



2021 COVID-19 Impact Survey Findings

July 2021



Contents

Introduction.....	3
Demographics.....	5
Contextualizing Disparities.....	6
Housing, Employment, and Income.....	7
Childcare.....	13
Family Concerns, Supports, and Needs.....	17
COVID-19 Vaccine.....	24
Conclusion.....	29



Introduction

At the start of Shelter in Place (SIP) in Spring and Summer of 2020, First 5 Contra Costa partnered with Applied Survey Research (ASR) to administer its first COVID-19 Impact Survey to parents and families with young children (N = 412). At the time, the county was in a period of great uncertainty around the COVID-19 pandemic, its prevalence, and its long-term impact. However, the pandemic soon developed into over a year of childcare, school, and business closings, with families of young children caught in the middle and stretched thin. Findings from that first survey can be found at: <http://www.first5coco.org/covid-19-impact-survey/> .

In the hope of bringing attention to the specific and prolonged challenges families of young children have faced since SIP, in Spring 2021 (March-May) First 5 Contra Costa invited First 5 families, First 5 partner families, and a survey panel of families (created by Applied Survey Research, or ASR) to participate in a second COVID-19 survey, and 533 families responded. First 5 and First 5 partner families who completed the survey received \$15 Safeway and Target gift cards.

The 2021 survey assessed changes in the stability of parents' employment and income, demand for childcare, family concerns, supports, and resource needs, as well as parents' thinking and actions around COVID-19 vaccination. We also investigated structural disparities in outcomes, focusing on differences in adverse outcomes of the pandemic by income and by race/ethnicity. The learnings of this survey are intended to inform comprehensive, cross-sector solutions that are responsive to the complex, profound challenges of families of young children, and promote equitable solutions that address the pronounced needs of systemically under-resourced, low-income families and families of color.

Introduction

Analysis

We analyzed survey responses to understand changes in the stability of parents' employment and income, get parents' current take on the demand for childcare, family concerns, supports, and resource needs, as well as parents' thinking and actions around COVID-19 vaccination.

Change over time. To assess changes in parents' employment and income as a result of the pandemic, we used Contra Costa County's March 2020 Shelter-In-Place (SIP) order as a reference point. Accordingly, questions for income and employment have a "pre-SIP" and "spring 2021" set of responses from parents. Notably, comparisons between the 2020 and 2021 COVID-19 surveys are not presented here, as each survey reflects a different sample and should be treated as two different point in time surveys.

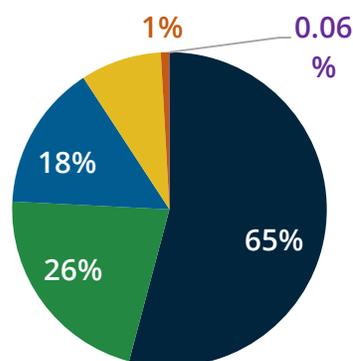
Subgroup analyses. We also investigated structural disparities in outcomes, focusing on differences in adverse outcomes of the pandemic by income and by race/ethnicity. Subgroup differences are reported as proportions. When looking at variation in outcomes based on income level, income level is defined as income level pre-SIP, or prior to Shelter in Place.

Additional notes. All percentages presented have been rounded up to the nearest whole number, so percentages may add up to more or less than 100%. Lastly, First 5 Partner family survey respondents received a separate survey in order to generate a unique survey link for families to access. For a subset of the sample, in the middle of survey administration, response options indicating that no other options applied ("none, "no concerns") were added only to the First 5 Partner family survey to check all that apply questions in response to community feedback. Therefore, percent response frequencies are not shown in the main bar graphs for check all that apply questions, and they have been indicated in the notes.

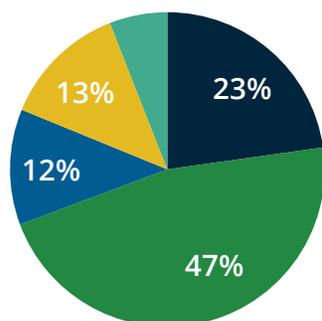
Parents are racially and ethnically diverse.

Parent survey respondents were highly diverse across race/ethnicity. When comparing the 2021 COVID-19 Impact Survey racial/ethnic demographics to the 2019 Census Demographics and the 2020 COVID-19 Impact Survey demographics, the 2021 survey respondents are even more representative of the county, particularly with regard to Hispanic/Latino, Black/African American, and White parents*. Other demographics of note are that parents primarily reported speaking English, Spanish, or Other languages at home. With regard to age range of children, nearly three quarters (67%) of parents reported having at least one child age 5 or younger, with the remainder of the sample either having older children or no children.

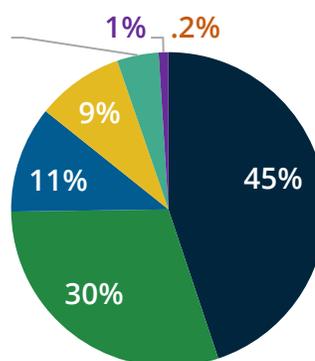
2019 County Demographics*



2020 COVID-19 Impact Survey
N = 411



2021 COVID-19 Impact Survey
N = 488



Top 3 Languages Spoken:
English, Spanish, Other



67% of the sample were parents with at least one child 5 or younger.



* In our race/ethnicity question, parents selected the race/ethnicity with which they most identified. In the census, participants select their race and whether they are of Hispanic/Latino origin, resulting in overlap between other racial/ethnic categories and the Hispanic/Latino category.

† "Other" included self-descriptions such as "Mixed Race" and "Middle Eastern."

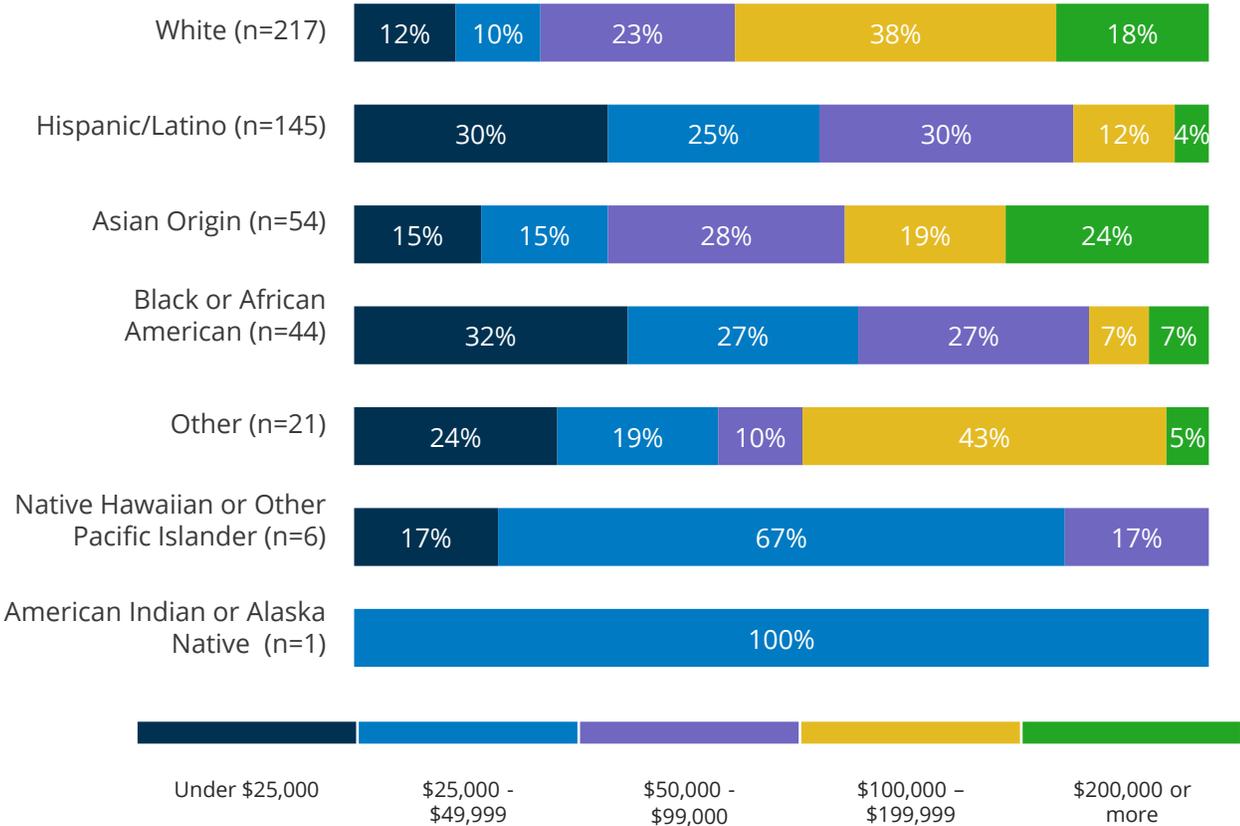
*From this point forward, we refer to survey respondents as parents, a descriptor which applies to the majority of the sample, in order to share implications of survey findings for parents and families.

Contextualizing Race/Ethnicity Data and Disparities

At various points in this report, we share data disaggregated by race/ethnicity that indicate disparities between different groups. **These disparities, such as those we see by income, are rooted in structural factors, i.e., policies, cultures, and systems that have limited where and how members of Black and brown communities can learn, earn, and live over generations.**

One of the key disparities we see as a result is that disproportionately more families of color have lower household incomes, compared to their white peers, a product of many structural factors including legacies of redlining that excluded families of color from accumulating wealth. The parents in our sample generally track with this trend; however, as with most samples, most racial/ethnic groups had representation across incomes, a reminder that racial and ethnic groups are not a monolith.

Proportion of parents' household income after SIP within race/ethnicity groups





Housing, Employment, and Income

In this section:

- When asked about their current living situation, over one third of parents report renting.
- More parents with low incomes have even less income since COVID-19 hit
- More parents work part-time or are unemployed since the SIP order.
- Almost half of parents (40%) lost employment after the SIP order.
- Returning to the workforce has been slow for many parents, such that parents experience reduced work hours or loss of employment for extended periods of time.

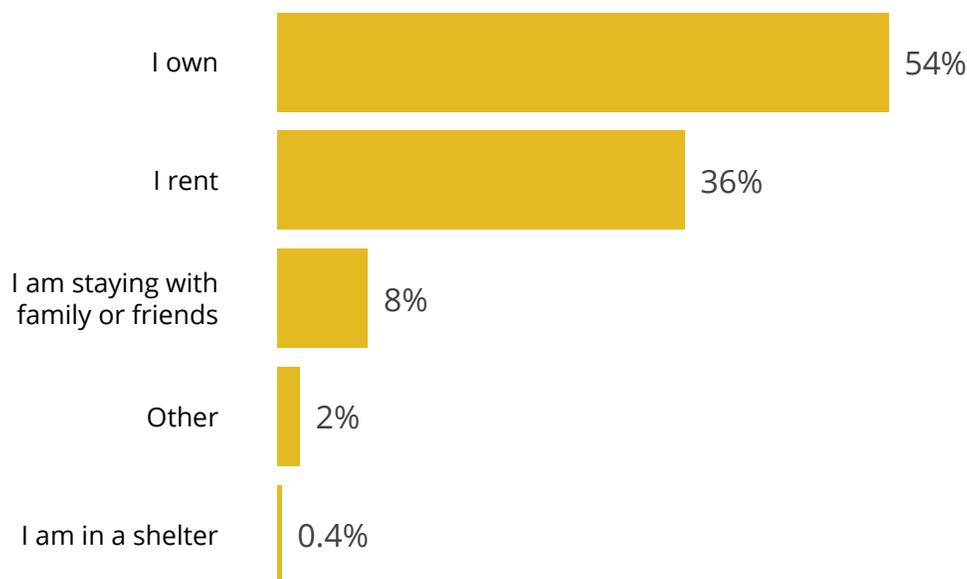
Over one third of parents are renters.

While over half own their homes, a small but not insignificant proportion—about 1 in 12—are **housing insecure**, i.e., in a shelter or staying with family or friends.

Importantly, there appeared to be differences in the living situations that parents reported based on their income level. A much higher proportion of parents with low incomes (less than \$50,000 annually) rent (61%), compared with parents with high incomes who rent (25%).

Percentage of parents reporting types of living situations

n=472

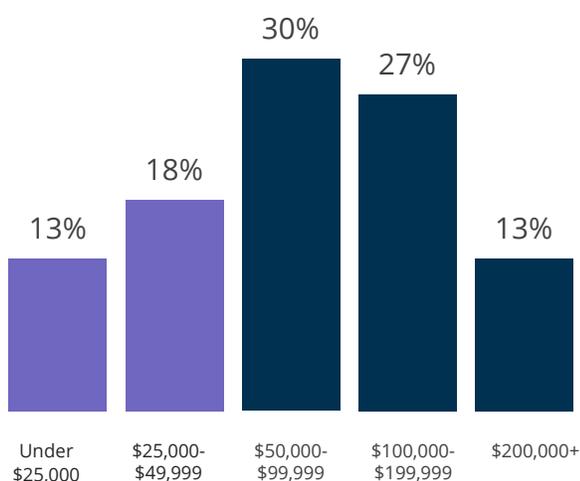


More parents with low incomes have even less income since COVID-19 hit.

When comparing household income before SIP to that of Spring 2021, we find that the percentage of households with incomes of less than \$50K increases by 6% from pre-SIP to Spring 2021.

Comparison of household income (before SIP vs Spring 2021)

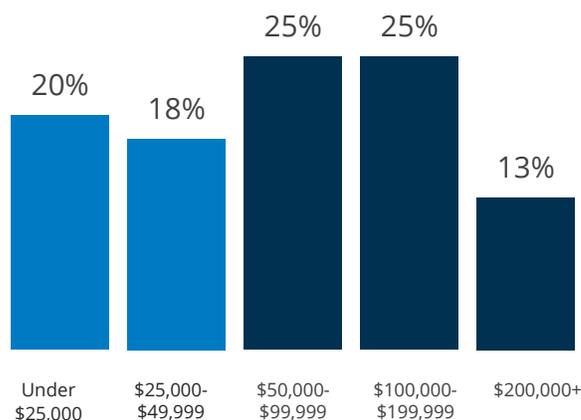
N = 488



Before SIP

31%

Over a quarter of households made less than \$50K before SIP



Spring 2021

37%

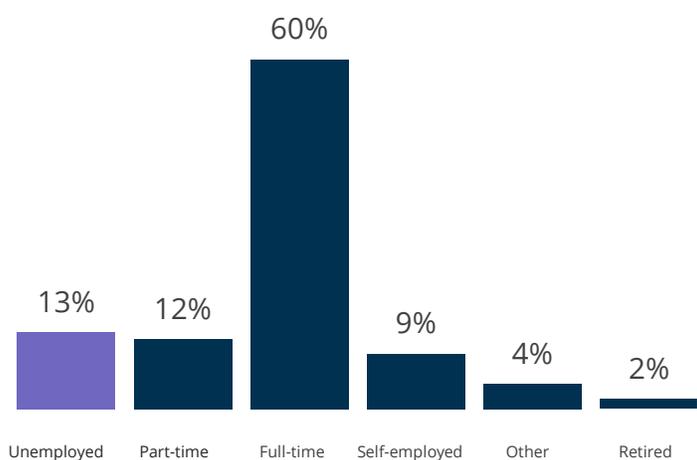
Over one third of households make less than \$50K in Spring 2021

More parents work part-time or are unemployed since the SIP order

We see similar patterns for unemployment rates as we do income, such that the percentage of parents reported being unemployed increases by 7% from pre-SIP to Spring 2021.

Comparison of employment status (before SIP vs Spring 2021)

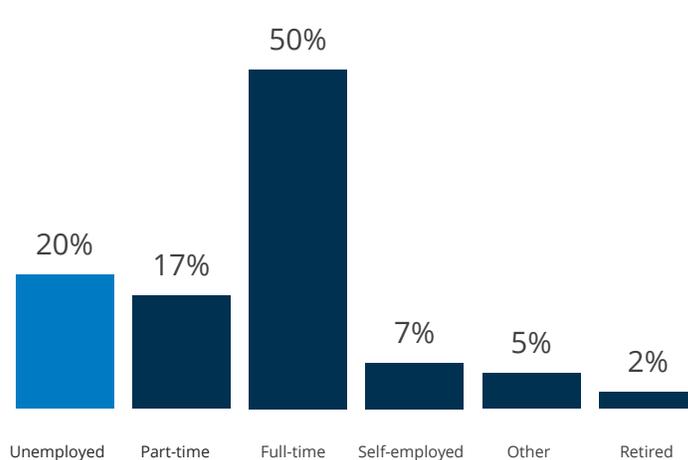
N = 488



Before SIP

13%

of parents were unemployed pre-SIP



Spring 2021

20%

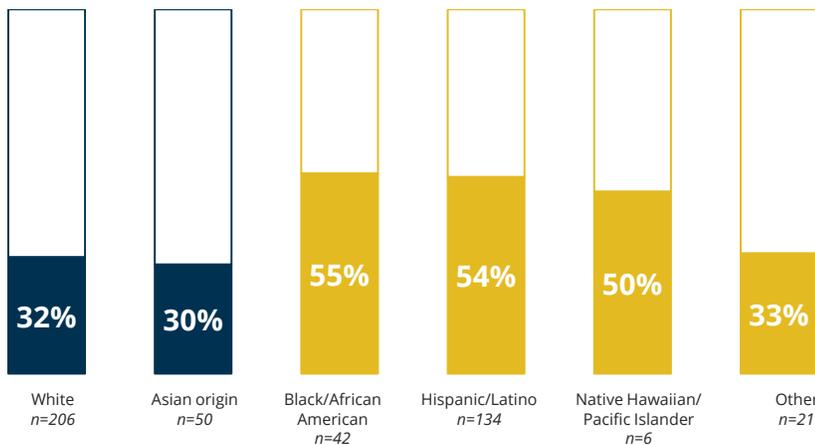
of parents were unemployed by Spring 2021

Almost half of parents (40%) lost employment after the SIP order.

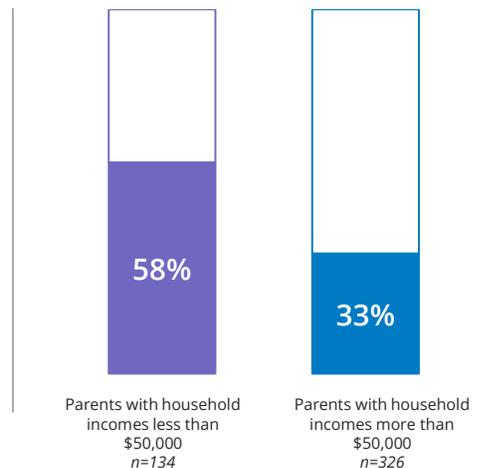
Though families overall were heavily impacted by loss of employment after SIP and the progression of the COVID-19 pandemic, communities of color and households with lower incomes were harder hit by loss of employment, as noted in the highlighted bars in the figure below.

Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander parents and households with low incomes were disproportionately affected by loss of employment.

Proportion of parents who lost employment, by race/ethnicity*



Proportion of parents who lost employment, by household income pre-SIP



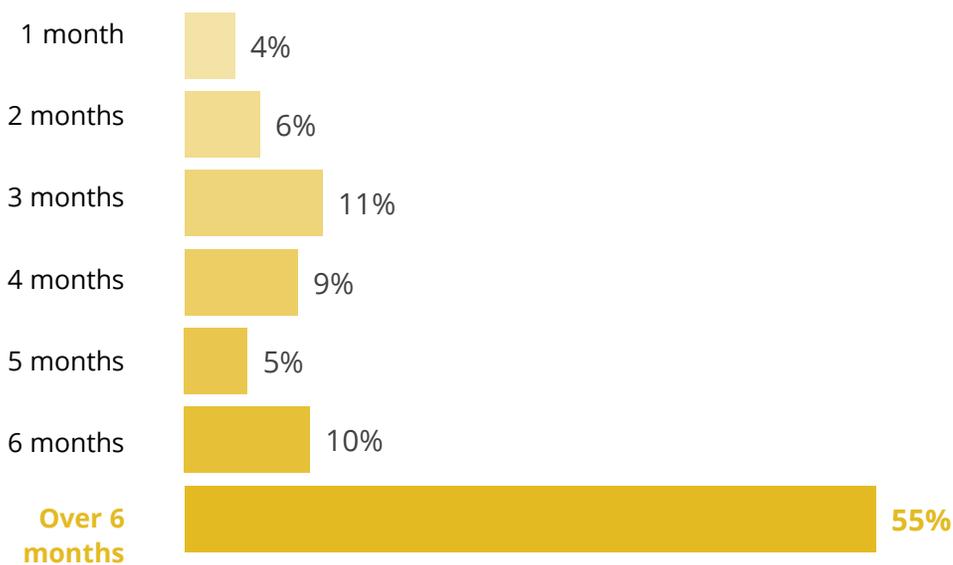
* The sole respondent who identified as Native American/Native Alaskan did not report loss of employment

Returning to the workforce has been slow for many parents.

Many families have not been able to bounce back quickly from a loss of employment. Of parents who experienced a decrease in work hours or are no longer working, **over half (55%)** experienced this for over 6 months.

Percentage of parents reporting reduced hours/loss of employment by months of reduced work hours/loss of employment

n=161





Childcare

In this section:

- Parents' needs and perspectives on childcare are largely tied with their income and employment status.
- Of parents who reported not working or having reduced hours, over one third (39%) cited caring for children not in school or daycare as the reason.
- When parents have the opportunity to describe challenges they are experiencing during the pandemic, we see the intersection of childcare, employment, and income, in which there is a push and pull between having childcare to work and having a sufficiently paying job for childcare.
- Over one third of parents need childcare now or very soon.

Of parents who reported not working or having reduced hours, **over one third** (39%) cited caring for children not in school or daycare as the reason.

A similar proportion (34%) lost access to childcare since the SIP order. Together, these statistics suggest that parents are leaving the workforce out of a need or a desire to provide their own childcare.



Parent perspective on major challenges:

When asked in an open-ended question to describe challenges they were experiencing in the pandemic that could not be captured in the survey, one parent described her complex challenges seeking childcare:

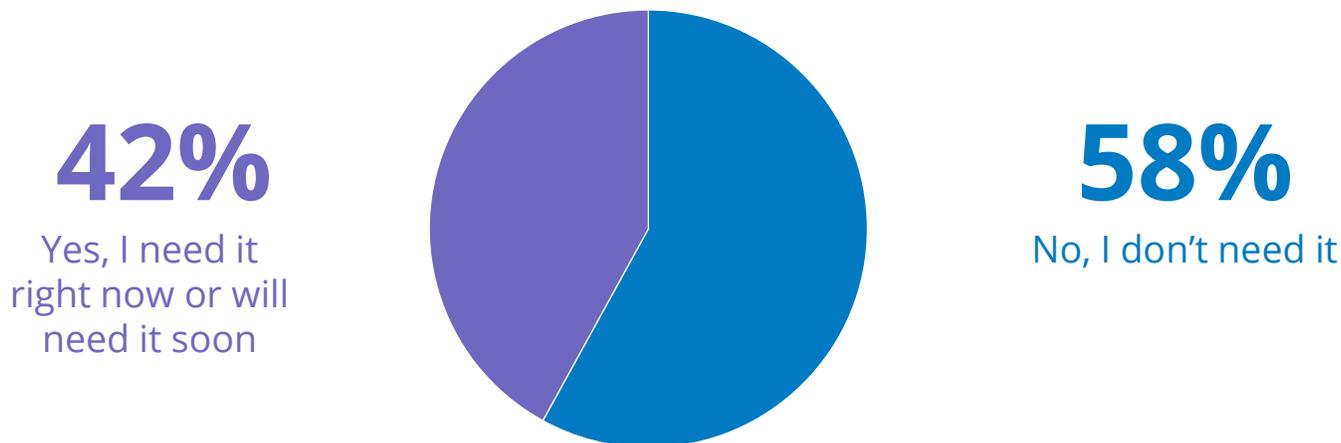
“[It was a challenge] finding a job that paid what my job did prior to the pandemic, that does not require more college and degrees. Childcare continues to be a struggle because I need childcare to work more, however we don’t feel it’s completely safe to put our child in care right now and therefore don’t really want to. Also the affordability factor, as childcare can cost upwards of a mortgage payment, and would cost more money monthly than I would even make from working, so ultimately would not even be worth it in the end.”

In this parent quote, we see the intersection of childcare, employment, and income, in which there is a push and pull between having childcare to work and having a sufficiently paying job for childcare.

Over one third of parents need childcare now or very soon.

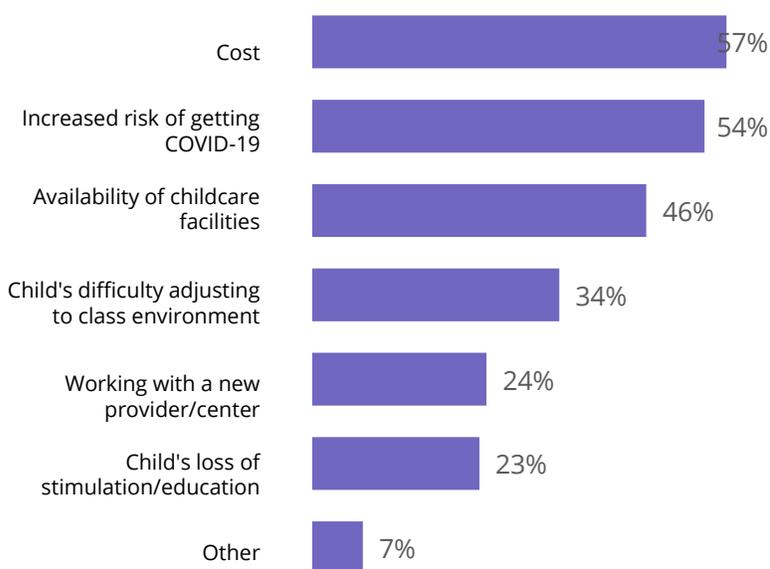
Percentage of parents reporting childcare needs

N=451



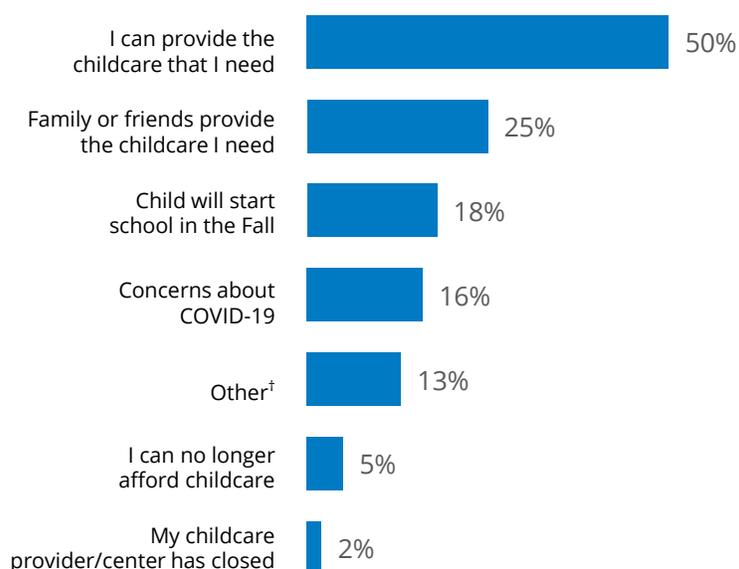
Concerns about childcare for parents who need it now or soon

n=182*



Reasons parents cite for not needing childcare

n=234*



* Parents could select multiple responses, so categories will add up to more than 100%

Notes. "Other" reasons parents cited for not needing childcare included already having childcare, having no children, or having older children. In the survey for First 5 Partner families, 1% of parents selected "None" when option was added.



Family Concerns, Supports, and Needs

In this section:

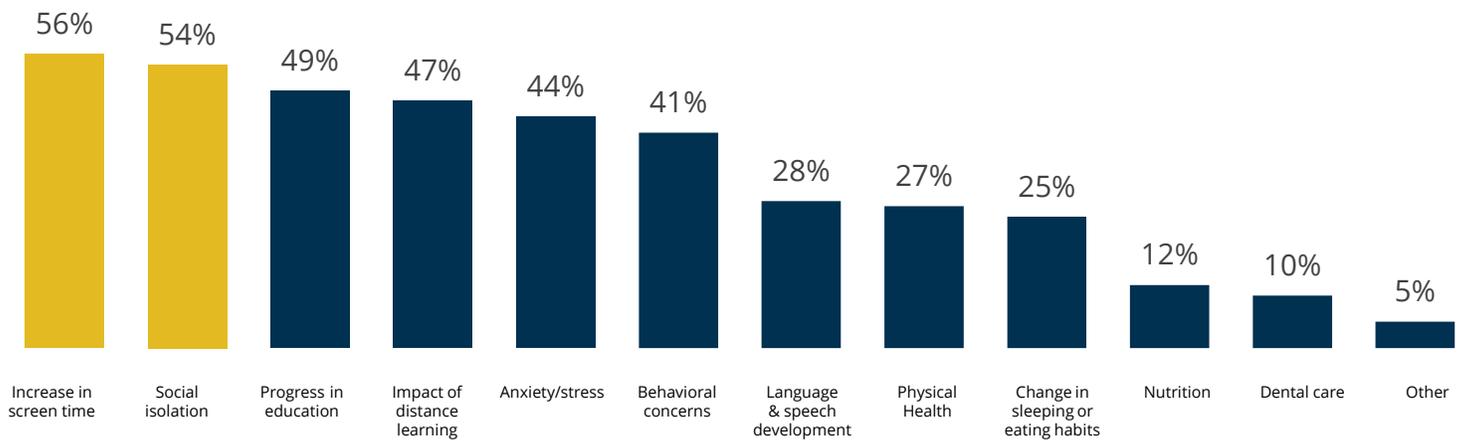
- When given an array of options, parents' concerns (for themselves and their children), needs, and requests for support were fairly evenly distributed across options, indicating the multifaceted challenges families are facing and the need to take a holistic approach in supporting them.
- Parents' greatest concerns for their children are increased screen time and social isolation.
- Families' greatest concerns for themselves are parenting stress, social isolation, and household expenses.
- Almost half of parents report feeling symptoms of anxiety (45%) or depression (43%) for at least several days in the last two weeks.
- Parenting support and unconditional cash were among parents' top-ranked needs.
- Half of families see cash assistance or stimulus checks as an action the County could take to support them.

Parents' greatest concerns for their children are **increased screen time** and **social isolation**.

Top concerns—**increase in screen time, social isolation, progress in education, and impact of distance learning**—have their roots in the remote learning environments many families have had to endure throughout the pandemic.

Parents' top concerns for children*

N = 429



* Parents could select multiple responses, so categories will add up to more than 100%
Notes. In the survey for First 5 Partner families, 3% selected "No concerns" when option was added.

Parents' greatest concerns for themselves are parenting stress, social isolation, and household expenses.

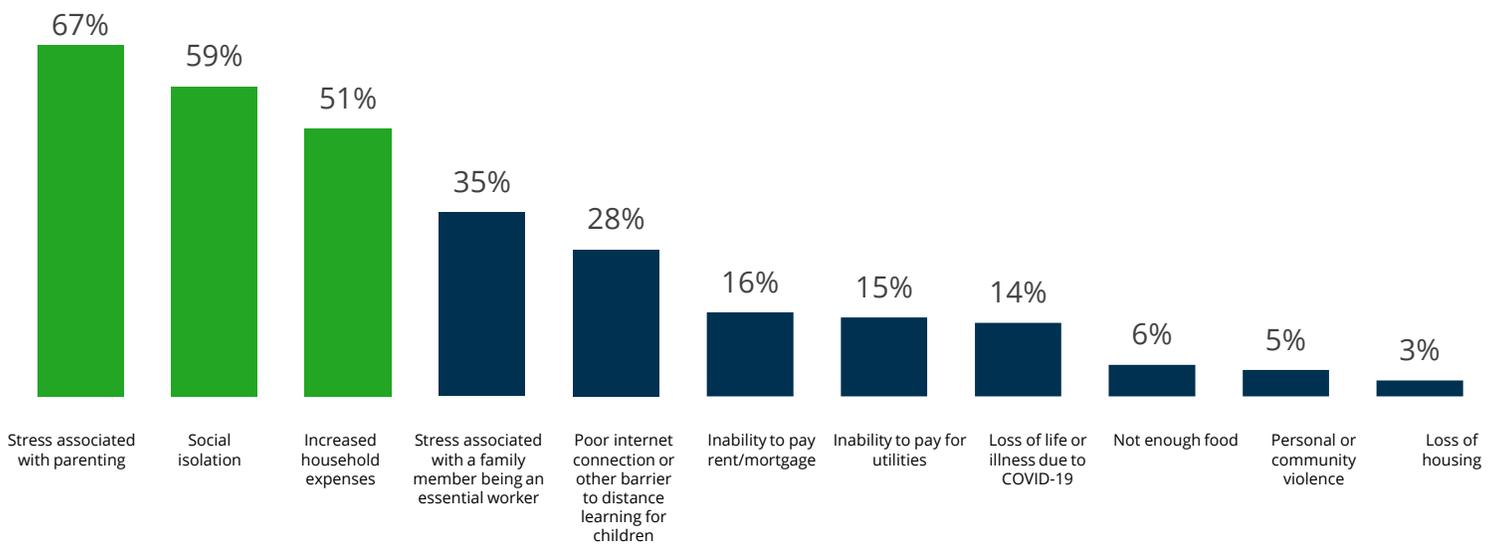
In the isolation of quarantine and remote learning, parents have not had the access to the community, supportive relationships, and many other supports that buffer against the stress of parenting. This stress has been further compounded by 1) the additional roles they have had to take on and 2) the rising pressures of financial hardship dues to loss of employment and reduced work hours.

Parent perspective on major challenges:

"[I have] developed severe depression and anxiety and agoraphobia. Also I'm struggling so much financially."

Parents' top concerns for themselves*

N = 378



* Parents could select multiple responses, so categories will add up to more than 100%

Almost half of parents report feeling symptoms of **anxiety (45%)** or **depression (43%)** for at least several days in the last two weeks.

We still do not know the full mental health implications of this pandemic for parents and children, but the data from this survey points to a pressing need for providers from across the care spectrum to be equipped with trauma-informed practices that address the mental and emotional toll of the pandemic.

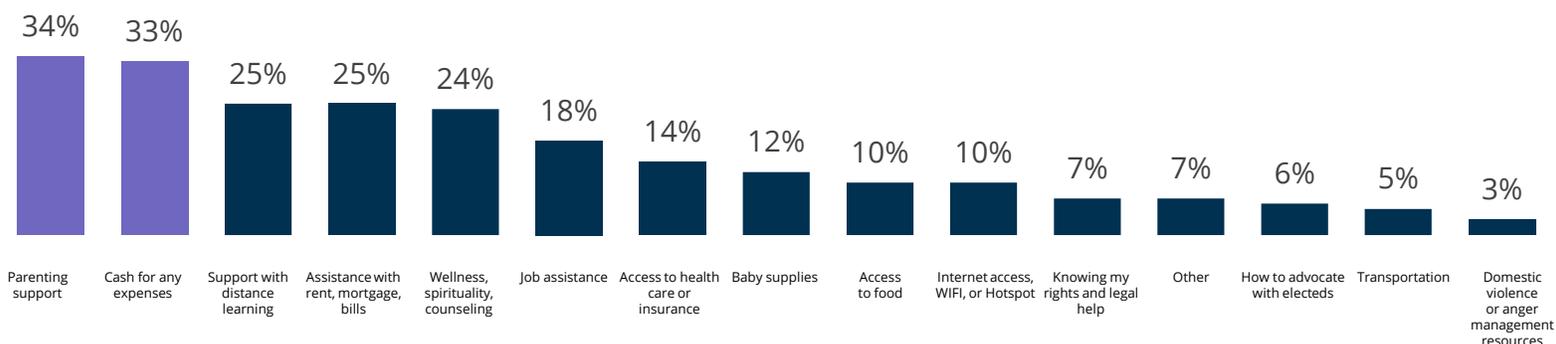


Parenting support and unconditional cash were among parents' top-ranked needs.

- Similarly to parents' concerns, when we asked parents about their most pressing needs, responses had a somewhat even distribution across the answer options, once again indicating the need for a comprehensive approach to recovery as we emerge from the pandemic.
- The need for parenting support tracks with the parents' reporting high stress associated with parenting. That there is also a need for unconditional funds ("cash for any expenses") speaks to parents' concern around rising household expenses.

Percentage of parents ranking certain supports or resources first, second, or third

N = 393



* Parents could select multiple responses, so categories will add up to more than 100%

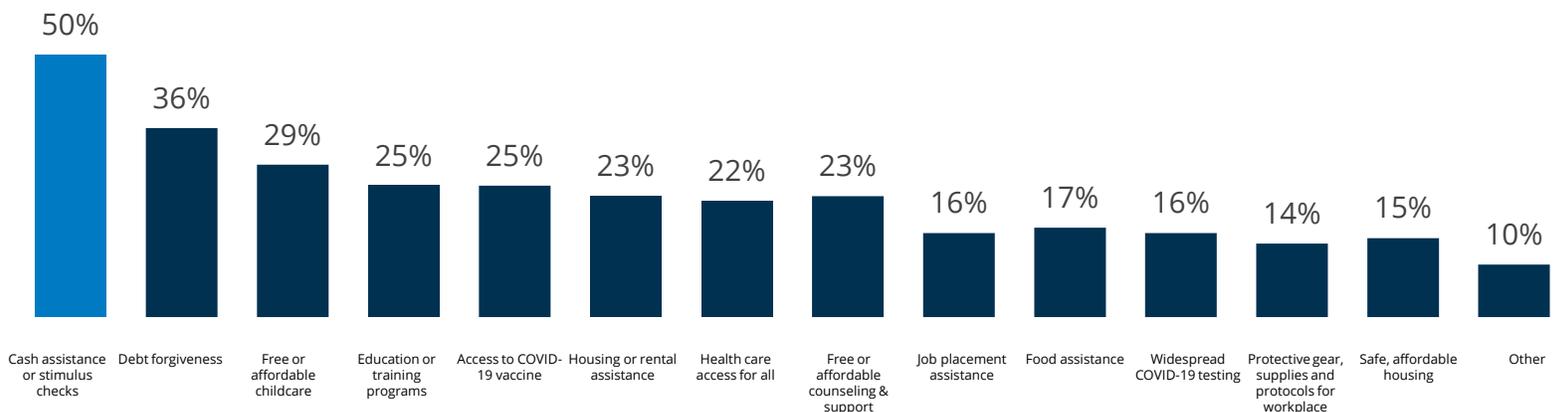
Notes. In the survey for First 5 Partner families, 15% selected "No resource needs" first, second, or third when option was added

Half of families see cash assistance or stimulus checks as an action the County could take to support them.

- We asked a question about concrete actions county agencies could take to support parents in order to inform First 5's own strategy moving forward, while also eliciting data that other county agencies and community-based organizations could use to inform their actions (given some of these actions are not within First 5's agency mandate).
- Parents' citing "cash assistance" as a top action a county agency could take triangulates data we see elsewhere in the survey about parents' loss of income and concerns about increasing household expenses. Given the rising cost of living in Contra Costa County, eligibility gaps, particularly for two-income households, remain a challenge for many families in getting the additional support they need to make ends meet.

Percentage of parents ranking certain County actions as one of their four choices

N = 380



* Parents ranked supports as first, second, third, or fourth, meaning totals across categories will add up to more than 100%.

Parent perspective on major challenges:

“Families where both parents work and live in the same household do not qualify because they make (barely) over the qualifying amount for assistance. More help should be provided for families with TWO working parents.”

“[I need] help with my huge past debt that I couldn’t afford after paying past rent and utilities with my stimulus checks. My kids needed a home and I couldn’t pay for a driving ticket (debt).”

These parent quotes surface areas where families may fall through the cracks, either due to eligibility thresholds that are too low or a lack of flexibility in financial assistance.



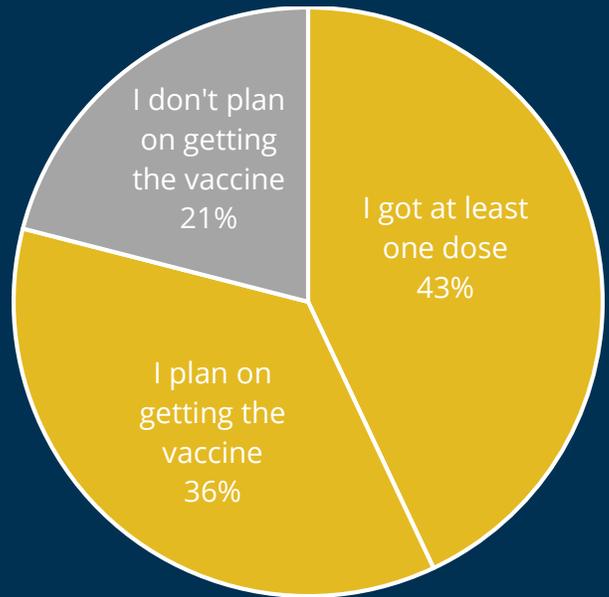
COVID-19 Vaccine

In this section:

- Most parents (79%) either plan on getting the COVID-19 vaccine or already got at least one dose.
- Generally, fewer parents of color have at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, compared to white parents.
- Different race/ethnicity groups have different intentions around getting the vaccine.
- For those not planning to get the vaccine, over one third (40%) say they do not trust the vaccine's safety.

Most parents (79%) either plan on getting the COVID-19 vaccine or already got at least one dose.

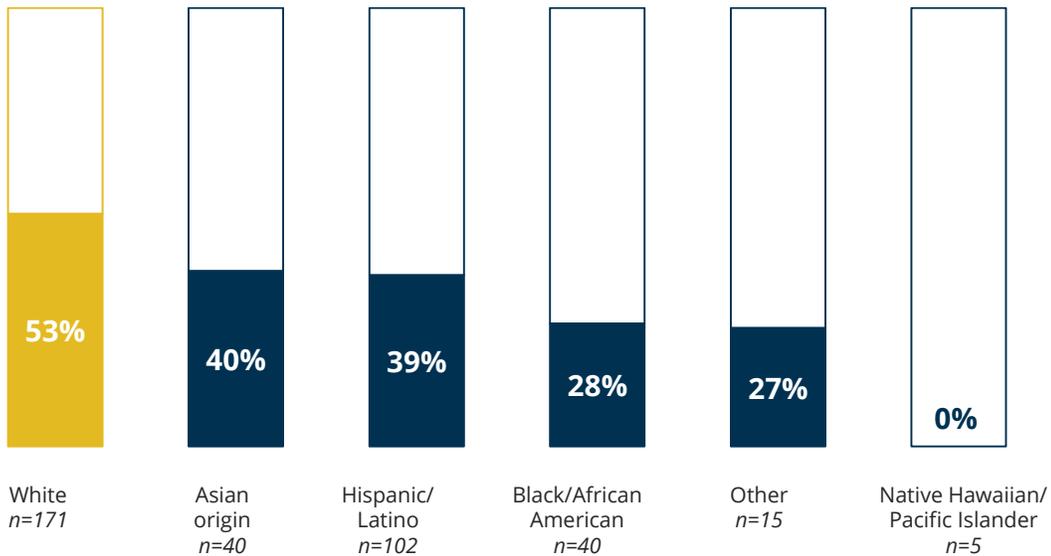
Parents' Vaccine Status
N = 373



Generally, fewer parents of color have at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, compared to white parents.

A higher proportion of **White parents** have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, compared to other race/ethnicity groups.

Proportion of families who received one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, by race/ethnicity*



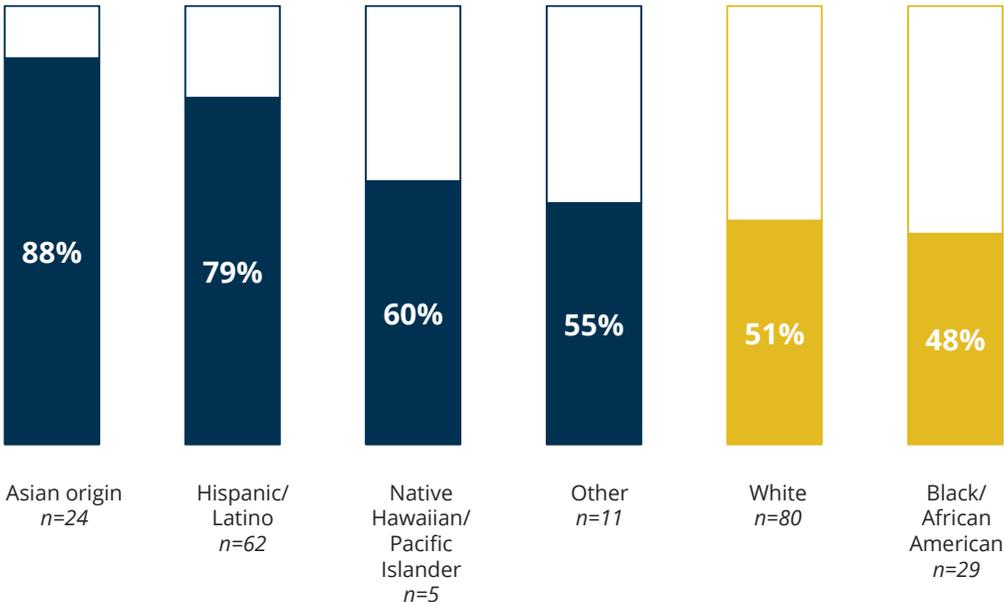
* The sole respondent who identified as Native American/Native Alaskan did not respond to questions related to the COVID-19 vaccine.

Different race/ethnicity groups have different intentions around getting the vaccine.

When we took a closer look at those respondents who had not gotten a vaccine to see if they intended to do so, we saw some differences by race and ethnicity.

Of those who have not received the vaccine, higher proportions of Hispanic/Latino, parents of Asian origin, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander parents plan on getting the vaccine. In contrast, of **Black/African American parents and White parents** who haven't received at least one dose, they plan on doing so at lower rates, compared to other groups.

Of parents who have not received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, proportion of those who plan to get one, by race/ethnicity*



* The sole respondent who identified as Native American/Native Alaskan did not respond to questions related to the COVID-19 vaccine.

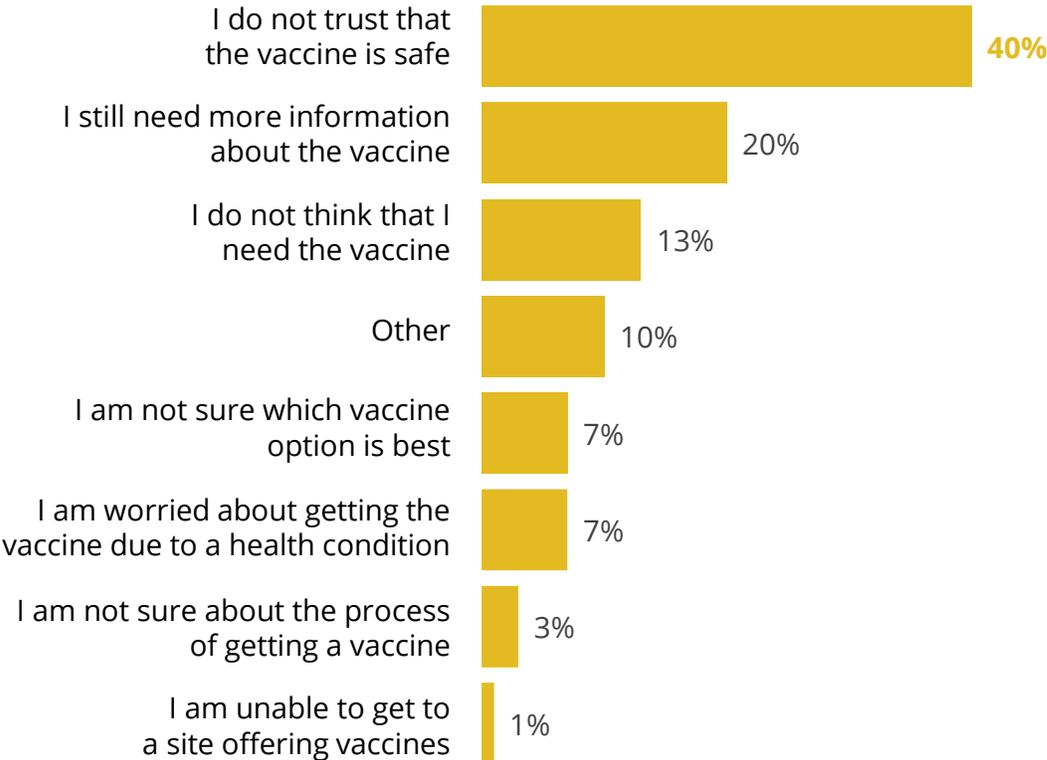
For those not planning to get the vaccine, over one third (40%) say they do not trust the vaccine's safety.

We dug even deeper into the group who did not intend to get the vaccine to better understand why, with safety concerns ranking high for many respondents.

These findings are intended to serve both our and our colleagues' efforts at getting all of Contra Costa County vaccinated. This data indicates that different strategies for vaccine uptake may be more effective depending on the population. For those who have not gotten the vaccine but intend to, the issue may be about accessing the vaccine. For those who have not gotten a vaccine and do not intend to, better communicating the safety via trusted messengers, combined with increasing accessibility, may be necessary in the short-term, with ongoing trust-building in the long-term.

Percentage of parents citing reasons for not getting the vaccine

n=77





Conclusion

Key takeaways from our findings include:

- **Financial pressures leading to tough choices:** Parents are experiencing intersecting challenges around loss of employment due to the pandemic, requisite loss of income, and loss of childcare. For families of color and low-income families, the adversity of loss of employment and income is only more pronounced. At the same time, parents are negotiating the financial tradeoffs of rejoining the workforce. Many parents lost childcare during the pandemic and are now facing difficult choices around whether they can get a job that pays enough to cover childcare they would then need.
- **Prolonged and compounding stress:** Parents' and children's mental health is also of great concern. Parents reported stress, anxiety, and depression as primary concerns for themselves, while also citing social isolation as a chief concern for their children.
- **Concrete policy actions County agencies can take:** Cash assistance, debt forgiveness, and free or affordable childcare ranked high for parents; however, responses were fairly well distributed across the options, indicating many opportunities for the County to be responsive to the particular needs and asks of parents with young children.



Conclusion

We at First 5 Contra Costa invite our public agency and community-based organization colleagues to leverage this data as they determine priority responses to supporting young children and families in the wake of this pandemic. Based on this data, those responses could include:

- A responsive, trauma-informed, and agile system of mental health supports for families with young children
- Viable, affordable childcare and early childhood education as parents and caregivers return to work
- Community hubs such as family resource centers where parents can find support, connection, and resource navigation
- Living wages and financial supports for hard-working families
- Long-term solutions for safe, secure, and affordable housing for low-income residents
- Community-driven recommendations that address root causes of the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on Black and Brown communities