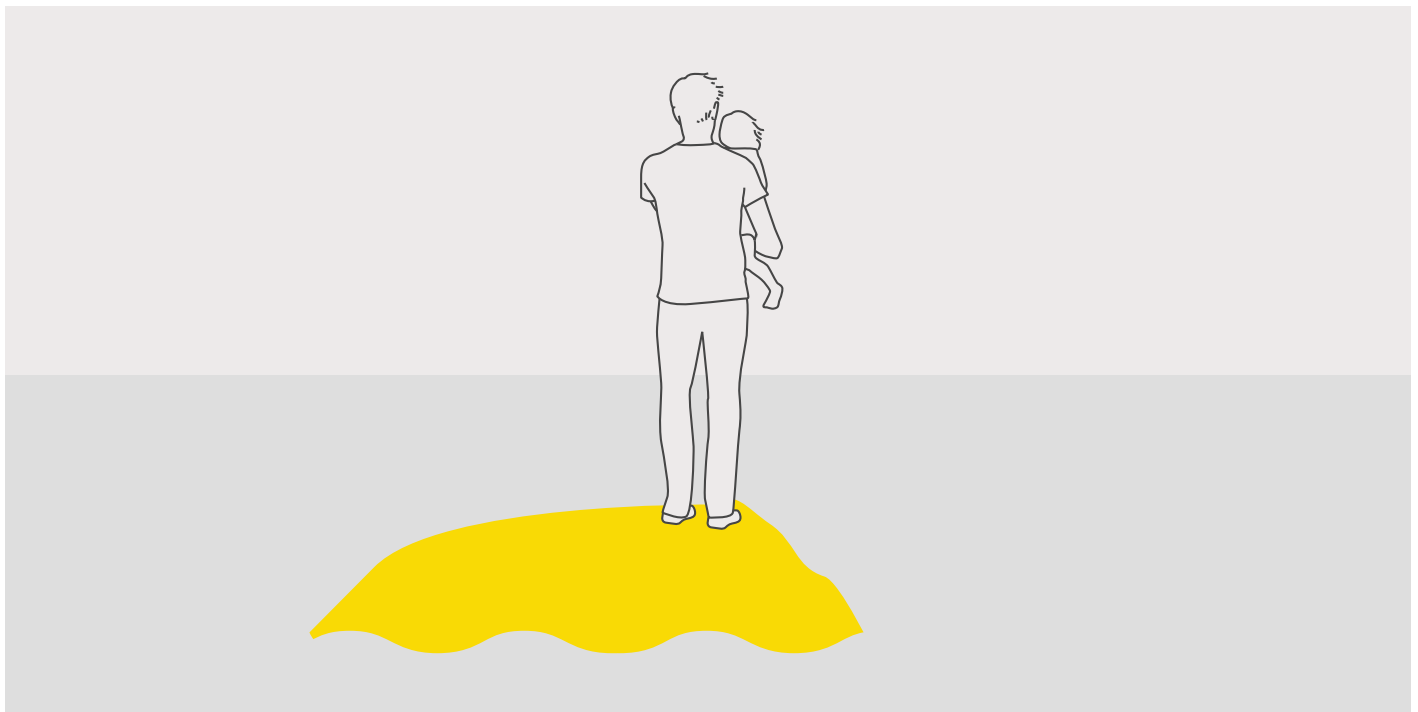


CHILD CARE DIFFICULTIES ON THE RISE FOR PARENTS OF YOUNG CHILDREN

In a [previous fact sheet](#), we described how child care staff shortages are negatively affecting the emotional well-being of parents, young children, and child care providers. Here, we update this picture by looking at more recent trends in child care challenges and disruptions from both parents' and child care providers' perspectives.

"We are worried about losing child care due to COVID-19 exposure and lost income... Finances are getting harder. I feel like our employers have run out of empathy and flexibility for us with young families. It's very isolating and sad."

Parent in California



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Findings from our surveys indicate that in January 2022, parents faced dramatically increased difficulties accessing child care for their young children. These difficulties significantly affected parents' emotional well-being and ability to work, which further impacted young children's emotional well-being. The cancelation/closure

of child care centers/programs also significantly influenced the emotional well-being of child care providers. These disruptions occurred in the context of ongoing challenges in child care, including caregivers leaving the field due to low wages and lack of benefits and support, and the Omicron surge that impacted many communities this winter.

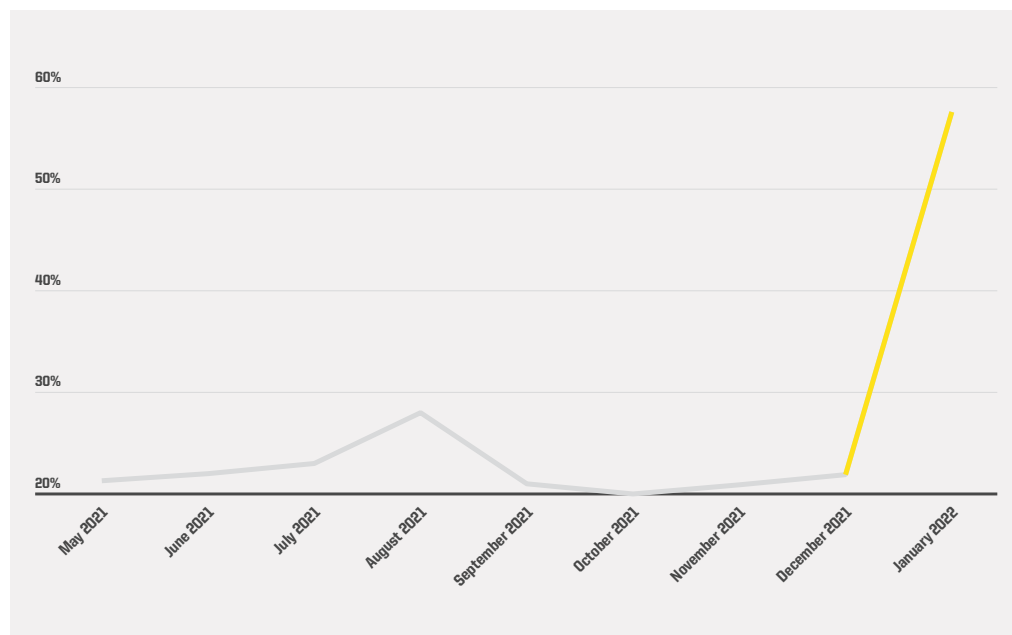
IN JANUARY 2022, FAMILIES OF YOUNG CHILDREN EXPERIENCED INCREASED DIFFICULTIES FINDING CHILD CARE OPTIONS.

- The percent of families in our household survey that reported difficulty finding space in a home- or center-based program increased dramatically from 22% in December 2021 to 58% in January 2022.
- Families also found it difficult to find other types of child care. In January 2022 (which was the first time we asked this question), 34% of parents reported having difficulty finding babysitters or nannies, either as an alternative or supplement to their other child care arrangement.

“Child care is so inconsistent. It’s incredibly hard to work with two little ones around and I am considering leaving my job to ensure I can care for them.”

Parent in Illinois

Percent of parents that reported difficulty finding space in child care



“In the past month we have been able to send our daughter only one day due to COVID exposures, snow, holidays, and more COVID exposures. My husband and I have been working from home but it’s very difficult to meet work expectations while juggling child care.”

Parent in Virginia

NOT ONLY WAS CHILD CARE HARD TO FIND, BUT FAMILIES OF YOUNG CHILDREN ALSO EXPERIENCED INCREASED CHILD CARE DISRUPTIONS.

- As reported elsewhere, many households with young children across the US experienced disruptions to child care, school and work as a result of the Omicron surge. In our household survey, the percent of parents who reported child care disruptions increased from 23% in December 2021 to 44% in January 2022. These disruptions included child care provider cancellations and closures due to staffing challenges or COVID-19 exposures.
- Among families who experienced a child care provider cancellation/closure, 38% reported the disruption lasted a week or longer, whereas only 30% reported the disruption occurred for a day or less.
- These findings are mirrored in our child care workforce survey data. In January 2022, 36% of providers reported cancellation/closure in the previous two weeks. In contrast, in November 2021, 24% of providers reported cancellations/closures in the previous two weeks.

“[Our biggest concern is] child care, specifically during all of the times when my kids are home for weeks due to an exposure. I had to quit my full-time job to be more flexible with child care.”

Parent in Georgia

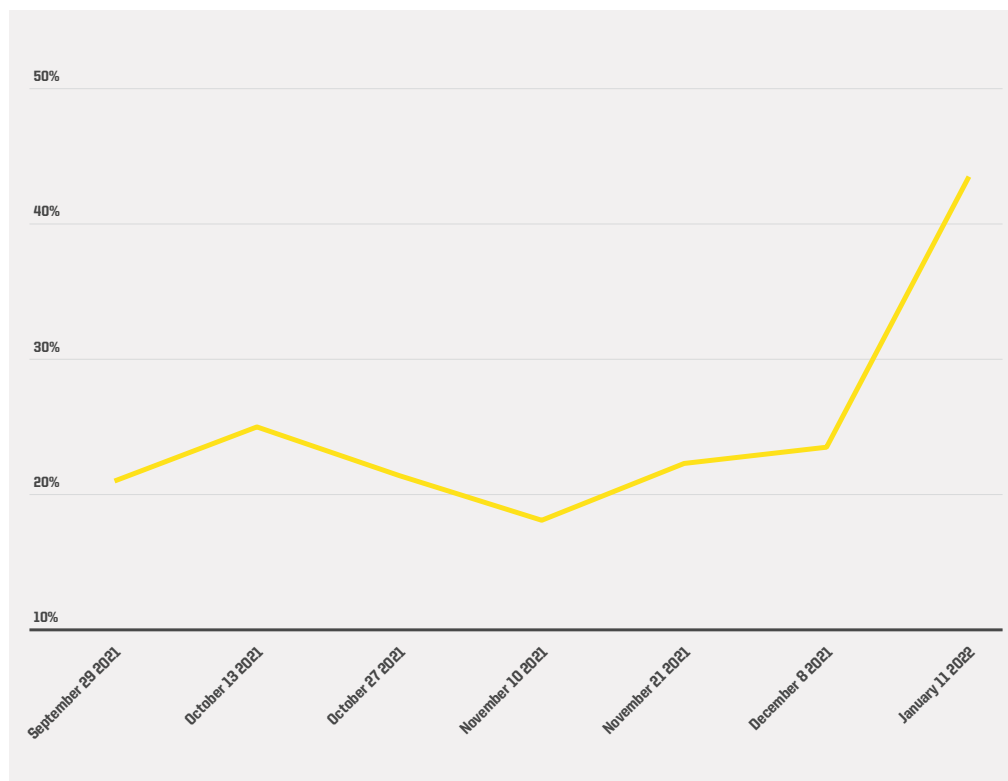
“It is scary knowing how transmissible Omicron is. My students are too young to be vaccinated, so I worry about them getting sick.”

Provider in Massachusetts

“We increased the cleaning protocol, which is exhausting at the end of each day. We have been working 16 to 20 hours per day to maintain our facility clean and open.”

Provider in Washington

Percent of parents who experienced child care cancellation/closure in previous 2 weeks



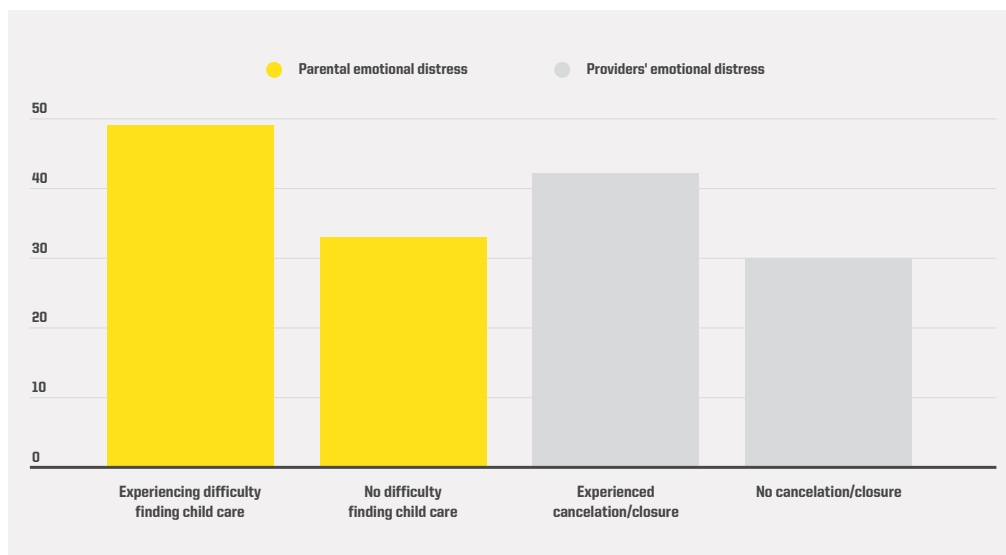
CHILD CARE DISRUPTIONS NEGATIVELY AFFECTED PARENTS' EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING AND ABILITY TO WORK, WHICH FURTHER IMPACTED CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING.

- Parents who had difficulty finding care for their children reported significantly higher levels of emotional distress* compared to those who did not report child care difficulties. Additionally, 71% of parents reported that difficulty finding child care has impacted their ability to work.
- As we have reported previously, parents' emotional well-being directly influences their child's emotional well-being. In January 2022, parents' elevated emotional distress was significantly associated with children's increased emotional distress.

The cancelation/closure of child care centers/programs also negatively affected providers' emotional

well-being. In January 2022, providers who experienced cancelation/closure reported significantly higher levels of emotional distress than those who did not experience cancelation/closure. For providers, like with parents and families, child care closures and cancelations may mean that work schedules have been inconsistent and unpredictable, which could result in a loss of income. The effect of these disruptions is to undermine families' and child care providers' sense of stability and routine, and to introduce additional stressors into their everyday lives. We will continue to monitor trends in parent, child and provider well-being, and household and provider economic well-being this year.

Child care disruptions are associated with increased emotional distress for parents, providers and young children



"[My biggest concern right now is] having to close my daycare down because of an exposure, either mine or a family member's."

Provider in Minnesota

"[My biggest concern right now is] to keep the preschool community safe. To prevent COVID cases. To have access for COVID tests for the community. To survive financially if we have to close due to COVID."

Provider in California

*

We ask parents and child care providers about their experiences with four symptoms of emotional distress: stress, loneliness, anxiety, and depression. Responses for each symptom were averaged to create a single score and transformed to a range of 0-100 for each parent. Child emotional distress was calculated in the same manner.

ABOUT THE RAPID PROJECT

Data in this fact sheet are based on the RAPID household and child care provider surveys. The analysis on difficulty finding child care was based on responses from 4,028 caregivers between April 2021 and January 2022. These caregivers represent a range of voices: 5.09% are Black/African American, 12.34% are Latinx, and 33.86% live at or below 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL). Analyses on child care data experiences during January 2022 were based on 936 caregivers (11.21% Black/African American, 13.62% are Latinx, and 32.76% live at or below 200% the FPL).

The child care provider analyses are based on responses from 817 providers during January 2022. These providers represent a range of voices: 5.97% are Black/African American, 10.60% are Latinx, and 46.43% live at or below 200% of the FPL. Proportions/percentages are calculated based on the item-level response rates,

not on the total sample. The data for these analyses are not weighted.

The RAPID project includes a survey of caregivers with children under age 6 and a survey of child care providers and other adults who care for children under age 6.

These surveys are designed to gather essential information continuously regarding the needs, health-promoting behaviors, and well-being of children and their families and important adults in their lives.

RAPID collects data monthly from 1,000 caregivers and child care providers in all 50 states. The surveys are national in scope, though not technically nationally representative. RAPID collects snapshots of data across time and can also assess trends longitudinally.

For more information about RAPID study design and methods, see [here](#).

RAPID is under the direction of Philip Fisher, PhD, Director of the Center for Translational Neuroscience at the University of Oregon

1,000+

**surveyed
bi-weekly**

93

surveys

13,000+

**unique
households**

50

US states

