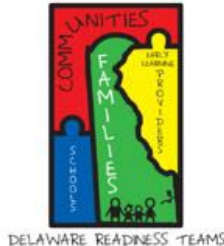


Delaware Parents and Families Survey

November 2024



About the Delaware Parents and Families Survey

- The Delaware Parents and Families Survey is a non-scientific survey released annually by Children & Families First, First State Pre-K, Rodel, the YMCA of Delaware, deaeyc, and Delaware Readiness Teams.
- This year, the survey was open from early-September through mid-October in 2024. It reached over 400 families (though sample sizes vary for individual questions).
- Approximately half of respondents were from New Castle County (46%). The remaining respondents were from Sussex County (36%) and Kent County (about 17%).
- Families including those across a range of income brackets (see slide 7) and languages (see slide 8).

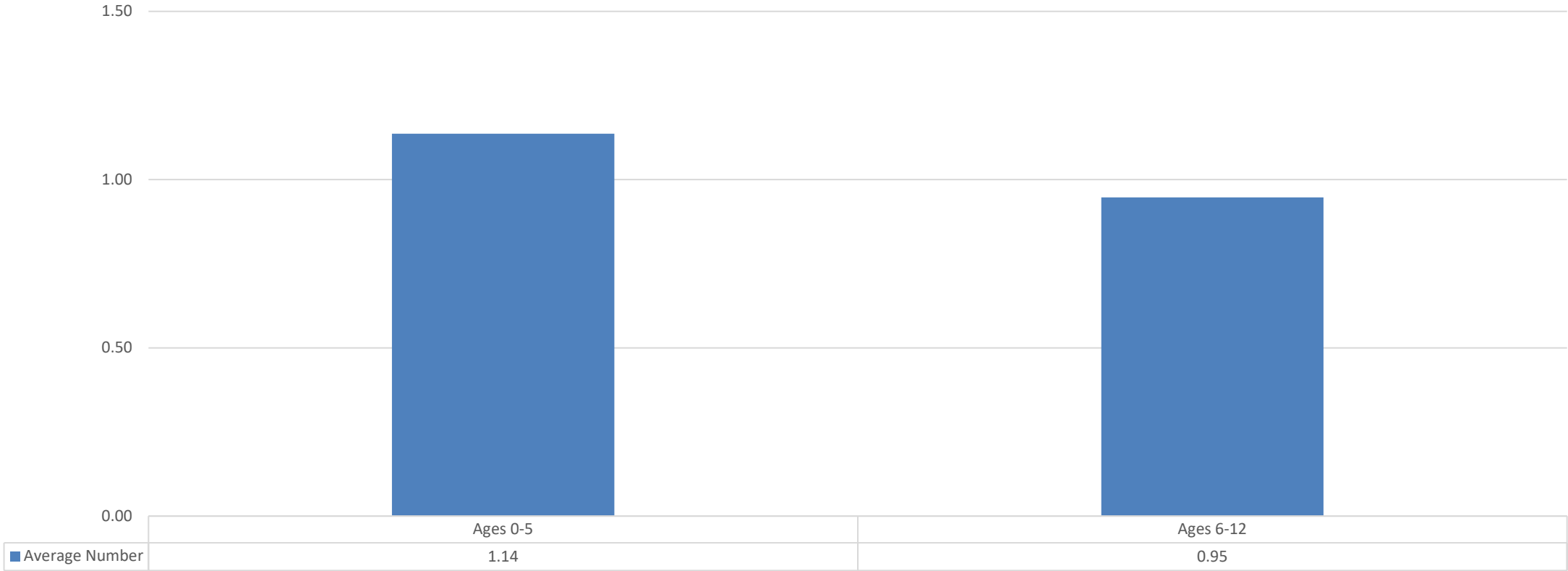
Delaware Parents and Families Survey

Findings Summary

- The majority of families surveyed (76%) are reporting that they struggled to find or afford or were in debt at least in part due to the high cost of child care.
- Families responded to open-ended questions by describing stress, financial strain, and lower quality of life.
- Over a quarter of families (28%) responded that an adult in their household had to leave the workforce entirely due to a lack of child care and more than half of families (54%) responded that an adult had to reduce their working hours due to a lack of child care.
- A high percentage of families (92%) said that it was extremely important or very important that the state increase investments in child care.
- Delaware Parents and Families are vital to the state's economy, with 86% of families reporting that they had at least one adult working in a high-needs industry.
- One in five families has even considered moving to a different state due to child care affordability/accessibility.
- Approximately 72% of families who had looked for care for a child with special needs said that they were not satisfied with the availability of services for children with special needs in their area.
- Spanish-speaking families are more likely to have stay-at-home-parent(s) and Haitian Creole-speaking families are more likely to struggle to find or afford child care when compared to all survey respondents.
- Families earning low- to mid-incomes are struggling with or sacrificing in a few key areas more so than overall survey respondents (mortgage payment or rent, car payment(s), food, utilities, and/or spending time with family).
- Year-to-year analysis reflects a growing financial burden on families, especially related to the cost of child care. A notable increase occurred in families reporting that child care was more expensive than other major expenses, especially mortgage payments (one-third of families in 2023 and over half of families in 2024).

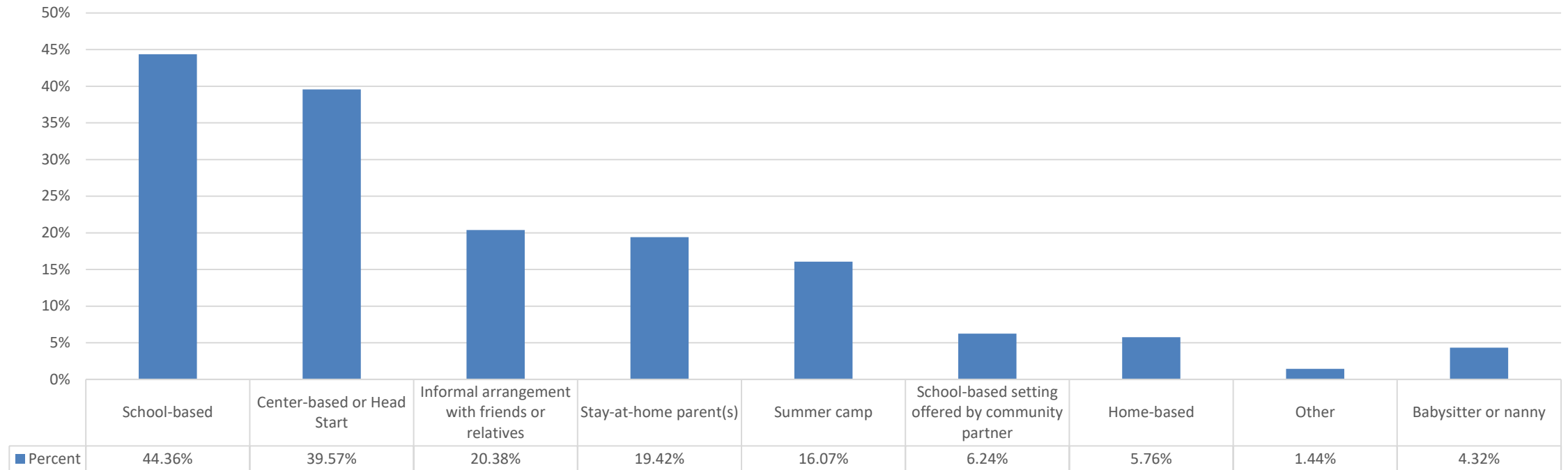
How many children age 12 or younger live with you? (n=417)

Families who responded to the survey reported an average of approximately one child aged 0-5 and approximately one child aged 6-12 living with them.



What kind of child care does your family use? (n=417)

Families reported using a variety of childcare options. The most common choices were school-based care (44%) and center-based care (40%).



Notes: This question allowed respondents to select all that apply. Some parents who stay at home specified that they are also working from home.

School-based: includes regular school day, e.g., private PreK, and before or after school programs with school staff.

Center-based or Head Start: a group setting in the community.

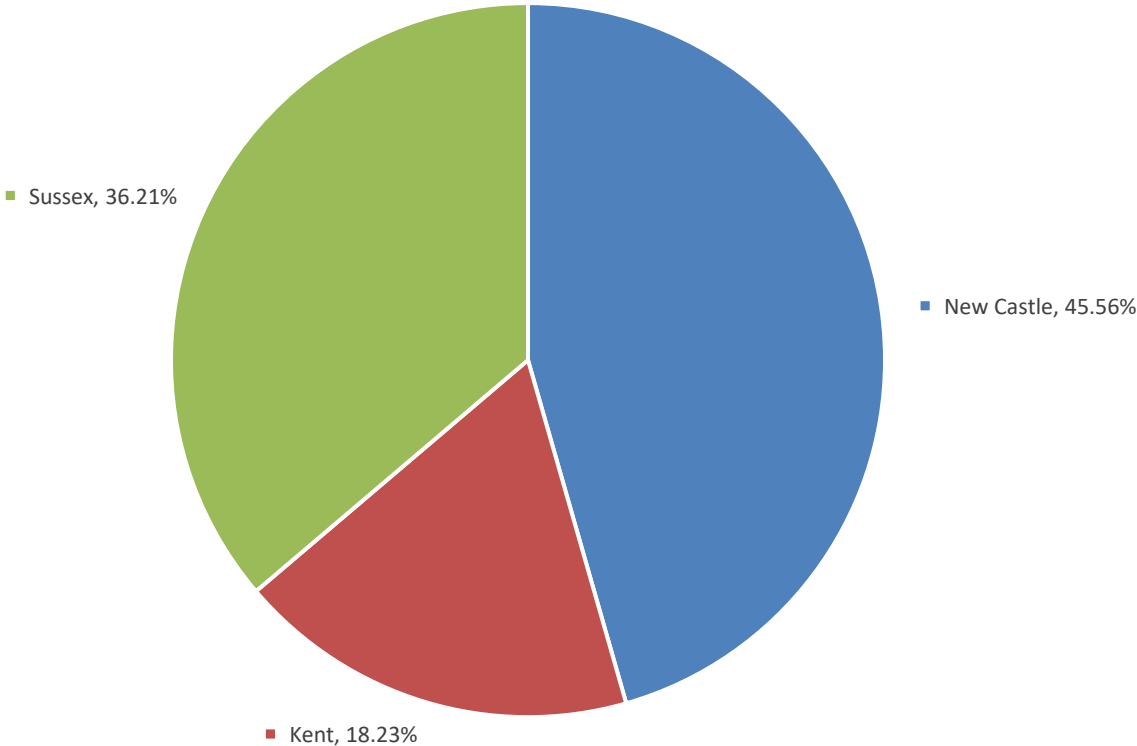
School-based setting offered by community partner: for example, YMCA or Boys and Girls Club.

Home-based: professionally licensed care in someone's residence.

Babysitter or nanny: at least three days a week.

Which county do you live in? (n=417)

Families from New Castle County made up the largest group of respondents (46%), followed by Sussex County (36%) and Kent County (about 18%).



Which best describes your household's yearly income?

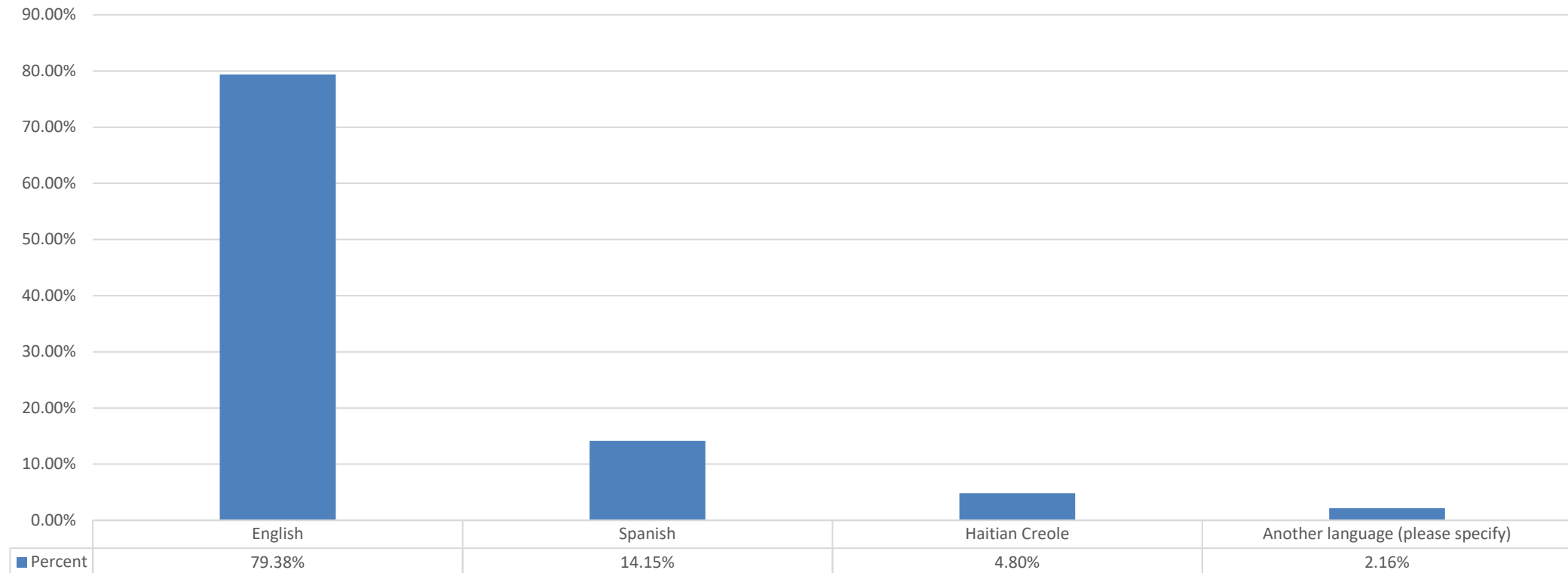
The majority of families who responded to the survey (31%) reported a household income of more than \$102,400. About a quarter of families reported a household income between \$67,100 and \$102,400, and approximately another quarter reported earning between \$31,000 and \$67,100. A slightly smaller portion of families, 20%, indicated a household income of less than \$31,000.

(\$31,000 is [100% FPL for a family of four](#), \$67,100 is 225% FPL for a family of four, \$102,400 is a basic survival budget as estimated by the [Economic Policy Institute](#))



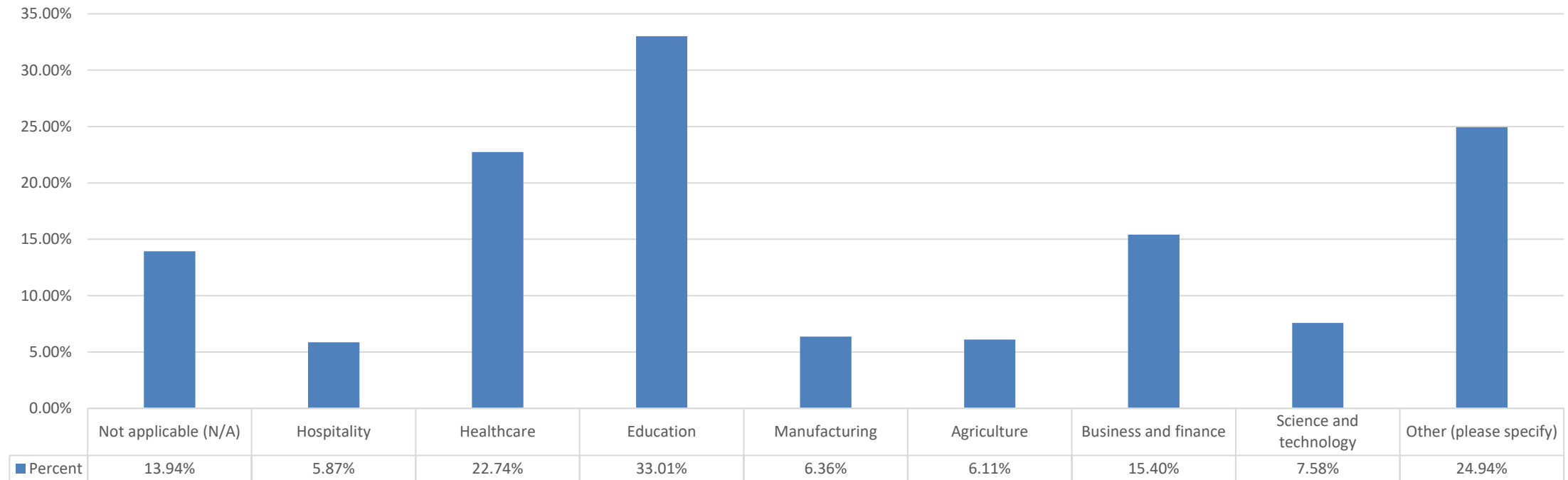
Which language do you mostly speak at home? (n=417)

The majority of families who responded to the survey (79%) reported speaking mostly English at home. Other families reported speaking Spanish (14%) and Haitian-Creole (5%) at home. A small number of families (2%) reported speaking other languages at home, including Vietnamese, Chinese, Twi, and ASL.



Does an adult in your family work in any of these industries? (n=409)

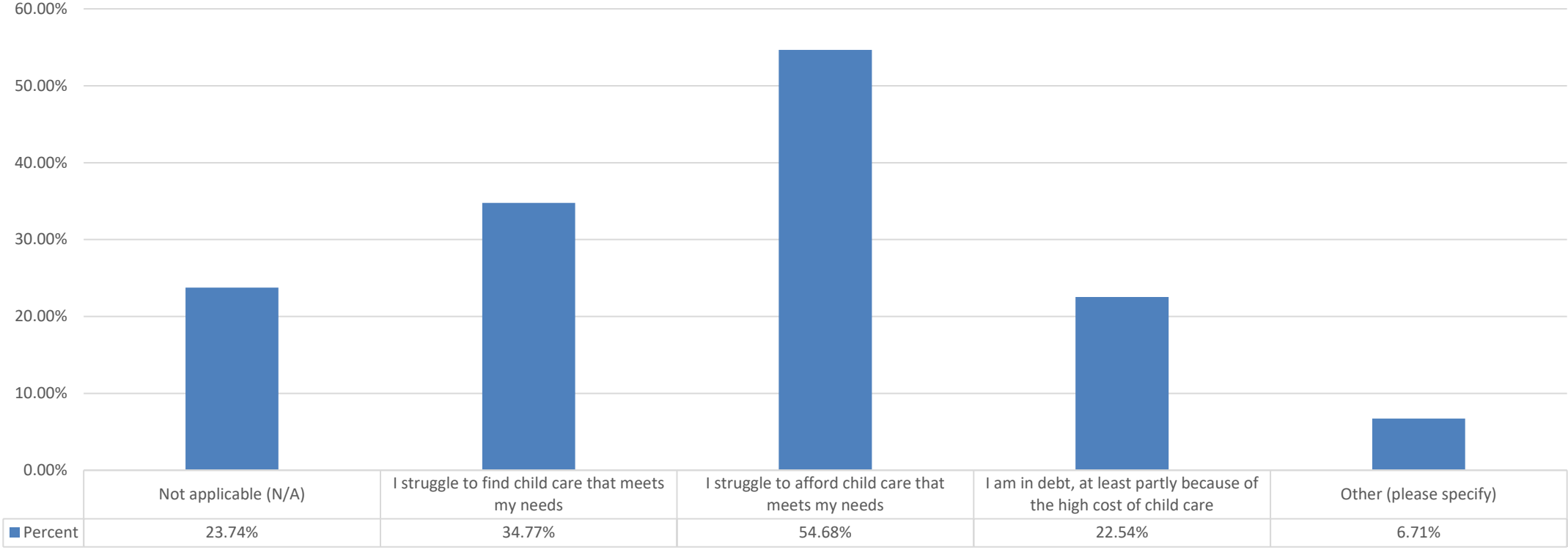
In total, 86% of families had at least one adult working in a high-need industry in Delaware. This includes one-third (33%) of families who responded to the survey that had at least one adult working in the field of education and just under one-quarter (23%) had at least one adult working in the field of healthcare. Other high-needs industries considered for this question included hospitality, manufacturing, agriculture, business and finance, and science and technology.



Note: This question allowed respondents to select all that apply.

Which of these statements are true for you and your family? (n=417)

Most families surveyed (76%) said that they struggled to find or afford or were in debt at least in part due to the high cost of child care.



Note: This question allowed respondents to select all that apply.

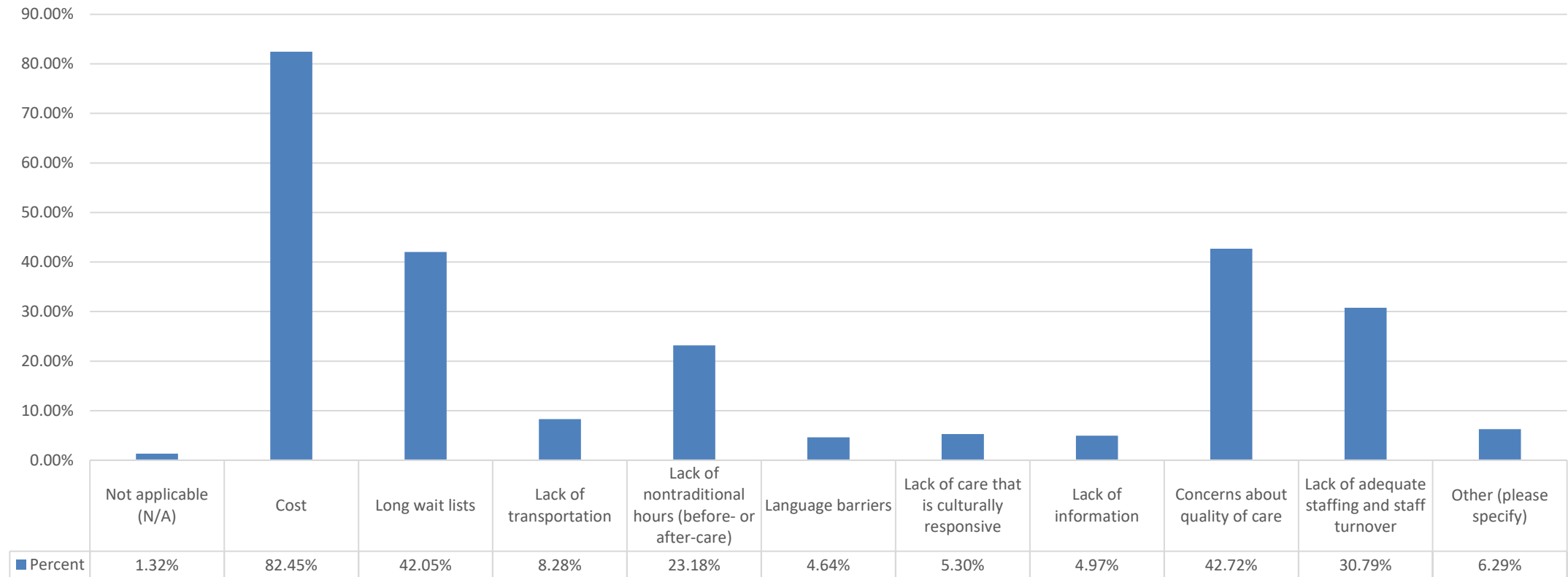
Which of these statements are true for you and your family? (Other, n=28)

Theme	Example Quote	Relative Frequency
Lack of affordable, available child care hurts families	“We declared bankruptcy in 2019 due to the lack of childcare for my child.”	43%
Finding available child care is hard	“I previously struggled for 2 years to find child care due to no openings”	29%
Long waitlists results in no care	“Los daycares que están cerca de mi casa tienen listas de espera (The daycares close to my home have waitlists).”	11%

Notes: Response count represents the number of responses that reference the theme and are not mutually exclusive.

What makes it difficult to find or afford child care that meets your needs? (n=302)

Most families surveyed who said it was difficult to find or afford child care said that cost (83%) was a barrier. Other barriers included concerns about quality of care (43%), long waitlists (42%), and lack of adequate staffing and staff turnover (31%).



Note: This question allowed respondents to select all that apply.

What makes it difficult to find or afford child care that meets your needs? (Other, n=15)

Theme	Example Quote	Relative Frequency
Scheduling	“Lack of daycare options between my home and work and daycares that are open reasonable hours”	27%
Quality	“Lack of providers with adequate education in the field “	33%
Age availability	“Not having appropriate classes for age and skill, holding kids back for higher fees”	20%

Note: Response count represents the number of responses that reference the theme and are not mutually exclusive.

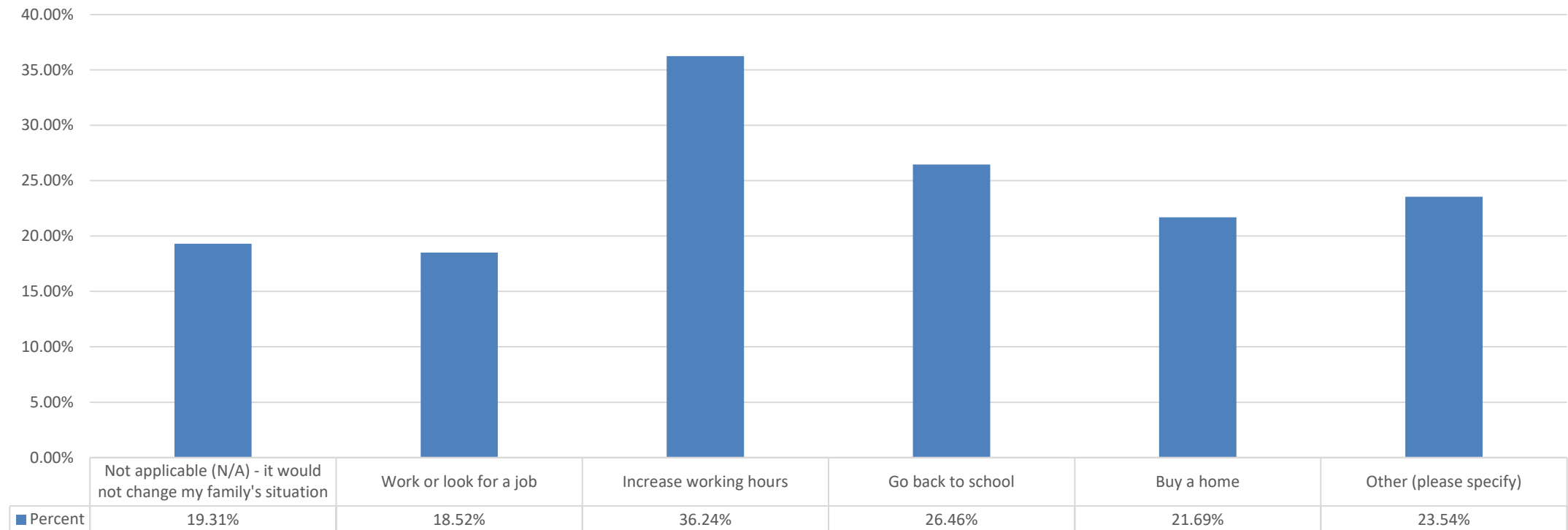
In your own words, what do you think would help make child care easier to find or afford for you and your community? (n=231)

Theme	Example Quote	Relative Frequency
Universal Child Care and Pre-K	“Offer pre-K through school districts.”	13%
Child Care Affordability	“It's just so expensive. I work two jobs just to be able to afford daycare so I can be able to work the first job.”	52%
Government Assistance for Families	“Bring back the expanded child care tax credit, and/or expand Purchase of Care so that higher income families can receive partial subsidies.”	23%
Availability	“We just need more centers in Sussex. They haven't kept up with the population boom.”	35%
Quality and Safety Concerns	“...programs that focus on quality education and child development at affordable prices would ensure kids get the care they need while giving parents peace of mind.”	26%
Assistance Finding/Learning about Providers	“Better search engines that links child care information within individual districts so I am not choosing a child care outside of my feeder pattern.”	15%

Note: Percentage represents the number of responses that reference the theme and are not mutually exclusive.

If child care that met your needs were easier to find or afford, how would it impact your family's situation? *I (or my spouse/partner/another adult in my household) would...* (n=378)

Well over a third (36%) of families said that if child care were easier to find/afford, they would increase their working hours. The vast majority of families (80%) said that they would improve their situation and contribute to Delaware's economy in some way (either by working or looking for a job, going back to school, buying a home, etc.).



Note: This question allowed respondents to select all that apply.

If child care that met your needs were easier to find or afford, how would it impact your family’s situation? *I (or my spouse/partner/another adult in my household) would...* (Other, n=91)

Theme	Example Quote	Relative Frequency
Financial security	“Be able to afford things without going into debt”	57%
Reduce burdens	“Finally take a deep breath of relief”	25%
Improve work/life balance	“Work fewer shifts (restaurant industry) and spend more time with family”	27%
Investing in their kids (extra-curriculars, college funds, education)	“My child would also have opportunities like extra curriculum activities that I would like to expose my child in to give her more opportunities in life.”	30%

Notes: Response count represents the number of responses that reference the theme and are not mutually exclusive.

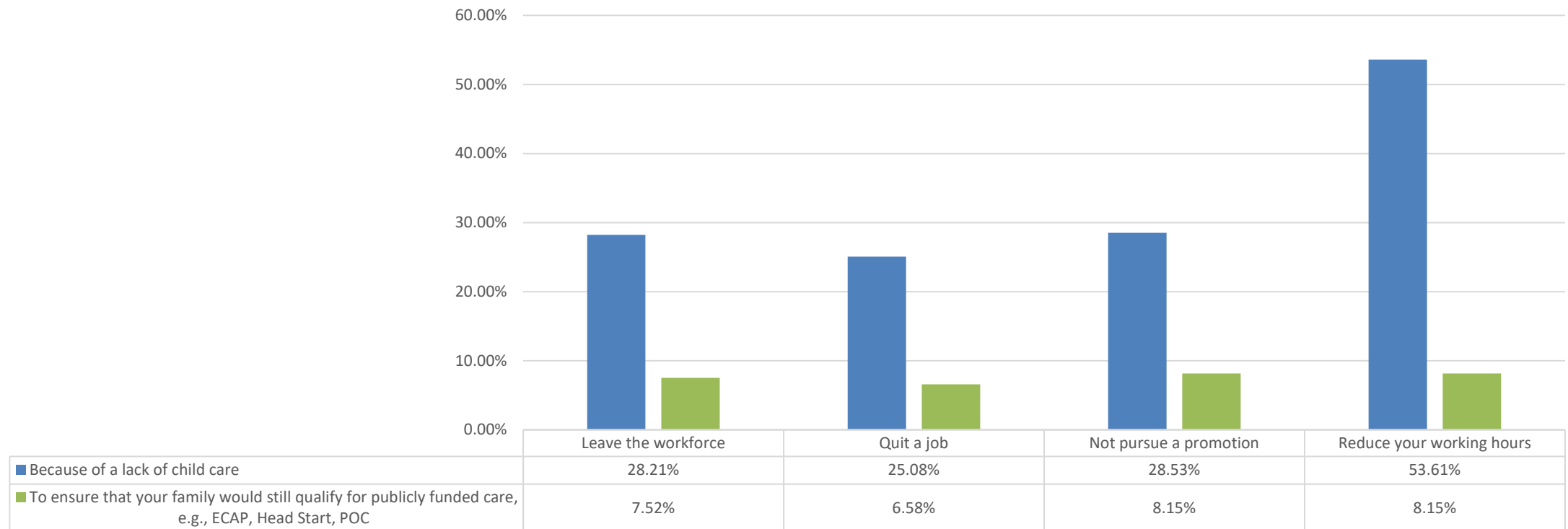
In your own words, how would easier-to-find or more affordable child care impact your family's situation? (n=257)

Theme	Example Quote	Relative Frequency
Financial stability	“I could afford to eat lunch again.”	49%
Parent mental health	“I would have more time for my mental health, therefore, my family would be happier.”	4%
Family connection	“It would allow us to become less stressed and enjoy family time together without the worries of what could happen next.”	9%
Career/job impacts	“We could go back to being a two-income family and living more comfortably.”	39%
Housing	“We would be able to purchase a home. Our child care cost is equivalent to a mortgage.”	8%

Notes: Response count represents the number of responses that reference the theme and are not mutually exclusive.

Have you (or your spouse/partner/another adult in your household) ever had to do any of the following because of a lack of child care or to ensure that your family would still qualify for publicly funded care? (n=319)

Over a quarter of families (28%) responded that an adult in their household had to leave the workforce entirely due to a lack of child care and more than half of families (54%) responded that an adult had to reduce their working hours due to a lack of child care.



Notes: This question allowed respondents to select all that apply and respond with not applicable (N/A) although this is not shown on the chart above.

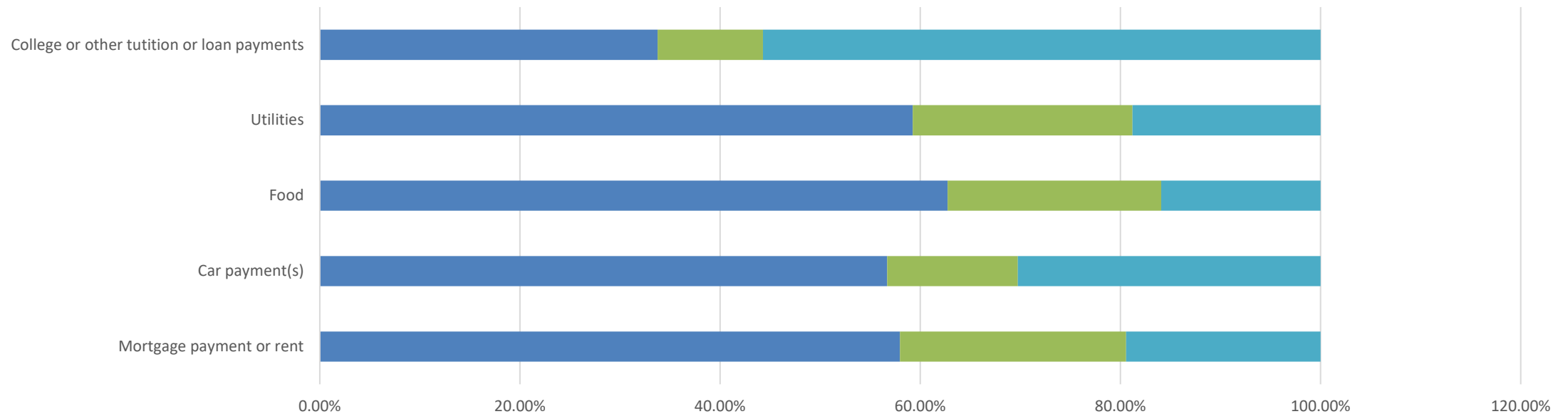
Can you explain in more detail how the availability or cost of child care has affected your career or work decisions? (n=209)

Theme	Example Quote	Relative Frequency
Restricted job choice	“I have to have a job that allows an extremely flexible schedule and allows remote work. I cannot pursue any career without this availability.”	56%
Changed hours worked	“I had to reduce my working hours from full time to part time (four 10-hour shifts per pay period) to accommodate childcare for my kids while maintaining insurance for my family”	26%
Delaying or giving up on career growth	“I stopped working full time after my first child was born because we couldn’t find child care. I gave up my career because of it.”	30%

Notes: Response count represents the number of responses that reference the theme and are not mutually exclusive.

How does the cost of child care compare to your other major monthly expenses? (n=314)

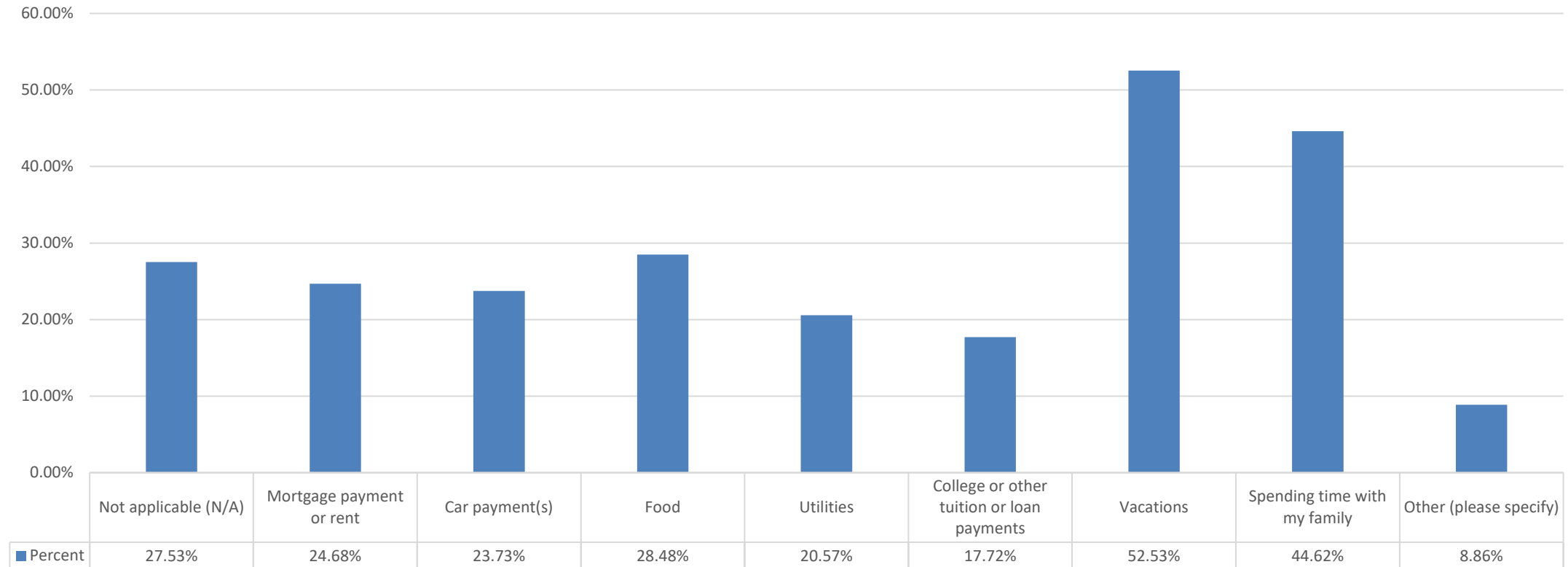
More than half of families said that child care was the same or more expensive than their monthly mortgage or rent payment (58%), their car payment(s) (57%), food (63%), and utilities (59%).



	Mortgage payment or rent	Car payment(s)	Food	Utilities	College or other tuition or loan payments
■ The same or more expensive	57.96%	56.69%	62.74%	59.24%	33.76%
■ Less expensive	22.61%	13.06%	21.34%	21.97%	10.51%
■ Not applicable (N/A)	19.43%	30.25%	15.92%	18.79%	55.73%

Is your family struggling with or sacrificing in any of these areas to afford child care? (n=316)

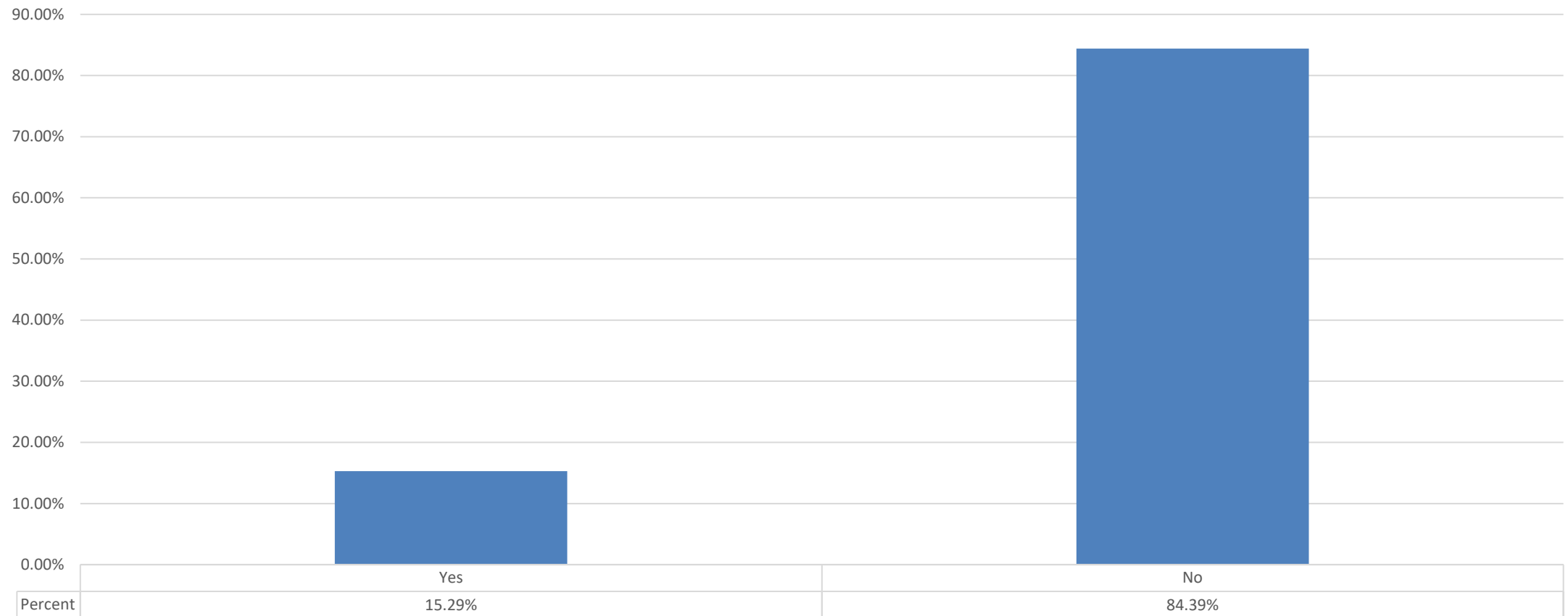
Nearly half (45%) of families said they were struggling with or sacrificing spending time with their family to afford child care.



Note: This question allowed respondents to select all that apply.

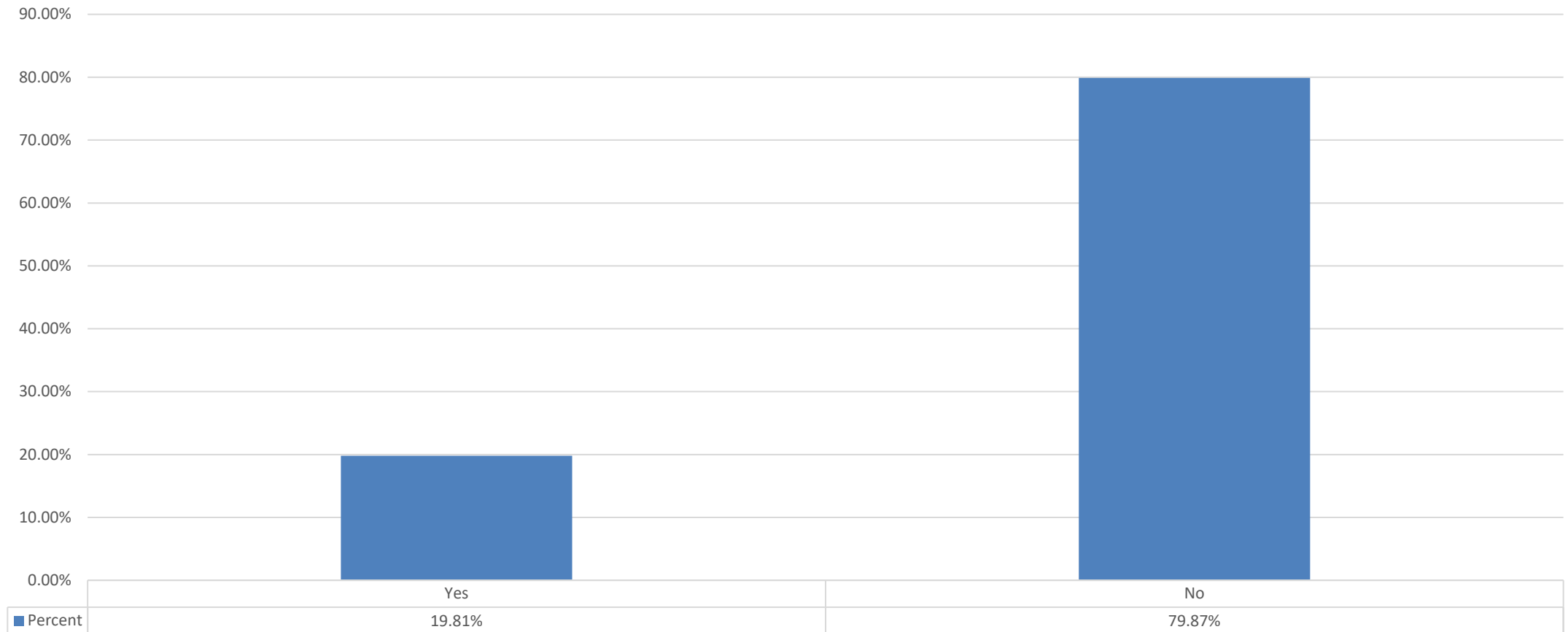
Have you used child care or looked for child care in another state? (n=314)

About 15% of respondents have used or looked for child care in another state. The vast majority (84%) have not.



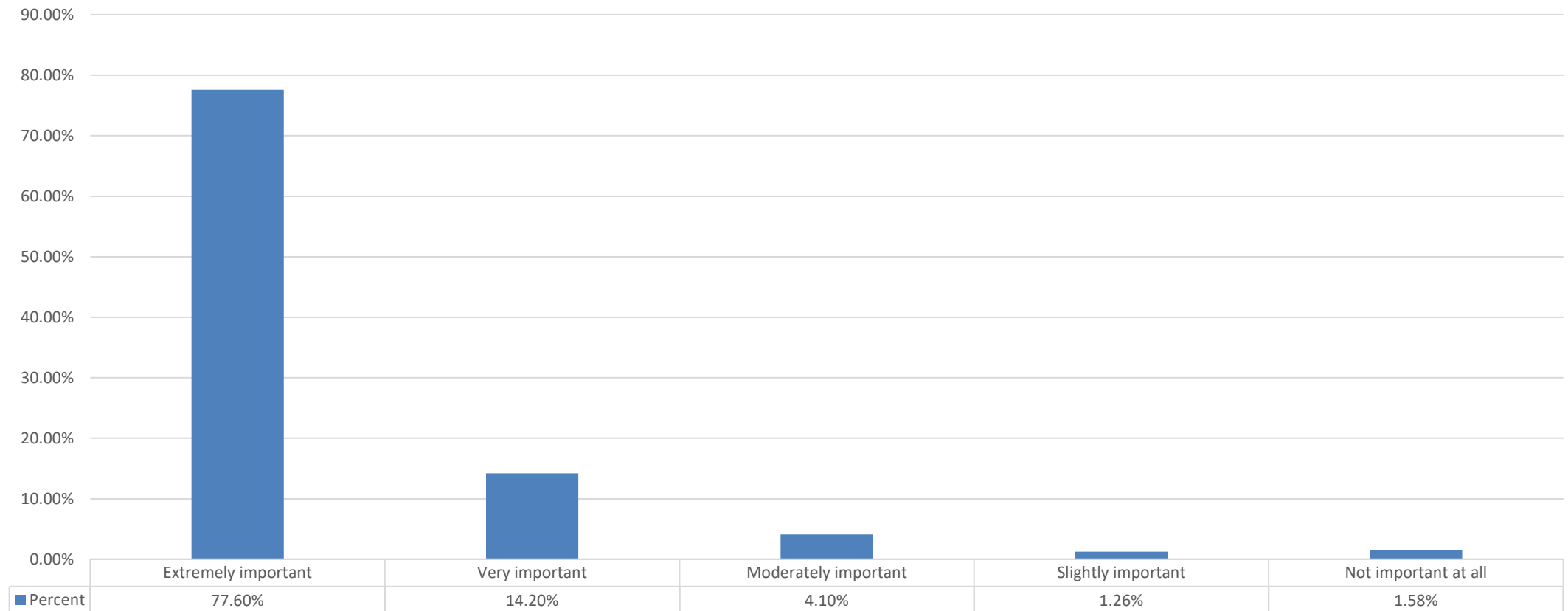
Have you considered moving to a different state due to child care affordability/accessibility? (n=313)

Almost 20% of respondents – or one in five families - has considered moving to a different state due to child care affordability/accessibility. The vast majority (80%) have not.



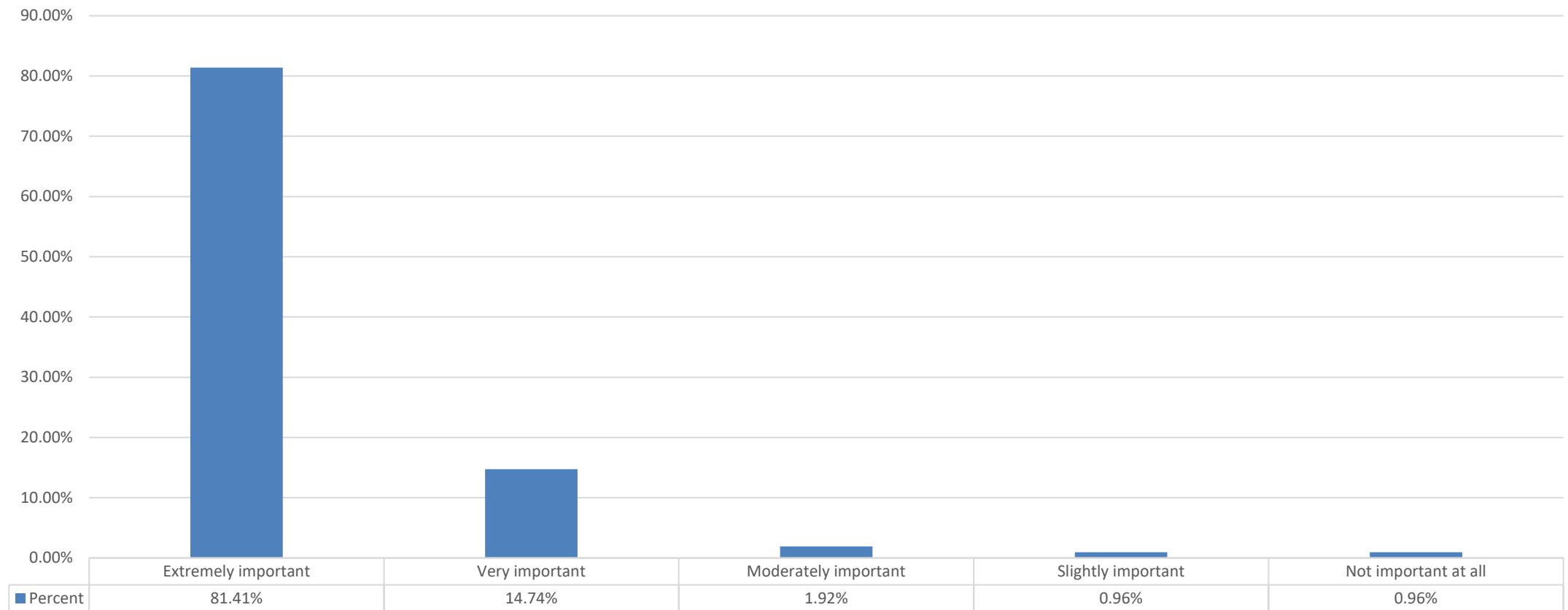
How important is it to you that the state increase investments in child care? (n=317)

Approximately 92% of families said that it was extremely important or very important that the state increase investments in child care.



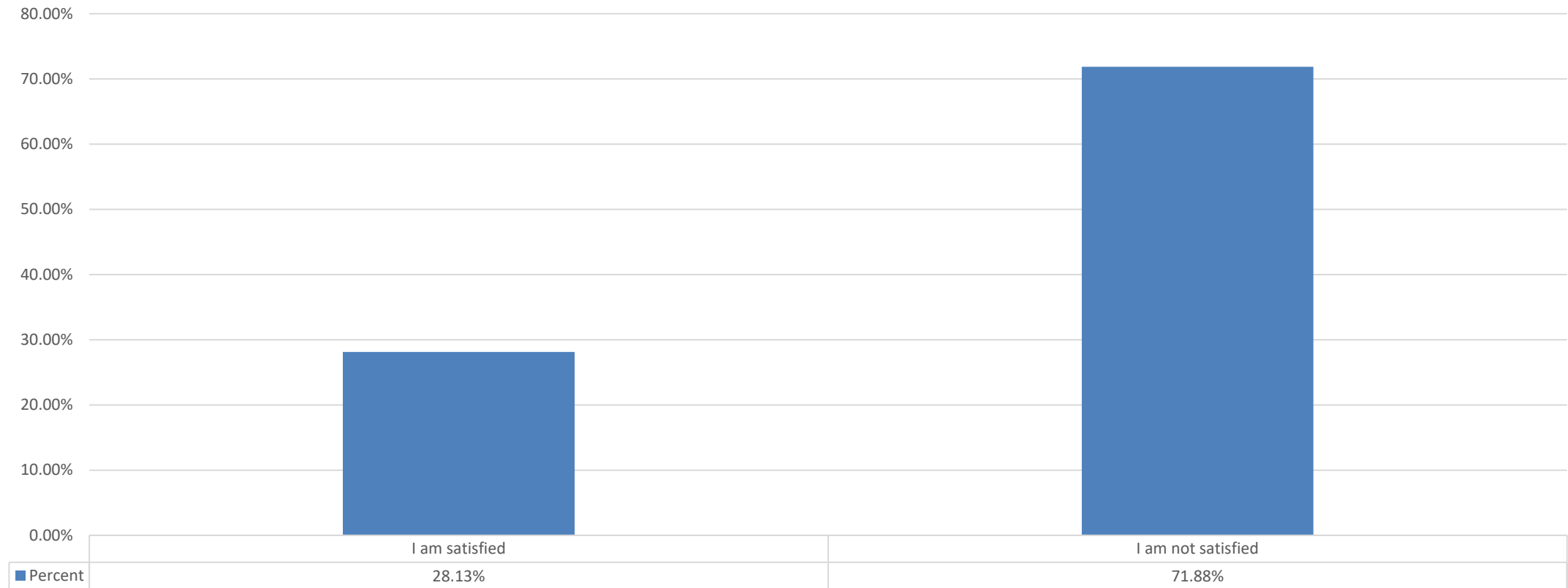
How important is it to you that elected officials prioritize improving access to child care?

Approximately 96% of families said that it was extremely important or very important that elected officials prioritize improving access to child care.



Are you satisfied with the availability of services for children with special needs in your area? (n=128)

Approximately 72% of families said that they were not satisfied with the availability of services for children with special needs in their area.



Note: This does not include respondents who selected not applicable (N/A) because they had not looked for care for a child with special needs.

If you have a child or children with special needs, please explain in more detail what your experience has been in finding adequate services and support for them. (n=112)

Theme	Example Quote	Relative Frequency
Lack of providers with staff that have experience with special needs	“My child has been unable to obtain adequate medical care, education or child care in this state. Last year we were told to go to Maryland or Pennsylvania...”	19%
Difficulty finding care/information about available care	“...there is a lack of information on programming and how to enroll your children for help. Everything is word of mouth.”	16%
Child care facilities deny care due to the child’s special needs	“I have been told my child is too special needs for any inclusion program in New Castle County we have tried.”	7%

Notes: Response count represents the number of responses that reference the theme and are not mutually exclusive.

Of 112 Respondents, 68 responded “Not Applicable” or “No” . 8 had 2nd hand responses (ex. A family member’s child).

Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with child care in Delaware? (n=139)

Theme	Example Quote	Relative Frequency
Choosing between expenses and child care	“We struggle to afford food. Daycare is almost twice as expensive as our mortgage each month.”	15%
Children deserve access to care	“It is simply not right. It's not fair to families, the children, nor the centers. Our children are suffering from it.”	13%
Sussex County needs help	“finding pre-schools in Sussex County is close to impossible.”	4%
Aid for families to cover child care	“Child care is too expensive!! Many people do not qualify for state programs such as POC.”	11%
Some form of government provided pre-K, early education, or summer care	“Our neighboring states have had universal pre-K for all students regardless of disability in the public setting for over a decade. We are behind and missing the mark”	5%

Notes: Response count represents the number of responses that reference the theme and are not mutually exclusive. Of 139 Respondents, 56 responded “Not Applicable” or “No”

Quotes from English-Speaking Families

"If childcare was more affordable and easier to find, I'd be able to work full time...bringing in more income and allowing our family to purchase a home, work through debt faster, and become more financially stable. It would also allow us to be less stressed... of what could happen next when we don't have a back up plan or savings to fall back on in the event of emergencies."

-Sussex County Parent
(earning \$67,100 to \$102,400)

"I work two jobs just to be able to afford daycare so I can be able to work the first job...My family is at a terrible financial position where we get no aid but don't quite make enough to keep up with everything."

-Sussex County Parent
(earning \$67,100 to \$102,400)

"Staff often seem overworked and underpaid, with high turnover. More school-based childcare (like some schools' 3-and-up programs, even part-time) would help families."

-New Castle County Parent
(earning more than \$102,400)

Child Care Challenges and Needs Among Spanish- Speaking Households

A 2024 Subgroup Analysis

Demographics

Spanish-Speaking Households

- **Number of Children** (Ages 0-5 and 6-12): On average, Spanish-speaking households reported having approximately 1 child aged 0-5 and 1 child aged 6-12, similar to the average household size for all respondents.
- **Child Care Usage:** Most Spanish-speaking families who responded to the survey have stay-at-home-parent(s) (47%) and/or use school-based care (41%), while fewer (22%) use center-based care or Head Start, which is used more commonly by all respondents (40%).
- **Income Brackets:** Most of the Spanish-speaking households who responded to the survey fall into the lower-income categories, with nearly half (42%) earning less than \$31,000 annually and another third (36%) earning \$31,000 to \$67,100 annually, whereas only 20% of all respondents reported a household income below \$31,000 and 24% reported an annual income between \$31,000 and 67,100.

Access, Affordability, and State Investment

Spanish-Speaking Households

- **Accessing/Affording Child Care:** 68% of Spanish-speaking families who responded to the survey reported that they struggle to find or afford child care that meets their needs. This is close to the 76% of all survey respondents who reported that they struggle to find or afford child care that meets their needs.
- **Barriers to Accessing/Affording Child Care:** The most significant barrier reported by Spanish-speaking households was the cost of child care (68%), a finding consistent with the overall survey results, where 83% of respondents cited cost as a major barrier.
- **Impact of Improved Child Care Access:** Almost all (87%) of Spanish-speaking households indicated that if child care that met their needs were easier to find or afford, they would improve their families situation in some way (e.g., work or look for a job, increase working hours, go back to school, etc.). This is similar all survey respondents, 80% of whom indicated they would improve their family's situation in some way.
- **State Investment:** 89% of Spanish-speaking families who responded to the survey said that it was extremely important or very important to them that the state increase investments in child care, similar to the 92% of all survey respondents who said the same.

Quotes from Spanish-Speaking Families

“Programas como Head Start que proveen transportación o durante horarios después de la escuela [ayudaría a que el cuidado infantil sea más fácil de encontrar y pagar].”

Programs like Head Start that provide transportation or provide care after school hours [would help make child care easier to find and afford].”

- Sussex County Parent
(earning \$31,000 to \$67,100)

“[Si el cuidado infantil fuera más fácil de encontrar o más asequible] económicamente podría ser autosuficiencia. Mi salud mejoraría, tanto física como mentalmente.”

[If child care were easier-to-find or more affordable] I could be financially self-sufficient. My health would improve, both physically and mentally.

- New Castle County Parent
(earning less than \$31,000)

“[Si tuviera cuidado infantil asequible], pasaría más tiempo de calidad con mi familia.”

[If I had affordable child care], would spend more quality time with my family.

-New Castle County Parent
(earning \$67,100 to \$102,400)

“Las aplicaciones son muy difíciles de completar.”

The applications are very difficult to complete.

- New Castle County Parent
(earning \$31,000 to \$67,100)

Child Care Challenges and Needs Among Haitian Creole-Speaking Households

A 2024 Subgroup Analysis

Demographics

Haitian Creole-Speaking Households

- **Number of Children** (Ages 0-5 and 6-12): On average, Haitian Creole-speaking households reported having approximately 1 child aged 0-5 and 1 child aged 6-12, similar to the average household size for all respondents.
- **Child Care Usage:** A high proportion of Haitian Creole-speaking families use school-based child care (48%) and/or an informal arrangement with friends for relatives (38%), while fewer (19%) use center based care or Head Start, which is used more commonly by all respondents (40%).
- **Income Brackets:** Most of the Haitian Creole-speaking households who responded to the survey fall into the lower-income categories, with nearly half (48%) earning less than \$31,000 annually and the other half (43%) earning \$31,000 to \$67,100 annually, whereas only 20% of all respondents reported a household income below \$31,000 and 24% reported an annual income between \$31,000 and 67,100.

Access, Affordability, and State Investment

Haitian Creole-Speaking Households

- **Accessing/Affording Child Care:** 95% of Haitian Creole-speaking families who responded to the survey reported that they struggle to find or afford child care that meets their needs. This is significantly higher than the 76% of all survey respondents who reported that they struggle to find or afford child care that meets their needs.
- **Barriers to Accessing/Affording Child Care:** The most significant barrier reported by Haitian Creole-speaking households was the cost of child care (82%), a finding consistent with the overall survey results, where 83% of respondents cited cost as a major barrier.
- **Impact of Improved Child Care Access:** Almost all (94%) of Haitian Creole-speaking households indicated that if child care that met their needs were easier to find or afford, they would improve their families situation in some way (e.g., work or look for a job, increase working hours, go back to school, etc.). This is similar all survey respondents, 80% of whom indicated they would improve their family's situation in some way.
- **State Investment:** 100% of Haitian Creole-speaking families who responded to the survey said that it was extremely important or very important to them that the state increase investments in child care, similar to the 92% of all survey respondents who said the same.

Quotes from Haitian Creole-Speaking Families

“Pafwa nou pa jwenn gadri ki apopriye ak lè travay nou yo.”

Sometimes we don't receive childcare that is appropriate with the times I work.

- Kent County Parent
(earning \$31,000 to \$67,100)

“[Si gadri a te pi fasil pou jwenn oswa mwayen, mwen ta] fè yon ti biznis”
[If child care were easier to find or afford] I would start a small business.

- Kent County Parent
(earning \$31,000 to \$67,100)

“[Si gadri a te pi fasil pou jwenn oswa mwayen, mwen ta] mtap ka travay ase poum ka pa gen det sou kredi mwn yo.”

[If child care were easier to find or afford] I would work enough so I wouldn't have debt on my credit report.

- Kent Count Parent
(earning less than \$31,000)

Child Care Challenges and Needs Among Low- to Mid-Income Survey Respondents

A 2024 Subgroup Analysis

Access, Affordability, and State Investment

Low- to Mid-Income Families

- **Accessing/Affording Child Care:** 72% of low- to mid-income families who responded to the survey reported that they struggle to find or afford child care that meets their needs. This is on par with the 76% of all survey respondents who reported that they struggle to find or afford child care that meets their needs.
- **Barriers to Accessing/Affording Child Care:** The most significant barrier reported by low to mid-income families who responded to the survey was the cost of child care (86%), a finding consistent with the overall survey results, where 83% of respondents cited cost as a major barrier.
- **Struggles and Sacrifices:** data for low- to mid-income families show that they are struggling with or sacrificing in the following areas to afford child care: mortgage payment or rent (35%), car payment(s) (33%), food (43%), utilities (34%) and/or spending time with family (39%). These are much higher rates than observed for all survey respondents.

Year-to-Year Trends in Child Care Access and Affordability

Comparative Insights from 2023 to 2024

Child Care Accessibility and Affordability

- **February 2023:** About 80% of respondents reported that lack of affordable child care impacted their family's ability to improve their situation, and 83% faced difficulties accessing child care programs due to cost, availability, or other factors.
- **November 2023:** 96% of respondents who struggled to access child care mentioned they would improve their lives (e.g., getting a job or enrolling in school) if they had better access.
- **November 2024:** 76% of families struggled with finding or affording child care, or were in debt due to its cost. 83% of respondents cited the high cost of child care as a barrier.

Accessibility challenges remained consistently high.

Notes: The number of respondents varied slightly across surveys, with 227 respondents in February 2023, 445 in November 2023, and over 400 in November 2024. This variation may affect the comparability of some results. In addition, this is not a scientific survey, and there was variability in the implementation of the surveys, including the questions asked, which may explain some year-to-year differences.

Impact on Family Financial Stability

- **February 2023:** Nearly half of respondents reported that child care was their biggest monthly expense, and for over a third, it was more expensive than their mortgage.
- **November 2023:** 38% of families indicated that their child care costs exceeded mortgage or rent payments, with 43% saying it was more expensive than car payments.
- **November 2024:** Over half of respondents said child care was more expensive than their mortgage (58%) and car payments (57%).

A notable increase occurred in families reporting that child care was more expensive than other major expenses, especially mortgage payments.

Notes: The number of respondents varied slightly across surveys, with 227 respondents in February 2023, 445 in November 2023, and over 400 in November 2024. This variation may affect the comparability of some results. In addition, this is not a scientific survey, and there was variability in the implementation of the surveys, including the questions asked, which may explain some year-to-year differences.

Household Income and Child Care Costs

- **February 2023:** A significant portion of respondents (46%) indicated child care was their largest monthly expense.
- **November 2023:** 25% of families said that they cannot afford to pay their other bills due to the high cost of child care.
- **November 2024:** Families across income brackets consistently reported struggles with affording child care.

Economic pressures due to child care costs were apparent across surveys, and impact families earning lower as well as higher incomes.

Notes: The number of respondents varied slightly across surveys, with 227 respondents in February 2023, 445 in November 2023, and over 400 in November 2024. This variation may affect the comparability of some results. In addition, this is not a scientific survey, and there was variability in the implementation of the surveys, including the questions asked, which may explain some year-to-year differences.

Waitlists and Child Care Availability

- **February 2023:** More than a third (37%) of respondents were placed on waitlists by two or more centers.
- **November 2023:** 44% of respondents reported struggles finding programs with room, that meets the needs of their schedule, or that they can afford.
- **November 2024:** Families continued to report difficulties with long waitlists, with 42% citing this as a barrier to child care.

The proportion of families facing long waitlists remained relatively stable, indicating that availability of child care has been a persistent issue.

Notes: The number of respondents varied slightly across surveys, with 227 respondents in February 2023, 445 in November 2023, and over 400 in November 2024. This variation may affect the comparability of some results. In addition, this is not a scientific survey, and there was variability in the implementation of the surveys, including the questions asked, which may explain some year-to-year differences.

Related materials

- [Delaware Parents and Families Survey Results November 2023](#)
- [Delaware Parents and Families Survey Results February 2023](#)
- Delaware Parents and Families Survey Press Release November 2024
- *Versions of this document (Delaware Parents and Families Survey Results November 2024) are also available in Spanish and Haitian Creole*



“I do not recommend living in Delaware with kids.”



“Our society sends such mixed messages, emphasizing the importance of starting a family, but ultimately providing little support for families and children.”
-New Castle County Parent
(earning more than \$102,400)

“We need more child care centers in the local area that provide transportation, are affordable, and also have adequate workers who enjoy working with children.”
- New Castle County Parent
(earning \$31,000 to \$67,100)

“We are one financial crisis away from not being able to afford our child care.”
-New Castle County Parent
(earning more than \$102,400)

“I gave up child care to be able to afford basic necessities.”
-New Castle County Parent
(earning \$31,000 to \$67,100)

“Child care costs more than I was being paid. It didn't make sense for me to work.”
-New Castle County Parent
(earning more than \$102,400)