



Results from Count on Mothers' September 2023 Study on the "Child Care for Working Families Act"

Count on Mothers **provides legislators with comprehensive first-hand data to help them make more informed decisions.** Each policy that we survey mothers on, across the country and political spectrum, is chosen based on what these surveyed mothers want to address. Every mother is welcomed.

In September 2023, Count on Mothers studied mothers' views on the "Child Care for Working Families Act." We do this because we believe that a mother's first-hand experience and knowledge is a critical source of information in the federal policy making process, particularly on bills that affect kids and families. In September 2023, 354 Mothers in 47 states and across the political spectrum completed the survey and shared their views. To learn more about Mothers' perspectives on this legislation, we also conducted interviews with 6 Mothers, including 2 conservatives, 2 moderates, and 2 liberals. We take this aggregate data and share it with Congressional legislators so they are educated on mothers' views on the "Child Care for Working Families Act," based on their first-hand experience.

Methodology

Design

The design is a quantitative, cross-sectional design.

Instrument

Survey questions are constructed based on main tenets of the Child Care for Working Families Act as well as questions to assess mothers' political ideology and state/ zip code of residence that describe the sample.

Sampling Procedure

Count on Mothers employs both purposive and snowball sampling strategies for a full month. Concerted efforts are made to advertise and distribute the survey to as many mothers as possible via Instagram and Google advertisements as well as via joining and announcing the survey on a wide array of mothers' Instagram groups – across political affiliation. Additionally, mothers who receive and/ or complete the survey were encouraged to distribute the survey

to mothers they believe will be interested in completing the survey.

Sample

354 Mothers completed the survey and reflected a range of political ideologies from very conservative to very liberal. They resided in 47 of 50 states. Count on Mothers will continue to recruit Mothers to complete our surveys in order for our sample to closely mirror national trends. In the 6 individual interviews, we included 2 Mothers who identified as liberal, 2 Mothers who identified as moderate, and 2 Mothers who identified as conservative.

Findings

On whether childcare costs should be capped at 7% of household income:

81% of Mothers who identified as conservative agreed with the idea that families should not pay more than 7% of their wages for childcare, while mothers who identified as very conservative were split – 38% agreed, 31% were unsure, 31% disagreed

91% of Mothers who identified as moderate agreed.

94% of Mothers who identified as liberal agreed.

On whether the federal government should pay for 90% of costs and states should pay for 10% of costs for eligible families in the first couple of years of this infrastructure program:

56% of Mothers who identified as conservative agreed with this idea and 44% of conservative Mothers disagreed or were uncertain, while 77% of Mothers who identified as very conservative disagreed with this idea and 23% agreed.

74% of Mothers who identified as moderate agreed with this idea, and 26% of moderate Mothers expressed uncertainty or disagreement.

80% of Mothers who identified as liberal and 88% of Mothers who identified as very liberal agreed with this idea, while 10% of liberal Mothers were uncertain or disagreed and 12% of very liberal Mothers were uncertain.

On whether the “Child Care for Working Families Act” would have a positive impact on their families:

61% of Mothers who identified as conservative believed it would and 39% of conservative Mothers were unsure or did not believe it would, while 69% of very conservative mothers were uncertain or disagreed with the idea, and 31% agreed.

90% of Mothers who identified as moderate agreed that it would have a positive impact on their family, and 10% of moderate Mothers expressed uncertainty or disagreement.

93% of Mothers who identified as liberal and 95% of Mothers who identified as very liberal agreed that it would, while 7% of liberal Mothers and 5% of very liberal Mothers expressed uncertainty or disagreement with the Act.

Mothers who completed the individual interviews believe:

- Costs associated with child care need to be modified, as they prohibit many families from accessing high-quality services.
- Accessibility issues impact access to child care, such as locations and hours of availability. Presently, logistics related to child care are making it difficult for Mothers to manage family and work responsibilities.
- Although there are many limitations, Mothers believe that child care is a very important resource. They recommend specific improvements, including key tenets of this legislation, so that child care can be more beneficial to both providers and families.

Actionable Insights at a Glance

- This bill contains one point of alignment across the political spectrum -

Mothers believe there should be more access to high-quality preschool programs for families with 3- and 4-year-olds.

Regarding access to child care for younger children of all ages, a Mother stated:

“Every parent cares for their child so much that they would do anything for them. But that love and devotion and care does not mean anything if you don't have a child care center, a preschool, that you can get your kid in and that you can afford. So this is where we have to work together, put our money where our mouth is. And you know, when we say we care about the middle class, we care about hard working Americans. They're out there, they're struggling so hard. This is one way to really help us.”

- Aside from very conservative Mothers who are split, the majority of Mothers across the political spectrum -

Believe families should not pay more than 7% of their wages for childcare.

Believe that to help pay for child care in the U.S., the federal government should pay for 90% of costs and states should pay for 10% of costs for eligible families for the first couple of years of the program.

Support the “Child Care for Working Families Act”

Expressing her support for this bill, a Mother commented:

“It's really exciting to see all the pieces in place that could really help to not only support working families, but the caregivers that are there day in and day out doing some of the hardest work that anyone has to do. And it's about time that we stepped up as a country, as a nation, as a community, to support child caregivers and families and make it easier for working families to actually work and to be part of the economy. So, I hope that this moves forward and stays in place. I think it reaches across the aisle and that families from all walks of life and all political perspectives would agree that for anyone to thrive, we have to have this in place.”

- Regarding the belief that families who make less than 85% of the state median income should receive free childcare -

Very liberal, liberal, and moderate mothers support this provision.

Conservative and very conservative mothers are opposed to or uncertain about the provision.

A Mother discussed her views on this aspect of the legislation:

“...A child never deserves or puts himself into a family, so providing it for them, for lower income families for free is very like, I agree and then I don't agree, like, cause someone's paying for it, you know, but then it's not that child's problem that they're in that situation.”

- Mothers were split on believing child care workers should be paid the same as elementary school teachers with the same experience and credentials.

Very liberal, liberal, and moderate mothers support this provision.

Very conservative and conservative mothers are largely opposed to or uncertain

about the provision.

Regarding compensation of child care workers, a Mother reflected as follows:

“And the reason we don't have high quality centers is because child care teachers are not paid enough to stay in their positions...And one of the most important things for young children is to have steady, consistent care. And the turnover I saw at these centers was bananas. I mean, you, you would have a lovely, caring teacher and you would go the month after and they'd say, ‘Hey, it's been great. This is my last week. I just can't afford to stay here.’”

Bill Component Questions

Should childcare costs be capped at 7% of your household income?

Belief	# of Mothers Responding	Percent of Sample
Strongly Agree	284	80%
Agree	37	10%
Uncertain	25	7%
Disagree	5	1%
Strongly Disagree	3	1%
	354	100%*

* On all tables, all percentages add up to 100% not accounting for rounding error.

On the above item, aside from very conservative mothers, Mothers were aligned across the political spectrum on this issue.

- 81% of Mothers who identified as conservative agreed with this statement and 19% of conservative mothers disagreed.
- Very conservative Mothers were split on this issue: 38% agreed with this statement,

31% were uncertain, and 31% voiced disagreement.

- 91% of Mothers who identified as moderate agreed with this statement. 9% of moderate Mothers expressed uncertainty or disagreement.
- 94% of Mothers who identified as liberal and 94% of Mothers who identified as very liberal agreed with this statement. 6% of very liberal mothers and 6% of liberal mothers voiced uncertainty.

Regarding comments shared during the individual interviews, a Mother who identified as moderate and supported this component of the bill stated:

“We actually are right under the cap of that 7% of our salary for the current day care we have. But yeah, like if our salary is the same and we could move to a place where day care is through the roof... it would make a huge difference, right? Part of the reason we're still here, even though our family's not here, is because child care is one of our concerns.”

Should families who make less than 85% of the state median income receive free child care?

Belief	# of Mothers Responding	Percent of Sample
Strongly Agree	240	68%
Agree	58	16%
Uncertain	31	9%
Disagree	17	5%
Strongly Disagree	8	2%
	354	100%

On the above item, the trend showed that liberal and moderate Mothers agreed on this item while conservative Mothers and very conservative Mothers were more likely to not

show support. For example,

- Conservative mothers were not in favor of this component. 75% who identified as conservative were uncertain or disagreed with this issue while 25% of conservative Mothers who identified as conservative agreed with this issue. Very conservative Mothers continued this trend as 74% of them disagreed with this statement while 26% supported the issue.
- 81% of Mothers who identified as moderate agreed with this statement. 19% of moderate Mothers expressed uncertainty or disagreement.
- 91% of Mothers who identified as liberal and 99% of Mothers who identified as very liberal agreed with this statement. 9% of liberal Mothers were uncertain or disagreed while 1% of very liberal Mothers voiced uncertainty.

While many conservative Mothers from the survey disagreed with this aspect of the bill, a conservative Mother who participated in an interview discussed the potential limitations and benefits of making child care free for children from lower income families:

“Like child care is a joke, and I don't know why you would put your kids in that situation. And I get that some have to, and so a child never deserves or puts himself into a family, so providing it for them, for lower income families for free is very like, I agree and then I don't agree, cause someone's paying for it, you know, but then it's not that child's problem that they're in that situation.”

Should the U.S. federal government pay for 90% of costs and states pay for 10% of costs for eligible families for the first few years of the infrastructure program?

Belief	# of Mothers Responding	Percent of Sample
Strongly Agree	185	52%
Agree	86	24%
Unsure	62	18%
Disagree	10	3%
Strongly Disagree	11	3%

	354	100%
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On the above item, aside from very conservative Mothers, the trend showed Mothers supporting the issue. For example,

- 56% of Mothers who identified as conservative agreed with this issue while 44% of conservative Mothers were uncertain or voiced disagreement.
- 77% of Mothers who identified as very conservative disagreed with this issue while 23% agreed with this statement.
- 74% of Mothers who identified as moderate agreed with this statement. 26% of moderate Mothers expressed uncertainty or disagreement.
- 80% of Mothers who identified as liberal and 88% of Mothers who identified as very liberal agreed with this statement. 10% of liberal Mothers were uncertain or disagreed and 12% of very liberal Mothers were uncertain.

A liberal Mother remarked that federal and state governments taking responsibility was sensible:

“You know, like the government, if they do decide, the federal government decides to provide, you know, a threshold of 90% or more down. I mean, they've been doing that for the military for decades now. So, from that standpoint, it makes sense because the more we can work, the more taxes we can pay. So, it seems like it would pay itself off, but I do think employers really should have more of a say.”

Should child care workers be paid the same as elementary school teachers with the same experience and credentials?

Belief	# of Mothers Responding	Percent of Sample
Strongly Agree	240	68%
Agree	72	20%
Unsure	23	7%
Disagree	14	4%
Strongly Disagree	5	1%
	354	100 %

On the above item, very liberal, liberal, and moderate mothers agreed with this issue; however, there was variation within each political ideology and particularly, a conservative split between conservative Mothers who supported it versus those who were uncertain or did not. A majority of very conservative Mothers did not support this provision.

- 50% of Mothers who identified as conservative agreed with this issue while 50% of conservative Mothers were uncertain or did not support this issue.
- 69% of very conservative Mothers uncertain or disagreed with this statement while 31% of very conservative Mothers agreed with this statement.
- 89% of Mothers who identified as moderate agreed with this statement. 11% of moderate Mothers expressed uncertainty or disagreement.
- 96% of Mothers who identified as liberal and 93% of Mothers who identified as very liberal agreed with this statement. 4% of very liberal Mothers and 7% of liberal Mothers expressed uncertainty or disagreement.

A Mother who identified as liberal discussed compensation of child care workers during her interview:

“They are doing some of the hardest work in our communities and they deserve to be recognized and paid appropriately. Not only for their physical but emotional and mental sacrifice every single day that they are committing to our communities and our children.”

Should there be more access to high-quality preschool programs for families with 3- and 4-year-olds?

Belief	# of Mothers Responding	Percent of Sample
Strongly Agree	293	83%
Agree	50	14%
Unsure	6	2%
Disagree	3	1%
Strongly Disagree	1	0.3%
	354	100.0%

On the above item, mothers agreed across the political spectrum. For example,

- 75% of Mothers who identified as conservative and 77% of Mothers who identified as very conservative agreed with this issue while 25% of Mothers who were conservative and 23% of Mothers who were very conservative expressed uncertainty or disagreement.

- 99% of Mothers who identified as moderate agreed with this statement, and 1% of moderate Mothers expressed disagreement.
- 99% of Mothers who identified as liberal and 100% of Mothers who identified as very liberal agreed with this statement, and 2% of liberal Mothers expressed uncertainty.

Would the "Child Care for Working Families Act" have a positive impact on your family?

Belief	# of Mothers Responding	Percent of Sample
Strongly Agree	270	76%
Agree	50	14%
Unsure	26	7%
Disagree	6	2%
Strongly Disagree	2	1%
	354	100%

For the above item, Mothers across the political spectrum supported this item with very strong support from all but very conservative Mothers.

- 61% of Mothers who identified as conservative supported the item and 39% of conservative Mothers did not support the item.
- 69% of very conservative mothers were uncertain or disagreed with supporting the Child Care for Working Families Act while 31% agreed that it would have a positive impact.
- 90% of Mothers who identified as moderate agreed that it would have a positive impact, while 10% of moderate Mothers expressed uncertainty or

disagreement with the Child Care for Working Families Act.

- 93% of Mothers who identified as liberal and 95% of Mothers who identified as very liberal agreed that it would have a positive impact, while 7% of liberal Mothers and 5% of very liberal Mothers expressed uncertainty or disagreement with the Child Care for Working Families Act.

Mothers across the political spectrum who were interviewed also expressed their strong support for this bill. For instance, a conservative Mother stated:

“But yeah, so I mean, the problems that like could have been avoided in our marriage if I would have put our kids in daycare and if we would have felt comfortable with it, but he agrees with it. He’s like, yeah, I would never put our kids there. It just, but it has taken a toll... A toddler is the one that’s going to try your patience, need your full attention, need those things. And it’s a lot more work. They need to be paid appropriately. And if they’re paid appropriately, they’re probably going to take their jobs more seriously.”

Similarly, a moderate Mother also endorsed key elements of this legislation:

“I think it’s definitely the right step. I wish that step happened like eons ago. It just seems like it’s common sense. We’re at a point where it’s just necessary, it’s not optional anymore. We’re at a point where there’s just not enough access to child care. So the fact that it’s more encompassing of middle-class families is just huge, it’s gonna be a huge benefit to everyone. Yeah, so I really, and also really focusing on day care worker wages, child care worker wages is really important.... And they do a great job of keeping my child happy, healthy, and fed. So yeah, it’s really important.”

A liberal Mother described the advocacy she is doing in favor of policies which support child care and other provisions for families:

“The money is in the budget in other countries to support families. And so now we’re organizing around that, but I’m organizing with child care workers, with other moms, with other dads, with widows, with people all across racial, economic, religious backgrounds, people I never thought that I would ally with kind of in that political sense. Our common cause truly is child care and our families. Like our number one thing is making sure our families are well, which means making sure our communities are well. Like it just emanates out. And it starts with us, but what we need is federal support.”

Additional Themes

Additional analyses of data collected from the individual interviews with the 6 Mothers resulted in the identification of a few themes of particular interest:

Concerns Related to Cost

Across the board, Mothers who were interviewed were very concerned about the financial burdens associated with child care. A Mother who identified as conservative described the challenges she has encountered balancing work, finances, and child care responsibilities:

“Like, especially when I was younger and I had only been in my industry and in my roles for so many years. So, I was still like starting, or I was just starting to like move up in my career. And so I wasn't making near what I wanted to be, especially with that expenditure. It's like, we were very limited on, like we couldn't go on many vacations. And I was a single mom for the first five years of her life. So it was one income and paying, you know, 1200, 1300 bucks a month for three days a week of childcare while commuting an hour each way. So, it was like when we wanted to take a break and take a vacation and go somewhere, just me and her, like that would have been nice, right? But the budget was like, I still had the mortgage, right? But there was no child support or anything like that. So, like financially it was tight. You know, I still saved for her college and things like that. We definitely could have enjoyed a lot more and done a lot more and traveled some. And I feel like kind of combined with that is the stress about how serious you have to be at work because you need more money and you're spending more than you should be. But it's by necessity, right?”

A Mother who identified as liberal also reported on financial challenges, describing difficulties taking care of her family and herself:

“And one thing that just came to mind too with your question about the economics from before, so my son's monthly day care cost is \$1,300. Since I'm pregnant, I just got the news that I need to have iron infusions because my iron is low and that's a risk factor for excessive bleeding post-pregnancy. My iron infusions are \$1,300 for each treatment. So now it's a question of trade-offs. And do I take my son to day care so I can continue to work? Or do I get the medical treatment that I need to help this other baby and myself? And those are the kinds of questions that a lot of families are asking themselves and having to figure out.”

Another Mother who identified as liberal also commented on her struggles affording child care despite educational and occupational advantages:

"I have a master's degree, work full-time, have four years, I'm on my way to student debt relief on that road. Anyway, and we're paying so much more than 7% of our income and it is crippling us. And for right now, like I'm of the age and my family's in a position where we're talking about what we want our family to look like and we do want two kids. And we cannot afford, as two grown adults with two full-time jobs, I have a bachelor's and a master's, my husband works for a law firm, like we've checked all the boxes, we're doing good. We cannot afford to have two kids in daycare. And frankly, like if we had twins next, which is not a decision that's really kind of up to us, like what does happen? Is it bankruptcy? I don't know. Like we can't afford it. Do I quit my job? I don't know. But something has to happen. Something has to give."

Accessibility-Related Obstacles

In addition to financial struggles, mothers detailed problems accessing child care, such as difficulties identifying conveniently-located child care options, managing work schedules so that their children could access these services, and navigating transportation issues. A moderate Mother shared:

"We were able to find a spot near my office, but it's downtown and you have to deal with traffic. And I was a hybrid worker, so going downtown, even though we're very close to downtown, it's just, it adds like an hour and a half sometimes with all the construction. So yeah, and then we eventually moved to the one that's closer to us, but that's affiliated with a major hospital chain here. And we can't get any of the additional like, before care or after care, because it's for their workers. But both me and my husband, before we had our son, both had to be at work at 7:00. So how does that work when both of us had to, when there's no child care that starts at 6:00? We only found one place and it was really far out of the way. And it wasn't even like 6:00 a.m., it was like 6:30, 6:45, so it was really cutting it close."

Additionally, another Moderate Mother talked about the importance of transportation options for families accessing child care:

"The other thing is, is like the one reason our previous daycare was a lot easier for them to staff was because they were on the major bus lines. So like anyone from anywhere in the city could take the bus in versus here, you really need a car to get to work. So that makes a huge difference, even though they're like two neighborhoods apart."

Child Care as Beneficial for Families

Although challenges related to the costs and logistics of child care are substantial, several Mothers affirmed its benefits and conveyed their commitment to providing

this resource to their children, especially if improvements are made. A Liberal Mother said the following:

“Every parent cares for their child so much that they would do anything for them. But that love and devotion and care does not mean anything if you don't have a child care center, a preschool, that you can get your kid in and that you can afford. So this is where we have to work together, put our money where our mouth is.”

Regarding the potential benefits of child care, a Mother who identified as moderate commented:

“But if we look at the brain of a newborn baby and all the way through age five, those are very formative years. The brain grows so quickly and the energetic imprint so to speak is established most often during that period. So there's a level of opportunity or space in terms of opportunity that we have to really shape the future, meaning the adults. But if we don't know how to do that, then we are kind of creating a space where children are imprinted with a system that's dysregulated. And then their brains are looking for solutions to regulate as they learn and grow. Child care and access to child care is for many, many people in this country that space, because their children spend so many hours of the week there. So that means then if that's the space where we're really doing a lot of this kind of formation of children then we really need to gather and make sure that the space, the environment, understands best practices, that the environment understands how the brain of a young baby works and how it develops throughout the years, but also most importantly, the needs of the family and the stressors that come along with dropping your child off, going to work, balancing home life and finances and all of the above.”

Another Mother who identified as moderate succinctly summarized her impressions:

“They do a great job of keeping my child happy, healthy, and fed. So yeah, it's really important.”

State of Residence Question

Mothers reside in 47 states. The states that have the most representation are Ohio (80), California (36), Virginia (16), Pennsylvania (14), Illinois (14), New York (13), and North Carolina (13).