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# Nontraditional Hours and Child Care:

An Exploratory Study on the Needs of Families and Child Care Providers in California

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California Child Care Resource & Referral



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October 2019



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## About the Author

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Gemma leads the research department at the California Child Care Resource & Referral Network (Network). With a BA in Psychology from Barnard College of Columbia University and an MPH in Epidemiology/Biostatistics from the University of California at Berkeley, she believes that both quantitative data analysis, along with individual stories of lived experiences are key to implementing programs and building systems that work for everyone. She's worked on studies investigating nutrition policies in child care settings in California, and has published a paper in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine.

### California Child Care Resource & Referral Network Research Department

The Network's research department conducts studies and creates reports on both broad and specific issues impacting families, children, and the child care workforce. Our researchers work with the local resource and referral agencies throughout California to bring stories that go beyond data so that readers can understand the impact of child care policies or practices affecting families or early care providers. The research department has been publishing the biennial California Child Care Portfolio since 1997, which portrays the child care supply, demand, and cost statewide and county-by-county, as well as information on employment, poverty, and family budgets.

The Network is led by Linda Asato, MPA, whose commitment to guiding our work through a racial and economic equity lens inspired this report.

California Child Care Resource & Referral



## Acknowledgments

Funded in part by First 5 LA, a leading public grantmaking and child advocacy organization, and managed in partnership with Community Partners.



We would like to thank Keisha Nzewi, MPH, the Network's Public Policy Director, who crafted and wrote the Recommendations section of the paper. We'd also like to thank the local R&Rs for their help in distributing the online surveys, and the following R&R agencies for their work in coordinating and hosting the focus groups: Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County, Child Development Resources of Ventura County, Community Action Partnership of Madera County, Solano Family & Children's Services, and Colusa County Office of Education. And a special thank you to Rita Guess, a family child care provider who reached out and helped organize a provider focus group in San Jose.

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# Abstract

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There are many parents in California who work outside of the traditional Monday through Friday nine to five schedule. Finding child care can be hard for many families, but during these hours it's particularly difficult - especially since many of these jobs are also low wage, making finding affordable care even less likely. This study explores the experiences of both parents working nontraditional hours, as well as the child care providers who care for their children. Online surveys, in-person focus groups, and phone interviews were all employed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data from parents and providers throughout California. Parents expressed: a lack of predictability and flexibility in their workplace, with financial and professional consequences when they didn't have child care (many parents also had to quit jobs due to child care issues); an overall preference for licensed care during nontraditional hours, as it's seen as more reliable; concern about transportation, especially when it disrupts the child's sleep; and a lot of gratitude and satisfaction for those with a family child care provider, as they offer flexible schedules. Providers expressed: disincentives to accept

children with a subsidy, as the payment is lower and less predictable; an obligation to extend their hours to accommodate all the families' schedules, often resulting in working up to 24 hours a day; and little family or personal time, leading to exhaustion, burnout, and negative health consequences. The policy recommendations generated from the results are the following: pay providers who accept subsidies in alignment with private pay families; allow license-exempt providers to provide care in the child's home; licensed providers should be able to care for a child the entire night if agreed upon by the parents and provider; create a mechanism for providers to take vacation and paid sick time; create a shared services model to support the business practices and operation of providers so they can focus more attention on providing quality care; ensure full commute times are accounted for in subsidy reimbursements; increase reimbursement rates during nontraditional hours; put procedures in place that ensure clear communication and understanding between Alternative Payment programs, parents, and providers; and create family-friendly work policies.

# Background

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Over one-third of Americans work nontraditional hours (early morning, evening, overnight, weekends), and it's estimated that these industries will see the largest increase by 2020. Sixty percent of workers with nontraditional hours in the U.S. are below the median income, and they are more likely to be people of color and to have less formal education.<sup>2</sup> The 24/7 economy and use of scheduling technology has increased the ubiquity of nontraditional and variable schedules. Without resources to pay for in-home care or having another adult at home during these hours, many parents are left to look for care outside the home. Child care accessibility during traditional working hours is already severely lacking; during nontraditional hours the problem is even more acute. The availability of licensed child care for all children zero to 12 with working parents in California is only 23% and within that, less than one-third of licensed programs offer nontraditional hours of care.<sup>3</sup>

T-Lab at Tipping Point Community recently investigated this issue with restaurant workers in the San Francisco Bay Area.<sup>4</sup> They found that for many families, the most viable solution was to leave their children with family, friends or neighbors in their community because they are often the only people who will offer care during these hours. However, to offer this care they often sacrifice work-life balance and a livable wage, creating the phenomenon of the “poor subsidizing the poor.” Parents also expressed giving up shifts and promotions because they

didn't have a stable child care arrangement, creating a barrier to economic mobility and perpetuating the cycle of poverty. This issue is two-generational, as often the only option is to leave children in care that is not stable or consistent, which can hinder children's healthy development.

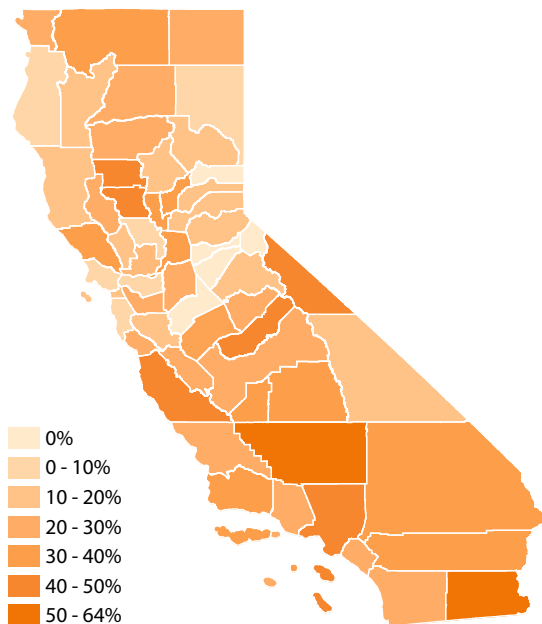
There have been various reports and articles written about the issue of child care during nontraditional hours. Most literature on this topic focuses on the parents' challenges and experiences, but doesn't investigate the experiences of the providers who are caring for children during these hours, or the factors influencing the supply side of the equation. This project seeks to understand the experiences of parents working nontraditional hours in California, including the nature of their work, their current child care arrangements and how they feel about them, how child care has impacted their work, what is most challenging for them, and what their ideal child care situation would be; it also seeks to understand the experiences of child care providers who care for children during these hours, including their main challenges and what would help them the most. This study is exploratory and uses a human-centered design approach to listen to the experiences of both parents and providers in California, in order to create policy and program recommendations that support both of these populations.

### NOTES ON TERMINOLOGY:

Nontraditional hours are also referred to as nonstandard hours. Our definition is the same, but we decided to use 'nontraditional' because 'nonstandard' implies that there is a normal or typical work schedule, which is increasingly not the case. Nontraditional implies a schedule outside of the commonly-conceived conventional work day.

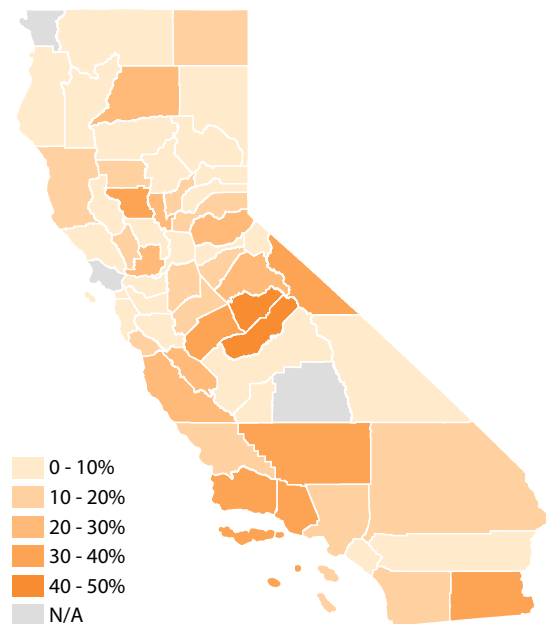
For brevity, we'll refer to all guardians as 'parents', although this could refer to any guardians, including grandparents, foster parents, etc.

### Child Care Programs Offering Nontraditional Hours (%)



Data from the 2017 California Child Care Portfolio. Includes all licensed facilities (centers and family child care homes) that offer evening, weekend, or overnight care.

### Requests for Care During Nontraditional Hours (%)



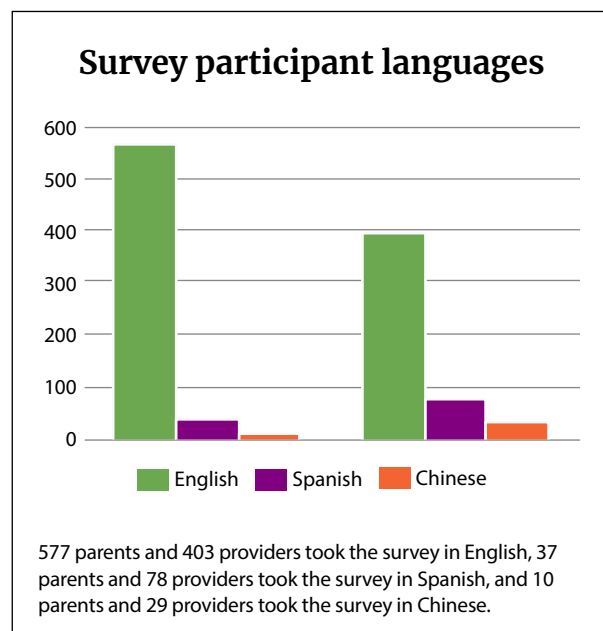
Data from the 2017 California Child Care Portfolio. Includes all resource and referral child care requests for evening, weekend, and overnight care from April 1, 2016 – June 30, 2016.

# Methods

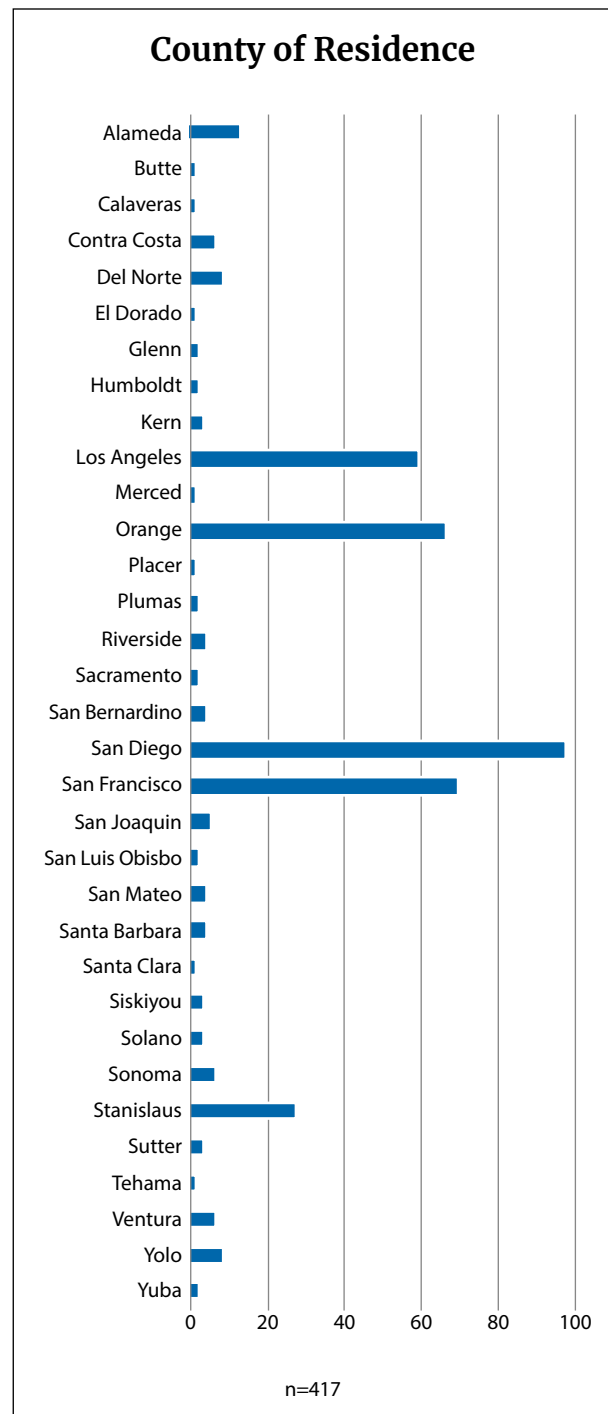
Data was collected through three methods (online surveys, in-person focus groups, and phone interviews) to allow a range of both quantitative and qualitative/narrative data to be collected, and to minimize excluding participants based on scheduling, travel, or internet access.

## Surveys

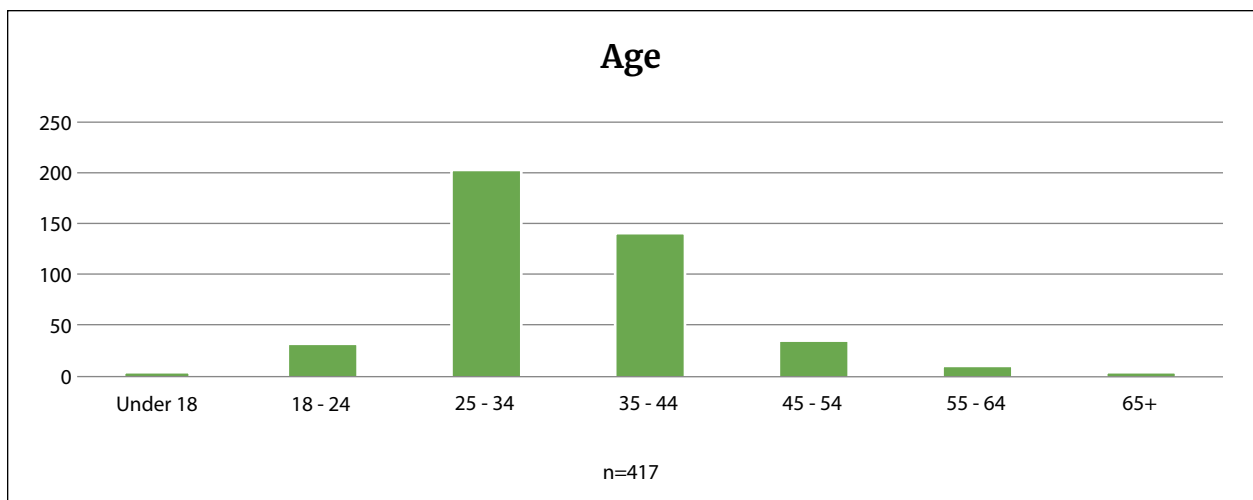
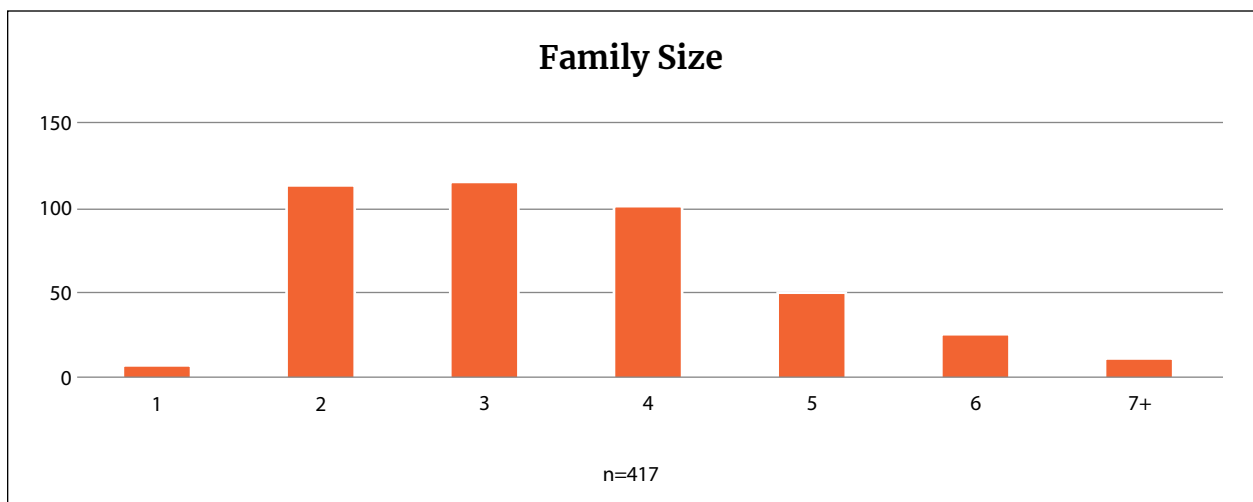
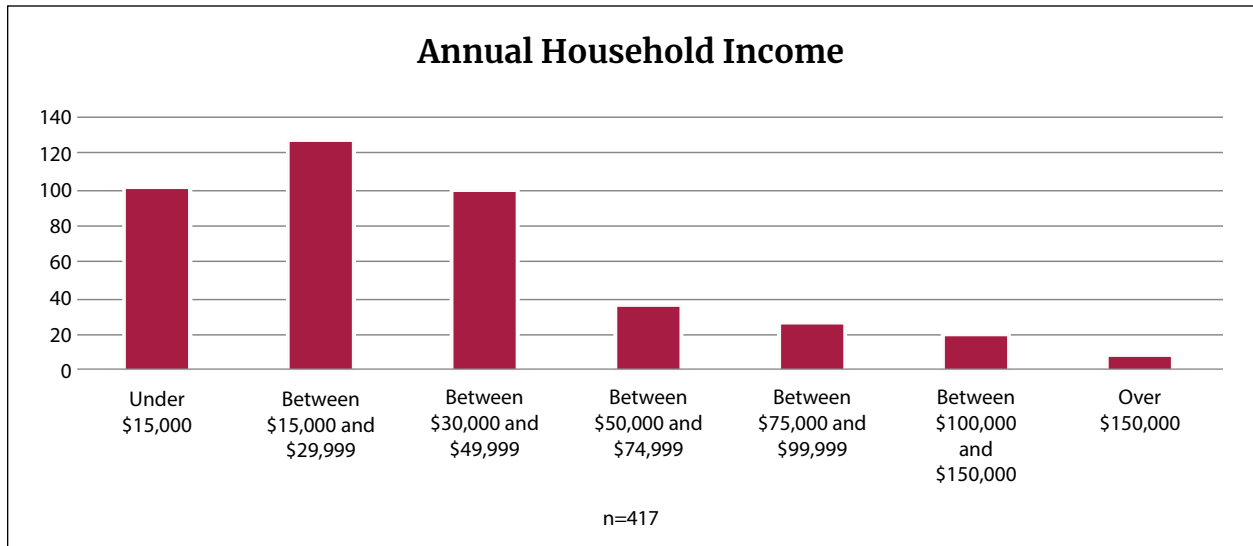
An online parent and provider survey were distributed statewide through different online platforms (social media, websites, etc.), and with the help of local resource and referral agencies. The surveys were available in English, Spanish, and Chinese. The surveys reached a total of 624 parents and 510 providers (not all survey questions were completed by all participants, resulting in n's less than the total).



## Parent demographics

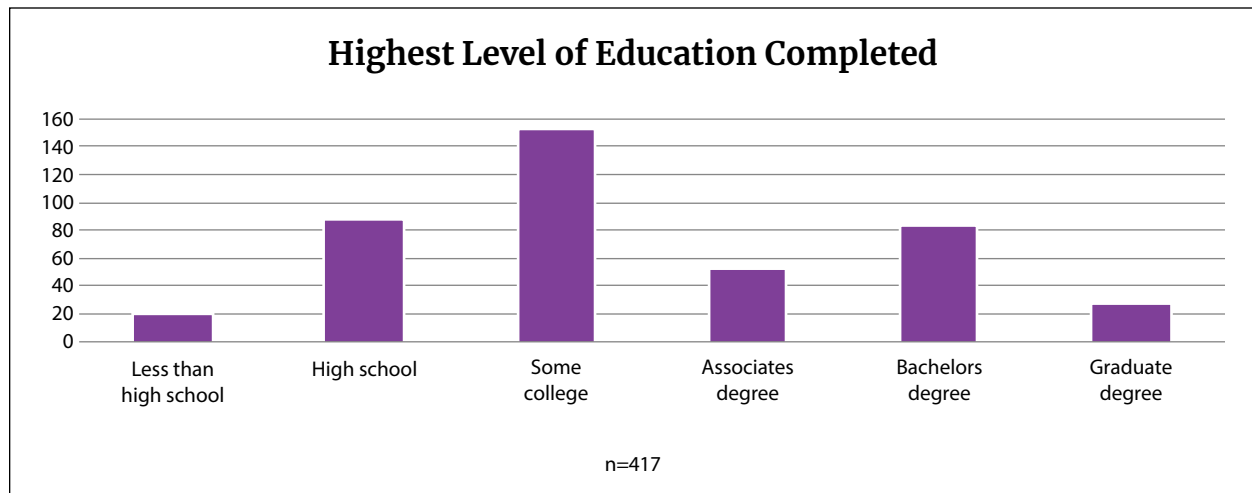


*Parent demographics (cont.)*

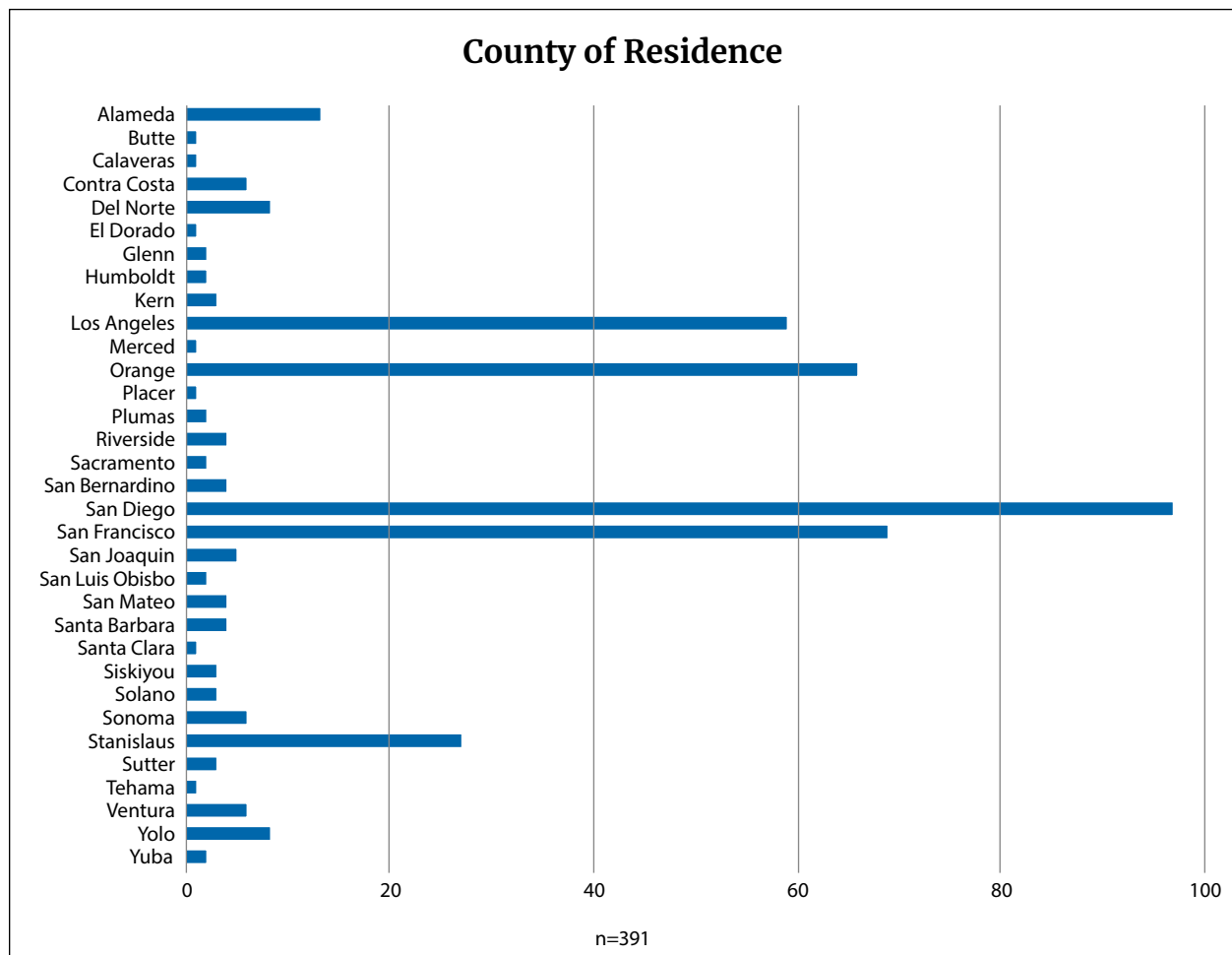


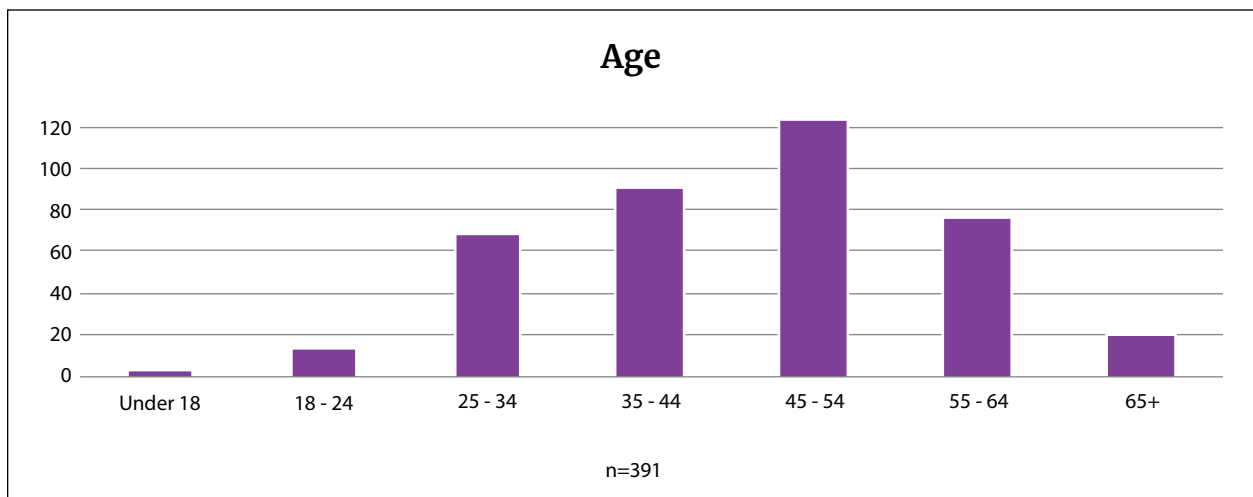
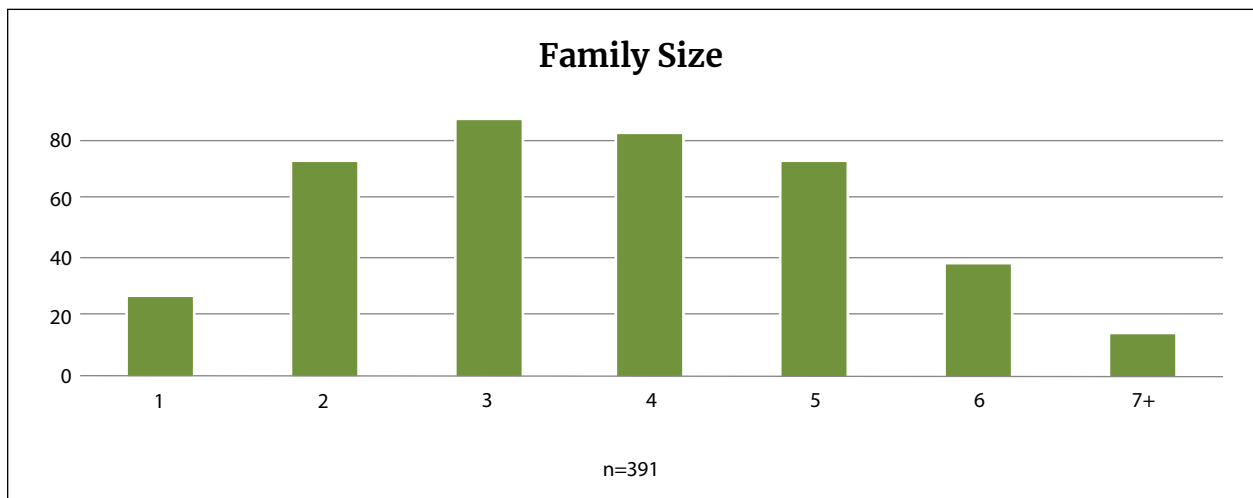
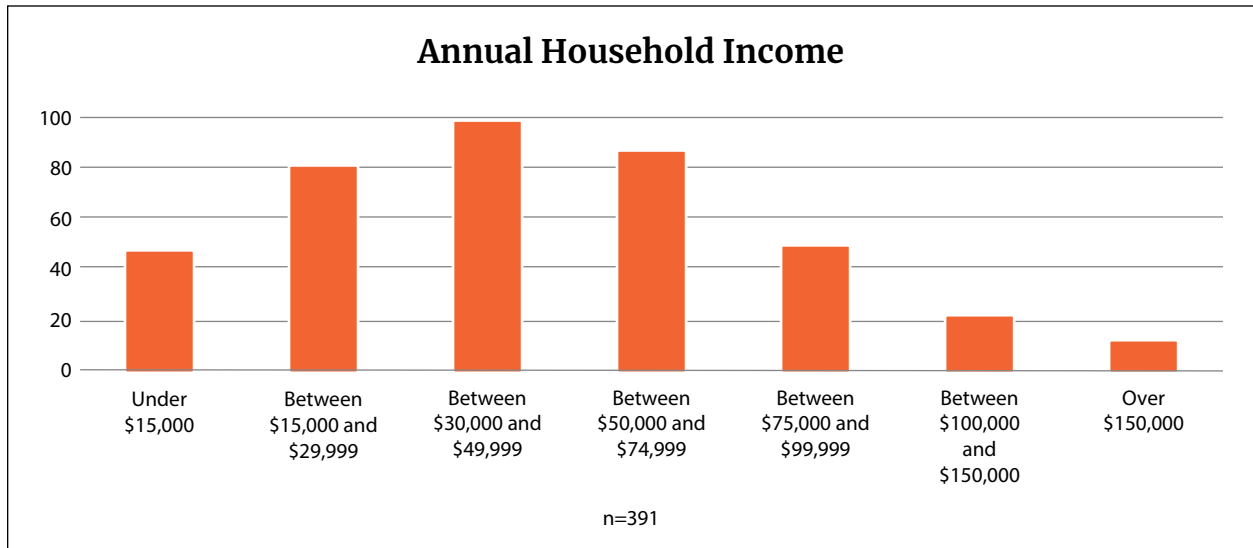


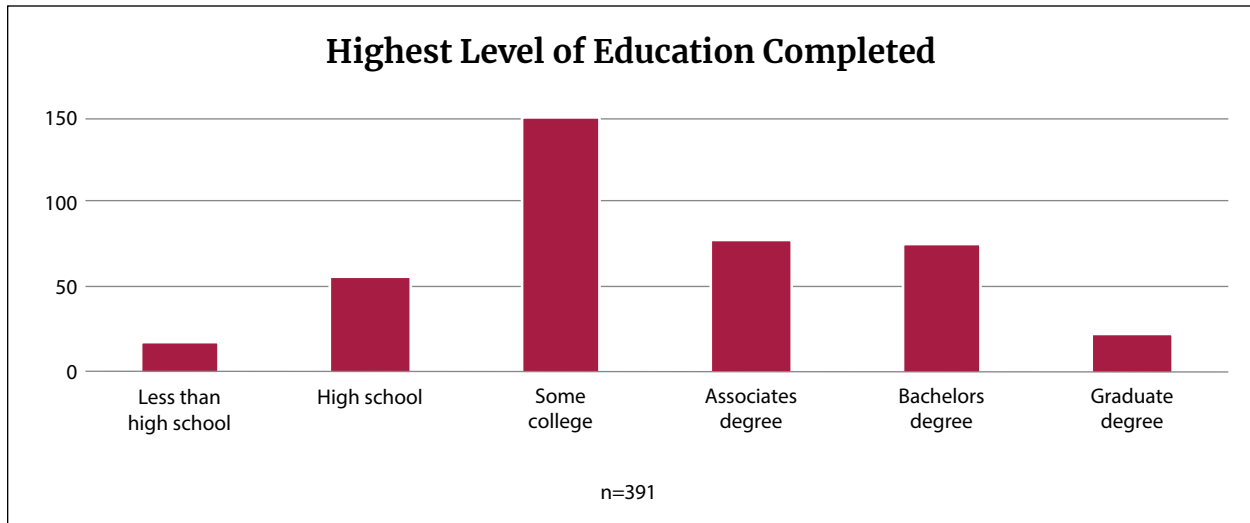
### Parent demographics (cont.)



### Provider demographics



*Provider demographics (cont.)*

*Provider demographics (cont.)*

## Focus groups and interviews

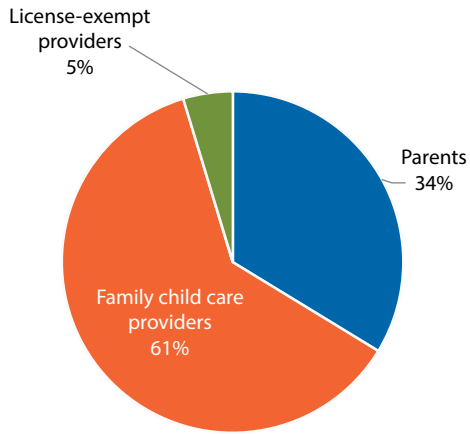
Counties where in-person focus groups were held were selected based on their percentage of child care requests for nontraditional hours<sup>3</sup> and local interest in participating in the project, while ensuring at least one county was included in each of the following regions: North, Bay Area, Central Valley, South. Focus groups and interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish, and all one-on-one interviews were over the phone. All except one focus group was coordinated and hosted by the county's local resource and referral agency. The Santa Clara focus group was coordinated by a local family child care provider, and hosted at a library. There were six provider focus groups in the following counties: Santa Clara, Madera, Ventura, Colusa, Solano, San Luis Obispo; there was one provider interview in Alameda. There were four parent focus groups in the following counties: Madera, Ventura, Solano, Colusa; there were three parent

interviews in Madera, San Diego, and San Luis Obispo.

Parents worked primarily in the following jobs: agriculture (fields and food preparation facilities), education (Head Start substitute, special education teacher or aide, summer school teacher), retail and fast food, hospitals, and in-home caregiving or behavioral technician. Almost all the parents that participated in the focus groups and interviews were currently using a child care voucher.

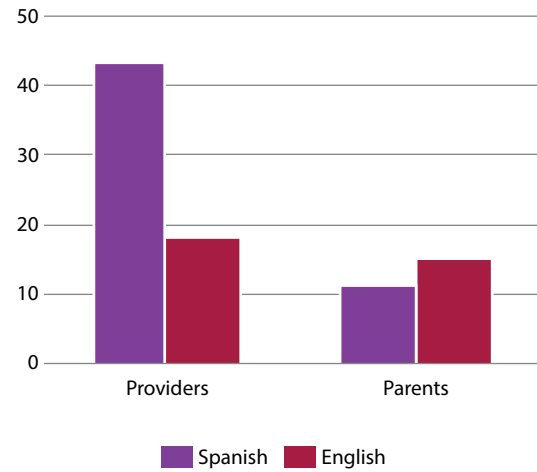
During the focus groups and interviews, parents were asked about their jobs and child care arrangements during nontraditional hours, and child care providers were asked about their experiences providing care during nontraditional hours.

### Participants



There were a total of 29 parents, 53 family child care providers, and four license-exempt providers reached through the focus groups and interviews.

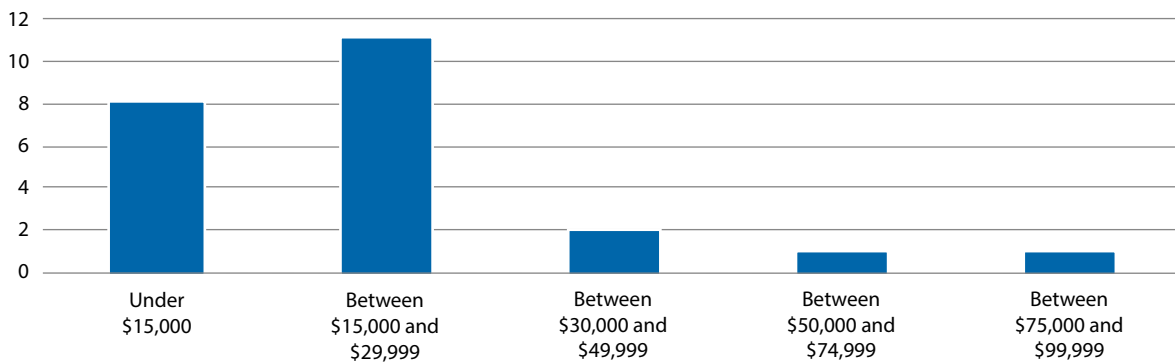
### Participant Language

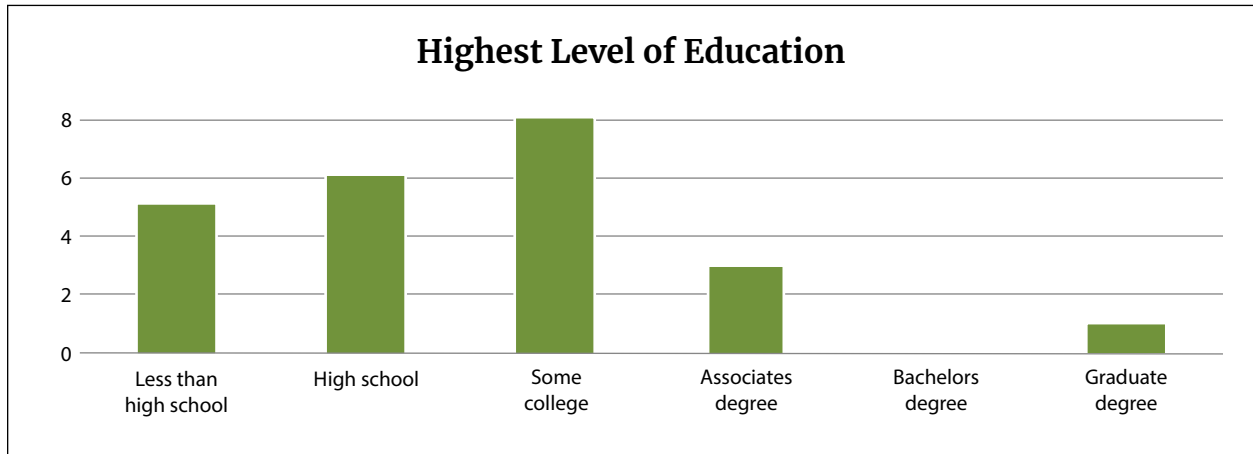
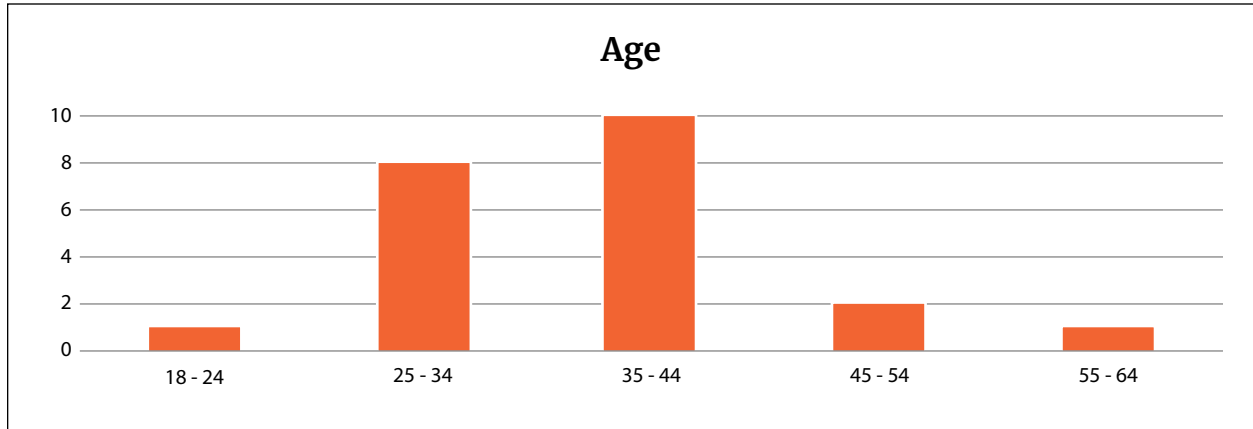
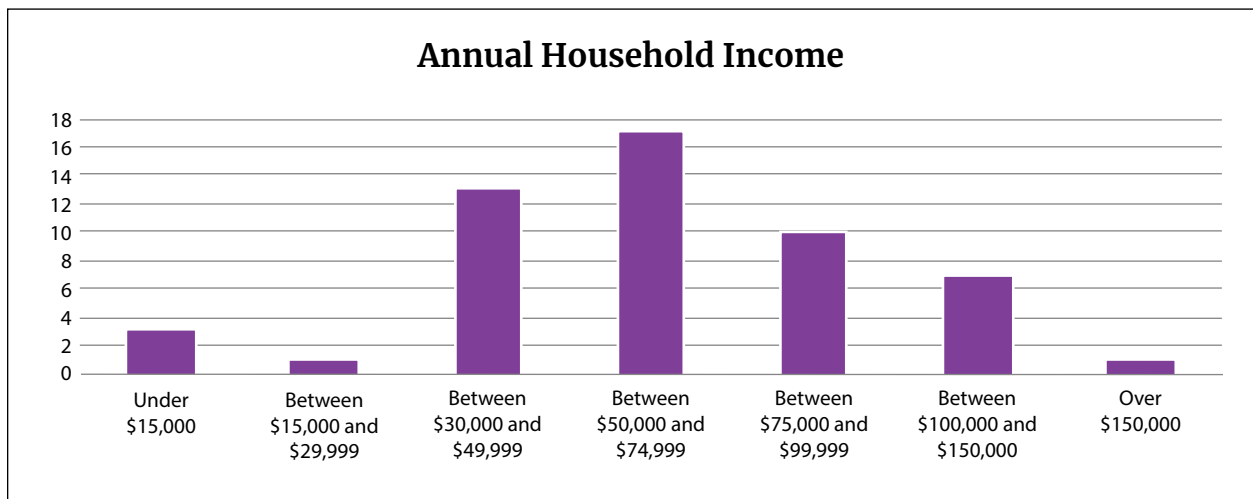


15 parents and 18 providers participated in English, and 11 parents and 43 providers participated in Spanish.

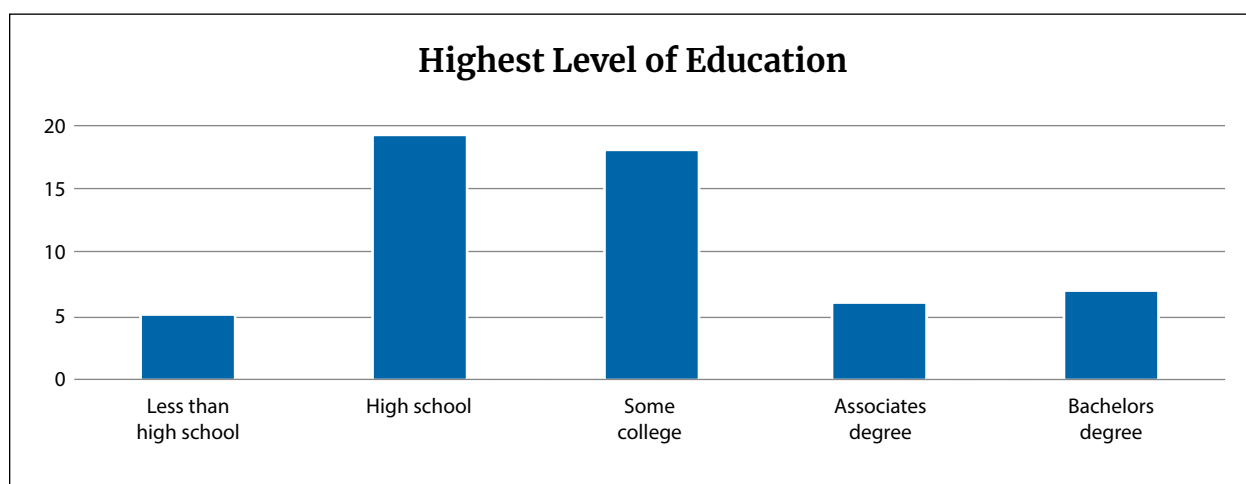
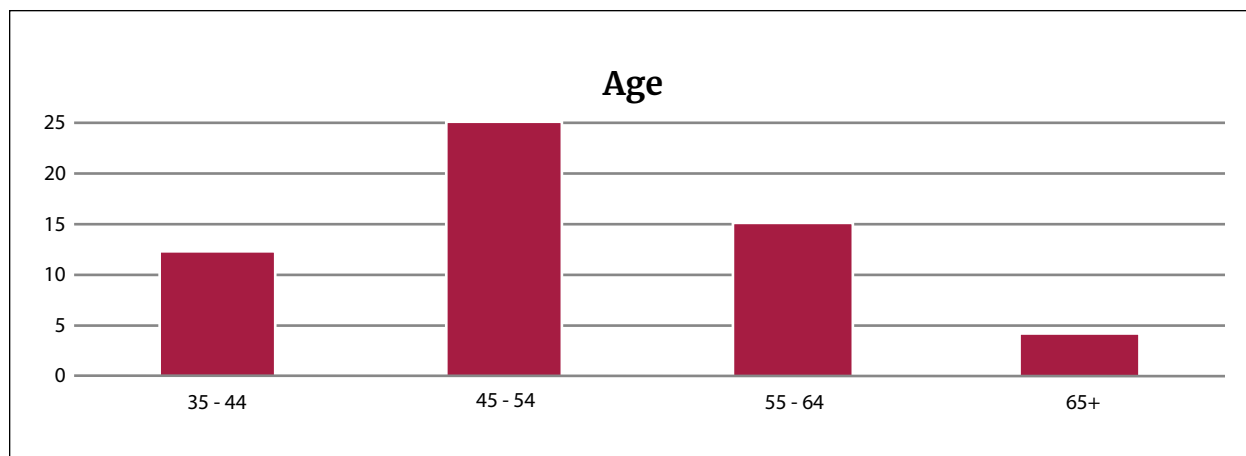
## Parent demographics

### Annual Household Income



*Parent demographics (cont.)**Provider demographics*

*Provider demographics (cont.)*



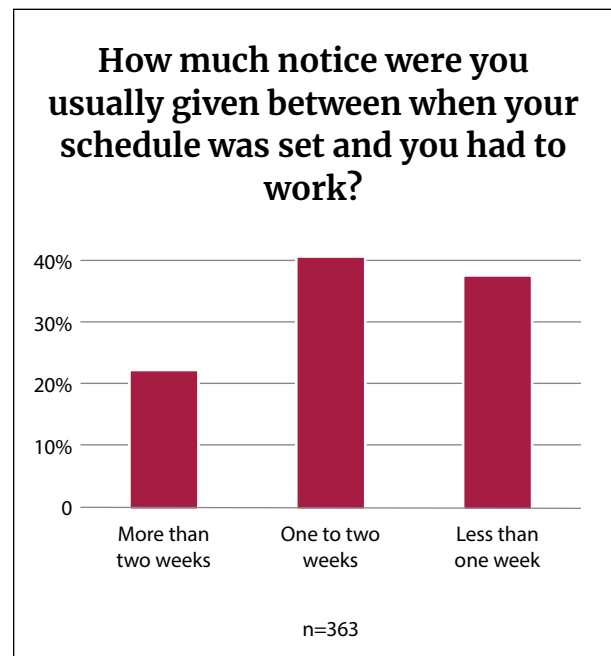
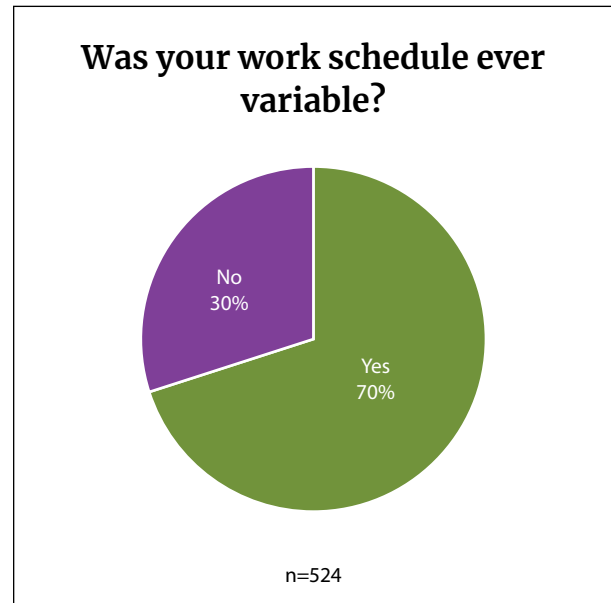
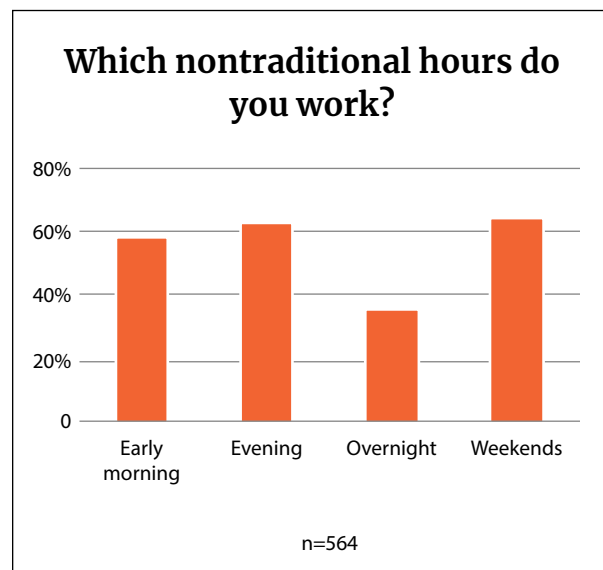
# Results

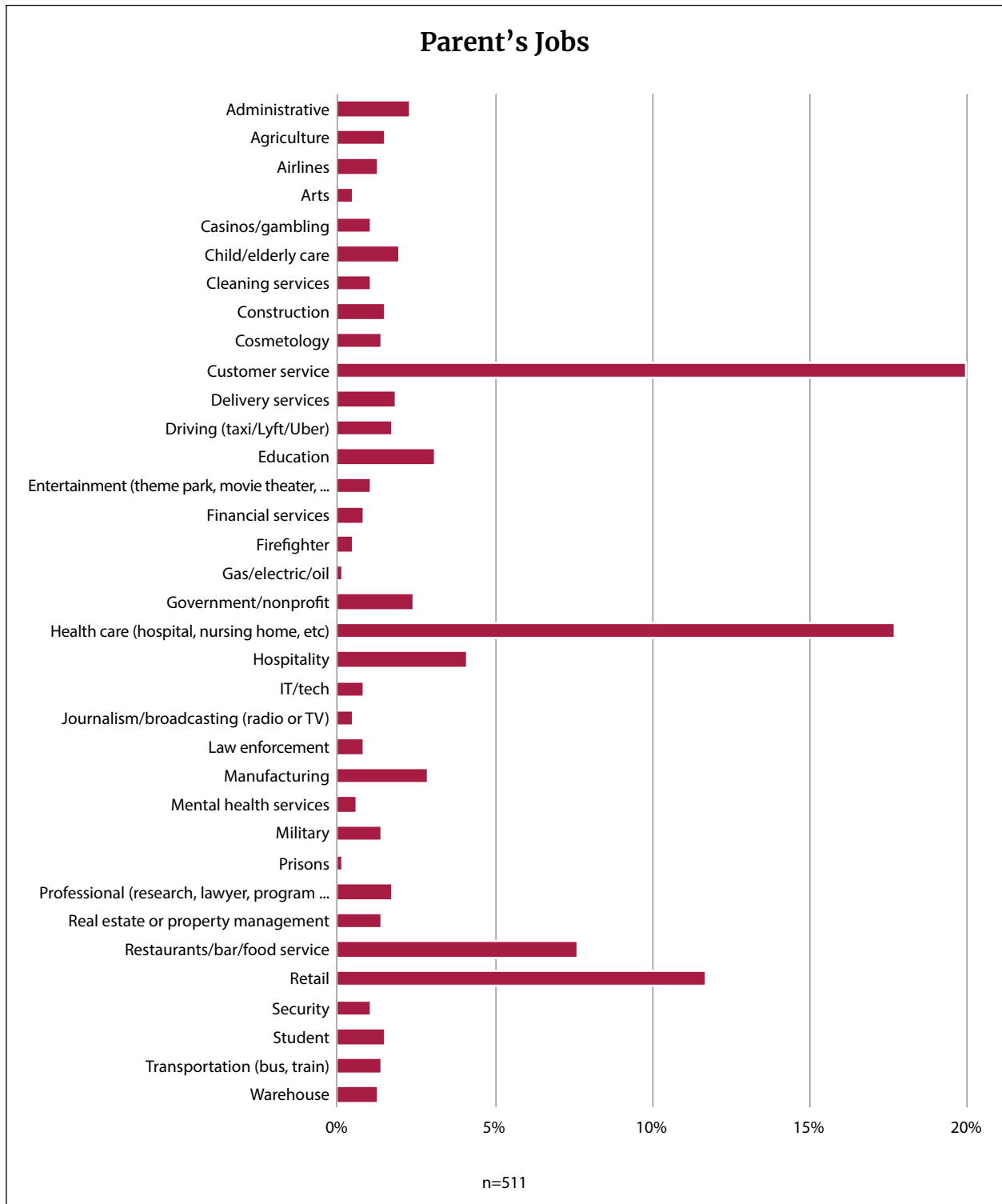
## Surveys

### Parent results

#### Parents' work

Most parents worked early mornings, evenings, and weekends and the majority (70%) had a variable schedule (changing every day, week, or month). Thirty-seven percent of parents reported receiving less than one week notice of their schedules, and 41% receive one to two weeks notice. The top three categories of parents' jobs are in customer service (20%), health care (18%), and retail (12%).



**Parent results (work)**

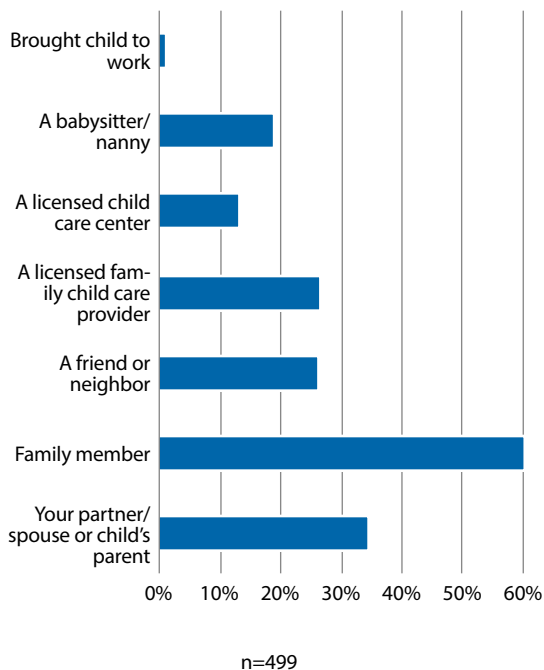


## Parent results (cont.)

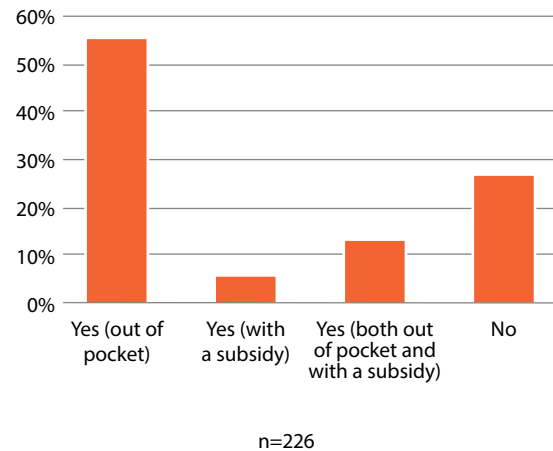
### Child care

The majority of parents have a family member watching their children while they work nontraditional hours (60%). For those with a family, friend, or neighbor watching their children, 73% were paying them either out of pocket or with a subsidy, while 27% were not paying them. Only 16% of family, friend, and neighbor care took place exclusively in the child's home, while 50% was exclusively in the provider's home, and 35% was a combination.

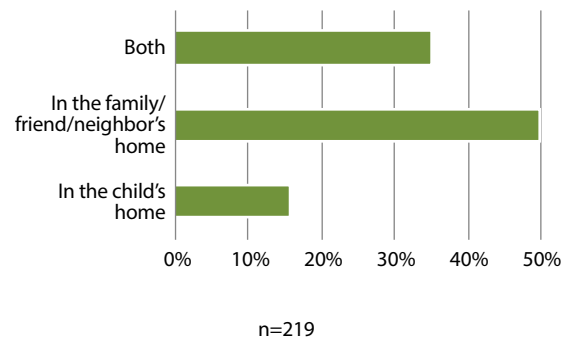
#### Who watches your child(ren) while you worked nontraditional hours?



#### Is the family/friend/neighbor paid to care for your child(ren)?



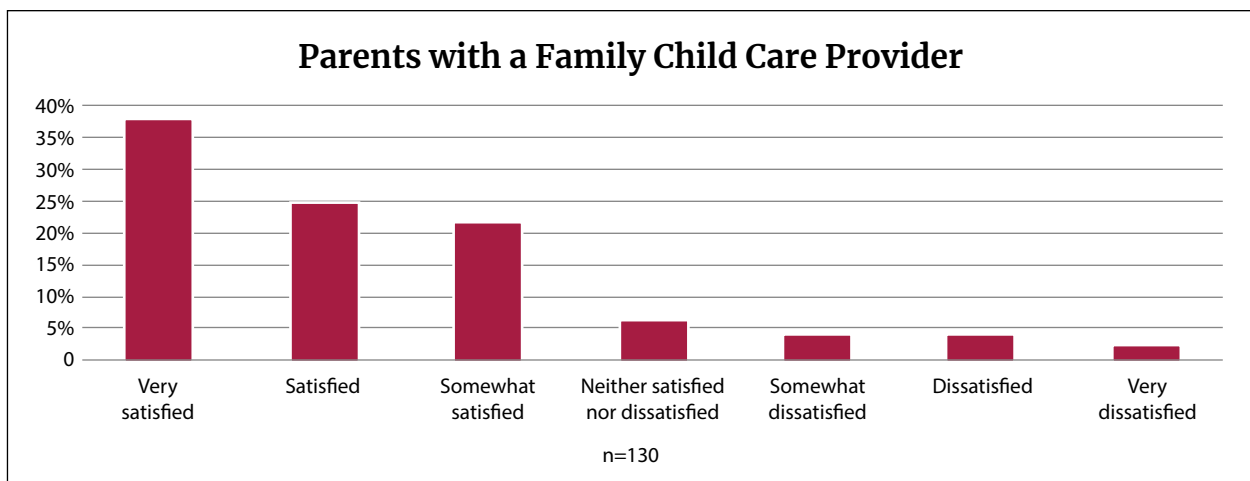
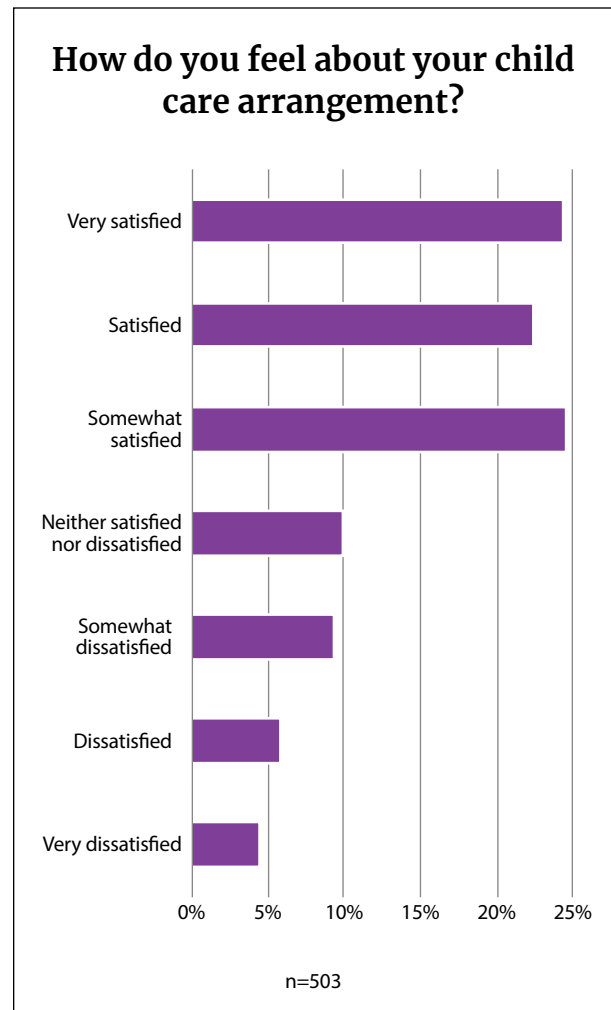
#### When your child is cared for by a family/friend/neighbor, where did the care take place?

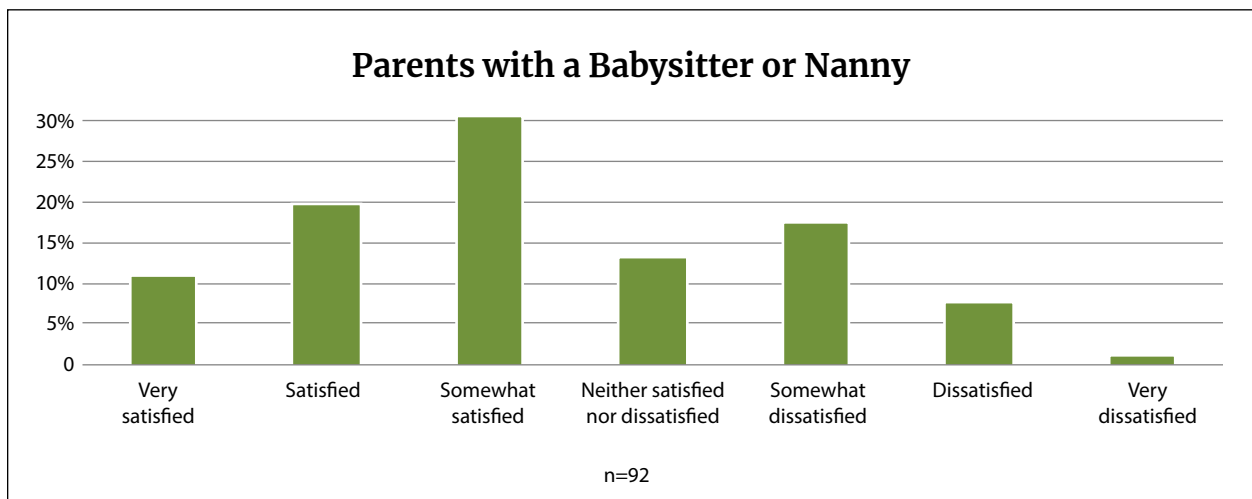
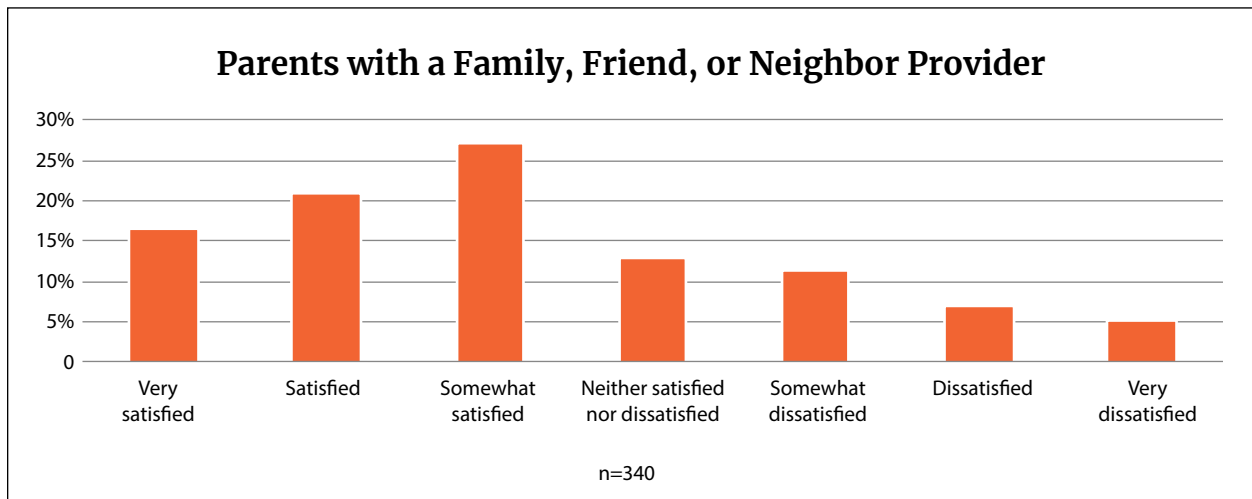
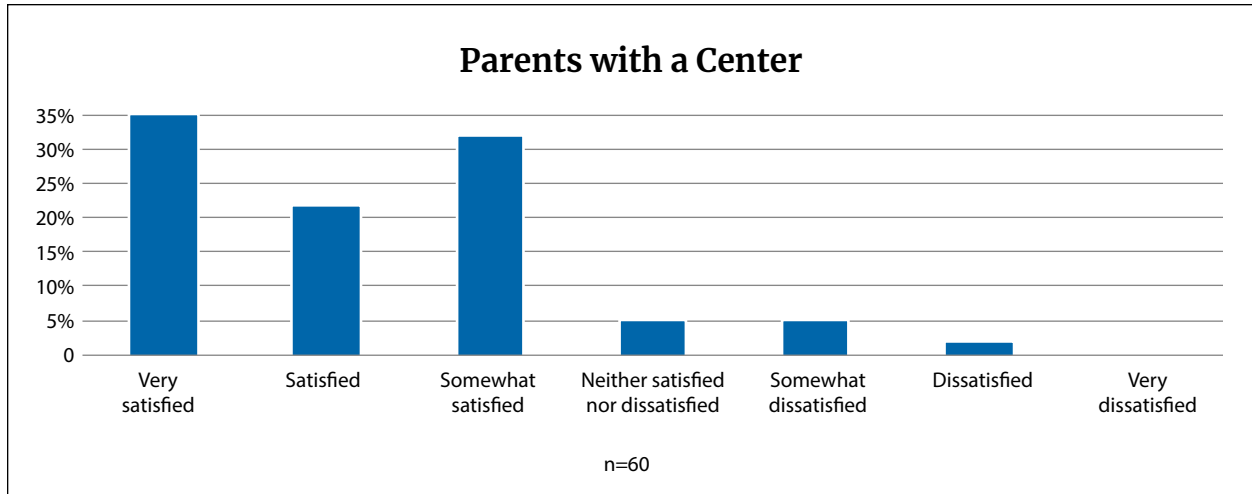


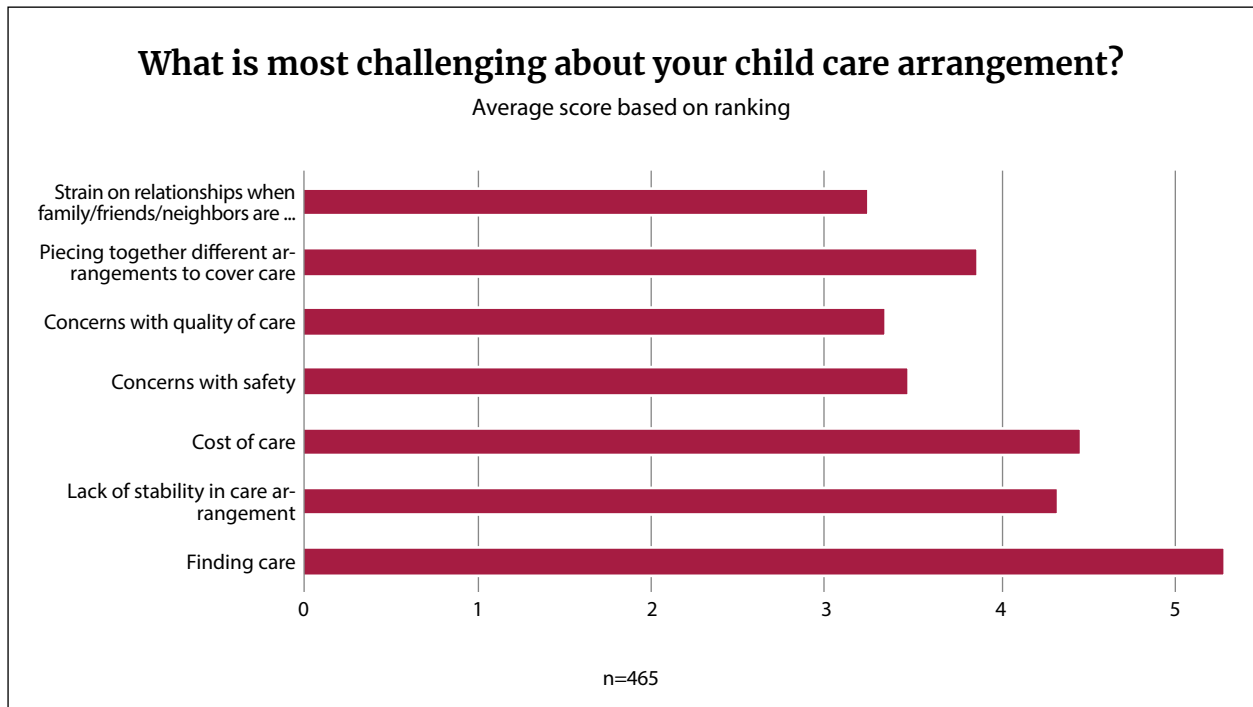
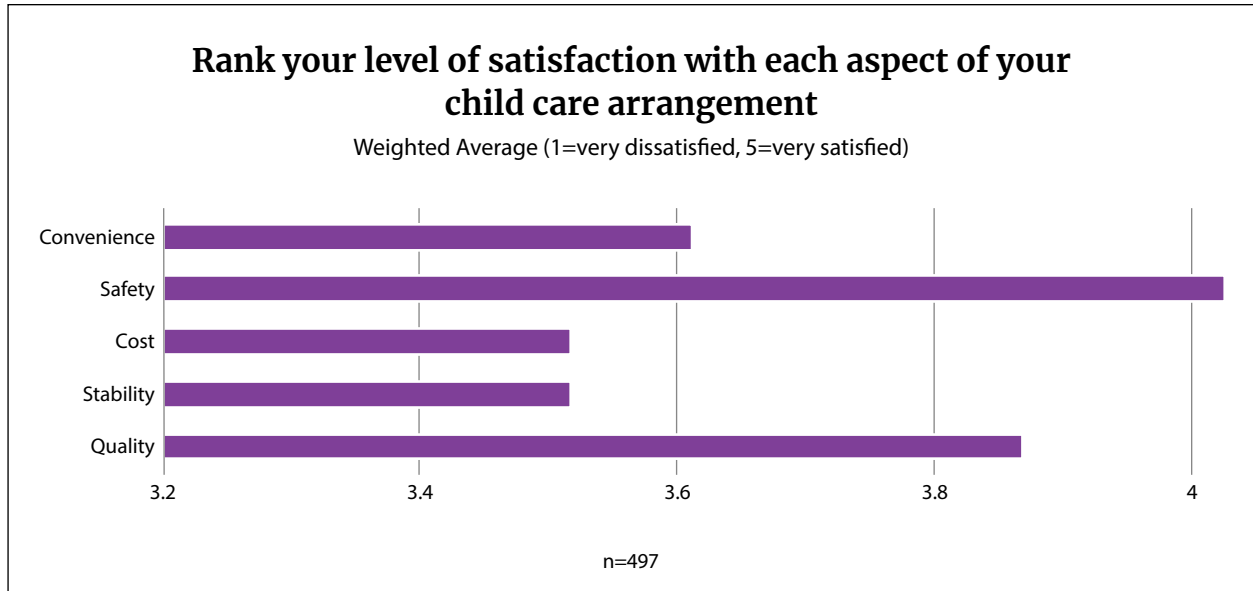
### Parent results (cont.)

#### Parent satisfaction with child care arrangement and ideal arrangement

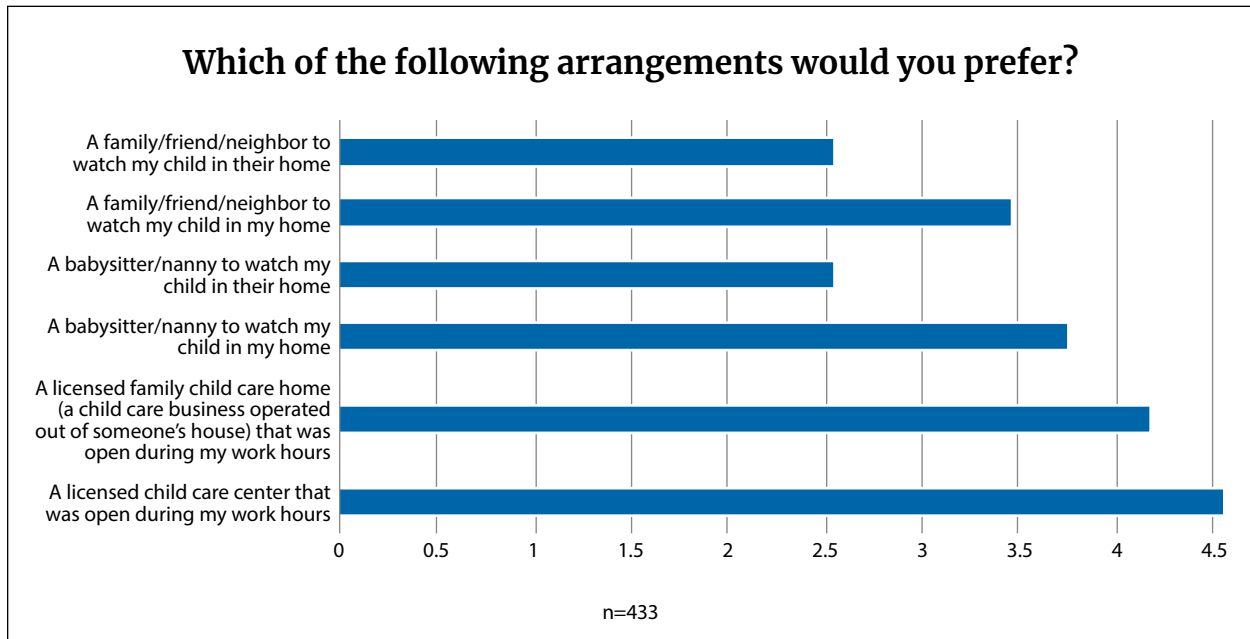
Parents' satisfaction with their child care arrangement varied by the type of provider. Those with a family child care provider reported the greatest satisfaction, with 38% "very satisfied", 25% "satisfied" and 22% "somewhat satisfied". Parents also reported high levels of satisfaction with centers while family, friend and neighbors and babysitters/nannies received more mixed results of parent satisfaction. When asked on a five-point scale about their level of satisfaction with different aspects of their child care, safety was rated the highest (4.03), with quality (3.87) and convenience (3.61) following. Cost and stability were rated lowest (3.52). This pattern did not vary greatly by type of child care. When asked what was most challenging about their child care arrangement, the top three reasons were: finding care, piecing together different arrangements to cover care, and cost of care. When asked what kind of child care arrangement they would prefer, the top choice was a center, followed by a family child care home, and then a babysitter/nanny watching their children in the family's home.



**Parent results (arrangement)**

**Parent results (arrangement)**

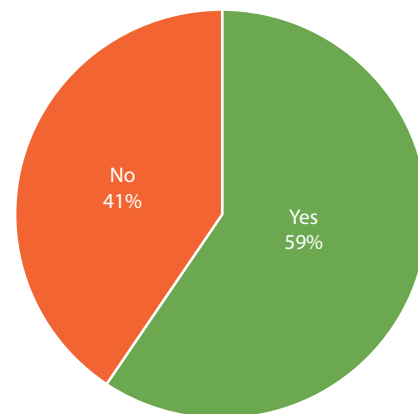
### Parent results (arrangement)



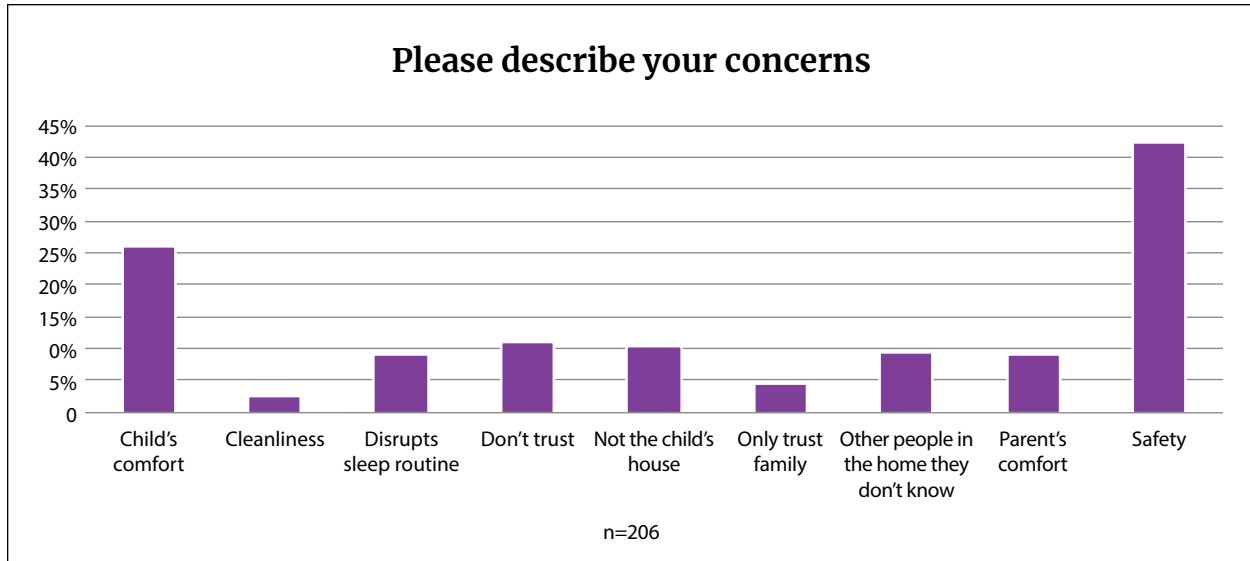
### Concerns with overnight care

Almost two-thirds (59%) of parents said they would have concerns with their child sleeping overnight at a licensed center or family child care home. When asked to describe their concerns, the top reason mentioned was safety (42%) and the second was related to their child's comfort (26%).

**Would you have concerns with your child sleeping overnight at a licensed child care center or licensed family child care home?**

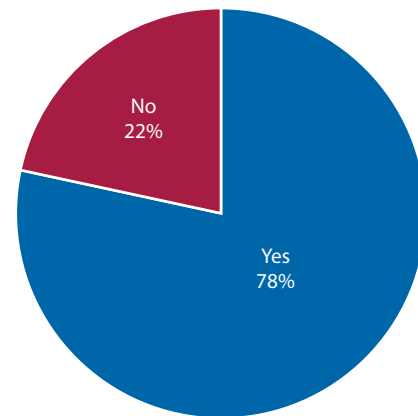


n=424

**Parent results (overnight care)****Impact on work**

The overwhelming majority of parents said they've had to miss work or give up shifts due to child care issues during nontraditional hours (78%). Almost two-thirds (62%) of parents have had to quit a job or pass on a job offer because of lack of child care during these hours. Almost 40% of parents said that they've been punished at work due to child care issues.

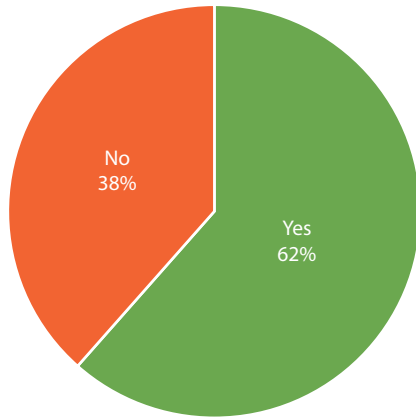
**Did you ever have to give up shifts or miss work because of child care issues during nontraditional hours?**



n=423

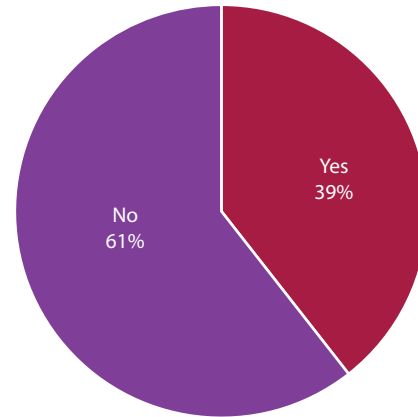
**Parent results (impact on work)**

**Did you ever have to give up a job offer or quit a job because you couldn't find stable care during nontraditional hours?**



n=421

**Have you ever been punished at work due to child care issues?**



n=421

**Parent insights**

[Parent describing transporting children to license-exempt provider (grandmother's) house]  
 "Sometimes when I would pick up my kids they would still be awake because as much as they love grandma they want mommy and daddy to put them to bed. It's not easy to get three sleeping kids out of the car once you've finally picked them up at 9pm. If they are asleep at my mom's that means getting them from my mom's to the car asleep and then from the car home and trying to not disrupt their sleep."

"Right now I'm juggling taking time off, hiring temporary sitters, and sneaking my baby into work at the risk of being disciplined or sent home."

"They are friends [watching my child], but I did not feel comfortable leaving my daughter, I was a little worried and wanted to finish my job quickly to pick her up."

"I struggled every day with trying to find someone available to care for my daughters. Even with having to ask family since they lived far away and having to commute two hours both ways just for a sitter."

"Child care is often pieced together the week of work. My partner, family, and neighbor all help. We pay our neighbor a below-market rate as she is wanting to help us. However, it is still a financial strain. Additionally, we are losing her support soon as she has found full-time work."

***Parent results (insights)***

"I had to find someone and ask around who can help me and also when I find people they have jobs too so my son was here and there and it's very hard. Family members are ok but also hard to be constant because they work or have children themselves."

"Difficult relationship with family member watching child. Interferes with mood for job."

"Working construction varies in start time and location. Often commute is one hour or more. The arrangements were varied: Work was 6PM-3AM. Picked my children up at 4AM from provider. Provider was paid so little through CalWorks system that she could not sustain as it was disruptive to her own family. Once children attended Head Start, dropping children with in-home provider at 5AM and transport to Head Start had been very difficult. Transportation provider is not funded to do both ends of transportation, and therefore would not pick up when Head Start closed at 4PM."

"A friend of mine watched my child in exchange for rent. The person was unreliable. I was unable to afford child care. I almost lost my job a couple times."

"I had licensed in-home care, she worked in a hospital setting in the past so she understood my schedule. She let me drop off early and pick up late and made her schedule around my work schedule. It was the best experience I could ask for."

"It has been very challenging finding care during after hours that most daycare facilities offer. My family has helped me a lot but it isn't stable and I don't feel the most comfortable leaving my son there."

"I was unable to find a child care provider that could watch my daughter (infant) for the variable hours I needed to work. I looked for six months and was out of work because of my child care need. I ended up moving away from San Diego to the Inland Empire because a family friend just stopped working and for most of my shifts is able to watch my daughter, although it is still not stable and there are days she cancels on me last minute."

"I always feel like I am imposing on them [family members]. I wish there was a licensed caregiver in my town."

"When I have to be out of town for work or work after 6 pm, I have to arrange pick up and drop offs, overnight and costs usually within a few days of receiving information about the trip/ event. I work with communities and youth, so my job can be fast paced and change from day to day; so it has been difficult to have constantly changing childcare and arrangements. It has become a sort of an ongoing game of Tetris."

"In the end... I wound up leaving my job because of the difficulty finding a sitter during these hours, whether it was family or friends, and I don't just trust anybody with my kids."

"My family child care provider would go above and beyond to have my children well. Arriving tired and frustrated she would have something positive to say about my kiddos. That would make my day. Plus she was available upon my variable schedule."

"Had six children, I worked 12 hour shifts, had to take them to different places. I worked as an ICU nurse and child care was often more stressful than my job."



### ***Parent results (insights)***

"My mom and brother provided child care for me. However, I had to turn down another job after being unemployed for six months because I could not find child care at that time – which was horrible! I also am a single parent and couldn't afford many of the options other parents could afford. We have a real lack of quality full day preschool/childcare options for low income parents – which is exactly what our community needs."

"When I worked nontraditional hours I had to ask my friends and family members if they were able to help me and babysit my child while I worked those hours. Sometimes I had to turn down jobs because I did not have the money to pay the babysitter or the babysitter for the nights I had to work."

"It was chaotic to say the least. I cried almost every day. I worked anywhere between 40-60 hour weeks and was going to school. One day their father watched them then two to three days out of the week I had to take them to daycare in the morning. Then I had to take my lunch to drive 45 minutes to the closest family member come back cross a bridge and pay toll twice. It was one of the worse experiences of my life and dangerous as I had to rush to make it back to work on time."

"I would get called to a property last minute, and sometimes my children would have to sit in the car while I worked."

"My mother, sister and other family members helped out. It was difficult to piece together at times. Sometimes my mom spent the night and my sister picked my daughter up to drop her off at school. I took time off occasionally due to childcare (ex when my mom was out of town and I didn't have anyone that could watch her overnight). I ended up changing jobs because it was just too stressful."

"Having to rely on family or family friends can be hard as they have their own kids or plans and it doesn't always fit with what I need coverage for. Sometimes having to piece together times and care with different people. It can be really stressful."

"Always piecing together who would watch my kids. No one in my family wanted or deserved to have to watch my kids all night every night I worked. Lots of flaky sitters and no backup plan causing me to almost lose my job. No daycare centers open overnight or early in the morning left me with very little options."

"My mother watched my two kids while I worked M-F Tuesday nights until 9pm and sometimes weekends. My mom is disabled so it was very hard for her to take care of one child under one year and a seven year old, she would do so much for me she was damaging her health more than what it was. She couldn't take my youngest outside to be around other kids or just to get fresh air, it put a strain on her body. So my daughter didn't get the correct care for the learning stability. My son didn't get out either because we lived in a bad area and again my mom couldn't be outside with a young child and watch another one."

***Parent results (insights)***

"I never knew if the person was going to show up or not. I always called the babysitter because I was worried about my kids."

"It was very hard because it was straining relationships. It was hard to afford living so I had to work but then having them placed with someone versus a center seemed to be more expensive. But it was hard because a center wasn't open during times of need. It was very hard."

"I work in food service industry where the peak hours are dinner. So I would be given the worst lunch shift making 4x less cause I couldn't find night child care."

"I've had great paying offers for work God knows how many times before I moved here and couldn't take them due to trying to find affordable daycare. One income only, just mine. No mother, grandma, friends. Just me to support him and child care is not cheap, one half if not more than a check so I need to make good money, but can't due to daycare, and weekend work is always needed and I can't do it."

"They will take away clients if I'm unable to show up to work over the weekend, which directly reflects in my pay."

"I had to decline shifts. Which resulted in less money to pay rent or food. I almost lost my job due to inconsistent child care. I had to turn down work due to nontraditional hours."

"I couldn't take a promotion because of the hours and not having affordable child care during those hours. Eventually I quit because I was spending more on child care than what I was earning."

"My hours have been cut due to disciplinary act towards me because I've had to call out of work when my mom randomly makes plans without letting me know and I have no one for my son to stay home with him."

"I was unable to take a promotion due to daycare hours. Instead of moving up I was forced to keep hours at current job."

"Lots of times when shifts opened up that I could have gotten overtime on I had to pass since I couldn't find someone last minute which made my work see me as failing to be flexible."

"Because child care options are not as flexible as my work, I have had to miss conferences, training and necessary events that directly affect my work and income. At times, it has made my work harder because I was not able to attend or be involved with an event, etc. which usually means I have to try to do more work within a constricted and hectic work week."

"I can only work jobs between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. to receive proper child care. Anything out of that range or with a large commute is out of the question. This makes it extremely hard and lowers my income. This is hard on me since I'm a single mother of two."

"Sometimes I call off on weekends when I don't have a sitter and I got written up at work."

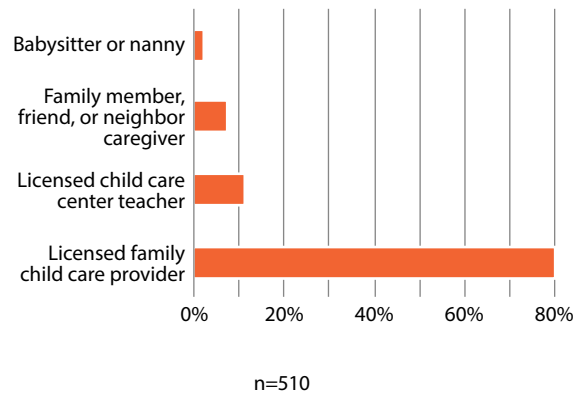
"I lost good job opportunities and almost fired because I cannot come into work because no child care on certain days.. I'm also on the verge of losing current job because of that issue."

## Provider results

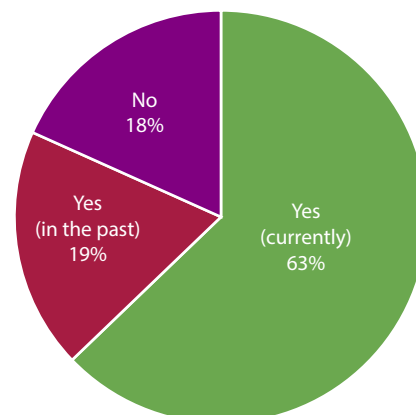
### General information

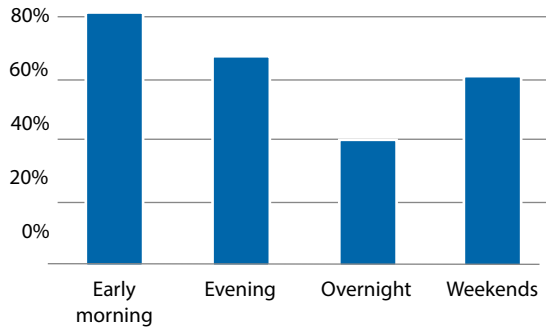
The majority of respondents were licensed family child care providers (80%). Eleven percent worked at licensed centers, seven percent were family, friend, or neighbor caregivers, and two percent were babysitters or nannies. The majority of providers either currently work nontraditional hours (63%) or used to (19%), while 18% said they never have (these respondents were excluded from the rest of the questions, except pertaining to their reasons for not providing it). Similar to the parents, the majority work early morning, evening and weekends. Most providers were paid to work during these hours, either through a subsidy (27%), out of pocket (34%) or both (40%). Three-quarters of providers cared for children with a variable schedule, and the vast majority reported getting either no notice to a few days' notice (41%) or less than a week's notice (39%). Over half (56%) of the providers said they started offering nontraditional hours because the families in their care needed it and they wanted to help. Twenty-two percent said they were trying to increase their enrollment or income, and 13% said they did it to help out a friend, family member, or neighbor.

### Which of the following best describes your role as a child care provider?

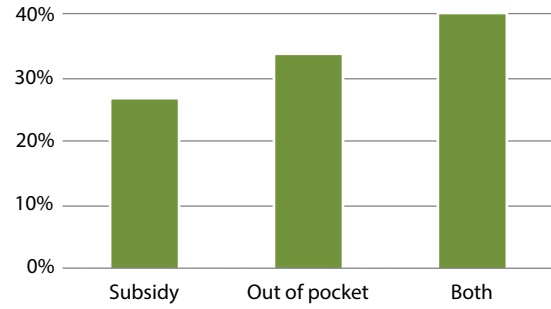


### Have you ever provided care during nontraditional hours?

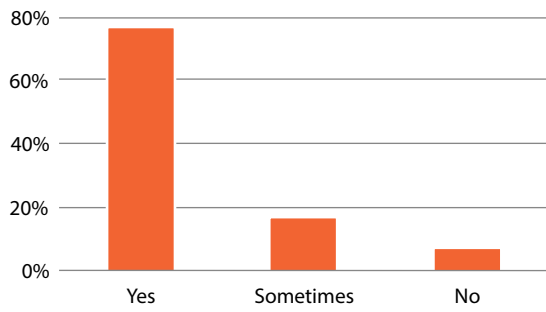


**Provider results (general)****Which of these nontraditional hours did you care for children?**

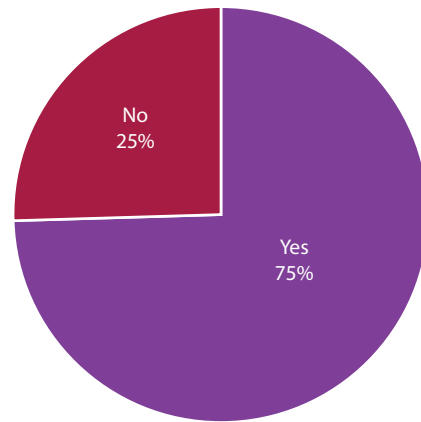
n=410

**Were you paid with a subsidy or out of pocket?**

n=373

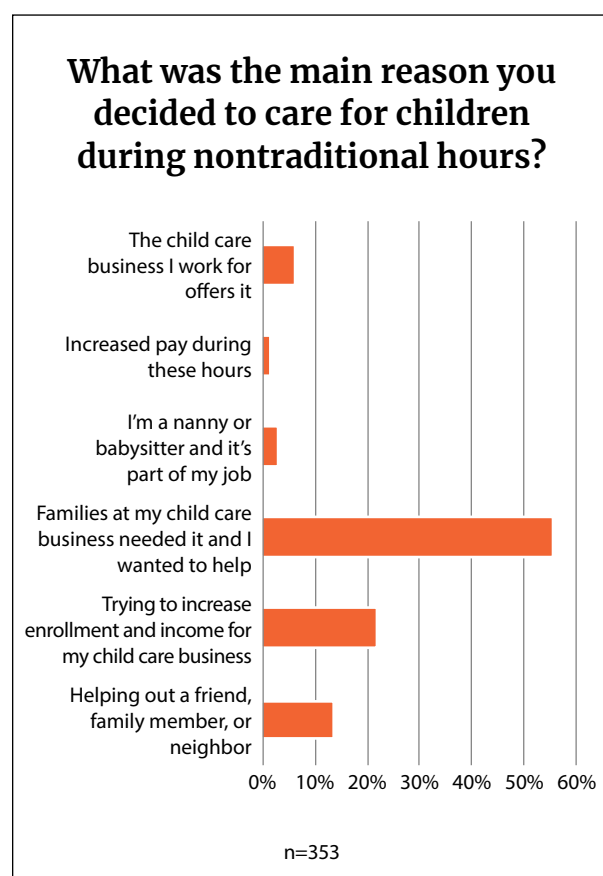
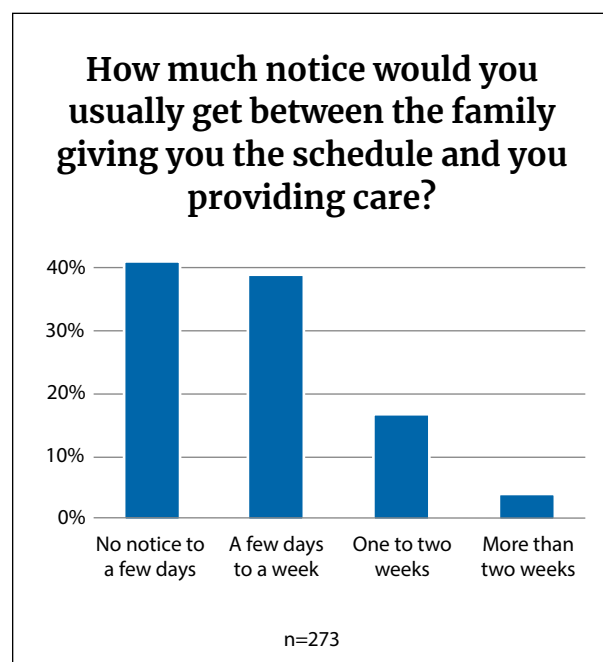
**Were you paid to care for children during this time?**

n=406

**Did you care for children with a variable schedule?**

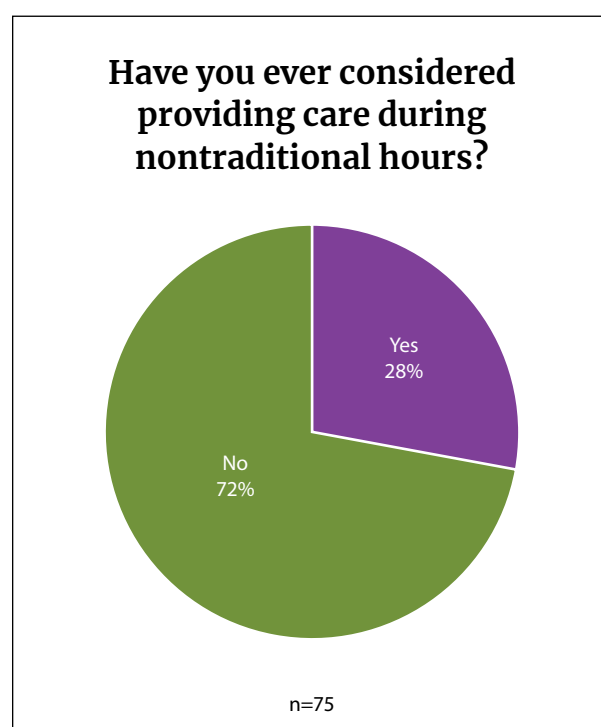
n=369

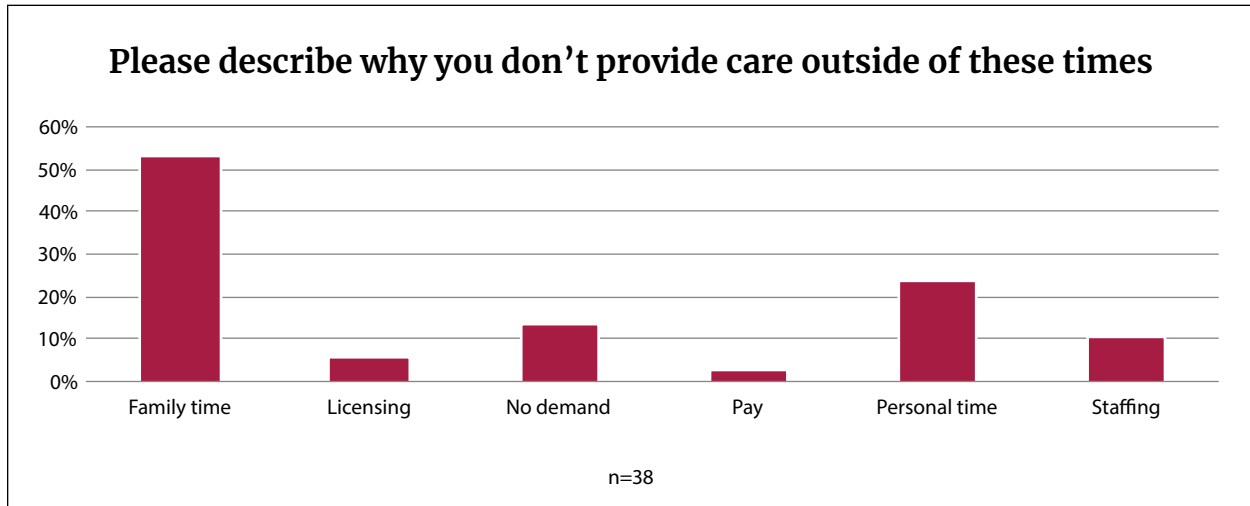
### Provider results (general)



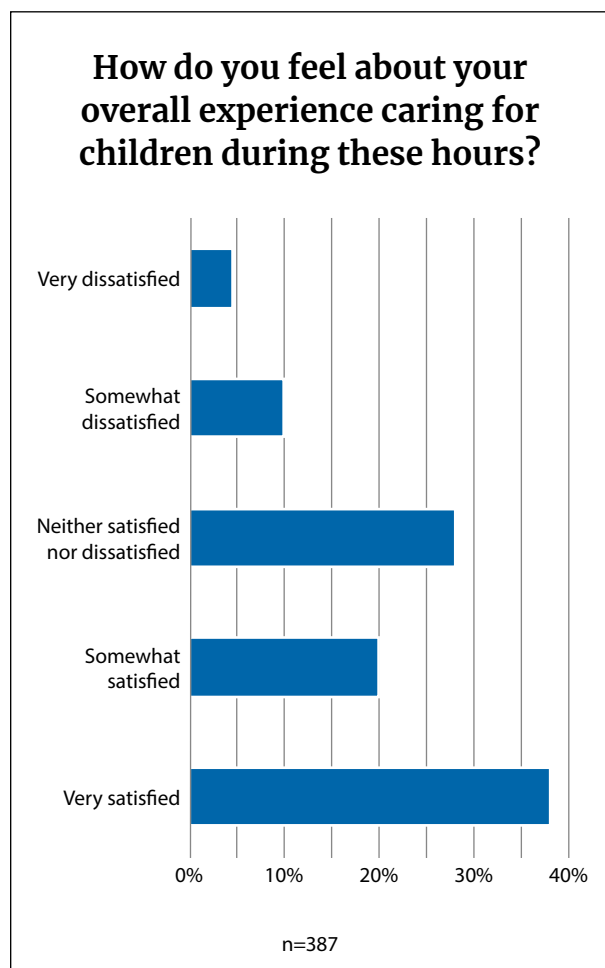
### Providers who haven't worked nontraditional hours

For providers who have never provided care during nontraditional hours, the majority (72%) said they've never considered it. When asked to explain why they don't, the top reason was family time, with over half (53%) providers describing how it would interfere with time with their own family. The second most frequently mentioned reason was personal time, with 24% citing the impact it would have on their own time as the main reason they don't work those hours.

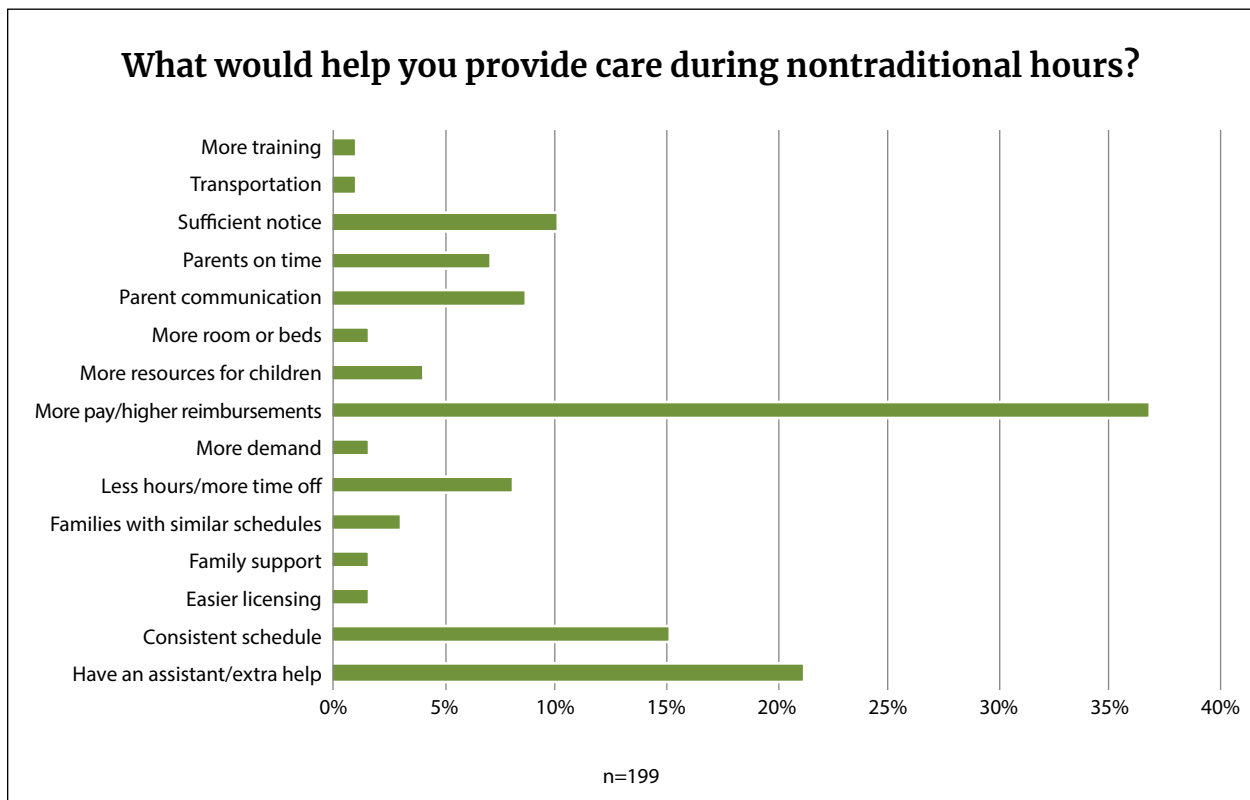
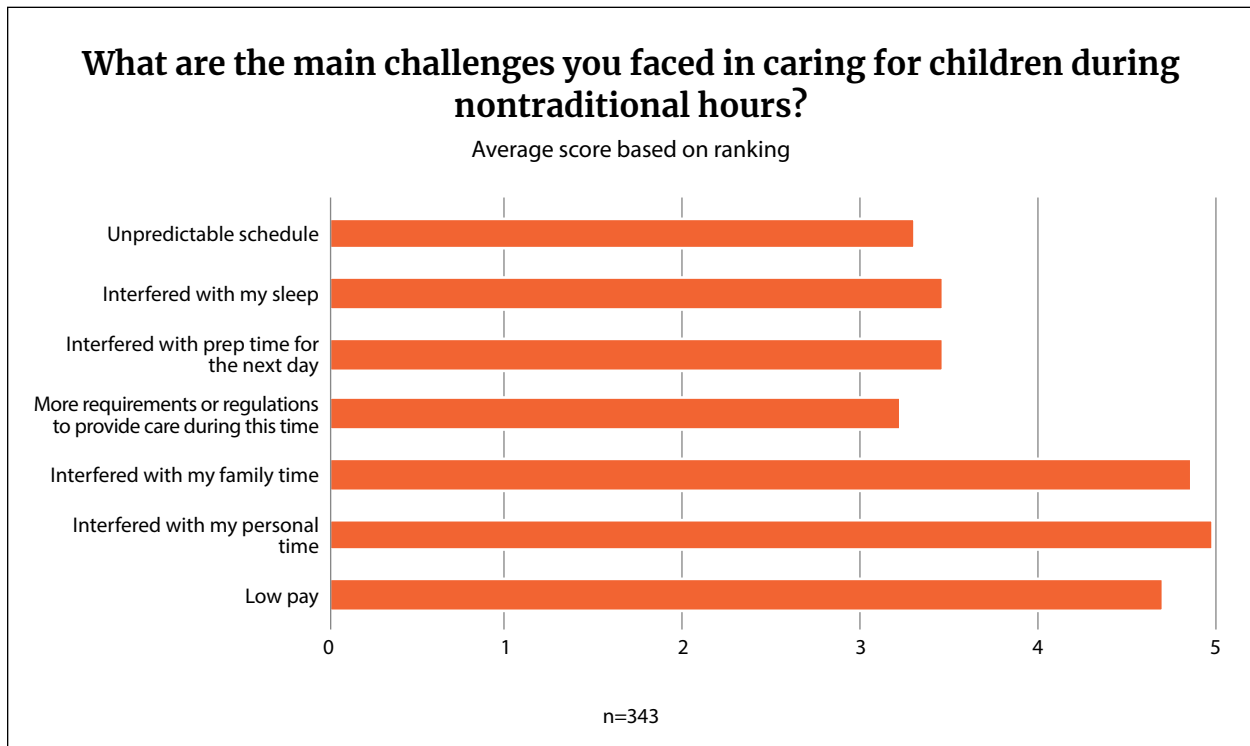


**Provider results (have not worked nontraditional hours)****Providers' experience and challenges**

Thirty-eight percent of providers said they were “very satisfied” with their overall experience working during nontraditional hours. Twenty percent said they were “satisfied”, and 28% said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Ten percent were “dissatisfied”, and 4% were “very dissatisfied”. These responses didn’t vary significantly between type of provider. The top three challenges were: interference with personal time, interference with family time, and low pay. When asked what would be most helpful to them, higher pay or higher reimbursements was by far most frequently mentioned (37%), and having an assistant or helper was second (21%), which is presumably related to higher pay. The next most cited things were having a consistent schedule (15%) and having sufficient notice about the families’ schedule (10%).



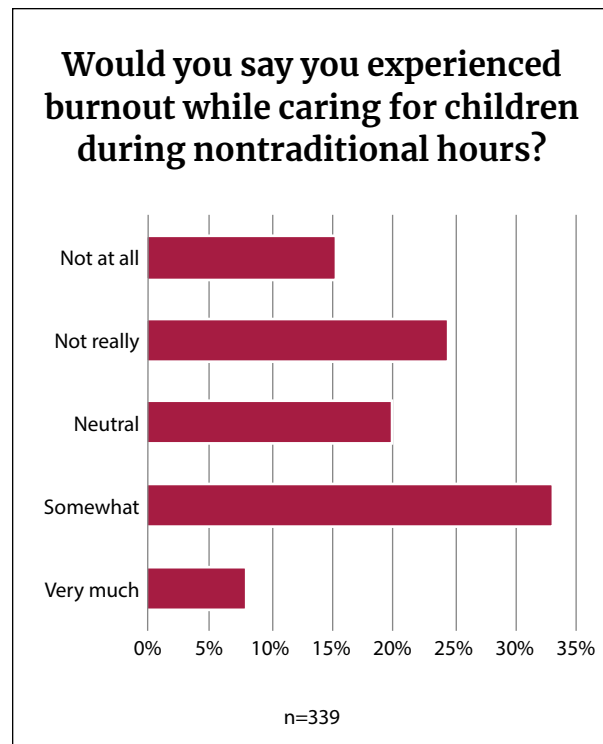
### Provider results (experience and challenges)



## Provider results (cont.)

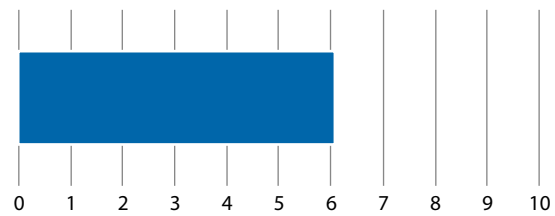
### Provider wellbeing

When asked to rank their work-life balance while caring for children during nontraditional hours on a scale from one to 10, with one being no work-life balance and 10 being excellent work-life balance, the average score was six (this did not vary significantly between provider type). When asked if they experienced burnout while caring for children during nontraditional hours, one-third (33%) of participants said “somewhat”, almost one quarter (29%) said “not really”, 15% said “not at all” and 8% said “very much”.



**On a scale from 1 to 10, please rank your work-life balance while caring for children during nontraditional hours**

Average number



n=342

### Provider insights

“I sleep less, but it is worth it because I am able to have more kids throughout the day, but it is hard because I have to work a lot of hours to be able to pay my assistant and my bills. If we would get a better payment for these hours, we can pay assistants more hours and be able to rest a little more”

“Hours of care not on enrollment forms so I don’t get paid for extended hours if this particular incident puts hours of care over-time...working for free is terrible”

“It’s really hard to do anything with your own kids because it really leaves no time for that.”

“There are no incentives to take care of children at this time, no program offers anything extra. Or some special class for us, as motivation or personal improvement.”



### *Provider results (insights)*

"A lot of time and efforts sacrificed for little appreciation and pay. The kids are great though and need the care so I do what I can."

"It was fulfilling to help families in need. It was temporary so not too bad but it was exhausting and my family suffered."

"It's a bit more exhausting, it's a liability - you have to be awake and alert at all times"

"It's hard to have your family time when you always are caring for other kids. I love having daycare kids early mornings but I no longer do nights and weekends due to my own family's time."

"The thing that would be the most helpful to me in order to not experience burn out would be to have more paid days off [through subsidy system]. 10 days for a whole year is not enough!"

"I felt unappreciated by the families who needed late hours as they didn't notice that I was putting in a 65 hour work week they were only focused on the time their children were in my care."

"Working nontraditional hours can be exhausting and can also hinder family relationships between the provider and their family members as they are busy caring, cleaning after and prepping for their child care children."

"Out of pocket parents are much easier in communicating their needs and times needed. Subsidies parents usually don't communicate well with me on times and needs."

"In order to run the financial part of a child care business, the income is important. The consistent, guaranteed income to pay overhead,

in a timely manner (like the traditional paycheck), is a deciding factor in choosing clients. To guarantee a provider a set monthly income without prejudice (disadvantage) of a parent's profession should be considered. It is prejudice to give a parent of traditional hours favorable benefits to secure child care and not to a parent who does not have traditional hours (variable hours). It brings injury to both parties involved: parent & provider."

"Working nontraditional hours takes a toll on one's well-being and family life, and when the reimbursement comes from a subsidized source it is not worth it most of the time. It can be fulfilling when one sees their child care families thrive and accomplish their goals."

## Focus groups and interviews

### *Parent results*

In talking to parents who work or have worked nontraditional hours in both the in-person focus groups and phone interviews, the following themes consistently emerged:

- » Parents with a family child care provider are extremely grateful for their flexibility and warmth with their children, and see them as a second parent.
- » Parents with vouchers experience limited access to programs, because of disincentives to take subsidies. For example, programs don't get reimbursed until the end of the month through the subsidy program.

### ***Parent results (cont.)***

- » Parents with a voucher can't have a license-exempt provider care for their children in their own home, so parents have to transport their children to the provider's home, often waking them up in the middle of the night and disrupting their sleep (and not allowing the children to sleep in their own beds).
- » Transportation is difficult for school age children - getting from school to child care, or child care to school. Parents wish there was an affordable ride-share service their children could use.
- » Parents often get very little to no warning about their schedules, meaning they can't give their providers warning either. Parents are trying to maintain good standing at work, and will be punished if they can't take last-minute shifts or have to leave early, so providers take on the flexibility so the parents can work. Often parents don't know what time they will be done for the day until they're told they can leave.
- » Sometimes (usually with center programs) the parent's work schedule is barely outside their hours of operation, but if they don't have someone else to transport, they have to take their child out of the program, quit their job, or cut their hours.
- » Even if parents aren't punished at work, they get passed up for promotions and job advancement by employees with no children, or who have another adult at home during those hours, who can accept last-minute shifts during nontraditional hours.

- » Head Start and other center-based programs meant for the most vulnerable families are often not accessible to families working nontraditional hours, especially those with a single parent.

### ***Parent insights***

"If we get extra hours they'll just put it on our schedule, so my daycare [family child care] will accommodate that because I have a variable schedule, so they'll just say one day you're doing this many hours, they give us a week's notice, it changes every week. If there are employees that need days off or are sick, they'll call us in. My daycare will accommodate that for me...I'm really happy with the daycare, I'll call her if I have to work extra hours or anything and if she has a spot that's available she'll accommodate that. I feel really safe with her, my son's been going to her since he was really little. He's had [provider] in his life for quite some time, and I just think it's really cool that she can be part of that. It's gonna be hard next year because he's gonna be going to school, and I know that's her job, but it's kind of an emotional thing for him. As far as [provider] goes, she's bent over backwards for us, helped us out when we've needed her."

"I work in the watermelon fields, I have a family child care provider. I don't have a set schedule, I show up and when I can leave I leave. Sometimes I'm in the fields close to home, sometimes it's one hour or more away. I don't have a schedule. Also, if the field is small I can leave at 1pm, if it's bigger I leave at 3/3:30/4pm depending on the distance. We find out from one day to the next what the location is."

**Parent results (insights)**

"I also have a home daycare provider. She's a very good person, I see her as a second mother to my children. It's very few times she has a great need and can't watch them, and she's always sure that I have someone else who can watch them. If I don't have anyone, she'll do what she needs to do to take them. But I tell her don't worry, I can find someone else to take them. It's very special this relationship, she's really a second mother to my children."

"Ideally I would have somebody that would go to my house, because I have to wake up the kids really early. In the winter it's very cold, and the kids don't like that."

"At one point before we had the subsidy I was working 3pm-7pm and my fiancée was working 7am-3pm. I would have to leave before he got home, but there was a 30 minute gap. There was a while I was just going to work late, showing up at 4pm, and I did get in trouble for that... As soon as my fiancée got home with the car, I would take the car and go and I was just late every day... At first I didn't get a subsidy because I only needed an hour, but I talked to them and explained the whole thing, I can't leave him alone for an hour, and they got me four hours a day. I have to take him for all four hours every day or else the [center] provider doesn't get paid and they'll drop him."

[Single mother without a child care voucher]

"I'm working 2:30pm-11:30pm, I'm relying on my parents five days a week. My dad is retired but he's watching my son almost 10 hours a day, I'm getting off work to pick him up at midnight and driving all the way back to my place, driving all those miles, it's like 65 miles. That's why I'm homeschooling him, because if I

put him in public school I would never see him. So I homeschool him two days out of the week, Mondays and Wednesdays I'm off, so I get to drop him off at his homeschooling group and pick him up, so it gives me time with my son too. It's not ideal, but it's what's working for my little family... I have to come wake him up in the middle of the night, put his jacket and shoes on, get him in the car and drive back up to our place."

[Single mother] "I have had opportunities with my second job to work weekends, and I can't because I don't have child care. I'm giving up on wages I could definitely use. The hours can go until 8pm, I work there five days a week, two hours a day. I could work more, but I'm in a time crunch because I can only work until 5pm, my child care closes at 5:30pm."

"[Head Start] is open 8am-3pm on Wednesday but I work until 3:30pm so I had to pull her out of Head Start, which I absolutely loved. I wasn't even using the grant for Head Start since it was free, I was just using a little bit in the afternoon so I could keep my grant. Then I enrolled her in [private center] because I thought, I can't play this game. If I need to be at a meeting at 7:30am, but Head Start doesn't start until 8am... the child care where she's gonna go is 6:30am-6pm. I'm not gonna leave her there that long, but I have that range that if I need to be at a staff meeting at 7:30am I'm not stressing about it. I was using the grant to pay for someone to pick her up and drop off, but then they stopped, said they couldn't do it anymore. I loved Head Start, I really didn't want to pull her out."

### ***Parent results (insights)***

[Single mother whose family child care provider is retiring soon] “If I use a center I would have to find someone to pick him up and have him for that time, until I’m off work. Another concern is if I did that, what quality of care would my son be getting if the [reimbursement] pay is so low. I wouldn’t mind paying out of pocket for some of it, but paying out of pocket is tough with all the bills and living expenses I have...the second job is for just getting by. If I had to pay someone out of pocket I would probably end up leaving the second job.”

[Single mother of four children, working in strawberry fields] “Sometimes I have to leave the house at two in the morning to get to the field when it’s very far away, but those hours in travel to get there aren’t covered in the child care subsidy. If I leave at 2am, the program only covers a half hour of travel, so the family child care provider just doesn’t get paid for the rest of the time. She only starts getting paid starting at 6:30am, but sometimes I have to drop off the kids at 3am. The program says it won’t cover those hours because it’s too early. When I have to work Sundays the [family child care] provider takes care of them. I really appreciate her. When I work six days a week, the provider doesn’t get paid when she works Sundays because I’ve already used five days. I only find out where and when I need to be by the end of the previous work day.”

“I work in a restaurant so your hours are never really steady there, you just take all the hours you can get the second they call. It sucks, I went from a nontraditional work schedule with shifts starting at 5pm and I’d get off at 1:30am if we were lucky, or I’d start at 5am and go until 7pm. I switched to a traditional work schedule and they told me if I want a promotion or want to

advance, you have to work all the extra hours, go back to a nontraditional schedule and take whatever they give you.”

“The school that’s closest to me is not the best. The walk home is dangerous. My son is 8 now, so even if he did go to his home school around the corner it would still be an issue getting home. There’s been murders at the park across the street at the school. What Uber service exists to pick up your child and take them home while you’re at work? I try to coordinate with family, but that doesn’t always work.”

“I worked at a movie theater for 15 years and those hours vary. I had to quit a year ago because child care is hard, now that my son’s older it’s a little easier, but it hasn’t been easy at all. I’ve been working and going to school. When I quit the theater I was lucky to get a job with the school district, but the theater paid more than what I’m getting now, because I can kick in more hours when the season was high, and at the school district my hours are set and my checks extend from a 10 month to a 12 month. So I actually get paid less monthly, but it’s a cut I took because at least I’m on my kid’s school schedule. And it’s just unfortunate that you have to make that kind of choice...I had my older kids helping me when my son was a baby but I didn’t want to put that on them, they wanted to do activities or go with their friends. I’d try to bargain with them, I’ll buy you a prom dress or something, but they were things I’d be doing for them regardless. So it’s been hard, but with that being said, I’ve had to change a lot of jobs because of child care, jobs where I could have been paid more I’ve had to turn down or quit because of child care and because it didn’t fall into the hours that I needed... [nearby town]

*Parent results (insights)*

has other programs, but you have to sign him in for the free programs. They have Ready Ride which is a transportation program but he would have to walk in himself, so they didn't approve for him to go. There has to be someone to drop him off, so technically I need 30 minutes for someone to pick him up from school and drop him off at this other daycare and sign him in. So I recently cut my hours at the elementary school, I told them I had to be out by 2:30pm so I could pick him up by 3:05pm. It's just trying to figure out what works and what doesn't work. I know I've worn out family by trying to ask them for help, so I try not to, I try to just make it work."

[Single mother working as a lab technician at Kaiser] "There's been many people who have come in under me (Kaiser is seniority based) who have child care, have people to watch their children, and can work all the crazy hours hospitals ask you to work, and who have bumped me in the process called 'conversion', who are now over me when I've been there longer than them because they've been able to work and put in the grind and the hours whereas I'm not because I don't have the child care there for me and the hours they call me to work. It's been very tough (also financially)."

"I never understood why you can't have a provider or relative come to your home. I typically try to have my kids get ready for bed between 8:30pm/9pm, so getting them out the bath and into pajamas and then dropping them off somewhere and then having to get them in the morning, get them dressed, barely see them and drop them off at school, that's a lot. I think it would be a lot more convenient and comfortable if they're in their own beds and there are

providers that are willing to come to your house, there are nannies and sitters, so I don't understand why this [subsidy] program doesn't support that. Ideally I would have someone come to me so I don't have to disrupt my kids' schedule. Right now I'm relying on family, my mom is my provider. My cousin is my backup provider. I mostly work at night at the hospital. The school hours are fine because my kids are all in school except the youngest, he's about to go to TK. So everybody will be in school, so that we have covered. But at night I don't know if I trust taking my kids to a facility or a stranger. My mom gets paid to care for them but it's minimal, and I have to take them to her. It disrupts her schedule too, because even if I bathe them and get them in their pajamas, if we have to travel to the other side of town, now they're up. So for her, now she has to settle them back down. My mom is more than happy to come to my house, but they won't allow it. If they did, my kids could already be asleep when she comes over. Their schedules would be less disrupted."

"I'd be off at work 11pm/12am. When I would pick up my child it's the middle of the night and they're asleep, and to have to get them home is difficult. The grant was great but a lot of people didn't accept it because they don't get paid right away, so that transition with payment. If I wanted to use the grant I'd have to pay upfront fee to cover costs so it was on the books when they didn't get paid. I respect the grants but it makes it hard to find a location that's willing to work with it. I don't even have it because where I want my son to be they won't accept it. Ideally it would be nice if more places were willing to take the grants, whether it's home day cares or facilities."

### ***Parent results (insights)***

"I love her [family child care provider], she's such a sweet lady. She goes above and beyond. On their birthdays she gets them cake and gifts, for Christmas she got them gifts, for vacation time she'll take them to Chuck E. Cheese. I'm so grateful because my mom wouldn't even do that, because she's tired."

### ***Provider results***

In talking to family child care providers and license-exempt providers who have ever cared for children during nontraditional hours, the following themes consistently emerged:

- » The reason all providers started working nontraditional hours was because the families they were caring for needed it and they wanted to help them. No one mentioned extending their hours to try to increase enrollment or increase their revenue.
- » Many family child care providers work 12-24 hours a day, six to seven days a week to accommodate all the families' work schedules.
- » Family child care providers express a lot of joy and fulfillment from the job. They love the children in their care, and see them as part of their family. This makes them feel obligated to accommodate the families' schedules, because they're attached to the children and feel responsible for them.
- » Family child care providers act as community hubs, and express gratification from helping the families and their community, particularly single parents. Some family child care providers described helping families experiencing homelessness by letting them stay in their home, or helping them get an apartment. They'll often provide resources (such as diapers), or referrals to external resources.
- » Working long hours interferes a lot with family time, causing regret and sadness, and anger from their own children and spouses. Many family child care providers said they went into this job so that they could stay home and take care of their own children, but working nontraditional hours they realized that they have less time with their children than if they had found a job outside of the home.
- » Across regions, older family child care providers whose kids are grown and live alone have an easier time providing nontraditional hours, and actually enjoy it. They like having children in the house, when it's otherwise empty. For family child care providers with young children at home it's a much bigger burden, because it detracts from time with their families.
- » Most providers expressed feeling burned out and tired while working nontraditional hours. Many worked nontraditional hours in the past but stopped because they got too burned out, or they are planning to stop soon. They expressed needing some time to rest so they could better care for the kids when they are working.
- » A lot of providers said a big challenge is they can't schedule doctor's appointments, and their health suffers as a consequence.



**Provider results (cont.)**

- » Family child care providers would like to work only nontraditional hours, or only traditional hours, but there aren't enough families who fit into one of those categories, especially with variable schedules.
- » License-exempt providers don't rely on the reimbursements as income; most were already watching the kids before they were getting reimbursed.
- » Family child care providers consistently mentioned disincentives and drawbacks to taking children with vouchers:
  - Providers can charge private pay families more if they ask for nontraditional hours, whereas with children with vouchers they often don't make significantly more money working these hours.
  - In areas where providers have a choice, many are trying to transition away from enrolling children with vouchers.
  - Providers who have only private pay families tend to only be open traditional hours, and experience better boundaries and work-life balance.
- » Vacation and paid time off are very important and helpful. Some providers have created a network of other providers to help cover for them when they're gone.
- » In some communities there's one or some family child care providers who work extended hours (both traditional and nontraditional) and take referrals from other providers for nontraditional hours, to cover those hours for other providers. For example, in one community there was a family child care provider who was older and lived alone, and she would take other providers' children during the weekends, so those providers (who had their own families at home) could take the weekend off.
- » Family child care providers wish there was better communication between Alternative Payment staff and parents.
- » It's easier to provide overnight care rather than have children picked up at all hours of the night and dropped off early in the morning. Late night and early morning pickups/drop offs wake the children and make it hard for providers to get the rest they need to make it through such long days.

What would help:

- » Higher reimbursements during nontraditional hours, or for working more than eight hours a day (like overtime) so that working extended hours was worth it, and so that they could afford to hire an assistant overnight so they can sleep.

**Provider insights**

"I used to do weekends, did that for a couple years but I quit because I wasn't seeing any difference in pay. Seems like weekends should be paid a different rate like overtime, but I was getting the same as Monday-Friday. There are a lot of parents looking for weekends, but a lot of providers don't want to do it because of that issue. I would make slightly more each month

### ***Provider results (insights)***

doing weekends, but the rate was the same as during the week. I thought I was supposed to make more, I don't really understand how the system works. When I stopped, the families stayed with me and looked for another provider during those hours. Private pay would pay more on the weekends. After stopping weekends I felt a lot of relief, less stressed, it made a big difference. I won't extend my hours again."

"I wanted more time with my little children. I was watching kids until 8/10 at night but I wanted time to do my children's activities. I waited to cut down on hours until all the families that needed it left. When my children are older I might take care of them, but I want to work more with private pay kids. Private parents are more flexible."

"Private families are better, pay better than [subsidy]. Subsidy families think my work is owed to them. I work almost 24 hours a day. It's very burdensome. I almost lost my house because I wasn't making enough watching children. I had to get another job, preparing for quinceañeras (on the weekends, when there's no kids). The [subsidy] program doesn't pay for these hours and it's not worth it to work all these hours for the same pay."

"At first I didn't watch kids during the weekends, but the parents were asking me. I want to work five days a week because it's very burdensome. I'm alone, I don't have a husband or kids at home so I can do it. I don't know how the providers with kids and families do it. My assistant helps me a lot but there's so much to do, I can't imagine also having my own kids at home. I want to take classes on Saturdays but I can't because I'm working."

"A lot of children need evening and weekend hours, but I also saw no difference in pay. I used to do evening hours, and I used to get more when I started 18 years ago. I had the choice of doing the daily rate so I would get more. Now, I get paid monthly payments and I get a lot less. I receive a lot of calls for evening and weekends, but it's hard. I know the need, but it's hard because you don't get paid enough to be working. I wish I had the choice of payment from [local Alternative Payment Program] because 18 years ago I used to get paid better. If I got paid better I would extend my hours again. [AP program] pays full-time if you have them six or 16 hours. With private pay you say you can have them eight to nine hours a day and they know that they have to be there. With subsidy, they take advantage because they don't have to pay."

"It is very little what they pay for working all day on the weekends, and very late during the week, it is not worth having those schedules. But the families I have need care those hours, and no provider wanted to help, so I do it just to help her, but they pay almost nothing."

"I think it was rewarding for me because I was helping the community, helping the kids, everyone who went through the program is still in my community...the challenge is being there for the families because they were working and I felt like if I wasn't going to do it, where would they go? It would have made it easier if I had help and just did certain hours and not so many weekends. I felt guilty because they'd come to me and say they have to work, can you please watch them, and I felt bad so I was like ok I'm here for them, so I just did it, not knowing the toll it was taking on me and my family too. It was so consuming for my time and my life."



***Provider results (insights)***

"I have a lot of single parent families that don't have a lot of family, that don't have grandparents or uncles to leave the kids with, so if I don't watch them they have no one to watch them. So sometimes I start at 4am, depends on the parents' schedule. If they have to be at work at 3:30am, then I have to be up to receive the kids. I'm working almost 24 hours different shifts. Some kids come in early, maybe they're gone 3pm/3:30pm then I have some kids maybe stay overnight, then staying the next day a little bit longer just so the parents can sleep. So I'm doing it because of the needs of the parents. I have three families basically under my wing because they have no other way for their kids to be taken care of."

"Private kids pay separate rate for Saturdays because it's overtime. I just started taking kids from [subsidy] and it's different. You get more with private kids because they pay more for extended hours. I prefer the private kids, I get a higher rate and if they come late they pay me more. It's all in the contract and they're ok with it. Kids on subsidy, the parents are often late and you don't get any extra. The parents don't value us, they expect a lot... We take classes to help their children. When [AP program] talks to parents, they need to educate them on what our job is and what we do for them. It's not just the pay, it's what we do. Our job isn't easy, after all the hours of work we come to learn more about how to take care of them."

"I opened my family child care home when my children were young, so I could stay home with them. It turns out that I had no time for them because my daycare kids were there all the time, I had to be open all the time for all the families' shifts. I couldn't go to any of my kids' activities, and they felt like they never had my full attention

because when the other kids are there it's my job to make sure they're ok. My own kids couldn't play with Legos if there were infants around, they couldn't watch TV if anyone was napping – it really impacted their lives. I feel a lot of sadness and regret about that."

"When I started watching kids I was open all day, every day. After four years I decided to shorten my hours to 5am-5:30pm, and to stop working Sundays. The reason I stopped working Sundays is because I believe that for me, I need a day of rest because this job is very stressful sometimes, and very heavy. Some people think the job is just watching kids, but it's not, it's everything else - it's cleaning, shopping, cooking, preparing, paperwork."

"The most difficult thing is we can't have our own lives. We have to have a flexible schedule to meet the needs of the parents. A parent will say their schedule is 5am-5pm, but sometimes they're not done until 8pm. And there's no warning, so I can't plan to do anything after 5pm. We could do traditional hours, but we'd be taking ourselves out of most of the market."

"I can't go to appointments because the families rely on us. I'm diabetic and I need to go to the doctor. I didn't go to the doctor for a whole year, I didn't have a mammogram for five years."

"I didn't have any time for the doctor or myself, I was very tired. And the [subsidy] program doesn't pay more for nontraditional hours, so I didn't want to waste my time. I love the kids, but I love myself. I noticed a big change when I stopped doing nontraditional hours. I didn't have any time for my family. I feel more happy with my job now. I love my kids, but I love my family. I can't work 24 hours a day."

# Conclusions

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Parents who work nontraditional hours experience a lot of stress in finding child care, particularly for single parents. Parents who work these hours often have variable schedules and receive little notice before shifts; employers expect them to be available on-call, and they're often penalized, passed for advancement, or impacted financially if they can't find child care during nontraditional hours. In general, parents expressed preference for a licensed child care setting during nontraditional hours because it provides more stability than a family, friend, or neighbor (license-exempt) provider, as they're often doing it as a favor but not as a child care business.

Transportation was a primary concern for parents; the child's sleep is disrupted when they have to be woken up in the middle of the night to transport them, or their bedtime is extended to match the parent's work schedule. Even for families with a subsidy using a license-exempt provider, the child can't be cared for in their own home, which would help alleviate this problem. The difference between the experience of families with and without a child care subsidy was stark – those without a subsidy described piecing together different arrangements, straining relationships, sometimes having to bring their children to work, or even having to quit their jobs. Those with a subsidy described significantly less stress and more security in their arrangements and ability to work. In particular, those with a licensed family child care provider expressed a lot of satisfaction and gratitude for them. These providers are extremely flexible and

accommodating to the families' needs, and warm and loving with the children, and the parents appreciate this.

In many ways the low-wage nontraditional workforce falls on the backs of in-home caregivers, particularly family child care providers, as most centers don't provide extended care (programs such as Head Start and preschools are largely inaccessible to families working even slightly outside their hours of operation). Family child care providers offer the flexibility for parents to work these jobs, and they do it because they're connected to the children and want to help the families, but they often aren't compensated adequately. When parents don't have stability or flexibility at work, often the burden gets passed to these providers, who are themselves low income, and usually women of color - thus perpetuating the cycle of the "poor subsidizing the poor". There were also stark discrepancies seen between family child care providers who live in middle to high income areas and had private pay families, versus those in lower income areas with more children using a subsidy. Family child care providers with private pay families described having set hours during the day, and if families needed care outside of those hours, they knew they had to pay more for it. Providers in areas with children using subsidies described needing to extend their hours to accommodate all the families' varying schedules, to the point that they're working 12 to 24 hours a day, and not getting paid much more to do so. This leads to exhaustion, stress, and burnout in the providers, which can affect

their interactions with the children in their care.<sup>5</sup> These providers often don't have time to address their own health because they don't have any flexibility to schedule doctor's appointments, and their family time and relationships are severely hindered when they have child care children in their house at all hours.

The subsidy system creates additional barriers to both parents and providers. Many providers expressed frustration with caring for children on a subsidy because of the low and delayed payments and extended and varying schedules. In areas where they had a choice, providers had either switched entirely to accepting private pay families, or said they were trying to transition to private pay families only. Parents experienced this on their end as well, describing difficulty finding any licensed facility that would accept their voucher, due to the increased burden it places on them. In talking to parents in the focus groups and interviews, it also became apparent that there's a lack of communication between them and the local Alternative Payment Program, so that parents were often not receiving all of the benefits they were eligible for, which also impacts their provider getting paid. Additionally, the issues in the subsidy system create tension in the relationship between parent and provider, hindering a warm and supportive relationship, which is ultimately best for the children.

# Recommendations

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Child care is an integral part of California's infrastructure for economic growth, workforce development, and employer support. The struggles of child care providers and families who depend on them, illustrated in this report, show that California has many opportunities to improve our child care infrastructure to meet the needs of providers and the workforce they sustain.

The California Blue Ribbon Commission on Early Childhood Education (BRC)<sup>6</sup> recommends that we expand programs that are available during nontraditional hours and responsive to flexible schedules. The BRC further recommends that incentives be provided to encourage this type of care, as well as the removal of barriers that keep providers from offering it. Additionally, the 2014 Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) final rule<sup>7</sup> makes regulatory changes based on the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014. It reiterates that families utilizing child care subsidy should have access to at least 75% of all available child care, and that children from families with low incomes benefit most from high quality care (pgs. 67512, 67438). We concur with the BRC recommendations and the CCDF regulations and add the following:

**1. Providers who accept subsidy payments should be paid in alignment with private pay families.**

Our current system reimburses child care providers for the hours of care provided, after the care is provided. This delays their payment and provides unstable income. Like private pay families, subsidy payments should be disbursed to providers

on a monthly basis, at the beginning the month prior to when care is provided. This ensures they have stable income, eliminates advancing costs that they may or may not be compensated for which allows them to plan better, and begins to prevent the poor from subsidizing the poor.

**2. License-exempt providers should be able to provide care in the child's home.**

A consistent theme among parents was the desire for their child to have a good night of uninterrupted sleep when in the care of others. Because Fair Labor Standards Act (Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) Requirement, Title 29, U.S. Section 206) rules don't allow license-exempt providers who receive subsidy payments to care for a child in the child's home unless they are paid minimum wage for the hours worked, in order to meet minimum wage, the parent must have a minimum number of children in care or pay an additional co-payment. There currently is no place a child can receive care and be able to sleep a full night when the parent's work schedule doesn't allow that. License-exempt providers should be able to care for children in the child's home when overnight care is being provided. As part of ongoing rate reform efforts, a solution should be sought that results in license-exempt providers being paid no less than minimum wage for the hours they provide care, without any added burden on the families. Children will get the uninterrupted sleep they need, providers will have stability in income, and parents may experience less

stressful situations, which is also better for the children.

**3. Licensed providers should be able to care for a child the entire night if agreed upon by the parents and provider.**

There were many examples where a family has to drop off their child well before anyone working standard hours would be awake, making for an extremely long day for the provider who also provides care during standard hours.

For the same reasons license-exempt providers who are paid by voucher should be able to care for a child in the child's home, allowing licensed providers to care for children the entire night, even if that is beyond the hours needed for care, would allow children to get the uninterrupted sleep they need, and allow providers to be well-rested the next day, presuming they are not caring for an infant without an assistant.

**4. Providers need paid vacation and sick/safe time (also a BRC recommendation).**

As evidenced in the responses, providers work long hours with little time to recuperate each week. The long hours with few days off takes a toll on their health, their wellbeing, and their own families. Home-based providers should have a mechanism to take paid vacation time and paid sick time. For example, with a certain number of hours worked they can accumulate a credit of an hour that they can claim to cover a substitute so they can attend to health needs, or have the ability to tap a number of subsidy-sponsored substitute pool hours at no cost to the provider.

**5. Support a shared services model to support the business practices and operation of providers so they can focus more attention on providing quality care.**

In a shared resources and services model, local providers work together to share or pool resources. In the case of time off, they are available to one another to care for the children who are impacted by their time off. Furthermore, a shared services model can help small business owners with their business practices such as enrollment and schedule management, billing and subsidy reimbursements, economies of scale purchasing, marketing, professional development, and peer technical support, to ensure they are able to successfully stay in operation for as long as they want. In fact, the CCDF Final Rule requires states to encourage public/private partnerships like the shared services model, so that at the very least, providers can pool resources to pay for fixed costs (page 67451).

**6. Commute time should be accounted for.**

Long commute times are a challenge for many parents. Parents who receive child care subsidies are allowed to request up to two-hour commute time each way. However, this study suggests that many parents and providers do not know that they are allotted the time necessary to get to and from work. As a result, providers are being underpaid, caring for children beyond the number of approved hours because a parent cannot pick them up or drop them off in the time allowed. This causes great frustration for providers, and is yet another example of the poor subsidizing the poor.

Actual commute times should be included in the amount of care a family is able to utilize, and providers should be paid for the actual amount of care they provide. Should that care exceed a normal workday, the additional hours for commuting should be paid at a higher rate, similar to private pay families. We don't expect people to work for free, and the same should be true for child care providers.

**7. Higher reimbursement rates for nontraditional hours.**

Caring for children during nontraditional hours is difficult on providers, but is an even further burden because of poor pay. Currently, providers do receive higher rates for nontraditional hours, but the rate is not high enough to incentivize providers to work during these hours. In fact, the CCDF Final Rule requires states to build supply for children who receive care during nontraditional hours. The rule suggests one way of doing that is to increase rates to levels that are sufficient enough to meet any higher quality standards associated with that type of care (page 67454). Unlike with private pay families, who are charged a significant amount more for care during nontraditional hours, providers accepting subsidies don't see a big enough differential in pay for the extended hours to be worth it, leaving a further gap for low-income families interested in licensed care.

Providers who care for children overnight also suffer from lack of sleep, because subsidy rates do not allow them to hire an overnight assistant. As a result, providers may often operate nearly 24 hours without any substantial sleep themselves. With adequate pay, they would be able to hire an overnight or daytime assistant, allowing the provider to get the sleep she needs to safely care for the children during the day, or night.

**8. Put procedures in place that ensure clear communication and understanding between Alternative Payment (AP) programs, parents and providers.**

Respondents expressed many issues with the voucher program that could potentially be solved if everyone was on the same page. Mechanisms should be in place that makes sure parents and providers have a consistent understanding of the AP program, avoiding unnecessary confusion or conflict. AP programs could work together to develop a checklist of what parents and providers can expect from the AP program, what parents can expect from their provider, providers expect from parents and what the AP programs expects from providers and parents. By facilitating this clear communication, providers will be less likely to feel taken advantage of, and combined with previous recommendations, parents will feel the care is meeting their needs.

**9. Family-friendly work policies.**

This study revealed that many parents fear losing their jobs, have lost their employment, or been prevented from advancement because of child care challenges. Employers can support their workforce by providing stable schedules, with as much advance notice so parents can plan for care, and child care assistance by helping employees find and use their local child care resource and referral agency(R&R), or contract with their local R&R to help their employees identify and find the care that best meets their needs. Employers can go even further and support a pool of trained, TrustLine-registered providers that parents can call upon to use, and furthermore, offer scholarships to help pay for the additional cost of care during nontraditional hours. Finally, employers could provide onsite licensed care or contract with licensed providers for nighttime care.

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