

Northwestern Health Unit  
**RRFSS 2018**  
**Positive Parenting**  
**Module Results**  
March 2019



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**Northwestern  
Health Unit**

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[www.nwhu.on.ca](http://www.nwhu.on.ca)

# Background

In September 2017 the Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) decided to participate in the Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS) in 2018 to measure some priority statistics from our general population. RRFSS is a telephone-based survey of adults aged 18 and older designed to collect and measure a wide variety of health risk factor information and other public health-related indicators. RRFSS is used by many public health units across Ontario obtain timely, local public health indicators that support program planning and evaluation and help advocate for public policy development.

RRFSS is conducted by the Institute for Social Research (ISR) at York University across three data collection cycles per year (January-April, May-August, and September-December). Health Units can customize their survey design by selecting from a large repository of modules or even designing their own modules to obtain specific information about their population.

The NWHU signed up to participate in RRFSS in 2018 in order to measure some key population health indicators that otherwise would not be available from other data sources. This included information relating to public perception of the social determinants of health (SDOH), social media use, prevalence of dental insurance, positive parenting habits, food security, amongst other indicators.

# Methodology

RRFSS uses a combination of landline and cell phone calls to administer the survey. ISR recommends that health units select a survey plan that includes a minimum of 10-15% cell phone calls, in order to reach as much of the population as possible. ISR uses computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) to conduct the interviews.

The Foundations Team at the NWHU, along with the Leadership Council, worked together to prioritize the modules to be included in our survey tool. Due to our relatively low budget, our tool was limited to around a 50-question survey that would take approximately 10-15 minutes. In addition, data would be collected only during the first cycle of the year (January-April).

The final survey tool consisted of a total of 54 questions, comprised of three mandatory core modules and an additional 6 optional modules:

**Figure 1: RRFSS modules selected by the NWHU in 2018**

| <b>Module</b>                        | <b>Number of questions</b> |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Age (core module)                    | 2                          |
| Gender (core module)                 | 1                          |
| Children (core module)               | 3                          |
| Ethnicity                            | 5                          |
| Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) | 10                         |
| Positive Parenting                   | 10                         |
| Social Media Use                     | 12                         |
| Dental Insurance                     | 4                          |
| Food Access and Security             | 6                          |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>53</b>                  |

The NWHU opted for a survey option that would yield a total sample of 575 responses; 490 landline respondents and 85 cell phone respondents. The ISR administered the survey in cycle 1 of 2018 between January and April, prepared the data and delivered it to the NWHU in early August.

Analysis of the data was done using STATA Version 15. To adjust for survey design a household weight variable provided by ISR was used for all calculations. In addition, a new variable was created which equaled the population for a particular age-sex and indigenous status sub demographic in the NWHU area. Each survey participant was assigned a value equaling the population in their sub demographic (e.g. for a male aged 20-29 who was indigenous, this variable equaled the total population of 20-29 year-old indigenous males in the NWHU area). This variable was used as a post-stratification weight in all estimations to adjust for under- or over-representation of age-sex groups in the sample, as well as the under-representation of Indigenous respondents. The exact population of Indigenous people in the NWHU catchment area was not available at the time of analysis, so it was estimated by using the proportion of the population in the Kenora and Rainy River Districts that is Indigenous in each age group, and using those proportions to estimate the number of Indigenous people in the NWHU area in the corresponding age groups.

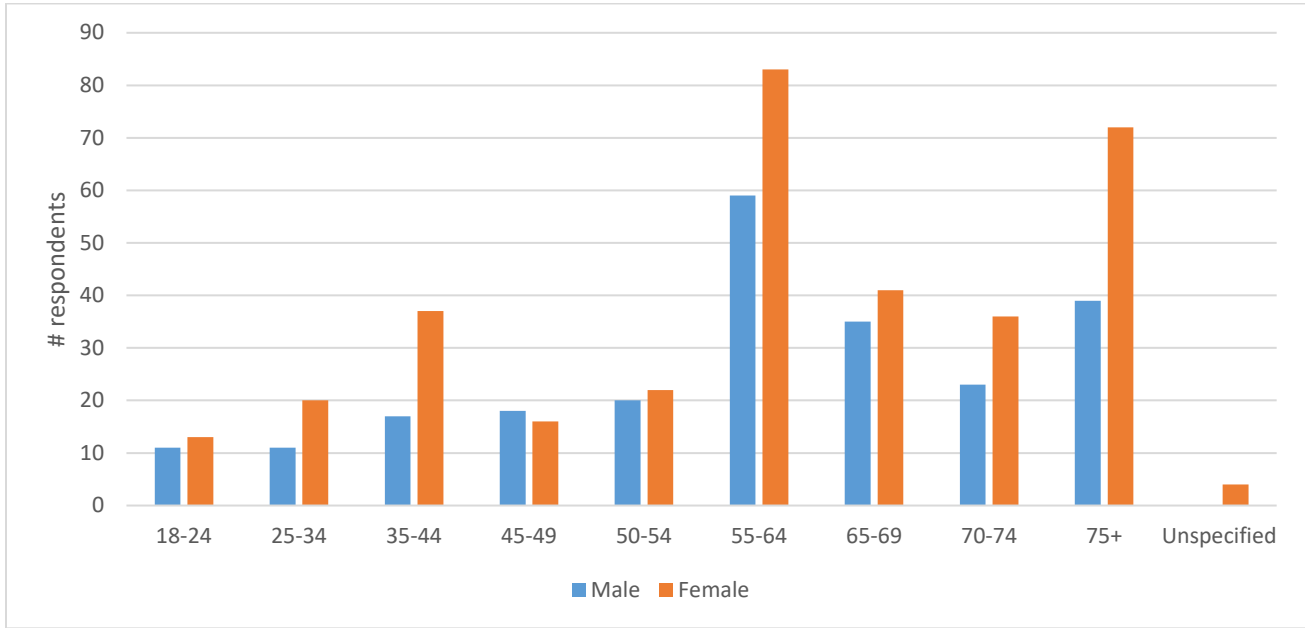
Proportions and accompanying 95% confidence intervals (CIs) were calculated for all variables. 95% CIs were calculated using a logit transform so that the endpoints were between 0 and 1.

This report outlines results obtained through the Positive Parenting module, in which participants were asked a number of questions relating to the frequency of positive interactions they have with their child. Parents or guardians with children under 12 were eligible to complete this module. The Positive Parenting module questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1.

## Results

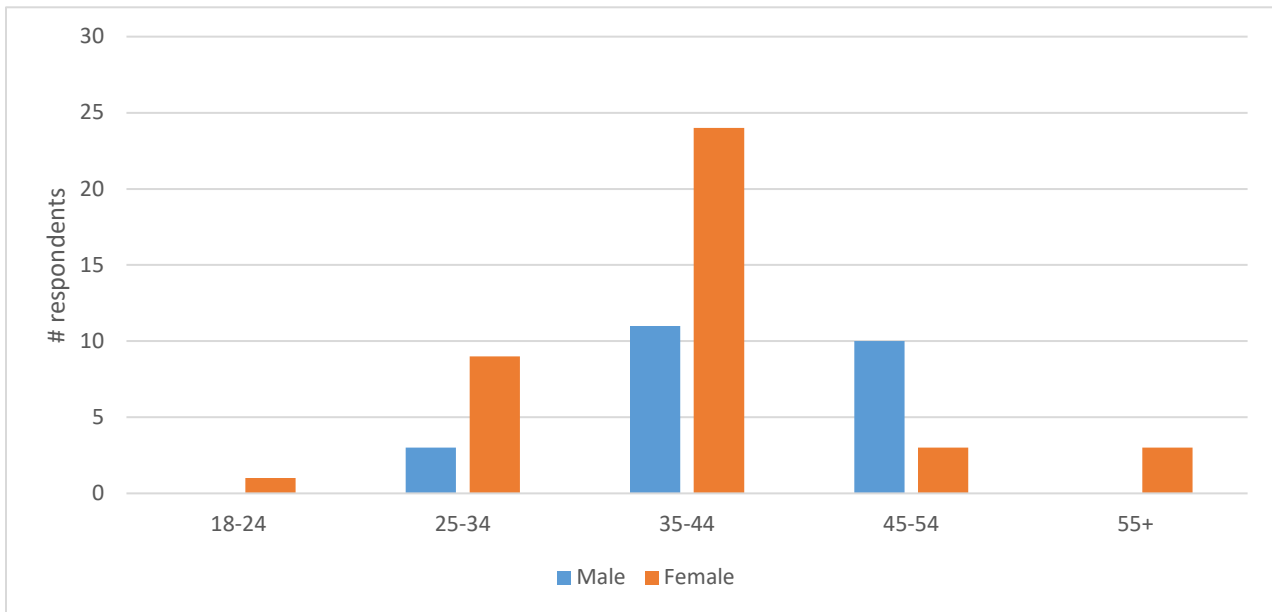
In total, the RRFSS survey yielded a total sample of 577 respondents within the NWHU catchment area. 344 of the respondents (59.6%) were female and 233 (40.4%) were male. The sample consisted disproportionately of the older population, with 74.5% of respondents being 50 years of age or older. 11.1% of respondents self-identified as Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit or Métis).

**Figure 2: RRFSS Survey respondents by age group and sex**



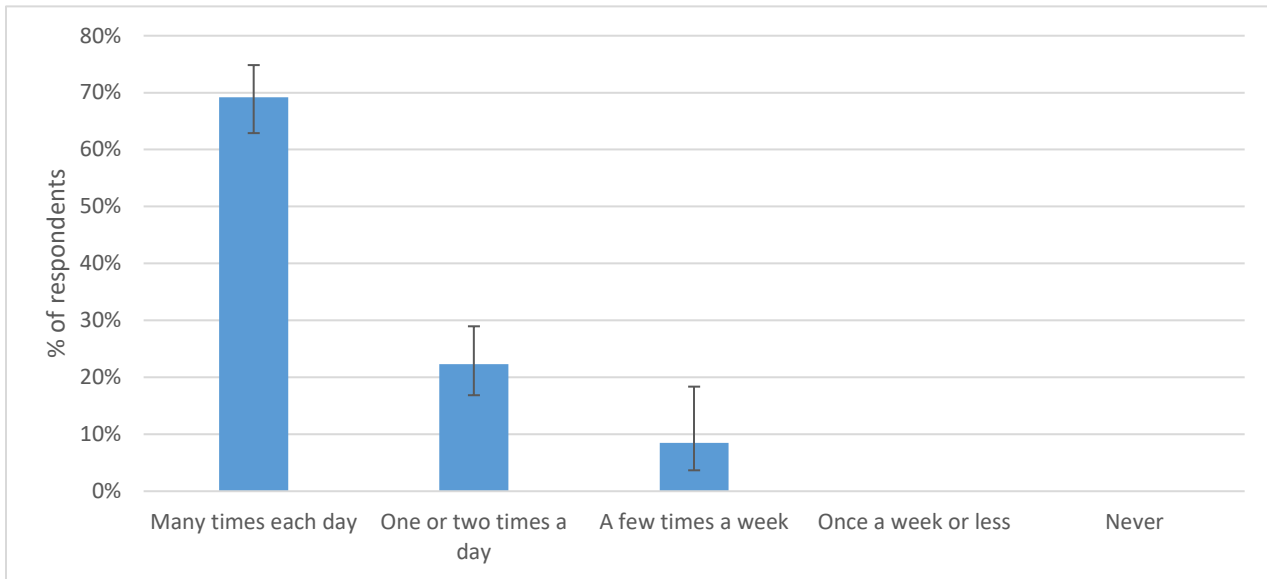
Parents, step-parents, grandparents, guardians, or siblings who play a role in raising a child under 12 years old in their house were permitted to answer the questions in the Positive Parenting module. In total, 64 respondents met this criteria and were able to answer the questions about positive parenting. Of these respondents, 62.5% were female and 37.5% were male. Over half of the respondents (54.7%) were in the 35-44 age group (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Participants who responded to the Positive Parenting module by age group and sex**



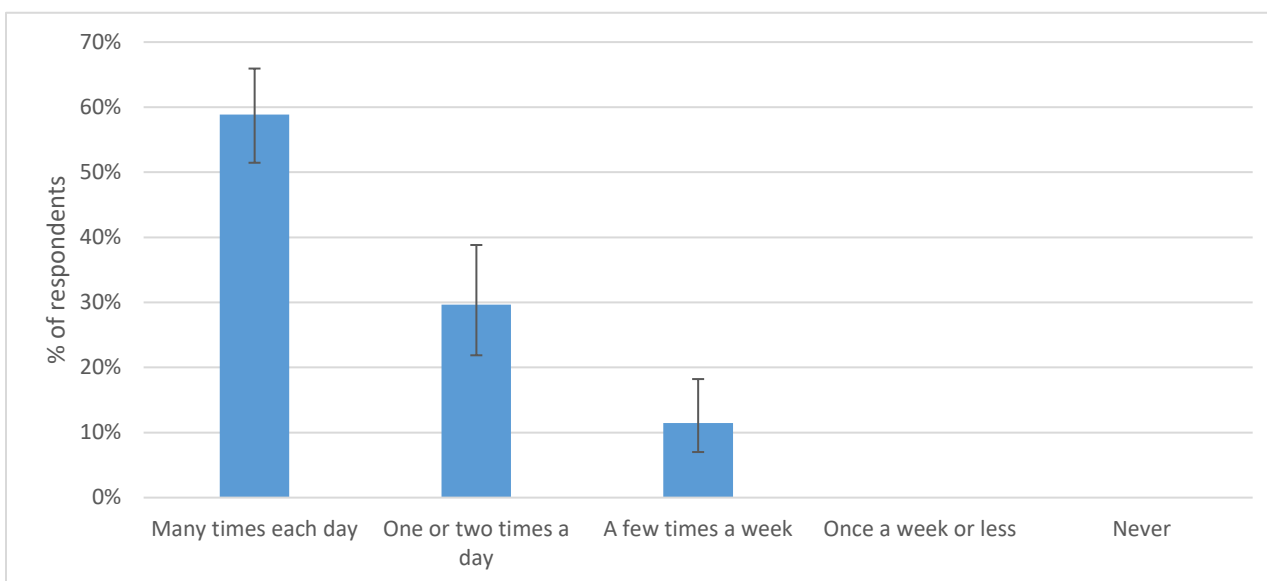
Respondents were asked how often they praise their child (or the child they care for), for example by saying things like “good for you!” etc. The majority (69.2%) claimed to do this many times each day, while an additional 22.3% said they do it one or two times a day, and 8.5% said they do it a few times a week.

**Figure 4: Frequency of a parent or guardian praising their child, NWHU, 2018**



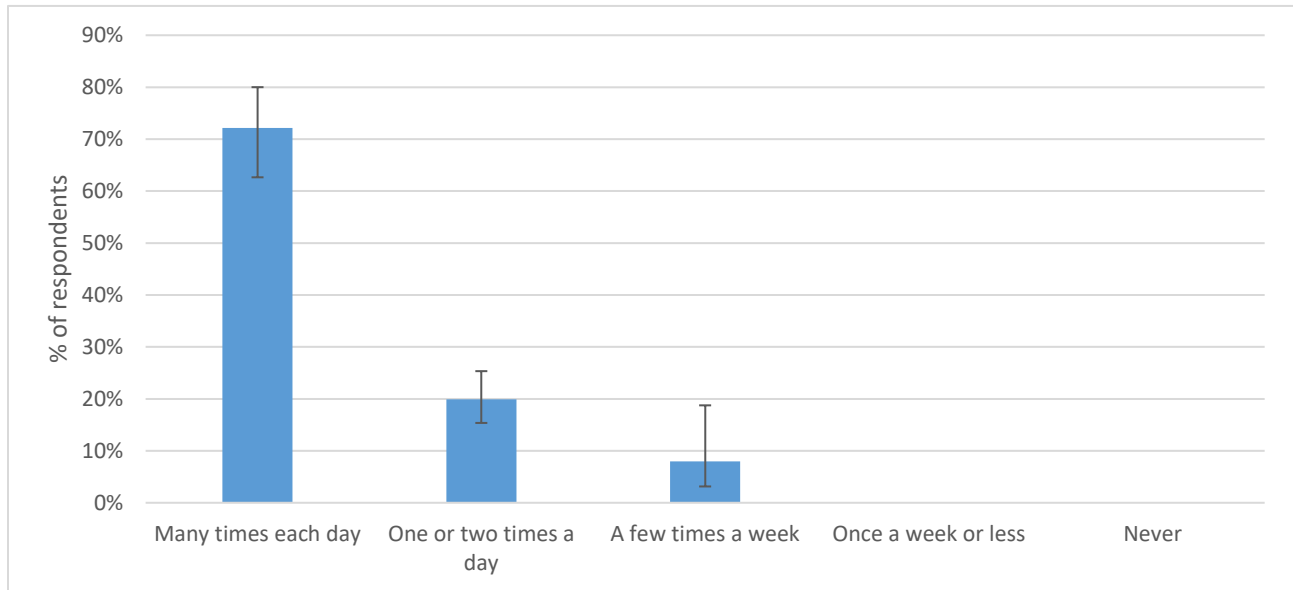
Respondents were then asked how often they and their child (or child in their care) talk or play with each other just for fun. Over half (58.9%) claimed to do this many times each day, while a further 29.6% do it one or more times a day and 11.5% do it a few times a week.

**Figure 5: Frequency of a parent or guardian talking or playing with their child for fun, NWHU, 2018**



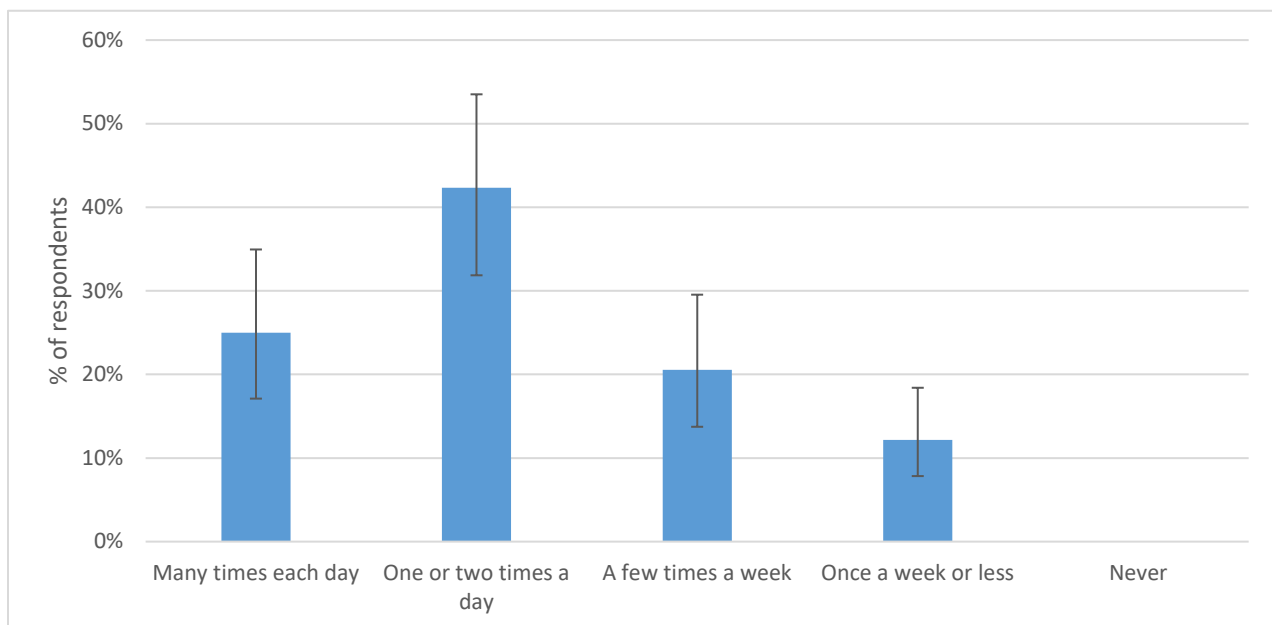
Respondents were asked how often they and their child (or child in their care) laugh together. The majority (72.2%) said they do many times each day, while 19.9% said they do one or two times a day and 8.0% said they do a few times a week.

**Figure 6: Frequency of a parent or guardian laughing with their child, NWHU, 2018**



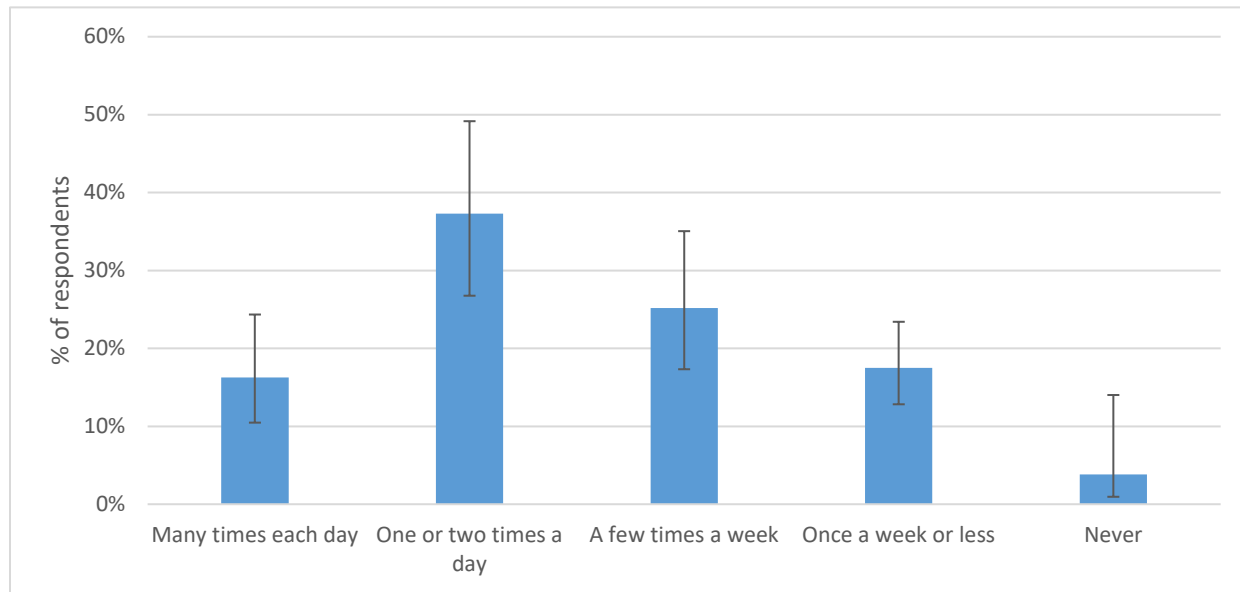
Respondents were asked how often they do something special with their child (or child in their care) that that child enjoys (where “something special” can mean something that either the child or guardian thinks is special). A quarter of parents/guardians (25.0%) said they do this many times each day, 42.3% said they do it one or two times a day, 20.5% a few times a week, an 12.2% once a week or less.

**Figure 7: Frequency of a parent or guardian doing something special with their child, NWHU, 2018**



The last question respondents were asked was how often they play games, sports, or hobbies with their child (or child in their custody), including things like reading together or watching TV together. The most common response was that they do this one or two times a day (37.3%), while 16.2% said they do many times each day, 25.2% a few times a week, 17.5% once a week or less, and 3.8% never do.

**Figure 8: Frequency of a parent or guardian playing sports, games or hobbies with their child, NWHU, 2018**



Taking these five questions together and giving them each a score ranging from 0 (never) to 5 (many times each day) a cumulative positive parenting score ranging from 0 to 20 can be assigned to each respondent that reflects their total score for these questions. The mean total parenting score for parents/caregivers in the NWHU area based on this survey was 15.8 (CI: 15.2-16.3) out of a possible 20.

## Discussion

The results from this module indicate a relatively high prevalence of positive parenting behaviours exhibited by parents and guardians in the catchment area. For several of the positive child bonding behaviours asked about in this module, a high proportion of respondents reported doing them many times a day or one or two times a day. In particular, a high proportion of parents and caregivers report frequently praising their child, playing with their child and laughing with their child. These types of positive interactions have an important influence on the well-being of a child and early childhood development.

The mean total parenting score of 15.8 for parents/caregivers in the NWHU area can be compared with results from the 1994 Canadian National Longitudinal Survey. In this survey, the national average score was calculated to be 13.5<sup>1</sup>, a few points lower than the NWHU in 2018. Unfortunately more recent national comparators are not available.

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Council on Social Development. (2006). *The Progress of Canada's Children and Youth, 2006*. Retrieved from [https://www.ccsd.ca/resources/ProgressChildrenYouth/pdf/pccy\\_2006.pdf](https://www.ccsd.ca/resources/ProgressChildrenYouth/pdf/pccy_2006.pdf)

The Region of Waterloo Public Health conducted this module in 2009/10 and 2011, and calculated the mean total score; in 2009/2010 it was 15.8 and in 2011 it was 16.1<sup>2</sup>, which are similar results to the NWHU survey.

Middlesex-London and Windsor-Essex Health Units also conducted this module in 2002, and reported a mean total parenting score of 16.1<sup>3</sup>, also very close to the mean in the NWHU survey.

## Limitations

Although phone calls made by ISR in conducting this survey were done randomly, the demographic makeup of the respondents in the final sample indicate that some groups were more likely to participate than others. For example, older respondents and women were over-represented in the sample, and Indigenous people were under-represented. As such, the sample obtained was not representative of the overall population of the NWHU catchment area. To mitigate this, post stratification methods were used in the analysis which should have greatly minimized the effects of having a non-representative sample.

First Nations reserves were not proportionally represented in the sample; only 6 respondents were from a reserve in the area. Because of this, the sample can generally only be considered to be representative of our off-reserve population.

Questions relating to socioeconomic status (e.g. income, education, employment, etc.) were not asked in this survey, so the socioeconomic makeup of the sample is not known. As such, it is unknown whether the sample is representative of the entire population within the catchment area with regard to socioeconomic variables.

Although the overall sample size of the RRFSS survey was large, the number of respondents who were eligible to fill out the Positive Parenting was relatively small (64 people). Due to this, only the highest level of results were able to be reported on, while drilling down into subpopulations (e.g. age group or sex) was not possible for this module.

This module asked relatively personal questions about the nature of the relationship between a parent/guardian and their child, the responses to which could potentially carry a stigma. Because of this, the impact of social desirability bias may play a role in the responses given in this module.

## Conclusion

This module provides the NWHU with useful information on positive parenting habits of parents and guardians in our catchment area. These types of statistics are not available at the local level from any other data source, so this survey has provided a valuable alternative means to measure these types of indicators which will be useful for us in our program planning and promotion activities.

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<sup>2</sup> Region of Waterloo Public Health. (2012). *RRFSS Monitor: Parenting Consistency*.

<sup>3</sup> Middlesex-London and Windsor-Essex Health Units. (2004). *Measuring Positive Parenting Using the RRFSS: Final Report of the Perinatal and Child Health Survey Initiative*.



# Appendix 1: Positing Parenting Module Questionnaire

**Date Created:** 01/15/2016

**Date Revised:**

**Date Retired From Use:**

## **MODULE QUESTIONS:**

[ask if at least one child in the household under 12 years old]

if count indicates one child under 12[goto intro\_par1]

if count indicates more than child under 12[goto intro\_par2] |

### **intro\_par1**

Now some questions about parent and child relationships. Earlier you indicated there was one child LESS than 12 years old in your household. The next questions refer to that child.

### **intro\_par2**

Now some questions about parent and child relationships. Earlier you indicated that there were [fill code\_par] children LESS than 12 years old in your household. For the next questions I would like to talk to you about the child who had the LAST birthday.

*Interviewer, if twins take the one born last.*

### **par1**

[only asked if more than one child]

And how old is this child?

Interviewer: If needed "The child with the LAST birthday".

0-11 enter age

98 don't know

99 refused

### **par2**

What is your relationship to [fill KIDNAME], are you a parent, step parent legal guardian, grand parent, brother, sister, or something else?

1 parent

2 step parent

3 guardian

4 grand parent

5 brother/sister

6 brother/sister R volunteers they have a role to play in raising child

8 live-in-nanny other paid child care provider

9 other relative (uncle, aunt, etc.)  
7 something else (specify)  
98 don't know  
99 refused

if <1,6> [goto par4]  
if <2-4,9> [goto par3]  
if <5,8,98,99> [goto exit\_parent]  
if <7> [specify] [goto exit\_parent]

### par3

Are you completely or partially responsible for raising [fill KIDNAME]?

Interviewer: ONLY if asked, a parent who has joint or partial custody & sees the child on a regular basis, even if every other weekend, code "yes."

1 yes complete or partial responsibility  
5 no responsibility  
8 don't know  
9 refused

If <1> [goto par4]  
If <5,8,9> [goto exit\_parent]

### par4

The following questions have to do with things that [fill KIDNAME] does and ways you react to him/her. For each of the following please tell me if you do this many times each day, one or two times a day, a few times a week, about once a week or less, or never.

First, how often do you praise [fill KIDNAME], by saying something like: "Good for you!" or "What a nice thing you did!" or "That's good going!" Do you do this many times each day, one or two times a day, a few times a week, about once a week or less, or never?

1 many times each day (includes "all the time" do not read)  
2 one or two times a day  
3 a few times a week  
4 about once a week or less  
5 never  
8 don't know 9 refused

### par5

How often do you and [fill KIDNAME] talk or play with each other, focusing attention on each other for five minutes or more, just for fun? Do you do this many times each day, one or two times a day, a few times a week, about once a week or less, or never?

Interviewer: if required, "talk or play with each other" means spending time together talking, playing or spending time doing things in each other's company. "Just for fun" means having a fun time together. If R says they tend to do this with one or more of their children at the same time ask them to try to answer as best they can for the selected child.

1 many times each day (includes "all the time" do not read)  
2 one or two times a day

- 3 a few times a week
- 4 about once a week or less
- 5 never
- 8 don't know
- 9 refused

**par6**

How often do you and [fill KIDNAME] laugh together?

Do you do this many times each day, one or two times a day, a few times a week, about once a week or less, or never?

Interviewer: If required, "laugh together" means laughing together at the same thing, or a situation makes both of you laugh together. If R says they tend to do this with one or more of their children at the same time ask them to try to answer as best they can for the selected child.

- 1 many times each day (includes "all the time" do not read)
- 2 one or two times a day
- 3 a few times a week
- 4 about once a week or less
- 5 never
- 8 don't know
- 9 refused

**par7**

How often do you do something special with [fill KIDNAME] that he/she enjoys?

Do you do this many times each day, one or two times a day, a few times a week, about once a week or less, or never?

Interviewer: if required, "something special" means "doing something EITHER you or the child think of as something special." If R says they tend to do this with one or more of their children at the same time ask them to try to answer as best they can for the selected child.

- 1 many times each day (includes "all the time" do not read)
- 2 one or two times a day
- 3 a few times a week
- 4 about once a week or less
- 5 never
- 8 don't know
- 9 refused

**par8**

[if par1 lt <2>]

How often do you play games with [fill KIDNAME]?

[else]

How often do you play sports, hobbies, or games with [fill KIDNAME]?

Do you do this many times each day, one or two times a day, a few times a week, about once a week or less, or never?

Interviewer: If required, "reading together" may be considered as hobby. Video games, watching TV or videos together count, but R should try to answer as best they can for the selected child, not counting family time.

- 1 many times each day (includes "all the time" do not read)
- 2 one or two times a day
- 3 a few times a week
- 4 about once a week or less
- 5 never
- 8 don't know
- 9 refused