

CHILD CARE DISRUPTION DUE TO COVID-19 IS DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTING LOWER-INCOME FAMILIES IN ALABAMA



ALABAMA FAMILIES' EXPERIENCE WITH CHILD CARE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: BRIEF #1

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RESEARCH QUESTION:

How is household income related to families' experience with child care disruption during the COVID-19 pandemic?

KEY FINDINGS:



Families with lower household income more frequently report being unsure whether their child care program will reopen or close permanently.



Those with lower income are less likely to report being able to work remotely or having flexible work arrangements.



Families with lower income less frequently report that someone in the household is able to provide child care during the pandemic.

INTRODUCTION:

The Alabama Partnership for Children (APC) conducted an online survey of working families between May 18, 2020 and June 9, 2020, and received over 500 responses. A report with full survey results can be found at: <https://alabamapartnershipforchildren.org/parent-survey-results/>.

The results are pertinent to reopening child care programs safely, understanding the needs of families, and reconciling the competing needs of returning to work and providing child care.

SAMPLE:

This brief uses survey responses from the 434 families who report having at least one child under six years of age and who used some form of non-parental child care prior to the pandemic. Of the 434 respondents, 35% report a household income of \$48,000 or less per year, 30% report \$49,000-\$99,000, and 35% report income of \$100,000 or higher.

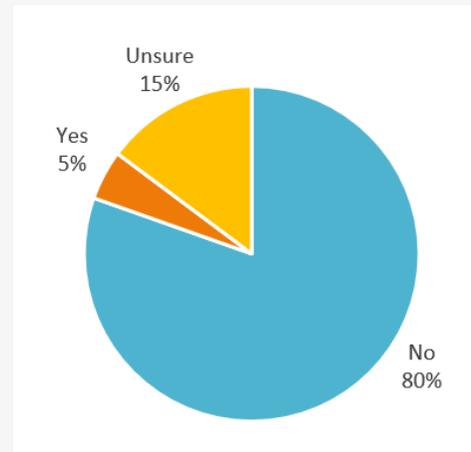


FINDINGS:

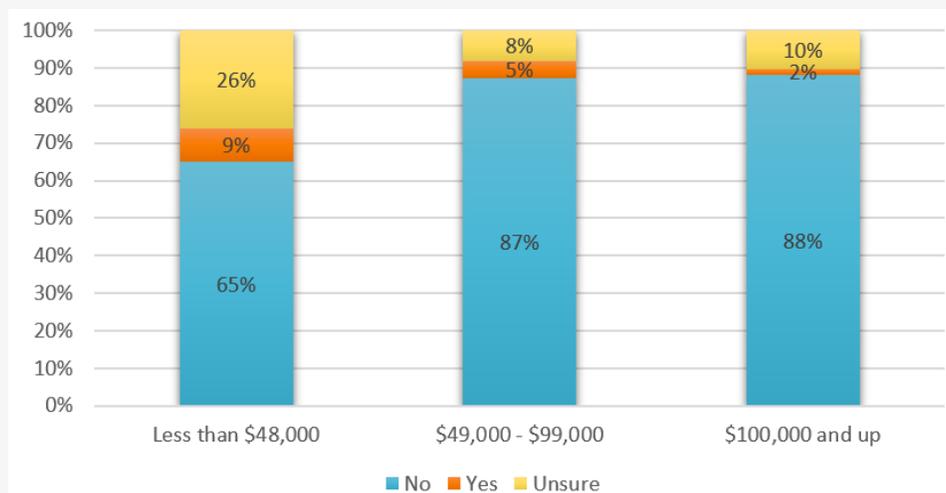
CHILD CARE PROGRAM CLOSURE

PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES REPORTING THAT THEIR CHILD CARE WILL CLOSE PERMANENTLY

Families were asked whether their child care arrangement had become unavailable permanently as a result of the pandemic. Only 5% of respondents report that that was the case, and 15% report being unsure.



PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES REPORTING THEIR CHILD CARE WILL CLOSE PERMANENTLY BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME

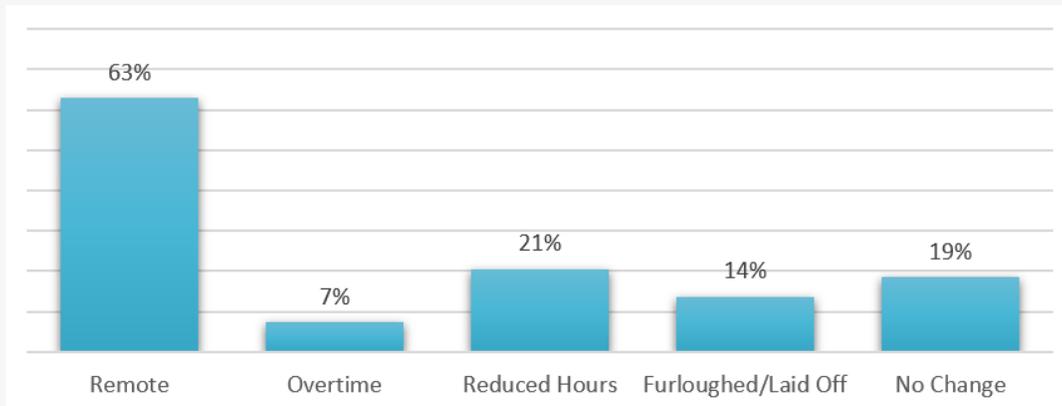


However, breaking down responses by household income reveals significant differences among income groups. For example, a much larger percentage of families in the lowest income group were unsure whether their child care program would reopen—26% compared with 8% and 10% of those in the higher income categories. This highlights the disproportionate long-term effect the pandemic may have on lower-income families. Additionally, while most

families report being confident their child care will resume, national data collected from child care providers indicates the number of programs that actually reopen may be much lower. For example, a survey by the National Association for the Education of Young Children[i] of more than 5000 child care providers found that 40% of respondents are certain they will close permanently if they do not receive public assistance.

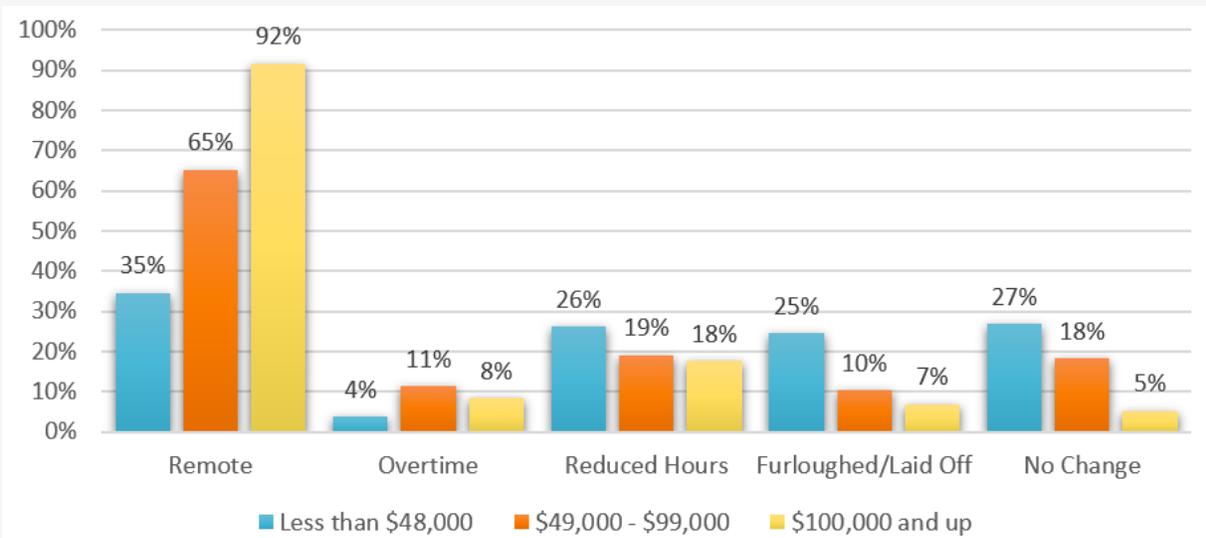
FAMILIES' EMPLOYMENT CHANGES

CURRENT WORK STATUS OF THE ADULT MEMBERS IN THE HOUSEHOLD



Overall, 63% of families report at least one adult in the household had switched to working remotely. However, this varies greatly by income level, with those with the lowest income least likely to report working remotely. Similarly, those with the lowest income are most likely to report working reduced hours, being furloughed or laid off, or having no change in their working arrangements.

CURRENT WORK STATUS OF THE ADULT MEMBERS IN THE HOUSEHOLD BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME

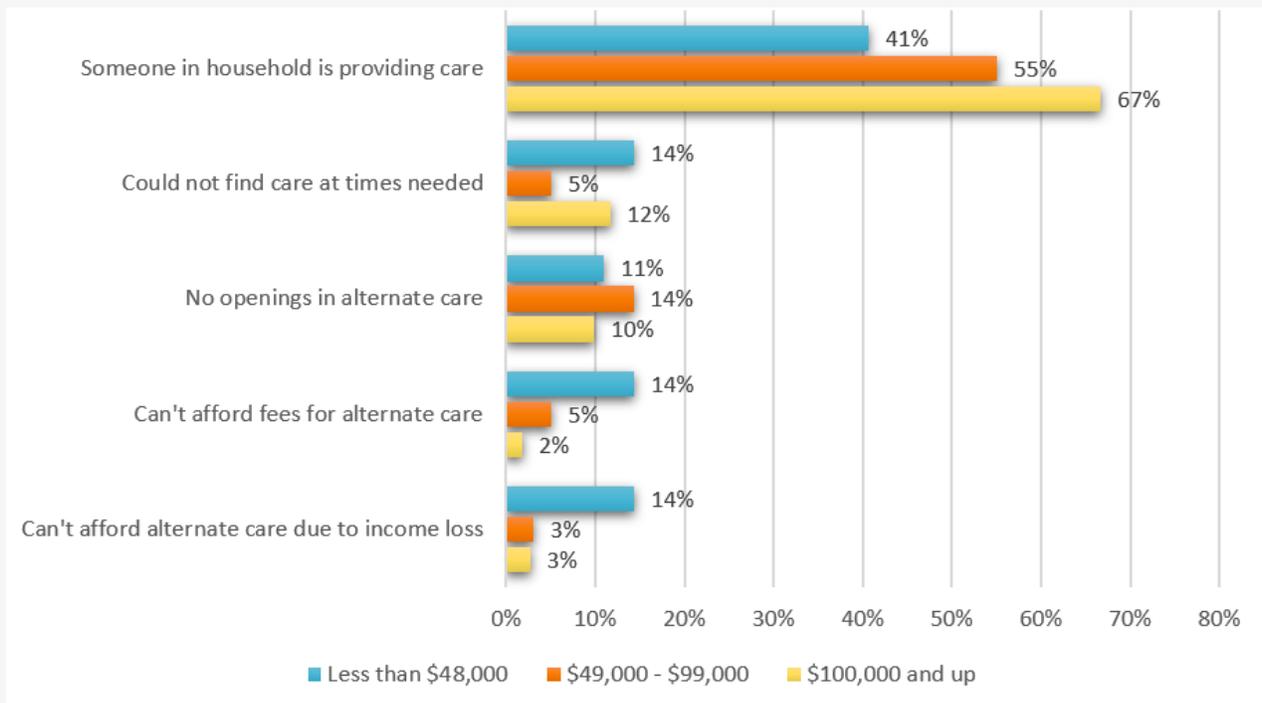


This highlights the increased need for non-parental child care among lower-income families. Given that only 35% of those with household income of less than \$48,000 report having the opportunity to work remotely and 27% report no change in their work arrangements, these families seem to have a continued need for non-parental child care in order to maintain their employment.

FAMILIES' EXPERIENCE FINDING ALTERNATE CARE

Families who report having had to find alternate care during the pandemic were asked about their experience finding it. Those with the lowest household income were much more likely to say they could not afford the cost of alternate care because of high fees and/or income loss, and they were least likely to report that someone in the household was able to provide alternate care.

FAMILIES' EXPERIENCE FINDING ALTERNATE CARE BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME



Together, these results point to the disproportionate effects of COVID-19 on child care arrangements for families in distinct household income ranges.

"It is financially difficult to continue paying for daycare when I am not making as much money as I was before."

"I don't understand how I'm supposed to go back to work when I can't find reliable child care due to my current child care provider being closed and reducing their hours."

"When calling around to locate care for essential workers children, I was very disappointed to find none. We are having to beg relatives to help since no child care is available in our area."



RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Use federal funding for child care relief to continue** to support the child care industry. The recent child care stabilization grants are an important step, but given the ongoing nature of the pandemic, more relief funds will be needed.
- 2 Continue to provide financial assistance to families to help provide child care that meets their needs.** This includes families who may not qualify for child care subsidies but cannot afford child care.
- 3 Consider how to support families in securing high-quality child care after the pandemic is over,** especially given the limited child care access prior to the pandemic. Results of the survey suggest this child care disruption will have long-term effects for lower-income families.
- 4 Identify regional child care needs and develop strategies to increase child care supply where needed.** This may include developing innovative strategies for recruiting and licensing new family child care and center-based programs.
- 5 Continue to collect information about parent needs and preferences related to child care** as we work to rebuild the child care industry and expand access to it.

For more information or if you have questions related to this report, please contact Dr. Alison Hooper at alhooper2@ua.edu.

[1] National Association for the Education of Young Children (July, 2020). Holding on until help comes: A survey reveals child care's fight to survive. Retrieved from https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/holding_on_until_help_comes.survey_analysis_july_2020.pdf