

**Arizona White Mountains  
Childcare Feasibility Study  
Final Report  
September 2023**



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## **i. Executive Summary**

It's well-established that comprehensive, high-quality childcare is essential for a community's health. As shown through census and related data, community surveys, and a focus group of parents and providers, the Arizona White Mountains community simply does not have access to the childcare services needed for its community to thrive. Expanding access to high-quality, accessible, and affordable childcare through the development of a model early childhood education center in the area of Pinetop-Lakeside, Arizona will provide critically needed access to early learning and development for the community's children while also affording families a safe and stable care setting that allows them to work and to take advantage of educational and career advancement opportunities.

The Arizona White Mountains is a mosaic of communities in the southern stretches of Navajo County. The communities include Pinetop-Lakeside, Wagon Wheel, Show Low, and the sprawling expanse of the White Mountain Apache reservation. Official and government borders often overlap or intersect with the area residents refer to as the Arizona White Mountains. For this reason, census and other demographic data is highly reflective of the demographic and socio-economic composition of the area but does not always correlate with the geographical boundaries or community understanding of the area referred to in this report as the Arizona White Mountains.

Overall, the Arizona White Mountains have a higher percentage of young children than the national average and experience poverty at a much higher rate than the rest of the state. Even for the small percentage of the population that could afford it, access to high-quality childcare is simply not available for most families and those that are have a long waiting lists. Moreover, the cost of childcare is out of reach for most families, often exceeding the hourly and weekly wages of parents and caregivers. Parents and caregivers are faced with heart wrenching choices of foregoing job and educational opportunities or leaving their children in unsafe environments.

In surveys sent to parents and caregivers in the region, 100 percent responded that they experienced difficulty in finding reliable, affordable childcare. Lack of availability of childcare was the largest barrier, followed by affordability and concerns about quality care or the trustworthiness of the provider. Most respondents also noted that lack of childcare kept them from getting and keeping a job as well as accepting promotions or a better job. Over 90% of respondents affirmed that having access to affordable and reliable childcare would significantly improve their household income. In addition to the economic impact on the community, almost 90% of survey respondents reported that the lack of access to childcare had an impact on their mental health.

Focus group participants repeatedly stressed concerns with availability, quality, and safety. They shared heart wrenching stories of having to choose between their jobs and leaving their child with people who had criminal backgrounds or substance use disorders. They also noted that police are being called regularly to go to hotel rooms where families have locked their kids (including 2-3-year-olds) in hotel rooms so they can go to work. They noted that "there are waiting lists upon waiting lists for the centers that are here. The cost is very expensive, and the ratio of teachers to children is often very bad." They also expressed that the daycares that are present in the region have limited hours that don't fit the needs of parents and caregivers.

A model early childhood education center will not only improve the financial stability of families and the economic potential of the community, it will also change the future of the Arizona White Mountains community for the better by allowing its future generation to maximize their potential. As noted by the focus group participants: "These kids are our future. We need to take care of them."

Geographically located between the White Mountain Apache Reservation and the town of Show Low, Pinetop-Lakeside is ideally situated to provide access to affordable childcare and lend support to the families from neighboring communities. With Pinetop-Lakeside serving as a pivotal link between these

communities, a childcare center here could be a transformative bridge, supporting families throughout the Arizona White Mountains area in pursuing a brighter future.

The following recommendations are based on the results of the survey and the focus group discussion:

**1. A Comprehensive Childcare Center Should be Built in Pinetop/Lakeside Based on Universal Support.** There was overwhelming support for a new childcare center from both survey and interview respondents. There is simply insufficient childcare available to meet community needs and it is having a negative impact on community well-being.

**2. A Childcare Center Should Include Services for Children Birth to Age 5 and those with Disabilities.** While childcare for all ages and abilities is needed, there is an urgent need for services for children ages 0-5 and those with disabilities.

**3. The Design of the Childcare Center Should Incorporate Core Elements of High-Quality Childcare Programming and Incorporate Community Input.** Community members repeatedly expressed concerns about the safety of available childcare and stressed the need for safe, high-quality programming for their children. The design of a childcare center should incorporate core elements of high-quality childcare programming using models such as EduCare, Head Start, and Quality First and NAEYC standards.<sup>1</sup> In addition, focus group participants stressed the need for community involvement.

**4. The Childcare Center Should Include Full-Day Care, especially During Non-Traditional Hours such as Night and Weekend Services.** Community members often have challenges working required hours because of childcare challenges. A program that includes all day childcare, including afterschool care, will help first responders and others who need reliable care for their children when they are working late hours or 24-hour shifts.

**5. The Budget for a Childcare Center Should Include Costs Associated with Start-up and Ongoing Maintenance and Should Braid and Blend Multiple Financial Resources.** The costs of start-up and maintenance of high-quality childcare can be high but pursuit of diverse financial resources such as Head Start/Early Head Start funding, local and state preschool and/or 0-3 funding (e.g., First Things First/Quality First), Arizona DES subsidies and potential transfer taxes on sales of real estate can help offset the contribution of parents. Parental contributions should be no more than 7% of family income.

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<sup>1</sup> [Head Start Program Performance Standards | ECLKC \(hhs.gov\)](https://www.eclkc.gov/standards)

NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards: <https://www.naeyc.org/accreditation/early-learning/interested>

## **ii. Background**

### ***a. Introduction and Overview***

Access to comprehensive, high-quality childcare is essential for a community's health. Studies repeatedly demonstrate that children who participate in high-quality early childhood experiences have better academic outcomes and reduced health risk factors. Providing children with a stronger educational and health foundation also affords parents greater opportunities for educational and career advancement. Mothers, in particular, are more likely to remain employed when they have access to affordable, dependable childcare.

As shown in more detail in this report, Arizona's White Mountains community does not have adequate access to the childcare services required for its workforce and for its community to thrive. To address this critical need, Sitgreaves Community Development Corporation (SGCDC), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, partnered with the Arizona Town Hall, another 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, to complete a childcare feasibility study to inform and guide the planning, logistics, operations, and financial support needed to construct a child development center in the area of Pinetop-Lakeside, Arizona which is located in Navajo County and a region local residents refer to as the Arizona White Mountains.

Expanding access to high-quality, accessible, and affordable childcare through the development of a model early childhood education center will provide access to early learning and development while also affording families a safe and stable care setting so they can work and improve their financial stability.

While residents refer to the area as the Arizona White Mountains, official and government borders often overlap or intersect with resident descriptions of the Arizona White Mountains community. For this reason, census and other demographic data is highly reflective of the demographic and socio-economic composition of the area but does not always correlate with the geographical boundaries or community understanding of the area referred to in this report as the Arizona White Mountains.



## b. Demographics of the Community, Children, and Families<sup>2</sup>

In the southern stretches of Navajo County, a mosaic of communities comes to life, each painting a unique portrait of its inhabitants. Among them stand Pinetop-Lakeside, Wagon Wheel, Show Low, and the sprawling expanse of the White Mountain Apache reservation.

Navajo County, spanning almost 10,000 square miles, cradles a population of 108,147, weaving an intricate tale with an average of 10.9 individuals per square mile. Within this vast expanse, the per capita income averages \$21,023, while the median household income hovers just below the \$50,000 mark. A stark reality casts its shadow as 26% of the population grapples with life below the poverty line—a figure that stands twice the size of the statewide and national averages. This economic struggle bears heaviest on the young, with over a third of the county’s children growing up under its weight.

In the southeast region of Navajo County lies Pinetop-Lakeside, a community that has experienced a 13.7% surge since the turn of the millennium, swelling its ranks to 4,102. In this close-knit enclave, 10.8% of residents face incomes below the poverty line, while 18.1% of its children navigate these same turbulent waters. Families shoulder a significant burden, with 12.5% falling below the poverty line. The resilience of the working class is apparent, as nearly half of those aged 16 and above engage in the labor force. Financially, the horizon is marked by a median household income of \$56,050—nearly \$10,000 below the state average.

The town of Show Low is located just 10 miles north of Pinetop-Lakeside. According to the most recent count taken in 2022, it has an estimated population of 12,056. Here, the vivacity of youth is palpable, with 8.2% of the population yet to reach their fifth birthday, a figure that exceeds the national average by over 45%. Between 2012 and 2017, the median household income in Show Low was \$53,569. However, an alarming 20.0% of its population live below the poverty line with an even much higher child poverty rate of 32.0%. Of the households that live above the poverty line, 18.2% teeter on its edge and 51.7% of these households have members 16 years or older that participate in the labor force.

At the southern tip of Navajo Country, nestled within the embrace of the White Mountain Indian Reservation, lies the small community of Whiteriver. According to the latest data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Whiteriver is home to 4,114 individuals, each contributing to the heartbeat of this unique enclave. The per capita income of \$12,662, with a median household income of \$34,734, reveals the bleak economic circumstances that plague families struggling to make ends meet. The 42.2% of Whiteriver residents living below the poverty line is more than double the statewide average.

Information from the 2020 Census, which is referenced in footnote 1, provides insight into the demographics of the Arizona White Mountains region. However, it’s important to note that the 2020

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<sup>2</sup> For additional information on some of the referenced regions:

Wagon Wheel: <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US0480380-wagon-wheel-az/>

White Mountain Tribe First Things First Needs Assessment 2018 <https://www.firstthingsfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Regional-Needs-and-Assets-Report-2018-WMAT.pdf>

McNary: <https://www.city-data.com/city/McNary-Arizona.html>

Fort Apache Census: <https://www.census.gov/tribal/?st=04&aianih=1140>

White Mountain Apache Tribe Community Profile: <https://naair.arizona.edu/white-mountain-apache-tribe>

<https://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US04017-navajo-county-az/>

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/AZ/HCN010217>

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/AZ/PST045222>

<https://www.biggestuscities.com/city/show-low-arizona>

census was administered during the COVID-19 pandemic and many residents in the community either failed to participate in the Census or refused for various reasons.<sup>3</sup>

Geographically located between the Arizona White Mountain Apache Reservation and the town of Show Low, Pinetop-Lakeside is ideally situated to provide access to affordable childcare and lend support to the families from these neighboring communities. With Pinetop-Lakeside serving as a pivotal link between these communities, a childcare center here could be a transformative bridge, supporting families throughout the Arizona White Mountains area in pursuing a brighter future.

### ***First Things First Data***

First Things First (FTF) is an Arizona state government agency dedicated to investing in and enhancing the early childhood system. The 2022 Regional Needs and Assets report for the Navajo/Apache Region provides additional and critical information for consideration.<sup>4</sup>

The FTF Navajo/Apache Region includes the southern areas of Navajo and Apache counties. The largest city in the region is Show Low. Other cities in the region include Winslow, Snowflake, Holbrook, and St. Johns. The White Mountain Apache Tribe is located to the south of the FTF Navajo/Apache Region.

The following are relevant excerpts from the 2022 Regional Needs and Assets Report<sup>5</sup>:

1. Almost all households with children up to age five in the region (89%) have at least one parent who is employed.
2. The median annual income for families with children under 18 in both Navajo and Apache County is consistently lower than the statewide median for all household types. Married-couple families have a median income of about \$65,000 in Navajo County and about \$51,000 in Apache County, while single females have a median income of about \$17,000 and \$20,000 in the respective counties. With the self-sufficiency standard for an adult with a young child being around \$42,000 in Navajo County and about \$41,000 in Apache County, single females are likely struggling and have need for support to help their child's growth and development.
3. Thirty percent of children in the FTF Navajo/Apache Region live under the poverty level, much higher than the state average of 23%. In the subregions, the percent of children living in poverty ranges from 18% in Snowflake to 34% in the Show Low-Heber area.
4. Twenty-five percent of residents in the Navajo/Apache Region spend 30% or more of their income on housing.
5. About 46% of households are assumed to need childcare based on the employment status of the adults in the household, yet only 34% of preschool-aged children in the region are enrolled in early care and education programs. One factor that may influence this finding is the high cost of childcare in the region. Childcare subsidies in the region appear to be helping as the number of

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<sup>3</sup> Sevigny, M. (2020, October 2). Rural Arizona, Tribal Nations Lag Behind Census Count. KNAU Arizona Public Radio. <https://www.knau.org/knau-and-arizona-news/2020-10-02/rural-arizona-tribal-nations-lag-behind-census-count>

<sup>4</sup> <https://files.firstthingsfirst.org/regions/Publications/Regional%20Needs%20and%20Assets%20-%202022%20-%20Navajo%20Apache.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.firstthingsfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/2022-RNA-Navajo-Apache.pdf>

children receiving subsidies increased, though the number on the waitlist also increased between 2018 to 2020.

6. Head Start and Early Head Start programs are assets in the region as children attending these programs tend to score higher in cognitive and social-emotional development than those who do not. As of 2016, the Northern Arizona Council of Governments (NACOG), a public organization that serves local governments and citizens in the region, was the sole federal grantee for Head Start and Early Head Start for four Northern Arizona counties including: Apache, Coconino, Navajo, and Yavapai. In the FTF Navajo/Apache Region, NACOG operates both center-based Head Starts and home-based Early Head Starts. Head Start programs are available in Holbrook, Snowflake, Show Low, Pinetop, Springerville, and St. Johns. Data presented are aggregated for these four counties. The Head Start performance indicator report from the federal Office of Head Start shows NACOG had 1,051 children enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start in 2022.
7. According to the most recent data, there are currently 55 early childhood centers and homes with a capacity to serve up to 2,373 children in the region, though childcare centers may not be operating at their full capacity due to staffing shortages or other reasons.
8. Additionally, approximately 100 children in the region receive scholarships to attend centers participating in the state's voluntary early childhood quality improvement and rating system, Quality First, and that are rated between three to five stars as "quality" programs. Increasing access to quality early care and education programs is essential for the regions' children, especially since early care and education teachers throughout the state are not well-compensated, most earning minimum wage despite the education, skills, and disposition necessary to teach young children.
9. Children receiving Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzEIP) referrals to be screened for developmental delays and those receiving early childhood special education services have increased in the region. This indicates both an increased need and capacity to meet the need of caring for children with disabilities. The most common types of disabilities for preschool children were developmental delays and speech and language impairments.

Notably, the Regional Needs and Assets Report identified several opportunities to gather additional data including:

- Recruitment and retention of early care and education professionals, including barriers to attracting and retaining professionals that impact continuity and quality of care, such as pay and work conditions.
- Information on cost burden to access quality childcare for families with young children, especially for groups such as single-income families, to be able to target outreach and support.

The report also noted the challenges with obtaining accurate data in these rural regions that often result in undercounting for children and families served.



### iii. Childcare and Community Resources

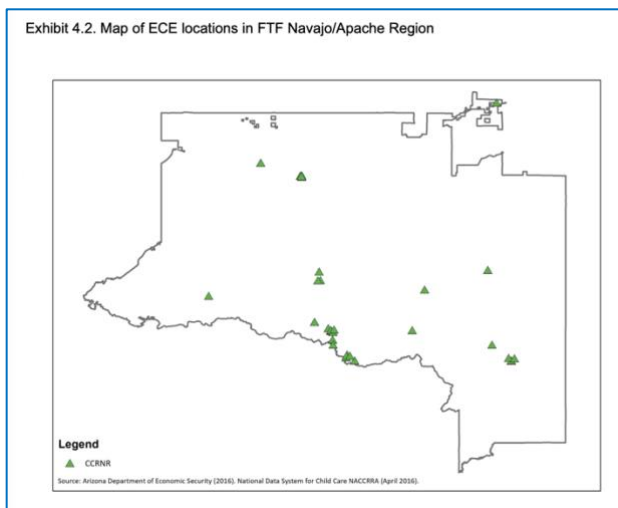
#### a. First Things First Data

In addition to the information referenced above, The FTF 2022 Regional Needs and Assets Report summarized the following information relating to early care and education centers and homes.

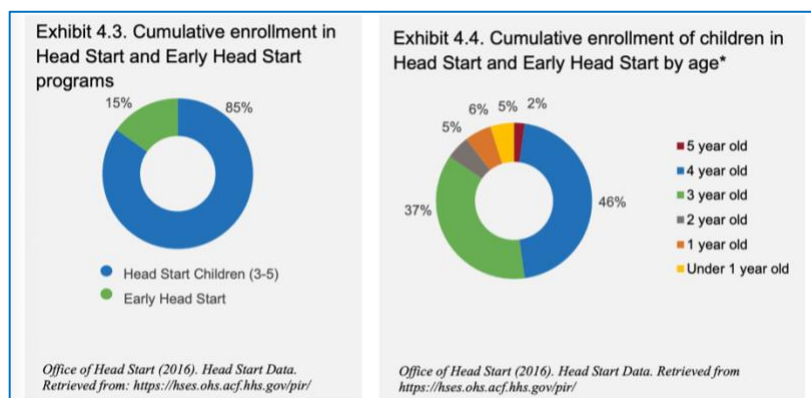
	Number of ECE Facilities	Total Licensed Capacity
<b>FTF Navajo/Apache Region</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>1,373</b>
Navajo County	50	2,221
Apache County	26	1,284
ARIZONA	4,307	395,787

*Arizona Department of Economic Security. (2021). 2021 Child Care Assistance Data. Unpublished data received by request*

(pg. 48, Exhibit 4.1).



- i. “Of those enrolled [in Head Start programs in the region], 85% are enrolled in Head Start and approximately 15% are enrolled in Early Head Start (Exhibit 4.3). In addition, close to 46% of children enrolled in Head Start were 4 years old (Exhibit 4.4). The lower enrollment rates of younger children could be due to several factors including lack of caregivers needed to meet state licensing requirements, lack of qualified professionals, capacity issues at individual centers, or the lack of center-based Early Head Starts in the region” (pg.50)



- ii. (pg. 51).

**Quality of Early Care and Education**

Quality First is a signature program of FTF that is designed to improve the quality of early learning for children birth to age five. Quality First partners with ECE providers across Arizona to provide coaching and funding that is meant to improve the quality of their services. Quality First implemented a statewide standard of quality for ECE programs along with associated star ratings. The star ratings allow parents to easily take quality into consideration when deciding on care providers. The star ratings range from one to five indicating the level of quality and attainment of quality standards.<sup>57</sup>

	Highest Quality	Far exceeds quality standards
	Quality Plus	Exceeds quality standards
	Quality	Meets quality standards
	Progressing Star	Approaching quality standards
	Rising Star	Committed to quality improvement
	No Rating	Program is enrolled in Quality First but does not yet have a public rating

In the FTF Navajo/Apache Region, there are four Quality First Centers/homes, one of which is rated 5-stars, one of which is rated 4-stars, and two of which are rated 3-stars. In total, 103 children are enrolled in these four centers and homes. Looking at the population of children zero to five (Exhibit 1.2), children enrolled in Quality First 3-5 star centers comprise less than two percent of the population.

iii.

(pg. 51).

**Exhibit 4.5. Median cost per day of early childhood care**

	Approved Family Homes			Certified Group Homes			Licensed Centers		
	Infants	1-2 Year Olds	3-5 Year Olds	Infants	1-2 Year Olds	3-5 Year Olds	Infants	1-2 Year Olds	3-5 Year Olds
<b>FTF Navajo/Apache Region</b>	<b>\$20.00</b>	<b>\$20.00</b>	<b>\$20.00</b>	<b>\$27.50</b>	<b>\$26.00</b>	<b>\$25.50</b>	<b>\$32.50</b>	<b>\$29.00</b>	<b>\$25.00</b>
Navajo County	\$20.00			\$20.00			\$35.00	\$27.50	\$25.00
Apache County	N/A			N/A			\$35.00	\$28.00	\$28.00
ARIZONA	\$20.00			\$20.00			\$43.03	\$38.00	\$33.00

Arizona Department of Economic Security (2018). Child Care Market Rate Survey. Provided by AZ FTF.

a.

(pg. 52).

**Exhibit 4.6. Cost of center-based child care as a percentage of income**

	Median Family Income (2019)	Cost for an infant	Cost for a 1-2 year old child	Cost for a 3-5 year old child
Navajo County	\$48,944	18%	14%	13%
Apache County	\$41,259	21%	17%	17%
ARIZONA	\$70,184	15%	14%	12%

Arizona Department of Economic Security (2018). Child Care Market Rate Survey. Provided by AZ FTF.

b.

(pg. 53).

**Exhibit 4.7. 2019-2020 Number of children eligible and receiving child care subsidies**

	Number of Children Receiving Subsidies				Percent of Eligible Children Receiving Subsidies			
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>FTF Navajo/Apache Region</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>72%</b>
Navajo County	155	138	147	100	95%	84%	89%	71%
Apache County	DS	12	25	DS	Cannot Calculate	80%	93%	Cannot Calculate
ARIZONA	16,922	19,813	23,155	19,909	93%	92%	92%	80%

Arizona Department of Economic Security (2020). Child Care (CCA) Subsidies. Provided by AZ FTF.

c.

(pg. 53).

Exhibit 4.8. 2019-2020 Number of DCS-involved children eligible and receiving child care subsidies

	Number of Children Receiving Subsidies				Percent of Eligible Children Receiving Subsidies			
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>FTF Navajo/Apache Region</b>	90	78	97	61	78%	80%	78%	58%
Navajo County	111	100	117	76	83%	79%	81%	59%
Apache County	32	28	22	DS	91%	78%	76%	Cannot Calculate
<b>ARIZONA</b>	12,201	12,219	11,808	7,137	88%	82%	82%	59%

Arizona Department of Economic Security (2020). Child Care (CCA) Subsidies. Provided by AZ FTF.

d. (pg. 54).

**b. Survey of Private Childcare Centers in Pinetop-Lakeside and Show Low**

While the data from First Things First is helpful and provides regional context, it does not specifically provide how many licensed or certified—or license-exempt or unregulated—childcare programs currently exist or the availability and cost of services. In addition, the region referenced does not include Pinetop, Lakeside or Show Low. To supplement this information, a survey was conducted in August of 2023 of private childcare centers in Pinetop, Lakeside and Show Low that includes the cost and the services provided. The results of the survey are listed below.

<b>Bright Beginnings Little Learners Lakeside, AZ</b>	<b>Ehmkees Show Low, AZ</b>	<b>Kidz Town Show Low, AZ</b>
Hours: 7:00am-5:30pm Rates: \$35-\$37 a day Ages: 2-5 Scholarships: DES, Quality First, DCS	Hours: 6:30am-6:00pm Rates: 5 days a week with monthly cost of \$720 for full-time and \$50 annual registration. Ages: 2-11 Scholarships: DES, Quality First	Hours: 6:30am-6:00pm Registration fee 20 a year Ages: Infants and toddlers Rates: \$31-\$50 a day or \$1,500 a month
<b>Hansen House Preschool Show Low, AZ</b>	<b>Starlight Learning Lab Pinetop, AZ</b>	<b>Tracy's Childcare Lakeside, AZ</b>
Hours: morning and afternoon 7:30-11:30 and 12:30-4:30 Rates: \$475-\$575 a month and \$50 registration fee Ages: 3-5 No scholarships Working towards licensing with AZ Department of Health DES	Hours: 8:00am-10:30am Rates: \$150 a month Ages 3-5 No scholarships	Hours: 6:30am-5:30pm Rates: \$28-\$38 a day and \$50 annual registration Ages: 1-12 Scholarships: DES, Quality First, DCS

**c. Additional Information Relating to Challenges Obtaining Quality Childcare in Rural Areas**

Numerous other surveys and studies further support the incredible challenges faced by families in the Arizona White Mountains and how the lack of affordable quality childcare severely impacts the ability of the community to thrive. See Appendix I.

In addition to the resources and information contained in Appendix I, the 2023 Navajo County Community Health Assessment is especially instructive.<sup>6</sup> The Navajo County Community Health Assessment was recently prepared by Navajo County Public Health Services District (NCPHSD) and provides an analysis of the health of Navajo County's residents using a survey assessment of residents. The report notes the importance of childcare for both early childhood development and working parents with young children and concludes that access to affordable, quality childcare is a significant barrier for many.

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<https://navajocountyaz.gov/Portals/0/Departments/Public%20Health%20Services/Documents/Navajo%20County%20Community%20Health%20Assessment%202023.pdf?ver=FRUbGgoethqfJ0A8Ygt9bg%3d%3d>

#### iv. Results from Surveys and Focus Group Discussion

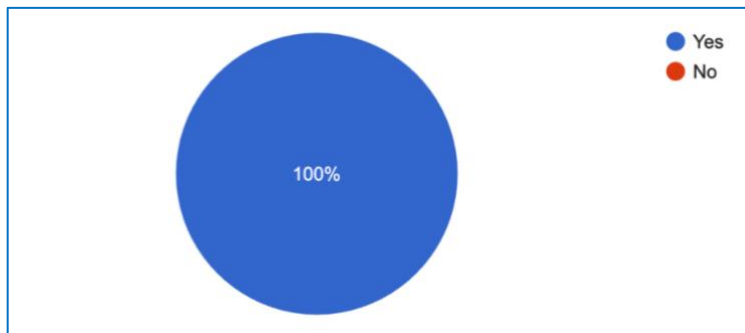
Information collected through the Census and other sources provide data points representative of Arizona White Mountain residents' lived experiences. To gain a more thorough assessment of lived experiences from parents and caregivers, a survey was developed by Sitgreaves Community Development Corporation (SGCDC) and collected between July and August of 2023. Ninety-two individuals responded to the survey. The complete survey and results are included as Appendix II.

In addition to the surveys, a representative focus group of 12 parents, caregivers and foster families convened on August 16, 2023, for several hours of in-depth discussion of childcare needs, concerns, and desires. Their heartfelt personal stories provided valuable insight supporting the survey results. Key points from the discussion are included as Appendix III and incorporated throughout this summary of the survey responses.

Of the survey respondents, 90% were responsible for caring for a child or children between the ages of birth to 12 years old. Ninety-seven percent believe quality childcare plays a very important role in the development of a child's brain and 95% ranked having access to quality and affordable childcare in the Arizona White Mountains of Arizona to be "very important." Over 80% anticipate needing childcare in the next 1-5 years.

In response to the question: "Have you ever experienced difficulty finding reliable, affordable childcare?" 100% responded "yes."

*Have you ever experienced difficulty finding reliable, affordable childcare to go to work or school?*



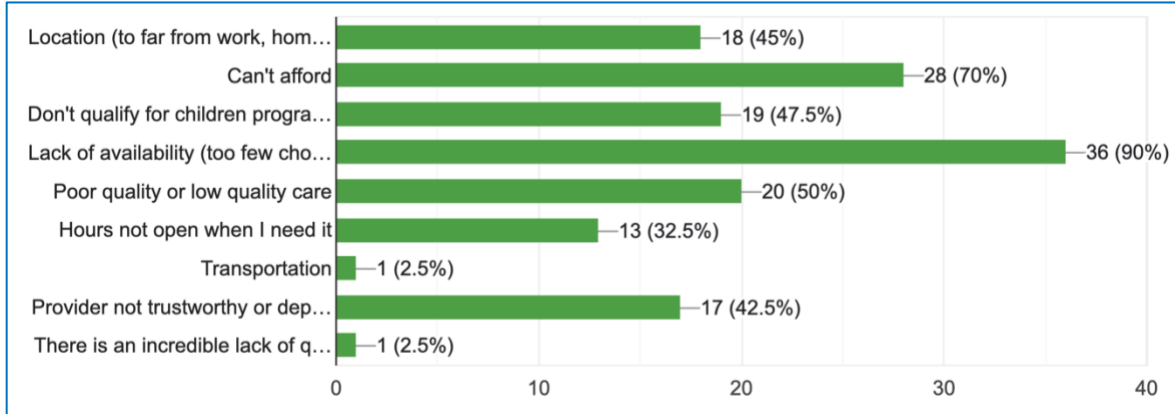
The largest barrier is the lack of availability followed by affordability and concerns about poor quality care or the trustworthiness of the provider.<sup>7</sup> The location of services was also a barrier noted by 45% of respondents.

*For kids who have disabilities, it's almost impossible to find daycare.*

<sup>7</sup> For more references relating to the burdens of childcare costs, see <https://childcaredeserts.org/> National Childcare Prices: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/wb/topics/childcare/price-by-age-care-setting> <https://blog.dol.gov/2023/01/24/new-childcare-data-shows-prices-are-untenable-for-families>



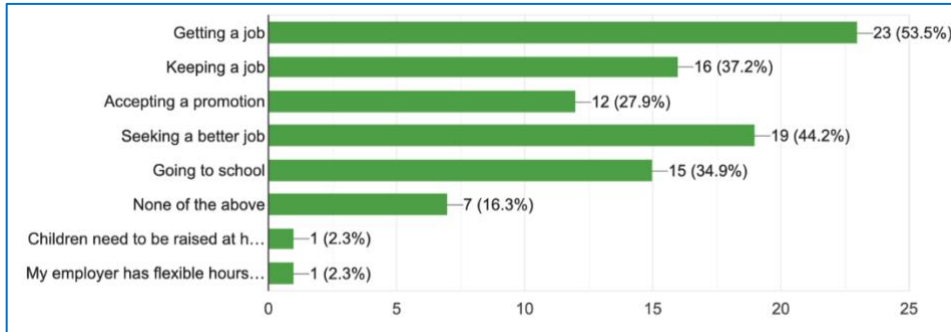
Please check all the barriers you have experienced when seeking childcare. (Check all that apply.)



For families in the Arizona White Mountains, the lack of reliable, affordable, quality care has a significant impact on getting and keeping a job as well as seeking a better job or going to school.

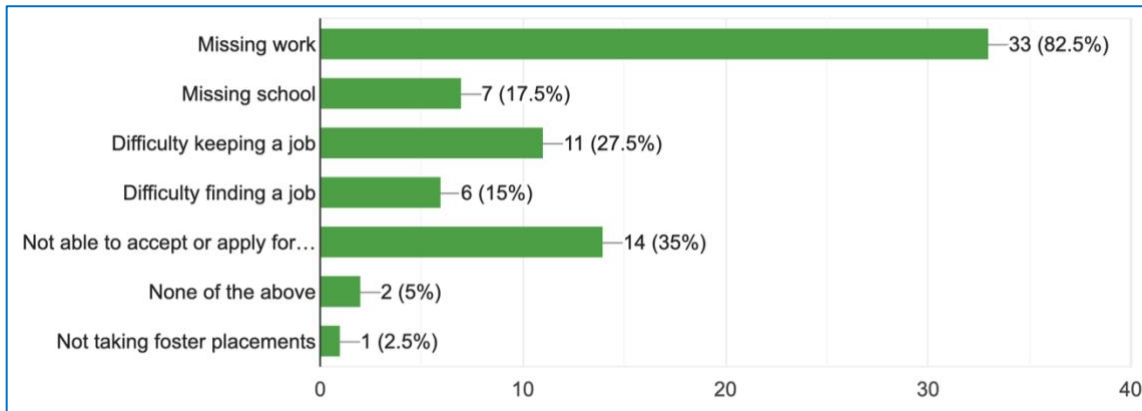
*People are having to drop their kids off with strangers. Other families lock their kids (2- to 3-year-olds) in hotels or rooms so they can go to work. Cops are getting called on this all the time.*

Has a lack of reliable, affordable, quality care kept you from:



*Daycares have limited hours that don't always fit the needs of parents and caregivers.*

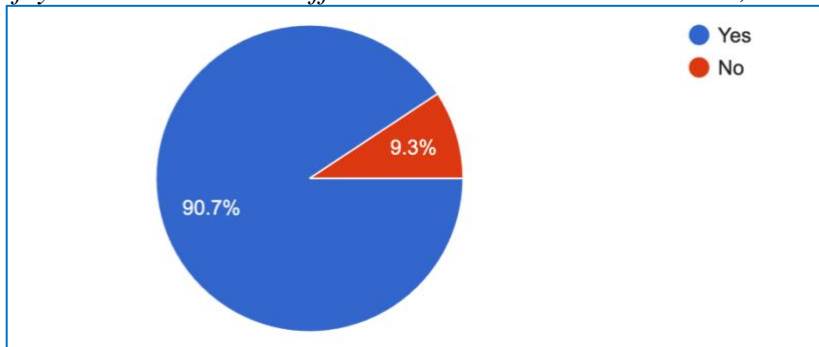
Has a lack of reliable or affordable childcare ever impacted you in the following way. (Check all that apply.)



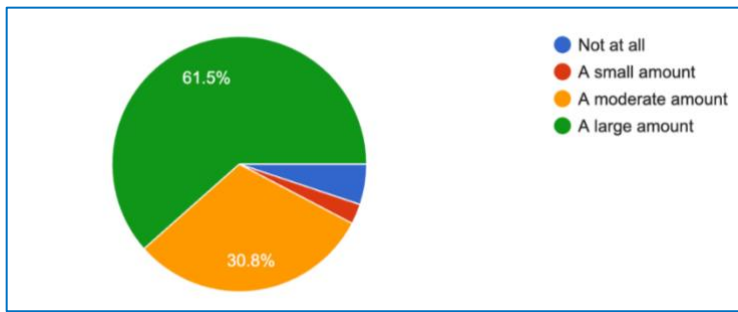
Having access to affordable and reliable childcare would be used by over 90% of respondents to go to school or work, and over 90% of respondents indicated that it would improve their household income by either a large (61.5%) or moderate amount (30.8%).

*There are waiting lists upon waiting lists for the centers that are here. The cost is very expensive, and the ratio of teachers to children is often very bad. Moms don't go to work because they don't feel they can get childcare where they believe their kids will be safe.*

If you had access to affordable and reliable childcare, would you use it to go to school or work?



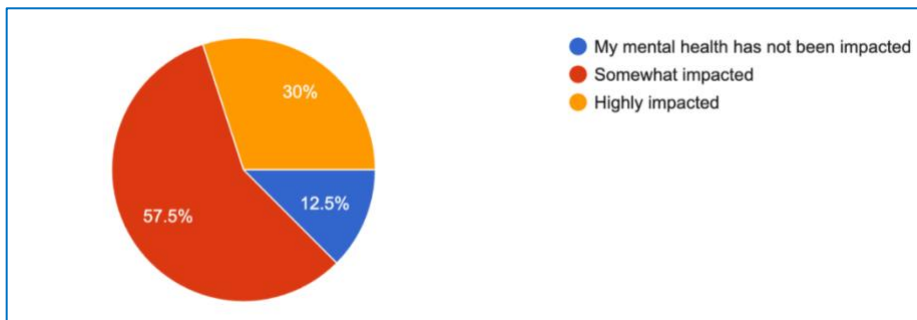
If you had access to childcare and the ability to go to work or school, how might that improve your household income?



Focus group participants noted that more affordable childcare centers would help the economy and the workforce because parents often are forced to choose between a job or childcare. The impact of a lack of childcare options is not limited to jobs and educational opportunities. The lack of access to childcare also has impacted the mental health of over 80% of those who responded to the survey.

*Childcare on the mountain sucks. I was working for \$15 per hour and daycare was \$18 per hour. I had to rely on a friend to watch my daughter and her son sexually molested my daughter. We are having to leave children with people we can't trust or who aren't able to properly care for children. It becomes very discouraging and has a negative impact on the quality of life because of the depth of the challenges.*

*How has the lack of access to childcare negatively affected your mental health?*



Focus group participants repeatedly stressed concerns with quality and safety. Participants shared heart wrenching stories of having to choose between their job and leaving their child with people who had criminal backgrounds or substance abuse disorders or who were not properly trained.

*Leadership needs to understand how important early childcare is to the economy and the workforce. We have no workforce, and this has prevented economic development.*

*What we do with our children now impacts the future of Arizona.*

## v. Recommendations

Census and other relevant data, surveys of parents and caregivers, and the personal stories of those who shared their experiences as part of the focus group discussion paint a compelling picture of childcare needs for the Arizona White Mountains. These sources provide overwhelming support for the following recommendations.

**1. A Comprehensive Childcare Center Should be Built in Pinetop/Lakeside Based on Universal Support.** There was overwhelming support for a new childcare center from both survey and interview respondents. There is simply insufficient childcare available to meet community needs and it is having a negative impact on community well-being.

**2. A Childcare Center Should Include Services for Children Birth to Age 5 and those with Disabilities.** While childcare for all ages and abilities is needed, there is an urgent need for services for children ages 0-5 and those with disabilities.

**3. The Design of the Childcare Center Should Incorporate Core Elements of High-Quality Childcare Programming and Incorporate Community Input.** Community members repeatedly expressed concerns about the safety of available childcare and stressed the need for safe, high-quality programming for their children. The design of a childcare center should incorporate core elements of high-quality childcare programming using models such as EduCare, Head Start, and Quality First and NAEYC standards.<sup>8</sup> In addition, focus group participants stressed the need for community involvement.

**4. The Childcare Center Should Include Full-Day Care, especially During Non-Traditional Hours such as Night and Weekend Services.** Community members often have challenges working required hours because of childcare challenges. A program that includes all day childcare, including afterschool care, will help first responders and others who need reliable care for their children when they are working late hours or 24-hour shifts.

**5. The Budget for a Childcare Center Should Include Costs Associated with Start-up and Ongoing Maintenance and Should Braid and Blend Multiple Financial Resources.** The costs of start-up and maintenance of high-quality childcare can be high but pursuit of diverse financial resources such as Head Start/Early Head Start funding, local and state preschool and/or 0-3 funding (e.g., First Things First/Quality First), Arizona DES subsidies and potential transfer taxes on sales of real estate can help offset the contribution of parents. Parental contributions should be no more than 7% of family income.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> [Head Start Program Performance Standards | ECLKC \(hhs.gov\)](https://www.eclkc.gov/standards)

NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards: <https://www.naeyc.org/accr/early-learning/interested>

<sup>9</sup> CCDF final rule suggests a benchmark of 7% of family income on child care: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/faq/child-care-and-development-fund-final-rule-frequently-asked-questions>

## vi. Appendix I — Additional Resources and Data

- a. Women’s Bureau of U.S. Department of Labor. (2018). *National Database of Childcare Prices*. U.S. Department of Labor. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/wb/topics/featured-childcare>
- b. Christin Landivar, L., Graf, N. L., & Altamirano Rayo, G. (2023). *Childcare Prices in Local Areas: Initial Findings from the National Database of Childcare Prices*. *Women’s Bureau U.S. Department of Labor Issue Brief*. [https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WB/NDCP/508\\_WB\\_IssueBrief-NDCP-20230213.pdf](https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WB/NDCP/508_WB_IssueBrief-NDCP-20230213.pdf)
- c. Health Management Associates. (2022). *2022 Arizona Child Care Market Rate Survey*. Arizona Department of Economic Security. <https://des.az.gov/sites/default/files/media/2022-Market-Rate-Survey.pdf?time=1664992484810>

2022 Arizona Child Care Market Rate Survey June 30, 2022

**Figure 1: 2022 Median Market Rates for Full-Time Care by Provider Type, District, and Child’s Age**

Age Group	District I	District II	District III	District IV	District V	District VI
<b>Centers</b>						
Infants (under 1 year)	\$54.00	\$50.00	\$45.00	\$37.50	\$42.50	\$43.00
Toddlers (1-2 years)	\$48.85	\$40.48	\$40.00	\$34.00	\$37.50	\$34.96
Preschoolers (3-5 years)	\$42.00	\$36.40	\$35.00	\$31.00	\$32.69	\$30.95
School Aged (6+ years)	\$35.00	\$34.10	\$33.00	\$30.00	\$30.00	\$33.11
<b>Public Schools</b>						
Infants (under 1 year)	\$49.29	\$50.80	\$50.00	\$30.00	\$60.55	-
Toddlers (1-2 years)	\$48.20	\$43.20	\$47.00	\$27.75	\$55.25	\$30.00
Preschoolers (3-5 years)	\$33.60	\$35.60	\$30.69	\$30.00	\$37.40	\$33.00
School Aged (6+ years)	\$22.50	\$40.00	\$54.00	\$30.00	\$17.00	\$10.00
<b>Small Group Homes</b>						
Infants (under 1 year)	\$36.00	\$35.00	\$35.00	\$35.00	\$42.00	\$34.50
Toddlers (1-2 years)	\$35.00	\$35.00	\$30.00	\$35.00	\$37.25	\$35.00
Preschoolers (3-5 years)	\$34.29	\$35.00	\$30.00	\$35.00	\$34.50	\$35.00
School Aged (6+ years)	\$30.00	\$35.00	\$30.00	\$35.00	\$30.00	\$32.50
<b>Certified Family Homes</b>						
Infants (under 1 year)	\$34.00	\$30.00	\$25.00	\$30.00	\$35.00	\$35.00
Toddlers (1-2 years)	\$30.00	\$30.00	\$25.00	\$29.00	\$35.00	\$30.00
Preschoolers (3-5 years)	\$30.00	\$30.00	\$25.00	\$29.00	\$32.50	\$30.00
School Aged (6+ years)	\$25.00	\$30.00	\$25.00	\$25.50	\$32.50	\$30.00

- i. (pg.2).
- ii. “For childcare centers, for example, most current subsidies are below the 33rd percentile of current market rates, meaning the subsidy covers the rates of less than one-in-three providers” (Health Management Associates, 2022, pg. 2).
- iii. “Childcare centers (including public school programs) are responsible for the large majority of formal childcare in Arizona, accounting for more than 98 percent of slots. A substantial proportion of providers, particularly center-based providers, do not offer infant care, reducing the options available to families with the youngest children. More than three-quarters of providers reported they accept DES subsidies. Though the subsidy program requires providers to bill by the day, most providers charge by the week or month, allowing them to efficiently schedule and cover their mostly fixed expenses. A majority of providers charge other fees, especially registration fees, that are not covered by the subsidy program” (Health Management Associates, 2022, pg. 2).
- iv. “In Arizona, the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) provides most of the funding for the subsidy program. Federal CCDF regulations require that payment rates be sufficient to “ensure equal access for eligible children to comparable childcare services...to children whose parents are not eligible.” **To support this goal, payment rates must be based on a market rate survey...conducted within the past three years. Regulations additionally require payment rates to reflect variations in category of provider (for**



example, center-based and home-based providers), the age of the child, and geographic location” (Health Management Associates, 2022, pg. 2).

- *The wages and benefits for classroom staff account for between 60 and 80 percent of total expenses. Given that these are the largest expenses and areas where providers have some flexibility, these are also the factors with the largest differences between providers’ reported expenses and the cost of quality care.*
- *Delivering higher-quality services has a significant impact on providers’ costs. Across all age groups, the estimated per-child cost for a 5-Star center-based provider is 30 to 35 percent higher than the cost for a 1-Star or 2-Star provider; for home-based providers, the difference is about 15 percent.*
- *Costs are highest for the youngest age groups, primarily due to smaller group sizes. Infant care is particularly costly; on a per-child basis, the cost of caring for an infant is nearly double the cost for caring for a preschooler.*

v. (pg. 4).

**Figure 2: Provider Base Cost Model Results (Cost per Month)**

Age Group	Est. Cost
Infants	\$1,688
Toddlers	\$1,062
Preschoolers	\$884
School-Aged	\$822

vi. (pg. 4).

**Rate Types**

The child care subsidy program pays providers based on the actual number of days that a child receives care. As shown in Figure 5, however, most providers – with the exception of certified family homes – charge families by the week or month.

**Figure 5: Distribution of Rate Types Charged to Self-Paying Families**

	Child Care Centers		Public Schools		Small Group Homes		Certified Family Homes	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Hourly	16	1.5%	10	4.0%	4	2.3%	5	2.7%
Daily	131	12.7%	60	23.7%	65	37.1%	101	54.8%
Weekly	517	50.0%	84	33.2%	93	53.1%	61	32.8%
Monthly	342	33.0%	98	38.7%	13	7.4%	19	10.2%
Quarterly	1	0.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Annual	28	2.7%	1	0.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,035</b>		<b>253</b>		<b>175</b>		<b>186</b>	

Weekly and monthly rates allow providers to effectively manage their staffing levels and cover their expenses. For example, if a child is scheduled to attend a program five days per week, the provider’s costs are the same regardless of the number of days the child actually attends because the provider must staff their program based on the schedules of enrolled children. To further explore this issue, the survey additionally asked providers with daily or hourly rates whether they charge families when the child is absent. Figure 6 presents the results.

vii. (pg. 9).

**Figure 8: Percentage of Providers That Charge Families the Difference Between the Subsidy Amount and the Provider’s Typical Rate**

	Child Care Centers		Public Schools		Small Group Homes		Certified Family Homes	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Yes	423	68.6%	83	48.3%	59	48.8%	68	60.7%
No	127	20.6%	55	32.0%	62	51.2%	35	31.3%
Not Applicable	67	10.9%	34	19.8%	0	0.0%	9	8.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>617</b>		<b>172</b>		<b>121</b>		<b>112</b>	

More than half of providers report that they charge families the difference between the family’s subsidy and the provider’s standard rate. Nearly 70 percent of child care centers, which provide the large majority of care in Arizona, report that they do so. Thus, the farther subsidy rates fall behind current market rates, the greater the burden placed on families relying on the subsidy program.

viii. (pg. 10)

**Figure 12: Availability of Child Care by Age Group**

Age Group	District I		District II		District III		District IV		District V		District VI	
	Ct.	%	Ct.	%	Ct.	%	Ct.	%	Ct.	%	Ct.	%
<b>Centers</b>												
Infants (under 1 year)	359	52.7%	87	44.8%	23	32.9%	20	34.5%	22	50.0%	13	37.1%
Toddlers (1-2 years)	515	75.6%	132	68.0%	42	60.0%	45	77.6%	32	72.7%	21	60.0%
Preschoolers (3-5 yrs)	636	93.4%	183	94.3%	66	94.3%	57	98.3%	44	100%	35	100%
School Aged (6+ yrs)	434	63.7%	119	61.3%	30	42.9%	39	67.2%	24	54.5%	14	40.0%
<b>Public Schools</b>												
Infants (under 1 year)	6	3.9%	2	5.1%	2	15.4%	2	12.5%	2	33.3%	0	0.0%
Toddlers (1-2 years)	8	5.2%	5	12.8%	2	15.4%	2	12.5%	2	33.3%	1	20.0%
Preschoolers (3-5 yrs)	124	80.0%	29	74.4%	5	38.5%	16	100%	6	100%	5	100%
School Aged (6+ yrs)	92	59.4%	21	53.8%	8	61.5%	2	12.5%	4	66.7%	1	20.0%
<b>Small Group Homes</b>												
Infants (under 1 year)	49	83.1%	62	93.9%	5	100%	26	96.3%	4	100%	9	81.8%
Toddlers (1-2 years)	55	93.2%	66	100%	5	100%	27	100%	4	100%	11	100%
Preschoolers (3-5 yrs)	59	100%	66	100%	5	100%	27	100%	4	100%	11	100%
School Aged (6+ yrs)	42	71.2%	64	97.0%	3	60.0%	25	92.6%	3	75.0%	8	72.7%
<b>Certified Family Homes</b>												
Infants (under 1 year)	25	92.6%	73	96.1%	2	100%	21	100%	13	92.9%	43	93.5%
Toddlers (1-2 years)	26	96.3%	75	98.7%	2	100%	20	95.2%	14	100%	43	93.5%
Preschoolers (3-5 yrs)	25	92.6%	76	100%	2	100%	20	95.2%	14	100%	45	97.8%
School Aged (6+ yrs)	21	77.8%	73	96.1%	2	100%	18	85.7%	14	100%	44	95.7%

ix.

(pg. 12)

1. Navajo County & Apache County are district III

**Child Care Centers**

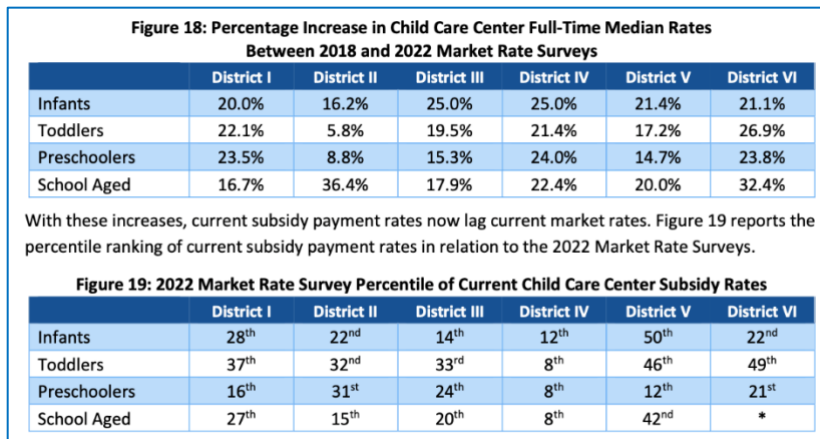
Figure 17 presents the market rates reported by child care centers.

**Figure 17: Child Care Center Market Rates**

		Dist. I	Dist. II	Dist. III	Dist. IV	Dist. V	Dist. VI
Infants (under 1)	Respondents	347	77	23	18	20	10
	25th percentile	\$50.00	\$44.00	\$42.57	\$36.00	\$34.31	\$38.70
	50th percentile	\$54.00	\$50.00	\$45.00	\$37.50	\$41.75	\$43.00
	75th percentile	\$64.15	\$56.76	\$48.26	\$43.75	\$46.80	\$48.45
Part-Time	Respondents	225	60	16	15	11	5
	25th percentile	\$39.00	\$33.00	\$34.68	\$28.00	\$28.40	\$39.60
	50th percentile	\$47.00	\$39.45	\$39.00	\$31.00	\$35.00	\$42.20
	75th percentile	\$52.80	\$46.00	\$40.94	\$37.00	\$43.45	\$45.00
Toddlers (1-2 years)	Respondents	493	118	40	40	30	16
	25th percentile	\$43.00	\$38.00	\$36.00	\$31.38	\$32.28	\$30.71
	50th percentile	\$48.70	\$40.74	\$40.00	\$34.00	\$37.50	\$34.96
	75th percentile	\$56.20	\$50.02	\$44.65	\$36.15	\$41.88	\$40.10
Part-Time	Respondents	375	105	30	32	18	9
	25th percentile	\$32.66	\$27.62	\$23.81	\$24.00	\$26.70	\$26.19
	50th percentile	\$38.10	\$33.10	\$30.99	\$27.00	\$31.75	\$35.00
	75th percentile	\$45.24	\$38.00	\$35.75	\$33.00	\$34.75	\$37.30
Preschoolers (3-5 years)	Respondents	596	159	61	52	37	25
	25th percentile	\$35.71	\$31.58	\$31.00	\$28.92	\$30.00	\$25.00
	50th percentile	\$42.00	\$36.50	\$35.00	\$31.00	\$32.38	\$30.95
	75th percentile	\$50.40	\$44.33	\$41.71	\$34.00	\$38.40	\$36.40
Part-Time	Respondents	451	137	49	37	27	15
	25th percentile	\$26.00	\$24.05	\$17.86	\$20.48	\$23.70	\$15.60
	50th percentile	\$32.60	\$29.80	\$25.00	\$24.00	\$27.00	\$20.00
	75th percentile	\$40.00	\$34.60	\$31.11	\$28.00	\$31.50	\$31.30
School Aged (6+ years)	Respondents	410	116	29	36	25	12
	25th percentile	\$29.00	\$28.00	\$31.00	\$27.00	\$22.38	\$29.25
	50th percentile	\$35.00	\$34.10	\$33.00	\$30.00	\$30.00	\$33.11
	75th percentile	\$42.00	\$40.00	\$37.14	\$32.61	\$40.00	\$38.20
Part-Time	Respondents	312	106	21	27	22	8
	25th percentile	\$19.00	\$20.40	\$16.00	\$19.00	\$16.03	\$23.95
	50th percentile	\$25.00	\$24.00	\$23.81	\$23.00	\$24.30	\$28.70
	75th percentile	\$31.00	\$30.00	\$28.57	\$25.50	\$29.25	\$35.00

x.

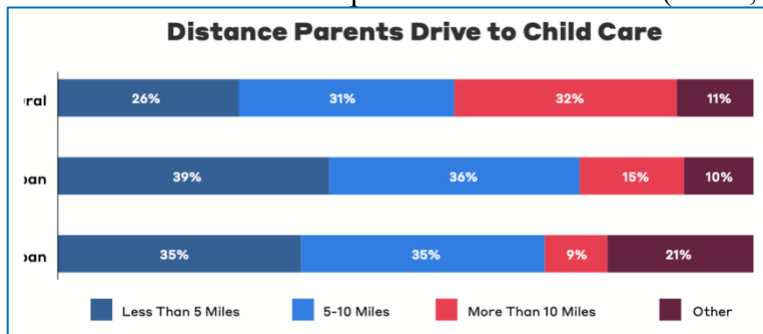
(pg. 17).



xi. (pg. 18).

d. Smith, L. K., Bagley, A., & Wolters, B. (2020). (rep.). *Child Care in 35 States: What we know and don't know*. Bipartisan Policy Center. Retrieved from <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/report/child-care-gap/>

- i. “However, simply comparing supply and potential need within a particular zip code or census block group would not reflect how parents choose childcare providers in reality. Parents do not restrict their childcare choices to the boundaries of their zip code or census block group. Such an approach would lead to an unrealistic distribution of childcare surplus and childcare gaps: high gap areas and high surplus areas would fall adjacent to each other” (Smith, et al., 2020, pg. 14).
- ii. A national “sample of parents” based on BPC’s survey in 2019, indicated that 86% of 800 parents drive to childcare, 60% “prefer childcare closer to home” and 27% “prefer childcare closer to their workplace or school” (Smith, et al., 2020, pg. 15).

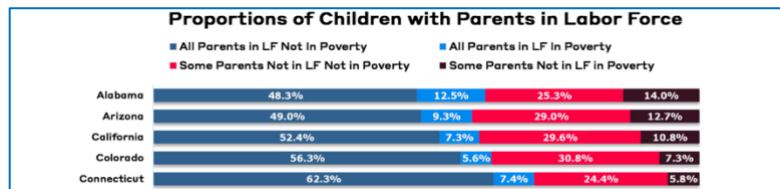


(pg. 16).

- 1. In rural areas, 32% of parents, as indicated, by the table above, drive more than 10 miles to their childcare arrangements.
- iii. “In 2019, BPC surveyed parents with children under six who paid for childcare at the time. Of these families, the majority (63%) said they paid for 30 or more hours of childcare per week. In August, amid the pandemic, BPC surveyed a new sample of parents with children under six that did not necessarily pay for childcare. Of the families in this sample with both parents employed, 44% reported that they need more than four full days of childcare per week. As parents get back to work, the demand for full-time childcare remains for families with all available parents in the workforce. And even parents who have the ability to work remotely say they need full-time care: 46% of these parents indicated they need more than four full days of care per week” (Smith, et al., 2020, pg. 18-19).

Increased Reliance on Grandparents, Family, or Friends to Afford Child Care Expenses		
Families	Yes	No
Income Under \$50,000	65%	35%
Income \$50,000 - \$100,000	53%	47%
Income \$100,000+	49%	51%
One child at home	55%	45%
Two children at home	58%	42%
Three children at home	68%	32%

iv. (pg. 19).



v. Only a small part of the table

^^ (Smith et al., 2020, pg. 21).

- e. Women’s Bureau of U.S. Department of Labor. (2018). *National Database of Childcare Prices*. U.S. Department of Labor. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/wb/topics/featured-childcare>
- f. Christin Landivar, L., Graf, N. L., & Altamirano Rayo, G. (2023). *Childcare Prices in Local Areas: Initial Findings from the National Database of Childcare Prices*. *Women’s Bureau U.S. Department of Labor Issue Brief*. [www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WB/NDCP/508\\_WB\\_IssueBrief-NDCP-20230213.pdf](http://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WB/NDCP/508_WB_IssueBrief-NDCP-20230213.pdf)
  - i. “Center-based care: providers care for children in non-residential settings. Centers are usually larger and care for more children than home-based providers and are organized into classrooms of similarly aged children” (pg. 1).
  - ii. “Childcare prices were consistently higher for infant care. The median yearly childcare price for one child in center-based infant care ranged from \$7,461 (\$8,310 in 2022 dollars) in small counties to \$15,417 (\$17,171 in 2022 dollars) in very large counties. Among home-based providers, infant care ranged from \$5,824 (\$6,486 in 2022 dollars) in small counties to \$9,892 (\$11,018 in 2022 dollars) in very large counties” (pg. 2).
  - iii. “Among preschool-aged children, center-based childcare prices per child ranged from \$6,239 (\$6,949 in 2022 dollars) in small counties to \$11,050 (\$12,307 in 2022 dollars) in very large counties. Home-based childcare prices ranged from \$5,541 (\$6,171 in 2022 dollars) in small counties to \$9,019 (\$10,045 in 2022 dollars) in very large counties” (pg. 2).

## GEOGRAPHY DEFINITIONS

The National Database of Childcare Prices (NDCP) provides childcare price data at the county level. Counties are consistent with the five-year American Community Survey and use Federal Information Processing Series (FIPS) codes. NDCP county-level data can be combined with any other data source at the county level using FIPS codes.

County size as used in this report refers to population size.

**Small county:** counties with a population of 1-99,999.

**Mid-sized county:** counties with a population of 100,000-499,999.

**Large county:** counties with a population of 500,000-999,999.

**Very large county:** counties with a population of 1,000,000 or more.

1. (pg. 2)

**TABLE 1. POPULATION DISTRIBUTION BY COUNTY SIZE AND MEDIAN CHILDCARE PRICES PER CHILD**

County size	Total U.S. Counties			Counties with Reported Median Childcare Prices			
	County Distribution	Population Distribution	Share of Population	Infant Center-Based Care: 2018 (2022 Estimate)	Infant Center-Based Care as a Share of Median Family Income: 2018	Infant Home-Based Care: 2018 (2022 Estimate)	Infant Home-Based Care as a Share of Median Family Income: 2018
Small (1-99,999)	2,548	67,266,422	21%	\$7,461 (\$8,310)	12.3%	\$5,824 (\$6,486)	9.6%
Medium (100,000-499,999)	456	96,580,292	30%	\$10,194 (\$11,354)	13.9%	\$7,800 (\$8,687)	10.6%
Large (500,000-999,999)	94	67,437,679	21%	\$13,420 (\$14,947)	15.7%	\$8,978 (\$10,000)	10.4%
Very Large (1,000,000+)	44	91,618,637	28%	\$15,417 (\$17,174)	19.3%	\$9,892 (\$11,018)	12.4%

**Note:** U.S. counties published in the 2014-2018 American Community Survey, excluding Puerto Rico. Childcare prices are based on counties reporting price data in 2018. The distribution of counties with missing data in 2018 was similar in population size to the distribution of counties with data in 2018. Childcare prices are presented in 2018 and 2022 real dollars using the CPI-U for child care. NDCP collects data at the county level rather than individual level. Using childcare estimates without accounting for county population size underestimates childcare prices paid by those living in larger, more expensive counties.

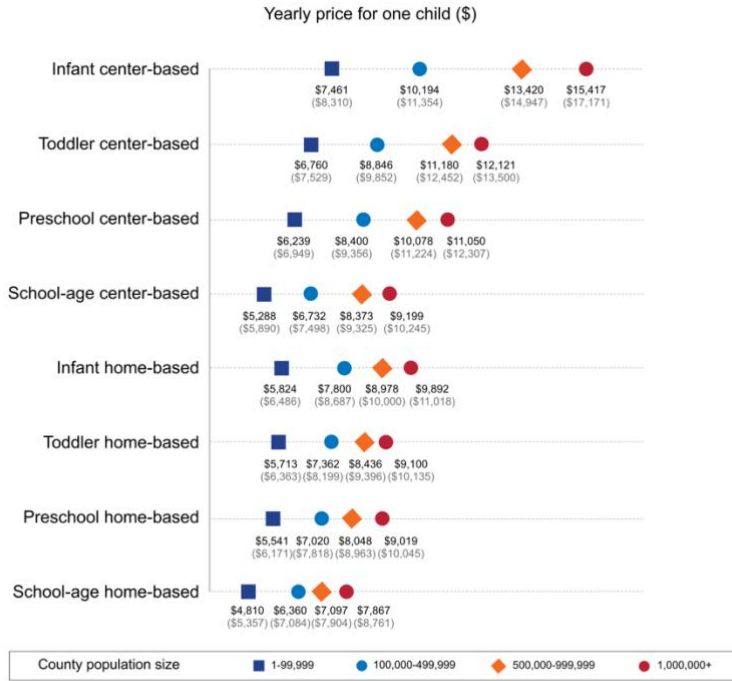
**Source:** National Database of Childcare Prices 2018, Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor and American Community Survey 2014-2018, U.S. Census Bureau

iv.

(pg. 3).



**FIGURE 1. MEDIAN COUNTY CHILDCARE PRICE BY AGE OF CHILDREN, CARE SETTING, AND COUNTY POPULATION SIZE**

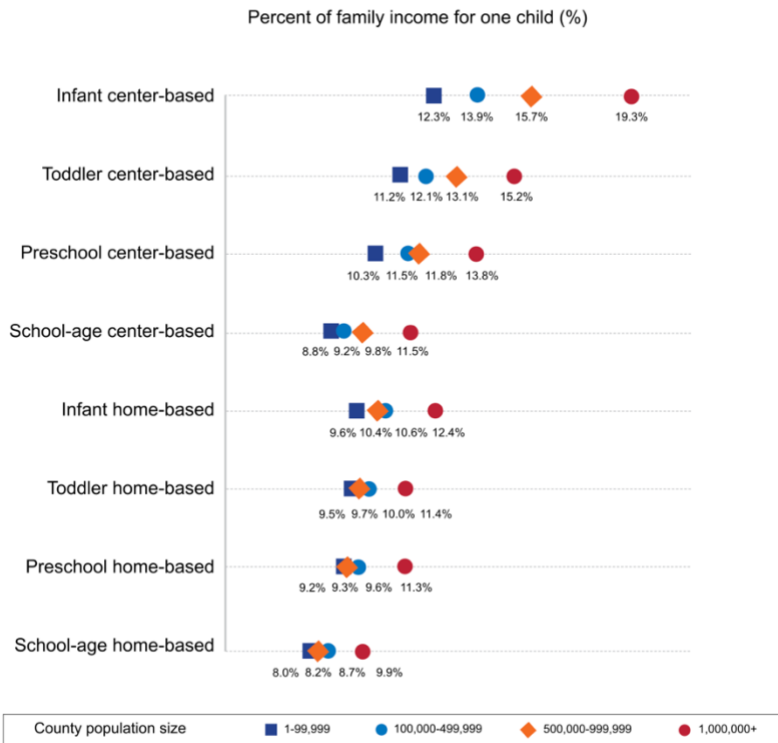


Source: National Database of Childcare Prices 2018, Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor and American Community Survey 2014-2018, U.S. Census Bureau  
 Note: Childcare prices are presented in 2018 and 2022 real dollars using the CPI-U for child care. Estimates for 2022 are in parentheses.

v.

(pg. 4).

**FIGURE 3. CHILDCARE PRICES AS A PERCENTAGE OF FAMILY INCOME BY AGE OF CHILDREN, CARE SETTING, AND COUNTY POPULATION SIZE**



Source: National Database of Childcare Prices 2018, Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor and American Community Survey 2014-2018, U.S. Census Bureau

vi.

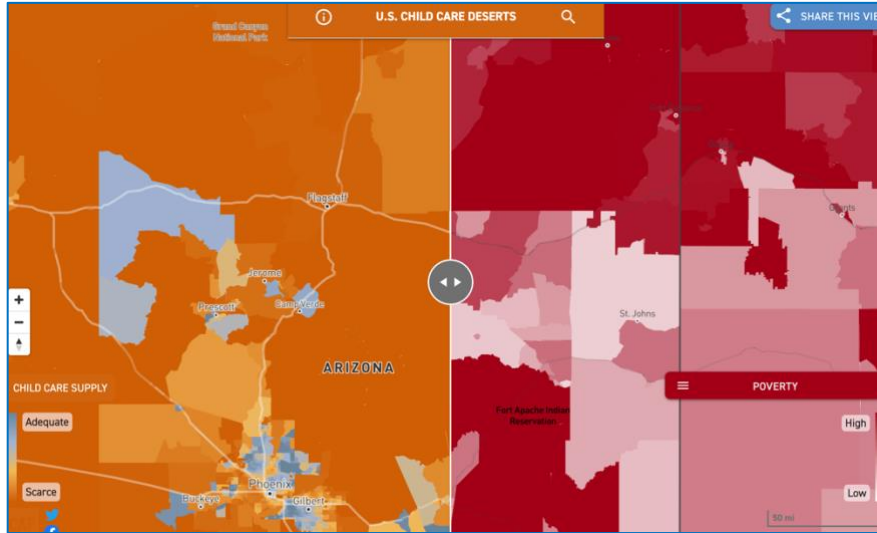
(pg. 6).

g. U.S. Department of Labor. (2018). *Childcare prices by age of children and care setting (2016-2018)*. Women’s Bureau of U.S. Department of Labor. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/wb/topics/childcare/price-by-age-care-setting>

II. Market Demand for Child Care by Age and Socioeconomics

i. Center for American Progress. (2020). *U.S. Child Care Deserts*. Child Care Deserts. <https://childcaredeserts.org/?lat=34.74045159872914&lng=-110.77397822291249&zm=6.9625680069159195&lyr=ccpoverty>

ii. According to the Child Care Deserts website, childcare is scarce, and poverty is high in some areas.



a. *Development Program Recommendation and Quality of Care Standards*

vii. Performance standards:

a. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2023, January 6). *Head Start Program Performance Standards*. Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center. <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii>

i. PROGRAM OPERATIONS: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/part-1302-program-operations>

ii. CENTER BASED OPTION: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1302-21-center-based-option>

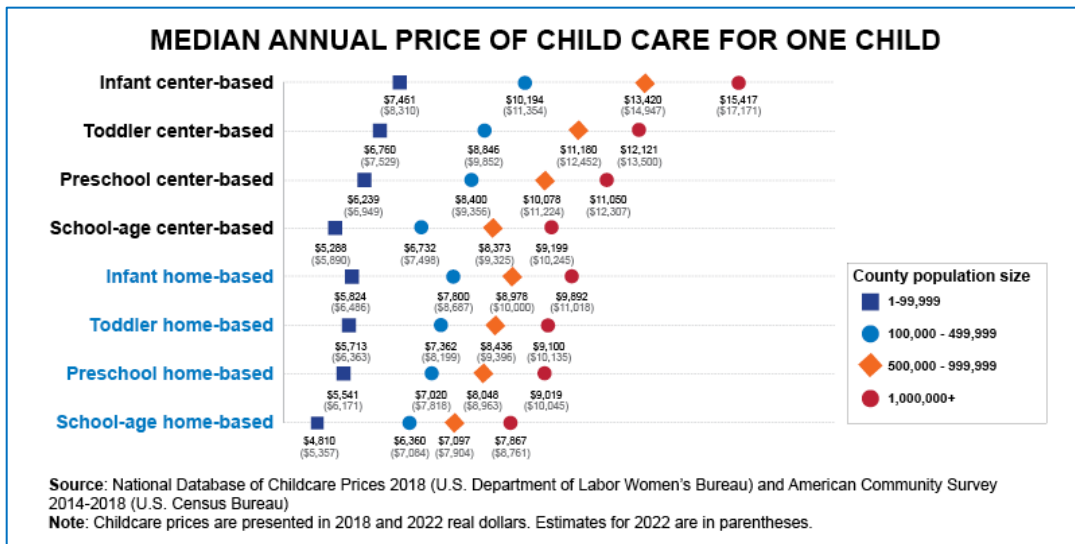
4 and 5 year olds	No more than 20 children enrolled in any class. No more than 17 children enrolled in any double session class.
3 year olds	No more than 17 children enrolled in any class. No more than 15 children enrolled in any double session class.
Under 3 years old	No more than 8 or 9 children enrolled in any class, depending on the number of teachers.

viii. Accreditation:

- a. National Association for the Education of Young Children. (n.d.). *Accreditation Research Databases*. NAEYC. <https://www.naeyc.org/accreditation/accreditation-research-databases>
- b. National Association for the Education of Young Children. (n.d.). *Early Learning Program Accreditation*. NAEYC. <https://www.naeyc.org/accreditation/early-learning/interested>
  - i. PDF DOCUMENT WITH THE EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM 10 STANDARD & RATIONALE: [https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/accreditation/early-learning/overview\\_of\\_the\\_standards.pdf](https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/accreditation/early-learning/overview_of_the_standards.pdf)

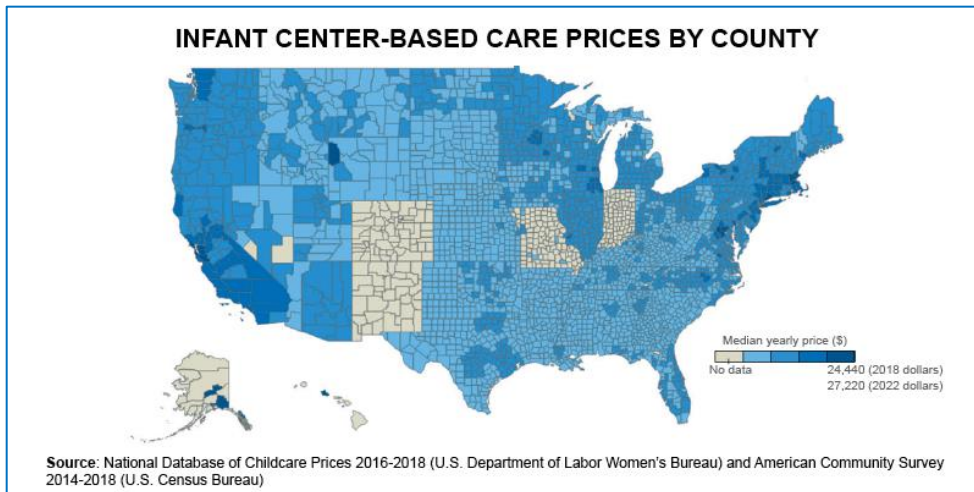
ix. Cost of Care and Subsidies for Affordability

- a. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2023, June 12). *Child Care and Development Fund Final Rule Frequently Asked Questions*. Office of Child Care: The Administration for Children and Families. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/faq/child-care-and-development-fund-final-rule-frequently-asked-questions>
  - i. Child Care and Development Fund: “a federal and state partnership program (over \$5 billion in federal funding) authorized under the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act (CCDBG) and administered by states, territories, and tribes with funding and support from the Administration for Children and Families’ Office of Child Care. States use CCDF to provide financial assistance to low-income families to access childcare so they can work or attend a job training or educational program” (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2023).
  - ii. Provides funding for childcare assistance for “1.4 million children, under age 13 each month from 850,000 low-income working families” (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2023).
  - iii. “Nationally, approximately 340,000 childcare providers served children receiving CCDF subsidies in FY 2015. A fourth of those providers were childcare centers, and 75 percent were home-based providers. Home-based providers include family childcare homes, group childcare homes, and care provided in the child’s home” (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2023).
  - iv. “CCDF Tribal allocations vary from less than \$25,000 to over \$12 million. The final rule recognizes that Tribes receiving smaller CCDF grants may not have sufficient resources or infrastructure to effectively operate a program that complies with all CCDF requirements” (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2023).
  - v. “Yes. Children experiencing homelessness are now included in § 98.46 “Priority for childcare services,” along with children of families with very low family income and children with special needs (which may include vulnerable populations as defined by the Lead Agency). Lead Agencies have flexibility as to how they offer priority to these populations, including by prioritizing enrollment, waiving copayments, paying higher rates for access to higher-quality care, or using grants or contracts to reserve slots for priority populations, though Lead Agencies must meet the requirements specific to serving children experiencing homelessness at § 98.51 and § 98.41(a)(1)(i)(C)” (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2023).
- b. Landivar, C. (2023, January 24). New Childcare Data Shows Prices Are Untenable for Families. *U.S. Department of Labor Blog*. <https://blog.dol.gov/2023/01/24/new-childcare-data-shows-prices-are-untenable-for-families>



c.

- d. “Using the most recent data available from 2018 and adjusted for inflation to 2022 dollars, childcare prices range from \$4,810 (\$5,357 in 2022 dollars) for school-age home-based care in small counties to \$15,417 (\$17,171 in 2022 dollars) for infant center-based care in very large counties. These prices represent between 8% and 19.3% of median family income per child” (Landivar, 2023).



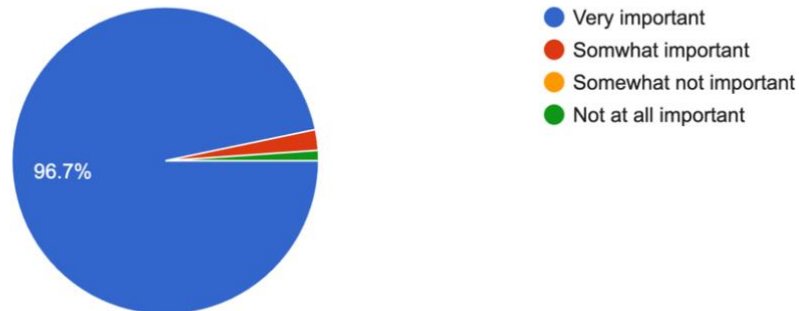
e.

- f. “These maps show that in nearly every county, childcare prices were high relative to family income, pricing families out of paid childcare. Higher childcare prices are especially detrimental to maternal employment as mothers’ employment drops in areas with more expensive childcare, even in places where women’s wages are higher.” (Landivar, 2023).
- g. “Even though childcare is expensive, childcare providers operate on thin margins and childcare workers receive very low wages – a median of \$13.22 an hour. This is lower than almost any other occupation, and wages fall below the living wage in most states, failing to meet childcare workers’ basic needs. Low pay in the childcare sector means that employers cannot attract sufficient workers and many areas are considered childcare deserts, leaving families with limited options. Yet, families cannot afford to pay more, meaning the childcare sector needs substantial government investment to function adequately and eventually prosper. Quality, affordable, accessible childcare supports higher employment and full-time work hours, reduces poverty, and reduces socioeconomic disparities in employment and early care and education” (Landivar, 2023).

## vii. Appendix II — Complete Survey Responses with Charts

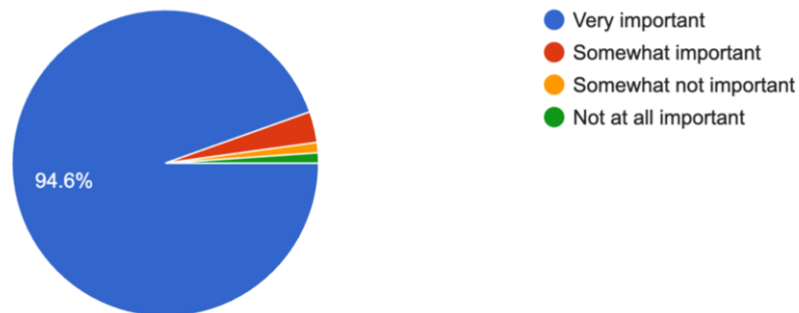
1. How important of a role does quality childcare play in the development of a child's brain?

92 responses



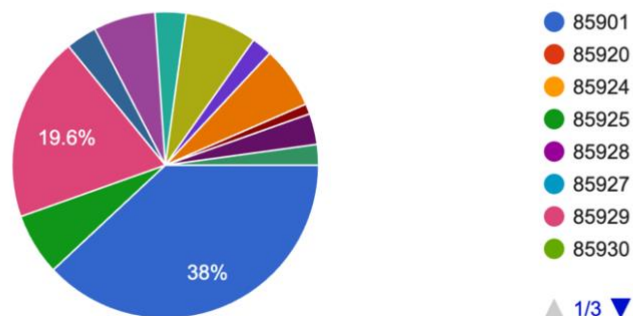
2. How high of a priority is having access to quality and affordable childcare in the White Mountains of Arizona?

92 responses



3. Please select your zip code.

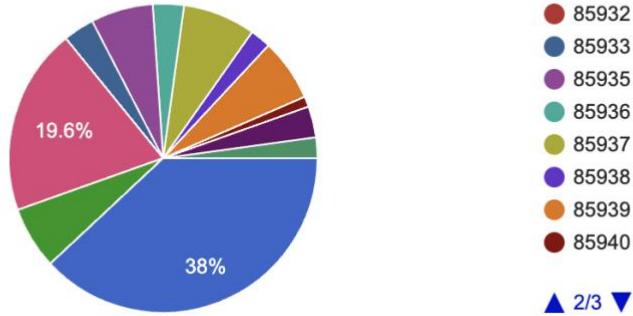
92 responses





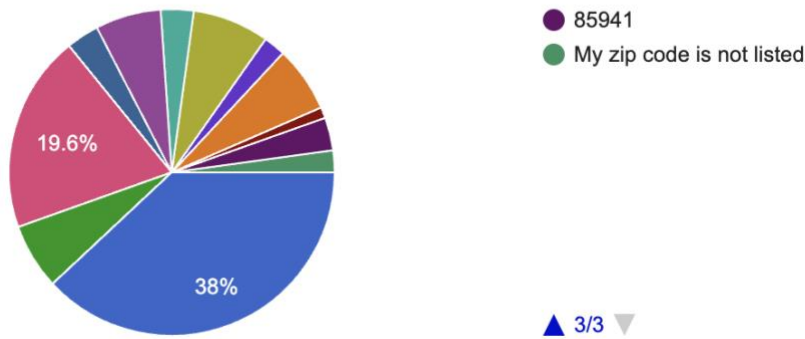
### 3. Please select your zip code.

92 responses



### 3. Please select your zip code.

92 responses

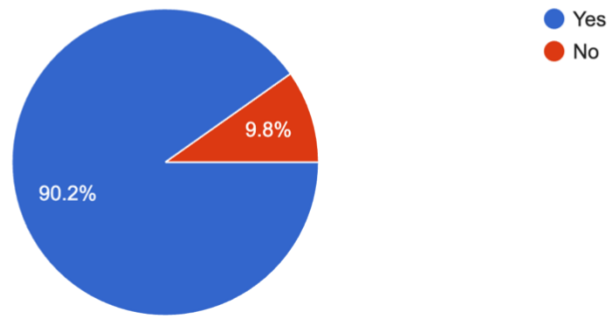


### Zip Codes (WMAT = White Mountain Apache Tribe)

- |                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 85901 – Show Low (35 responded)     | 85937 – Snowflake (7 responded)         |
| 85920 – Alpine (0 responded)        | 85938 – Springerville (2 responded)     |
| 85924 – St. Johns (0 responded)     | 85939 – Taylor (6 responded)            |
| 85924 – Eager (6 responded)         | 85940 – Vernon (1 responded)            |
| 85927 – Greer (0 responded)         | 85941 – Whiteriver (WMAT) (3 responded) |
| 85928 – Heber (0 responded)         |   |
| 85929 – Lakeside (18 responded)     |   |
| 85930 – McNary (WMAT) (0 responded) |   |
| 85932 – Nutrioso (0 responded)      |   |
| 85933 – Overgaard (3 responded)     |   |
| 85935 – Lakeside (6 responded)      |   |
| 85936 – St. Johns (3 responded)     |   |

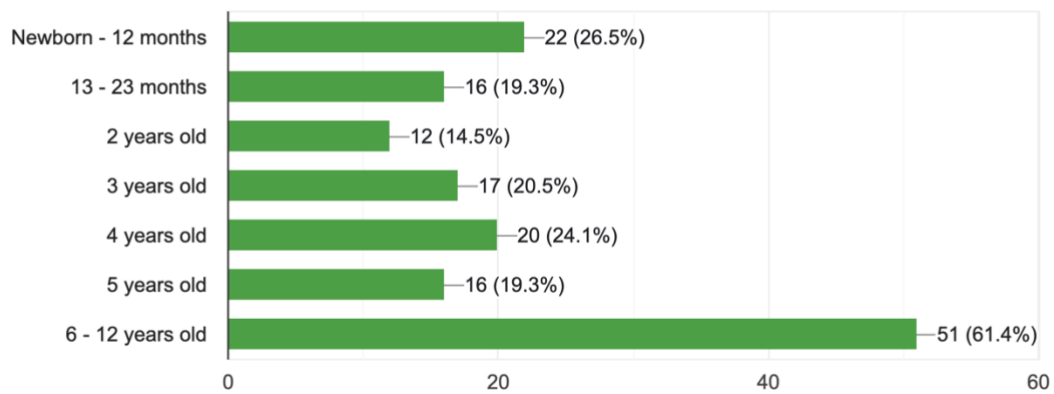
4. Do you currently have, or are you responsible for caring for a child or children between the ages of birth to 12 years?

92 responses



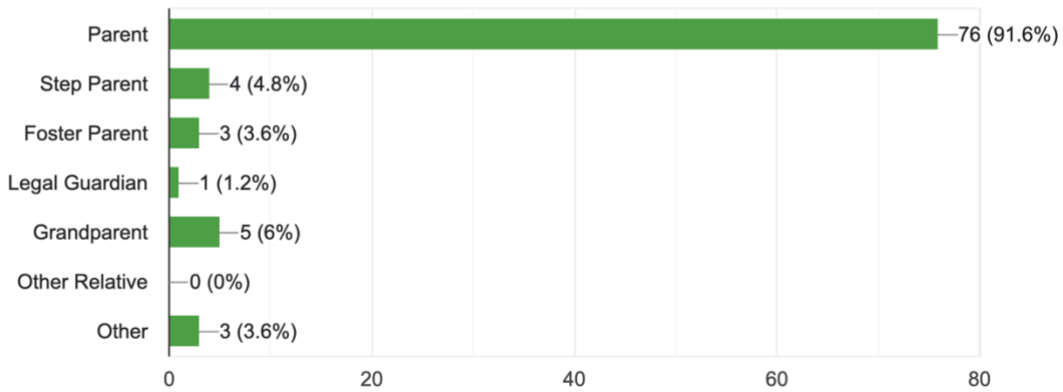
6. What are the ages of the children in your household?

83 responses



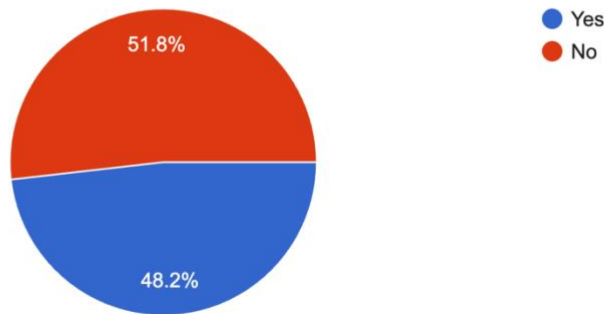
5. What is your relationship to the child(ren) in your household whom you care for? Please check all that apply.

83 responses



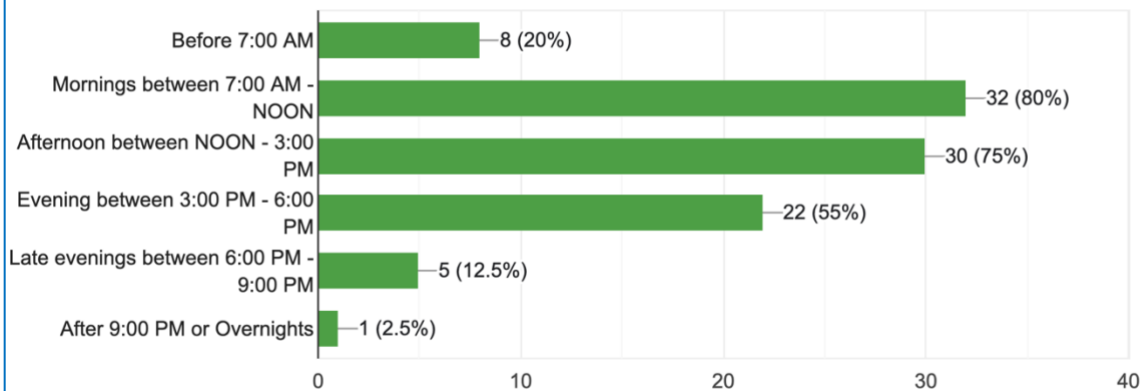
7. Are you currently using childcare services to go to work or school?

83 responses



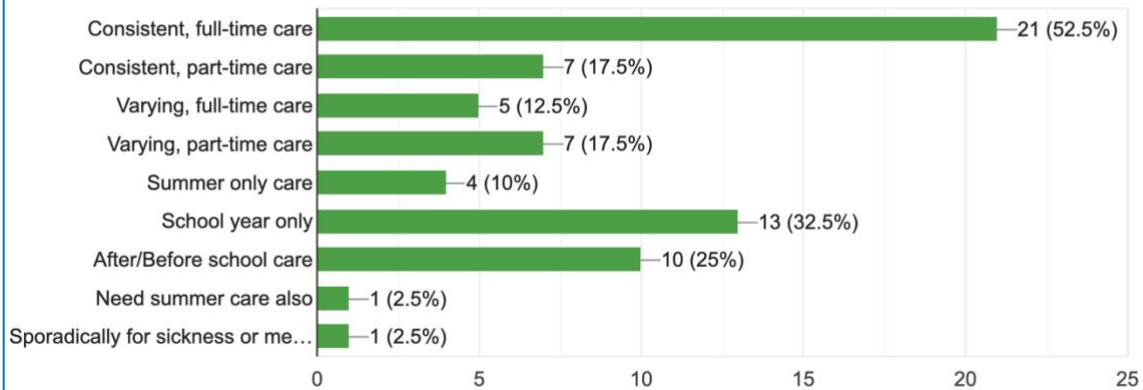
8. When are you currently using childcare to go to work or school? (Check all that apply)

40 responses



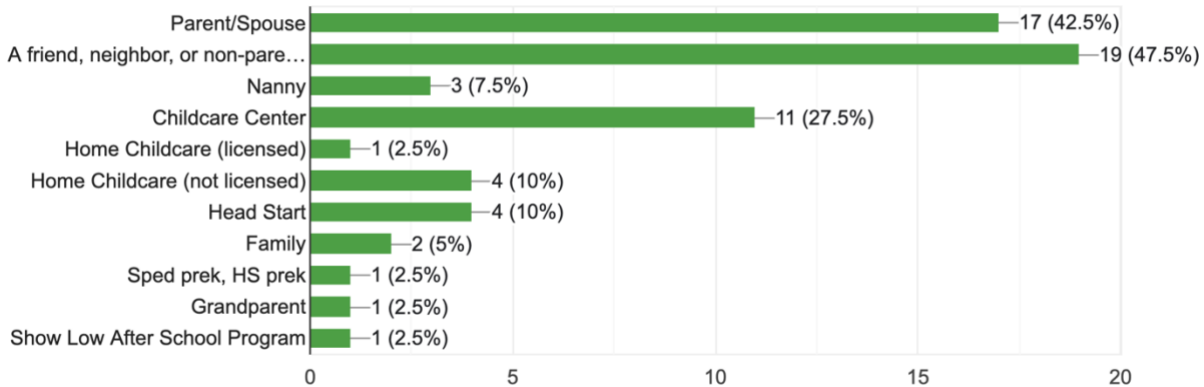
9. Which of the following options best describes your childcare needs? Please select all that apply. (Full-time is 30+ hours, Part-time is less than 29 hours per week).

40 responses



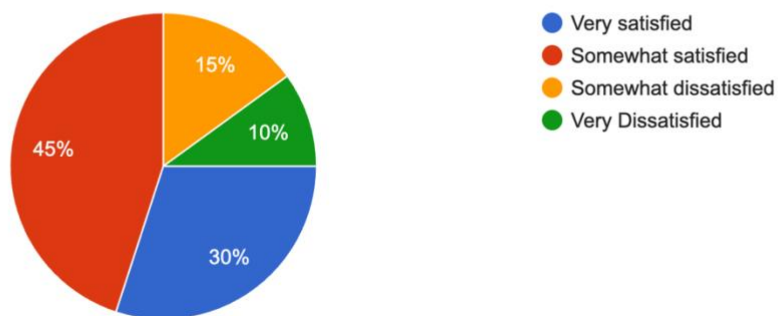
10. Please specify the type of childcare services you are currently using. (Check all that apply)

40 responses



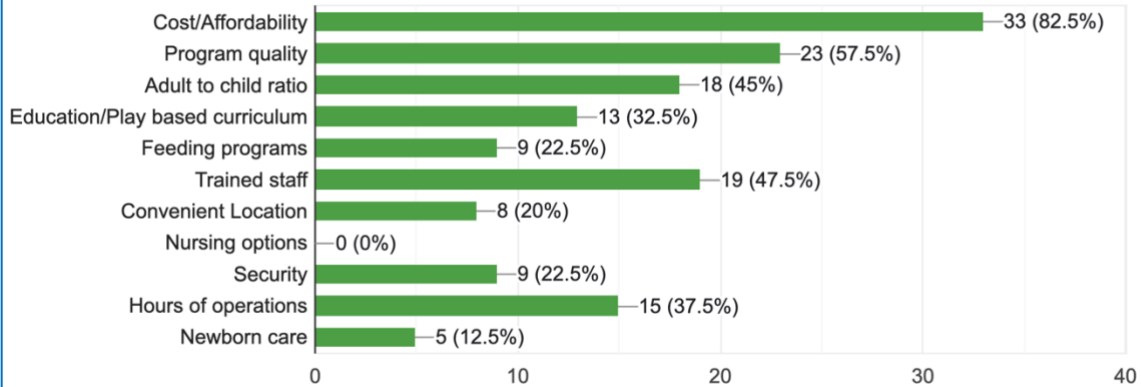
11. How satisfied are you with your current childcare arrangements?

40 responses



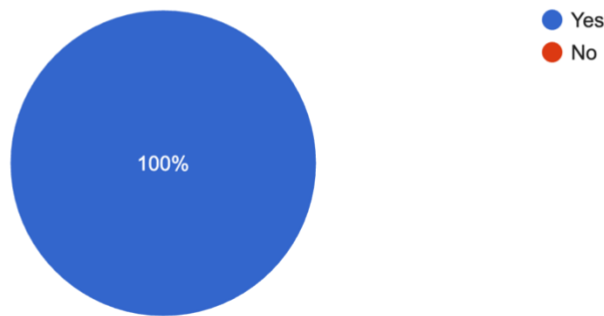
12. Please select the three options most important to you when choosing a childcare program.

40 responses



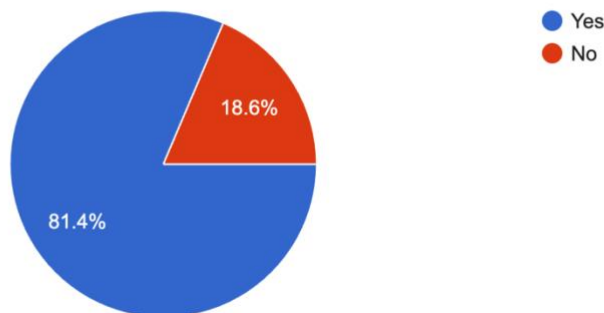
13. Have you ever experienced difficulty finding reliable, affordable childcare to go to work or school?

40 responses



14. Do you anticipate needing childcare in the next 1-5 years?

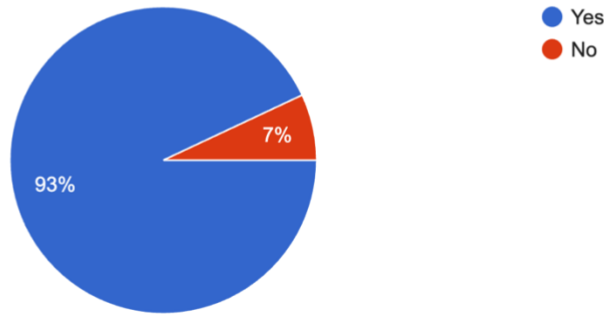
43 responses





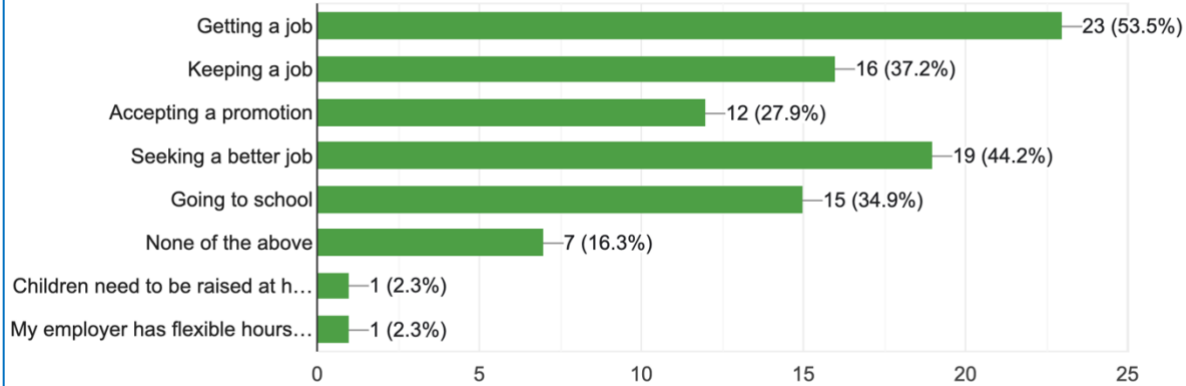
15. Has a lack of reliable, affordable, quality childcare been a reason for not choosing to use childcare services.

43 responses



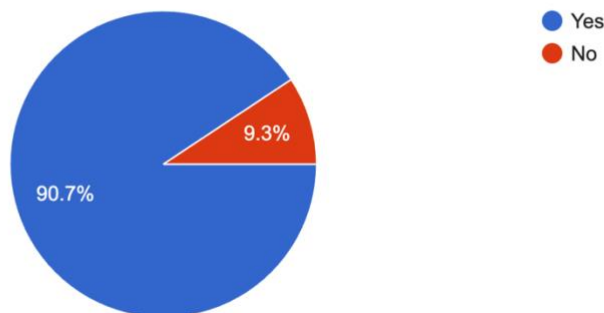
16. Has a lack of reliable, affordable, quality care kept you from:

43 responses



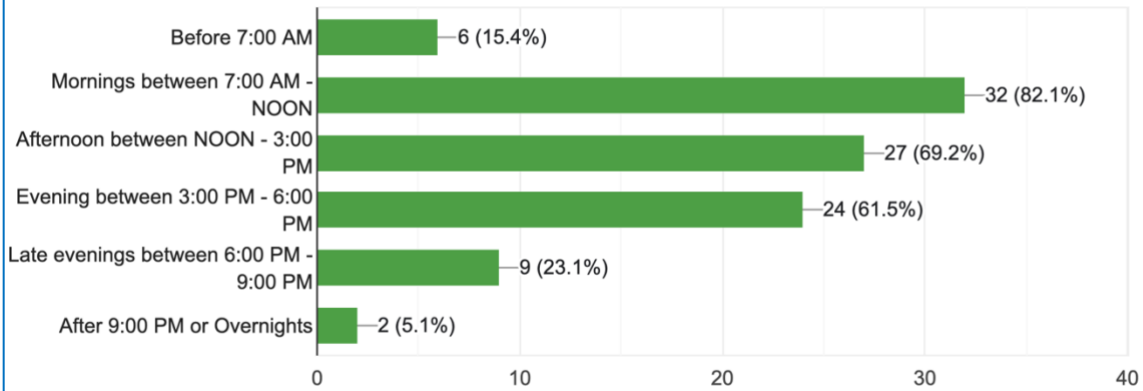
17. If you had access to affordable and reliable childcare would you use it to go to school or work?

43 responses



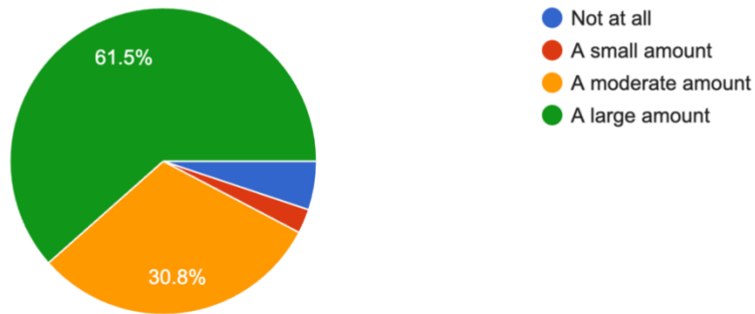
18. When would you anticipate needing childcare to go to school or work? (Check all that apply)

39 responses



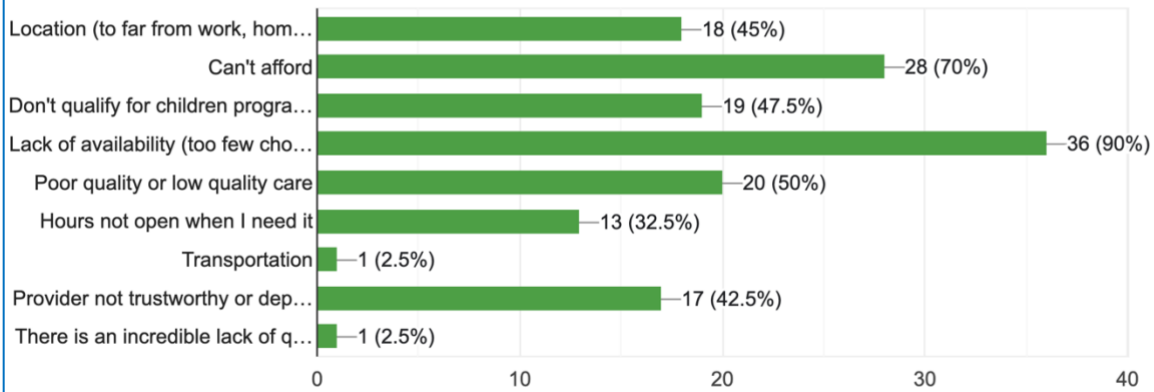
19. If you had access to childcare and the ability to go to work or school how might that improve your household income?

39 responses



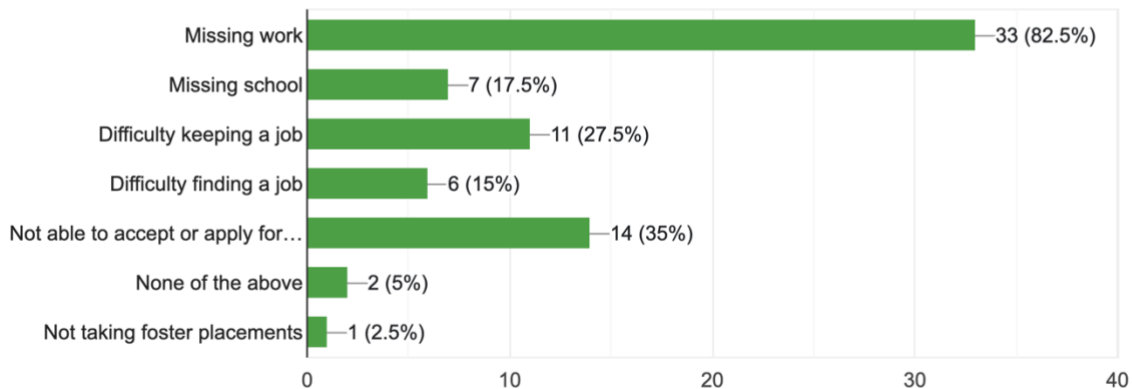
20. Please check all the barriers you have experienced when seeking childcare. (Check all that apply)

40 responses



21. Has a lack of reliable or affordable childcare ever impacted you in the following way. (Check all that apply)

40 responses



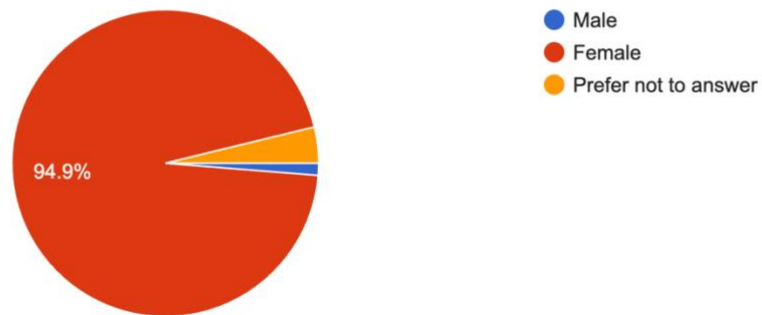
## 22. How has the lack of access to childcare negatively affected your mental health?

40 responses



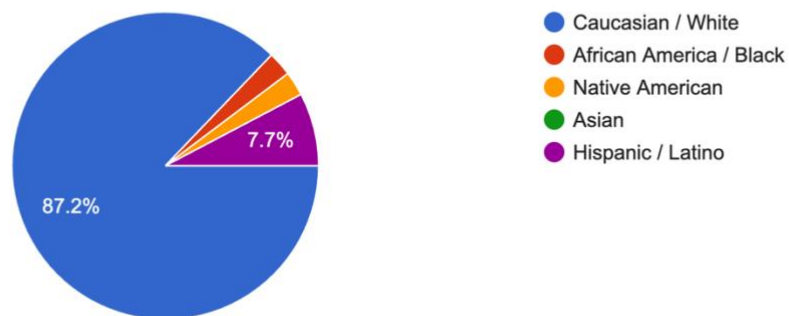
## 23. Gender

79 responses



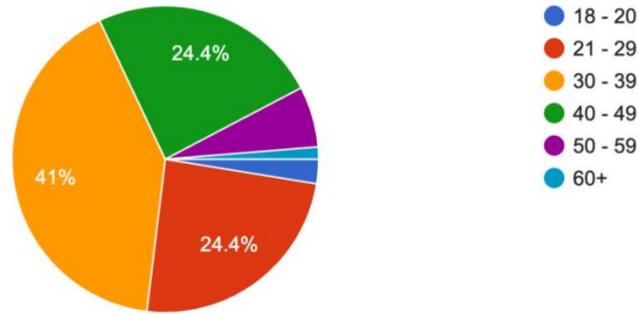
## 24. Race

78 responses



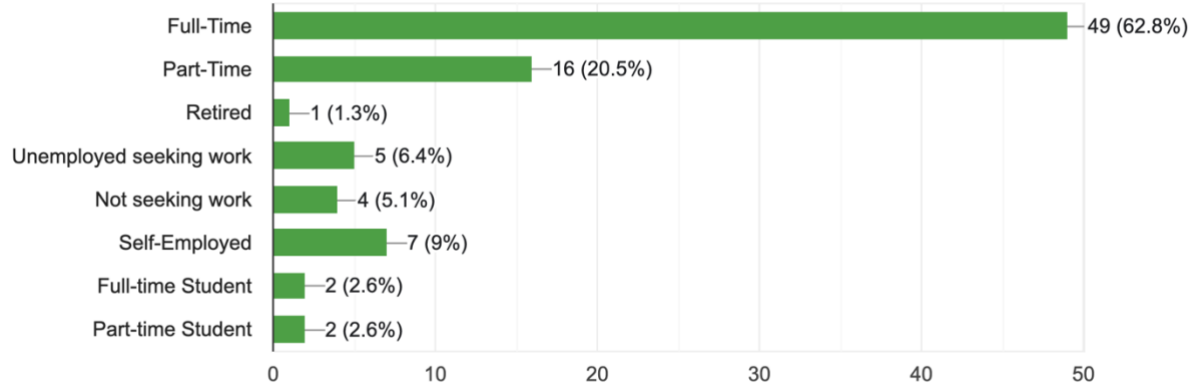
### 25. Age Group

78 responses



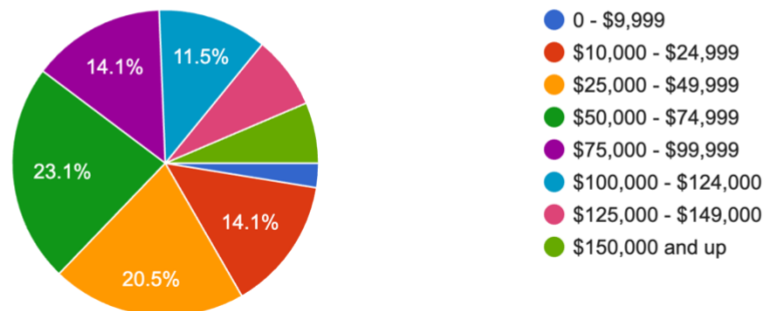
### 26. Employment Status (Check all that apply)

78 responses



### 27. What was the total combined household income (before taxes) earned by all members of your household last year?

78 responses





## viii. Appendix III — Focus Group Discussion

August 16, 2023

### Discussion Questions

*\*These discussion questions helped to guide the focus group.*

What do you think of when you think of high-quality childcare?

#### 1. Additional Discussion Questions

1. How would a high-quality childcare center in the Arizona White Mountains impact the community? Consider how it would impact community health, the economy, and quality of life.
2. Consider the barriers identified to quality early childcare (reference responses to survey questions 13 and 20). What collaborations or actions would help us to address these barriers with the least amount of expense?
3. How can we better utilize existing resources to meet community needs for quality childcare?
4. To the extent actions need to be taken to increase quality early childcare, what are the most important actions that should be taken and who should be responsible for taking them?
5. To the extent funding is required, what are the best sources for reliable funding to meet community needs for quality early childhood education?

### Key Points from Discussions

#### **High Quality Childcare is...**

- All about LOVE.
- A place where children are getting their needs met.
- High quality childcare demonstrates love to all kids. Every child is different, and kids learn best when they feel listened to and loved.
- Is safe and filled with love.
- Has people who care about the children and will take them regardless of disability or challenges.
- Includes children with special needs.
- Has people you can trust to take care of your children while you are away.
- A place that does not try to put a square peg in a round hole. It accepts a child where they are.
- A place that creates safe and stimulating environments.
- Community—the community needs to be more invested in the daycare centers and support them. The community also needs to support bringing family members and childcare centers people together to work together to support the needs of the children.

- High quality childcare takes a village and it's important to have a support structure with members of the community—especially for students and families who may need additional resources but who either do not have the knowledge of resources or who don't feel comfortable asking for them.

### **Barriers and Challenges**

- One of the biggest issues is shortages of services for infants and those up to age 2.
- Safety is a major concern.
- Availability: There are waiting lists upon waiting lists for the centers that are here. The cost is very expensive, and the ratio of teachers to children is often very bad. Moms don't go to work because they don't feel they can get childcare where they believe their kids will be safe.
- For kids who have disabilities, it's almost impossible to find daycare.
- Daycares have limited hours that don't always fit the needs of parents and caregivers.
- We have a lot of teens who are directionless and could have a community center that is not just for fitness but open to the entire community with classes for diverse ages and affordable programs. A community center based in a few places in Navajo County would create a space where you wouldn't worry as much about kids.
- It can start with good childcare centers which can then build support for more. Also, Good childcare will boost the economy by helping moms to be able to work jobs.
- For what people make on the mountain, childcare is very expensive. Many people stay home because they are unable to work.
- More affordable childcare centers would help the economy and the workforce. Parents often have to choose between a job or childcare.
- Parents turn down promotions because then they lose the benefit of government subsidies that allow them to send kids to daycare.
- In addition, people who work at different hours cannot find childcare.
- It becomes very discouraging and has a negative impact on the quality of life because of the depth of the challenges. Families need scholarships but if they take a promotion, then they don't get the scholarships and can't afford childcare.

### **Moving Forward to Address Barriers**

- Make sure anyone who works in day care is certified in multiple areas –so they can accept foster children or children with special needs.
- Types of training needed: Special Needs, Article 9s, CPR first aid, and special training with the parents,
- Respite care workers: went through 4 in 4 years. Is very hard for special needs families.
- Article 9 is one of the biggest issues—is not even that big of an expense. If there could be help paying for this, it would help.
- Providers need to be compensated appropriately to attract the quality of people you need.
- DCS, DES and Quality First pay for scholarships. Trying to find people who will take these jobs Can be hard for business to stay afloat.

- Parents can't pay the amount it takes to provide quality childcare and daycare providers find it hard to make ends meet if there aren't scholarships. The work is hard and challenging and the pay doesn't match, so many people quit.
- COVID relief monies end in September of next year. It's unclear what will happen when this ends. There needs to be SUSTAINABLE funding and a model different from what we have now.
- It would help to widen the gap for people who get subsidies so more can get them and still work.
- Quality of life is being impacted for mothers who want to work or who work at home.
- Would help to increase DES reimbursements.
- Licensing is expensive and is about to become even more so (without COVID relief funds).
- It is a big expense to get started and takes a lot of planning. It's hard for people to start centers. Even things like the changing tables are thousands of dollars. The cost for children with special needs is also not covered.
- It is very difficult and not practical. People making guidelines for daycare and foster care need to talk to the actual community.

### **The Personal Impact of Childcare Challenges**

- Having someone who is an alcoholic watch the kids or making choices where you have to leave your child with someone who is not what you wanted.
- Childcare on the mountain sucks. I was working for \$15-hour and daycare was \$18/hour. I had to rely on a friend to watch my daughter and her son sexually molested my daughter. We are having to leave children with people we can't trust or who aren't able to properly care for children.
- In Snowflake, had child molester in a home while running a daycare. There are a lot of child molesters up here.
- Because of lack of childcare, families are forced to leave children with people who are unsafe or who don't know how to take care of them.
- These kids are our future. We need to take care of them.
- Lots of children have undiagnosed issues. These children need a place where they can be happy.
- Here, most childcare centers don't fully engage.
- We want a place where children are listened to and where teachers pay attention to them, one where they enjoy going to.
- Licensure doesn't mean high quality.
- It's important to educate the teachers. When we're only paying them \$13/hour it is harder to get educated staff.
- People are having to drop their kids off with strangers. Other families lock their kids (2–3-year-olds) in hotels or rooms so they can go to work. Cops are getting called on this all the time.
- There's a mental health and emotional component that drains parents and teachers. The worry and strain about trying to care for their children.
- Partnering with local businesses could help—coupons or other things to help support. Centers also need to cooperate more and work together.

- What we do with our children now impacts the future of Arizona.

## **Actions and priorities**

- A group of people need to work together to create more of an impact: Make the plan together and get the community involved.
- Taking care of the workers in the childcare group should be a top priority. The State could give them health benefits through the state. Hosting relevant training at no cost or a minimal cost would help providers pay employees more.
- Share resources: Communicate to teachers about free training available to them and provide scholarships for potential and current teachers to finish school.
- Define quality. What do parents agree on? What does the community want? The community needs to decide.
- Leadership needs to understand how important early childcare is to the economy and the workforce. We have no workforce, and this has prevented economic development. We need to have a cohesive message to our leadership at the local, regional, and state level to impact policy. When it comes to housing assistance, leaders need to know that there is no sustainability if they don't include childcare with housing.
- Housing and childcare go hand in hand. Childcare centers can employ affordable housing clients.
- To get teachers, we can provide them with housing and other benefits such as childcare.
- We have a very wealthy population here of people with second homes. How can we benefit from the second home population? Can we consider a "transfer tax?" When a million-dollar house gets sold, a tiny percentage of the sale could help. Telluride has a model like this. We need to find a way to take advantage of the wealth here that is distributed to the community.
- Let's not reinvent the wheel. Let's look at places where they have changed the systems to work.