



January 28, 2025

# The State of Early Childhood in Ohio: 2024 Poll Results and Implications

Webinar Hosted By



# ABOUT US

Groundwork Ohio is a committed, **nonpartisan public-policy research and advocacy organization** formed in 2004 that champions high-quality early learning and healthy development strategies from the prenatal period to age 5, that lay a strong foundation for Ohio kids, families, and communities.

We advance quality early childhood systems in Ohio by engaging, educating, and mobilizing diverse stakeholders and strategic partners to promote data-driven and evidence-based early childhood policies.

[GroundworkOhio.org](https://GroundworkOhio.org)



# HOUSEKEEPING

- Today's webinar is being recorded.
- Closed captioning is available.
- All participants are muted.
- Please use the Q&A for questions.
- If we can't get to your request or question during the event, we will follow-up after the event if you provide your email address with the question.
- All participants will receive a recording of the webinar along with materials shared via email after the event has concluded.



# AGENDA

- **Welcome & Opening Remarks**  
Brittany Boulton, Vice President, Groundwork Ohio
- **Presentation of Poll Findings**  
Jarrett Lewis, Public Opinion Strategies
- **Implications for Policy & Advocacy**  
Troy Hunter, Managing Director of Policy,  
Groundwork Ohio
- **Q&A**  
Brittany Boulton
- **Closing Remarks**  
Brittany Boulton





## **Jarrett Lewis**

Partner  
Public Opinion  
Strategies





# PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

turning questions into answers

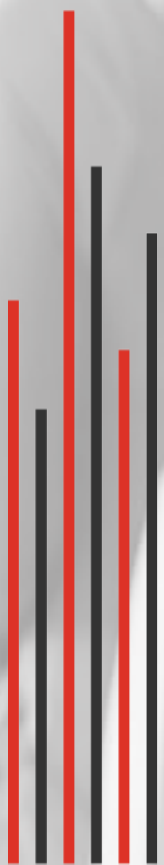


# Groundwork Ohio Survey

December 5-15, 2024

PREPARED BY:

Neil Newhouse, Partner  
Jarrett Lewis, Partner



# METHODOLOGY

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**On behalf of Groundwork Ohio, Public Opinion Strategies completed a statewide survey of 800 registered voters and an oversample of 484 parents with children ages five and younger in Ohio.**

**The survey was conducted December 5-15, 2024, and has a credibility interval of  $\pm 3.95\%$  for the registered voter sample and  $\pm 5.08\%$  for the parent oversample.**

**Neil Newhouse and Jarrett Lewis were the primary researchers on this project. Tommy Dow was the project director and Zachary Cooper provided analytical support.**

# Demographic Profile of Full Sample



Ethnicity	% of Sample
<i>White</i>	<b>84%</b>
<i>People of Color</i>	<b>16%</b>
<i>African American</i>	<b>10%</b>
<i>Hispanic</i>	<b>2%</b>



Party	% of Sample
<i>Republican</i>	<b>37%</b>
<i>Independent</i>	<b>30%</b>
<i>Democrat</i>	<b>31%</b>



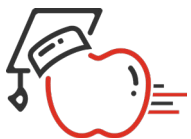
Gender	% of Sample
<i>Men</i>	<b>48%</b>
<i>Women</i>	<b>52%</b>



Age	% of Sample
<i>18-34</i>	<b>24%</b>
<i>35-44</i>	<b>18%</b>
<i>45-54</i>	<b>16%</b>
<i>55-64</i>	<b>17%</b>
<i>65+</i>	<b>25%</b>



DMA	% of Sample
<i>Cleveland</i>	<b>33%</b>
<i>Columbus</i>	<b>22%</b>
<i>Cincinnati</i>	<b>16%</b>
<i>Dayton</i>	<b>11%</b>
<i>Toledo</i>	<b>8%</b>
<i>Youngstown</i>	<b>4%</b>
<i>SE Ohio</i>	<b>5%</b>



Education	% of Sample
<i>Less than College</i>	<b>55%</b>
<i>College+</i>	<b>45%</b>



# Demographic Profile of Parents with Children Ages Five and Younger



Ethnicity	% of Sample
<i>White</i>	<b>80%</b>
<i>People of Color</i>	<b>20%</b>
<i>African American</i>	<b>14%</b>
<i>Hispanic</i>	<b>4%</b>



Party	% of Sample
<i>Republican</i>	<b>34%</b>
<i>Independent</i>	<b>35%</b>
<i>Democrat</i>	<b>31%</b>



Geography	% of Sample
<i>A city</i>	<b>37%</b>
<i>A suburban area</i>	<b>46%</b>
<i>A small town/rural area</i>	<b>17%</b>

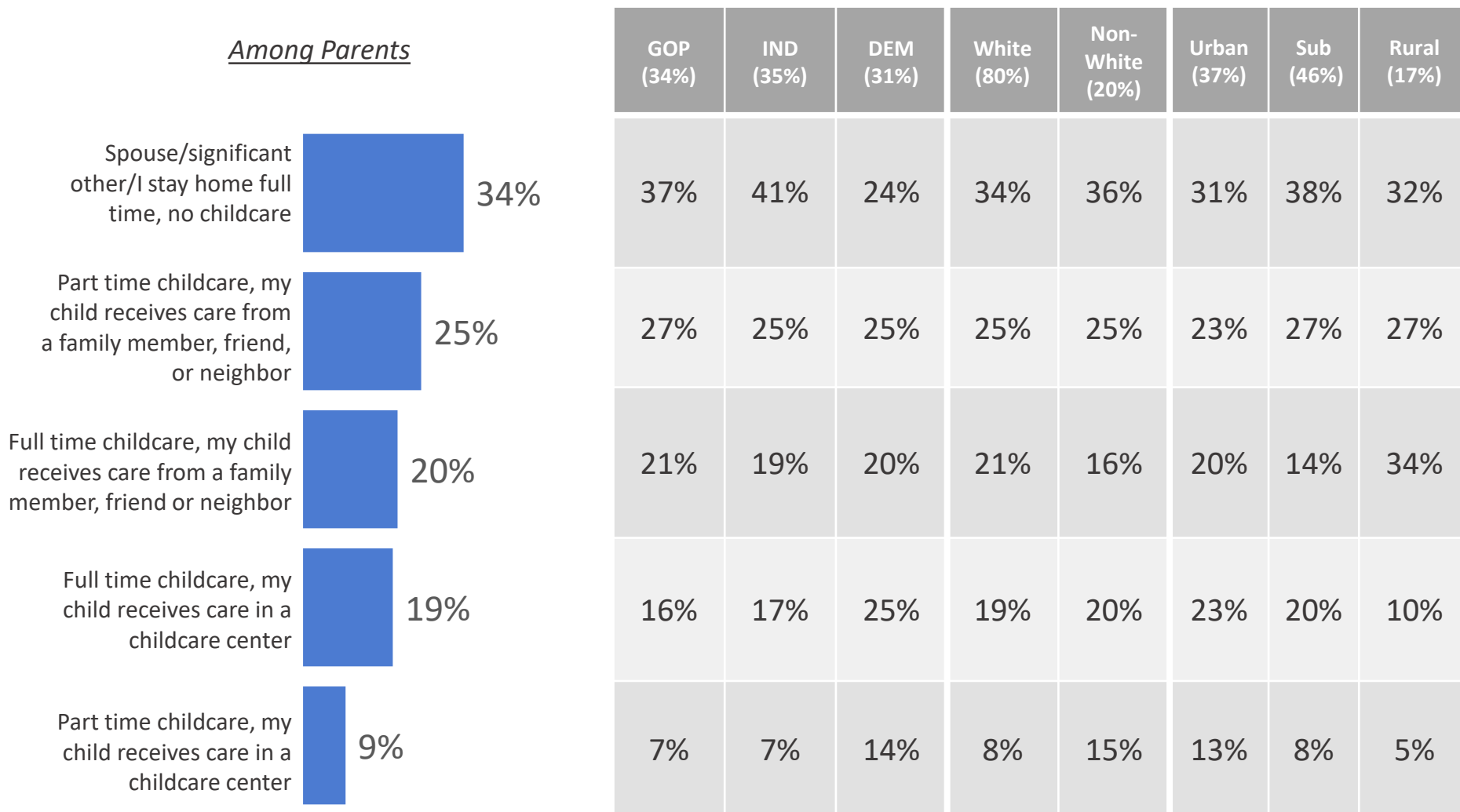


Gender	% of Sample
<i>Men</i>	<b>44%</b>
<i>Women</i>	<b>56%</b>

***\*Mentions of parents throughout this slide deck refer to the above group (unless otherwise noted).***

# One-third of parents interviewed stay home with their child or have a family member who does.

## Among Parents





# Key Findings

## Take-Away Points

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1. Ohio parents of young children are facing a child care crisis; already impacted by a negative economy and rising costs, these parents report buying fewer groceries than in the past, delaying or skipping medical care due to high out of pocket expenses, and having problems accessing high quality child care.
2. One-third of parents with young children say they have been having serious problems paying their mortgage/rent, while nearly one-half say they have had serious problems paying credit card bills and other debt. Clearly, the economic travails faced by Americans over the last several years have hit parents of young children especially hard.

## Take-Away Points

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3. The issue of reliable and affordable child care has also impacted the economic situation for these parents. They focus on the exorbitant cost of child care which leads them to question whether they can afford to work. Adding to the stress of making ends meet is the daunting task of finding a spot in a quality child care center.
4. While child care is a personal issue to parents of young children, it's an economic issue for the state. **Fully 61% of non-full-time-working moms say they would go back to work if their child had access to quality child care at a reasonable cost.** Further, half of working parents say that over the last couple of months, they have had to cut back on their work hours to care for their children. This results in an undeniable impact on the state's economy – Ohio voters agree that labor shortages in the state are in part due to a lack of access to quality, affordable child care.



## Take-Away Points

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5. In light of this, Ohio voters overwhelmingly support increasing funding for child care “in order to increase access, affordability and quality.” That support extends across party lines.
6. The linkage between child care and the state’s economy is undeniable - when stay-at-home parents of young children are asked what would having child care allow them to do, there is one response that stands out – “work more.” And, when parents of young children with child care are asked what having child care allows them to do – the response is the same – “work.”

## Take-Away Points

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7. And, among all Ohio working parents, nearly 5-in-10 have cut back their work hours to care for their children. ***Putting this into real numbers using Census data, this means over 1,000,000 working parents have cut back their work hours.***

## Take-Away Points

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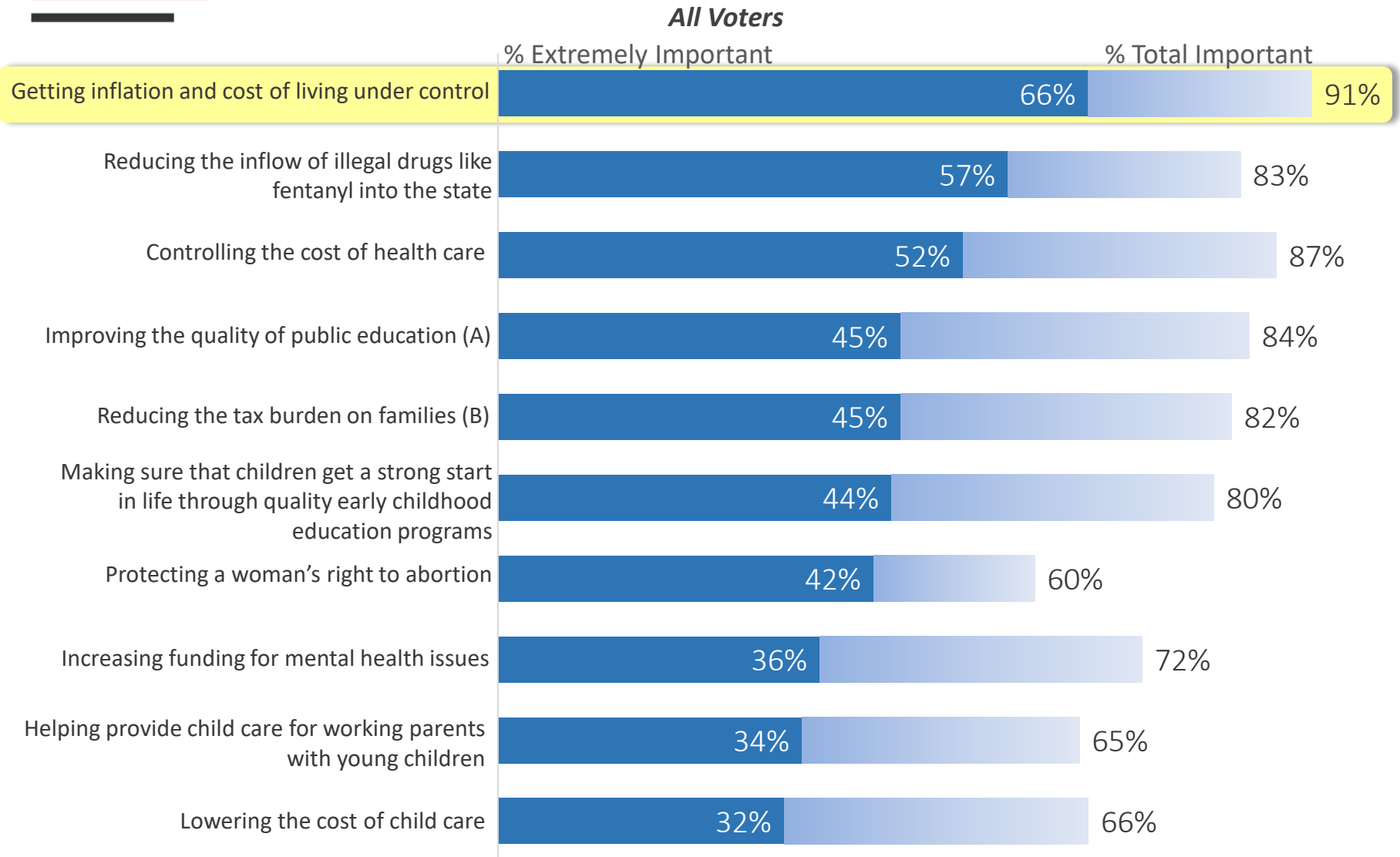
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8. When asked about policies to deal with the issue, the polling shows huge majorities of voters (87%) support creating a child tax credit to provide tax relief to working families with children under the age of 16.
  
9. When faced with arguments on either side of the issue, Ohioans show overwhelming support (70%) for increasing funding for the state's early childhood education programs.
  
10. Voters who support increased state funding focus on building the next generation of Ohioans who will form the backbone for the state's workforce and leadership. Further, they argue that increased access to affordable, quality child care allows more parents, particularly women, to remain employed, providing economic benefits to their families and to businesses in the state.



**Early childhood education/child care issues are strong second-tier concerns.**

# Not surprising, inflation/cost of living is the top concern of voters in the state.

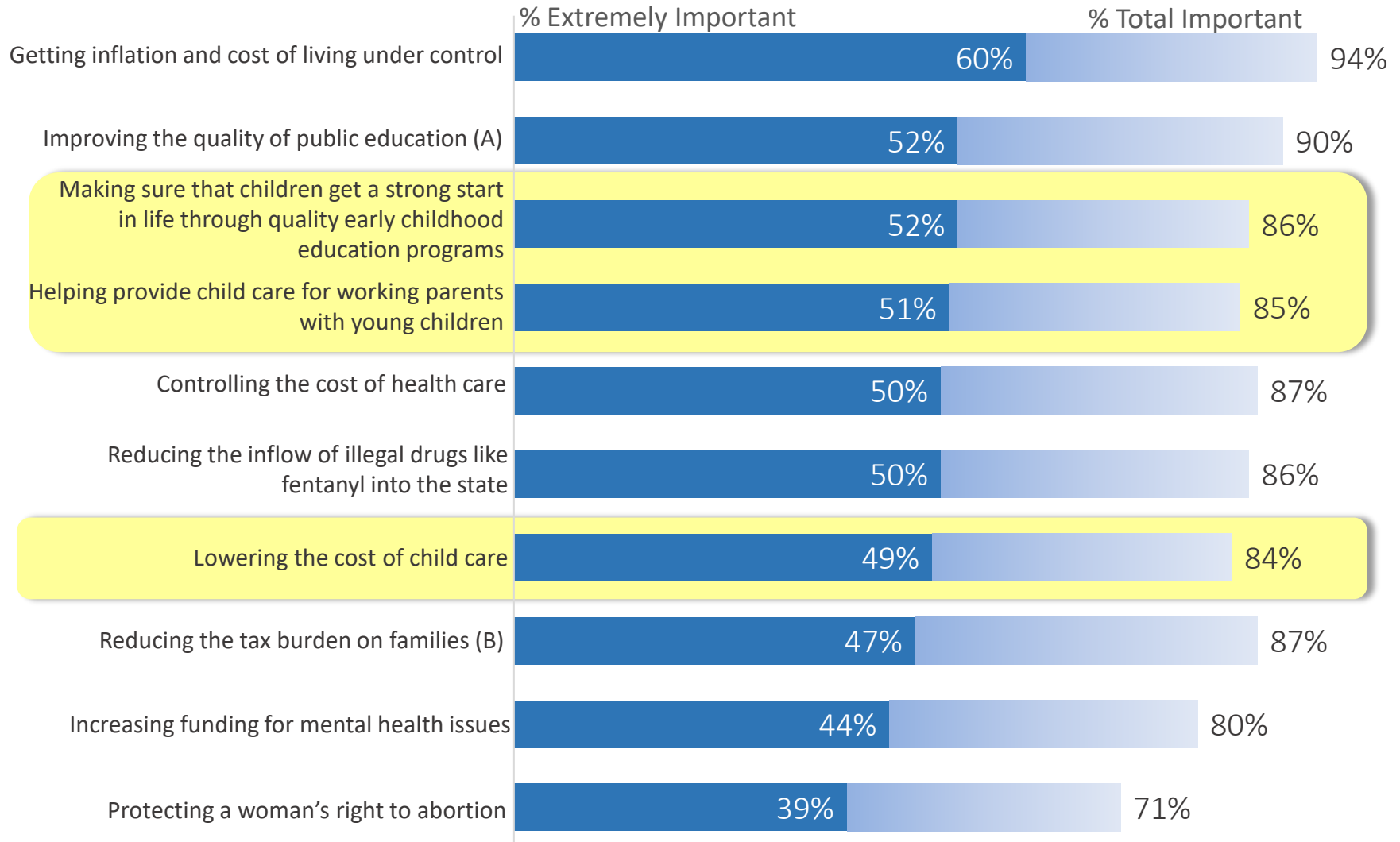


*Now please read some goals that people might have for Ohio right now, and rate how important you personally consider each goal to be – is it extremely important, very important, somewhat important or not that important to you?*



# Ohio parents of young children also rate inflation/cost of living as their top goal, but score child care issues much higher than other voters.

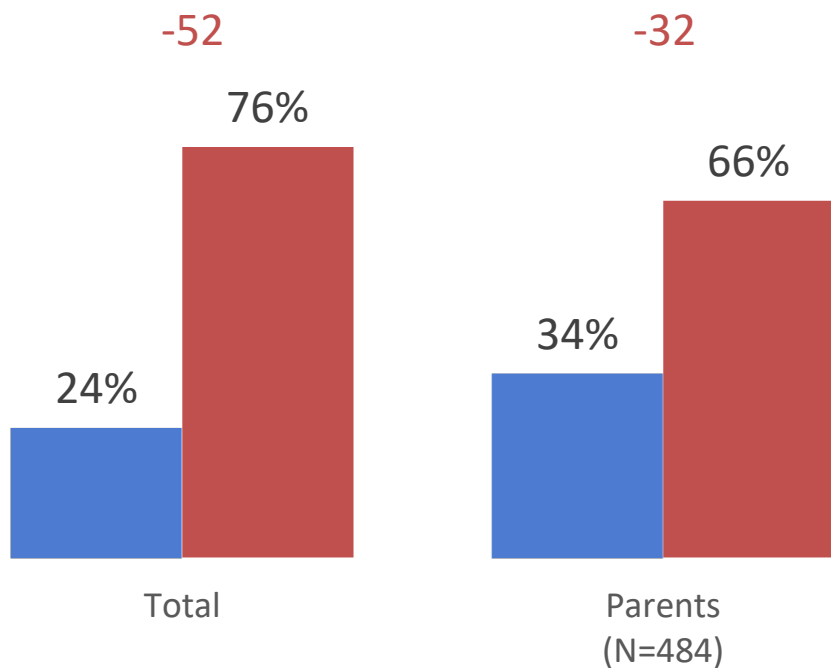
**Parents with Children 5 And Younger (Or Pregnant) (N=484)**



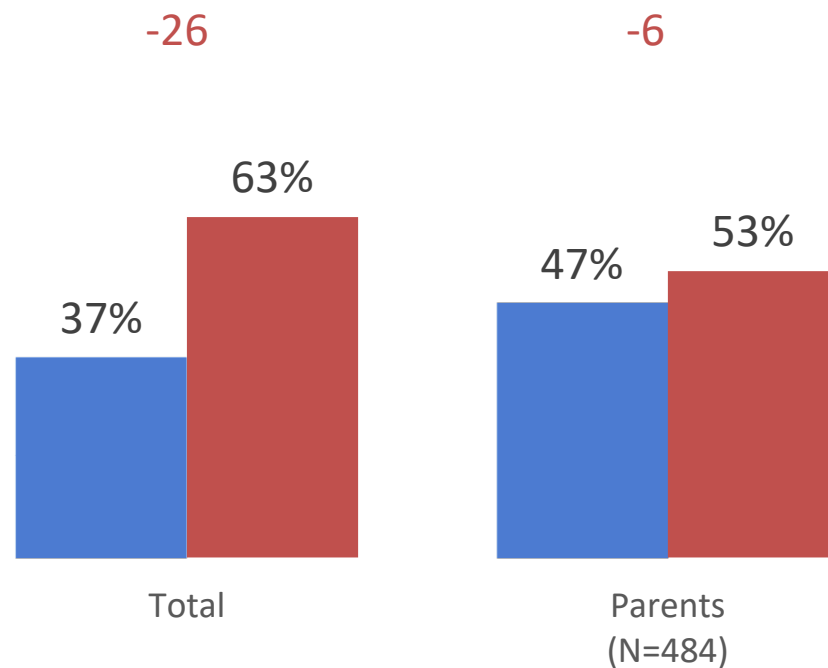
*Now please read some goals that people might have for Ohio right now, and rate how important you personally consider each goal to be – is it extremely important, very important, somewhat important or not that important to you?*

# Parents report having greater difficulty in paying their rent/mortgage and credit card bills.

*In the past few months, have you or anyone living in your household been having serious problems paying your/the rent or mortgage, or not?*



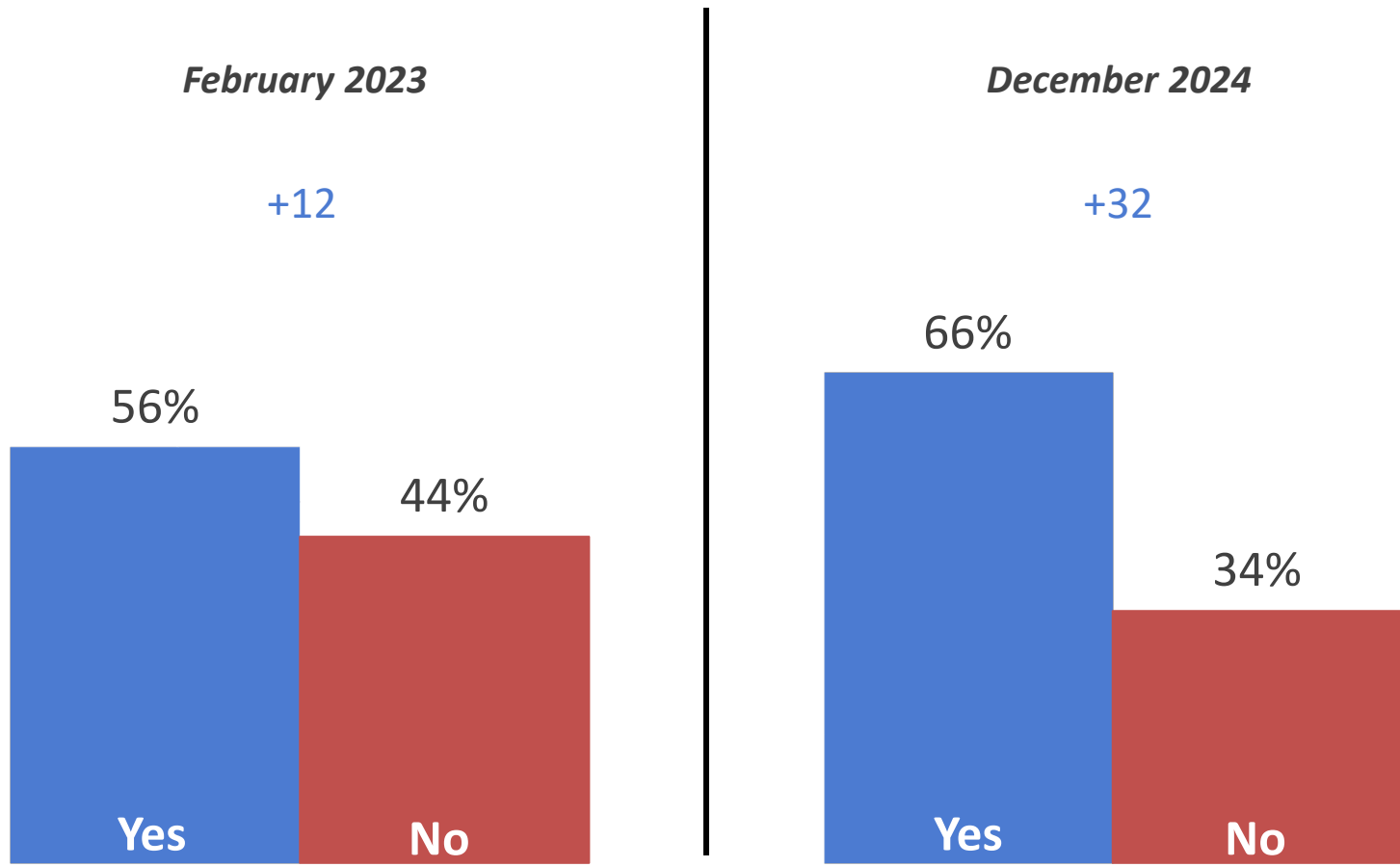
*In the past few months, have you or anyone living in your household been having serious problems paying credit card bills, loans, or other debt, or not?*



■ Yes ■ No

# Further, parents report challenges in accessing high quality child care.

## Having issues accessing high quality child care



\*Data shown among Parents with Children 5 and younger (Or Pregnant) (N=484)



# The Challenges of Child Care

# Parents' experiences accessing child care: Word Cloud

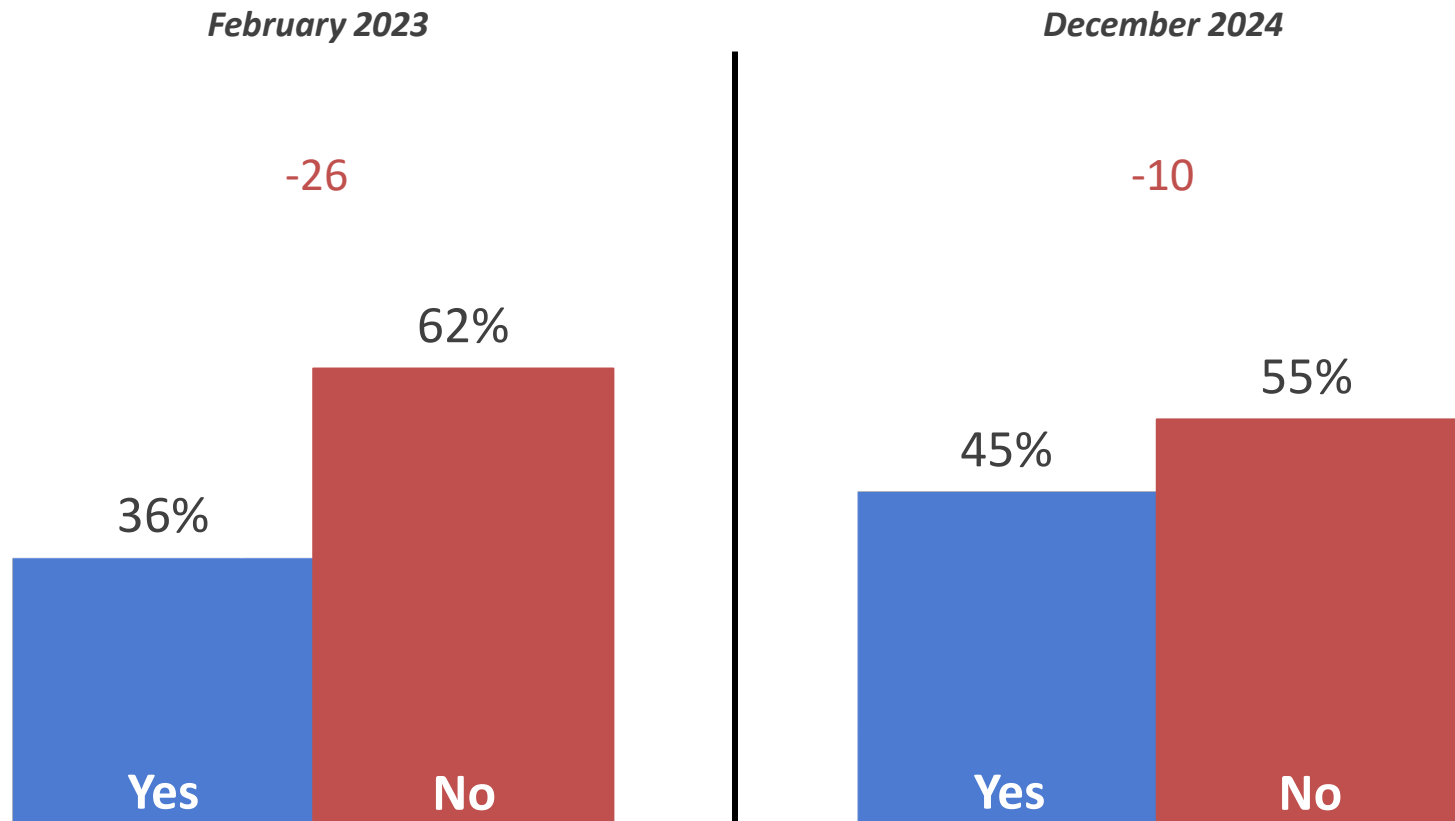
*Earlier, you were asked if you or someone you know is having issues accessing high quality child care. In your experience, please share a couple ways you are personally having issues accessing high quality child care?*





Balancing work and child care is clearly a challenge – almost half of parents say that over the past few months, they have faced serious problems meeting both work and family responsibilities.

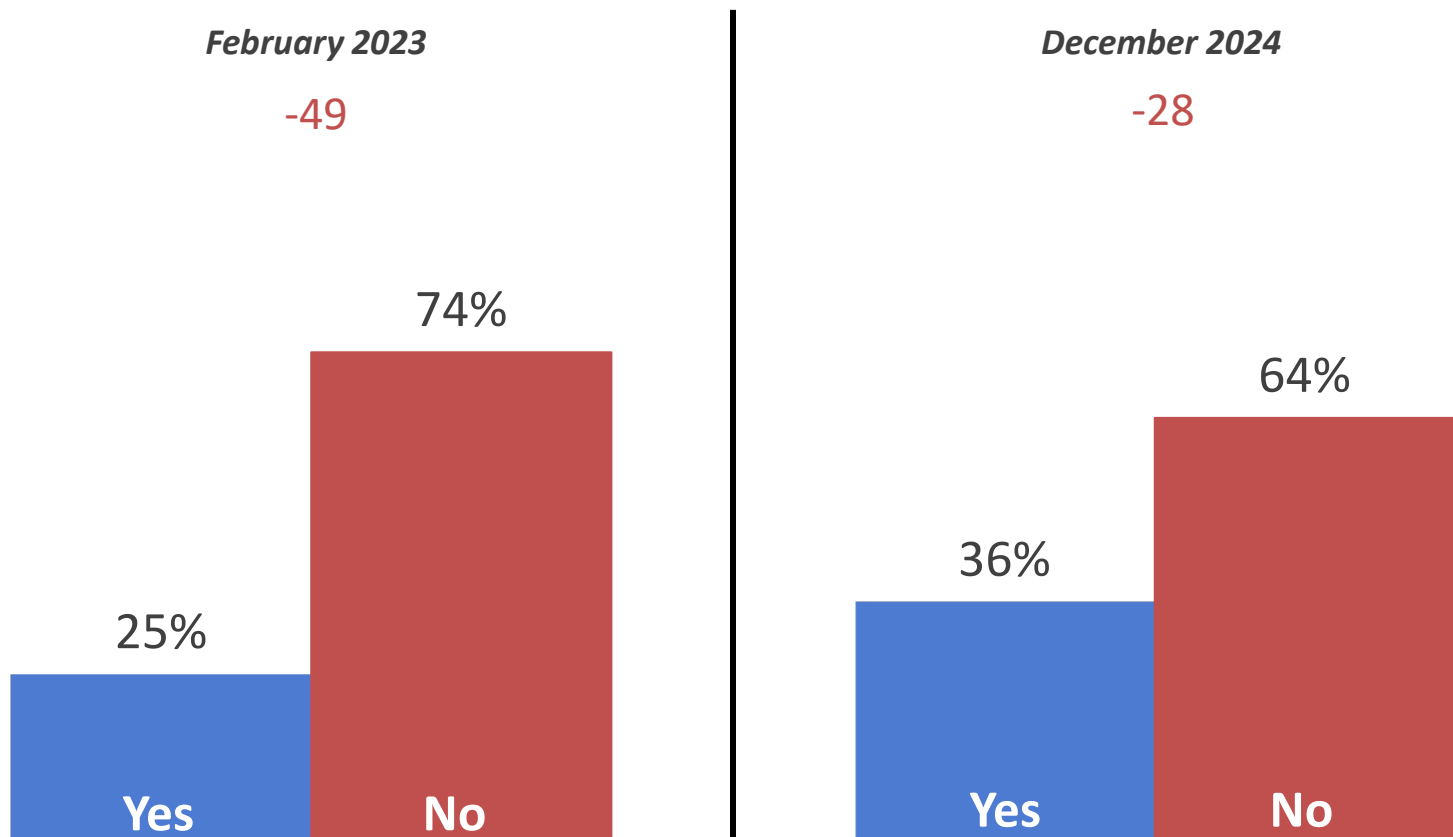
*And, over the past few months, have you or those in your household faced serious problems meeting both work and family responsibilities?*



*\*Data shown among parents who are employed (N=367)*

Further, more than one-third say they have had serious problems affording child care.

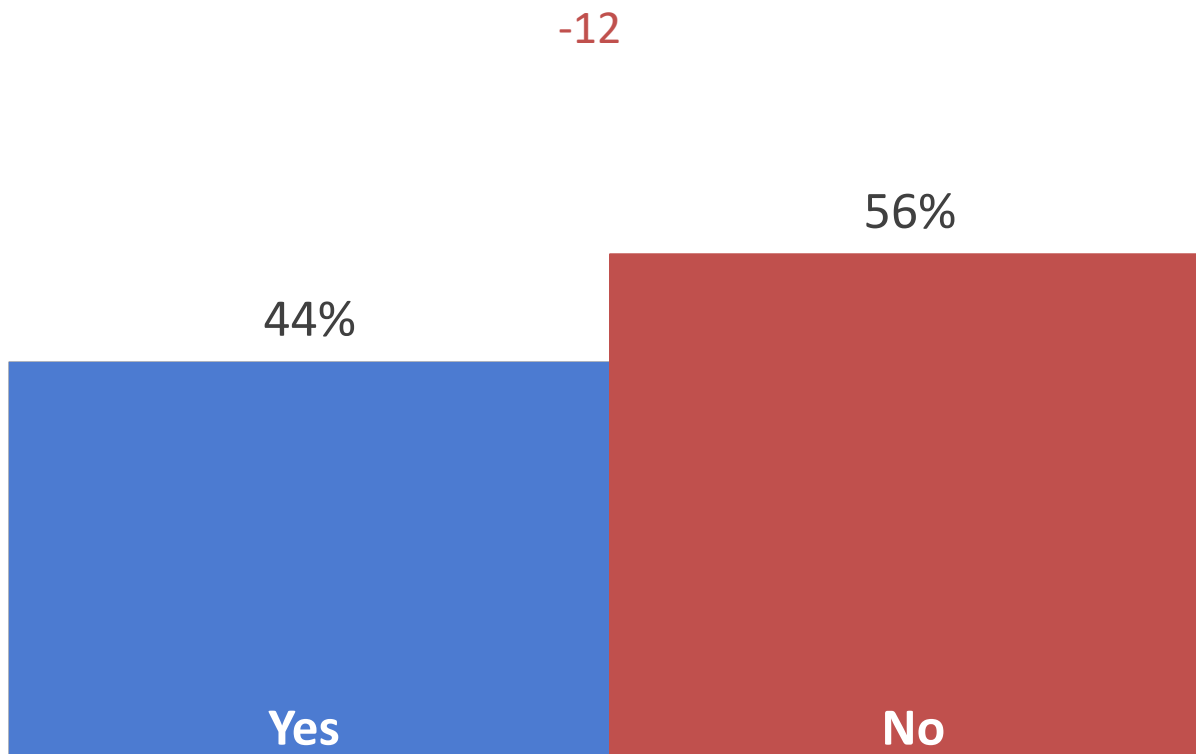
*In the past few months, have you or anyone living in your household been having serious problems affording child care, or not?*



*\*Data shown among Full Time/Part Time Working Parents with Children 5 and Younger (N=343)*

And, almost half of parents with young kids say they have faced challenges with child care that have forced them to miss work, leave early, or lose focus.

*And, over the past few months, have you or those in your household faced challenges with child care that have caused them to miss work, leave early or lose focus?*

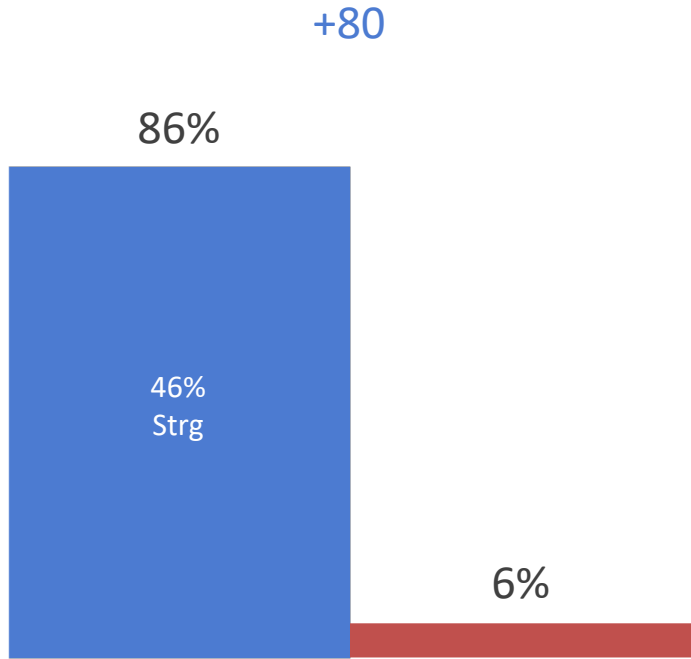
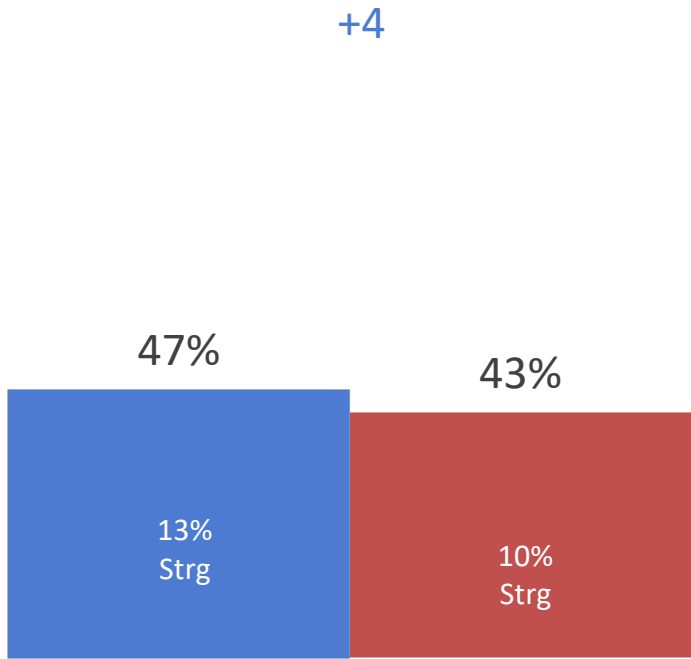


*\*Data shown among Full Time/Part Time Working Parents with Children 5 and Younger (N=343)*

Fewer than half of Ohio voters believe that young children in the state are prepared for learning when they enter kindergarten; and Ohioans strongly believe we can do a better job of preparing young children for learning when they enter kindergarten.

*Young children in Ohio are prepared for learning when they enter kindergarten. (A)*

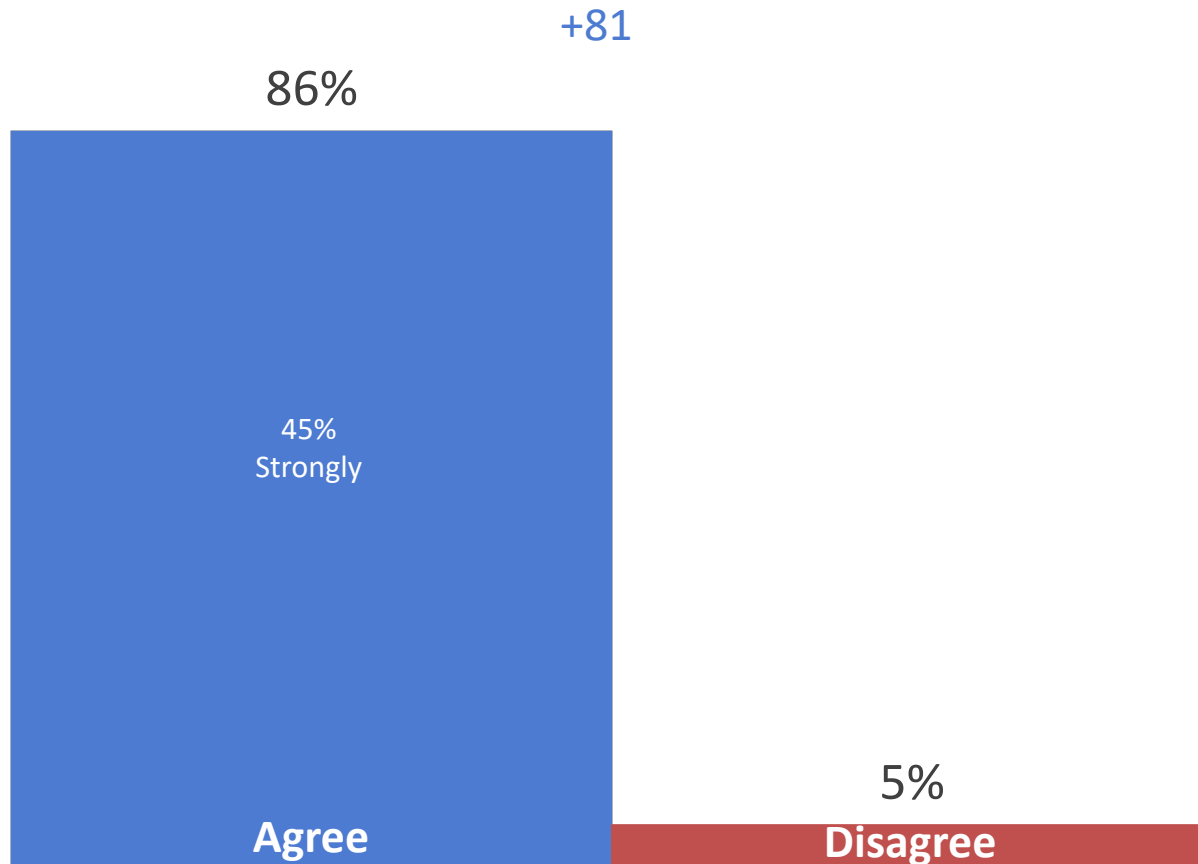
*We can do a better job of preparing young children for learning when they enter kindergarten. (B)*



■ Agree ■ Disagree

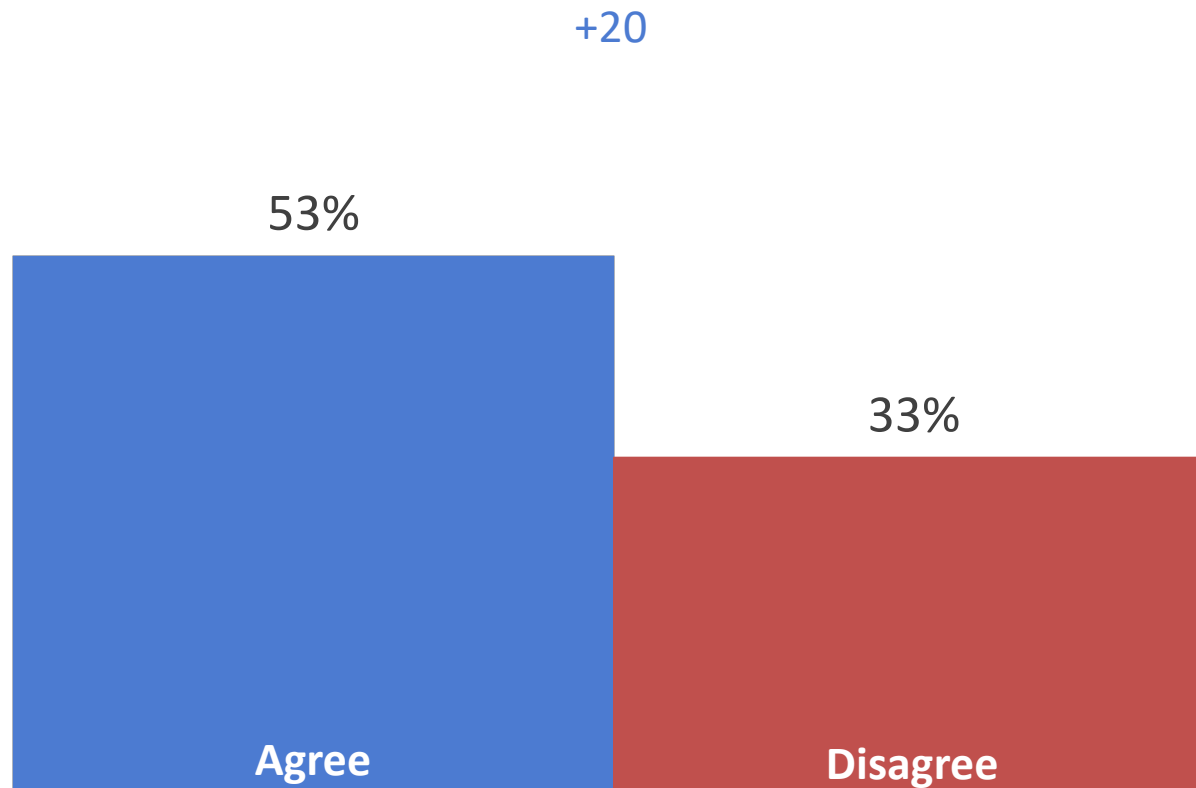
Not only do voters strongly agree that “increasing access to high-quality, affordable child care will help strengthen Ohio’s economy and help its workers” ...

*“Increasing access to high-quality, affordable child care will help strengthen Ohio’s economy and help its workers.”*



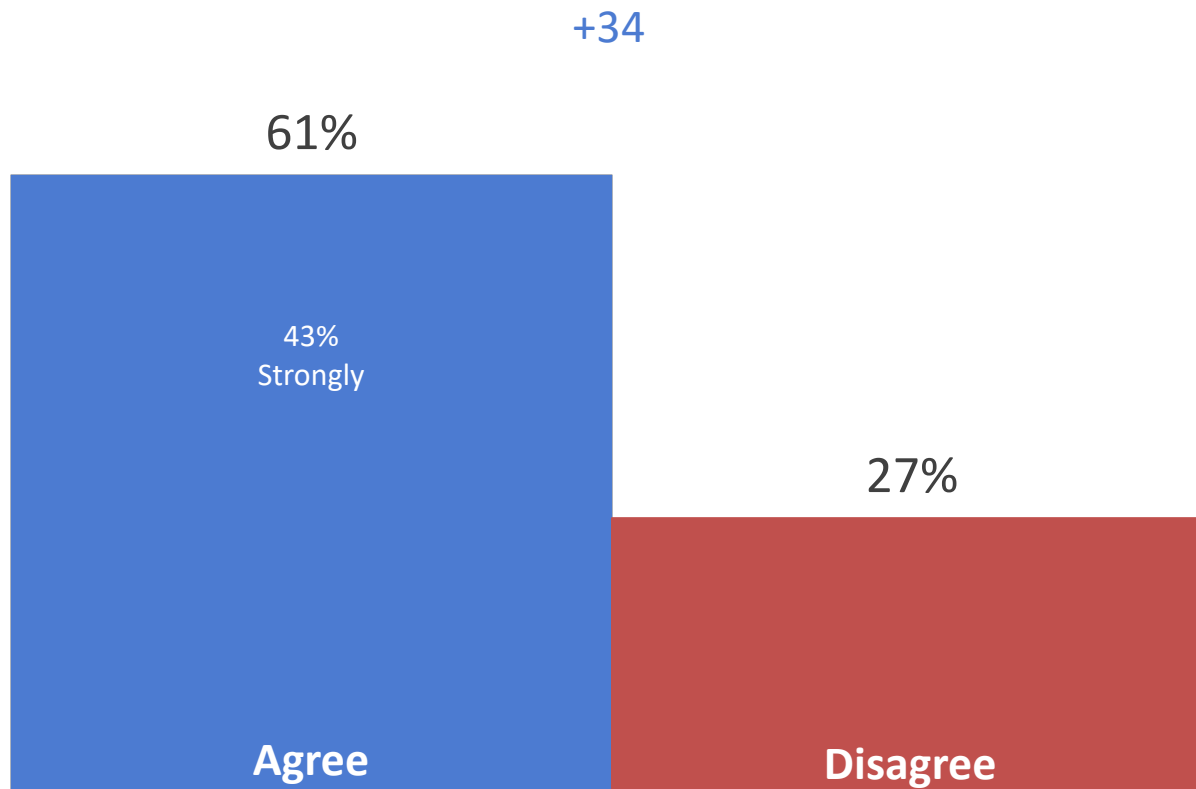
But, voters agree that “labor shortages in the state are in part due to a lack of access to quality, affordable child care.”

*Labor shortages in Ohio are in part due to a lack of access to quality, affordable child care.*



The lack of affordable, quality child care has a direct impact on the economy – more than 60% of part-time and non-working moms say they would go back to work if their child “had access to quality child care at a reasonable cost.”

*I would go back to work if my child had access to quality child care at a reasonable cost.*



\*Data shown among non-working and part-time moms (N=119)

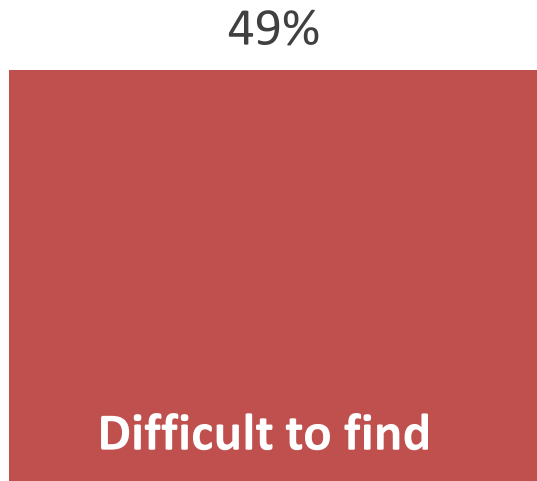




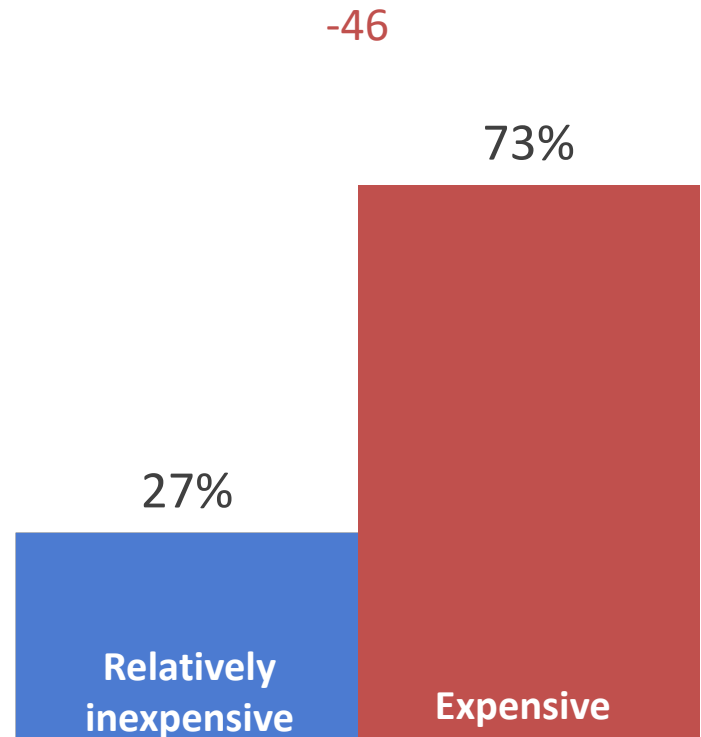
**Affordable and Accessible Child Care**

Roughly one-half of parents believe child care is difficult to find in their area...and they *overwhelmingly* believe it is expensive.

*Do you generally believe that child care in your area is*



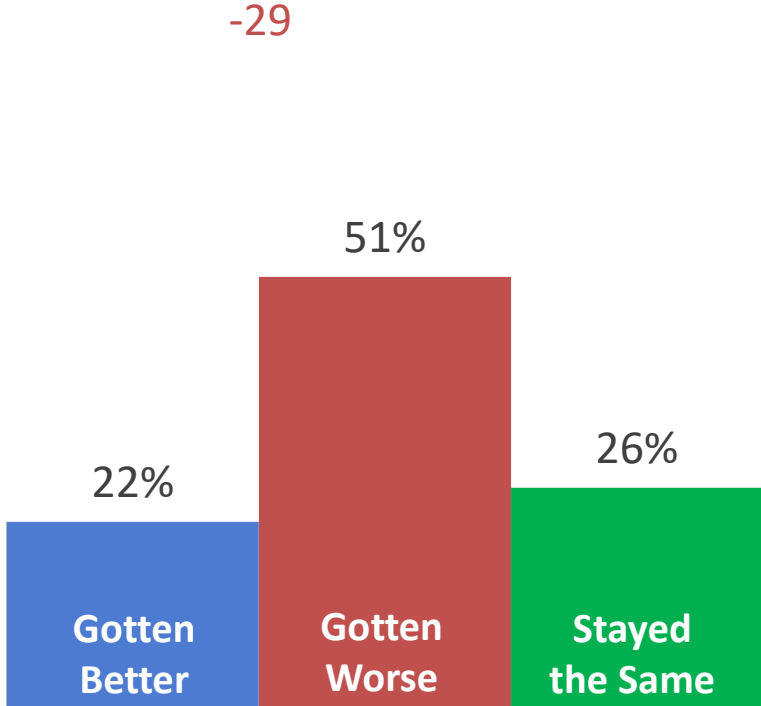
*And, do you believe that child care in your local area is*



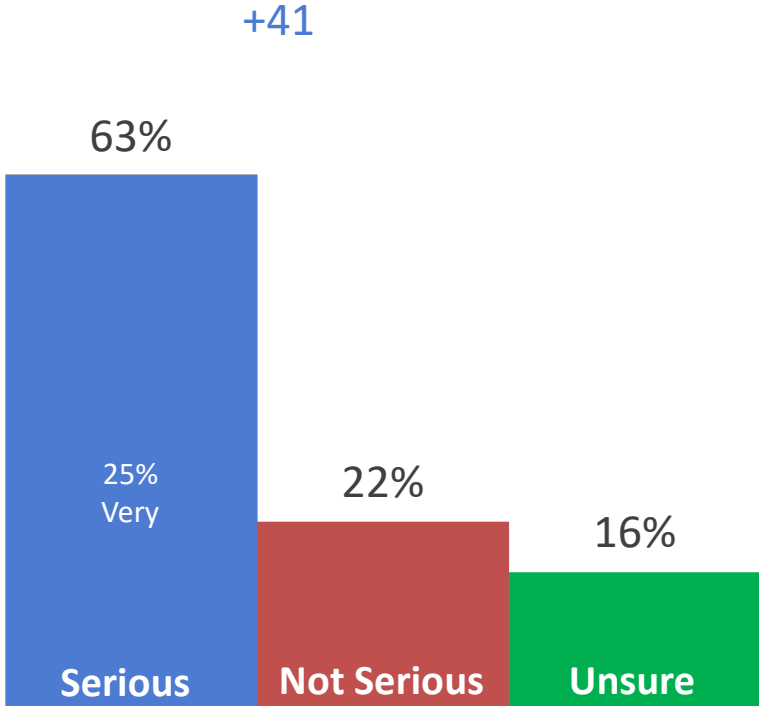
\*Data shown among Parents with Children 5 and Younger (Or Pregnant) (N=484)

# Ohio parents of young children believe that the availability of high quality/affordable child care has gotten worse over the last few years and that local child care centers are experiencing serious staffing shortages.

*And over the last few years, do you think that the availability of high quality and affordable child care has...*

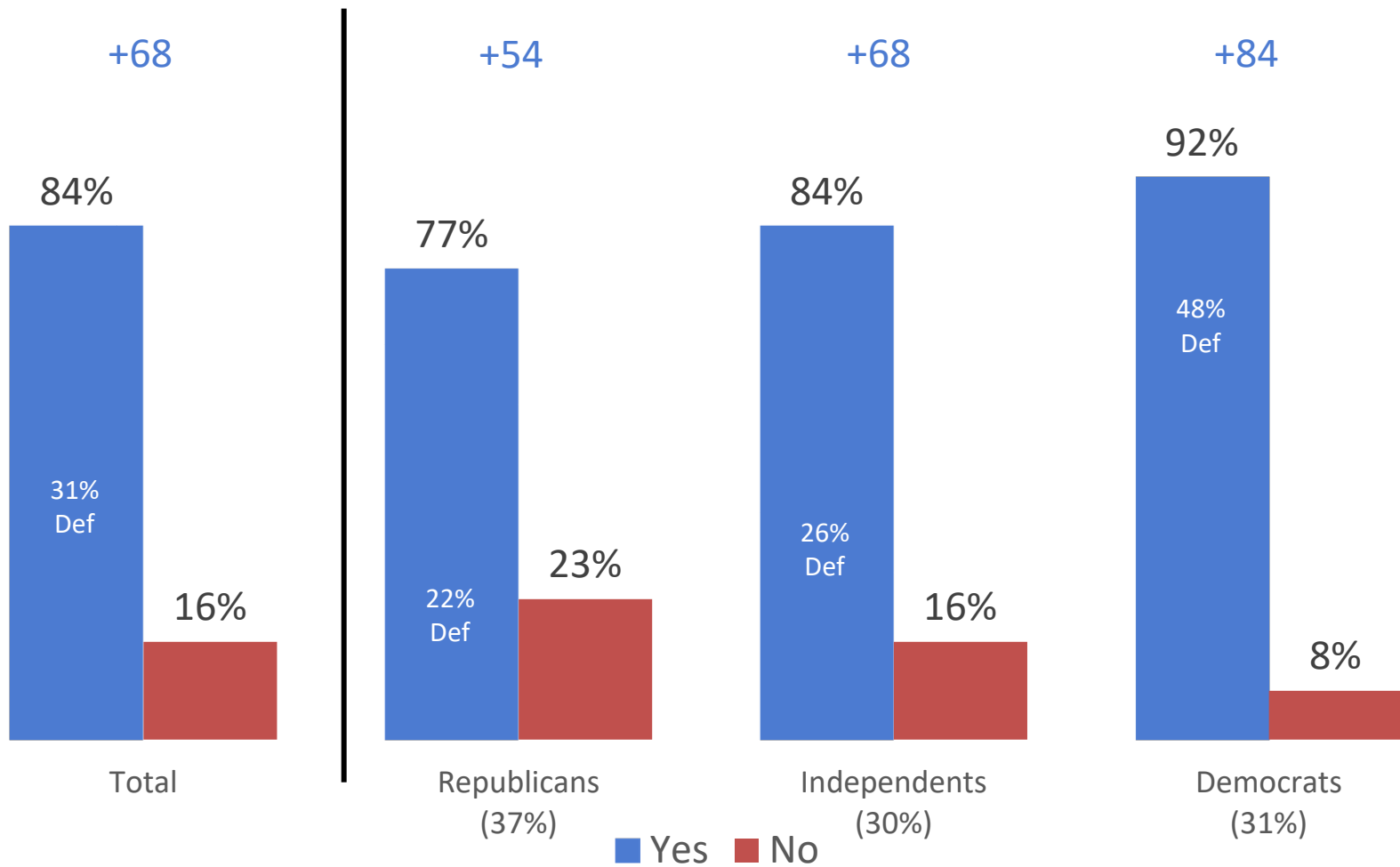


*And, from what you know, are child care centers in your local area having serious staffing shortages?*

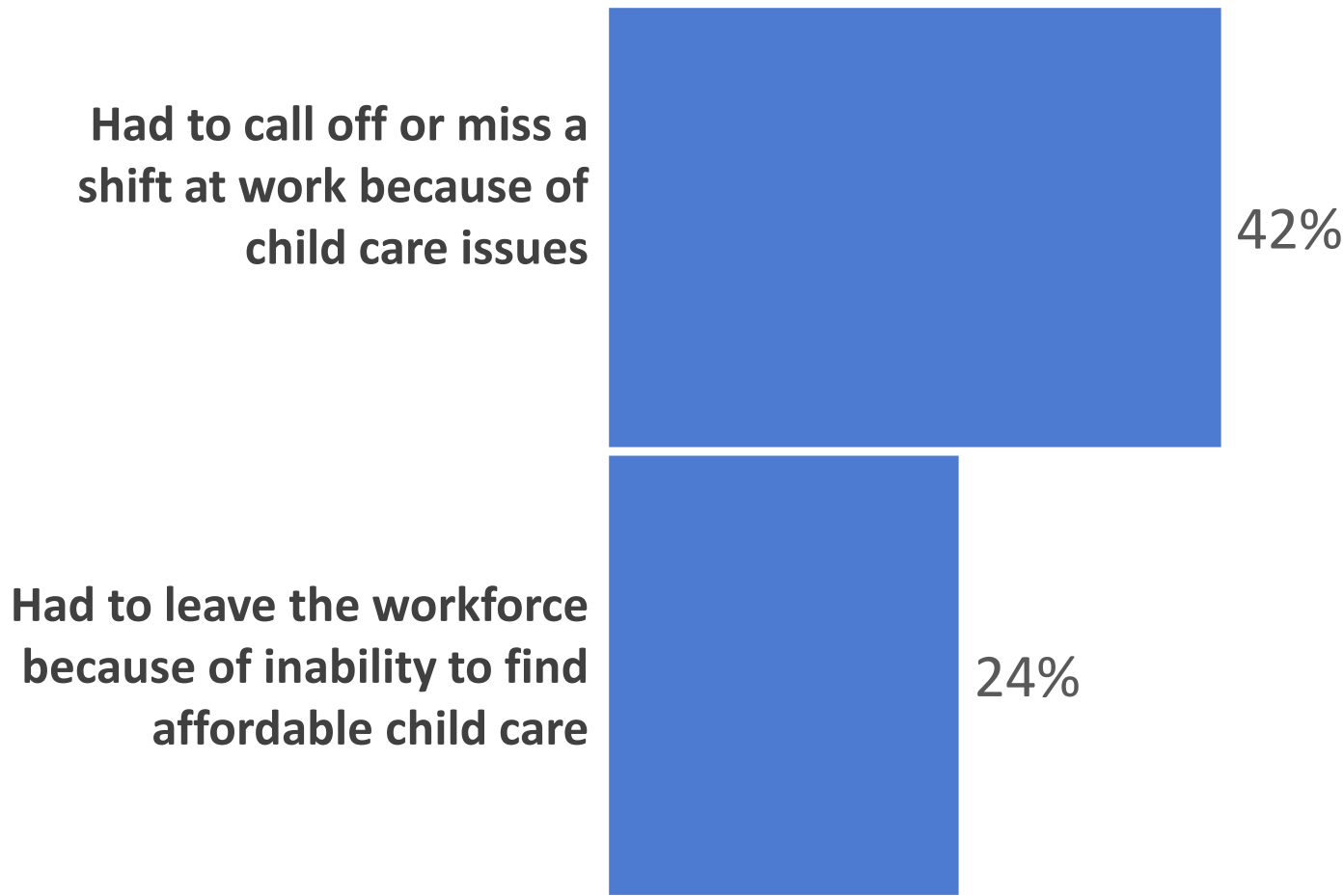


\*Data shown among Parents with Children 5 and Younger (Or Pregnant) (N=484)

# Ohio voters, across party lines, believe the state should increase funding for child care “to increase access, affordability and quality.”

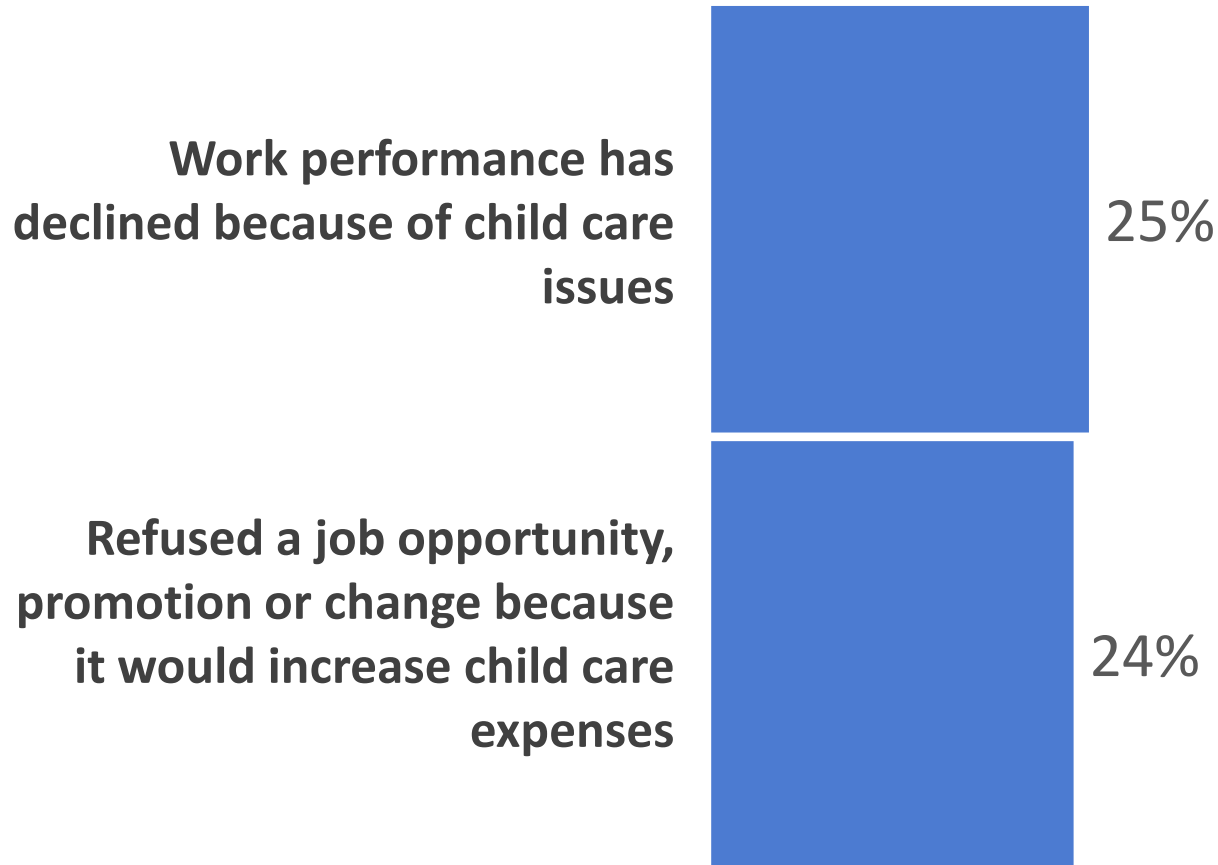


More than 40% of parents of young children have had to call off or miss a shift at work because of child care issues, and one-quarter say they have had to leave the work force because of an inability to find affordable child care.



*\*Data shown among Parents with Children 5 and Younger (Or Pregnant) (N=484)*

Further, one-quarter of parents say their work performance has declined because of child care issues, and another one-quarter say they have refused a job opportunity because it would increase child care expenses.



*\*Data shown among Parents with Children 5 and Younger (Or Pregnant) (N=484)*

# The lack of affordable and accessible child care has had an adverse impact on Ohio's economy.

- Work performance has declined because of child care issues
- Refused a job opportunity, promotion or change because it would increase child care expenses
- Had to call off or miss a shift at work because of child care issues
- Had to leave the workforce because of inability to find affordable child care

**68%**

*Of Ohio parents with children under 5 have had at least ONE of these happen*

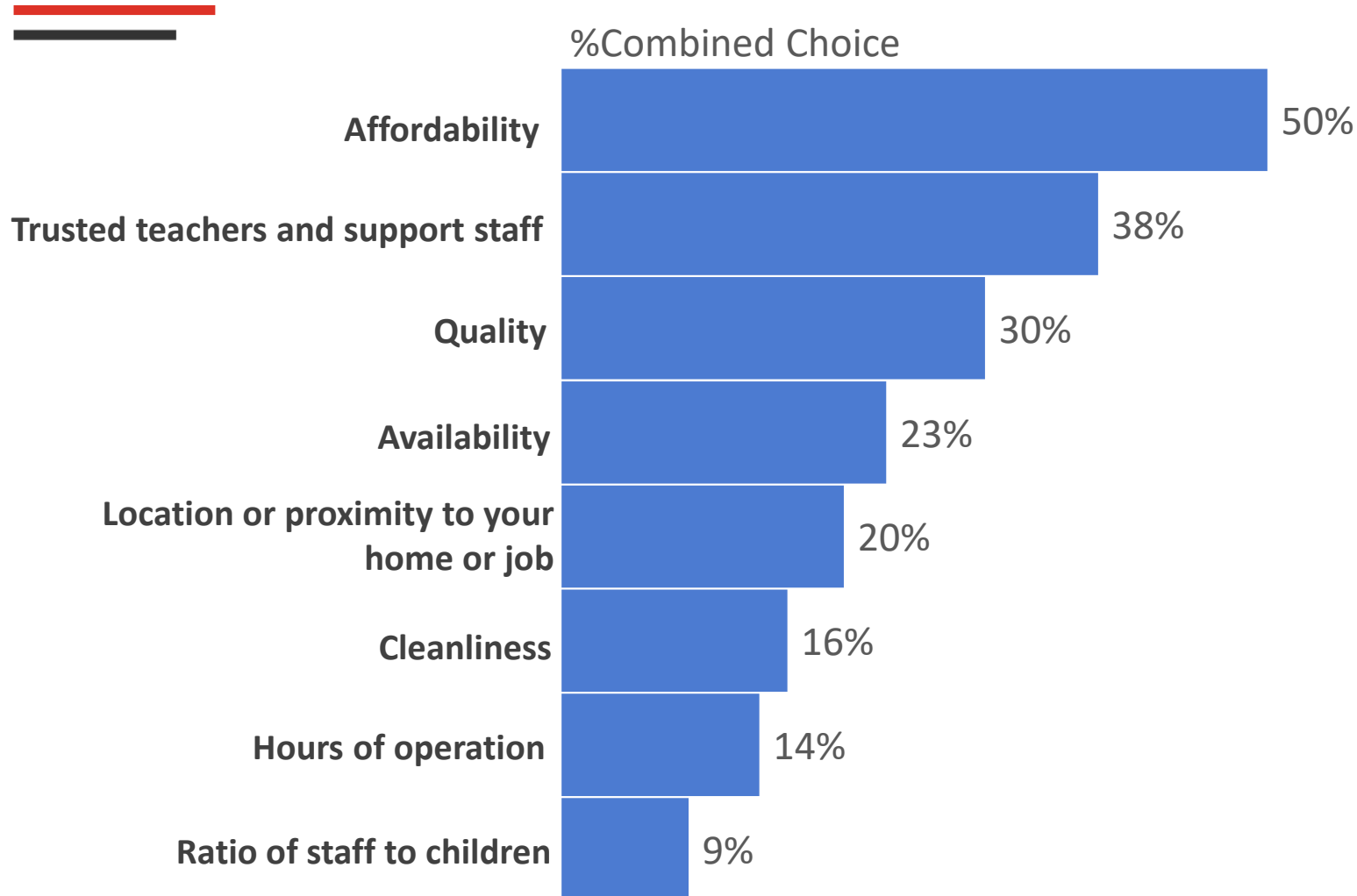
**30%**

*Of Ohio parents with children under 5 have had TWO-TO-THREE of these happen*

*\*Data shown among Parents with Children 5 and Younger (Or Pregnant) (N=484)*



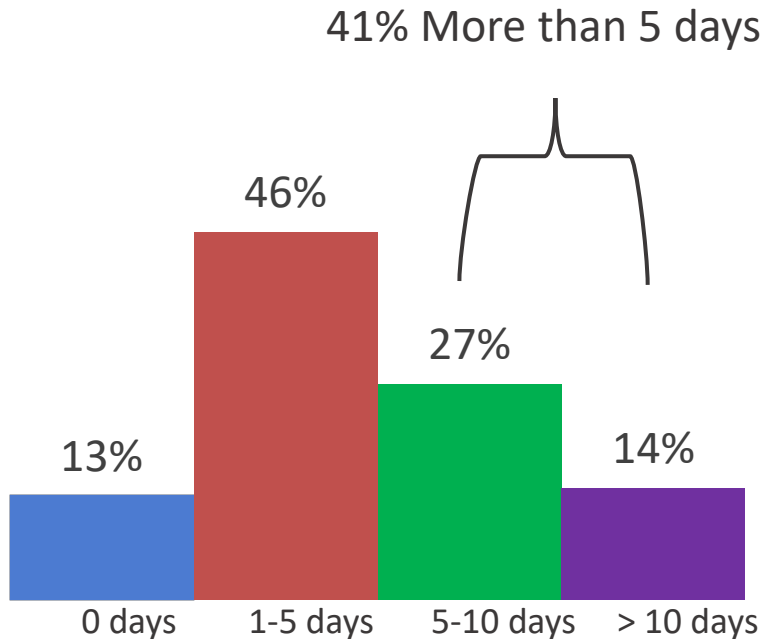
Parents of young children put “affordability,” “trusted teachers,” and “quality” as the most significant challenges in finding suitable child care.



\*Data shown among Parents with Children 5 and Younger (Or Pregnant) (N=484)

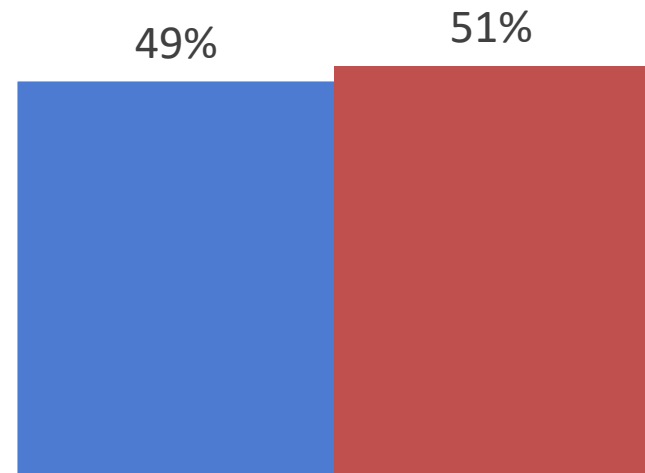
# Problems with child care are having an economic impact – more than 4-in-10 parents have missed than five days of work in the last two years because of a lack of child care.

Over the last two years, how many days of work would you estimate you have missed because of a lack of child care?



**In real numbers: over 1,000,000 Ohio working parents have cut back hours\***

Over the last couple of months, have you cut back your work hours to care for your children?^

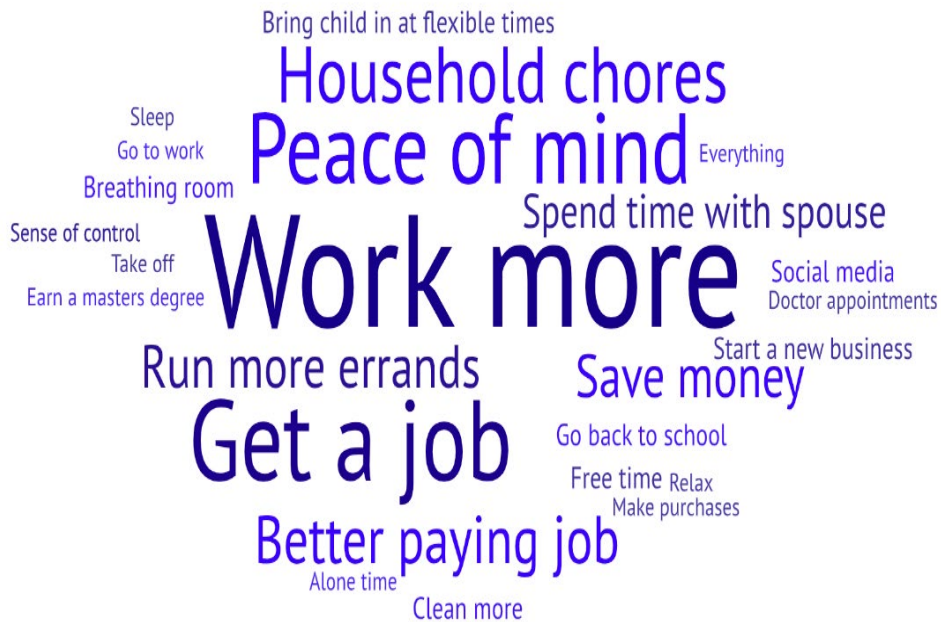


■ Yes ■ No

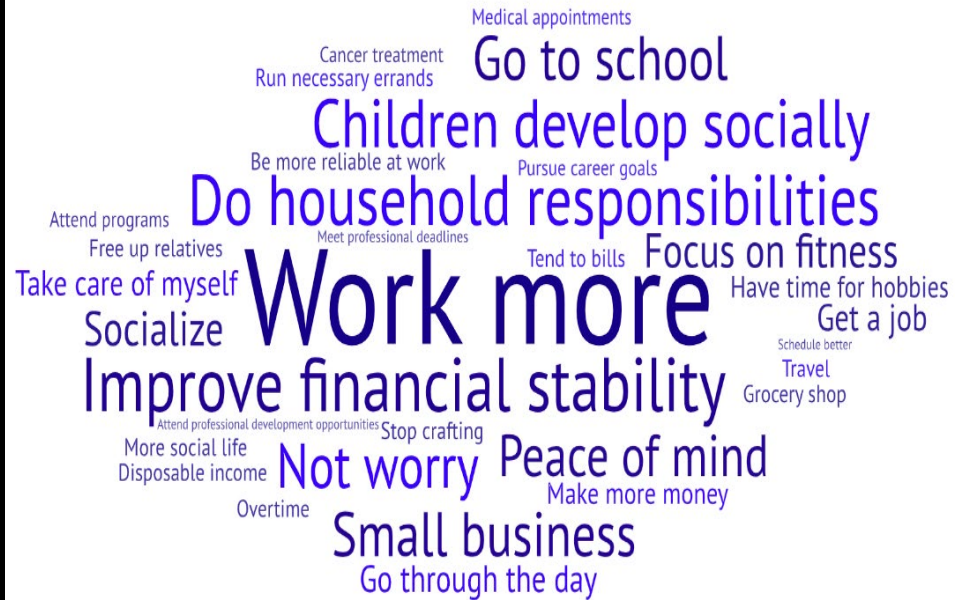
\*2020 US Census Data  
^ALL Ohio working parents

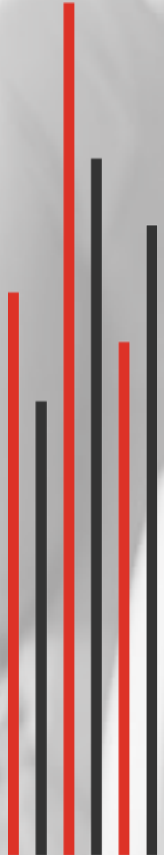
# What parents say: Word Clouds

***If you DID have child care, what would that allow you to do that you don't do now?***



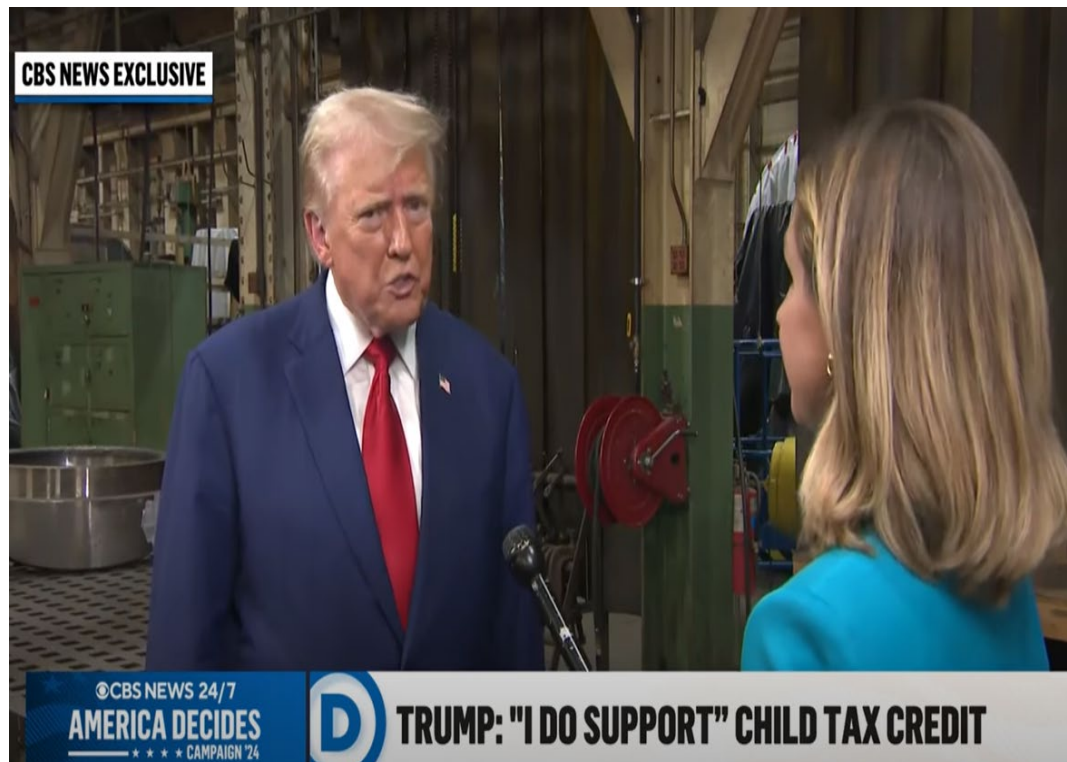
***What does having child care allow you to do that you wouldn't be able to otherwise?***





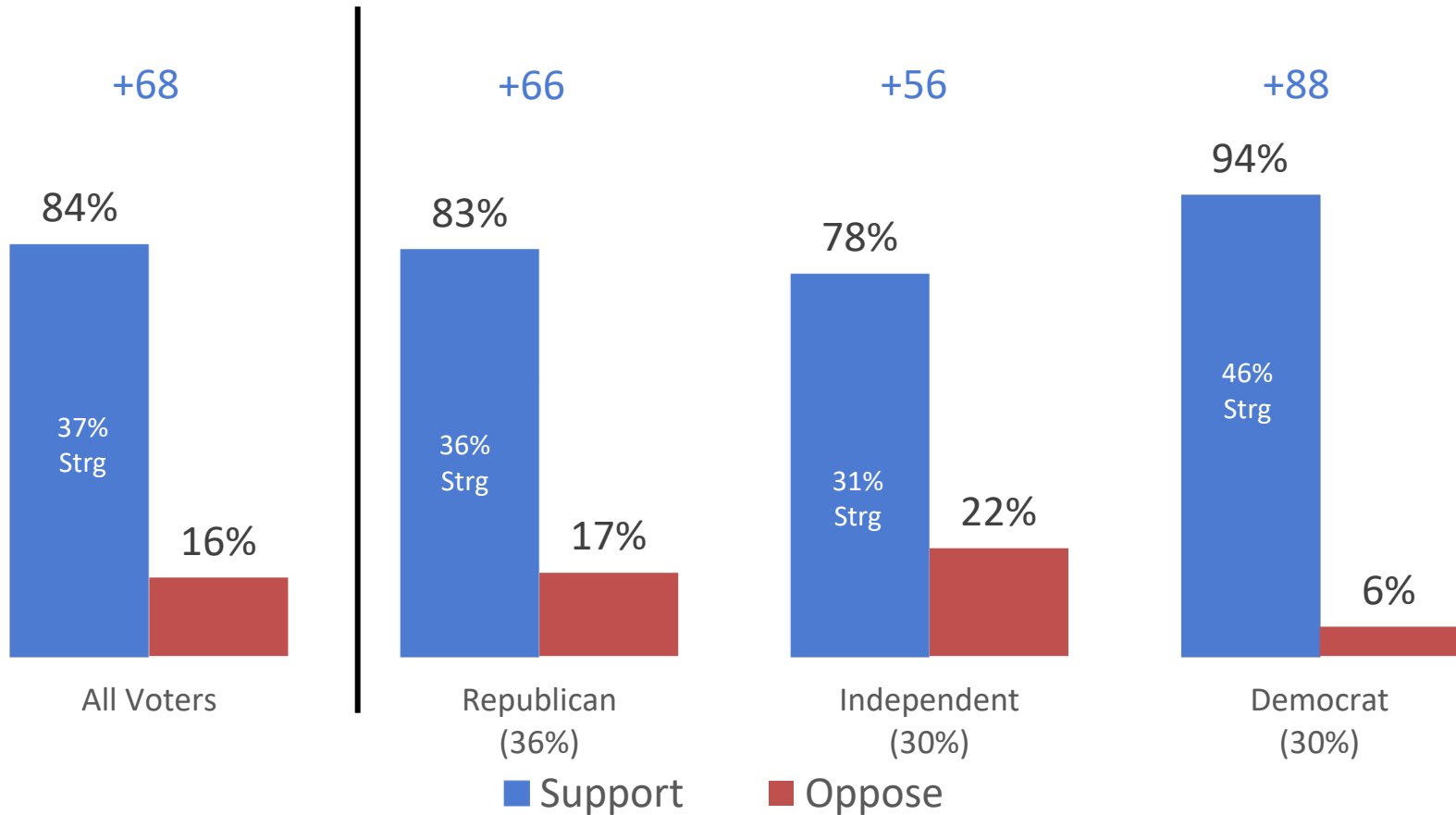
# Policies To Strengthen Child Care

# Reflecting the support given by POTUS/VPOTUS...



# ...Ohio voters support creating a child tax credit to provide tax relief to working families.

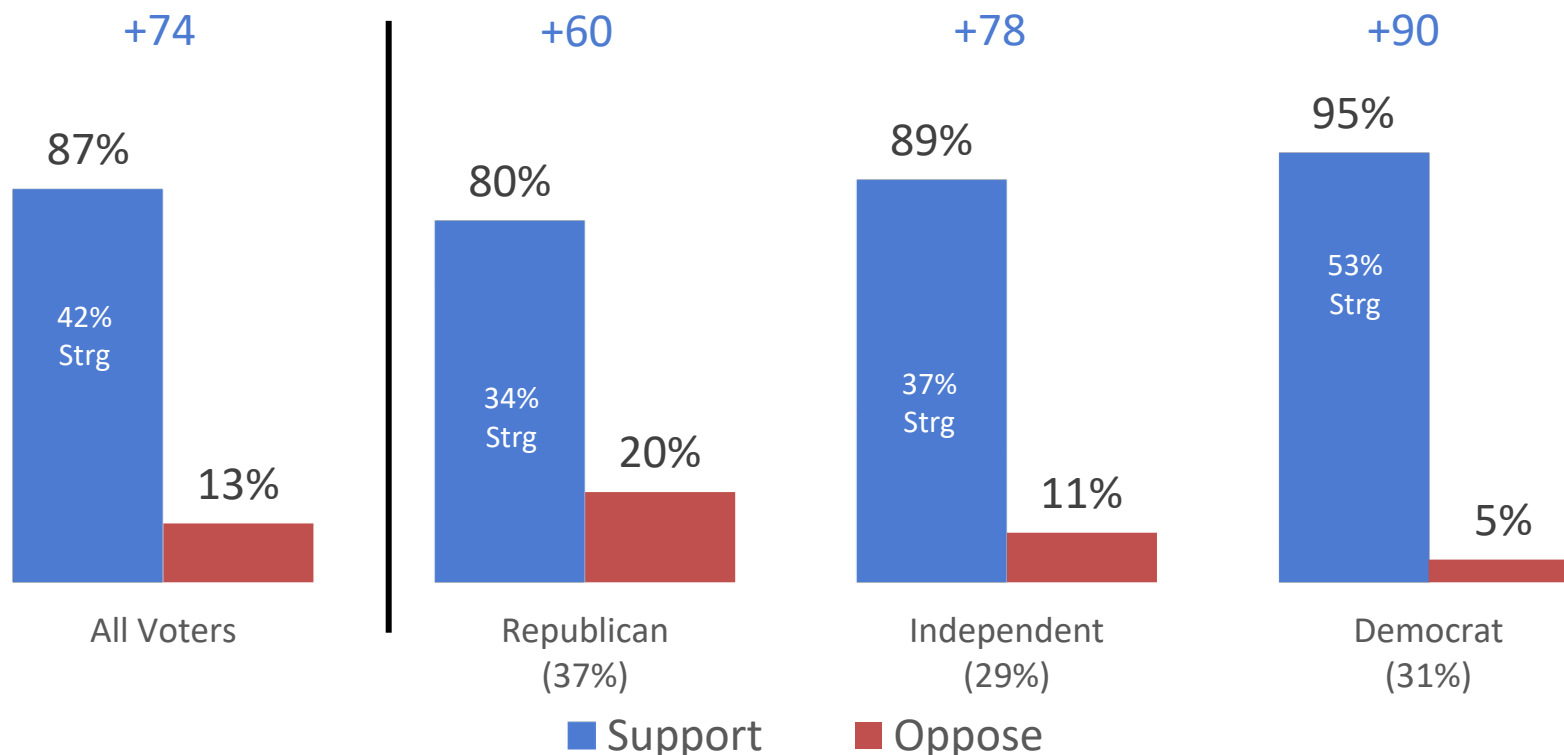
*Now, as you may have heard, recent discussions on the national level around tax policy have highlighted the importance of supporting families. Here in Ohio, the legislature is considering a child tax credit to provide financial relief to working families. Would you support or oppose Ohio creating a child tax credit to provide tax relief to working families with children under the age of 16? (A)*



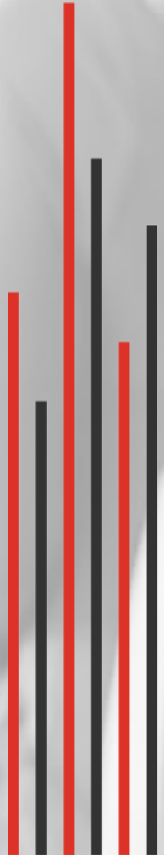


# Support edges even higher when voters are informed that both Biden and Trump support expanding the Child Tax Credit.

*Now, as you may have heard, recent discussions on the national level around tax policy have highlighted the importance of supporting families. Not only has President-elect Trump voiced support for increasing the Child Tax Credit, but President Biden and Vice-President Harris also support expanding it. Here in Ohio, the legislature is considering a child tax credit to provide financial relief to working families. Would you support or oppose Ohio creating a child tax credit to provide tax relief to working families with children under the age of 16? (B)*







# The Government's Role In Funding Child Care

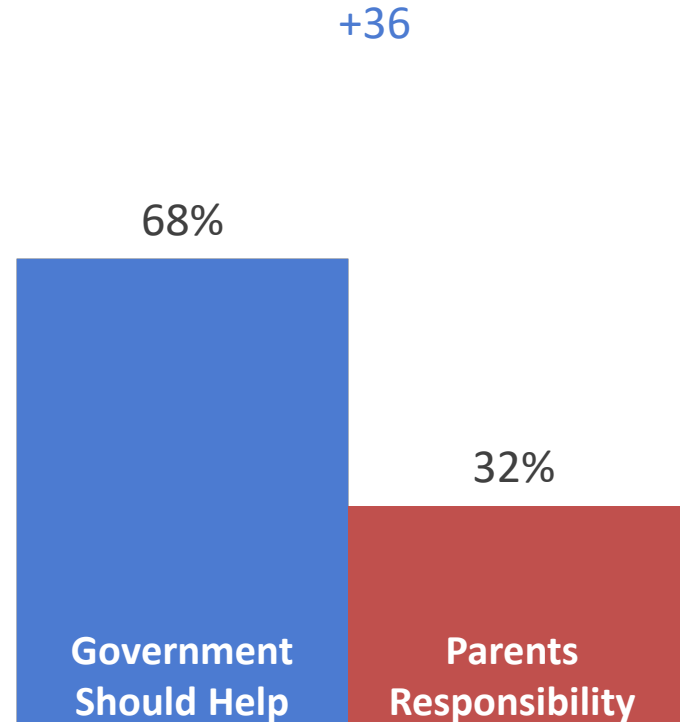
They strongly believe that the government should help fund child care for working families who can't afford it.

*In Ohio, child care is often one of the largest household expenses for families. The cost of child care can rival or exceed other big household expenses like rent, college tuition, and health care. For example, the annual cost of child care for two children in Ohio is higher than the cost of housing for most families. These rising costs are forcing many parents to make tough decisions about employment and child care arrangements.*

*Thinking about the affordability of child care and its impact on Ohio families, which of the following statements aligns more closely with your views, even if neither perfectly describes your opinion?*

*Some people say that the government should help fund child care for working parents who struggle to afford it, not only to provide a strong foundation of learning for their children, but to allow the parents to contribute to the workforce.*

*Other people say that it is the parents' responsibility to pay for their own child care. Parents who cannot afford it should explore alternatives such as family care or leaving the workforce until their children are school-aged.*

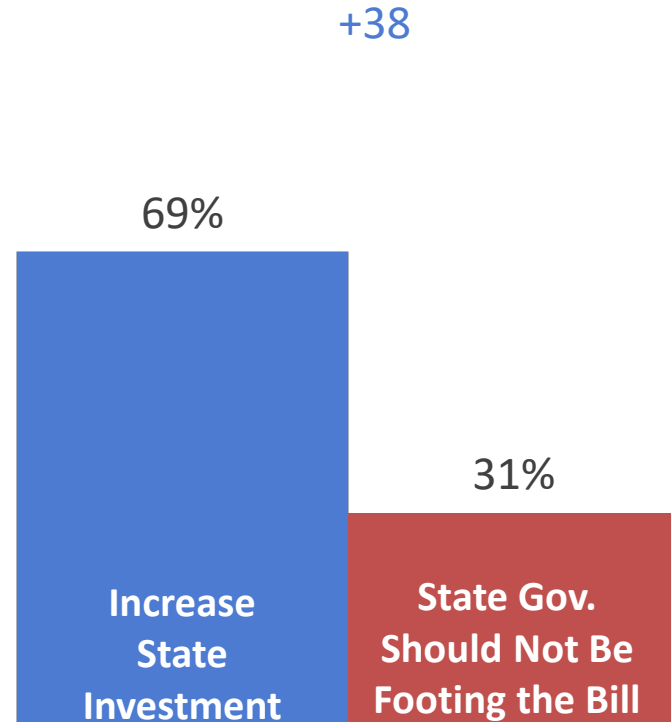


# A clear majority support increased state funding for early childhood programs.

*Thinking more specifically about investing in early childhood education...some people in Ohio would like to see more funding from the state government go towards early childhood education programs, while others disagree... which of the following two statements regarding this do you most agree with:*

*Some believe we need to increase state investment in child care in order to support the workforce and our economy. Increased access to quality, affordable child care will allow parents greater freedom to work and provide for their families. It will also address workforce shortage challenges facing employers.*

*Others say the state government should not be footing the bill for this or raising Ohio's children. Parents should be accountable for raising and educating their own children at this stage in their lives. If they want to place their children in early childhood education, they should be the ones footing the bill not the Ohio taxpayer. Ohio simply cannot afford another huge government entitlement program that costs hundreds of millions of dollars, especially during a pandemic that has caused a huge budget shortfall and when the cost of living is increasing so rapidly.*



## Voters' comments – why they support increasing early childhood funding: Verbatim Summary

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Among supporters, a major theme is that quality early education cultivates the next generation of Ohioans who will form the workforce and leadership pipeline. As one voter states, “investing in young children not only benefits their immediate well-being but also ensures a robust future workforce.” There is a strong belief that the early years are a critical window for child development, with lasting impacts. As one voter comments, “children need a stable environment to learn and grow and avoid pitfalls of difficulty later.” Many point to concerning statistics about kindergarten readiness, with only 40% of Ohio children entering ready to learn in 2018. Supporters argue early funding can help level the playing field for underprivileged children.

## Voters' comments – why they support increasing early childhood funding: Verbatim Summary

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Another prevalent theme is that increased access to affordable, quality child care allows more parents, particularly mothers, to remain employed, providing economic benefits. “Lack of affordable child care is the top reason women leave jobs,” one voter notes. Several comments highlight how early childhood education enables families to have two working parents and achieve stability.

# Voters' comments – why they support increasing early childhood funding: Statewide Quotes

*"It will help inflation because companies will have workers to get jobs done. Children will get a better quality of training at a daycare. Be more sociable so it makes it easier to learn." – Stark County*

*"It helps to shape a kids life." – Summit County*

*"To continue to have a strong Ohio in the future, something must be done to help young families pay for early childcare education." – Hamilton County*

*"A child has a right to learn. If child care costs are high, there should be some type of government funding to help families." – Lucas County*

*"Our children deserve the chance at a good future. They deserve the best education possible, at no cost to them. why deprive them of an education because of your financial status." – Lawrence County*

*"I know what it's like to miss work because of lack of child care. I believe funding should be increased to benefit both the child and the parents." – Lawrence County*

*"It is impossible for both parents to work when childcare costs more than an entire year's salary. In today's economy, it is difficult to live on one income." – Greene County*

*"Because I come from a big family. My parents were both working and going to school and supporting me and my two siblings at the same time. We were fortunate to have family members help, but other people are not so lucky." – Hamilton County*

*"Children benefit developmentally when they have quality care. Our society will benefit when children do well. When parents feel supported they will be better able to raise strong children." – Ashland County*





# PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

turning questions into answers



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# CHILD CARE POLICY PRIORITIES

1. Increase eligibility for Publicly Funded Child Care (PFCC) to at least 200% of the federal poverty level and increase access to full-time public preschool slots comparable to full-time PFCC subsidies to ensure young children are ready for kindergarten and working families are supported.
2. Improve payment practices that better support a child care program's ability to deliver quality learning, increase teacher pay by making progress towards paying the *actual* cost of quality care while not overburdening families. We recommend increasing PFCC rates to the 75th percentile of the 2024 Market Rate Survey for base rates as the next benchmark while maintaining tiered rates for providing higher levels of quality; paying programs based on enrollment of children versus attendance; and limit family copays to 7% of a family's income.



# Q & A



# UPCOMING WEBINAR

February 11, 2025

## Groundwork Ohio's 2025 Early Childhood Dashboard Release



Lynanne Gutierrez  
Groundwork Ohio



Carrie Almasi, MPA  
Health Policy Institute of Ohio



Lexi Chirakos, PhD  
Health Policy Institute of Ohio



February 11, 2025 | 10:00 am  
WEBINAR



Register at [groundworkohio.org/events](https://groundworkohio.org/events)

# RAISING OUR VOICES

Early Investments. Lifelong Returns.



**BE THE VOICE FOR  
OHIO'S YOUNGEST CHILDREN—  
JOIN US AT ADVOCACY DAY!**

**Wednesday, March 12, 2025**

The Ohio Statehouse | 9:00 am - 4:00 pm  
Registration Open at 8:00 am



# THE MORNING MEETING

**Thursdays at 9:30 am**

## WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

- State policy-makers, local elected officials, business leaders, families, early childhood professionals, community leaders, maternal and young child health practitioners, and advocates to raise their voice for Ohio's young children!

## WHY SHOULD I ATTEND?

- Access Ohio's policy-makers.
- Learn real-time updates about policy changes impacting Ohio families.
- Deepen relationships with other advocates.
- Build the power of Ohio's early childhood movement.

**Register at [groundworkohio.org/events](https://groundworkohio.org/events)**



# EARLY CHILDHOOD FELLOWSHIP

**Applications Open Soon!**

Brings together next-generation leaders who are passionate about early childhood learning, policy and advocacy. The Fellowship provides a place for cross-sector collaboration, peer networking, professional development, and authentic discussion of topics and issues related to the early childhood community.

## IDEAL PARTICIPANTS

- Passionate early childhood professionals
- Home and center-based child care providers
- Child welfare professionals
- Child development specialists

## FELLOWSHIP ACTIVITIES

- Unique and engaging curriculum
- Keynote speakers
- Discussions with policymakers
- Small group projects





# SOCIAL MEDIA

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