

VOTERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD

# Emotional Development in Young Children + Infants

Survey Findings | September 2017



## **Background.**

ZERO TO THREE and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation commissioned a national survey of voters to understand awareness of and attitudes toward emotional development in young children and infants. PerryUndem led the research along with GMMB.

This is a new policy area for many voters. While most believe that infants and young children are developing emotionally right from the start, voters are not sure how to support the healthy development of children or if there is a role for government on this issue. They are also more accustomed to thinking in terms of policies, supports, and interventions for school-age children, not younger children.

For these reasons, we tested messages and policies about the importance of supporting the emotional development of young children ages zero to three. Following are insights from the survey.

# Methods.

PerryUndem, a non-partisan research firm, conducted the interviews, focus groups and survey for this study. For more information about PerryUndem, go to <http://perryundem.com/>.



## Phase 1: Interviews and Focus Groups

The project started with 16 in-depth interviews with parents of children 0-5 years old, pediatricians, child-care providers, a social worker, a psychologist, and a child behavioral health specialist. The interviews were conducted in September 2016 in Columbus, OH and San Antonio, TX.

Following the interviews, we conducted four focus groups with diverse parents of children 0-5 years old, one group with pediatricians, and one group with child-care providers. The focus groups were conducted in December 2016 in Baltimore, MD, Nashville, TN, and Seattle, WA.

The interviews and focus groups helped shape the development of the national survey.



## Phase 2: National Survey

After the focus groups, we conducted a national survey of 1,051 registered voters. The survey included oversamples\* of:

- N = 559 Parents of children 0-5 years old
- N = 103 African-American parents of children 0-5 years old
- N = 108 Latino parents of children 0-5 years old
- N = 175 “First time” parents
- N = 202 Millennials
- N = 151 Non-metro voters

This was an 18-minute survey conducted May 31 to June 18, 2017. The margin of sampling error is  $\pm 3.3$  percentage points for the total.

*\*All oversamples and subgroups reported are among registered voters.*

# Contents.

Key Findings	5
Where Voters Start	8
Parents' Behaviors + Experiences	18
Messages + Policies	25
Attitudes of Key Subgroups	33

# Key Findings

## Where voters start.

### **Brain development in babies and young children is important.**

Nine in 10 (93%) voters feel this way. However, half of voters (51%) say they do not know much about this topic. Also, more than half (57%) feel parents are only doing a fair or poor job of encouraging the healthy brain development of their young children.

**More than 9 in 10 (96%) say it is important for society to support the healthy emotional development of children ages 3 and younger.** Three-quarters (75%) think this is “very” important.

### **Babies less than six months old can feel a range of emotions.**

This is what many voters (48%) believe. They also say babies can be impacted by their parents’ moods (60%). However, they are less clear on whether or not witnessing repeated violence can affect a child so young (35%).

**There are long term impacts.** Experiences in the first three years of a child’s life can lead to mental health issues later in life, according to most voters (85% agree).

**Emotional milestones are just as important as physical milestones.** Most voters (95%) feel both are crucial to a child’s healthy development. They want pediatricians to advise parents on both (69%).

**Pediatricians have a big role to play.** Most (73%) agree that pediatricians should help guide parents when it comes to the emotional development of children.

**Child-care providers have a role too but some may not want them to provide advice.** Most voters (82%) agree child-care providers should speak up if they have concerns about the emotional development of a child in their care. But they are less sure they want them to provide advice on how to address these issues.

**Parents should have resources.** Most (97%) say it is important for parents to have resources to help them be aware of the emotional development of their children.

# Key Findings

## What parents\* have to say.

**Voters in the survey who are parents of children ages 5 and younger feel *other* parents are not doing enough to nurture their children's healthy development.** About 7 in 10 feel other parents are spending *too little time* talking about the different emotions/feelings their children experience (70%), reading to their children (70%), stimulating the brains of their children (69%), or helping their children cope with emotions (67%).

**The vast majority of parents (more than 8 in 10) also say they are thinking about the emotional development (89%) and mental health (84%) of their young children.** Of note, mothers are thinking about these issues much more than fathers are.

**Three-quarters (73%) say they have had conversations with their spouse, partner, or other family members about their child's emotional development.** But only about one-third (36%) say these conversations were "very easy."

**Eight in 10 (81%) have also talked with their pediatrician about their child's emotional development.** The vast majority of these parents (87%) say these discussions were helpful. One in 10 (11%) have had their pediatrician actually raise concerns about the emotional development of their child.

**Parents of children ages 5 and younger generally feel prepared to deal with their young children's emotional development.** The majority (65%) say they were very or somewhat prepared for the emotions and feelings of their young children. However, only 4 in 10 of all voters surveyed say parents are prepared for this.

\* All parents in this survey are voters.

# Key Findings

## Messages + policies.

**The best way to describe this topic is “healthy social and emotional development in babies and toddlers.”** Voters chose this as the best name out of a total of eight possible selections. Names with the phrase “mental health” did not test as well.

**Messages on this topic test well.** Roughly 9 in 10 voters found each message “convincing.” One message may have a little more intensity than the others, however (62% found it “very” convincing): “Parents and caregivers influence babies’ brain development from the start...Children who feel loved, comforted, and have the freedom to play form more brain connections, which increases their ability to trust, relate, communicate, and learn.”

**Policy ideas to help families with young children receive majority support.** The top policy for voters is to “expand access to affordable, quality child care for working families.” This is a top policy idea across party ID. Three other policies have strong support too: more access to child development specialists; more flexible paid leave options for parents; and expanding Early Head Start.

**Most voters (80%) see a role for government in helping parents spend more time with their babies.** Those who are more hesitant to support a government role include: Republicans, Independents, men, and older voters (45-59 and 60+).

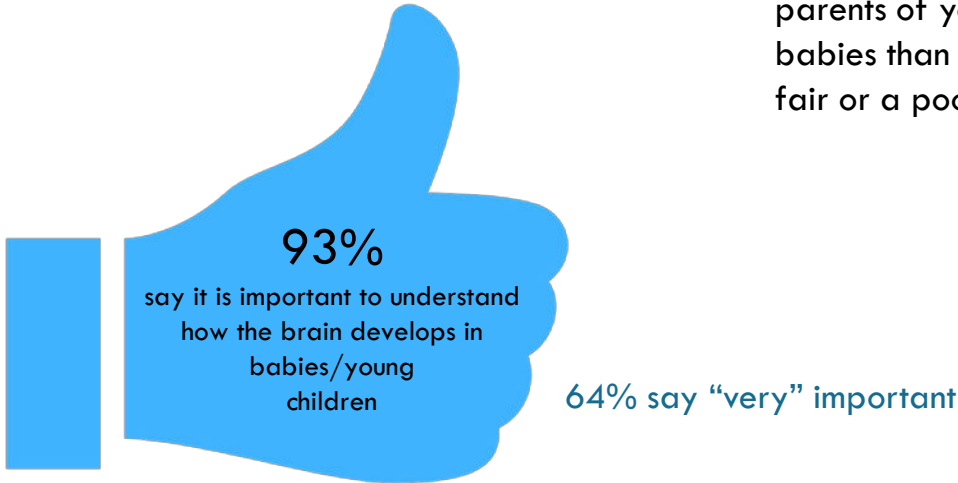
**Conflicted feelings about the role of government could dampen support for policies.** After reviewing messages and policies, there is a 13-point decrease in the intensity of “importance” voters attach to supporting the emotional development of children ages 3 and younger. Likely this dip was caused by some voters’ discomfort with government involvement in this issue. However, most who shift downward move into the “somewhat important” category – i.e., 93% still think this is an “important” issue. Those who are more likely to move downward: Republicans, Independents, and those who say government should have a minor or no role.

**Where Voters Start.**

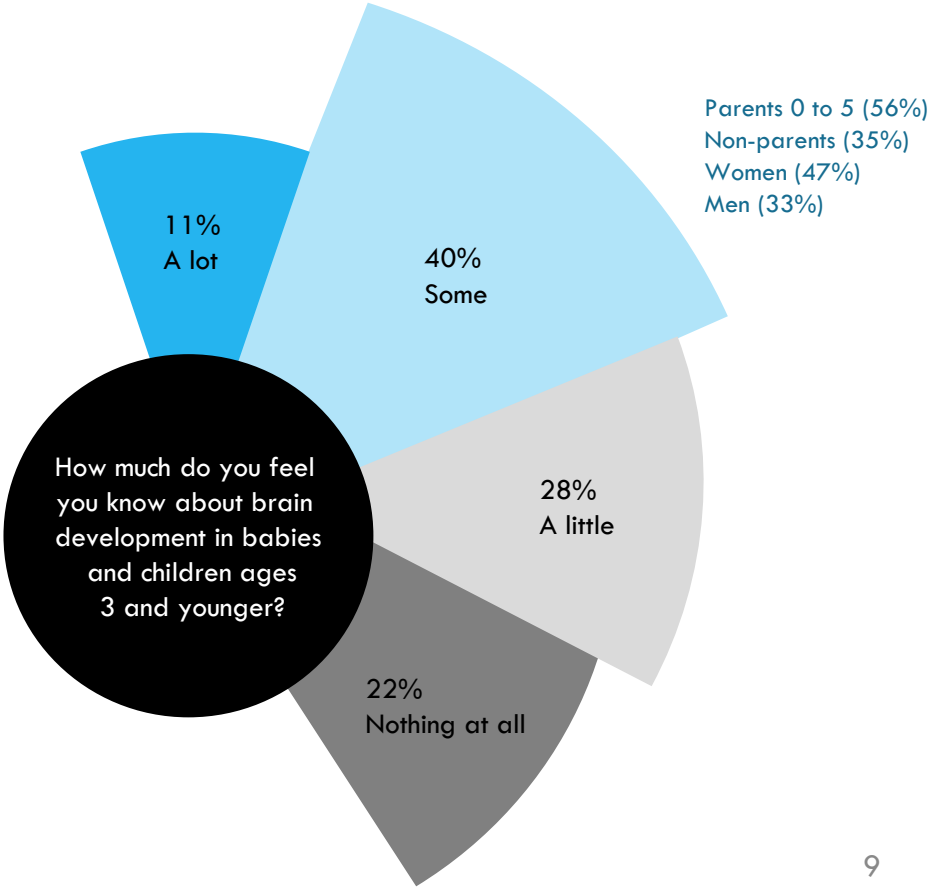
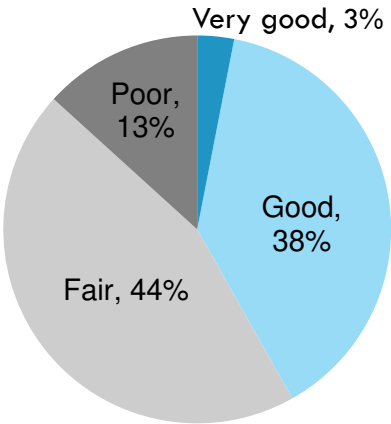


# Baseline knowledge.

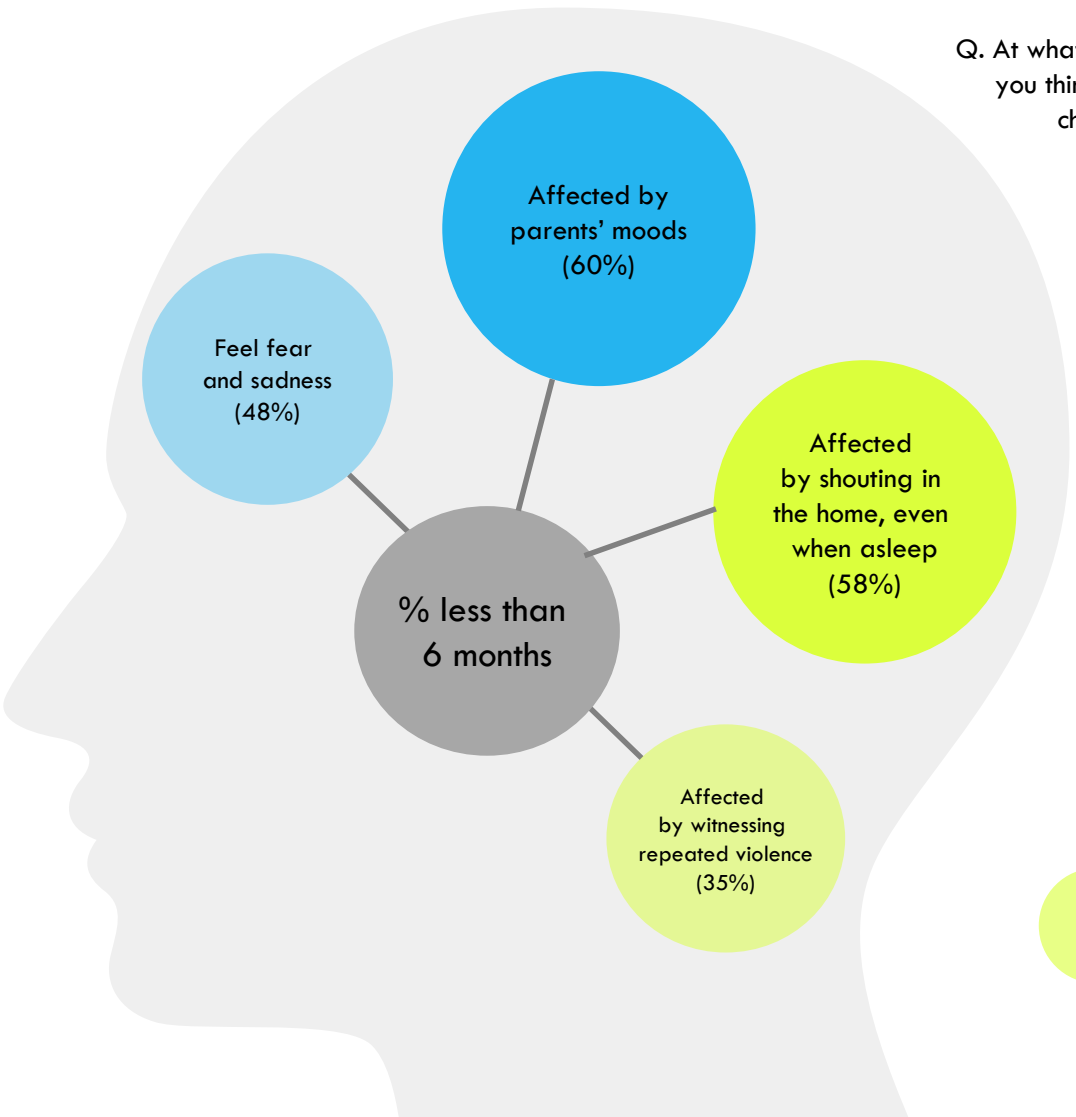
Nearly all voters in the survey say it is important to understand how the brain develops in young children. However, this is not something that voters know a lot about. In fact, half say they know little or nothing at all about brain development in young children. Good news: parents of young children are much more likely to say they know about brain development in babies than other voters. Finally, more than half of voters say most parents are only doing a fair or a poor job encouraging healthy brain development in their young children.



Q. Do you think most parents these days are doing a very good job, a good job, a fair job, or a poor job of encouraging the healthy brain development of their children ages 3 or younger?

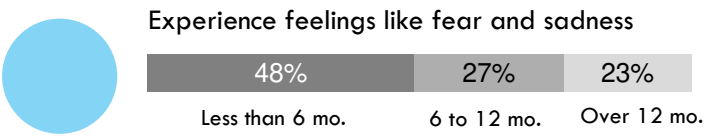


# When do young children experience emotions.

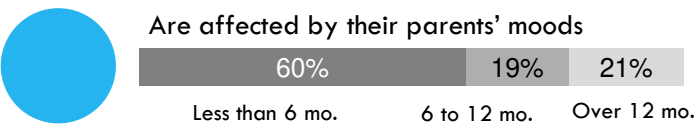


Q. At what age do you think young children...

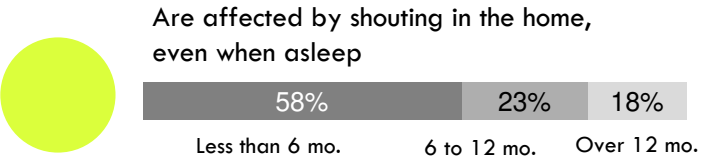
While large numbers of voters – often a majority – believe children less than six months old feel many emotions, many are not sure children that young feel fear and sadness or could be impacted by witnessing repeated violence. They feel children need to be older to feel these more complex emotions.



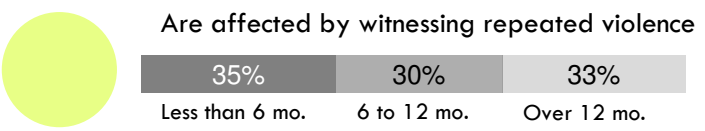
**Less than 6 months:**  
 Parents 0 to 5 (57%)  
 White parents 0 to 5 (64%)  
 Latino parents 0 to 5 (56%)  
 AA parents 0 to 5 (27%)



**Less than 6 months:**  
 Parents 0 to 5 (67%)  
 White parents 0 to 5 (74%)  
 Latino parents 0 to 5 (66%)  
 AA parents 0 to 5 (35%)



**Less than 6 months:**  
 Parents 0 to 5 (59%)  
 White parents 0 to 5 (65%)  
 Latino parents 0 to 5 (53%)  
 AA parents 0 to 5 (43%)



**Less than 6 months:**  
 Parents 0 to 5 (46%)  
 White parents 0 to 5 (51%)  
 Latino parents 0 to 5 (46%)  
 AA parents 0 to 5 (29%)

# Importance of those first few months and years.

Voters agree with many different statements that underscore the importance of the first few months and years of a child's life. They seem to understand that the emotional and brain development of a young child is important.

The survey finds that large majorities of voters agree that:

- A baby's emotional needs are just as important as his/her physical needs in the first 3 months of life;
- Parents' emotions affect their babies' emotions;
- Experiences during the 0-3 years can lead to mental health issues later in life;
- Emotional trauma in a young child's life can lead to depression or ADHD later on; and
- New parents are overwhelmed in the first few months with a new baby.

Q. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements...

Strongly agree      Somewhat agree  
Somewhat disagree      Strongly disagree

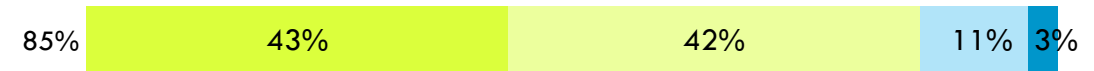
SPLIT: In the first 3 months of a baby's life, his or her emotional needs are just as important as his or her physical needs. N=531



Parents' emotions affect their baby's emotions and his or her brain development.



SPLIT: Experiences in the first 3 years of a child's life can lead to mental health issues later in life. N=531



SPLIT: Emotional trauma that a child age 3 or younger experiences can lead to long-term problems like depression or Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD). N=520



All new parents are overwhelmed in the first few months with a baby. It takes everything they have just to cope with feedings, sleep schedules, and diaper changes.



Q. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements...

Babies do not develop emotions, like joy, sadness, and anger, until they start talking.



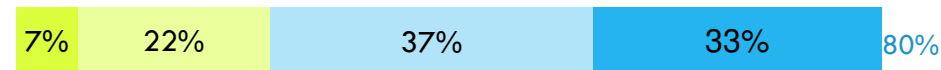
A child age 3 or younger cannot have mental health issues.



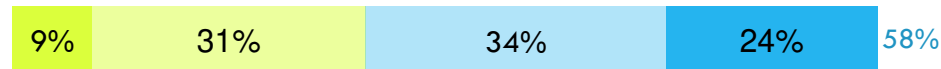
Most brain development happens after a child is three years or older.



Too much is expected of parents of young children these days.



In the first 3 months of a baby's life, his or her physical needs are more important than his or her emotional needs. N=520



■ Strongly agree    ■ Somewhat agree  
■ Somewhat disagree    ■ Strongly disagree

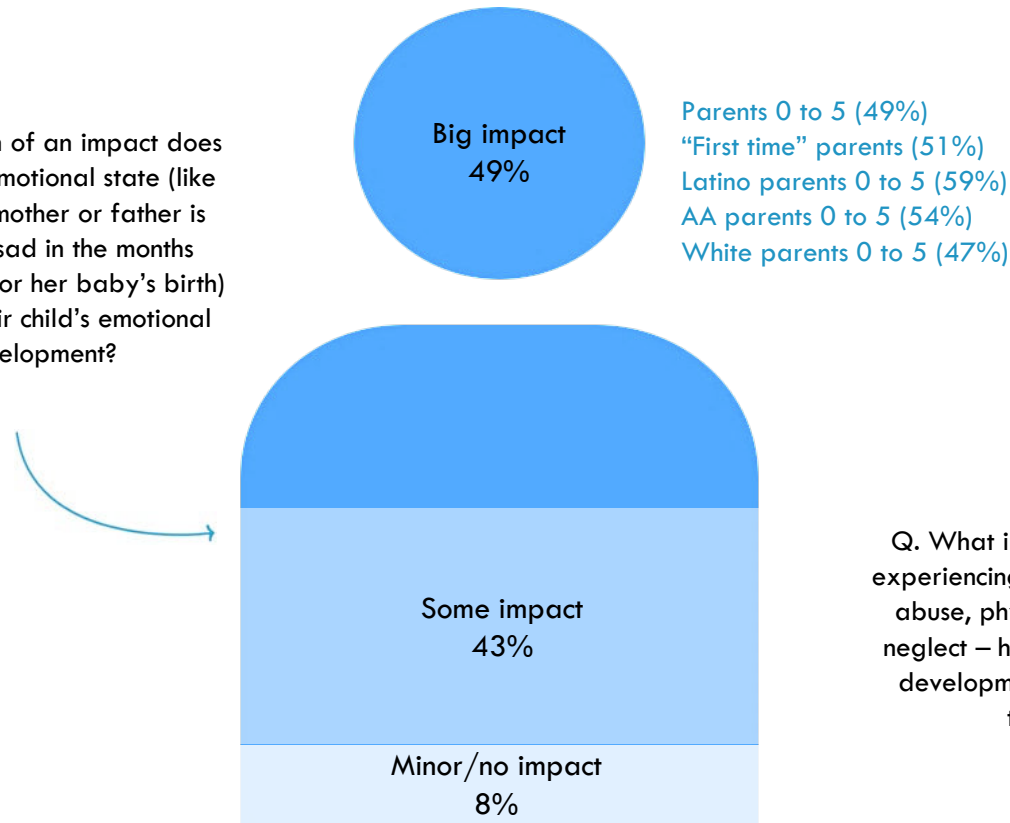
## Importance of those first few months and years.

Voters disagree with statements that seem to discount the ability of babies and young children to feel emotions or have mental health issues. Most reject statements that say these kinds of feelings and issues emerge only when the child is older. Of note, voters seem more confused or conflicted when it comes to the relative importance of a baby's physical needs vs. their emotional needs. (In another survey question, voters indicate that physical and emotional needs are *equally* important in babies.)

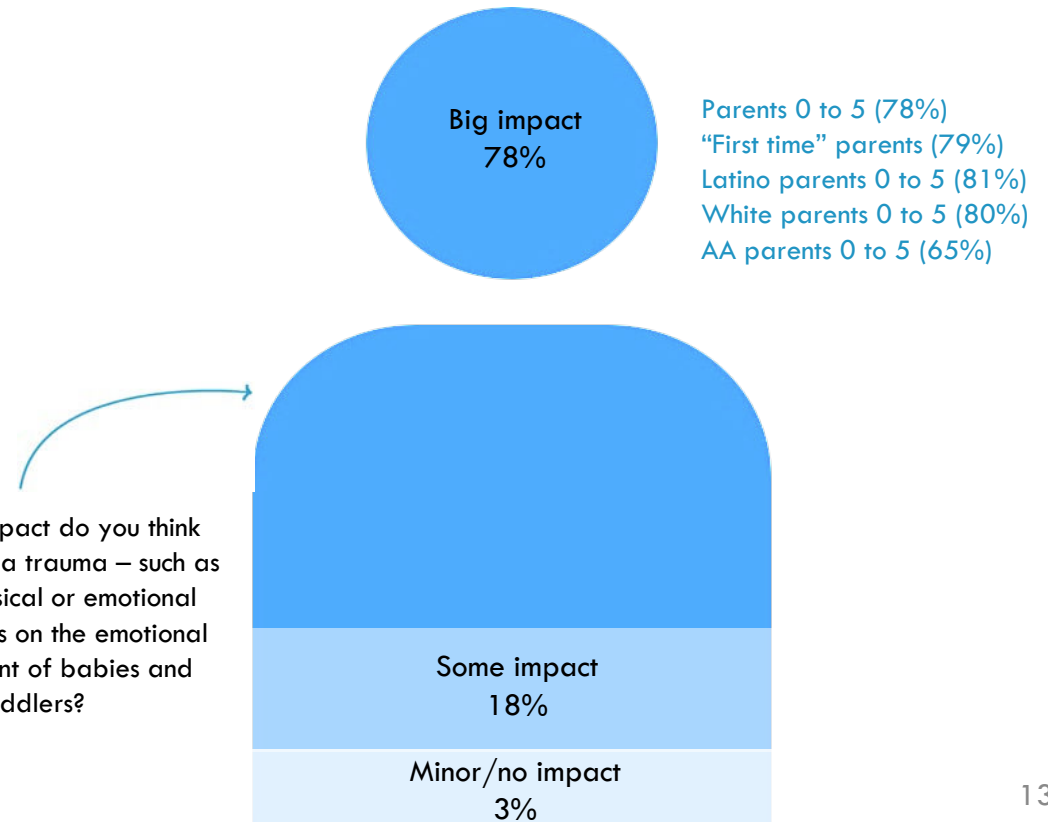
# Emotional impacts on young children.

Three-quarters of voters feel that trauma can have a big impact on a baby's emotional development. They are less clear on the impact of a parent's emotional state on a young child's emotional development.

Q. How much of an impact does a parent's emotional state (like whether a mother or father is happy or sad in the months following his or her baby's birth) have on their child's emotional development?



Q. What impact do you think experiencing a trauma – such as abuse, physical or emotional neglect – has on the emotional development of babies and toddlers?

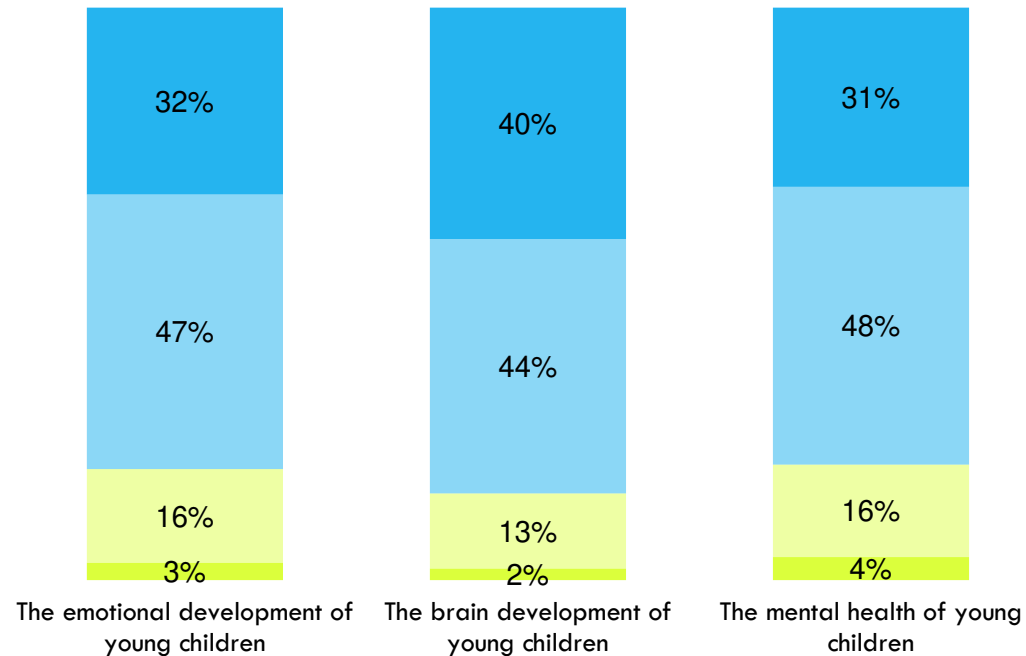


# Views toward pediatricians.

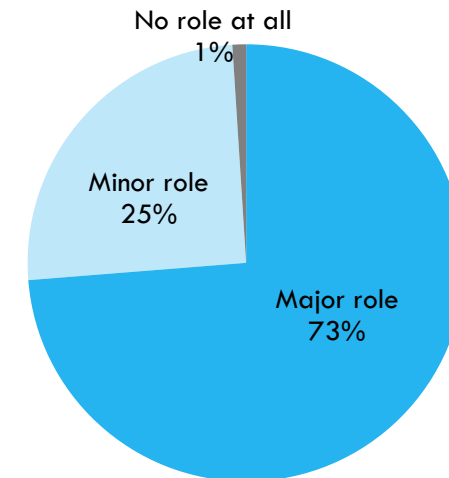
Virtually all voters say pediatricians should play a role in helping parents understand the importance of their child's emotional development, with nearly three in four saying they should play a "major role." About eight in 10 say they trust pediatricians at least somewhat to provide advice to parents on the mental and emotional health and brain development of young children.

Q. How much do you trust pediatricians in general to provide advice on...

■ Not at all ■ A little ■ Somewhat ■ A lot



Q. What role should pediatricians play in helping parents understand the importance of their child's emotional development? Should they play a...



# Physical vs. emotional milestones.

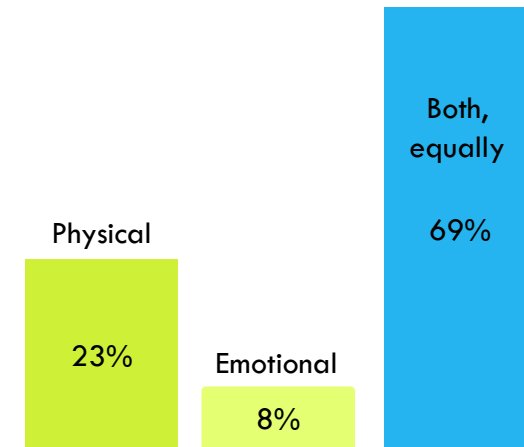
Q. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Right now, pediatricians often focus on physical milestones (e.g. sitting up, crawling, walking) with parents of young children. However, it is important that pediatricians also discuss emotional development milestones (e.g. attachment to adults, fear of strangers, engaging in back-and-forth interactions) with parents.



95% agree

Most voters agree that emotional milestones are equally as important as physical milestones in a young child. They want pediatricians to focus on both.

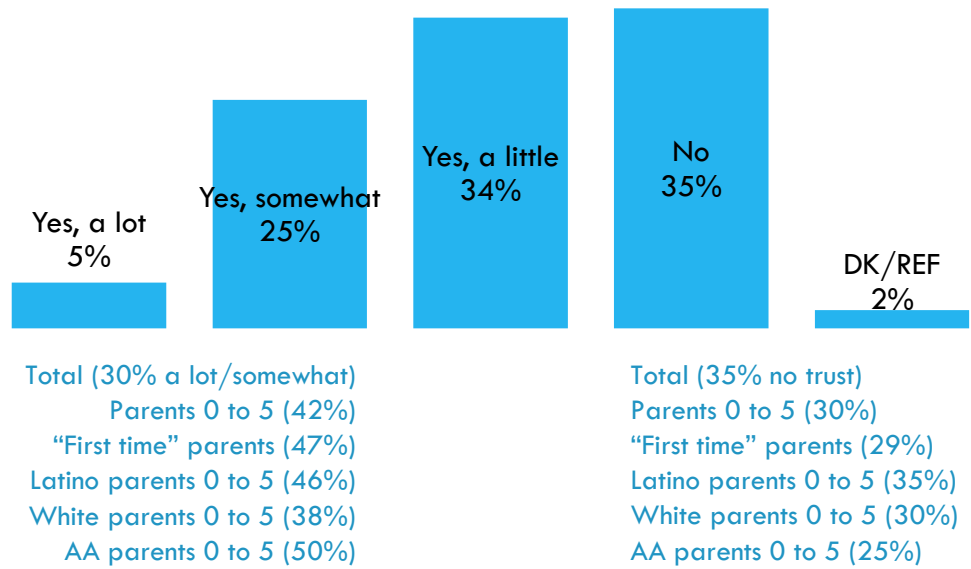


Q. Which milestones do you think are more important for pediatricians to focus on – physical milestones, emotional milestones, or both equally?

# Role of child-care providers.

Voters want child-care providers to raise concerns with parents about a child's mental and emotional health if they see an issue. They are less clear that they want child-care providers advising them on how to deal with children's emotional health.

Q. Now think about child-care providers of babies and children ages 3 or younger like licensed workers in daycare centers. Do you trust licensed workers in daycare centers to provide parents with advice on the issue of emotional development for young children?



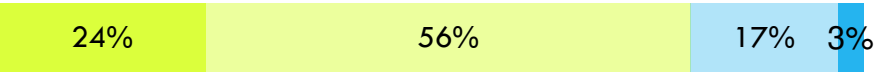
Q. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements...

■ Somewhat disagree      ■ Strongly disagree  
■ Strongly agree      ■ Somewhat agree

It is a licensed worker in a daycare center's role to raise potential concerns about a child's emotional development.



It is a licensed worker in a daycare center's role to raise potential concerns about a child's mental health.



Licensed workers in a daycare center overstep their role when they talk to parents about a child's emotional development or mental health.

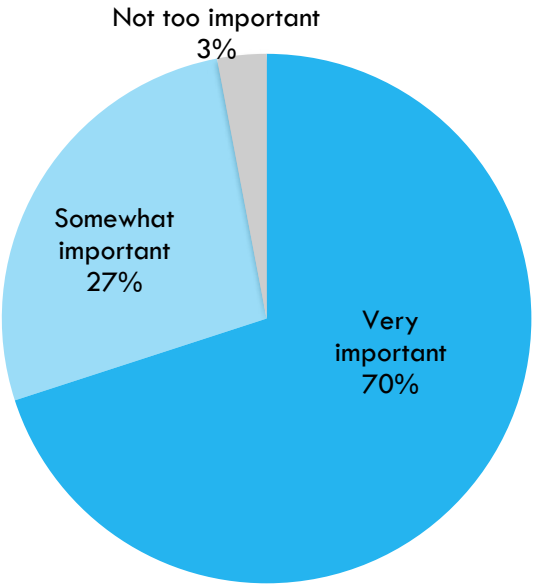




# Access to resources.

Most voters feel it is important for parents to have resources available to help them keep track of the emotional development of their young child. It is noteworthy that most parents of young children in this survey feel this information is already available. Three-quarters report that it is “very” or “somewhat” easy to find help and information on childhood development, including information about emotional and brain development.

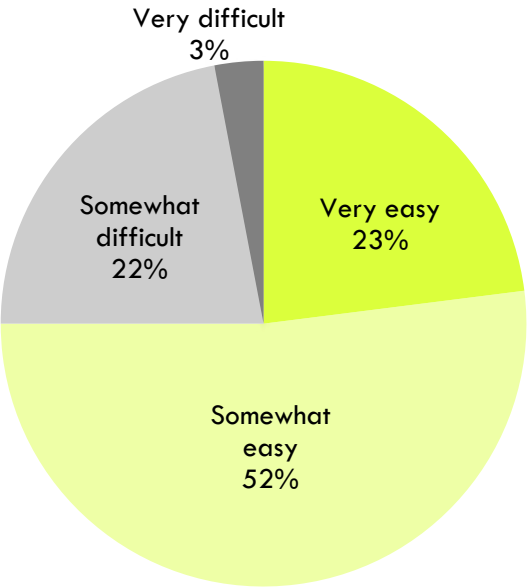
Q. Is it very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important that parents have access to resources that could help them watch for emotional developmental milestones?



## Q. PARENTS OF CHILDREN 5 OR YOUNGER ONLY

Thinking about your child(ren) who are 5 or younger, do you feel like it is easy or difficult for parents to find help and information on issues like child development, including issues like brain development and emotional development?

N=559



## **Parents' Behaviors + Experiences.**

We asked questions just of voters who are parents of children ages 5 or younger (N=559) in the survey. Following are insights from these parent voters.



Q. [IF CHILDREN 5 AND UNDER]  
Thinking of babies and young children  
ages 3 or younger, do you think most  
parents spend too much time, too little  
time, or the right amount of time...  
N=559

% too little time

71%

Talking with their young  
children about the different  
emotions and feelings they  
experience

69%

Helping their young  
children cope with  
emotions

67%

Reading to their young  
children

66%

Stimulating the brains  
of their young children

48%

Creating a calm and  
safe environment for  
their young children

45%

Hugging their  
young children

40%

Playing games like  
peek-a-boo with their  
young children

39%

Smiling at their young  
children

## How parents rate other parents.

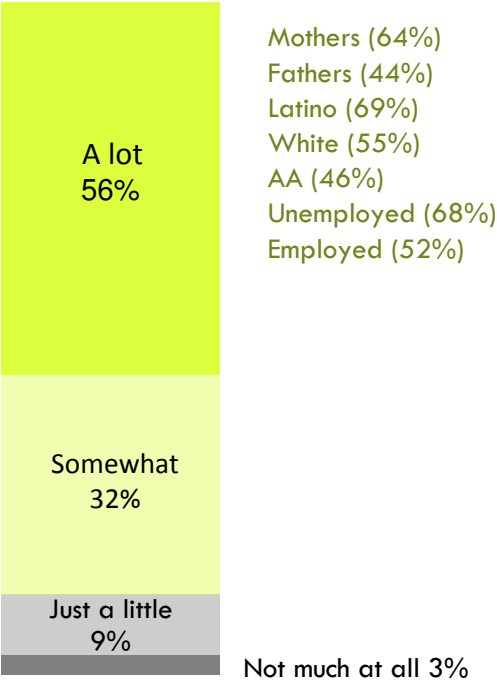
Voters who are parents of children ages 5 and younger have fairly negative views of how other parents are doing in nurturing the healthy emotional and brain development of their babies and young children.

Specifically, large numbers feel other parents are spending *too little time* talking about the different emotions/feelings their children experience, reading to their children, stimulating the brains of their children, or helping their children cope with emotions. This is consistent across demographics.

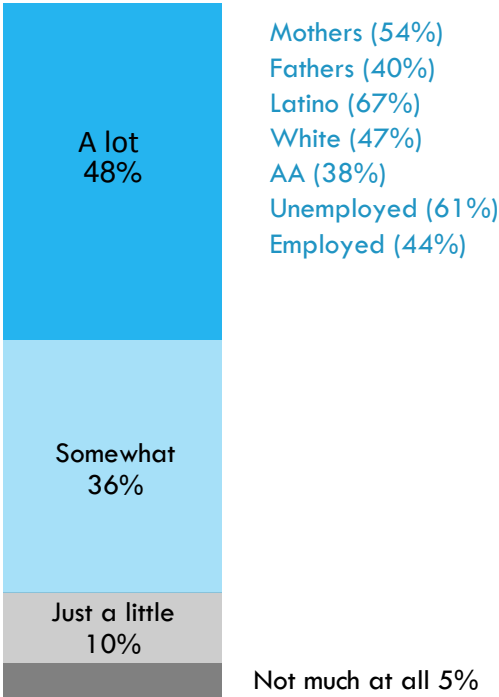
# Parents' focus on emotional + mental health.

Most parents of children ages 5 and younger say they are, in fact, thinking about the emotional and mental health of their young children. Of note, mothers are thinking about these issues much more than fathers. Latino parents are also focused on these issues more as are unemployed parents (who may be worrying about the impact of their unemployed status on their young children).

Q. [IF CHILDREN 5 AND UNDER] Thinking about your child(ren) who are 5 or younger, how much do you think about their emotional development?  
N=559



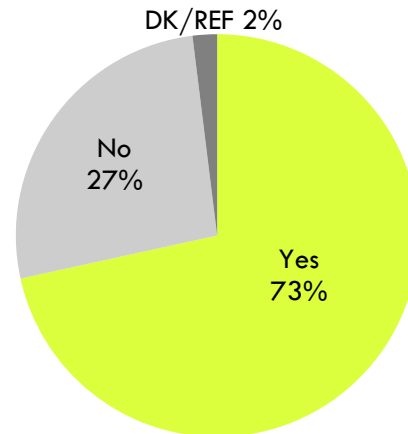
Q. IF CHILD(REN) 5 AND UNDER: Thinking about your child(ren) who are 5 or younger, how much do you think about their mental health?  
N=559



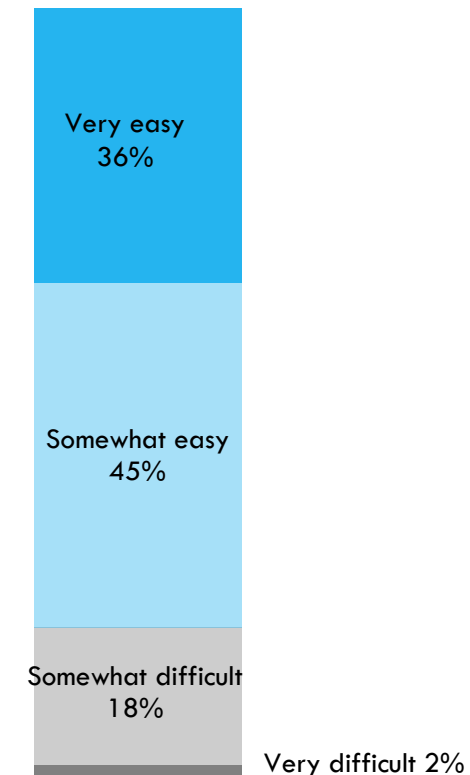
# Conversations about a child's emotional health.

Almost three-quarters of parents of children 5 and younger say they have talked with their spouse, partner, or other family members about the emotional development of their child. However, only about one-third of these parents found these conversations “very easy” – they are more likely to say these conversations were only “somewhat easy” to have. There were no significant distinctions among different demographics of parents on this issue.

Q. [IF CHILDREN 5 AND UNDER] Have you ever had any discussions with your spouse, partner, or another family member about your child(ren)'s emotional development?  
N=559



Q. [IF YES] Did you find having those discussions to be easy or difficult?  
N=419

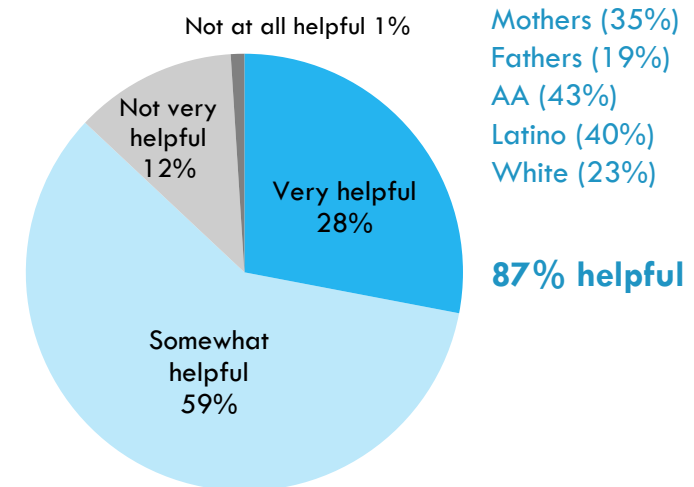
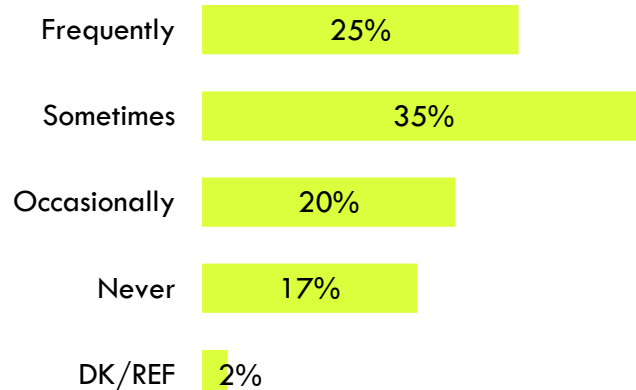


# Conversations with pediatricians.

More than half of parents of children ages 5 and younger say they are at least talking “sometimes” with their pediatricians about their child’s emotional development and an additional 1 in 5 say they talk with them occasionally about this topic. Of the parents having these conversations, almost 9 in 10 say they are helpful. Mothers, African American parents, and Latino parents find these conversations particularly helpful.

Q. [IF CHILD(REN) 5 AND UNDER] Thinking about your children who are 5 or younger, does your pediatrician or another doctor ever talk to you about your child’s emotional development? Some examples would be asking you how frequently your baby gets fussy and what helps her calm down; asking how your toddler reacts when you drop her off at child care; discussing how your toddler plays with other children. Do they talk with you...

N=559

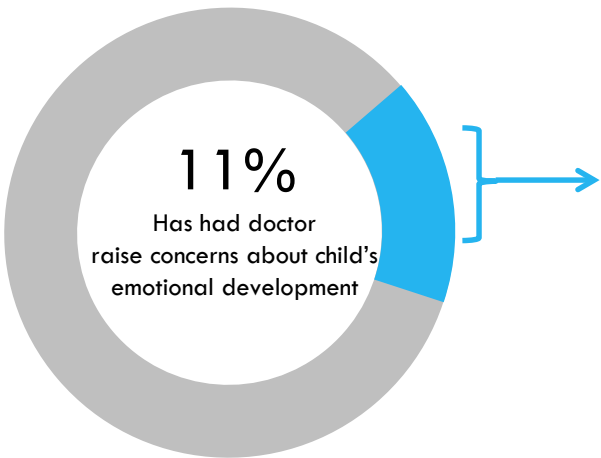
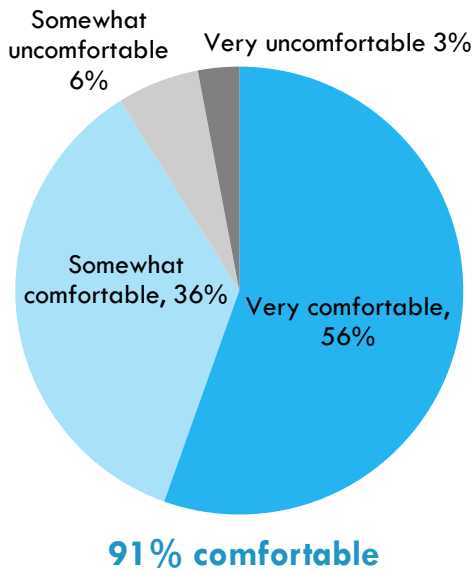


Q. [IF FREQUENTLY/SOMETIMES/OCCASIONALLY] How helpful was the discussion with your pediatrician or another doctor about your child’s emotional development?

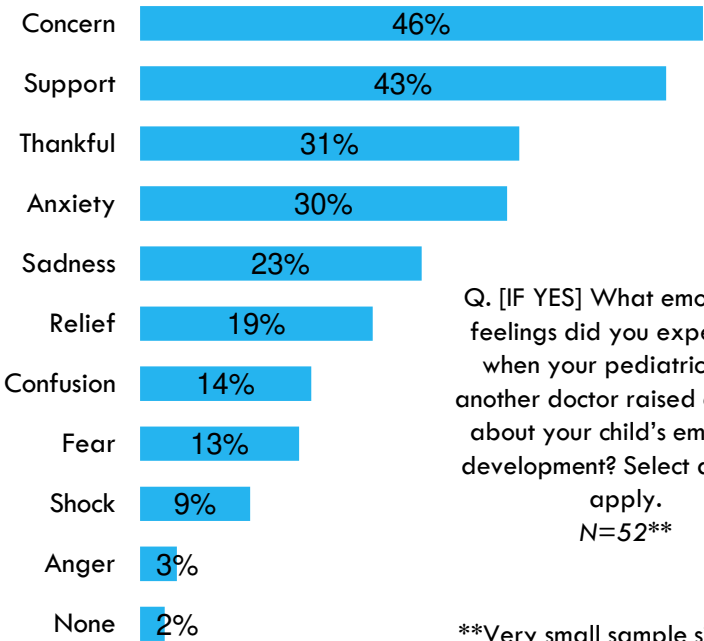
N=468

# Comfort turning to pediatricians.

Q. IF CHILD(REN) 5 AND UNDER: Thinking about your children who are 5 or younger, if you had concerns about their emotional development, would you feel comfortable or uncomfortable raising this issue with your pediatrician?  
N=559



Nine in 10 parents say they would be comfortable turning to their child's pediatrician for guidance on their child's emotional development. About 1 in 10 parents say a doctor has actually raised concerns about their child's emotional development with them before. Among those parents, some say they felt emotions like "concern," "support," "thankfulness," and "anxiety" about this interaction.



Q. [IF YES] What emotions or feelings did you experience when your pediatrician or another doctor raised concerns about your child's emotional development? Select any that apply.  
N=52\*\*

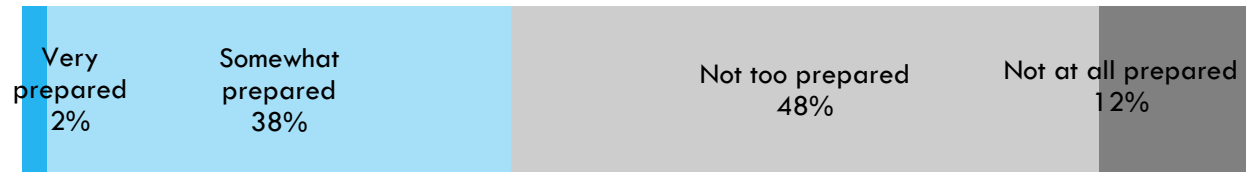
\*\*Very small sample size (N=52)

# How prepared parents are to deal with their child's emotions.

Most voters feel that new parents are not prepared to deal with their young child's emotions. In fact, only 4 in 10 voters say parents are prepared for this. Once again, the general perception of parents tends to be negative when it comes to the emotional development of their young children.

However, when we asked parents of children ages 5 or younger to assess *their own* level of preparation, 2 in 3 say they were very or somewhat prepared for the emotions and feelings of their young children. Although, more than 1 in 3 say they were not prepared.

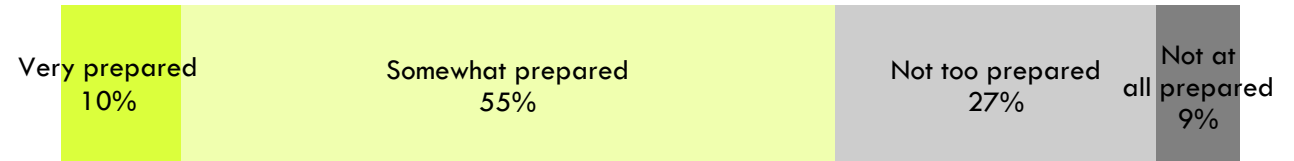
Q. In general, how prepared do you think most new parents are to deal with the emotions and feelings of their young children ages 3 and under?



40% prepared

Q. [IF CHILDREN 5 AND UNDER] How prepared do you think you were as a new parent to deal with the emotions and feelings of your young child(ren) ages 3 and under?

N=559



65% prepared



## Messages + Policies.

Since this is a new topic for many voters, we explored ways to talk about emotional development in young children that are clear and compelling. We tested potential names for this topic, messages about why it is important to focus on the emotional development of young children, and then policies that could help support young children and parents. As part of the policy questions, we asked about the role of government in this issue. Following are insights.

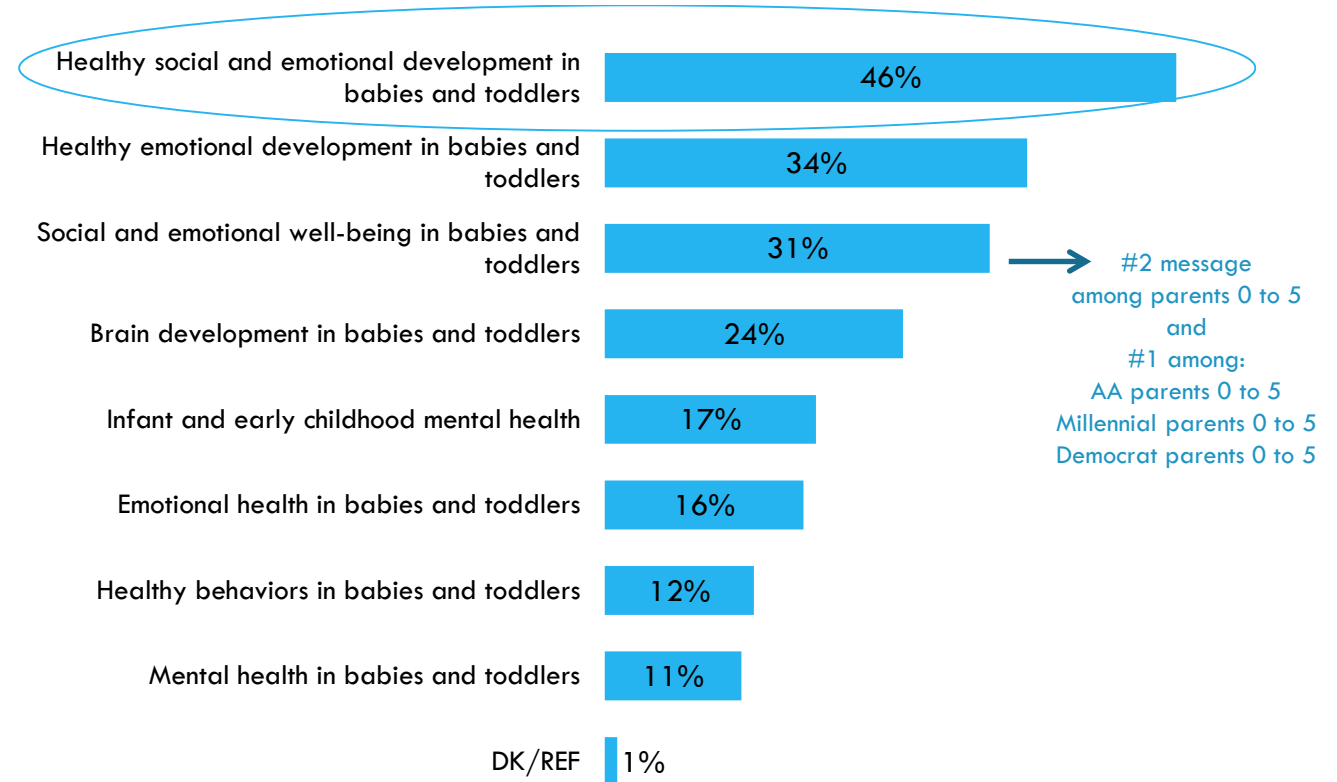
# What to call this topic.

Q: Below is a little more information about this topic.

“Paying attention to the emotional development of babies and toddlers is important. It starts at birth and is the foundation for how babies build relationships, show emotions, and interact with others throughout their lives. Much like physical development, how a baby develops emotionally can tell us whether they’re on track to becoming stable and healthy teenagers and adults. Recent research studies suggest that forming close relationships with parents and caregivers, showing emotions, and being interested in the world around them – these are all important signs of a baby’s emotional wellbeing.”

After learning more about this issue, what do you think is the best phrase to describe it? Select the TWO phrases you think are the best way to describe this issue.

We described emotional development for survey respondents and then asked them to pick the two best phrases to describe the issue out of eight possible choices. The winning name – by a significant margin – is the “healthy social and emotional development in babies and toddlers.” It seems voters want “social” included with “emotional development” when talking about this topic. Phrases that include “mental health” did not test as well with voters.



# Message overview.

**Messages on this topic test well.** (See following slide) Roughly 9 in 10 voters find *all* of the messages “convincing” reasons for society to focus on the emotional development of young children. In fact, all five messages score within 4 percentage points of each other. This means there are many ways to talk about this issue that will resonate with voters.

**Generally, mothers of children 0 to 5 rate messages higher than others.** Latino parents tend to also rate messages higher.

**One message may have a little more power than the others (to the right).** This message tests best among mothers, Latino parents 0 to 5, women voters, and voters ages 60+. It is consistently a top message across most demographics.

## Top Message

“Parents and caregivers influence babies’ brain development from the start. As early as 3 months – well before a baby utters his or her first words – babies experience a whole range of emotions like joy, sadness, anger, interest, and excitement. Children who feel loved, comforted, and have the freedom to play form more brain connections, which increases their ability to trust, relate, communicate, and learn.”

Total (62% very convincing)  
Women (67%)  
Men (55%)

White (65%)  
Latino (56%)  
AA (57%)

White parents 0 to 5 (59%)  
AA parents 0 to 5 (62%)  
Latino parents 0 to 5 (61%)

Democrat (64%)  
Independent (59%)  
Republican (62%)

Parents 0 to 5 (59%)  
Mothers 0 to 5 (66%)  
Fathers 0 to 5 (49%)

Metro (60%)  
Non-metro (70%)

Age 60+ (70%)  
Age 45 to 59 (57%)  
Age 30 to 44 (59%)  
Age 18 to 29 (57%)

Married parents 0 to 5 (63%)  
Unmarried parents 0 to 5 (46%)

# Message testing results.

“Below you will see reasons people give for why there should be a greater focus on the emotional development of young children ages 3 or younger. Please indicate how convincing each is as a reason to focus on the emotional development of young children.”

■ Very convincing  
■ Not very convincing

■ Somewhat convincing  
■ Not convincing at all

Parents and caregivers influence babies’ brain development from the start. As early as 3 months – well before a baby utters his or her first words – babies experience a whole range of emotions like joy, sadness, anger, interest, and excitement. Children who feel loved, comforted, and have the freedom to play form more brain connections, which increases their ability to trust, relate, communicate, and learn. (62% very convincing)



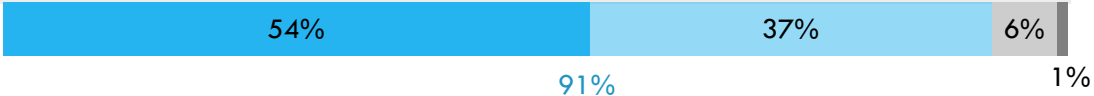
Babies pick up on your emotions. They can sense your mood and when you feel happy, sad, or angry as early as 3 months. By 6 months, babies are affected by stress in their environment, like shouting in the home, even while asleep. If stress is prolonged, they risk having emotional and behavioral problems throughout their childhood and life. (58%)



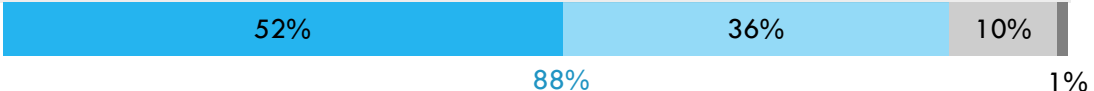
A child’s brain grows the most in the first 3 years of life. During this time, more than 1 million new neural connections form every second. Because of this, the early years are a time of great vulnerability as well as great opportunity to lay a healthy foundation. (57%)



Babies’ earliest experiences—both good and bad—affect their brains and their health. The first 1,000 days of a child’s life give the best opportunity and highest risk for their healthy emotional development. Building strong relationships, showing love, and avoiding stress help put babies on the right track. (54%)



If you do not pay attention to a baby’s emotional development, he or she can feel the impact for years to come. Without loving interactions and everyday learning, such as talking, singing, reading, and helping them explore their world, babies are unsure of whether their needs will be met and live in an aroused state of fear and insecurity. This elevates stress for extended periods of time and interferes with healthy brain growth. (52%)



# Policy overview.

**Just as with the messages, all of the policy ideas tested in the survey receive majority support.** (See following slide) Support ranges from 86% to 68%. Generally, African American parents, Latino parents, and first time parents are among the most supportive. Democrat voters also tend to be highly supportive of all of these policies.

**The top policy idea is expanding access to affordable, quality child care for working families.** This is a top policy idea across party ID.

**Of note, parents of children ages 0-5 are most supportive of paid leave for parents.** First time parents also rank this idea highest.

**Those voters most hesitant to support ANY of the policies are Republicans, Independents, and men.** However, a majority of each of these groups still supports these policies.

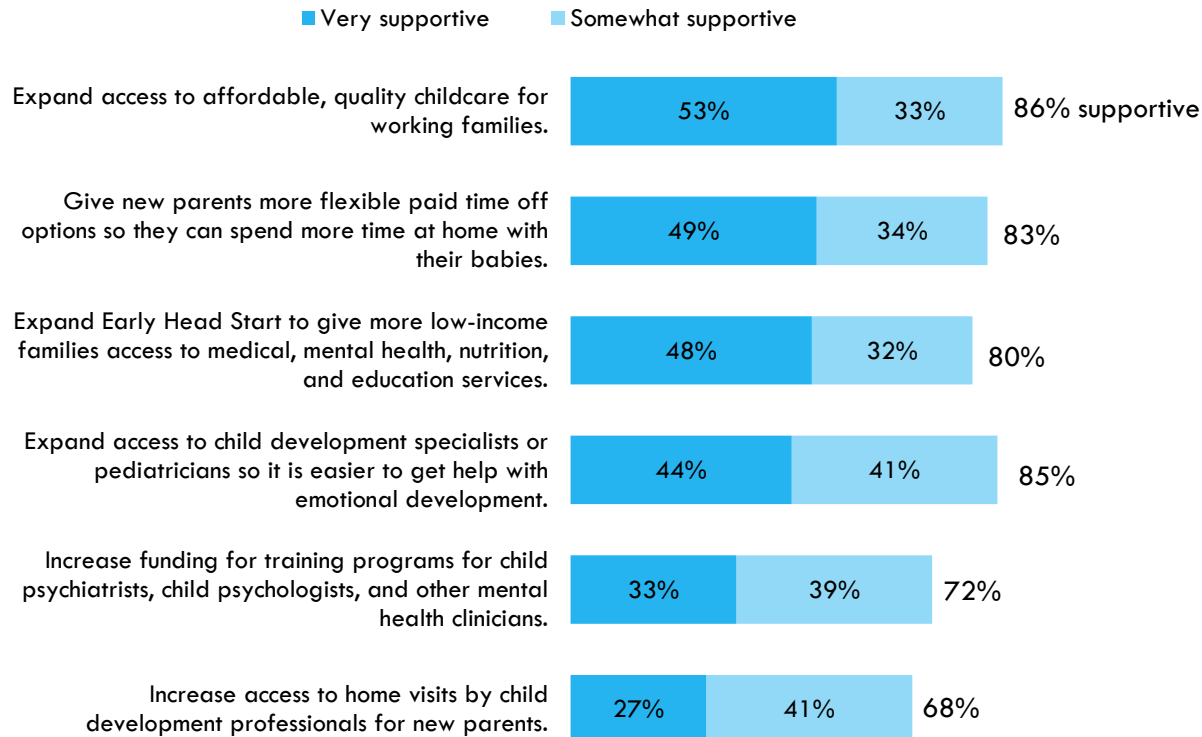


## Partisan Divide

While most voters tend to support policies that help promote healthy emotional development in children 0-3, there is a wide partisan divide. For example, on the most popular policy idea – expanded access to affordable child care – Republican voters are 34 points less likely to be “strongly supportive” of this idea than Democrats. Based on other survey findings, at issue is the role of government in funding these policies.

# Testing policy ideas.

Q. Below are some policy ideas that people say would help families focus more on the emotional development of their young children. For each policy, please indicate whether you would be supportive of this policy. Would you be...



## Top policies by segment (% very supportive)

### Parents 0 to 5

Give flexible paid time off (60%)  
Expand access to child care (55%)  
Expand Early Head Start (47%)

### "First time" parents

Give flexible paid time off (60%)  
Expand access to child care (56%)  
Expand access to dev. specialists (47%)

### AA Parents 0 to 5

Expand access to dev. specialists (70%)  
Give flexible paid time off (68%)  
Expand access to child care (68%)

### Latino Parents 0 to 5

Expand access to child care (74%)  
Give flexible paid time off (73%)  
Expand Early Head Start (69%)

### Democrats

Expand access to child care (70%)  
Expand Early Head Start (70%)  
Give flexible paid time off (65%)

### Independents

Expand access to child care (48%)  
Give flexible paid time off (46%)  
Expand Early Head Start (42%)

### Republicans

Expand access to child care (36%)  
Give flexible paid time off (31%)  
Expand access to dev. specialists (29%)

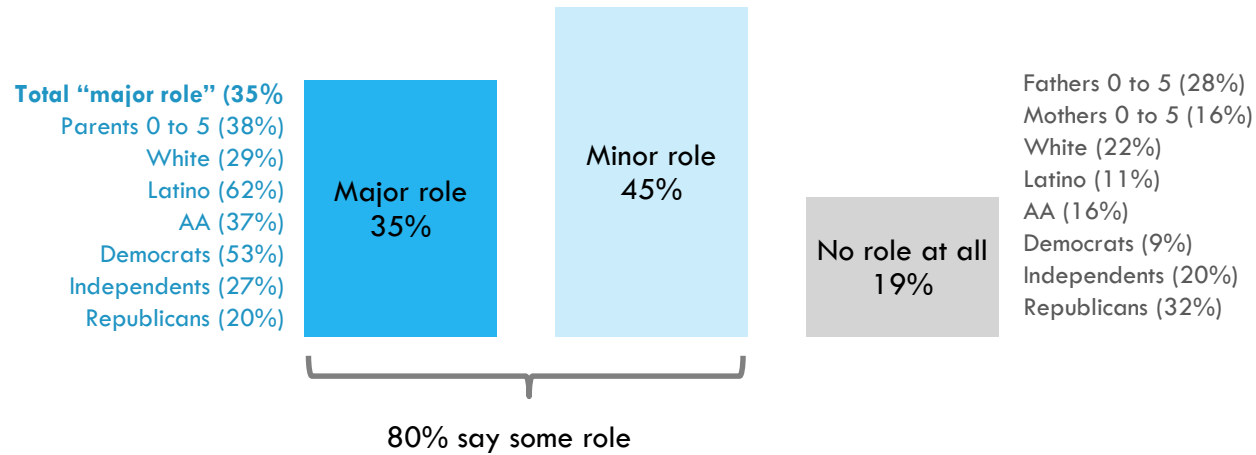
### Non-metro voters

Expand access to child care (53%)  
Give flexible paid time off (49%)  
Expand Early Head Start (48%)  
Expand access to dev. specialists (48%)

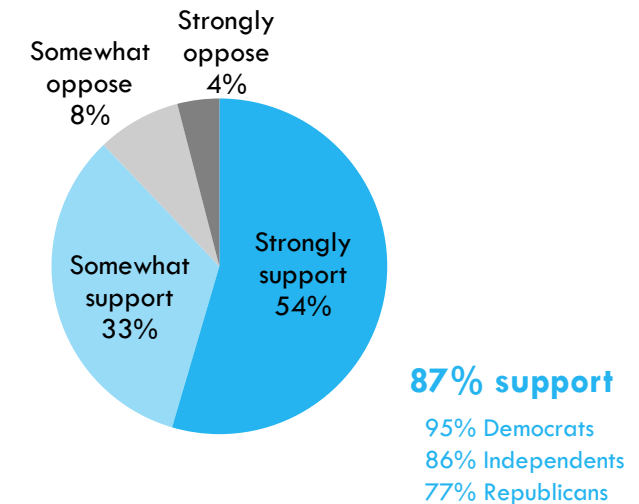
# Role of government in helping children/families.

Most voters are supportive of some government involvement in helping parents spend more time with children. Most are also at least somewhat supportive of government policies that give parents more time with their children. Voters who are more torn on the role of government on this issue include Republicans, Independents, men, and older voters (45-59 and 60+).

Q. What role should government policies play in helping parents to spend more time with their young children?

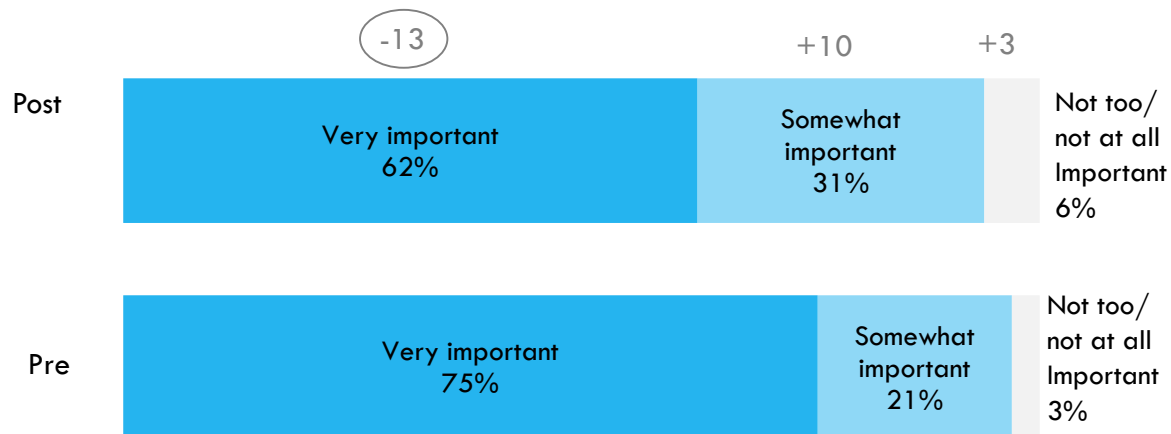


Q. Would you support or oppose government policies that allow parents to spend more time with their children when they are very young?



# Pre and post measures of support.

Q. How important should it be for society in general to support the healthy emotional development of children ages 3 and younger?\*



\* The “pre” benchmark question was asked before survey respondents saw any messages or policy ideas. The “post” benchmark was asked after the messages, the policies, and questions about the role of government on this issue.

**The vast majority of voters believe the healthy emotional development of children 0-3 is important.** The benchmark question in the survey shows that before messages and policies, three-quarters of voters feel this issue is “very important” and another 21% feel it is “somewhat important” (for a total of 96%).

**However, there is a 13-point drop in intensity after voters see the messages and policies.** The post measure shows that the number of voters who say this issue is “very important” goes down while those saying the issue is “somewhat important” goes up ten points. And, those saying “not too important” or “not at all important” increases from 3% to 6% in the post measure.

**Discomfort with government involvement could explain the shift downward.** Those voters who shift downward tend to be Republicans, Independents, and those who say government should have a minor or no role in this issue.



## **Attitudes of Key Subgroups.**

We oversampled some important populations to see how they are the same or different from other voters on issues relating to the emotional development of young children. This section highlights where parents, non-metro voters, African American parents of children 0-5, and Latino parents of children 0-5 stand apart from the overall population of voters in this survey.



## All parents.

This subgroup includes parents of children ages 5 and younger (n=559) as well as “first time” parents (n=175). Here is where they stood out:

**They know more about brain development in young children.** Both groups of parents are more likely to say they know a lot/some about the brain development in children ages 3 and younger than voters overall (74% parents 0 to 5 and 74% first time parents vs. 54% voters). This makes sense since both groups of parents are in the midst of raising young children and are focused on these issues.

**They are more likely to say they trust child-care providers a lot/somewhat to advise parents on the issue of emotional development for young children (42% parents 0 to 5 and 47% first time parents vs. 30% voters).** Again, parents with young children would have much more contact with child-care providers than other voters, possibly causing them to be more likely to acknowledge their role and rely on them.

**They support paid family leave policies.** Both sets of parents are more likely to be “very supportive” of giving new parents more flexible paid time off options so they can spend more time at home with their babies (60% parents 0 to 5 and 60% first time parents vs. 49% of voters.) Since they are the likely beneficiaries of this kind of policy – and are more likely to be in a position to see the need for more paid time off – their support for this policy makes sense.



## Non-metro voters.

We oversampled 151 voters who live in non-metro areas of the country. Here is where they stood out:

**Non-metro voters are more likely to be strongly against government's role in helping parents stay home with children.** These voters are more likely to say the government should play *no role at all* in helping parents spend more time with their young children (29% non-metro voters vs. 19% total and 18% metro voters).

**Non-metro voters are also more likely to reject the notion that expectations are too high for parents.** These voters are more likely to disagree with the statement: "Too much is expected of parents of young children these days" (82% non-metro voters vs. 69% total and 67% metro voters).



## African-American parents.

We oversampled 103 African American parents of a child age 5 or younger. Here is where they stood out:

**They are less likely to believe babies experience an array of emotions.** Specifically, African American parents are less likely to think babies under 6 months old: experience feelings like fear and sadness (27%, vs. 57% all parents 0 to 5); are affected by their parents' moods (35%, vs. 57% all parents 0 to 5); are affected by shouting in the home (29%, vs. 59% all parents 0 to 5); or are affected by witnessing repeated violence (29%, vs. 46% all parents 0 to 5).

**One-third feel brain development happens mostly in older children.** The survey shows African American parents are more likely to agree that most brain development happens after a child is three years or older (36% agree vs. 19% of all parents 0 to 5).

**Many believe new parents are prepared.** African American parents are more likely to say they think parents are very or somewhat prepared to deal with the emotions of their young children (56% prepared, vs. 40% all parents 0 to 5).

**They are less clear on the impacts of trauma.** African American parents are less likely to think experiencing a trauma has a big impact on the emotional development of babies (65%, vs. 78% all parents 0 to 5).

**They are having more conversations with their pediatricians.** These voters are more likely to say their pediatrician/another doctor talks to them about their child's emotional development frequently or somewhat (81% vs. 61% all parents 0 to 5) and are more likely to say these conversation were "very" helpful (43% vs. 28% all parents 0 to 5).

**They are less open to feedback from child-care providers.** African American parents are more likely to agree "licensed workers in a daycare center overstep their role when they talk to parents about a child's emotional development or mental health." (44% vs. 26% of all parents 0 to 5).



## Latino parents.

We oversampled 108 Latino parents of a child age 5 or younger.

Here is where they stood out:

**Latino parents agree new parents are overwhelmed.** Specifically, they are more likely to agree with the statement: “All new parents are overwhelmed in the first few months with a baby. It takes everything they have just to cope with feedings, sleep schedules, and diaper changes” (96% vs. 78% of all parents 0 to 5).

**They care about emotional development.** Latino parents are more likely than others to think “a lot” about their children’s emotional development (69% vs. 56% all parents 0 to 5) and mental health (67% vs. 48% all parents 0 to 5).

**They have high trust in pediatricians.** Latino parents are more likely to trust pediatricians’ advice “a lot” on the emotional development of young children (50% vs. 34% of all parents 0 to 5). They are also more likely to say conversations with their pediatricians about the emotional development of their child were “very” helpful (40% vs. 28% all parents 0 to 5). Of note, they were also more likely to say their pediatrician has raised concerns about their child’s emotional development in the past (25% vs. 11% of all parents 0 to 5).

**They are less open to feedback from child-care workers.** Latino voters are more likely to agree “licensed workers in a daycare center overstep their role when they talk to parents about a child’s emotional development or mental health” (43% vs. 26% of all parents 0 to 5).

