

# JUST OUT OF REACH

## Louisiana Working Families' Continued Struggle to Access & Afford Child Care

*The Louisiana Policy Institute for Children (LPIC) conducted its annual survey of Louisiana parents and guardians with children under the age of 5 in the fall of 2023 in partnership with Agenda for Children, Louisiana Department of Education, and Women United of Southeast Louisiana. The survey focused on the child care arrangements of surveyed families, including their needs and experiences related to child care.*

### 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.
- **Nearly 60%** of parents indicated having trouble paying for basic household expenses, including utilities, food, child care, and clothing, in the prior six months.

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

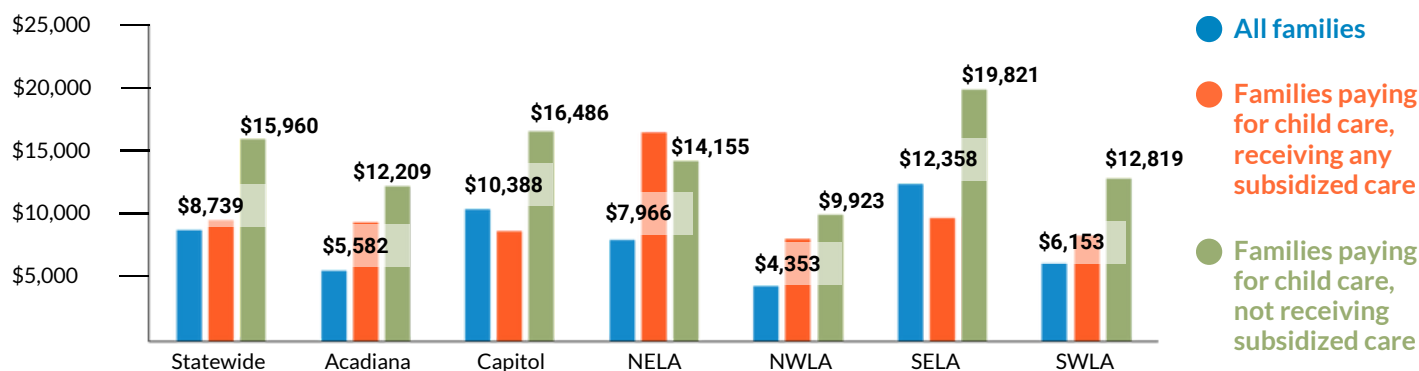
- **Three-fourths of parents** reported having to take at least one day off from work in the prior three months because of a child care disruption.
- **Over half of parents** reported having child care during typical weekday business hours, while an additional 30% needed but did not have child care during those times.
- **Almost 25% of parents** said it was difficult to find their current child care arrangements.
- **One out of 10 parents** used their current child care arrangements because it was 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.



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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.

## 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 METHODOLOGY

LPIC developed and administered the Louisiana Child Care Parent Poll survey online through Survey Monkey from October 18, 2023, through November 1, 2023. 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.

