



PARENT STORY PROJECT:

**Perspectives on Raising Children
in Silicon Valley**



Introduction

In 2013, Silicon Valley Community Foundation launched the Parent Story Project – the first-ever regional study to investigate what it is like to be a parent of a young child in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. The Parent Story Project provides us with a better understanding of today's early learning landscape, the region's most challenging problems and the ripest opportunities for affecting the lives of Silicon Valley's youngest children – birth through age 8 – and their families.

SVCF was particularly interested in two research questions:

1. How are parents and caregivers supporting the growth and development of their children?
2. As viewed by parents, how effective and useful are the programs and institutions that work with children and their caregivers?

To answer these questions, SVCF commissioned a representative telephone survey of 1,000 parents residing in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties whose children were age 8 or younger. SVCF also commissioned 14 focus groups involving 120 parents.

What can we do as a community?

Silicon Valley is one of the most resource-rich regions in the country, both in financial and intellectual capital. Yet many parents are experiencing challenges. SVCF hopes the data in this report will inspire funders, program providers and community leaders to support Silicon Valley's parents. Together, we can help provide our region's youngest children the opportunities they need to become tomorrow's leaders.

For more information regarding the Silicon Valley Parent Story Project, please contact Michelle Sioson Hyman at 650.450.5400, or mshyman@siliconvalleycf.org.



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Summary

Overall, the story of Silicon Valley parents with children ages 8 and younger is one of strong families. The majority of parents experience a sense of family harmony and appreciation for each other, and are in agreement when it comes to making decisions about how to spend money. Silicon Valley parents frequently engage in practices conducive to their child’s development. A majority of parents have strong systems of support and express high satisfaction with the preschool or school that their child attends.

However, there are several sides to Silicon Valley’s parent story. Described in this brief are a handful of key data findings that highlight some of the challenges parents in Silicon Valley face today and the ways in which our community can work to ensure all families have the critical resources they need to support young children in reaching their greatest potential.

Who did we talk to?

- 32% were male, 68% were female
- Average age: 38.7
- Average parental age when first child was born: 28.2
- 18% lived in households earning \$32,000¹ or less annually
- 87% were married or in a domestic partnership
- 65% were born in the U.S.
- 51% spoke more than one language in the home
- 56% had a bachelor’s degree or higher

¹San Mateo and Santa Clara counties are both considered “high-cost” counties. The poverty threshold for a family of four (two children and two adults) in “high-cost” counties is \$31,300. Source: Bohn et al., 2013, Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC).

Family characteristics:

Parents’ level of education and household income are strong predictors of children’s success in school and in life. The figures below show education and income levels by ethnicity of the parents who participated in this study.

PARENT EDUCATION LEVELS	
Ethnicity	High school diploma or less
Hispanic/Latino	45%
Pacific Islander	17%
Black/African American	15%
South Asian	8%
White/Caucasian	8%
East Asian	6%
Southeast Asian	3%
Overall	17%

HOUSEHOLD INCOME LEVELS		
Ethnicity	Less than \$32,000	More than \$105,000
Black/African American	44%	19%
Hispanic/Latino	41%	14%
Pacific Islander	30%	26%
South Asian	13%	56%
Southeast Asian	10%	52%
White/Caucasian	10%	55%
East Asian	9%	63%

What did we learn?

Parental depression

- 36% of parents reported chronic sadness or depression that interfered with their daily lives at some point within the previous year, of which 4.4% reported experiencing symptoms often or always.
- 45% of low-income parents reported these symptoms, compared with 34% of middle-to-high-income parents

Helpful sources of child-rearing advice

- The top three sources of child-rearing advice for parents were: 1) spouse/partner, 2) doctor or nurse and 3) family or relative
- The number one source of child-rearing advice for low-income parents was doctors or nurses

Child care and parent as primary caretaker

- 83% of infants and toddlers are cared for by a parent or relative as their primary caretaker throughout the day

Family engagement in developmental activities

- Parents of all age groups reported low levels of engaging in mathematical skill- building activities with their children

- Low-income parents read to, told stories to and had conversations with their children less frequently than middle-to-high-income parents

School satisfaction

- One out of five families wished they could send their child to a different school

Family/life/work balance

Due to the responsibilities of being a parent, in the past year:

- One out of four parents reduced the number of hours worked
- One out of 10 parents changed employers
- One out of 5 parents earning \$16,000/year or less changed employers
- 68% of parents making less than \$32,000/year left the workforce by choice
- 38% of those making less than \$32,000/year lost their job or were laid off



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To read the full study, visit siliconvalleycf.org.

About Silicon Valley Community Foundation

Silicon Valley Community Foundation makes all forms of philanthropy more powerful. We serve as a catalyst and leader for innovative solutions to our region's most challenging problems, and our donors award more money to charities than any other community foundation in the United States. SVCF has more than \$4.7 billion in assets under management. As Silicon Valley's center of philanthropy, we provide thousands of individuals, families and corporations with simple and effective ways to give locally and around the world. Find out more at www.siliconvalleycf.org.

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