

# CITY OF PALO ALTO FAMILY NEEDS ASSESSMENT



**Prepared for  
The City of Palo Alto  
and  
The Palo Alto Advisory Committee on Early Care and Education  
June 2019**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report documents the findings of a family needs assessment conducted to better understand the assets, resources and challenges of families, particularly those with young children, living in the City of Palo Alto. The purpose of the family needs assessment was to gather data on the current state of families with young children and understand the best practices and opportunities for improving Palo Alto as a great place for families to live and raise children.

Four research questions form the foundation of this work:

- **Quality of Life in Palo Alto:** How are families with children ages birth through 12 doing in Palo Alto, how secure do they feel financially, how much of their time is devoted to family life, and what stressors do they face in their daily lives?
- **The Early Care and Education (ECE) Landscape:** What challenges do early care and education professionals face in Palo Alto, how the community can support this work, and which best practices are being implemented to recruit and retain quality teachers?
- **Access and Inclusion in the Palo Alto Community:** What are the unique stressors faced by low-income families, immigrant families, and families with children who have special needs? These are three groups who are historically underrepresented in planning and assessment processes.
- **Community Services, Resources and Supports:** What is the availability and accessibility of community resources, services and supports?

In this report, the terms “Early Care and Education (ECE),” “childcare” and “after-school care” encompass all programs in the community serving families and children, ages birth through 12.

Data was gathered from a variety of sources, including:

- 18 key informant interviews with community leaders who work with families
- 41 interviews with ECE providers
- 661 survey respondents from a quantitative mail survey
- 3 in-depth focus groups conducted with low-income families, immigrant families, and families with children who have special needs

### OVERVIEW: QUALITY OF LIFE IN PALO ALTO

Palo Alto is known as a great place to live and raise a family. Key informants, childcare providers, focus group participants and survey respondents all remarked on the strengths of the community, including:

- Educational and recreational opportunities for children
- Safe neighborhoods
- Opportunities to be involved through volunteering
- Connections with other parents
- Having time to spend with family
- Access to parks, libraries and community centers

Palo Alto also has its challenges. Survey respondents reported that they struggle with the following concerns:

- The high cost of housing
- Work-related stressors
- Lack of family support
- Peer pressure or fears of inadequacy
- Depression
- Social isolation or lack of friends

In the focus groups, families expressed additional concerns about the competitiveness of after-school activities, the need and cost of specialized equipment to participate, and the advantages some families have to hire private tutors and trainers. Focus group participants also noted that the pressure to excel can be a detriment to children’s well-being, in addition to the well-being of their parents and families as a whole.

## **OVERVIEW: THE EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION (ECE) LANDSCAPE**

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Most key informants say that Palo Alto does an excellent job catering to and being mindful of children’s needs through stellar early care and education programs that are developmentally appropriate.

Families overwhelmingly agree that convenient, high-quality childcare exists in Palo Alto, but the most frequently cited barrier for accessing them is the waitlist. About half of the survey respondents and many of the ECE providers interviewed also cited parking as a problem at childcare or after-school care facilities, especially during pick-up and drop-off times.

In focus group discussions, participants shared that childcare in Palo Alto is very expensive. Participants who self-identified as middle-income families reported they cannot afford full tuition, but neither do they qualify for financial aid. Families also expressed concern about the shortage of culturally-sensitive childcare options. And parents with children who have special needs expressed concern about the lack of childcare programs that can care for their child.

ECE providers acknowledged families’ frustration with waitlists, the high costs of childcare, and the limited options for children who have special needs. ECE providers identified their biggest struggles as the inability to expand capacity due to space constraints, meeting the changing needs of diverse populations, and managing the high expectations and demands of parents in the community.

However, the biggest barrier to providing consistent, high-quality early care and education in Palo Alto is recruitment and retention of teachers. ECE providers identify the following challenges: low wages and lack of benefits, commute time to work, and finding qualified professionals who can afford to live in Palo Alto and the surrounding communities.

## **OVERVIEW: ACCESS AND INCLUSION IN THE PALO ALTO COMMUNITY**

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Focus group participants identified several strengths related to access and inclusion in Palo Alto, including access to low-income housing, high-quality public schools, free or reduced cost activities offered at the libraries, and a playground that welcomes children who have special needs.

Participants in both the low-income and immigrant family focus groups described difficulty integrating into the Palo Alto community due to cultural and language barriers, although most focus group participants agreed that finding playmates for their children is a much easier gateway into the community.

Unfortunately, families encounter barriers to participating in after-school activities and programs because of the high fees and need for specialized equipment.

Parents of children with special needs also reported feeling isolated from other parents in the community, because of the perception that parents of “typically-developing children” do not understand the experiences of parents of children who have special needs. Participants agreed that inclusiveness should begin early at the playground.

## **OVERVIEW: COMMUNITY SERVICES, RESOURCES, AND SUPPORTS**

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A majority of survey respondents, focus group participants, ECE providers and key informants expressed gratitude for all the opportunities they have living in the Palo Alto community. Nearly two out of three survey respondents access Palo Alto’s extensive system of parks and local libraries frequently and a large majority of survey respondents agree that they have ample opportunities to be involved in the community.

Finding information about community resources was a clear area for improvement, particularly with the focus group respondents. While some families with children who have special needs use the City’s Enjoy! Catalog to find activities, many would appreciate more classes and events appropriate for children with differing abilities and needs. Participants in the low-income focus group appreciated the free and reduced rate classes and activities held at the local libraries, although they noted that sports programs and summer camps are still too expensive for their children to access.

Some focus group participants discussed the difficulty in finding activities for younger children, especially toddlers and children under six years old. Others noted the difficulty in finding activities for teens, since most activities seem to end after middle school.

And a majority of focus group participants recommended that all city advisory committees and commissions ensure there is a diverse composition of members, to carefully consider the needs of all families in Palo Alto.

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This section illustrates the research methods used to assess the needs, assets, resources and challenges of families, particularly those with young children, living in the City of Palo Alto.

### RESEARCH METHODS

Data were gathered from 18 key informant interviews with community leaders who work with families and children, 41 interviews with ECE providers and 661 survey respondents from a quantitative mail survey sent to Palo Alto families with at least one child under the age of 13. To ensure the feedback of historically underrepresented families, three in-depth focus groups were also conducted with low-income families, immigrant families, and families with children who have special needs.

#### INDIVIDUAL KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

A variety of individual key informant interviews were held with community leaders who work with youth and families, including Palo Alto Community Childcare (PACCC), the YMCA, Stanford Work/Life Office, Palo Alto Housing, Abilities United, Hand in Hand Parenting, Parents Place, Blossom Birth & Family and Oshman Family Jewish Community Center. Additionally, other key informants included the founder of a parents' group, an ECE consultant, representatives from the Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) and the League of Women Voters.

Interviews included topics such as childcare, education, mental health and medical services, prenatal and postnatal services, financial support, housing, immigration and other community services. A total of 18 interviews were conducted with key informants, with an average length of 20 minutes.

#### EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION (ECE) PROVIDER INTERVIEWS

Palo Alto is home to approximately 68 early care and education centers and 24 family childcare homes. For this study, interviewers attempted to contact each provider for an interview. Forty-one interviews were conducted by telephone, one of them in Spanish. Three providers completed written answers of the interview questions by email. Interviews included questions about enrollment capacity, tuition and curriculum; resources and services provided to families with children who have special needs, low-income families and immigrant families; teacher recruitment and retention; and the greatest challenges early care and education providers and families face in the Palo Alto community.

Interviewees worked in a variety of child care settings. Among those interviewed, an overall theme of admiration for the City of Palo Alto emerged. Many providers mentioned how great Palo Alto is, and the many wonderful services and resources found here. Several interviewees specifically mentioned the extraordinary parks, the exceptional education system and the sense of community that Palo Alto offers.

## FOCUS GROUPS

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Three focus groups were held in Palo Alto to capture the voice and concerns of historically underrepresented groups including low-income families, immigrant families and parents with children who have special needs.

Focus group participants were recruited through social media, including Facebook and Instagram advertising, and through email newsletters and announcements sent by the City of Palo Alto, Abilities United, Palo Alto Chinese Parent’s Club, Palo Alto Housing, among other avenues.

The focus group for low-income families was held in the Community Room at Arastradero Park Apartments, a complex with 65 HUD Section 236 and Section 8 subsidized family units operated by Palo Alto Housing. This group consisted of 12 participants. The focus group of immigrant families was held at the Palo Alto Art Center and consisted of seven participants. Finally, the focus group of parents with children who have special needs was held at Milestones Preschool, located at Abilities United. This focus group consisted of 15 participants.

Throughout the focus group discussions, various challenges were discussed with the participants including the cost of housing, finding quality and affordable childcare, challenges with inclusion, competition, finding and using community resources, and the specific needs and concerns of families like them. Participants received a \$75 VISA gift card for their time and participation.

## SURVEY OF PALO ALTO FAMILIES

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A quantitative mail survey provided generalizable data to inform the research. A commercial listing of households in Palo Alto with children under the age of 13 was purchased. The mailing was sent to 3,615 Palo Alto households. The survey was also sent out to the Palo Alto childcare provider list for distribution to local families, a variety of local ethnic family listservs, and PAUSD’s weekly e-news. 360 completed surveys were returned. 264 surveys were returned as undeliverable.

The introduction to the mail survey included a web link for respondents who preferred to take the survey online. 301 respondents took the survey online, for a total of 661 survey respondents and a response rate of approximately 20%.

Each survey packet included a return self-addressed stamped envelope. Each packet also included an optional raffle ticket for a \$75 prepaid VISA gift card. At the conclusion of the data collection period, a winner was selected and awarded the gift card.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

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The quantitative mail survey was sent to all identified Palo Alto families with children ages 0 to 12 using a purchased consumer list. This Census style approach was used to attempt to secure the insights of all families living in the Palo Alto community; however, the sample may not have included all families who recently moved to the community or otherwise were not included on the purchased consumer listing.

The focus group of lower-income families was held at an apartment complex with 65 HUD Section 236 and Section 8 subsidized family units. Many of the participants who attended this focus group lived in one of these family units. The recruitment strategy for this focus group did not target families experiencing homelessness. Cost and time constraints provided limited recruitment for other historically underrepresented populations in Palo Alto.

Finding price information for childcare in Palo Alto proved difficult. Some childcare providers list their pricing information on their website, but many do not. Not all childcare providers were willing to provide pricing during the childcare provider interviews as many variables determine the cost of childcare for families including the parent’s income level, number of children served at the childcare facility and the number of days or hours childcare is needed, to name a few. These factors made it difficult to determine a uniform, streamlined pricing structure for childcare providers operating in the community.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- 1) Explore including more focus groups for this research. There are many important groups living in the Palo Alto community that may be small in population, but have important voices in the community.
- 2) Conduct additional research to access the opinions and needs of the following populations: renters, new residents and students with families at Stanford University.
- 3) Provide an online survey option for childcare providers to complete at their convenience. This may increase the response rate among childcare providers to further gain their insights and opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of providing childcare in the Palo Alto community
- 4) Conduct an additional study into the needs and availability of quality afterschool care/programs and how parents manage when care cannot be found.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Throughout this report, the following terms are used.

<i>Key informant</i>	Community leader who works with families who was interviewed
<i>Survey respondent</i>	Palo Alto resident who filled out the survey by mail or Internet
<i>Focus group participant</i>	Someone who participated in one of three focus groups
<i>Childcare provider</i>	A licensed childcare provider who was interviewed for this report

## ABOUT THE SURVEY RESPONDENTS

This section reviews characteristics of families in Palo Alto. It provides the survey results that describe the respondents, as well as Census information regarding the City of Palo Alto. Unless otherwise noted, all graphs show results of the survey. For the survey charts, the sample size for respondents answering each question shown is shown as “N=”.

### POPULATION

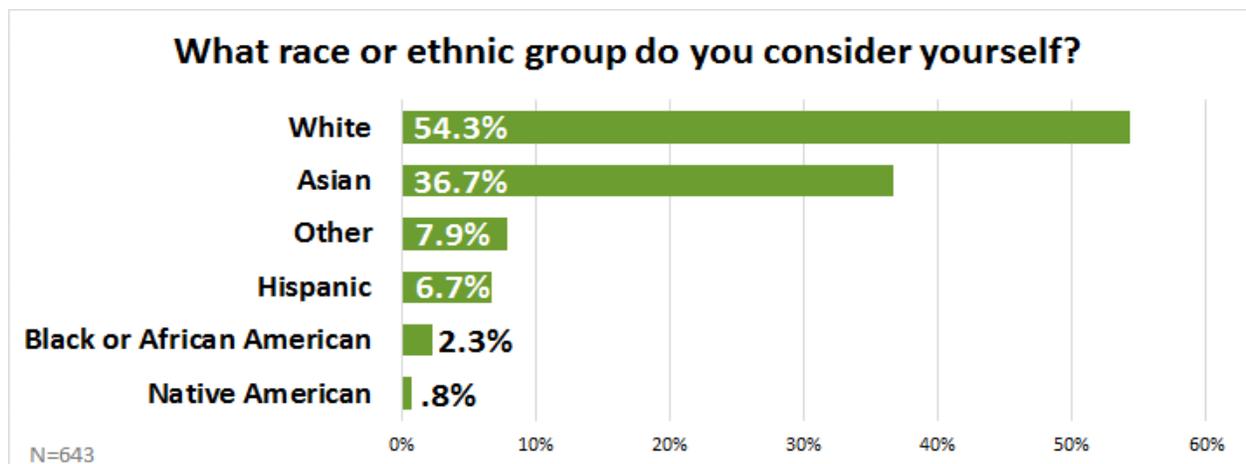
According to the 2017 American Community Survey (ACS), an ongoing survey by the U.S. Census Bureau that regularly gathers information previously contained only in the long form of the decennial census, the City of Palo Alto has about 67,082 residents, with 15,658 under the age of 18.

Palo Alto is home to 8,994 households with at least one child under the age of 18. About 62% of children in Palo Alto are age 12 or younger. Therefore, we estimate the number of households with a child 12 years of age or younger to be approximately 4,200 households.

Palo Alto residents are predominantly white (61%), with Asians making up the largest ethnic minority (31%), including Chinese (17%) and Asian Indians (6%). Fewer than one in ten residents (7%) are Hispanic or Latino and 2% are black or African American.

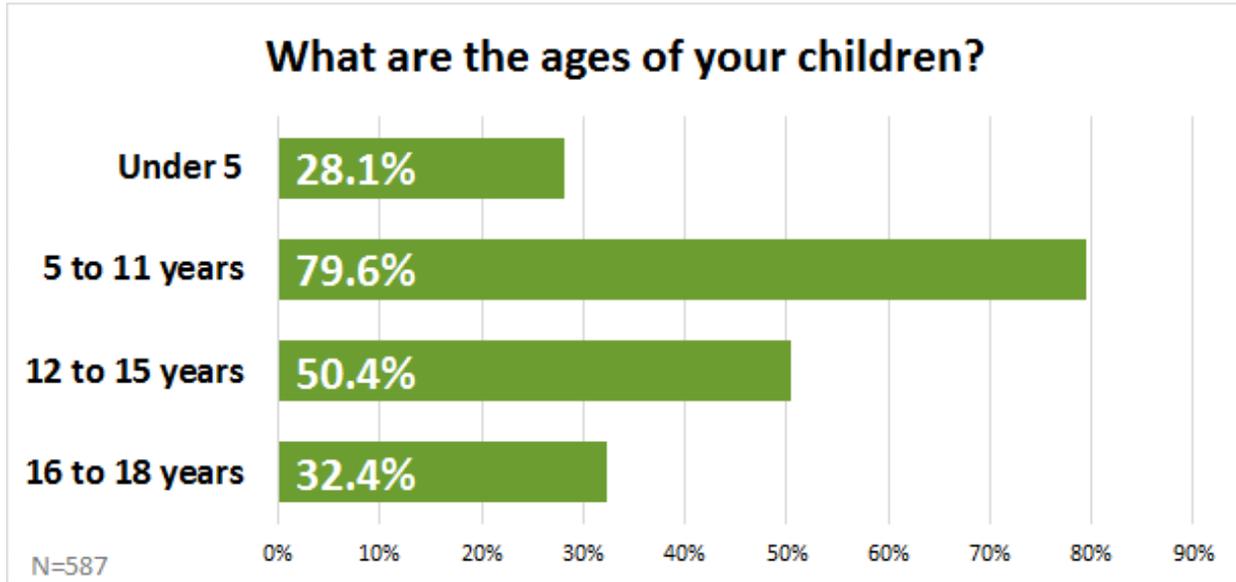
### ETHNIC DIVERSITY OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Survey respondents in the study reflected the ethnic diversity of the Palo Alto population. About half (54%) of the survey respondents identify as white. About one in three (37%) survey respondents identified as Asian, about one in fifteen (7%) as Hispanic and about one in thirty (2%) as black or African American.

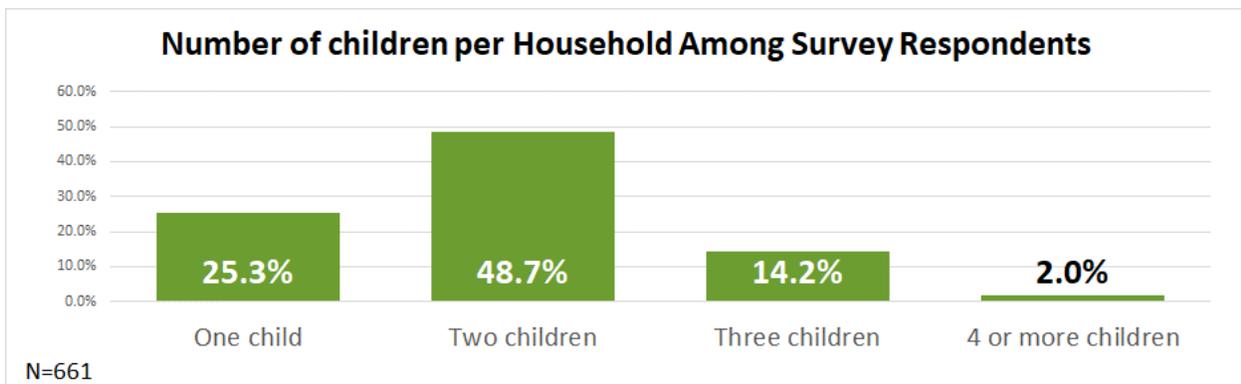


HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

The majority of survey respondents (80%) have at least one child between the ages of 5 and 11 years. More than one in four has a child under the age of five. Over half of respondents have a child who is 12-15 years of age and about one in three (32%) have a child who is 16-18 years old.

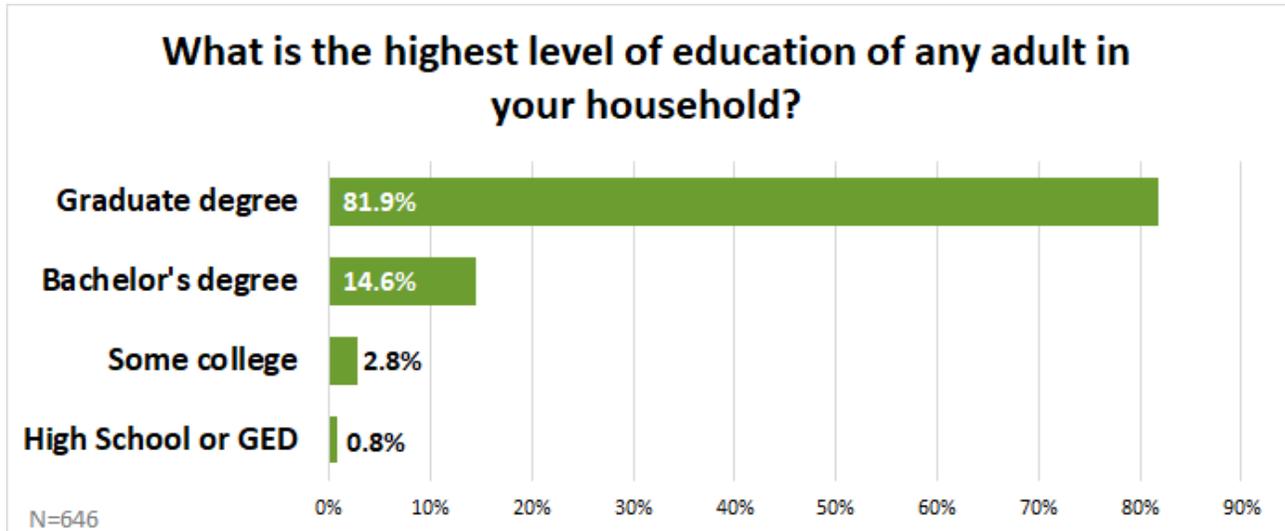


Most respondents have more than one child. About one in four (25%) have one child and half (49%) have two children in their household.

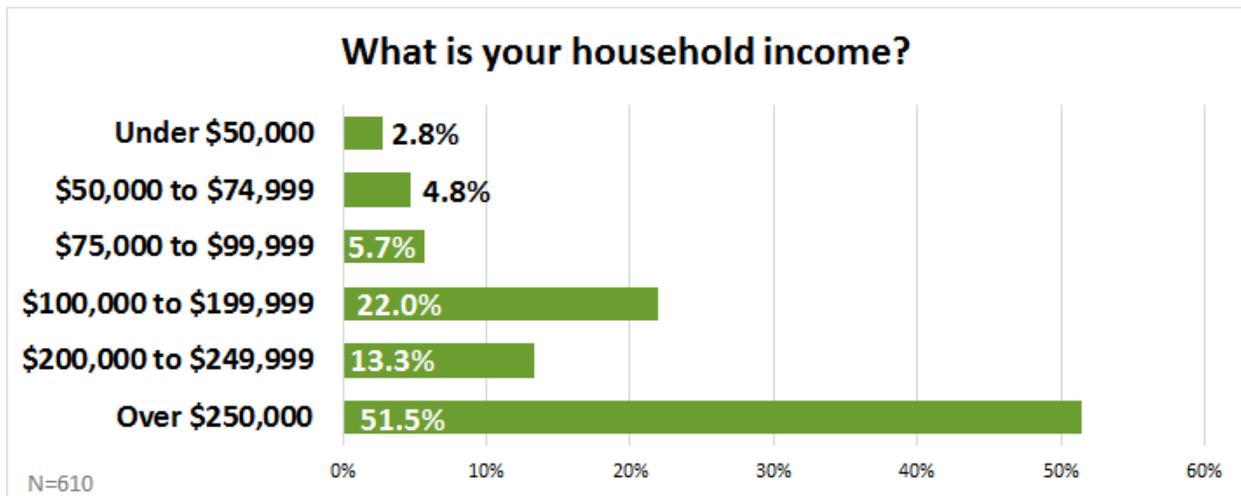


EDUCATION AND INCOME

A majority (82%) of survey respondents have a graduate degree. This is 30% higher than Palo Altans overall and 70% higher than statewide numbers according to data from the 2017 American Community Survey.

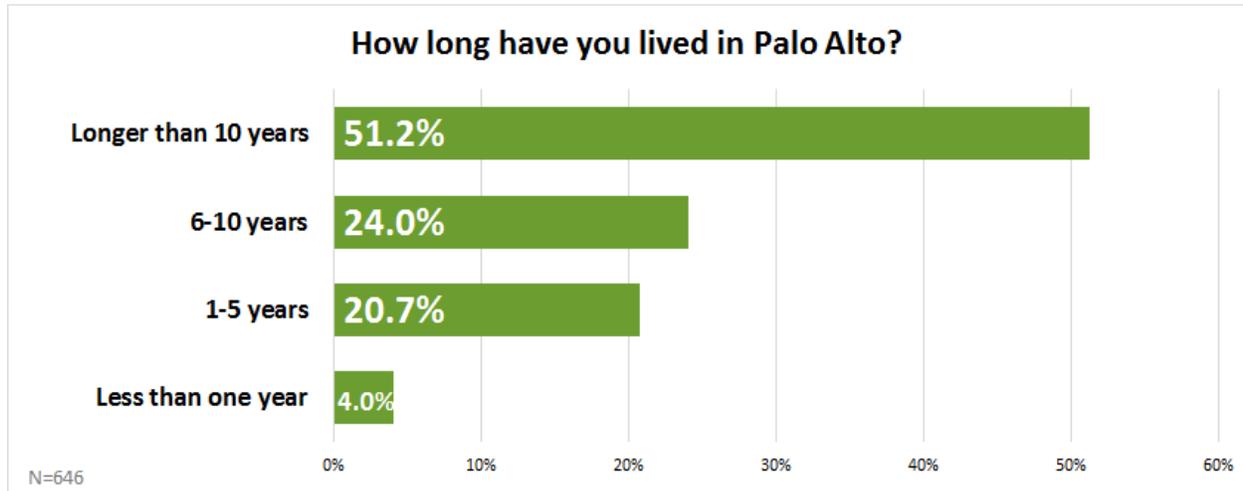


Over half (52%) of survey respondents report household income over \$250,000. About one in seven residents (13%) have household income less than \$100,000. According to the 2017 ACS, about one in three residents (37.3%) have household income less than \$100,000.



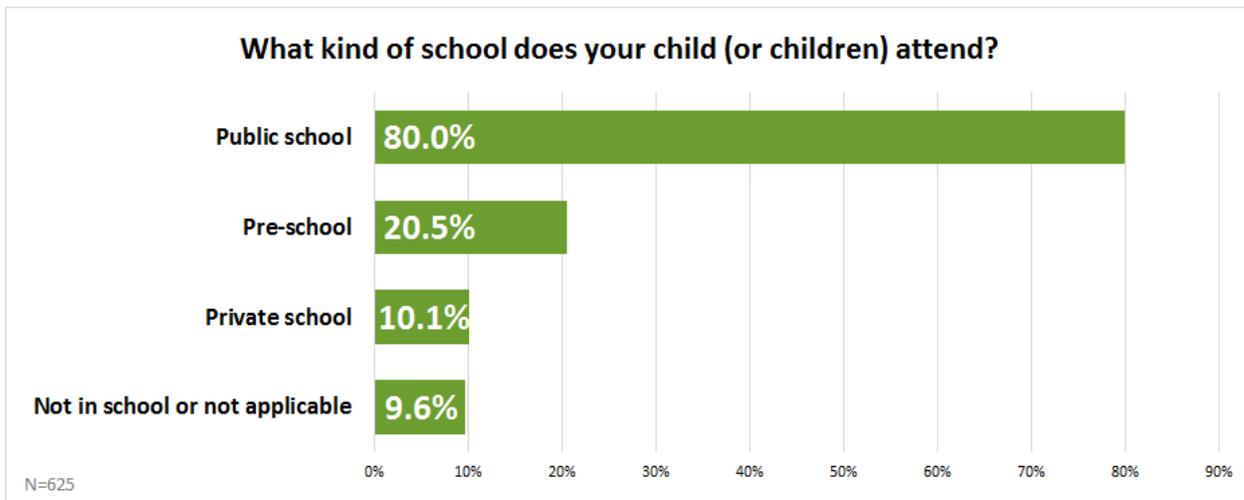
LENGTH OF RESIDENCE IN PALO ALTO

Survey respondents answered questions about children of all ages who are growing up in the Palo Alto community. About half (51%) of the survey respondents have lived in Palo Alto longer than ten years and about one in four (25%) have lived in Palo Alto for five years or less.



TYPE OF SCHOOL CHILDREN ATTEND

Most (80%) of the survey respondent’s children attend public school in Palo Alto. One in five (21%) has a child in pre-school and one in ten (10%) has a child in private school. None of the respondents answered that they home school.



## QUALITY OF LIFE IN PALO ALTO

The City of Palo Alto offers residents many unique opportunities. There are at least 36 parks and nearly one-third of its 26 square miles is dedicated to open spaces. Several key informants noted that Palo Alto offers parks and libraries in almost every neighborhood as well as activities and amenities for families. Additionally, key informants said that there are excellent preschools, well-regarded public schools, recreation programs and numerous after-school activities in the city.

**“Palo Alto has excellent schools, provides a multitude of recreational activities and enrichment activities, beautiful parks and family activities.”**

*KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW*

Key informants highlighted numerous things Palo Alto does well for youth in the community, including offering instruction in numerous languages, sports, arts and music programs. Most key informants interviewed believe Palo Alto residents benefit greatly from these opportunities and interests.

Palo Alto also has its challenges. In the City’s 2018 National Citizen Survey, only 37% of Palo Alto residents said the availability of affordable quality childcare or preschool was good or excellent, down ten percentage points from the 2017 finding of 47%.

Key informants described the pressure many children experience as a result of being part of a community with so many advantages and opportunities and such high expectations. Several participants questioned the value of having their children in Palo Alto schools because of the advantages other more affluent students have in terms of private lessons and specialized sports equipment.

**“Dial down the pressure and competitive feel to the community, a sense of security needs to be fostered. Children have this pressure early and it is destructive. You have to be the best of the best... The pressure this puts on families and their children is brutal.”**

*KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW*

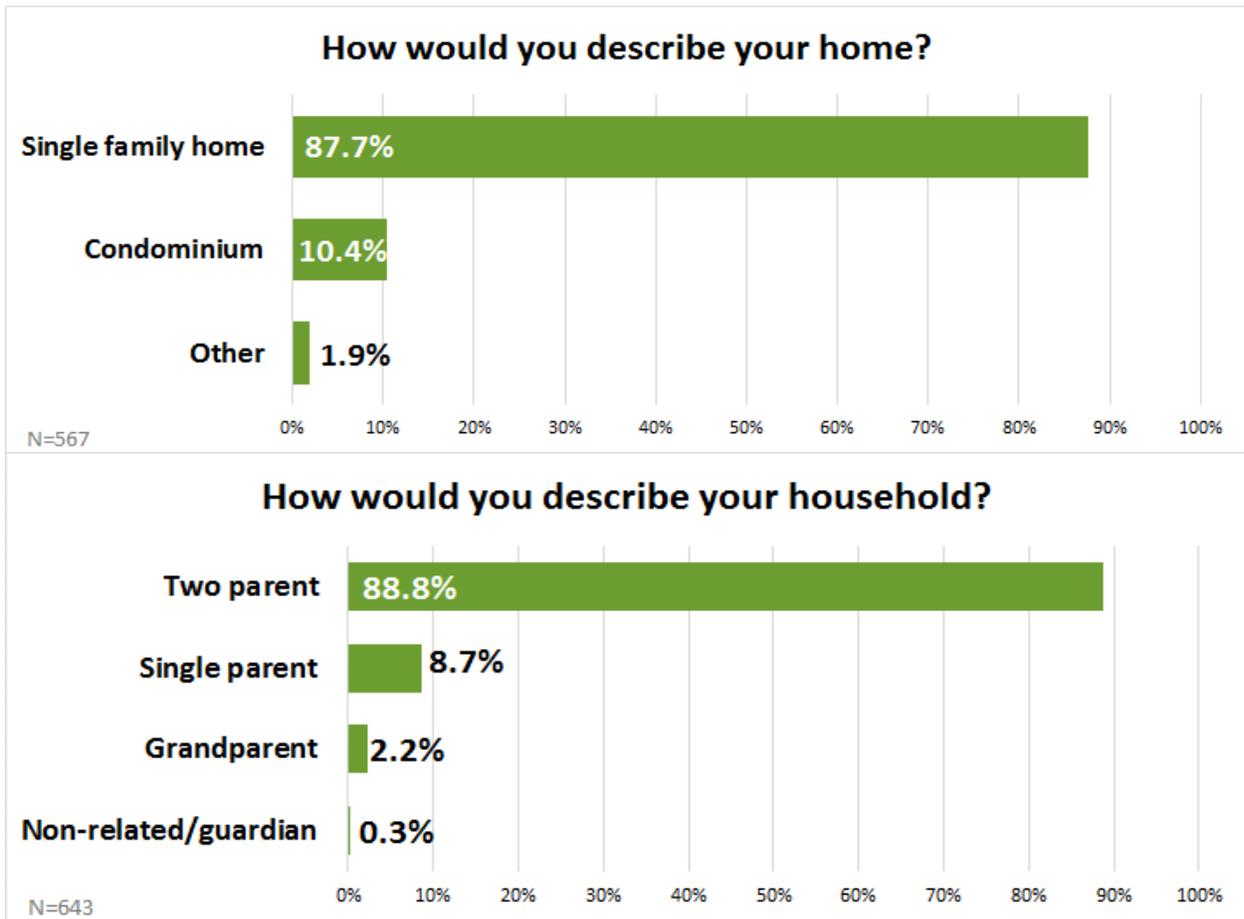
**“Having so many opportunities and resources is a strength but it leads kids to believe that they need to be the best in everything, or at least be doing everything—this hinders the time that families have to spend with each other.”**

*KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW*

**LIVING IN PALO ALTO**

Most (88%) of the survey respondents live in a single-family home and most live in a two-parent household (89%). About one in ten (9%) report that their children live in a single-parent household or are a grandparent raising a child (2%).

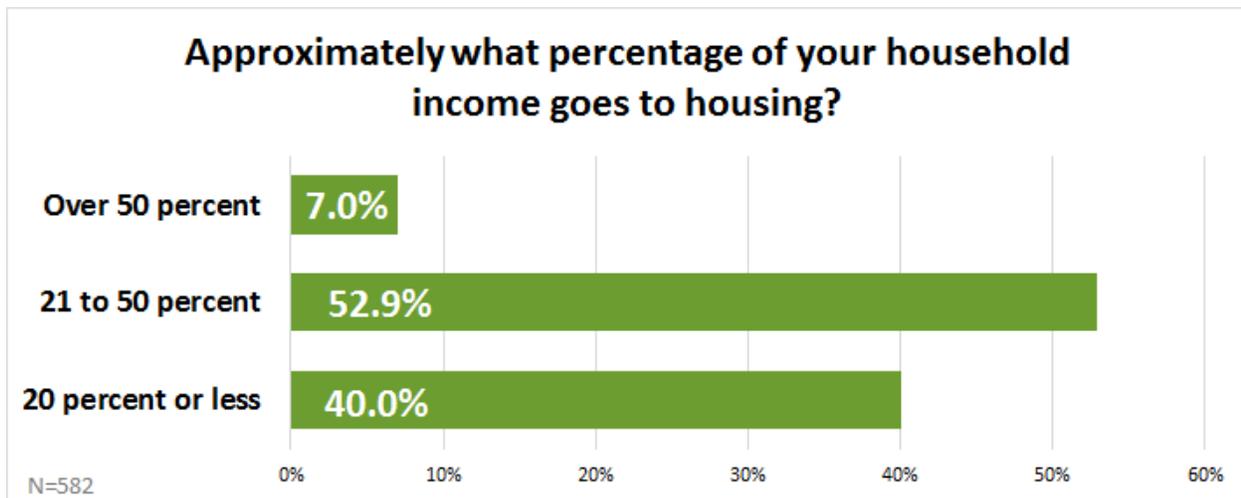
According to the 2017 ACS, family households comprise 66.9% of all households in Palo Alto and include 56.5% married-couple households and 10.4% single-parent households. Grandparents responsible for grandchildren represent 16.8% of Palo Alto households.



COSTS OF HOUSING

Palo Alto is known for very high housing costs, like other communities in Silicon Valley and the state of California. Census figures indicate that more than one in three housing units in Palo Alto (38%) have monthly costs of \$3,000 or more.

Nearly 60% of survey respondents reported that they spend between 20-50% or more of their household income on housing. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s indicator of affordability is to keep housing costs below 30% of household income<sup>1</sup>. According to the US Census, 75% of Palo Alto residents with incomes under \$35,000 spend 30% or more of their income on housing, whereas just 19% of those with incomes of \$75,000 or more spend 30% of their income or more on housing<sup>2</sup>.



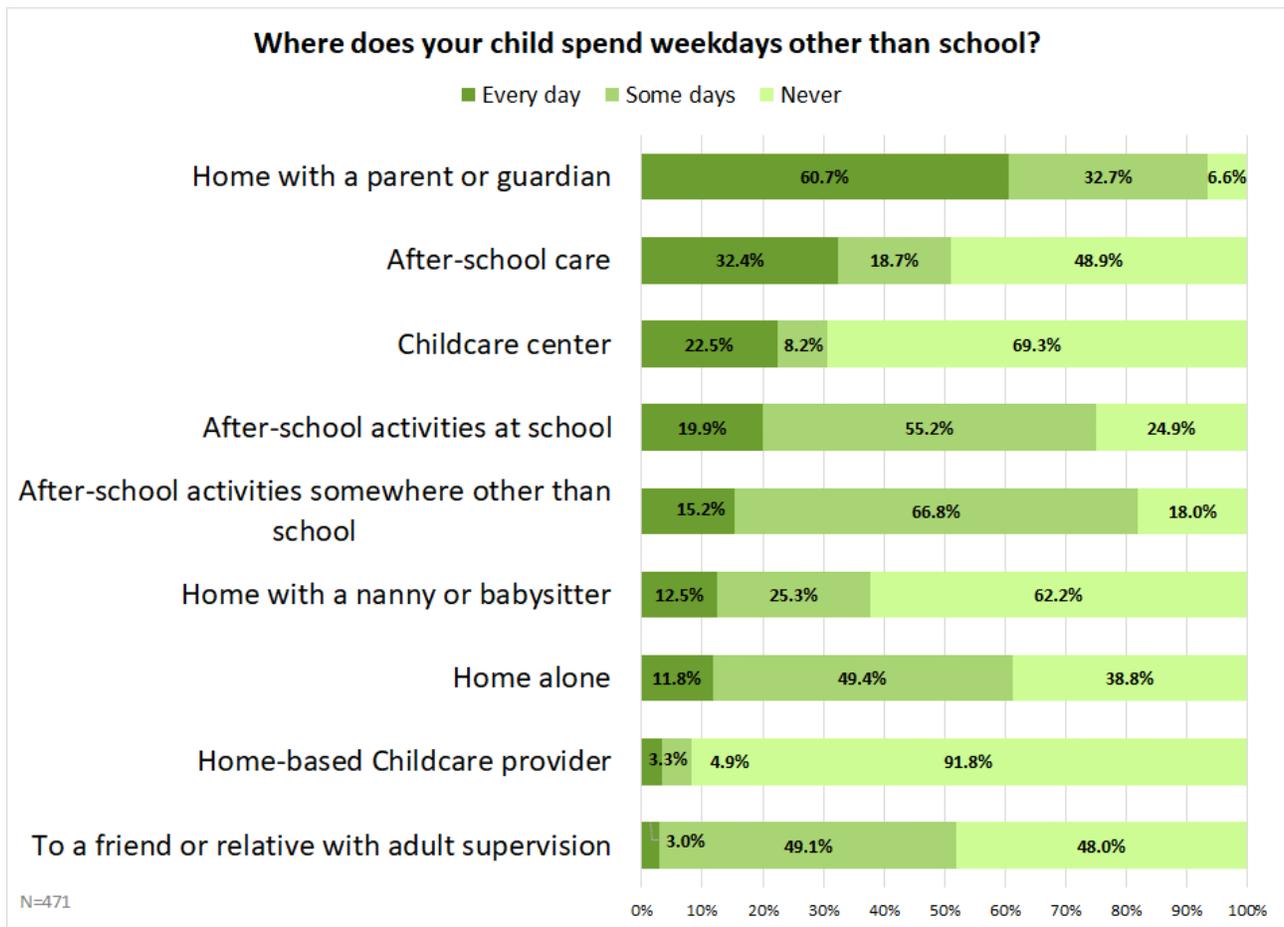
<sup>1</sup> Defining Housing Affordability, available at <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr-edge-featd-article-081417.html>

<sup>2</sup> 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

WHERE CHILDREN SPEND THEIR TIME OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

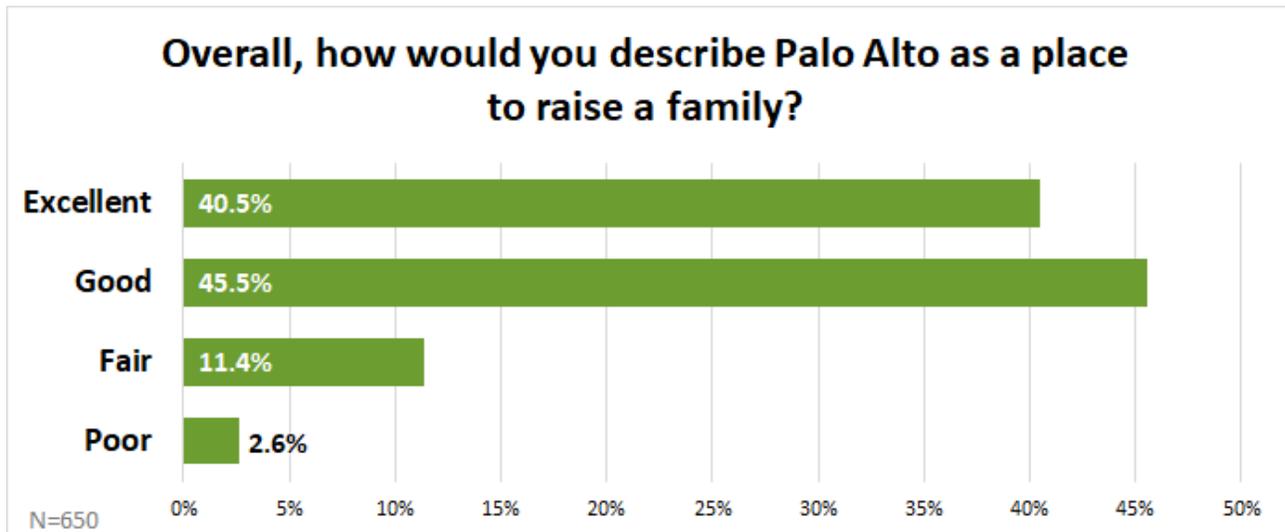
When it comes to everyday activities, most children of the families who responded to the survey go home to a parent or guardian (60.7%), with about one in three (32.7%) going home to a parent on some days. Less than one in ten (6.8%) do not go home to a parent or guardian.

On at least some days, a majority of children attend after-school activities at school (75%) or attend activities somewhere other than school (82%). Of these children, most attend activities some days rather than every day. About half (51%) of respondents' children attend after school care on at least some days. Almost one in three (31%) children go to a childcare center and a few (8%) go to a home-based childcare provider on at least some days.



**PALO ALTO AS A PLACE TO RAISE A FAMILY**

Eight out of ten (86%) survey respondents describe Palo Alto as an excellent or good place to raise a family. Only a few describe Palo Alto as a fair (11%) or poor (3%) place to raise a family.



These results are consistent with the City’s 2018 National Citizen Survey result, which found that 82% of respondents rated Palo Alto as an excellent or good place to raise children. This result was a decrease of 12 percentage points from the 2017 study, in which 94% of Palo Alto residents said the City was a good or excellent place to raise children.

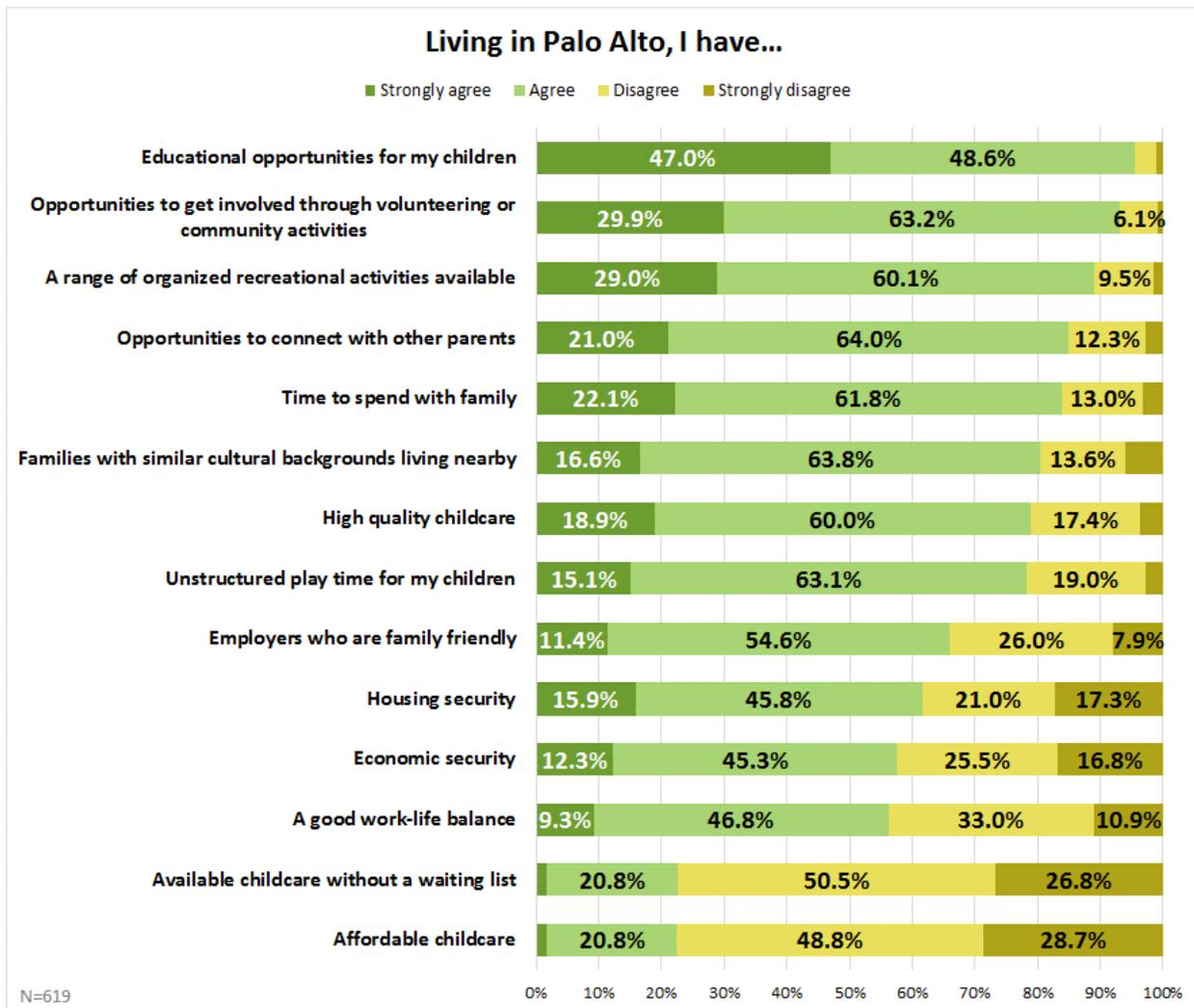
The age of the survey respondents child(ren) did not significantly change their perception of Palo Alto as a good or excellent place to raise a family. The key drivers, or variables that had a statistically significant relationship with ratings of Palo Alto as a place to raise a family, included having:

- ◆ A good work-life balance;
- ◆ Housing security;
- ◆ Educational opportunities;
- ◆ Families with similar cultural backgrounds living nearby;
- ◆ High quality childcare;
- ◆ Economic security; and
- ◆ Employers who are family friendly.

A vast majority (96%) of survey respondents agree that they have educational opportunities for their children by living in Palo Alto. Similarly, most families agree that they have opportunities to get involved through volunteering or other community activities (93%), have a range of organized recreational activities available (89%), opportunities to connect with other parents (85%), time to spend with their family (84%), and families with similar cultural backgrounds living nearby (80%). A majority of families in Palo Alto also agree that their child has time for unstructured play (78%).

Key informant interviews reinforced the idea that Palo Alto is home to excellent public schools, although some noted that families of children with special needs sometimes have to advocate hard for themselves within the public school system. Once accessed, the school programs were described as being very strong.

One key informant described a need to offer more shadowing support for special needs children, particularly in preschool. Shadowing support is the process of a staff person accompanying a student in order to gain insight into the student's experience and offer support to the student in that environment.



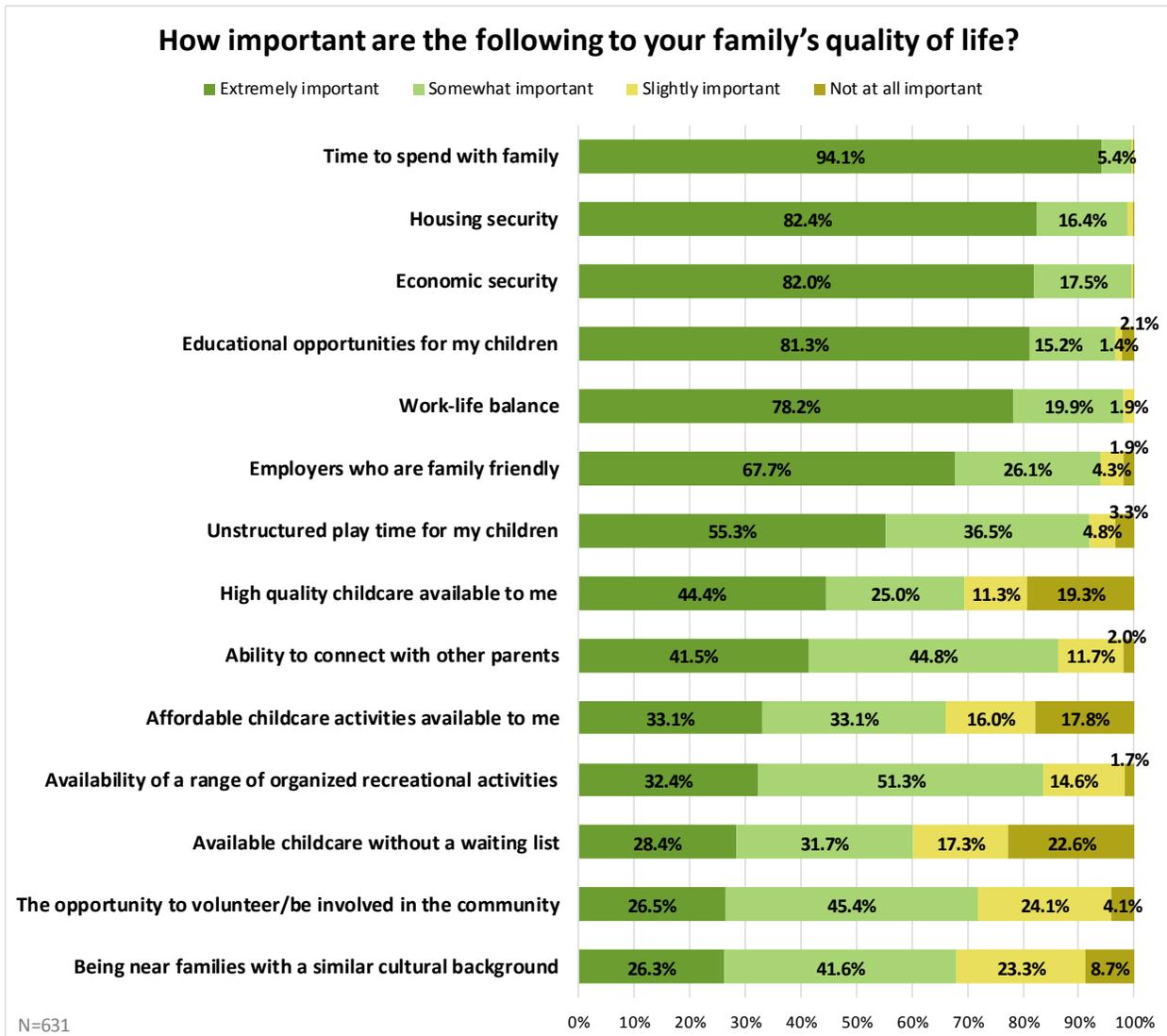
A majority of families believe that Palo Alto offers employers who are family friendly (66%). Additionally, a majority of families advise that they have housing security (62%) and economic security (58%). Many families say that they have a good work-life balance living in Palo Alto (56%).

Childcare challenges are reflected in the survey results. While a majority of families in Palo Alto agree that they have high quality ECE in the city (79%), only some agree that there are available ECE centers without a waiting list (23%) and that ECE programs are affordable (23%).

## THE ELEMENTS THAT MAKE UP QUALITY OF LIFE

Most families agreed that time to spend with family (94%), housing security (82%), economic security (82%) and educational opportunities for their children (81%) are extremely important for their family’s quality of life. A majority of families say that work-life balance (78%) and employers who are family friendly (68%) are also extremely important to their family’s quality of life.

The opportunity to volunteer or be involved in the community and being near families with similar cultural backgrounds was seen as somewhat important (45% and 42% respectively), but not necessarily extremely important (27% and 26% respectively).



## CASE STUDY: HOW BUSINESSES CAN HELP

To mitigate both the skilled labor shortage and the lack of childcare availability, some companies offer on-site childcare to their employees. This benefit helps to fill and maintain vacant spots with qualified individuals, improves job satisfaction and increases employee engagement.

Despite known benefits, on-site childcare is extremely rare. In a 2017 study by *The Outline*, just 17 of the Fortune 100 top companies provided at least one on-site childcare center. A 2016 National Study of Employers by the Society for Human Resource Management and Families and Work Institute found that employers more commonly offer a plan where pre-tax dollars can be used for childcare or subsidize childcare costs instead of offering childcare on-site. Facebook, for example, subsidizes childcare but does not offer childcare on their campus. On-site childcare is rare among Fortune 100 companies, and even more rare outside of the top companies. A few examples include:

**Campbell's Soup** offers a Family Center, which provides care for infants through kindergarten-aged children, at its headquarters in Camden, New Jersey. Their facility also includes several family lounges.<sup>1</sup>

**Nike Inc.** provides care for hundreds of infants to 5-year-olds, at its Nike World Headquarters in Beaverton, Oregon. At these centers, children are offered a diverse experience and creative learning environment, which includes use of Nike's facilities and grounds, on-campus farmer's markets, athlete visits and other events that only Nike can offer. By focusing on the zero to five ages, they address the most difficult period for many families to find childcare and help to alleviate a broader childcare shortage.<sup>2</sup>

**Johnson & Johnson** offers childcare centers at several of their locations worldwide. In 1990, Johnson & Johnson opened their first Child Development Center, which provides programs for infants, toddlers and preschoolers, kindergarten prep and kindergarten, at their headquarters in New Brunswick, New Jersey.<sup>3</sup>

1 Beck, Julia. *How Some Companies Are Making Childcare Less Stressful for Their Employees*. Harvard Business Review, 19 July 2017, [www.hbr.org/2017/04/how-some-companies-are-making-child-care-less-stressful-for-their-employees](http://www.hbr.org/2017/04/how-some-companies-are-making-child-care-less-stressful-for-their-employees).

2 Nike. "Nike. Just Do It." *NIKE, Inc.- Inspiration and Innovation for Every Athlete in the World.*, 2019, [www.nike.com/](http://www.nike.com/).

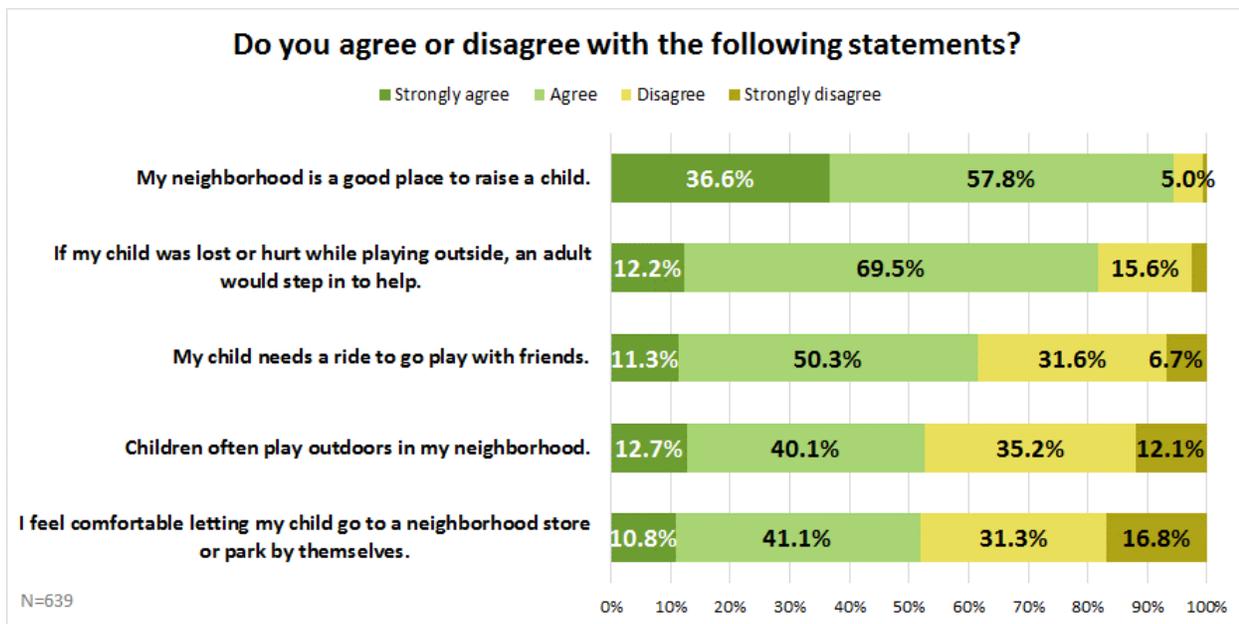
3 Ahern, Kaitlin. "7 Ways Johnson & Johnson Has Been at the Forefront of Supporting Its Employees Since 1886." *Johnson & Johnson*, 3 September 2017, [www.jnj.com/our-heritage/7-ways-johnson-johnson-has-been-supporting-its-employees-since-1886](http://www.jnj.com/our-heritage/7-ways-johnson-johnson-has-been-supporting-its-employees-since-1886).

PLAYING IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Nine in ten Palo Alto families surveyed (94%) agreed that their neighborhood is a good place to raise a child, with just over five percent saying they disagree.

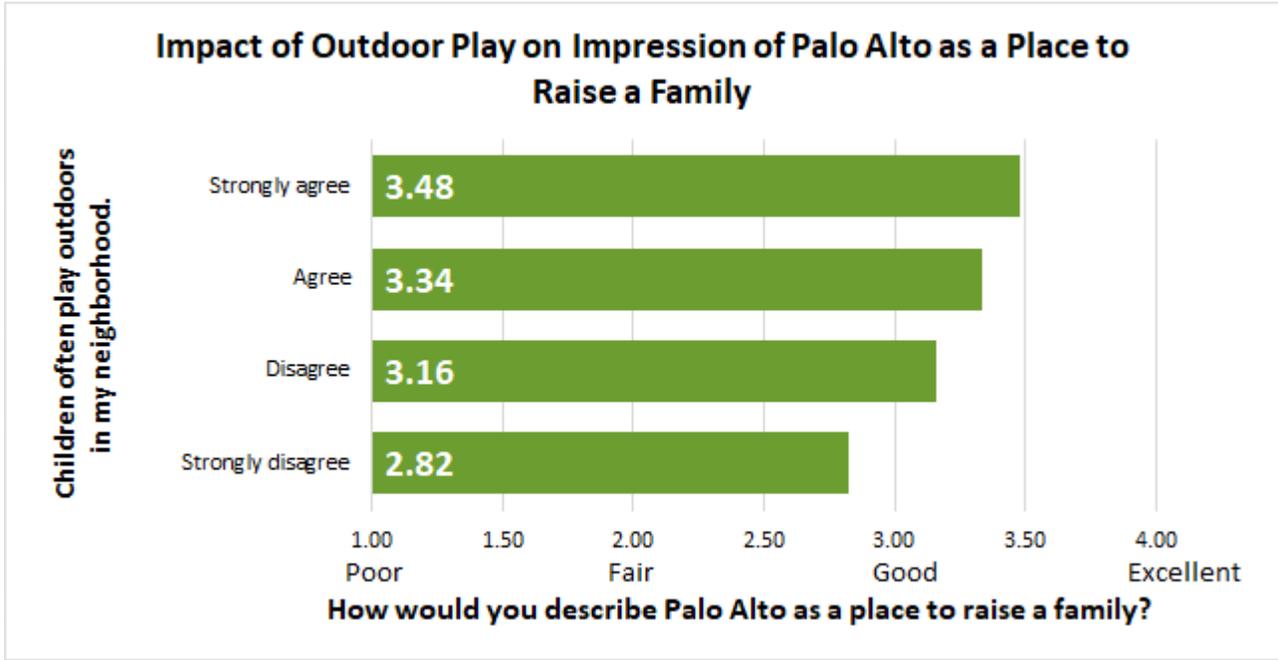
A large majority of Palo Alto families agree (82%) that an adult would step in to help their child if they were lost or hurt while playing outside. Despite these findings, only about half (53%) of Palo Alto families say that children often play outdoors in their neighborhood. Similarly, only about half (52%) of Palo Alto families say they feel comfortable letting their child go to a neighborhood store or park by themselves.

Palo Alto families often rely on transportation for their children to play with friends. A majority of families (62%) agree that their child needs a ride to go play with friends.



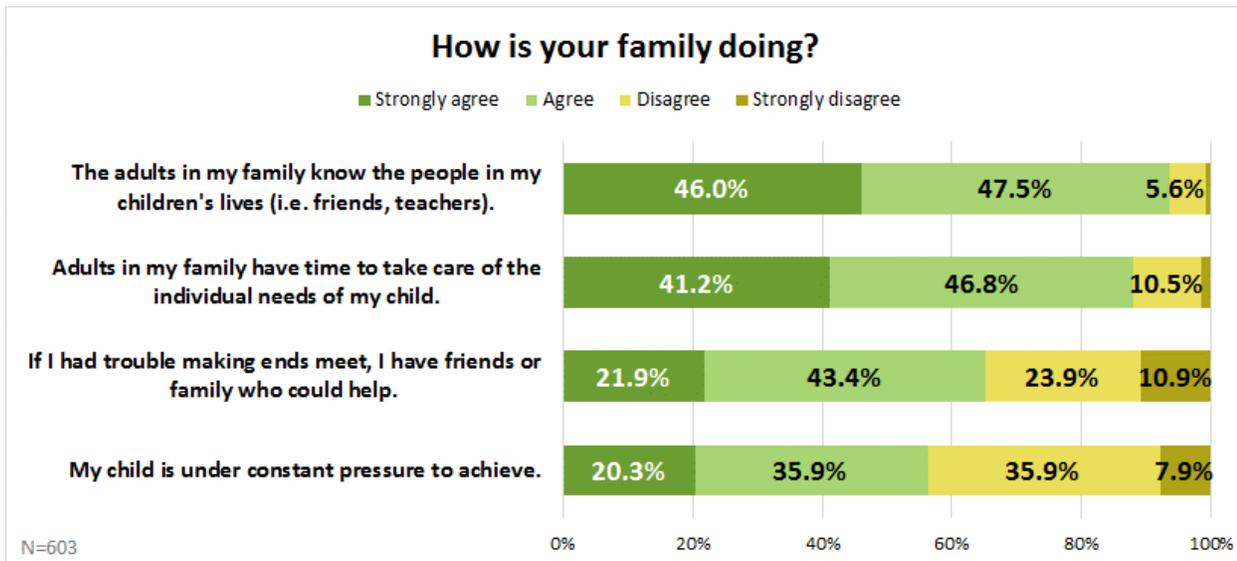
OUTDOOR PLAY AND PERCEPTIONS OF PALO ALTO AS A PLACE TO RAISE A FAMILY

The more strongly respondents agree that children often play outdoors in their neighborhood, the more favorable their impression of Palo Alto as a place to raise a family.



## CURRENT STATE OF THE FAMILY

Most families agree that the adults in their family know the people in their children’s lives such as friends or teachers (94%). Similarly, most families agree that the adults in their family have time to take care of the individual needs of their child (88%). A majority of families stated that they have friends or family who could help them if they had trouble making ends meet (65%). Many families believe that their child is under constant pressure to achieve (56%).



High expectations for children and their parents are a major challenge faced by families. Several key informants noted that work demands make it hard for parents to connect with their children. Long work hours and time spent commuting lead to less family time. Key informants reported that the pressure placed on children, in terms of academic standards, impacts their social and emotional development while the pressure placed on parents’ impacts their ability to parent well.

### COMMUNITY CHALLENGES

Palo Alto is still recovering from two community-identified suicide clusters in 2009-10, in which five teens died by suicide, and in 2014-15, in which four teens died by suicide. In response, the community created Project Safety Net a collaborative network designed to foster youth well-being. The coalition works to develop and implement a community-

**“It’s really competitive, but we are lacking. Me and my husband have a university education from our home country, so we didn’t need tutors. But my son worked as a tutor for a rich family and he complained to me, ‘If you could have paid for my tutor, I would have done much better.’ They feel they could have done better if we had more money.”**

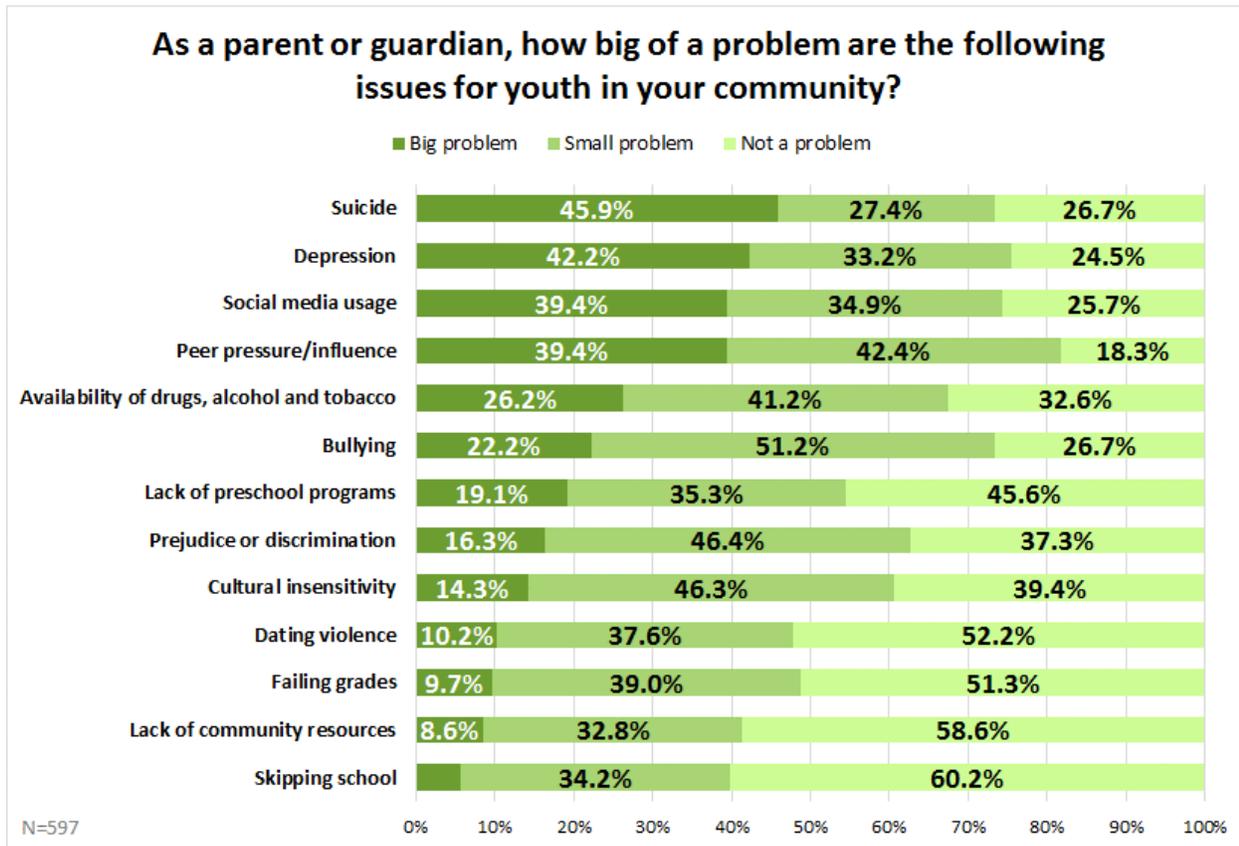
- Focus Group Participant

based mental health plan that includes education, prevention and intervention strategies for teen suicide-prevention efforts.

Within this context, survey respondents identified as the primary concerns for youth in Palo Alto as suicide (46%) and depression (42%), the detrimental effects of peer pressure (40%) and social media usage (40%).

Prejudice, discrimination and cultural insensitivity are seen as at least a small problem by many survey respondents (46%), with some reporting these issues as a big problem (16%).

A large percentage of respondents did NOT perceive the following issues as big problems for youth: skipping school (60%), failing grades (51%), dating violence (52%) and lack of community resources (59%).



COMPETITION

The sense of competition among Palo Alto children was a concern for many participants in the low-income focus group. Specifically, many participants found it difficult for their children to get into sport programs. Some determined that because many families in Palo Alto can afford to put their children in programs from an early age, buy equipment and provide extra training, those children have an advantage in tryouts.

**“It’s very hard here if you don’t have the right tutors. Everyone here has tutors, but they can afford it. People like me can’t.”**

- Focus Group Participant

Similarly, low-income parents feel that their children lack opportunities academically that high-income families enjoy. For example, high-income families are able to secure tutors and other academic help for their children from an early age. Low-income parents are unable to afford tutors and worry that their children will fall behind.

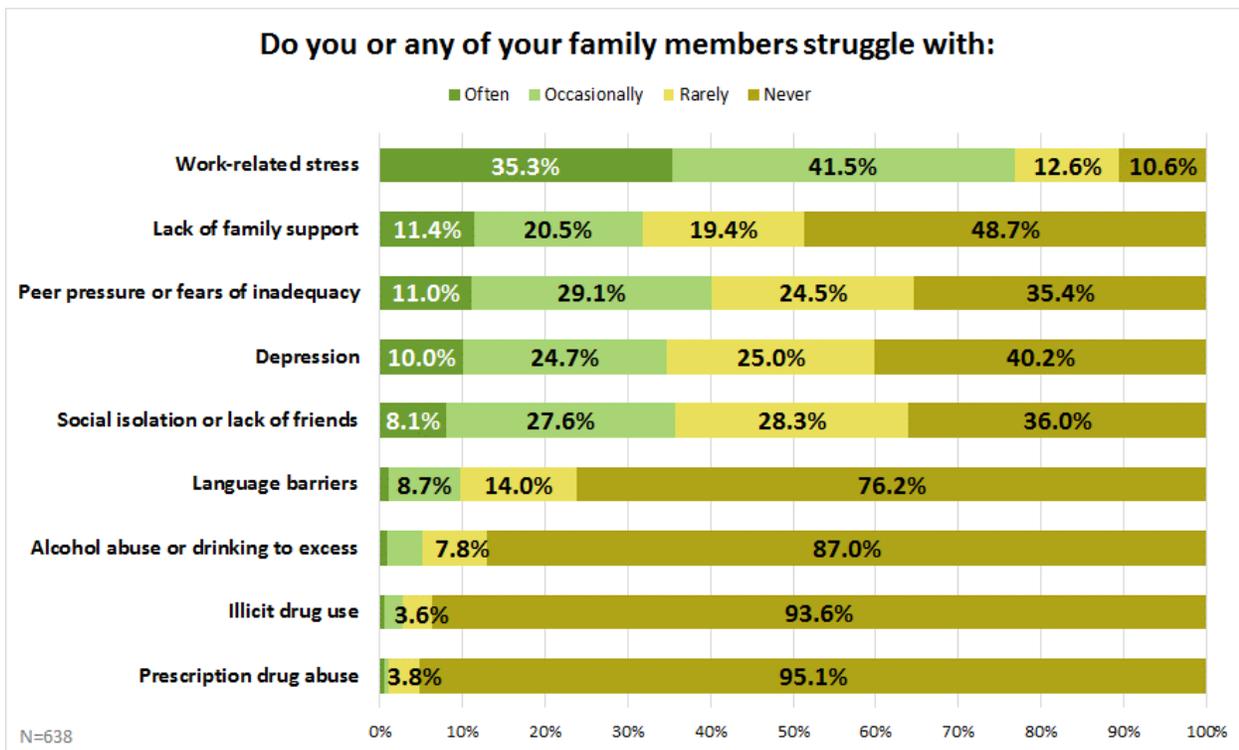
The participants in the immigrant family focus group also talked about the competition among Palo Alto children. Some noted that children are very competitive in sports from a very early age. A few discussed how they feel that they need to always have their children in some form of practice or activity in order to keep up with others. Others said that they are cognizant about how many activities they sign their children up for so they do not overwhelm them

with too many activities that may interfere with their social or academic development.

UNIQUE STRESSORS FOR PALO ALTO FAMILIES

Work-related stress is the most frequently cited stress by far, with four in five survey respondents (77%) saying they often or occasionally struggle with it. Lack of family support, peer pressure, depression and social isolation were acknowledged as being at least an occasional issue for about one in three respondents.

Almost one in four respondents report that language is a barrier on at least some occasions (rarely or more.) Alcohol abuse is an issue on at least some occasions for over one in ten residents.



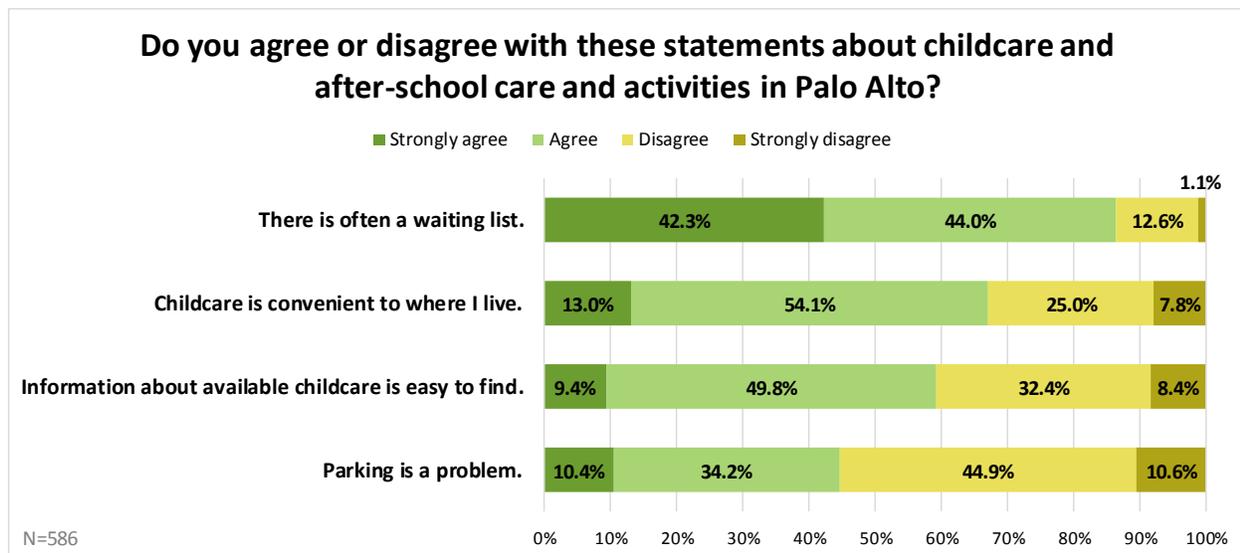
## THE EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION (ECE) LANDSCAPE

Most childcare providers say that Palo Alto does an excellent job catering to and being mindful of children’s needs, which is done through stellar early care and education programs that incorporate play-based and parent participation models. Some stated that they believe there is good coordination and cooperation between the City of Palo Alto and individual early care and education programs. Although seen as never adequate, several key informants mentioned they do offer financial aid and fee reduction programs.

### THE ECE LANDSCAPE FOR FAMILIES

The greatest challenge that families face related to childcare and after-school care is the waiting list (86% agree).

A large percentage of families (45%) report that parking is a problem at childcare or after-school care facilities.

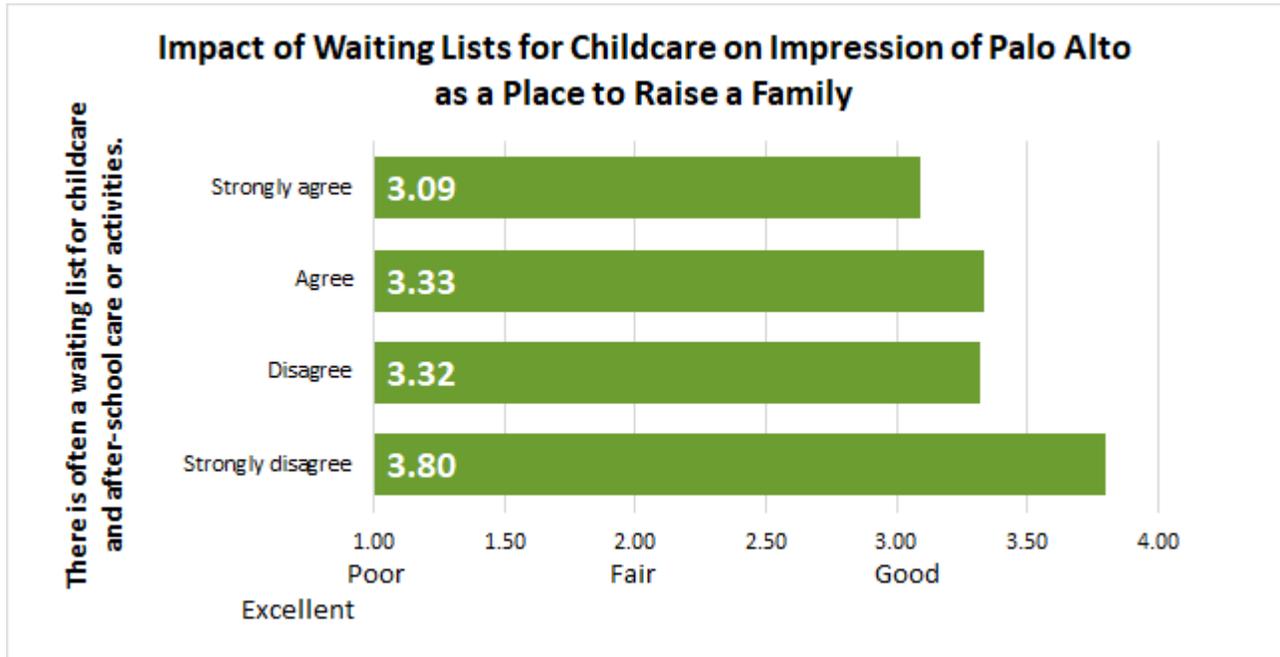


Among the providers who reported on their facility’s enrollment capacity, there was a wide range in the number of children they could enroll, from small family home sites to large childcare centers. The median capacity reported was 65.5 with the majority of providers indicating a capacity of 25 to 100.

Almost all providers indicated that they currently have a waitlist of families in need of early care and education services. The length of the waiting list and the time anticipated before a slot would become available varied between five and 359 families, with an average waitlist of approximately 100 children.

IMPACT OF WAITING LISTS FOR CHILDCARE WITH PERCEPTIONS OF PALO ALTO

Survey respondents’ ability to find childcare and after-school care without a waiting list significantly impacts their impression of Palo Alto as a place to raise a family. Survey respondents who strongly agree that there is often a waiting list for childcare, rate the Palo Alto as a place to raise a family significantly less favorably (3.09) than those who strongly disagree (3.8).



COST OF CHILDCARE IN PALO ALTO

Not all early care and education providers who participated in an interview were willing to provide information on their tuition rates. Among the providers who would provide this information, we found that many factors account for a family’s weekly or monthly program costs. These include such factors as the child’s age, half-day versus full-day attendance, as well as the number of days a child attends each week. Some have additional costs or fees for enrollment, lunch or other factors. Therefore, tuition rates were estimated for five days of care and are reported as roughly between \$815 to \$2,800 a month, for an average cost of \$1,595.

Due to the high variability of program offerings and provider tuition rate calculations, it was difficult to find a standardized method for evaluating tuition rates across all providers. Therefore, we focused on programs that provide five days of care for any age group and may include full-day, half-day and/or after-school care.

Tuition Rate Per Month:	Up to \$1,000	\$1,000 – \$2,000	Over \$2,000
Number of Childcare Providers	10	23	12
Price Range	\$815 - \$965	\$1,020 - \$1,965	\$2,200 - \$2,800
Average	\$874	\$1,457	\$2,461

FINDING QUALITY AND AFFORDABLE EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

Both lower-income families and immigrant families shared that childcare in Palo Alto is very expensive. For focus group participants who acknowledged being of middle-income level, there is an added stressor because they cannot afford the cost of full tuition, but they also do not qualify for financial aid. A few low-income parents noted the competition to access childcare and the large number of waiting lists in the community. Immigrant families expressed concern about the variety in culturally-appropriate childcare options that will incorporate their home country heritage, as well as the convenience of programs close to their work and home.

**“There’s very good childcare but it’s extremely expensive. If you are of middle-income, you don’t qualify for anything. There’s no assistance.”**

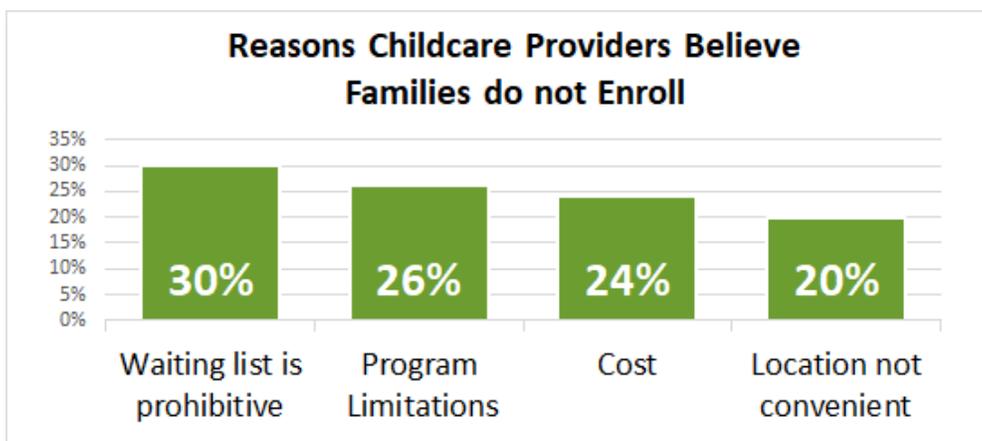
- Focus Group Participant

Parents of children who have special needs expressed concern about the number of childcare providers who have the staff and facilities required to care for their child. Several indicated that very few childcare providers will accept children with special needs without a full-time aide, which can be cost-prohibitive for families. Due to the lack of childcare options for children who have special needs, several parents stopped working to care for their child full-time, adding to the financial stress at home.

OBSTACLES TO ENROLLMENT - REASONS CHILDCARE PROVIDER BELIEVE PARENTS CHOOSE NOT TO ENROLL

Providers’ perceptions of the reasons families choose not to enroll their children in their center or program revealed four common responses. The most commonly cited reason was that there was a waiting list, whereas many families needed care immediately.

Program limitations such as operating hours (e.g. lack of Saturday hours), limited support for children with special-needs, a specialized curriculum or parental involvement requirement were mentioned by about one in four providers (26%). The cost of the program being too high was mentioned by about one in four childcare providers and about one in five (20%) indicated that their location was not appealing to parents, in many cases due to traffic or parking limitations.



## Case Study on Solutions to a Childcare Shortage

### A Quiet Crisis: Minnesota's Childcare Shortage

**Background:** Marnie Werner, Research Director for the Center for Rural Policy and Development noted Minnesota's childcare shortage and the ripple effect it has on entire communities. Statewide numbers showed that every region of the state was dealing with a deficit between the number of children needing care and the number of available spaces. Further investigation showed that this crisis was due to several factors: lack of infant care, low-income and single-parent families unable to afford childcare, parents of children with special needs with limited options, a shortage of skilled laborers, and long commute times to and from available providers.

**Lack of childcare providers:** An alarming 85% of childcare workers would be considered low-wage workers, which explains why so many providers are leaving the profession to move into K-12 teaching positions.

**Highly affected groups:** Low-income families, particularly single-parent families, struggle with options for childcare since they are more likely to work multiple jobs and non-traditional shifts, are less likely to have paid-time off and are less likely to afford certain childcare programs. Families with children who have special needs typically require a specific specialized program with individualized attention. Additionally, bilingual childcare programs are lacking.

**Challenges for providers:** The primary problem faced by childcare providers is the gap between what it costs to run their program and what parents are willing to pay. Additionally, regulations control the number of children a childcare facility can care for which limits the number of available childcare spots. Furthermore, regulations are so strict for infants that many providers are afraid to care for infants; thus, creating even more challenges for infant care availability. Lastly, childcare centers are not easy to open, due to the cost of starting up and maintaining a center.

**Challenges for businesses and communities:** Businesses are currently facing a worker shortage, in part brought on by the childcare shortage. High-quality and reliable childcare that parents can count on supports a reliable workforce that local businesses can rely on. Childcare (i.e., a sick child) is among the top reasons for absenteeism.

#### Recommendations:

- Ensure that *family childcare* providers are represented on committees and in other policy-making decisions, especially those that set regulations.
- Make training accessible and affordable.
- Track and study childcare options for under-served groups: children of immigrants, children with special needs and children whose parents work nights and non-traditional shifts. More information will help with the search for solutions.
- Help with licensing costs or even offer free licensing. Such cost savings can mean the difference for a provider between staying in business or quitting.
- Help spread the word. Local communities have been making a start of finding their own solutions, but only when they recognize there's a problem.

Source: Werner, Marnie. "A Quiet Crisis: Minnesota's Childcare Shortage." *Center for Rural Policy and Development*, Center for Rural Policy and Development, 1 Sept. 2016, [www.ruralmn.org/a-quiet-crisis-minnesotas-child-care-shortage/](http://www.ruralmn.org/a-quiet-crisis-minnesotas-child-care-shortage/).

## THE ECE LANDSCAPE FOR PROVIDERS

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When asked about the greatest challenges faced by early care and education providers, interviewees generally agreed that teacher recruitment and retention is a major challenge. Other challenges included the inability to expand and accommodate all on the waitlist, meeting the needs of diverse populations, as well as the high expectations of parents.

Almost all providers interviewed reported a high need for childcare in Palo Alto due to the long waitlists and children not receiving care. Some providers reported an inability to expand their capacity, reporting that they are constrained by space or capacity per their facility license. Furthermore, those who want to increase their facility size find it extremely difficult to obtain a new location due to cost or zoning restrictions while ensuring an adequate location for the families they serve. Unfortunately, when faced with the challenge of looking for a new facility, some providers have been forced to choose between accommodating families on their waitlist and staying local to families currently enrolled.

Some providers find it challenging to meet the needs of many diverse populations. Several reported that the support and resources they need to serve diverse populations is limited, especially when it comes to serving parents of children with special needs. One provider interviewed said “the biggest challenge is meeting the wide variety of needs that are constantly being redefined.”

Providers reported that meeting high parental expectations poses another major challenge for them. Parents require childcare for more hours each day due to their own demanding work schedules and are often only interested in full-time care options. Additionally, several full-time programs have parental involvement requirements which can be problematic for many two-income families. Providers mentioned that parents expect the safest and best care for their children and like to see smaller than required teacher to student ratios. This becomes especially challenging given the current status of childcare in Palo Alto with long waitlists and teacher recruitment and retention challenges.

Several providers indicated that the large income discrepancy between some families and childcare providers can be problematic. The gap in income and social status was perceived as a challenge to effective communication with parents. Those of lower wealth or status believed that it was difficult to establish credibility and authority. It is important that expectations for children’s behavior are consistent and that children have effective role models among their care providers and teachers. The relationship between families and providers is important for effectively supporting a child’s development.

### TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

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Many childcare providers reported that their largest challenge is hiring and retaining qualified teachers, with one interviewee stating that they are currently in a “recruitment crisis.” Recruitment and retention challenges are multifaceted and include various limitations including low pay and lack of benefits, travel and commute time and limited qualified professionals in the early education field.

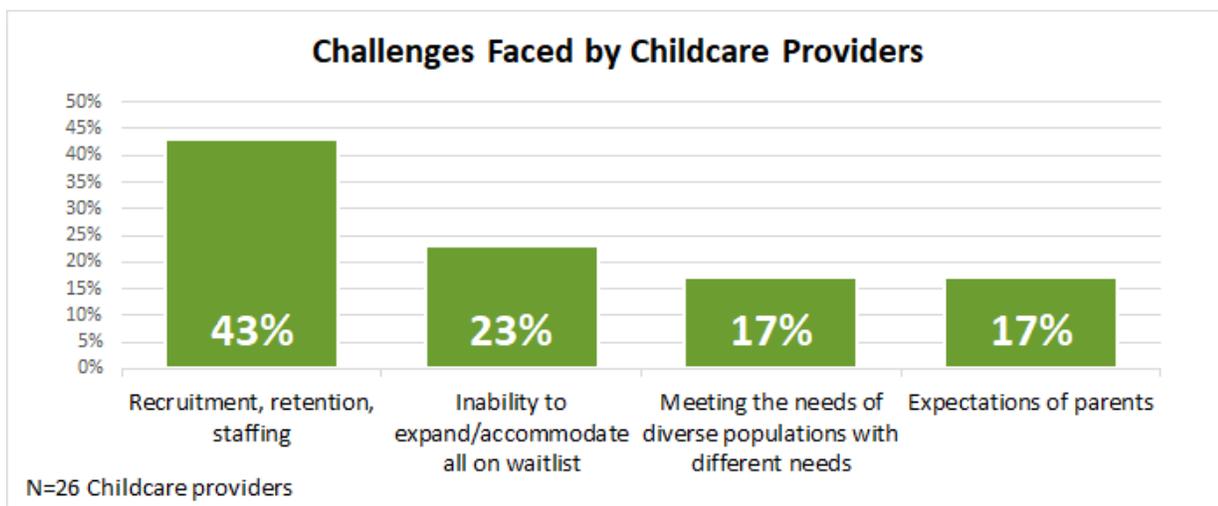
Providers reported that they typically do not have the means to provide a good salary incentive to those in the field. One interviewee reported that they “lose qualified teachers to families that offer cash for being a nanny.” Additionally, providers report that many educators cannot afford the tuition for their own children

to attend the childcare center where they work and teach. Similarly, many educators are unable to live in or near Palo Alto due to high housing costs.

Indeed, for teachers recruited to work at a childcare facility in Palo Alto, the high cost of living in the city forces teachers to commute long distances to work each day or work multiple jobs. Almost all providers reported that they have staff commuting long distances to get to work, with one interviewee stating that she has “staff commuting 1.5 to 2 hours each way every day.”

Interviewees also talked about the challenges of traffic with one interviewee advising that some staff show up early or leave late to avoid traffic. Similarly, high-traffic volumes pose a continuing problem for commuting staff where unforeseen problems lead to late arrival at work, which can affect the facility’s ability to meet state mandated staffing ratios.

Providers reported that despite employing constant recruitment strategies, finding qualified educators with the right fit for their organization is difficult. Since providers are often limited in their ability to provide typical monetary incentives (i.e., pay increases and bonuses), they rely heavily on non-monetary methods, including offering good benefit packages (i.e., healthcare, dental, vacation time, retirement, etc.), providing support and recognition to their teachers, as well as professional development and training. Several providers mentioned autonomy and flexibility for their teachers, tuition reimbursement, and the overall appeal to the program. Other methods mentioned include free gym memberships and free or reduced childcare fees for employees.



### Retention Strategies for Childcare Providers

Many of the childcare providers interviewed said it was difficult to hire and retain qualified staff given the cost of living in and around Palo Alto. A large body of research has shown the following recruitment and retention strategies to be effective within the childcare sector.

- Increased wages
- Improved career structure
- Greater investment through training opportunities during working hours and mentoring
- Increased performance appraisals to provide individualized recognition
- More 'family-friendly' policies (i.e., free or subsidized care for staff children, time off for family events)
- More status on the role with reduced stigma of childcare providers being viewed as “babysitters,” possibly through title changes

### SERVICES PROVIDED TO SPECIAL POPULATIONS

Many providers reported that they currently have children with special needs or behavioral challenges present in their programs.

The facilities that care for children with special needs or behavioral challenges make use of a variety of resources and services. These resources include referrals, support services, on-site specialists, trainings and workshops, outside aides, academic and social accommodations and communication tools. Although staff at the facilities make use of these services, many report that resources are stretched to their limits to accommodate an increasing number of families.

Some providers indicated that they currently have children who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness present in their programs. Among the providers that care for homeless or at-risk of homelessness children, there are a few resources offered. These resources include financial assistance in the form of scholarships, subsidies and other forms of tuition assistance, as well as referrals to other organizations better suited to help families in financial and housing crisis. Indeed, many childcare providers (73%) reported that their organization offers financial assistance options for low-income families. In addition, Palo Alto Community Child Care administers a childcare subsidy program with funding provided by the City of Palo Alto.

MULTI-LINGUAL FAMILIES & EDUCATORS

One provider reported that among her families there are 42 different languages and dialects spoken. Among the languages spoken by educators, Spanish remained the most widely reported second language spoken, with 65% of providers reporting that Spanish is spoken by at least one of their educators.

Languages Spoken by Families as Reported by Childcare Providers

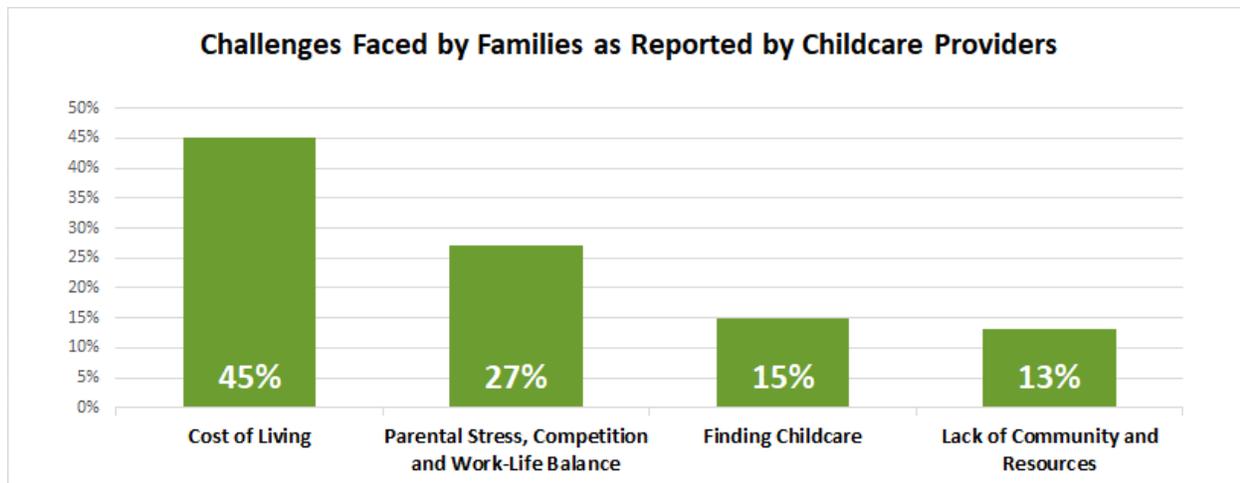
Arabic - Armenian - Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin) - Dutch - Finnish - French - German - Greek - Hebrew - Hindi and several other Indian dialects - Hungarian - Indonesian - Italian - Japanese - Korean - Lithuanian - Norwegian - Polish - Portuguese - Russian - Spanish - Swedish - Swiss - Swiss-German- Tagalog - Turkish - Thai - Vietnamese

Languages Spoken by Educators as Reported by Childcare Providers

Arabic - Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese) - Dutch - Farsi - French - German - Hebrew - Hindi and several other Indian dialects - Italian - Korean - Persian - Polish - Spanish - Tagalog

PROVIDER INSIGHTS TO CHALLENGES FOR FAMILIES

Childcare providers were also asked to provide their opinions and insights about the greatest challenges they think families face in Palo Alto. Several themes emerged, including the high cost of living, parental stress and competition, lack of work-life balance, finding available and affordable childcare, and the lack of community and resources.



Almost every provider interviewed mentioned the high cost of living as being the greatest challenge faced by families with young children. As one provider indicated, Palo Alto is unique in that a household’s income could top six figures, but the family may still need to ask for financial assistance. The discussion about cost of living centered on the high cost of buying or renting a house, the cost of childcare, and living and playing in Palo Alto more generally. Young couples with young children cannot afford a house in Palo Alto. Rental rates continue to rise causing many families to relocate outside of Palo Alto. One provider stated that

“some of our parents have been forced to move due to the high cost of living in the area. This is from housing, the price of the care programs and other costs.”

Many providers reported that parents in Palo Alto face high levels of stress. Due to the highly competitive atmosphere present in Palo Alto, parents work longer and at more demanding jobs than ever before. Providers mentioned that they often see parents struggling to find a balance between their job and parenting. Providers indicate that this may result in some parents quitting their jobs due to guilt, or on the other extreme, taking on more hours at work and hiring a nanny to help with the extra hours and coordination at home. Additionally, almost all providers mentioned the long commute times due to traffic and congestion that creates yet another time constraint stressor for parents.

Several providers reported that finding quality childcare is a major challenge faced by families in Palo Alto. Due to the high cost, large waitlists at most facilities, limited availability of infant, toddler and after-school care, as well as the expectations of parents for high quality programming, families face the predicament of placing their children in care they find appropriate and affordable. Some providers even commented on the fact that some families may have one child in care while their other child is placed on a waitlist due to availability and program restrictions. Families are then forced to find childcare at multiple facilities, adding to their already stressful work day.

## COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR THE CITY

When asked if they had any comments or suggestions for the City of Palo Alto, childcare providers reiterated their concerns about the cost of living, the traffic, commuting and parking problem, the need for childcare availability, and the need for more parental support and early childhood education, amongst other things. Outlined below are suggestions of childcare providers to improve on each of the concerns mentioned herein.

Theme	Recommendations
<b>Cost of Living</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Explore efforts in the community to alleviate teacher housing crisis</li> <li>▪ Make more child care subsidies available for middle-income families</li> <li>▪ Provide more grants for educators and centers to update and expand their facilities</li> </ul>
<b>Traffic, Commute and Parking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase shuttle and bus services to outlying areas</li> <li>▪ Collaborate with businesses on parking solutions</li> <li>▪ Set limitations on growth</li> </ul>
<b>Improve Capacity and Availability of Childcare</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduce permit fees for childcare institutions</li> <li>▪ Explore Federal grants for schools, day cares and after-school programs</li> <li>▪ Require companies which are building in the community to have childcare built in as part of their system to support at least a certain percentage of their families who have a use for them</li> <li>▪ Loosen regulations for providers. Make it easier and faster</li> <li>▪ Partner with businesses to provide unusable areas as childcare centers</li> </ul>
<b>Parent and Early Childhood Education Resources and Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide more local classes and training on child development</li> <li>▪ Expand ways to get information to families about the childcare that is available</li> <li>▪ Provide a comprehensive resource guide that providers could give to parents inquiring about services</li> <li>▪ Extra parenting classes for younger children</li> <li>▪ Increase information about mental health services for parents, as the pressure on parents is so extreme.</li> </ul>

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## ACCESS AND INCLUSION IN THE PALO ALTO COMMUNITY

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Focus groups offer a rich descriptive element to a study, and in this study, focus groups were used to ensure that we had diverse representation from a variety of Palo Alto families. For this study, we wanted to gather feedback from groups that may comprise a smaller percentage of the population overall, and therefore may not be adequately heard through the survey results. Focus groups were held with immigrants, low-income residents and families of children with special needs.

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### ABOUT THE FOCUS GROUP RESPONDENTS

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For this family needs assessment, three focus groups were convened in Palo Alto with historically underrepresented groups including low-income families, immigrant families and parents with children who have special needs.

Focus group participants were recruited through social media, including Facebook and Instagram advertising, and through email newsletters and announcements sent by the City of Palo Alto, Abilities United, Palo Alto Chinese Parents' Club, Palo Alto Housing, among other avenues.

The focus group for low-income families was recruited through the Palo Alto Housing newsletter and social media. It was held in the Community Room at Arastradero Park Apartments, an apartment complex with 65 HUD Section 236 and Section 8 subsidized family units. This group consisted of 12 participants.

To recruit immigrant families, an announcement was sent to the Palo Alto Chinese Parents' Club, as well as Taiwanese, Korean and Russian Mother's group, local child care providers with large immigrant participation, as well as through social media. The focus group for immigrant families was held at the Palo Alto Art Center and consisted of seven participants.

Finally, the focus group of parents with children who have special needs was held in the preschool at Abilities United. This group was recruited through Abilities United. The group consisted of 15 participants.

All focus group participants received a \$75 VISA gift card for their time and participation.

THE HIGH COST OF HOUSING

Participants in the low-income focus group expressed gratitude for the low-income housing complex where they live. However, some talked about how even a small wage increase could disqualify them from their current housing situation. Many talked about how this impacts their job growth potential. At the same time, they would still be unable to afford the high rents in Palo Alto, leading to a risk of homelessness or forcing them to move out of Palo Alto away from their jobs. Some reported that they feel trapped at their current income level if they want to continue to live in Palo Alto. Others described feeling embarrassed that their housing is tied to their low-income status.

**“We are blessed to live in the Arastradero Park Apartments (a low-income housing complex). But we also have dreams. I don’t want to stay this low-income person my whole life. I want to succeed. I would love to live in Palo Alto my whole life and that’s impossible.”**

**- Focus Group Participant**

For participants who did not reside in low-income housing, they still described their socio-economic status as low-income, compared to middle- and high-income families in Palo Alto. These residents expressed concern about the high cost of living in Palo Alto and how long they could continue to live in this community if costs continue to rise. These participants earn less than the average salary of Palo Alto residents, but too much to qualify for any subsidy programs or tax breaks that might alleviate their financial pressures.

Participants in the immigrant focus group agreed that housing costs were too high in Palo Alto and that the problem should be addressed. However, most of the immigrant focus group participants did not identify housing as their biggest challenge to living in Palo Alto, as many of them believe their income adequately covers their housing expenses.

Parents with children who have special needs also described their concerns related to the prohibitive costs of housing, although this concern was primarily about their children’s ability to stay nearby as they reach adulthood, and especially after the parents are deceased. One participant noted that she would like to purchase a second dwelling for her disabled child in the future so that her child can live independently while still being close to her parents’ home. However, this participant acknowledged that purchasing a second dwelling in Palo Alto did not seem feasible and felt she would need to look elsewhere to fulfill this dream. Many agreed that when their children reach adulthood, the family will need to move away from Palo Alto to find a more affordable place in which to live and care for their adult child.

## INTEGRATING INTO THE PALO ALTO COMMUNITY

Participants in both the low-income and immigrant focus groups described difficulty integrating into the Palo Alto community due to cultural and language barriers.

In the low-income focus group, several participants expressed concern about the current national focus on illegal immigration and worried about themselves and their children being racially profiled. Several told stories about their experiences with discrimination in Palo Alto, including one participant who worked at a retail store where a customer refused her help, demanding that a supervisor provide an associate “who speaks English.”

**“It’s hard to fit in, I have to say, from my personal experience. No matter how hard you try to be nice and friendly, there is that culture barrier or language barrier that makes it very hard to fit in.”**

**- Focus Group Participant**

Participants in the immigrant family focus group also described difficulty “fitting in” to the Palo Alto community because of cultural barriers. Some participants described barriers to participating in community and school groups, saying they felt intimidated by parents who have run these programs for a long time.

In the focus group of parents with children who have special needs, some participants reported feeling isolated from other parents in the community. Participants agreed that it is challenging for parents of typically-developing children to understand the experiences of parents with children who have special needs. Participants agreed that inclusiveness should begin early at the playground. Many positively described their experiences at the Magical Bridge playground, an all-abilities playground located at Mitchell Park. It was suggested that making more playgrounds inclusive would be beneficial for increasing and improving all children’s social interactions, ability to connect with other children, and general well-being.

Across all three focus groups, participants agreed that finding playmates for their children seemed to be the most effective gateway into the Palo Alto community. Unfortunately, families find it consistently difficult for their children to be included in sports and other community programs because of the high fees and need for specialized equipment.

## ACCESSING COMMUNITY SERVICES, RESOURCES, AND SUPPORTS

One challenge that arose during all three focus groups was the barrier of accessing information about community resources. Participants utilize online resources (Twitter, Trip Advisor, and NextDoor), Internet searches, and word of mouth as primary methods for finding community programming and activities.

Participants who reside in low-income housing say they use the Palo Alto Housing newsletter, “Call to Housing,” frequently to find out about community programming and activities. The participants in the immigrant families focus group reported that they rely heavily on word of mouth to find community programming and activities.

Many low-income families reported they often attend classes and activities at the local libraries, because these are free of charge or can be accessed at a reduced rate. Some other community resources, like the Palo Alto Children’s Theater, were described as being too expensive for low-income parents to access often.

Some focus group participants discussed the difficulty in finding activities for younger children, especially toddlers and children under six years old. Others noted the difficulty in finding activities for teens, since most activities are perceived to end after middle school.

Parents with children who have special needs also expressed concern about a lack of information about community programming or activities appropriate for their children. They reported that there is currently no online forum or email list designed for their unique needs. While some families with children who have special needs use the City of Palo Alto’s Enjoy! catalog to find activities, participants suggested it would be helpful if the catalog devoted more space to classes and events appropriate for children with differing abilities and needs.

Parents of children with special needs also said there are fewer resources and subsidies available for children who have special needs. Participants reported that a large percentage of a family’s financial resources are directed at supporting their child with special needs, leaving less to spend on community activities and services. As an example, some participants expressed a concern about the difficulty in finding respite care or babysitting services for their child who has special needs. It was reported that Abilities United recently lost its funding for respite care, which was devastating for parents who relied on this service.

Many parents with children who have special needs also expressed concern about the difficulty in finding and accessing specialized therapies in Palo Alto. Several reported they must travel outside Palo Alto to access the services their child requires. Some attributed this scarcity of resources to the high cost of operating a business in Palo Alto.

Finally, a majority of *all* focus group participants recommended that Palo Alto’s various advisory committees should be structured to include a diverse composition of voices, to more easily consider the needs of all families in Palo Alto.

**“With a special needs child, you have to spend an incredible amount of effort taking care of things other people don’t even have to think of. For example, my child makes an enormous amount of noise, always. Neighbors complain. People call the police. There is just no end to dealing with issues most people don’t have to deal with.”**

**- Focus Group Participant**

## COMMUNITY SERVICES, RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS

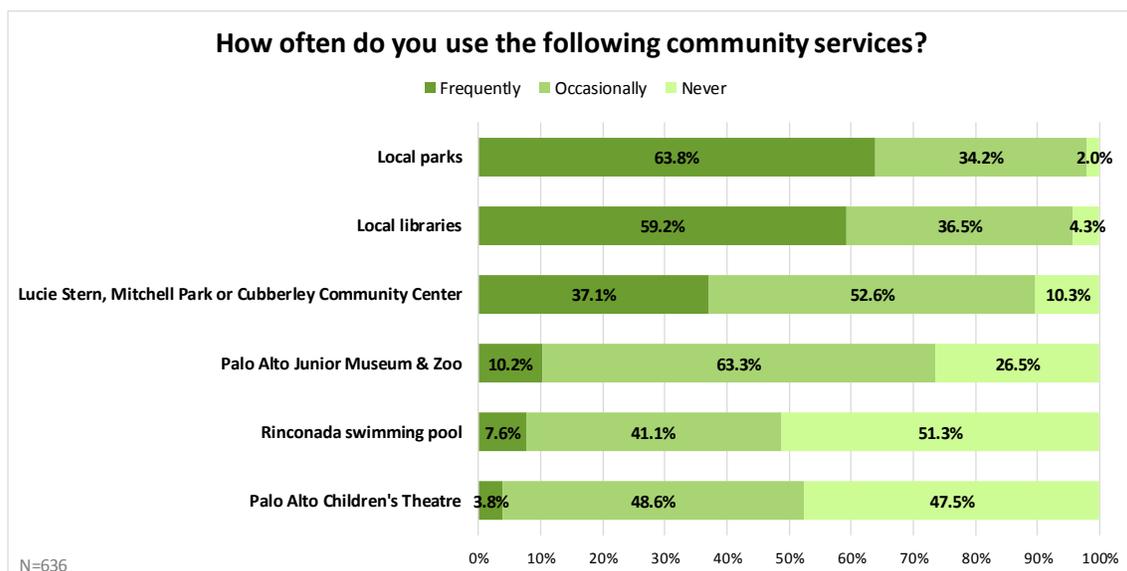
Palo Alto is the home to many community resources and the City offers numerous opportunities for families to enjoy. The summer camp and afterschool programs were mentioned by many of the focus group residents as being superb and the survey results showed that the City parks and amenities are used by a large percentage of Palo Alto families. As one key informant said, “Palo Alto offers parks and libraries in almost every neighborhood, activities and amenities for families, and high performing and well regarded schools.”

### FINDING AND USING COMMUNITY RESOURCES

When it comes to finding resources, Palo Alto residents tend to be highly literate and Internet savvy. Most of the focus group participants were aware that there is a list of childcare providers on the City’s website and the recreational offerings from the City’s Community Services Department. For more informal resources, however, many participants used the Nextdoor app to identify babysitters, learn about family friendly activities and share alerts about neighborhood hazards.

Most of the focus group participants made use of the parks near their homes and there was a lively discussion in each of the groups about the parks participants frequent with their children. In the focus groups for families of children with special needs, many participants used the Magical Bridge, an accessible playground at Mitchell Park. The focus group participants in the low-income and immigrant groups said they used public parks and the library most often.

The vast majority of survey respondents use local parks and libraries at least occasionally, and the majority use them frequently (64% and 59%, respectively). About one in three (37%) survey respondents use the Lucie Stern, Mitchell Park or Cubberley Community Center frequently. For each of the services and amenities included in the survey, half or more of respondents report using them at least occasionally.



## CHALLENGES TO ACCESSING COMMUNITY RESOURCES

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In the key informant interviews, as well as the focus groups, participants identified the greatest barriers to participating in after-school activities as the availability of options and, for low and middle-income residents, cost. In addition, families with children who have special needs noted that there are few programs appropriate for their children. They particularly stressed the need for programs in which children who have special needs can play and interact with siblings who may or may not have special needs. Programs that reach across the spectrum of abilities are rare and offer a unique opportunity for siblings of different abilities to interact.

Another challenge for focus group participants, also mentioned in key informant interviews, is accessing healthcare, including mental health services. Key informant interviews recognized the important role the nonprofit community plays in offering additional support. In particular, Abilities United and Parents Place were mentioned several times as excellent resources, as well as Parents Helping Parents, Greendell School, the Early Intervention Program through San Andreas Regional Center and Children’s Health Council.

Accessing community and city run after-school and summer programs in Palo Alto, although very affordable in comparison to private programs, are still out of reach for some low-income residents, who struggle to pay even the discounted rate offered to them. One participant shared that she had sent her child previously to summer camp, and described it as a wonderful experience, but she couldn’t manage the cost over time and ultimately decided not to continue in subsequent years.

## OPPORTUNITIES AT THE CUBBERLEY COMMUNITY CENTER

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The Cubberley Community Center is a 35-acre campus in south Palo Alto jointly owned by the City of Palo Alto and Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD). After many years of public debate, the Cubberley Community Advisory Committee determined a need for a joint master plan for the Cubberley campus that will accommodate the needs of the community, including a future public school.

The Palo Alto community is currently creating a Cubberley Community Center Master Plan, which will include programming recommendations reflecting the input of residents, key informants and user groups, the City and PAUSD. Specifically, the City’s vision for the community center includes provision of a multi-cultural and multi-generational learning environment. This vision is shared by the community; multi-generational programming was one of the top-ranked priorities at a community meeting on November 1, 2018. Work on the plan has continued at three subsequent meetings and a final plan is to be completed in the summer of 2019.

### The Viable Futures Toolkit

The Virginia Planning District 10 serves the City of Charlottesville as well as the five counties of Albermarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa and Nelson. With the coordinated efforts of Jefferson Area Board for Aging (JABA), the district has turned into a national model of intergenerational community benefits. District 10 works together with the Boys and Girls Club, the Alzheimer's Association, the YMCA and the Local Food Hub to ensure that every stage of life is represented and enhanced<sup>1</sup>.

JABA had a critical role in the inception of Planning District 10's intergenerational movement. In 2003, the District was transformed with the creation of the *2020 Plan: Aging in Community*. This plan emphasized the importance of intergenerational practices and served as a blueprint that other communities could follow to achieve the status of a great intergenerational place to live. The U.S. Administration of Aging caught wind of the 2020 Plan and presented Planning District 10 with an "Overall Excellence Award."

The "[Viable Futures Toolkit](#)" offers suggestions, recommendations and solutions for the needs of all generations to be simultaneously met within a livable community. This toolkit has been used nationwide, and has now been implemented in at least 13 states.

### Benefits of Intergenerational Interactions for Children:

Preschool children involved in intergenerational programs had higher personal/social developmental scores (by 11 months) than preschool children involved in non-intergenerational programs.

Children in schools where older adults were a regular fixture (volunteers working 15 hours per week) had improved reading scores and fewer behavioral problems than their peers at other schools.

## FUTURE PLANNING - THE VALUE OF INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMMING

The year 2035 marks a milestone in United States history: older adults will outnumber children living in communities across the nation for the first time. Indeed by 2030, all members of the baby boomer generation will be older than 65. Additionally, immigration will overtake natural population increases by 2030. Slowing population growth and more racially and ethnically diverse residents mean that the 2030's will be a transformative decade for many communities across the United States<sup>1</sup>. Understanding these future trends is important for local governments focused on improving multi-generational community programming that incorporates the needs of both young families and older adults.

Multi-generational community planning efforts should focus on long-term sustainability. Programs should monitor outcomes such as improved health among older adults and improved educational outcomes for children and youth. Planning efforts may include cross-generational collaboration, innovative methods to engage older adults, young adults and families throughout the planning process, and inclusion of immigrant and other racially and ethnically diverse populations.<sup>1</sup>

Many multi-generational programs are “shared site programs” that deliver services to young and old residents at the same place for an ongoing period of time. Many multi-generational programs are housed in childcare facilities or nursing home environments; however, some are located in community recreational centers. Many shared site programs operate in a single building, but others include a shared campus design with multiple buildings close to each other. This offers a variety of spaces for integrated programming for both children and older adults, as well as separate spaces for programming specific to children or older adults. Some shared site campuses offer buildings for senior living facilities as well.

The benefits of shared site multi-generational programming are both financial and societal. Financial benefits may include full enrollment in programming as many families acknowledge their preference in multi-generational over age-segregated programs, lower staff turnover rates and longer participant tenure in programs. Societal benefits include improved health outcomes for older adult participants and improved educational performance among children and young adult participants<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Vespa, Jonathan, David M. Armstrong & Lauren Medina (March 2018). *Demographic Turning Points for the United States: Population Projections for 2020 to 2060*. United States Census Bureau.

<sup>1</sup> Warner, Mildred, George Homsey & Esther Greenhouse (April 2010). *Multi-generational community planning: Linking the needs of children and older adults*. Department of City and Regional Planning, Cornell University.

<sup>1</sup> Jarrott, Shannon E. Ph.D. (2019). *Brief: Survey of Shared Site Intergenerational Programs*. The Eisner Foundation, Generations United and The Ohio State University College of Social Work.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors of this report would like to thank the key informants who contributed their time and insights by participating in an interview, the families of Palo Alto who took the time to complete the survey and the childcare providers who took the time to share their experiences with the research team.

The following individuals provided input into the development of tools used to develop this report, as well as careful review and feedback on the report itself.

### **MEMBERS OF THE PALO ALTO ADVISORY COMMISSION ON EARLY CARE & EDUCATION**

Joan Baran, Children’s Health Council  
 Shannon Coleman, Palo Alto Unified School District  
 Heidi Emberling, Parents Place on the Peninsula  
 Allison Guerra, Stanford WorkLife Office  
 Lori Rock, Palo Alto Community Child Care  
 Rachel Samoff, First Five Commission  
 Melissa Woodburn, Family YMCA  
 Dominique Vincent, Blossom Birth & Family  
 Ollia Yenkomshian, Children’s Pre-School Center

### **FORMER PAACECE MEMBERS**

Raju Parikh, formerly of Stanford WorkLife Office  
 Paula Evans Fitch, The Learning Center  
 Jannesa Granillo-Katz, Edgewood Children’s House

### **CITY STAFF**

Minka van der Zwaag, City of Palo Alto

## KEY LEARNINGS

### Quality of Life in Palo Alto:

- Survey respondents appreciate the education and recreation opportunities, safe neighborhoods, community involvement, connection to parents, time to spend with family, and access to parks, libraries, and community centers.
- Families are concerned about housing costs, work-related stress, lack of family support, and the accessibility of affordable, quality childcare. Additional stressors for low and middle-income families and families with children who have special needs, include accessing community resources, learning supports, after-school options, and recreational activities.

### The Early Care and Education (ECE) Landscape:

- Survey respondents agree there are high-quality, convenient childcare options. Primary challenges include long waitlists, program limitations, cost, and parking.
- The biggest challenge facing ECE providers is recruitment and retention of teachers. ECE providers also struggle to expand their programs, meet the needs of diverse populations, and manage the high expectations and demands of parents.
- ECE providers identify best practices for recruiting and retaining teachers as offering higher pay and more benefits, mitigating commute time, and partnering with the community to address the high cost of living in Palo Alto and the surrounding cities.

### Access and Inclusion in the Palo Alto Community:

- Low and middle income families report potentially earning too much to qualify for subsidies for housing, childcare, and recreational after-school and summer activities, but not enough to afford these services without a subsidy. Additional challenges include obtaining specialized equipment to participate in sports programs and accessing tutors.
- Immigrant families report struggling to integrate into the Palo Alto community due to language and cultural barriers. It may also be challenging to find culturally-sensitive childcare options and join established parent and community networks.
- Families with children who have special needs report difficulties connecting with parents of typically-developing children, finding childcare that can accommodate their child's needs, and accessing specialized services.

### Community Services, Resources and Supports:

- Survey respondents frequently access the beloved local parks, libraries, and community centers. They also appreciate the excellent schools and nonprofit services that exist in the community to support families and children.
- Finding information about community resources, services, and supports can be challenging for families, especially those seeking financially-accessible services or programs that meet the language, cultural, or special needs of their child. Also, finding and accessing medical and mental health services can be prohibitive.

## APPENDIX A: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Name/Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

### INTRODUCTION:

Hello, I'm calling from Analytic Insight. We have an appointment to speak. Is this still a convenient time?

Thanks so much for speaking with me today, as you know we are working with the City of Palo Alto and the Early Care and Education Committee to conduct a community needs assessment of families with young children ages 0-12. This interview should take about 25 to 30 minutes.

I'm going to be recording our interview using a smart pen that links my notes to an audio recording. After the report is developed, I will destroy the recording part of our conversation. Your interview will be combined with other interviews. We will not use your name or position in our report. We report only what was said, not who said it. Is it OK with you if I record this conversation?

### ABOUT THE KEY INFORMANT

1. I have here that you are the \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g. Director) of the \_\_\_\_\_ (Organization). How long have you been in this position?
2. What services does your organization provide to families or young children in the community?

### ABOUT PALO ALTO FAMILIES

3. What does Alto do best for families and their young children?
4. What are the greatest challenges for families and their young children in Palo Alto?

### SERVICES: ACCESSIBILITY, GAPS AND DUPLICATIONS

5. What are the most useful services or resources available in the community of Palo Alto for:
  - a) Low-income families?
  - b) Immigrant families?
  - c) Parents of children with special needs?
6. What do you see as the specific challenges faced by:
  - a) Low-income families?
  - b) Immigrant families?
  - c) Parents of children with special needs?

**BARRIERS TO ACCESSING SERVICES**

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7. What do you think are the greatest barriers for \_\_\_\_\_ to access available resources? (After each item, probe for potential solutions to barriers described.)
  - a) Low-income families
  - b) Immigrant families
  - c) Parents of children with special needs

**WRAP UP**

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8. What do you think would make Palo Alto a better place for families with young children?
9. Do you collaborate with other organizations serving families and young children in Palo Alto?
  - a) If yes, who are your main collaborators? What kinds of things do you collaborate on?
  - b) If no, would you like to? On what kinds of projects?
  - c) What could be done to improve collaboration with other organizations serving families and young children in Palo Alto?
10. Is there anything else you would want the City to know about raising a child in Palo Alto?

## APPENDIX B: CHILDCARE PROVIDER INTERVIEW GUIDE

Name/Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

### INTRODUCTION:

Hello, I'm calling from Analytic Insight. We have an appointment to speak. Is this still a convenient time?

Thanks so much for speaking with me today, as you know we are working with the City of Palo Alto and the Early Care and Education Committee to conduct a community needs assessment of families with young children ages 0-12. This interview should take about 25 to 30 minutes.

I'm going to be recording our interview using a smart pen that links my notes to an audio recording. After the report is developed I will destroy the recording part of our conversation. Your interview will be combined with other interviews. We will not use your name or position in our report. We report only what was said, not who said it. Is it OK with you if I record this conversation?

### ABOUT THE CHILDCARE PROVIDER

1. I have here that you are the \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g. Director) of the \_\_\_\_\_ (Organization). How long have you been in this position?
2. What type of childcare facility is \_\_\_\_\_?
  - a. Childcare center
  - b. Small family home (Up to eight children)
  - c. Large family home (Eight or more children)
  - d. Other \_\_\_\_\_
3. What was your enrollment capacity for the 2017/2018 school year for the following age groups?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Infant (0 to up to 1 year)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Toddler (1 to 3 years)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Preschool (4 to 5 years)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ School age/After-school care (Kindergarten or 5 years to 12 years)
4. (As needed) What was your total enrollment capacity last year?
5. Did you have a waiting list last year?
  - a. If yes, approximately how many families were on your waiting list last year on average?
  - b. If yes, what age group has the longest list?

- Infant (0 to up to 1 year)
- Toddler (1 to 3 years)
- Preschool (4 to 5 years)
- School age/After-school care (Kindergarten or 5 years to 12 years)

6. What percentage of your enrollment was part time vs full time? (Part-time enrollment is defined as anything less than childcare 5 days per week.)

Part-time (%)	Full-time (%)	
_____	_____	Infant (0 to up to 1 year)
_____	_____	Toddler (1 to 3 years)
_____	_____	Preschool (4 to 5 years)
_____	_____	School age/After-school care (Kindergarten or 5 years to 12 years)

7. During the last school year, about how many children with special needs or behavioral challenges did you serve? \_\_\_\_\_

a. (If at least one) What resources or services did you provide to the families with children with special needs or behavioral challenges?

8. During the last school year, did you encounter any children whose families were homeless or are at-risk of homelessness?

a. If yes, what were the signs that you recognized that indicated the family may have been homeless or at-risk?

b. If yes, what resources or services, if any, did you provide?

c. What gaps in needed services do you see?

9. What languages do the families you serve speak, other than English?

a. What resources or services did you provide?

b. What gaps in needed services are there?

Now, I have a few more questions about your services in general.

10. Last year, did you provide...

- Transportation?
- Meals?
- After-hour care?

- Drop-in childcare services?
- Parent workshops?
- Special events?
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

11. Looking ahead to the 2018/2019 school year, do you have plans to expand your current enrollment?

- a. If yes, what programs will be expanded?
- b. If no, what are your reasons?

12. Among parents who inquire but decide not to use your services, what do you think are the reasons they chose not to enroll?

- Cost
- Location
- No availability/waiting list
- Hours inconvenient
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## ABOUT YOUR TEACHERS

Now I have a few questions about the teachers who work with you there.

13. How many teachers did you employ during the 2017/2018 school year?

14. What was your student-teacher ratio for the following age groups?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Infant (0 to up to 1 year)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Toddler (1 to 3 years)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Preschool (4 to 5 years)
- \_\_\_\_\_ School age/After-school care (Kindergarten or 5 years to 12 years)

15. Do any of your educators speak any languages other than English?

- a. If yes, what languages?

16. Has language or communication with families ever been a problem? If so, how did you deal with it?

17. How does your curriculum reflect the culture of the children you serve?

18. What are your greatest challenges recruiting new educators?

19. What best practices have you found to deal with those challenges?

20. How do you go about finding new educators?

21. What are the best ways you've found to retain your current educators?

**ABOUT THE COST**

Next, I'd like to talk a little about the cost of your services. (Confirm costs listed below if information is listed online. Ask if not available. Get estimate or approximation if necessary.)

22. What is your standard, full-time rate per child for each of the following age groups?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Infant (0 to up to 1 year)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Toddler (1 to 3 years)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Preschool (4 to 5 years)
- \_\_\_\_\_ School age/After-school care (Kindergarten or 5 years to 12 years)

23. What is your standard, part-time rate per child for each of the following age groups?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Infant (0 to up to 1 year)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Toddler (1 to 3 years)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Preschool (4 to 5 years)
- \_\_\_\_\_ School age/After-school care (Kindergarten or 5 years to 12 years)

24. Do you offer financial assistance or options for low-income families?

- a. If yes, what types of assistance or options are offered?
- b. How many kids are served?
- c. How do you fund the financial aid?

25. Do you charge a registration or application fee?

26. Do you charge any additional fees? If yes, what are they?

**CHALLENGES FOR CHILDCARE PROVIDERS AND FAMILIES IN PALO ALTO**

27. What are the greatest challenges you face as a childcare provider operating in Palo Alto?

28. What do you think are the greatest challenges for families raising young children in Palo Alto?

**WRAP UP**

29. What do you think would make Palo Alto a better place for families with young children?

30. Is there anything else you would want the City to know about providing childcare in Palo Alto?

## APPENDIX C: THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT



# Palo Alto Families Community Needs Survey

The City of Palo Alto and the Palo Alto Advisory Committee on Early Care and Education (PAACEE) would like to know your thoughts about raising a family in Palo Alto.

Please complete this short survey. As a thank you gift, please return the survey and the enclosed raffle ticket for a chance to win a \$75 Visa gift card. The raffle ticket with your contact information will be separated from your survey responses. Survey responses are anonymous. The raffle will take place on November 15, 2018.

If you prefer to take the survey online, please visit: <https://tinyurl.com/Palo-Alto-Family-Survey>

Thank you very much for your time. Your responses will make Palo Alto an even better place for families and children.

Sincerely,

Minka van der Zwaag  
Manager, Office of Human Services  
City of Palo Alto

### ABOUT YOUR FAMILY

Q1 What are the ages of your children? (Please check all that apply.)

- |   |                                  |                                   |                                   |
|---|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0 to 12 months | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 10 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 15 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 year         | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 11 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 16 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 years        | <input type="checkbox"/> 7 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 12 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 17 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 years        | <input type="checkbox"/> 8 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 13 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 18 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 years        | <input type="checkbox"/> 9 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 14 years |                                   |

Q2 What kind of school does your child (or children) attend? (Please check all that apply.)

- Pre-school   
  Public school   
  Private school   
  Home school   
  NA/Not in school

Q3 How long have you lived in Palo Alto?

- Less than one year   
  1-5 years   
  6-10 years   
  Longer than 10 years

Q4 Where does your child spend weekdays other than school? If you have more than one child, please check all that apply.

- |  | Every day                | Some days                | Never                    |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Home with a parent or guardian                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Home alone  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Home with a nanny or babysitter                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) At a friend or relative's home with adult supervision | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) After school care                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) After school activities at school                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g) After school activities somewhere else                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h) Home-based child care provider                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i) Child care center                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Living in the Palo Alto Community**

**Q5** Do you agree or disagree with these statements about child care and after-school care and activities in Palo Alto?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a) Information about available child care is easy to find.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Child care is convenient to where I live.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Parking is a problem.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) There is often a waiting list.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q6** Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a) Children often play outdoors in my neighborhood.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) If my child was lost or hurt while playing outside, an adult would step in to help.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) My child needs a ride to go play with friends.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) I feel comfortable letting my child go to a neighborhood store or park by themselves.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) My neighborhood is a good place to raise a child.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q7** How often do you use the following community services?

	Frequently	Occasionally	Never
a) Lucie Stern, Mitchell Park or Cubberley Community Center	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Palo Alto Junior Museum & Zoo	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Palo Alto Children's Theatre	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Local parks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Rinconada swimming pool	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Palo Alto Art Center	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q8** How would you rate Palo Alto as a place to live with regard to each of the following characteristics? Please complete the sentence, "Living in Palo Alto, I have ...."

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a) Time to spend with family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Economic security	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Housing security	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) A range of organized recreational activities available	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Affordable childcare	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) High quality childcare	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Available childcare without a waiting list	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Educational opportunities for my children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) Unstructured play time for my children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j) A good work-life balance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k) Employers who are family friendly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l) Opportunities to connect with other parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m) Families with similar cultural backgrounds living nearby	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n) Opportunities to get involved through volunteering or community activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Your Family's Well-being

Q9 How important are the following to your family's quality of life?

	Extremely Important	Somewhat Important	Slightly Important	Not at all Important
a) Time to spend with family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Economic security	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Housing security	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Availability of a range of organized recreational activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Affordable childcare activities available to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) High quality childcare available to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Available child care without a waiting list	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Educational opportunities for my children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) Unstructured play time for my children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j) Work-life balance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k) Employers who are family friendly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l) Ability to connect with other parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m) Being near families with a similar cultural background	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n) The opportunity to volunteer/be involved in the community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q10 How is your family doing? Let us know by checking whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your family's well-being.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Does not apply
a) The adults in my family know the people in my children's lives (i.e. friends, teachers).	<input type="checkbox"/>				
b) Adults in my family have time to take care of the individual needs of my child.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
c) If I had trouble making ends meet, I have friends or family who could help.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
d) My child is under constant pressure to achieve.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Q11 Do you or any of your family members struggle with:

	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
a) Depression	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Prescription drug abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Peer pressure or fears of inadequacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Illicit drug use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Alcohol abuse or drinking to excess	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Work-related stress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Social isolation or lack of friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Language barriers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) Lack of family support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### A Few Last Thoughts

Q12 Overall, how would describe Palo Alto as a place to raise a family?

- Excellent       Good       Fair       Poor

Q13 As a parent or guardian, how big of a problem are the following issues for youth in your community?

	Not a problem	Small problem	Big problem
a) Lack of preschool programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Lack of community resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Social media usage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Availability of drugs, alcohol and tobacco	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Skipping school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Peer pressure/influence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Dating violence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) Failing grades	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j) Cultural insensitivity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k) Prejudice or discrimination	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l) Depression	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m) Suicide	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### About You

These next questions ask for some general information about the person completing the survey.

Q14 How would you describe your household?

- Single parent       Two parent       Grandparent       Non-related/guardian

Q15 What race or ethnic group do you consider yourself? (Please check all that apply.)

- White       Asian       American Indian  
 Hispanic       Black or African American       Other

Q16 What is your household income?

- Under \$50,000       \$75,000 to \$99,999       \$200,000 to \$249,999  
 \$50,000 to \$74,999       \$100,000 to \$199,999       Over \$250,000

Q17 Approximately what percentage of your household income goes to housing?

%

Q18 Approximately what percentage of your household income goes to child care?

%

Q19 What is the highest level of education of any adult in your household?

- Highschool or GED       Some college       Bachelor's degree       Graduate degree

Q20 How would you describe your home?

- Single family home       Condominium       Apartment       Other

Thank you for filling out this survey!  
 Please return the completed survey in the postage-paid envelope.  
 If you would like to enter the raffle for \$75 Visa gift card, please complete  
 and enclose your raffle ticket!

## APPENDIX D: FOCUS GROUP MODERATOR’S GUIDE

Contents	Minutes
Introduction – First name and warm-up question	15
Family Stressor	20-25
Resources	20-25
Describing Palo Alto as a Place to Raise a Family	10-15
Needed Services	10-15
Wrap Up	5-10
Total Group Time:	90

### INTRODUCTION (15 MINUTES)

Hello, my name is Amy Flowers and I really appreciate your taking the time to come out for this group tonight. The focus of this group is families with a child with special needs (low-income families. Asian Families.) We are going to be talking about what is like to live in Palo Alto and your views about raising young children ages 0-12 here.

Let me tell you a little about the discussion group and how it works...

First off, I want to tell you I’m not here to sell you anything, this is a research project that is being conducted on behalf of the City of Palo Alto to learn about the benefits and challenges of raising children in Palo Alto.

The group is being video-taped and recorded. After the group, we’ll review what was said, the City may review the group, and eventually the tape will be destroyed.

Your name will not be used in any report, and you won’t be personally identified in any way. Only what was said will go into the report, not who said it.

Focus groups are most interesting when a conversation starts and people interact with each other. You don’t have to just talk to me, you can also talk to each other. To make it work as a research exercise though, and not just a conversation, there are a few things we all need to keep in mind.

- At any time during the group, feel free to excuse yourself to use the restroom or get more food or beverages. The restrooms are located .....
- Please talk one at a time, and in a voice at least as loud as mine is now.
- This group is completely voluntary and you are free to leave at any time if you are uncomfortable in the group or the content of the discussion.
- Please do not discuss statements made during the group outside the focus group.

- Avoid side conversations with your neighbors. Sometimes those whispered comments are the juiciest best information of all. Please make sure you make your comments to the whole group.
- I need to hear from everyone in the room at some point, so if possible let's try to get in about equal air time to everyone. Please excuse me if I call you by name, it is only so I can make sure I get everyone's participation.

Because we're here to talk about raising children in Palo Alto, let's introduce ourselves with our first name and what you enjoy most about raising a family in Palo Alto.

### **FAMILY STRESSES (20-25 MINUTES)**

We've talked a bit now about the best things about raising a family in Palo Alto. Next, I'd like to talk about some of the drawbacks.

**Family Stressors Card Sort:** Each of you has a pile of cards in front of you. I'd like you to sort the cards into three piles. Look at each card and if you believe that what is written there is a large problem for the Palo Alto community, put it in the first pile. If it is a small problem, put it in the middle. If it is NOT a problem, put it in the last pile. (Leslie hands out sticky notes to mark each pile of cards, gathers the piles.)

Now let's discuss each of the cards. (Moderator shows each card in sequence for discussion. Participants reveal their choices and rationale. For each group, moderator will probe for the particular challenges associated with being a family with a child with special needs/lower-income family/immigrant family in Palo Alto. During discussion probe for solutions to each problem.)

Card Content	Probes and Discussion Points
1. Housing costs	Housing discrimination, acceptance in neighborhoods
2. Finding quality childcare	Acceptance into preschools, day care or other services, involvement in school/care leadership, activities
3. Finding affordable childcare	
4. Finding childcare without a waiting list	
5. Finding playmates and friends for my child	Language and cultural barriers
6. Parking	
7. Time spent commuting outside of Palo Alto	
8. Time spent driving <i>in</i> Palo Alto	
9. Discrimination	
10. Lack of family time	
11. Language Barriers	
12. Peer pressure	
13. Social media use	
14. Competitiveness	Challenges of having a special needs child, cultural differences

## RESOURCES (20-25 MINUTES)

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Next we'd like to talk about the resources that are available to children and families here in Palo Alto. Where would you go to look for information about services or resources for your family?

Probe for information about:

- Finding quality childcare
- Ways to pay for childcare
- After school care
- Occasional babysitting
- Sick Childcare and/or odd hours childcare
- Support for new moms or pregnancy
- Support for children with special needs
- Meeting other parents with common cultural and language interests
- WIC or SNAP information
- Help finding affordable housing
- Health Care
- Transportation between school and after-school activities

On each topic, probe for:

How many participants have used (resource named by participant)?

What are the barriers to accessing this resource?

What solutions do you suggest?

**Word Associations:** Next I'd like you to write down the first words that come to mind when you see the community resource or service described on each of these cards. (Pass out Resource cards. Moderator will collect the cards before discussion.)

1. After school care in Palo Alto
2. Pre-school or early childhood care in Palo Alto
3. Growing up in Palo Alto
4. Parent resources
5. Mental health support
6. Housing in Palo Alto
7. Places to play in Palo Alto
8. Palo Alto parks
9. Palo Alto libraries
10. Magical Bridge Playground
11. Having an infant in Palo Alto
12. Palo Alto Junior Museum and Zoo
13. Palo Alto Children's Theater

14. City of Palo Alto
15. Lucie Stern, Mitchell Park or Cubberley Community Center
16. Rinconada swimming pool

Now let's talk about your thoughts on each topic. What were your thoughts about after-school care in Palo Alto?. (Moderator goes through each card.)

### **DESCRIBING PALO ALTO (10 MINUTES)**

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I've collected some slogans that describe different cities. How much do each of these statements apply to raising a family in Palo Alto? (Get a show of hands for the number of those who believe it applies, then discuss.)

1. Preparation for the Real World
2. Together for a Better Tomorrow
3. A good investment
4. The Hamster wheel
5. Infinite Possibilities
6. A Head Start for my Children
7. Where everybody is somebody
8. The city of bright tomorrows
9. A Better Way to Live!
10. More than you imagined
11. \_\_\_\_ Capital of the Bay Area (Fill in the blank)

### **NEEDED SERVICES (10 MINUTES)**

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What services in Palo Alto do you and your family use most?

What kinds of improvements would you like to see to them?

What other services would improve the quality of life for families in Palo Alto?

What would you like the City of Palo Alto to know about raising a family here?

### **WRAP UP (5-10 MINUTES)**

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What are the reasons you chose to live in Palo Alto?

Thank you so much for participating today. Leslie will be coming around with a sign out sheet and your \$75 gift card.