

# Rooted and Rising: Black Families Navigating Racism, Hardship, and Hope

Findings from the UNC-Gallup  
Black Family Census Study

A Series of Reports from the Black FA<sup>3</sup>M Study

February 2026



**Equity Research Action Coalition**

UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute

## ABOUT THE UNC EQUITY RESEARCH ACTION COALITION

The Equity Research Action Coalition (ERAC), a university-based collaborative, focuses on co-constructing with practitioners and policymakers actionable research and evaluation to support the optimal development of Black children prenatally through childhood across the African diaspora. ERAC works at the intersection of research, program, and practice through anti-racist and cultural wealth frameworks. ERAC focuses on developing a science-based action framework to eradicate the impact of racism and poverty and all their consequences on the lives of Black children, families, and communities, ensuring their optimal health and well-being.

**Acknowledgments:** The Equity Research Action Coalition stands on the shoulders of many and is grateful for the opportunity to create equitable outcomes for all. We thank the Gallup Center on Black Voices team for their partnership in collecting and curating this data. We thank the families who completed the surveys; we appreciate their time and insights. We thank Dr. Breanna Dede for her contribution to the development of the survey. We also thank Dr. Stephanie M. Curenton, Dr. Chrishana Lloyd, and Dr. Latrice Rollins for their feedback on the overall study goal and survey questions. Finally, we thank Imaginable Futures, the Pritzker Children’s Initiative, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for their support that led to the production and dissemination of this report. None of the above listed people are responsible for, or necessarily endorse, this document (including, without limitation, its content and policies). Furthermore, the opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect other contributors and funders.

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# FOR MY PEOPLE<sup>1</sup>

BY MARGARET WALKER

For my people everywhere singing their slave songs repeatedly: their dirges and their ditties and their blues and jubilees, praying their prayers nightly to an unknown god, bending their knees humbly to an unseen power;

For my people lending their strength to the years, to the gone years and the now years and the maybe years, washing ironing cooking scrubbing sewing mending hoeing plowing digging planting pruning patching dragging along never gaining never reaping never knowing and never understanding;

For my playmates in the clay and dust and sand of Alabama backyards playing baptizing and preaching and doctor and jail and soldier and school and mama and cooking and playhouse and concert and store and hair and Miss Choomby and company;

For the cramped bewildered years we went to school to learn to know the reasons why and the answers to and the people who and the places where and the days when, in memory of the bitter hours when we discovered we were black and poor and small and different and nobody cared and nobody wondered and nobody understood;

For the boys and girls who grew in spite of these things to be man and woman, to laugh and dance and sing and play and drink their wine and religion and success, to marry their playmates and bear children and then die of consumption and anemia and lynching;

For my people thronging 47th Street in Chicago and Lenox Avenue in New York and Rampart Street in New Orleans, lost disinherited dispossessed and happy people filling the cabarets and taverns and other people's pockets and needing bread and shoes and milk and land and money and something—something all our own;

For my people walking blindly spreading joy, losing time being lazy, sleeping when hungry, shouting when burdened, drinking when hopeless, tied, and shackled and tangled among ourselves by the unseen creatures who tower over us omnisciently and laugh;

For my people blundering and groping and floundering in the dark of churches and schools and clubs and societies, associations and councils and committees and conventions, distressed and disturbed and deceived and devoured by money-hungry glory-craving leeches, preyed on by facile force of state and fad and novelty, by false prophet and holy believer;

For my people standing staring trying to fashion a better way from confusion, from hypocrisy and misunderstanding, trying to fashion a world that will hold all the people, all the faces, all the Adams and Eves and their countless generations;

Let a new earth rise. Let another world be born. Let a bloody peace be written in the sky. Let a second generation full of courage issue forth; let a people loving freedom come to growth. Let a beauty full of healing and a strength of final clenching be the pulsing in our spirits and our blood. Let the martial songs be written, let the dirges disappear. Let a race of men now rise and take control.

<sup>1</sup> Walker, M. (1937). For My People. *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, LI(II). <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/21850/for-my-people>

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## INTRODUCTION

On January 16, 1865, Union General William T. Sherman issued Special Field Order No. 15,<sup>2</sup> a directive to redistribute land to newly freed Black families. According to scholar Henry Louis Gates Jr., “[The] idea for massive land redistribution was the result of a discussion that Sherman and Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton held four days before Sherman issued the Order, with 20 leaders of the black community in Savannah, Ga., where Sherman was headquartered following his famous March to the Sea.”<sup>3</sup> With this order, 400,000 acres of land was redistributed to newly freed slaves. Self-governed communities were quickly established on the land, which encompassed a strip of coastline from Charleston, South Carolina, to the St. John’s River in Florida, including Georgia’s Sea Islands and the mainland 30 miles in from the coast.

However, in fall 1865, President Andrew Johnson, Lincoln’s successor, overturned this order and returned the land along the South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida coasts to the planters who had originally owned it—to the very people who had declared war on the United States of America. **The reversal of Special Field Order No. 15 ensured that this promise made to Black Americans—“forty acres and a mule” (FA<sup>3</sup>M)—was deferred.**

It is from this history—a promise deferred—and the continued oppression of Black Americans that the Black FA<sup>3</sup>M Study was born. **The Black FA<sup>3</sup>M study is a collection of projects—surveys, diaries, and focus groups—that provide insight into the realities of Black families, with a particular focus on those with young children under age 8.** In particular, the study employs a culturally grounded, asset-based lens that simultaneously showcases the adversities faced by Black families and their resolve, the backbone of the Black community. The Black FA<sup>3</sup>M Study complements prior research by the UNC Equity Research Action Coalition (ERAC), such as the [Black Child National Agenda](#) and [Black Parents and Their Babies](#).

This report, *Rooted and Rising: Black Families Navigating Racism, Hardship, and Hope*, is part of a series presenting results from the UNC-Gallup Black Family Census, which is part of the Black FA<sup>3</sup>M Study. The Black Family Census included a nationally representative sample of more than 500 Black participants from across the United States, including up to 80 respondents who self-identify as Black plus another race. This survey addresses limitations in national data on Black families by assessing ways to protect, promote, and preserve their health, wealth, and overall well-being through an asset-based lens.

<sup>2</sup> Myers, B. (2020). Sherman’s Field Order No. 15. *New Georgia Encyclopedia*. <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/shermans-field-order-no-15/>

<sup>3</sup> Gates, Jr., H. L. (2013). *The Truth Behind ‘40 Acres and a Mule.’* <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/history/the-truth-behind-40-acres-and-a-mule/>



**The primary focus of this report is Black families with children who have at least one Black child under the age of 8.** The results are based on a Gallup study conducted in partnership with ERAC among 587 U.S. adults aged 18 and older between March 27 and June 3, 2024.<sup>4</sup> The survey was conducted in English. This report includes information about the full sample of 587 Black parents with children to provide a broader context for the experiences of Black families. Throughout this report, we use the terms “parent” and “caregiver” interchangeably, given the diverse familial patterns of Black families. In some instances, we use “family” to refer to the familial environment and processes. We use the terms “children” and “young children” interchangeably, but we recognize that there are varying developmental stages and milestones across the birth-to-age-8 period.

## Sample Demographics

- Parent/Caregiver Race: Black (84.1%), Black Hispanic (4.1%), Black and White (7.8%), Black and other or multiple (4%)
- Child Race: Black (88.7%), Black and something else (7%), Some other race (3.2%)
- Parent/Caregiver Age: Mean = 34.8 (SD = 9.5)
- Age of Youngest Child: M = 3.2 (SD = 1.9)
- Parent/Caregiver Gender: Male (32.7%), Female (63.2%), Other (1.8%), Prefer not to say (1.3%)
- Child Gender: Male (47.5%), Female (43.6%), Other (1.7%), Prefer not to say (2.9%)
- Parent/Caregiver Sexual Orientation: Heterosexual (83%), Gay or lesbian (1.5%), Bisexual or other (8.3%), prefer not to say (3.3%)
- Language other than English: Never (54.8%), Rarely (17.9%), Sometimes (13.9%), Often (10.1%)
- Marital Status: Single, never married (40.2%), Married (36.9%), Separated/divorced/widowed (11.6%), Domestic partnership (10.8%)
- Parenting Situation: With biological mother or father (60.4%), Single parent (25.1%), With romantic partner not biological parent (5.6%), Family member (7.3%)
- Number of Adults in the Home: 1 (36.4%), 2 (51.4%), 3 (5.3%), 4 (5.2%), 5+ (1.4%)
- Geographical Setting: Urban (42.8%), Suburban (36.7%), Rural (16.5%)

<sup>4</sup> Address-based sampling (ABS) was used to recruit 174 respondents for the study, and the remaining 413 respondents were recruited from the Gallup Panel. The Gallup Panel is a probability-based panel of U.S. adults whom Gallup selects using address-based sampling methods and random-digit-dial phone interviews that cover landlines and cellphones.

Gallup weighted the data to account for nonresponse and to reflect the demographic representation of Black parents in the United States, using the most recent Current Population Survey figures.

For results based on this sample, the maximum margin of sampling error, which takes into account the design effect from weighting, is  $\pm 6.1$  percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Margins for subgroups are higher. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

**Some analyses examined responses by racial identity (i.e., Black vs. Black, multiracial), urbanicity (i.e., urban, suburban, rural).** We performed descriptive analyses of the UNC-Gallup data, with particular attention to the diversity of Black families and the communities in which they reside. For example, we examined experiences of racial discrimination based on parents'/caregivers' racial identities and whether they lived in urban, suburban, or rural communities. Given the history of racism in various parts of the U.S. and based on one's phenotype (i.e., their color), we thought it was essential to look at some of these variables.

**This report is centered on the 3Ps Framework: Protection, Promotion, and Preservation.<sup>5</sup>** This report is organized through the lens of protecting, promoting, and preserving the well-being and flourishing of Black families and their children. Specifically, for “Protection,” we explore Black

families' experiences with racism, discrimination, and material hardship. With “Promotion,” we examine Black families' health, wealth, and early care and education opportunities. Under “Preservation,” we examine Black families' cultural socialization, community resilience, and self-care.



<sup>5</sup> Iruka, I. U., Durden, T. R., Gardner-Neblett, N., Ibekwe-Okafor, N., Sansbury, A., & Telfer, N. A. (2021). Attending to the Adversity of Racism Against Young Black Children. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 8(2), 175-182. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23727322211029313>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of the experiences and well-being of Black families in the United States, utilizing the UNC-Gallup data and structured around the 3Ps Framework: Protection, Promotion, and Preservation.<sup>6</sup> The findings highlight the diversity within Black communities, examining many outcomes by racial identity and urbanicity, and emphasize the ongoing impact of racism and structural inequalities across various regions and settings.

Overall, the report underscores the necessity of targeted policies and practices to protect, promote, and preserve the well-being of Black families, recognizing the complexity and richness of their lived experiences across the country—and most importantly, delivering on the promise of equality.

## FINDINGS

This report demonstrates that Black families are finding ways to thrive even under the weight of racism, discrimination, economic strain, mental health challenges, and growing concerns about climate change and natural disasters. Our key findings are listed below.

- Pervasive experiences of racial discrimination remain a concern.
- Significant material hardship across Black communities is growing.
- Mixed health outcomes and mental health stressors impact daily life.
- Financial barriers remain, but optimism for children's future abounds.
- Challenges and priorities in access to and experiences in early care and education remain a concern.
- Active preservation of cultural identity and community ties is prioritized.
- Family flourishing is supported by spirituality and social networks.



<sup>6</sup> Iruka, I. U., Durden, T. R., Gardner-Neblett, N., Ibekwe-Okafor, N., Sansbury, A., & Telfer, N. A. (2021). Attending to the Adversity of Racism Against Young Black Children. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 8(2), 175-182. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23727322211029313>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Black families in the U.S. are diverse in their racial and ethnic identities, vary in their economic stability, and live in different geographical settings. Across these differences, however, many of them continue to report challenges regarding racial discrimination, material hardship, economic stability, early care and education access, and concerns about climate change and natural disasters. Nevertheless, they continue to identify and activate their cultural capital through spiritual, familial, and cultural assets, and they express optimism for a brighter future for their children. Based on these reported findings, we call for the following immediate actions:

- **Protect Black families and children** from racial discrimination and material hardship by advocating for policies that address structural inequalities, improve access to basic resources, and ensure equitable treatment in education, healthcare, and community services. This includes increasing support for families facing financial and health-related challenges, particularly in urban and rural areas.
- **Promote opportunities for Black families and their children** through expanded access to quality early care and education, mental health resources, and financial resources. There is a need to increase funding for and access to programs that foster economic mobility, home and business ownership, and prepare families for emergencies and natural disasters, with a special focus on removing barriers related to cost, transportation, and racial bias. Prioritizing economic stability and upward mobility is vital for the success and well-being of Black families, especially in light of the enduring impacts of centuries of economic oppression and exclusion.
- **Preserve the family, community, and cultural identity of Black families and children** by investing in initiatives that celebrate and sustain Black cultural identity, community cohesion, and spiritual well-being. Supporting creative expression, intergenerational traditions, and open dialogues about race are important, while also improving environmental conditions and climate resilience. Encouraging strong social networks and community engagement are foundational elements for ensuring family flourishing.

Given the current national and local political climate—marked by anti-Black sentiment and policies that threaten to undermine six decades of hard-won progress<sup>7</sup>—there is an urgent need to prioritize the protection, promotion, and preservation of Black families' and children's health, economic stability, educational attainment, and civil and human rights. The future well-being of Black families, children, and communities over the next 60 years and beyond depends on the actions we choose to take today.

<sup>7</sup> <https://nul.org/news/trumps-big-beautiful-bill-jeopardizes-lifelines-black-americans>; <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/trumps-agenda-is-a-direct-threat-to-the-black-middle-class/>; <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/04/10/trump-administrations-assaults-black-history>

# PROTECTION: Protecting Black families and their children from racism, discrimination, and material hardship

## RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Many Black parents perceive persistent structural inequalities in America, with 67% acknowledging these barriers and over half rejecting the notion that discrimination has lessened over the past decade. Additionally, a significant portion have personally experienced various forms of racial discrimination in the past year, with these experiences

even more prevalent among Black, multiracial individuals. There are also higher rates of daily occurrences among those living in rural communities.

Over two-thirds of Black parents (67%) *strongly agree or agree* that Black people in America face structural inequalities that limit their ability to achieve. This number grows to 73% for those living in urban communities (see Table 1). Similarly, more than half (55%) of urban residents *strongly disagree or disagree* that there is less discrimination than 10 years ago, a number that increases to almost 60% for those in rural communities (59%).



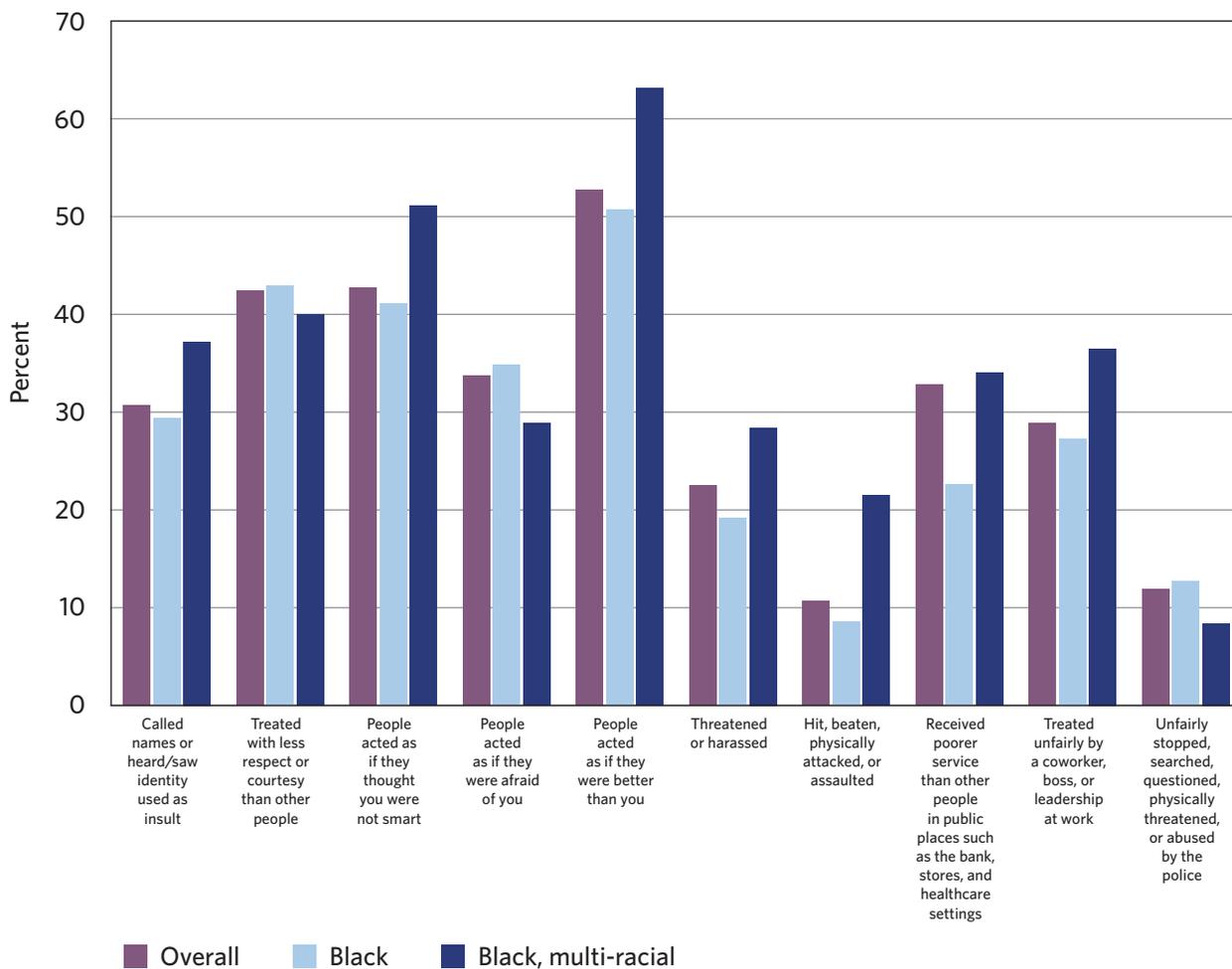
**Table 1. Percent Agreement or Disagreement Regarding Structural Inequalities and Discrimination Facing Black Americans**

	Race			Urbanicity		
	Overall	Black	Black, multiracial	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Blacks face structural inequalities in America that limit their ability to achieve financial independence.						
<i>Strongly Agree or Agree</i>	67.2	67.6	65.1	72.8	64.7	60.1
<i>Strongly Disagree or Disagree</i>	13.2	14.2	7.9	10.3	12.2	23.8
Compared to 10 years ago, there is less racial discrimination today.						
<i>Strongly Agree or Agree</i>	24.6	23.7	29.4	15.0	34.1	28.8
<i>Strongly Disagree or Disagree</i>	50.0	50.4	48.0	55.2	38.6	58.8

Black parents also reported their own personal experiences of racial discrimination. A third or more were likely to report being called or hearing slurs, being treated with less respect, people acting as if they were not smart, acting afraid of them, acting as if they were better than them, receiving poor services, or being treated unfairly at work because of their race at least a few times in the past 12 months (see Figure 1). In several instances, more Black, multiracial individuals reported these discriminatory experiences than Black respondents.

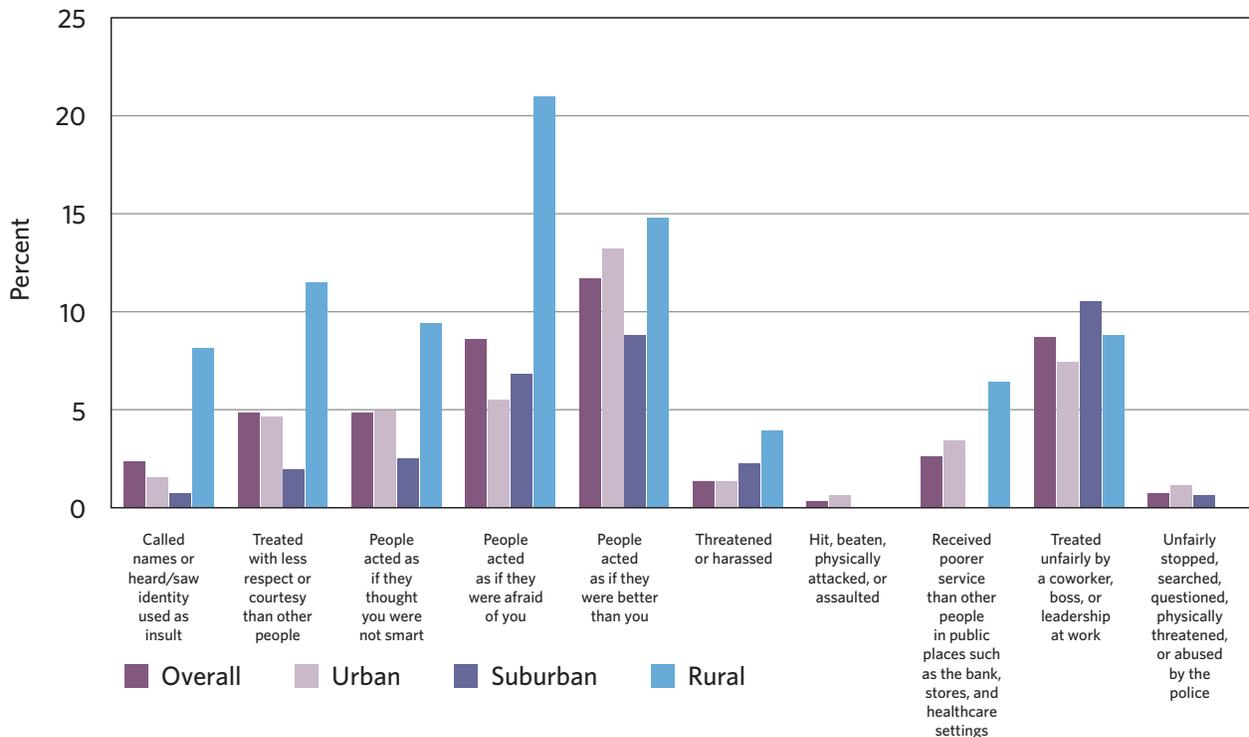


**Figure 1. Percent Reporting Racial Discrimination in the Past 12 Months**



More Black parents living in rural communities reported experiencing racial discrimination every day or nearly every day compared to those living in urban or suburban communities (see Figure 2). For example, 21% of Black parents living in rural communities reported that people acted as if they were afraid of them every day or nearly every day. More Black parents living in rural communities reported being called names, treated with less respect, treated as if they were unintelligent or as if others were better than they were, and receiving poorer service compared to those living in urban and suburban communities.

**Figure 2. Percent Experiencing Daily Racial Discrimination by Urbanicity**

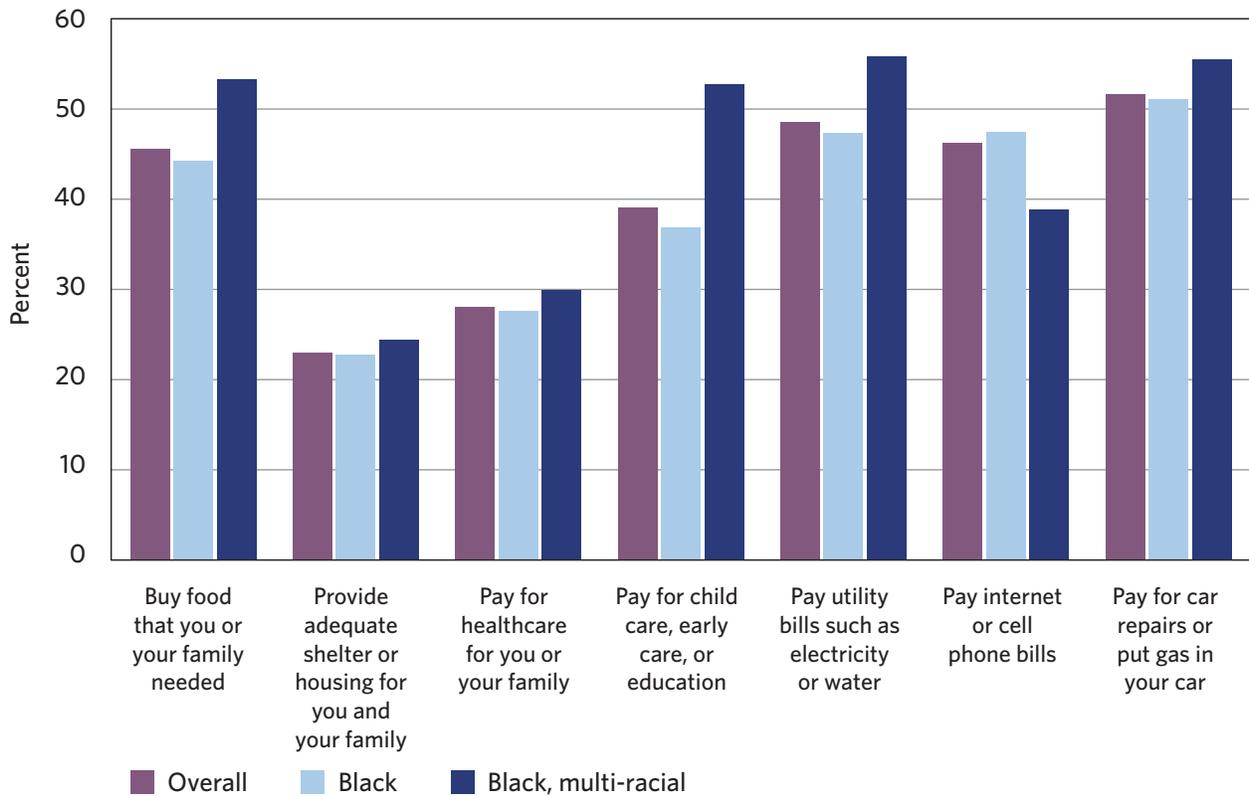


## MATERIAL HARDSHIP

**Many Black families face significant material hardships, with over half struggling to afford car expenses and utilities, and substantial numbers also reporting difficulty paying for food and child care. These challenges are more severe among Black, multiracial families and those living in urban and rural communities compared to their suburban counterparts.**

Over half (51.7%) of families reported not being able to repair their cars or put gas in their cars, almost half (48.6%) not being able to pay utility bills such as their water or electric bill (48.6%), and over a third not being able to pay for child care (39%) or food (45.6%) (see Figure 3). These difficulties with material hardship were even more pronounced for Black, multiracial respondents, who reported more challenges than the overall sample in buying food (53.3% vs. 45.6%), paying for child care (52.7% vs. 39.0%), and paying utility bills (55.9% vs. 48.6%).

**Figure 3. Percent of Those Who Reported Any Difficulty Meeting Basic Needs by Race**



More Black families who lived in urban and rural communities reported difficulty in meeting their basic needs compared to Black families who lived in suburban communities (see Table 2). For example, over 50% of Black families who live in urban and rural communities reported difficulty paying for food compared to 35% of those who lived in suburban communities. This was similar for difficulty paying utility bills, with almost 60% of Black people living in urban and rural communities reporting challenges paying their electric or water bills, compared to 34% in suburban communities.

**Table 2. Percent of Those Who Reported Any Difficulty Meeting Basic Needs by Urbanicity**

	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Buy food that you or your family needed	52.0%	35.3%	53.9%
Provide adequate shelter or housing for you and your family	31.1%	13.1%	26.5%
Pay for healthcare for you or your family	26.0%	25.7%	40.3%
Pay for child care, early care, or education	41.2%	35.6%	44.1%
Pay utility bills such as electricity or water	57.9%	33.7%	60.6%
Pay internet or cell phone bills	54.5%	36.3%	50.6%
Pay for car repairs or put gas in your car	62.2%	42.6%	49.8%

# PROMOTION: Promoting health, wealth, and educational excellence for Black families and their children

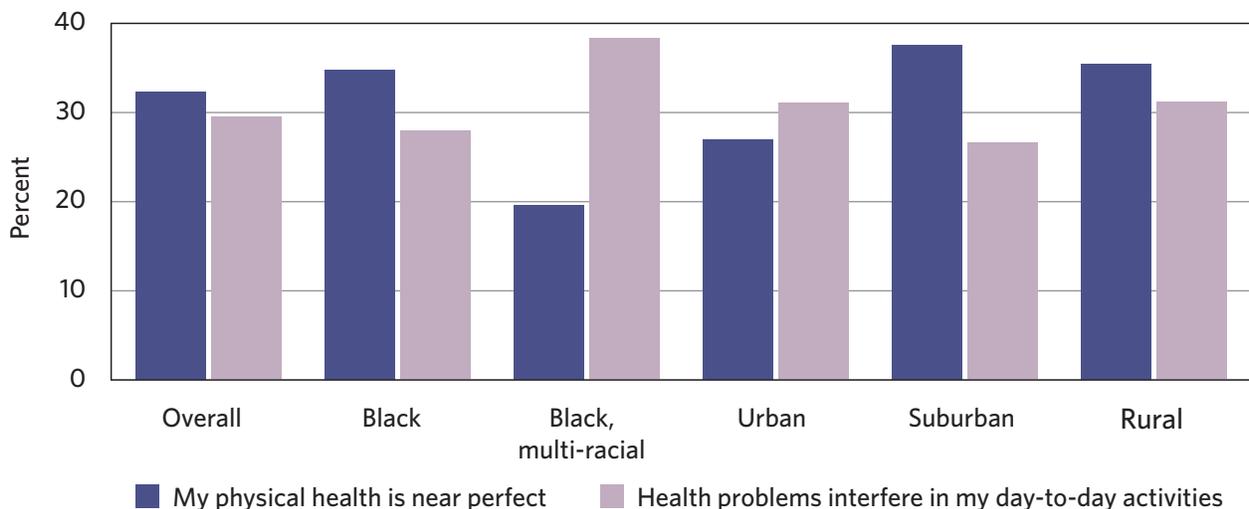
## HEALTH

Black parents reported mixed experiences regarding their physical and mental health, with about a third considering their physical health “near perfect,” yet many also face health challenges that impact daily life. Satisfaction with healthcare options and access varies by race and community, with suburban families generally reporting better outcomes. Most Black parents recognize unique mental health stressors within their communities. Yet the majority feel knowledgeable and able to access mental health supports for themselves and their children, although access is easier for suburban and rural families than urban families.

### Health and Healthcare

Almost a third of Black parents *strongly agree or agree* that their physical health is “near perfect” (32%). In comparison, this increases to 38% and 35% for respondents living in suburban and rural communities, respectively (see Figure 4). However, only one in five Black, multiracial parents reported that their physical health is “near perfect” (20%). At the same time, almost a third of respondents, especially Black, multiracial respondents, reported health problems interfering with their day-to-day activities. These percentages are slightly higher among those living in urban and rural communities than among those in suburban communities.

**Figure 4. Percent Agreement Regarding Health, Strongly Agree or Agree**





Over a third of Black parents *strongly agree or agree* that it is important for them to have healthcare provided by someone who shares the same racial background (38%). A plurality (57%) was satisfied with the availability of healthcare options in their area. However, this number drops to less than half for families who live in urban communities (49%) and increases to 66% for those who live in suburban communities (see Table 3). The majority of Black parents also *strongly agreed or agreed* that their health care providers care about them and their children.

**Table 3. Percent Agreement Regarding Perceptions About Healthcare Options, Strongly Agree or Agree**

	Overall	Race		Urbanicity		
		Black	Black, multiracial	Urban	Suburban	Rural
I am satisfied with the availability of healthcare options in the area where I live.	56.8	57	55.3	49.2	65.7	55.6
It is easy for me to access quality healthcare in the area where I live.	59.6	60.8	58.4	53.7	69.5	50.6
I feel like my healthcare providers care about me and my children.	60.1	60.4	58.8	57.9	64.5	53.5

## Mental Health

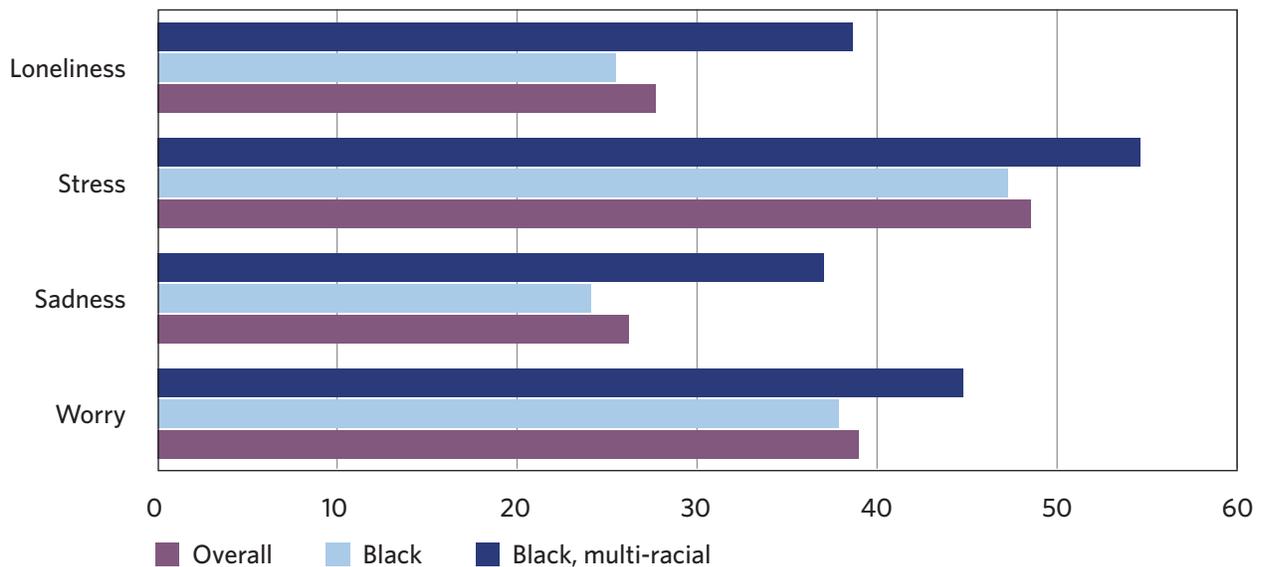
Many Black parents acknowledge facing unique mental health stressors that are not always addressed by traditional providers, with urban, rural, and multiracial families expressing these concerns most strongly. Despite reporting significant stress, worry, and sadness, a large majority also experience positive emotions and feel confident in their ability to access mental health resources for themselves and their children. However, access is easier for suburban families compared to those in urban and rural areas.

Over two thirds of respondents *strongly agree or agree* that Black parents have unique mental health stressors that are often not addressed by traditional mental health providers; this percentage is slightly higher for Black, multiracial families (71%) and families living in urban (72%) and rural (71%) communities, but lower for those in suburban communities (61%).



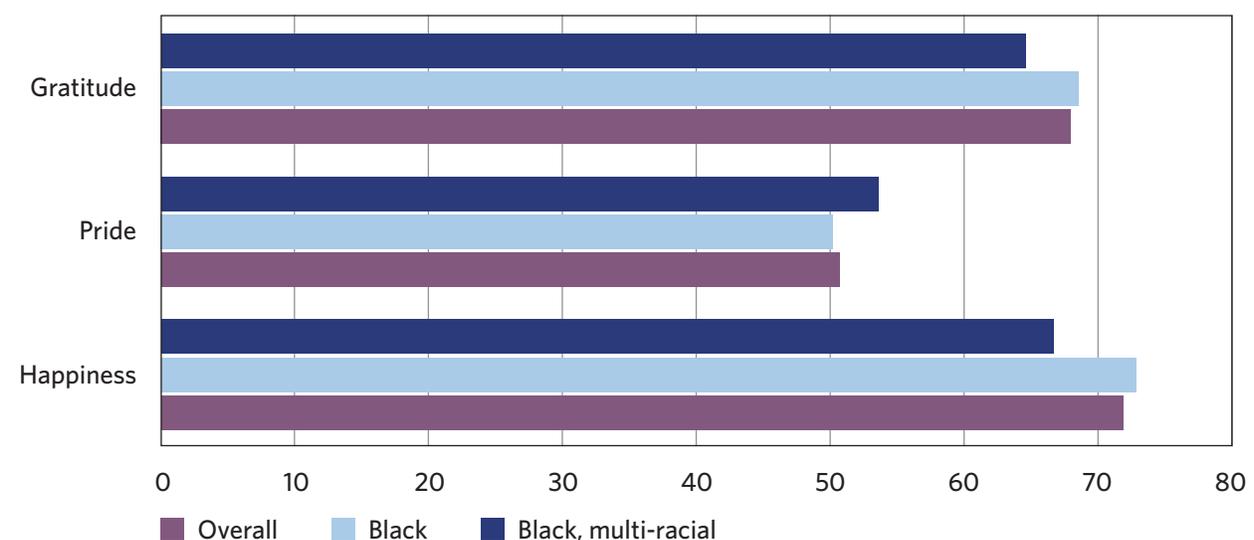
While almost 50% of Black parents reported experiencing stress *some of the day or a lot of the day* (the day before responding), this number dropped to 39% for feelings of worry, 28% for loneliness, and 26% for sadness (see Figure 5). More Black, multiracial parents were likely to report these threats to their mental health.

**Figure 5. Percent Experiencing Threats to Their Mental Health, Strongly Agree or Agree**



In contrast, more than two-thirds of Black parents reported feeling happiness (72%) and gratitude (68%) *some of the day or a lot of the day* (the day before responding) (see Figure 6). Over 50% of Black parents reported feeling a sense of pride.

**Figure 6. Percent Experiencing Protection for Their Mental Health, Strongly Agree or Agree**



Most importantly, the vast majority of Black parents were likely to *strongly agree or agree* that they had the knowledge and ability to access mental health supports for themselves and especially for their children (see Table 4). However, more parents living in suburban communities were likely to report easier access to mental health services compared to those in urban and rural communities. Over 85% of families living in rural communities, compared to those living in suburban (77%) and urban (73%) communities, reported being able to access mental health support for their child.

**Table 4. Percent Reporting Knowledge and Ability to Access Mental Health Services, Strongly Agree or Agree**

	Race			Urbanicity		
	Overall	Black	Black, multiracial	Urban	Suburban	Rural
It is easy for me to access mental health services in the area where I live.	51.3	51.1	52.9	45.7	58.4	50.8
If needed, I have the knowledge and confidence to access resources for my mental health.	65.7	66.7	60.9	60.3	73.4	60.1
If needed, I am able to access mental health resources for my child.	76.8	76.9	75.6	72.8	76.5	85.7

## WEALTH

**While less than half of Black parents own their home and only a small percentage own a business, many face challenges in saving for retirement or their child’s future, and only about a third feel they have adequate resources to recover from a natural disaster. Despite these financial obstacles, most remain hopeful that their children will achieve greater financial success and inherit assets to improve their standard of living.**

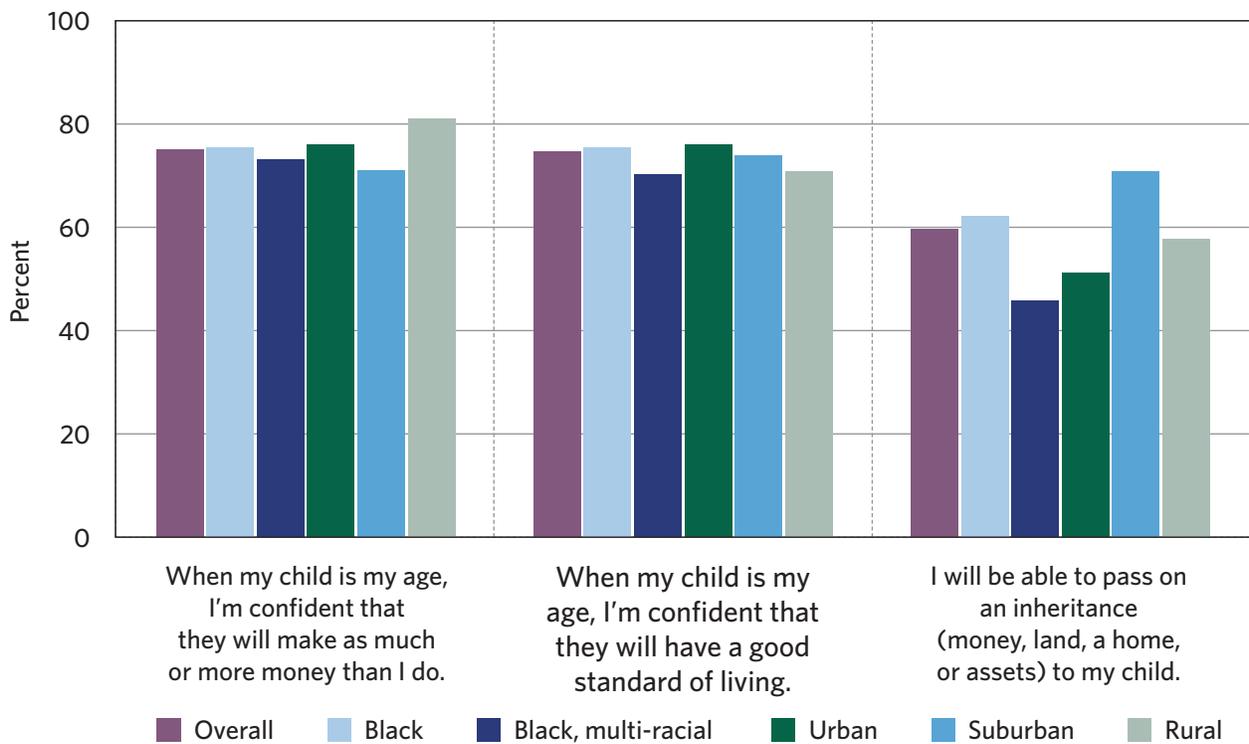
Forty-four percent of Black parents reported owning the home they live in, compared to 49% who rent. Only about 14% of Black parents reported owning a business. About a third (33%) of Black parents *strongly agree or agree* that they would have the resources to recover and rebuild if affected by a natural disaster or extreme weather event; this number drops to 23% for Black, multiracial parents (see Table 5). More families living in suburban and rural communities compared to urban communities indicate that they can recover if affected by a natural disaster. Over a third of Black families who earn \$100,000 or more annually reported being able to recover in the face of a natural disaster compared to less than 20% of those earning less.

**Table 5. Percent With Resources to Recover and Rebuild After Natural Disaster, Strongly Agree or Agree**

I would have the resources to recover and rebuild if affected by a natural disaster or extreme weather event.								
Race			Urbanicity			Household Income		
Overall	Black	Black, multiracial	Urban	Suburban	Rural	less than 40K	40K-<100K	100K+
32.7	34.4	23.4	24.6	38.5	38.9	26.7	19.0	37.0

Relatedly, a vast majority of Black parents reported that they find it difficult to save for retirement (55%) or their child’s future (60%). Nevertheless, they were optimistic that their children would earn more than they did and have a good standard of living (see Figure 7). Additionally, almost two-thirds *strongly agree or agree* that they will be able to pass on an inheritance (e.g., money, land, a home, or assets) to their child.

**Figure 7. Expectations About Child’s Financial Future, Strongly Agree or Agree**



## EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION/CHILD CARE

Most Black parents reported having several options for early care and education, with quality, security, location, and the education offered being top priorities in their selection process. While satisfaction with care environments is high across all settings, many families encounter barriers such as cost, transportation, and, notably in public preschool and family/friend/neighbor care arrangements, experiences of racial bias and exclusion for their children.

More than half of Black parents *strongly agree or agree* that they have more than one option for early care and education, especially for those using private child care (see Table 6). Over 60% of parents using public preschool reported it was easy to find child care, compared to 44% and 46% of parents using private child care or Friend/Family/ Neighbor (FFN), respectively. Overall, about a quarter of parents reported transportation as an issue, with this rising to 38% among those using public preschool. Over 50% of families using public preschool (50%) and FFN (62%) reported that cost prevents them from accessing the kind of early care and education environment they want. Less than half (45%) reported that early care and education in their area is high quality, ranging from 42% among parents who use FFN to 47% among parents using private child care.

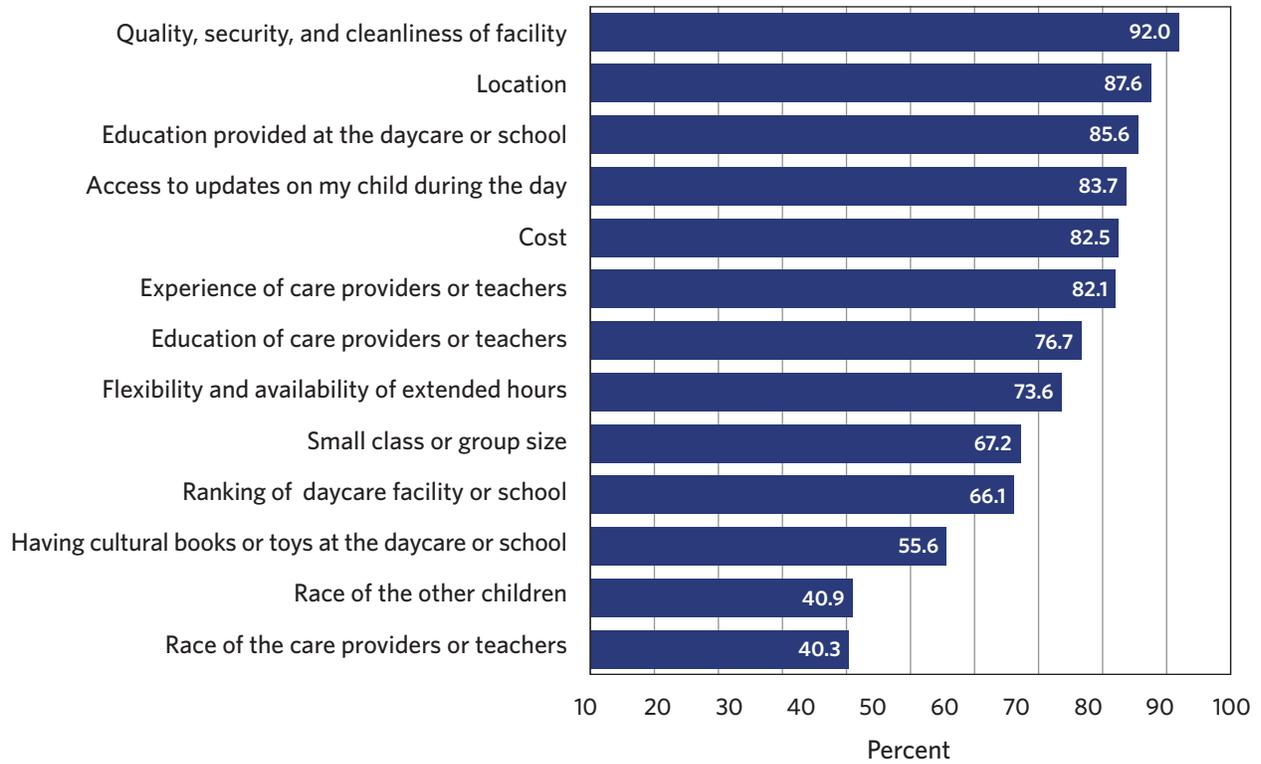


**Table 6. Percent Agreement Regarding Child Care Access for Overall and by Type of Setting**

	Overall	Private Childcare	Public Preschool	Family/ Friend
For my child care arrangement, transportation is a big problem.	25.1	21.4	38.2	31.0
I had more than one option available when choosing child care.	57.1	69.3	59.5	51.3
In choosing child care, I have felt I had to take whatever I could get.	44.7	41.7	54.0	53.7
I would be willing to pay more than I do for the child care I have.	29.7	25.2	36.5	39.6
My child care is too far from my home or work.	26.3	23.1	34.1	34.1
It was easy to find daily child care (a facility, school, or care provider).	48.7	43.9	61.2	45.6
The cost of child care in my area prevents me from getting the kind I want.	50.4	45.5	50.0	61.6
Childcare in my area is affordable for most families.	33.5	24.2	45.2	32.5
Childcare in my area is high quality.	44.6	47.2	45.3	41.5

More than 80% of Black parents identified the following factors when choosing early care and education: (1) quality, security, and cleanliness of facility, (2) location, (3) education provided at program, (4) access to updates about child during care, (5) cost, and (6) experience of early care and education professionals (see Figure 8). Less than 50% of Black parents reported race of other children or care professionals as a factor in selection. The item “quality, security, and cleanliness” was the top choice across all types of early care and education settings (see Table 7).

**Figure 8. Factors for Choosing Early Care and Education**



**Table 7. Top Five Reasons for Choosing Early Care and Education Overall and by Setting**

Rank	Overall	Private Childcare	Public Preschool	Family/Friend
#1	Quality, security, and cleanliness of facility			
#2	Location	Location	Location	Education provided at the daycare or school
#3	Education provided at the daycare or school	Education provided at the daycare or school	Education provided at the daycare or school	Location
#4	Access to updates on my child during the day	Access to updates on my child during the day	Cost	Cost
#5	Cost	Cost	Access to updates on my child during the day	Access to updates on my child during the day

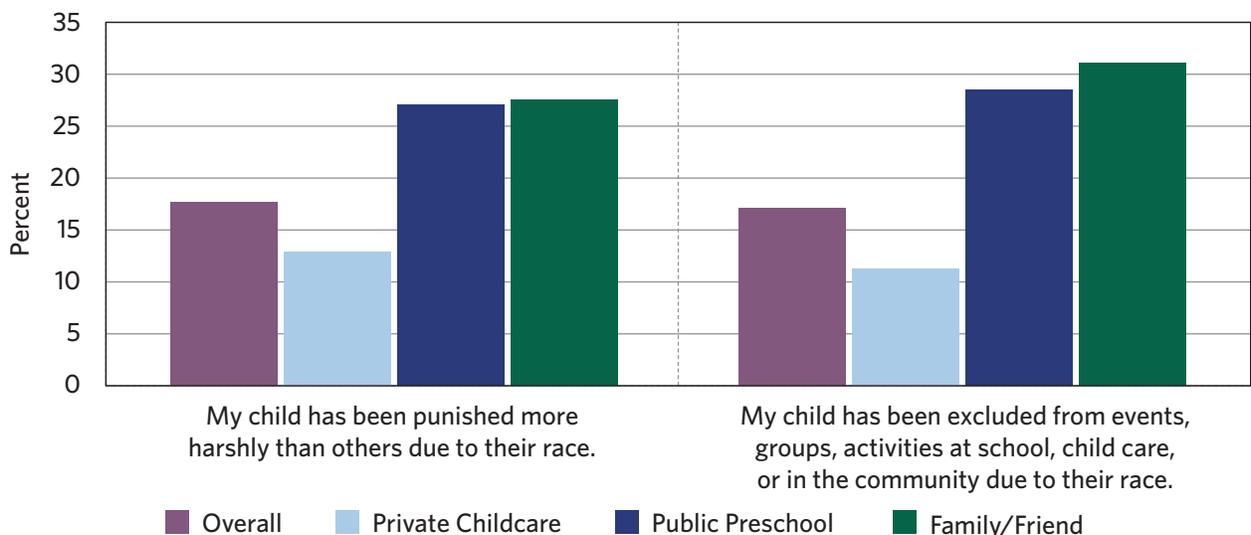
Nevertheless, more than eight out of ten parents are satisfied with the early care and education setting that they use most often, regardless of whether it is private child care, public preschool, or a family/friend/neighbor (FFN) (see Table 8). They *strongly agree or agree* that the early care and education program they use most often is responsive, encourages family engagement, is welcoming, has an open channel of communication, and is diverse.

**Table 8. Percent Agreement About the Early Care and Education Program Used Most Often, Strongly Agree or Agree**

	Overall	Private Childcare	Public Preschool	Family/Friend
Is responsive to concerns shared by parents	82.8	85.5	81.4	83.5
Encourages parental involvement	86.6	86.2	81.4	90.5
Is a welcoming environment for families from all backgrounds	86.9	88.4	84.7	85.9
Has an open channel of communication that allows me to reach my child’s teachers or care providers	85.7	82.9	82.2	86.6
I am satisfied with the quality of education provided by my child’s teachers or care providers.	83.1	78.8	85.5	86.7
My child’s school or child care facility is diverse.	83.1	84.9	88.9	83.1

Unfortunately, almost two out of ten parents reported their child has either been punished more harshly (18%) or excluded from events or groups (17%) due to their race (see Figure 9). In addition, the number of families saying their child has been punished more harshly due to their race grows by over 50% for families using public preschool or FFN. The number of families saying their child has been excluded due to their race grows by over 80% for families using public preschool or FFN.

**Figure 9. Parents’ Agreement about Their Child’s Experience of Harsh, Exclusionary Practices in Early Care and Education Setting, Strongly Agree or Agree**



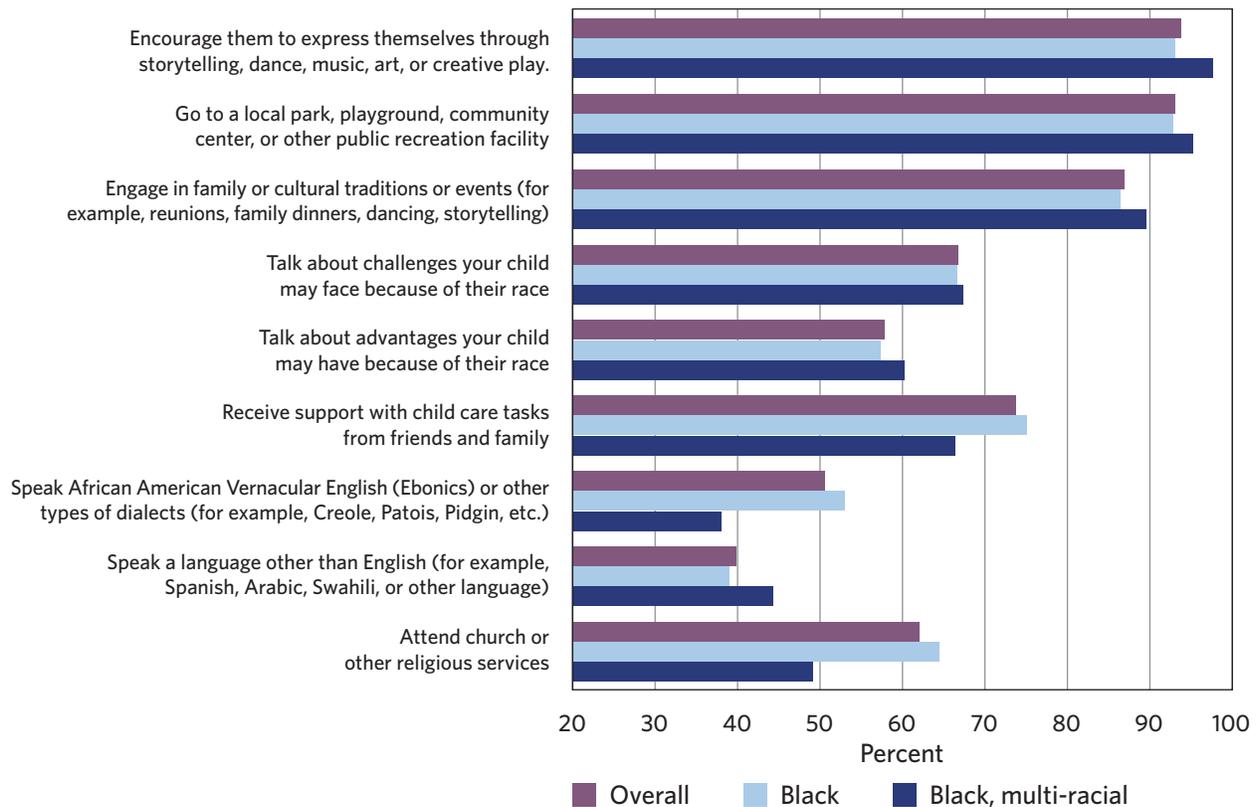
# PRESERVATION: Preserving the family, community, and healthy racial identity of Black families and their children

Black parents actively foster their children’s cultural and racial identity through creative expression, engagement in family traditions, and open discussions about both the advantages and challenges associated with their race. Many Black families reported strong community ties and access to necessary resources, especially in suburban and rural areas, though concerns about environmental threats and limited climate action persist. Despite high rates of work burnout, the majority of Black parents find joy, maintain hope, and rely on spiritual practices, self-care, and supportive networks to thrive amid adversity.

## CULTURAL SOCIALIZATION PRACTICES

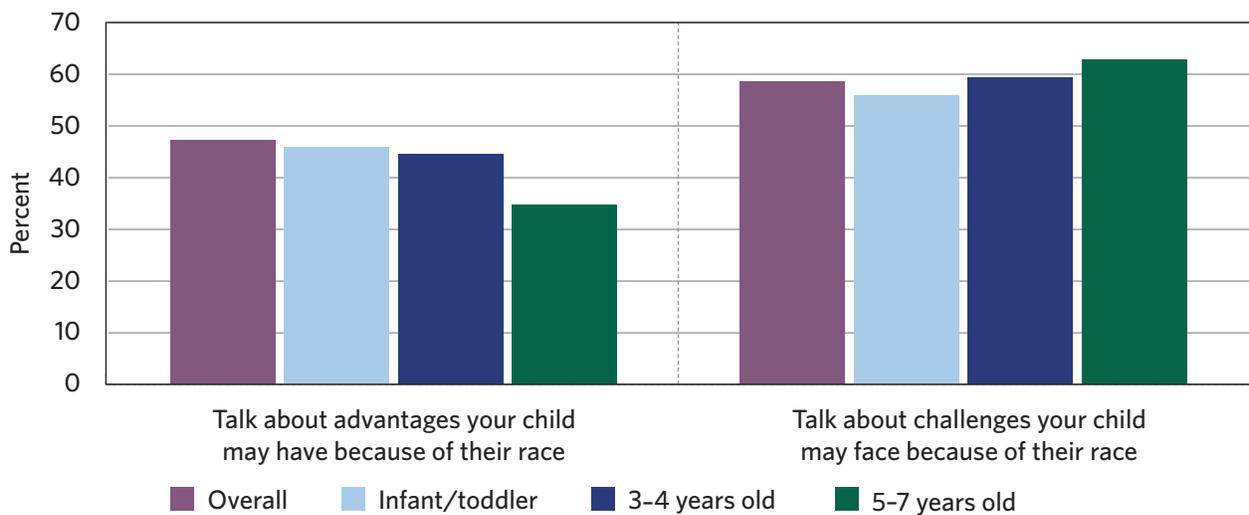
In support of children’s racial and cultural identity, many Black parents reported engaging in a variety of practices called cultural socialization. For example, more than 9 in 10 Black parents encourage their children to express themselves through storytelling, dance, music, art, or creative play, *sometimes or often* (see Figure 10). Over 50% of Black parents are also likely to engage in family or cultural traditions or events, get parenting help from friends and families, and attend church or other religious services.

**Figure 10. Percent of Families Engaging in Cultural Socialization Practices, Sometimes or Often**



Black parents also support their children’s healthy racial identity. Forty-seven percent of Black parents overall talk to their children about the advantages related to their race, but this drops as children get older; 35% of parents of five- to seven-year-old children speak about the advantages of their race, *sometimes or often* (see Figure 11). Fifty-nine percent of Black parents overall talk with their children about the challenges related to their race. This slightly increases as children get older; 63% of Black parents of five- to seven-year-old children speak to their child about the challenges related to their race, *sometimes or often*.

**Figure 11. Percent of Parents that Talk to Children About Advantages and Challenges of Their Race By Age, Sometimes or Often**



## COMMUNITY COHESION AND RESOURCES

The majority of Black parents *strongly agree or agree* that their community has the services they need, is a safe place to raise a family, and offers a warm relationship with their neighbors; a larger percentage of families living in suburban communities agreed with these sentiments (see Table 9). Over 50% of Black parents living in suburban communities (54%) say their community is “a perfect place” for themselves and their family, 60% say they are “proud of the community” where they live, and almost three quarters (74%) say it is a safe place to raise a family; the percentages are lower for families living in urban and rural communities. Fifty percent of Black families living in rural communities say they have a strong sense of belonging, compared with 29% and 41% in urban and suburban communities, respectively.



**Table 9. Percent Agreement on the Level of Community Cohesion and Resources**

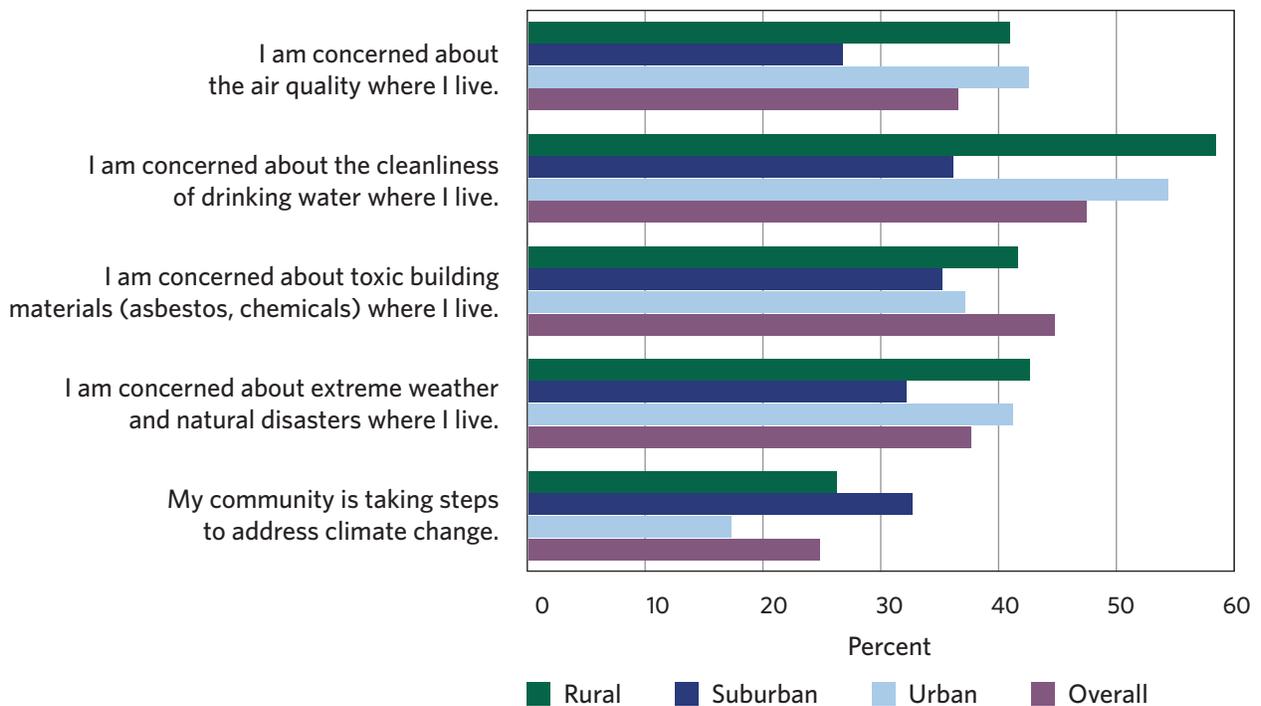
	Overall	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Where we live is a perfect place for me and my family.	39.1	27.4	54.3	38.5
I am proud of the community where I live.	44.8	31.4	59.6	49.2
The area that I live in has the goods and services I need for a good quality of life.	55.3	45.9	71.3	48.0
I am satisfied with the availability of healthcare options in the area where I live.	56.8	49.2	65.7	55.6
It is easy for me to access quality healthcare in the area where I live.	32.6	53.7	69.5	50.6
It is easy for me to access mental health services in the area where I live.	51.3	45.7	58.4	50.8
The area that I live in has resources that are tailored to the needs of Black families and children.	32.1	35.6	32.3	24.1
Where I live is a safe place to raise a family.	56.0	36.5	74.1	68.3
I have a strong sense of belonging to the community where I live.	37.7	29.1	41.2	50.2
I routinely say hello to three or more people in my neighborhood.	59.3	54.3	64.9	59.7
I want to continue to live where I currently live as I get older.	34.2	25.8	37.9	46.6

## ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER CONCERNS



Over a third of Black parents are concerned about extreme weather and natural disasters where they live, with a higher percentage for those living in rural (43%) and urban (41%) compared to suburban (32%) communities (see Figure 12). However, only a quarter of Black parents reported that their community is taking steps to address climate change, with a higher percentage saying they *strongly agree or agree* with this statement in suburban (33%) communities than in rural (26%) or urban (17%) communities.

**Figure 12. Percent Concerned about Community Action on Climate Change and Natural Disasters**



## FAMILY FLOURISHING SUPPORTS AND PRACTICES

Fifty percent of Black parents *strongly agree or agree* that they feel burned out at work. Nevertheless, almost two-thirds (64%) are able to find happiness and joy, and 67% are able to maintain hopes and dreams for the future in the face of racism and discrimination (see Table 10). However, fewer Black, multiracial parents *strongly agree or agree* with these statements, 57% and 58%, respectively. A vast majority of Black parents rely on spiritual guidance (59%) and self-care practices such as hobbies and meditation (65%) to get through challenges, while a majority reported receiving positive energy (62%) and support through difficult times (68%) from families and friends. In contrast, less than 50% of Black and multiracial parents *strongly agree or agree* that they rely on spiritual guidance to help cope with challenges (45%), get positive energy from family and friends (44%), and have family and friends who support them through challenges (47%).

**Table 10. Percent Agreement for Access to and Practices to Support Flourishing**

	Overall	Black	Black, multiracial
I am able to find happiness and joy during challenging circumstances.	64.3	65.6	57.0
I am able to maintain hopes and dreams for the future even in the face of racism and discrimination.	67.4	69.1	58.4
I rely on spiritual guidance to help me cope with personal, professional, and parental challenges or difficulties.	58.9	61.5	45.1
I make time for self-care practices (hobbies, going for a walk, meditation, etc.).	65.3	67.1	55.9
My family and friends give me positive energy every day.	61.8	65.2	43.8
My family and friends support me through difficult times.	68.0	72.0	46.9



## FINDINGS

**Pervasive Experiences of Racial Discrimination.** Black parents widely perceive ongoing structural inequalities and persistent racial discrimination in America, with 67% agreeing these barriers exist and half disagreeing that discrimination has diminished in the past decade. Personal experiences of discrimination are common, especially among Black, multiracial individuals and those living in rural areas.

**Significant Material Hardship Across Communities.** More than half of Black families struggle to meet their basic needs, such as paying for car repairs, utilities, food, and child care. These hardships are more pronounced for Black, multiracial families and those residing in urban and rural areas compared to suburban families.

**Mixed Health Outcomes and Mental Health Stressors.** While a third of Black parents reported near-perfect physical health, many face health challenges impacting daily life. Satisfaction with healthcare is higher in suburban areas. Most Black parents recognize unique mental health stressors in their communities, with knowledge and access to mental health supports reported, though access is easier in suburban and rural areas.

**Financial Barriers but Optimism for Children's Future.** Fewer than half of Black parents own their homes, and even fewer own businesses. Many find it challenging to save for retirement or their children's future, and only a third feel prepared for natural disasters. Despite these challenges, most are optimistic that their children will achieve greater financial success and inherit assets.

**Challenges and Priorities in Early Care and Education.** Most Black parents have multiple options for early care and education, prioritizing quality, security, location, and educational offerings. However, cost and transportation frequently limit access, and experiences of racial bias and exclusion are reported in public preschool and informal care settings.

**Active Preservation of Cultural Identity and Community Ties.** Black families actively nurture cultural and racial identity through creative expression, traditions, and open discussions about race. Strong community cohesion and access to resources are reported, particularly in suburban and rural areas, though environmental concerns and limited climate action remain issues.

**Family Flourishing Supported by Spirituality and Social Networks.** Despite high rates of work burnout, most Black parents find joy and maintain hope, relying on spiritual guidance, self-care, and support from family and friends to navigate challenges. These supports are somewhat less prevalent among Black, multiracial parents.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Black families in the U.S. are diverse in their racial and ethnic identity, vary in their economic stability, and live in a variety of environments. However, they continue to report common challenges regarding racial discrimination, material hardship, economic stability, and concerns about climate change, natural disasters, and preparedness to address these environmental challenges. Regardless of those challenges, they continue to identify and activate their cultural capital through their spiritual, familial, and cultural assets, and they express optimism for a brighter future for their children.

Based on these reported findings, we call for the following immediate actions:

- **Protect Black families and children** from racial discrimination and material hardship by advocating for policies that address structural inequalities, improve access to basic resources, and ensure equitable treatment in education, healthcare, and community services. This includes increasing support for families facing financial and health-related challenges, particularly in urban and rural areas.
- **Promote opportunities for Black families and their children** through expanded access to quality early care and education, mental health resources, and financial resources. There is a need to increase funding for and access to programs that foster economic mobility and home and business ownership, as well as prepare families for emergencies and natural disasters, with a special focus on removing barriers related to cost, transportation, and racial bias. Prioritizing economic stability and upward mobility is vital for the success and well-being of Black families, especially in light of the enduring impacts of centuries of economic oppression and exclusion.
- **Preserve the family, community, and cultural identity of Black families and children** by investing in initiatives that celebrate and sustain Black cultural identity, community cohesion, and spiritual well-being. It is important to support creative expression, intergenerational traditions, and open dialogues about race, while improving environmental conditions and climate resilience. Encouraging strong social networks and community engagement are foundational elements for ensuring family flourishing.

Given the current national and local political climate—marked by anti-Black sentiment and policies that threaten to undermine six decades of hard-won progress<sup>8</sup>—there is an urgent need to prioritize the protection, promotion, and preservation of Black families' and children's health, economic stability, educational attainment, and civil and human rights. The future well-being of Black families, children, and communities over the next 60 years and beyond depends on the actions we choose to take today.



<sup>8</sup> <https://hul.org/news/trumps-big-beautiful-bill-jeopardizes-lifelines-black-americans>; <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/trumps-agenda-is-a-direct-threat-to-the-black-middle-class/>; <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/04/10/trump-administrations-assaults-black-history>