

Overview & Key Findings | Childcare Trends Survey: What American Families Want

Goal

To better understand the evolving priorities, challenges, and preferences of American parents regarding childcare – with a focus on affordability, flexibility, and cultural enrichment – and to assess awareness and attitudes toward non-traditional options such as the au pair program.

Methodology

Findings come from survey responses from 681 parents who have school-aged children with childcare needs. The survey was authored by Cultural Care Au Pair and conducted through Survey Monkey in June 2025.

Who We Heard From

The typical respondent:

- ✓ Married, age 30–60
- ✓ Lives in an urban area
- ✓ Household income below \$150,000
- ✓ Has two children
- ✓ Relies primarily on family-based care

Key Findings

Access & Flexibility:

Rigid childcare schedules are the #1 source of family stress and childcare costs are a shared burden for families across all income levels.



Flexibility is the top consideration for families when making decisions about childcare, yet also the leading source of dissatisfaction.



More than 60% of respondents report negative impacts on work or personal well-being from rigid or limited childcare hours. Parents cite lack of backup care and restricted hours as key pain points, especially during summer and back-to-school seasons.



Affordability consistently ranked among the top three concerns for families.

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Family Satisfaction:

Many parents seek more flexible childcare options, with families reporting higher satisfaction with their current childcare if they host an au pair.



81% of respondents report satisfaction with their current care, but many are still seeking more flexible options, indicating latent demand for adaptable care models.



Parents who rely on the au pair program as a component of their current childcare solution are more satisfied than those who do not include the au pair program as part of their childcare solution (+6.7%).



On average, respondents are 5.5% more satisfied with their childcare solution when it includes an au pair compared to when it includes a daycare center.

Cultural Enrichment:

Parents value opportunities to expose their children to new cultures.



82% of parents said that it was at least somewhat important for their child to have cultural learning opportunities, with more than half of parents (52%) saying it was very or extremely important.

Bottom Line

American parents want flexible, affordable, and enriching childcare options. The au pair program, with its unique combination of adaptability, cultural exchange, and consistent, per-family cost, is uniquely positioned to meet these evolving family needs.