

# STRUGGLING TO RECOVER:

## The Impacts of COVID-19 on Louisiana Families with Young Children

Survey Findings from September 21 - October 6, 2020





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You can find this report and additional information at [www.policyinstitutela.org](http://www.policyinstitutela.org).

## OVERVIEW

The Louisiana Policy Institute for Children (LPIC), with partners, is conducting a series of surveys on the impact of the COVID-10 pandemic on child care in Louisiana. The first surveys focused on child care providers and captured how child care fared through the initial closure and subsequent reopening of the state.

**Two-thirds of children age 5 and under in Louisiana have both parents or their single parent in the workforce, leading working families to rely on early care and education programs to support parent employment and child development.<sup>1</sup>**

Previous research conducted by the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children (LPIC) indicates child care breakdowns have a significant negative impact on Louisiana's economy. Among other things, this research shows that one in six Louisiana workers with young children had to quit a job because of child care issues, and one in 13 Louisiana workers with young children had been fired due to recurring child care issues.<sup>2</sup> These challenges for working parents end up costing Louisiana employers \$816 million annually and the state almost \$84 million in tax revenue.<sup>3</sup> On top of this, national research consistently shows that most child care centers operate on tight profit margins, which is likely to leave them particularly vulnerable in economic downturns.<sup>4</sup>

**And then the COVID-19 pandemic hit, having wide-ranging and devastating impacts on Louisiana's people and economy.**

In the first six months of the COVID-19 pandemic, families faced shifting education and care options for their children as K-12 schools largely remained closed until the fall and many child care providers closed or had reduced enrollment capacity due to public health requirements. At the same time, record numbers of Louisianans filed for unemployment, peaking around 361,000 in April and May.<sup>5</sup> Unemployment rates began to decline through the summer, as more businesses were able to reopen and employees returned to work, and by early October the number of unemployed Louisianans averaged around 205,000.

Over the summer, the percentage of child care providers that temporarily closed fell from a peak of 70% in April to 10% in June, though providers statewide reported estimated losses of \$137.5 million by that point. By the fall, as schools reopened and child care provider capacity somewhat increased under revised COVID-19 related guidelines, care and education arrangements for children began to stabilize, although the long-term implications of the pandemic on the child care sector's financial viability remains unknown.<sup>6</sup>

**To learn more about how Louisiana families with children under the age of 5 have been impacted by, and managed during, the COVID-19 pandemic,** LPIC, with partners, conducted a survey of Louisiana parents and guardians in the fall of 2020. Partners included Agenda for Children, Louisiana Department of Education, New Orleans Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, Urban League of Louisiana, and Women United of Southeast Louisiana.

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1. Louisiana Policy Institute for Children. (2017). Losing Ground: How Child Care Impacts Louisiana's Workforce Productivity and the State Economy. Retrieved online at: [https://0cd902dd-9de1-4dae-8781-4a355ebda8df.filesusr.com/ugd/20d35d\\_476f91b779d74b74937ccdd9965d74e3.pdf](https://0cd902dd-9de1-4dae-8781-4a355ebda8df.filesusr.com/ugd/20d35d_476f91b779d74b74937ccdd9965d74e3.pdf)

2. Louisiana Policy Institute for Children. (2017). Losing Ground: How Child Care Impacts Louisiana's Workforce Productivity and the State Economy. Retrieved online at: [https://0cd902dd-9de1-4dae-8781-4a355ebda8df.filesusr.com/ugd/20d35d\\_476f91b779d74b74937ccdd9965d74e3.pdf](https://0cd902dd-9de1-4dae-8781-4a355ebda8df.filesusr.com/ugd/20d35d_476f91b779d74b74937ccdd9965d74e3.pdf)

3. Louisiana Policy Institute for Children. (2017). Losing Ground: How Child Care Impacts Louisiana's Workforce Productivity and the State Economy. Retrieved online at: [https://0cd902dd-9de1-4dae-8781-4a355ebda8df.filesusr.com/ugd/20d35d\\_476f91b779d74b74937ccdd9965d74e3.pdf](https://0cd902dd-9de1-4dae-8781-4a355ebda8df.filesusr.com/ugd/20d35d_476f91b779d74b74937ccdd9965d74e3.pdf)

4. Center for American Progress. (2018). Where Does Your Child Care Dollar Go? Retrieved online at: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2018/02/14/446330/child-care-dollar-go/>

5. Louisiana Workforce Commission, available online at <http://www2.laworks.net/Homepage.asp>

6. Previous surveys indicate child care providers have sustained significant financial losses, and though most have reopened, it is unclear how many are sustainable in the long term. See the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children's surveys of child care providers at [www.policyinstitute.org/covid-19-impact-child-care](http://www.policyinstitute.org/covid-19-impact-child-care).

## SUMMARY OF SURVEY FINDINGS

This survey provides insights into the needs and challenges of families with young children in Louisiana, many of whom are struggling as the COVID-19 pandemic endures:

### **Even in an economy affected by COVID-19, families with young children continue to need child care to support parent employment or education, and parents must adjust schedules to fill child care gaps.**

- Most responding parents in Louisiana were working or in school, full time and outside the home.
- More than three-quarters of families with young children relied on some type of formal child care outside the home.
- Parents, on average, reported their children were in child care for 39 hours per week.
- Almost two-thirds of parents experienced some sort of adjustment to their work or school schedule to provide child care during the pandemic.

### **Families are struggling to afford child care and basic necessities, with child care costing the average Louisiana family almost \$10,000 a year.**

- On average, families in Louisiana reported currently paying \$399 per child per month for child care — for a family with two children that would translate to \$9,568 per year.
- Nearly one-third of families received some type of subsidized child care, either through enrollment in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and/or a free child care program.
- Almost half of parents were concerned about being unable to afford child care due to the high cost.
- Nearly 1-in-2 parents worried about being able to afford their family's basic needs.

### **Working families continue to rely on child care even in the face of reduced income, increased stress, and concern about the spread of COVID-19.**

- The majority of parents in Louisiana reported the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted their lives and increased their stress level as a parent.
- Almost half of parents saw their family's monthly income decrease during the pandemic.
- Nearly one-fifth of parents reported their work or school hours have decreased compared to February 2020.
- Almost 1-in-6 parents reported another adult in their household lost their job due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- One-third of parents were concerned about their employment.
- Almost two-thirds of parents were concerned about the spread of COVID-19 through child care.

### **Economic challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic hit families of color and lower income families especially hard.**

- Unemployment rates were nearly twice as high for Black/African American parents and nearly three times as high for parents with a family income below \$20,000 per year.
- Parents of color and parents with family incomes below \$50,000 per year were more likely to have seen their monthly income decrease.
- Black/African American and multiracial families and families with incomes below \$50,000 per year were more likely to have an adult in the household experiencing job loss due to COVID-19.
- Parents of color and parents with family incomes below \$50,000 expressed concern about being able to afford their family's basic needs at higher rates.

## WORKING FAMILIES CAN'T WAIT, THE TIME TO FUND CHILD CARE IS NOW

Louisiana's economic recovery from COVID-19 relies on working families, and, as these survey results show, working families rely on child care. To support all facets of the recovery, Louisiana must:

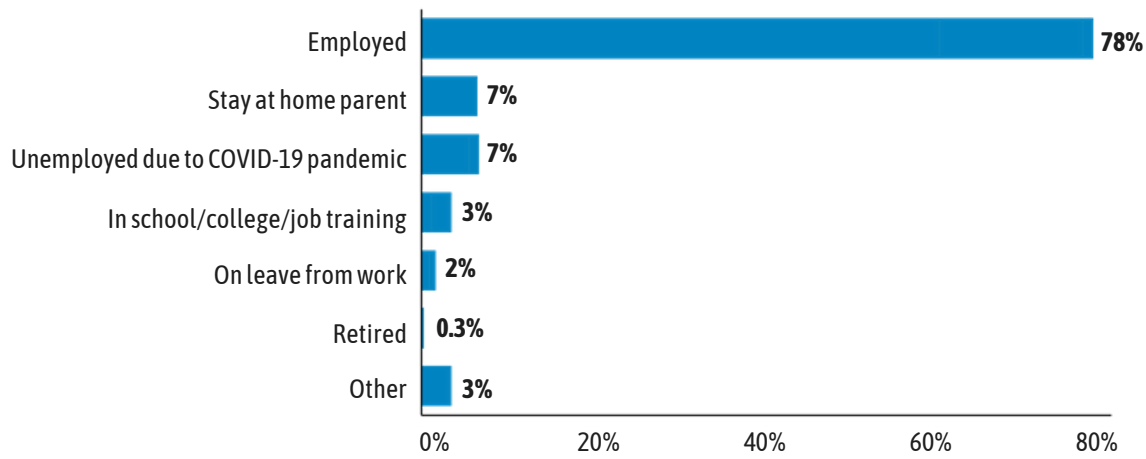
- **Increase funding for child care assistance at the state and local levels** to support both families struggling to afford child care for their young children and rebounding businesses who need access to a reliable workforce.
- **Maintain expanded eligibility for essential workers to the Child Care Assistance Program**, enabling parents in our most critical fields to afford quality care while they work.
- **Support the child care sector through public investments** to increase the availability of quality, reliable child care for working parents, keeping in mind health and safety precautions.
- **Direct any additional COVID-19 related federal investments toward supporting child care providers** with keeping their doors open and rates affordable as they balance increased health and safety requirements, higher operational costs, and lower enrollment capacities.

Even in an economy affected by COVID-19, families with young children continue to need child care to support parent employment or education, and parents must adjust schedules to fill child care gaps.



of responding parents in Louisiana were working or in school, most full time (74%) and outside of the home (61%).

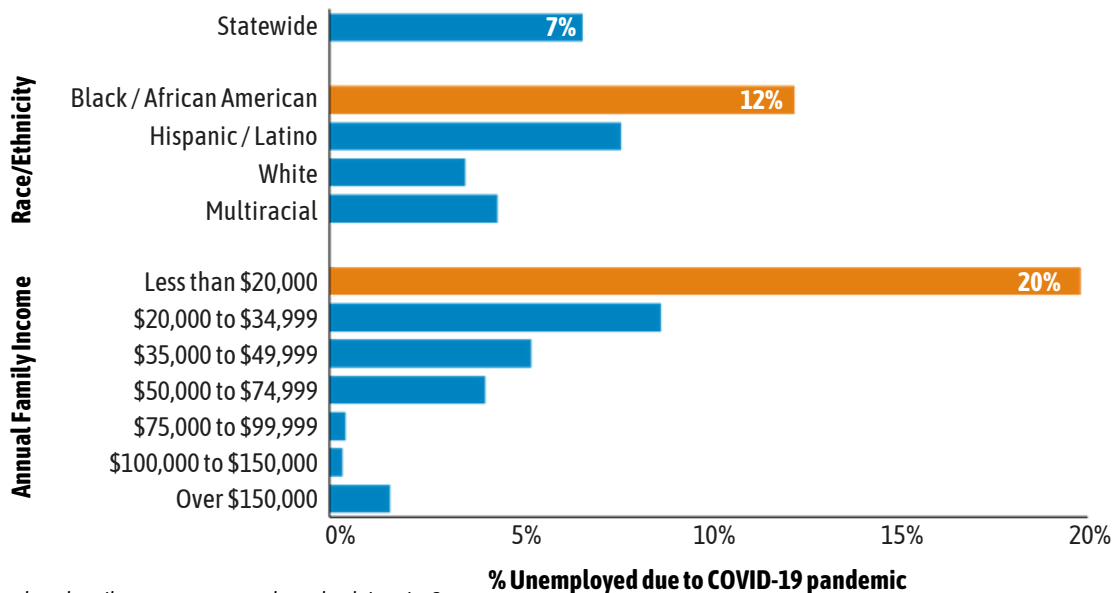
**Figure 1**  
**Work or School Situation of Responding Parents**



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

While 7% of parents reported being unemployed due to COVID-19, that rate was nearly **twice as high (12%) for Black/African American parents**, and nearly **three times as high (20%) for parents with a family income below \$20,000 per year**.

**Figure 2**  
**Unemployment Rates of Responding Parents**

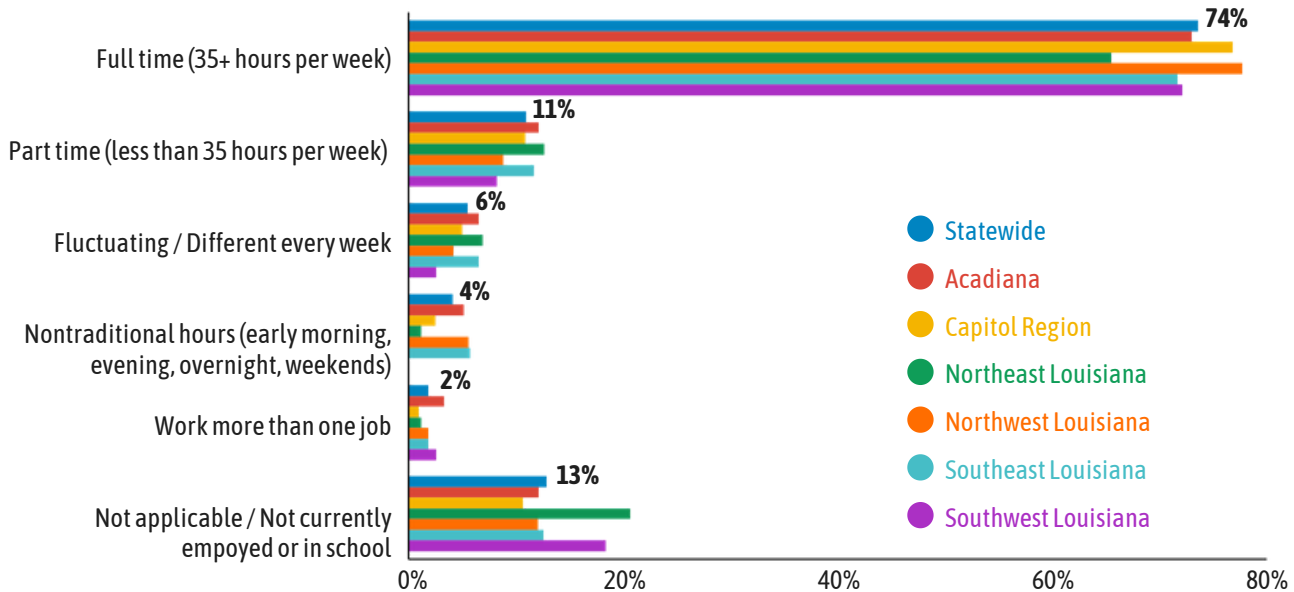


Question: What best describes your current work or school situation?

Note: Due to small number of responses (N size), American Indian/Native American/Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander responses not included.

**Even in an economy affected by COVID-19, families with young children continue to need child care to support parent employment or education, and parents must adjust schedules to fill child care gaps.**

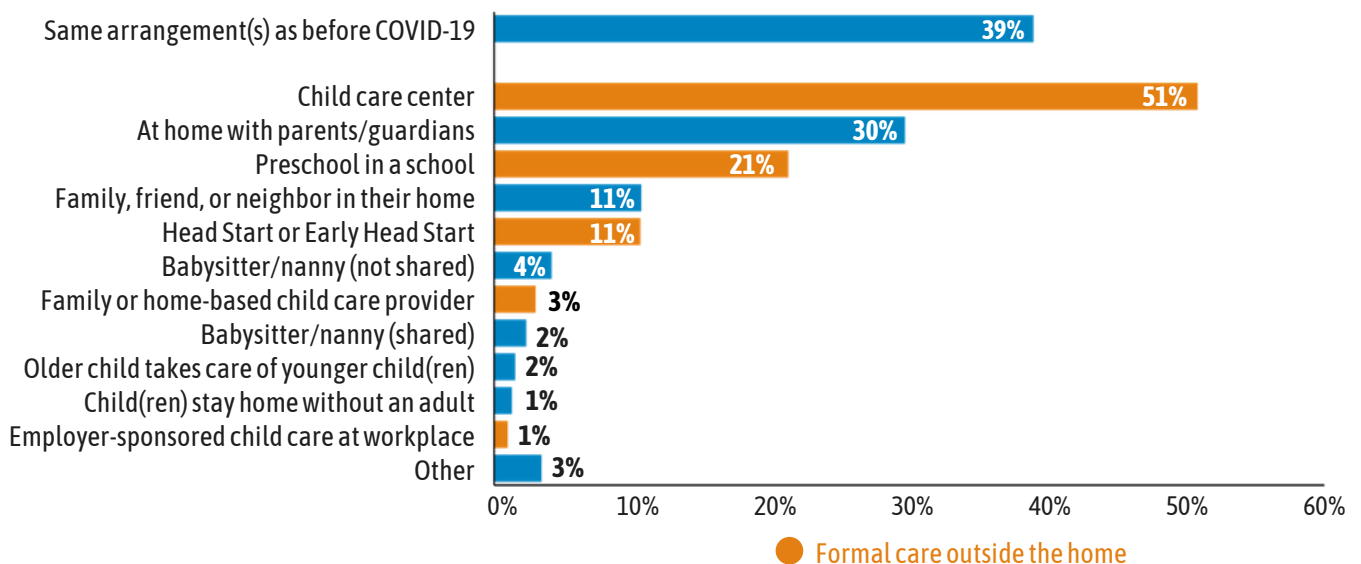
**Figure 3**  
**Work or School Schedule for Responding Parents**



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%.

**More than three-quarters (78%)** of families with young children relied 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 4**  
**Current Child Care Arrangements Used by Responding Parents**



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%.



**Even in an economy affected by COVID-19, families with young children continue to need child care to support parent employment or education, and parents must adjust schedules to fill child care gaps.**

Parents, on average, reported their children were in child care for **39 hours per week**, and **78%** of parents reported needing child care for **at least 30 hours per week**. This is similar to before the COVID-19 pandemic, with parents reporting that children were in child care for an average of 41 hours per week and 80% of parents reported needing child care for at least 30 hours per week.

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

Weekly Child Care Hours Used	Before Pandemic	Current	Percentage Change
0 hours	1%	3%	+2%
1 to 10 hours	6%	6%	--
11 to 20 hours	3%	5%	+2%
21 to 30 hours	9%	9%	--
31 to 40 hours	54%	56%	+2%
41 to 50 hours	19%	16%	-3%
51 to 60 hours	2%	2%	--
More than 60 hours	5%	4%	-1%

Questions: From August 2019 to February 2020, how many hours per week did you typically use these child arrangements for your child(ren)? How many hours per week do you typically use your current child care arrangement(s) for your child(ren)?



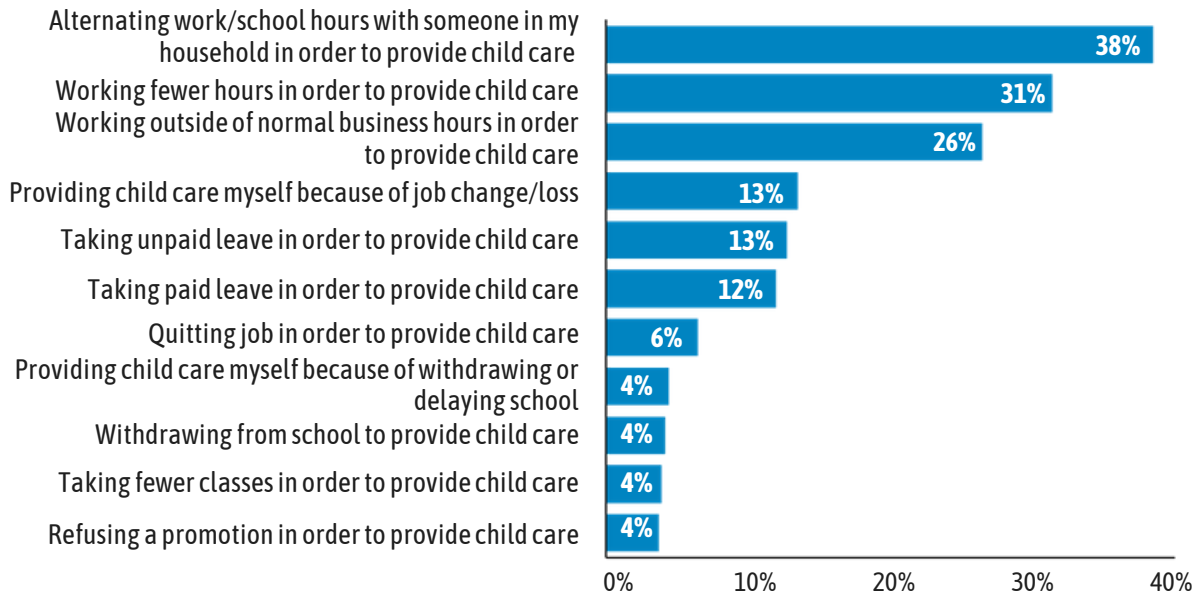
**65%** of parents experienced some sort of adjustment to their work or school schedule to provide child care during the pandemic

**38%** of parents **alternated work or school hours** to provide child care, **31%** **worked fewer hours** to provide child care, **26%** **worked outside of normal business hours** to provide child care, and **6%** **quit their job** to provide child care.



**Even in an economy affected by COVID-19, families with young children continue to need child care to support parent employment or education, and parents must adjust schedules to fill child care gaps.**

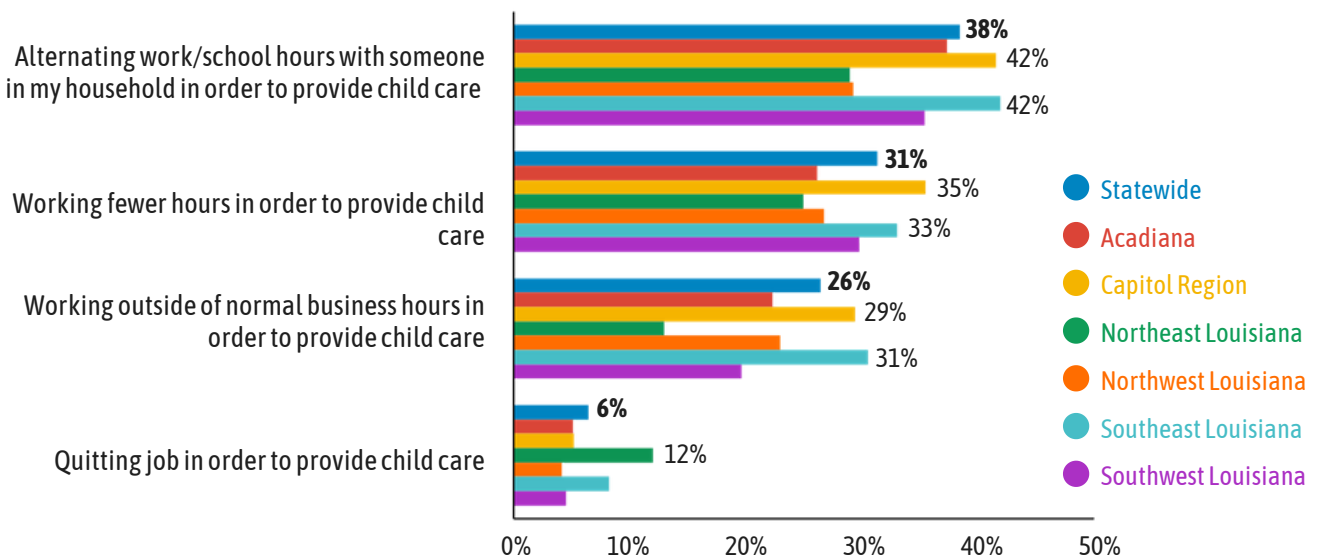
**Figure 6**  
**Schedule Adjustments Related to Providing Child Care Experienced by Responding Parents**



Question: Since March 2020, 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** and **southeast Louisiana** were more likely to have **alternated work or school hours, worked fewer hours, and/or worked outside of normal business hours** to provide care for their children. Parents in **northeast Louisiana** were more likely to have **quit their job** in order to care for their children.

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



Question: Since March 2020, 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%.

**Families are struggling to afford child care and basic necessities, with child care costing the average Louisiana family almost \$10,000 a year.**

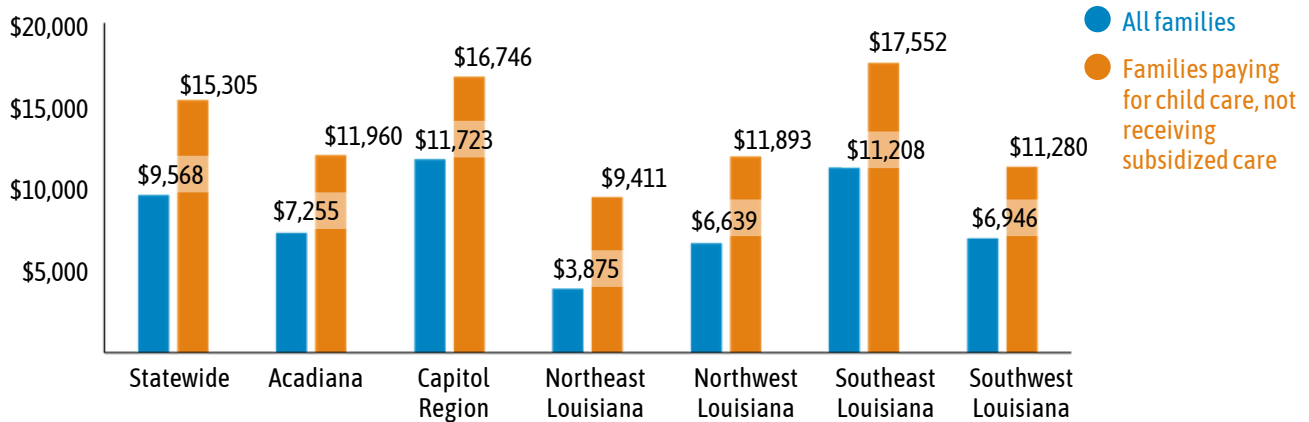
**\$399** The average amount of money families in Louisiana reported currently paying **per child per month for child care.**

For a family with two children that would translate to **\$9,568 per year for child care**

**For families paying for child care and not receiving any type of subsidized care,** the average monthly cost of child care was

**\$638 per child per month**      **\$15,305 per year** for a family with two children

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



Questions: 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. / 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: 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 **one-third** of families received some type of **subsidized child care**, either through enrollment in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and/or a free child care program. Families in **Acadiana** and **northeast Louisiana** were more likely to receive some sort of subsidized child care.

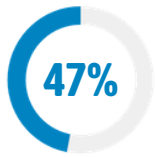
**Table 9**  
**Receipt of Subsidized Child Care by Responding Parents**

Response	Acadiana	Capitol Region	Northeast Louisiana	Northwest Louisiana	Southeast Louisiana	Southwest Louisiana	Statewide
<b>Received any subsidized care</b>	42%	28%	50%	37%	30%	17%	32%
Received child care subsidy/CCAP	32%	19%	25%	22%	14%	7%	18%
Child care provided at no cost / for free through publicly funded program at a school or child care center	7%	6%	17%	8%	11%	4%	9%
Child care provided at no cost / for free by family, friend, or neighbor	4%	4%	11%	6%	6%	6%	6%
<b>Did not receive subsidized care</b>	58%	72%	50%	63%	70%	83%	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%.

**Families are struggling to afford child care and basic necessities, with child care costing the average Louisiana family almost \$10,000 a year.**



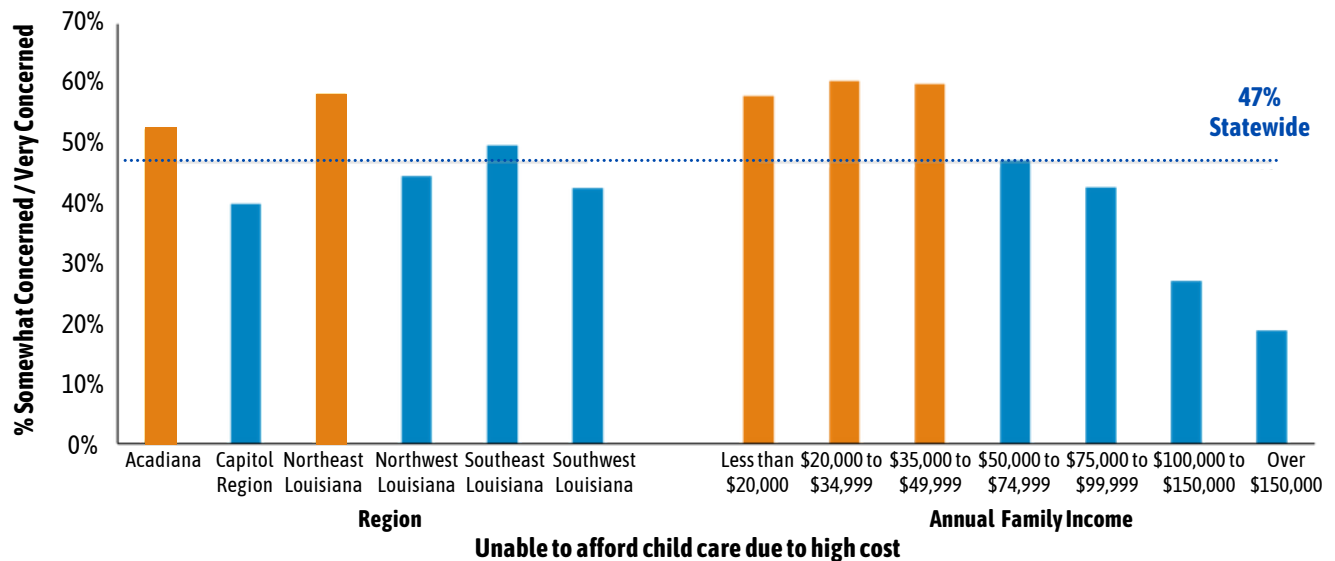
of parents were concerned about being unable to afford child care due to the high cost.



of parents were concerned about being unable to afford child care due to a job change or loss.

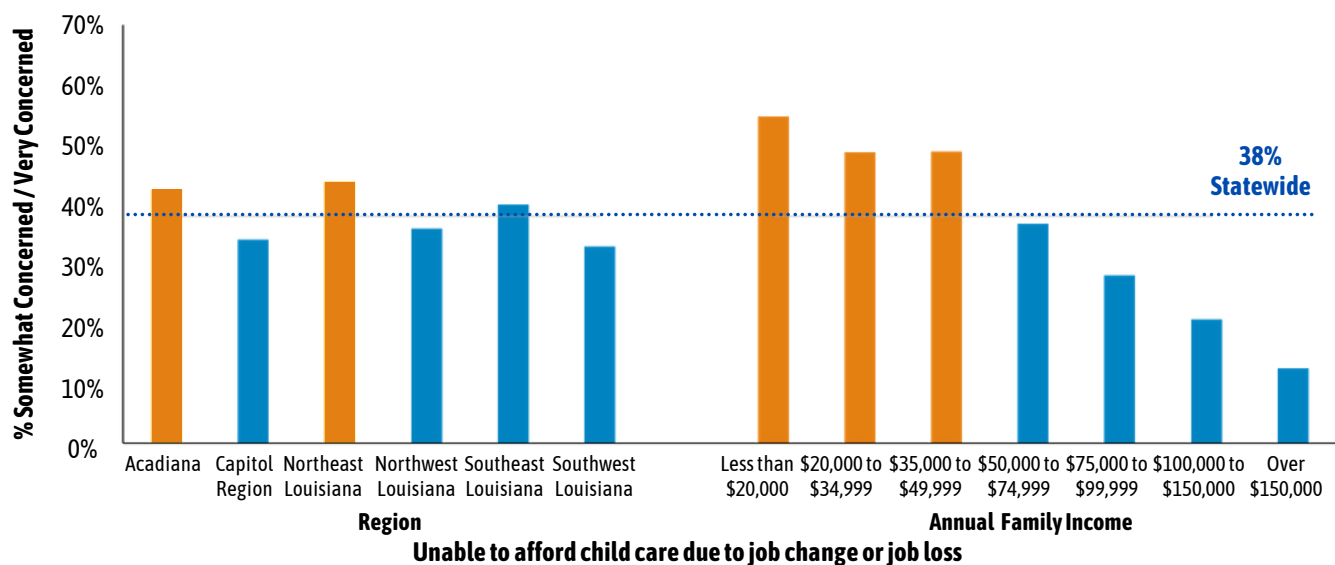
Parents in **Acadiana** and **northeast Louisiana**, as well as those with **family incomes below \$50,000 per year**, were more likely to be concerned about inability to afford child care than other regions of the state.

**Figure 10**  
Percent of Responding Parents Concerned About Affording Child Care Due to High Cost



Question: When thinking about enrolling your child(ren) in child care outside of your home right now, how concerned are you, if at all, about each of the following?  
"Unable to afford child care due to high cost"

**Figure 11**  
Percent of Responding Parents Concerned About Affording Child Care Due to Job Change or Loss



Question: When thinking about enrolling your child(ren) in child care outside of your home right now, how concerned are you, if at all, about each of the following?  
"Unable to afford child care due to job change or loss"

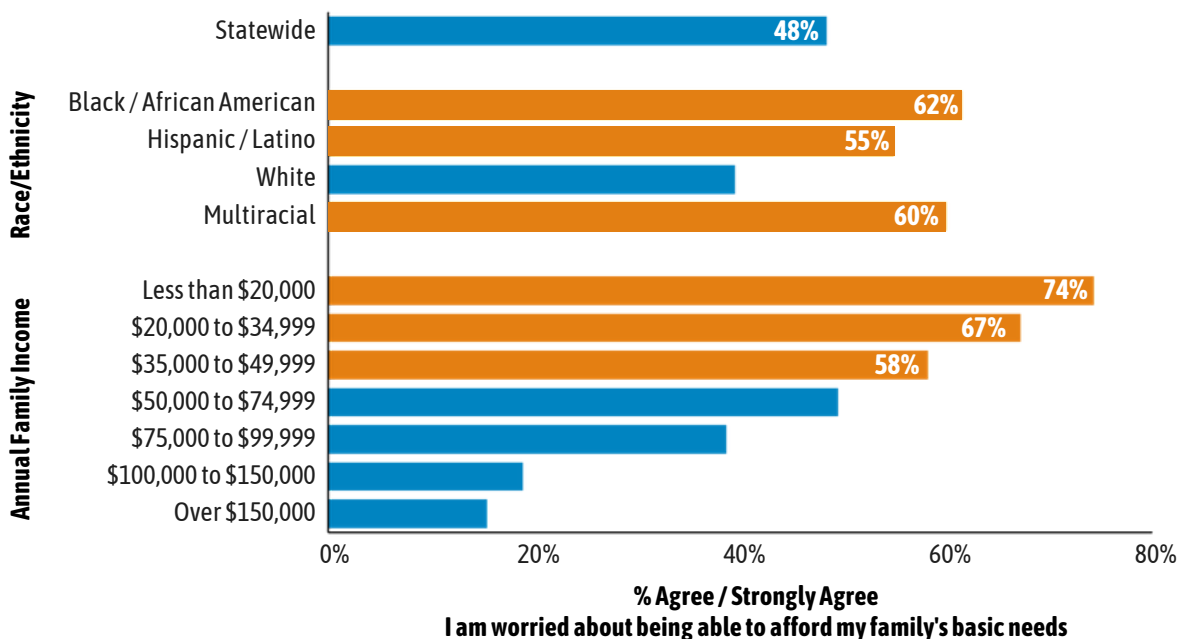
**Families are struggling to afford child care and basic necessities, with child care costing the average Louisiana family almost \$10,000 a year.**



**48%** of parents worried about being able to afford their family's basic needs.

Parents of color and parents with family incomes below \$50,000 were more likely to express concern, with over 50% of each group worried about affording basic needs for their family.

**Figure 12**  
**Percent of Responding Parents Concerned About Affording Basic Needs**



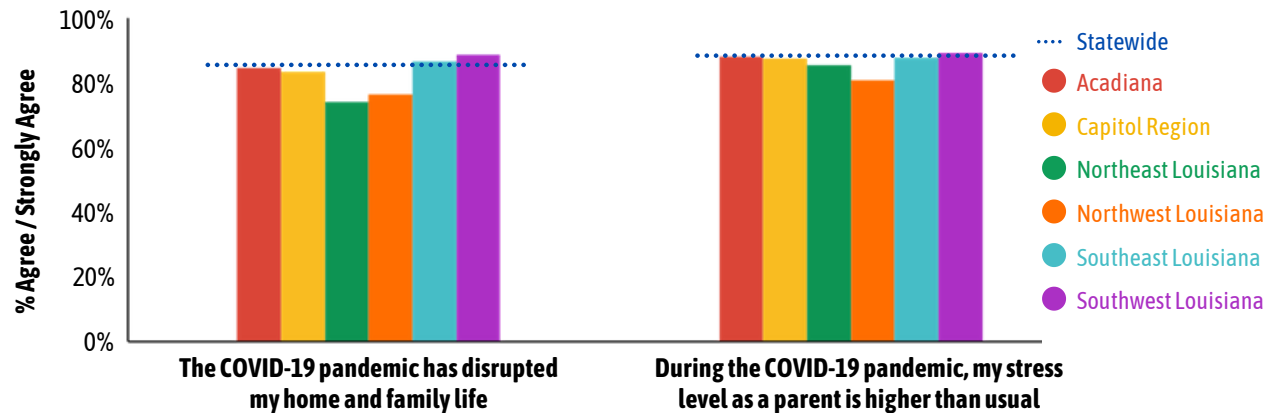
Question: Thinking about your family's current situation, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? "I am worried about being able to afford my family's basic needs (rent/mortgage, food, utilities, essential supplies, other bills)"

Note: Due to small number of responses (N size), American Indian/Native American/Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander responses not included.

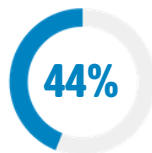
## Working families continue to rely on child care even in the face of reduced income, increased stress, and concern about the spread of COVID-19.

Over **80%** of parents in Louisiana reported the COVID-19 pandemic has **disrupted their lives** and **increased their stress level as a parent**. Parents in **central and south Louisiana** were somewhat more likely to report disruption and stress than parents in north Louisiana.

**Figure 13**  
Responding Parents Experienced Disruption and Increased Stress



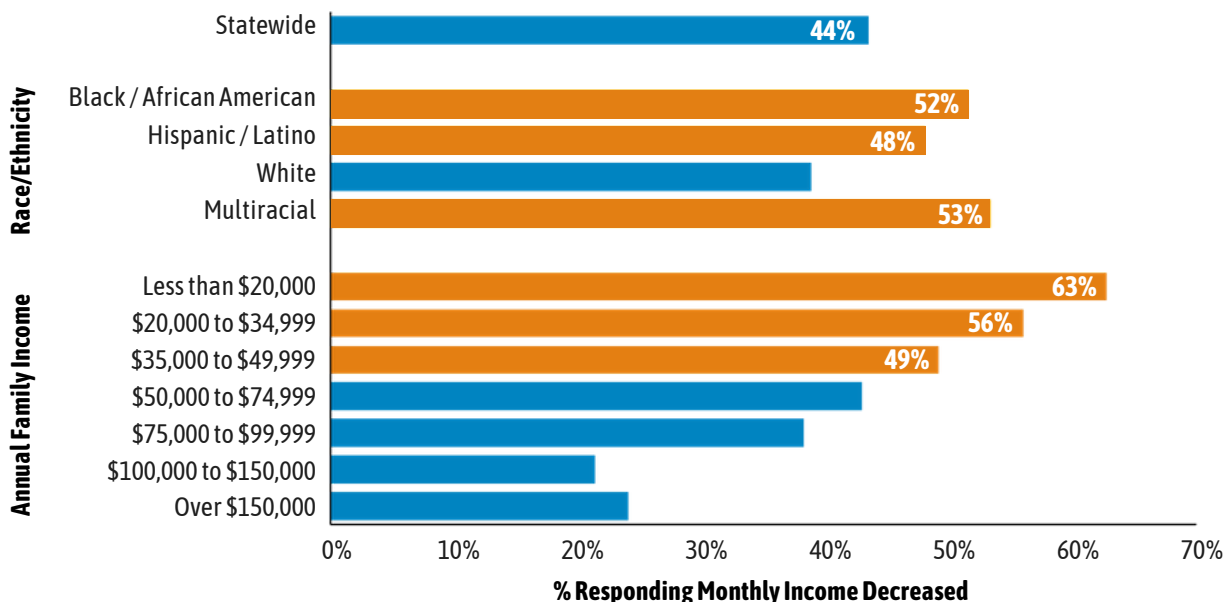
Question: Thinking about your family's current situation, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? "The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted my home and family life", "During the COVID-19 pandemic, my stress level as a parent is higher than usual"



**44%** of parents saw their family's monthly income decrease during the pandemic.

This impacted **parents of color** and **parents with family incomes below \$50,000 per year** at greater rates, with **more than half** seeing their monthly income decrease during the pandemic.

**Figure 14**  
Percent of Responding Parents Reporting Monthly Income Decreased



Question: Compared to February 2020, is your family's current monthly income higher or lower?

Note: Due to small number of responses (N size), American Indian/Native American/Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander responses not included.

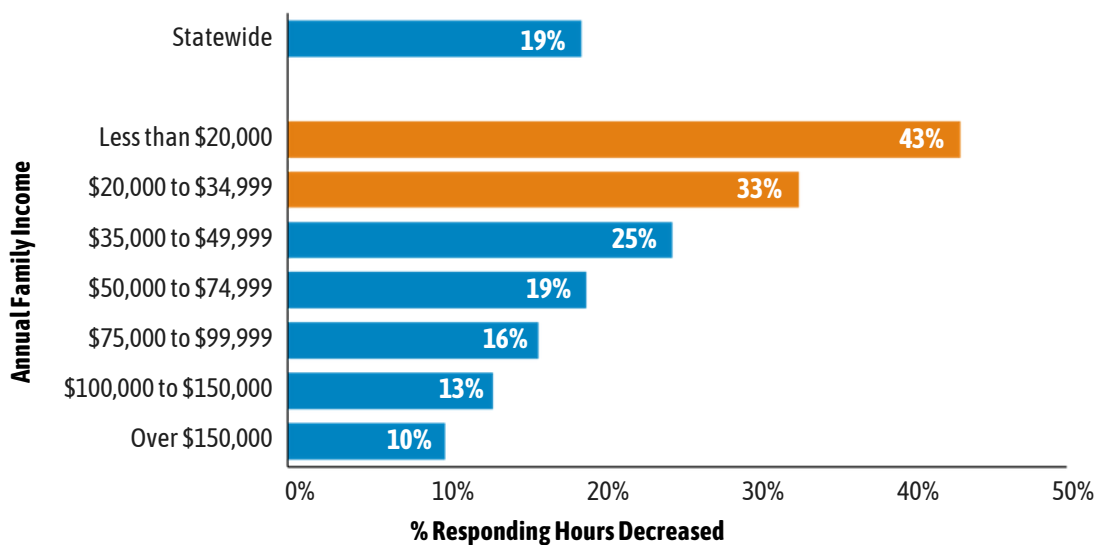
**Working families continue to rely on child care even in the face of reduced income, increased stress, and concern about the spread of COVID-19.**



**19%** of parents reported their work or school hours have decreased compared to February 2020.

This percentage doubles to **38%** for parents with family incomes below \$35,000 per year, which is almost **three times** the rate (13%) for parents with family incomes above \$75,000 per year.

**Figure 15**  
**Percent of Responding Parents Reporting Hours Decreased**



Question: Compared to February 2020, is your current work or school schedule/hours different due to the COVID-19 pandemic? Please check all that apply.



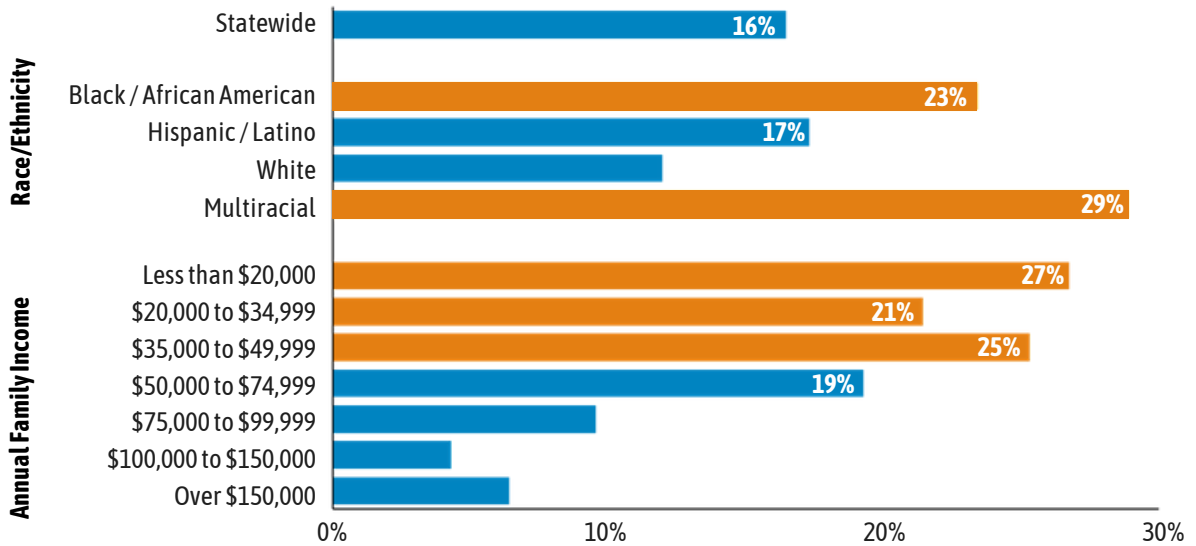
**16%** of parents reported another adult in their household lost their job due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Families with **incomes below \$50,000 per year** and **Black/African American** and **multiracial** families were more likely to have an adult experiencing job loss due to COVID-19.

## KEY SURVEY FINDINGS:

**Working families continue to rely on child care even in the face of reduced income, increased stress, and concern about the spread of COVID-19**

**Figure 16**  
Percent of Responding Families with Adult Experiencing Job Loss Due to COVID-19 Pandemic



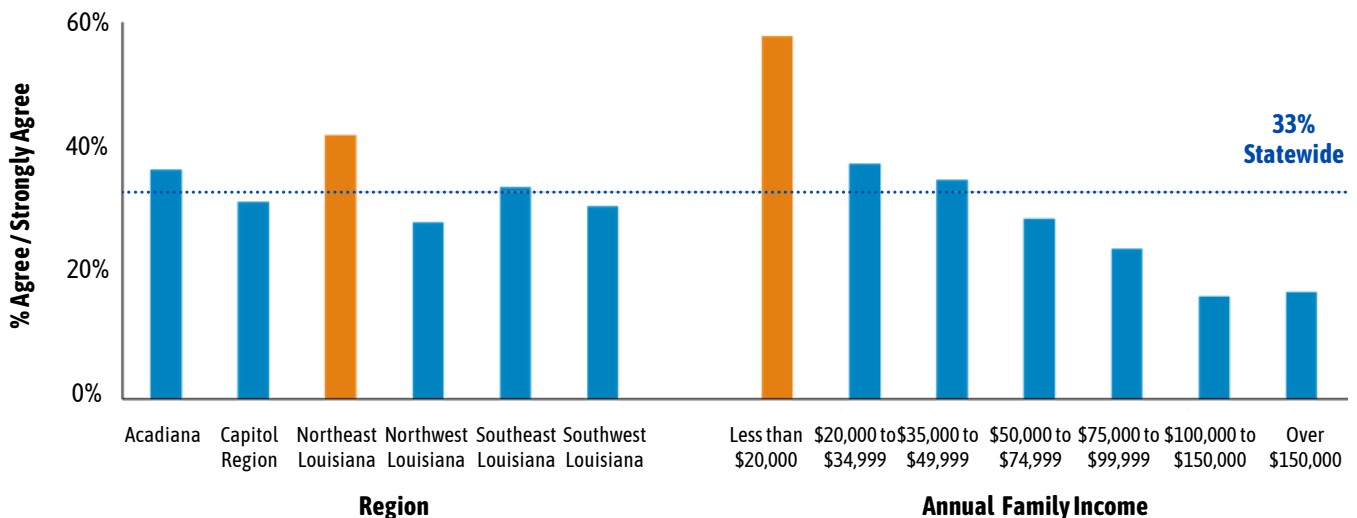
Question: Has any other adult member of your household become unemployed due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Note: Due to small number of responses (N size), American Indian/Native American/Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander responses not included.



Uncertainty was greater for parents in **northeast Louisiana** and those with **family income below \$20,000 per year**.

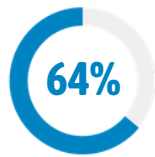
**Figure 17**  
Percent of Responding Parents Unsure of Their Employment



Question: Thinking about your family's current situation, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? "I am uncertain of my own employment"



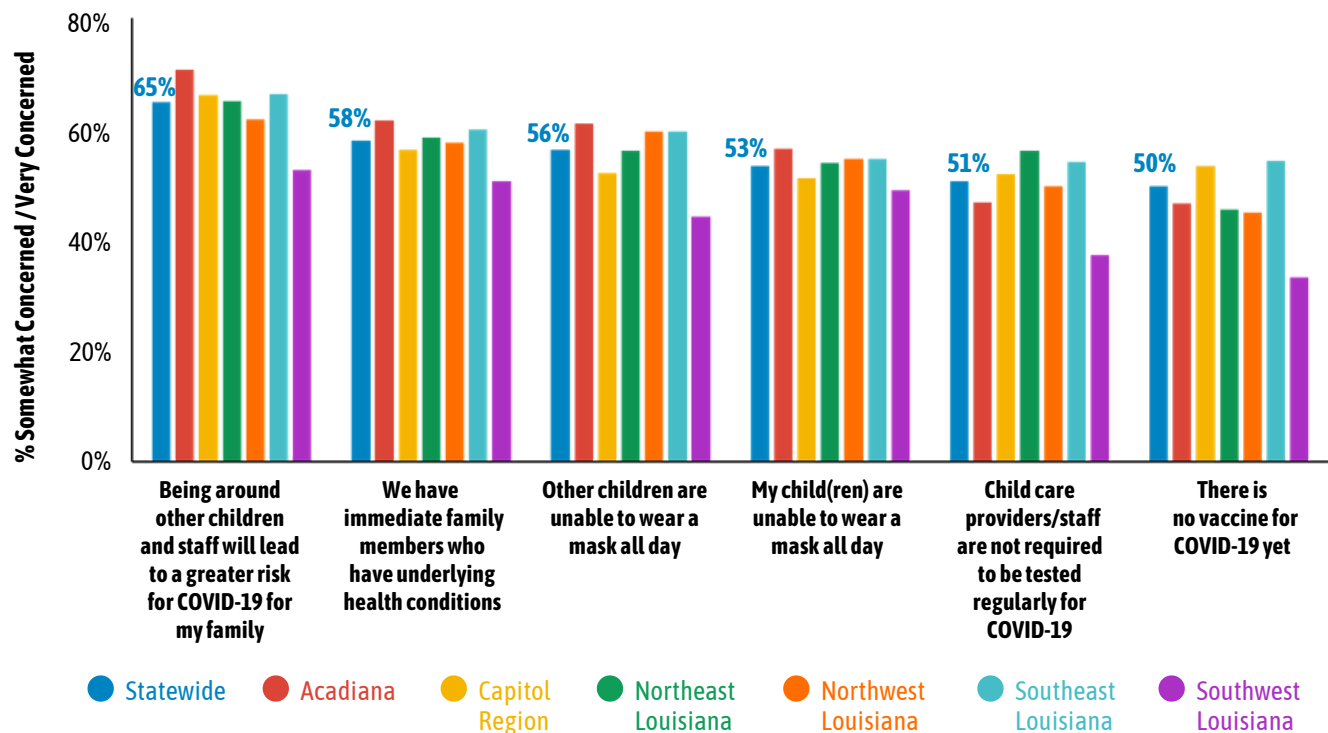
## Working families continue to rely on child care even in the face of reduced income, increased stress, and concern about the spread of COVID-19



64% of parents were concerned about the spread of COVID-19 through child care.

Parents were concerned about increased exposure from being around other children and child care staff (65%), immediate family members with underlying health conditions (58%), other children being able to wear a mask all day (56%), their own children being unable to wear a mask all day (53%), lack of required testing for child care providers (51%), and the lack of a COVID-19 vaccine (50%).

**Figure 18**  
**Responding Parents Concerned About Spread of COVID-19 Through Child Care**



Question: When thinking about enrolling your child(ren) in child care outside of your home right now, how concerned are you, if at all, about each of the following? “We have immediate family members who have underlying health conditions”, “My child(ren) are unable to wear a mask all day”, “Other children are unable to wear a mask all day”, “Other children are unable to wear a mask all day”, “Child care providers/staff are not required to be tested regularly for COVID-19”, “There is no vaccine for COVID-19 yet”

# APPENDIX

## Survey Methodology

LPIC developed and administered the Louisiana Child Care Parent Poll survey online through Survey Monkey from September 21, 2020, through October 6, 2020. 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 2020 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 11,121 phone numbers. After the first text message, approximately 5,979 provided phone numbers were identified as non-cell phone numbers and removed from subsequent texts. Another 556 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, 2,292 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 (2019)
<b>Acadiana</b> (Acadia, Avoyelles, Evangeline, Iberia, Lafayette, Rapides, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, Vermilion, Vernon)	12%	19%
<b>Capitol Region</b> (Ascension, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Iberville, Livingston, Pointe Coupee, St. Helena, Tangipahoa, West Baton Rouge, West Feliciana)	24%	21%
<b>Northeast Louisiana</b> (Caldwell, East Carroll, Franklin, Lincoln, Madison, Morehouse, Ouachita, Richland, Tensas, Union, West Carroll)	5%	7%
<b>Northwest Louisiana</b> (Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Catahoula, Claiborne, Concordia, De Soto, Grant, Jackson, La Salle, Natchitoches, Red River, Sabine, Webster, Winn)	12%	14%
<b>Southeast Louisiana</b> (Assumption, Jefferson, Lafourche, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Tammany, Terrebonne, Washington)	37%	33%
<b>Southwest Louisiana</b> (Allen, Beauregard, Calcasieu, Cameron, Jefferson Davis)	9%	7%

## APPENDIX

**Table A2**  
Children in Household of Survey Respondents

Number of Children in Home	Percent of Survey Respondents
1	35%
2	37%
3	19%
4	6%
5	2%
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	8%
12 months to 24 months	12%
2 years old	13%
3 years old	16%
4 years old	17%
5 to 12 years old	27%
13 to 18 years old	7%

**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	26%
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	0.04%
White	47%
Multiracial	2%
Not Provided	23%

**Table A5**  
Family Income of Survey Respondents

Family Income Range	Percent of Survey Respondents
Less than \$20,000	20%
\$20,000 to \$34,999	18%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	10%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	13%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	13%
\$100,000 to \$150,000	16%
Over \$150,000	11%

