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2024 Teen Parent Housing Needs Assessment

A Colorado Front-Range Survey

Presented by

Madison Caparros, MSW

Donica Snyder, MA

Florence Crittenton Services

Acknowledgments

Florence Crittenton Services (FloCrit) wishes to thank the teen parents who shared their experiences and insights, which were critical to our research. Additionally, we appreciate the contributions of the non-profits working with teen parents, the Teen Parent Collaborative, and Professor Heather Allen from MSU Denver for their collaboration and commitment to improving the lives of young families. Your collective efforts have been instrumental in shaping this needs assessment and its findings.



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Methodology

Why?

Teen parents are a subset of youth and families who share a unique experience when it comes to housing. Often times, they face significant housing challenges that make it hard for them to build stable lives for themselves and their children. Research is limited and practices of elevating Teen Parents voices to drive change is uncommon. **Because of this, this Teen Parent Housing Needs Assessment aims to understand these housing challenges and most importantly, elevate housing solutions from Teen Parents themselves.** The goal is to inform service providers, guide housing program development, and influence policy to improve housing stability and self-sufficiency for teen parents and their families.



Who?

Florence Crittenton Services (FloCrit) was the researcher of this study and was supported by other non-profits working with teen parents who were members of the Teen Parent Collaborative (TPC). FloCrit staff, Teen Parents, and other non-profits were involved in the creation and administration of the survey. **This assessment targeted any teen parent between the age of 14-25 in Colorado who had their child before turning 21. A total of 195 teen parents responded to the survey in writing.**



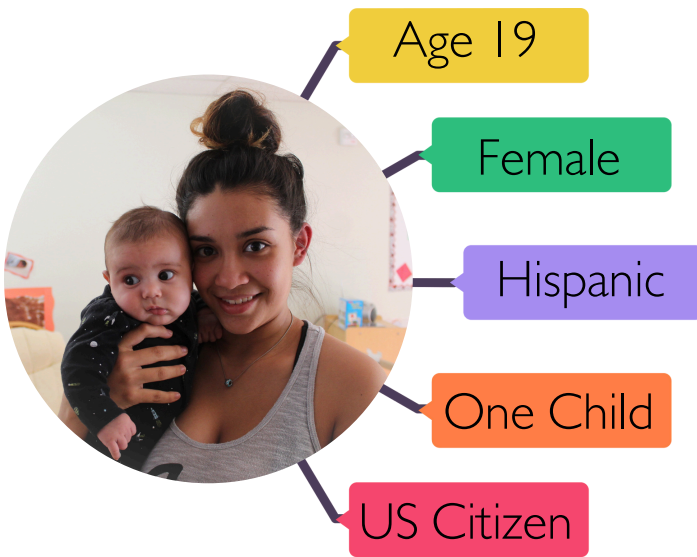
The survey established the demographics of the participants first, and then asked two primary research questions: **1) What are the current housing circumstances of teen parents? 2) What are the housing preferences of teen parents?**

How?

The study used a mixed-methods approach, combining numbers and stories. **The survey was administered in March 2024 and included questions on demographics, current housing circumstances, future housing solutions, and a brief qualitative section.** The survey was given confidentially through non-profit organizations and hosted on a secure platform to keep information private. Participants were offered a \$20 gift card for their time. All quotes from teen parents stayed original to the way they submitted their responses in the survey. The non-profits who participated in the study were: Hope House, Urban Peak, MotherWise, Nurse Family Partnership, New Legacy, McLain Community High School, Aurora Public Schools Young Parent Support program, Community Resource Center, and others.



Demographics

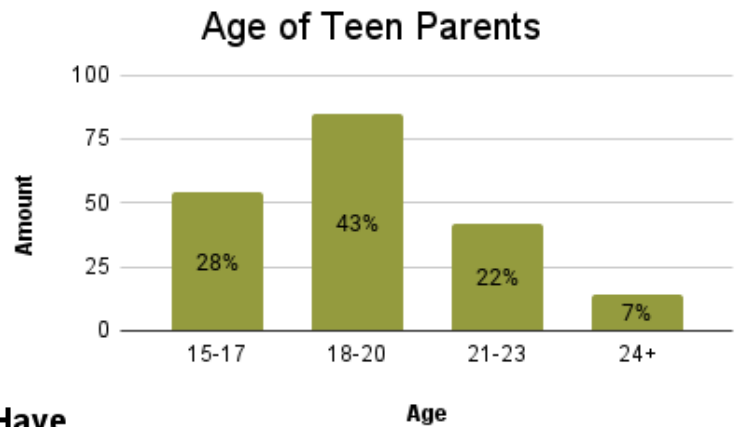


The participants answered several demographic questions around age, number of children, gender identity, race/ethnicity, citizenship status, and history of foster care & homelessness.

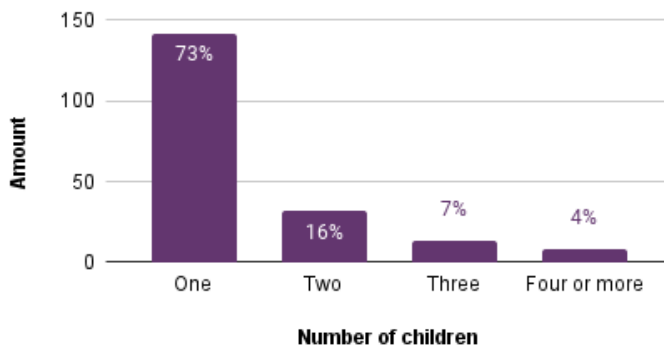
Teen parents most commonly self-reported as a 19 year old hispanic female with one child.

97% reported identifying as female and 82% reported as being U.S Citizens

43% of participants are 18-20 years old



Number of Children Teen Parents Have



73% of participants have one child



According to Colorado Health Information Dataset Live Birth Statistics, in 2023, 26% of teen parent births occurred to parents ages 15-17, and 74% of teen parent births occurred to parents ages 18-19.

Demographics

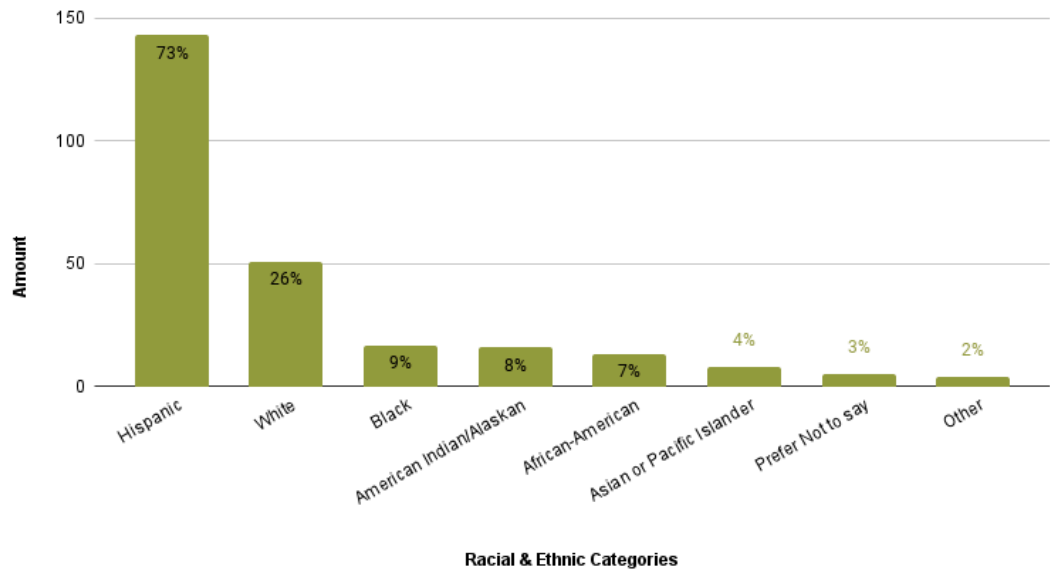


“I wish people knew that the housing problem is a crisis. We cannot work, further our education, or support our children without first having a stable place to live. It is a fundamental necessity.”
 -Teen Parent

84% of Teen Parents prefer to communicate in English

*The language question offered the 6 most common languages in Colorado along with a “other” option to write in their preference . **The “other” 16% reported that they prefer to communicate in Spanish.**

Race & Ethnicity of Teen Parents

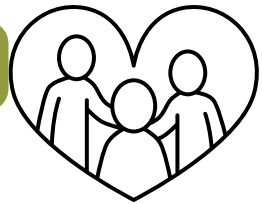


For race/ethnicity, the question was check all that apply to promote inclusivity and self-identification. Race and ethnicity were separated so people could select what they feel fits them the most. According to Colorado Health Information Dataset Live Birth Statistics in 2023, 64% of teen parent live births were to Hispanic Parents and 35% to Non-Hispanic Parents. 7% of the teen parents identified as Black/African American.



Demographics

18% of participants reported prior experience with foster care

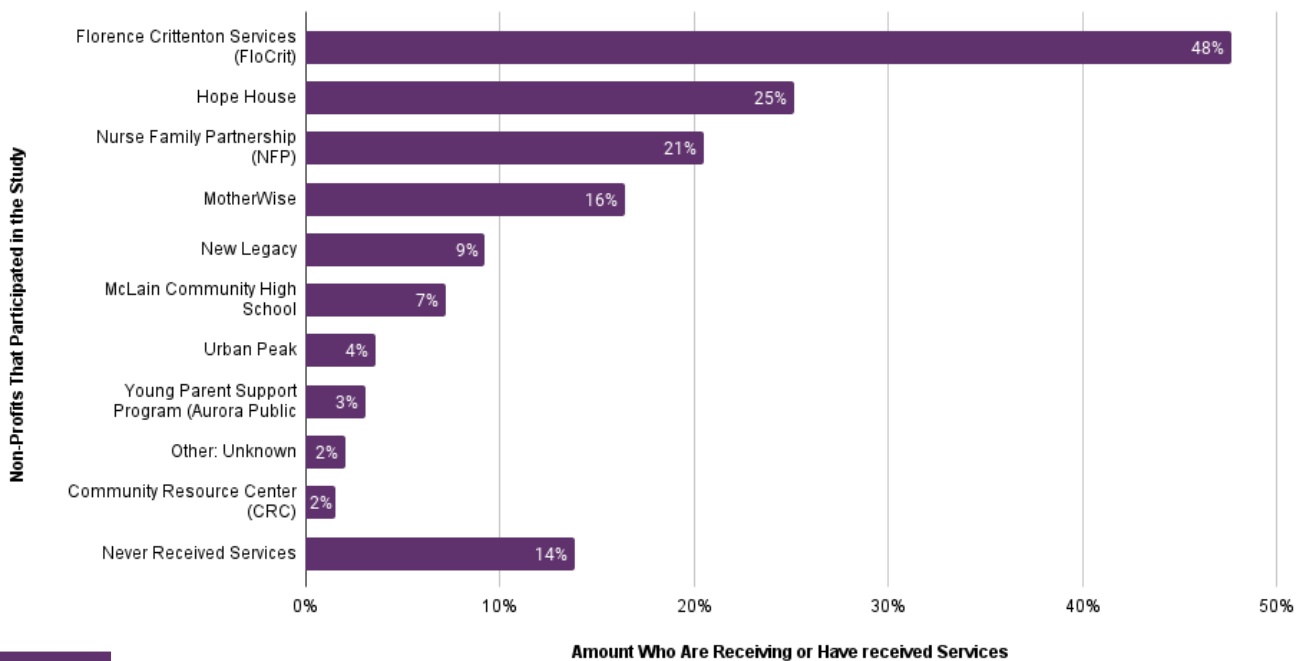


43% of participants reported prior experience with homelessness

“It's hard becoming a parent young, and then not having the stability to raise your child not only hurts us but it hurts our kids too” - Teen Parent

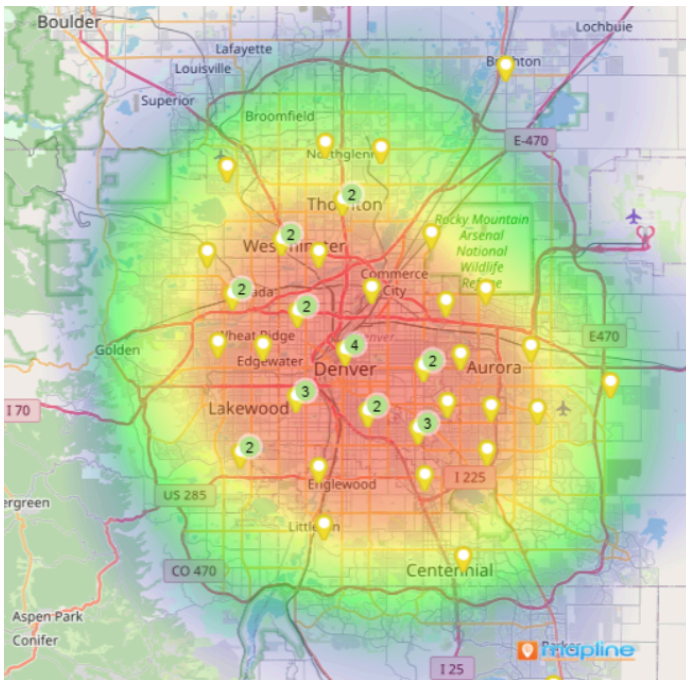
Teen Parents were asked if they are currently or have previously received services from the agencies listed in the chart below. Of the responses, 86% reported having received services from one or more community agencies.

History of Non-Profit Services



Current Housing Circumstances

Results from the current housing circumstances questions highlighted a variety of areas, situations, and experiences that teen parents face when it comes to housing. **When asked in which zip code participants currently live, 53 different zip codes were provided.**

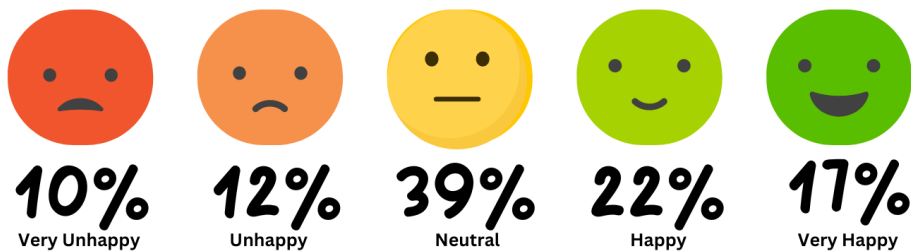


“We would like to move out but cant due to cost and where we live is not close enough to school and daycare .”
-Teen Parent

The zip code map displays which zip codes participants are living in. A few participants also reported living in Northern Colorado & Colorado Springs, which are not displayed on this map.

To gauge teen parents feelings towards their housing, they were asked to rate how happy they were with their current living situation.

61% of teen parents reported **not** being happy with their current living situation.

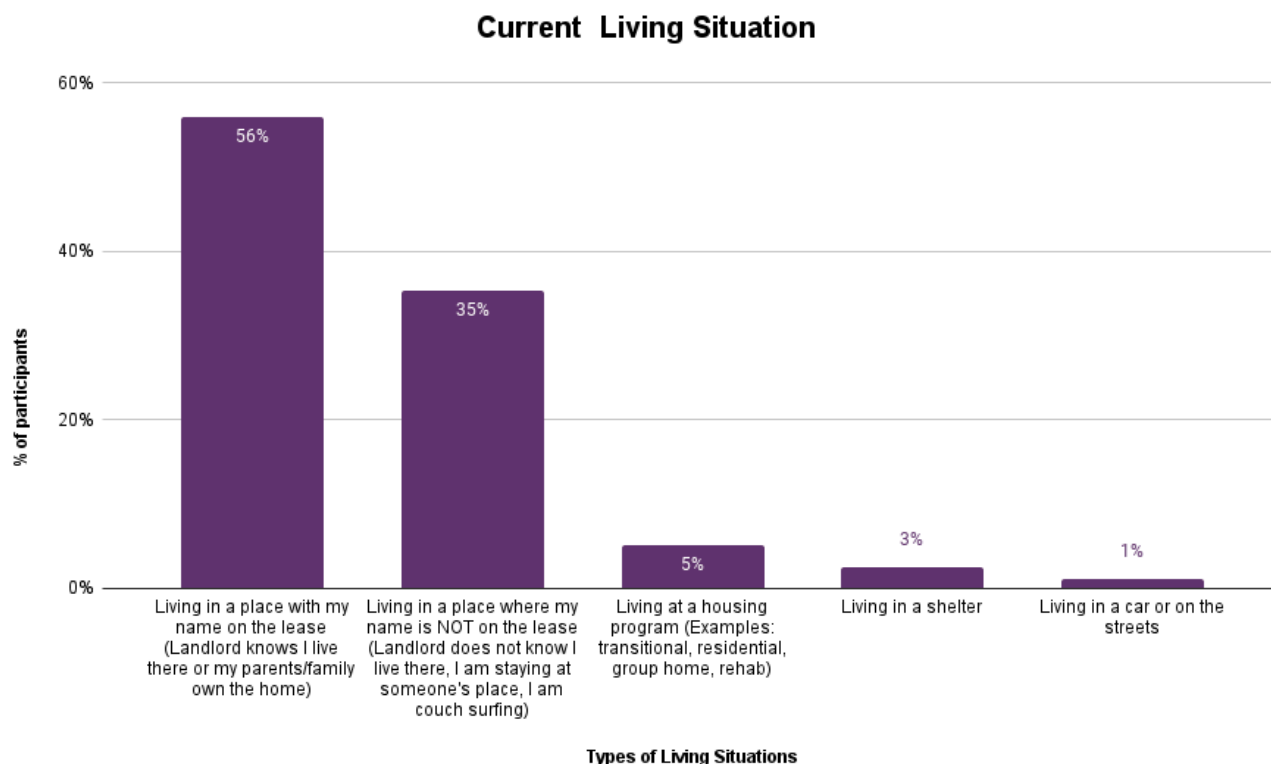


“Our living situations at home are not always ideal and somewhere better would be best. It is hard to leave the home the systems do not always have your back.” -Teen Parent



Current Housing Circumstances

When asked what their current living situation is, **44% of Teen Parents reported living in a housing situation that puts them at risk of homelessness or literally homeless.** The chart below shows the living situations teen parents reported being in. While living in a place with your name on the lease/with someone who is a homeowner can be a protective factor, you can still be at risk of homelessness or live in an unsafe environment depending on individual circumstances.



“A lot of teen parents struggle finding a home because half of these parents I know live in toxic households and wanna leave but cant because of money or they got nowhere to go.”
-Teen Parent

“Teen parents are often homeless, couch surfing, or very under looked out for”
-Teen Parent



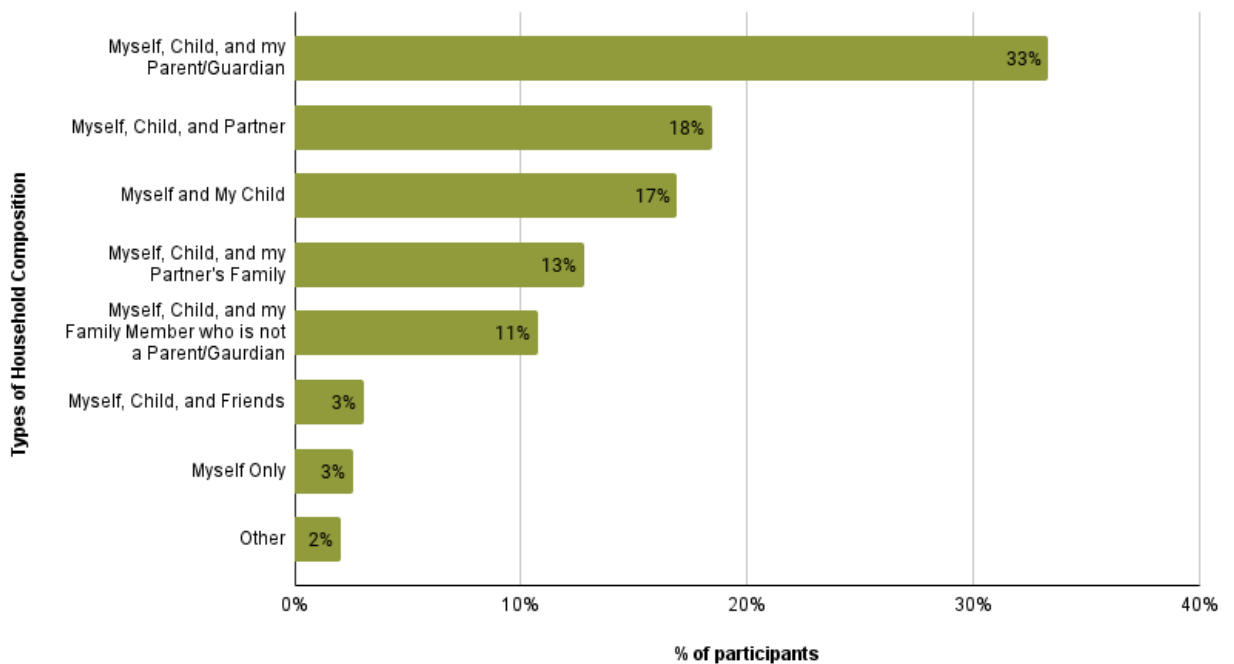
Current Housing Circumstances

In addition to their current living situation, teen parents were asked who they are currently living with to identify their existing household composition. **The results showed that 67% of teen parents do not live with their parent/guardian.**

“It’s hard finding a place where you feel safe with your child even when it’s family.”
-Teen Parent

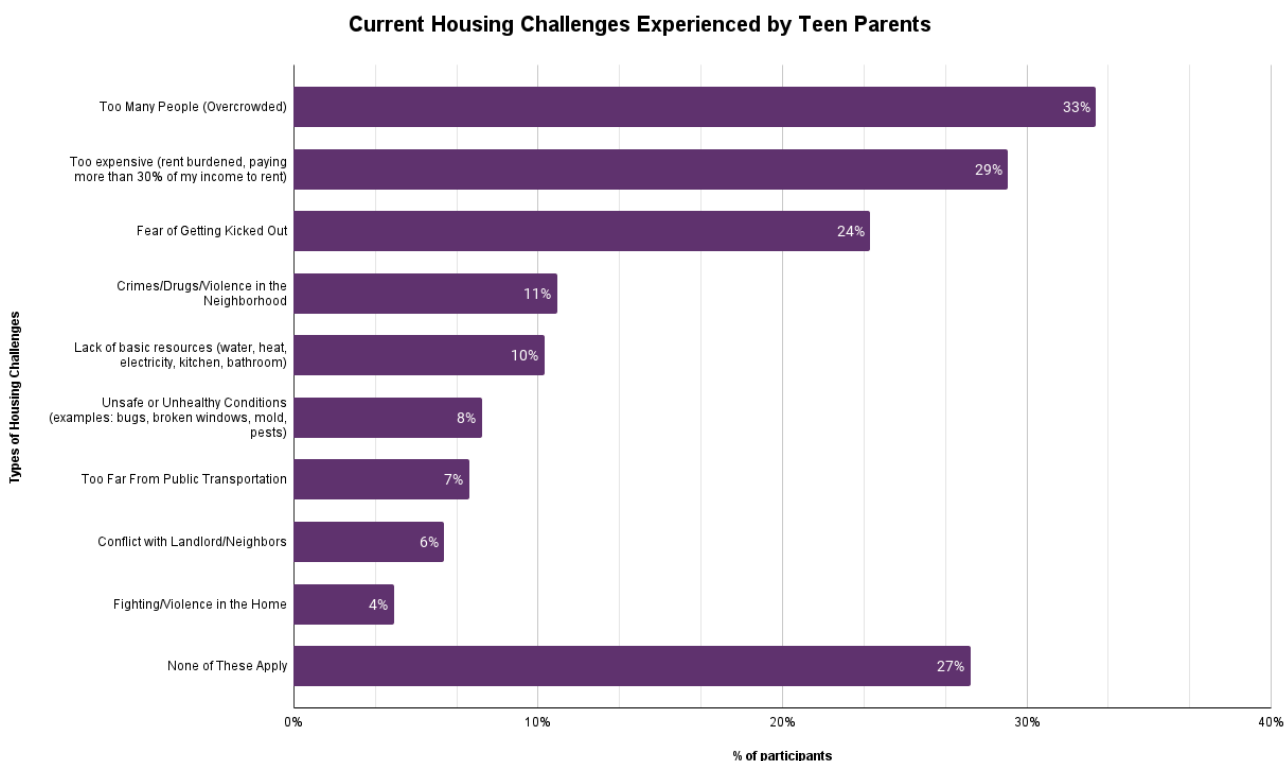
“Housing is a bigger issue than what people realize. Moms stay with abusive partners in order to afford a home for their kids with the two incomes from mom and dad.”
-Teen Parent

Current Household Composition



Current Housing Circumstances

With 61% of participants having neutral or dissatisfied feelings with their current living situation, it highlights the importance of getting a deeper look into the various housing challenges that teen parents are facing. **73% of participants reported to be experiencing one or more housing challenges, with the top three being: Overcrowded, Too Expensive, and Fear of Getting Kicked Out.**



The chart displays different housing challenges teen parents are experiencing. Participants could check all that currently applied to them, with an “other” option available in case any primary housing challenges were missed. This means that the chart above will not add up to 100%; rather it displays the percentage of participants who are experiencing each type of housing challenge. The sample size is 195.

“...Its hard to find places that are welcoming... its even harder to live with your own family (child and partner), its even worse when you are living with other people and you guys don't do the same things. It causes so much conflict.”
 - Teen Parent

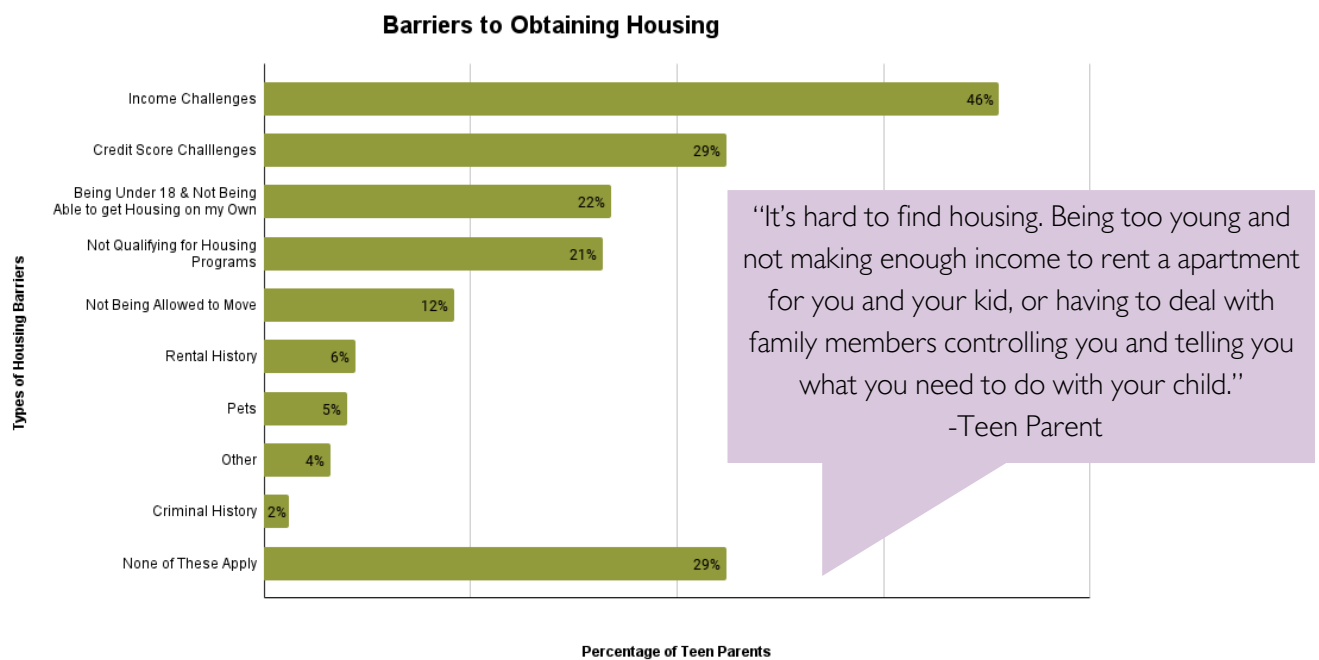


Current Housing Circumstances

In addition to the housing dissatisfaction and challenges teen parents experience, the data showed that **54% of teen parents had moved one or more times in the last 6 months.**

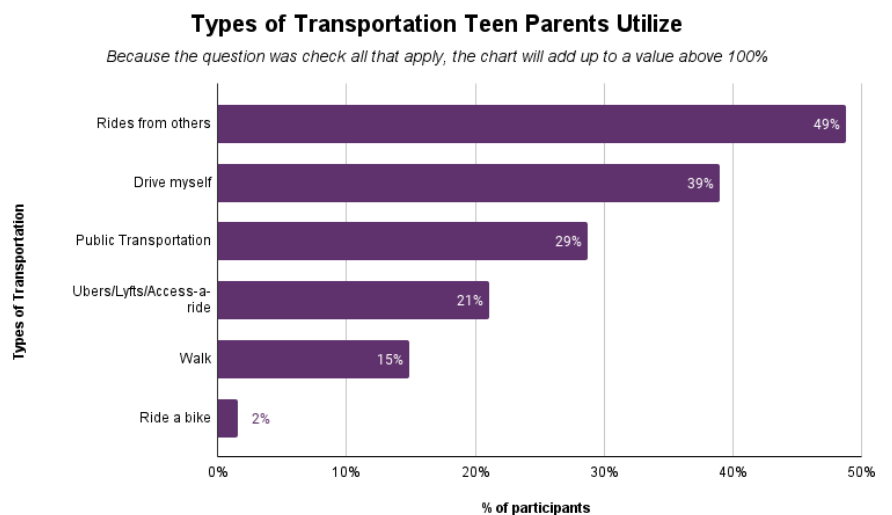
“It’s hard to do right when you are always having to move around” -Teen Parent

In the chart below, participants provided a deeper understanding regarding the types of barriers that they feel are making it more difficult for them to find housing. Income and credit score challenges were listed as the top two barriers to obtaining housing.



61% of teen parents lack car access and depend on other transportation options.

Transportation can heavily influence where someone lives, both in terms of location and types of housing. The chart to the right displays what modes of transportation participants use most often.

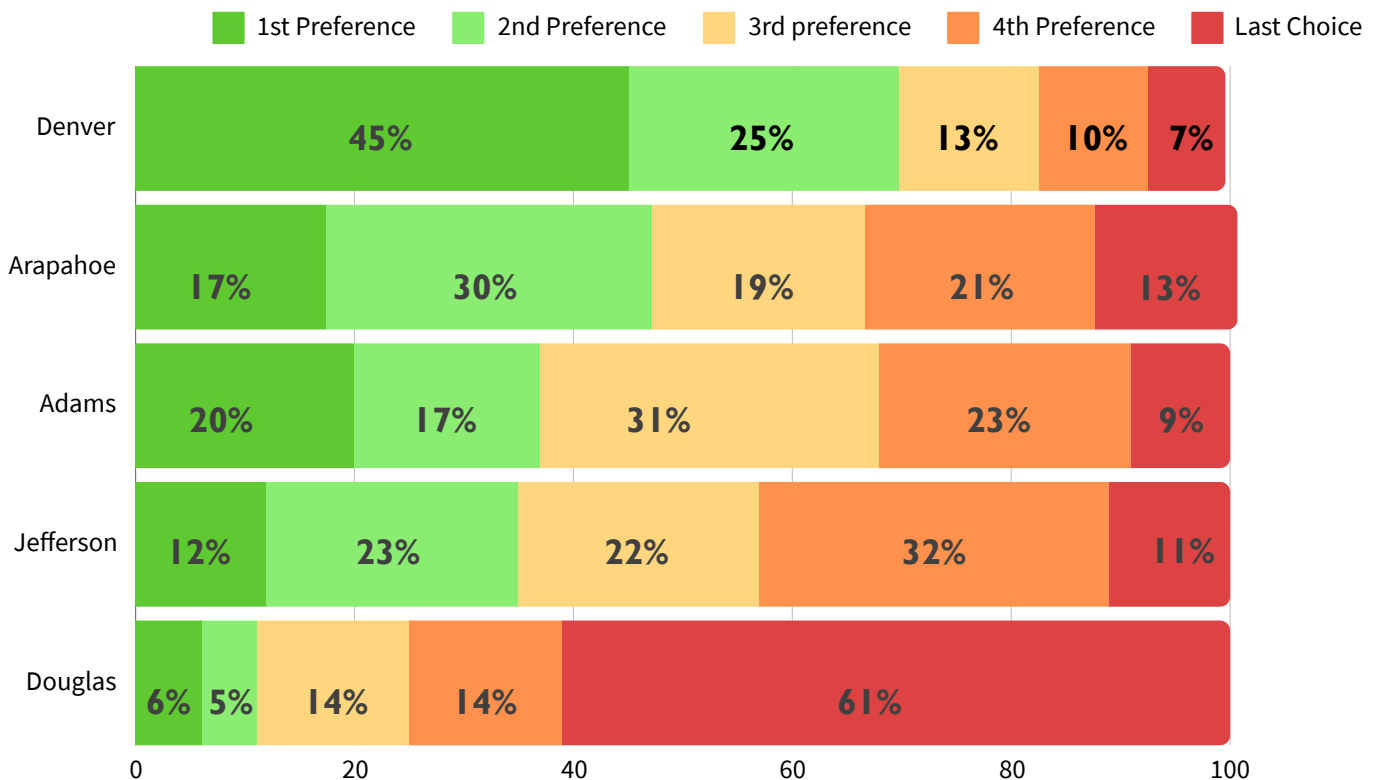


Future Housing Solutions

This housing needs assessment included a large section specifically focused on Housing Solutions for Teen Parents through the lens of the experts, the teen parents themselves. Fourteen questions were asked to strategically identify the type of housing teen parents would want if their housing challenges were not present.

The first question asked if teen parents had a preference between living in the Denver Metropolitan Area (Denver Metro) or somewhere else in Colorado. 94% preferred the Denver Metro, and 6% preferred to live in a different part of Colorado. Of the 6%, 73% preferred Northeast Colorado, 18% preferred Southeast Colorado, and 9% preferred Northwest Colorado. It is important to note that there are limitations to this response due to the limited number of agencies outside of the Denver Metro who participated in this study. Of the teen parents who preferred the Denver Metro, Denver County and Adams County were their top two choices. Douglas County was listed as the least preferred county to live in, with 61% selecting it as their last choice.

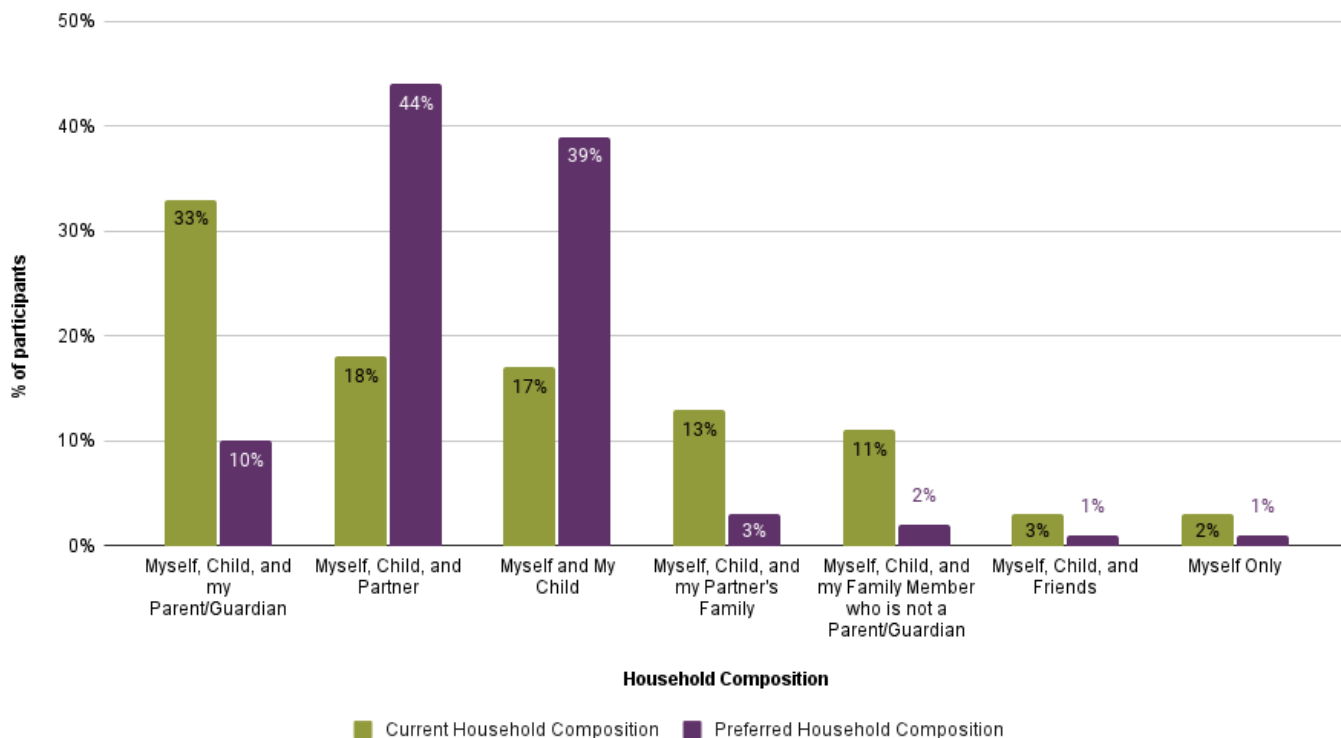
Location Preferences by Counties in the Denver Metro Area



Future Housing Solutions

With a better understanding of where teen parents want to live, we also wanted to know who they want to live with. This question was presented in the same format as the previous current household composition question to explore discrepancies between who participants currently live with and whom they prefer to live with. The results showed some significant differences, with a heavy increase in teen parents who would prefer to live with “Myself and My Child” (22% more) and “Myself, Child, and Partner” (26% more). In addition, a notable decrease occurred for ‘Myself, Child, and my Parent/Guardian’, moving from 33% listing it as their current household composition to 10% preferring it as their household composition.

Current vs. Preferred Household Composition

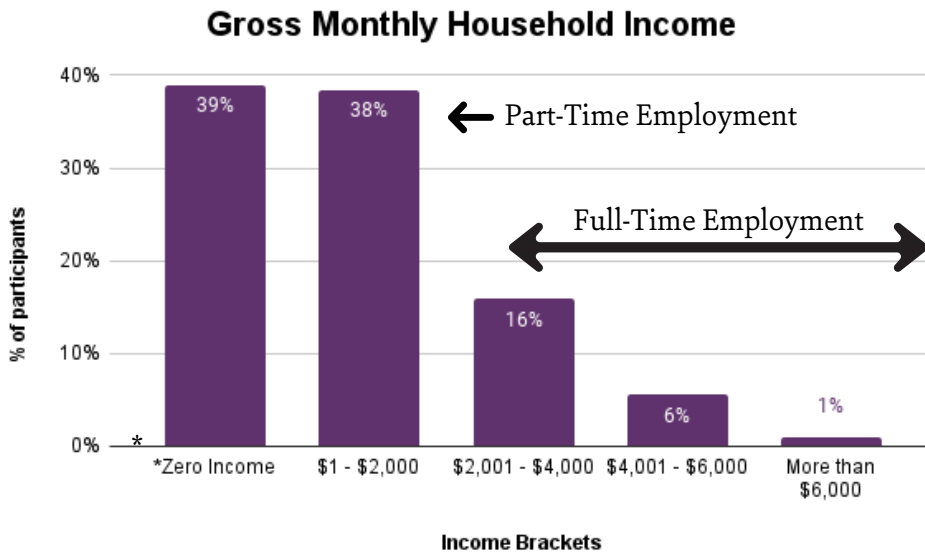


“There’s a struggle of living with someone’s family and not having time to yourself with the baby because everyone tells you what to do.” -Teen Parent



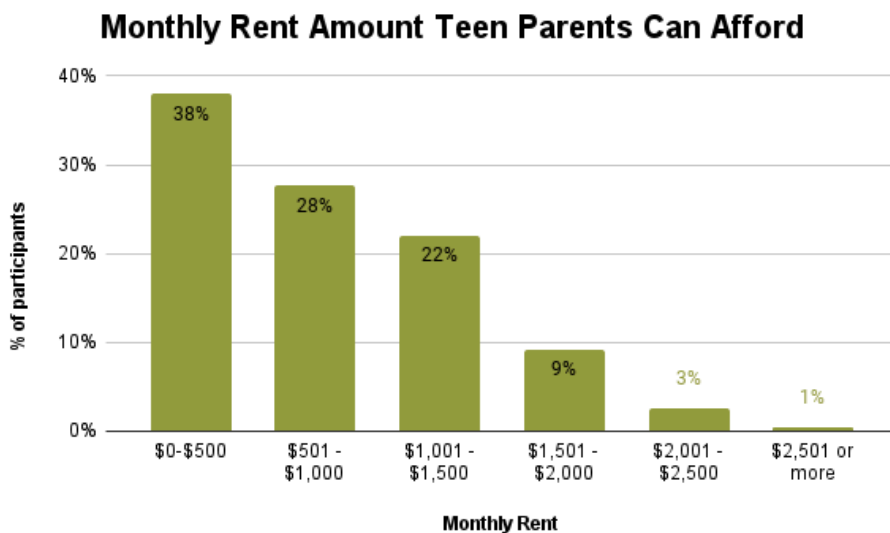
Future Housing Solutions

With teen parents preferred household composition in mind, they were asked to provide what that preferred household's gross household monthly income would be to explore the types of housing teen parents would qualify for. The chart below displays the different self-reported gross monthly incomes of teen parents' preferred households. The results of this question helped the researchers identify potential Area Median Income (AMI) brackets that teen parents may fall into as well, which is an indicator for qualifying for various subsidized, affordable housing. Based on these responses, we can assume that around 77% of teen parents sit at or below 30% AMI, which is the deepest or most affordable type of subsidized housing available. It is important to note that AMI is based on household size and income, so further research may need to occur to precisely identify teen parents' household AMI brackets.



**Zero Income can be due to factors outside of just unemployment. Things like school enrollment, lack of access to childcare, employment, transportation, and other environmental barriers may be additional factors to consider.*

"Market rates are higher then they have ever been. Most are given a minimum wage job that only pays 15 dollars an hour but then give us a rent of \$1500+. Its nearly impossible to survive in Colorado." -Teen Parent

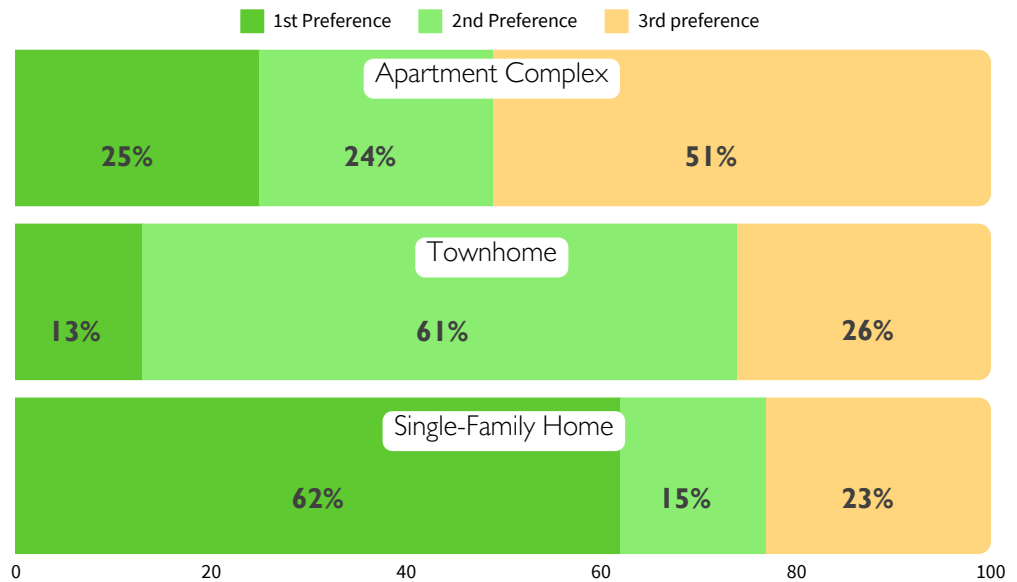


Future Housing Solutions

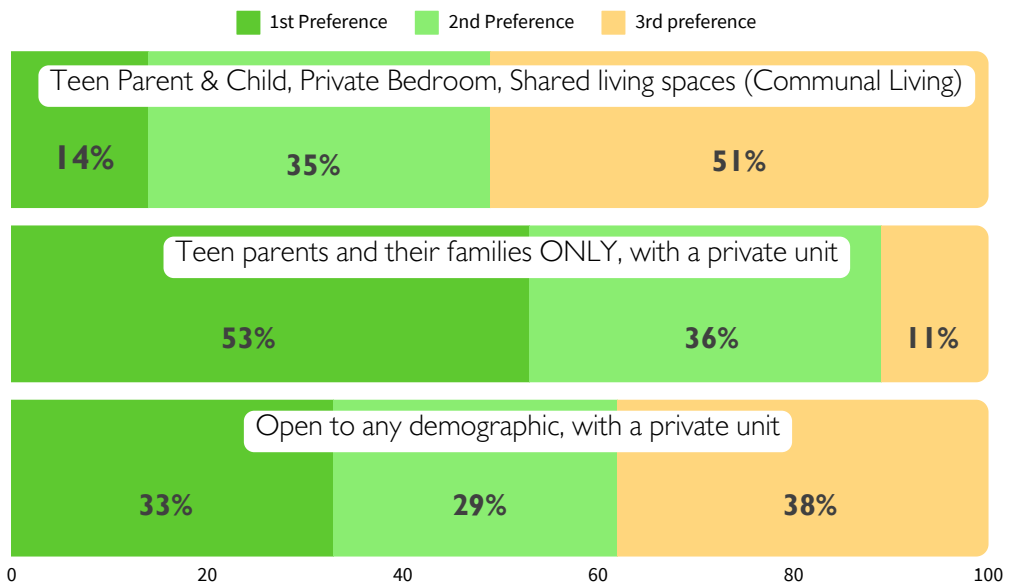
Once further information was obtained on teen parents' income eligibility, the next priority was to understand the details of what kinds of housing teen parents prefer. Two general questions were asked regarding what types of housing they prefer and what types of housing communities they prefer based on a ranked order. A theme emerged of Teen Parents preferring a housing environment where they share fewer walls with their neighbors, with the preference order going from single-family homes to townhomes to apartment complexes. The results also showed that their top preference for a housing community was a place where they could have their own unit and where all of their neighbors were also teen parents and their families, with 53% listing it as their first preference and 36% listing it as their second.

"Housing is very hard to get on our own because we are either on our own or we don't make enough money. I wish there was a place where any teen mom could get housing to help them get a comfortable place for them and their baby."
-Teen Parent

Types of Housing



Types of Housing Communities



Future Housing Solutions

After surveying the housing preferences, a matrix-style question was asked to assess what types of supportive services teen parents would want on-site. The chart below displays the Likert structured preferences of different types of on-site services teen parents would prefer to have, from Very Important to Not at all Important. Of the services teen families rated based on the importance of being on-site, employment was listed the most frequently as “very or moderately important,” with a 81% response rate. Education programs (78%) and childcare (76%) followed most closely after that.

Types of On-Site Services: Level of Importance

 **Very or Moderately Important**  **Slightly or Not at all Important**

Employment | 81% Importance



Education Program for Parent | 78% Importance



Childcare/School for Child | 76% Importance



Case Management | 61% Importance



Therapist | 56% Importance



"I wish people would know how hard it is for parents that need to finish some type of education while trying to work a full time job and having to save for a house" - Teen Parent

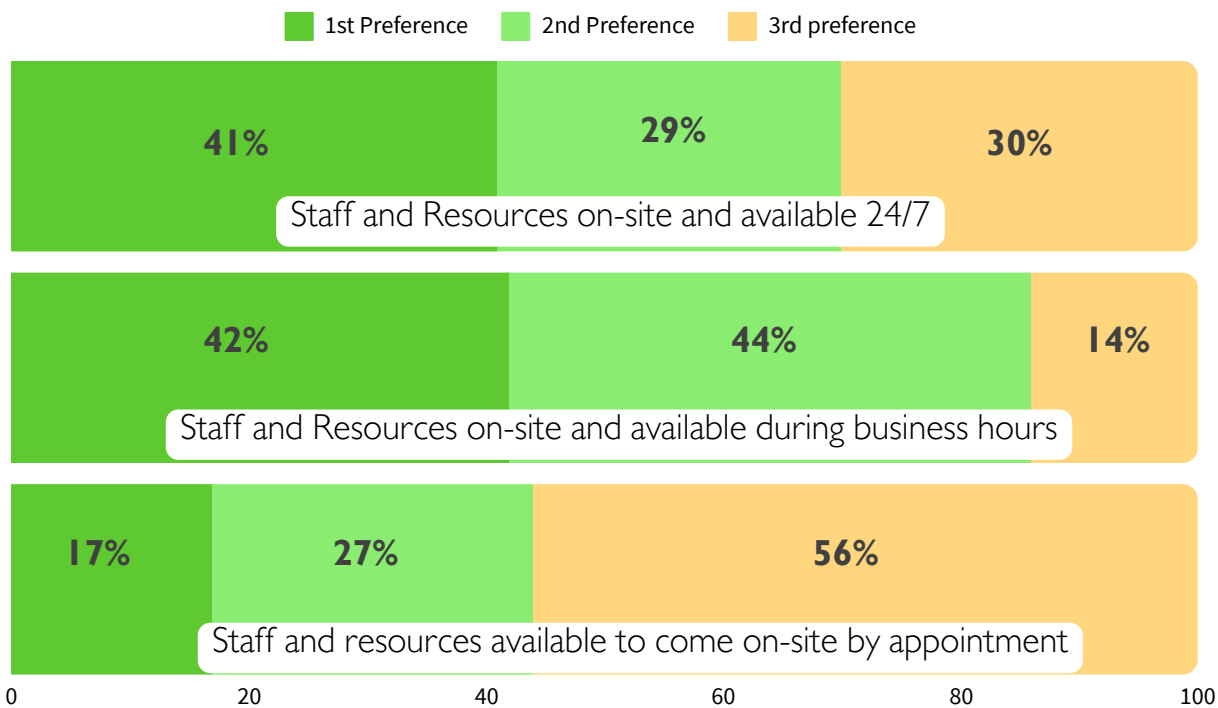
According to the National Institute of Health in 2021, 50% of teen parents graduate from high school compared to 90% of teenagers who did not give birth.



Future Housing Solutions

On-site staff is a critical component to providing high-quality on-site services. Because of this, questions were asked to help gauge the level of staff presence a teen parent wants in their housing community. This was conducted in a ranked question structure that provided three different on-site staff support options. Teen parents ranked staff available during business hours as their first preference at 42%, with a close following of 41% preferring staff 24/7. Teen parents shared that 56% of them rated their third choice as staff by appointment only, pointing out that teen parents are seeking a stronger presence of staff on the site where they live.

Types of On-Site Staff Support



"I wish people knew how difficult it is for some of us teen parents with how expensive the economy is right now and getting extra help is really useful."
 -Teen Parent

"It is difficult but with the right help you can provide for yourself and child." - Teen Parent



Future Housing Solutions

The participants also answered a question to clarify what type of on-site amenities are important to them. The chart below displays the Likert structured preferences of different types of on-site amenities Teen Parents would prefer to have from Very Important to Not at all Important. Of the amenities listed below, in-unit laundry was listed the most frequently as “Very or Moderately important” with a 88% response rate. Parking (84%) and a Playground (71%) followed most closely after that.

On-Site Amenities: Level of Importance

 **Very or Moderately Important**  **Slightly or Not at all Important**

In-Unit Laundry | 88% Importance



Parking | 84% Importance



Playground | 71% Importance



Shared Laundry Room | 60% Importance



Gym | 59% Importance



Pet Area | 34% Importance

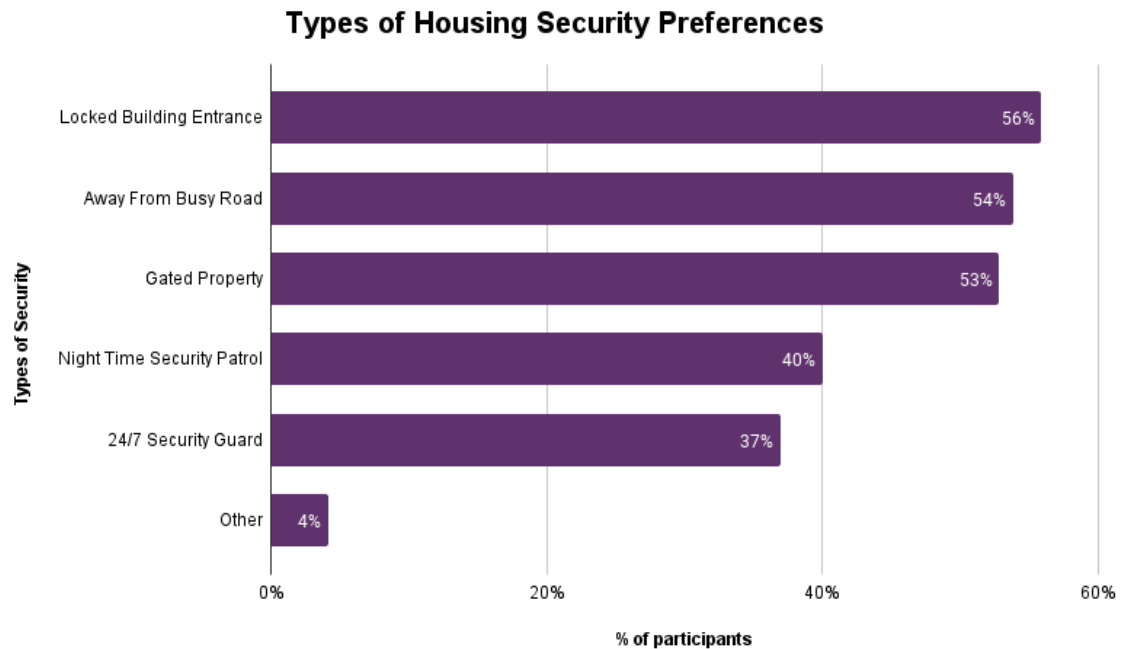


“Its vital to our success, without the access to a safe and comfortable housing it can be very disruptive in our pursuit to education and employment.” -Teen Parent

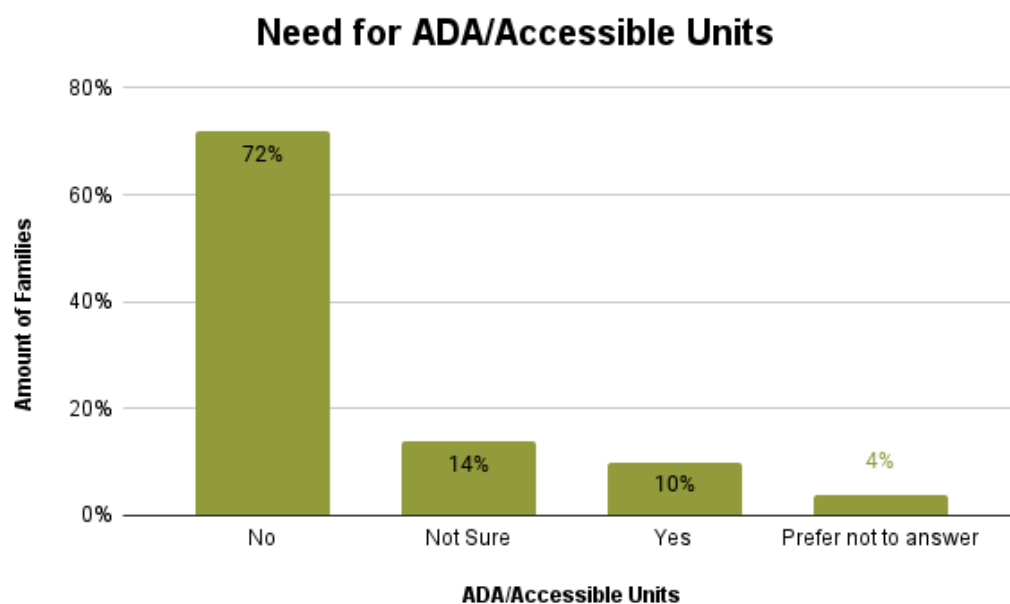


Future Housing Solutions

Two questions were asked regarding safety and accommodation. Teen parents were asked to select all the security types that they prefer when living in a multi-family complex. Over half of them responded by preferring a gated property, locked building entrance, and being away from busy roads. An additional question assessed how many teen parents would need an ADA/Accessible unit wherever they lived, 10% confirmed a need for an accessible unit and 18% selected “unsure” or “other”.



Participants were able to check all that apply to the above question. This means that the chart above will not add up to 100%; rather it displays the percentage of participants who prefer each different housing security type. The sample size is 195.



Future Housing Solutions

Once on-site amenities and safety needs were assessed, the next step was to inquire on the importance of proximity to several essential locations. The chart below displays the Likert structured preferences of being walking distance to different types of locations from Very Important to Not at all Important. Of the locations listed below, a Grocery Store was listed the most frequently as “Very or Moderately Important” with a 86% response rate. A Medical Facility (84%) and Employment (83%) followed most closely after that.

Walking Distance: Level of Importance

 **Very or Moderately Important**  **Slightly or Not at all Important**

Grocery Store | 86% Importance



Medical Facility | 84% Importance



Employment | 83% Importance



Childcare/School for Child | 82% Importance



Education Programs | 73% Importance



Public Park | 69% Importance



Public Transportation | 49% Importance



“It is very difficult to find a place that is pleasant, that is close to the places we have to go to and that is affordable.” -Teen Parent



Qualitative Responses

Two qualitative questions were included in the survey to ensure that teen parents had the chance to speak to the complications and nuances of their housing experiences and solutions. Reflect on the things these families have to say and let it drive the impact of this study. **The qualitative questions were: What do you wish people knew about teen parents experiences with housing? Is there anything we missed in the previous questions that you feel is important for us to know?**

The majority of the quotes are woven throughout the assessment and all quotes are unedited, original responses.

“

It is hard to find housing as a young parent because others might not take you seriously but all we're trying to do is provide for our children. We want better for our kids.

“

That us teen parents always take risks for our childrens so they can have a place to live and a better future.

”

“

Many people dont see us as someone trying to grow and provide the best for ourselves and our kid(s), they see someone who screwed up and isnt responsible enough to keep up with payments/rent or someone who is going to destroy the place or someone who still has the mentality of a irresponsible teenager. It is hard trying to raise a child and provide for our family while there are people out there who dont give us the chance to prove them wrong. So we are stuck.

”

A lot of us are single mothers and we don't make a lot of income and most of us struggle with having our own space!

“

“

I wish people knew how hard it is for us teen parents to get housing. It is really hard to get a place with no childcare and not being able to work full time. It is also really hard for us to get a job with a good schedule that will work for us.



Discussion

Results

The needs assessment, completed by 195 teen parents in Colorado, revealed significant gaps in housing stability and resources. A striking 61% of participants were either neutral or dissatisfied with their current living situation, with just under 50% residing in housing without their name on a lease, indicating a lack of housing security. Additionally, 54% had moved at least once in the past six months, underscoring the instability faced by these young families. Major challenges reported included rent burden, overcrowding, and violence in the home, with 73% experiencing at least one of these issues. The high prevalence of these housing challenges highlights the urgent need for interventions aimed at improving the housing stability of teen parents.

Demographically, the survey revealed that 97% of participants identified as female, with the majority being Hispanic (73%), and nearly half had experienced homelessness at some point. The average age of the participants was 19, and 73% had one child. These statistics highlight the vulnerability of this population and the critical need for tailored support services. The assessment also found that a significant portion of participants were already receiving services from agencies like Florence Crittenton Services and Hope House, indicating some existing engagement with support systems but also a need for more comprehensive and integrated housing solutions.

When asked about future housing solutions, an overwhelming 94% of participants expressed a desire to live in the Denver Metropolitan Area, highlighting a clear demand for affordable housing in this region. Specifically, 70% preferred Denver County as their first and second choice, indicating a strong preference for urban settings with access to resources. The assessment also revealed significant discrepancies between who teen parents currently live with and who they prefer to live with, which could be influenced by the types of housing challenges they face. Many teen parents currently live in overcrowded situations, fear being kicked out, or reside in locations far from essential services and resources. These living conditions could contribute to their strong preference for independent living arrangements within supportive teen parent communities. Addressing these preferences requires understanding that the challenges faced by teen parents are not necessarily a result of personal failings or broken families, but could largely be due to systemic issues such as poverty, lack of affordable housing, and inadequate support systems.



Discussion

The findings emphasize the necessity for targeted housing policies and programs that cater to the unique needs of teen parents, ensuring their access to secure and supportive living conditions. These housing solutions provided by teen parents point to the importance of developing affordable housing projects that not only provide stability but also integrate essential services such as employment, childcare, educational programs, and transportation assistance.

Implications

This study aims to address the critical gaps in housing resources for teen parents and their families in Colorado. By highlighting these gaps and elevating the housing solutions proposed by teen parents themselves, the study seeks to guide housing programming to better align with the needs and solutions identified by teen parents. Additionally, it will explore potential models for programs and affordable housing developments specifically designed for teen parents and their families. The findings are expected to inform policy and advocacy efforts, ultimately increasing funding for affordable housing and related programs for this demographic.

Limitations

While this assessment aims to provide valuable insights, several limitations must be acknowledged. One significant limitation is that the study faced challenges with underrepresentation, particularly of teen fathers, which could skew the results and limit the applicability of the findings to the broader population of teen parents. Additionally, the survey was predominantly administered by a number of agencies within the Denver Metropolitan area, which may result in a representation that is less reflective of teen parents living in other regions of Colorado.

It is possible that the study may have excluded perspectives from teen parents who lack internet access or who are not engaged with supportive services, potentially overlooking a portion of the population with unique needs. These limitations were considered during data analysis and reporting; however, they underscore the need for continued research with more diverse and broader samples. This approach is crucial to gaining a comprehensive understanding of the housing needs and solutions for teen parents across the state.



Recommendations

While there are a variety of needs and solutions that this study has identified, a few primary recommendations emerged when analyzing and discussing the results:

- **Develop Specialized Housing Programs:** Create housing programs and developments specifically for teen parents that include supportive services such as childcare, employment assistance, and educational programs. These programs should address the unique needs of young families and provide comprehensive support to enhance stability and self-sufficiency.
- **Advocate for Policy Changes:** Push for policy reforms that increase funding and support for teen parent housing initiatives. Securing adequate resources is essential for expanding and sustaining effective housing solutions.
- **Implement Youth-Led/Youth-Centered Approaches:** Ensure that housing programs and policies are developed by youth and with youth, trusting in their expertise and ability to solve solutions for their own community. Involving Teen Parents in decision-making allows programs to be more relevant and effective in addressing their real-life challenges.

Implementing these recommendations collectively can contribute to a more robust and supportive system for teen parents and their families, promoting greater stability and long-term success.

Conclusion

The Teen Parent Housing Needs Assessment shows that teen parents are facing significant housing instability, with high rates of challenges like overcrowding, rent burden, and a considerable percentage at-risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness. The findings highlight the need for tailored housing solutions that include on-site supportive services such as childcare and employment assistance. Creating specialized housing programs and advocating for supportive policies can hopefully improve the overall stability and self-sufficiency teen parents are experiencing.



References

The data presented in the above needs assessment is entirely original to the study conducted by Florence Crittenton Services, with the exceptions of a few data points from Colorado Department of Health & Public Environment. The below references were utilized to inform this study during the literature review and assessment building process.

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