

Racial and ethnic disparities in swimming skills found across generations

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A parent survey from Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago published in the journal *Pediatrics* found intergenerational trends in swimming skills, with stark racial and ethnic differences.

Comfort with their own swimming skills was reported by fewer parents who identified as Latino (less than 25%) and Black (28%), compared to White parents (56%). Similarly, their children's swimming competence was affirmed by less than 33% of Black parents and less than 40% of Latino parents, compared to nearly 60% of White parents.

The survey also revealed that over 26% of Black parents and over 32% of Latino parents reported that they never learned to swim, compared to less than 4% of White parents. Likewise, fewer Black and Latino children had swimming lessons, compared to White children (46%, 47% and 72%, respectively).

"Our results underscore that racial and ethnic gaps in swimming competence run in families, and that children are less likely to swim when their parents can't swim," said senior author Michelle Macy, MD, MS, Emergency Medicine physician at Lurie Children's and Associate Professor of Pediatrics at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine.

"To improve swimming abilities in Black and Latino communities, we need to address swim comfort and skills for both parents and their children. Expanding access to pools and affordable, culturally tailored water safety programs are critically important strategies to help eliminate racial disparities in child drownings."

In swimming pools, Black children ages 10–14 years drown at rates over 7 times higher than White children, according to the latest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The survey used the Voices of Child Health in Chicago Parent Panel to ascertain parent and child experiences with swim lessons and swimming skills. Dr. Macy and colleagues analyzed responses from 1,283 parents of 2,148 [children](#) aged 4 years and older. Participants represented the

racial and ethnic diversity of Chicago.

More information: Michelle Macy et al, *Pediatrics* (2022).

Provided by Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago

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