Parenting is an Economic Issue

AUTHORS: Michelle Sisson Hyman, Senior Officer, Silicon Valley Community Foundation • Rebecia Diaz, Senior Research Associate, WestEd • Fernando Rodriguez, Research Assistant, WestEd

Introduction

Silicon Valley Community Foundation and WestEd conducted an investigation of what it is like to be a parent of a young child in California’s Silicon Valley, often considered one of the most resource-rich regions in the country, both in financial and intellectual capital. Silicon Valley is defined as Santa Clara and San Mateo counties, encompassing 35 cities spanning over 1,100 square miles. Silicon Valley is known as the hub of our country’s technological economy; however, our geographical boundaries also include rural coastal towns, working-class industrial cities, and farming communities. Despite Silicon Valley’s riches, our findings showed significant disparities among families based on income and educational characteristics. Our paper will discuss economic mobility among Silicon Valley families from diverse income levels.

Methods

We employed rigorous quantitative and qualitative methods to gather information about the plight of parents in Silicon Valley. Our primary method was a representative telephone survey of 1,000 parents of children age 0 to 5 residing in Silicon Valley. The survey, conducted via random digit dialing (RDD), was administered in English and Spanish during summer 2013. We also conducted a series of focus group interviews with over 100 parents.

Conclusions

The three most common changes to employment were: 1) decreasing work hours, 2) leaving the workforce by choice, and 3) taking a leave of absence.

Low-income parents reported greater changes to employment than high-income groups.

Parents who were employed reported more moderate to high job-related stress.

Upper- and high-income parents reported slightly greater job-related stress.

Lower- to middle-income parents reported greater changes to employment than did upper-to high-income parents.

Parents who reported high levels of job-related stress also reported higher rates of depressive symptoms.

Low-income parents who reported high levels of job-related stress were less likely to engage in math activities with their young children.

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