



# Voices of Child Health in Chicago REPORT

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## REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

We found that two-thirds of parents worry about climate change in general: 30% said they worry a great deal and 37% said a fair amount.

Nearly three in four parents expressed concern about climate change affecting their family: 32% were very concerned and 40% were somewhat concerned.

Parents who reported they understood the issue of climate change better reported higher levels of concern.

## Parental Concerns about Climate Change

As Earth Day approaches on April 22, our April 2022 *Voices of Child Health in Chicago* report provides insight into Chicago parents' concerns about climate change. Chicago experiences climate-related weather events as well as rising water levels, which have the potential to affect more than 1 million children living in the city.<sup>1</sup> According to the Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health, rising temperatures and decreased air quality affect kids by increasing the risk of asthma and allergies, worsening pregnancy outcomes and creating food insecurity.<sup>2</sup> The 2020 State of Global Air reported that air pollution accounts for 20% of newborn deaths worldwide.<sup>3</sup> From a mental health perspective, extreme weather events caused by climate change patterns can cause children to experience major trauma from enduring events such as wildfires or intense storms.

Climate change is documented to already be affecting human health and well-being. Despite this, little is known about parental concerns about climate change and their family's future. In this month's *Voices of Child Health in Chicago* report, we provide parent perspectives on concerns about climate change. We asked 1,620 Chicago parents from all 77 community areas in the city about their feelings about climate change, its impact on their family and other climate-related questions.

### General worry about climate change

Nearly two-thirds of Chicago parents worry about climate change: 30% said they worry a great deal and 37% said a fair amount (Figure 1). When thinking about the issue of global warming, 24% of parents felt they understood the issue very well while 49% of parents felt they understood it fairly well. According to a national 2019 Gallup poll, 44% of U.S. adults were concerned a great deal and 21% were concerned a fair amount.<sup>4</sup> In the same national poll, 27% of people reported that they understood the issue of global warming very well while 53% reported understanding it fairly well.

**Figure 1.** Proportion of Chicago parents at each concern level for two climate change questions



### Climate change affecting the family

Nearly three in four Chicago parents expressed concern about climate change affecting their family; 32% were very concerned and 40% were somewhat concerned. In a national Quinnipiac poll of U.S. adults, 40% of people reported being worried about climate change and extreme weather events affecting their family.<sup>5</sup>

In our survey, there were no differences in concern by parent gender, age or household income, but there were differences by race/ethnicity and education level. Latinx/Hispanic parents were the most concerned about climate change affecting their family (41% said they

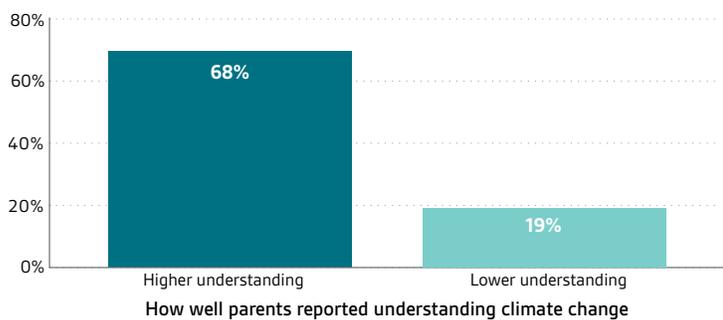
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were “very concerned”), followed by Asian/Other parents (36%), White parents (29%) and Black parents (17%). For parents with some high school or below, 38% expressed that they were very concerned about climate change affecting their family, followed by parents with a college education or higher (32%) and lastly by parents with some college or technical school (22%). We also found that parents who reported they understood the issue better reported higher levels of concern (68% “very concerned”) than parents who understood the issue less well (19%) (Figure 2).

**Figure 2** Proportion of parents who were “very concerned” about climate change affecting their family, by their reported understanding of climate change



### Steps to minimize the impact of climate change

There are many small-scale steps that families can take to minimize the effects of climate change. The United Nations Act Now campaign suggests actions that, in different ways, can reduce greenhouse gases in the environment. (Figure 3).<sup>6</sup> They also have a mobile resource — AWorld — that can help build and track actions toward sustainable habits to help our earth.

**Figure 3.** Suggestions from the UN Act Now campaign to minimize the effects of climate change

**Actions families can take to minimize the effects of climate change include:**

- Save energy at home
- Reduce, reuse, repair and recycle goods
- Walk or bike
- Use an electric vehicle
- Take public transportation
- Choose eco-friendly products
- Eat more vegetables

Find more suggestions from the UN Act Now campaign at [un.org/actnow](https://un.org/actnow)

The City of Chicago has a 2022 Climate Action Plan that aims to implement many changes to better the environment including reducing carbon emissions, increasing household savings, advancing environmental justice and improving community health.<sup>7</sup> With Earth Day on April 22, it is important to remember that even small steps can make a difference and reduce the impact of climate change on our planet.

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### HOW THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED

This report is based on data from the Voices of Child Health in Chicago Parent Panel Survey. The survey is administered to a sample of Chicago parents by Lurie Children’s and NORC at the University of Chicago via internet and telephone. The survey is administered to the same panel of parents three times each year. The data in this report was collected from May through July 2021. The sample consisted of 1,620 Chicago parents, step-parents, or guardians who had at least one child under 18 years of age in the household (referred to as “parents” in this report). Parents were from all 77 community areas in Chicago. The survey completion rate was 50% and the cumulative survey response rate was 1.5%. All analyses were conducted with statistical weighting so that the results are representative of the parent population in the City of Chicago during the time period of data collection. For more information about the VOCHIC Parent Panel Survey, visit [luriechildrens.org/ParentPanel](https://luriechildrens.org/ParentPanel) and our page on Open Science Framework at <https://osf.io/cjz82/>.

### SUGGESTED CITATION

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