



Nebraskans Speak About Early Care and Education

Buffett Early Childhood Institute/Gallup Survey on
Early Childhood Care and Education in Nebraska



Buffett
Early Childhood
Institute
at the University of Nebraska

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Introduction

The first eight years of a child's life are the most important time to influence his or her future. Birth to age 8 is a period of rapid brain development during which children acquire language, form relationships for the first time, build character, and develop cognitive skills.¹ Decades of research have demonstrated that high-quality early childhood care and education can provide young children with a strong start in developing the skills necessary for success in school and life.² Research indicates that investments in young children's learning and development can affect a community's future economic strength and well-being.³

These research findings guide the work of the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska. The Institute is committed to transforming young children's lives by improving their learning and development. In support of this mission, the Buffett Institute commissioned Gallup to conduct a statewide survey of Nebraska residents. The Institute's goal was to better understand Nebraskans' attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge about early care and education in the state.

Research Questions

The Buffett Institute and Gallup designed the Buffett Early Childhood Institute/Gallup Survey on Early Childhood Care and Education in Nebraska to answer the following research questions:

1. Do Nebraskans understand the long-term effects of early care and education on student success?
2. How accessible and affordable is high-quality early care and education in Nebraska?
3. Do Nebraska residents view early care and education as an important investment priority when compared with other educational priorities in the state?
4. Do Nebraskans support quality early care and education for children from low-income households?

Future Reports

In the coming months, the Buffett Institute and Gallup will release additional reports. Selected topics will be explored in greater depth, including the early childhood workforce and early care and education in rural Nebraska, among others.

1 Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2013). *The first eight years: Giving kids a foundation for lifetime success*. Baltimore, MD: Author. Retrieved from www.aecf.org.

2 Reynolds, A., Magnuson, K., & Ou, S.-R. (2006). *PK-3 education: Programs and practices that work in children's first decade*. New York: Foundation for Child Development.

3 Heckman, J. J. (2011). The economics of inequality: The value of early childhood education. *American Educator*, 35(1), 31-35, 47.

Executive Summary

The Buffett Early Childhood Institute/Gallup Survey on Early Childhood Care and Education in Nebraska demonstrates that the vast majority of Nebraskans recognize the importance of high-quality early care and education. However, Nebraskans also report its lack of availability and affordability across the state. Most Nebraskans agree that the state should make early care and education a higher priority than it currently is today.

Results from this study are based on questionnaires completed by more than 7,100 Nebraska residents. Gallup conducted the survey in English and Spanish via mail in late August through September 2015. The following represent key findings from the study:



1 Nebraskans recognize the importance of early care and education.

- The vast majority (68%) of Nebraska residents say early care and education has a lot of impact on the long-term success of students in school and in life.
- Only 10% of Nebraska residents strongly feel that most young children in Nebraska are prepared to be successful in school when they start Kindergarten.

2 Nebraskans do not believe high-quality early care and education is available or affordable for all families in the state.

- Just 11% of Nebraska residents strongly agree that high-quality early care and education is **available** to every family in the state.
- Only 6% of Nebraskans strongly agree that high-quality early care and education is **affordable** for every family in Nebraska.
- Among several possible obstacles, more than a third (35%) of Nebraska residents say cost is the biggest challenge families face in obtaining high-quality care and education for their young children.

3 Nebraskans report deficiencies in early care and education in their area and in the state.

- Only 15% of Nebraskans are very satisfied with the quality of early care and education programs in the city or area where they live.
- Just 1% of Nebraska residents say that all children from birth to age 5 in Nebraska receive high-quality early care and education.

4 Nebraskans want a greater investment in quality early care and education.

- Two-thirds (67%) of Nebraskans strongly agree or agree that the state should make early care and education a higher priority than it is today.
- The majority of Nebraska residents (58%) believe the state is investing too little in early care and education, while only 6% think the state is investing too much.

5 Nebraskans support early care and education for children most in need.

- Only two in 10 residents (19%) strongly agree or agree that Nebraska is doing enough to help children from low-income families be ready for success in life.
- Half of Nebraskans strongly agree or agree that the state should provide early care and education for all children from low-income families who choose to use it.

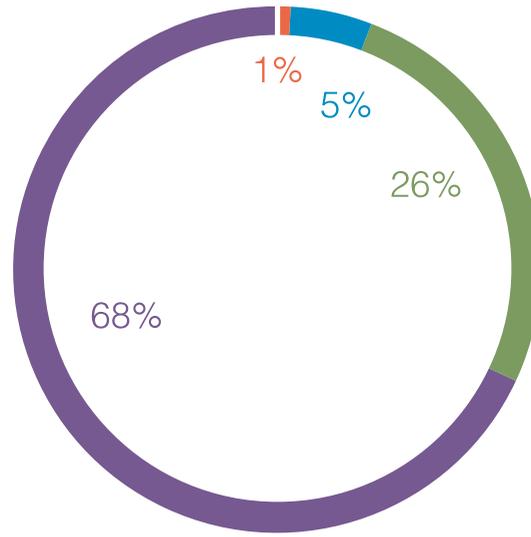
Nebraskans recognize the importance of early care and education.

The vast majority (68%) of Nebraska residents say early care and education has a lot of impact on the long-term success of students in school and in life.

Approximately one-quarter (26%) of Nebraskans say early care and education has some impact on students' long-term success in school and life, while only 6% see little or no effect from this early childhood educational experience.



Based on what you have seen or heard, how much impact does early childhood care and education have on the long-term success of students in school and in life?



None at all Not much Some A lot

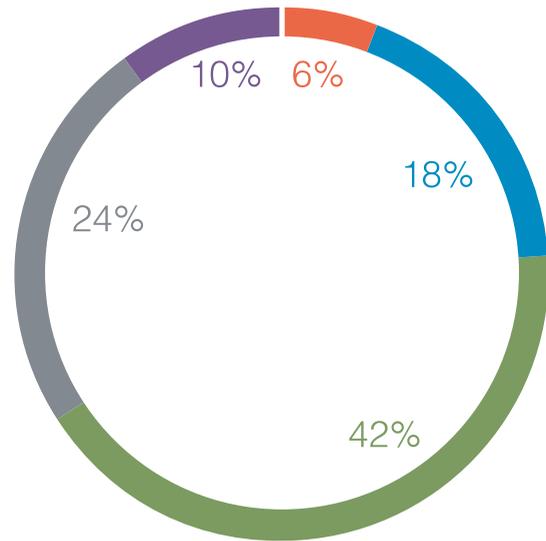
Even though the majority of Nebraskans believe early care and education is very important,

only 10% strongly agree

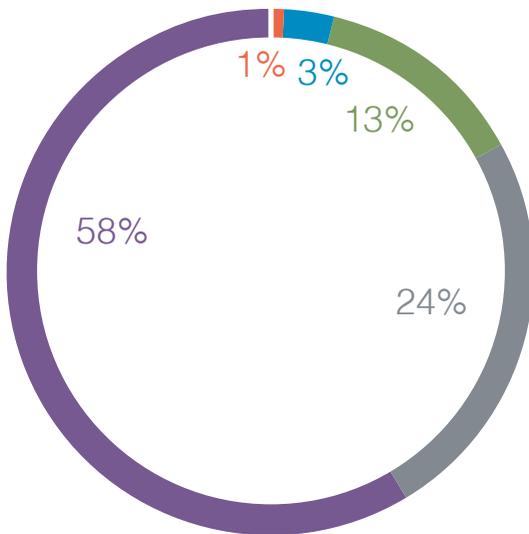
that most young children in Nebraska are prepared to be successful in school when they start Kindergarten.

On a 5-point scale, where 1 means strongly disagree and 5 means strongly agree, please rate your level of agreement with the following item:

Most young children in Nebraska are prepared to be successful in school when they start Kindergarten.



1 - Strongly disagree 2 3 4 5 - Strongly agree



On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all important and 5 is very important, how important is early childhood care and education to a child's success in life?

1 - Not at all important 2 3 4 5 - Very important

On a 5-point scale, more than half (58%) of Nebraskans rate early care and education as very important (5 rating) to a child's success in life, while 24% of respondents rate it a 4. One percent say it is not at all important (1 rating).



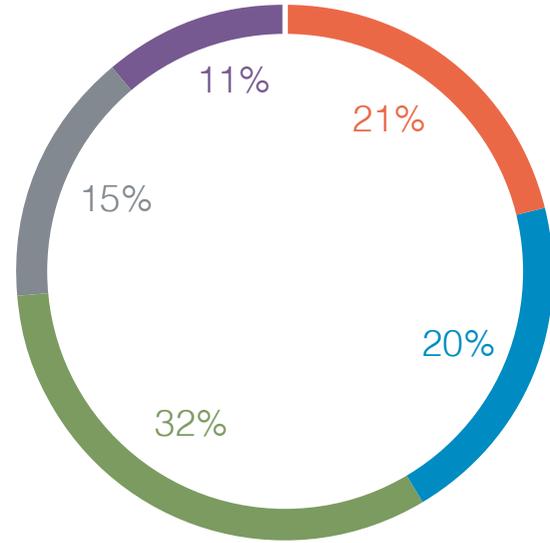
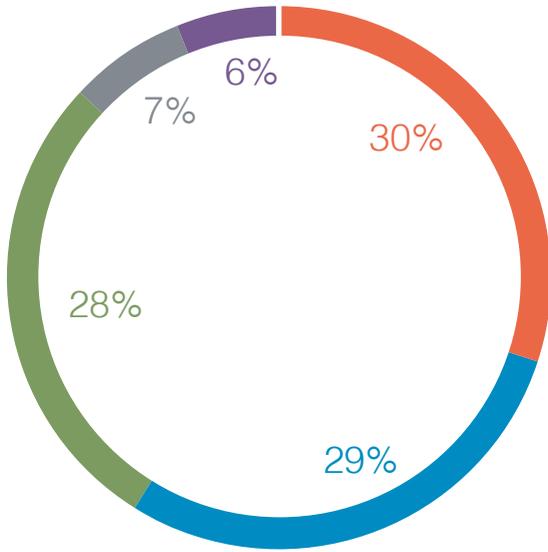
Nebraskans do not believe high-quality early care and education is available or affordable for all families in the state.

Only 11% of Nebraskans strongly agree that high-quality early care and education is available to every family in the state. Nearly twice as many Nebraskans (21%) strongly believe it is not available.



On a 5-point scale, where 1 means strongly disagree and 5 means strongly agree, please rate your level of agreement with the following items:

High-quality early childhood care and education is available to every family in Nebraska.



High-quality early childhood care and education is affordable for every family in Nebraska.

1 - Strongly disagree 2 3 4 5 - Strongly agree

Only 6% of Nebraskans strongly agree that high-quality early care and education is **affordable** for every family in Nebraska.

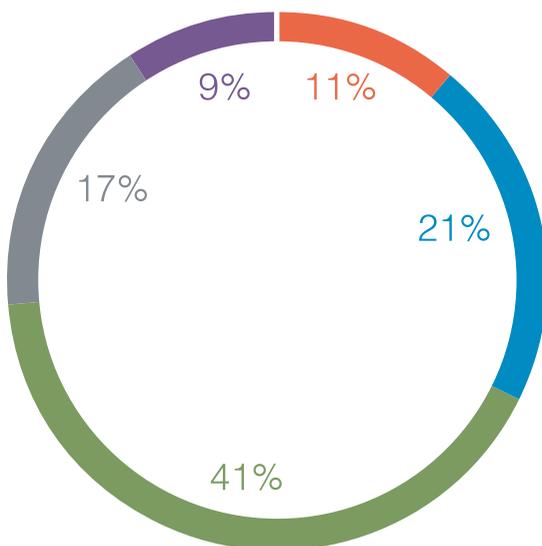
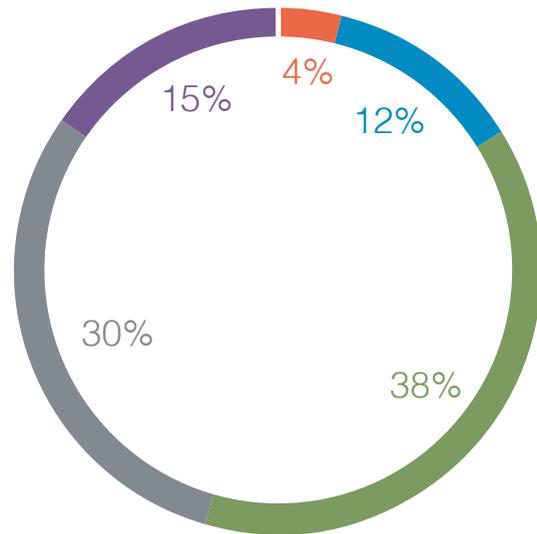
Just 11% of residents strongly agree that high-quality early care and education is **available**.

Just 15% of Nebraskans are very satisfied with the **availability** of early care and education programs in the city or area where they live; 30% are satisfied. Fewer — only 9% — of Nebraskans are very satisfied with the **affordability** of early care and education programs in their city or area. Residents living in small towns/rural areas (13%) are more likely to be very satisfied with affordability than those living in urban areas (7%).



On a 5-point scale, where 1 means very dissatisfied and 5 means very satisfied, please rate your level of satisfaction with the following items:

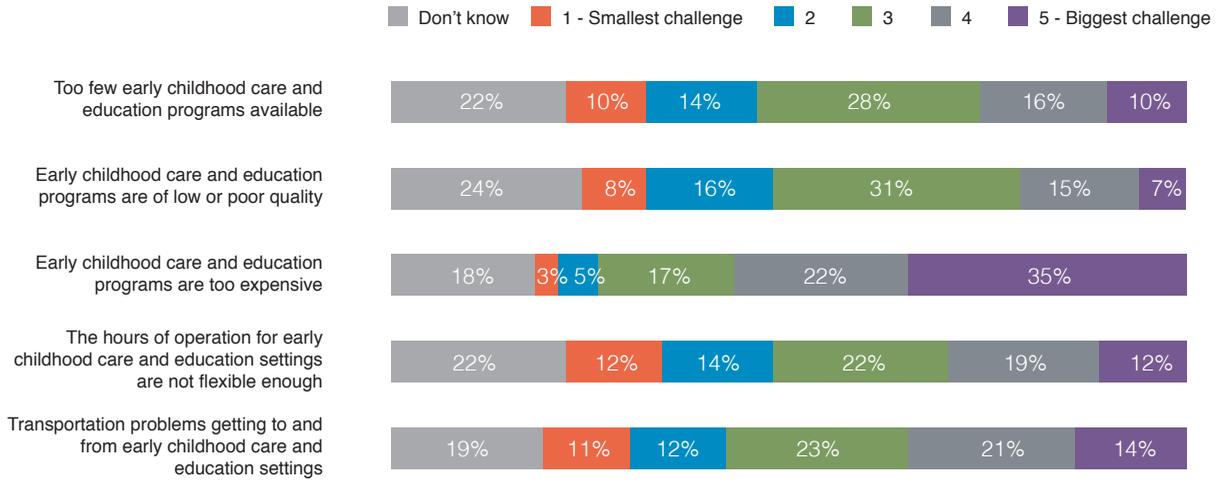
The availability of early childhood care and education programs in the city or area where you live



The affordability of early childhood care and education programs in the city or area where you live

1 - Very dissatisfied 2 3 4 5 - Very satisfied

Following are challenges some families face in getting high-quality early childhood care and education for their young child(ren). Please rank the following challenges from 1 to 5 where 1 represents the smallest challenge and 5 represents the biggest challenge:



The survey asked Nebraskans to rate five potential challenges families face in obtaining high-quality early care and education for their young children. Among the challenges listed, more than a third of Nebraskans cite programs that are too expensive as the biggest challenge families face in getting high-quality care and education for their kids. The next-greatest challenges for families are transportation to and from care and education settings (14%) and limited hours of operation (12%).



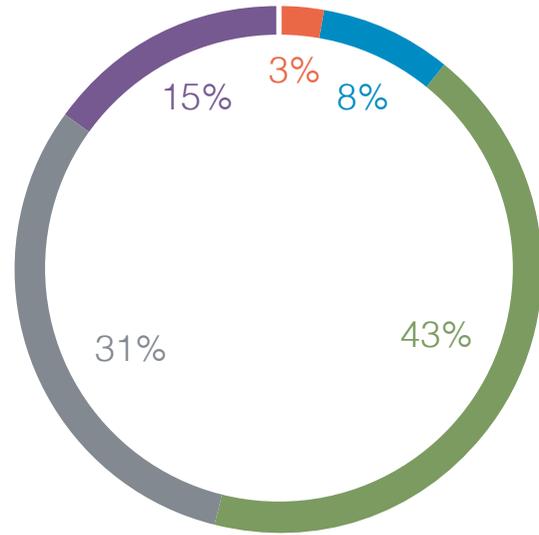
Nebraskans report deficiencies in early care and education in their area and in the state.

Only 15% of Nebraskans are very satisfied with the quality of early childhood care and education programs in the city or area where they live, while 31% are satisfied.



On a 5-point scale, where 1 means very dissatisfied and 5 means very satisfied, please rate your level of satisfaction with the following item:

The quality of early childhood care and education programs in the city or area where you live

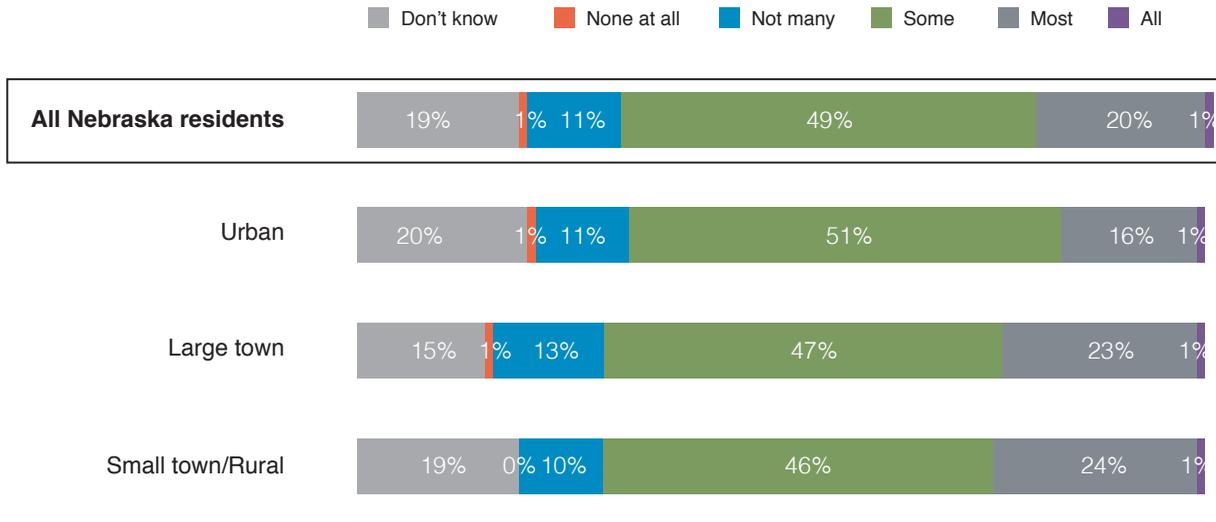


1 - Very dissatisfied 2 3 4 5 - Very satisfied

Only 1% of
Nebraskans say

all children from birth to age 5 in
Nebraska receive high-quality early
care and education.

Based on what you have seen or heard, about how many children birth to age 5 in Nebraska receive high-quality early childhood care and education?



Only 21% of Nebraskans believe all or most children in Nebraska receive high-quality early care and education. This percentage decreases among urban residents (17%), but is higher among residents in large towns (24%) and rural areas (25%).



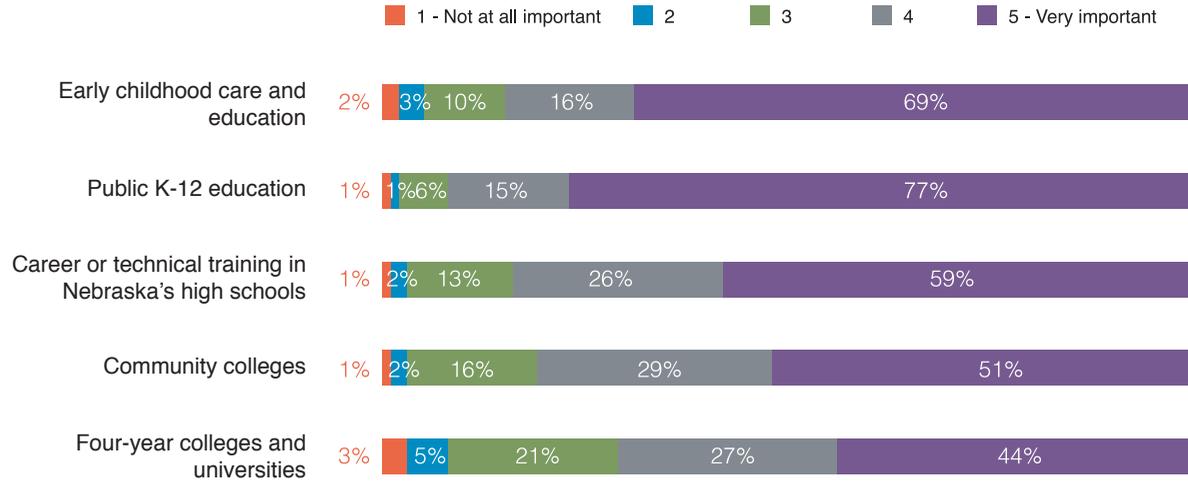


Nebraskans want a greater investment in quality early care and education.

A majority of Nebraskans (69%) identify early care and education as a very important investment for the state. This compares with 77% who say it is very important for the state to invest in public K-12 education and 59% who view career or technical training in Nebraska's high schools as very important.



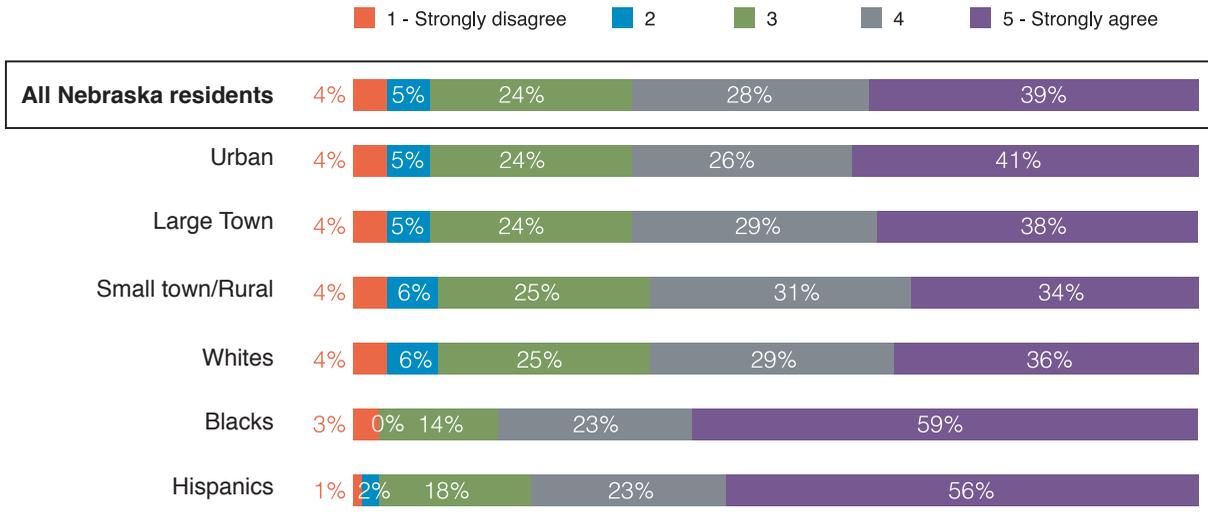
On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all important and 5 is very important, how important is it for the state of Nebraska to invest in each of the following?



Two-thirds of Nebraska residents strongly agree or agree that the state should make early care and education a higher priority than it is today.

On a 5-point scale, where 1 means strongly disagree and 5 means strongly agree, please rate your level of agreement with the following item:

Nebraska should make early childhood care and education a higher priority than it currently is today.



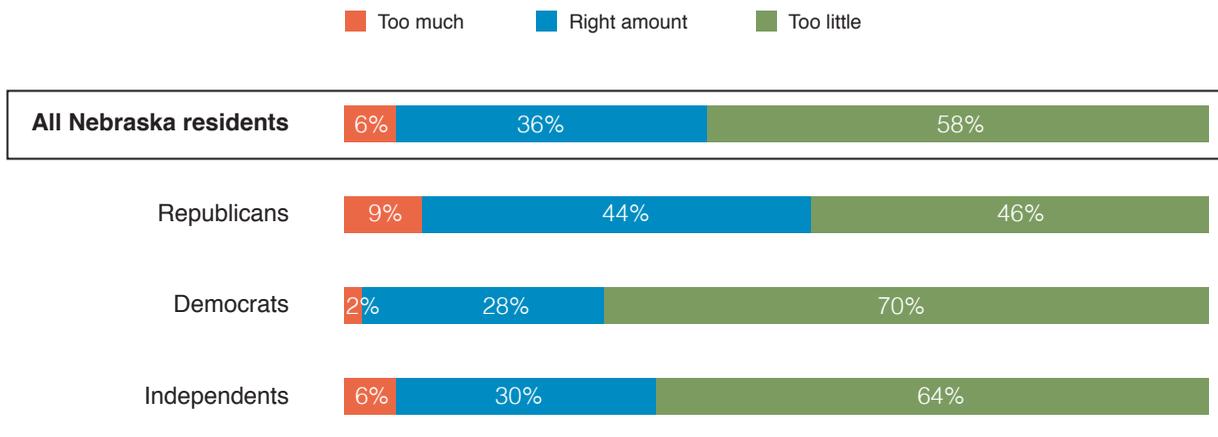
Small-town/rural residents (34%) are less likely than urban residents (41%) to strongly agree that early care and education should be a higher priority. Blacks and Hispanics are significantly more likely than whites to strongly agree with this statement.



The majority of Nebraska residents (58%) believe the state is investing too little in early care and education programs. Very few (6%) say the state is investing too much.



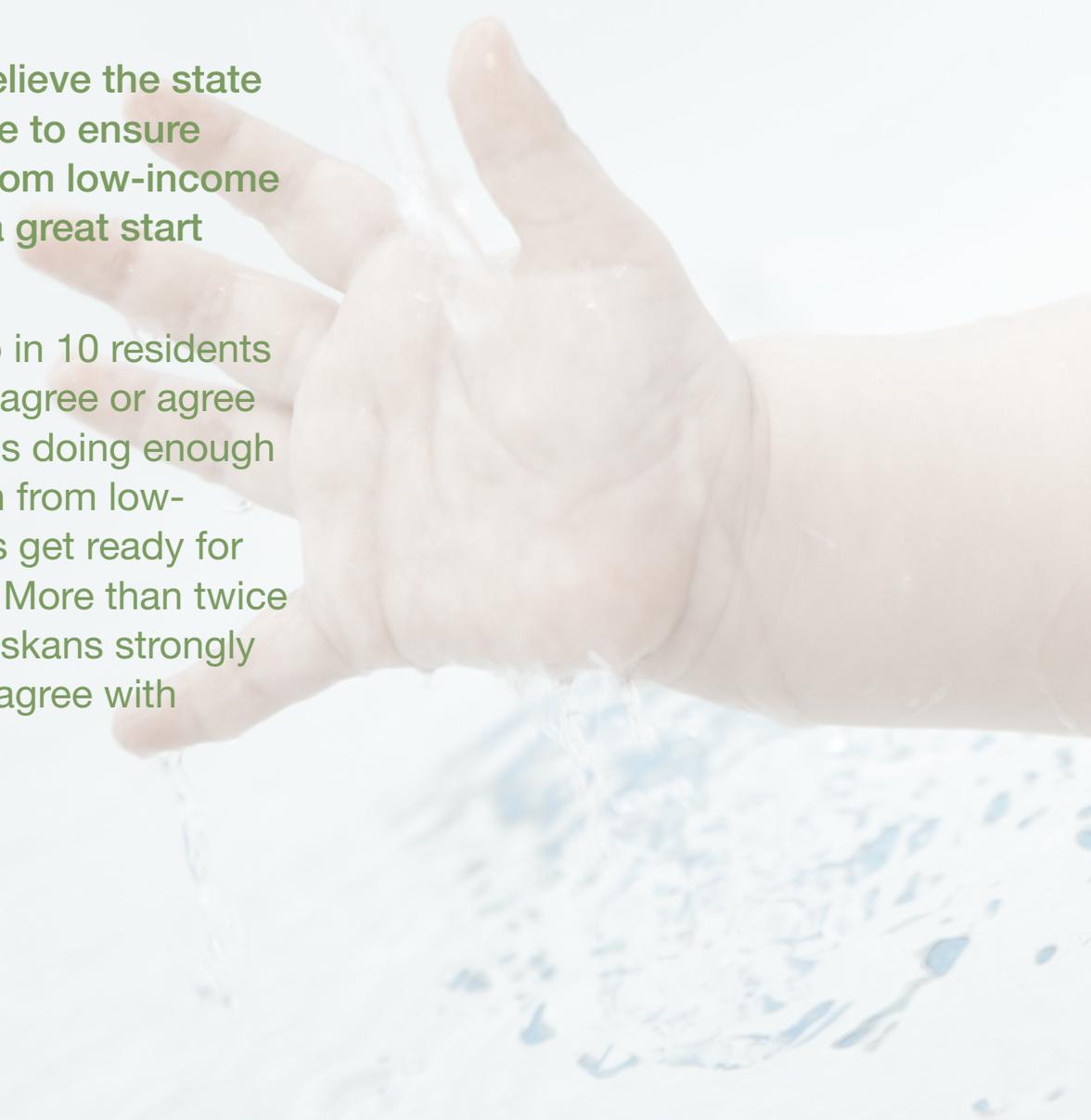
In your opinion, is Nebraska investing too little, too much, or about the right amount on early childhood care and education programs?



Nebraskans support early care and education for children most in need.

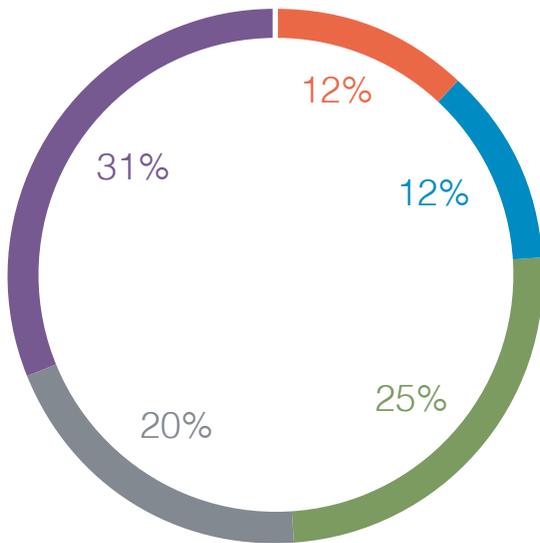
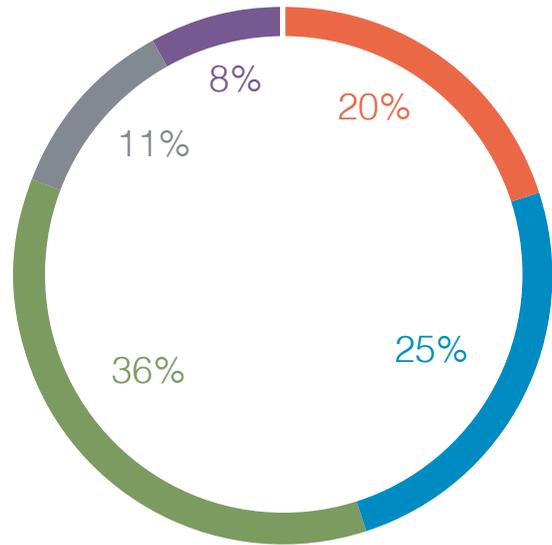
Nebraskans believe the state should do more to ensure that children from low-income families have a great start in life.

Only about two in 10 residents (19%) strongly agree or agree that Nebraska is doing enough to help children from low-income families get ready for success in life. More than twice as many Nebraskans strongly disagree or disagree with this statement.



On a 5-point scale, where 1 means strongly disagree and 5 means strongly agree, please rate your level of agreement with the following items:

The state of Nebraska is doing enough to help children from low-income families be ready for success in life.



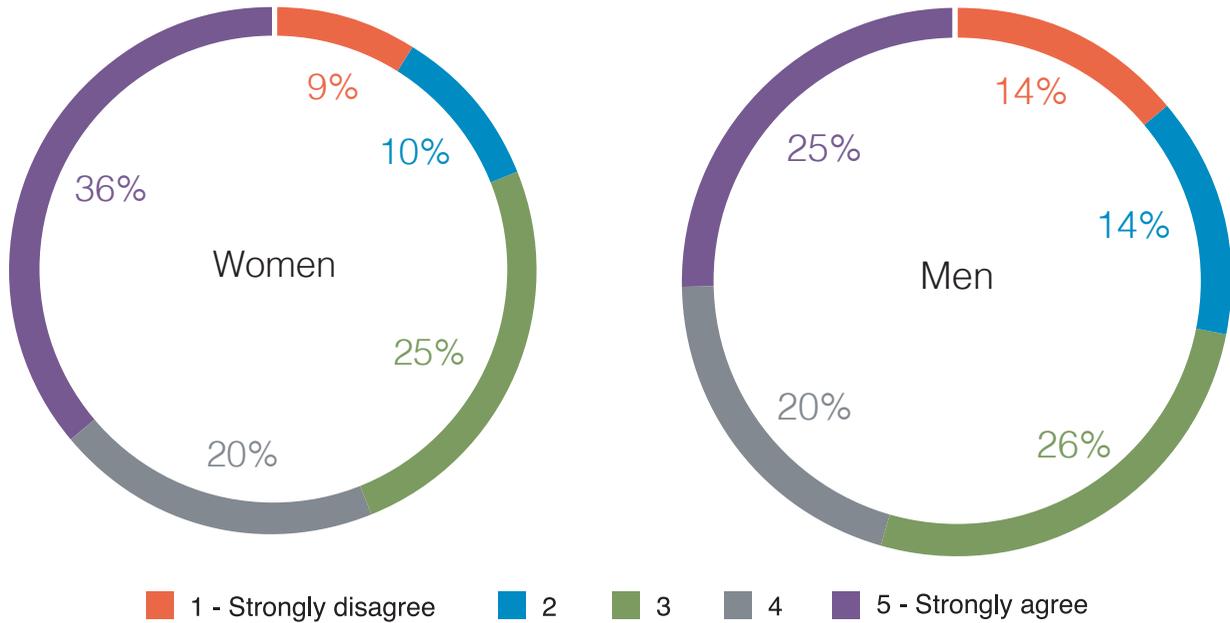
The state of Nebraska should provide early childhood care and education for all children from low-income families who choose to use it.

1 - Strongly disagree 2 3 4 5 - Strongly agree

The majority of Nebraskans

agree that the state should provide early care and education for all children from low-income families who choose to use it.

On a 5-point scale, where 1 means strongly disagree and 5 means strongly agree, please rate your level of agreement with the following item: The state of Nebraska should provide early childhood care and education for all children from low-income families who choose to use it.



Women (36%) are more likely than men (25%) to strongly agree that the state should provide early care and education for all children from low-income families who choose to use it.



Implications

Results from the Buffett Early Childhood Institute/Gallup Survey on Early Care and Education provide ample evidence that Nebraskans recognize the importance of quality early care and education for children's school success and future well-being. Nebraskans' perspectives are consistent with scientific evidence showing that healthy brain development and positive interactions during a child's first eight years of life form the foundation for optimal learning and development.

The survey results clearly indicate the need for more affordable, available, and higher-quality early care and education options in Nebraska. Respondents also indicated their strong support for more investment by the state in young children, especially those in greatest need.

Nebraska's ambition to become a national leader in early care and education is visible in its innovative public/private partnerships, collaborations between preschools and public schools, and continua of care across the first eight years of life. But this survey suggests that more must be done to fulfill the state's commitment to young children and their families.



Methodology Statement

Results for the Buffett Early Childhood Institute/Gallup Survey on Early Childhood Care and Education in Nebraska are based on surveys conducted by mail from Aug. 27-Sept. 30, 2015, with a random sample of 7,191 Nebraska residents aged 18 and older. The survey package included an English and Spanish survey to provide respondents with the flexibility to reply in their preferred language.

Gallup selected the sample of Nebraska residents using address-based sampling (ABS), a sampling technique used to select households from a list of all households on file with the United States Postal Service (USPS). The sampling frame includes approximately 97% of all Nebraska households. Gallup chooses respondents within the household at random based on which household member would have the next birthday. Gallup used a series of postcard reminders to encourage participation in the survey among nonresponders.

Gallup stratified the sample of Nebraska residents by area (urban centers, large towns, and small towns/rural areas) to allow for estimates at the area and state levels. In addition, Gallup weighted the data to match state of Nebraska demographics of gender, age, education, race, and Hispanic ethnicity.

All reported margins of sampling error include the computed design effects for weighting.

- For results based on the total sample of 7,191 Nebraska residents, the margin of sampling error is ± 1.6 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.
- For results based on the sample of 2,352 Nebraska residents currently residing in urban areas, the margin of sampling error is ± 2.9 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.
- For results based on the sample of 2,357 Nebraska residents currently residing in large towns, the margin of sampling error is ± 2.9 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.
- For results based on the sample of 2,482 Nebraska residents currently residing in small towns/rural areas, the margin of sampling error is ± 2.8 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

Margins of error may differ for other subgroups of the population. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

About Gallup

Gallup delivers analytics and advice to help leaders and organizations solve their most pressing problems. Combining more than 80 years of experience with its global reach, Gallup knows more about the attitudes and behaviors of employees, customers, students, and citizens than any other organization in the world. Gallup works with leaders and organizations to achieve breakthroughs in customer engagement, employee engagement, organizational culture and identity, leadership development, talent-based assessments, entrepreneurship, and well-being. Our 2,000 professionals include noted scientists, renowned subject-matter experts, and bestselling authors who work in a range of industries, including banking, finance, healthcare, consumer goods, automotive, real estate, hospitality, education, government, and business-to-business (B2B).

About Buffett Early Childhood Institute

The Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska is an innovative research, policy, and outreach institute that draws on the resources of the four University of Nebraska campuses. The Institute is dedicated to promoting the development and learning of children from birth through age 8. Visit buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu for more information.

This survey was supported in part by the Buffett Early Childhood Fund. We acknowledge their help and that of the Buffett Institute/Gallup Survey advisory group for their input during the development of the survey.

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