



Mott Poll Report

April 17, 2023
Volume 43
Issue 2

Parents See Upsides and Downsides to Teen Jobs

In many families, getting a job is a rite of passage for teens. However, teens can experience both positive and negative consequences of having a job. The C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health asked a national sample of parents of teens 14-18 years about their experiences related to teen jobs.

In thinking about whether a job is appropriate for their teen, parents rate the following factors as very important: whether the hours fit with their teen's schedule (87%), convenience of getting them to and from the job (68%), whether the job provides a learning experience (54%), pay rate (34%), and the other teens who work there (25%). Most parents consider themselves very (29%) or somewhat (52%) informed about state laws for teen employment.

Over half of parents of 18-year-olds (53%) say their teen has a formal job, compared to 42% of parents of teens 16-17 years and 8% of parents of teens 14-15 years. Among these parents, 26% estimate their teen works ≥20 hours a week. Parents say teens use their job money to pay for personal items (82%) or activities (29%), for savings (75%), or to help with family expenses (8%).

Parents of working teens believe having a formal job has a positive impact on their teen's money management (76%), self-esteem (70%), time management (63%) and social life (28%); they cite a negative impact on their teen's sleep (16%), activities (11%), social life (11%), and grades (4%). In addition, 44% report their teen has experienced problems on the job, including not getting as many hours as promised (26%), having to work more hours or later hours (18%), disagreements with coworkers or managers (14%), unsafe situations in the workplace (6%), and incorrect or delayed pay (6%).

Parents of teens who do not have a formal job express concerns that having a job could negatively impact their teen's grades (44%), involvement in activities (44%), sleep (42%) or social life (23%). Some parents expect their teen 16-18 years (42%) or 14-15 years (22%) to get a job within the next 6 months. Parents say factors that may prevent their teen from getting a job include being too busy (34%), transportation (27%), lack of jobs for teens (14%), having to help at home (6%), school (5%) or health (4%).

Teen jobs: Pros and cons

% of parents citing a positive or negative impact of teen's job

Positive Impact

- ✔ Money management 76%
- ✔ Self-esteem 70%
- ✔ Time management 63%
- ✔ Social life 28%



Negative Impact

- ✘ Sleep 16%
- ✘ Activities 11%
- ✘ Social life 11%
- ✘ Grades 4%



Report Highlights

Parents cite logistical factors (schedule, convenience) as top factors in deciding whether a job is appropriate for their teen.

Among parents of teens with a formal job, nearly half report their teen has experienced workplace problems.

Less than 1 in 3 parents feel very informed about state laws for teen employment.

Data Source & Methods

This report presents findings from a nationally representative household survey conducted exclusively by Ipsos Public Affairs, LLC (Ipsos) for C.S. Mott Children's Hospital. The survey was administered in February 2023 to a randomly selected, stratified group of adults who were parents of at least one child age 0-18 years living in their household (n=2,100). Adults were selected from Ipsos's web-enabled KnowledgePanel® that closely resembles the U.S. population. The sample was subsequently weighted to reflect population figures from the Census Bureau. The survey completion rate was 62% among panel members contacted to participate. This report is based on responses from 1,017 parents with at least one child age 14-18. The margin of error for results presented in this report is ±1 to 7 percentage points.

A publication from C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, the University of Michigan Department of Pediatrics, and the Susan B. Meister Child Health Evaluation and Research (CHEAR) Center.

Findings from the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health do not represent the opinions of the University of Michigan. The University of Michigan reserves all rights over this material.

C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health

Co-Director: Sarah J. Clark, MPH
Co-Director: Susan J. Woolford, MD, MPH
Contributing Editor: Gary L. Freed, MD, MPH
Poll Manager: Dianne C. Singer, MPH
Data Analyst: Acham Gebremariam, MS
Publication Designer: Sara L. Schultz, MPS



**SUSAN B. MEISTER
CHILD HEALTH EVALUATION
AND RESEARCH CENTER**
MICHIGAN MEDICINE

Implications

Having a job can offer the opportunity for teens to gain experience, make new friends, and earn money. Many parents observe that having a job helps their teen improve their time management and money management. At the same time, parents worry that it can interfere with a teen's schoolwork, extracurricular activities, social life, and sleep schedule, which can cause negative effect on the teen's mental and physical health.

Benefits are more likely to occur when teens are in a job that is appropriate for their circumstances. Parents in this Mott Poll prioritized logistical factors, the foremost being whether the job would fit the teen's schedule. This should be broadly considered, to include the time needed for schoolwork, extracurricular activities, family commitments, and planned social events, as well as the time to get to and from the job. Being realistic about these practical considerations may prevent subsequent conflicts and avoid setting the teen up for negative consequences.

Many teens will need guidance in trying to find a suitable job. Parents can encourage teens to use multiple strategies, including online postings, asking other teens for suggestions, or going to a business and asking directly about potential positions. Offering advice on how to dress and behave during an interview, and role-playing the types of questions employers might ask, may help teens feel more comfortable and confident during the interview.

Parents can also help teens develop a list of their own questions to ask during the interview, focused on making sure the job will meet their practical considerations and priorities. For example, if the teen is available only on certain days, it's important to verify that the employer will meet that schedule limitation; otherwise, the job may negatively impact their sleep, stress level, and other areas of life.

When teens begin a new job, parents should watch for any signs of a negative impact on the teen's physical or mental health. Teens may feel anxious about being in an unfamiliar situation, having someone evaluate their performance, and dealing with more demands on their time. Having regular conversations about what's happening at work creates an opportunity for parents to provide support and encouragement, and share advice, while they are assessing whether the job is too much of a burden.

Moreover, in this Mott Poll, nearly half of parents of working teens indicated their teen had experienced job-related problems, including working longer hours than expected and unsafe work situations. Parents should be aware of state laws related to teen employment, including limitations on total hours and on the times that teens are allowed to work, as well as safety measures such as rules around operating equipment. If parents suspect problems in any of these areas, they should encourage their teen to find a different job that supports their health and safety.

Although younger teens 14-15 years are allowed to hold a formal job in many states, the options may be limited. Informal jobs like babysitting or lawn mowing are a good option to allow teens to gain confidence and experience. Parents can help younger teens get started by introducing them to friends and neighbors who may have informal tasks, by outlining how to do a good job, and talking with them about different challenges they may encounter.

Whether a teen has a formal or informal job, parents may want to establish some guidance for what teens do with their earnings. For many families, teens use their earnings for "extras" – personal items that go beyond what parents provide. In other circumstances, teens are expected to use job earnings to cover the costs of participating in extracurricular activities or to save for college. In other situations, teens may be asked to contribute to family expenses. Setting expectations will help parents and teens avoid conflict in this area.