



PARENTS KNOW THE BRAIN SCIENCE:

# Parents Want Policymakers to Fund Early Learning

In a new national survey, the majority of parents, regardless of political affiliation, believe the developmental needs of young children outweigh economic arguments when it comes to child care funding.

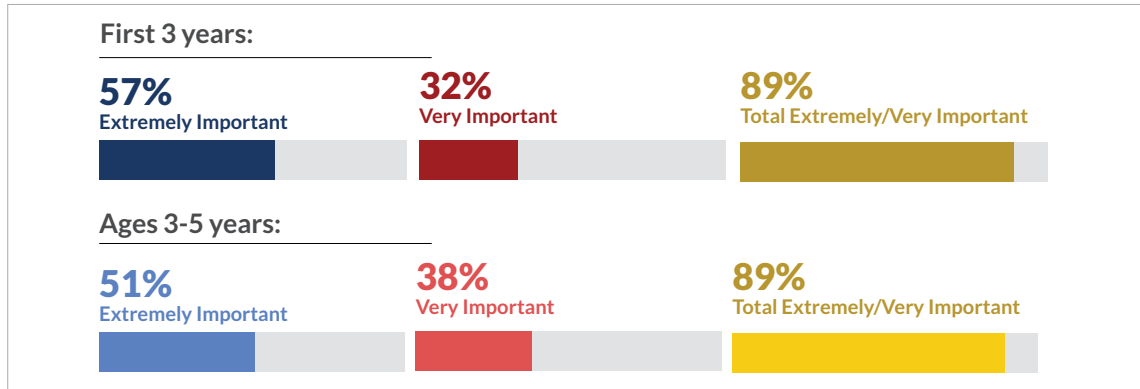
June 2025

A new national survey conducted by bipartisan researchers at New Bridge Strategy and Hart Research for Child Care Aware® of America reveals a clear message: **parents say brain development is important in the early years and want child care policy to reflect that priority.**

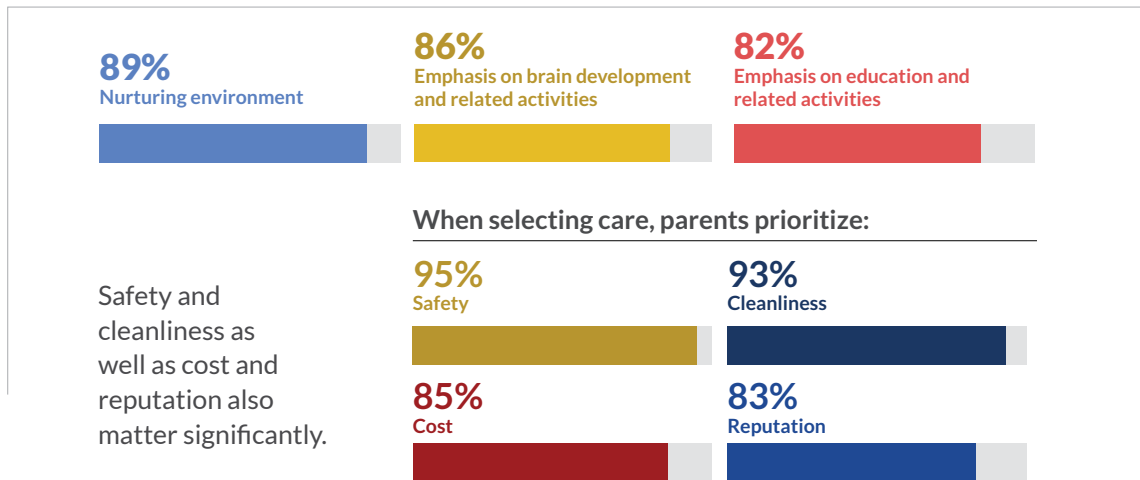
Across party lines and regions, parents recognize that the earliest years are critical for their child's brain development. They are calling on federal and state leaders to invest in child care policies that support early learning, safe and nurturing environments, and skilled educators.

## FINDING 1: BRAIN DEVELOPMENT MATTERS TO PARENTS

Nearly all parents—98% for children ages 0–3 and 99% for children ages 3–5—say brain development is very or extremely important in the early years. As one parent shared, these are the years when children are “little sponges” and “excited to learn.”\*



When selecting child care, parents seek settings that support learning and development. They prioritize environments that are nurturing (89%), emphasize brain development (86%), and focus on education (82%).



Parents are both looking for a safe place for their children and they want access to high-quality early learning experiences.

## WHY IT MATTERS

From birth to age five, a child’s brain forms **one million new neural connections** every second and absorbs information like a sponge. That is why it is so important to have child care and early education staffed by skilled and caring professionals. It creates ideal conditions for nurturing, supporting, and enabling healthy brain development.

Parents understand that high-quality child care is a critical foundation for lifelong learning and development.

\*All quotes in this report were taken from focus groups commissioned by Child Care Aware® of America, March 2025

## FINDING 2: PARENTS WANT POLICYMAKERS TO ACT

Eight in 10 (81%) parents want policymakers at the state and federal level to make access to quality child care a top priority. They look to elected leaders to enact policies that make quality child care more available and more affordable, including through funding that supports skilled educators, safe and nurturing environments, and clean and safe facilities.

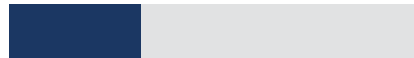
Parents say child care access to affordable, quality child care should be a top priority for policymakers.

Elected leaders at the federal level:

Elected leaders at the state level:

**32%**

Top priority



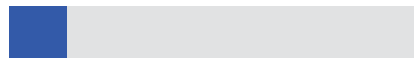
**49%**

High priority



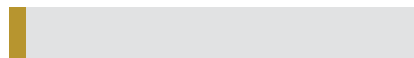
**14%**

Medium priority



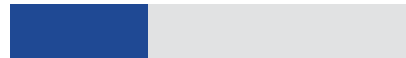
**4%**

Low priority



**34%**

Top priority



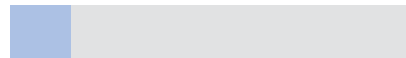
**47%**

High priority



**15%**

Medium priority



**4%**

Low priority



Three-quarters of parents want to see an increase in funding for child care—because increased funding supports brain development. This is true across party lines, and especially for parents living in small towns (83%).

**82%**

Democrats



**72%**

Independents



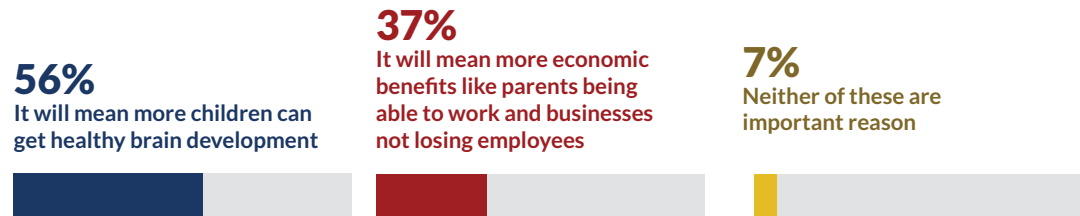
**68%**

Republicans



The case for investment is clear: a majority of parents (56%) say that supporting early brain development—**not just boosting the economy**—should be the driving reason for increasing child care funding.

#### Reasons to increase child care funding:



In addition, regardless of political affiliation, the majority of parents believe the developmental needs of young children **outweigh economic arguments** when it comes to child care funding.

#### Increase child care funding because it will mean more children can get healthy brain development:



## WHY IT MATTERS

Parents know that their child's brain develops faster from birth to age six than at any later point in life, absorbing information like a sponge— and they want policymakers to act accordingly.

**The bottom line is** child care is more than a workforce support—it's a developmental necessity. Investing in child care pays off.



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

## SURVEY METHODOLOGY

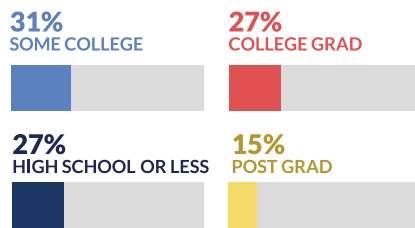
New Bridge Strategy and Hart Research conducted a national survey among 600 parents or guardians of children 18 years of age or younger who are also registered to vote.

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.

### Survey Demographics

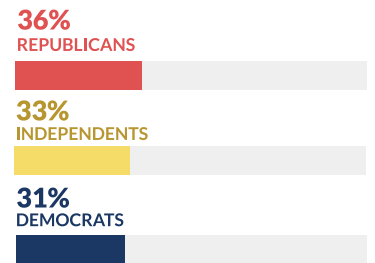
#### Education



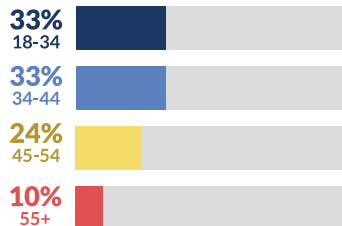
#### Children Under the Age of 5



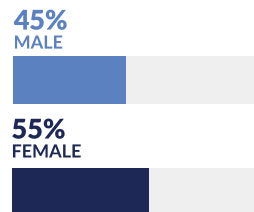
#### Party Affiliation



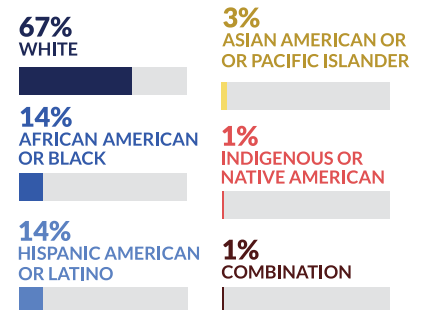
#### Age of Respondent



#### Gender



#### Ethnicity



[www.ChildCareAware.org](http://www.ChildCareAware.org)