

Many parents give money rewards to their children as an intentional tool for learning and motivation, helping teach what it means to earn, build a strong work ethic, and reinforce positive behavior.

Topline Findings

May 28, 2026 – A new Wells Fargo survey, with data collection provided by Ipsos, finds that the majority of parents of school age children (6-17 years of age) are rewarding them with money, mainly in cash form, and primarily as an incentive for good schoolwork. These monetary rewards tend to result in repeated behavior for half of the parents most of the time or always. Other types of rewards are used by parents, but money rewards are most prevalent.

A top motivation for providing a monetary reward is to help their child understand the concept of what it means to earn.

Respondents were asked questions about their child in one of the following age groups: 6 to 8 years of age, 9 to 11 years of age, 12 to 14 years of age, 15 to 17 years of age. If they had more than one child, they were randomly asked about only one of the age groups.

Detailed Findings

- 1. Money rewards are a common parenting tool, primarily used to drive academic outcomes**
 - Overall, nearly three-quarters of U.S. parents or guardians (72%) tell us they have given extra money as a reward to their child, beyond any allowance the child may receive.
 - There is only a slight difference between children of different ages:
 - Child 6 to 8 years old – 73% rewarded with extra money
 - Child 9 to 11 years old – 78% rewarded with extra money
 - Child 12 to 14 years old – 72% rewarded with extra money
 - Child 15 to 17 years old – 67% rewarded with extra money
 - Rewarding a *good report card or high mark on an assignment* is by far the most rewarded behavior with half of parents (51%) rewarding for this. Other situations where the child is rewarded with money are for *good behavior for a babysitter or other caregiver (24%), sticking with an extracurricular activity*

(22%), and for *meeting a savings or financial goal* (20%). Fewer are rewarding a child for *reading for enjoyment* (18%) or *limiting their online/screen time* (16%).

2. Other forms of rewards often complement money rewards

- While not as prevalent as monetary rewards (72%), under half of U.S. parents or guardians reward by giving the child a *choice of a family activity, such as a meal or an outing* (49%) *an item they want, such as candy, clothing, games, etc.* (42%), *experiences with friends, like a movie or sleepover* (42%), *a special privilege such as caring for a pet, using the family car, delayed bedtime or access to digital devices* (40%), or with a *visual recognition like stickers or a star chart* (19%).
- A non-monetary reward is being given more to children ages 6 to 11 than those 12-17 years old.
- Fewer than one-in-ten (9%) are not rewarding their child with money or with non-monetary forms of reward.

3. Money rewards are effective, though consistency is limited

- While just over half (53%) of those giving money to their child say the reward results in the behavior being repeated *most of the time or always*, this increases to 92% with the inclusion of *sometimes*.
- There are no ‘payoff’ differences between the four child age groups.

4. Cash remains the primary reward format, while digital payments rise with age

- Cash is the top form of monetary reward, selected by more than four-in-five (82%) of U.S. parents providing a monetary reward to a 6-17 year old, followed by Peer-To-Peer / P2P payments such as Venmo, PayPal, CashApp, Zelle, Greenlight, and Apple Pay/Cash (26%), money deposited into their bank account (19%), prepaid debit card (10%), and other methods (3%).
- Cash is given to 9 to 11 year olds (88%) more than 15 to 17 year olds (76%).
- Older children and teens (12 to 17 year olds) are more likely to receive money from their parents for rewards through Peer-To-Peer / P2P (36%) versus children 6 to 11 (16%).
- Money deposited into the child bank account and prepaid debit cards are relatively the same across child age groups, ranging from 15% to 23% and 7% to 12%, respectively.

5. Levels of Agreement Pertaining to Rewarding Children with Money

- Eight-in-ten (82%) U.S. parents and guardians of 6-17 year olds surveyed agree (agree strongly + agree somewhat) with the statement A money reward helps my child understand the concept of what it means to earn.
 - The level of agreement with this statement is higher than the other statements below.
 - Agreement is higher among those who have given money rewards (91%) than those who have not (58%).

- Three-quarters (76%) of the parents surveyed agree (agree strongly + agree somewhat) Money rewards help to instill a positive work ethic.
 - The level of agreement with this statement is higher than the other statements below.
 - Agreement is higher among those who have given money rewards (87%) than those who have not (48%).
- Just under three-quarters (73%) of parents surveyed agree (agree strongly + agree somewhat) Money rewards are effective at reinforcing continued good behavior.
 - The level of agreement with this statement is higher than the other statements below.
 - Agreement is higher among those who have given money rewards (84%) than those who have not (44%).
- Roughly seven-in-ten (69%) of parents surveyed agree (agree strongly + agree somewhat) with the statement When my child is resistant to a task, a financial reward can help motivate them.
 - The level of agreement with this statement is higher than the next two statements below.
 - Agreement is higher among those who have given money rewards (80%) than those who have not (42%).
- Under two-thirds (64%) of parents surveyed agree (agree strongly + agree somewhat) Money rewards are more effective than punishment-based approaches, such as restricting privileges.
 - The level of agreement with this statement is higher than the statement below.
 - Agreement is higher among those who have rewarded with money (74%) than those who have not (39%).
- Under three-in-five (57%) of parents surveyed agree (agree strongly + agree somewhat) with the statement I prefer to give money as a reward because it is easier to give compared to other forms of reward.
 - Agreement is higher among those who have given money rewards (70%) than those who have not (25%).

These are findings of a Wells Fargo survey, with data collection provided by Ipsos, conducted between April 2 and April 15, 2026. A sample of 1,500 U.S. parents aged 18 and older with at least one child between 6 and 17 years of age in the household were surveyed online in English, as part of Ipsos Omnibus shared survey program. The results of this research have a credibility interval of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points for all respondents. Respondents were asked questions about their child in one of the following age groups: 6 to 8 years of age, 9 to 11 years of age, 12 to 14 years of age, 15 to 17 years of age. If they had more than one child, they were randomly asked about only one of the age groups.

For full results, please refer to the following annotated questionnaire:

Full Annotated Questionnaire

For the remaining questions, please think specifically about the child you have whose age is [pipe in: 6-8 / 9-11 / 12-14 / 15-17]. If you have more than one child in between [pipe in: 6-8 / 9-11 / 12-14 / 15-17] please think about the oldest.

- Beyond any allowance they may receive, have you ever given your child age [pipe in: 6-8 / 9-11 / 12-14 / 15-17] extra money as a **reward** for any of the following? **Note that we are focusing on activities other than things like chores/housework or homework.** (Select all that apply.) [RANDOMIZE LIST]

(Asked of total respondents)	Total (n=1,500)	6-8 Yr Old (n=382) (A)	9-11 Yr Old (n=378) (B)	12-14 Yr Old (n=370) (C)	15-17 Yr Old (n=370) (D)
Getting a good report card or a high mark on an assignment.	51%	44%	55% A	54% A	50%
Good behavior for a babysitter or other caregiver	24%	26%	26%	24%	23%
Sticking with an extracurricular activity like music lessons, dance class, a seasonal sport, or after-school club	22%	24%	21%	23%	22%
Meeting a savings goal or other financial goal	20%	18%	23%	19%	20%
Reading for enjoyment	18%	18%	22% D	18%	13%
Limiting their online/screen time	16%	20% D	20% D	17% D	9%
Some other behavior	5%	4%	8%	4%	5%
No, I don't reward my child with money in this way.	28%	27%	22%	28%	33% B

2. Other than money, there are ways in which parents may reward their children for meeting a goal or for a special accomplishment. Please review the list below and tell us if you **reward** your child age [**pipe in: 6-8 / 9-11 / 12-14 / 15-17**] in these ways. Again, please think about activities other than things like chores/housework or homework. (Select all that apply.) [RANDOMIZE LIST]

(Asked of total respondents)	Total (n=1,500)	6-8 Yr Old (n=382) (A)	9-11 Yr Old (n=378) (B)	12-14 Yr Old (n=370) (C)	15-17 Yr Old (n=370) (D)
Choice of a family activity -- e.g., meal, outing	49%	52%	54%	46%	47%
An item that they want -- e.g., candy, clothing/shoes, games, toys, trading cards, stuffed animals	44%	50% CD	48% D	41%	37%
Experiences with friends - e.g., movie, sleepover	42%	35%	46% A	43%	45% A
Special privilege - e.g., caring for a pet, use of family car, delayed bed time, extended screen time or access to digital devices	40%	43%	43%	38%	36%
Visual recognition, e.g., stickers/star chart	19%	32% BCD	19% D	15%	12%
Other reward	3%	2%	3%	2%	4%
I don't reward my child in any of the ways listed.	12%	6%	8%	16% AB	16% AB

3. You mentioned that you have given money as a reward to your child. How often does giving a money reward result in the desired behavior being repeated? (Select one.)

(Asked of those have given monetary reward in Q1)	Total (n=1,103)	6-8 Yr Old (n=288) (A)	9-11 Yr Old (n=297) (B)	12-14 Yr Old (n=264) (C)	15-17 Yr Old (n=254) (D)
<u>Net – Top 3</u>	<u>92%</u>	<u>93%</u>	<u>88%</u>	<u>92%</u>	<u>94%</u>
<u>Subnet – Top 2</u>	<u>53%</u>	<u>50%</u>	<u>49%</u>	<u>58%</u>	<u>55%</u>
Always	15%	11%	15%	17%	16%
Most of the time	38%	39%	34%	41%	39%
Sometimes	38%	43%	40%	33%	39%
Rarely	6%	4%	9%	8%	5%
Never	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Unsure	1%	2%	2%	0%	1%

4. What is the average dollar amount you give your child for each reward? (Select one.)

(Asked of those have given monetary reward in Q1)	Total (n=1,103)	6-8 Yr Old (n=288) (A)	9-11 Yr Old (n=297) (B)	12-14 Yr Old (n=264) (C)	15-17 Yr Old (n=254) (D)
<\$10	27%	40% CD	39% CD	20% D	10%
\$10-\$14	23%	25%	24%	23%	21%
\$15-\$24	28%	24%	23%	32% B	33% B
\$25-\$49	15%	6%	9%	18% AB	25% AB
\$50 or more	7%	4%	4%	7%	10% AB

5. What form of money do you give as a reward to your child age [pipe in: 6-8 / 9-11 / 12-14 / 15-17]? (Select all that apply.) [RANDOMIZE LIST]

(Asked of those have given monetary reward in Q1)	Total (n=1,103)	6-8 Yr Old (n=288) (A)	9-11 Yr Old (n=297) (B)	12-14 Yr Old (n=264) (C)	15-17 Yr Old (n=254) (D)
Cash	82%	84%	88% D	81%	76%
P2P (peer to peer) payment -- e.g., Venmo, PayPal, CashApp, Zelle, Greenlight, Apple Pay/Cash	26%	15%	17%	35% AB	38% AB
Money deposited into their bank account	19%	15%	20%	18%	23%
Prepaid debit card	10%	7%	9%	12%	11%
Other (SPECIFY)	3%	5%	4%	1%	1%

6. **[SHOW IF ONLY ONE CATEGORY AT INV_KIDAGE]** Still thinking about your child whose age is **[pipe in: 6-8 / 9-11 / 12-14 / 15-17]**, how strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

[SHOW IF MORE THAN ONE CATEGORY AT INV_KIDAGE] How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of these statements? Please think about all your children age 6-17 when answering how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

[RANDOMIZE LIST OF STATEMENTS]

a. Money rewards help to instill a positive work ethic

(Asked of total respondents)	Total (n=1,500)
Net – Strongly/Somewhat Agree	76%
Agree strongly	25%
Agree somewhat	52%
Net – Strongly/Somewhat Disagree	19%
Disagree somewhat	12%
Disagree strongly	7%
Does not apply	5%

b. When my child is resistant to a task, a financial reward can help motivate them

(Asked of total respondents)	Total (n=1,500)
Net – Strongly/Somewhat Agree	69%
Agree strongly	21%
Agree somewhat	48%
Net – Strongly/Somewhat Disagree	24%
Disagree somewhat	14%
Disagree strongly	10%
Does not apply	7%

c. Money rewards are effective at reinforcing continued good behavior

(Asked of total respondents)	Total (n=1,500)
Net – Strongly/Somewhat Agree	73%
Agree strongly	24%
Agree somewhat	49%
Net – Strongly/Somewhat Disagree	22%
Disagree somewhat	15%
Disagree strongly	7%
Does not apply	5%

d. Money rewards are more effective than punishment-based approaches, such as restricting privileges

(Asked of total respondents)	Total (n=1,500)
Net – Strongly/Somewhat Agree	64%
Agree strongly	22%
Agree somewhat	42%
Net – Strongly/Somewhat Disagree	30%
Disagree somewhat	20%
Disagree strongly	10%
Does not apply	6%

e. I prefer to give money as a reward because it is easier to give compared to other forms of rewards

(Asked of total respondents)	Total (n=1,500)
Net – Strongly/Somewhat Agree	57%
Agree strongly	19%
Agree somewhat	38%
Net – Strongly/Somewhat Disagree	36%
Disagree somewhat	23%
Disagree strongly	13%
Does not apply	7%

f. A money reward helps my child understand the concept of what it means to earn

(Asked of total respondents)	Total (n=1,500)
Net – Strongly/Somewhat Agree	82%
Agree strongly	32%
Agree somewhat	50%
Net – Strongly/Somewhat Disagree	14%
Disagree somewhat	10%
Disagree strongly	4%
Does not apply	4%

About the Study:

These are findings for research that was conducted between April 2 and April 15, 2026, by Ipsos. For this survey, a sample of 1,500 American adults aged 18 and older who are parents or guardians of a child between 6 and 17 years of age residing in the household were interviewed online in English. Respondents were asked questions about their child in one of the following age groups: 6 to 8 years of age, 9 to 11 years of age, 12 to 14 years of age, 15 to 17 years of age. If they had more than one child, they were randomly asked about only one of the age groups. Surveys were collected as part of a multi-client omnibus program, where questions on various topics are included in one interview and clients share demographic information collected.

The sample was randomly drawn from [Ipsos’ online panel](#), partner online panel sources, and [“river” sampling](#) and does not rely on a population frame in the traditional sense. After a sample has been obtained from the Ipsos panel, Ipsos calibrates respondent characteristics to be representative of the U.S. Population using standard procedures such as raking-ratio adjustments. The source of these population targets is U.S. Census 2023 American Community Survey data. Post-hoc weights were made to the population characteristics on age, gender, region, and household income.

Statistical margins of error are not applicable to online non-probability surveys. Instead, the precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the survey has a credibility interval of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points for all respondents. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error and measurement error. Where figures do not sum to 100, this is due to the effects of rounding.