

A group of diverse children are playing outdoors in a sunny, wooded area. They are blowing bubbles, and the scene is filled with joy and laughter. The children are of various ethnicities and are dressed in casual clothing. The background is a soft-focus view of trees and sunlight filtering through the leaves.

# **The State of Child Care in Wisconsin**

**Wisconsin Women's Council,  
March 1, 2024**



Wisconsin Department of  
Children and Families

# DCF Core Child Care Programs



YoungStar

Quality of  
learning  
environment



Regulation

Health &  
safety



Wisconsin Shares

Helps  
eligible  
families  
afford care



# Why does child care matter?



**Workforce participation** for the parents of young children



Improved **K-12 education** outcomes



Better long-term **health** outcomes



Improved **public safety**



Family **stability** and **prosperity**



## Our Goal

Ensure Wisconsin families have **access to quality, affordable** child care that meets their needs

# Access

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- There are **4,601** regulated child care programs in Wisconsin with the capacity to serve **177,299** children.

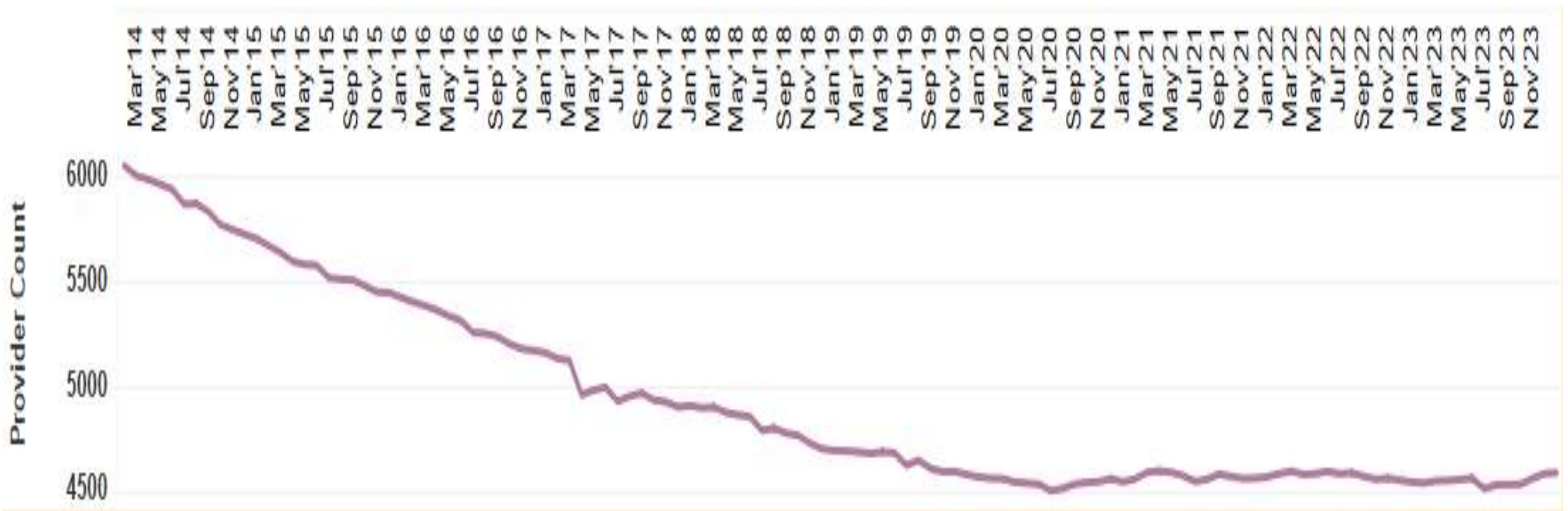
Type	Active Providers	Regulated Capacity
Certified Family	518	2,967
Licensed Camp	103	2,055
Licensed Family	1,561	12,150
Licensed Group	2,195	142,239
Public School	224	17,888
	<b>4,601</b>	<b>177,299</b>

**Half of Wisconsin families – and 70% of families in rural communities – live in a child care desert.**

Source: <https://childcaredeserts.org/2018/index.html?state=WI>

# 24% decline in the number of regulated child care programs in the last decade

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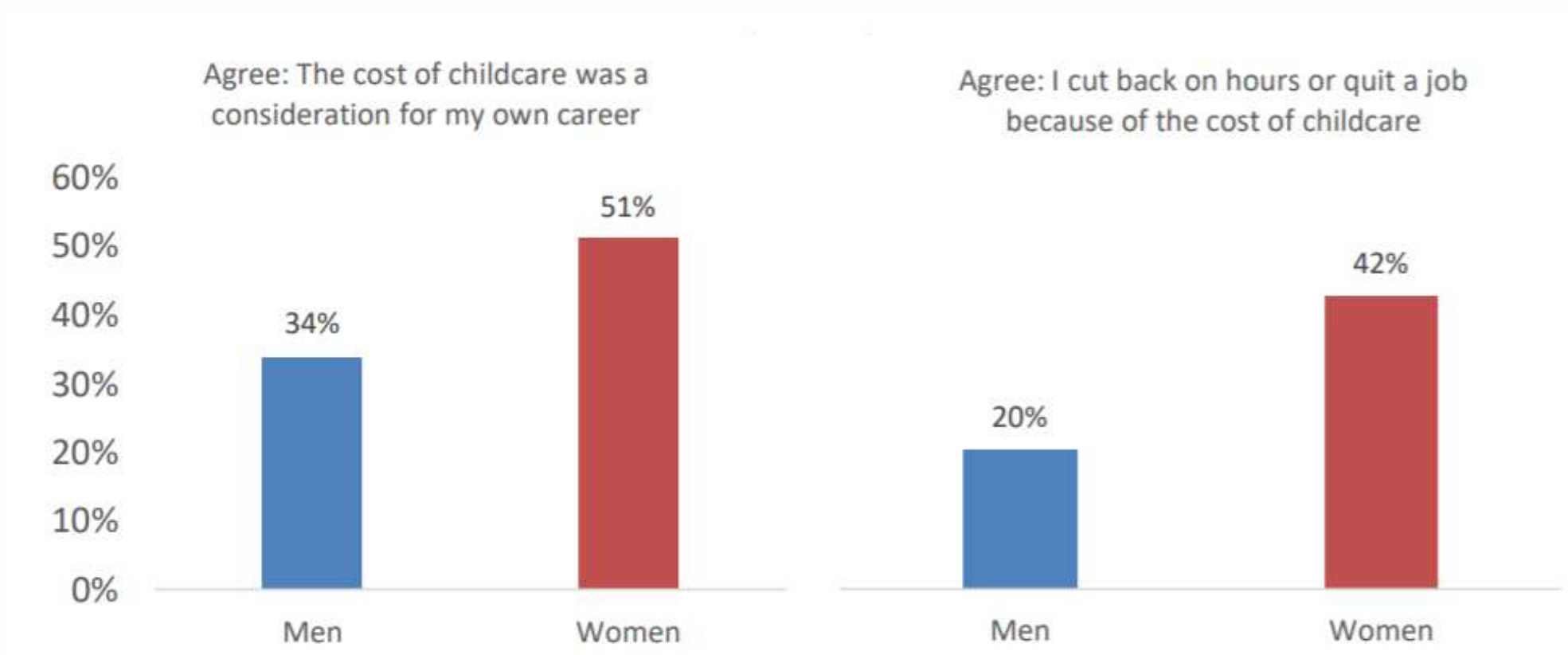
# Affordability

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- The average price of center-based care for one infant is over **\$11,000** per year.
- That's **15%** of the median household income.







Source: UW-Madison Extension Windicators, *Are the Kids Alright? Women, Work, and Childcare*





## Quality

The YoungStar system evaluates providers on 4 key areas:

- Staff's education and training
- Learning environment and curriculum
- Program's business and professional practices
- Child's health and well-being

# YoungStar Results


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As of 12/29/2023	1 Star	2 Star	3 Star	4 Star	5 Star	Total
<b>Providers rated by Youngstar</b>	9	1,748	1,070	178	499	<b>3,381</b>
<b>Children using WI Shares attending YoungStar providers</b>	0	13,766	11,473	1,807	5,432	<b>32,478</b>

Programs with pending ratings (approx. 250 providers) are not reflected in this chart



## Child Care Workforce



One of the biggest challenges facing child care providers: they can't increase their tuition enough to pay teachers competitive wages because families can't afford to pay any more.

## Wisconsin's child care workforce is ...

- Almost all women
- Educated
  - Over 80% have an Associate's Degree or higher
- Poorly compensated
  - \$13.55/hour lead teachers
  - \$7.46 for family child care directors



**Over 40%** of Wisconsin child care providers report **staffing shortages**, which lead to closed classrooms, longer waitlists, reduced hours, and **fewer children served**

Source: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2024 Wisconsin Survey





## **DCF initiatives to increase access to quality, affordable child care**

A woman and a young girl are sitting at a table, smiling as they stack colorful blocks together. The woman is on the left, and the girl is on the right. They are in a classroom or playroom setting with shelves of books in the background. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red circle containing text.

# Child Care Counts

Over **\$711 million** has gone to providers

Helped more than **5,000 providers** keep their doors open

Ensured employment of **61,469 professionals**

Supported continued care for more than **349,000 kids**



# How have funds been used?

## Operating Expenses

- Rent
- Utilities

## Payroll & Benefits

- Bonuses & raises
- Health benefits

## Reducing Costs for Families

- Tuition

# How has Child Care Counts impacted providers?

“It has allowed us to stay open and available to care for children. We would not be open without this program.”

“Our centers have long waitlists and one of the main issues of this is not having teachers to be able to ...accommodate new enrollments. Being able to give staff bonuses and increase compensation has allowed us to be more competitive in attracting staff, especially since child care is such a low paying industry.”



A hand is shown putting a coin into a piggy bank on a wooden table. The background is a warm, reddish-orange color. The text is overlaid on a white rectangular box.

# **Wisconsin Shares**

**Provided over \$300 million to  
over 27,000 families and  
nearly 50,000 children**

*July 2022 – June 2023*

# Program Improvements

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- Full time/part time
- Quality Adjustments
- Increased eligibly threshold and less steep benefits cliff (*coming soon*)



## With DCF support, partners have



Provided **scholarships** and **wage stipends** to early educators



Supported programs to **become licensed** in high-demand regions



Developed **community-specific plans** to grow the supply of child care



## For more information



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