



# Voices of Child Health in Chicago **REPORT**

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## REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

Chicago parents identified gun violence, bullying, and poverty as the biggest social issues facing youth in the city.

Younger parents were more concerned about school violence than older parents.

Parents with older children were more concerned about social media use than parents of younger children.

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 **HEALTHY  
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## Chicago Parents Identify the Top 10 Social Issues Affecting Children and Adolescents in the City

### How we measured the 10 biggest social issues affecting youth in Chicago

Children and adolescents face many social challenges in the City of Chicago. In the 2017-18 Healthy Chicago Survey, Jr., Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago and the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) teamed up to uncover the most common social concerns that parents in Chicago have about kids in the city. Chicago parents were asked which social issues are "big problems" for children and adolescents in Chicago — not just for their own kids.

In this report, we share the "Top 10" issues — the social issues facing kids that parents in Chicago think are the biggest problems. This Top 10 List reflects the views of parents in randomly selected households all across the city, with participants in all 77 community areas. In other words, the survey results reflect the broad concerns of parents across Chicago. We summarize the major results and data in this report below, for each of the social issues in the Top 10 List. For more information about the top 10 social issues and links to related resources, please go to our informational resources: [luriechildrens.org/Top10SocialIssues](http://luriechildrens.org/Top10SocialIssues).

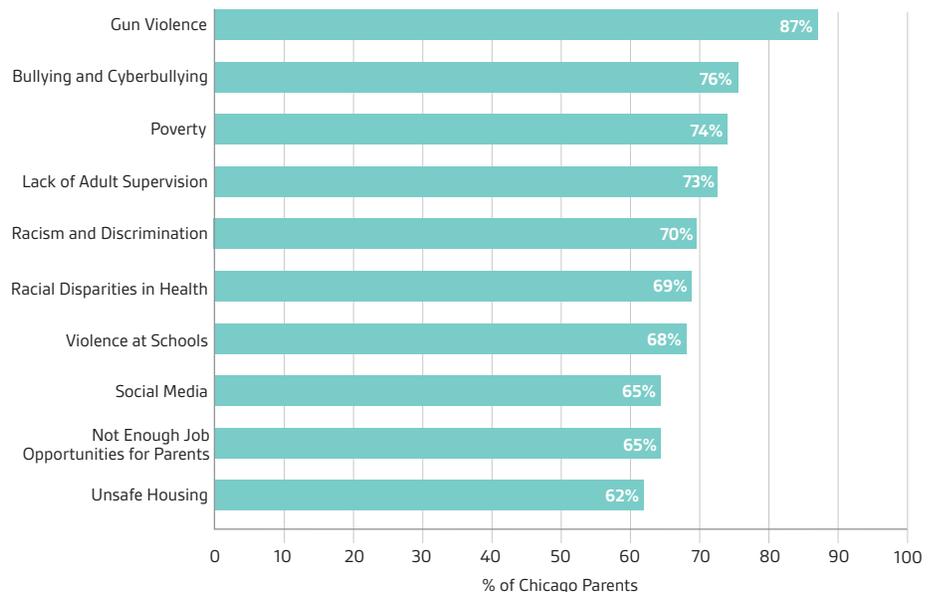


Figure 1. Top 10 social issues affecting youth in Chicago, identified by Chicago parents

# Here are the **top 10** biggest social concerns affecting youth in Chicago, rated by parents

## 1 GUN VIOLENCE – 87%

The number one social concern that parents had for youth in Chicago was gun-related violence in neighborhoods. Gun violence was the top concern for Chicago parents of all ages, and for parents of younger children as well as older children.

The number of homicides in Chicago decreased by nearly 100 in 2018 compared to 2017.<sup>1</sup> The 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, which surveys high school students in Chicago and across the United States, found that teens in Chicago were more likely to say they have carried a gun during the last year (7%) than U.S. teens (5%).<sup>2</sup>

Neighborhood gun violence is associated with other barriers to physical health, such as lower access to grocery stores, pharmacies, and fitness resources.<sup>3</sup> The City of Chicago’s public health plan, Healthy Chicago 2.0, includes goals such as decreasing violent crime and exposure to violence, and strengthening community protective factors.<sup>4</sup>

## 2 BULLY AND CYBERBULLYING – 76%

Bullying and cyberbullying emerged as the second most common social concern for youth among parents in our survey.

In 2017, 15% of Chicago high school students said that they were bullied on school property, and 12% were “cyberbullied,” through social media or online.<sup>2</sup> Other research indicates that rates of cyberbullying among teens across the U.S. may be even higher (59%).<sup>5</sup> Bullying is linked to negative outcomes, both for youth who are bullied and youth who bully others.<sup>6</sup> We will further explore bullying and cyberbullying in a forthcoming *Voices of Child Health in Chicago* report.

## 3 POVERTY – 74%

The third most common social concern regarding youth in Chicago was child poverty. In 2017, 27% of children in Chicago and 17% of children in Illinois were living below the poverty threshold.<sup>7</sup>

Growing up in poverty has lifelong effects. For instance, children who grow up in poverty are twice as likely to experience financial struggles later in life as children who do not grow up in poverty.<sup>8</sup> Poverty also is associated with worse academic outcomes, behavioral and emotional

problems, poor nutrition, and risky behaviors.<sup>9</sup>

## 4 LACK OF ADULT SUPERVISION AND INVOLVEMENT – 73%

Lack of adult supervision and involvement for children and teens was the fourth biggest youth social concern for parents in our sample. Younger parents tended to be more concerned about this issue than older parents. Specifically, among parents who were 18–29 years old and parents who were 30–44 years old, lack of adult supervision and involvement was the third most common concern (79% and 74%, respectively). However, among parents who were 45 years of age or older, this emerged as the fifth most common concern (65%) (see Table 1).

One issue connected to lack of adult supervision is access to quality childcare and early childhood education. The City of Chicago is working to implement a universal, full-day pre-kindergarten for 4-year-old children.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, one of the goals of Healthy Chicago 2.0 is to increase early childhood education enrollment for eligible 3- and 4-year-olds by 10% by 2020.<sup>4</sup> For older children, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) offer district-funded Out-of-School Time (OST) programming. In the 2017–18 school year, approximately 65,000 CPS students participated in OST programming. Other after-school care options include district-funded sports and private programs.

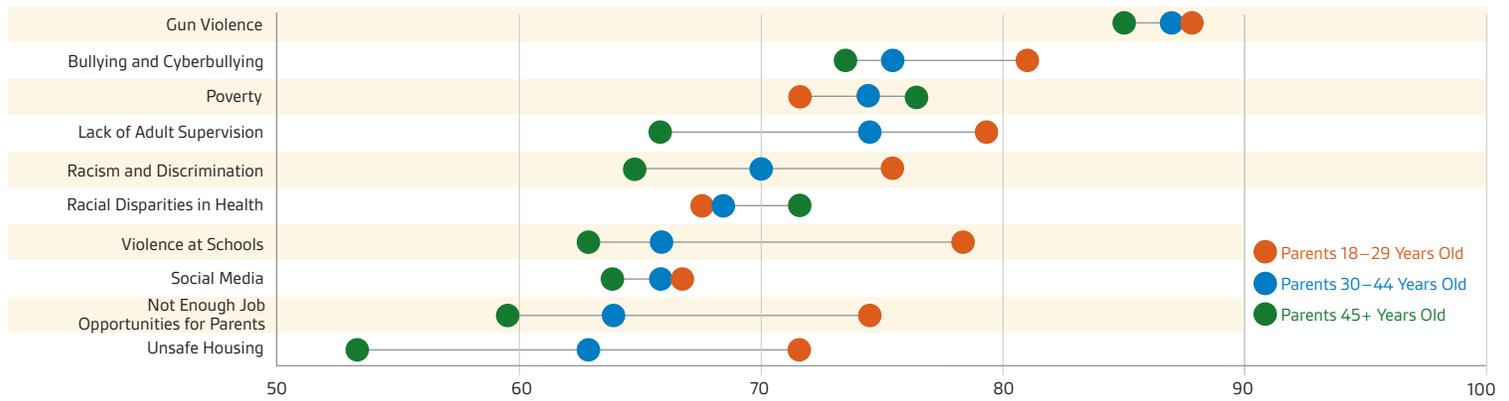
## 5 RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION – 70%

Racism and discrimination was the fifth biggest social concern Chicago parents had for youth in the city. This aligns with findings from a national survey on experiences of discrimination among adolescents and young adults, which indicated that 67% of U.S. youth experienced discrimination and that Non-Latinx Black youth and Latinx youth were significantly more likely to experience discrimination than Non-Latinx White youth.<sup>11</sup> Minority youth also experience high rates of online discrimination.<sup>12</sup>

Experiencing discrimination is associated with a variety of negative consequences, such as lower academic performance and self-esteem, and higher levels of depression, anxiety, distress, physical complaints, and delinquency.<sup>13–15</sup> Worrying about discrimination and witnessing

**Table 1.** Top 5 social concerns, by parent age group

Parents 18–29 Years Old	Parents 30–44 Years Old	Parents 45+ Years Old
<b>88%</b> Gun violence	<b>87%</b> Gun violence	<b>85%</b> Gun violence
<b>81%</b> Bullying and cyberbullying	<b>75%</b> Bullying and cyberbullying	<b>76%</b> Poverty
<b>79%</b> Lack of adult supervision	<b>74%</b> Lack of adult supervision	<b>73%</b> Bullying and cyberbullying
<b>78%</b> Violence at schools	<b>74%</b> Poverty	<b>71%</b> Racial disparities in health
<b>75%</b> Racism and discrimination	<b>70%</b> Racism and discrimination	<b>65%</b> Lack of adult supervision



**Figure 2.** Proportion of parents rating social issues as “big problems” for Chicago youth, by parent age group

discrimination toward another person, such as a family member, are also associated with negative health outcomes for adolescents.<sup>16,17</sup>

## 6 RACIAL DISPARITIES IN CHILD AND ADOLESCENT HEALTH – 69%

Over two-thirds of Chicago parents considered racial disparities in health — i.e., worse health for children of color than for white children — to be a big problem for Chicago youth. In the U.S., racial disparities in child health and healthcare continue to adversely affect children of color. For instance, compared with white children, children of color are more likely to be uninsured, to have health issues such as asthma, to have unmet medical and dental needs, and to have transportation barriers to care.<sup>18</sup> Discrimination is thought to contribute to health disparities among youth.<sup>19</sup>

## 7 VIOLENCE AT SCHOOLS – 68%

Violence at schools was another major concern among Chicago parents. Younger parents tended to be more concerned about this issue than older parents. For instance, school violence was the fourth biggest concern for parents between 18–29 years old (78%), the seventh biggest concern among parents between 30–44 years of age (65%) and the ninth biggest concern among parents 45 years of age and older (62%) (see Figure 2).

In 2017, 3% of Chicago high school students reported carrying a weapon on school property, 8% were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property, and 10% said that they were in a physical fight on school property.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, school violence is also a major concern on the minds of youth. A 2018 survey by the American Psychological Association found that, among young people 15–21 years old, three in four said that mass shootings are a significant source of stress. Over one-half of respondents who were currently in school said they experienced stress at least sometimes when considering the possibility of a shooting at their school.<sup>20</sup>

## 8 SOCIAL MEDIA – 65%

The eighth biggest social concern that parents had for youth in Chicago was social media. Parents with older children were more likely to be concerned about social media than parents of young children. Specifically, social media ranked seventh among parents who had at least one child 11 years of age or older (67%), but it was ranked eleventh among parents of only young children (0-5 years of age) (57%).

A 2018 survey of U.S. adolescents found that youth have mixed views about social media use, with 31% saying that social media had a mostly positive effect on their lives and 24% saying that it had a mostly negative effect.<sup>21</sup> Positive outcomes included feeling more connected to friends and becoming more civically-minded. Negative outcomes included feeling overwhelmed by drama on social media and feeling pressure to look good to others.<sup>22</sup>

Although there is some evidence of a link between social media use and mental health problems among youth, the evidence is mixed.<sup>23,24</sup> In a sample of over 350,000 adolescents, digital technology use had a small, negative effect on well-being.<sup>25</sup>

**Table 2.** Rank order of proportion of Chicago parents rating social concerns as “big problems” for youth in 2017-18 Healthy Chicago Survey, Jr.

<b>87%</b>	Gun violence
<b>76%</b>	Bullying and cyberbullying
<b>74%</b>	Poverty
<b>73%</b>	Lack of adult supervision
<b>70%</b>	Racism and discrimination
<b>69%</b>	Racial disparities in health
<b>68%</b>	Violence at schools
<b>65%</b>	Social media
<b>65%</b>	Not enough job opportunities for parents
<b>62%</b>	Unsafe housing
<b>60%</b>	Not enough job opportunities for teens
<b>59%</b>	Hunger
<b>57%</b>	Medical care access
<b>55%</b>	Medical care access for sexual health
<b>40%</b>	Traffic safety

*Percentages reflect the proportion of adults rating each health concern as a “big problem” for children and adolescents. Sample included parents (at least one child <18 years old in the household).*

## 9 NOT ENOUGH JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARENTS – 65%

Parents were also concerned that limited job opportunities for parents is a major social problem affecting youth in Chicago. In 2016, the most recent year for which there is data, 36% of youth in Chicago were living in families in which no parent had regular, full-time employment.<sup>26</sup> Living in a family without at least one parent with full-time employment can make it more likely that children will fall into poverty. Additionally, lower-income workers face the most irregular work schedules, which can contribute to work-family conflict.<sup>27</sup>

## 10 UNSAFE HOUSING – 62%

The tenth social issue that parents in Chicago were concerned about for youth was unsafe housing. Younger parents tended to consider this a bigger problem than older parents. Specifically, unsafe housing ranked as the seventh biggest concern among parents 18–29 years old (71%), the tenth biggest concern among parents 30–44 years old (62%), and the twelfth biggest concern among parents 45 years or older (52%) (see Figure 2).

One issue related to safe housing is lead poisoning, which can contribute to learning disabilities, developmental delays, and behavioral problems. In 2016, there were 8,381 children in Illinois who had blood lead levels above the intervention level recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.<sup>28</sup> In Chicago, 4% of children under three years old have elevated blood lead levels.<sup>4</sup> The Chicago Department of Public Health is leading efforts to eliminate lead exposure among Chicago children.<sup>29</sup>

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### HOW THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED

This report presents findings from the 2017-18 Healthy Chicago Survey, Jr., administered by the Chicago Department of Public Health in collaboration with Lurie Children's. The survey was administered via phone interviews from December 2017 through June 2018. The sample consisted of 3,310 adults in Chicago, 1,002 of whom were the parent, step-parent or guardian (referred to as "parents" in this report) of at least one child under 18 years old living in the household. Respondents were parents who indicated which social issues were "big problems" for children and adolescents in the city (i.e., beyond their own children). The survey cooperation rate was 18%. All analyses were conducted with statistical weighting so that they are representative of the adult population of the City of Chicago during the time period of data collection.