



Summary of: *Brief Overview and Analyses of “Impact of COVID-19 on Your Family” Survey*, by Jessie Moore and Marily Oppezzo.

Research Brief - December 2021

This brief summarizes the presentation, *Brief Overview and Analyses of “Impact of COVID-19 on Your Family” Survey*¹ by Jessie Moore, MS, and Marily Oppezzo, PhD, MS, RDN. The *Impact of COVID-19 on Your Family Survey* aimed to better understand the experiences of families with school-aged children in efforts to potentially inform modifications to existing COVID programs and policies.

The researchers recruited Bay-area families for an on-line survey through emailed newsletters and Facebook and other social media posts. The survey was conducted in the fall of 2020, August-October 2020. Respondents were asked demographics, eligibility for Free and Reduced Priced Meals (FRPM), and access to school-provided meals. They were also asked a series of open-ended questions focusing on the impact of COVID-19 on the family’s living arrangements and emotional and physical well-being.

Respondents included 24 parents with 36 children. Additionally, five of these children responded to a child-specific section of the survey. Almost all (95 percent) of the respondents were women. Participants identified as white (76 percent), Hispanic (9 percent), Asian (five percent), Mixed (five percent), or ‘other’ (five percent). Five families were eligible for FRPM.

Findings

Food security and access to school-based meals:

- Of the five families previously eligible for FRPM, three were low to very low food security. They all reported using the school-based meal service program.
- Families reported difficulties accessing the program due to the distance from home and inconvenient times to pick up meals.

Impact of COVID-19 on families:

- **Slightly more than one-half of families (13 families, 54 percent) reported losing part of their income.**
 - None of the families reported losing all their income and 11 families did not experience any income losses.
 - Families that experienced financial losses highlighted losing their jobs, losing child care services, and losing health, dental and vision insurance.
- **There were positive and negative impacts on family dynamics. Families reported:**
 - More time together as a family which had a positive impact on family relationships.
 - Tensions such as more disagreements and difficulty balancing work and family.
 - Additional family members moving into the household, including adult children.

¹ Moore, J. & Oppezzo, M. (2021). *Brief Overview and Analyses of “Impact of COVID-19 on Your Family” Survey* [Powerpoint Slides]. Department of Medicine, Stanford University.

- **There were changes in family lifestyles.** Families reported:
 - A decrease in social interaction
 - A loss of structure such as a lack of schedules for young children and disruptions of family routines.

- **There were negative impacts on mental health.** Families reported:
 - Stress related to job loss, health concerns, and concerns about the quality of their child’s education
 - Depressed feelings among younger children, teens, and themselves.

- **There was less physical activity and more screen time for both parents and children.**
 - Parents worked from home and children were not participating in play dates, sports, or other outside activities.
 - Seventy-four percent of participants’ children were not meeting the recommended levels of physical activity according to the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans.
 - On average, children participated in 9 hours of screen-time per day, including 4.5 hours for schoolwork.

Recommendations for the San Francisco Unified School District

The researchers made the following recommendations to the SFUSD:

- **Conduct additional research for a deeper understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on families, particularly low-SES families.**
 - Conduct an adapted survey, based on the findings and the current economic and public health climate, to further assess the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on Bay Area families.
 - Conduct a follow-up survey to further capture the experiences of families in need and better understand ways in which SFUSD may be supportive in future emergencies.
 - Use targeted advertising, specifically advertising placed in schools’ grab and go meals, to capture more low-SES families.

- **Develop and disseminate an emergency food distribution plan.**
 - Since many participants reported difficulties with accessing school-based meals during the COVID-19 pandemic and the FRPM program saw decreased participation nationwide, an emergency food distribution plan could potentially mitigate these issues in the future.
 - Inform parents each school year on where they would pick-up meals in case there were to be an emergency.
 - Identify locations for meal pick-ups that are easily accessible using public transportation and ensure that the majority of families are no further than 15 minutes away from a site.
 - Utilize summer breaks to pilot food programs and evaluate usage in order to develop a program that successfully reaches all families in need.