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## 2022 Child Support Guidelines Review

December 2022

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2022 Child Support Guidelines Review ..... 1

    Executive Summary ..... 1

    Introduction..... 5

        Authority..... 6

        Requirements of the Report..... 6

        Background..... 6

Upcoming Changes to the Minnesota Child Support Guidelines ..... 7

    Minnesota Child Support Task Force..... 7

    2023 Child Support Guidelines Changes ..... 8

Economic Analysis ..... 8

    Cost of Raising a Child ..... 8

    Minnesota Labor Market Data Analysis ..... 10

Case Data Analysis ..... 18

    Background..... 18

    Deviations..... 20

    Imputed Income ..... 26

    Default Orders ..... 28

    Low-Income Adjustment ..... 30

    Parenting Expense Adjustment ..... 31

Public Input..... 33

    Input from Participants ..... 33

    Input from Child Support Professionals ..... 36

Recommendations..... 40

Appendices ..... 42

## Executive summary

The Minnesota Department of Human Services (department) is required by federal and state laws to review its child support guidelines every four years and publish findings in a report. The previous review in 2018 found that Minnesota's guidelines are generally followed by the courts, and considered fair by both parents and child support professionals. The report included a number of recommendations to improve the guidelines, including that the department:

- Continues to support work of the Minnesota Child Support Task Force in updating guidelines
- Continues to improve data reliability for future reports through continual county worker training, and
- Review the new parenting expense adjustment as it relates to deviations, collection rates, support award amounts, and parents' satisfaction with the guidelines.

## Upcoming changes to Minnesota child support guidelines

The current guidelines have been in place since 2007. Previous reviews found the guidelines are based on sound policy and economic methodology. However, the 2014 and 2018 reviews found the economic data the guidelines were based on should be updated. To address this, the legislature formed the Minnesota Child Support Task Force in 2016. It was charged with updating the basic support table and addressing other known issues with the guidelines. In 2021, legislation based on the task force's recommendations was passed with an effective date of Jan. 1, 2023. These changes update the basic support table, incorporating recent economic data, including an adjustment for low-income families within the basic support table, and altered the guidelines calculation so support obligations are right-sized and more equitable for families.

## Economic analysis

Minnesota's child support guidelines are based on an income shares model. The income shares approach uses both parents' incomes to calculate presumptive child support obligations based on economic data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). This report summarizes the income shares approach in theory and the empirical methodology used to implement it in practice. It also summarizes other economic approaches to estimating the cost of raising children; and analyzes relevant labor market data for Minnesota families.

## Case data analysis

The case review's guidelines deviation rate is 16.4%. This is a 1.2% increase from the 2018 review, however, it still complies with the federal criteria that deviations from the guidelines be "limited." The increased deviation rate of the 2022 review may be due to either sampling error or coding error in PRISM, the Minnesota child support program's computer system.

The case review also analyzed:

- The frequency of default orders
- Frequency of use of imputed income
- Application of low-income adjustment
- Frequency of court-ordered parenting time, and
- Application of the parenting expense adjustment.

The case review also analyzed these characteristics by race and ethnicity of non-custodial parents.

## **Public input**

In designing the 2022 review, department staff engaged Management Analysis and Development (MAD) to gather parent perspectives across the state. MAD's report combines responses from two surveys along with context from initial parent interviews. Average ratings on statements about overall experience, logistics, payments, and communications ranged from mixed (neither agree nor disagree), to negative (disagree to strongly disagree); none of the statements received a positive average rating among parents.

The department also conducted a survey of child support professionals. The results of that survey show that most respondents indicated that current guidelines are consistently applied and deviations are justified. The majority of respondents also felt that parents do not understand the guidelines.

## **Recommendations**

The report resulted in the following recommendations:

- Review child support guidelines effective in 2023 in the next guidelines review to determine if changes advance underlying policy goals
- Implement enhancements to PRISM, Minnesota's child support system, to improve collection of demographic data allowing for a more robust equity analysis of the guidelines
- Implement recommendations from analysis of child support participant survey results
- Engage more with child support participants so they better understand the way support is calculated
- Engage more with child support professionals from other areas, such as the private bar and the district courts when soliciting public input for the next review of the guidelines.

## **Introduction**

This report was prepared and submitted to the Minnesota Department of Human Service's commissioner. It includes analyses of current child support guidelines and case data, a summary of public input, and recommendations for guidelines and future case reviews.

## Authority

This report was prepared pursuant to federal and state laws [45 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 302.56(e)] requiring each state “review its child support guidelines at least every four years.” Minnesota Statute § 518A.77 provides that “no later than 2006 and every four years after that, the Department of Human Services must conduct a review of the child support guidelines.”

## Requirements of the report

The federal regulation mandates that reviews must consider economic data on the cost of raising children, and provide an analysis of case data regarding application of the guidelines. Department staff must also analyze case data gathered through random sampling, and must include a comparison of payments on child support orders by case characteristics. This must include whether:

- The court entered an order by default
- An order was based on imputed income, and
- Orders were determined using the low-income adjustment.

The analysis is used to ensure that deviations from guidelines are limited and appropriate, based on established criteria. The department must provide a meaningful opportunity for public input, including non-custodial parents and their representatives, as well as child support professionals.

## Background

The department conducted its last review of child support guidelines in 2018, while the Child Support Task Force reviewed the guidelines. The report concluded the guidelines were generally followed by Minnesota courts, and considered fair by professionals and parents. It also concluded that the guidelines should be updated in accordance with recommendations of the task force. The 2018 review recommended:

- Continuing to support updating the basic support table
- Continuing to train county workers to uniformly identify deviation reasons to improve data reliability for future reports
- Reviewing the new parenting expense adjustment
- Collaborating with the Child Support Division’s Equity Team in future reviews
- Providing a meaningful opportunity for public input during the next review process for parents and child support professionals.

## Upcoming changes to Minnesota child support guidelines

### Minnesota Child Support Task Force

Current guidelines have been in place since 2007. Previous reviews of the guidelines found that while they are based on sound policy and economic methodology, underlying economic data of the basic support table is out of date. To address this, the legislature formed the Minnesota Child Support Task Force in 2016.

The task force was comprised of a diverse group of stakeholders, including parents, legislators, and child support professionals. The task force's enacting legislation, Minn. Stat. § 518A.79, noted the group's purpose was to advise the commissioner of human services on matters relevant to maintaining effective and efficient child support guidelines that will best serve Minnesota children, and take into account changing dynamics of families.

The task force reviewed, addressed, and made recommendations on the following issues:

- The self-support reserve for custodial and non-custodial parents
- Simultaneous child support orders
- Non-custodial parents subject to child support orders in multiple counties
- Parents with multiple families
- Non-nuclear families, such as grandparents, relatives, and foster parents who are caretakers of children
- Standards to apply for modifications
- Updating the basic support table in section 518A.35.

The task force was active from 2016 to 2019, submitting two reports to the legislature.<sup>1</sup> Its recommendations focused on:

- Remedying known issues with current guidelines
- Increasing fairness to parents
- Providing more consistent outcomes for similarly situated parents
- Increasing transparency in the way the courts calculate or determine child support
- Increasing the court's flexibility to tailor support amounts to facts of a case
- Creating child support guidelines that result in right-sized orders for families.

The final report recommended several amendments to child support guidelines, including a new basic support table.

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<sup>1</sup> To read the reports, including the Minnesota Task Force recommendations and reasoning behind them, refer to the Child Support Task Force website at <http://mn.gov/dhs/child-support-task-force/>.

## Changes to 2023 child support guidelines

The legislature passed, and Governor Walz signed, legislation based on task force recommendations in 2021. The legislation:

- Updates the basic support table to reflect increased costs of raising children based on recent economic data from the USDA
- Incorporates a low-income adjustment for parents with combined monthly income of \$6,000 or less
- Creates new minimum support order amounts
- Changes the way deductions for non-joint children are calculated
- Expands application of deductions for non-joint children to all legal non-joint children
- Provides the support-self reserve for both parents, not just non-custodial parents
- Deducts the self-support reserve from Parental Income for Determining Child Support (PICS) rather than gross income
- Creates a new deviation factor for low-income families
- Extends the cap on the basic support table to combined monthly income of \$20,000.

These changes are effective Jan. 1, 2023, and not the subject of this review. While the timing of this review is not ideal given that current guidelines will be obsolete shortly after its publication, this review serves as a baseline to compare updated Minnesota guidelines in the 2026 review.

## Economic analysis

Economic analysis of Minnesota's child support guidelines centers on the current guidelines in Minn. Stat. § 518A.35. Federal law requires states to review the guidelines every four years and consider economic data on the cost of raising a child. Child support guidelines vary by state because they are a combination of policy and economic decisions. Despite differences, states share the goal of creating guidelines that result in fair, reasonable, and equitable child support orders.

### Cost of raising a child

Minnesota transitioned from a percentage-of-obligor's-income guidelines model in 2007, where only the obligated parent's income was considered when calculating child support obligations, to an income shares model, where both parents' incomes are considered. The policy behind this change was founded on the premise that both parents share financial responsibility for their children, and that children are entitled to the same level of support they would have received if they lived with both parents as a family. Accordingly, numbers in the guidelines table represent the total estimated cost of raising children for both parties.

Most costs of raising a child are not directly observable because they are shared by other members in households, adults and children in a household, such as housing, utilities, transportation and food. Therefore, economic estimates of child rearing costs are just that, estimates, not actual data on spending. Those estimates



have theoretical and practical limitations. They are informative and important to consider, but are not determinative.

Most of the economic model underlying the Minnesota child support guidelines is based on a 2001 study of data from the Consumer Expenditure Survey on the cost of child rearing conducted by the USDA. Child support amounts in Minnesota under the guidelines are presumptive in the absence of specific findings to the contrary. It is important to re-evaluate regularly the guidelines structure and resulting dollar amounts relative to basic economic principles, current economic estimates of costs to raise a child, and other relevant economic information, according to the federal requirement.

### **USDA method**

The USDA publishes a report on estimated costs of raising children. The most recent report was published in 2017. It divides expenditures into seven categories: housing, food, transportation, clothing, health care, child care, education and miscellaneous. The USDA report highlighted that for a middle-income family, housing accounts for the greatest share at 29% of total child-rearing costs. This is followed by food at 18% and child care/education expenses at 16%. Expenses also vary according to ages of children.

The report uses a different approach in each category to estimate a child's portion of a household's expense in that category. The USDA sums the categories for a final estimate. While most of Minnesota's child support guidelines are based on the USDA method, they were adjusted at certain income levels using the Betson-Engel and Betson-Rothbarth methods of measuring child-rearing costs.

### **Betson-Engel and Betson-Rothbarth methods**

Betson-Engel and Betson-Rothbarth measure the costs of child rearing by comparing households with children to equally well-off households without children and attribute the difference in expenditures to children. The Betson-Engel method uses food as the measurement between households, while the Betson-Rothbarth method uses adult goods as its measurement. Betson-Engel tends to produce higher results than Betson-Rothbarth and USDA methods. The Betson-Rothbarth method produces the lowest result compared to the other two methods.

### **Limitations**

To receive federal funds for child support programs, federal law requires each state to review its child support guidelines every four years to assure their application results in appropriate child support amounts. While the report extensively examines the economic basis of current guidelines, and provides various options to consider when updating them, there are limitations in developing child support guidelines due to available economic data on the cost of raising children.

As a matter of economics, regularly reviewing guidelines is an important part of getting both the process and numbers correct. This is difficult because guidelines establish a *one-size fits-all* formula for calculating child support based on parents' incomes and number of joint children. Since child-related expenses vary widely even in different households with similar economic characteristics, there is not an objectively correct amount of child support for a given case. Regardless of measurement of child-rearing costs, data are based on intact families,

not two separate households. As noted in prior economic analyses of the guidelines, it is more expensive to maintain two households than one.

### **Minnesota labor market data analysis**

In addition to considering economic data on the cost of raising children, federal law requires states to consider:

- Labor market data (unemployment and employment rates, hours worked and earnings) by occupation and skill-level for state and local job markets
- The impact of guideline policies and amounts on parents with family incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level
- Factors influencing employment rates among non-custodial parents, and
- Compliance with child support orders.

### **Unemployment rate for open cases, October 2017 – September 2021**

Department staff calculated the unemployment rate (U3) for child support participants by dividing the total number of custodial parents (CP) and non-custodial parents (NCP) with an open case by county.<sup>2</sup> This was correlated or compared to the state unemployment (U3) dataset by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

The figure below shows the trend and relationship between state unemployment and child support open cases on a monthly and yearly basis over the period of review, from October 2017 through September 2021.

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<sup>2</sup> Unemployment rate (U3) is known as the official unemployment rate; it is defined as the number of people who are jobless but actively looking for employment.

### Unemployment Rates (%) for Child Support Cases in MN Oct 2017 - Sep 2021

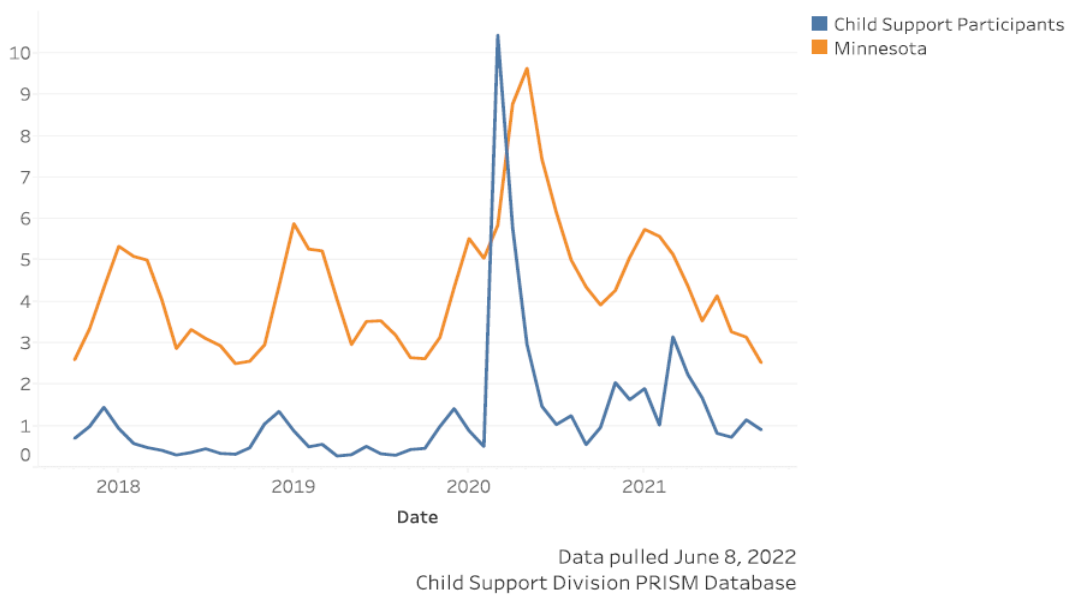


Figure 1: Unemployment rates (%) for child support participants in Minnesota

The average unemployment rate per county was lower in 2020 for program participants. The year 2020 coincided with COVID-19, along with financial, economic, and psychological turmoil in participant households. This brief anomaly is not unlike other economic measures due to shutdown of the economy in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The continued trend of lower unemployment for the participant population versus Minnesota is likely a reflection of the population. The BLS measure of unemployment (U3) calculates it as a jobless person who is available and actively sought work in the past four weeks. Although considered the official unemployment rate, U3 does not capture discouraged, marginally attached, and part-time workers. This could explain reported lower rate among child support participants who could be captured through other unemployment measures. Department staff chose the BLS U3 rate as the best comparative measure to match the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development’s (DEED) unemployment calculation for statistical consistency.

#### Planning areas and unemployment rate by planning area

There are six planning areas designated by DEED, including the seven-county metro area, central, southeast, southwest, northeast, and northwest. These areas were used to match employment activities from October 2017 to September 2021 in Minnesota. Among the planning areas, the seven-county metro area, including Minneapolis and St. Paul, had the greatest 48-month average unemployment rate of 1.4%, followed by southwest and central with 1.31%; the southeast area had a rate of 1.29%, northeast, 1.28%, and northwest, 1.11%. With the exception of April 2020, Minnesota households had a higher unemployment rate than child support participants throughout the review period.

The illustrations below for participants in Figures 1a and 1b, and all Minnesota, 2a and 2b, highlights the average income per capita difference between all Minnesotans and child support program participants. For all of Minnesota, the northeast area has the highest income per capita, \$46,517, followed by the seven-county area with \$45,771, southwest, \$45,349, northwest, \$45,225, southeast, \$44,646, and central, with the lowest income per capita at \$44,537. All participant average income per capita was lower in each economic region when compared to all Minnesotans. The highest participant income per capita is in the seven-county metro area, reporting \$37,760, followed by central, \$32,243, southeast, \$31,182, southwest, \$28,622, northeast, \$27,444, and northwest, \$27,407.

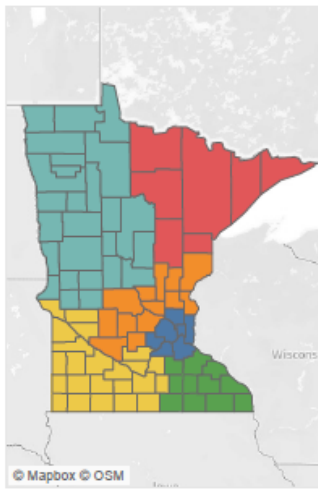


Fig 1a. Income Per Capita (Child Support Participants)

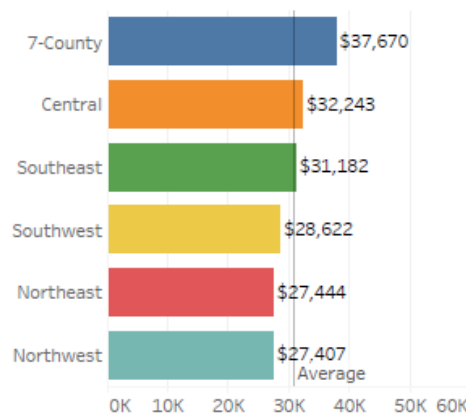


Fig 1b. Unemployment Rate (Child Support Participants)

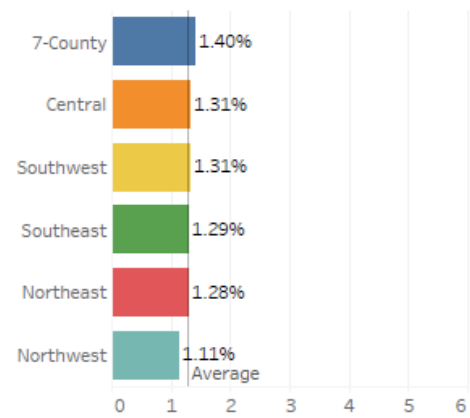


Fig 2a. Income per Capita (Minnesota)

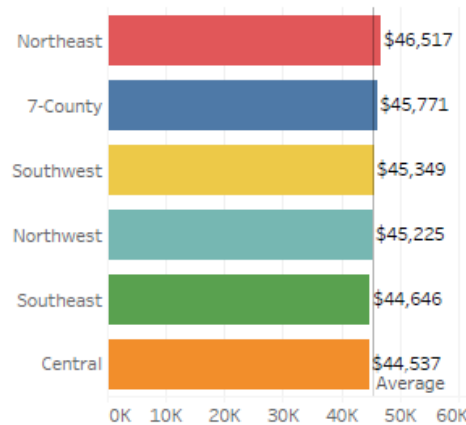
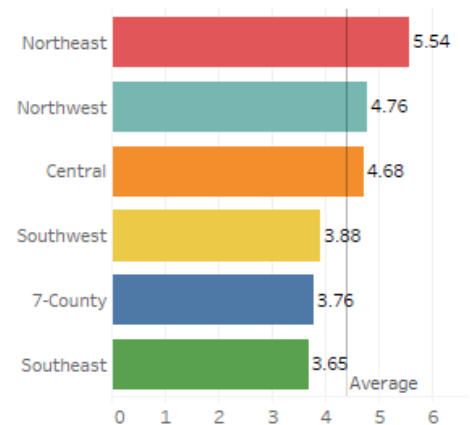


Fig 2b. Unemployment Rate (Minnesota)



**Comparison between all Minnesotans and child support participants of income per capita and unemployment rate (U3)**

The illustrations in Figures 1a and 1b above indicate planning areas with the lowest income per capita observe a lower unemployment rate for child support participants. This trend continued for all planning areas of child

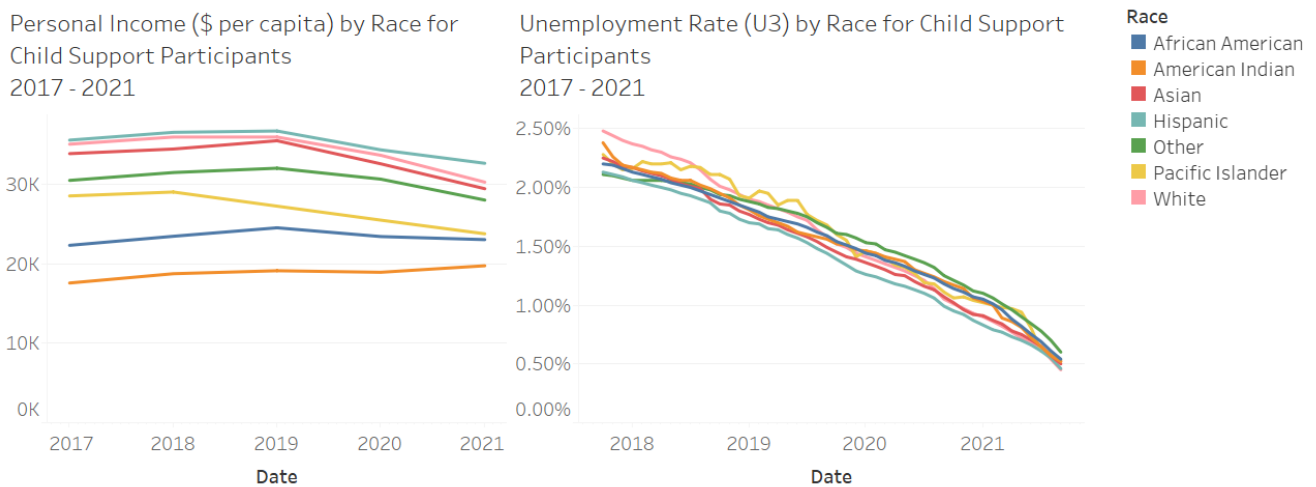
support participants for income and unemployment. The data behaved somewhat differently when looking at all Minnesota within the same designated planning areas.

The result was more mixed in comparison to participant income and unemployment data. Only the northeast planning area mirrored the participant trend of higher income, matching the highest unemployment rate for all Minnesotans. The remaining planning areas for all Minnesotans followed specific trends when comparing income and unemployment. Further analysis may indicate the cost of living among regional economic areas may erode the perceived anomaly illustrated with an increase in per capita income corresponding with higher unemployment rates.

### Unemployment rate by race and ethnicity

Personal income per capita was increasing prior to 2020. It started to decrease among almost all racial groups in 2020, with the exception of American Indian child support participants.

The unemployment rate decreased for all child support participants, regardless of race. Unemployment rates were also relatively similar among groups every year. One notable trend is that Hispanics had the lowest unemployment rate across the four-year review period.



Figures 3a and 3b: Personal income (\$ per capita) by race and unemployment rate by race for child support

### State and local job markets

Federal law mandates states or programs consider data on state and local job markets. The figure below shows DEED’s 2020-2030 industry employment projections for Minnesota.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For more data on Minnesota’s economy and workforce, see DEED’s website at <https://mn.gov/deed/data>.

<b>Industry</b>	<b>2020 employment estimate</b>	<b>2030 employment estimate</b>	<b>2020 to 2030 percentage of change</b>
Arts, entertainment and recreation	38,292	51,708	35%
Accommodations and food services	174,155	210,345	20.8%
Health care and social services	473,914	533,729	12.6%
Other services, ex. public administration	106,083	118,291	11.5%
Professional and technical services	154,228	170,931	10.8%
Administrative and waste services	120,228	129,573	7.8%
Transportation and warehousing	103,467	110,041	6.4%
Education services	229,788	241,644	5.2%
Construction	123,927	129,479	4.5%
Finance and insurance	159,797	164,617	3.0%
Public administration	184,485	188,472	2.2%
Wholesale trade	124,780	126,800	1.6%
Information	43,138	43,734	1.4%
Manufacturing	309,108	313,098	1.3%
Management of companies and enterprises	86,958	87,685	0.8%
Real estate, rental and leasing	33,760	33,693	-0.2%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	24,004	23,750	-1.1%
Mining	5,474	5,318	-2.8%
Retail trade	276,316	263,653	-4.6%
Utilities	11,898	10,501	-11.7%

Figure 4: 2020-2030 industry employment projections for Minnesota

Figure five shows the average of Minnesota employment industries broken down by the race of workers for 2019 to 2021.

<b>Industry</b>	<b>White Alone</b>	<b>Black or African American Alone</b>	<b>American Indian or Alaska Native Alone</b>	<b>Asian Alone</b>	<b>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Alone</b>	<b>Two or More Race Groups</b>
Arts, entertainment and recreation	89.5%	4.5%	0.7%	2.6%	0.1%	2.5%
Accommodations and food services	81.4%	7.6%	1.5%	5.7%	0.2%	3.6%
Health care and social services	77.6%	13.4%	0.8%	6.1%	0.1%	2.0%
Other services, ex. public administration	86.1%	4.4%	0.8%	6.5%	0.1%	2.1%
Professional and technical services	86.9%	2.7%	0.4%	8.5%	0.1%	1.5%
Administrative and waste services	76.5%	13.0%	1.5%	6.6%	0.2%	2.3%
Transportation and warehousing	84.9%	9.7%	0.7%	2.7%	0.1%	1.8%
Education services	85.8%	6.3%	0.7%	5.2%	0.1%	2.0%
Construction	94.6%	1.9%	0.8%	1.2%	0.1%	1.4%
Finance and insurance	88.0%	4.0%	0.3%	6.2%	0.1%	1.4%
Public administration	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available
Wholesale trade	91.6%	3.0%	0.5%	3.5%	0.1%	1.3%
Information	89.6%	3.3%	0.4%	5.0%	0.1%	1.7%
Manufacturing	83.3%	5.3%	0.6%	9.2%	0.2%	1.4%
Management of companies and enterprises	86.9%	4.6%	0.4%	6.4%	0.1%	1.6%
Real estate, rental and leasing	88.2%	6.2%	0.9%	2.6%	0.1%	1.9%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	91.4%	3.3%	1.0%	2.7%	0.3%	1.3%
Mining	98.0%	0.4%	0.5%	0.3%	0.0%	0.9%

<b>Industry</b>	<b>White Alone</b>	<b>Black or African American Alone</b>	<b>American Indian or Alaska Native Alone</b>	<b>Asian Alone</b>	<b>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Alone</b>	<b>Two or More Race Groups</b>
Retail trade	86.8%	5.7%	0.9%	3.9%	0.1%	2.5%
Utilities	94.9%	1.8%	0.4%	2.0%	0.0%	0.9%

Figure 5: Employment per Industry per Race in Minnesota, Q<sub>1</sub>2019-Q<sub>4</sub>2021



## Guideline support amounts for incomes below 200% of federal poverty level

Federal law requires state departments to review the impact of its child support guidelines on families with incomes of 200% or less of federal poverty guidelines (FPG). The federal poverty guidelines in 2022 for one person was \$27,180 per year, or \$2,265 per month. An issue with Minnesota guidelines is they result in basic support obligations that constitute a higher percentage of income for non-custodial parents when combined incomes of parents are \$6,000 or less. This is particularly true for non-custodial parents whose income is just above 120% of FPG, the self-support reserve amount in Minnesota.<sup>4</sup> In 2022, 120% of FPG for one person was \$1,359 per month.

The table below shows the presumptive basic support obligation for a family with two joint children where each parent's income ranges from 130% to 190% of FPG for one person. The example presumes no court-ordered parenting time, therefore, no parenting expense adjustment.

Percentage of FPG	Each parent's monthly income	Combined monthly income	Presumptive basic support obligation	Presumptive obligation's percentage of non-custodial parent's income	Application of the self-support reserve
130%	\$1,471	\$2,942	\$481	32.7%	Yes
140%	\$1,584	\$3,168	\$495	31.2%	Yes
150%	\$1,698	\$3,396	\$510	30.0%	Yes
160%	\$1,811	\$3,622	\$531	29.3%	Yes
170%	\$1,924	\$3,848	\$540	28.0%	No
180%	\$2,037	\$4,074	\$558	27.3%	No
190%	\$2,150	\$4,300	\$580	26.9%	No

Figure 6: Presumptive basic support obligations for two joint children when parents' combined income is 130% to 190% FPG

Figure six illustrates a non-custodial parent's presumed basic support obligation, before application of the self-support reserve, may constitute from 26.9% to 32.7% of their monthly income. This is significant for custodial and non-custodial parents, as research shows that compliance with child support orders significantly decreases

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<sup>4</sup> Self-support reserve is a dollar amount equal to 120% of Federal Poverty Guidelines for one person. The self-support reserve is the minimum amount of income the law requires a parent be allowed to keep for their own needs after payment of child support obligations.

if obligations exceed 19% of non-custodial parent's income.<sup>5</sup> If obligations are too high for non-custodial parents to pay, custodial parents are unlikely to receive support.

Figure six also illustrates that the self-support reserve reduces the presumptive support obligation for parents with combined incomes of 130% to 160% of FPG. The fact that presumptive guideline amounts exceed parent's ability to pay is a concern the task force addressed in its development of the 2023 basic support table. The basic support table going into effect in 2023 includes a low-income adjustment that ensures non-custodial parents' obligations are a smaller percentage of their monthly income, therefore, more likely to be collected.

## Case data analysis

Federal regulations require that as part of a review of the state's child support guidelines, agency staff must analyze case data gathered through sampling, and must include a comparison of payments on child support orders by case characteristics. Analysis must include if the courts used imputed income or the low-income adjustment when determining support amounts, and if an order was entered by default.

### Background

The case data analysis deviation review focuses on the difference between current support amount the court ordered and the current support amount suggested by guidelines based on parents' income levels.

Deviations from child support guidelines happen for several reasons, the two most common are:

- Participants voluntarily agree to an amount different from the guidelines, and the agreement is submitted to and approved by the court
- A magistrate or judge determined that departure from the guidelines is consistent with the best interest of child/ren.

The Minnesota income shares guidelines model includes the following provisions when, if met are not considered a deviation from the guidelines:

- Ability to pay
- Self-support reserve adjustment
- Minimum order

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<sup>5</sup> Takayesu, M.I., & Eldred, S.C. (2011). "How Do Child Support Orders Affect Payments and Compliance." Orange County Department of Child Support Services.

The model includes these provisions to ensure court-ordered support obligations do not exceed a non-custodial parent's ability to pay, and the joint children and custodial parent receive at least a minimum amount of basic support.

Determining whether a child support order exceeds a non-custodial parent's ability to pay requires applying the following factors:

- Self-support reserve as a dollar amount equal to 120% of FPG for one person.
- Income available for support is calculated by subtracting the self-support reserve amount from a non-custodial parent's monthly gross income.
- Presumptive minimum order (basic support only) is the minimum amount of basic support, which if applicable, the court orders non-custodial parents to pay. The amount is \$50 per month for one or two children, \$75 per month for three or four, and \$100 per month for five or more children.

## **Methodology**

The department used several criteria to select cases for the sample. Staff included only Minnesota court orders signed between Oct. 1, 2017, and Sept. 30, 2021, in sampling. Staff used two additional random samples until outcomes resulted in minimum guidelines of at least one case representation from each county. Court orders had to be one of the following types:

- Establishment
- Modification
- Paternity

In addition, court orders had to address child support, order a child support amount, including \$0 orders. Staff excluded cases currently being served by a tribal authority from the sample. These criteria produced 38,808 cases from which to sample. The sampling criteria of  $\pm 5\%$  margin of error and a 95% confidence level was used, producing a sample of 395 court orders. Department staff stratified the sample by the proportion of case counts for each county in the state and rounded-up to one, if a county stratification value was less than one.

## **Race and ethnicity of non-custodial parents in case sample**

Figure seven shows the race and ethnicity of non-custodial parents in case sample compared to the race and ethnicity of non-custodial parents in the statewide child support program.

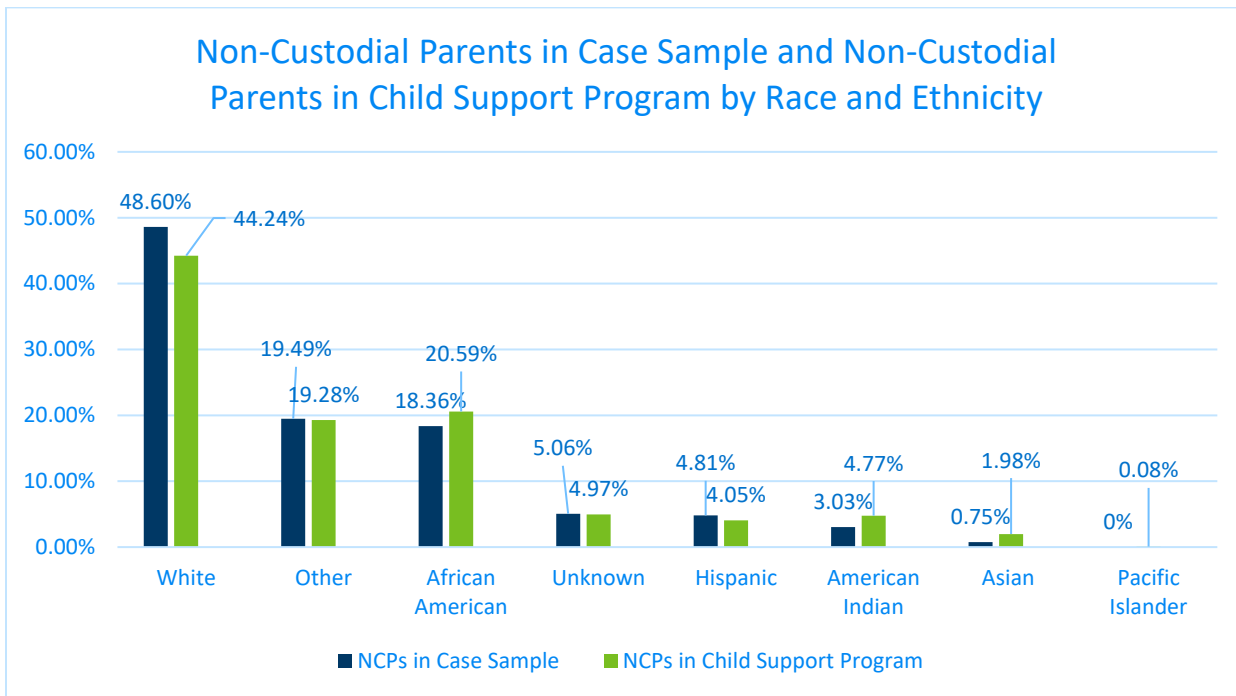


Figure 7: Non-custodial parents in case sample and non-custodial parents in statewide child support program

Figure seven shows white non-custodial parents in the case sample at 48.6% were slightly over-represented compared to the total number of white non-custodial parents in the statewide child support program. Non-custodial parents whose race and ethnicity is described as *other* constituted 19.49% of the case sample compared to 19.28% of non-custodial parents in the statewide program. African American non-custodial parents were slightly under-represented in the case sample at 18.36% compared to African American non-custodial parents in statewide program at 20.59%. Non-custodial parents whose race and ethnicity is unknown comprised 5.06% of the case sample compared to 4.97% of the statewide program. Hispanic non-custodial parents constituted 4.81% of the case sample compared to 4.05% of the statewide program. Asian non-custodial parents were under-represented in the case sample at .75% compared to 1.98% of Asian non-custodial parents in the statewide program. There were no Pacific Islander non-custodial parents in the case sample compared to .08% of Pacific Islander non-custodial parents in the statewide program.

## Deviations

Reviewing cases required evaluators to compare court orders to what county workers coded or recorded in PRISM. Evaluators identified cases incorrectly coded as not a deviation in PRISM, but court order stated it was a deviation. Department staff corrected 26 of these cases in PRISM to reflect the deviation. After adjustments, staff found an overall deviation rate of 16.4%, (65 deviations and 330 non-deviations) in the sample. To correctly identify deviations, evaluators confirmed workers entered an accurate deviation type in PRISM. If there were coding errors, staff noted the correct code in the analysis. The detail of deviation types is in figure eight. *Parties agree* had the highest deviation rate of 18.46%, followed by *Best interest for child*, at 13.84%. The use of *other* as a deviation reason was 9.23%.

Deviations from the guidelines deviation reason	% of deviations in 2018	% of deviations in 2022	Change in deviation %
Parties agree (PAG)	25.40%	18.46%	-6.94%
Best interest of child (BIC)	8.50%	13.84%	5.34%
Other (OTH)	23.70%	9.23%	-14.47%
Visitation/custody arrangements (COV)	8.50%	7.69%	-0.81%
Standard of living (SOL)	22.00%	7.69%	-14.31%
Extreme hardship for party/s (EXH)	5.10%	3.07%	-2.03%
Income disparity (INC)	1.70%	1.53%	-0.17%

Figure 8: Percentage of deviations by deviation reason

### Comparison 2022 to 2018

All indicator variables in 2022 moved in a downward trend compared to 2018, with the exception of *BIC*, which increased from 8.5% in 2018 to 13.84% in 2022. Indicator *PAG* had 18.46% deviation in 2022 down from 25.4% in 2018. Indicator *OTH* was the second highest reason for deviation in 2018 with 23.70%, which saw the greatest change, to 9.23% in 2022. Another noticeable difference from deviation reasons from 2018 to 2022 was indicator *SOL*, falling from 22% in 2018 to 7.69% in 2022. Other deviation reason changes from 2018 to 2022 were minor but noted are *COV*, 8.50% to 7.69%, *EXH*, 5.10% to 3.07%, and *INC*, 1.70% to 1.53%.

Figure nine is an illustration of the above indicating the trend for deviation reasons from 2018 to 2022.

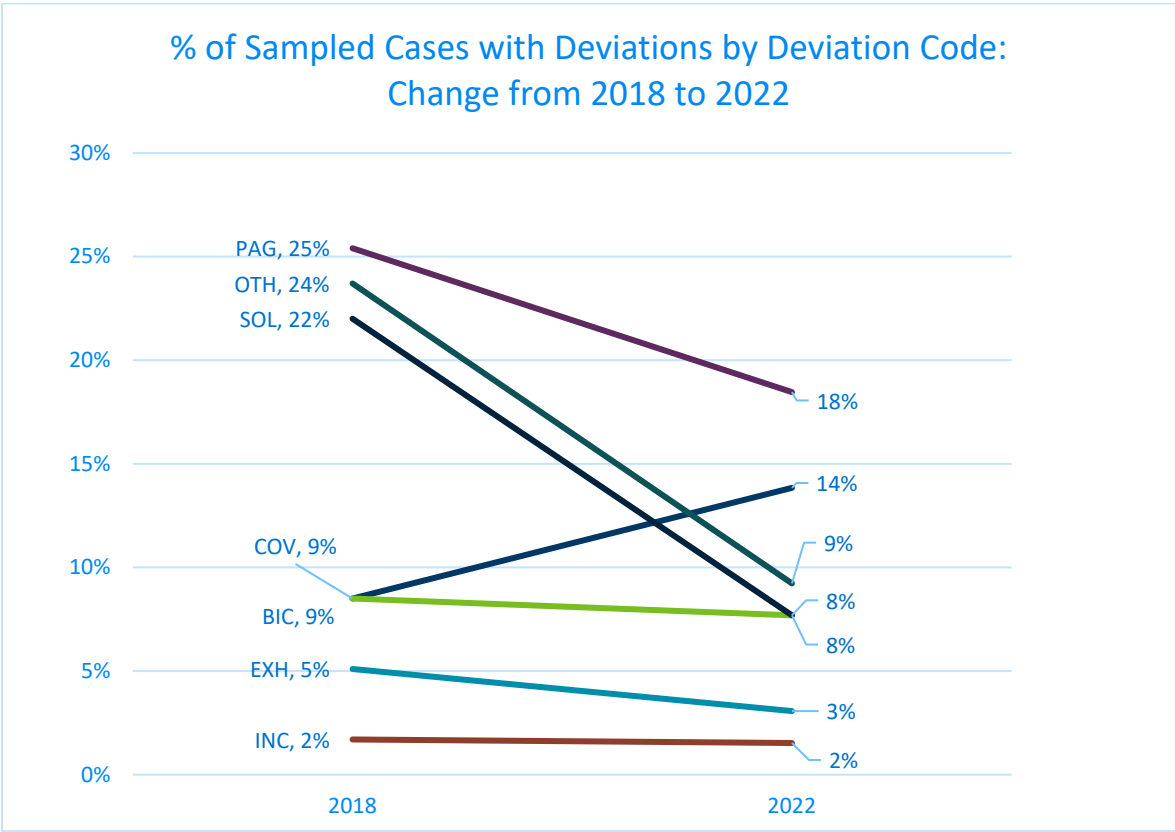


Figure 9: Percentage of sample cases with deviations by deviation code

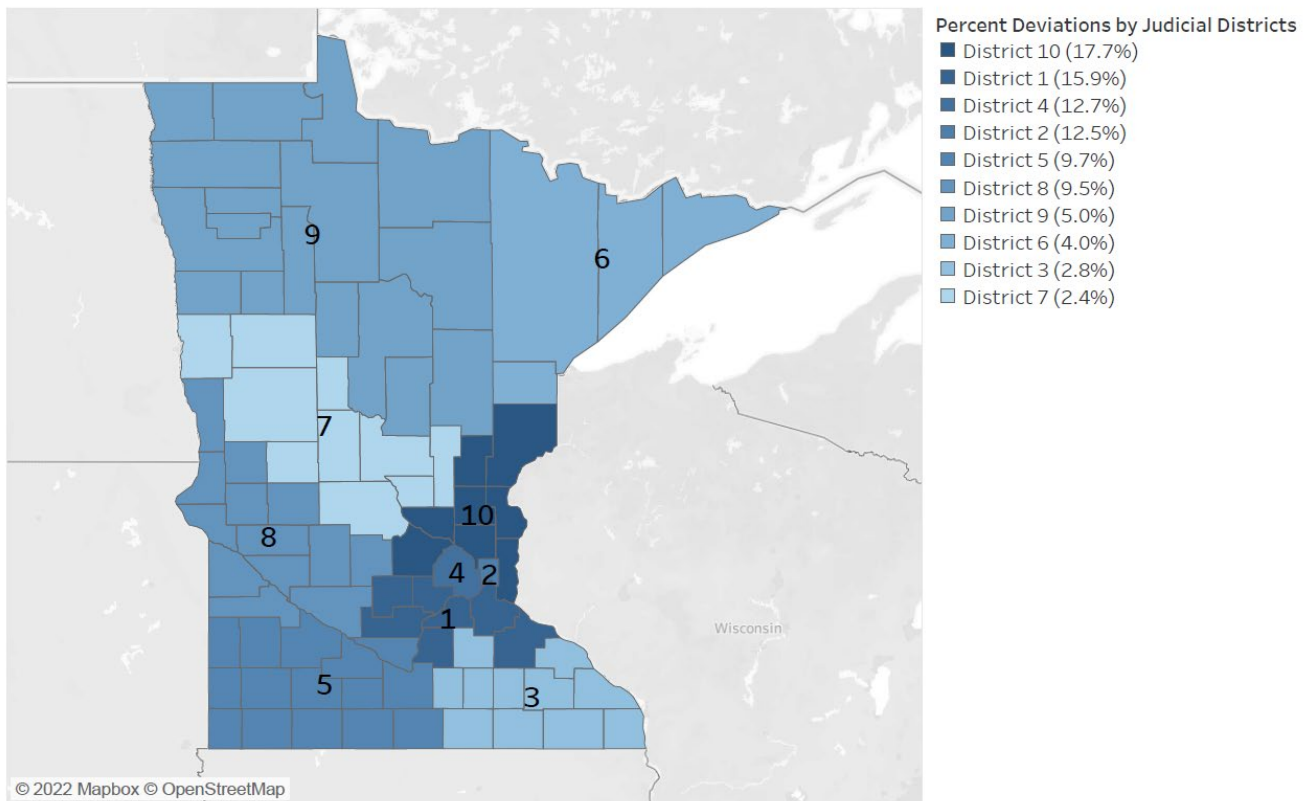


Figure 10: Percentage of sampled cases with deviations by judicial district

Department staff aggregated the deviation counts by judicial district for cases they reviewed, shown in figure ten, to identify geographic trends. Judicial districts 10 and one had the greatest deviation rates, respectively at 17.7% and 15.9%. Judicial districts four and two had the state’s second greatest deviation rates, respectively at 12.7% and 12.5%. The other six judicial districts had rates below 10%, with districts five and eight at 9.7% and 9.5%, respectively; district nine, 5.0%, district six, 4.0%, district three, 2.8%, and district seven at 2.4%.

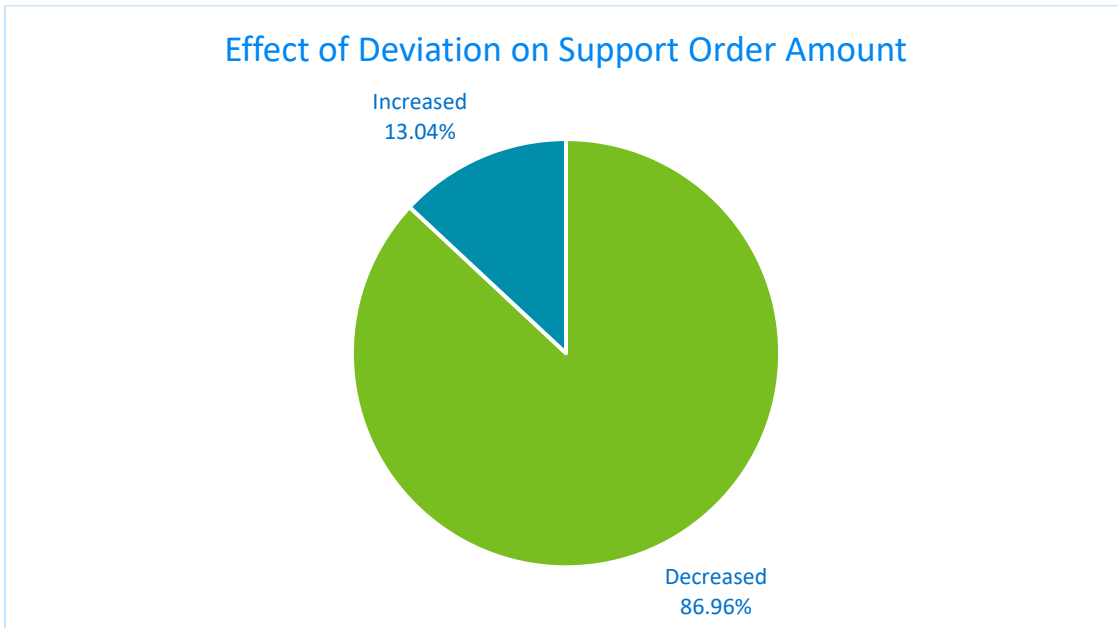


Figure 11: Effect of deviation on support order amount

Reviewers also analyzed whether deviations raised or lowered child support orders. The majority of sampled deviations (86.96%) decreased child support order amounts, as indicated in figure 11. After completing the court order review, department staff analyzed several characteristics to see how cases were affected by deviations. Reviewers looked at the percentage of child support collected for current obligations due for federal fiscal years 2019 through 2022. Reviewed cases with deviations had collection rates of 3.3 percentage points higher on average (81.1% compared to 77.8% collected on current), than cases without a deviation.



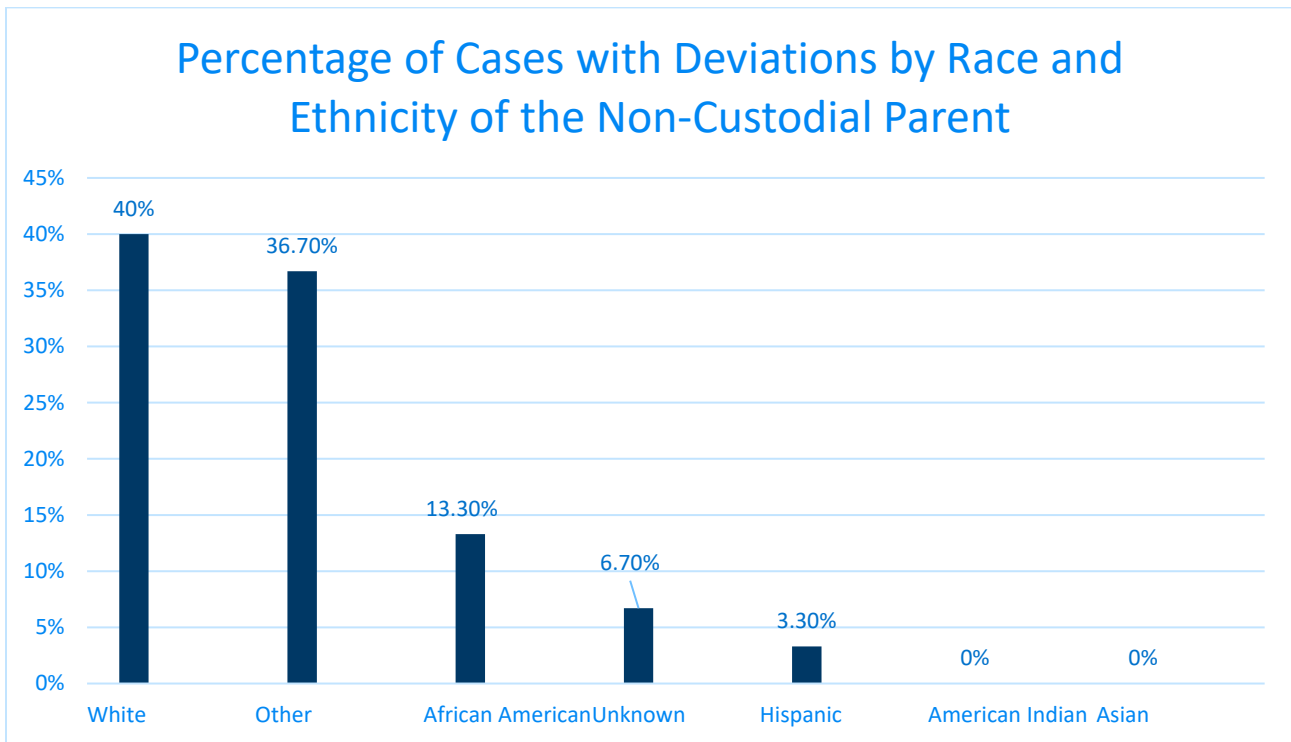


Figure 12: Percent of cases with deviations by race and ethnicity of non-custodial parent

Figure 12 shows the percentage of cases with deviations by race and ethnicity. White non-custodial parents had the highest rate of deviation, with cases reviewed having deviations of 40%. This was followed by:

- Non-custodial parents whose race and ethnicity is described as *other* at 36.7%
- African American, 13.3%
- Unknown, 6.7%
- Hispanic, 3.3%
- American Indian and Asian non-custodial parents both at 0%.

It is notable that both non-custodial parents whose race and ethnicity is described as *other* and those whose race and ethnicity are unknown are overrepresented in the case sample when it comes to deviations from the guidelines. Limitations in the current way that race information is captured on PRISM likely contribute to the high percentages of participants described as *other* and unknown. In PRISM, the list of options when describing race and ethnicity is limited to the options set forth above and there is no way to select multiple races, or an option such as “Multi-Racial.” Implementing the enhancements to PRISM described in the Recommendations sections of this report would improve future reviews of the guidelines, particularly when it comes to identifying disparities among child support participants.

## Imputed income

Case reviews also noted frequency of the use of imputed income. In child support, imputed income is defined as an estimation of earning ability of parent/s when courts cannot determine the actual amount of income.

Courts use the following factors when determining the appropriate amount of income to impute for an individual:

- Prior earnings history
- Education level
- Job skills
- Availability of appropriate jobs within a community for an individual with similar qualifications.

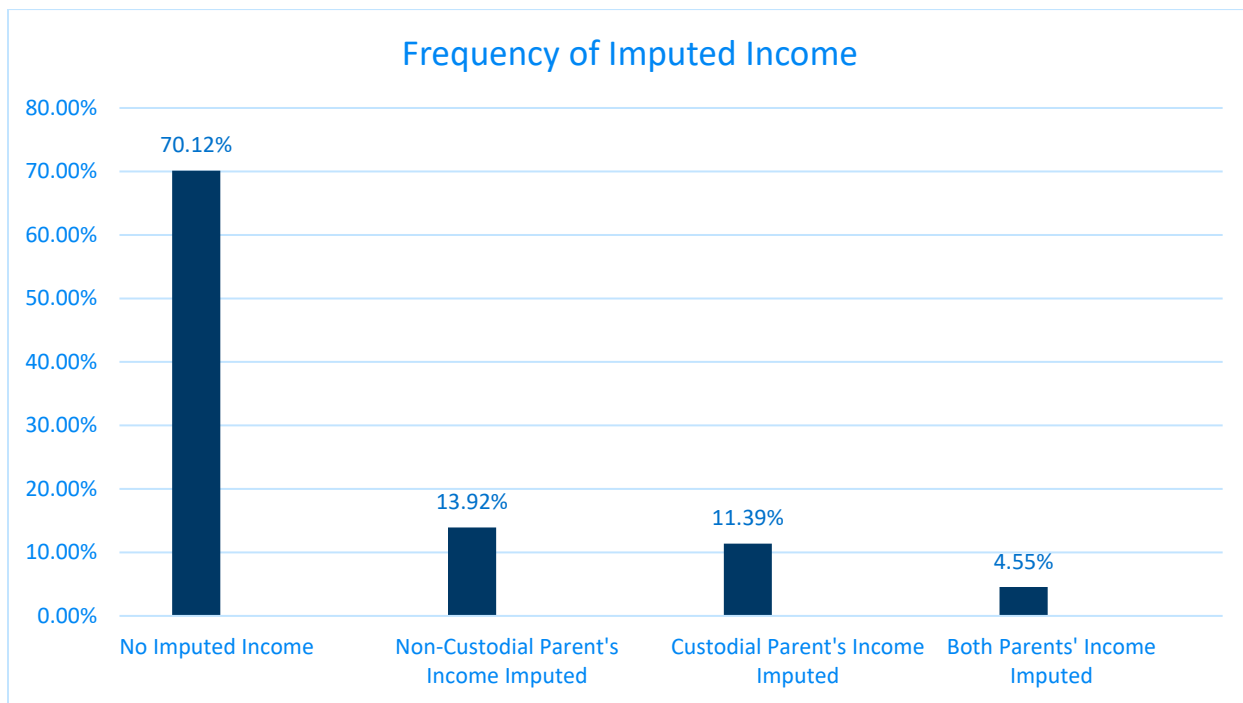


Figure 13: Frequency of imputed income

During this review, 70.12% of court orders did not use imputed income. Of reviewed court orders, 13.92% imputed income only for the non-custodial parent, 11.39% for only the custodial parent, and 4.55% imputed income to both parents.

An analysis of collections on current support was calculated between two types of cases:

- Non-custodial parent's income was imputed
- Non-custodial parent's income was not imputed.

Figure 14 illustrates cases without imputed income have a collection rate of 80%.

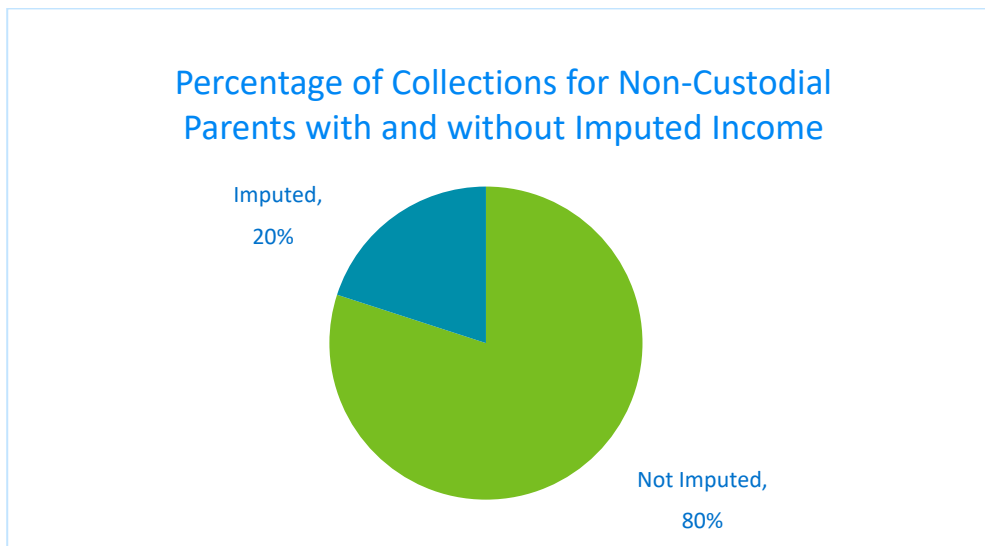


Figure 14: Percentage collected by imputed income category

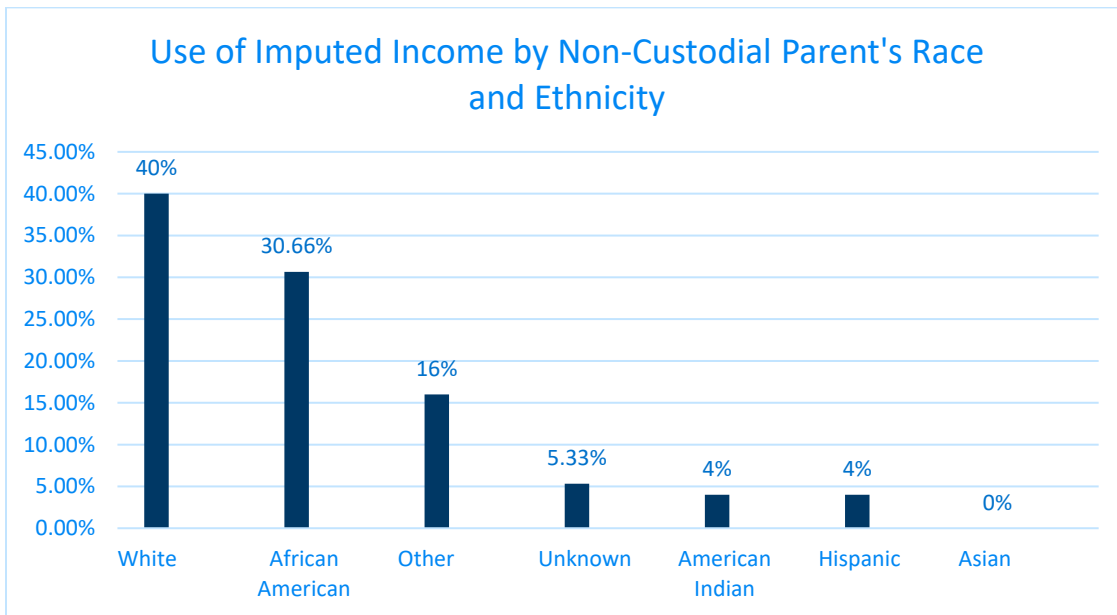


Figure 15: Use of imputed income by on-custodial parent's race and ethnicity

White non-custodial parents had the highest rate of use of imputed income at 40%. African American non-custodial parents had the second highest rate at 30.66%, followed by:

- Race and ethnicity is described as *other* at 16%
- Race and ethnicity is unknown, 5.33%
- American Indian at 4%
- Hispanic at 4%
- Asian, no court orders where income was imputed.

### Default orders

As part of the case review, reviewers looked at court orders to determine if they were default orders. Default orders are issued by the court without a hearing.

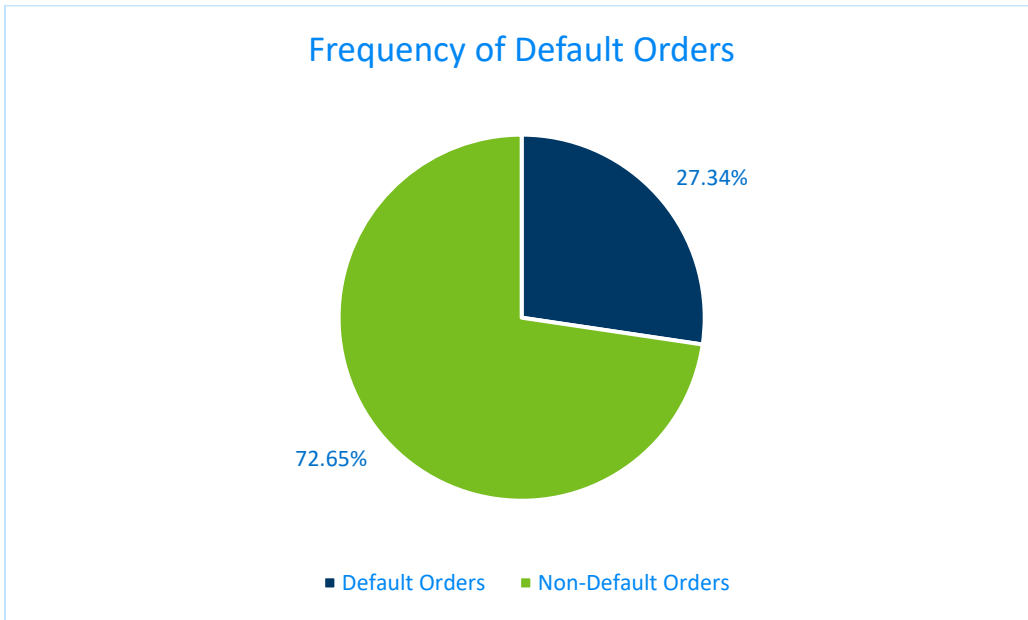


Figure 16: Frequency of default orders

As illustrated in Figure 16, 27.3% of reviewed court orders were issued by default.

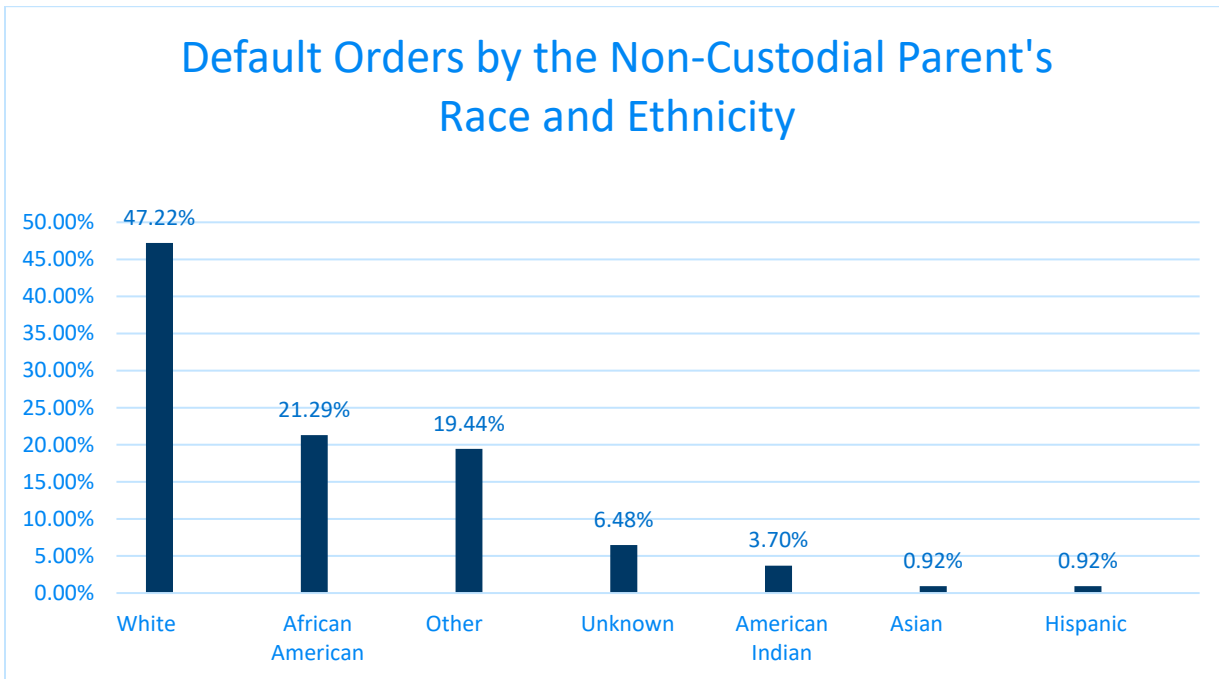


Figure 17: Default orders by non-custodial parent's race and ethnicity

Figure 17 illustrates the percentage of default orders by race and ethnicity of non-custodial parents. White non-custodial parents had the highest rate of default orders at 47.2%; African Americans had the second highest rate

of default orders at 21.29%, followed by non-custodial parents whose race and ethnicity is described as *other* at 19.44 %; race and ethnicity unknown at 6.48%; American Indian at 3.70%, Asian at 0.92%, and Hispanic non-custodial parents at .92%.

### Low-income adjustment

Department staff also reviewed cases for frequency of application of low-income adjustment, also referred to as the *self-support reserve*.

As illustrated in Figure 18, the child support obligation in 15.18% of reviewed court orders received a downward adjustment due to application of the low-income adjustment; 84.81% of reviewed court orders did not have an obligation subject to a downward adjustment due to application of the low-income adjustment.

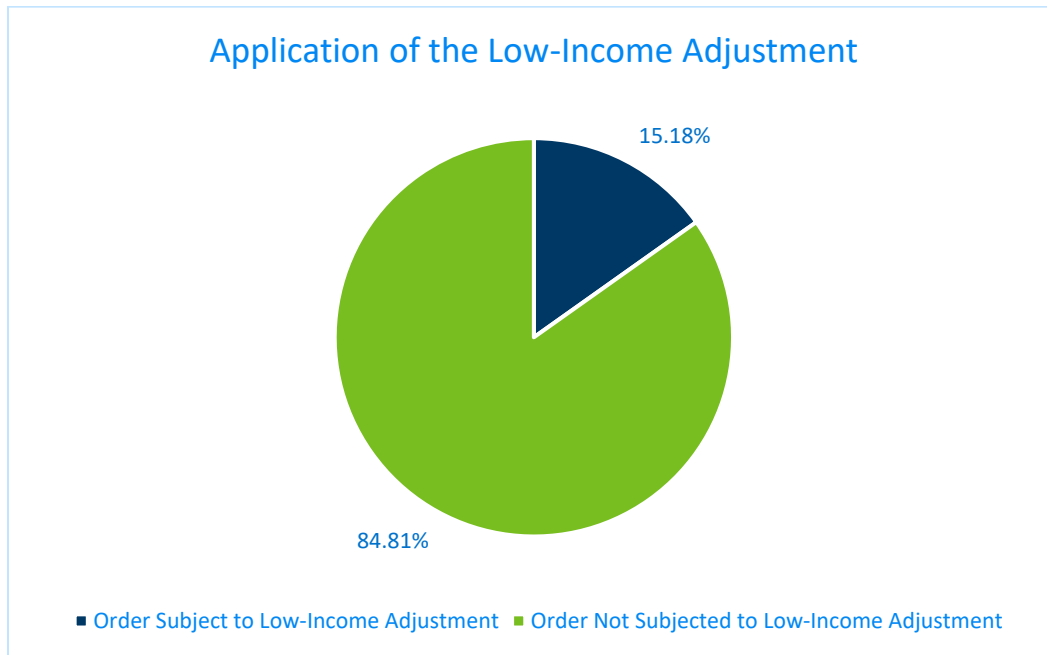


Figure 18: Court orders subject to low-income adjustment

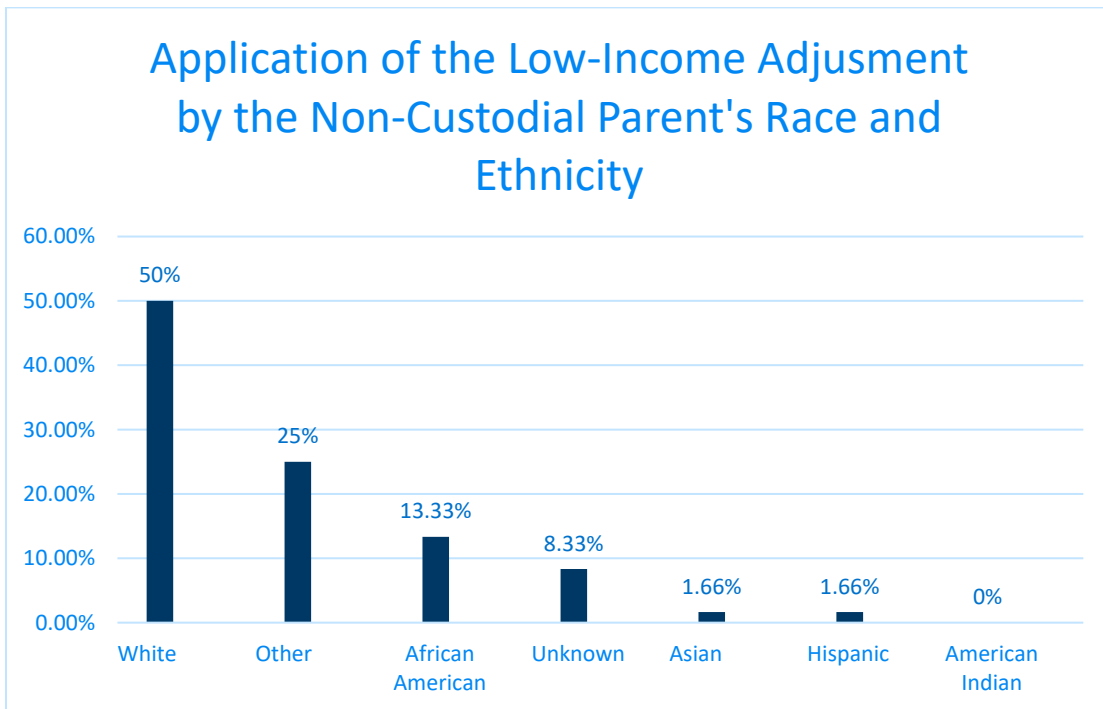


Figure 19: Application of low-income adjustment by non-custodial parent's race and ethnicity

Figure 19 shows the percentage of court orders in which non-custodial parent's obligation was reduced due to application of the low-income adjustment by race or ethnicity. White non-custodial parents had the highest rate of application of low-income adjustment at 50%; those whose race and ethnicity is described as *other* had the second highest rate at 25%, followed by:

- African American parents at 13.33%
- Whose race and ethnicity is unknown at 8.33%
- Asian and Hispanic non-custodial parents at 1.66%
- No American Indian non-custodial parents with court-ordered obligations were reduced by the low-income adjustment.

### Parenting expense adjustment

The 2018 review recommended the 2022 review analyze frequency of the new parenting expense adjustment.<sup>6</sup> Department staff reviewed court orders for frequency of application of the parenting expense adjustment.

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<sup>6</sup> A new parenting expense adjustment went into effect Aug. 1, 2018. The new parenting expense adjustment provides incremental changes in child support for each overnight with non-custodial parents, rather than the previous three-tiered percentage approach.

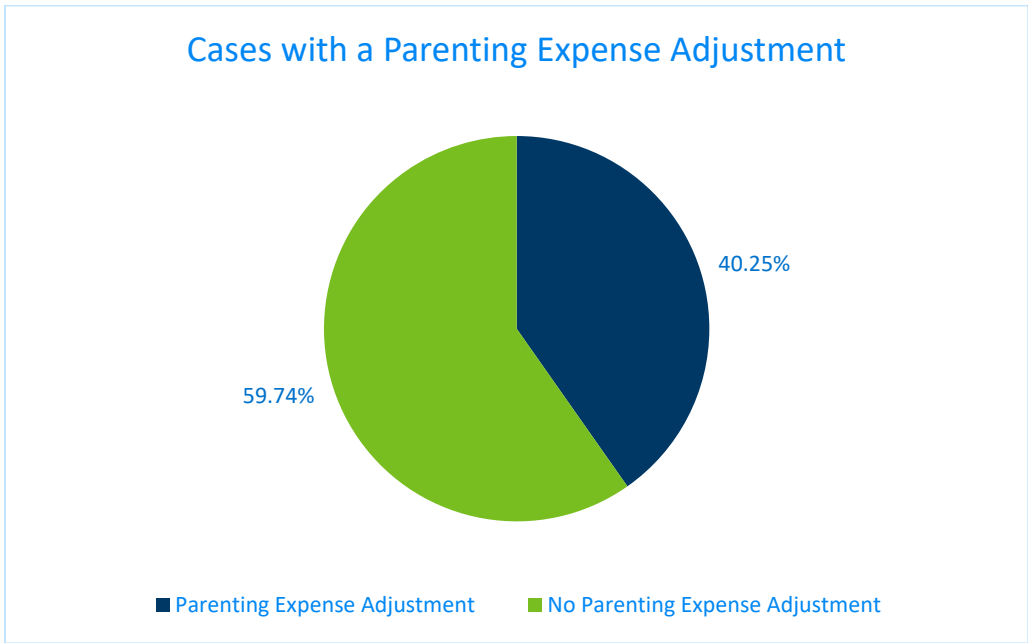


Figure 20: Count of cases with and without court-ordered parenting time

As illustrated in Figure 20, 40.25% of reviewed cases had a parenting expense adjustment, while 59.74% of cases did not.

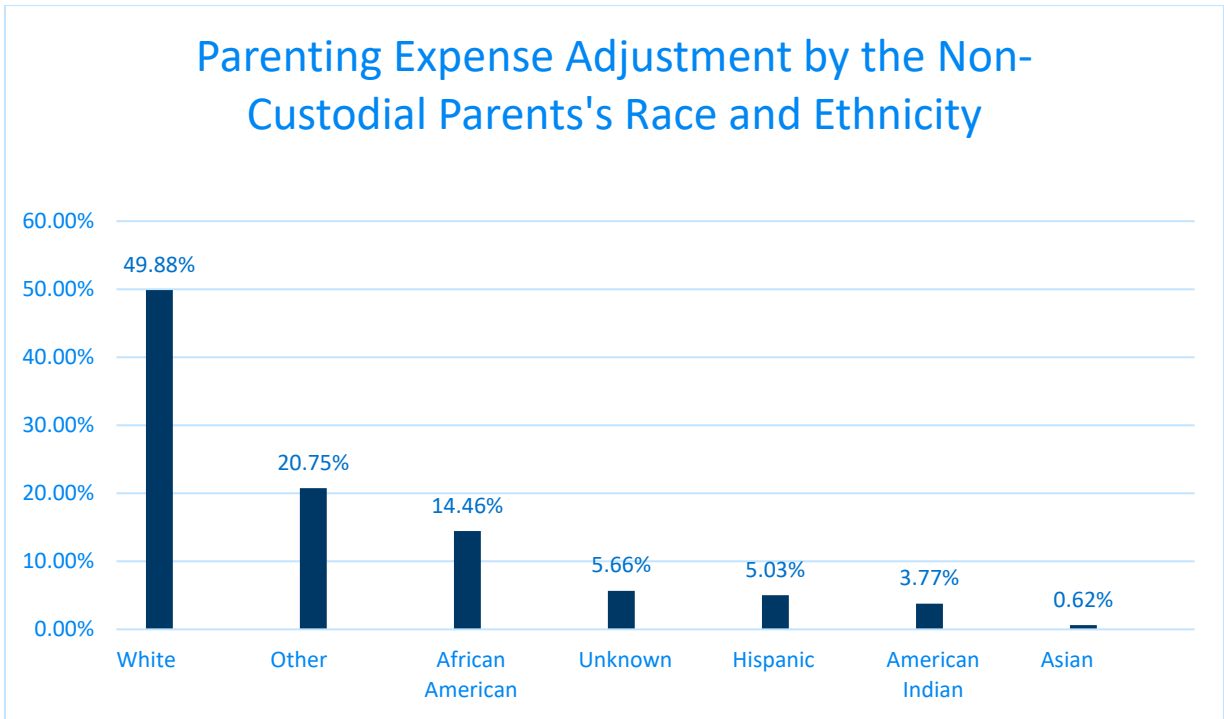


Figure 21: Parenting expense adjustment by non-custodial parent’s race and ethnicity



As illustrated in Figure 21, cases with parenting expense adjustments were broken down by race and ethnicity of non-custodial parents. Of cases reviewed, white non-custodial parents had the highest rate of having a parenting expense adjustment at 49.88%; those whose race and ethnicity is described as *other* had the second highest at 20.75%, followed by:

- African American at 14.46%
- Whose race and ethnicity is unknown at 5.66%
- Hispanic at 5.03%
- American Indian at 3.77%
- Asian non-custodial parents at 0.62%.

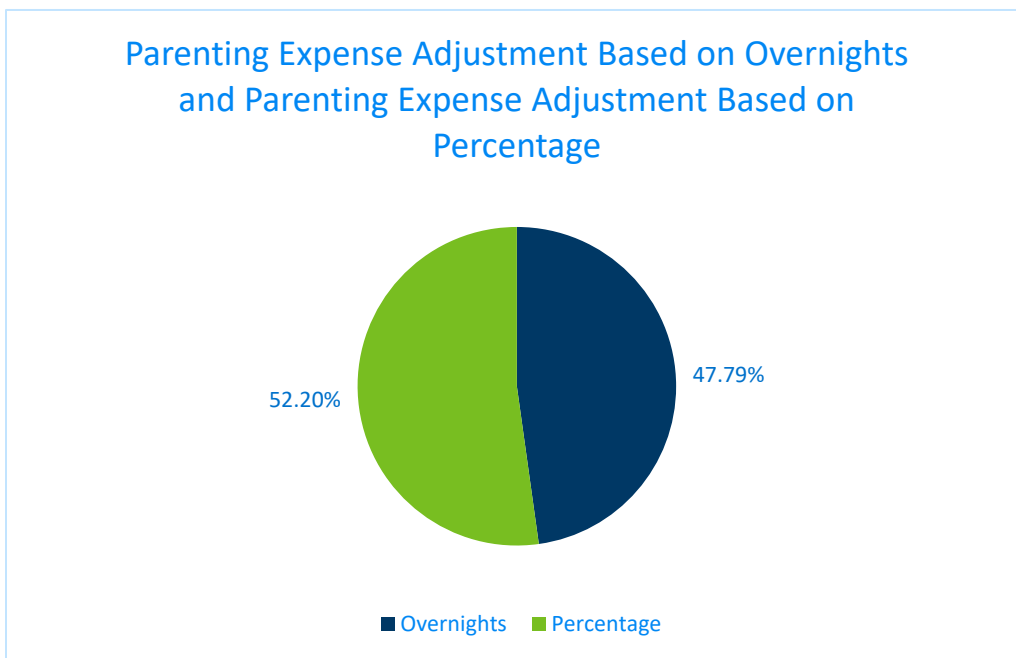


Figure 22: Cases by type of parenting expense adjustment

Of the 159 cases with court-ordered parenting time, 47.79% used the parenting expense adjustment based on overnights; 52.20% used the prior parenting expense adjustment based on a percentage of parenting time.

## Public input

### Input from participants

As part of the 2022 review, department staff engaged Management Analysis and Development (MAD), Minnesota’s internal management consulting group, to gather parent perspectives statewide.

Highlights from MAD's research on parent perspectives are shared below. The full report is attached as Appendix A.

## Methodology

MAD collected and analyzed feedback from 2,206 parents across several different methods: 20 in-depth parent interviews, a survey of 1,206 parents in Digital Marketing Grant pilot counties, and a second survey conducted specifically for this quadrennial review of 980 additional parents in non-pilot counties.

Just over half of respondents were custodial parents receiving child support payments, and just under half were non-custodial parents making child support payments. Nearly three-quarters of respondents had participated in the program for four or more years, and a similar proportion of respondents identified as White. About an equal proportion reported making more than or less than \$50,000 annually. More information is in the **Background** and **Methodology** sections of the attached report.

## Findings

Parents' responses to questions asking them to rate their overall experience, program logistics, payments, and communications ranged from mixed (neither agree nor disagree) to negative (disagree to strongly disagree); none of the statements on the survey received a positive average rating among parents.

Other key findings include:

- Nearly three-quarters of respondents agreed that child support is an important program for ensuring financial needs of children are met. In contrast, fewer respondents said they trust the child support program to do what is in the best financial interest of their children, or that the program is fair and unbiased.
- Parent perceptions of program logistics were generally neutral. While nearly two-thirds of respondents said they understood how to provide updates about changes in their address or contact information; only half said they understood how to provide updates when they experience a life event.
- About one-third said they would be interested in referrals to other programs and resources. Overall, and across all subgroups, the number of parents interested in referrals was greater than the number who reported having been connected with other programs and resources.
- More than two-thirds agreed that it is helpful when the child support program collects and records payments on their case. Statements about automatic payments and income withholding, as well as consistently collecting payments, were also among the highest-rated statements overall.
- Respondents' ratings on statements about communications ranged from mixed to more negative. Overall, statements about general communication and information were rated lower by respondents (less agreement) than statements about county child support officers, which were rated higher (more agreement).
- Respondents who identified as American Indian, Native American, Alaskan Native, or Indigenous, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander, as well as those who identified as *other* racial or ethnic group, consistently rated statements lower than those who identified as Black, Asian, Hispanic, or white, on average.

- Custodial parents consistently rated their overall experience more positively than non-custodial parents did, and statements about overall experience included some of the greatest levels of divergence between these two groups.
- While custodial parents consistently rated statements about communications higher than non-custodial parents did, these statements included some of the lowest levels of divergence between these two groups.
- More than half of respondents expressed interest in receiving email and text messaging communications from the program, and some said they already receive these.
- Most commonly, respondents selected email as their preferred communication method, and monthly and quarterly communications as their preferred frequencies.

These and other findings are described in more detail in the **Findings** section of the attached report.

## Recommendations

MAD developed recommendations for the child support program based on input from both interview participants and survey respondents. The program should explore these recommendations in the broader context of programmatic goals, priorities, feasibility, and available resources. These recommendations include:

- Build on findings of the study and move toward action planning and implementation.
- Proactively communicate with parents throughout their time in the program using a range of communication methods
- Identify opportunities to connect parents with other programs and resources
- Consult with county child support offices to identify opportunities to improve parent interactions with county workers, and leverage interactions with county workers to inform and connect parents
- Seek to understand better the experiences of parents who identify as American Indian, Native American, Alaskan Native, or Indigenous
- In future research and engagement activities, explore other methods of engaging families who might better reach Black or African American parents, those with low incomes, and with longer program tenure
- Explore simplifying application and modification processes
- Build on parents' appreciation for automated payments and review suggestions about payment logistics to determine whether they can be incorporated
- Explore differences in opinion among parents regarding payment calculations.

These recommendations are discussed in more detail in the **Recommendations** section of the attached report.

In addition to the survey conducted by MAD, department staff posted a survey with the same questions to the public on the department's website, with a link to it from the Minnesota Child Support Online (MCSO) landing page. MCSO is a website providing child support participants the online option for making child support payments, general information about their case, financial history, as well as educational materials about the child support program. The survey was posted concurrently with the MAD survey from May 23, 2022, through June 10, 2022. The survey was available in English, Hmong, Russian, Somali, Spanish and Vietnamese. Results of this survey are in Appendix B. The differences in methodology between the department's survey and MAD's

survey make an in-depth comparison inappropriate, however, the results of the department’s survey were consistent with MAD’s key findings.

### **Input from child support professionals**

Federal law requires state agencies to obtain input about guidelines from its child support agencies. To solicit input from child support professionals, department staff created a survey of 14 closed-ended questions to gather opinions on the following topics:

- Whether the guidelines can be understood by parents
- Whether deviations are justified
- Stakeholder feelings towards the fairness of guidelines
- Whether parenting time adjustments are fair.

### **Methodology**

Department staff sent county supervisors and staff a message with a link to the survey on DHS-SIR in May 2022. DHS-SIR is a website providing system availability information, announcements, and targeted links to Minnesota counties. County workers were asked to share the link to the survey to their county attorneys, magistrates, and district court judges. In addition, emails with the survey link were sent to the Minnesota State Bar Association-Family Law Section, Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators (MACSSA), Minnesota County Attorney Association (MCAA), Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML), and Minnesota State Court Administrators Office (SCAO).

### **Results**

A total of 218 child support professionals responded to the survey. The first question was demographical in nature and asked respondents to describe their roles with child support. The majority of respondents (75%) were child support workers, managers or supervisors. This is followed by county attorneys or assistant county attorneys (9%), child support magistrates (7%), private bar or family law attorneys (4%), professionals who described their role as *other* (3%), and county directors (1%). No district court judges participated in the survey.

<b>Survey Question 1: What describes your role with child support?</b>	<b>%</b>
Child support magistrate	7%
Child support manager or supervisor	17%
Child support worker	58%

Survey Question 1: What describes your role with child support?	%
County attorney or assistant county attorney	9%
County director	1%
District court judge	0%
Other	3%
Private bar or family law attorney	4%

Figure 23: Responses to survey question 1

Questions two through eight asked respondents if:

- Guidelines can be understood by parents
- Guidelines encourage non-custodial parents to have relationships with their children
- Deviations are justified in court orders
- Deviations are easily identified in court orders
- Guidelines are applied consistently
- Parenting time adjustments are fair to custodial and non-custodial parents.

To answer these questions respondents selected from four responses:

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree.

Department staff condensed responses into two broader categories to highlight respondent’s collective opinions, as shown in Appendix C. The majority of respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed to all but two of the statements. The majority of respondents either strongly disagreed or somewhat disagreed with the statements that child support guidelines can be understood by most parents, and that guidelines encourage non-custodial parents to develop and maintain relationships with their children. It will be illuminating to review responses to these questions or similar questions after the upcoming guideline changes go into effect in 2023. One of the themes of the Minnesota Child Support Task Force was to increase transparency in the way that child support is calculated; this may improve ability of parents to understand the guidelines.

Survey questions 2-8	% Strongly agree and Somewhat agree	% Strongly disagree and Somewhat disagree
2. Child support guidelines, as written, can be understood by most parents.	35%	65%
3. Child support guidelines, as written, encourage non-custodial parents (NCP) to develop and maintain relationships with their children.	37%	63%
4. Deviations are justified in court orders.	92%	7%
5. Deviations are easily identified in court orders.	79%	21%
6. Child support guidelines are applied consistently.	60%	39%
7. Parenting time adjustments are fair to non-custodial parents.	59%	41%
8. Parenting time adjustments are fair to custodial parents (CPs).	77%	23%

Figure 24: Responses to survey questions 2-8

For the next set of questions, respondents rated the fairness of Minnesota child support guidelines to:

- Non-custodial parents
- Custodial parents
- Children
- Tax payers

To answer these questions, respondents selected from four options:

- Completely fair
- Mostly fair
- Mostly unfair
- Completely unfair

Responses were condensed into two broader categories to highlight respondent’s collective opinions, as shown in Appendix C. Although the majority of respondents rated all statements either completely fair or somewhat fair, approximately 40% of child support professionals rated the guidelines as either completely or mostly unfair to both non-custodial parents and taxpayers. It will be instructive to know if the 2023 child support guidelines have an impact on child support professionals’ perception of fairness to participants.

Survey questions 9-12	% Completely fair and Somewhat fair	% Completely unfair and Mostly unfair
9. Rate the fairness of Minnesota child support guidelines to non-custodial parents.	60%	40%
10. Rate the fairness of Minnesota child support guidelines to custodial parents.	87%	13%
11. Rate the fairness of Minnesota child support guidelines to children.	82%	19%
12. Rate the fairness of Minnesota child support guidelines to taxpayers.	60%	41%

Figure 25: Responses to survey questions 9-12

Question 13 asked respondents to check all of the main reasons they deviate or request deviations for child support orders. The most frequent reasons child support professionals reported deviating or requesting deviations were:

- NCP to have sufficient money to live on, at 67%
- Parties request deviation, at 60%
- Non-ordered parenting time agreed on by all parties, at 47%.

With the upcoming change to the child support guidelines, it will be important to evaluate whether new guidelines decrease the number of deviations based on non-custodial parent’s economic need, as well as parties requesting the deviation. A main goal of changes to the guidelines is making obligations more affordable for low-income non-custodial parents, as well as *right-sizing* orders.

Survey question 13: What are the main reasons you deviate or request deviations for child support orders?	%
Child/ren's need for additional support (standard of living)	12%
Child/ren's medical needs	13%
NCP to have sufficient money to live on	67%
NCP's medical needs	13%
Non-ordered parenting time agreed on by parties	47%
Parties request deviation	60%
County requests deviation	22%
Other	4%

Figure 26: Responses to survey question 13

## Recommendations

This is the final review of Minnesota's current child support guidelines. A number of changes were made to the guidelines based on Child Support Task Force recommendations, effective Jan. 1, 2023. In summary, the basic support table was updated so it is based on recent economic data; it will also incorporate an adjustment for low-income families. The changes also alter a number of components to the guidelines calculation so resulting support obligations are *right-sized* and more equitable for similarly situated families.

The next guidelines review will be vital in evaluating whether goals of the 2023 guidelines changes are being met. As a result, this report's recommendations focus primarily on areas to be reviewed in 2026. The recommendations are to:

- **Review the child support guidelines going into effect in 2023 in the next guidelines review to determine if the changes advance policy goals.** The 2026 guidelines review will be a valuable opportunity to evaluate whether the new guidelines result in more manageable, therefore, more collectible support obligations. If so, one would expect a decrease in both deviations from guidelines



and application of the low-income adjustment, as well as increased collection of support. In addition to the federally required components, the review should include robust analysis of parents' compliance with support orders at various income levels, as well as parents' overall satisfaction with guidelines to determine if the 2023 guidelines result in equitable outcomes for Minnesota families.

- **Implement enhancements to PRISM to improve collection of demographic data to allow for a more robust equity analysis of guidelines.** This review's case data analysis examined the frequency of deviations, imputed income, default orders, application of low-income adjustment, as well as application of the parenting expense adjustment by race and ethnicity of non-custodial parents. For future reviews, it would be helpful to analyze the impact of guidelines on custodial parents by race and ethnicity, as well as the impact of guidelines on other populations identified in the department's Equity Policy on communities experiencing inequities. These include communities of color, American Indians, veterans, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities, and persons with disabilities. PRISM is able to house relevant data for these populations; however, it could be better utilized. Enhancements to PRISM such as making certain fields mandatory, developing new screens and allowing for multiple options when identifying participants' race and ethnicity would provide a greater understanding of the characteristics and needs of Minnesota's child support participants.
- **Implement recommendations from analysis of results of the child support participant survey.** MAD's analysis provides a number of options for the Child Support Division to utilize findings of the participants' survey to improve the program. County agencies, courts, and other partners in the child support program should be consulted in reviewing the parent perspectives reflected in this report, and planning changes that could be made in response.
- **Engage with child support participants so they have a better understanding of the way support is calculated.** Both the surveys of child support participants and professionals indicated that current child support guidelines are difficult for participants to understand. While the upcoming 2023 guidelines changes focus on being more transparent, Child Support Division staff should review its forms, documents, and other communications to ensure use of plain language. The Child Support Division should also pursue other initiatives to engage and educate participants and potential participants.
- **Engage more with child support professionals from other areas such as the private bar and district courts.** This review's survey for child support professionals had a low response rate from those working outside the Title IV-D program. To gain a more complete perspective on views of all professionals who routinely work with the guidelines, it would be advantageous to proactively engage with private attorneys as well as district court judges and their staff.

## Appendices

- Appendix A: MAD's Quadrennial review – Child support participant surveys
- Appendix B: CSD's public child support survey results
- Appendix C: Child support professionals survey results
- Appendix D: Minnesota labor market data

# Appendix A



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## Quadrennial review: Child support participant surveys

Minnesota Department of Human Services  
Child Support Division  
October 28, 2022

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## **Management Analysis and Development**

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## Table of contents

<b>Executive summary</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Background</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Child support in Minnesota .....	6
Terminology .....	7
Project background .....	8
<b>Methodology</b> .....	<b>10</b>
Response rate .....	10
Sampling approach .....	11
Survey respondents .....	12
Interpreting findings .....	16
<b>Findings</b> .....	<b>20</b>
Overarching findings .....	20
Overall experience .....	22
Program logistics.....	27
Payments .....	36
Communications .....	41
All rated statements sorted by average .....	58
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	<b>64</b>
Recommendations categorized by complexity and impact.....	64
Potential action steps .....	66
<b>Appendix A: Child Support Program Survey</b> .....	<b>69</b>

# Executive summary

Minnesota is required by federal regulation (45 CFR § 302.56 (h)(3)) to conduct a review of the child support program and guidelines every four years (“quadrennial review”). As part of this review Minnesota must “provide a meaningful opportunity for public input, including input from low-income custodial and noncustodial parents and their representatives.”

In designing this year’s review, the Department of Human Services (DHS) Child Support Division (CSD) engaged Management Analysis and Development (MAD) to gather parent perspectives across the state. This report combines the responses from two surveys along with context from initial parent interviews. This report reflects the perspectives of the 2,206 total parents who participated in either survey or in the initial interviews.

Further information is in the **Background** and **Methodology** sections.

Just over half of the respondents included in this report were parents receiving child support payments (often referred to as “custodial parents” within CSD) and just under half were parents making child support payments (often referred to as “non-custodial parents” within CSD). Nearly three-quarters of respondents had participated in the program for four or more years and a similar proportion of the respondents identified as White. About an equal proportion of respondents reported making more than or less than \$50,000 annually.

Average ratings on statements about overall experience, logistics, payments, and communications ranged from mixed (neither agree nor disagree) to negative (disagree to strongly disagree); none of the statements received a positive average rating among parents.

Broadly, survey findings are directionally consistent with findings from interviews conducted with program participants in January and February 2021. Findings from interviews and the survey provide concrete suggestions for better serving participants.

Other key findings from the survey include:

- Respondents who identified as American Indian, Native American, Alaska Native, or Indigenous, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander, as well as respondents who identified as an “Other” racial or ethnic group, consistently rated statements lower than respondents who identified as Black, Asian, Hispanic, or White, on average.
- Custodial parents consistently rated their overall experience more positively than non-custodial parents, and statements about overall experience included some of the greatest levels of divergence between these two groups.
- Nearly three-quarters of respondents agreed that child support is an important program for ensuring the financial needs of children are met. In contrast, fewer respondents said they trust the child support program to do what is in the best financial interest of their children, or that the program is fair and unbiased.
- Parent perceptions of program logistics were generally neutral. While nearly two-thirds of respondents said they understood how to provide updates about a change in their address or contact information, only half said they understood how to provide updates when they experience a life event.

- About one-third of respondents said they would be interested in referrals to other programs and resources. Overall and across all subgroups, the number of parents interested in referrals was greater than the number who reported having been connected with other programs and resources.
- More than two-thirds of respondents agreed that it is helpful when the child support program collects and records payments on their case. Statements about automatic payments and income withholding as well as consistently collecting payments were also among the highest-rated statements overall.
- Respondents' ratings on statements about communications ranged from mixed to more negative. Overall, statements about general communication and information were rated lower by respondents (there was less agreement) than statements about county child support officers, which were rated higher (there was more agreement).
- While custodial parents consistently rated statements about communications higher than non-custodial parents, these statements included some of the lowest levels of divergence between these two groups.
- Over half of respondents expressed interest in receiving email and text messaging communications from the program, and some said they already receive these communications.
- Most commonly, respondents selected email as their preferred communication method and monthly and quarterly communications as their preferred frequencies.

These and other findings are described in more detail in the **Findings** section of the report.

MAD developed recommendations for the child support program based on input from both interview participants and survey respondents. The program should explore these recommendations in the broader context of programmatic goals, priorities, feasibility, and available resources. These recommendations include:

- Build on the findings of this study and move toward action planning and implementation.
- Proactively communicate with parents throughout their time in the program using a range of communication methods.
- Identify opportunities to connect parents with other programs and resources.
- Consult with county child support offices to identify opportunities to improve parent interactions with county workers and leverage interactions with county workers to inform and connect parents.
- Seek to better understand the experiences of parents who identify as American Indian, Native American, Alaska Native, or Indigenous.
- In future research and engagement activities, explore other methods of engaging families that might better reach Black or African American parents, parents with low incomes, and parents with longer program tenure.
- Explore simplifying application and modification processes.
- Build on parents' appreciation for automated payments and review suggestions about payment logistics to determine whether they can be incorporated.
- Further explore differences in opinion among parents regarding payment calculations.

These recommendations are discussed in more detail in the **Recommendations** section of the report.

# Background

## Child support in Minnesota

Minnesota’s child support program administers and enforces court orders that include child support payments between parents. A variety of levels and branches of government play roles in the child support program:<sup>1</sup>

- The **federal government**’s Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) sets minimum standards for state child support programs and provides the majority of program funding.
- The Minnesota **legislative branch** establishes child support laws in Minnesota.
- The Minnesota **judicial branch** interprets and applies child support laws in individual cases. This includes district court judges, family court referees, and child support magistrates.
- The Minnesota **Department of Human Services** (DHS) Child Support Division (CSD) oversees the state’s program, maintains PRISM (the case management system), manages administrative enforcement tools (such as driver’s license suspensions), establishes program policies, provides training and assistance to counties, and maintains relationships with the federal government, other country and state programs, and other Minnesota state agencies.
- **County** child support agencies administer the program. County workers work directly with participating parents and their cases.

Courts can order child support during a divorce or separation of a married couple with minor children or when parentage is established for unmarried parents, either voluntarily or through a contested paternity process. Courts can also establish child support orders when a child is in the legal custody of an individual other than a parent.

In Minnesota, DHS CSD and county child support offices serve 314,000 parents and 220,000 children.<sup>2</sup> Custodial (receiving) parents who participate in certain public assistance programs are required to use the child support program to administer and enforce child support. In addition, parents not participating in public assistance programs can voluntarily apply to the child support program to administer and enforce child support. When the child support program is not involved, parents instead directly handle child support payments and privately settle concerns. Once the child support program is involved, it will support parents in locating the other parent (if applicable), establishing parentage (if applicable), establishing child support orders, processing child support payments, and enforcing child support orders.

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<sup>1</sup> This section is adapted from Lynn Aves, “Minnesota’s Child Support Laws: An Overview,” Minnesota House of Representatives, Research Department (November 2015): <https://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hrd/pubs/chldsupp.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Minnesota Department of Human Services, Child Support Division. Annual Performance Report. 2021.



# Terminology

Participants in the child support program and county workers are referred to using different terms by statute, the program, and by parents themselves.

Legally, participants are defined as either “obligors” or “obligees.” According to Minnesota Statute 518A.26, subdivisions 13 and 14<sup>3</sup>:

- “Obligee means a person to whom payments for maintenance or support are owed.”
- “Obligor means a person obligated to pay maintenance or support.”

Within the Department of Human Services Child Support Division, participants are referred to either as the “custodial parent” or the “non-custodial parent.” Contrary to the naming convention, these terms are not related to the amount of custody a parent has (or does not have). Instead, these terms refer to which individual receives child support (“custodial parent”) and which individual pays child support (“non-custodial parent”).<sup>4</sup>

In program participants interviews, parents were generally referred to as “paying parents” and “receiving parents.” Table 1 displays the different ways in which child support participants are described in different contexts.

**Table 1. Typical terms for child support participants in different sources/contexts**

Source/Context	Term for those who receive child support	Term for those who pay child support
Statute	Obligee	Obligor
Department of Human Services Child Support Division	Custodial parent	Non-custodial parent
Participants	Receiving parent	Paying parent

This report generally uses the terms “custodial parent” and “non-custodial parent” to match the terminology used within the Department of Human Services Child Support Division.

In addition, county child support workers are sometimes referred to by parents as “case workers” or “case managers,” although counties and DHS CSD do not necessarily use these terms for these positions. This report generally uses the terms “case worker” when describing what parents said and uses the term “county worker” when making recommendations about how the program can best support these roles.

<sup>3</sup> Minnesota Statutes 2021, section 518A.26, subdivisions 13 and 14:

<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/518A.26>, “Minnesota’s Child Support Laws: An Overview”:  
<https://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hrd/pubs/chldsupp.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> For example, a parent who makes child support payments to another parent would be described as a non-custodial parent within DHS CSD, even if this parent had majority legal custody of the child. This situation could occur when a parent with majority (but not full) custody has greater income than the other parent.

## Project background

Across several recent projects, CSD has sought to learn more about the parent experience. CSD engaged Management Analysis and Development (MAD), the State of Minnesota’s management consulting practice housed in Minnesota Management and Budget, for support with these projects.

### Digital Marketing

MAD’s initial research activities were part of a Digital Marketing project [funded](#) by the United States Department of Health and Human Services to research how the child support program can more effectively reach and serve families, focusing on selected pilot counties across the state (Figure 1).<sup>5</sup> This broader effort included information gathering, program evaluation, targeted digital marketing, and text messaging. CSD will use the results of this research to inform marketing efforts as well as inform improvements to the child support program overall.

**Figure 1. Map of program pilot counties**



As part of this grant project, in 2021 MAD conducted 20 in-depth interviews with parents in pilot counties across the state about whether and how the program has benefited their families, the challenges they have experienced, and what changes they would recommend.

After the interviews, MAD consultants facilitated a series of workshops with state and county staff to discuss what was learned from interviews with parents, what efforts were already underway, and what gaps remained between feedback from parents and existing efforts.

In January and February 2022, MAD administered a survey to 1,206 parents in pilot counties to learn more about parents’ perspectives on the topics raised in earlier parent interviews. Survey development was based on findings from interviews with parents and discussions with state agency and county staff.

### Quadrennial review

Minnesota is required by federal regulation (45 CFR § 302.56 (h)(3)) to conduct a review of the child support program and guidelines every four years (often referred to as a “quadrennial review” within CSD). As part of this review Minnesota must “provide a meaningful opportunity for public input, including input from low-income custodial and noncustodial parents and their representatives.”

In designing this year’s review, CSD engaged MAD in a new project to expand on the previous parent survey conducted in Digital Marketing pilot counties to gather parent perspectives in non-pilot counties in addition to pilot counties. For this project, MAD surveyed 980 additional parents in non-pilot counties using the same

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<sup>5</sup> The pilot counties are Becker, Cottonwood, Crow Wing, Dakota, Hennepin, Jackson, Koochiching, Mower, Olmsted, Pine, Ramsey, Scott, and Wright.

survey questions (except for county of residence) as the earlier pilot county survey. While MAD administered the surveys separately, this report combines the responses from the 1,206 pilot county parents with the 980 non-pilot county parents into a single report to reflect the perspectives of the 2,206 total parents who participated in either survey or in the initial interviews.

# Methodology

## Response rate

**Pilot county survey:** In January and February 2022, MAD consultants emailed 9,810 parents in Digital Marketing pilot counties to invite and remind them to participate in a survey. A total of 386 email addresses bounced. Of the 9,424 email addresses that worked, 1,206 individuals provided at least a partial response to the survey (12.8 percent of those with a working email responded).

**Non-pilot county survey:** In May and June 2022, MAD consultants emailed 5,767 parents in non-pilot counties to invite and remind them to participate in a survey. A total of 269 email addresses bounced. Of the 5,498 email addresses that worked, 980 individuals provided at least a partial response to the survey (17.8 percent of those with a working email responded).

**Overall:** Across both surveys, MAD emailed 15,577 parents and a total of 655 email addresses bounced. Of the 14,922 addresses that worked, 2,186 provided at least a partial response to the survey (14.6 percent of those with a working email responded).

Partial surveys (respondents did not complete the entire survey) were included if individuals provided responses to four or more statements or questions. Survey questions are included in Appendix A.

Multiple survey tool resources note a response rate between 5 and 30 percent as typical.<sup>6</sup> They also note that external customer satisfaction surveys tend to have lower response rates than other types of surveys, such as internal employee surveys.<sup>7</sup> The response rate for this survey was likely influenced, in part, by email quality in DHS' Providing Resources to Improve Support in Minnesota (PRISM) case management system where child support participant data are stored. For example, some emails in PRISM may be inaccurately recorded, some may no longer be actively used by participants (even if they are active), and some may be inactive.

The response rate may have also been impacted by the enforcement nature of the program, with which participants may not want to interact more than required. Additionally, the program has not routinely reached out to participants for their feedback at the state level, meaning there are not established relationships between

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<sup>6</sup> Survey response rates: <https://peoplepulse.com/resources/useful-articles/survey-response-rates/#:~:text=Customer%20satisfaction%20surveys%20and%20market,respondents%20who%20complete%20your%20survey.%E2%80%9D>; What is a good survey response rate for online customer surveys?: <https://delighted.com/blog/average-survey-response-rate>; What is a good survey response rate?: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/blog/what-is-a-good-survey-response-rate>; Average survey response rate – What you need to know: <https://www.customerthermometer.com/customer-surveys/average-survey-response-rate/>

<sup>7</sup> What is a good survey response rate for online customer surveys?: <https://delighted.com/blog/average-survey-response-rate>; What's the average survey response rate? [2021 benchmark]: <https://surveyanyplace.com/blog/average-survey-response-rate/>; What is a good survey response rate?: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/blog/what-is-a-good-survey-response-rate>

the state and participants. This could have an impact on participants' trust in the program and may lower their response rate if they are unsure how the program will (or will not) use their input.

## Sampling approach

CSD used administrative records from PRISM to gather a sample of participants that had an open case with a court order and current support due.

CSD excluded participants meeting any of the following criteria from the sample:

- Participants currently in the intake process
- Alleged fathers for whom paternity has not yet been established
- Cases that do not have an order for support
- Closed cases
- Non-IV-D cases (that is, cases that are not using the child support program to administer and enforce support)
- Cases maintained outside of Minnesota (that is, out-of-state parents receiving support from Minnesota parents)
- Individuals with no email address on file
- Duplicate records
- Participants who are incarcerated
- Non-custodial parents who have contempt proceedings against them
- Cases with good cause granted or pending<sup>8</sup>
- Tribal cases

CSD used a non-proportional stratified random sample, which selected equal-size groups of participants in four distinct categories:

1. Non-custodial parents with no enforcement remedy history
2. Non-custodial parents with a case history of at least one enforcement remedy in the past five years
3. Custodial parents with no enforcement remedy history
4. Custodial parents with a case history of at least one enforcement remedy in the past five years

For the pilot county survey, MAD sent survey invitations in two waves, with the first wave of 5,000 participants sent in January 2022, and the second wave of 4,810 sent in February 2022. In the first wave of survey invitations, an equal number of custodial and non-custodial parents were sampled. The second wave included an unequal number of custodial and non-custodial parents, after duplicate records from the first wave were removed. In the second wave of participants, 3,047 custodial parents and 1,763 non-custodial parents were invited to take the

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<sup>8</sup> Parents participating in public assistance programs must help pursue child support unless they have good cause for not cooperating. Good cause exists in cases such as when the parent is a current participant in the Safe at Home address confidentiality program for people who fear for their safety, when the parent conceived the child as a result of rape or incest, or when legal proceedings for the adoption of the child are pending.

survey. For the non-pilot county survey, MAD sent survey invitations in a single wave, with 5,767 survey invitations sent in May 2022.

CSD used administrative data to develop the sample but only shared a subset of that data (name, email address, and parent role) with MAD for survey purposes. Additional information about participants, including program tenure, geographic location, race and ethnicity, absolute income (respondent’s annual income), relative income (respondent’s income relative to the other parent’s income), and any enforcement remedy were self-reported by participants in the survey.

## Survey respondents

Table 2 provides demographic information for survey respondents and for parent participants overall.

**Table 2. Survey respondent and Overall parent participant demographics**

Category	Survey Number	Survey Percent	CSD Parents Overall
<b>Role<sup>9</sup></b>			
Custodial (receiving) parents	1,274	58%	50%
Non-custodial (paying) parents	912	42%	50%
<b>Case Tenure<sup>10</sup></b>			
Less than 1 year	139	7%	4%
1–3 years	422	22%	6%
4–6 years	520	27%	5%
7+ years	880	45%	84%
<b>Minnesota residency<sup>11</sup></b>			
Yes	1812	93%	79%
No	145	7%	14%
<b>County<sup>12</sup></b>			
Aitkin	0	0%	0%

<sup>9</sup> For survey respondents, role information came from PRISM data associated with them at the time of survey invitation. For participants overall, data is at the person-case level in PRISM.

<sup>10</sup> For survey respondents, case tenure and all subsequent demographic questions were self-reported. For participants overall, tenure is defined as the time since the person was first entered into PRISM.

<sup>11</sup> For participants overall, Minnesota residency is defined as the state of the participant’s most recent mailing address. An additional 6 percent had no mailing address listed.

<sup>12</sup> For survey respondents, county percentages reflect self-reported residence excluding respondents who answered “None of the above” or who reported a residence outside of Minnesota. In PRISM, several counties are merged into a single entity: Cottonwood and Jackson Counties; Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Rock, Pipestone, and Redwood Counties; Faribault and Martin Counties; Grant and Pope Counties; Dodge, Steele, and Waseca Counties. In the table, merged counties are listed as “N/A.”

<b>Category</b>	<b>Survey Number</b>	<b>Survey Percent</b>	<b>CSD Parents Overall</b>
Anoka	66	4%	6%
Becker	7	0%	1%
Beltrami	7	0%	1%
Benton	6	0%	1%
Big Stone	0	0%	0%
Blue Earth	26	2%	1%
Brown	11	1%	0%
Carlton	26	2%	1%
Carver	11	1%	1%
Cass	2	0%	1%
Chippewa	4	0%	0%
Chisago	21	1%	1%
Clay	14	1%	1%
Clearwater	0	0%	0%
Cottonwood	4	0%	N/A
Cook	0	0%	0%
Crow Wing	32	2%	2%
Dakota	186	12%	6%
Dodge	15	1%	N/A
Douglas	15	1%	2%
Faribault	2	0%	N/A
Fillmore	8	0%	0%
Freeborn	10	1%	1%
Goodhue	10	1%	1%
Grant	0	0%	N/A
Hennepin	323	20%	22%
Houston	3	0%	0%
Hubbard	0	0%	1%
Isanti	23	1%	1%
Itasca	10	1%	1%
Jackson	1	0%	N/A
Kanabec	7	0%	0%
Kandiyohi	12	1%	1%
Kittson	0	0%	0%

<b>Category</b>	<b>Survey Number</b>	<b>Survey Percent</b>	<b>CSD Parents Overall</b>
Koochiching	5	0%	0%
Lac qui Parle	3	0%	0%
Lake	3	0%	0%
Lake of the Woods	1	0%	0%
Le Sueur	9	1%	0%
Lincoln	2	0%	N/A
Lyon	7	0%	N/A
Mahnomen	0	0%	0%
Marshall	3	0%	0%
Martin	9	1%	N/A
McLeod	9	1%	1%
Meeker	6	0%	0%
Mille Lacs	10	1%	1%
Morrison	7	0%	1%
Mower	16	1%	1%
Murray	0	0%	N/A
Nicollet	13	1%	1%
Nobles	1	0%	0%
Norman	1	0%	0%
Olmsted	57	4%	2%
Otter Tail	16	1%	1%
Pennington	2	0%	0%
Pine	14	1%	1%
Pipestone	0	0%	N/A
Polk	7	0%	1%
Pope	1	0%	N/A
Ramsey	138	9%	10%
Red Lake	2	0%	0%
Redwood	3	0%	N/A
Renville	1	0%	0%
Rice	17	1%	1%
Rock	2	0%	N/A
Roseau	4	0%	0%
Scott	70	4%	1%



Category	Survey Number	Survey Percent	CSD Parents Overall
Sherburne	27	2%	2%
Sibley	7	0%	0%
St. Louis	63	4%	4%
Stearns	23	1%	3%
Steele	10	1%	N/A
Stevens	4	0%	0%
Swift	1	0%	0%
Todd	5	0%	0%
Traverse	1	0%	0%
Wabasha	3	0%	0%
Wadena	3	0%	0%
Waseca	11	1%	N/A
Washington	52	3%	3%
Watonwan	1	0%	0%
Wilkin	0	0%	0%
Winona	6	0%	N/A
Wright	93	6%	2%
Yellow Medicine	4	0%	0%
<b>Race and ethnicity<sup>13</sup></b>			
Black/African American	174	9%	20%
American Indian/Native American/Alaska Native/Indigenous	43	2%	5%
Asian	67	3%	2%
Hispanic/Latinx	85	4%	2%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	12	1%	0%
White	1,456	76%	49%
Other	18	1%	15%
Unknown	6	0%	7%
Prefer not to answer	181	9%	N/A
<b>Annual income<sup>14</sup></b>			
\$0–\$24,999	257	13%	29%
\$25,000–\$49,999	614	31%	22%

<sup>13</sup> Respondents could select multiple race and ethnicity categories (for example, both Black/African American and Asian). Respondents who selected more than one category were reported in all categories they selected.

<sup>14</sup> For participants overall, annual wage amounts are calculated from DEED wage data.

Category	Survey Number	Survey Percent	CSD Parents Overall
\$50,000–\$74,999	459	24%	12%
\$75,000–\$99,999	186	10%	4%
\$100,000+	149	8%	3%
Prefer not to answer/Not reported	285	15%	31%
<b>Relative income<sup>15</sup></b>			
Higher than other parent	453	23%	18%
About the same as the other parent	321	16%	13%
Lower than other parent	652	33%	18%
I don't know	523	27%	52%
<b>Enforcement remedy<sup>16</sup></b>			
Yes	823	42%	61%
No	744	38%	50%
I don't know	389	20%	N/A

Relative to CSD participant population overall, the survey respondent set had proportionately:

- More custodial (receiving) parents, and fewer non-custodial (paying) parents
- More parents in the first several years in the program, and fewer with 7+ years in the program
- More Minnesota residents, and fewer non-residents
- More parents in the highest income categories, and fewer parents in the lowest income category
- More White parents, and fewer Black parents, American Indian parents, and parents who selected an Other race or ethnicity

## Interpreting findings

The report is organized into five main parts:

- **Overarching findings:** Cross-cutting findings from sections that follow.
- **Overall experience:** Findings about respondents' overall experience with the program, including perceived benefit and importance, overall fairness, and trust.

<sup>15</sup> For participant cases overall, “higher than other parent” and “lower than other parent” are defined as cases in which one parent earned more than \$10,000 more or less than another parent, “about the same” is defined as cases in which parents earned within \$10,000 of each other, and “I don't know” is defined as either parent not having wages in PRISM.

<sup>16</sup> For participants overall, percentages total over 100 because the denominator is at the participant level and the numerator is at the case level; some participants have had both cases with enforcement remedy history as well as other cases without enforcement remedy history. Enforcement remedies of any status and of any type are included.

- **Program logistics:** Findings about respondents' experience with applying for the program and level of understanding about various administrative aspects of the program. Also includes findings about connections to other government programs and resources that could benefit families, and interest in other government programs and resources.
- **Payments:** Findings about respondents' experiences related to making or receiving payments (for example, how amounts are determined, fairness, methods of making or receiving payments, collection of payments, and changing payment amounts).
- **Communications:** Findings about respondents' experience locating and receiving information about the child support program and their case, and with child support workers. Also includes findings about resources used to access case information, interest in receiving email or text communications from the program, and communication method and frequency preferences.

Similar to the methodological approach used in parent interviews, MAD designed the surveys to obtain feedback from a range of parents to inform future improvements to the child support program, not to provide precise estimates of perceptions among the total parent population. For example, as noted in the "Sampling approach" section above, parents currently in the intake process were excluded from the sample because they might not yet have opinions on all aspects of the program. In addition, response rates were different across demographic groups and parents responding to the survey were more likely to be White, have higher income, and be new to the program compared with parent participants overall. Because of these factors, survey responses do not proportionately reflect the overall parent population. Readers should interpret survey results as directional, rather than precise estimates of parent perceptions.

Many questions on the survey asked respondents to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with a statement on a scale. MAD gave each answer a numerical value to calculate the average score for each statement:

- Strongly agree = 5
- Agree = 4
- Neither agree nor disagree = 3
- Disagree = 2
- Strongly disagree = 1

Average statements of 4 or greater reflect general agreement with the statement; the higher the number, the stronger the level of agreement. Four statements in the survey (about program logistics) included an option to select "not applicable." MAD excluded these responses from average score calculations for these statements.

To better understand participant perspectives, MAD analyzed survey responses for different demographic groups. The goal of this analysis was to identify general patterns and trends that might be interesting, rather than testing for statistical significance. Understanding the perspectives of different demographic groups can help the program more effectively make changes to improve participant experiences.

Compare responses across different demographic groups with caution. In some cases, differences between groups can be difficult to interpret because one group is much larger or smaller than others. For example, only 12 respondents identified as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and only 18 respondents identified as an Other race or ethnicity out of the 1,921 respondents who answered this question.

Comparisons explore notable differences or trends in how demographic groups responded to survey questions. In this report, “notable difference” means one group’s average score for a statement differed by 0.5 point or more than another group’s within the same demographic category (or 10 percentage points or more for statements presented by proportion). In exploring notable differences between groups, MAD uses the term “levels of divergence” to explain difference in averages.

For parent role as well as for race and ethnicity comparisons, differences are calculated between the maximum value of any group for that statement in comparison to every other group. For example, if the highest average rating for a statement among any group is 4.0, other groups are described as having a notably lower average if their average was 3.5 or less.

For absolute income, relative income, and program tenure, differences are calculated between the averages of the highest and lowest levels within that demographic category’s continuum. For example, if the average rating among respondents who made \$24,999 or less annually is 0.5 point higher or lower than respondents who made \$100,000 or more annually, that is described as a notable difference.

Cross-tabulation tables include columns that reflect the difference between scores in that row (“difference” column). Due to rounding, subtracting the lowest score in a row from the highest may yield a slightly different number than the “difference” column reflects. For example, a row may reflect a score of 4.0 for custodial respondents and 2.3 for non-custodial respondents, but because the true difference is between 4.04 and 2.25, the difference rounds to 1.8 instead of 1.7. The report provides differences for cross-tabulation tables related to parent role, absolute income, relative income, and program tenure. To conserve space on cross-tabulation tables of race and ethnicity, cells with notable differences (positive or negative) are highlighted using a blue background with white, bold text.

In demographic questions, the survey gave respondents the opportunity to select “prefer not to answer” for questions about race and ethnicity and absolute income. Similarly, respondents could select “I don’t know” for the question about relative income. While this report provides these data in relevant cross-tabulation tables and includes these respondents in calculations of overall averages, they were not included in analysis of notable difference calculations across demographic subgroups.

Since the survey did not require respondents to answer any question, denominators are different for each statement and question. For simplicity, demographic denominators included in cross-tabulation tables reflect the total number of respondents who identified with that category in the survey.

To conserve space in cross-tabulation tables, MAD shortened the racial and ethnic group names in the header row. The full category names respondents could select from included:

- Black/African American
- American Indian/Native American/Alaska Native/Indigenous
- Asian
- Hispanic/Latinx
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- White
- Other

- Unknown
- Prefer not to answer

The report includes abbreviated group names in descriptive narratives for brevity and clarity.

Data on respondents who identified as an unknown race or ethnicity are not presented in race and ethnicity cross-tabulations in this report because fewer than 10 responses were received from this group. Cross-tabulation data are suppressed when cell sizes are less than 10 to protect the identity of individuals. Additionally, respondents could select multiple race and ethnicity categories (for example, both Black/African American and Asian). Respondents who selected more than one category were reported in all categories they selected (for example, included in both Black/African American and Asian averages).

# Findings

## Overarching findings

Broadly, survey findings are directionally consistent with findings from interviews MAD conducted with participants in January and February 2021, particularly related to overall experience, payments, and communications.

Average ratings on statements about overall experience, logistics, payments, and communications ranged from mixed (neither agree nor disagree) to negative (disagree to strongly disagree). Though the average of the highest rated statement in the survey, “Child support is an important program for ensuring the financial needs of children are met,” (3.8) approached a positive response (agree), none of the rated statements received a positive average rating across respondents overall.

The survey found few notable differences by relative income (respondent’s income relative to the other parent’s income) or absolute income (respondent’s annual income). While interview data were not analyzed by income, interviewees did share anecdotal information about their relative and absolute income levels, which seemed to affect their opinions on the fairness of payment amounts. Given this, it was expected that there would be a greater number of notable differences in statements by relative and absolute income. There were no notable differences in relative or absolute income levels for the statement “The child support system is fair in determining payment amounts.” However, individuals at all absolute and relative income levels disagreed with this statement, so opinions on why payment amounts are unfair that were discussed by interviewees may still differ by income (higher-income participants wanting flatter payment amounts and lower-income participants wanting variable payment amounts).

Respondents who identified as Native American consistently rated statements lower than respondents who identified with another racial or ethnic group, on average. Respondents who identified as Pacific Islander and an “Other race or ethnicity” also often rated statements lower than those identifying with another racial or ethnic group. While these respondents’ averages followed the trend of the overall average on several statements, their responses were notably lower than the trend of the overall average on several statements.

Statements where respondents who identified as Native American (43 respondents), Pacific Islander (12 respondents), or Other race or ethnicity (18 respondents) rated statements notably **lower** than the overall average include:

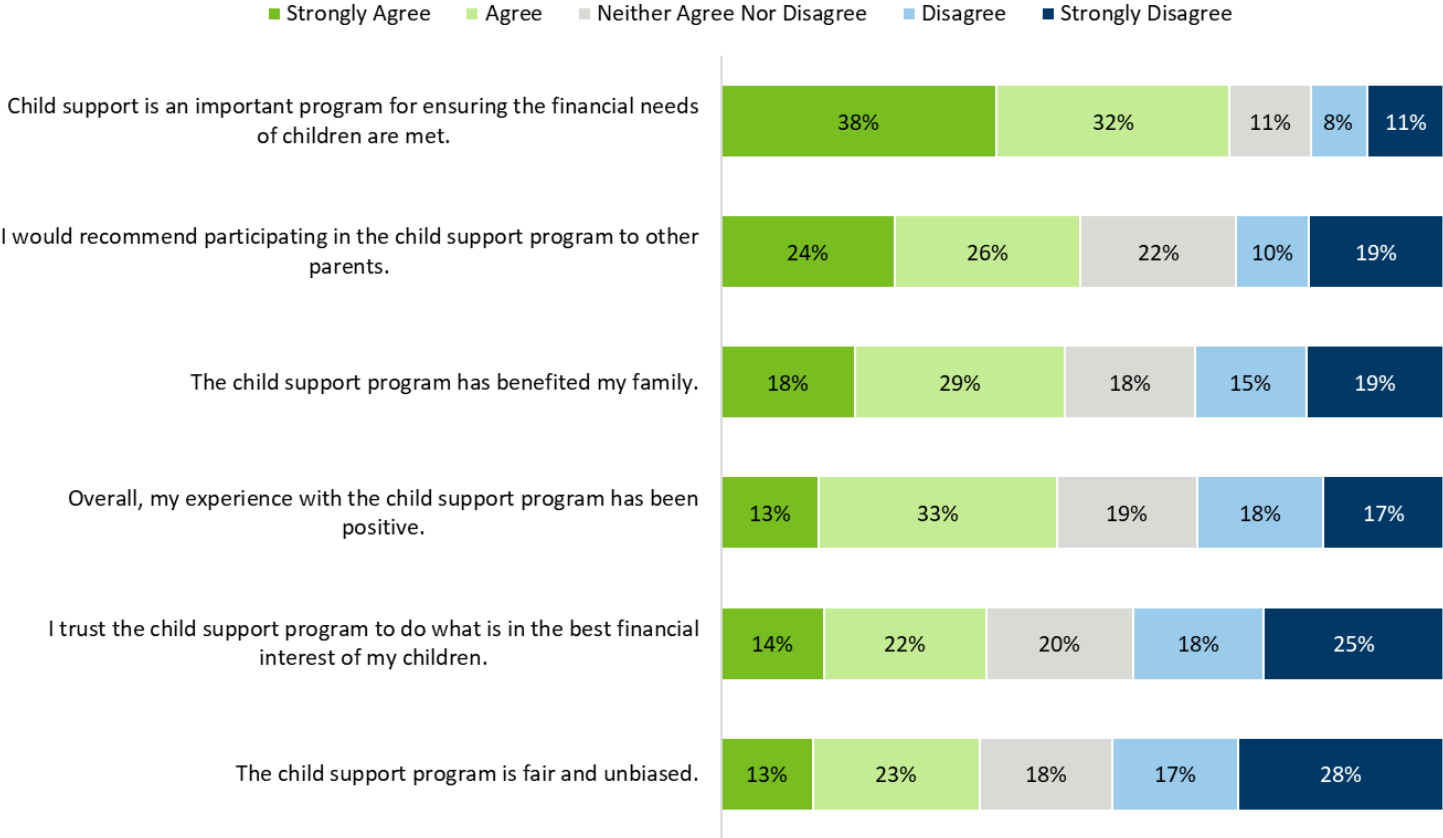
- I trust the child support program to do what is in the best financial interest of my children. (Native American, Pacific Islander, and Other race or ethnicity)
- I would recommend participating in the child support program to other parents. (Pacific Islander and Other race or ethnicity).
- I understand how to provide updates to the program when I experience a life event such as a change in employment or when my child graduates from high school. (Pacific Islander and Other race or ethnicity)
- I understood the administrative fees associated with the child support program when I applied or enrolled. (Native American and Other race or ethnicity)

- The child support system is fair in determining payment amounts. (Native American and Other race or ethnicity).
- I understand how child support payment amounts are determined. (Native American)
- It is easy for me to find the information I need about the child support program and my case. (Native American, Pacific Islander, and Other race or ethnicity)
- My child support worker treats me with dignity and respect. (Other race or ethnicity)
- I receive enough information from the child support program about my case. (Native American)
- The child support program proactively communicates with me about my case. (Native American and Other race or ethnicity)

# Overall experience

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement on statements related to their overall experience in the child support program, from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). Overall findings are presented first (Figure 2 and Table 3), followed by notable differences and trends among respondents.

**Figure 2. Overall experience with the child support program**





**Table 3. Overall experience with the child support program**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Total answers</b>	<b>Average</b>
Child support is an important program for ensuring the financial needs of children are met.	38% 828	32% 702	11% 244	8% 171	11% 230	2,175	3.8
I would recommend participating in the child support program to other parents.	24% 521	26% 558	22% 468	10% 219	19% 405	2,171	3.3
The child support program has benefited my family.	18% 402	29% 633	18% 390	15% 337	19% 413	2,175	3.1
Overall, my experience with the child support program has been positive.	13% 292	33% 718	19% 423	18% 381	17% 362	2,176	3.1
I trust the child support program to do what is in the best financial interest of my children.	14% 309	22% 487	20% 444	18% 391	25% 542	2,173	2.8
The child support program is fair and unbiased.	13% 275	23% 503	18% 397	17% 379	28% 617	2,171	2.7

Nearly three-quarters of respondents (70 percent) agreed child support is an important program for ensuring the financial needs of children are met. This was the highest-rated statement in the survey. In contrast, fewer respondents said they trust the child support program to do what is in the best financial interest of their children (36 percent) or that the program is fair and unbiased (36 percent). These statements were some of the lowest-rated statements in the survey.

Half of the respondents said they would recommend participating in the program to other parents (50 percent). Less than half said that the program has benefited their family (47 percent) and that their experience in the program has been positive (46 percent).

Custodial parents rated all of these statements notably higher than non-custodial parents (more agreement, Table 4). These statements included some of the greatest levels of divergence (difference between averages) between custodial and non-custodial parents in the survey.

While the program’s importance in ensuring the financial needs of children are met was the highest rated statements for both custodial and non-custodial parents, recommending participation in the program to other parents had the greatest level of divergence between custodial and non-custodial parents in the survey. Similarly, there was a high level of divergence between custodial and non-custodial parents **about participation in the program and its benefit to their family**. Custodial parents were more likely to agree that the program has benefited them or their family than non-custodial parents.

**Table 4. Notable differences in overall experience with the child support program by parent role**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Custodial parent (n=1,266)</b>	<b>Non-custodial parent (n=910)</b>	<b><i>Difference</i></b>
I would recommend participating in the child support program to other parents.	4.0	2.2	1.7
The child support program has benefited my family.	3.8	2.2	1.6
The child support program is fair and unbiased.	3.4	1.8	1.6
I trust the child support program to do what is in the best financial interest of my children.	3.4	2.1	1.3
Child support is an important program for ensuring the financial needs of children are met.	4.3	3.1	1.2
Overall, my experience with the child support program has been positive.	3.6	2.4	1.2

Respondents who identified as Native American, Pacific Islander, and Other racial or ethnic background had notably lower average responses (less agreement) than at least one other race and ethnicity category, across all statements about overall program experience (Table 5). Table cells are highlighted in blue when there is a 0.5 point or more difference between the average for the highlighted group and at least one other group in the same row. For example, on average, respondents who identified as Native, Pacific Islander or Other rated the statement “I trust the child support program to do what is in the best financial interest of my children” 0.5 point lower than respondents who identified as Black, Asian, Hispanic, or White.

**Table 5. Notable differences in overall experience with the child support program by race/ethnicity**

Statement	Black (n=174)	Native (n=43)	Asian (n=67)	Hispanic (n=85)	Pacific Islander (n=12)	White (n=1450)	Other (n=18)	Prefer not to answer (n=181)	Difference
I trust the child support program to do what is in the best financial interest of my children.	3.0	2.4	3.3	3.0	2.8	2.9	2.7	2.1	0.8
Child support is an important program for ensuring the financial needs of children are met.	3.8	3.6	3.9	4.0	3.3	3.9	3.3	3.2	0.7
The child support program has benefited my family.	3.2	2.9	3.3	3.2	3.2	3.2	2.7	2.6	0.6
The child support program is fair and unbiased.	2.9	2.5	2.9	3.0	2.7	2.8	2.4	2.1	0.6
I would recommend participating in the child support program to other parents.	3.3	3.0	3.4	3.3	2.9	3.4	2.9	2.4	0.5

In general, as participants' absolute income increased, their agreement about the program benefiting their family notably decreased (Table 6).

**Table 6. Notable differences in overall experience with the child support program by absolute income**

Statement	\$0– \$24,999 (n=257)	\$25,000– \$49,999 (n=610)	\$50,000– \$74,999 (n=457)	\$75,000– \$99,999 (n=186)	\$100,000 or above (n=149)	Prefer not to answer (n=285)	Difference
The child support program is fair and unbiased.	3.1	2.9	2.8	2.6	2.4	2.4	0.7

As participants' time in the program increased, their agreement that the program is fair and unbiased notably decreased (Table 7).

**Table 7. Notable differences in overall experience with the child support program by program tenure**

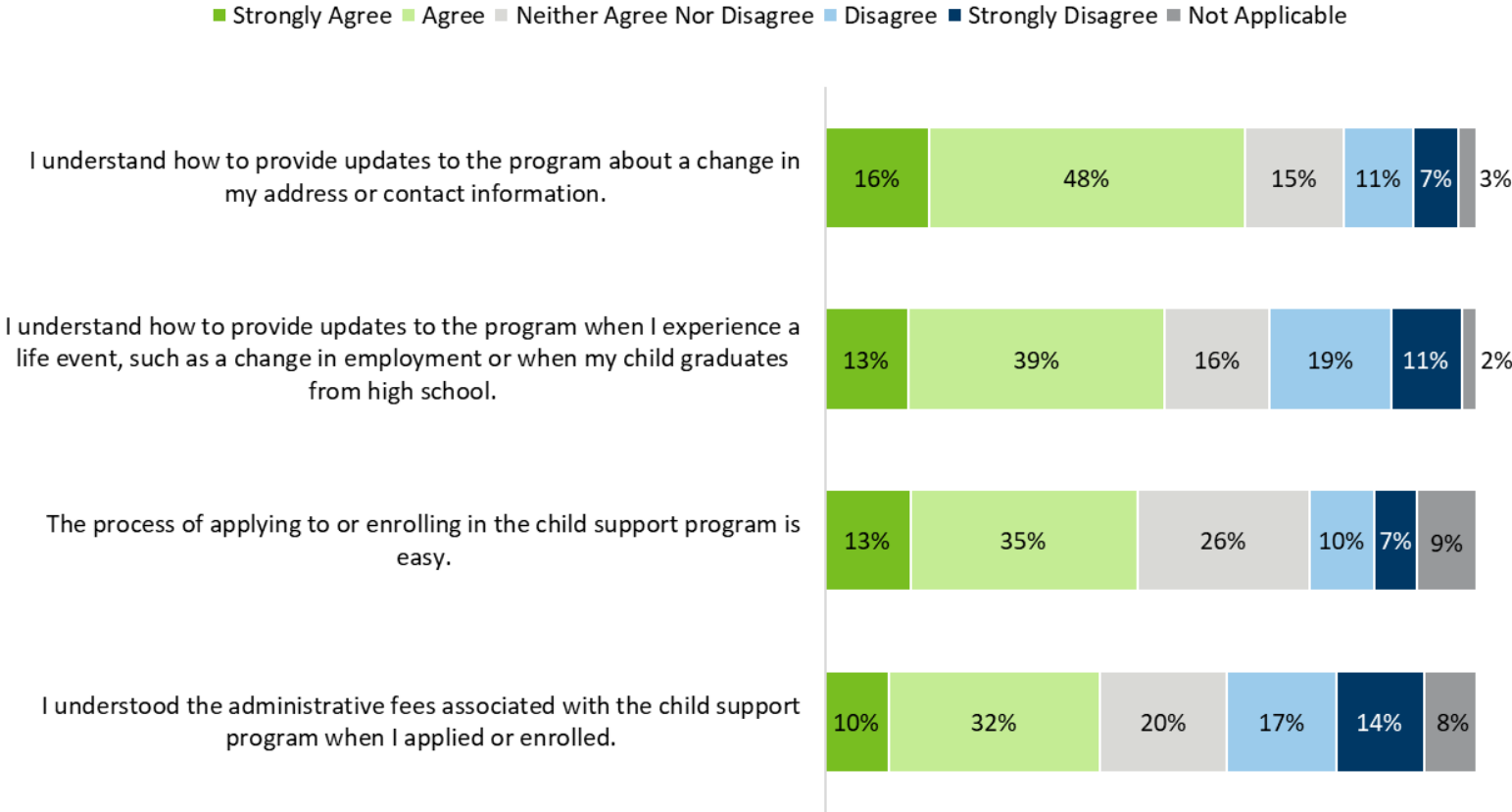
<b>Statement</b>	<b>Less than a year (n=139)</b>	<b>1–3 years (n=421)</b>	<b>4–6 years (n=518)</b>	<b>7 or more years (n=877)</b>	<b><i>Difference</i></b>
The child support program is fair and unbiased.	3.2	2.9	2.7	2.6	0.5

There were no notable differences in average perceptions of overall experience by relative income (whether parents' income was higher, about the same, or lower than the other parent involved in their child support case).

# Program logistics

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement on statements related to program logistics, from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). This report presents overall findings first (Figure 3 and Table 8), followed by notable differences and trends among respondents.

**Figure 3. Perceptions of program logistics**



**Table 8. Perceptions of program logistics**

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Total answers	Average
I understand how to provide updates to the program about a change in my address or contact information.	16% 333	48% 1,008	15% 317	11% 224	7% 144	3% 59	2,085	3.6
I understand how to provide updates to the program when I experience a life event, such as a change in employment or when my child graduates from high school.	13% 265	39% 822	16% 335	19% 388	11% 226	2% 49	2,085	3.3
The process of applying to or enrolling in the child support program is easy.	13% 273	35% 730	26% 553	10% 205	7% 139	9% 192	2,092	3.4
I understood the administrative fees associated with the child support program when I applied or enrolled.	10% 202	32% 677	20% 407	17% 349	14% 283	8% 169	2,087	3.1

While nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of respondents said they understood how to provide updates about a change in their address or contact information, only just over half (52 percent) said they understood how to provide updates when they experience a life event—and nearly one-third (30 percent) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Even fewer (48 percent) said the process of applying to the child support program is easy, and that they understood the administrative fees associated with the program (43 percent).

Custodial parents rated their perceptions of program logistics notably higher than non-custodial parents (more agreement, Table 9) on understanding administrative fees and providing updates to the program; there were no notable differences by parent role on perceptions of the enrollment process being easy.

**Table 9. Notable differences in perceptions of program logistics by parent role**

Statement	Custodial parent (n=1,219)	Non-custodial parent (n=868)	Difference
I understood the administrative fees associated with the child support program when I applied or enrolled.	3.4	2.6	0.8
I understand how to provide updates to the program when I experience a life event, such as a change in employment or when my child graduates from high school.	3.5	2.8	0.7
I understand how to provide updates to the program about a change in my address or contact information.	3.8	3.3	0.5

Respondents who identified as Pacific Islander or Other had notably lower average responses (less agreement) than at least one other race and ethnicity category in understanding how to provide updates to the program due to a change in life event (Table 10). In addition, respondents who identified as Native American or Pacific Islander had a notably lower average response in how to provide updates to the program about a change in address or contact information. Those who identified as Native American or Other had a lower average response about administrative fees associated with the program

**Table 10. Notable differences in perceptions of program logistics by race/ethnicity**

Statement	Black (n=171)	Native (n=43)	Asian (n=66)	Hispanic (n=85)	Pacific Islander (n=12)	White (n=1,451)	Other (n=18)	Prefer not to answer (n=180)	Difference
I understand how to provide updates to the program when I experience a life event, such as a change in employment or when my child graduates from high school.	3.5	3.1	3.4	3.3	2.7	3.3	2.9	2.8	0.8
I understand how to provide updates to the program about a change in my address or contact information.	3.9	3.4	3.7	3.5	3.2	3.6	3.6	3.2	0.7
I understood the administrative fees associated with the child support program when I applied or enrolled.	3.2	2.9	3.4	3.2	3.3	3.1	2.8	2.5	0.7

There were no notable differences on average perceptions of program logistics by absolute income, relative income, or program tenure.

## Program connections

Respondents were asked whether the child support program had connected them with other government programs or resources and whether they would be interested in referrals to other government programs or resources based on information in their child support case. Overall, 14 percent of respondents had been connected to other programs and resources and 34 percent were interested in referrals (Table 11).

**Table 11. Overall experience and interest in connections to other programs and resources**

Statement	Yes	No	Total answers
The child support program has connected me with other government programs or resources that could benefit me and my family.	14% 291	86% 1,790	2,081
I would be interested in referrals to other government programs or resources that could benefit me and my family, based on information in my child support case.	34% 703	66% 1,373	2,076

Comparing survey responses by role, custodial parents were both notably more likely to have been connected to and notably more likely to be interested in referrals to other programs and resources (Table 12).

**Table 12. Notable differences in connections to other programs and resources by parent role**

Statement	Custodial parent (n=1,217)	Non-custodial parent (n=864)	Difference
The child support program has connected me with other government programs or resources that could benefit me and my family.	20%	6%	14 points
I would be interested in referrals to other government programs or resources that could benefit me and my family, based on information in my child support case.	39%	27%	12 points
<i>Referral gap (percent interested minus percent connected)</i>	19%	21%	2 points



Connections to other programs and resources also differed by race and ethnicity (Table 13). Despite these differences, for all racial and ethnic groups, the percent of parents who had been connected to other programs was lower than the percent of parents interested in being referred. Indeed, even for groups with lower levels of interest in referrals, there was still a notable referral gap. Respondents who identified as Native American, Hispanic, or an Other racial or ethnic background had notably higher referral gaps (the percent interested in referrals minus the percent connected to programs or resources).

**Table 13. Notable differences in connections to other programs and resources by race/ethnicity**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Black</b> (n=172)	<b>Native</b> (n=43)	<b>Asian</b> (n=66)	<b>Hispanic</b> (n=84)	<b>Pacific Islander</b> (n=12)	<b>White</b> (n=1,450)	<b>Other</b> (n=18)	<b>Prefer not to answer</b> (n=181)	<b>Difference</b>
The child support program has connected me with other government programs or resources that could benefit me and my family.	16%	16%	24%	15%	17%	15%	6%	4%	19 points
I would be interested in referrals to other government programs or resources that could benefit me and my family, based on information in my child support case.	43%	48%	48%	47%	42%	34%	44%	23%	15 points
<i>Referral gap (percent interested minus percent connected)</i>	26%	31%	24%	32%	25%	19%	39%	19%	4 points

Parents with lower levels of absolute income were both notably more likely to have been connected to programs and notably more interested in referrals (Table 14). Parents on a lower income also had somewhat larger referral gaps.

**Table 14. Notable differences in connections to other programs and resources by absolute income**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>\$0–\$24,999 (n=255)</b>	<b>\$25,000– \$49,999 (n=609)</b>	<b>\$50,000– \$74,999 (n=457)</b>	<b>\$75,000– \$99,999 (n=186)</b>	<b>\$100,000 or above (n=149)</b>	<b>Prefer not to answer (n=284)</b>	<b><i>Difference</i></b>
The child support program has connected me with other government programs or resources that could benefit me and my family.	23%	19%	11%	9%	5%	9%	18 points
I would be interested in referrals to other government programs or resources that could benefit me and my family, based on information in my child support case.	47%	40%	34%	25%	25%	22%	22 points
<i>Referral gap (percent interested minus percent connected)</i>	24%	21%	22%	16%	20%	12%	4 points

Parents with lower levels of relative income were also notably more interested in referrals, although they were only somewhat more likely to have been connected to programs (Table 15).

**Table 15. Differences in connections to other programs and resources by relative income**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Lower</b> (n=649)	<b>About the same</b> (n=317)	<b>Higher</b> (n=452)	<b>I don't know</b> (n=521)	<b>Difference</b>
The child support program has connected me with other government programs or resources that could benefit me and my family.	17%	12%	11%	14%	7 points
I would be interested in referrals to other government programs or resources that could benefit me and my family, based on information in my child support case.	40%	33%	30%	32%	10 points
<i>Referral gap (percent interested minus percent connected)</i>	23%	21%	19%	18%	3 points

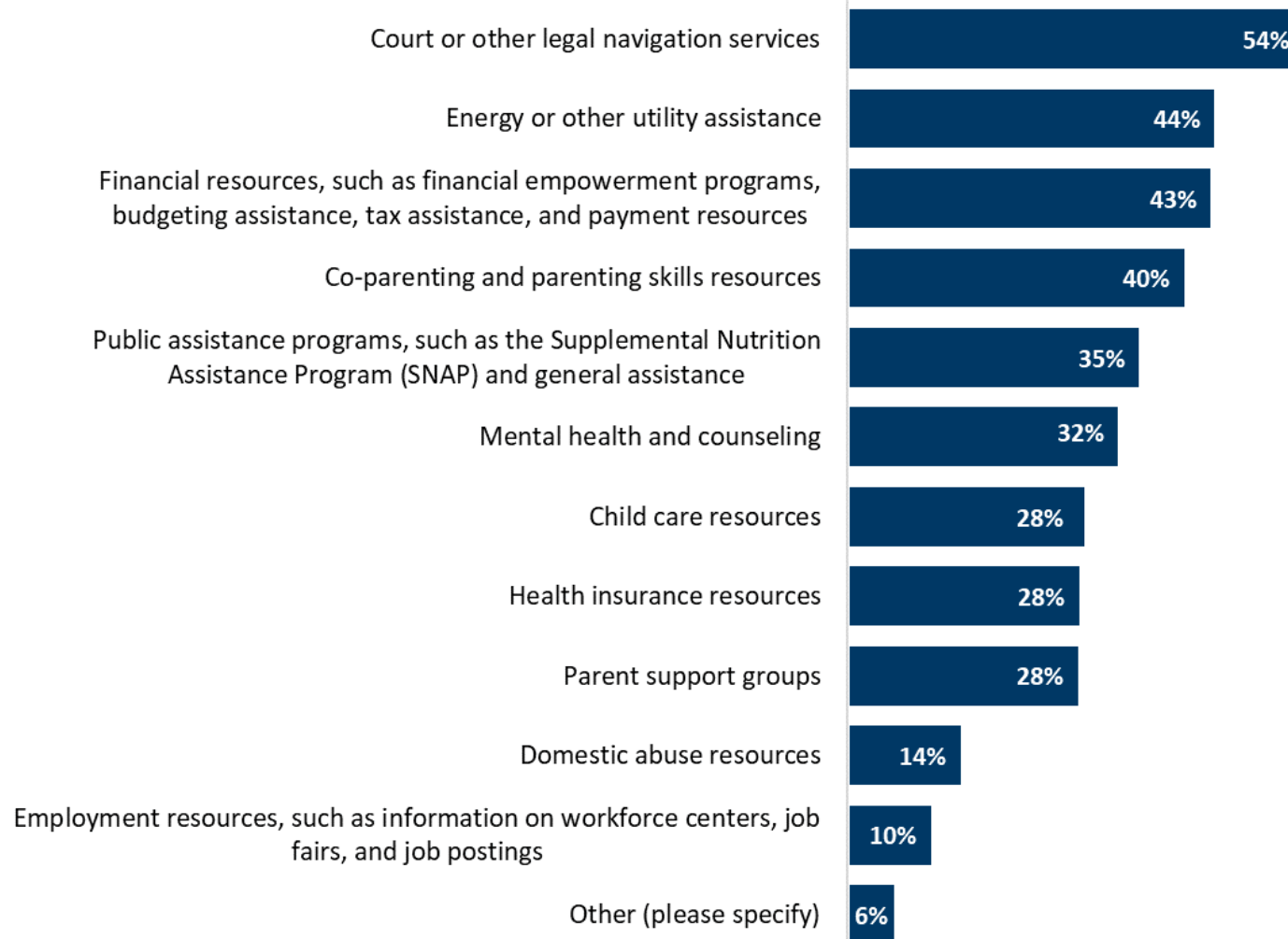
As participants' time in the program increased, they were notably less interested in referrals to other programs and had a notably smaller referral gap; over time, participants were somewhat less likely to have been connected (Table 16).

**Table 16. Differences in connections to other programs and resources by program tenure**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Less than 1 year</b> (n=137)	<b>1–3 years</b> (n=421)	<b>4–6 years</b> (n=519)	<b>7 or more years</b> (n=874)	<b>Difference</b>
The child support program has connected me with other government programs or resources that could benefit me and my family.	18%	15%	16%	12%	6 points
I would be interested in referrals to other government programs or resources that could benefit me and my family, based on information in my child support case.	48%	43%	36%	27%	22 points
<i>Referral gap (percent interested minus percent connected)</i>	31%	28%	20%	15%	16 points

Respondents who said they would be interested in referrals to other government programs or resources based on the information in their child support case were asked to select resources they would be most interested in from a list, selecting all that applied (Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Resources and supports of interest to respondents (select all that apply; n=660)**



The five most frequently requested resources were court or other legal navigation services (54 percent); energy or other utility assistance (44 percent); financial resources, such as financial empowerment programs, budgeting assistance, tax assistance, and payment resources (43 percent); co-parenting and parenting skills resources (40 percent); and public assistance programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP and general assistance) [35 percent].

Custodial parents were notably more interested in referrals to other government programs, particularly public assistance, energy assistance, and mental health resources. Non-custodial parents, while less interested in referrals on average, still had substantial interest in referrals to programs such as court or legal navigation services and co-parenting resources.

All resources had at least some notable differences between one or more racial or ethnic groups. The largest differences were for referrals to:

- Mental health and counseling (Pacific Islander parents were more interested)
- Energy or other utility assistance (Black, Native American, and Asian parents were more interested)
- Financial resources (Black, Hispanic, or Pacific Islander parents were more interested)
- Health insurance resources (Asian, Native American, and Pacific Islander parents were more interested)
- Childcare resources (Native American, Hispanic, and Pacific Islander parents were more interested)
- Co-parenting and parenting skills resources (Asian and Other race ethnicity parents were less interested)
- Public assistance programs (Pacific Islander parents were more interested)
- Parent support groups (Other race or ethnicity parents were more interested)

As incomes increased, parents were notably more interested in parent support groups, co-parenting resources, and court and legal navigation services. In parallel, parents with low incomes were notably more interested in financial resources, public assistance programs, and energy and utility assistance.

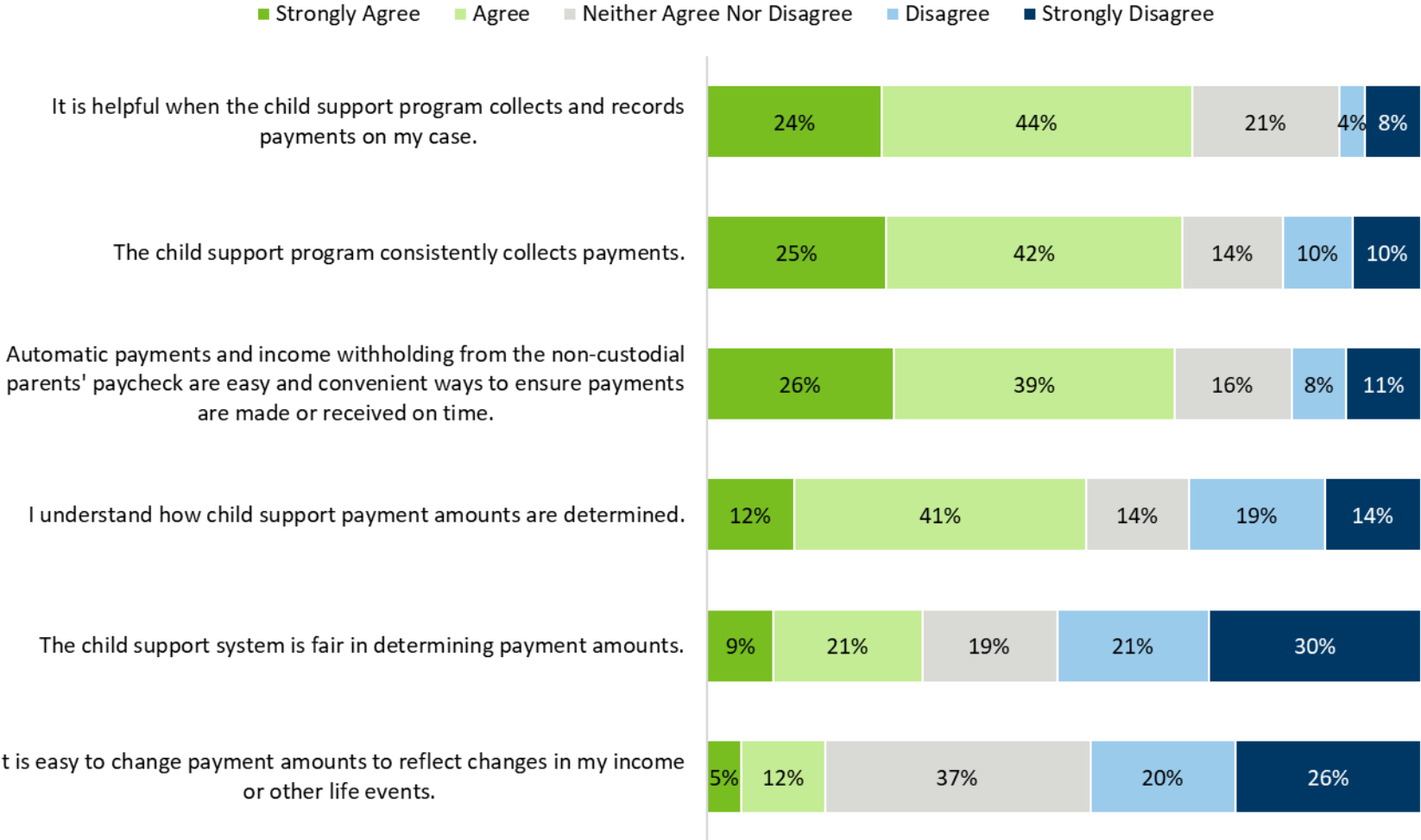
There was notable interest in referrals to court or legal navigation services across parents' relative income. Additionally, parents with less relative income were notably more interested in referrals to energy assistance, and financial resources and parents with relatively more income were notably more interested in referrals for co-parenting and parenting skills resources and financial resources.

Finally, as participants' time in the program increased, they were notably less interested in referrals to other government programs and services.

# Payments

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement on statements related to payments with the child support program, from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). Overall findings are presented first (Figure 5 and Table 17), followed by notable differences and trends among respondents.

**Figure 5. Perceptions of payments with the child support program**



**Table 17. Perceptions of payments with the child support program**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Total answers</b>	<b>Average</b>
It is helpful when the child support program collects and records payments on my case.	24% 501	44% 891	21% 420	4% 75	8% 161	2,048	3.7
The child support program consistently collects payments.	25% 514	42% 852	14% 288	10% 201	10% 198	2,053	3.6
Automatic payments and income withholding from the non-custodial parents' paycheck are easy and convenient ways to ensure payments are made or received on time.	26% 537	39% 805	16% 338	8% 157	11% 216	2,053	3.6
I understand how child support payment amounts are determined.	12% 250	41% 842	14% 294	19% 392	14% 279	2,057	3.2
The child support system is fair in determining payment amounts.	9% 188	21% 430	19% 385	21% 436	30% 610	2,049	2.6
It is easy to change payment amounts to reflect changes in my income or other life events.	5% 98	12% 239	37% 759	20% 416	26% 532	2,044	2.5

Statements about payments included both some of the highest-rated and some of the lowest-rated statements in the survey. More than two-thirds of respondents agreed and only 12 percent disagreed with the statement “it is helpful when the child support program collects and records payments on my case,” which was the second-highest average rated statement overall. Automatic payments and income withholding and consistently collecting payments were the third- and fourth-highest-rated statements overall.

“It is easy to change payment amounts to reflect changes in my income or other life events” and “The child support system is fair in determining payment amounts,” however, were the second- and third-lowest-rated statement overall. Only 17 percent of respondents agreed that changing

payment amounts was easy, while nearly half disagreed. About one-third of respondents felt the child support system is fair in determining payment amounts, while half of respondents disagreed.

Non-custodial parents had notably lower perceptions of payments with the child support program across every statement except for the program consistently collecting payments (Table 18). The largest difference across payment statements by parent role was around fairness in determining payment amounts, where the average custodial parent rating (3.2) was between “Agree” and “Neither Agree Nor Disagree,” while the average non-custodial parent rating (1.7) was between “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree.”

**Table 18. Notable differences in perceptions of payments with the child support program by parent role**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Custodial parent (n=1,204)</b>	<b>Non-custodial parent (n=853)</b>	<b><i>Difference</i></b>
The child support system is fair in determining payment amounts.	3.2	1.7	1.4
It is easy to change payment amounts to reflect changes in my income or other life events.	2.9	1.9	1.0
It is helpful when the child support program collects and records payments on my case.	4.1	3.2	0.9
I understand how child support payment amounts are determined.	3.5	2.7	0.8
Automatic payments and income withholding from the non-custodial parents' paycheck are easy and convenient ways to ensure payments are made or received on time.	3.9	3.2	0.7

Respondents who identified as Native American, Hispanic, Pacific Islander and an Other racial or ethnic background had a notably lower average response to at least one statement about payments compared with at least one other race or ethnic category (Table 19). Respondents who identified as Native American had consistently lower average responses to many of the statements including about the fairness of the child support system, consistent collection of payment, and about how the child support payment amounts are determined. Respondents who identified as Hispanic and Pacific Islander also had lower average responses about the program consistently collecting payment. Respondents who identified as an Other racial or ethnic background had notably lower average responses about the ease with which participants can change payment amounts to reflect the change in their income or other life events.



**Table 19. Notable differences in perceptions of payments with the child support program by race/ethnicity**

Statement	Black (n=174)	Native (n=43)	Asian (n=67)	Hispanic (n=85)	Pacific Islander (n=12)	White (n=1,453)	Other (n=18)	Prefer not to answer (n=180)	Difference
The child support system is fair in determining payment amounts.	2.7	2.3	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.6	2.2	2.0	0.6
The child support program consistently collects payments.	3.9	3.5	4.0	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.9	3.3	0.6
It is easy to change payment amounts to reflect changes in my income or other life events.	2.7	2.4	2.8	2.6	2.6	2.5	2.2	2.1	0.6
I understand how child support payment amounts are determined.	3.1	2.8	3.3	3.3	3.0	3.2	3.1	3.0	0.5

Parents with the highest incomes had notably higher agreement about the consistency of the program in collecting payments (Table 20).

**Table 20. Notable differences in perceptions of payments with the child support program by absolute income**

Statement	\$0– \$24,999 (n=257)	\$25,000– \$49,999 (n=612)	\$50,000– \$74,999 (n=459)	\$75,000– \$99,999 (n=186)	\$100,000 or above (n=148)	Prefer not to answer (n=284)	Difference
The child support program consistently collects payments.	3.5	3.5	3.7	3.7	4.1	3.5	0.6

There were no notable differences in statements about payments among parents by relative income, though perceptions about fairness were consistently low: Across all absolute income groups as well as across all relative income groups, the average rating was between “Disagree” and “Neither Agree Nor Disagree.”<sup>17</sup>

As participants’ time in the program increased, parents had notably lower perceptions of the fairness of the system in determining payment amounts (Table 21).

**Table 21. Notable differences in perceptions of payments with the child support program by program tenure**

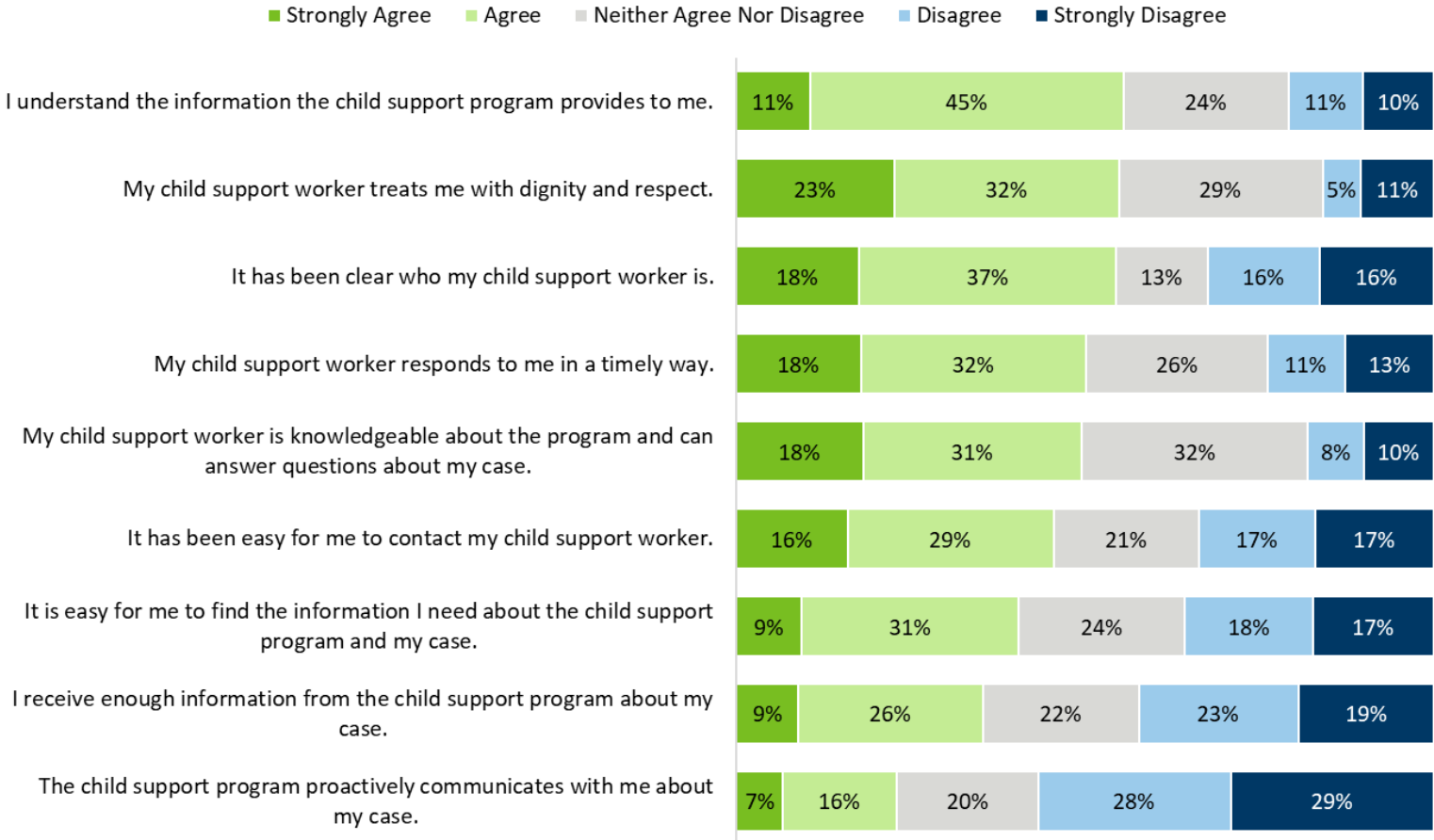
<b>Statement</b>	<b>Less than 1 year (n=138)</b>	<b>1–3 years (n=422)</b>	<b>4–6 years (n=518)</b>	<b>7 or more years (n=879)</b>	<b>Difference</b>
The child support system is fair in determining payment amounts.	3.1	2.7	2.5	2.5	0.6

<sup>17</sup> Considering interview findings, this may be because both low- and high-income earners have concerns about fairness of payment amounts, but for differing reasons: In general, parents with higher incomes expressed a preference for payments to be flatter (to change less if they earn more), while parents with low incomes expressed a preference for more graduated payments (for payments to change more based on income earned at a given time).

# Communications

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement on statements related to communication with the child support program, from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). Overall findings are presented first (Figure 6 and Table 22), followed by notable differences and trends among respondents.

**Figure 6. Communications with the child support program**



**Table 22. Communications with the child support program**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Total answers</b>	<b>Average</b>
My child support worker treats me with dignity and respect.	23% 453	32% 643	29% 581	5% 109	11% 210	1,996	3.5
I understand the information the child support program provides to me.	11% 211	45% 896	24% 473	11% 213	10% 203	1,996	3.4
My child support worker is knowledgeable about the program and can answer questions about my case.	18% 364	31% 627	32% 646	8% 162	10% 200	1,999	3.4
My child support worker responds to me in a timely way.	18% 357	32% 643	26% 518	11% 222	13% 254	1,994	3.3
It has been clear who my child support worker is.	18% 351	37% 739	13% 263	16% 320	16% 328	2,001	3.2
It has been easy for me to contact my child support worker.	16% 319	29% 589	21% 416	17% 334	17% 339	1,997	3.1
It is easy for me to find the information I need about the child support program and my case.	9% 188	31% 620	24% 478	18% 365	17% 348	1,999	3.0
I receive enough information from the child support program about my case.	9% 178	26% 529	22% 445	23% 457	19% 388	1,997	2.8
The child support program proactively communicates with me about my case.	7% 134	16% 327	20% 406	28% 551	29% 583	2,001	2.4

Respondents' ratings on statements about communications ranged from mixed to more negative. Just over half of the respondents agreed that they understand the information the child support program provides (56 percent), that their child support worker treats them with dignity and respect

(55 percent), and that it has been clear who their child support worker is (55 percent). Half agreed that their child support worker is knowledgeable about the program and can answer questions about their case (50 percent) and that their child support worker responds to them in a timely way (50 percent). Less than half agreed that it has been easy to contact their child support worker (45 percent), that it has been easy to find information they need about the program and their case (39 percent), that they receive enough information from the program about their case (35 percent), and that the program proactively communicates about their case (23 percent).

Overall, statements about general communications and information were rated lower by respondents (less agreement) than statements about county workers, which were rated higher (more agreement). The statement about receiving enough information from the program was one of the lowest-rated statements in the survey, and the statement about receiving proactive communication from the program was the lowest-rated statement in the survey.

Custodial parents rated all communication statements higher than non-custodial parents, six of them with notable differences of 0.5 or more (Table 23). However, these statements also included some of the lowest levels of divergence between custodial and non-custodial parents in the survey (difference between averages). In other words, their levels of agreement trended in the same direction and, while notable differences still exist, custodial and non-custodial were more aligned in their opinions of communication with the program.

**Table 23. Notable differences in communications with the child support program by parent role**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Custodial parent (n=1,193)</b>	<b>Non-custodial parent (n=851)</b>	<b><i>Difference</i></b>
It is easy for me to find the information I need about the child support program and my case.	3.3	2.5	0.8
I understand the information the child support program provides to me.	3.7	2.9	0.8
I receive enough information from the child support program about my case.	3.1	2.4	0.7
The child support program proactively communicates with me about my case.	2.7	2.1	0.6
It has been easy for me to contact my child support worker.	3.3	2.8	0.5
My child support worker responds to me in a timely way.	3.5	3.0	0.5

Respondents who identified as having an Other racial or ethnic background and who identified as Native American had the most notably lower average responses (less agreement) across statements about communications (Table 24).

**Table 24. Notable differences in communications with the child support program by race/ethnicity**

Statement	Black (n=173)	Native (n=42)	Asian (n=66)	Hispanic (n=85)	Pacific Islander (n=12)	White (n=1,451)	Other (n=18)	Prefer not to answer (n=179)	Difference
It has been easy for me to contact my child support worker.	3.2	2.9	3.2	3.0	3.3	3.2	2.4	2.8	0.9
It is easy for me to find the information I need about the child support program and my case.	3.3	2.6	3.2	3.0	2.8	3.0	2.8	2.5	0.7
My child support worker responds to me in a timely way.	3.4	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.4	3.4	2.8	3.0	0.6
My child support worker treats me with dignity and respect.	3.5	3.3	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.6	3.0	3.1	0.6
I receive enough information from the child support program about my case.	3.1	2.5	3.0	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.7	2.3	0.6
It has been clear who my child support worker is.	3.4	3.0	3.6	3.3	3.6	3.3	3.0	2.9	0.6
The child support program proactively communicates with me about my case.	2.7	2.2	2.7	2.6	2.3	2.5	2.2	2.0	0.6
My child support worker is knowledgeable about the program and can answer questions about my case.	3.5	3.2	3.5	3.4	3.3	3.5	3.0	3.0	0.5

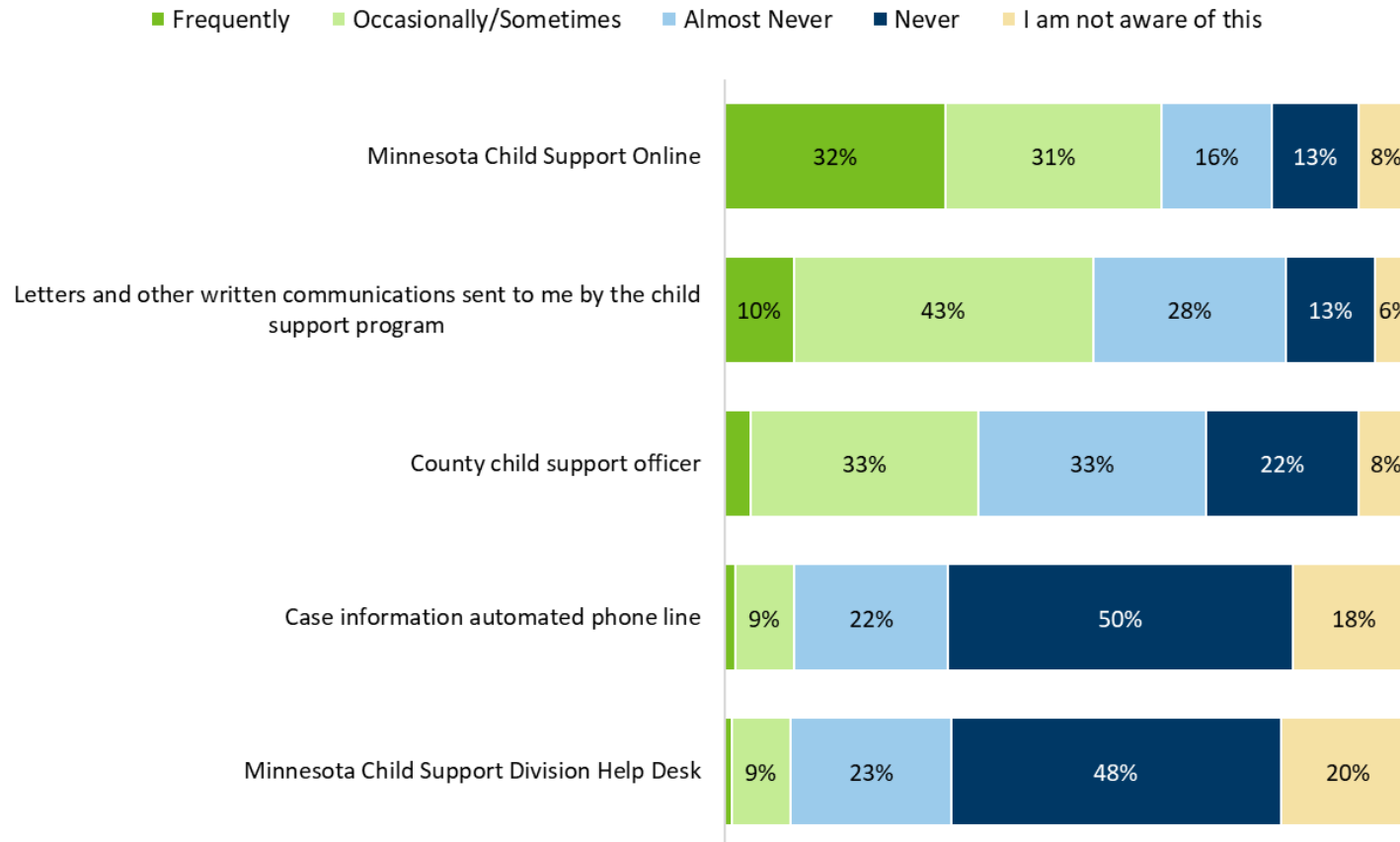
There were no notable differences in average perceptions of program communications by absolute income, relative income, or program tenure.

## Communication preferences

Findings on resources used to access information, preferred communication methods, and preferred communication frequencies are highlighted differently than other findings in this report. While other findings tend to focus on which demographic groups reported lower ratings, this section highlights both higher and lower ratings across groups, depending on the question. For example, this section highlights which groups reported lower usage of different resources to access information about their case and which groups had greater preferences for different communication methods. Findings are highlighted in this way to be more useful for future communication planning efforts.

Respondents were asked how often they utilized different resources to access information about their child support case (Figure 7 and Table 25).

**Figure 7. Resources used to access information about child support case**





**Table 25. Resources used to access information about child support case**

Statement	Frequently	Occasionally/ sometimes	Almost never	Never	I am not aware of this	Total answers
Minnesota Child Support Online	32% 639	31% 623	16% 321	13% 251	8% 164	1,998
Letters and other written communications sent to me by the child support program	10% 199	43% 861	28% 553	13% 255	6% 117	1,985
County child support officer	4% 76	33% 652	33% 654	22% 438	8% 163	1,983
Case information automated phone line	2% 30	9% 170	22% 443	50% 990	18% 353	1,986
Minnesota Child Support Division Help Desk	1% 20	9% 170	23% 463	48% 944	20% 388	1,985

Respondents reported using Minnesota Child Support Online (MSCO) most often (64 percent used it frequently or occasionally/sometimes).<sup>18</sup> Over half reported using letters and other written communications sent by the program (53 percent used them frequently or occasionally/sometimes). Fewer respondents reported using their county child support officer as a resource (37 percent), the case information automated phone line (11 percent), or the help desk (10 percent). A greater proportion of respondents said they are not aware of the case information automated phone line (18 percent) or the help desk (20 percent).

A notably higher proportion of custodial parents said they use MSCO frequently or occasionally/sometimes compared with non-custodial parents (Table 26Error! Reference source not found.).

<sup>18</sup> Because a valid email is required to use Minnesota Child Support Online (MSCO), this survey's approach of inviting participants via email may have resulted in an overrepresentation of MSCO users.

**Table 26. Notable differences in resources used frequently, occasionally, or sometimes to access information about child support case by parent role**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Custodial parent (n=1,167)</b>	<b>Non-custodial parent (n=831)</b>	<b><i>Difference</i></b>
Minnesota Child Support Online	75%	47%	28 points

Notable differences in use of resources to access information about a child support case by race and ethnicity included (Table 27):

- Respondents who identified as Native American or White generally reported lower usage of resources to access information about their child support case.
- Respondents who identified as Native American, Pacific Islander, White, or an Other racial or ethnic background reported lower usage of MSCO; respondents who identified as Black reported higher usage.
- Respondents who identified as Native American, White, or an Other racial or ethnic background reported lower usage of letters or other written communication; respondents who identified as Pacific Islander and Black reported higher usage.

**Table 27. Notable differences in resources used frequently, occasionally, or sometimes to access information about child support case by race/ethnicity**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Black (n=174)</b>	<b>Native (n=43)</b>	<b>Asian (n=66)</b>	<b>Hispanic (n=85)</b>	<b>Pacific Islander (n=12)</b>	<b>White (n=1,452)</b>	<b>Other (n=18)</b>	<b>Prefer not to answer (n=179)</b>	<b><i>Difference</i></b>
Minnesota Child Support Online	77%	<b>58%</b>	70%	68%	<b>50%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>61%</b>	47%	27 points
Letters and other written communications sent to me by the child support program	64%	<b>56%</b>	61%	<b>56%</b>	67%	<b>53%</b>	<b>56%</b>	44%	13 points
County child support officer	40%	<b>26%</b>	39%	32%	33%	37%	39%	35%	13 points
Case information automated phone line	24%	<b>9%</b>	14%	<b>12%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>8%</b>	24%	7%	16 points
Minnesota Child Support Division Help Desk	21%	<b>5%</b>	20%	<b>15%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>7%</b>	28%	7%	23 points

Respondents who reported higher absolute income also reported notably lower usage of the case information automated phone line and help desk; parents on a lower income reported notably higher usage (Table 28).

**Table 28. Notable differences in resources used frequently, occasionally, or sometimes to access information about child support case by absolute income**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>\$0– \$24,999 (n=256)</b>	<b>\$25,000– \$49,999 (n=607)</b>	<b>\$50,000– \$74,999 (n=459)</b>	<b>\$75,000– \$99,999 (n=184)</b>	<b>\$100,000 or above (n=148)</b>	<b>Prefer not to answer (n=280)</b>	<b><i>Difference</i></b>
Case information automated phone line	18%	11%	9%	4%	7%	8%	11 points
Minnesota Child Support Division Help Desk	15%	12%	7%	6%	5%	7%	10 points

There were no notable differences in resources used by relative income or by program tenure.

When asked about their interest in email and text messaging communications from the program, just over half of respondents expressed interest (53 percent, n=1,048), and some said they already received these communications from the program (11 percent, n=219). Over one-third said they were not interested in text messaging or email communications (36 percent, n=719).

A notably larger proportion of custodial parents were interested in receiving email and text messaging communications from the program compared with non-custodial parents (Table 29), as were Native American, Hispanic, and White parents (Table 30).

**Table 29. Notable differences in interest in email and text messaging communications from the program by parent role**

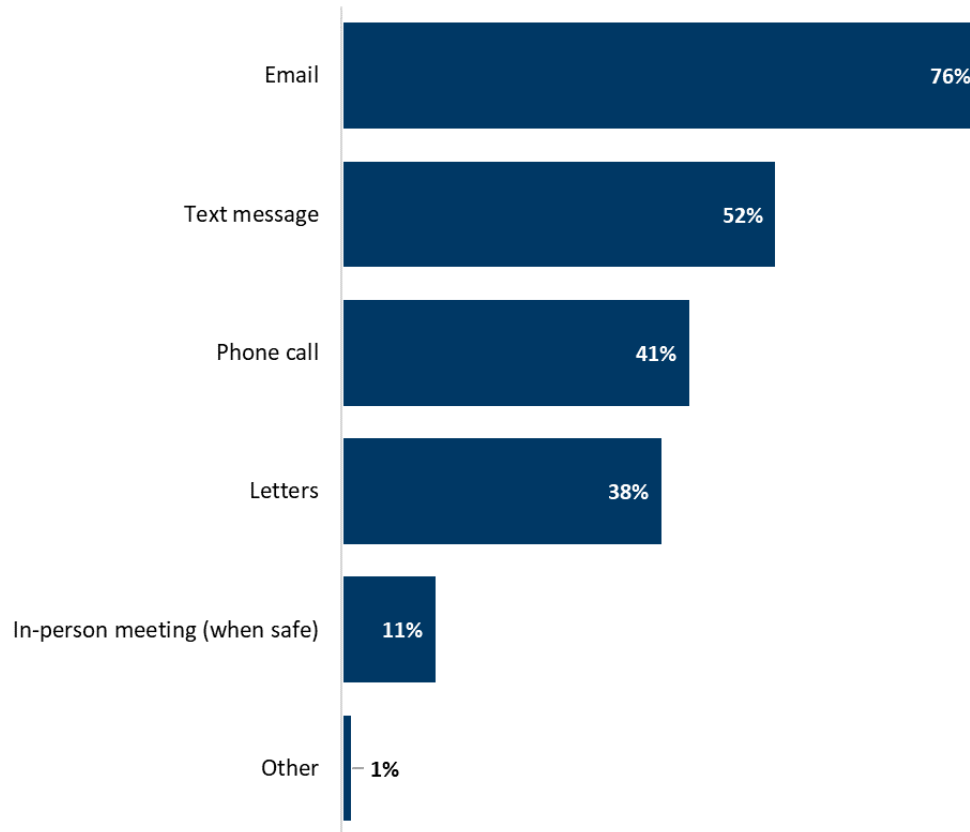
<b>Response</b>	<b>Custodial parent (n=1,159)</b>	<b>Non- custodial parent (n=827)</b>	<b><i>Difference</i></b>
<b>I would be</b> interested in email and text messaging communications from the Child Support Program	61%	41%	20 points

**Table 30. Notable differences in interest in email and text messaging communications from the program by race/ethnicity**

Response	Black (n=171)	Native (n=42)	Asian (n=66)	Hispanic (n=84)	Pacific Islander (n=12)	White (n=1,448)	Other (n=18)	Prefer not to answer (n=178)	Difference
I <b>would be</b> interested in email and text messaging communications from the Child Support Program	50%	<b>64%</b>	52%	<b>54%</b>	17%	<b>54%</b>	44%	45%	20 points

Respondents were asked to indicate their preferred communication methods (Figure 8).

**Figure 8. Preferred communication method (check all that apply; n=1,084)**



Most commonly, respondents selected email communication (76 percent) and over half selected text messaging (52 percent) as their preferred communication method. Less than half of respondents selected phone calls as a preferred communication method (41 percent).

Though letters and other written communications were frequently or occasionally used by over half of respondents (53 percent), fewer selected it as their preferred communication method (38 percent). This may suggest that written communications are used because it is how the program currently communicates with participants, but that it is not participants' preferred method of communication.

A minority selected in-person meetings as a preferred communication method (11 percent) and several selected other communication methods (1 percent). Among those who selected other, respondents most commonly said they would prefer if the program did not contact them at all. Others suggested voice mail, video call, and other online methods not further specified.

A notably higher proportion of custodial parents reported preferring text messaging and email than non-custodial parents, though email was still the most preferred method of communication across all respondents (Table 31).

**Table 31. Notable differences in preferred communication method by parent role**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Custodial parent (n=1,150)</b>	<b>Non-custodial parent (n=808)</b>	<b><i>Difference</i></b>
Text messaging	61%	39%	22 points
Email	81%	70%	11 points

Notable differences in preferred method of communication by race and ethnicity included (Table 32):

- There were no notable differences in preference for text messages across racial and ethnic groups.
- Email was the most preferred method of communication across all racial and ethnic groups. Respondents who identified as Native American or Asian had the strongest preferences for email.
- Respondents who identified as Black preferred letters notably more than other groups; respondents who identified as Hispanic were much less likely to prefer letters.
- Respondents who identified as an Other racial or ethnic background preferred phone calls, in-person meetings, and other communication methods notably more often than other groups; other groups were much less likely to prefer these methods.

Table 32. Notable differences in preferred communication method by race/ethnicity

Response	Black (n=172)	Native (n=42)	Asian (n=66)	Hispanic (n=81)	Pacific Islander (n=12)	White (n=1,429)	Other (n=18)	Prefer not to answer (n=173)
Phone call	46%	45%	42%	53%	42%	40%	72%	43%
In-person meeting (when safe)	15%	19%	11%	12%	17%	11%	39%	13%
Letters	49%	40%	36%	33%	33%	38%	44%	35%
Email	80%	86%	86%	79%	83%	77%	72%	68%
Other	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	11%	2%

Phone calls, text messaging, and letters were preferred notably less often as absolute income increased among respondents (Table 33). There were no notable differences in preferred communication method by relative income.

**Table 33. Notable differences in preferred communication method by absolute income**

Response	\$0– \$24,999 (n=250)	\$25,000– \$49,999 (n=603)	\$50,000– \$74,999 (n=449)	\$75,000– \$99,999 (n=186)	\$100,000 or above (n=147)	Prefer not to answer (n=271)	<i>Difference</i>
Phone call	49%	40%	41%	42%	35%	39%	13 points
Text message	62%	57%	51%	48%	50%	38%	12 points
Letters	47%	39%	36%	32%	37%	38%	10 points



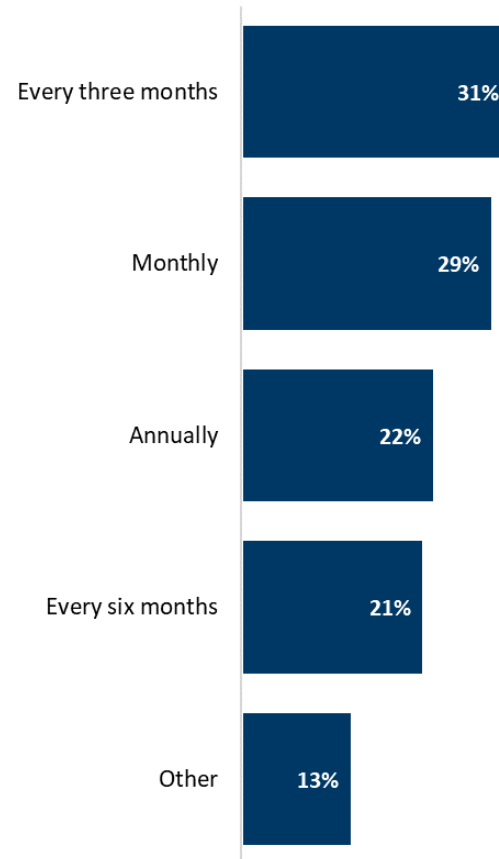
Phone calls and text messages were preferred notably less often as respondents' time in the program increased (Table 34).

**Table 34. Notable differences in preferred communication method by program tenure**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Less than 1 year (n=132)</b>	<b>1–3 years (n=413)</b>	<b>4–6 years (n=509)</b>	<b>7 or more years (n=862)</b>	<b><i>Difference</i></b>
Phone call	59%	44%	39%	39%	20 points
Text message	59%	57%	51%	49%	10 points

Respondents were asked to indicate their preferred frequency of communications (Figure 9).

**Figure 9. Preferred contact frequency (check all that apply; n=1,079)**



Respondents were most often interested in monthly (29 percent) and quarterly (32 percent) communications from the program. Similar proportions of respondents were interested in bi-annual (21 percent) and annual (22 percent) communications from the program. Few respondents selected other communication frequencies (13 percent). Most of these respondents said they preferred communication on an as-needed basis, for example,

when there are changes in payment amounts, missed payments, changes to employment or case worker assignments, when major life events occur (for example, a child graduates from high school), or when an enforcement remedy is enacted.

Several respondents who selected other communication frequencies said they never wanted the program to contact them, while a few requested more-frequent communication (for example, daily, weekly, bi-weekly). A few respondents requested that the program return their phone calls, and, in line with ratings above, a few suggested the program provide more proactive communication, which would decrease their need to contact the program directly (for example, updates, important news, frequently asked questions, sufficient information about requests and changes to cases).

## All rated statements sorted by average

The table below shows the results for each rated statement. They are shown in order of average score, from highest to lowest.

**Table 35. All rated statements sorted by average** <sup>19</sup>

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Average
Child support is an important program for ensuring the financial needs of children are met.	38%	32%	11%	8%	11%	3.8
It is helpful when the child support program collects and records payments on my case.	24%	44%	21%	4%	8%	3.7
Automatic payments and income withholding from the non-custodial parents' paycheck are easy and convenient ways to ensure payments are made or received on time.	26%	39%	16%	8%	11%	3.6
The child support program consistently collects payments.	25%	42%	14%	10%	10%	3.6
I understand how to provide updates to the program about a change in my address or contact information.	16%	48%	15%	11%	7%	3.6
My child support worker treats me with dignity and respect.	23%	32%	29%	5%	11%	3.5
The process of applying to or enrolling in the child support program is easy.	13%	35%	26%	10%	7%	3.4

<sup>19</sup> Some statements included an option for respondents to select "Not applicable" which were excluded when calculating averages.

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Average</b>
My child support worker is knowledgeable about the program and can answer questions about my case.	18%	31%	32%	8%	10%	3.4
I understand the information the child support program provides to me.	11%	45%	24%	11%	10%	3.4
My child support worker responds to me in a timely way.	18%	32%	26%	11%	13%	3.3
I would recommend participating in the child support program to other parents.	24%	26%	22%	10%	19%	3.3
I understand how to provide updates to the program when I experience a life event, such as a change in employment or when my child graduates from high school.	13%	39%	16%	19%	11%	3.3
It has been clear who my child support worker is.	18%	37%	13%	16%	16%	3.2
I understand how child support payment amounts are determined.	12%	41%	14%	19%	14%	3.2
The child support program has benefited my family.	18%	29%	18%	15%	19%	3.1
It has been easy for me to contact my child support worker.	16%	29%	21%	17%	17%	3.1
Overall, my experience with the child support program has been positive.	13%	33%	19%	18%	17%	3.1
I understood the administrative fees associated with the child support program when I applied or enrolled.	10%	32%	20%	17%	14%	3.1

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Average</b>
It is easy for me to find the information I need about the child support program and my case.	9%	31%	24%	18%	17%	3.0
I trust the child support program to do what is in the best financial interest of my children.	14%	22%	20%	18%	25%	2.8
I receive enough information from the child support program about my case.	9%	26%	22%	23%	19%	2.8
The child support program is fair and unbiased.	13%	23%	18%	17%	28%	2.7
The child support system is fair in determining payment amounts.	9%	21%	19%	21%	30%	2.6
It is easy to change payment amounts to reflect changes in my income or other life events.	5%	12%	37%	20%	26%	2.5
The child support program proactively communicates with me about my case.	7%	16%	20%	28%	29%	2.4

The table below compares the results for each rated statement across the initial pilot county survey in January and February 2022 with the non-pilot county survey in May and June 2022. They are shown in order of combined average score, from highest to lowest. There were no notable differences in the average scores between the two surveys.

**Table 36. All statements sorted by average, pilot vs. non-pilot counties**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Combined Average</b>	<b>Pilot County Average</b>	<b>Non-Pilot County Average</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Child support is an important program for ensuring the financial needs of children are met.	3.8	3.9	3.7	0.2
It is helpful when the child support program collects and records payments on my case.	3.7	3.8	3.6	0.2
Automatic payments and income withholding from the non-custodial parents' paycheck are easy and convenient ways to ensure payments are made or received on time.	3.6	3.7	3.6	0.1
The child support program consistently collects payments.	3.6	3.7	3.6	0.1
I understand how to provide updates to the program about a change in my address or contact information.	3.6	3.6	3.5	0.1
My child support worker treats me with dignity and respect.	3.5	3.5	3.5	0.0
The process of applying to or enrolling in the child support program is easy.	3.4	3.4	3.4	0.1
My child support worker is knowledgeable about the program and can answer questions about my case.	3.4	3.4	3.4	0.0
I understand the information the child support program provides to me.	3.4	3.4	3.3	0.1

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Combined Average</b>	<b>Pilot County Average</b>	<b>Non-Pilot County Average</b>	<b>Difference</b>
My child support worker responds to me in a timely way.	3.3	3.3	3.3	0.0
I would recommend participating in the child support program to other parents.	3.3	3.3	3.2	0.2
I understand how to provide updates to the program when I experience a life event, such as a change in employment or when my child graduates from high school.	3.3	3.2	3.3	0.0
It has been clear who my child support worker is.	3.2	3.2	3.3	0.0
I understand how child support payment amounts are determined.	3.2	3.2	3.1	0.1
The child support program has benefited my family.	3.1	3.2	3.0	0.2
It has been easy for me to contact my child support worker.	3.1	3.1	3.1	0.1
Overall, my experience with the child support program has been positive.	3.1	3.1	3.0	0.1
I understood the administrative fees associated with the child support program when I applied or enrolled.	3.1	3.1	3.0	0.1
It is easy for me to find the information I need about the child support program and my case.	3.0	3.0	2.9	0.1



<b>Statement</b>	<b>Combined Average</b>	<b>Pilot County Average</b>	<b>Non-Pilot County Average</b>	<b>Difference</b>
I trust the child support program to do what is in the best financial interest of my children.	2.8	2.9	2.7	0.1
I receive enough information from the child support program about my case.	2.8	2.8	2.8	0.1
The child support program is fair and unbiased.	2.7	2.8	2.6	0.2
The child support system is fair in determining payment amounts.	2.6	2.6	2.5	0.1
It is easy to change payment amounts to reflect changes in my income or other life events.	2.5	2.5	2.5	0.0
The child support program proactively communicates with me about my case.	2.4	2.5	2.4	0.0

# Recommendations

MAD developed recommendations for the child support program based on survey responses and earlier interview findings; these recommendations may be improved and refined with additional perspectives from program staff and other stakeholders. The child support program should explore these recommendations in the broader context of programmatic goals, priorities, feasibility, and available resources.

## Recommendations categorized by complexity and impact

### Low complexity, high impact

- **The child support program should build on the findings of this study and move toward action planning and implementation.** CSD has invested significant time and financial resources in studying the parent experience and now has a number of tangible improvements it should make to the program. Counties, courts, and other partners in the child support program should be consulted in reviewing the parent perspectives reflected in this report and planning changes that could be made in response.
- **In future research, the child support program should explore other methods of parent engagement that would complement surveys and interviews.** Parents who responded to the survey were more likely to be White, have a higher income, and be newer to the program compared with parents overall. For example, Black and African American parents made up 20 percent of the participants in the child support program (the second largest race or ethnicity besides White parents); only 9 percent of respondents identified as Black or African American. In future research and engagement activities, the child support program could explore other methods of engaging families that might better reach parents of color, parents with low incomes, and parents with longer program tenure.
- **The child support program should proactively communicate with parents throughout their time in the program using a range of communication methods.** In both the survey and interviews, parents expressed an interest in more-frequent communication, with different needs for different groups of parents. When contacting parents, the child support program should use plain language and consider the tone and framing of communications, identifying any that may be perceived as overly punitive, particularly when communicating with non-custodial parents.

### High complexity, high impact

- **The child support program should consider opportunities to connect parents with other programs and resources.** The child support program could partner with other state programs and nonprofit organizations to refer families to resources and programs for which they may be eligible. The survey results suggest that over one-third of parents would be interested in referrals, far more than have been connected in the past—overall, nearly three times the number of parents were interested in referrals as had been connected with other government programs or resources.
- **The child support program should consult with county child support offices to identify opportunities to improve parent interactions with county workers and leverage interactions with county workers to**

**inform and connect parents.** While respondents rated statements about case workers more positively than statements about general communications, none of the statements about communications were rated particularly positively. To best serve parents, county worker resources and training elements could include sections on how to serve families holistically, how to shift toward a customer service mindset, and how to identify community resources that may be available to support parents. County workers could also be supported with automated notifications and resources sent to both participants and county workers about a status change, life event, or potential eligibility for another program.

- **The child support program should seek to better understand the experiences of parents who identify as American Indian, Native American, Alaska Native, or Indigenous.** Respondents who identified as American Indian, Native American, Alaska Native, or Indigenous consistently rated statements lower than respondents who identified with another racial or ethnic group, on average. Further engagement is needed to better understand the needs and experiences of Native American parents and identify opportunities to serve them better.
- **The child support program should explore simplifying application and modification processes.** Only half of the parents surveyed said they understood how to provide updates when they experience a life event. In interviews, many parents described the process of updating support amounts to reflect a change in income or life event as difficult. Parents said they wish there were an easier, simpler way to update orders for support without going to court. In interviews, many parents also described the documentation requested as part of the application process as burdensome. These findings were relatively consistent with survey findings, though were not as negatively rated, on average. Improving these processes would likely involve working with counties, judicial partners, and legislative partners to streamline forms and the documentation that is requested.

## Low complexity, low impact

- **The child support program should build on parents' appreciation for automated payments and review suggestions about payment logistics to determine if they can be incorporated.** More than two-thirds of respondents agreed it is helpful when the child support program collects and records payments on their case. Perceptions of automatic payments and income withholding and consistently collecting payments were also among the highest-rated statements overall. CSD can build on this success by highlighting the value the program provides to parents through payment collection and recording and by continuing to refine and improve payment logistics. For example, auto pay for self-employed non-custodial parents, electronic refunds, and selecting on which day of the month payments are made.

## High complexity, low impact<sup>20</sup>

- **As DHS and policymakers implement changes in statute<sup>21</sup> to calculating child support payments, they should further explore the differences in opinion among parents regarding payment calculations.** Only

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<sup>20</sup> It may be unlikely that DHS and policymakers will identify a payment calculation system that satisfies most participants, lowering the impact of changes to the payment calculation system on parent satisfaction.

<sup>21</sup> Laws of Minnesota 2021, chapter 30, H.F.No. 2128.

<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/laws/2021/0/Session+Law/Chapter/30/>

one-third of respondents felt the child support system is fair in determining payment amounts, while about half disagreed. In interviews, parents with higher incomes expressed a preference for payments to be flatter (to change less if they earn more), while parents with low incomes expressed a preference for more graduated payments (for payments to change more based on income earned at a given time). Additionally, DHS should consider parent feedback about potential unintended consequences of existing and future payment structures, such as making it difficult for parents with low incomes to pursue further education and decreasing the incentive for higher-earning parents to pursue a promotion.

## Potential action steps

### Action planning

- Convene internal staff to share results and identify short- and medium-term actions, including timelines and staff responsible for implementation.
- Convene counties, courts, and other partners to review the parent perspectives reflected in this report and plan changes that could be made in response.

### Proactive communication

- Ask visitors to Minnesota Child Support Online to opt in to email and text message updates (the most preferred methods of communication) and confirm their email address and phone numbers on file.
- Write a series of physical and electronic welcome mailings to automatically send to newly enrolled parents (who were notably more interested in more frequent communication) during the first few months they are enrolled, covering topics such as different ways parents can contact the program, the intent and goals of the program, and how child support amounts are determined.
- Write a series of milestone messages to automatically send to parents in specific situations, such as a change in county worker, changes in support status, and a child turning 18.
- Develop a customized report to send to all parents on a regular basis (such as quarterly) that summarizes information about their case, such as their currently assigned county worker, and reminders and frequently asked questions. As program tenure increased, parents were less interested in frequent communication but were also less likely to know information such as their currently assigned county worker.
- Review all messages for plain language, tone, and framing, identifying any that may be perceived as overly punitive, particularly when communicating with non-custodial parents.
- In situations in which the program must provide documents with complex legal language, include a cover letter with a plain language summary.

### Connections with other programs and resources

- Work with other programs and departments within DHS (for example, Business Solutions Office) and at other state agencies (such as interagency Preschool Development Grant initiatives) to identify and develop a repository of eligibility criteria for programming of most interest to parents.

- Solicit input from counties on programs and resources parents might find useful.
- Share repository of programs and resources with county child support officers.
- Share information about commonly requested resources as part of Minnesota Child Support Online.
- Develop automated messages to send to parents based on their potential eligibility for other programs and resources, either as stand-alone messages or as part of other proactive communications.

## Improving interactions with county workers

- Share results of this research with county staff and facilitate a workshop to collectively identify ways to improve parents' experiences with county workers.
- Develop training and job aids highlighting best practices from counties on topics such as serving families holistically, how to shift toward a customer service mindset, and how to identify community resources that may be available to support parents.
- Equip county workers with resources identified as part of the recommendations on proactive communication and connection with other programs. When proactive messages and automated referrals are sent to parents, send a copy of these messages to county workers as well.
- Make information about a parent's currently assigned county worker more visible across communication methods, such as on letters and on Minnesota Child Support Online. Proactively send parents messages whenever their worker changes.

## Understanding the experiences of Native American parents

- In future research, continue to disaggregate the perspectives of parents who identify as American Indian, Native American, Alaska Native, or Indigenous. In addition, explore conducting separate, intentional research to better understand these parents' experiences.
- In future research, explore other methods of parent engagement that would complement surveys and interviews.
- Work with tribal liaisons and other DHS programs to identify ways to begin building stronger relationships with Native American tribes and communities. Once relationships have been established, engage with community members to identify ways the program could better support individuals with cases managed by the state.
- Identify opportunities to engage with parents residing outside of tribal lands, such as the Urban Indian Advisory Board of the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council.
- Consider how the history of state and federal policies impacting Native American children may contribute to a lack of trust in the state to do what is in the best interest of Native American children and identify actions the program could take to acknowledge this history and earn parents' trust.

## Simplifying application and modification processes

- Share results of this research with judicial and legislative partners and convene a conversation to discuss the potential to streamline forms and the documentation that is requested.

- Evaluate which pieces of requested information are vital and which pieces could be optional by reviewing how often different pieces of information on the application and modification processes lead to changes in child support determinations.

# Appendix A: Child Support Program Survey

## About this survey

The Department of Human Services (DHS) Child Support Division (CSD) is conducting a review of the Child Support Program and is interested in learning about parents' experiences. Specifically, DHS is interested in learning about participant's overall experience in the program, and experiences with program logistics, payments, and communications.

**The survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete.**

If you are interested in participating, please complete the survey **by Friday, June 3rd**.

## Data privacy

DHS hired MAD to administer the survey and analyze the results. MAD is a state government office within Minnesota Management and Budget and is separate from DHS. Only MAD, and not DHS, will know whether you took the survey and how you answered. Any information that could reasonably be used to identify an individual from their responses is considered private data under the Minnesota Data Practices Act (Minnesota Statute §13.64), meaning MAD cannot share it with others, except as provided by law. MAD will provide a summary of survey findings to DHS and will use methods such as rounding, aggregation, and data suppression to make sure no individual can be identified by their responses. For example, if there are only a few survey respondents in a group, MAD will combine that grouping with a larger group of respondents to ensure confidentiality.

Participation in the survey is voluntary; the only consequence of not participating is that DHS will not have your feedback.

## If you have questions

If you have questions about how the results will be used, please contact Jessica Raymond at [jessica.raymond@state.mn.us](mailto:jessica.raymond@state.mn.us). If you have any technical problems accessing the survey, please contact Ashley Johnson at [ashley.johnson@state.mn.us](mailto:ashley.johnson@state.mn.us).

If you have questions about your child support case, please contact your county child support case worker.

## Tips for using this survey

- If you cannot complete the survey at one sitting, you can use the "Save" button at the bottom of the page to save your answers. You can return to complete the survey later using the link in the invitation email.
- To reset your answers on a particular page, use the "Reset" button.

- If you would prefer a text-based version of the survey (for example, if you use a screen reader), use the “text only” link on the center of the top of the screen.

Thank you for your time!

## Overall experience

1. **Thinking about your overall experience with the child support program, please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.** [Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree]
  - Overall, my experience with the child support program has been positive.
  - The child support program has benefited my family.
  - The child support program is fair and unbiased.
  - Child support is an important program for ensuring the financial needs of children are met.
  - I would recommend participating in the child support program to other parents.
  - I trust the child support program to do what is in the best financial interest of my children.

## Program logistics

2. **Thinking about program logistics, please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements. Select “Not Applicable” if you have not had experiences related to the statement.** [Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Not Applicable]
  - The process of applying to or enrolling in the child support program is easy.
  - I understood the administrative fees associated with the child support program when I applied or enrolled.
  - I understand how to provide updates to the program about a change in my address or contact information.
  - I understand how to provide updates to the program when I experience a life event, such as a change in employment or when my child graduates from high school.
3. **The child support program has connected me with other government programs or resources that could benefit me and my family.**
  - Yes
  - No
4. **I would be interested in referrals to other government programs or resources that could benefit me and my family, based on information in my child support case. *Selecting “yes” will not sign you up to receive referrals.***
  - Yes
  - No
  - a. **If yes to Q4: Which of the following resources and supports would you be most interested in? Select all that apply.**
    - Child care resources
    - Health insurance resources
    - Parent support groups
    - Co-parenting and parenting skills resources



- Court or other legal navigation services
- Employment resources, such as information on workforce centers, job fairs, and job postings
- Financial resources, such as financial empowerment programs, budgeting assistance, tax assistance, and payment resources
- Public assistance programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and general assistance
- Energy or other utility assistance
- Domestic abuse resources
- Substance use and abuse resources
- Mental health and counseling
- Crisis centers
- Other (please specify)

## Payments

5. **Thinking about child support payments, please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.** [Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree]
- I understand how child support payment amounts are determined.
  - The child support system is fair in determining payment amounts.
  - Automatic payments and income withholding from the non-custodial parents' paycheck are easy and convenient ways to ensure payments are made or received on time.
  - The child support program consistently collects payments.
  - It is easy to change payment amounts to reflect changes in my income or other life events.
  - It is helpful when the child support program collects and records payments on my case.

## Communications

6. **Thinking about communicating with the child support program, please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.** [Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree]
- I receive enough information from the child support program about my case.
  - The child support program proactively communicates with me about my case.
  - It is easy for me to find the information I need about the child support program and my case.
  - I understand the information the child support program provides to me.
  - It has been clear who my child support worker is.
  - It has been easy for me to contact my child support worker.
  - My child support worker responds to me in a timely way.
  - My child support worker treats me with dignity and respect.
  - My child support worker is knowledgeable about the program and can answer questions about my case.
7. **How often do you access or use the following to help you get information about your child support case?** [Frequently, Occasionally/Sometimes, Almost Never, Never, I am not aware of this]
- Minnesota Child Support Online
  - Letters and other written communications sent to me by the child support program
  - County child support officer

- Case information automated phone line
  - Minnesota Child Support Division Help Desk
8. **I would be interested in email and text messaging communications from the child support program. *Selecting “yes” will not sign you up to receive email or text messaging communications.***
- Yes
  - No
  - I already receive emails and/or text messages from the child support program
9. **How would you prefer the child support program communicate with you? Check all that apply.**
- Phone call
  - Text message
  - Email
  - Letters
  - In-person meeting (when safe)
  - Other (please specify)
10. **How often would you like the child support program to contact you? Check all that apply.**
- Monthly
  - Every three months
  - Every six months
  - Annually
  - Other (please specify)

## About you

Reminder: Information that could reasonably be used to identify an individual from their responses is considered private data under the Minnesota Data Practices Act (Minnesota Statute §13.64), meaning MAD cannot share it with others, except as provided by law. MAD will provide a summary of survey findings to DHS and will use methods such as rounding, aggregation, and data suppression to make sure no individual can be identified by their responses.

You are not required to share the following information. Sharing information in this survey about yourself will not impact any current or future child support cases.

11. **How long have you participated in the child support program?**
- Less than a year
  - 1–3 years
  - 4–6 years
  - 7 or more years
12. **Do you currently live in Minnesota?**
- Yes
  - No
- a. **If yes to Q12: In which Minnesota county do you live?**
13. **What racial/ethnic background do you identify with? Select all that apply.**
- Black/African American

- American Indian/Native American/Alaska Native/Indigenous
- Asian
- Hispanic/Latinx
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- White
- Other (please specify)
- Unknown
- Prefer not to answer

**14. Which of these describes your annual income?**

- \$0–\$24,999
- \$25,000–\$49,999
- \$50,000–\$74,999
- \$75,000–\$99,999
- \$100,000 or above
- Prefer not to answer

**15. Compared with the other parent involved in your child support case, is your level of income about the same as theirs, higher than theirs, or lower than theirs?**

- Higher
- About the same
- Lower
- I don't know

**16. Have you or the other parent involved in your child support case experienced an enforcement remedy in the past five years? Enforcement remedies include (but are not limited to) actions such as arrears collection, credit bureau reporting, passport denial, and driver's license suspension.**

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Use the **“Submit”** button below to submit your survey. Thank you for your feedback!

## Appendix B: CSD’s public child support survey results

524 respondents completed this survey.

### Overall experience

Statement	% Strongly Agree	% Somewhat Agree	% Neutral	% Somewhat Disagree	% Strongly Disagree
Overall my experience with the child support program has been positive.	16%	26%	17%	22%	22%
The child support program has benefited my family.	23%	27%	14%	16%	20%
The child support program is fair and unbiased.	17%	18%	18%	22%	25%
Child support is an important program for ensuring the financial needs of children are met.	53%	16%	14%	8%	9%
I would recommend participating in the child support program to other parents.	37%	22%	19%	10%	12%
I trust the child support program to do what is in the best financial interest of my children.	16%	18%	16%	19%	30%

## Program logistics

Statement	% Strongly Agree	% Somewhat Agree	% Neutral or Not Applicable	% Somewhat Disagree	% Strongly Disagree
The process of applying to or enrolling in the child support program is easy.	36%	28%	25%	6%	5%
I understood the administrative fees associated with the child support program when I applied or enrolled	27%	18%	21%	13%	21%
I understand how to provide updates to the program about a change in my address or contact information.	53%	27%	11%	5%	4%
I understand how to provide updates to the program when I experience a life event, such as a change in employment or when my child graduates from high school.	44%	25%	16%	9%	7%

## Other government programs and resources

The child support program has connected me with other government programs or resources that could benefit me and my family.	%
Yes	16%
No	84%

<b>I would be interested in referrals to other government programs that could benefit me and my family, based on information in my child support case.</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	40%
No	60%

<b>Which of the following resources and supports would you be most interested in? Select all that apply.</b>	<b>%</b>
Court or other legal navigation services	62%
Financial resources, such as financial empowerment programs budgeting assistance, tax assistance, and payment resources	49%
Energy or other utility assistance	43%
Co-parenting and parenting skills resources	40%
Public assistance programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and general assistance	40%
Child care resources	39%
Mental health and counseling	33%
Health insurance resources	32%
Parent support groups	31%

Which of the following resources and supports would you be most interested in? Select all that apply.	%
Domestic abuse resources	20%
Employment resources, such as information on workforce centers, job fairs, and job postings	14%
Other (please specify)	10%

## Payments

Statement	% Strongly Agree	% Somewhat Agree	% Neutral	% Somewhat Disagree	% Strongly Disagree
I understand how child support payment amounts are determined.	22%	32%	10%	19%	17%
The child support program is fair in determining payment amounts.	13%	18%	17%	21%	31%
Automatic payments and income withholding from the non-custodial parents' paycheck are easy and convenient ways to ensure payments are made or received on time.	36%	25%	12%	10%	20%
The child support program consistently collects payments.	21%	15%	11%	17%	37%
It is easy to change payment amounts to reflect changes in my income or other life events.	8%	8%	41%	16%	27%

<b>Statement</b>	<b>% Strongly Agree</b>	<b>% Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>% Neutral</b>	<b>% Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>% Strongly Disagree</b>
It is easy to change payment amounts to reflect changes in my income or other life events.	51%	27%	13%	3%	6%

## Communication

<b>Statement</b>	<b>% Strongly Agree</b>	<b>% Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>% Neutral</b>	<b>% Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>% Strongly Disagree</b>
I receive enough information from the child support program about my case.	15%	20%	16%	21%	28%
The child support program proactively communicates with me about my case.	10%	8%	16%	23%	43%
It is easy for me to find the information I need about the child support program and my case.	22%	28%	20%	13%	18%
I understand the information the child support program provides to me.	28%	33%	19%	10%	10%
It has been clear who my child support worker is.	41%	20%	11%	10%	18%
It has been easy for me to contact my child support worker.	32%	21%	16%	14%	17%
My child support worker responds to me in a timely way.	34%	22%	18%	9%	17%



<b>Statement</b>	<b>% Strongly Agree</b>	<b>% Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>% Neutral</b>	<b>% Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>% Strongly Disagree</b>
My child support worker treats me with dignity and respect.	39%	18%	23%	7%	14%
My child support worker is knowledgeable about the program and can answer questions about my case.	29%	20%	26%	10%	16%

## Access of information

<b>How often do you use or access the following to get information about your case support case?</b>	<b>% Frequently</b>	<b>% Occasional/ Sometimes</b>	<b>% Almost Never</b>	<b>% Never</b>	<b>% I am not aware of this</b>
Minnesota Child Support Online (MCSO)	84%	13%	1%	1%	1%
Letters and other written communications sent to me by the child support program	12%	37%	32%	15%	4%
County child support officer	7%	35%	35%	19%	5%
Case information automated phone line	2%	6%	23%	50%	19%
Minnesota Child Support Division Help Desk	2%	7%	25%	46%	21%

<b>I would be interested in email and text messaging communications from the child support program.</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	66%
No	25%
I already received emails and/or text messages from the child support program.	9%

## Communication preference

<b>How would you prefer the child support program to communicate with you? Check all that apply.</b>	<b>%</b>
Email	83%
Text message	66%
Letters	46%
Phone call	43%
In person (when safe)	12%
Other	2%

<b>How often would you like the child support program to contact you?</b>	<b>%</b>
Monthly	38%
Every three months	24%
Every six months	15%
Annually	12%
Other	11%

## Demographics

<b>How long have you participated in the child support program?</b>	<b>%</b>
Seven or more years	61%
Four to six years	21%
One to three years	15%
Less than a year	4%

<b>Do you currently live in Minnesota?</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	95%
No	6%

<b>In which Minnesota county do you live?</b>	<b>%</b>
Hennepin	9%
Anoka	9%
Dakota	8%
St. Louis	5%
Ramsey	4%
Stearns	4%
Washington	4%
Wright	3%
Chisago	3%
Olmsted	2%
Sherburne	2%
Crow Wing	2%

In which Minnesota county do you live?	%
<b>What racial/ethnic background do you identify with? Select all that apply.</b>	%
White	82%
Black/African American	8%
Prefer not to answer	7%
Hispanic/Latinx	3%
American Indian/Native American/Alaska Native/Indigenous	3%
Asian	1%
Other	1%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0%
Unknown	0%

<b>Which of these describes your annual income?</b>	<b>%</b>
\$0 to \$24,999	25%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	37%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	19%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	6%
\$100,000 or above	4%
Prefer not to answer	9%

<b>Compared with the other parent involved in your child support case, is your level of income about the same as theirs, higher than theirs, or lower than theirs?</b>	<b>%</b>
Higher	17%
About the same	14%
Lower	37%
I don't know	33%

<b>Have you or the other parent involved in your child support case experienced an enforcement remedy in the past five years? Enforcement remedies include (but are not limited to) actions such as arrears collections, credit bureau reporting, passport denial, and driver's license suspension.</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	71%
No	15%
I don't know	14%

## Appendix C: Child support professionals survey results

218 respondents completed this survey.

Survey Question 1: What describes your role with child support?	%
Child support magistrate	7%
Child support manager or supervisor	17%
Child support worker	58%
County attorney or assistant county attorney	9%
County director	1%
District court judge	0%
Other	3%
Private bar or family law attorney	4%



<b>Survey questions 2-8</b>	<b>% Strongly agree</b>	<b>% Somewhat agree</b>	<b>% Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>% Strongly disagree</b>
2. Child support guidelines, as written, can be understood by most parents.	1%	34%	47%	18%
3. Child support guidelines, as written, encourage non-custodial parents (NCP) to develop and maintain relationships with their children.	4%	33%	44%	19%
4. Deviations are justified in court orders.	42%	50%	6%	1%
5. Deviations are easily identified in court orders.	31%	48%	19%	2%
6. Child support guidelines are applied consistently.	21%	39%	8%	31%
7. Parenting time adjustments are fair to non-custodial parents.	13%	46%	32%	9%
8. Parenting time adjustments are fair to custodial parents (CPs).	17%	60%	18%	5%

<b>Survey questions 9-12</b>	<b>% Completely fair</b>	<b>% Mostly fair</b>	<b>% Mostly unfair</b>	<b>% Completely unfair</b>
9. Rate the fairness of Minnesota child support guidelines to non-custodial parents.	5%	55%	37%	3%
10. Rate the fairness of Minnesota child support guidelines to custodial parents.	8%	79%	11%	2%
11. Rate the fairness of Minnesota child support guidelines to children.	7%	75%	17%	2%
12. Rate the fairness of Minnesota child support guidelines to taxpayers.	4%	56%	30%	11%

<b>Survey question 13: What are the main reasons you deviate or request deviations for child support orders?</b>	<b>%</b>
Child/ren's need for additional support (standard of living)	12%
Child/ren's medical needs	13%
NCP to have sufficient money to live on	67%
NCP's medical needs	13%
Non-ordered parenting time agreed on by parties	47%
Parties request deviation	60%
County requests deviation	22%
Other	4%

## Appendix D: Minnesota Labor Market Data

Figure 1: Unemployment rates

Date	Minnesota child support participants	Minnesota statewide
October 2017	0.68%	2.65%
November 2017	0.94%	3.34%
December 2017	1.48%	4.21%
January 2018	0.93%	5.09%
February 2018	0.57%	4.91%
March 2018	0.46%	4.81%
April 2018	0.42%	3.94%
May 2018	0.3%	2.90%
June 2018	0.35%	3.33%
July 2018	0.47%	3.08%
August 2018	0.33%	2.92%
September 2018	0.33%	2.52%
October 2018	0.45%	2.59%

<b>Date</b>	<b>Minnesota child support participants</b>	<b>Minnesota statewide</b>
November 2018	1.02%	2.97%
December 2018	1.37%	4.25%
January 2019	0.88%	5.61%
February 2019	0.49%	5.03%
March 2019	0.55%	5.01%
April 2019	0.29%	3.96%
May 2019	0.3%	2.99%
Jun 2019	0.48%	3.52%
July 2019	0.31%	3.49%
August 2019	0.28%	3.20%
September 2019	0.4%	2.68%
October 2019	0.45%	2.68%
November 2019	1.03%	3.14%
December 2019	1.42%	4.21%
January 2020	0.84%	5.24%
February 2020	0.49%	4.80%
March 2020	10.59%	5.66%

<b>Date</b>	<b>Minnesota child support participants</b>	<b>Minnesota statewide</b>
April 2020	5.75%	9.15%
May 2020	2.92%	10.39%
June 2020	1.48%	7.96%
July 2020	1.06%	6.59%
August 2020	1.22%	5.34%
September 2020	0.55%	4.65%
October 2020	0.92%	4.12%
November 2020	1.96%	4.37%
December 2020	1.74%	5.18%
January 2021	1.78%	5.70%
February 2021	0.93%	5.53%
March 2021	3.03%	5.08%
April 2021	2.15%	4.44%
May 2021	1.58%	3.63%
June 2021	0.88%	4.22%
July 2021	0.66%	3.31%
August 2021	1.07%	3.21%

Date	Minnesota child support participants	Minnesota statewide
September 2021	0.87%	2.61%

**Figure 3a: Personal income (\$ per capita) by race**

Year	African American	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Other	Pacific Islander	White
2017	\$22,339.52	\$17,597.13	\$33,891.69	\$35,593.80	\$30,520.28	\$28,565.02	\$35,081.33
2018	\$23,481.70	\$18,766.68	\$34,471.74	\$36,575.37	\$31,511.93	\$29,058.08	\$35,982.48
2019	\$24,551.55	\$19,141.67	\$35,517.44	\$36,744.32	\$32,055.67	\$27,276.11	\$35,983.29
2020	\$23,446.17	\$18,946.91	\$32,608.37	\$34,368.62	\$30,678.47	\$25,516.11	\$33,684.94
2021	\$23,061.11	\$19,767.72	\$29,474.39	\$32,675.48	\$28,044.80	\$23,794.39	\$30,299.50

**Figure 3b: Unemployment rate by race for child support participants**

Date	African American	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Other	Pacific Islander	White
October 2017	2.2%	2.38%	2.25%	2.13%	2.11%	2.28%	2.48%
November 2017	2.19%	2.26%	2.22%	2.11%	2.1%	2.22%	2.44%
December 2017	2.16%	2.19%	2.18%	2.09%	2.08%	2.21%	2.4%
January 2018	2.13%	2.17%	2.17%	2.06%	2.06%	2.2%	2.37%
February 2018	2.11%	2.15%	2.14%	2.04%	2.06%	2.2%	2.35%

<b>Date</b>	<b>African American</b>	<b>American Indian</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Pacific Islander</b>	<b>White</b>
March 2018	2.09%	2.13%	2.12%	2.02%	2.06%	2.2%	2.32%
April 2018	2.07%	2.12%	2.1%	2%	2.06%	2.18%	2.3%
May 2018	2.04%	2.08%	2.07%	1.98%	2.05%	2.17%	2.26%
June 2018	2.02%	2.06%	2.03%	1.95%	2.04%	2.16%	2.24%
July 2018	2%	2.06%	2.01%	1.93%	2.03%	2.15%	2.21%
August 2018	1.9%	2.02%	1.99%	1.9%	2%	2.15%	2.15%
September 2018	1.94%	1.99%	1.9%	1.87%	1.98%	2.11%	2.07%
October 2018	1.91%	1.95%	1.86%	1.8%	1.94%	2.11%	2.01%
November 2018	1.88%	1.91%	1.85%	1.78%	1.93%	2.07%	1.98%
December 2018	1.85%	1.85%	1.8%	1.73%	1.9%	1.97%	1.94%
January 2019	1.82%	1.81%	1.77%	1.7%	1.88%	1.95%	1.9%
February 2019	1.79%	1.76%	1.73%	1.69%	1.86%	1.93%	1.88%
March 2019	1.75%	1.73%	1.7%	1.65%	1.83%	1.91%	1.85%
April 2019	1.73%	1.7%	1.68%	1.64%	1.82%	1.89%	1.82%
May 2019	1.71%	1.67%	1.64%	1.6%	1.8%	1.89%	1.79%
Jun 2019	1.69%	1.62%	1.61%	1.57%	1.78%	1.85%	1.75%

<b>Date</b>	<b>African American</b>	<b>American Indian</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Pacific Islander</b>	<b>White</b>
July 2019	1.66%	1.6%	1.58%	1.53%	1.75%	1.77%	1.72%
August 2019	1.62%	1.58%	1.54%	1.48%	1.7%	1.72%	1.64%
September 2019	1.59%	1.56%	1.49%	1.44%	1.66%	1.68%	1.58%
October 2019	1.54%	1.52%	1.45%	1.39%	1.61%	1.6%	1.52%
November 2019	1.51%	1.51%	1.41%	1.34%	1.6%	1.55%	1.49%
December 2019	1.48%	1.47%	1.39%	1.29%	1.57%	1.46%	1.44%
January 2020	1.44%	1.46%	1.36%	1.26%	1.53%	1.44%	1.41%
February 2020	1.42%	1.44%	1.33%	1.24%	1.52%	1.41%	1.38%
March 2020	1.38%	1.41%	1.3%	1.21%	1.47%	1.4%	1.35%
April 2020	1.36%	1.39%	1.26%	1.18%	1.45%	1.34%	1.32%
May 2020	1.33%	1.37%	1.25%	1.16%	1.42%	1.32%	1.29%
June 2020	1.29%	1.3%	1.2%	1.13%	1.39%	1.27%	1.25%
July 2020	1.26%	1.27%	1.16%	1.1%	1.36%	1.19%	1.21%
August 2020	1.23%	1.24%	1.13%	1.06%	1.32%	1.18%	1.14%
September 2020	1.18%	1.2%	1.07%	0.99%	1.25%	1.11%	1.05%
October 2020	1.14%	1.17%	1.02%	0.95%	1.21%	1.07%	1.01%



<b>Date</b>	<b>African American</b>	<b>American Indian</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Pacific Islander</b>	<b>White</b>
November 2020	1.11%	1.14%	0.96%	0.92%	1.17%	1.06%	0.97%
December 2020	1.07%	1.06%	0.92%	0.87%	1.12%	1.04%	0.93%
January 2021	1.05%	1.03%	0.91%	0.83%	1.1%	1.02%	0.9%
February 2021	1.01%	1%	0.87%	0.79%	1.06%	1%	0.86%
March 2021	0.96%	0.89%	0.84%	0.77%	1.01%	0.98%	0.82%
April 2021	0.88%	0.86%	0.78%	0.73%	0.96%	0.97%	0.77%
May 2021	0.82%	0.81%	0.75%	0.7%	0.9%	0.94%	0.72%
June 2021	0.75%	0.72%	0.7%	0.66%	0.84%	0.8%	0.67%
July 2021	0.69%	0.65%	0.65%	0.61%	0.78%	0.61%	0.63%
August 2021	0.61%	0.57%	0.57%	0.55%	0.7%	0.6%	0.54%
September 2021	0.54%	0.52%	0.5%	0.46%	0.6%	0.53%	0.45%