



Illinois Parent Survey on Product Safety

Survey fielded in September 2009

Report by:

Kids In Danger
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Illinois Parent Survey on Product Safety Executive Summary

Kids in Danger (KID) is proud to release the Illinois Parent Survey on Product Safety. This research was motivated by a simple question: what can parents teach us about promoting children's product safety? The survey seeks to better understand parents' thinking in order to create more effective recall and product safety policies. Knowing the extent of their knowledge or awareness provides a basis for designing more meaningful outreach methods. Understanding what motivates parents to comply with recalls will enable companies to offer the proper incentives.

Some key findings include:

- Safety issues in the home top those of traffic, outside injuries and even crime.
- Only 43% of parents hear of recalls at least once a month, yet children's products are recalled on average of more than twice a week.
- Despite the increase in internet usage, 50% of parents still cite TV as their number one source of recall information.
- Thirty-seven percent of parents report having found a recalled product in their homes on at least one occasion
- Parents are more likely to comply with recalls that offer a replacement product or refund.

KID recommends:

- The CPSC, safety organizations and other advocates should refine and enhance their methods of communicating safety messages to parents and other caretakers.
- The CPSC, and other stakeholders, should dedicate more time and creative resources to develop community outreach campaigns, especially in minority and other vulnerable neighborhoods.
- Recall notices go unnoticed in the flurry of marketing, news and general life that families face every day. Manufacturers and retailers must increase efforts to convey recall and other safety information directly and provide consumers with incentives (refund or product replacement) to comply.



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Illinois Parent Survey on Product Safety

Part I. Methodology

This survey sampled 500 Illinois parents with children under 18 years old in September 2009. The margin of error for the sample is +/- 4.5%. The interviews were conducted by telephone¹ and respondents were asked a variety of questions about child safety and recall-related issues. The survey results give a snapshot of Illinois families' perceptions of safety and recalls and will be used to inform outreach and education campaigns.

Part II. Perceptions of Safety

Parents appear optimistic regarding safety at home. Respondents are asked to rate “the overall level of safety that your children experiences while in your home” using a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is “extremely unsafe” and 10 “extremely safe.” The mean response is 8.8, reflecting a high level of confidence.

Issues

When asked to name a specific safety issue, parents list issues that might be categorized as home safety concerns most often—with 31% of total responses. Other significant issues mentioned fall into the categories of crime (25%), safety around cars and traffic (13%), fire or burn hazards (6%) and getting hurt outside the home, for instance while at the playground (5%).

Figure 1. Parents' greatest child safety concerns



¹ The difficulty of reaching a broad representative sample of families with children under 18 caused minorities and men to be underrepresented.

Products

Parents are also asked to rate the relative danger of certain products – toys, cribs, high chairs, vegetables and meat. The survey includes food and product safety issues that have been in the news. For each product, respondents rate the level of danger associated with the product. The percentages of “serious danger” and “some danger” were then aggregated to determine which products are viewed as the most threatening, renamed the “threat level”. Overall, very few parents feel that any of the products pose a serious danger (less than 5%). Using the combined ‘some’ and ‘serious’ danger scores, toys rank as the highest concern, followed by high chairs, cribs, meat and vegetables.

Figure 2. Perceived danger of various items

<i>Products</i>	<i>Almost no danger</i>	<i>Some danger</i>	<i>Serious danger</i>	<i>Threat level</i>
Toys	36%	60%	3%	63%
High Chairs	38%	54%	4%	58%
Cribs	47%	46%	3%	49%
Meat	56%	39%	3%	42%
Vegetables	73%	26%	1%	27%

Parents with children between 0-6 years old are more sensitive than the general sample to the dangers of the above items. Parents with young children consider these items to be more threatening by 12 points for toys, 9 points for high chairs and only 4 points for cribs.

Figure 3. Perceived danger of items by parents with children under 6

<i>Products</i>	<i>Almost no danger</i>	<i>Some danger</i>	<i>Serious danger</i>	<i>Threat level</i>
Toys	26%	71%	4%	75% (+12 from general population)
High Chairs	32%	62%	5%	67% (+9)
Cribs	45%	51%	2%	53% (+4)

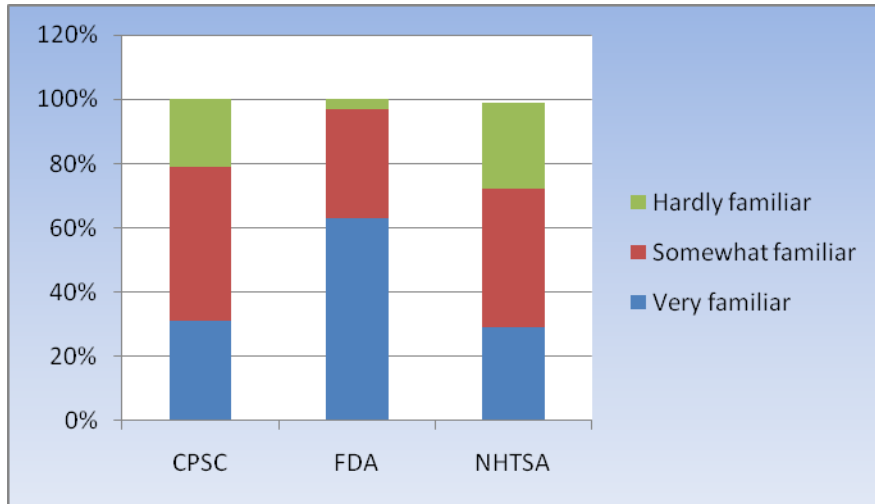
Part III. Recalls

Awareness

Asked about their familiarity with the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), 31% of respondents choose “very familiar”, 48% “somewhat familiar” and 21% “hardly familiar” at all. Though the concept of “familiarity” is not well defined, the results indicate that the majority of parents have at least heard of the CPSC.

For a relative sense of this familiarity, respondents rate two other government bodies –the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) and the National Highway Safety Administration (NHTSA). The results (shown below) demonstrate that CPSC is much less renowned than the FDA, but a little more recognized than the NHTSA.

Figure 4. Parents' relative familiarity with CPSC



When asked *how often* they hear of recalls, 43% of respondents indicate at least once a month and 57% report less than 3 times per a year. Of those that were African American, only 23% hear of a recall at least once a month and 77% less than 3 times per year.

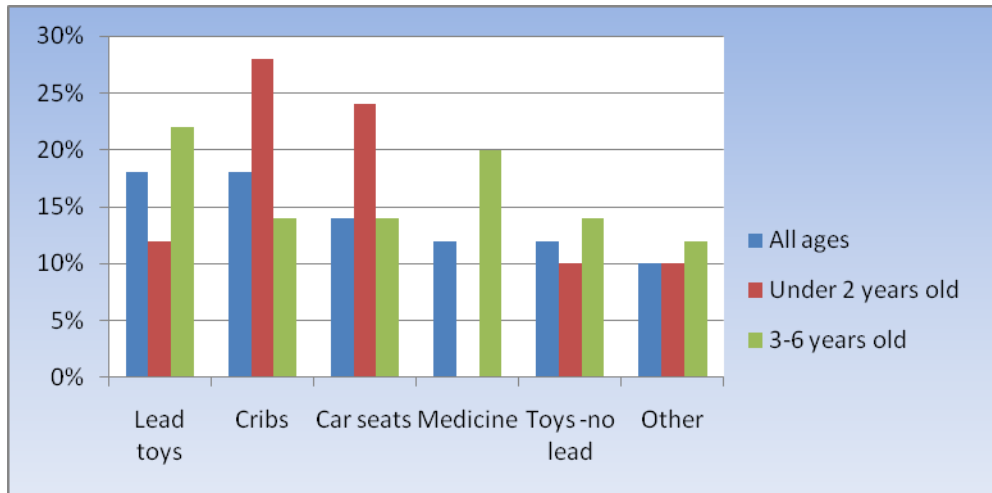
When questioned about *how* they usually hear of recalls, 50% of parents cite the TV news, 15% the internet, 9% in retail shops, 6% in the newspaper and only 3% from email alerts (the other sources were negligible). This demonstrates that TV news coverage is a crucial aspect of recall awareness. Online sources, on the other hand, seem fairly low given the prominence of the internet in general. The percentage of parents receiving email alerts is small but significant. These parents are probably the most active and informed on children's product safety. In the future, this number could serve as an effective metric to determine the extent to which public awareness is developing.

Of the 500 survey participants, only 47% are able to name the most recent recall item they have heard about. Of these, 18% mention toys with lead paint, 18% cribs/bassinets, 14% car seats, 12% children's medicine, 12% toys without lead paint and 10% "other children's products". Not surprisingly, some of the most frequently cited products include "Thomas the Tank Engine" (lead), "Aquadots" (chemical hazard) and Children's Tylenol. The first two items were recalled in 2007, but were highly publicized in the news media. The Children's Tylenol recall was issued on September 18, 2009, just days before the survey took place.

The ages of respondents' children also seem to affect which products parents will remember. Parents with children under 2 years old report cribs and car seats more frequently than the average, but mention toys with lead paint less often.

Parents with children between 3-6 years old cite toys with lead paint (22%) and children's medicine (20%) most often, yet mention cribs less often than the average. The following chart illustrates these age-based differences.

Figure 5. Types of recalls most remembered by parents



Recall Efficacy

Thirty-seven percent of all respondents report having discovered a recalled product in their homes at some point, whereas only 22% of African Americans indicate the same.

Forty percent of women report finding a recalled item, while only 28% of men indicate the same.

Marital status also seems to be a significant factor. Thirty-seven percent of married parents report finding recalls against 27% for single/divorced parents.

Asked what they did with the recall item, 35% of respondents threw it away, 26% requested a repair kit (from the manufacturer/retailer), 12% returned it for a refund, 10% returned it for a replacement and 7% did nothing (continued using/storing it).

In order to identify the factors that contribute most to a recall's success, parents are then asked to indicate which policies would make them more likely to respond to a recall notice. For each given policy or condition, parents are questioned whether it would make them *more*, *less* or *equally* (no difference) likely to comply. Parents' willingness to observe the recall is investigated under each of the following conditions:

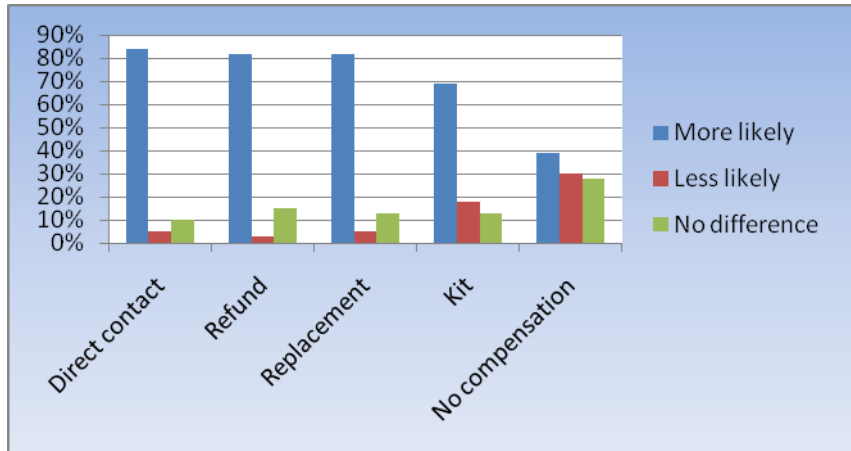
That the company...

- (a) contacted them directly with instructions on how to comply (*direct contact*)
- (b) gave a refund or store credit for the product (*refund*)
- (c) replaced the product (*replacement*)
- (d) sent a fix-it-yourself kit (*kit*)

(e) or instructed them to destroy the product without compensation (*no compensation*)

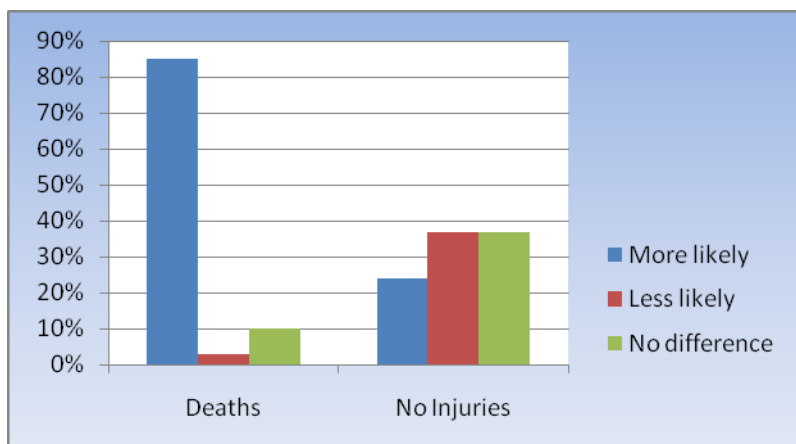
The results indicate that parents are most likely to comply under conditions (a), (b) and (c), while significantly less likely under policies (d) and (e). The following chart demonstrates the incentive disparities between each of the above provisions.

Figure 6. Likelihood of compliance under different recall policies



Parents are also questioned about whether they are more likely to respond to a recall when they are aware of deaths or injuries associated with the product. We tested their willingness to comply under conditions (a) “a child had been killed using the product” and (b) “no injuries had been reported”. The results indicate that knowledge of deaths or injuries are significant determinants of a parent’s choice to comply. Eight-five percent of parents are more likely to respond in the case of *death*, whereas only 24% are more likely if there are *no injuries*.

Figure 7. Likelihood of compliance in cases of deaths or injuries.



Part IV. Conclusions

Summary

This study has significant implications for improving recall awareness and designing effective recall policies. The survey allows advocates to understand children's product safety through parents' perspective and has revealed severe shortcomings in how recalls are conducted.

Parents seem to underestimate the danger of "high-risk" products and are not sufficiently aware of recalls. Even parents with children under six are overly optimistic about the items their children use: twenty-six percent of parents thought that toys posed almost no danger, 32% for high chairs and 45% for cribs. This high degree of security reflects imperfect knowledge about the dangers children's products can pose.

Regarding recall compliance, we have found intuitive, yet revealing results. Parents are more likely to respond to recalls when companies contact them directly, or when they are given replacements or refunds. They are less likely to comply when given a "fix-it-yourself kit" or, even more so, when given no compensation at all.

Implications

There is much to be done. Many parents are still not aware of the hundreds of recalls that happen every year. They're not getting all the information they need. Manufacturers, the CPSC and all other stakeholders need to be more effective in communicating this information.

It's hard to believe that in the midst of the "internet age" only 15% of parents receive their recall information online. More should be done to reach parents through the internet, and specifically, to make them aware of vital resources such as Kids In Danger and the CPSC's website. The CPSC and other organizations should try to promote greater awareness through blogs, linking campaigns and even targeted advertising.

The manufacturers and retailers themselves need to be held to higher standards. They too should utilize the internet more effectively to communicate their recalls with consumers. Most recall announcements are transitory: they appear in the papers, on the storefront and on TV for only a limited time. Companies should connect with consumers online to provide an extended announcement of the recall. They could, for example, use targeted keyword advertising to communicate recalls to the relevant consumer populations. This is only an example; there are many possible avenues to explore.

More than anything, however, companies must offer their customers the right incentives to comply with the recall notices. This report has confirmed that recall compliance is greatest when companies offer refunds or replacement products. When companies offer a "fix it yourself" kit, or even worse, offer no compensation, customers are least likely to follow the recall procedure. It's vital that all parents with recalled products not only hear of the recall, but that they contact the company and make their awareness known. It's not possible to have an accurate gauge of a recall's effectiveness (how many customers it reached) if parents don't report their awareness and compliance.

Kids In Danger will use the results of this survey, along with our other information from parents and caregivers, to develop more effective outreach campaigns and to better advocate for a more effective recall system.

Appendix

Survey Questions and Frequency Tables

(Q₁) Thinking of your children’s safety around the home, how would you rate the overall level of safety that your child experiences? Using a scale of one to ten where ten is extremely safe and one is extremely unsafe – and you can use any number between one and ten - how would you rate the overall level of safety that your children experiences while in your home?

Count of Q ₁	
Safety Ratings	Total
01 -Extremely Unsafe	0%
03	0%
05	1%
06	0%
07	6%
08	25%
09	37%
10 -Extremely Safe	29%
Grand Total	100%

(Q₂) Thinking about potential safety issues you might worry about regarding your children, what would you consider the greatest safety issue for your children? (answers categorized) and **(Q₃)** Is there another issue you feel is the second greatest safety issue for your child?

Count of Q ₂	
Safety Issues -1st	Total
Home	31%
Fire	6%
Drowning	2%
Crime	25%
Environment	1%
Behavioral	2%
Automobile	13%
Outside	5%
Other	5%
None	10%
Grand Total	100%

Count of Q ₃	
Safety Issues -2nd	Total
Home	19%
Fire	2%
Drowning	1%
Crime	11%
Environment	1%
Behavioral	2%
Automobile	8%
Outside	4%
Other	9%
None	44%
Grand Total	100%

(Q4) Intro: Some people have expressed concern over the danger of injury or poisoning from certain products. For each product that I read to you, please tell me whether in using this product you feel there is serious danger to a child's health or safety, only some danger, or almost no danger at all?

(a) Children's Toys

Count of Q4a	
Concern -Toys	Total
Serious Danger	3%
Only Some Danger	60%
Almost No Danger	36%
Don't know	1%
Grand Total	100%

(b) Cribs

Count of Q4b	
Concern -Cribs	Total
Serious Danger	3%
Only Some Danger	46%
Almost No Danger	47%
Don't know	4%
Grand Total	100%

(c) High Chairs

Count of Q4c	
Concern -High Chairs	Total
Serious Danger	4%
Only Some Danger	54%
Almost No Danger	38%
Don't know	4%
Grand Total	100%

(d) Fresh Vegetables

Count of Q4d	
Concern -Vegetables	Total
Serious Danger	1%
Only Some Danger	26%
Almost No Danger	73%
Don't know	0%
Grand Total	100%

(e) Meats

Count of Q4e	
Concern -Meats	Total
Serious Danger	3%
Only Some Danger	39%
Almost No Danger	56%
Don't know	2%
Grand Total	100%

(Q5) Intro: There are federal agencies which are responsible for assuring the safety and reliability of a number of goods and services. For each of the following agencies, would you say you are very familiar with it and the work it has done in protecting the safety of the consumer, somewhat familiar, or hardly familiar at all?

(a) Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)

Count of Q5A	
Familiarity with CPSC	Total
Very familiar	31%
Somewhat familiar	48%
Hardly familiar at all	21%
Don't know	1%
Grand Total	100%

(b) Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

Count of Q5B	
Familiarity with FDA	Total
Very familiar	63%
Somewhat familiar	34%
Hardly familiar at all	3%
Grand Total	100%

(c) National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)

Count of Q5C	
Familiarity with NHTSA	Total
Very familiar	29%
Somewhat familiar	43%
Hardly familiar at all	27%
Don't know	1%
Grand Total	100%

(Q₆) To the best of your knowledge, do you feel the Consumer Product Safety Commission has done an excellent job in protecting the interest and safety of the consumer, a pretty good job, only a fair job, or a poor job?

Count of Q6	
Perceived Efficacy- CPSC	Total
Excellent job	6%
Pretty good job	63%
Only a fair job	22%
Poor job	4%
Don't know	5%
Grand Total	100%

(Q₇) How often do you hear about a recall of a children's product? Is it at least once a week, once a month, less than every year, or never?

Count of Q7	
Recall Awareness	Total
At least once a week	9%
Once a month	34%
Two to three times a year	43%
Once a year	10%
Less than once a year	2%
Never	1%
Don't know	1%
Grand Total	100%

(Q₈) How do you usually find out about toys or other children's products that have been recalled?

Count of Q8	
Recall Info Sources	Total
From email alerts	3%
On TV news	50%
In the newspaper	6%
On the radio	3%
In magazines	4%
On the internet	15%
In retail stores	9%
Other	9%
Grand Total	100%

(Q₉) Can you tell me the most recent recalled children product you learned about?

Count of Q9	
Recall Remembrance	Total
Yes	47%
No	45%
Don't know	8%
Grand Total	100%

(Q₁₀) Please tell me the most recent children's product you remember being recalled. (Note: Open-ended were coded and placed into the categories below)

Count of Q10 Code	
Remembered Recalls	Total
Toys with Lead	18%
Cribs/bassinets	18%
Other toys	12%
Car seats	14%
Other children's Products	5%
Medicine	12%
Food	0%
Other	10%%
Grand Total	100%

(Q₁₁) Have you ever discovered a recalled children's product in your home?

Count of Q11	
Recall Experiences	Total
Yes	37%
No	61%
Don't know	2%
Grand Total	100%

(Q₁₂) What did you do about the recalled children’s product you discovered in your home? Did you…?

Count of Q12	
Reactions to Recalled Items	Total
Do nothing [continued to use/store]	7%
Throw it away	35%
Contact the manufacturer or retailer for a repair kit	26%
Take or mail it back for a refund or credit	12%
Take or mail it back for a replacement	10%
Other	10%
Grand Total	100%

(Q₁₃) Do you have children under the age of two?

Count of Q13	
Children Under Two	Total
Yes	13%
No	87%
Grand Total	100%

(Q₁₆) Intro: I am going to read you a list of methods for notifying consumers such as yourself of recalls. For each one that I read, please tell me if it would make you more likely to respond to a recall notice, less likely to respond to a recall notice or if it wouldn’t make any difference.

(a) If the company contacted you directly with instructions on how to comply.

Count of Q16A	
Direct Contact	Total
More Likely	84%
Less Likely	5%
No difference	10%
Don't know	1%
Grand Total	100%

(b) If the company gave a refund or store credit for the product.

Count of Q16B	
Refund/Store Credit	Total
More Likely	82%
Less Likely	3%
No difference	15%
Grand Total	100%

(c) If the company replaced the product.

Count of Q16C	
Q16C	Total
More Likely	82%
Less Likely	5%
No difference	13%
Grand Total	100%

(d) If the company sent a kit to fix the product.

Count of Q16D	
Fix-It Kit	Total
More Likely	69%
Less Likely	18%
No difference	13%
Grand Total	100%

(e) If the company instructed you to destroy or discard the product with no compensation.

Count of Q16E	
No Compensation	Total
More Likely	39%
Less Likely	30%
No difference	28%
Don't know	2%
Grand Total	100%

(f) If you learned a child had been killed using the product.

Count of Q16F	
Child's Death	Total
More Likely	85%
Less Likely	3%
No difference	10%
Don't know	1%
Grand Total	100%

(g) If you learned that product had been recalled, but with no reported injuries.

Count of Q16G	
Recalls –No Injuries	Total
More Likely	24%
Less Likely	37%
No difference	37%
Don't know	2%
Grand Total	100%

(Q17) Have you ever seen recall notices for children’s products posted in the store?

Count of Q17	
Q17	Total
Yes	82%
No	18%
Don't know	1%
Grand Total	100%

Demographics Questions

(D1) What would you consider primary news source? Would you say it was...?

Count of D1	
Primary News Sources	Total
TV	49%
Radio	5%
Internet	28%
Newspaper	9%
Magazines	4%
Other	6%
Grand Total	100%

(D3) What is your ethnic background or race?

Count of D3	
Ethnicity	Total
White or Caucasian	88%
African American	4%
Asian	2%
Hispanic	2%
Other	1%
Refused/don't know	3%
Grand Total	100%

(D4) What is your marital status?

Count of D4	
Marital Status	Total
married	88%
single	6%
divorced	3%
widowed	3%
other	1%
Grand Total	100%

(D₅) Do you live in a two-parent household?

Count of D5	
Two-Parent Household	Total
Yes	91%
No	8%
Don't know	1%
Grand Total	100%

(D₆) Gender (note: by observation)

Count of D6	
D6	Total
Male	30%
Female	70%
Grand Total	100%

(D₇) Is your annual household income under \$25,000 per year, between \$25,000 and \$50,000 a year, between \$50,000 and \$75,000 a year or over \$75,000 a year?

Count of D7	
Income Brackets	Total
Under \$25,000	4%
\$25,000 to \$50,000	17%
\$50,00 to \$75,000	20%
Over \$75,000	45%
Don't know	13%
Grand Total	100%

(D₈) Please tell me the number of children in your household aged two years and under.

Count of D8	
# of Children Under 2	Total
0	80%
1	13%
2	2%
3	0%
4	0%
NA	5%
Grand Total	100%

(D₉) Please tell me the number of children in your household aged three to six.

Count of D9	
Children 3-6 Years Old	Total
0	60%
1	25%
2	9%
3	1%
NA	5%
Grand Total	100%

(D₁₀) Please tell me the number of children in your household aged seven to fourteen years.

Count of D10	
Children 7-14 Years	Total
0	26%
1	31%
2	30%
3	6%
4	2%
NA	5%
Grand Total	100%

(D₁₁) Please tell me the number of children in your household aged fifteen to eighteen years.

Count of D11	
Children 15-18 Years	Total
0	68%
1	21%
2	6%
3	0%
NA	5%
Grand Total	100%

(D₁₂) Do you have grandparents that are involved in the care of your children?

Count of D12	
Grandparents Involved	Total
Yes	46%
No	54%
Grand Total	100%

(D₁₃) Thinking of your children's grandparents, how frequently are they involved in caring for your children?

Count of D13	
Frequency of Care	Total
Daily	29%
Weekly	29%
Occasionally	36%
Rarely	6%
Never	1%
Grand Total	100%