

# Illinois Parent Survey Panel

Third Survey

March 2024



illinois  
**action** for  
children

Building Strong Families  
& Powerful Communities™

**RAPID**

The Illinois Parent Survey Panel consists of Illinois parents with children under the age of 6.

- Parents on the panel have the opportunity to share information about their family, experiences, and challenges.
- The goal of the panel is to gather essential and ongoing information from parents and caregivers.
- With our findings, we hope to inform the public and public officials about parents' goals and challenges in raising young children in Illinois.

## What is the Illinois Parent Survey Panel?

*Illinois Action for Children has partnered with the RAPID survey project at the Stanford Center on Early Childhood to conduct a quarterly survey with an ongoing panel of parents.*

# Snapshot of the Children

---

# Children's Interests – Parent Quotes

Parents shared that their children had a wide variety of interests and things that got them excited! Here are some of the most common interests:

## Arts and crafts and creative play!

“They are very interested in anything hands on [and] creative play. They have a very big imagination ... They love to build and while building there is much room for creative play.”

## Singing and dancing!

“He loves to run around, he enjoys singing and being sung to, loves music.”

## Reading and listening to stories!

“He loves learning and reading. He loves the museum. He gets excited about playing, tumbling and racing.”

## Being outdoors, visiting parks, playgrounds, museums, and zoos!

“He loves to be outdoors and explore creatures. He loves playing with water, sand, and dirt. He loves bubbles, playing on the playground and running.”

# Survey 3 at a Glance

---

## Survey Three Topics

1. Social support systems
2. Housing experiences and concerns
3. Experiences with employment
4. Experiences with child care

**Social supports:** Parents offer and receive different kinds of support to and from their friends, family, and network of people and most parents have more than one source of support. However, when we asked parents if they have a place in their community where they feel a sense of belonging or joy, 65% of those who responded shared that there was no such place in their community.

**Housing experiences and concerns:** Of the parents who currently do not own homes, 82% have the goal of home ownership. For those who want to be home-owners, the biggest barriers are the unaffordability of a down payment, poor credit scores, and the inability to find affordable housing.

**Employment experiences:** Parents place high importance on certain job benefits – the most valued ones being health insurance, paid time off, flexible work schedules, 401(k)/retirement accounts, and child care-related benefits. However, a smaller percentage of parents (or their partners) reported receiving those benefits.

**Child care experiences:** 83% of parents on our panel use child care. We asked parents what they like best about their providers. Many mentioned that they value the people providing care to their children especially trustworthy providers who treat children with care and patience.

Of the parents who do not use child care, half shared that they do not use child care because they want to care for their children themselves. Parents shared that the benefits of caring for their children themselves is to create a safer, more loving and more comfortable environment for them than if they were in care with others.

# Networks of Support

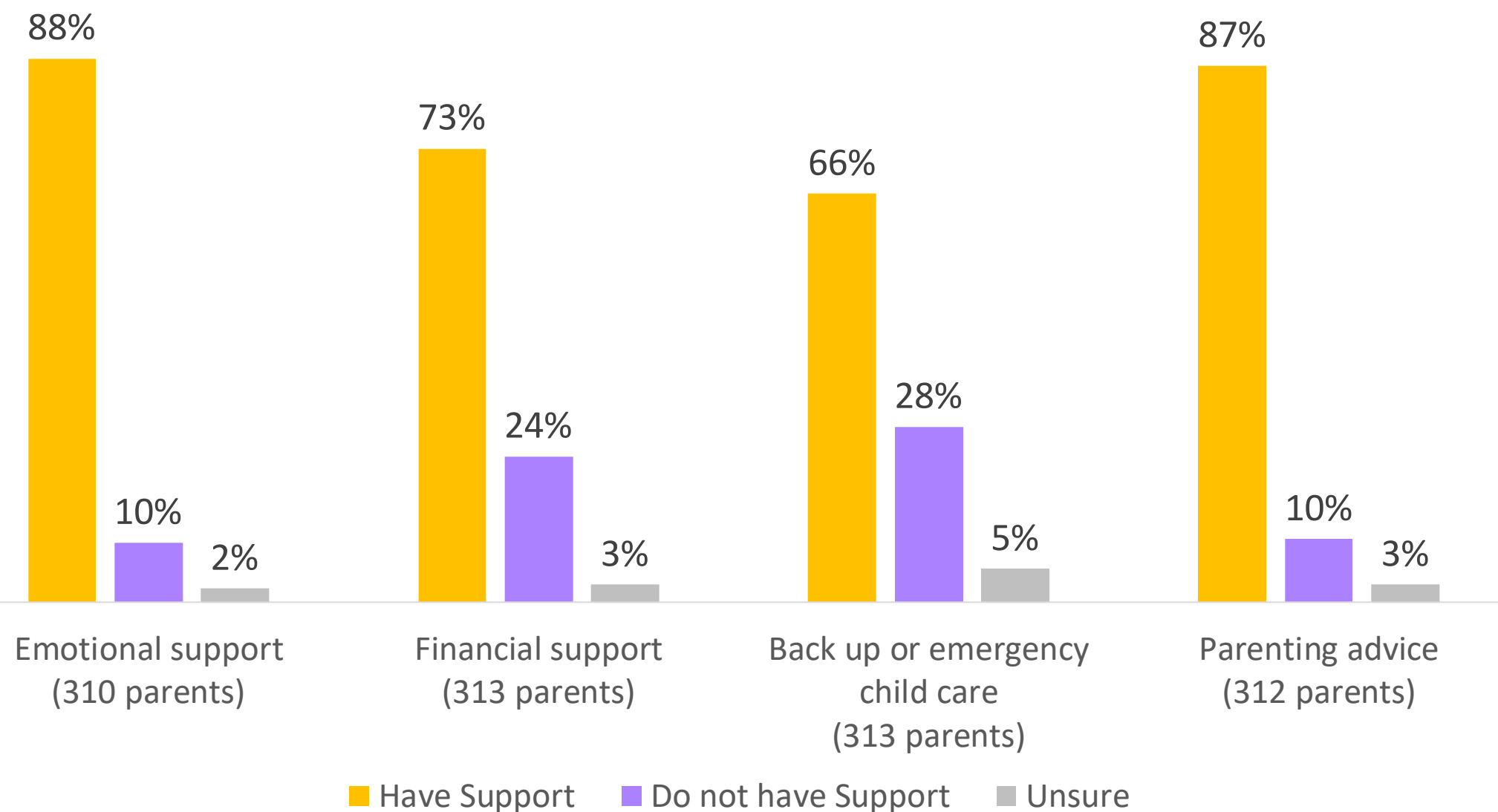
---



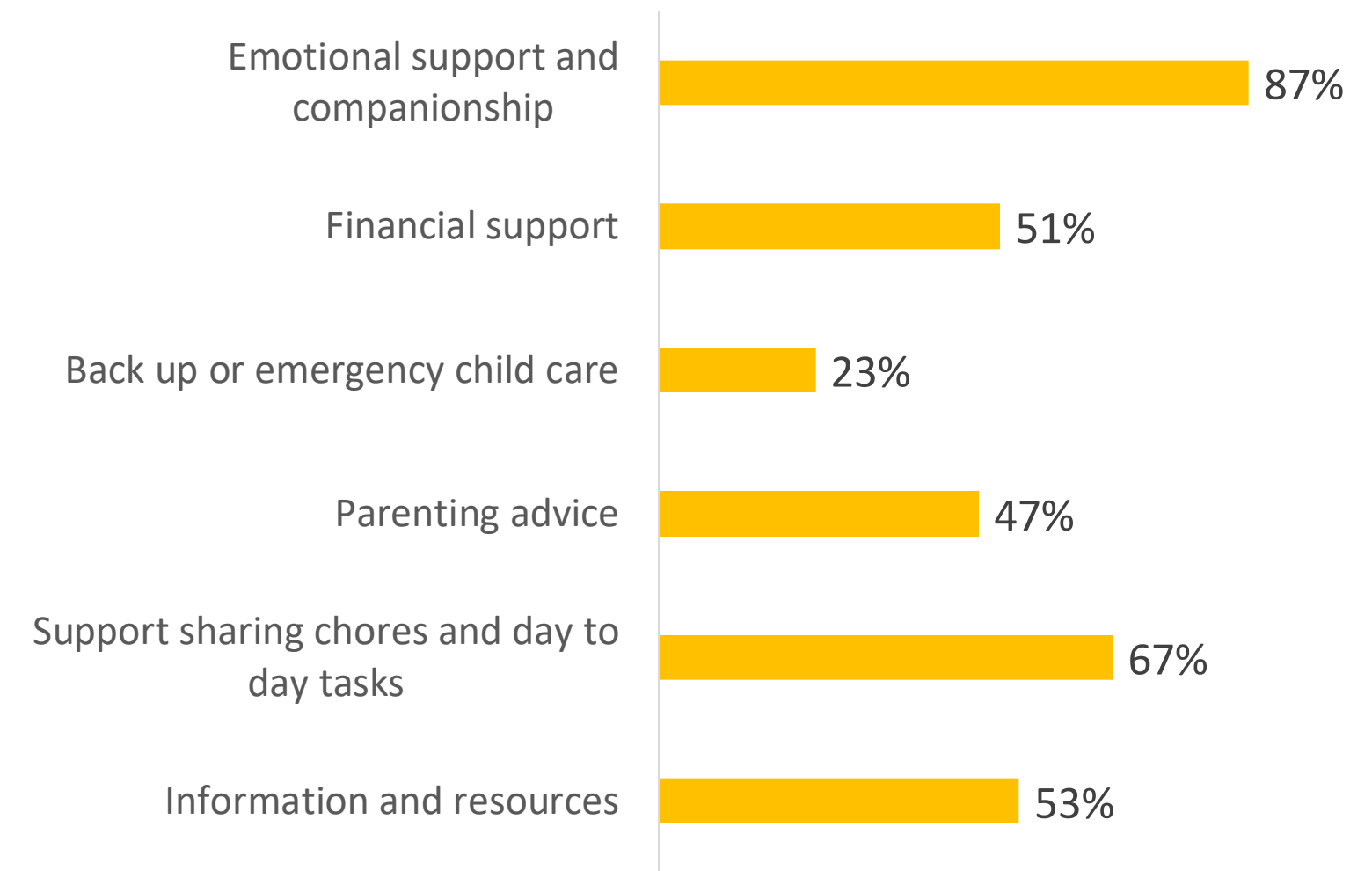
# Parents' Support Networks

Almost 90% of parents on our panel have someone to turn to for emotional support and parenting advice. Fewer can turn to someone for financial support or back up child care. Parents also provide support, most commonly emotional support and companionship, followed by support with chores and day to day tasks.

Do parents have friends, family, or a network of people that they can call on for the following?



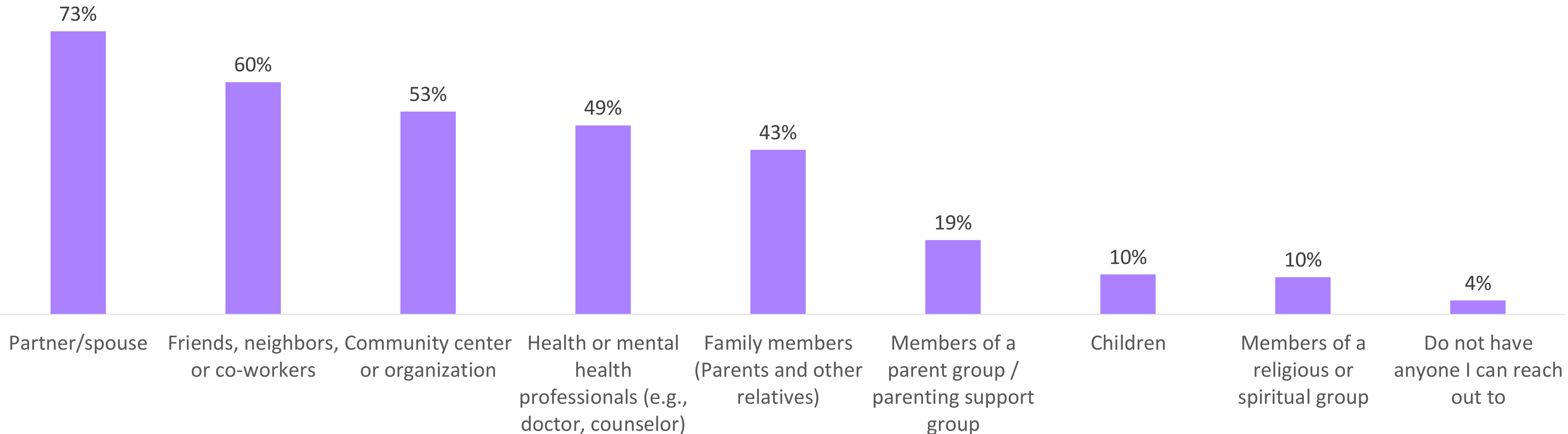
What type of support do parents *give* to family, friends, or others in their social network? (318 parents)



# Who do parents turn to for social support?

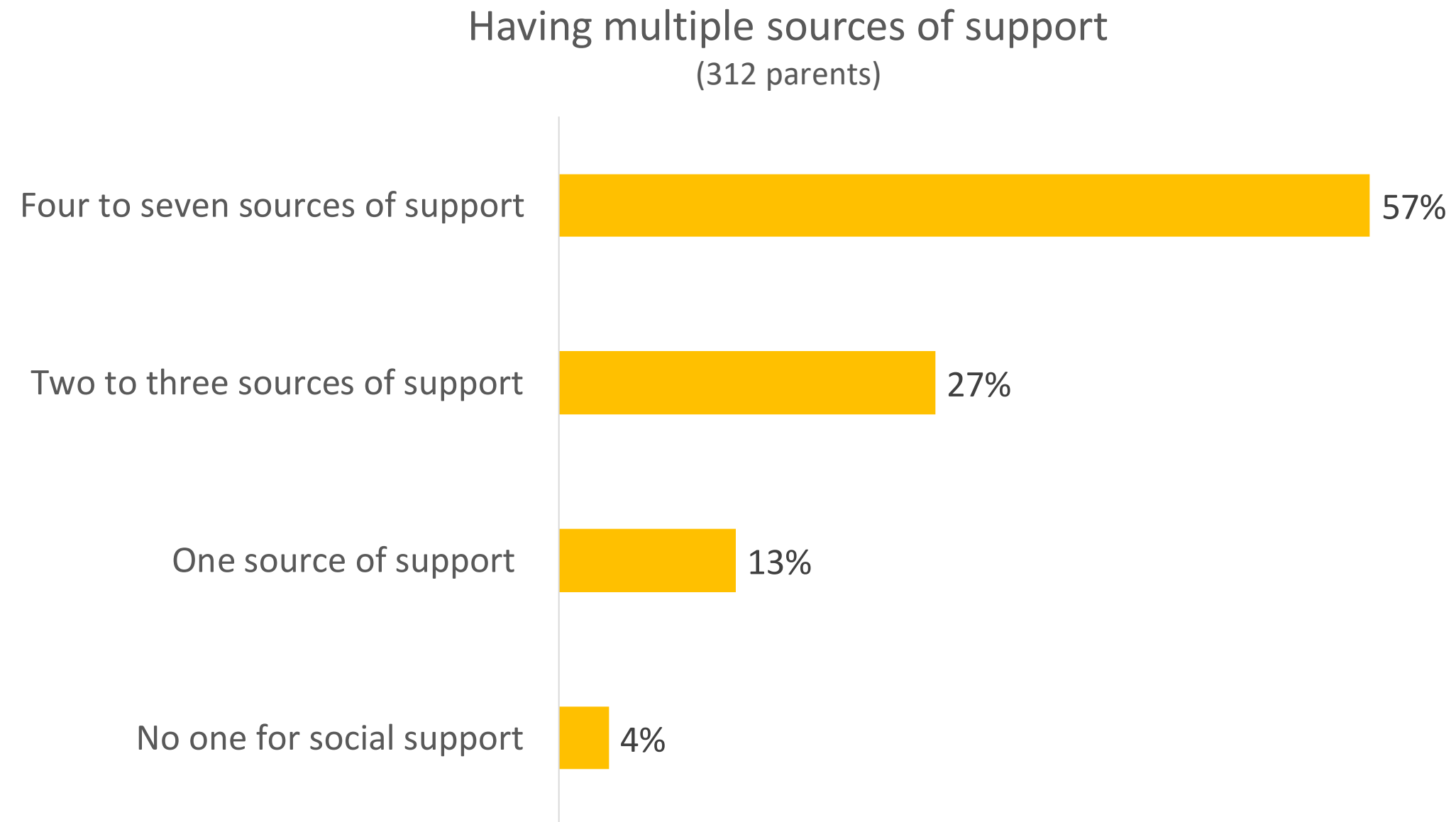
In our panel, 73% of parents turn to their partner for support followed by 60% of parents that turn to friends, neighbors, or co-workers for support. Only 4% of parents shared that they do not have anyone they can reach out to for social support.

Who do parents turn to for social support?  
(312 parents)



# Multiple Sources of Support

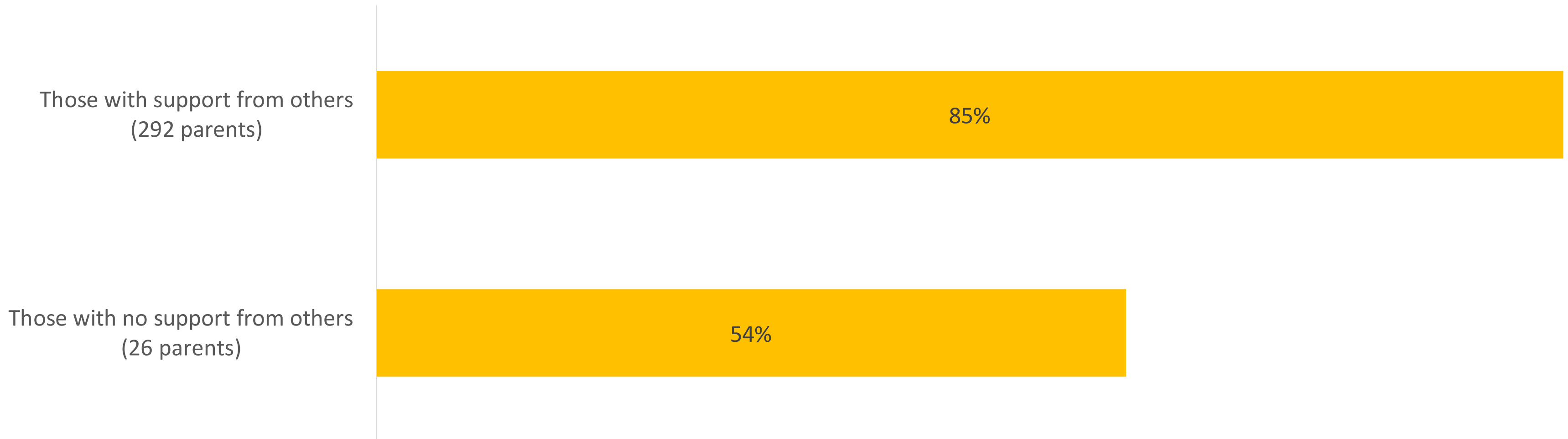
More than 80% of the parents had more than one source of support. Thirteen percent of parents had just one source that they could turn to for social support.



# Resilience and Support

Parents who had support from others were more likely to be able to stay hopeful and able to handle challenges compared to the few parents who did not have support from others.

Percentage of parents who are always or usually hopeful and able to handle challenges, by whether they receive support from others

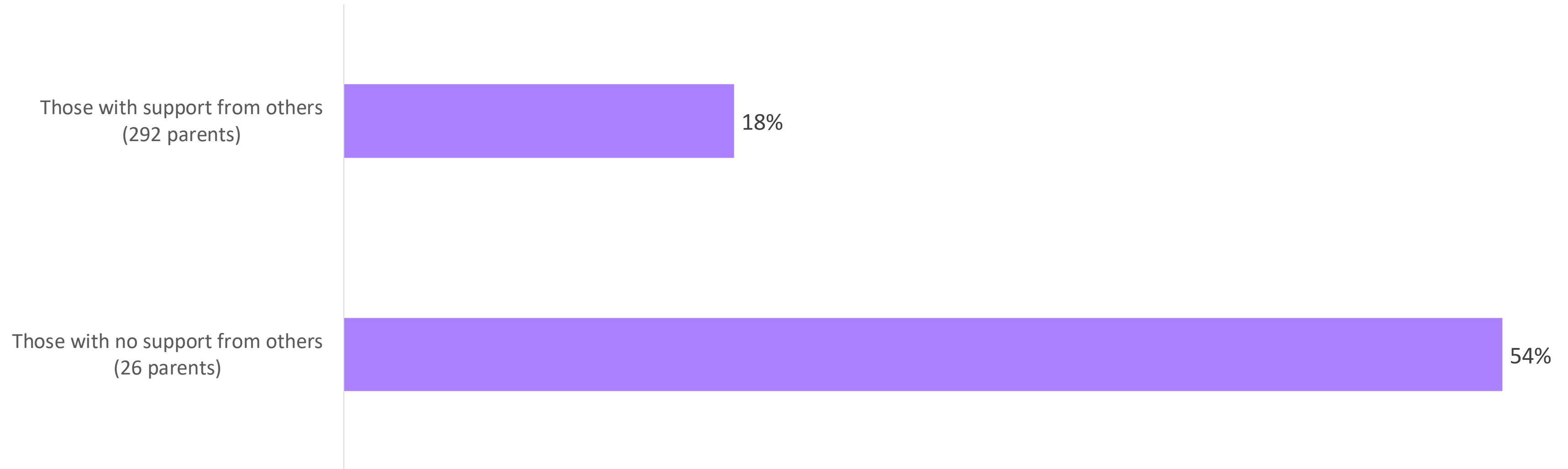


*Please note: We only have 26 parents that did not have support from others, however we wanted to share this trend to highlight the importance of support for parents' resilience through hardships.*

# Mental Well-being and Support

Parents who had support from others were less likely to experience emotional distress than the few parents who did not have support from others.

Percent of parents experiencing emotional distress, by support received

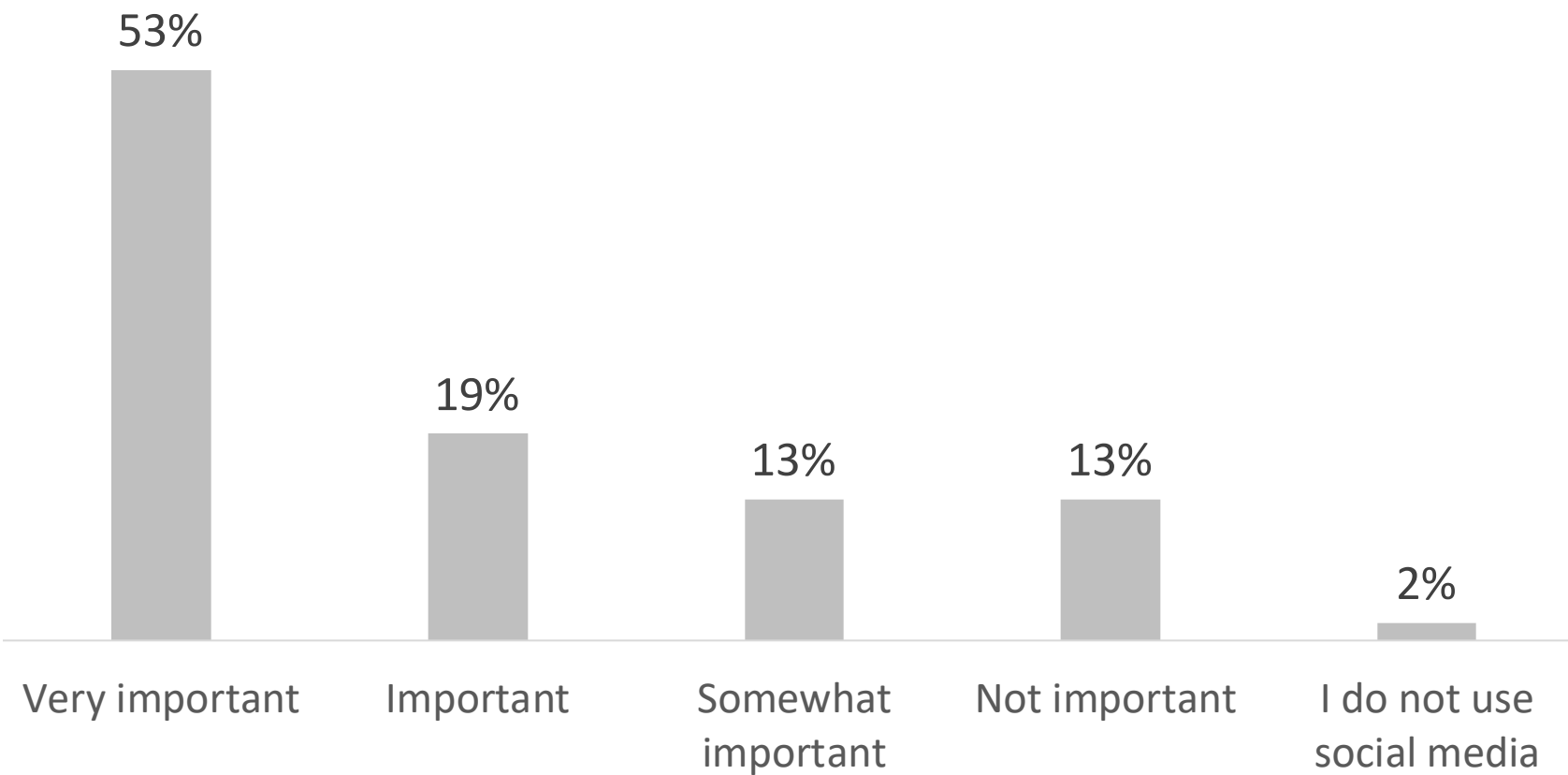


*Parents who experience frequent emotional distress are defined as those that report experiencing anxiety or depression 'more than half the days' or 'nearly every day' in the past month, or who experienced stress or loneliness 'usually', or 'always' in the past month.*

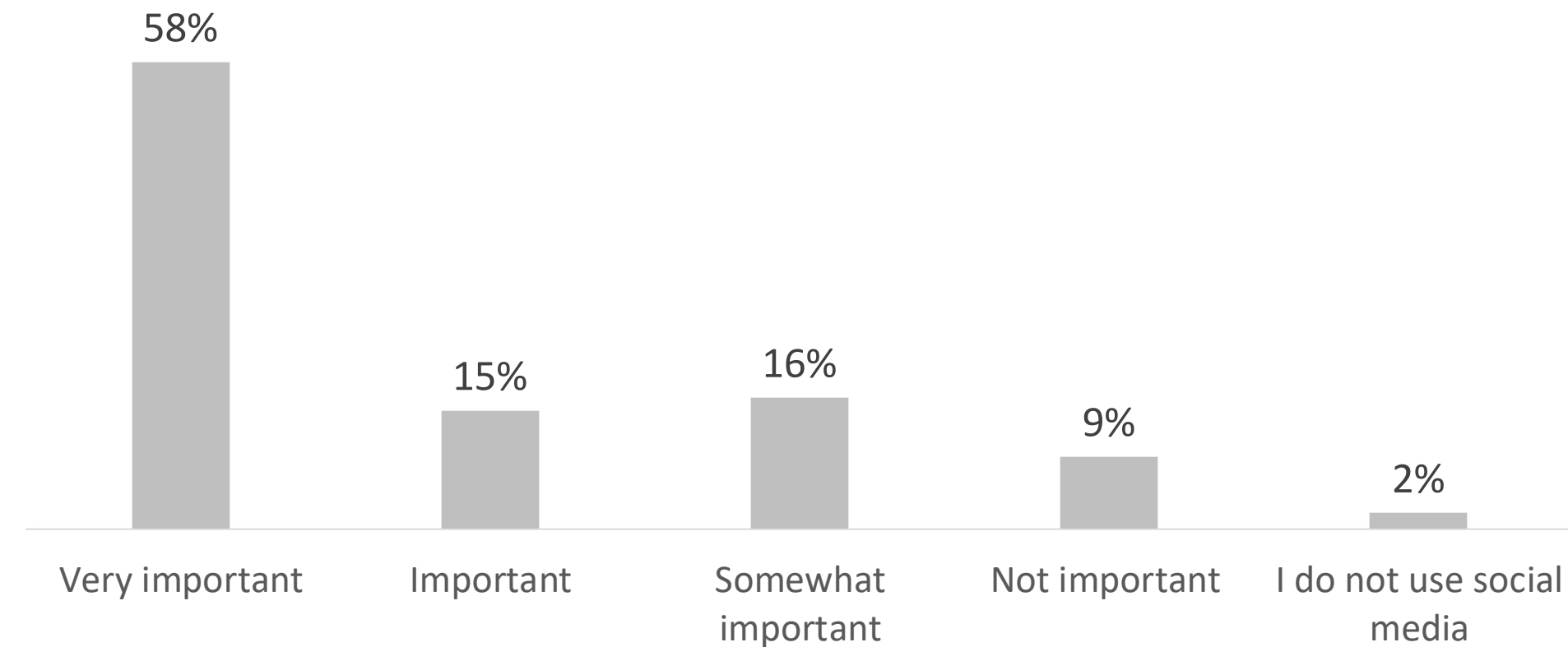
# Importance of Social Media

More than half of the parents on the panel consider social media to be **very important** for staying connected with family and friends as well as for accessing parenting resources.

Importance of social media to stay connected with family and friends  
(313 parents)



Importance of social media for accessing parenting resources and advice  
(313 parents)



# Sense of Belonging

---

We asked parents if there is an organization or place in their community where they feel a sense of belonging or joy. Approximately 65% of parents (or 73 parents) that responded to this question shared that there is no such place in their community.

Those that did feel a sense of belonging in their community, did so in the following places:

- Places of worship (such as churches and mosques)
- Family or parent-oriented organizations, support groups, or activities (libraries with infant/toddler activities, parents support groups, and other local organizations)
- Friends, families, or neighbors' houses
- Outdoor places (such as parks or walking trails)
- Their gym



# Sense of Belonging – Parent Quotes

"I have a women's Bible study group that I just joined a couple of months ago and I feel valued and listened to there."

"Libraries with story time/infant activities."

"El grupo de padres." (*The parent group*)

"I think the closest thing to that could be my neighbors, which are the people around my house and the parent community at my child's school."

"I'm sure there is a place around me, but I don't have the time to actually find it nor go experience it."

"I like going to the mosque. It gives me joy and peace."

"Church."

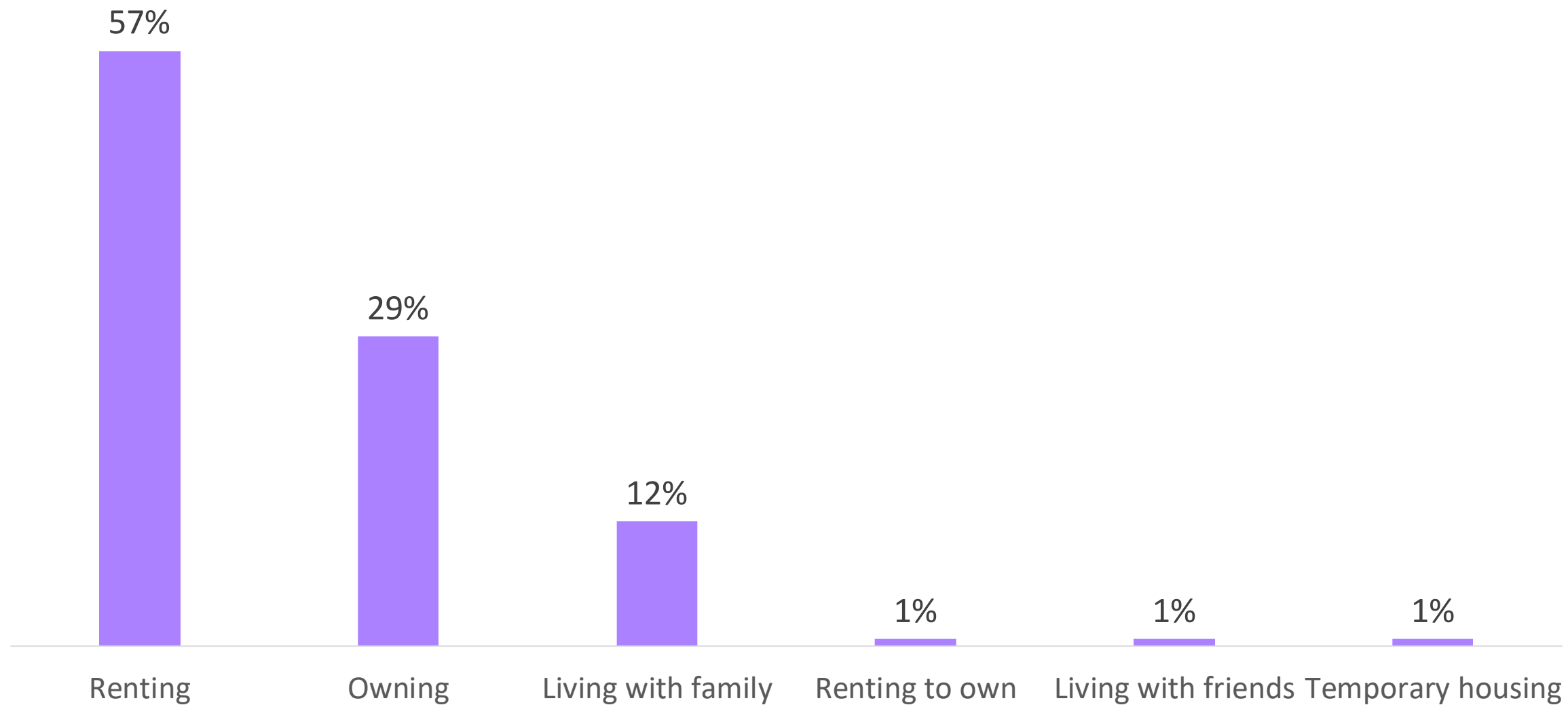
# Housing experiences and concerns

---

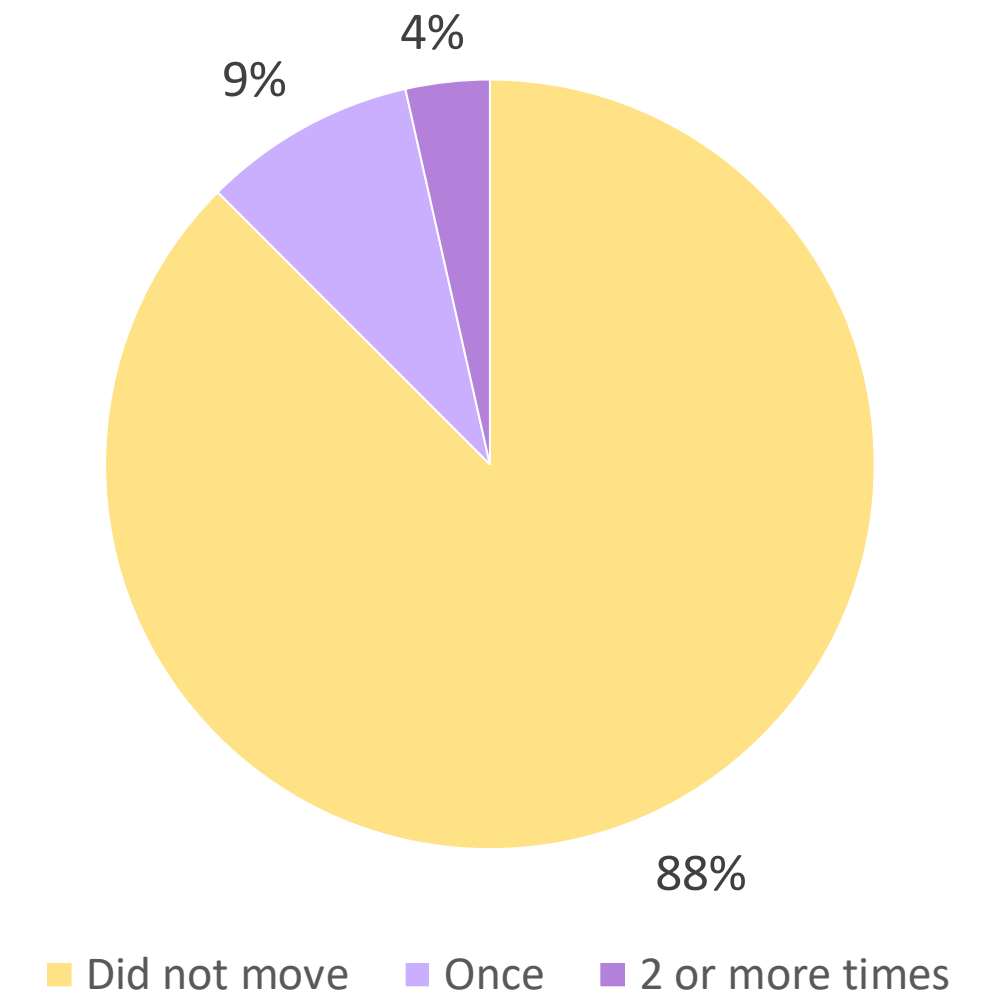
# Housing Status and Housing Stability

In our panel, 57% of parents are renting and 29% own their current place of residence. Eighty-eight percent of families have not changed their place of residence in the past year.

Parent's Housing Status  
(312 parents)

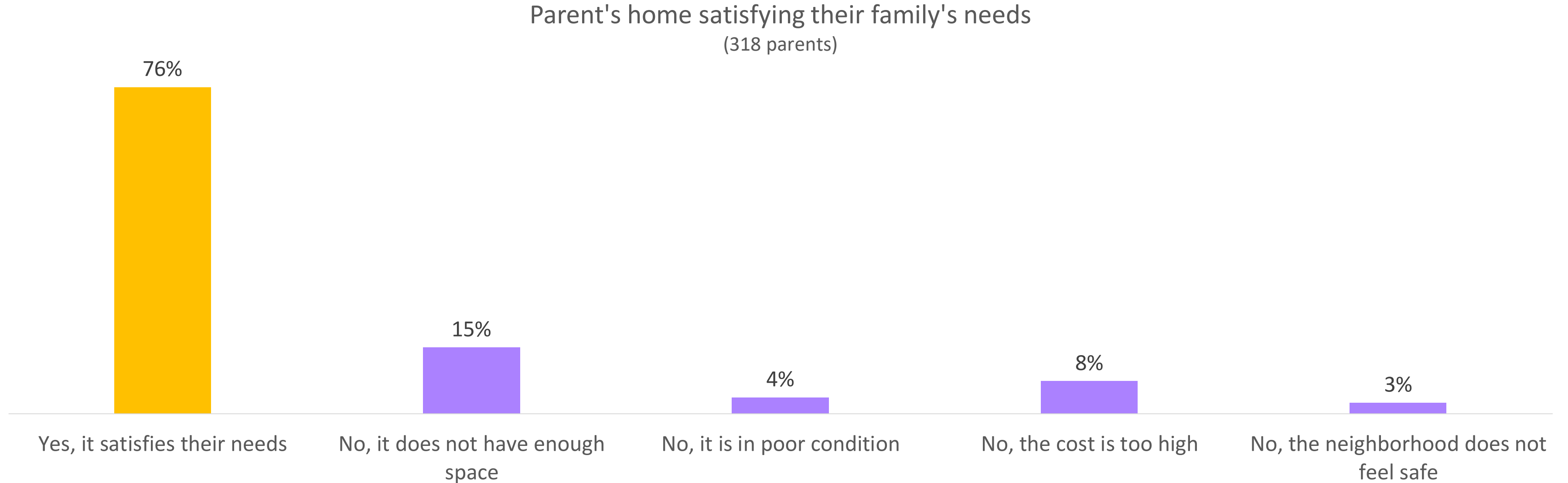


Frequency of family changing place of residence in the past year  
(312 parents)



# Whether homes satisfy families' needs

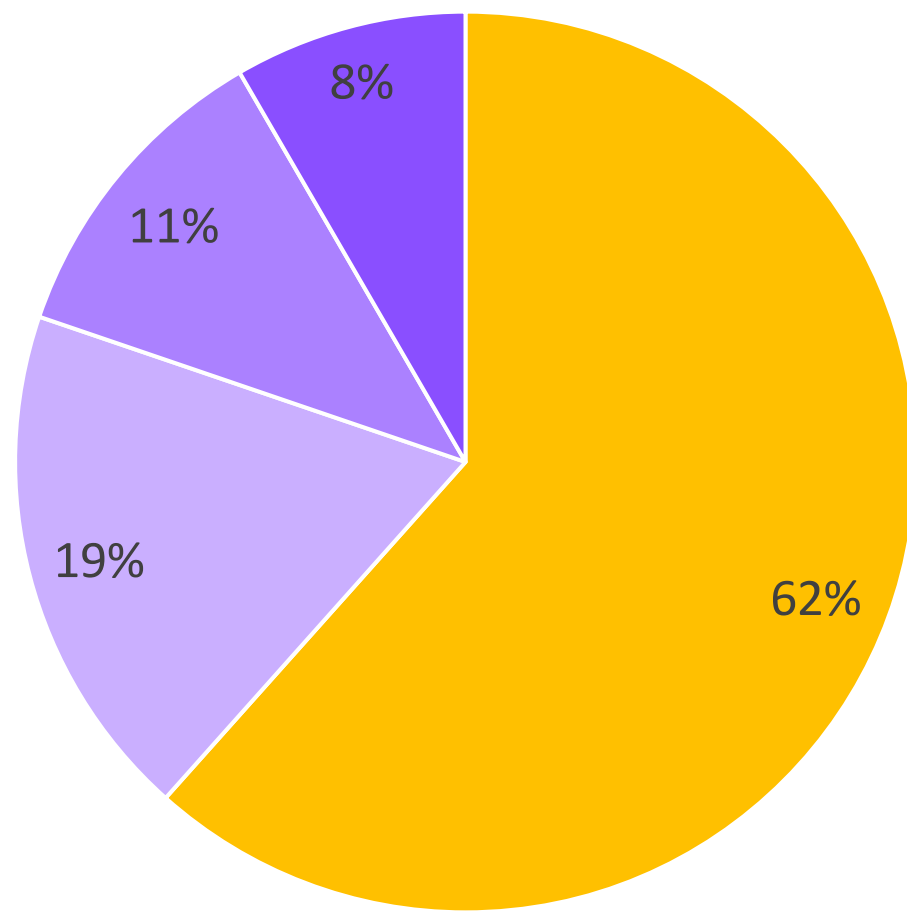
Seventy-six percent of parents shared that their current home satisfies their family's needs. However, 15% of parents said their home does not have enough space and 8% said the cost is too high.



# Concerns with housing situation

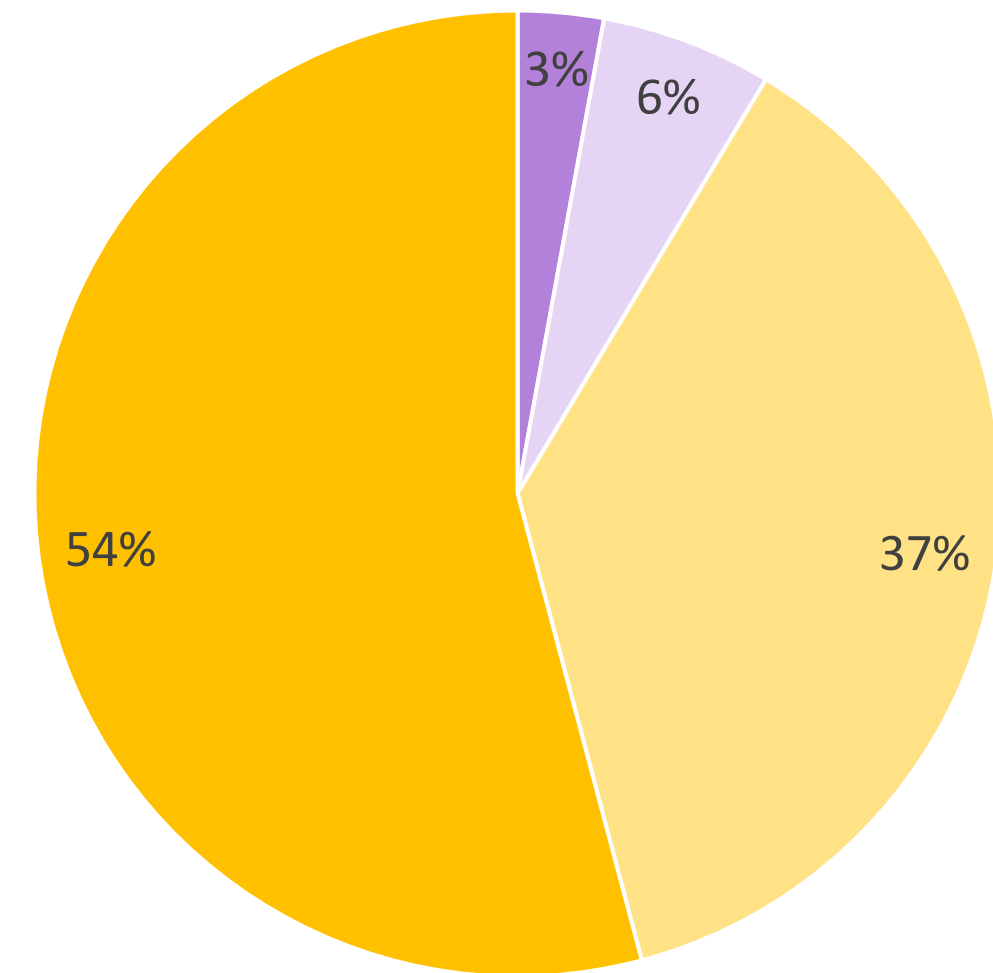
Thirty-eight percent of parents on our panel experience some level of worry about paying rent or mortgage. In comparison, 91% of parents share that their current housing situation is mostly or very stable.

Parents' worries about not being able to pay full rent or mortgage or being late with payment  
(263 parents)



■ Not at all worried ■ Slightly worried ■ Moderately worried ■ Extremely worried

Stability of current housing situation  
(314 parents)



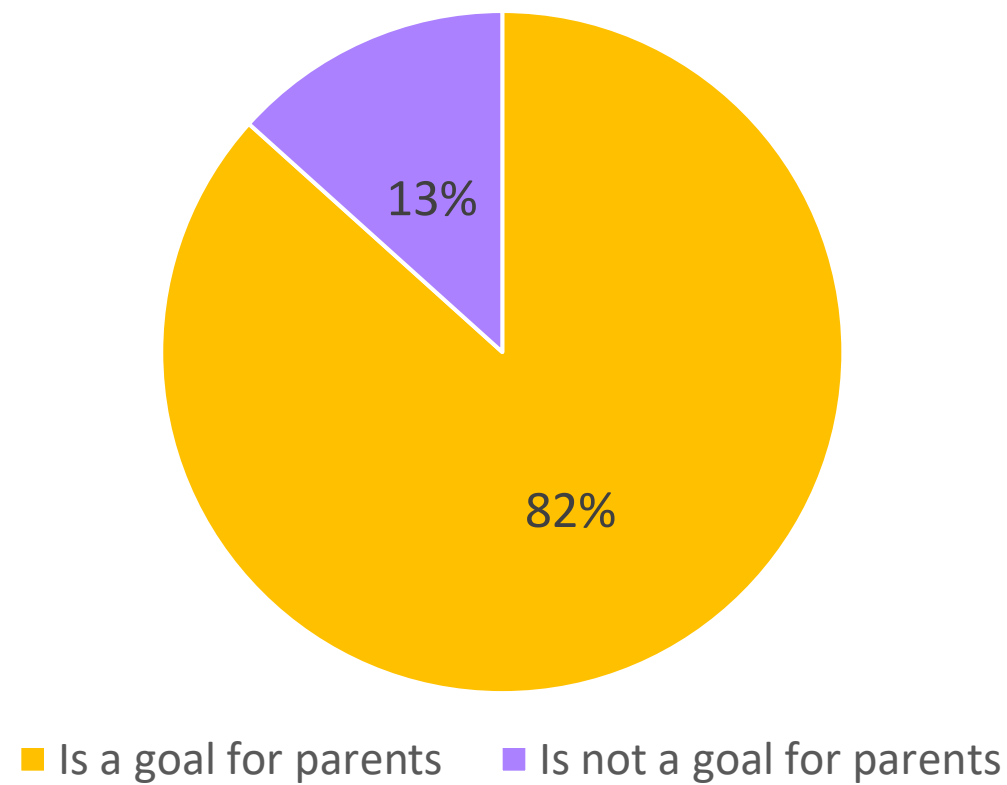
■ Very unstable ■ Mostly unstable ■ Mostly stable ■ Very stable

# Home ownership goals and its barriers

Among parents who do not own their home, 82% said home ownership was a goal. The top barrier to home ownership was being unable to afford a down payment, followed by poor credit scores and being unable to find affordable housing.

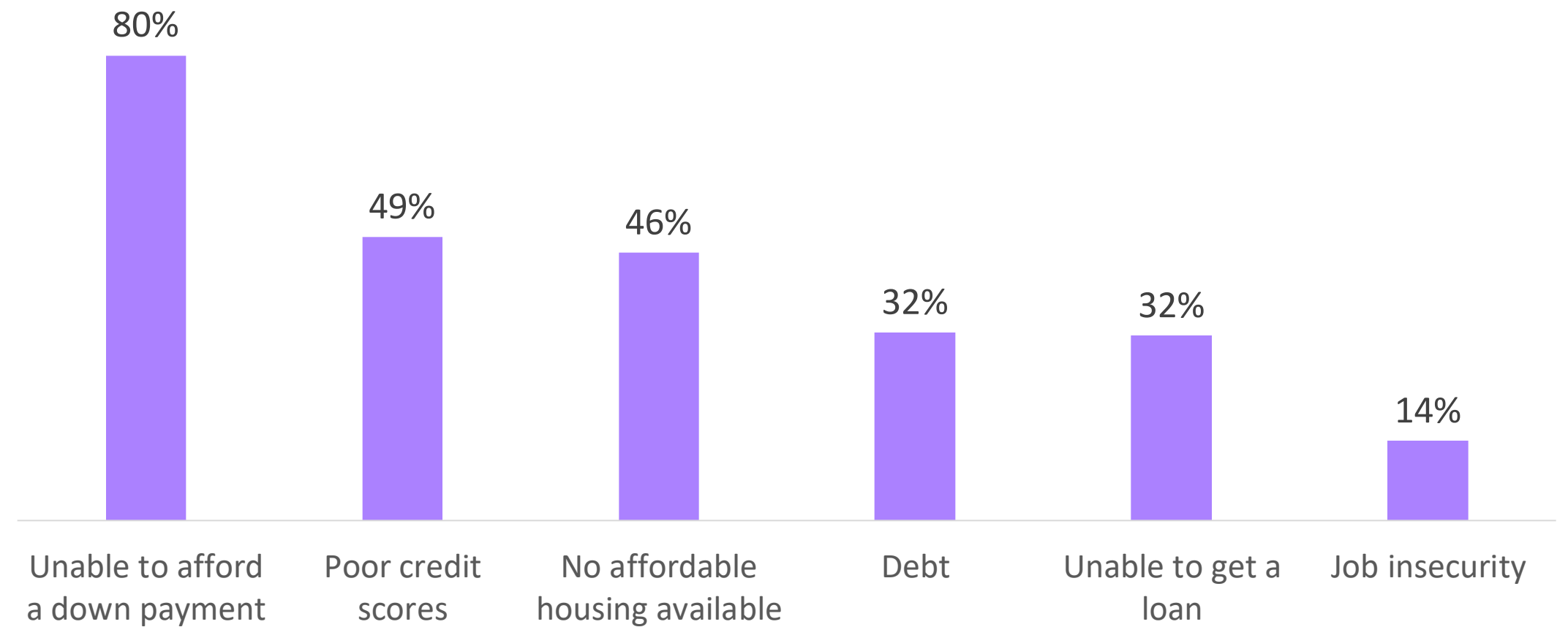
Is home ownership a goal for those who do not own their home?

(221 parents)



Barriers to home ownership

(182 parents)



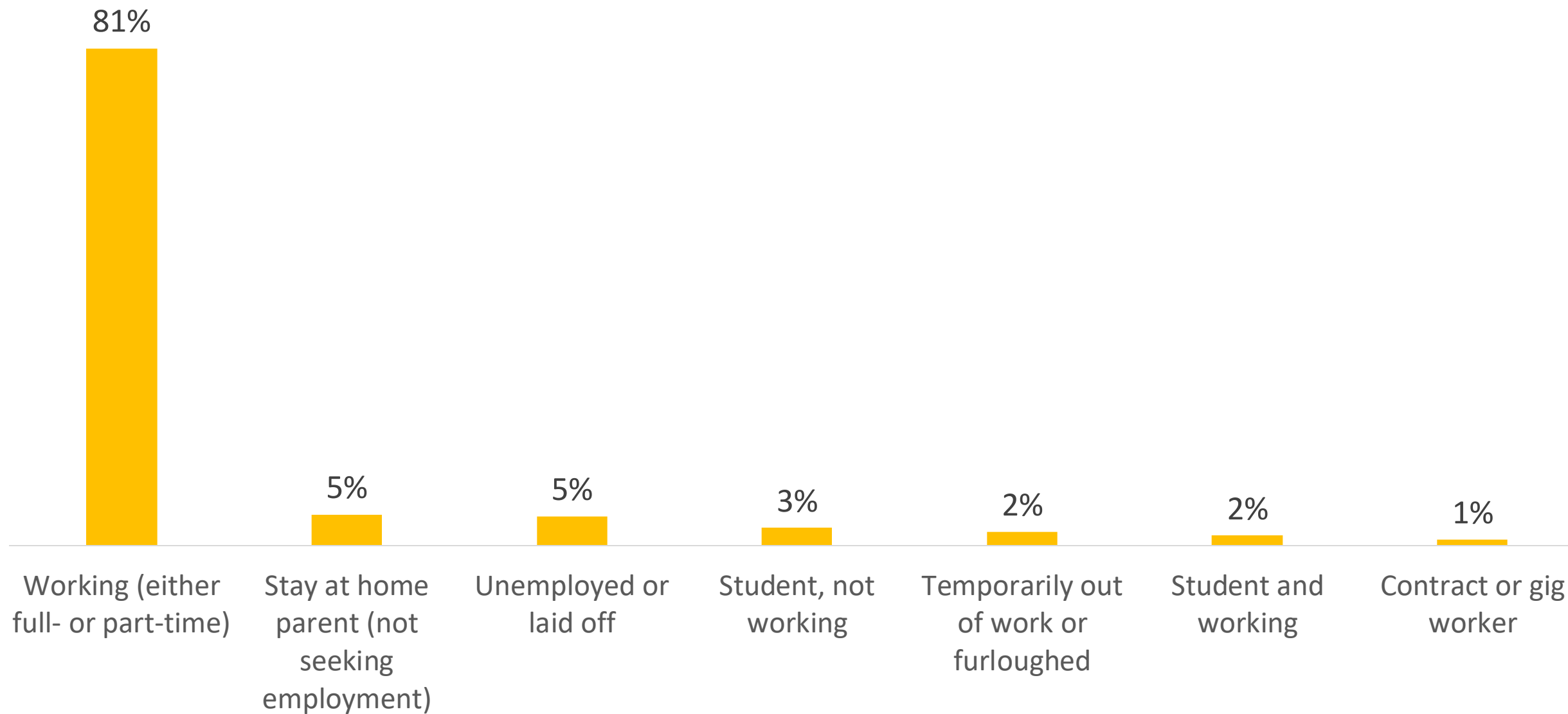
# Experiences with Employment

---

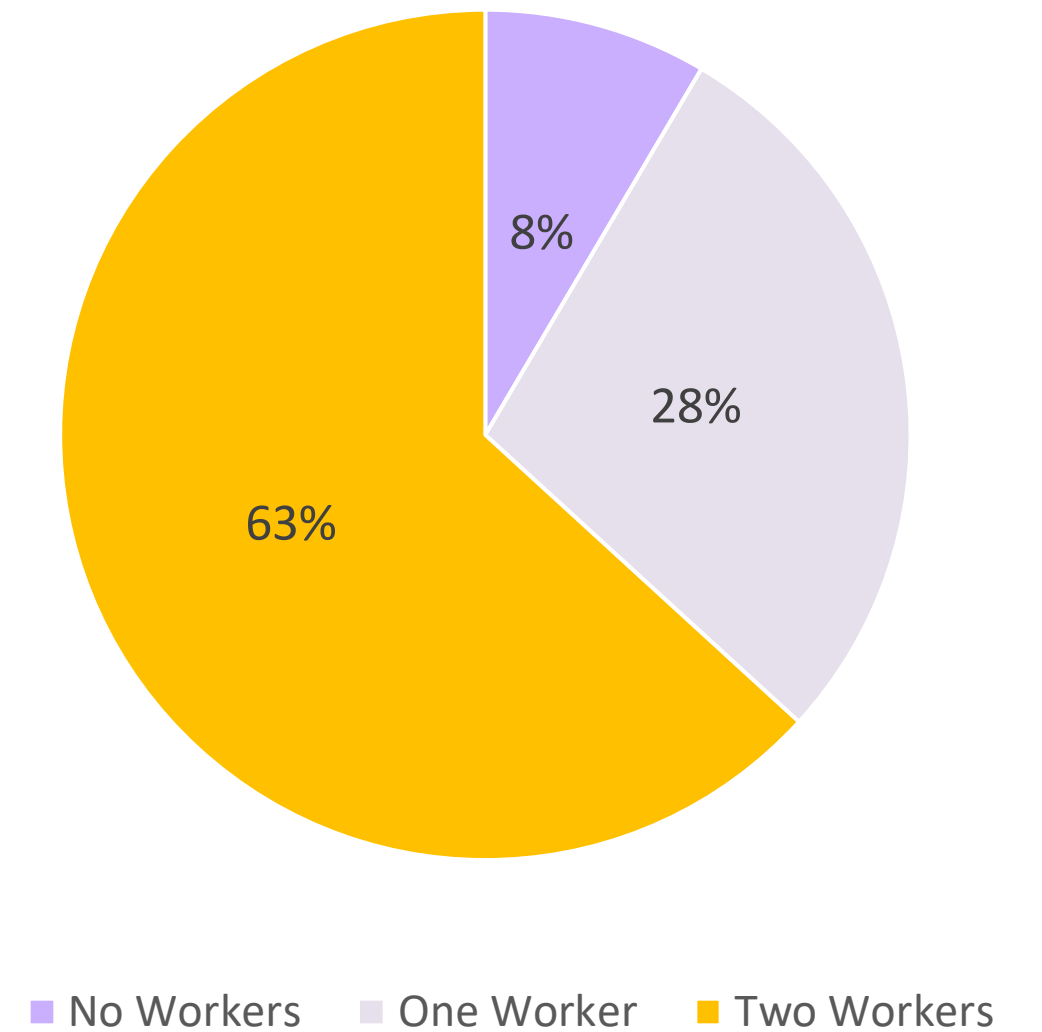
# Employment

In our panel, 81% of parents were working either full-time or part-time. Sixty-three percent of families had two working adults in the household.

Parent's Employment  
(313 parents)



Number of working adults in the household  
(318 parents)

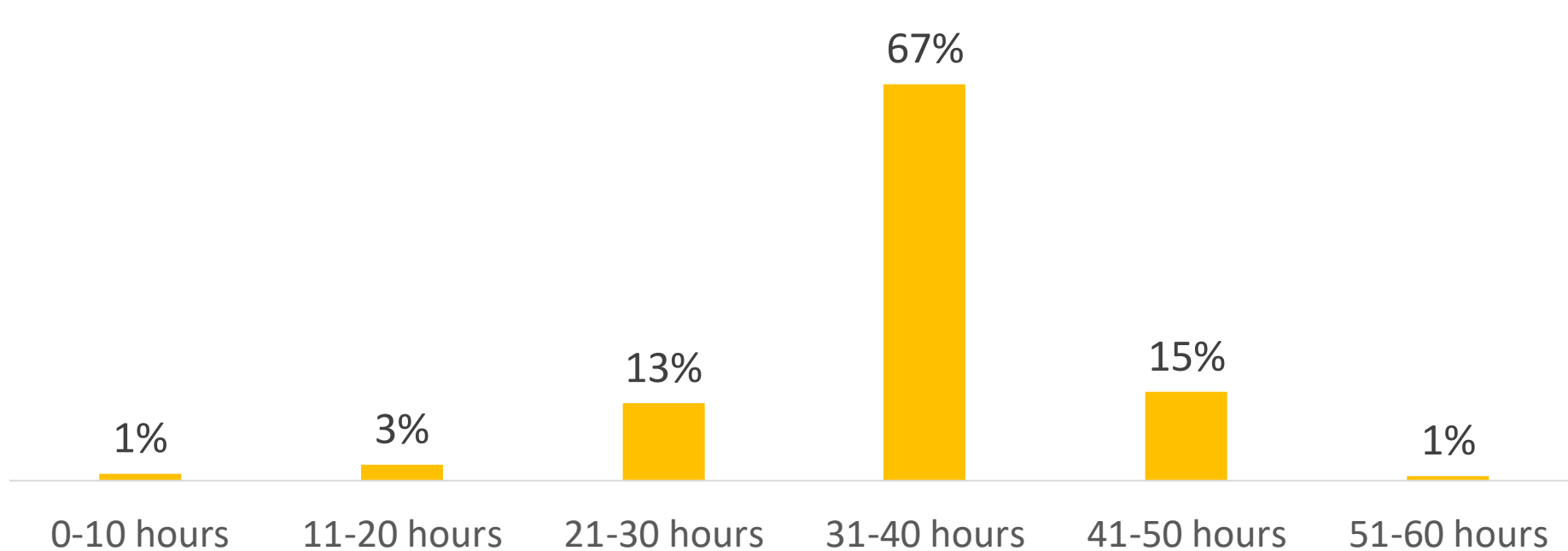




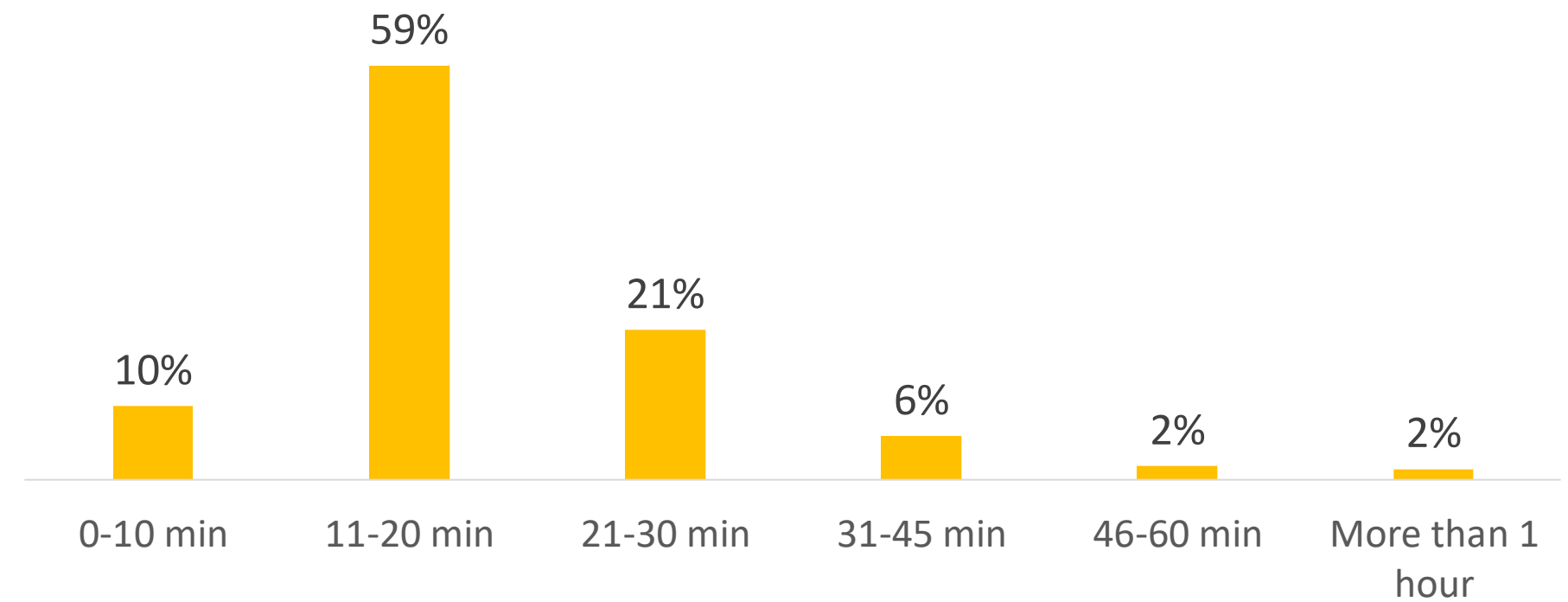
# Employment Hours

Of the parents who were employed, 67% of them worked 31 – 40 hours in an average week. Furthermore, 60% of working parents said their commute to work was 11 – 20 minutes.

How many hours do you work in an average week?  
(260 parents)



How long is your commute to work everyday?  
(259 parents)



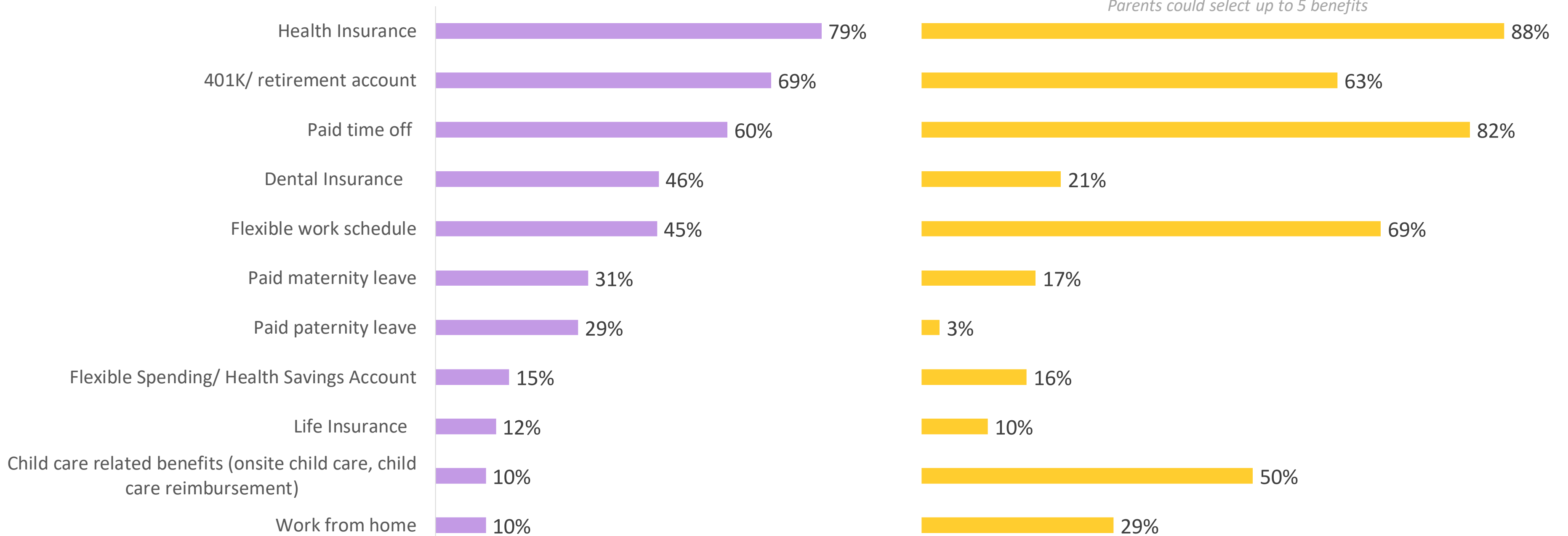
# Job benefits that parents receive & value

These charts show the job benefits that parents receive (left) and those they consider most important (right). The biggest gaps between what parents want and what they receive are paid time off, flexible schedules and child care benefits.

Job benefits that parents or their partner receive  
(291 parents)

Job benefits most important to parents  
(291 parents)

*Parents could select up to 5 benefits*



# Challenges of Working Parents – Parent Quotes

Parents shared that spending time with their children and finding child care that fits their schedules were the biggest challenges as working parents.

## Spending time with their children

“Giving my son my attention and energy and being present with him. Work took all my best hours and left me stressed and exhausted. When working full time from home and being a full time stay at home parent, I was unable to properly care for my child and unable to properly perform my job functions.”

“Always being tired not enough energy to play with the kids how I would like or take the time to take them out.”

“Not being able to see certain things my child does as he grows up.”

## Finding child care that fits their schedules

“Having to call off and switch schedule around when one of the boys is sick and not having someone to watch them to work fulltime”

“Finding a job that works with my children’s schedule”

“Not being able to work evening shifts because of lack of childcare.”

# Challenges of Working Parents – Parent Quotes

Other challenges of working parents that a significant portion of respondents shared include (but are not limited to):

- Managing multiple different responsibilities in the workplace, at home, and caring for their children
- Caring for children's health when they fall sick
- Financial stability
- Time management

“Time. There are not enough hours in a day for me to work, take/pick-up my kids to/from school, take/pickup from extracurricular activities, make home cooked meals, clean, help kids with homework, family time, grooming, etc.”

“Managing all the things, getting kids ready in the morning and on time, while also having to get myself ready. Finding time for making meals while also being present for my family.”

“Being tired working the long hours and coming home to 3 kids and having to do everything for them it's like a second job.”

“Not having the help and access to resources I need because of lack of income.”

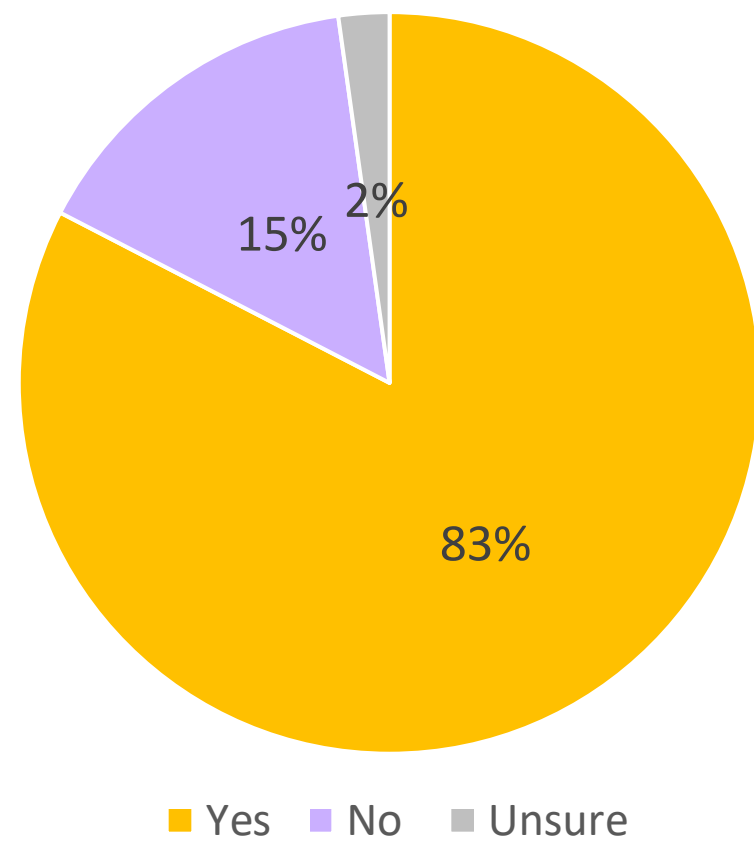
# Experiences with Child Care

---

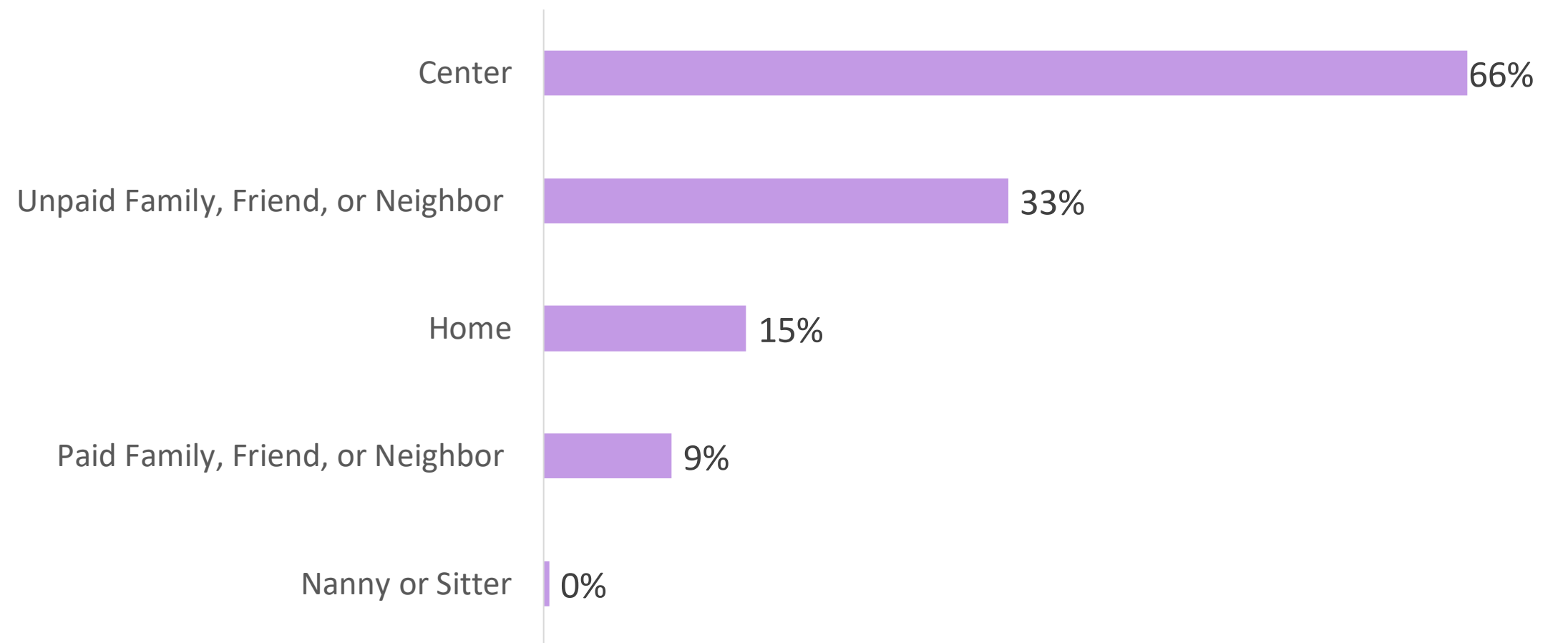
# Use of Child Care

In our panel, 83% of parents use non-parental care for their children under the age of 6. Of those who use non-parental care, 66% of them use center-based care and 42% use family, friend or neighbor care, either paid or unpaid.

In the past month, have you used any non-parental care for your children under age 6?  
(316 parents)



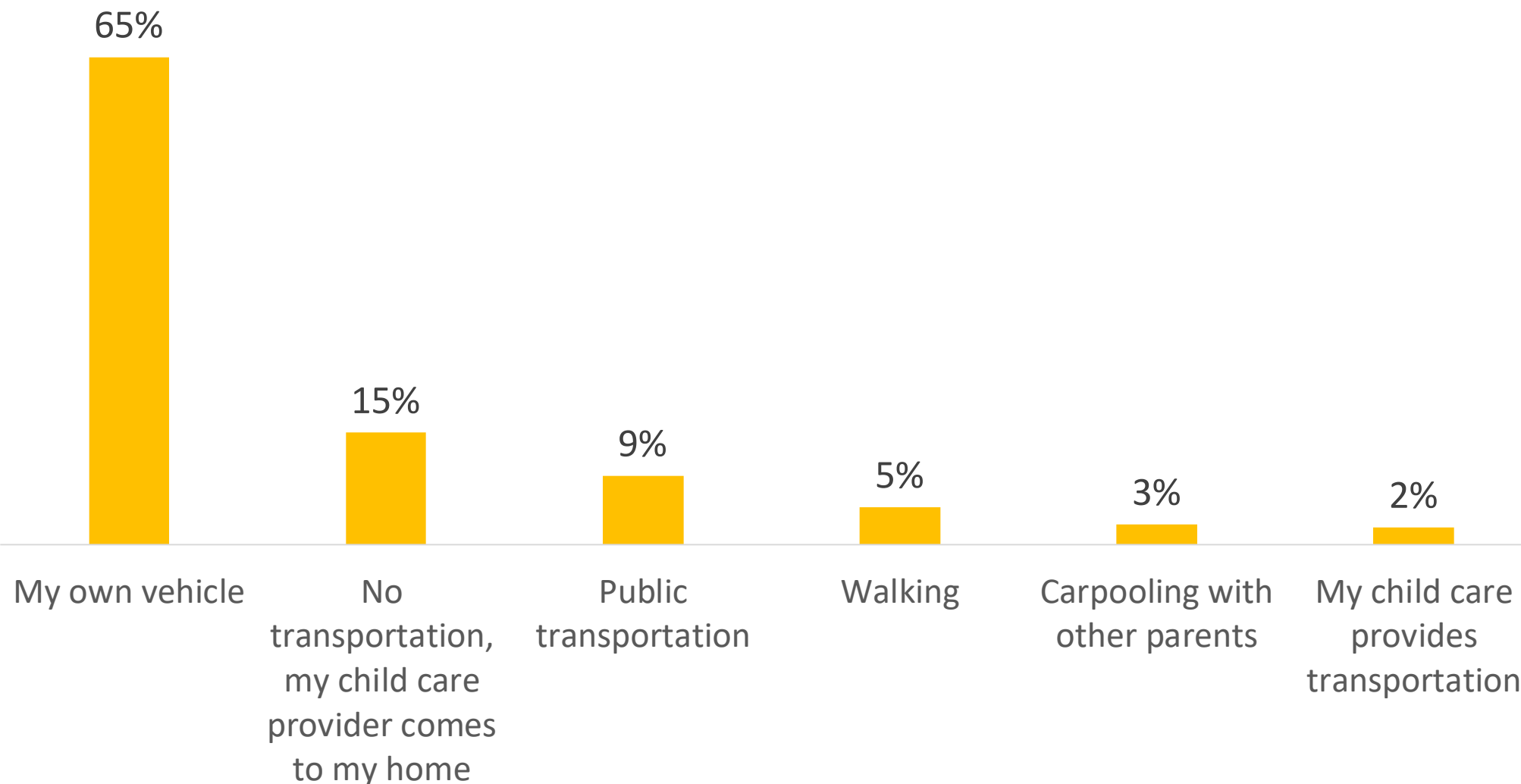
Types of non-parental child care for children under age 6  
(261 parents)



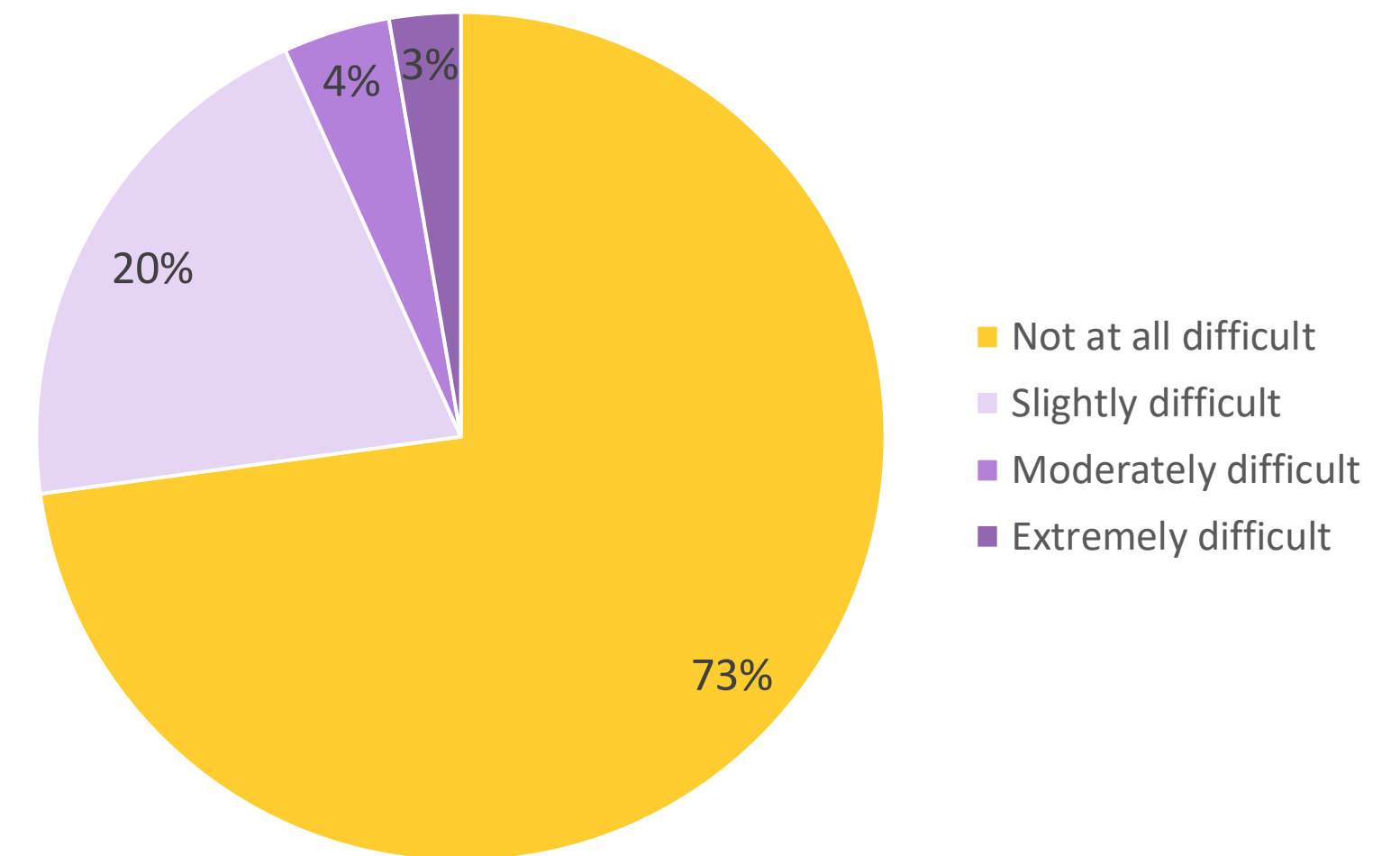
# Transportation to Child Care

Of those parents on our panel who use child care, 65% use their own vehicle to travel to their child care provider. Furthermore, 90% of those who travel to their provider shared that it takes them less than 20 minutes to get to their provider. However, almost a third experience some level of difficulty traveling to their provider.

Main mode of transportation to travel to child care  
(261 parents)



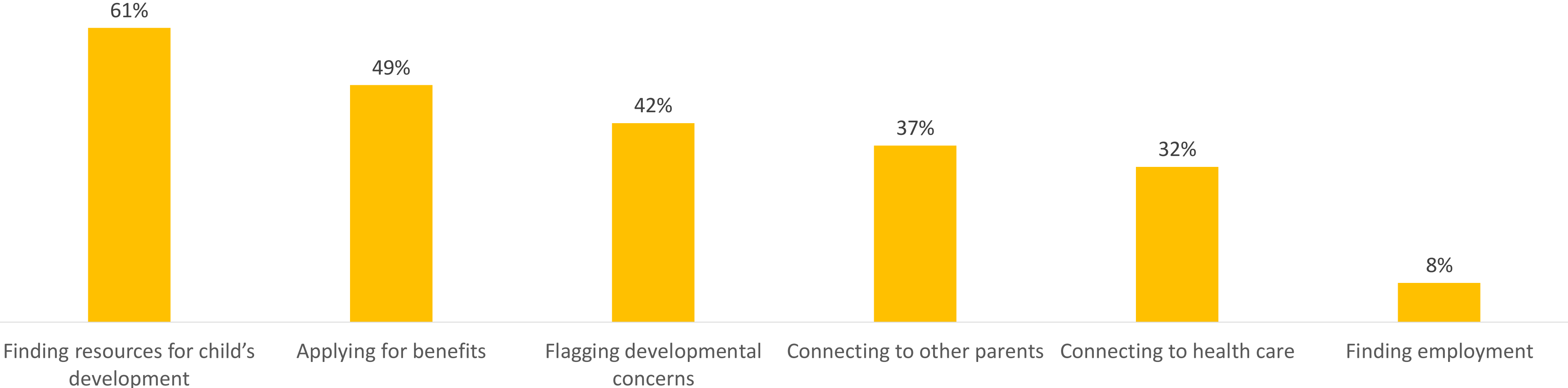
Difficulty traveling to child care  
(221 parents)



# Support from Child Care Providers

Child care providers have provided many forms of support to parents on our panel. Over 60% of parents said their providers have helped them find resources for their children's development, and 50% of parents said providers have helped them apply for benefits.

Types of support child care providers have provided to families  
(318 parents)





# What do parents like best about their child care? - Parent Quotes

Many parents shared that they value the people providing care to their children, especially trustworthy providers who treat children with care and patience. Parents also value the quality of education that their children receive. Lastly, parents value having easy physical access to their child care provider.

"The staff are consistent most of the same teachers have been there for the duration. The main teacher does a good job of teaching educational concepts, and they also teach songs and movement and ASL."

"They are a trusted family member."

"What I like best about my child care provider is that they are someone I can trust to take care of my child. I also like that they have other children my child can play with."

"Very professional and clean daycare. I can view her on camera on my phone app at anytime and they give updates all day of everything (food ate, diaper changes, activities)."

"The way they interact and care for my child. For example, my son has a teacher who greets him with a hug and he's always smiling while she's around."

# What improvements do parents want to see in their child care?

Among parents who responded, 38% had no improvements they could think of. Some parents wanted more flexible care hours, more emergency care offered, more affordable care, and improved facilities (such as cleanliness and more amenities).

" Availability and closeness in location for short notice childcare needs."

"Flexibility. Daycare opens at 6:30am. It would be very helpful if they open at 6am. This would enable me get to my clinical site early."

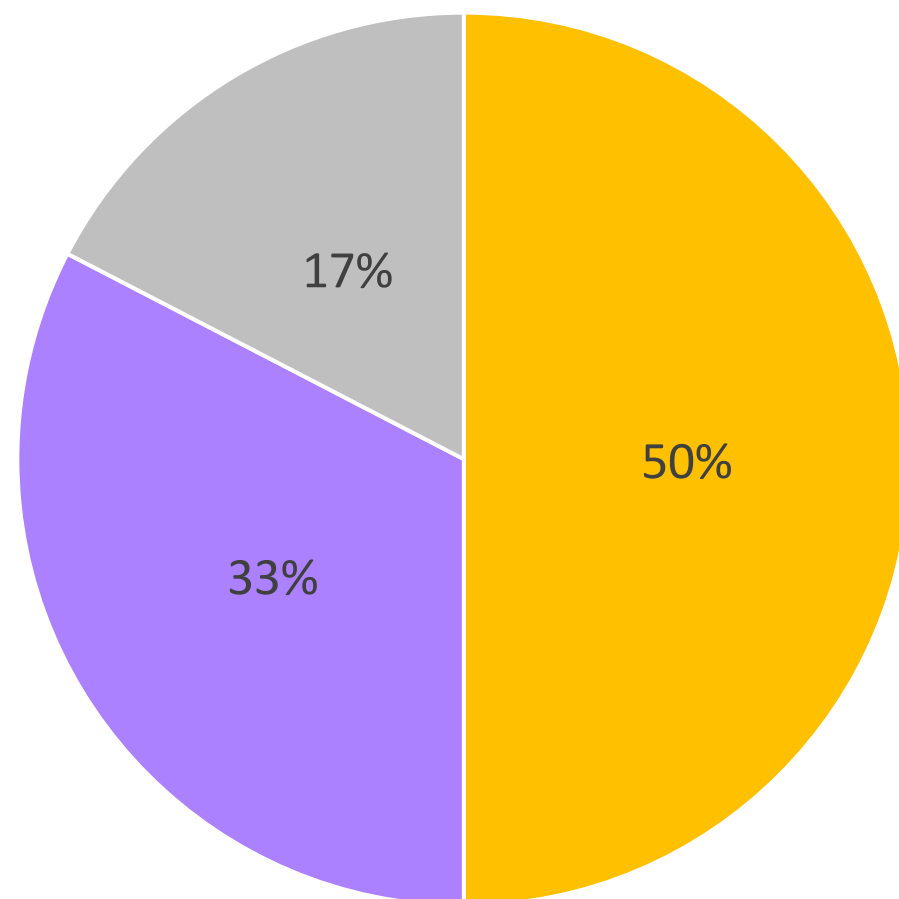
"Quality of care - changing teacher leads to changing quality and lack of consistency for kids, clear communication - activities throughout day aren't documented properly and issues aren't documented appropriately, even when brought up to directors."

"Providing breakfast and lunch for parents who don't have time to feed their children in the morning."

# Parents Not Using Child Care

We asked parents who do not use child care if they prefer to take care of their children themselves. Fifty percent of parents said yes, and 33% of parents shared other reasons for not using child care.

Reasons why parents do not use child care  
(48 parents)



■ They want to take care of their child themselves ■ Other reasons ■ Prefer not to say

"Other" reasons for not using child care:

- Unable to find child care or unable to afford it
- Temporarily not using child care
- Spouse or family member takes care of their child
- Parent is unemployed so takes care of their child themselves

# Benefits to taking care of children themselves - Parent Quotes

Parents said benefits are spending more time with their children, feeling closer to them, and seeing them grow. They feel that their children are in environments that are safer, more loving and more comfortable than if their children were in care with others.

"The benefits of taking care of my child is that he is always in a comfortable and familiar environment. I don't have to worry about his safety. I don't have to worry about his basic needs being met."

"Able to see them grow. Spend more time with them. Childcare is expensive."

"I know what is best for my children and how to take care of them."

"I know what she's eating, when she uses the potty, knowing that she's safe and just her overall wellbeing."

# Challenges of taking care of children themselves - Parent Quotes

The most common response from parents was that they had no challenges. But some who had challenges described their difficulty managing work and care, having no time to themselves, and the impact on their mental health and mood.

"I get so stressed out because I never get alone time or 'me' time. I get depressed and short tempered."

"It's not an easy task doing it by myself. Not being able to work as much to make the money to get everything they need."

"Sometimes it gets overwhelming managing a baby along with the household chores."

"There is no challenge, but I do feel strained that I don't have a lot of childcare options or family support to have a break from parenting duties."

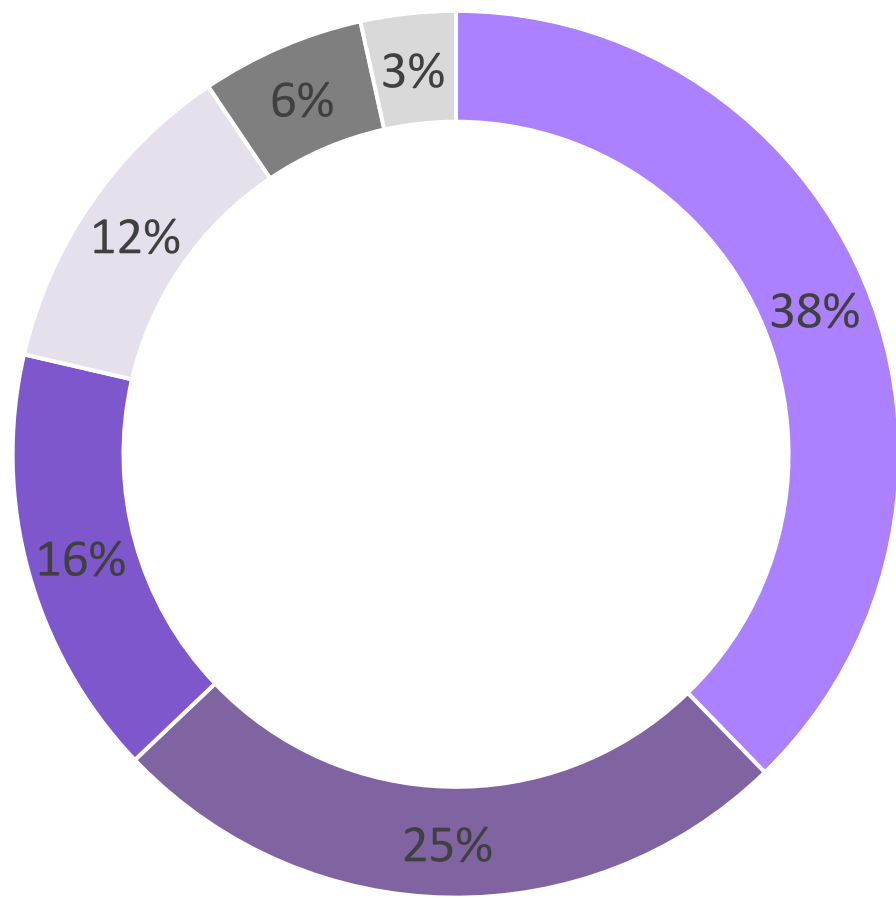
# About the Parents Taking our Third Survey

---

# About the Parents Taking our Third Survey

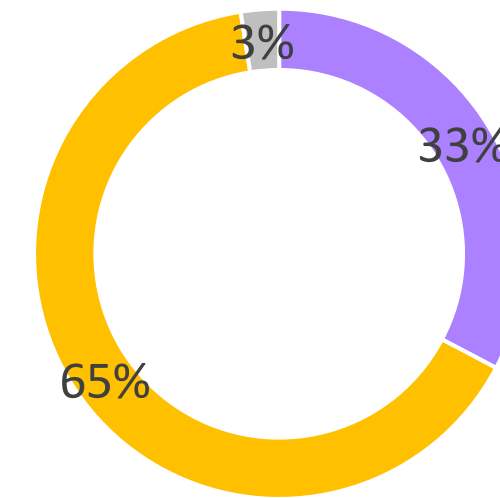
Parents were diverse in terms of race/ethnicity. Sixty-five percent of the parents are female. Three-quarters of families have two parents in their household.

Race and Ethnicity  
(318 parents)



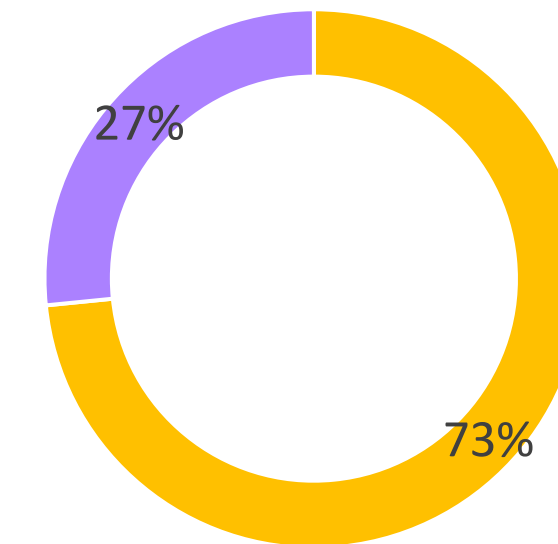
- White
- Black/African American
- Hispanic, Latine, or Spanish origin
- Asian
- 2 or more Races
- Middle Eastern or North African, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, and some other race category

Gender  
(318 parents)



- Male
- Female
- Do not wish to disclose

Number of Parents at home  
(316 parents)

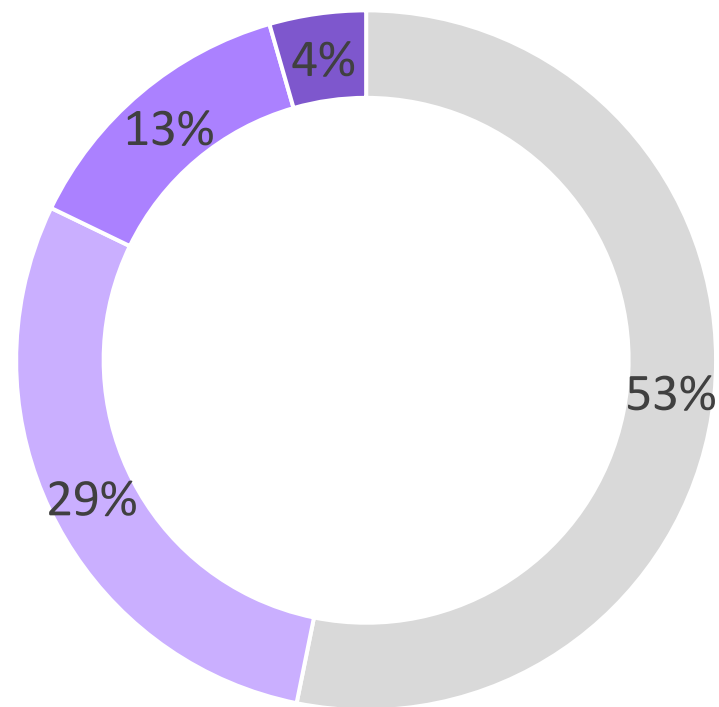


- Two Parents
- One Parent

# Financial State

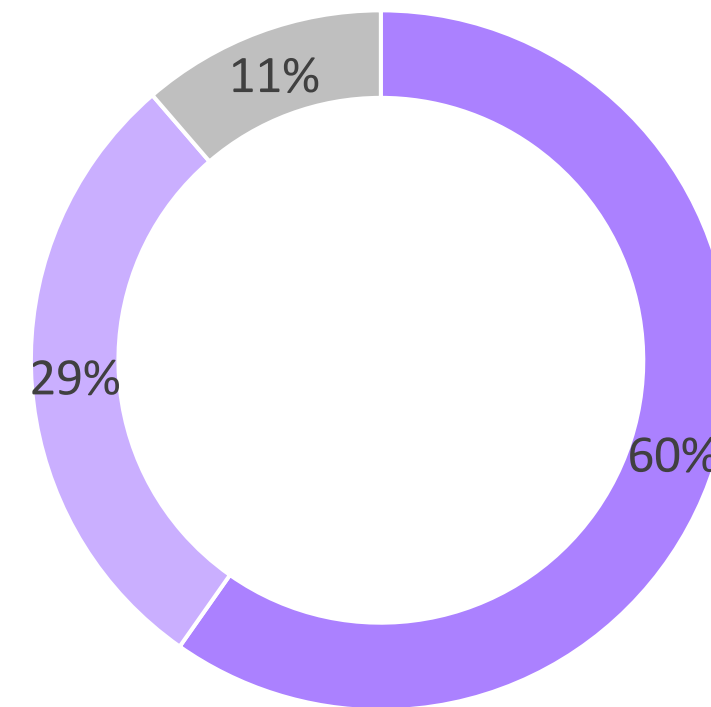
In our panel, 17% of parents shared that they have major or extreme financial problems. Almost 30% of parents were below or at 200% of Federal Poverty Level.

Family's Financial State  
(314 parents)



- No problems
- Minor problems
- Major problems
- Extreme problems

Income Distribution  
(318 parents)



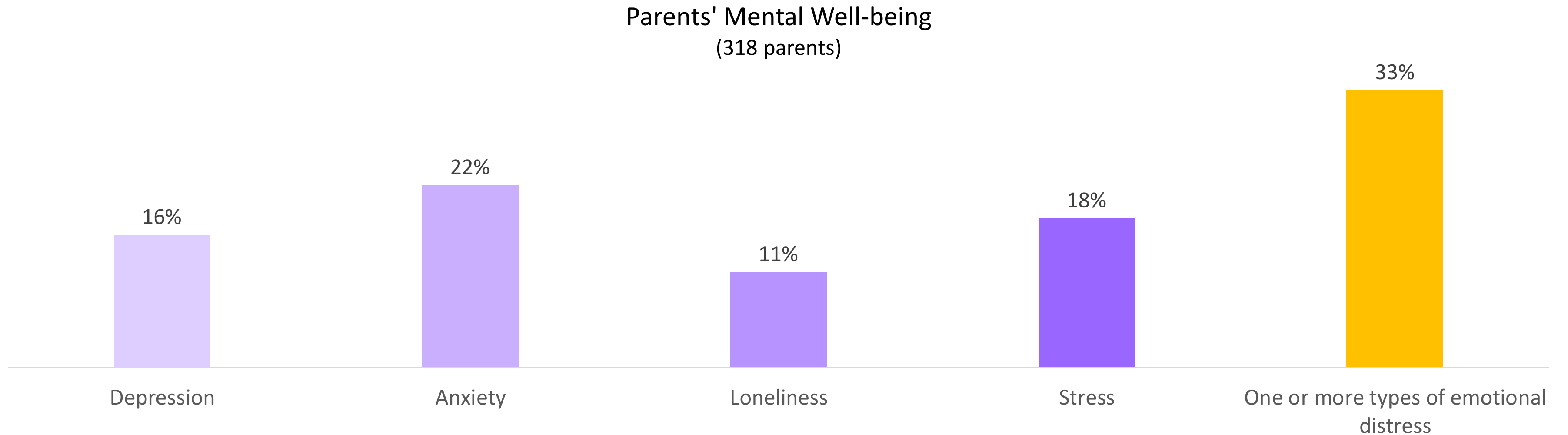
- Above FPL 200%
- Below or at FPL 200%
- Income not reported

*Note: 200% of the federal poverty level is \$39,440 for a family of 2, \$49,720 for a family of 3, and \$60,000 for a family of four.*



# Parents' Mental Well-being

In our panel, 33% of parents experienced high occurrences of distressing emotions such as stress, anxiety, depression, or loneliness in the past month.



*Parents experiencing frequent emotional distress include those who report experiencing anxiety or depression 'more than half the days' or 'nearly every day' in the past month, or who experienced stress or loneliness 'usually', or 'always' in the past month.*

# Thank you

---

Parents offer and receive different kinds of support to and from their friends, family, and network of people. Majority of them have more than one source of support. **Those who received support from others were more likely to stay hopeful during challenges and feel they could handle them**, and less likely to experience emotional distress than those who received no support from others. However, when we asked parents if they have a place in their communities where they feel a sense of belonging, majority of those who responded that there is no such place.

While the majority of parents on our panel are currently satisfied with their housing situation and consider it to be stable, **more than a third of parents experience some level of worry about paying rent or mortgage**. Many parents wish to own their own home; however, they experience financial obstacles to home ownership.

Moreover, parents shared their need to **have trustworthy, accessible, and high quality child care arrangements that suit their work schedules**, as well as the need to **receive more job benefits** that support them and their families.

## Our message to policymakers and elected officials

Stable and affordable housing, a supportive employment situation, and a suitable child care arrangement are institutional supports that every individual needs and deserves. Furthermore, having supportive relationships with the people around you (where you both receive and offer support) and having a place where you feel like you belong are indispensable in the face of hardships. They are indispensable to living a quality of life where you feel appreciated and cared for.

***Supporting families holistically requires us to prioritize supporting their ability to form community with others and develop healthy relationships where they take care of each other.***

# Acknowledgements

We are grateful to have the opportunity to make this research possible because of the support and contribution of Illinois Action for Children staff, our partners at the national RAPID survey at the Stanford Center on Early Childhood, and the organizations listed below who helped us recruit parents.

- 
- Altgeld-Riverdale Early Learning Coalition
  - Evanston Cradle to Career
  - Palatine Early Learning Alliance
  - Elgin Partnership for Early Learning
  - Jewish Early Childhood Collaborative
  - SPARK Aurora
  - We, The Village
  - Raising IL Coalition
  - YWCA Metropolitan Chicago
  - 4-C: Community Coordinated Child Care
  - Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI)
  - North Lawndale Early Learning Collaboration