

# The Child Care Barrier

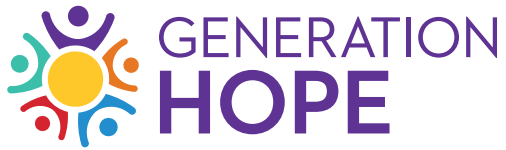
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The Impacts of Inaccessible and Costly Child Care for Student Parents



# Contents

- 1** Executive Summary
- 4** Introduction
- 6** Respondents by the Numbers
- 12** Snapshot of Student Parents' Child Care
  - Family Demographics
  - Child Care Providers
- 18** Evaluation of Current Child Care
  - Quality of Child Care
  - Affordability of Child Care
  - Accessibility of Child Care
- 21** Impacts on Student Parents
  - Time Poverty and Child Care
  - Academic Well-being
  - Personal Well-being
- 27** Student Parent Perseverance
- 28** Conclusion and Recommendations
- 30** References



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## About Generation Hope

Founded in 2010 in Washington, D.C., Generation Hope is a nonprofit organization that engages education and policy partners to drive systemic change and provides direct support to teen parents in college as well as their children through holistic, two-generation programming to ensure all student parents have the opportunities to succeed and experience economic mobility. As an organization, we engage in local and national advocacy work, amplifying the student-parent voice and centering their experiences. Additionally, Generation Hope leverages its data and best practices to serve as a thought partner to colleges, providing them with the tools, resources, and support that they need to implement programs, adjust policies, and change structures and culture to improve outcomes for student parents.

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### Note on Report Methodology

In December of 2022, Generation Hope surveyed its current 140 student-parent Scholars in an effort to better understand their child care needs and experiences. The insights shared in the report reflect the responses of 65 student parents (46.4% response rate) attending 19 colleges and universities across the D.C. region (Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia). All of the participants are current or former teen parents who are enrolled as undergraduate students at their post-secondary institutions.

While this survey produced invaluable insights into the child care needs of Generation Hope's student-parent Scholars and unveiled many common experiences across our student-parent population, it is important to acknowledge that, due to the small sample size and niche population, the findings do not provide statistical significance nor do they function as a representative data set of the broader population of student parents. Our sincere hope is that the in-depth look provided by this specific student-parent population can function as a catalyst for further research.

This report would not be possible without the contributions of Generation Hope Scholars, who generously provided their responses and insights about their child care needs and experiences with our Policy and Research team.

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### Acknowledgments

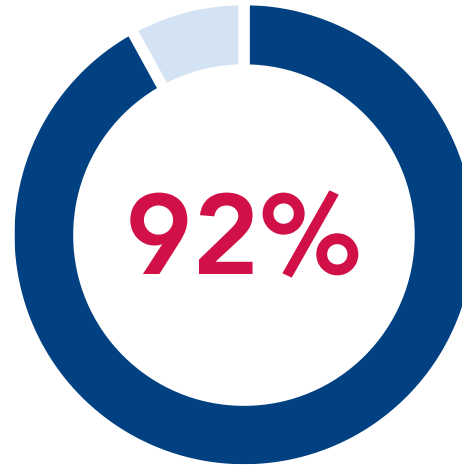
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For questions about the survey or requests for partnership on implementing best practices for student-parent success, please contact:

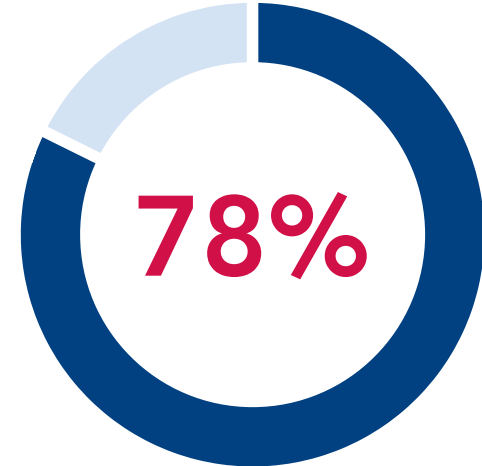
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## Executive Summary

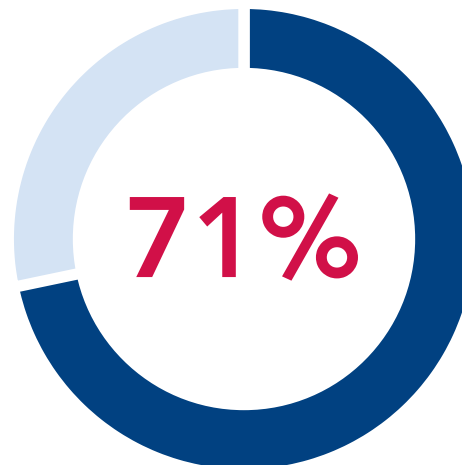
Earning a college degree can have a profound and far-reaching impact on the lives of student parents and their children. However, without affordable, high-quality child care the goal of a college education remains largely inaccessible for countless student parents. This report sheds light on the child care needs of student parents living in the D.C. region participating in Generation Hope's Scholar Program. Despite strong determination to achieve their academic goals, the results identify clear gaps in child care support for these student parents and highlight how caregiving responsibilities impact student parents' academic and personal well-being.



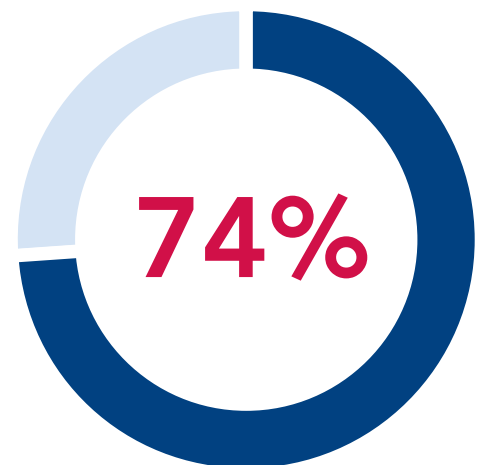
**of respondents either did not have access to or were unaware of on-campus child care options.**



**of respondents wished their campuses did more to support their child care needs.**



**of respondents relied on informal and/or unpaid child care (i.e. family, friends, neighbors, public school programming, etc).**



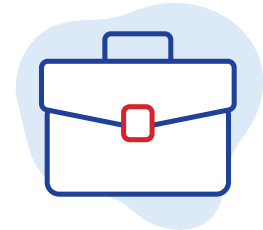
**of respondents were providing 30+ hours of care for their child/ren each week while also attending school.**

This survey also brings to the forefront key factors that reinforce disparities in child care support and post-secondary attainment for Black and Latinx students, families, and communities. Ninety-five percent of our respondents are students of color, and the significant barriers that they face in accessing consistent, quality child care mirror the experiences of families of color nationwide. For example, nationally a median-income Black family with two young children has to spend 56% of its income on child care, more than that of any other group (Glynn & Hamm, 2019). In light of the fact that parenting students are more likely to be students of color, it is imperative that policies and practices for this population are viewed and implemented from a racial equity and justice perspective. We hope this report will contribute to a growing body of knowledge, encourage more thoughtful research, and serve as a resource to guide policymakers who shape legislation that directly impacts student parents and their families.



# 82%

of respondents reported  
an annual household income  
below \$30,000.



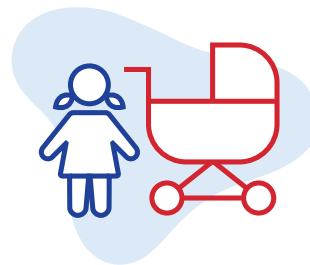
# 55%

of respondents were  
working 20+ hours  
per week.



# 56%

of respondents were  
attending school full-time.



# 75%

of respondents were  
parents of young children  
(4 years and under).



# 37%

of respondents were  
caring for more than one child  
while attending school.

“

Aside from parenthood and school, we also work and have a personal life of our own which makes it 100x harder on us. Any assistance possible really makes a difference in any aspect possible no matter how big or small.”



All quotes included in this report were shared by Generation Hope Scholars in their survey responses. These quotes have been made anonymous to respect the privacy of respondents and their families. Any photographs of Generation Hope Scholars used throughout this report have no correlation with the anonymous respondents' quotes.



The journey toward and through college is uniquely challenging for students pursuing a degree or credential while raising children.

## Introduction

The journey toward and through college is uniquely challenging for students pursuing a degree or credential while raising children. Balancing academic schedules, employment needs, and parenting responsibilities presents significant obstacles for student parents, especially when affordable, high-quality child care remains largely inaccessible to them. Aligned with national child care needs, this report contains an evaluation of the child care utilized by Generation Hope Scholars across the following dimensions:

### Quality

In the United States, only 11% of child care centers are accredited (Schulte & Durana, 2016).<sup>1</sup> One key challenge stems from the high rate of turnover among providers, which impacts the stability and consistency of young children's care (Sullivan, 2021).

### Affordability

Across the United States, average child care expenses cost more than a four-year public university's fees and tuition (Economic Policy Institute, 2023). A student parent who earns minimum wage would need to work an average of 54 hours per week for 50 weeks in order to fully pay for both their higher education costs (after taking into account all federal, state, and institutional aid) and center-based child care expenses (Williams et al., 2022).

### Accessibility

Approximately one-third of U.S. parents (32%) have difficulty finding child care (NPR, 2021). The availability of child care is especially limited for families with infants and toddlers, working evening and night shifts, and living in rural areas (Ready Nation, 2018).

<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that accreditation, while providing an invaluable foundation for accountability and evaluation, should not function as the only standard for determining quality of care. Child care should encompass the holistic needs of the child/ren, their parents, families, caregivers, and the larger communities and culture.



Student parents are often forced to choose between providing quality care for their children or continuing their own education. In fact, differences in college persistence and academic momentum for student parents compared to their non-parenting peers has been directly linked to child care access (Wladis et al., 2018).

- **Student parents with young children — in particular, mothers — have the least time for college and are more likely to enroll part-time (Conway et al., 2021).**
- **Approximately one-third of community college students reported spending significant time on dependent care and cite “caring for dependents” as a reason for dropping out of college (Center for Community College Students Engagement, 2014).**
- **Teen parents who receive some form of child care are twice as likely to graduate from high school and ten times more likely to complete at least some college (Maslowsky, 2022).**

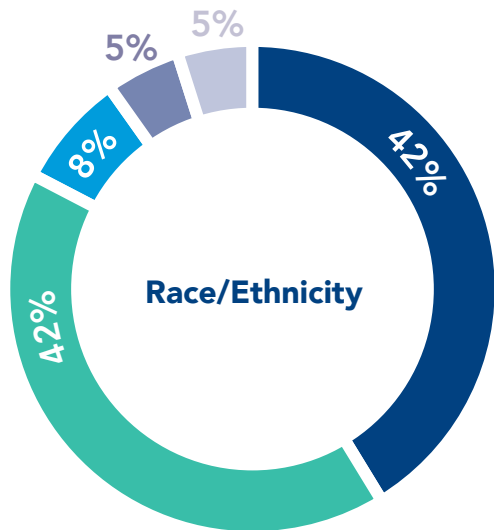
Improving outcomes for student parents is crucial not just for students themselves, but for their families. Barriers to affordable, quality child care impose multi-generational impacts on families — impacts felt most acutely by low-income communities and communities of color (Novoa, 2020). Obtaining a college degree is linked to better economic and educational outcomes for the children of student parents (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020; Monaghan, 2017). This is especially true for student mothers, as maternal education strongly influences the socioeconomic well-being of both women and their children (Jackson, 2017). Policymakers and higher education institutions can help support student parents through their academic journey by implementing child care policies and programs that consider the caregiving needs of student parents and their children. Providing pathways to accessible, affordable, and quality child care can be the determining factor in transforming the economic and academic trajectories of student parents and their families for generations.



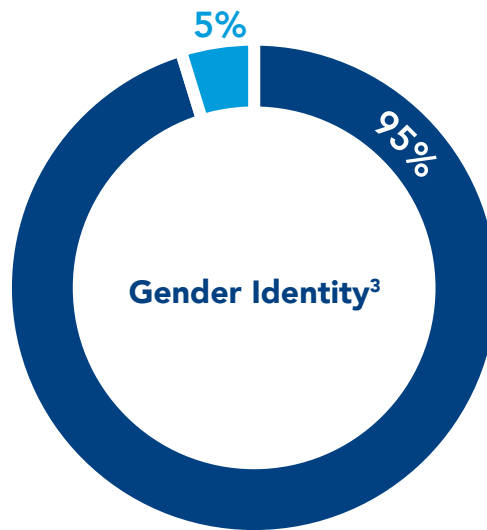
# Respondents By The Numbers

The survey yielded 65 responses from current student parents in Generation Hope’s Scholar program. This section provides a breakdown of the survey respondents across three key areas: scholar demographics, higher education profiles, and economic resources.

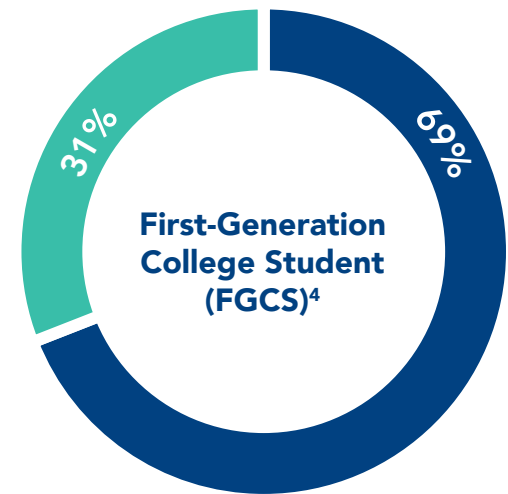
## Scholar Demographics



- African American or Black
- Latinx or Hispanic
- Multiracial
- Asian, AI/AN, PI<sup>2</sup>
- White



- Female
- Male



- Yes
- No

Non-FGCS respondents were more likely to attend a four-year institution than community college (65% vs 35%), whereas FGCS respondents were evenly split between four-year institutions and community colleges.

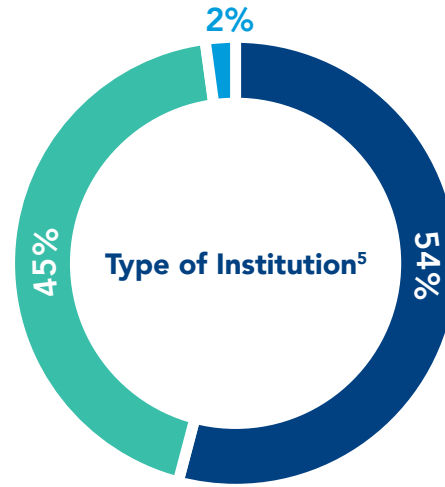
<sup>2</sup> Due to the small sample size, Asian, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Pacific Islander are grouped into one category. However, we recognize that student parents of each of these backgrounds have unique experiences that are important to understand and hope that future data collection will illuminate these perspectives.

<sup>3</sup> While “female” and “male” are the only two identities represented by this group of survey participants, multiple gender identities were provided as survey options. Student parents of every gender identity deserve to have their specific experiences understood and recognized. Future data collection should seek to illuminate these perspectives.

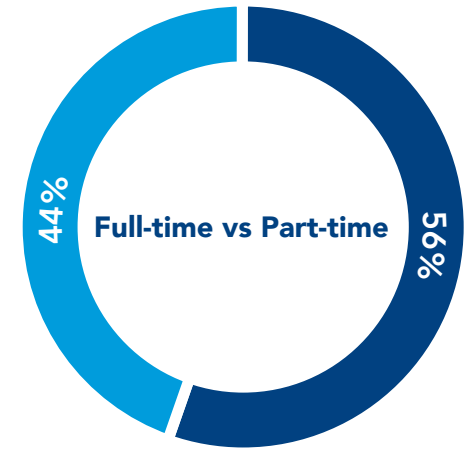
<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of this survey, “first-generation college student” is defined as any individual pursuing a post-secondary education where neither of the participant’s parent(s)/caregiver(s) had earned a college degree.

## Higher Education Profile

All of the survey respondents are considered undergraduate students. More than half (54%) attend a four-year institution, which is a higher percentage than the national student-parent population (Cruse et al., 2019). Sixty-three percent of participants enrolled at four-year institutions are full-time students compared to 48% of participants enrolled at two-year institutions. Participants who are part-time students — considering enrollment at both two-year and four-year institutions — are twice as likely to participate solely through online instruction compared to participants enrolled as full-time students (45% compared to 22%, respectively).

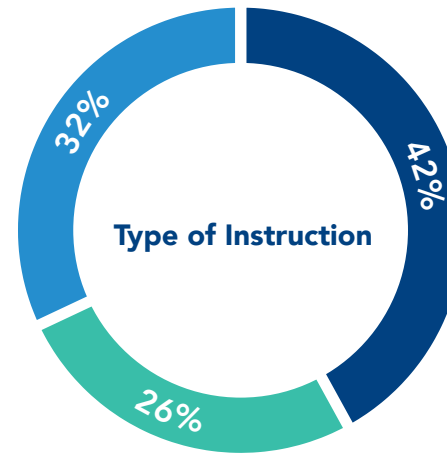
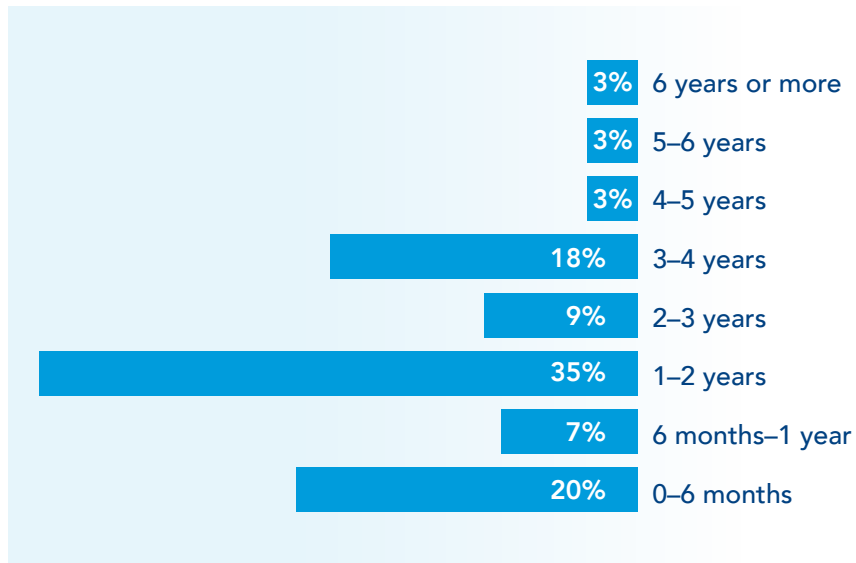


- Two-year
- Four-year
- Unsure



- Full-time
- Part-time

## How Far Along in Academic Career?



- Hybrid (a mix of in-person and online)
- In-person (i.e. on campus)
- Online

<sup>5</sup> Generation Hope's direct services are only designed to support student-parent Scholars enrolled in associate's and/or bachelor's degree programs. For this reason, data was not gathered on the student-parent experience at vocational, trade, and technical training institutions. We hope future research and data collection efforts will be able to explore and highlight the full breadth of higher education learning experiences for student parents, including those pursuing vocational, trade, and technical training programs.

“

It's really hard to attend school, do chores,  
and take care of a home with children.  
People need to understand one's  
schedule and lack of flexibility.”

.....

*Que es súper difícil atender la  
escuela tareas y aparte la casa  
los hijos que la gente entienda  
el horario y la flexibilidad.”*





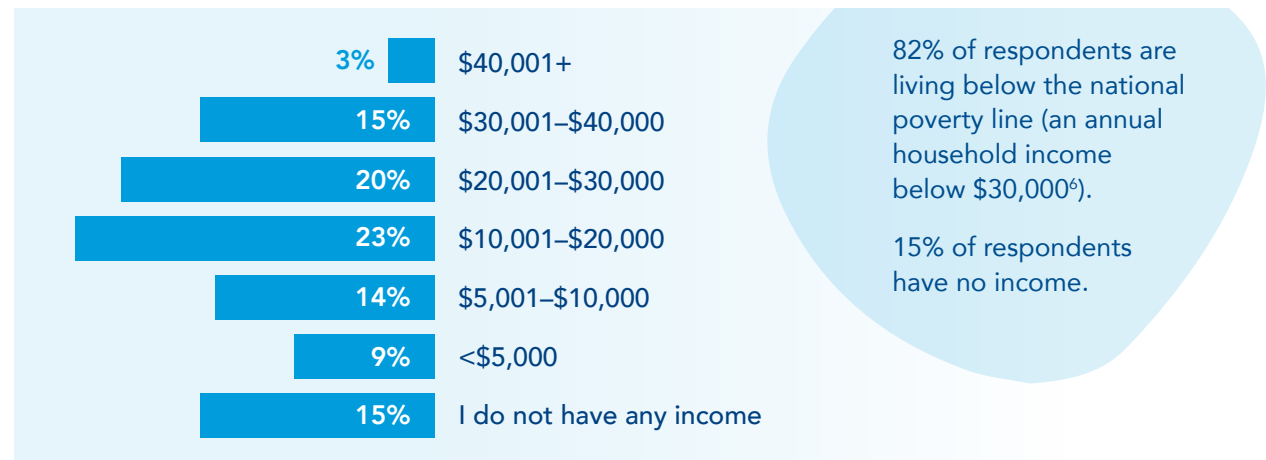
Financially, I have to sometimes decide between going without clothes or doing something with my children to make sure a bill is paid.”

## Economic Resources

Financial barriers — including rising tuition costs, cost-of-living inflation, and exorbitant child care expenses — can be insurmountable for many student parents. Understanding the household income, basic needs stability, and public aid usage of respondents provides crucial insights into the financial pressures this particular group of student parents face.

### Household Income

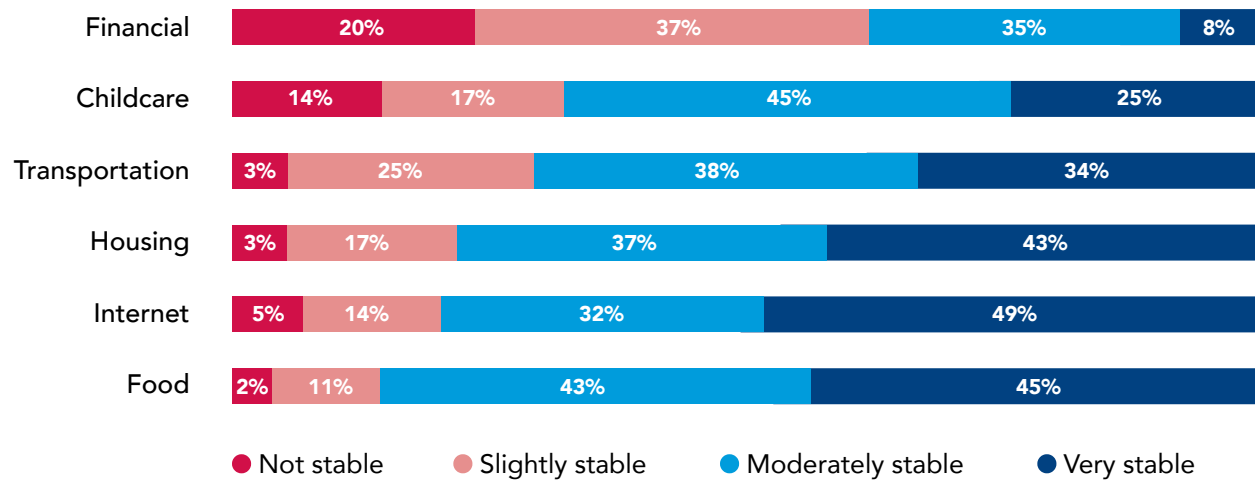
U.S. Census data places the median household income in the United States at \$69,021 (United States Census Bureau, 2022). This number increases significantly for families living in the D.C. region where the median household incomes are \$80,615 for the state of Virginia, \$91,431 for the state of Maryland, and \$93,541 for the District of Columbia (United States Census Bureau, 2021). In contrast, the median household income for respondents — all of whom live in the D.C. region — fall between the range of \$10,001–\$20,000, approximately six times below the regional median income.



<sup>6</sup> According to the HHS Poverty Guidelines for 2023, a family of four is considered under the poverty line if their annual income is less than \$30,000 (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, 2023).

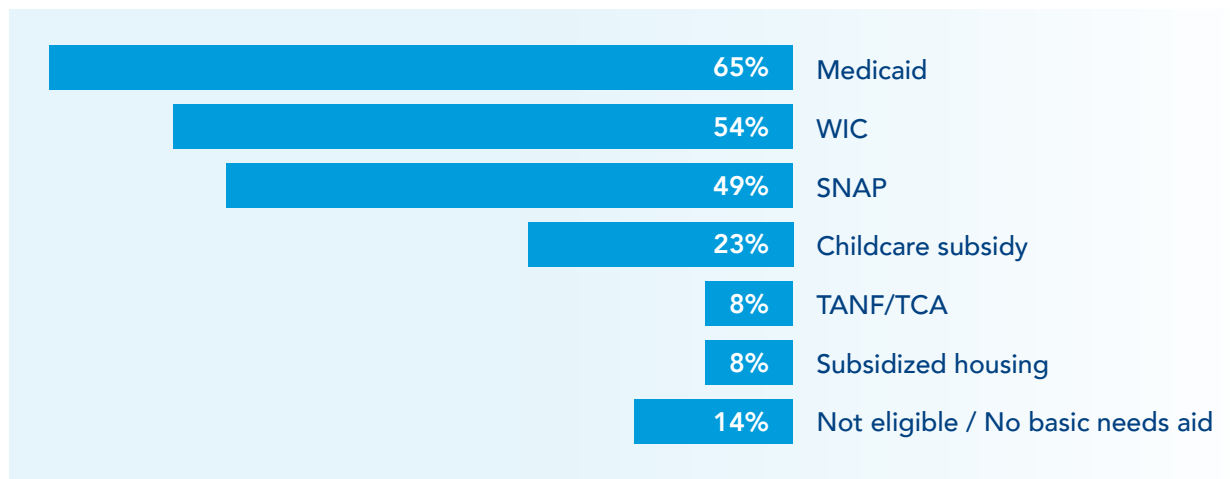
## Basic Needs Stability

The survey asked respondents to self-assess their stability across six types of basic needs: finances, housing, food, child care, transportation, and internet access. From the responses gathered, “financial instability,” “child care instability,” and “transportation instability” are ranked as the most pressing concerns for respondents.



## Public Subsidies & Government Aid

The data gathered indicates that 85% of respondents are relying on some form of public assistance. For the respondents, Medicaid is the most utilized source of public aid (65%) followed by Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) at 54% and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) at 49%. Nearly three-quarters of respondents (72%) are receiving two or more forms of public assistance, while 15% of respondents indicate that they are ineligible to receive basic aid and/or receive no basic aid.



“

Nothing is really consistent no matter how much I try to organize and schedule my time. Stuff always comes up — especially with so many kids.”





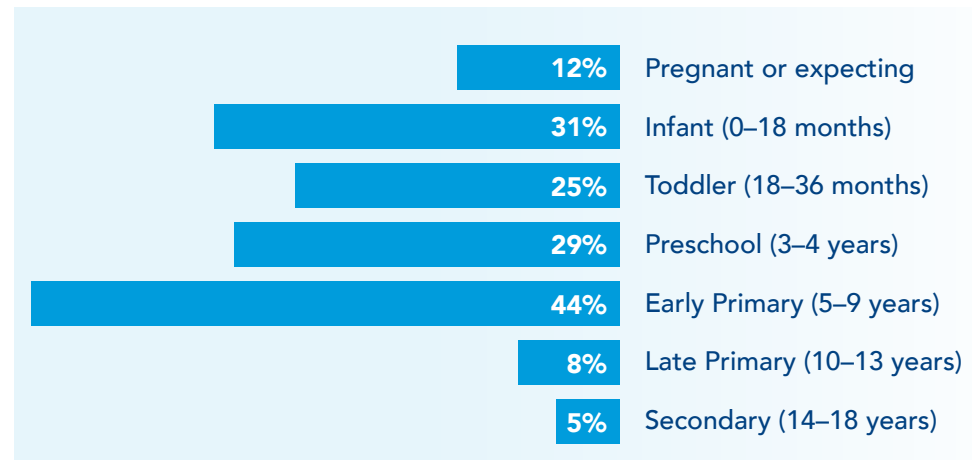
## Snapshot of Student Parents' Child Care

To provide a better understanding of the child care needs for the student parents surveyed, this section explores two aspects of respondents' child care: family demographics and child care providers.

### Family Demographics

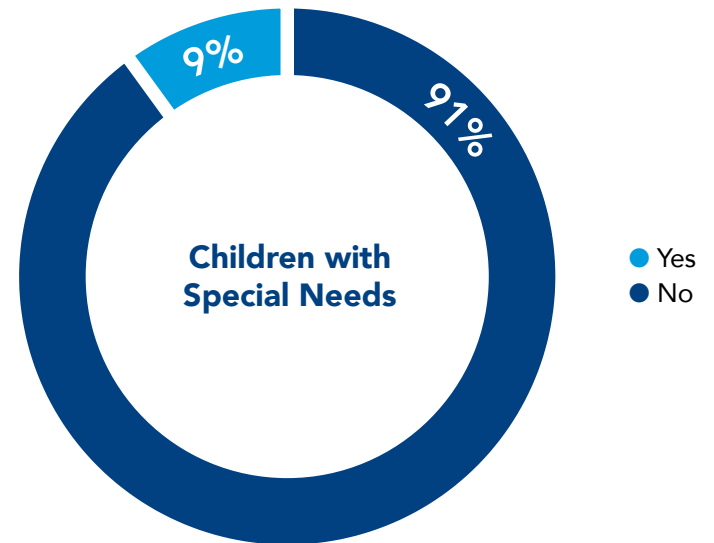
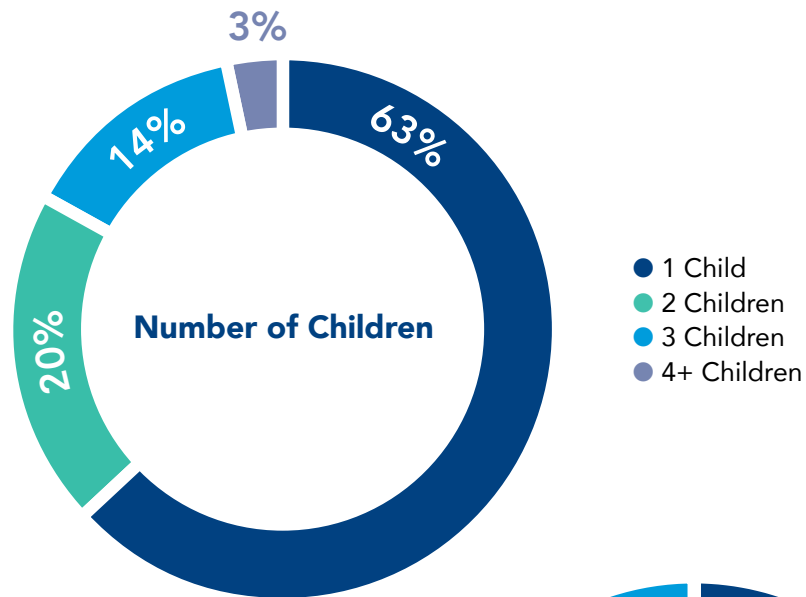
Ages of a student parent's children has a substantial effect on their academic persistence and momentum. Those who have preschool-aged children have substantially less time for their studies compared to those without children (as noted by Conway et al, 2021). Given the higher hourly cost of child care and the availability of free public school, the overall cost of full-time child care for a preschool-aged child is nearly nine times that of a school-aged child (Wladis & Conway, 2018). The following table details the ages of children in the survey population.

#### Ages of Children



75% of respondents were caring for young children (4 years and under) while attending college.

In addition to the ages of student parents' children, other factors — including the number of children being cared for and the specific needs of each child — also impact academic persistence and momentum. From the responses gathered, 37% of the student parent respondents report that they are caring for multiple children, and nearly one in ten of our respondents report caring for a child with special needs.

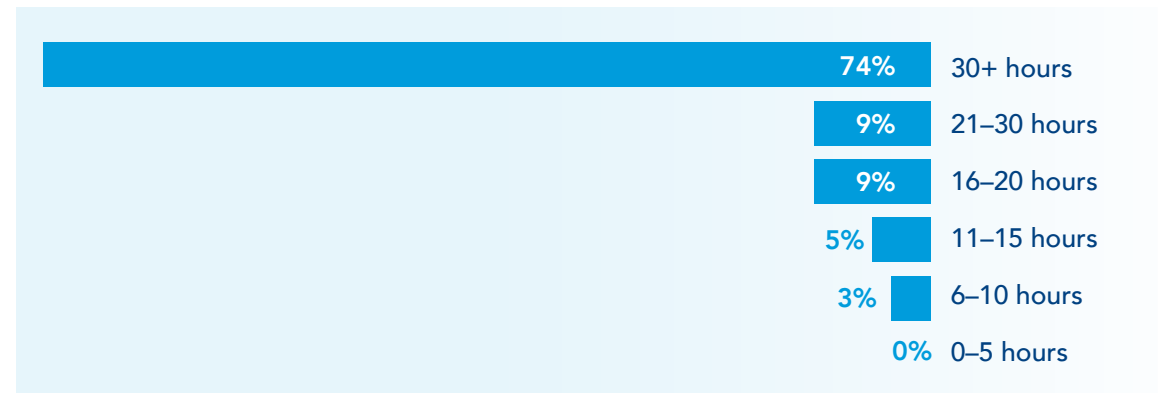




## Child Care Providers

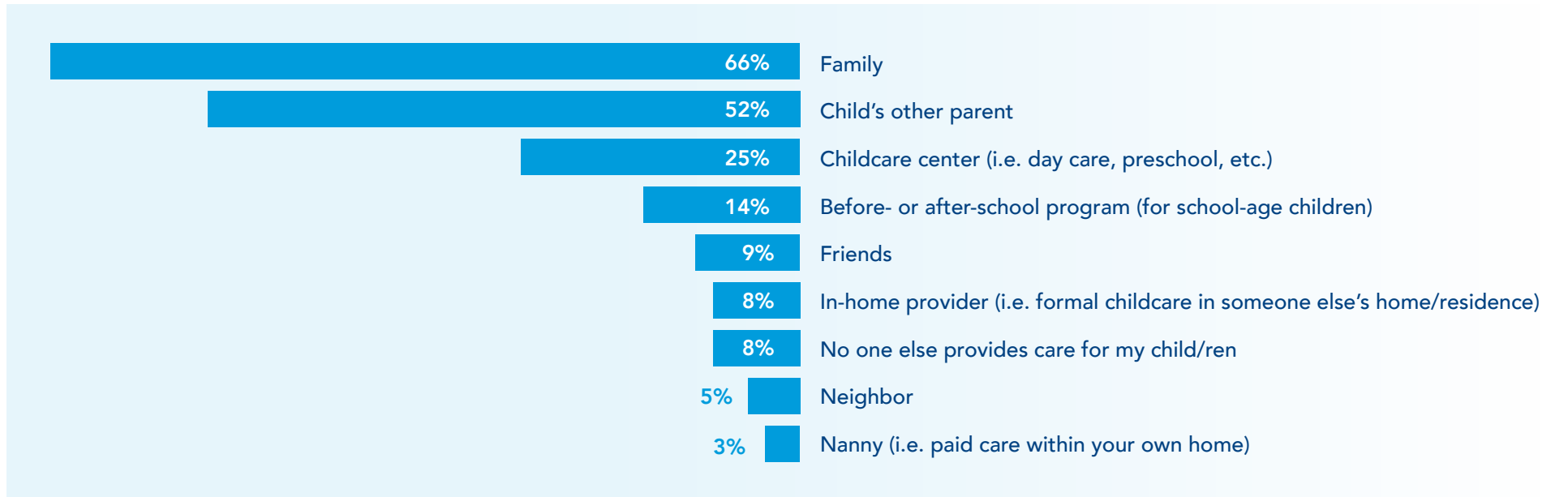
For student parents, balancing academic pursuits with child care needs presents a persistent challenge. Survey respondents provided insight into their current child care situations, highlighting opportunities for improved support services. The vast majority of student parents shared that they typically take the lead in providing child care for their children; 72% of respondents reported providing 30 or more hours of care per week for their child/ren while attending school.

### How Many Hours Per Week Do You Spend Personally Providing Care for Your Children?



Beyond personally providing child care for their children, the student parents shared details regarding their child care arrangements. **Sixty-eight percent of respondents depend solely on informal and/or unpaid child care options (i.e., family, friends, neighbors, public school programming, etc.)** compared to 32% who utilize some form of formal paid child care (i.e., day care, preschool, nanny, in-home provider, etc.). **Additionally, 65% of respondents combine two or more different provider options to take care of their children.**

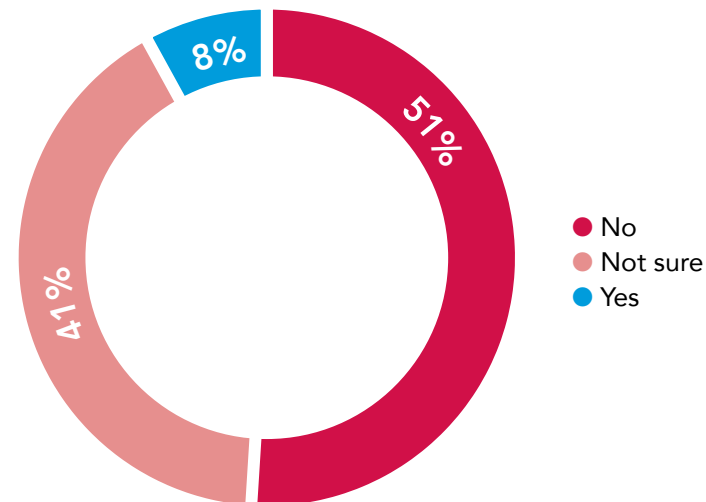
## Who Else Helps You Care for Your Children?



## Does Your Campus Offer Child Care?

Depending on the academic institution and the type of campus, child care availability varies greatly. According to a 2021 report from the Institute for Women's Policy Research, the number of higher education institutions offering child care services decreased by 14 percentage points since 2004 (Cruse et al., 2021). Even when colleges and universities do offer campus child care, it often fails to fully meet the needs of student parents and their families.

Of the student parents who responded to the survey, half of the respondents confirmed that no campus child care is available at their institution, while another 42% were unsure. Only five (out of 65) could confirm that campus child care is available at their institution (two of those respondents attend the same institution).





Sometimes I wish I could've taken my child to my college with me, but since they don't allow kids at my college I'm not able to take him. If they had a day care then I would've been able to drop my child [off] for a few hours to study and to go to office hours."

**None of the five student parents whose institutions provide campus child care actually participate in it.**

Respondent reasons for not utilizing on-campus child care:

- "Too expensive"
- "No spots available"
- "Child is too young, campus care is for 2+"
- "[My child] attends a closer day care that works better for us"
- "Type of care does not meet my child/ren's needs"

The majority of student parents surveyed (79%) wish their campus did more to support their child care needs.

I wish my campus would do more to support my childcare needs.



From the data gathered, a clear gap exists between the needs of student parents and the support services offered by the campuses they attend. This gap places increased pressure on students as they balance the needs of their academic programs and the needs of their children and presents an opportunity for higher education institutions to provide additional support.

“

Being a parent is a job, and it's my first priority. There's days where it's easier than others, but carrying different roles can get very overwhelming as I have to give it my best. Being a parent has shown me that you have to adapt to different situations quickly. It's always 'go' mode. So having trustworthy support is important as it can help relieve some weight off your shoulder, even if it's for 30 minutes.”



“My son was in day care, but we are currently transitioning to a new home day care because of neglect at the old one.”

“Not everyone you give your child to is trustworthy. It is very hard to find good child care. It is very expensive to have good child care.”

## Evaluation of Child Care

Student parents were also asked to share their evaluation of the child care they currently utilize for their children. Their responses demonstrate a clear contrast in how the student parents evaluate the degree to which their current child care situation met their children’s needs (“Quality of Child Care”) compared to meeting their own needs (“Affordability of Child Care” and “Accessibility of Child Care”).

### Quality of Child Care

Throughout their responses, student parents emphasized the importance they place on the quality of child care for their children above competing priorities. They reported high marks across various factors for their children’s care, including academic preparation, child safety, social-emotional development, personalization, and child well-being.

#### Is Your Current Child Care Meeting Your Child/ren’s Needs?

**Academic Preparation:** My current child care is preparing my child/ren for academic success.



**Child Safety:** My current child care is provides a physically safe environment for my child/ren.



**Social Emotional Development:** My current child care is helping my child/ren develop social skills and interactions.



**Personalization:** My current child care is meeting the individual needs of my child/ren.



**Child Well-being:** My current child care provides an emotionally safe environment for my child/ren.



● Strongly agree      ● Slightly agree      ● Slightly disagree      ● Strongly disagree



Day care is truly a difficult balance between cost, distance, and quality. My day care costs \$1,500/month and is a 40-minute drive away (over 2 hours of driving per day) because day cares in my area average \$2,300/month.”

## Affordability of Child Care

When factoring the cost of child care, out-of-pocket costs for attending a public college are two to five times higher for student parents than for their peers (Williams, B., 2022). In the United States, full-time child care for preschool-aged children on average exceeds the cost of full-time in-state tuition for their parents (Economic Policy Institute, 2023).

Most low-income families cannot bear the entire cost of child care, regardless of the type of arrangement — whether at a center on- or off-campus or at a home-based site. For instance, in Virginia, a full-time minimum wage worker would have to spend almost 95% of their income to afford infant care. This is true even before the additional burden of higher education expenses.

For the student parents surveyed, 74% pay for child care from their own income or savings while only 28% report that they receive public aid or subsidies to pay for child care. A quarter of respondents feel that child care is not affordable, and a third wish they could afford different child care.



**1 in 4** felt their current child care was not affordable.



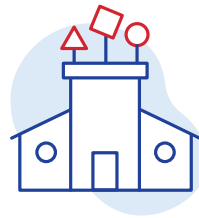
**1 in 3** wished they could afford different child care.



Jobs with unconventional hours are the hardest to find child care for...I would have to be at work 1pm to 8pm. It's very random and hard to find care."

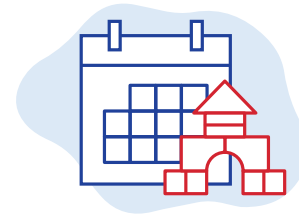
## Accessibility of Child Care

In contrast to the quality of child care, the respondents found the accessibility of their child care to be lacking across several key areas.



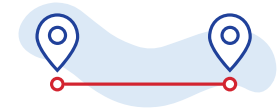
### Availability of Spots

1 in 3 struggle to find available spots with their preferred child care.



### Flexibility

1 in 3 do not consider their child care flexible to their needs.

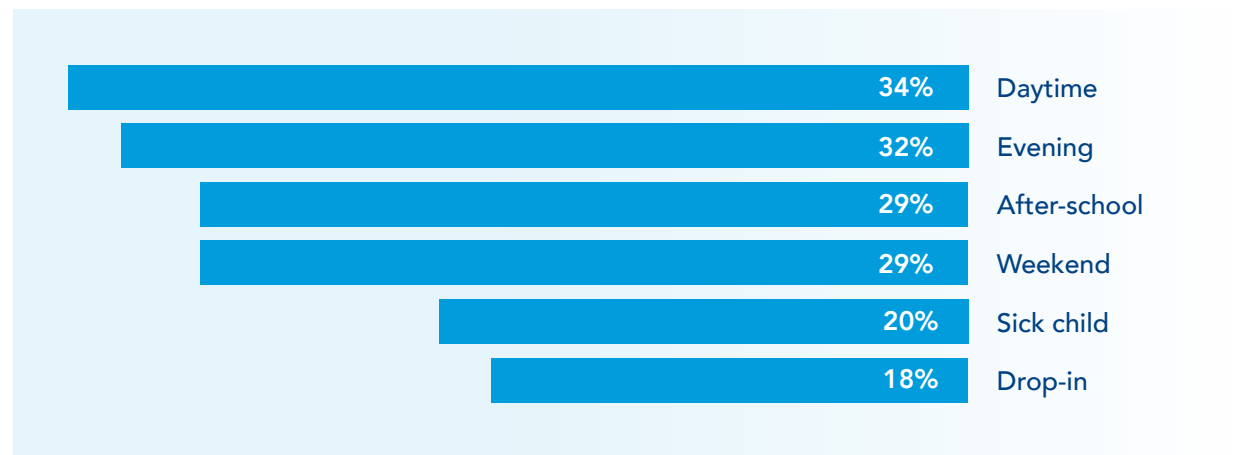


### Commute Distance

1 in 5 describe their commute to child care as unmanageable.

Respondents also shared that they often need additional child care to attend school and go to work and that they need more child care access during daytime hours.

## When Do You Need More Child Care?



“

It's not easy for a mother, or parent in general, to find time to do things like work, school, study, etc. I have to manage my schedule based on my child's schedule, and it can be overwhelming. Sometimes I feel like quitting my job, but I can't because I need money to provide for her.”

## Impact on Student Parents

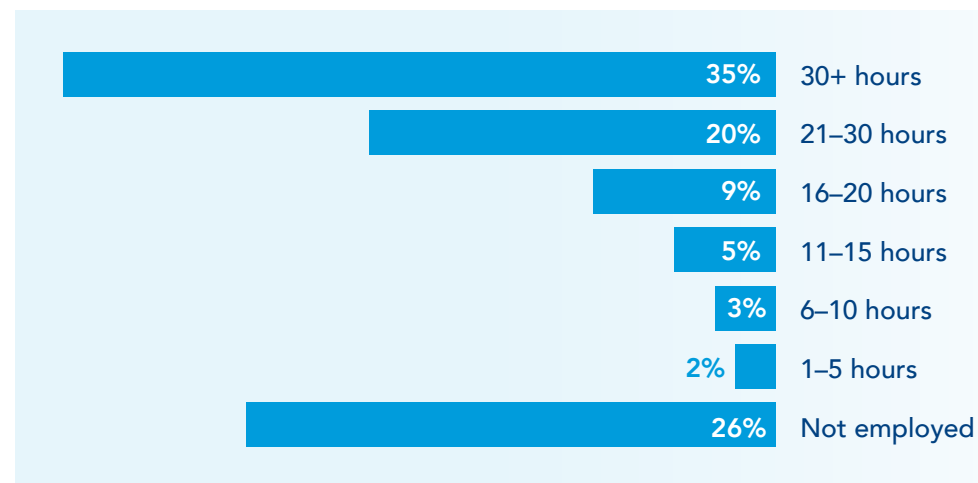
Due to the prohibitive costs and inaccessibility of child care for student parents, they often experience time poverty and challenges to their academic and personal well-being.

### Time Poverty and Child Care

Student parents have extensive demands on their time. The responsibilities of parenthood have a close causal connection to students' "time poverty," a condition that reduces the quantity and quality of time student parents can spend on their studies (Wladis, C., 2018). A 2021 study showed that the decrease in quantity and quality of time spent on academic work for student parents was directly connected to their child care responsibilities and their work requirements (Conway et al., 2021).

These constraints on time are evident both quantitatively and qualitatively from the student parent respondents. Nearly three-fourths report that they have a job with 55% working more than 20 hours per week.

### How Many Hours Per Week Do You Spend Working for Income?





The time student parents dedicate to college studies often overlaps with their caregiving responsibilities, impacting their ability to fully focus their time and energy on schooling or caregiving. As one student parent shared, **"It's hard to study [while] taking care of our babies, since sometimes, or most of the time, all they want is to play with us."**

“ It's very hard to manage personal life, school, and work all at the same time.”

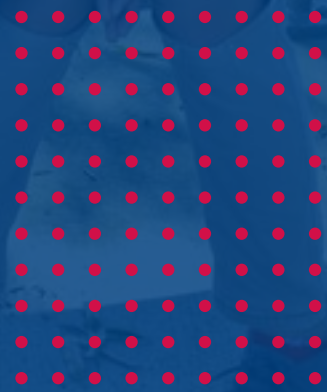
“ Time becomes very limited when your schedule is based on someone else's.”

“ I also do 16 hours of internship apart from my part-time job.”

“ Sometimes there are not enough hours in the day. We all try our best to make sure we accomplish everything, but sometimes it's not possible.”

“ Without reliable child care, I couldn't keep a regular 9-5 that paid enough to support my family.”

“ It can be very difficult and overwhelming, especially when you barely have time for your kids.”



“

Not having steady employment [to be] able to provide for my family led to poor performance in my courses. I had to pivot to survival mode. My courses were the last thing on my mind because I knew I needed to find help for my family. There were times where I lost focus, failed classes, and wanted to quit college altogether so we could survive. If I had affordable child care, life would be easier.”



## Academic Well-being

The amount and quality of time a student can spend on academic work greatly impacts their overall academic success. However, since student parents have significantly less time for college than their non-parenting peers, their specific version of time poverty results in lower college momentum and academic performance (Conway et al., 2021; LaBrenz et al., 2022).

Survey responses provided significant evidence of the impact that time poverty has on student parents' well-being.

### How Frequently Do Your Parenting/Caregiving Responsibilities Impact the Following Aspects of Your Academic Performance?

Working on personal course assignments/homework



Studying for quizzes and exams



Participating in group projects outside of class



Going to the library



Connecting socially with peers outside of class



Attending instructor's office hours



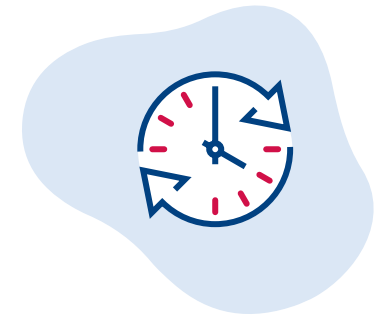
Arriving late to class



Missing class



● Frequently    ● Occasionally    ● Rarely    ● Never



1 in 4 respondents were attending school full-time while providing 20+ hours of child care and working 20+ hours each week.

“ I can't always study [or] finish my homework on time.”

“ Our kids come first and sometimes we have to miss class for that.”

“ We do not have time for participating in traditional college activities.”

“ I wish [my college] would have more patience if I miss [class] to go to work or I need to go home early because of my child.”

“ Sometimes I need more time to complete things.”

“ I am trying my absolute best 100% of the time. If something isn't turned in, or I am late, it is not for lack of trying.”

“ If people would understand student parents' time management when dealing with multiple courses, then they can set schedules for them to fulfill their goals while in school.”

“ We want to excel and give our all, but life and work sometimes throw things at us that we can't control. We need grace on assignments or quizzes that have a 24-hour time frame to get done.”



“  
Check in with me because  
I am not always okay,  
even when I say it.”

## Personal Well-being

Respondents also shared details on the impact that their academic and child care responsibilities have on their personal well-being. With so many competing demands for their time, it is apparent that student parents often de-prioritize their personal well-being in favor of academic, parental, and work demands. These demands can cause student parents to feel overwhelmed and exhausted.

Doing all I have to do as a parent often leaves me exhausted.



I feel overwhelmed by all I have to do to take care of my family.



Taking care of my family makes it difficult to find time for myself.



My family's needs often leave me feeling depleted at the end of the day.



I wish I had more support in caring for my family.



● Strongly agree    ● Slightly agree    ● Slightly disagree    ● Strongly disagree



“I don't really have time to do anything for myself because I'm either at work full-time or in school. When I have [time] to myself, I'm usually with my daughter or I have to cut what I'm doing short due to my family [needing] me.”

“I wish people understood that I need a break sometimes for a day or two.”

“I have a life too, or at least want to have one outside of being a mom and student.”

“Sometimes I need some alone time in order for me to be my best for my son.”

“

Parenting is my full-time job, and my child is my number one priority, but that shouldn't stop me from accessing education. In fact, being a parent gives me more motivation to succeed in my academics. I wish people understood how hard I really try to be the best I can as a mom. It's just so hard for me to balance everything. But I also wouldn't change anything in my life.”

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## Student Parent Perseverance

In light of the weight of responsibilities student parents carry — as well as the numerous barriers they face — respondents shared their deep resolve and determination to succeed academically. Several commented on the added motivation that being a parent provides for them and a strong belief that completing their degrees will benefit their families.

”

“Parenting is a full-time job, and my child is my first priority, but it only makes me more determined to succeed in my higher education.”

“I wish people [understood] that not every day is easy. There are frustrating days and unhappy days. But as a mom, I am always trying to stay positive [and] to stay focused.”

“It's hard [and it] takes a lot of patience. But I'm self-motivated to graduate. It's something I have to do for my family.”

“My main priority is my child, but that does not stop me from accomplishing my goals even if it takes me twice as long.”

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## Conclusion and Recommendations

### Conclusion

Earning a college degree can have a transcendental impact on the lives of student parents and their families. From a 2022 Generation Hope report, annual earnings more than doubled for teen parents after earning a college degree (Short et al., 2022). Despite the challenges that come with being a student parent across financial, academic, and time constraints, student parents are determined to succeed. And the clear impact of a college degree on the life of a student parent and their child should motivate higher education leaders and policymakers to rally to their cause.

### Recommendations

Below are several recommendations for college campuses and policymakers to consider as they develop more supports for student parents.

#### 1 Collect and track students' parenting and caregiving statuses.

Better data collection is an essential first step to improving college completion rates for student parents. Without comprehensive data collection, policymakers and institutional leaders will not be able to effectively address child care barriers — as well as numerous other barriers — impeding student parents' academic and professional success.

#### 2 Provide more on-campus child care that is designed to specifically serve the needs of student parents and their families.

Policymakers and institutional leaders should consider the benefits of two-generation educational programming on campuses. Transforming colleges and universities into hubs for two-generation programming sets the stage for lasting ripple effects, helping parenting students and their families to thrive personally, academically, and professionally.

**3** Increase funding of child care supports for student parents. Federal funding for child care subsidies is inadequate, leaving many families in need without access.

- A. Champion federal policies and programs designed to support students' child care needs, including the PROSPECT Act and the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) Program.
- B. Encourage the prioritization of community colleges and minority-serving institutions (MSIs) — where the largest share of student parents can be found (Cruse et al., 2019) — when allocating child care funding.
- C. Back efforts to lower and stabilize the cost of child care nationwide and establish fair compensation for child care providers. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), child care is affordable if it costs no more than 7% of a family's income. Support legislation that would establish guidelines for the cost of care and close the affordability gap, including The Child Care for Working Families Act.

**4** Invoke institutional policies that are flexible and adaptable, recognizing that individual students' situations may warrant different approaches.

Create educational opportunities by establishing more family-friendly campuses and encouraging educators and administrators to build systems, policies, scheduling practices, and physical spaces on campus that support students and their families.

**5** Bridge basic needs aid with student parents' education and career pathways.

Student parents are far more likely than their non-parenting peers to experience high rates of basic needs insecurity: 53% of student parents experience food insecurity, 68% experience housing insecurity, and 17% experience houselessness (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2020). Institutions should ensure their students have the information and resources necessary to identify, apply for, and enroll in any and all public assistance programs that address their needs, especially prioritizing student parents, and should assist students throughout the process.

**6** Appreciate and encourage the insights and leadership offered by student parents on campuses, in classrooms, and in communities.

Adopting a strengths-based approach in policies and practices that rewards resiliency and values student parents' life experiences and perspectives will lead to more diverse and richer campus environments where more students can thrive.



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