

BLACK PARENT' VOICES

*Resilience in the Face of
the Two Pandemics—
COVID-19 and Racism*



BLACK PARENT VOICES:

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Researchers Investigating Sociocultural Equity and Race Network (RISER), co-founded by Iheoma U. Iruka (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) and Stephanie M. Curenton (Boston University), is a network of senior, mid-level, and junior scholars working together to conduct applied child development research focused on the positive development of Black children. This research-to-policy information is disseminated with the goal of dismantling education and health disparities and to promote the thriving and academic success of children. RISER works to publish research unpacking how racism is an environmental context that drives health and education disparities, specifically across the child development trajectory from prenatal to age 8. RISER is focused on disseminating research knowledge to scholars and policy makers that is actionable, strengths-based, and focused on wellness promotion. The network is currently funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (via a grant to Boston University (lead) and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) and was seeded by a [grant](#) from the Foundation for Child Development.

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Equity Research Action Coalition

UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute



Center on the Ecology of Early Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report illustrates how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting Black families' experiences with racism and discrimination, financial security/material hardship, health and mental health, and early care and education options. The data in this report are from 768 Black families in the United States with an average household income of \$69,286, which is slightly higher than the U.S. median household income for 2019 of \$68,703 but significantly higher than the 2019 median income for Black households of \$45,438, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Where possible, we examined the data based on whether families were *Below/Near Poverty* (meaning these families had incomes that were less than 200% of the federal poverty threshold) or *Middle Income* (meaning these families had incomes that were above 200% of the federal poverty threshold). Sixty-seven percent of Black caregivers in this sample were part of dual-parent¹ households. The majority of families are English speakers and about eight percent of caregivers reported being a first-generation immigrant who was born outside of the U.S.

¹In this report, we use the term "parents" to apply to both biological and non-biological caregivers (nearly exclusively women) of Black children.

**“Racism. The historical and contemporary trauma and grief that is occurring is overwhelming. Add that on top of a pandemic when I cannot use my regular outlets to center myself (gym, hang out with friends, etc.). It is exhausting.”
– BLACK PARENT**

In order to provide broader context for the experiences of Black families during the COVID-19 pandemic, we also examined data for the full sample of 8,390 RAPID-EC families. The full RAPID-EC sample of families was largely White (74%) but also included Black (8.7%), and Asian (3.7%) families, with a smaller proportion of American Indian/Alaska Native families (1.1%); twelve percent of families did not indicate their race. In terms of ethnicity, nearly 17% of families were Latinx. The average household income of the full RAPID-EC sample was \$87,945, which is higher than the national median income.

These data were collected by the Rapid Assessment of Pandemic Impact on Development in Early Childhood (RAPID-EC) team at the University of Oregon between April 6 and November 17, 2020. RAPID-EC is an early childhood family well-being survey designed to gather essential information in a continuous manner regarding the needs, health-

promoting behaviors, and well-being of children and their families during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in the United States. RAPID-EC has partnered with the Researchers Investigating Sociocultural Equity and Race (RISER) Network from Boston University (co-founder Stephanie M. Curenton) and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (co-founder Iheoma U. Iruka) to use the RAPID-EC data to specifically examine the experience of Black households during the COVID-19 pandemic and to create additional questions in the survey that examine racism, racial discrimination, and racial trauma.



The key findings for this report are as follows:

- Racism and discrimination have an overarching negative impact on the experiences and lives of Black children and their families, and this negative impact has continued throughout the pandemic.
- Black families are experiencing high levels of economic instability regardless of household income level.
- Black parents delayed health care visits primarily due to concerns about being exposed to coronavirus and an inability to find an early care and education option while they attended their health visit.
- Black families use a variety of paid and unpaid early care and education options, but most families largely stopped in-person participation at the beginning of the pandemic.

Policy Recommendations:

- There is an urgent need for anti-racist policies and strategies that promote positive outcomes and opportunities for Black families and children.
- Financial tools are needed to stabilize families, while racial audits will ensure that new policies and initiatives are better targeted to Black families and are addressing historical and contemporary challenges.
- Different models of health care services, including telehealth and mobile health care, must implement anti-racist and culturally appropriate strategies that promote radical healing.
- It is critical to develop policies that prioritize in-person learning for Black children, while also providing extended paid sick and personal leave and flexible schedules for parents who are the sole providers for their children.





Black people and communities are under siege due to the two pandemics—COVID-19 and racism. The coronavirus pandemic has exposed the historical and contemporary inequities that Black families and communities have experienced throughout their life course and their daily lives. Black adults are at high risk of catching, being hospitalized with, and dying from the coronavirus.² Black children are also sickened and hospitalized at a higher rate than White children.³ Simultaneously, when compared to Whites, Black adults are more likely to live in poverty, be unemployed and underemployed, have low income and wealth, be killed by police, and be imprisoned in their lifetime. The pandemic, coupled with racism, has resulted in the lives of Black families and children changing for the worse, which has implications for their well-being through this pandemic and over their life course. It is urgent that the United States addresses the specific needs of Black children and their families and communities.

This report illustrates how the pandemic is affecting Black families' experiences with racism and discrimination, financial security/material hardship, health and mental health, and early care and education options.

² Killerby, M., Link-Gelles, R., Haight, S., et al. (2020). Characteristics associated with hospitalization among patients with COVID-19—Metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia, March–April 2020. *MMWR Weekly Report*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6925e1>

³ Goyal, M.K., Simpson, J.N., Boyle, M.D., Badolato, G.M., Delaney, M., McCarter, R., & Cora-Bramble, D. (2020). Racial/ethnic and socioeconomic disparities of SARS-CoV-2 infection among children. *Pediatrics* <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2020-009951>

EXPERIENCES OF RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

Black parents across the economic spectrum reported experiencing racism and racial discrimination at some point throughout their lifetime prior to the pandemic, and they have continued to experience it during the pandemic. The most common form of racism and discrimination experienced was being called a derogatory name/ racial slur and the second most common was mistreatment by the police. Facing racism and discrimination is a unique problem for Blacks in that more Black parents experienced racism and discrimination than the full RAPID-EC sample of families.

More than 25% of Black parents were concerned about their children’s experiences and treatment before and during the pandemic due to their race. Before the pandemic, Black parents were concerned about harsh and unfair treatment, but now, during the pandemic (when most children are at home), they are more concerned with poor early care and education options and limited life choices. More Black parents reported concern for their children than among the full RAPID-EC sample of families.

Parents reported on their experiences of discrimination and their related concerns for their children. Parents were asked to indicate whether they had experienced any of 12 forms of discrimination across domains such as housing, employment, education, and interactions with the police. Many Black parents reported experiencing discrimination, both prior to and during the pandemic.



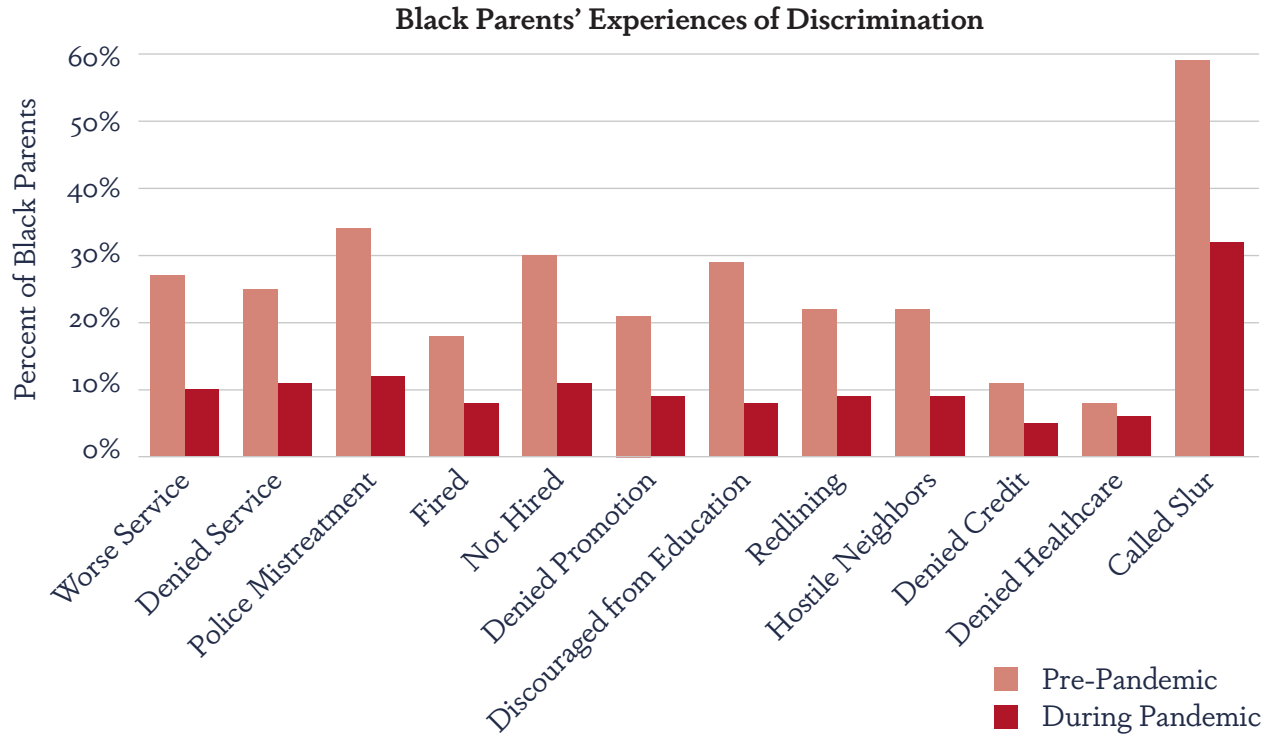
The most common discrimination experienced by Black parents was being called a derogatory name/racial slur (59% prior to the pandemic and 32% during the pandemic), followed by mistreatment by police, being discouraged from educational opportunities, not being hired for a job, and receiving worse service or being denied service (see Figure 1). The reduction in discriminatory experiences is likely due to state and local orders limiting social gathering and interactions; as a result of these restrictions, many families are now working and going to school from home. However, it is important to note that Black people experience racism through many forms, including the infliction of psychological harm (racial slur) and physical harm (police brutality).

Black parents' experiences with discrimination were higher than the full RAPID-EC sample across all forms of racism and discrimination (see Figure 2).

**“Systematic racism is real and it affects BIPOC [Black, Indigenous, and People of Color] in their ability to get ahead like their white counterparts.”
– BLACK PARENT**

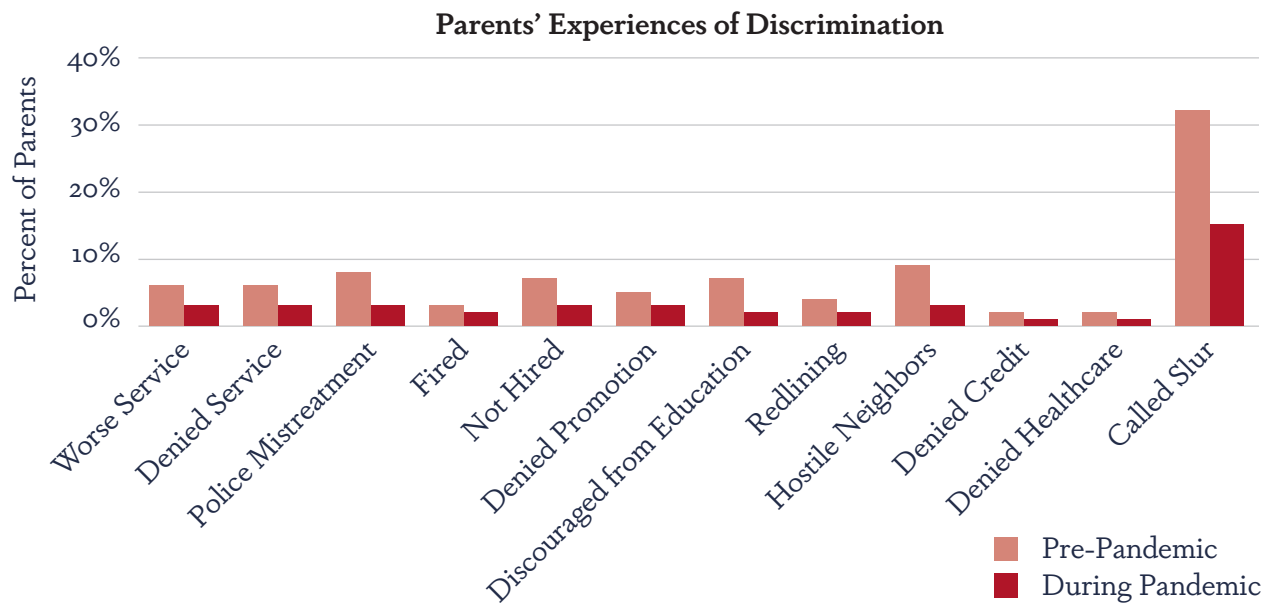


Figure 1. Black Parents' Experiences with Discrimination



Note. N = 214, RAPID-EC survey between August 1 and November 3, 2020.

Figure 2. Parents' Experiences with Discrimination



Note. N = 2,481, RAPID-EC survey between August 1 and November 3, 2020.

“The additional trauma of watching Black people being killed and no justice being served is devastating. It is compounding trauma. Then the weight of having white folks want me to spend emotional labor to help them feel better about a racist system I did not make. I am exhausted, and what energy I have left, I want to spend on loving my family and keeping them safe from COVID-19 and racists.”

– BLACK PARENT

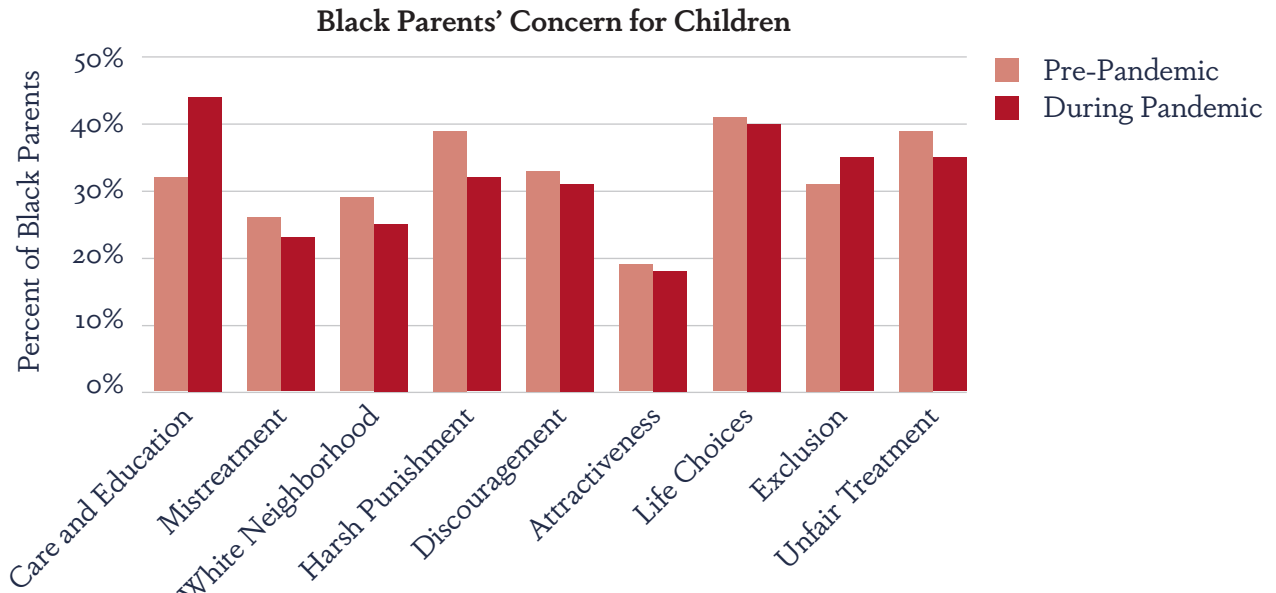




Parents reported on a variety of concerns about their children’s unfair treatment. Parents were asked to indicate their concern for their children’s treatment in a variety of domains, such as education, treatment by adults, and having fewer life choices, both prior to and during the pandemic. Many Black parents expressed concerns about these issues prior to and during the pandemic (see Figure 3). The most commonly reported concerns for children were harsh punishment, unfair treatment, and children having fewer life choices. Fewer Black parents reported a concern in these areas during the pandemic compared to pre-pandemic, with the exception of concern about care and education. Thirty-two percent of Black parents reported concern for their child’s care and education pre-pandemic; this number increased to 44% during the pandemic.

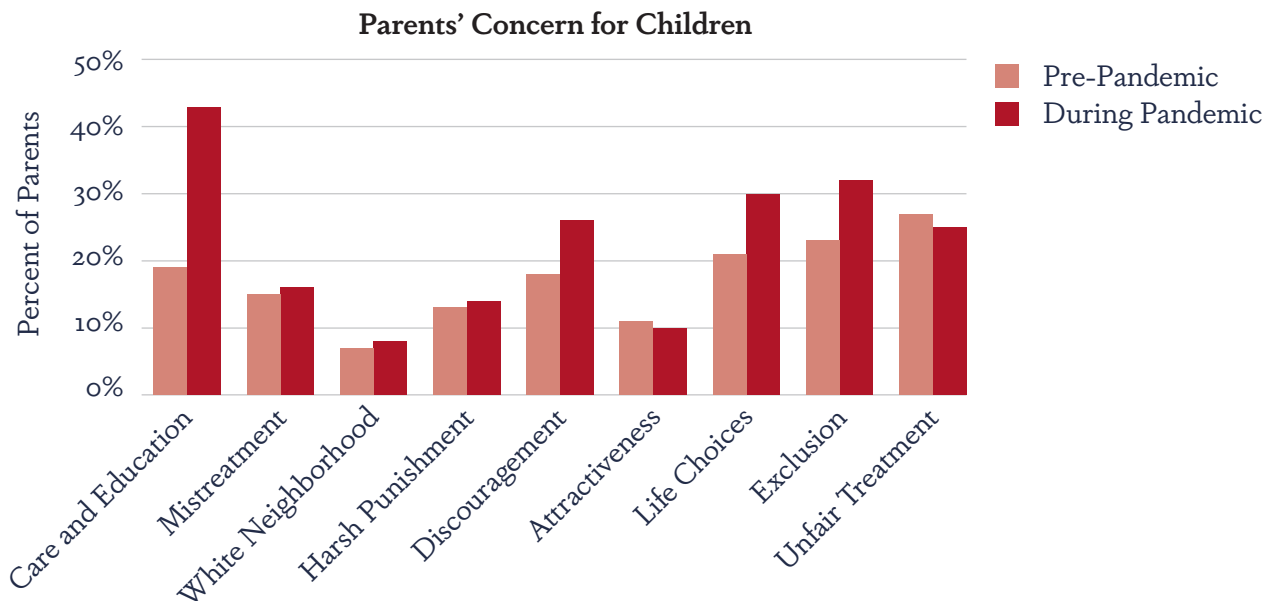
Black parents reported higher levels of concern for their children than the full RAPID-EC sample both prior to and during the pandemic (see Figure 4), with the exception of concerns about getting poor care and education during the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, 19% of the full RAPID-EC sample reported concern about their children getting poor care and education, compared to 32% of Black parents. During the pandemic, however, this concern was shared broadly among Black parents (44%) and the full RAPID-EC sample (43%).

Figure 3. Black Parents' Concerns for their Children Pre-Pandemic and During the Pandemic



Note. N = 214, RAPID-EC surveyed between August 1 and November 3, 2020.

Figure 4. Parents' Concerns for their Children Pre-Pandemic and During the Pandemic



Note. N = 2,481, RAPID-EC survey between August 1 and November 3, 2020.

FINANCIAL SECURITY

Black families are experiencing high levels of economic instability regardless of household income level, with half of all Black families reporting a decrease in income during the pandemic. Over 40% of Black families below/near poverty are feeling a financial strain even after receipt of stimulus checks.

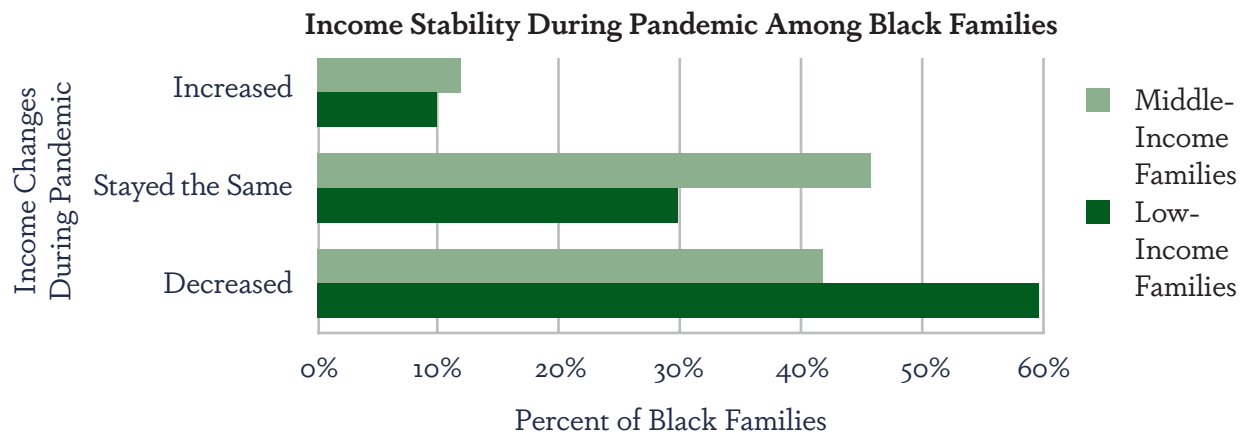
Survey items assessed the extent to which families' income increased, decreased, or stayed the same during the pandemic, while also assessing the level of financial strain in managing their household economic needs. More than half of Black families below/near poverty (59%) reported a decrease in family income, compared to 44% of middle-income Black families (see Figure 5).

Higher proportions of Black families reported decreases in income than among the full RAPID-EC sample of families, while a smaller proportion of Black families reported consistent income than among the full RAPID-EC sample (see Figure 6). These differences were apparent regardless of income level. Increases in income were more similar, with a slightly higher proportion of middle-income Black families (15%) reporting increased income than among the full RAPID-EC sample (12%).



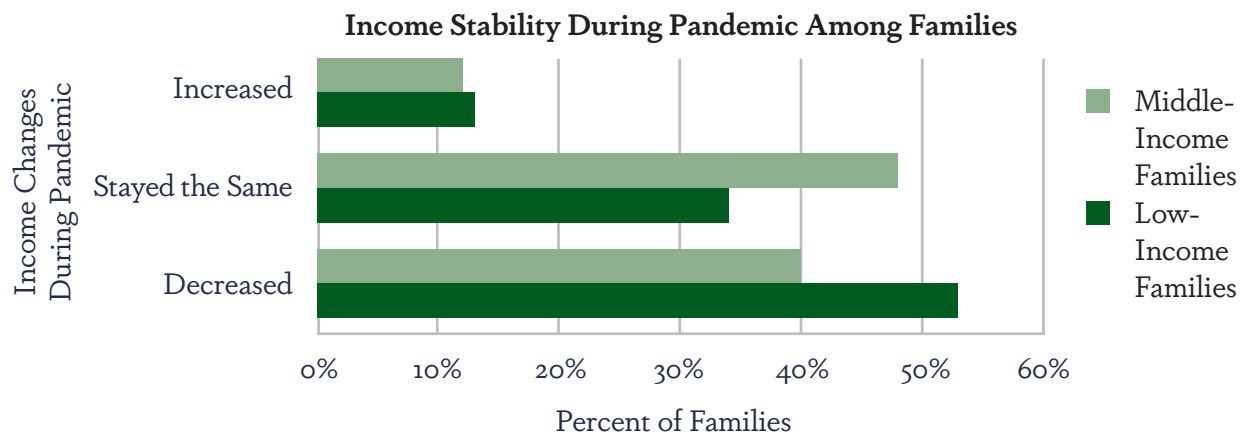


Figure 5. Income Stability Among Black Families During the Pandemic by Family Income



Note. N = 688, RAPID-EC surveyed between April 6 and November 17, 2020.

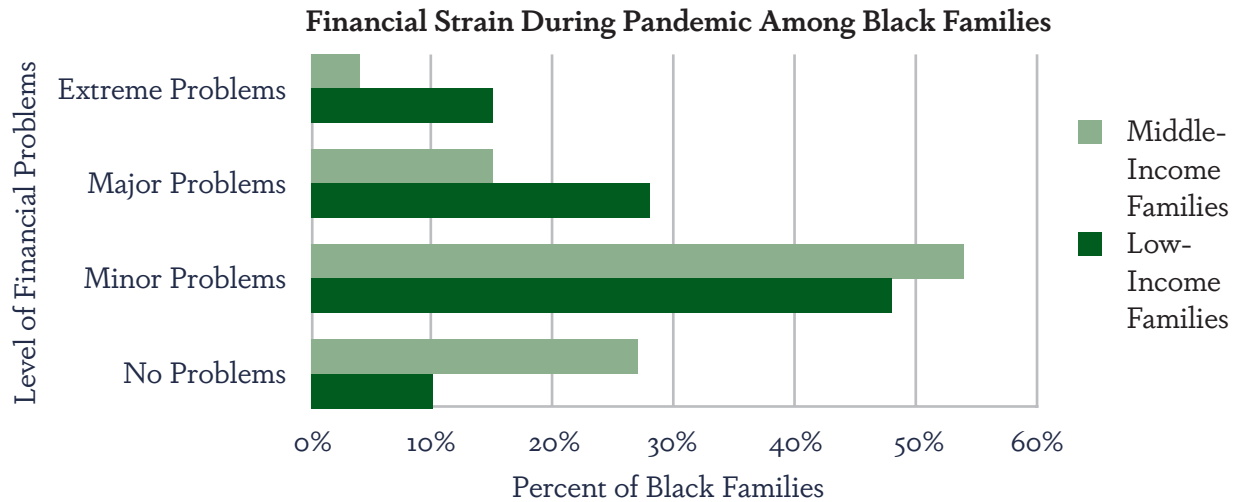
Figure 6. Income Stability Among Families During the Pandemic by Family Income



Note. N = 8,390, RAPID-EC surveyed between April 6 and November 17, 2020.

About one in four Black families are experiencing major or extreme financial strain. Those major and extreme problems were more common among Black families below/near poverty (42%) than they were among middle-income Black families (19%; see Figure 7). These levels of financial strain remained even after 80% of Black parents reported receiving a federal stimulus check or an economic impact payment in 2020.

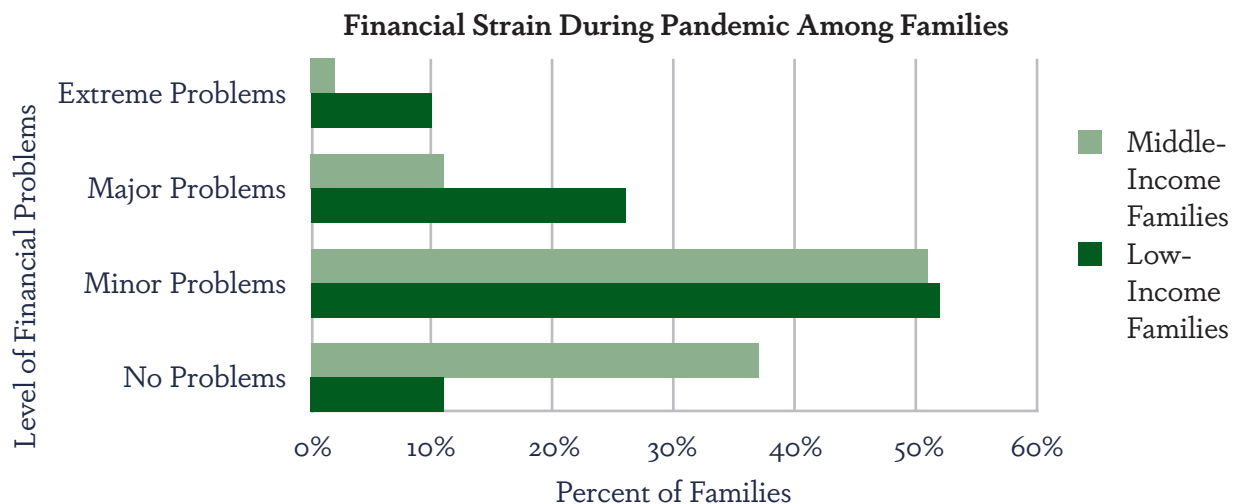
Figure 7. Financial Strain Among Black Families During the Pandemic



Note. N = 688, RAPID-EC surveyed between April 6 and November 17, 2020.

More Black families reported experiencing major or extreme financial problems than among the full RAPID-EC sample, regardless of income level (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Financial Strain Among Families During the Pandemic



Note. N = 8,390, RAPID-EC surveyed between April 6 and November 17, 2020.

MATERIAL HARDSHIP

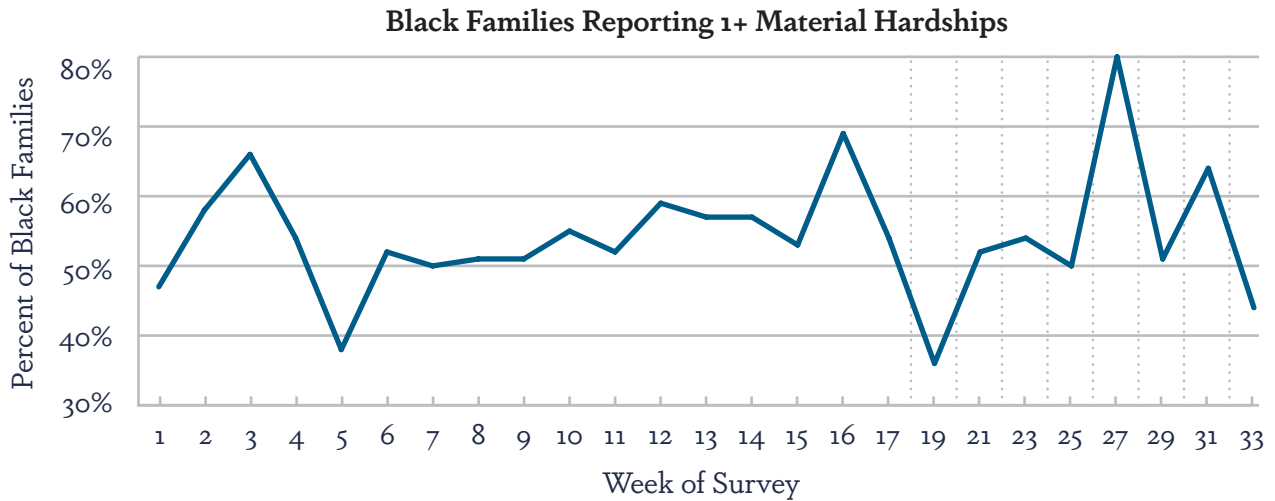
Over half of Black families reported material hardship, although this proportion slightly decreased over time. One in three families below/near poverty reported having difficulty paying for basic needs such as housing, food, and early care and education. Even though the majority of middle-income Black families reported little to no difficulty paying for material needs, one out of six families reported difficulty paying for their basic needs.

Families were asked whether they had any material hardships and about their access to public benefits or community supports (e.g., food bank). Material hardship is defined as having difficulty paying for basic needs such as housing, electricity and clean water, food, early care and education, and health care. Across all income groups, 54% of Black families experienced at least one material hardship, although the percentage decreased over time from 47% (week 1) in April to 44% (week 33) in November (see Figure 9). This is the period when families likely received some economic relief from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act).⁴ This decrease was largely driven by middle-income Black families (see Figure 10), while the proportion of Black families below/near poverty experiencing at least one material hardship increased across this time from 48% of families in April to 67% of families in November.



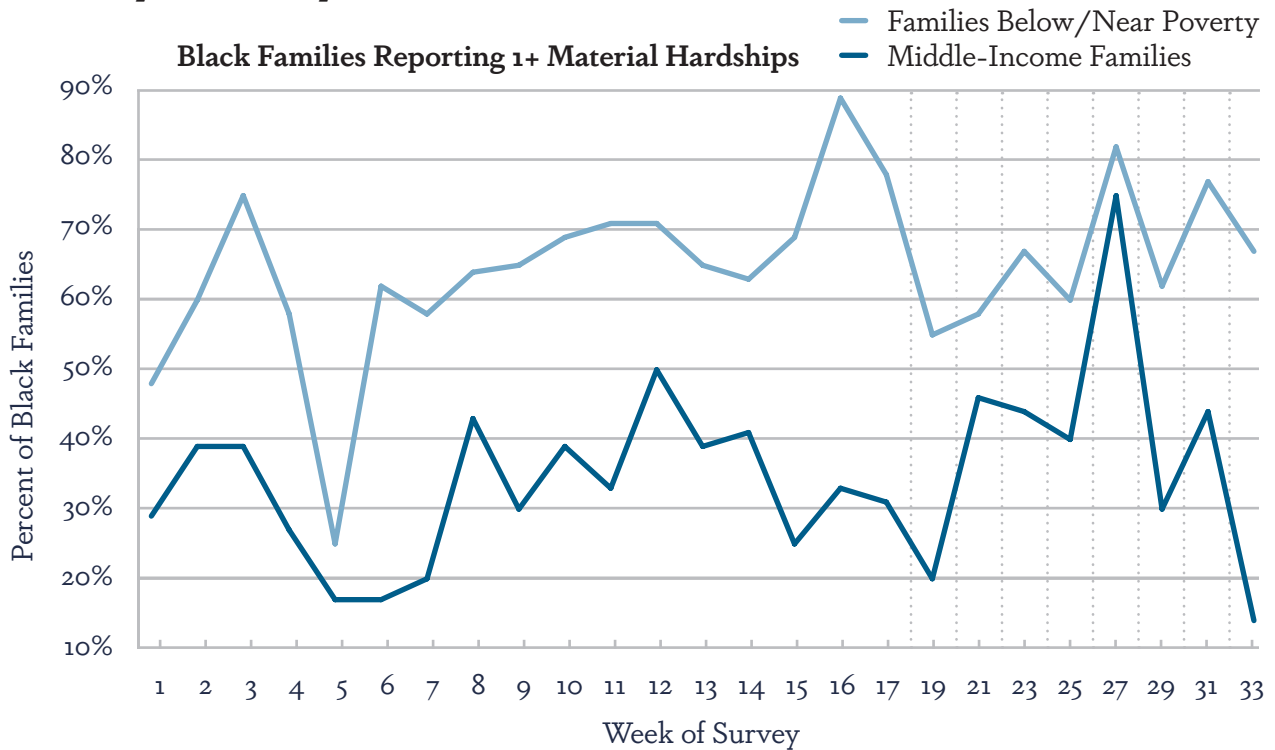
⁴ The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was passed by Congress with overwhelming, bipartisan support and signed into law by President Trump on March 27, 2020. This economic relief package of more than \$2 trillion delivers on the Trump Administration's commitment to protecting the American people from the public health and economic impacts of COVID-19. The CARES Act provides fast and direct economic assistance for American workers, families, and small businesses, and preserve jobs for our American industries. <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/cares>

Figure 9. Percent of Black Families Reporting At Least One Material Hardship between April and November 2020



Note. $N = 722$, RAPID-EC surveyed between April 6 and November 17, 2020. Even weeks are skipped beginning in September 2020 due to changes in sampling.

Figure 10. Percent of Black Families by Income Reporting At Least One Material Hardship between April and November 2020



Note. $N = 722$, RAPID-EC surveyed between April 6 and November 17, 2020. Even weeks are skipped beginning in September 2020 due to changes in sampling.



Compared to non-Black families, higher proportions of Black families reported material hardships nearly every week. Indeed, on multiple weeks, the proportion of Black families reporting experiencing material hardship was more than double the rate among the full RAPID-EC sample.

One out of three Black families below/near poverty reported having a hard time or very hard time paying for basic needs compared to a smaller percentage (17%) of middle-income Black families (see Table 1). These difficulties exist despite the fact that many families below/near poverty (54%) and some middle-income families (22%) are receiving public benefits through federal cash assistance programs such as the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Social Security Income (SSI) or through federal-in-kind benefit programs such as Medicaid, Food Stamps, and Housing subsidies. These difficulties also exist despite the fact that the majority of families below/near poverty (67%) and many middle-income families (23%) have access to free food from food pantries or other programs.

Table 1. Percent of Black Families Having a Hard Time Paying for Basic Needs

	Below/Near-Poverty	Middle-Income
Difficulties Paying for Basic Needs (Hard/Very Hard)	32%	17%
Difficulty Paying for ^a :		
Utilities	48%	29%
Housing	39%	25%
Food	33%	24%
Early Care and Education	18%	15%
Health Care	11%	13%
Material Hardships (3 or More)	30%	23%
Receiving Public Benefits	54%	22%
Access to Free Food	67%	23%

Note. *N* = 688, RAPID-EC surveyed between April 6 and November 17, 2020.

^a Based on those who reported having a hard time or very hard time paying for basic needs.

Table 2. Percent of Families Having a Hard Time Paying for Basic Needs

	Below/Near-Poverty	Middle-Income
Difficulties Paying for Basic Needs (Hard/Very Hard)	33%	10%
Difficulty Paying for ^a :		
Utilities	50%	17%
Housing	39%	16%
Food	33%	14%
Early Care and Education	12%	8%
Health Care	12%	9%
Material Hardships (3 or More)	34%	14%
Receiving Public Benefits	51%	13%
Access to Free Food	60%	17%

Note. N = 8,390, RAPID-EC surveyed between April 6 and November 17, 2020.

^a Based on those who reported having a hard time or very hard time paying for basic needs.

Similar proportions of families living below/near poverty reported difficulties paying for basic needs among Black families and among the full RAPID-EC sample. One notable exception is early care and education, which 18% of Black families reported having a hard time or very hard time paying for, compared to 12% of the full RAPID-EC sample. Greater proportions of middle-income Black families reported difficulties paying for all basic needs than among middle-income families in the full RAPID-EC sample.

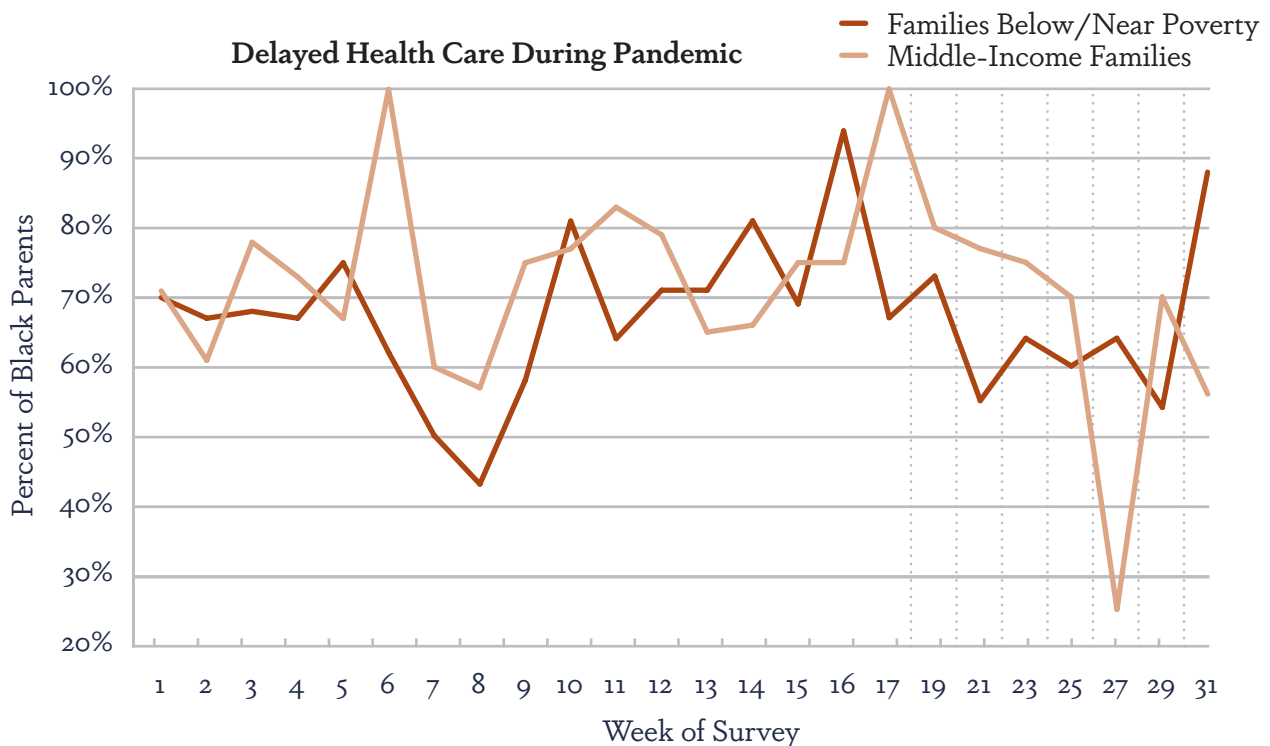


PARENTS' HEALTH CARE AND WELL-BEING

Black parents delayed health care visits, reporting that the primary reason for doing so was concern of being exposed to coronavirus if they visited hospitals or doctors' offices. The secondary reason for delaying health care visits was due to an inability to find early care and education. Many Black parents reported experiencing mental health issues during the pandemic, including anxiety, depression, stress, and loneliness.

Parents were asked whether they delayed health care and about their reasons for the delay. The majority of Black parents reported delaying health care across the length of the survey. At least 43% of parents reported doing so each week of the survey until fall 2020 (week 27), when rates of delaying health care dropped among Black parents. Prior to that, as many as 88% of Black parents reported delaying health care during the pandemic. Delaying health care was generally more common among middle-income Black parents (see Figure 11). Black parents across income groups had similar reasons for delaying their health care (see Table 3). The primary reason for delaying health care was due to concern over being exposed to coronavirus. In addition, Black parents reported that lack of early care and education, caring for family members, cost of care, and inability to leave work were reasons for delaying health care.

Figure 11. Percent of Black Parents Delaying their Health Care During the Pandemic Over the 31 Weeks from April to November by Income Level



Note. N = 722, RAPID-EC surveyed between April 6 and November 17, 2020. Even weeks are skipped beginning in September 2020 due to changes in sampling.

Table 3. Reasons for Delaying Health Care Across all Black Families and by Income Levels

Reason for Delay ^a	All Black Families	Below/Near-Poverty	Middle-Income
Concern for COVID	94%	93%	93%
Inability to Find Early Care and Education	60%	64%	53%
Time Away from Work	40%	41%	37%
Cost	51%	50%	47%
Caring for Family	51%	56%	40%

Note. N = 715, RAPID-EC surveyed between April 6 and November 5, 2020.

^a Numbers can add up to more than 100%; parents were asked to select all that applied.



In general, non-Black parents reported similar patterns of delaying health care and similar reasons for doing so. More Black parents (51%), however, reported that caring for family was a reason for delaying health care than among the full RAPID-EC sample (40%).

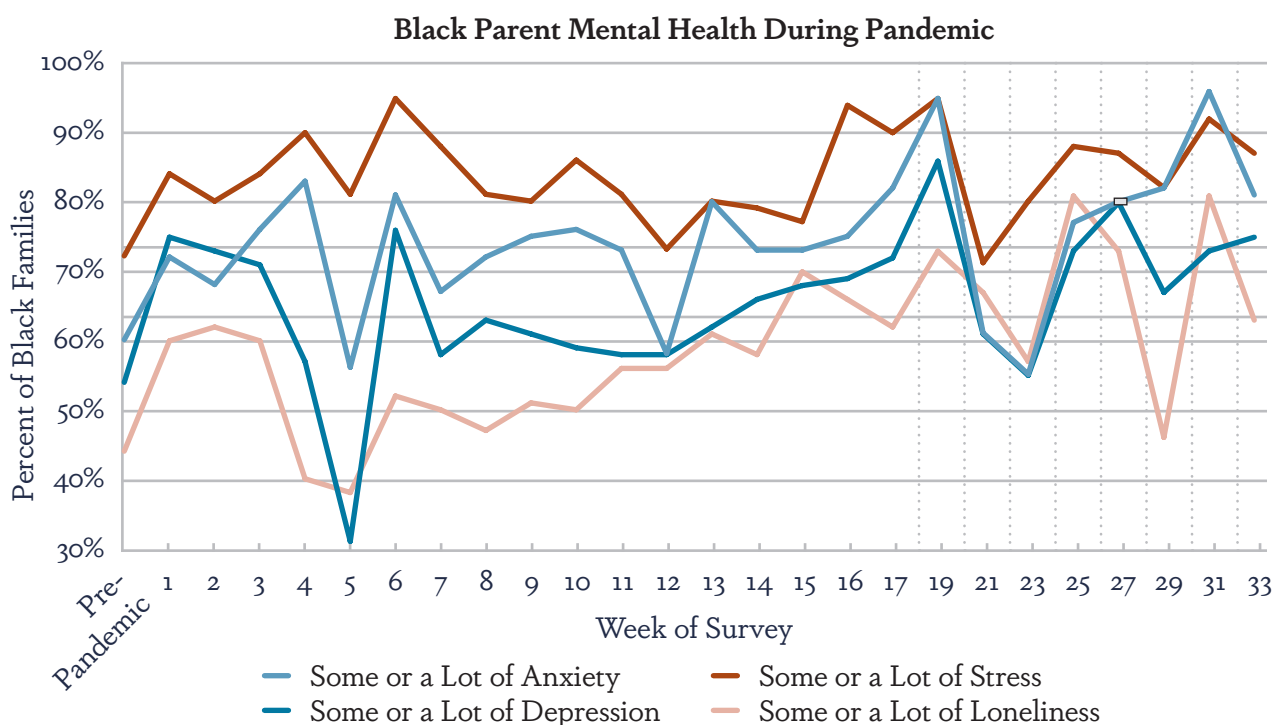
Parents were also asked about their mental health, including their level of anxiety, depression, stress, and loneliness both prior to and during the pandemic. Levels of all conditions were higher by the end of the survey than they were prior to the pandemic. Black parents overwhelmingly reported experiencing stress throughout the survey: at least 70% expressed experiencing stress each week of the survey (see Figure 12). The majority of Black parents reported experiencing some or a lot of anxiety across the survey, and fewer—but still many—Black parents reported experiencing depression throughout the survey. Loneliness was the least frequently reported threat to mental health across the survey, but as many as 81% of Black parents reported experiencing loneliness at multiple points across the survey.

VOICES OF BLACK PARENTS ABOUT THEIR STRESS

“Pandemic + racism = a lot of stress and worry.”

“Stress and worry has been very debilitating and constant trauma from violence against Black people.”

Figure 12. Percent of Black Parents Reporting Some Level of Anxiety, Depression, Stress, and Loneliness Over the 31 Weeks from April to November



Note. *N* = 722, RAPID-EC surveyed between April 6 and November 17, 2020. Even weeks are skipped beginning in September 2020 due to changes in sampling.

Black parents shared insights into sources of stress. Across the two income groups, there were different sources of stress. Common challenges among Black parents below/near poverty were related to money, bills, and income; jobs and employment; health and worries about contracting COVID-19; relationship with spouses; early care and education; and children’s behavior. On the other hand, concerns among middle-income Black families were related to safety, children’s learning and behavior, early care and education, and worries about COVID-19.

Black parents shared sources of support and coping. Across the two income groups there were similarities in how families coped with stress during the pandemic. For Black parents below/near poverty, their sources of support and coping included faith, prayer, and God; connections with immediate family and kinship networks; financial relief from stimulus checks; being able to maintain their jobs; and communication. Middle-income Black parents reported that their sources of support and coping were immediate family (spouses and children), friends, and extended kin networks; faith; exercise; and communication. Hence, support from family, faith, and communication were healthy coping mechanisms that all families used.



**“The paranoia of us getting sick and ultimately dying from COVID or racism is [so] unreal that we have days where we disconnect from all news platforms and social media just to breathe.”
– BLACK PARENT**

CHILDREN'S HEALTH CARE AND WELL-BEING

Almost a third of Black parents reported their child missed a well-baby/well-child checkup during the pandemic; concern over being exposed to the virus was the primary reason for missing the checkup. These responses did not vary by family income.

Black parents reported generally consistent child behavior during the pandemic with slight elevation over time. Families across economic groups reported similar patterns of fussy/defiant behaviors (externalizing behaviors), but families below/near poverty reported elevated fearful/anxious behaviors (internalizing behaviors) during the pandemic compared to middle-income families.

Parents were asked whether they missed a well-baby/well-child checkup during the pandemic and about the reasons why. Twenty-nine percent of Black parents reported missing a well-baby/well-child checkup during the pandemic, including 25% of families below/near poverty and 32% of middle-income families. This was similar to the full RAPID-EC sample, in which 28% of parents reported missing a well-baby/well-child checkup during the pandemic, including 25% of families below/near poverty and 32% of middle-income families. Thirteen percent of Black families reported missing a vaccine at a well-baby/well-child checkup, while 12% of the full RAPID-EC sample reported missing a vaccine. Parents expressed a variety of concerns that led them to miss a child checkup, but the primary concern was related to the coronavirus pandemic (see Table 4).

Table 4. Percent of Parents Reporting the Reasons for Missing a Well-Baby/Well-Child Checkup Among Black Families and Among All Families

Reason for Missing Checkup	% of Black Families	% of All Families
Concern for COVID	83%	79%
Inability to Find Early Care and Education	10%	10%
Time Away from Work	8%	6%
Vaccine Hesitancy	9%	6%
Cost	7%	7%
Caring for Other Family Members	7%	6%

Note. Full sample $N = 8,390$; Black families $N = 494$, RAPID-EC surveyed between April 6 and November 21, 2020.



Parents were asked whether their children were fussy or defiant (also known as externalizing behaviors) and fearful or anxious (also known as internalizing behaviors) during the previous week and prior to the pandemic. The majority of Black parents reported that their children were fussy or defiant every week during the pandemic, ranging from 50% to 88% of families (see Figure 13). A smaller but still substantial proportion of Black parents reported that their children were fearful or anxious (ranging from 23% to 67% of families). Parents generally reported higher levels of both behaviors during the pandemic as opposed to prior to the pandemic. Reports of children’s externalizing behaviors are consistent across economic groups (see Figure 14), but Black families below/near poverty reported an increase over time in their child’s internalizing behaviors compared to middle-income Black families (see Figure 15).

Figure 13. Black Children’s Externalizing and Internalizing Behaviors During the Pandemic

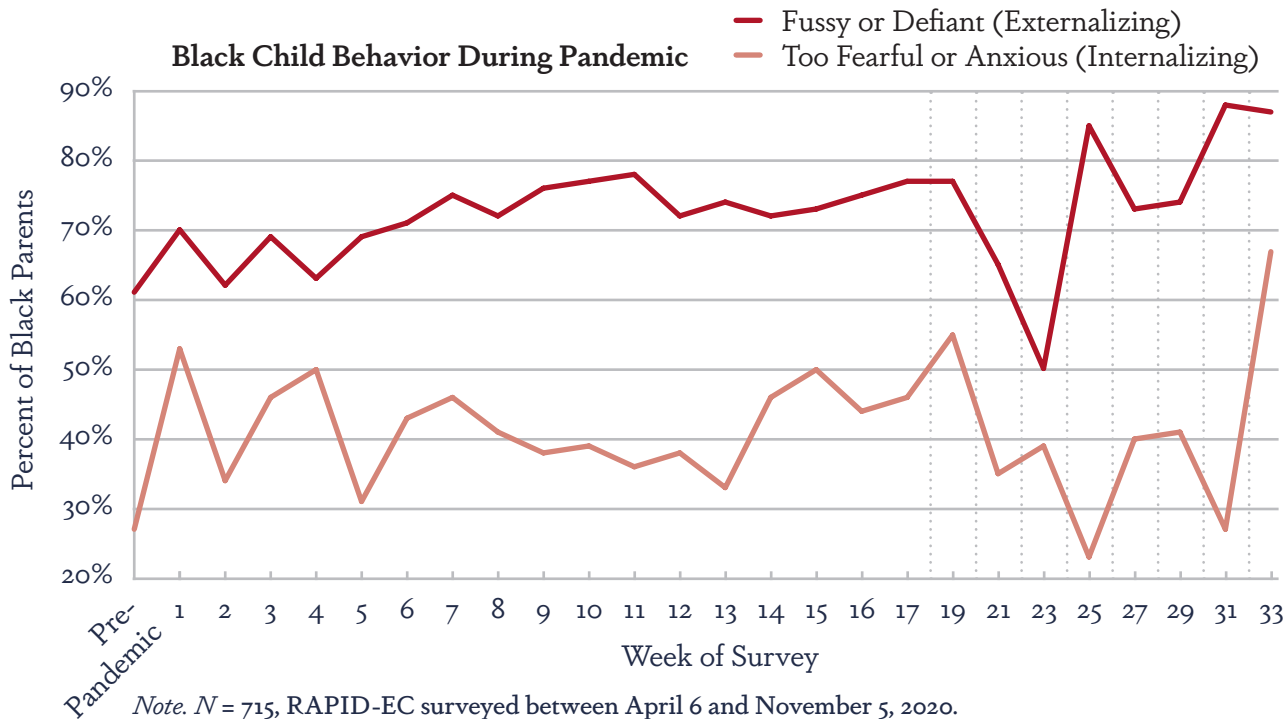


Figure 14. Black Children’s Externalizing Behaviors During the Pandemic by Income

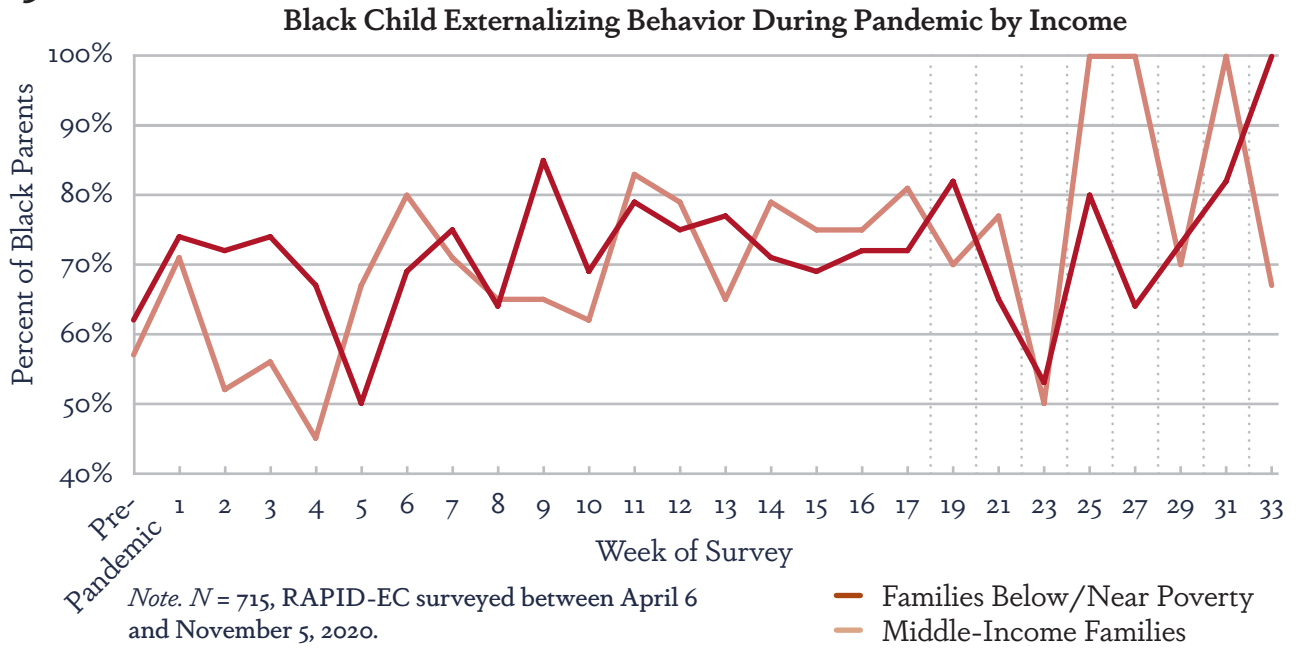
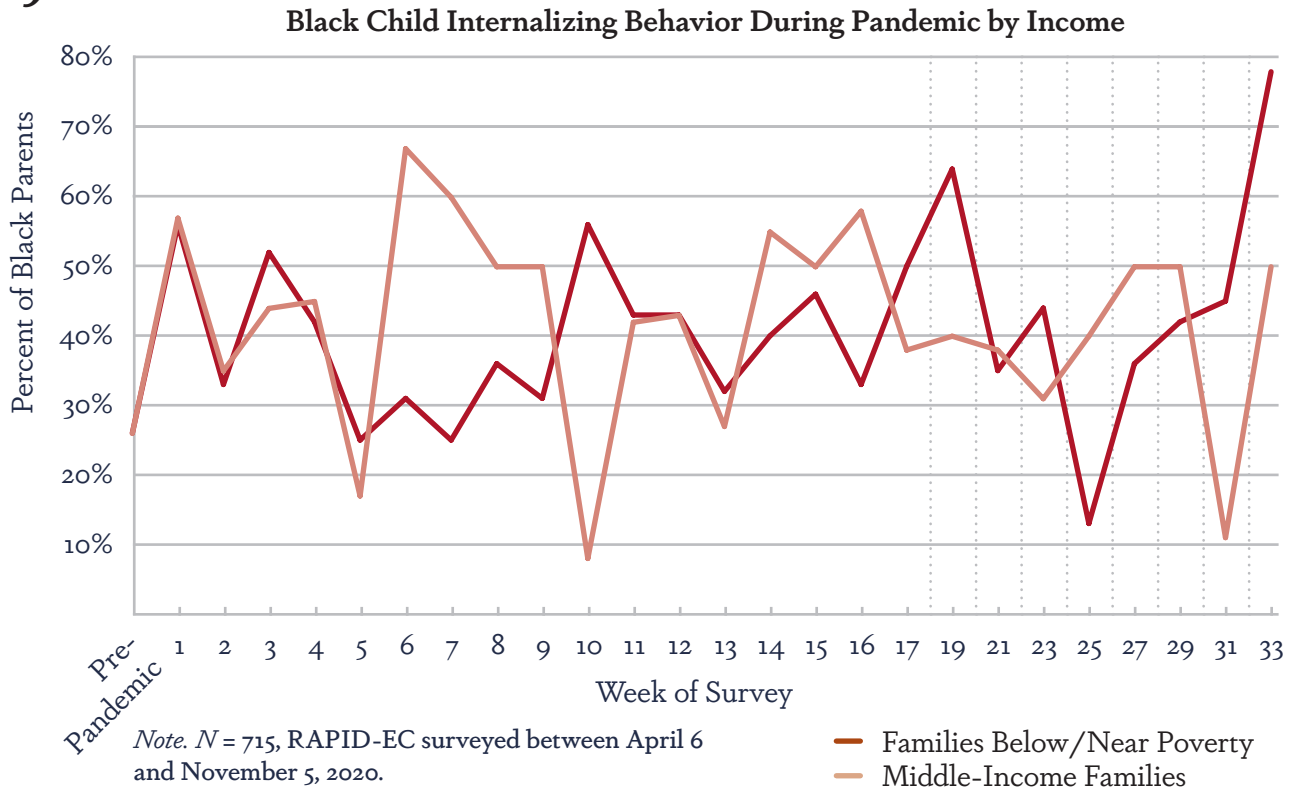


Figure 15. Black Children’s Internalizing Behaviors During the Pandemic by Income



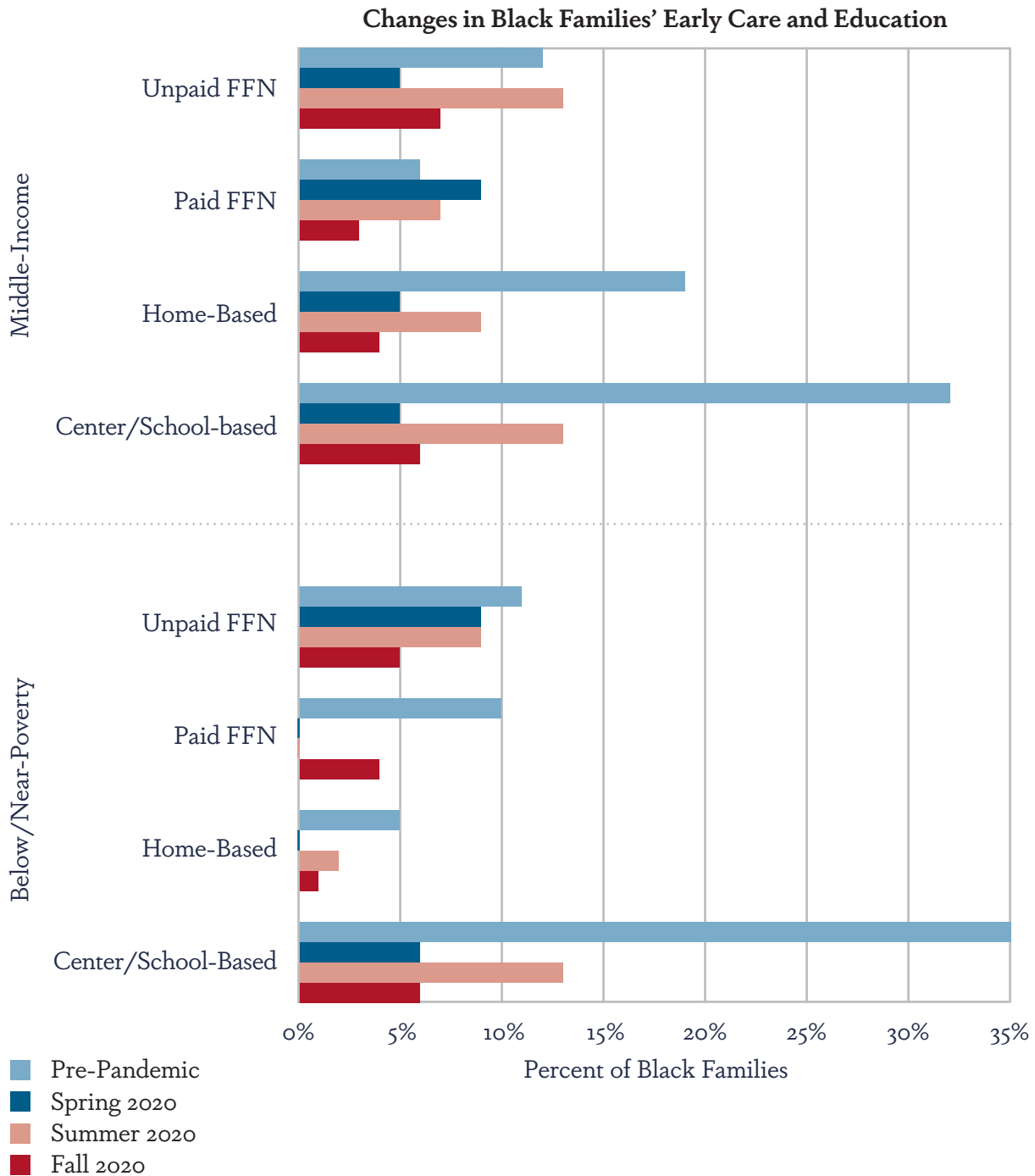
EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

Black families use a variety of early care and education options, with more families using center-based care than other types of care. Black families largely stopped using early care and education in the early stages of the pandemic. The proportion of Black families using early care and education increased later during the pandemic, but was still far smaller than pre-COVID proportions. The majority of Black parents shouldered the responsibility of managing their children's learning at home or remote learning, while some Black families also reported having the support of grandparents.

Black parents reported on their use of early care and education prior to and during the pandemic. Early care and education includes paid center-, school-, and home-based options; paid care by a friend, family, or neighbor (FFN); and unpaid care by FFN. Among Black families below/near poverty and middle-income Black families, there were drastic decreases in nearly all types of care early in the pandemic, except for early care and education provided by unpaid FFN used by Black families below/near poverty (see Figure 16). Although many Black families below/near poverty and middle-income Black families reported returning to early care and education arrangements by October 2020, levels were far lower than those reported prior to the pandemic. Parents among the full RAPID-EC sample reported similar patterns of early care and education use.



Figure 16. Changes in Black Families' Early Care and Education Before and During the Pandemic



Note. $N = 468$, RAPID-EC surveyed between April 6 and November 5, 2020; FFN = Friend, Family, or Neighbor Care.

In the late summer of 2020, parents were asked to share the kinds of learning activities they are using to engage their young children (birth to age 5) at home. Most Black families reported engaging in games and activities (72%) and using online resources such as educational apps (70%). Fewer Black parents reported attending online classes (29%) or attending in-person learning, such as early care and education outside their home (23%).

The majority of young Black children's learning is being handled primarily by parents (85%), with smaller proportions of Black families reporting assistance from grandparents (25%). The majority (86%) of Black families with school-age children learning remotely reported that a parent is managing their online learning. Smaller proportions of Black families reported that a grandparent (16%), sibling (10%), or relative (5%) is managing their online learning.⁵

“Because of my field and position, I am getting ridiculous amounts of requests for anti-racism training. I am overwhelmed with all of the work that has to be done, while I still homeschool my children.”
–BLACK PARENT

⁵ Numbers can add up to more than 100%; parents were asked to select all that applied.



KEY FINDINGS

This is the first national report on how Black families are experiencing COVID-19 while also battling the legacy of structural racism and discrimination. This report shows that while Black families, regardless of income, are leaning in on their cultural wealth and assets (e.g., spirituality, kinship network, family), there is a need for the nation to direct attention and resources to meet the social, economic, health, and psychological needs of the Black community, including Black families and children. Several threads emerge from this national survey on Black families' experiences during the global pandemic.



Experiences and Concerns for Children Due to Racism and

Discrimination. Racism and discrimination have an overarching impact on the experiences and lives of Black children and their families. The most common form of racism and discrimination experienced by Black parents was being called a derogatory name/racial slur and the second most common form was mistreatment by the police. Black parents were also concerned about their children's experiences and treatment before and during the pandemic due to their race. Before the pandemic, Black parents were mostly concerned about harsh and unfair treatment, but now they are more concerned with poor care and education and their limited life choices. This is likely because most children are at home and not in school or being cared for by someone other than a parent.

Financial Security and Material Hardship. Black families are experiencing high levels of economic instability regardless of household income level, with half of all Black families reporting a decrease in income during the pandemic even after receipt of stimulus checks. Black families reported material hardship, including difficulty paying for basic needs such as housing, food, and early care and education.

Parental and Child Health Care and Well-Being. Black parents delayed health care visits primarily due to their concerns about being exposed to the coronavirus and an inability to find early care and education. Black parents also reported their child missed a well-baby/well-child checkup primarily due to their concern over the coronavirus. Black parents reported experiencing anxiety, depression, stress, and loneliness. Black parents also noted their children had some elevated emotional concerns, such as more fussiness or defiance and more fearfulness or anxiety.

Early Care and Education. Black families use a variety of paid and unpaid early care and education options but largely stopped at the beginning of the pandemic. While some families below/near poverty have increased their use of early care and education since that time, the numbers are still far smaller than pre-COVID numbers. The majority of Black parents shouldered the responsibility of managing their children's care and learning at home, but some of these families are being helped by grandparents.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **There is an urgent need for anti-racist policies and strategies that promote positive outcomes and opportunities for Black families and children.** Racism and discrimination impact the everyday life of Black families and children in tangible and intangible ways. There is a need for anti-racist policies, such as those that address police brutality and violence, provide opportunities for life choices, and reduce harsh punishments and unfair treatment in many institutions (e.g., early care and education, criminal justice, health care). This can include a legislative commission at state levels tasked with reviewing racial equity and inequalities across state agencies, such as the Department of Education and Department of Health and Human Services.
- **Financial tools are needed to stabilize families, while racial audits will ensure that new policies and initiatives are better targeted to Black families and are addressing historical and contemporary challenges.** The current financial tools slightly reduced families' economic and material hardships, but extreme concerns remained. There is a need to prioritize federal relief funding to adequately meet the needs of Black families that have historically been left behind and not able to fully participate in the American dream. Furthermore, we encourage legislative budget boards to request a fiscal note to assess the extent to which new policies and initiatives may exacerbate (or improve) racial disparities, especially for Black families.
- **Different models of health care services, including telehealth and mobile health care, must implement anti-racist and culturally appropriate strategies that promote “radical healing.”**⁶ Supports provided need to be culturally grounded to ensure they meet the needs of families (e.g., faith-based, relationship-based). This is critically important as Black families and children are disproportionately at high risk of being hospitalized and dying from the coronavirus, and these alternative models can limit their exposure to the virus.
- **It is critical to develop policies that prioritize in-person learning for Black children, while also providing extended paid sick and personal leave and flexible schedules for parents who are the sole providers for their children.** Parents' concerns about the coronavirus, coupled with the loss of early care and education providers and the reduction of in-person opportunities, have resulted in many parents managing their children's learning and care while continuing to work full-time. More robust affordable and accessible options for early care and education need to be explored, including payments for informal care from families, friends, and neighbors. There is urgency to ensure that Black early care and education providers and those who care for and educate Black children are provided with the economic material resources, human capital, and supports to remain open and provide safe and high-quality care that meets the needs of families and children.

⁶ French, B. H., Lewis, J. A., Mosley, D. V., Adames, H. Y., Chavez-Dueñas, N. Y., Chen, G. A., & Neville, H. A. (2020). Toward a psychological framework of radical healing in communities of color. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 48(1), 14-46