INSTABILITY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD WELL-BEING: 2003

By Jane Lawler Dye

and Annette Rogers

Population Division

U.S. Census Bureau

Presentation for the Population Association of America
Annual Meeting, Los Angeles, CA
March 30 to April 1, 2006

U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

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Background

- Research suggests that major transitions in the lives of children have marked effects on children's well-being.
  - Children who move or change schools are more likely to drop out of school.
  - Changes such as parental divorce, parental job loss, income instability, and changes in health or disability are also associated with negative consequences for children.

Hypothesis

Our hypothesis is that children who experience instability will have levels of academic performance and school attachment below the national level.

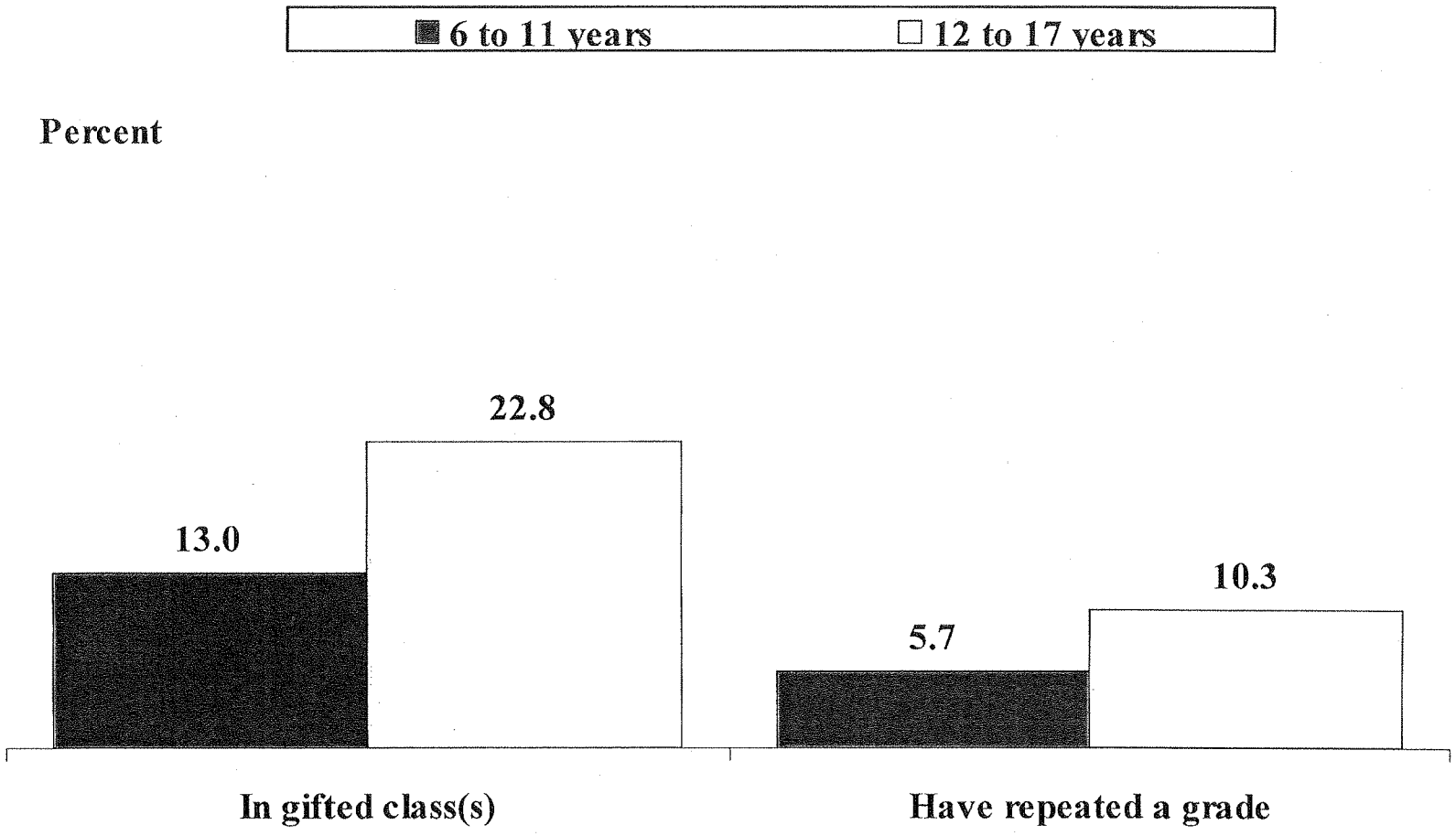
Sample

- The Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) provides core data on basic economic and demographic characteristics as well as indicators of child well-being.
  - SIPP is a nationally representative sample. There were approximately 26,500 households interviewed in wave 7 http://www.sipp.census.gov/sipp/
- The analysis is based on parents and children between the ages of 6 and 17 who participated in the Child Well-Being Topical Module from Wave 7 of the 2001 SIPP Panel (conducted between February and May 2003).
  - For this descriptive analysis children ages 6-11 and 12-17 are shown separately because elementary school age children differ substantially from middle and high school age children. The older group has had more opportunity to experience transitions and changes in well-being.
  - Some transitions, such as changes in parent characteristics, are measured in Waves 1 through 7 of the SIPP.

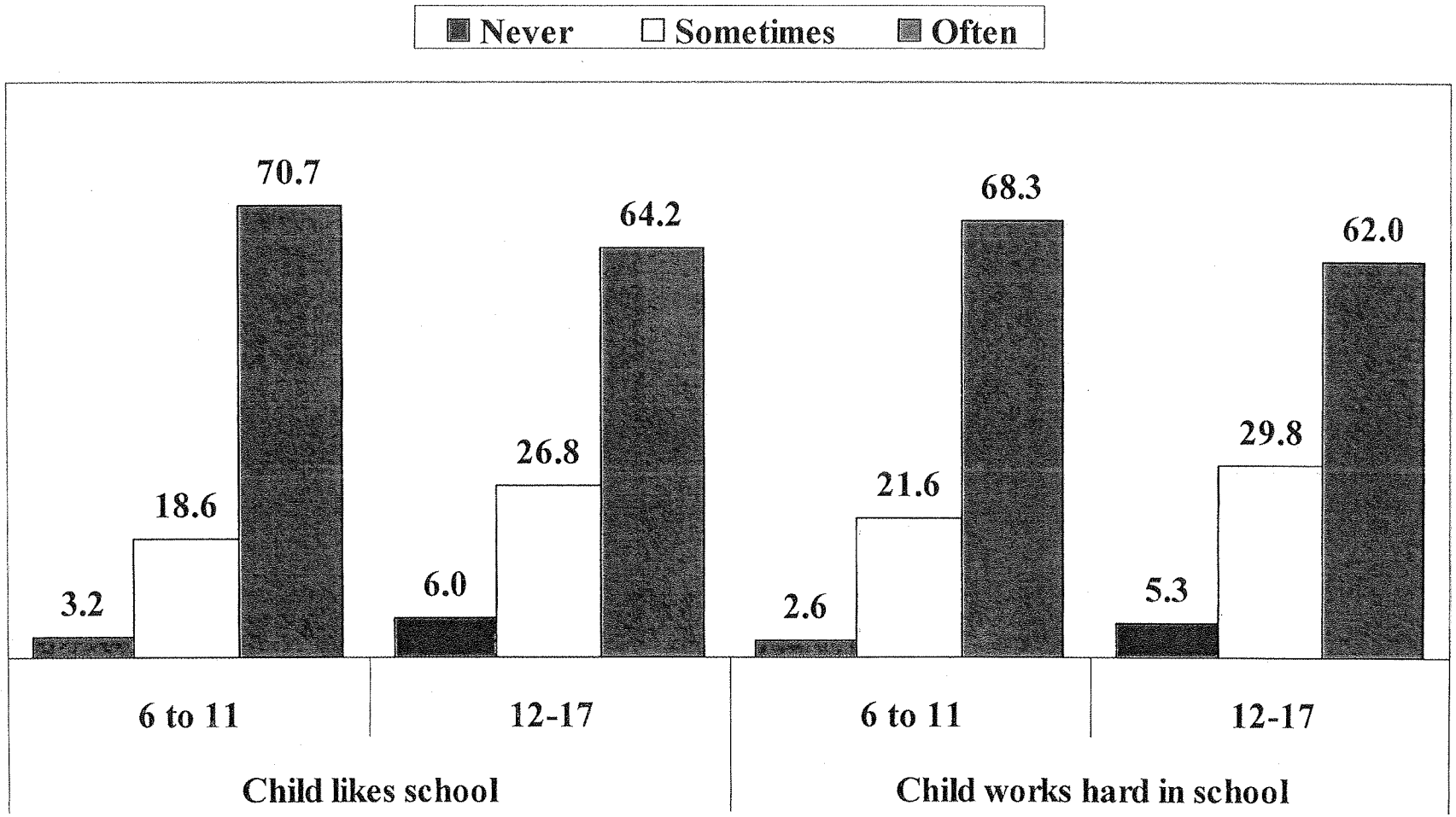
- Academic performance — whether or not the child:
    - **Is in a gifted class**
    - **Has repeated a grade**

- School attachment — parental reports of whether the child "often" says that he or she:
    - **Likes school**
    - **Works hard in school**

Percent of Children 6 to 17 Years Old by Academic Performance Indicators and Age: 2003



Percent of Children 6 to 17 Years Old by Age and Selected School Attachment Indicators: 2003

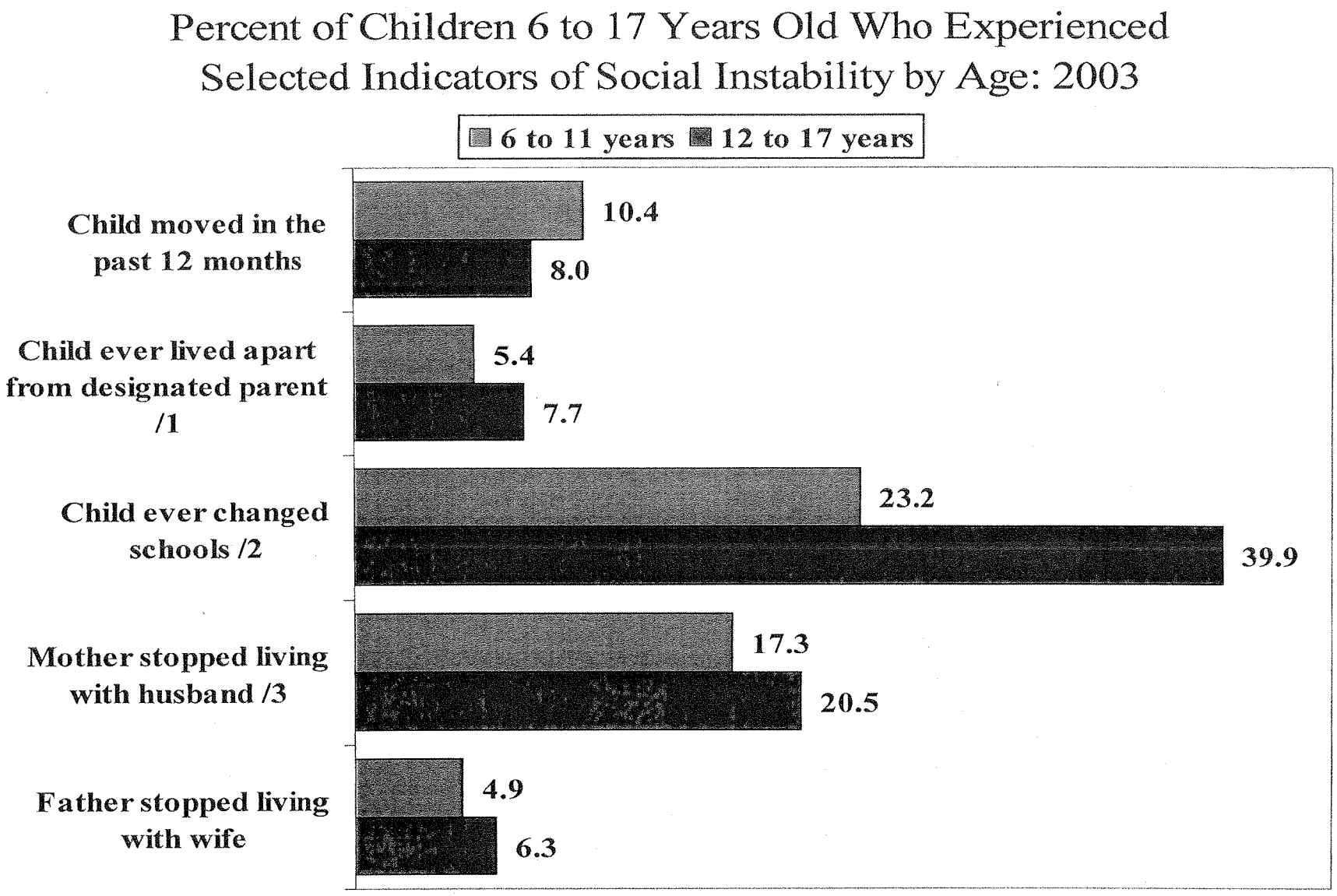


Social Instability

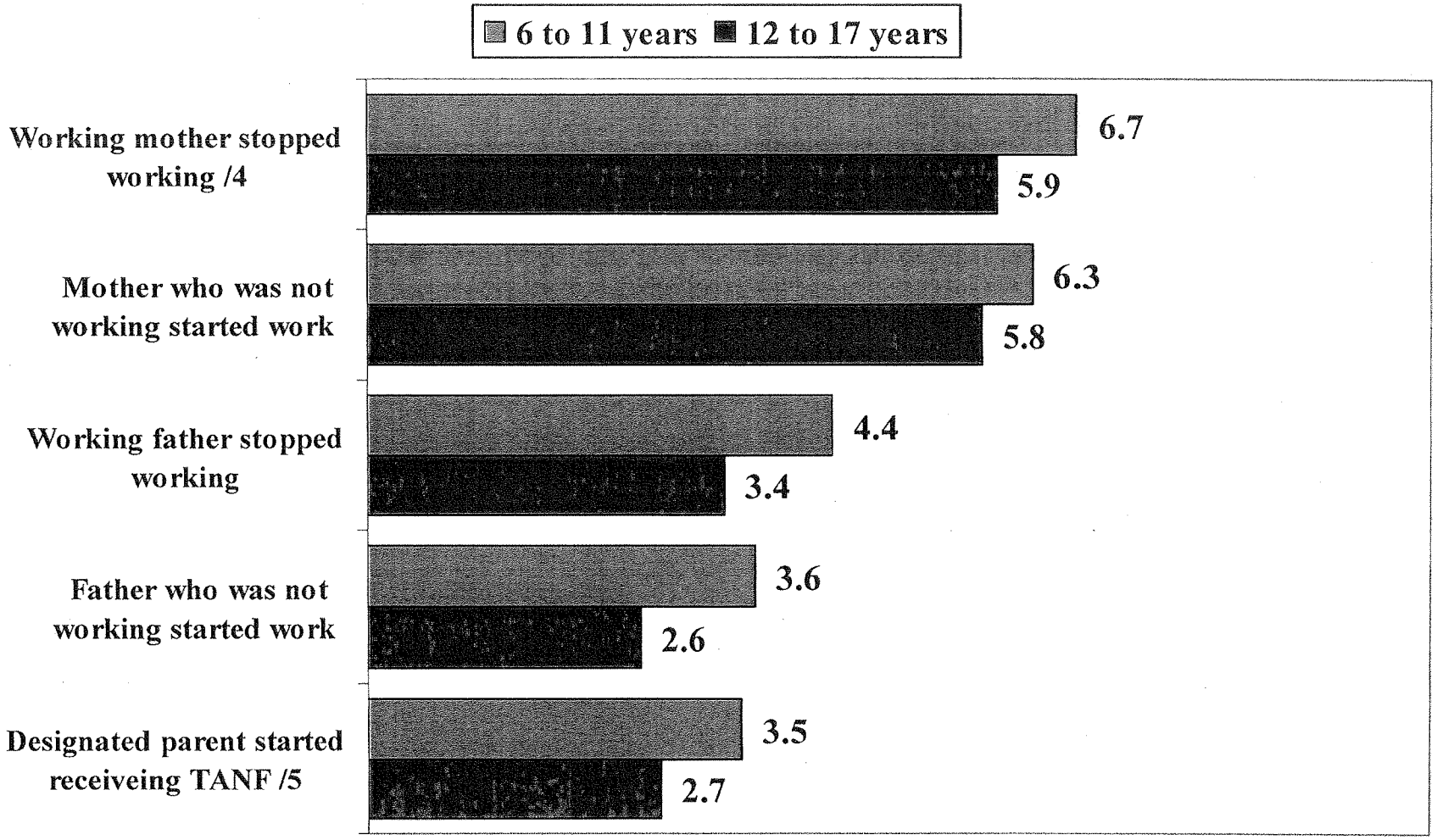
- Child moved in the past year
- Child ever changed schools
- Change in parent(s') marital/residential status
  - To capture the instability associated with a parent or step-parent leaving the household, we measured whether or not a parent was no longer living with his or her spouse. This is based on the marital status of child's mother or father changing from "married spouse-present" in waves 1-6 to not "married spouse-present" in waves 2-7.

Economic Instability

- Change in parent(s') employment status
  - If parent started or stopped working for one week or more during the 4 months prior to interview.
- Change in TANF receipt
  - Based on designated parent's receipt of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) changing from "No" in waves 1-6 to "Yes" in wave 2-7 and vice versa. Patterns were similar whether the parent started or stopped TANF receipt, so only those who started TANF will be shown here.
  - The "designated parent" was the mother for children in married couple families and the co-resident parent in other families. If no parent was present, a guardian was selected as the "designated parent."


Percent of Children 6 to 17 Years Old Who Experienced Selected Indicators of Social Instability by Age: 2003
6 to 11 years
12 to 17 years
Child moved in the past 12 months
10.4
8.0
Child ever lived apart from designated parent /1
5.4
7.7
Child ever changed schools /2
23.2
39.9
Mother stopped living with husband /3
17.3
20.5
Father stopped living with wife
4.9
6.3

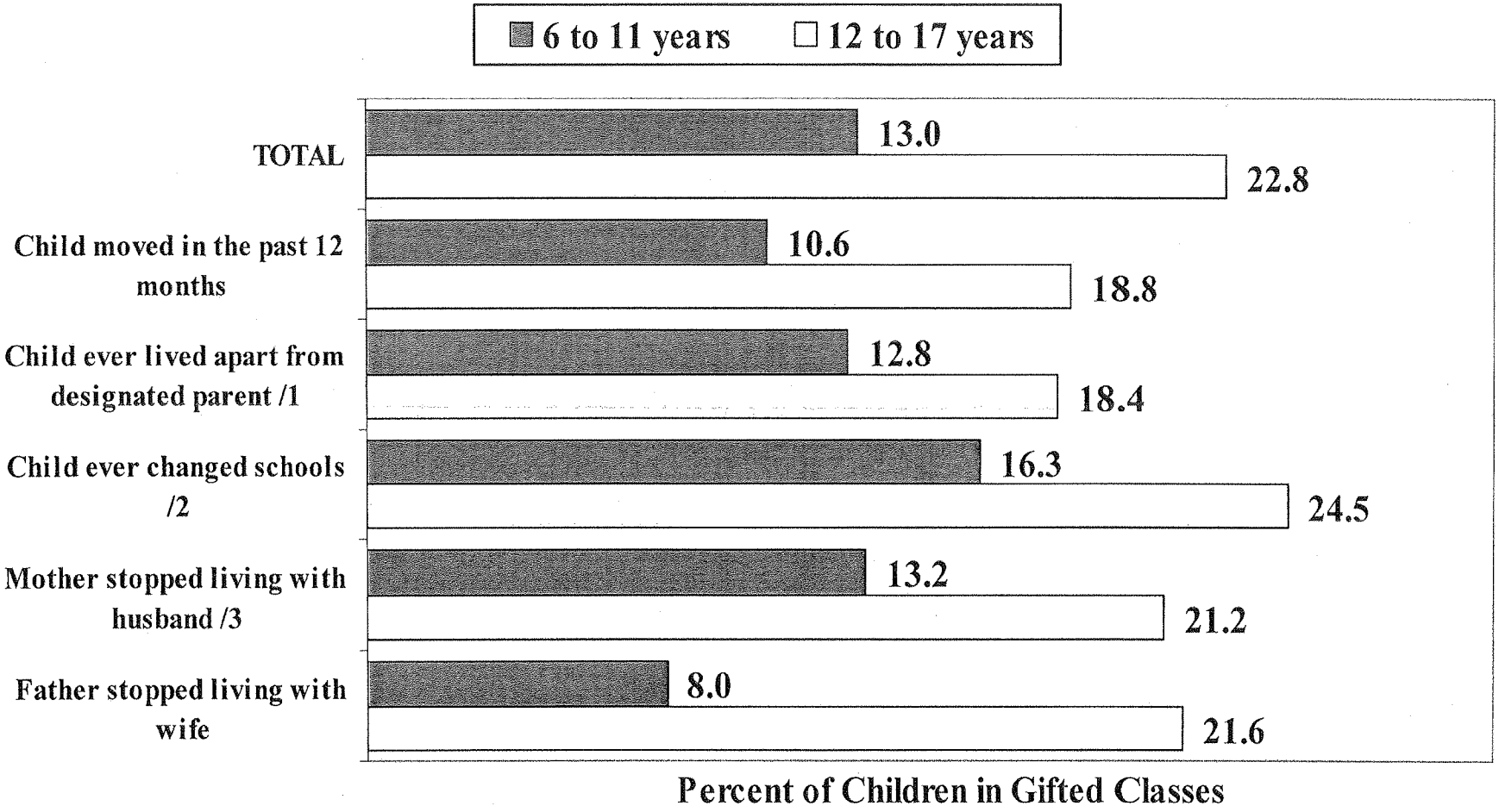
Percent of Children 6 to 17 Years Old Who Experienced Selected Indicators of Economic Instability by Age: 2003



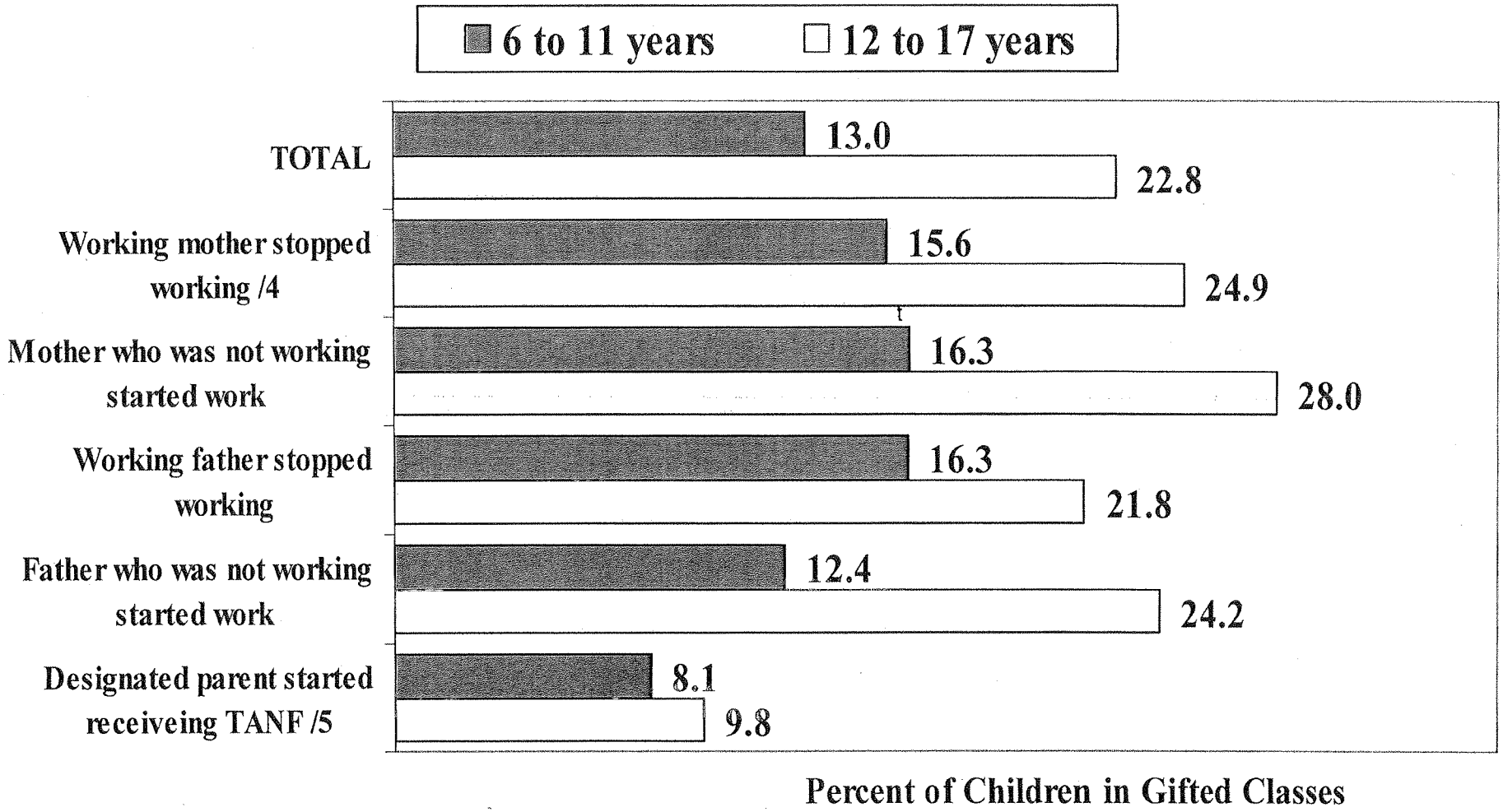
- **13 percent of children 6 to 11 were in gifted classes**
- Children 6 to 11 years old were less likely to be in gifted classes:
  - If they moved
  - If their married father stopped living with his wife
  - If their designated parent started receipt of TANF benefits

- **23 percent of children 12 to 17 were in gifted classes**
- Children 12 to 17 years old were less likely to be in gifted classes:
  - If they had moved or ever lived apart from their designated parent
  - If their designated parent started receipt of TANF benefits

Percent of Children 6 to 17 Years Old Who Were in Gifted Classes by Selected Indicators of Social Instability and Age: 2003



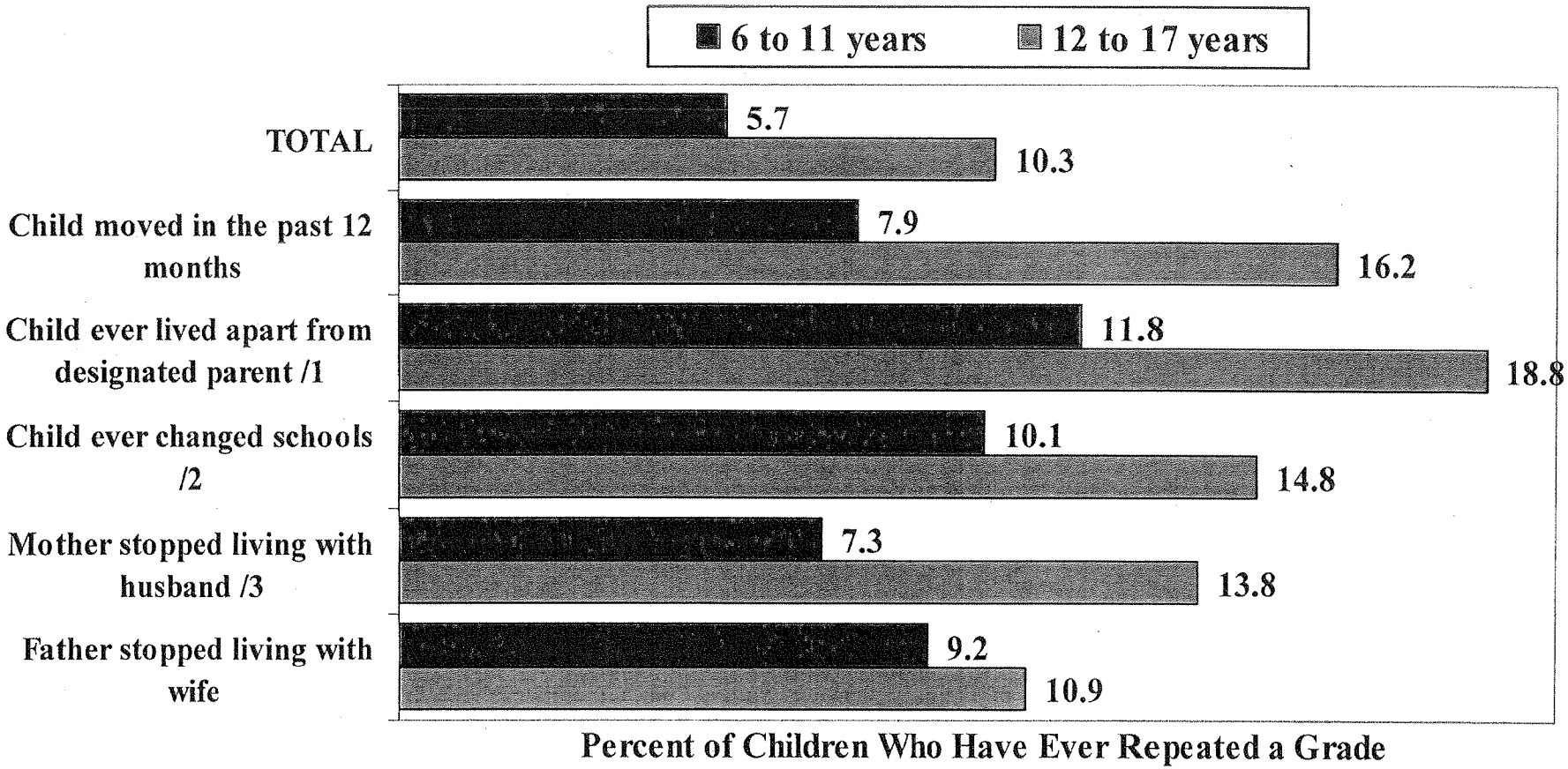
Percent of Children 6 to 17 Years Old Who Were in Gifted Classes by Selected Indicators of Economic Instability and Age: 2003



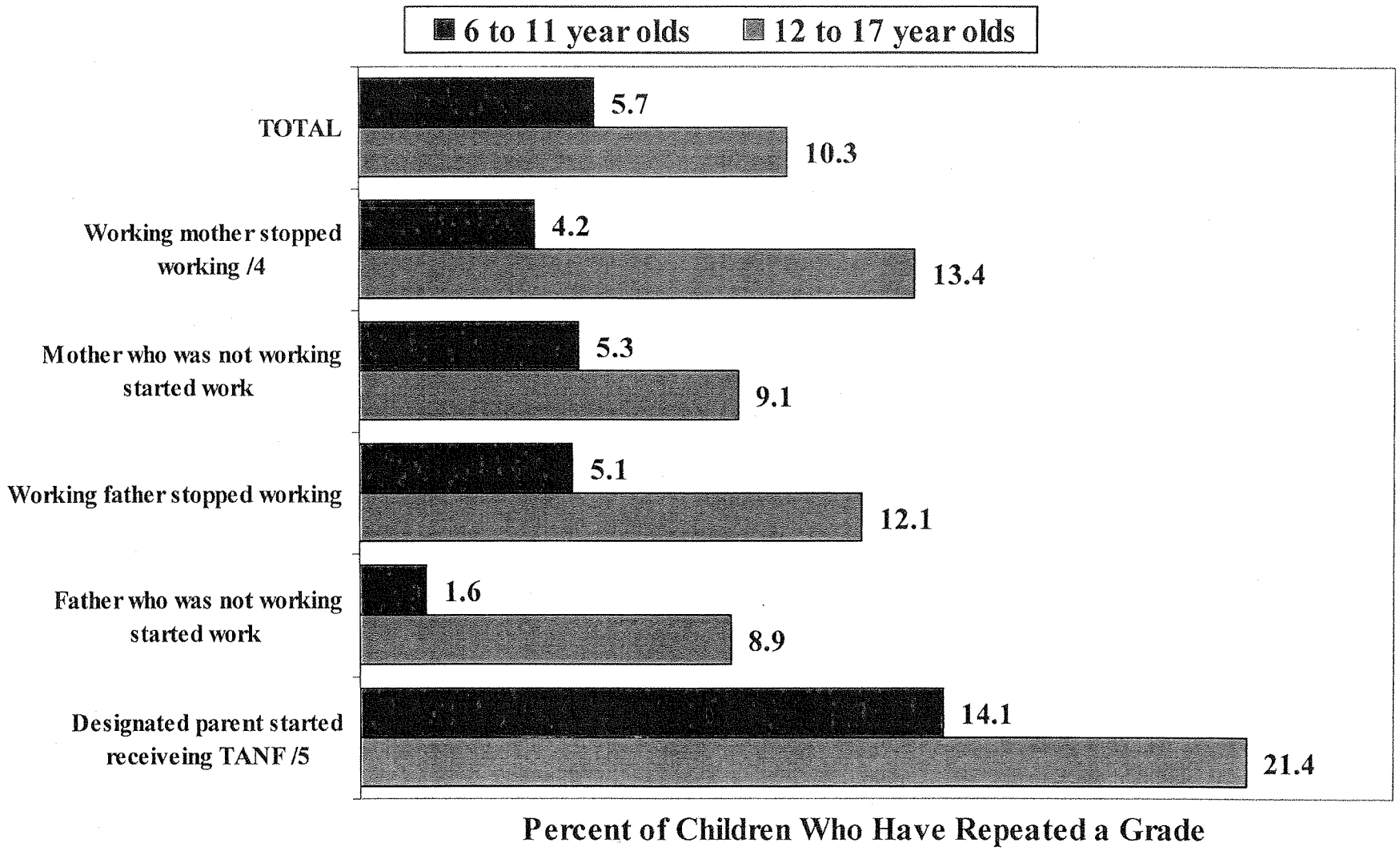
- **Among 6-11 year olds, 5.7 percent repeated a grade.**
  - Children 6 to 11 years old were more likely to repeat a grade:
    - If they ever changed schools, lived apart from their parent or their father was no longer married spouse-present
    - If their parent started receipt of TANF benefits

- **Among 12-17 year olds, 10.3 percent repeated a grade**
  - Children 12 to 17 years old were more likely to repeat a grade:
    - If they moved, ever changed schools, lived apart from their parent or if their mother was no longer married spouse-present
    - If their parent started receipt of TANF benefits
    - If their mother was working and then stopped working.

Percent of Children 6 to 17 Years Old Who Repeated a Grade by Selected Indicators of Social Instability and Age: 2003



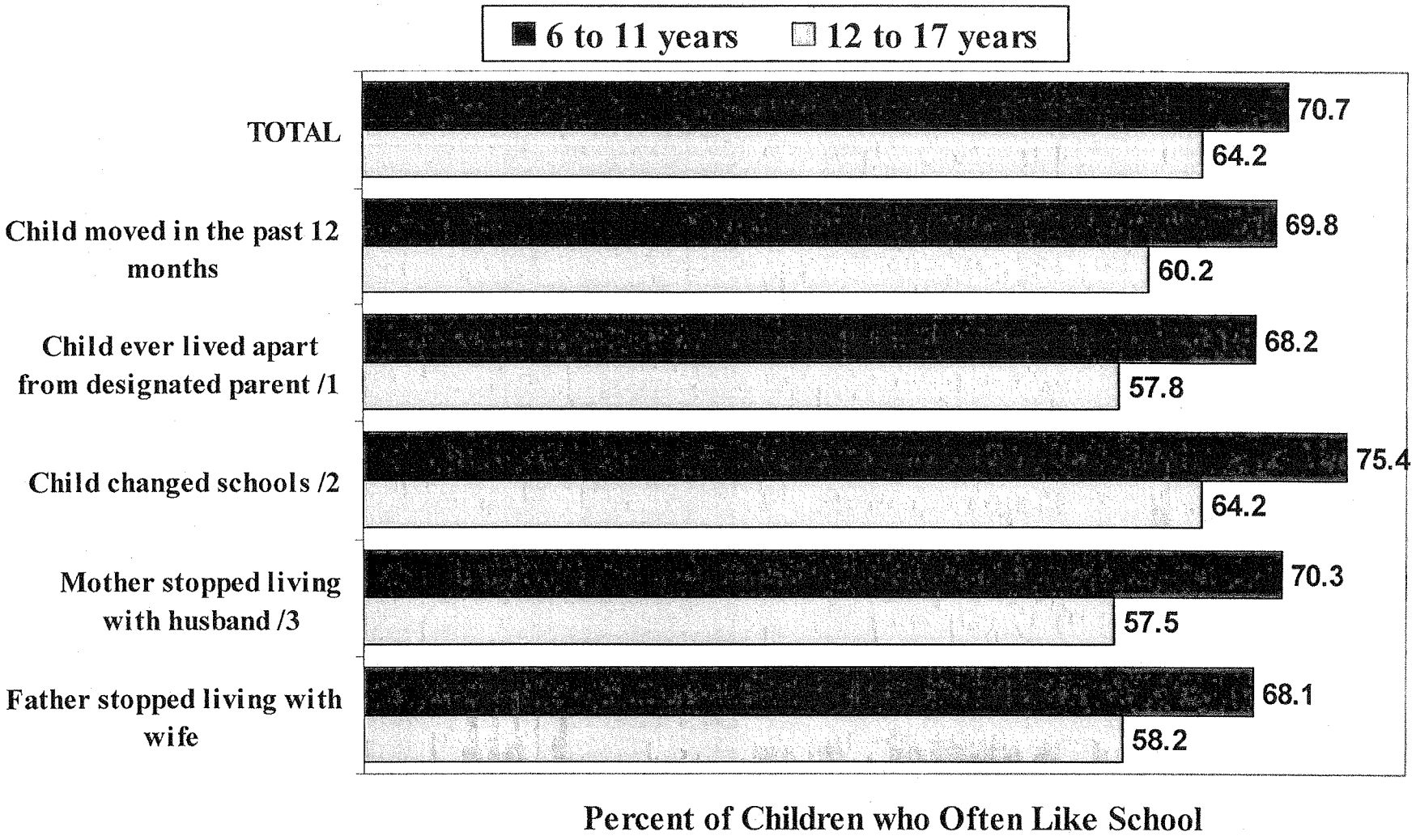
Percent of Children 6 to 17 Years Old Who Repeated a Grade by Selected Indicators of Economic Instability and Age: 2003



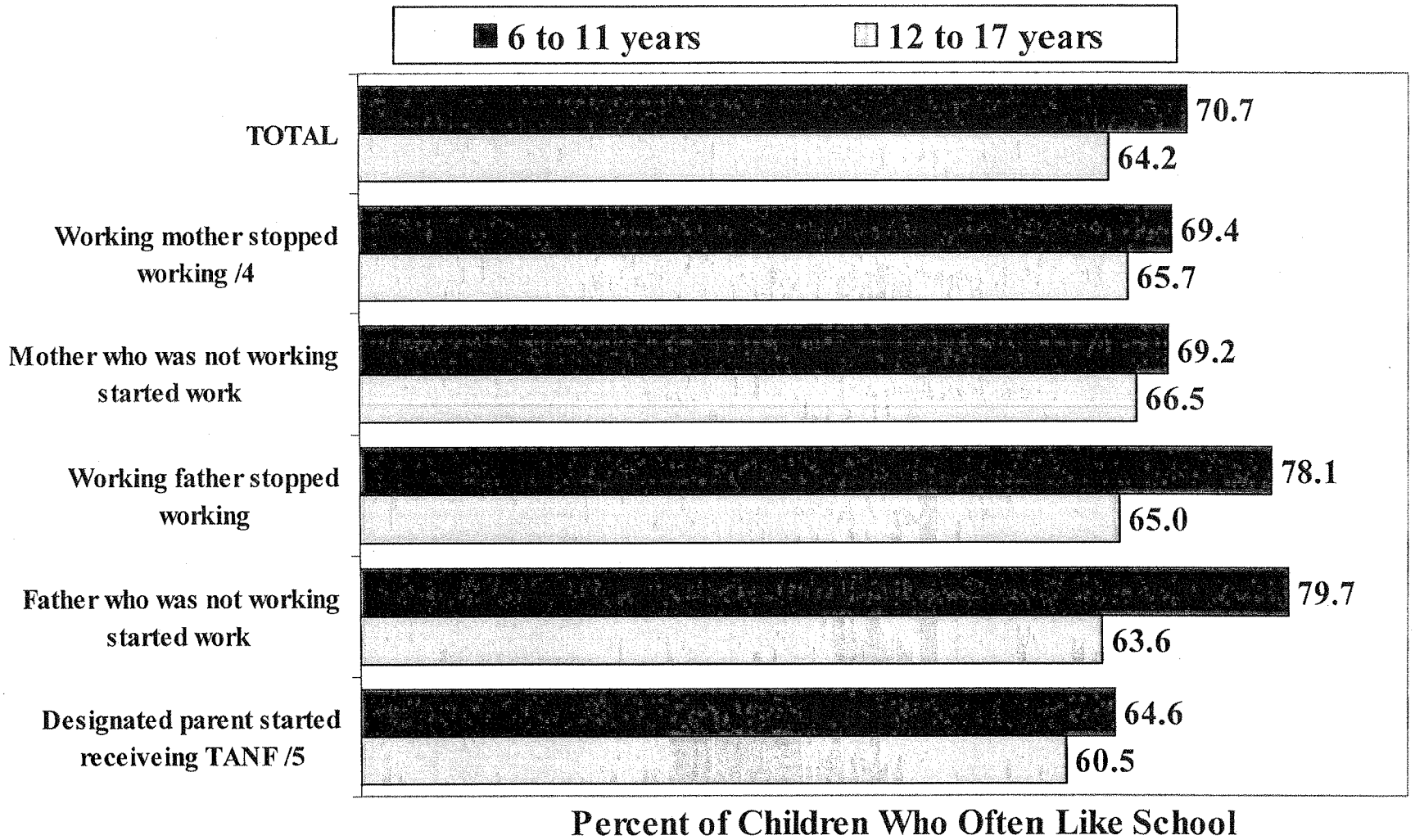
- **70.7 Percent of 6-11 year olds "often" like school.**
  - Children 6 to 11 years old who were less frequently reported by their parent as "often" liking school were:
    - Those whose designated parent started receipt of TANF benefits

- **64.2 percent of 12-17 year olds "often" like school.**
  - Children 12 to 17 years old who were less frequently reported by their parent as "often" liking school were:
    - Those who moved, ever lived apart from their parent, or had their parent change their marital status
    - Those whose designated parent started receipt of TANF benefits

Percent of Children 6 to 17 Years Old Whose Parent Reported That They "Often" Like School by Selected Indicators of Social Instability and Age: 2003



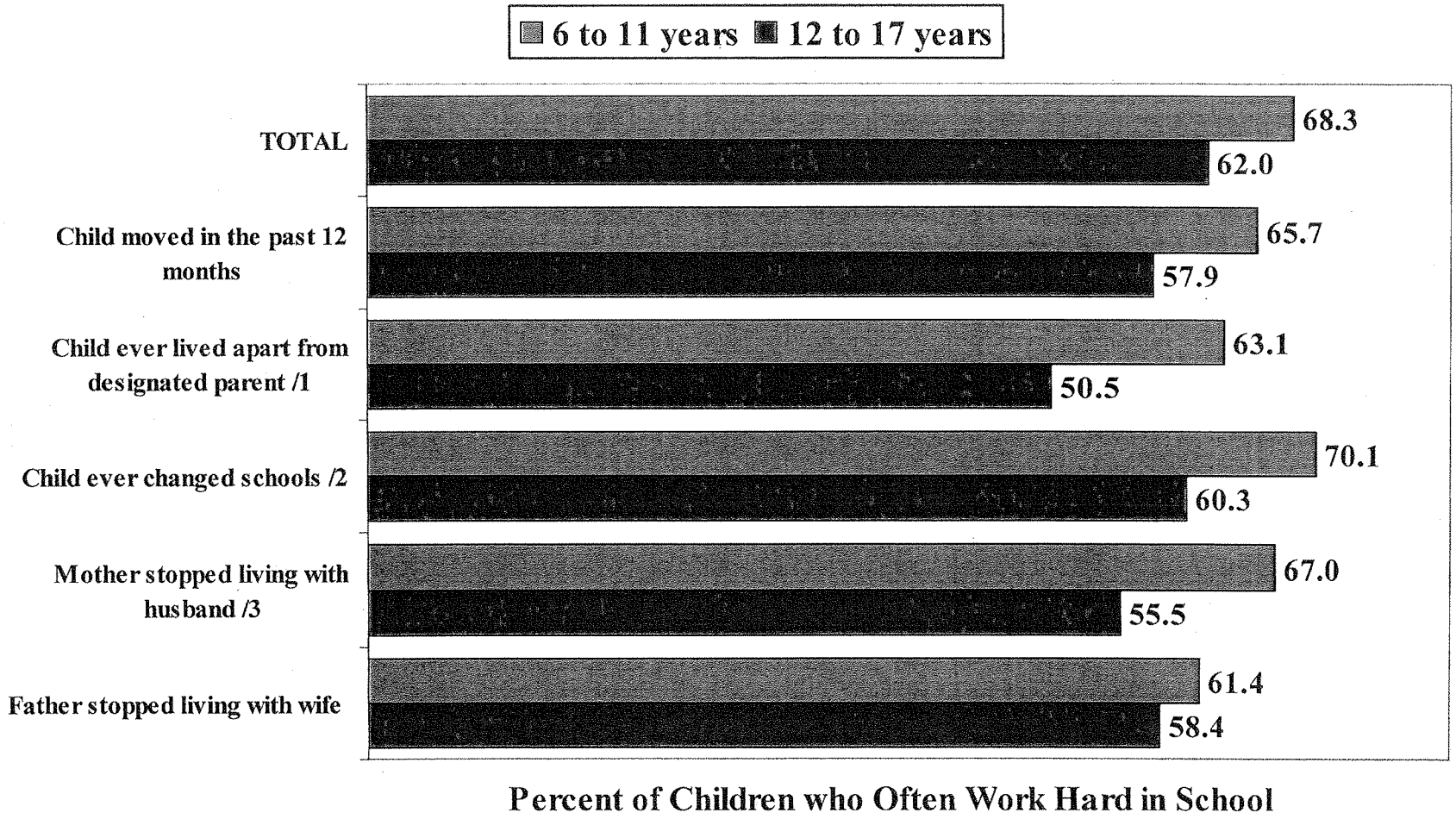
Percent of Children 6 to 17 Years Old Whose Parent Reported That They "Often" Like School by Selected Indicators of Economic Instability and Age: 2003



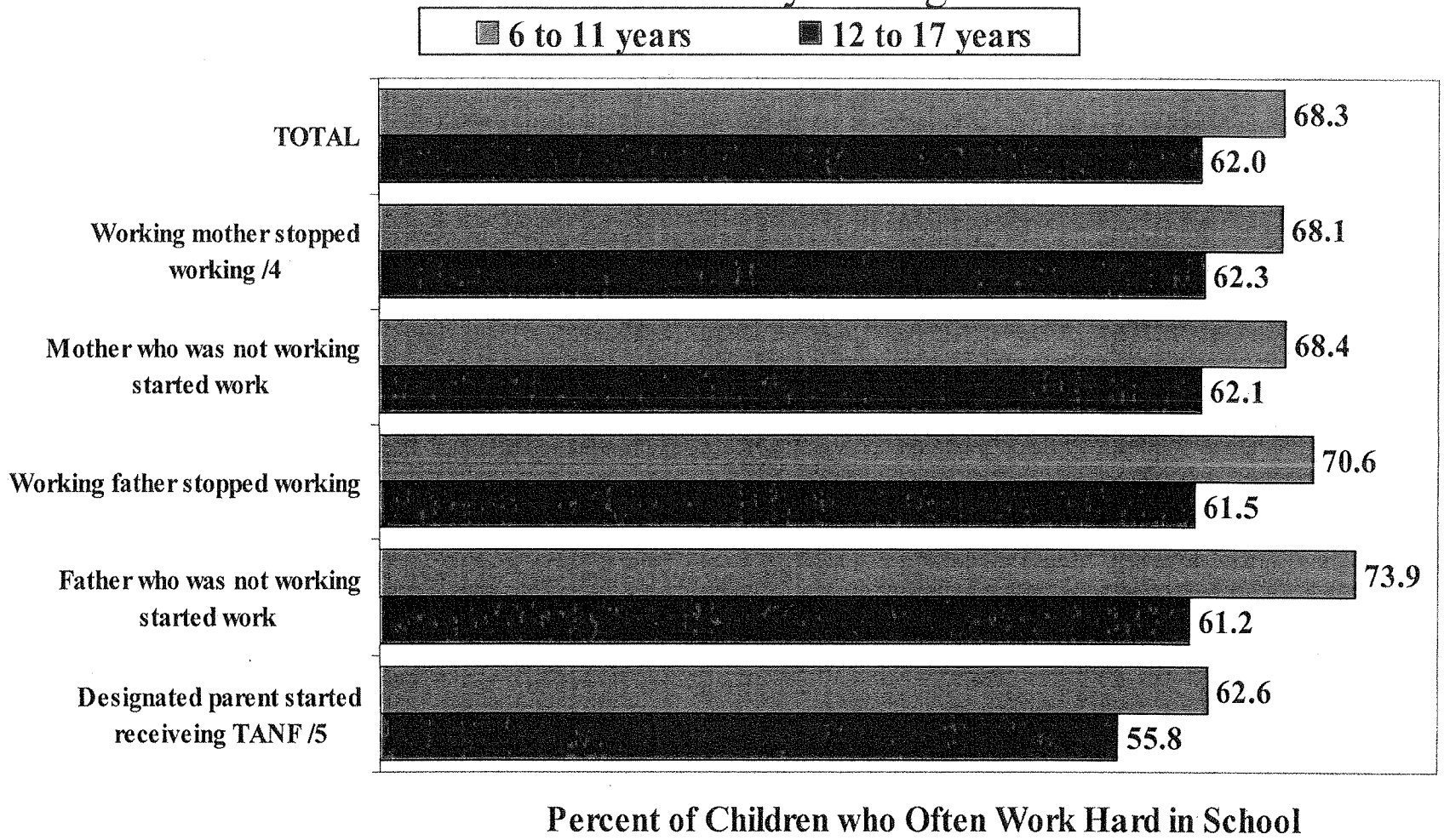
- **68.3 percent of children 6 to 11 years old "often" work hard in school**
- Children 6 to 11 years old who were less likely to be reported as "often" working hard in school were:
  - Those who had moved, ever lived apart from their designated parent, and whose father stopped living with his wife
  - Those whose designated parent started TANF benefits

- **62.0 percent of children 12 to 17 years old "often" work hard in school**
- Children 12 to 17 years old who were less likely to be reported as "often" working hard in school were:
  - Those who moved, ever lived apart from their designated parent, and had either parent change marital status
  - Those whose designated parent started TANF benefits

Percent of Children 6 to 17 Years Old Whose Parent Reported That They "Often" Work Hard in School by Selected Indicators of Social Instability and Age: 2003



Percent of Children 6 to 17 Years Old Whose Parent Reported That They "Often" Work Hard in School by Selected Indicators of Economic Instability and Age: 2003



- Social Instability
  - Overall, the relationships between child well-being and social instability differ for children of different age groups partly because older children have had more opportunity to experience transitions.
  - Older children who moved in the past year were more likely than children on average to repeat a grade, and were less likely to "often" like school or work hard in school.
  - Older children who ever lived apart from their designated parent for one month or more were less likely than children on average to be in gifted classes, were less likely to "often" like school and work hard in school, and were more likely to repeat a grade.
  - Children who ever changed schools were more likely than children on average to be in gifted classes, and to repeat a grade.
  - Children who had a parent or step-parent move out of the house were more likely than children on average to repeat a grade and were generally less likely to "often" like school and work hard in school.

- Economic Instability
  - Overall, economic instability was less associated with indicators of academic performance and school attachment than social instability.
  - Having a working mother with an employment interruption was associated with younger children being more likely to be in gifted classes and older children more likely to repeat a grade compared with children on average in those age groups.
  - Children whose mother started working were more likely than children on average to be in gifted classes, especially for older children.
  - Young children whose working father had an interruption in employment were more likely to "often" like school than children on average.
  - The strongest relationships between economic instability and child well-being occurred for transitions in TANF receipt.
    - Starting TANF receipt was associated with negative factors such as being less likely to be in gifted classes, more likely to repeat a grade, and less likely to "often" like school or work hard in school compared with children on average.

Future Research

- The data suggest analysis using a multivariate model to determine which indicators of instability are the best predictors of child well-being would prove very informative in understanding the impact of social and economic changes on children's lives.

- Contact Information

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Introduction

Indicators of Child Well-being

Indicators of Instability

Children in Gifted Classes

Children Who Repeated a Grade

Children Who “Often” Like School

Children Who “Often” Work Hard in School

Conclusion

Footnotes:

1. Ever lived apart from designated parent for one month or more.
2. Ever changed schools excludes school changes due to graduation.
3. Change in parent's marital status is based on parent being "married spouse-present" in wave1-6 and not "married spouse-present" in waves 2-7.
4. Parent's work status, within an 18 week time span, is defined as "working" if the parent had a job or business and was working and "not working" if parent was not working, absent without pay or on layoff for one or more weeks. Starting and stopping work was measured by comparing weeks 1-17 with weeks 2-18.
5. Designated parent started receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) in waves 2-7. The analysis included ending TANF receipt, but the estimates were so similar that only starting TANF is shown here.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation 2001 Panel Wave 7 Child Well-Being Topical Module.