



Voices of Child Health in Chicago REPORT

Volume 1 Number 9
September 2019

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

Stress, drug abuse and depression were the top health problems facing Chicago youth identified by Chicago adults in 2018–19.

Issues related to mental health were considered “big problems” by Chicago adults again this year, with stress moving to number one on the list up from number four last year.

More respondents considered smoking and tobacco a “big problem” this year (57%), up from 53% last year.



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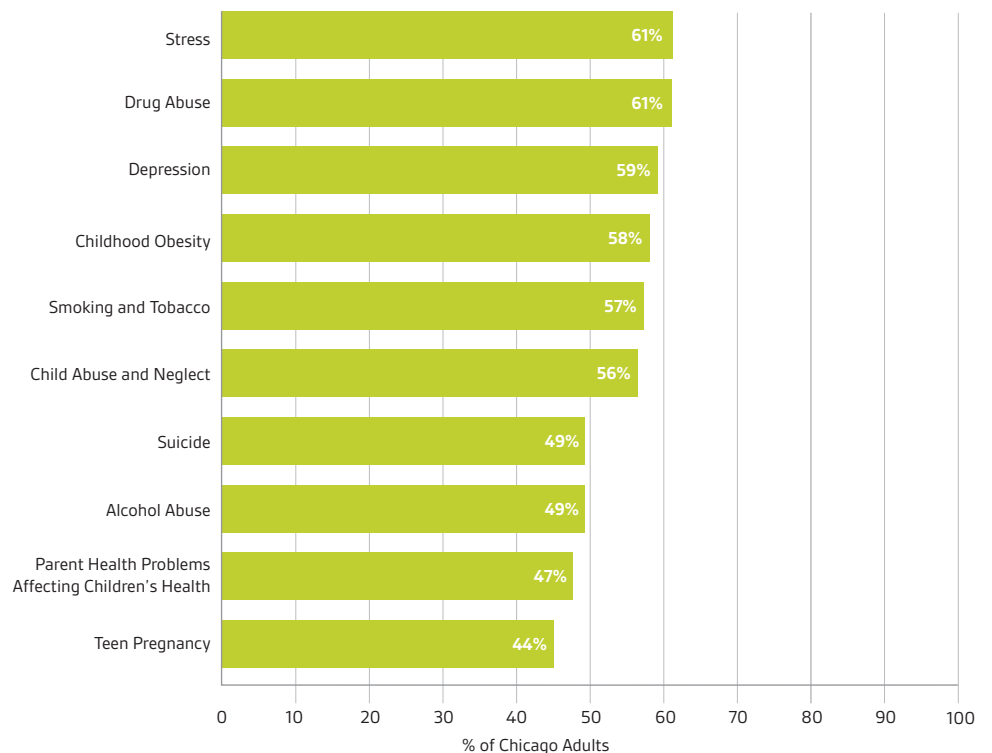


Chicago Adults Identify the Top 10 Health Problems Facing Chicago Youth 2018–2019

Last year, the first Voices of Child Health in Chicago report covered the “Top 10” health problems facing Chicago youth as identified by Chicago adults. This year, we asked adults across the city about this topic again, enabling us to explore trends in attitudes about child and adolescent health issues over time. Many of the Top 10 health problems remained the same from 2017–18 to 2018–19, but there were some changes.

Researchers at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago teamed up with the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) on the 2018–19 Healthy Chicago Survey, Jr. to ask adults from all 77 community areas in Chicago which health problems they considered to be “big problems” for children and adolescents in Chicago (Figure 1). To learn more about the Top 10 health problems, visit luriechildrens.org/Top10HealthProblems2019.

Figure 1. Top 10 health problems facing children and adolescents in Chicago, reported by Chicago adults



Here are the **top 10** health problems facing Chicago youth in 2018–2019, rated by Chicago adults

1 STRESS – 61%

Stress was the top youth health concern identified by Chicago adults. Parents with children living in the household were more likely to consider stress a big problem for youth (66%) compared with adults without children in the home (60%). Stress moved up several spots on the Top 10 list from last year, when it was ranked fourth (Figure 2). This may indicate a growing concern among adults, and parents in particular, about mental health in children and adolescents.

A 2018 report from the American Psychological Association found that Gen Z youth (young people between the ages of 15–21) were more likely than other generations to report feeling stressed due to issues in the national news such as mass shootings, rise in suicide rates, global warming, separation and deportation of immigrant and migrant families, and widespread sexual harassment and assault reports.¹

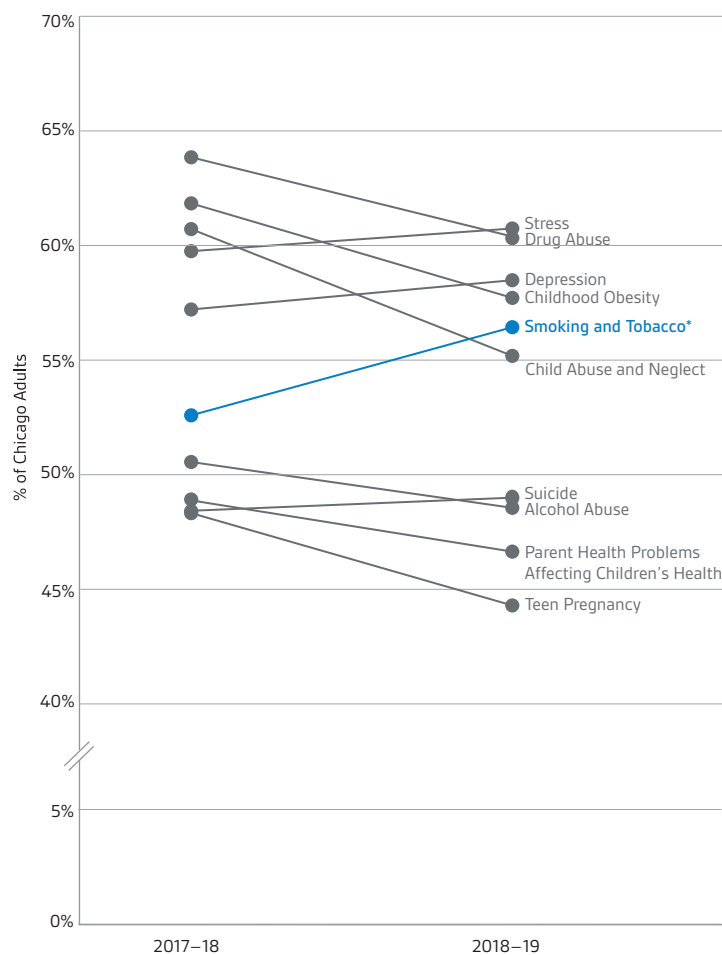
2 DRUG ABUSE – 61%

Drug abuse was the second most common concern about child and adolescent health in Chicago. Among parents with children under 18 years old in the household, 64% considered drug abuse a big problem facing Chicago youth.

The 2018 Illinois Youth Survey (IYS) found that marijuana was the most commonly used drug among Chicago students, with 17% of 8th graders, 29% of 10th graders, and 40% of 12th graders in Chicago reporting using marijuana in the last year. Among Chicago 12th graders, 43% said it would be “very easy” for them to get marijuana. Marijuana was more likely to be very easy to get than alcohol (25%), cigarettes (28%) or prescription drugs (11%). Additionally, 13% of Chicago 12th graders reported that they had driven a car or other vehicle when they had been using marijuana.²

Local and national helplines are available for individuals who may have a substance use disorder — in Chicago (1-833-2-FIND-HELP) and across the U.S. (1-800-662-HELP).

Figure 2. Top 10 health concerns from 2017–18 and 2018–19



*Smoking and Tobacco was the only health concern that had a statistically significant increase in proportion from 2017–18 to 2018–19.

3 DEPRESSION – 59%

The third most commonly identified big health problem for kids in the city was depression. Among parents, younger parents (18–29 years old) were more likely to be concerned about depression for youth (70%) than parents 30–44 years old (63%) and those 45 years and older (49%).

The 2018 IYS data support the public’s concerns. Among Chicago students in 2018, 39% of 8th graders, 32% of 10th graders and 32% of 12th graders reported symptoms of depression such as feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row so that they stopped doing some usual activities.²

4 CHILDHOOD OBESITY – 58%

Childhood obesity was the fourth most common health concern for youth in Chicago. Parents with children in the household (59%) and adults without children in the household (58%) were equally likely to consider this a big problem.

In Chicago, the 2018 IYS data show that 32% of 8th graders self-reported being overweight or obese, along with 28% of 10th graders and 33% of 12th graders.² Across the state of Illinois, 25% of 8th graders, 26% of 10th graders and 26% of 12th graders were overweight or obese.³

A 2015–16 local survey of Chicagoans in neighborhoods on the south and southwest sides of the city, conducted by the Sinai Urban Health Institute, found that over half of children 2–3 years old were obese (55%).⁴ They also found that 71% of children 2–5 years old had at least one hour of physical activity per day; however, only 39% of children 6–12 years old had at least one hour of physical activity per day.⁵

5 SMOKING AND TOBACCO – 57%

The fifth most common health problem was smoking and tobacco, including e-cigarettes. Chicago adults were more concerned about this issue this year compared to last year, when only 53% of adults considered it a big problem (see Figure 2). Younger adults were more likely to consider this a big problem (62%) than adults who were between 30–44 years old and those who were 45 years and older (both 55%).

In 2018, 23% of Chicago 12th graders reported using any tobacco or vaping products (e.g., e-cigarettes) over the previous 30 days compared with 16% in 2016 and 18% in 2014.^{2,6,7} Additionally, in 2018, 62% of Chicago 12th graders thought that smoking one or more packs of cigarettes per day put people at “great risk” of harming themselves, whereas only 19% thought that using e-cigarettes or other vaping products put people at “great risk.” This suggests that young people may underestimate the risks posed by e-cigarette use. Research has shown that e-cigarette use significantly increases adolescents’ risk of subsequent cigarette smoking.^{8,9}

6 CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT – 56%

Child abuse and neglect was sixth on the list, with over half of adults considering child abuse and neglect a big problem for child and adolescent health in Chicago. Parents with children in the household were more likely to consider child abuse and neglect a big problem (60%) than adults without children in the household (54%) (Figure 3).

In Illinois, child deaths due to abuse and neglect are tracked by the Department of Children and Family Services. In 2019, there have been 13 child deaths due to abuse and 61 child deaths due to neglect to date, although some investigations are ongoing.¹⁰

Child abuse and neglect helplines are available for individuals in Illinois (1-800-25-ABUSE) and outside of Illinois (1-800-4-A-CHILD).

7 SUICIDE – 49%

Suicide among children and teens was another major health concern for Chicago adults. Parents of at least one older child (11+ years old) were more likely to be concerned about this issue (60%) than parents of only young children (0–5 years old; 46%). Additionally, among younger parents (18–29 years old), 56% considered suicide a big problem, compared with 50% of parents 30–44 years old, and 44% of parents 45 years and older.

Results from the 2018 Illinois Youth Survey indicated that 14% of Chicago 10th graders and 8% of Chicago 12th graders said they had seriously considered suicide in the last year.² Between 2008 and 2015, there was an increase in hospitalizations in children’s hospitals for suicidal ideation and suicide attempts.¹¹

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides 24-hour support for individuals dealing with suicide or suicidal thoughts over the phone (1-800-273-TALK) or online (suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat) and the Crisis Text Line serves anyone in any type of crisis (text HOME to 741741).

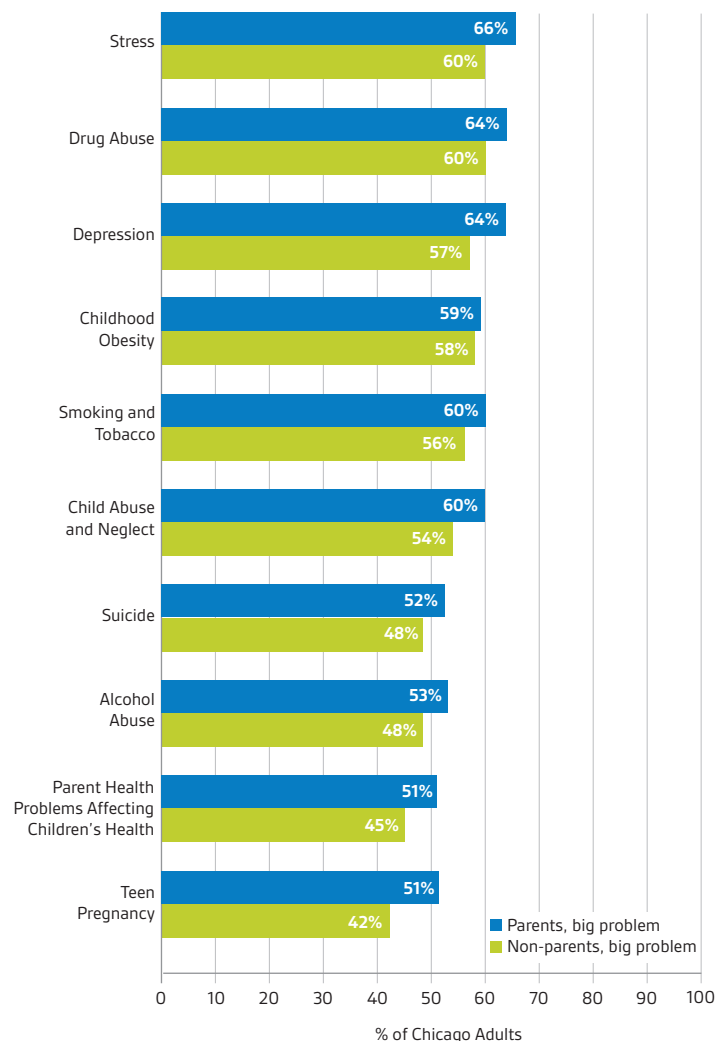
8 ALCOHOL ABUSE – 49%

The eighth most common big health problem for kids in Chicago identified by adults was alcohol abuse.

In 2018, 39% of Chicago 8th graders, 42% of 10th graders and 51% of 12th graders reported using alcohol in the past year. Approximately half of students in each grade reported that their parents had talked to them about not using alcohol, and between 74–81% of students in each grade said their parents had clear rules about alcohol and drug use.² Certain events can increase the likelihood of youth alcohol abuse. For example, in Chicago, there is a surge in adolescent alcohol-related emergency department visits during the Lollapalooza music festival weekend compared with an average weekend.¹²

The Substance Use and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has a national helpline for individuals and family members facing substance use disorders and mental health issues (1-800-662-HELP).

Figure 3. Proportions of parents with children in the household and adults without children in the household (non-parents) who rated each issue as a “big problem” facing kids in Chicago



NOTE. The difference in proportions for parents and non-parents was not statistically significant for drug abuse, childhood obesity, smoking and tobacco, and suicide.

9 PARENTS' HEALTH PROBLEMS AFFECTING CHILDREN'S HEALTH – 47%

Parents' health problems affecting children's health was another major concern. Adults who reported being in worse health themselves were more likely to consider this a big problem (50%) than adults who reported being in better health (43%).

One way in which parent health may affect children's health is when a parent has a chronic illness. Parental chronic illness can undermine family stability, and children may experience greater psychological and social challenges than other children their age. It can be helpful for parents with chronic illness to maintain daily family routines.¹³

10 TEEN PREGNANCY – 44%

The tenth most common concern that Chicago adults identified for youth in Chicago was teen pregnancy. Among parents with at least one older child (11+ years old), 57% considered this a big problem. Additionally, concern about this issue was greater among parents who had both male and female children (59%), compared with parents who had only female children (46%) and only male children (47%).

In 2017, there were 21.5 births per 1,000 females aged 15–19 years old in Chicago. The teen birth rate has been steadily declining over the past several years (down from 80.5 births per 1,000 females in 2000). However, the teen birth rate is higher among individuals facing high economic hardship (33.5 birth per 1,000 females age 15–19 years old).¹⁴ In the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 5% of Chicago public high school students reported that they had been pregnant or had gotten someone pregnant.¹⁵

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HOW THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED

This report presents findings from the 2018–19 Healthy Chicago Survey, Jr., administered by the Chicago Department of Public Health in collaboration with Lurie Children's. The survey was administered via phone interviews from December 2018 through May 2019. The sample consisted of 2,982 adults in Chicago, 740 of whom were the parent, step-parent or guardian (referred to as "parents" in this report) of at least one child under 18 years old living in the household. The survey cooperation rate was 12%. All analyses were conducted with statistical weighting so that they are representative of the adult population of the City of Chicago during the time period of data collection. For more information about health in your community, visit chicagohealthatlas.org.

**This report was developed and published
as a partnership:**



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*This project is supported in part by an anonymous foundation,
the Founders' Board of Ann & Robert H. Lurie
Children's Hospital of Chicago, and the
Chicago Department of Public Health.*