

NEWS RELEASE



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For Immediate Release
July 8, 2010

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New Poll: Adults Working With Youths Say Minority Children Face More Obstacles to Health and Success than White Counterparts

Commissioned by W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Survey Finds Fewer Opportunities for Minorities

Battle Creek, Mich. – Minority children and teenagers have fewer opportunities than white counterparts to be healthy, obtain a quality education and achieve economic success, according to a national survey of adults whose jobs involve children’s education, health and economic well-being. The groundbreaking poll was released today by the independent W. K. Kellogg Foundation, which sought to gauge the level of disparities affecting children of color.

Researchers with C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital at the University of Michigan polled more than 2,000 adults, such as teachers, childcare providers, healthcare workers, social workers and law enforcement officials. Their findings indicate that African American, Latino, Native American/Alaska Native, Asian American/Pacific Islanders and Arab American children from birth to age 8, as well as teenagers ages 13 to 18, face diminished opportunities that reduce their chances to succeed.

“This is the first known national assessment of health, educational and economic opportunities for children, as reported by individuals at the community level who can affect such opportunities through their work,” said Dr. Gail Christopher, vice president for Programs at the Kellogg Foundation. “The results clearly establish that children and teenagers of color face significant disadvantages, many of which are the result of structural racism.”

For instance, the poll respondents said minority teenagers face significantly more obstacles than their white counterparts in graduating from high school.

Specifically, respondents noted several circumstances that are bigger barriers for minority teenagers than whites in obtaining a diploma: 31 percent cited family financial problems, 25 percent cited unfair or inappropriate treatment by law

enforcement, 22 percent cited inadequate academic support for vulnerable children, 22 percent cited children's health or social needs, 21 percent cited a lack of counseling or mentoring about opportunities after high school and 20 percent cited lower-quality teachers in some middle and high schools.

Moreover, 58 percent of the respondents said white children in the community where they work have "lots of opportunity" to live and play in healthy environments, safe from lead and other toxins, but only 42 percent said the same about African American children. Sixty-two percent of the respondents said that white children have a good chance at having a healthy birth weight, but only 48 percent said the same about Latino children. And 59 percent of the respondents said white children have lots of opportunity to play in homes and neighborhoods without violence, while only 36 percent said the same about Latino children, 37 percent said the same about African American children and 42 percent said the same about American Indian/Alaska Native children.

"These results are alarming because the inequities within a given community are so clearly visible to people who work with children and families," said Matthew Davis, M.D., M.A.P.P., who directed the study and is Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Communicable Diseases in the CHEAR Unit at the University of Michigan Medical School. "Because they see firsthand the education and health opportunities for children in the communities where they work, they have a different perspective than parents or policymakers. Their views are absolutely essential to improving opportunities for young children at the community level."

The poll respondents included 2,028 adults from all 50 states and the District of Columbia, ranging in age from 18-65. Of the respondents, 71 percent were white, 12 percent African American, 7 percent Hispanic, 3 percent Asian American/Pacific Islander and the remainder from other racial and ethnic groups. Respondents were all members of KnowledgePanel, a nationally representative Web-enabled panel of adult members of households recruited by Knowledge Networks. Knowledge Networks engages all of its panel members via the Internet (current panel size is approximately 50,000).

Throughout the survey, respondents said children and teenagers from low-income families have considerably fewer opportunities than those from specific racial

and ethnic groups. Furthermore, the poll also identified many key areas where white children and teenagers have more opportunities than minority youths:

- 46 percent of respondents said white teenagers have lots of opportunity to receive quality care for mental health issues, but only 31 percent said Latinos have the same opportunities, 32 percent said African Americans do, 35 percent said American Indian/Alaska Natives do, 36 percent said Arab Americans do and 37 percent said Asian American/Pacific Islanders do.
- 55 percent of respondents said white children have lots of opportunity to access quality healthcare, but only 41 percent said the same for Latino, Arab American and American Indian/Alaska Native children, and 45 percent said the same for African American and Asian American/Pacific Islander children.
- 60 percent of respondents said white children have lots of opportunity to grow up in communities that support children, while 36 percent said Arab American children have the same opportunities, 43 percent said Latino and African American children have the same opportunities, 44 percent said American Indian/Alaska Native children have the same opportunities and 47 percent said Asian American/Pacific Islander children have the same opportunities.

Dr. Christopher said the poll results demonstrate that an unlevel playing field exists for minority children and teenagers, a circumstance underscoring the disparities that people of color face in health outcomes, education achievement and job levels. She noted that the Kellogg Foundation recently launched a \$75 million, five-year America Healing initiative that is addressing the devastating impact of structural racism on communities and aims to improve life outcomes for vulnerable children and families.

“This poll shows the need to create more opportunities for minority children and teenagers,” Dr. Christopher said. “This will be our baseline for assessing whether our initiative, coupled with the work of many others, is succeeding at providing minority children and their families with more opportunities for better health, education and life outcomes.”

Established in 1930, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation supports children, families, and communities as they strengthen and create conditions that propel vulnerable children to achieve success as individuals and as contributors to the larger community and society. Grants are concentrated in the United States, Latin America and the Caribbean, and southern Africa. For further information, visit www.wkkf.org

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Data in the above release is based on responses from adults working in a wide variety of occupations that affect children's opportunities at the community level. The most common occupation groups were: teaching (includes early childhood, elementary, and secondary) 25%, healthcare (including mental health) 19%, business owner or manager 6%, childcare / early childhood education 6% and non-elected government office or agency 6%. Over a 10-day project period, more than 9,700 panel members aged 18-65 and currently employed were invited to participate in the project. The participation rate was 56%. Participants then completed screening questions; 37% of participants identified themselves as having occupations that affect children and were therefore "screened-in" and met the qualifying conditions to complete the survey. Among respondents, 1,516 selected one or more of the pre-set job categories and 512 wrote in "other" occupations as relevant for children. Data collection and analysis was completed in late April 2010.