



Families' Experiences with Minnesota's Child Care Assistance Program and the Early Learning Scholarship

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MINNESOTA CHILD CARE
Policy Research Partnership
Advancing Equitable Access to Early Care and Education

Acknowledgements

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Minnesota Research Partnership

This project emerges from a research partnership between the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Child Trends, and the University of Minnesota. The purpose of the partnership is to address the challenges of access to early care and education (ECE) in Minnesota. It aims to support children and families in Minnesota by addressing pressing questions that policymakers and researchers have related to equitable access to ECE and improving stakeholders' understanding of the effectiveness of policies and practices that support access.



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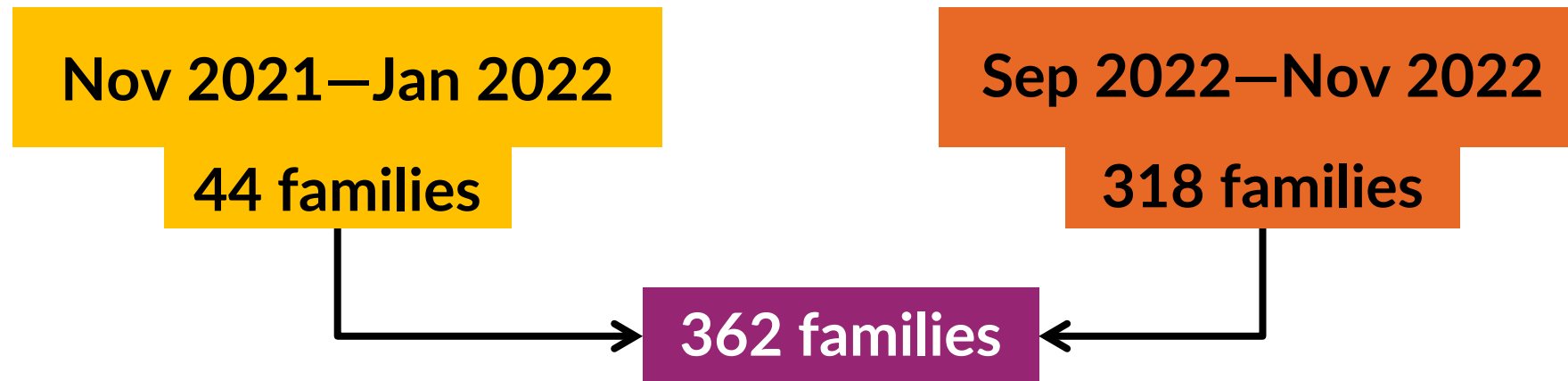
Purpose of the study

- Understanding families' experiences with searching for and accessing child care, specifically families with children receiving financial assistance through the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) or the Early Learning Scholarship (ELS)

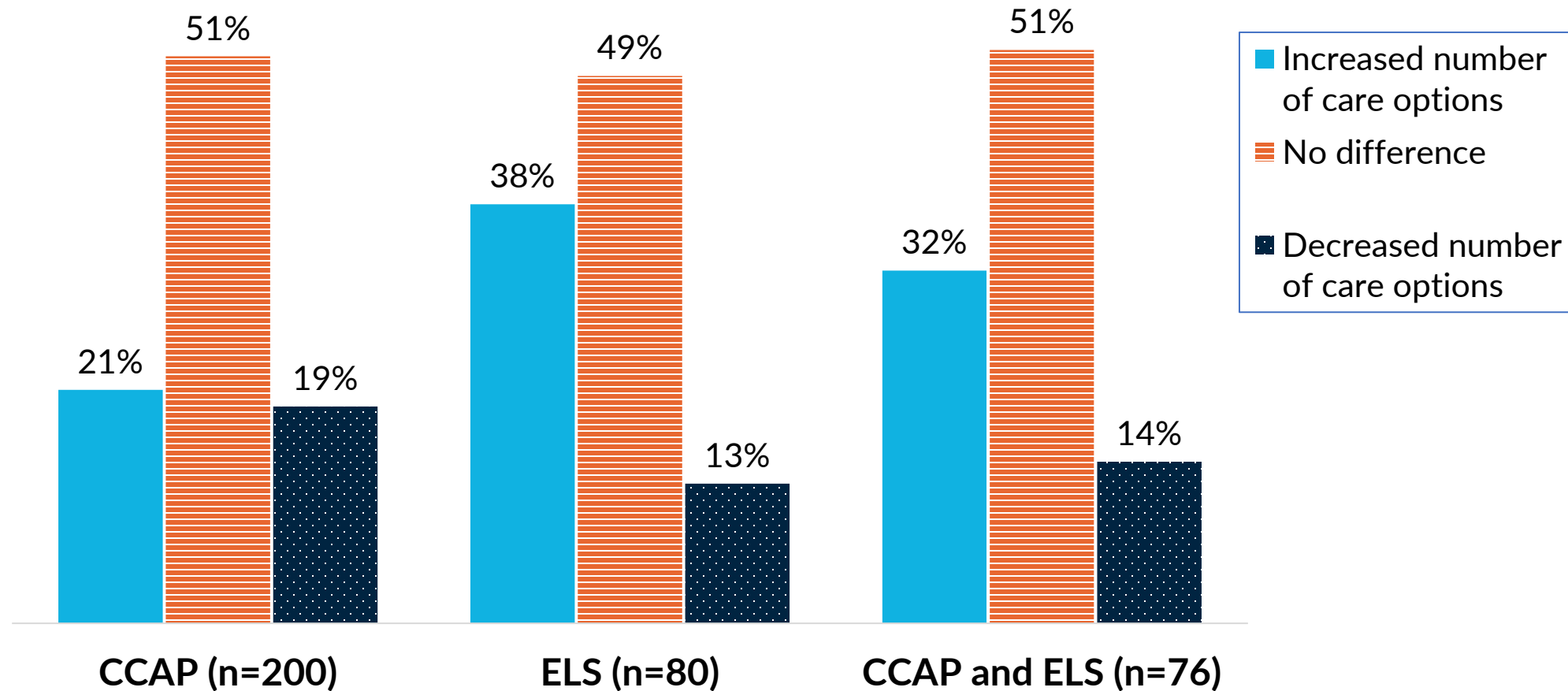
Methods

Sample

- Families living in Minnesota who currently receive financial assistance for child care
- Families were surveyed two separate times:

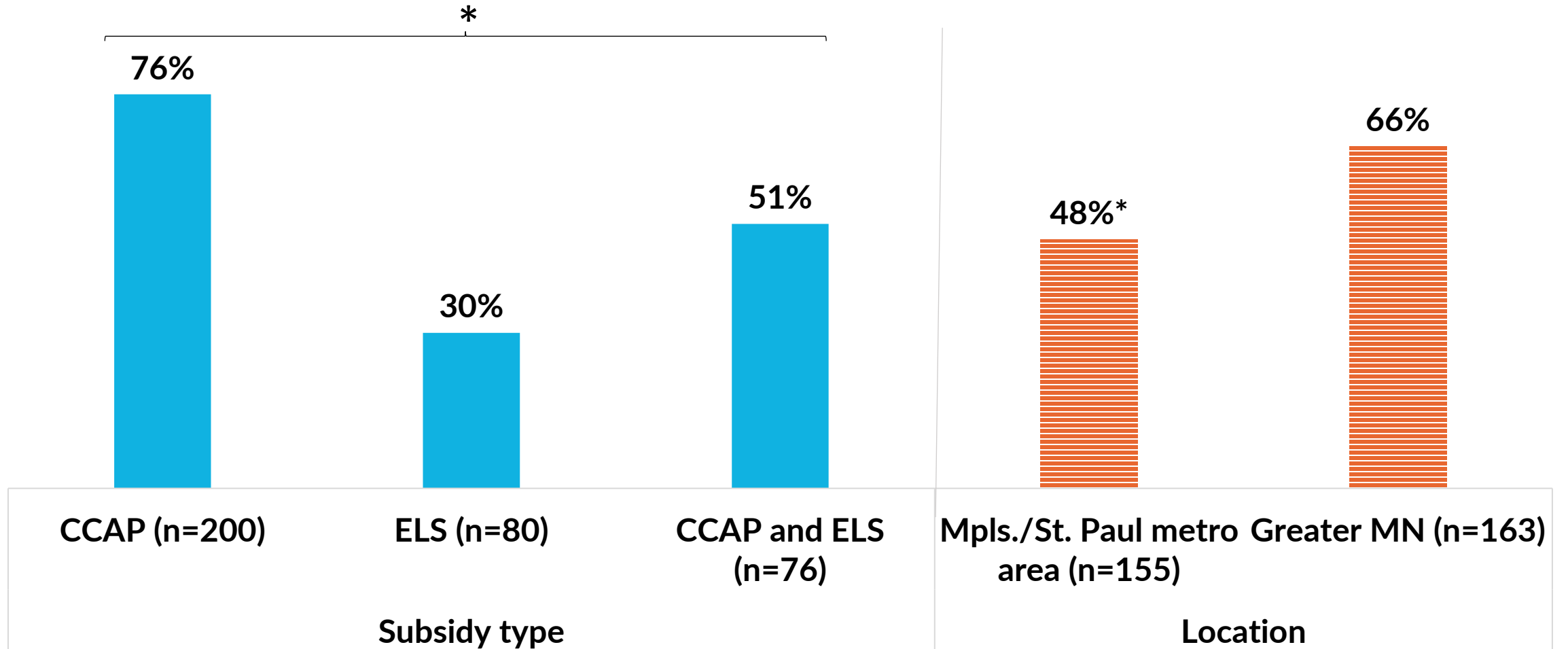


Families' perceptions of whether financial assistance increased the number of child care options



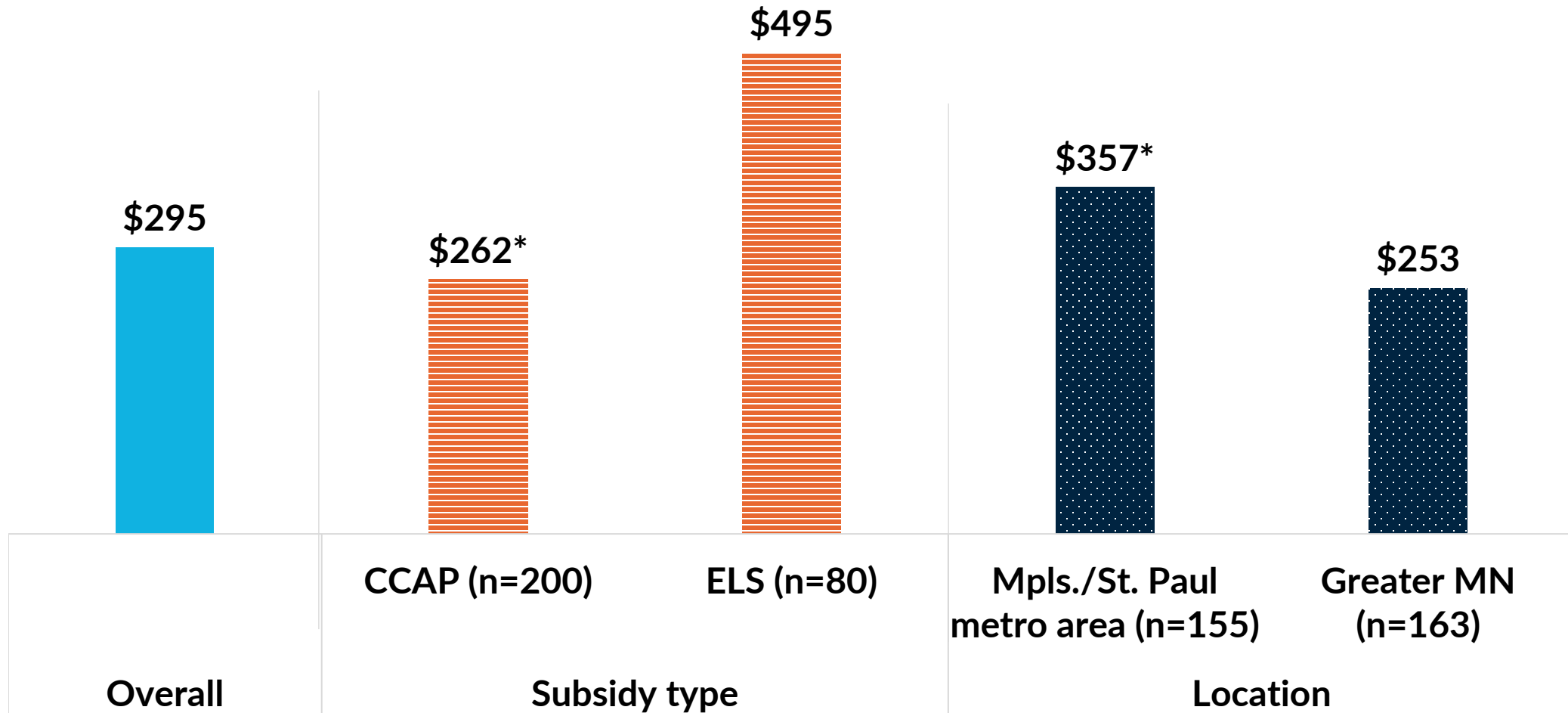
Source: Child Trends' analysis of data from the Minnesota Child Care Policy Research Partnership Family Surveys (2021, 2022).

Families who pay out-of-pocket expenses



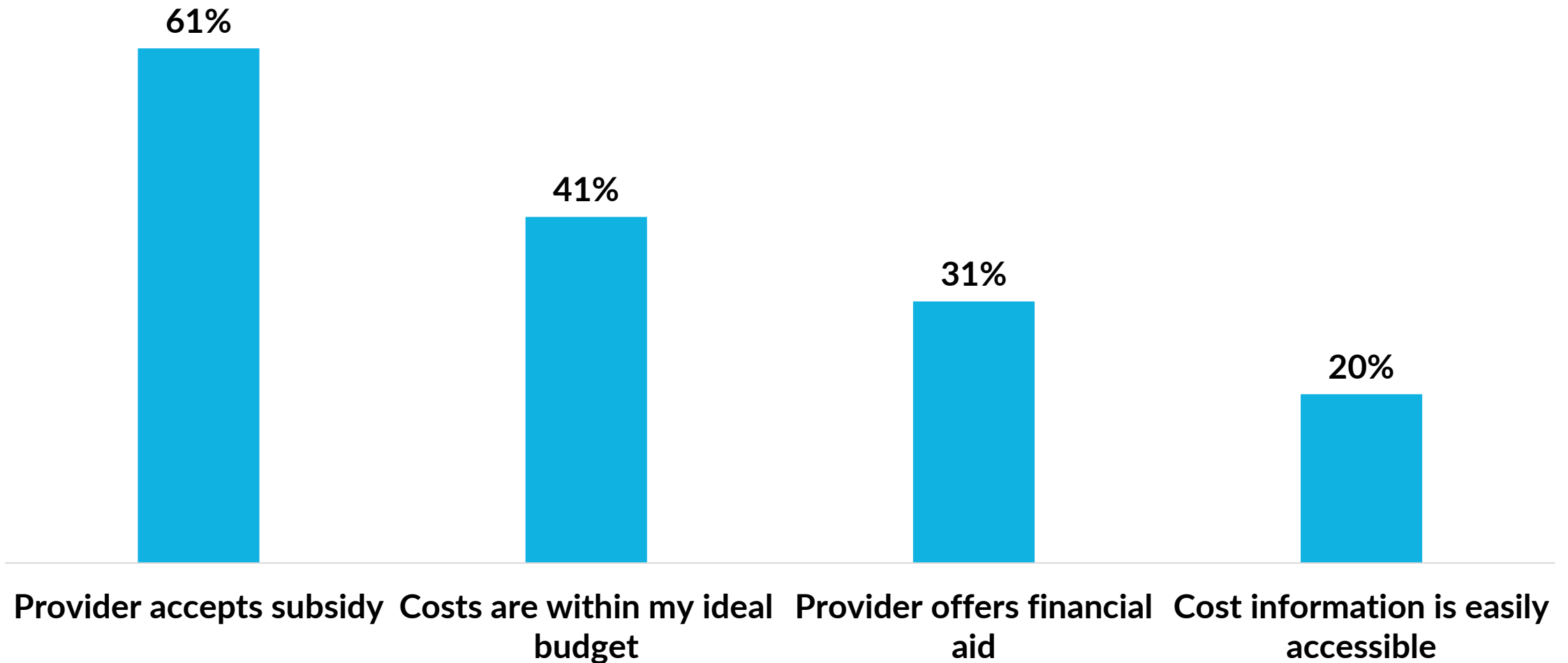
Source: Child Trends' analysis of data from the Minnesota Child Care Policy Research Partnership Family Surveys (2021, 2022).

Average cost of out-of-pocket expenses per month



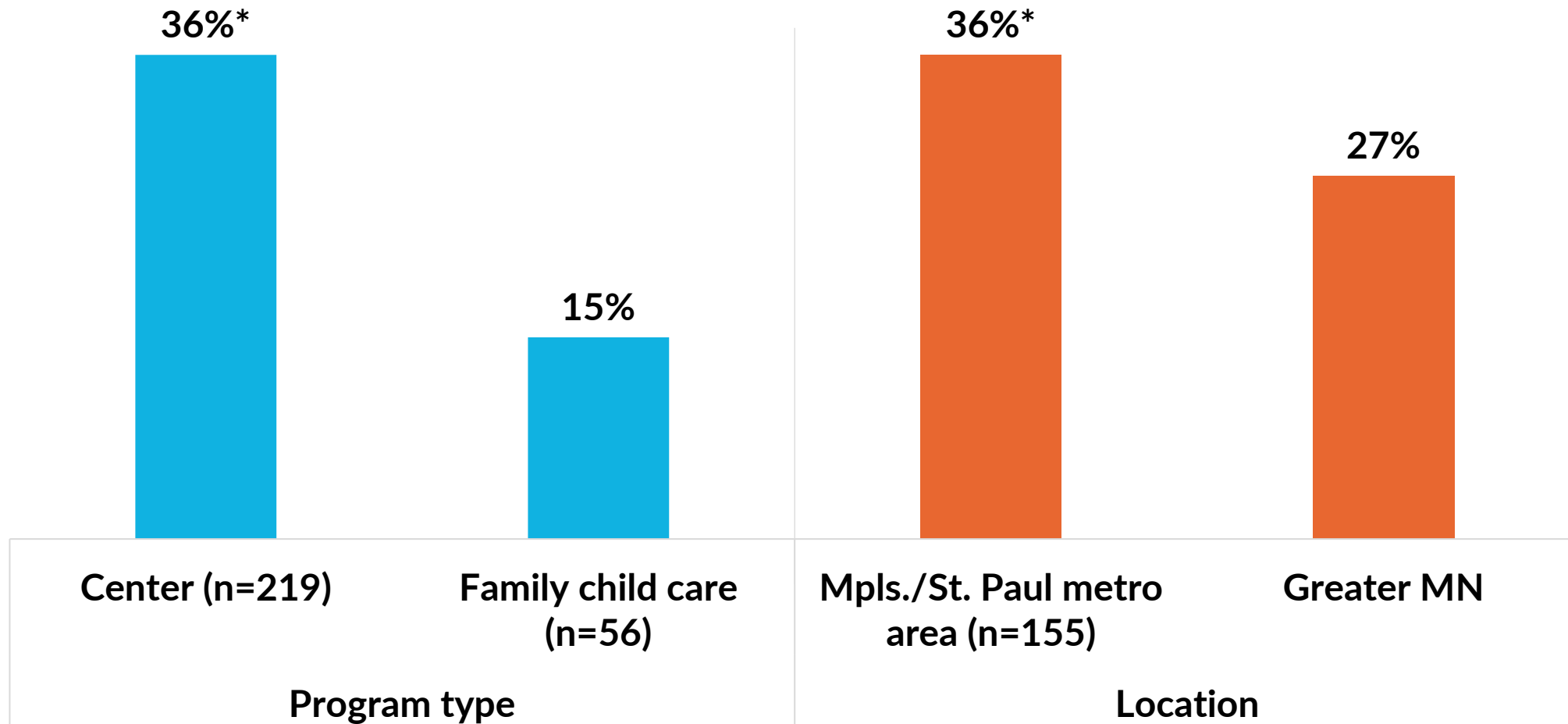
Source: Child Trends' analysis of data from the Minnesota Child Care Policy Research Partnership Family Surveys (2021, 2022).

Families who marked cost factors as “Crucially important”



Source: Child Trends' analysis of data from the Minnesota Child Care Policy Research Partnership Family Surveys (2021, 2022).

Families who marked “provider offers financial aid” as “Crucially important”



Source: Child Trends’ analysis of data from the Minnesota Child Care Policy Research Partnership Family Surveys (2021, 2022).



When asked the primary reason they selected their provider,

30% of families

reported that it was because the provider accepted subsidy

Other common primary reasons were:

Facility is within driving distance (7%)

Use of quality learning activities or curricula (5%)

Cost is within the family's budget (5%)

Child can spend time with other children their age (4%)

What receiving financial assistance means to families

Theme	%	Example quote
Allowed parents to maintain employment	38%	“Receiving the grant makes it possible for us to work. If we did not receive the grant, the cost of daycare would be more than one parent’s income.”
Appreciation for program	27%	“Everything. Truly, it has meant everything. I am more appreciative of these programs than anyone could know. Thank you to whomever makes sure they are in place. Bless.”
Child receives high-quality education	13%	"It's allowed me to enroll my child in a center that offers languages and other enrichment activities that he may not be offered in another care center."

Other themes that emerged included:

- Allowing parents to attend school
- Affording families financial stability and assisting with living expenses
- Decreasing stress
- Allowing some families to keep their housing
- Challenges of affording child care and navigating system

Summary and Implications

- For the majority of families, financial assistance does not change their perception of the number of child care options available to them
- While financial assistance programs help mitigate costs, families still pay significant out-of-pocket expenses
- Cost is a crucially important factor to many families and may be the primary reason a family selects a certain provider
- Families view financial assistance as vitally important to them and their children



Thank you!

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