

1998 FAMILY TIME REPORT



It's just a matter of time ...

A STATEWIDE LOOK AT THE ATTITUDES AND ACTIVITIES IMPACTING
THE QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF FAMILY TIME IN WASHINGTON

Jeff Kemp—Executive Director

Melinda Lincicome—Director of Research & Public Policy

Dina Hovde—Communications & Publications Director

Washington Family Council
P.O. Box 40584
Bellevue, WA 98015
(425) 637-5959 or 1-888-WA FAMILY
wfcinfo@wafamily.org



Washington Family Council (WFC) commissioned Barna Research Group, Ltd. of Ventura, Calif., to conduct the research reported in this publication. Barna was responsible for survey design, data collection, tabulation and analysis. Drawings throughout the report were provided by local artist Saara Janmohamed, age 7. This report was printed by Precision Press in Redmond, Wash. Questions about this study should be directed to Melinda Lincicome at WFC.

© August 1998, Washington Family Council. All rights reserved.

The *1998 Family Time Report* may be reproduced in whole or in part, without change, for non-commercial purposes without prior permission from WFC, provided proper acknowledgment is given. Please notify WFC of any such use.

It's
just a
matter
of time...



Table of Contents

Introduction from Jeff Kemp	5
Executive Summary	6
Family Time in Washington	9
What amount of time is the right amount?	10
Quality time or quantity time ... or is that really the question?	12
Parent-child time in Washington	14
Does time affect quality?	17
What do families look like?	18
The differences between moms and dads	20
Education's influence	21
Time & child care	22
Time for work	24
Finances and family time	25
People & places—family time & activities	26
Making time for faith	30
What's the problem with conflict?	32
How can we increase family time?	34
Recommendations	37
Methodology	40
About Washington Family Council	41

It's
just a
matter
of time...



An introductory letter from Jeff Kemp, WFC Executive Director

August 1998

It has been said that we can know a lot about a person's priorities by looking at two things: their checkbook and their calendar. If someone was to look at our checkbooks and calendars, would the picture they see be an accurate illustration of our highest priorities in life? Maybe the picture would be an accurate reflection of reality, but reality is not necessarily what we want it to be.

As a community, what messages and priorities do our collective calendar and checkbook communicate? The family is the heart of our society—the life-giving part that nourishes and determines the health of our culture. Integral to the success of a family's endeavor to nurture and prepare children for adulthood—shaping their character—is the strength and depth of relationships between parents and children.

The *Family Time Report* is designed to explore the attitudes and activities that impact the quality and quantity of time that parents spend with their children in Washington state. What activities and obligations take time away from families? What do families need to enhance their time together? When families do spend time together, how do they invest that time? What factors contribute to and detract from strong, vital relationships between parents and children?

The *Family Time Report* does not present a list of instructions for creating the “perfect” family with the “right amount” of time.

Rather, the purpose of this research is to take the pulse of families in Washington. If we can identify some of the strengths and weaknesses in today's family life, then we can intelligently plot a course to improve family life tomorrow.

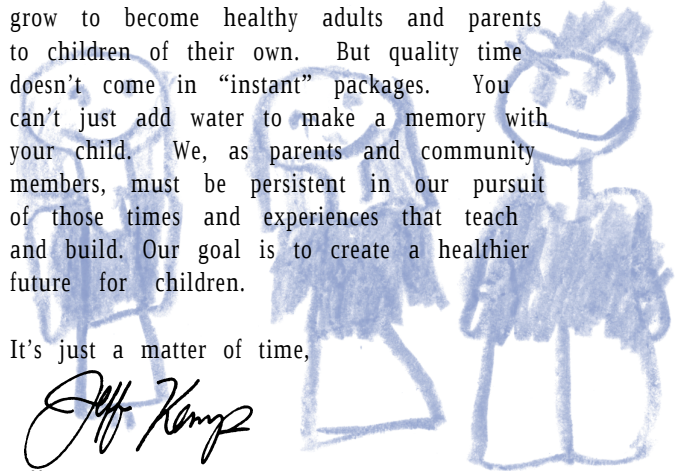
Our hope is that this *Family Time Report* will provide leaders in our society—parents, church pastors, business owners, educators, media messengers and government officials—with essential information that will motivate them to strengthen their own family relationships, while encouraging parents to prioritize and invest in time with their children.

Parents desire to spend significant, meaningful time with their children. They want to lay a foundation upon which children will grow to become healthy adults and parents to children of their own. But quality time doesn't come in “instant” packages. You can't just add water to make a memory with your child. We, as parents and community members, must be persistent in our pursuit of those times and experiences that teach and build. Our goal is to create a healthier future for children.

It's just a matter of time,



Jeff Kemp
Executive Director





Executive Summary

It's just a matter of time ...

Time. It seems to be such a simple concept—60 seconds in one minute, 60 minutes in one hour, 24 hours in one day, etc. One of the first educational achievements of childhood is learning to tell time, and then we spend the rest of our lives filling it, wasting it, chasing it and relaxing in it.

How do the routine minutes and hours of today become tomorrow's fond memories? Without prioritizing our time and who gets it, memories can slip away.

Six indicators highlighted in this executive summary—three beliefs about parent-child time and three behaviors that relate to the amount and type of parent-child time—give a quick picture of the current status of family time in our state. Taken together and measured over time, this information will track our state's pursuit of stronger family relationships and stronger communities.

1 Nearly three-quarters (73%) of Washington parents agreed with the idea that “it is more important that a parent spend quality time with a child than to spend a large amount of time with the child.” About half (49%) strongly agreed with this idea. The quality time versus quantity time debate has been widely discussed with current wisdom and research indicating the necessity of both. The relationship between this indicator and the next is crucial to any discussion of strengthening parent-child time.

2 Seven out of every 10 parents (71%) in Washington agree that “to raise children properly, a parent must spend a lot of time with each child every day.” More than half (53%) of all parents

strongly agree with this axiom. As other findings in this research will indicate, the quantity of time parents spend with their children is a significant factor in the quality of that time.

3 Just more than half (54%) of all Washington parents believe that “these days most kids are more influenced by the schools, government, the media, and other sources than they are by their parents.” Since parents generally know the most, care the most, and are most invested in the long-term well-being of their children, it is probably a discouragement to parents to feel that their influence is overshadowed by other entities. The level of disagreement with this belief is indicative of parental confidence and awareness of their unique and vital role in their child's life.

4 A majority of Washington parents (71%) are currently married. This research joins a significant number of other studies in showing that parents' marital status has critical influence in many factors impacting the quantity and quality of parent-child time. A 1997 survey found that 86 percent of Washington adults believed it was better for a child to be raised by a married mother and father.

5 Washington parents, on average, spend less time in significant interaction with their older children than they do with their younger children. Parents with children under age 5 report spending an average of four hours interacting with their children in the past day. An average of three hours was spent with children between the ages of 6 and 12, while parents with teenagers (13-17) spent an average of only one hour

in the past day with their children.

6 Parents in Washington spend an average of one hour per day in conversation with their child. Slightly more than one-third of parents (37%) say they spend more than 30 minutes a day talking with their children about things that are important to the child.



Beliefs impacting parent-child time

■“It is more important that a person spend quality time with a child than to spend a large amount of time with the child.”

Agree 73%
Disagree 24%

■“To raise children properly, a parent must spend a lot of time with each child every day.”

Agree 71%
Disagree 29%

■“These days most kids are influenced more by the schools, government, the media and other sources than they are by their parents.”

Agree 54%
Disagree 44%

Behaviors impacting parent-child time

■Washington parents who are married: 71%

■Average quantity of significant parent-child interaction per day:

Under age 5—four hours
Ages 6 to 12—three hours
Ages 13 to 17—one hour

■Parents who spend more than 30 minutes in conversation with child every day: 37%
(The average time amount spent in conversation with a child per day was one hour.)

It's
just a
matter
of time...





Family Time in Washington

What amount of time is the right amount?

Whether a parent measures time in the number of minutes or the quality of the experience, most have an internal scale that weighs their time with their children against an ideal. In Washington, about six in 10 parents (61%) feel they spent “about the right amount” of time with their children over the past month, while 38 percent believe they came up short of that ideal.

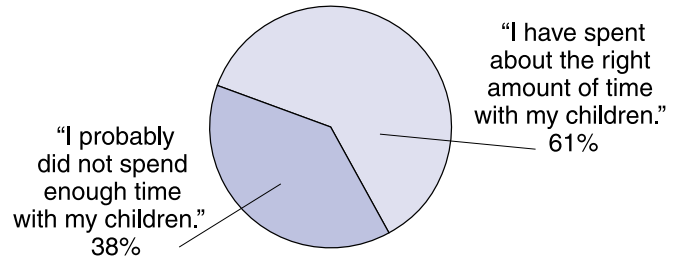
- Women (67%) and parents over 40 (67%) are more likely than average to say they have spent the right amount of time with their children in the past month.

- Men (45%) and parents who work 50 or more hours per week (59%) are significantly more likely to say they hadn’t spent enough time with their children over the past month.

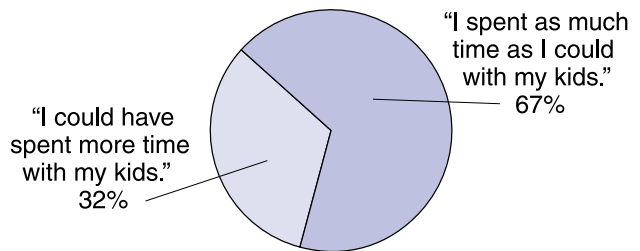


Key finding:
The least “stressed out” group of parents is married couples with one full-time and one part-time wage earner. Only one in five (21%) parents in this family type said they are “stressed out.”

“Over the past month ...”



“Over the past month ...”



- Thirty-something parents (46%) are more likely than average to report not spending enough time with their children, as are parents of teenagers (43%).

There are many factors that could prevent parents from spending time with their kids, about one-third (32%) of Washington parents feel they could have spent more time with their children in the last month while two-thirds (67%) believe they spent as much time as they could.

- Parents over the age of 40 (36%) are more likely to say they could have spent more time with their children.

- Parents with children under age 5 (73%) are more likely to say they spent as much time as they could, while parents with teenagers (36%) are more likely to feel they

could have spent more time with their kids in the last month.

■ Interestingly, parents who work part time or less (73%) are more likely to feel they spent as much time as they could have with their children, yet parents who work full time (35%) are more likely than average to feel that they could have spent more time with their children.

Though the majority of Washington parents believe they spend about the right amount of time with their children, and that they are spending as much time as they can with them, nearly seven of 10 parents (69%) agreed with the statement, “You would do more with your children if you did not feel so pressured for time.” Lots of things can compete for a parent’s time: children and their activities, household responsibilities, employment, finances and community activities. The impact these factors have on family time is explored later in this report.

■ Characteristics of parents who were significantly more likely to feel a time crunch include those who are in their 30s, only have a high school education, work more than 50 hours a week, or report a high level of conflict in their family.

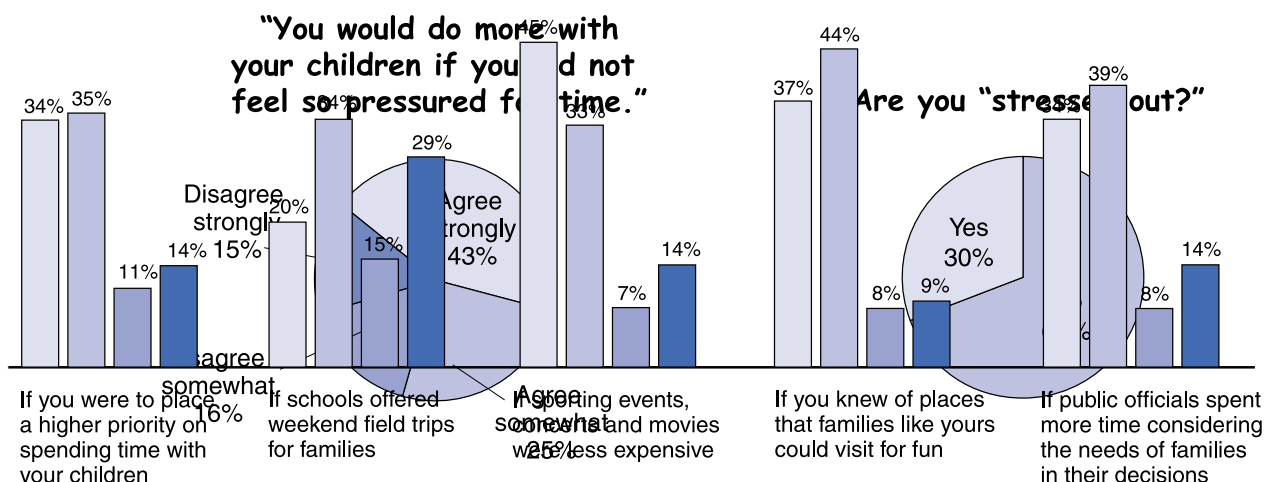
Even though two-thirds of Washington parents feel they are missing some opportunities with their children because they are so pressured for time, less than one-third of parents (30%) described themselves as “stressed out.” In fact, Washington parents, on average, are less “stressed out” than parents nationwide (41% of parents nationwide).

■ Young children contribute to the likelihood of feeling stressed out. Parents with children under 5 are more likely (35%) than average to feel stressed.

■ Nonwhite parents are significantly more “stressed out” (41%) than parents in general, as are parents with only some college education (38%).

■ The least “stressed out” group of parents is married couples with one full-time and one part-time wage earner. Only one in five (21%) parents in this family type said they are “stressed out.”

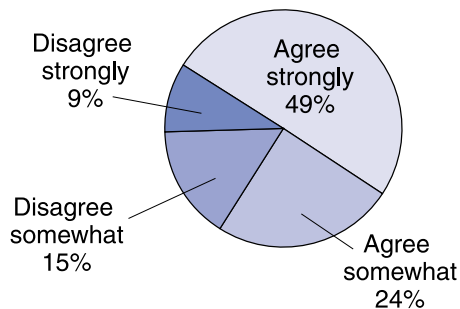
■ Parents who express an absolute commitment to Christianity and those who report low levels of conflict in their family are also significantly less stressed than the average parent (26% and 23%, respectively).



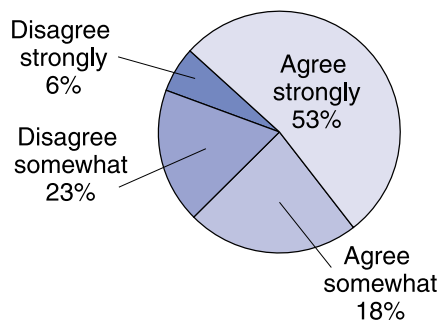
Quality time or quantity time ... or is that really the question?

On May 12, 1997, *Newsweek's* cover story revealed, "The Myth of Quality Time." The article highlights families who "... had subscribed in good faith to the careerists' most treasured rule of parenting: it isn't how much time you spend with your kids, it's how you spend the time." A majority of Washington parents seem to subscribe to this "rule" as well. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of parents agree with the statement, "It is more important that a parent spend quality time with a child than to spend a large amount of time with the child."

"It is more important that a parent spend quality time with a child than to spend a large amount of time with the child."



"To raise children properly, a parent must spend a lot of time with each child every day."



■ Single parents are significantly more likely to agree with this statement than average (87% of single parents), as are parents who use child care regularly (83%).

■ While just less than one-quarter (24%) of Washington parents disagreed with this belief on average, among married parents there is significantly higher disagreement (29%), especially among parents who have been married longer (34% of parents married 11-plus years disagreed).

Although a significant majority of parents say they believe that the quality of parent-child time is more important than the quantity of that time, almost the same percentage (71%) of parents believe that "to raise children properly, a parent must spend a lot of time with each child every day." Do these ideas contradict each other? Are Washington parents confused? Or does the level of agreement with both of these statements indicate an interdependent relationship between quality time and quantity time that Washington parents are realizing in their everyday experience?

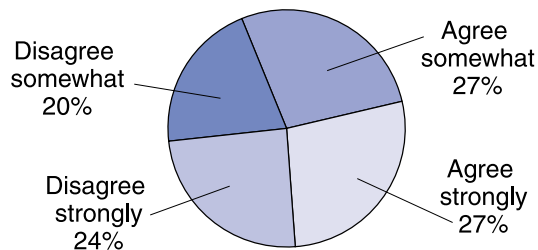
■ With 73 percent of Washington parents agreeing that spending quality time with their children is more important than spending a lot of time with them and 71 percent of parents attesting that a large amount of time is essential to raising children properly, Washington parents could be indicating that quantity time is the only means to a quality end.

■ There is significantly higher agreement with this statement among parents under age 30 (81% agree), parents with one child (81% agree), and married parents when only one parent is employed (84%).

■ Parents who graduated from college are also more likely to agree (76%) with this statement.

■ Twenty-nine percent of all Washington parents disagreed with this statement, yet there are significantly higher disagreement levels among two subgroups. More than one-third (36%) of currently single parents and 43 percent of parents who have ever been divorced disagreed with the necessity of large amounts of time with children.

“These days most kids are influenced more by the schools, government, the media, and other sources than they are by their parents.”



Washington parents are fairly evenly split as to whom has the greatest influence with children. Just more than half of all parents (54%) believe that “these days most kids are more influenced by the schools, government, the media, and other sources than they are by their parents.” About half of all parents express strong beliefs about this idea, with 27 percent agreeing strongly and 24 percent disagreeing strongly. Since parents generally know the most, care the



Key finding:

As Washington parents report strong feelings about the need for both quality and quantity of time, they could be indicating that quantity time is the only means to a quality end.

most, and are most invested in the long-term well-being of their children, it is probably a discouragement to some parents to feel that their influence is overshadowed by other entities. The level of disagreement with this belief is indicative of parental confidence and awareness of their unique and vital role in their child's life.

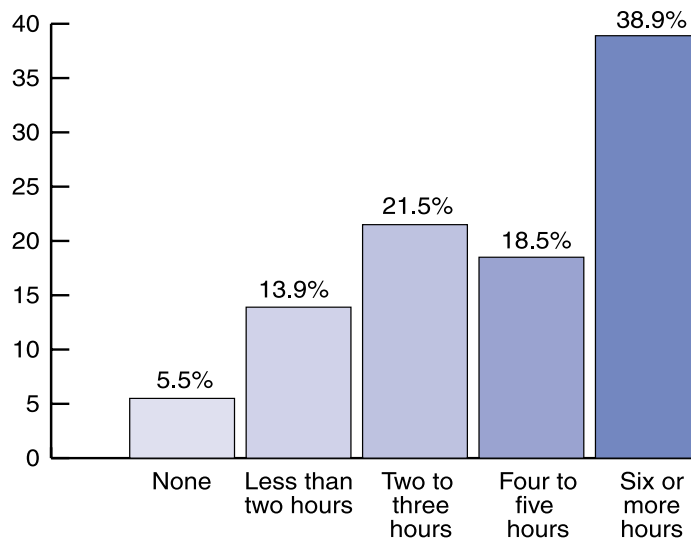
■ Among parents under 30 (70%) and parents with only one child (71%), there is significantly higher agreement with this idea than among parents in general (54%).

■ Parents with only a high school education (59%) and lower income levels (61% of families making less than \$40,000 yearly) also report higher than average agreement with this statement.

■ More than two-thirds (65%) of parents who report high levels of involvement with religious activities agree that other influences hold more sway than parents with children.-----

Parent-child time in Washington

48
Parent interaction with children in a day



When parents were asked how much time they spent in significant, meaningful interaction with all of their children in the past 24 hours, the average response was four hours. There are several factors that significantly affected the amount of time a parent reported. The age of the child plays a clear role—the older the child, the less time, on average, is spent in significant interaction with a parent. On average, parents report spending four hours a day in significant interaction with children under the age of 5. With children ages 6 to 12, parents report an average of three hours a day in meaningful interaction. Parents report spending only one hour per day, on average, with their teenagers.



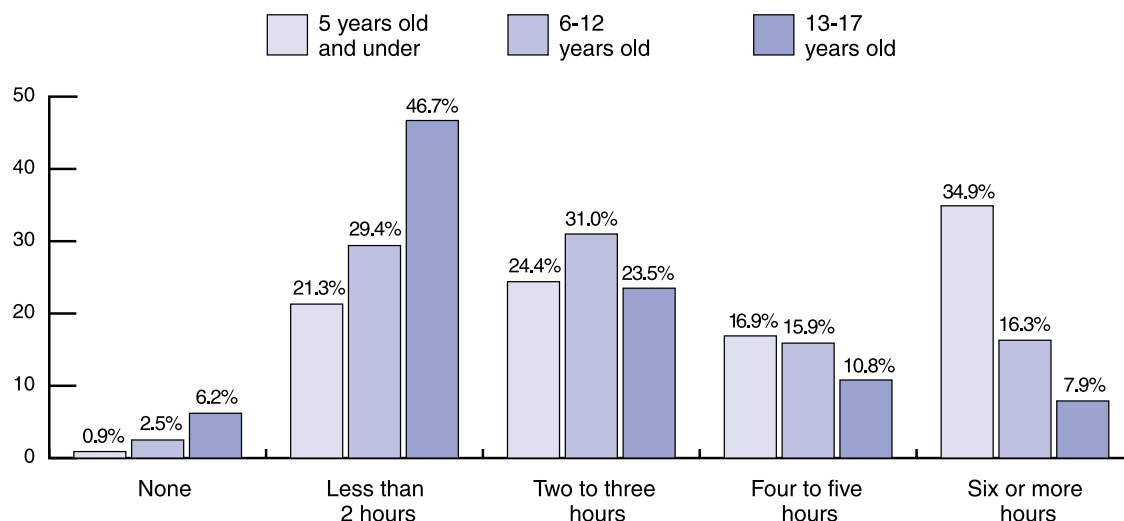
Key finding:
Age matters. On average, children who are older spend less time in significant interaction with a parent. Younger children are in significant interaction with a parent more often.

■ Thirty-somethings, parents with children under 5, married parents, and parents who work part time or less are all significantly more likely to report spending more time with their children than average.

■ Single parents and parents of teenagers are more likely to report spending a lower-than-average amount of time interacting with their children.

■ Parents of school-aged children (6 to 12 and 13 to 17) who use child care regularly are significantly more likely to report spending no time with their children in the last 24 hours than the average parent with children in those age ranges.

Parent time with children by children's age



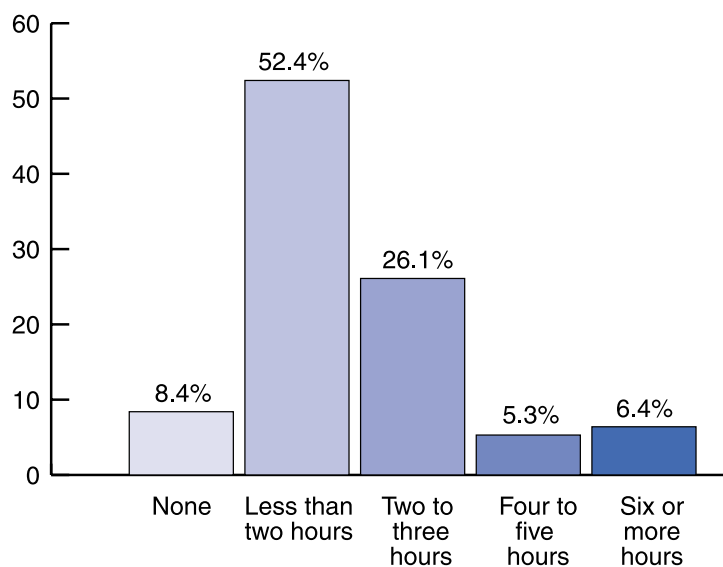
It was left up to the parents who participated in this survey to determine the practical definition of “significant, meaningful interaction.” Based on other responses and information gathered in this research, it would seem that parents might count all the time spent in the same location as their child as significant, meaningful interaction. Some of this subjectivity can be eliminated, however, by grouping parents into three subsets: those who spend an average amount of time (the average of all responses), an above-average amount of time, and a below-average amount of time with their children. These sub-groups were used in further analysis of the information gathered.

Washington parents say they spend an average of one hour in meaningful conversation with their children in a typical day. At the same time, less than four in 10 parents (37%) say they spend more than 30 minutes in conversation with their child every day. Nearly half (45%) of all parents, though, say they spend more than a half-hour talking with their kids about issues that are important to them at least once a week.

■ Moms are significantly more likely to spend greater amounts of time in conversation with their kids (44% of moms spent more than two hours).

Continued on next page ...

Parent conversation with children in a day



■ Parents who use child care (14%) regularly are more likely to report spending no time in meaningful conversation with their kids in the past 24 hours.

■ Families with high levels of religious involvement (indicated by frequent participation in multiple religious activities) are significantly more likely to spend more time in conversation with their kids (54% of parents with high religious involvement report more than two hours in the typical day). This correlation is also evidenced by 61 percent of parents with high religious involvement saying they spend more than 30 minutes talking with their child about issues important to the child every day, compared to an average 37 percent of all parents.

■ Fewer than two-thirds (60%) of parents who spend an above-average amount of time in meaningful conversation with their children report spending 30 minutes a day every day talking with their kids. This would indicate that the amounts of time reported by parents, in general, may be somewhat inflated.

Another way of assessing how parents feel about the amount of time they're spending with their children is to ask them to compare themselves to "other" parents. Almost six of every 10 parents (59% and 57%, respectively) believe they are spending

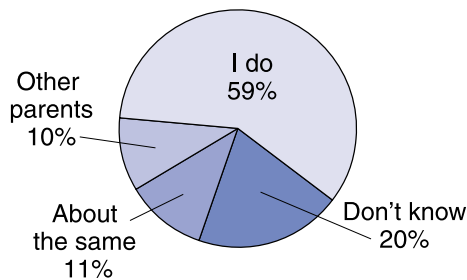
more time interacting and conversing with their children than "other" Washington parents. However, when parents are divided into above-average, average and below-average categories based on the amount of time they report actually spending with their children, their personal ratings do not always match up.

■ Among the 59 percent of parents who believe they spend more time interacting with their children, 38 percent actually spend an above-average amount of time, 37 percent spend an average amount of time, and 25 percent spend a below-average amount of time with their kids.

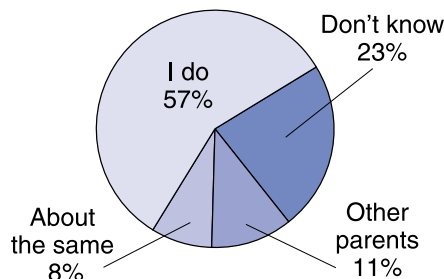
■ Among the 57 percent of parents who believe they spend more time in conversation with their children than other parents, only 26 percent spend an above-average amount of time, 50 percent spend an average amount of time, and 23 percent spend a below-average amount of time talking with their kids.

■ Single parents are significantly more likely to say other parents spend more time with their children (18% of single parents compared to 10% of all parents). Parents of teenagers are also more likely to believe other parents spend more time interacting with their kids (16% of parents with children ages 13-17, 15% of parents with children over 18).

Overall, who spends more time in significant interaction with their children?



Overall, who spends more time in conversation with their children?



Does time affect quality?

Parents were asked to evaluate the strength of the relationships in their family on a 10-point scale. The average strength of the relationship between a parent and child was 8.6, as was the mean strength of the parent's marriage. Parents assessed the strength of sibling relationships slightly weaker, with an average rating of 8.0.

■ Some groups consistently reported above-average ratings of family strength in all three relationships. Parents under 30, parents with children under 5, families with annual household incomes of \$75,000 and higher, and two-parent families were more likely to rate their relationship strength a 9 or 10 than the average parent.

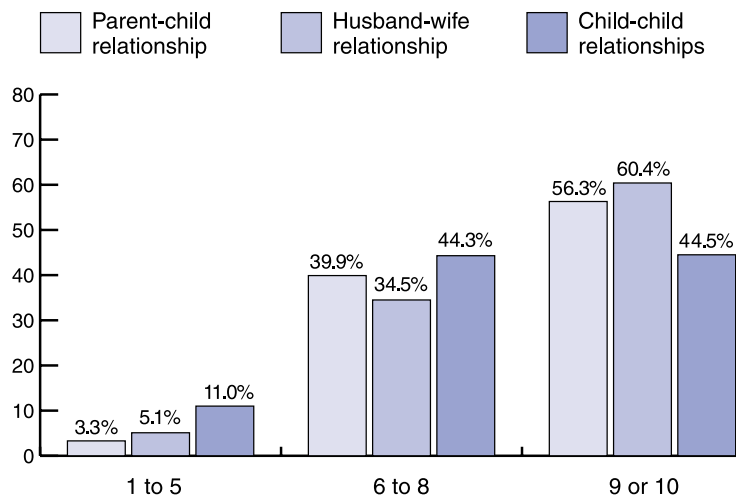
■ Parents who have a high level of religious involvement are more likely to rate all of their family relationships stronger than the average parent (69% rate their parent-child relationships a 9 or 10, 70% rate their marriage relationship a 9 or 10, and 60% rate child-child relationships a 9 or 10).

■ Married parents rate their parent-child relationships stronger than other parents. Single parents and parents that have ever divorced are less likely to give strong ratings for their parent-child relationships (62% of married parents rate their parent-child



Key finding:
Married parents rate their parent-child relationships stronger than do single parents and parents that have ever divorced.

Strength of family relationships
(from a scale of 1-10)

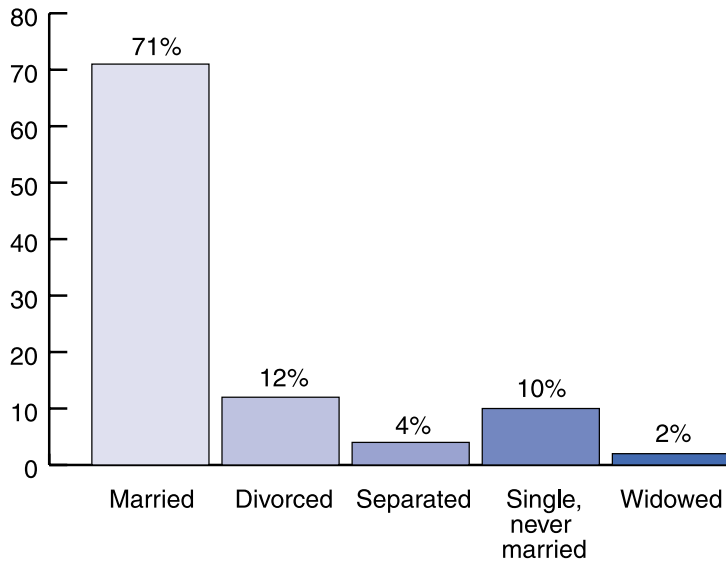


relationships a 9 or 10, compared to 43% of currently single parents and 47% of ever-divorced parents).



What do families look like?

Current marital status of parents



Nearly three-quarters (71%) of Washington parents are married, representing seven of 10 households with children under 18 living in them. A single parent heads about two in 10 (21%) households with children under 18. Ten percent of Washington parents are single and have never been married, while slightly more (12%) are currently divorced. About 25 percent of Washington parents have experienced divorce at some time.

■ Families with higher household incomes are significantly more likely to be headed by married parents. All but one (98.8%) of the respondents reporting a household income higher than \$75,000 are married, and 82 percent of parents reporting income between \$40,000 and \$75,000 are married. On the other hand, 21 percent of all parents report being the head of a one-parent family yet 41 percent of parents making under \$40,000 are part of one-parent families.

■ Parents who make regular use of child care are significantly less likely to be married and significantly more likely to be single parents (64% of child-care users are married, 28% are one-parent families).

■ Younger parents are significantly less likely to be married than older parents (50% of parents under 30 are married, compared to 75% of parents 30 and over).

■ Parents of teenagers are significantly less likely to be single and never married. While 35 percent of currently unmarried parents have never married, only 15 percent of single parents with teenage children have never married.



Key finding:
Younger parents are significantly less likely to be married than older parents (50% of parents under 30 are married, compared to 75% of parents 30 and over).

■ Of parents reporting excellent conflict-resolution skills, 78 percent are married (significantly higher than average). Parents reporting lesser abilities to resolve family conflict were more likely to be one-parent families (28% of parents reporting less than excellent conflict-resolution skills were one-parent families).

The typical Washington parent has two children, with the average number of children per parent being more than two. Nearly half (48%) of all Washington parents currently have a teenager living at home, and almost as many (44%) have a child age 5 or under. Almost six in 10 parents (58%) have a child between the ages of 6 and 12. One quarter (24%) of parents in Washington who have children under 18 living with them also have a child over 18.

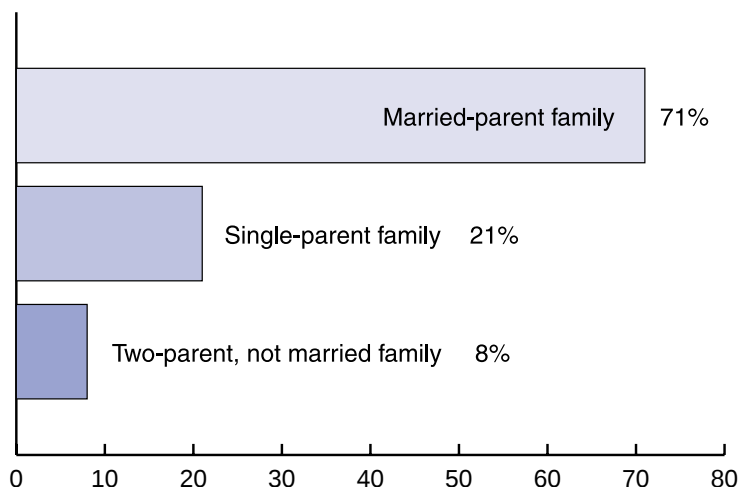
■ Parents under age 30 (48%) and parents who are currently single (34%) are significantly more likely to have only one child, as are parents whose household income is less than \$40,000 (32%) and parents who have been married less than 10 years (29%).

■ Washington parents who report engaging in a high number of family activities (35%) and spend an above-average amount of time interacting with their children (29%) are also significantly more likely to have only one child. Interestingly, among those reporting an above-average amount of time with their children, parents with four children are represented significantly more often than average (13.2% of parents reporting above-average time in parent-child interaction have four children, compared to 8.4% of all parents).

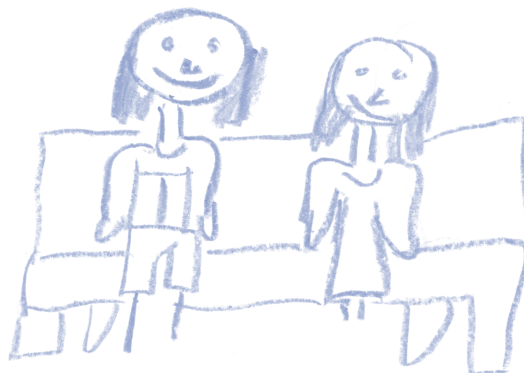
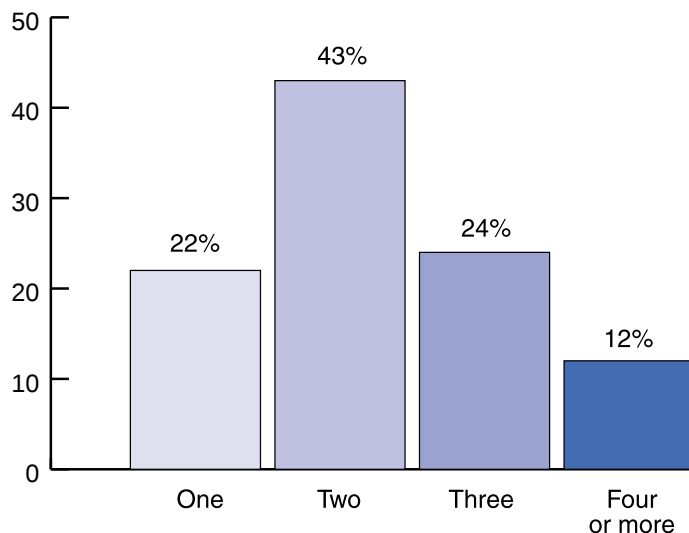
■ Parents who use child care regularly are significantly more likely to have children under 5 (77%) than the average parent. However, two parent households with only

Continued on next page ...

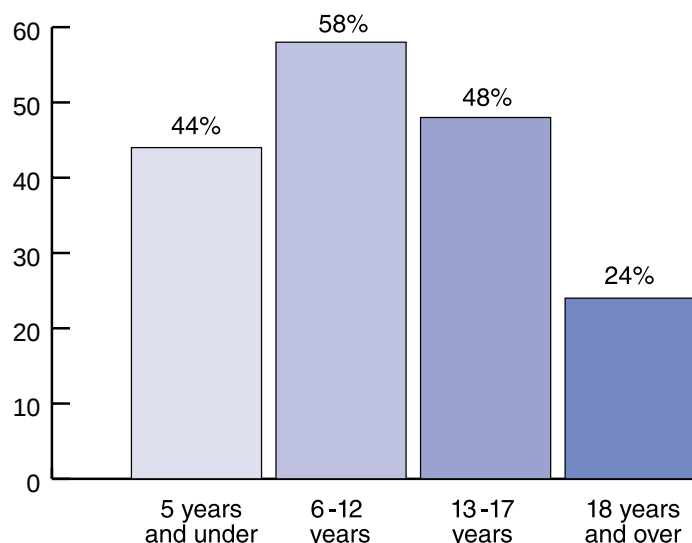
Household arrangements



Number of children



Families with children ...



one full-time employed parent are also more likely to have children under 5 (59%).

■ The frequency and quantity of participation in various activities as a family seems to decline as children get older. Parents reporting a high number of family activities are significantly more likely to have children under 5, those with a medium number of activities are more likely to have children ages 6 to 12, and those reporting a low number of family activities are more likely to have teenagers (63% of parents with a high number of activities have kids under 5, 67% of parents with a medium number of activities have kids ages 6 to 12, and 58% of parents reporting low activity have teenagers).

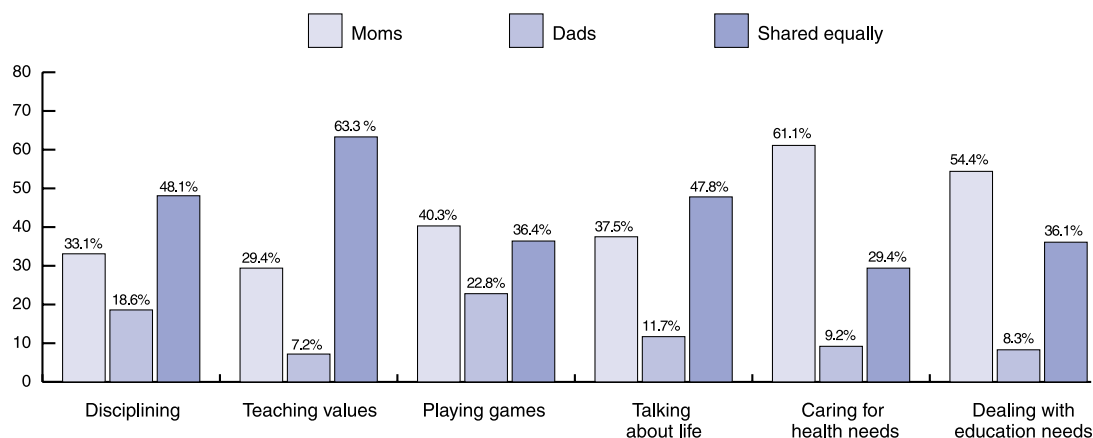
The differences between moms and dads

Children need time, interaction and conversation, with both their mother and their father. Research and popular opinion indicate moms and dads play different roles in a child's development. In Washington, moms are the primary caregiver in all aspects of a child's life. Both men and women recognize this. When married parents were asked who spends more time in various activities with the children, women were significantly more likely to name themselves while men were significantly more likely to say their spouse.

■ The two activities that show noticeably higher involvement by fathers are "playing games" and "disciplining."

■ Washington parents are slightly more likely than parents nationwide to report sharing parenting responsibilities equally. While the percentage of Washington parents who report sharing a role equally ranged from 29 percent to 63 percent, the range among U.S. parents was 22 percent to 52 percent.

Who spends more time?



Education's influence

Education fills a child's time. And parents are a child's primary educators. From a child's earliest moments, they are taught by their parents. As children get older, parents often enlist the specialized skills and services of other adults to teach their children in specific areas of academics, arts, athletics, and religion. If parents are satisfied with the education their child receives when they are away from the family, family time can be spent on other activities that enhance and build on that education.

The majority of parents with children under 5 (57%) do not send their child to any type of school. Just more than two in 10 parents (21%) send their young children to a public school, while slightly more (23%) send their children to a private school. Among parents with elementary-age and teenage children, eight in 10 parents (81%) send their children to public school. The remainder of Washington parents sends their children to private schools (at an approximate ratio of 3:1 for religious schools to nonreligious schools), they educate them at home, or make some other type of arrangement.

■ Older parents and parents with older children are more likely to send their children under age 5 to school, while younger parents and parents with only one child are more likely to report not sending their young child to any school.

■ Parents who report less satisfaction with their child's school situation are significantly

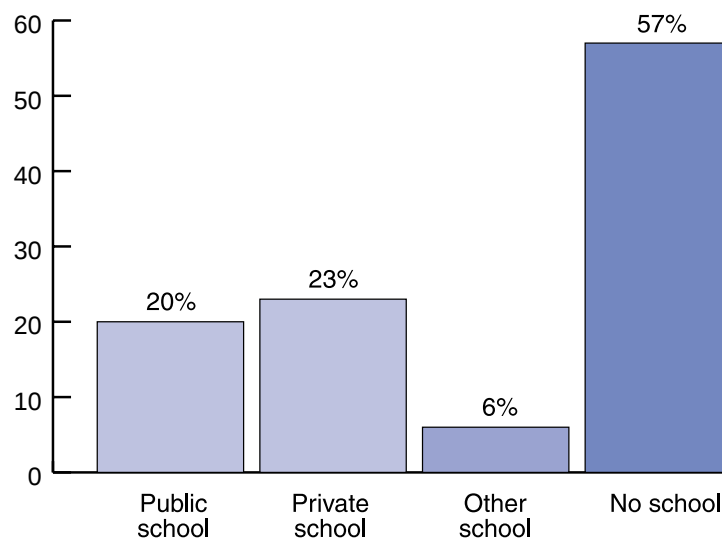


Key finding:
Eighty-one percent of parents with children ages 6 to 17 send their children to public schools, yet parents of private-school students report a higher level of educational satisfaction.

cantly more likely to have their child enrolled in public school (31% of less-satisfied parents have their children under 5 in public school, compared to 21% of parents on average; 88% of less-satisfied parents with 6 to 12-year-olds and 89% of less-satisfied parents of teenagers, compared to 81% of parents in general have their children in public school).

Continued on next page ...

School attendance - children under 5

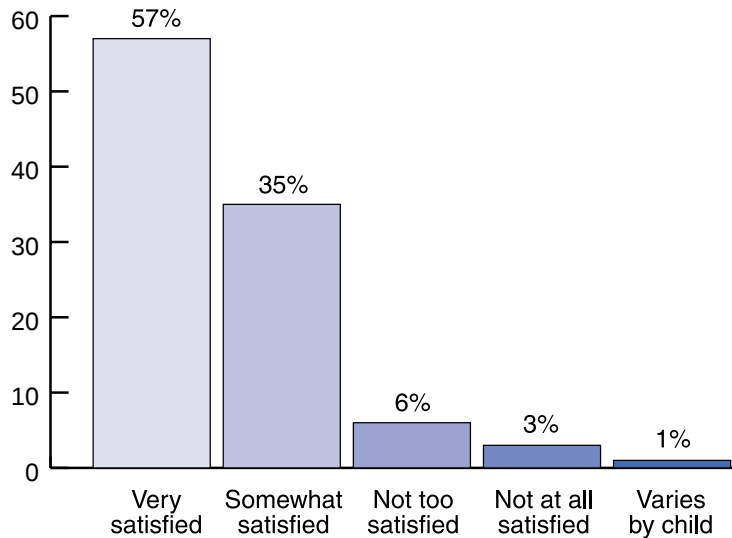


■ Parents who graduated from college are significantly more likely to have their teenagers enrolled in private school (27%) and less likely to have them in public school (70%). Parents with a high-school diploma are more likely to have their teenagers in public school (89%).

Among parents who have a child in school, just less than six in 10 parents (57%) are “very satisfied” with their child’s school situation. Another one-third of parents (35%) say they are “somewhat satisfied.” About one in 10 parents report low satisfaction with their child’s current school experience.

■ Parents who send their children to private school are significantly more likely to be “very satisfied” with their child’s education than the parents of kids in public

How satisfied are you with your children's school situation?



school (72% of private-school parents, compared to 51% of public-school parents).

■ Parents of teenagers were significantly less likely to be “very satisfied” with their child’s education (47%).



Key finding:
Nearly two-thirds of parents who use child care believe that if they did not need to use child care as often, they would have more family time.

Time & child care

Time spent in child care not only impacts the quantity of time parents have with their children but also seems to influence the content of their interaction when they are together. Just more than one-quarter (27%) of Washington parents say that their children are in a child-care arrangement on a regular basis. Among those parents, slightly more than half (54%) have their children in care five days a week.

■ Younger parents and parents with young children are significantly more likely to

report using child care regularly. Slightly less than half (48%) of parents under 30 and 32 percent of parents in their 30s have children in regular child care compared to 27 percent of all parents. Similarly, 47 percent of parents with children under age 5 say their children are in regular child care.

■ Parents with only one child are significantly more likely to report using child care regularly (41%, compared to a 27% average).

■ While single parents are more likely than average to have their children in regular child care (35%), only about one-third of single parents say that their children are in any type of regular child-care situation.

■ Interestingly, parents who report participating in a high number of family activities are significantly more likely to say their children are in regular child care. More than one-third of parents (37%) who do a lot of things with their family use child care, while eight of 10 (81%) of parents reporting a low number of family activities

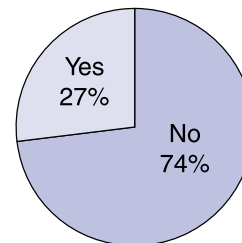
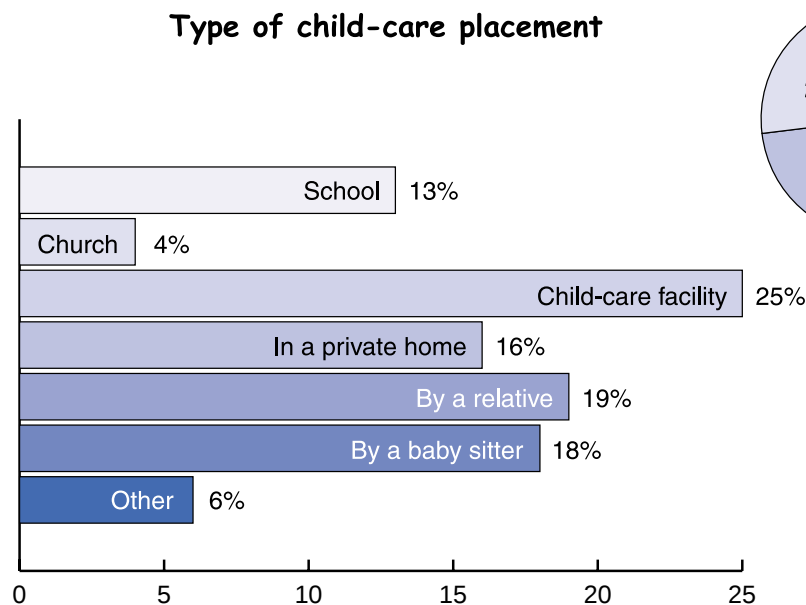
say they do not use child care on a regular basis.

■ Fewer than two in 10 (17%) parents who rate above average in the quantity of time they spend talking with their children put their children in regular child care, significantly lower than the average rate of child-care usage among parents (27%).

■ Nearly two-thirds (66%) of parents who use child care believe that if they did not need to use child care as often, they would have more family time.

Among parents who say their children are in some child-care situation on a regular basis, only one in four (25%) send their children to a child-care facility. About two parents in 10 (19%) have a relative care for their children and an equal amount (18%) leave their children with a baby sitter. Parents who report a high number of family activities with their children are significantly more likely to use a relative to provide child care for their children (35%).

Is your child in any type of child-care situation on a regular basis?



Time for work

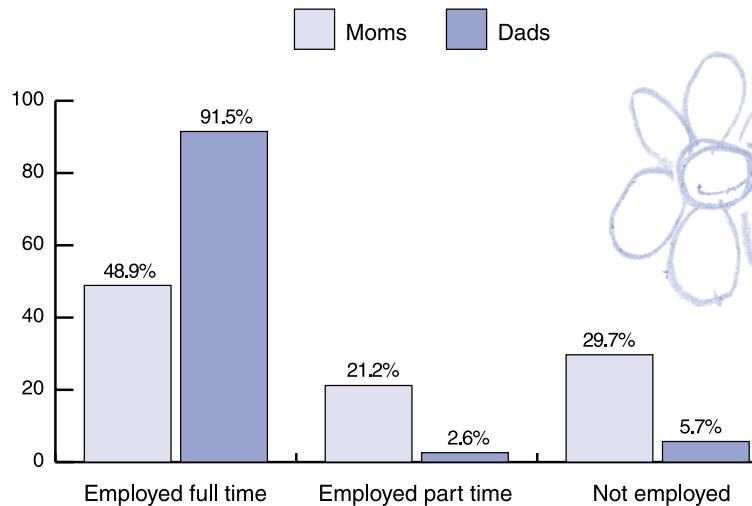
Almost every Washington father with a child under 18 living at home is employed full time (92%), and just about half (49%) of Washington mothers are employed full time. Three of 10 Washington moms (30%) with children under 18 are not employed at all, while only six percent of Washington dads are not employed.

■ In general, about four in 10 Washington parents (43%) work 40 hours per week. Another one-quarter (24%) of parents works more than 50 hours in a week.

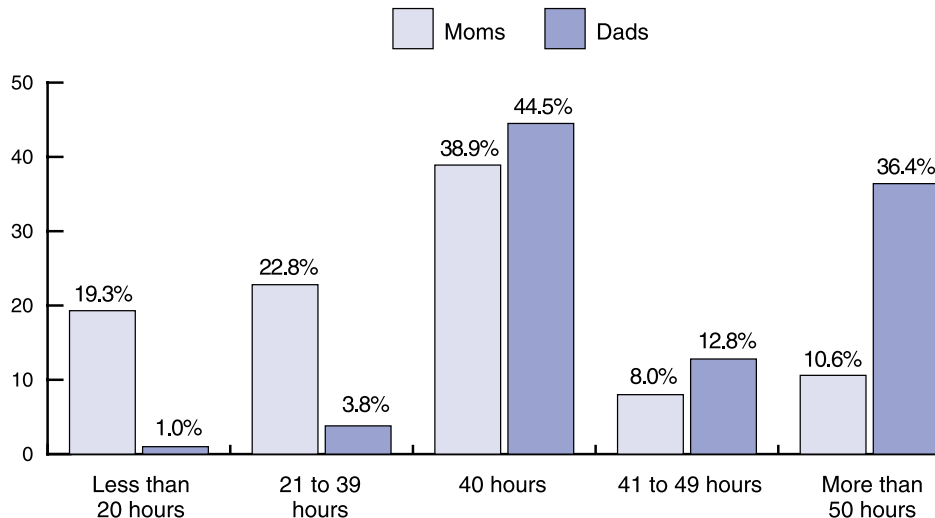
■ Washington mothers are significantly more likely to work part time. While 9 percent of all parents say they are employed less than 20

hours per week, 18 percent of mothers are employed this amount. Additionally, about 24 percent of mothers are employed between 20 and 39 hours while only 13 percent of all parents are employed at this level.

Parents' employment status



Employed parents' typical hours per week



Finances & family time

Money can't buy you love, but can it buy time? More than two-thirds (68%) of Washington parents say that they are financially comfortable. However, financial comfort is not significantly different among parents who spend varying amounts of time in interaction and conversation with their children.

On the other hand, nearly half (48%) of Washington parents with children under 18 agreed that they would “do more with their children if they did not feel so financially stretched.”

- Parents over the age of 40 are significantly more likely to say they are financially comfortable (76%).

- Married parents are also more likely to feel financially comfortable (72%), while single parents and parents who have ever divorced are less likely to feel financially secure (58% and 62%, respectively).

- There is no significant difference between parents' financial comfort level correlated to the parents' race or ethnicity.

- Parents in their 30s are significantly more likely to agree that feeling financially stretched keeps them from doing more with their children (57% of thirty-somethings agree compared to 48% of parents in general).

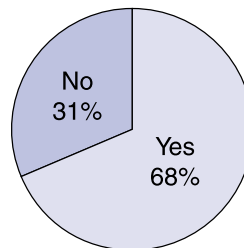
- Single parents are more likely to express feelings of being financially stretched (60% agree), and two-parent families are more likely to disagree with this idea (56% of married parents compared to 51% of parents in general).



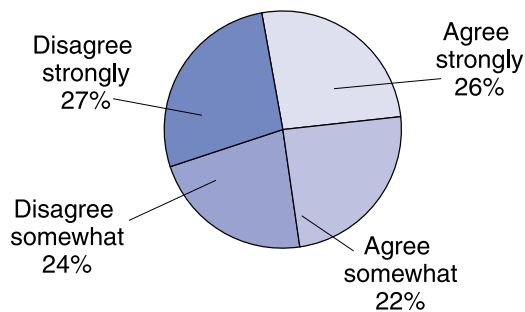
Key finding:

Married parents are more likely to feel financially comfortable, while single parents and parents who have ever divorced are less likely to feel financially secure.

Are you financially comfortable?



“You would do more with your children if you did not feel so financially stretched.”



- Parents who use child care regularly are also more likely to agree with this statement (55%) than parents in general.

People & places— family time & activities

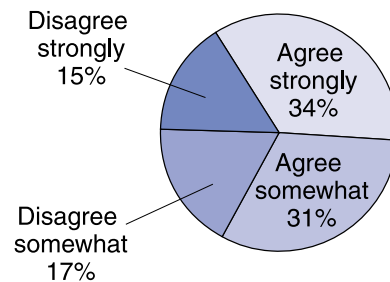
This research has found that parents spend less time with their children as the children get older, and those findings are consistent with parents' responses to the following. About two-thirds (65%) of Washington parents agree with the statement, "As your children get older it is harder to plan activities that everyone wants to do," with just about half of those parents expressing strong agreement. At the same time, the majority of Washington parents (79%) disagree with the statement, "You and your children do not have similar interests." Almost half of all parents (47%) strongly disagree with this idea.

- Parents with older children are significantly more likely to agree that finding activities that everyone wants to do is difficult (72% of parents with teenagers and 74% of parents with children over 18 agree, compared to 65% agreement among parents in general).

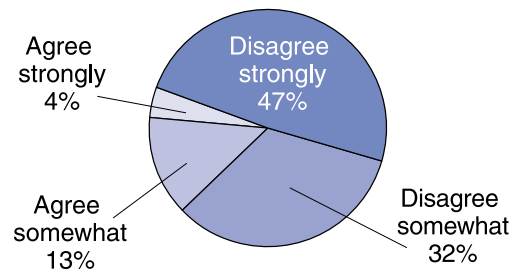


Key finding:
Having similar interests with their children is significantly correlated with the amount of time parents spend in conversation with their children.

"As your children get older it is harder to plan activities that everyone wants to do."



"You and your children do not have similar interests."



- Fathers are more likely to agree (71%) than average, and mothers are less likely to agree (60%) that planning family activities is more difficult as children get older.
- It's not a matter of money. Parents reporting a household income of more than \$75,000 are significantly more likely to agree (75%) that it is more difficult to find activities that everyone will enjoy with older children.
- Some families have been able to overcome this age hurdle. Parents who rate above-average in the number of family activities, quantity of family time and quantity of conversation are more likely to disagree (43%, 40%, and 45% respectively) that planning interesting family

activities is harder with older children. Additionally, parents who report a below-average number of family activities, quantity of family time and quantity of conversation are more likely to agree (76%, 75%, and 73% respectively) that having older children makes planning family activities more difficult.

■ Parents seem to report having more in common with their preschoolers than with their teenagers. Parents with teenagers are significantly more likely to agree with the idea that they do not have similar interests to their children (22% agreement among parents of 13 to 17-year-olds, 28% agreement among parents with children over 18).

■ Having similar interests with their children is significantly correlated with the amount of time parents spend in conversation with their children. Parents who rate above average in quantity of conversation are more likely to disagree with the question (88% disagreement), while parents who rate below average in the amount of conversation are less likely to disagree and more likely to agree (69% disagree, 23% agree).

There are many things a family can spend time doing together—some are fun, some are educational, some are routine. Parents who rated above average in the amount of time they spent interacting and conversing with their children are significantly more likely to participate in all of the activities mentioned here than the average parent with one exception—Internet use. This may indicate that parents have yet to make surfing the Web a family pastime, and not just an individual activity.

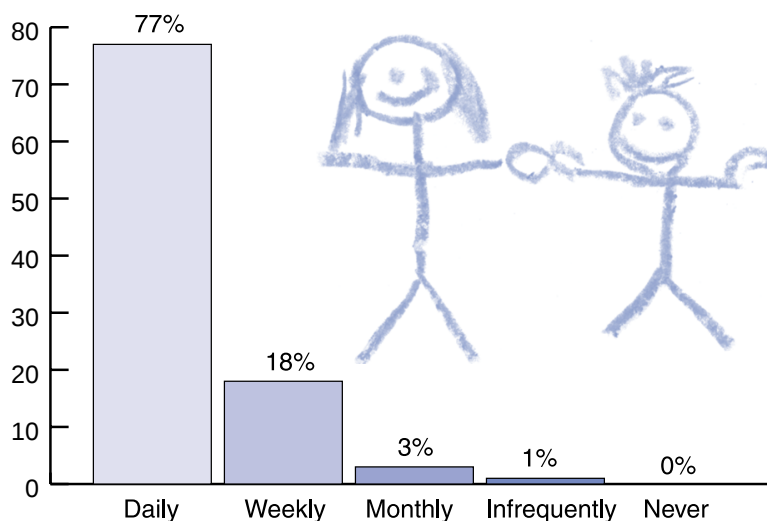
"Eat meals together"
By far the most frequent

family activity, more than three-quarters (77%) of Washington parents say, is eating meals together as a family every day. An additional 18 percent eat together several times during the week, accounting for nearly full participation in this daily ritual. Younger parents, and those with younger children, are significantly more likely to eat meals together daily (86% of parents under 30, 82% of parents in their 30s, and only 70% of parents over 40; 86% of parents with kids under 5, 81% of parents with kids 6 to 12, 71% of parents with kids 13 to 17, and 66% of parents with kids 18 and over). Parents who have a high level of religious involvement are the most likely to eat meals together with their family on a daily basis (94%). More frequent conflict between parent and child or among children made families less likely to eat meals together daily (71% in families when parents reported frequent child-child conflict, 66% when parents reported frequent parent-child conflict).

"Watch television together"

Less than half of Washington parents say their families watch television together every day (44%), yet an equal amount (42%) say they watch television together several times during the week. Parents with lower incomes are
Continued on next page ...

Eat meals together



slightly more likely to watch television together every day (53% of parents making \$40,000 or less) while parents with higher incomes are less likely to say they watch television as a family every day but more likely to watch several times during the week (29% of parents making \$75,000 or more say they watch daily, and 58% watch weekly). About one-third (34%) of parents who say they watch television with their family every day believe that having the television on less would be very helpful in increasing their time together as a family.

"Play games together"

About two in 10 Washington parents (18%) say they play games with their family every day. Nearly half of all parents (46%) say they play games with their children during every week, and almost one-quarter (23%) of families play games at least once a month. Younger parents and those with younger children are more likely to play games together more often (25% of parents under 30 and 24% of parents in their 30s play games daily, while only 10% of parents over 40 do; 30% of parents with children under 5 play daily, 56% of parents with children ages 6 to 12 play weekly).

"Work on your home or residence together"

Just more than two-thirds (68%) of Washington

parents say they work on their residence as a family at least once a week, with 21 percent of parents saying housework is a daily family activity. Women are slightly more likely to report daily family activity in working on their home and men are slightly less likely to do this activity daily than the average among all families (24% of women say this is a daily activity, 16% of men do housework with their family daily).

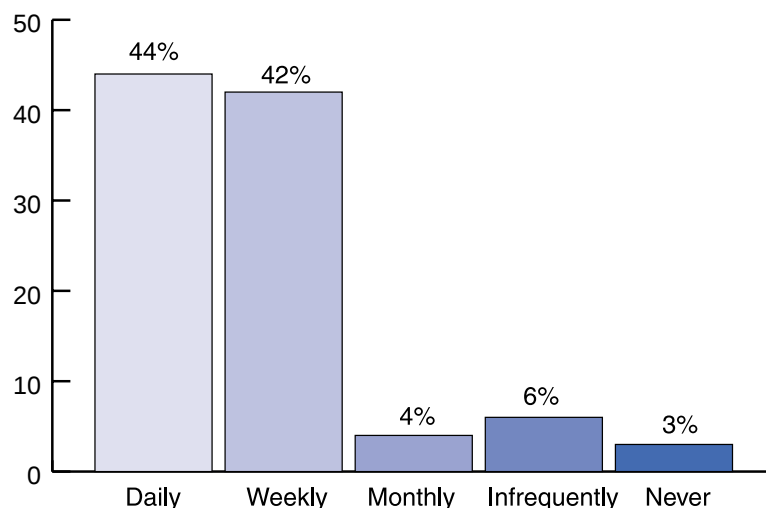
"Play a sport together"

More than half (58%) of Washington parents play a sport with their family at least weekly, and one in 10 parents (11%) play sports daily with their children. Younger parents and parents with elementary-aged children (6 to 12) are more likely to play sports as a family more frequently.

"Visit family or friends together"

Visiting family or friends isn't a daily activity with many Washington parents (8%), but nearly half of all parents say their family visits others on a weekly basis (45%). Another one-third (34%) of parents go visiting as a family at least once a month. Parents who have been married less than 10 years are more likely to make weekly visits to family and friends (55%), while parents who have been married longer than 11 years are more likely to make monthly

Watch television together



visits (43%). Among those who live in a rural community, there is a higher likelihood of making daily visits as a family (14%).

"Use the Internet together"

Even in the technology-rich Northwest, very few families use the Internet together on a regular basis. In fact, almost two-thirds of parents (64%) say they never use the Internet together as a family. Only 7 percent of parents say they use the Internet with their family on a daily basis, and about one in 10 parents (12%) surf the Web with their family at least once a week. Parents with a household income of more than \$75,000 are more likely to access the Internet weekly (25%), while families with incomes less than \$40,000 are more likely to never use the Internet together (74%).

"Go out to a concert or movie for fun together"

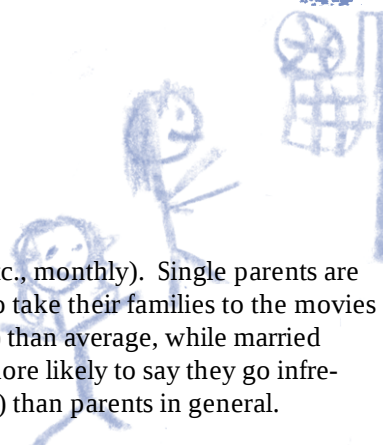
Going out to a movie or concert together as a family is an infrequent occasion among Washington parents. No parent reports doing this as a daily activity, and only 10 percent of parents say this is a weekly family activity. About half of all parents (51%) go out to a movie with their family at least once a month, and for one-quarter (25%) of families this is an infrequent activity. This activity seems to be slightly more popular among parents with teenagers (58% go

to a movie, etc., monthly). Single parents are more likely to take their families to the movies weekly (15%) than average, while married parents are more likely to say they go infrequently (29%) than parents in general.

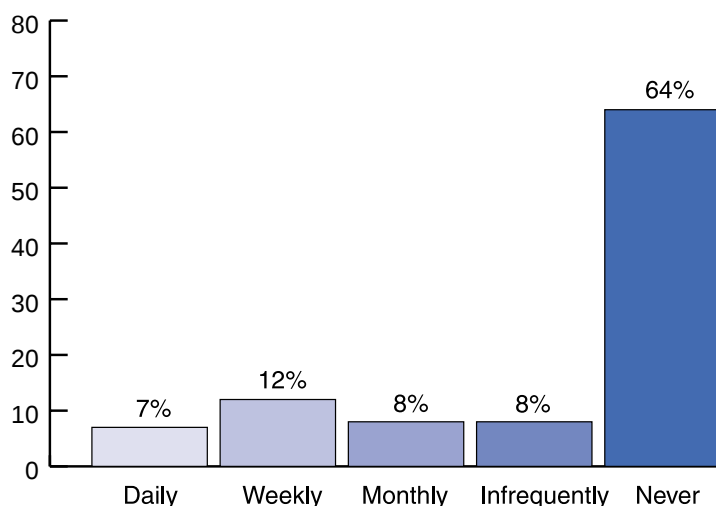


Key finding:

Even in the technology-rich Northwest, few families use the Internet together on a regular basis. In fact, almost two-thirds of parents say they never use the Internet together as a family.



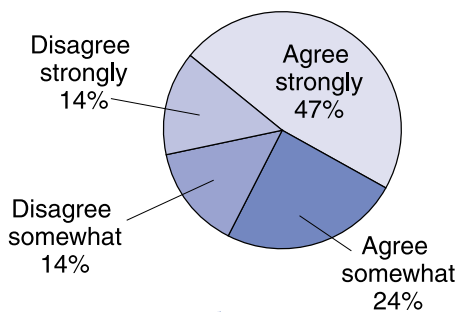
Use the Internet together



Making time for faith

Though Washington has a reputation for being a very “unchurched” region, Washington parents expressed a strong level of involvement and commitment to their religious beliefs. Nearly half of all parents (47%) agreed strongly with the statement, “Your personal religious beliefs play a very important part in how you raise your children.” Four in 10 parents (40%) report

“Your personal religious beliefs play a very important part in how you raise your children.”



Key finding:
Parents who are college graduates are more likely than other parents to agree that their religious beliefs influence how they raise their children.

attending a church service with their family on a weekly basis, with an additional 31 percent attending less frequently (13% say they attend monthly, 18% say they attend infrequently).

■ Married parents are significantly more likely to strongly agree with the idea that their religious beliefs play an important role in raising their children (54% strongly agree), while single parents are significantly less likely to agree (only 28% strongly agree).

■ Parents under age 30 are significantly more likely to disagree with the importance of religious beliefs (23% disagree somewhat, 21% disagree strongly) than the average parent.

■ College-graduate parents are more likely to agree that their religious beliefs influence how they raise their children (55% strongly agree), while parents with a high-school diploma are more likely to disagree (20% disagree somewhat, 19% disagree strongly) than parents in general.

■ Married parents are more likely to attend a church service on a weekly basis (44%) than average, while single parents and parents who have ever been divorced are less likely to attend regularly (29% of single parents and 28% of parents who have ever divorced) than the average parent is.

■ Parents with only one child are more likely to never attend a church service than average (38% never attend).

■ Fifty-five percent of two-parent households with only one parent employed full time attend a church service on a weekly

basis. This is a significantly higher rate than average.

■ Parents who have been married more than 11 years are also more likely to attend a church service weekly (50%).

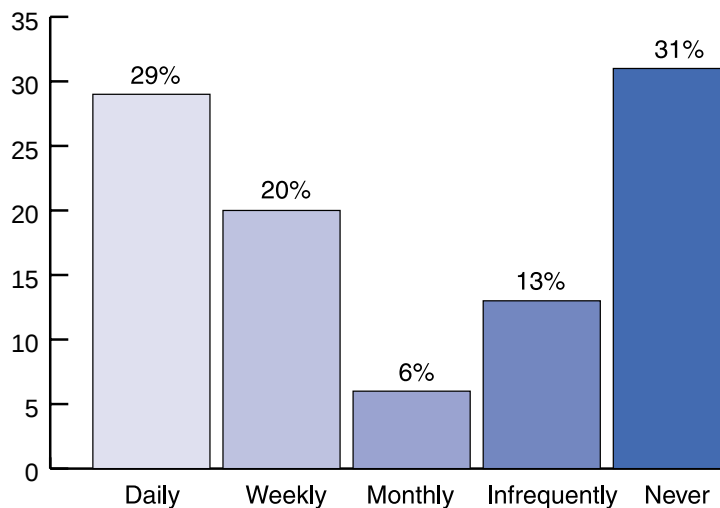
■ Nearly three-quarters (73%) of parents who think that church-planned family activities would help increase their family time together attend a church service on a weekly

Three in 10 Washington parents pray together as a family every day. About the same amount (31%) of parents never pray together as a family. Twenty percent of parents say they pray together at least once a week, and 13 percent say they pray together infrequently.

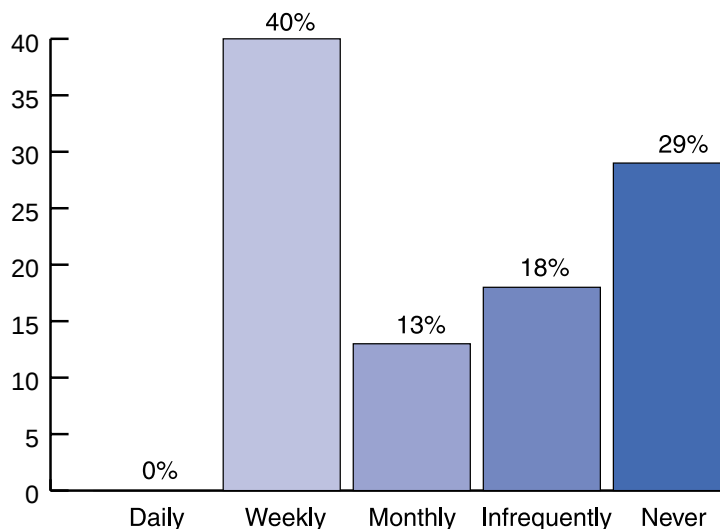
Approximately one in six (16%) of parents say they discuss their religious faith with their family on a daily basis. Almost three in 10 parents (36%) discuss their religious faith on a weekly basis, and just more than one in 10 (21%) parents say they discuss their religious faith less frequently (monthly, 20% infrequently). Two in 10 (21%) parents say they never discuss their religious faith with their family.

Parents discuss how their religious faith impacts the life choices a person makes with the same frequency as they discuss their faith in general. Fourteen percent say they discuss this relationship with their family on a daily basis, 29 percent discuss it weekly, 15 percent monthly, 15 percent infrequently, and 23 percent never discuss how religious faith impacts life choices with family.

Pray together



Attend a church service together



■ Reading the Bible together is a fairly infrequent activity among parents in Washington. Nearly half of parents (48%) say they never read the Bible together as a family. Only 8 percent read the Bible daily with their family, 18 percent say they read together weekly, 11 percent do this activity monthly, and 15 percent say they read the Bible together infrequently.

What's the problem with conflict?

Conflict is inevitable, according to Washington parents, but handling and resolving conflict is an important factor to the time families spend together. One-quarter of parents (25%) say they discuss family problems every day, and another 44 percent say they discuss problems as a family on a weekly basis. These times could actually be heading off larger problems, as parents report that they actually deal with conflict in their family on a less frequent basis.

Only one in 10 parents (12%) say they deal with conflict in their family daily. About three in 10 parents (31%) report that they deal with family conflict on a weekly basis. Conflict occurs most frequently among siblings and least frequently between spouses, according to Washington parents, with the frequency of parent-child conflict falling in between.

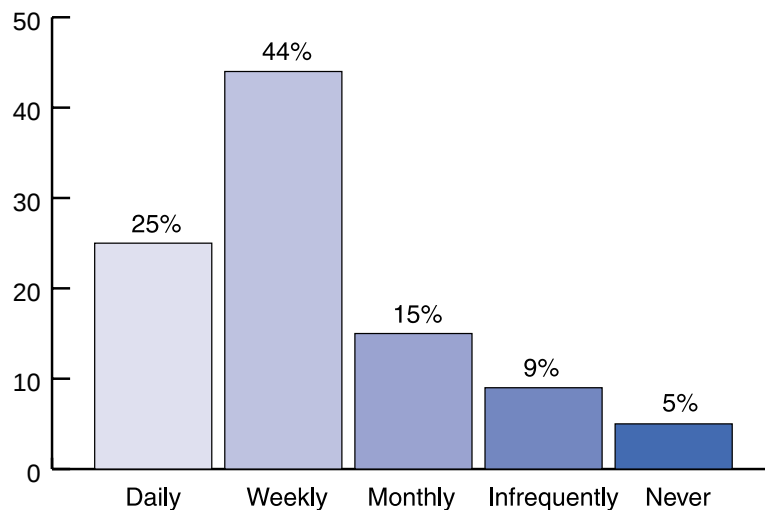
One-quarter of Washington parents (25%) experience frequent conflict between siblings (14% say conflict occurs “usually,” 11% say conflict occurs “almost always”).

About half as many parents (14%) say there is frequent conflict between parents and kids in their family (5% experience conflict “usually,” 9% experience conflict “almost always”). Fewer than one in 10 married parents (7%), however, report frequent conflict between spouses in the family.

When asked how capable their family is at resolving conflict, more than half of all parents (57%) rated their family as “very capable.” An additional 37 percent said they were “somewhat capable” of resolving conflict, and only two percent said they were either “not too capable” or “not at all capable.” There were significant differences between groups of parents who rated themselves very capable and somewhat capable.

■ Two-parent families are significantly more likely to say they are “very capable” of resolving conflict (61%), while single parents are less likely to say they are “very

Discuss family problems



capable” (40%) and more likely to rate themselves “somewhat capable” (51%) of resolving family conflict.

■ Parents with college degrees are more likely to say they are “very capable” of resolving family conflict (65%) than the average parent, as are parents who have yearly household incomes over \$40,000 (65% among parents in the \$40,000 to \$75,000 range, 67% of parents making more than \$75,000).

■ Families with two full-time employed parents are also significantly more likely to rate themselves very capable of resolving conflict (68%).

■ Two-thirds (64%) of parents who say they are absolutely committed to Christianity rate themselves “very capable” of resolving family conflict.

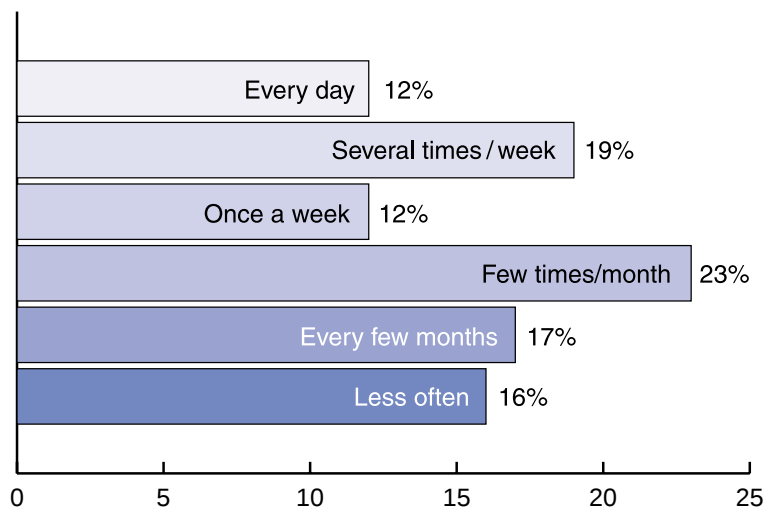
■ Conflict seems to be contagious. In families where parents reported a high frequency of conflict in one relationship (marital, siblings, or parent-child), there is a significantly higher frequency of conflict in the other relationships as well.



Key finding:

Conflict is contagious. In families where parents reported a high frequency of conflict in one relationship, there is a significantly higher frequency of conflict in the other relationships as well.

Conflict between family members



How can we increase family time?

Washington parents were asked to evaluate how helpful a number of factors would be to increasing their family time. In general, parents were open to any and all suggestions as more than half of all parents responded positively to every option.

The two factors that received the highest “helpfulness” ratings both had to do with accessibility. Parents want to know about places they can visit with their families, and they believe it would be helpful if entertainment options (sporting events, concerts, movies) were less expensive.

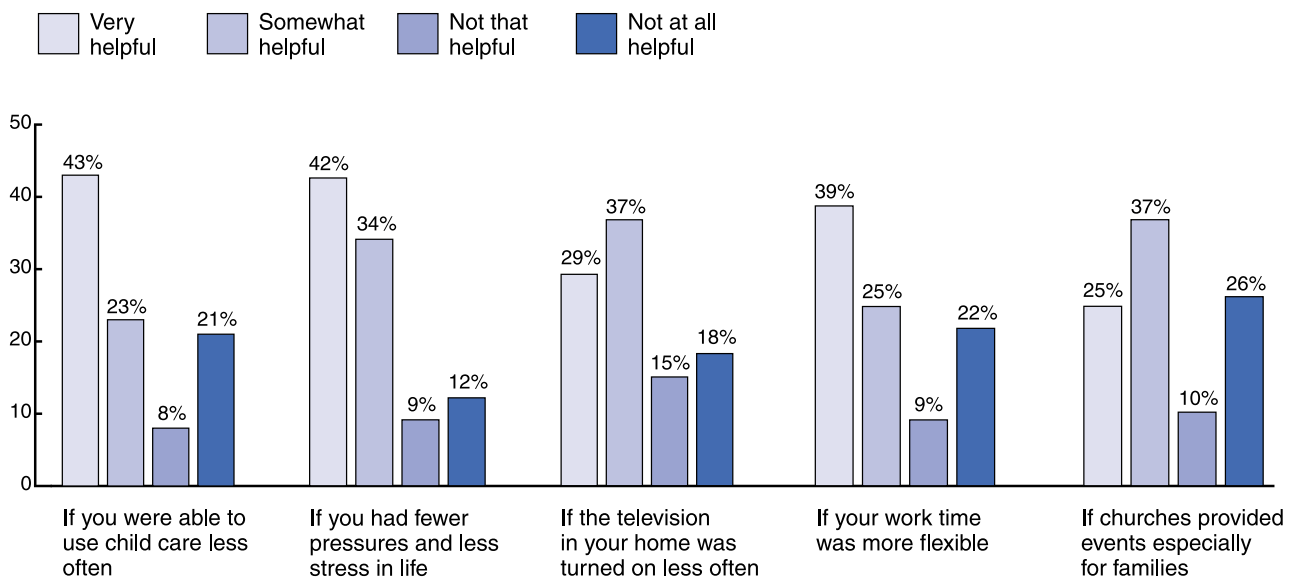
The circumstances that receive the next highest helpfulness ratings both reflect individual decisions on the part of parents. Parents believe that “having fewer pressures and less stress in life” and “placing a higher priority on spending time with your children” would help them spend more time with their family.

Parents then look to societal institutions for help in increasing the time they can spend with their family. Increased consideration of family needs by government, less need for child care, less television viewing, more flexible work time, and churches and schools providing events for the whole family are all things Washington parents believe would be helpful to increasing the time they get to spend with their children.

■ Parents with children under age 5 are especially looking for places they could visit with their family (44% said it would be very helpful, compared to 37% of parents in general).

■ Single parents are more likely to want cheaper entertainment options (58% of single parents said this would be very helpful, compared to 41% of married parents).

How helpful would this be in allowing more time for your family?



■ Parents with young children are also more likely to feel it would be very helpful to have fewer pressures and less stress in life (49%, compared to 42% of parents in general).

■ About seven of 10 parents (69%) said it would be very or somewhat helpful if they, themselves, put a higher priority on spending time with their kids. Parents who rated below average in the amount of time they spend with their children are especially likely to feel this would be helpful (41% of parents with below-average time with their kids, compared to 34% of parents in general).

■ Parents who have ever been divorced are significantly more likely to believe that if the government gave greater consideration to the needs of families when making decisions, it would be very helpful to increasing their family time (42% of ever-divorced parents, compared to 34% of parents in general).

■ Parents with children ages 6 to 12 are more likely to feel that having the television on less often would be very helpful to increasing their family time (49%).

■ Among those parents who utilize child care, thirty-something parents are more likely than parents, in general, to feel that

being able to use child care less often would increase their family time (53%, compared to 43% in general).

■ Two-thirds (64%) of parents feel it would be helpful to their family time if their work hours were more flexible. Parents under 30 are more likely to find this change very helpful than the average parent (53% of parents under 30, compared to a 39% average).

■ Parents who already spend an above-average amount of time interacting and conversing with their children are more likely to think that churches and schools providing activities for the whole family would be very helpful to increasing their family time.

Since parents seem to be open to just about any opportunity to spend more time with their family, yet not one of these options is clearly more helpful than another, it could be that a little deliberate effort on everyone's part—parents, employers, churches, schools, and government—could yield increases in the quantity and quality of time parents spend with their children. If building a community that is more supportive of parents' efforts to raise their children is everyone's goal, achieving that goal is just a matter of time.

It's
just a
matter
of time...





Family Time Recommendations



Make time for family

Time is to strong family relationships as oxygen is to people—it's necessary for survival, for stability, and for growth.

A person wouldn't last long if he only got to breathe for 15 minutes a day, even if those breaths were all deep, full breaths of pure oxygen. Similarly, children will miss out on some valuable nutrients—security, love, challenge, friendship, responsibility, laughter, memories—if they do not receive regular exposure to those who know them best, care most for them, and are most invested in their well-being.

A little deliberate effort on everyone's part—parents, employers, churches, schools, and government—could yield increases in the quantity and quality of time parents spend with their children. If building a community that is more supportive of parents' efforts to raise their children is everyone's goal, achieving that goal is just a matter of time.

"If you were to place a higher priority on spending time with your children ..."

Most businesses today have a corporate mission statement—a public declaration that states their reason for existence. What is your family mission statement? What do you want to accomplish as a parent and as a family? Talk about it. Write it down. Set your priorities by it.

"If you had fewer pressures and less stress in your life ..."

Marriage matters. Throughout this research, married parents were less plagued by the pressures of money, employment, time, and conflict. While marriage is not effortless nor a panacea, it does offer many benefits to parents and children and should be affirmed and pro-

moted by society's institutions as the preferred foundation for parenting.

"If sporting event, concerts, and movies were less expensive ..."

Enhancing family time is about people, not prestige. If your family enjoys sports, take a picnic to the local park and watch a community league game rather than spending a lot of money for a professional game. Go to a matinee, rent a movie, or check a video out from the library. Seek out local performing groups. Your family memories may be more unique than the ones everyone sees on the nightly news.

"If the television in your home was turned on less often ..."

Try it for an evening, or even for an hour! The more parents talk with their children, the more similar interests they discover.

"If your work time was more flexible ..."

As employers, recognize that your employees are husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, and children even when they are at work. Reflect that understanding in your personnel policies and practices. Explore options for flexible work time and place. Offer resources to your employees that address family issues they may be confronting.

"If churches provided events especially for families ..."

Educate parents about the ups and downs and "how tos" of parenting. Offer opportunities for

the family to worship and play and learn together in the same room. Support families in times of economic or emotional crisis as an extended family.

“If public officials spent more time considering the needs of families in their decisions...”

Convey in word and action the idea that marriage and parenting are generally positive relationships, and that society needs these relationships to flourish for its own success. Do nothing to compromise the integrity of these

relationships, but provide for their protection and opportunity to succeed.

“If schools offered weekend field trips for families...”

OK, so this specific idea wasn't very popular among parents. But schools do play an integral role in a family's life. Encourage students to build strong relationships with their parents by word and action. Respect and foster a parent's role as their child's primary educator and advocate.





Methodology

Barna Research Group, Ltd. of Ventura, Calif., was commissioned to conduct this research. Their responsibilities included survey design and all data collection and statistical analysis related to the original research presented in this report. Their methodology is reported as follows:

“The research was conducted among adults living in the state of Washington who have children under the age of 18 currently living in their household. The survey benefited from very high cooperation rates (91%), which increases the confidence we can have that the data accurately reflect the population studied. The final incidence of the project was 39 percent, indicating that four out of 10 Washington residents have children under the age of 18 years old living in their household.

The results of the research are accurate to within 4.5 percentage points at the 95-percent confidence level. That means that if we were to repeat this study 100 times, in 95 of those trials we can expect that the results would fall within plus or minus four and one-half percentage points of what we discovered in this study.

The survey averaged 19 minutes. Interviews were conducted by telephone between June 2 and June 13, 1998. Calling hours were 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. weekdays, and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the weekends. Respondents were not given any material incentives for their participation in the research.

The final data were weighted in order to balance the findings to population norms established through the U.S. Census Bureau. The research sample was stratified by area code, according to the state's population distribution.”

This report was created using material from the cross-tabulated data and report of findings provided by Barna Research Group, Ltd. Percentages that do not add to 100 percent are due to rounding or non-responses from participants on that question.



About Washington Family Council

Washington Family Council (WFC) is a non-profit communication, research and education organization working to strengthen the environment for family through informed citizenship and improved public policy. WFC is uniquely positioned to multiply its efforts by networking with various leaders in the state who can help change hearts and attitudes about the importance of family. The following are four areas in which WFC has strategically determined to work with leaders to improve family life in Washington.

Community

Networking people together and building bridges between people in our state is an essential part of WFC's work. In WFC's constituent services department, staff members are dedicated to connecting people with the resources, information and organizations they need to handle family or community concerns. WFC has also started Marriage Builders, which seeks to bring local-level action and concern to strengthening marriages. WFC also joins and serves churches and service organizations that seek opportunities to help people in times of crisis and economic hardship.

Public Policy

Although public policy cannot solve society's ills, it can uphold principles that make a society stronger. WFC encourages policy makers to choose to make family the primary consideration in their decisions. The *Family Issues Guide* is a tool WFC creates and distributes to all state legislators. It includes case studies, practical analysis and talking points on family-related issues. WFC is frequently asked to testify in Olympia and assist lawmakers on family-related legislation.

Media

Mass media has the ability to highlight and shape the issues of the day. But the treatment given to those issues is often not one that resonates with many families we work with. Through letters to various editors, editorials, speaking to a plethora of reporters and producing public-service announcements, WFC is able to send a message that does ring true to families. WFC also introduces the media to news stories by writing its own articles about issues often missed by the mainstream press. By producing articles for *Washington Citizen*, issuing press releases to the media and highlighting vital news in the *Community Impact Bulletin*, WFC is informing families about important issues.

Business

Employers have the opportunity to empower employees to strengthen their families, while improving business productivity. This is the message WFC Executive Director Jeff Kemp has brought to more than 1500 Rotarians and other business leaders around the state. Kemp urges business people to help employees make family a priority, asking them to lead by example. WFC also provides packets of information, showing how business leaders in small and large corporations can implement family-friendly policies in the workplace.

For more information about the 1998 Family Time Report, our 1997 Washington Marriage Report, or other WFC projects, please contact WFC.

Washington Family Council
P.O. Box 40584
Bellevue, WA 98015
(425) 637-5959, (425) 637-5955 (fax)
1-888-WA FAMILY
wfcinfo@wafamily.org

It's
just a
matter
of time...

