



Majority of Louisiana residents support more investment in early childhood education

Means-tested and universal versions of childcare and early childhood education programs are popular

The fifth in a series of five reports from the 2021 Louisiana Survey, a project of the Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs

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Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs

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About the Louisiana Survey

The *2021 Louisiana Survey* is the nineteenth in an annual series sponsored by the Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs at Louisiana State University's Manship School of Mass Communication.

The mission of the *Louisiana Survey* is to establish benchmarks as well as to capture change in residents' assessments of state government services. The survey is further dedicated to tracking public opinion on the contemporary policy issues that face the state. Each iteration of the *Louisiana Survey* contains core items designed to serve as barometers of public sentiment, including assessments of whether the state is heading in the right direction or wrong direction, perceptions about the most important problems facing the state, as well as evaluations of public revenue sources and spending priorities.

In the *2021 Louisiana Survey*, this core is supplemented by measures of experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic; support for paid family leave requirements, extending broadband access, expansion of early childhood education programs, and an increase to the gasoline tax; as well as beliefs about race and socio-economic class.

As part of an effort to ensure that the *Louisiana Survey* fulfills its public service mission, the research team solicited input about topics for the survey from members of the government and policy community across the political spectrum. Additionally, the research team drew upon expertise in public policy and polling from Louisiana State University faculty. These advisors provided invaluable insight into the design of the questionnaire and in identifying the contemporary policy questions that could most benefit from an understanding of the public's views. While we are indebted to them for their time and contributions, they bear no responsibility for final decisions on the questionnaire, analysis, and interpretation presented in this report or any mistakes therein.

We especially thank the Reilly Family Foundation for their generous support and vision in helping to create the *Louisiana Survey*.

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Summary

This is the fifth of five reports from the *2021 Louisiana Survey*, a project of the Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs at Louisiana State University's Manship School of Mass Communication. This report contains results from questions asking Louisiana residents' opinions about early childhood education and childcare programs. Following are the topline findings.

- A majority of Louisiana residents support more spending for childcare, regardless of whether the program is universal or targeted to low-income families. Seventy-six percent (76%) support increasing state spending on childcare for infants and toddlers from low-income families, and 75% support doing so for childcare for three and four year olds from low-income families. Similarly, sixty-nine percent (69%) support increasing state spending on childcare for infants and toddlers from all families, and 67% support doing so for childcare for three and four year olds from all families.
- Likewise, a majority of state residents back more spending on universal and means-tested early childhood education. Seventy-one percent (71%) support increasing state spending on early childhood education for infants and toddlers from low-income families, and 68% support doing so for early childhood education for three and four year olds from low-income families. Similarly, seventy-three percent (73%) support increasing state spending on early childhood education for infants and toddlers from all families, and 72% support doing so for early childhood education for three and four year olds from all families.
- There is also majority support for raising taxes to pay for spending on early childhood education and childcare programs. Fifty-seven percent (57%) support raising taxes to increase spending on childcare for low-income families. Fifty-three percent (53%) support raising taxes to increase spending on childcare for all families. Fifty-eight percent (58%) support raising taxes to increase spending on early childhood education for low-income families. Fifty-nine percent (59%) support raising taxes to increase spending on early childhood education for low-income families.

Views on Childcare and Early Childhood Education

Most Louisianans support more spending for childcare and early childhood education, including raising taxes to pay for it

To measure what Louisiana residents think about state funding for early childhood education programs, the *2021 Louisiana Survey* includes questions about different families and children's ages the program might serve. Additionally, to assess whether Louisianans view early childhood education programs as something different than childcare, we randomly assigned participants to either versions of the questions that mention "early childhood education" or versions that mention "childcare."

In all, there are four groups: Participants asked about childcare for low-income families, participants asked about childcare for all families, participants asked about early childhood education for low-income families, and participants asked about early childhood education for all families. Participants in each group answered questions about increasing state spending on programs for infants and toddlers, increasing spending on programs for three and four year olds, and, if they support increased funding, a question about raising taxes to fund the programs.

The most striking pattern in the results is how robust support for more spending is regardless of age of child, whether the program is means-tested or universal, or whether the program consists of childcare or early childhood education. Across all of these questions, support for more spending remains between 67% and 76%. The differences are within the margin of error.

Support for taxes to fund childcare or early childhood education is lower, but remains above 50%. The final column of Table 1 shows the percent of participants asked about the particular version of the program listed in the row who support raising taxes to fund more spending.

Fifty-seven percent (57%) support raising taxes to increase spending on childcare for low-income families. Fifty-three percent (53%) support raising taxes to increase spending on childcare for all families. Fifty-eight percent (58%) support raising taxes to increase spending on early childhood education for low-income families. Fifty-nine percent (59%) support raising taxes to increase spending on early childhood education for low-income families. These percentages are within the margin of error of each other.

Table 1: Most Louisiana residents support more funding for childcare and early childhood education across a variety of potential program designs

Program	Spending for infants and toddlers	Spending for three and four year olds	Raising taxes
Childcare for low-income families	76	75	57
Childcare for all families	69	67	53
Early childhood education for low-income families	71	68	58
Early childhood education for all families	73	72	59

Note: Participants randomly assigned to one of four question batteries listed in the Program column. Spending columns are the percent who support increasing spending for the program. The final column is the percent who support raising taxes to fund more spending (the denominator for this percentage includes those who do not support more spending and those who support more spending but not more taxes as well).

Survey Methodology

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted among a statewide sample of 781 adults (18 years of age or older) living in Louisiana. The survey was conducted by interviewers at Louisiana State University's Public Policy Research Lab. The sample includes 154 respondents interviewed via landline telephone and 627 respondents interviewed on a cellphone, including 476 who do not have a landline telephone.

Approximately four-fifths of the sample (82 percent) was stratified across parishes proportionally to their adult population ensuring geographic representation across the state. The remaining 18 percent of the sample was drawn statewide. For both the parish and statewide samples, the design of the landline samples ensures representation of both listed and unlisted numbers by use of random digit dialing. Similarly, the cell phone samples are randomly drawn from known, available phone number banks dedicated to wireless service. Both samples, landline and cellphone, were provided by Marketing Systems Group.

The combined landline and cell phone sample is weighted using an iterative procedure that matches race, education, household income, gender, and age to known profiles for the adult population of Louisiana found in the Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2019 one-year estimates. Weighting cannot eliminate every source of nonresponse bias. However, proper administration of random sampling combined with accepted weighting techniques has a strong record of yielding unbiased results.

The sample has an overall margin of error of +/- 6.4 percentage points. The margin of error includes adjustment due to the weighting procedure. The design effect due to weighting is 1.4 percentage points; that is, the margin of error is 1.4 percentage points larger than it would be for a simple random sample of this size without weighting.

In addition to sampling error, as accounted for through the margin of error, readers should recognize that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls. As often as possible, the *Louisiana Survey* follows the wording of relevant questions repeatedly used by reputable public opinion research institutions and projects, such as the Pew Research Center, Gallup Inc., and the American National Election Studies.

Interviews for this survey were conducted from January 4 to March 1, 2021. However, 80% of interviews occurred from February 1 to March 1, 2021.

The *2021 Louisiana Survey* has a response rate of four percent. This response rate is the percentage of eligible residential households or personal cell phones in the sample for which an interview is completed. The rate is calculated using the American Association for Public Opinion Research's method for Response Rate 3 as published in their Standard Definitions. Response rates for

telephones have been on decline for several decades and frequently fall in the single digits even among the very best survey research organizations.

Louisiana State University's Public Policy Research Lab, a division of the Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs, designed the survey questionnaire and sampling strategy, computed the survey weights, and conducted all statistical analysis.

Question Wording and Toplines

Unless otherwise indicated, results are for the total sample. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

[FOR QUESTIONS Q50 THROUGH Q51, PARTICPANTS RANDOMLY ASSIGNED TO ONE OF FOUR BATTERIES: A, B, C, OR D]

Q50A. [ASKED IF RANDOMLY ASSIGNED TO BATTERY A]

Do you support or oppose the state government increasing spending on quality childcare for infants and toddlers from low-income families?

Support	76
Oppose.....	22
Don't know/Refused [VOLUNTEERED].....	2

Q50B. [ASKED IF RANDOMLY ASSIGNED TO BATTERY B]

Do you support or oppose the state government increasing spending on quality childcare for infants and toddlers from all families?

Support	69
Oppose.....	27
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	4

Q50C. [ASKED IF RANDOMLY ASSIGNED TO BATTERY C]

Do you support or oppose the state government increasing spending on quality early childhood education for infants and toddlers from low-income families?

Support	71
Oppose.....	28
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	1

Q50D. [ASKED IF RANDOMLY ASSIGNED TO BATTERY D]

Do you support or oppose the state government increasing spending on quality early childhood education for infants and toddlers from all families?

Support	73
Oppose.....	27
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	0

Q51A. [ASKED IF RANDOMLY ASSIGNED TO BATTERY A]

Do you support or oppose the state government increasing spending on quality childcare for three and four year olds from low-income families?

Support	75
Oppose.....	23
Don't know/Refused [VOLUNTEERED].....	2

Q51B. [ASKED IF RANDOMLY ASSIGNED TO BATTERY B]

Do you support or oppose the state government increasing spending on quality childcare for three and four year olds from all families?

Support	67
Oppose.....	30
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	2

Q51C. [ASKED IF RANDOMLY ASSIGNED TO BATTERY C]

Do you support or oppose the state government increasing spending on quality early childhood education for three and four year olds from low-income families?

Support	68
Oppose.....	31
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	1

Q51D. [ASKED IF RANDOMLY ASSIGNED TO BATTERY D]

Do you support or oppose the state government increasing spending on quality early childhood education for three and four year olds from all families?

Support	72
Oppose.....	25
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	2

Q52AB. [ASKED IF RANDOMLY ASSIGNED TO BATTERY A OR BATTERY B AND ANSWERED SUPPORT TO EITHER Q50 OR Q51]

Do you support or oppose raising taxes to fund more spending on childcare?

Support	73
Oppose.....	25
Don't know/Refused [VOLUNTEERED].....	2

Q52CD. [ASKED IF RANDOMLY ASSIGNED TO BATTERY C OR BATTERY D AND ANSWERED SUPPORT TO EITHER Q50 OR Q51]

Do you support or oppose raising taxes to fund more spending on early childhood education?

Support	77
Oppose.....	20
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	3