

FOCUS ON: UNEVEN RECOVERY ACROSS NC PROSPERITY ZONES



North Carolina's continued economic recovery from COVID-19 will require sustained attention to regional variations in child care availability, access, and utilization to ensure robust workforce participation and educational attainment, especially among families with low-SES and women.

To ensure a strong workforce and economy, and an equal opportunity for success (or equitable future) for all North Carolinians, **we need to think regionally when rebuilding our child care system, with a focus on low SES families and women.**

Rurality and race/ethnicity of low-SES families are important factors driving regional variation. Although rurality does not appear to be a major factor across Prosperity Zones (PZs) for unemployment/employment and job sector participation, the variation in COVID impacts may have serious implications for communities that have large populations of historically-underserved minority populations.

WE NEED TO ENSURE A ROBUST CHILD CARE SYSTEM THAT IS AVAILABLE AND ACCESSIBLE TO MEET THE DIVERSITY OF FAMILIES' NEEDS, ESPECIALLY FOR PARENTS OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS.

Upon examination of the economic and social condition of the NC PZs, we see that risks and opportunities are not evenly distributed and vary across and within PZs.

When considering economic recovery and the importance of access to child care, **particular attention should be given to the Sandhills and Piedmont-Triad PZs, as well as the Northeast and Northwest PZs** given their numerous and complex community needs (e.g., economic, housing, transportation) compared to other regions.

Child care access looks different across regions and these differences should be considered.

- » While the majority of parents who responded to the NCECF survey report centers make up the majority of programs their children attended, regardless of PZ region, there were differences across the state in the percent of children receiving child care in homes.
- » **Almost half of NC families with children live in “child care deserts,” with less than 1 slot for every 3 children.**
- » Families with children, ages 3 to 5, were likely to have subsidized child care (~40% across PZs) compared to families of infants and toddlers (~20% across PZs).

For more context and deeper analysis, [read the full report](#) and follow NCECF.

