

SPOKANE UNIVERSITY DISTRICT

early learning and care needs assessment

MAY 2025

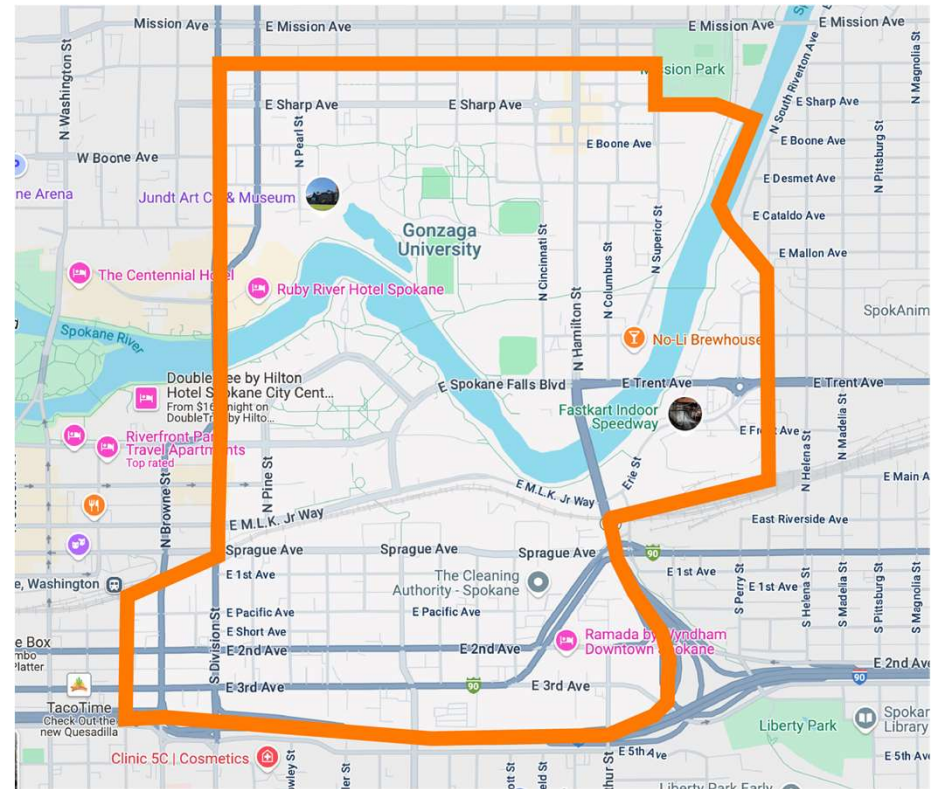


Prepared by Arrowleaf Consulting | arrowleafgroup.com



PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to assess the need for a new child care center in the Spokane University District and to help inform the design of an early learning and care program.



METHODS



Secondary data



US Census

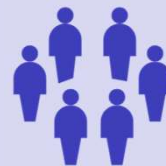


WA Department of Children,
Youth, and Families (DCYF)



Community survey

(n=260)



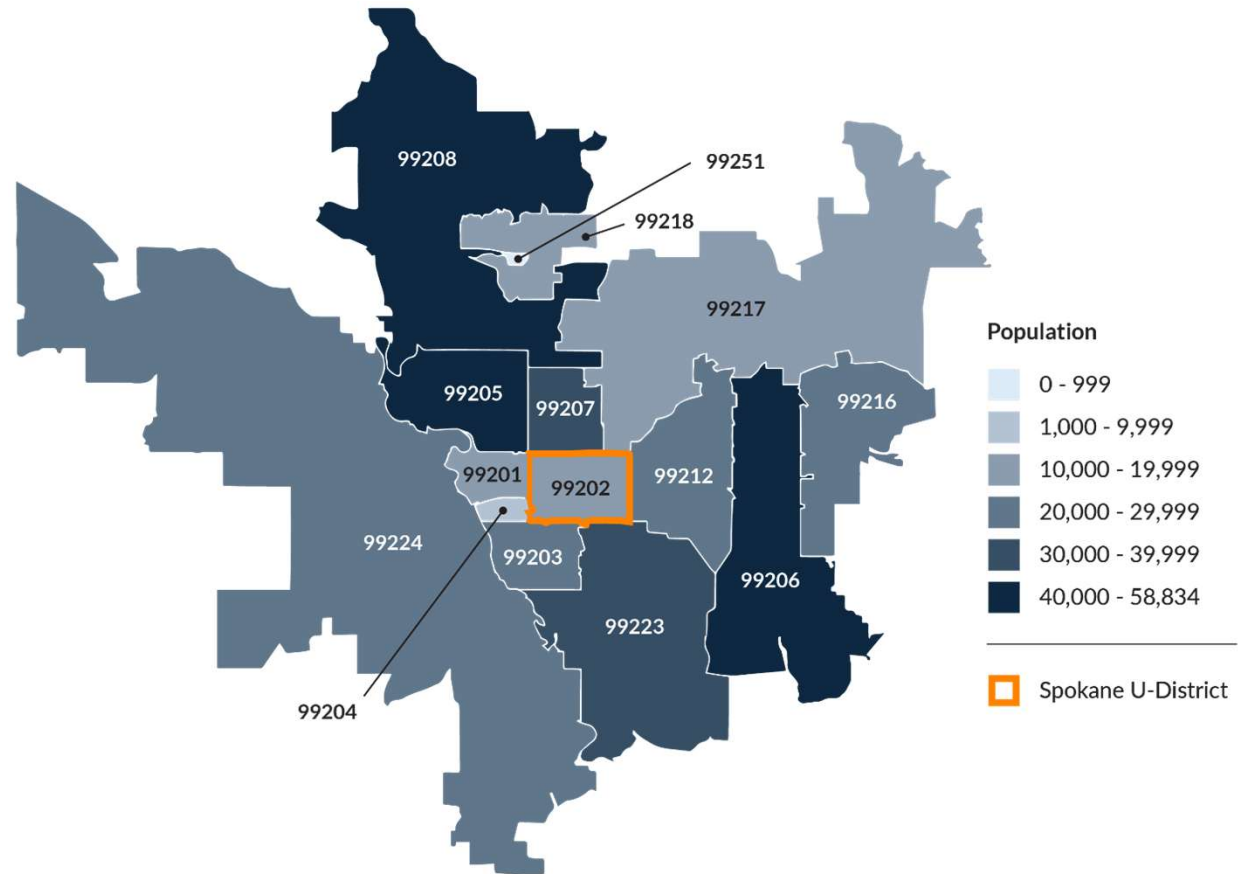
5 focus groups

(43 participants)

STUDY AREA OVERVIEW

**19,956
people**

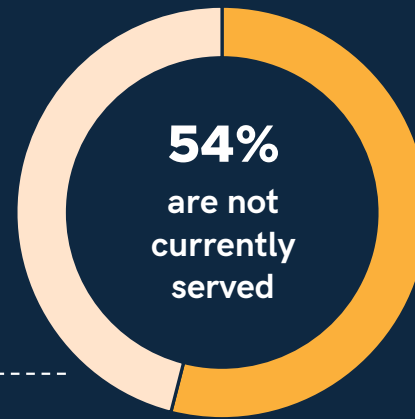
live in the
University District's
primary zip code
(99202)



STUDY AREA OVERVIEW (CONTINUED)

DCYF estimates there are **1,068 children who need child care** in the University District's primary zip code (99202).

— OF THOSE →



154 infants
(77% unserved)



261 toddlers
(65% unserved)



164 preschoolers
(52% unserved)

FURTHERMORE,

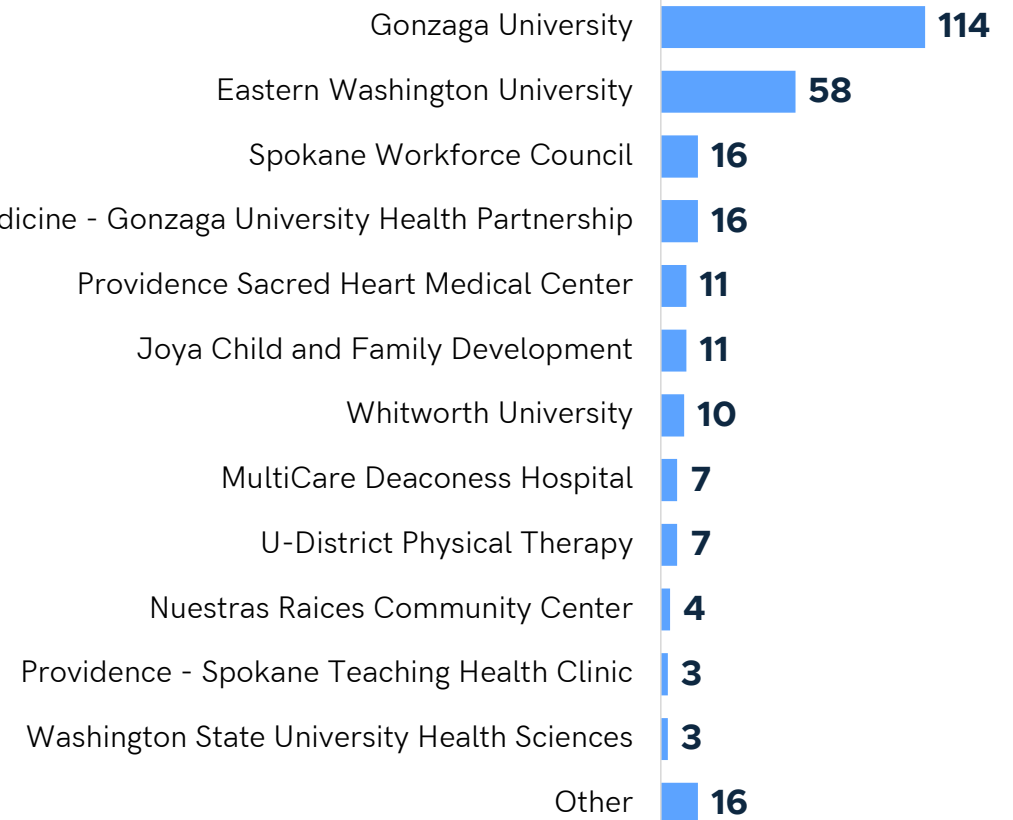
6,684 children in the eight Spokane zip codes closest to the University District do not have the child care they need.

STUDY PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS



Where survey participants work or study.

They could select all that apply to them. (n=259)



STUDY PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS (CONTINUED)

OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS



75% are employees in the organization(s) they are affiliated with (n=259)



30% are students in the organization(s) they are affiliated with (n=259)



80% of student survey respondents are full-time students (n=59)



76% have one or more children aged 12 years old or younger (n=259)

- **25%** have ≥ 1 infant
- **29%** have ≥ 1 toddler
- **42%** have ≥ 1 preschooler
- **63%** have ≥ 1 school-age child



26% are planning to have a baby or adopt a child in the next 1-2 years (n=259)

↳ Note, if they do not currently have ≥ 1 under 12 years old and are not planning to have a baby or adopt, then they skipped to the end of the survey.

STUDY PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS (CONTINUED)

OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS



9% have a child with a disability or developmental delay (n=193)



11% are single parents (n=204)



13% are eligible for the WA Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) (n=175)

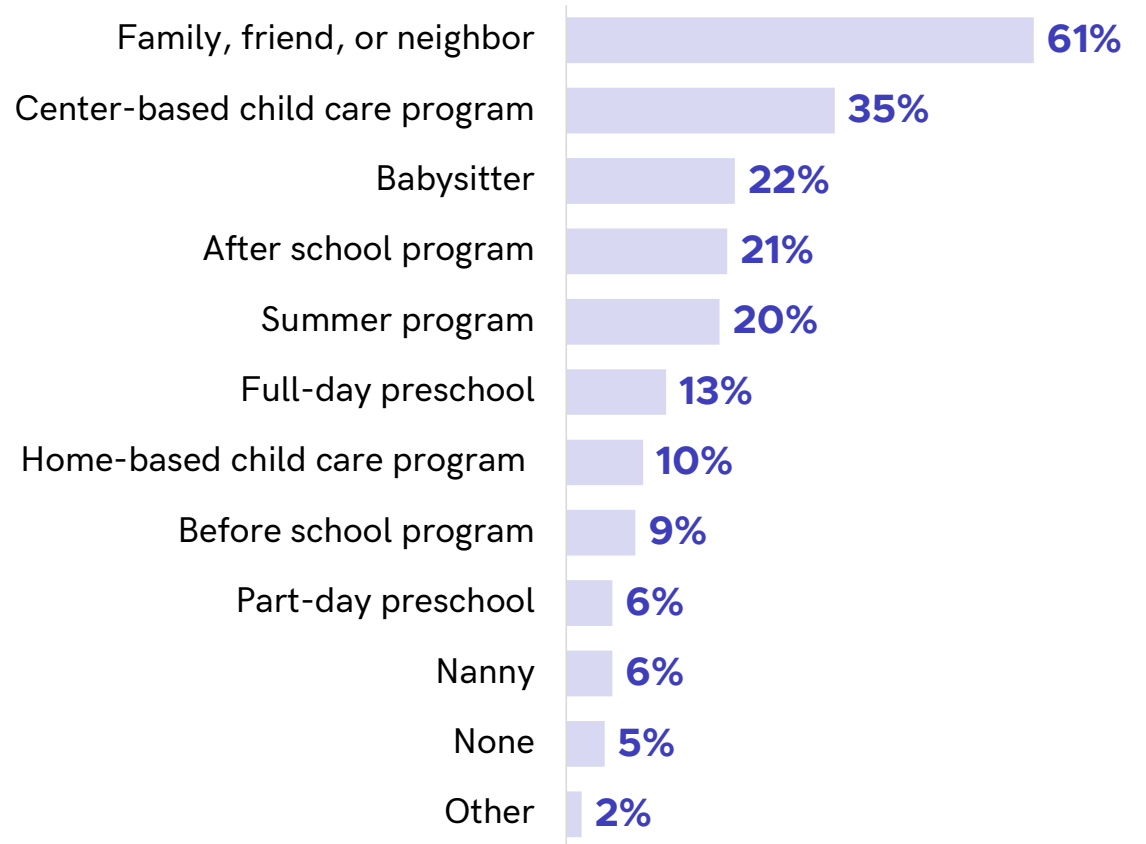


30% are eligible for the WA Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) subsidy program (n=175)

↳ However, only 7% said they are eligible compared to 67% who said they are not and 27% said they do not know if they are.

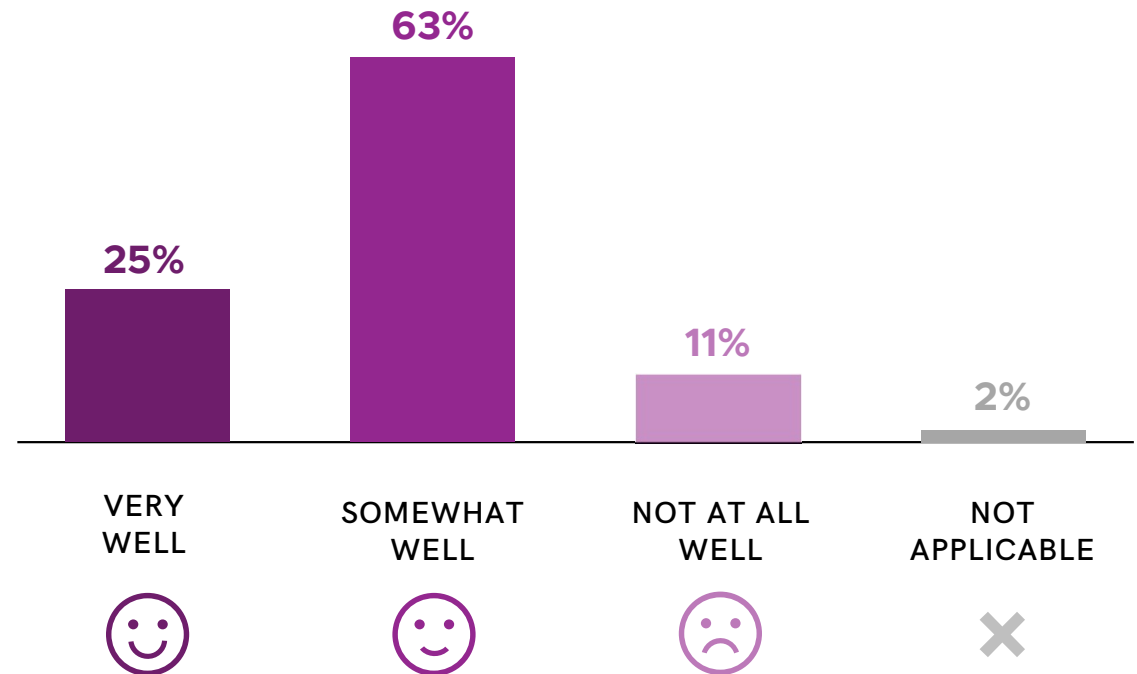
SURVEY PARTICIPANTS' CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS

The largest percentage (61%) said they used family, friends, or neighbors for child care in the last 12 months in contrast to 35% who used a center-based program and 10% who used a home-based program (n=206).



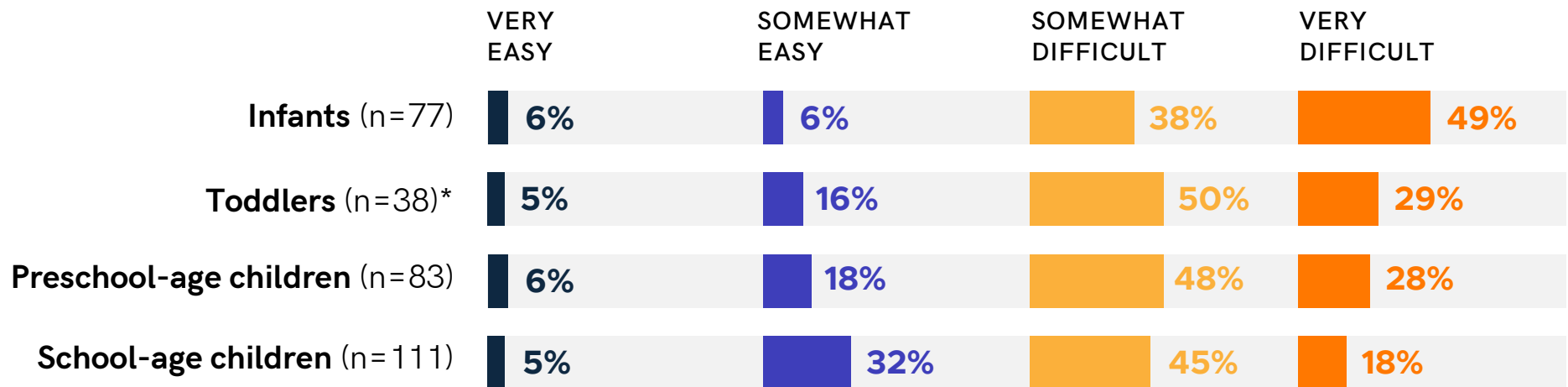
SURVEY PARTICIPANTS' CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS

Most (63%) said their current child care arrangements meet their child care needs "somewhat well" (n=195)



CHILD CARE CHALLENGES

The majority of respondents said it has been difficult to get the child care they need for all ages of children and have experienced the greatest difficulty getting care for infants.



*GU unintentionally omitted this question for toddlers

CHILD CARE CHALLENGES (CONTINUED)

77%

of the 22 respondents who said they have a child with a disability or developmental delay said it has been difficult to get the child care needed for their child.

TOP-FIVE

Greatest challenges for the largest number of respondents (n=189)



94%

Finding affordable child care



92%

Finding high-quality child care



89%

Finding a child care provider you trust



86%

Finding child care near your classes, home, or work



81%

Finding child care at the times when you need it

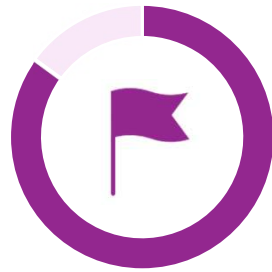
IMPACTS

DUE TO CHILD CARE DIFFICULTIES



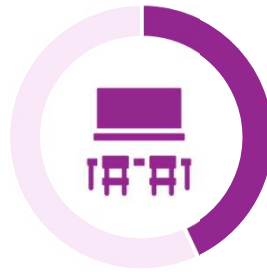
77%

have had to work **fewer hours** than they wanted
(n=178)



85%

feel their job performance or **career goals have been limited**
(n=190)



43%

of students have taken fewer classes than they wanted
(n=53)



94%

of students feel their academic performance has been limited
(n=53)



68%

of students are influenced to take classes online
(n=31)

IMPACTS (CONTINUED)

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS SAID

"I felt really stuck between a rock and a hard place in that **I can't afford not to work, but I also can't afford to work.**"

"My paycheck basically just covers child care at this point. We're not profiting at all and that's just for two days, which is pretty, I don't know, hard soul sucking sometimes, worth it to have a career, and frustrating."

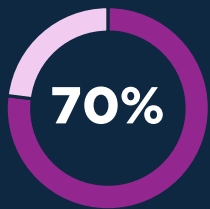
"We have had three women leave their jobs where I work because of child care. We have lost out on good employees because of child care needs and that's just in the past six months."

"I've been accepted into a master's program and right now **looking at what the master's program [schedule]...and my child care needs for my daughter, the two just aren't matching up.** I'm not understanding how I'm going to be able to make this happen."

"I'm extending med school into a fifth year, which is not the best for applying to residencies and things down the road, just because **we've got balance child care versus going to class.**"

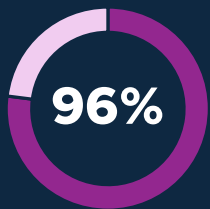
NEED AND INTEREST IN A UNIVERSITY DISTRICT CHILD CARE CENTER

OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS



said there is a *high need* for a child care center in the University District

--- another 23% said there is a moderate need (n=235).

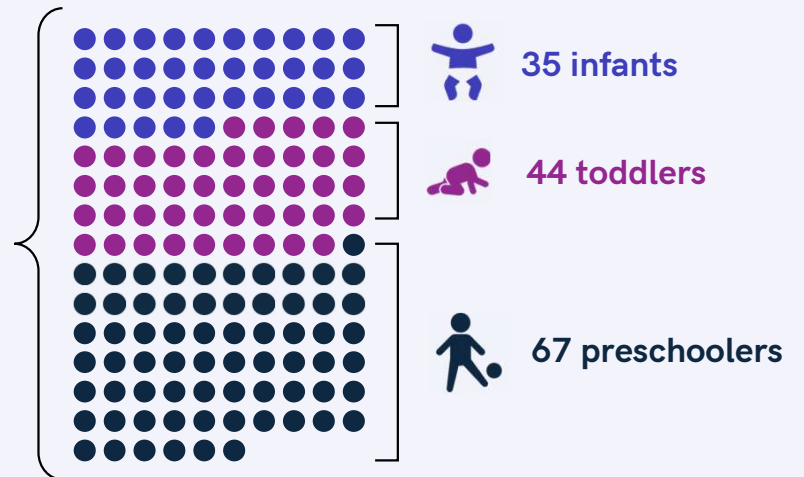


said they would be interested in using a child care center in the University District (n=211).

A child care center at the scale under consideration could have **three classrooms.**

One each for infant, toddler, and preschool age groups for a total of 42 slots.

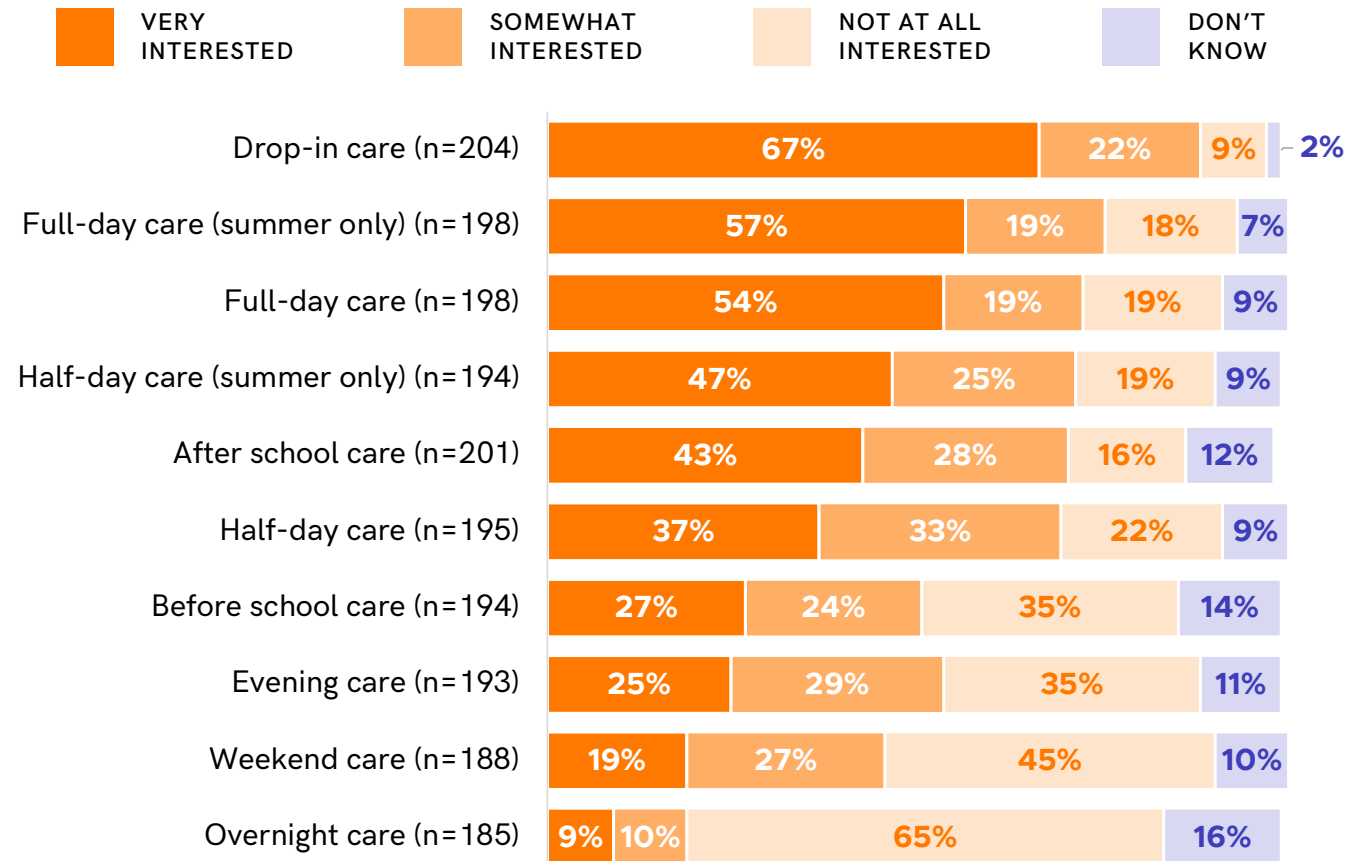
Survey respondents alone have (collectively) **146 children under 5 years old**



NEED AND INTEREST IN A UNIVERSITY DISTRICT CHILD CARE CENTER (CONTINUED)

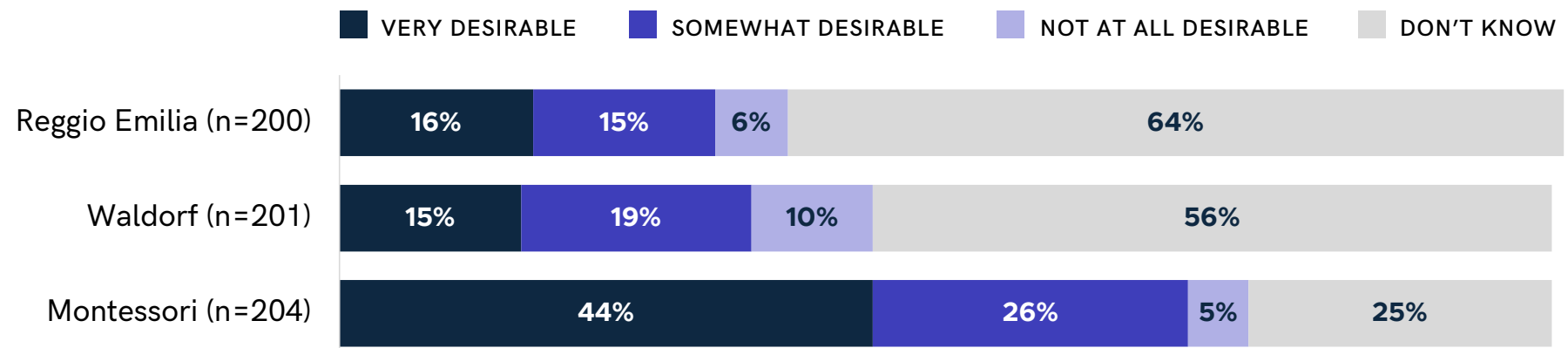
Interest in specific types of care in the University District

The majority expressed some level of interest in nearly all the options we asked about, with the largest number expressing the highest interest in drop-in, full-day, and half-day options.



NEED AND INTEREST IN A UNIVERSITY DISTRICT CHILD CARE CENTER (CONTINUED)

The largest number of survey respondents expressed the highest interest in a Montessori model when asked; however, many in focus groups and open-ended survey responses said they would be happy with a high-quality program of any kind:



"I personally have no preference on the curriculum...**just having somewhere that I know is safe for my child to be at is enough.**"
— Focus group participant

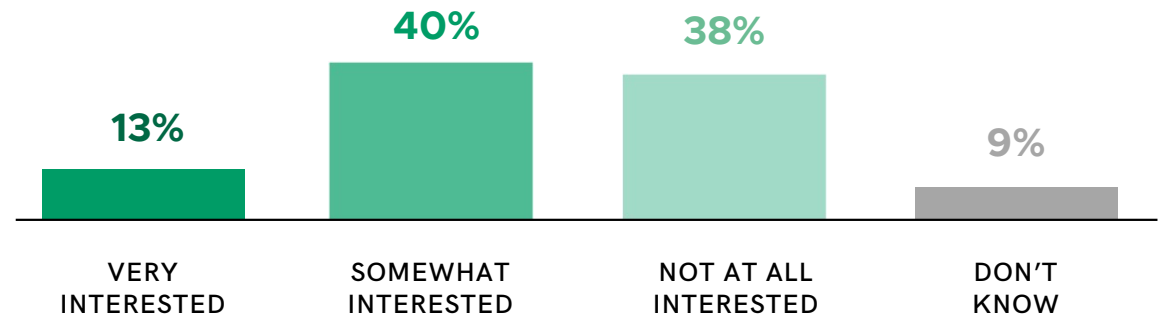
"**Price is a big priority.**"
— Focus group participant

NEED AND INTEREST IN A UNIVERSITY DISTRICT CHILD CARE CENTER (CONTINUED)

Complementary strategies that could help meet some needs

53%

of respondents expressed interest in participating in a **parent cooperative preschool** arrangement.



A parent cooperative preschool is organized by a group of families who hire a trained teacher to lead the program. The children's parents/guardians volunteer a percentage of time to help in the classroom on a rotating basis and provide administrative support.

Spokane Falls Community College provides support for parent cooperative preschools.

NEED AND INTEREST IN A UNIVERSITY DISTRICT CHILD CARE CENTER (CONTINUED)



88%

of respondents said it would be useful to have a **directory of local babysitters** who have been trained and certified in skills such as basic first aid, what to do during an emergency, how to choose age-appropriate activities, and how to handle behaviors (n=209).

