

Berkshire Early Childhood Collaborative: Survey Results

November 2025



Understanding the Berkshire County Landscape

Child Care: A Strategy for Economic Vitality in Berkshire County

February 2025



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- A **shrinking population** and an **aging workforce** threaten Berkshire County's economic vitality.
- Berkshire County faces a **child care shortage**, leaving many families, especially those with children under five, without adequate options.
- Insufficient child care options hinder **workforce participation**, particularly for parents of young children, and create challenges for employers in attracting and retaining staff.
- The child care business model presents **sustainability challenges** for providers.

38.5% Child Care Gap in Berkshire County

1,950 slot shortage

Source: Bipartisan Policy Center Child Care Gaps Assessment tool

3,777

Total Licensed Capacity



Designing a Solution **WITH** the Community

- The **PURPOSE** of the Berkshire Early Childhood Collaborative Survey is to:
 - **Understand** the perspectives of both employers and employees on the specific child care needs and challenges facing the Berkshire County workforce.
 - **Inform** the design of a child care and business partnership pilot.
 - **Gauge** interest among the business community and identify potential pilot partners.

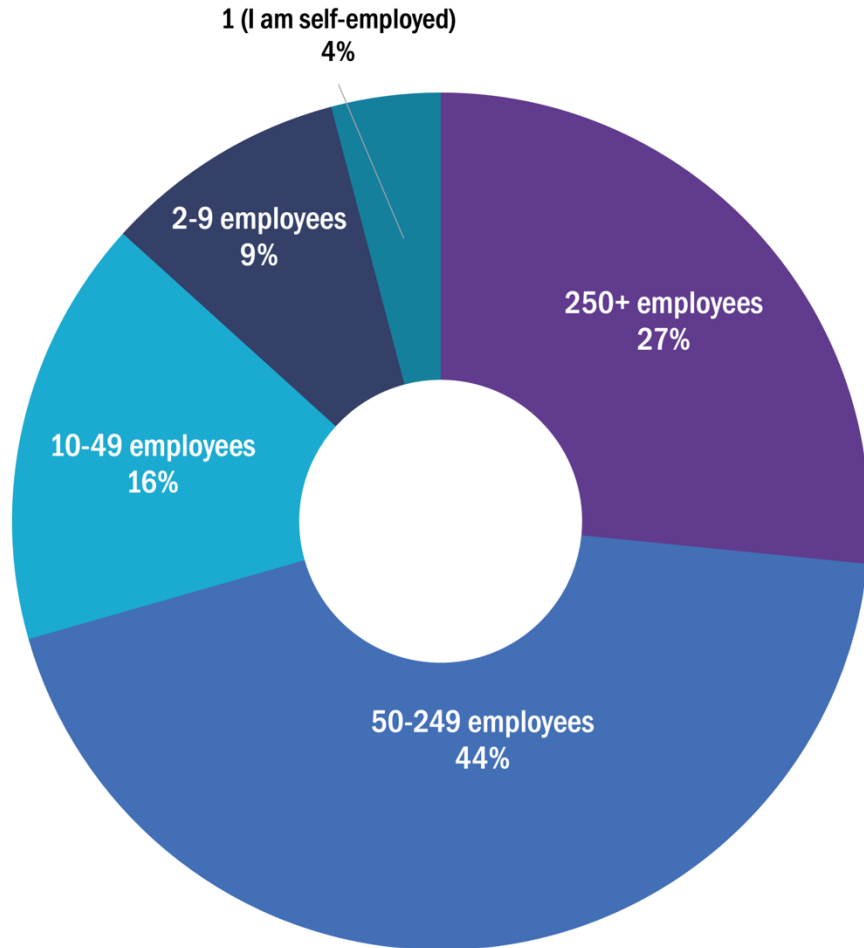
Berkshire Early Childhood Collaborative Survey

September 25th – October 24th

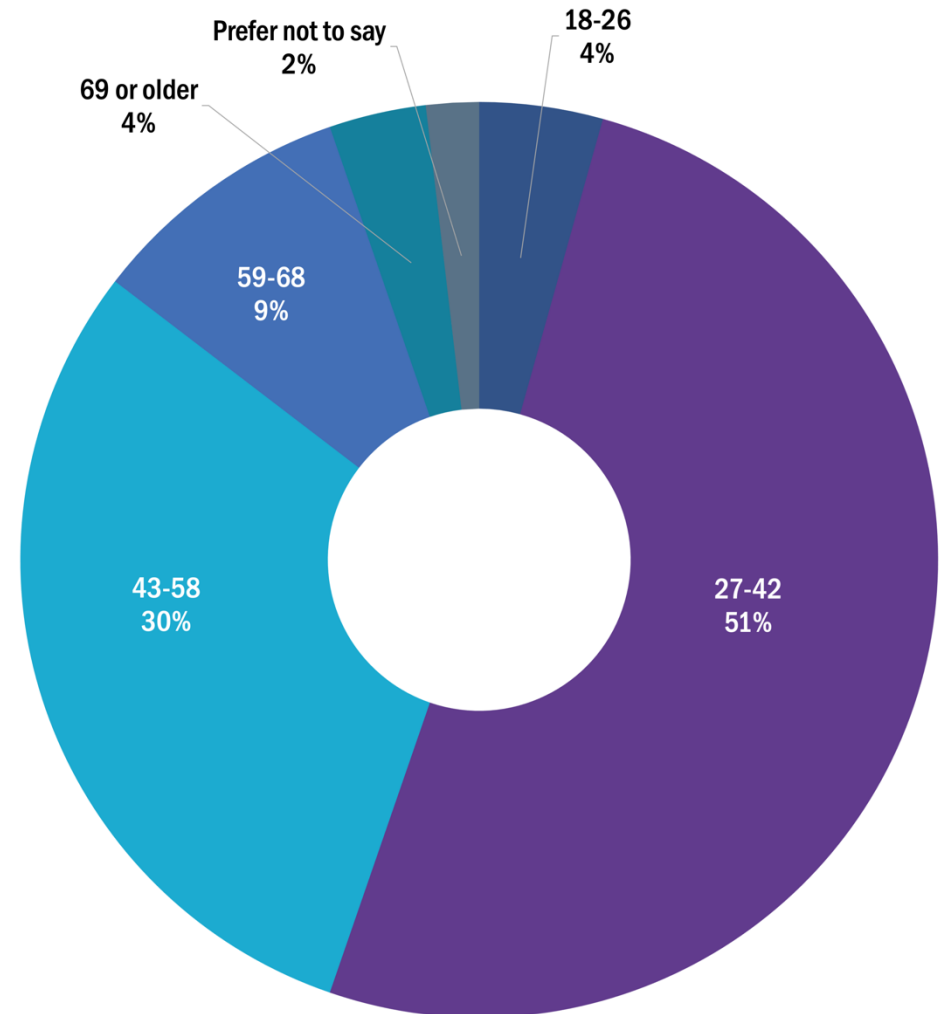
- Online format (approx. 5 minutes to complete)
- Available in English and Spanish
- **455** individuals entered the survey
- **ALL** Berkshire County cities and towns represented

Who Completed the Survey?

A wide distribution of employer sizes was represented with approximately half of all respondents reporting the size of their organization as between 50 and 249 employees. (n=316)



Most survey respondents (81%) were between the ages of 27 and 58. (n=322)



Industries and Professional Titles/Levels of Respondents

147 frontline staff or direct service providers

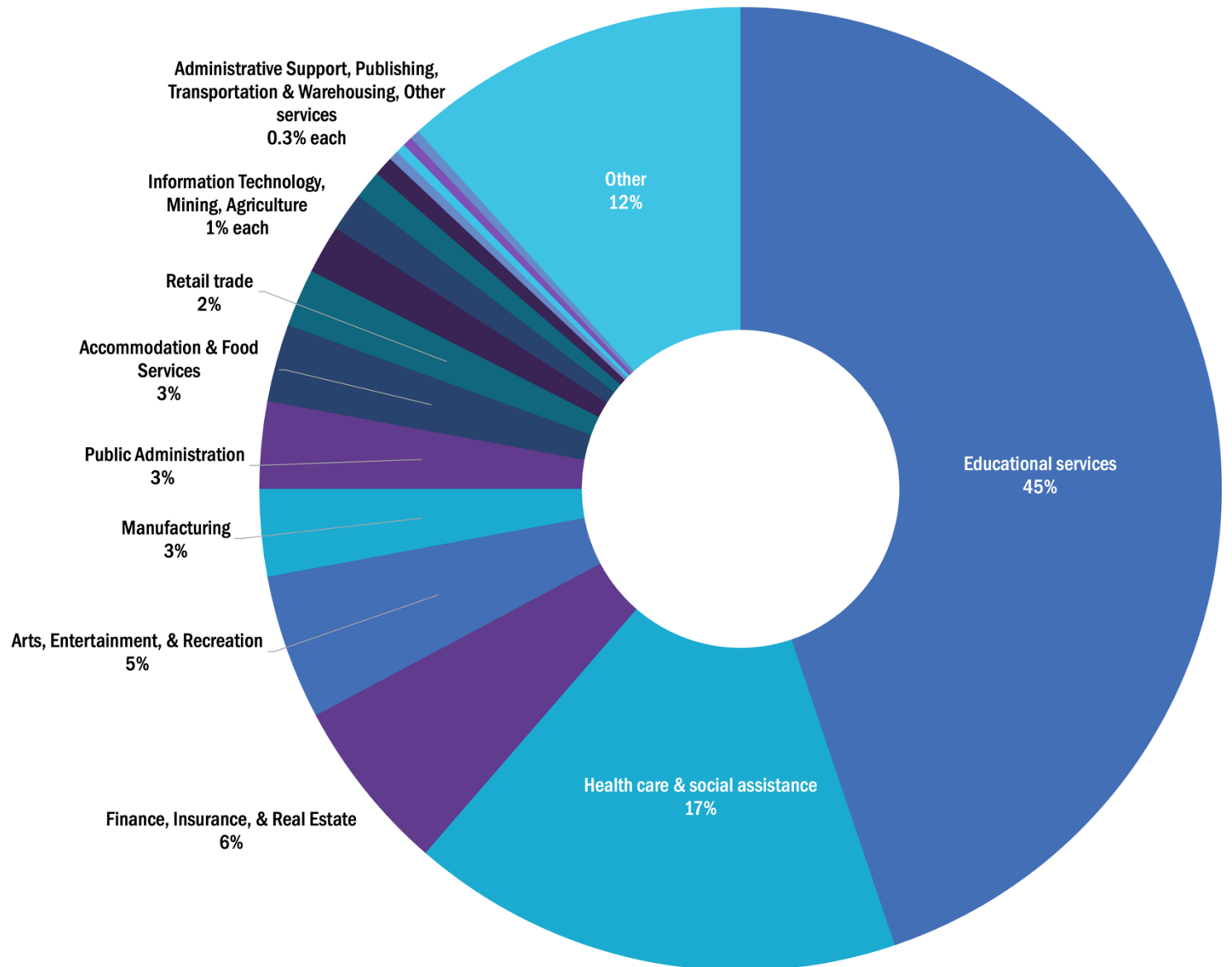
72 mid-level managers

58 senior leadership

23 business owners or self-employed individuals

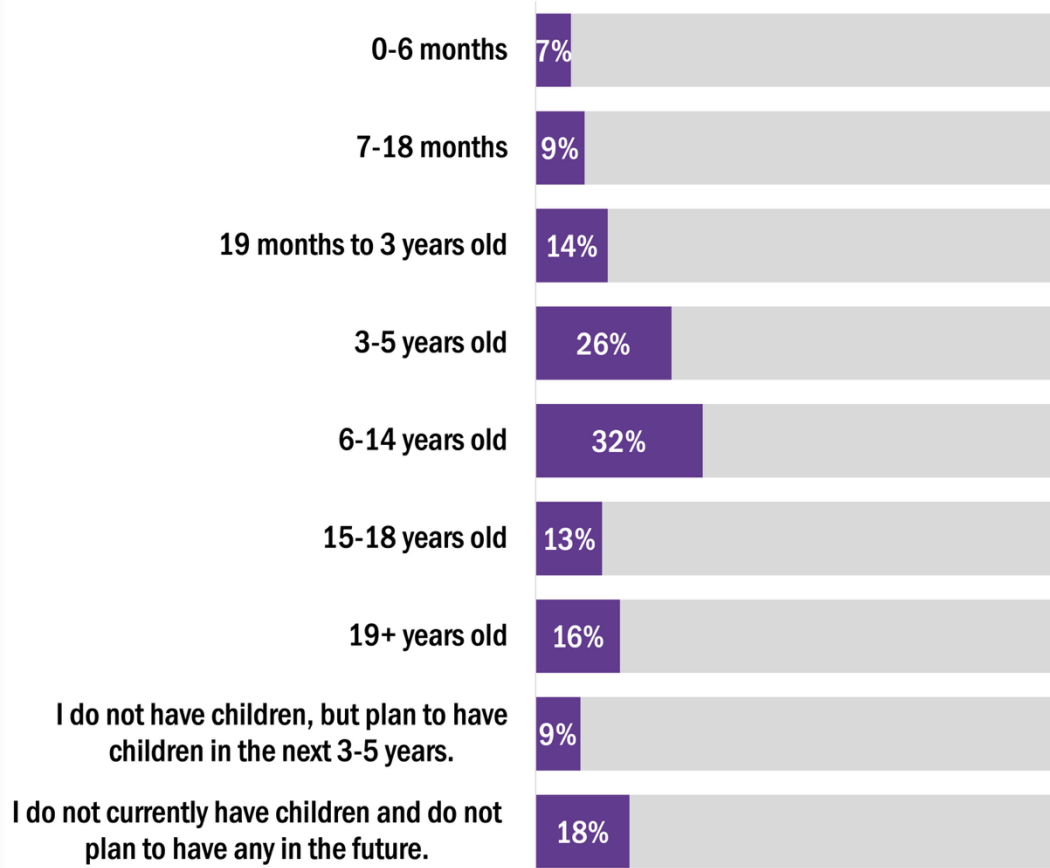
38 identified as other

Distriution of Survey Respondents Across Industries (n=308)

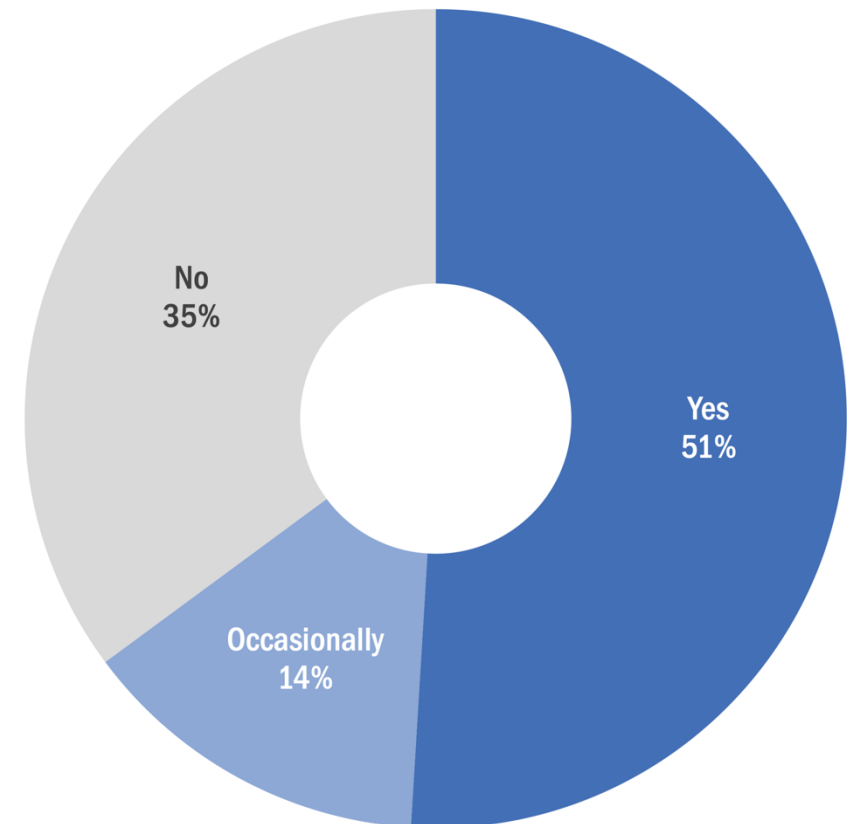


Most working parents responding to the survey need child care.

Over half of survey respondents (56%) have children five years old or younger. (n=384)



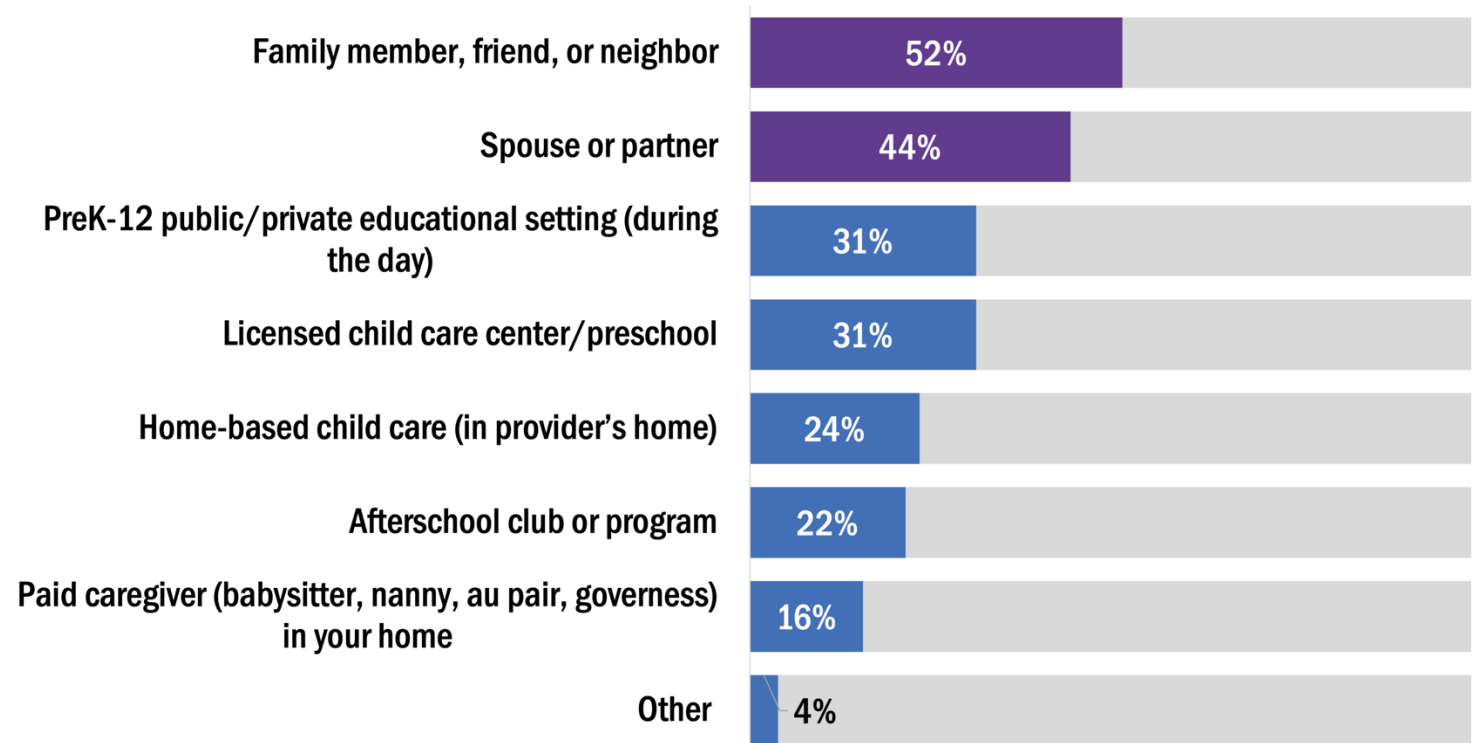
65% of respondents with children report that they need child care when working. (n=259) Of the employees who reported needing child care when working, 92% have children under the age of 5.



Most working families report “piecing together” child care arrangements.

“When I became pregnant with my first child in 2020, I called between 5-10 daycare providers and all told me they would not have a spot for my child in a year when I would need child care. I ended up taking the full 12 weeks of FMLA, most of which was unpaid, as my employer doesn’t offer paid leave, and we must use our sick time to cover our maternity leave. I had to return to work part-time for 2 months until summer vacation because I didn’t have child care. Our family and friends were taking time off from their jobs to help watch our son on the days my husband and I needed to work. It was so stressful, and we barely had any money coming in.”

Informal child care arrangements were the most frequently reported child care arrangements among survey respondents identifying as employees needing child care. (n=153)

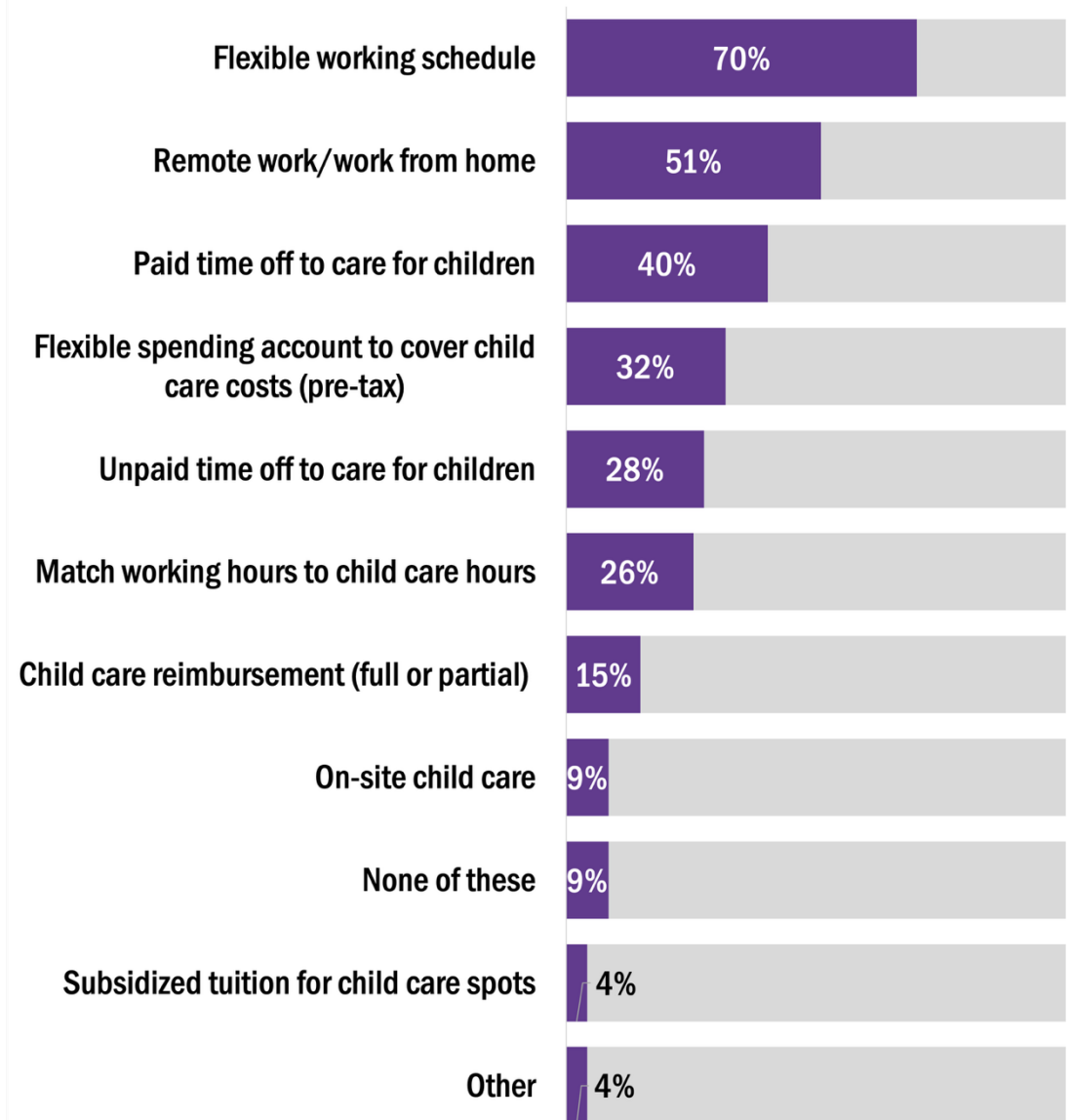


There is a disconnect between the child care benefits businesses currently offer and the benefits that employees want.

Only **27** of survey respondents in need of child care (**18%**) report that their employers offer child care benefits. (n=153)

Most employers who offer child care benefits do not help parents cover tuition costs.

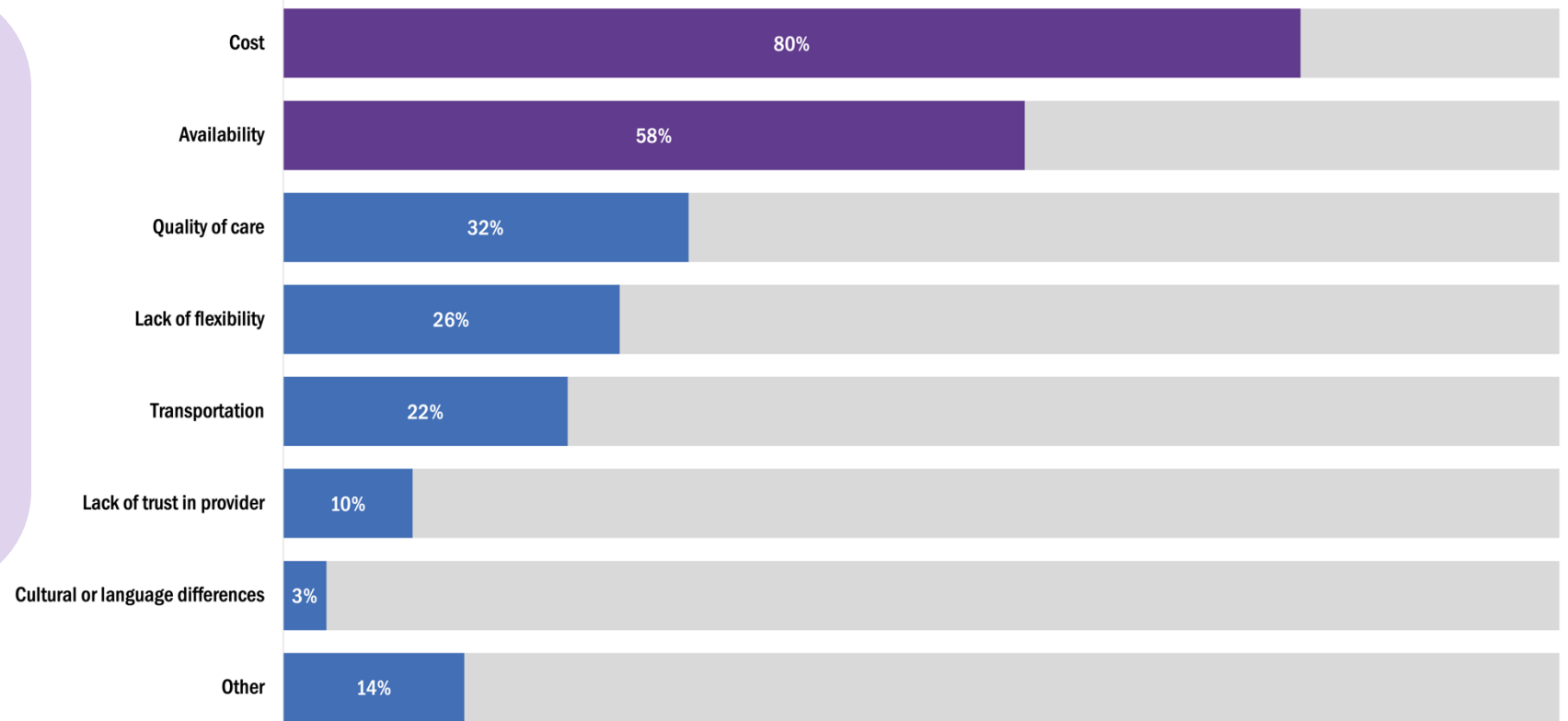
Most responding employers report that they have implemented child care benefits such as flexible hours and work environments. About a third report offering flexible spending accounts to cover child care costs. (n=47)



The primary child care challenges reported by working parents are cost and availability.

“I haven’t had children yet because my partner and I would not have additional support for our child and we both work full time. We can’t afford to have one of us stay home full time with children and are afraid we will be unable to get full day care as soon as our parental leaves would end.”

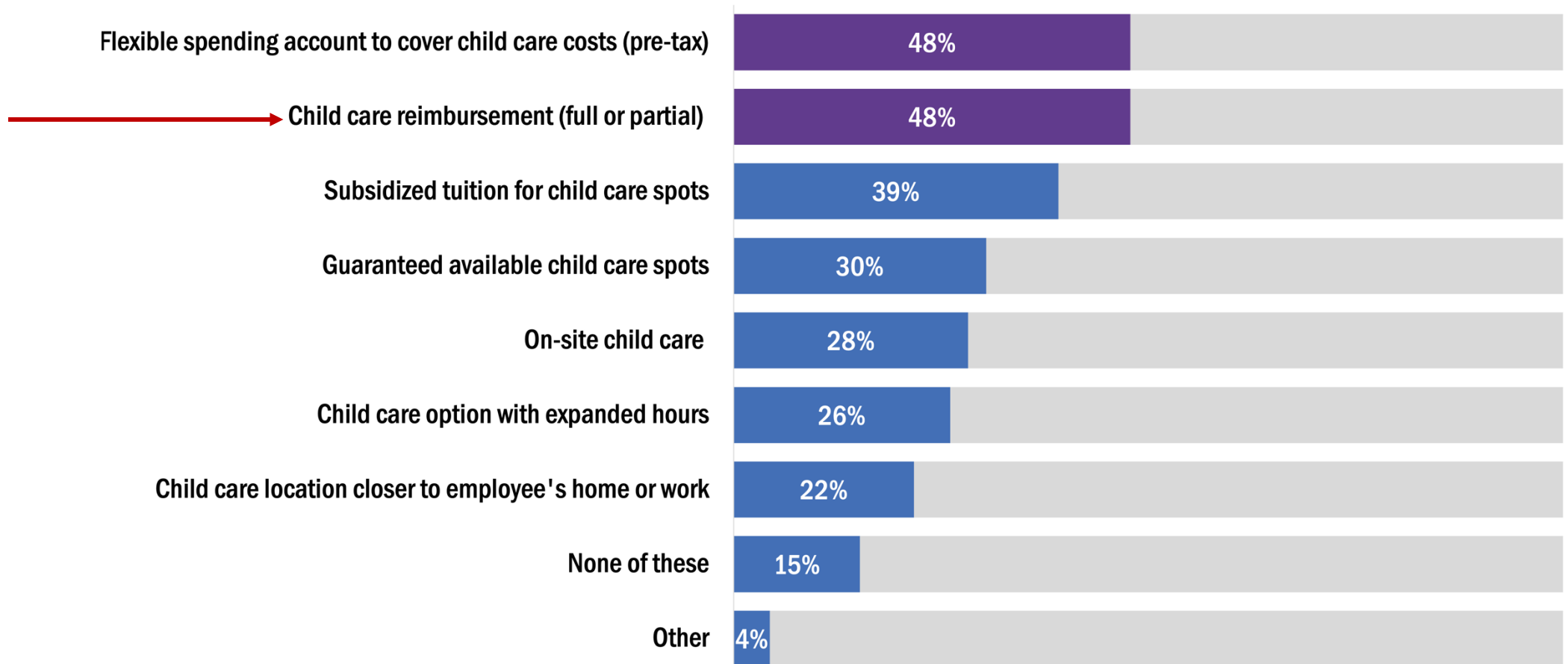
Cost and availability of child care were the primary challenges reported by responding employees who need child care when working. (n=148)



However, there is alignment between the benefit that most employees want and what employers say they would like to offer if they had the resources.

Almost half of employer respondents indicated that, if they had the resources, they would be willing to offer child care benefits to help families afford child care. (n=46)

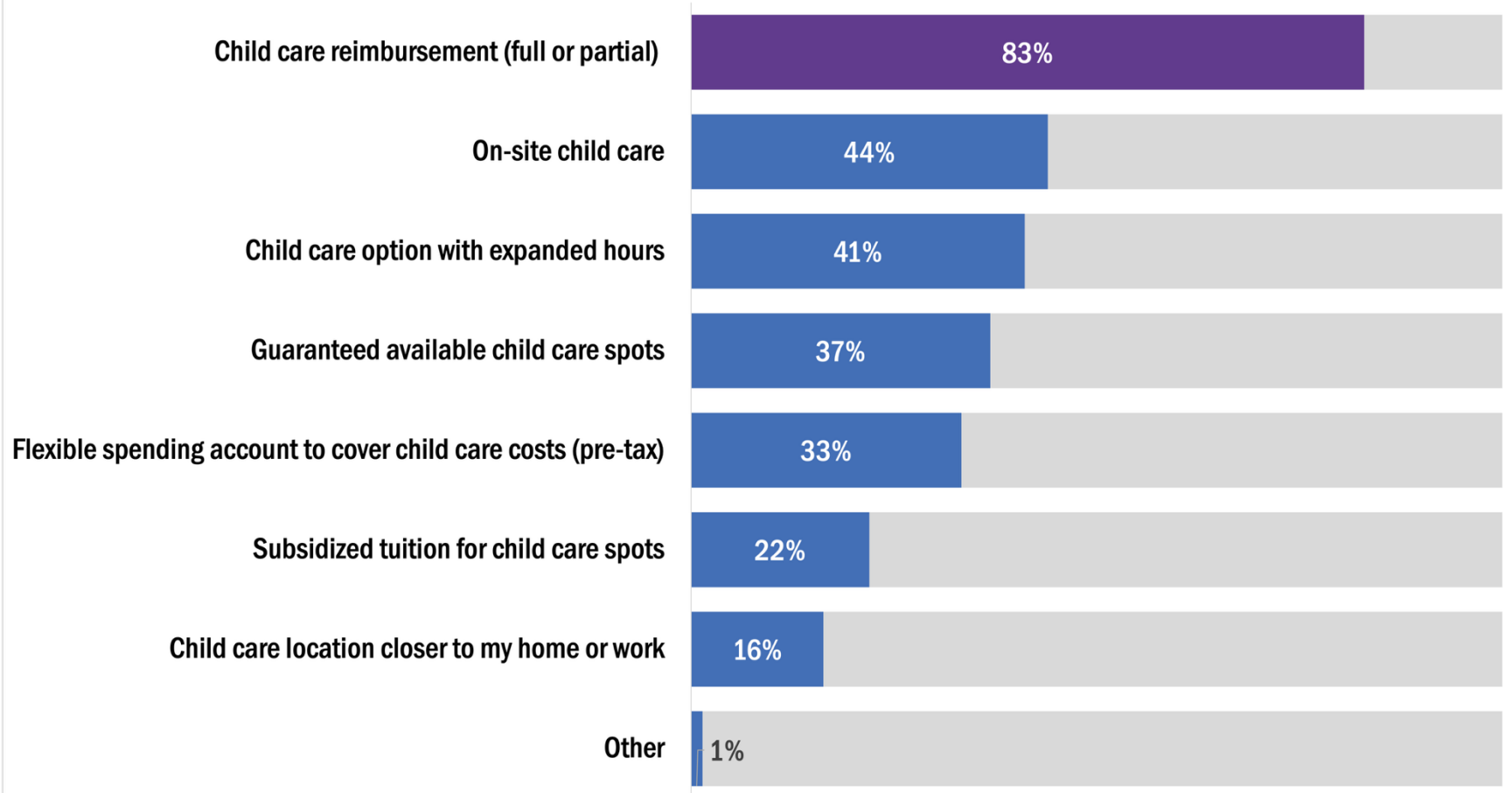
Benefit most preferred by employee respondents



Employees would like help covering child care costs.

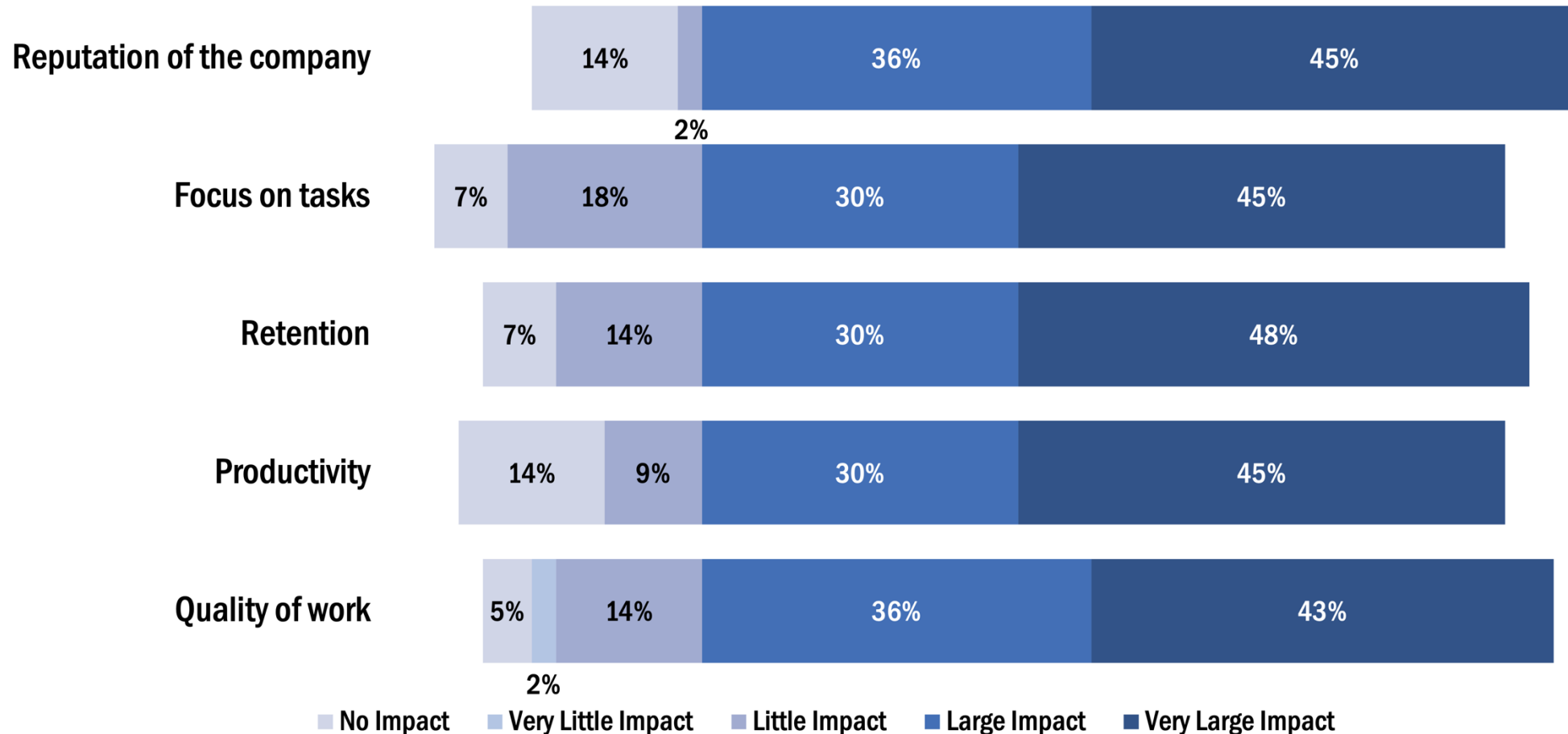
This gives us important information when planning a pilot program.

When employee respondents were asked to select their top three potential employer-driven benefits from a list, child care reimbursement was the clear winner, preferred by 83% of respondents. (n=141)



Many employers surveyed recognized ways that employee child care benefits can improve their business operations.

Approximately three-quarters of employer respondents felt that more child care benefits would positively impact several dimensions of their business or organization. (n=44)



Several employers also recognized the importance of child care and a responsibility to their workforce.

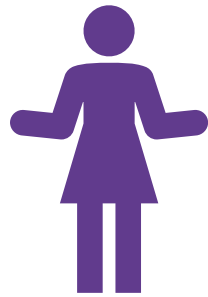
Most employer respondents (76%) expressed some level of agreement with the statement: "It's important for Berkshire County Businesses to support child care for their employees." (n=46)



Over half of respondents (60%) expressed some level of disagreement with the statement: "It is NOT the employer's responsibility to support child care for the employees." (n=46)



Consistent themes emerged from the qualitative analysis of **84** survey comments.



Lack of child care **affordability** and **availability** were the barriers most frequently described by respondents.



Existing child care challenges place both **short and long-term limitations** on the Berkshire County workforce.

Lack of affordability and availability were the barriers most frequently described by respondents.

Child care remains unaffordable for many families, even when both parents are working.

Locating available, quality care is difficult for almost all respondents, but especially for populations such as families with special needs children, infants, and single parents.

A few respondents described child care staffing and capacity challenges.

One respondent expressed a desire to become a child care provider.

Existing child care challenges place both short and long-term limitations on the Berkshire County workforce.

Respondents shared experiences reflecting underparticipation in the workforce or considerations of exiting the workforce because of child care constraints

Some respondents highlighted a lack of available child care benefits or a lack of employer understanding and support for parenting obligations.

One business owner reflected that they are unsure how to help their employees with the child care burden, but know they can't pay for it and shoulder the risk.

Employer flexibility was described as a helpful benefit.

Parents would like child care hours to mirror the hours that parents need to work.

Working parents report experiencing stress and burnout due to difficulties in managing childcare arrangements for their children.

If people don't have extended family to help patch together care, they struggle to participate in the workforce.

After-school care and transportation were described as a persistent community need.

Child care limitations were described as a barrier to postsecondary education enrollment and persistence.

Several respondents shared that they are limiting the number of children they will have due to limited access to child care and its affordability.

Implications for Berkshire County Child Care Pilot Program

- 1. Prioritize affordability as the central design goal.** The single greatest barrier for working parents is the cost of child care. Consider a pilot that helps families reduce out-of-pocket expenses through financial support or shared-cost mechanisms.
- 2. Position child care as a workforce solution and economic strategy.** Businesses view reliable child care as key to employee recruitment, retention, and productivity. The pilot should position child care investments as a good business decision that strengthens the local talent pipeline and optimizes operations.
- 3. Include child care providers and businesses as core partners.** Providers are the foundation of the system. Consider program elements that stabilize their operations through predictable payments, consistent enrollment, and opportunities to collaborate directly with employers.