

THE STATE OF KIDS AND FAMILIES IN AMERICA 2025

common sense®

LRP LAKE RESEARCH PARTNERS

ECHELON INSIGHTS

THE STATE OF KIDS AND FAMILIES IN AMERICA 2025

Credits

Authors:	Celinda Lake, Alysia Snell, Cate Gormley, Izzy Vinyard, Matthew Gillett (Lake Research Partners) Kristen Soltis Anderson, Eleanor O'Neil (Echelon Insights) Dylan Alles, Edda Collins Coleman, Michael Robb (Common Sense Media)
Copy editor:	Christopher Dare
Designers:	Amy Buller, Alice Seiler

Suggested citation: Lake, C., Snell, A., Gormley, C., Vinyard, I., Gillett, M., Anderson, K. S., O'Neil, E., Alles, D., Collins Coleman, E., & Robb, M. (2025). *The state of kids and families in America, 2025*. Common Sense Media.

Introduction

Across the U.S., families are navigating a landscape marked by pressing challenges. On behalf of Common Sense Media, Lake Research Partners and Echelon Insights conducted two surveys—one among parents of children of any age, and another among kids and teens age 12 to 17—that offer a detailed portrait of what life looks like for families today. These surveys provide insights into the state of American kids and families through an exploration of current attitudes among parents and young people, their most salient concerns, their hopes for the new presidential administration, and solutions that they support on the issues that matter.

In 2024, Common Sense Media released a survey about likely 2024 voters, including parent voters, as well as kids and teenagers. In last year's survey, parent voters shared the same concerns as non-parent voters about the economy and the future of American children. There is a strong continuity in the responses—parents this year and voters in last year's survey see a real opportunity to improve education, and they want action to safeguard youth mental health. Just like this year, survey respondents across party lines favored investment in kids and families, saw a role for government, and thought that politicians are failing to deliver. This year, we wanted to dig deeper into attitudes among parents, and many of these trends held consistent, with parents expressing strong bipartisan support for family-focused policies despite deep skepticism about government action.

Parents and young people have notable concerns about how things are going for kids and families today, ranging from the need to improve education and expand access to mental health care to enforcing regulations to improve tech and social media experiences for youth, and the government doing a better job of meeting families' basic needs. When they think about the future, parents, kids, and teens are more hopeful and positive than fearful and negative, but parents' anxieties about the affordability of housing and post-secondary education abound.

The nation is at a critical crossroads for families, with significant changes on multiple fronts with the arrival of the Trump administration. Contrary to conventional wisdom, parents across party lines share many of the same concerns and support the same goals to improve the lives of families and children: high-quality education, proactive government policies and investments at the state and federal levels, and stronger families. Parents and young people alike believe that elected leaders and politicians are not prioritizing policies for kids and teenagers enough and should invest more in kids and families. The nation is divided, but parents across the political spectrum share a lot of common ground on the practical pathways through our challenges.

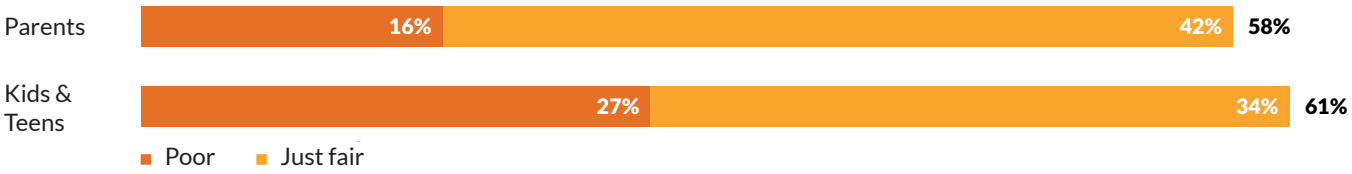
© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Key Findings

1. The Generation Gap That Isn't.

Parents, as well as kids and teenagers, think that things are not going well for American families right now, with 58% of parents and 61% of kids and teens saying things are going just fair or poor for families like theirs. **But they are more hopeful and positive than concerned and negative when they look to the future.** When thinking about the future for kids, the top emotion that parents feel is "hopeful" (49%), and the top emotions that kids and teens feel when they think about their future are "hopeful" (44%) and "excited" (42%).

FIGURE 1. Percent of parents and youth who think things are going poor or just fair for families like theirs

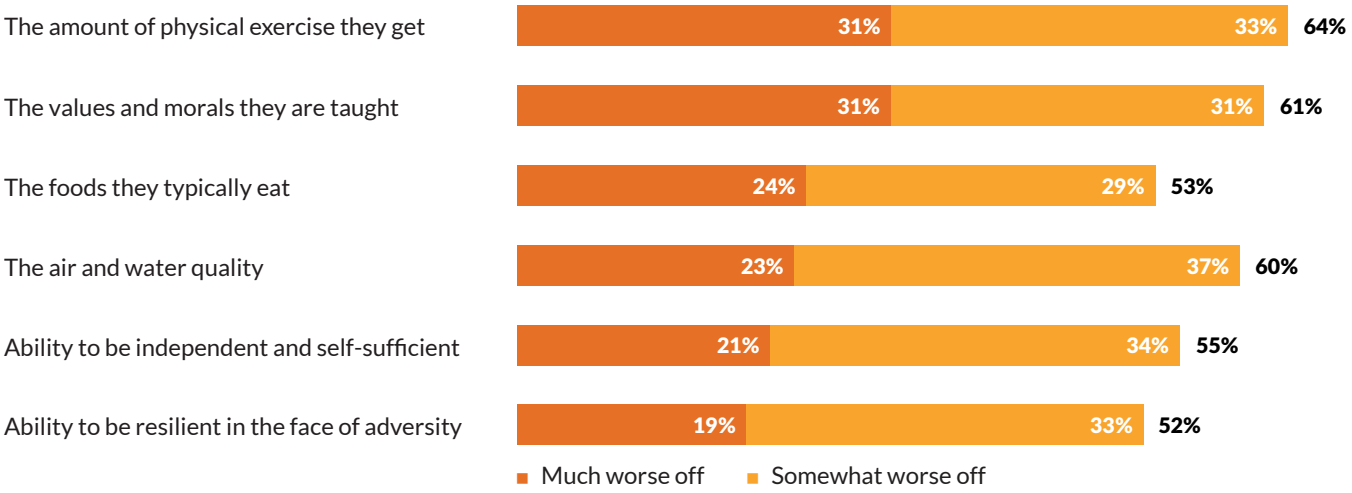


© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

2. Lost Ground: Parents Perceive a Decline in Children's Resilience and Well-Being.

Parents see deterioration in markers of well-being for kids and teenagers compared to 20 years ago. Parents think today's kids and teens are doing worse than children were 20 years ago in their ability to be resilient in the face of adversity (52% worse off), their ability to be independent and self-sufficient (55% worse off), the foods they typically eat (53% worse off), the air and water quality (60% worse off), and the amount of physical exercise they get (64% worse off). Parents also think today's children lag behind children 20 years ago when it comes to the values and morals they are taught (61% worse off). Parents whose children are 18 or older are more likely than parents of children under age 18 to think that today's children are worse off in these areas.

FIGURE 2. Percent of parents who think children today are doing worse than children were 20 years ago with respect to:



Note: Results may not add to 100% due to rounding or multiple responses.

© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

3. American Dreams Deferred.

Parents feel strong economic pressures today, with 73% of parents concerned about children's future economic opportunities, and 39% of parents with children under 18 saying it has become harder to afford the things they need for their children compared to last year. **When they look ahead, two critical economic agenda items emerge for their children: education and cost of housing.** Parents are not confident that today's children will be able to afford housing (66% are only a little or not at all confident) and post-high school education (62% are only a little or not at all confident) in the future.

FIGURE 3. Percent of parents who are not confident that children growing up today will be able to:



Note: Results may not add to 100% due to rounding or multiple responses.

© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

4. A Silent Emergency Speaks.

The mental health crisis is urgent, and young people insist that addressing it must be a top priority. A majority of parents (54%) and two-thirds of kids and teenagers (67%) believe the mental health of children in their communities is just fair or poor. Parents as well as kids and teens point to social media (parents: 28%; kids and teens: 27%) and lack of parental support and involvement (parents: 20%; kids and teens: 16%) as prime drivers of this crisis. Parents (48%) and kids and teens (54%) feel that schools are not doing enough to support students' mental health and well-being. Parents see an acute need for more mental health services in and out of schools: 56% believe it is very important to expand the availability of mental health services outside of schools, and 55% believe it is very important to expand the availability of mental health services in schools.

FIGURE 4. Percent of parents and youth who rate the mental health of children in their community as just fair or poor



FIGURE 5. Percent of parents and youth who feel that schools in their community are doing too little to support students' mental health and well-being



© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

5. Tech's Two Faces: Parents Are Wary as Kids and Teens Spot Silver Linings.

Families worry that technology's grip on teenagers impacts their mental health, and parents' concerns are more acute. Over half (53%) of parents think kids would be much better off with less social media and smartphone use. That said, kids and teens show the most divergence from parents in their attitudes toward social media and AI. About two-thirds (64%) of parents think social media has had a mostly negative influence on kids and teens, while kids and teens lean toward thinking the influence has been more positive (40%) than negative (33%). And while kids and teens think AI programs will have a positive impact on their learning in school (48%) and see the short-term (46%) and long-term (46%) impacts of AI on society as more helpful than harmful, parents are more mixed. Forty-three percent of parents think AI programs will have a negative impact on children's learning in school, and 39% think AI will have a positive impact. Similarly, parents are split on AI helping (43%) or hurting (40%) society in the short term, and in the long term (42% help, 43% hurt).

FIGURE 6. Percent of parents and youth who say the influence of social media is mostly positive or mostly negative



FIGURE 7. Percent of parents and youth who say the impact AI programs will have on a child's learning in school is positive or negative



© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

6. United in Urgency and Distrust.

Parents in both political parties want the government to play a role in supporting young people and prioritizing family policies. Despite political divisions, the research reveals striking common ground: 83% of parents believe the federal government should prioritize policies that benefit young people. Majorities across political parties agree: 88% of Republicans, 83% of Democrats, and 75% of independents think the federal government should place a priority on making policies that benefit younger people. Yet families share a profound crisis of trust in government institutions: 61% of parents and 61% of kids and teenagers feel their voices "do not matter" in policy decisions. Across party identification, parents believe that their voices do not matter, with independent parents feeling especially voiceless at the local level (72% said their voice does not matter in decisions made by local government). This democratic emergency transcends partisan divides, as families across the spectrum express doubt that leaders will deliver for the next generation. Two-thirds or more of Democratic (68%), Republican (66%), and independent parents (75%) do not think federal politicians and elected officials reflect the needs, desires, and experiences of young people in this country well.

FIGURE 8. Percent of parents and youth who say the (federal) government ...

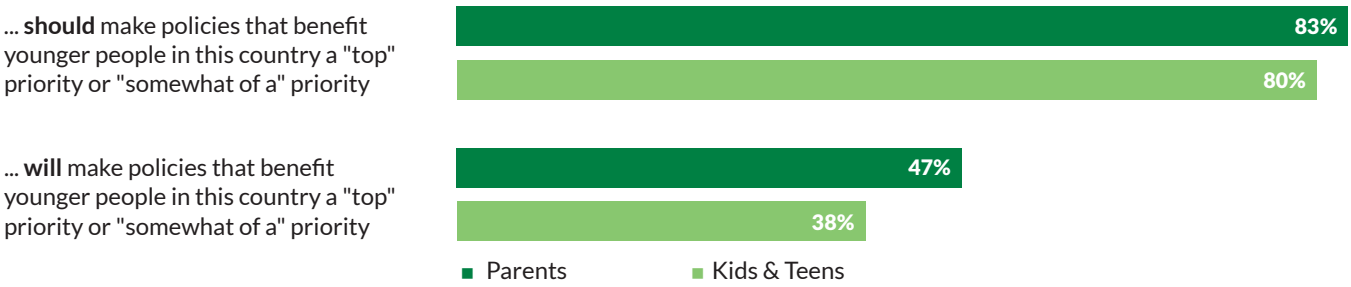


FIGURE 9. Percent of parents and youth who feel their voice does not matter in decisions made by the (federal/their local) government (*split sampled)



Note: Parents were specifically asked about the "federal government." Youth were asked about "government" generally. Results may not add to 100% due to rounding or multiple responses.

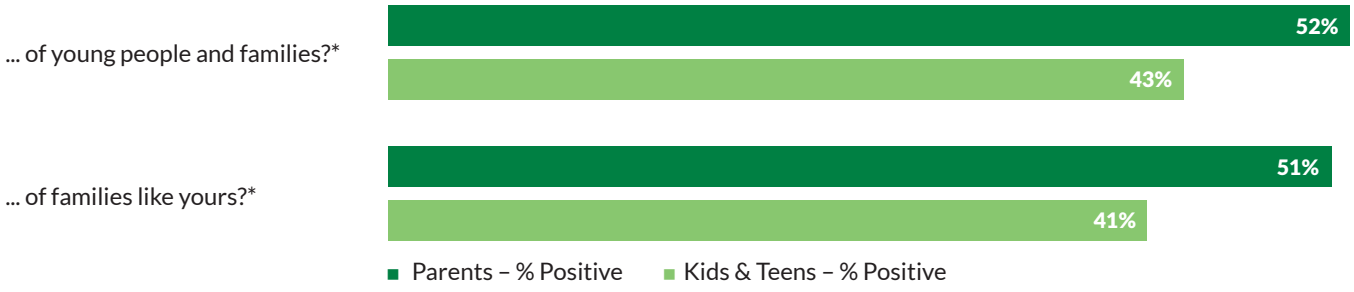
© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

7. Trust Gap: Youth and Parents Split on Trump's Impact.

When surveyed in early January, before President Trump took office, parents responded more positively than negatively when asked how the new administration under President Trump will affect young people and families like theirs. There are partisan differences among parents. Kids and teenagers are more reserved. About half of parents think the new administration will have a positive impact on the lives of young people and families (52%) and on the lives of families like theirs (51%). There is polarization by party identification. Republican parents overwhelmingly anticipate a positive impact on the lives of young people and families (78%) and on the lives of families like theirs (82%). Independent parents think there will be a positive impact on the lives of young people and families (53%), but are split on the impact on families like theirs (36% negative, 33% positive). Democratic parents think the impact will be negative on the lives of young people and families (69%) and on the lives of families like theirs (59%).

Compared to parents, kids and teens split more evenly between the new administration having a positive or negative impact on the lives of young people and families (43% positive, 37% negative) and on the lives of families like theirs (41% positive, 39% negative).

FIGURE 10. Percent of parents and youth who rate the impact they think the new administration under President Trump will have on the lives of young people and families or on families like theirs as positive (*split sampled)



© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

8. Education: The Common Ground Solution.

Parents see education as the key to improving the lives of American children. When asked what they would recommend doing to improve the lives of American children, parents' top volunteered response is improving or reforming education, including post-secondary education (30%). Over 8 in 10 parents believe that better K–12 public schools (86%) and free preschool for young children (82%) would make the lives of America's children better off.

FIGURE 11. Percent of parents who say the most important thing they would recommend doing to improve the lives of America's children is improve/reform education

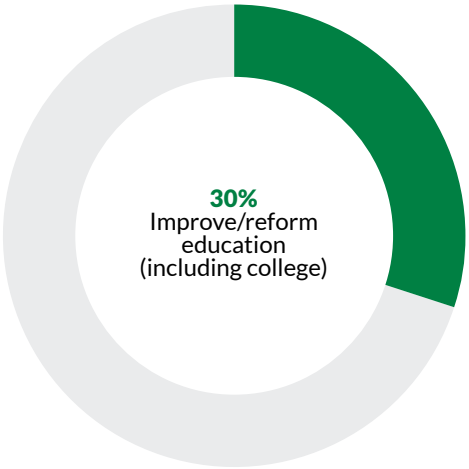


FIGURE 12. Percent of kids and teens who say the most important thing they would recommend doing to improve the lives of kids like them is improve/reform education

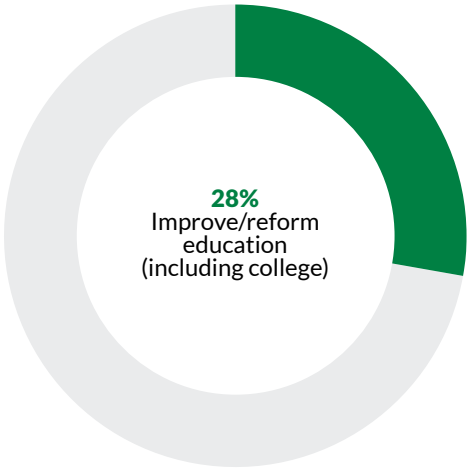


FIGURE 13. Percent of parents who think better K–12 public schools or free preschool for young children would make the lives of American children better off



Note: Results may not add to 100% due to rounding or multiple responses.

© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

9. Foundations First: How Parents and Youth Define Strong Families.

Healthy family relationships and stable communities emerge as top priorities for parents as well as kids and teenagers. In addition to quality education (31%), parents believe that families are strong when they have basic needs met or their income is keeping up with costs (27%), including affordable housing (23%), affordable health care (22%), and good-paying jobs with benefits like health care and vacation (25%), as well as when they prioritize values like putting God first (27%) and children being raised by a father and a mother (27%). Kids' and teens' most important elements for strong families are parents who listen to their kids (42% say this makes families strong) and who accept their children no matter what (29%).

FIGURE 14. Percent of parents who say the following makes families strong:

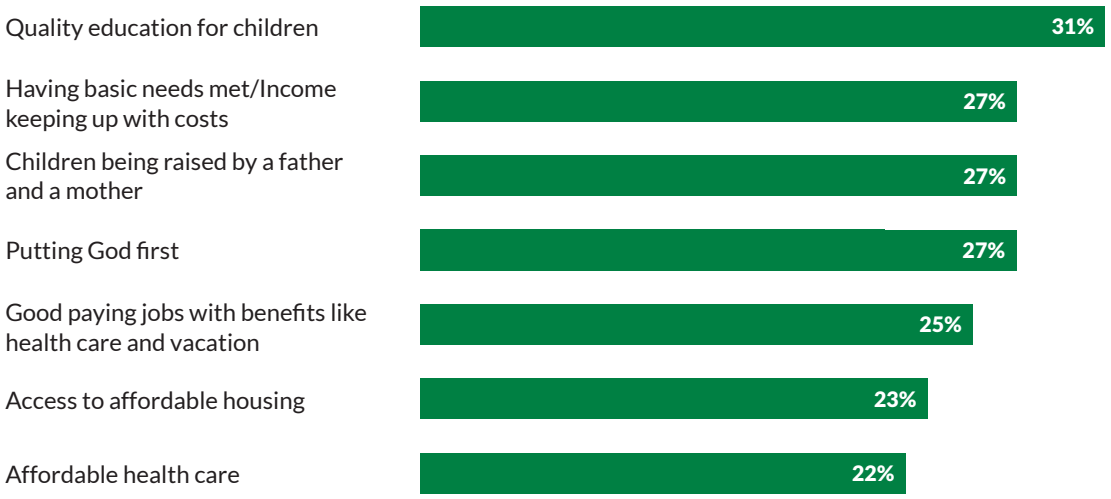
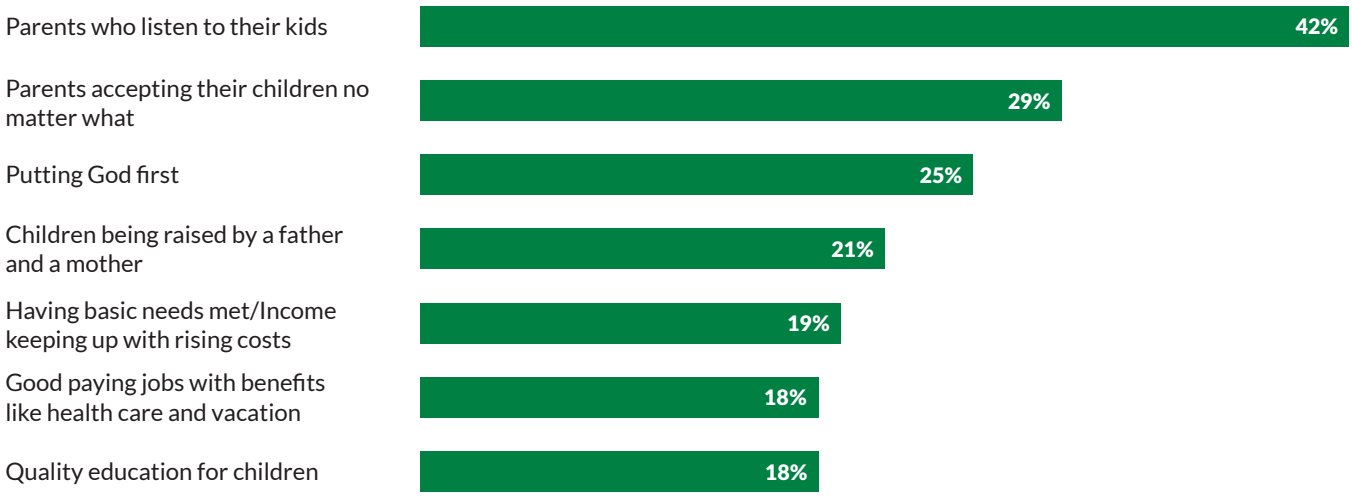


FIGURE 15. Percent of kids and teens who say the following makes families strong:



© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

10. A Call to Government Action.

Parents are strongly aligned on government solutions that they believe will improve the lives of American children. Three-quarters or more of parents say a paid family, parental, and medical leave program for workers who need to provide short-term care for family members, like children, would make the lives of American children better (81% say much or somewhat better off), as well as more tax credits for programs that support families (77% much or somewhat), and more government funding to help parents afford child care and after-school programs (76% much or somewhat).

FIGURE 16. Percent of parents who say a paid family, parental, and medical leave program for workers who need to provide short-term care for family members, like children, would make the lives of America's children better off

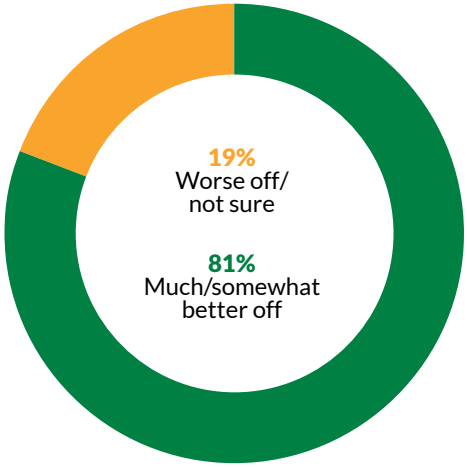


FIGURE 17. Percent of parents who say more tax credits for programs that support families would make the lives of America's children better off

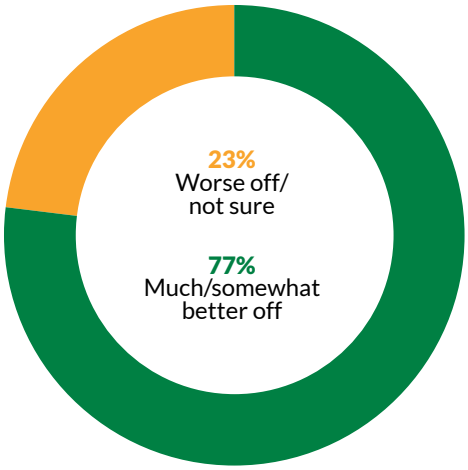
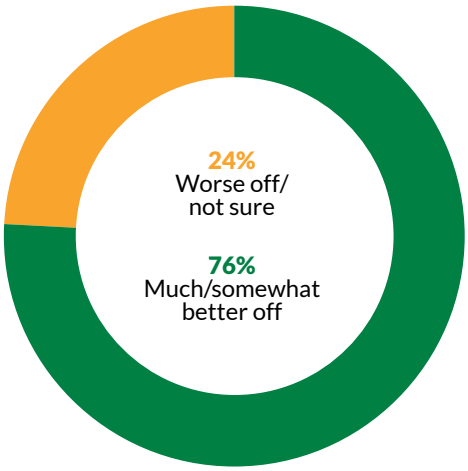


FIGURE 18. Percent of parents who say more government funding to help parents afford child care and after-school programs would make the lives of America's children better off



© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

11. Digital Safety: A Cross-Generational Call for Change.

Parents as well as kids and teenagers overwhelmingly support social media regulations that would protect young people. By extremely wide margins, parents as well as kids and teens favor requiring platforms to display warning labels about their potential risks to children's and teens' mental health and well-being (81% of parents favor; 72% of kids and teens favor). Parents overwhelmingly support requiring age verification and blocking social media accounts for anyone under 16, with 83% in favor. Although support is lower among kids and teens, a majority (54%) still back the idea.

FIGURE 19. Percent of parents and youth who favor requiring social media platforms to display warning labels about their potential risks to children's and teens' mental health and well-being

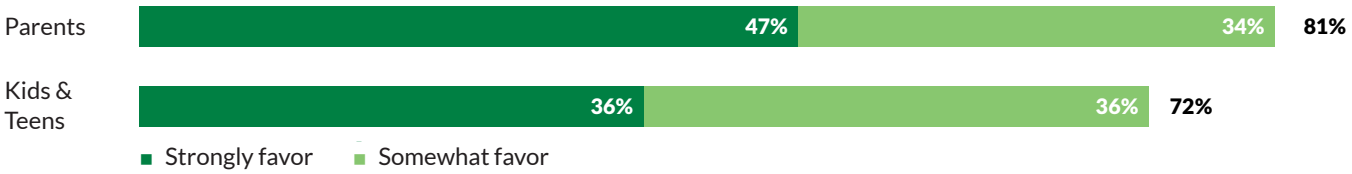


FIGURE 20. Percent of parents and youth who favor requiring social media companies to verify users' ages and prevent anyone under 16 from having accounts



Note: Results may not add to 100% due to rounding or multiple responses.

© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Sentiments on the Present and Future for American Families

When asked to think about how things are going for families like theirs, parents along with kids and teenagers feel that things are not going well right now. A majority (58%) of parents say things are going just fair (42%) or poor (16%) for families like theirs today, and 61% of kids and teens say things are going just fair (34%) or poor (27%) for kids and teens in America today. Kids and teenagers are even more pessimistic than parents, with only 4% saying things are going excellently, compared to 10% of parents.

Younger[1] and older[2] dads and moms think things are going just fair or poor for families like theirs today. Older moms (67%) and older dads (60%) are especially likely to say things are going just fair or poor. While 61% of Asian American and Pacific Islander parents and 53% of Black parents say things are going excellent or good, by contrast, 63% of White parents and 55% of Latino parents say things are going just fair or poor.

Asian American and Pacific Islander boys[3] (46%) and boys who live in urban areas (43%) stand out as being the most likely to think things are going excellent or good for kids and teenagers in America today.

Looking ahead to the future, parents as well as kids and teenagers are more optimistic than pessimistic in a number of areas. When given a list of feelings and asked how they feel about the future for kids, parents most often say they feel hopeful (49%), followed by a mix of positive and negative feelings: anxious (33%), excited (26%), stressed (23%), and happy (22%). Kids and teens share parents' hopefulness, with 44% saying they feel hopeful about their future and 42% feeling excited. That said, like parents, they express a mix of negative and positive feelings as well: 32% of kids and teens feel anxious, 27% feel happy, and 18% feel stressed about their futures.

Moms, dads, and parents across race/ethnicity share positive feelings about the future for kids, with "hopeful" being the most common sentiment among these subgroups. However, younger moms (38%) and older moms (41%) are more likely than younger and older dads (27% each) to say they feel anxious as well. White moms, in particular, are split between feeling hopeful (43%) and anxious (44%).

Most subgroups of kids and teenagers say their top feelings about the future are hopeful and excited. A few groups are just as likely to feel anxious: 17-year-olds, girls age 15 to 17, Latina girls, 12- to 14-year-old Latino kids and teens, Southern girls, and rural girls. Kids and teens who plan to attend a two-year college or join the military[4] after high school are about as likely to feel hopeful as they are to feel anxious.

While parents feel pessimistic about their current situation, they think their children could be better off in the future. About half (49%) of parents of kids under 18 think that in adulthood, their children will be better off than they are, while 24% say their kids will be about the same, and 18% think their children will be worse off. A plurality (40%) of parents of adult children (children age 18 and older) say their children are better off in adulthood, while 33% say their children are about the same in adulthood, and 22% say their children are worse off.

Younger moms (46%) and dads (54%) think their children will be better off, as do Black parents (68%), Latino parents (59%), Asian American and Pacific Islander parents (50%), and White parents (41%). White dads (46%) are more likely than White moms (38%) to say their kids will be better off in adulthood. While urban (54%), suburban (49%), and small-town parents[5] (44%) think their children will be better off, parents in rural areas split between thinking their children will be better off (31%) and about the same (32%). Both lower-income parents (46%) and higher-income parents (51%) think their children will be better off than they are.

Kids and teenagers also think that they will be better off in the future than their parents. Half (51%) of kids and teens think they will be better off, 24% think they will be about the same, and 12% think that they will be worse off than their parents.

Every demographic and geographic subgroup of kids and teens think they will be better off than their parents. Asian American and Pacific Islander girls[6] are more evenly split between better off (36%) and about the same (31%), as are kids and teenagers in the Middle Atlantic region (36% each), and boys in the Northeast region (37% better off, 32% about the same).

[1] *Younger* is defined as under age 50.
[2] *Older* is defined as age 50 and older.
[3] Note: small sample size.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.

© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Parents also feel more optimistic than pessimistic about the future for children and about the future of the country. Over half (57%) of parents feel good about the future for children (i.e., they rate it 6 to 10 on a zero to 10 scale), 25% feel bad (rate zero to 4), and 18% feel neutral (rate 5) or unsure. Half (49%) of parents feel good about the future of the country, while 31% feel bad, and 20% feel neutral or unsure.

Most subgroups of parents feel more good than bad about the future of the country, but there are some exceptions. A few groups feel more bad than good: New England parents[7] (55% bad to 25% good), older Democrats (45% bad to 37% good), and stay-at-home parents (43% bad to 36% good). The following subgroups split between feeling good and bad: White moms (40% good, 38% bad), older Black parents (39% good, 40% bad), independents (38% good, 37% bad), Democratic moms (42% good, 41% bad), Northeastern moms (40% good, 42% bad), and Midwestern moms (40% good, 39% bad).

Every demographic, geographic, and partisanal subgroup, except for older independents, feels more good than bad about the future for children. Older independents[8] split between feeling good (34%) and bad (35%) about the future for children.

While kids and teenagers feel good about the future for children, they feel more tepid about the future of the country. About half (52%) of kids and teens feel good about the future for children, while 26% feel bad and 22% feel neutral or unsure. A plurality (43%) of kids and teens feel good about the future of the country, while a third (34%) feel bad, and 23% feel neutral or unsure.

Across demographic and geographic subgroups, kids and teenagers feel more good than bad about the future for children. However, some subgroups feel more bad than good about the future of the country. These groups include: 16-year-olds (42% bad, 35% good), girls age 15 to 17 (41% bad, 35% good), Native American or Indigenous kids and teens[9] (44% bad, 36% good), Middle Atlantic kids and teens (45% bad, 34% good), Northeast girls[10] (41% bad, 35% good), and Black suburban kids and teenagers[11] (44% bad, 34% good). Midwest girls are split (40% good, 42% bad).

[7] Note: small sample size.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.

© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

What Fuels Pessimism?

Parents as well as kids and teenagers identify a range of economic, health, mental health, and safety concerns, which drive and animate their feelings of discontent. On top of that, many feel their voices do not matter when leaders make decisions, and they do not trust the government to make policies that will benefit young people and families over the next four years.

Economic Concerns

Parents are overwhelmingly concerned about children's future economic opportunities: 73% of parents are concerned, and 34% are very concerned. While this concern crosses demographic, geographic, and partisanal subgroups, older Black parents (47%), White college-educated moms[12] (46%), Democratic moms (45%), Black moms (44%), large-city parents (42%), and Midwest moms (41%) are the most likely to be "very" concerned.

Regardless of the ages of their children, moms and dads are concerned about children's future economic opportunities.

Parents' concern about children's future economic opportunities crosses race/ethnicity, with Black parents slightly more concerned than White, Latino, or Asian American and Pacific Islander parents.

FIGURE 21. Percent of moms and dads of children under 18 and children 18 and over who are concerned about children's future economic opportunities

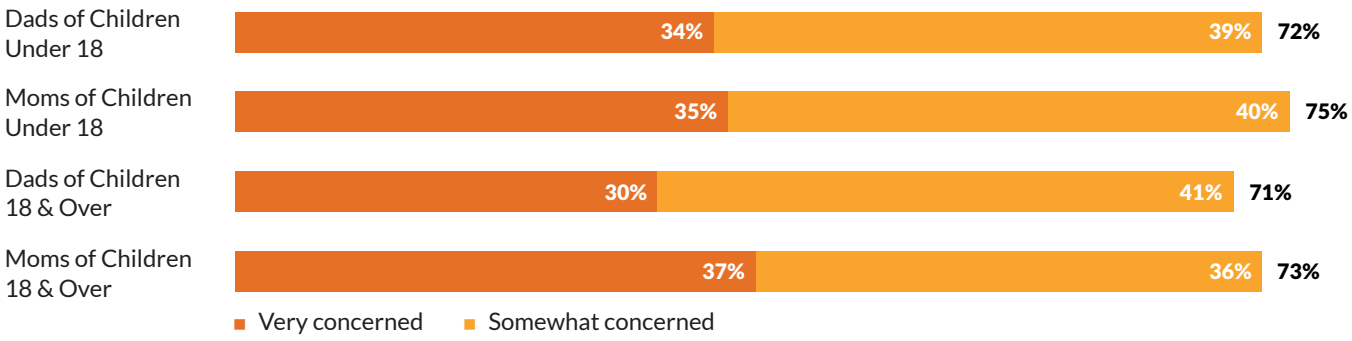
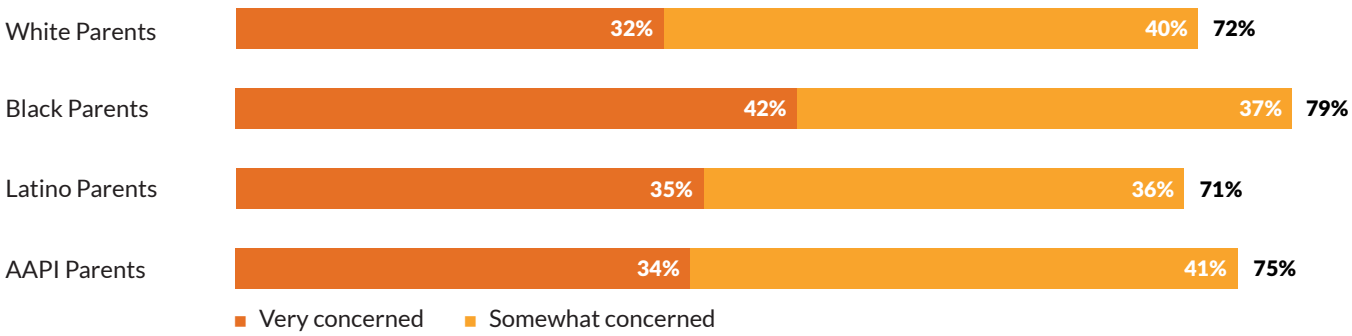


FIGURE 22. Percent of parents by race/ethnicity who are concerned about children's future economic opportunities



[12] Note: small sample size.

© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Parents are worried about children's future incomes and wages. About one in three (34%) parents say children's incomes not being enough to meet their expenses and pay their bills and about one in five (18%) parents say having a job with wages that are too low are big barriers to children today being able to achieve economic security when they grow up. The cost of health care also raises concern, as 17% of parents say that the cost of medical care is one of the biggest barriers to children today being able to achieve economic security when they grow up.

Kids and teenagers share parents' worries about their future economic prospects. One in five (20%) kids and teens say the ability to get a good paying job after high school is their most important concern. Getting a good paying job is the most concerning for boys age 15 to 17 (28%), Northeastern boys (31%), kids and teens in the West South Central region (30%), and suburban boys (27%).

Compared to their peers who plan on attending a four-year college or joining the military,[13] those who plan on going to a two-year college or getting specific job training are more concerned about their ability to get a good paying job after high school. Kids and teens who plan to attend a two-year college after high school are equally concerned about their ability to get a good paying job after high school (26%) and youth mental health challenges (25%). Kids and teens who plan on getting specific job training after high school are more concerned about their ability to get a good paying job after high school (33%) than they are concerned about youth mental health challenges (25%).

Parents feel like the things they need to buy for their children are getting more out of reach. When parents of kids under age 18 think about this time last year and their ability to afford the things they need to buy for their children, 39% say it is now getting worse, 26% say it is getting better, and 33% say it has stayed the same. Parents of children 18 or older have worse perceptions when they think about how things are for parents of kids under 18: 54% of parents of adult children say things are getting worse for parents of kids under 18, 11% say they are getting better, and 28% say it has stayed the same.

While younger moms (41%) say that their ability to afford the things they need to buy for their children is getting worse, younger dads are split between it getting worse (34%), getting better (34%), and staying the same (32%).

White parents are split when it comes to their ability to afford the things they need to buy for their children (41% getting worse, 36% stayed the same), and Latino parents are split between it getting worse (35%) and getting better (35%). Black parents are split in thinking affordability is getting better (39%) or worse (33%). Asian American and Pacific Islander parents are split between affordability staying the same (40%) and getting worse (34%).

Parents with lower annual household incomes are slightly more likely than parents with higher incomes to say that their ability to afford things for their children is getting worse compared to this time last year. About 4 in 10 parents with annual household incomes under $30,000 (41%), from $30,000 to $49,999 (40%), and from $50,000 to $99,999 (39%) say compared to last year, their ability to afford the things they need to buy for their children is getting worse, while 33% of parents with household incomes over $100,000 say things are getting worse.

Parents have serious concerns about the affordability of housing and education for children growing up today, but kids and teenagers are more confident. About two-thirds (66%) of parents are not confident that children growing up today will be able to afford a house. Over a third (37%) of parents say the cost of housing is one of the biggest barriers to children today being able to achieve economic security when they grow up. Pacific region parents (50%), Asian American and Pacific Islander dads (49%), older Asian American and Pacific Islander parents[14] (46%), and post-graduates (45%) are the most likely to believe that the cost of housing is one of the biggest barriers to children today achieving economic security when they grow up.

However, unlike parents, kids and teens believe homeownership is in their future: **68% of kids and teenagers are confident that they will be able to afford a house.** Confidence among kids and teens crosses demographic and geographic subgroups.

Over 6 in 10 parents (62%) are not confident that children growing up today will be able to afford a college education/job training after high school. About a sixth (17%) of parents say that not being able to get the education or training they need to get a good paying job is one of the biggest barriers to children today being able to achieve economic security when they grow up.

Again, there is a divide between parents and kids and teens. **Nearly two-thirds (64%) of kids and teenagers are confident that they will be able to afford a college education or job training after high school.** Again, every demographic and geographic subgroup of kids and teens is confident that they will be able to afford a college education or job training after high school.

[13] Note: small sample size.
[14] Ibid.

© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Younger dads, Black parents, and Asian American and Pacific Islander parents are more confident that children growing up today will be able to afford a college education or job training after high school, and younger dads and Black parents are more confident that children growing up today will be able to afford a house.

FIGURE 23. Percent of parents by gender and age, and by race/ethnicity, who are confident or not confident that children growing up today will be able to afford a college education or job training after high school or be able to afford a house

	Able to afford a college education or job training after high school			Able to afford a house		
	Confident	Not confident	Margin	Confident	Not confident	Margin
Younger[15] dads	48	49	-1	42	53	-11
Younger moms	38	60	-22	34	63	-29
Older[16] dads	29	69	-40	23	76	-53
Older moms	25	71	-46	22	74	-52
White parents	32	65	-34	27	70	-44
Black parents	49	49	+1	49	48	+1
Latino parents	36	61	-25	34	63	-30
AAPI parents	49	49	even	42	56	-14

[15] *Younger* is defined as under age 50.
[16] *Older* is defined as age 50 and older.

© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Widespread Doubts About Children's Well-Being

Parents think that children today are doing worse than children were 20 years ago on several key components of well-being.

About half of parents think children today are doing worse than children were 20 years ago in their ability to be independent and self-sufficient (55%) and in their ability to be resilient in the face of adversity (52%).

Health remains key, including determinants of health that people can control, as well as things they cannot. Parents think children today are doing worse than children were 20 years ago in regard to the amount of physical exercise they get (64%), the air and water quality (60%), and the foods they typically eat (53%).

Comparing today's children to the children of 20 years ago, 61% of parents think children today are doing worse than children were 20 years ago when it comes to the values and morals they are taught.

Parents of children under 18 differ from parents of adults, who largely coalesce around the idea that today's kids are doing worse on these key components of well-being.

FIGURE 24. Percent of parents of children under 18 and of children 18 or older who say children today are doing better or worse than children were 20 years ago in:

	Parents of Children Under 18		Parents of Children 18 or Older	
	Better off	Worse off	Better off	Worse off
Amount of physical exercise they get	44	51	18	78
The values and morals they are taught	43	50	21	73
The air and water quality	38	57	28	65
The foods they typically eat	52	46	34	63
Ability to be independent and self-sufficient	45	49	34	61
Ability to be resilient in the face of adversity	47	44	32	60

While moms and dads are mostly the same in their opinions that today's children are doing worse than children 20 years ago on self-sufficiency, resiliency, exercising, and values and morals, there are large differences between moms and dads on some central components of health: air and water quality and the foods that kids typically eat.

FIGURE 25. Percent of moms and dads who say children today are doing better or worse than children were 20 years ago in:

	Moms		Dads	
	Better off	Worse off	Better off	Worse off
The air and water quality	27	66	41	54
Amount of physical exercise they get	31	65	34	63
The values and morals they are taught	29	62	37	60
The foods they typically eat	38	57	50	49
Ability to be independent and self-sufficient	38	55	42	54
Ability to be resilient in the face of adversity	40	50	40	54

While gun violence and addiction barely register for parents, these are salient concerns for kids and teenagers. One in five (20%) kids and teens say gun violence is one of their most important concerns; 19% say addiction and drug abuse. Gun violence especially stands out as a concern for Northeastern boys (27%), Latino boys (26%), rural Latino kids and teens[17](26%), and boys in fifth to eighth grades (25%). Addiction and drug abuse especially stands out for small-town or rural boys (29%), Midwestern boys (27%), kids and teenagers in the West North Central[18] (26%) and East South Central regions[19] (29%), rural kids and teenagers of color (26%), kids and teens in rural areas (24%), and boys in fifth to eighth grades (24%).

[17] Note: small sample size.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.

© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Children's Mental Health Is in Crisis

Parents as well as kids and teenagers rate the mental health of their community's children as poor: 54% of parents rate the mental health of children in their community as just fair or poor, and 67% of kids and teens rate this as just fair or poor.

Parents' perceptions of the mental health of children in their community represent a shift from last year's survey among parents who are likely voters. This year, by 14 percentage points, parents say that the mental health of children in their community is just fair or poor (54%) rather than excellent or good (40%). Last year, likely voter parents were evenly split between thinking that children's mental health was excellent or good (46%) and just fair or poor (46%).

Dads and moms across age, race/ethnicity, and party identification rate children's mental health differently, with dads more positive than moms. Asian American and Pacific Islander dads and moms are the exception; they rate children's mental health about the same. **When given a list of concerns, kids' and teenagers' top answer is youth mental health challenges** (28% say this is one of the most important concerns for them). Girls age 12 to 14 (31%) are more likely than boys their age (22%) to say youth mental health is the top concern. This pattern extends across race/ethnicity: White girls (32%), White boys (28%), Black girls (28%), Black boys (23%), Latina girls (35%), Latino boys (27%), Asian American and Pacific Islander girls[20] (25%), and Asian American and Pacific Islander boys[21] (19%).

Parents and kids and teenagers agree that schools in their community need to step up to meet the moment and address students' mental health and well-being. Nearly half (48%) of parents and over half (54%) of kids and teens think schools in their community are doing too little to support students' mental health and well-being. Across key demographic and partisanal subgroups, parents and kids and teens believe schools in their community are doing too little.

The cause of the mental health crisis is multifactorial, with significant overlap between the factors that parents think cause the crisis and the indicated factors for kids and teenagers. Parents point to social media, technology, and screen time as the top cause of the mental health crisis (28%), followed by a lack of parental support and involvement (20%), poverty (13%), and bullying (12%). Kids and teens think the main cause is the negative impact of social media and the internet (27%), followed by a lack of parental or adult support (16%), academic or peer pressure (14%), and bullying and discrimination (14%).

Across younger and older moms and dads, across race/ethnicity, and across party identification, parents think the main cause of today's mental health crisis is social media, technology, and screen time. Older moms and dads put just as much weight on the lack of parental support and involvement, as do Black parents.

FIGURE 26. Percent of parents by gender and age, race/ethnicity and gender, and party identification and gender who rate the mental health of children in their community as excellent, excellent/good, or just fair/poor

	Excellent	Excellent/ Good	Just fair/ Poor	Margin
Younger dads	15	50	47	+3
Younger moms	10	35	61	-26
Older dads	5	44	45	-1
Older moms	6	30	63	-34
White dads	7	45	48	-4
White moms	7	30	65	-35
Black dads	16	50	45	+6
Black moms	14	42	50	-8
Latino dads	16	56	39	+17
Latina moms	10	34	64	-30
AAPI dads	8	40	55	-14
AAPI moms	6	38	54	-16
Democratic dads	11	57	37	+20
Democratic moms	12	41	53	-12
Independent dads	7	39	51	-12
Independent moms	3	22	73	-51
Republican dads	11	45	50	-4
Republican moms	8	30	65	-34

Compared to last year's survey of parents who are likely voters, this year, parents are even more likely to volunteer that the main causes of today's mental health crisis are social media, technology, and screen time (28% this year, 17% last year) and lack of parental support and involvement (20% this year, 11% last year). This year, parents are more likely than the likely voter parents were in last year's survey to recommend reducing screen time, technology, and social media usage (13% said this is the most important thing they would recommend doing to improve the lives of America's children, compared to 4% last year).

[20] Note: small sample size.
[21] Ibid.

© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Most subgroups of kids and teenagers say the main cause of today's mental health crisis is the negative impact of social media and the internet. Black boys are more likely to say it is a lack of parental support. Black kids and teens age 12 to 14 say the main causes are social media, lack of parental support, and bullying and discrimination. Social media and lack of parental support carry equal weight for kids in the West North Central[22] and West South Central regions. Suburban girls say social media, lack of parental support, academic and peer pressure, and bullying and discrimination all contribute about equally.

Parents and Teens Are Wary of Tech, Social Media, and AI

Technology and social media play a ubiquitous role in many Americans' lives. Yet **parents as well as kids and teenagers have some reservations about the benefits of social media and the impact that increasing use of AI may have on society.** Nearly two-thirds (64%) of parents think social media has had a mostly negative influence on children and teens.

Younger dads (49% negative, 41% positive) and Black dads (45% negative, 44% positive) are more evenly split on whether social media has had a positive or negative influence on children. Younger moms, older parents, White, Latino, and Asian American and Pacific Islander parents, and parents across party identification see the influence as largely negative.

Kids and teenagers are more mixed in their assessments: 40% say social media has had a mostly positive influence on them, and 33% say it has had a mostly negative influence. A plurality of kids and teens who check social media once a day or more often say it has had a positive influence on them (46%), while those who check social media only a few times a week or less often say it has had a negative influence on them (40%).

Majorities of Asian American and Pacific Islander boys[23] (65%) and Black suburban kids and teens[24] (53%) say social media has had a positive influence. Subgroups of kids and teens who are most likely to say social media has had more of a negative influence on them than a positive influence include rural boys (+14 net-negative influence), small-town residents (+13), Native American or Indigenous kids and teens (+12), and White rural kids and teens[25] (+10).

When given a list of concerns, 22% of kids and teenagers say the effect of social media on kids is their most important concern. Here, there is little difference between kids and teens who check social media once a day or more (22% say the effect of social media on kids is a top concern) and those who check social media only a few times a week or less (24%). White suburban kids and teens (32%), girls who are in fifth to eighth grade (31%), and boys in the West (31%) are the most likely to say the effect of social media on kids is a top concern.

In addition to broad concerns about social media, **parents along with kids and teenagers suspect AI will interfere with creativity.** Two-thirds (67%) of parents and 6 in 10 (60%) kids and teens agree that using AI tools will make kids and teens less creative. Parents agree across demographic, geographic, and partisanal subgroups.

Parents, Kids, and Teenagers Are Unified on Lack of a Voice in Policymaking

It is clear that parents, kids, and teens have a lot of worries about young people's current and future prospects. **Unfortunately, many do not feel like our leaders adequately take young people's needs into consideration and do not trust leaders to benefit young people through their policymaking.**

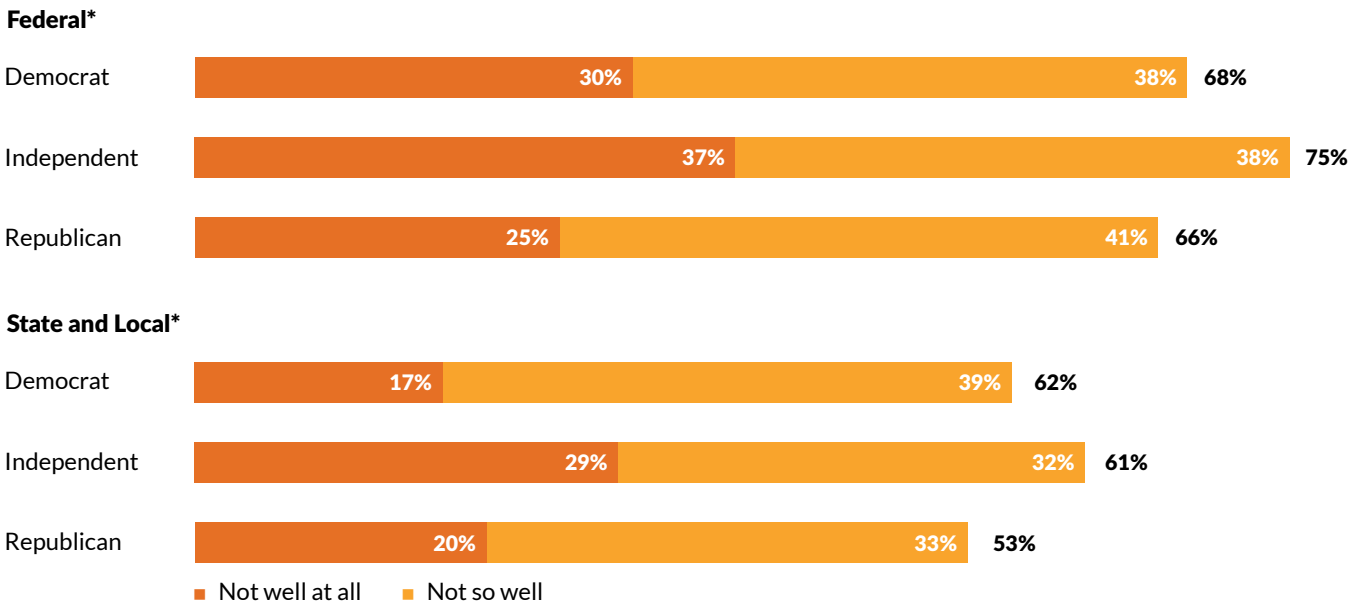
Federal policymakers face an even bigger struggle to earn the trust of parents and kids and teenagers compared to state and local leaders. **Over two-thirds (69%) of parents think federal politicians and elected officials don't reflect the needs, desires, and experiences of young people in this country well, and over half (56%) of parents think state and local politicians and elected officials don't reflect the needs, desires, and experiences of young people in this country well. Kids and teens express similar sentiments as parents:** 63% think politicians and elected officials don't reflect the needs, desires, and experiences of young people in this country well.

This is a place of partisan unity. Democratic, Republican, and independent parents all believe that federal, state, and local politicians and elected officials do not reflect the needs, desires, and experiences of young people in this country well.

[22] Note: small sample size.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.

© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

FIGURE 27. Percent of parents by party identification who think federal or their state and local politicians and elected officials do not reflect the needs, desires, and experiences of young people in this country



* split-sampled questions

FIGURE 28. Percent of parents by party identification who feel their voice matters or does not matter in decisions made by the federal government or their local government

	The Federal Government*			Your Local Government*		
	Rep parents	Ind parents	Dem parents	Rep parents	Ind parents	Dem parents
My voice matters	37	30	38	46	23	35
My voice does not matter	62	65	58	52	72	63

* split-sampled questions

© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Across regions of the country, parents do not think their state and local politicians and elected officials reflect the needs, desires, and experiences of young people well. Parents in the Midwest (62% not well) and West (60% not well) are more likely than parents in the Northeast (53% not well) and South (51% not well) to feel this way.

Perhaps because parents and kids and teenagers do not see leaders as considering young people, **they do not feel their voice matters.** About 6 in 10 parents think their voices do not matter in decisions made by their local governments (60% does not matter, 33% does not matter at all) or in decisions made by the federal government (61% does not matter, 35% does not matter at all). And 6 in 10 kids and teens feel their voice does not matter in decisions made by the government (61% does not matter, 38% does not matter at all).

Parents across party identification believe that their voice does not matter in decisions made by their local government or the federal government. Independent parents feel especially voiceless. **Parents in different regions of the country say their voice does not matter in decisions made by their local government (54% or more parents from different regions) or by the federal government (56% or more parents from different regions).**

Asian American and Pacific Islander kids and teens (41% my voice matters a lot or somewhat) are more likely than Black (32%), Latino (32%), or White (26%) kids and teens to feel their voice matters in decisions made by the government. There is little difference between boys and girls (31% and 30% respectively), or between teens age 12 to 14 and teens age 15 to 17 (30% and 32% respectively).

Parents do not trust that kids will benefit from policies made by the federal government or state and local governments, with some partisan differences. About 6 in 10 (61%) parents do not trust the federal government or their state government (57%) to make policies that benefit young people and families over the next four years. Republican parents are nearly evenly divided on trusting the federal government (49% trust, 47% don't trust). However, they show less confidence in their state governments, with 53% not trusting versus 43% trusting them to create beneficial policies for young people and families. Democratic and independent parents express even stronger distrust. Among Democrats, 74% don't trust the federal government, and 60% don't trust their state government. Similarly, 64% of independent parents distrust the federal government, while 65% lack confidence in their state government to develop policies that benefit young people and families.

Across regions of the country, parents do not trust the federal government to make policies that will benefit children over the next four years. Parents in the Northeast split between trusting and not trusting (48% each) their state government to make these beneficial policies, but parents in the Midwest (66%), South (56%), and West (59%) do not.

No matter which party controls their state or if their state has divided power, parents do not trust the federal government or the state government to make policies that benefit young people and families over the next four years. Over half of parents in Republican trifecta states do not trust the federal government (57%) or their state government (55%). Parents in Democratic trifecta states especially do not trust the federal government (63%), and half (52%) don't trust their state government. Parents in divided government states (states where neither Democrats nor Republicans have control of the state) are the most likely to not trust the federal government (65%) and their state government (70%).

On the trust dimension, kids and teenagers resemble Democratic and independent parents more than Republican parents. About half (52%) of kids and teens do not trust President Trump and his team to make policies that will make the world a better place for kids like them over the next four years.

Looking at demographic and geographic subgroups, **only Asian American and Pacific Islander boys trust President Trump and his team** (53% trust, 44% do not trust). Several other groups split between trusting and not trusting Trump and his team: boys in the South (+2), suburban boys (+2), White urban kids and teens (+2), White kids and teens in fifth to eighth grade (+1), Northeast boys (-2), boys under age 15 (-3), 15-year-olds (-4), White rural kids and teens (-4), and kids and teens in the West South Central region (-4).

© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

A Call for Government Action from Parents, Kids, and Teens

The Government Should Prioritize Young People, But Some Skepticism

Parents as well as kids and teenagers believe that federal, state, and local governments should prioritize policies that benefit young people, even as they express some skepticism that the government will do this. **Over four in five (83%) parents think the federal government should place a priority, 84% of parents think their state and local government should place a priority, and 80% of kids and teenagers think the government should place a priority on making policies that benefit younger people in this country.**

But parents and kids and teens alike are somewhat skeptical that the government will follow through on what they should do: 47% of parents think the federal government *will* place a priority on making policies that benefit younger people in this country; 45% think the federal government *will not*. Parents' outlook is slightly better at the state and local level, but many still believe that prioritization of young people will not happen: 50% of parents think their state and local government will place a priority on making policies that benefit younger people in this country; 43% think their state and local government will not.

Among parents, views are partisanly polarized. The majority of Republican parents believe that federal as well as state and local government will make policies that benefit younger people in this country a priority, while Democratic and independent parents believe that neither federal nor state and local government will do so. Democratic parents are especially skeptical about the federal government's willingness to prioritize policies that benefit young people.

Younger dads and moms have different impressions compared to older dads and moms on the level of priority that the federal and their state and local governments will place on making policies that benefit younger people. Younger dads believe both the federal and their state and local governments will place a priority on this; younger moms are more likely to think the federal government will. Older moms think all levels of government will not place a priority on policies that benefit younger people; older dads agree that the federal government will not but are more evenly split on their state and local governments. Similar differences emerge among White, Black, Latino, and Asian American and Pacific Islander parents. Black parents do not see any level of government placing a priority on this. White parents are split. Latino parents think all levels of government will place a priority on policies that benefit younger people. Asian American and Pacific Islander parents think their local and state government will, but are split on the federal government.

Regional differences emerge as well. Northeastern parents are split on the federal government prioritizing policies that benefit younger people, but think their state and local governments will make this a priority. Midwestern parents think the federal government will not, but are split on their state and local governments. Southern parents think all levels of government will prioritize making policies that benefit younger people. Western parents are split on their state and local governments and think the federal government will not make this policymaking a priority.

Kids and teenagers are even more skeptical than parents that the government will follow through on prioritizing younger people. Half (50%) of kids and teens think the government will not place a priority on making policies that benefit younger people in this country; 38% think the government will. White kids and teens (41% will, 45% will not) are more evenly split than Black, Latino, and Asian American and Pacific Islander[26] kids and teens, who all say the government will not place a priority on making policies that benefit younger people in the country (65%, 55%, and 60% respectively).

[26] Note: small sample size.

© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

FIGURE 29. Percent of parents by party identification who think the federal government or their state and local government will place a priority or will not place a priority on making policies that benefit younger people in this country

	The Federal Government*			Your Local Government*		
	Rep parents	Ind parents	Dem parents	Rep parents	Ind parents	Dem parents
Will place a priority	67	38	29	63	34	44
Will not place a priority	27	46	66	32	53	50

* split-sampled questions

FIGURE 30. Percent of parents by gender and age who think the federal government or their state and local government will place a priority or will not place a priority on making policies that benefit younger people in this country

	The Federal Government*				Your Local Government*			
	Dads <50	Moms <50	Dads 50+	Moms 50+	Dads <50	Moms <50	Dads 50+	Moms 50+
Will place a priority	58	53	40	30	60	49	50	39
Will not place a priority	38	38	52	57	36	40	45	51

* split-sampled questions

FIGURE 31. Percent of parents by race/ethnicity who think the federal government or their state and local government will place a priority or will not place a priority on making policies that benefit younger people in this country

	The Federal Government*				Your Local Government*			
	White	Black	Latino	AAPI	White	Black	Latino	AAPI
Will place a priority	46	36	55	48	49	43	56	51
Will not place a priority	45	60	39	48	44	51	37	43

* split-sampled questions

FIGURE 32. Percent of parents by region who think the federal government or their state and local government will place a priority or will not place a priority on making policies that benefit younger people in this country

	The Federal Government*				Your Local Government*			
	NE	MW	South	West	NE	MW	South	West
Will place a priority	48	43	51	40	60	45	51	44
Will not place a priority	48	54	38	49	36	50	41	45

* split-sampled questions

© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

The Government Spends Too Little on Programs That Benefit Children and Youth

Parents think the government can do a better job of funding programs for children and youth. As we saw in last year's survey among voters, a solid majority of parents across party lines think the federal government and their state government spend too little on programs that benefit children and youth, and this crosses party lines. Close to 6 in 10 parents think the federal government spends too little on programs that benefit children and youth (63%) and think their state government spends too little (57%).

Democratic parents especially believe that the federal government spends too little (73%), as do independent parents (65%) and Republican parents (55%). When thinking about their states, 66% of Democratic parents, 60% of independent parents, and 50% of Republican parents think their state government spends too little on programs that benefit children and youth.

Parents Think Programs and Tax Credits Will Improve Lives

Parents see a role for the government specifically in letting parents do the work of raising children, and believe that some policy and tax changes would improve the lives of America's children. A plurality (42%) of parents say a paid family, parental, and medical leave program for workers who need to provide short-term care for family members, like children, would make the lives of America's children much better off (81% say much or somewhat better off), 40% say more government funding to help parents afford child care and after-school programs would make the lives of America's children much better off (76% much or somewhat), and 39% say more tax credits for programs that support families would make the lives of America's children much better off (77% much or somewhat).

Democratic, Republican, and independent parents agree that implementing these changes would make the lives of America's children better off, with Democratic parents more likely to say it would make children's lives much better off.

FIGURE 33. Percent of parents by party identification who think the following changes would make the lives of America's children much better off or better off overall

	Democratic parents		Independent parents		Republican parents	
	Much better	Somewhat/ much better	Much better	Somewhat/ much better	Much better	Somewhat/ much better
Paid family, parental, and medical leave program	49	87	44	79	35	78
More government funding to help parents afford child care and after-school programs	49	86	46	74	29	68
More tax credits for programs that support families	48	85	34	71	33	73

© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Younger and older moms and dads and parents across race/ethnicity believe that America's children would be better off with a paid family, parental, and medical leave program for workers who need to provide short-term care for family members, like children, as well as more government funding to help parents afford child care and after-school programs, and more tax credits for programs that support families. Every single demographic, geographic, and partisanal group thinks these changes will make the lives of America's children better off by wide margins.

Half of Parents, Fewer Kids Feel Positive About How the New Administration Will Affect Families

As of January 2025 (pre-inauguration), about half of the parents surveyed think the new administration under President Trump will have a positive impact on the lives of young people and families (52%) and on the lives of families like theirs (51%). Republican parents feel especially optimistic: 78% think the impact on the lives of young people and families will be positive (37% very positive), and 82% think the impact on the lives of families like theirs will be positive (38% very positive).

Independent parents make an interesting distinction. **While independent parents think the new administration will have a positive impact on the lives of young people and families** (53% positive, 16% very positive), **they are split as to whether the impact on the lives of families like theirs will be positive** (33% positive, 10% very positive) or negative (36% negative, 19% very negative). Democratic parents think the impacts will be negative: 69% think the impact on the lives of young people and their families will be negative (45% very negative), and 59% think the impact on the lives of families like theirs will be negative (40% very negative). Interestingly, about a quarter of Democratic parents think the impact on young people and their families (25%) and on families like theirs (26%) will be positive.

Aside from Republicans, small-town parents (30%) and rural dads (31%) are the most likely to say the Trump administration will have a very positive impact on the lives of young people and the lives of families like theirs. In addition to Democrats, older Black parents (54%), White college-educated moms[27] (40%), New England parents[28] (40%), Black moms (36%), seniors (31%), older moms (31%), and older Latino parents (31%) are the most likely to say the Trump administration will have a very negative impact on the lives of young people and the lives of families like theirs.

Overall, kids and teenagers have a mixed assessment of the impact the new administration under President Trump will have on the lives of young people and families and on the lives of families like theirs. Kids and teens lean toward thinking that the impact on the lives of young people and families will be positive (43% positive and 37% negative), and are evenly split on the impact on the lives of families like theirs (41% positive and 39% negative). White kids and teens assess the impacts in a more favorable light than their Black and Latino peers. But within racial subgroups, there are gender gaps, with boys more positive than girls.

FIGURE 34. Percent of kids and teens by gender and race/ethnicity who rate the impact the new administration under President Trump will have on the lives of young people and families or on the lives of families like theirs as positive or negative

	The lives of young people and families*			The lives of families like yours*		
	Positive	Negative	Margin	Positive	Negative	Margin
White boys	48	31	+17	50	33	+17
White girls	50	30	+20	41	38	+3
Black boys	33	40	-7	33	33	even
Black girls	15	62	-47	28	54	-25
Latino boys	38	40	-2	40	41	-1
Latina girls	33	51	-18	38	44	-6

* split-sampled questions. Note: small sample size for Black boys, Black girls, Latino boys, and Latina girls.

[27] Note: small sample size.
[28] Ibid.

© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Parents, Kids, and Teens See a Broad Range of Solutions

Looking Back, Seeing Improvements

When they look back at 20 years ago, parents see real improvements in some areas of kids' lives. First, a majority (54%) of parents think today's children are doing better than American children 20 years ago in their ability to think creatively. Parents also see an improvement in kids' access to health care and mental health care: 60% of parents think today's children are doing better than children 20 years ago in their ability to access mental health care, and 58% think today's children are doing better in their ability to access health care.

Older moms and Northeast moms stand out as subgroups who think today's children are worse off in their ability to think creatively.

Older college-educated parents, Republican moms, and moms of children age 18 and over are split between thinking today's children are better off and worse off when it comes to the mental health care they can access. Moms who have children 18 and over are split on access to health care.

The Government Can Help Families Economically

Parents agree that the government could do more to help families economically, both in the early years of a child's life and when children are teens and young adults—and this crosses party lines.

FIGURE 35. Percent of parents by party identification who strongly agree or agree overall that families need more economic assistance from the government to get by in the early years of a child's life or when their children and teens are young adults

	Democratic parents		Independent parents		Republican parents	
	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Agree
In the early years of a child's life*	36	83	39	74	30	59
When their children and teens are young adults*	42	83	28	68	20	53

* split-sampled questions

© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Solutions to Make Families Strong

Parents and kids and teens have plenty of ideas about what makes families strong. In addition to improving education, **parents' list of what makes families strong includes meeting people's basic needs and promoting traditional family values, and kids' and teenagers' list includes connection with parents, promoting traditional values, and meeting people's basic needs.**

FIGURE 36. Percent of parents who say the following things are what make families strong

Quality education for children	**31%**
Having basic needs met/income keeping up with rising costs	**27%**
Children being raised by a father and a mother	**27%**
Putting God first	**27%**
Good paying jobs with benefits like health care and vacation	**25%**
Access to affordable housing	**23%**
Affordable health care	**22%**
Access to fresh and quality food	**19%**
Parents accepting their children no matter what	**14%**
Having a support network/community	**13%**
Affordable child care and after-school programs	**13%**
Access to mental health care	**10%**
Safer/limited social media use	**10%**
Programs like paid family and medical leave	**7%**
Affordable access to technology and internet	**6%**

FIGURE 37. Percent of kids and teens who say the following things are what make families strong

Parents who listen to their kids	**42%**
Parents accepting their children no matter what	**29%**
Putting God first	**25%**
Children being raised by a father and a mother	**21%**
Having basic needs met/income keeping up with rising costs	**19%**
Good paying jobs with benefits like health care and vacation	**18%**
Quality education for children	**18%**
Having a support network/community	**15%**
Access to mental health care	**14%**
Access to fresh and quality food	**13%**
Access to affordable housing	**12%**
Affordable health care	**10%**
Safer social media use	**7%**
Affordable access to technology and internet	**5%**
Affordable child care	**5%**

© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Meeting basic needs: When given a list of things that people have said make families strong, 27% of parents say one of their top things is having basic needs met or incomes keeping up with costs, 25% say good paying jobs with benefits like health care and vacation, 23% say access to affordable housing, 22% say affordable health care, and 19% say access to fresh and quality food makes families strong. Meeting basic needs and income keeping up with costs particularly resonates with younger and older moms, White parents, and independents. Independent parents also rank good paying jobs with benefits and access to affordable housing in their top tier of things that make families strong. Good paying jobs with benefits also stands out for younger dads, and access to affordable housing stands out for younger moms.

Similarly, when given a list, kids and teenagers choose many of the components that meet people's basic needs: 19% say one of their top things is having basic needs met or incomes keeping up with rising costs, 18% say good paying jobs with benefits like health care and vacation, 13% say access to fresh and quality food, 12% say access to affordable housing, and 10% say affordable health care.

Family values: 27% of parents say one of their top things that make families strong is children being raised by a father and a mother, and 28% say putting God first makes families strong. Putting God first is especially relevant to older moms, Black and Latino parents, and Republican women. Children being raised by a father and a mother is in the top tier of things that make families strong for younger and older dads, White parents, and Republican dads.

A quarter (25%) of kids and teenagers say one of their top things is putting God first, and 21% say children being raised by a father and mother makes families strong.

Connection: Kids and teenagers believe that healthy family dynamics make families strong. Their top selection in the list is parents who listen to their kids: 42% say that this makes families strong. About one in three (29%) kids and teens say parents accepting their children no matter what makes families strong.

About one in 10 (9%) kids and teens say providing community and active parents is the most important thing they'd recommend to improve the lives of kids like them.

Parents, Kids, and Teens Are Eager for More Mental Health Services

Parents as well as kids and teenagers see the importance of additional access to mental health care. Over half (56%) of parents think expanding the availability of mental health services ***outside* of schools** is very important in improving mental health in the country (84% total think this is important); 55% think it is very important to expand availability in schools (84% total think this is important).

Pluralities or more of younger and older moms and dads, and parents across race/ethnicity and party identification, think it is very important to expand the availability of mental health services inside and outside of schools. Intense importance is just under a majority among younger dads and White dads, and only 37% of Republican dads think this is very important, but over three-quarters still think this is very or somewhat important to do.

Kids and teenagers agree. A solid majority (61%) think it is very important for their school to provide more mental health services, and 85% think this is important overall.

Education: The Critical Common Ground Solution

Parents as well as kids and teenagers see education as the key, and they include more than K–12 education in their educational priorities. When asked the most important recommendation they would make to improve the lives of America's children, parents' top response is improving and reforming education, including college (30% of parents say this is the most important thing they would recommend). Similarly, 28% of kids and teens say improving and reforming education is the most important thing they would recommend to improve the lives of kids like them.

Relatedly, 31% of parents say quality education for children makes families strong—the top response. Almost 9 in 10 (86%) parents think better K–12 public schools would make the lives of America's children better off (56% say it would make them much better off), and 82% of parents say free preschool for young children would make the lives of America's children better off (48% much better off).

Parents believe that education includes play and activities. About four in five (81%) parents believe more structured activities like organized sports, arts, and lessons would make America's children better off (40% much better off), and over three-quarters (77%) of parents think more unstructured free time for play with other children would make America's children better off (30% much better off).

© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

The Role of AI in Education

One of the places in the surveys where the attitudes of parents diverge the most compared to kids and teenagers is in their opinions about AI. Parents are mixed as to whether AI programs will have a positive (39%) or negative (43%) impact on a child's learning in school. On the other hand, kids and teens are more likely to think AI will be positive for learning: 48% think AI will have a positive impact on their learning in school (31% say a negative impact).

Younger and older moms and dads and White, Black, Latino, and Asian American and Pacific Islander parents have different perceptions of AI programs' impact on children's learning. Younger dads and Black parents are most likely to believe the impact will be positive. Older parents and White moms are the most likely to think it will be negative.

FIGURE 38. Percent of parents by gender and age, and by gender and race/ethnicity, who say AI will have a very positive, positive, or negative impact on a child's learning in school

	Very Positive	Positive	Negative	Margin
Younger dads	22	52	36	+16
Younger moms	14	38	41	-4
Older dads	5	34	51	-17
Older moms	6	31	46	-15
White dads	12	41	44	-3
White moms	9	29	50	-21
Black parents	20	51	28	+23
Latino parents	13	44	40	+4
AAPI parents	15	44	37	+7

But parents and kids and teens alike are interested in the benefits that AI could provide. Six in 10 (60%) parents agree that they are interested in AI tools that could help kids and teenagers learn (22% strongly agree). About two-thirds (65%) of kids and teens feel the same way (28% strongly agree).

Digital Safety – Calls for Change Across Generation

Parents overwhelmingly favor guardrails on social media for young people. While kids and teenagers widely favor social media warning labels, they are less in favor of age verification and limits. Over four in five parents favor requiring social media platforms to display warning labels about their potential risks to children's and teens' mental health and well-being (81% favor, 47% strongly favor) and requiring social media companies to verify users' ages and prevent anyone under 16 from having accounts (83% favor, 54% strongly favor). Parents across gender, age, and race/ethnicity solidly favor these social media reforms.

Nearly three-quarters of kids and teenagers favor requiring social media platforms to display warning labels (72% favor, 36% strongly favor), and about half (54%) favor requiring social media companies to verify users' ages and prevent anyone under 16 from having accounts, though 36% oppose this. Among boys, there isn't a significant difference among age groups: 56% of boys under 15 favor age limits, and 57% of 15- to 17-year-old boys favor them. Girls under 15 are split between favoring (46%) and opposing (44%) age limits, while 15- to 17-year-old girls favor them (60%).

© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Conclusion

Despite today's challenges, parents, kids, and teenagers offer valuable insights that form a powerful road map for policymakers, businesses, tech companies, educators, and communities, as well as parents, kids, and teenagers themselves. Their perspectives provide clear direction for the creation of systems that truly support family well-being.

To address mental health, educators and policymakers should respond to families' unambiguous call for expanded mental health services, both within and beyond school settings. Social media and tech companies should feel empowered and embrace their responsibility to establish and enforce thoughtful, protective, and robust regulations that safeguard young people's mental well-being while respecting their developmental needs.

Families hold a comprehensive view of education, spanning early childhood through post-secondary opportunities, and extending beyond classroom walls to all learning environments. This vision demands that policymakers, educators, and communities collaborate to strengthen K–12 public schools, implement universal pre-K, preserve spaces for both structured and unstructured play, approach AI integration with careful consideration, and ensure affordable pathways to college and career training.

The foundation for strong families requires economic stability. Policymakers, employers, and the housing and health care industries must fundamentally realign their priorities to ensure that families' basic needs are met and include housing, comprehensive health care, and good-paying jobs with benefits. This economic security creates the necessary conditions for children to thrive and for families to build stability.

Religious institutions, community organizations, parents, and extended family networks have crucial roles in creating support systems for parents and their children. Elected leaders and politicians in federal, state, and local governments should heed the call to prioritize policies that benefit young people through both action and funding. Policymakers must work diligently and recommit to meaningful engagement that strengthens the fabric of family and community life.

This report reveals that despite political polarization, Americans share significant common ground on what children need. By committing to a thoughtful, family-oriented road map, we can create a society where families thrive and children are prepared for the future—reflecting the hope that both parents and children express when thinking about what lies ahead.

Methodology

Parent survey: Lake Research Partners, in partnership with Echelon Insights, designed and administered this online survey, which was conducted from January 8 to 20, 2025. The survey reached a total of 1,300 parents nationwide, which includes a base sample of 1,000 parents, with oversamples of 100 Black, 100 Latino, and 100 Asian American or Pacific Islander parents. The oversamples were weighed down into the base sample to their proper proportion of the universe for a total sample size of 1,000.

Kid and teenager survey: Lake Research Partners, in partnership with Echelon Insights, designed and administered this online survey, which was conducted from January 8 to 20, 2025. The survey reached a total of 1,100 kids and teens age 12 to 17 nationwide, which includes a base sample of 800 kids and teens, with oversamples of 100 Black, 100 Latino, and 100 Asian American or Pacific Islander kids and teens. The oversamples were weighed down into the base sample to their proper proportion of the universe for a total sample size of 800.

Quantitative results are expressed as percentages unless otherwise noted. Results may not add to 100% due to rounding or multiple responses.

Split-sampled questions marked with an asterisk (*) are instances of controlled language experiments, where half of the respondents read one version of a question and the other half read another version—and we controlled for demographic, regional, and partisan variables.

To refer collectively to kid and teenager participants, we also use the terms *youth* and *young people*.

© COMMON SENSE MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

About Lake Research Partners

Lake Research Partners is a nationally recognized qualitative and quantitative research firm with over 25 years of experience in all phases of public opinion research for public entities and private enterprises. LRP's principals are leading strategists with experience serving as tacticians and senior advisors to a wide range of government agencies, advocacy groups, universities, labor unions, nonprofits, and foundations across the United States. LRP is a Woman-Owned Small-Business (WOSB) and is certified through the U.S. Women's Chamber of Commerce.

About Echelon Insights

Echelon Insights is an opinion research and analytical intelligence firm based in Alexandria, Virginia, known for providing strategic guidance to brands, political organizations, advocacy groups, and nonprofits. Founded in 2014, Echelon Insights has stayed on the cutting edge of polling and data analysis, and in 2022 was ranked as one of the most accurate pollsters in the 2022 election cycle by FiveThirtyEight's analysis.

About Common Sense

Common Sense is dedicated to improving the lives of kids and families by providing the trustworthy information, education, and independent voice they need to thrive. Our ratings, research, and resources reach more than 150 million users worldwide and 1.4 million educators every year. Learn more at commonsense.org/research.

For the full report, please visit commonsense.org/kids-and-families-in-america.

common sense®

LRP LAKE RESEARCH PARTNERS

ECHELON INSIGHTS

commonsense.org

© 2025 Common Sense Media. All rights reserved. Common Sense, associated names, associated trademarks, and logos are trademarks of Common Sense Media, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization (FEIN: 41-2024986).