



Bipartisan Policy Center

# Virtual Roundtable: Parent Experiences with Child Care

April 1, 2021



# Understanding the Problem

**For too many families, an “ideal” child care system is not reality**

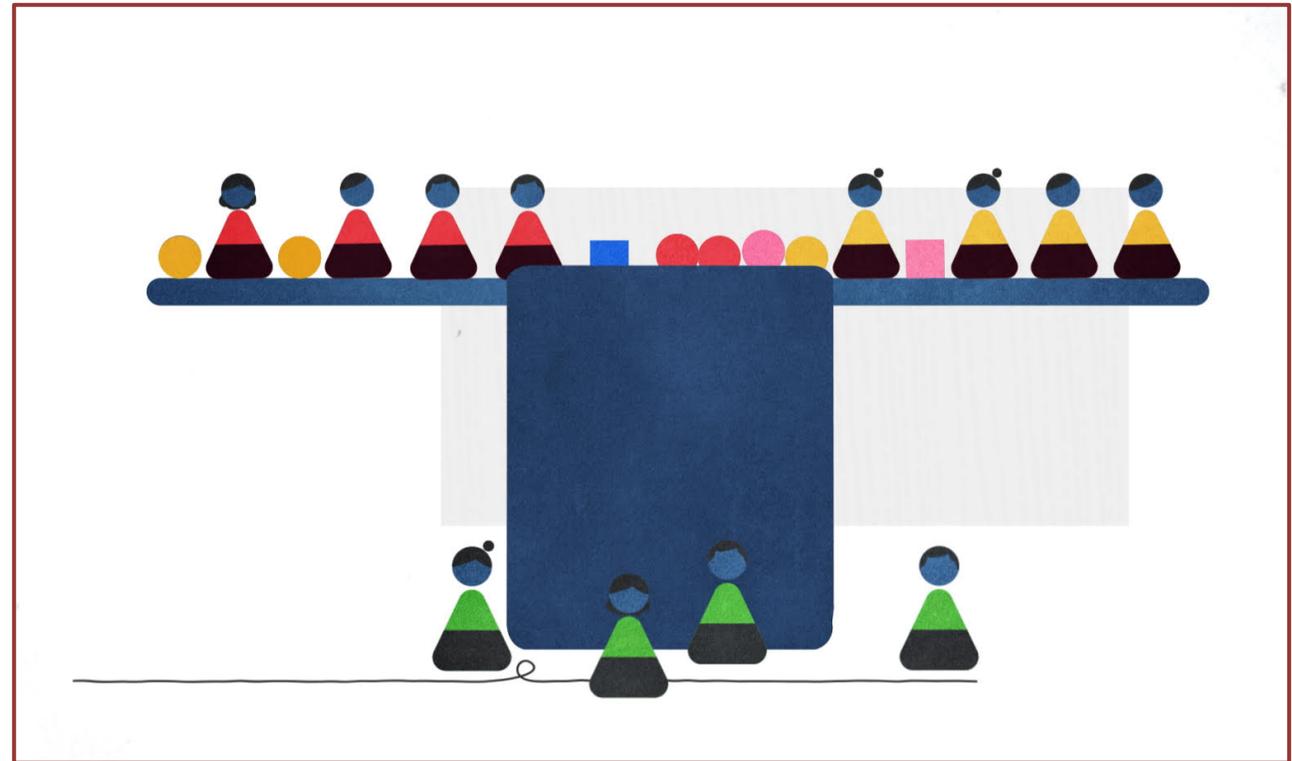
- Unaffordable
- Inaccessible
- Work hours and location
- Values
- Preferences



# Understanding the Problem

## Parent preferences must be central in our pursuit of making the child care system work better for all who rely on it

- ❑ Efforts to improve the child care system, whether at the federal, state, or local level, must be centered around *parents' priorities* for child care.
- ❑ We must better understand what those needs, preferences, and circumstances *actually are*.
- ❑ A deeper understanding of how the child care system impacts families' lives is necessary to ensure family experiences can truly drive child care policy.

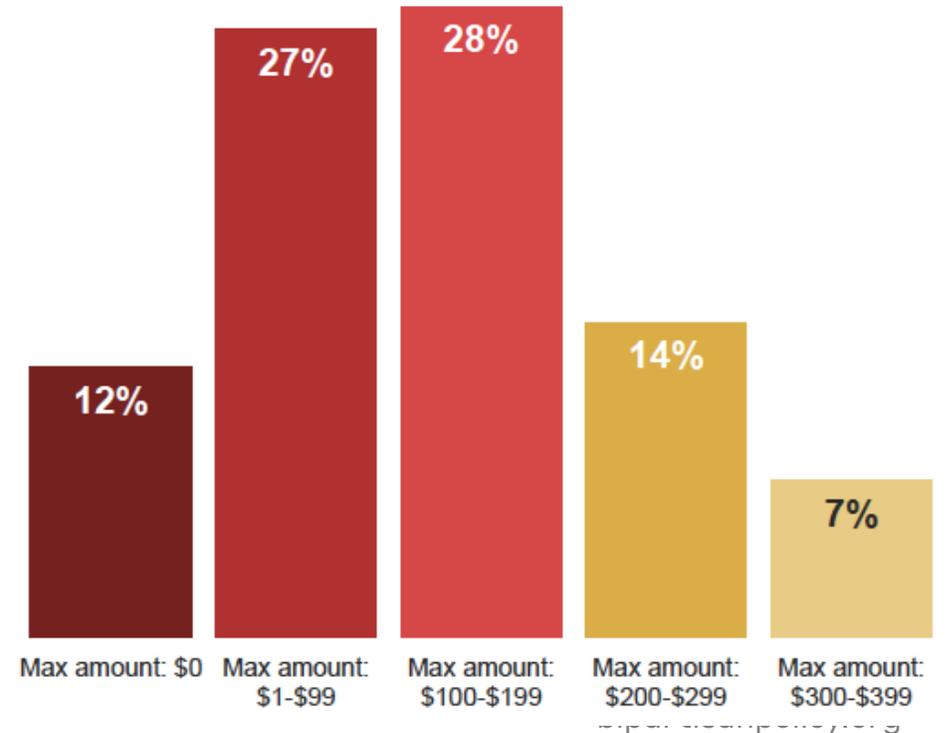


# Child Care is Unaffordable

## Prior to the pandemic (November 2019):

- More than half (54%) of parents said finding child care within their budget was difficult, including almost one in five parents (18%) who said it was “very difficult”
  - Parents with lower incomes are more likely to say it was difficult: 61% of those making under \$50,000 responded as such compared to 45% of those making above \$100,000
- To afford child care, a majority of parents reduced spending on non-essential (75%) and every-day purchases (59%), delayed or decreased money saved for emergencies (57%), and relied on family members or friends to help with child care (56%)

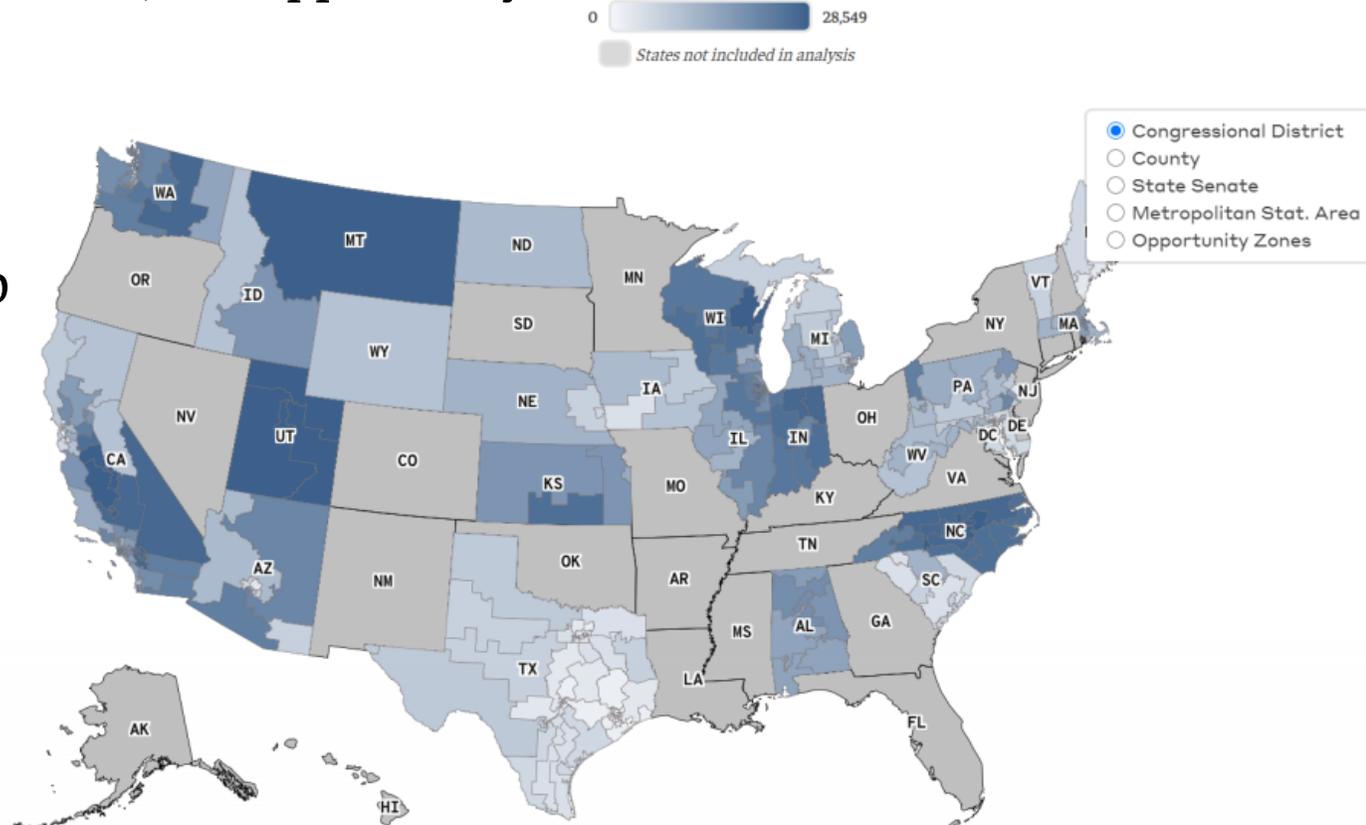
In our December 2020 survey, the maximum annual amount most parents said they can afford for child care is \$10,400—well below the cost of quality child care for one child in many states, especially for infant care.



# Child Care is Inaccessible

- ❑ BPC's child care gap analysis quantified the supply of, potential need for, and gaps in child care in 25 states, as of 2019
  - The interactive mapping tool quantifies supply and gaps by: state; county; congressional district; state senate district; metropolitan area; and opportunity zone
  - Breakdowns by: minority population; poverty line; 85% state median income

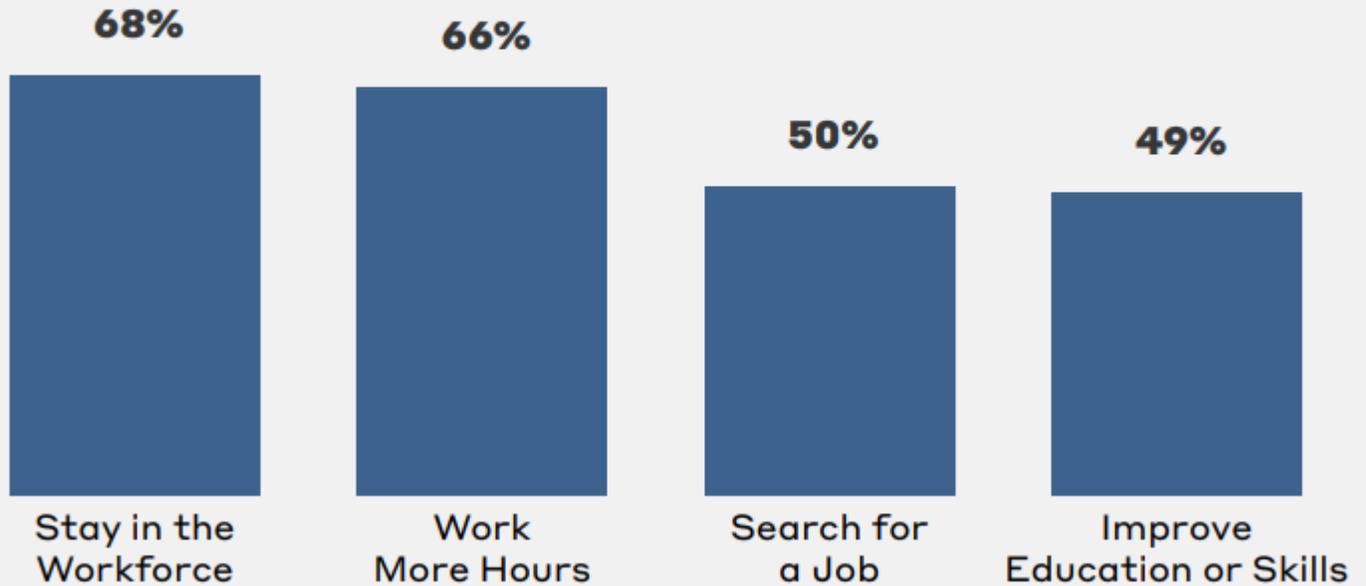
- ❑ BPC's analysis identified a potential gap of almost **32%**, or **over 2.5 million families** who potentially lack access to child care



# Child Care Impacts Workers & the Economy

The unavailability of affordable, high-quality child care that meets a family's needs impacts a parents' ability to work and provide for their family. This spillover impacts businesses and the broader economy.

**Lack of Access to Affordable Child Care Affects Families**  
In 2019, being able to find child care impacted whether parents could:



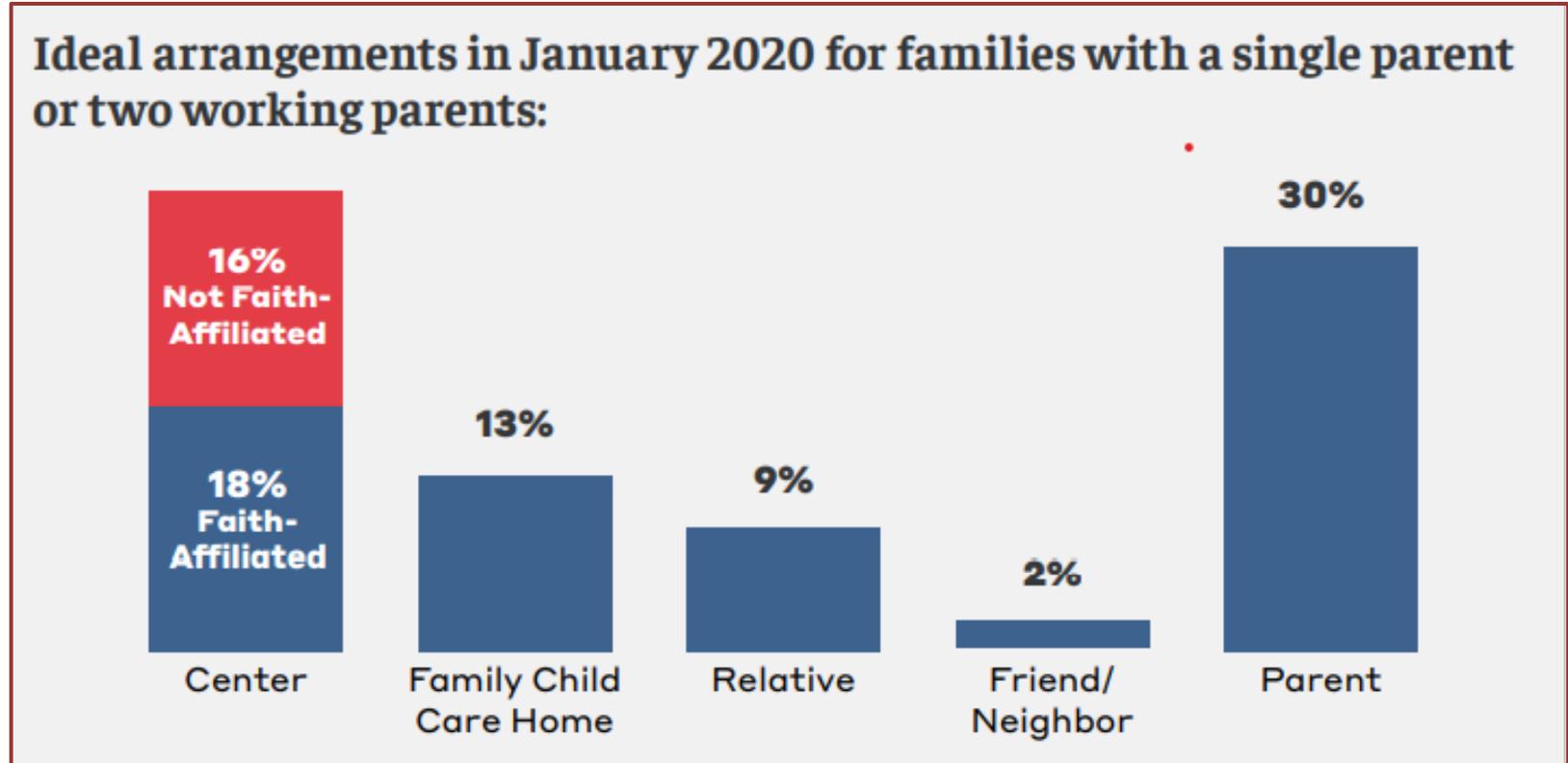
# Understanding Parent Preferences and Needs

- ❑ **Many parents need 30+ hours of child care per week.** In 2019, 63% of parents said they paid for 30 or more hours of child care each week.
- ❑ **Parents prefer child care closer to home.** In 2019, 60% of parents said they preferred child care closer to home, while just 27% preferred child care closer to their workplace or school.
- ❑ **Many parents—but not all—are able to use their preferred arrangement.** In January 2020, two-thirds (66%) of parents reported they were using a child care arrangement that aligned with their ideal child care type (if both price and accessibility were not factors).



# Understanding Parent Preferences and Needs

- ❑ **Faith-affiliated** centers are an important component of the system.
- ❑ Many working families would prefer to care for their children **themselves**.
- ❑ Parents overwhelmingly prefer to rely on **relatives** for child care rather than non-relative friends or neighbors.





# The American Rescue Plan

The American Rescue Plan Act, signed into law on March 11, 2021, includes several provisions that will help parents, children, and families.

- ❑ Several of these funding opportunities and programs are only available during 2021
- ❑ Congress must work to facilitate long-term, sustainable investments for working families
- ❑ We cannot let short term fixes distract us from the longer-term needs of working parents and their children – and from understanding what parents truly want in a support system

- ✓ Child care subsidies and tax supports
- ✓ Paid family leave
- ✓ Nutrition support
- ✓ Home visiting services
- ✓ Prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect
- ✓ Support for homeless children, children with disabilities, and tribal youth and families



**the challenge:**  
**redesigning the child  
care system to work  
better for families,  
providers, businesses, and  
the broader economy**

Parent Roundtable Discussion:

- What are parents' experiences accessing and affording child care?
- Does the child care system work for parents and meet their needs and values?
- What does an ideal system of holistic family support look like in a post-COVID environment?



# More Resources

Parent Survey Resource Center:

<https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/parent-survey-resource-center/>

Video Explainer: Rethinking America's Child Care System:

<https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/rethinking-americas-child-care-system/>

What's in the American Rescue Plan for Parents:

<https://bipartisanpolicy.org/explainer/whats-in-the-american-rescue-plan-for-parents/>





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