

Americans view child abuse and neglect as a serious public health problem

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A strong majority of Americans view child abuse and neglect as a public health problem in the United States, a sentiment shared across populations with 81% of Hispanics, 76% of non-Hispanic whites, 74% of African-Americans and 67% of Asians in agreement, according to a new survey commissioned by Research!America and the National Foundation to End Child Abuse and Neglect (EndCAN).

Survey results indicate [child abuse](#) and [neglect](#) impact households across the country. A majority of respondents say child abuse and neglect is a problem in their local communities—65% of Hispanics, 60% of African-Americans, 56% of non-Hispanic whites and 54% of Asians. In addition, 44% of non-Hispanic whites, 42% of Hispanics and 40% of African-Americans say they know someone who has experienced child abuse and neglect compared to 27% of Asians.

"The survey reveals that child abuse and neglect is all too pervasive and must be addressed as a public health problem," said Mary Woolley, president and CEO, Research!America. "Robust funding for research and public health programs is essential in order to ensure evidence-based strategies are being deployed to protect children and families at risk."

Respondents are significantly more likely to identify child abuse and neglect as a more serious problem than they believe others view it. Fifty-four percent of African-Americans, 51% of Hispanics, 43% of non-Hispanic whites and 34% of Asians say they personally consider child abuse and neglect a 'serious problem' in terms of severity in the United

States while only 39% of African-Americans, 38% of Hispanics, 29% of Asians and 27% of non-Hispanic whites think others view it as a serious problem.

"A significant percentage of respondents recognize the seriousness of child abuse and neglect but believe public awareness is lacking," added Woolley. "Raising awareness is often the first step in addressing public health challenges."

A large majority of all groups surveyed say it is important to increase federal funding for research on child abuse and neglect—91% of Hispanics, 85% of African-Americans, 84% of Asians and 80% of non-Hispanic whites. In terms of areas to prioritize in research, finding ways to prevent each form of child abuse and neglect was ranked highest among Asians and non-Hispanic whites (65%).

Sixty-one percent of African-Americans said identifying causes of abusive behavior and treatment to stop it was most important, while 62% of Hispanics said best treatments for victims of abuse and neglect should be the top priority in research.

According to a majority of all groups surveyed, child and family services bear the responsibility for ending child abuse, followed by state and federal governments, and law enforcement. And across populations, majorities agree that state and federal governments should fund research to better understand, prevent and intervene in child abuse and neglect. Non-profit organizations, the private sector (industry) and academia should also play a role, respondents say.

"These results demonstrate that the American public know that child abuse and neglect are significant health and public health problems for them and their communities and reinforces our belief that the time is ripe for a national effort to support research, training and prevention,"

said Richard Krugman, MD, Chair of the Board of the National Foundation to End Child Abuse and Neglect.

Asians (35%) are less likely to say health professionals are not effective in intervening, preventing, or stopping abuse and appropriately treating victims than non-Hispanic whites (50%), African-Americans (47%) and Hispanics (42%). An overwhelming majority of respondents say it is important for health care providers to identify families at elevated risk of child abuse and neglect—92% of Hispanics, 91% of non-Hispanic whites, 90% of Asians, 86% of African-Americans.

Child abuse and neglect contribute to depression, problems at school, violence, substance abuse and suicide according to respondents. Hispanics (67%), non-Hispanic whites (65%) and African-Americans (63%) say child abuse and neglect contribute 'a great deal' to depression than do Asians (54%). And more Hispanics (65%) say child abuse contribute 'a great deal' to problems at school than African-Americans (58%), non-Hispanic whites (57%) and Asians (50%).

Among other findings:

- A strong majority of all groups say it is very important for national and local systems to share data such as reports of child abuse—non-Hispanic Whites (74%), Hispanics and African-Americans (68%) and Asians (60%).
- Many view early education and family support services as 'very important' to decreasing the likelihood of [child abuse](#) and neglect—Hispanics (74%), African-Americans (66%) non-Hispanic Whites (65%), and Asians (62%).
- A large majority of respondents agree that people who are abused or neglected are likely to abuse or neglect their own children—non-Hispanic whites (73%), Hispanics (71%), Asians (70%), and African-Americans (68%).

- When asked if they believe that in order to raise and educate children properly, they need to be physically punished, 69% of Asians, 65% of Hispanics, 61% of non-Hispanic whites and 57% of African-Americans said no.

More information: www.researchamerica.org/childabusesurvey

Provided by Research!America

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