

Building Strong Families Fact Sheet

A Preliminary Study from YMCA/Search Institute on What Parents Need to Succeed

This project is made possible by a generous grant from the Kimberly-Clark Corporation in Dallas.

YMCA of the USA and Search Institute are releasing the findings from a poll of 1,005 parents from across the United States that investigates how much support and success they experience in raising healthy, responsible, and caring children and teenagers. This poll, and accompanying interviews and profiles of families, represent the first step in a long-term partnership focused on identifying and bolstering the strengths of parents and families.

Key Findings

Finding #1: A majority of the parents we 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 percent 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 percent say they receive parenting support from all three sources.
- ▶ These parents 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 percent who turn to friends, and 11% who turn to community resources as an important source of help, advice, or support in their parenting.

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 with a strong partner relationship were more likely to say they do things to help their kids grow up strong and healthy, feel successful and confident as parents, experience fewer challenges as parents, and be open to other support and learning.
- ▶ Despite the importance of this relationship for parenting success, only half of the parents interviewed (54 percent) 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 percent), teaching basic values such as equality, honesty, and responsibility (89 percent), and helping their child feel good at something (87 percent).
- ▶ Most of these parents feel successful as parents most of the time. About one-third of those surveyed (34 percent) say they feel successful nearly every day, and an additional 54 percent feel successful on most days. Younger parents and African American parents report feeling successful more often than other parents do.

Finding #4: Most parents interviewed face ongoing challenges.

- ▶ Things parents polled say make parenting more difficult include job demands (50 percent "very much" or "somewhat"), conflicts or rivalries among children (48 percent), child being overscheduled (41 percent), and financial pressures (41 percent).
- ▶ Among those surveyed, here are the percentages who say each factor contributes to their feeling dissatisfied with their parenting: feeling unprepared for a situation that arises (52 percent), feeling overwhelmed by everything (46 percent), and feeling unsupported by family or friends (34 percent).

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 percent said this would help them very much, and 36 percent said it would help them somewhat.
- ▶ Having other adults whom they trust spend time with their kids. Of those surveyed, 29 percent said this would help very much, and 42 percent said it would help somewhat.

Resources from the Study (available at www.abundantassets.org)

- ▶ *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.
- ▶ *Self-Quiz*—A simple conversation-starting tool for adults to compare their perspectives to those of parents in this survey.
- ▶ *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: Insights from Research*—A free electronic newsletter that provides updates on the study as well as other relevant research on building strong families.
- ▶ *Building Strong Families: Power Point Presentation*—A ready-to-use presentation of the key findings from the study.

About the Poll

This preliminary poll, conducted by Global Strategy Group of New York City and Washington, D.C., involved a 15-minute telephone interview in May 2002 with 1,005 parents with children under age 18. Of the parents we interviewed, 82 percent are white, 84 percent are married, 45 percent have at least a college degree, and 49 percent make \$50,000 or more. Ten percent are African American, and 4 percent 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 across the United States. **For more information, see the detailed report on the study, which is available at www.abundantassets.org.**

The Building Strong Families poll represents the first phase of an ongoing collaboration between the YMCA of the USA and Search Institute around strong families and parenting. It is part of the larger Abundant Assets Alliance, which combines the resources of YMCA of the USA, YMCA Canada, and Search Institute—three distinguished organizations with proven success in building strong kids, families, and communities. **For more information, visit www.abundantassets.org.**



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