

Illinois Parent Survey Panel

Fourth Survey

August 2024



illinois
action for
children

Building Strong Families
& Powerful Communities™

RAPID

The Illinois Parent Survey Panel consists of Illinois parents with children under the age of 6.

- Parents on the panel have the opportunity to share information about their family, experiences, and challenges.
- The goal of the panel is to gather essential and ongoing information from parents and caregivers.
- With our findings, we hope to inform the public and public officials about parents' goals and challenges in raising young children in Illinois.

What is the Illinois Parent Survey Panel?

Illinois Action for Children has partnered with the RAPID survey project at the Stanford Center on Early Childhood to conduct a quarterly survey with an ongoing panel of parents.

Survey 4 at a Glance

Survey Four Topics

1. About their communities
2. Health care access
3. Getting to places in their communities
4. Environmental quality
5. Safety
6. Resources & access to information

Key Findings - 1

Parent's Communities: This survey asked parents about different aspects of the communities where they live. The parents who responded are from 25 diff. counties and most lived in their community for at least five years.

Support and Services: For advice and support regarding their child's development, the majority of parents turn to their doctors, their family members, and their child care providers.

Half of the parents often participate in community events. Parents are looking for more activities for their children. Specifically, they shared the need for more parks, playgrounds, and libraries.

Environment Quality: Sixty percentage of parents had concerns about their communities' cleanliness. Two-fifths of parents expressed concern for their communities' air and water quality and noise levels.

Safety: Parents' most common safety concerns related to public health hazards such as pollution, unsafe water, and waste management. A fifth of parents were concerned about crime rates and street safety in their areas. Fourteen percent of parents shared that they do not feel safe raising children in their neighborhood.

However, seventy percent of parents believed that local authorities were effective at addressing their safety concerns.

Key Findings - 3

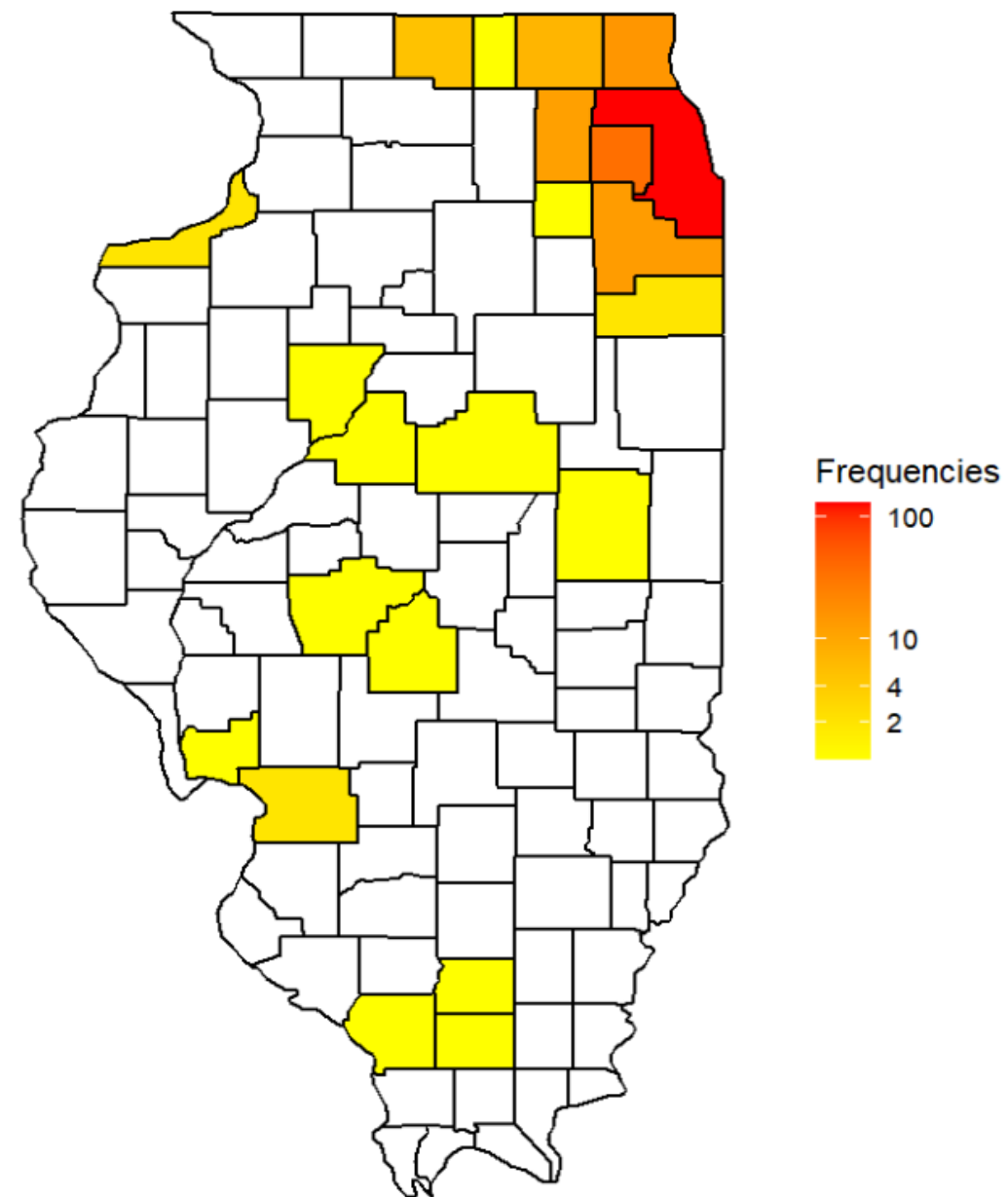
Health care access: Parents are satisfied with the availability of and access to pediatric, gynecologist, and primary care services – yet some are dissatisfied with dental and mental health services offered in their communities. A vast majority of parents trust their child’s doctor and the quality of care their child receives. When it came to challenges accessing medical care – the biggest one for parents was finding a doctor or an appointment that suits their schedules.

Transportation: Parents found driving to be the easiest and walking to be the most difficult form of transportation in their communities. Three-fourths of the parents found some level of ease with using public transportation; a fifth of parents use public transportation rarely and a fifth of them use it daily. Parents would like the current state of public transportation and road infrastructure to improve – with emphasis on having better routes.

About their Community

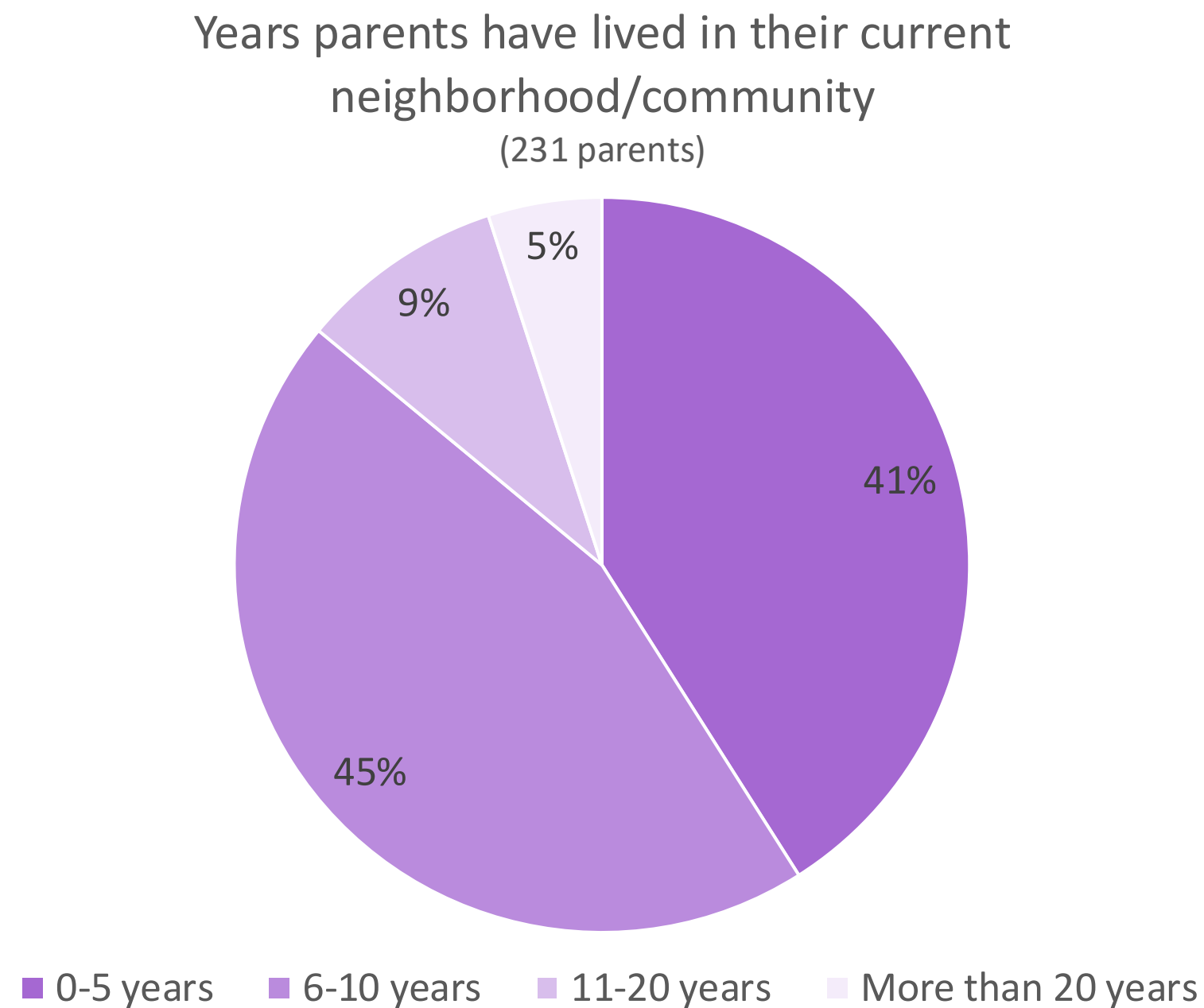
Where are parents from?

On our panel for the fourth survey, parents come from 25 different counties. More than half of the parents coming from Cook county; many other parents come from DuPage, Lake, Kane, and Will counties.



Residence Duration

In our panel, 41% of parents have lived in their current neighborhood less than 5 years, 45% have lived in their neighborhood between 6 to 10 years and 14% have lived there longer than 10 years.



What are some things that you like about the community you live in?

Parents like that their neighborhood is quiet and peaceful, neighbors are friendly, trustworthy, and care for each other, and that their community has resources and amenities for their children.

- “It’s mostly clean, I feel somewhat safe, multicultural neighborhoods, peaceful, great schools and mostly friendly faces.”
– Parent from DuPage County
- “Some things I like is that it is an inclusive community for Latinos, and there are many resources to support us.”
– Parent from Cook County
- “Neighborhood is like a village. They care for one another.”
– Parent from DuPage County
- “Lots of kids for my daughter to play with. Safe enough they can play together without needing close adult supervision.”
– Parent from Kane County
- “It is very quiet, calm, and there are big backyards and greenery (I live by a Forest Preserve).”
– Parent from Cook County
- “We know, trust, and rely on each other.”
– Parent from Cook County

What do you wish was different about your community?

Parents shared that they would like for their communities to be safer, have less crime, and have more amenities (parks and playgrounds, libraries, businesses and restaurants, and more events/activities for families)

- “I wish people cared more about their children’s education and I wish that our community didn’t experience gun violence, so I could feel more comfortable walking outside with my family.”
– Parent from Kane County
- “That our township offered more events/activities for families since we don’t have a park district.”
– Parent from DuPage County
- “I wish that it was more diverse (more Hispanics) and that there were more businesses in Town including restaurants.”
– Parent from Cook County
- "Strengthen the management of public resources, such as air and water."
– Parent from Will County
- “Less expensive. The community is great, but the cost of living has skyrocketed. I would love for my toddler to attend a school in this neighborhood, but I don't know if I can afford it in a few years.”
– Parent from Cook County

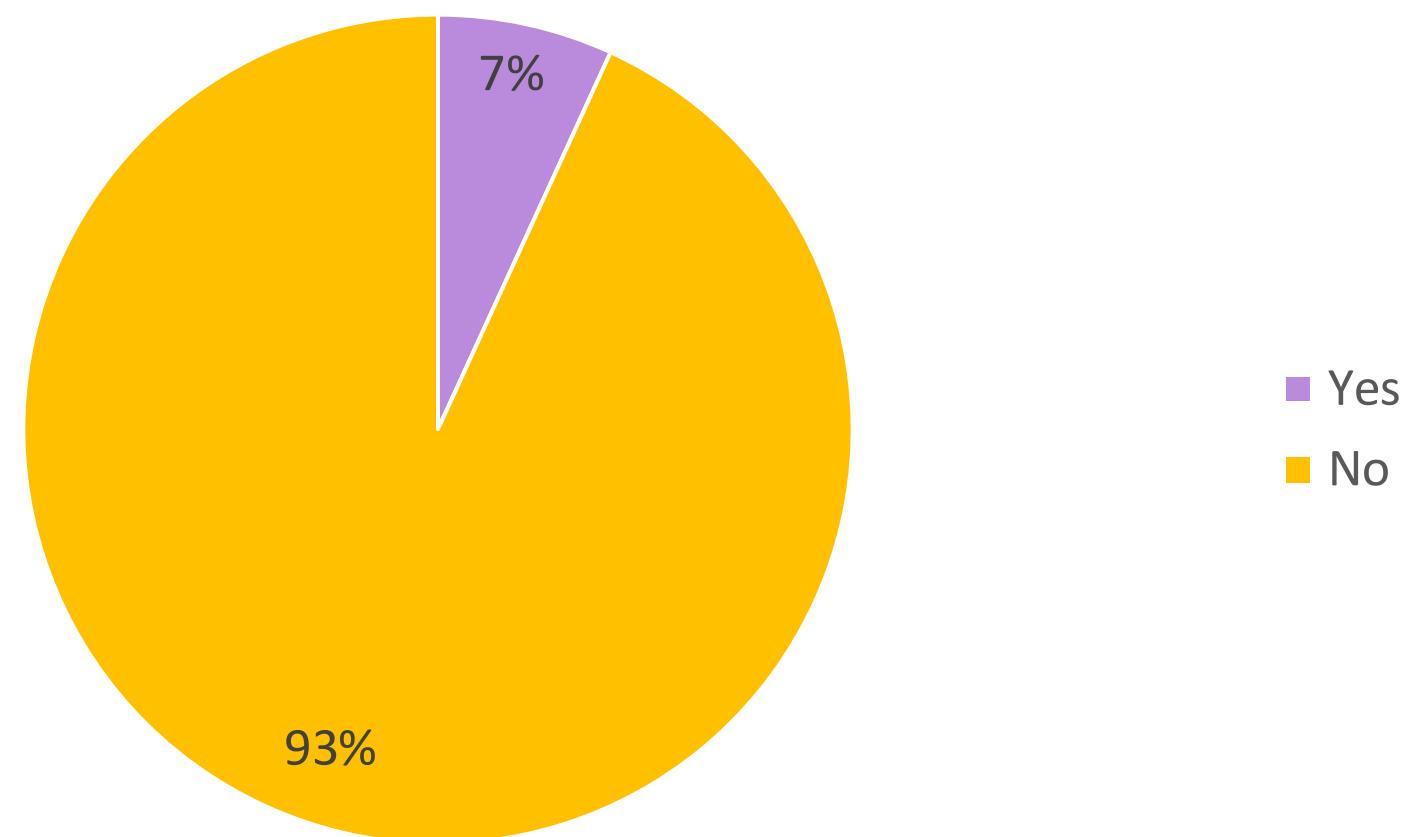
Health care access

Access to medical care

The large majority of parents had no trouble accessing medical care for themselves or their children.

Have you had trouble accessing medical care for
yourself or your children for any reason?

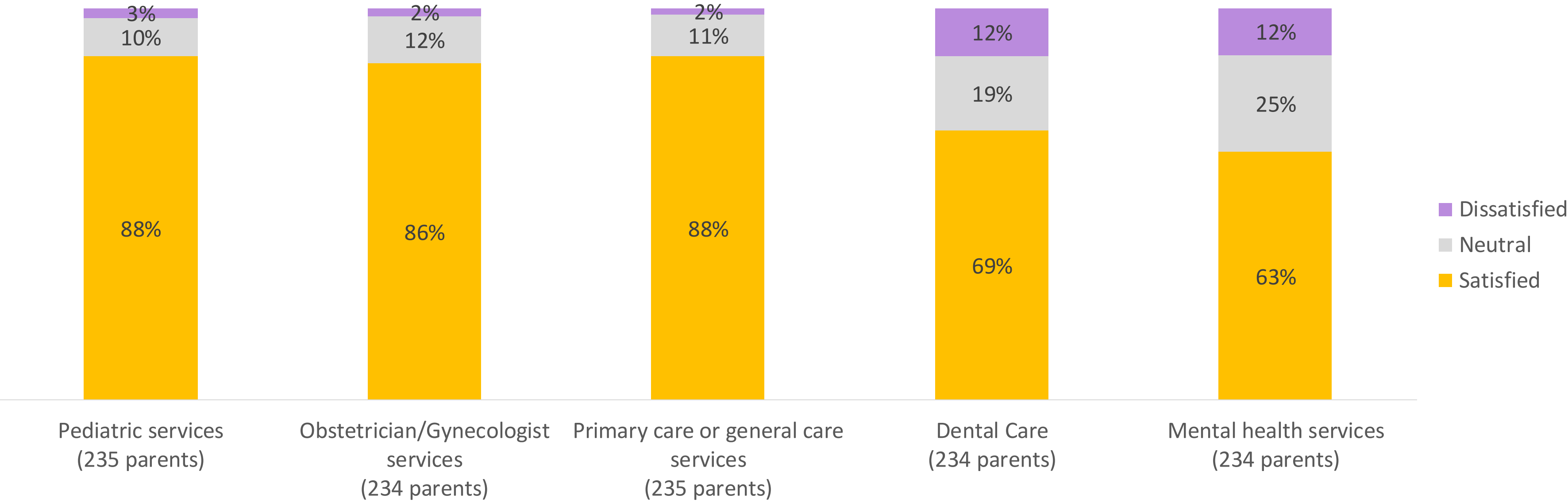
(234 parents)



Satisfaction with healthcare services

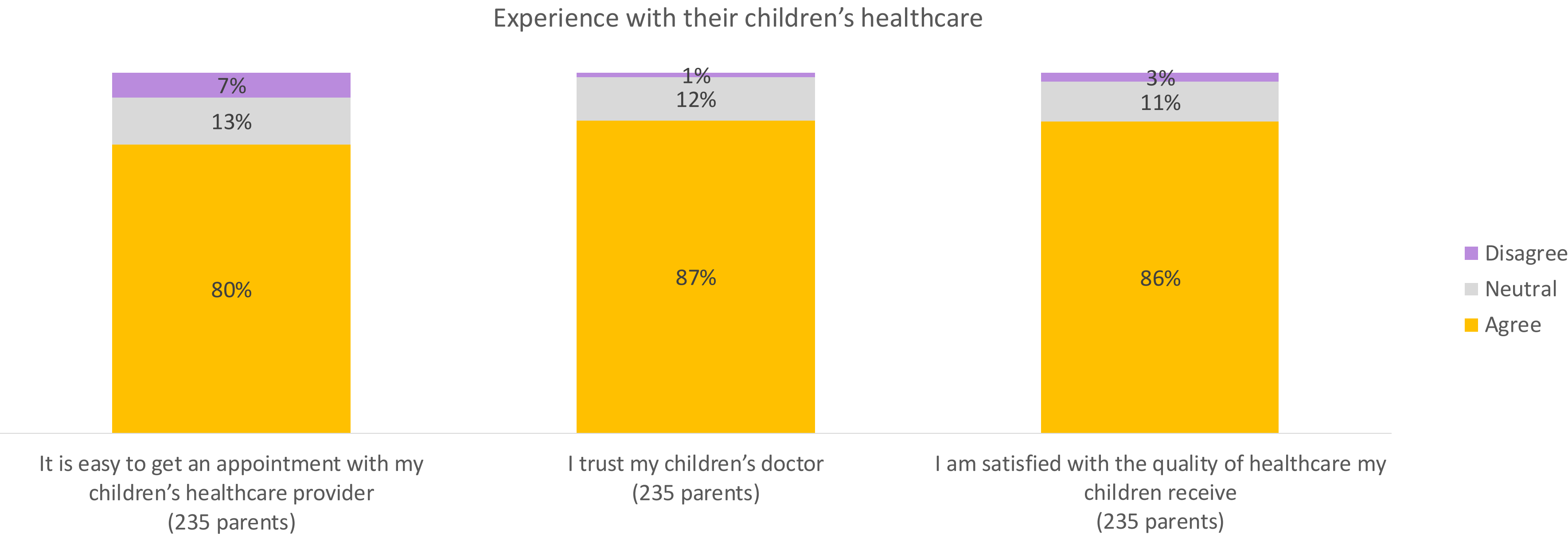
Most parents were satisfied with the availability and access to pediatric, gynecologist, and primary care services in their communities. However, fewer parents were satisfied with the dental care and the mental health services available.

Parents' satisfaction with availability and access of healthcare services in their communities



Parent experience with their children's healthcare

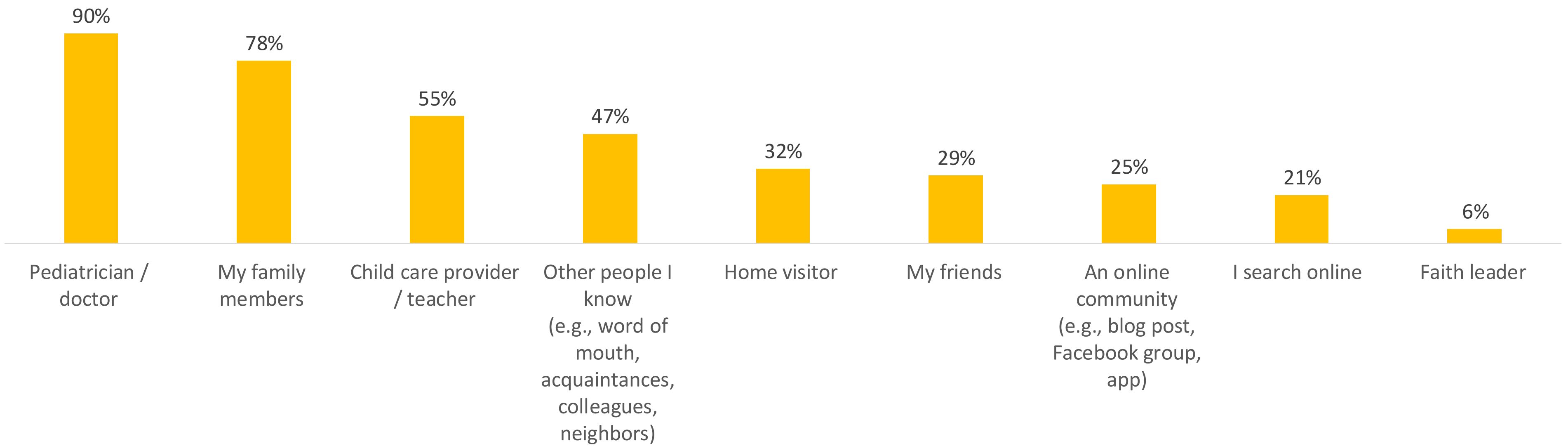
Eighty percent of parents said that it was easy to get an appointment with their child's healthcare provider. Almost 90% of parents trust their child's doctor and are satisfied with the quality of care their child receives.



Support for their children's development

Most parents turned to their doctor (90%) or family (78%) for support around their child's health, emotional well-being and development. About half (54%) of parents consulted their child care provider for support.

Whom do parents turn to for advice and support about their child's physical health and emotional wellbeing and general development
(240 parents)



What challenges have you faced in accessing medical care for yourself or your children?

The main challenge for parents was having a hard time finding a doctor or getting an appointment that suits their schedules. Other common issues included affordability, insurance, ease of access, mental health services, and dissatisfaction with the care provided.

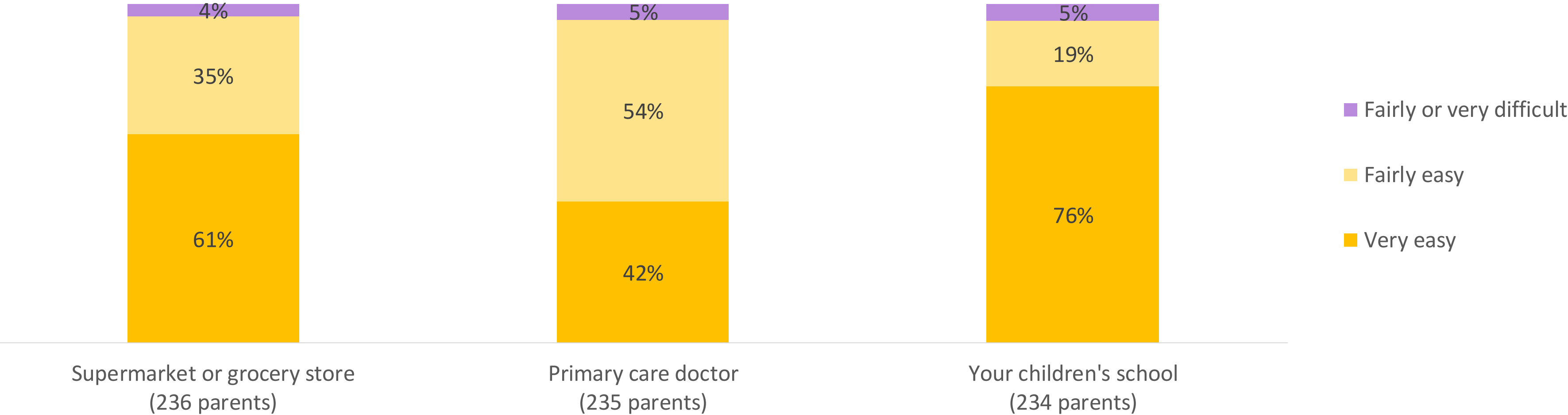
- “Find a place that accepts my insurance. Finding places that accepts new patients. Specifically, a therapist or eye doctor!”
– Parent from Cook County
- “Not being able to take time off work to go see a doctor when I need to because I can not afford to lose hours, and all the PTO is spent on my son's or parents need for my presence somewhere.”
– Parent from DuPage County
- “Unable to pay for medical care out of pocket and was denied Medicaid because IDHS lost my paperwork sent for redetermination. Children’s doctors are ALWAYS booked, and appointments are MONTHS out. Doctors never seem to know what is .”
– Parent from Cook County
- “Local doctor's office, particularly the psychiatric unit, is always 5 months behind in appointments. So, to fill my medication I have to see a medical doctor. If I want to talk to a psychiatrist I have to go elsewhere.”
– Parent from Kane County
- “Medical care is hard to access for myself being that it's hard to afford it and I don't know any resources to help me pay for it.”
– Parent from Cook County

Getting to Places in their Communities

Traveling to essential places

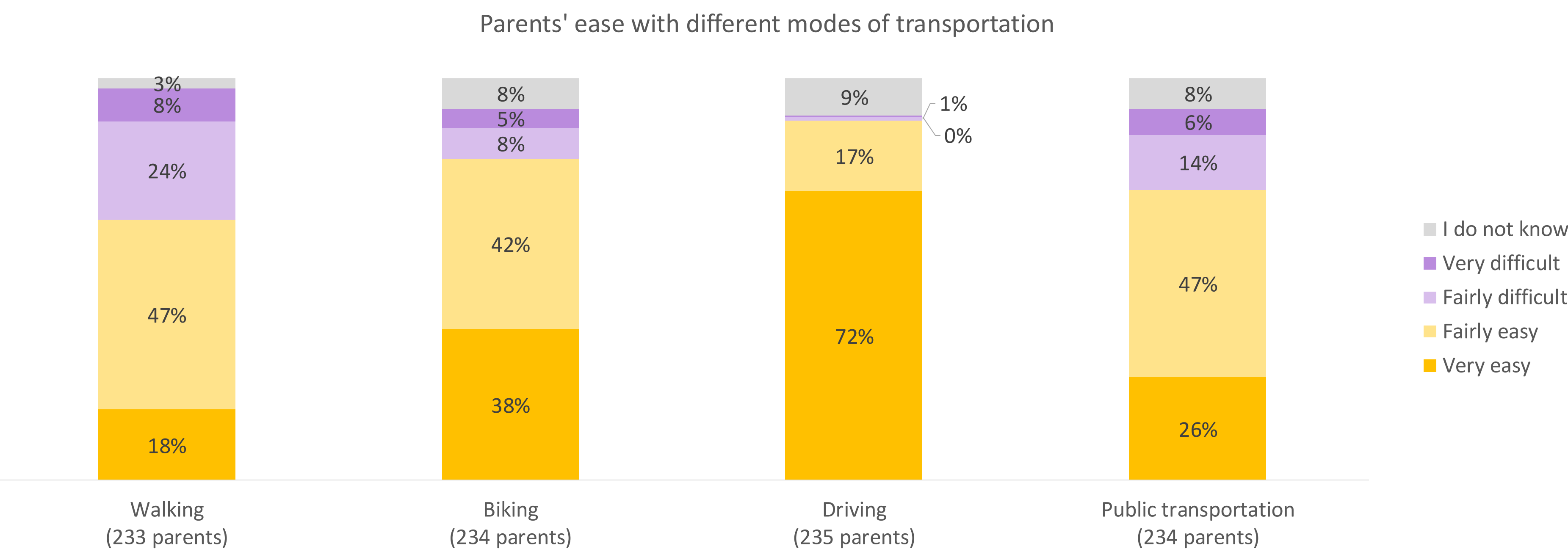
Few parents experienced difficulty traveling to their grocery store, primary care doctor, and their children’s schools.

Parents' ease traveling to the following places



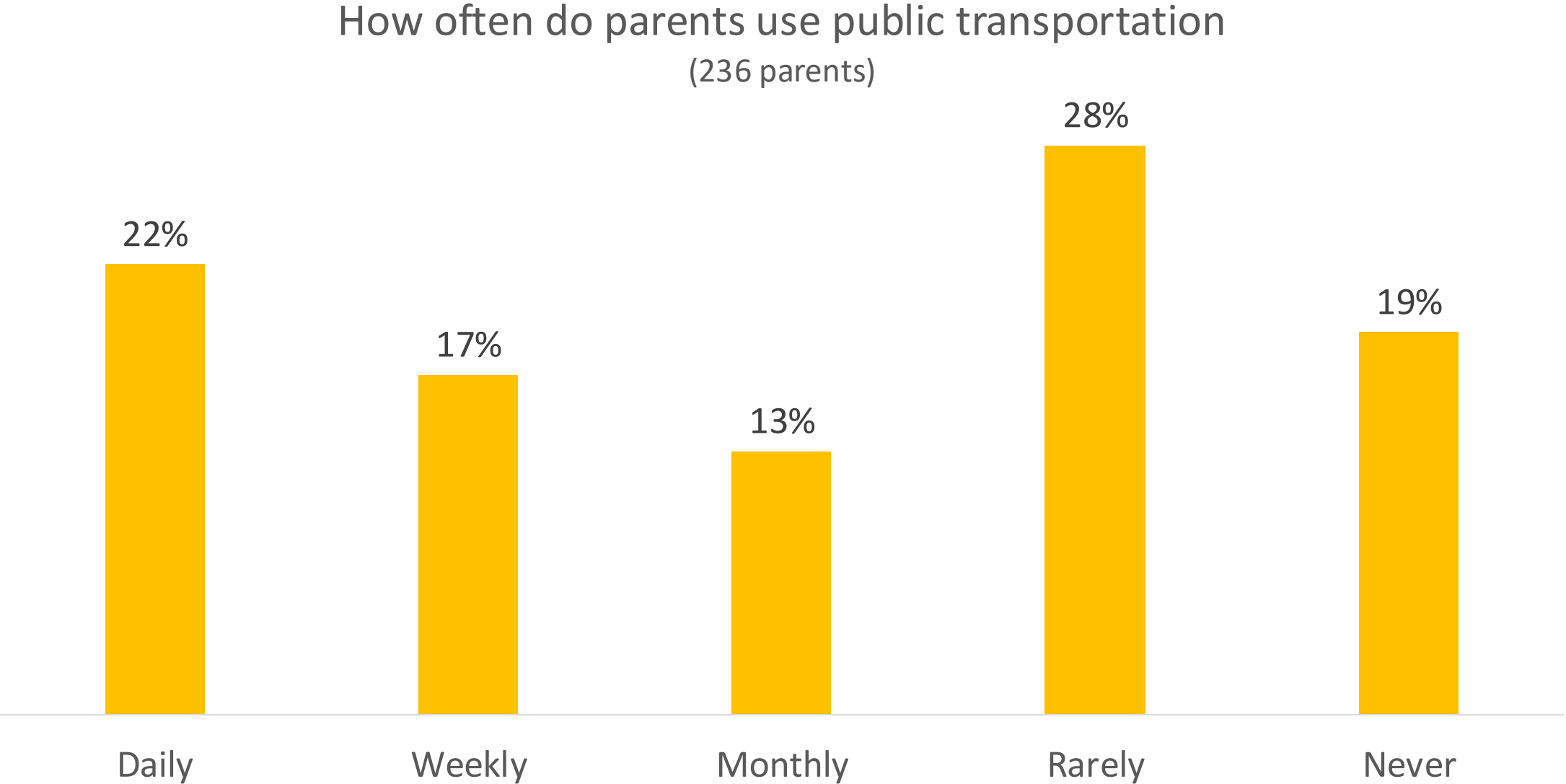
Ease of getting places with different modes of transportation

Thirty-two percent of parents feel it is difficult to walk to places in their community, and 20% say it is difficult to get around by public transportation.



Use of public transit

One fifth of parents relied on public transportation for daily use. About half (47%) of parents rarely or never used it.



What changes would you like to see in your community to make it easier to get where you need to go?

Parents expressed wanting increased access and reduced fares for public transportation, improvements to road infrastructure (better routes, better roads). Other issues included a need for more safety on roads, more pedestrian crosswalks and bike lanes.

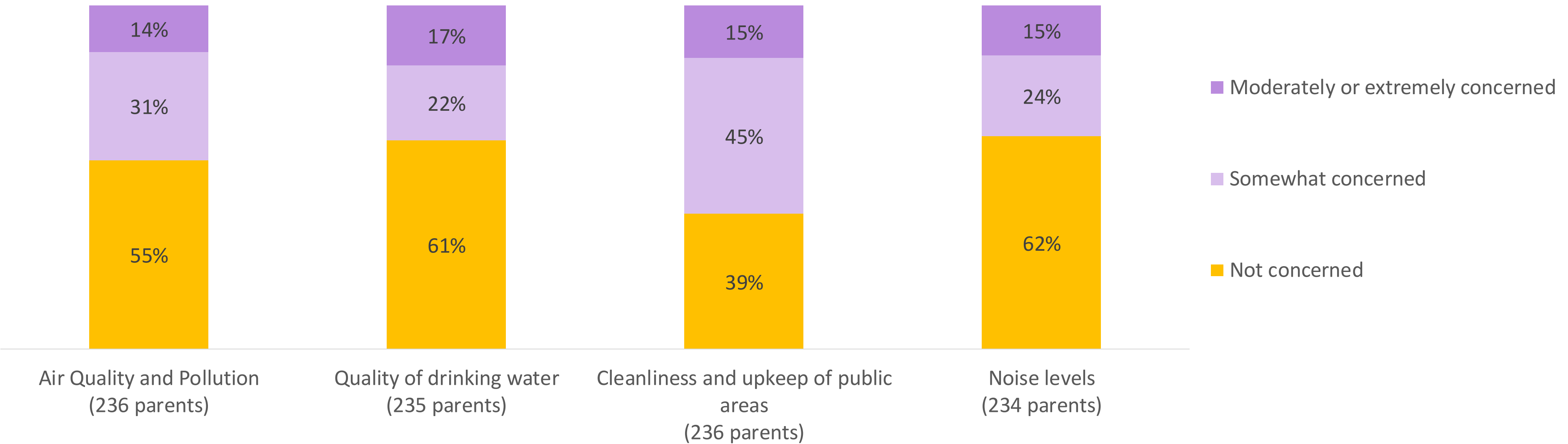
- “Less construction and street closures. Less people on the roads causing accidents. Cheaper gas.”
– Parent from McHenry County
- “Maybe better bus routes especially for the neighborhoods that aren’t urban. Maybe carpool services for the single parents who don’t have cars.”
– Parent from DuPage County
- “Sidewalks. Where we live there aren’t any sidewalks so we have to take walks on the side of the street or travel for outdoor walking exercise.”
– Parent from DuPage County
- “Faster public transportation, more sidewalks, parks, walk trails, helping families with use car donations, decrease in utility bills, more bike lanes on roads and cheaper gas!”
– Parent from DuPage County
- “Some changes I would like to see is just safer areas, potholes being fixed, streets become clean, and more patrol.”
– Parent from Cook County

Environmental quality

Environmental quality

Sixty percent of parents were concerned with the cleanliness and upkeep of public areas in their community. About 40% of parents were concerned about air quality, water quality, and noise levels in their community.

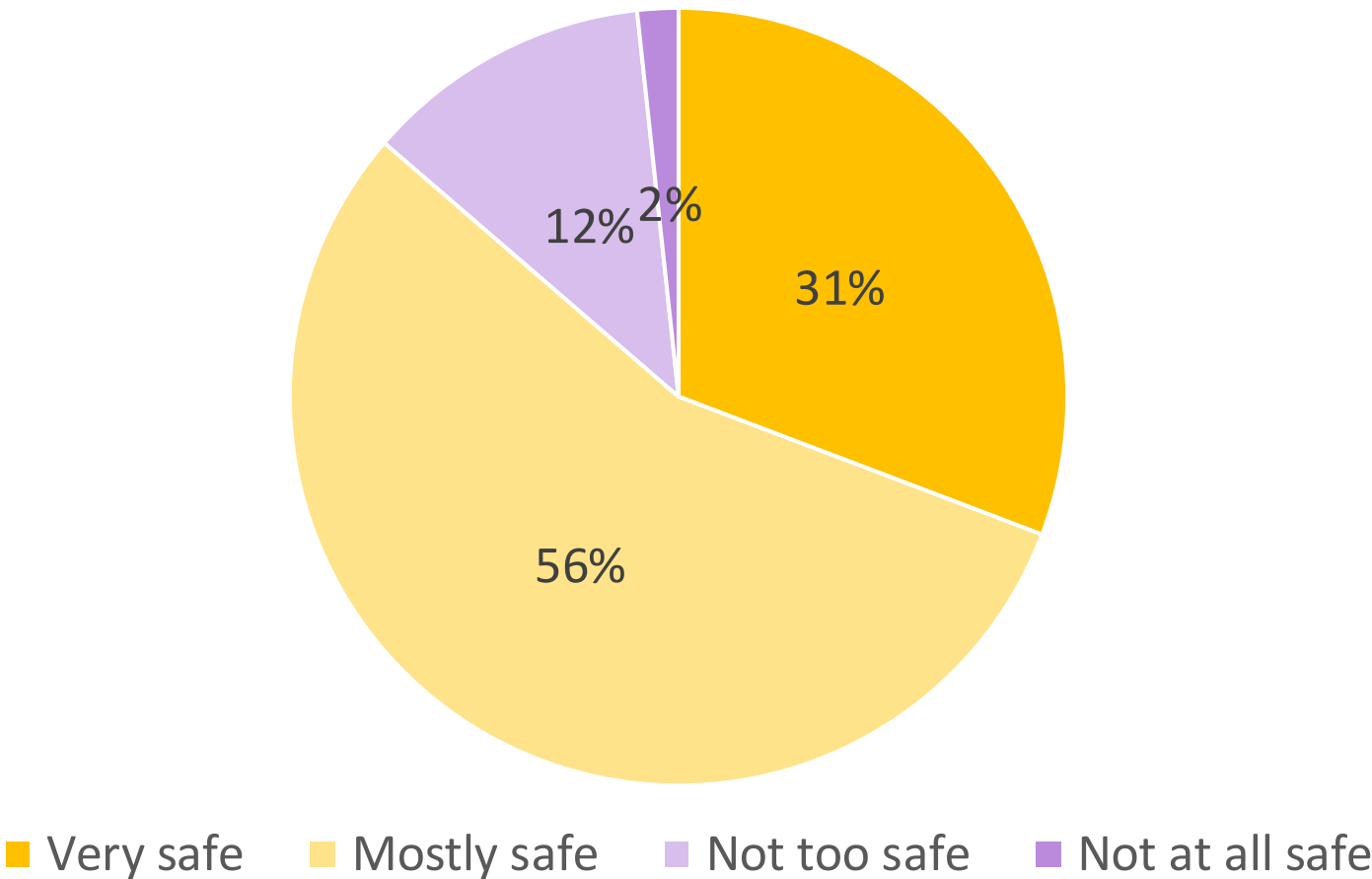
Environmental quality in the community



Safety

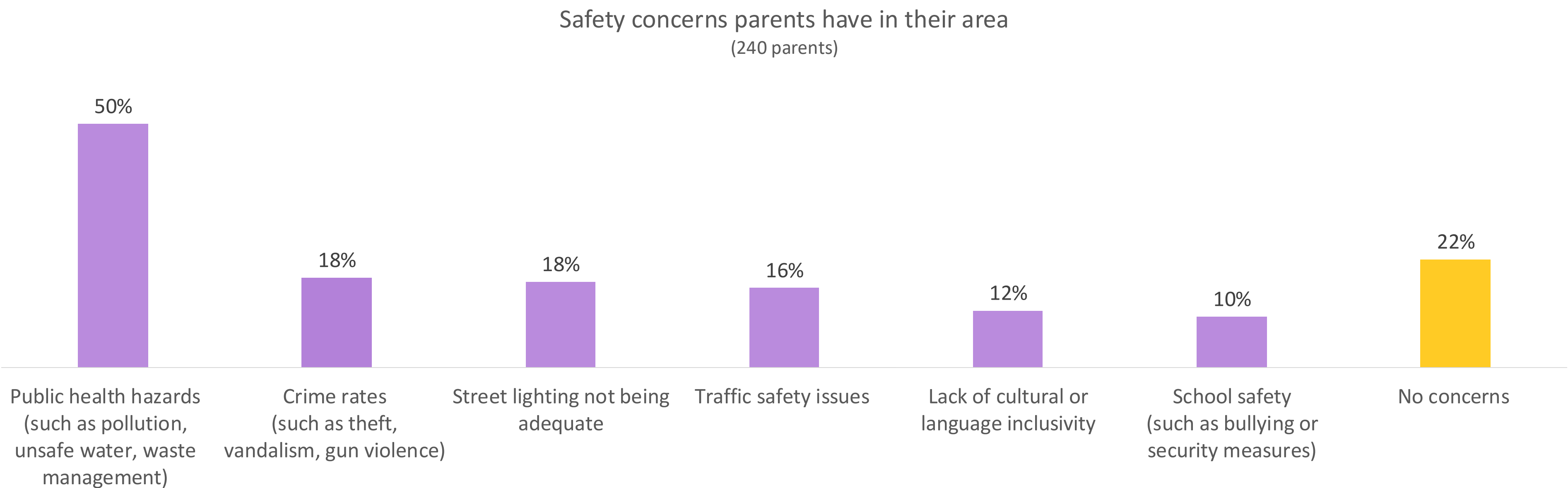
Only 14% percent of parents felt their neighborhood was not safe for raising children.

How safe do you feel your neighborhood is for raising children?
(234 parents)



Safety concerns

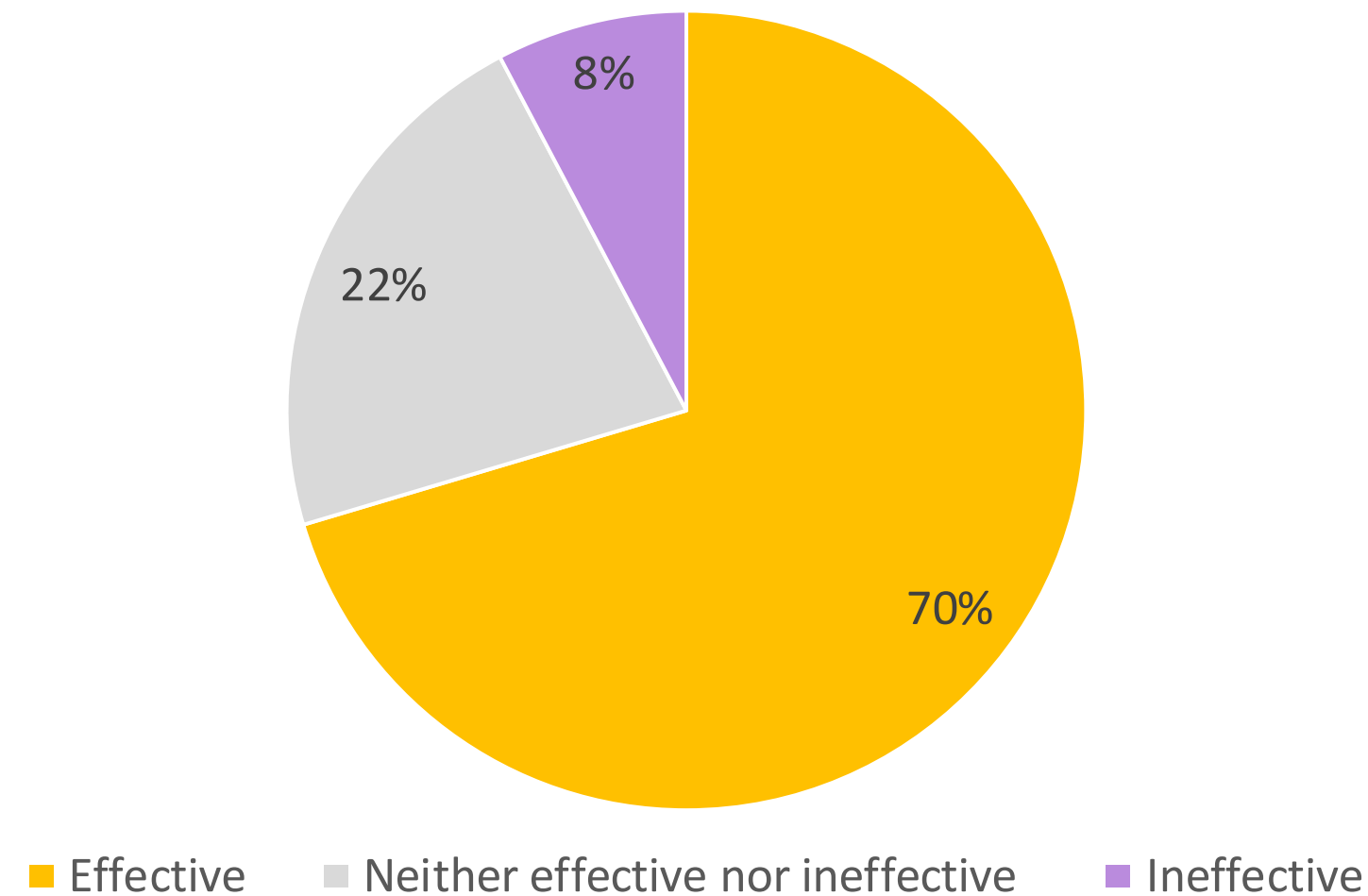
Fifty percent of parents are concerned about public health hazards, and almost 20% are concerned about crime rates and street lighting in their area.



Local authority addressing concerns

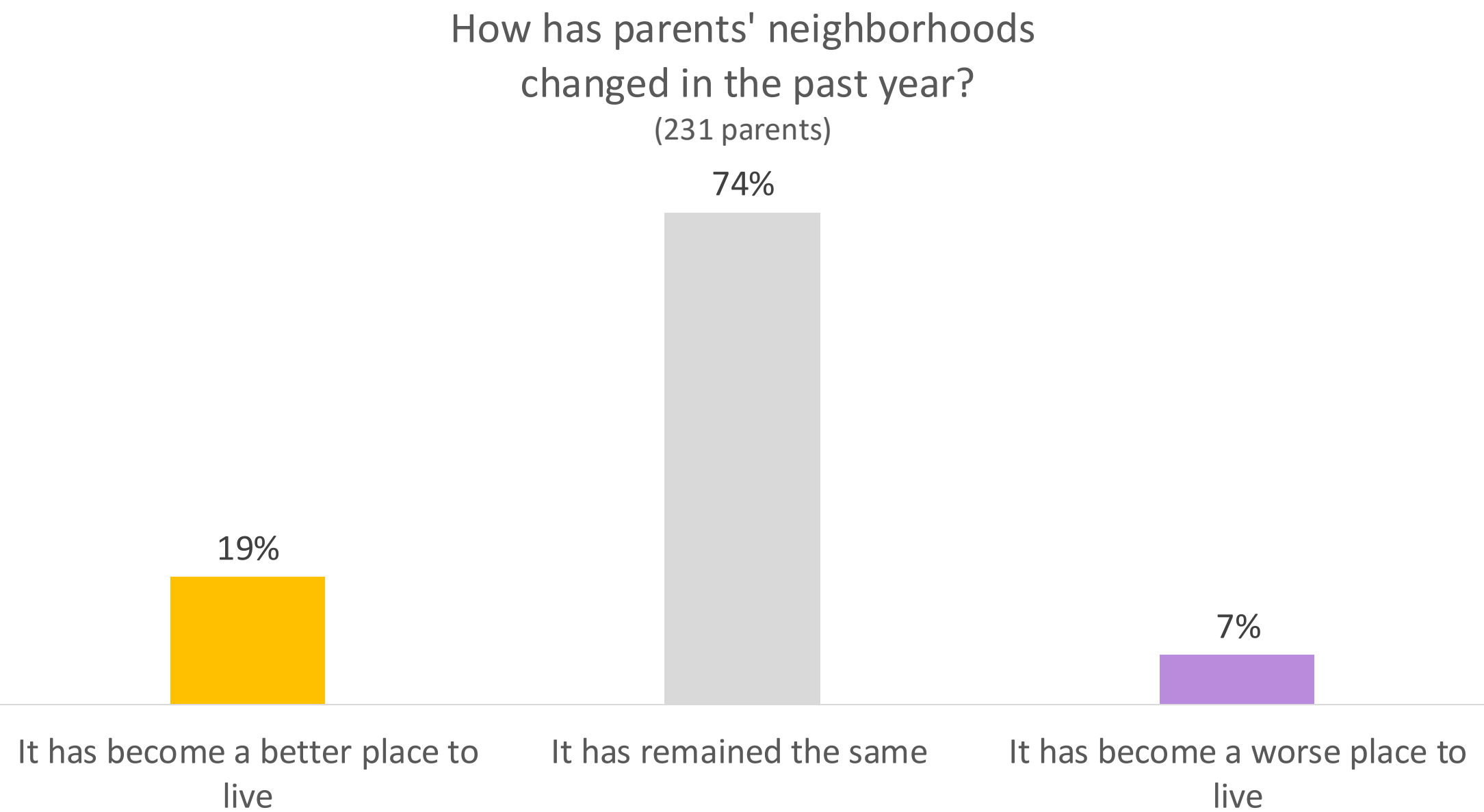
Most parents (70%) felt their local authorities were effective at addressing safety concerns.

Effectiveness of local authority in addressing safety concerns
(233 parents)



Change in the neighborhood

Most parents (74%) felt their neighborhood had not changed in the past year. Almost 20% of parents felt their neighborhood became a better place to live and 7% of parents felt it had become a worse place to live.



What are some of your concerns with safety in your community?

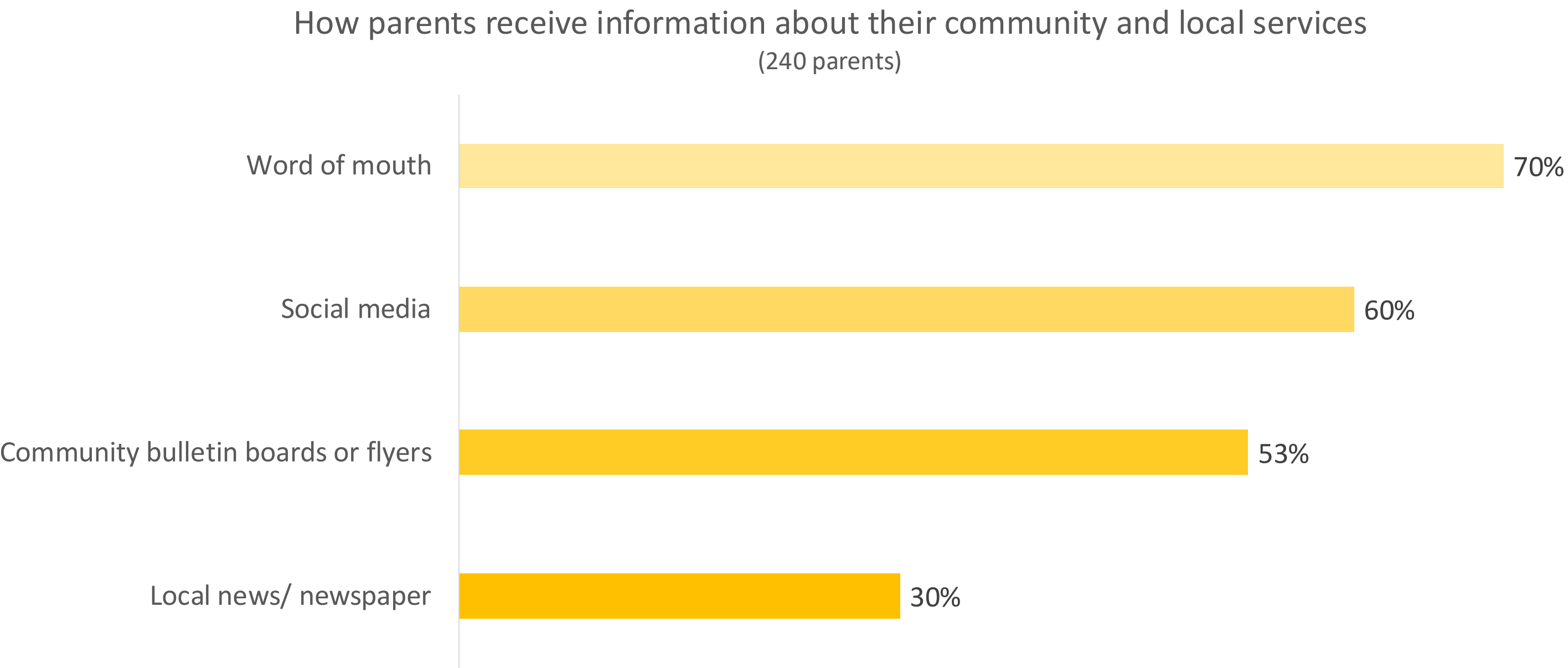
Parents were concerned with road safety, crime, and violence in their communities.

- “Its very dark so we need street lights. Also, the speeding cars through the neighborhood.”
– Parent from DuPage County
- “Gun violence mostly and not enough street lights.”
– Parent from Cook County
- “Cars do not respect speed limit on small side streets where children could be at play. Too many houses/cars broken into.”
– Parent from Cook County
- “[There's] a lot of crime and too many shootings.”
– Parent from Cook County

Resources and access to information

Information about services

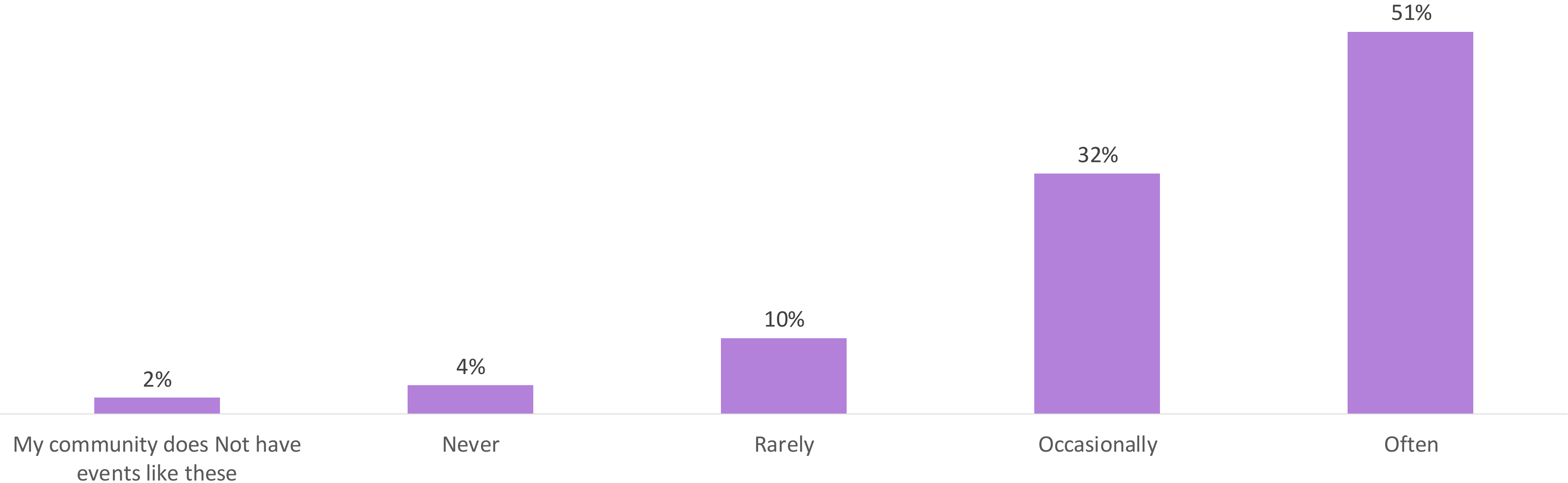
While word-of-mouth is the most common way parents receive information about their community and local services, social media and community bulletin boards are also common ways parents get information.



Community events and recreation

Almost half of the parents *often* participate in community events.

Parents' participation in community events
(235 parents)



What community resources and activities would you like to see more of in your area?

Parents want more free activities and resources for children and families including more parks, playgrounds, libraries, neighborhood-based events and festivals.

- “FREE activities for children in nearby park districts so families can actually participate get their children out of the house.”
– Parent from DuPage County
- “Workshops on various parenting topics, such as child development, positive discipline, and managing work-life balance.”
– Parent from Cook County
- “Activities that provide enrichment and supervision for school-age children.”
– Parent from Will County
- “More exercising park , free yoga, free movie night, free meditation event, free exercise classes, free gardening areas and more free events.”
– Parent from DuPage County
- “More child and parent activities that does not cost money or costs little money. More free indoor play areas because all the indoor ones have expensive cover charges.”
– Parent from DuPage County
- “We enjoy the free meals they have here every once in a while. The presence of quality food pantries matter.”
– Parent from Kane County

Thank you

What kind of communities do parents live in? *We asked parents a wide diversity of questions to learn about the lives they and their children live.*

Peace, quiet, and cleanliness were important to parents – when their neighborhoods had those characteristics, they cherished it; when they did not, they felt it’s lack.

Safety was of great importance to many families. Parents shared **concern about crime in their area, and public health hazards** (air, water, and noise pollution). They also wished for better street lightening, road routes, and affordable, accessible public transportation.

Parents want **more amenities for their families and their children** – especially more parks, playgrounds, libraries, businesses, and affordable community events/activities. This gives parents a way to connect with their neighbors and build support in their communities.

Our message to policymakers and elected officials

Where we live matters– families desire communities that are safe, clean, and quiet; they want reliable and accessible health care, child care, schools, public transportation, and recreational facilities in their neighborhoods.

To support the well-being of our communities and have them flourish, requires support for the families and children who are part of it. Learning about the strengths, difficulties, and hopes of communities that families live in, is the first step to supporting strong families and empowering communities.

Acknowledgements

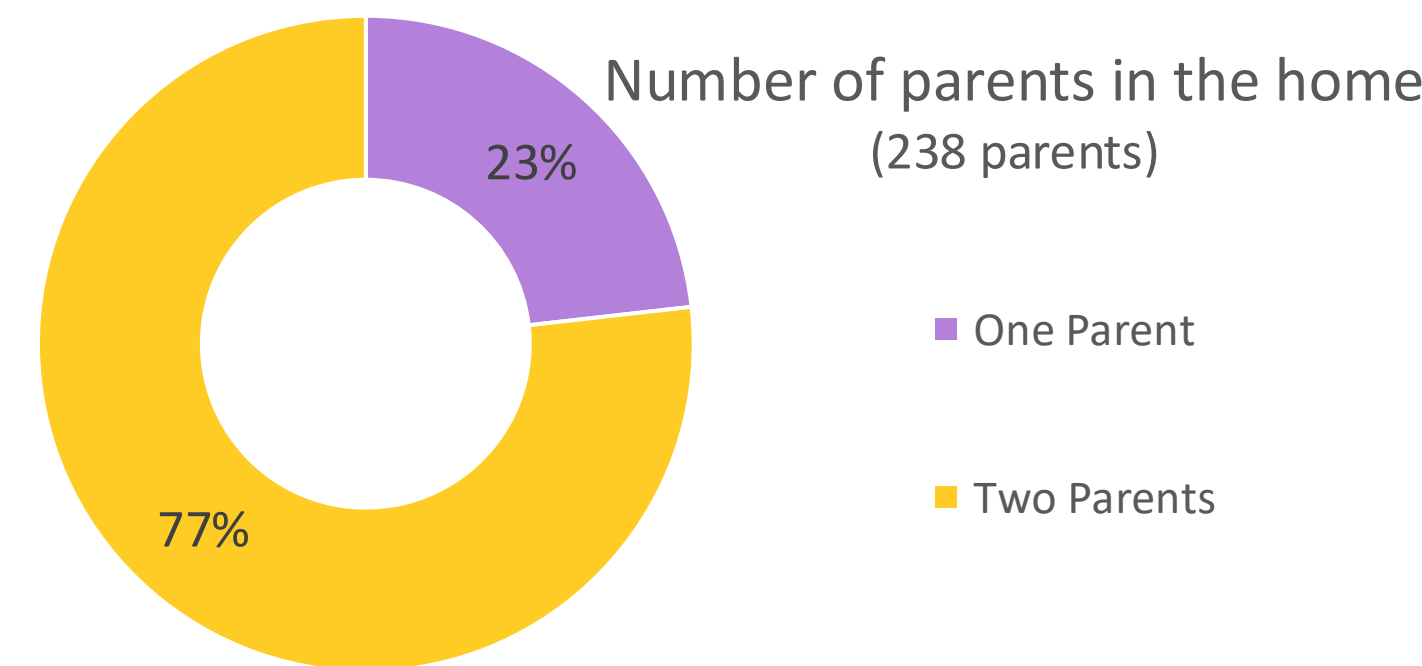
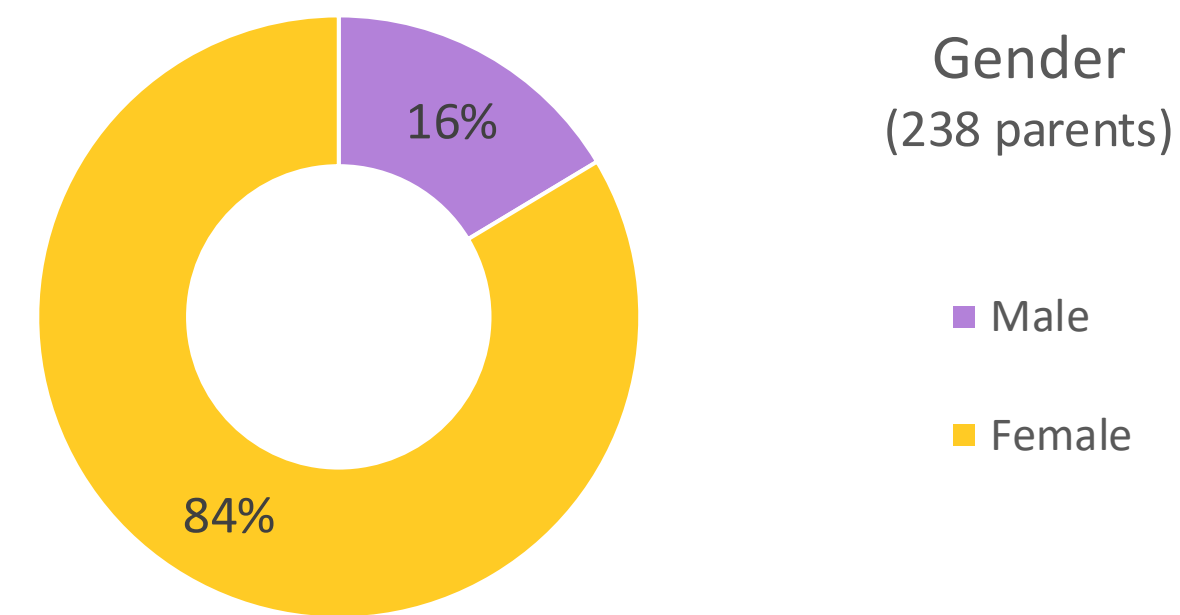
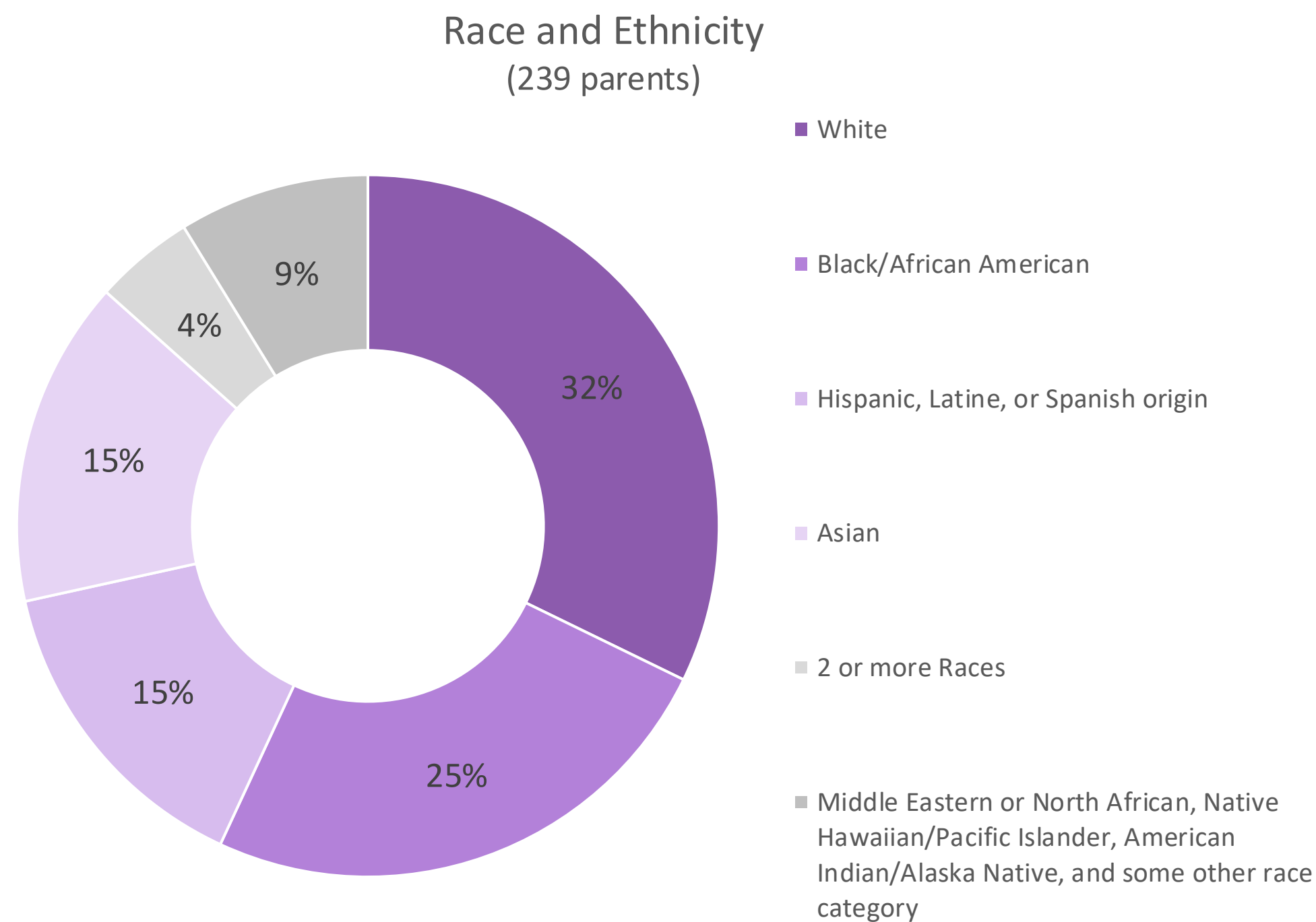
We are grateful to have the opportunity to make this research possible because of the support and contribution of Illinois Action for Children staff, our partners at the national RAPID survey at the Stanford Center on Early Childhood, and the organizations listed below who helped us recruit parents.

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- Altgeld-Riverdale Early Learning Coalition
 - Evanston Cradle to Career
 - Palatine Early Learning Alliance
 - Elgin Partnership for Early Learning
 - Jewish Early Childhood Collaborative
 - SPARK Aurora
 - We, The Village
 - Raising IL Coalition
 - YWCA Metropolitan Chicago
 - 4-C: Community Coordinated Child Care
 - Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI)
 - North Lawndale Early Learning Collaboration

About the Parents Taking our Fourth Survey

About the Parents Taking our Third Survey

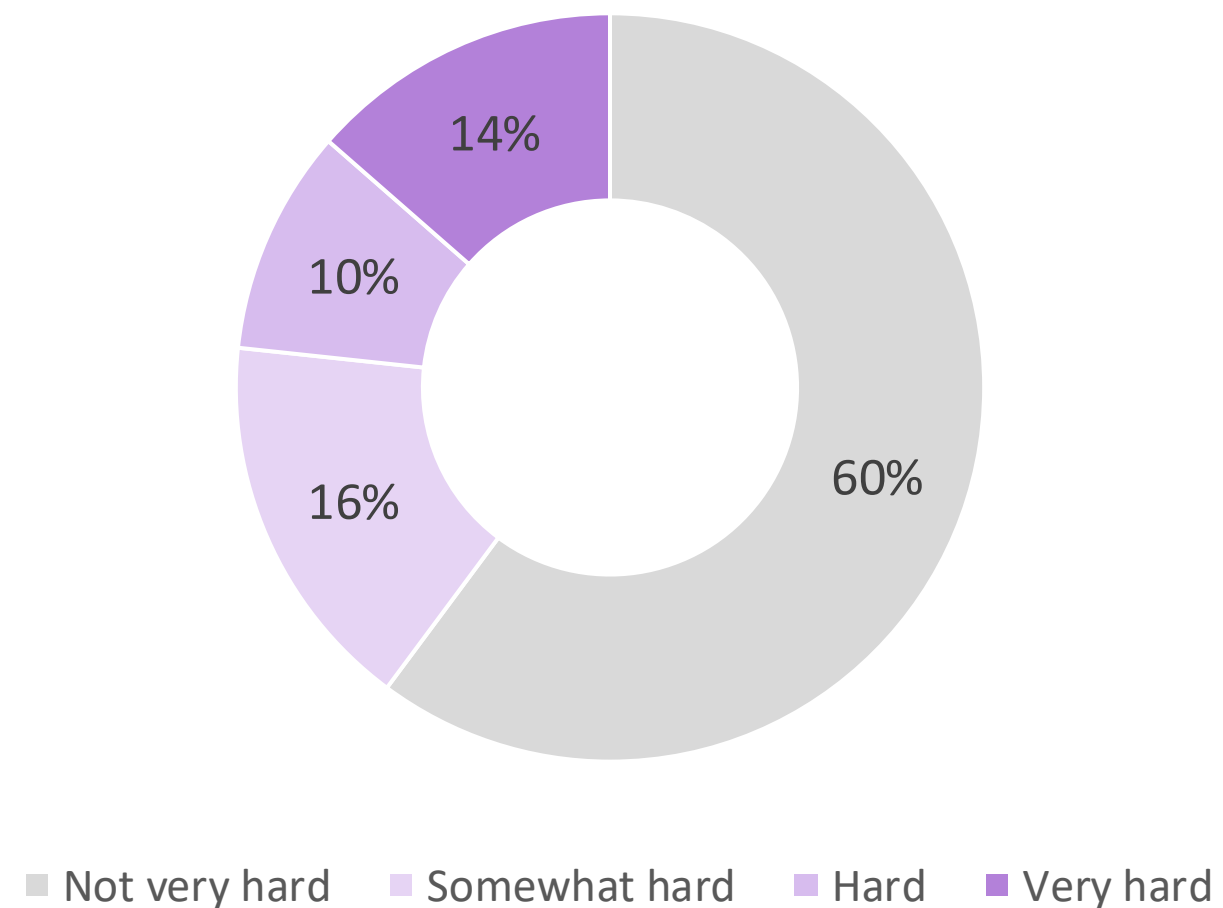
Parents are diverse in terms of race & ethnicity. Eighty-four percent of the parents are female. Three-quarters of families have two parents in their household.



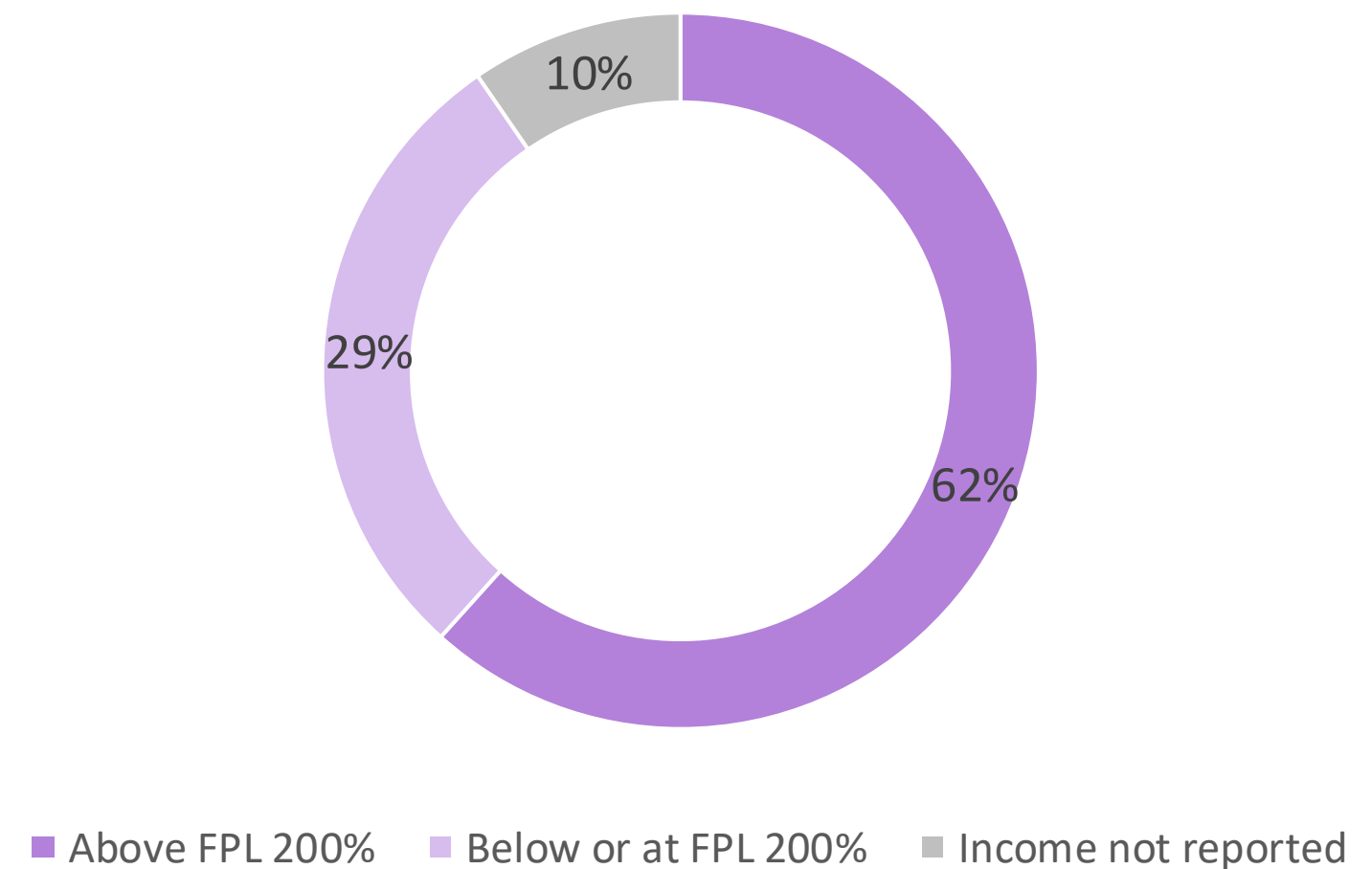
Financial State

In our panel, 24% of parents shared that they had a hard or a very hard time paying for their basic needs. Almost 30% of parents had incomes at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.

Hardship paying for basic needs
(236 parents)



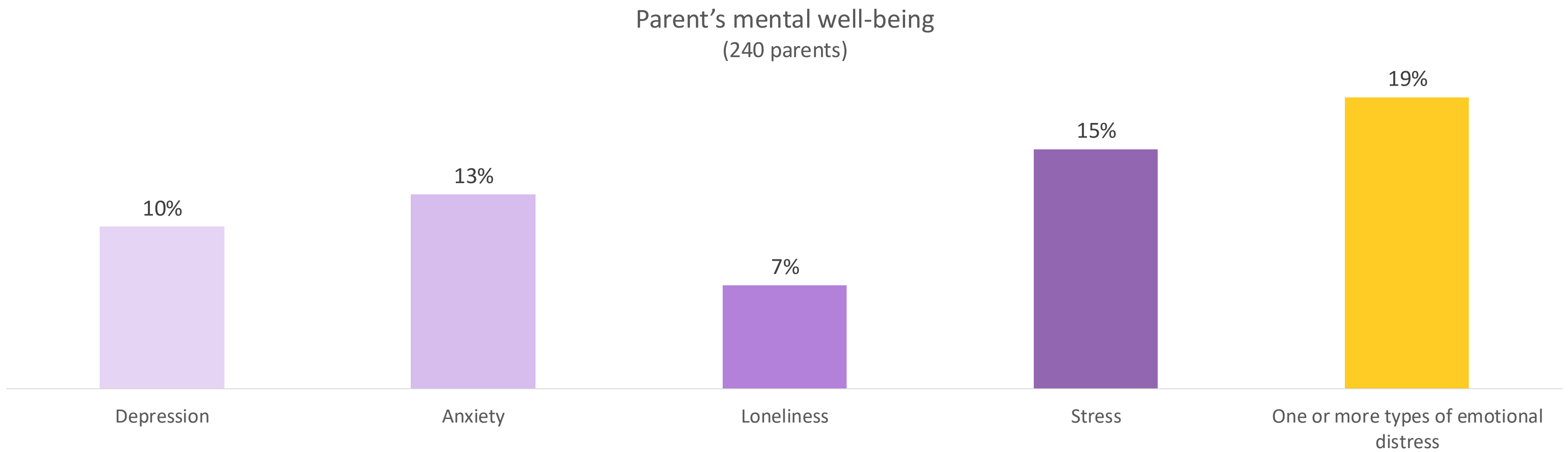
Income Distribution
(240 parents)



Note: 200% of the federal poverty level is \$39,440 for a family of 2, \$49,720 for a family of 3, and \$60,000 for a family of four.

Parents' Mental Well-being

In our panel, 19% of parents experienced frequent distressing emotions such as stress, anxiety, depression, or loneliness in the past month.



Parents experiencing frequent emotional distress include those who report experiencing anxiety or depression 'more than half the days' or 'nearly every day' in the past month, or who experienced stress or loneliness 'usually', or 'always' in the past month.