

To: *Interested Parties*
From: *Hart Research and New Bridge Strategy*
Date: *June 21, 2024*
Re: *Key Findings from a Survey on Food Insecurity, Child Care, and Working Class Families*

Our new survey for Save the Children Action Network (SCAN) finds Americans struggling with a number of financial problems in the post-pandemic world and that those struggles correspond to substantial support for expansions in funding in two key areas—nutrition assistance and child care—to help lessen these challenges.

But importantly: in a country that is deeply politically divided, there is agreement across partisan lines that greater federal action and funding is warranted and needed in nutrition assistance and child care.

This memorandum outlines the key findings from this research.

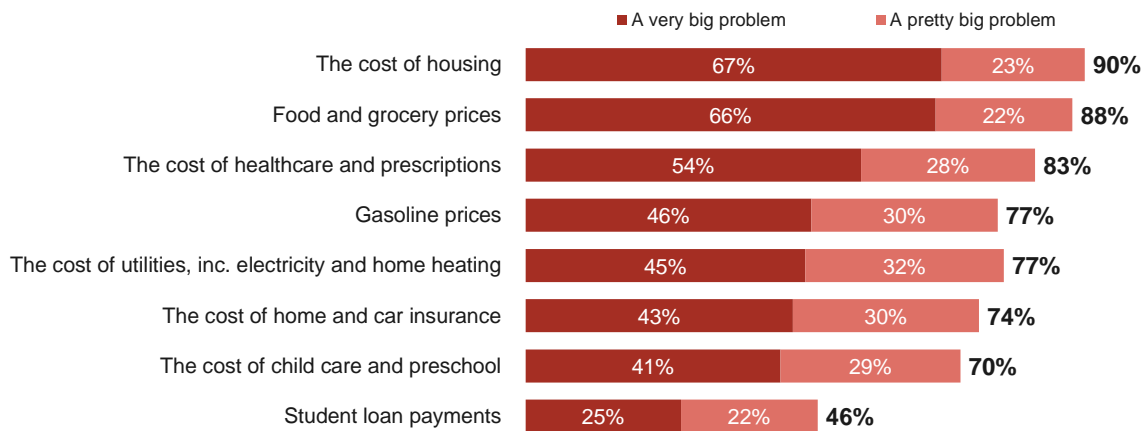
Financial Concerns and a Desire for Government Action

Americans are struggling at the moment—seven in 10 voters nationally (71%) and in the six swing states (69%) say they are dissatisfied with how things are going in the country—and financial concerns likely play a large role in their distress. Indeed, when asked in an open-ended question what the next president should do to help families be more financially secure, the top answer is to lower inflation (32%), and substantial numbers volunteer more specific areas where financial relief is needed: healthcare (18%), housing (14%), taxes (14%), education (11%), child care (11%), and improved wages (10%).

Many of these areas, as well as several others, are rated as “big problems” by large majorities of voters:

Americans have a range of financial concerns.

How much of a problem is each of the following right now?



These issues do not have political, demographic, or regional boundaries. Nine in 10 Trump voters (93%) say food and grocery prices are a big problem, as do 82% of Biden voters and 96% of third party and undecided voters. Three quarters (75%) of parents say child care and preschool costs are a problem, as do 68% of non-parents. Very large majorities in every region of the country say grocery prices (80%+) and child care costs (68%+) are problems.

Similarly, large majorities of voters across the board say the government should “do more” to help financially struggling families in nearly every one of those areas. Specifically, 87% say government should do more on food and groceries (including 62% who say it should do *much* more) and 75% say it should do more regarding child care and preschool (40% say *much* more). And, again, these sentiments are consistent across partisan and demographic lines. It is worth noting that the proportion who want government to do more on child care has increased eight percentage points in the past year.

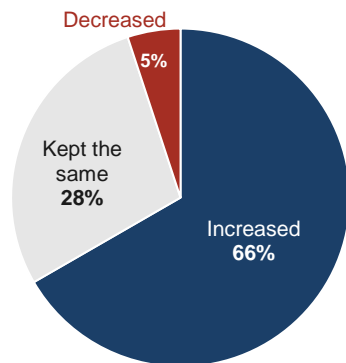
Food Insecurity and SNAP

As noted above, Americans are deeply and widely affected by the cost of food and groceries. The survey finds that voters recognize the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) as being vital—85% say it is important (include 63% very important) in helping families who are facing food insecurity to pay their grocery bills.

Moreover, when they are informed that the typical SNAP beneficiary family of four receives an average of \$6.20 per family member per day, two in three say SNAP benefits should be increased.

Two thirds of voters—including three in four undecided voters—say SNAP benefits are inadequate.

The typical family of four who gets SNAP benefits receives an average of about \$6.20 per family member per day. Do you think this amount should be...



	% increased
Swing state voters	66
Biden voters	77
Trump voters	55
Other/undecided voters	71
House Democratic voters	79
House Republican voters	53
House undecided voters	77
White non-college	67
White college grads	55
VOC non-college	77
VOC college grads	76
Self-identified MAGA voters	58
Northeast	68
South	69
Midwest	62
West	66
Urban	76
Suburban	63
Small town/rural	64

As shown above, voters of all political and socioeconomic stripes, and in every region of the country, say SNAP benefits should be increased. Among those who say benefits should be increased, by a four-to-one margin (79% to 21%) they say that increases should be based on a combination of inflation *and* the cost of nutritious meals that reflect today’s eating habits rather than just inflation alone.

Voters overwhelmingly envision positive outcomes if SNAP benefits are increased:

- **90%** nationally (89% in swing states) say it would help working families manage the higher cost of living.
- **86%** nationally and in swing states say it would give families the freedom to make choices that best meet their needs.
- **74%** nationally and in swing states say it would help parents secure their children's future.
- **69%** nationally and in swing states say it would help more working families achieve the American dream.

Finally, the survey results send a clear message that voters want candidates for office to support an increase in SNAP benefits. Just under nine in 10 voters say a candidate doing

so would tell them that that candidate supports working families (87%) and understands Americans’ financial struggles (also 87%). Moreover, 67% of voters say they would feel more favorable about a candidate who favors increased SNAP benefits; just 9% would feel less favorable. A number of key groups say they would feel more favorable about such a candidate:

% more favorable	
Swing state voters	67
Other/undecided presidential voters	62
Undecided House voters	63
Independents	65
Parents	79
Latino voters	78
White non-college	68
Rural residents	63

Child Care and Early Education

Voters report a dearth of good child care and early education options in their communities: 61% say that only some or very few of the programs in their area are both high quality *and* affordable for lower- and middle-income families (in the six swing states it is slightly higher at 66%). This represents a regression from the end of the pandemic—in a [November 2022 survey](#)^{*}, 53% said that only some or very few programs were high quality and affordable. An already challenging situation for young families has gotten worse, and things are difficult in every type of community: 59% of urban residents, 61% of suburban residents, and 63% of small town and rural residents say only some or few programs are high quality and affordable. Parents confirm the problems this situation creates, as 67% of them say they have or had trouble finding child care either due to affordability (47%) or other issues.

That voters recognize the lack of accessible child care and early education is notable because they understand the vital role these programs play for children and the country as a whole.

^{*} National survey of 1,006 registered voters, conducted for the First Five Years Fund.

Voters are clear about the high importance of child care to families AND to the U.S. economy.

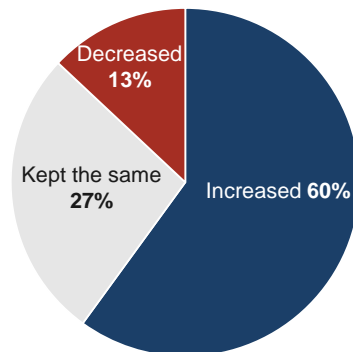
Having enough high-quality and affordable child care and early education programs is important for...

	Very important	Pretty important		% Biden Voters	% Trump voters
Children's educational development	60%	25%	85%	89	80
Parents of young children being able to work	58%	27%	85%	89	80
Children's social development	56%	27%	83%	87	80
The U.S. economy	55%	24%	79%	81	77
Employers being able to find enough workers	48%	30%	78%	81	75

When respondents are informed what [the average parent must pay for child care](#) for a single child, three in five say federal funding for child care and early education should be increased:

A solid majority of voters—including undecided voters—say federal funding for child care and early education should be increased.

The average cost for a family with one child in childcare is \$11,582 every year. Do you think federal funding to states to help parents pay for childcare and early education should be...



	% increased
Swing state voters	59
Biden voters	73
Trump voters	47
Other/undecided voters	60
House Democratic voters	73
House Republican voters	47
House undecided voters	64
White non-college	59
White college grads	53
VOC non-college	67
VOC college grads	69
Self-identified MAGA voters	51
Northeast	64
South	59
Midwest	60
West	57
Urban	68
Suburban	60
Small town/rural	54

Note that this includes a majority of Biden voters and 3rd party/undecided voters and a plurality of Trump voters (increasing to a majority of voters who identify themselves as supporters of the MAGA movement).

As is the case with SNAP benefits, voters believe that additional federal funding that increases the affordability and quality of child care and early education would help working families:

- **91%** nationally (93% in swing states) say it would give families the freedom to make choices that best meet their needs.
- **89%** nationally (88% in swing states) say it would help working families manage the higher cost of living.
- **84%** nationally (85% in swing states) say it would help parents secure their children's future.
- **80%** nationally (79% in swing states) say it would help more working families achieve the American dream.

And, again, a candidate's endorsement of increased funding for child care and early education strongly signals to voters that the candidate supports working families (90%) and understands families' financial struggles (90%). And, voters have an overwhelming positive reaction to such a candidate, with 70% saying they would feel more favorable toward him or her. The reaction is even slightly better among some key swing groups:

% more favorable	
Swing state voters	73
Other/undecided presidential voters	74
Undecided House voters	71
Independents	69
Parents	81
Latino voters	81
White non-college	71
Rural residents	67

The Bottom Line: In an environment of extreme partisan division, the dual imperatives of helping working families pay for food and child care are rare areas of agreement. Increasing funding in each area is widely supported and candidates who favor such increases would improve their standing with the voting public.