



Voices of Child Health in Chicago REPORT

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REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

Stress was the top concern for youth health, with 78% of Chicago adults reporting it as a great challenge for youth this year. Stress has been a top concern since 2018.

Sixty-eight percent of Chicago adults considered violence in schools a big problem facing youth health.

In general, higher levels of concern for youth health were reported by women, parents, and people of color.

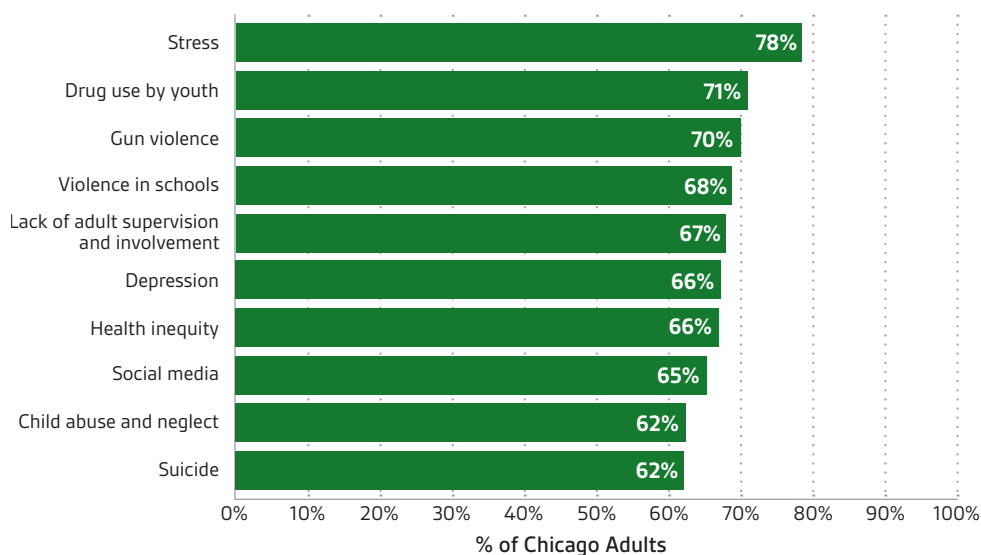
Top 10 Child Health Concerns

Children and adolescents in Chicago face various challenges that can impact their physical and mental health and their social well-being. To understand which of these challenges adults consider most concerning for youth health, we teamed up with the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) again on the 2022 Healthy Chicago Survey Jr. As we have done in past years of this survey, we asked adults from all 77 community areas in Chicago which health and social issues they considered to be “big problems” for all children and adolescents in Chicago — not just for their own kids.

There is one important change to note regarding this year’s report and survey. In the past, when we have asked Chicagoans about problems facing child health in the city, we did this in two separate questions — one about health problems and one about social problems. We also reported about the results in two separate reports — one focused on health problems and one focused on social problems. However, the health problems and social problems facing youth are interconnected, so this year we combined all problems into one survey question and are also including all problems in a single report.

In this report, we share the “Top 10” health and social problems facing youth in Chicago identified by Chicago adults (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Percent of Chicago adults who considered each to be a “big problem”

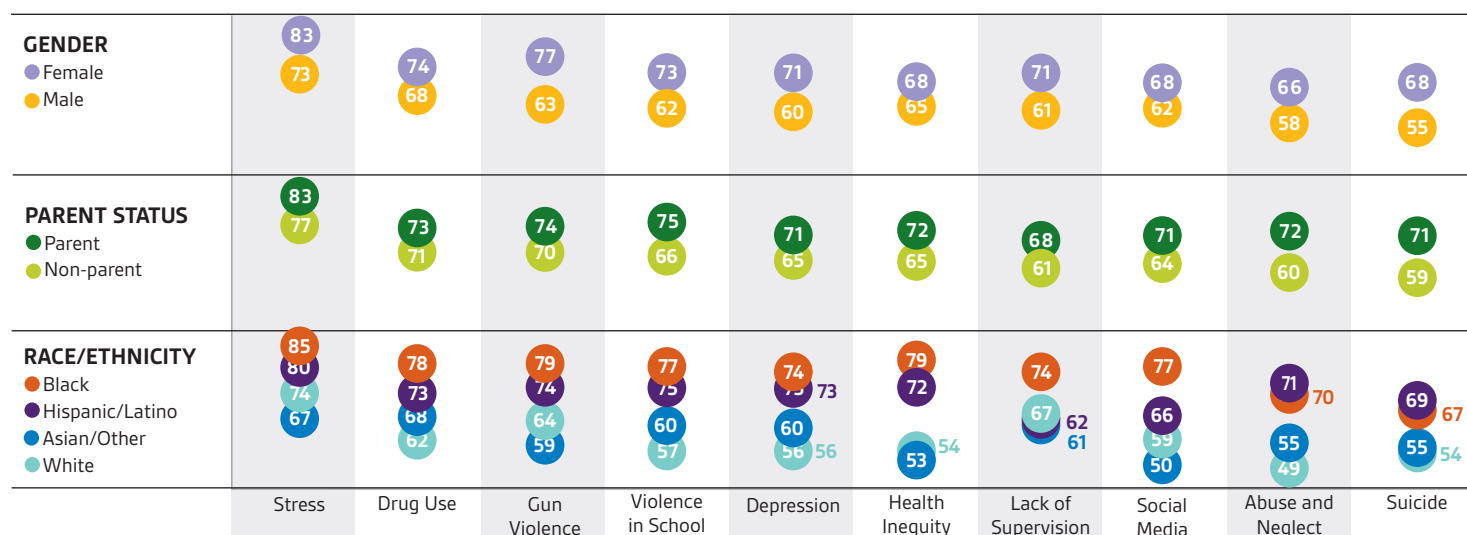


1. Stress – 78%

Stress emerged as the top concern for child health among surveyed Chicagoans, with 78% saying it was a big problem for youth. Stress has been among the top concerns in previous years. In the 2018-19 survey, 61% of Chicago adults considered stress a big problem for youth health¹, and in 2020 62% considered it a big problem². The ongoing youth mental health crisis from the COVID-19 pandemic may have increased concern about stress levels for children and adolescents. This is consistent with national surveys of children and adolescents experiencing elevated levels of stress, noting that diagnoses of anxiety have increased by a third since 2016³.

Older adults were more likely to consider stress a big problem than younger adults (82% in those over 45, 79% in those 30 to 44, 68% in those 18 to 29). Non-Hispanic Black and Latinx/Hispanic adults were more likely to consider this a big problem than white adults and other groups (85% and 80%, respectively vs. 74% and 67%, respectively). Women were more likely to consider this a big problem than men (83% vs. 73%) (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Proportion of respondents who rated each health or social issue as a “big problem” for Chicago youth by respondent gender, parent status, and race/ethnicity



2. Drug use by youth – 71%

Youth drug use was the second concern with 71% of surveyed Chicago adults expressing concern for the issue. Drug use by youth has been a rising concern for Chicago adults in recent years. In 2018–19, 61% considered youth drug use a big problem¹, and in 2020 drug use was the top health concern at 65%². The rise of adolescent drug use parallels increasing feelings of anxiety and low self-esteem as a part of the post-pandemic youth mental health crisis. The increase in adult concern for youth drug use is consistent with a 2022 survey of Chicago youth regarding substance use that found that 27% of 8th grade students, 41% of 10th grade students and 55% 12th of grade students have used a substance (e.g., marijuana, alcohol, cigarettes) in the past year⁴.

Non-Hispanic Black and Latinx/Hispanic adults were the most likely to consider this a big problem compared to white adults and other groups (78% and 73% respectively vs. 68% and 62% respectively). Parents and non-parents were equally likely to consider drug use to be a big problem.



Resources for both youth and parents are available with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Helpline. Call 1.800.662.HELP (4357) for confidential and free information available 24/7.⁵

3. Gun violence – 70%

Gun violence emerged as the third overall child health concern among surveyed Chicago adults at 70%. Gun violence has been a continuous concern among adults across the Chicago. In 2018–19, 85% of Chicago adults considered it a “big problem” facing Chicago youth¹. In some of our work with the *Voices of Child Health in Chicago* Parent Panel, Chicago parents have expressed their fears regarding the possibility of their children being physically injured by a firearm, the mental health impact of exposure to gun violence either directly or through the media, as well as the possibility of their children having or gaining access to a gun^{6,7}. Growing concern for children’s safety and firearms parallels data that gun-related injuries have remained the leading cause of death among children nationally since 2020⁸.

Non-Hispanic Black and Latinx/Hispanic adults were the most likely to consider this a big problem compared to white adults and other groups (79% and 74%, respectively vs. 64% and 59%, respectively). Adults with low household income (below the federal poverty level [FPL]; the FPL for a family of four in 2022 was \$27,500) and those with middle income (100–399% FPL) were more likely to consider gun violence a big problem for youth (73% and 75%, respectively) compared with adults with high household income (400%+ FPL; 64%).

4. Violence in schools – 68%

In 2022, 68% of Chicago adults noted their concern for violence in schools as it relates to the overall health of children. In 2020, 57% of Chicagoans considered this issue a big problem for youth². This rising concern is consistent with national findings that over 25% of children have witnessed an act of violence in their schools, homes or communities⁹.

Non-Hispanic Black adults and Latinx/Hispanic adults were more likely to consider this a big problem compared to white adults and other groups (77% and 75% respectively vs. 57% and 60% respectively). Adults with low household income (<100% FPL) were more likely to consider gun violence a big problem compared with adults with high income (400%+ FPL) (76% vs. 61%). Parents were more likely than non-parents to consider this a big problem (75% vs. 66%).

5. Lack of adult supervision and involvement – 67%

Chicagoans cited lack of adult supervision and involvement as their fifth concern, with 67% considering this a “big problem” for youth. Lack of parental supervision and involvement is linked to poor adult health, decreased self-esteem and academic success, as well as increased risk for mental illness and drug use¹⁰. A statewide survey found that 15% of surveyed youth spent three or more days at three or more hours per day home alone each week after school. Among Illinois students, 7% of 8th grade students, 12% of 10th grade students, and 15% of 12th grade students reported their parents or guardians never knowing where they are or who they are with when not at home¹¹.

Non-Hispanic Black adults were more likely to consider this a big problem than adults of other groups (74% vs. 61% for Latinx/Hispanic adults, 62% for other groups and 67% for non-Hispanic white adults). This is the only issue for which non-parents were more likely to consider this a big problem than parents (68% vs. 61%). Women were more likely to consider this a big problem than men (71% vs. 61%).

6. Depression – 66%

Youth depression has been an ongoing concern among Chicago parents. Depression was among the top 10 health concerns in 2018–19 at 59%¹ and in 2020 at 62%². In 2023, depression was the sixth concern for surveyed Chicago adults, with 66% of respondents considering it an issue. National data estimates 4% of U.S. children have been diagnosed depression and 15% of adolescents have had a major depressive episode. Yet only 78% of children with depression across the country receive treatment¹². Depression, diagnosed or not, puts youth at a higher risk for suicide, drug usage and bullying¹³.

Younger adults were more likely to consider this a big problem than older adults (75% for those 18–29 years old, 68% for those 30–44, and 60% for those 45+). Non-Hispanic Black adults and Latinx/Hispanic adults were more likely to consider this a big problem compared to white adults and other groups (74% and 73% respectively vs. 56% and 60% respectively). Adults with lower household income (<100% FPL) were more concerned about this issue (73%) compared with adults with high income (400%+ FPL; 59%).

i **The Crisis Text Line provides free 24/7 mental health support and crisis intervention for youth and adults. Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a volunteer crisis counselor¹⁴.**

7. Health inequity – 66%

Worse health for children of color than for white children, also known as health inequity, was the seventh concern with 66% of adults considering it a “big problem” for Chicago youth. Poorly distributed resources among social classes, races, and ethnicities across the country has a negative impact on children, particularly children of color¹⁵. National data shows that 3.5% of children aged 0–11 lack a usual source of health care and 4.2% of those under 18 lack health insurance. Black and Hispanic children are more likely to lack a source of healthcare and health insurance compared to white children¹⁶.

Older adults were more likely to consider this a big problem than younger adults (72% for those 45 years old and older, 64% for those 30–44 years and 57% for those 18–29 years). Non-Hispanic Black adults and Latinx/Hispanic adults were more likely to consider this a big problem than white adults and other groups (79% and 72%, respectively vs. 54% and 53%, respectively).

8. Social media – 65%

Chicago adults highlighted social media as the eighth concern with 65% stating it is a “big problem” for youth health. Parents’ fears surrounding social media usage have continued to grow as more children and teens have gained access to smartphones in recent years. An estimated 95% of teens in the U.S. have access to a smartphone. And 60% of teens use at least one form of popular social media sites such as TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat. Social media usage presents many risks to children such as exposure to inappropriate content, cyberbullying, and interference with sleep, social interaction and academics, as well as low self-esteem¹⁷.

Older adults were more likely to consider this a big problem than younger adults (69% for those over 45 years old, 65% for those 30–44 years, and 58% for those 18–29 years). Non-Hispanic Black adults were the most likely to consider this a big problem compared to other groups (77% vs. 66%–50%).

9. Child abuse and neglect – 62%

Child abuse and neglect were listed as the ninth concern for youth health among Chicago adults, with 62% saying it was a big problem. Concern about this issue has been growing. In 2018–19, 56% of adults considered this a big health problem for Chicago youth¹ and in 2020, 60% of adults considered it a big problem². Statewide data indicate that 35,841 Illinois children were victims of maltreatment in 2021: 90.3% of those identified children were victims of neglect and 16.4% were victims of physical abuse¹⁸.

Non-Hispanic Black adults and Latinx/Hispanic adults were more likely to consider this a big problem than white adults and other groups (70% and 71%, respectively vs. 49% and 55%, respectively). Adults with low household income (<100% FPL) and those with middle income (100–399% FPL) were more likely to consider this a big problem than those with high income (400%+ FPL) (68% and 66% vs. 53%).

i **If you or someone you know needs non-emergency assistance, please call 211 for free assistance getting connected to essential health and social services. Live assistance is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. For emergencies call 911.**

10. Suicide – 62%

Suicide has been among the top youth health concerns for Chicago adults in recent years. This year, suicide was highlighted as the tenth concern with 62% of adults considering it a big problem for youth. In 2018–19, 49% of Chicago adults considered youth suicide to be a big problem¹ and this jumped to 57% in 2020². National data estimates 22% of high school students have seriously contemplated attempting suicide and 10% of students have attempted suicide. The high number of youth who contemplate or attempt suicide can be linked to the growing number of children and teens experiencing depression or other mental illnesses among other factors¹⁹.

Younger adults were more likely to consider this a big problem than older adults (73% for those 18–29 years old, 61% for those 30–44 years, and 55% for those 45+ years). Parents were more likely to consider this a big problem than non-parents (71% vs. 59%), and women were more likely to consider this a big problem than men (68% vs. 55%).

i **There are a number of resources for parents and youth:**

- **Call or text the National Suicide and Crisis Hotline at 988 for free, confidential and 24/7 support for anyone in a suicidal crisis or emotional distress²⁰**
- **How to Talk to Children and Teens About Suicide: A Guide for Parents²¹**
- **Suicide Resource Center²²**

Summary of Data Trends

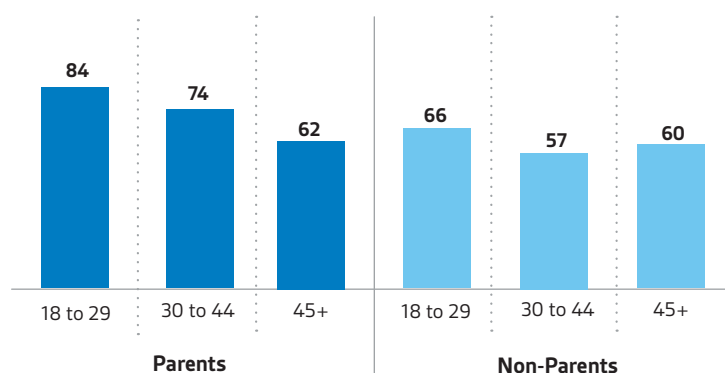
Overall, we see higher levels of concern among parents vs. non-parents, among Black and Latinx adults vs. white and other-race adults, among women vs. men (Figure 2), and among lower household income vs. high household income. Interestingly, COVID-19 infections did not land in the top 10 concerns across all adults. This tracks with the trend we have seen in adults’ concerns about COVID-19 declining over time. Although, in spring 2022, 69.5% of parents who had children currently enrolled in school reported having concerns about their children getting COVID-19 at school and becoming sick. The full list of health and social problems is in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Full list of health and social issues and the proportion of Chicago adults who indicated each was a big problem

Rank	Child Health Problem	% of Chicago adults who said each was a “big problem”
1	Stress	78%
2	Drug use	71%
3	Gun violence	70%
4	Violence in schools	68%
5	Lack of adult supervision and involvement	67%
6	Depression among children and teens	66%
7	Health inequity	66%
8	Social media	65%
9	Child abuse and neglect	62%
10	Suicide among children and teens	62%
11	Poverty	61%
12	Smoking and tobacco use, including vaping/e-cigs	60%
13	Childhood obesity	60%
14	Childhood asthma	60%
15	COVID-19 pandemic effects on youth mental health	60%
16	Injuries from accidents among children and teens	59%
17	Unsafe housing	59%
18	Discrimination and racism	58%
19	Bullying including cyberbullying	57%
20	Not enough job opportunities for parents	53%
21	COVID-19 infections	53%
22	Not enough job opportunities for teens, young adults	51%
23	Hunger	49%
24	Teen pregnancy	49%
25	Alcohol abuse by youth	47%
26	Parent’s health problems affecting their children	46%
27	Infant mortality	45%

Additionally, when we examined the data from parents only, younger parents and women tended to be concerned about more issues than older parents and men. Age was related to levels of concern for parents, but not for non-parents. Parents in younger age groups were more likely to indicate that 10 or more issues were “big problems” for youth compared with parents of older age groups, whereas non-parents of various age groups had similar proportions who indicated 10 or more issues were “big problems” (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Proportion of respondents who indicated that 10 or more issues were “big problems” for youth by parent status and respondent age



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HOW THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED

This report presents findings from the 2022 Healthy Chicago Survey, Jr., administered by the Chicago Department of Public Health in collaboration with Lurie Children's. The survey was self-administered by web and paper from June to December 2022. The sample consisted of 4,192 adults in Chicago, 1,162 of whom were the parent, step- parent or guardian (referred to as “parents” in this report) of at least one child under 18 years old living in the household. The survey yield rate was 20.9%. All analyses were conducted with statistical weighting so that they are representative of the adult population of the City of Chicago during the time period of data collection. For more information about health in your community, visit chicagohealthatlas.org.

SUGGESTED CITATION

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