

# RAPID-Harris County Data Update Actualities and Aspirations

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## RAPID-Harris County

The RAPID Survey on child and family well-being at Stanford partnered with Harris County and the UH Institute for Research on Women, Gender & Sexuality (IRWGS) to hear from families with children under six, from March 2023 through December 2024. (Surveys were roughly 2-3 months apart.) IRWGS worked with community partners to connect with parents and other caregivers, who were paid for their time answering the survey. The data gathered on financial hardship, maternal health, child care use and needs, aspirations, and much more provides stakeholders with actionable insights to inform immediate and long-term program and policy decisions.

### Financial Hardship

The graph above shows the percentage of parents reporting at least some difficulty in paying for basic needs, as well as those experiencing minor to major financial problems, has been high and increasing. This suggests that financial stress among parents persisted, with no clear improvement over time. (fig. 1)

### Maternal Health

More than a quarter (26%) of mothers did not have health insurance before their most recent pregnancy. Of those with health insurance, the most common type (75%) was through an employer/union.

This high uninsured rate reflects the fact that Texas has the highest rate of uninsured residents in the United States. Lack of insurance reduces access to preventive care

before a woman becomes pregnant, contributing to high comorbidity rates going into pregnancy and worsening maternal health and mortality outcomes in Texas (Milazzo, IRWGS, 2024).

One third of mothers would have liked to have a midwife for their most recent birth, but only 11% were able to have one. For those that were unable to obtain a midwife the top three reported reasons were insurance not covering (60%), cost (56%), and lack of information (52%).

### Child Care

Two-thirds (65.52%) of participants reported receiving some form of help from their children’s grandparents during the pandemic, with the leading type of help received being child care (38% of all respondents, 59% of the two thirds who received some form of help). Since elders died of Covid at the highest rate globally, in the US and in Harris County (75%-

80% of total), already scarce child care resources were further reduced by that global catastrophe.

Overall, 60% of RAPID respondents indicated that they utilized some form of nonparental child care (NPCC) during the period of the survey (post-pandemic). Of those, 50% involved paid Center care only, 22% involved unpaid care by family/friends only, 10% involved paid care by family/friends only, and 18% involved some combination of paid or unpaid nonparental child care. (fig. 2)

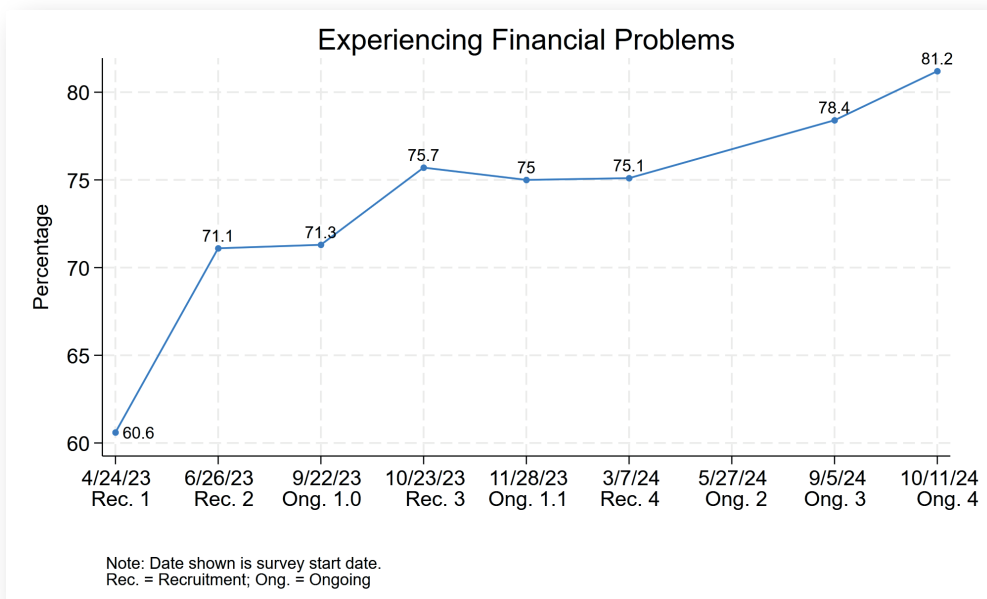


Figure 1

## Types of NPCC Used

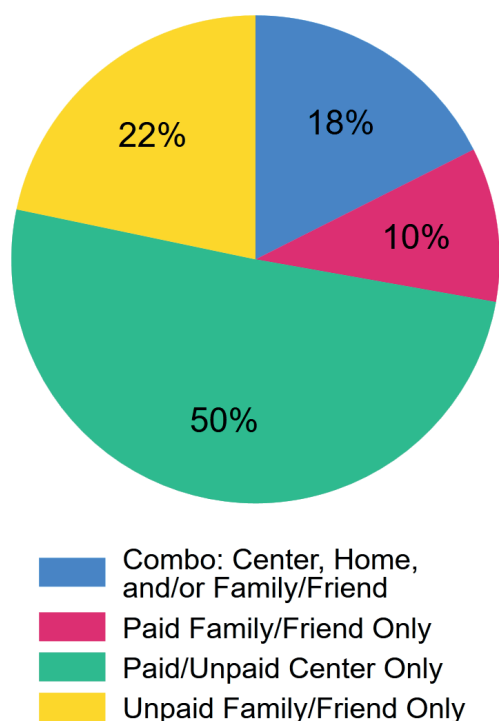


Figure 2

High center-based child care costs mean that many parents rely on family for care provided by those not otherwise employed, either for free or for some payment. For immigrant families, however, this option is often not available, if grandparents are not in the US.

Likewise, internal immigrants from other US states may not have access to grandparent or other family care. Given that 42% of children under six in Houston have at least one immigrant parent, that means that many mothers who would like to be in the workforce cannot be. Expanded access to affordable child care would expand available workforce.

### Aspirations

87% of parents indicated that they would like their children to go to college and earn a degree, though some worried about cost. Many mentioned wanting them to be happy and/ or financially secure, sometimes linking the two.

### Parent voices:

**Q:** “What sorts of additional supports or services would be most helpful?”

*“Help with child care when schools are closed.”*

*“I would love for my mother to be able to retire to help us care for our children.”*

*“I think we could also benefit from more affordable, high-quality child care.”*

**Q:** “What are the biggest challenges/what would you like elected officials to know?”

*“Struggling with cost of child care.”*

*“Child care needs to be more affordable for everyone. It’s so hard to work just to pay for someone to watch your kid.”*

*“Affording child care and our new mortgage (which was more than originally expected).”*

**Q:** “As a parent, what are the long-term goals that you have for your child(ren) in areas such as school, friends, money, future career, or any other area?”

*“Me gustaría que mis niños sean unos profesionales ... Pero que sobre todo sean una grandes personas con valores que para mí sería lo más importante.”*

**Translation:** *“I would like my children to become professionals, but above all to be great people with strong values, which for me is the most important thing.”*

*“I want them to be happy and be successful. I want them not to worry about the food they are going to eat because their finances will not be a struggle for them. I want them to get married and have children and enjoy life.”*

*“I want her to graduate high school ... To learn to think critically. To be kind to others. To pursue college and grad school (if she wants). To find a career that she’s happy/satisfied in. I know that we need to save for college but honestly we don’t have that type of money.”*

### Conclusion

Rising financial stress places a significant strain on families. Lack of affordable child care can lead parents to have to leave their jobs or work less. Lack of insurance prior to pregnancy connects to high rates of adverse

maternal health outcomes. Together, these factors create a cycle where financial stress, limited healthcare, and limited child care access contribute to health risks and economic vulnerability for mothers and families and to lowered workforce availability, especially among parents with no family in Texas.