

Child Care: Assessing Needs of Families and Providers

Study Findings and Recommendations

November 3, 2025



Agenda

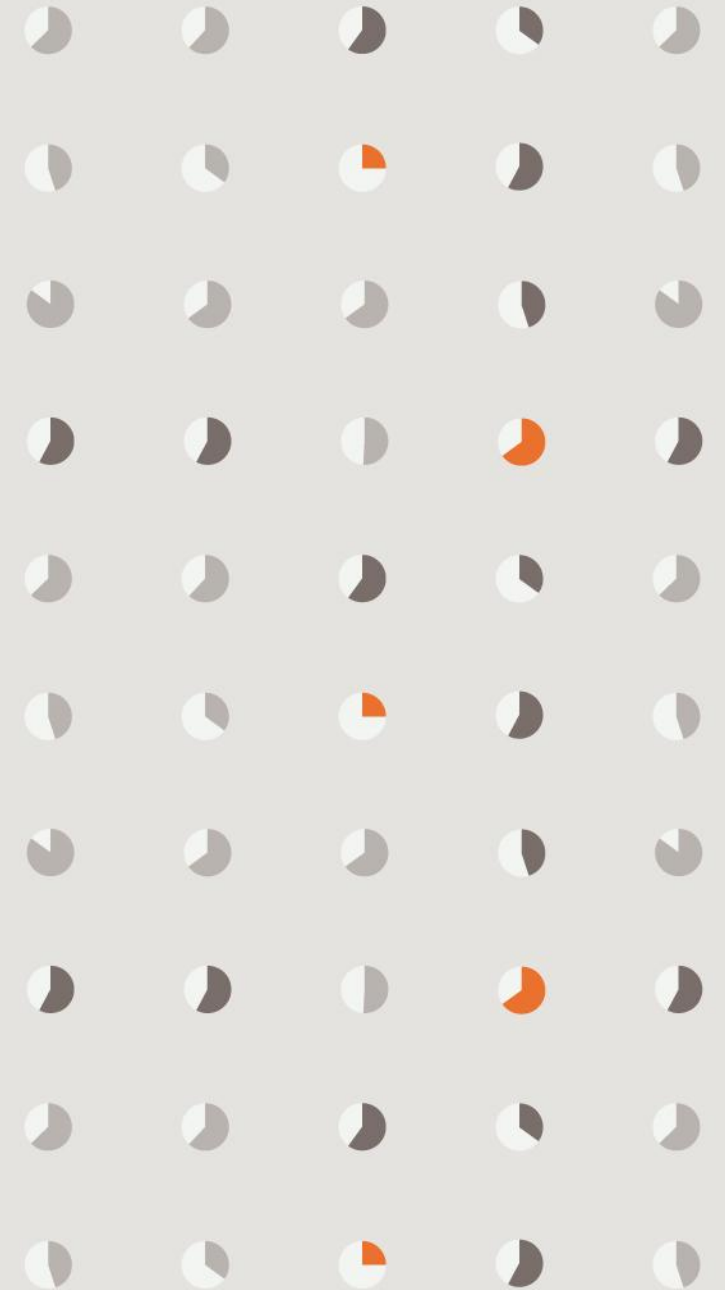
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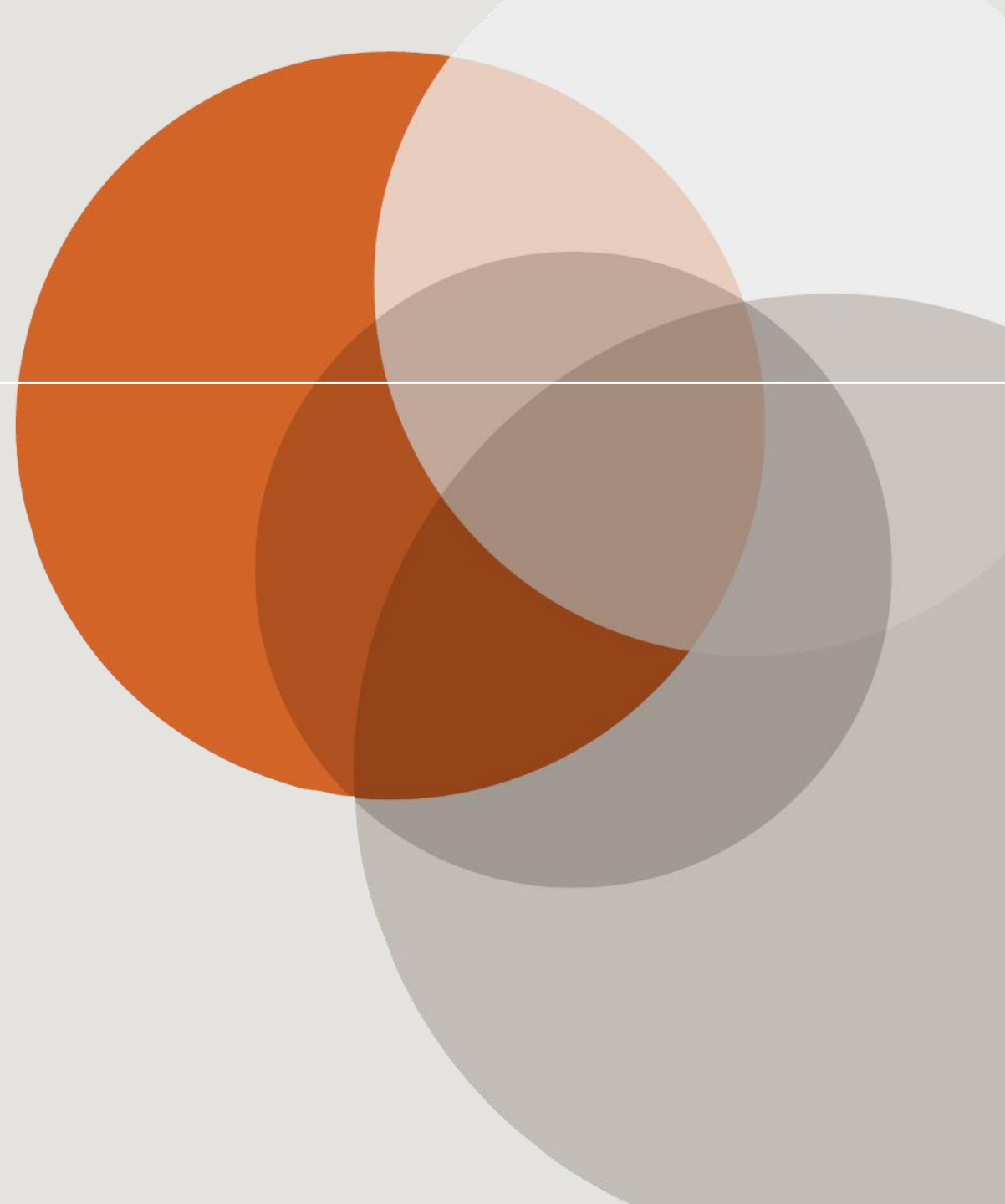
05 Discussion and Q&A



Introductions



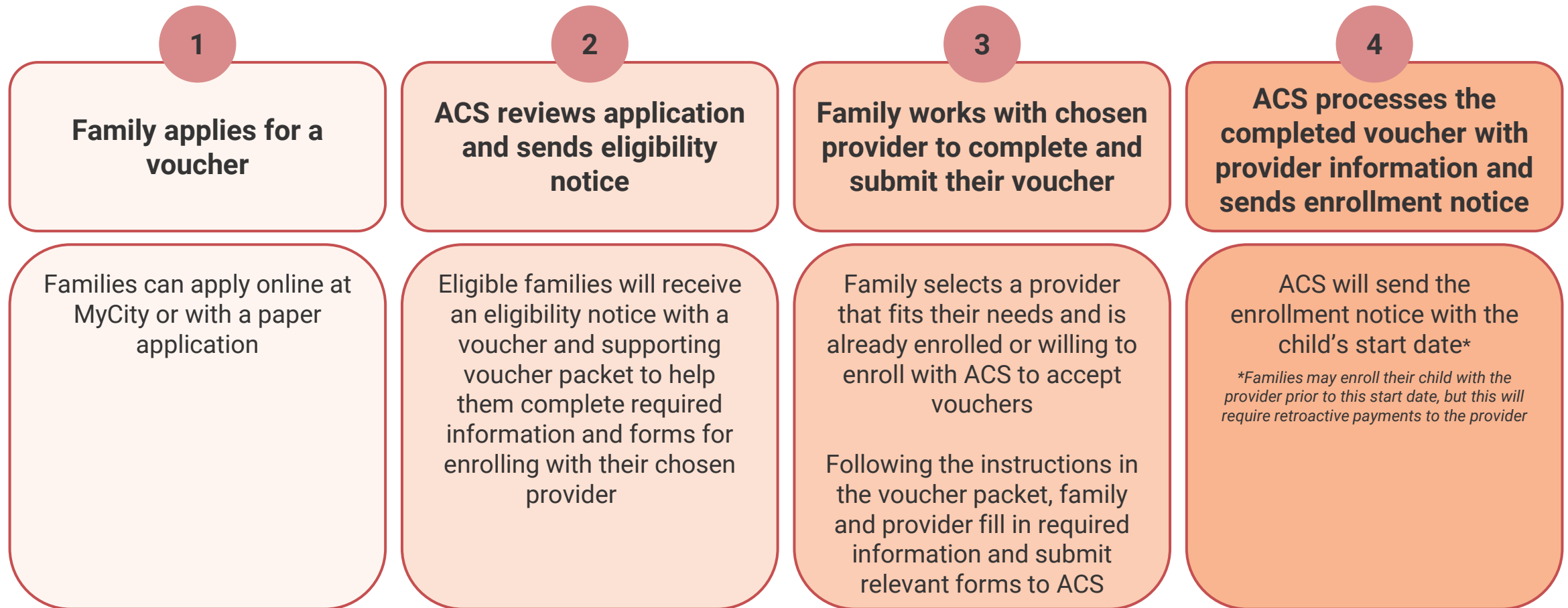
Study Purpose and Context



ACS Child Care Voucher Overview

Families must complete an application for the voucher to determine if they are eligible. If eligible, they will select a provider and work with them to complete the voucher and supporting documents for ACS review.

While this study focused on eligible families' experiences during steps 3 and 4 in searching for and choosing a provider, completing the voucher, and receiving the enrollment notice, respondents responded to some questions based on their experience with the application process.



Understanding voucher use to expand access to child care

Study Purpose

To support ACS's work in expanding child care access, particularly in priority communities, this study aimed to better understand barriers preventing eligible families from using their vouchers, factors impacting parents' decision-making when choosing a provider, and incentives and barriers for child care providers participating in the voucher program.

To inform ACS's strategies to increase eligible families' use of vouchers and NYC child care providers accepting vouchers, ACS is interested in learning:

- Why do families who are found eligible for vouchers and provided vouchers not use them?
- What types of care do families who qualify for vouchers need most and/or prefer?
- What drives child care providers' decision to participate or not participate in the voucher/subsidy system?

ACS Child Care Assistance Landscape – Then and Now.

Influx of child care voucher applications

ACS rapidly expanded the number of children enrolled with the support of a voucher from ~8,000 in 2022 to over 70,000 in 2025

Delayed case processing

Families surveyed in this study were determined eligible for an ACS voucher between February and July 2024. During this time, ACS processing times were delayed due to a large influx of cases

ACS efforts to address processing delays

Families qualifying more recently are much less likely to experience processing delays than the interviewed sample, as ACS cut processing time in half by the end of 2024 after implementing the following strategies:

Increased Staffing

Leaned into data-informed operations

Upskilled managers and supervisors

Improved and documented business processes

Current landscape

While ACS is not currently issuing new vouchers, findings from this study will inform strategies to support families in keeping their child enrolled in care with their voucher

Study Design



NORC conducted web surveys and open-ended interviews with subsidy-eligible parents and early care and education providers in NYC.

Web Surveys

- **Parents**
 - Subsidy-eligible families with valid e-mail addresses
 - Found eligible for a voucher between February and July 2024
 - Stratified sampling by borough and community poverty density
 - 406 completed responses
- **Providers:**
 - Regulated providers across all boroughs
 - Email and postcard outreach
 - 131 completed responses

Interviews

- **Parents**
 - Subsidy-eligible families with valid e-mail addresses
 - Sampled by voucher use and community area
 - 18 interviewed parents

Web surveys and interviews were conducted between December 2024 – February 2025 in English and in Spanish

Study Findings

+ Recommendations for Implementation



Parent Perspectives

Web Survey and Open-Ended Interviews

Web surveys and interviews were conducted with parents and caregivers of subsidy-eligible children across the city.

❑ Of 406 completed web surveys,

- ❑ 32% families resided in Queens, 25% Bronx, 21% Brooklyn, 17% Manhattan, 5% Staten Island
- ❑ 60% parents of infant/toddlers, 21% preschool to kindergarten age, 19% school-age

❑ Of 18 open-ended interviews,

- ❑ Families resided in Queens, Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan
- ❑ Included families with children in all age groups (I/T, preschool, school-age)
- ❑ 15 of 18 were currently using the ACS child care voucher

Surveyed parents who reached out to ACS for help to fill out their voucher packet were largely satisfied with the support they received.

46% of Parents reached out to ACS for help completing the voucher packet



Satisfaction with support among parents who reached out to ACS, by communication mode

	Email N=119	Phone N=128	In-person Communication N=47
Completely satisfied	49%	44%	49%
Very satisfied	24%	16%	17%
Moderately satisfied	13%	14%	21%
Slightly satisfied	4%	13%	6%
Not at all satisfied	9%	13%	6%

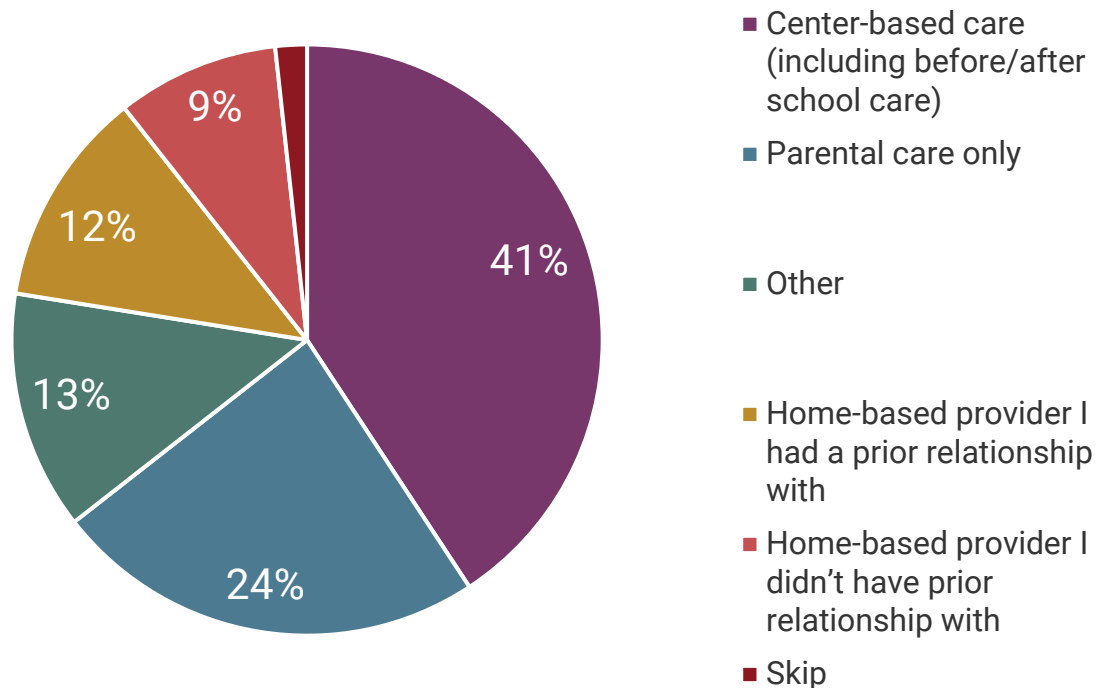
Parents welcomed existing resources for support and offered areas for continued improvement through open ended interviews.

"I think that the packet itself was pretty straightforward. You know, having to provide the supporting documents and things like that. The tricky part for me was when they asked, like hours of employment, or like your work, schedule sort of say, I know at that time I struggled ... so I was under the impression that if I wasn't completing a certain number of hours I wouldn't qualify, because then they would have said, 'Well, you can stay with your kid if you're not working full time.'"

"I had already been taking [my child] to the daycare thinking that the voucher is valid. And he was there for about a month. And then they were like, well it's not valid because it says that it expired. And then I had to, that's when I went down to the actual [ACS] office again downtown...It was just a lot of back and forth...about the things that I need to be eligible."

Use of non-parental care at time of voucher receipt was common, and just over one-third of parents chose a new provider after receiving the voucher.

Care Used by Parents at Time of Voucher Receipt



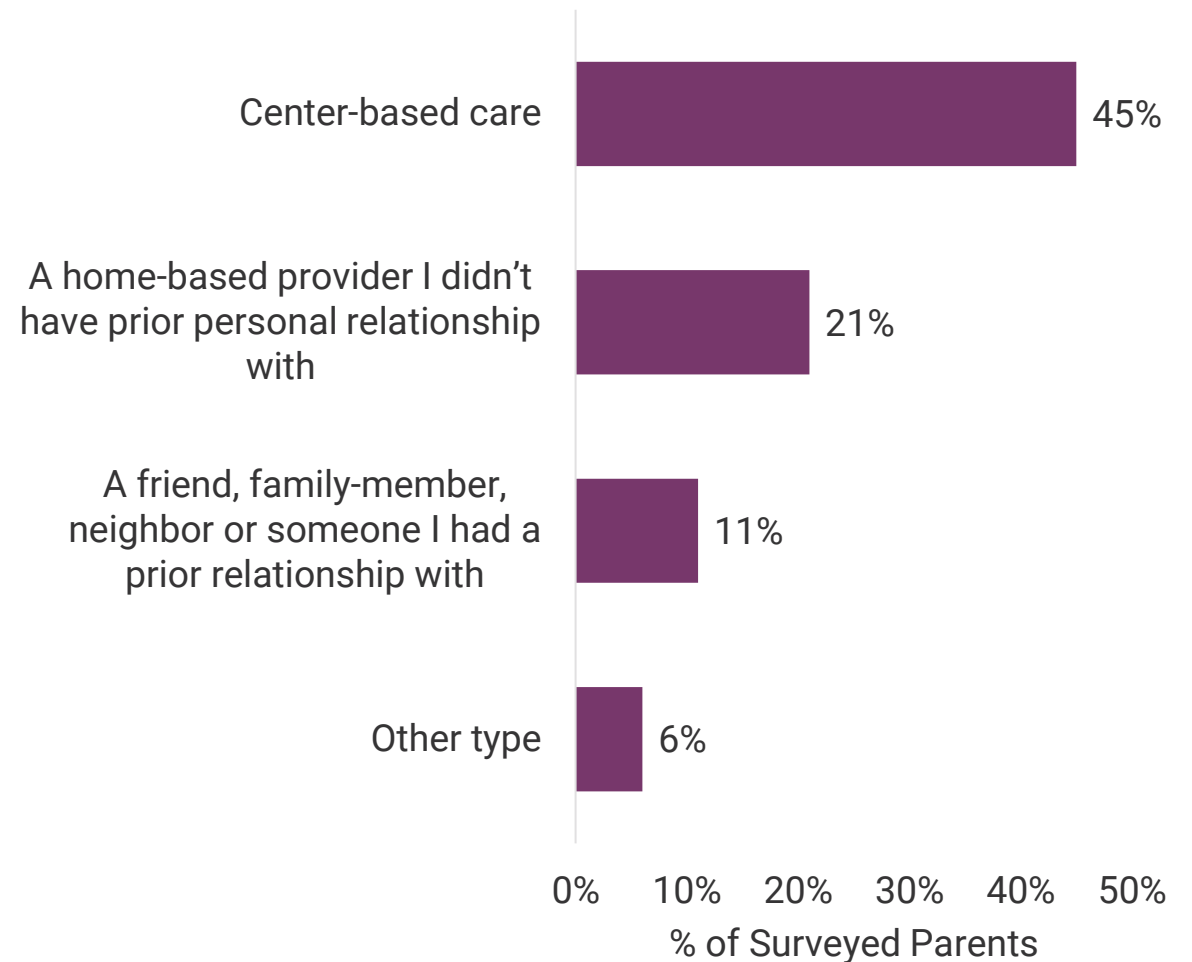
Decision Made After Receiving Voucher % Parents

Decided to stay with existing provider	44%
Chose a new child care provider	37%
Other	6%
Decided to have a relative or friend care for this child (e.g., grandparent, sibling, neighbor)	5%
Did not make any decision about child care at that time	5%
Skip	3%
Decided to care for this child yourself and/or by your spouse/partner	0%

85% of parents reported having at least one provider option that met most of their family's needs.

- 45% of respondents indicated the care they found after receiving the voucher that best met their needs was center-based care
- 32% identified a home-based provider or friend, family, or neighbor care

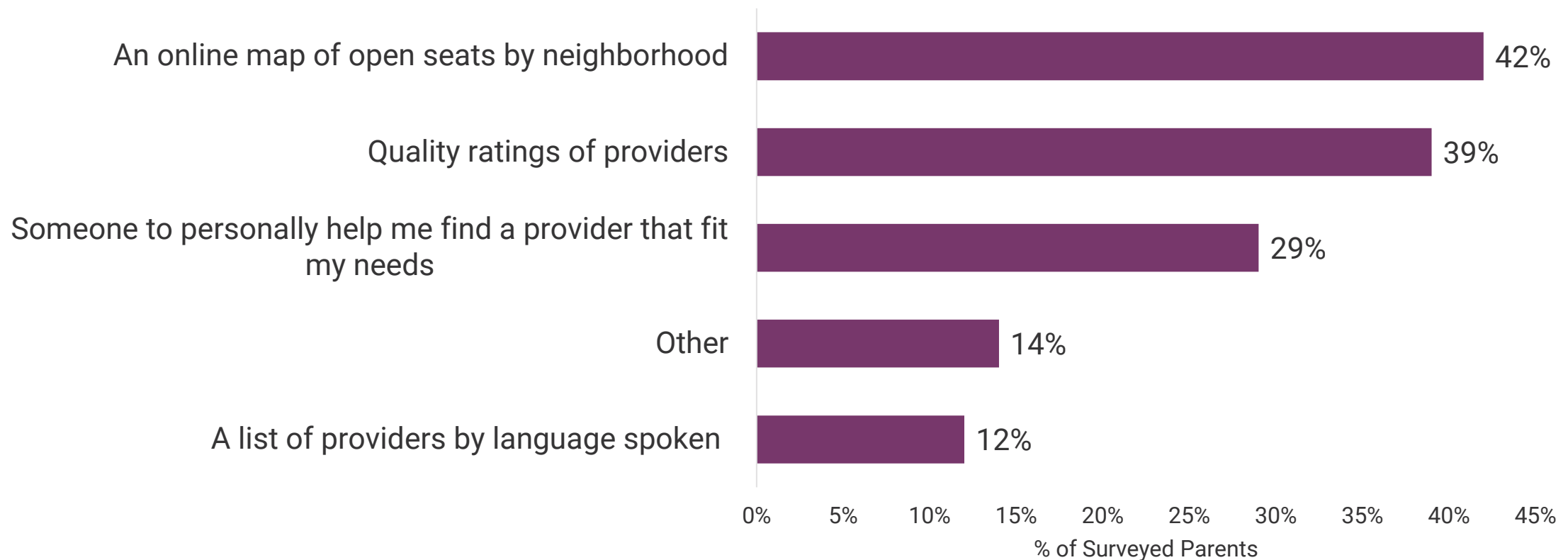
Provider Option that Best Met Family Needs



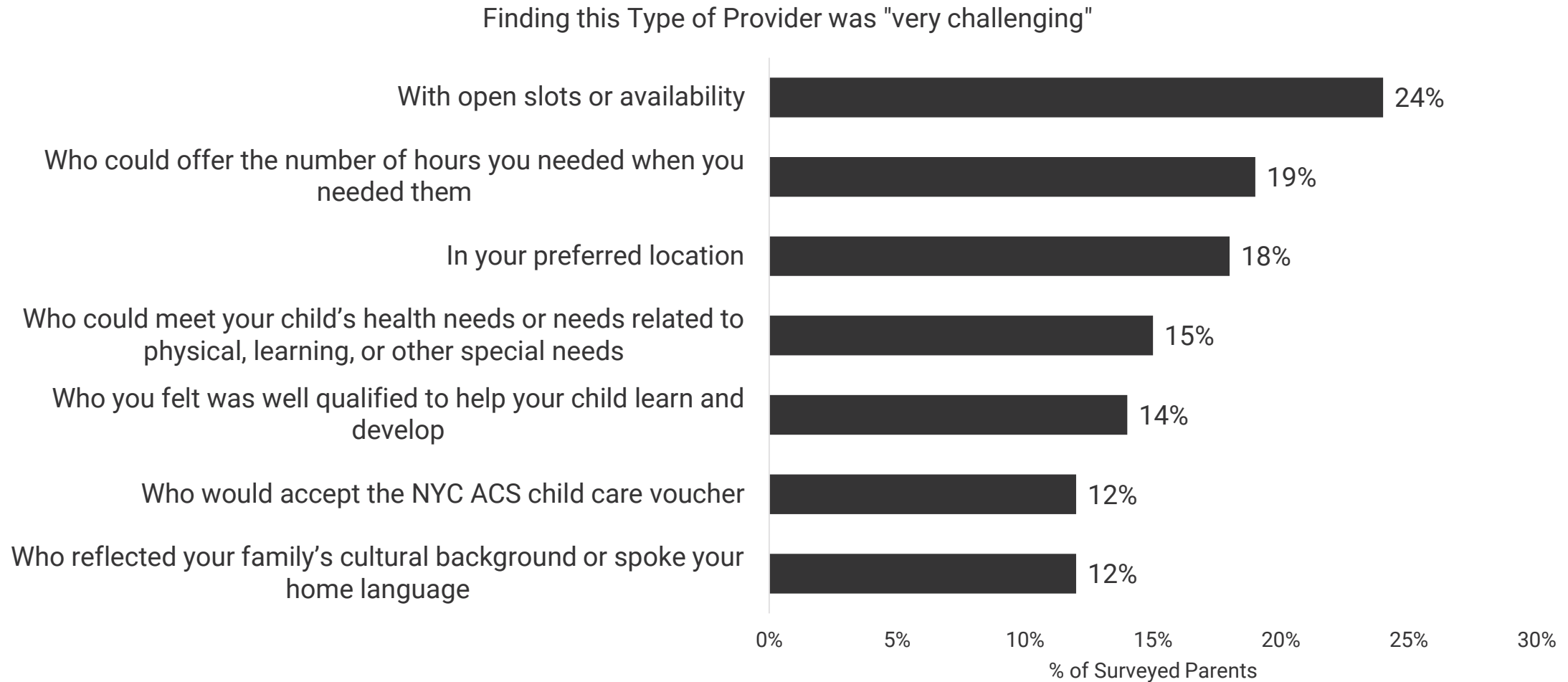
Parents were most likely to ask friends and family with children and providers they already knew when looking for new care.

Some resources they would have found helpful include online maps, available quality ratings.

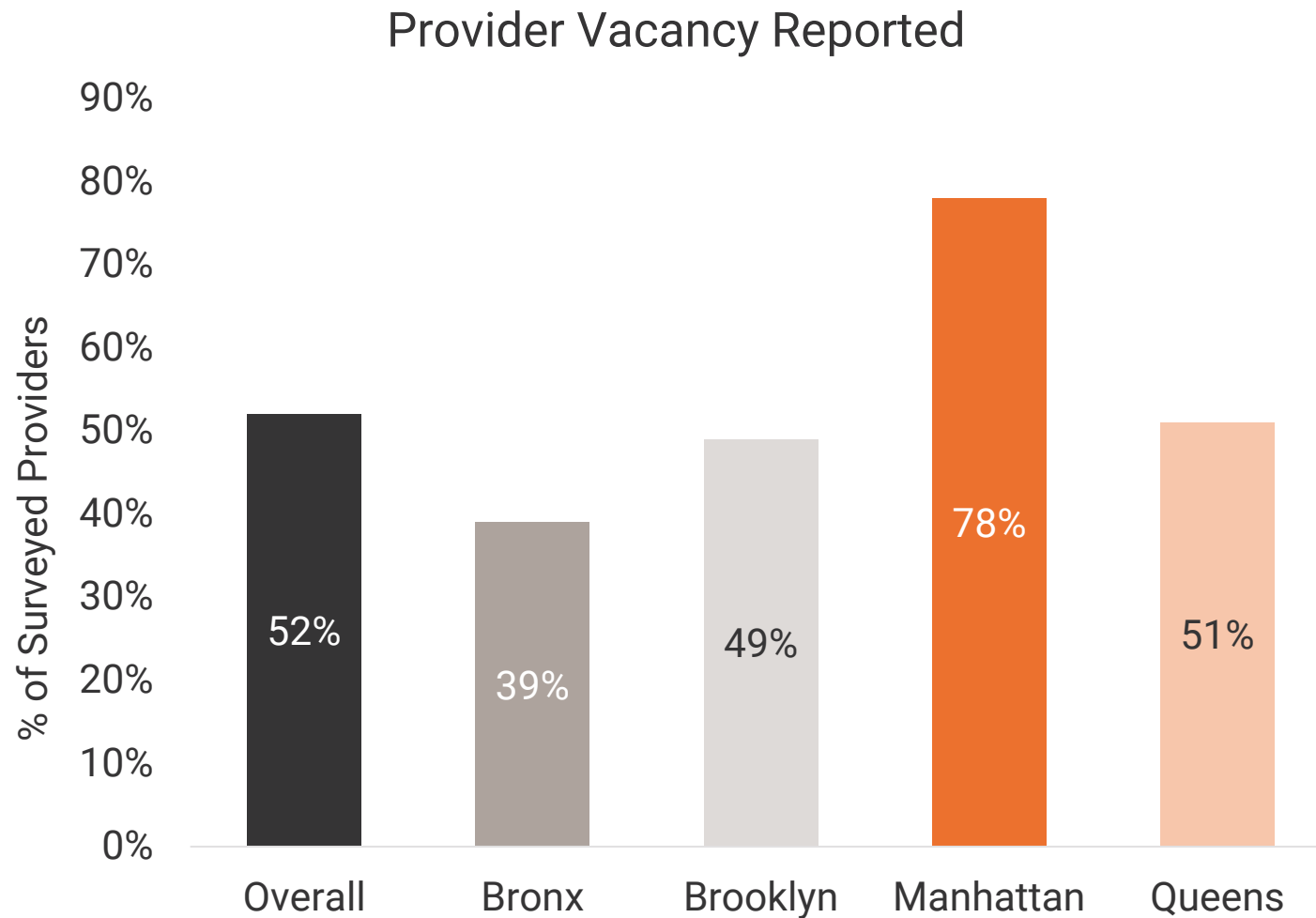
Suggested Resources for Helping With Search



Parents searching for care found it challenging to find providers with open slots or needed schedules, as reported in a web survey.



Digging Deeper: Where are providers with vacancies located?



** Almost 80% of surveyed providers in Manhattan reported vacancies, compared to just under 40% in the Bronx.*

Provider Perspectives

Web Survey

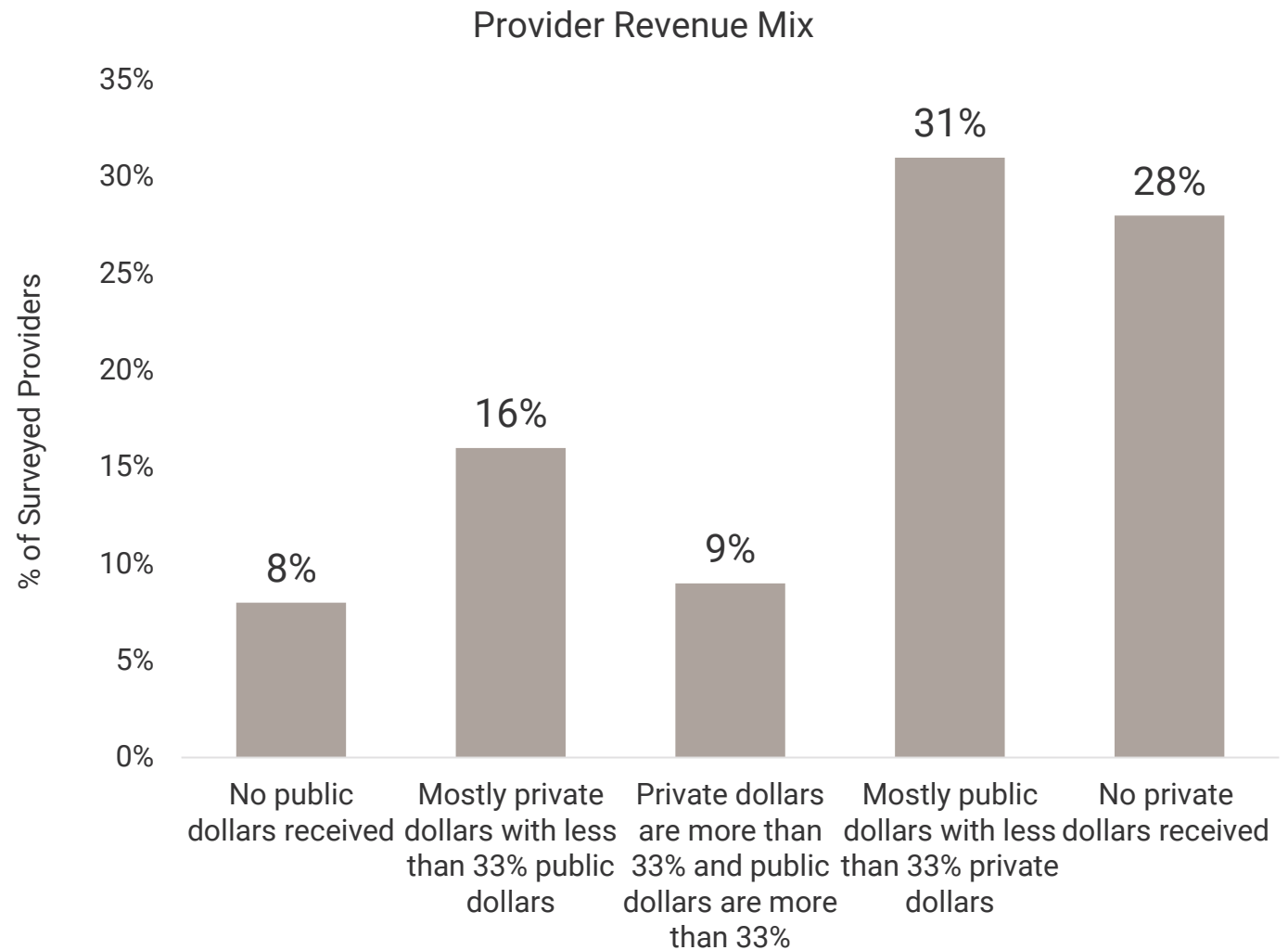
Web survey data was collected from providers across the city.

- ❑ About two-thirds (69%) were home-based providers and one-third (31%) center- or school-based programs.
- ❑ Respondents served all age groups 0-5 and school-aged children.
- ❑ Approximately 31% operated in Queens, 21% in the Bronx, 27% in Brooklyn, 14% in Manhattan, and 7% in Staten Island.
- ❑ 50% reported that “some but less than half” of the children in their program were newly enrolled in the past six months.
- ❑ About one-third (34%) reported that “no families pay” out of pocket for their child to attend the program.

Surveyed providers navigate using multiple public funding sources.

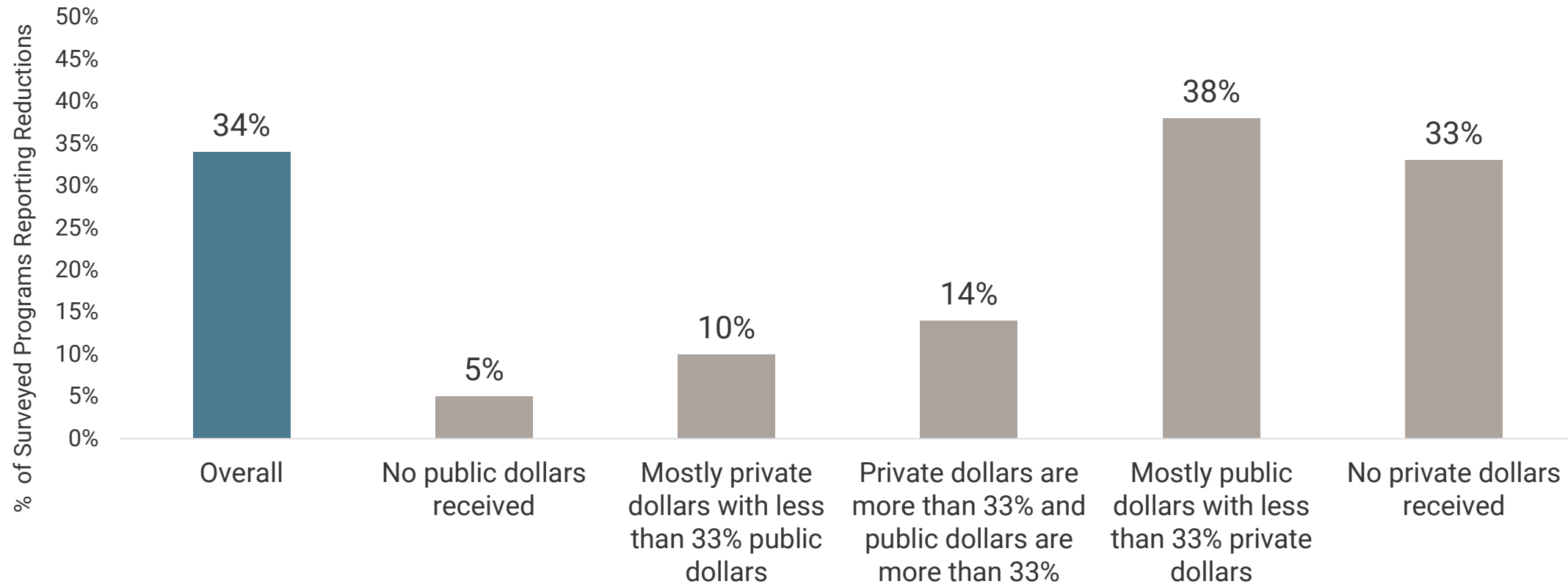
20% of providers surveyed reported using three or more public funding sources; 40% use two public funding sources

Nearly all providers reported using at least some public funding



Surveyed providers with higher proportions of public funding were more likely to report cuts in past year.

Programs with Staff Layoffs, Cuts in Salaries, Benefits, or Hours in Past Year, by Revenue Mix



Providers want to enroll more children using the voucher but struggle with payments and administrative challenges.

87%

Agree they would like to enroll [more] children through the ACS child care voucher

42%

Feel ACS voucher covers full cost of quality programming

63%

Report it is a financial challenge to receive payments at the end of the month

33%

Report it is an administrative challenge to provide qualifying information to ACS

Recommendations and Limitations

ACS can continue to support families and providers in the low-income voucher system through several recommendations.

- Increased information resources for parents and caregivers, including easy-to-find and easy-to-use instructions regarding the voucher process, and a way for families to check the status of their application.
- A parent guide that lists all providers, across provider types if possible, currently accepting ACS child care vouchers and ones that do not currently accept them (and/or) accept other types of child care vouchers.
- Continued support of the complex NYC mixed-delivery system.
- Support for providers navigating both ACS and other public funding sources.
- Consider how policies and practices may threaten the financial sustainability of providers, especially those who may not have a substantial core of private-pay enrollment.

Limitations

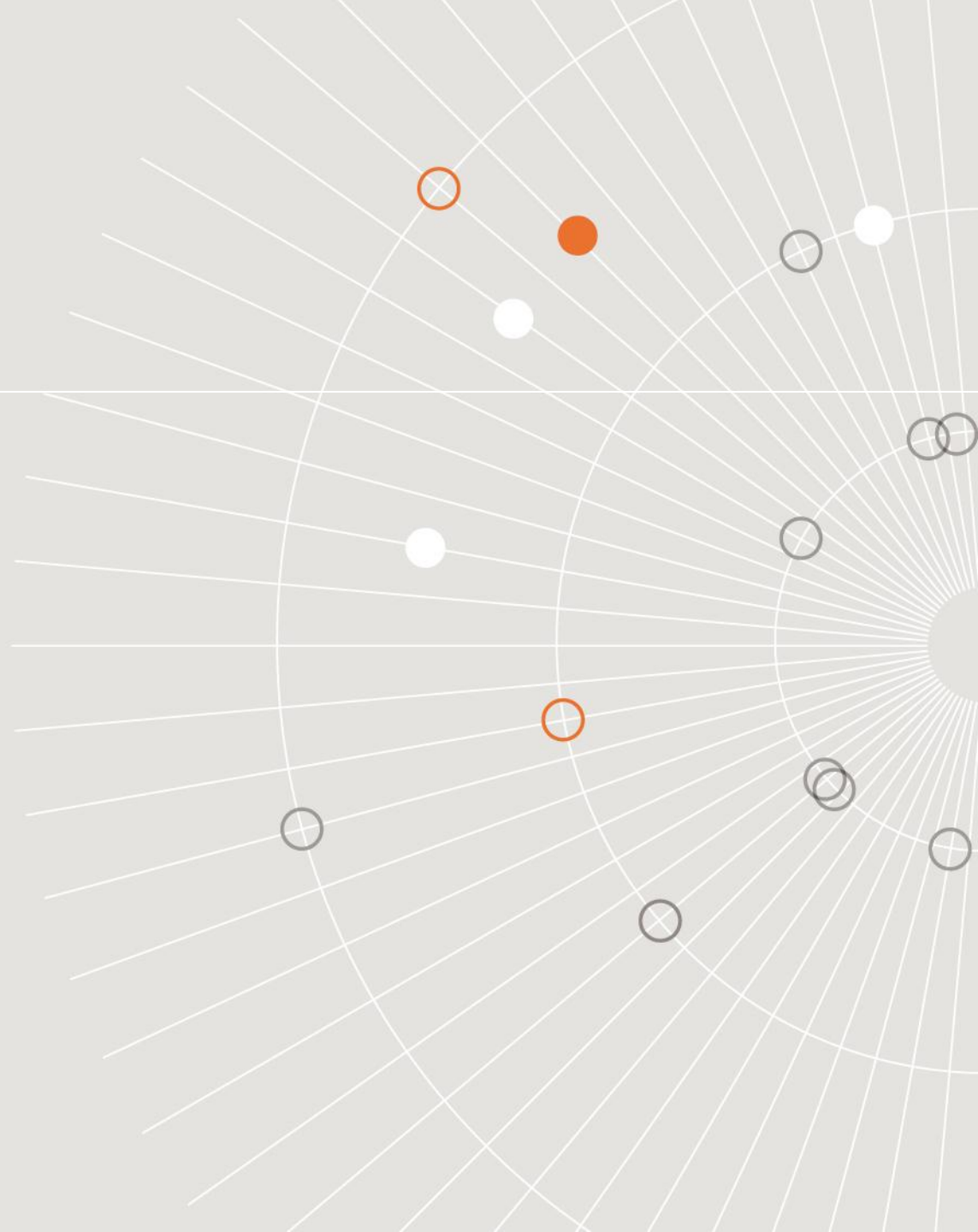
➤ **Data availability and quality**

- Administrative data systems could be improved to support exploration of program processes for the purpose of continuous improvement, including potential linking to external data
- Up-to-date provider information is difficult to collect and maintain, creating a challenge to implement some parent recommendations

➤ **Study sample size**


- The present study had limited qualitative feedback from providers and families not using the voucher

Questions?



Thank you

Questions
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