



WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN TOPS CALIFORNIANS' CONCERNS

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PALO ALTO - Californians rate "the well-being of children" as their chief concern, outranking the cost of living, taxes, the war in Iraq and terrorism, according to a new poll conducted by the Field Research Corporation for the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health.

Three-quarters of respondents in total (75 percent) said they are "extremely concerned" about the well-being of children. "Education and the schools," at 69 percent, ranked second among respondents, who rated 14 issues of interest to Californians on a four-point scale ranging from extremely concerned to not at all concerned. "Health care" (63 percent), "the well being of seniors" (63 percent), and "the cost of living" (62 percent) followed as top issues in the "extremely concerned" category. "Taxes" (46 percent) and "terrorism" (42 percent) ranked lowest in that category. (See full release for the entire list.)

The poll was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish February 8-17, among a random sample of 1,009 California adults. The overall sample was divided into two approximately equal-sized random sub-samples of 503 and 506 adults each on most of the items measured.

In addition to ranking the 14 general issues, respondents were asked to say what they felt were the biggest problems facing California's children, and to rate their level of concern about 21 issues specific to children.

Parents and non-parents alike expressed the highest level of concern about the well being of children compared to other issues, with 80 percent of parents saying they are "extremely concerned" about this issue, and 73 percent of non-parents saying the same. Males and females both ranked this issue as their paramount concern, as did respondents of all age, income level and ethnic groups. Respondents in Northern and Southern California, and Republicans and Democrats also put children at the top of their list.

"It is striking to see such unanimity on this issue, particularly the extent to which parents and non-parents alike list children as their foremost concern," said Stephen Peeps, president and CEO of the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health.

The foundation is a Palo Alto-based public charity whose mission is to "promote, protect, and sustain the physical, mental, emotional, and behavioral health of children." The foundation commissioned the poll to assess the public's degree of concern about matters relating to the well-being of children, and to determine which children's issues Californians view as priorities.

"The well being of children had not been included in previous Field surveys when assessing the relative importance of issues facing the state," Peeps said, "so this is the first time we have seen how the issue compares to other important topics."

Focusing on Children's Issues

In addition to ranking the 14 broad issues, those polled were asked to state in their own words what they felt were the biggest problems facing California's children. Answers were recorded verbatim during the interview and later coded into general categories of response. One response category was named by far more respondents than any other in this setting -- "poor quality of schools, education, and cuts in school funding" (63 percent). (See Graph 2 in full release for complete list.)

When queried about a list of 21 specific children's issues, however, respondents ranked issues differently. For example, 68 percent said "youth gangs and violence" was a "big problem." Other issues mentioned frequently as "big" problems -- on a scale of "a big problem" to "not a problem at all" -- were "drug and alcohol use" (62 percent); "obesity and unhealthful eating habits" (61 percent); "divorce and family-related problems" (60 percent); and "child abuse or neglect" (58 percent). On this list, the "quality of education" ranked sixth, with 56 percent citing it as a big problem. (See Graph 3 in full release for complete list.)

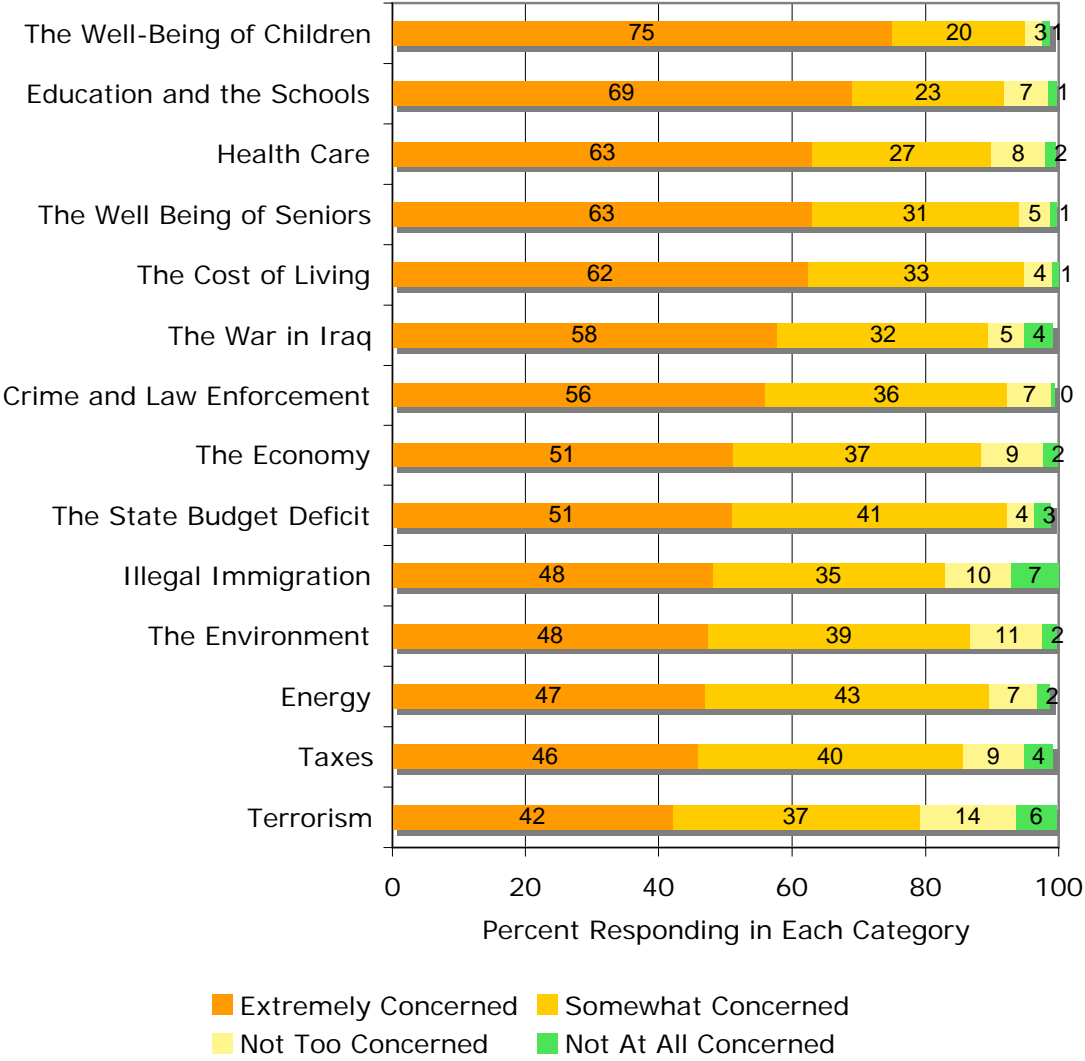
"These findings confirm the public's awareness of key children's health issues, such as obesity and drug and alcohol use," Peeps said, "but they also tell us that more needs to be understood about the effects of emotional and behavioral problems that many children face, such as depression, bullying and body image."

In general, Latinos expressed higher levels of concern about children than white non-Hispanics, particularly regarding emotional health issues, including "low self esteem," "bullying and teasing by classmates," "stress," and "peer pressure to misbehave." Concern among Latinos also was more pronounced than white non-Hispanics for "smoking," "chronic illness, like diabetes and asthma," "youth gangs and violence" and "drug and alcohol use." (See Graph 4 in full release.)

Additional results from this survey also are available online at www.kidsdata.org, a website sponsored by the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health that provides data and related information about the status of children in California, and San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, along with news, research articles, and listings of community resources.

For more information about the foundation, see www.lpfch.org.

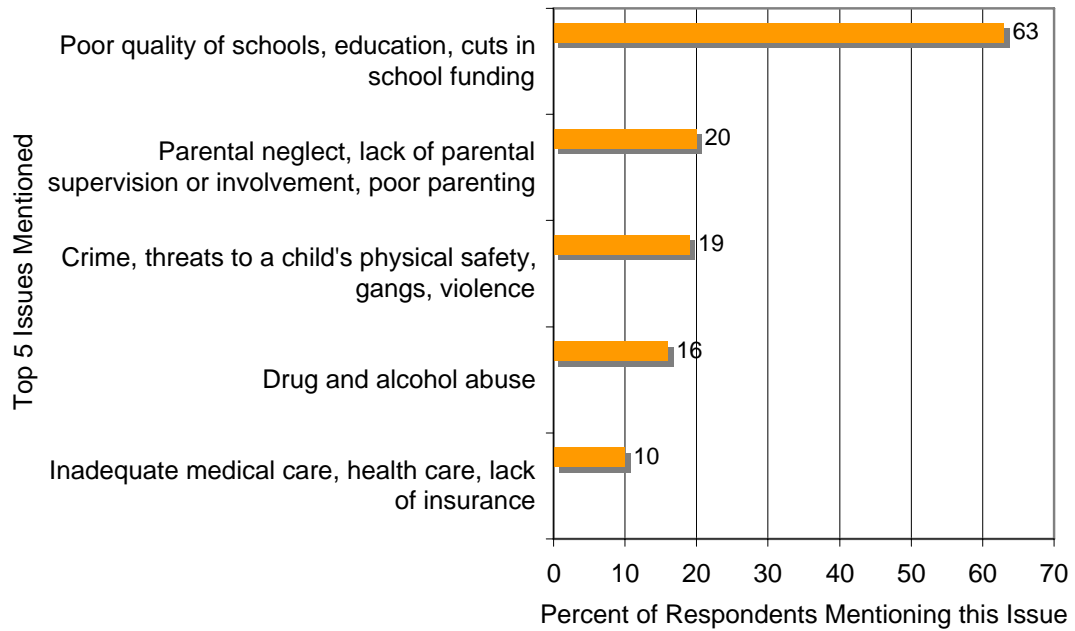
Graph 1
Level of Concern About 14 Issues Facing California



Source: Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health, from a poll conducted by the Field Research Corporation.

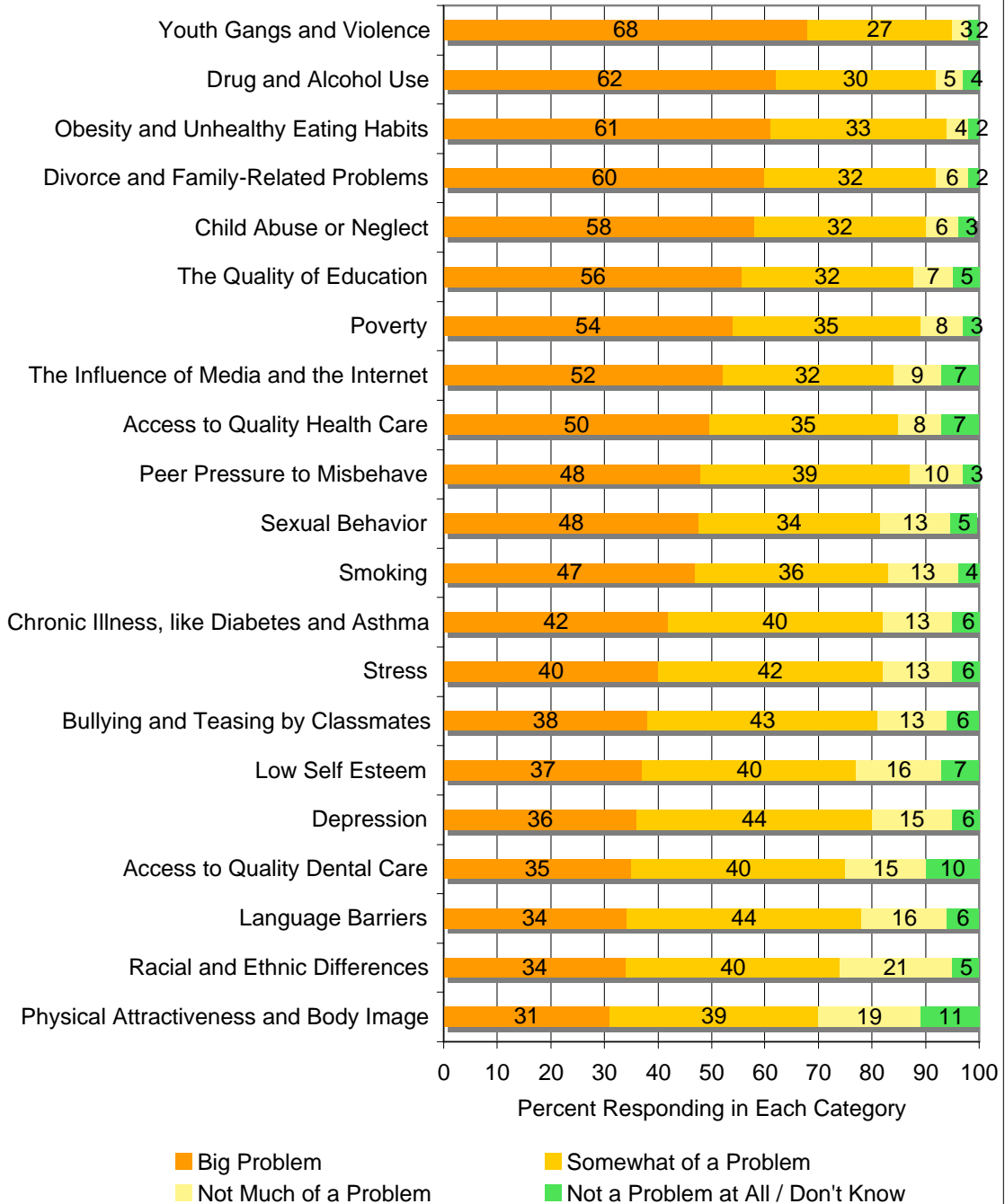
Graph 2

In Their Own Words: What Respondents Say Are the Biggest Problems Facing California's Children



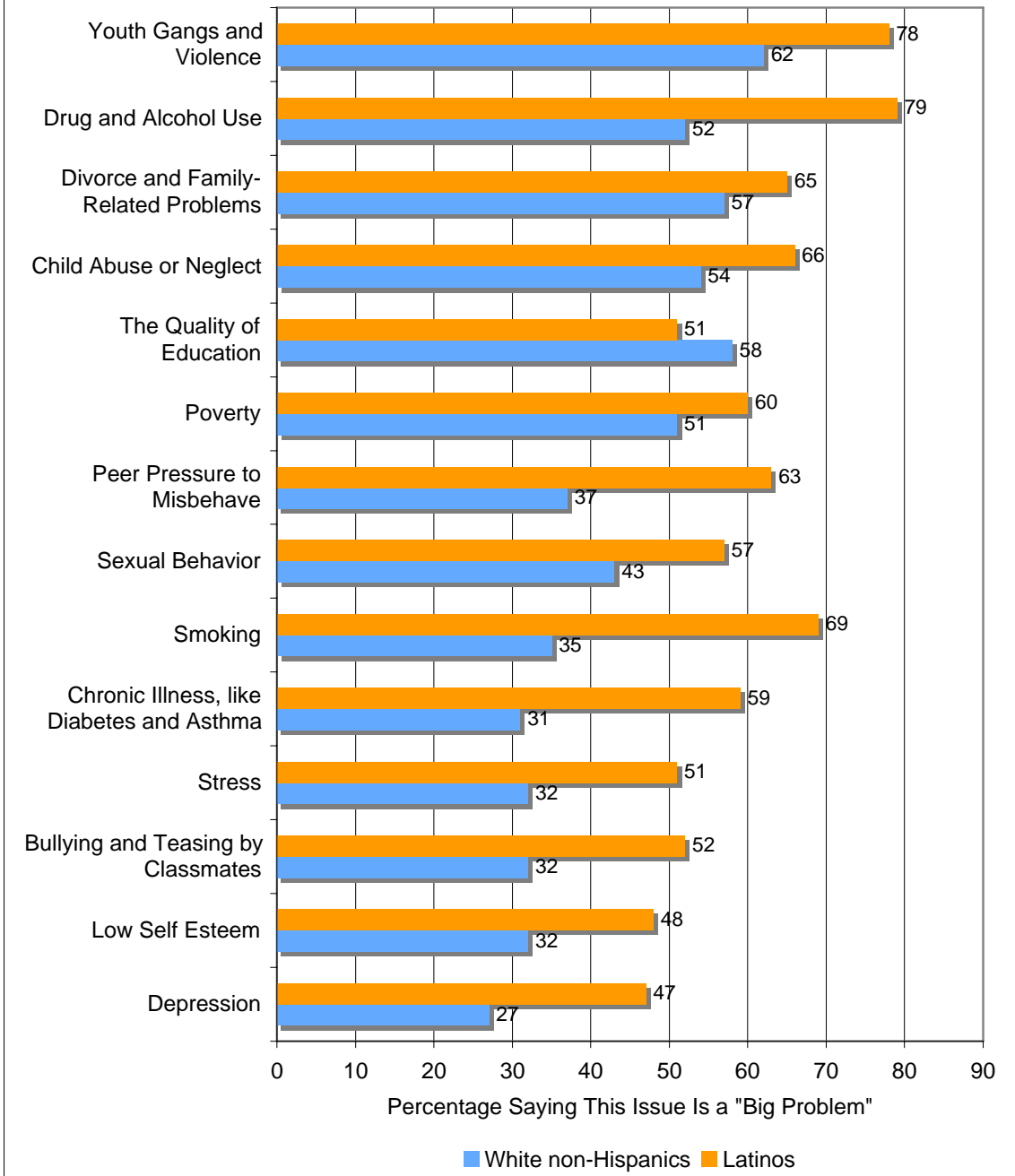
Source: Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health, from a poll conducted by the Field Research Corporation.

Graph 3
*Extent to Which Each of 21 Matters Are Seen as Being
 a Problem for Children in California Today*



Source: Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health, from a poll conducted by the Field Research Corporation.

*Graph 4
Comparisons Between White non-Hispanics and Latinos
on Select Children's Issues*



Source: Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health, from a poll conducted by the Field Research Corporation.

About this survey:

The results in this report are based on questions included on Field Research Corporation's February 2005 Field Poll survey of California adults. Interviewing was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish during the period February 8-17, 2005, among a random sample of 1,009 adults. In order to cover a broad range of issues and still minimize possible respondent fatigue, the overall sample was divided into two approximately equal-sized random sub-samples of 503 and 506 adults each on most of the items measured in this report.

Sampling was carried out using a random digit dial methodology, which includes all operating telephone exchanges within all landline area codes serving California households in proportion to population. Within each telephone exchange, a random sample of telephone numbers was created by adding random digits to the selected exchange. This permits access to all residential landline telephone numbers, both listed and unlisted. After the completion of interviewing the sample was weighted to census estimates of the state's adult population by age, gender, and geographic region of the state.

According to statistical theory, 95% of the time results from each random sub-sample have a sampling error of +/- 4.5 percentage points. There are other possible sources of error in any survey other than sampling variability. Different results could occur because of differences in question wording, sampling, sequencing or through undetected omissions or errors in interviewing or data processing. Extensive efforts were made to minimize such potential errors.

Questions Asked:

I am going to read some issues that are of concern to people in California today. For each, please tell me how concerned you are about this issue. How concerned are you about (ITEMS READ IN RANDOM ORDER) – extremely concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned or not at all concerned? (SEE RELEASE FOR CATEGORIES READ)

What do you think are the biggest problems facing children in California today? (PROBE) Anything else?

Next, I am going to read some things that can affect the well-being of children in California. For each, please tell me how big a problem you feel this is today. (ITEMS READ IN RANDOM ORDER) Do you consider this to be a big problem, somewhat of a problem, not much of a problem, or not a problem at all for children in California today? (SEE RELEASE FOR CATEGORIES READ)