

Caring For Long Island's Children

REGIONAL ATTITUDES TOWARD CHILDREN,
FAMILY, EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY

INTRODUCTION

According to Census 2000, there are 365,000 households with children on Long Island. These households account for 78,000 children of preschool age and 520,000 children enrolled in elementary and secondary schools. These young people are, quite literally, the future of Long Island.

In 2002, the Rauch Foundation, a family foundation based in Garden City and active in Long Island affairs, commissioned a series of three surveys. These surveys are intended to create a better understanding of what Long Islanders think about the region and its place in the New York metropolitan area, encourage public dialogue on issues facing Long Island, and help establish social indicators to track Long Island's progress in the spheres of quality of life, education and economic development.

The first survey, completed in December 2002, addressed the perceptions of Long Island's identity, quality of life, environment, and transportation system.¹ The third survey, in the fall of 2003, will explore issues related to economic and workforce development. This survey focuses on issues facing Long Island's children and education systems, with an emphasis on the perceptions of parents.

This telephone survey "Caring for Long Island's Children: Regional Attitudes Towards Children, Family, Education and Community" was conducted between April 14 and 27, 2003. The sample on Long Island consisted of 1,200 randomly chosen adult residents of Suffolk and Nassau, as well as over samples of 200 Blacks and 100 Latinos from those counties. In addition, we conducted interviews with 600 randomly chosen adult residents of New York City, 300 in the New Jersey suburbs, and 400 in the northern suburbs. (Further details on data collection are available in the methodological appendix at the end of this report. The responses in each region to all the questions can be found on the Rauch Foundation website, www.rauchfoundation.org.)

The results of this survey demonstrate that despite their concern about fiscal issues, Long Islanders are committed to preserving the high-quality public education for which Long Island has become known. Regardless of whether they have children, Long Islanders are surprisingly willing to consider new solutions to the fiscal challenges that could affect education, including the possibility of tax increases. Those with children voice concern over the difficult choices that they are forced to make between work and family. They show a strong desire for measures to accommodate parents in the workplace, in the form of family-friendly policies, and for greater support for the challenging job of parenting, such as parent resource centers and more options for pre-school aged children and after-school programming. Furthermore, while most parents are pleased with their local public education systems, many low-income² parents and minority parents are concerned about the quality of education that their children receive.

¹ *Long Islanders: Who Are We? A Quality of Life Survey of Long Island and the New York Metropolitan Region*, Rauch Foundation, Garden City, 2003.

² Low-income refers to those people earning less than \$60,000, which on Long Island equates to the lower 40% of income brackets.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key findings of the survey include the following:

- » The regional mood: Long Islanders are cautiously optimistic. They are clearly aware of the fiscal problems facing government and the potential negative implication for the quality of public services, but think things are headed in the right direction.
- » Facing fiscal facts: Long Islanders are ready to confront the fiscal problems in their areas. They will consider school tax increases.
- » Confidence about children: Long Islanders feel hopeful about their region's children, even more than other suburbanites, while New York City residents are anxious.
- » Comparative advantages: Long Islanders are the likeliest of residents throughout the metropolitan area to see growing up in their region as an advantage, thanks to good schools, communities, safety, and environment.
- » Family matters: Concerns about children and families focus on practical issues such as education, balancing work and family, and making ends meet.
- » Demand for early childhood education: Preschool and childcare programs serve a large proportion of children under 5 years old, but there is still an unmet demand, largely due to cost of such programs.
- » Help after school: Most Long Island children are supervised after class, but many parents would like more after-school programs.
- » Working families: Most Long Island parents work and many are pressed for time to spend with their children.
- » Family-friendly policies: Most working parents on Long Island do not have employer policies available that help them balance the demands of work and family life. There is also a strong desire for more flexibility in their workplaces. The majority of parents who say they have enough time for their kids also report that their workplace offers paid maternal or paternal leave, while among those who say they don't have enough time for their children, the opposite is the case. Long Island is lagging the country in offering family friendly policies.
- » Help for parents: Parents on Long Island also would like help in the form of parent resource centers and preschool ratings for quality.
- » Schools and pupils: Most Long Islanders are proud of their public schools, but many minority parents and low-income parents want improvements, worry about race relations in the schools, and don't feel welcome there.
- » Safety concerns: Most think their children are safe at school and in the community, but men, minorities, and low-income parents tend to be nervous about their children's safety.

REGIONAL CONCERNS

The regional mood: Long Islanders are cautiously optimistic. They are clearly aware of the fiscal problems facing government and the potential implications for the quality of public services, but think things are headed in the right direction.

Long Islanders think the budget crisis, including the attendant tax increases and spending cuts, is the most important problem facing county government, with 31% mentioning it. (The problem seemed more intense in Nassau County, where 36% considered the budget crises to be the top problem facing county government, compared to 26% in Suffolk County, though it also was the top issue there.) The next major issue, the sagging economy, is also financial in nature, but it ranks well behind, at 12%. These are followed by almost equal emphases on education (9%), traffic and crime (8% each), and uncontrolled development (7%), with Long Island's housing needs cited by 5%. The focus on fiscal crises as the top issue holds true almost across the board in terms of race, income, gender, and party. The only exceptions are Black men with incomes under \$60,000 (which represents the lower 40% of income categories on Long Island) and Black women of all income categories, both of whom rate jobs as the top priority.

The concerns of Long Islanders are similar to those of other suburbanites — and quite different from those of New York City residents. In all three suburban regions, the budget crisis and economy are the top two issues. In contrast, in the City crime is the number one concern, followed by the economy, while the budget crisis is in fourth place.

Nonetheless, despite the problems facing their communities, the majority of Long Islanders still think things are headed in the right direction. This is the view of 54% of Long Islanders, while 24% say their areas are headed in the wrong direction. Almost all sub-groups of Long Islanders hold positive views about their areas. The one exception is Black men, who are pessimistic about the direction of their areas by 43% to 33%.

LONG ISLAND'S FISCAL CONDITION

Facing fiscal facts: Long Islanders are ready to confront the fiscal problems in their areas. They will consider school tax increases.

Long Islanders are willing to contribute more in taxes, if they must do so to avoid damaging education cutbacks. If their local school district is forced to make a choice, they favor raising taxes over teacher layoffs and bigger classes by a 19-point margin, 47% to 26%. The wide margin of support for quality public education, even at the price of higher taxes, contradicts the assumption that Long Islanders care only about keeping their taxes down. Although support was highest among Long Islanders with children, even those without children at home preferred higher taxes to teacher layoffs by an 11-point margin.

The poll's findings show that most Long Islanders are willing to bear heavier burdens to ensure the future of quality education.

CHILDREN AND COMMUNITIES

Confidence about children: Long Islanders feel hopeful about their region's children, even more than other suburbanites, while New York City residents are anxious.

Comparative advantages: Long Islanders are the likeliest of residents throughout the metropolitan area to see growing up in their region as an advantage, thanks to good schools, family-oriented communities, safety, and environment. New York City residents are the most doubtful about their region.

Confidence about Children

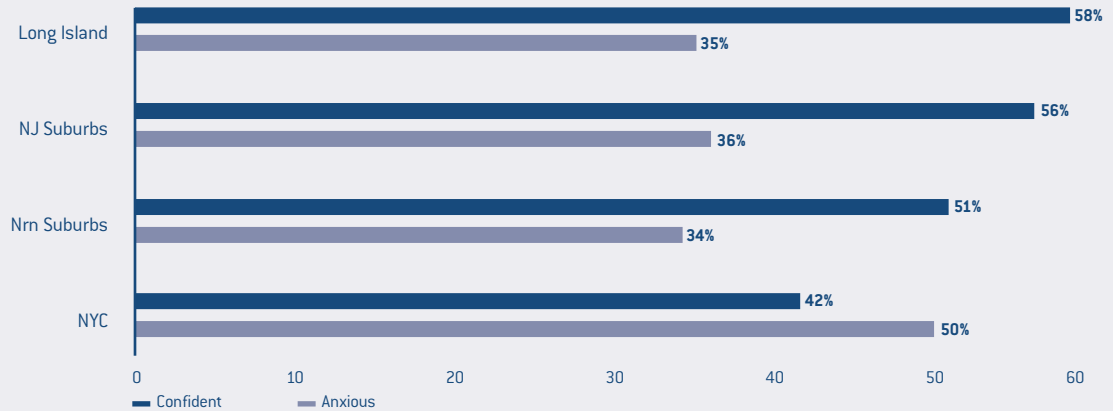
Most Long Islanders are confident about the future of children growing up in their communities. (See Chart 1.) All told, some 58% of Long Island residents say they feel confident about children in their community today, while just 35% say they feel anxious about them. This is the highest proportion of positive replies of any region in the metropolitan area.

Confidence is widespread among almost all age groups and most racial and income categories on Long Island. There are three exceptions, however: families with incomes under \$20,000, Black women, and women who work part-time are predominantly anxious about children.

Like Long Islanders, if by smaller margins, majorities in the New Jersey suburbs (56% to 36%) and Northern suburbs (51% to 34%) express confidence about children in their communities. But New York City residents take the opposite view: some 50% say they feel anxious about children in their communities, while only 42% are confident.

CHART 1_ CONFIDENT SUBURBS, ANXIOUS CITY Q4/N = LI 1200, NJ SUBURBS 400, NRN SUBURBS 400, NYC 600

THINKING ABOUT CHILDREN IN YOUR COMMUNITY TODAY, WHAT BEST DESCRIBES HOW YOU FEEL?



Comparative Advantages

Similarly, suburbanites — above all, Long Islanders — say that growing up in their region gives children an advantage. More than two out of three Long Islanders (68%) feel this way, as do more than 60% in the other two suburban regions. (See Chart 2.) There is impressive unity on this score on Long Island: large majorities of every racial, income and social group see growing up there as an advantage. Long Island’s crown jewel, without a doubt, is good schools, mentioned by 49% of those who see growing up there as an advantage, with family-oriented communities, safety, and environment following in its list of advantages. The responses for the other suburban regions are similar. (See Chart 3).

CHART 2_ THE SUBURBAN EDGE (Q4/N = LI 1200, NJ SUBURBS 400, NRN SUBURBS 400, NYC 600)

DO YOU THINK GROWING UP IN [LONG ISLAND RESIDENTS:] LONG ISLAND / [NEW JERSEY RESIDENTS:] THE NEW JERSEY SUBURBS / [NORTHERN SUBURBURB RESIDENTS:] THIS COUNTY / [NYC RESIDENTS:] NEW YORK CITY] GIVES CHILDREN AN ADVANTAGE OR DISADVANTAGE? A SIGNIFICANT ONE, OR A MINOR ONE?

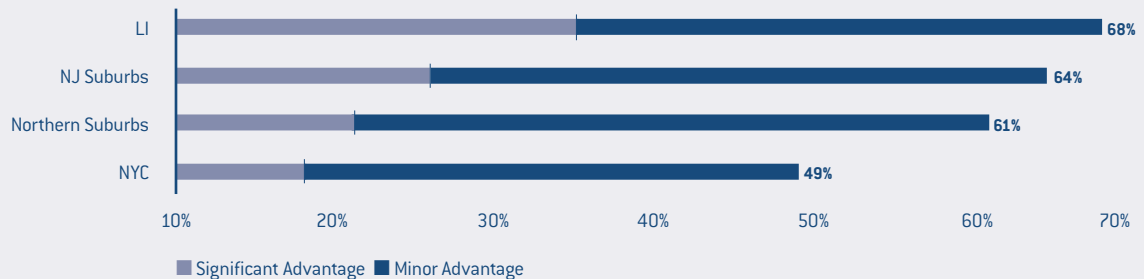
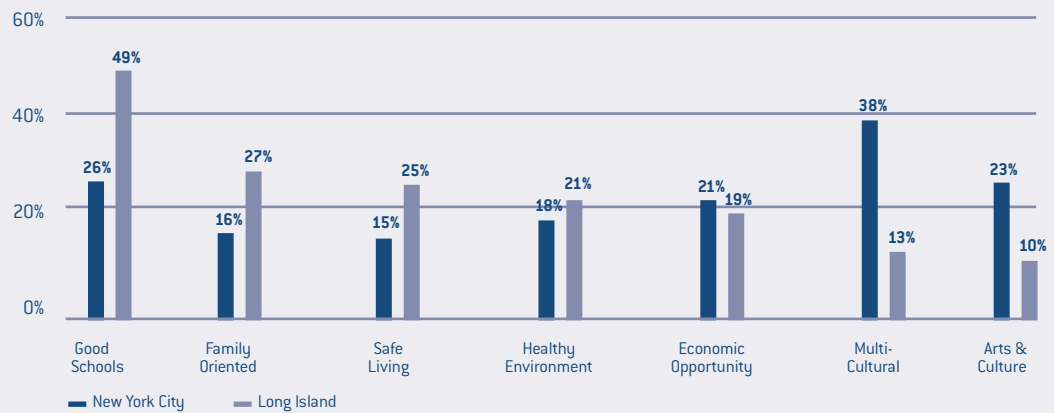


CHART 3_ DIFFERENT FOLKS, DIFFERENT STROKES (Q9 / N = LI 1200, NYC 600)

WHY DO YOU SAY THAT GROWING UP [LONG ISLANDERS:] ON LONG ISLAND [NEW YORK CITY:] IN NEW YORK CITY IS AN ADVANTAGE?



New York City residents are more doubtful about the urban lifestyle than suburbanites are about theirs: just 49% of New York City residents regard growing up there as an advantage, while 34% see it as a disadvantage. But those who like the idea of raising children in the City do so for different reasons than those suburban residents cite regarding their own areas. Besides schools, those who see growing up in New York City as an advantage cite as reasons its diversity and cultural life — items that figure last on the list of advantages for the suburbs.

But in every region, the minorities of residents who consider growing up there to be a disadvantage cite the same reasons: crime, drugs, and poor schools. After those, Long Islanders mention housing costs and lack of community, while New York City residents complain that the city is too big, with too many distractions and poor race relations. Long Islanders who don't think growing up there is an advantage tend to have low income and education levels, although even among those groups only around one-fourth feel this way.

AN AGENDA FOR LONG ISLAND FAMILIES

Family matters: Concerns about children and families focus on practical issues such as education, balancing work and family, and making ends meet.

Demand for early childhood education: Preschool and childcare programs serve a large proportion of children under 5 years old, but there is still an unmet demand, largely due to cost of such programs.

Help after school: Most Long Island children are supervised after class, but many parents would like more after-school programs.

Working families: Most Long Island parents work and many are pressed for time to spend with their children.

Family-friendly policies: Most working parents on Long Island do not have employer policies available that help them balance the demands of work and family life. There is also a strong desire for more flexibility in their workplaces.

Help for parents: Parents on Long Island also would like help in the form of parent resource centers and preschool ratings for quality.

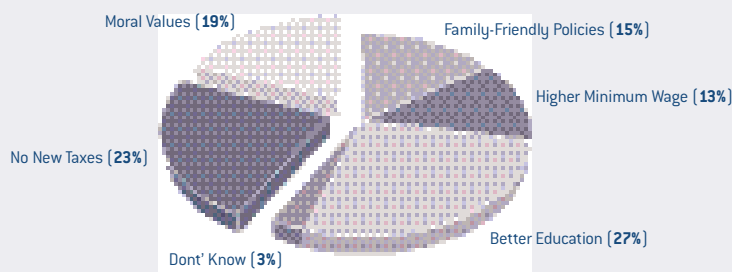
Family Matters

The survey provides more evidence of the centrality of education to Long Island's families: it is the top concern for children in their communities, mentioned by 24%. What is striking is how widely people understand the importance of education to their communities. It is Long Islanders' top priority for children whether or not they have any themselves. Education is followed by crime and drugs, cited by 21% of all respondents (and higher proportions of parents of school-aged kids and Black and Latino men). After these, there is a second tier of issues, including parents lacking time for their kids (10%), struggling to make ends meet (9%), and trying to instill moral values (8%). School safety rated fairly low as a spontaneous mention (6%), as well as other issues including teen sex and AIDS (3%) and TV and movie sex and violence (3%).

The measures Long Islanders would advocate for to help families reflect their education-related priorities and work-family balance-related priorities. (See Chart 4.) Education-related issues make up their top priority, cited by a total of 27%. These include improving public schools (13%), expanding after-school programs (8%), and better preschool and child care (7%). Next come avoiding tax increases, mentioned by 23%, reflecting the economic pressure on families, and strengthening moral values, cited by 19%. Two work-related measures follow, giving working parents more flexibility to cope with work-family issues (15%) and a higher minimum wage (13%), responses to the wage and family concerns noted above.

CHART 4_ WHAT'S BEST FOR FAMILIES ON LONG ISLAND (07 / N = 1200)

TO HELP FAMILIES IN YOUR COMMUNITY, TELL ME WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING SHOULD BE A TOP PRIORITY.



Of course, the importance of children's and family concerns is, in part, a reflection of the proportions of Long Islanders who have them. More than one-third (36%) of Long Islanders in the survey have children under 18 living with them. These include majorities of the 25-34 year olds (57%) and 35-49 year olds (66%), the life cycle periods when parenthood is most common. This is a substantial portion of the population and higher than the national average for the same age groups. In addition to these age groups, several other groups have above-average proportions of children, including 49% of those with annual incomes over \$60,000, 51% of Latinos, and 58% of women working part time. Some 11% of respondents have preschoolers (children under 5). Preschoolers were most common among younger parents (30% of under-35 year olds), as well as among those making below \$60,000, non-college educated, and Latino residents.

Early Childhood Education

The survey results suggest that, of Long Island families with children under 5 years old, 46% are in preschool or childcare. Around three-fourths of the three and four year olds go to preschool or childcare; twice as many are in preschool as childcare. Some 25% of infants and toddlers (birth to two) are in childcare.

However, the poll also found significant unmet demand for early care and education on Long Island and suggests that the main reason is cost. Some 17% of Long Island parents with children under 5 say they have children not currently in preschool or childcare programs that they wish were in such programs. There are clear signs in the data that the major factor keeping these children out of programs is finances. Many of these parents are from families that make less than \$60,000 and almost all say that the reason why their children are not enrolled is either that the programs are unaffordable or that they lost their jobs. These findings show the need to make quality affordable early childhood education and care programs available to all Long Island families.

After-school Supervision and Programming

The survey findings show that, according to their parents, most Long Island children are supervised after school, with substantial proportions in after-school programs at school or in the community (though there may be some over reporting in this category). As can be expected, the types of supervision varied considerably with the children's age (see Table 1). After school, 77% of Long Island's elementary school children are supervised at home, 15% are in extracurricular activities, and 8% are in after-school programs in the school (5%) or in the community (3%). Among middle schoolers, 41% are supervised at home, 28% participate in school extra-curricular activities, and 23% in after-school programs (14% at school, 9% in the community).

TABLE 1. NOT HOME ALONE

	What does your oldest child do after school? 040, N = 298		
	ELEMENTARY SCHOOL %	MIDDLE SCHOOL %	HIGH SCHOOL %
Supervised at home	77	41	12
Extracurricular activity in school	15	28	42
After-school program in school	5	14	2
After-school program in community	3	9	1
Has a job	0	6	44
Unsupervised at home	1	11	19
Visits friends	6	7	4
Hangs out	0	0	4

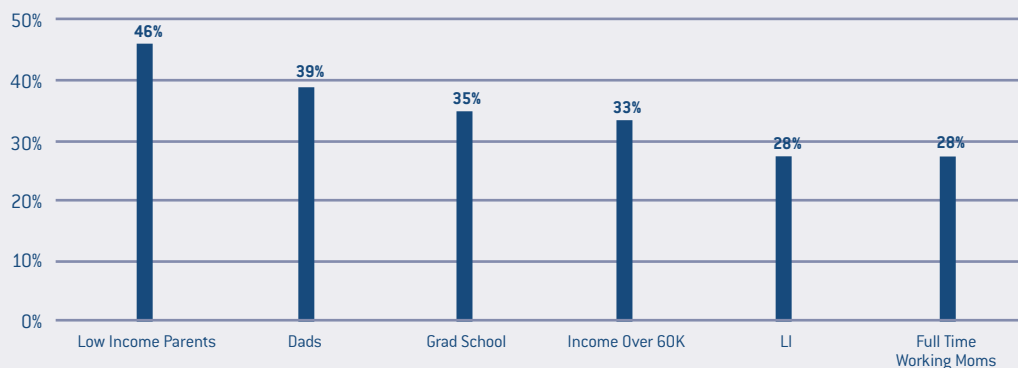
Few Long Island high school students (12%) are supervised at home, while 42% are in extra-curricular activities in school and 44% work. High schoolers are also the only group where substantial proportions are on their own after school: 19% of high school parents say their children are unsupervised at home, 4% say they visit friends, and 4% that they hang out.

There are also major differences in children's participation in organized after-school activity according to family income, race, and whether or not their mothers work. Children from families making under \$60,000 are less likely to participate in school extra-curricular activities (20%, vs. 35% for those from families with incomes over \$60,000) and are also less likely to have after school jobs (13%, vs. 21% for those from families with incomes over \$60,000). Children from homes with income below \$60,000 are more likely to be supervised at home (52%) than those from families with an income over \$60,000 (34%).

The differences in participation noted above explain the pattern of unmet demand. Parents tend to want after-school programs for their younger children, for whom fewer formal after-school opportunities are available. Approximately one out of four elementary school

CHART 5. **PARENTS UNDER PRESSURE** (Q23/N = LI 431, NJ SUBURBS 103, NRN SUBURBS 129, NYC 257)

PROPORTIONS OF PARENTS IN EACH GROUP WHO SPEND LESS THAN 15 HRS/WEEK WITH THEIR KIDS.



parents (24%) and middle school parents (27%), respectively, would like to have their children in programs, compared to just 12% of the parents of high schoolers, for whom more after-school activities are available.

In demographic terms, the largest proportions of parents who would like their children to participate more in such programs are among those whose children now participate the least: families with incomes under \$60,000 (27%), Blacks (42%), Latinos (24%), and those with full-time working mothers (27%). Given that U.S. census projections suggest that on Long Island, the Black population will increase 9% and the Latino population 21% by 2010, the need for additional programs for currently underserved populations will only grow.

Working Families

It's a fact of life today: most of Long Island's parents work. The working population includes 91% of married fathers, 66% of married mothers, and 56% of unmarried mothers. Almost half of Long Island's mothers work full time. After the massive shift of women into the work force in recent decades, few full-time homemakers are left. They number only 29% of married mothers on Long Island and 16% of unmarried ones. Fully 70% of Long Island women who work (either full time or part time) have children under 18, and 30% of them have children under 5.

The combination of parenthood and work leaves a lot of Long Island parents short of time to spend with their children. (See Chart 5.) More than one parent in four spends less than 15 hours a week with their kids (28%) or has dinner with the family 3 times a week or less (26%). Parents earning less than \$60,000 experience the most severe time squeeze when they try to balance work and family, with 46% of them having less than 15 hours weekly for their

children. Not surprisingly, those who spend under 15 hours a week with their children are likelier to be fathers. However, time shortage is also more frequent among parents with college degrees (33%) and higher income (33% of those with incomes over \$60,000). This may reflect the more extensive time demands that high-level and professional jobs pose, both in the workplace and at home. The same is true of one in five mothers who work part time, as well as more than one in four of those mothers who work full time, who face the classic problem of the “double shift” at work and home. These findings point to a very real time bind facing many working parents in the region.

Family Friendly Policies

Although many Long Island parents have trouble balancing work and family, policies intended to provide working parents with more flexibility regarding work time, often referred to as family-friendly policies, are available to fewer than half of working Long Island parents (see Table 2). Paid maternity or paternity leave is offered to 48% of them. Some 46% can take paid time off for other issues; part time work is available to 32%, and flexible working hours (starting later or earlier to meet family needs) to 37%. More fathers than mothers reported the availability of paid leave for family issues at their workplace, by 49% to 45%. Nevertheless, more mothers reported paid parental leave (52% to 46%), part-time opportunities (40% to 32%), and equal proportions had the choice of flexible work schedules (37%). However, judging by data from a previous national survey of parents, where 67% reported that flexible hours were available and 53% paid leave for family needs, Long Island is lagging the country as a whole in the adoption of family-friendly policies.³

While options are more common among some of the groups most pressed for time, substantial proportions are not offered them. For instance, 36% of Long Island workers earning more than \$60,000 and 32% of the college-educated cannot take maternity or paternity leave. Moreover, some groups who demonstrated great need for family-friendly policies were actually less likely to be offered family-friendly options. For instance, parents of preschool children were less likely to be offered such policies. Likewise, the youngest parents — 18-24 year olds, who not only have younger children but lower levels of education and income — were the age group least likely to have family-friendly options available.

TABLE 2_ FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES

WORKING LONG ISLAND PARENTS ONLY	WORKPLACE OFFERS %
Paid maternity or paternity leave	48
Paid leave for other issues	46
Part time work options	32
Flexible working hours	37

0.27, N = 32

³ Charney Research, [What Will Parents Vote For? Report on a survey of American parents](#), (New York, National Parenting Association, 2000).

Parents clearly want family-friendly policies and think that such measures matter. Among Long Island parents, 76% would be interested in taking advantage of a law allowing three days paid leave annually for family needs such as parent-teacher conferences or doctor's visits (and 48% would be very interested). The desire to make use of such a law is true across the board and includes majorities of all social groups. Moreover, the availability of family-friendly policies seems to have a positive impact on the lives of parents and their families. For instance, the majority of parents who say they have enough time for their kids also report that their workplace offers paid maternal or paternal leave, while among those who say they don't have enough time for their children, the opposite is the case.

The poll results show that there is a need to expand the availability of family-friendly policies among Long Island employers. Even fairly inexpensive options — such as flexible hours — are less common on Long Island than is the case nationwide.

Programming to Support Parents

Long Island's parents indicate great interest in programming that would support them in their parenting role. The survey asked about attitudes towards family resource programs and parent groups in the community or at the workplace, which would help parents develop parenting strategies and locate useful parenting information and resources. Fully 71% of Long Island's parents expressed an interest in such programs, with 30% very interested in taking advantage of them. Interest was particularly strong among parents with less than high school education (47% were very interested) and among Black and Latino parents (44% of both very interested). Both parents of preschoolers and those of school-aged children expressed interest in fairly similar proportions. These results represent clear evidence of a need for programs to assist parents in working out how best to play their vital role.

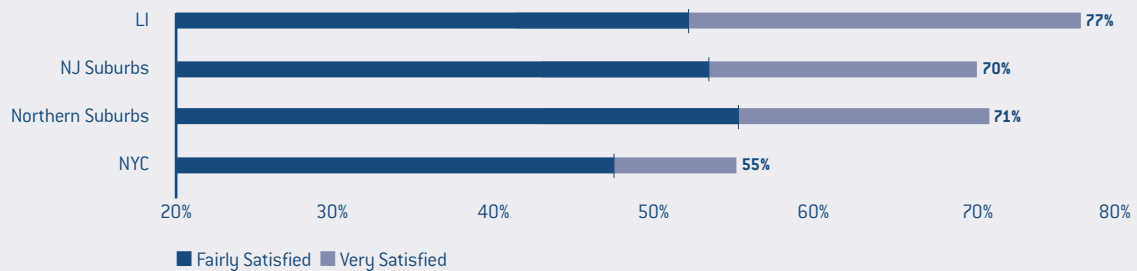
Specifically among the parents of preschoolers, there was a strong desire for help in the selection of preschools or childcare centers. Among Long Islanders with children under five, fully 66% said that if ratings were available to determine the quality of local preschools and child care centers (on a one to five-star basis, for example) they would want to use them in selecting one for their child. This idea received broad, across-the-board support from parents, who understand that quality preschool improves outcomes for their children.

K-12 EDUCATION

Schools and pupils: Most Long Islanders are proud of their public schools, but many minority parents and parents earning less than \$60,000 want improvements, worry about race relations in the schools, and don't feel welcome there.

CHART 6_ SCHOOLS, THE CROWN JEWELS (Q28/N = LI 1200, NJ SUBURBS 300, NRN SUBURBS 400, NYC 600)

ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN YOUR AREA?



The vast majority of Long Island's residents are pleased with the performance of its public schools. Some 77% of Long Islanders say they are satisfied with the quality of public education in their area and 25% say they are very satisfied. Some 62% of Long Islanders are very or fairly confident that local public high school students will meet the New York State minimum achievement standards when these become effective in 2005. Among parents, satisfaction with their oldest child's school is extremely high among the minority of Long Island parents with children in private school (71% very satisfied, 96% satisfied), but the majority who send their children to public school are also fairly contented (38% very satisfied, 88% satisfied).

Long Island is also the most positive region in the metropolitan area when it comes to the quality of the schools their children attend. (See Chart 6.) Satisfaction with the schools in the other suburban regions is close to the level reported on Long Island, but slightly lower. In New York City, on the other hand, only 55% of residents say they are satisfied with the public schools and only 8% are very satisfied, the lowest proportions in any region in the metropolitan area.

However, while the general view of Long Island's schools is positive, the poll found levels of discontent with public education worth noting among two groups: Blacks of all income categories and residents earning less than \$20,000. Some 22% of Blacks are dissatisfied with the quality of public education in their areas (substantially more than was the case for Whites or Latinos). Likewise, 26% of Black parents were dissatisfied with the quality of education their children were receiving. Discontent was also substantial among the Long Islanders with incomes under \$20,000. Some 31% of them are dissatisfied with local public schools, and the majority of them did not think that most pupils in local public schools would meet the new New York State standards.

Race relations at school also concern many Black and Latino parents. Some 38% of Black parents rate race relations at their oldest child's school unfavorably (fair or poor). Although Latino parents are more positive about school quality than Blacks, they are almost as concerned about race relations, 36% rating them unfavorably. In contrast, only 19% of White parents see race relations at their oldest child's school as problematic.

Altogether, some 79% of Long Island parents claimed to attend parent meetings at their oldest child's school (a figure that may contain some over-claim). Gender is the biggest factor determining attendance — fathers are three times as likely to miss school meetings as mothers. However, the proportion that does not go regularly also is almost twice as high among Latinos (31%) as among Whites (17%) — and substantially higher among Whites earning less than \$60,000 (26%). We also asked whether parents felt they could work with the schools to solve their children's problems. Most (88%) felt they could — but parents under 35 and Black parents were three times, and Latino parents twice as likely to feel they could not. Likewise, the proportion of Black parents who felt unable to help with problems in the schools was three times as high, and that of Latinos, twice as high, as among Whites. In short, although most Long Islanders are understandably proud of the quality of their schools, there are still important concerns to address among minority students in Long Island schools and their parents.

CHILDREN'S SAFETY

Safety concerns: Most think their children are safe at school and in the community, but men, minorities, and low-income parents tend to be nervous about their safety.

The safety of children in the school or community is a major concern for only a few Long Islanders, but remains a nagging anxiety for certain groups. Just 6% of Long Islanders say their children are unsafe at school, and 7% say they are unsafe in the neighborhood. The results on youth safety on Long Island are significantly better than those in New York City, where more than twice as many parents feel their children are unsafe at school (13%) or in the community (20%). The proportions of those who think their children are very safe also are higher among parents earning more than \$60,000 (45%) and Whites (40%) than among parents earning less than \$60,000 (25%) and Black or Latino parents (27% and 31% respectively). The pattern of responses is similar for safety in the community. From these results, though youth on Long Island are generally thought to be safe, some parents do worry about their children's safety, particularly minority parents of public school pupils and parents earning less than \$60,000.

CONCLUSION

This survey presents an image of Long Islanders' concerns about children and families that is familiar in some ways and surprising in others. The local schools are the pride of Long Island. Along with its social and physical environment, these advantages make Long Islanders hopeful about the future of children growing up here. Education, balancing work and family needs, and economic security together dominate the agenda of Long Island families. The very real time squeeze on working parents has sparked wide interest among them in family-friendly policies. Although early care and education programs and after-school activities reach many children, there is still an unmet demand, as well as a desire among parents for help choosing programs and developing parenting strategies. This underlines the need for an effective, coordinated system of quality early learning programs and after-school care on Long Island. Although Long Islanders do worry about taxes and budgets, they are also ready to do what they must to maintain the quality of education. The schools are widely perceived to serve most pupils well, but many minority parents and parents earning less than \$60,000 have concerns about the quality of education, race relations, and the welcome they receive in their children's schools. These are issues that leaders, community and business groups, and members of the public concerned with Long Island's children — and its future — must address.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted as a telephone survey via random-digit dialing around the New York metropolitan area to reach adult respondents (18 or older). The poll was conducted in four regions:

- » Long Island: 1200 interviews of the general population of Nassau and Suffolk counties, along with oversamples of 200 Blacks and 100 Latinos.
- » New York City: 600 interviews citywide.
- » The Northern suburbs; 400 interviews in Westchester, Rockland, Orange, and Fairfield counties.
- » The New Jersey suburbs: 300 interviews across the New Jersey counties that fall within the Census Bureau's New York Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area, Bergen, Passaic, Hudson, Hunterdon, Middlesex, Somerset, Monmouth, Mercer, Warren, Ocean, Essex, Morris, Sussex, and Union.

The results for each of the four regions were tabulated separately. In the case of Long Island, for Island-wide results the over-samples were weighted down to their correct proportion of the regional population. Some questions were only asked of particular sub-sets of respondents, such as parents of preschool or school-aged children.

This yielded the following error margins for the different regions:

- » Long Island: +/-2.8%
- » New York City: +/- 4%

- » Northern suburbs: +/- 4.9%
- » New Jersey suburbs: +/-5.7%

Interviewing was conducted from April 14-27, 2003. Interviews were conducted in English or Spanish, depending upon the preference of the respondent.

The results of the survey were weighted slightly in order to make them correspond to the demographics of each region within the metropolitan area. The weighted data closely reflect the demographics of Long Island as measured by the results of the 2000 Census (See Table 3).

TABLE 3 SURVEY AND CENSUS RESULTS

	Rauch Survey %	2000 Census %
Gender		
Male	48	48
Female	52	52
Age		
18-34	28	27
35-49	32	33
50-64	21	21
65+	19	18
Race/Ethnicity		
White	77	77
Black	8	8
Latino	9	10
Other/Refused	3	6

NB: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding of individual percentages

This research was supervised by Professor Edward Blakely, Dean of the Milano School of Urban Policy and Public Management at New School University in New York City. This report was written by Dr. Craig Charney, Senior Research Fellow at the Milano School and President of Charney Research, a New York City polling firm. Laura Forlano and Adriana Best of Charney Research managed the survey, and Alan Aja of the Milano School provided research assistance. The Regional Plan Association supplied demographic and other regional data. Funding, support, and guidance were provided by the Rauch Foundation, with particular thanks due to Dr. Nancy Douzinas, Linda Landsman, Carrie Meek Gallagher, and Patricia Schaefer for their assistance and confidence.

