

RESEARCH REPORT



Preschool Participation in Fall 2022: Findings from a National Preschool Learning Activities Survey

W. Steven Barnett and Kwanghee Jung

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About NIEER

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About the Authors

W. Steven Barnett is a Board of Governors Professor of Education at Rutgers University and Senior Co-Director of NIEER. His research interests include early childhood policy, the economics of early care and education, the effects of early care and education on children's learning and development, program evaluation, and the distribution of early learning opportunities.

Kwanghee Jung is an Assistant Research Professor at NIEER. She brings to NIEER an expertise in quantitative data analysis. Her research interests include school readiness, state early childhood program policies, and the impact of state funded preschool on children's cognitive development and social-emotional well-being.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE Fall 2022 PRESCHOOL LEARNING ACTIVITIES SURVEY REGARDING PRESCHOOL PARTICIPATION

1. Preschool participation rates overall in Fall (December) 2022 had returned to near pre-pandemic 2019 levels after having declined substantially in 2020 and partially rebounding in 2021 as shown in Figure 1. These estimates are based on NIEER national Preschool Learning Activities Surveys (PLA) in 2020, 2021, and 2022 as well as the 2019 National Household Education Survey (NHES) Early Childhood Program Participation module (Cui & Natzke, 2020).
2. The PLA estimated overall preschool participation rate for children ages 3 to 5 and not yet in kindergarten in Fall 2022 was 61 percent (with 3% margin of error) which is consistent with the NHES estimate (Figure 1).
3. Preschool participation rates by single year of age from the NIEER PLA Survey for Fall 2022 were: 54 percent at age 3, 65 percent at age 4, and 65 percent at age 5. As shown in Figure 2, comparison of the 2019 NHES and 2022 PLA survey results by single year of age suggests a relative increase for younger children and decrease for older children. This could simply reflect sampling variation. However, it might also reflect the greater representation of children in low-income families attending public programs among 4-year-olds. Note that the PLA survey's margin of error is larger for single year subgroup estimates than for the overall estimate for the full sample.

Comparing 2019 (NHES) and 2022 (NIEER) enrollment by age:

2019 children age 3: 49%	children age 4: 71%
2022 children age 3: 54%	children age 4: 65%

4. Preschool participation rates are much lower for children in low-income families than for others. Preschool participation appears to have recovered less fully for children in families reporting annual incomes below \$25,000 than for those in families reporting higher incomes. See Figure 3. Note that estimates for families with incomes below \$25,000 have wider margins of error due to the smaller size of this subsample. Nevertheless, the PLA survey suggests the participation gap for low-income families has widened since the pandemic.

Comparing 2019 (NHES) and 2022 (NIEER) enrollment by income:

2019 children <\$25K income: 47%	children >\$25K income: 62%
2022 children <\$25K income: 35%	children >\$25K income: 63%

5. NIEER's survey asked parents of young children who were not in preschool in Fall 2022 to report the reasons they did not enroll their children, listing all that applied (Figure 4). Top answers included having one parent home (82%), cost and lack of affordable options (41%), and continuing concerns about the pandemic (35%).

6. In NIEER's Spring 2021 PLA survey, 81percent of parents of age eligible children said they would very likely or somewhat likely send their child to a free, universal pre-K program if it became available (Figure 5). Black and Hispanic parents more often reported they were highly likely to participate in such a program than did White Non-Hispanic parents (Figure 6). Parents with annual incomes below \$25,000 more often reported being very likely to participate than those with higher incomes (Figure 7).

Figure 1. Preschool participation before and during the pandemic. NIEER PLA Survey Results 2020-2022 compared to National Household Education Survey Results from 2019.

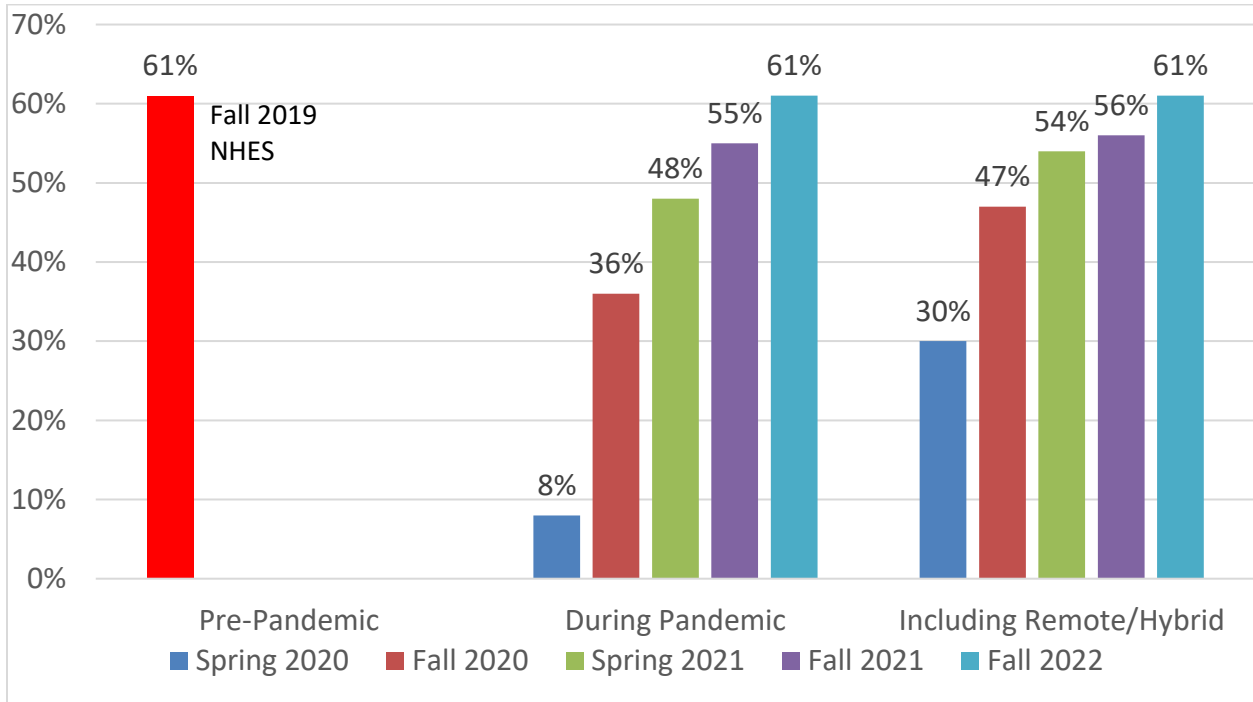


Figure 2. Preschool Participation Before and During the Pandemic by Age

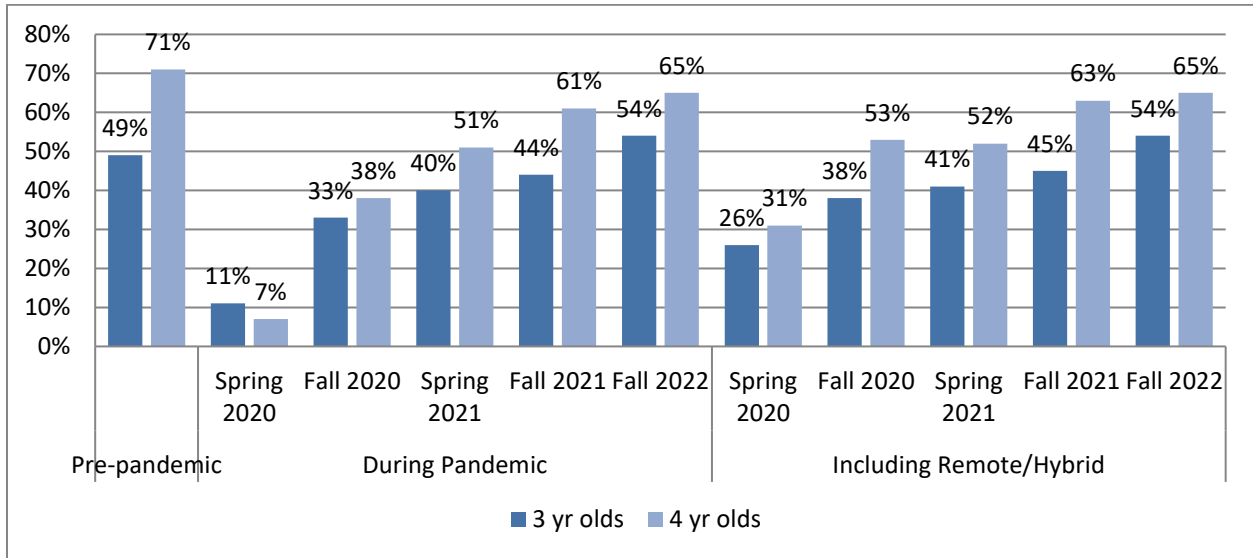


Figure 3. Preschool participation before and during the pandemic by family income.

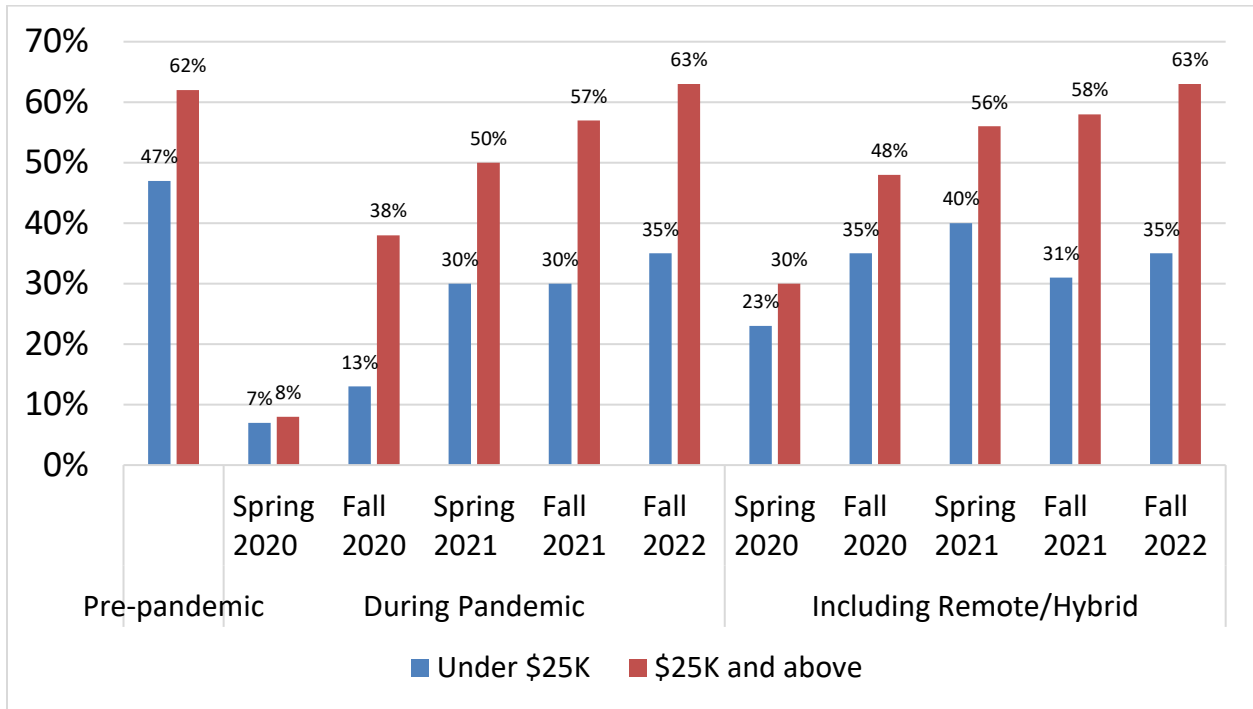


Figure 4. Reasons parents reported as contributing to the household decision not to send the child to some type of preschool program in Fall 2022 (N = 393).

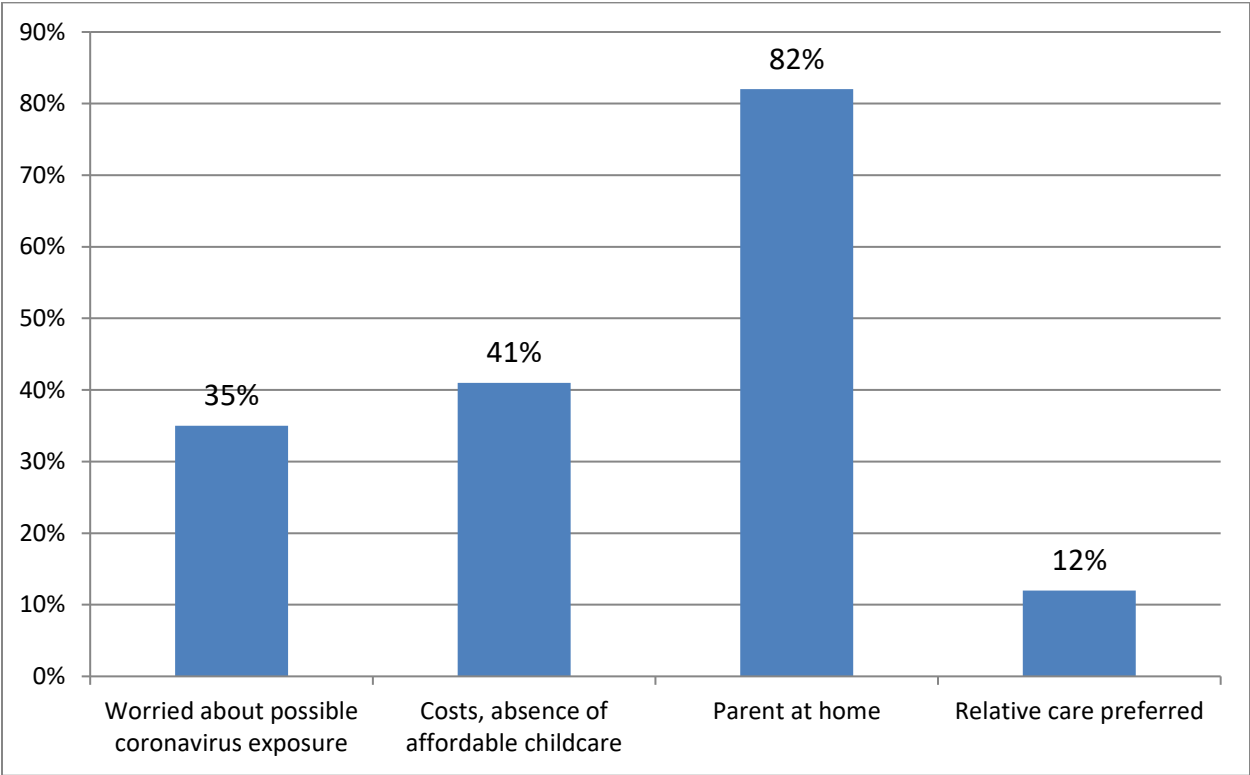


Figure 5. Reported likelihood of enrolling the child if a free, high quality preschool program had been available in Fall 2021. (PLA Spring 2021 Survey, N = 794, only those not entering kindergarten in the fall).

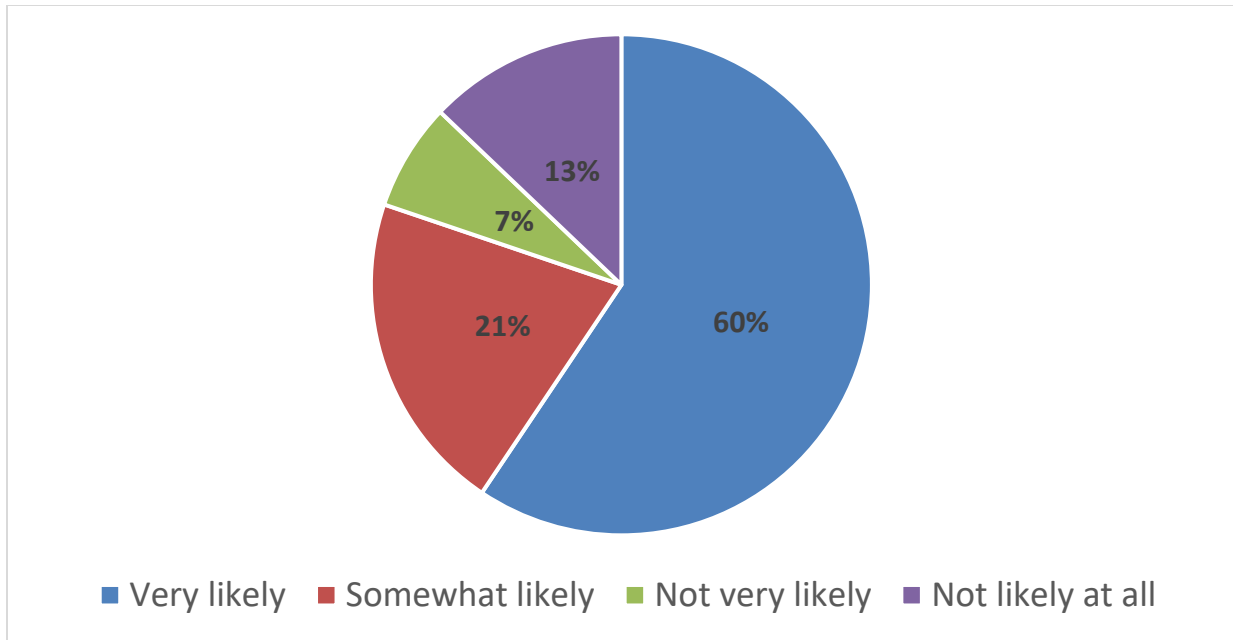


Figure 6. Reported likelihood of enrolling the child if a free, high quality preschool program had been available in Fall 2021, by race ethnicity (PLA Spring 2021 Survey, N = 794, only those not entering kindergarten in the fall).

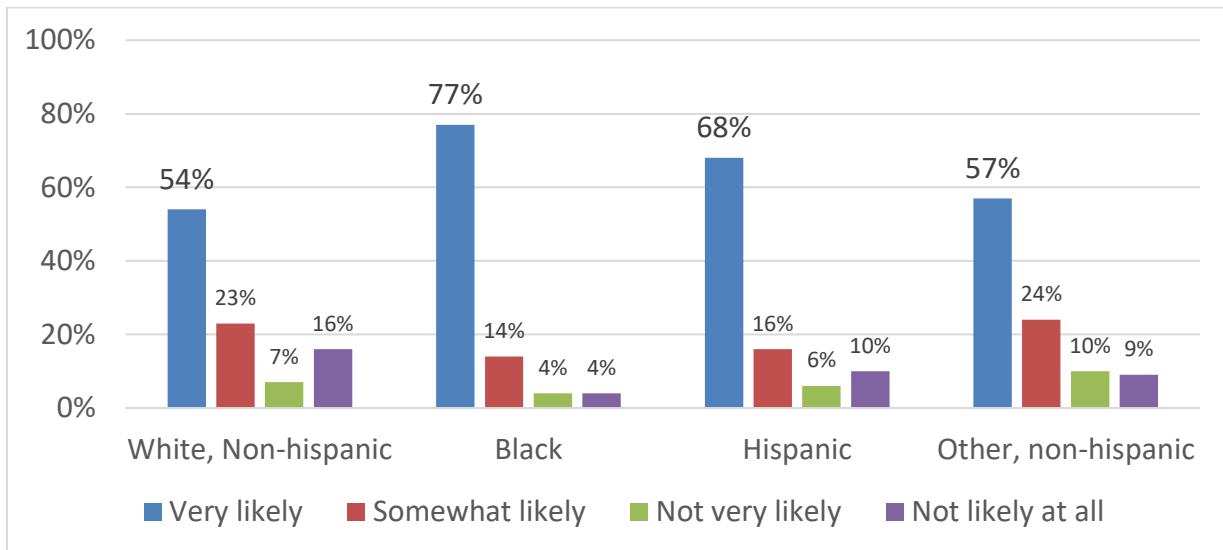
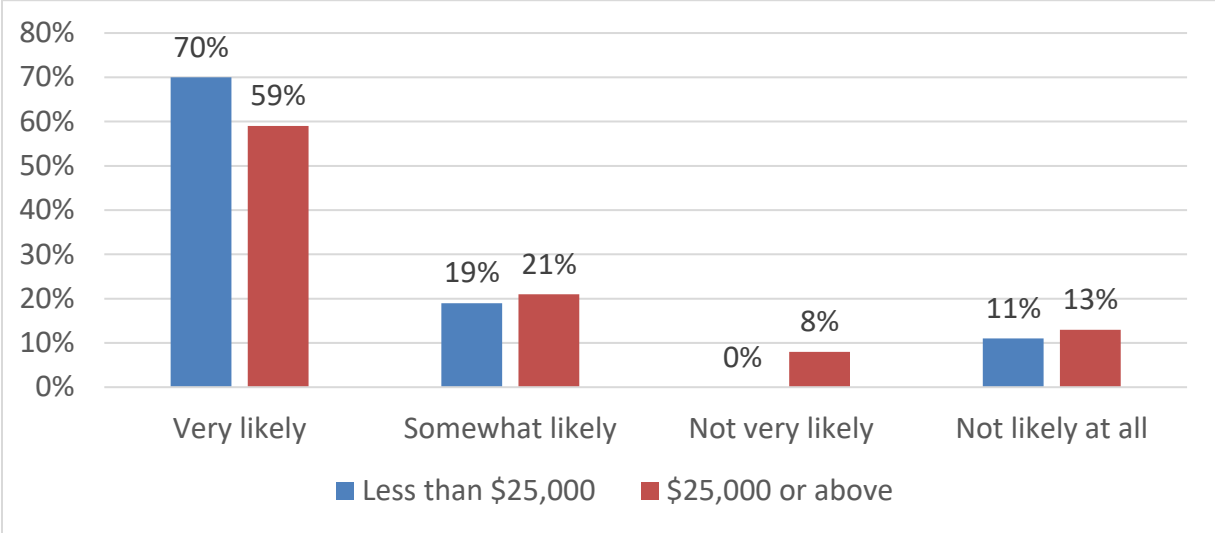


Figure 7. Reported likelihood of enrolling the child if a free, high quality preschool program had been available in Fall 2021 by household income. (PLA Spring 2021 Survey, N = 794, only those not entering kindergarten in the fall).



Technical Details for the Fall 2022 PLA Survey (excerpted from Koning & Roman, 2022)

Ipsos Public Affairs (Ipsos) conducted the Fall 2022 Preschool Learning Activities Survey on behalf of NIEER. The Fall 2022 Home Learning Study is the fifth iteration of this survey. The survey was conducted on KnowledgePanel®, a probability-based web panel designed to be representative of the United States.

The target population consisted of non-institutionalized U.S. adults ages 18 and older with at least one child aged 3, 4, or 5 years old in the household—specifically those born in 2017, 2018, or 2019 who had not yet started kindergarten. Ipsos sampled U.S. adults with children in their household age 3, 4, or 5 years old to obtain a total of 1,014 interviews. Selected panel members received an email invitation to complete the survey and were asked to do so at their earliest convenience. The survey was fielded in both English and Spanish. The sample release consisted of a soft launch followed by a full launch.

KnowledgePanel is the first and largest online research panel that is representative of the entire U.S. population. It relies on probability-based sampling techniques for recruitment; hence, it is the largest national sampling frame from which fully representative samples can be generated to produce statistically valid inferences for study populations. Panel members are randomly recruited through probability-based sampling, and households are provided with access to the Internet and hardware if needed.

All respondents with children ages 3, 4, or 5 in the household, regardless of kindergarten attendance ($n=1,376$), were weighted to represent U.S. adults ages 18 and older with at least one child age 3, 4, or 5 in the household. The needed benchmarks were obtained from the March 2022 Current Population Survey (CPS), with language proficiency obtained from the 2021 American Community Survey (ACS).

Weights were trimmed and scaled to sum to the unweighted sample size of respondents with at least one child aged 3, 4, or 5 in the household, regardless of child birthdate or kindergarten attendance ($n=1,376$). These weights (`screen_wt*`) were then scaled to sum to the unweighted sample size of qualified respondents with at least one child aged 3, 4, or 5 in the household who had not yet started kindergarten (`weight`, $n=1,014$).

References

Cui, J., and Natzke, L. (2020). Early Childhood Program Participation: 2019 (NCES 2020-075), National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC. Retrieved August 20, 2020 from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2020075>.

Koning, A., & Roman, J. (2022). Fall 2022 methodology report. New Brunswick, NJ: Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling, Rutgers the State University of New Jersey. Available on request from NIEER.