



2024 Banff Childcare Needs Assessment

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Land Acknowledgement

Raising a child in the natural environment of Banff National Park is a privilege. Beyond interactions on the streets and events animating the days- lies the steadfast peace and presence of the land. What the land provides and what residents receive may not easily be conceptualized, especially for children and youth. The intentional commitment we adults make to appreciate and give back to the land positions us to support Banff's children to notice and do the same.

In the spirit of respect, reciprocity, and truth, we honour and acknowledge that the townsite of Banff is located on traditional Treaty 7 territory. These sacred lands are a gathering place for the Niitsitapi from the Blackfoot Confederacy, of whom the Siksika, Kainai, and Piikani First Nations are part; the Îyârhe Nakoda of the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Goodstoney First Nations; the Tsuut'ina First Nation; the Métis Nation of Alberta, and many others whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to enrich our vibrant community.

The Bow Valley has also long been important to the Ktunaxa and Secwépemc First Nations who traditionally occupied lands and used the watersheds of the Columbia and Kootenay Rivers and the eastern slopes of the Rockies. The area was also used by the Mountain Cree clan of Chief Peechee, and the Dene of the far north and far south.

The Town of Banff is continuously learning about the rich and complex histories of Indigenous peoples in this region and is working to refine how the organization can better understand and acknowledge Indigenous peoples that have and continue to contribute to the area. We recognize the land as an act of reconciliation and gratitude to those whose territory we reside on or are visiting and acknowledge the many First Nations and Métis who have lived in and cared for these lands for generations.

May we consider the depth of benefit which the land provides us and raise our children to be actively aware of the ways we can care for and give back to it.



Acknowledgements

This report was informed by many residents of Banff, including parents & caregivers, current and former frontline childcare educators, and members of the business community. Thank you to these community members for sharing their stories and experiences as they relate to childcare and life in Banff.

Licensed pre-school and childcare providers in Banff also contributed to this assessment in many ways. These partners identified a number of challenges, successes and opportunities which they observe from their provider role, many who have worked in the childcare sector in Banff for over a decade. We are grateful for the contribution and support of:

- Banff Rundle Playschool
- Puzzles Child Care & Banff Child Care Centre, The Day Care Society of Banff
- Bow Valley Family Child Care, Davar Child Care Society
- Out of School Club, Town of Banff

An additional thank you to the Town of Canmore for sharing their knowledge and experience in executing the 2023 Town of Canmore Childcare Assessment.

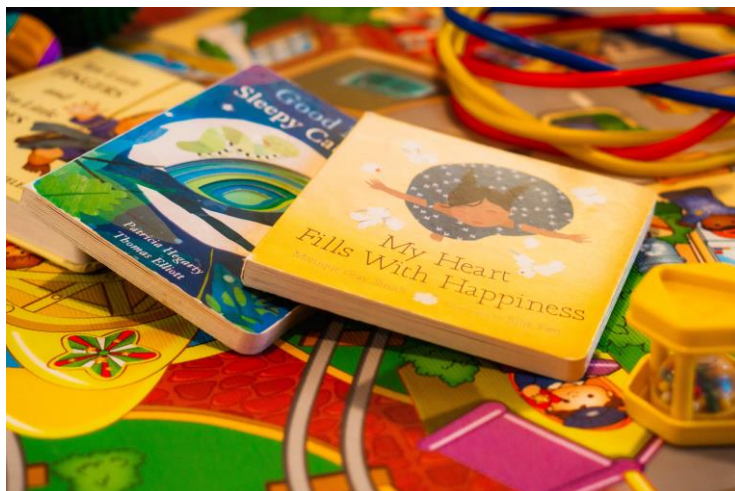


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Report Summary

The 2024 Childcare Needs Assessment was conducted by the Town of Banff, FCSS & Social Programs Department following a review of family-specific information documented in the 2023 Community Social Assessment (CSA).

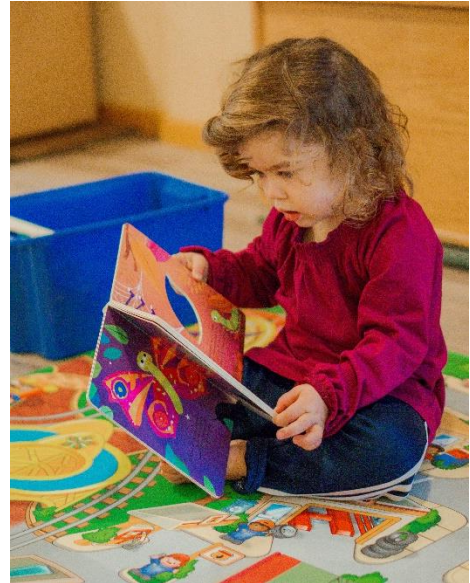
A notable finding from the CSA demonstrated a substantial decline in the number of two-parent families living in Banff. “The federal census statistics show fewer two-parent families with children from 47% in 2016 to 39% in 2021. Although this trend can be seen in other jurisdictions such as Jasper, Canmore and Whistler, the changes these communities have seen are significantly less than the marked change seen in Banff over this five-year period” (Town of Banff, 2023).

Finding suitable childcare was one of the primary challenges identified by families during the CSA engagement, as well as the overall cost of living and housing.

Although Alberta’s most recent *Community Childcare Coverage Appendix* identifies Banff as having “adequate” childcare coverage, (the most favorable rating), its findings demonstrate a notable contrast to the information received from Banff parents and caregivers, childcare educators and providers, and the business community. The perspectives from these populations all echoed the findings of the CSA, citing the need for more childcare spaces in Banff.

Stating the number of licensed childcare spaces in a community provides one singular metric. Available childcare space does not always equate to spaces which meet the needs of families. Further information on days and times of care, and the age of children most in need are worth consideration.

The 2024 Childcare Needs Assessment shares local data and provides insight into current childcare experiences from a diversity of roles and perspectives. It explores the intricacies of childcare service provision, highlighting the strengths of the local childcare sector and recommendations to improve the state of local childcare.



Introduction

High quality childcare is an essential service with benefits reaching far beyond the support it provides to children and families, the impact of which should not be underestimated. The work being done by childcare educators to support foundational brain development, build competence and understand emotional intelligence has invaluable, life-long impacts. “High-quality early education and childcare for young children improves physical and cognitive outcomes for the children and can result in enhanced school readiness” (Donoghue, 2017). Well-adjusted, resilient children develop into well-adjusted, resilient adults, able to contribute to society in positive ways and reduce reliance on government funded supports and intervention.

The ability for parents and caregivers to engage in the workforce is directly linked to the level of childcare services available. The childcare sector both enables workforce participation while simultaneously creating opportunities for employment. “Investments in childcare create more jobs compared to similar



levels of investment in other industries, by not only creating direct employment for childcare workers, but also enabling growth in women's labor force participation” (Government of Canada, 2025). Job opportunities allow skilled childcare educators to exercise their competencies while supporting the delivery of essential services.

Quality childcare is a valued asset in building strong and connected communities. “It helps newcomers integrate into their new neighborhoods, and fosters appreciation and respect for diversity” (AECEA, 2025). Families who access quality childcare programs are more closely connected to local resources and are more likely to be involved in the community.

The immediate and longer-lasting benefits which accompany quality childcare provision are extensive. What is good and necessary for families is truly good for the economy, workforce and communities. Challenges exist in communities where essential childcare service provision is unable to meet the demand for care- as is the case for Banff. Up to this point, the Town of Banff did not have a current, holistic set of data which could depict the state of childcare in the community. The 2016 Bow Valley Childcare Needs Assessment and 2023 Community Social Assessment both included relevant information from parents and caregivers, however further childcare-specific data from frontline staff, licensed providers and businesses was not gathered- leaving an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the assets and challenges in the sector.

Banff's unique characteristics create an interesting picture of licensed, rural childcare- one well worth exploring to understand the complexities of present needs, current service delivery and creative solutions for the future.

Childcare Needs Assessment Goals

- Gather information which represents the diversity of childcare experiences in Banff
- Gain a wholesome understanding of the state of childcare in Banff
- Formulate recommendations which address challenges and seize opportunities to improve the state of childcare in Banff
- Support generative discussions and creative ideas to actively address childcare needs in the community

Methodology

The 2024 Childcare Needs Assessment gathered information via three online surveys, aimed at three distinct populations in Banff:

- Parents & caregivers
- Frontline childcare educators
- Business owners and managers

A public marketing campaign was initiated in the fall of 2024 to engage parents and caregivers, followed by further promotion to invite participation from both the childcare sector and business community in late 2024 and early 2025.

The public engagement phase of the assessment obtained both quantitative and qualitative data to inform this report. Gathering both types of data allows for the inclusion of stories and amplifies the voices of residents in a deeper way. The complimentary relationship between qualitative and quantitative data produces a higher degree of information- each able to shine light in areas the other does not.

Qualitative data was collected via online surveys and meetings with licensed childcare providers in Banff, while quantitative data was obtained through local, licensed childcare providers, Statistics Canada and the Government of Alberta.

Online surveys included multiple choice and open-ended questions and offered areas for commentary. Questions posed to parents & caregivers included those related to childcare needs, barriers to access, quality of care, program fees and how childcare (or lack thereof) affects one's family. Businesses were asked about the ways in which childcare affected employee attraction, retention and scheduling. Questions for front-line, childcare educators included those related to workplace experiences, compensation and the most important factors affecting their decision to stay or leave the industry.

Qualitative data responses from open-ended questions were reviewed and categorized according to the nature of the response. These responses were then tallied and sorted to demonstrate the frequency of responses as they relate to each category.

The cumulative survey data, from all three surveys, was reviewed and analyzed with municipal Family and Community Support Services staff and licensed childcare providers in Banff to support the formulation of report recommendations.

Current State of Childcare

The global COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the essential role childcare plays in the economy. At that time, licensed childcare program closures, restrictions and additional health measures made access to childcare especially challenging and at times prohibitive. As a result, parents and caregivers were unable to work, relying on ad-hoc childcare solutions to participate in the workforce. Now post-pandemic, diligent work by Banff's licensed childcare providers has re-established a level of childcare service delivery which was only seen before the pandemic occurred.

"Since getting childcare...we seem happier and less stressed, spend more time with our children... we are beginning to look at engaging more in the community and less being in a state of survival in our home- not getting out." (Banff parent/caregiver)

Although services are back up to speed, the realization that current childcare offerings are still not enough to support Banff families remains. Local efforts to address this challenge are more active than ever before, with creative discussions between childcare partners well underway, and targeted supports from the government being accessed.

Provincial Government Support

Alberta signed the Canada-Alberta Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (ELCCA) with the federal government in July 2021- adding \$3.8 billion over five years to support childcare in the province. Funds intended to improve affordability, accessibility, quality and inclusivity for the childcare sector in Alberta. Distribution of these funds through various provincial grants has provided a variety of support to families, childcare staff and licensed childcare providers in some of the following ways:

- **Space Creation Grant-** The provincial Space Creation Grant was launched July 2022 providing one-time funding to create more spaces at new and existing licensed childcare programs. Through this grant, the province hopes to create up to 68,700 new childcare spaces by March 2026. A primary determinant for receipt of funds was the demonstrated need for more spaces, based on the Community Childcare Coverage in Alberta Appendix. According to the most recent Childcare Appendix, Banff is identified as a community of "adequate coverage" with a

provincially reported 49% coverage rate for licensed early childhood care. Communities below 33% coverage are considered “in need”- hence by this measurement Banff is not identified as “in need” of childcare.

- **Wage-Top Ups-** Licensed childcare providers in Banff have been accessing provincial government support to enhance childcare educator wages. Providers can obtain wage top-ups to supplement the hourly wages of childcare educators, depending on the educator’s level of certification. These top-up amounts were increased in January of 2023 and can be seen in Figure 4 below. Further support for childcare educators includes funding for professional development opportunities and supplemental funding for operators to cover the staffing costs for times when educators are absent for this purpose.
- **Affordability Grant-** The Government of Alberta’s Affordability Grant offers funding to eligible programs to reduce parent fees and includes funding to support program operations in lieu of fee reductions. In 2017, a \$25 per day childcare pilot program was initiated and starting April 1, 2025, a provincially set daily fee of \$15 will be implemented for families accessing full-time, licensed early years care. Future plans include a \$10 per day fee to be actioned by March 31, 2026. With the new fee structure, the Alberta Government will be eliminating the income-based childcare subsidy program for families. The provincial childcare subsidy offered financial support to qualifying families- offsetting program fees with funds based on the number of hours their child received care each month. Providers who choose not to sign the ELCCA with the new provincially set fee and the Affordability Grant will not be eligible for other childcare grants offered by the government.

The Government of Alberta has recently undertaken a provincial Child Care Assessment- aiming to identify needs, uncover barriers and develop feasibility plans for licensed childcare across the province. Participating communities are to receive a customized report with actionable insights on local childcare and an interactive, online assessment tool. This exercise supports provincial goals to ensure high-quality, accessible, affordable and inclusive childcare for Alberta’s families and is scheduled to be complete by June 30, 2025.

Licensed Childcare Services

At the time of this report, licensed childcare services in Banff were delivered by the following providers:

- Banff Child Care Centre- early years care, offered by The Day Care Society of Banff
- Puzzles Child Care- early years care, offered by The Day Care Society of Banff
- Out of School Club- school-aged care, offered by the Town of Banff
- Bow Valley Family Child Care - early years day-home care, offered by Davar Child Care Society



This complement of service providers offers a total of 148 licensed childcare spaces in Banff for children aged 12 months to 12 years. The total number of licensed spaces and spaces per age group, seen below in Figure 1, are based on actual numbers shared by the childcare providers listed above. The majority of spaces which exist are allocated to children aged 3- 5 years, with the fewest spaces dedicated to children 12-18 months. There are no providers currently offering care for children under 12 months of age, however day home educators can choose to accept children 0-11 months into their care if they remain within licensing ratios and regulations.

Banff Rundle Playschool has been a longstanding fixture for early childhood development in the community. Offering half-day playschool programming for 3- and 4-year-old children, they are the only licensed pre-school in Banff. Although at the time of this report, full-time, full-day programming was not offered, the Playschool's work to support early childhood development and school-readiness provides families with a valuable opportunity to enhance their child's learning.

The Out of School Club is the only licensed program in Banff offering care for school aged children-operating during critical after-school hours, school breaks and school staff professional development days. At the time of this report, the Banff Elementary School (BES) offered unlicensed, before-school care programming for children who attend BES, making it the only local, before-school care option for school-aged children in Banff. There is currently no data available regarding any non-formal, unlicensed childcare services for early years or school-aged care.



Figure 1 - Licensed Childcare Spaces in Banff per Age Group

(As of January 2025)

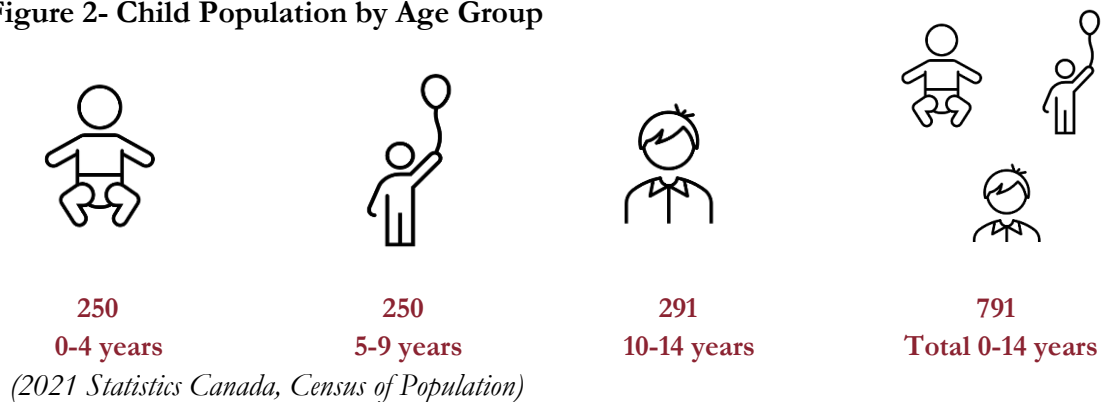
	Total Spaces	12 – 18 months	19 month – 3 years	3-5 years	6+ years
Banff Child Care Centre	82	8	24	50	0
Bow Valley Family Child Care*	6	2	1	3	0
Out of School Club	36	0	0	16**	20
Puzzles Child Care	24	4	6	14	0
TOTALS	148	14	31	83	20

**Day home licensing permits three spaces for children under 3 years of age, with a maximum of two of those spaces permitted to be occupied by children under the age of 2*

***Kindergarten students only*

According to the 2021 Statistics Canada data on census of population, Banff's total population of residents aged 0-14 years is 9.5% compared to 20% in Alberta, with specific age groupings seen below in Figure 2. With this data now becoming somewhat dated, there is anticipation for more current statistics being released with the 2026 Census.

Figure 2- Child Population by Age Group



The allocation of licensed childcare spaces in Banff shows notable discrepancies between age groups for which care is offered. This is somewhat due to the low adult-to-child ratios and physical space requirements needed to offer care to younger children. Should the 2026 Census statistics demonstrate similar population characteristics as those shared in 2021, the lack of childcare space for Banff's youngest children requiring care will continue to pose challenges for families. During this assessment, families with children under the age of 18 months shared the distress caused by the inability to obtain childcare- some have delayed their return to work following maternity or paternity leave as a result.

“If we can’t find childcare between my partner moving off parental leave and a place becoming available, we don’t really have many options.” (Banff parent/caregiver)

Childcare Staff Complement

Local childcare service providers operate with diverse staff teams made up of front-line childcare educators, administrative staff and at times, externally funded support staff (e.g. children’s aides). As seen in Figure 3 below, the total number of front-line childcare educators employed at the four licensed childcare sites in Banff include 27 full-time staff, 3 part-time staff and 10 on-call/casual staff. These staffing numbers do not account for supervisors or coordinators of childcare services who, at times, must work in front-line educator roles to maintain required ratios and support the staff teams they oversee.

Childcare Staff Housing

Most positions within Banff’s childcare sector do not come with the offer of staff accommodation. The Day Care Society of Banff purchased a housing unit in 2023 which can accommodate 3 staff at any given time. The Town of Banff Out of School Club program can offer housing for 1 staff- however this is not consistent and is based on availability.

Figure 3 - Childcare Staff, Housing & Wages

(As of January 2025)

	Average Hourly Wage	Housing Spaces	Full Time Staff	Part Time Staff	Casual/ On-Call Staff
Banff Child Care Centre	\$22.25	2	19	0	0
Bow Valley Family Child Care*	\$37.70	0	1	0	0
Out of School Club	\$24.48	1	1	2	8
Puzzles	\$20.00	1	6	1	2
TOTALS	\$26.11	4	27	3	10

Note- Average wages were calculated per facility, using the lowest and highest hourly wage of front-line educators.

**Day home wage was calculated based on a 36-hour week with full occupancy - 6 children*

Childcare Staff Wages

With the systemic issue of childcare being deemed “domestic work”, it has historically been an under-paid industry considering the significant energy and responsibility it requires. “Early childhood educators (ECEs), the majority of whom are women, earn wages close to or below what is considered the living wage in cities like Calgary, Edmonton and Fort McMurray” (Bellefontaine, 2024).

Since 2018, the Government of Alberta has offered childcare educators a wage top-up, with the aim of keeping professional, educated, staff working in the childcare sector. The top-up amount is based on the level of the mandatory Early Childhood Educator certification front-line staff have obtained, as seen in Figure 4 below. It provides an additional amount to be added to the employer-offered hourly wage, based on the actual hours worked each month.

Figure 4 – Childcare Wages & Provincial Wage Top-Up

	Level 1 Early Childhood Educator	Level 2 Early Childhood Educator	Level 3 Early Childhood Educator
Average Childcare Educator Wage in Banff	\$24.68/hour	\$26.11/hour	\$27.54/hour
Provincial Wage Top-Up	\$2.64/hour	\$5.05/hour	\$8.62/hour
Average Wage with Top-Up	\$27.32/hour	\$31.16/hour	\$36.16/hour

Parent & Caregiver Survey Overview

The first of three surveys undertaken by this initiative was to hear the childcare experiences of parents and caregivers living in Banff. It was targeted toward those who were currently using childcare services and/or those who were still seeking childcare services. The survey was open from September 12 to October 22, 2024- gaining 129 responses, representing 192 Banff children aged 12 and under.

Of the 129 (household) responses:

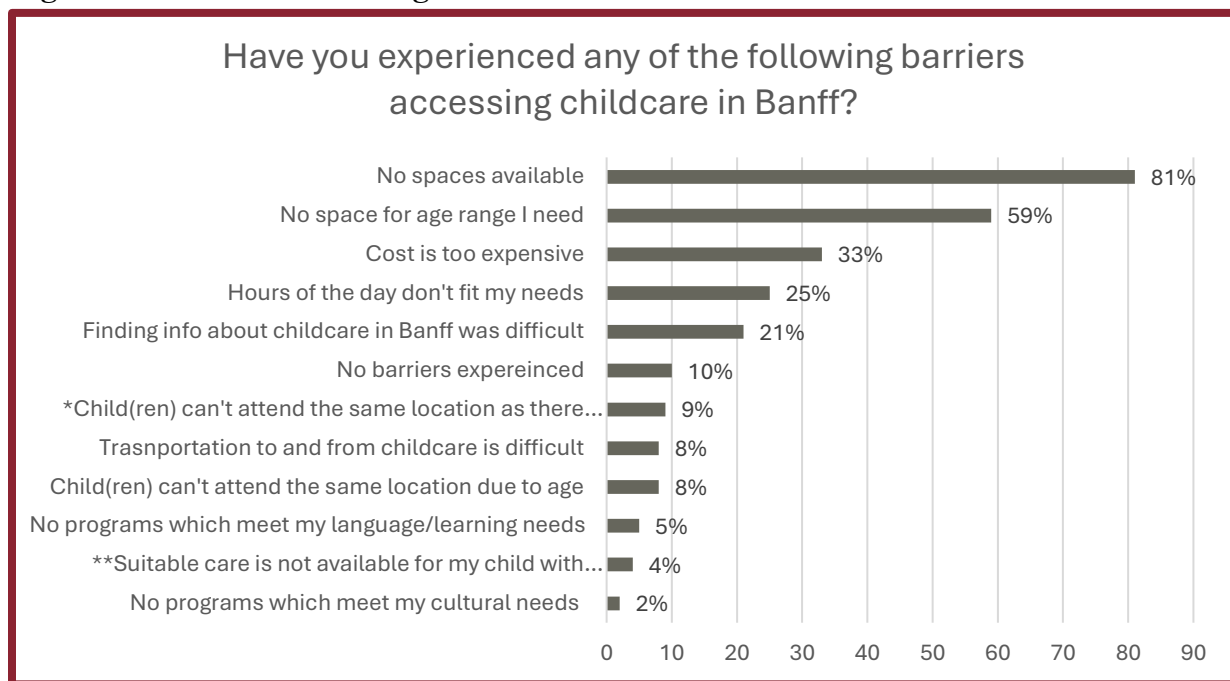
- 80% of survey respondents have lived in Banff for more than 6 years
- 88% were two-parent households
- 93% work in Banff
- 43% had found suitable childcare (56 households)
- 37% were currently seeking care (48 households)
- 8% had found care but were seeking something more suitable (10 households)

- 7% were not looking and not in need at the time of the survey (9 households)
 - 89% of these respondents indicated they have a primary caregiver or family member looking after their child(ren)
- 5% had found childcare for one child, but not the other(s)(6 households)

Notable findings:

Childcare space availability is the primary challenge for residents seeking childcare. 90% of survey respondents reported they encountered barriers to accessing childcare in Banff. They clearly identified the lack of overall childcare spaces as the top barrier to access. As seen in Figure 5 below, 81% of respondents indicated the lack of space with 59% of respondents specifying the lack of space for specific age ranges as a primary challenge. The inability for families to obtain care at the right time and for the right age, leave many families wait-listed for care. A total of 83% of respondents indicated they were wait-listed prior to accessing care, with 48% of those waiting more than a year before being offered a suitable space. The cost of childcare was the third highest ranked barrier - supporting the notion that despite fees being manageable for some, cost is still a challenge. Only 10% of survey respondents stated they did not experience any barriers to accessing childcare.

Figure 5- Barriers to Accessing Childcare



**Child(ren) can't attend the same location as there are no spots for them both/all*

***Suitable care is not available for my child(ren) with additional needs*

Childcare fee reductions have been helpful, but affordability remains a challenge for one third of families. A total of 68% of families currently accessing childcare in Banff reported the monthly cost they pay is manageable for their family. Families shared that the government funding given to childcare providers to reduce fees has been greatly beneficial. Despite this, childcare fees continue to be referenced as an expense contributing to already high costs of living in Banff, with 32% of survey respondents identifying childcare costs as a barrier to access. The provincial Affordability Grant's latest actions to implement equitable childcare fee structures will prove beneficial for some families and detrimental to others. "This means that low-income subsidized families now paying less than \$15-a-day will suffer a fee increase" (Child Care Now, 2025).

*"Between the cost of living and the cost of childcare, there are no funds remaining."
(Banff parent/caregiver)*

Families are grateful for current childcare service provider offerings. Although respondents frequently identified the need for more childcare spaces in Banff, those occupying the current spaces are overwhelmingly satisfied with the care their child(ren) is receiving. A total of 91% of respondents agreed they were happy with the quality of care they receive and many shared comments of gratitude for the opportunity to obtain care for their family. 96% of survey respondents who have accessed care indicated their provider is in the town of their preference and the program's operational days and hours are working for them.

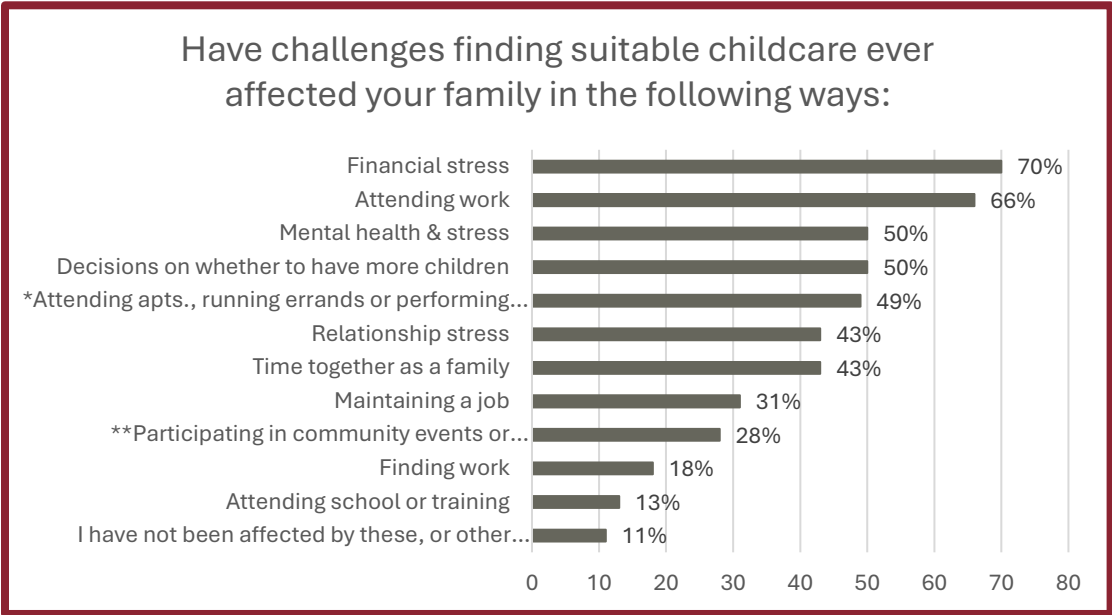
"I think the quality of the childcare that we've used and currently use is excellent, and we feel super fortunate to have it." (Banff parent/caregiver)

When it comes to finding childcare in Banff, you take what you can get. The survey asked what primary factors parents and caregivers consider when choosing childcare. The highest-ranking selections were program quality, days and times of care and reputation of the childcare program. This was followed by program fees and proximity of the childcare facility to their home and/or work. The lowest ranking considerations were the physical program space, food program and one-to-one support offered. Families shared the scarcity of the childcare environment in Banff, paired with their desperation, leaves them to take what is available when offered. Having a choice amongst childcare providers was referenced as a luxury which simply isn't afforded when it comes to childcare in Banff.

No one here is able to be picky, we have to accept what is available, just so we can work and afford to live here." (Banff parent/caregiver)

Challenges finding care is taking a negative toll on local families. Survey respondents shared the ways in which childcare challenges have affected their family- with 89% indicating they have been affected negatively in some way. As seen in Figure 6 below, most frequently mentioned were financial stress and attending work. Half of respondents indicated their challenges finding suitable care has influenced their level of mental health & stress and decisions on whether to have more children. As seen below only 11% of respondents indicated they had not been affected by the challenges when it came to securing suitable care for their child(ren).

Figure 6 – Effects of Childcare Challenges on Families



**Attending appointments, running errands or performing daily tasks*

***Participating in community events or recreational activities*

Finding childcare has been by far the most challenging part of moving to Banff...it's been impossible to find a sustainable solution..." (Banff parent/caregiver)

Childcare Staff Survey Overview

To complement the responses shared from parents and caregivers, understanding the experiences of front-line childcare workers was a necessary component to paint an accurate picture of childcare in Banff. The childcare staff survey was directed towards current or former childcare educators who had worked in the childcare sector in Banff the past five years, serving families with children aged 12 or under. The survey was open from November 19, 2024, until January 26, 2025, and received 39 responses. Of those responses, 57% were from childcare staff currently working in Banff, 41% were

former Banff childcare staff who worked within the past five years and 2% were from staff who were resigning from their position at the time they participated in the survey.

The survey shared many positive sentiments about the quality of relationships within the industry and the important meaning it holds in the scope of child development. Childcare educators also highlighted some of the primary challenges experienced within their work.

Notable findings:

Educators have an interest in continuing to work in local childcare. Half of survey respondents expressed an interest in continuing to work in the childcare industry in Banff. Many childcare staff shared a deep passion for their work and recognized its importance in the community. There was an expressed appetite to apply the education received, support the development of children in the community and continue working in positive work environments.

"I love my job and its role in the community. I value the work I do, and I feel valuable to children and families" (Banff childcare educator)

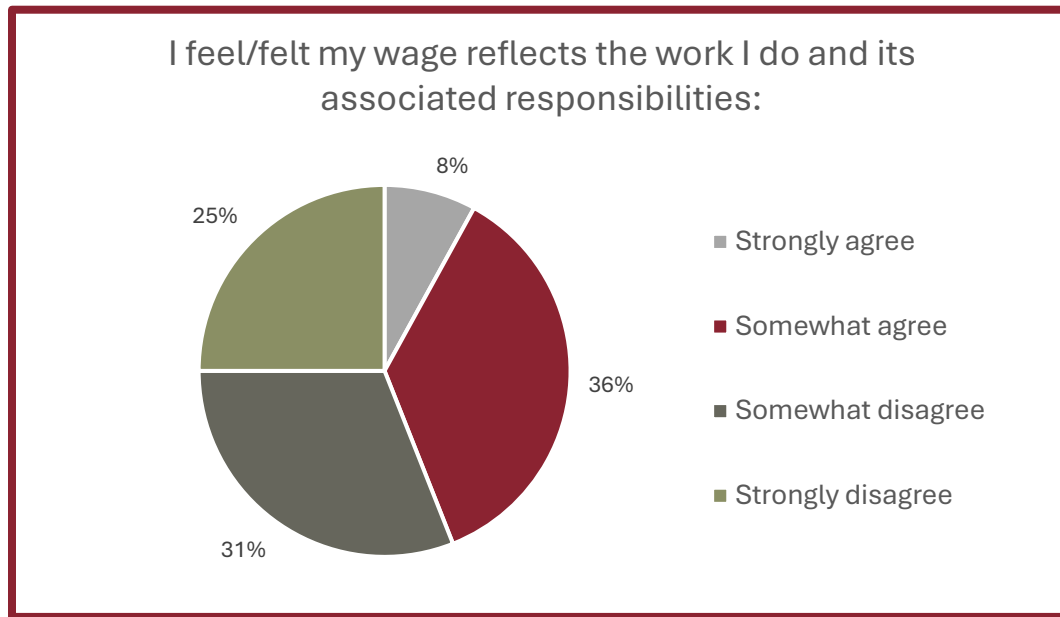
A total of 92% of respondents agreed they like or liked their job in childcare. When asked what the most important factors are which affect their decision to stay working in the childcare sector in Banff, the top three responses were:

1. Wage
2. Workplace culture
3. Hours of work

Low childcare educator wages are challenging. The need for higher childcare educator wages came up frequently in the staff survey data. Childcare educators shared that despite their formal education, training and passion for their work, low-wages and the high demands of childcare work made the decision to stay in the industry difficult. As seen in Figure 7 below, 56% of respondents indicated they did not feel their wage reflected childcare work or its associated responsibilities. Like many Banff residents, the majority of survey respondents indicated they held more than one job during their time working in childcare. Even with the provincial government wage top-up, local job opportunities with seemingly less demands and higher wages have valuable childcare educators finding work outside the industry.

"Frontline childcare work is extremely demanding, especially with the increase in behaviour challenges and one-to-one care needs that seem to continue to grow. With high cost of living, a better paying job with less stress was desired." (Banff childcare educator)

Figure 7 – Childcare Educator Reflection on Wage



Childcare educators are facing increasing job demands. During the engagement phase of the assessment, childcare educators and local licensed childcare providers both indicated that the demands on staff in the childcare industry have increased. They reported a noticeable difference over the past five years of children with more complex and higher individual needs than ever before- with limited additional resources to support these needs.

“Every year we see more and more children with moderate to extreme behaviour and lack the resources to support them.” (Banff childcare educator)

Educators and providers shared that increases in staff capacity, lower staff to child ratios and further government support of children with special needs would be of great benefit in addressing this challenge. Without the required supports in place, the demand on childcare educators is only compounded, resulting in what providers identify as staff burnout.

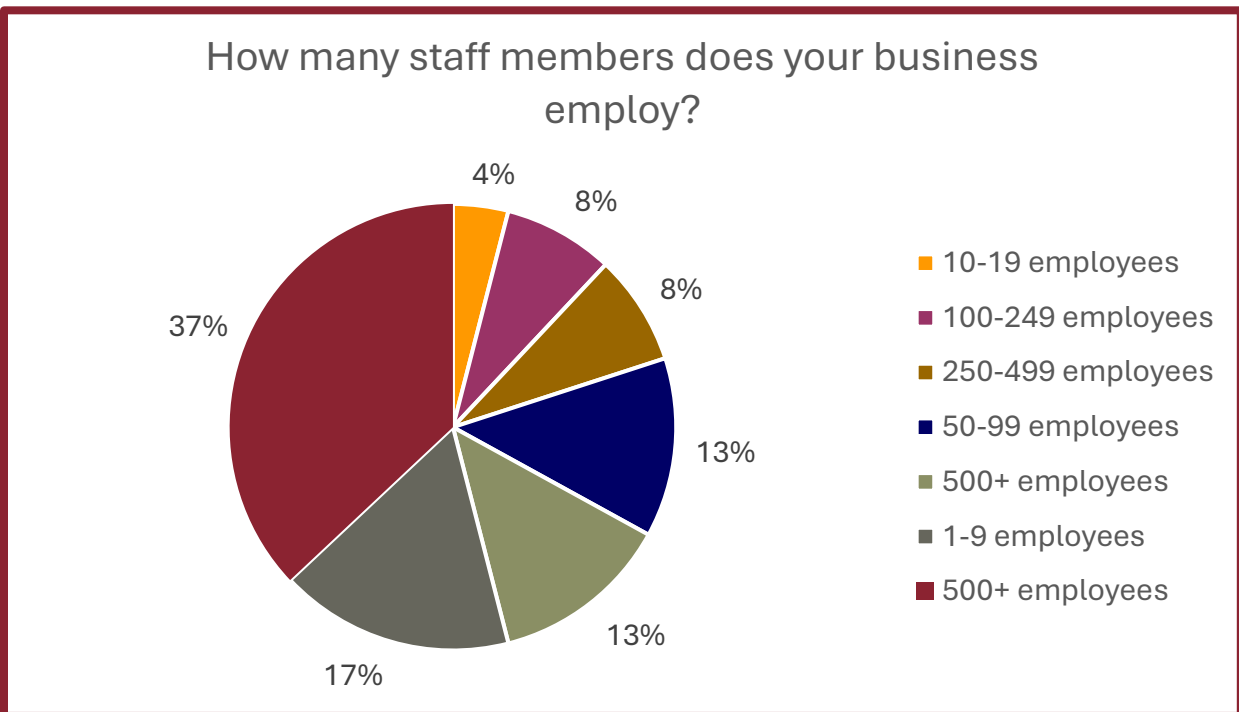
The local childcare workplace culture is a positive one. Complementing the reported satisfaction of parents and caregivers with the quality of care their child(ren) receives, was a strong sentiment of appreciation from childcare staff for their workplaces. Childcare educators spoke fondly of the caring and passionate staff they work with, gratitude for professional development opportunities, and fulfilling nature of their work. The friendships established within the workplace and sense of community built through relationships with children and families was frequently mentioned as a meaningful and valued part of their role.

Business Survey Overview

Diverse childcare offerings are needed in Banff to accommodate the many families who work irregular schedules – primarily within the hospitality and tourism industries. The extension of this assessment to include the local business community sought to understand the impact childcare had on businesses—specifically as it relates to staffing. The business survey was aimed at local businesses owners or managers who employ staff with children aged 12 or under. Only one representative from each business or organization was requested to complete the survey.

The survey was open from November 19, 2024, to January 26, 2025, and received 24 responses. Figure 8 below depicts the number of staff represented by the businesses which responded for a total representation of between 2534-3789 local staff (with or without children). The highest response rates came from the food and beverage sector, followed by accommodation, retail and the non-profit/charitable sector.

Figure 8– Staff Member Volumes by Business Survey Respondents



Notable findings:

Evenings, weekends and holidays are the most difficult shifts for businesses to schedule due to lack of childcare. With so many Banffites working in the hospitality and service industry, childcare offerings during non-traditional business hours is needed. In the 2016 Bow Valley Childcare Needs Assessment, Banff-based respondents identified the need for evening and weekend childcare to help support their varying work schedules. When Puzzles Child Care opened in 2017, their hours of operation included early mornings and late evenings for a period of time. At the time of this report, no licensed

childcare providers in Banff offered weekend or evening childcare, leaving some two- parent families to create work schedules with opposing hours, directly impacting their ability to spend time together as a family unit.

“We need more of it (childcare) - and on weekends and long weekends. Being a resort town this is when we need as many of our team working as possible - and we often lose our senior/expert staff on key dates due to the childcare logistics they face.” (Banff business owner/manager)

Childcare needs impact staff availability. A total of 63% of respondents indicated that the childcare needs of staff have an impact on the times of day they are available to work. Parent and caregiver scheduling availability is often dictated by the childcare available to them. The overwhelming majority of childcare offerings in communities across the country cater to traditional business hour schedules- operating Monday to Friday, during the day. As mentioned, the make-up of Banff’s workforce is unique and requires higher volumes of care outside of typical business hours. Without local childcare service provision which meets this need, staff availability is more restrictive for employer scheduling- affecting business service delivery and operations.

“We have several employees on the waitlist for daycares in the Bow Valley. Some only have part- time hours available for us as they must work around their partner’s schedule for childcare until they secure daycare.” (Banff business owner/manager)

Childcare affects staff recruitment and retention. As an essential service which families rely on, available childcare is a primary determinant of parents’ ability to participate in the workforce. 66% of business survey respondents reported the access (or lack thereof) to childcare affects their ability to attract and retain staff. In the 2023 Community Social Assessment, residents reported pressures to find affordable childcare, secure housing and manage the of cost of living all factored into their decision on whether staying in Banff was viable for their family. The lack of available childcare hence implicates staffing levels, operations and service delivery for the local business community.

Local Support to Childcare

Municipal Support

In 1995, the Town of Banff supported the construction of the Banff Child Care Centre (BCCC). This facility has continued to be a valued community asset, providing licensed childcare for many years. BCCC continues to receive municipal support- with a \$1 annual rental fee for facility use, including water and sewage. Municipal resources are largely responsible for the maintenance of BCCC, including inspections, repairs and replacements of facility infrastructure and fixtures.

Additionally in 2018, the Town of Banff approved approximately \$500,000 to support the creation of two licensed Out of School Club classrooms at the new Banff Elementary School when it was being constructed. The Town also offers support services for families with children aged 0-18 through the Family Resource Network. Enabled by provincial funding, these services include early years, drop-in social connection and support programs for families. Within the data collected for this assessment and the 2023 Community Social Assessment, residents shared their deep appreciation of these services, the benefits of discussing childcare challenges with others, and potential solutions to address family-specific childcare needs.

The Wim & Nancy Pauw Foundation

Banff's licensed childcare providers have expressed their gratitude for local funding from the Wim and Nancy Pauw Foundation (Pauw Foundation) in their work supporting the local childcare sector. Since 2022, the Pauw Foundation has supported the Banff Rundle Playschool, covering the facility rental costs for the entirety of their operational year. The Day Care Society of Banff is also supported by the Pauw Foundation, who provided \$16,500 of funding in 2024 to help offset the expenses related to day-to-day operations and professional development.

YWCA Banff

Puzzles Child Care has been operating out of the Kay Watt Training Centre on the YWCA grounds since they opened in 2017. The YWCA Banff has demonstrated their continued commitment to Puzzles Child Care, generously offering their facility space at a cost well below the market rate for the program space.



Report Recommendations

The recommendations shared below were informed by survey responses, feedback from Banff-based licensed childcare providers and input from municipal Family and Community Support Services staff. Of the many recommendations suggested, those included in this report were identified as the top priorities most worthy of pursuing. The participation of multi-levels of government, childcare providers and community partners will be essential to take action on these recommendations.

1. Increase the number of childcare spaces in Banff through assessing current resources and facilities, planning for space maximization and pursuing creative opportunities for additional space
2. Explore opportunities which enable childcare educators to receive higher wages, retirement savings plans and health & dental benefits
3. Consider implementing extended hours, weekend and evening childcare offerings to meet the needs of local families
4. Actively participate in the Government of Alberta's Child Care Needs Assessment and review opportunities shared in the community-specific report
5. Investigate alternative staffing models and schedules to improve the work/life balance of childcare educators
6. Explore the potential for a centralized online platform that could host local childcare information, parent and caregiver resources and supports
7. Identify and leverage new revenue sources which could be used to support the local childcare sector
8. Advocate for increased provincial funding and local, professional supports for children with special needs
9. Actively reduce barriers to establishing more day homes in Banff

Conclusion

Childcare challenges in Banff are not the sole reason for the noted decline in number of families living in the community. Housing and cost of living challenges continue to affect all residents in a variety of ways, at times influencing families' decisions to remain in the community. What the 2024 Town of Banff Childcare Needs Assessment has identified is that the provision of childcare in Banff does not meet the current needs of the community.

With Banff-specific data now in hand, the 2023 Community Social Assessment complete, and a provincial Child Care Needs Assessment tabling shortly, the access to comparative and complementary data is well timed. Any action which positions childcare to be viewed and attended to in ways which other essential services are, is a step in the right direction. The opportunities to improve the state of local childcare await, should we choose to explore the creative ideas and possibilities available.

Next Steps

This report will be presented to Banff Town Council in the spring of 2025. It will be shared with residents and valued partners who contributed their insights. The information presented is intended to be used in ways which can improve the state of local childcare, create childcare spaces, inspire collaborative partnerships and identify new funding sources. The recommendations posed provoke further thought and action as they relate to childcare, with a refreshed visibility of challenges and opportunities. The Town of Banff FCSS is committed to supporting conversations and activities which aim to improve childcare in Banff and track any resulting changes which may occur. As part of the FCSS Community Development portfolio in 2025, the creation of a Banff Childcare Action Plan will be facilitated to explore possible strategies and tactics related to addressing the recommendations in this report.



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Appendix (Additional Survey Answers)

Figure 9 - Parents/caregiver reflection on quality of care

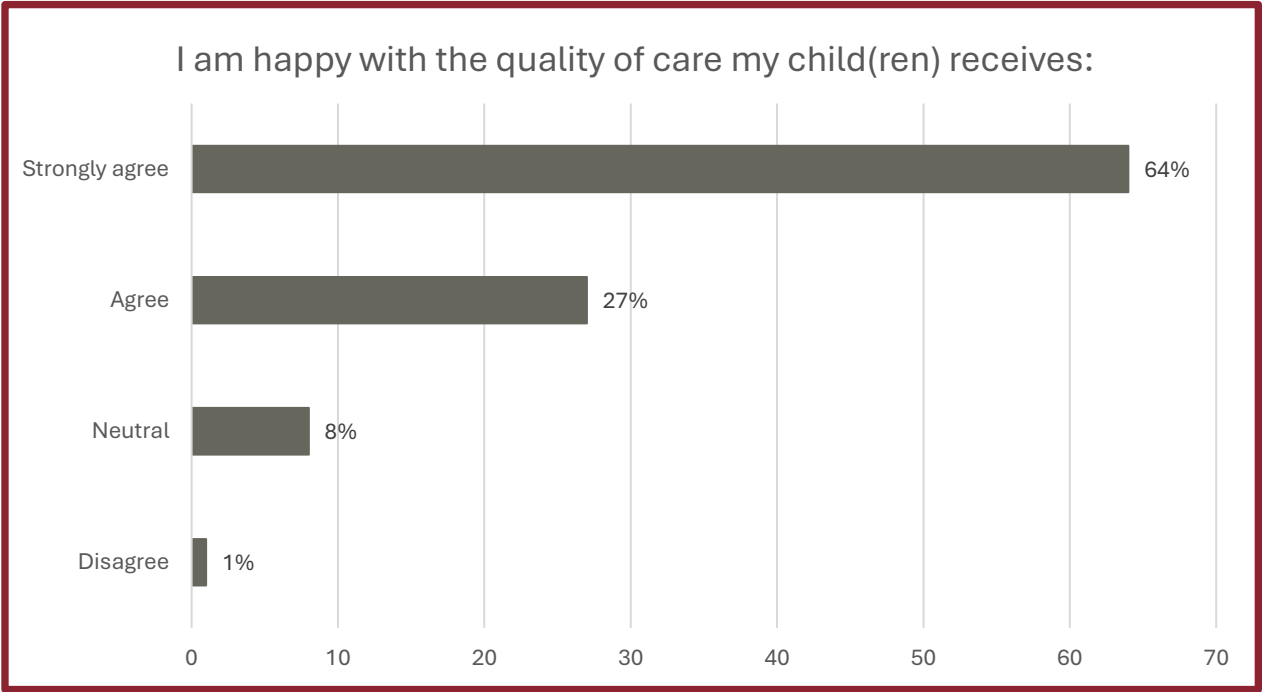


Figure 10- Parents/caregiver reflection on childcare fees

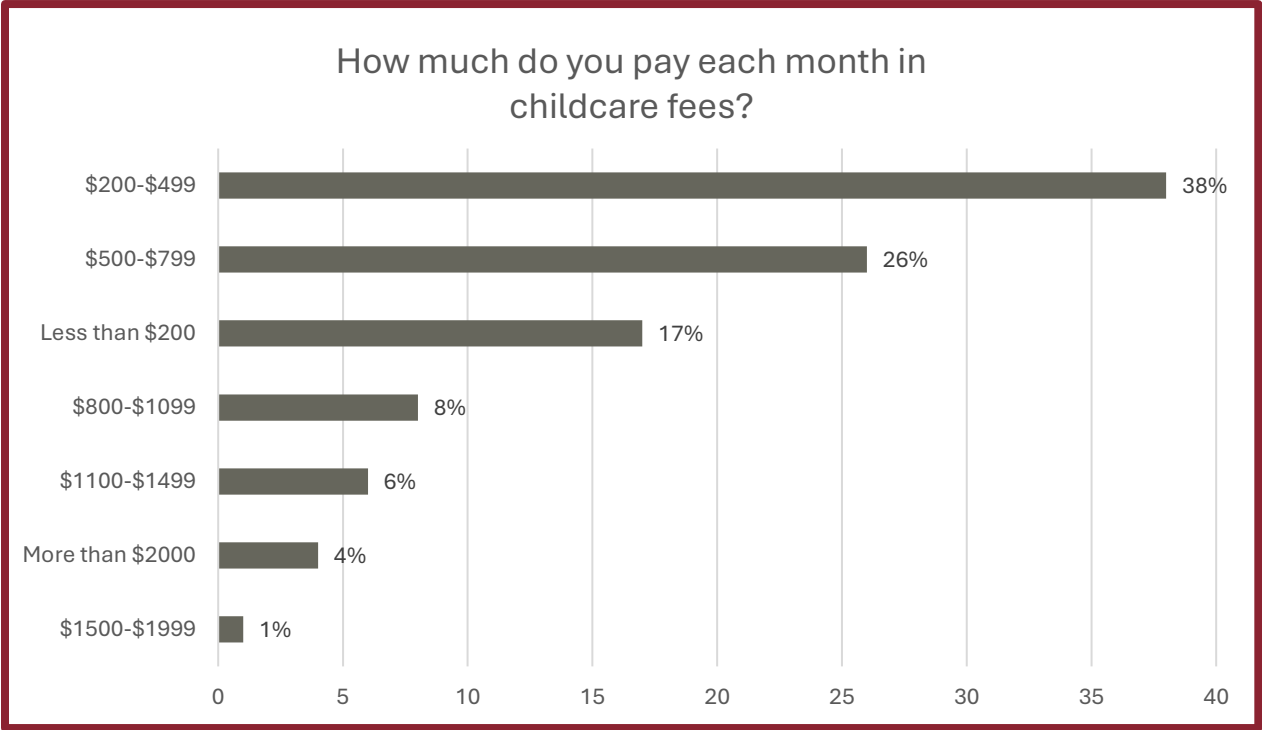


Figure 11- Parent/caregiver reflection on cost

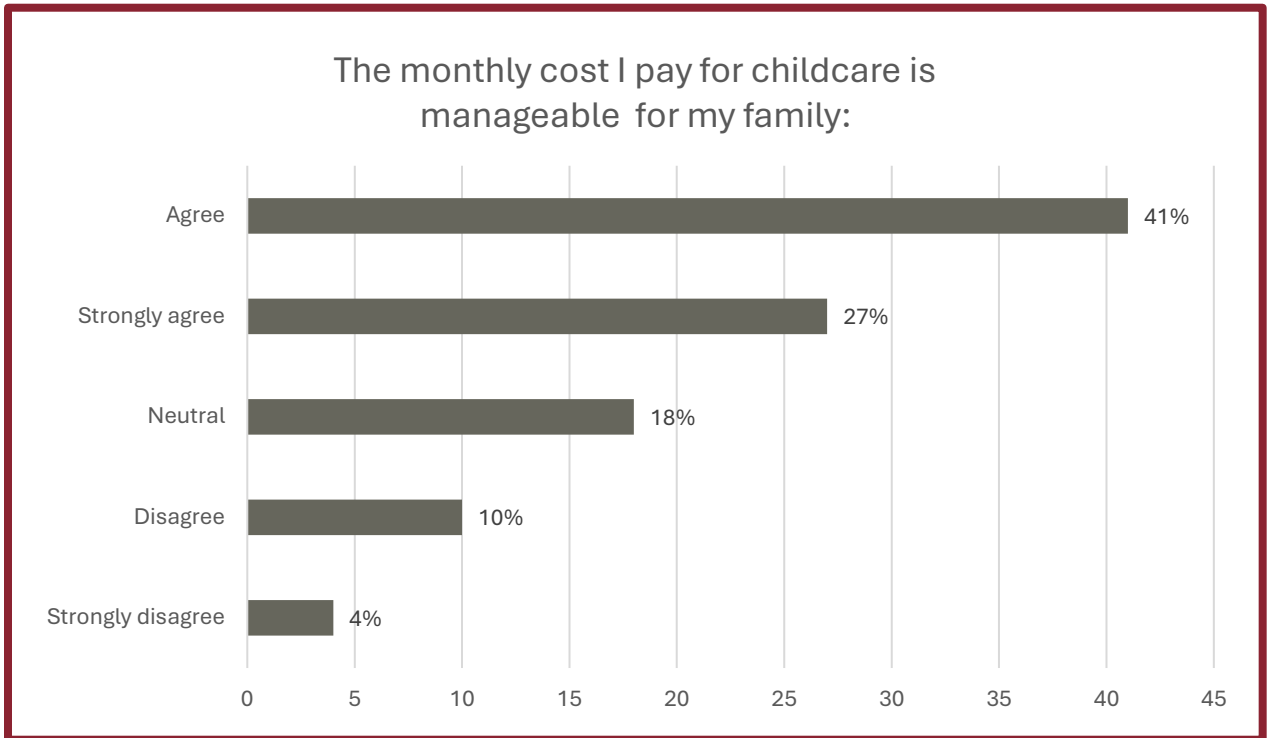


Figure 12- Parent/caregiver waitlist experience

