



Study Summary

Educational Background and Child Age Influenced Experiences of Caregivers During COVID-19 Pandemic

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Who sponsored this study?

The Environmental influences on Child Health Outcomes (ECHO) Program, Office of The Director, National Institutes of Health supported this research.

Why was this study needed?

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting public health measures presented unique challenges for families, frequently influenced by factors such as income and educational background. Yet while research has highlighted the sociodemographic factors that influenced adults' experience, the COVID-19 pandemic generally interfered with population-based studies of children and families. However, in April 2020, the ECHO Program introduced a COVID-19-specific questionnaire that allowed researchers to gather information on how the pandemic and its effects on daily life were influencing the health of children. This study used ECHO data collected from April 2020 to March 2022 to examine sociodemographic differences in pandemic-related experiences.

What were the study results?

The study suggested that caregivers with less than a high school education were more likely to report challenges accessing COVID-19 testing for their children, were less likely to work remotely, and reported financial concerns and access to necessities such as food as top sources of stress. Caregivers with a master's degree or higher, on the other hand, were more likely to name social distancing as the top source of their pandemic stress. The study also noted that caregivers with higher education had a significantly greater likelihood of having the option to work remotely. Caregivers with children between the ages of 1 and 5 reported the least support from school systems, the most difficulty finding childcare, and fewer remote learning options; were more likely to have healthcare appointments canceled due to COVID-19 concerns, and were most concerned about how the pandemic would affect their ability to work.

Footnote: Results reported here are for a single study. Other or future studies may provide new information or different results. You should not make changes to your health without first consulting your healthcare professional.

What was the study's impact?

This study underscores the importance of understanding how children and caregivers from various backgrounds experienced the COVID-19 pandemic. This understanding can help uncover social inequities that could worsen conditions for some populations during future public health crises. These findings suggest that families with young children may be in particular need of more support related to childcare and work flexibility during future public health crises that involve school disruption.

Who was involved?

The study analyzed data from 14,646 ECHO children and 13,644 ECHO caregivers between April 2020 and March 2022.

What happened during the study?

Researchers measured COVID-19 pandemic-related experiences using three characteristics—caregiver education, child life stage, and urban or rural residence. Caregivers completed ECHO COVID-19 surveys about their experiences during the pandemic for their children and themselves. Among children, researchers examined items related to COVID-19 infection, access to COVID-19 testing, changes to healthcare, and disruptions to school, preschool, or daycare. For caregivers, researchers examined remote work, childcare challenges, and their subjective ranking of pandemic-related stressors.

What happens next?

Future research could explore the complex connections between the outcomes examined as well as the long-term impacts of COVID-19 infection and pandemic-related adversities for children in the ECHO Cohort over time.

Where can I learn more?

Access the full journal article, titled “Sociodemographic Differences in COVID-19 Pandemic Experiences Among Families in the United States,” in [JAMA Network Open](#).

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