



FAMILIES DEMAND CHILD CARE INVESTMENT:

What Parents Need Policymakers to Know

A national survey of parents shows overwhelming support
for lawmaker action on child care and early learning.

June 2025

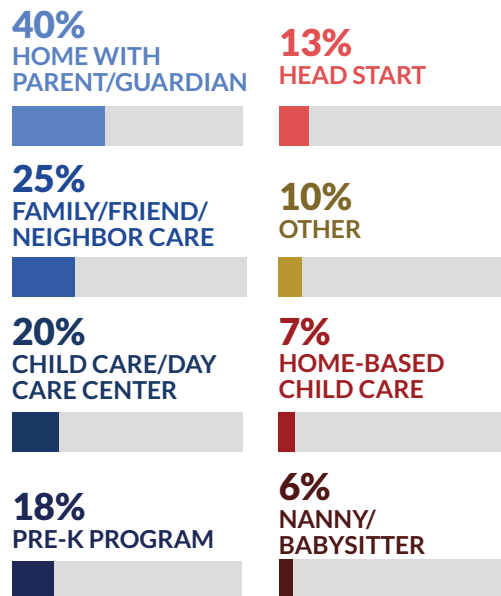
A new national poll commissioned by Child Care Aware® of America and conducted by the bipartisan research team of New Bridge Strategy and Hart Research shows that parents are struggling to make child care work. Findings show that many parents are piecing together multiple care arrangements, facing challenges balancing work and caregiving, and struggling to pay for child care. As a result, an overwhelming majority of parents—across party lines and in all types of communities—say that expanding access to affordable, quality child care should be a high priority for both federal and state policymakers, and that funding for child care and early learning should be increased.

FINDING 1: THE CHILD CARE LANDSCAPE IS A COMPLEX PATCHWORK

A majority of parents (58%) use some form of out-of-home care, often combining multiple arrangements to meet their needs.

For some families, this complexity may reflect that one single child care arrangement is insufficient or isn't currently available to them in a way that fully meets their needs.

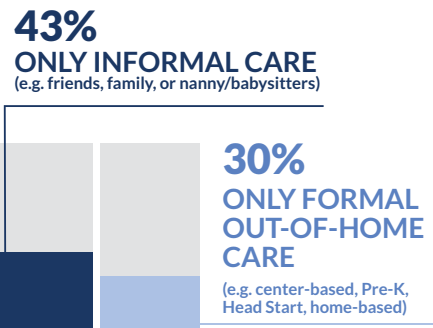
Parents combine several types of child care arrangements to make things work:



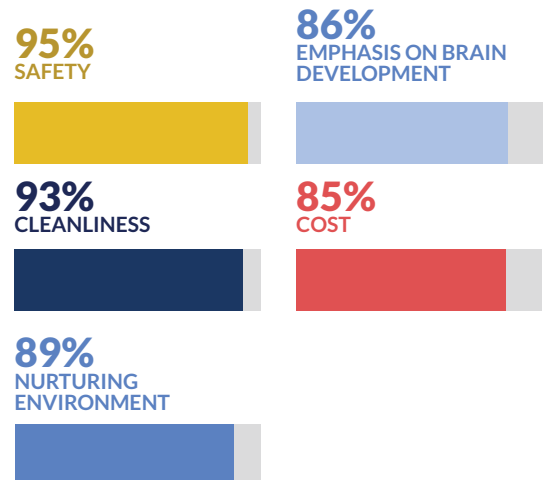
*Parents could select more than one option

When choosing child care arrangements, parents understand that the early years matter profoundly for their children's brain development and future learning. Parents know that early experiences shape how children grow, think, and relate to the world.

Though some families only use one type of care:



When selecting care, parents prioritize:



WHY IT MATTERS

Parents use different child care options and affordability and accessibility of the child care in their area may drive these choices. Additionally, parents are not simply looking for supervision. They want a safe and healthy environment that supports their children's development through strong relationships, robust early learning, and enriching experiences.

FINDING 2: FINDING QUALITY, AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE IS A PROBLEM FOR MOST PARENTS

A majority of parents said that it is difficult to find both high-quality child care (62%) and affordable child care (70%) in their community.

These concerns are especially high for mothers, stay-at-home parents, rural families, and those with lower incomes. Additionally, an overwhelming majority of parents believe that child care costs, supply, and teacher compensation are problems facing the system.

Both working parents and stay-at-home parents consider finding high-quality and affordable child care difficult.

73%

STAY-AT-HOME PARENTS SAY FINDING AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE IS DIFFICULT



64%

STAY-AT-HOME PARENTS SAY FINDING HIGH-QUALITY CHILD CARE IS DIFFICULT



68%

WORKING PARENTS SAY FINDING AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE IS DIFFICULT



59%

WORKING PARENTS SAY FINDING HIGH-QUALITY CHILD CARE IS DIFFICULT



Where parents live also impacts how difficult it is to find affordable care.

78%

PARENTS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES SAY THAT FINDING AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE IS DIFFICULT

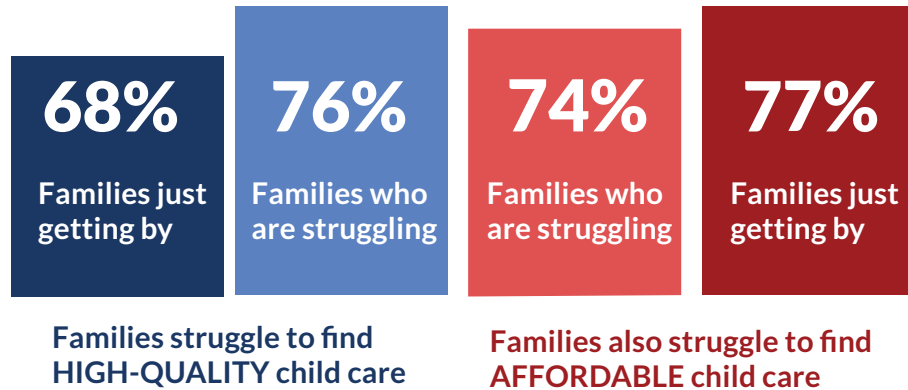


76%

PARENTS IN SMALL TOWNS SAY THAT FINDING AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE IS DIFFICULT



For families who are struggling or just getting by, parents are most likely to say that it is difficult or very difficult to find high-quality or affordable child care.



But even for families who are comfortable, a **majority** say that it is difficult to find affordable child care.

Parents say that the challenges facing families and facing the child care system are a serious problem.

90%

OF PARENTS SAY BALANCING CHILD CARE AND WORK RESPONSIBILITIES IS A PROBLEM



85%

CITE LOW WAGES FOR CHILD CARE WORKERS AS A PROBLEM



87%

SAY COST IS A PROBLEM, INCLUDING NEARLY HALF (49%) OF PARENTS WHO SAY THAT CHILD CARE COSTS ARE A VERY SERIOUS PROBLEM



85%

IDENTIFY A LACK OF HIGH-QUALITY CHILD CARE AND EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAMS AS A PROBLEM



WHY IT MATTERS

Parents are squeezed on all sides. Across communities and work status, they struggle to access affordable, high-quality child care. To help parents, policymakers can relieve the pressure from the serious problems they face around finding and affording child care.

FINDING 3: THERE IS BROAD, BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR CHILD CARE INVESTMENT

81% of parents say that expanding access to affordable, quality child care should be a top or high priority for both federal and state policymakers.

74% of parents think funding for child care and early learning should be increased.

The strongest support for increasing funding for child care comes from parents in rural communities and small-town communities.

83%

PARENTS IN SMALL-TOWN COMMUNITIES



74%

PARENTS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES



Parents across the political spectrum and across the country want their elected leaders to act.

82%

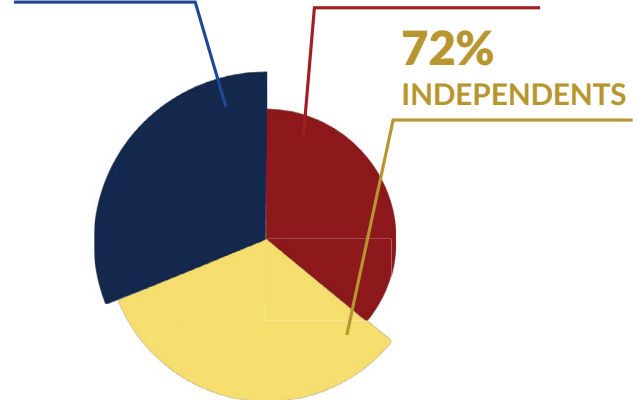
DEMOCRATS

68%

REPUBLICANS

72%

INDEPENDENTS



WHY IT MATTERS

Why it matters. Child care funding is not a partisan issue—it's a parent issue. Families want their lawmakers to see child care as essential and act accordingly.

The bottom line is that parents are sending a clear message to lawmakers: investment in child care can't wait.

Parents want lawmakers to act by increasing funding to support access to high-quality, affordable child care.



For more information and downloadable versions of the charts in this report, please visit the [What Parents Want digital hub](#).

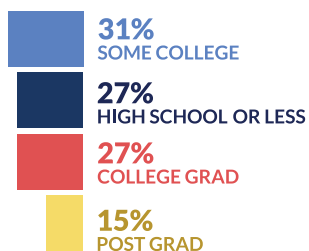
SURVEY METHODOLOGY

New Bridge Strategy and Hart Research, operating as a bipartisan research team, conducted a national online survey among 600 parents or guardians of children 18 years of age or younger who are also registered to vote.

Interviews were conducted online from March 28-April 5, 2025. They were distributed proportionally nationwide. Quotas were set for key demographic sub-groups, such as gender and age.

The confidence interval (analogous to a margin of error) is +4.56% for the overall sample. This will vary for sub-groups.

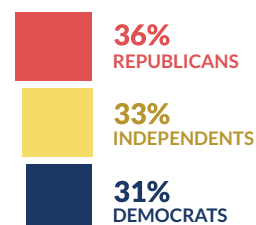
EDUCATION



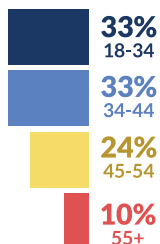
CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 5



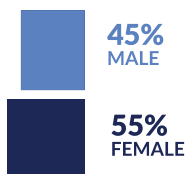
PARTY AFFILIATION



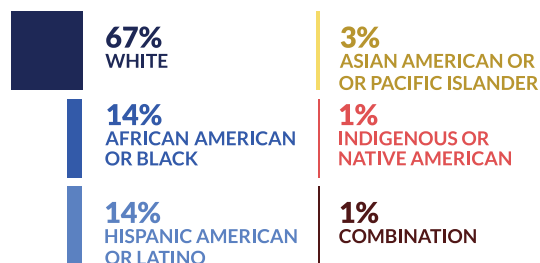
AGE OF RESPONDENT



GENDER



ETHNICITY



www.ChildCareAware.org