

The background of the entire page is a collage of orange-tinted photographs showing children and families in various settings, including a classroom and a home. A large white circle is overlaid on the center of the page, containing the main text.

NOW MORE THAN EVER

**A Snapshot of How Louisiana
Working Families Rely on Child Care**

*Survey Findings from
October 10 - November 3, 2021*



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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.

Earlier research highlights how critical child care is both for parent workforce involvement and healthy child development. **In Louisiana, two-thirds of children age 5 and under have both parents or their single parent in the workforce.** Child care breakdowns can then have a significant negative impact on the state's economy. This includes parents having to quit jobs, or even being fired, due to child care issues. These challenges for working parents end up costing Louisiana employers \$762 million annually and having a \$1.3 billion impact on the state's economy.

In 2021, as Louisiana began to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, the state made policy changes to benefit families eligible for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), the state's only publicly funded program for children under age 4. To qualify for CCAP, parents must meet income requirements and be working, actively seeking work, in school, or in job training. Funding for the program is in the form of a subsidy paid to the child care center that the parent chooses. Policy changes in 2021 included increasing the subsidy rate paid to child care centers and raising the income eligibility threshold to 65% of state median income. These changes expanded the pool of eligible families and enabled more families to include a wider option of providers in child care decisions.

SUMMARY OF SURVEY FINDINGS

This survey provides insights into the needs and challenges of families with young children in Louisiana as the state recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Louisiana families with young children continue to rely on child care and make decisions about child care based on factors that support parent employment and education.

- Most responding parents were working or in school, full time and outside of the home.
 - The unemployment rate was twice as high for parents with a family income below \$20,000 per year.
- **Over 80%** of families with young children relied on some type of formal child care outside the home in 2021, an increase compared to 2020. 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.
- Parents, on average, reported their children were in child care for **39 hours per week**.
- Parents indicated the main reasons for using their current child care arrangements were hours/availability, trust in the provider, convenient location, and quality.
- Just **over half** of parents experienced some sort of adjustment to their work or school schedule to provide child care in the previous six months.
 - Parents in the Capitol Region were more likely to have alternated work or school hours, worked fewer hours, worked remotely, and/or worked outside of normal business hours to provide care for their children.
 - Parents with a family income below \$20,000 per year were twice as likely to have quit their job in order to care for their children.

The cost of child care remains high, with child care costing the average Louisiana family almost \$9,000 a year.

- On average, families in Louisiana reported currently paying **\$358 per child per month** for child care – for a family with two children, that would translate to **\$8,600 per year**.
 - Families with infants paid over one-third more for child care than the average, **\$488 per child per month**.
 - For families paying for child care and not receiving any type of subsidized care, the average monthly cost of child care was **\$655 per child per month**, or **\$15,715 per year** for a family with two children.
- **Nearly 60%** of families received some type of subsidized child care in 2021, either through enrollment in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and/or a free child care program, an increase compared to 2020.
 - Families in Acadiana and northwest Louisiana were more likely to receive some sort of subsidized child care.

Without subsidies for child care and other household essentials, working families with young children will struggle even more to afford basic necessities.

- Almost half of parents were concerned about being unable to afford child care.
 - Parents in southwest and northwest Louisiana, as well as those with family incomes between \$35,000 and \$100,000 per year, were more likely to be concerned about inability to afford child care than other regions of the state.
- **Over 50%** of parents indicated having trouble paying for basic household expenses, including utilities, child care, food, and clothing, in the prior six months.
 - Parents in northwest Louisiana and those with family incomes below \$50,000 per year were more likely to have had trouble paying for basic household expenses.
- Over half of parents claimed or planned to claim School Readiness Tax Credits for Child Care Expenses on their 2020 Louisiana tax return, and most reported receiving the monthly federal Child Tax Credit payments that began in July 2021.

Many families still experience child care challenges due to COVID-19 and struggle to easily find child care.

- **Almost one-quarter** of parents said it was difficult to find their current child care arrangements.
 - Parents in the Capitol Region and southwest Louisiana, as well as parents who did not receive any type of subsidized care, were more likely to report difficulty finding child care.
- **Over 60%** of parents were concerned about the spread of COVID-19 through child care.
- **Over 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 closure.

LOUISIANA'S CONTINUED ECONOMIC SUCCESS RELIES ON WORKING FAMILIES' ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, RELIABLE CHILD CARE

These survey results again show working families rely on child care and how child care challenges impact workforce participation. To support working families and their employers, Louisiana must:

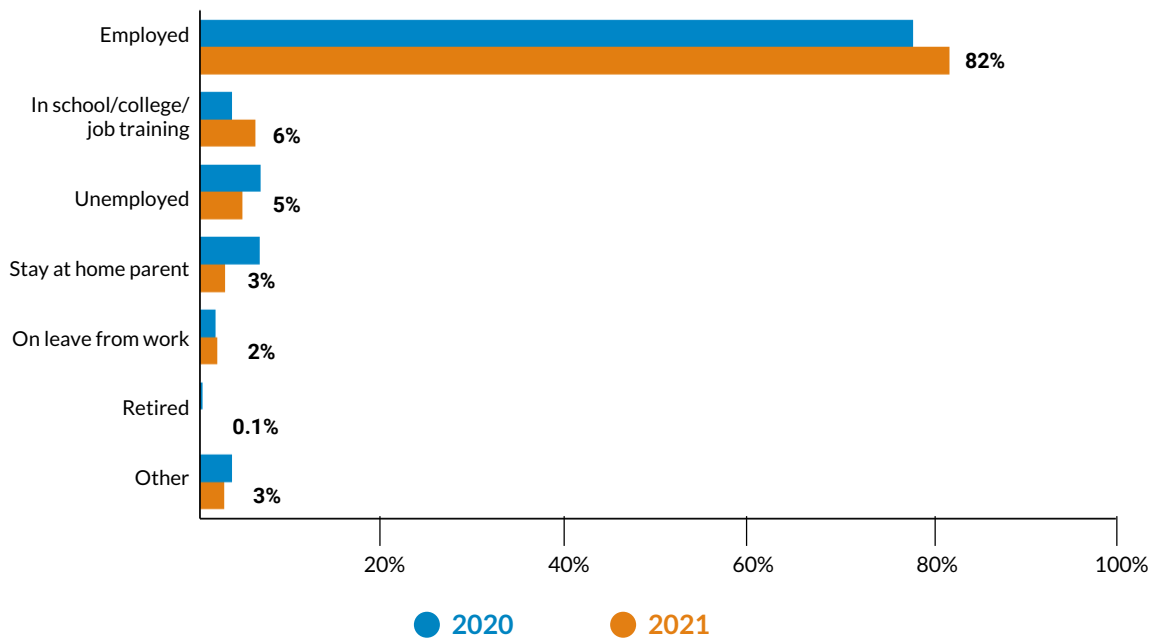
- **Increase state investments in early care and education to expand access to high-quality child care**, especially for children birth through age 3, which will prepare our students for a smart start in life, enable families to be productive in the workforce, and serve as an economic engine for local communities.
- **Continue to use federal stimulus and COVID-19 relief funds to stabilize the child care sector** to increase the availability of quality, reliable child care for working parents.
- **Encourage multiple streams of investment into the early care and education system**, including supporting local government efforts to generate revenue through both state enabling legislation and sufficient incentivizing investment into the Louisiana Early Childhood Education Fund.

SURVEY FINDINGS

Louisiana families with young children continue to rely on child care and make decisions about child care based on factors that support parent employment and education.

Almost 90% of responding parents were working or in school, most full time (80%) and outside of the home (74%).

Figure 1
Work or School Situation of Responding Parents

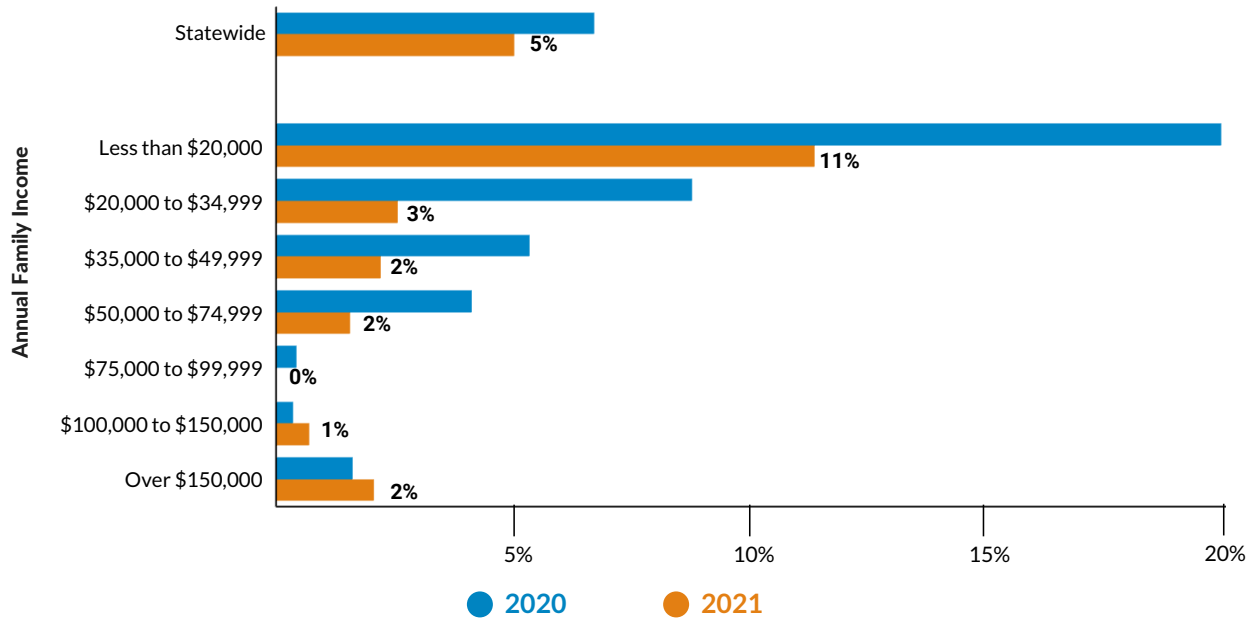


Question: What best describes your current work or school situation?
Note: In 2020, "unemployed" response options began with "Unemployed due to COVID-19 pandemic"



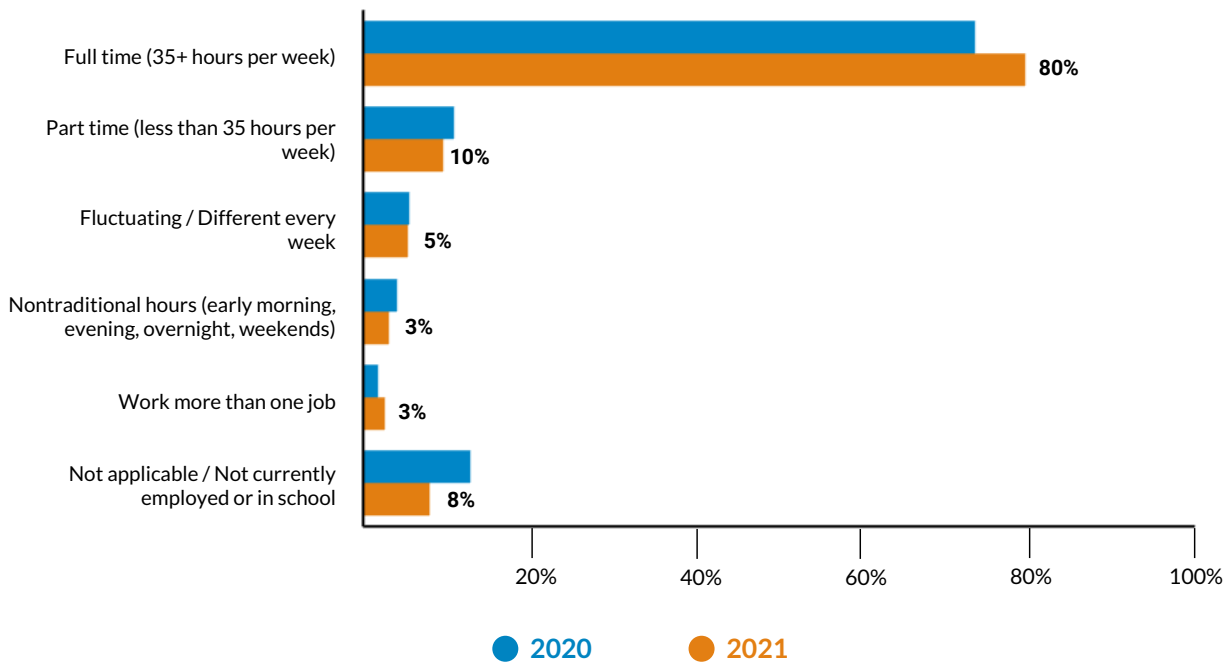
Overall, **5%** of parents reported being unemployed, however, that rate was **twice as high (11%)** for parents with a family income below **\$20,000 per year**.

Figure 2
Unemployment Rates of Responding Parents



Question: What best describes your current work or school situation?

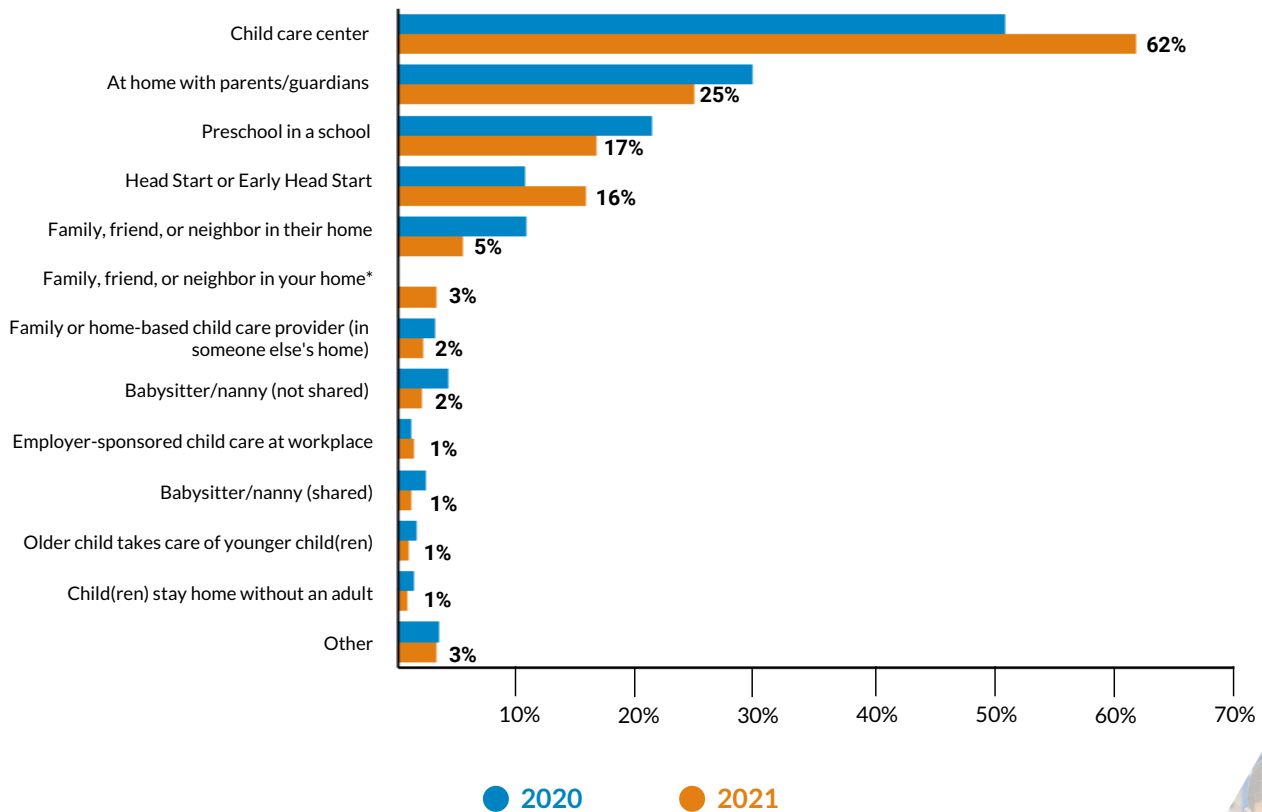
Figure 3
Work or School Schedule for Responding Parents



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%.

The majority of families (85%) with young children relied on some type of formal child care outside the home in 2021, an **increase of 7 percentage points** compared to 2020. 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 4
Current Child Care Arrangements Used by Responding Parents



*Response option not available in 2020

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%.

Parents, on average, reported their children were in child care for **39 hours per week**, and **81%** of parents reported needing child care for at least **30 hours per week**.

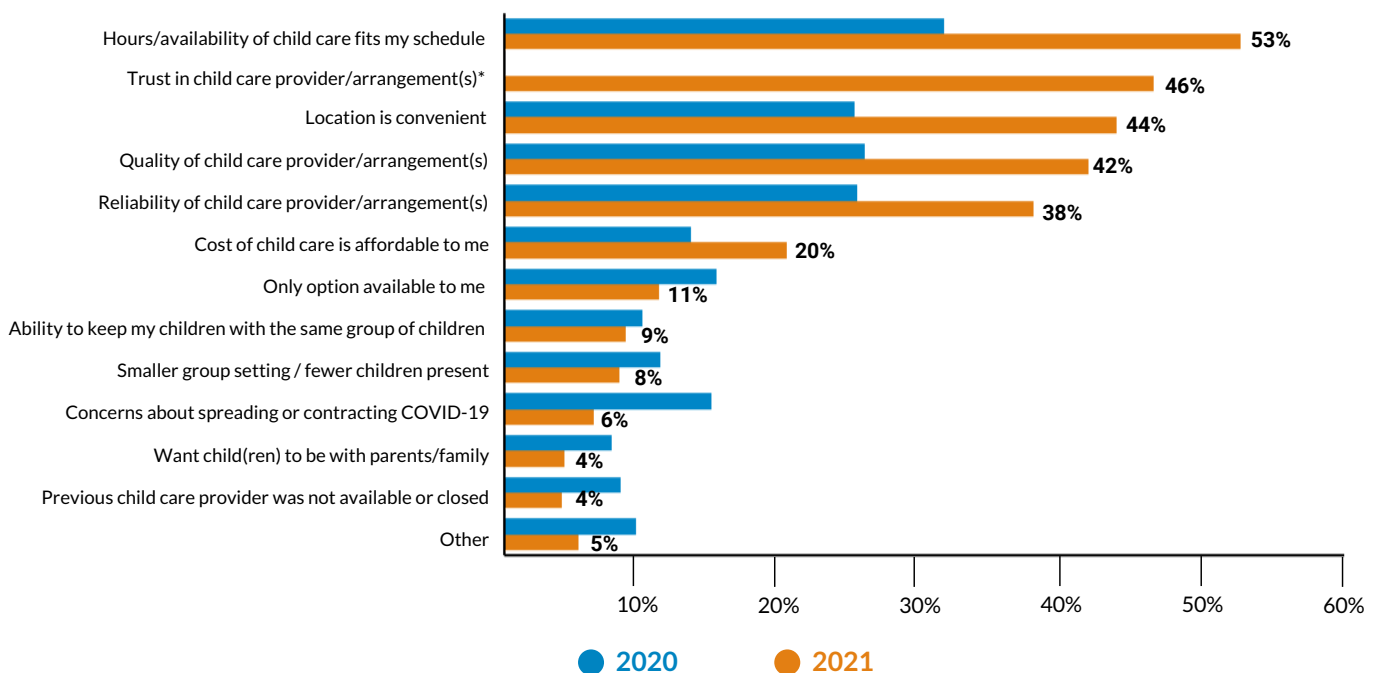
Table 5
Typical Weekly Hours of Child Care Currently Used by Responding Parents

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

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.

Parents indicated the main reasons for using their current child care arrangements were **hours/availability (53%)**, **trust in the provider (46%)**, **convenient location (44%)**, and **quality (42%)**.

Figure 6
Reasons for Using Current Child Care Arrangements by Responding Parents



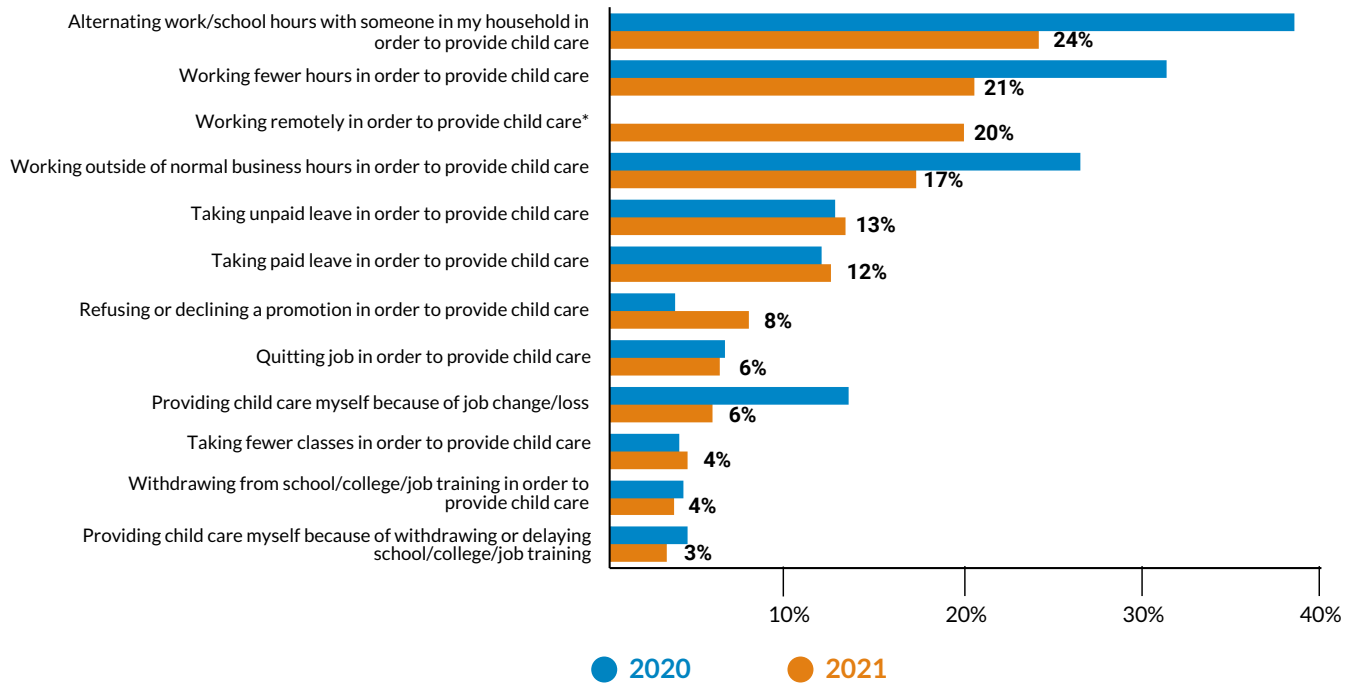
*Response option not available in 2020

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%.

Just **over half (51%)** of parents experienced some sort of adjustment to their work or school schedule to provide child care in the previous six months — **24% of parents alternated work or school hours, 21% worked fewer hours, 20% worked remotely, 13% worked outside of normal business hours, and 6% quit their job.**

Figure 7
Schedule Adjustments Related to Providing Child Care Experienced by Responding Parents

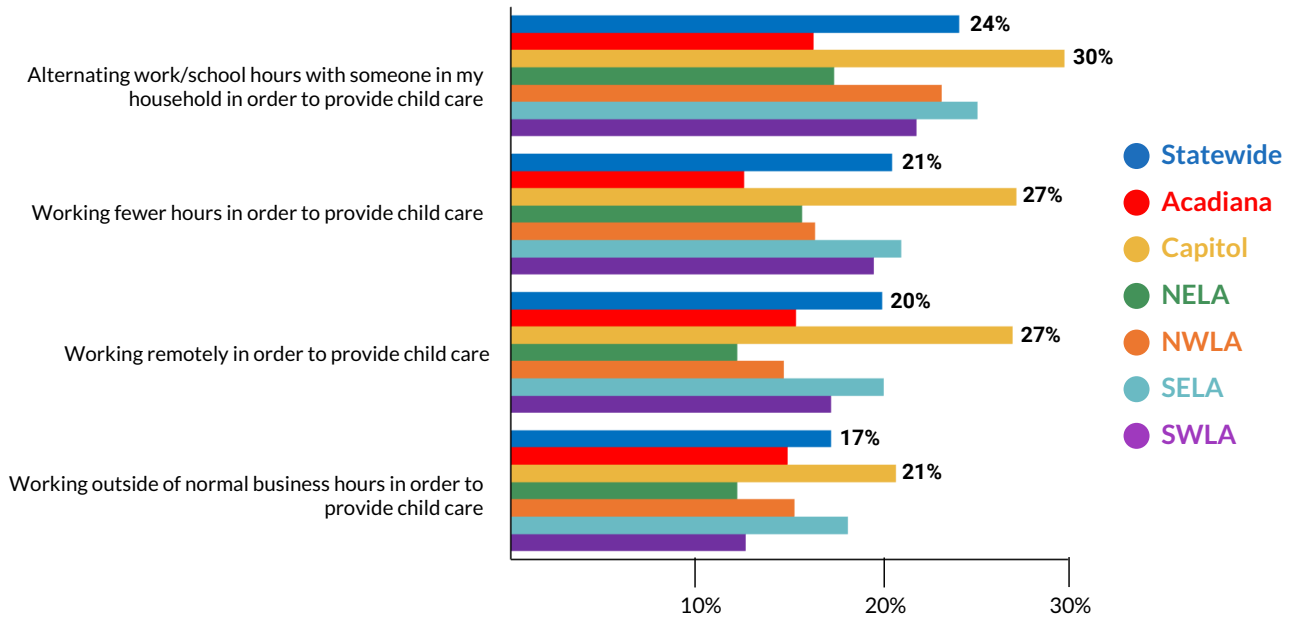


*Response option not available in 2020
 Questions: [2020] Since March 2020, have you or another parent/guardian in your household experienced any of the following? Please check all that apply. / [2021] Since April 2021, have you or another parent/guardian in your household experienced any of the following? Please check all that apply.
 Note: Respondents may have selected more than one response. Percentages may total to more than 100%.



Parents in the Capitol Region were more likely to have alternated work or school hours, worked fewer hours, worked remotely, and/or worked outside of normal business hours to provide care for their children.

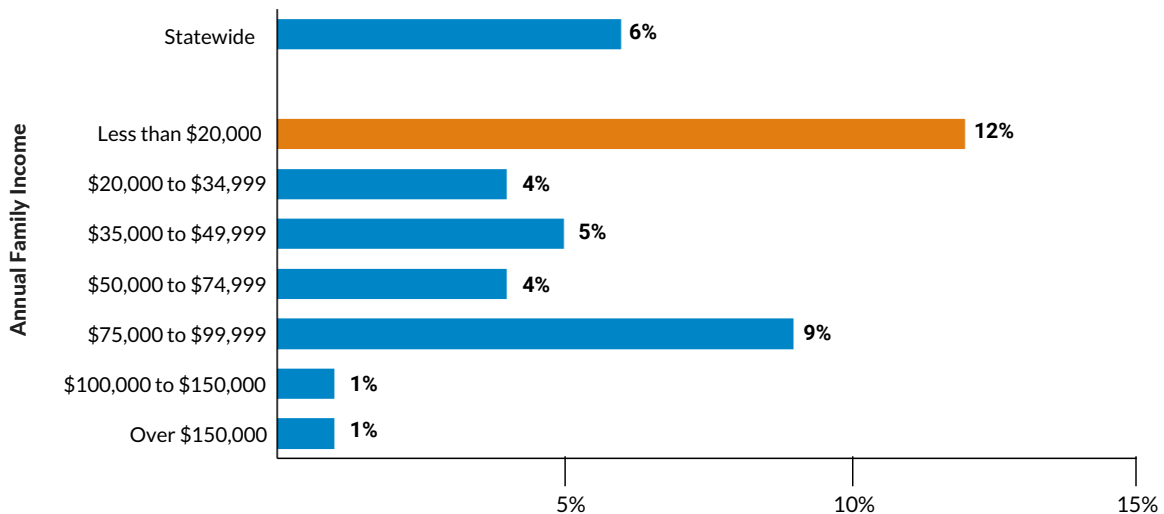
Figure 8
Selected Schedule Adjustments Related to Providing Child Care Experienced by Responding Parents



Question: Since April 2021, 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%.

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

Figure 9
Percent of Responding Parents Who Quit Job to Provide Child Care



Question: Since April 2021, have you or another parent/guardian in your household experienced any of the following? Please check all that apply.

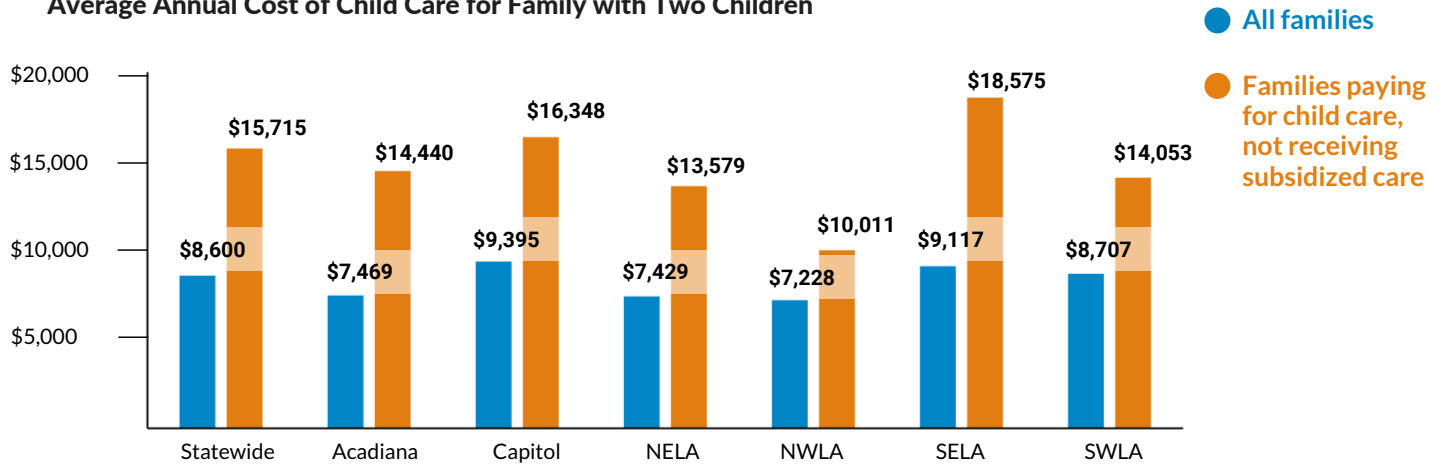
The cost of child care remains high, with child care costing the average Louisiana family almost \$9,000 a year.

On average, families in Louisiana reported currently paying **\$358 per child per month** for child care — for a family with two children, that would translate to **\$8,600 per year**.

Families with infants paid over one-third more for child care than the average, **\$488 per child per month**.

For families paying for child care and not receiving any type of subsidized care, the average monthly cost of child care was \$655 per child per month, or **\$15,715 per year for a family with two children**.

Figure 10
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, not receiving subsidized care" only include respondents paying at least \$1 and who indicated they are not receiving subsidized care.

Nearly 60% of families received some type of subsidized child care in 2021, either through enrollment in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and/or a free child care program, a 25 percentage point increase compared to 2020.

Table 11
Receipt of Subsidized Child Care by Responding Parents

Response	2021							2020
	Acadiana	Capitol	NELA	NWLA	SELA	SWLA	Statewide	Statewide
Received any subsidized care	63%	54%	59%	61%	56%	50%	57%	32%
Received child care subsidy/CCAP	51%	37%	46%	55%	39%	39%	43%	18%
Child care provided at no cost / for free through publicly funded program at a school or child care center	11%	17%	15%	7%	18%	17%	15%	9%
Child care provided at no cost / for free by family, friend, or neighbor	1%	4%	2%	3%	3%	2%	3%	6%
Child care provided at no cost / for free by employer	2%	1%	1%	0%	1%	2%	1%	--
Did not receive subsidized care	37%	46%	41%	39%	44%	50%	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.

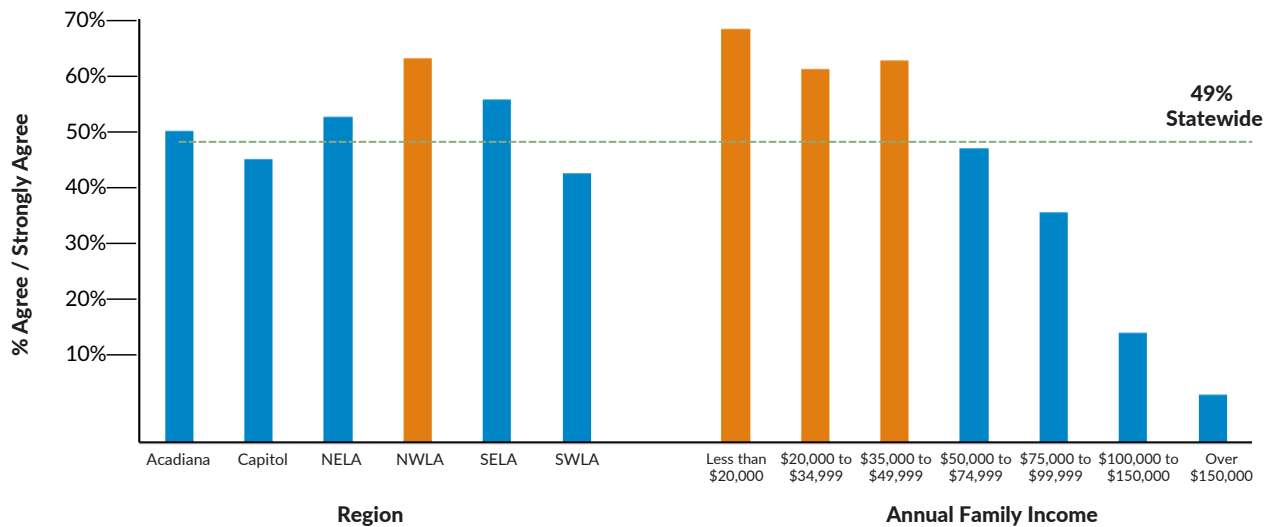
Note: Respondents may have selected more than one response. Percentages may total to more than 100%.

Without subsidies for child care and other household essentials, working families with young children will struggle even more to afford basic necessities.

Almost half (49%) of parents were concerned about being unable to afford child care.

Parents in southwest and northwest Louisiana, as well as those with family incomes between \$35,000 and \$100,000 per year, were more likely to be concerned about the inability to afford child care than other regions of the state.

Figure 12
Percent of Responding Parents Concerned About Affording Child Care

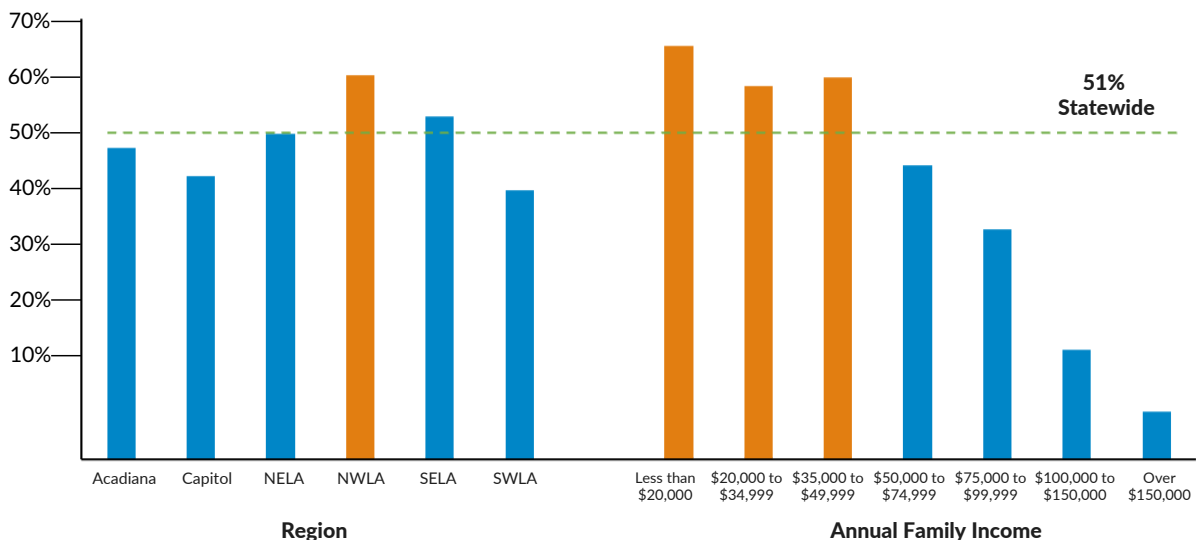


Question: Thinking about your family's current situation, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? "I am worried about being able to afford child care"

Over 50% of parents indicated having trouble paying for basic household expenses, including utilities, child care, food, and clothing, in the prior six months.

Parents in northwest Louisiana and those with family incomes below \$50,000 per year were more likely to have had trouble paying for basic household expenses.

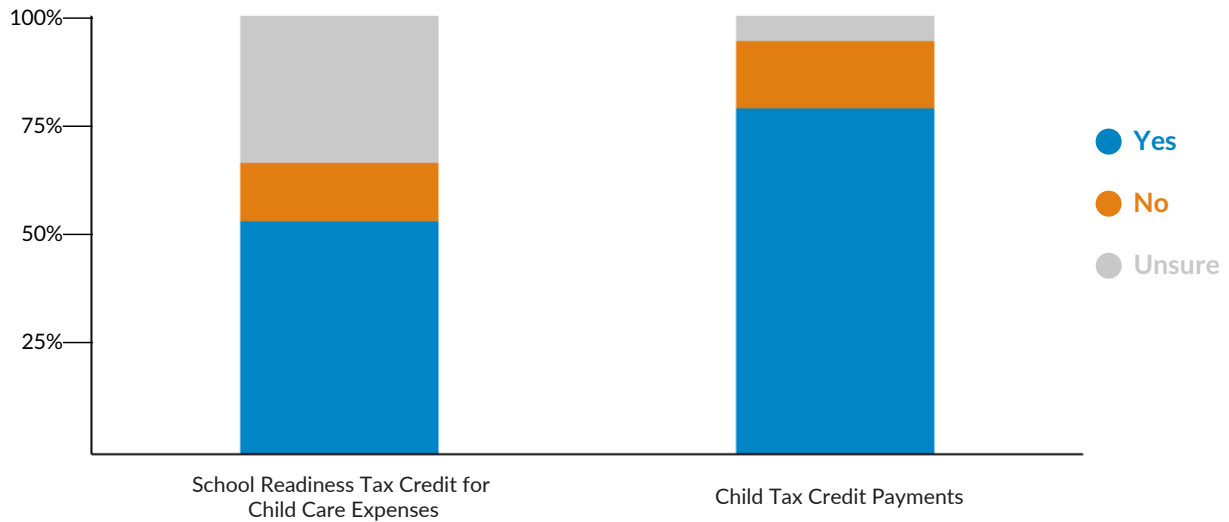
Figure 13
Percent of Responding Parents Having Trouble Paying for Any Basic Household Expense



Question: Since April 2021, have you had trouble paying for any of the following for your family? Please check all that apply.

Over half of parents (53%) claimed or planned to claim School Readiness Tax Credits for Child Care Expenses on their 2020 Louisiana tax return, and **79%** reported receiving the monthly federal Child Tax Credit payments that began in July 2021.

Figure 14
Receipt of Certain Tax Credits by Responding Parents



Questions: Did you, or do you plan to, claim the School Readiness Tax Credit for Child Care Expenses on your 2020 Louisiana tax return? The School Readiness Tax Credit for Child Care Expenses is allowed for taxpayers who have a qualified dependent under the age of 6 who attended a child care facility that participates in the quality rating program and has earned at least 2 stars. / Did you receive any of the monthly Child Tax Credit payments from the federal government that began in July 2021? Tax Credits increased in the American Rescue Plan that passed Congress in March 2021. Eligible families started receiving advance payment of the tax credit in July 2021, up to \$300 for children under age 6 and \$250 for children age 6 to 17.

Many families still experience child care challenges due to COVID-19 and struggle to easily find child care.

Almost one-quarter of parents said it was difficult to find their current child care arrangements.

Parents in the Capitol Region and southwest Louisiana, as well as parents who did not receive any type of subsidized care, were more likely to report difficulty finding child care.

Figure 15

Percent of Responding Parents Reporting Difficulty Finding Child Care Arrangements

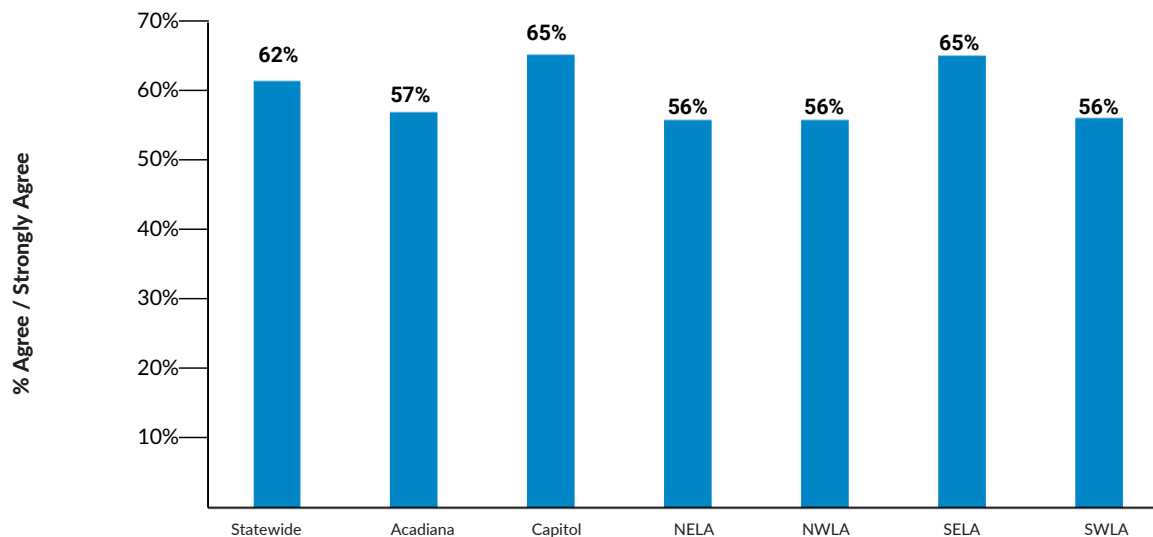


Question: How easy or difficult was it to find your current child care arrangement(s)?

Over 60% of parents were concerned about the spread of COVID-19 through child care.

Figure 16

Percent of Responding Parents Concerned About Spread of COVID-19 Through Child Care



Question: Thinking about your family's current situation, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? "I am concerned about the spread of COVID-19 through child care"

Over 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 closure.

Table 17
Percent of Responding Families with Parent Work Absences Due to Child Care Closure

Response	Acadiana	Capitol	NELA	NWLA	SELA	SWLA	Statewide
0 days	24%	25%	27%	29%	21%	17%	24%
1 to 5 days	29%	30%	28%	28%	23%	36%	28%
6 to 10 days	19%	19%	25%	16%	19%	16%	19%
11 to 15 days	12%	7%	11%	13%	14%	16%	11%
16 to 20 days	6%	4%	5%	3%	6%	3%	5%
21 to 30 days	5%	10%	4%	7%	8%	9%	8%
More than 30 days	4%	5%	0%	3%	9%	4%	5%

Question: Since July 2021, 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.



APPENDIX

Survey Methodology

LPIC developed and administered the Louisiana Child Care Parent Poll survey online through Survey Monkey from October 10, 2021, through November 3, 2021. 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 Way, 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 2021 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 at 11am Central Time. The first text message was sent to 28,848 phone numbers. After the first text message, approximately 1,048 provided phone numbers were identified as non-cell phone numbers and removed from subsequent texts. Another 352 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, 2,028 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>	15%	18%
Capitol Region <i>(Ascension, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Iberville, Livingston, Pointe Coupee, St. Helena, Tangipahoa, West Baton Rouge, West Feliciana)</i>	30%	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>	30%	33%
Southwest Louisiana <i>(Allen, Beauregard, Calcasieu, Cameron, Jefferson Davis)</i>	6%	7%

Table A2
Children in Household of Survey Respondents

Number of Children in Home	Percent of Survey Respondents
1	31%
2	36%
3	21%
4	7%
5	3%
6	1%

Table A3
Ages of Children in Household of Survey Respondents

Age of Children in Home	Percent of Survey Respondents
Younger than 12 months	7%
12 months to 24 months	9%
2 years old	13%
3 years old	17%
4 years old	14%
5 to 12 years old	31%
13 to 18 years old	8%

Table A4
Race/Ethnicity of Survey Respondents

Race/Ethnicity	Percent of Survey Respondents
American Indian / Native American / Alaska Native	0.4%
Asian	1%
Black / African American	3%
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	0.1%
White	33%
Multiracial	2%
Not Provided	30%

Table A5
Family Income of Survey Respondents

Family Income Range	Percent of Survey Respondents
Less than \$20,000	29%
\$20,000 to \$34,999	28%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	10%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	9%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	7%
\$100,000 to \$150,000	10%
Over \$150,000	7%

