

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

Child Health Evaluation
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For Kids, Hard Economic Times Mean More Stress, Fewer Doctor Visits

The current economic situation in the United States has impacted adults in a number of ways. But children are also likely to be affected by economic pressures.

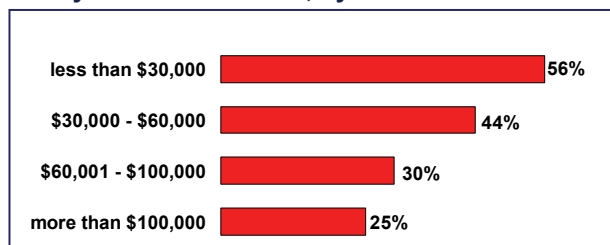
In May 2009, the CS Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health asked a national sample of parents about their household financial situation and the related consequences.

Family Financial Situations and Children's Stress

Among parents with children age 17 or younger, 44% said their financial situation has gotten worse over the last 6 months, 39% said it stayed the same and 17% said it got better.

Forty percent of parents indicated their children age 5-17 have stress (either *some* or *a lot*) as a result of worries about their family's money. Over one-half (53%) of parents report their teens 13-17 have stress due to the family's financial situation. Stress from financial worries affects twice as many children from the lowest income families as from the highest income families (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Parent Report of Child Stress Due to Family Financial Worries, by Household Income



Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, May 2009

Making Ends Meet

Parents endorsed many actions they have taken to try to make ends meet. Among parents reporting their family financial situation has gotten worse (Table 1), most had cut back on extras, a quarter had applied for government programs and 11% had delayed taking their children to a doctor. Delaying doctor visits was especially common (40%) for families with uninsured children.

Table 1. How Parents in Worse Financial Situations Are Making Ends Meet

	% of parents
Cutting back on "extras" or activities for children	65%
Applied for or used free/reduced lunch program	27%
Applied for state or government insurance	24%
Delay taking children to the dentist	16%
Delay taking children to the doctor	11%

Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, May 2009

Report Highlights

- For 44% of families, the financial situation has gotten worse over the past 6 months.
- 40% of parents report that their children age 5-17 have stress as a result of worries about their family's money.
- To make ends meet, 11% of parents who report a worse financial situation have delayed taking their children to the doctor.

Implications

Nearly 1 in 2 US families report a worse financial situation now than just 6 months ago. Such severe family financial strain is taking its toll—with 2 out of 5 parents reporting that their kids were showing signs of stress as a result of worries about money. Although many parents are applying for government meal or health care programs for their children, some are also choosing to cut back on dental and doctor visits that could potentially delay needed care.

In other words, as tough as this recession is for adults, it's a grueling road for kids, too—perhaps more so than many adults have recognized. Health care professionals, counselors, teachers, and parents must be aware of stress felt by youth in these tough times, in order to reach out to support them in their moments of uncertainty.

Data Source

This report presents findings from a nationally representative household survey conducted exclusively by Knowledge Networks, Inc, for C.S. Mott Children's Hospital via a method used in many published studies. The survey was administered in May 2009 to a randomly selected, stratified group of parents aged 18 and older (n=1,471) with children from the Knowledge Networks standing panel 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 56% among parent panel members contacted to participate. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 1 to 15 percentage points, depending on the question.

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