

### Summary

The American Family Assets Study presents a compelling national portrait of families. It introduces a new framework of Family Assets—relationships, interactions, opportunities, and values that help families thrive. These assets are associated with positive outcomes for young teens and their parenting adults, explaining more of the differences in outcomes than many demographics and other individual and family characteristics explain.

The study blends the perspectives of both teens and their parenting adults to show how a wide range of diverse families experience both strengths and gaps in Family Assets. The framework proposes an ideal—something families might aspire to as a vision for how they live their lives together. In our national study, American families scored an average of 47 out of 100 in the Family Assets Index, suggesting that the vast majority of families have both strengths to celebrate and opportunities to grow stronger together.

### Why the Study Is Important

The American Family Assets Study gives voice to the diversity of adults, youth, and experiences that make up today's families and empirically demonstrates the ways adults and youth pull together to support and bring out the best in one another. The study:

- Defines and assesses a broad framework of Family Assets that help strengthen families.
- Empirically links Family Assets to key outcomes for young people and parenting adults.
- Recognizes young people as active contributors to family life, and includes their perspectives in measuring Family Assets and other factors.
- Acknowledges the many different adults who are involved in parenting, including biological mothers and fathers; grandparents; adoptive, foster, and stepparents; legal guardians; and, other family members.

For information on the research behind the family assets, visit [www.search-institute.org/familyassets](http://www.search-institute.org/familyassets)

For practical ways to build assets in your family, visit [www.ParentFurther.com/familyassets](http://www.ParentFurther.com/familyassets)

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## The Study Sample

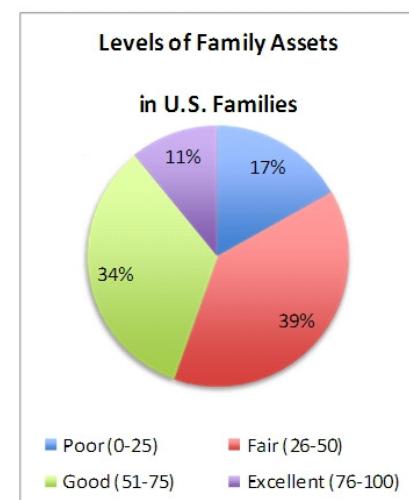
A parenting adult and a 10- to 15-year old were surveyed in 1,511 racially, ethnically, economically, geographically, and structurally diverse U.S. families.

- **Family composition:** 75% of parenting adults were married or in a committed relationship. 79% were birth parents to the child who was surveyed.
- **Income:** 23% reported incomes under \$35,000; 28% reported incomes over \$100,000
- **Race/ethnicity:** 60% of the sample was non-Hispanic White. Asian American, Black/African American, and Hispanic families each represented 14% of the total sample. They were each intentionally oversampled for analysis purposes.
- **Gender:** 62% of the parenting adult sample was female. The youth sample was evenly split between females and males.

Harris Interactive collected the data in June 2011 through an online survey from a random sample of American families who were part of a large, diverse national database. Data were weighted to key demographic variables, based on 2010 Census figures, to reflect the U.S. population of 10- to 15-year olds and their parents.

## Selected Key Findings

1. *The average American family surveyed scores 47 out of 100 on the Family Assets Index.* The vast majority of families score between 26 and 50 (39%) or between 51 and 75 (34%). (See chart.)
2. *Families are more alike than different when it comes to overall levels of Family Assets.* When comparing different subgroups of families, we find no meaningful differences in overall levels of Family Assets based on income, family structure (single-parent or two-parent; heterosexual or LGBT parenting adults), parents' education level, region of the country, or immigrant status.
3. *Some demographic factors do make a difference in overall levels of Family Assets, though these differences tend to be small.* Some factors that do affect overall levels of Family Assets include age of the child, parenting adults' marital status, the family's access to basic resources in their community, race/ethnicity, and mobility.



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4. *Overall, parenting adults and their teens tend to report similar assets in their families.* Where there are differences, they fit what we would expect developmentally. For example, there is a 31% gap between parents and teens who say their family has the asset “openness about tough topics,” such as sexuality, religion, and substance use.
5. *Specific Family Assets and categories of assets are more or less common in American families.* Families show the most strength in the category of “nurturing relationships” (average score: 12 out of 20), and the greatest needs in the categories of “establishing routines,” “adapting to challenges,” and “connecting to community” (each 8 out of 20). The most common Family Asset is “clear expectations” (84%); the least common Family Asset is “relationships with others” (22%)
6. *When families foster more of these assets, both the parent and kids do better in life.* Teens and parents from families with more assets tend to:
  - Have higher satisfaction with their families and their lives;
  - Take better care of their health; and contribute more to their communities.

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