Audience: 2,013 U.S. adults age 18+

Survey Timing: 15 minutes
Fielded from June 29 – July 19, 2023

Mode: The research was conducted online in the US by The Harris Poll on behalf of the Bipartisan Policy Center

Weighting: Data are weighted to ensure results are projectable to the U.S. general population as well as Georgia and Ohio populations, respectively.
Parenting is hard, but abuse and neglect are seen as willful, though US adults see more potential for redemption in scenarios of neglect vs. abuse

- **9 out of 10 Americans** agree that parenting is hard

- Child abuse is mostly attributed to parents with ill intent or a desire to harm their child, while neglect is attributed to a variety of possible factors

- **3 in 4 Americans** agree that parents who have been neglectful can care for their children when they receive needed supports; **half** say the same for abuse

Parents who have been neglectful can provide safe and nurturing care for their children when they receive needed supports.  

- Somewhat agree: 53%  
- Strongly agree: 21%  
- 75% Agree

Parents who have been abusive can provide safe and nurturing care for their children when they receive needed supports.  

- Somewhat agree: 38%  
- Strongly agree: 15%  
- 53% Agree
Americans believe that agencies should err on the side of caution in considering investigation, but express concern over bias in decision making.

- Americans lean towards authorities investigating every report, even if that means that some parents might be investigated unnecessarily.
- **Three quarters of Americans** think that decisions about intervention are influenced by socioeconomic bias, 6 in 10 believe decisions are influenced by racial bias.

Position on How System Should Work When Deciding Whether to Investigate Reports

- **Net: 61%**
  - Investigate every report, even if that means that some parents might be investigated unnecessarily.

- **Net: 36%**
  - Only investigate reports with compelling evidence that abuse or neglect has/is occurring, even if some legitimate reports aren't investigated.
US public recognizes the complexity of the welfare system, and a third of Americans have experience with the system

More than **1 in 3 U.S. adults** have direct experience with the child welfare system

**Two-thirds** agree that child safety and family assistance should be a shared effort between government and community/religious organizations

**8 in 10** agree that the child welfare system only gets attention when something bad happens and that the system is simply overwhelmed and lacks resources
Americans are divided on how the system should operate in strengthening families versus protecting children and prioritize keeping children with their family.

- Americans slightly lean towards the welfare system’s purpose being strengthening families over protecting children from their families.
- When it comes to removing a child from their family after an investigation, Americans lean towards the system keeping the child with their family.
- U.S. adults favor the system giving parents more time to address challenges and reunify, even if it means more time in foster care for their child.

**Primary Purpose of System in an Ideal World**

- Primarily protecting children at risk of abuse or neglect by their families (Net: 44%)
- Primarily strengthening families’ ability to care for their children (Net: 51%)

Net: 44%  
VS.  
Net: 51%
Americans agree that extended family should be given priority and supported when children require placement and that adoptions should remain open.

- **9 in 10 Americans** overwhelmingly support engaging extended family members before resorting to foster care and providing similar support to family as foster parents.

- Americans also believe that extended family should be prioritized in adoption.

- Most Americans feel that if adoption must take place, biological parents should still be able to maintain safe and ongoing relationships with their children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CW authorities should identify extended family members to take in children before resorting to foster care with somebody the child does not already know.</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>43%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extended family members should receive similar screening, support and resources as foster parents when they take on full-time care of children.</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>51%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children should not be adopted to an adoptive family until all extended family/kin options have been exhausted first.</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>31%</td>
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