# The Early Childhood System Voters Want to Invest In

While a decade of poll results shows consistent—and strong—voter support for public investments in early childhood care and education, policymakers continue to debate which early childhood services to prioritize, whether programs should target all children or some, and what "high quality" means to voters. Findings from a new national poll commissioned by Children's Funding Accelerator and an analysis of 56 other state, local, and national polls offer insights on these and other questions about voter support for early childhood services. The state and local poll examples included here represent consistent findings observed across our analysis.

COVID-19 increased the intensity of voter support for early childhood services.
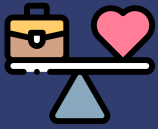
71% of voters believe the challenges parents face balancing child care and work during the pandemic are a serious/very serious issue and

82% of voters believe it is extremely/very important for state and local governments to improve opportunities for all children to get a strong start in life.

Sources: FM3 Research and New Bridge Strategy, Washington state poll, 2020; Children's Funding Accelerator and FM3 Research, national poll, 2021

These feelings translate to broad support for early childhood programs.

75% Maternal and infant health services

70% High-quality infant and toddler child care

69% High-quality preschool programs

Percentage of voters who rank each program/service as a high or very high priority for public spending.

Source: Children's Funding Accelerator and FM3 Research, national poll, 2021

Across state and local polls, voters support spending plans that address all ages in early childhood.

For example, in a Larimer County, CO, poll, **68%** of voters either prefer providing services to all children younger than 5 years or do not express a preference for a specific age group.

46% Strongly/somewhat prioritize all children younger than 5 years

22% No difference

21% Strongly/somewhat prioritize 3- and 4-year-olds

Percentage of voters who believe each age group should receive services under a sample early childhood spending proposal.

Source: Strategies 360; Larimer County, CO, poll; 2021

Meanwhile, voters tend to show equal support for universal and targeted approaches for providing early childhood programs/services when these options are not compared directly.

In a national poll with a split sample of voters

70% say access to high-quality child care for *all* infants and toddlers is a high/very high priority while

72% say access for infants and toddlers with the *greatest need* is a high/very high priority.

However, when pollsters ask voters directly whether they would prefer an early childhood program/service designed to reach all children and families or one that targets a specific group of children, poll results vary by community. **This highlights the importance of collecting local data to inform decision-making.**

Source: Children's Funding Accelerator and FM3 Research, national poll, 2021

Voters know that a variety of factors prevent many families from accessing the early childhood programs they need. They express the greatest concern about issues of program quality and cost.

80% Quality   **76% Cost**   **73% Location**   **69% Availability**

Percentage of New Orleans voters who express a lot/some concern about each factor.

Source: LJR Custom Strategies; New Orleans, LA, poll; 2021

Voters believe early childhood educators are key to program quality and they support using public funds to increase educator pay.

92% of voters say early childhood educators "play a critical role in helping children grow and develop"

while only **23%** of voters see them as having "fairly easy jobs."
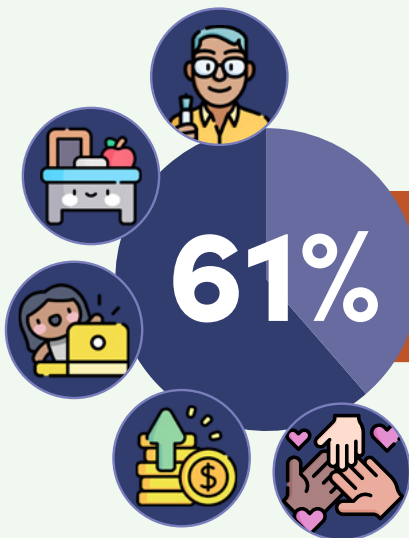
61% of voters nationally say it is extremely/very important to "combat the shortage of qualified child care, preschool, and after-school staff by increasing wages."

Sources: FM3 Research and Public Opinion Strategies, national poll, 2015; Children's Funding Accelerator and FM3 Research, national poll, 2021

Children's Funding Project is a nonprofit social impact organization that helps communities and states expand equitable opportunities for children and youth through strategic public financing.
childrensfundingproject.org

CHILDREN'$ FUNDING PROJECT

🐦 @FundOurKids   in Children's Funding Project