

CSW Child Care Impact Survey Data

This comprehensive effort was initiated at the Women's Equality Day event hosted by the Commission in August 2023. Subsequent outreach was conducted through local community partners and online platforms, leveraging social media to invite residents and workers of San Mateo County to participate in an anonymous online survey. To enhance accessibility, survey prompts were translated into English, Spanish, and Chinese. The objective of the surveys and interviews conducted by the Commission on the Status of Women was multifaceted, aimed at achieving the following:

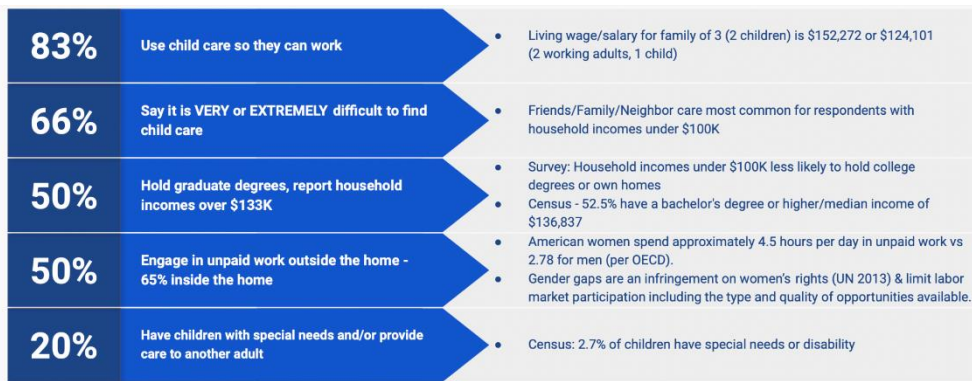
- **Comparison with State and National Trends:** The primary aim was to juxtapose local data from San Mateo County with broader state and national trends to identify unique challenges and opportunities specific to our community.
- **Expanded Analysis on Lifelong Impacts of Child Care Trends:** In addition to addressing acute impacts on mothers and caregivers of young children, the study sought to delve into the long-term financial and non-financial implications of child care arrangements on women in San Mateo County.
- **Exploration of Ripple Effects on Family Members:** Understanding how child care challenges reverberate through families was a key focus, shedding light on the broader impact beyond primary caregivers.
- **Collection of Individual Stories and Lived Experiences:** The initiative aimed to gather personal narratives and lived experiences of women in San Mateo County to provide qualitative insights that complement quantitative data.

By the survey's closure at the end of October 2023, a total of 389 responses had been received, providing a diverse range of perspectives from our community.

Concurrently, commissioners conducted in-depth interviews and conversations with community members and local stakeholders from October to December 2023. These engagements were instrumental in enriching our understanding of the data, adding layers of personal stories and stakeholder insights to inform policy recommendations and community initiatives.

Demographic data on child care impact survey respondents

Questions were written to offer deeper insights, not just on the whole person but also on child care experiences/impacts over a lifetime. Demographic data from the 389 child care impact survey respondents provides a comprehensive view of the diverse experiences and challenges faced by women in our community.



- **Gender and Sexual Orientation:** 90% of respondents identified as female, and 78% as heterosexual.
- **Ethnicity/Race:** The breakdown of respondents by ethnicity is 56% White, 22% Latinx, 24% Asian, and 3% African American.
- **Household Characteristics:** Over 80% of respondents have children under the age of 18, and 20% have children with special needs or provide care to another adult. Half of the respondents hold graduate degrees, and most (3-4 people) report household incomes exceeding \$133,000, with over half owning homes.
- **Occupational Distribution:** Nearly a quarter of respondents work in education-related fields.
- **Unpaid Work:** Half of the respondents engage in unpaid work outside the home, and over 65% report spending 8 or more hours on unpaid work inside the home each week. When combining unpaid work hours both inside and outside the home, a majority of women are dedicating at least a day's worth of unpaid work every week.
- **Child Care Use and Challenges:** 83% of respondents use child care to facilitate their work, and 66% find it very or extremely difficult to secure child care.



To highlight the experiences of traditionally underrepresented or low-income communities, we analyzed data for families with household incomes below \$100,000. Most of these families reside in Half Moon Bay, South San Francisco, Menlo Park, or East Palo Alto, identify as Latinx, rent their homes, and hold a GED or high school diploma. The predominant type of child care among this group is Friends, Family, and Neighbor (FFN) care.

The Commission prioritized gathering personal stories and insights from community partners to further

underscore these experiences and advocate for targeted child care solutions that address the specific needs of our diverse population.

Impact of Child Care Challenges

A staggering 88% of survey respondents affirmed that child care significantly impacts their lives. The impact of child care challenges for women in San Mateo County is profound and long lasting, irrespective of age, income, or other demographic factors. The survey data underscores the magnitude of these impacts, which align with trends observed at the state and national levels. Key findings reveal:



- **Career Opportunities:** Nearly 70% of women have delayed or forgone career opportunities due to child care challenges.
- **Work Schedule:** Approximately two-thirds have needed to leave early or arrive late at work.
- **Career Advancement:** 30-40% of respondents have had to reduce hours or decline promotions because of child care constraints.

In addition to the economic impact, survey respondents highlighted various consequences linked to child care challenges:

- **Financial, Mental Health, and Relational Impacts:** Roughly half of respondents reported experiencing these effects, which extend beyond the individual to impact their families.
- **Health Impacts:** Over 1 in 5 respondents attribute health issues to child care challenges.
- **Housing Instability:** 15% of respondents reported housing instability resulting from child care impacts.

While the survey respondents' income distribution mirrors county medians, it's reasonable to anticipate higher levels of housing instability among lower-income communities. This instability can be



attributed to difficulties in finding or affording child care, managing schedule conflicts, or coping with financial strains resulting from lost income or employment. Addressing these challenges is essential to support the economic security, well-being, and stability of women and families in San Mateo County.

Solutions and Recommendations

The survey identified solutions from respondents that could alleviate child care challenges, improve financial security and increase well-being. These recommendations are actionable strategies that local leaders and employers can consider to support women and families in San Mateo County:

1. **Time and Flexibility:** Respondents emphasized the importance of time and flexibility to care for themselves and their families when needed. Policies in this area could include:
 - Implementing paid sick and family leave policies.
 - Exploring options like a four-day work week or flexible work arrangements to accommodate family responsibilities.
2. **Access to Affordable Child Care:** The high cost and limited availability of quality child care were significant concerns for respondents. Proposed solutions include:
 - Advocating for universal child care to ensure access for all families.
 - Encouraging employers to offer onsite child care or expanded child care benefits as part of employment packages.
3. **Ending Discriminatory Policies and Promoting Equity:** Respondents highlighted the persistent gender wage gap and disparities faced by women of color. Policy initiatives could focus on:
 - Promoting pay transparency to address wage disparities.
 - Expanding paid family and medical leave to support working families.
 - Investing in child care programs and policies that promote work-life balance and support women's economic empowerment.

Respondents also discussed the potential financial and non-financial benefits of implementing these policies. Financially, they anticipated saving or investing more, spending locally, paying off debt, and addressing housing and basic needs. Among respondents with household incomes under \$100,000, covering basic needs, housing, and transportation ranked as top priorities. Beyond financial benefits, respondents emphasized the importance of reducing stress, spending quality time with family, especially with infants and children, prioritizing personal health and well-being, and accessing opportunities for professional development.

These recommendations underscore the critical role of policy interventions in supporting women's economic empowerment, enhancing family well-being, and fostering a more equitable and inclusive community. By prioritizing these policy areas, local leaders have the opportunity to make meaningful changes that positively impact the lives of women and families in San Mateo County, promoting economic security, work-life balance, and overall quality of life.

Respondents Free Response

Respondents at the end of the survey could answer free response questions. A significant number took advantage of this opportunity to expand on the importance of these issues, the challenges and the changes they would like to see. (Refer to Appendices for full text of responses.)

Respondents' Suggestions for Business Support:

- **Normalization of Family and Children:** Encourage workplaces to embrace family-friendly policies and respect the needs of employees with families.
- **Flexibility for Parental Needs:** Advocate for understanding and flexibility from employers when parents need to manage childcare responsibilities, especially during illness.
- **Listening to Employee Needs:** Stress the importance of employers listening to the needs of employees, particularly those managing multiple jobs while caregiving.
- **Promotion of Work-Life Balance:** Emphasize the need for true work-life balance, focusing on outcomes over hours worked, flexible scheduling, and on-site childcare options.
- **Integration of Childcare into Benefits:** Call for childcare to be a core part of employee benefits, with active engagement from employers in finding effective solutions.

Respondents' Recommendations to Local Leaders:

- **Support for Remote Work and Flexible Schedules:** Encourage policies that enable remote work and flexible schedules to enhance childcare accessibility.
- **Expansion of Sick Leave Policies:** Advocate for expanded sick leave to accommodate childcare needs, ensuring parents can care for sick children without penalty.
- **Advocacy for Universal Childcare:** Push for universal, safe, and affordable childcare options to empower women and support workforce participation.

Additional Comments and Insights:

- **Exemption for Childcare Providers:** Highlight the financial challenges faced by childcare providers and advocate for income tax exemptions to sustain this essential workforce.
- **Societal Embrace of Childcare Prioritization:** Stress the importance of society valuing childcare and supporting mothers who face challenges balancing work and family.

These responses underscore the urgent need for comprehensive policies and initiatives to support working parents and caregivers, with a focus on child care accessibility, flexibility, and overall well-being.

Individual Stories

Individuals who completed the original anonymous survey were invited to indicate via the google form if they would be willing to share more about their personal stories and the impacts of child care and caregiving in their lives. Here are highlights from 5 women who replied. Additional responses were received but not all granted permission to share.

- Janet from South San Francisco: As an immigrant and single mother, Janet faced daunting challenges when she suddenly became the sole caregiver for her two young children. "When my daughter was only two weeks old, her father went to prison, and I was left alone with them. I have no other family, so I started to navigate the support system and I began to study and educate myself," Janet recounts. She highlights the bureaucratic challenges involved in securing child care, "Applications for child care take too long... It should be simplified. I would like there to be more emergency support for people who are victims of domestic violence and their children."
- Megan from Half Moon Bay: Megan's story illustrates the financial pressures that many middle-class families face in balancing child care costs with other life goals. "We were able to purchase a condo thanks to a dip in the market at the start of the Pandemic... We both carry student-loan debt as well. We postponed having children because our income could not support a mortgage and childcare," she explains. The difficulty in finding available child care added to their challenges, "Once my son was born, I spent weeks trying to find daycare so that I could go back to work as we depend on both incomes." Megan suggests, "Our county should provide [paid leave] as well. We need to prioritize opening new childcare facilities," and mentions the potential benefits of child-tax credits for childcare.
- Rosali from Menlo Park: Rosali manages her academic and professional commitments while caring for her husband with a serious health condition, all without local family support. "After COVID-19, his kidney disease progressed to level 3. Since then, I haven't been able to work full-time. So I work part-time for the county because I want to make sure he is well taken care of," she describes. The cost and availability of health insurance are significant concerns for her, "The county is a great place to work, but health insurance for permanent part-time employees is very expensive... My husband is currently under a Medical plan, but I would like him to have better healthcare due to his special circumstance." She emphasizes the need for better insurance options for part-time employees and suggests, "Expanding CalFresh for county employees would be a great help as well... opening more remote or hybrid jobs would be a great help for some of us who want to work more, but can't due to lack of help with caregiving services."
- Dawn from Montara: Dawn shares the severe financial strain that child care costs have placed on her family, "Childcare tuition is more than our mortgage. We scraped by for the year until I was able to find something, but there were a few times that I almost decided

to not re-enter the workforce due to the cost." The logistical challenges of child care also compound the difficulty, "Service hours usually make it really difficult for parents who work far from home and arrangements for pick up and drop off have to be made." She highlights the scarcity of options and the logistical hurdles, suggesting the need for more infant care facilities and flexible service hours to accommodate working parents.

- Ana from San Mateo: Ana discusses the constant financial and emotional pressure of being a single working parent. "I work in the nonprofit sector where I make too much to qualify for publicly subsidized resources like housing and childcare, yet I live paycheck-to-paycheck. I have no family in the area, so I rely on paid childcare when I work," Ana shares. She also describes the emotional toll of single parenting, "Single working parents - particularly women - face layers of burden. The financial, emotional, and physical labor of childrearing falls on us." Ana calls for more affordable childcare programs and suggests, "This means more tax dollars for childcare, yes, but it also means normalizing the act of co-parenting across families, sharing resources in the community."

These stories provide a deeper insight into the personal stories of hardship and resilience, emphasizing the critical need for comprehensive support and policy changes to address the challenges faced by families in San Mateo County.