



JUST OUT OF REACH

Louisiana Working Families' Continued Struggle to Access & Afford Child Care
Survey Findings from October 18 - November 1, 2023

20
23





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You can find this report and additional information at www.policyinstitutela.org.

OVERVIEW

The Louisiana Policy Institute for Children (LPIC), with partners, began surveying Louisiana parents with young children in 2020 as part of a larger effort to understand the impact of COVID-19 on families and child care in Louisiana. This now annual survey of Louisiana parents with children under the age of 5 focuses on their child care arrangements, including their needs and experiences related to child care.

Many of the COVID recovery trends of 2022 in Louisiana continued in 2023, including low unemployment rates, increased rates of inflation, and tapering off of federal COVID relief dollars. For child care, like many industries, these factors contributed to increased costs for business, including significant increases in insurance premiums, and rising wage and workforce competition. What makes 2023 different from 2022, however, are two factors. First, despite increased state investments in early care and education during the most recent legislative session, the expiration of federal funds with no promise of new ones creates an overall reduction in the number of publicly funded early care and education seats in the state. Second, the state's revenue projections are beginning to level off, suggesting that the robust investments the sector requires, that voters support, and that families need may be postponed. Overall, this leads to a dimmer outlook for Louisiana's families moving forward, with not all Louisiana families able to access, or afford, the high-quality child care they need.

With two-thirds of young children in Louisiana having all available parents in the workforce, the state's economic performance relies on families' ability to access child care. Without reliable child care, parents miss work, leave or change jobs, come in late, or leave early, and child care breakdowns cost the state economy \$1.3 billion annually.



SUMMARY OF SURVEY FINDINGS

This survey provides insights into the continued needs and challenges of families with young children in Louisiana.

Louisiana parents with young children depend on child care while they work or go to school.



Most responding parents...

- Worked or attended school full-time and outside the home
- Relied heavily on some type of formal child care outside the home
- Utilized child care for 30 or more hours per week
- Used their current child care arrangements because of availability – hours and location
- Made some sort of adjustment to their work or school schedule to provide child care

Child care continues to be unaffordable for those who need it most.

- On average, families in Louisiana reported currently **paying \$364 per child per month for child care** – for a family with two children in child care, that translates to \$8,739 per year.
 - For families paying for child care and not receiving any type of subsidized care, the average monthly cost of child care was **\$665 per child per month, or \$15,960 per year for a family with two children in child care.**
 - For families who receive some sort of subsidized child care but have to pay some amount, the average monthly cost of child care was **\$395 per child per month, or \$9,491 per year for a family with two children in child care.**
- **Almost 50%** of responding families received some type of subsidized child care in 2023, either through enrollment in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and/or a free child care program.
- **Almost 60%** of parents were concerned about being unable to afford child care.
 - Parents with family incomes between \$20,000 and \$75,000 per year were more likely to be concerned about their inability to afford child care.
- **Nearly 60%** of parents indicated having trouble paying for basic household expenses, including utilities, food, child care, and clothing, in the prior six months. The percent of families reporting this challenge increased for most geographic and income groups over the past three years.

Finding available, reliable child care remains a challenge for many working families.

- **Three-fourths of parents** reported having to take at least one day off from work in the prior three months because of a child care disruption.
- **Over half of parents** reported having child care during typical weekday business hours, while an additional 30% needed but did not have child care during those times.
 - Parents with family incomes below \$50,000 per year were more likely to need and not have care, including on weekends and overnight.
- **Almost 25% of parents** said it was difficult to find their current child care arrangements.
 - Parents in southwest and southeast Louisiana, as well as parents who did not receive any type of subsidized care, were more likely to report difficulty finding child care.
- **One out of 10 parents** used their current child care arrangements because it was the only option available to them.
 - Parents in southwest Louisiana, as well as parents providing child care themselves or relying on family, friends, and neighbors, were more likely to cite their arrangements as the only option available to them.
- **Nearly half of parents** found their current child care arrangements through family, friends, neighbors, or other parents.
- **Over 70% of parents** expressed interest in additional resources to help with making child care decisions, including an easy-to-use website showing child care providers with open seats and information about low- and no-cost child care programs and options.

INVEST IN FAMILIES, INVEST IN OUR FUTURE

While increased federal funds – and the accompanying boost to the state’s economy – have ended for now, Louisiana policymakers should invest public dollars in the most strategic way possible by ensuring families and young children have what they need to thrive now and in the long-term. The research is clear that investing in early care and education allows caregivers to go to work and contribute to the economy, supports businesses seeking a reliable workforce, ensures kindergarten readiness, prepares children for long-term economic success, and even prevents the likelihood of future criminal activity. To ensure all these benefits now and in the future, Louisiana should:

- **Continue state investments in early care and education** to expand access to high-quality child care especially for children birth through age 3, supporting our youngest learners, their working parents, and employers across the state.
- **Support local governments generating revenue for early care and education** through continued state investment in the Louisiana Early Childhood Education Fund.
- **Help families more** easily learn about, find, and connect with high-quality child care providers in their communities.

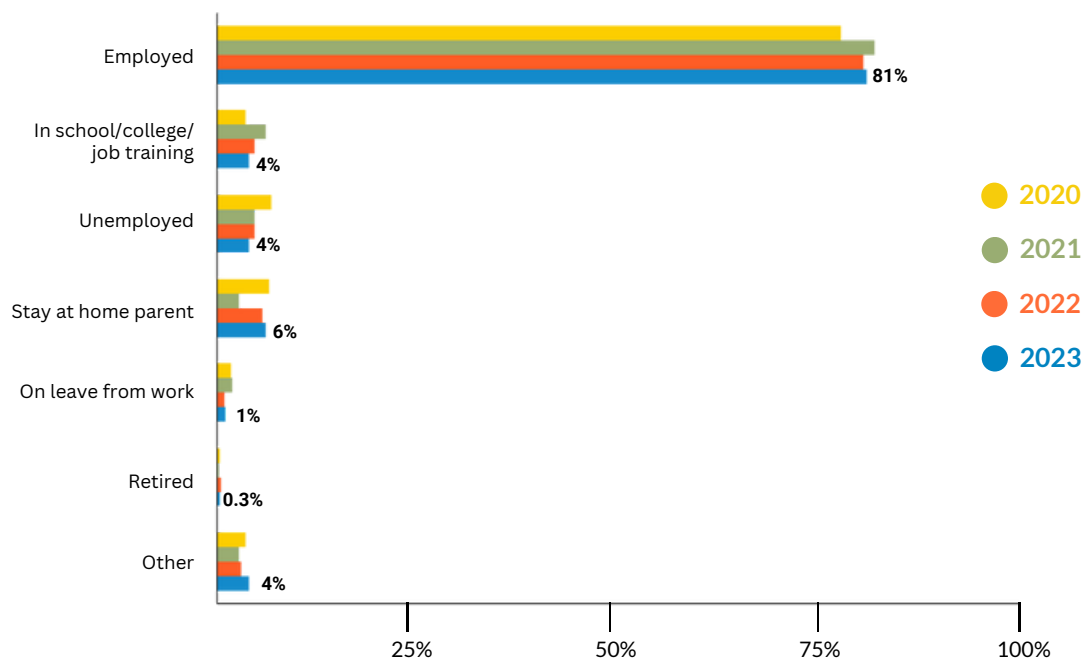


SURVEY FINDINGS

Louisiana parents with young children depend on child care while they work or go to school.

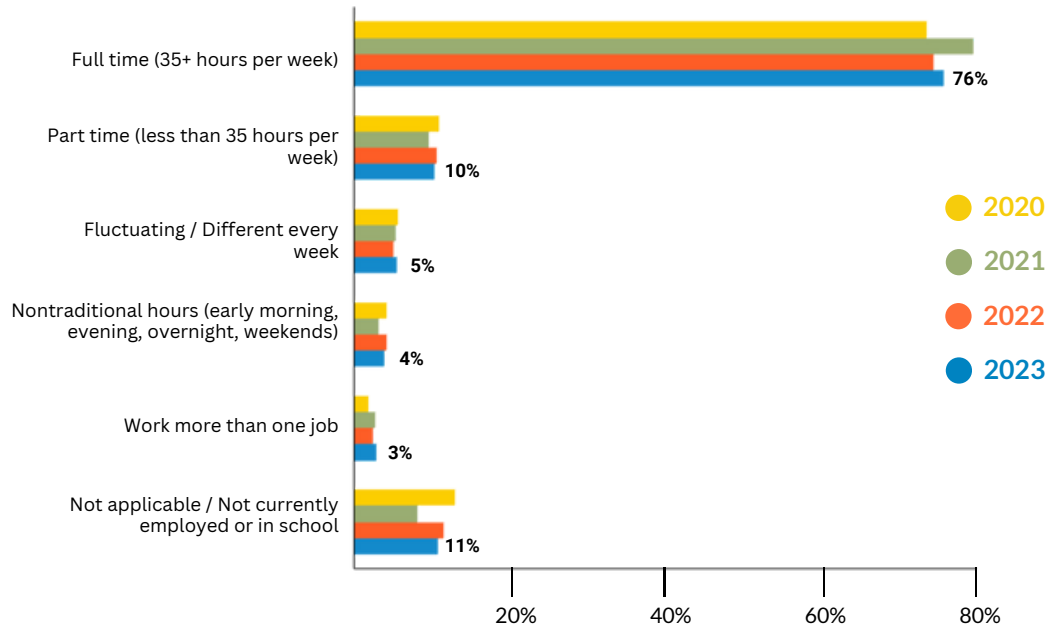
Almost 90% of responding parents were working or attending school, most full time (76%) and outside of the home fully or at least part of the time (74%).

Figure 1
Work or School Situation of Responding Parents



Question: What best describes your current work or school situation?
Note: In 2020 survey, "unemployed" response options began with "Unemployed due to COVID-19 pandemic"

Figure 2
Work or School Schedule for Responding Parents



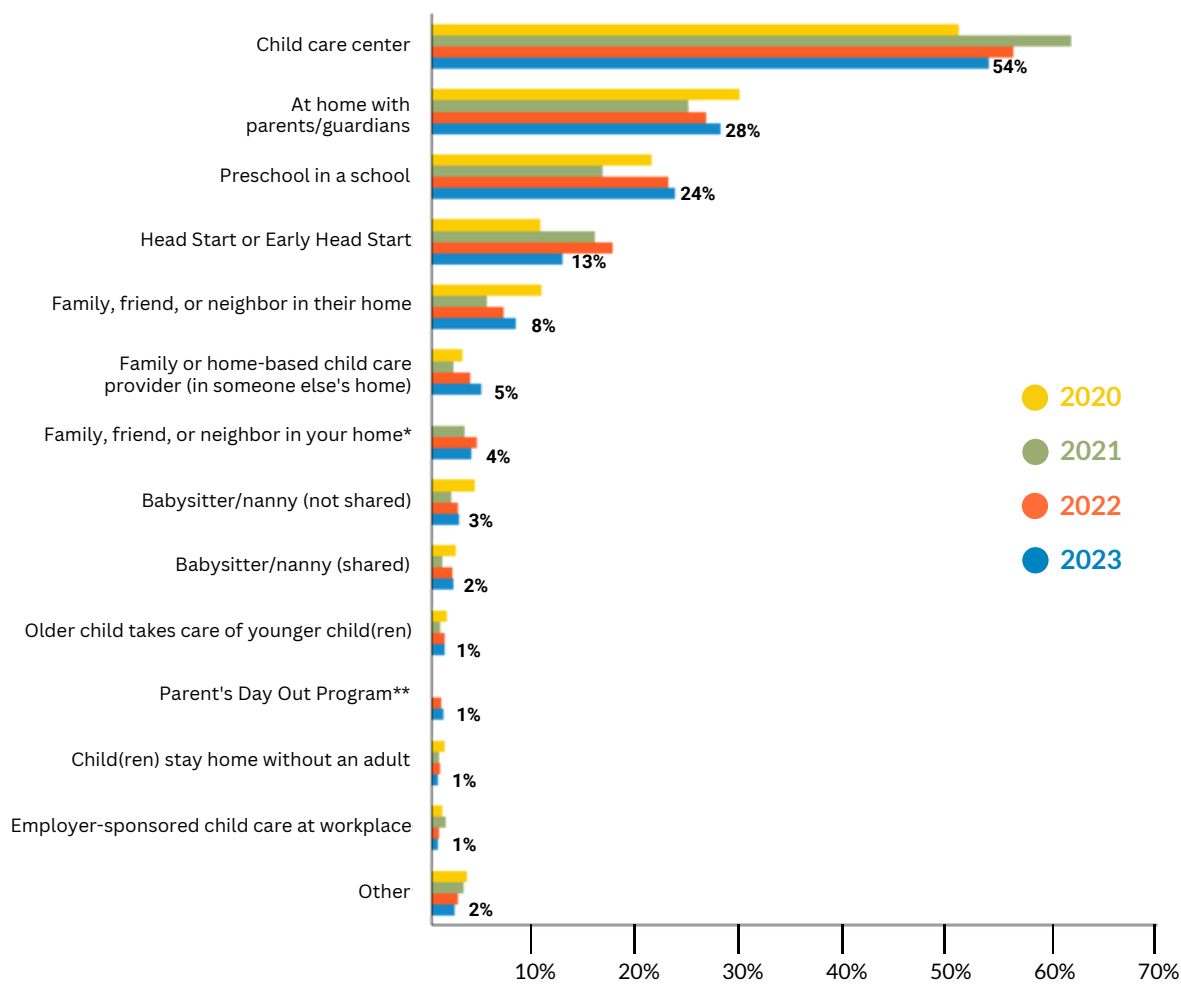
Question: What is your current work or school schedule? Please check all that apply.
 Note: Respondents may have selected more than one response. Percentages may total to more than 100%.





Families with young children relied heavily on some type of formal child care outside the home. Formal care options include child care centers, preschools in a school, Head Start or Early Head Start, family or home-based child care providers, and employer-sponsored child care at a workplace.

Figure 3
Current Child Care Arrangements Used by Responding Parents



*Response option not available in 2020

**Response option not available in 2020 or 2021

Question: What best describes your current child care arrangement(s)? Please check all that apply.

Note: Respondents may have selected more than one response. Percentages may total to more than 100%.



Over 80% of parents reported utilizing child care for 30 or more hours per week, with children in child care for an average of 40 hours per week.

Table 4
Typical Weekly Hours of Child Care Currently Used by Responding Parents

Weekly Child Care Hours Used	2020	2021	2022	2023
0 hours	3%	3%	2%	1%
1 to 10 hours	6%	7%	9%	8%
11 to 20 hours	5%	3%	5%	3%
21 to 30 hours	9%	7%	8%	8%
31 to 40 hours	56%	57%	55%	56%
41 to 50 hours	16%	18%	16%	16%
51 to 60 hours	2%	2%	2%	3%
More than 60 hours	4%	4%	4%	5%

Question: How many hours per week do you typically use your current child care arrangement(s) for your child(ren)? If you use more than one child care arrangement, please provide the total combined hours for ALL of your current child care arrangements.

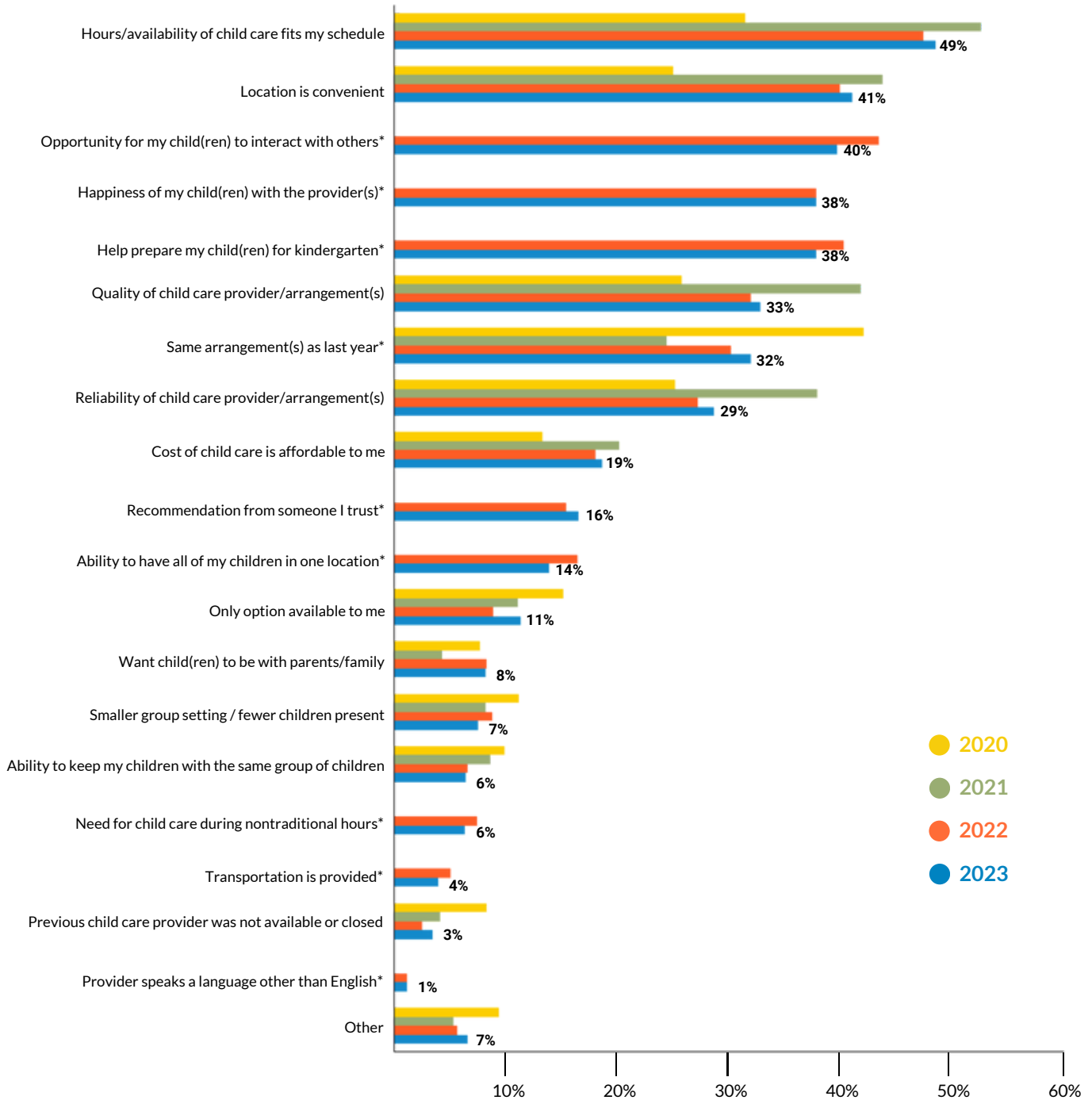
“It’s really, really stressful to not know if we will have [child] care until a month or so before we need it. I put my daughter on waiting lists at 8 [child care] centers 8 months before she needed care—before she was even born!—and we only got into one. It shouldn’t be this difficult. I don’t know what we would’ve done if we didn’t get into that [center].

PARENT, ORLEANS PARISH



Parents indicated the main reasons for using their current child care arrangements were hours/availability (49%), convenient location (41%), child interactions with others (40%), happiness of their children (38%), and supporting kindergarten readiness (38%).

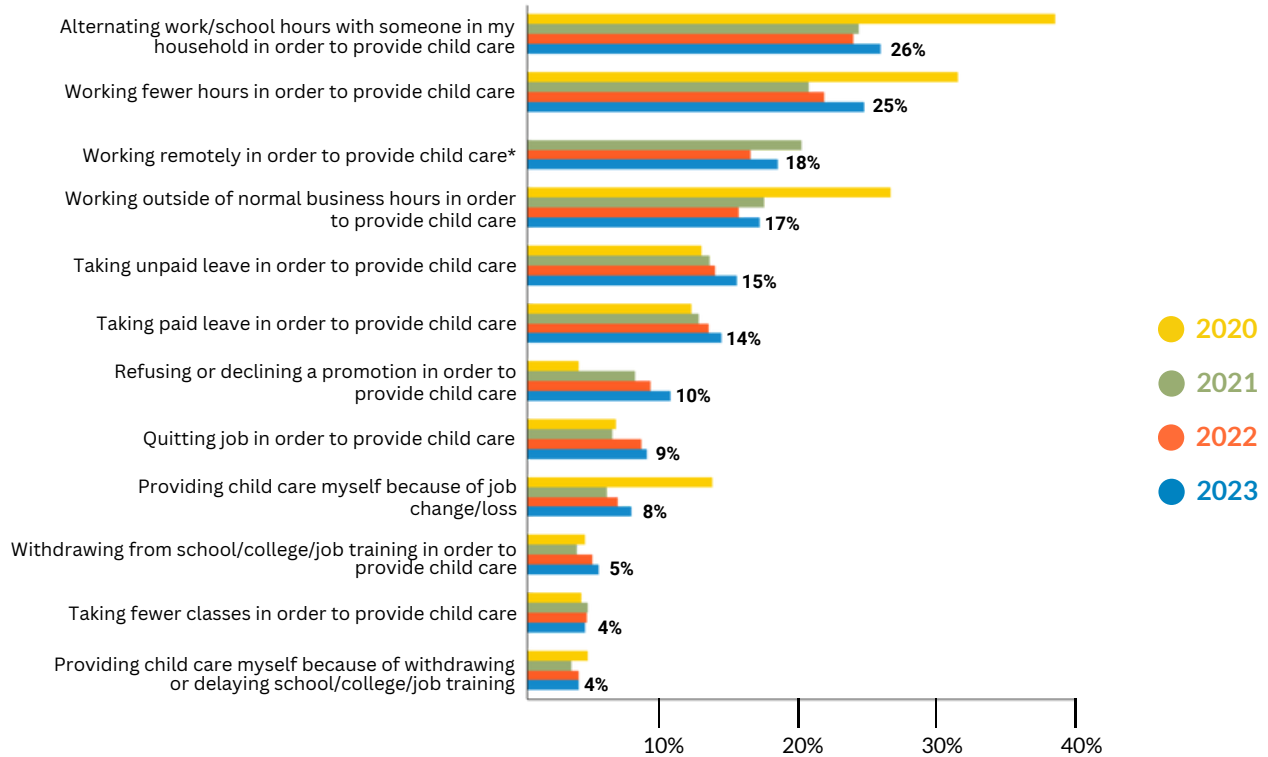
Figure 5
Reasons for Using Current Child Care Arrangements by Responding Parents



*Response option not available in 2020 or 2021
Question: What are the main reasons for using your current child care arrangement(s)? Please check all that apply.
Note: Respondents may have selected more than one response. Percentages may total to more than 100%.

Over half of parents (54%) made some sort of adjustment to their work or school schedule to provide child care in the previous six months — 26% of parents alternated work or school hours, 25% worked fewer hours, 18% worked remotely, 17% worked outside of normal business hours, and 9% quit their job.

Figure 6
Schedule Adjustments Related to Providing Child Care Made by Responding Parents



*Response option not available in 2020

Questions: [2020] Since March 2020, have you or another parent/guardian in your household experienced any of the following? Please check all that apply. / [2021] Since April 2021, have you or another parent/guardian in your household experienced any of the following? Please check all that apply. / [2022] In the past six months (since April 2022), have you or another parent/guardian in your household experienced any of the following? Please check all that apply. / [2023] In the past six months (since April 2023), have you or another parent/guardian in your household experienced any of the following? Please check all that apply.

Note: Respondents may have selected more than one response. Percentages may total to more than 100%.



My wife and I are both teachers, if we did not live in a family home we would not be able to afford child care, i.e. we couldn't pay a mortgage as well.

PARENT, LINCOLN PARISH

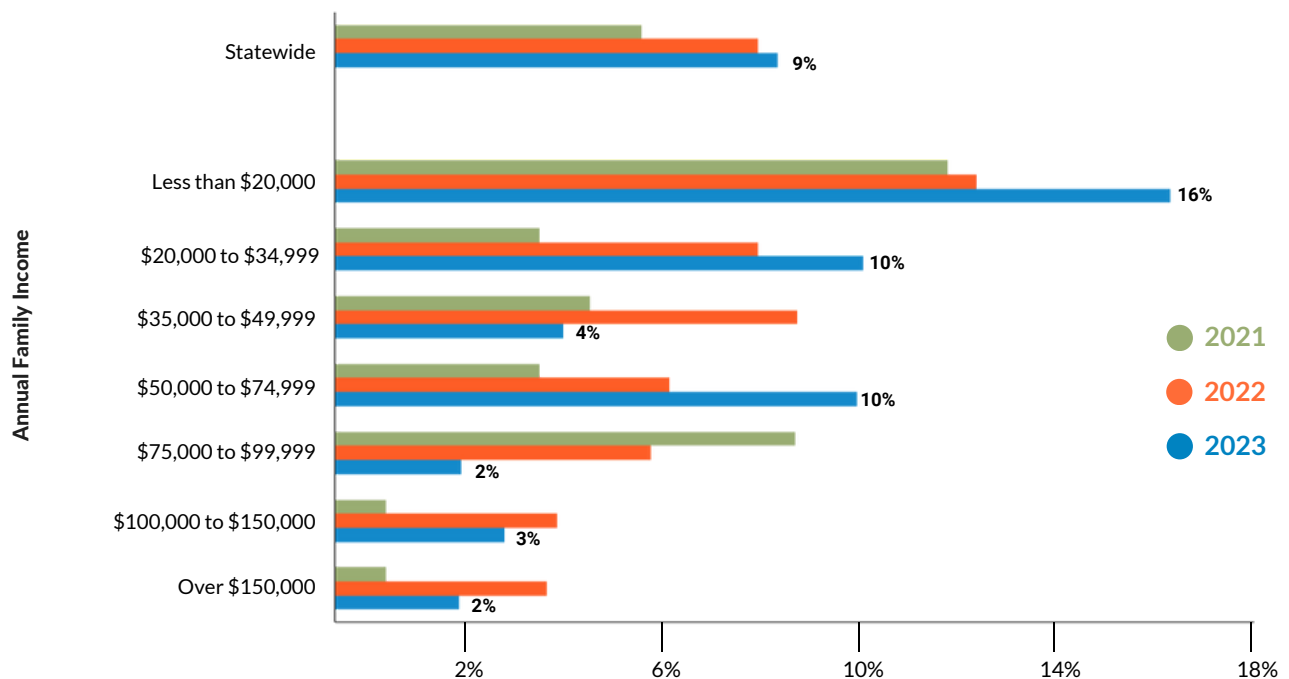
“Child care costs more than my wife was making so she quit.

PARENT, ST. TAMMANY PARISH



Parents with a family income below \$20,000 per year were almost **twice as likely** to have quit their job in order to care for their children.

Figure 7
Percent of Responding Parents Who Quit Job to Provide Child Care



Question: In the past six months (since April 2023), have you or another parent/guardian in your household experienced any of the following? Please check all that apply.

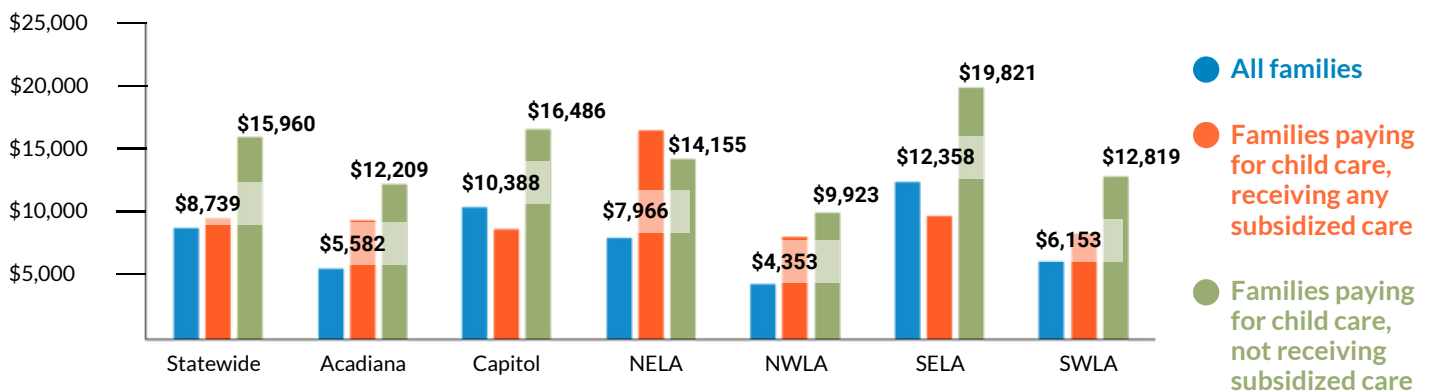


Child care continues to be unaffordable for those who need it most.

On average, families in Louisiana reported currently paying **\$364 per child per month** for child care – for a family with two children in child care, that translates to **\$8,739 per year**.

- For families paying for child care and **not receiving any type of subsidized care**, the average monthly cost of child care was **\$665 per child per month**, or **\$15,960 per year** for a family with two children in child care.
- For families who receive **some sort of subsidized child care** but have to pay some amount, the average monthly cost of child care was **\$395 per child per month**, or **\$9,491 per year** for a family with two children in child care.

Figure 8
Average Annual Cost of Child Care for Family with Two Children



Question: How much do you pay for your current child care arrangement(s) per week? Please provide the typical dollar amount you pay per week for ALL of your children under age 5. If you pay a monthly rate, please divide the monthly rate by 4.
 Note: Results for "families paying for child care, receiving any subsidized care" only include respondents paying at least \$1 and who indicated they are receiving at least one type of subsidized care. Results for "families paying for child care, not receiving subsidized care" only include respondents paying at least \$1 and who indicated they are not receiving subsidized care.

“ I applied for CCAP and was put on a waiting list 9 months ago, this is the only choice I have.

PARENT, RAPIDES PARISH

“ Child care is not affordable for me and [my] income is too high for assistance.

PARENT, BOSSIER PARISH



Almost 50% of responding families received some type of subsidized child care in 2023, either through enrollment in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and/or a free child care program.

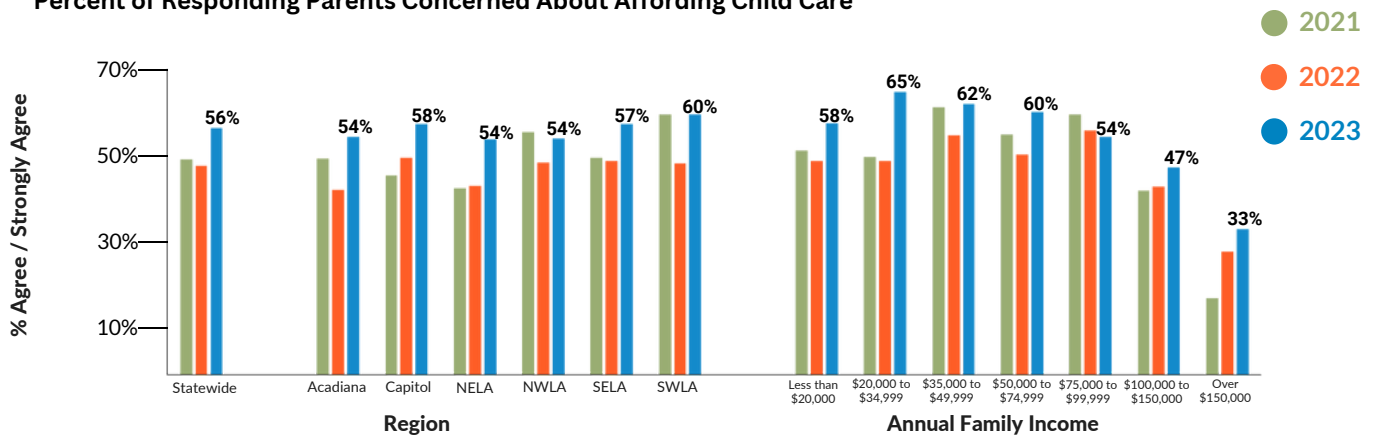
Table 9
Receipt of Subsidized Child Care by Responding Parents

Response	2023							2022	2021	2020
	Acadiana	Capitol	NELA	NWLA	SELA	SWLA	Statewide	Statewide	Statewide	Statewide
Received any subsidized care	52%	42%	50%	51%	42%	41%	45%	55%	37%	32%
Received child care subsidy/CCAP	29%	27%	34%	27%	28%	18%	27%	34%	43%	18%
Child care provided at no cost / for free through publicly funded program at a school or child care center	19%	12%	14%	20%	13%	17%	15%	20%	15%	9%
Child care provided at no cost / for free by family, friend, or neighbor	8%	4%	7%	6%	3%	8%	6%	5%	3%	6%
Provided at no cost / for free by employer	0%	1%	2%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	-
Did not received subsidized care	48%	58%	50%	51%	58%	59%	55%	45%	43%	68%

Question: Do you receive a child care subsidy or are these child care arrangements provided at no cost/for free? Please check all that apply.
Note: Respondents may have selected more than one response. Percentages may total to more than 100%.

Almost 60% of parents were concerned about being unable to afford child care. Parents with family incomes between \$20,000 and \$75,000 per year were more likely to be concerned about their inability to afford child care.

Figure 10
Percent of Responding Parents Concerned About Affording Child Care



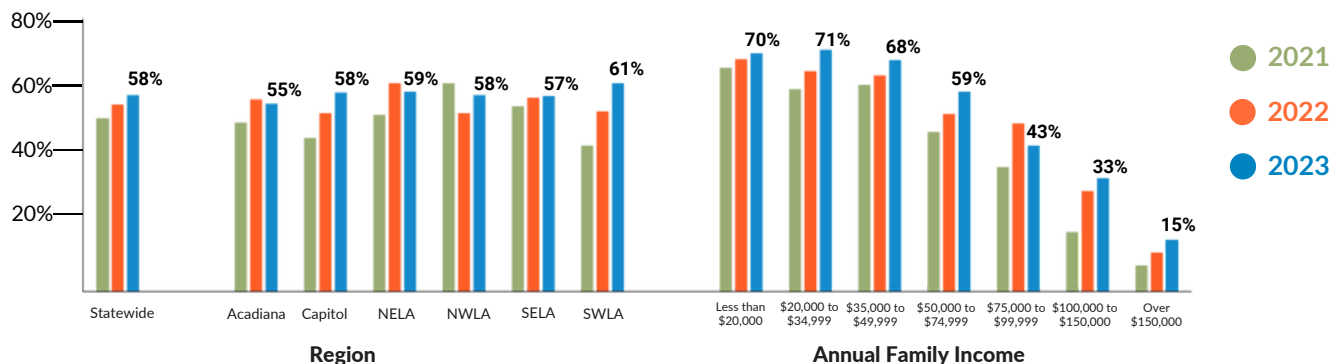
Question: Thinking about your family's current situation, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? "I am worried about being able to afford child care"



[Child care is] so expensive. We're deciding not to have another child because we can't afford child care and groceries. I always dreamed of more children, but I can't justify it.
PARENT, ST. TAMMANY PARISH

Nearly 60% of parents indicated having trouble paying for basic household expenses, including utilities, food, child care, and clothing, in the prior six months. The percent of parents reporting this challenge increased for most geographic and income groups over the past three years.

Figure 11
Percent of Responding Parents Having Trouble Paying for Any Basic Household Expense



Questions: [2021] Since April 2021, have you had trouble paying for any of the following for your family? Please check all that apply. / [2022] In the past six months (since April 2022), have you had trouble paying for any of the following for your family? Please check all that apply. / [2023] In the past six months (since April 2023), have you had trouble paying for any of the following for your family? Please check all that apply.

Finding available, reliable child care remains a challenge for many working families.

Three-fourths of parents reported having to take at least one day off from work in the prior three months because of a child care disruption.

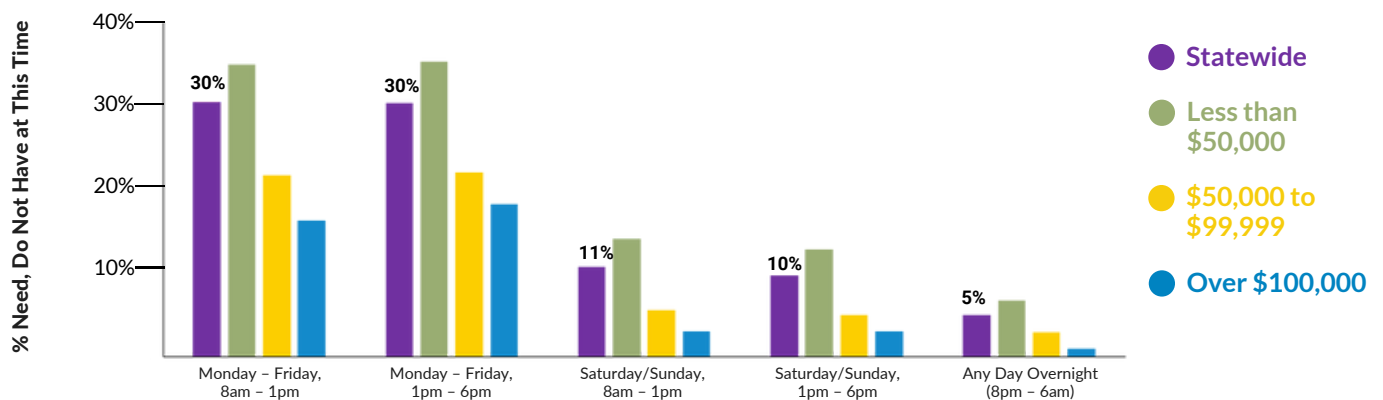
Table 12
Percent of Responding Families with Parent Work Absences Due to Child Care Disruption

Response	2023							2022
	Acadiana	Capitol	NELA	NWLA	SELA	SWLA	Statewide	Statewide
0 days	30%	24%	22%	32%	20%	26%	25%	26%
1 to 5 days	45%	42%	48%	43%	45%	50%	45%	40%
6 to 10 days	13%	23%	22%	16%	21%	14%	19%	20%
11 to 15 days	5%	6%	4%	3%	6%	3%	5%	6%
16 to 20 days	3%	3%	2%	3%	3%	2%	3%	3%
21 to 30 days	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%	3%	2%	2%
More than 30 days	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%	3%	2%	2%

Question: [2022] In the past three months (since July 2022), how many days have you or another parent/guardian in your household had to take off from work because your child(ren) could not attend their regular child care arrangement(s) for any reason? Reasons could include child(ren) with a confirmed or suspected illness or child care closure for staff training or weather-related issues. / [2023] In the past three months (since July 2023), how many days have you or another parent/guardian in your household had to take off from work because your child(ren) could not attend their regular child care arrangement(s) for any reason? Reasons could include child(ren) with a confirmed or suspected illness or child care closure for staff training or weather-related issues.

Over half of parents reported having child care during typical weekday business hours, while an additional 30% needed but did not have child care during those times. Parents with family incomes below \$50,000 per year were more likely to need and not have care, including on weekends and overnight.

Figure 13
Percent of Responding Parents Who Need But Do Not Have Child Care at Certain Times

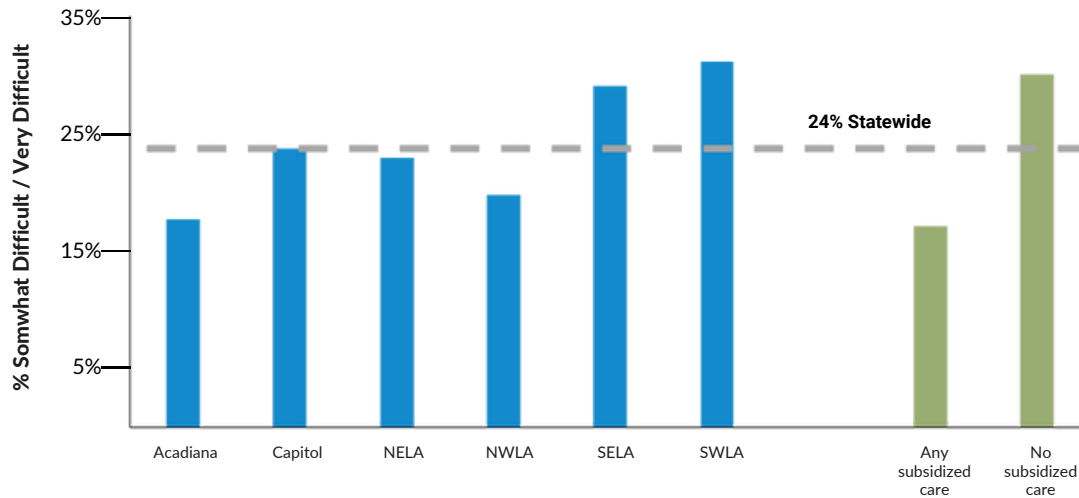


Question: What times of day do you typically need child care? Do you have child care at those times? Please check all that apply.
Note: Respondents may have selected more than one response. Percentages may total to more than 100%.

Almost 25% of parents said it was difficult to find their current child care arrangements. Parents in southwest and southeast Louisiana, as well as parents who did not receive any type of subsidized care, were more likely to report difficulty finding child care.

Figure 14

Percent of Responding Parents Reporting Difficulty Finding Child Care Arrangements

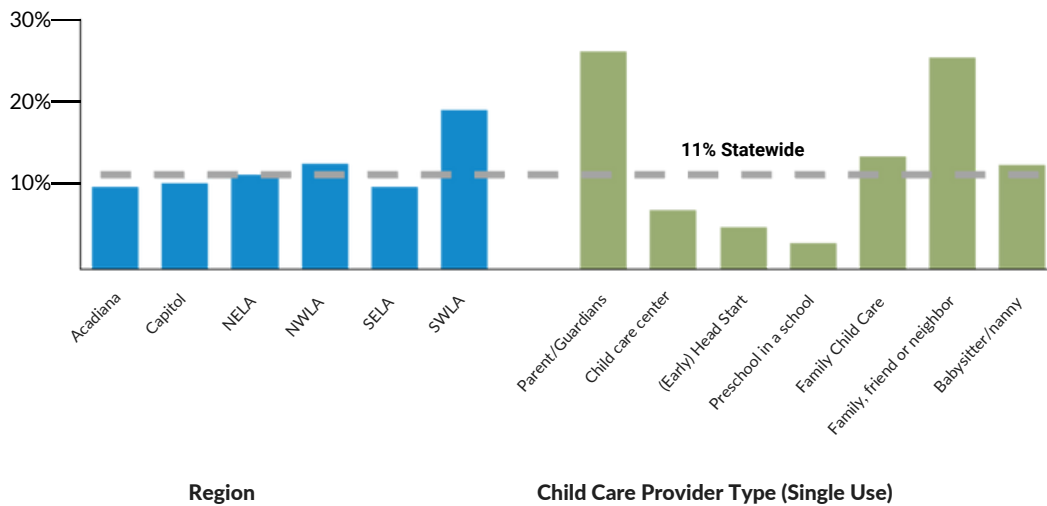


Question: How easy or difficult was it to find your current child care arrangement(s)?

One out of 10 parents used their current child care arrangements because it was the only option available to them. Parents in southwest Louisiana, as well as parents providing child care themselves or relying on family, friends, and neighbors, were more likely to cite their arrangements as the only option available to them.

Figure 15

Percent of Responding Parents Indicating Current Child Care Arrangement Is Only Option Available



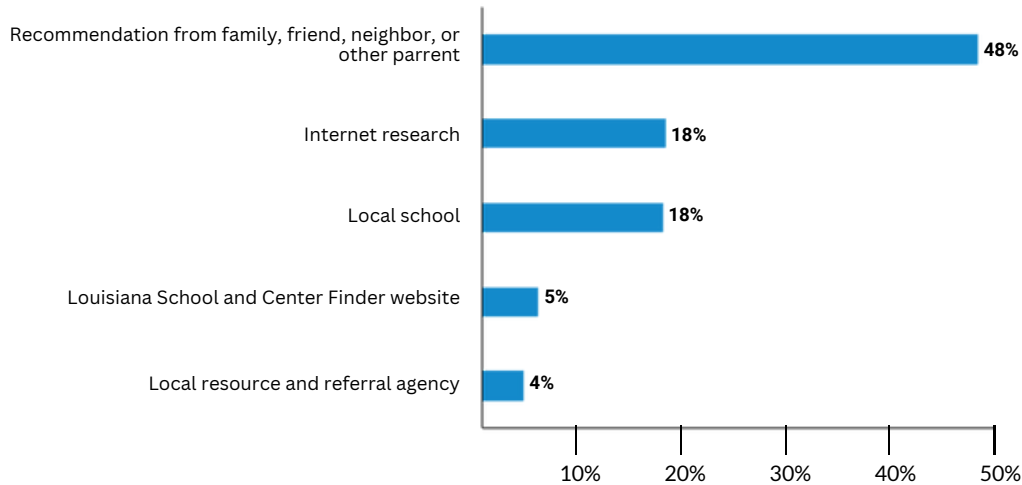
Question: What are the main reasons for using your current child care arrangement(s)? Please check all that apply.

Note: Results for "Child Care Provider Type (Single Use)" only include respondents using a single type of child care arrangement.

Nearly half of parents (48%) found their current child care arrangements through family, friends, neighbors, or other parents.

Figure 16

How Responding Parents Found Their Current Child Care Arrangements

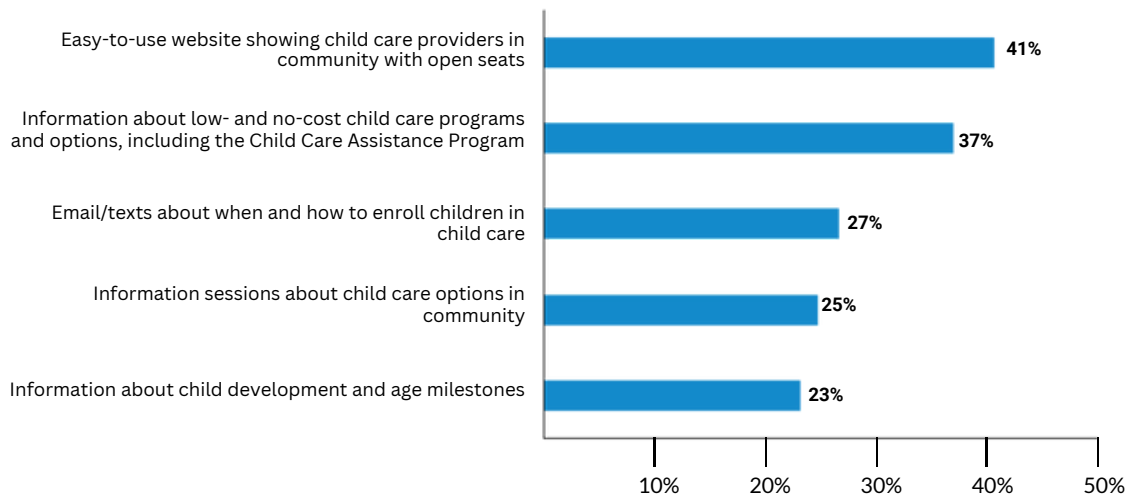


Question: How did you find your current child care arrangement(s)? Please check all that apply.
Note: Respondents may have selected more than one response. Percentages may total to more than 100%.

Over 70% of parents expressed interest in additional resources to help with making child care decisions, including an easy-to-use website showing child care providers with open seats and information about low- and no-cost child care programs and options.

Figure 17

Percent of Responding Parents Interested in Resources to Help with Child Care Decisions



Question: What types of resources would have helped you with making decisions about child care arrangement(s) for your child(ren)? Please check all that apply.
Note: Respondents may have selected more than one response. Percentages may total to more than 100%.

APPENDIX

Survey Methodology

LPIC developed and administered the Louisiana Child Care Parent Poll survey online through Survey Monkey from October 18, 2023, through November 1, 2023. Prior to administration of the survey, questions were reviewed by the Louisiana Department of Education and partner organizations. The survey link was shared by LPIC, the Louisiana Department of Education, Louisiana United Ways, resource and referral agencies, and nonprofit organizations through email newsletters and social media. The Louisiana Department of Education also distributed a letter to parents about the survey through Type I, II, and III child care centers.

In addition, individuals who applied for or received assistance through the Child Care Assistance Program in 2023 and provided a phone number to the Louisiana Department of Education received up to three text message reminders about the survey during the survey window. All text messages were sent between 9:30am and 2pm Central Time. The first text message was sent to 12,441 phone numbers, while 1,010 phone numbers unsubscribed from future text messages during the survey window.

Prospective respondents included any parent or guardian in Louisiana with at least one child under the age of 5 living in their home. Within the survey window, 3,646 responded to the survey, answering some or all of the survey questions.

For questions where some survey respondents did not provide an answer, the included results percentages reflect calculations based only on the number of survey respondents providing an answer to the question. For example, if only 100 survey respondents answered a question, the results would reflect what percentage of those 100 respondents selected each answer.

Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Table A1

Geographic Regions of Survey Respondents

Region (Parishes)	Percent of Survey Respondents	State Population (2020)
Acadiana <i>(Acadia, Avoyelles, Evangeline, Iberia, Lafayette, Rapides, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, Vermilion, Vernon)</i>	20%	18%
Capitol Region <i>(Ascension, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Iberville, Livingston, Pointe Coupee, St. Helena, Tangipahoa, West Baton Rouge, West Feliciana)</i>	22%	21%
Northeast Louisiana <i>(Caldwell, East Carroll, Franklin, Lincoln, Madison, Morehouse, Ouachita, Richland, Tensas, Union, West Carroll)</i>	7%	7%
Northwest Louisiana <i>(Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Catahoula, Claiborne, Concordia, De Soto, Grant, Jackson, La Salle, Natchitoches, Red River, Sabine, Webster, Winn)</i>	12%	13%
Southeast Louisiana <i>(Assumption, Jefferson, Lafourche, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Tammany, Terrebonne, Washington)</i>	29%	33%
Southwest Louisiana <i>(Allen, Beauregard, Calcasieu, Cameron, Jefferson Davis)</i>	10%	7%

Table A2
Children in Household of Survey Respondents

Number of Children in Home	Percent of Survey Respondents
1	32%
2	36%
3	19%
4	8%
5	2%
6 or more	2%

Table A3
Ages of Children in Household of Survey Respondents

Age of Children in Home	Percent of Survey Respondents
Younger than 12 months	9%
12 months to 24 months	11%
2 years old	13%
3 years old	14%
4 years old	16%
5 to 12 years old	27%
13 to 18 years old	9%

Table A4
Race/Ethnicity of Survey Respondents

Race/Ethnicity	Percent of Survey Respondents
American Indian / Native American / Alaska Native	1%
Asian	1%
Black / African American	34%
Hispanic / Latina / Latine / Latino	3%
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	0.1%
White	39%
Other	1%
Not Provided	25%

Note: Respondents may have selected more than one response. Percentages may total to more than 100%.

Table A5
Family Income of Survey Respondents

Family Income Range	Percent of Survey Respondents
Less than \$20,000	22%
\$20,000 to \$34,999	27%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	13%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	10%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	8%
\$100,000 to \$150,000	10%
Over \$150,000	9%

Table A6
Rate of Claiming School Readiness Tax Credits by Survey Respondents

Utilization of School Readiness Tax Credits	Percent of Survey Respondents
Claimed or Planned to Claim	42%
Did Not Claim	20%
Unsure	39%



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