



**Institute for  
Research on  
Poverty**

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

**Experiences, Characteristics, and Service Needs of Noncustodial Parents  
with Challenges Meeting Child Support Obligations:  
Evidence from ELEVATE Parents**

**2022–2024 Child Support Policy Research Agreement: Task 14**

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **I. Purpose**

Federal and state initiatives suggest growing interest in providing supportive services for noncustodial parents (NCPs) who face challenges in meeting their child support obligations. Yet, this population of parents is often underrepresented in large-scale surveys, and evidence about their employment history, economic resources, physical and mental health, system interactions, and service needs is limited. This report aims to provide a holistic and nuanced understanding of parent experiences, which may inform development of effective programming to support these parents and their families.

The report describes the characteristics of the nearly 1,000 parents who enrolled in the Empowering Lives through Education, Vocational Assessment, Training, and Employment (ELEVATE) program evaluation from January 2020 through December 2022. ELEVATE is intended to provide an array of services for noncustodial parents (NCPs) who are behind or at risk of falling behind on their child support obligations. Parents completed a baseline survey at the time of enrollment, and we present descriptive data from their survey responses to expand understanding about an important population of NCPs in Wisconsin and their potential service needs.

The baseline survey responses offer new and important insights into the lives and experiences of noncustodial parents experiencing economic precarity who may face challenges in consistently making their child support payments. Parents provided information about their employment history, perceived barriers to employment, economic well-being, physical and mental health and well-being, relationships with their children, connection to support services, and experiences with the child support system.

To provide context about this unique sample of NCPs, we first describe the ELEVATE program, including eligibility criteria and recruitment. We follow this with chapters focused on sample demographics, employment history and economic well-being, health and overall well-being, romantic relationships and co-parenting, relationships with children, and experiences with the child support program. Each chapter presents NCP responses about their relevant experiences in each domain including related service receipt.

## **II. What is ELEVATE?**

In 2012, Wisconsin, along with seven other states, received a National Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration Program (CSPED) grant. The objective of the grant was to identify effective strategies for improving reliable payment of child support by unemployed or underemployed noncustodial parents. The intervention was a child support-led program that included case management as well as enhanced child support, employment, and parenting services. In Wisconsin, Brown and Kenosha counties participated under the title “Supporting Parents Supporting Kids” (SPSK) from October 2013 to September 2017. The CSPED impact evaluation did not find evidence of increases in child support payments, compliance, or NCP employment, but did show promising results in several domains such as a decline in child support orders and improvements in the attitudes of noncustodial parents toward the child support system (Cancian, Meyer, & Wood, 2019).

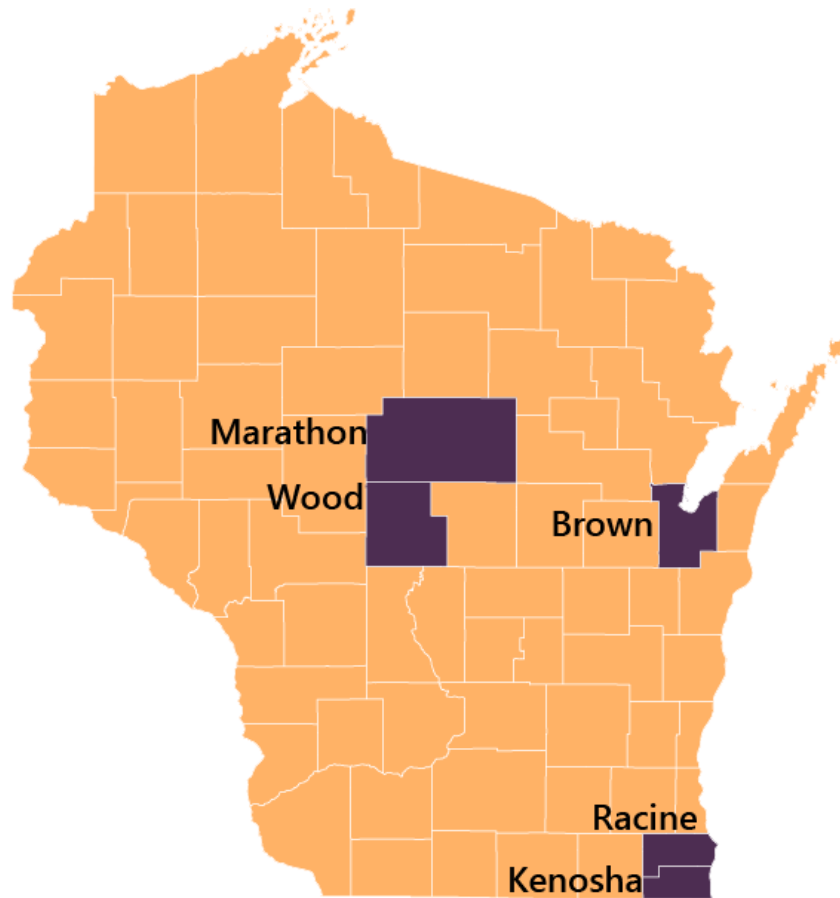
Given these results, Wisconsin was interested in learning more about the parents served by the child support system and exploring how new approaches like CSPED might be effectively implemented in other counties. Thus, the Wisconsin Department of Children & Families (DCF) pursued and received a waiver from the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE), as well as additional state budget funds, to establish the Five County Demonstration Project

(FCDP). FCDP was designed to continue to develop and run the programs in Brown and Kenosha counties and extend the model (renamed ELEVATE) to three additional Wisconsin counties (Marathon, Racine, and Wood), beginning in April 2019 through March 2024 (See Figure 1-1: ELEVATE Implementation Counties). For additional context on the five ELEVATE counties, including demographics as well as income and poverty measures, see Appendix B. ELEVATE retained the basic design of SPSK, providing case management, enhanced child support services, employment services, and parenting services to parents behind in their child support payments and facing employment difficulties. An impact and implementation evaluation of the program conducted by the Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP) at the University of Wisconsin–Madison (UW) is ongoing.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Additional information about the ELEVATE impact evaluation can be found in the June 30, 2021, memo “Identification and Matching Strategies for the FCDP Impact Evaluation.”

**Figure 1-1. ELEVATE Implementation Counties**



### **III. Who Are the NCPS In this Sample? ELEVATE Eligibility and Enrollment**

Noncustodial parents were eligible to enroll in ELEVATE if they had a current child support order, met established criteria that defined unemployment or underemployment, and demonstrated either nonpayment of current child support orders or being at risk of nonpayment.<sup>2</sup> For purposes of the evaluation, NCPs also had to be receiving child support services in one of the

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<sup>2</sup>The ELEVATE Policies and Procedures manual (Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, 2020) details the established criteria. Non-payment or risk of non-payment is defined as the following: “(a) the parent paid less than 50% of the ordered amount for at least 1 month (including those that have made no payments for 1 month) or (b) they have made zero payments since order was entered or modified.” Unemployment or underemployment is defined as a self-report of “(a) being unemployed at the time their court order is entered or modified, or (b) that being unemployed or underemployed causes them to be unable to pay or puts them at risk of being unable to pay, and/or (c) that improving their employment situation could help improve their compliance with their child support order.” For more information about enrollment criteria, see Vogel et al., 2021.



five ELEVATE counties (or live close enough to access ELEVATE services), over 18 years old, fluent in English, have a valid SSN, and be medically able to work (i.e., not currently receiving disability benefits). Incarcerated parents were not eligible to enroll in the ELEVATE evaluation.

ELEVATE staff identified potential participants based on the established eligibility criteria through standard reports from the Kids Information Data System (KIDS) and Web Intelligence (WebI) systems, case management contacts, referrals from other programs, or self-referrals from interested NCPs. Enrollment began in January 2020 but was paused on March 18, 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting UW–Madison temporary restriction on face-to-face research, as well as the potential difficulty for counties to provide a full set of services. Enrollment resumed on July 7, 2020, after discussions with each participating county and verification of their ability to resume services and study enrollments.

A total of 992 noncustodial parents enrolled in ELEVATE over the course of the evaluation enrollment period, which ended in December 2022.<sup>3</sup> At the time of their enrollment, parents completed a baseline survey, which serves as the data source for this report. Additional information about the fielding of the baseline survey, including administration processes and procedures and the instrument itself, can be found in the December 18, 2020, memo to DCF titled “Baseline Survey Administration Report” submitted under Task 14 of the 2018–2020 Child Support Policy Research Agreement.

#### **IV. Roadmap for this Report**

In this report, we present data from the full sample, including all parents who enrolled in the evaluation and completed the baseline survey. The report provides information on the

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<sup>3</sup>The total number of responses for items vary due to skip patterns in the survey instrument, nonresponse from parents, and changes to the instrument during administration. The sample size for specific items is available in tables and often in figure notes.

following aspects of noncustodial parents' lives and experiences: demographics (Chapter 2), employment history and economic well-being (Chapter 3), health and overall well-being (Chapter 4), romantic relationships and co-parenting (Chapter 5), parenting and families (Chapter 6), and interaction with the child support program (Chapter 7). We refer to the parents in our sample interchangeably as parents, respondents, and NCPs. We present descriptive statistics based on parents' survey responses with the goal of providing insight into strengths, challenges, and service needs of a population of parents who are often underrepresented in many large-scale surveys and current research.

## **CHAPTER 2: SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS**

In this chapter, we describe the demographics of the sample for this report (i.e., ELEVATE evaluation participants), including their county of service, gender, age, race/ethnicity, educational attainment, and current marital status (see Figure 2-1 and Appendix Table 1). These characteristics provide an important basis for understanding the overall sample of parents in this report. We note that the information from parent respondents who enrolled in ELEVATE is one of the most comprehensive data sources about this population of parents, but that these parents are likely not representative of all NCPs in Wisconsin nor of all NCPs behind on child support. Where relevant, we note how the demographics of our sample compare to the overall population of Wisconsin.

**Gender:** Though the majority of the parents were men (80.5%), nearly one-fifth (19.5%) were women. Compared to other samples of NCPs, this sample offers a relatively high proportion of women. In CSPED, for example, 86.6% of the Wisconsin sample was male. The proportion of female NCPs varied by county of enrollment, ranging from 6.7% to 34.2% of respondents.

**Age:** On average, NCPs were 35.3 years-old at the time of enrollment. Almost half (47%) of NCP respondents were between 30 and 39 years old. Just under one-quarter (24.2%) were under 30, and 28.7% were 40 or older. Few were under 25 (6.7%).

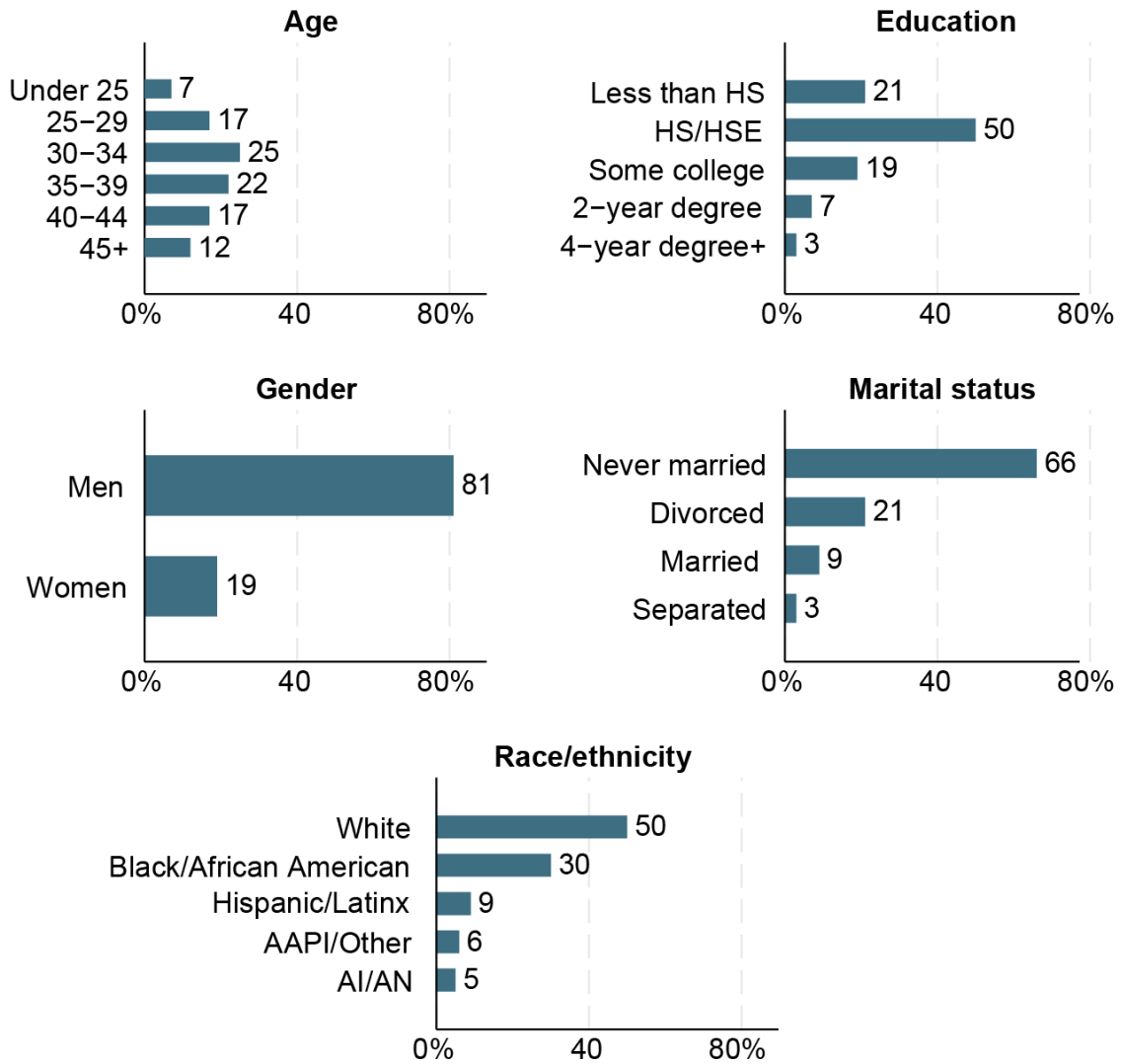
**Race/Ethnicity:** Half of the parents in the sample identified as White; 30.0% identified as Black or African-American; 9.1% identified as Hispanic or Latinx of any race; 5.1% identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native; 2.1% identified as Asian; and 1.7% identified as Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. An additional 1.9% of parents identified as some other race or did not provide their race or ethnicity; 6.5% of parents reported multiple races or ethnicities. Black or African-American, Hispanic or Latinx, American Indian or Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander parents were disproportionately represented in this sample compared to the overall Wisconsin population in 2020 of which 6.6% were Black or African-American, 7.6% were Hispanic or Latinx, 1.2% were American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 0.1% were Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022).

**Education:** Half of the NCPs in the sample had at most a high school degree or equivalent (50.2%), and one-fifth had not completed a high school degree (21.4%). Another one-fifth (18.6%) attended some college but had not completed a post-secondary degree, and 9.8% attained a two- or four-year college degree.

**Marital Status:** A substantial majority of NCPs (66.3%) had never been married. One-fifth (21.2%) were divorced, and an additional 3.3% reported being currently separated. At the time of enrollment, 8.8% of respondents were married.

**County:** Parents in the sample were fairly evenly spread across the five counties that provided ELEVATE services, although enrollment targets varied across counties based on population. Ultimately, 26.5% of the sample was from Marathon County, 22.3% from Brown County, 19.4% from Racine County, 17.0% from Kenosha County, and 14.8% from Wood County.

**Figure 2-1: Demographic Profile of Noncustodial Parents at Enrollment into ELEVATE Evaluation**



N=992

Source: Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

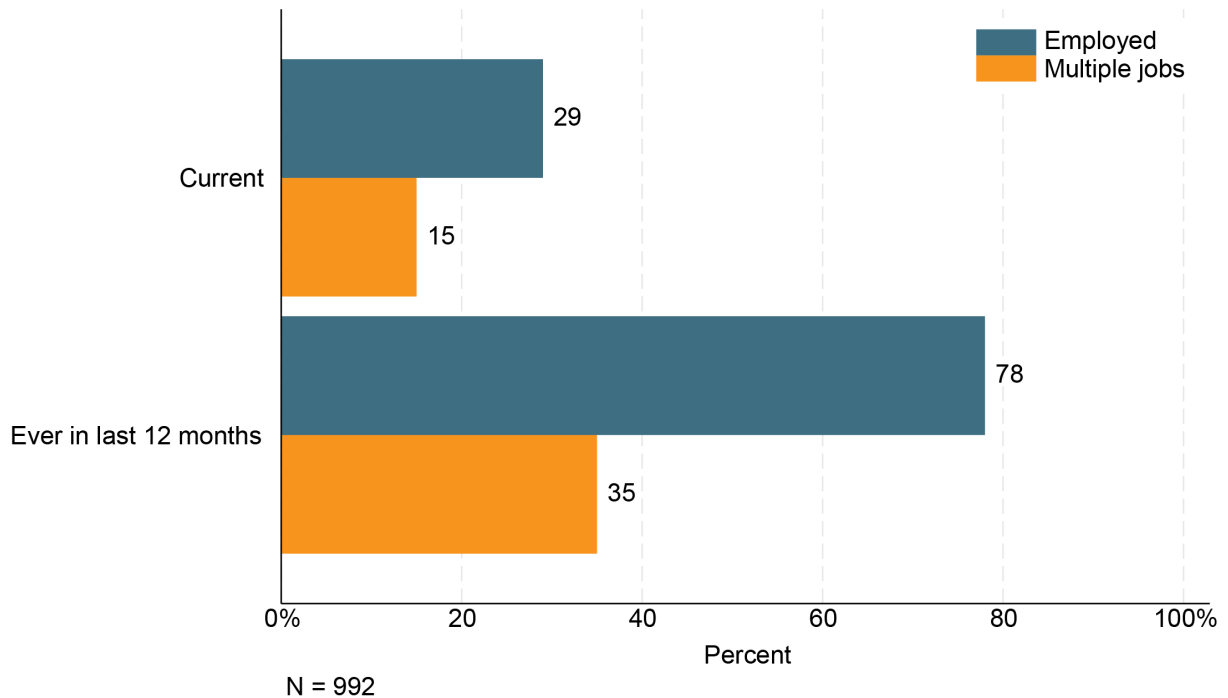
## CHAPTER 3: EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

### I. Employment

As shown in Figure 3-1 (and Appendix Table 2), most respondents (77.6%) had been employed at some point in the 12 months prior to completing the survey, including 28.8% who

were employed at the time of the survey. Around half of currently employed respondents (14.5% of all respondents) were working multiple jobs, and 34.6% of NCPs reported working multiple concurrent jobs at some point in the last 12 months.

**Figure 3-1: Employment in the Last 12 Months**



**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

Table 3-1 provides information about NCPs' reported job characteristics and what kinds of benefits they received in the 12 months prior to survey completion. On average, across the whole sample, parents held 1.27 jobs in the last 12 months. Most NCPs (59.1%) described having employment in the last 12 months that was regular part-time or full-time employment; 30.2% of NCPs reported informal, under-the-table employment or gig work; and 19.1% worked for a temporary or staffing agency or as a seasonal employee. Approximately 2.2% of NCPs reported working as day laborers, and 1.9% reported being self-employed sometime in the last 12 months.

The 283 respondents who were currently employed at the time of the survey reported working an average of 32.76 hours per week across all their current jobs. Half of currently employed NCPs reported working full-time (more than 35 hours per week), while the other half worked part-time. Approximately 8.8% of respondents reported working less than 10 hours per week. Of the 746 respondents who reported having had employment in the last 12 months and provided approximate start and end dates for their employment, the average job tenure was a little over two years (24.1 months).

Because data were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, we also asked parents if their employment was impacted by COVID-19. Over a quarter of respondents (27%) said their employer closed completely, cut hours, or temporarily or permanently laid them off due to COVID-19.

We also asked about pay and benefits from employment. The average hourly rate for the 742 NCPs who had been employed in the last 12 months and provided information about their pay rate was \$15.70, and the median hourly pay rate was \$15.64. In terms of benefits, of the 740 NCPs who had been employed and knew whether any of their jobs provided paid time off, 50.3% said they had paid time off, either for vacation or illness, through any of the jobs they had, representing 37.5% of the full sample of parents. Similarly, 54.1% of the same 740 parents had health insurance through a Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) or Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) plan available to them, representing 40.3% of the full sample.

**Table 3-1 Employment Types, Hours, Pay, and Benefits in the Last 12 Months**

	<i>Freq/N</i>	<i>Mean/Percent</i>
<b>Employment history in the last 12 months</b>		
Number of jobs in the last 12 months	992	1.27
Employment types in the last 12 months		
Self-employment in the last 12 months	992	1.9%
Informal/gig/under-the-table employment in the last 12 months	992	30.2%
Temp/staffing agency/ seasonal employment in the last 12 months	992	19.1%
Day laborer employment in the last 12 months	992	2.2%
Part-time or full-time employment	992	59.1%
Number of hours worked per week across all current jobs	283	32.76
Number of hours worked per week across all current jobs (category)	283	
<10 hours per week	25	8.8%
11–34 hours	116	41.0%
35+ hours	142	50.2%
Number of hours worked per week per job (last 12 months)	762	36.5
Job duration in the last 12 months (in months)	746	24.1
Employment impacted by COVID	992	27.0%
<b>Pay/benefits in the last 12 months</b>		
Hourly pay rate in the last 12 months	742	\$15.70
Median hourly pay rate in the last 12 months	742	\$15.64
Paid time off offered through any job	740	50.3%
Paid time off offered through any job (full sample)	992	37.5%
Health insurance offered through any job	740	54.1%
Health insurance offered through any job (full sample)	992	40.3%

**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

As shown in Table 3-2, roughly two-fifths (38.1%) of all respondents received services designed to help them gain employment in the 12 months prior to their engagement with ELEVATE services. The most common employment-related service NCPs reported receiving was a connection to an employer about a specific job opening (16.1% of respondents). Approximately 9.3% of NCPs received transportation assistance, where they either received a ride to or from work from a program staff member or received a bus pass or gas card, and 8.3% participated in a training program for a specific job, trade, or occupation. Only a small proportion

(2.3%) reported subsidized employment, and no respondents reported receiving follow-up services after they got a job (i.e., having a service provider check in with them about how things were going at work).

**Table 3-2 Employment Services in the Last 12 Months**

	<i>Freq/N</i>	<i>Mean/Percent</i>
Received any employment services	992	38.1%
Connected with employer	990	16.1%
Transportation assistance	991	9.3%
Employment training	989	8.3%
Subsidized employment	990	2.3%
On-the-job follow-up	990	0.0%

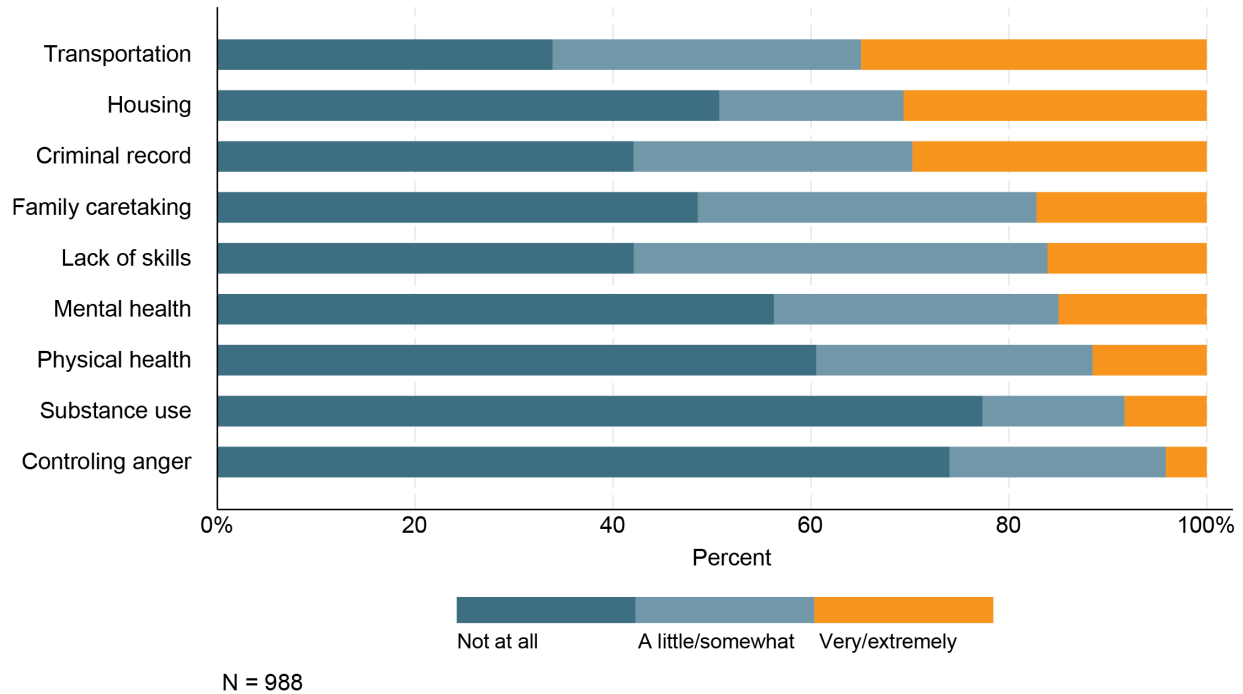
**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

## **II. Barriers to Employment**

As shown in Table 3-1, NCPs reported inconsistent and, for some, limited employment experience. Understanding what may be keeping parents from obtaining consistent employment may help service providers understand how best to support parents and their families; therefore, the survey included questions about the extent to which specific barriers made it hard to find or keep a job. Responses are shown in Figure 3-2 and Appendix Table 3.



**Figure 3-2: Barriers to Employment**



**Source:** Authors’ calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

The most often cited barrier to employment was transportation: 34.9% of NCPs said not having a car or access to public transportation made it very hard or extremely hard to find or keep a job in the past year. Another 31.2% said transportation issues made it a little or somewhat hard to find or keep a job in the past year; only a third said transportation was not an issue at all.

NCPs reported unstable housing as another common barrier to employment. Around half of respondents cited not having a steady place to live as a barrier to employment to some degree, including 30.6% who said the lack of a steady place to live made it very hard or extremely hard to find or keep a job in the past year.

The next most commonly reported barrier to employment was having a criminal record; almost one third (29.7%) of NCPs said having such a record made it very hard or extremely hard to find or keep a job in the past year. Other commonly reported barriers that made it very or

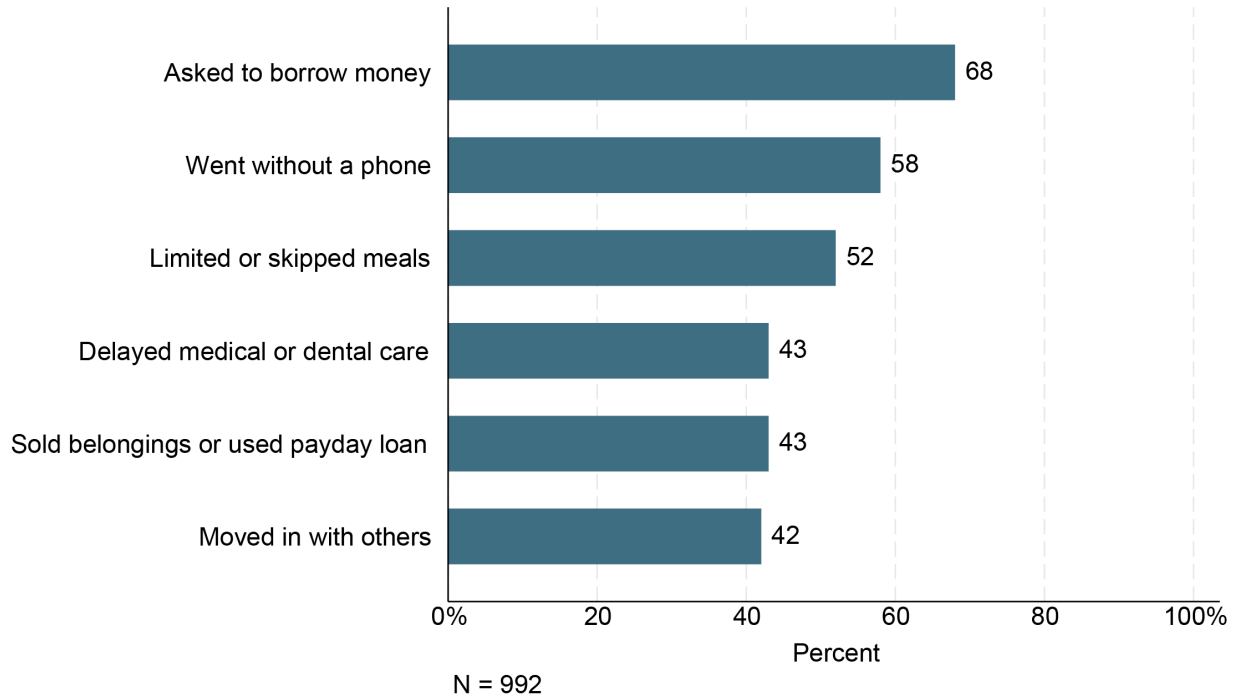
extremely hard to find or keep a job in the last year included having to take care of a family member (17.2%) and not having the kind of skills employers were looking for (16.1%).

More parents reported that their mental health made finding employment very or extremely hard compared to their physical health (15.0% versus 11.5%), and 8.3% of parents said alcohol or drug use made it very hard or extremely hard to find or keep a job. Having trouble getting along with other people or controlling one's anger was the least frequently cited barrier to employment; only 4.1% of NCPs said such issues made it very hard or extremely hard to find employment.

### **III. Economic Hardship Measures**

NCPs also reported experiences of economic hardships in the last 12 months (see Figure 3-3 and Appendix Table 4). Of the six hardship experiences asked about, asking to borrow money from friends or family was the most commonly experienced event, with two-thirds of parents (67.8%) reporting having done so in the past year. Approximately 57.8% of parents had gone without a phone because they could not afford to pay the phone bill or buy extra cell phone minutes, and over half of parents (51.7%) had to cut the size of their meals or skip meals because they could not afford enough food. Many parents (43.2%) reported forgoing medical or dental attention due to the cost, and a similar proportion (42.6%) sold or pawned their belongings or took out a payday loan or auto-title loan. More than two out of five parents (41.6%) moved in with others due to financial problems.

**Figure 3-3: Experiences of Economic Hardships in the Last 12 Months**



**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

#### **IV. Available Economic Resources**

The survey asked respondents how they would handle a \$400 emergency expense, allowing them to state multiple ways they would plan to cover such an expense. As shown in Table 3-3, borrowing money from friends or family was the most common method to cover an emergency expense cited by NCPs (62.8%). A little over half (57.3%) said they would use money available in their checking or savings account to cover that expense; 54.5% of NCPs said they would sell something; and 19.4% said they would use a payday loan, cash advance or overdraft. Only 15% said they would use a credit card and pay it off in full, while 31.1% reported they would use a credit card and pay it off gradually.

The survey also asked parents about their social network of family and friends and how this network might help them weather economic hardships. NCPs reported knowing, on average,

approximately three people who would be able to lend them \$100 (3.07), offer them a place to stay (3.15), or offer them a ride (2.79).

**Table 3-3 Economic Resources**

	<i>Freq/N</i>	<i>Mean/Percent</i>
<b>How would NCP handle a \$400 emergency expense</b>		
Borrow money from friend or family member	992	62.8%
Use money currently in checking or savings account	992	57.3%
Sell something	992	54.5%
Use a credit card and pay it off gradually	992	31.1%
Use bank loan or line of credit	992	20.0%
Payday loan, cash advance, overdraft	992	19.4%
Use a credit card and pay it off in full	992	15.0%
Couldn't afford that expense right now	992	1.6%
<b>Social network support for hardship</b>		
Number of people who could lend \$100	857	3.07
Number of people who could offer a place to stay	858	3.15
Number of people who could offer a ride	858	2.79
<b>Health insurance and other resources</b>		
Currently has a bank account	856	55.1%
Ever had driver's license	992	77.4%
Currently has driver's license	992	47.2%
NCP has health insurance	992	70.0%
Children have health insurance	990	
Yes, all children	834	84.2%
Yes, some children	15	1.5%
No	30	3.0%
Don't Know	111	11.2%

**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

**Notes:** The bank account item and social network items were added to the survey in September 2020. The lower sample size reflects the number of participants who received this question.

Table 3-3 also shows results from questions about other economic resources including whether parents had health insurance, a bank account, or a driver's license. Being unbanked, or not having a checking or savings account at a bank or credit union, means individuals do not have access to services and protections that come with belonging to traditional financial institutions such as direct deposit, no-fee check cashing, and access to lines of credit. Just over

half (55.1%) of respondents said they currently had a bank account;<sup>4</sup> this is in contrast to 96% of U.S. households who said they had a bank account in 2021 (Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, 2022). Consistent with NCPs' reports of transportation as a barrier to employment, 77.4% of parents said they had ever had a driver's license, yet only 47.2% reported having a current driver's license.

Approximately 70% of respondents reported having health insurance, either through an employer, purchased from the Health Insurance Marketplace, or through government plans such as BadgerCare or Medicaid. When asked whether their children had health insurance, 84.2% of respondents said all their children had health insurance coverage, but 1.5% said only some of their children did. Approximately 3% said none of their children had health insurance, and 11.2% of respondents did not know if their children had health insurance coverage.

## **V. Housing**

To gain additional understanding about their economic context, we also asked NCPs about their current housing situation. We asked parents whether they owned the place they lived in, rented it, paid some amount toward rent, lived rent free with a friend or relative, or whether they had some other living arrangement. Most commonly, as shown in Figure 3-4 (and Appendix Table 5), parents said they rented the place they lived (38.3%). Roughly one-quarter (24.7%) said they lived rent free with a friend or relative, and 18.4% said they paid some amount towards rent. Only a small number of parents reported that they were homeowners (5.2%).

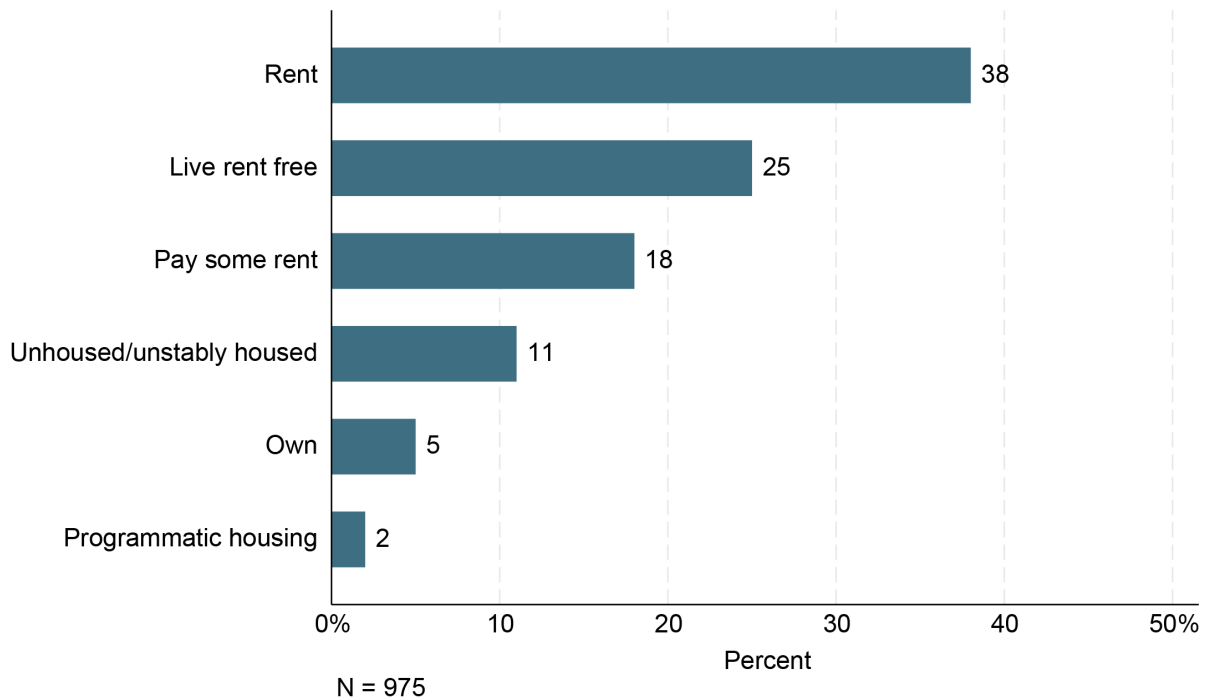
Parents' experiences suggest an opportunity for housing support. For example, 11.3% of NCPs were unhoused or unstably housed, experiencing housing situations such as trading work

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<sup>4</sup>The bank account item and the social network items were added in September 2020, resulting in a sample size of 858 participants who were asked this question.

or chores in exchange for a place to stay; paying for utilities or food in exchange for a place to stay; living in a car, a shelter, or on the streets; or couch surfing or moving around from place to place. Approximately 2.1% lived in programmatic housing (i.e., housing provided by a service agency or social service program).

**Figure 3-4: Current Housing**



**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

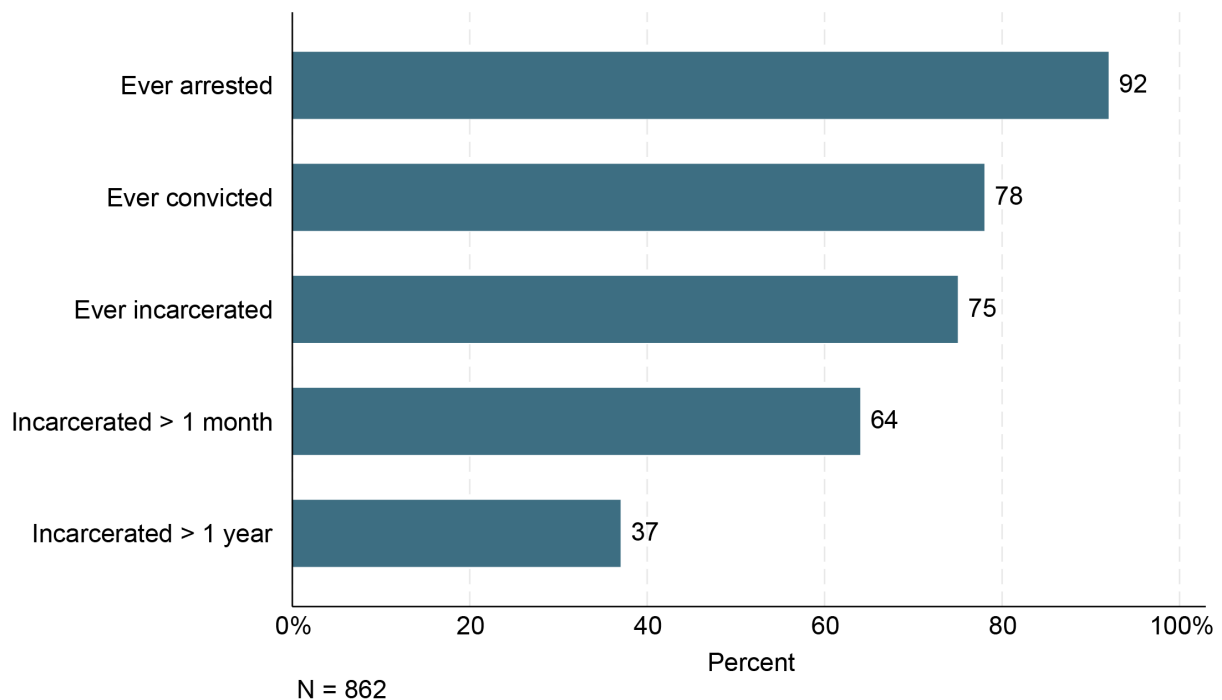
**Note:** 17 participants (1.7%) reported other housing arrangements or did not respond to the question.

In addition, considering other measures of housing instability (see Appendix Table 5), 13.1% of parents lived in multiple residences, and approximately one quarter (25.5%) lived with their parents or grandparents. Though 64.7% of NCPs expected to live in the same place next year, one-third expected their housing to change, which has implications for continuing to connect with children, co-parents, and services or supports.

## VI. Involvement with the Criminal Justice System

Criminal justice system involvement may negatively impact employment and available financial resources (e.g., Pager, 2003; Western & Petit, 2010). Parent responses to the survey reinforce previous studies indicating that criminal justice experiences may be particularly salient for this population of NCPs (e.g., Berger et al., 2021; Geller et al., 2011). Nearly all (92%) of the NCPs surveyed reported being arrested at some point in the past (see Figure 3-5 and Appendix Table 6), and 77.8% were convicted of a crime.<sup>5</sup> Of those who were ever arrested, 36.6% were arrested in the last 12 months.

**Figure 3-5: Criminal Justice Involvement**



**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

<sup>5</sup>Items on arrest history were added to the survey in September 2020, leaving a total sample of 862 parents who provided answers to all criminal justice questions. Previously, the series began with asking about convictions; following September 2020, only participants who reported an arrest were asked about convictions. We report findings for the 862 participants for whom we have full information. Appendix Table 6 presents the raw data for all survey participants.

Three-quarters of all NCPs (75.0%) reported previously being incarcerated in an adult correctional facility. When these parents were asked about the longest incarceration spell they had had, about 85% reported being incarcerated for more than a month, and about half reported being incarcerated for more than one year. When including parents who had never been arrested, this means that 64.3% of all parents in the sample reported an incarceration spell of a month or longer, and 37.0% reported incarceration for at least one year. As indicated in Appendix Table 6, the average length of a parent's longest incarceration spell was 651.5 days, or around one year and nine months. Approximately 32.4% of respondents were on parole or probation.

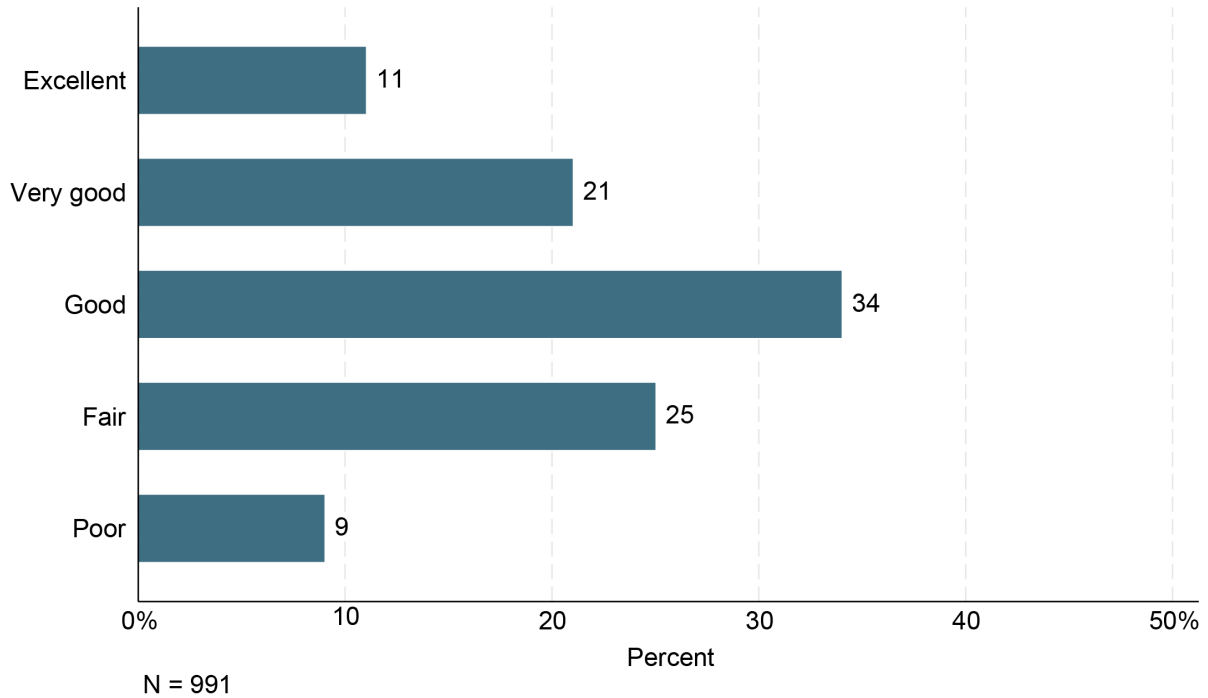
Although a large proportion of NCPs reported previous involvement with the criminal justice system, only 1.7% received help with record expungement prior to their enrollment in ELEVATE.

#### **CHAPTER 4: HEALTH AND OVERALL WELL-BEING**

Overall, as shown in Figure 4-1 and Appendix Table 7, most respondents reported being in good health. When asked to self-rate their overall health quality, two-thirds of NCPs (65.7%) said their health was “Good,” “Very Good,” or “Excellent.” One-quarter (25.4%) rated their health as “Fair.” Only 8.9% said they were in poor health.



**Figure 4-1: Self-Rated Health Quality**



**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

### **I. Physical & Mental Health**

As shown in Table 4-1, when asked how many days in the past 30 days they were in poor physical or mental health, NCPs indicated important differences in the two constructs. On average, respondents reported 5.66 days of poor physical health. More than half said they had no poor physical health days in the last month, and only 8.3% said they were in poor physical health every day. However, while parents generally reported being in good physical health, the self-reported mental health for this sample of parents suggests a somewhat different experience, with a bimodal distribution of reports indicating some NCPs with few mental health concerns and others with significant challenges. When asked how many days in the past 30 days they were in poor mental health, around one-third (34.0%) said they had no poor mental health days, but

17.7% said they were in poor mental health every day. On average, this sample of parents reported poor mental health for over one-third of the days in the last month (10.22 days).

**Table 4-1: Health**

	<i>Freq/N</i>	<i>Mean/Percent</i>
<b>Health</b>		
Poor physical health days in the last 30 days (mean)	986	5.66
Poor physical health days in the last 30 (category)		
0	528	53.6%
1–10	224	22.7%
11–20	124	12.6%
20–29	28	2.8%
All	82	8.3%
Poor mental health days in the last 30 days (mean)	986	10.22
Poor mental health days in the last 30 days (category)		
0	335	34.0%
1–10	241	24.4%
11–20	148	15.0%
20–29	88	8.9%
All	174	17.7%
<b>Depression</b>		
PHQ-8 mean score	984	7.44
Cutoff for depression	992	31.7%
<b>Social anxiety</b>		
Mini-SPIN mean score	992	3.55
Some social anxiety	992	20.4%
Some levels of high social anxiety	992	7.4%
Locus of control scale	992	16.86
<b>Health service receipt in last 12 months</b>		
Received services for mental health, alcohol, or substance use	990	23.5%
Received services for anger management or IPV	990	6.0%
Received any services from a community organization	988	24.9%

**Source:** Authors’ calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

We also asked parents about specific aspects of their mental health. The survey included a standard eight-item depression scale (PHQ-8),<sup>6</sup> which asks how frequently respondents

<sup>6</sup>The eight-item Patient Health Questionnaire depression scale (PHQ-8) is a “diagnostic and severity measure for depressive disorders in large clinical studies” (Kroenke et al., 2009).

experienced certain feelings or difficulties in the past two weeks. By this measure, approximately 31.7% met or exceeded the clinical cutoff for depression. We also measured parents' level of social anxiety using a three-item social anxiety scale (mini-SPIN).<sup>7</sup> Approximately 20.4 percent of parents expressed feeling some level of social anxiety, while 7.4% expressed feeling high levels of social anxiety.

Parents were also asked five questions to measure their locus of control. These items measure whether parents feel they have control over outcomes in their lives or whether they feel that external forces are responsible. The average locus of control score was 16.86, where the minimum possible score was 5 and the maximum possible score was 25, indicating that, on average, our sample reported neither a strong internal nor external locus of control.

## **II. Substance Use**

We also asked NCPs about their substance use in the past 30 days. As shown in Table 4-2, 40.1% reported consuming alcohol in the past 30 days. Overall, parents reported having at least one drink an average of 2.61 days in the last month. We were also able to derive measures of the frequency of binge drinking, defined for men as drinking more than 5 drinks on one occasion and for women as drinking more than 4 drinks on one occasion (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022). Based on these measures, 16% of parents met the criteria for an episode of binge drinking in the past 30 days, and, of the 396 parents who reported having any alcohol in the last 30 days, 39.9% met the criteria for binge drinking. Those 396 parents reported an average of 5.11 days of binge drinking in the last month.

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<sup>7</sup>For more information about the measures used in the survey, see the December 18, 2020, memo from the Institute for Research on Poverty to Wisconsin Department of Children and Families titled: "CSPRA 2018–2020 Task 14: Research Related to Learning More About New Approaches to Child Support Services, Baseline Administration Report."

**Table 4-2: Substance Use**

	<i>Freq/N</i>	<i>Mean/Percent</i>
<b>Alcohol</b>		
Ever drank alcohol in last 30 days	987	40.1%
Number of days with at least one drink in last 30 days	987	2.61
Ever had more than 4/5 drinks on one occasion	992	16.0%
Ever had more than 4/5 drinks on one occasion (of sample who reported any drinking)	396	39.9%
Number of days with 4/5 drinks on one occasion	394	5.11
Meets CDC definition for heavy drinking	393	13.7%
<b>Other substances</b>		
Any marijuana use	992	16.6%
Number of days with marijuana use	165	12.50
Any non-marijuana drug use	987	9.0%
Number of days used drugs	89	4.65

**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

We also derived measures of heavy drinking as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which is defined as more than 14 drinks per week for men and more than 7 drinks per week for women (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022). Based on this measure, approximately 13.7% of the 396 parents who reported any alcohol use met the CDC definition for heavy drinking.

In terms of substances other than alcohol, 16.6% of parents said they used marijuana in the past 30 days and those parents reported using an average of 12.50 days in the past month. Approximately 9.0% of parents said they used drugs other than marijuana in the past 30 days and reported using an average of 4.65 days in the past month.

### **III. Well-Being Service Receipt**

Understanding what services NCPs accessed prior to their enrollment in ELEVATE can provide important context about service take-up and use for this population of NCPs (see Table 4-1). In the past 12 months, approximately 23.5% of parents received services for mental health,

alcohol, or substance use, and 6.0% received services for anger management or intimate partner violence (IPV). A quarter (24.9%) of parents received services from any community organization including community centers, food pantries, or religious institutions for help with housing, food, or other services.

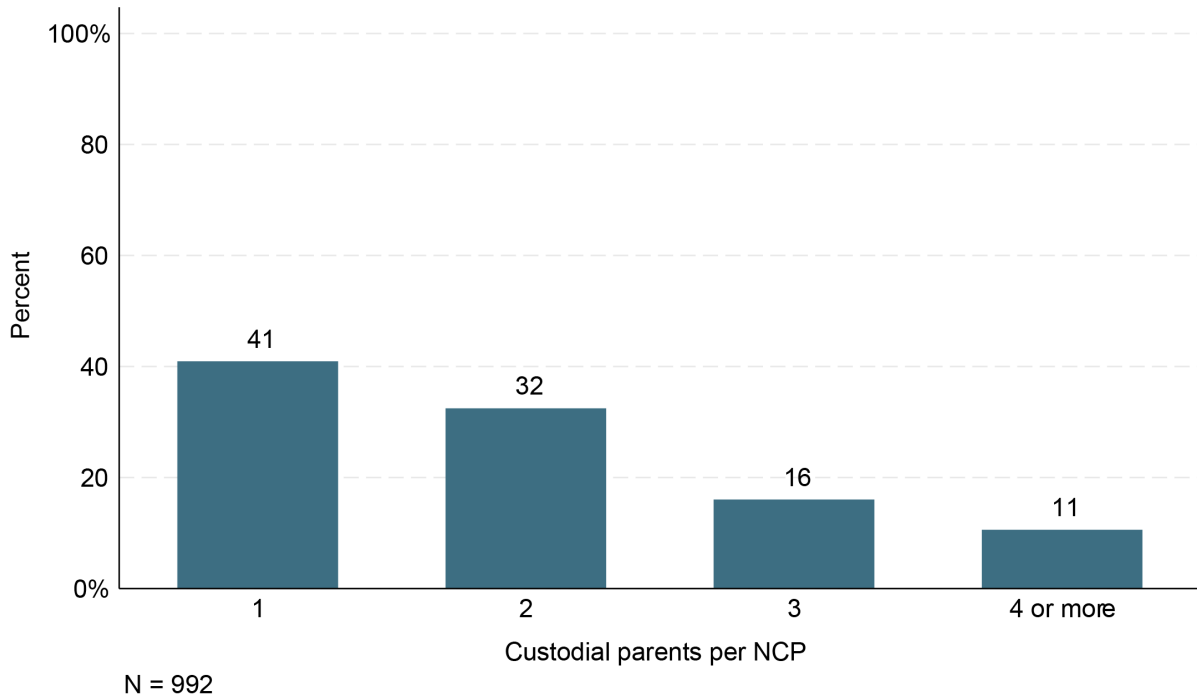
## **CHAPTER 5: ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS AND CO-PARENTING**

This chapter summarizes parents' reports of their current and past romantic relationships, including the number of parents with whom they share children and to whom they owe child support. In addition, we examine parents' self-reported co-parenting relationships.

### **I. Co-Parents**

As shown in Figure 5-1 and Appendix Table 8, it was most common for NCPs to report having children with more than one custodial parent (i.e., their child(ren)'s other parent to whom they owe formal child support). Approximately 40.9% of NCPs reported having one custodial parent (CP) to whom they owe child support. An additional 32.5% reported having two parents to whom they owe child support. It was less common for NCPs to have 3 or more CPs: 16.0% reported having three CPs, and 10.6% reported having four or more.

**Figure 5-1: Number of Custodial Parents per NCP**



**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

Just under one quarter of our sample (24.5%) reported having been married to at least one of their children's CPs at the time of the child's birth (see Appendix Table 8). A large majority (83.5%) reported cohabiting with at least one CP at the time of a child's birth.

At the time of the survey, however, most NCPs (81.2%) were not in a current relationship with any of their children's other parents. Approximately 4.5% were currently married to a CP; 12.5% were romantically involved with at least one CP; and another 6.4% were involved in an on-again/off-again relationship with at least one CP.

## II. Co-Parenting Relationships

As shown in Table 5-1, NCPs reported some challenges co-parenting with their children's other parent.<sup>8</sup> We asked respondents four items that comprised an overall co-parenting index. The co-parenting index ranged from 0 to 16 with lower scores indicating more difficult co-parenting relationships. The average score for our sample was 8.89. Parents provided responses about each of their children's other parents who were currently living (i.e., each living CP); for simplicity we focus on the CPs of the NCPs' youngest and oldest children. When comparing specific items for the parent of the NCP's oldest and youngest child, NCPs tended to report an easier time co-parenting with the CP of their youngest child.

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<sup>8</sup>Parents provided information on their six youngest children, including the name and gender for each child's other parent. Parents were then asked additional questions about each of their children's other parents, including romantic relationship and cohabitation status at the time of the child's birth and since, assessment of current relationship (i.e., poor, fair, good, etc.), and items focused on co-parenting.

**Table 5-1 Co-Parenting**

<i>Co-parenting with CPs</i>	All		CP of Youngest Child		CP of Oldest Child	
			Freq/N	Mean/Percent	Freq/N	Mean/Percent
Overall coparenting index	990	8.89				
<b>Relationship quality with CP</b>			981		970	
Poor			366	37.3%	421	43.4%
Fair			232	23.7%	218	22.5%
Good			174	17.7%	175	18.0%
Very good			137	14.0%	97	10.0%
Excellent			72	7.3%	59	6.1%
<b>Assessment of parenting team</b>						
Poor			273	28.0%	321	33.4%
Fair			164	16.8%	184	19.2%
Good			212	21.8%	203	21.1%
Very good			151	15.5%	143	14.9%
Excellent			174	17.9%	110	11.5%
<b>How much does CP trust you to care for children</b>						
Not at all			121	12.6%	168	17.6%
A little			58	6.0%	66	6.9%
Somewhat			127	13.2%	127	13.3%
Quite a bit			143	14.9%	154	16.1%
A great deal			512	53.3%	440	46.1%
<b>How often do you talk about problems parenting with CP?</b>						
Never			251	25.6%	351	36.2%
Rarely			138	14.1%	159	16.4%
Sometimes			211	21.5%	196	20.2%
Very often			250	25.5%	181	18.7%
Extremely often			131	13.4%	84	8.7%

**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

**Notes:** Questions were not asked for CPs who were reported to be deceased, resulting in sample sizes less than the full survey sample. Some respondents refused or skipped individual items; we display valid responses.

Approximately 39.1% of parents reported that they had a good, very good, or excellent relationship with the parent of their youngest child, while a similar proportion, 37.3%, reported a poor relationship. The remaining 23.7% reported a fair relationship. When it came to the other parent of their oldest child, more NCPs in our sample reported a poor relationship (43.4%) rather than a good, very good, or excellent relationship combined (34.1%).



Parents were more optimistic about their assessment of themselves and the other parent as a parenting team. Although 28.0% rated their parenting team with their youngest child's parent as poor, over half (55.1%) rated themselves as having a good, very good, or excellent parenting team. For the parent of their oldest child, 33.4% rated the parenting team poor, while 47.5% reported a good, very good, or excellent parenting team.

Most NCPs also reported that CPs tended to trust them to care for their children. Approximately 53.3% reported that the other parent trusted them "a great deal" to care for their youngest child, and 46.6% reported the same level of trust from the other parent of their oldest child. Only 12.6% reported that the parent of their youngest child did not trust them at all, and 17.6% reported the same for the parent of their oldest child. Still, NCPs reported limited conversations with their children's other parent about parenting issues, particularly with the parent of their oldest child. Over one quarter (25.6%) said they never talked to the parent of their youngest child about parenting issues, and over one third (36.2%) said the same about the parent of their oldest child. Approximately 38.9% reported talking very often or extremely often to their youngest child's parent about parenting, and 27.4% reported the same for their oldest child's parent.

## **CHAPTER 6: PARENTING AND FAMILIES**

NCPs' relationships with their own parents and families of origin may shape their relationships with their children (e.g., Conger et al., 2009; Jessee & Adamsons, 2018). As indicated in Appendix Table 9, NCPs in this sample were unlikely to have lived with both of their own parents growing up, and very few reported an excellent or very good relationship with their own biological father. Only about a quarter of our sample (26.3%) lived with both of their biological parents at age 15.

Approximately 41.7% of parents reported that their biological father was not at all involved in their life during childhood, and 32.6% reported that he had been somewhat involved. Only 25.7% of parents reported their biological father was very involved. Of those whose biological fathers were somewhat or very involved, 22.1% of NCPs had an excellent relationship with their father (equivalent to 13.0% of all parents in the sample who reported having an excellent relationship); 20.6% had a very good relationship; and 22.5% had a good relationship. Over one-third of these parents (34.9%) reported a fair or poor relationship.

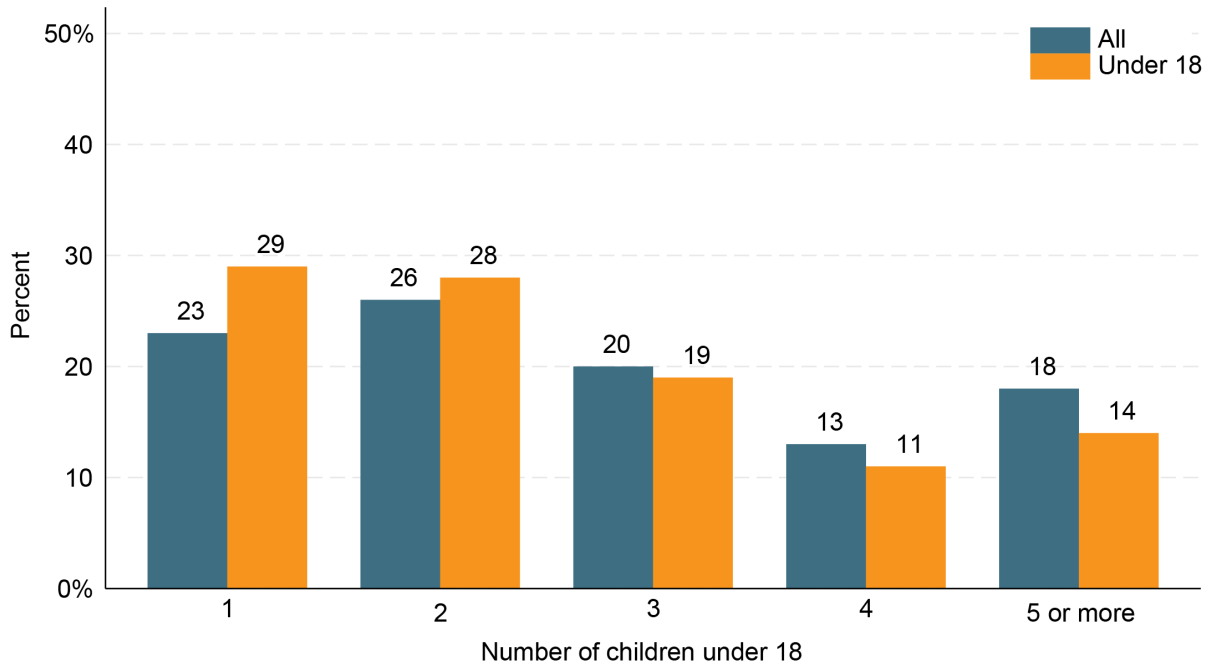
## **I. Parental Contexts and Child Characteristics**

As shown in Figure 6-1, most of the NCPs in our sample (77.1%) were parenting multiple children. Approximately 20.0% had one minor child (i.e., a child under age 18); a similar proportion (27.5%) had two children; 19.1% had three children, 10.6% had four; and 13.7% had five or more children.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Parents provided the gender and date of birth (or age) of up to six biological children, starting with their youngest child. For each of their six youngest children who were under 21, parents provided information about the child's residence status, including the number of nights spent with the child in the last 30 days. Of all of the children the parents told us about, up to three children were selected as focal children for whom the parent provided additional information including self-assessments of parenting and contact and activities in the last 30 days. We exclude parents who report a particular activity was not relevant for their child, often due to the child's age. For more information about the child measures on the survey, see the December 18, 2020, memo from the Institute for Research on Poverty to Wisconsin Department of Children and Families titled: "CSPRA 2018–2020 Task 14: Research Related to Learning More About New Approaches to Child Support Services, Baseline Administration Report."

**Figure 6-1: Number of Children**



N = 992: 4 respondents had no children under 18.

**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

As Table 6-1 indicates, respondents were parenting children across all stages of childhood. Again for simplicity, we focus on parents' youngest and oldest children. On average, parents' youngest child was just over 6 years-old (6.07) at the time of the survey. Approximately 48.0% of parents had very young children (i.e., under 5 years old); another 26.3% had an elementary school-aged child between the ages of 5 and 9; 19.3% had a child between 10 and 14; and 6.5% reported that their youngest child was between 15 and 18. The average age of respondents' oldest child was 12.42 years old. Approximately 14.5% of parents reported that their oldest child was under 5; 23.4% had an oldest child who was between 5 and 9 years old; 25.9% had an oldest child between 10 and 14 years old; and 17.4% reported that their oldest child was between 15 and 18 years old at the time of the survey.

**Table 6-1: Children**

	<i>Freq/N</i>	<i>Mean/Percent</i>
<b>All Children</b>		
Number of biological children	992	3.01
<b>Youngest Child</b>		
Mean age of youngest child	991	6.07
Distribution of age of youngest		
0–4	473	48.0%
5–9	259	26.3%
10–14	190	19.3%
15–18	64	6.5%
Mean age of youngest resident child	290	5.09
Distribution of age of youngest resident child		
0–4	176	60.7%
5–9	59	20.3%
10–14	26	9.0%
15–18	23	7.9%
18+	6	2.1%
Mean age of youngest non-resident child	940	7.27
Distribution of age of youngest nonresident child		
0–4	345	36.7%
5–9	270	28.7%
10–14	231	24.6%
15–18	89	9.5%
18+	5	0.5%
<b>Oldest Child</b>		
Mean age of oldest child	991	12.42
Distribution of age of oldest		
0–4	144	14.5%
5–9	232	23.4%
10–14	257	25.9%
15–18	172	17.4%
18+	186	18.8%
Mean age of oldest resident child	290	7.18
Distribution of age of oldest resident child		
0–4	124	42.8%
5–9	72	24.8%
10–14	45	15.5%
15–18	40	13.8%
18+	9	3.1%
Mean age of oldest nonresident child	940	11.11
Distribution of age of oldest nonresident child		
0–4	133	14.2%
5–9	235	25.0%
10–14	279	19.7%
15–18	211	22.5%
18+	82	8.7%
<b>Resident Children</b>		
Any resident children	991	29.3%

	<i>Freq/N</i>	<i>Mean/Percent</i>
Mean overnights for resident children	290	27.09
Mean number of biological resident children under 18	992	0.46
Total number of biological resident children under 18		
0	712	71.8%
1	163	16.4%
2	75	7.6%
3	26	2.6%
4 or more	16	1.6%
<b>Non-resident Children</b>		
Any non-resident children	992	94.9%
Mean overnights for non-resident children	941	2.79
Mean number of biological non-resident children under 18	992	1.98
Total number of biological non-resident children under 18		
0	68	6.9%
1	382	38.5%
2	257	25.9%
3	143	14.4%
4 or more	142	14.3%

**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

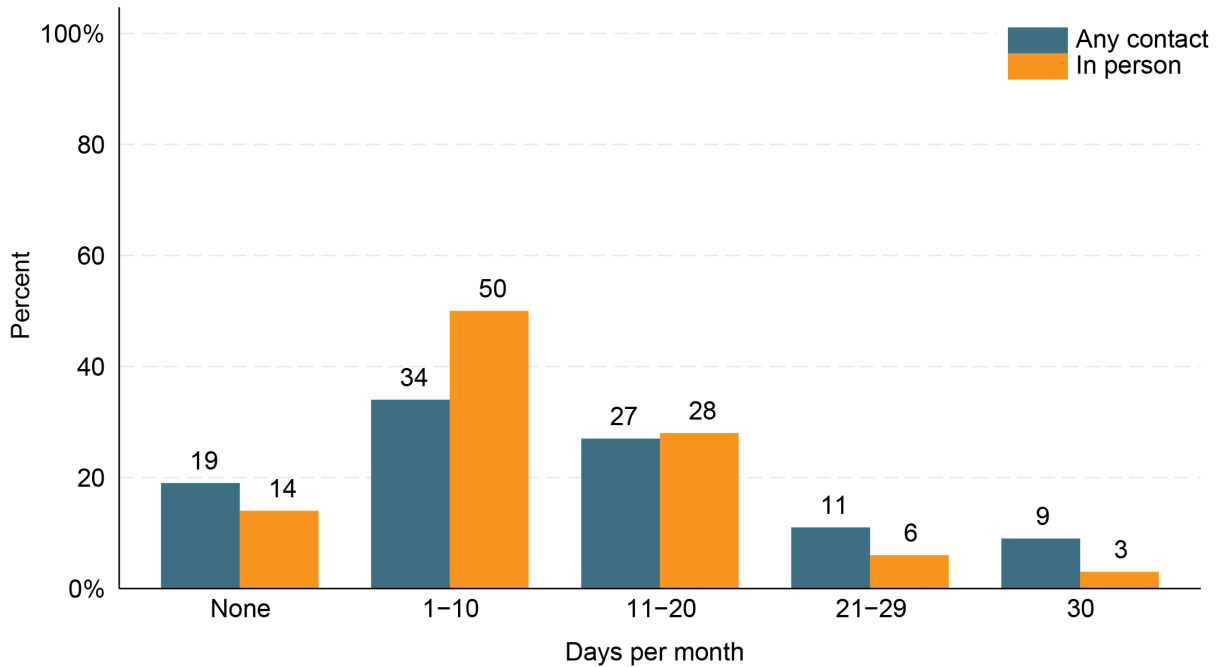
Although our sample is composed of parents who owe child support (NCPs or obligors), which is a group of parents who are often assumed to be nonresident parents, many of the parents in our sample reported living with at least one child. Almost one-third (29.3%) of parents had at least one resident child (who spent on average 27.09 overnights with them). Approximately 11.8% had more than one resident child. As expected, most parents in our sample had nonresident children, with just 6.9% reporting no nonresident children under 18. Still, nonresident children spent 2.79 overnights on average with parents in our sample over the 30-day period prior to the survey, indicating at least some shared parenting time among families.

## II. Parenting Measures

Indeed, parents reported spending a significant amount of time with their children regardless of whether they shared a residence with them. As shown in Figure 6-2 and Appendix Table 10, most parents (79.4%) reported contact with at least one of their children in the 30 days prior to the survey. Considering parents with nonresident children, about two-thirds (66.7%)

reported contact with their youngest nonresident child, and a similar proportion (66.1%) reported contact with their oldest nonresident child. Often contact was in-person; 86.0% of parents with contact reported some in-person contact in the last 30 days.

**Figure 6-2: Number of Days in the Last 30 with Contact with Any Child**



Any contact N = 973. In person N = 787.

**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

**Note:** The sample for the in-person contact measures includes the 787 parents who reported any contact with their child in the last 30 days. Therefore, of the 787 parents with any contact in the last 30 days, 14% reported no days with in-person contact, 50% reported 1-10 days of in-person contact, 28% reported 11-20 days, 6% reported 21-29 days, and 3% reported 30 days of in-person contact.

However, few parents were spending as much time as they wanted with their children (see Appendix Table 10). Only 28.8% reported that they spent as much time as they wanted with their youngest nonresident child in the last 30 days, and 22.9% said they spent as much time as they wanted with their oldest nonresident child. Because parents completed the survey during different portions of the COVID-19 pandemic, including early in the pandemic when stay-at-home orders were in effect, parents were asked about the extent to which COVID-19 impacted

the time spent with their children. Slightly more than one-third of parents reported that they were spending less time with their children than usual because of COVID-19, including 36.7% who indicated COVID-19 resulted in decreased time with their youngest child and 37.6% who reported less time with their oldest child. Few parents reported that the pandemic increased time with children: only 9.8% with their youngest child and 8.3% with their oldest child. Over half of NCPs reported that COVID-19 did not impact the amount of time they spent with their children (54.2% with their youngest and 54.1% with their oldest child).

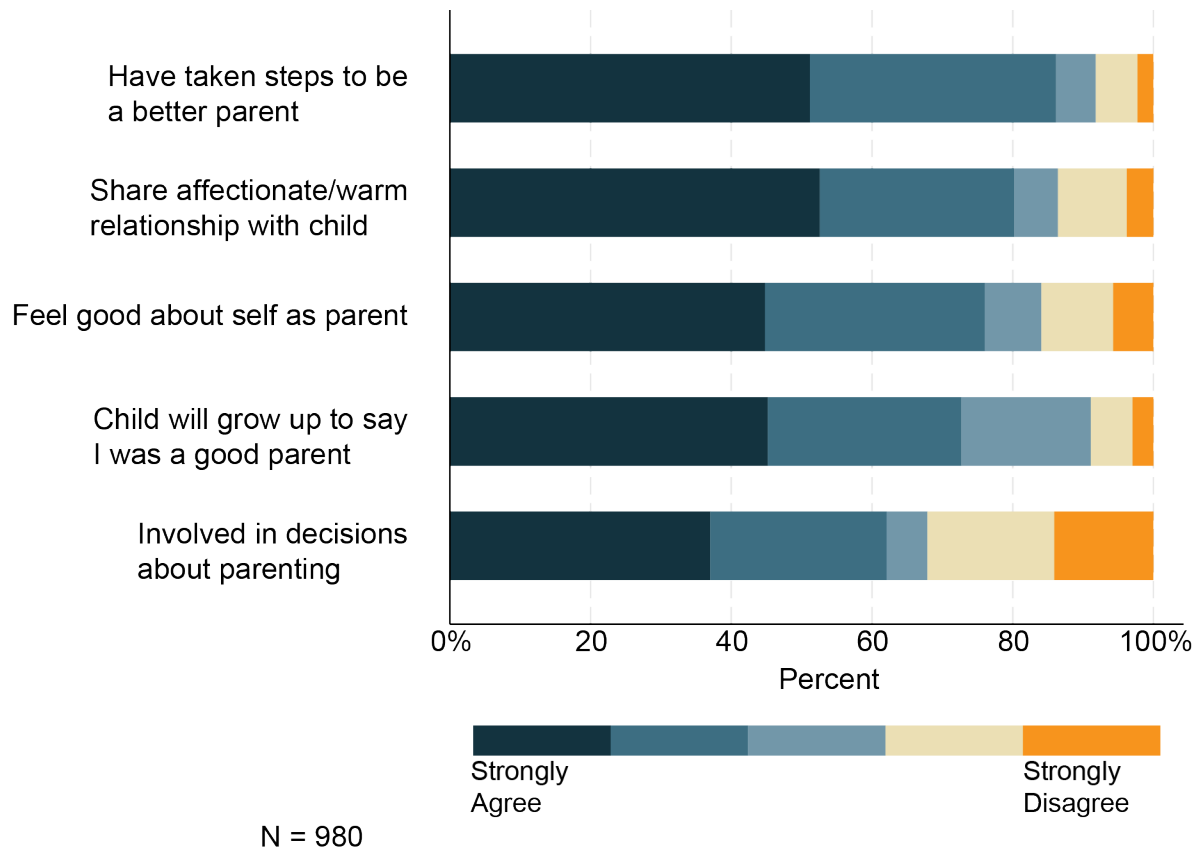
In addition to the amount of time spent together, parents who reported contact with their child were asked about four specific activities that they may have done with their children in the last 30 days, including talking to their child about their child's interests, talking to the child about their child's feelings, taking their child to an appointment or other places they needed to go, and talking to the child's teacher or child care provider. As shown in Appendix Table 10, almost all NCPs with any contact reported talking to at least one of their children about their child's interests and feelings (97.4% and 94.5%, respectively). About half (54.9%) of parents said they took their child to an appointment or other places they needed to go, and about half (48.0%) also reported talking to their child's teacher or child care provider.

Understanding parents' sense of their relationship with their children and their own parenting strengths provides important context into the potential need for family supports. For each focal child, parents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a variety of statements about themselves as parents and their relationship with each child. As shown in Figure 6-3, which focuses specifically on the NCPs' youngest non-resident child, and Appendix Table 11, which includes information about relationships with both youngest and oldest children, across most items, NCPs reported confidence about their role as a parent and felt positively about

their relationship with their children. Parents were slightly more likely to agree or strongly agree with positive statements about their relationship with their youngest nonresident child compared to their oldest nonresident child. Three-quarters (76.0%) of NCPs agreed or strongly agreed that they felt good about themselves as a parent for their youngest child, and two-thirds (67.8%) of NCPs said the same for their oldest child. A similar proportion of NCPs (72.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that their youngest child would grow up to say they were a good parent; the proportion for their oldest child was 62.2%. Most NCPs (80.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that they shared an affectionate and warm relationship with their youngest child, and 75.4% said the same for their oldest child. Also, 62.0% said they were involved in decisions about parenting their youngest child, and a slim majority (51.7%) said the same about their oldest child. While still high, this item had the lowest proportion of parents who agreed or strongly agreed, which may reflect the nature of co-parenting as noted in Chapter 5. A substantial majority of parents (85.9%) reported that they had taken steps to be a better parent for their youngest child (81.8% for oldest child).



**Figure 6-3: Parenting Self-Assessment Measures, Youngest Nonresident Child**



**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

Respondents provided a self-rating of their own parenting across all children and answered three items from a parenting stress index. Overall, as shown in Table 6-2, parents gave a relatively high assessment of their own parenting skills. Approximately 22.2% of parents reported feeling that they were an excellent parent; 27.5% reported that they were a very good parent; 40.4% reported that they were a good parent; and only 10.0% reported that they were not a very good parent.

NCPs reported relatively low levels of parenting stress. Approximately one quarter (25.7%) said that they thought parenting was harder than they thought it would be very or extremely often, while 47.4% said they thought that sometimes, and 26.9% said they rarely or never thought that was the case. Just 9.6% of parents reported very or extremely often feeling

trapped by parenting responsibilities compared to 68.9% who said they never or rarely felt trapped. Similarly, 10.0% of NCPs reported that parenting was very or extremely often more work than pleasure, and 71.5% reported that was never or rarely the case. Very few reported receiving parenting services in the 12 months prior to the survey; just 11.5% reported participating in a parenting class of some type in the last year.

**Table 6-2 Parenting Measures**

	<i>Freq/N</i>	<i>Mean/Percent</i>
<b>Parental self-assessment</b>		
Self-assessment of parenting	984	
Excellent parent	218	22.2%
Very good parent	271	27.5%
Good parent	397	40.4%
Not a very good parent	98	10.0%
<b>Parenting Stress</b>		
Overall parenting stress scale (index of following 3 items)	992	6.91
Being a parent is harder than you thought		
Never	114	11.5%
Rarely	152	15.4%
Sometimes	468	47.4%
Very often	164	16.6%
Extremely often	90	9.1%
Feel trapped by parenting responsibilities		
Never	423	42.8%
Rarely	258	26.1%
Sometimes	213	21.5%
Very often	62	6.3%
Extremely often	33	3.3%
More work than pleasure		
Never	444	45.1%
Rarely	260	26.4%
Sometimes	183	13.6%
Very often	68	6.9%
Extremely often	30	3.1%
<b>Parenting Classes</b>		
Participated in any classes about parenting	989	11.5%
Number of classes about parenting	112	7.96

**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

## **CHAPTER 7: CHILD SUPPORT AND EXPERIENCES WITH THE CHILD SUPPORT PROGRAM**

Having explored parents' strong ties to their children in the previous chapter, as well as parents' experiences of economic hardship and potential barriers to successful labor market participation (Chapter 3), with these key contexts in mind, we now focus on the legal obligations that noncustodial parents have to their children, including formal financial contributions. We also describe the informal support parents reported providing, both in terms of financial contributions as well as in-kind contributions. In addition, we examine parents' reported experiences with the child support program. This includes their contact and satisfaction with child support in the 12 months prior to the survey.

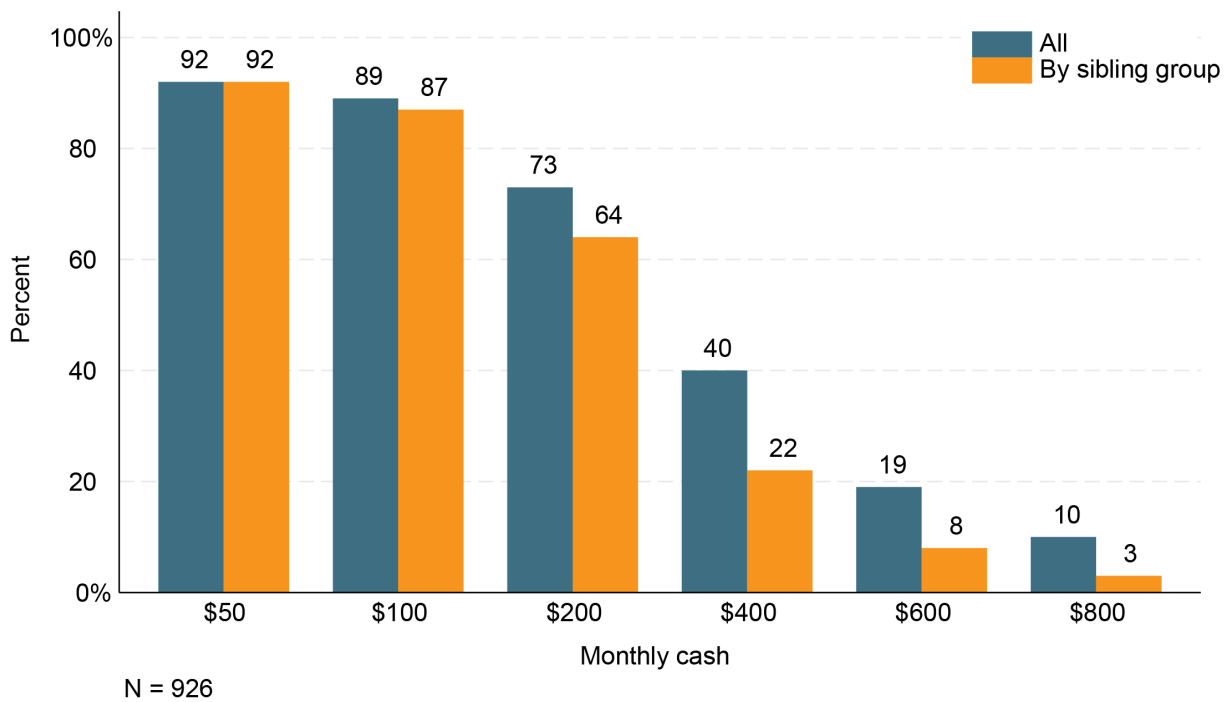
At the time of the survey, nearly all parents in our sample (93.7%) reported having a formal child support order for at least one of their children. Another 1.0% described that they were in the process of having an order put in place. An additional 5.0% of our sample was not asked about their legal obligations because they reported being married to the parent of their eligible children or they reported that the other parent was deceased. We exclude these parents from calculations of formal support.

### **I. Formal Support**

On average, parents reported owing around \$420 monthly in formal child support for all of their children, regardless of the number of parents to whom they owed support (see Appendix Table 12). The median monthly amount owed was lower at \$350 per month. As shown in Figure 7-1, parents reported a wide range of monthly amounts owed. One quarter of parents reported owing \$210 per month or less, while one quarter of parents owed \$526 or more per month. Parents who owed the most child support were those with obligations to multiple parent payees.

When considering the amount owed per sibling set (i.e., the amount owed to one parent payee) rather than across all children and payees, the reported order amounts were lower, as expected. Parents reported owing around \$306 per month on average per payee, with a median amount of \$248. The bottom quartile (i.e., the lowest 25% of reported orders) for obligations for sibling sets was similar to obligations for all children, with 25% of parents owing \$180 per month or less. However, the top quartile for sibling sets was substantially lower than the top quartile for all children, with 25% of parents owing \$375 per month or more per payee. This suggests that the overall reported mean order amount across all children is driven by parents with multiple child support obligations. In fact, when averaging across children (rather than NCP or sibling set), the mean monthly formal support owed per child was \$179.

**Figure 7-1: Percent of Parents Who Owe At Least . . . In Formal Child Support per Month (Self-Report)**

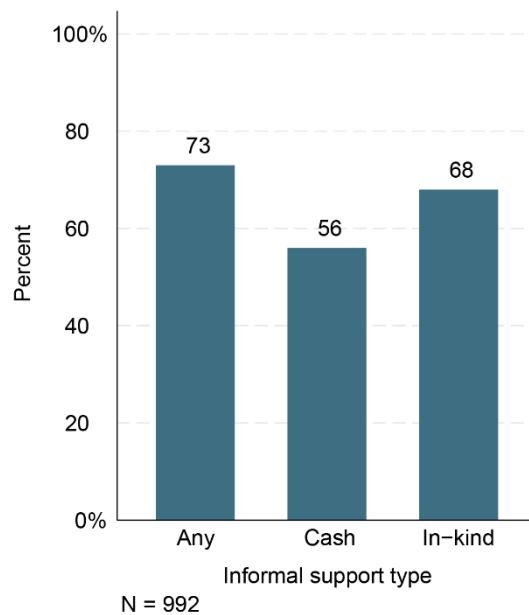


**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

## II. Informal Cash and Noncash Support

As shown in Figure 7-2 and Appendix Table 13, most parents (72.9%) reported providing informal cash or noncash support to at least one of their children in addition to any formal child support they provided. For example, 56.1% of NCPs reported providing cash support outside of a formal child support obligation, and 67.9% reported providing in-kind support (i.e., informal noncash support such as clothing, gifts, or other items).

**Figure 7-2: Percent of Parents Providing Different Types of Informal Support in the Last Month**



**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

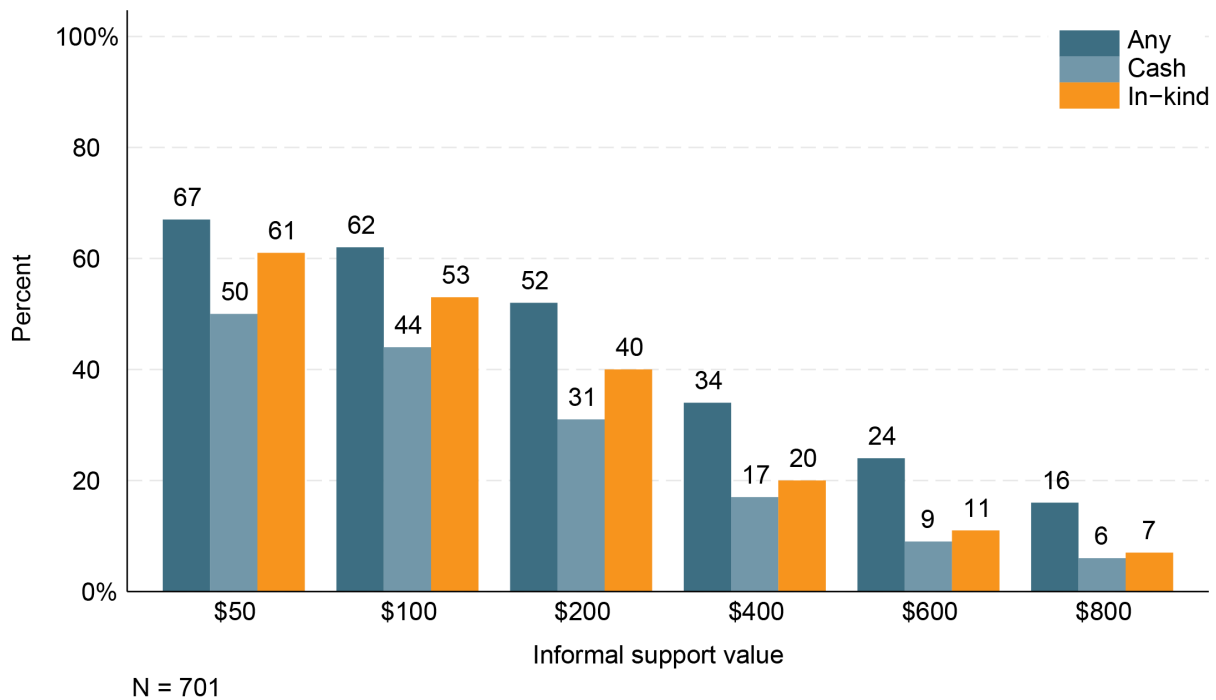
On average, parents reported providing around \$196 per month in informal cash support, with a median of \$50 (see Appendix Table 13). When considering only the pool of parents who reported providing support, the average amount was around \$365 with a median of \$200. One quarter of parents reported providing \$450 or more.

In general, parents reported providing more in informal noncash support than informal cash support, reporting, on average, around \$238 per month in informal noncash support with the

median amount being \$100. For parents who provided any informal noncash support, the average was around \$363 in noncash support per month, with a median of \$220. One quarter of parents reported providing \$400 or more in noncash support (see Figure 7-3 and Appendix Table 13).

Considering the total amount of informal support provided, combining cash and in-kind, parents reported spending around \$434 on average across all of their children, with a median amount of \$200. Considering only parents who provided any informal support, the average was around \$614 per month, with a median amount of \$350. One-quarter of parents reported providing \$720 in informal support total or higher.

**Figure 7-3: Percent of Parents Who Contributed at Least . . . In Informal Support in the Last Month**



**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

### **III. Interaction with the Child Support Program**

The survey also asked parents about their interaction with and perception of the child support program. In general, as shown in Figure 7-4 and Appendix Table 14, parents reported positive interactions with the child support program, yet responses indicated some room for service growth. Overall, 41.0% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with their experiences with the child support program compared to 33.5% who strongly disagreed or disagreed and 25.3% who neither agreed nor disagreed.

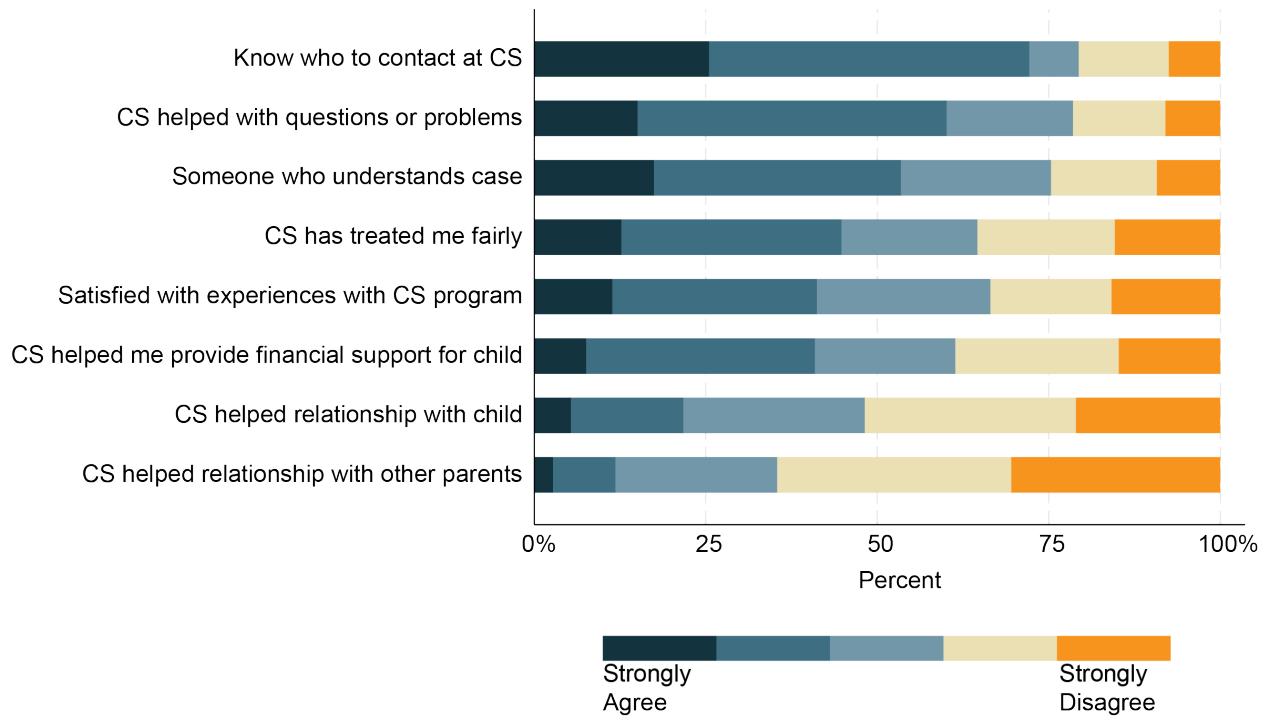
Approximately 34.2% of parents reported having had contact with a specific person in child support. Of the 334 parents who had contact with child support, 21.9% reported one contact; 32.3% reported two; 18.0% reported three, and 26.3% reported four or more contacts. Very few reported receiving help with visitation of parenting time; just 7.3% of the sample received this service.

Most parents reported that they knew who to contact in child support; 72.2% strongly agreed or agreed that they knew who to contact for help, and just 7.5% strongly disagreed that this was true. Just over half of NCPs (53.1%) also agreed or strongly agreed that there was someone in child support who understood their case; 24.5% of NCPs disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Similarly, a majority (59.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that child support had helped with questions or problems compared to 21.4% who disagreed or strongly disagreed. While more parents agreed that they had been treated fairly by the child support system than disagreed (44.7% compared to 35.3%), that number did not reach a majority.

Parents were less optimistic about how the child support program had helped them in their relationships with their children and payees. Less than half (40.8%) agreed or strongly agreed that child support had helped them to provide financially for their children, though a similar number (38.4%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 20.4% were not sure. About half

(51.4%) of parents disagreed or strongly disagreed (with 20.9% strongly disagreeing) that child support had helped their relationship with their child, and only 21.5% agreed or strongly agreed that it had helped their relationship with their child. Parents felt even more strongly that child support had not helped their relationship with their children’s other parents. Two-thirds (64.3%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that the child support program helped with this relationship, and just 11.8% agreed or strongly agreed.

**Figure 7-4: Satisfaction with Child Support (CS) Program**



**Source:** Authors’ calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

## CHAPTER 8: IMPLICATIONS FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR NCPS

This report offers important insights into the experiences of noncustodial parents in Wisconsin who may face challenges in providing regular child support payments. The responses of the nearly 1,000 parents provide new information about the lives of noncustodial parents experiencing economic precarity, including key barriers to employment, their health and well-



being, and their relationships with custodial parents and their children. Parents in this sample also report about their interactions with multiple systems, including the child support system and other community resources, shedding light on current access to and opportunities for additional kinds of support.

We offer these results with a few caveats. First, these data are drawn from parents in five counties in Wisconsin who chose to enroll in a program that provides services with the goal of improving employment and child support payment outcomes; therefore, the experiences of parents in this sample are not likely to be representative of all noncustodial parents or even all those who may be behind in their child support obligations. Second, Appendix B provides some additional context about the limited number of enrolling counties, including how they compare to the state of Wisconsin overall. Finally, parents completed this survey during a time in which COVID-19 restrictions and impacts of the public health emergency were particularly salient; therefore, experiences may not be representative in another time period. Despite these limitations, the survey results provide some of the most detailed information we have on this population of NCPs and can help inform policy and practice.

Overall, parents experienced many challenges in securing gainful employment and meeting child support obligations. A majority did not have education beyond a high school diploma, and only 29% were employed at the time of the survey. For many parents, prior jobs were not high-paying and provided few benefits. Many NCPs also reported significant barriers to employment, including transportation, unstable housing, and having a history of arrest or incarceration. Indeed, almost all parents in our sample had previously been arrested, and three-quarters had a history of incarceration. Parents experienced economic hardship at high levels, including over half who reported skipping or cutting the size of meals and over half who went

without a phone. Physical and mental health were also barriers for some parents; almost one-third of our sample met the clinical cutoff for depression using the PHQ-8. Parents also often reported difficult relationships with their children's other parents. The size of parents' legal obligations for child support relative to earnings and household resources may have also prevented parents from meeting these obligations. Parents in this economically disadvantaged sample reported owing, on average, around \$420 each month in formal child support.

Despite these barriers, parents reported supporting their children financially and having strong relationships with their children. Most parents reported that they provided either cash or in-kind support for their children in the last month, with the median amount of \$350 for those who provided such informal support. Some parents in our sample had at least one resident child, and most parents reported high levels of contact with children, including in-person contact. Parents reported overall low levels of parenting stress and high confidence in their assessment of their parenting and the quality of relationships with their children.

Parents also reported receiving a variety of services in the 12 months prior to the survey. About one-third of respondents received some employment services in the last 12 months; approximately one-quarter received services from a community organization; and a small number also reported receiving parenting services. By responding to this survey, they voluntarily sought additional services through the ELEVATE program.

Responses indicated that parents had mixed feelings about the child support program. While many felt that they had a clear contact or knew who to ask for assistance, most parents did not feel that the child support program had improved their relationship with their children or their children's other parents.

Overall, these data offer an in-depth look at the experiences of a unique group of parents and help us consider how new approaches may help parents meet their child support obligations. Some results point to the potential need for specific types of services. For example, responses illuminating multiple, often complex, barriers to employment as well as weak interactions with the labor market point to the need for effective employment supports. “Getting a job” is one important outcome to strive for, but so is obtaining and maintaining employment that pays well enough to meet child support obligations *and* individual needs. Other results point to opportunities to leverage individual, family, and community strengths. For example, many respondents indicated high levels of motivation to spend time with their children and be good parents, but struggled with issues like housing, transportation, and health that might hinder their ability to be active in their children’s lives. To this end, in addition to considering the economic well-being of both parents and children, partnerships between child support agencies and other community organizations, including those that provide access to legal, housing, mental health, and parenting services, may be important. The results also invite us to consider ways in which child support policies and practices might be changed to better serve families. For example, what are the unintended consequences of sanctions associated with non-payment on parents’ abilities to obtain employment or spend time with children? What resources and training do child support staff need to provide high quality services to parents with challenges meeting their obligations? How can the child support program support effective co-parenting? What other public policies and community supports interact with the child support system, and how can these be leveraged to promote positive outcomes for parents and their families? Indeed, the ELEVATE evaluation presents an opportunity to address some of these questions, and continued study, importantly, in direct consultation with NCPs, can inform effective program development and implementation.

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## APPENDIX A

**Table A1: Sample Demographics**

	<i>Freq/N</i>	<i>Mean/Percent</i>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	992	80.5%
<b>Age</b>		
18–24	69	6.9%
25–29	172	17.3%
30–34	247	24.9%
35–39	219	22.1%
40–44	168	16.9%
45+	117	11.8%
<b>Race/Ethnicity (first race or ethnicity reported if multiple chosen)</b>		
White	496	50.0%
Black or African American	298	30.0%
Hispanic/Latinx (any race)	90	9.1%
American Indian/Alaska Native	51	5.1%
Asian	21	2.1%
Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander	17	1.7%
Other Race/Don't Know/Refused	19	1.9%
Multiple Races/Ethnicities	992	6.5%
<b>Education</b>		
<12 years	212	21.4%
HS/GED	496	50.2%
Some college	184	18.6%
2 Year Degree	69	7.0%
4 year degree or more	28	2.8%
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	87	8.8%
Divorced	210	21.2%
Widowed	4	0.4%
Separated	33	3.3%
Never Married	657	66.3%
<b>County</b>		
Brown	221	22.3%
Kenosha	169	17.0%
Marathon	263	26.5%
Racine	192	19.4%
Wood	147	14.8%

**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

**Table A2: Employment in the Last 12 Months**

	<i>Freq/N</i>	<i>Mean/Percent</i>
Currently employed	992	28.8%
Currently working multiple jobs	992	14.5%
Ever employed in last 12 months	992	77.6%
Ever employed in last 12 months, excluding currently employed	703	68.8%
Ever worked multiple jobs (concurrently) in last 12 months	992	34.6%

**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

**Table A3: Barriers to Employment**

	<i>Freq/N</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<b>Transportation</b>	988	
Not at all hard	335	33.9%
A little hard	114	11.5%
Somewhat hard	194	19.6%
Very hard	144	14.6%
Extremely hard	201	20.3%
<b>Lacking skills employers are looking for</b>	988	
Not at all hard	416	42.1%
A little hard	205	20.8%
Somewhat hard	208	21.1%
Very hard	104	10.5%
Extremely hard	55	5.6%
<b>Caring for family member</b>	988	
Not at all hard	480	48.6%
A little hard	167	16.9%
Somewhat hard	171	17.3%
Very hard	92	9.3%
Extremely hard	78	7.9%
<b>Not having a steady place to live/Housing</b>	988	
Not at all hard	502	50.8%
A little hard	82	8.3%
Somewhat hard	102	10.3%
Very hard	136	13.8%
Extremely hard	166	16.8%
<b>Alcohol or drug use</b>	988	
Not at all hard	764	77.3%
A little hard	91	9.2%
Somewhat hard	51	5.2%
Very hard	35	3.5%
Extremely hard	47	4.8%

	<i>Freq/N</i>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Getting along with others/Controlling anger</b>	988	
Not at all hard	731	74.0%
A little hard	142	14.4%
Somewhat hard	74	7.5%
Very hard	20	2.0%
Extremely hard	21	2.1%
<b>Physical health</b>	989	
Not at all hard	599	60.6%
A little hard	138	14.0%
Somewhat hard	138	14.0%
Very hard	51	5.2%
Extremely hard	63	6.4%
<b>Mental health</b>	988	
Not at all hard	556	56.3%
A little hard	156	15.8%
Somewhat hard	128	13.0%
Very hard	77	7.8%
Extremely hard	71	7.2%
<b>Criminal record</b>	989	
Not at all hard	416	42.1%
A little hard	100	10.1%
Somewhat hard	179	18.1%
Very hard	133	13.5%
Extremely hard	161	16.3%

**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

**Table A4: Economic Hardship Experiences the Last 12 Months**

	<i>Freq/N</i>	<b>Percent</b>
Limited or skipped meals	992	51.7%
Moved in with others	992	41.6%
Asked to borrow money	992	67.8%
Went without a phone	992	57.8%
Sold belongings or used a payday loan	992	42.6%
Delayed medical or dental care	992	43.2%

**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.



**Table A5: Current Housing**

	<i>Freq/N</i>	<i>Mean/Percent</i>
<b>Current housing situation</b>	992	
Own	51	5.2%
Rent	373	38.3%
Pay some rent	180	18.4%
Live rent free	241	24.7%
Unhoused/unstably housed	110	11.3%
Programmatic housing	20	2.1%
Other/Don't Know/Refusal	17	1.7%
<b>Live with parents or grandparents</b>	992	25.5%
<b>Multiple residences</b>	992	13.1%
<b>Expect to live in same place next year</b>	992	64.7%

Source: Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

**Table A6: Criminal Justice Involvement**

	<i>Freq/N</i>	<i>Mean/Percent</i>
<b>Arrests</b>		
Ever arrested	862	92.0%
Arrested in the last 12 months (of those arrested)	793	36.6%
Number of arrests in the last 12 months (of those arrested)	793	0.57
<b>Convictions</b>		
Ever convicted (full sample)	989	78.8%
Ever convicted (of the sample who received the arrest question)	862	77.8%
<b>Incarceration</b>		
Ever incarcerated (full sample)	989	75.3%
Ever incarcerated (of the sample who received the arrest question)	862	74.7%
Longest time incarcerated (full sample)		
Greater than one month	989	63.9%
Greater than one year	989	36.9%
Mean days incarcerated of those ever incarcerated (in days)	747	651.47
Longest time incarcerated (of those in arrest sample)		
Greater than one month	862	64.3%
Greater than one year	862	37.0%
Mean days incarcerated of those ever incarcerated (in days)	644	683.53
<b>Currently on parole or probation (of those convicted)</b>	989	32.4%
<b>Received help with record expungement</b>	989	1.7%

Source: Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

**Table A7: Self-Rated Health Quality**

	<i>Freq/N</i>	<i>Mean/Percent</i>
Excellent	111	11.2%
Very good	207	20.9%
Good	333	33.6%
Fair	252	25.4%
Poor	88	8.9%

**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

**Table A8: Relationships with Custodial Parents**

	<b>All</b>		<b>CP of Youngest Child</b>	
	<i>Freq/N</i>	<i>Mean/Percent</i>	<i>Freq/N</i>	<i>Mean/Percent</i>
<b>Number of Custodial Parents</b>				
Mean number of Custodial Parents	992	2.02		
Distribution				
1	406	40.9%		
2	322	32.5%		
3	159	16.0%		
4 or more	105	10.6%		
<b>Marital status at time of birth</b>				
Ever married to any CP at time of birth	992	24.5%		
Cohabiting with CP at time of birth	992	83.5%		
<b>Relationship status with CPs</b>				
Currently married to any CPs	992	4.5%	992	4.2%
Romantically involved with CPs	992	12.5%	992	11.1%
Involved in on-again, off-again relationship with CP	992	6.4%	992	5.6%
Not in a romantic relationship (across all CPs)	992	81.2%	992	78.3%

**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

**Table A9: Family of Origin**

	<i>Freq/N</i>	<i>Mean/Percent</i>
<b>Living with both biological parents at 15</b>	989	26.3%
<b>Bio father involvement during childhood</b>	985	
Very involved	253	25.7%
Somewhat involved	321	32.6%
Not at all involved	411	41.7%
<b>Quality of relationship with biofather during childhood</b>	574	
Excellent	127	22.1%
Very good	118	20.6%
Good	129	22.5%
Fair	136	23.7%
Poor	64	11.2%

**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

## A10: Contact with Children

	All		Youngest Non-Resident Child		Oldest Non-Resident Child	
	Freq/N	Mean/Percent	Freq/N	Mean/Percent	Freq/N	Mean/Percent
<b>Contact with Child</b>						
Contact with child in last 30 days	992	79.4%	939	66.7%	939	66.1%
Number of days with any contact with child						
No days	186	19.1%	313	33.3%	318	33.8%
1–10	334	34.3%	258	27.5%	265	28.2%
11–20	263	27.1%	177	18.9%	178	19.0%
21–29	104	10.7%	60	6.4%	43	4.6%
30 days	86	8.8%	131	14.0%	135	14.4%
Number of days with any in-person contact with child (of NCPS who had any contact)	787		627		622	
No days	110	14.0%	118	18.8%	147	23.6%
1–10	392	49.8%	297	47.4%	285	45.8%
11–20	218	27.7%	172	27.4%	154	24.8%
21–29	45	5.7%	19	3.0%	17	2.7%
30 days	22	2.8%	21	3.4%	19	3.1%
Spent as much time as wanted with child/ren in the past 30 days			938	28.8%	955	22.9%
Time impacted by COVID-19			831		854	
More than usual			81	9.8%	71	8.3%
Less than usual			300	36.1%	321	37.6%
About the same			450	54.2%	462	54.1%
<b>Time Use</b>						
Talked to child about their interests	773	97.4%				
Talked with child about their feelings	776	94.5%				
Took child to appointment or places they needed to go	804	54.9%				
Talked to child's teacher or child care provider	757	48.0%				
<b>Number of children</b>						
Total number of biological children						
1	227	22.9%				
2	259	26.1%				
3	197	19.9%				
4	133	13.4%				
5 or more	176	17.7%				
Number of biological children under 18	992	2.69				

	All		Youngest Non-Resident Child		Oldest Non-Resident Child	
	<i>Freq/N</i>	Mean/Percent	<i>Freq/N</i>	Mean/Percent	<i>Freq/N</i>	Mean/Percent
Total number of biological children under 18	988					
1	287	29.0%				
2	272	27.5%				
3	189	19.1%				
4	105	10.6%				
5 or more	135	13.7%				

**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

**Table A11: Self-Assessment of Parenting, Youngest and Oldest**

	Youngest Non-Resident Child		Oldest Non-Resident Child	
	<i>Freq/N</i>	Mean / Percent	<i>Freq/N</i>	Mean / Percent
<b>Parental Self-Assessment</b>	980		691	
Feel good about self as parent				
Strongly agree	439	44.8%	234	33.9%
Agree	306	31.2%	234	33.9%
Not sure	79	8.1%	77	11.2%
Disagree	100	10.2%	93	13.5%
Strongly disagree	56	5.7%	53	7.5%
Child will grow up to say NCP was a good parent				
Strongly agree	442	45.1%	238	34.4%
Agree	269	27.4%	192	27.8%
Not sure	180	18.4%	173	25.0%
Disagree	58	5.9%	58	8.4%
Strongly disagree	29	3.0%	27	3.9%
Share an affectionate and warm relationship with child				
Strongly agree	515	52.6%	274	39.7%
Agree	271	27.7%	247	35.7%
Not sure	61	6.2%	53	7.7%
Disagree	96	9.8%	83	12.0%
Strongly disagree	37	3.8%	33	4.8%
Taken steps to be a better parent				
Strongly agree	500	51.0%	286	41.4%
Agree	342	34.9%	279	40.4%
Not sure	55	5.6%	45	6.5%
Disagree	58	5.9%	60	8.7%
Strongly disagree	22	2.2%	18	2.6%
Involved in decisions about parenting				
Strongly agree	362	36.9%	176	25.6%
Agree	246	25.1%	180	26.2%
Not sure	57	5.8%	41	6.0%
Disagree	177	18.1%	167	24.3%
Strongly disagree	138	14.1%	124	18.0%

**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

**Notes:** If parents have only one nonresident child, they are not included in the sample of oldest non-resident child. Individual items may not sum to full sample due to missing or refused items.

**Table A12: Formal Child Support**

	<i>Freq/N</i>	<b>Mean/Median/Percentile</b>
Any formal child support order	992	93.7%
<b>Amount owed across all children</b>		
Mean	929	\$419.72
Distribution		
Min		\$0
10th percentile		\$134.00
25th percentile		\$210.00
Median		\$350.00
75th percentile		\$526.00
90th percentile		\$810.00
Max		\$2,474.00
<b>Amount owed per sibling set/CP</b>		
Mean	930	\$305.81
Distribution		
Min		\$0
10th percentile		\$105.00
25th percentile		\$180.00
Median		\$247.83
75th percentile		\$375.00
90th percentile		\$556.75
Max		\$2,400.00
<b>Amount owed per child (average over number of children)</b>		
Mean	929	\$179.04
Distribution		
Min		\$0
10th percentile		\$47.40
25th percentile		\$85.00
Median		\$143.00
75th percentile		\$225.00
90th percentile		\$360.00
Max		\$1,089.00

**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

**Notes:** Sixty-two parents were not asked about their child support obligation amounts. They are excluded from the distribution estimates.

**Table A13: Informal Support**

	<i>Freq/N</i>	<i>Mean/Median/Percentile</i>
<b>Informal cash or in-kind support provided</b>		
Any informal support	992	72.9%
Informal cash	992	56.1%
In-kind	992	67.9%
<b>Amount of informal cash provided</b>		
Mean	992	\$195.96
Distribution		
10th percentile		\$0
25th percentile		\$0
Median		\$50.00
75th percentile		\$250.00
90th percentile		\$550.00
<b>Amount of informal cash provided, of those who provided support</b>		
Mean	533	\$364.71
Distribution		
10th percentile		\$50.00
25th percentile		\$100.00
Median		\$200.00
75th percentile		\$450.00
90th percentile		\$800.00
<b>Amount informal in-kind support provided</b>		
Mean	992	\$237.64
Distribution		
10th percentile		\$0
25th percentile		\$0
Median		\$100.00
75th percentile		\$300.00
90th percentile		\$605.00
<b>Amount informal in-kind support provided, of those who provided support</b>		
Mean	650	\$362.67
Distribution		
10th percentile		\$50.00
25th percentile		\$100.00
Median		\$220.00
75th percentile		\$400.00
90th percentile		\$800.00



	<i>Freq/N</i>	<b>Mean/Median/Percentile</b>
<b>Total amount of informal support provided</b>		
Mean	992	\$433.60
Distribution		
10th percentile		\$0
25th percentile		\$0
Median		\$200.00
75th percentile		\$535.00
90th percentile		\$1,125.00
<b>Total amount of informal support provided, of those who provided support</b>		
Mean	701	\$613.59
Distribution		
10th percentile		\$75.00
25th percentile		\$160.00
Median		\$350.00
75th percentile		\$720.00
90th percentile		\$1,400.00

**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

**Table A14: Experiences with Child Support Program**

	<i>Freq/N</i>	<i>Mean/Percent</i>
	992	
<b>Satisfied with experiences with child support program</b>		
Strongly agree	112	11.3%
Agree	294	29.7%
Neither agree or disagree	249	25.3%
Disagree	174	17.7%
Strongly disagree	156	15.8%
<b>Know who to contact at child support</b>		
Strongly agree	252	25.4%
Agree	462	46.6%
Neither agree or disagree	71	7.2%
Disagree	130	13.1%
Strongly disagree	74	7.5%
<b>Someone who understands case</b>		
Strongly agree	172	17.3%
Agree	355	35.8%
Neither agree or disagree	216	21.8%
Disagree	152	15.3%
Strongly disagree	91	9.2%
<b>Child support has treated NCP fairly</b>		
Strongly agree	126	12.7%
Agree	317	32.0%
Neither agree or disagree	196	19.8%
Disagree	198	20.0%
Strongly disagree	152	15.3%
<b>Child support has helped with questions or problems</b>		
Strongly agree	149	15.0%
Agree	445	44.9%
Neither agree or disagree	182	18.3%
Disagree	133	13.4%
Strongly disagree	79	8.0%
<b>Child support program has helped relationship with other parent</b>		
Strongly agree	27	2.7%
Agree	90	9.1%
Neither agree or disagree	233	23.5%
Disagree	337	34.0%
Strongly disagree	301	30.3%
<b>Child support program has helped NCP provide financially for child/ren</b>		
Strongly agree	75	7.6%
Agree	329	33.2%
Neither agree or disagree	202	20.4%

	<i>Freq/N</i>	<i>Mean/Percent</i>
Disagree	235	23.7%
Strongly disagree	146	14.7%
<b>Child support program has helped relationship with child/ren</b>		
Strongly agree	53	5.3%
Agree	161	16.2%
Neither agree or disagree	260	26.2%
Disagree	303	30.5%
Strongly disagree	207	20.9%
Received help with a visitation/parenting time order	987	7.3%
Contact with specific person in child support who helped	988	34.2%
Number of times had contact with specific person in child support	334	
0	5	1.5%
1	73	21.9%
2	108	32.3%
3	60	18.0%
4 or more	88	26.3%

**Source:** Authors' calculations using ELEVATE baseline survey.

**Notes:** Items may not sum to total N for questions due to response refusals.

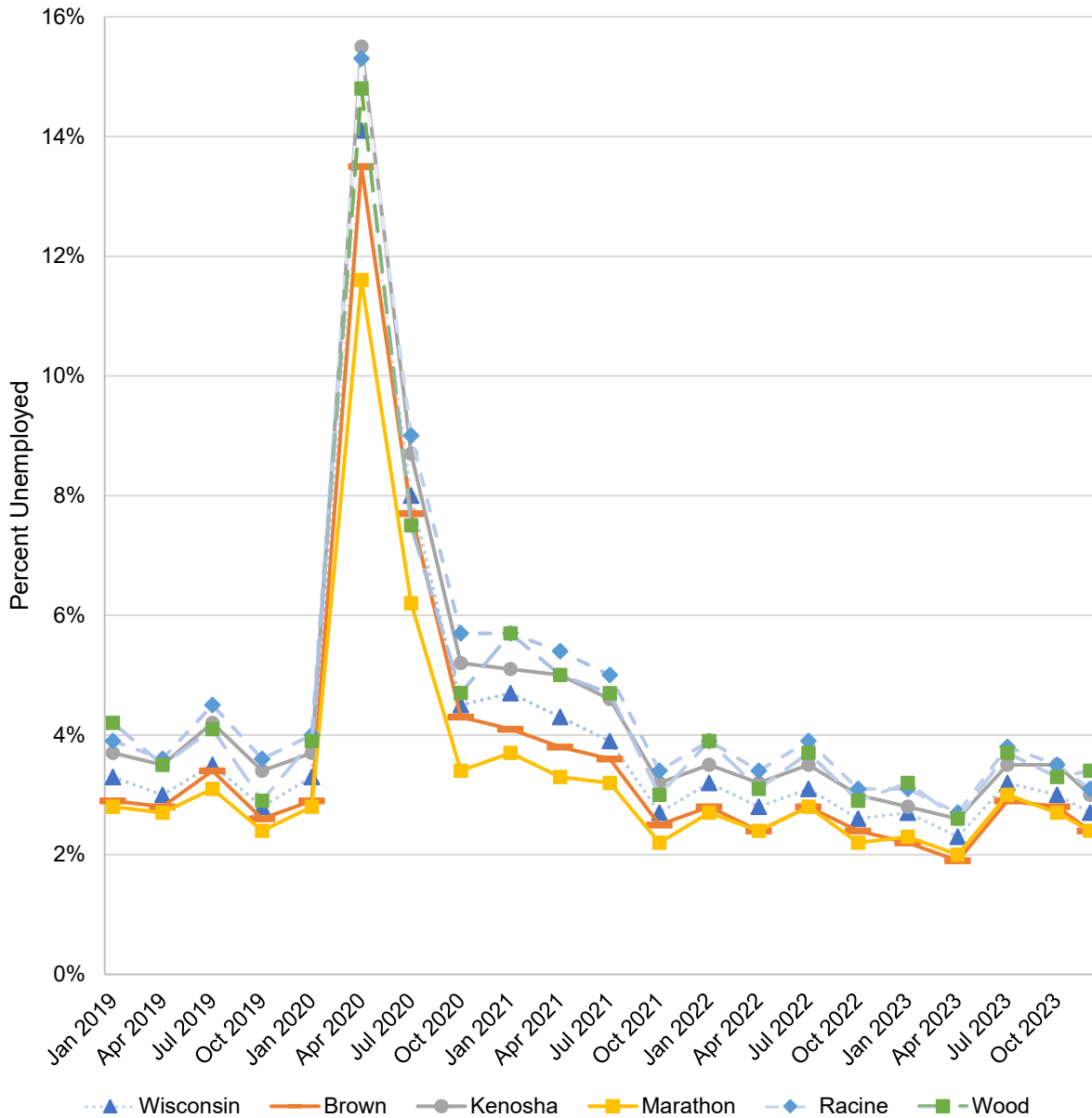
## APPENDIX B

**Table B1: County Characteristics**

	<b>Wisconsin</b>	<b>Brown</b>	<b>Kenosha</b>	<b>Marathon</b>	<b>Racine</b>	<b>Wood</b>
IV-D Caseload Size (September 2019)	357,178	14,397	11,888	5,419	16,822	3,841
<b>Demographics (2020)</b>						
Population Size	5,893,718	268,729	169,151	138,013	197,727	74,207
Educational Attainment of population 25 years and over (%)						
High school graduate or higher	93.1%	92.9%	91.3%	92.7%	91.2%	93.3%
Bachelor's degree or higher	32.0%	31.7%	29.4%	27.0%	28.0%	21.3%
Race (%)						
White alone	86.6%	86.9%	86.5%	90.1%	82.8%	94.6%
Black or African American alone	6.6%	3.2%	7.6%	1.0%	11.8%	1.0%
American Indian or Alaska Native alone	1.2%	3.5%	0.8%	0.6%	0.7%	0.9%
Asian alone	3.2%	3.7%	2.0%	6.3%	1.4%	2.0%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander alone	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0%
Some Other Race alone	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Two or More Races	2.2%	2.6%	3.0%	1.9%	3.2%	1.4%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	7.6%	9.9%	14.6%	3.2%	15.1%	3.6%
<b>Income and Poverty</b>						
Population Below Poverty Level in past 12 months(%) (2020)	10.7%	9.7%	11.1%	8.3%	11.3%	10.5%
Children Below Poverty Level in past 12 months (%) (2020)	13.3%	12.3%	14.6%	9.8%	15.9%	11.8%
Median Annual Household Income (2022 \$)	\$72,458	\$74,066	\$76,583	\$73,248	\$72,658	\$63,273
Median Hourly Wage						
2019	\$18.79	\$18.60	\$20.43	\$18.83	\$17.98	\$17.56
2020	\$19.79	\$19.62	\$21.84	\$19.62	\$18.88	\$18.08
2021	\$21.63	\$21.62	\$22.74	\$21.92	\$18.51	\$18.18
2022	\$21.95	\$21.84	\$23.24	\$21.74	\$20.25	\$19.88

**Notes & Sources:** IV-D Caseload Size Source: Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, Division of Family and Economic Security (DFES) Administrator's Memo 20-05. Median Hourly Wage measures drawn from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics. <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>. Accessed: 2/9/2024. Median hourly wages reflect each county's Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) as designated by BLS. Wages are not seasonally adjusted. Race proportions source: 2020 Census via US Census Bureau QuickFacts. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/WI/PST045222>. All other measures taken from 2022 ACS 5-year-estimates via US Census Bureau Quick Facts. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/WI/PST045222>.

**Figure B1: County Unemployment Rates over the ELEVATE Implementation Period**



**Source:** Bureau of Labor Statistics; Local Area Unemployment Statistics. <https://data.bls.gov/lausmap/showMap.jsp>  
 Accessed: 2/9/2024.

**Note:** Unemployment rates not seasonally adjusted.