

# Early Learning and Child Care Modernization

## Project Overview

The Department of Families is working towards a modernized early learning and child care system that will strengthen and improve services across the province. The introduction of new legislation, Bill 47 – The Early Learning and Child Care Act, lays the foundation for a broader modernization of the early learning and child care system. It will enable more flexibility in child care choices and creativity in delivering a variety of options.

A new Child Care Parent Advisory Committee was created on December 7, 2020, to guide public engagement and provide advice to the Manitoba government regarding early learning and child care services, and how they can be more responsive and flexible to the needs of Manitoba parents and families.

## Engagement Overview

To support this ongoing work, all Manitoba parents/guardians with children 12 years of age or younger who use any type of early learning and child care arrangement were invited to participate in an online survey open from February 12 to March 1, 2021. A total of 4,351 respondents completed the full survey.

The purpose of this survey was to allow the Child Care Parent Advisory Committee to hear directly from parents/guardians about any barriers they face in the current early learning and child care system and identify potential opportunities for further exploration. Feedback from this survey, in addition to input from other key stakeholders such as child care providers, communities and employers, will be used to help inform and guide the development of a more robust, responsive and flexible early learning and child care system for Manitobans.

## What We Heard

The report below summarizes some of the key responses provided by parents in the survey. It is organized by the seven themes of the survey, which include:

1. Availability
2. Flexibility
3. Cost of Child Care
4. Early Learning and Child Care Programs
5. Diverse and Inclusive Early Learning and Child Care Programs
6. Modernized Early Learning and Child Care System
7. Board Management of Non-Profit Early Learning and Child Care Centres

The results for all of the survey questions can be found in the Appendix.

A final open-ended question asked if survey respondents had comments about the current early learning and child care system or a future modernized system. Most of the key themes that emerged are the same as the themes above. In addition, parents made comments about the value of early learning and child care and the importance of quality early learning and child care programs. The last section of this report will provide more information about the comments received.

## 1. Availability

**Did you experience any of the following barriers when you were looking for child care? Select all that apply.**

The top three barriers cited include:

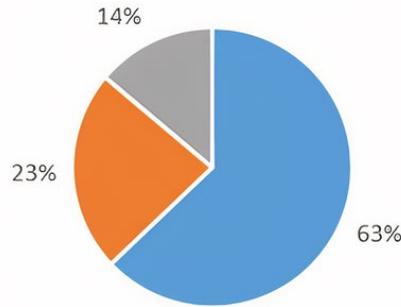
- Finding an available child care space (85%)
- Finding child care at a convenient location (66%)
- Finding affordable child care (47%)

<b>Did you experience any of the following barriers when you were looking for child care? Select all that apply.</b>	
<b>Barriers</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents who selected each barrier</b>
Finding an available child care space	85%
Finding child care that fits my schedule (i.e. operational hours that suit my needs)	45%
Limited choice/options that met my or my child's needs	30%
Finding child care at a convenient location	66%
Finding affordable child care	47%
I did not experience any barriers when looking for child care.	7%

Mandatory question for those who answered they have looked for child care in the past five years (3,698 responses)

**When looking for child care space, some parents/guardians prefer to proactively communicate with child care providers before being put on a wait list while others prefer to be contacted by a provider after space becomes available. Which option do you prefer?**

Almost two-thirds of respondents (63%) prefer to proactively communicate with child care providers instead of waiting to be contacted by a provider once a space is available.



- I prefer to proactively communicate with child care providers before being placed on a wait list.
- I prefer to register on a wait list and wait to be contacted by a child care provider after space becomes available.
- Unsure

Mandatory question (4,351 responses)

**When looking for a child care space, what factors are most important to you? Select your top three.**

- The three most important factors identified by respondents were:
  - Location (63%)
  - Experience of child care staff (56%), and
  - Affordability (55%)
- A significant number of respondents also selected before and after school programs (45%) and flexible hours of operation (32%) as factors that were important to them.

<b>When looking for child care space, what factors are most important to you? Select your top three.</b>	
<b>Factors</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents who selected each factor</b>
Affordability of child care	55%
Location	63%
Cultural/diverse program (i.e., Indigenous, francophone, newcomer, etc.)	5%
Supports for children with additional emotional/behavioural needs or diagnosed disabilities	9%
Experience of child care staff	56%
Before and after school program	45%
Flexible hours of operation	32%
Availability of lunch and/or snacks at the facility	17%
Child care program in other languages	2%
Other	4%

Mandatory question (4,351 responses)

## 2. Flexibility

**What type of flexible hours of care are you looking for? Select all that apply.**

- For the type of flexible operational hours needed, most respondents selected early mornings (69%), followed by late evenings (60%) and part-time child care (45%).

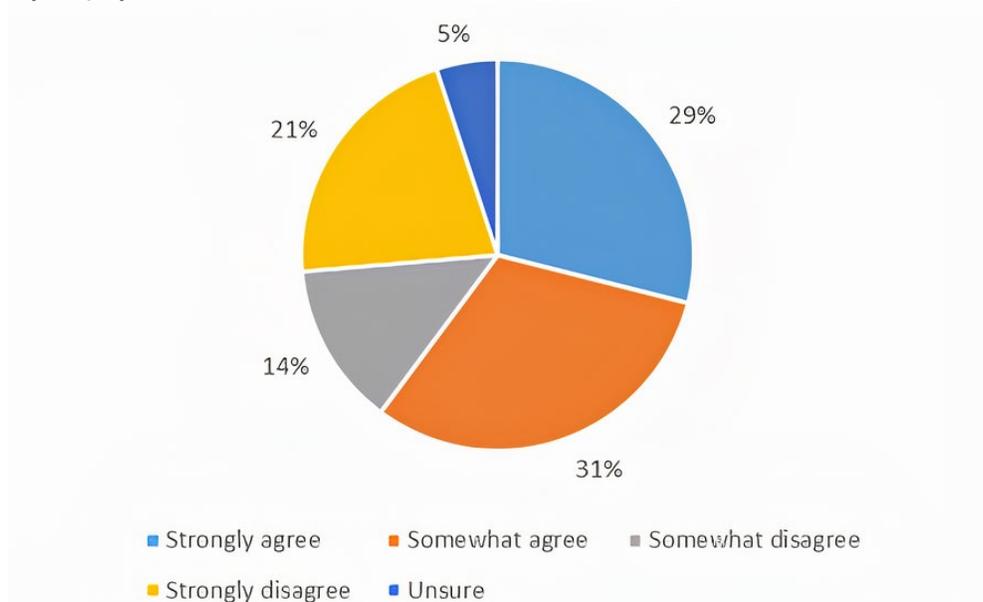
What type of flexible hours of care are you looking for? Select all that app	
Option	Percentage of respondents who selected each option
Part-time care	45%
Early mornings (i.e. between 6 a.m. and 8 a.m.)	69%
Late evenings (i.e. between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m.)	60%
Weekends	13%
Overnight	4%

Mandatory question for those respondents who selected flexible hours of operation as an important factor (1,398 responses)

## 3. Cost

**Rate the extent to which you agree or disagree that the Manitoba government should consider a funding model where child care fees are adjusted based on the parent/guardian's ability to pay (i.e. family income level)?**

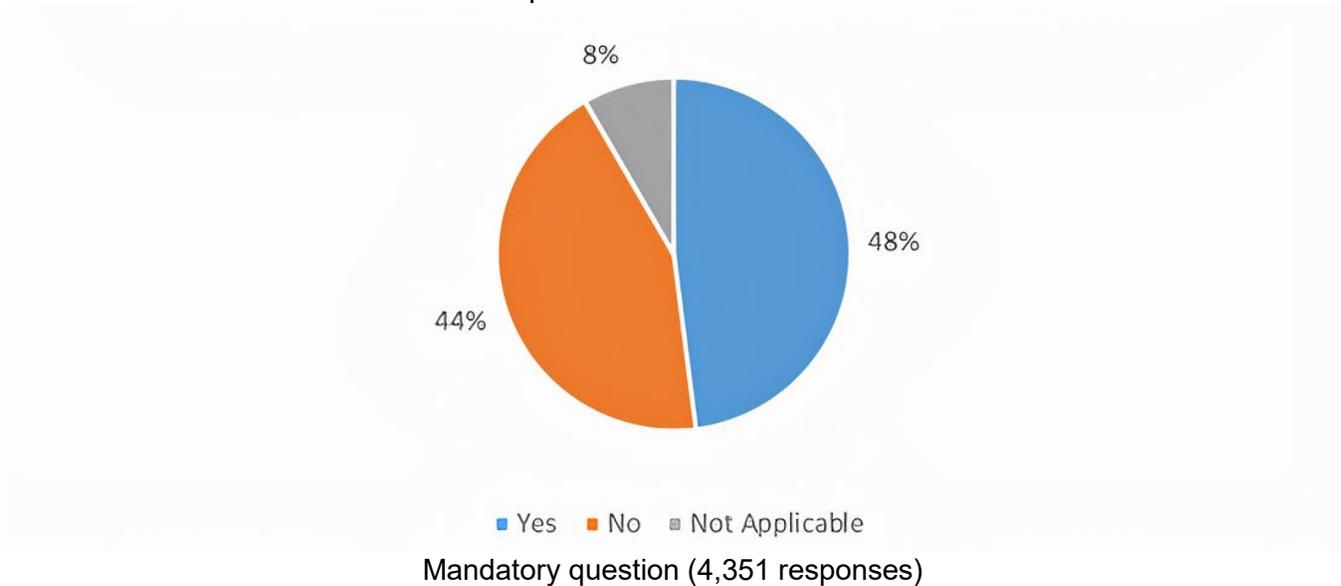
- Most respondents (60%) strongly/somewhat agreed that the Manitoba government should consider a funding model where child care fees are adjusted based on the parent/guardian's ability to pay.



Mandatory question (4,351 responses)

**Has the current cost of child care impacted your decision on returning to employment/ pursuing training or education?**

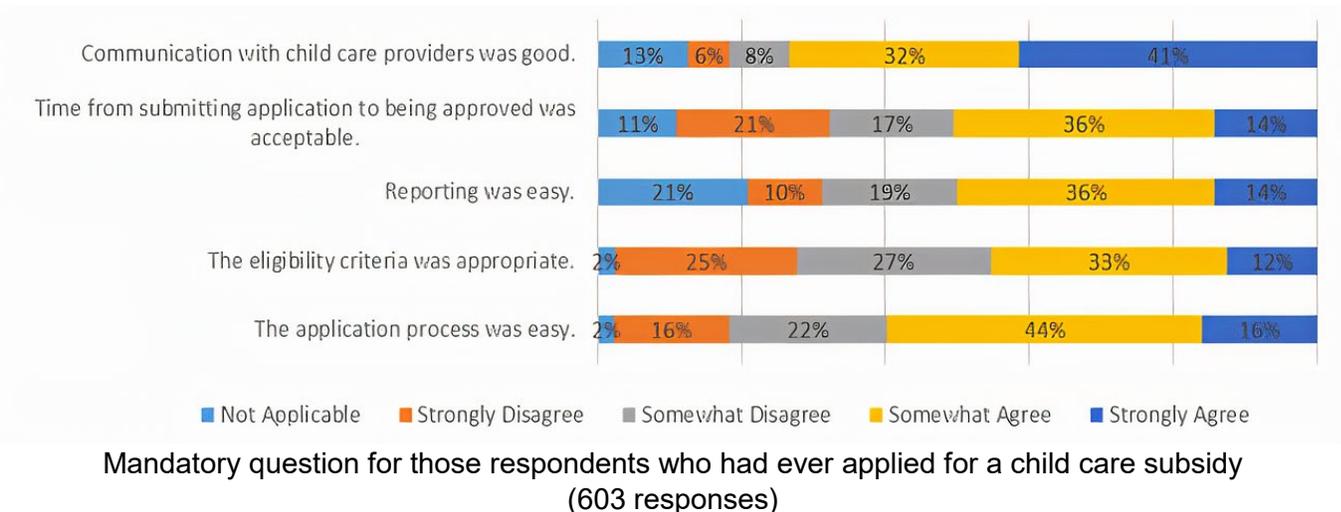
- Almost one-half of the respondents indicated the cost of child care did impact their decision, while less than one-half of the respondents indicated it did not.



**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following aspects of the child care subsidy process?**

Respondents who had ever applied for a child care subsidy were asked this question.

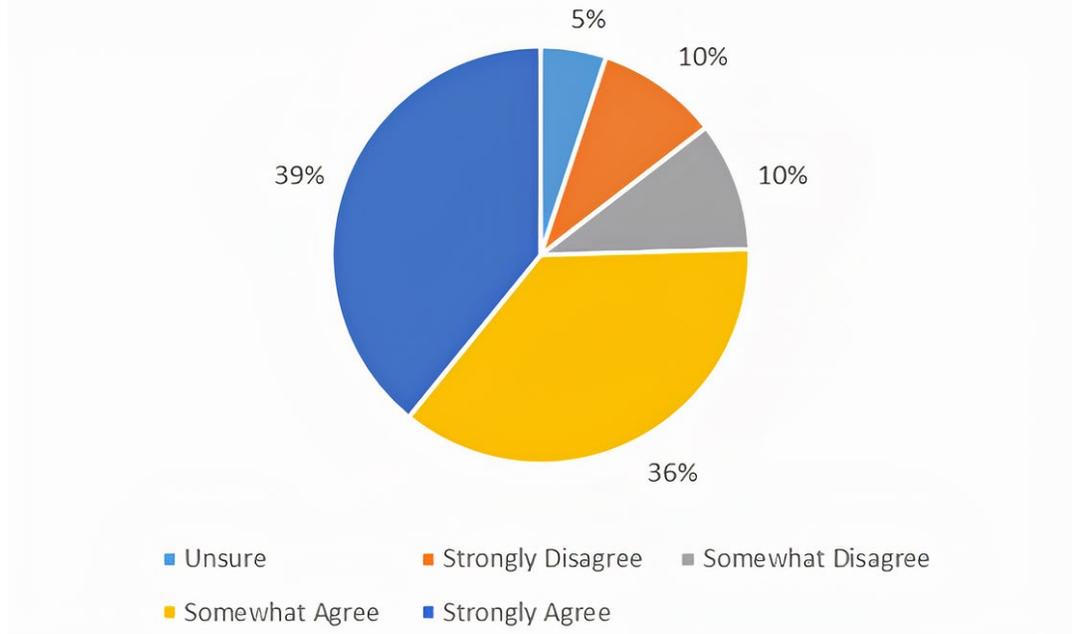
- A majority of these respondents strongly/somewhat agreed that:
  - Communication with child care providers during the subsidy process was good (73%)
  - The application process was easy (60%)
- One-half of these respondents strongly/somewhat agreed that:
  - Time from submitting application to being approved was acceptable (50%)
  - Reporting was easy (50%)
- A little over one-half (52%) of these respondents strongly/somewhat disagreed that the eligibility criteria is appropriate.



#### 4. Early Learning and Child Care Programs

To what extent do you agree or disagree that early learning, provided by a licensed child care facility, is more important for younger children (aged 6 and under) than for older school aged children (aged 7-12) who generally attend school full-time?

- Three-quarters of all respondents strongly/somewhat agreed that that early learning is more important for younger children than for older children, with only 20% of respondents disagreeing.



Mandatory question (4,351 responses)

When considering before and after school child care programs for children aged 7-12, what is most important to you? Rank the options from most important (1) to least important (4). Skip question if not applicable.

- Respondents indicated that recreational activities and socializing with friends were more important than structured learning opportunities and cultural/language programs when considering before and after school child care programs for children aged 7-12.

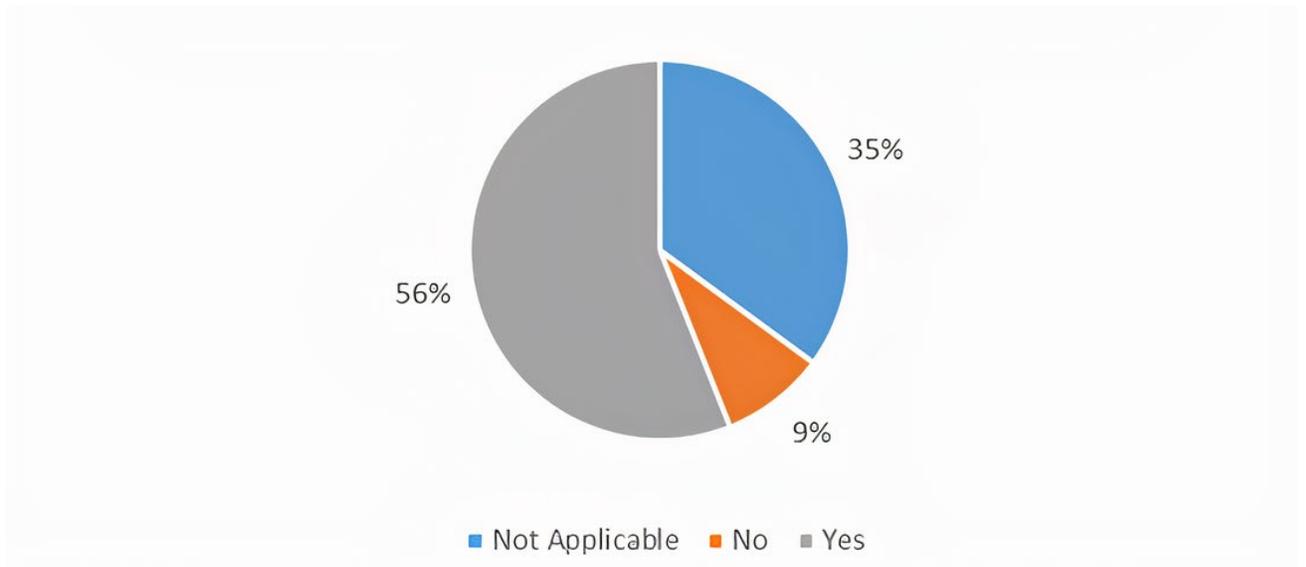
Options	Rank
Recreational activities (e.g. athletics, art, music)	1.66
Socializing with friends	2.29
Structured learning opportunities beyond education in schools	2.68
Cultural/language programs	3.34

Optional question (4,040 responses)

## 5. Diverse and Inclusive Child Care Programs

**As a parent, are you able to access a child care program that meets your cultural/linguistic needs?**

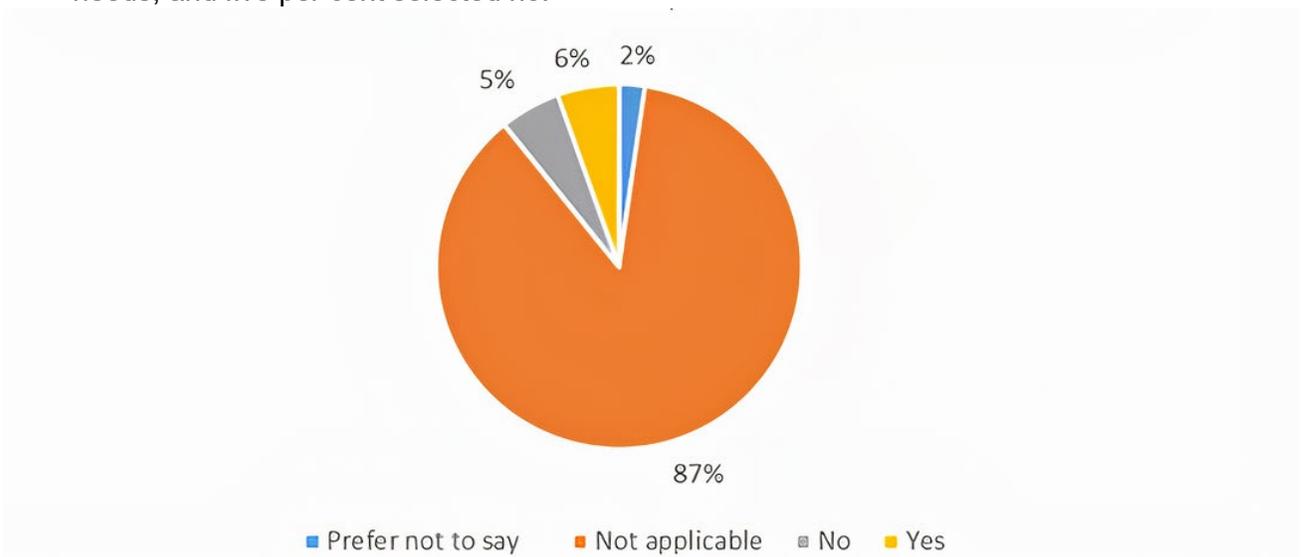
- This question was applicable to sixty-five per cent of parents, with slightly more than one-third of participants stating that this question was not applicable to them.
- While most participants are able to access a program that meets their cultural/linguistic needs, there are some parents (9%) who indicated that they are not able to access a program that meets their needs.



Mandatory question (4,351 responses)

**If you are a parent with a child/children with inclusion/additional support needs, are you able to access a child care space?**

- This question was applicable to 11 per cent of parents. Of these respondents, six per cent selected yes, they are able to access a child care space for their child with additional support needs, and five per cent selected no.

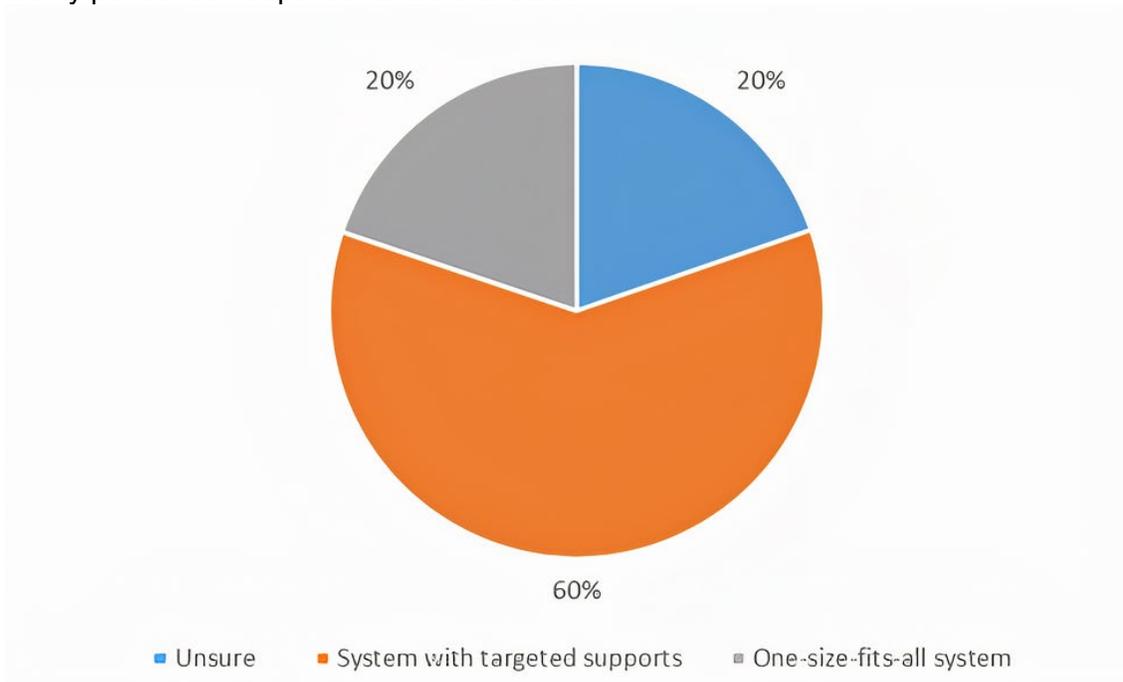


Mandatory question (4,351 responses)

## 6. Modernized Early Learning and Child Care System

When thinking of developing a modernized child care system, it could be designed as more of a “one-size-fits-all” approach where there are fewer, more regular, full-time child care options and the same type of funding supports are available for everyone. The other option is to design a modernized system that is based on more of a targeted approach that provides a variety of child care choices and funding supports that address specific parent needs. Which option do you prefer?

- Most respondents, 60 per cent, prefer a modernized early learning and child care system based on a “targeted approach” with more child care options and funding dependent on parent need.
- Twenty per cent prefer a one size fits all approach with more regular, full-time child care options and the same type of funding supports available for all.
- Twenty per cent of respondents were unsure.



Mandatory Question (4,351 responses)

## 7. Board Management of Non-Profit Child Care Centres

What are the top factors that could improve the board management of non-profit centres? Select up to two options.

This question was asked of those respondents who are or have been on a board of directors (about one-quarter of respondents).

- The majority of respondents selected:
  - More access to board resources (68%)
  - Board members should be required to take board training (53%)
- Approximately one-quarter (24%) of respondents also stated that centralized supports (i.e., a hub/agency model) could improve board management.

<b>What are the top factors that could improve the board management of non-profit centres? Select up to two options.</b>	
<b>Option</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents who selected each option</b>
Board members should be required to take board training, including their legal responsibilities	53%
Professional requirements for board members	19%
Centralized supports (i.e. a hub/agency model where one board is able to serve multiple centres)	24%
More access to board resources (i.e. human resource manuals, general training manuals, financial resources)	68%
Other	8%

Mandatory question for those respondents who are or have been on a board of directors  
(966 responses)

## Open-ended Question

**Do you have any other comments or suggestions about the current early learning and child care system or a future modernized system in Manitoba?**

Fifty-two per cent of respondents (2,278 parents) answered the final open-ended question. Six key themes emerged:

- Cost (37%)
- Value of Early Learning and Child Care (36%)
- Availability (36%)
- Quality (15%)
- Flexibility (13%)
- The Online Child Care Registry (13%)

In addition to these themes, in a few instances, parents also commented on: inclusion/additional support needs, COVID-19 impacts and the processes for opening a new child care facility.

### Cost

Thirty-seven per cent of the comments to the final open-ended question were about the cost of child care. Some parents indicated that current child care costs are not affordable for them, others indicated that they are currently affordable. Some also suggested that fee increases were needed to better support early learning and child care facilities, while others were opposed to fee increases.

For example, some respondents stated that:

- child care is not affordable for all families;
- they can't work because child care is too expensive;
- they were opposed to fee increases;
- that increased fees would force many to reconsider working;
- they supported fee increases; and
- there is a need to change the eligibility criteria and/or income thresholds to child care subsidies.

There were also comments about an income testing model for fees. Some respondents supported this idea and some did not. There were suggestions that an income testing model needs to account for more than income (such as debt or expenses).

Some respondents stated that rather than increases to fees, the funding to facilities should be increased to support operational costs. There were comments that increased funding would lead to more child care and improve the quality of child care. Respondents stated that funding should also take operational costs, such as rent or staffing, into consideration.

### **The Value of Early Learning and Child Care**

Thirty-six per cent of the comments were about the value of early learning and child care. Parents indicated that child care is a public service that is critical and necessary in supporting them to participate in the labour market or education/training. Also, some parents commented about the significance of early learning for positive societal and educational outcomes. Parents also highlighted the importance of early childhood educators (ECEs), stating that they should be fairly compensated for their training and responsibilities.

For example, respondents stated that early learning and child care:

- supports the economy;
- increases tax revenue;
- is essential to women entering or returning to the workforce; and
- contributes to healthy child development.

Parents also commented that:

- increased funding was needed for higher and more competitive wages
- higher wages would lead to increased quality of care and staff retention
- current wages are the cause of the workforce shortage and the lack of trained ECEs.

Respondents also referred to the need for a universal child care system, or free public child care, for every child or family who needs it. Parents stated that the early learning and child care system should be an extension of the public education system, or that the two systems should work together and be more integrated.

### **Availability**

Thirty-six per cent of the comments were about the availability of child care. Parents commented that they are not able to find any child care space or one that meets their needs (e.g., convenient location). There were comments about the difficulties this caused for their families. For example, stress, facing the possibility of leaving employment (especially after maternity leave), making tough choices about placing their child in a space that may be of low quality or unsafe, and juggling multiple arrangements with different providers in order to meet their need for child care.

For example, respondents stated that:

- families are struggling to find any type of child care and sometimes settle for a child care arrangement that is not preferred;
- there is a need for more licensed child care, including more centres and more space (especially for infants and school-age children);
- there is a need for transportation to before and after school care at centres near the school;
- before and after school care should be in every school; and
- there is a need for more licensed child care in rural communities.

## **Quality**

Fifteen per cent of the comments were about high-quality early learning and child care. Parents stated that quality child care was important to them in terms of both the early learning component as well as a safe and nurturing environment and positive relationships with trained caregivers for children. Parents felt that well-compensated early learning and child care staff would lead to better retention and higher quality programs.

For example, respondents referred to:

- higher wages leading to more educated and trained staff and higher quality;
- quality in terms of physical space and the buildings used to house child care programs;
- the need for a curriculum;
- licensed facilities providing higher quality care;
- lower quality in unlicensed homes, private facilities, and for-profit facilities.

Some comments stated that increased funding of facilities was needed to improve quality.

There were also comments about training or resources for boards of directors.

## **Flexibility**

Thirteen per cent of the comments were about families needing flexible child care options.

Parents mentioned they need extended hours, part time care (without needing to pay for full time), and child care for those who work shifts (such as essential health care workers). A few respondents suggested incentives and options to help parents stay at home with their children.

## **The Online Child Care Registry**

Thirteen per cent of the comments were about the Online Child Care Registry (OCCR). Parents indicated that they could not find a space using the OCCR. They commented that they were never contacted by a provider even though they were registered on the wait list for many years. Parents indicated that they felt the only way to secure a child care space was by directly contacting a provider. In some instances, parents shared that a new system or processes are needed to better connect families with the child care they need.

For example, there were comments that:

- facilities keep their own lists and most are not using the OCCR;
- if facility use of the OCCR is not mandatory, the system is not useful to parents;
- directly contacting a facility is necessary in order to have your child enrolled;
- it is not a fair system because facilities' selection policies are not fair, as they are based on personal connections; and
- a better wait list system should be created.

# APPENDIX – FULL EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE MODERNIZATION PARENT SURVEY RESULTS

## Participant Profile

Below is a profile of parents who participated in the survey.

### Are you a parent/guardian with children aged 12 years or younger?

Ninety-eight per cent of respondents (4,351 respondents) were parents/guardians with children aged 12 years or younger. Those that responded no are not included in the rest of the responses.



Mandatory question (4,451 responses)

### What are the ages of your children? Select all that apply.

The chart below shows the percentage of children belonging to each age category. Most children were aged 5 or younger (63 per cent).

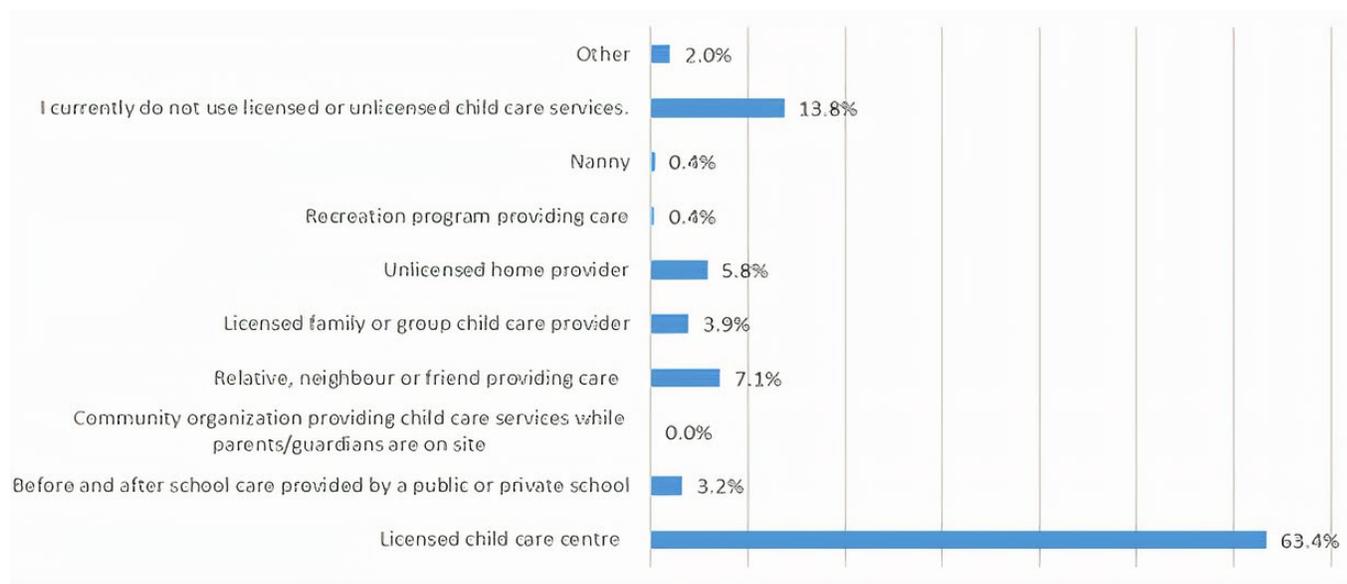
What are the ages of your children? Select all that apply.	
Age Ranges	Percentage of respondents who selected each age range
Under 2 years of age	32%
2 - 3	39%
4 - 5	40%
6 - 7	28%
8 - 9	22%
10 - 12	15%

Mandatory question (4,351 responses)

### What is your primary child care arrangement?

Sixty-seven per cent of respondents stated that they use licensed child care (homes and centres) as their primary child care arrangement. The bar chart below shows the other arrangements.

Of the two per cent that selected “other,” most of these responses did fall into the options provided. For example, some respondents thought that nursery schools did not fit into any category. Manitoba Families classifies these as licensed centres. Some respondents had children in different arrangements (e.g.: one child in a licensed centre and one in an unlicensed home, etc.) Some respondents identified themselves or relatives as providing care. Others identified being on maternity leave or looking for care. They have been factored into “do not use licensed/unlicensed child care.”



Mandatory question (4,351 responses)

### Tell us why you do not use child care services at this time. Select all that apply.

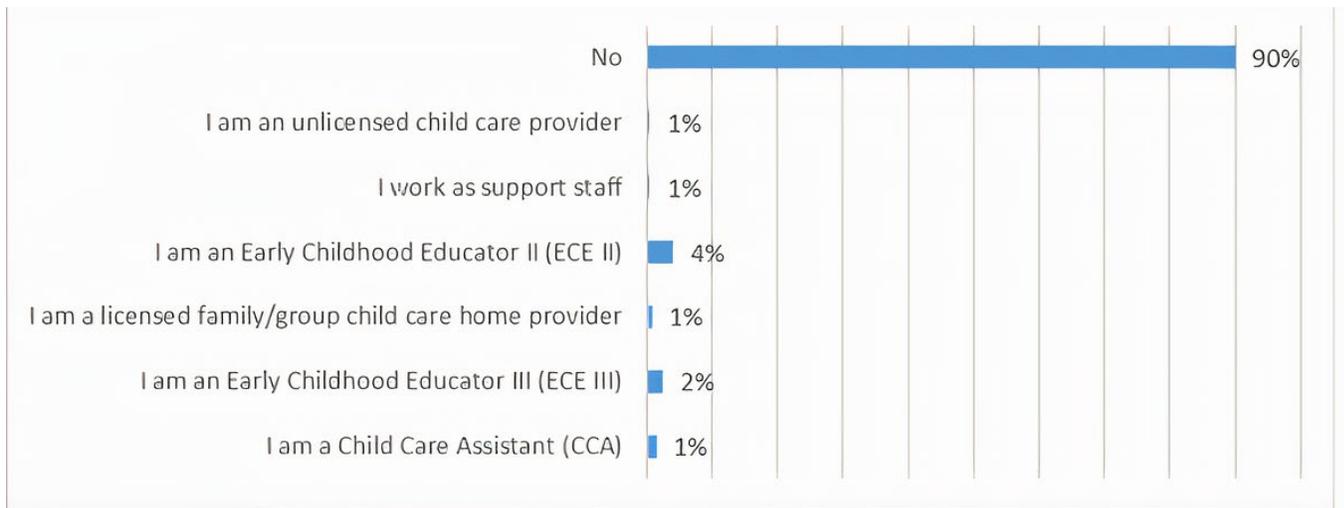
Most of the respondents (63%) selected “myself or my spouse provides care,” followed by “child care is not affordable” (29%). Almost one-quarter (24%) were looking for regular, ongoing child care.

Tell us why you do not use child care services at this time. Select all that apply.	
Reasons	Percentage of respondents who selected the option
Myself or my spouse provides care	63%
I am looking for regular, ongoing child care.	24%
Child care is not affordable	29%
Child care is not available when I need it	19%
Child care is available but does not meet my child’s needs	4%
Other	16%

Mandatory question for those respondents who do not currently use licensed or unlicensed child care services (599 responses)

## Do you or your partner work in a child care centre or home?

Nine per cent of the total respondents work in a licensed child care facility.



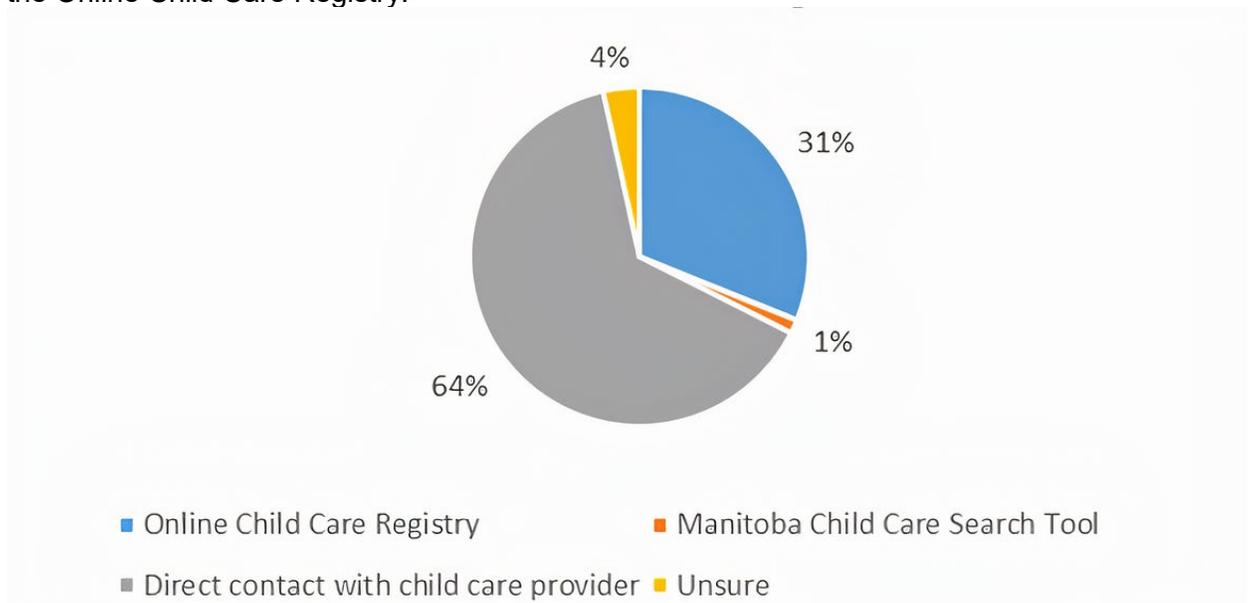
Mandatory question (4,351 responses)

## Full Parent Survey

### 1. Availability

#### Which best describes how you secured your child care arrangement?

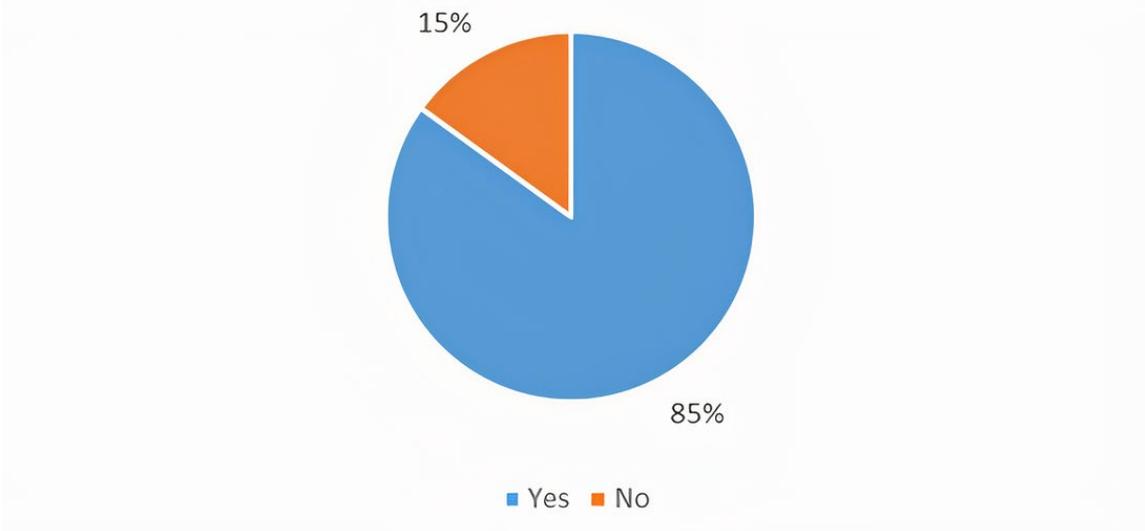
- Almost two thirds of respondents (64%) secured their child care arrangement by directly contacting the provider, while a little less than on-third (31%) secured their arrangement using the Online Child Care Registry.



Mandatory question (3,752 responses)

**Are you currently looking or have you looked for child care in the past five years?**

- Most respondents (85%) are looking/have looked for child care in the past five years.



Mandatory question (4,351 responses)

**Did you experience any of the following barriers when you were looking for child care? Select all that apply.**

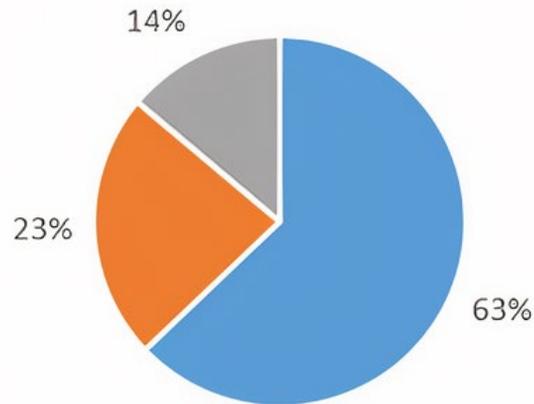
- The top three barriers cited include:
  - Finding an available child care space (85%)
  - Finding child care at a convenient location (66%)
  - Finding affordable child care (47%)

<b>Did you experience any of the following barriers when you were looking for child care? Select all that apply.</b>	
<b>Barriers</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents who selected each barrier</b>
Finding an available child care space	85%
Finding child care that fits my schedule (i.e. operational hours that suit my needs)	45%
Limited choice/options that met my or my child's needs	30%
Finding child care at a convenient location	66%
Finding affordable child care	47%
I did not experience any barriers when looking for child care	7%

Mandatory question for those who answered they have looked for child care in the past five years (3,698 responses)

**When looking for child care space, some parents/guardians prefer to proactively communicate with child care providers before being put on a wait list while others prefer to be contacted by a provider after space becomes available. Which option do you prefer?**

- Almost two-thirds of respondents (63%) prefer to proactively communicate with child care providers instead of waiting to be contacted by a provider once a space is available.



- I prefer to proactively communicate with child care providers before being placed on a wait list.
- I prefer to register on a wait list and wait to be contacted by a child care provider after space becomes available.
- Unsure

Mandatory question (4,351 responses)

**When looking for a child care space, what factors are most important to you? Select your top three.**

- The three most important factors identified by respondents were:
  - Location (63%)
  - Experience of child care staff (56%), and
  - Affordability (55%)
- A significant number of respondents also selected before and after school programs (45%) and flexible hours of operation (32%) as factors that were important to them.

<b>When looking for child care space, what factors are most important to you? Select your top three.</b>	
<b>Factors</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents who selected each factor</b>
Affordability of child care	55%
Location	63%
Cultural/diverse program (i.e., Indigenous, francophone, newcomer, etc.)	5%
Supports for children with additional emotional/behavioural needs or diagnosed disabilities	9%
Experience of child care staff	56%
Before and after school program	45%
Flexible hours of operation	32%
Availability of lunch and/or snacks at the facility	17%
Child care program in other languages	2%
Other	4%

Mandatory question (4,351 responses)

For those that selected “other,” parents mentioned the importance of:

- Quality child care programs and safety
- Education/professionalism of staff
- Personal relationship/interaction with provider
- Better staff wages
- Part-time care and summer/spring break care
- Transportation to and from school

## 2. Flexibility

**What type of flexible hours of care are you looking for? Select all that apply.**

- For the type of flexible operational hours needed, most respondents selected early mornings (69%), followed by late evenings (60%) and part-time child care (45%).

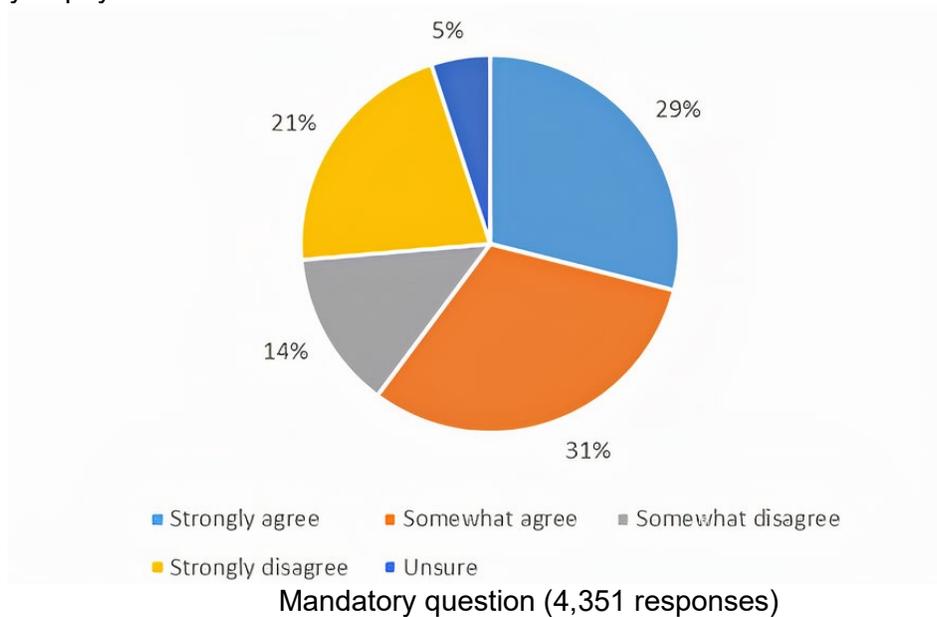
<b>What type of flexible hours of care are you looking for? Select all that apply.</b>	
<b>Option</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents who selected each option</b>
Part-time care	45%
Early mornings (i.e. between 6 a.m. and 8 a.m.)	69%
Late evenings (i.e. between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m.)	60%
Weekends	13%
Overnight	4%

Mandatory question for those respondents who selected flexible hours of operation as an important factor (1,398 responses)

### 3. Affordability

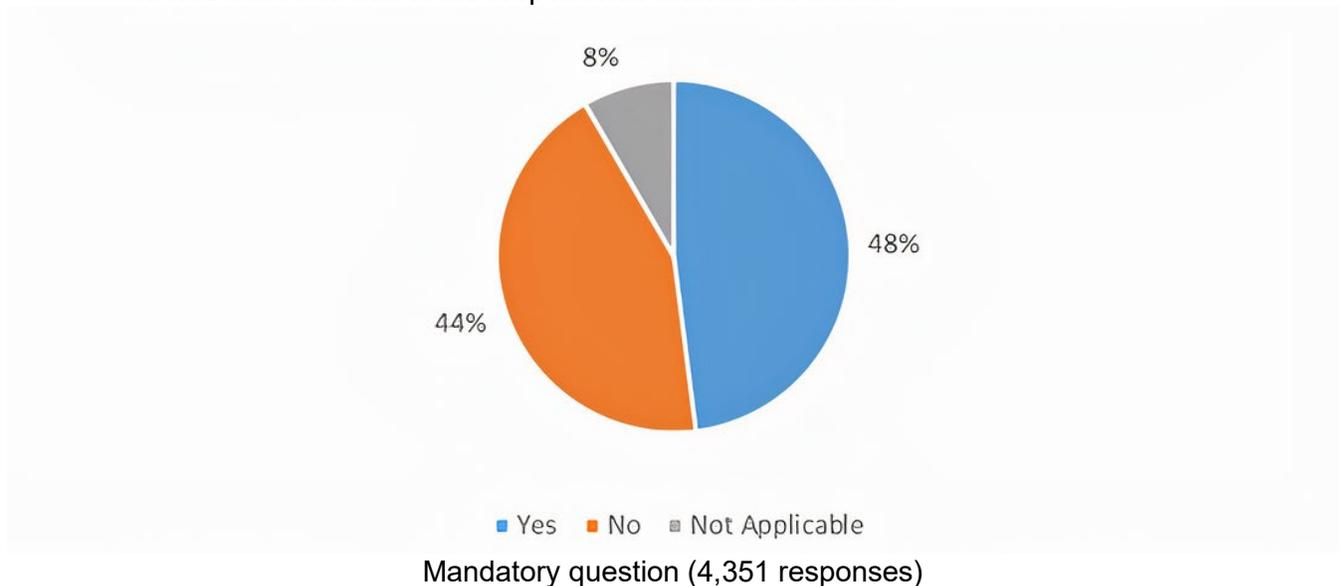
Rate the extent to which you agree or disagree that the Manitoba government should consider a funding model where child care fees are adjusted based on the parent/guardian's ability to pay (i.e. family income level)?

- Most respondents (60%) strongly/somewhat agreed that the Manitoba government should consider a funding model where child care fees are adjusted based on the parent/guardian's ability to pay.



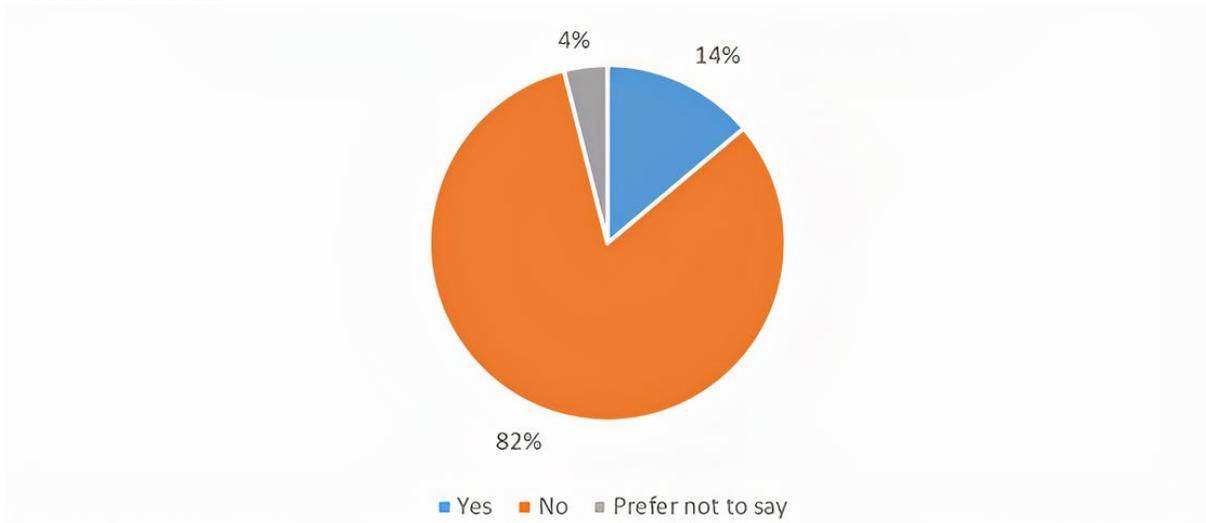
Has the current cost of child care impacted your decision on returning to employment/pursuing training or education?

- Almost one-half of the respondents indicated the cost of child care did impact their decision, while less than one-half of the respondents indicated it did not.



### Have you ever applied for a child care subsidy?

- Approximately 14 per cent of respondents have applied for a child care subsidy to help with the cost of child care.

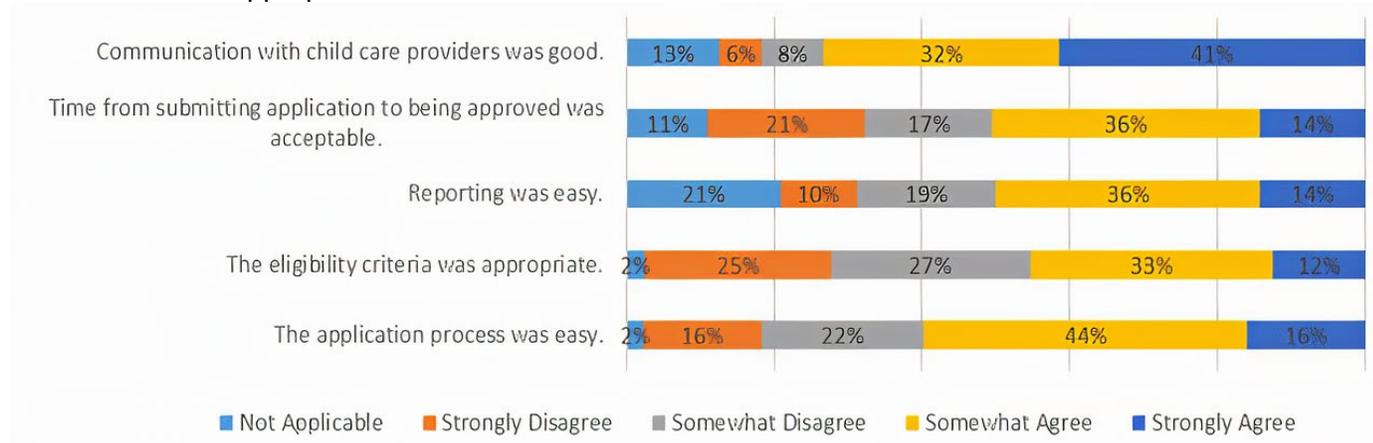


Mandatory question (4,351 responses)

### To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following aspects of the child care subsidy process?

Respondents who had ever applied for a child care subsidy were asked this question.

- A majority of these respondents strongly/somewhat agreed that:
  - Communication with child care providers during the subsidy process was good (73%)
  - The application process was easy (60%)
- One-half of these respondents strongly/somewhat agreed that:
  - Time from submitting application to being approved was acceptable (50%)
  - Reporting was easy (50%)
- A little over one-half (52%) of these respondents strongly/somewhat disagreed that the eligibility criteria is appropriate.

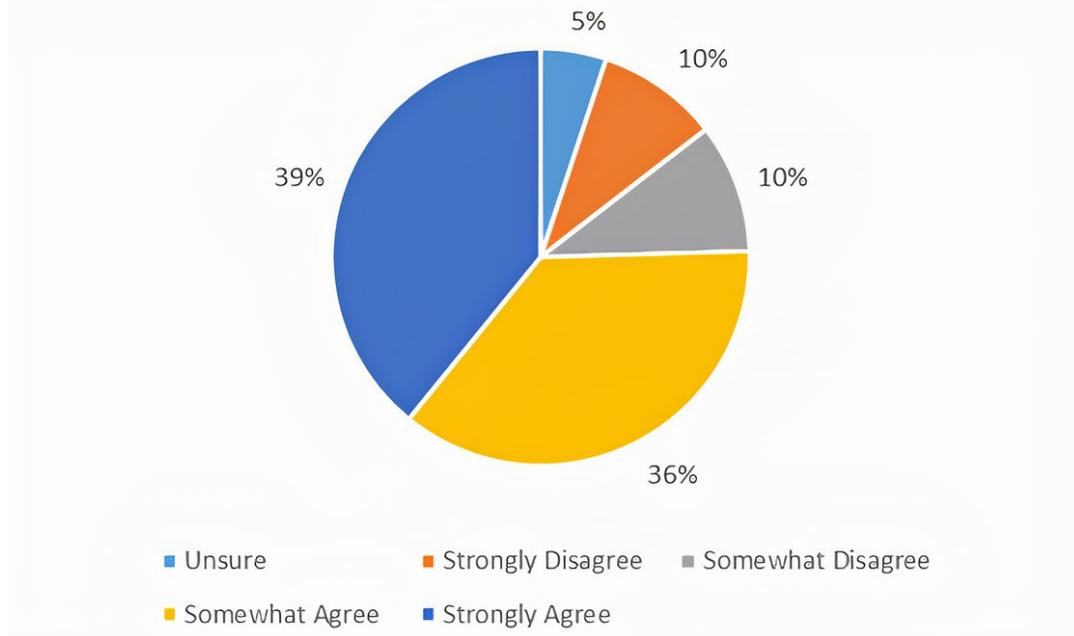


Mandatory question for those respondents who had ever applied for a child care subsidy (603 responses)

#### 4. Early Learning and Child Care Programs

To what extent do you agree or disagree that early learning, provided by a licensed child care facility, is more important for younger children (under 6) than for older school aged children (aged 7-12) who generally attend school full-time?

- Three-quarters of all respondents strongly/somewhat agreed that that early learning is more important for younger children than for older children, with only 20% of respondents disagreeing.



Mandatory question (4,351 responses)

When considering before and after school child care programs for children aged 7-12, what is most important to you? Rank the options from most important (1) to least important (4). Skip question if not applicable.

- Respondents indicated that recreational activities and socializing with friends were more important than structured learning opportunities and cultural/language programs when considering before and after school child care programs for children aged 7-12.

Options	Rank
Recreational activities (e.g. athletics, art, music)	1.66
Socializing with friends	2.29
Structured learning opportunities beyond education in schools	2.68
Cultural/language programs	3.34

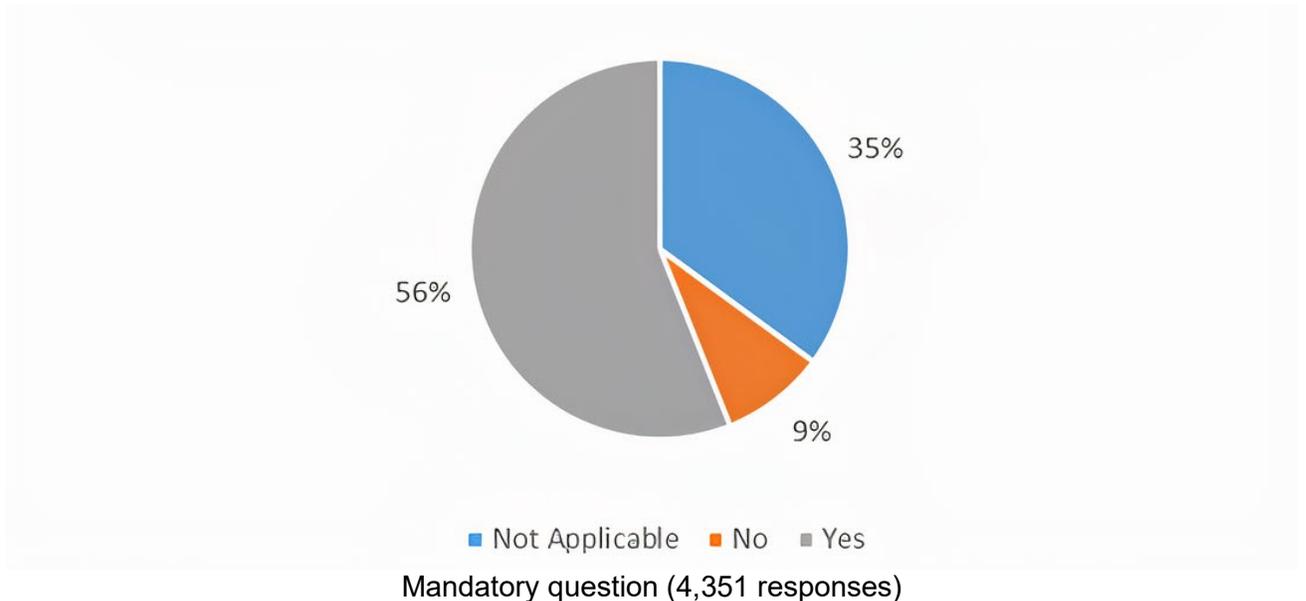
Optional question (4,040 responses)

- It should be noted, while the chart above refers to all respondents, when looking more closely at the French respondents, we found that they slightly differed in their preference. They indicated that recreational activities were most important, followed by cultural/language programs, socializing with friends and least important was structured learning opportunities for before and after school child care programs.

## 5. Diverse and Inclusive Child Care Programs

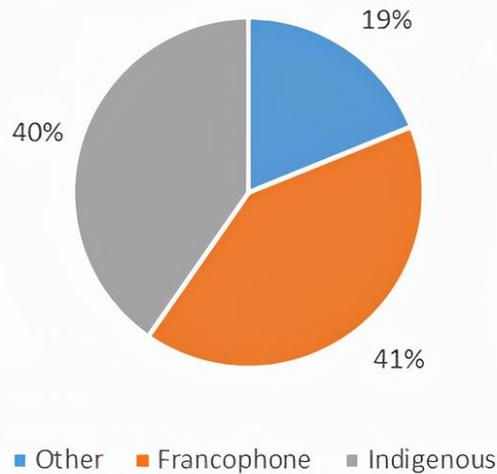
### As a parent, are you able to access a child care program that meets your cultural/linguistic needs?

- This question was applicable to sixty-five per cent of parents, with slightly more than one-third of participants stating that this question was not applicable to them.
- While most participants are able to access a program that meets their cultural/linguistic needs, there are some parents (9%) who indicated that they are not able to access a program that meets their needs.



### What type of diverse/culturally appropriate child care program do you need? Select all that apply.

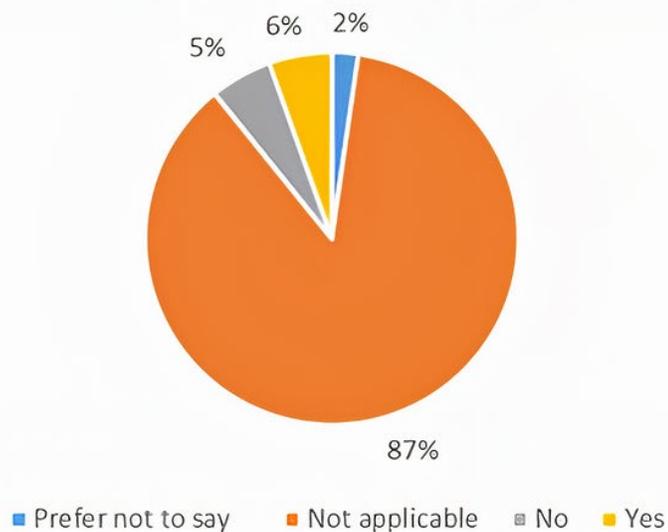
- Of the respondents who need a diverse/culturally appropriate program:
  - 41% respondents identified they need a Francophone program
  - 40% respondents identified they need an Indigenous program
  - 19% respondents identified other, the most common of which included:
    - Child care with religious values
    - Chinese
    - Ukrainian
    - Spanish
    - Filipino
    - Polish
    - Punjabi



Mandatory question for those respondents who are not able to access a program that meets cultural/linguistic needs (361 responses)

**If you are a parent with a child/children with inclusion/additional support needs, are you able to access a child care space?**

- This question was applicable to 11 per cent of parents. Of these respondents, six per cent selected yes they are able to access a child care space for their child with additional support needs, and five per cent selected no.
- Two per cent of participants preferred not to say if they are able to access a child care space for their child/children with inclusion/additional support needs

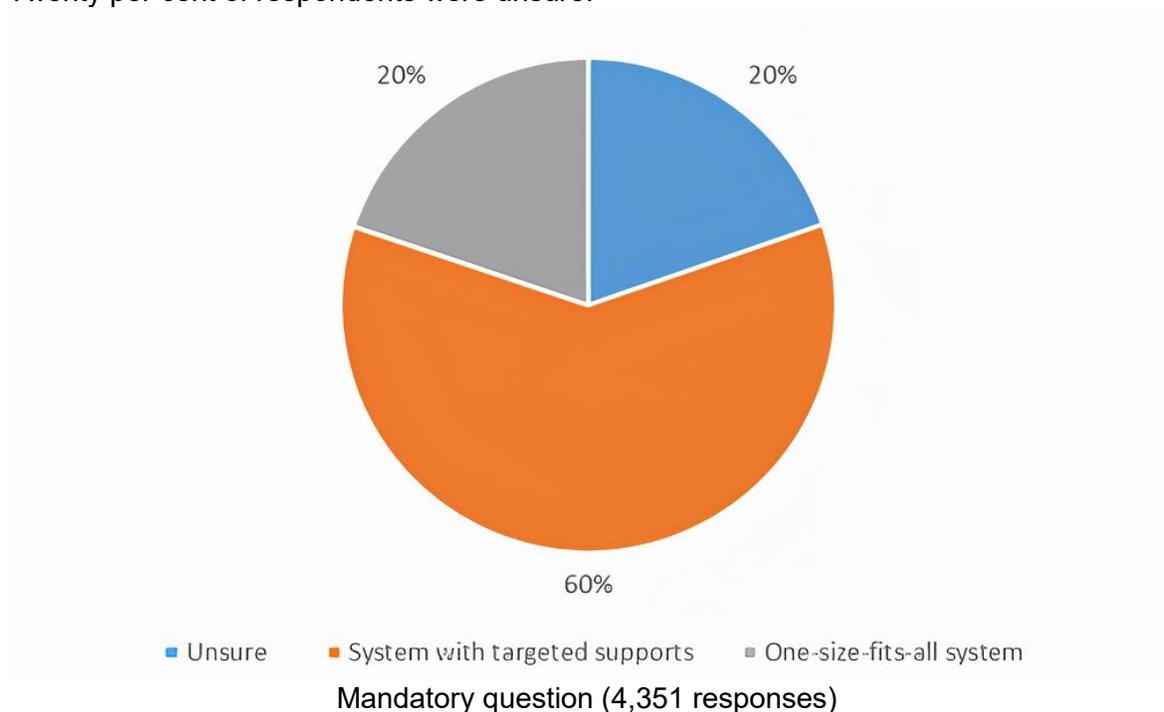


Mandatory question (4,351 responses)

## 6. Modernized Early Learning and Child Care System

When thinking of developing a modernized child care system, it could be designed as more of a “one-size-fits-all” approach where there are fewer, more regular, full-time child care options and the same type of funding supports are available for everyone. The other option is to design a modernized system that is based on more of a targeted approach that provides a variety of child care choices and funding supports that address specific parent needs. Which option do you prefer?

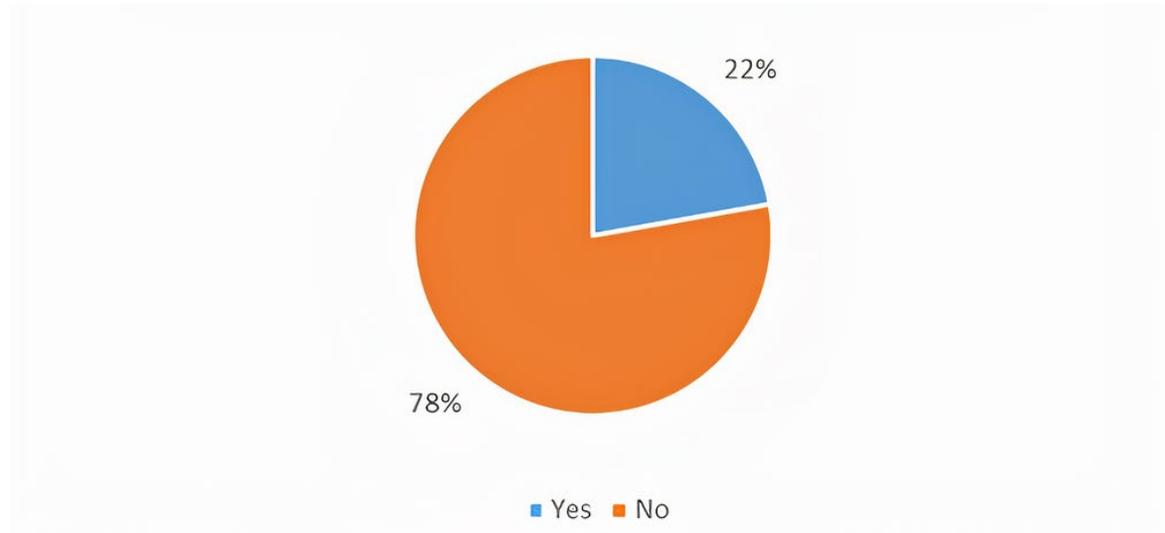
- Most respondents, 60 per cent, prefer a modernized early learning and child care system that is based on a “targeted approach” with more child care options and funding dependent on parent need.
- Twenty per cent prefer a one size fits all approach with more regular, full-time child care options and the same type of funding supports available for all,
- Twenty per cent of respondents were unsure.



## 7. Board Management of Non-Profit Child Care Centres

### Are you/have you been on a child care centre's board of directors?

- Almost one-quarter of all respondents (22%) are or have been on a child care centre's board of directors.



Mandatory question (4,351 responses)

### What are the top factors that could improve the board management of non-profit centres? Select up to two options.

This question was asked of those respondents who are or have been on a board of directors.

- The majority of respondents selected:
  - More access to board resources (68%)
  - Board members should be required to take board training (53%)
- Approximately one-quarter (24%) of respondents also stated that centralized supports (i.e., a hub/agency model) could improve board management.
- For the “other” responses, parents also mentioned:
  - Issues with a volunteer, parent board (i.e. not professional management)
  - Better access to central resources
  - Increased funding to be better able to manage budget and pay staff
  - Better communication with the Early Learning and Child Care Program
  - Positive comments about boards working well

**What are the top factors that could improve the board management of non-profit centres?  
Select up to two options.**

Option	Percentage of respondents who selected each option
Board members should be required to take board training, including their legal responsibilities	53%
Professional requirements for board members	19%
Centralized supports (i.e. a hub/agency model where one board is able to serve multiple centres)	24%
More access to board resources (i.e. human resource manuals, general training manuals, financial resources)	68%
Other	8%

Mandatory question for those respondents who are or have been on a board of directors (966 responses)

## Open-ended Question

### Do you have any other comments or suggestions about the current early learning and child care system or a future modernized system in Manitoba?

Fifty-two per cent of respondents (2,278 parents) answered the final open-ended question. Six key themes emerged:

- Cost (37%)
- Value of Early Learning and Child Care (36%)
- Availability (36%)
- Quality (15%)
- Flexibility (13%)
- The Online Child Care Registry (13%)

In addition to these themes, in a few instances, parents also commented on inclusion/additional support needs, COVID-19 impacts and the processes for opening a new child care facility.

#### Cost

Thirty-seven per cent of the comments to the final open-ended question were about the cost of child care. Some parents indicated that current child care costs are not affordable for them, others indicated that they are currently affordable. Some also suggested that fee increases were needed to better support early learning and child care facilities, while others were opposed to fee increases.

For example, some respondents stated that:

- child care is not affordable for all families;
- they can't work because child care is too expensive;
- they were opposed to fee increases;
- that increased fees would force many to reconsider working;
- they supported fee increases; and
- there is need to change the eligibility criteria and/or income thresholds to child care subsidies.

There were also comments about an income testing model for fees. Some respondents supported this idea and some did not. There were suggestions that an income testing model needs to account for more than income (such as debt or expenses).

Some respondents stated that rather than increases to fees, the funding to facilities should be increased to support operational costs. There were comments that increased funding would lead to more child care and improve the quality of child care. Respondents stated that funding should also take operational costs, such as rent or staffing, into consideration.

### **The Value of Early Learning and Child Care**

Thirty-six per cent of the comments were about the value of early learning and child care. Parents indicated that child care is a public service that is critical and necessary in supporting them to participate in the labour market or education/training. Also, some parents commented about the significance of early learning for positive societal and educational outcomes. Parents also highlighted the importance of early childhood educators (ECEs), stating that they should be fairly compensated for their training and responsibilities.

For example, respondents stated that early learning and child care:

- supports the economy;
- increases tax revenue;
- is essential to women entering or returning to the workforce; and
- contributes to healthy child development.

Parents also commented that:

- increased funding was needed for higher and more competitive wages
- higher wages would lead to increased quality of care and staff retention
- current wages are the cause of the workforce shortage and the lack of trained ECEs.

Respondents also referred to the need for a universal child care system, or free public child care, for every child or family who needs it. Parents stated that the early learning and child care system should be an extension of the public education system, or that the two systems should work together and be more integrated.

### **Availability**

Thirty-six per cent of the comments were about the availability of child care. Parents commented that they are not able to find any child care space or one that meets their needs (e.g., convenient location). There were comments about the difficulties this caused for their families. For example, stress, facing the possibility of leaving employment (especially after maternity leave), making tough choices about placing their child in a space that may be of low quality or unsafe, and juggling multiple arrangements with different providers in order to meet their need for child care.

For example, respondents stated that:

- families are struggling to find any type of child care and sometimes settle for a child care arrangement that is not preferred;
- there is a need for more licensed child care, including more centres and more space (especially for infants and school-age children);
- there is a need for transportation to before and after school care at centres near the school;
- before and after school care should be in every school; and
- there is a need for more licensed child care in rural communities.

## **Quality**

Fifteen per cent of the comments were about high-quality early learning and child care. Parents stated that quality child care was important to them in terms of both the early learning component as well as a safe and nurturing environment and positive relationships with trained caregivers for children. Parents felt that well-compensated early learning and child care staff would lead to better retention and higher quality programs.

For example, respondents referred to:

- higher wages leading to more educated and trained staff and higher quality;
- quality in terms of physical space and the buildings used to house child care programs;
- the need for curriculum;
- licensed facilities providing higher quality care; and
- lower quality in unlicensed homes, private facilities, and for-profit facilities.

Some comments stated that increased funding of facilities was needed to improve quality.

There were also comments about training or resources for boards of directors.

## **Flexibility**

Thirteen per cent of the comments were about families needing flexible child care options.

Parents mentioned they need extended hours, part time care (without needing to pay for full time), and child care for those who work shifts (such as essential health care workers). A few respondents suggested incentives and options to help parents stay at home with their children.

## **The Online Child Care Registry**

Thirteen per cent of the comments were about the Online Child Care Registry (OCCR). Parents indicated that they could not find a space using the OCCR. They commented that they were never contacted by a provider even though they were registered on the wait list for many years. Parents indicated that they felt the only way to secure a child care space was by directly contacting a provider. In some instances, parents shared that a new system or processes are needed to better connect families with the child care they need.

For example, there were comments that:

- facilities keep their own lists and most are not using the OCCR;
- if facility use of the OCCR is not mandatory, the system is not useful to parents;
- directly contacting a facility is necessary in order to have your child enrolled;
- it is not a fair system because facilities' selection policies are not fair, as they are based on personal connections; and
- a better wait list system should be created.

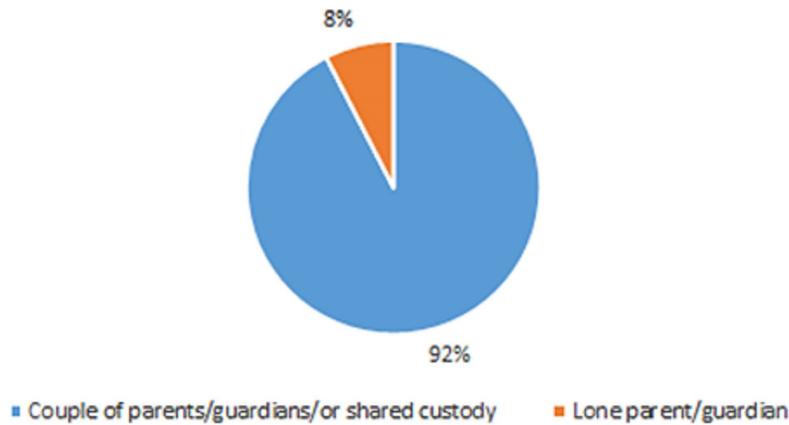
## Voluntary Demographic Information

The following is demographic information from respondents who voluntarily answered any of these questions. The number of total respondents for each question is noted under the charts.

### Which of the following best describes your family's current parenting arrangement?

- Almost all of the respondents, 92%, are a couple of parents/guardians or have shared custody and 8% of respondents are a lone parent/guardian.

Which of the following best describes your family's current parenting arrangement?



Optional question (4,319 responses)

### Which of the following describes your current situation? Select all that apply.

Option	Percentage of respondents who selected each option
Working	87%
Studying or training	13%
None of the above	10%

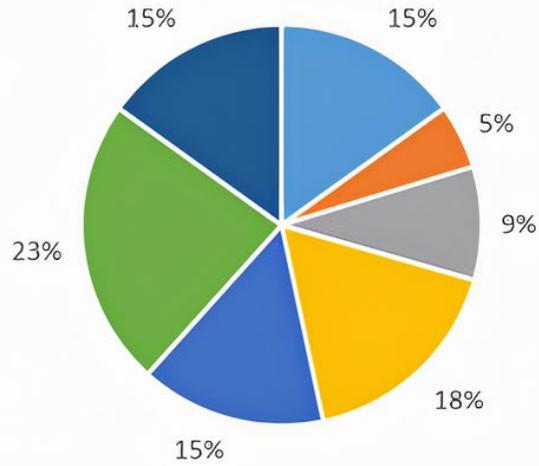
Optional question (326 responses)

### Which of the following describes your situation? Select all that apply.

Option	Percentage of respondents who selected each option
Neither of us are working, studying or training	0%
One of us is working	13%
One of us is studying or training	6%
Both of us are working	86%
Both of are studying or training	1%

Optional question (3,977 responses)

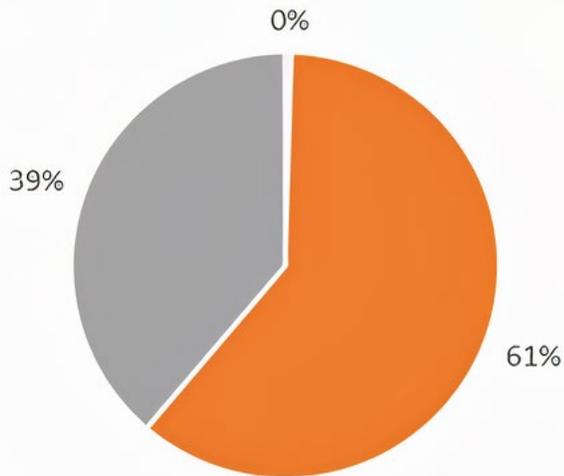
In 2019, what was your annual household income?



- Unsure/Prefer not to say
- Under \$30,000
- \$30,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$79,999
- \$80,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 to \$149,999
- Over \$150,000

Optional question (4,325 responses)

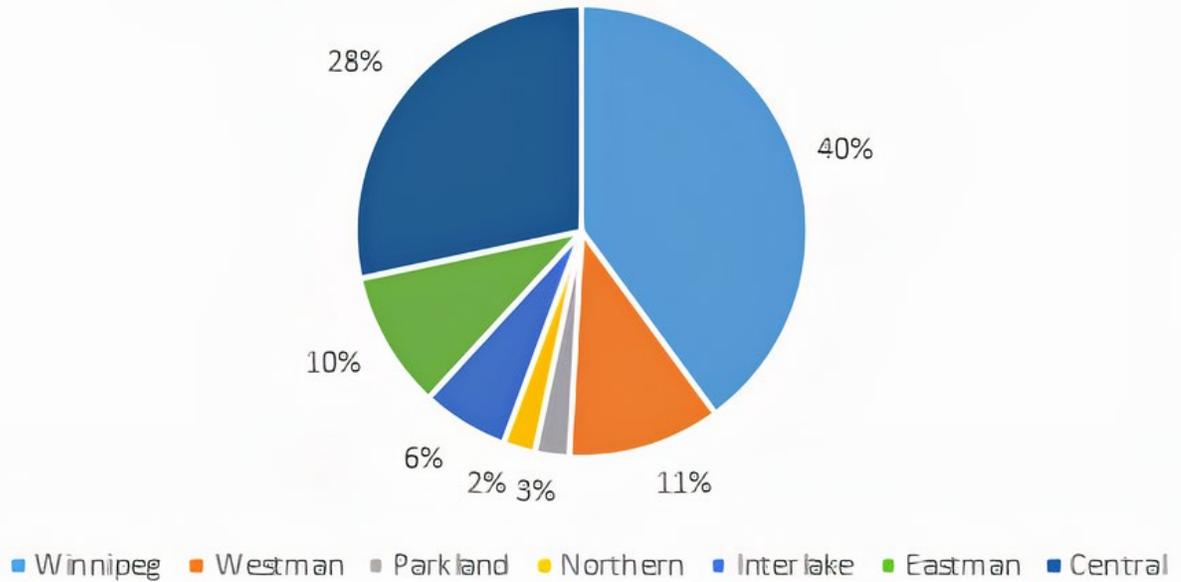
How old are you?



- 55 and over
- 35-54
- 18-34

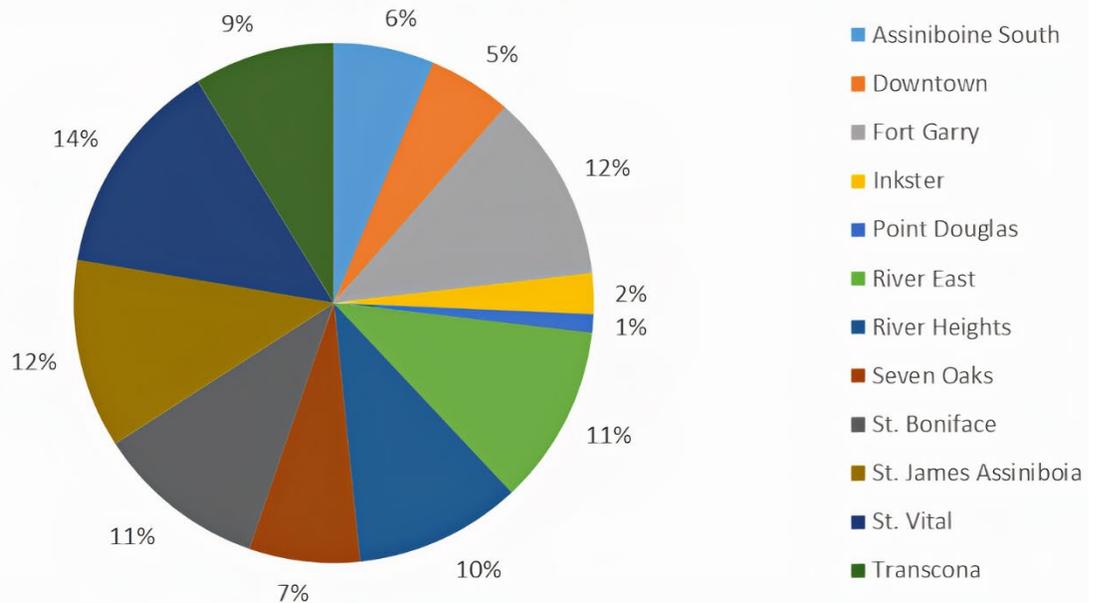
Optional question (4,310 responses)

## What region of Manitoba do you live in?



Optional question (4,322 responses)

## What community/neighbourhood in Winnipeg do you live in?



Optional question (1,713 responses)