

**20**  
**24**

**LOPEZ**

**CHILD CARE**

**NEEDS**

**ASSESSMENT**

**FINAL REPORT**



Prepared by San Juan County  
Health & Community Services

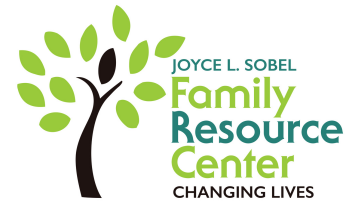
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# Thank You, Partners

Thank you to our community partners for your support of this important work.

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# Executive Summary



Lopez Island shares in the abundance of stunning natural beauty, opportunities for the appreciation of nature and outdoor recreation, and tight-knit community support that feature heavily in descriptions of the best benefits of living in San Juan County. It also shares the geographic isolation, rural setting, and seasonal tourist-influenced economy specific to the ferry served islands in the county. Working families, whether employed by others, self-employed, or operating a small business are impacted by the fluctuations and uncertainties that come with an economy largely reliant on the waxing and waning of seasonal tourist and part-time resident activity. For families with young children, the ability to access child care and early learning opportunities can determine whether they are able to participate in the workforce at all.

An anchor agency that offers an array of community supports on Lopez Island is the Lopez Island Family Resource Center (LIFRC). On their website, LIFRC asks readers to consider these two statistics from the 2018 United Way/Pacific NW ALICE report: “Over a third of residents living in San Juan County do not have enough income for a basic survival budget for rent, food, child care, and other basic expenses. This means roughly 1,100 children and adults on Lopez... are struggling to make ends meet.” This succinct statement of their organization’s why follows: “You cannot thrive when you are too busy trying to survive. That is *exactly* why we do what we do.”

The Child Care Partnership Grant funded a family child care needs assessment survey which was deployed during the first three weeks of February 2024 via English and Spanish language posters, social media channels, and community agency person-to-person promotion. It resulted in a modest sample size of 22 families, but the responses reflect the unique challenges of the Lopez community, the child care needs of Lopez families, and alignment with estimated percentages of child care needs met (age 0 to 5 years) statistics provided by the Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families, 2023 and Washington Childcare Aware, 2023.

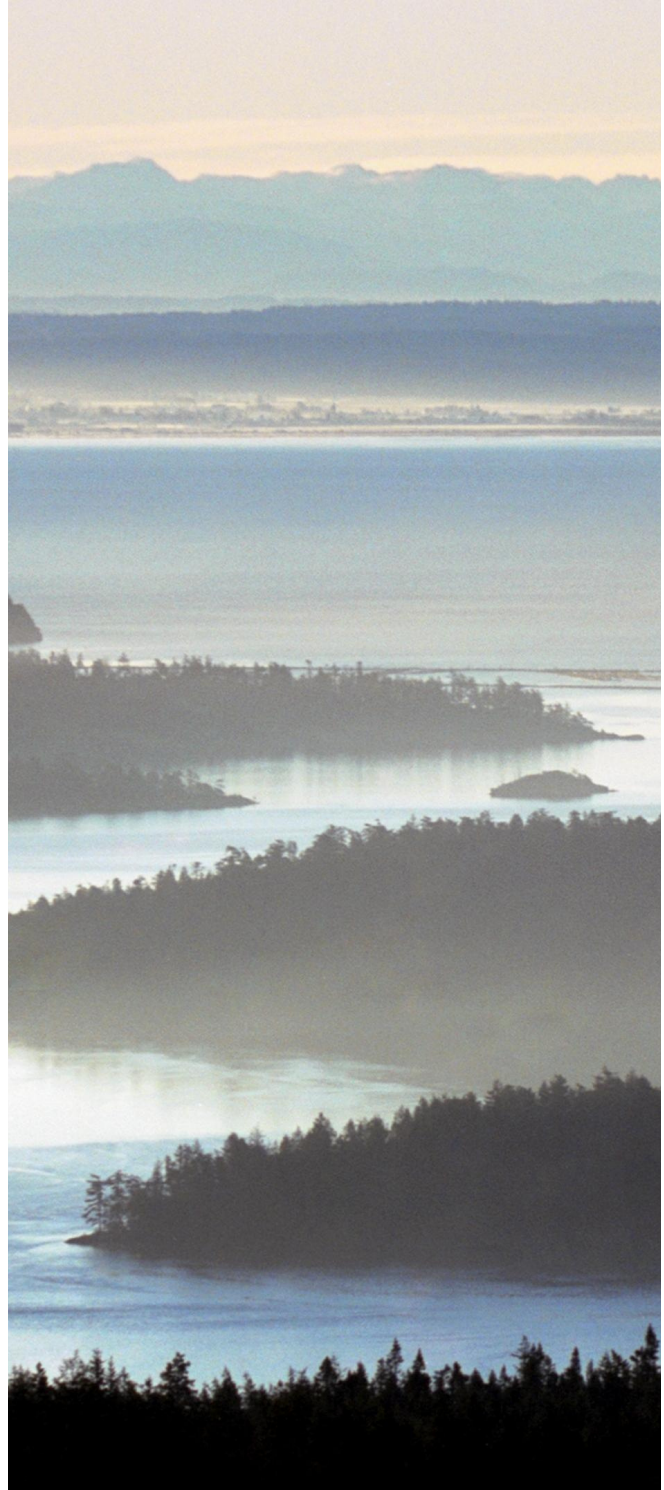


# Dear Lopez Island Families,

If you took the time out of your busy lives to respond to the Department of Commerce funded Child Care Partnership Grant Family Child Care Needs Survey that resulted in this report, we would like to express our utmost appreciation. You will find that many of your comments have been included in this report and all your contributions considered in the creation of the data points.

Those data points are not the end goal of this needs assessment. Work will continue to support and strengthen the child care options that are currently available in your community and to encourage the development of more child care capacity to meet your expressed needs.

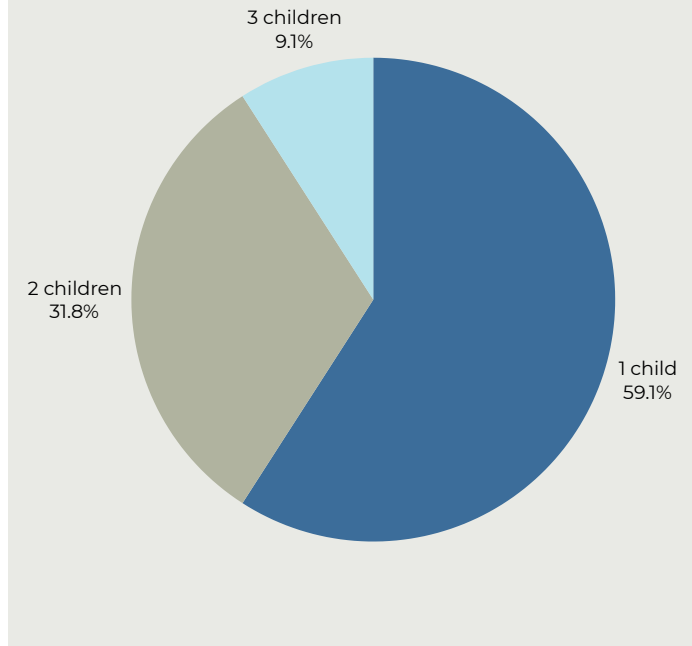
If you are reading this and did not have a chance to respond to the survey, please realize that your feedback is always welcome. We want to include your voices and experiences in creating high-quality, accessible child care options that meet the unique needs of Lopez Island families.



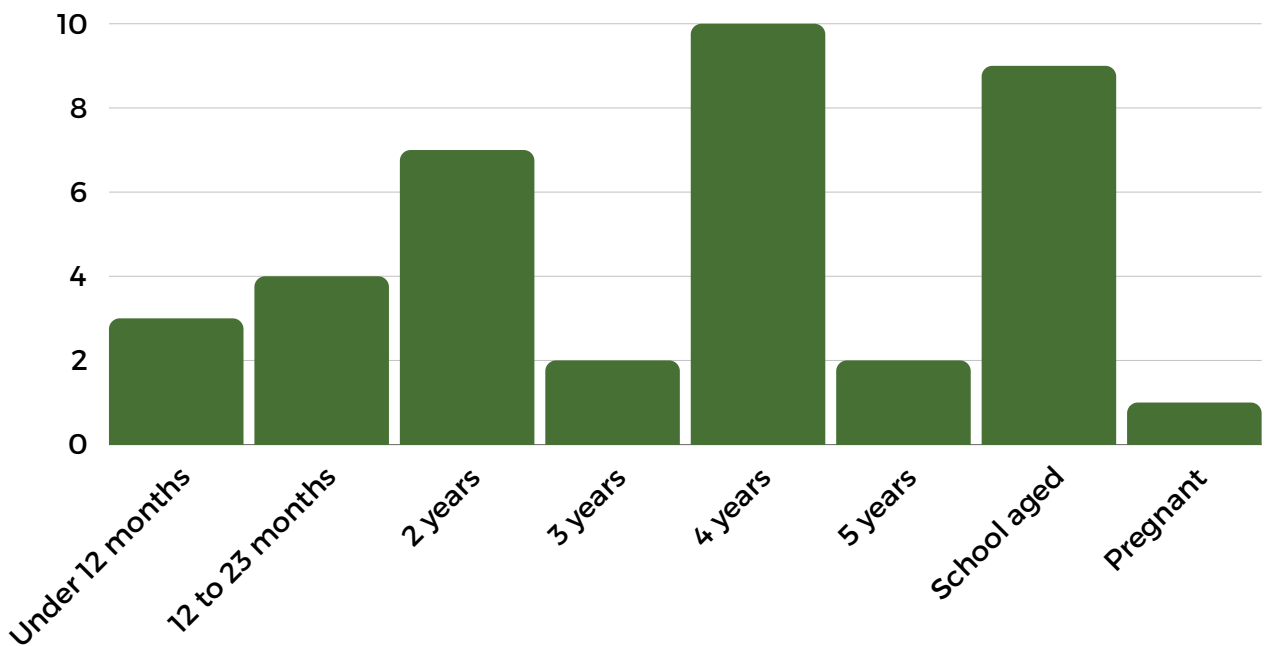
# I. Current Child Care Needs

The data demonstrates that child care is needed for all ages of children from 0 to 5, with some families requiring care for up to three children. It also demonstrates the means by which families arrange care for their children when they cannot access the child care they need. Child care provided by the parent in their own home is the child care currently used by most respondents (64%), with over half of respondents accessing child care provided by a center (55%) and nearly a third of respondents relying on care provided in a relative's home (32%).

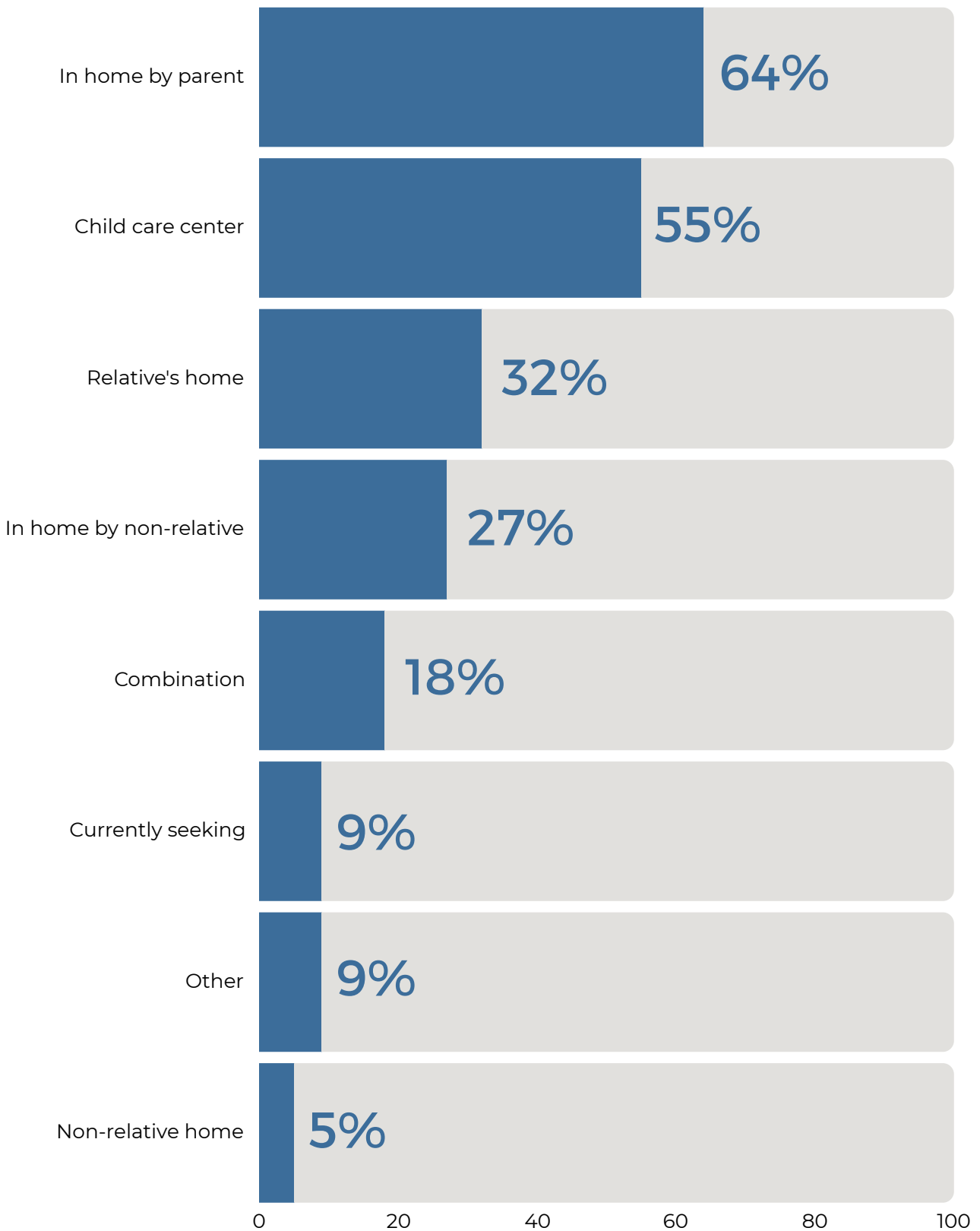
1. Number of respondents' children who need/would like child care:



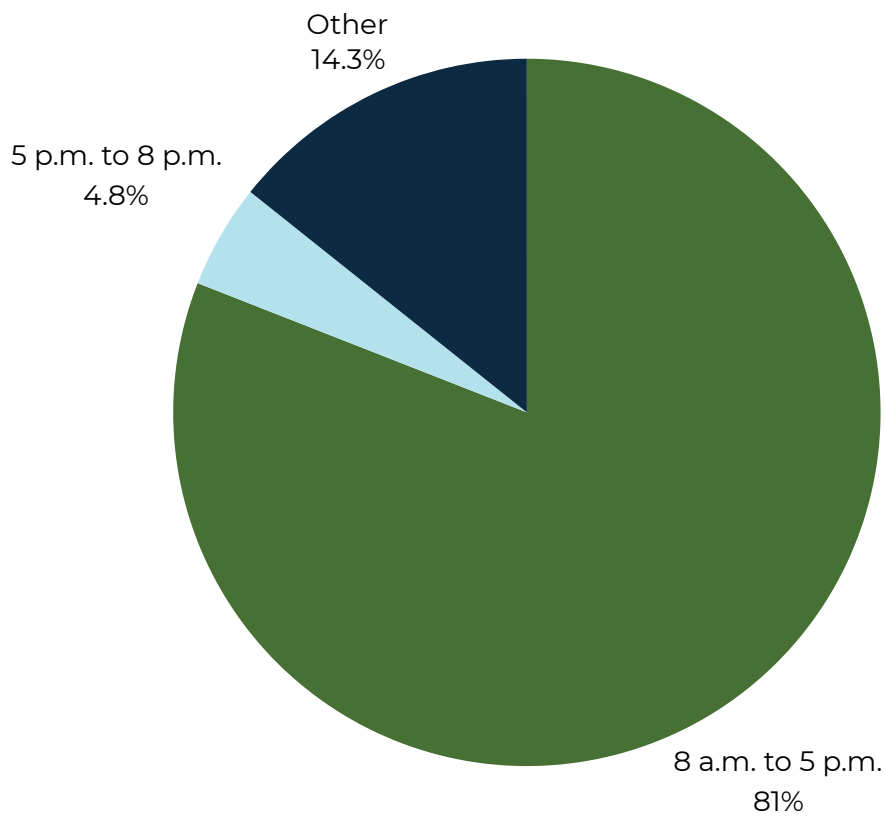
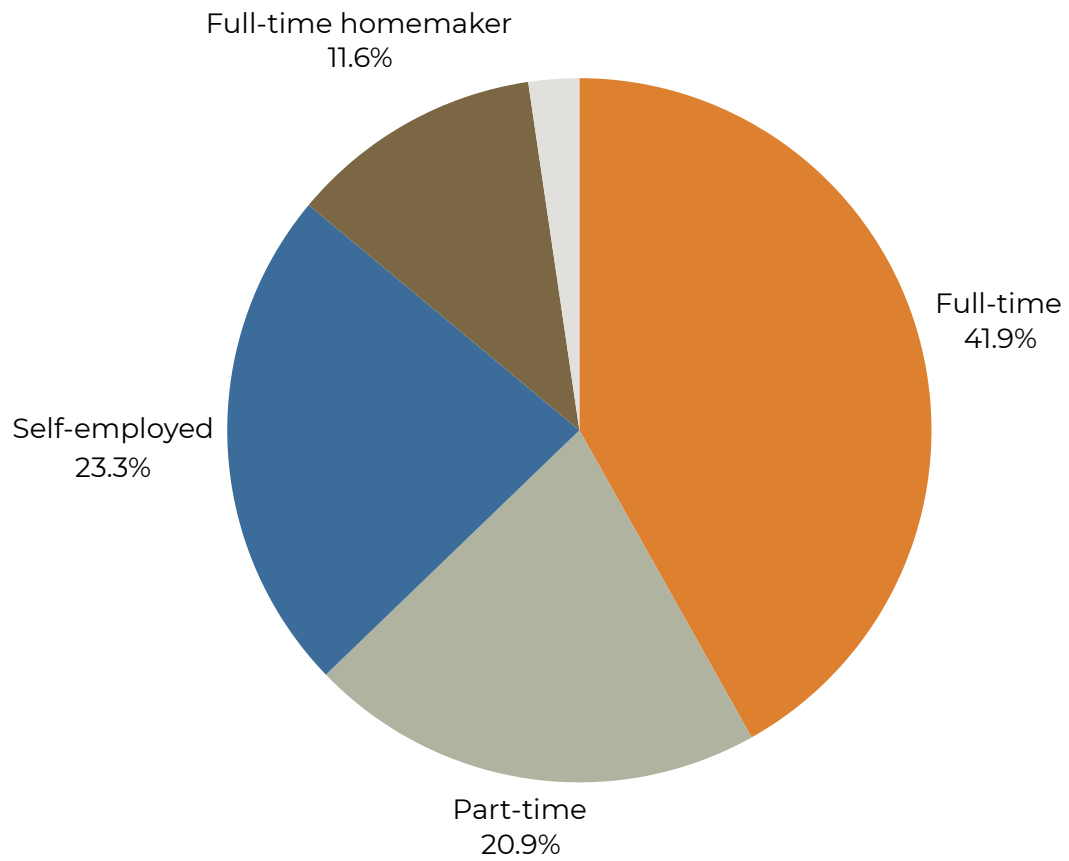
2. Ages of respondents' children:



### 3. Type of care currently used by respondents:



#### 4. Employment status and working hours of respondents and their partners:

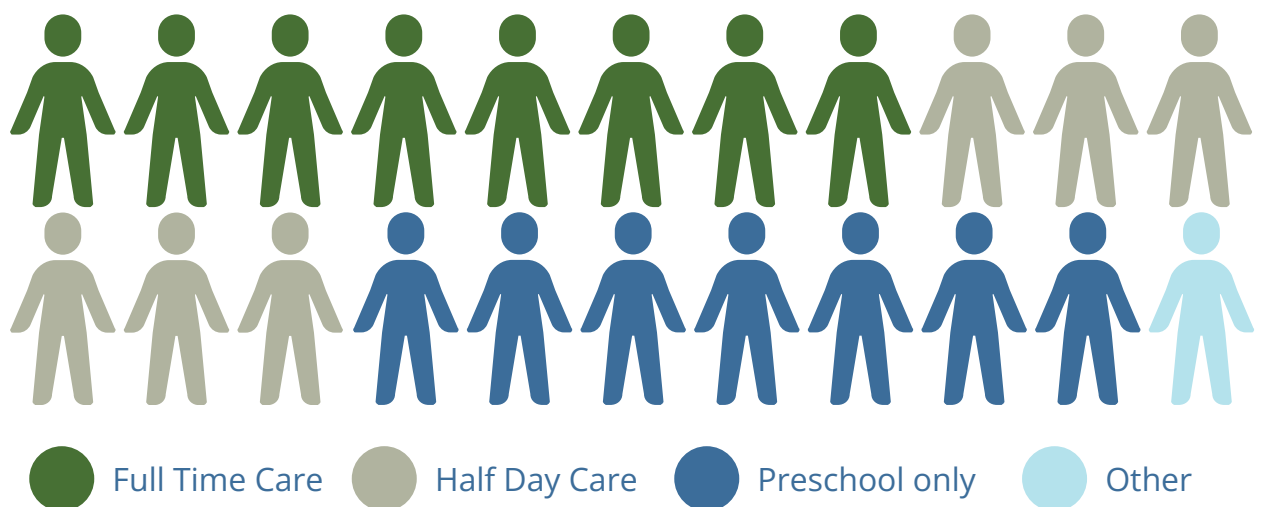


# II. Community-identified Needs

Thirty-six percent of the families that responded to the survey need full-time child care, with twenty-six percent indicating that they need half-day care. Thirty-one percent selected preschool only (either full or part-day in a group learning setting) with one respondent specifying that they were seeking preschool for their child's social-emotional development. One respondent spoke to the fact that they anticipated that their needs would change over time and that their employment choices would be impacted. "I wish we could select more than one, as my needs will change (i.e. I don't plan on using full time care right away for my infant – but if was available, that would allow me to make better job choices if I knew that was an option. I'm making decisions based on what's there! [sic.]"

**"I'm making decisions based on what's there!"**  
Survey Respondent

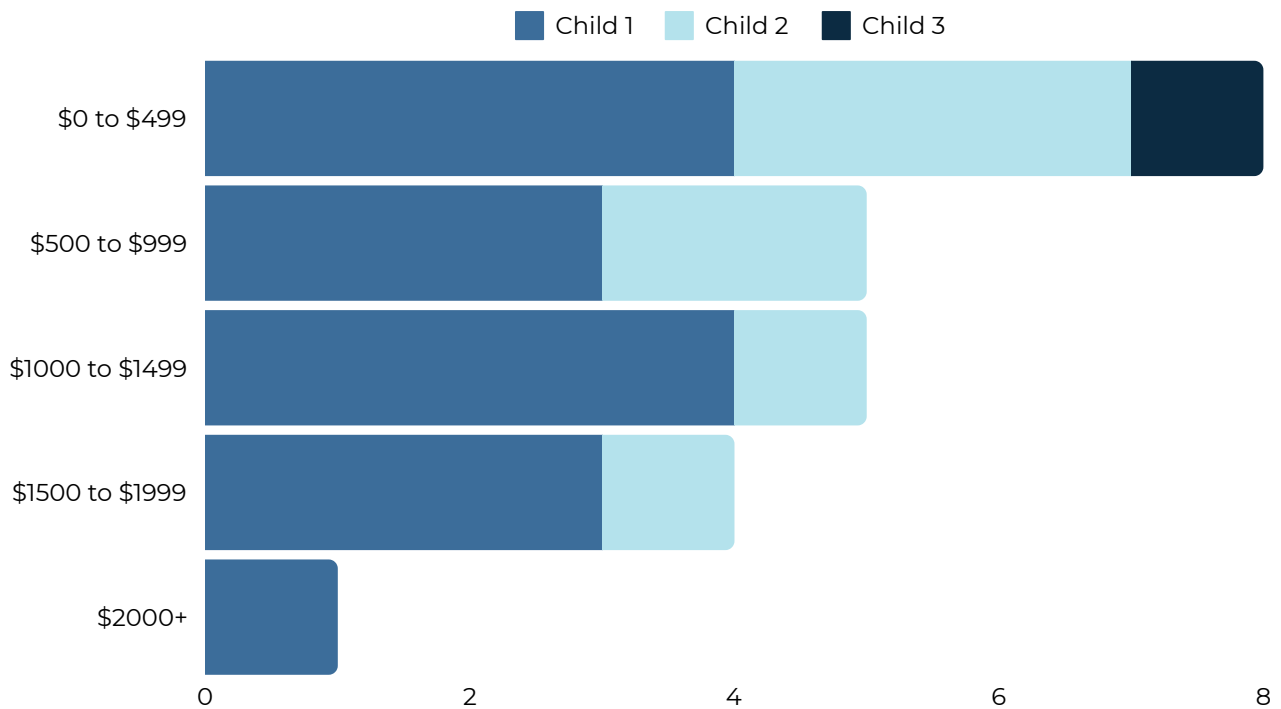
## 5. Type of care needed, as identified by respondents:



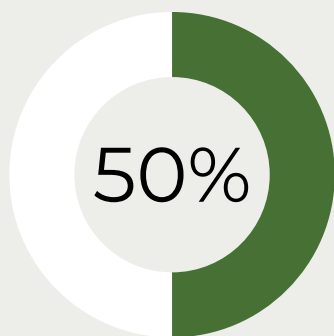
# \$0 to \$2000

The cost of child care per child per month.

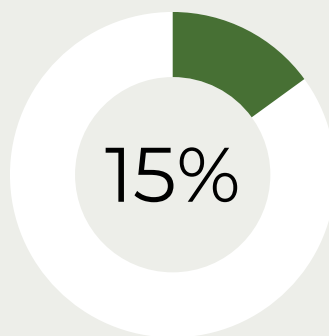
6. How much respondents are paying per month for child care:



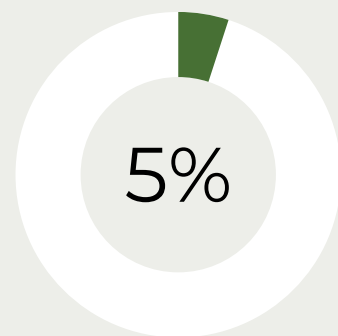
7. Respondents' willingness to pay more for care:



8. Respondents with child care fees subsidized by ECEAP or WCC:



9. Respondents who are receiving child care financial assistance through other means:

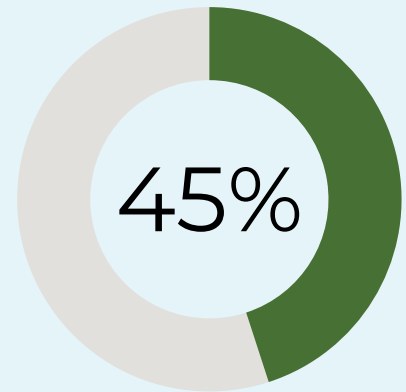


# III. Community-identified Child Care Landscape

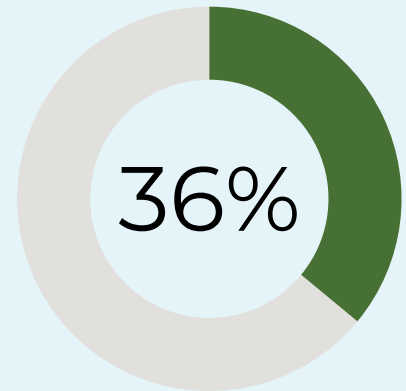
When families were asked what prevented them from accessing the child care they need, the most prominent barrier expressed was “More satisfactory child care is not available in my community.” It follows that forty-five percent of respondents indicated that “finding dependable care was a problem.”

More specifically, families indicated “finding care available during work hours was a problem.” In keeping with the global issue of family affordability and the disproportionate percentage of family income that goes toward child care expenses, thirty-six percent of respondents communicated that “the cost of care makes child care unaffordable.” One respondent commented “Cost is affordable for us but very high, especially for two children.”

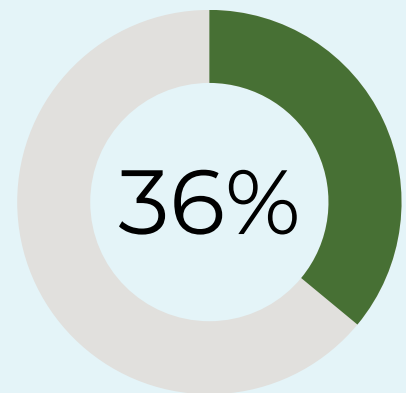
In responding to the request to identify any of the child care associated problems you have experienced around accessing child care, thirty-two percent of families noted that “quality of care was a problem.” Discovering that their chosen childcare facility had full capacity was experienced by thirty-two percent of respondents. Finding care for children with special needs was experienced by just under ten percent of respondents, a significant finding. Difficulty in finding temporary care or care for a sick child were recognized as problems by some families.



said finding dependable care was a problem

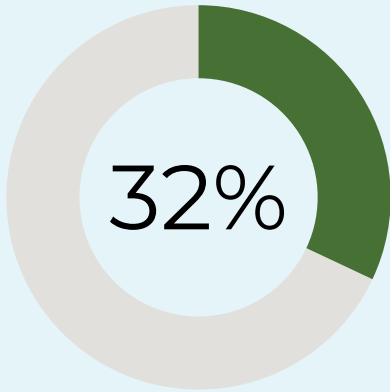


said finding care available during work hours was a problem

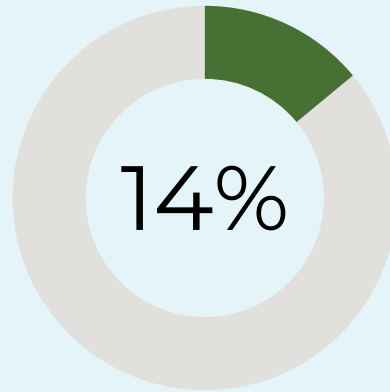


said cost of care makes childcare unaffordable

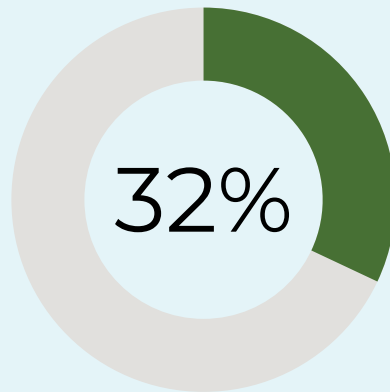
10. Community-identified problems accessing care needed:



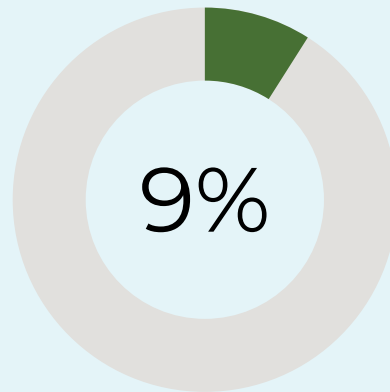
said quality of care was a problem



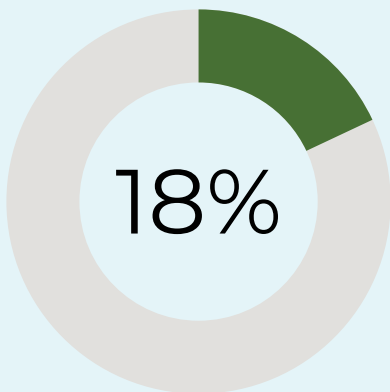
said finding temporary care was a problem



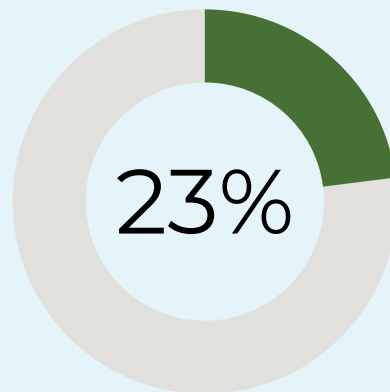
said their chosen childcare facility had full capacity



said finding care for a child with special needs was a problem



said finding care for a sick child was a problem

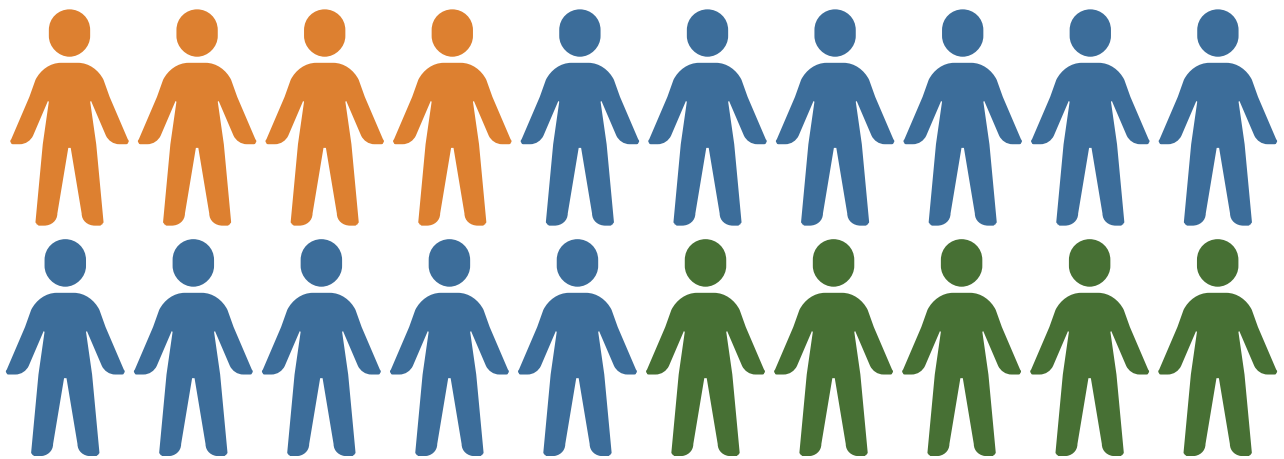


said other reasons

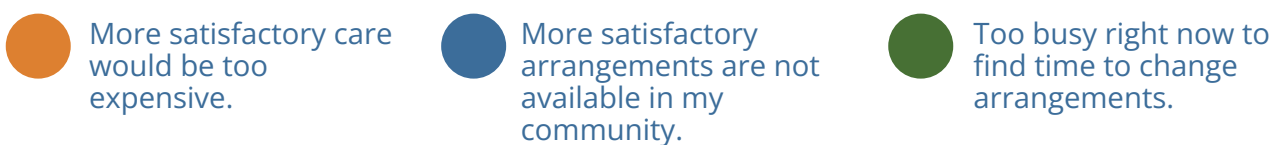
## 11. Respondent satisfaction with current care:



Families expressed varied levels of satisfaction with their current care options across components such as location, quality of care provided, hours of care provided and cost of care. The greatest levels of dissatisfaction were indicated around available hours of care by providers and the cost of care. In addition to “more satisfactory care options are not available in my community, and more satisfactory care would be too expensive”, some families shared that they were “too busy right now to find time to change arrangements.”



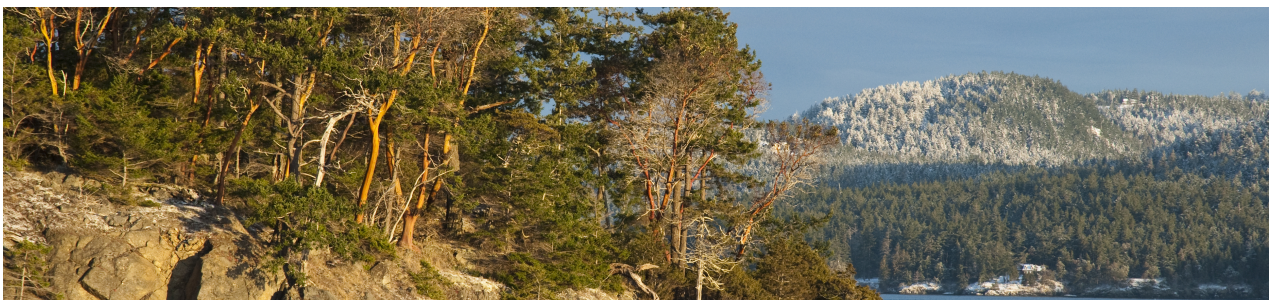
## 12. Reasons for not changing child care if unsatisfied:



# IV. Existing Resources

There are high-quality programs to be celebrated in the Lopez Island early learning and child care landscape. One that has long existed as the sole licensed program option on the island, and is approaching its twenty-fifth year of operation, is Lopez Children’s Center. Lopez Children’s Center (LCC) was established in 1999 when the Lopez Cooperative Preschool and the Lopez Island Family Resource Center formed the Lopez Children’s Center Committee and was granted a foundational federal Community Development Block Grant of \$285,000. Additional fundraising and grant writing enabled the construction of the building that currently houses Lopez Children’s Center, which opened its doors September 2003 in the heart of Lopez Village. LCC is an Early Achiever’s Level 4 rated non-profit early education center that offers Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP) services, accepts Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) subsidy, and provides scholarships to families when possible. They have just added a waddler/toddler classroom to their program offerings, intentionally to meet the need for care for Lopez’s youngest islanders.

Other options for families seeking early learning experiences on Lopez Island include a Parent/Tot Time program offered by the Lopez Island Family Resource Center. The Parent/Tot program is a weekly drop-in program with hour long sessions facilitated by English and Spanish speaking parent leaders. The program uses guidelines from the Kaleidoscope Play and Learn Curriculum and incorporates Vroom literature and materials into their sessions. Morning Star Children’s Circle is a license-exempt, Waldorf-inspired learning community and reportedly has capacity for fifteen children during half-day morning and afternoon sessions.



# V. Conclusion

The results from this Family Childcare Needs Assessment show a striking need for child care that is provided during working hours. While no families specified that they worked the third shift (9 p.m. or later), one family commented that their working day went from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. or 9 p.m. Other families mentioned the need for care that would cover typical working day hours plus sporadic overtime hours. Respondents that identified their work as raising children in their own home did not signal a need for care during the summer months. Many families employed outside of the home flagged their need for care during the high season summer months and a few families need care on weekend days. These trends are unsurprising given the structure of Lopez Island’s economy and the schedules that arise from families needing to work the most hours available to accommodate for seasonal fluctuations in work.

Another area that requires further investigation and action is the finding that thirty-two percent of families felt that there was a problem with the quality of care in their current child care arrangement. The San Juan County early learning community values equity and inclusivity and will follow-up on the finding that families with children with special needs are not finding accessible care that meets their children’s needs.

In addition to being a learning experience on how to best assess the needs of families on Lopez Island, this assessment will provide a jumping off point for deeper investigation and coordinated response to the childcare needs of families on Lopez Island.

# Appendix: Survey Questions

## 1. Are you a resident of or work on Lopez Island?

- Yes
- No

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

- 6 weeks to 11 months
- 12 months to 23 months
- 2 years
- 3 years
- 4 years
- 5 years
- School aged
- Pregnant or planning to adopt/foster this year

## 3. How many children do need/would you like to have childcare for?

- 1 child
- 2 children
- 3 children
- 4 children
- 5 or more children

## 4. Please indicate the months you would use childcare if it was available for your family.

- January
- February
- March
- April
- May
- June
- July
- August
- September
- October
- November
- December

## 5. Please check the days you would use childcare if it was available.

- Monday
- Tuesday
- Wednesday
- Thursday
- Friday
- Saturday
- Sunday

## 6. What type of childcare do you need?

- Full Time Care
- Half Day Care
- After School Care
- Evening Care
- Drop in Care
- Seasonal Work or Holiday Care
- Preschool only (either full- or part-day, in group learning setting) with no before or after care needed

**7. Please identify any of the childcare associated problems you have experienced around accessing childcare.**

- Cost of care makes childcare unaffordable for us
- Chosen childcare facility had full capacity
- Quality of care
- Dependable care
- Finding care available during work hours
- Finding care for a child with special needs
- Finding temporary care
- Finding care for a sick child
- Other (please specify)

**8. Please identify each item that describes the type of care you are currently using.**

- Care by parent in your home
- Care in a relative's home
- Care in your home by a non-relative
- Care in a non-relative home
- Combination of above as needed
- Child care center
- Currently seeking child care
- Other (please specify)

**9. Please identify your employment status.**

- Full-time employed
- Part-time employed
- Self-employed, owner of a business
- Working, but not on a regular basis
- Full-time homemaker caring for your own children
- Studying in a school or university
- None of the above (please specify)

**10. What hours/shift do you typically work?**

- Day time (range of hours between 8am-5pm)
- Second shift (5pm - 8pm)
- Third shift (9pm and later)
- Other (please specify)

**11. Do you have a Spouse or Partner who lives with you?**

- Yes
- No

**12. If you answered Yes to question 11, please indicate the category that best describes your spouse/partner's primary work/study situation.**

- Full-time employed
- Part-time employed
- Self-employed, owner of a business
- Working, but not on a regular basis
- Full-time homemaker caring for your own children
- Studying in a school or university
- None of the above (please specify)

**13. What is your annual family income before taxes are deducted?**

- Under \$10,000
- \$10,000 - \$19,000
- \$20,000 - \$29,999
- \$30,000 - \$39,999
- \$40,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$59,999
- \$60,000 - \$69,999
- \$70,000 - \$79,999
- \$80,000 - \$89,999
- \$90,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 or more

**14. How satisfied are you with the following features of your main childcare arrangements?**

- Location of Care Facility
  - Dissatisfied
  - Somewhat Satisfied
  - Satisfied
  - Very Satisfied
- Quality of Care
  - Dissatisfied
  - Somewhat Satisfied
  - Satisfied
  - Very Satisfied
- Hours of Care
  - Dissatisfied
  - Somewhat Satisfied
  - Satisfied
  - Very Satisfied
- Cost of Care
  - Dissatisfied
  - Somewhat Satisfied
  - Satisfied
  - Very Satisfied

**15. If you are dissatisfied with any part of this child care arrangement, what keeps you from changing it? Indicate all responses that apply.**

- More satisfactory child care would be too expensive
- More satisfactory child care arrangements are not available in my community
- Too busy right now to find time to change arrangements
- Other (please specify)

**16. How much do you pay per month for childcare?**

- Child 1:
- Child 2:
- Child 3:
- Child 4:

**17. Would you be willing and able to pay higher childcare tuition or enrollment fees than you are currently paying to have more satisfactory childcare?**

**18. Are your childcare fees subsidized by ECEAP (Early Childhood Education Assistance Program) or WCC (Working Connections Childcare)?**

**19. Are you receiving childcare financial assistance through community organizations or your childcare provider?**

**20. Do you think of yourself as**

- Decline to answer
- Female
- Male
- Transgender man/trans man
- Transgender woman/trans woman
- Genderqueer/gender nonconforming neither exclusively male or female
- Additional gender category or other (please specify)

**21. Do you think of yourself as**

- Decline to answer
- Straight or heterosexual
- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Queer, pansexual, and/or questioning
- Don't know
- Something else (please specify)

**22. What is your race or ethnicity?**

**Choose all that apply.**

- White or Caucasian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian or Asian American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

