

87% of millennials and Gen Zers say child-care costs affect their decision to have kids ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Child care is important. Younger generations believe having access to affordable, high-quality child care is a priority when it comes to starting their own families, new data shows.

Nearly 9 out of 10 millennials and Gen Zers (defined here as those ages 18 to 36) say that the cost of child care is very or somewhat important in deciding whether or not to have children, according to a new survey of over 3,250 young adults conducted by GenForward and Next100, a progressive think tank start-up focused on the next generation of policy.

Overall, 81% of millennials and Gen Zers believe access to affordable high-quality child care is an important issue. And support for child care spans race, gender and ideological differences, even among those without children, the survey finds.

“This is an issue that speaks to a lot of young people,” says Cathy Cohen, founder of the GenForward survey project and professor at the University of Chicago. Although she’s been fielding these types of surveys since 2016, Cohen has rarely seen such a consistently high percentage of responses indicating that an issue is important. “This should be a red flag to say that this is a critically important issue to young people,” she says.

Additionally, the survey finds that when weighing the decision to have kids, access to affordable, high-quality child care actually plays a bigger role with millennials and Gen Zers than student loan debt, even though it’s talked about much less. While 87% cite child care as an important factor, only 76% of respondents without children say student loans is an important consideration, the survey finds.

“Amidst economic strains, mountains of student loans and soaring housing costs, millennials and Gen Z understand that affordable, high-quality child care is a priority,” says Levi Bohanan, policy expert with Next100.

Among millennials and Gen Zers who already have children, 72% say that the lack of affordable child-care programs was a barrier to meeting their career goals. That’s significant when you consider that millennials are the largest generation in the workforce, making up just over a third of U.S. workers. When broken down by gender, 3 out of 4 women say a lack of child care has disrupted their professional plans, while 68% of men say the same.

When taken all together, the survey shows that “the lack of public investment in child care is reducing the ability of young generations to start families and begin careers,” Bohanan says.

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