



TOPS Survey Findings

April 2024





Toddlers of Philadelphia Survey(TOPS)

- / The goal of the TOPS was to provide actionable information about families with two-year-old children in Philadelphia**
- / This survey can help inform the feasibility and usefulness of collecting and analyzing information provided by their caregivers in an ongoing way in Philadelphia**
- / Conducted by Mathematica in partnership with the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, Division of Maternal, Child, and Family Health (PDPH MCFH); with the support from the William Penn Foundation¹**

¹ The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the William Penn Foundation





Why two-year-olds?

/ **A child's experiences in early childhood are very important to their future health and development**

- The most rapid period of brain development occurs in the first three years of life
- The first five years are considered a critical period for language development
- Supportive environments early in children's lives can provide a foundation for future success

/ **There is limited data about the needs of two-year-olds in Philadelphia**

- There is less known about families with two-year olds; and generally fewer programs and supports directed at these early ages (particularly early care and education programs)



Why survey caregivers?

- / Stable and responsive relationships with caregivers or other adults are the most influential ingredient in resilient development**
- / Caregivers can provide a buffer against challenging environmental conditions**
- / Understanding what caregivers do to support their children's development, can help identify parenting strengths and needs**
- / Identifying what caregivers need, and findings ways to support them, can, in turn, allow them to better support their children**
- / Programs and services can support families in building family well-being**



Why a survey?

- / **A survey allows us to systematically capture information that is not available elsewhere**
- / **There is limited information about the beliefs and behaviors of toddlers and their caregivers; particularly on a city-wide level**
- / **A survey including respondents who represent families with toddlers living in Philadelphia, or a survey with a large group of caregivers from different backgrounds, can inform us about family strengths, needs, and gaps in support across the region, including:**
 - What information caregivers need
 - How to share information with caregivers
 - Which supports caregivers need and who needs them



Toddlers of Philadelphia (TOPS) Survey

/ Fielded in Fall and Winter 2023

/ 444 caregivers of two-year olds completed the survey

- Representative of city population of two-year olds

/ Survey topics included:


- Caregiver and household characteristics
- Activities with children
- Involvement with early care and education (ECE)
- Child well-being
- Caregiver well-being
- Household and neighborhood context



Overview of the slides



Key terms and definitions in these slides

- / **“Toddler” refers to two-year-old children**
- / **High-risk zip codes refer to zip codes where a greater percentage of children experienced two or more early childhood risks ¹**
 - The risks include: 1) preterm/low birth weight, 2) homelessness, 3) inadequate prenatal care, 4) teen mother, 5) low maternal education, 6) lead exposure, and 8) child maltreatment.
- / **Low-risk zip codes refer to zip codes where there was a smaller percentage of children who experienced two or more childhood risks**
- / **On some slides we include recommendations. They are indicated by a  icon. These are ideas from the research team; there are likely many other recommendations that could be considered, especially from organizations serving families in the city.**

¹ **More details on defining high- and low-risk zip codes:** https://aisp.upenn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Philadelphia_Early-Risk-Brief-FINAL.pdf



Topics and findings in these slides

- / **Not all survey topics or findings are included in these slides, these are intended to be a highlight of some of the survey findings**
- / **In most slides we present the overall data, but in some cases where there are larger (i.e., more than 10 points) differences between responses from participants in high- and low-risk zip codes we present the data by those groups**
- / **Tables that include the full set of survey results can be obtained from the research team**
- / **The slides that follow address the following topics:**
 - Activities with children
 - Parenting ideas that caregivers want and trusted sources of information
 - Early childhood education
 - Children's development and health
 - Caregiver wellbeing and needs

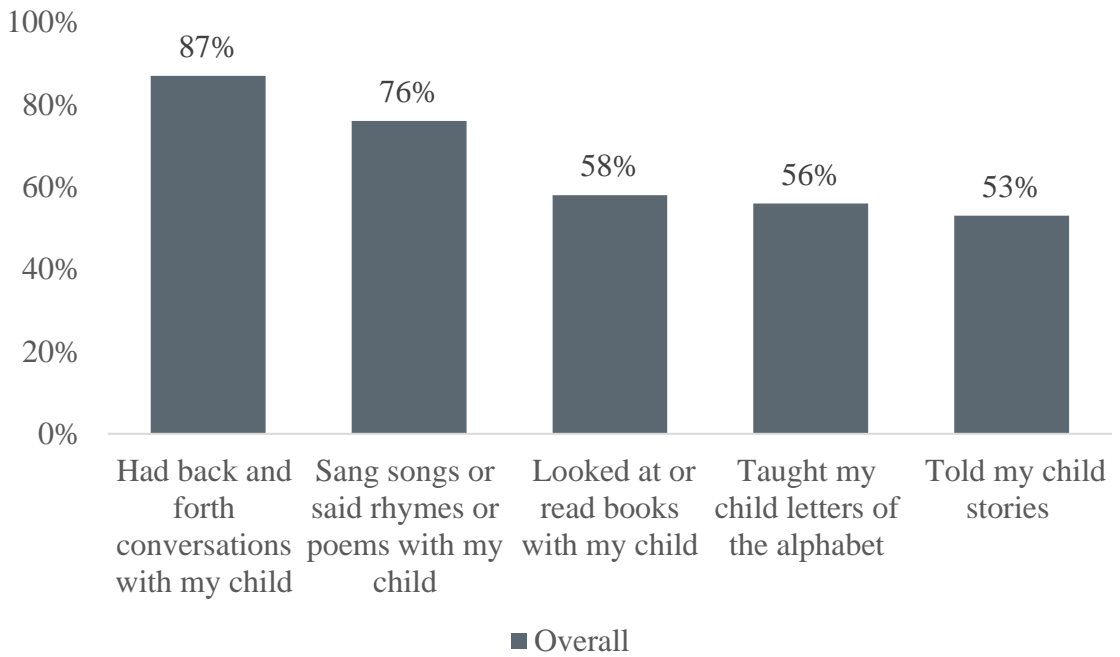


Activities with children



Most caregivers frequently have conversations and sing with their child, but fewer read, teach the alphabet, or told stories

Percentage of caregivers who engage in these activities with their child 5-7 days a week



/ Many caregivers are supporting children's early language development, particularly through conversations and singing



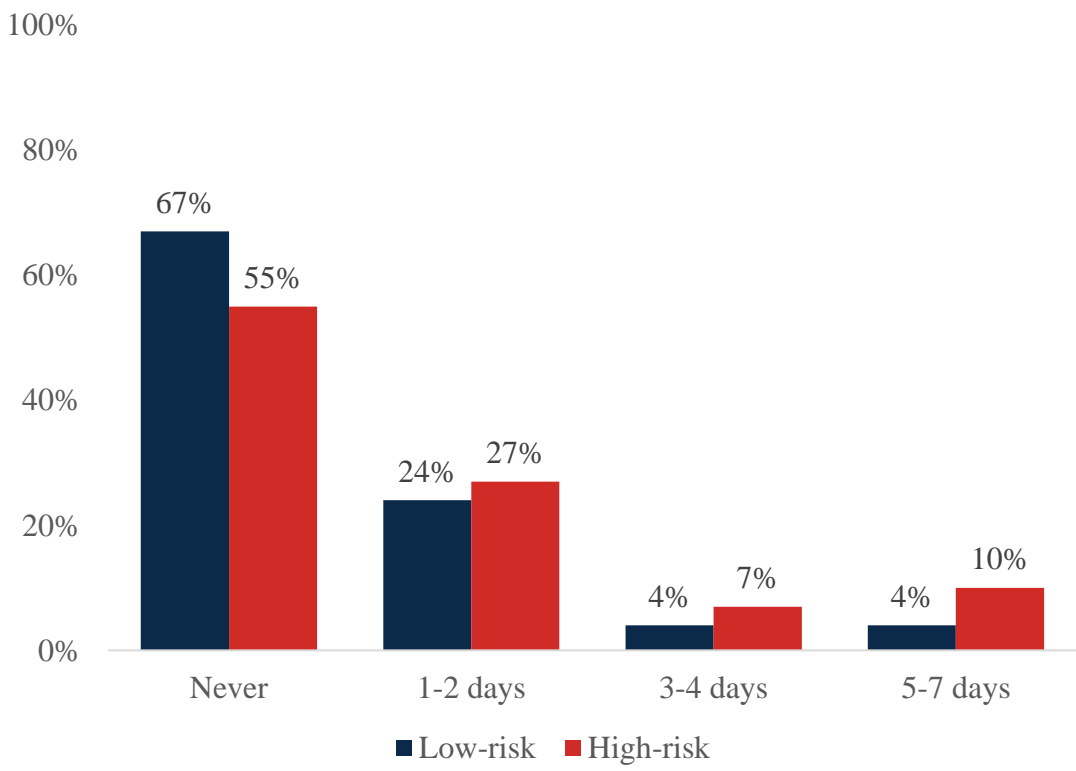
Caregivers could be supported to do some activities more frequently, like reading, teaching letters of the alphabet and telling their child stories





Caregivers living in high-risk zip codes go to the library more frequently than those in low-risk zip codes

Weekly library visits



- / Overall, 37% of caregivers reported taking their child to the library at least once a week
- / More caregivers in high-risk zip codes (45%) use the library than those in low-risk zip codes (33%)



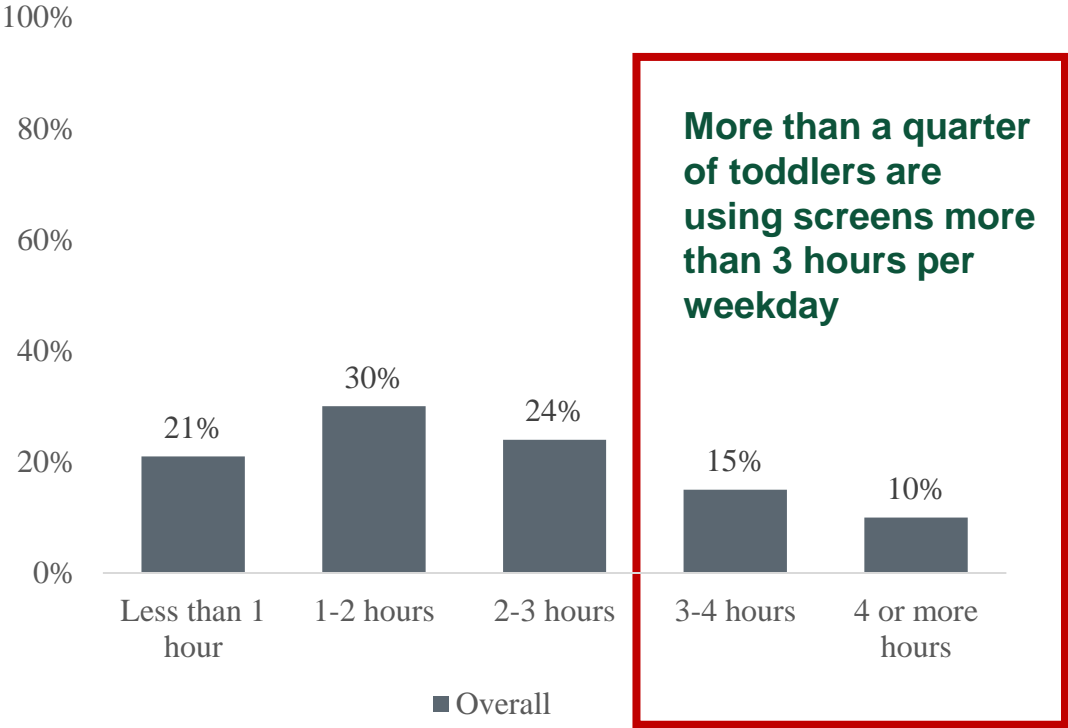
Libraries could be good places to share information or offer services, particularly for people living in high-risk zip codes





Almost 80% of toddlers have 1 hour or more of screen time per weekday

Hours of screen time for toddlers on a typical weekday



/ The AAP¹ recommends children ages 2 to 5 have 1 hour or less of screentime per weekday



Some caregivers may need strategies for how to manage screen time, ways to occupy toddlers without screens, or how to use screens in more developmentally supportive ways

¹AAP = American Academy of Pediatrics



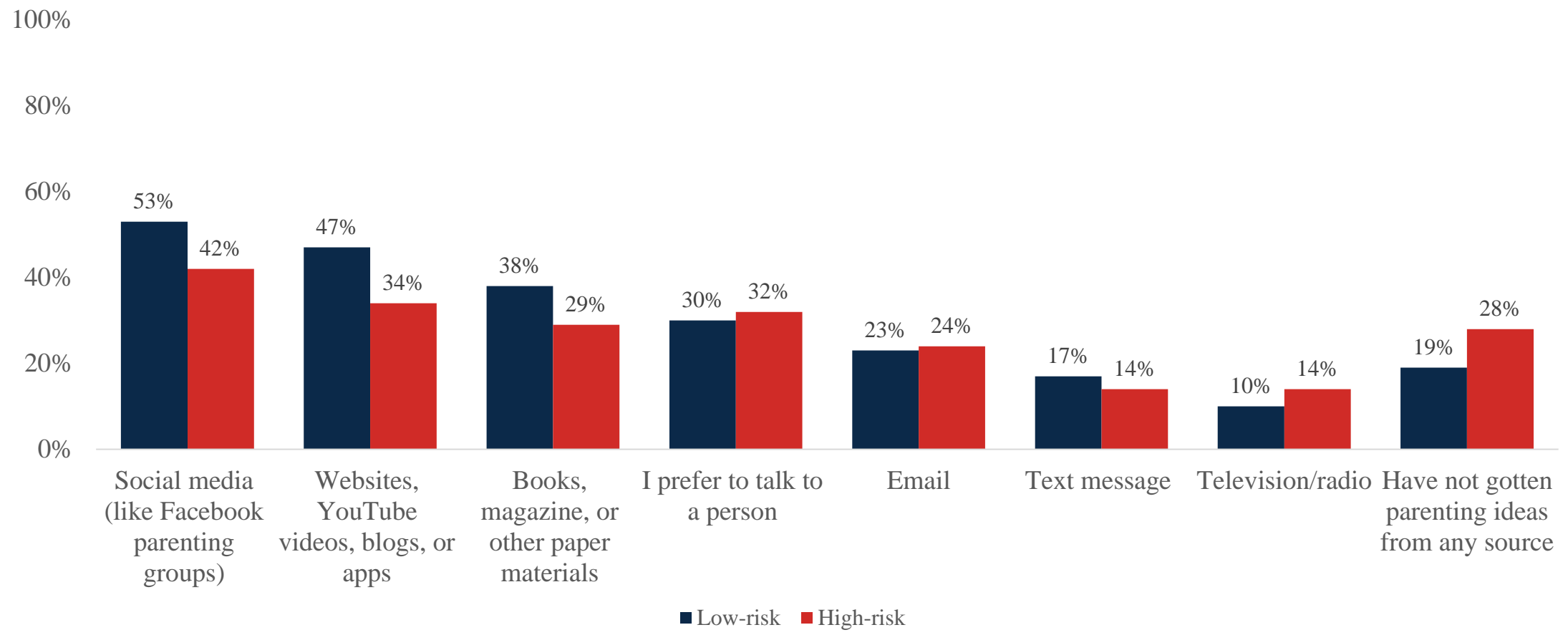


Caregiver sources of information



Caregivers get parenting information from multiple sources; nearly a quarter of caregivers do not get parenting ideas from any source

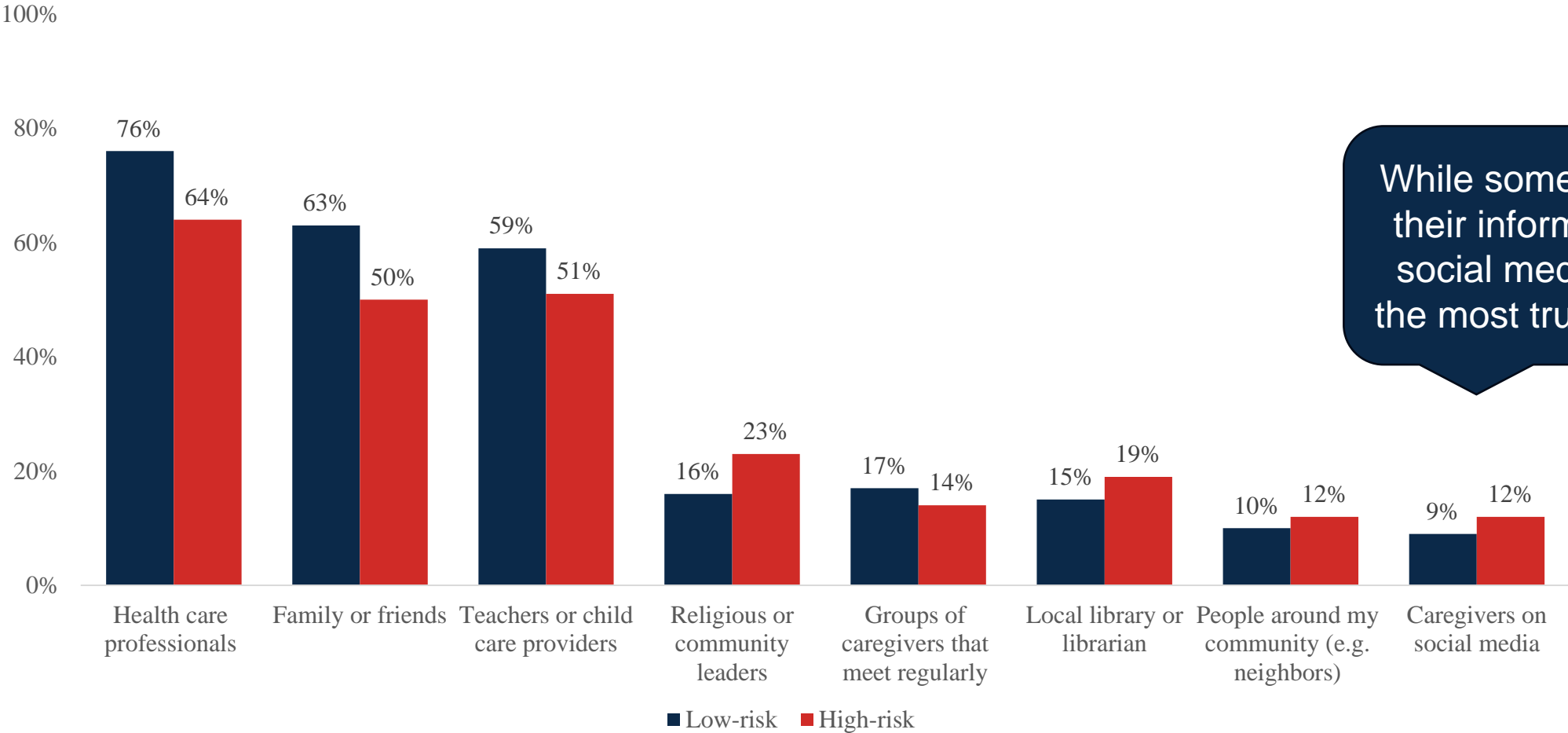
Tops sources of parenting information





Health care professionals are the most trusted source for parenting ideas

Sources that caregivers trust “very much” for parenting ideas



While some people get their information from social media, it is not the most trusted source



Caregivers want more information about supporting their children

/ **Top 3 topics caregivers would like more information about:**

1. Events or places for my child to play with other children (71%)
2. Things I can do with my child at home to help them learn (70%)
3. Things I can do to help my child calm down when they are upset (64%)

 **Resources focused on these topics could be distributed through trusted sources, such as medical offices, teachers/childcare professionals, or on social media and websites**

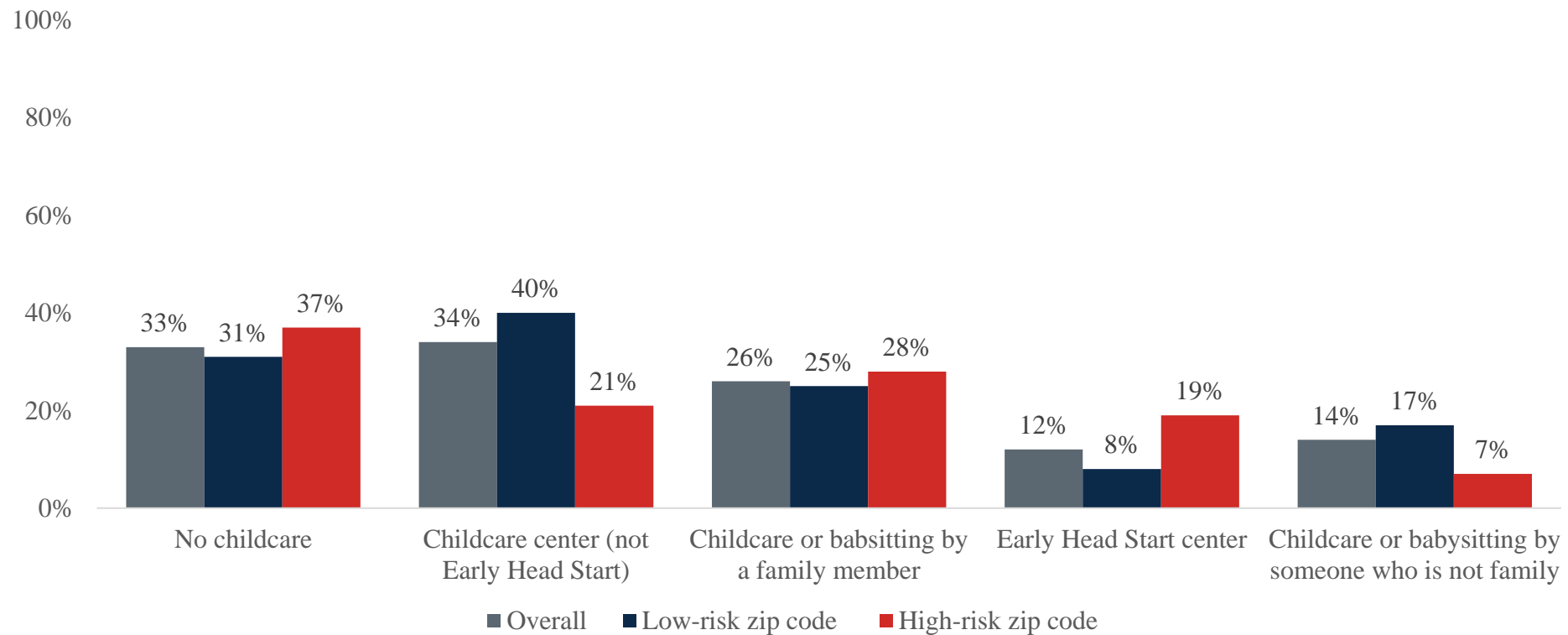


Early childhood education



About 70% of caregivers use childcare. Of those, most use a private childcare center or receive childcare from a family member.

Types of childcare caregivers used for their two-year-olds at least once a week during the past month

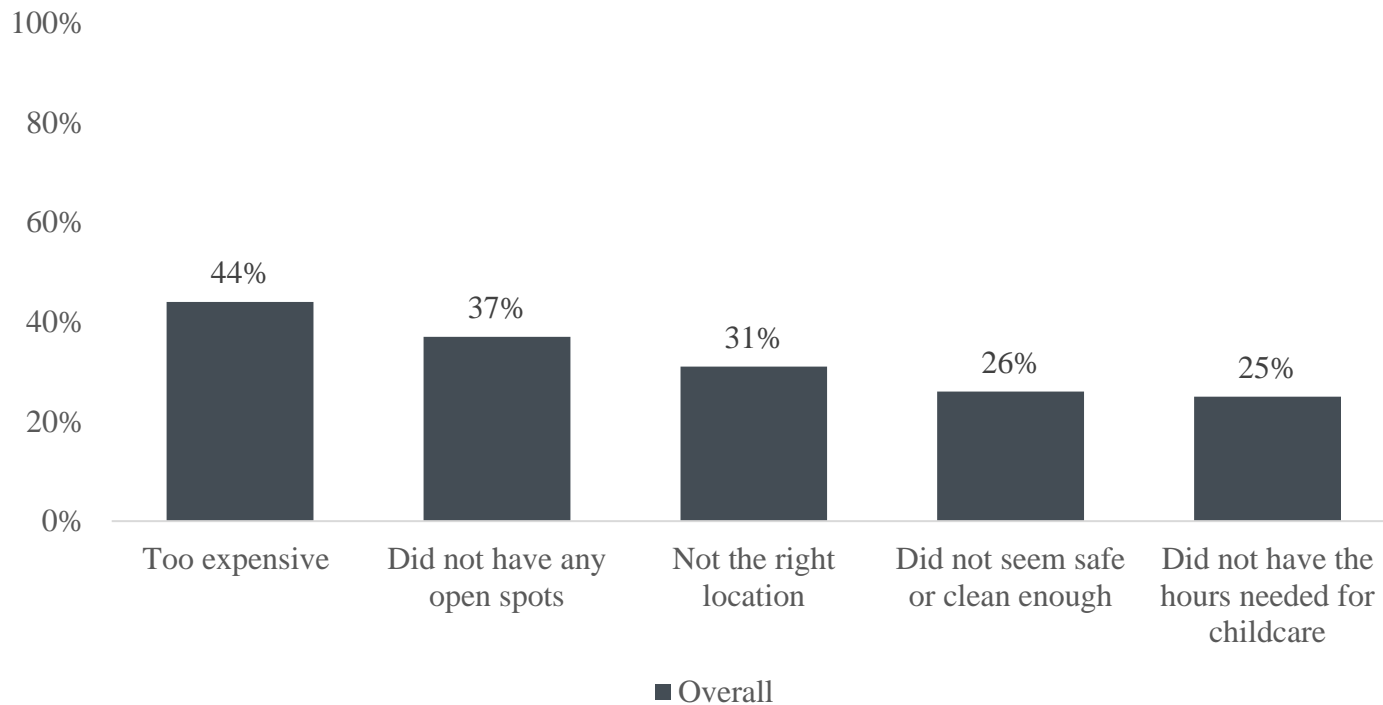




Childcare is a challenge

Affordability, availability, and location are key challenges

Challenges when looking for childcare



Almost a quarter (23%) of caregivers reported that they had to quit a job, school, or training activity because of problems arranging childcare or keeping a childcare arrangement.

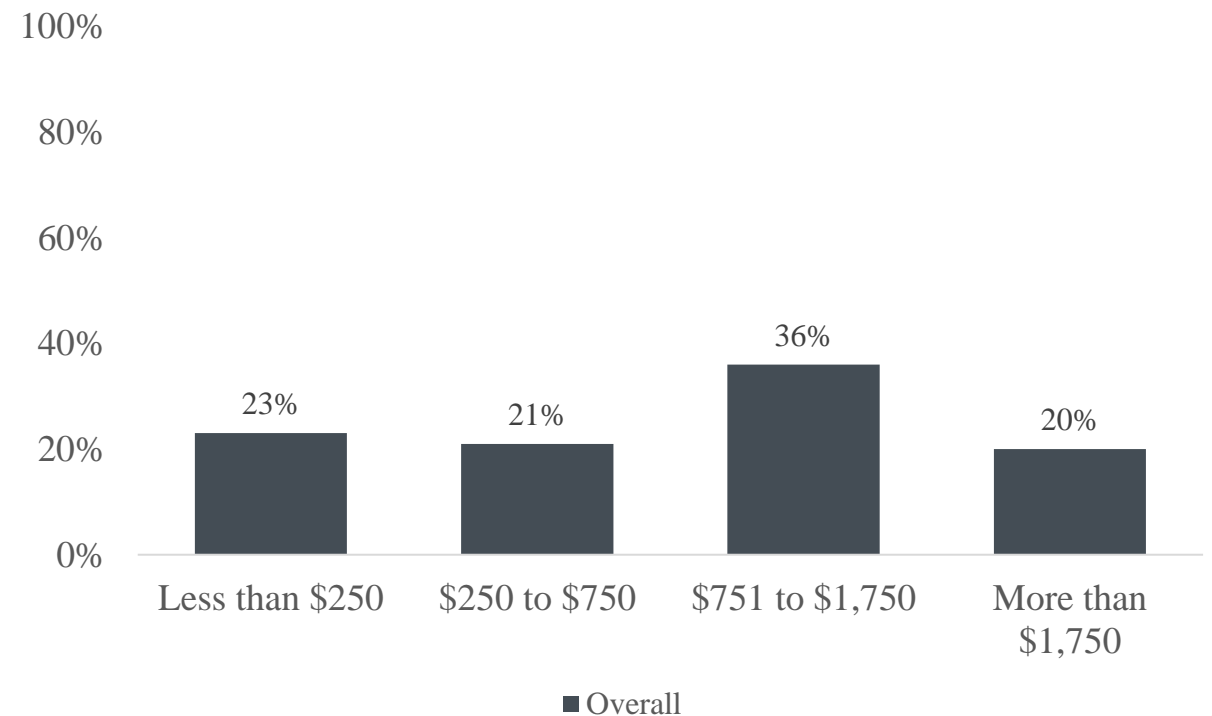


Childcare is a major expense for most caregivers with two-year old children

/ The average amount spent out-of-pocket on childcare per month was \$1,143

/ About half of caregivers had a (gross) household income of \$3,333/month¹ or less and spent at least a third of their income on childcare

Out-of-pocket money caregivers spent on childcare each month

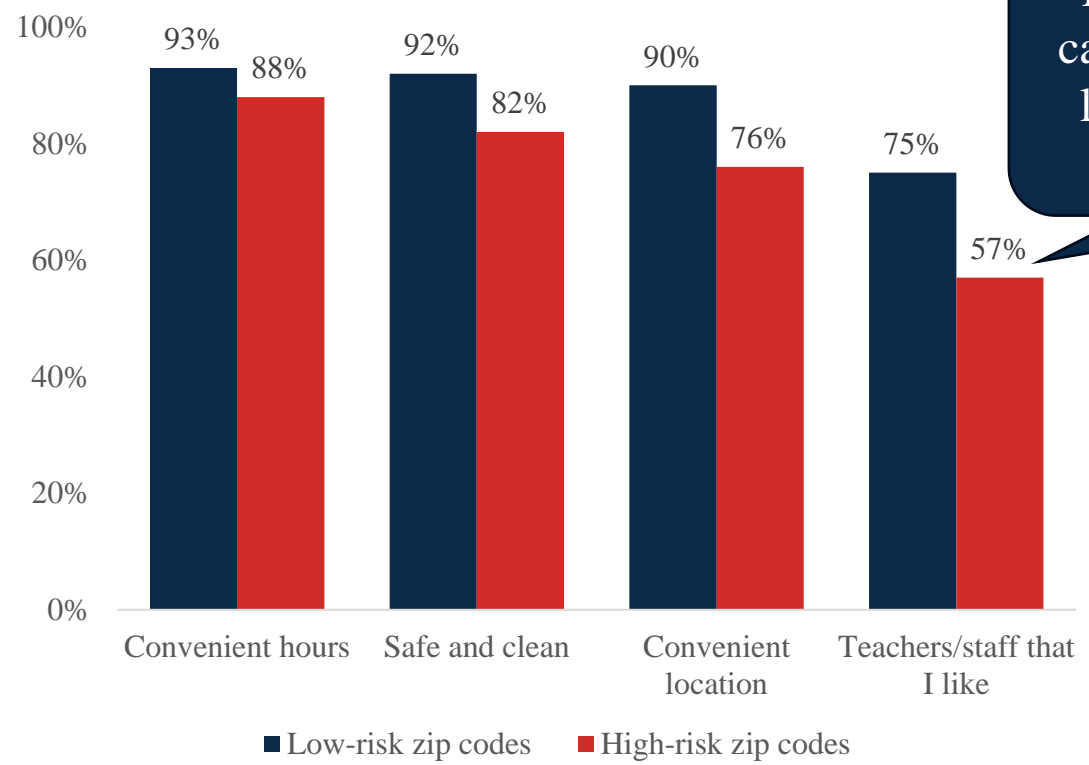


¹ Respondents were asked to estimate their yearly total income in increments. See slide 39 for more specifics.



Caregivers are mostly satisfied with their childcare provider; however, caregivers in high-risk zip codes are less satisfied

Caregivers' satisfaction with elements of their toddlers' childcare provider



Less than two-thirds (57%) of caregivers in high-risk zip codes liked the teachers/staff at their childcare

In addition, only about half of all caregivers were satisfied with: affordability; subsidy acceptance; care for special needs; or the STAR rating of the childcare.





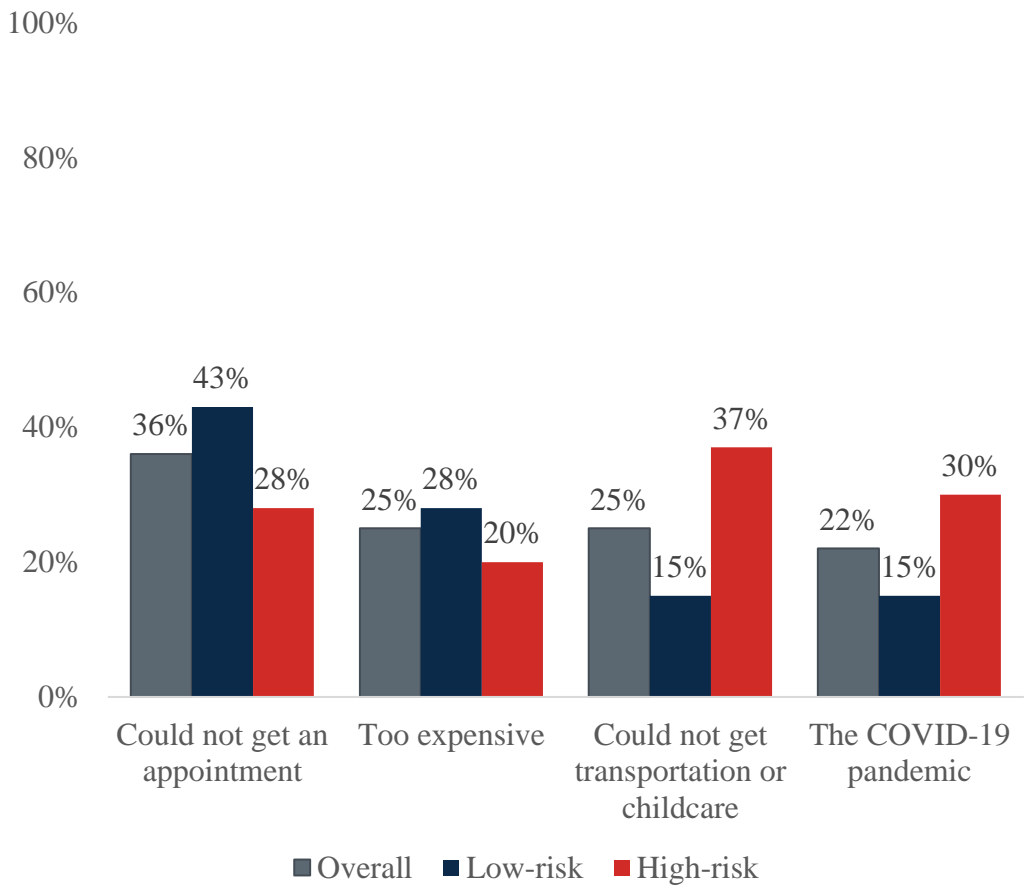
Children's Development and Health



A small portion (8%) of all families experience barriers in accessing health care; barriers vary by high- and low-risk zip codes

- / **Caregivers in low-risk zip codes biggest barriers was not getting an appointment**
- / **Caregivers in high-risk zip codes biggest barrier was that they could not get transportation or childcare**

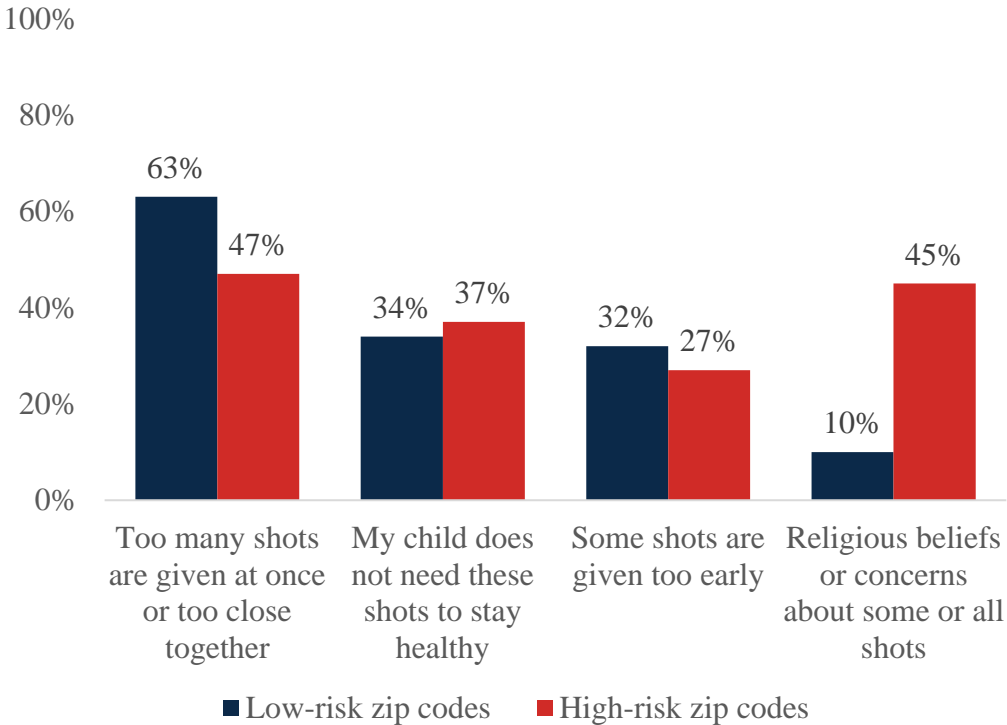
Barriers to health care among the 8% of families who experience barriers





Four main factors affected caregiver decisions about immunizations for toddlers

Main reasons for delaying or forgoing immunizations (n=54)



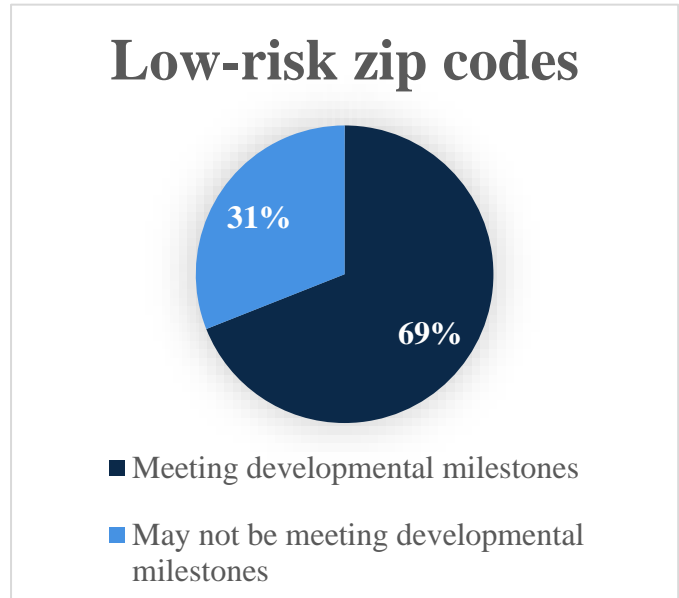
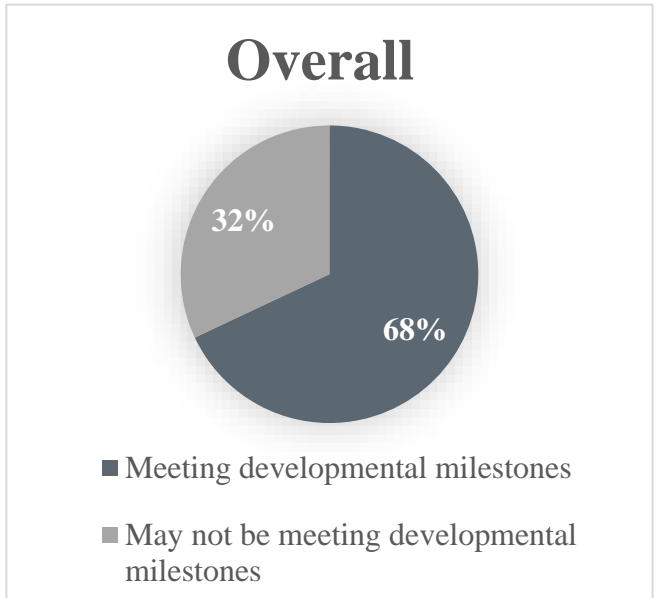
/ About 11% of caregivers decided to delay or not get immunizations for their toddler (n = 54)

/ Caregivers in low- and high-risk zip codes answered differently on concerns about immunization frequency and religious beliefs





Two-thirds of Philadelphia toddlers are meeting developmental milestones, based on parent reported development



Scores did not differ substantially between low vs high-risk zip codes

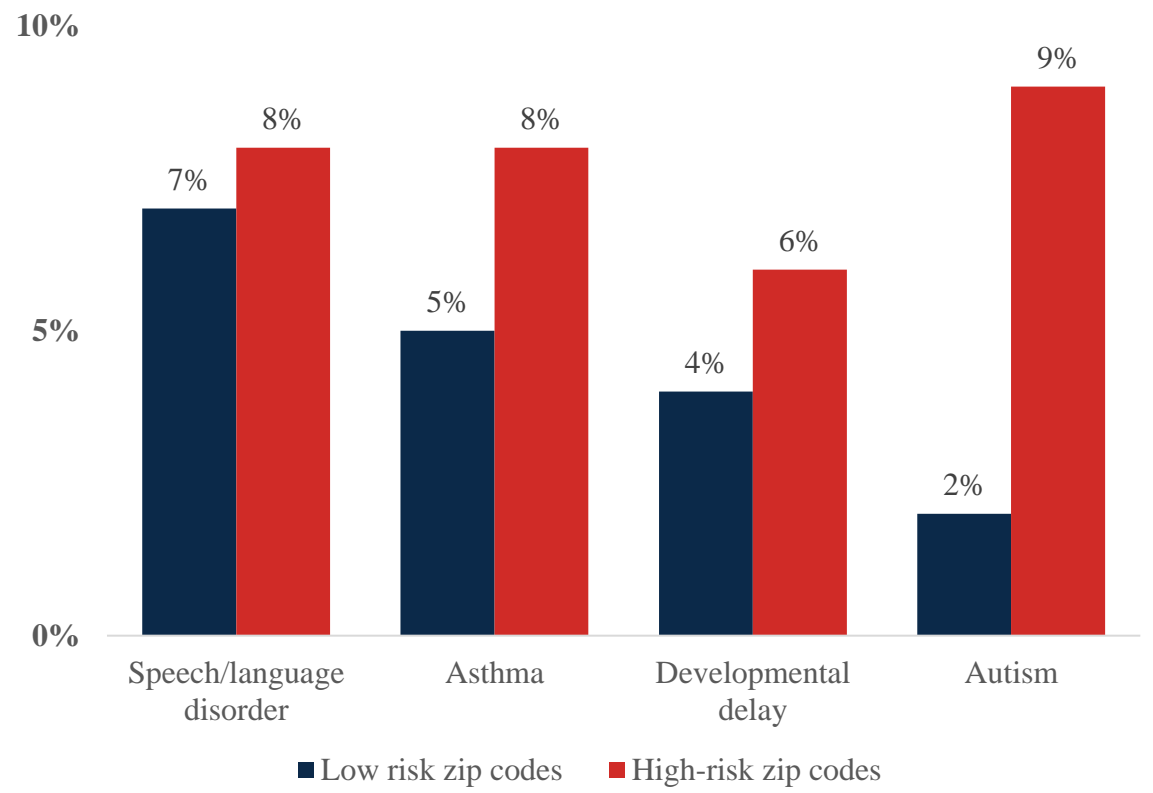
The percentage meeting developmental milestones is lower than that seen in other studies (roughly 20%-25% of children do not meet milestones in other studies, however those studies are not representative and not specific to Philadelphia E.g., Sheldrick & Perrin 2013; Sheldrick et al 2020)



Medical and developmental diagnosis rates are higher in high-risk zip codes

- / About 20% of toddlers overall have been diagnosed with a special need by a medical professional
- / 26% of toddlers in high-risk zip codes were diagnosed, compared to 17% of their low-risk counterparts

Percent of toddlers diagnosed with a medical or developmental condition



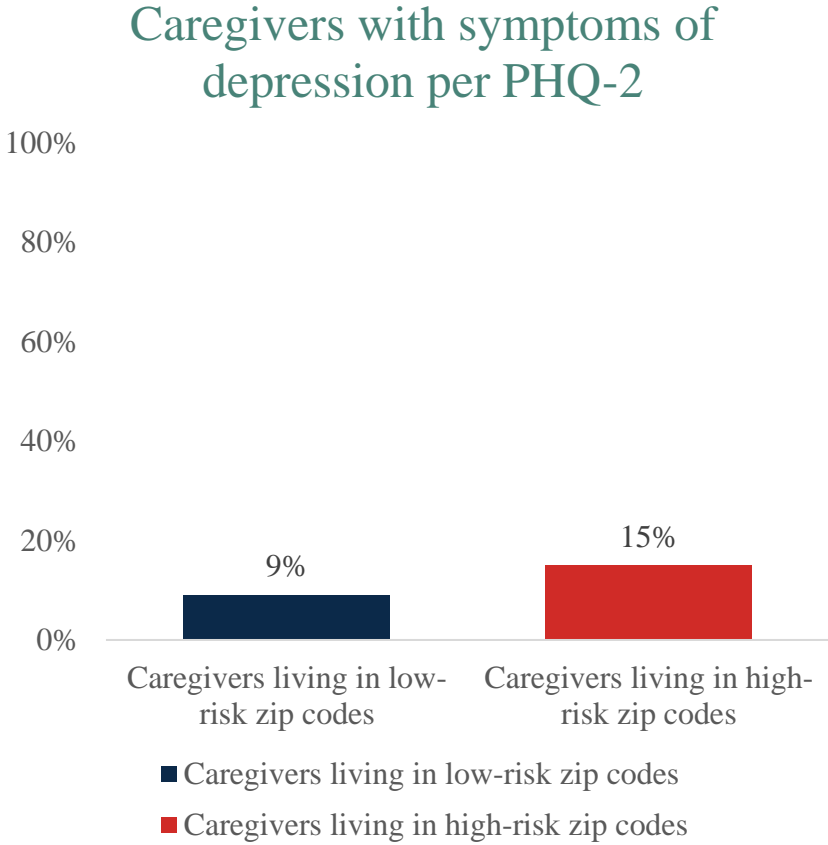


Caregiver wellbeing and needs



Depressive symptoms were more prevalent among caregivers in high-risk zip codes

/ About 12% of caregivers overall reported symptoms of depression on the two-question Patient Health Questionnaire¹



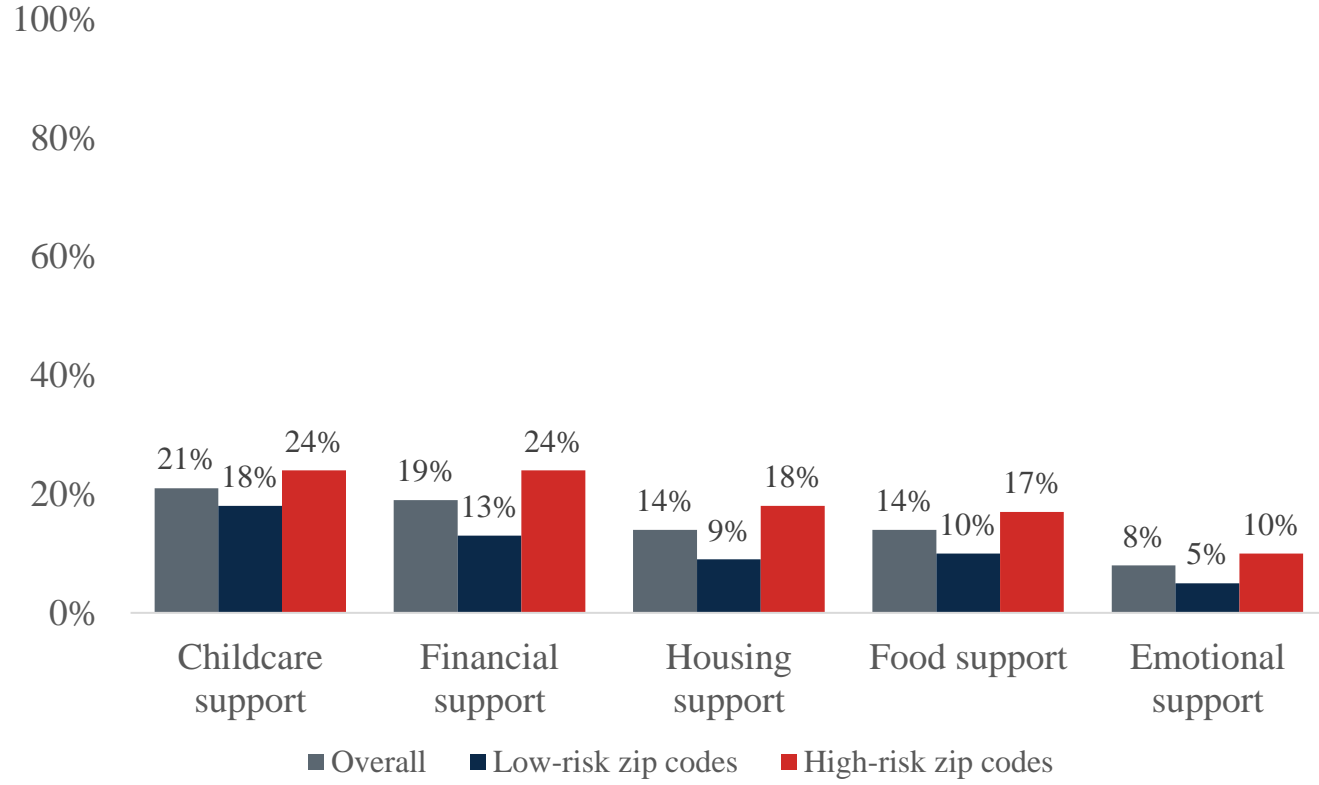
¹Symptoms of depression were determined with a score of 3 or higher on the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-2). Scores of 3 or higher indicate that the individual should be fully screened for depression.



Some caregivers, especially those living in high-risk zip codes, do not feel like they can get support

- / Overall, about 1 in 5 caregivers report lacking childcare or financial support
- / Fewer caregivers in high-risk zip codes report not having support than those in low-risk.

Type of support caregivers report “never” having





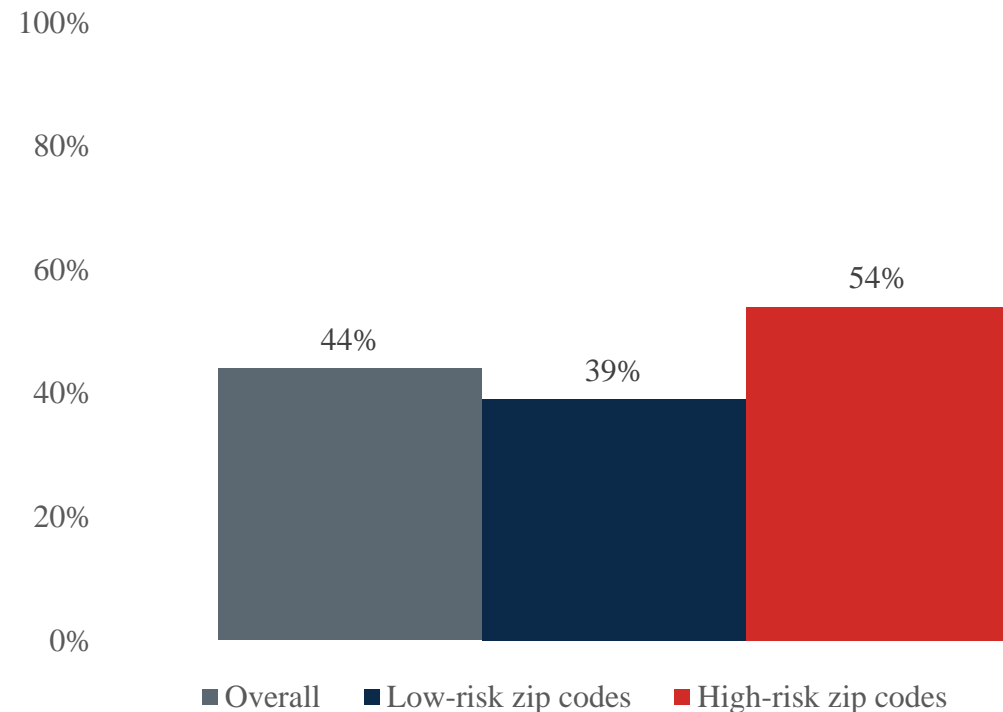
Almost half of caregivers do not know where to go for help in their community



Caregivers may need more information about resources available to help them address difficulties.

- / Given that up to half of caregivers¹ rely on social media or the internet, communicating available programs and supports that way may reach a considerable number of caregivers.
- / Getting information in-person was preferred for one-third of caregivers; targeting information sharing during in-person visits with service providers (e.g., medical providers) may also be useful.

Caregivers that “somewhat disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” with the statement, “When I have difficulties, I know where to go for help in our community.”



¹ See slide 15 for more detail about where caregivers get their information





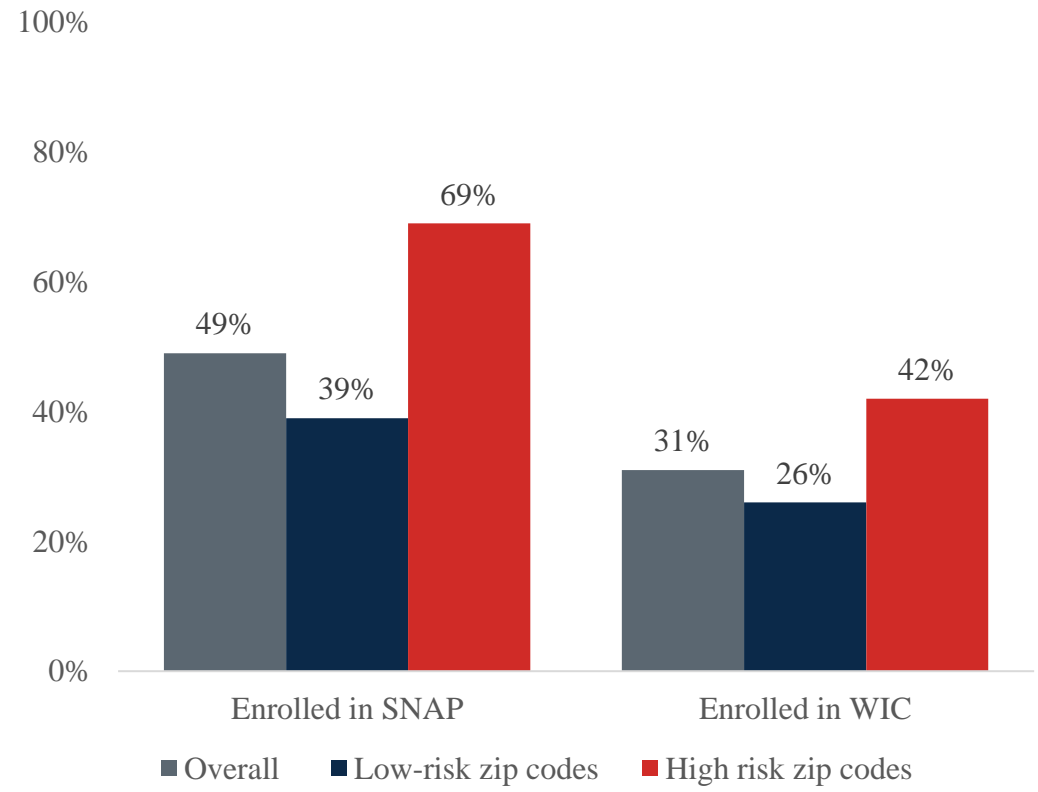
Philadelphia families utilize public benefits programs

Reported income suggests that **57%** of caregivers in TOPS meet eligibility for a family of 4 for WIC and **64%** meet eligibility for a family of 4 for SNAP¹



Many caregivers of toddlers in Philadelphia use programs like SNAP and WIC, but it may still be fewer than qualify

Participation in public benefits



¹ This is imprecise and based on a comparison of reported income and an average household size of 4 in the TOPS survey to the WIC and SNAP income limits effective in 2023 (Source: <https://www.pawic.com/IncomeGuidelines.aspx> and <https://www.dhs.pa.gov/Services/Assistance/Pages/SNAP-Income-Limits.aspx>)



Ways TOPS data could be used in the future



Sharing findings from the TOPS survey

/ **Additional existing sources for seeing findings:**

- Data tables (available from research team)
- Infographic highlighting literacy and childcare findings (forthcoming)

/ **Future ideas for sharing of TOPS findings:**

- Forums or meetings with city organizations or agencies to share findings and gather input about how the information could be best used (could also gather ideas for any future survey implementation)
- Written dissemination: infographics, fact sheets, or reports. Organizations could combine findings with recommendations for caregivers or family-serving organizations
- Data dashboard: Interactive dashboard for people to access findings and look at different “slices” of data. Could be used to show change over time for future surveys if data linking is implemented in those surveys.



References



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Appendix A. Demographic Information



Household composition

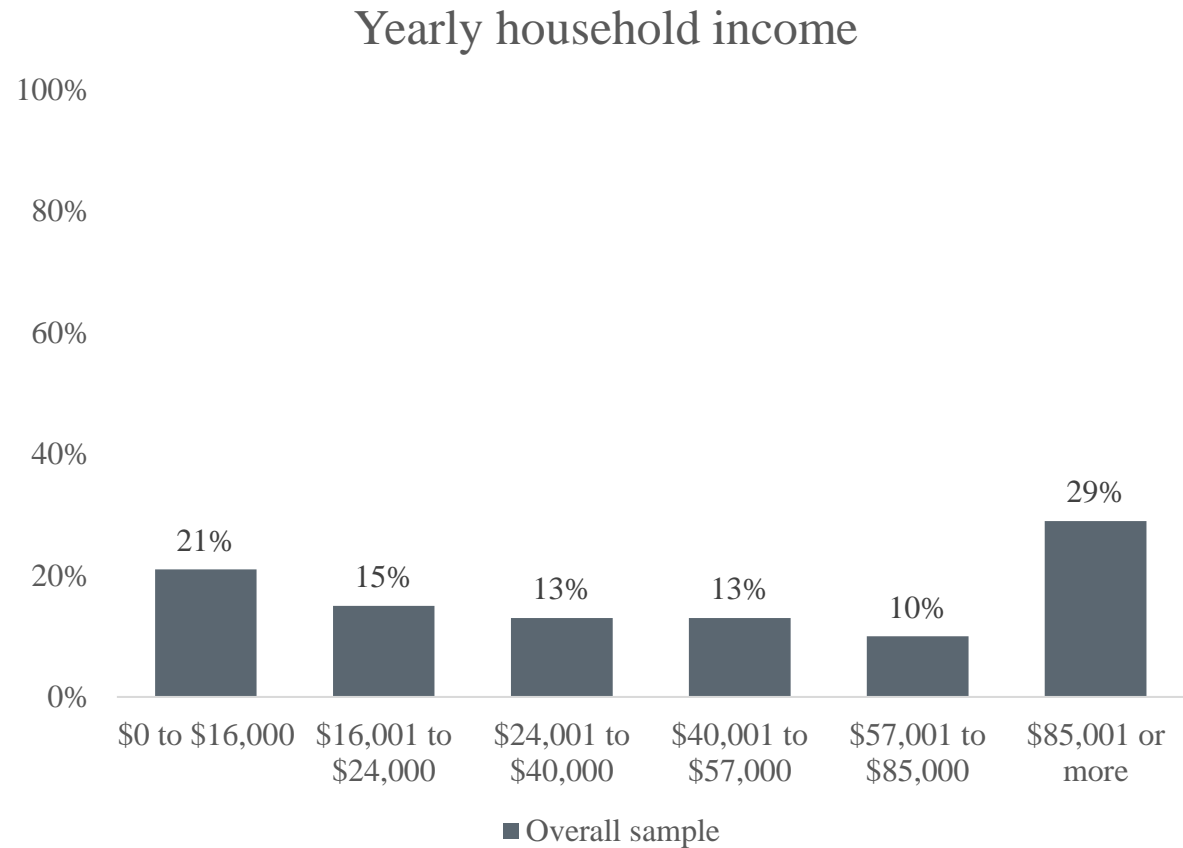
- / The majority (69%) of caregivers reported another parent or parent-like figure in the household.**
- / The number of children in the household varied, but most families (59%) had at least two children.**
- / The two-year old child that was a focus of the survey was the only child under the age of 5 for most families (68%).**





Household income

/ Most households in TOPS fell into the lowest and highest income categories



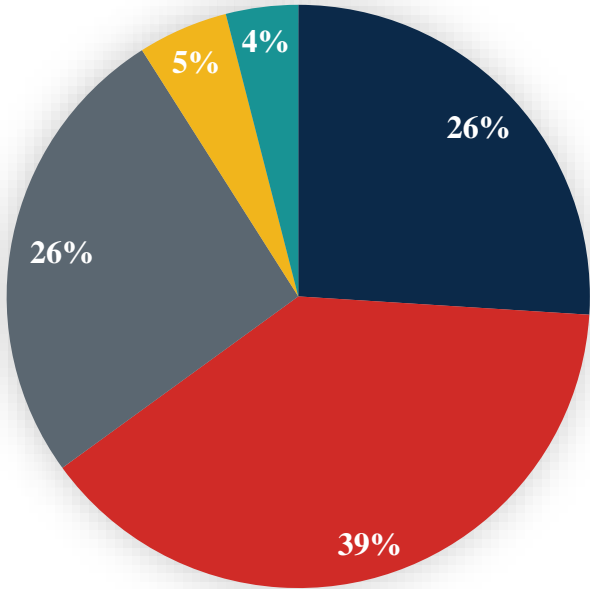
The 2023 national poverty threshold for a family of four was \$30,000. About 2/3 of TOPS families have at least 2 adults and 2 children in the household (see previous slide).





Caregiver race and ethnicity

Caregiver race/ethnicity



- White, non-Hispanic
- Black, non-Hispanic
- Hispanic
- Other, non-Hispanic
- 2 or more races, non-Hispanic





Caregiver background and language

/ **Caregivers' main language**

- English: 89%
- Spanish: 9%
- Other: 2%

/ **Main languages spoken in the household:**

- English: 94%
- Spanish: 22%
- Other: 16% (includes Arabic, Chinese, French, Portuguese, among others)

/ **86% of caregivers were born in the United States**