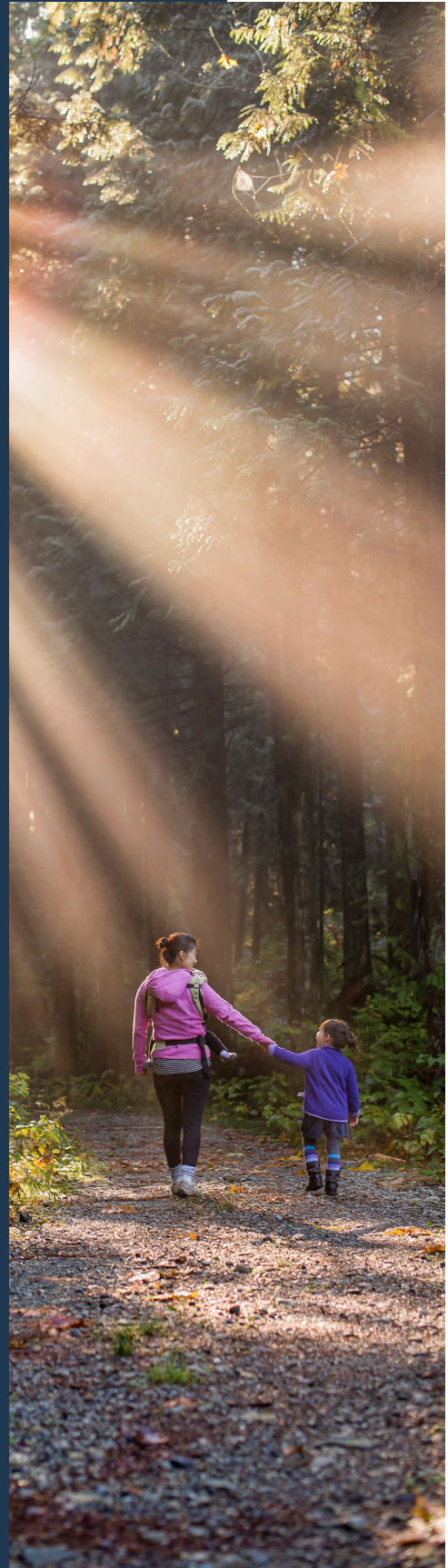




Meeting the Needs of Georgia's Young Families

Findings and insights from a
survey of parents of children
age birth to five



From November 6 – 30, 2023, Hart Research Associates conducted an online survey on behalf of GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students. Hart Research interviewed 400 Georgia parents of children ages birth to five years old. This online survey has a margin of error of ± 4.9 percentage points for the full sample of 400, and it is higher for subgroups of the sample.

Summary of Findings

CHALLENGES FOR PARENTS

Parents with young children are often overwhelmed and underserved, and Georgia parents are no exception. While half of those surveyed say that generally things are going well for their family, a closer look reveals underlying challenges for parents with stress and mental health, paying bills, and affording basic necessities. At least four in 10 parents report that each of those aforementioned areas have become more challenging over the last few years. Even just in the last year, we find that **eight in 10 have had difficulty affording at least one key necessity for their family, including food (which half had trouble paying for), housing, utilities, and a litany of other basic needs.** Additionally, these financial difficulties are affecting certain demographics more than others, namely mothers, parents in lower-income or single-adult households, and those in small towns or rural areas.

POLICY PRIORITIES

The majority of Georgia parents with young children do not believe that their state government is doing enough to meet their needs and the needs of families like theirs. They want their representatives to understand how much they are struggling financially and to prioritize issues that affect them the most on a day-to-day basis, like access to food and infant formula, and consistent health-care coverage. We then asked a list of potential policies that directly addressed those concerns, and that led to overwhelming support (and majorities of strong support) for every policy on the list, with the most popular policies being eliminating the state sales tax on diapers and increasing access to paid parental leave. Parents across partisan lines are adamant on the benefits that these policies could bring for Georgia families, and even the policy of direct cash assistance, which has the “least” support (still favored by eight in 10 parents), would be welcomed by parents across the partisan spectrum and is seen as helpful to respondents personally.



CHILD CARE OPTIONS

When it comes to child care, family-based care—sometimes referred to as “Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN)” care—is the most used option by Georgia parents in our survey and includes having their child either at home or staying with another trusted adult. Although six in 10 parents use family-based care for their child due to personal preference, the fact that half say that alternatives (out-of-home care options) are too expensive also plays a key role in their decision. Another factor is likely that quality out-of-home care options are either non-existent or out of reach: almost three in four parents from urban to rural Georgia say that there are only some or very few child care and early learning programs in their area that would meet their standards of being both high quality and affordable.

IMPACT ON EMPLOYMENT

Over eight in 10 parents surveyed report that child care struggles have directly impacted their financial situation in some way, most commonly by forcing parents or their partners to miss a shift or reduce their hours at work. Additionally, two other setbacks that are less common overall but potentially more financially harmful—turning down a job opportunity and leaving the workforce entirely—have disproportionately impacted both mothers and parents in single-adult households.

PARENTAL LEAVE

Parental leave is another often necessary but difficult decision for parents, especially when taking such leave can lead to consequences in the workplace. Two-thirds of parents surveyed have taken either paid or unpaid parental leave for a median time of six weeks in either case. However, one-third of those who have taken leave report that doing so led to negative effects on their employment in some way, a finding that is even higher among mothers and those in lower-income households.

The undisputable takeaway from this survey is that parents of young children in Georgia need help, especially in managing their families’ mental health and maintaining their financial stability—with child care as a key element to both of these. Moreover, parents are explicit that they view it as Georgia political leaders’ job to provide the help, and they widely support a number of steps leaders could take in this regard. It is important to recognize that this is not a matter of partisanship for parents; rather, they are endorsing commonsense actions that will support families who are raising the next generation of Georgians.

I.

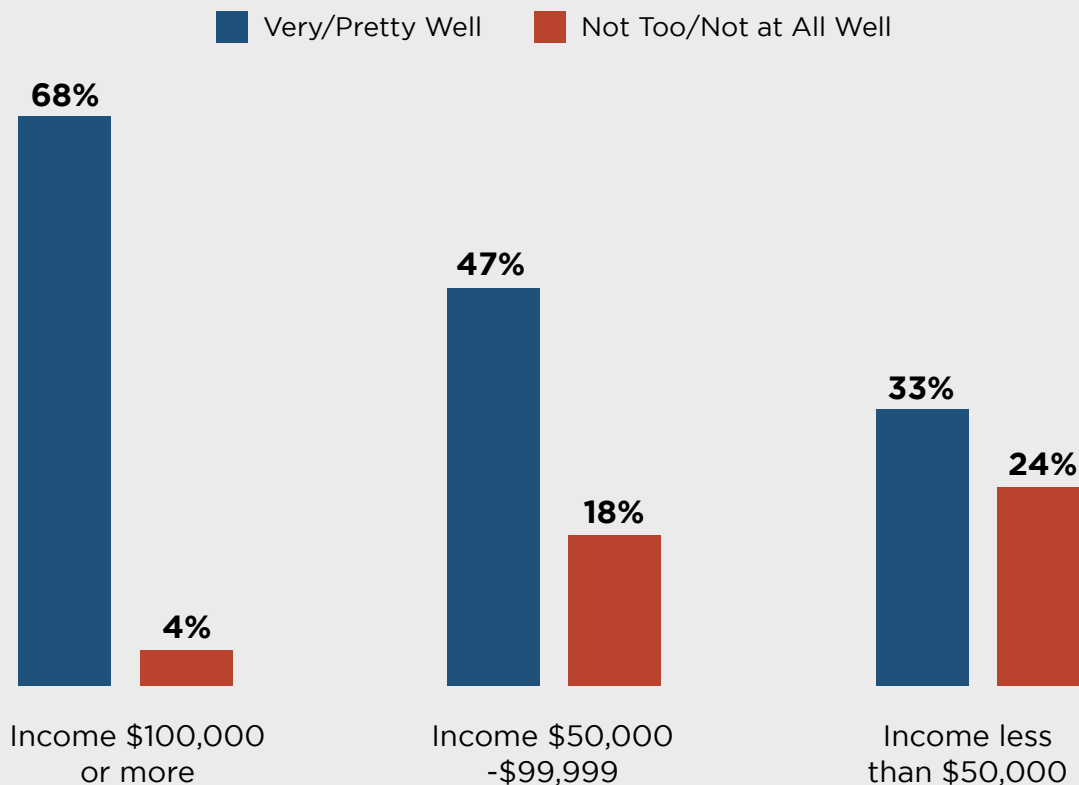
State of Georgia's Families with Young Children

Many parents are facing challenges, especially financial ones.

At a very high level, things appear to be going reasonably well for families with young children in Georgia. When asked broadly about how things are going for their family these days, 50% of parents say they are going “very well” or “pretty well;” about a third (35%) give a middling response of “somewhat well,” and 15% say “not too well” or “not well at all.” That said, we would note that not all parents’ experiences are the same; indeed, here (and throughout the survey, as we will detail in this report) parents’ financial situation is a major determinant of how they assess their family’s well-being—the lower a family’s household income, the less apt they are to say things are going well.

Family Wellness by Income Group

Overall, how are things going for you and your family these days?



Moreover, the picture changes when we ask about wellness in different areas of families' lives—things are clearly going better in some areas than in others.

For each of the following areas, please indicate how well you and your family are doing.

	Very/Pretty Well %	Not Too/Not at All Well %
Your family's overall health situation	75	4
Your family's child care situation for your children age five and younger	72	11
Your family's ability to pay weekly and monthly bills	46	23
Your family's stress levels and mental health	46	23
Your family's overall economic situation	42	23

Three in four parents give a positive rating to their family's overall health situation, and nearly as many do so for their child care situation (though, as we will detail later in this report, the child care issue is appreciably more complicated than this overall rating would imply). But fewer than half think things are going well when it comes to their family's mental health, paying regular bills, and their general economic situation. In these latter three areas, a family's socioeconomic status becomes a dominant factor in their wellbeing.

% of parents who say their family is doing very or pretty well in various areas, by income category

	\$100,00 or more %	\$50,000 - \$99,999 %	Less than \$50,000 %
Your family's overall health situation	84	74	65
Your family's child care situation for your children age five and younger	81	71	64
Your family's ability to pay weekly and monthly bills	70	41	24
Your family's stress levels and mental health	51	48	39
Your family's overall economic situation	66	38	21



While there are acute disparities in every income category, the gap is particularly large when it comes to families’ overall economic situation and ability to pay bills (though, those who say their family’s mental health is good also drops below 40% for the lowest-income group). The same dynamic exists between parents who have a four-year college degree and those who do not: parents in the latter group are much less likely to say that things are going well for their family in any of these categories. And the number of adults in a household is also determinative: whereas 53% of two-adult households say they do well in their ability to pay their bills, just 17% of single-adult households say the same.

The last few years have taken a toll on the lives of families with young children, especially when it comes to financial health.

For each of the following areas, have things gotten better or more challenging over the past three years, or stayed about the same?

	% Better	% About the same	% More Challenging
Your family’s child care situation for your children age five and younger	32	47	21
Your family’s overall economic situation	32	25	43
Your family’s overall health situation	31	51	18
Your family’s ability to pay weekly and monthly bills	29	24	47
Your family’s stress levels and mental health	28	28	44

Again, families’ overall economic situation and ability to pay bills emerge as areas where parents face substantial difficulty—the COVID pandemic clearly set families back and catching back up is a challenge. It is worth noting that while lower-income parents are the most likely to say that paying bills is more challenging (56% say this), it is also the case that pluralities of middle-income and higher-income parents (45% and 42%, respectively) say that this has become a greater challenge for them in the past few years.

But financial elements aside, widely-spread stress and mental health challenges are the legacy of the past three years. The 44% of parents who say that these have become a greater challenge for them is on par with the two financial-related elements and, tellingly, is nearly identical across income groups, affecting



45% of lower-income parents, 42% of middle-income parents, and 47% of higher-income parents.

Two groups of parents are struggling disproportionately.

To this point, we have focused heavily on how families' socioeconomic status (SES) impacts their measures of wellbeing. Looking beyond SES, we will note two demographic groups of parents whose assessments of their families' wellness is consistently lower than other groups:

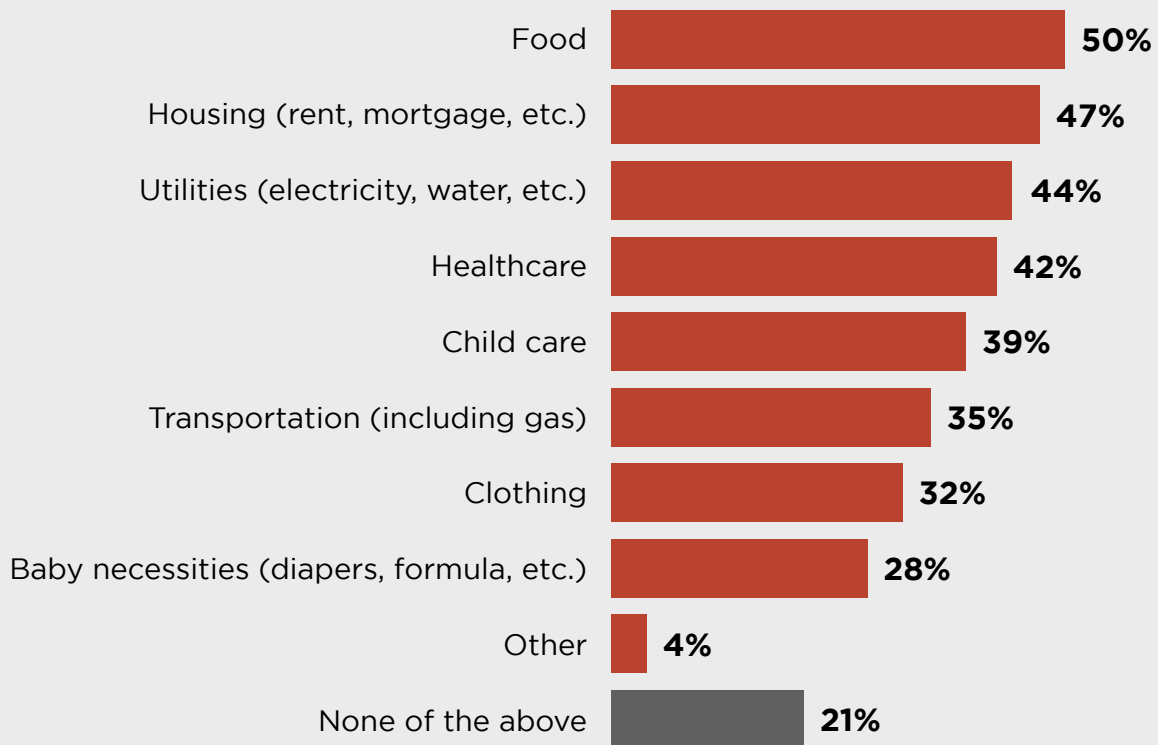
- **Mothers** – Mothers are less likely than fathers to rate their families as doing well across all wellness metrics. The gap is especially large for ability to pay bills (56% for fathers, 36% for mothers) but is also significant when it comes to overall health (82% for fathers, 70% for mothers). Moreover, mothers are more likely than fathers to say that every wellness measure became challenging over the past three years. The gap stems from mothers being in a much more precarious place financially than fathers—they report having, on average, much lower household incomes, much lower rates of college degrees, and a much greater likelihood of living in a single-adult household (28% of mothers are the only adult in their household, versus just 7% of fathers).
- **Small town and rural residents** – There are similar patterns when comparing parents who live in small town and rural areas with those who reside in urban and suburban areas—small town/rural parents are much less likely to say their families are doing well in paying bills (36%, compared with 56% for urban parents and 50% for suburban parents) and in their overall economic situation (32%, 46%, and 49%, respectively). And, small town/rural parents are more likely to say that things have gotten more challenging over the last few years in every one of the wellness metrics. While the SES gaps are not as large among the geographic groups as they are between mothers and fathers, they exist nonetheless, with rural parents reporting lower incomes and lower levels of educational attainment than those in cities and suburbs.

In which categories are living costs most pervasively challenging?

Seeking to better understand the challenges Georgia parents may have in paying their bills, we provided survey respondents a list of needs and asked which, if any, their family has had difficulty affording in the last 12 months.



Cost of Living Items that have been a Challenge to Pay For



It is instructive to note that only 21% of parents say that *none* of these areas was a challenge for them—meaning that four in five parents struggled in at least one area. And that includes 33% who report facing challenges in five or more of the areas listed, a group that surges to 53% of parents with incomes under \$50,000; 52% of those in single-adult households; 46% of those without four-year college degrees; 45% of small town and rural residents; and 42% of mothers.

Paying for food, housing, and utility costs lead the list of challenges, with 44% to 50% of parents saying they have had difficulties in each area. Over 70% of parents in lower-income households have struggled in each. Healthcare and child care are not far behind, at 42% and 39%, respectively. Note that challenges in paying for child care vary widely by the type of care parents use: 29% of parents who have a family-based care arrangement have struggled to pay for care in the past year, making it a lower (though not non-existent) problem on their list; by comparison, 61% of parents who send their child to a child care or daycare center report paying for care as a challenge, putting it on par with paying for food as a challenge for this group.

II.

Parents' Views of State Government and Family Policies

Parents of young children cite several high priorities for state government.

Parents of young children give Georgia state government reasonably low marks on meeting the needs of families like theirs. Thirty-two percent (32%) say the state is doing a good job in this regard, compared with 41% who say it is doing a bad job; 27% say it is neither good nor bad. Fewer than half (44%) of parents who identify themselves as Republican say the state is doing a good job, and that rating drops to 28% among Democrats and 23% among independents.

In the survey, we provided parents an open-ended opportunity to tell state leaders one thing that would help policymakers to understand their family's life. Parents have plenty of messages for state leaders, with many comments on specific issues like child care, housing, and healthcare, and overwhelmingly they want leaders to know that they are struggling financially—living paycheck to paycheck, having trouble paying for groceries, and not meeting requirements for assistance. Some of the comments we received include:

“

“I think the income cutoffs should be reassessed when it comes to qualifying for state assistance for food, housing, etc. People are struggling to afford safe housing and good healthy food.” - *Mother*

“

“That we are regular people trying to make it every day and these days we're having to choose between gas to get to work or a meal on the table for the family, and that's ridiculous! Childcare is extremely too high for a single mother of multiple children making just a tad bit too much for any assistance.” - *Mother*

“

“My wife made the decision to stay home with our children because the cost of two children in daycare was prohibitively expensive based on her salary.” - *Father*



“Even for our family who is much better off financially than most, childcare costs are a huge burden on our household. It actually will delay our plans to have additional children due to costing nearly \$2000 a month.” - *Mother*



My youngest son is on dialysis and needs a kidney transplant. My wife and I are trying to make enough money to pay our bills, but if we make too much then insurance could get cut off for our kids because they are in Medicaid and the youngest is on Medicare. If we make too much SSI, Medicaid will get cut off and we will be footed with the medical bills.” - *Father*



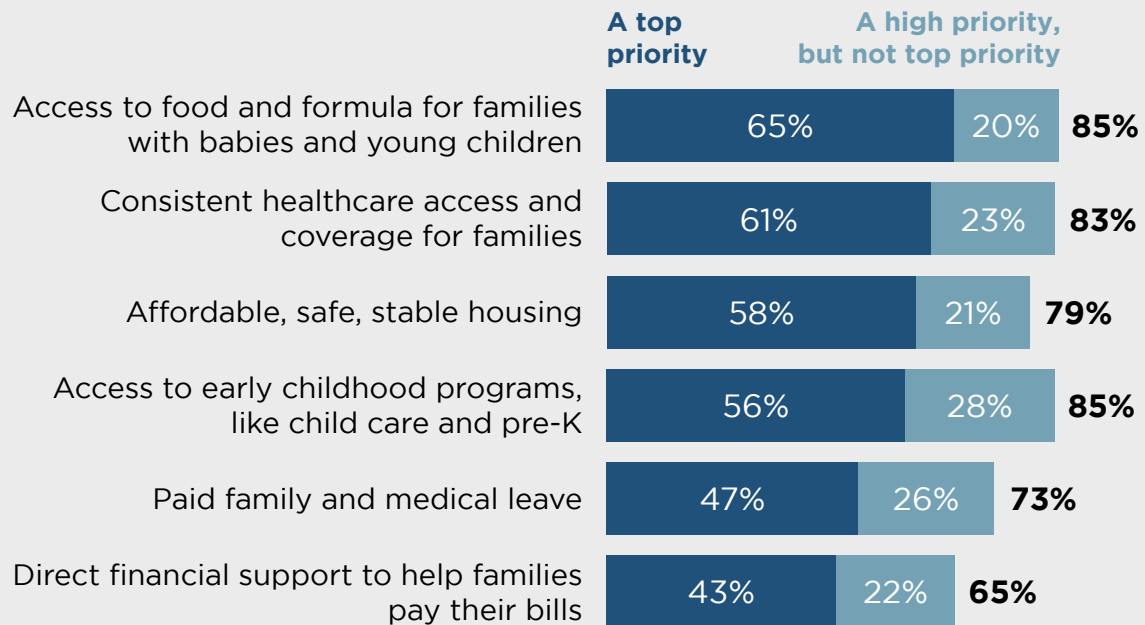
“Regulate rent and supplies companies [that] are gouging citizens with ridiculous prices everywhere.” - *Father*



“Especially with the economy and prices of things like food, formula, and diapers, it makes it so the necessities become even harder to attain and so we are now living paycheck to paycheck. Before having a child we were doing well and able to save money. Now there is nothing in savings and paychecks are spent almost as quickly as they hit the account due to the prices of mortgages, taxes, gas, INSURANCE, diapers, formula. So, any little assistance, even if it’s not the biggest amount would be greatly appreciated and actually looked at as such a great help.” - *Mother*

Given the range of topics covered in the comments we received, as well as the challenges parents have had paying for things in multiple areas of life, it is perhaps unsurprising that two-thirds or more of parents rate each of the six potential issue areas we ask about as a high priority for state government to address, including pluralities or majorities who rate each as a *top* priority.

Potential Priorities for State Government that Affect Families with Young Children



Indeed, parents' enthusiasm about these issue areas translates into very high levels of support for a number of specific policies that Georgia state government could consider. Overwhelming majorities of parents favor each policy we asked about, including majorities who *strongly* favor each one.

The Georgia state government could consider various policies in the future. Would you favor or oppose the state government taking steps to implement each of the following policies?

	Total Favor %	Strongly Favor %
Eliminating the state sales tax on diapers to help families afford this basic necessity and keep babies healthy	94	76
Increasing access to paid parental leave for families to have time to bond and care for a newborn or newly adopted child	93	67



	Total Favor %	Strongly Favor %
Allowing children who are on Medicaid to automatically stay on it from birth up to the age of six, to make sure they have reliable healthcare during those years of growth and development	92	73
Using a portion of Georgia's Lottery funds to increase salaries for Pre-K teachers to improve quality of teaching and keep teachers in the job for longer	91	68
Increasing the monthly amount that families who are in need can receive to purchase healthy food and infant formula	91	65
Assisting with housing costs for families of young children who are at risk of losing their homes	89	64
Increasing funding for Georgia's child care program so that more families with low incomes can receive scholarships to help them afford child care	89	65
Investing in financial supports to ease stress for families, such as providing cash assistance to families with young children	78	53

What is remarkable in these results is the degree to which parents *across the political spectrum* favor these policies. More than nine in 10 parents in every partisan group (Republican, independent, Democrat) favor eliminating the state sales tax on diapers. And support for nearly all of the other policies exceeds 80% in each partisan group. The one exception is financial supports and cash assistance for families, but even there, support is very high: 65% of Republicans, 72% of independents, and 95% of Democrats say they are in favor.

Importantly, though the cash assistance/financial supports item yields the lowest level of support (with “only” three in four parents favoring it), it is the policy that parents are most apt to say would benefit their own family. When provided the same list of policies and asked which two would help families like theirs the most, 36% choose the financial supports policy as one of their top two, with housing cost assistance (30%), eliminating the diaper tax (26%), automatically elongating Medicaid coverage (25%), and increasing access to paid parental leave (25%) coming in a bit lower.



Belief in the personal helpfulness of the financial supports policy is especially high among the same groups of parents who were less sanguine about their family's economic situation earlier in the survey—lower-income parents (59%), small town/rural residents (47%), and non-college graduates (46%)—and was also higher among parents under age 35 (48%). Moreover, though they are more positive about their general economic situation than those with lower incomes, the financial supports policy is the top choice for middle-income parents as well (37%).

Personal benefit aside, parents are adamant about the appropriateness of Georgia state government passing these policies—by a margin of three to one, parents say that these are the kinds of things that state government should be doing to help parents of young children (76%) rather than things that parents should be responsible for on their own (24%). And, again, there is cross-partisan agreement on this point, with solid majorities of Republicans, independents, and Democrats saying these are the kinds of things state government should be doing.



III.

Child Care Use and Needs in Georgia

Many Georgia parents use family-based care for their children, both out of personal preference and financial necessity.

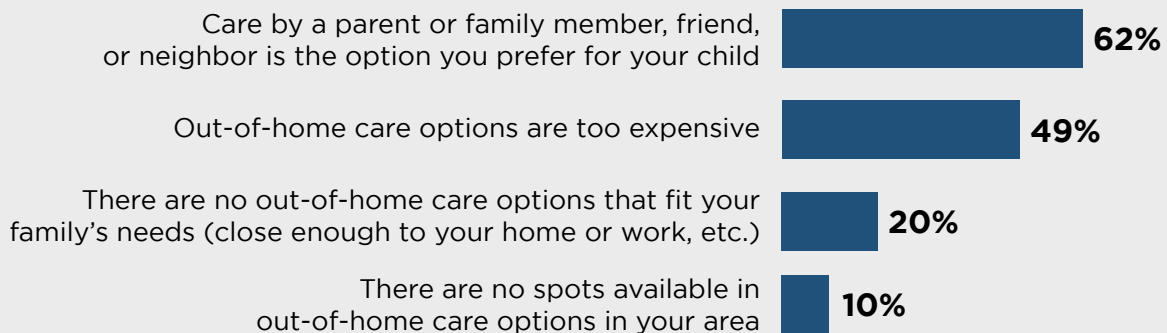
In order to better understand how Georgia parents manage care for their children on a day-to-day basis, we first asked parents to choose any and all child care arrangements they were using from a list of options. The most-used arrangement for parents is keeping their child home with a parent or guardian at 44%, followed by child care or daycare centers (38%) and pre-K programs (23%). Thirty-five percent (35%) of parents use more than one child care arrangement, and the demographic groups most likely to do so include parents of children ages 4-5 (46%), those in urban areas (44%), and fathers (42%).

Parents were then asked to think about the *main* form of child care they were using, even if they stated before that they were using multiple options. The data fall in a similar way, with the most-used arrangement still being having the child at home with a parent or guardian at 34%, followed by child care or daycare centers (29%) and pre-K programs (13%).

Based on that question, four in 10 (44%) parents surveyed use some form of “family care” as their main arrangement, which includes either having their child stay at home with a parent or guardian, or with another family member, neighbor, or friend. Digging a little deeper with that subpopulation, we asked parents why they made this decision.

Why Parents Choose Family-Based Care

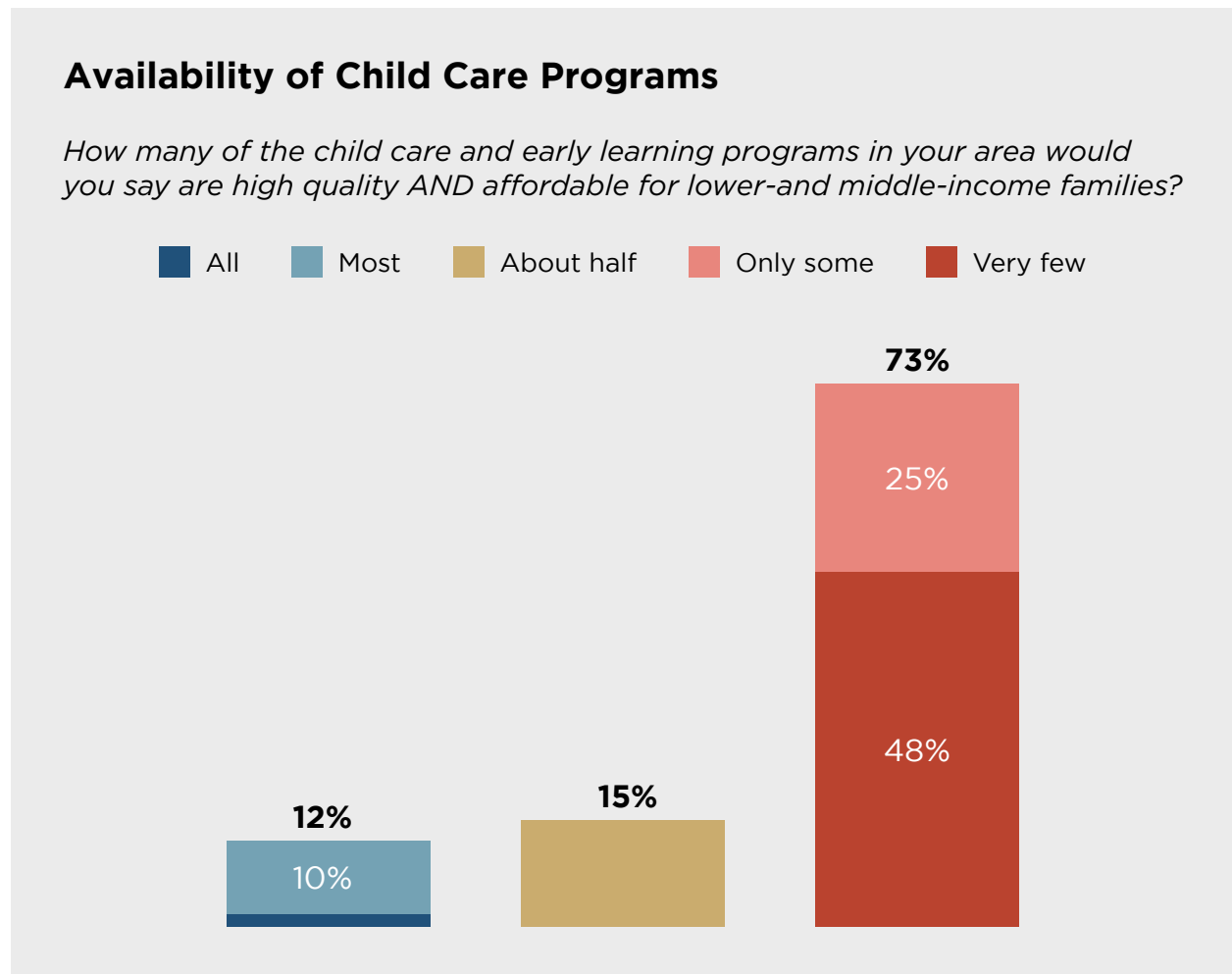
Do you use this arrangement because...?



While the top reason for using a family-based care arrangement (it is “the option you prefer for your child”) wins out at 62%, the more telling number is the second-place finisher, where half (49%) report that they use family-based care because out-of-home options are too expensive. Since this question was not asked of the full sample, many of the subgroups are not large enough to have reportable results, but broadly, the groups who are most likely to say that out-of-home options are too expensive include younger parents (ages 18-34), those with the youngest children (ages 0-1), Black parents, those making less than \$50,000, and parents in urban areas. (Q11c)

Parents see few high-quality and affordable child care and early learning options around them.

Regardless of the child care arrangement, we wanted to know how many of the child care and early learning programs in their area parents would consider both high quality and affordable for lower- and middle-income families. Almost three out of four (73%) parents indicated that there were only some or very few programs that would meet their standards of being both:



Parents across the state see a lack of options, and specific factors like the age of their child make the search for acceptable options even more difficult.

About how many of the child care and early learning programs in your area would you say are high quality AND affordable for lower-income and middle-class families?

	All/Most %	Only Some/ Very Few %
Region Type		
Urban	17	74
Suburban	11	75
Rural	12	70
Age of Child		
0-1	14	67
2-3	9	78
4-5	11	68

Another group that stands out here is those parents who use family-based care as their main child care arrangement: eight in 10 (79%) say there are only some or very few programs that are affordable and high quality. We hesitate to extrapolate too much from this finding since we do not delve any further into this topic, but there is at least a good chance that for those who mainly use family-based care for their children, part of their decisions stems from the fact that they do not see affordable or high-quality options in their vicinity.

Adjustments for child care have a significant impact on parents’ financial situations.

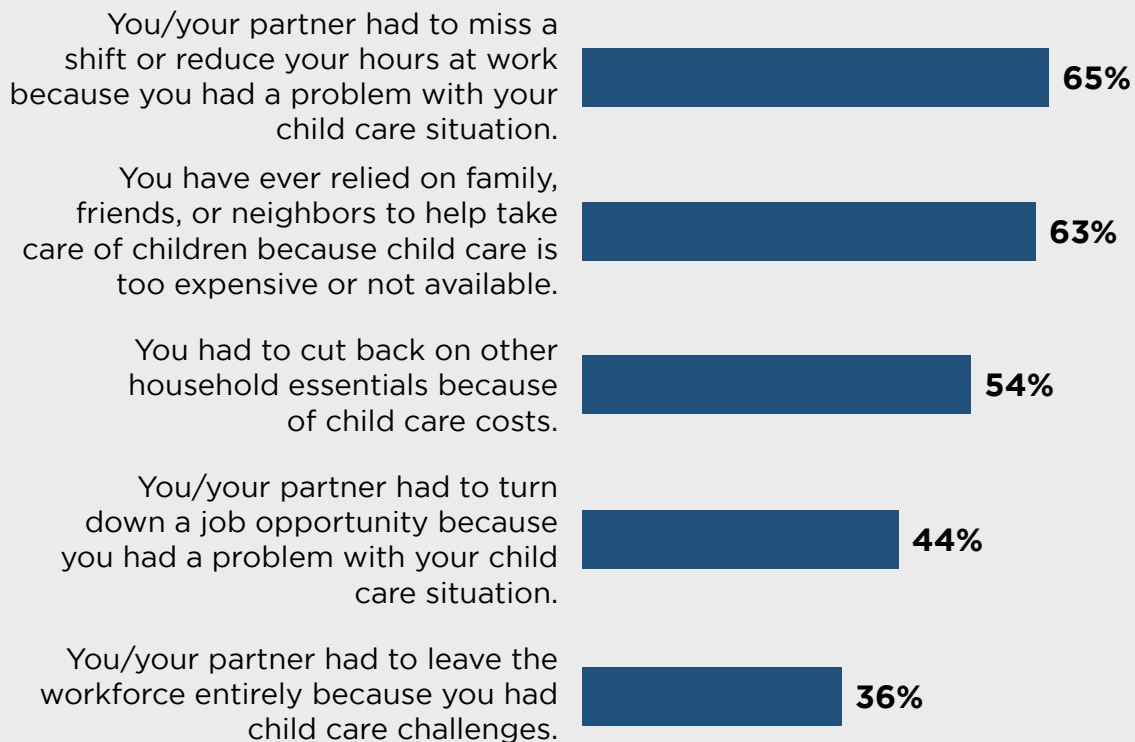
Balancing child care, workplace, and other household demands can be challenging, and many parents’ adjustments for child care can have a direct impact on their financial situation. Two-thirds (65%) of parents say that they or their partners have missed a shift or reduced hours at work because of a problem with their child care situation, closely followed by 63% who say that they have



had to rely on family, friends, or neighbors for help specifically because child care was too expensive or not available. Additionally, over half (54%) have had to cut back on other household essentials specifically because of child care costs.

Financial Impact of Child Care Struggles

Have any of these things ever applied to your family?



Although it sits at the bottom of the list, it is still worth noting that over one-third (36%) of parents surveyed had to leave or have their partner leave the workforce entirely because of child care challenges. This item applies most for the subgroups who report struggles consistently over the course of the survey: younger parents ages 18-34 (43%), parents of children ages 4-5 (48%), Black parents (48%), and those making less than \$50,000 (58%).

Additionally, there are two demographic groups that bear highlighting here specifically for the disproportionate impact that child care struggles have on their financial situations. The gender gap mentioned earlier remains prevalent here as well, as mothers are significantly more likely to have had to turn down a job opportunity or leave the workforce entirely:



Have any of these things ever applied to your family?

	Fathers %	Mothers %
You/your partner had to miss a shift or reduce your hours at work because you had a problem with your child care situation.	64	65
You have ever relied on family, friends, or neighbors to help take care of children because child care is too expensive or not available.	63	63
You have had to cut back on other household essentials because of child care costs.	52	55
You/your partner had to turn down a job opportunity because you had a problem with your child care situation.	38	49
You/your partner had to leave the workforce entirely because you had child care challenges.	26	44

Even more stark are the disparities between single-adult and two-adult households, where the former are more likely on every single item to have experienced some kind of financial setback compared with the latter, again most significantly on the items around turning down job opportunities and leaving the workforce:

Have any of these things ever applied to your family?

	% Two-adult HH	% Single-adult HH
You/your partner had to miss a shift or reduce your hours at work because you had a problem with your child care situation	62	76
You have ever relied on family, friends, or neighbors to help take care of children because child care is too expensive or not available.	60	77
You have had to cut back on other household essentials because of child care costs.	52	63
You/your partner had to turn down a job opportunity because you had a problem with your child care situation.	39	66
You/your partner had to leave the workforce entirely because you had child care challenges.	31	57



The results for each individual item are already harsh, but taken as a whole, we ran an additional calculation over the results to see how many respondents indicated that one or more of these financial disruptions applied to their family as a result of their child care situation: 84% of parents had at least one item apply to their family, including 20% to whom every item applies. These proportions are highest among those in urban areas (94% at least one item and 28% every item), single-adult households (92% at least one item and 36% every item), Black parents (90% at least one item and 26% every item), and parents of children ages 4-5 (90% at least one item and 25% every item). Otherwise, the data is very flat and shows few differences by party or by income, which emphasizes the point that child care struggles affect parents across the partisan and economic spectrum.

The survey also provides a clear illustration of how disruptive inconsistent child care can be to families' lives. There is a direct correlation between the number of child care arrangements a parent uses simultaneously and the number of financial disruptions (i.e., the loss of work hours, the need to leave the workforce, etc.) that he or she has experienced as a result of child care adjustments. We cannot say from this survey which factor causes the other, but we do know that as one increases, so does the other. For instance, only 19% of parents who had no financial disruptions due to child care currently have to use multiple care arrangements; but this more than doubles to 44% among parents who have experienced four or five types of financial disruptions. In short, trouble in one of these areas results in problems in the other.

We also asked whether respondents had received benefits from Georgia's Child Care and Parent Services (CAPS) program, and if they said yes (12% of parents), we asked an open-ended question on whether participating in the program was helpful for their family. Most who have participated say that it has been very helpful and allows them to both work and have their child in daycare, an option that they would not have had otherwise.

For example, one parent shared:



“It has been very helpful. I work in customer service and still have to work on school breaks and summers. Having childcare during these times really helps me to be able to afford other bills and expenses.” – *Mother*

IV.

Parental Leave

The decision to take parental leave has different consequences depending on both gender and income.

Two in three (67%) parents report taking parental leave at some point after the birth or adoption of their child, where 35% have taken paid parental leave that their job provided and 37% had to take unpaid parental leave. The median time of taking leave is six (6) weeks for both paid and unpaid leave.

Of those who have taken some form of parental leave, 32% report that taking leave had a negative effect on their position at work in some way (whether it be by being passed over for a promotion, having to take a pay cut, having responsibilities shifted, or in some other form). As is the case with child care, there are hidden disparities within these parental leave results involving key demographic groups that bear highlighting:

- **Mothers** – While similar proportions of mothers and fathers have taken unpaid parental leave (39% and 33%, respectively), only 26% of mothers have taken paid parental leave while 47% of fathers have done the same. Regardless of type of leave, mothers end up taking much more time off of work: of those who took paid leave, 34% of mothers took 12 or more weeks off compared with 11% of fathers, and of those who took unpaid leave, 29% of mothers took 12 or more weeks off compared with 5% of fathers. That difference can often have consequences upon their return: 41% of mothers say that taking leave had a negative effect on their position at work, while only 22% of fathers say the same.
- **Lower-income households** – When looking at differences in income, we see that half (49%) of parents making less than \$50,000 a year took any kind of parental leave (primarily unpaid—only 8% took paid leave), compared with 75% of those making \$50,000 to \$99,999 and 74% of those making \$100,000 or more. That difference becomes even more apparent once asked about the effects of taking leave: 72% of those in our lowest income bracket report that this decision had a negative effect on their position at work, compared with 24% of those making \$50,000 to \$99,999 and 16% of those making \$100,000 or more.



V. Conclusion

It is a truism that the years of and immediately following the pandemic have been difficult for most Americans. But it is a fact that it has been more difficult for some than others. Polling by many organizations (including ours) has illustrated time and again that three of the hardest-hit groups, who have been the slowest to recover—financially and mental health-wise—are young adults, people of color, and children. All three of these groups are disproportionately represented when one is talking about parents of young kids in Georgia.

This survey makes abundantly clear that these parents need help. While most are, by and large, optimistic about their family’s physical health, their mental and financial health are a very different story. And while we treated their child care situation as a discrete category in this survey, it obviously plays an outsize role when considering a young family’s levels of stress and financial security.

Not only do parents need help in these areas, but they are also explicit that they view it as Georgia political leaders’ job to provide that help, and many say leaders are falling down on that job at this moment. And the types of steps leaders could take to provide that help are widely supported by this population. They do not view this as a partisan line of thinking, but rather as a commonsense way to support families who are raising the next generation of Georgians.

We asked what message parents would send to Georgia state leaders about what they should be doing for parents and families. We will close this report with some of their thoughts, in their own words.



“Our family is in the top 1% of income earners, and we identify as politically conservative. We have 7 children. We strongly believe in increased access to affordable diapers and formula, paid family leave, easy access to affordable healthcare, and support for new moms. Let’s support new moms and babies, please.” - *Mother*



“Safe and quality childcare is essential for our society, economy, and communities to thrive. Creating public and guaranteed childcare through birth through five learning centers should be a priority for our leaders. We need better vetting, education, and pay for teachers working with young children. These teachers are just as important as K-12 teachers.” - *Father*

“

“Given the relationship between socioeconomic status of parents and long-term outcomes of their children, I believe government officials should do everything they can to support the well-being of children by providing social safety nets and assistance to their parents.” - *Mother*

“

“I believe Georgia state leaders should help parents and families as long as the parents and families are trying to be independent and stable.” - *Mother*

“

“I think they should help us with the basic necessities because things have become so much more expensive and it’s hard to find a job with the salary to keep up with these increasing costs. We need more money but until employers can see that, we will turn to the government to help us make ends meet. We need children to keep the world going so please stop punishing us when we bring them into this world. The children deserve better.” - *Mother*