



Building Strong Families

Insights from Research

Number 4, November 20, 2002

Parents Expect a Lot from Themselves ... and Little from Anyone Else

Highlights:

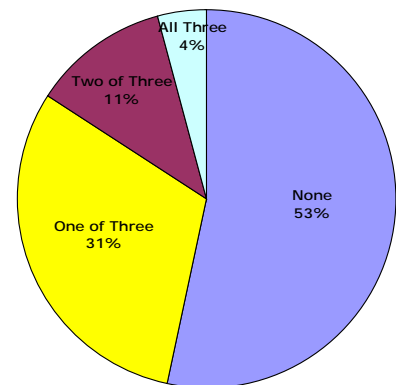
According to a poll of 1,005 parents, released today by YMCA of the USA and Search Institute, parents of children and teenagers are “doing it themselves,” without the support, encouragement, and networks that make it easier for them to raise strong kids and overcome the daily challenges of parenting. Most parents interviewed generally feel successful as parents most of the time, and they do many things to help their children grow up strong and healthy. However, they say more support and affirmation from others would really help them as parents.

Key Findings from the Study

Finding #1: A majority of the parents surveyed are going it alone in the vital and challenging task of raising children and teenagers. Most say they don't often turn to their extended family, friends, and community resources for support in parenting.

- Among those parents interviewed, 53% indicate that they do not regularly reach out for parenting help, advice, or support from immediate or extended family, friends, or community resources. Only 4% say they receive parenting support from all three sources.
- The parents in this study are most likely to seek support from family and friends. Thirty-six percent of parents interviewed say it is “very true” that they turn to family as a source of help, advice, or support, compared to 20% who turn to friends, and 11% who turn to community resources as an important source of help, advice, or support in their parenting.

How Many Sources of Support Do Parents Tap?
*Based on parents who said it was “very true” that they turned to each group for parenting help, advice, or support.



Finding #2: A key—but often lacking—resource for parents is a strong relationship with their spouse or partner. The parents we interviewed who experience an excellent partner relationship—regardless of whether they are married—are more likely to feel successful and up to the challenges of parenting.

- Parents tend to feel consistently more successful if they report an “excellent” relationship compared to a “good,” “okay,” or “poor” relationship. Parents with a strong partner relationship were more likely to say they do things to help their kids grow up strong and healthy, experience fewer challenges, and be open to other support and learning.
- Despite the importance of this relationship for parenting success, only half of the parents interviewed (50%) said their relationship with their partner was excellent.

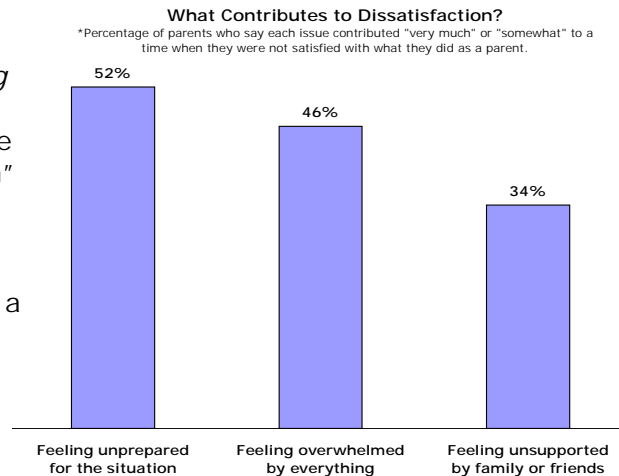
Finding #3: Most parents who were interviewed generally feel successful as parents most of the time. They do many things to help their children grow up strong and healthy.

- Most survey respondents report doing many positive things daily with their child, including showing love and support (97%), teaching basic values such as equality, honesty, and responsibility (89%), and helping their child feel good at something (87%).

- Most of these parents feel successful as parents most of the time. About one-third of those surveyed (34%) say they feel successful nearly every day, and an additional 54% feel successful on most days.

Finding #4: Most parents interviewed face ongoing challenges.

- Things parents polled say make parenting more difficult include job demands (50% "very much" or "somewhat"), conflicts or rivalries among children (48%), child being overscheduled (41%), and financial pressures (41%).
- Among those surveyed, feeling unprepared for a situation (52%), feeling overwhelmed by everything (46%), and feeling unsupported by family or friends (34%) contribute to their feeling dissatisfied with their parenting.



Finding #5: Many of the things that these parents say would really help them as parents are things that many people can easily do. These include:

- Others telling them that they're doing a good job as parents. Of the parents surveyed, 31% said this would help them very much, and 36% said it would help them somewhat.
- Having other adults whom they trust spend time with their kids. Of those surveyed, 29% said this would help very much; 42% said it would help somewhat.

For more information

Visit www.abundantassets.org or www.search-institute.org/families, where you will find the following resources:

- *Building Strong Families: Highlights from a Preliminary Survey*—A 16-page, easy-to-read summary of key findings from the study as well as practical action steps.
- *Building Strong Families: An In-Depth Report*—This research report presents the findings in greater detail, tells stories of parents and communities that illustrate the poll's findings, offers action ideas, and presents technical information on the study.
- *Building Strong Families: Power Point Presentation*—A ready-to-use presentation of the key findings from the study.
- *Building Strong Families: Fact Sheet*—A 2-page informational sheet highlighting key findings.

About the Poll

This preliminary poll, conducted by New York-based Global Strategy Group, involved a 15-minute telephone interview in May 2002 with 1,005 parents with children under age 18. Of the parents we interviewed, 82% are white, 84% are married, 45% have at least a college degree, and 49% make \$50,000 or more. Ten percent are African American, and 4% are Hispanic/Latino. Forty-one percent are fathers. A low response rate means that these findings are not representative of all American parents. However, the study does offer insights into the perspectives of a large, reasonably diverse sample of parents from many parts of the United States. Ongoing research by YMCA of the USA and Search Institute will further examine these and other issues.

This electronic newsletter, *Building Strong Families: Insights from Research*, is prepared by Stacey P. Rude, Search Institute, Minneapolis, Minnesota for the Abundant Assets Alliance. The alliance seeks to strengthen the capacity of YMCAs and the communities they serve to provide young people with the support and experiences they need to become healthy, caring, and competent adults.

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