



Idaho Association for the  
Education of Young Children



# Child Care Needs Assessment

Idaho Businesses and Families Speak Out

#### Acknowledgements:

**GS Strategy Group** provides our clients with sophisticated analysis of the societal trends and behaviors driving public opinion so they can develop the strategy and messaging necessary to achieve their goals. GSSG has partnered with a wide range of companies, coalitions, and advocacy organizations, including some of America's most iconic brands, media powerhouses, and industry disruptors. Our breadth of experience provides our clients with a unique advantage - enabling them to better navigate the environment in which their issue is being discussed and debated and successfully reach their desired outcomes. GSSG is based in Boise, ID and is led by Robert Jones and Greg Strimple.

**Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children** (Idaho AEYC) brings together communities, leaders, parents, providers, and educators who believe all of Idaho's children deserve access to quality early learning and care to help them grow and develop.

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GS Strategy Group, a Boise-based survey research firm, conducted surveys on behalf of the Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children. The online surveys were conducted on August 16 through September 11, 2023, among 304 Idaho parents and 163 Idaho employers and human resources decision-makers.



# Introduction

The scarcity of accessible, quality child care options affects the daily lives of families, straining the workforce, and challenging the very core of Idaho's economy. Many Idaho residents live in child care "deserts," areas where the availability of licensed child care providers remains inadequate. The repercussions of this are widespread, with parents facing agonizing decisions about their careers and employers struggling with the consequences. The challenges we face with child care in Idaho are difficult and persistent, but not unsolvable. The need for affordable, high-quality child care echos throughout the state, as families and employers alike recognize its profound impact. The insights shared in this report delve into the multifaceted challenges of the child care landscape in Idaho, shedding light on potential solutions that could drive change for the better.

**In Idaho, a profound challenge resonates across communities, impacting working parents and the economic landscape of the state.**



## SUMMARY

Idaho, in common with the broader nation, faces a pressing child care crisis. Finding quality child care is a large task for most parents, enhanced by the prevalence of child care deserts in Idaho, where the availability of licensed providers is alarmingly limited. This doesn't just affect parents; it has a tremendous impact on the economy, affecting both working parents and the businesses they work for. More than half of Idaho families are facing these challenges, and they're all saying the same thing: Idaho needs better, more affordable and easier-to-find child care.

**“The challenges we face with child care in Idaho are difficult and persistent, but not unsolvable.”**

**42%**

of parents have to either quit a job or are unable to accept a job due to a lack of accessible and affordable child care.

**71%**

of employers recognize that the lack of access to child care is a problem for their organization's sustainability and leads to employee turnover.

**64%**

of employers say that the lack of child care in their communities has impacted workforce productivity.

This study reveals that while 85% of Idaho employers understand that child care is an important component to the success of their employees, a majority of Idaho parents say finding child care is incredibly difficult. This crisis is exacerbated in Idaho, with more than half of Idaho residents living in child care “deserts” with limited access to licensed child care providers. Rural areas face particular difficulties, with 60% of rural residents residing in child care deserts. The economic toll of this crisis in Idaho is substantial, affecting working parents and their employers.

**As employers grapple with the child care crisis that affects their employees, many are responding by offering additional support for child care.**

**44%** of Idaho business leaders currently provide child care assistance for their employees.

**16%** of Idaho business leaders plan to provide child care support for their employees in the near future.

**35%** of Idaho business leaders are unsure if they will provide assistance to their employees for child care in the future.



**The employers that currently offer child care support for their employees cite three major reasons for doing so:**

**1**

**It helps attract and retain better employees.**

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95% of employers agree that valuing and offering family-friendly policies and benefits helps employers attract and retain better employees.

**2**

**It reduces employee turnover.**

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83% of employers believe that employees would switch jobs if a competitor offered better family-friendly policies and benefits.

**3**

**It will increase the number of women in the workforce.**

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75% of employers believe that increasing the availability of child care affects the participation of women in the workforce.



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**Employers and working parents agree that Idaho needs more affordable, accessible, and high-quality child care.**

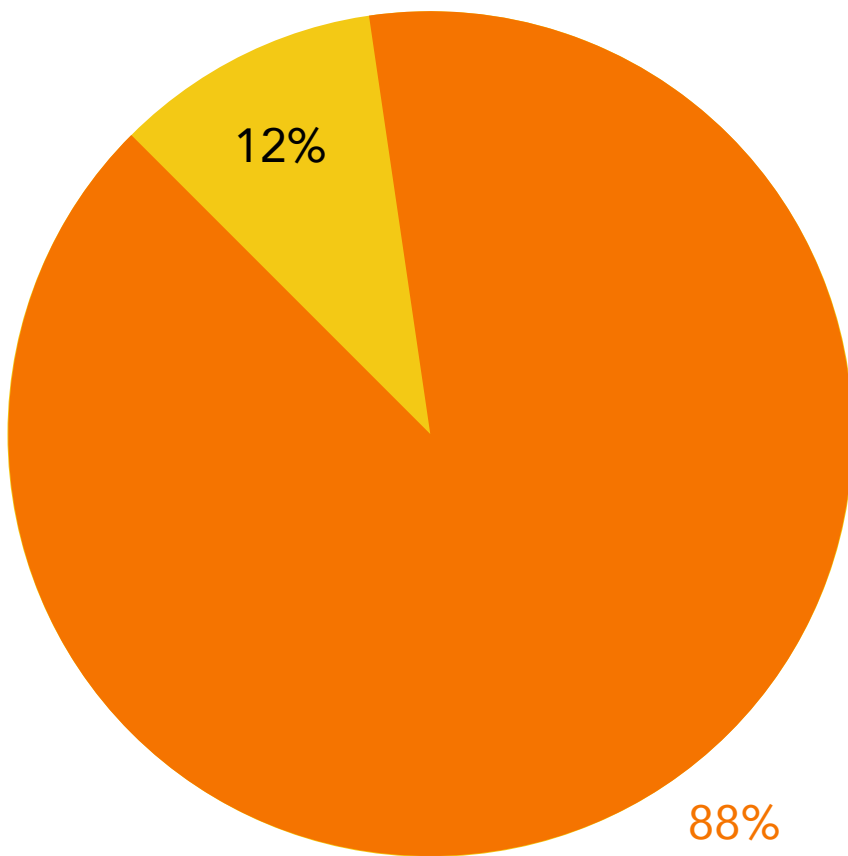
**84%** of Idaho business leaders

favor offering a tax credit to employers who provide or help their employees afford child care and preschool education.

**The government has a role in supporting families and the affordability of child care and early learning.**

QUESTION

**What percentage of business leaders favor the idea of supporting public education in Idaho by offering optional state government-provided preschool to all three- to five-year-olds?**



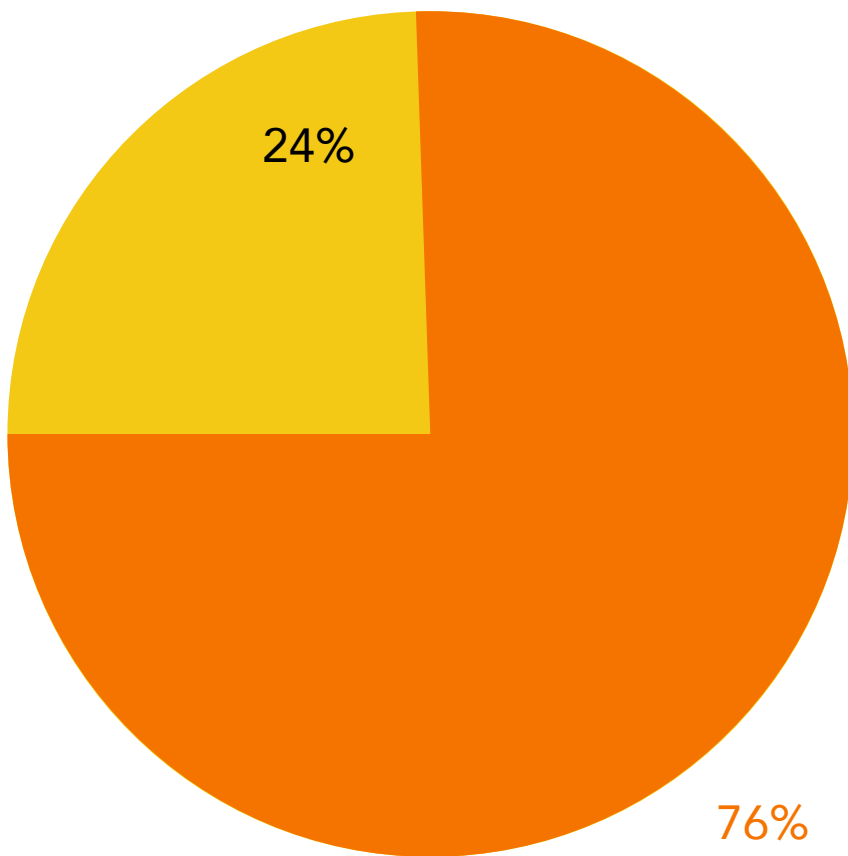
**88%**

**of Idaho business leaders strongly favored supporting public education**

With Idaho being one of the few states that does not provide state funding for pre-K programs, this increases costs for child care centers, families, and, in turn, employers. Even with federal funding, low-income families still struggle to afford child care. This leaves families with little to no options for support, resulting in families making tough decisions and leaving employment. This does not just affect singular families, this impacts Idaho's economy as a whole.

QUESTION

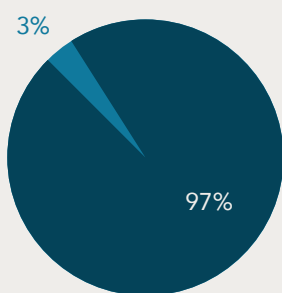
What percentage of Idaho business leaders believe our government policies should be designed to help families afford the costs of child care and early learning?



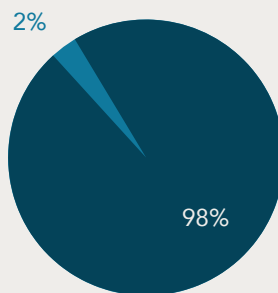
**76%**

of Idaho business leaders believe that our government policies should be designed to support families

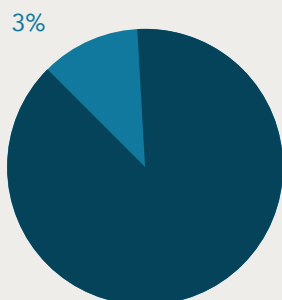
# Why is it important to invest in early childhood education?



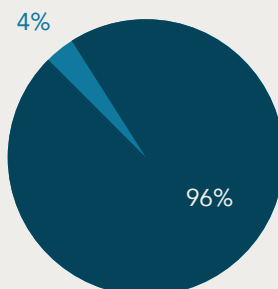
**97%**  
of parents find a program that supports their child's cognitive and/or academic development to be important



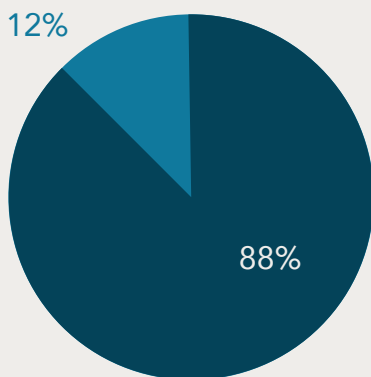
**98%**  
of parents describe their child's feelings about their preschool programs as "happy and engaged"



**93%**  
of parents believe their child has or will have the skills necessary to succeed in kindergarten



**96%**  
of parents find a program that supports their child's emotional and social development to be important



**88%**  
of parents believe preschool education is important for their child or children



## Why is it important to invest in early childhood education?

Employers and employees agree that child care and preschool education are important for children, families, and Idaho's economy. Increasing access to preschool and early education has resulted in higher reading scores for kindergarteners. In recent state test scores, incoming kindergarteners surpassed pre-pandemic fall reading scores for the first time.

**Kindergarten scores continued to increase in the spring and were the only age group that improved from 2022 to 2023.**

Preschool education has life-long impacts on someone's life and well-being. Parents across the state of Idaho are looking to preschool education programs to prepare their children for kindergarten through academic, social and emotional development.

The employers that currently offer child care support for employees cite three major reasons for doing so.

### Policy Recommendations:

1

Invest in community-led efforts to expand access and resources for early care and education.

2

Offer a tax credit to employers who provide or help their employees afford child care and preschool education.

*84% of Idaho business leaders favor this option.*

3

Wave income eligibility for child care providers through Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP) to address the child care workforce shortage.



**The early years are a time of remarkable brain growth** in children and lay the foundation for subsequent learning and development. Investments in quality care and early education translate into direct returns for the state, our communities, and greater society. Idaho AEYC works to improve the quality of child care and raise awareness about the importance of early education in Idaho.



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