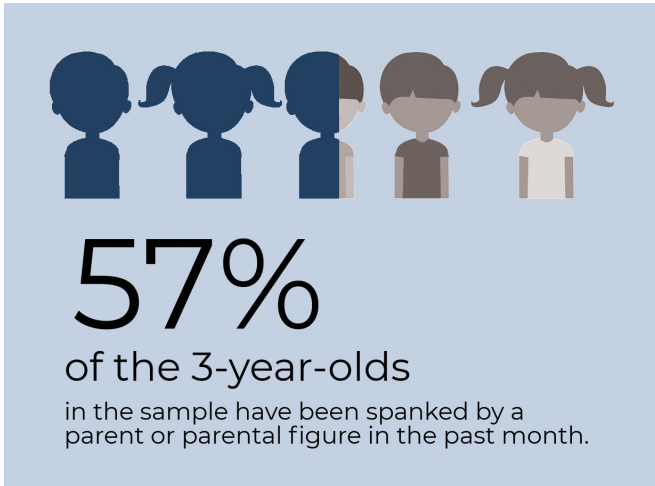


Cohesive neighborhoods, less spanking result in fewer child welfare visits

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Credit: University of Michigan

The child welfare system is more likely to intervene in households in "less neighborly" neighborhoods and in which parents spank their kids, a new study shows.

Researchers at the University of Michigan and Michigan State University conducted analyses on nearly 2,300 families from 20 large U.S. cities who responded to surveys and interviews. Participating families had a child who was born between 1998-2000.

They found that living in [neighborhoods](#) with strong social cohesion and trust—where neighbors are willing to help each other and generally get along—protects families against getting involved in the [child welfare](#) system.

In addition, Child Protective Services is less likely to intervene in households where kids are rarely spanked.

Other factors, such as poverty and mothers feeling

depressed, also increase the odds of CPS involvement after controlling for neighborhood risk and spanking.

In the study, mothers reported the neighborhood conditions in which they lived, such as supportive relationships between neighbors and whether they spanked their 3-year-old child within the past month. The moms also reported contact with CPS when their child had been 3-5 years.

"Our findings suggest that promoting caring, neighborly relationships among residents that support the needs and challenges of families with young children can help ensure children's safety," said study co-author Andrew Grogan-Kaylor, U-M associate professor of social work.

About 57 percent of the 3-year-olds in the sample had been spanked by a parent or parental figure in the past month. CPS investigated 7.4 million children for suspected maltreatment during 2016, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Unlike previous research that only factored spanking and [neighborhood conditions](#) separately as precursors of child maltreatment, the current study examined these factors simultaneously, said study lead author Julie Ma, assistant professor of [social work](#) at UM-Flint.

"Both the types of neighborhoods in which parents choose, or are forced, to raise their children and parents' decisions about whether they spank their children influence the chances of CPS involvement," she said. "Programs and policies should address strategies for building supportive resident interactions in the neighborhoods, as well as nonphysical [child](#) discipline to help reduce maltreatment."

The study, whose other author was Sacha Klein of Michigan State University, appears in the journal

Child Abuse & Neglect.

More information: Julie Ma et al. Neighborhood collective efficacy, parental spanking, and subsequent risk of household child protective services involvement, *Child Abuse & Neglect* (2018). DOI: [10.1016/j.chiabu.2018.03.019](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2018.03.019)

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