



Voices of Child Health in Chicago REPORT

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REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

Chicago adults identified drug abuse, obesity, and child abuse and neglect as the biggest health problems facing children and adolescents in the city.

Seven of the 10 most commonly identified health problems for youth either involve mental health directly or are health conditions connected to mental health.

Parents with children in the household rated all of the health concerns in the survey as more problematic than people without children in the household.

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 **HEALTHY
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CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Chicago Adults Identify the Top 10 Health Problems for Children and Adolescents in the City

Surveying Chicago adults about the 10 biggest health problems facing youth in Chicago

Children and adolescents face many health 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 find out the most common concerns that adults in Chicago have about kids in the city. Chicago adults, including parents and non-parents, were asked which health challenges are "big problems" for children and adolescents in Chicago.

In this report, we share the "Top 10" problems – the biggest health problems facing kids that adults are most concerned about. Seven of the Top 10 problems are related to mental health, either directly (stress, depression, and suicide) or through health conditions that are connected to mental health (drug abuse, alcohol abuse, obesity, and smoking and tobacco use) (Figure 1).

The Top 10 list reflects the views of adults in randomly selected households across Chicago, with participants in all 77 community areas. These survey results reflect the broad concerns of all adults across the city. This is the first of several reports that we will release about the 2017-18 Healthy Chicago Survey, Jr. results. For more information about the Top 10 Health problems and what you can do, please go to our information resources: luriechildrens.org/Top10HealthProblems.

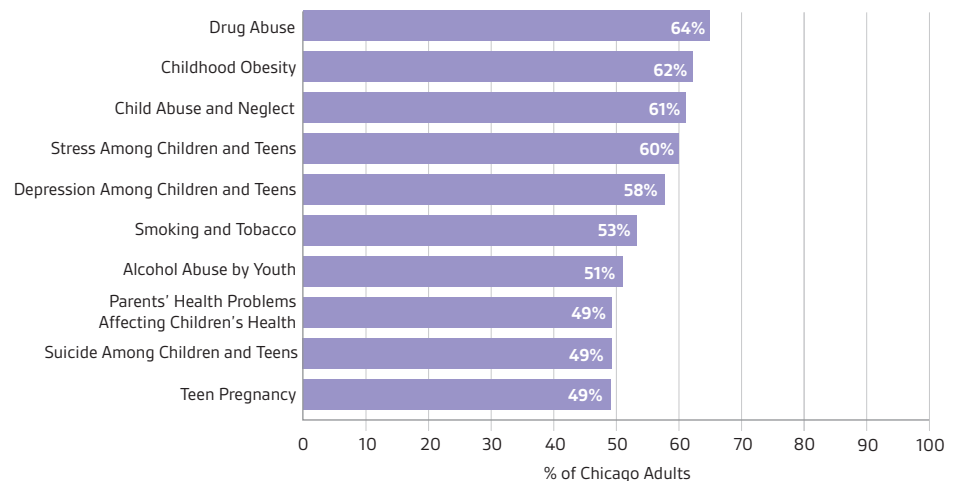


Figure 1. Top 10 health problems facing children and adolescents in Chicago, reported by Chicago adults

Here are the **top 10** biggest health problems for children and adolescents in Chicago

For each problem, we offer additional information to help put these concerns in context.

1 DRUG ABUSE – Rated by 64% as a “big problem”

Drug abuse was the top youth health problem identified by Chicago adults. Parents with children living in the household were more likely to view drug abuse as a major concern (69%) than adults without children in the household (63%) (Figure 2).

The 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, which surveyed high school students in Chicago and across the United States, found that 24.7% of Chicago high school students currently use marijuana, compared with 19.8% of all U.S. high school students. Chicago high school students were also more likely than U.S. high school students to have been offered or sold an illegal drug at school (32.2% vs. 19.8%). Additionally, 15.0% of Chicago high school students reported taking a prescription pain medication (e.g., codeine, Vicodin, Oxycontin) without a doctor’s prescription or differently than how a doctor told them to use it.¹

There are local and national helplines for individuals who may have a substance use disorder — in Chicago (1-833-2 FIND HELP) and across the U.S. (1-800-662-HELP).

2 CHILDHOOD OBESITY – 62%

The second most common concern about child and adolescent health in Chicago was childhood obesity.

Children in Chicago have higher prevalence rates of overweight and obesity than U.S. children in the same age groups.² A 2013 report on Chicago Public School students revealed that 36.5% of kindergartners, 48.6% of sixth graders and 44.7% of ninth graders were overweight or obese.³ In contrast, among all children in the U.S., 24.1% of kindergartners, 39.0% of sixth graders and 32.1% of ninth graders were overweight or obese.⁴

3 CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT – 61%

Child abuse and neglect was the third most commonly identified big health problem for kids in Chicago. Among parents with children in the household, 67% stated that it was a major concern (Figure 2). Additionally, child abuse and neglect emerged

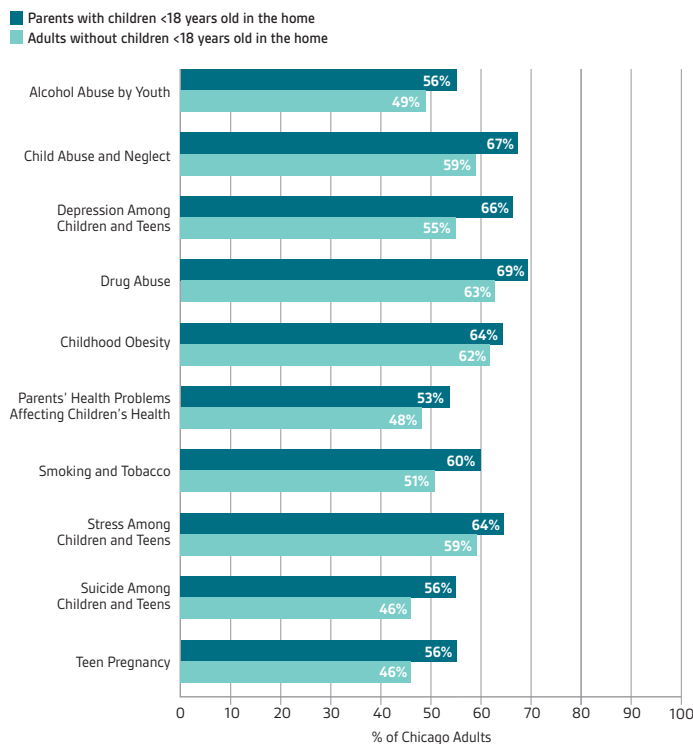


Figure 2. Most commonly identified big health problems for kids in Chicago, from perspectives of parents with kids in the home vs. adults without kids in the home

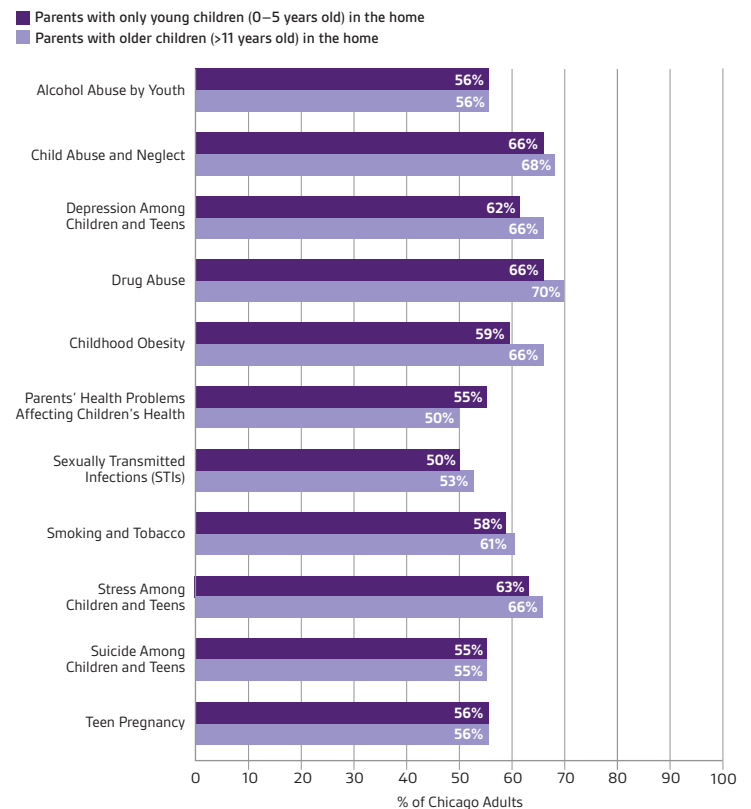


Figure 3. Most commonly identified big health problems for kids in Chicago, from perspectives of parents with only young children vs. parents with older children

as the top concern (66%) for parents of young children (Figure 3). In the United States, one in four children experience abuse or neglect at some point in their lives, and one in seven have experienced abuse or neglect in the last year.⁵ Child abuse and neglect have a lasting impact on children, such as increasing their risks for physical and mental health problems, and for future experiences of violence as perpetrators and victims.

Child abuse and neglect helplines are available for individuals in Illinois (1-800-25-ABUSE) and outside of Illinois (1-800-4-A-CHILD).

4 STRESS AMONG CHILDREN AND TEENS – 60%

The fourth most common health concern was stress among children and teens. Parents with kids in the household were even more likely than adults without kids at home to consider stress a major health concern for children and teens (64% vs. 59%, respectively) (Figure 2).

Factors such as bullying and violence can contribute to the stress that children and teens experience. Among Chicago high school students in 2017, 15.2% were bullied on school property and 12.1% were cyberbullied (e.g., through social media) within the last year. Furthermore, 24.7% of Chicago high school students were in a physical fight, 10.0% did not go to school because they felt unsafe and 14.1% experienced sexual violence.¹

5 DEPRESSION AMONG CHILDREN AND TEENS – 58%

Related to concerns about stress as a major problem, over one-half of adults in Chicago consider depression among children and teens a big health problem.

Other data strongly support the public's concerns. In 2017, 34.7% of Chicago high school students reported experiencing symptoms of depression during the previous 12 months, such as feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row so that they stopped doing usual activities.¹

6 SMOKING AND TOBACCO – 53%

The sixth most common big health problem for kids in Chicago identified by adults is smoking and tobacco use. Parents with children in the household were more likely to view smoking and tobacco as a major concern (60%) than adults without children in the household (51%) (Figure 2).

In 2001, one in four high school students in Chicago smoked cigarettes; today that number has fallen to less than one in 16 high school students.⁶ However, in 2017 14.5% of Chicago high school students reported current use of any tobacco product, including 6.6% who reported use of electronic vapor products such as e-cigarettes.¹ Recent research indicates that e-cigarette use among young people increases the risk of ever using traditional cigarettes.⁷

Table 1. Rank order of proportion of Chicago adults rating health concerns as “big problems” for youth in 2017-18 Healthy Chicago Survey, Jr.

64%	Drug abuse
62%	Childhood obesity
61%	Child abuse and neglect
60%	Stress among children and teens
58%	Depression among children and teens
53%	Smoking and tobacco
51%	Alcohol abuse by youth
49%	Parents' health problems affecting children's health
49%	Suicide among children and teens
49%	Teen pregnancy
46%	Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
39%	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
37%	Childhood asthma
33%	Vaccine refusals by parents
32%	Infant mortality
31%	Autism
29%	Injuries from accidents among children and teens

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) and other adults as well.

7 ALCOHOL ABUSE BY YOUTH – 51%

Alcohol abuse by youth is another big health concern among Chicago's adults. Among parents with children in the household, 56% listed alcohol abuse as a top concern. Additionally, younger adult respondents (18-29 years) were more concerned about youth alcohol abuse (55%) than adults who were 65 years or older (42%).

Results from the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicated that about one-quarter (23.9%) of Chicago high school students report current alcohol use, and about one-tenth (9.1%) report current binge drinking behaviors.¹

8 PARENTS' HEALTH PROBLEMS AFFECTING CHILDREN'S HEALTH – 49%

Parents' health problems have the potential to affect children's health in many ways. Among parents with children in the household, 53% rated this as a major concern (Figure 2).

One way in which parents' health problems may affect children's health is when a parent smokes. For instance, young children who have a mother who smokes are more likely to experience wheezing⁸ and worse breathing overall.⁹ In addition, for children with asthma, exposure to parental smoking increased the number of flares of asthma.¹⁰

9 SUICIDE AMONG CHILDREN AND TEENS – 49%

Suicide is another common major youth health concern among adults in Chicago. Among parents with children in the household, 56% listed suicide as a big health problem (Figure 2).

Suicide was the third most common cause of death among Illinois youth between the ages of 10 and 17 from 2013-2015, and the rate of suicide has increased for both males and females since 2007.¹¹ Among Chicago high school students in 2017, 18.0% had seriously considered attempting suicide in the last year and 14.8% made a plan about how they would attempt suicide. Additionally, 12.3% of Chicago high school students report that they attempted suicide in the last year, with 5.1% requiring medical treatment.¹

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides 24-hour support for individuals dealing with suicide or suicidal thoughts (1-800-273-8255) and the Crisis Text Line serves anyone in any type of crisis (text HOME to 741741).

10 TEEN PREGNANCY – 49%

The tenth most frequently identified major youth health problem perceived by adults in Chicago is teen pregnancy. Parents with kids in the household were more likely than adults without kids in the household to select teen pregnancy as a major concern (56% and 46%, respectively) (Figure 2).

In 2016, there were 24.6 births per 1,000 females aged 15-19 years old, more than a 69% drop from the 80.5 rate in 2000.¹² However, teen births remain a major health risk factor for low birthweight and premature birth for infants.

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 of at least one child under 18 years old living in the household. Respondents indicated which problems were "big problems" for children and adolescents in the city (not necessarily 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.

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