

Adults' Environment and Behavior

Parental Aggravation

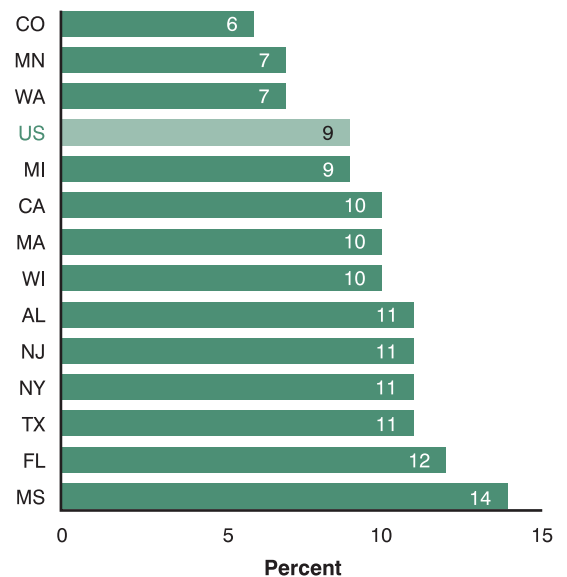


High stress and aggravation in parents are associated with poor cognitive and socioemotional development of young children. In addition, maternal emotional distress has been linked to less responsive, even hostile, parenting practices.

Mandated employment, time limits on benefits, shifts in child care arrangements, and fluctuations in income are some of the challenges facing low-income parents under welfare reform. The added stress of these challenges may increase parental aggravation. However, work experiences that provide opportunities for social interaction, support outside the family, and economic self-sufficiency may reduce stress and hence parental aggravation.

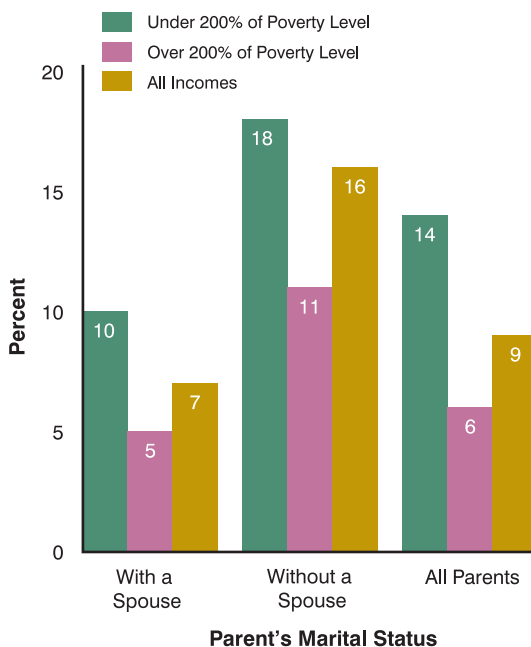
Aggravation was assessed on a scale that summed a parent's estimates of how often in the last month he or she felt a child was much

Children Living with a Parent Who Felt Highly Aggravated, by State, 1997



Source: Child Trends and Urban Institute

Children Living with a Parent Who Felt Highly Aggravated, by Family Income and Parent's Marital Status, 1997



Source: Child Trends and Urban Institute

harder to care for than most, the child did things that really bothered the parent a lot, the parent was giving up more of his or her life to meet the child's needs than expected, and the parent felt angry with the child.

Nationally, 9 percent of all children lived with a parent who felt highly aggravated. Of children in families with low incomes (below 200 percent of the poverty level), 14 percent lived with such a parent, compared to 6 percent of children in families with higher incomes, a statistically significant difference. Children of parents who did not have a spouse were significantly more likely than other children (16 percent versus 7 percent) to be living with a highly aggravated parent.

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Assessing
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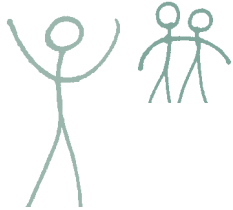
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This *Snapshot* presents findings from the National Survey of America's Families (NSAF), a 1997 survey of 44,461 households with and without telephones that are representative of the nation as a whole and of 13 states. As in all surveys, the data are subject to sampling variability and other sources of error.

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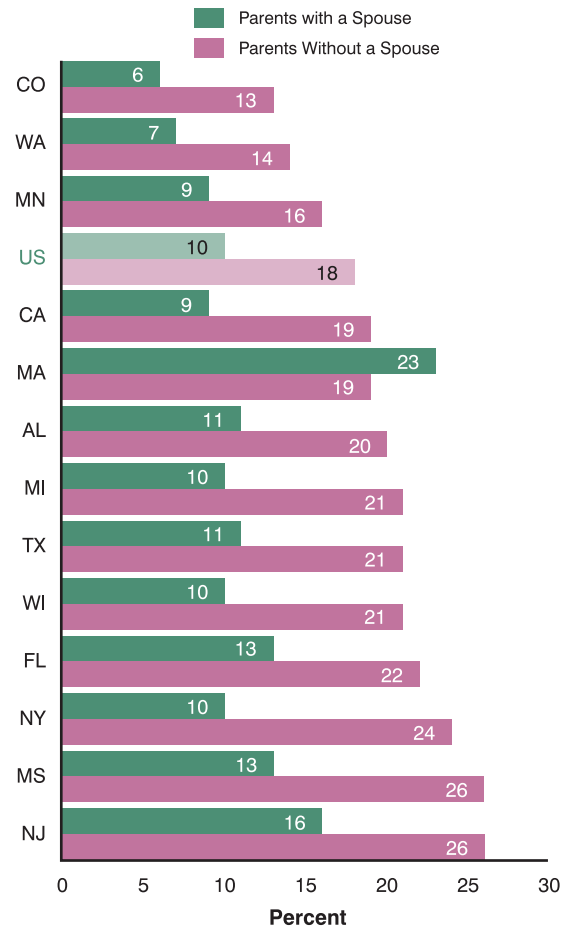
In the 13 states surveyed, 6 percent to 14 percent of children lived with a highly aggravated parent. In six of the states, the percentage was above the national average: Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, and Texas. The percentage was below average in Colorado, Minnesota, and Washington.

In low-income families, 9 percent to 21 percent of children lived with a highly aggravated parent. In five states, that percentage was higher than the national average: Florida, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Jersey, and New York. In Colorado and Washington, it was lower.

In low-income families where the parent did not have a spouse, 13 percent to 26 percent of children lived with a highly aggravated parent. In three states, the percentage was above the national average of 18 percent: Mississippi, New Jersey, and New York; in Colorado, it was below average.

This four-item scale was adapted from a component of the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies (NEWWS), the evaluation of the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) program.

Low-Income Children Living with a Parent Who Felt Highly Aggravated, by Parent's Marital Status and State, 1997



Source: Child Trends and Urban Institute

Children (%) Living with a Parent Who Felt Highly Aggravated, 1997

Parent's Marital Status	AL	CA	CO	FL	MA	MI	MN	MS	NJ	NY	TX	WA	WI	US
Under 200% of poverty level														
With a spouse	11.4	9.3	6.1	12.9	22.5	9.9	9.3	12.8	15.6	10.4	11.1	6.8	10.4	10.5
Without a spouse	20.4	18.8	13.2	22.0	19.1	21.4	15.8	25.6	25.7	23.9	21.2	13.8	21.2	18.0
All parents	16.3	13.0	8.7	17.2	20.8	15.7	11.8	20.2	20.4	17.4	15.1	9.1	14.8	13.7
Over 200% of poverty level														
With a spouse	6.3	6.1	5.1	6.7	5.5	5.9	4.0	5.0	6.8	4.8	6.8	6.0	7.1	4.8
Without a spouse	11.3	13.4	5.0	7.9	9.3	9.4	8.0	4.9	13.9	13.7	8.2	10.2	8.7	11.2
All parents	6.9	7.3	5.1	6.9	5.9	6.3	4.4	5.0	7.5	6.2	7.0	6.4	7.3	5.6
All incomes														
With a spouse	7.9	7.4	5.4	9.0	8.7	6.8	5.2	8.1	8.5	6.5	8.5	6.2	7.9	6.6
Without a spouse	18.6	17.1	10.1	18.4	15.8	17.9	12.8	22.6	21.4	21.0	18.3	12.4	16.8	16.0
All parents	11.4	10.1	6.3	11.9	10.3	9.5	6.6	13.7	11.2	11.1	11.0	7.4	9.7	9.0

Figures in color represent statistically significant differences from the national average at the .05 confidence level. Figures in black are not statistically significantly different from the national average. All figures in text, charts, and table are rounded.

Source: Child Trends and Urban Institute