

THE 2025 PARENT/CAREGIVER SURVEY

Connecticut families are struggling to find child care that is affordable, available, and meets their needs.

Based on responses from 3,719 parents and caregivers statewide, the survey gives a clearer view of what Connecticut families experience as they look for, choose, and use child care.

3,719

completed surveys
statewide

30%

of families statewide
were actively searching
for child care, on a
waitlist, or both

71%

of families in one seven-
town area of Northeastern
Connecticut were
searching for child care, on
a waitlist, or both

53%

said child care is too
expensive

KEY FINDINGS

- 1 Statewide, demand for child care exceeds available supply.** Nearly one-third of families (30%) statewide are actively searching for child care, on a waitlist, or both.
- 2 Difficulties accessing child care are especially pronounced in Northeastern Connecticut.** While access and affordability are concerns statewide, Northeastern Connecticut faces especially acute challenges. In one seven-town area, 71% of families reported that they were searching for child care, on a waitlist, or both—the highest rate among the 48 local areas measured statewide.
- 3 The cost of child care places a significant burden on families.** More than half (53%) of respondents reported child care is too expensive.
- 4 Families with toddlers are having an especially hard time accessing care.** The unmet need for child care is especially pronounced among families with toddlers—nearly half of whom are seeking care or waiting for a slot.
- 5 Being home doesn't mean care is covered.** Stay-at-home parents and caregivers do full-time caregiving work, but may still need part-time child care in order to study, attend appointments, and/or work for pay. More than half of stay-at-home caregivers said their care does not meet their family's needs. Among those who shared their reasons for caring for their children themselves, 28% said it was because they had been unable to secure other care.

About the survey

In 2018, the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC) and UConn launched a research partnership to better understand the experiences, needs, and preferences of Connecticut families with children under age six. Since then, the partners have conducted three statewide Parent/Caregiver Surveys—in 2020, 2022, and 2025.

From September to November 2025, ten UConn survey team members worked with 140 partner organizations on more than 258 recruitment efforts across the state, gathering responses from 3,719 parents and caregivers. The 2025 survey introduced several new approaches designed to broaden participation, improve accessibility, and strengthen data quality. Families could respond online or in person and in four languages, while a Parent Committee helped shape survey development, recruitment, and interpretation.

Because the Parent/Caregiver Survey is designed to be conducted in Connecticut every two years, it helps the state track changes in child care over time, understand whether policies and programs are working, and keep families' experiences at the center of early childhood decisions.

See next page for additional
survey findings and contact info

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

Lower-income families face greater challenges accessing child care.

Across racial and ethnic groups, income levels, and regions, families identified cost, limited availability, and transportation/travel as major barriers to preferred child care. But those barriers fell more heavily on lower-income families: those below about 75% of the State Median Income were more likely than higher-income families to report dissatisfaction with current child care arrangements, unmet child care needs, and difficulty accessing financial assistance. The pattern suggests affordability efforts may need to address both price and the practical hurdles families face finding available care.

More than one-third of Connecticut families surveyed (35%) say their current child care arrangement does not fully meet their needs.

Even when families have care, many say it does not fully cover their needs.

Barriers vary by community. The cost of child care was the top barrier statewide, but families' other challenges varied by community, including long waitlists, limited openings, transportation/travel distance, and difficulty accessing financial assistance.

Families' child care priorities are consistent statewide. Across nearly every region, parents and caregivers emphasized the same fundamentals: safety, learning, affordability, and confidence that their child would be well cared for.



Scan to read the complete
2025 Connecticut Parent/
Caregiver Survey report

35%

of Connecticut parents and caregivers report their current child care arrangement does not fully meet their needs

Survey design

- **Statewide reach**

The survey includes responses from families across 48 Local Governance Partner communities.

- **Multiple ways to participate**

Families could complete the survey online or in person, and it was offered in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Polish.

- **Community-based recruitment**

140 partner organizations helped recruit families, supported by 30+ in-person events statewide.

- **Family-informed design**

A Parent Committee helped shape survey development, recruitment, and interpretation so family voices informed each stage of the project.



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