



Parenting and Pregnant Students: Childcare and Parenting Strain

A Research Report from the
2022 Student Life Survey

Center for the Study of Student Life

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THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explores the childcare experiences and parenting strain of parenting and pregnant students at The Ohio State University. Data for this report are from the 2022 Student Life Survey. In January 2022, 11,701 students on the Columbus campus were surveyed, out of which 1,639 responded, resulting in a response rate of 14.0%. A sample of 6,741 undergraduate students were surveyed; 14.4% responded ($n = 970$). A sample of 3,795 graduate students were surveyed; 14.5% responded ($n = 552$). A sample of 1,100 professional students were surveyed; 10.4% responded ($n = 114$).

KEY FINDINGS

- **74.0%** of parents with children younger than kindergarten age report needing some type of childcare arrangement. **52.5%** of parents with K-12 children report needing some type of childcare arrangement.
- **24.0%** of parents with children younger than kindergarten age and **11.9%** of parents with K-12 children reported missing 4 or more days of work or classes in the last semester (Autumn 2021) because of childcare issues.
- **64.3%** of pregnant students, **68.0%** of parents with children younger than kindergarten age, and **59.3%** of parents with K-12 children reported experiencing significant amounts of stress related to their identity as a parenting student.

INTRODUCTION

This report explores the childcare experiences and parenting strain of parenting and pregnant students at The Ohio State University. The unique experiences of students attending university while being a primary caregiver can influence the way they interact with other students, staff and faculty. This report examines how sense of belonging differs between students without primary caregiver responsibilities and those who are parenting or pregnant.

METHODS

The Student Life Survey is administered annually by the Center for the Study of Student Life to examine trends in student engagement, sense of belonging and satisfaction with the college experience. The 2022 Student Life Survey was administered to a stratified, random sample of 11,701 Ohio State students at the beginning of spring semester (January 2022). This sample comprised 6,741 undergraduate students, 3,795 graduate and 1,100 professional students, all on the Columbus campus. A total of 1,639 students responded to the survey. Three respondents were removed for mischievous or careless response patterns, resulting in a final sample of 1,636 respondents and an overall response rate of 14.0%. The response rate was 14.4% among undergraduate students, 14.5% among graduate students and 10.4% among professional students.

This report only includes the 106 respondents who reported being pregnant or being financial responsible for a child under the age of 18. Of these 106 respondents, 13.2% reported being pregnant, 47.2% reported having at least one child younger than kindergarten age, and 55.7% reported having at least one child in kindergarten through 12th grade.

FINDINGS

CHILDCARE ARRANGEMENTS

This section reports on childcare arrangements for children younger than kindergarten age and for children and youth from kindergarten through high school.

Children Younger than Kindergarten Age

Table 1: Childcare Needs of Parents with Children Younger than Kindergarten Age (*n* = 50)

How often is your pre-kindergarten child/children in need of some type of childcare situation other than you or your partner?	%
Full-time	40.0%
Part-time	16.0%
As needed	18.0%
No childcare need and do not plan to utilize childcare in the immediate future?	26.0%

Respondents who reported having a child in full-time, part-time and as-needed childcare were asked a follow-up question about childcare providers and The Ohio State University Childcare Program.

Table 2: Childcare Providers for Children Younger than Kindergarten Age (n = 37)

Who provides care for your pre-kindergarten child/children when you are at school or work? Select all that apply.	%
Daycare program	48.7%
Other family members, friends or neighbors	48.7%
Partner watches child/children	29.7%
In-home group care	16.2%
Babysitter/nanny in your own home	8.1%
Other	16.2%

Note. Respondents could select more than one option, which is why percentages add up to more than 100%.

Six respondents who selected 'other' as an option for childcare providers chose to write in an answer. These six responses included other specific family members, preschool, and themselves as a childcare option.

Table 3: Usage of Ohio State Child Care Program (n = 50)

Do you currently use The Ohio State University Child Care Program?	%
Yes, currently enrolled	13.5%
No, but I am on the waitlist	10.8%
No, and I am not on the waitlist	75.7%

Parents with K-12 Children

Table 4: Childcare Needs of Parents with K-12 Children (n = 59)

When is your school-aged child/children (K-12) in need of some type of childcare? Select all that apply.	%
No childcare need, with no plans to utilize	47.5%
Before and/or after school care	44.1%
Summer care	22.0%
Evenings or weekends	11.9%
Unsure	5.1%

Note. Respondents could select more than one option, which is why percentages add up to more than 100%.

Respondents who reported having a child in before and/or after school care, evenings or weekends, summer care or were unsure of their childcare needs were asked a follow-up question about childcare providers.

Table 5: Childcare Providers for K-12 Children (n = 31)

Who provides care for your pre-kindergarten child/children when you are at school or work? Select all that apply.	%
Other family members, friends or neighbors	51.6%
Partner watches child/children	48.4%
School program or childcare program	38.7%
Babysitter/nanny in your own home	22.6%
In-home group care	3.2%
Other	6.5%

Two respondents who selected 'other' as an option for childcare providers chose to write in an answer. These two responses included daycare and the child watching themselves.

CHILDCARE PAYMENT

Table 6: Paying for Childcare

Those who reported utilizing childcare were asked about how they pay for childcare.

How do you currently pay or plan to pay for childcare? Select all that apply.	Parents with children younger than kindergarten age (n = 37)	Parents with K-12 children (n = 35)
Out of pocket	75.7%	80.0%
I do not pay for childcare	16.2%	8.6%
Childcare allowance through financial aid	5.4%	8.6%
Childcare or parenting grants (CCAMPIS grant or another grant)	2.7%	2.9%
Government childcare assistance (e.g., publicly funded childcare through the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services)	2.7%	0.0%
Other	2.7%	2.9%

One respondent who selected 'other' as an option for childcare payment wrote in that they have a family member who pays for their childcare.

CHILDCARE STRAIN

Table 7: Absence Because of Childcare Issues

During last semester (Autumn 2021), how many days were you absent from work or classes because of childcare issues?	Parents with children younger than kindergarten age (n = 50)	Parents with K-12 children (n = 59)
0 days	44.0%	52.5%
1-2 days	22.0%	25.4%
3-4 days	10.0%	10.2%
4 or more days	24.0%	11.9%

Table 8: Affordability of and Access to Childcare

Percentage of respondents who selected “Strongly Agree” or “Agree”.	Parents with children younger than kindergarten age (n = 50)	Parents with K-12 children (n = 59)
I can afford the childcare I currently need.	30.0%	35.6%
I have access to the childcare I currently need.	48.0%	41.4%

PARENTING STRAIN

Table 9: Parenting Strain on Pregnant and Parenting Students

Percentage of respondents who selected “Strongly Agree” or “Agree”.	Pregnant students (n = 14)	Parents with children younger than kindergarten age (n = 50)	Parents with K-12 children (n = 59)
I feel like Ohio State is a family friendly place.	28.6%	56.0%	54.2%
As a parenting student, I feel supported by faculty and staff.	42.9%	68.0%	69.5%
As a parenting student, I feel supported by Ohio State’s academic policies.	28.6%	58.0%	55.9%
I feel isolated as a parenting student on the Ohio State campus.	50.0%	40.0%	20.3%
Being a parenting student has caused me a significant amount of stress.	64.3%	68.0%	59.3%
My parenting responsibilities have negatively affected my academic progress.	21.4%	36.0%	28.8%

Percentage of respondents who selected “Strongly Agree” or “Agree”.	Pregnant students (n = 14)	Parents with children younger than kindergarten age (n = 50)	Parents with K-12 children (n = 59)
I have reduced or considered reducing my course load or school hours because of my parenting responsibilities.	50.0%	48.0%	42.4%
I am considering transferring to a different institution due to my parenting responsibilities.	14.3%	6.0%	3.4%
I am considering dropping out of school or my program due to my parenting responsibilities.	21.4%	8.0%	5.1%

CONCLUSION

Parenting and pregnant students face unique challenges at Ohio State. In addition to the stress of school, they encounter additional stressors related to childcare and parenting. Nearly one-quarter of parents with children younger than kindergarten age reported missing four or more days of work of classes because of childcare issues. Few respondents reported using childcare or parenting grants (like CCAMPIS), financial aid or government childcare assistance (like childcare support through the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services), with most respondents reporting that they pay for childcare out of pocket. Thus, it is possible that some parenting students are unfamiliar with these various forms of childcare assistance.

Less than half of parents with children younger than kindergarten age and parents with older children reported having access to the childcare they currently need. Moreover, only 30.0% of parents with young children and 35.6% of parents with older children reported being able to afford the childcare they currently need. This highlights the need for increased access and affordability of childcare options for parenting and pregnant students.

Parents with children had higher rates of agreement that Ohio State is a family friendly place compared to pregnant students. Additionally, pregnant students had lower rates of agreement that they felt supported by faculty, staff and Ohio State's academic policies. Half of all pregnant students reported that they already have or have considered reducing their course load, transferring to a different institution or dropping out of school because of their parenting responsibilities.

APPENDIX: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

	Pregnant Students		Parents with Children Younger than Kindergarten Age		Parents with K-12 Children	
	<i>n</i>	Percent	<i>n</i>	Percent	<i>n</i>	Percent
Total	14		50		59	
Academic Level	14		50		59	
Undergraduate student	2	14.3%	7	14.0%	10	17.0%
Graduate student	10	71.4%	35	70.0%	48	81.4%
Professional student	2	14.3%	8	16.0%	1	1.7%
Gender Identity	14		50		59	
Man	8	57.1%	31	62.0%	21	35.6%
Woman	6	42.9%	17	34.0%	38	64.4%
Another identity not listed	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Prefer not to say	0	0.0%	2	4.0%	0	0.0%
Transgender Status	14		50		59	
Transgender	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Cisgender	14	100.0%	47	94.0%	59	100.0%
Not sure	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Prefer not to say	0	0.0%	3	6.0%	0	0.0%
Marital Status	14		50		59	
Married	13	92.7%	48	96.0%	48	81.4%
Cohabiting	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	5.1%
Partner	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	1.8%
Single	1	7.1%	2	4.0%	6	10.2%
Race/Ethnicity	14		50		59	
African American or Black	0	0.0%	3	6.0%	5	8.5%
Asian or Asian American	3	21.4%	8	16.0%	5	8.5%
Latinx or Hispanic	2	14.3%	1	2.0%	1	1.7%
Middle Eastern or Arab American	1	7.1%	1	2.0%	1	1.7%
White or European American	8	57.1%	32	64.0%	43	72.9%
Prefer not to answer	0	0.0%	4	8.0%	1	1.7%
Biracial or Multiracial	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Another identity not listed	0	0.0%	1	2.0%	3	5.1%
Sexual Orientation	14		50		59	
LGBQ+	3	21.4%	2	4.0%	6	10.2%
Heterosexual/straight	11	78.6%	44	88.0%	52	88.1%
Prefer not to say	0	0.0%	4	8.0%	1	1.7%

	Pregnant Students		Parents with Children Younger than Kindergarten Age		Parents with K-12 Children	
	<i>n</i>	Percent	<i>n</i>	Percent	<i>n</i>	Percent
Generational Status	14		50		59	
First-generation student	2	14.3%	6	12.0%	11	18.6%
Continuing-generation student	12	85.7%	44	88.0%	48	81.4%
Disability Status	14		50		59	
Has a disability	1	7.1%	3	6.0%	5	8.5%
Does not have a disability	12	85.7%	44	88.0%	54	91.5%
Prefer not to say	1	7.1%	3	6.0%	0	0.0%
Education Route[^]	2		6		10	
Campus change	1	50.0%	1	16.7%	0	0.0%
Transfer student	1	50.0%	2	33.3%	6	60.0%
Continuing Ohio State student	0	0.0%	3	50.0%	4	40.0%
Residence	14		50		59	
On-campus in a university residence hall	0	0.0%	2	4.0%	1	1.7%
Off-campus	14	100.0%	48	96.0%	58	98.3%
Sorority or fraternity housing	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

[^]Note: This question was only asked to undergraduate students.