National Voices Project

Understanding barriers
Measuring opportunities
Informing initiatives for change

For children - through the voices of adults in their communities

Impact Report:
Neighborhood Safety for Young Children, 2012-2015
Introduction

The National Voices Project (NVP) offers an unprecedented perspective on community-level opportunities for children throughout the country, in the domains of health and nutrition, education and learning, and economic security - through the eyes of adults whose occupations and volunteer work affect such opportunities. In other words, the NVP reflects the perceptions of individuals throughout the United States who are in a position to improve children's opportunities in the future. We generally use the word "children" throughout the report to describe children from age 0-18 years, unless otherwise noted.

With support and collaboration from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation through the America Healing initiative, researchers at the University of Michigan are leading the NVP from 2011-2016. The central goals of the NVP are to examine the sources of racial/ethnic inequity and other disparities for children in the United States today and identify interventions that address disparities effectively.

Background

Violence in neighborhoods is a factor negatively associated with parents' and children's ability to thrive where they live. In the National Voices Project, we have asked annually about respondents' perceptions of children's opportunities to live in neighborhoods without violence, in communities that the respondents know best. We have also asked specifically about how respondents perceive such opportunities for children from different racial/ethnic backgrounds.

Perception of "lots of opportunity" for neighborhoods without violence for young children in 2015

Response options included "lots of opportunity," "some opportunity," "little or no opportunity," and "don't know."
Note: "n" value represents the number of respondents who answered this question.
Perception of "lots of opportunity" for neighborhoods without violence for young children

Key Findings

Respondents perceive substantively different levels of opportunity for children to live in neighborhoods without violence, by the race/ethnicity of children.

Native Hawaiian and American Indian/Alaska Native children are least likely to be perceived as having lots of opportunity to live in neighborhoods without violence.

While African American/Black children and Hispanic/Latino children are perceived as having somewhat more opportunity to live in neighborhoods with violence, fewer than half of respondents perceive “lots of” opportunity for these groups.

Arab/Arab American and Asian American/Pacific Islander young children are perceived to have slightly higher levels of opportunity to live in neighborhoods without violence, though all of these groups were perceived as substantially less likely to live in neighborhoods without violence compared with White children.

Over the full study period of the National Voices Project from 2012-2015, the overall perception was that young children at higher incomes had a decreasing level of opportunity to live in neighborhoods without violence.

Over the same time period, young children at lower incomes were perceived to have varying levels of opportunity to live in neighborhoods without violence.

Analyses

Young children living at higher incomes were consistently perceived to have greater opportunities to live in neighborhoods without violence than children living at lower incomes -- with almost a two-fold difference in the perceived opportunities.

Patterns of perceived opportunities to live in neighborhoods without violence were generally similar for adolescents compared with young children, with adolescents generally perceived to have less opportunity for safe neighborhoods.

Respondents who did not identify as White were generally more likely to perceive lower levels of opportunities for children to live in neighborhoods without violence.

Future Research

Subsequent research efforts would be able to illuminate what types of events or circumstances in neighborhoods are influencing respondents' (and parents') perceptions of children's safety. Such research could inform efforts to improve neighborhood safety for children, in ways that would be most impactful in community members' perceptions.

Additional research could examine how respondents' own experiences of violence in communities shape their perceptions of neighborhood safety; such experiences may be a factor that disproportionately affects perceptions of community members of color.
Mission of the National Voices Project

Led by researchers at the University of Michigan, the National Voices Project is an effort to bring the perspectives of thousands of people in communities across the United States to the national dialogue about opportunities and barriers for children related to race/ethnicity. For more information, visit the project website: NationalVoicesProject.org.

The National Voices Project conducts major national surveys twice each year among adults who work and volunteer on behalf of children. These surveys focus on racial/ethnic inequities at the community level that affect children's health, education, and economic security.

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