



Bipartisan Policy Center

# Child Care and the Illusion of Parent Choice



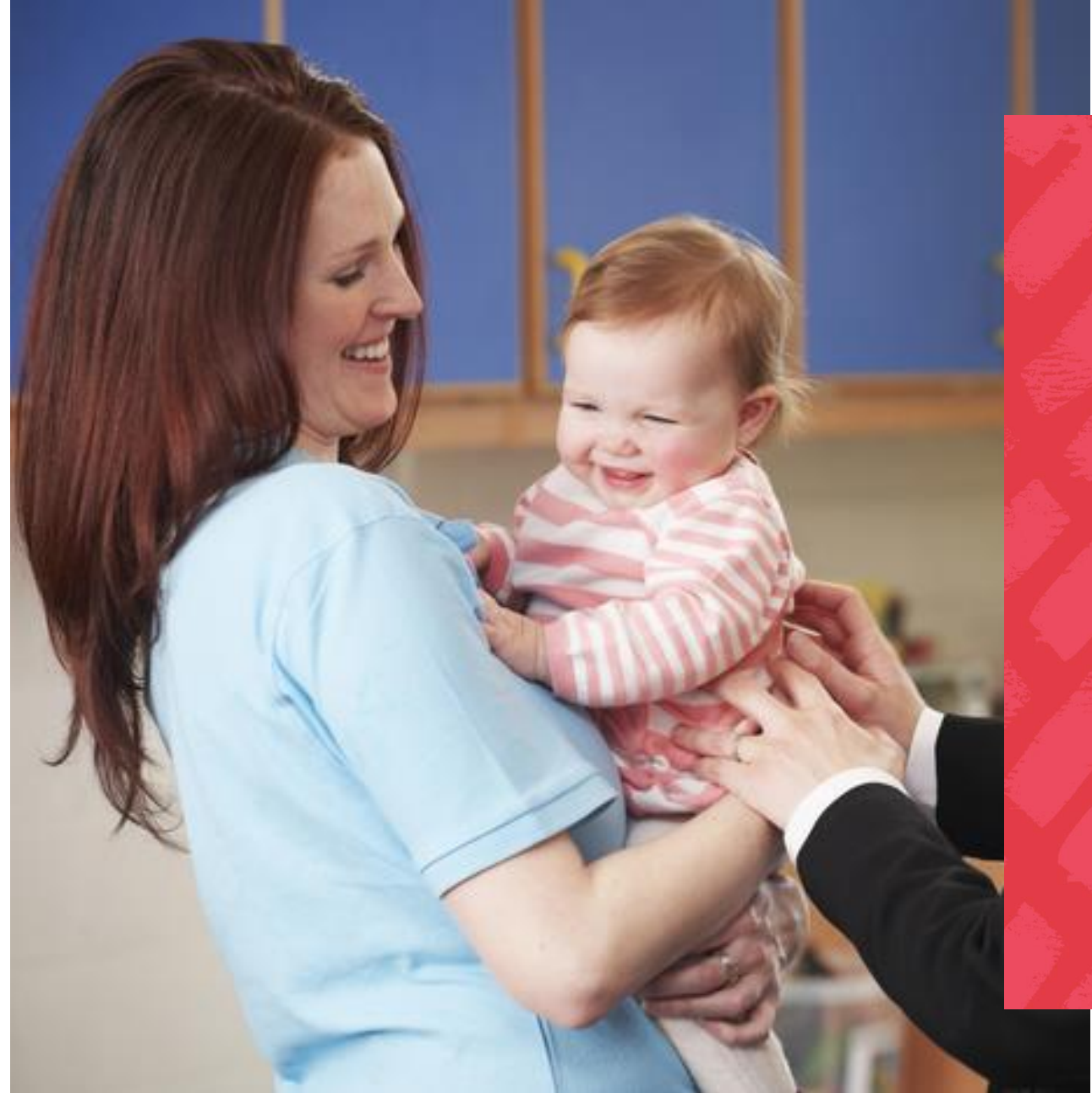
IDEAS  
ACTION  
RESULTS

March 27, 2023

# Overview

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- Who We Are
- The Potential Need for Child Care
- What We Know and Don't Know about Parents
- Discussion
- Next Steps



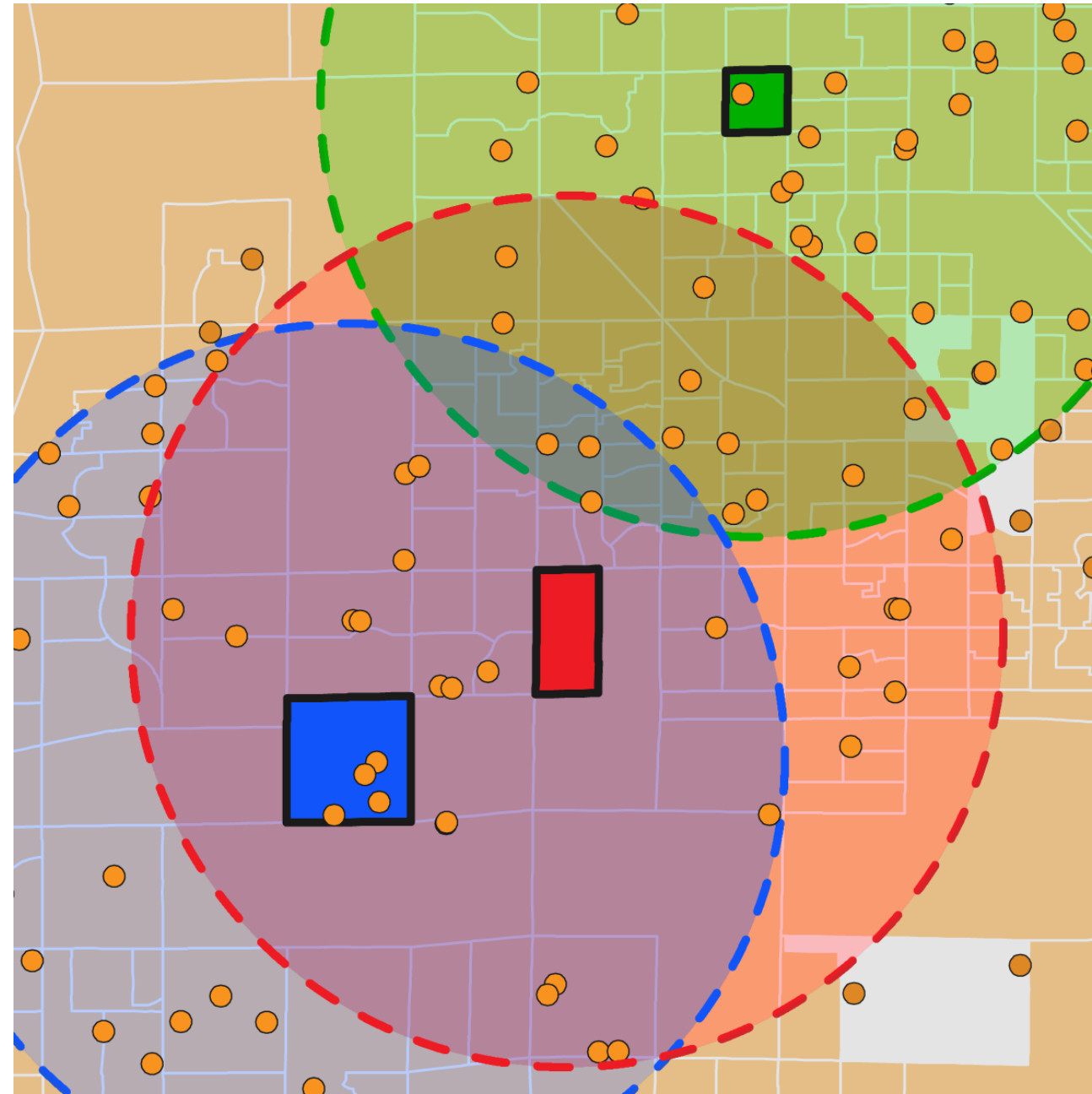
# Definitions

- This project is focused on understanding the gap between **potential need** for and supply of child care.
- **Potential need:** All children under six with all available parents in labor force.
- **Demand:** Rate at which parents and families will actually utilize child care.
- There are a number of factors that can impact demand.
- This data on gap between supply and potential need gives states and the country a starting point.
- More work needs to be done to understand what demand in states and communities might look like.



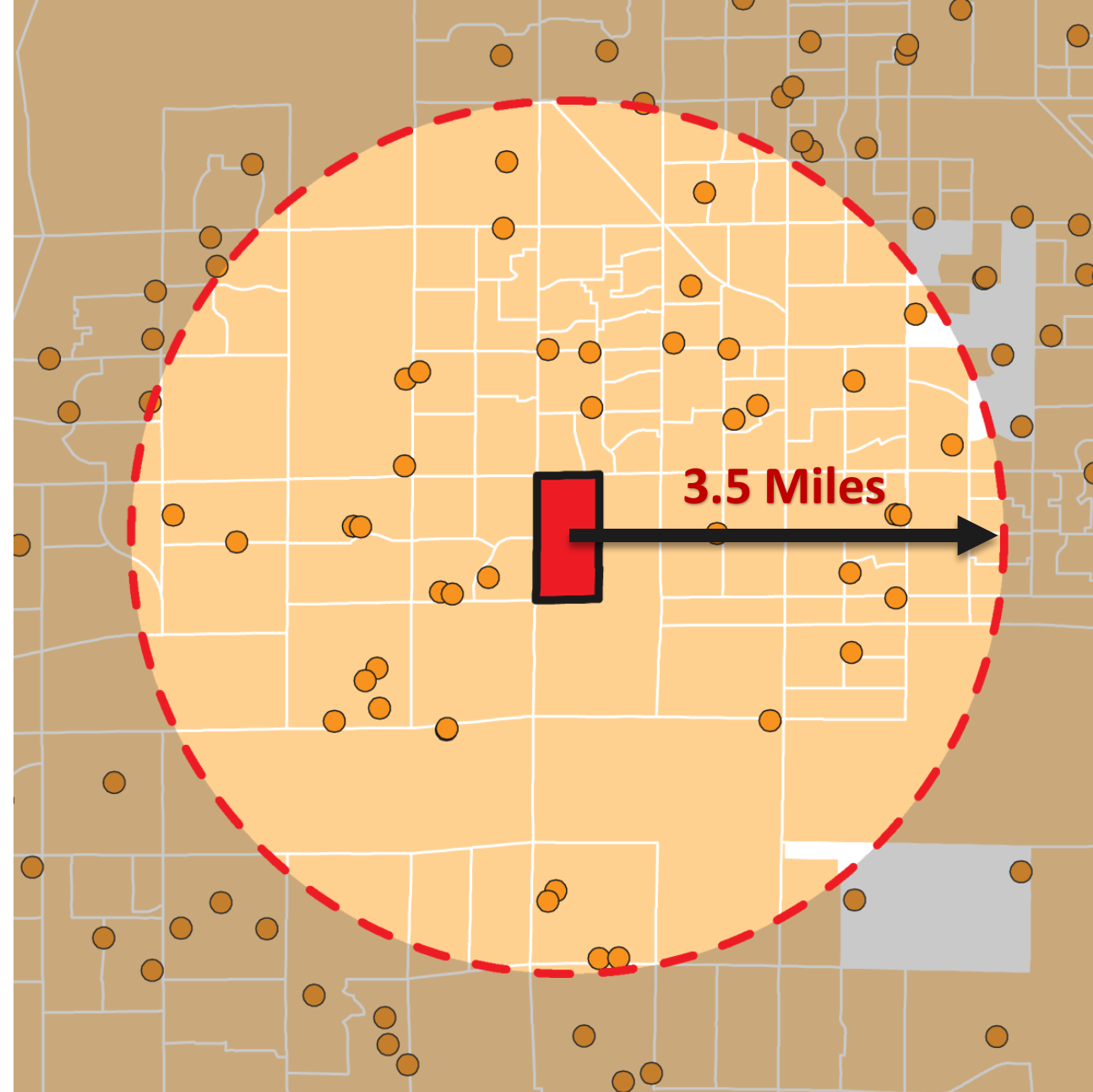
# Distance-Based Method

- Service areas from neighboring block groups overlap.
- Facilities are allocated children (need) from all block groups whose service area the facility falls into, until all capacity is used up.
- This method results in assignment of need to available spaces without going over the facility capacity.

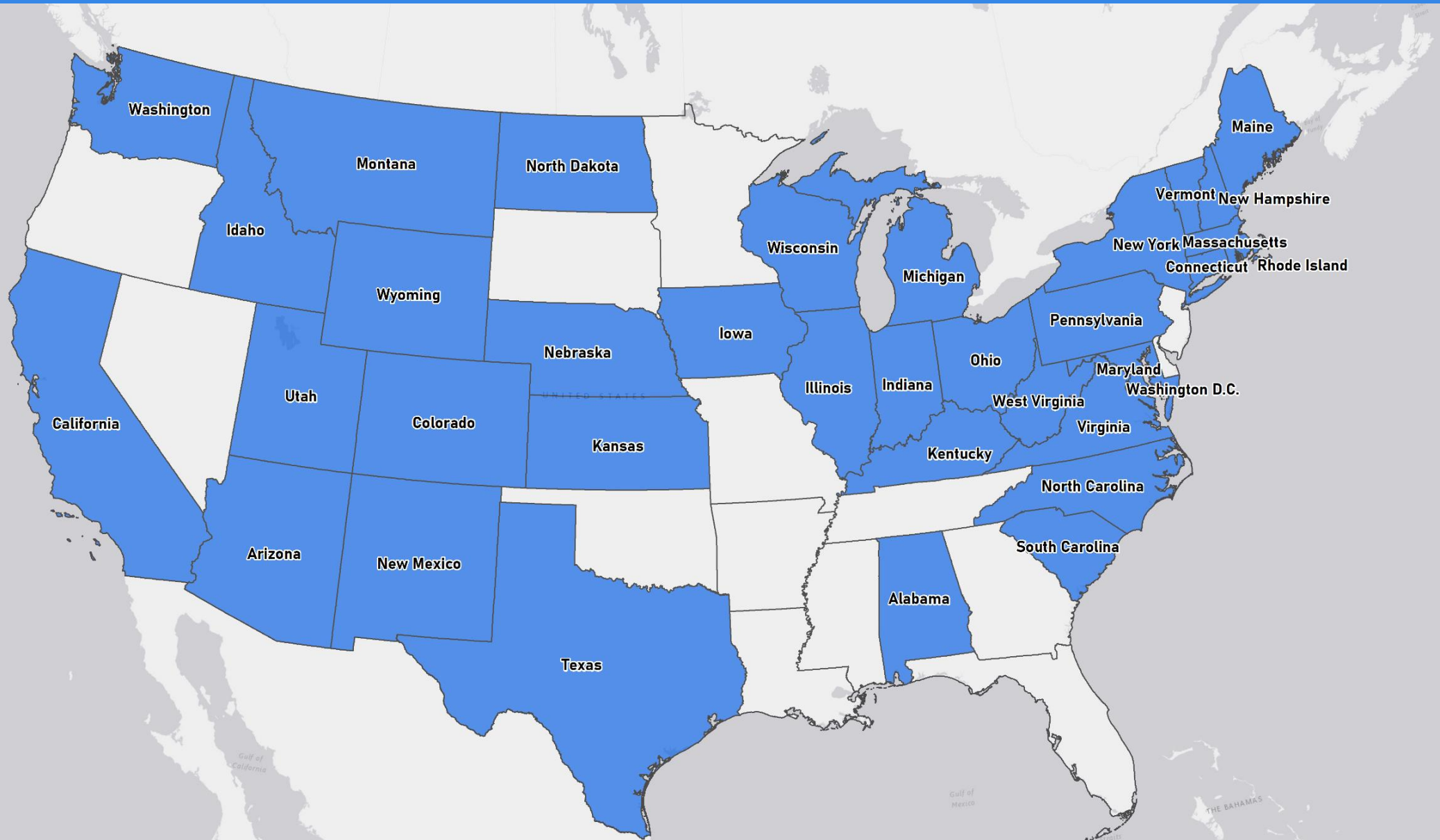


# Distance-Based Method

- Block groups are assigned a service area:
  - 3.5 miles from the block group center for urban and 10 miles for rural.
- Population in the block group can access the spaces available in the facilities within the service area.
- Child care need within the block group is proportionally allocated to the facilities within the service area.



# Project Overview: 35 States

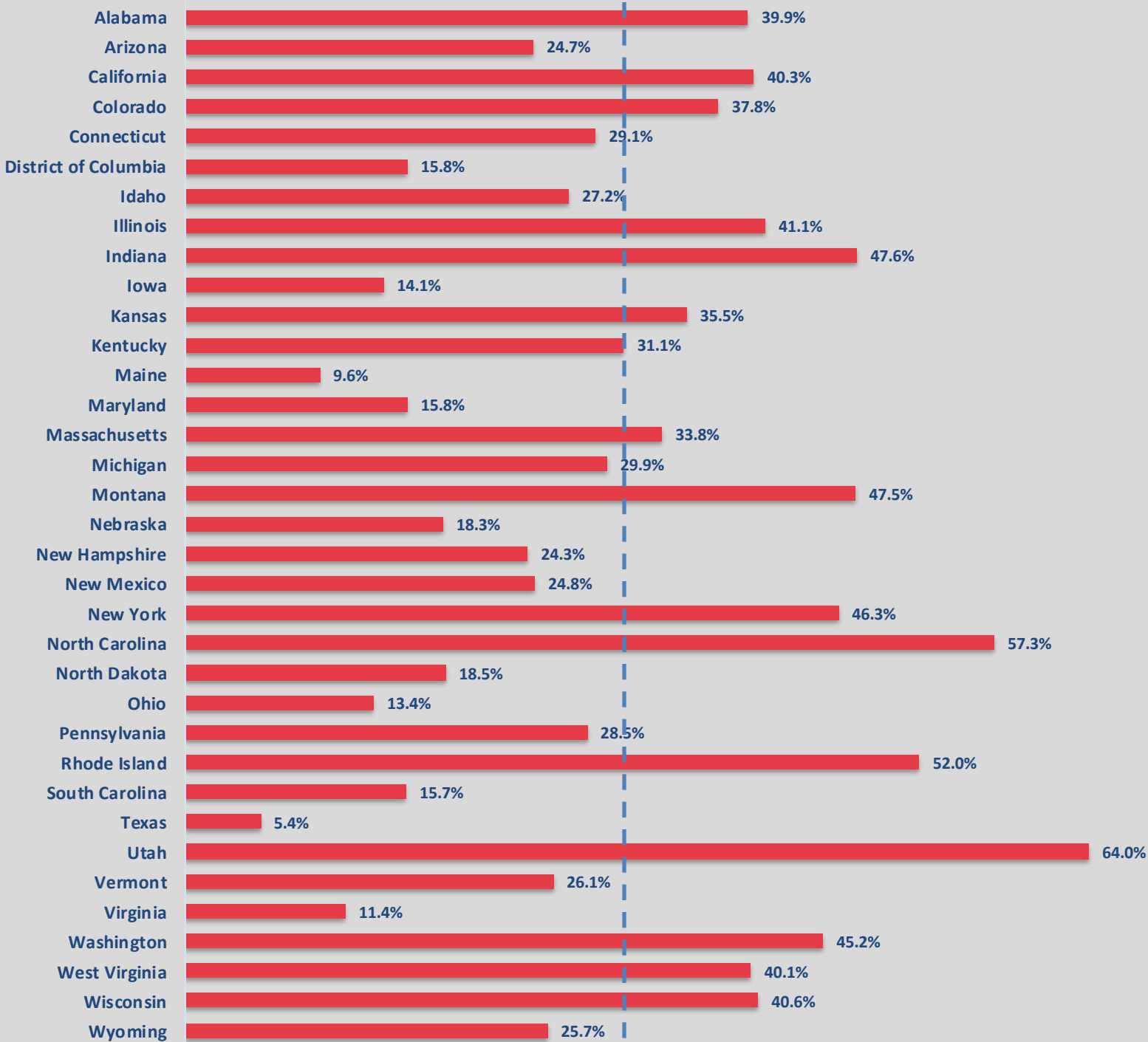


# Percent Gap



35 States

Average: 31.2



## Child Care Gap Findings Across 35 States

Potential Child Care Need	11,109,000 children
Child Care Supply	7,807,000 slots
Child Care Gap	3,461,600 children
Percent Child Care Gap	31.2% of children

\*The difference between supply and potential need in this table does not equal the gap because the methodology used accessibility measurements to calculate the gap.





# Child Care Gap Assessment

## Data Sources

- State data on child care facilities and capacity
- U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 2017-2021 estimates
- Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Defense

## Analysis Includes

- Estimate of:
  - potential need, based on Census data on population under age six with parents in labor force
  - supply, based on data on child care facilities provided by state agencies
  - gap, or the difference between these two data sets based on distance from home to facility
- Maps showing how supply and need are distributed across the state, with breakdown by county, state legislative district, and Congressional District
- Cross tabulation of child care gaps by socioeconomic characteristics like minority population, population in poverty, etc.

## Notes

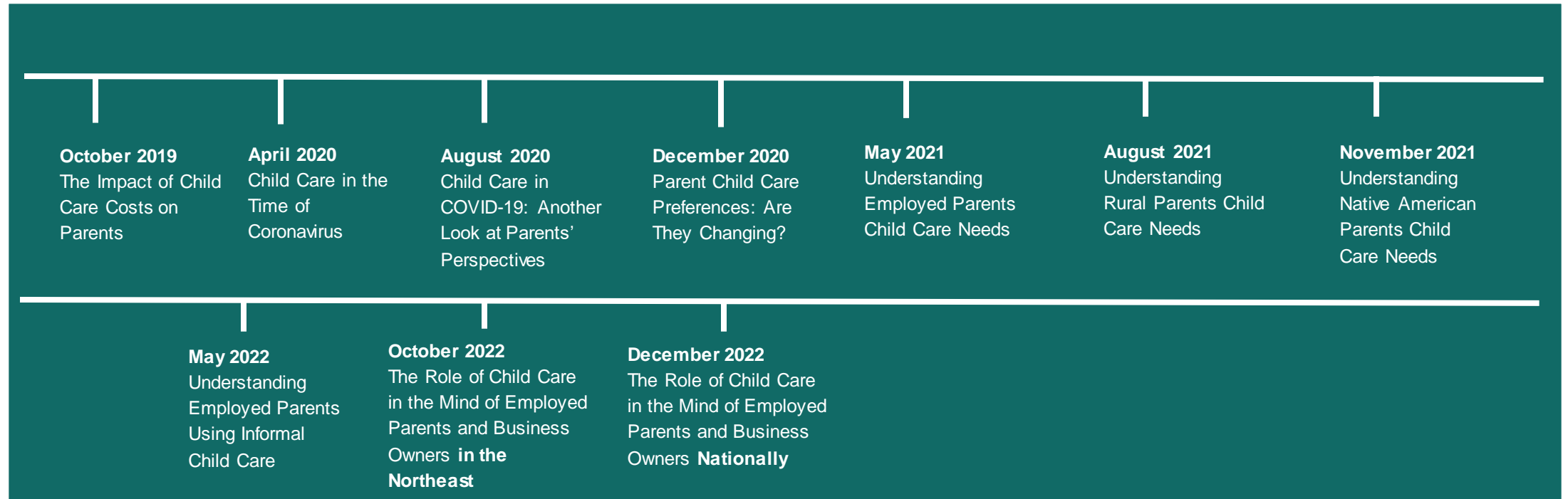
- Child care facilities included in the analysis are primarily those serving children under age six. In some cases, school age children may be included since detailed age data is not always available.
- The analysis includes cross-state interactions for States where data is currently available. Effective gap calculations for populations resident across all state borders will need to be recalculated once the complete US dataset is compiled.



BACKGROUND

PARENT SURVEY SERIES

BPC and Morning Consult have conducted a series of parent surveys beginning in October 2019 to understand parents' need and preferences for child care.





## METHODOLOGY

Surveys are conducted online and quotas are used to recruit a representative sample. Weight sets applied for known audience. Sample sizes for the surveys are between n=800 and n=1,500. Results from the full survey have a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

## DEFINITION

Throughout the analysis **formal child care** refers to a child care center, family child care home, pre-K, and a head start program, while **informal child care refers** to child care from relatives, parents, non-relative friend/neighbor, or a nanny.

AGENDA

1. PARENTS' CHILD CARE  
EXPERIENCES

2. PARENTS' CHILD CARE  
PREFERENCES

3. PARENTS AND WORK



MORNING CONSULT & BIPARTISAN POLICY CENTER PARENT SURVEY SERIES

# PARENT'S CHILD CARE EXPERIENCE



# Current Child Care Experience

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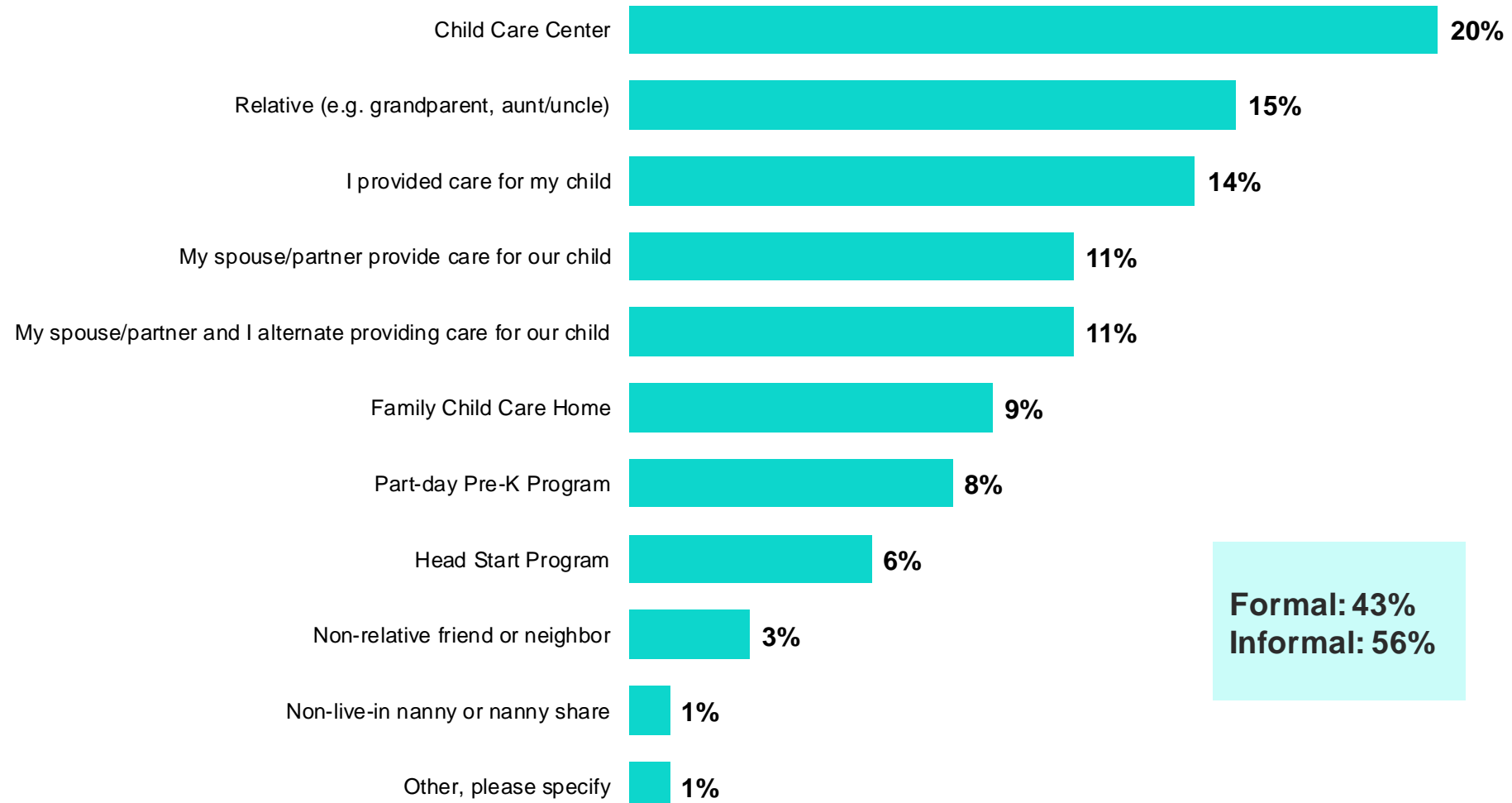
**Parents are using  
a variety of types  
of child care**

**Parents need  
child care in non-  
traditional hours,  
mostly in hours  
just before or just  
after the standard  
workday**

PARENTS' CHILD CARE EXPERIENCES: CURRENT

Which of the following best describes the current primary child care arrangement for your youngest child between birth and before starting kindergarten?

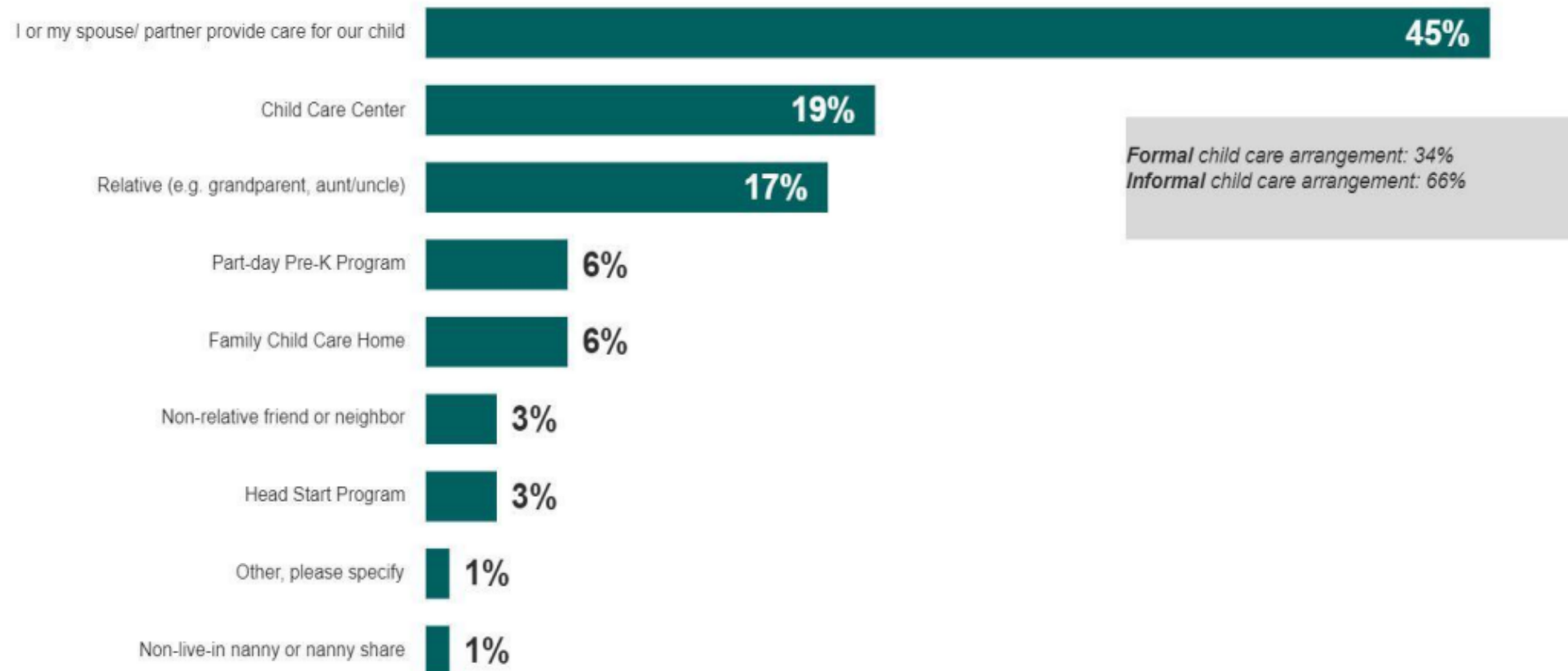
PARENTS, DECEMBER 2022



# Nearly half (45%) of rural parents say they or their spouse/partner provide care for their youngest child.

Which of the following best describe the current primary child care arrangement for your youngest child?

RURAL PARENTS, N=654 AUGUST 2021

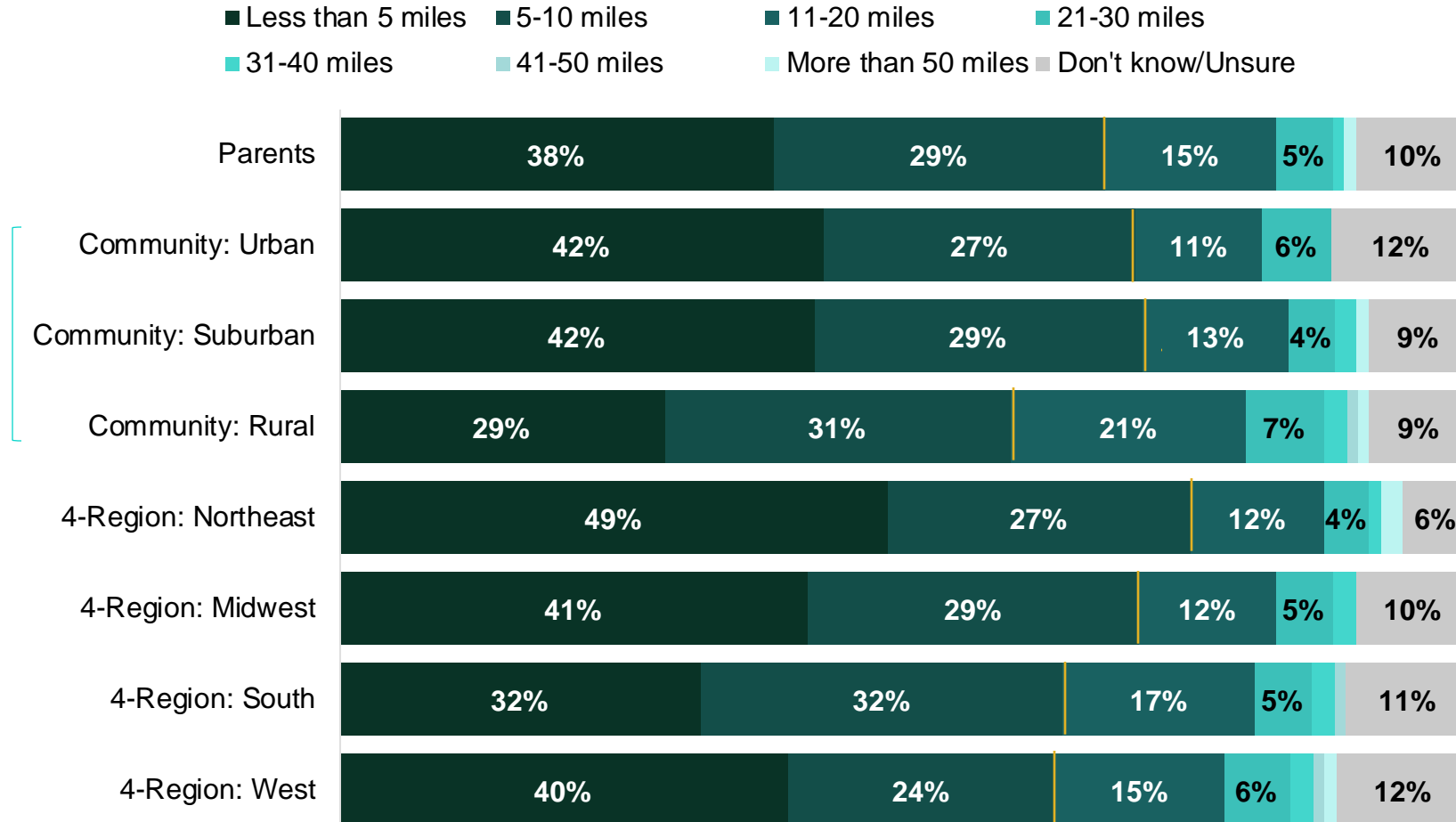




PARENTS' CHILD CARE EXPERIENCES: CURRENT

Approximately how many miles is a one-way drive from your home to a formal child care arrangement?

EMPLOYED PARENTS USING INFORMAL CHILD CARE, MAY 2022



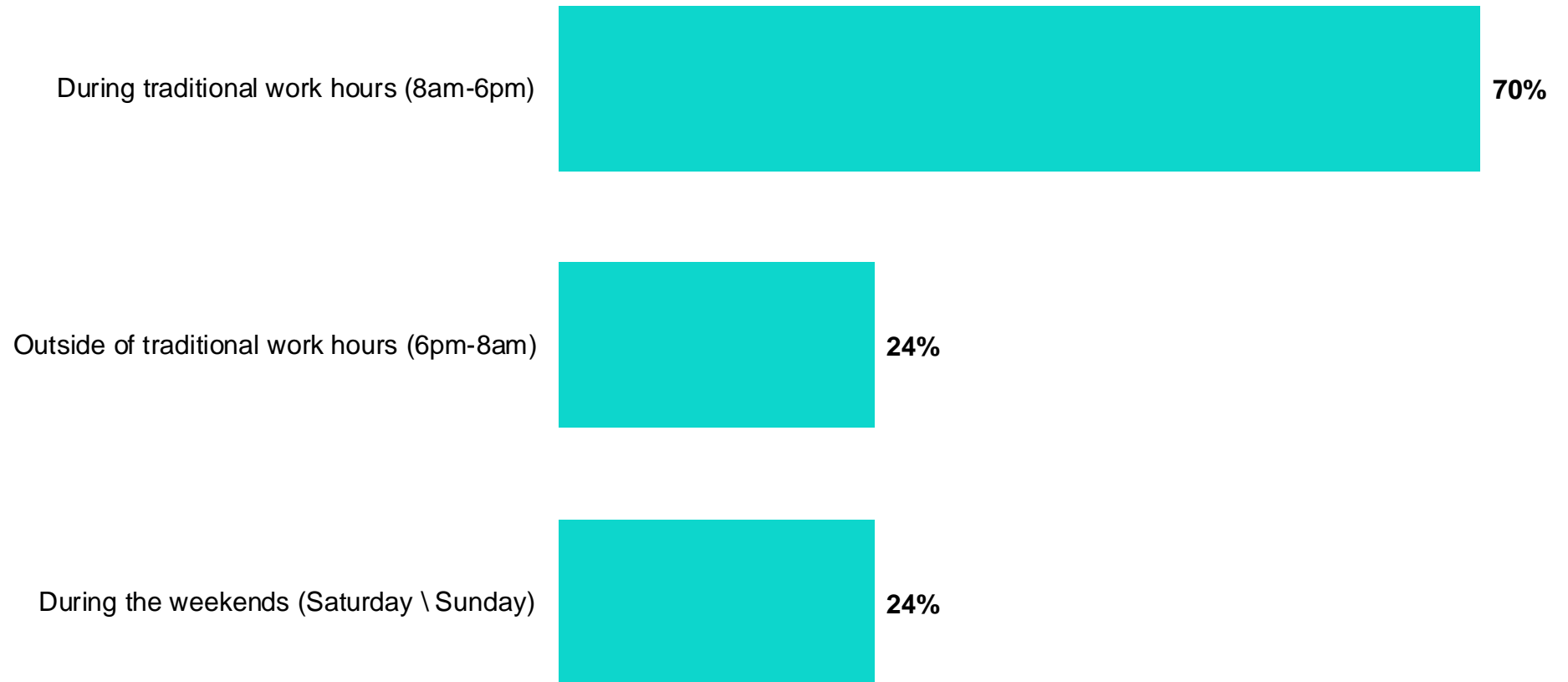
- Less than a third of **rural parents (29%)** say a one-way drive from their home to a formal child care arrangement is less than 5 miles, compared to urban (42%) and suburban (42%) parents.
- Across regions, **parents in the South (32%)** are least likely to say their home is less than a 5 mile one-way drive to a formal child care arrangement, while **parents in the northeast (49%)** are most likely.

\*Indicates 10 miles or less

PARENTS' CHILD CARE EXPERIENCES: CURRENT

In a typical week, does your family need a child care arrangement for your children ages 0-12 so that you (or both you and your spouse/partner) can work during the following hours? *% yes*

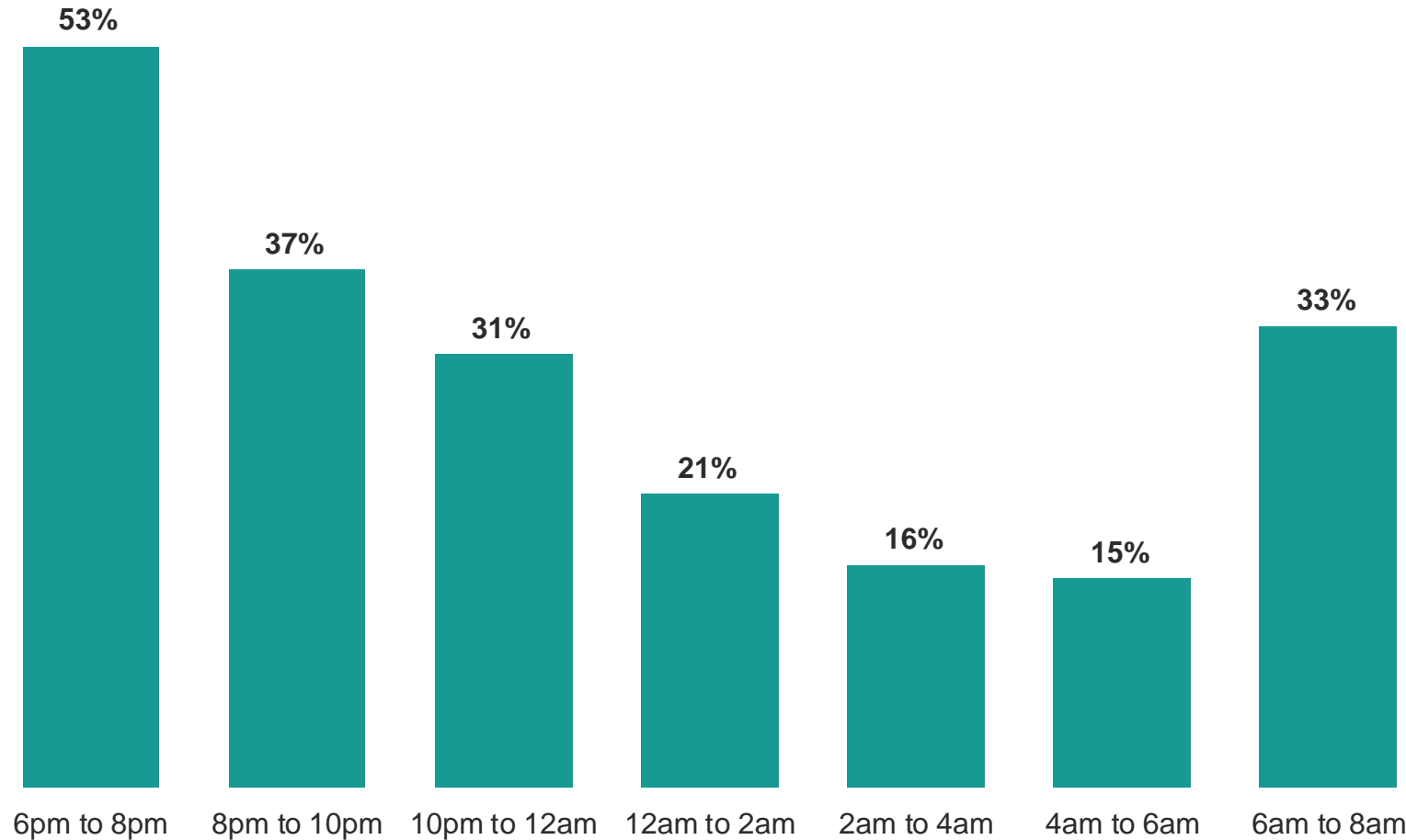
PARENTS, DECEMBER 2022



PARENTS' CHILD CARE EXPERIENCES: CURRENT

Which of the following hours do you require a child care arrangement? Please select all that apply.

PARENTS WHO NEED CARE IN NON-TRADITIONAL HOURS, DECEMBER 2022

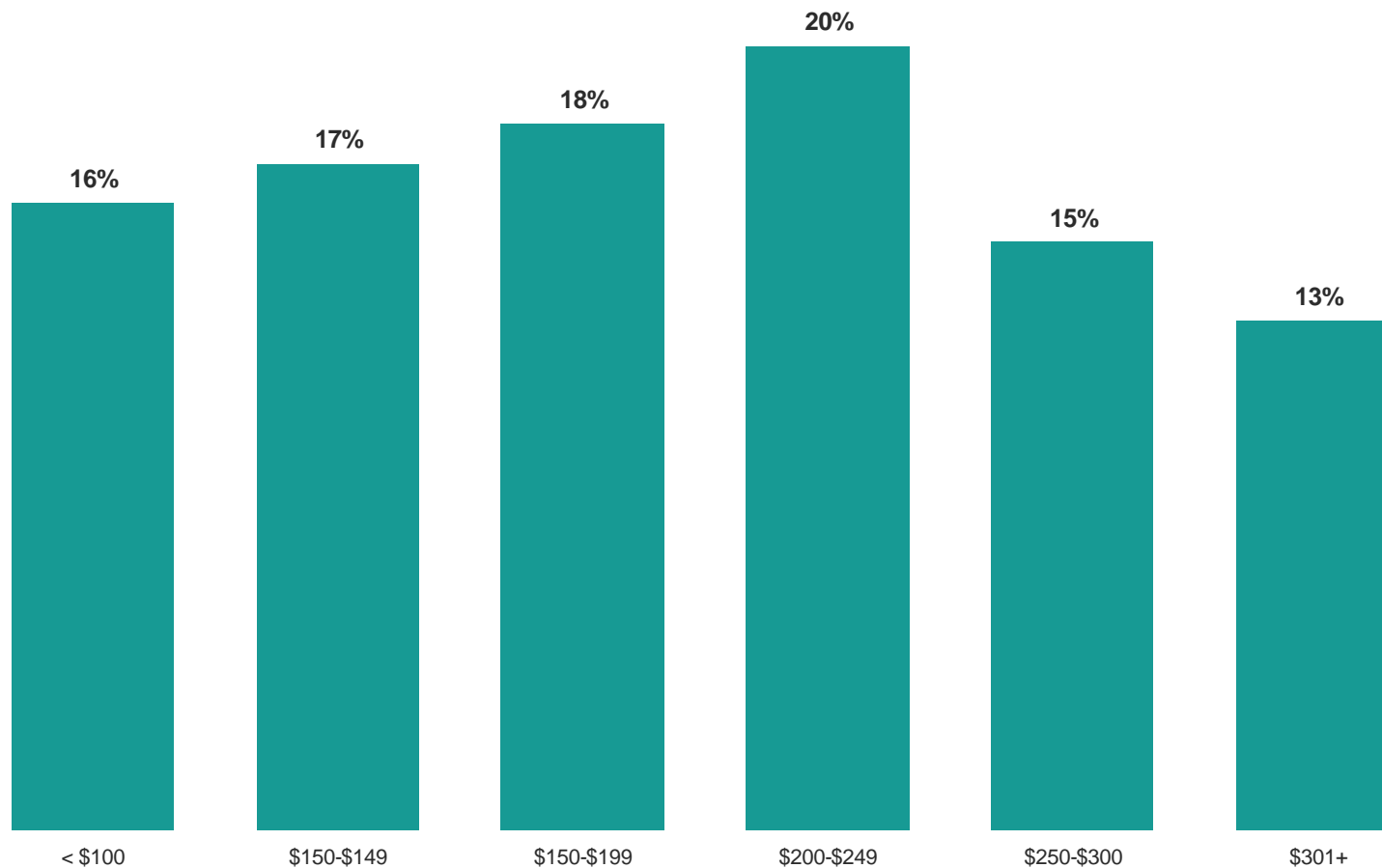


- Non-traditional hour care is nearly impossible to find. A recent BPC survey of three Northeast states found that only 2% of centers and 7% of homes offer care from 6pm to 8pm.<sup>xxvii</sup> Zero percent of centers and 5% of homes provide care on the weekends.

PARENTS' CHILD CARE EXPERIENCES: CURRENT

# What are parents paying for child care?

PARENTS, DECEMBER 2022

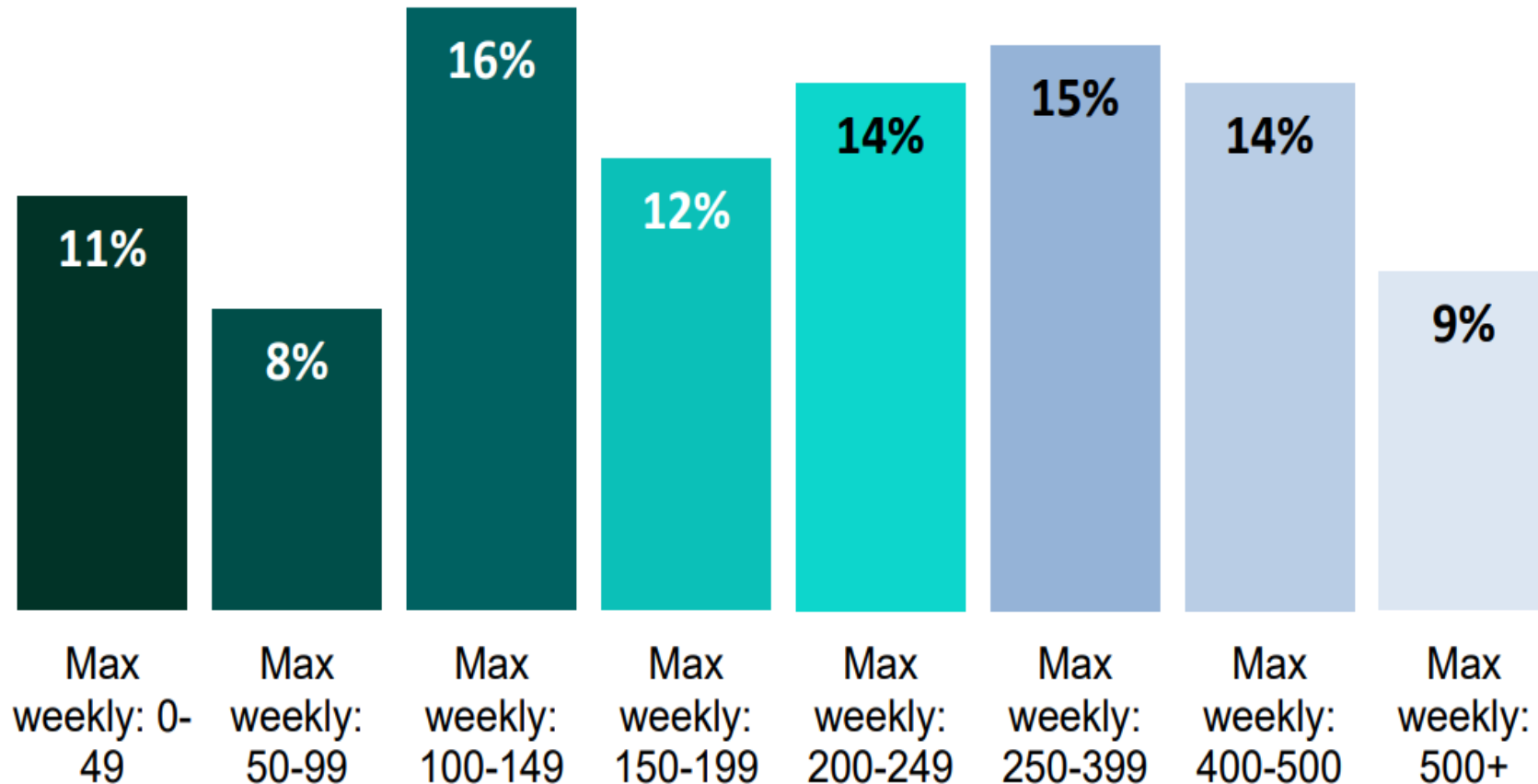


- 46% of parents currently pay their child care provider, while 54% do not.
- Among those who are currently paying for child care, the overall average is \$215 for child care for their youngest child on a weekly basis.

PARENTS' CHILD CARE EXPERIENCES: CURRENT

# What can parents afford?

PARENTS, MAY 2021



- Half (47%) of parents say the maximum amount their household can afford to pay per child per week for child care is less than \$200.
- 67% of service and retail workers report the maximum they can afford for child care is less than \$200 per week.

MORNING CONSULT & BIPARTISAN POLICY CENTER PARENT SURVEY SERIES

# PARENTS' CHILD CARE PREFERENCES



# Parents' Child Care Preferences

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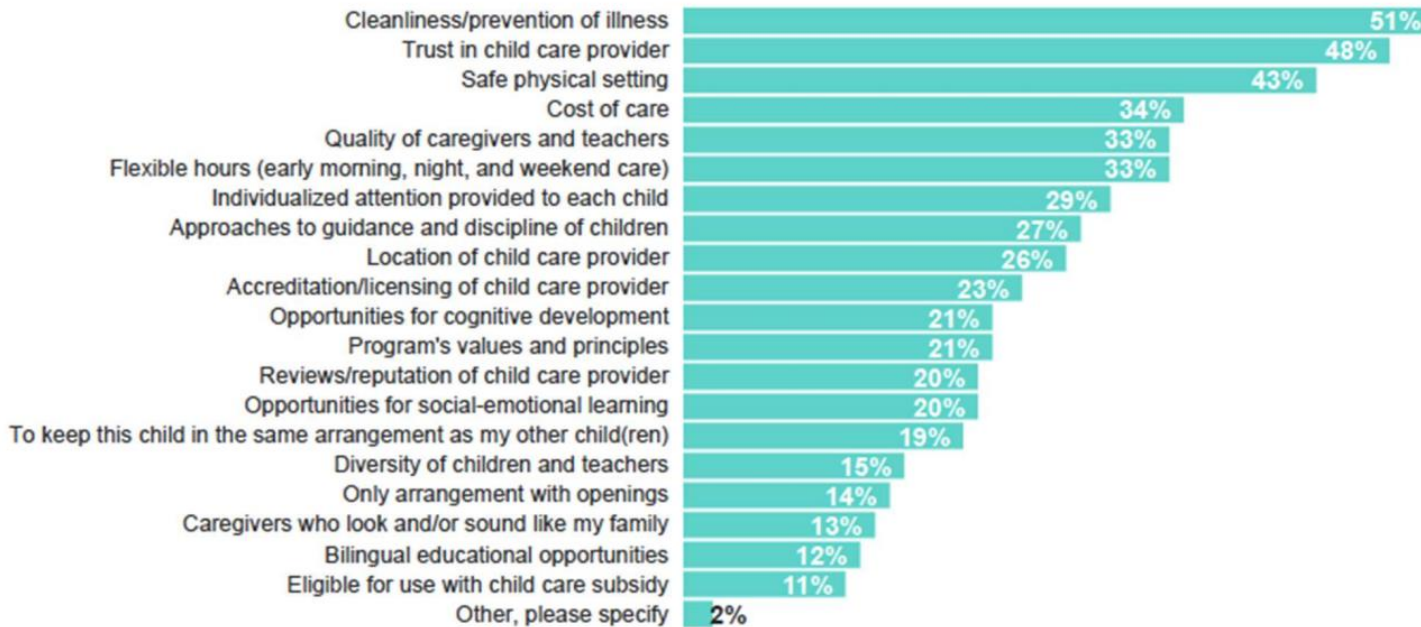
**Parents are considering a variety of factors when choosing a child care provider**

**One size does not fit all when it comes to the child care provider parents' prefer.**

PARENTS' CHILD CARE PREFERENCES

Consistently, parents rate safety and trust as the most important characteristics of their child care arrangement.

PARENTS, DECEMBER 2020





# Understanding Parent Choice



In December 2020, parents made a series of forced choice responses about the most important and least important factors for selecting a child care provider.

# MAXDIFF ANALYSIS

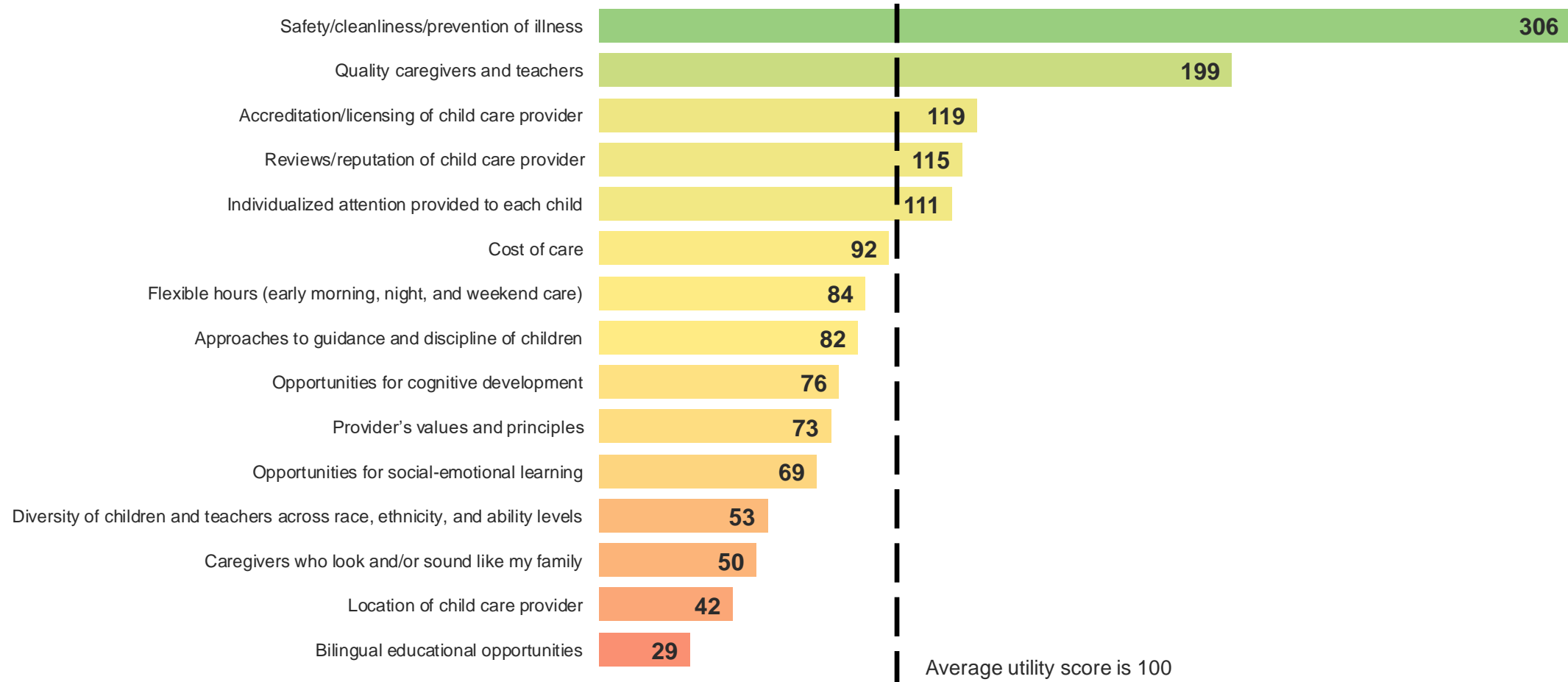
Please indicate which factor is **most important** in selecting a child care provider for your child(ren) under the age of 5 at this time, and which factor is **least important** in selecting a child care provider for your child(ren) under the age of 5 at this time.

MOST IMPORTANT		LEAST IMPORTANT
<input type="radio"/>	Opportunities for cognitive development	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	Location of child care provider	<input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Cost of care	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	Provider's values and principles	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	Quality of caregivers and teachers	<input type="radio"/>

**PARENTS' CHILD CARE PREFERENCES**

*Please indicate which factor is **most important** in selecting a child care provider for your child(ren) under the age of 5 **at this time**, and which factor is **least important** in selecting a child care provider for your child(ren) under the age of 5 **at this time**.*

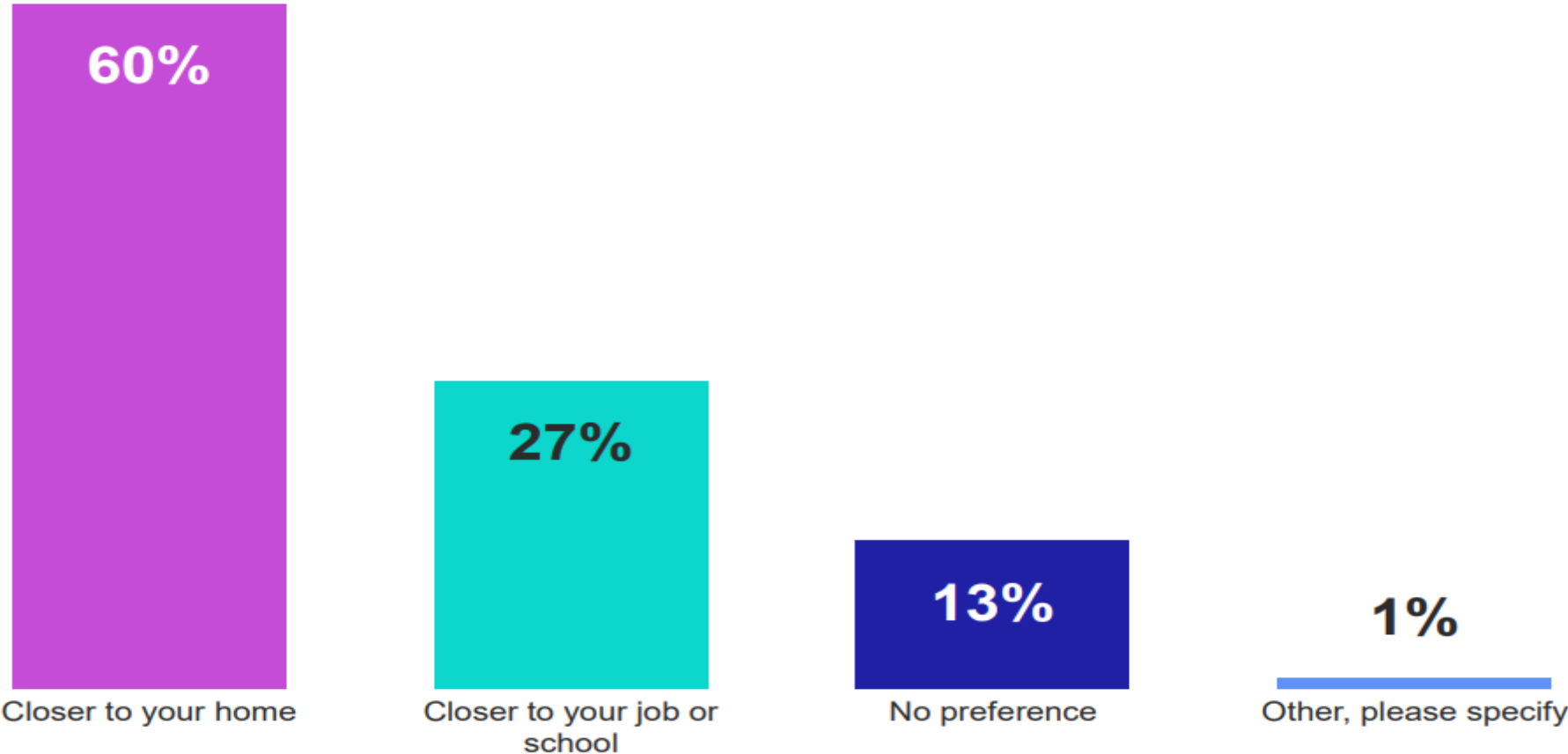
**PARENTS, DECEMBER 2020**



PARENTS' CHILD CARE PREFERENCES

Do you prefer that your child care location is:

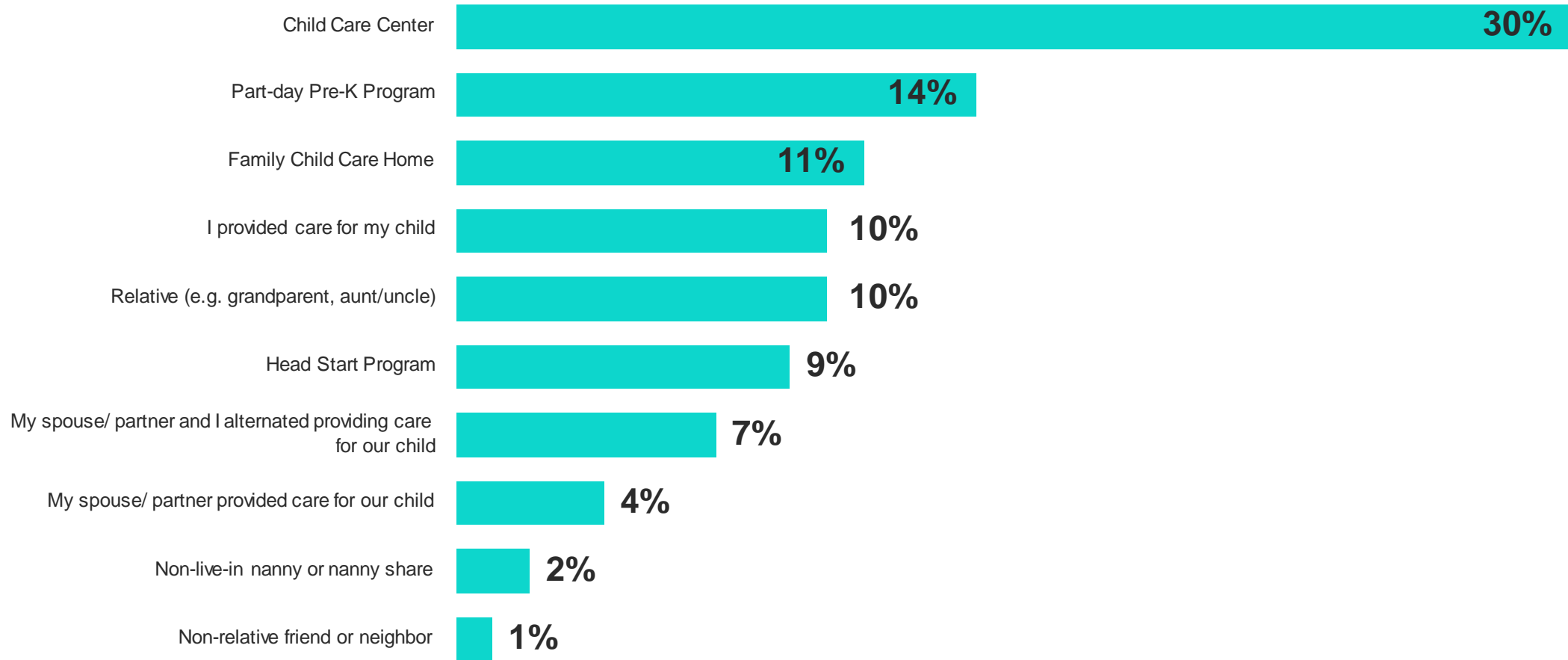
PARENTS, OCTOBER 2019



PARENTS' CHILD CARE PREFERENCES

If child care were free for your family, what type of child care arrangement would you most prefer?

PARENTS, MAY 2021



# Understanding The One-Third



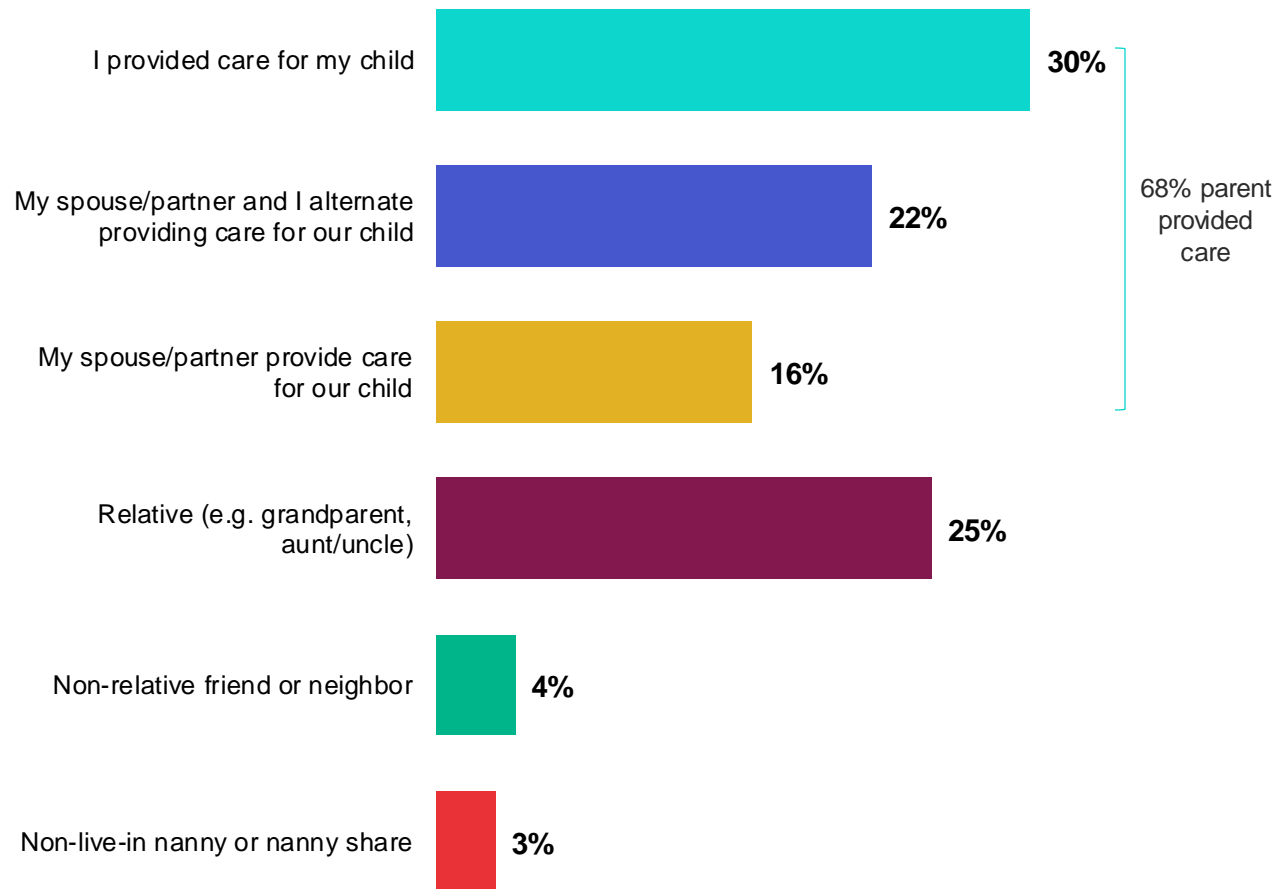
In June 2022, we conducted a survey among employed parents currently using an informal child care arrangement.

PARENTS' CHILD CARE PREFERENCES : INFORMAL CARE

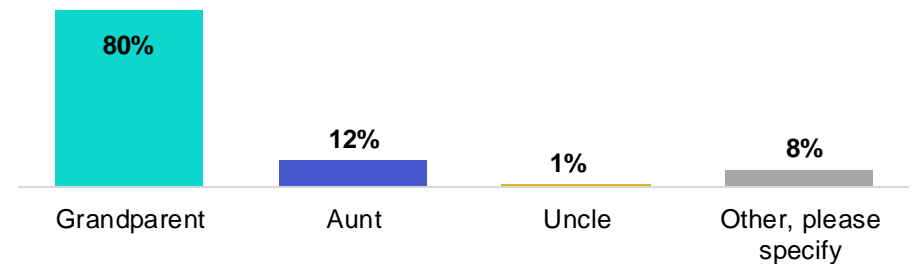
Over half of parents (68%) are using parent-provided care as their primary child care arrangement for their youngest child.

Parents Using Informal Child Care, May 2022

Which of the following best describes the current primary child care arrangement for your youngest child?



Which of the following best describes which relative is responsible for your primary child care? (among parents using relatives, n=246)

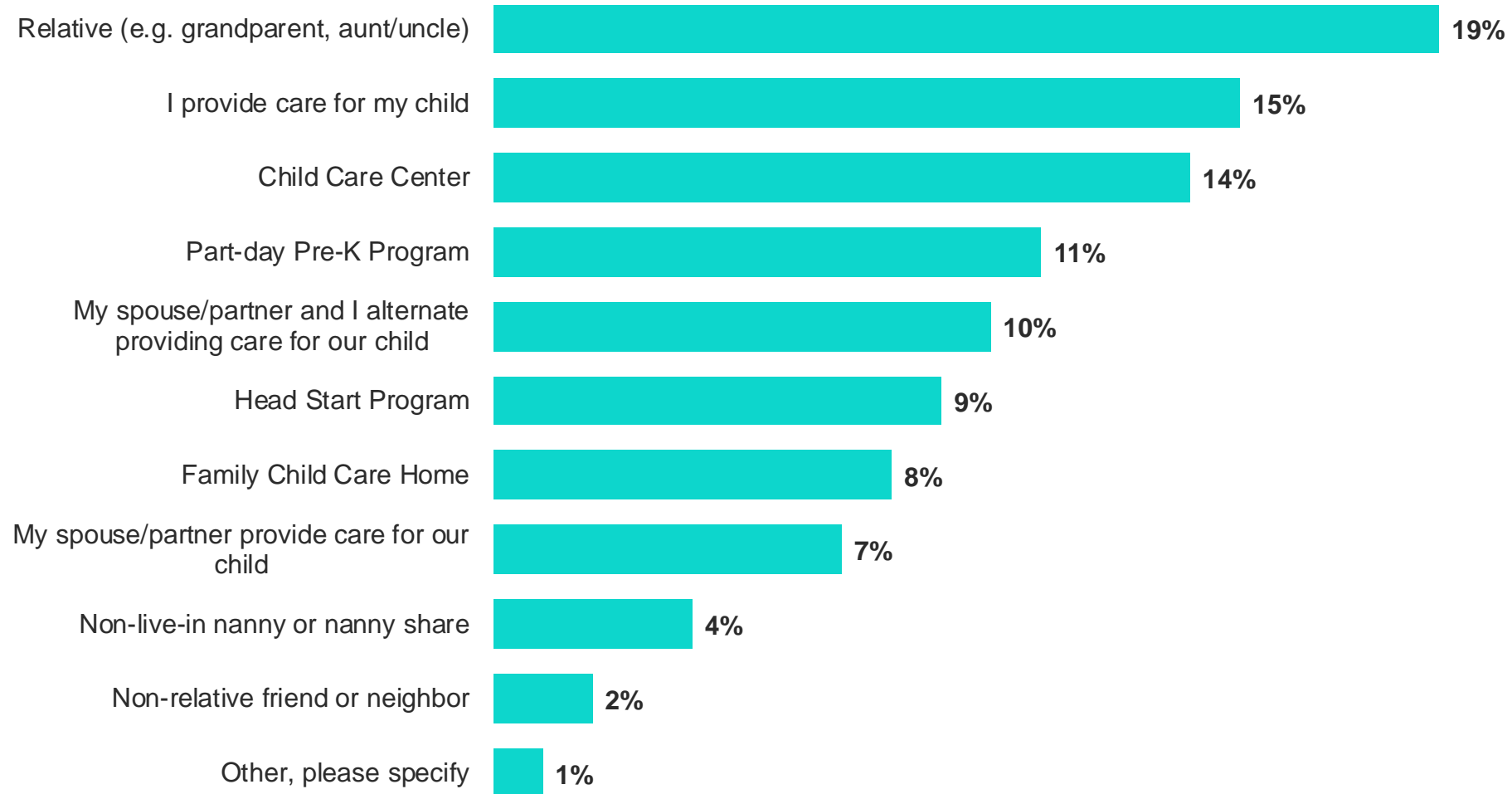


- A quarter of parents (25%) use relatives as their primary child care arrangement for their youngest child. Among those who use relatives as their primary child care provider, 80% say grandparents are responsible for the care.
- Older parents are more likely than younger parents and rural parents are more likely than urban parents to use *relatives* as their primary child care provider.
- Black and parents of other ethnic groups are more likely than white and Hispanic parents to personally provide care for their child, while white and Hispanic parents are more likely to use relatives.
- Parents with older children are more likely to personally be providing care.

PARENTS' CHILD CARE PREFERENCES : INFORMAL CARE

If child care were free and in a convenient location for your family, what type of child care arrangement would you most prefer for your youngest child?

PARENTS, JUNE 2022



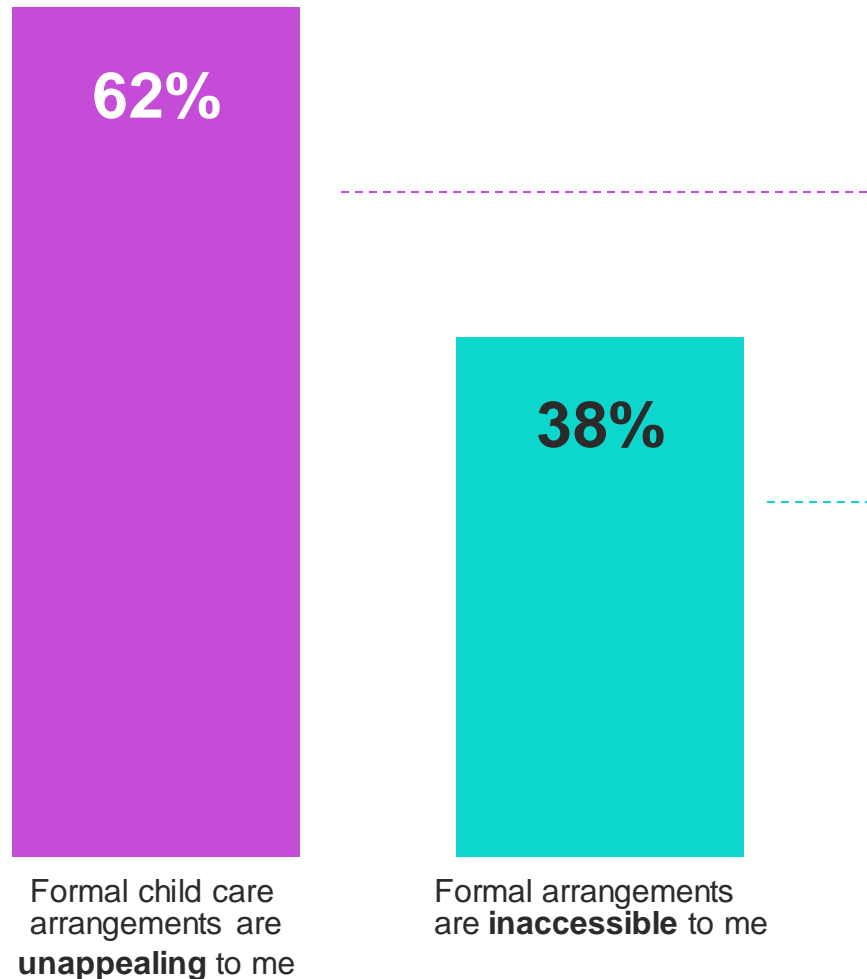
42% prefer a **formal** arrangement  
57% prefer an **informal** arrangement



PARENTS' CHILD CARE PREFERENCES : INFORMAL CARE

Which of the following statements best describes your point of view, even if neither is exactly correct?

PARENTS, JUNE 2022



*In a few words, please describe why a formal child care arrangement is **unappealing** to you? [OPEN END] (n=496)\**

- **Lack of trust** are leading reasons why formal child care arrangements are unappealing to parents.
- Many parents say they **prefer the care of a relative or to take care of the children themselves**.
- Others site **concerns about the safety and quality of care**, including poorly trained staff, COVID concerns, and negative reputations.

*In a few words, please describe why a formal child care arrangement is **inaccessible** to you? [OPEN END] (n=304)\*\**

**Cost** is also a leading reason why formal arrangements are inaccessible to parents. Other reasons include:

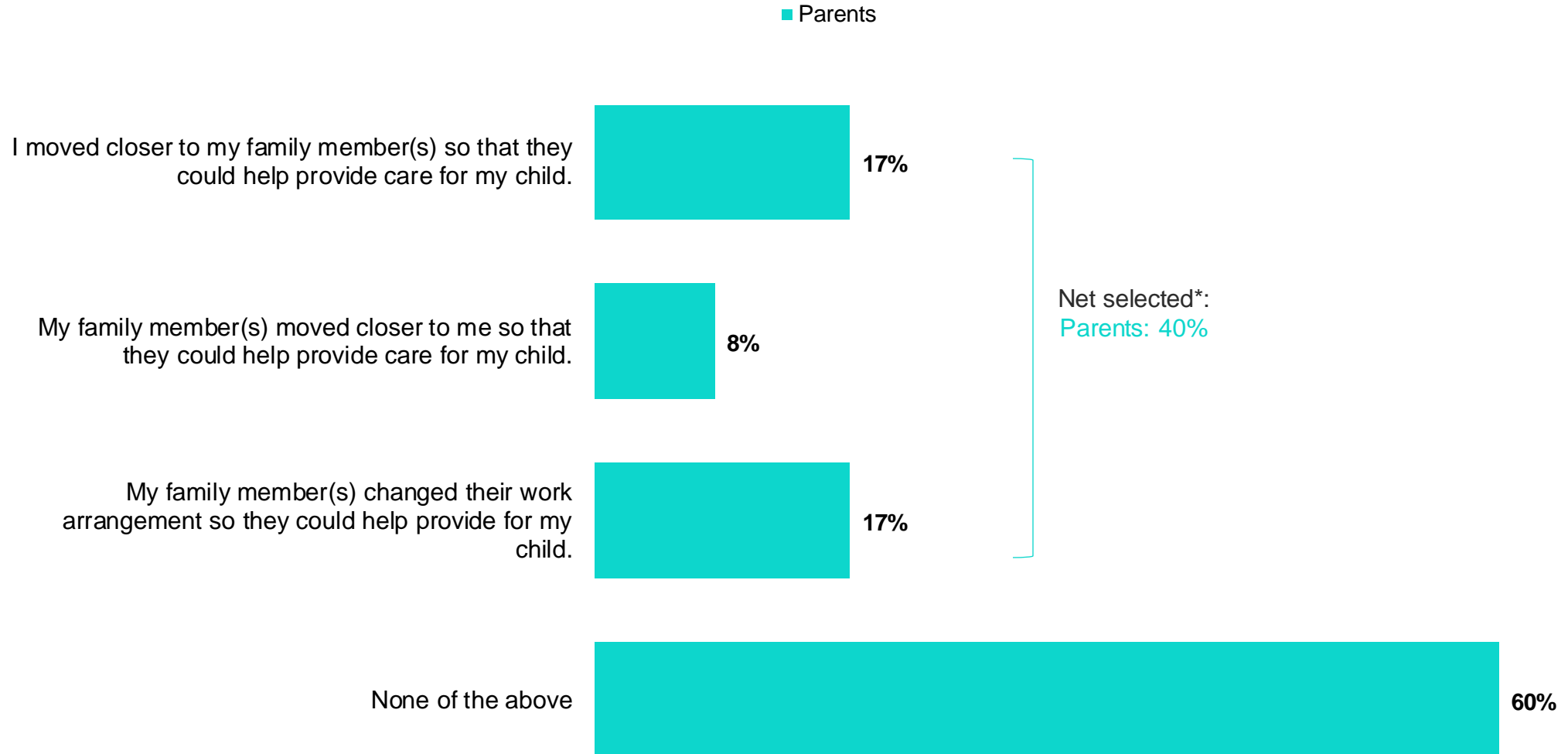
- Distance to arrangement/inconvenient location
- Incompatible hours
- Lack of transportation
- Ineligibility for programs
- Long waitlists
- Lack of information about options

\*Among parents who say formal child care arrangements are unappealing to them. \*\*Among parents who say formal child care arrangements are inaccessible to them.

PARENTS' CHILD CARE PREFERENCES : INFORMAL CARE

Which of the following statements, if any, apply to you? Please select all that apply. % selected

PARENTS USING INFORMAL CHILD CARE, JUNE 2022



\*Net selected de-duplicates multiple selections.

MORNING CONSULT & BIPARTISAN POLICY PARENT SURVEY SERIES

# PARENTS AND WORK



# Parents' Work Arrangements

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**Child care needs impact parents' ability to work and their family life.**

**In an evolving work environment, parents feel comfortable talking to their employer about their child care responsibilities.**

## PARENTS & WORK

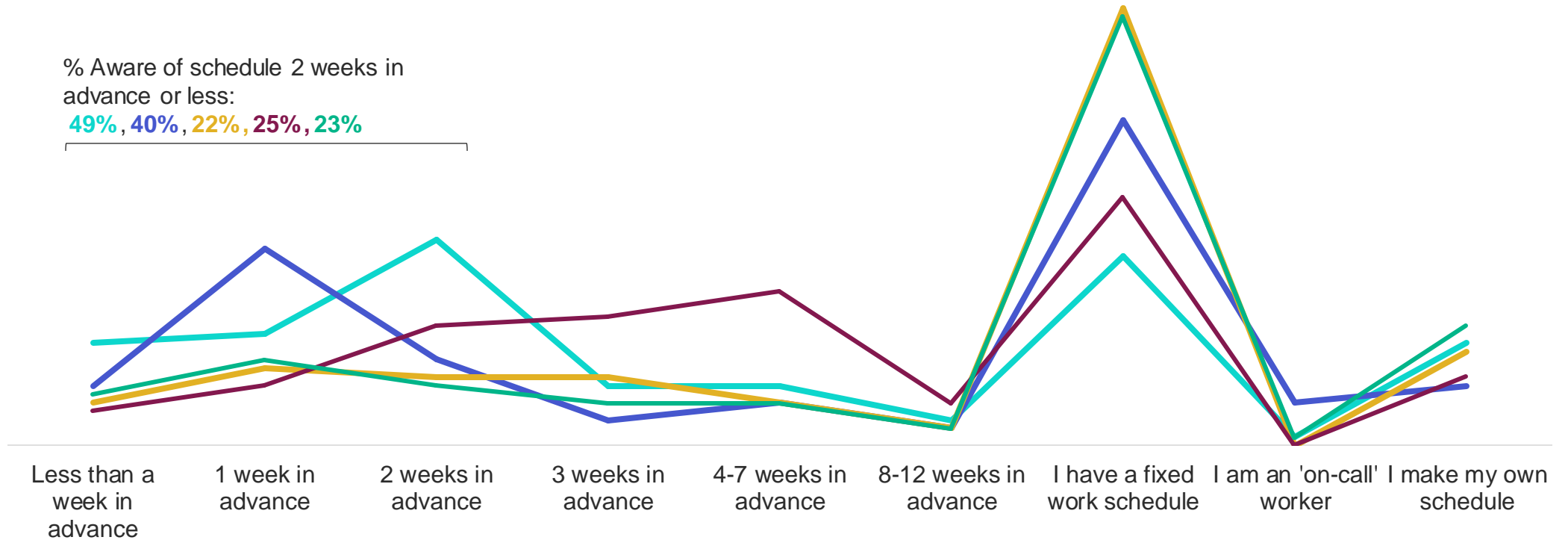
# Thinking about your work hours, how far in advance are you aware of your work schedule, or do you have a fixed work schedule?

PARENTS, MAY 2021

- Service Worker, Retail Sales, Laborers and Helpers
- Administrative Workers, Office Professionals, and Executive/Senior Level Managers
- Other Professionals
- Trade and Skilled Workers
- Health Care and Medical Professionals, Lab Technicians, and Pharmacists

% Aware of schedule 2 weeks in advance or less:

49%, 40%, 22%, 25%, 23%



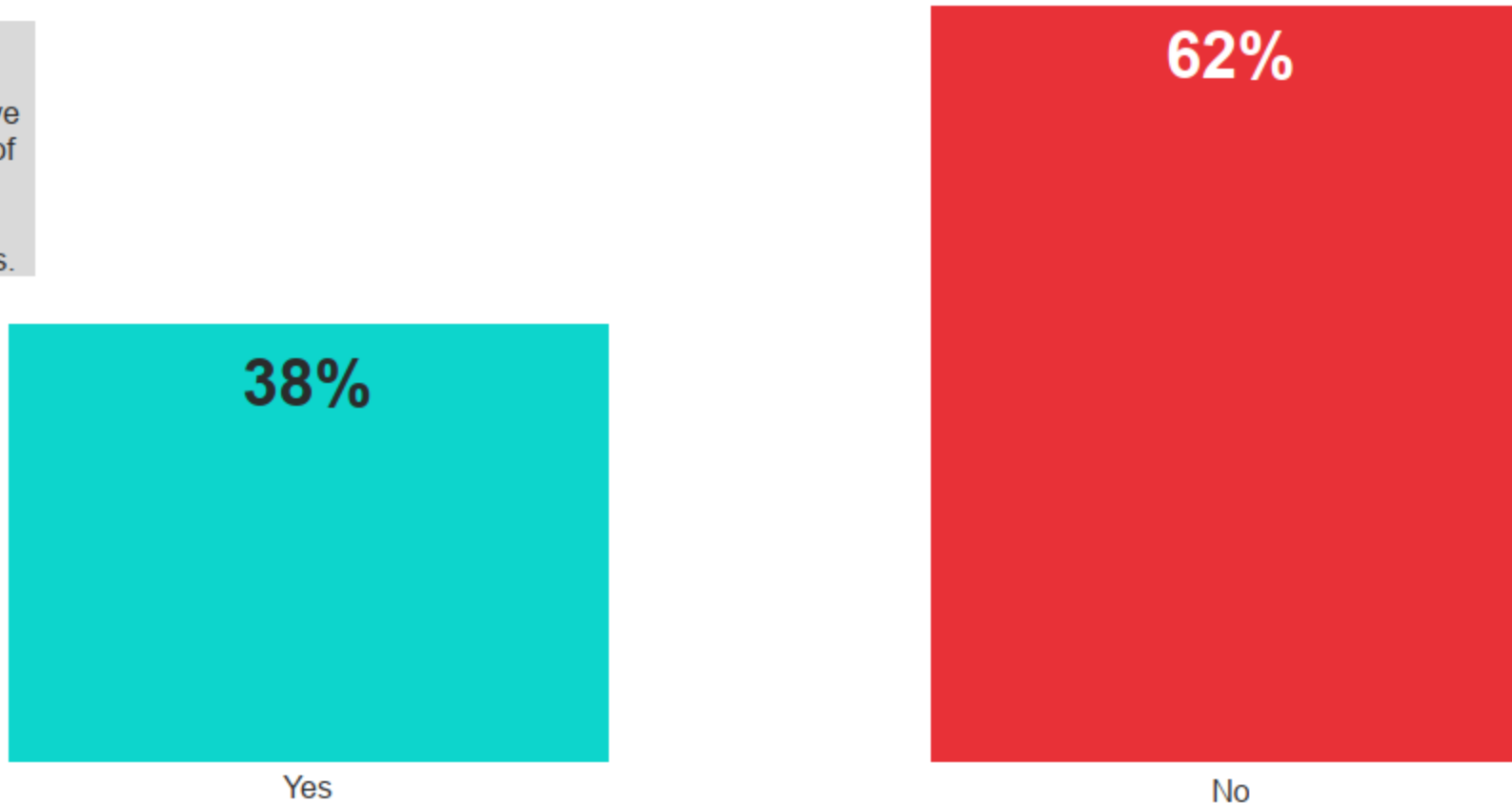
## SUPPORTING CHILD CARE RESPONSIBILITIES

Two in five parents (38%) say child care responsibilities have impacted their ability to work over the past month.

In the past month, have child care responsibilities impacted your ability to work? If yes, how many work hours have you missed due to child care responsibilities?

### EMPLOYED PARENTS

Among those who have missed work, 56% of parents have missed 10+ hours of work over the past month due to child care responsibilities.

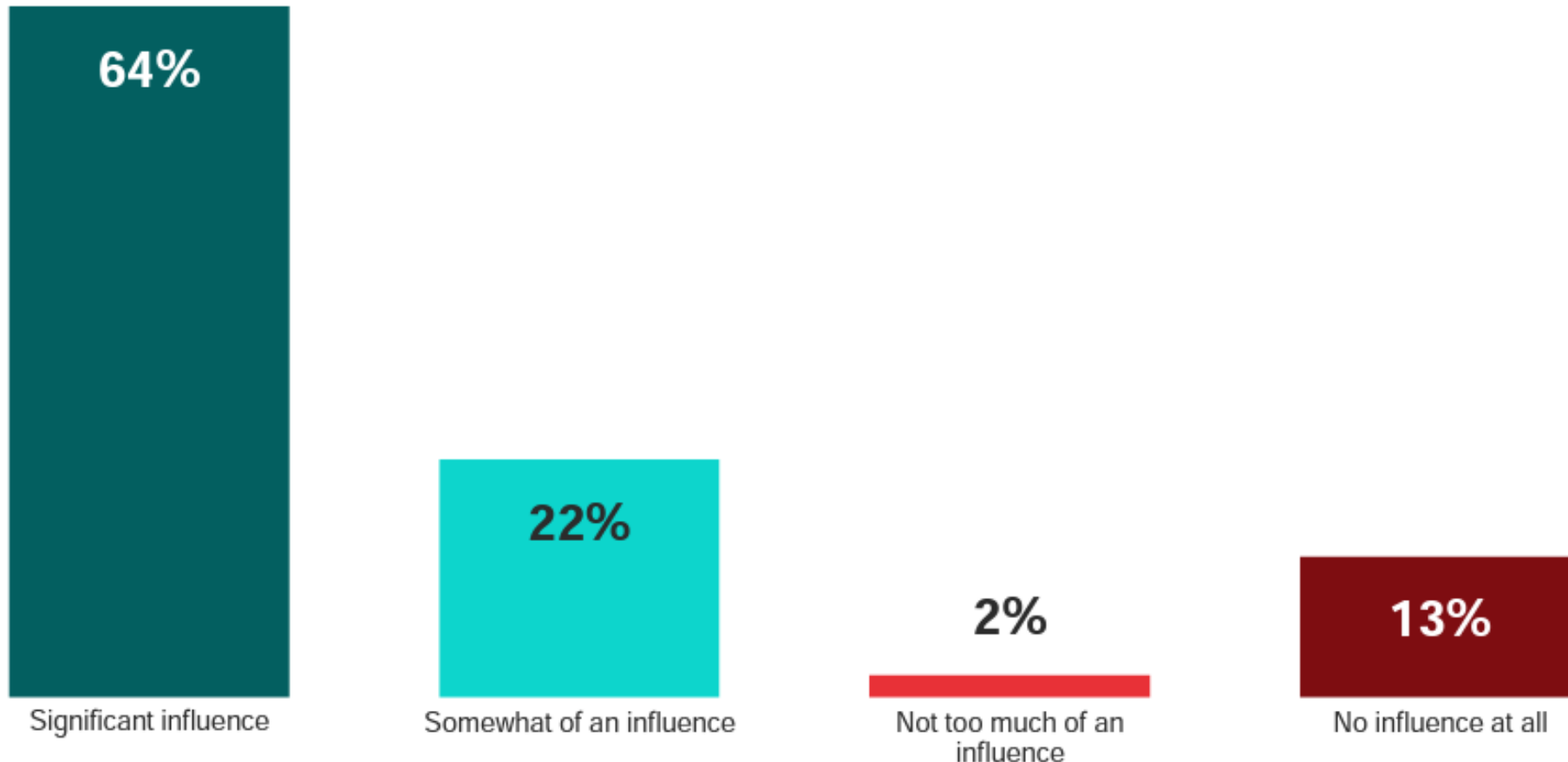


Women (40%) are more likely than men (28%) to say child care responsibilities have impacted their ability to work in the past month.

- Over 4 in 5 rural parents who are personally or their spouse/partner is not currently working say child care responsibilities influenced their decision to not work (86%), including 64% who said they *significantly influenced* their decision.

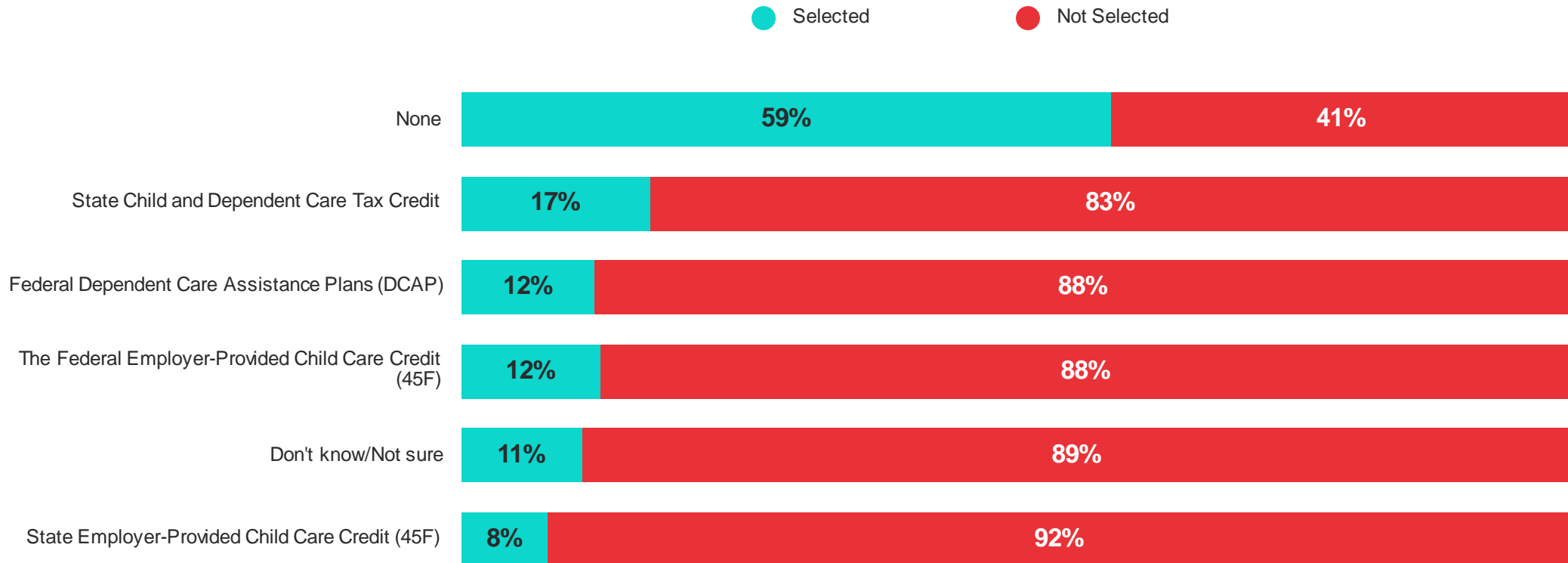
How much of an influence, if at all, did child care responsibilities have in your and or your partner or spouse's decision not to work?

RURAL PARENTS WHO ARE PERSONALLY OR SPOUSE/PARTNER IS NOT CURRENTLY WORKING, N=206



# What, if any, tax program has your business used? Please select all that apply.

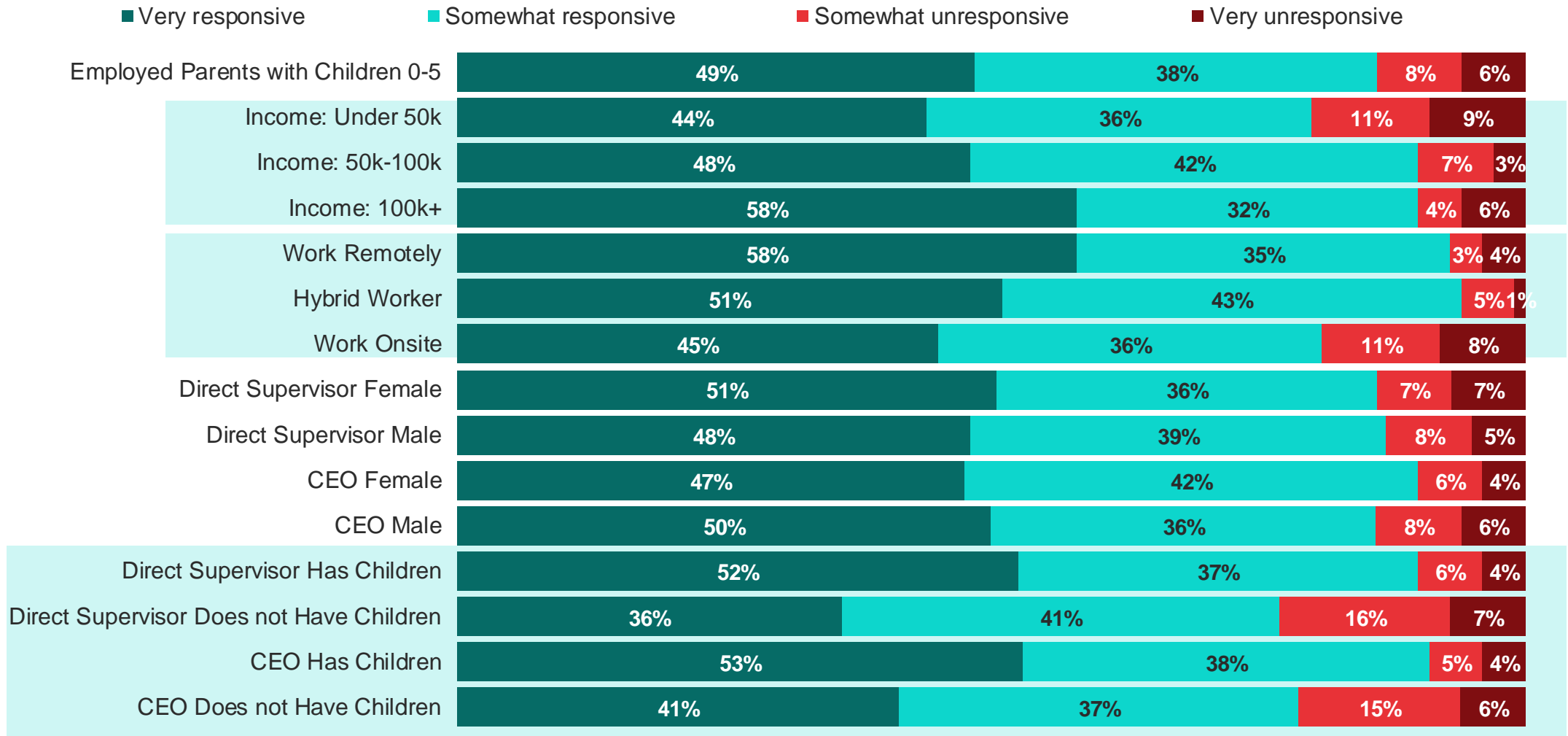
SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS/EXECUTIVES, DECEMBER 2022





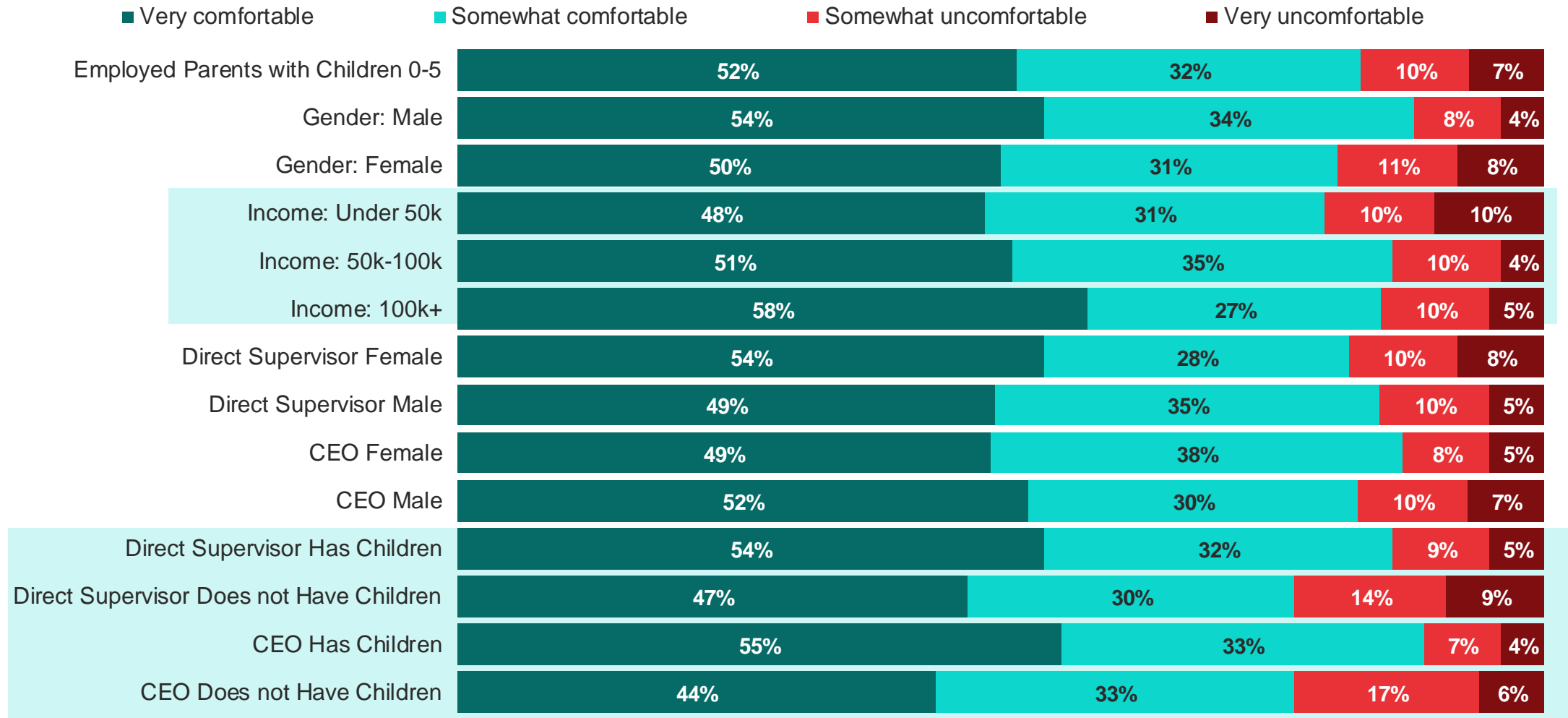
PARENTS & WORK

How responsive or unresponsive is your direct supervisor at your primary job to your child care responsibilities?



PARENTS & WORK

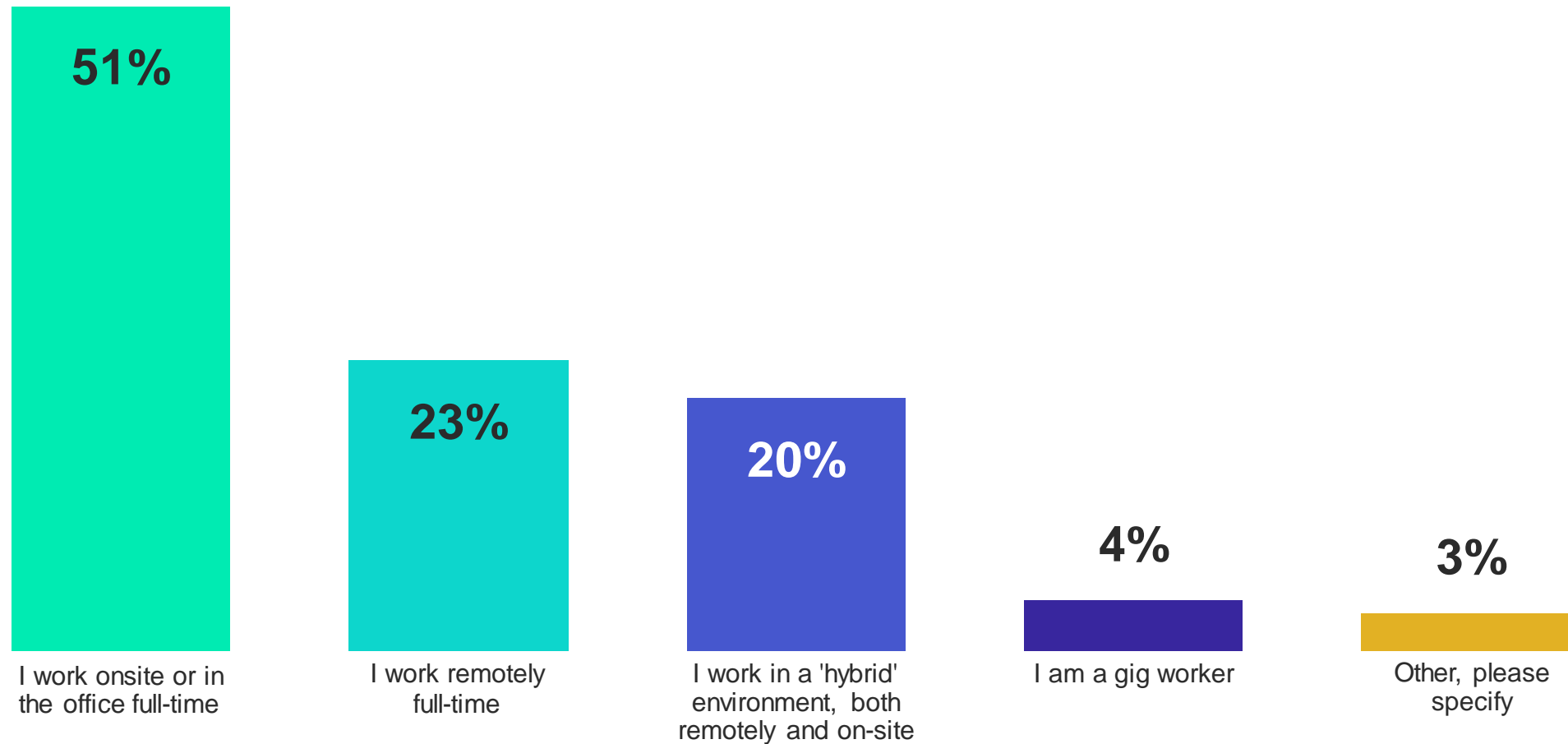
How comfortable or uncomfortable do you feel talking to your direct supervisor at your primary job about problems with your child care arrangement that impact your ability to work?



PARENTS & WORK

# Which of the following best describes your current work situation?

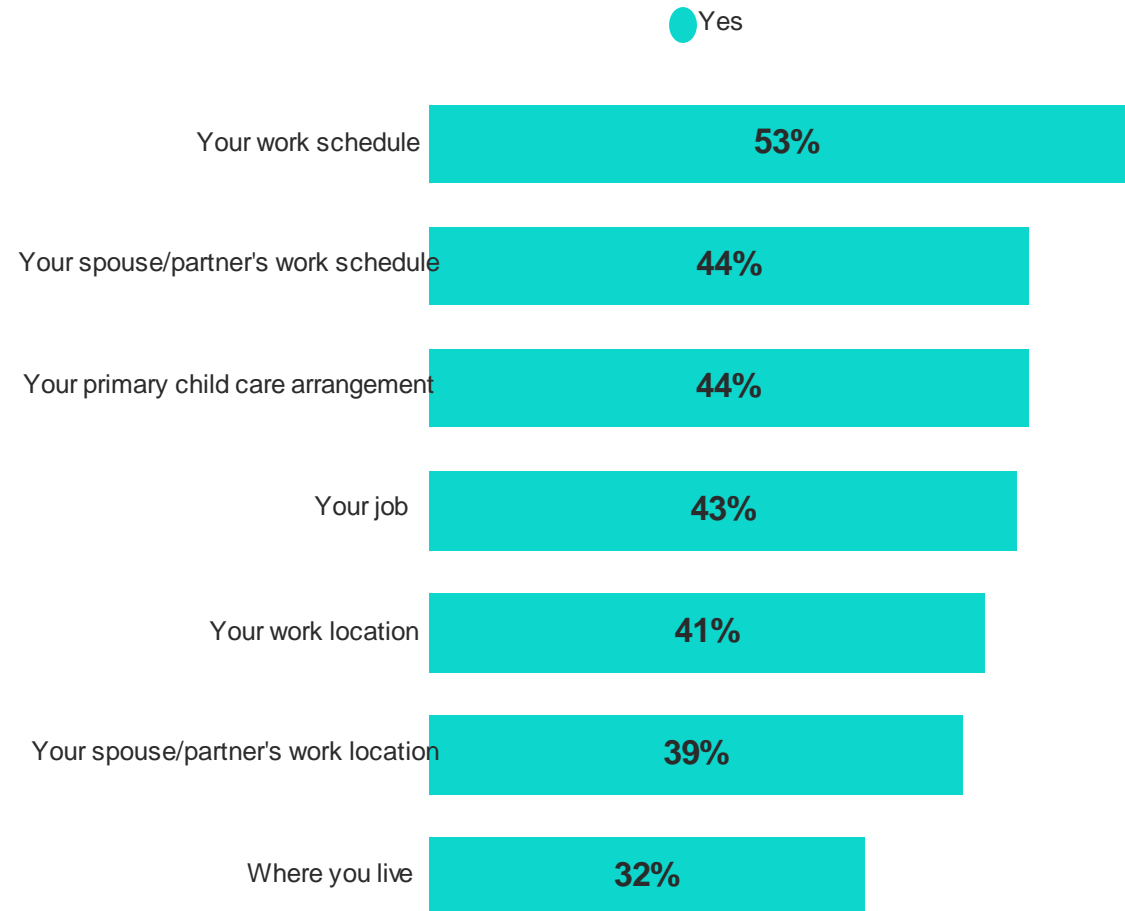
EMPLOYED PARENTS, DECEMBER 2022



PARENTS & WORK

Have the following changed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, or since the start of March 2020?

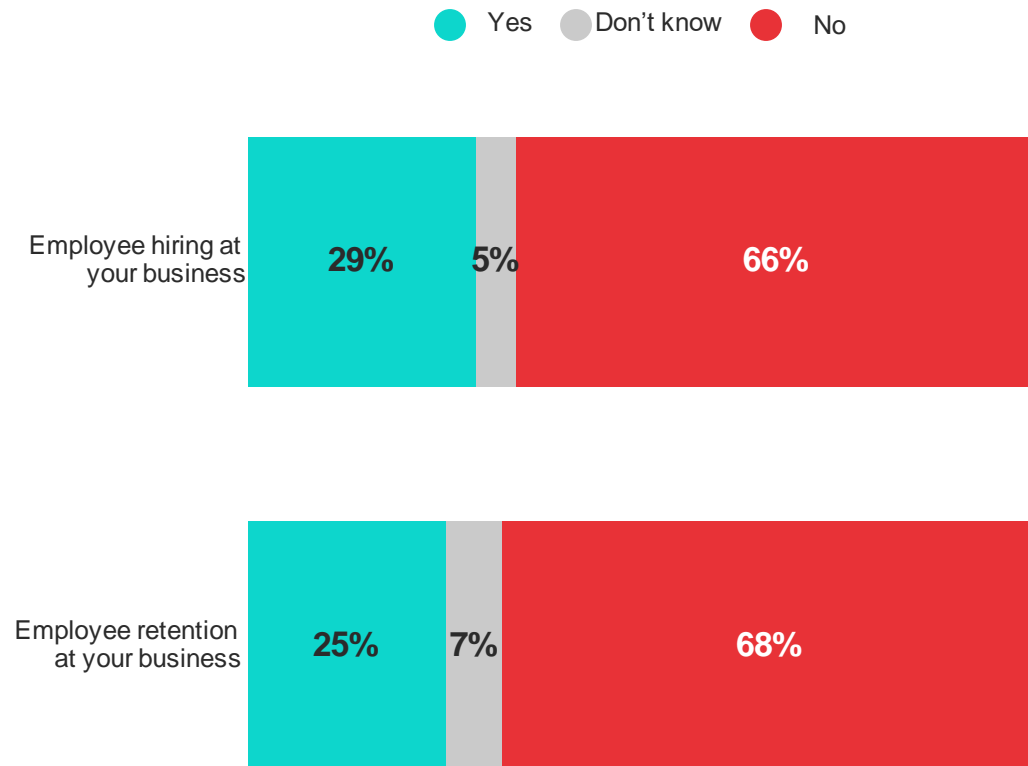
EMPLOYED PARENTS, DECEMBER 2022



PARENTS & WORK

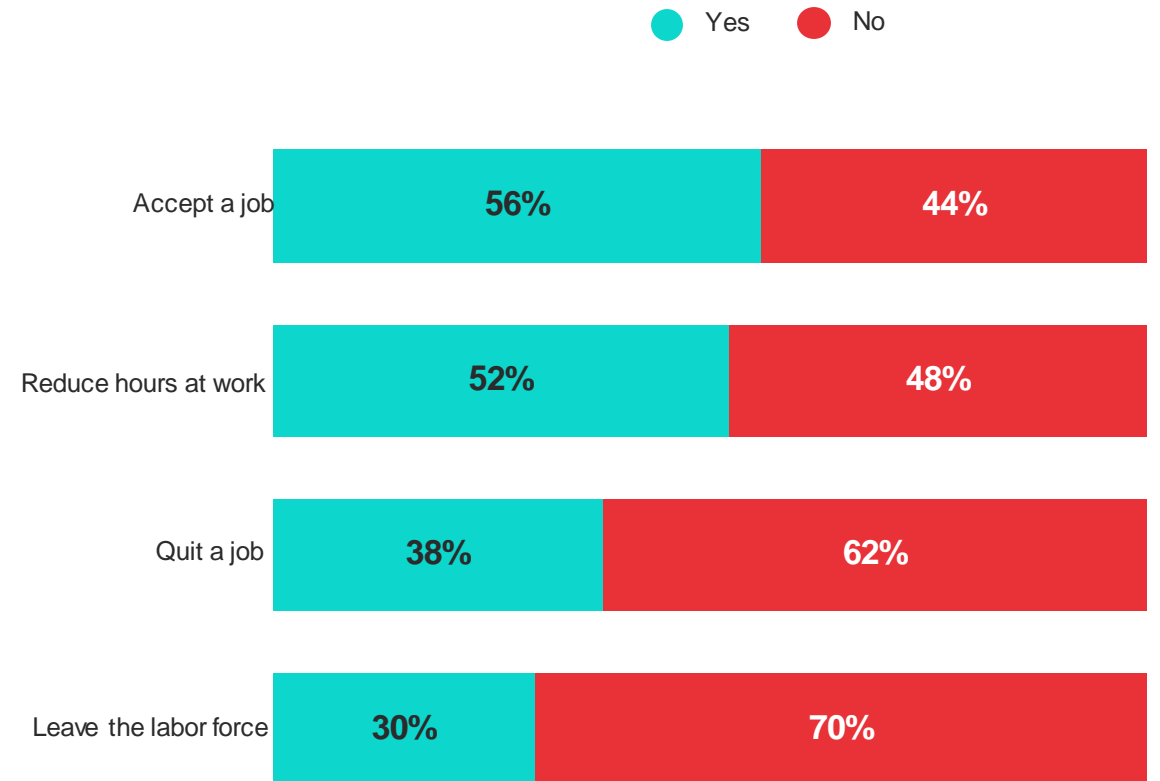
## Has access to child care in your community impacted the following at your business?

SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS/EXECUTIVES, DECEMBER 2022



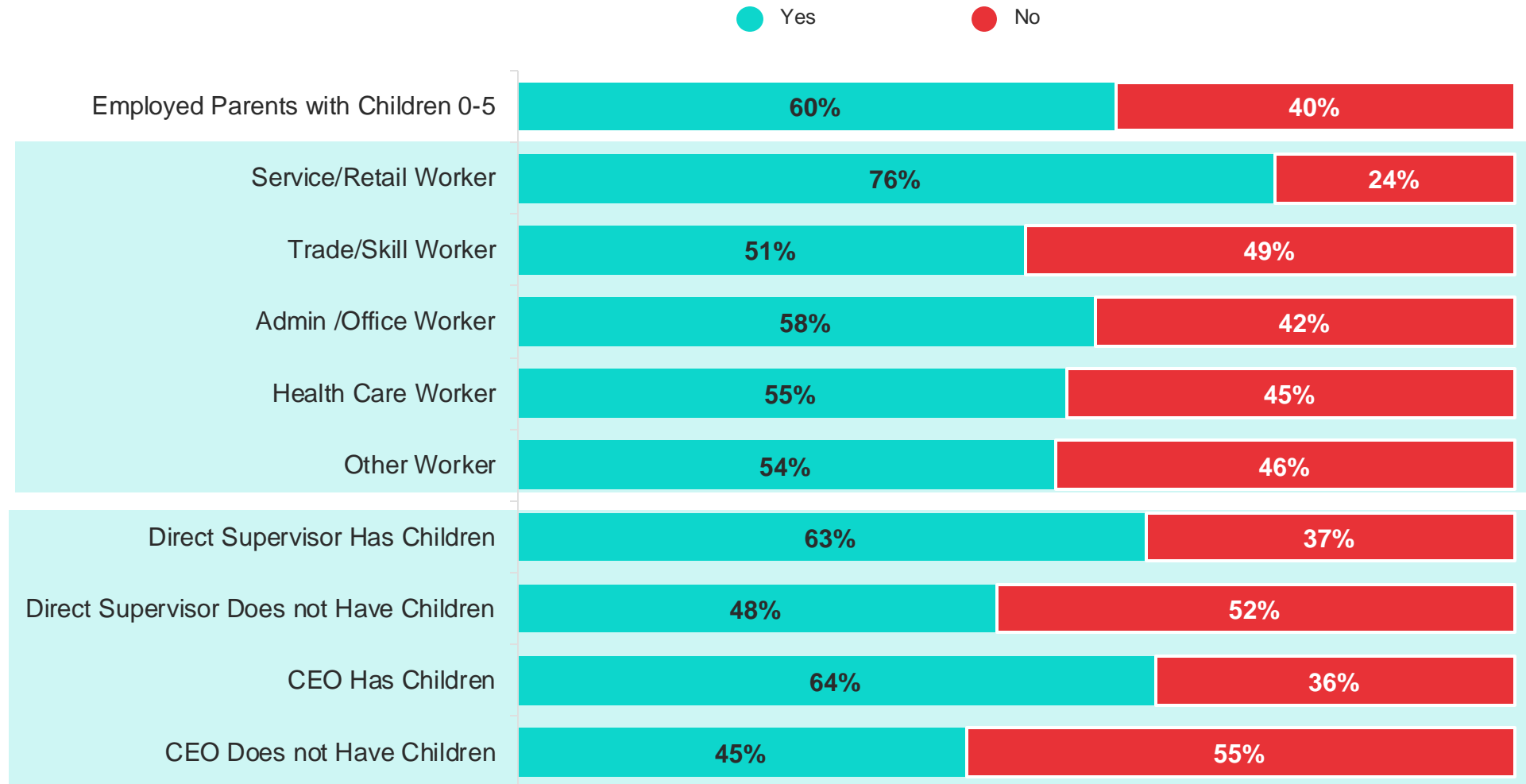
## Have child care responsibilities ever been a factor in your decision to take any of the following actions?

EMPLOYED PARENTS, DECEMBER 2022



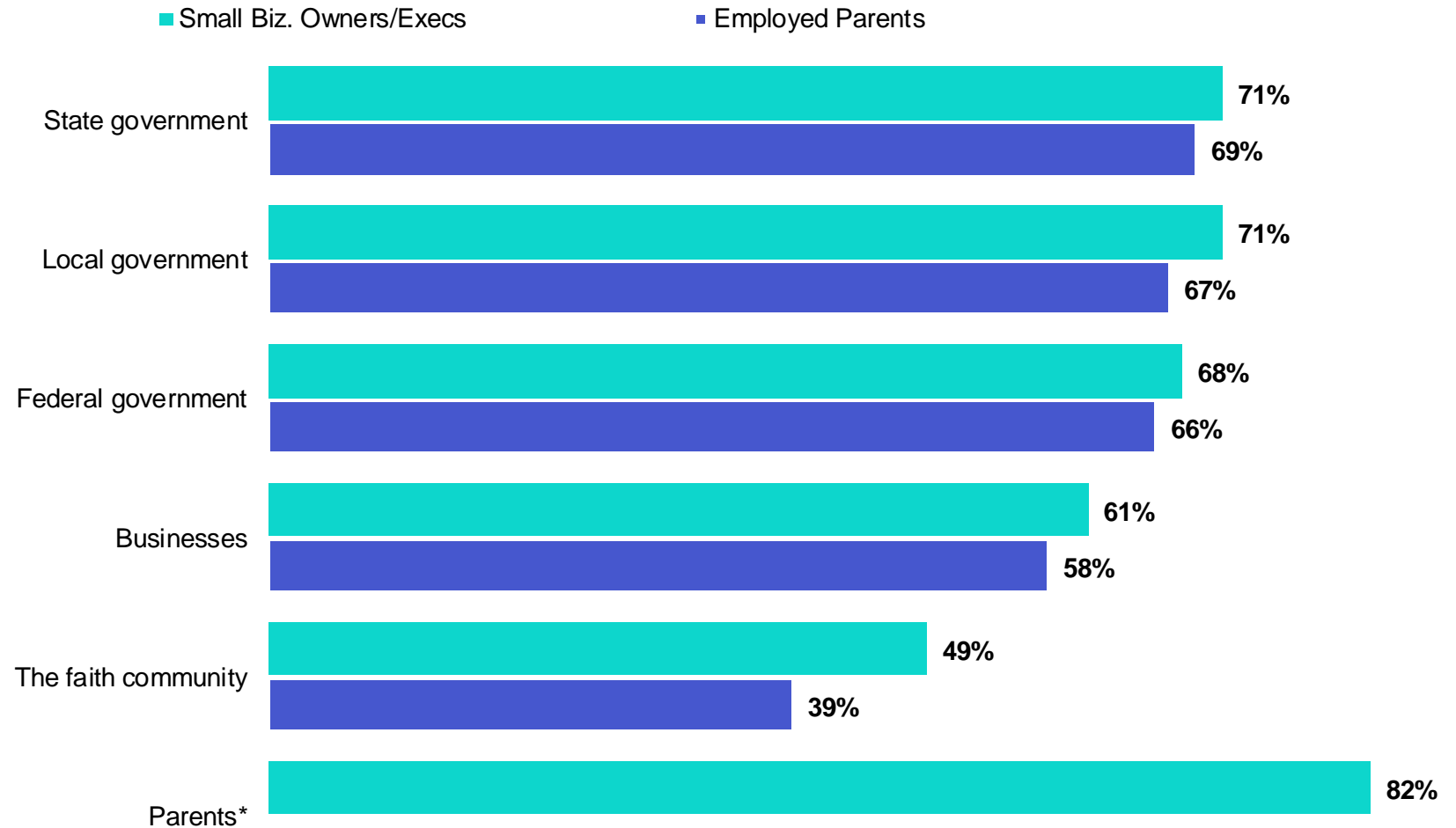
PARENTS & WORK

# Thinking about your primary work arrangement, does your supervisor consider your child care needs when making the work schedule?



PARENTS & WORK

How responsible, if at all, are each of the following for ensuring that child care is affordable and accessible? % **responsible**



\*Not tested among parents