

MAKING CHILD CARE WORK:

Results from the 2021 Child Care Census Survey

ASHLEY WHITE | MPP, Former Director, Economic Mobility Lab

ADAM JONES | Policy Research Fellow, Economic Mobility Lab

SAMIYA KHALID | MPP, Policy Research Fellow, Economic Mobility Lab



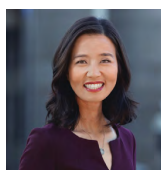
Dear Friends:

Early education and childcare is a public good. There is no better investment we can make than providing our children with access to supportive, loving environments, full of learning opportunities that set the foundation for the rest of their lives. Boston has taken important strides by offering more high-quality Pre-K seats than ever before and investing in our early education and care providers – a workforce that is predominantly women, people of color, and immigrants. Now we must come together to answer what's next.

Since our initial report in 2019, we've been able to get firsthand information from parents and guardians about their childcare experience for children aged five years and under. This report gives a clear description of the barriers families face when arranging for the care of their young children and the opportunities for the City of Boston to close early education and childcare gaps. We will continue to keep residents at the center as we shape policies that leverage City resources and existing family-based and center-based providers to build a thriving early education and care ecosystem.

By supporting the care of our youngest residents in their first years of life, we can promote healthy brain development that sets the stage for long-term academic, financial, and socio-emotional success. And by supporting Boston's early childhood educators, we can build a talent pipeline that meets the demands of the next generation – while prioritizing consistency and stability for our children and families.

It is our hope that the analysis presented here sparks conversations about the centrality of early education and childcare in our civic infrastructure – and leads to cross-sector collaborations and coalitions for bold, systemic change. Together, we can elevate the wellbeing of children and families and truly make Boston a city for everyone.



Sincerely,

Michelle Wu

Michelle Wu
Mayor of Boston

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

MAYOR'S OFFICE OF WOMEN'S ADVANCEMENT (MOWA)

We strive to promote gender equity by empowering women and removing systemic barriers to their advancement. Using research and data we create programming and advocate for policies that advance and support women in Boston.

THE ECONOMIC MOBILITY LAB

As a team of social entrepreneurs, we research and test ideas to help advance the economic mobility of low- and moderate-income Bostonians. Using a people-centered approach, we coordinate action across departments to address gaps and help residents reach critical benchmarks to economic security.

CONTRIBUTORS

The creation of this survey, analysis of the data, and completion of this report were collaborative processes that would not have been possible without our many partners. Although their backgrounds vary, they each share our passion for improving the state of childcare and supporting the needs of families in our city. We want to thank the Equity Cabinet, the Department of Innovation and Technology, and the Elections Department at the City of Boston.

A special thanks for their support on this project to Kristin McSwain, Fernanda Campbell, Pratima Patil, and the entire Data Committee at the Boston Opportunity Agenda; Wendy Robeson at the Wellesley Centers for Women; and Christina Kim at the Boston Planning and Development Agency.

We would also like to specifically thank Alexandra Valdez and Ayanna Polk at the Mayor's Office of Women's Advancement for their support throughout this entire project.

Finally, we express our gratitude to the parents and caregivers of Boston. For the past year and a half, you have supported our city through a global pandemic, which has required great strength and tenacity. Thank you for taking the time to contribute your thoughts and experiences.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
BACKGROUND	2
OUR FINDINGS	3
BOSTON'S CONCERNS ABOUT CHILD CARE	8
Cost of Child Care	8
Shortage of Child Care	8
Parent/Guardian Care	8
Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic	10
CONCLUSION	11
CONTINUING OUR WORK	12
METHODOLOGY	13
The Survey	13
Our Sample	14
Limitations	14
APPENDIX	15

English: IMPORTANT! This document or application contains **important information** about your rights, responsibilities and/or benefits. It is crucial that you understand the information in this document and/or application, and we will provide the information in your preferred language or accessible format at no cost to you. If you need them, please contact us at

earlychildhood@boston.gov, LCA@boston.gov or 617-635-2850

Spanish-Español: !IMPORTANTE! Este documento o solicitud contiene **información importante** sobre sus derechos, responsabilidades y/o beneficios. Es crucial que comprenda la información en este documento y/o solicitud, y le proporcionaremos la información en su idioma preferido o formato accesible y sin costo alguno para usted. Si lo necesita, póngase en contacto con nosotros en el correo electrónico earlychildhood@boston.gov, LCA@boston.gov o llamando al 617-635-2850

Haitian Creole -Kreyòl Ayisyen: AVI ENPÒTAN! Dokiman oubyen aplikasyon sa a genyen **enfòmasyon ki enpòtan** konsènan dwa ou, responsablite ou, ak/oswa benefis ou yo. Li enpòtan ke ou konprann enfòmasyon ki nan dokiman oubyen aplikasyon sa a, e n'ap bay enfòmasyon yo nan lang pefrere ou oswa nan yon fòma aksesib a pri gratis. Si w bezwen sèvis sa yo, tanpri kontakte nou nan earlychildhood@boston.gov, LCA@boston.gov oswa 617-635-2850

Traditional Chinese -重要! 本文件或申請表包含有關您的權利、責任和/或利益的重要信息。您理解本文件和/或申請表中的信息至關重要。我們將會以您選擇的語言或方便你(以無障礙的)方式或樣式為您免費提供信息。如果您需要, 請通過以下信息聯絡我們earlychildhood@boston.gov, LCA@boston.gov 或 617-635-2850。

Vietnamese - Tiếng Việt: QUAN TRỌNG! Tài liệu hoặc mẫu đơn này chứa **thông tin quan trọng** về quyền, trách nhiệm và/hoặc lợi ích của quý vị. Điều quan trọng là quý vị hiểu được thông tin trong tài liệu và/hoặc mẫu đơn này, và chúng tôi sẽ cung cấp thông tin bằng ngôn ngữ quý vị muốn hoặc cách hỗ trợ có thể tiếp cận miễn phí cho quý vị. Nếu quý vị cần chúng, xin vui lòng liên lạc chúng tôi tại earlychildhood@boston.gov, LCA@boston.gov hoặc 617-635-2850

Simplified Chinese - 重要! 本文件或申請表包含有關您的權利、責任和/或利益的重要信息。您理解本文件和/或申請表中的信息至關重要。我們將會以您選擇的語言或方便你(以無障礙的)方式或樣式為您免費提供信息。如果您需要, 請通過以下信息聯絡我們 earlychildhood@boston.gov, LCA@boston.gov 或 617-635-2850。

Cabo Verdean Creole - kriolu: "IMPORTANTI! Es dokumentu li ó aplikason teni **informason importanti** sobri bu direitu, risponsabilidadi i/ó benefísius. É mutu inportanti pa bu intendi informason ki sta nes dokumentu i/ó aplikason, i nu ta oferese informason na bu língua prifiridu ó formatu asesível sem nenhum kustu pa bo. Si bu mesti, entra em kontatu ku nos na earlychildhood@boston.gov, LCA@boston.gov ó na 617-635-2850

العربية - Arabic

هام! يحتوي هذا المستند أو التطبيق على معلومات هامة بشأن حقوقك، ومسؤولياتك و/أو منافعك. من المهم أن تفهم المعلومات في هذا المستند و/أو التطبيق، و سوف نوفر المعلومات بلغتك المفضلة أو الصيغة المبسرة بدون أي تكلفة لك. إذا كنت بحاجة إليها، يرجى الإتصال بنا على (earlychildhood@boston.gov, LCA@boston.gov) أو 617-635-2850

Russian -Русский: ВАЖНО! Этот документ или заявка содержит **важную информацию** о ваших правах, обязанностях и/или льготах. Очень важно, чтобы вы понимали информацию, содержащуюся в этом документе или заявке, мы также можем бесплатно предоставить вам информацию на предпочитаемом вами языке или в доступном формате. При необходимости, пожалуйста, свяжитесь с нами по адресу/адресу earlychildhood@boston.gov, LCA@boston.gov или 617-635-2850

Portuguese - Português: IMPORTANTE! Este documento ou aplicação contém **informações importantes** sobre seus direitos, responsabilidades e/ou benefícios. É essencial que você compreenda as informações contidas neste documento e/ou aplicação, e forneceremos as informações em seu idioma de preferência ou formato acessível, sem nenhum custo para você. Se você precisar deles, por favor, entre em contato conosco em earlychildhood@boston.gov, LCA@boston.gov ou 617-635-2850

French - Français: IMPORTANT ! Ce document ou cette demande contient des **informations importantes** concernant vos droits, responsabilités et/ou avantages. Il est essentiel que vous compreniez les informations contenues dans ce document et/ou cette demande, que nous pouvons vous communiquer gratuitement dans la langue de votre choix ou dans un format accessible, sans frais pour vous. Si vous en avez besoin, veuillez nous contacter à earlychildhood@boston.gov, LCA@boston.gov ou au 617-635-2850

Somali - Af Soomaali: MUHIIM! Dukumeentigan ama arjigan waxaa ku qoran **macluumaad muhiim ah** oo ku saabsan xuquuqdaada, mas'uuliyadahaaga iyo/ama manfacyadaada. Waxaa muhiim inaad fahamto macluumaadka dukumeentigan iyo/ama arjigan ku qoran, oo anagana macluumaadka waxaan kugu siin doonaa luuqadaada aad doorbidayso định dạng quý vị có thể truy cập adiga oo wax qarash ah ayna kaa bixin. Haddii aad u baahan tahay, fadlan nagala soo xiriir earlychildhood@boston.gov, LCA@boston.gov ama 617-635-2850

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As we approach two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, few things are clearer to us now in 2021 than the essential nature of early education and care. Now, more than ever, child care is acknowledged as a system crucial to an equitable recovery and economy. However, even prior to the pandemic, the high cost and limited supply of child care did not meet the needs of families. The pandemic worsened these pre-existing challenges, as early education and care providers have struggled to keep their doors open. As a result, families have been faced with limited options, leaving them to make difficult child care decisions, often with large sacrifices.

This year's City of Boston Child Care Census Survey asked families about their experiences and challenges with child care during the pandemic. Specific questions were asked about how families' access to child care may be affecting their participation in the workforce. To get a better understanding of what families will prefer as the pandemic slows, and to gain clarity around how to better support an early education and care system that meets the needs of Boston's families, the survey also asked families to share their ideal child care scenario. Taken together, these responses illustrate the pandemic's toll on Boston's working families and highlight the child care infrastructure needed to support building back a thriving and resilient city.

KEY FINDINGS

- For children of all ages in our sample, respondents are utilizing a parent/guardian care arrangement more than they would prefer.
- 81% of the respondents utilizing a parent/guardian care arrangement for their children are women, which is interfering with their career desires.
- Respondents with 3-5 year old children strongly prefer public/charter school care arrangements, but are not able to access them.
- Based on the responses in our sample, the average cost of center-based care is greater than the Massachusetts state average, which is already the 2nd highest in the nation behind only Washington, D.C. While the responses to the survey are not representative of the entire City of Boston, the overall results mirror trends in other cities across the country. The responses we received are helping us to create an even clearer picture of the state of child care in Boston.



BACKGROUND

As was the case when we released our inaugural survey in 2019, Massachusetts has the highest average monthly cost for center-based care of any state.¹ However, this crisis of affordability is now compounded by the presence of a global pandemic. Changes in public health guidelines at the beginning of the pandemic led to the closure of many child care centers, some of which never reopened.² Even as some centers have reopened and returned to their pre-pandemic capacity, many have not. Some families have chosen not to return to these arrangements due to safety concerns, costs, or some combination of factors.³ Many families have managed to make do, but this has often come at the cost of ideal career and employment prospects. For instance, national data show that roughly 2 million fewer women are in the workforce compared to February 2020.⁴

Even in the face of the pandemic, the City of Boston continues to move in a positive direction with regards to child care access. The number of pre-kindergarten seats available in Boston Public Schools or subsidized community-based care centers has increased every year for the past eight years.⁵ The Mayor's Office of Women's Advancement, in partnership with the Economic Mobility Lab, has supported over a hundred child cares in Boston through grants and technical assistance programs. Additionally, funding from the American Rescue Plan Act will enable the City to expand and deepen its support of this crucial industry. With this in mind, our survey seeks to understand the depths and nuances of the needs of Boston families so that we might create meaningful solutions as a city.

¹ Economic Policy Institute. The cost of child care in Massachusetts. October 2021. <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/MA>

² Child Care Aware Report. Fall 2020. <https://www.childcareaware.org/picking-up-the-pieces/>

³ Pew Research Center, 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/01/26/a-rising-share-of-working-parents-in-the-u-s-say-its-been-difficult-to-handle-child-care-during-the-pandemic/>

⁴ Reuters Analysis. U.S. Department of Labor Employment Report. September 2021. <https://www.reuters.com/business/women-left-us-workforce-last-month-fewer-numbers-than-year-ago-2021-10-08/>

⁵ Boston Globe Analysis. Boston Public Schools Report. February 2021. <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/02/22/metro/eight-years-after-walshs-promises-boston-prekindergarten-is-still-not-universal/>



OUR FINDINGS

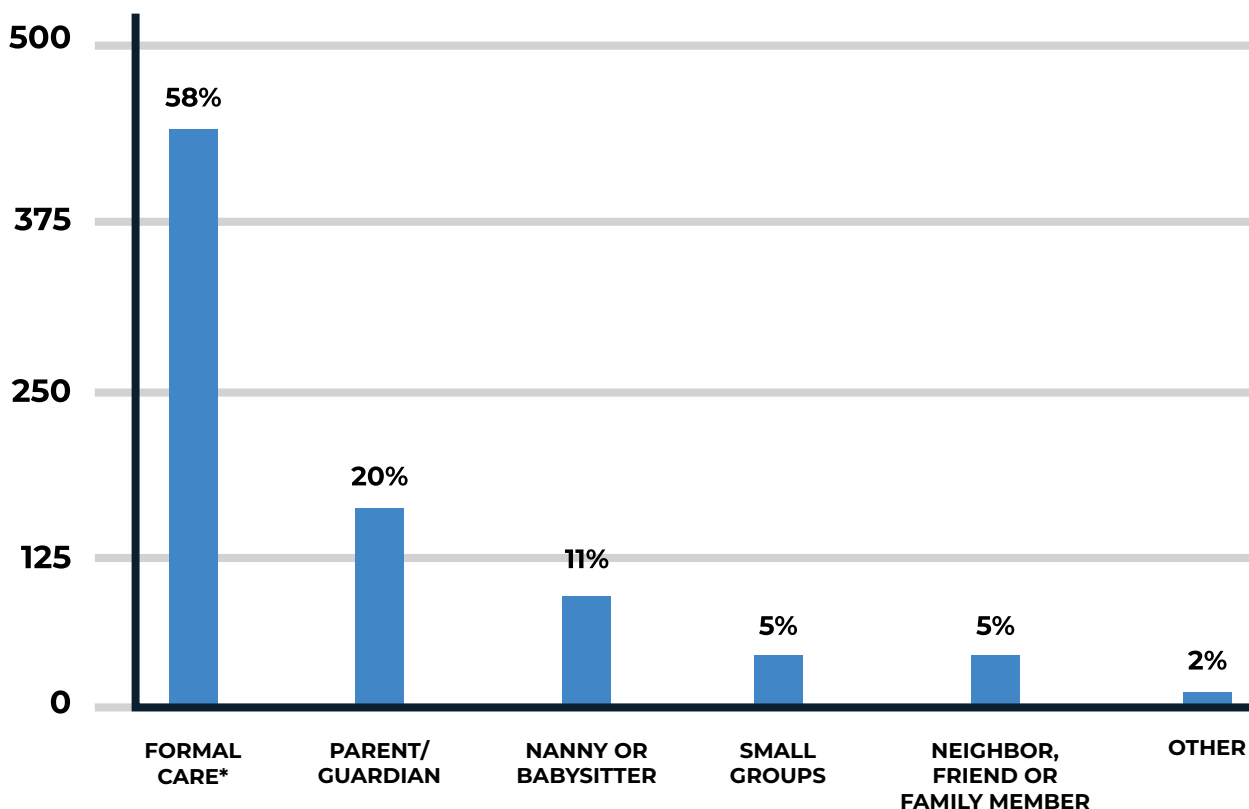
The City of Boston launched this year's Child Care Census Survey in January 2021 and collected responses through August 2021. The Survey was mailed to every address in the city and was also available online in multiple languages. The survey collected responses from 3,006 families, representing 3,539 children. The American Community Survey (ACS) estimates that there are roughly 28,000 families in Boston with children aged 0-5, making the survey response rate just over 11%, an improvement from 9% in 2019. The following represent key takeaways from our survey, each with significant implications for Boston:

1. For children of all ages, respondents are engaged in more parent/guardian care than they would like to be. (Refer to Graph 1)

- 28% of 0-2 year olds were in a parent/guardian care arrangement, but only 9% of those children were in their family's ideal arrangement.

- 16% of 3-5 year olds were in a parent/guardian care arrangement, but only 5% of those children were in their family's ideal arrangement.

GRAPH 1: Ideal care arrangements for parent/guardian caretakers



* Formal Care = Center-based Care, Early Headstart/Headstart, Licensed Family Care Provider, Public School/Charter School

2. 81% of parent/guardian caretakers are women; their engagement in parent/guardian care may be interfering with their career desires. (Refer to Graph 2)

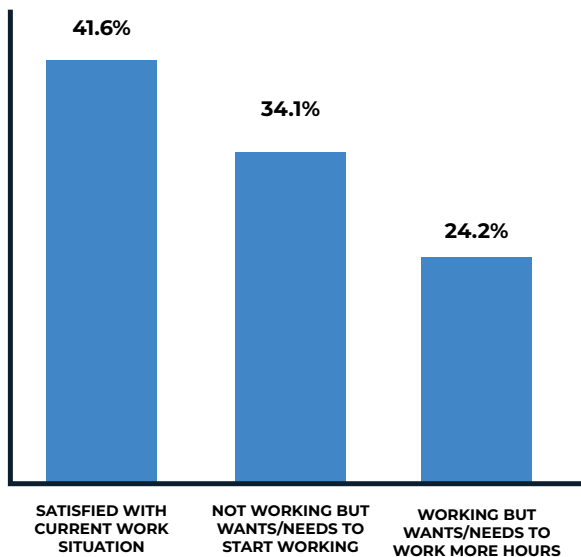
- 58% of respondents utilizing a parent/guardian arrangement want to start working or are already working and would like to take on more hours.
- 58% of respondents utilizing a parent/guardian arrangement prefer a “formal” care arrangement, in which care is either center-based, home-based, in school, or in a Head Start setting.

3. The average cost of center-based care in our sample exceeds the Massachusetts state average, which is already the second highest in the nation. (Refer to Graph 3 and 4)

- For 0-2 year olds in our sample, the average cost of center-based care ⁶ is \$2,237 per month, compared to \$1,743 in the state of Massachusetts as a whole (Economic Policy Institute).
- For 3-5 year olds in our sample, the average cost of center-based care is \$1,806 per month, compared to \$1,258 in the state of Massachusetts as a whole
- To further contextualize this issue, 41% of children in our sample are in care arrangements whose cost exceeds 10% of their family’s income.

⁶ See appendix for all cost of care calculations.

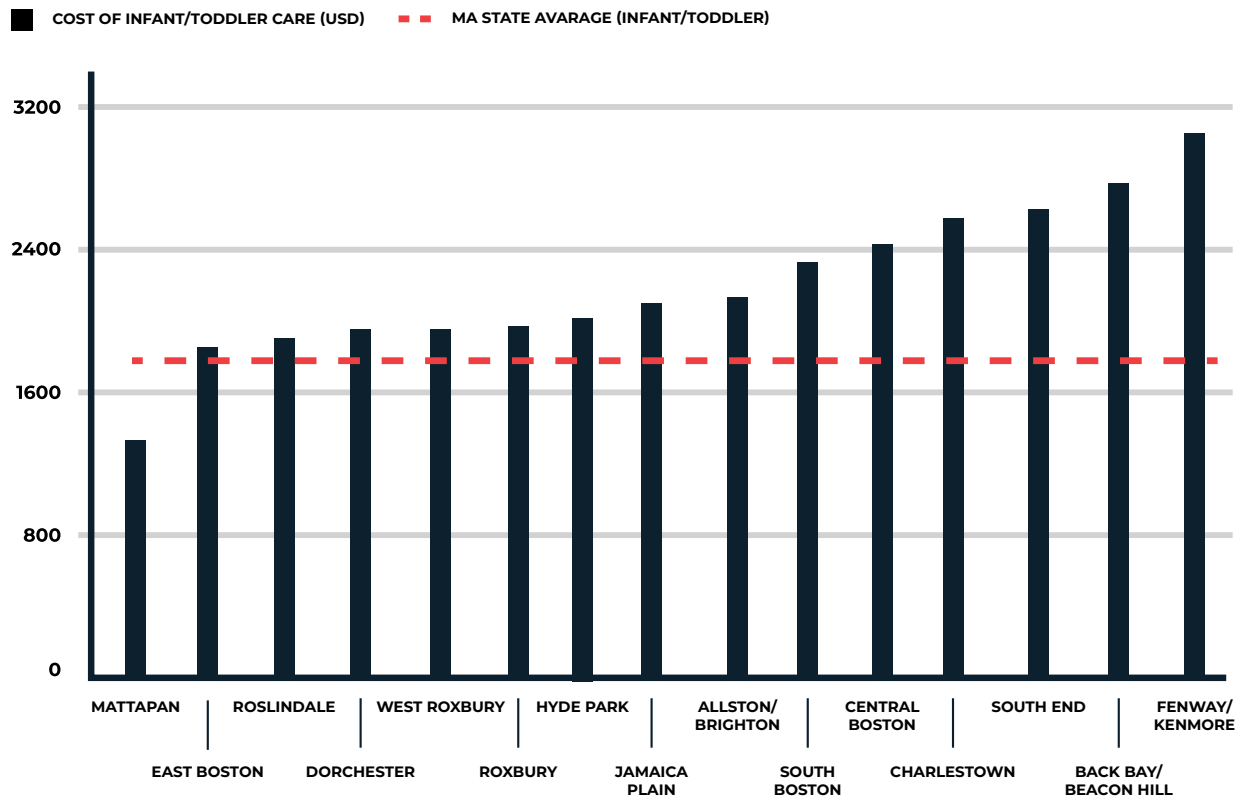
GRAPH 2: Parent/Guardian Work Desires



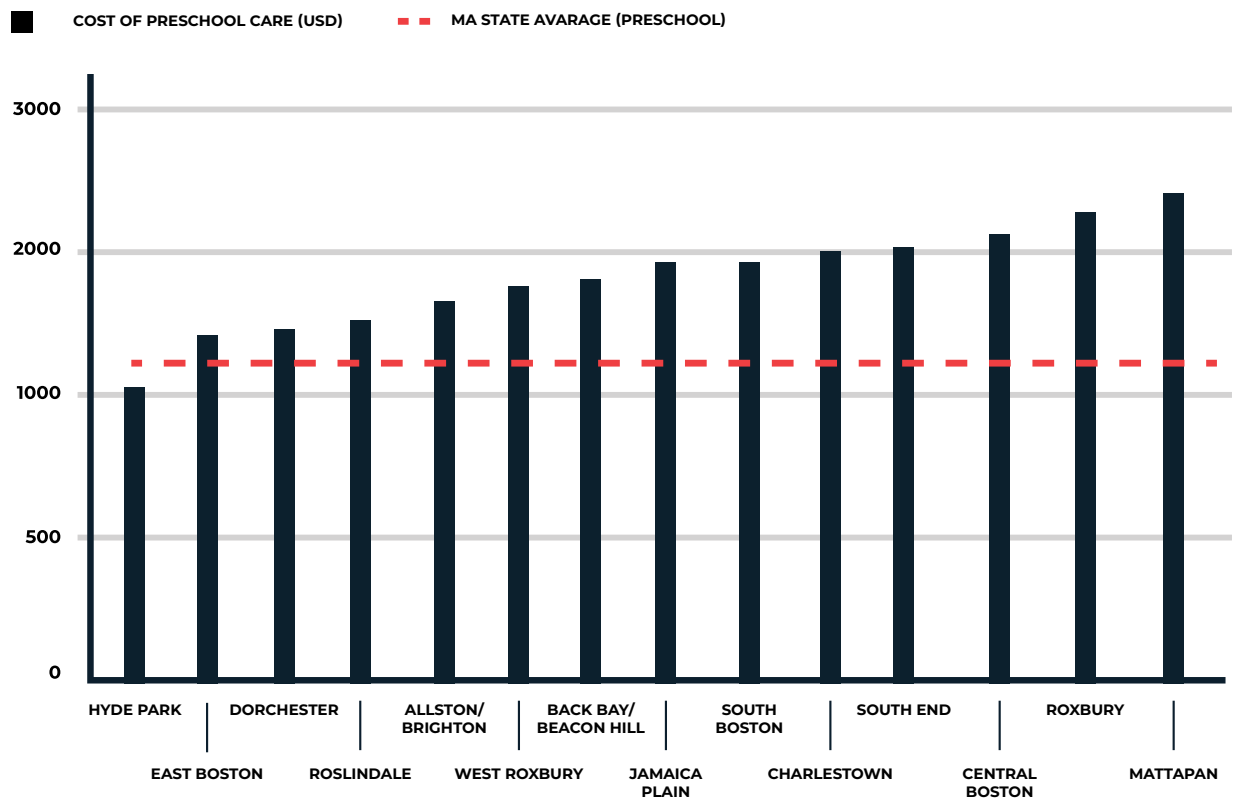
“In many cases we feel as if we have to choose between working and taking care of children. With wages stagnant, but cost of child care dramatically increasing, there is an extremely unjust position for working parents, especially women”

- WEST ROXBURY RESIDENT

GRAPH 3: Monthly Cost of Center-based Care for Infants/Toddlers



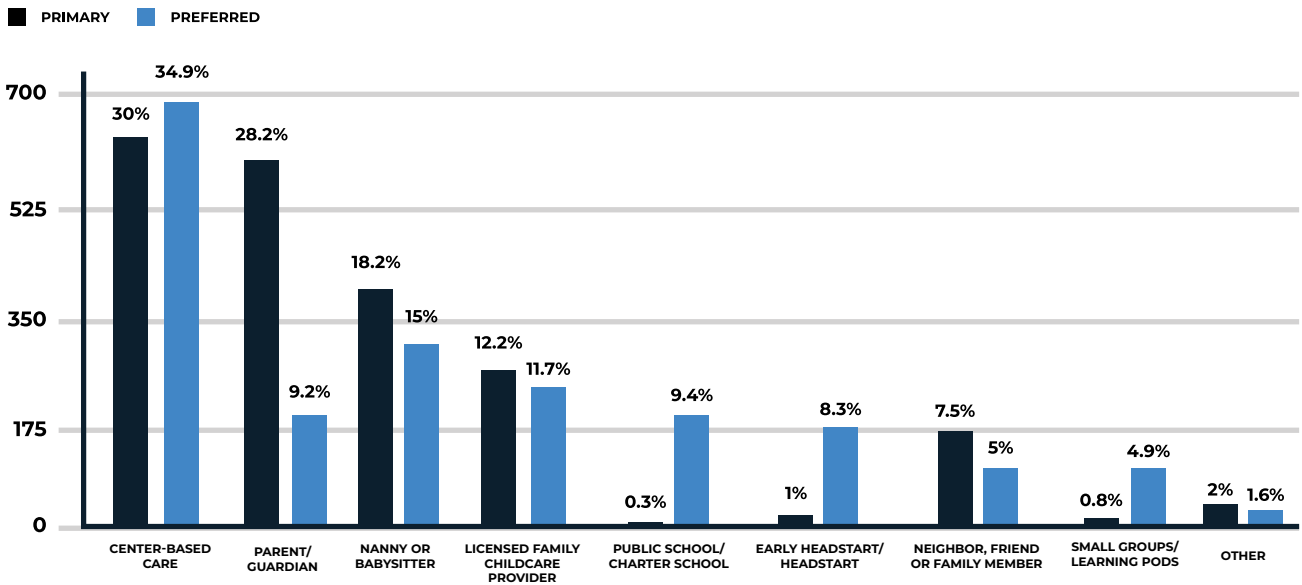
GRAPH 4: Monthly Cost of Center-based Care for Preschoolers



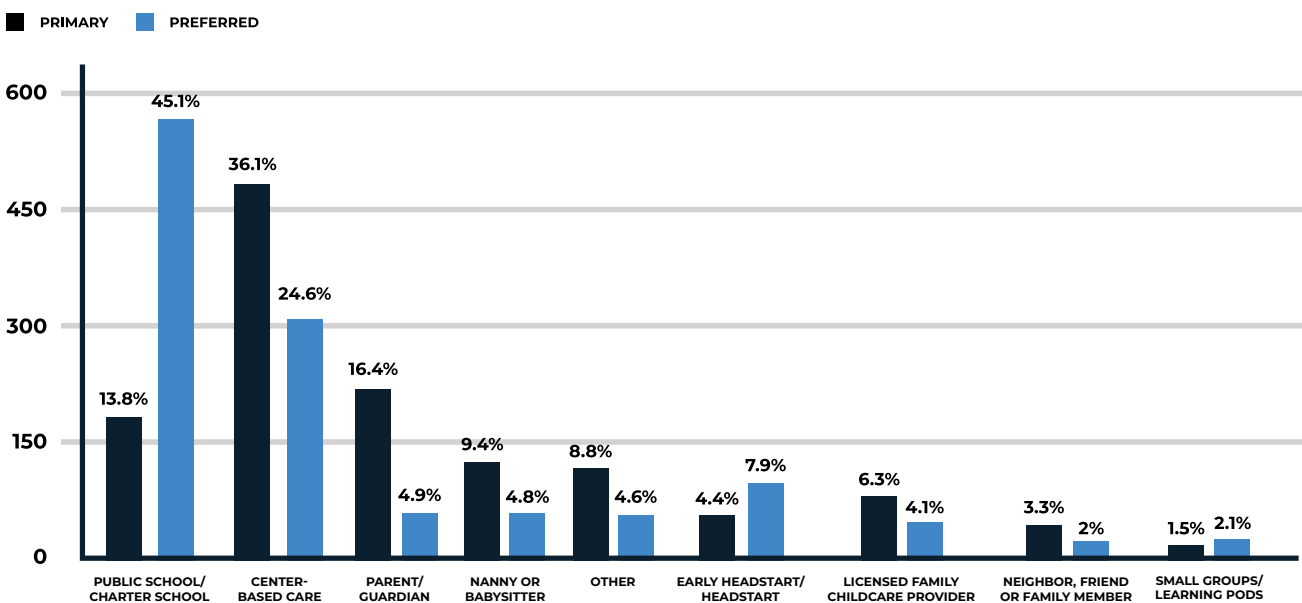
4. Respondents with 3-5 year old children strongly prefer public/charter school care options, but are not able to secure them. (Refer to Graph 5 and 6)

- Nearly half (45%) of respondents with 3-5 year olds identified public/charter school as the ideal arrangement for those children.
- However, only about 14% of the 3-5 year old children in our survey sample attend a public/charter school.

GRAPH 5: Primary vs. Preferred Care Arrangements for Infants/Tod-



GRAPH 6: Primary vs. Preferred Care Arrangements for Preschoolers (Age 3-5)



“There is a lack of facilities for infant care in my neighborhood. Only one that accepts infants had a waiting list for over a year..”

- ROSLINDALE RESIDENT

“The shortage and increasing cost of child care in Boston is outrageous. We had very few options available to us and had to place our daughter at an incredibly expensive center”

- DORCHESTER RESIDENT

“Child care is difficult to find and too expensive in Boston. We are going to leave..”

- ALLSTON/BRIGHTON RESIDENT



BOSTON'S CONCERNS ABOUT CHILD CARE

The Child Care Census Survey collected a total of 1578 qualitative, or write-in, responses from respondents regarding the challenges they experience with child care. The following are some key findings that highlight the challenges faced by parents/guardians in our survey. These include the high cost and limited supply of child care and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on families' child care needs. In addition, we dedicate a section to understanding the experiences of parents/guardians who stay home full-time to care for their children.

COST OF CHILD CARE

The most common challenge identified by parents is the astoundingly high cost of child care in Boston. Even households with two parents working full-time are financially strained and cannot afford child care. Families highlight a number of ways their lives have been impacted by the high cost of care. Firstly, high levels of unemployment due to the pandemic have exacerbated the issue of cost as parents have faced loss of income. Secondly, some parents had to make the difficult decision of cutting back hours or leaving the workforce altogether to meet their child care needs. Worse, some parents are considering leaving the City entirely. Taken together, these concerns show us that the child care crisis is a multi-pronged issue that doesn't just affect our children but our local economy, too.

“Child care costs too much, and once you figure out how to pay for it, you get out on a waitlist...”

- JAMAICA PLAIN RESIDENT

SHORTAGE OF CHILD CARE

Finding affordable, accessible, and quality child care in the neighborhoods that parents live is a major cause of distress among families. While cost of care is the number one concern, availability of a spot at a child care center is the second most important challenge that parents face.

The child care sector is experiencing a supply shortage and parents in Boston are feeling it. Parents of 3-5 year olds seem to overwhelmingly prefer having their child in a public school seat, though very few children actually are. This finding is in congruence with the quantitative findings that parents of 3-5 year olds do not have their child in a preferred arrangement. Parents also expressed difficulty finding infant care based on their needs, due to the high cost of care for 0-2 year olds compared to 3-5 year olds. Again, we heard that a number of parents are considering moving out of the city.

PARENT/GUARDIAN CARE ARRANGEMENTS

Respondents state a number of reasons why parents/guardian care is their primary arrangement for their child(ren). A total of 93 qualitative responses were received from parents who are primary caregivers of their children.

Most of the parents who left qualitative responses reported that they were on parental leave or that they wanted to be the primary caregiver, especially if their child was very young or a newborn. However, closure of child care facilities during the pandemic and COVID-19 safety concerns have also impacted parents/guardian's decisions to be the primary caregivers. Lastly, having the flexibility to work from home and loss of employment during the pandemic were other factors that led respondents to utilize parent/guardian care arrangements. Families with 3-5 year olds also expressed the inability to access Boston Public Schools seats, leaving them with fewer options for care.

“Our first daughter has a speech and language development delay. It has been very hard to find a good school for her because we cannot afford a private school..”

- HYDE PARK RESIDENT

“Affordable child care is a massive issue! We would love to stay in the city of Boston when we have a second child, but the cost of child care will be the #1 factor for whether we decide to live somewhere else. We are two working professionals with advanced degrees. If we are struggling to make this work, it points to a massive equity issue in the city, and is one of the main reasons young families are choosing to leave the city...”

- BACK BAY / BEACON HILL RESIDENT

“Child care in Boston, particularly for infants and toddlers, is prohibitively expensive. I hope the city will expand the number of seats for BPS K0 and K1 to allow all children access to BPS public pre-k from the start”

- ROSLINDALE RESIDENT

IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The pandemic has worsened the crisis faced by the child care sector. It has impacted both child care providers and families in different ways. Rising unemployment rates, the permanent closure of child care centers, long waitlists, and limited hours of operation are some factors that have made it extremely difficult for families to find quality care arrangements that fit their needs. Moreover, safety concerns due to the risk of COVID-19 has further complicated the situation. For example, families expressed the lack of alternative options for child care when there is an outbreak at the child care center or if their child care provider is sick, resulting in parents making sacrifices both at home and at work.

In addition to fewer child care seats due to program closures, a number of providers are also not accepting new children due to the pandemic, leaving parents with fewer options for good quality child care. Overall, the pandemic has massively disrupted the child care sector with lasting impacts on families.

“Due to COVID-19, our center-based child care is not accepting new children. I am taking unpaid leave from my full-time job until the center will take him.”

- CHARLESTOWN RESIDENT

“It is just too expensive for 2 children! My husband has lost significant work due to COVID and when he is able to work (afternoon/evening), child care is not available.”

- HYDE PARK RESIDENT



CONCLUSION

The findings of this survey are, by and large, consistent with other local and national data on child care. Based on average local prices of care, middle-class families are spending anywhere from a tenth to a quarter of their income on infant care.⁷ Just as women across the country bear the brunt of suboptimal child care arrangements, so do women in Boston. During the COVID-19 pandemic, working mothers were more likely than working fathers to reduce their hours or leave the workforce altogether to care for children at home.⁸ Although the challenges facing Bostonians are unique, they speak to issues that parents and governments across the country are forced to confront.

While there is no single solution to address the issues that families face, a few things are certain. We must address the issue of child care costs, which strain both providers and families. We must center the well-being and livelihood of child care providers, who are disproportionately women of color. We must also work to ensure that parents of all genders are in positions to care for their families while also accomplishing their career goals.

As we transition out of the COVID-19 pandemic and into our new normal, we look forward to working across the City to address these issues and make child care work for everyone.

⁷ <https://www.epi.org/publication/whos-paying-now-costs-of-the-current-ecce-system/>

⁸ https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/20210929_Hamilton_stevenson_womenWorkFamilies.pdf



CONTINUING OUR WORK

This survey is a critical tool in the City of Boston's effort to support families with young children. With the 2021 survey completed, we will further this work by doing the following:

CONTINUE LISTENING TO BOSTON FAMILIES

Our first two surveys have demonstrated that families have a lot to report about their experiences with child care. It is our goal to capture these experiences annually, and we have already begun work on the 2022 child care survey. Our goal each year is to deepen our understanding of the state of child care in Boston. The most effective policy solutions for our city are informed by and responsive to the experiences of our residents.

IMPROVE OUTREACH TO UNDER-REPRESENTED POPULATIONS

As our survey continues to grow and response rates increase, it is crucial that certain Bostonians do not get left behind. The Mayor's Office of Women's Advancement and the Economic Mobility Lab, along with their partners, have already begun to reimagine our outreach efforts so that we might reach individuals who have not been represented in the survey's first two iterations, specifically communities of color and lower-income communities. These strategies include the hyper-localization of outreach efforts and the use of existing city/area infrastructure for communication (i.e. BPS, BCYF, MBTA, etc.). Although our survey was available in seven languages, populations speaking languages other than English were not well represented in our survey; we will continue to expand our multilingual outreach to capture the breadth of experiences in our city.

IMPROVE DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

The next rendition of our survey will incorporate the feedback we have gathered from the first two rounds. Survey updates will include increased precision in the language of existing questions, the addition of new questions, and the introduction of alternative data collection techniques (i.e. focus groups).

TAKE ACTION

The Economic Mobility Lab and its partners remain committed to direct action and support for the child care industry. The City's Child Care Entrepreneur Fund is in its third year and continues to provide direct financial support to home-based child care providers. The Lab will use the findings of this year's survey to identify areas where direct support is needed and possible. Indeed, these data are made all the more important as cities and localities begin to receive stimulus funds from the American Rescue Plan Act. We will continue to collaborate with our partners across the city to devise policy solutions that meet the current and persistent needs of Boston families.

METHODOLOGY

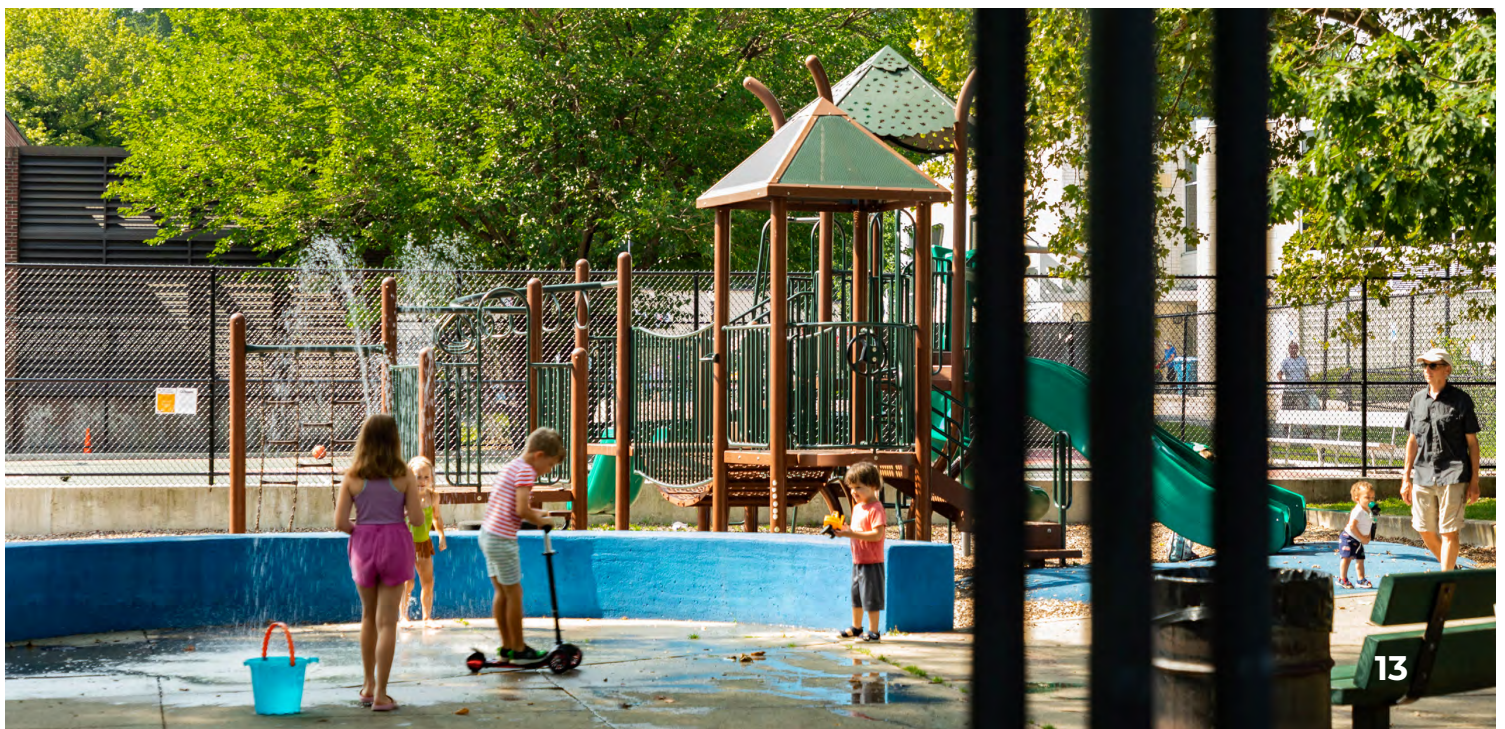
THE SURVEY

The survey was collected from January 2021 through August 2021. It was available both online and in paper format. The paper version was sent through direct mail to all Boston households as an insert within the larger annual City of Boston Resident Census. The print version was offered in English and Spanish. The online version was available on the City's website in English, Spanish, traditional Chinese, Cape Verdean Creole, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Vietnamese.

The City utilized a variety of strategies for survey outreach, including social media posts and flyers in seven languages, emails, newsletters, word of mouth via community partners, and the City's own press outreach.

In the first section of the survey, respondents were asked to confirm that they were the parent/guardian of a child aged 0-5. Respondents were asked to report their age, gender identification, and racial/ethnic background, as well as that of their partner/spouse. Respondents were asked to report their zip code of residence. The information in section two of the survey was collected for each child aged 0-5 in the respondent's care.

For up to five children aged 0-5, respondents were asked to provide the month and year of birth, whether the child received subsidized child care (i.e. a voucher), and whether the child was diagnosed with a disability/developmental delay. The survey asked respondents to report the child's primary child care arrangement while a parent/guardian was working, as well as what the respondent considered the ideal child care arrangement for that child. Respondents were asked to identify challenges that they experienced in accessing child care for each child and were also asked how much they paid for child care for all children combined. Section three was specifically designed for respondents who reported that parent/guardian care was their primary child care arrangement for at least one child. Respondents were asked to identify the primary reason that they were engaged in parent/guardian care, as well as the employment desires of the parent/guardian that performed the care. Respondents were asked to indicate the gender of the parent/guardian who performs the care. The final section of the survey gave respondents space to provide any additional thoughts on child care (open-ended).



OUR SAMPLE

The Child care Survey collected responses from 3,006 families, representing 3,539 children. The American Community Survey (ACS) estimates that there are roughly 28,000 families in Boston with children 0-5, making the Child care Survey response rate just over 11%, which is an increase from the 9% response rate in the inaugural 2019 survey.

The neighborhoods with the largest number of respondents were Jamaica Plain (17% of all respondents), Roslindale (12%), and Dorchester (10%); these neighborhoods also have larger populations of children (see table). However, neighborhoods like Roxbury (4%), East Boston (5%), and Hyde Park (4%) also have a relatively large number of children aged 0-5, but had lower numbers of survey respondents.

The average age of both respondents and their partners was 37 years old. A majority of respondents in the sample had just one child aged 0-5 (68%), while fewer families reported having multiple children aged 0-5 (32%). Children were divided into two age groups: 0-2 year olds and 3-5 year. This language designation aligns with the age categorization used within the field of early childhood education research. 0-2 year olds comprised 59% of the children in our sample and 3-5 year olds comprised the remaining 41%. The main reason for dividing our sample by age is that the cost of caring for 0-2 year olds is significantly higher than it is for caring for 3-5 year olds because of the difference in state-mandated teacher-to-child ratios. These ratios are determined based on the developmental needs of each group of children.

Approximately 4% of children within our sample received subsidized child care. Approximately 4% of children within our sample have been diagnosed with a disability/developmental delay.

With regards to racial/ethnic identity, White respondents comprised the largest share of our sample at 74%. Asian respondents comprised 9% of the sample, while Black/African-American respondents comprised 6%, Multiracial respondents 5%, and Latinx respondents 4%. Respondents who identified as Alaskan Native/Native American or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander comprised less than 1% of our respondents, respectively.

LIMITATIONS

Our survey accomplished the goal of informing a deeper understanding of the state of child care as experienced by Boston parents, particularly within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there were limitations to our project. Physical space on the paper version of the survey restricted the number and kind of questions we were able to ask. We are glad to have made improvements from our inaugural 2019 to increase the precision of this survey, and we look forward to a similar revision process for the next iteration of the survey.

The primary limitation of our findings is that our sample, while larger than the previous survey, is not representative of the Boston population. Neighborhoods like Jamaica Plain, Roslindale, and South Boston were overrepresented compared to their share of the population with children under 5 years old, while Roxbury, Mattapan, East Boston, and Hyde Park were underrepresented (see table). Similarly, our survey was also not representative of Boston's racial demographics, with Whites heavily overrepresented and Blacks and Hispanics heavily underrepresented. We observed similar trends in our 2019 survey and we are actively refining our survey outreach to improve neighborhood representation in future surveys.

Our survey did not ask respondents where their child care arrangements were located, and we therefore were not able to explore differences in care experiences by geographic locations. Finally, we recognize that other research around child care has found that many families' ideal care arrangement involves more than one type of care setting. While our survey did not allow respondents to explore that nuance, we believe that these data provide an insightful view into the lived experiences of families with young children in the City.

APPENDIX

KEY CALCULATIONS

Cost of care per child per month: Respondents were asked to provide the total cost of care for children aged 0-5 in their household. Respondents had the option to provide cost by week or by month. If this value was provided as “per week,” it was multiplied by 4.33 to approximate a monthly value. If this value was provided as “per month” it was not adjusted. This “per month” value was then divided by the number of children aged 0-5 in the household.

Cost of care per month for 0-2 year olds: This was obtained by calculating the mean of cost of care per child per month for respondents who reported having an 0-2 year old in their household. Respondents with multiple children in the household were excluded from this calculation, as many households with multiple children had both 0-2 year olds and 3-5 year olds.

Cost of care per month for 3-5 year olds: This was obtained by calculating the mean of cost of care per child per month for respondents who reported having a 3-5 year old in their household. Respondents with multiple children in the household were excluded from this calculation, as many households with multiple children had both 0-2 year olds and 3-5 year olds.

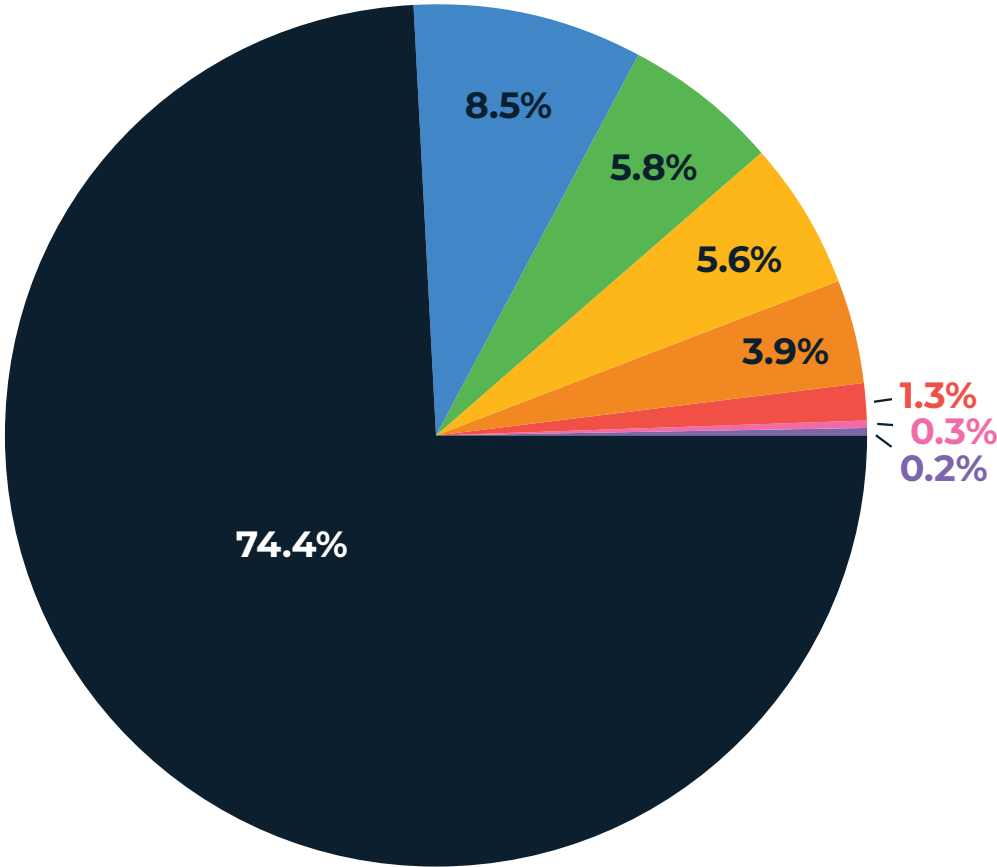


NEIGHBORHOOD	COUNT OF CHILDREN	PERCENT OF CHILDREN
ALLSTON/BRIGHTON	198	6.7%
BACK BAY/BEACON HILL	118	4.0%
CENTRAL BOSTON	128	4.3%
CHARLESTOWN	235	8.0%
DORCHESTER	293	9.9%
EAST BOSTON	126	4.3%
FENWAY/KENMORE	53	1.8%
HYDE PARK	127	4.3%
JAMAICA PLAIN	498	16.9%
MATTAPAN	38	1.3%
ROSLINDALE	352	11.9%
ROXBURY	119	4.0%
SOUTH BOSTON	261	8.8%
SOUTH END	134	4.5%
WEST ROXBURY	273	9.2%
BOSTON	2953	100%

NEIGHBORHOOD	SAMPLE COUNT OF CHILDREN SURVEY	SURVEY	BOSTON COUNT OF CHILDREN 0-5	BOSTON POPULATION
ALLSTON/BRIGHTON	198	5.6%	2,234	5.5%
BACK BAY/BEACON HILL	118	3.3%	932	2.3%
CENTRAL BOSTON	128	3.6%	1,226	3.0%
CHARLESTOWN	235	6.6%	2,172	5.4%
DORCHESTER	293	8.3%	9,497	23.4%
EAST BOSTON	126	3.6%	3,291	8.1%
FENWAY/KENMORE	53	1.5%	261	0.6%
HYDE PARK	127	3.6%	2,562	6.3%
JAMAICA PLAIN	498	14.1%	3,135	7.7%
MATTAPAN	38	1.1%	2,293	5.7%
ROSLINDALE	352	9.9%	2,014	5.0%
ROXBURY	119	3.4%	4,186	10.3%
SOUTH BOSTON	261	7.4%	2,370	5.8%
SOUTH END	134	3.8%	1,684	4.2%
WEST ROXBURY	273	7.7%	2,705	6.7%
BOSTON	-2953	40,562		

NEIGHBORHOOD	INFANTS/TODDLERS	PRESCHOOLERS
ALLSTON/BRIGHTON	117	80
BACK BAY/BEACON HILL	82	36
CENTRAL BOSTON	73	55
CHARLESTOWN	128	107
DORCHESTER	168	125
EAST BOSTON	83	43
FENWAY/KENMORE	32	21
HYDE PARK	69	58
JAMAICA PLAIN	307	191
MATTAPAN	20	18
ROSLINDALE	207	145
ROXBURY	75	44
SOUTH BOSTON	167	94
SOUTH END	88	46
WEST ROXBURY	140	133
BOSTON	1756	1196

GRAPH 7: Respondents by Race



- WHITE
- ASIAN
- BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN
- MULTIRACIAL
- LATINO/HISPANIC
- OTHER
- NATIVE AMERICAN/ALASKAN NATIVE
- NATIVE HAWAIIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER

