

FAMILY VOICES:

GROWING HARDSHIPS AND THE IMPACTS OF FAMILY FINANCIAL STRESS

Results of a countywide survey of 600 Monroe County parents

Families in Rochester and Monroe County are experiencing widespread financial stress, despite low unemployment rates, rising stock market and strong economic productivity. Poverty and financial hardship is found across the county and has especially profound impacts on children.



Poverty is due to a lack of cash, not character. Responsibility for ending child poverty and alleviating economic hardship is born by all levels of government. Towns, the City of Rochester, Monroe County, and New York State government each have a role to play.

TheChildren'sAgenda

Smart Choices. Bold Voices.



Challenges Parents Face Across Monroe County

Economic stress is felt by families across Monroe County. The density of poverty in Rochester, which is tied to a lack of racial equity, poses particular challenges for city families and requires unique policy solutions.

61%

*Rationing food
until next paycheck*

66%

*Affording
rent or mortgage*

**Challenges for parents
with annual household
incomes under \$100,000**

56%

*Affording insurance
that covers mental
health care*

64%

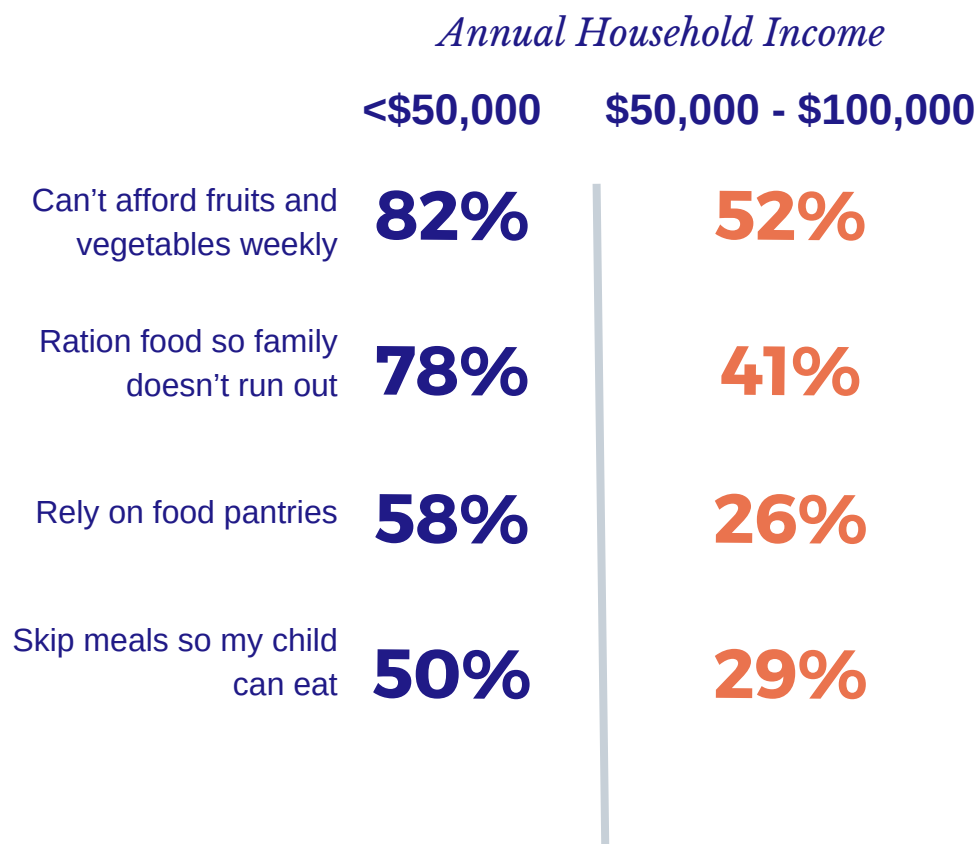
*Having to work
instead of attending
child's activities*



Food Security

Food security is not only a matter of making sure children aren't hungry. It's about ensuring children are well-nourished and able to fully participate in learning, enrichment and relationships. It's about feeding our families with dignity and it's a fundamental human right.

Challenges Affording Food



Black parents are more likely to **ration food**

Hispanic parents are more likely to **skip meals**



Housing

Every child needs stability, routine and predictability. Every child should experience the joy of living in a safe, inclusive and opportunity-rich neighborhood. Housing is not only a matter of affordability. It is also about quality and stability. Children who move frequently may experience setbacks in their education and social development.

Finding housing where rent or mortgage is manageable is a challenge

48%

All Parents

Higher for

Rochester **76%**

Households with income less than \$50,000 **76%**

Households with income \$50,000 - \$100,000 **59%**

Finding housing that is safe, stable and appropriate for my child's needs is a challenge

28%

All Parents

Higher for

Rochester **60%**

Parents of children with disabilities **41%**

Current Monroe County Medians

Rent = \$1,085

House Value = \$182,700

Data from US Census Bureau



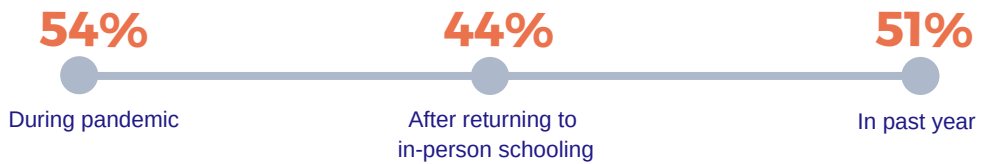
Access to Health Care

We have been tracking children’s emotional and mental health challenges since our March 2022 poll. Although there have been some improvements, far too many children continue to struggle without access to the supports they need and deserve.



Parents who say their child has struggled with emotional or mental health

*Household Income
Less than \$100,000*



More than \$100,000



Parents who say they struggle to afford insurance that covers mental health

39%

All Parents

Household Income

Less than \$50,000 **72%**

\$50,000 - \$100,000 **47%**

Over \$100,000 **24%**



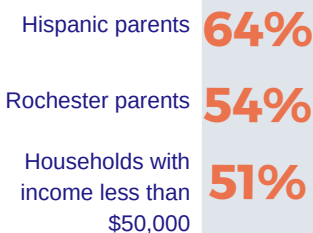
Access to Opportunities

Having access to opportunities helps children learn, broadens their horizons, fosters a sense of power over their circumstances, and instills a sense of dignity and of being valued by the community. But financial constraints and stark differences between neighborhoods and schools mean not all children have the same opportunities.

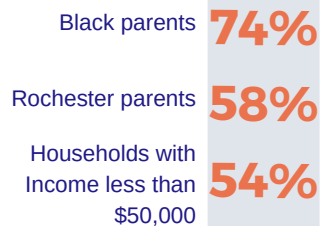


Transportation access and affordability impacts whether children can take part in opportunities outside their neighborhood.

Access is a Challenge

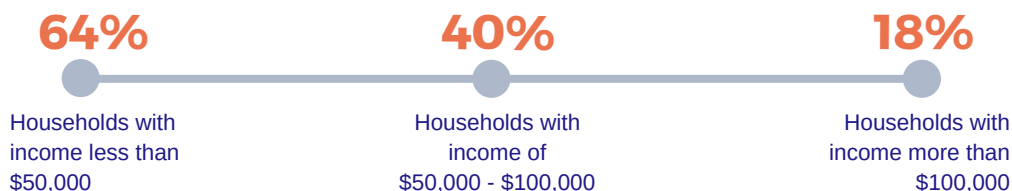


Affordability is a Challenge



Opportunities to participate in recreational activities and sports promotes learning, social development, leadership, goal setting and self-confidence.

Parents who say their child cannot participate in activities due to cost





Impact on Relationships

Poverty and financial hardship is not only about the challenge of meeting material needs. They also impact the strong and supportive relationships all parents want to have with their children. Social science research has documented how children experience poverty. We asked parents in our community about some of those experiences.

Compared with parents who earn \$100,000+, parents with lower incomes were 1.3 to 3 times more likely to identify relationship challenges

	<i>Annual Household Income</i>		
	<\$50,000	\$50,000 - \$100,000	\$100,000+
My child asks for things I can't afford	82%	60%	41%
Finding energy to help my child with reading/homework	75%	65%	58%
Needing to work instead of attending child's activities like sports or special events	75%	56%	43%
My child shows concern about my stress over money	51%	37%	18%



Solutions Parents Support

Poverty is a policy choice. Our nation has the resources to ensure that no child lives in poverty. We only need the will to enact the policies we know work.

Parents of all income levels support local and state government investing more in programs and policies that help children and families

Parents Support More Public Investment in...

Services for children with disabilities	79%
Mental health services in schools	76%
Affordable child care	74%
Larger tax credits for families with children	73%
Public schools	72%
After-school programs	71%
Increasing wages for child care providers	70%



Making Solutions Work

Public investment only works when the dollars reach the children and families they are intended to help. New York has recently increased the funding and broadened the eligibility for families to receive help paying for child care. But families can only make use of the assistance if they know it's there and that they qualify.

Slightly more than

HALF of Monroe County children under the age of 13 years qualify for child care assistance

But only...

41%

Have heard about child care assistance being available

Awareness is lower in the suburbs

15%

Think their family would be eligible

The program or service must also be available when and where families need it and it must be accessible for their child's needs.

1 out of **3**

parents has difficulty finding child care during evenings, nights or weekends

1 out of **3**

parents whose child has a disability or developmental delay has difficulty finding a child care provider for that child



POLICY PRIORITIES

What families have told us makes clear that New York needs bold **public policies** and smart use of **public funds** so children and families can thrive. Alongside local and state partners, The Children's Agenda recommends policy changes in five areas.

- 1** Strengthen the impact of existing tax credits by **enacting the Working Families Tax Credit** because ensuring wages stay in parents' pockets is the most effective and cost-efficient way to lift children out of poverty.
- 2** Fund universal, free school meals **in all districts across New York** because children can't learn when they are hungry.
- 3** Create a **New York State Housing Access Voucher Program** to shorten housing waits because kids need safe, stable housing.
- 4** Ensure quality, affordable child care is abundantly available by **increasing child care during evenings, nights and weekends** because not all parents work 9 to 5 and **creating a permanent child care fund** because early childhood educators deserve equitable wages.
- 5** Enhance Medicaid coverage for children by providing continuous coverage for ages 0 - 6 years, increasing reimbursement rates for youth mental health care, and expanding coverage of school-based health services **because kids who are healthy and supported do better in school and in life.**

You can support these efforts by joining The Children's Agenda's **Action Network** at www.thechildrensagenda.org. Rochester parents and families are invited to join our **Very Invested Parents advocacy group** by calling (585) 256-2620.

CITY & TOWN DATA

Every community in Monroe County is affected by child poverty and financial hardship.

Municipality	Households with Children Living Under the Poverty Line		Households with Children Earning Income <\$50,000	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Brighton	290	4.8%	426	11.5%
Chili	138	3.5%	470	14.2%
Clarkson	15	7.7%	59	8.5%
East Rochester	29	6.6%	89	18.2%
Gates	213	4.0%	540	20.4%
Greece	1,413	7.0%	2,626	26.0%
Hamlin	93	6.8%	330	36.5%
Henrietta	194	3.5%	464	11.8%
Irondequoit	632	5.8%	1,083	21.0%
Mendon	91	7.5%	91	7.5%
Ogden	212	4.1%	395	18.7%
Parma	150	4.1%	430	20.6%
Penfield	218	3.2%	317	7.2%
Pittsford	37	0.7%	160	4.8%
Riga	38	4.0%	43	7.8%
Rochester	8,310	23.9%	12,192	59.9%
Rush	20	2.0%	20	6.4%
Sweden	138	8.9%	260	30.5%
Webster	257	3.0%	766	15.6%
Wheatland	24	2.0%	97	21.0%

Data from US Census Bureau

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The goal of this poll was to document family experiences in a way that provides compelling evidence to county and state legislators for supporting public policies that help children thrive. This survey of **600 Monroe County parents** was conducted by Global Strategy Group on behalf of The Children’s Agenda from November 8 - 20, 2023. Parents were contacted by **phone call or text**, and respondents had the option of taking the survey in either **English or Spanish**.

The margin of error at the 95% confidence level is **+/- 4.9%**. The margin of error for sub-groups is greater.

Weighted targets were generated by using data from the 2015-2019 **American Community Survey-Education Tabulation (ACS-ED)**, a collaboration between the U.S. Census Bureau and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

The ACS-ED includes data on characteristics of the parents of school-age children. Data were aggregated for **every school district** entirely or mostly within the geographic lines of Monroe County.

Special care was taken to ensure the **sample matched the target population** as closely as possible across demographic variables including age, education status, gender, geography, gender, party registration, and race/ethnicity.

	Survey Sample	
	600	%
Rochester Suburbs	246	41%
	354	59%
Parent Race		
Black/African-American	120	} 36%
Hispanic/Latino	72	
Asian-American/Other	12	
White	384	64%
Parent Gender		
Female	378	63%
Male	222	37%
Family Income		
Under \$50,000	174	29%
\$50,000 - \$100,000	144	24%
Over \$100,000	228	38%
Parent Education		
Did not complete high school	42	} 37%
Graduated high school	60	
Some college or technical school	120	
Associate's degree	96	16%
Bachelor's degree	138	23%
Advanced degree	144	24%
Have a child with a developmental delay or disability	132	22%

This poll was made possible by the generous support of the ESL Charitable Foundation.