



What Were Parents' Experiences Searching for and Using Child Care in the District of Columbia?

Presentation to the Child Care and Early Education Policy Research Consortium
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Access to a Supply of Quality Care in the District of Columbia

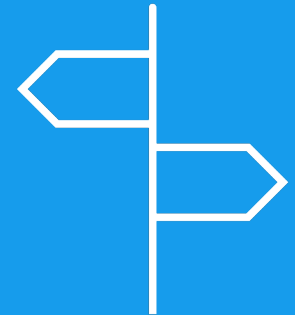
2022 Parent Study



- ❖ What are parents' experiences looking for child care?
- ❖ What sources of information do they use?
- ❖ How long does it take to find care?



- ❖ What factors are most important to parents as they look for and select a provider?
- ❖ How do parents rate their providers' quality?



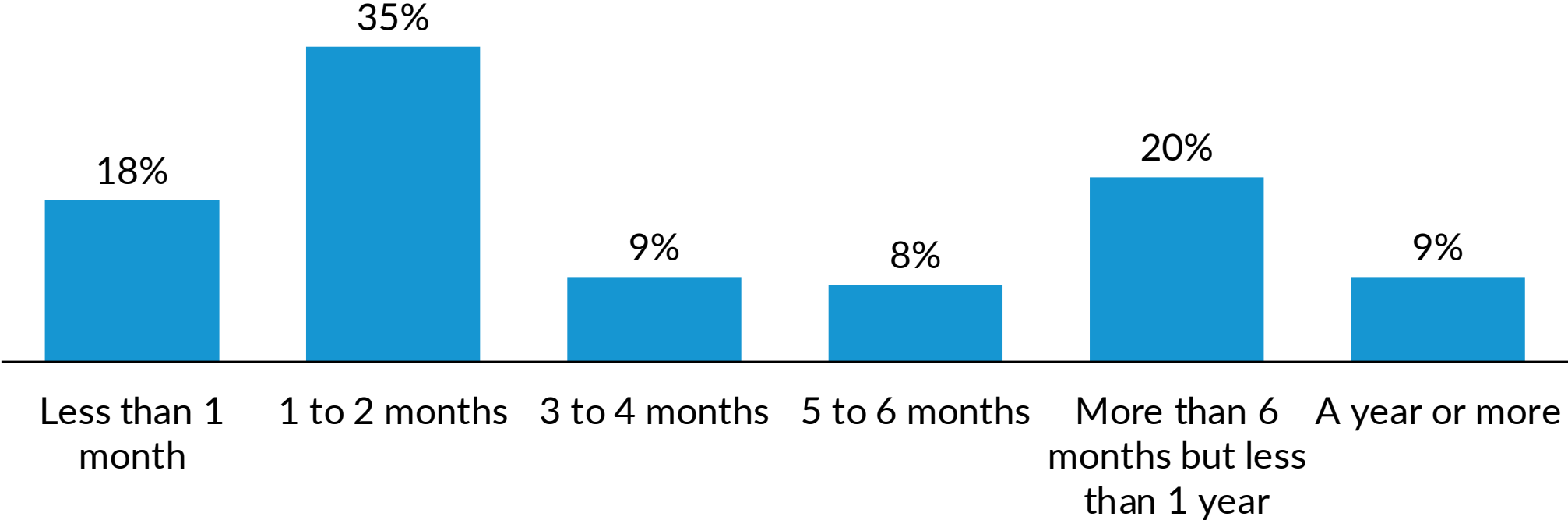
- ❖ What are parents' perceptions of local care supply?
- ❖ Do parents feel they have good care choices?

Parent Study Methods

- 30-minute telephone interviews with 137 parents and guardians using licensed DC child care in April-June 2022
 - All 8 Wards represented
 - Similar to DC adult population in race, ethnicity, and educational attainment
 - 40% of survey participants received a subsidy voucher
- Virtual focus groups via Zoom with a subset of 39 parents in fall 2022

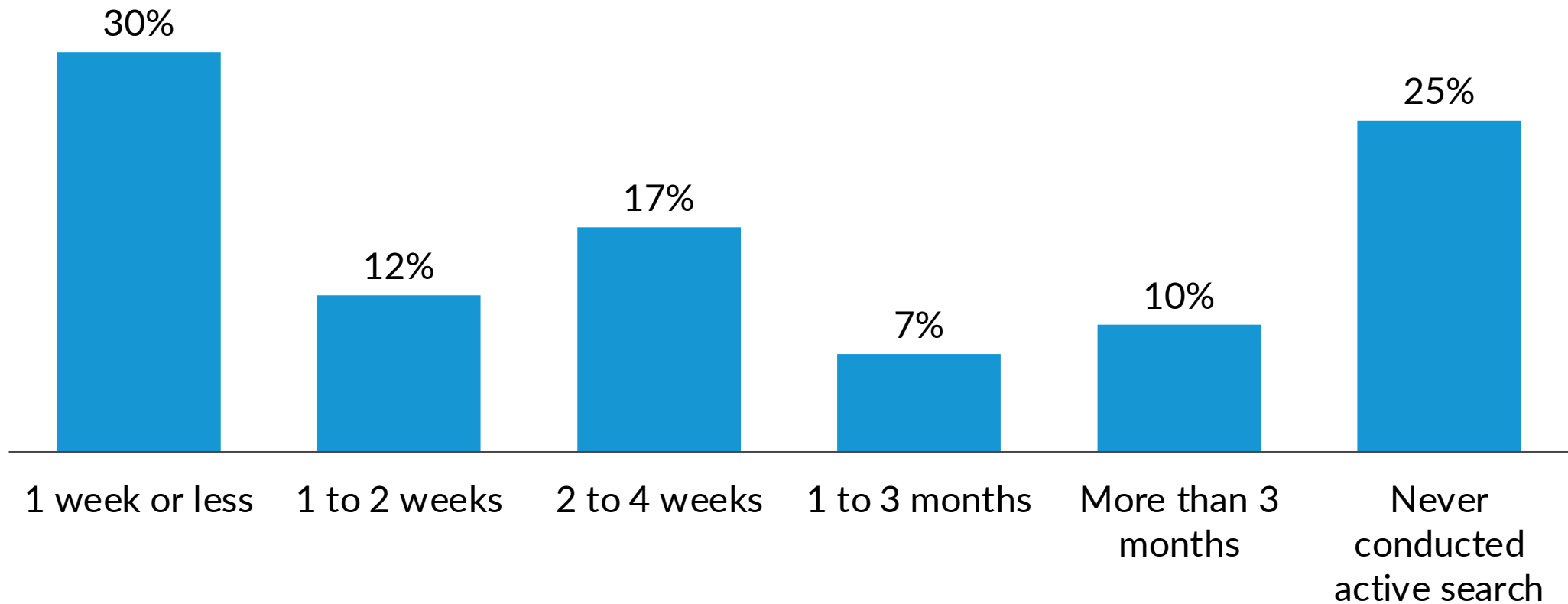
Key Survey Findings

Most parents reported beginning to look for care about 1-2 months in advance, while others began looking much earlier.



❖ *About how far in advance before you started care at this provider did you begin looking for care?*

About 25% of parents said they did not have an “active search.” Many others found their provider within one week.

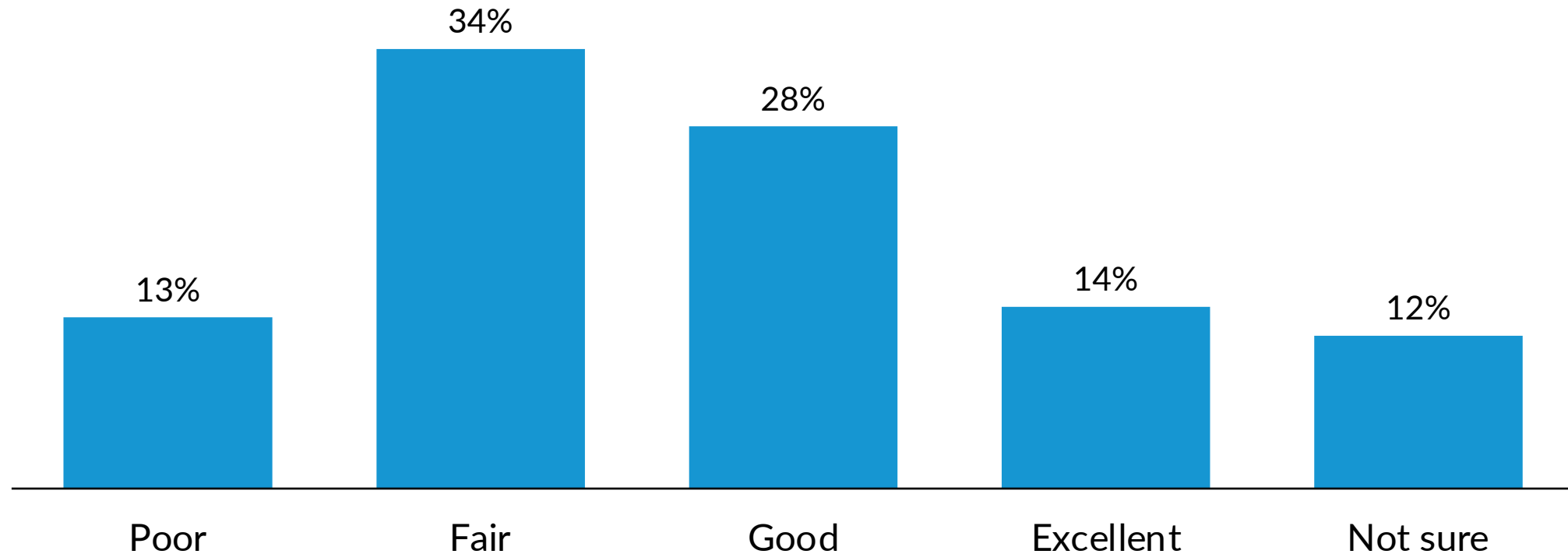


❖ *Once you started looking, how long did it take you to find [provider name]?*

Top resources parents used while searching for care

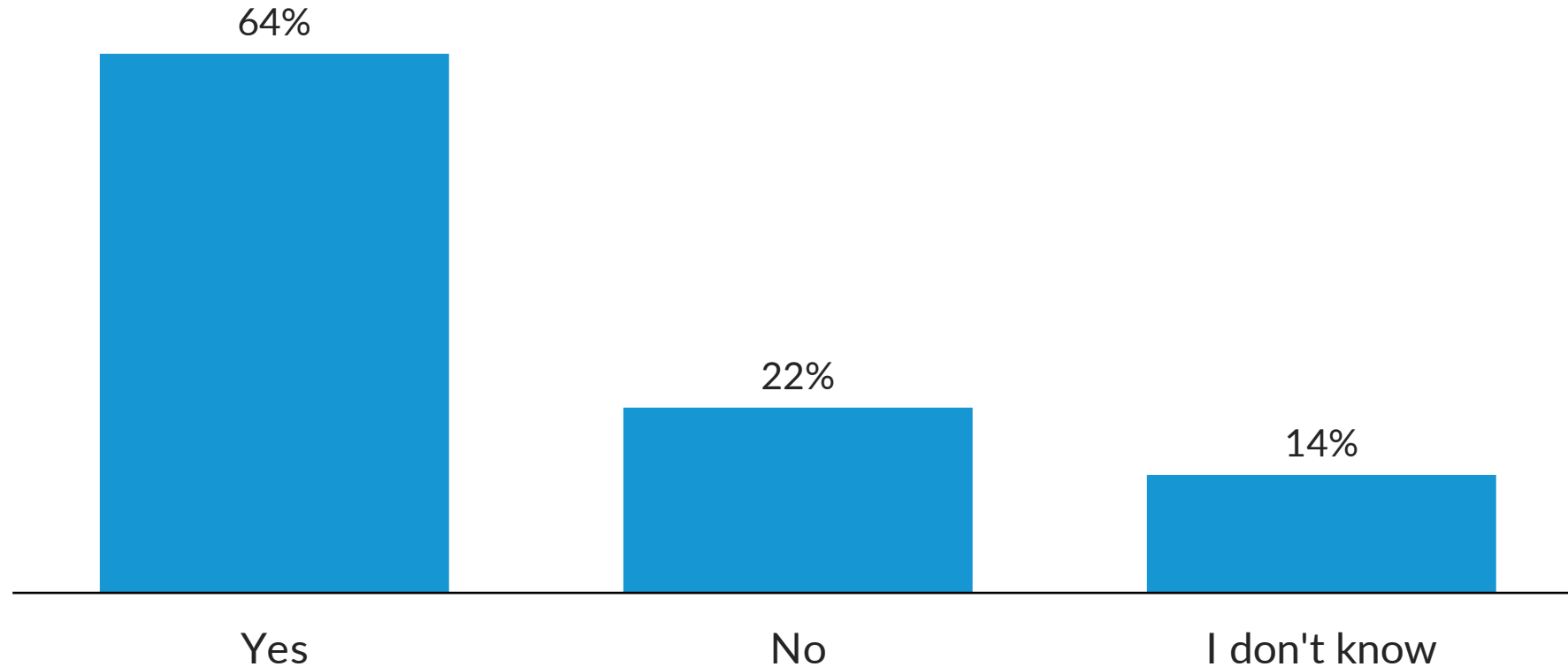
| | N | % |
|--|-----|-------|
| Used Google or any other search engine | 101 | 73.7% |
| Asked friends or neighbors with children | 95 | 69.3% |
| Walked or drove around my neighborhood | 73 | 53.3% |
| Asked family members | 52 | 38.0% |
| Searched the <i>My Child Care DC</i> website (https://mychildcare.dc.gov) | 52 | 38.0% |
| Asked providers I already knew | 51 | 37.2% |
| Used social media | 42 | 30.7% |
| Searched the Care.com website | 24 | 17.5% |
| Got help from a child care subsidy or social services caseworker | 23 | 16.8% |
| Posted or responded to an ad | 17 | 12.4% |
| Asked a healthcare provider for information | 16 | 11.7% |
| Called DC Child Care Connections (CCR&R) | 14 | 10.2% |

Most parents rated the overall supply of DC child care as “fair” or “good.”



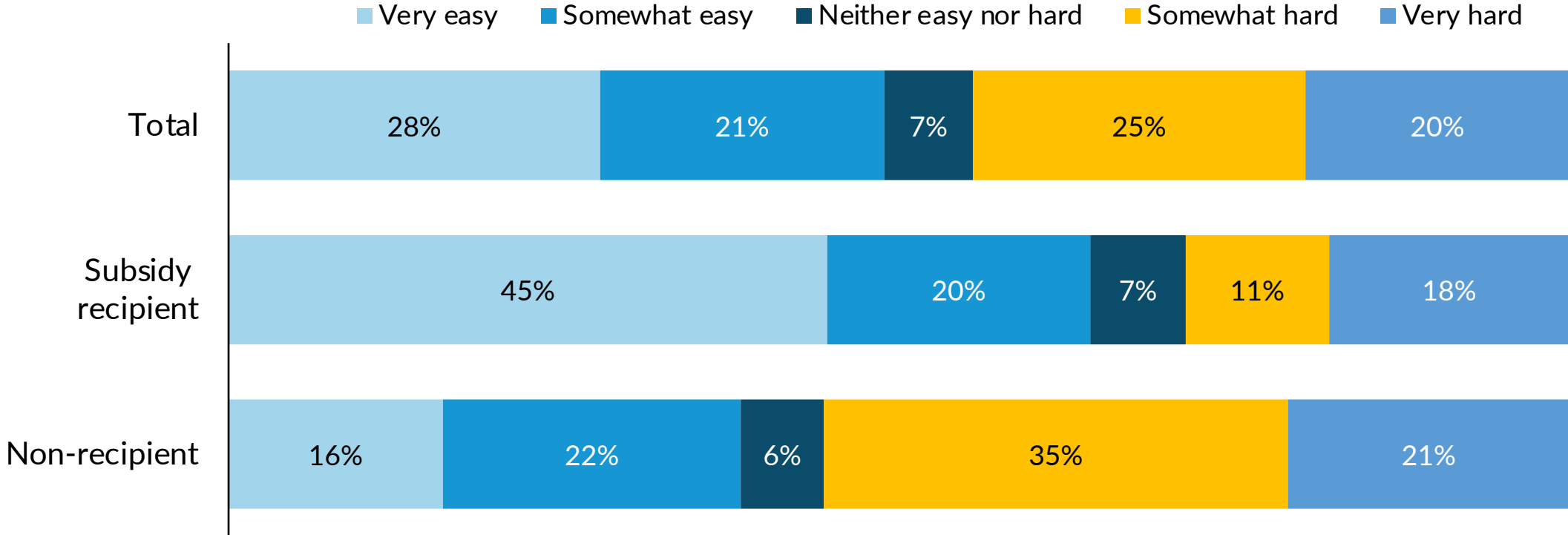
❖ *How would you rate the overall supply of child care in DC?*

Only 64% felt they had “good choices” for care near home.



❖ *Do you feel you have good choices for child care near your home?*

Parents were almost evenly split on their rating of difficulty in finding child care.



❖ *How easy or hard was the process of finding child care?*

Parents indicated they had difficulty finding a provider who...

| | <i>N</i> | % |
|---|----------|-------|
| Had open slots for new children | 66 | 48.2% |
| Was affordable | 61 | 44.5% |
| Was available during the hours needed | 48 | 35.0% |
| Was in a convenient location | 47 | 34.3% |
| Was responsive when reached out to | 47 | 34.3% |
| Had the quality of care desired | 40 | 29.2% |
| Had the desired level of diversity in the children or staff | 31 | 22.6% |
| They believed would be a safe place | 29 | 21.2% |
| Was in the type of care setting they wanted | 25 | 18.2% |
| Spoke their preferred language | 17 | 12.4% |
| Could meet their child's individual needs | 17 | 12.4% |

Focus Group Findings

Focus group themes related to child care search

Key priorities:

- Location (typically wanted care near home)
- Cost and/or acceptance of subsidy vouchers
- Comfort with the program setting (environment and staff)

Factors that made it difficult:

- High cost
- Lack of open slots in desired programs
- Administrative burden of the subsidy voucher
- Difficulty finding information
- Restricted program hours (closing early)
- Concerns about health and safety precautions that met children's needs
- Concerns about care quality

Recommendation to friend looking for child care in DC (subsidy recipient)

“The first thing, if they’re using a voucher, they have to find a place that takes the vouchers and figure out how much on top of that you have to pay in a day. Some places they have you paying different amounts based on their income.

Go into the center to make sure that’s the type of environment you want your child to be in. See how nice the teacher is. As mothers, we want to make sure our babies are okay in school while we are working. We want them to be loved even when we are not there. Meet the teachers and study them for their body language and stuff like that to see if the child will be safe.

Look on Google and look at the reviews.”

Child care experiences in wake of the pandemic

- Temporary/sudden program closures
- Reduced care hours
- Missing a feeling of community
- Limited interactions with and inconsistent communication from program staff
- Staff shortages and turnover

“I’ve heard from some teachers that if their [own children’s] day care is closed, they can’t work. If their kid is sick or has COVID, then they can’t work. It’s a pattern of their schedules, and they can’t keep up.”

Publications found on project web site

<https://www.urban.org/projects/dc-child-care-policy-research-partnership>

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TOPICS STORIES, DATA TOOLS, BLOGS EVENTS

PROJECT

DC Child Care Policy Research Partnership



Project Home
An Implementation Study of Capital Quality, the District's Enhanced Quality Rating and Improvement System

The District of Columbia Child Care Policy Research Partnership is an active collaboration between the Urban Institute and the District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), DC's Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agency. Ongoing since 2019, the Partnership brings new data and evidence to questions about access to a supply of quality child care for District