



WORLD HEADQUARTERS
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Voters Overwhelmingly Support Universal Child Care and Fair Wages for Child Care Providers

Defining child care as part of economic and societal infrastructure is particularly persuasive.¹

To: Interested Parties

From: GQR and The Child Care for Every Family Network

A new survey from GQR and The Child Care for Every Family Network shows widespread support for making sure that all American families can access high quality, flexible child care. Nearly three-quarters of voters – 73 percent – agree that the child care system is fundamentally broken and 73 percent support universal child care, defined as: "a government-funded universal child care system that guarantees every family free and easy-to-access options to meet their needs, including care during nights and weekends, and care provided in the languages families speak at home. This system would support the diverse child care workforce, where all providers earn a livable wage." Importantly, support for this radical change crosses party and ideological lines and garners strong support from people without children under the age of 18.²

Executive Summary

Almost 60 percent of parents with kids under the age of 18 pay for childcare, a necessity that most families pay for out of pocket without much help. Indeed, parents are more likely to report they get financial assistance from family than from the government. Even lower income parents are unlikely to receive much help, even though they are more likely to be in the workforce.

- Most parents of children under age 18 are paying for child care (59 percent), and another 19 percent say they pay with help from family members. One-quarter (25 percent) of all parents say they do not pay for child care, likely either staying home or getting help from family members.³

¹GQR conducted a survey among 3,100 voters, including 850 registered voters nationwide and oversamples of 450 voters each in Arizona, California, Georgia, Michigan, and New York from October 3-15, 2023. Live phone interviews made up 34 percent of respondents, and online interviews made up the other 66 percent. Phone respondents were contacted using voter file sample, and online respondents were contacted via online panels. If this poll were conducted among a probability sample, then the margin of error would be of +/- 1.76 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence interval; the margin of error is higher among subgroups.

²Appendix figure 1 shows more detail by subgroup on who supports guaranteed child care.

³Figures 2 and 3 in the appendix provide detail on parents' child care arrangements and how they pay for child care.

- Few parents of children under age 18 report receiving government support for child care (9 percent), indicating that existing programs are not reaching qualified families. Only 10 percent of parents who make less than \$30,000 per year report receiving government assistance.
- Parents of children under age 5 (20 percent) and single parents (18 percent) are most likely to receive government assistance.
- Nearly half of parents say they use a child care facility, including 7 percent who use an employer-based child care facility and 37 percent who use a non-employer facility. Additionally, 17 percent pay for summer camp, and 15 percent pay for home-based care by a non-family member.
 - Parents with incomes over \$100,000 (51 percent), parents of children under age 5 (49 percent), Black parents (49 percent), Hispanic parents (48 percent), and parents who work outside the home (47 percent) are the groups most likely to use a paid child care facility.

Despite widespread reliance on private paid care, parents report that these arrangements are not always stable. This instability has a significant impact on parents' ability to work and earn a living.⁴

- One-third (32 percent) of parents of children under age five and 27 percent of parents with children aged 6-18 years report their child care arrangements are somewhat stable, somewhat unstable, or very unstable.
 - Single parents of children under 18 are disproportionately impacted by unstable child care – 42 percent report somewhat stable or unstable care – as do 43 percent of parents of children under 18 who make less than \$30,000 per year.
 - Black (36 percent) and Hispanic (32 percent) parents are more likely to report instability in care than white (26 percent) or AAPI (17 percent) parents.
- **A 61 percent majority of parents – regardless of how stable they say their care arrangements are – have had their job impacted by a lack of stable child care.** Many (43 percent) also turn to family, friends, or neighbors for help, but nearly all talk about missing work, reduced hours, or changing jobs.
 - **Due to unstable child care, half of single parents have had to miss a shift at work (52 percent), 31 percent have reduced their hours at work, 27 percent changed jobs, 23 percent had to decline a job opportunity, promotion, or change, and 17 percent left the workforce completely.**
 - Majorities of parents who make less than \$30,000 per year (61 percent) and single parents (53 percent) have also had to rely on family, friends, or neighbors for child care.
 - Even parents with higher income still face significant challenges when child care is unstable. Among those making \$75,000 or more, 29 percent have missed work, 20 percent have reduced hours at work, 18 percent have declined a job opportunity, promotion, or change, 17 percent have left the workforce completely, and seven percent have changed jobs.
 - Married parents also face these challenges, with 28 percent missing work, 19 percent reducing hours, 17 percent having declined a job opportunity, promotion, or change, 17 percent leaving the workforce altogether, and nine percent changing jobs.
 - About one in five parents (19 percent) have cut back on essentials to cover the costs of unstable child care. That figure is higher among Black (27 percent), Hispanic (24 percent) parents, and single parents (24 percent).

⁴ Figures 4 and 5 in the appendix provide additional information on stability of child care and the impact of instability.

There is widespread agreement that the current child care system is broken, and nearly half of voters say the government does not do enough.⁵

- Half of voters (49 percent) and 60 percent of parents of children under age 5 say the federal government is not doing enough to help families with young children. Only 14 percent of parents say the federal government is doing too much.
 - Democrats (63 percent) are most likely to say the federal government is not doing enough, but 44 percent of independents and 41 percent of Republicans also agree.
- Large majorities of voters agree that:
 - “The child care system in the U.S. is broken and needs to be completely changed in order to serve families well” (73 percent),
 - “Child care should be affordable for all families, regardless of their income” (89 percent),
 - “Child care is essential to our country’s workforce and economy, and we should invest in it just like infrastructure such as roads and bridges” (84 percent), and
 - “Child care is a public good, like public education and public libraries, that benefits everyone whether or not we have children” (81 percent).
- When asked to choose between a statement that says the child care system is broken and needs to be overhauled, and a statement that says we have a system in place and can’t afford a system overhaul, 56 percent of voters favor the broken system statement.⁶
 - Parents who currently have children under age 18 are more likely than parents of children over the age of 18 to choose the statement that says the current child care system is broken and needs to be overhauled (65 percent vs. 50 percent).
 - Parents of children under age 18 are also considerably more open to guaranteed child care than parents of adult children (87 percent vs. 58 percent).

Support for the guaranteed child care policy described above is driven by parental status and age more than political divides.

- Nearly all parents of children under 5 (92 percent) and parents of children ages 5-18 (86 percent) support guaranteed government funded universal child care. Even a majority of parents whose children are over age 18 (58 percent) support it.
- Black voters (93 percent) and single parents (93 percent) are among the most likely groups to support guaranteed child care.
- Four in five Republican parents of children under 18 (79 percent) support guaranteed child care, as do 83 percent of independent parents and 97 percent of Democrat parents. Even among parents whose children are over 18, 51 percent of independents and 40 percent of Republicans support this complete system overhaul.

⁵ Figure 6 in the appendix provides a partisan breakdown of this question.

⁶ Figure 7 in the appendix provides the wording of these statements and additional data.

Messaging guidance

Support is robust in the face of messages for and against guaranteed government funded universal child care.⁷ The most successful messages, as indicated by subgroup analysis and regression modeling, focus on:

- Highlighting that everyone deserves to have what they need to raise a family, including schools, libraries, and access to guaranteed child care,
- Highlighting that child care is unaffordable for most families – and most federal assistance currently only covers some very low-income families, and
- Highlighting that the inability to find quality, affordable child care limits women in the workplace.

These messages are the most consistently convincing across demographics without alienating any political or ideological groups. These points can be distilled into a single message recommendation:

Child care is unaffordable and the inability to find quality, affordable child care limits women in the workplace, hurts family well-being and the economy. Everyone deserves the essentials they need to raise a family, including public schools, public libraries, and guaranteed child care.
Guaranteed universal child care is critical part of the country's infrastructure that supports our workforce and economy.

⁷Figure 8 in the appendix shows all of the messages and how convincing they are to voters.

Targeted Messaging

The messaging guidance covers the broadest swath of voters, but there are distinctions among various subgroups of voters that are also important for efforts to appeal to those groups.

Group	Most convincing messages	Additional messaging considerations
Black voters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone deserves to have what they need to raise a family (90 percent convincing). • Child care is unaffordable for most families – and most federal assistance currently only covers some very low-income families (89 percent convincing). • Investing in guaranteed child care improves society for everyone (89 percent convincing). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black voters are the most likely demographic group to say the economic and racial justice message is convincing (86 percent). This message is as convincing as the top three. • Black voters are more likely than most other groups to say it is a priority for their child care providers to share their cultural background (28 percent). • Black parents are among the most likely to say their child care arrangements are somewhat stable or unstable (36 percent).
Hispanic voters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone deserves to have what they need to raise a family (88 percent convincing). • Investing in guaranteed child care improves society for everyone (87 percent convincing). • Child care is unaffordable for most families – and most federal assistance currently only covers some very low-income families (86 percent convincing). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After Black voters, Hispanic voters are most likely to think the economic and racial justice message is convincing (77 percent). • Hispanic voters more likely than most other groups to say it is a priority for their child care providers to speak the same language they do (23 percent) and share their cultural background (17 percent). • Hispanic parents are more likely than other races to report somewhat stable or unstable care arrangements (32 percent).
AAPI voters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child care is unaffordable for most families – and most federal assistance currently only covers some very low-income families (86 percent convincing). • Everyone deserves to have what they need to raise a family (80 percent convincing). • The inability to find quality, affordable child care limits women in the workplace (76 percent convincing). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AAPI voters are more likely than any other demographic group to say it is a priority for their child care providers to share their cultural background (30 percent). • AAPI parents are more likely than most other parents to say they do not pay for child care (37 percent) and are also most likely to say it’s better for a parent to stay home with children (85 percent).
Women of color	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child care is unaffordable for most families – and most federal assistance currently only covers some very low-income families (90 percent convincing). • Everyone deserves to have what they need to raise a family (87 percent convincing). • The inability to find quality, affordable child care limits women in the workplace (86 percent convincing). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women of color with children under age 18 are more likely than any other subgroup to say they pay for child care with government help (20 percent). Only 18 percent say they do not pay for child care, fewer than most other groups. • 64 percent of women of color say the government does not do enough to help families.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investing in guaranteed child care improves society for everyone (83 percent convincing). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women of color are more likely than other groups to report somewhat stable or unstable child care arrangements (29 percent).
<p>Republican parents of children under 18</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everyone deserves to have what they need to raise a family (89 percent convincing). Child care is unaffordable for most families – and most federal assistance currently only covers some very low-income families (86 percent convincing). Investing in guaranteed child care improves society for everyone (83 percent convincing). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parental status trumps partisanship and ideology on this issue. Republican parents of children under 18 overwhelmingly support guaranteed child care (79 percent). Republicans with children under 18 are equally likely as Democrats with children under 18 to say the current child care system is broken (69 percent vs. 67 percent).
<p>Independent women</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The inability to find quality, affordable child care limits women in the workplace (83 percent convincing). Child care is unaffordable for most families – and most federal assistance currently only covers some very low-income families (82 percent convincing). Everyone deserves to have what they need to raise a family (81 percent convincing). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent women are more likely than independent men to support guaranteed child care (73 percent vs. 62 percent). Half or more of independent women who are parents say they have had to rely on others (57 percent) due to unstable child care. Due to unstable child care, 48 percent of independent women have had to miss work, 28 percent have reduced hours at work, 26 percent have declined a job change, 24 percent have changed jobs, and 15 percent have left the workforce.

Appendix: Data detail

Figure 1: Support for guaranteed child care among subgroups

Support for Guaranteed Child Care proposal	%Strong Support / Total Support	%Strong Oppose / Total Oppose
Overall	41 / 73	13 / 26
Less than \$30k	47 / 77	8 / 22
\$30-\$50K	41 / 75	12 / 24
\$50-\$75K	44 / 79	11 / 21
\$75K or more	36 / 70	17 / 30
Single	48 / 83	7 / 17
Married	35 / 68	17 / 31
White voters	35 / 68	16 / 31
Black voters	66 / 93	4 / 6
Hispanic voters	52 / 80	8 / 20
AAPI voters	32 / 87	4 / 11
College educated voters	35 / 71	14 / 28
Non-college educated voters	45 / 75	13 / 24
18-49	49 / 86	4 / 13
50+	32 / 61	22 / 38
65+	27 / 52	30 / 46

Figure 2: Many parents’ child care arrangements rely on facilities

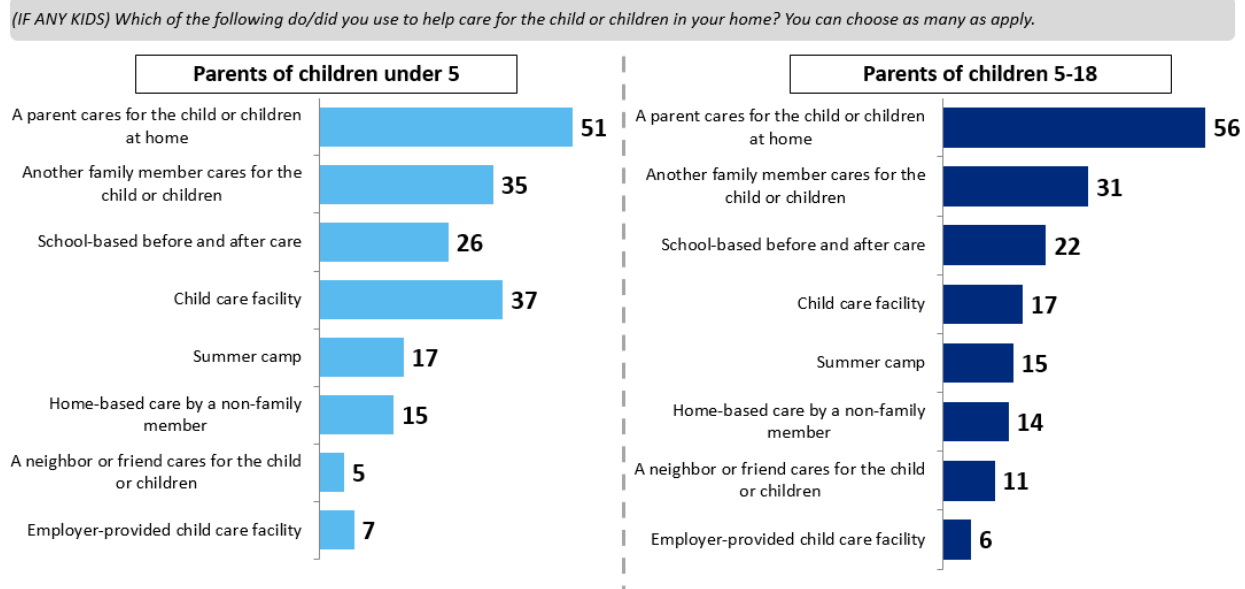


Figure 3: Most families pay for child care, regardless of income

(IF KIDS OF ANY AGE) Which of the following, do you currently use/have you used to help you pay for child care for your child or children? Do/did you pay for it yourself, do/did you receive help from family or do/did you receive government assistance? You can choose as many as apply for you.

Among parents of children under 18					
	Overall	Less than \$30K	\$30-\$100K	100K+	Using Paid Child Care Facilities
Pay myself	59	40	57	69	77
Pay with help from family	19	16	23	13	27
Pay with help from the government	9	10	11	7	15
Do not pay for child care	31	47	29	26	10

Figure 4: Stability of parents’ child care arrangements

(IF KIDS UNDER 18) How stable and reliable are/were your child care arrangements - meaning that you can count on it most days and do not often have to look for alternative arrangements. Are/were they very stable, somewhat stable, somewhat unstable or very unstable?

Among parents of children under 18	
	%Somewhat Stable or Not Stable
Overall among parents with children under 18	28
White voters	26
Black voters	36
Hispanic voters	32
AAPI voters	17
Single	42
Married	22
Less than \$30k	43
\$30-\$50K	33
\$50-\$75K	31
\$75K or more	22
Using a paid child care facility	31

Figure 5: Single parents’ face more work consequences with unstable child care

(IF KIDS OF ANY AGE) Have you ever done any of the following because you could not find or afford stable child care?

	Among parents of children under 18	Less than \$30K	\$30-\$50K	\$50-\$75K	\$75K or more	Single	Married
Relied on family, friends or neighbors	43	61	41	42	40	53	39
Had to call out or miss a shift at work	34	39	26	50	29	52	28
Cut back on other household essentials to pay for childcare	23	12	26	21	28	24	23
Reduced hours at work	22	28	14	33	20	31	19
Declined a job opportunity, promotion or job change	19	17	19	24	18	23	17
Left the workforce completely	16	19	15	17	17	17	17
Relocated to be closer to family or friends	15	4	20	16	17	16	16
Changed jobs	13	16	25	21	7	27	9

Figure 6: Nearly half think the government does not do enough to help families

Do you think the federal government does too much, about the right amount or not enough to help families with young children?

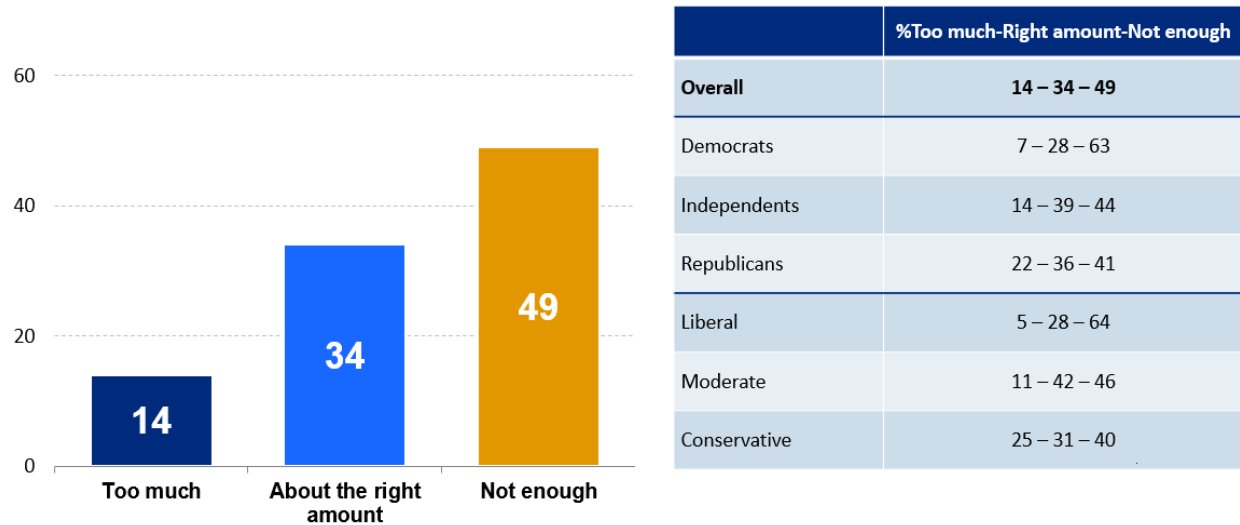


Figure 7: Majorities of parents and non-parents say the system is broken

Now, I am going to read you some statements on child care. After I read these statements, please tell me which one comes closer to your point of view, even if neither is exactly right.

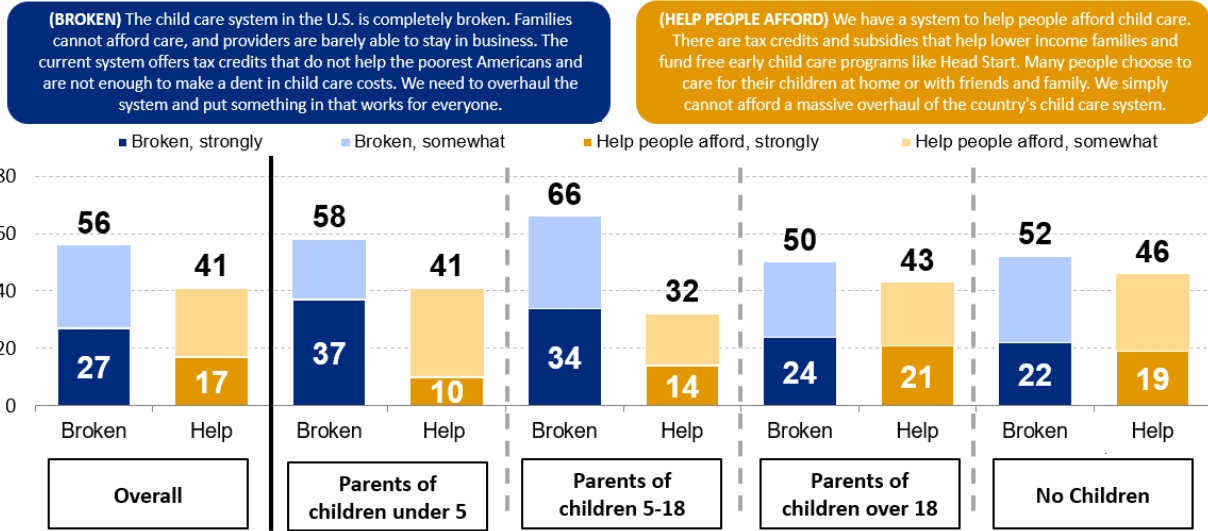


Figure 8: Messages tested in favor of guaranteed child care are convincing

Now I will read you a series of statements about guaranteed child care. After I read each statement, please tell me if this is a very convincing, somewhat convincing, not very convincing, or a not at all convincing reason to SUPPORT guaranteed child care for everyone

