

# Material Hardship Matters: Parent Voices from the RAPID Survey

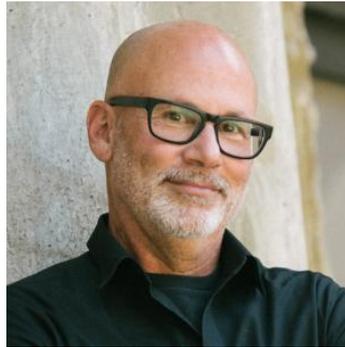
June 17, 2025



# Panelists



**Danielle Buckner**  
Prenatal to Kindergarten  
Program Manager  
Northside Achievement  
Zone, Minnesota



**Phil Fisher, Ph.D.**  
Director, Stanford Center  
on Early Childhood  
Stanford University



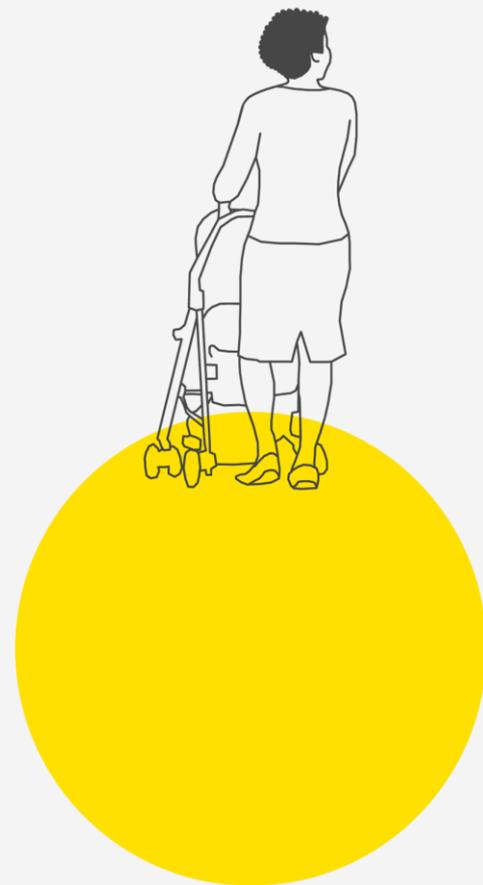
**Allison Logan, BS-ED, MS**  
Co-Founder  
CT 359 Network, Connecticut



**Joan Lombardi, Ph.D.**  
RAPID National Advisory  
Council Chair  
Adjunct Professor  
Stanford Center on Early  
Childhood  
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# Overview of RAPID Survey

- Ongoing survey of households with at least one child under age 6 launched **in April 2020** to understand experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Added parallel **national child care provider survey** in 2021
- Tool to **elevate voices of adults in young children's lives**; provide
- timely and actionable data, and promote data-informed programs, advocacy, and policy
- **22,000+ parents and 12,000+ providers** in all 50 states
- **15-minute paid questionnaire** completed via computer or smartphone in English or Spanish



# RAPID Survey Focus Areas

## Household survey:

- Demographic information
- Material hardship
- Child & parent well-being
- Child care
- Healthcare
- Open-ended questions

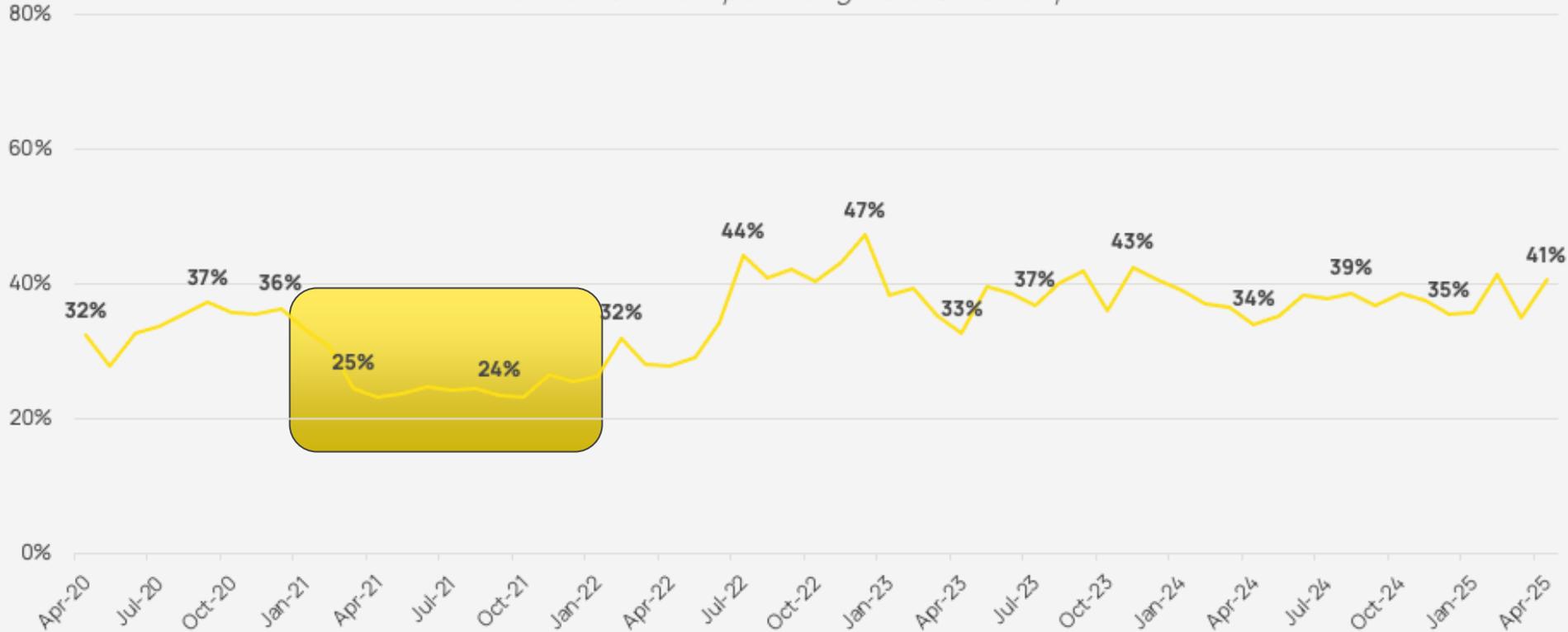


## Child care provider survey:

- Demographic information
- Material hardship
- Provider well-being
- Working conditions
- Health care
- Open-ended questions

# Over a Third of Families Experience Material Hardship

*Trend of Parents Experiencing Material Hardship*







Social Science & Medicine

Volume 307, August 2022, 115173



# Material hardship level and unpredictability in relation to U.S. households' family interactions and emotional well-being: Insights from the COVID-19 pandemic

Sihong Liu<sup>a</sup>  , Maureen Zalewski<sup>b</sup>, Liliana Lengua<sup>c</sup>, Megan R. Gunnar<sup>d</sup>,  
Nicole Giuliani<sup>b</sup>, Philip A. Fisher<sup>a</sup>



Child: care, health and development

RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Understanding the Association Between Childcare Precarity and Emotional Distress

Mateus M. Mazzaferro , Sihong Liu, Philip Fisher

First published: 03 April 2025 | <https://doi.org/10.1111/cch.70076>

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[Read the full text >](#)

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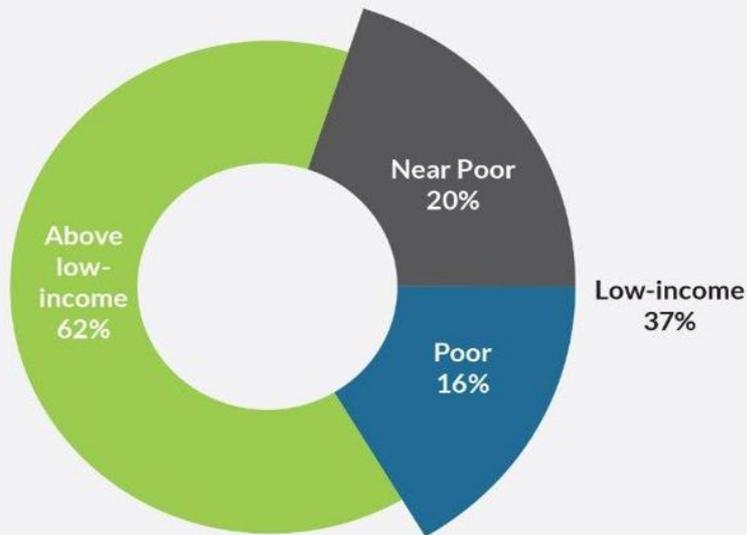
# Material Hardship Goes Beyond Measuring Poverty

RAPID measures material hardship as difficulty within the past month meeting basic needs in one or more of the following categories:

- Food
- Housing (mortgage or rent)
- Utilities
- Child care
- Healthcare
- Activities that support well-being (e.g. counseling)

# Young Children by Family Income, 2023

**Above Low-income** (At or above 200% FPT)   **Low-income** (0-199% FPT)   **Near Poor** (100-199% FPT)   **Poor** (0-99% FPT)



*Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.*

Source: Granja, M. & Smith, S. (2025). Basic facts about low-income children: Children under age 9, 2023. New York: National Center for Children in Poverty, Bank Street Graduate School of Education.

# RAPID Material Hardship Questions

- **Which of the following best describes what has happened to your family income in the past month?** (decreased, increased, stayed the same)
- **Which describes your family financially at this time?** (no problems, minor problems, major problems, extreme problems)
- **In the past month, how hard has it been for you to pay for the very basics like food, medical care, and heating?** (not very hard, somewhat hard, hard, very hard)
- **Which of these needs have been hard to pay for in the past month? Select all that apply.** (food, housing, utilities, healthcare, wellness activities, child care, not listed)
- **In the past months, which of the following utilities have you had difficulty paying for?** (water, sewer, electricity, gas, trash, phone, internet, not listed)

# Parent Voices

“My landlord is facing foreclosure on the house I’m living in. We may be homeless soon.” - Parent in New York

“Catching up on back rent. Our car was repossessed, so we have no transportation. Will we be evicted after December 31?” - Parent in Texas



“Currently keeping up with utility and rent costs. Both have rapidly increased within the last few months making it very difficult to pay, as my fiancé was laid off for a few weeks.” - Parent in Kentucky

“I am currently using backup care days offered by my employer as our primary form of child care for our younger child. In March, I will run out of days to use, and we are struggling to find an affordable option nearby that has availability when we need it.” - Parent in Virginia

“I’m relying on family and things arise that make them unable to help. I have looked into center-based care and considered going back to work, but it will cost me more for child care than I can make in income to pay for it.” - Parent in Ohio

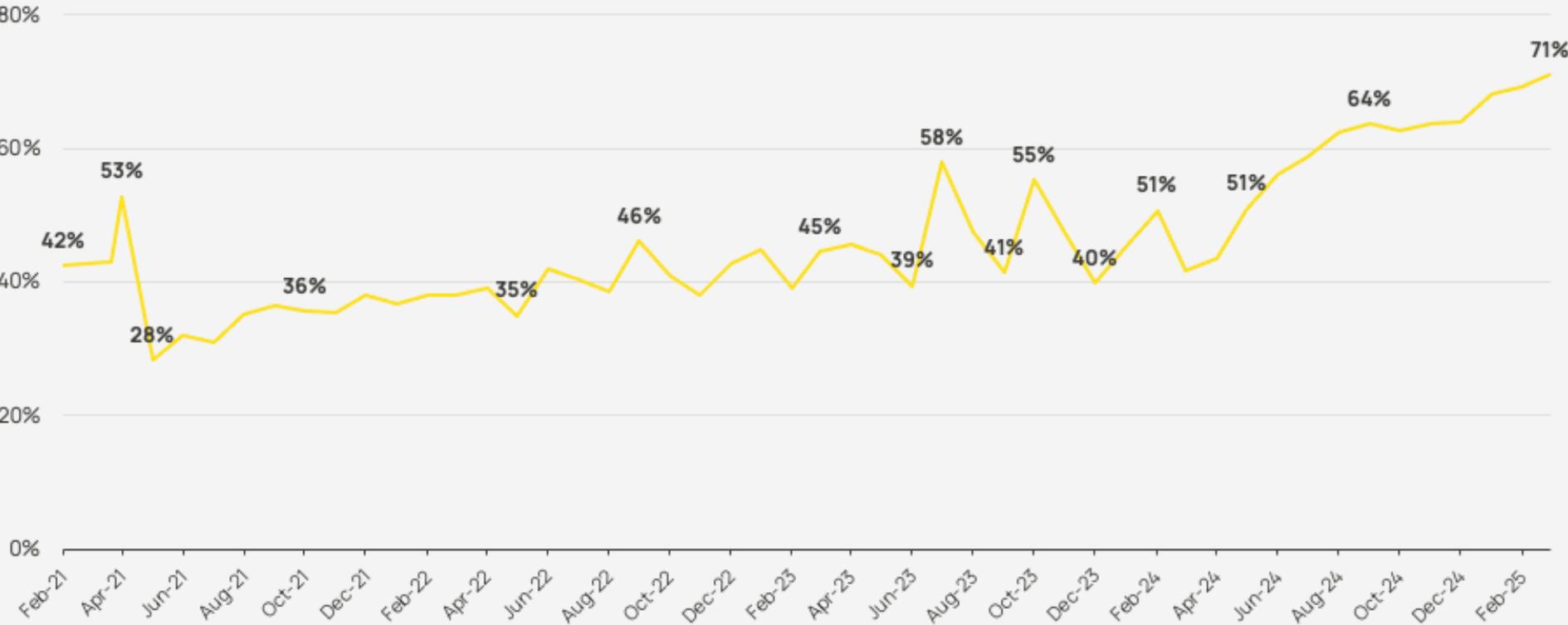
# Experiences of Material Hardship Have Ripple Effects on Young Children's Development

“As we've continued to hear from parents and understand their experiences, we've learned that the chain reaction of hardship is not only strongly associated with **young children's emotional distress**, but also with **impacts on their overall development**, in terms of cognitive, motor, language, and social-emotional development.”

Source: Sihong Liu, PhD and Abbie Raikes, PhD

# Difficulty Paying for Basic Needs Continues to Grow Among Providers

*Trend of Providers Experiencing Material Hardship*



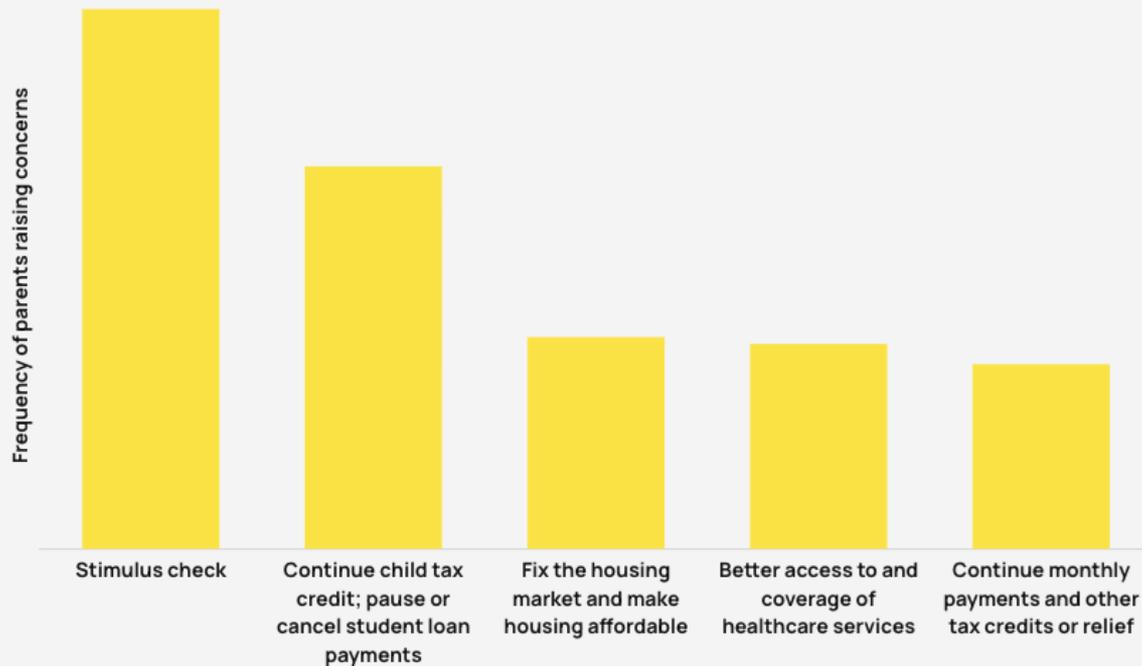
# Caregiver voices: In their own words



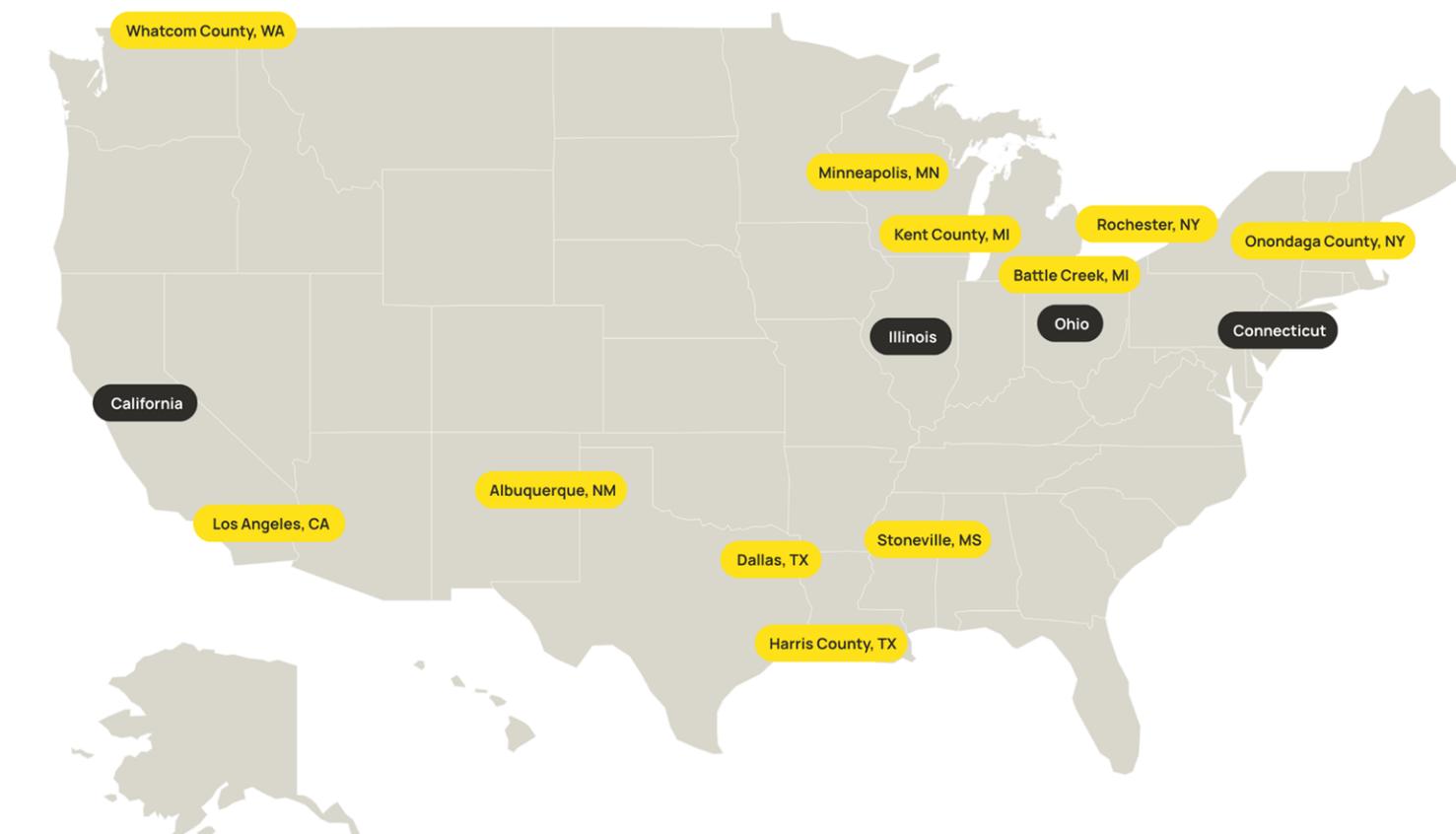
**Stanford**  
Center on Early Childhood

# What supports do parents tell us help them?

Frequency of parents raising specific family support policy solutions, all participants



# RAPID Partnerships for Local & State Parent Voices





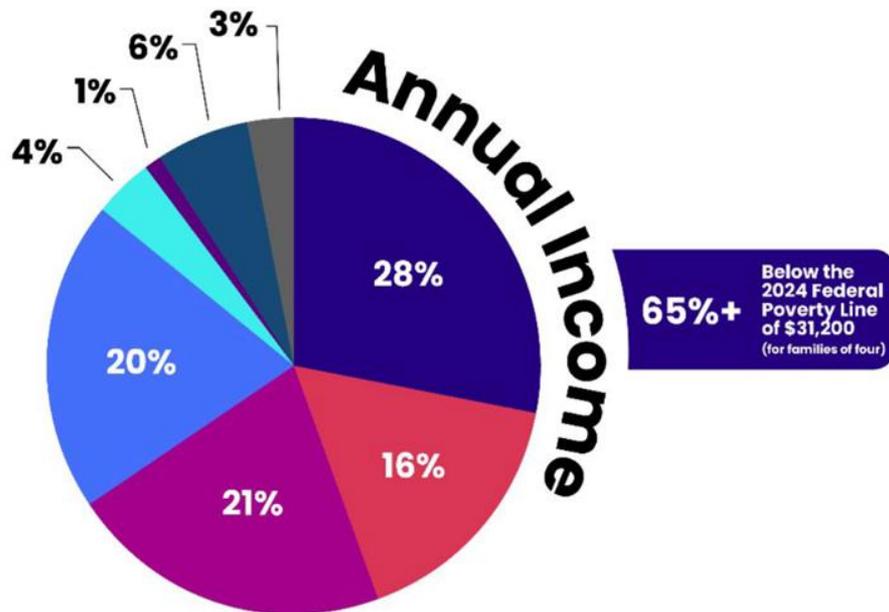
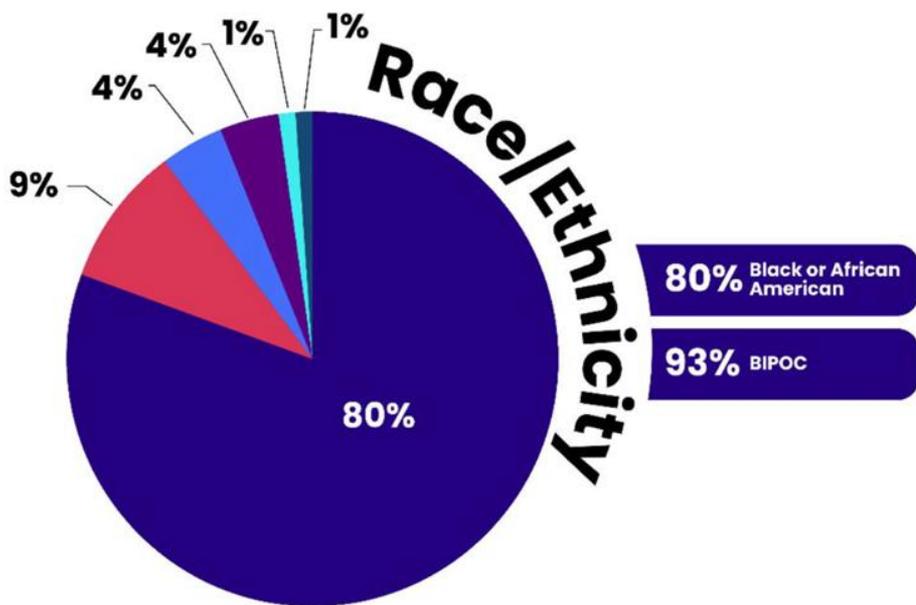
**Northside  
Achievement  
Zone**

# Why North Minneapolis?

North Minneapolis is an area brimming with both great possibility and great need. NAZ is committed to the Northside, comprised of thirteen neighborhoods and home to 66,000 residents, with the largest Black population and the highest percentage of families with children in all of Minneapolis. NAZ continues in the strong belief that scholars' lives are shaped by the neighborhoods they grow up in.



# NAZ Family Demographics 2024



- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Multi-Racial
- Not Reported
- White
- Prefer Not to Answer

- \$0-\$9,999
- \$10,000-\$19,999
- \$20,000-\$29,999
- \$30,000-\$49,999
- \$50,000-\$69,999
- \$70,000-\$89,999
- Prefer Not to Answer
- Not Reported

American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and Other: <1%





# Connecticut's RAPID Survey Project: Centering Family Voice for Actionable Change



On Target and Thriving at  
Three, Five, and Nine

**Allison Logan**, Co-Founder, CT 359 Network; Lead  
Consultant, CT Data Collaborative (CT 359 PCI  
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Ambassador

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# History of RAPID in Connecticut

In 2016, A StriveTogether, Cradle to Career, Collective Impact effort launched the development of the Bridgeport Baby Bundle ([a 2017 CGLR Bright Spot!](#))

The bundled framework consisted of Universal and Targeted supports for Prenatal-3 and was built on **centering parent and family voices to co-design solutions.**

- Increasing access to Doulas at CHC's
- Launched first in CT Universal Home Visiting program (nurses and CHW's)
- Universal access to early literacy supports prenatally, at the hospital and in pediatric offices.
- Increased developmental screening through mobile app ([Sparkler](#))
- Universal awareness campaign of the importance of the first three years
- Coordinated referral system for families to access the supports they need.



On Target and Thriving at  
Three, Five, and Nine

In 2023, Pritzker Children's Initiative awarded a 3-Year Community Systems Grant to advance lessons learned in Bridgeport and build toward "on target" development ACROSS Connecticut through an equity-informed data- and policy-to-Early Relational Health action agenda

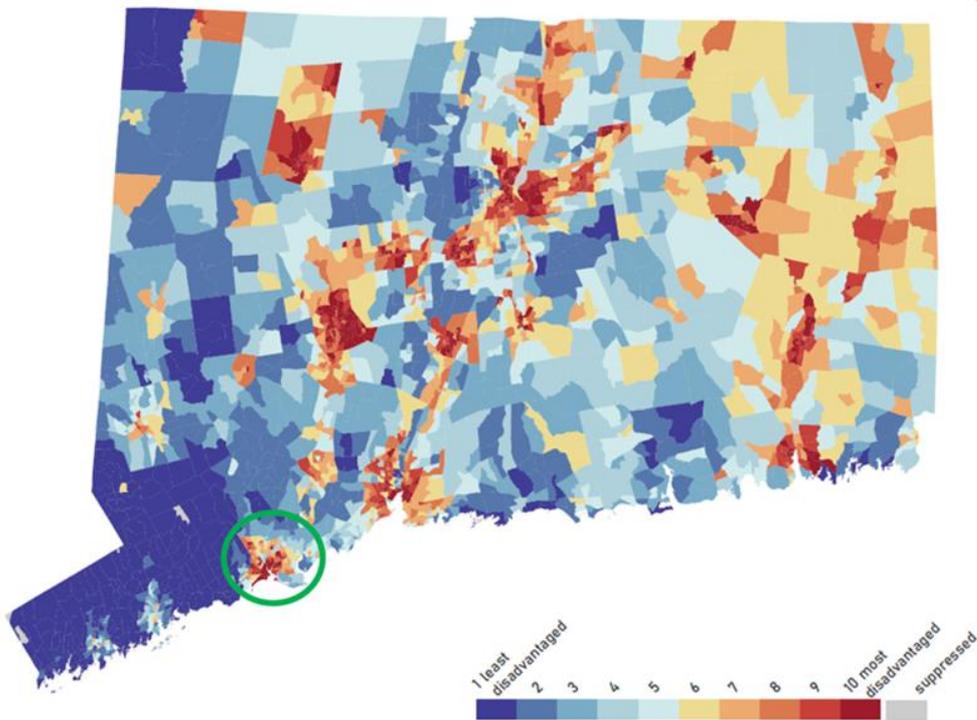
## Two Connecticut: How gaps between rich and poor define life in CT

There's a stereotype about Connecticut, one that pops up frequently in pop culture.

**CT is one big suburb.**

Connecticut  
ADI State Rankings  
2023

Yes, Connecticut has extreme wealth — with an estimated 130,000 millionaire households as of 2019 and at least 16 billionaires as of this year — but it's also home to approximately 360,400 people in poverty, including 79,170 children.



Source: [Neighborhood Atlas - Home](#)

## CT's RAPID Survey Project Structure

- Statewide survey that is reaching families with children under age 6.
- 17 community-based implementation partners (local early childhood councils, Cradle to Carrer communities, regional education services groups, direct service providers that operate counseling & health services)
- Broad geographic representation, responses represent more lower income families.
- Community-based implementation partners receive grants for their work recruiting families.
- Advisory Committee:
  - **The Connecticut Project** – funder and project owner
  - **CT Data Collaborative** – leveraging data for secondary and customized analysis to further use and data storytelling, offers ongoing thought partnership on survey content
  - **Connecticut Network for Children & Youth** – serves as a statewide intermediary for local early childhood collaboratives and councils, helped recruit community-based implementation partners, offers ongoing thought partnership on survey content
  - **CT 359** – sourced the connection to RAPID survey project, offers ongoing thought partnership on survey content
- We choose a different thematic focus for each survey and draft mostly original content. So far, we've focused on:
  - Child Care Access & Affordability
  - Material Hardship
  - Access to Development Screenings
  - Early Literacy
  - Affordable Housing & Healthcare (in process)

## Some of CT's RAPID Data Findings

- **25%** report that their current childcare arrangement is unaffordable.
- **63%** report spending more than 7% of total family income on childcare, higher than the childcare affordability benchmark established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Only **35%** of surveyed Connecticut **parents who are eligible** based on their income are receiving Care 4 Kids.
- **28%** surveyed Connecticut parents who are eligible based on their income but did not apply for childcare benefits say the reason they did not apply is because they are unsure if their family meets the income eligibility criteria.
- **20%** surveyed Connecticut parents who are eligible based on their income, say they did not know about the childcare benefits or how to find a childcare program that accepts the benefits.
- **54%** of parents reported that it was hard or very hard or somewhat hard to meet basic needs. (**67%** of parents in rural areas)
- **44.6%** of parents overall reported that their housing situation or plans in the past year had been affected by their family's financial situation or rising costs.
- Top three challenges in meeting family needs were **utilities (43%), housing (33%), and healthcare food (31%).**

## Using RAPID Survey Data for Action

- Connecticut has leveraged RAPID findings in its advocacy efforts this legislative session through testimony and fact sheets, blog posts, and partner briefings to share data with community-based implementation partners and other stakeholders.
- The CT Data Collaborative runs customized analyses for community-based implementation partners, by request, so that they can see findings on a local level and apply findings to their program design and delivery.
- CT Data Collaborative is working on a data dashboard to promote ongoing use of data.

## **Resulting in a Historic Moment for Early Childhood in CT!**

The Connecticut House of Representatives passed a [priority bill](#) that promises to transform early childhood care and education for generations of families.

[Senate Bill 1](#), which also includes supports for special education, would create a new endowment for early childhood education that would draw up to \$300 million from surplus funds each year.

This would eventually allow families making less than \$100,000 to pay nothing for infant and toddler care and pre-K, while families making more than that would pay no more than 7% of their annual income. This legislation also supports equitable wages and access to healthcare for early childhood educators, creation of a parent portal, and local community planning for expansion.

### **Permanent Child Tax Credit**

Parents who receive the Earned Income Tax Credit will also receive an additional \$250 credit per household! The EITC helps the working poor (i.e. those earning up to \$62,688 for a married couple with two children). This is not the Child Tax Credit we hoped for (\$600/kid for married couples earning up to \$200,000), but it does help put more money back in the pockets of hardworking families.

# WITH GRATITUDE TO OUR SUPPORTERS

## CGLR THANKS OUR **ENTERPRISE FUNDERS**



**HEISING-SIMONS**  
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FOUNDATION



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## THANKS ALSO TO OUR **PROGRAMMATIC FUNDERS**

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The Grable Foundation

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The California Endowment

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WE ALSO DEEPLY APPRECIATE **OUR INDIVIDUAL DONORS**, INCLUDING THOSE WHO PREFER TO  
REMAIN ANONYMOUS, FOR THEIR GENEROSITY!