

**TO: Children's Leadership Council**  
**FROM: Guy Molyneux and Jessica Wintfeld, Hart Research Associates**  
**DATE: May 2, 2016**  
**RE: Findings from a National Survey on Children's Programs**

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*From March 31 to April 6, 2016, Hart Research Associates conducted an online survey on behalf of the Children's Leadership Council to understand national sentiment regarding public investments in children and the role of government in improving child well-being. We interviewed 2,050 adults, including 595 parents of children under the age of 18 from across the country.*

**Summary:** Americans show a great deal of support for increasing investment in the health, education, and nutrition of the nation's children, and parents of children under age 18 voice a particularly strong commitment to investing in children's programs. In fact, most adults say they are more likely to vote for a candidate who commits to making any of a number of child well-being policies a priority if elected. Of the policies tested, preventing child abuse, hunger, and poverty prove to be especially compelling among the population as a whole. For parents, ensuring access to healthcare and making college more affordable are equally as important as violence prevention and anti-poverty measures. Both parents and non-parents overwhelmingly agree that there is a role for government in supporting families and that children would be better off if government did more to ensure that education, child care, nutrition, and healthcare were more affordable.

### **Survey Findings**

- **Adults across all demographic groups say that the next president and Congress should invest more in America's children.** More than three in five (63%) adults say that we should be spending more on education, health, and nutrition programs to meet the needs of the nation's children. With few exceptions, support for this position is consistently high across demographic groups. Indeed, strong majorities of Americans of every age, race, income, and educational level—and in all regions of the country—would like to see increased spending on children. Support for this position is particularly high among younger Americans (74% among those age 18 to 34) and minorities (75% among African Americans and 74% among Hispanics).

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**When it comes to meeting the needs of children—including health, education, and nutrition—do you think the next president and Congress should invest more than they do now, less than they do now, or continue to invest at the level they do now?**

	<u>Invest More</u>	<u>Invest Less</u>		<u>Invest More</u>	<u>Invest Less</u>
	%	%		%	%
All Adults	63	10	Parents	71	8
Men	61	13	Non-parents	59	11
Women	64	7			
			Democrats	76	4
Age 18-34	74	7	Independents	59	11
Age 35-49	65	10	Republicans	48	17
Age 50-64	52	12			
Age 65+	56	13	Income under \$40k	65	8
			Income \$40k-75k	61	10
Whites	59	12	Income \$75k+	62	12
African Americans	75	6			
Hispanics	74	6	Northeast	66	7
			South	61	12
High school grad/less	61	8	Midwest	59	11
Some college	64	10	West	65	10
College graduates	64	11	Battleground states	61	11

It comes as little surprise that parents of children under the age of 18 are particularly strong supporters of increased investment in the well-being of the nation's children (71% support increasing spending). However, it is notable that among this subset of the population, majorities across all groups, including party affiliation, support increased spending. Among parents, Democrats and Hispanics are the strongest proponents of increased investment in children's programs.

**When it comes to meeting the needs of children—including health, education, and nutrition—do you think the next president and Congress should invest more than they do now, less than they do now, or continue to invest at the level they do now?**

	<u>Invest More</u>	<u>Invest Less</u>		<u>Invest More</u>	<u>Invest Less</u>
	%	%		%	%
All Parents	71	8	Democratic parents	83	4
Fathers	71	11	Independent parents	67	9
Mothers	71	6	Republican parents	58	14
Parents age 18-34	75	7	White parents	67	9
Parents age 35+	68	9	African American parents	76	8
			Hispanic parents	81	5

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- **A commitment to making a priority of meeting the needs of children draws significant support across many specific policy areas.** The majority of adults are more likely to support candidates who say they will make policies related to child abuse and family violence, child poverty and hunger, child health, and education and care priorities if elected. This is true of both men and women, and adults of all races, age groups, and educational attainment.

People respond with particular enthusiasm to candidate commitments related to reducing child abuse, poverty, and hunger. These are followed by policies related to child healthcare coverage, college affordability, early childhood care, and education.

### Likelihood of Supporting a Candidate who Commits to Making Each a Priority if Elected (All Adults)

	More likely to support %
Reducing child abuse and family violence	75
Reducing child poverty and hunger	71
Preserving and improving child health coverage	67
Making college more affordable	66
Expanding child care assistance and early education programs	58
Expanding after school programs and summer learning programs	55

- For adults of all stripes, a commitment to **reducing child abuse and family violence** is an especially compelling reason to support a candidate. Among Republicans, this position resonates particularly well, with more than two in three (67%) saying they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who stakes out such a position.
- **Reducing child poverty and hunger** draws a similarly wide breadth of support, though Millennials (age 18 to 34) are especially responsive to a commitment in this area. Four in five adults in this age cohort—including equal proportions of parents (80%) and non-parents (80%)—say they are more likely to support a candidate who prioritizes this issue.
- When it comes to **children’s healthcare**, African Americans are particularly supportive of candidates who commit to preserving and improving coverage. In fact, with 83% saying that they would be more likely to support such a candidate, this is the top issue among this group.
- **Making college more affordable** is a policy priority that resonates best among African Americans and Democrats. Whereas 66% of all adults say they are more likely to support a candidate who focuses on this, 82% of African

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Americans and 81% of Democrats say such a commitment would draw their support.

- Candidates that commit to **expanding child care assistance and early childhood education** can expect to gain the most support from African Americans (76%), Democrats (73%), and Millennials (73%).
  - Consistent with their reactions to commitments to ensure access and affordability of early and post-secondary education, African Americans (77%) and Democrats (70%) again are the constituencies most likely to be compelled to vote for a candidate who commits to other learning opportunities, including **expanding after school programs and summer learning opportunities**.
- **Across the board, parents are more likely to support a candidate who commits to any of the policies benefiting children, and more policies occupy their top tier of issues.** Parents of children under 18 are more likely than non-parents to reward candidates who commit to making child-focused investments a priority if elected. There is a gender gap, with mothers being even more likely than fathers to say a commitment in any area is likely to affect their support.

College affordability is tremendously important to today's parents. More than three in four (76%) parents say they are more likely to vote for a candidate who commits to making college more affordable, making it the second-most compelling reason among the policies tested to support a candidate. For unmarried moms, parents over the age of 35, college-educated parents, and those making more than \$75,000 a year, making college affordability a priority is the top reason to support a candidate.

<b>Likelihood of Supporting a Candidate who Commits to Making Each a Priority if Elected (Parents)</b>			
	<b>More likely to support (Parents)</b>	<b>More likely to support (Mothers)</b>	<b>More likely to support (Fathers)</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Reducing child abuse and family violence	78	82	72
Making college more affordable	76	80	69
Reducing child poverty and hunger	75	79	69
Preserving and improving child health coverage	74	78	67
Expanding child care assistance and early education programs	67	70	64
Expanding after school programs and summer learning programs	63	67	56

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■ **By overwhelming margins, Americans say the nation’s children would be better off if government did more to support parents and families, and they reject the argument that families would be better off if government “got out of the way.”** Seventy percent (70%) of respondents agree that there is a role for government in ensuring that children and families have access to education, child care, nutritious food, and healthcare, with 40% saying they strongly agree. By contrast, just 30% of adults say instead that children would be better off if government got out of the way. This opinion is shared among the majority of adults both male and female, parents and non-parents, and of every age, education, and income level. Even among Republicans nearly half (49%) support an affirmative role for government, while 51% say government should get out of the way.

**Which of the following two statements do you agree with more?**

**Statement A: America’s children would be better off if government got out of the way and let parents and families take care of their children.**

**Statement B: America’s children would be better off if government did more to support parents and families by making education, child care, nutrition, and children’s healthcare more affordable.**

	<u>Statement A</u>	<u>Statement B</u>		<u>Statement A</u>	<u>Statement B</u>
	%	%		%	%
All Adults	30	70	Parents	26	74
Men	36	64	Non-parents	32	68
Women	25	75			
			Democrats	13	87
Age 18-34	24	76	Independents	32	68
Age 35-49	29	71	Republicans	51	49
Age 50-64	32	68			
Age 65+	39	61	Income under \$40k	25	75
			Income \$40k-75k	31	69
Whites	35	65	Income \$75k+	35	65
African Americans	15	85			
Hispanics	24	76	Northeast	28	72
			South	33	67
High school grad/less	28	72	Midwest	32	68
Some college	32	68	West	27	73
College graduates	31	69	Battleground states	33	67

By a three-to-one margin, parents say children would benefit from increased government support, with nearly half (45%) of all parents saying they strongly agree that children would benefit. As an indication that the shared experiences of parenthood transcend party and other divides, strong majorities of parents across

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all demographic groups, including 57% of Republican parents, say government should do more to support parents and families.

**Which of the following two statements do you agree with more?**

**Statement A: America's children would be better off if government got out of the way and let parents and families take care of their children.**

**Statement B: America's children would be better off if government did more to support parents and families by making education, child care, nutrition, and children's healthcare more affordable.**

	<u>Statement A</u>	<u>Statement B</u>		<u>Statement A</u>	<u>Statement B</u>
	%	%		%	%
All Parents	26	74	Democratic parents	13	87
Fathers	33	67	Independent parents	26	74
Mothers	22	78	Republican parents	43	57
White parents	29	71			
African American parents	14	86			
Hispanic parents	25	75			

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