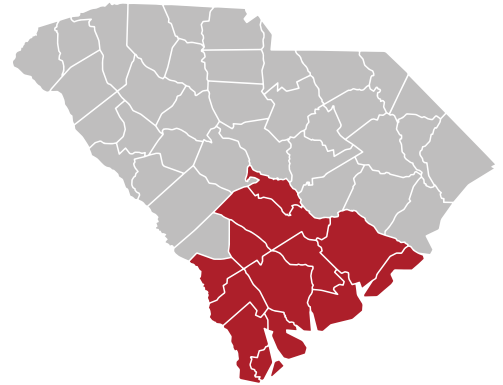


Understanding the Impact of COVID-19 on Young Children, their Families, and Child Care Needs in South Carolina’s Lowcountry Region

Representing the voices of 313 parents and caregivers from 10 of 11 counties in the Lowcountry region, this brief offers policymakers, advocates, and stakeholders timely insights into the status of families with children birth through age five. This brief aims to advance and inform data-driven, family-centered solutions to restoring and strengthening our state’s early childhood system. There are 81,540 children birth through age five estimated to live in the Lowcountry region.



Respondent Demographics and Age of Young Children

Our most frequent respondents from the Lowcountry region were white and ages 35-44. Respondents were asked to report the number of children by age who lived in their home. In the Lowcountry region, a total of 490 children were reported and varied in age. The most frequently reported child age was 3 years old (figure 1).

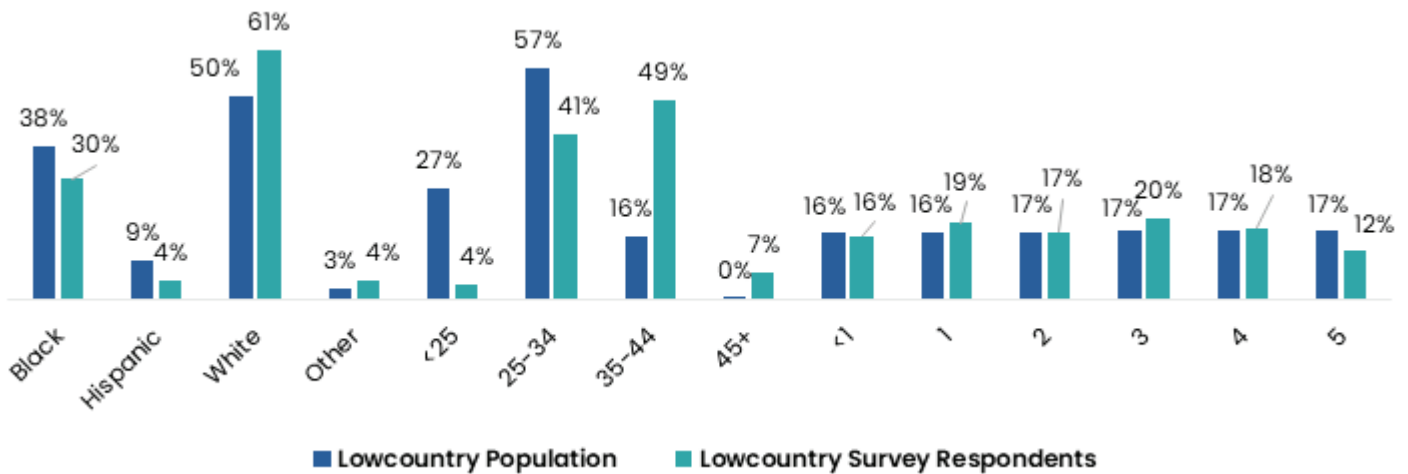


Figure 1. Demographic distribution of proxy population (blue; data sources explained in references), compared to demographics of survey respondents - (teal; number of unknown responses excluded: race/ethnicity [n=23]; age of respondent [n=5]) – 313 total survey respondents reporting 490 total children under age 6.

67% worked full or part-time in the past month
50% of them identified as an essential worker

1

Disruptions in child care have required parents and caregivers of young children to modify or reduce their work schedules and child care arrangements.

Most parents and caregivers who responded from the Lowcountry are telecommuting, alternating work hours with someone in their household, or working fewer hours in order to provide child care (figure 2).

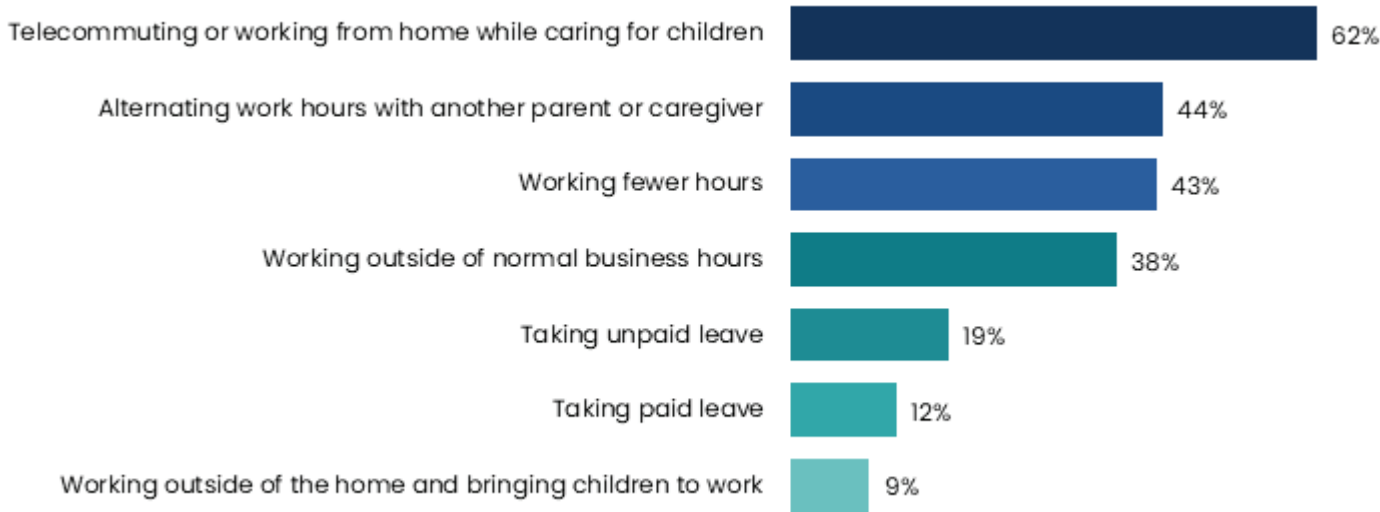


Figure 2. Responses to the question, “Have you or another parent/caregiver in your household experienced any of the following since March 13, 2020? Select all that apply.” Total Lowcountry survey respondents = 313.

When a state of emergency was declared for the state of South Carolina on March 13, 2020, 49% of Lowcountry respondents were using a child care center, daycare, or preschool as the primary care arrangement for the young children in their households, compared to 19% of respondents at the time of the survey. Since March, the most common type of child care arrangement has been unpaid care by parents, family or friends. At the time of the survey, 63% of respondents used unpaid care, compared to 21% before the crisis. Of those using unpaid care, 54% say it is not ideal (figure 3).

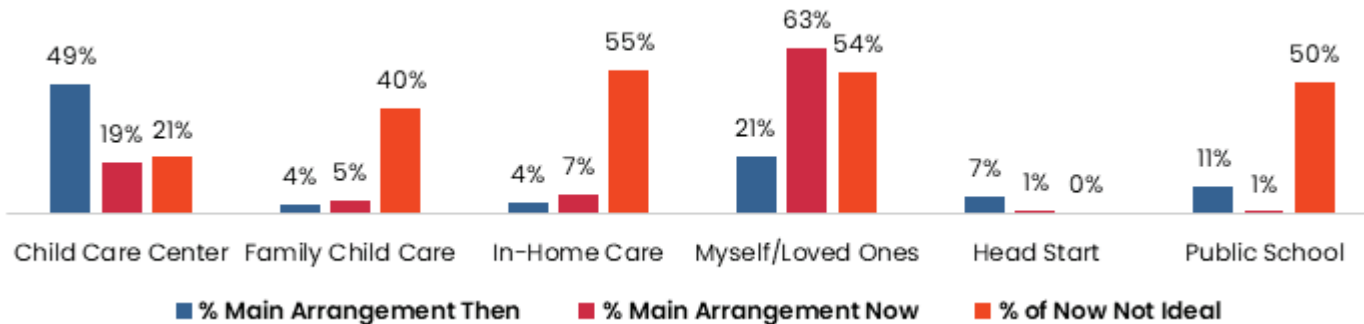


Figure 3. Diagram comparing percent of survey respondents’ reported main child care arrangements before March 13 (“Then”) and at the time of the survey response (“Now”). Also, the percent of each arrangement who report it is not ideal is displayed. Total survey respondents = 313. “Summer program/camp” (then: 0%; now: 0%; now, not ideal: 0%) or “other/unknown” (then: 4%; now: 4%; now, not ideal: 73%) responses not displayed. Interpret small numbers with caution.

2

Currently available child care options are not adequate for many working families, and this crisis poses a threat to the wellbeing of young children and their families.

When thinking about their child care arrangements for the next three months, survey respondents say they are most concerned about the increased likelihood that their child and family may be exposed to COVID-19 (figure 4).

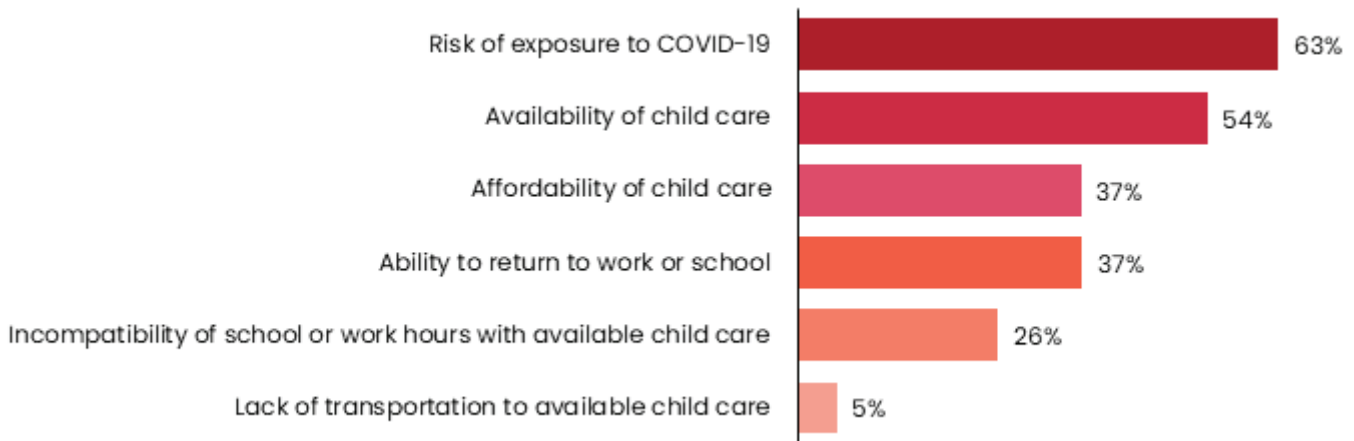


Figure 4. Percent of survey respondents reporting that they are very/moderately concerned about these issues; total survey respondents = 313 (number of unknown responses excluded: COVID-19 exposure [n=1]; availability [n=1]; affordability [n=1]; incompatible hours [n=1]; transportation [n=1]).

Parents and Caregivers' Pandemic-Related Worries and Anxiety

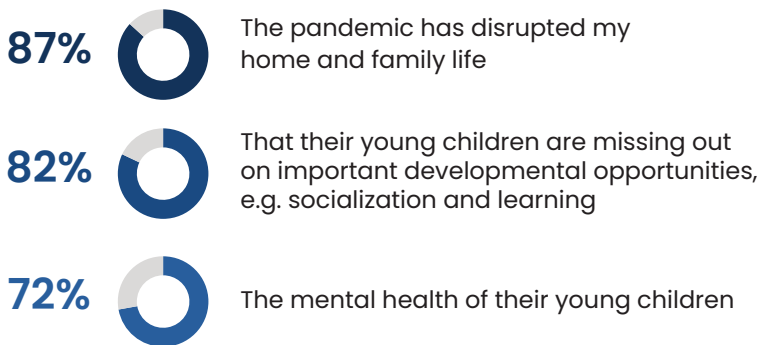


Figure 5. Percent of survey respondents reporting that they slightly/strongly agree that they worry about these issues; total survey respondents = 313 (number of unknown/not applicable responses excluded: disruption [n=2]; opportunities [n=7]; mental health [n=4]).



80% of parents and caregivers say they are more stressed and anxious than usual

Figure 6. Percent of survey respondents who reported that their current level of stress/anxiety as a caregiver is much or somewhat higher than usual

Survey Administration and Brief Sample

The “Build It Back Better” survey administration is detailed in the full report [<https://earlychildhoodsc.org/what-we-do/build-it-back-better-survey/>]. In total, 3,261 responses were received. Those who responded “no” to the question, “Do you live in South Carolina and are the parent or primary caregiver of at least one child under age 6?” were excluded [n=680]. Then, those who reported zero for the number of children under age 6 when asked to report the number of individuals in their household by age group were excluded [n=146]. Finally, for any respondents who entered the drawing for 1 of 10 \$200 Visa gift cards at the end of the survey more than once, only their first response was counted in the final sample [n=4]. Further refinement of our sample was done to exclude those with an IP address outside of South Carolina [n=1,186]. Those who did not report their county of residence or a county from the Lowcountry region were excluded for this brief [n=932].

References

Regional population estimate of children under age 6 obtained from 2014-2018 American Community Survey (5 Year Estimates; Table B17024). US Census Bureau.

Proxy population for survey respondents’ age and race/ethnicity obtained from South Carolina resident births 2014-2018. Regions based on DHEC definition. Data obtained from South Carolina Community Assessment Network. Office of Vital Statistics, South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. Obtained 12 Aug 2020. [Available from: <http://sclangis.dhec.sc.gov/scan/bdp/tables/birthtable.aspx>].

Proxy population for survey respondents’ children by age group. Calculated by Chelsea Richard, South Carolina First Steps. Raw data obtained from Center for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Obtained 28 Jul 2020. [Available from https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/bridged_race.htm/].

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Disclaimer

This report does not represent the views of the South Carolina Early Childhood Advisory Council, the United Way Association of South Carolina, South Carolina First Steps, or the Alliance for Early Success.

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