



**Highlighting  
Connections Among  
Early Childhood  
Development,  
Families and  
Communities**

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Buffett Early  
Childhood Fund  

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investing in the early years





# BY THE END OF THIS PRESENTATION ...

1. Reliable, population-level data on early child development, birth to age 5, is within reach for states, counties and communities
2. These data can give great insight into how young children and families are doing
3. This information can be used to inform policies, improve programs and advocate



# AGENDA

- 1) What is Kidsights Data?
- 2) What did we learn when using the tool in Nebraska?
- 3) How can results be used to inform state or community-level policy and practice?
- 4) How can we use Kidsights Data to monitor child development at the population level over time?





# WHAT IS KIDSIGHTS DATA?

- Kidsights Data are population-based measurement tools of child development
  - A parent-report scale designed to report on group-level differences and trends in child development at the population level
  - Not intended to assess individual children
- Integration of World Health Organization's Global Scales for Early Development and the Healthy/Ready to Learn Scale through NSCH
  - In the US, at present most population-level monitoring is focused on older children or adults

***Kidsights Data is the only tool in the U.S. for children birth to age 5 years.***



# WHY POPULATION-LEVEL DATA?

- As programs scale and we think more and more about systems ...
  - The only way to know if we are *making progress* across a population is to *measure* across a population
- We know that disparities arise early
  - But few states or communities have the data required to report on early disparities within their own boundaries especially for under 3s
  - Having local data is essential component of addressing early disparities

***Kidsights Data can help highlight trends so we can respond effectively!***



# WHAT POPULATION-LEVEL MEASUREMENT IS (AND ISN'T)

What Population-Level Measurement Is	What Population-Level Measurement Isn't
Designed to track trends and identify disparities across populations	Not intended to make decisions on individual children
Ideally based on a representative sample	Not based on small samples
Requires tools that are fast, easy and feasible to use across large samples	Not finely-grained
Requires tools that are relevant across cultural and linguistic groups	Not the same as measurement for research or program evaluation



# POPULATION-LEVEL DATA IN THE U.S.

- What are the other tools to measure child outcomes?
  - National Survey of Children's Health - Healthy and Ready to Learn
  - Numerous states with Kindergarten readiness assessments
  - Indicators of infant and child health, routinely collected by many health departments (i.e., infant mortality)
- Kidsights Data is the first to extend birth to 5, focus on child development, and is available and feasible for state/community use.



# WHAT KIDSIGHTS DATA INCLUDES

- Kidsights Data
  - Normative child development for children birth to age five
  - Based on achievement of developmental milestones
- Psychosocial stress
  - Dysregulation in sleep, eating & behavior problems
- Home learning environments
  - Materials, activities with young children

***Many other indicators of child and family wellbeing***



# WHAT KIDSIGHTS DATA IS (AND ISN'T)

What Kidsights Data Is	What Kidsights Data Isn't
A caregiver report tool of child development	Not a direct assessment (doesn't require trained assessors)
Collected using an online survey	Not a screening tool
Takes 10 min to complete	Not expensive
Uses existing items from the Global Scales for Early Development (WHO) and Healthy Ready To Learn National Survey of Children's Health)	Not insensitive to cultural diversity
Includes measures of normative child development AND psychosocial stress	Not a Kindergarten Readiness Assessment
Recommend collecting alongside measures of family and home characteristics	Not intended to directly inform instruction or curricula
Validated with direct assessments (Woodcock Johnson, Bayley)	Unvalidated



# COMMON ITEM EXAMPLES

Item Description	GSED	HRTL	Kidsights Data
Sucks thumb or finger	X		X
Speak using sentences of 3 or more words that go together	X		X
Fasten and unfasten buttons without help	X		X
Repeat or sing rhymes	X	X	X
Recognize letters of the alphabet		X	X
Recognize geometric shapes		X	X



# VALIDATION EVIDENCE

- Strong evidence of validity and reliability
- Predictive validity
  - Predict Bayley-4 and Woodcock-Johnson administered 12+ months later (Bayley 4:  $r = .64$  to  $.77$ ; Woodcock-Johnson:  $r = .66$ ).
- Criterion validity
  - Positive association with education ( $p < .001$ )
  - Negative association with enrollment into government programs and services ( $p = .004$ )
  - Negative association with caregiver anxiety and depression ( $p < .001$ )
  - Negative association with child's count of ACEs ( $p = .040$ ).
- High reliability ( $r_{XX'} = .92$ )



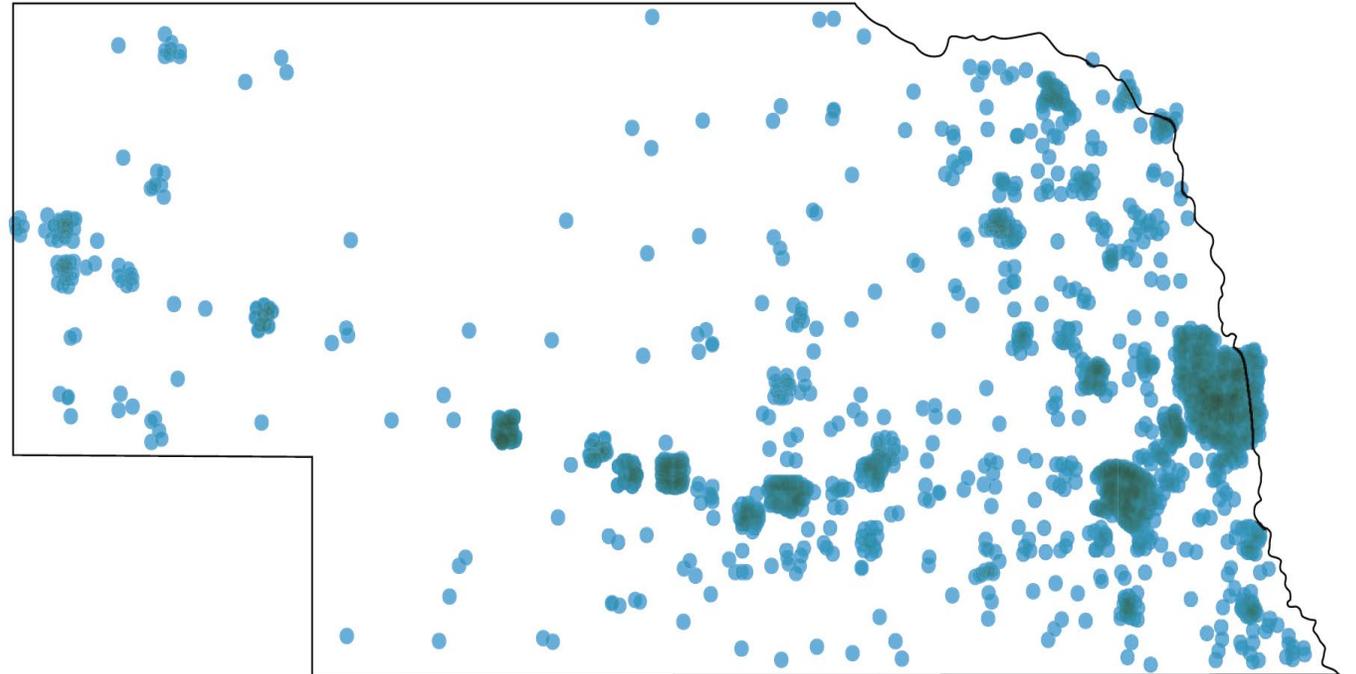
# NEBRASKA SPOTLIGHT



# WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY?

**2,572 Parents/guardians of children birth to age 5 (71 months) living in Nebraska (2022-23)**

- 87% were married
- 43% had a 4-year college degree
- 75% identified as white, non-Hispanic/25% as Black, Hispanic, Asian, Native or Other
- 72% lived in an urban area





# HOW WE COLLECTED THE DATA?

- Online survey
  - Took about 20 minutes on average
- Recruited parents multiple ways:
  - Childcare
  - Social media
  - Pediatricians
  - Programs
- \$20 incentive followed by \$40 incentive

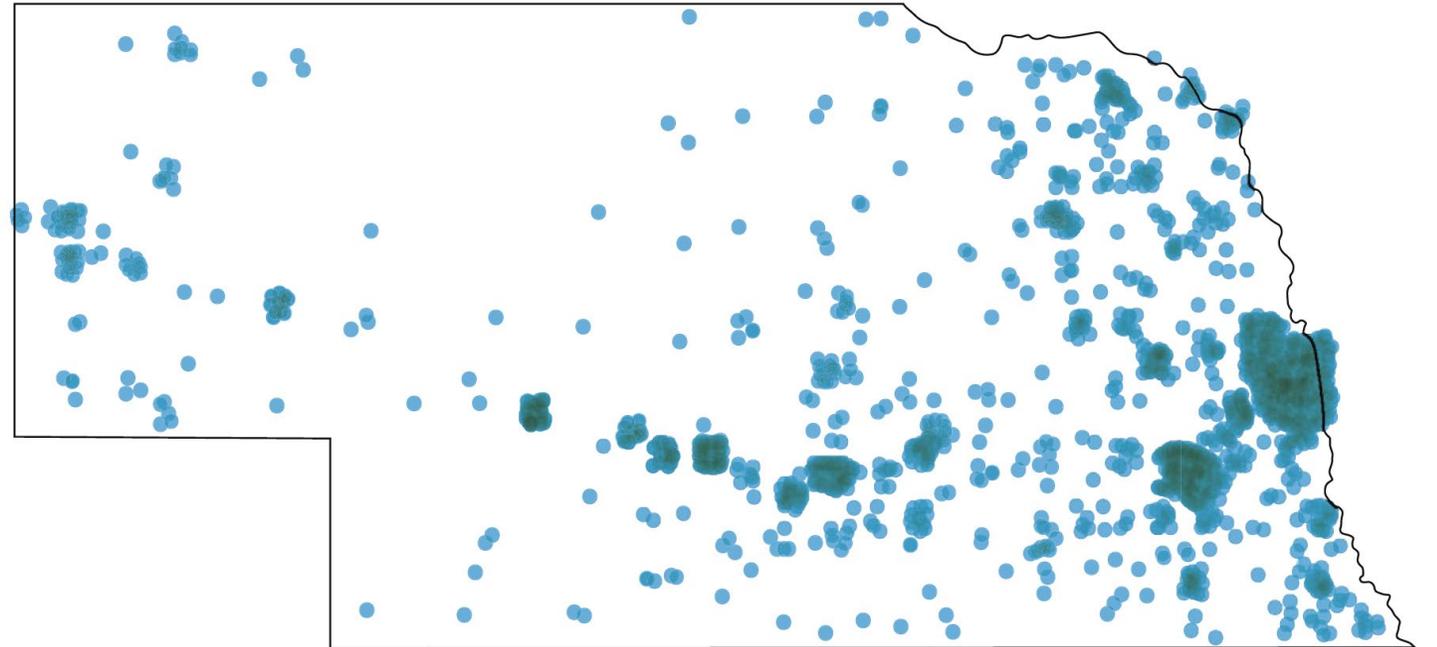




# COMPARISON GROUPS

## GENERALIZABLE TO UNDERLYING POPULATION

- **RURAL VS URBAN**
- **PARENTS WITH  
COLLEGE DEGREES  
VS. THOSE WITHOUT  
COLLEGE DEGREES**





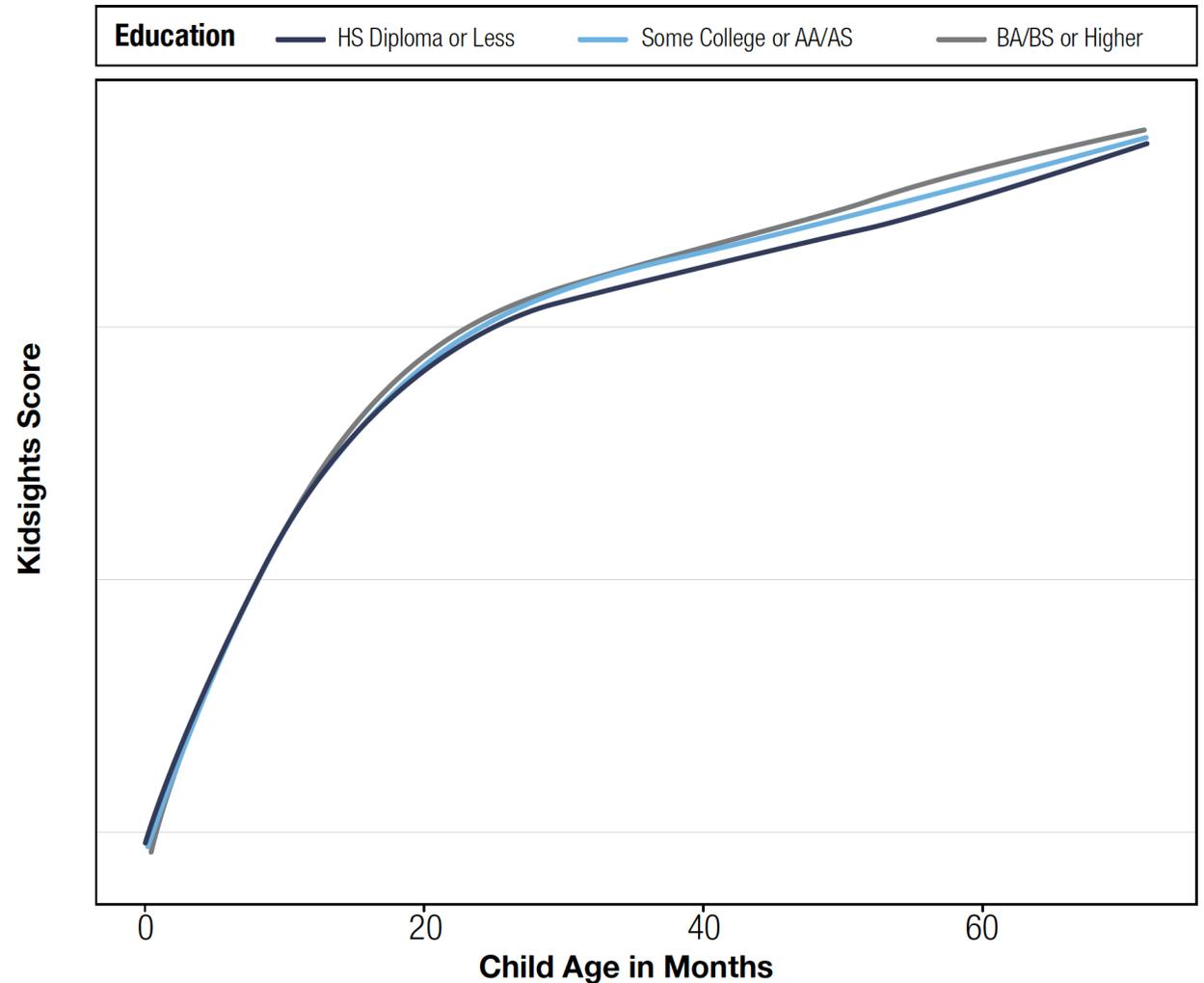
# RURAL/URBAN DIFFERENCES

- When compared with urban families, rural families reported ...
  - Greater economic insecurity
  - Fewer home learning activities and materials
  - Reported they were not doing as well as parents as urban families
- But also reported several strengths ...
  - More supportive neighborhoods and communities
  - Fewer ACEs for parents
- No differences on child development scores or trouble with childcare



# PARENT EDUCATION LEVEL MATTERS

Children of parents with a 4-year college degree scored higher on the measures of child development starting at age 1.





# THE HOME ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

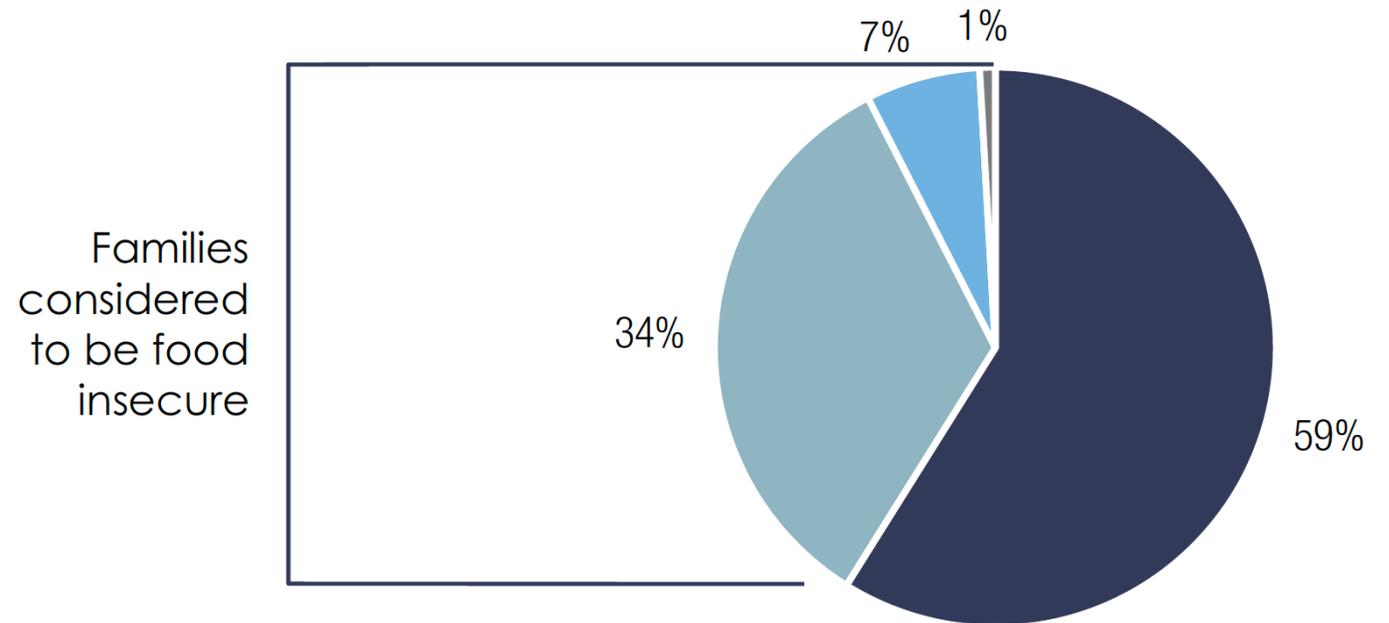
- More home learning activities and stimulating materials in the home were associated with higher child development scores and lower psychosocial stress scores.
- Economic insecurity was associated with less stimulating home environments.
- Parents reported more home learning activities with older children.
- Parents in rural areas reported fewer home learning activities and materials than families in urban areas.



# ECONOMIC SECURITY MATTERS

- 41% of families reported some level of food insecurity
- 52% of families noted difficulty covering the basics at some point since their child's birth

Both were associated with lower scores of child development and higher scores of psychosocial stress

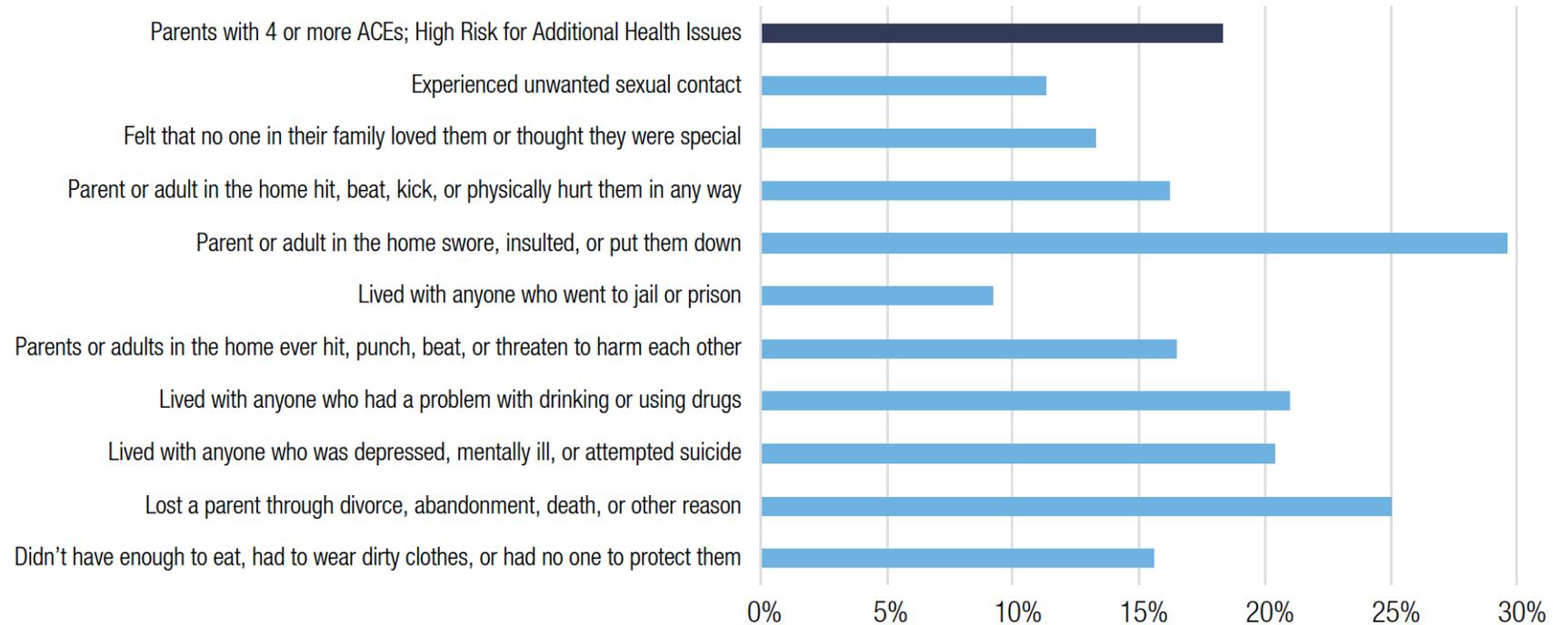


- We could always afford to eat good nutritious meals
- We could always afford enough to eat but not always the kinds of food we should eat
- Sometimes we could not afford enough to eat
- Often we could not afford enough to eat



# PARENT MENTAL HEALTH AND ACEs MATTER

- 60% of parents endorsed at least one Adverse Childhood Experience
- 30% of parents reported some level of distress

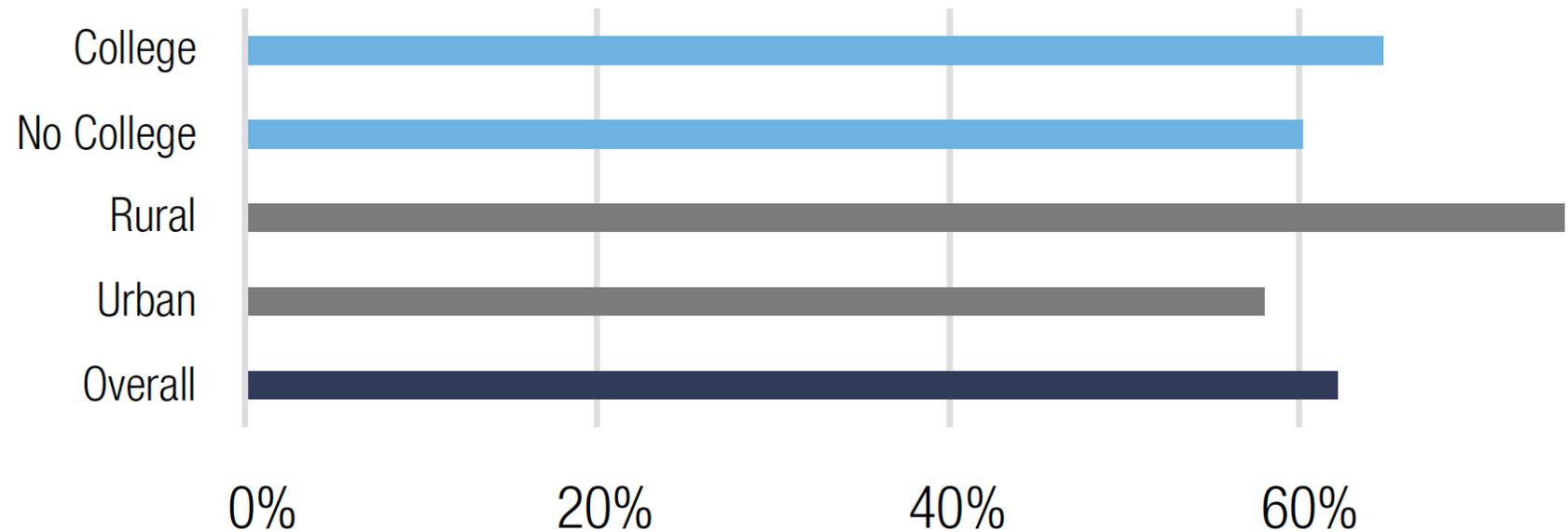


Both were associated with lower scores of child development and higher scores of psychosocial stress



# SUPPORT FOR PARENTS MATTERS

- 62% of parents reported living in a supportive neighborhood
- 82% of parent reported having at least one person for day-to-day supporting

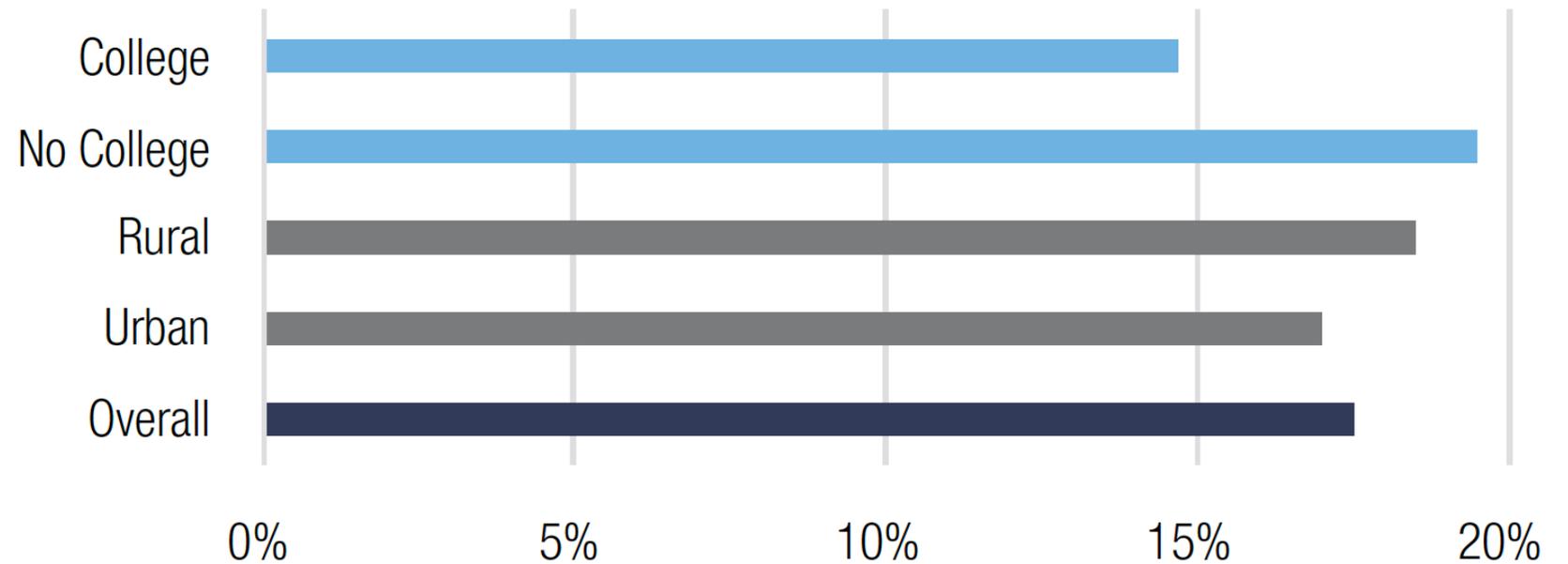


Both were positively associated with Kidsights Data scores of child development and negatively associated with scores of psychosocial stress.



# ACCESS TO CHILDCARE MATTERS

- 16% of parents reported having to change employment or quit a job due to problems with childcare



Trouble with childcare was associated with lower child development scores and higher child psychosocial stress



# POLICY FOCUS: CHILDCARE INSTABILITY, SUBSIDY AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

- With statewide advocacy group, identified policy focus on impacts of childcare instability on family economics
  - Which families experienced childcare trouble that affected employment?
  - What were associations with child development?



# RESULTS

- Less than 20% reported trouble with childcare that resulted in a job change
  - But 33% of parents receiving childcare subsidies reported trouble with childcare that affected employment, **nearly 4x more than other parents**
- 1/5 parents reported changing childcare more than 2x in the past year

**Changes in childcare and trouble with childcare are negatively associated with child development.**



HOW DATA  
CAN BE  
USED?



# PARENT RESPONSES TO DATA

Parents valued receiving the data. It helped them to feel connected:

- *"I think most families are struggling in some way. It is nice to know I am not alone."*
- *"Most parents don't feel they're doing great at parenting - glad to know I'm not alone in the struggle."*



# PARENT RESPONSES TO DATA

Parents see how the data can be used in their personal and professional life:

- *"Personally, it was helpful to see, if I'm not feeling like I'm doing very well, I'm not alone. Also from a professional way, just being able to have those statistics to shine a light on the stress that parents are feeling."*
- *"It helped me to explain things better to my husband, too, that it's not just us... Just being able to share it with others and be able to say, 'Hey, we're not the only ones going through this.'"*



# PARENT RESPONSES TO DATA

Parents as advocates in policy and decision-making:

- *"If we knew all the data, it gets that discussion going in communities to possibly come up with a solution and to help policymakers... If we knew [the data], we could have discussions about it. And if it was out in the open, it would be a push, you know, cause I'm sure some families don't know there's so much food insecurity in our communities. If they get this information, it could become a community solution to get things changed."*



# HOW DO KIDSIGHTS DATA COMPLEMENT OTHER EARLY CHILDHOOD DATA/MEASUREMENT EFFORTS?

- Identified potential users at state, county/city and large-scale program levels
  - Most states have invested in early childhood data systems, but few systems seem to have access to child development data before the start of school
  - County health departments, large-scale programs may be uniquely positioned to help generate population-level data
- As states scale early childhood programs, more opportunity and more need for population-level data

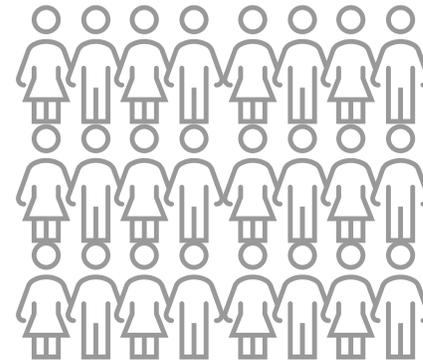


# HOW CAN KIDSIGHTS DATA BE USED?

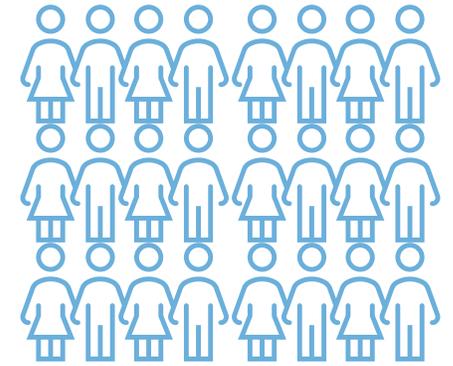
## Tracking state, city/county trends in development over time

*For example:*

- *Nebraska policies supporting pre-K for 3- and 4- year-olds*



Children born 2018-2019 at  
age 3 and 4  
(Data collected in 2022-2023)



Children born 2021-2022 at  
age 3 and 4  
(Data collected in 2024-2025)

### Using Kidsights Data:

- Evaluate any increase in 3- and 4-year-olds attending preschool programming
- Compare the Kidsights child development scores between children before and after the policy



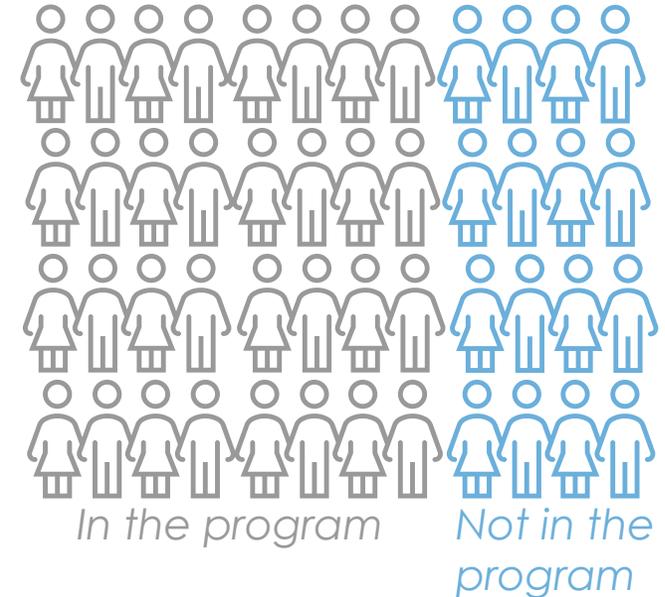
# HOW CAN KIDSIGHTS DATA BE USED?

## Use for a Large Program

*For example:*

- *Examining overall levels of child development within a community-wide program*
  - *Sample size is dependent upon group comparisons (which groups of children – those who participated vs. those who did not, etc.)*
  - *Requires strong partnership to ensure that groups to compare are well-represented in the sample*

*All children that are eligible for the program*



### **Using Kidsights Data:**

- **Determine groups within the community most in need of additional services or showing great resilience**
- **Evaluate the overall development of children within the program compared to those not in the program; possible to compare program with statewide data, if available**



## TAKE-WAY POINTS ...

- Reliable, population-level data on early child development, birth to age 5, is within reach for states, counties and communities
- These data can give you great insight into how young children and families are doing
- This information can be used to inform policies, improve programs and advocate



# OPPORTUNITY FOR 2024/2025 ...

- We hope to continue recruiting sites in late 2024
- Looking for possible partners who meet these characteristics
  - Ability to reach parents to fill out survey (ideally cohort or large-scale access)
  - Explore with us on how data are used to create change
  - Willing to convene key partners/stakeholders to build demand for data
  - Interested in sustained use over time



# LET'S STAY IN TOUCH

- Email:
  - [Abbie.Raikes@unmc.edu](mailto:Abbie.Raikes@unmc.edu)
  - [Katelyn.Hepworth@unmc.edu](mailto:Katelyn.Hepworth@unmc.edu)
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- Facebook: Kidsights Data
- LinkedIn: Kidsights Data

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# KIDSIGHTS DATA CONTRIBUTION TO NE

## Using Kidsights Data Over Time

- *We now have Nebraska baseline that generalizes to underlying population*
  - *Recommended to repeat every 2-3 years to track trends in child development, family characteristics, receipt of services*
- *Complementary to ECIDS: Includes all children, not only those receiving services*

***Estimated cost of less than \$100K once every 2-3 years for data collection, analyses and reporting within a statewide generalizable sample***

***Similar costs when administered at the community level***