

# PARENTING INFANTS AND TODDLERS TODAY

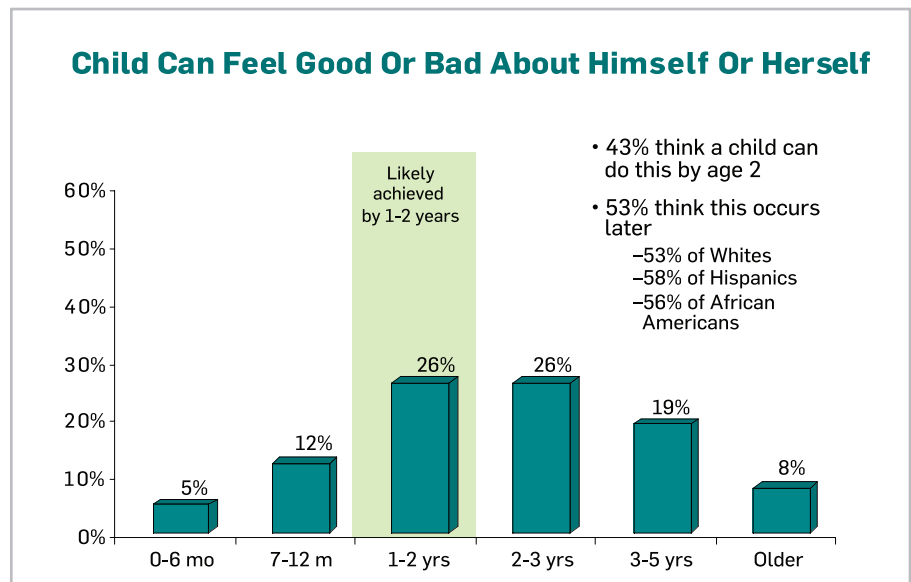
## Key Findings From a ZERO TO THREE 2009 National Parent Survey

Hart Research Associates conducted a national survey of 1,615 parents of children from birth to 3 years for ZERO TO THREE in June 2009. The survey was designed to explore the issues and challenges that parents of young children confront today where gaps in knowledge about early development exist, identify the sources of information and support to which these parents turn, and what factors influence their approach to parenting.

### Parents Don't Fully Understand How Deeply Babies' and Toddlers' Social-Emotional Development Is Affected by Their Early Experiences

- **Young children's ability to experience feelings such as sadness and fear.** Although a robust body of research shows that babies as young as 6 months can experience these feelings, a large majority of respondents (69%) think this developmental milestone occurs later in a young child's life.
- **Young children's ability to sense and be affected by parents' moods.** Babies sense and react to their parents' moods, such as being angry or sad, starting from birth. Although 34% of parents think a young child can begin to sense and be affected by their parents' moods by the time they reach 6 months, two thirds do not fully understand that babies can be affected in this critical way at such a young age.
- **The early development of self-esteem.** Research shows that most children are capable of feeling good or bad about themselves between ages 1 and 2. Although 43% of parents think that a child is capable of such feelings by age 2, a majority (53%) do not think a child can experience these feelings until they are older.
- **Young children's ability to control emotions.** Between the ages of 3 and 5, most children develop the capacity to control their emotions, such as asking for help when frustrated rather than having a tantrum. Although slightly more than one in three parents hold this expectation, a significant proportion of parents expect a young child to be capable of exerting this kind of self control at a much younger age: Forty-three percent of parents believe that children can control their emotions by age 3, and 20% expect this by age 2.

### Child Can Feel Good Or Bad About Himself Or Herself



### Faith and Religion are Powerful Influences on Parenting

Two thirds of parents say that their faith or religious background has a major (41%) or moderate (23%) influence on their approach to child rearing.

- African American parents (49%) are substantially more likely than Hispanic (35%) or White (42%) parents to identify this as having a major influence on their approach to parenting.

### Parents' Own Upbringing Has Major Influence on Their Approach to Parenting

More than half of parents (53%) say that the way their parents raised them has a major influence on their approach to parenting, and another 30% say that it has a moderate influence.

- African American parents are substantially more likely (61%) than Hispanic (49%) or White parents (52%) to identify the way they were raised as having a major influence on their approach to parenting.



National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families

To view the full report, go to: [www.zerotothree.org/parentsurvey](http://www.zerotothree.org/parentsurvey)

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- Fathers are more likely (59%) than mothers (50%) to identify the way their parents raised them as a major influence on their approach to parenting.

## The Economic Downturn Has Forced Millions of Parents to Make a Change in Their Child Care Arrangements

Twenty-five percent of parents nationwide are experiencing child care-related hardships that they attribute to the economic downturn, according to the survey. This can have significant negative impact on babies and toddlers, both because of the change in their daily caregiving routine and because of the stress this change causes parents, which young children pick up on and by which they are affected.

The most common ways in which the economic downturn has affected child care arrangements include the following:

- Not being able to afford child care (21%)
- A spouse who has lost a job assuming additional child care duties (11%)
- Cutting back on child care hours (10%)
- Making other child care arrangements (7%)
- The price of child care increasing (5%)
- Changing work schedules or splitting shifts to be able to care for the young child (5%)

## Grandparents Are Key Influencers in Children's Development and a Major Source of Daily Support

### Heavily Relied on for Regular Child Care

Half of parents (51%) have a regular caregiver for their child other than themselves or their spouse or partner, and these parents most frequently rely on a family member to provide child care.

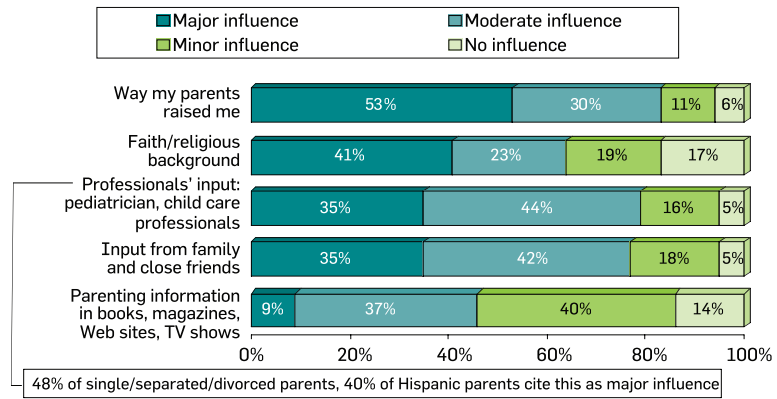
- Twenty-three percent of parents rely on the child's grandparent.
- Of the 71% of African Americans who rely on a regular caregiver, 27% rely on the child's grandparent.
- Parents with household incomes of \$100,000 or more also rely on a regular caregiver at higher rates (60%); of these, 21% rely on the child's grandparent.

### Significant Source of Information

Forty-seven percent of parents regularly turn to their mother or mother-in-law for information about child development and parenting. Mothers are an important source of parenting information

## Family History and Faith Are Powerful Influences on Parenting

How much influence does this have on your approach to parenting?



across demographic subgroups, and especially for parents under age 25, 53% of whom turn to their mothers more regularly for parenting information.

## Father's Experience of Parenting Differs From That of Mothers

- Mothers and fathers have different perceptions of what they find challenging. Twice as many mothers as fathers identify temper tantrums as a top challenge, and twice as many fathers as mothers identify sleep and bedtime issues as a top challenge.
- Fathers are less likely to be satisfied with their work/family balance.
- Men are three times more likely than their female counterparts to turn to their spouse or partner for parenting information, with 21% of men doing so compared with only 7% of women.
- Fathers are more likely than mothers to identify the way their parents raised them as a major influence on their approach to parenting, with 59% of fathers reporting this compared with 50% of mothers.
- Fathers are not as informed about young children's social-emotional development. They are less aware of the kinds of experiences that have a strong or major influence on the social and emotional development of a young child. They are also less likely to understand that young children can begin to sense whether their parents are angry or sad and can be affected by their parents' moods by 6 months of age.
- Not as many fathers as mothers are aware that talking and singing to newborns have an important influence on the cognitive development of young children.



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