

Alameda County

Kindergarten Readiness Assessment

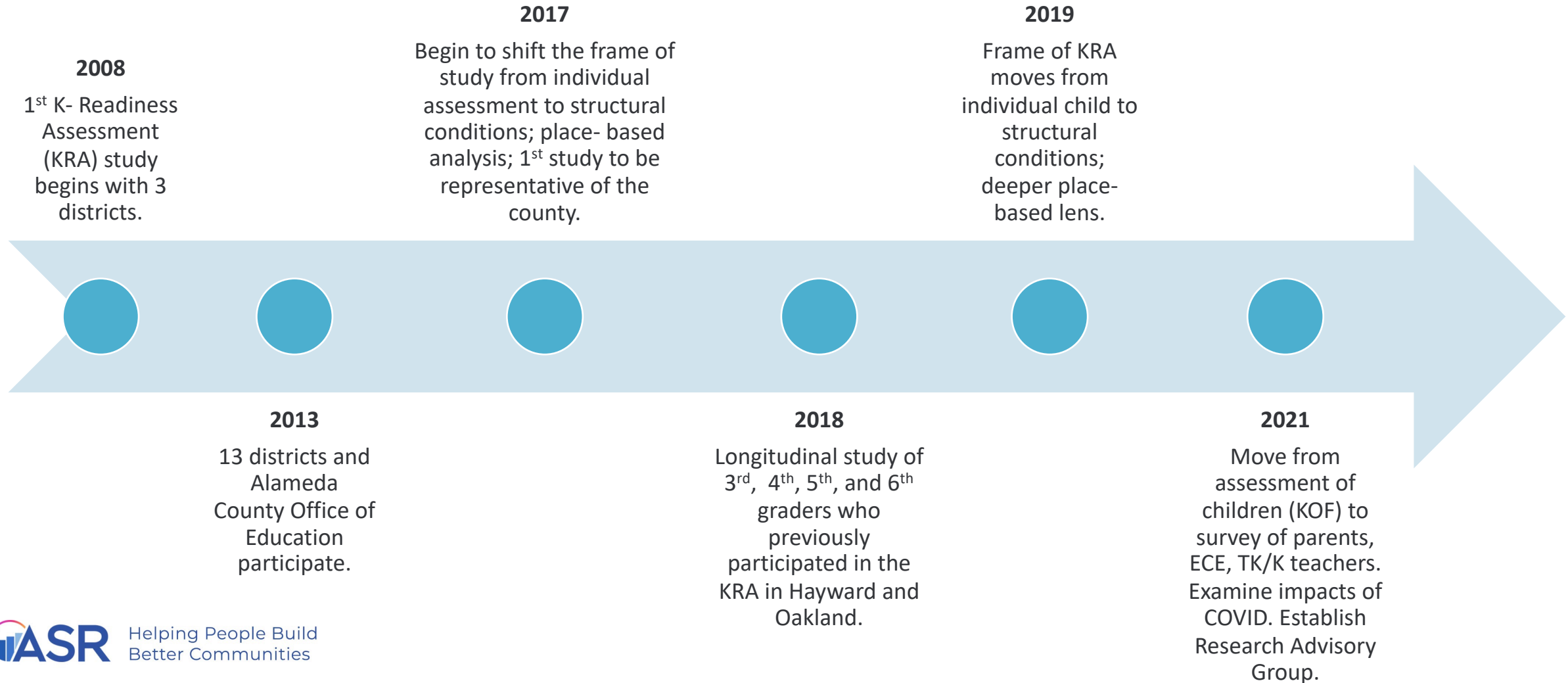
2021



First 5 Alameda County
Commission Meeting

April 2022

Evolution of First 5 Alameda County KRA



Structure of the Partnership and Process

Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Study



Research Advisory Group



Parent/Caregiver Subcommittee



Community Members - Teachers



Guiding Agencies



First 5 Alameda
County (Lead)



Applied Survey
Research



Community Centered Evaluation
and Research

COMMUNITY CENTERED
EVALUATION & RESEARCH



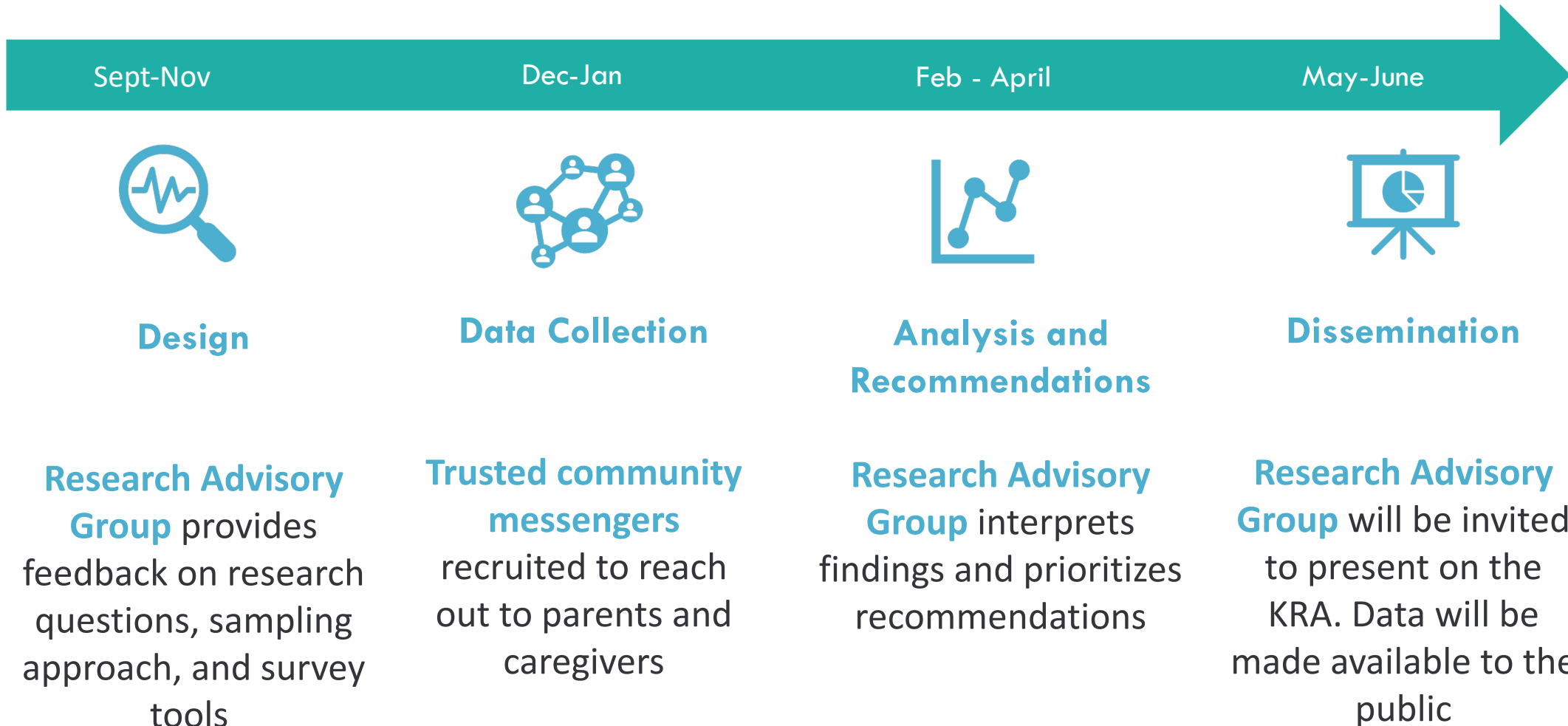
UNIVERSITY OF
OREGON

University of Oregon,
RAPID-EC



Helping People Build
Better Communities

Community Involvement, Collaboration Through Each Stage



Research Advisory Group Members

Parent/Caregiver Members and Referral Affiliations

1. Amani Almatri, Lincoln
2. Bi Yi (Biyong), San Antonio Family Resource Center
3. Rajni Chauhan, San Antonio Family Resource Center
4. Noni Galloway, Parent Voices Oakland
5. Guadalupe Peña Grima, Union City Family Center
6. Carlo Hernandez, City of Newark Department of Recreation and Community Services
7. Danay Johnson, Lincoln
8. Phebe Kemp, Healthy Black Families
9. Miriam Mendez, City of Newark Department of Recreation and Community Services
10. Yolanda Monroe, San Antonio Family Resource Center
11. Luz Nonato, Help Me Grow
12. Yessenia Ramirez, Union City Family Center
13. LaRichea Smith, Roots
14. Kenya Snell, Roots
15. Valerie Tabarez, Healthy Black Families

Educators and Community Members

1. Shruti Agarwal, Shruti's Family Day Care, Valley Family Child Care Association
2. Angela Ball, Alameda County Public Health Dept
3. Angela Cabrera, Early Learning Program, Alameda County Office of Education
4. Vanessa Cedeño, Alameda Co Social Services Agency (former), Office of Supervisor Dave Brown
4. Edgar Chávez, Hayward Promise Neighborhood
5. Joanne Clark, San Leandro Unified
6. Clarissa Doutherd, Parent Voices Oakland
7. Hazelle Fortich, Kindergarten Teacher, Berkeley Unified
8. Mitchell Ha, Hayward USD Early Learning Program
9. Priya Jagannathan, Oakland Starting Smart and Strong
10. Gaylon Logan, Village Connect
12. Kimberly Mayfield, EdD, Holy Names University
13. Chris Nguon, Mandela Family Resource Center, Lincoln
14. Tanisha Payton, Parent Voices Oakland
15. Maria Sujo, Oakland USD Kindergarten Readiness
16. Rosemary Vasquez, Family Engagement & Equity, Hayward Unified
17. Dr. Tuwe Mehn, Oakland USD Kindergarten Readiness

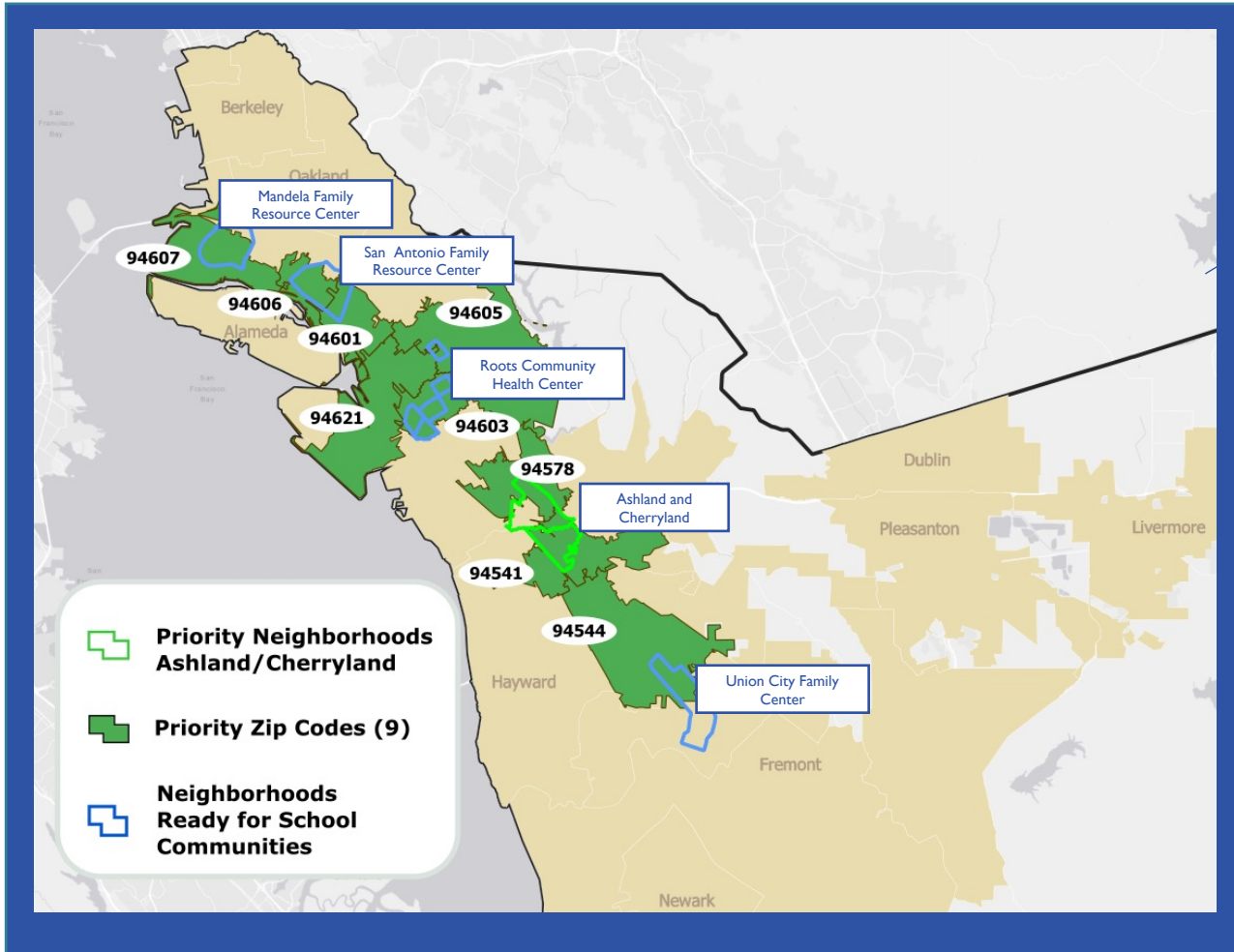
Introduction and Purpose

- Kindergarten readiness is multifaceted:
 - **Children** thrive when they grow up in healthy and supportive **communities** and attend **schools** ready to meet their needs
- COVID-19 pandemic likely had adverse effects on readiness
- 2021 Alameda County KRA built off past studies (most recently conducted in 2019) and used a participatory and equity-informed process
 - **Research Advisory Group** was developed to advise on survey design, recruitment, outreach, interpretation of the results, and recommendations
- Study is intended to be **research for action** that will contribute to the achievement of equity in kindergarten readiness by informing programs, policies, and investments

Sample



Priority Zip Codes and Neighborhoods



The Kindergarten Readiness Assessment conducted intensive recruitment in 9 priority zip codes and the Ashland/Cherryland neighborhood.

Outreach partners included:

- Early Care and Education Professionals
- Eden Church
- Hayward Promise Neighborhood
- Kindergarten Teachers
- Mandela Family Resource Center
- Oakland Head Start
- Parent Voices Oakland
- Roots Community Health Clinic
- San Antonio Resource Center
- Union City Family Center

Sample: Parents/Caregivers (Weighted Sample)

2,015

Parent/caregiver surveys

88%

of children were typically developing

100%

of families had at least one child between 3-6 year of age

50%

of families earned under \$50K

39%

were Hisp/Latino, 17% Black, 17% Asian/PI, 10% White, 7% multiracial, 10% another race

26%

of families resided in priority zip codes/neighborhoods

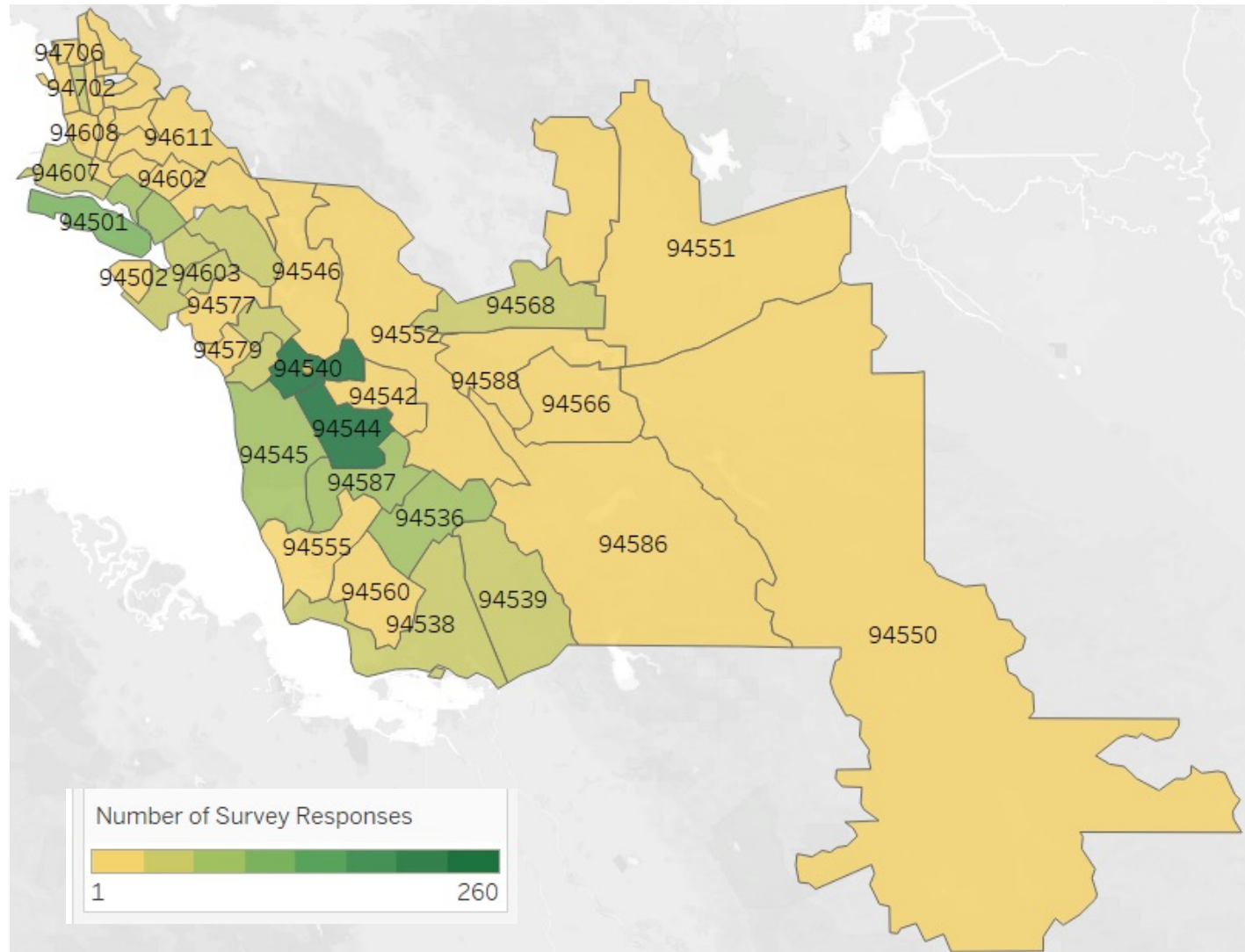
73%

of families spoke English in the home, 31% Spanish, 7% Chinese, 16% another language*

45%

attended licensed centers, 12% attended licensed family child care

Map of Parent/Caregiver Participants



Sample: ECE Professionals (Weighted Sample)

694

ECE professional surveys

82%

spoke English, 24% Spanish, 15% Chinese, 11% Hindi, 6% another language*

61%

worked in center, 39% in family child care setting

48%

had 10+ years of experience

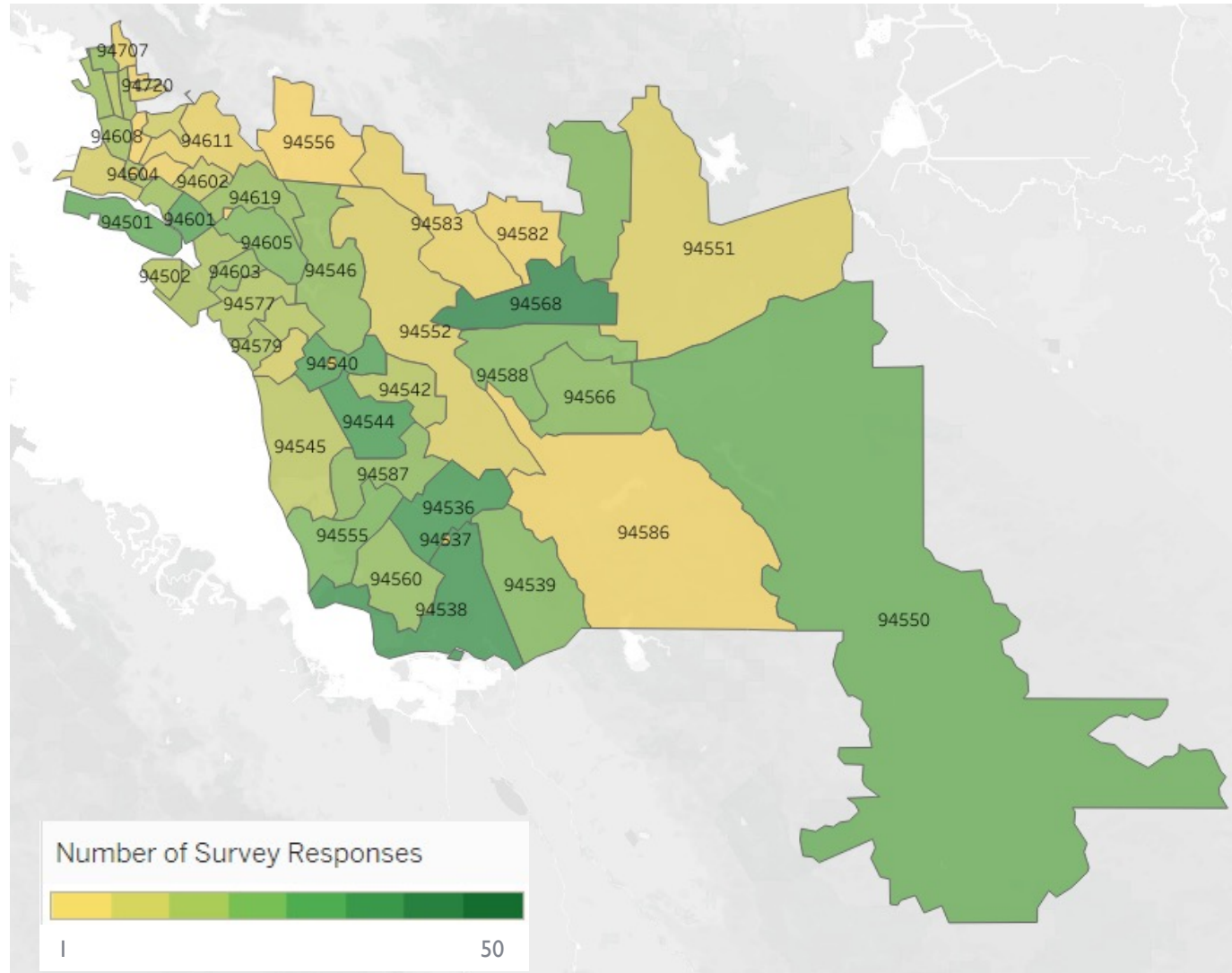
37%

were Asian/PI, 26% Hisp/Latino, 16% White, 15% Black, 2% multiracial, 4% another race

17%

worked in a priority zip code/neighborhood

Map of ECE Professional Participants



Sample: TK and K Teachers (Weighted Sample)

284

K/TK teacher surveys

82%

taught K, 18% taught TK

Kindergarten Teachers

51%

were White, 19% Asian/PI, 15%
Hispanic/Latino, 10% multiracial, 3%
Black, 2% another race

18%

spoke Spanish, 7% Chinese, 11%
another language*

70%

had 10+ years of experience

TK Teachers

35%

were White, 16% Asian/PI, 10%
Hispanic/Latino, 19% multiracial, 16%
Black, 4% another race

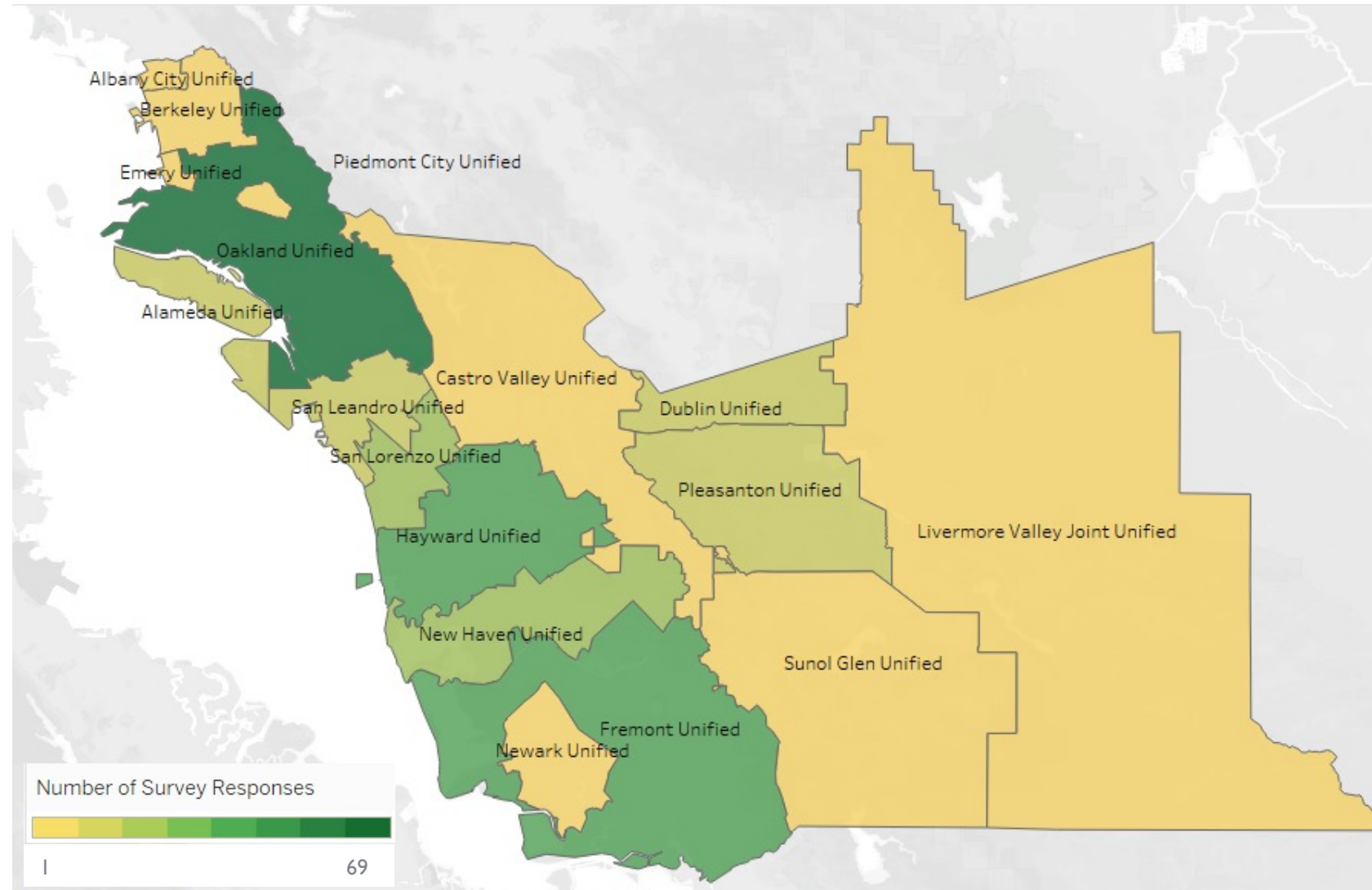
24%

spoke Spanish, 7% spoke Chinese,
15% spoke another language*

60%

had 10+ years of experience

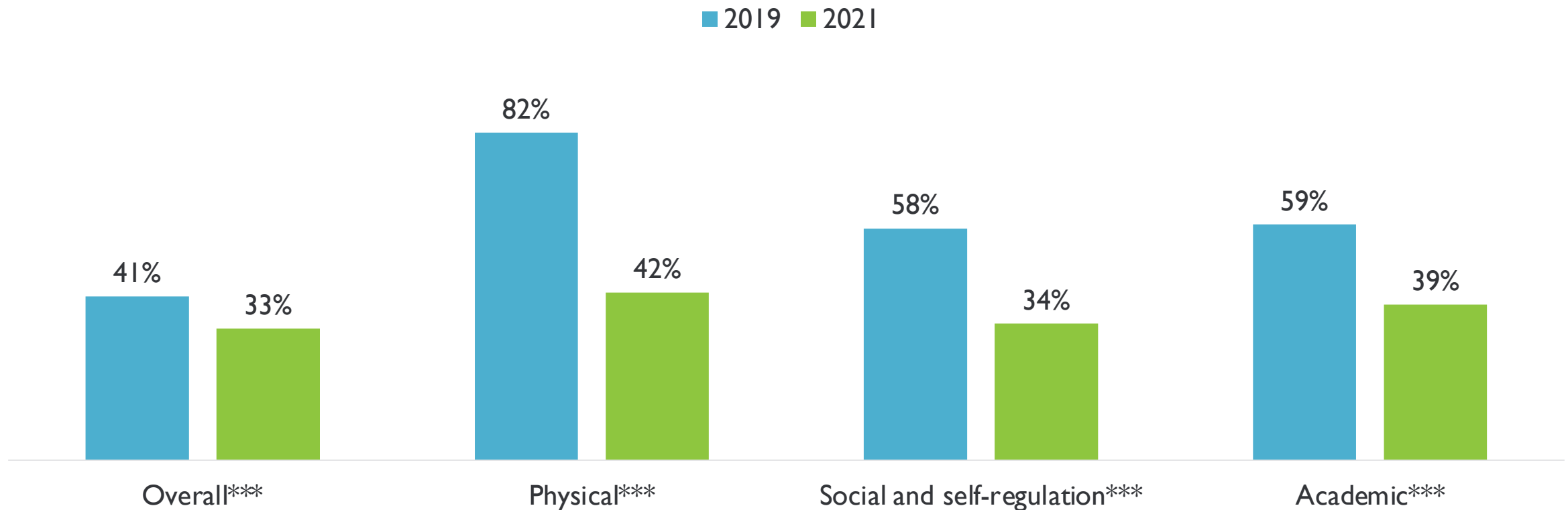
Map of K/TK Teacher Participants



Key Findings

Percent of Parents/Caregivers who Say Child Is Ready for Kindergarten, by Skill Domain and Year

- Parents' assessment of their child's readiness was lower in 2021 than it was in 2019



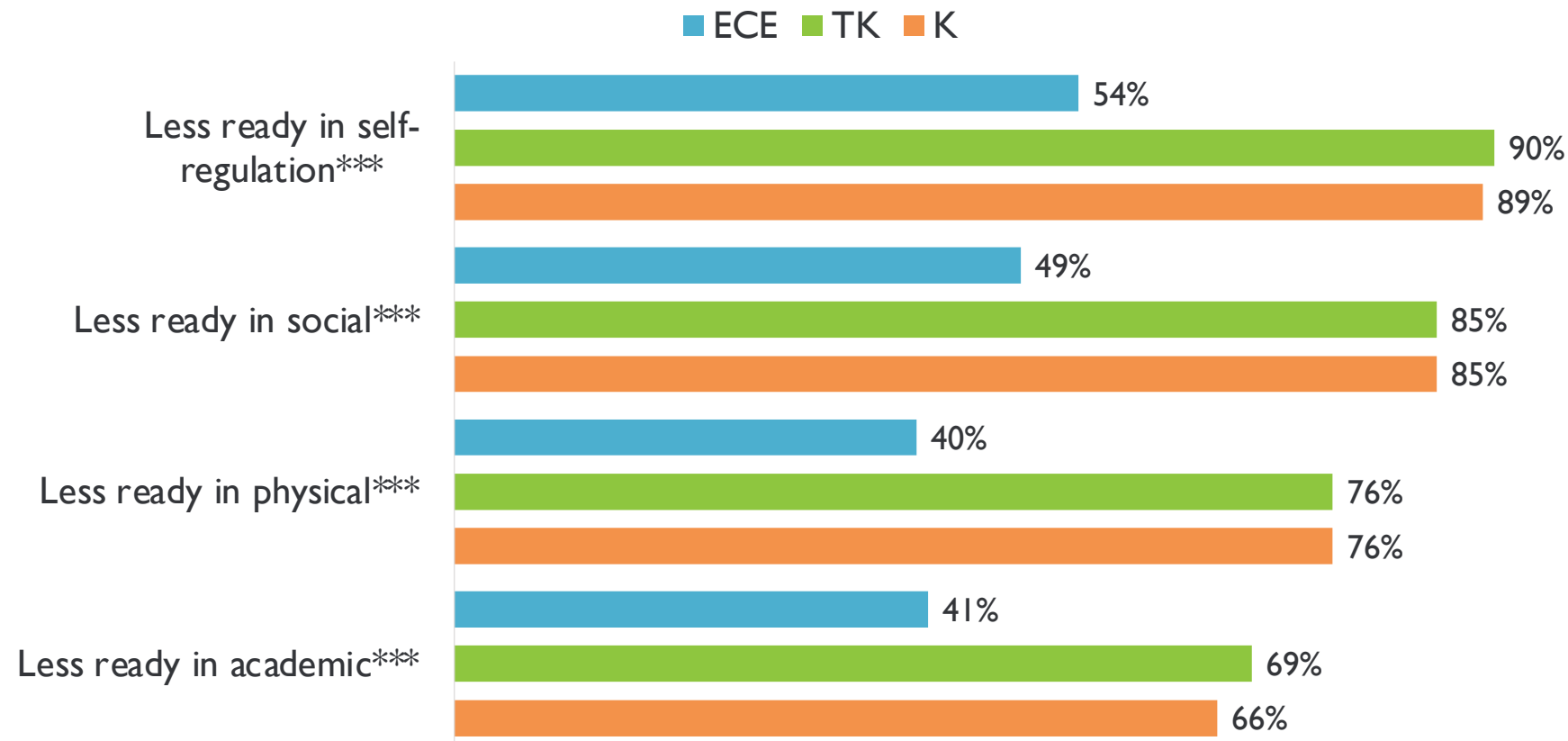
Source: Parent Survey (2019, 2021)

Note: N=1,466 (2019); 1,217-1,282 (2021, weighted). Data were weighted to approximate race/ethnicity, ***Differences are significant at $p < .001$.

On each domain, figures represent the percent of children fully ready (i.e., 4 was selected on the 4-point readiness scale). 'Overall' figures represent the percent of children who received an average of 3.25 or higher across the four domains. In 2019, parents were asked about social and self-regulation skills together.

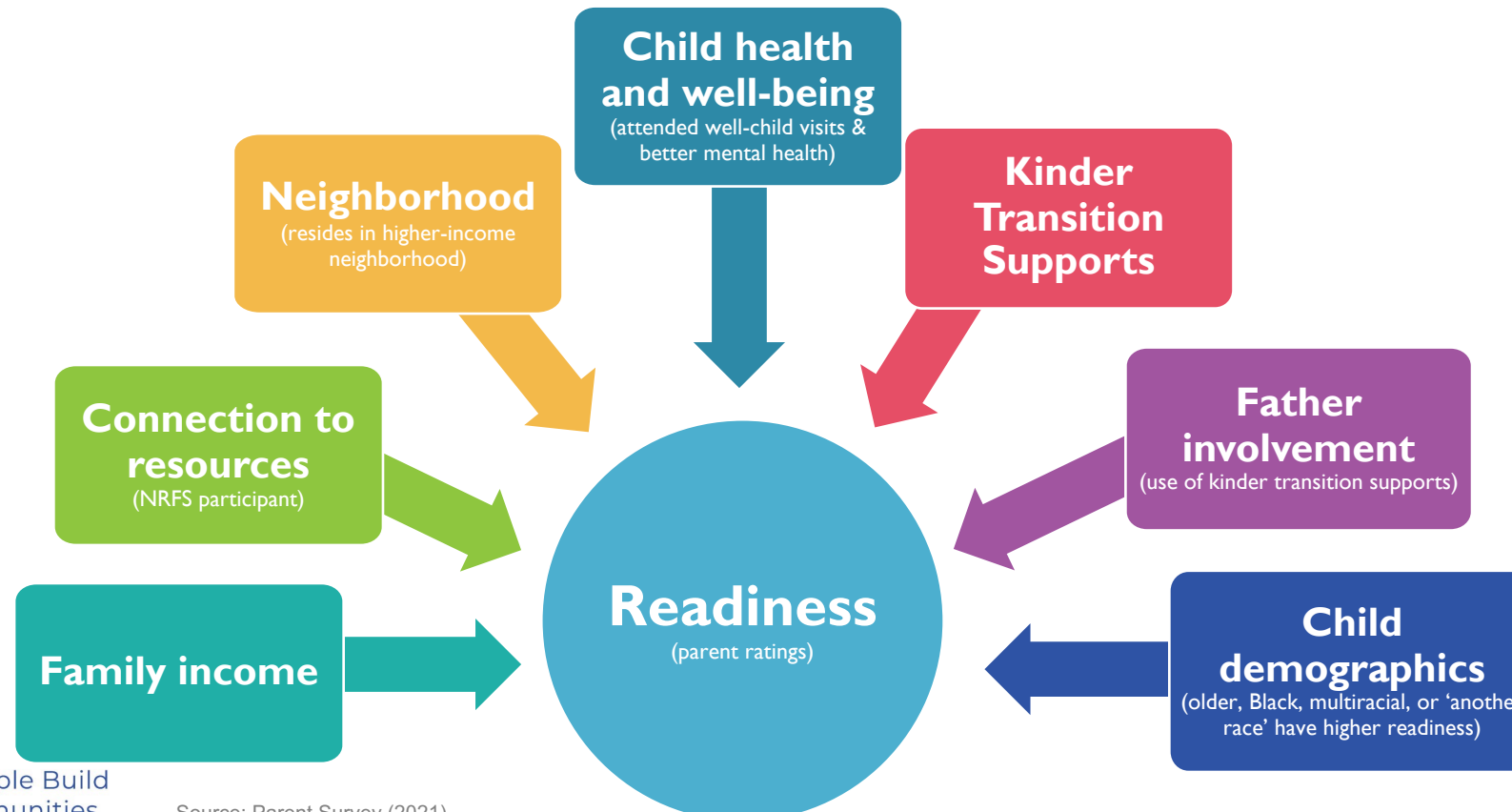
Perceived Readiness of Children Entering Kindergarten/TK in Fall 2021 Compared Before COVID, by Skill Domain and Educator Type

- Majority of K/TK teachers feel students are less ready now than they were pre-COVID; fewer ECE professionals believe students are less ready



Top Factors Associated with Readiness

- In **past research** in Alameda County, **teacher ratings** of readiness were strongly associated with factors like child health & well-being, ECE attendance, kindergarten transition supports, father involvement, lower levels of parenting stress, family socioeconomics, demographics, and development
- In the **current study**, **parent ratings** of readiness were strongly associated with many of the same factors:

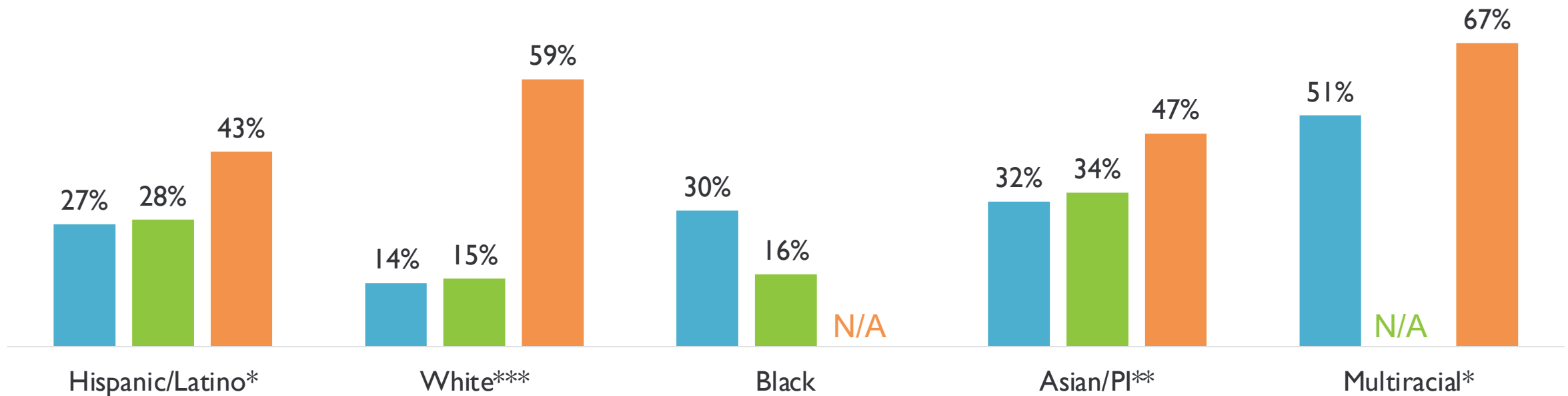


Parent/Caregiver Perceptions of Readiness, by Income

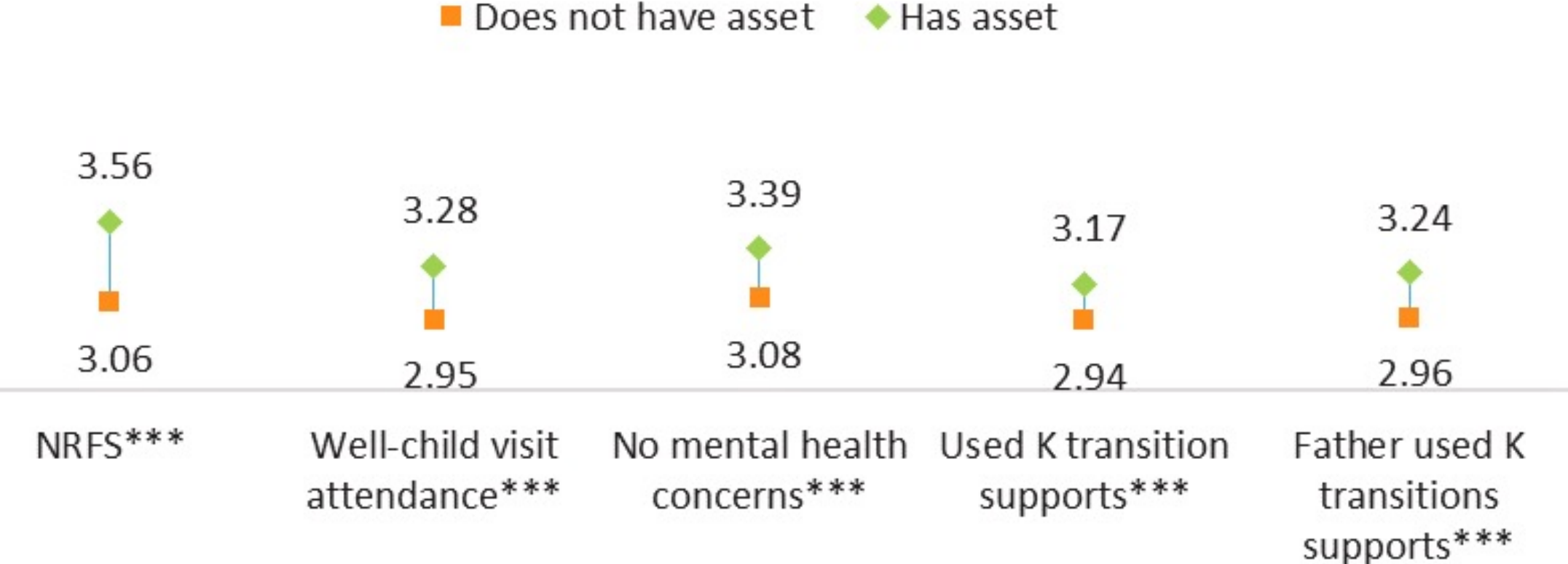


Percent of Parents/Caregivers who Say Child is Ready for Kindergarten Overall, by Race/Ethnicity and Income

■ Under \$50K ■ \$50K-\$99,999 ■ \$100K or more



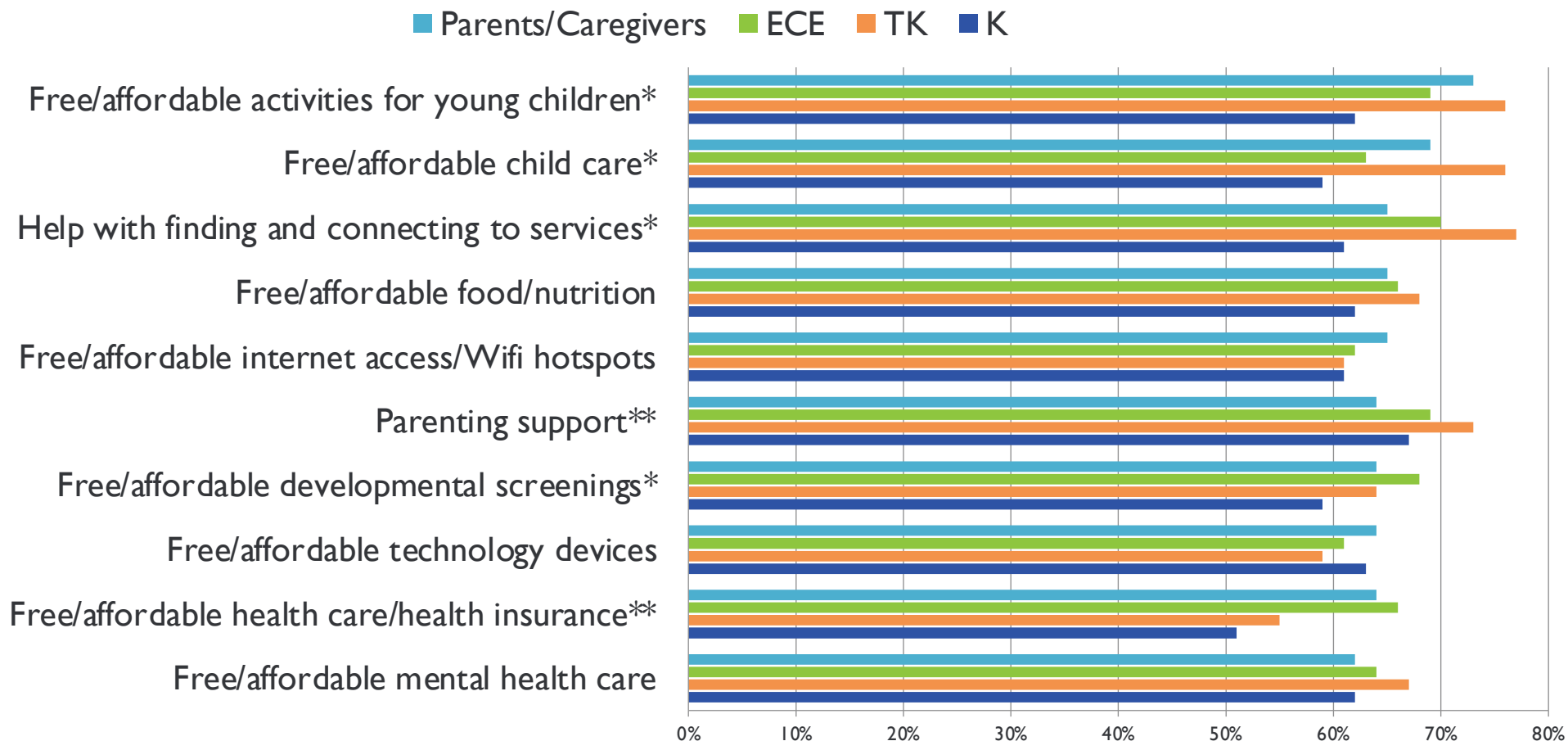
Parent/Caregiver Perceptions of Readiness, by Assets



Note: N=1,905 (weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the Zip Code distribution of the young child population in the county. Numbers reflect average overall readiness on a 4-point scale. ***Differences are significant at $p < 0.001$. Estimates are adjusted for other significant factors in the regression model.

Community Supports Families Need

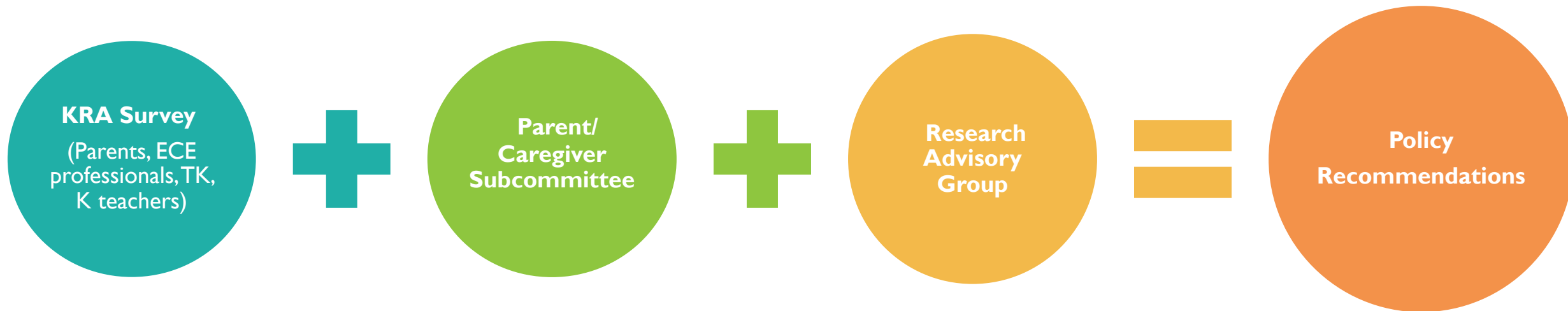
- The top supports families need include activities for children, child care, and help with finding and connecting to resources



Research Advisory Group Priorities & Recommendations



KRA Policy Recommendations



Key Priorities:

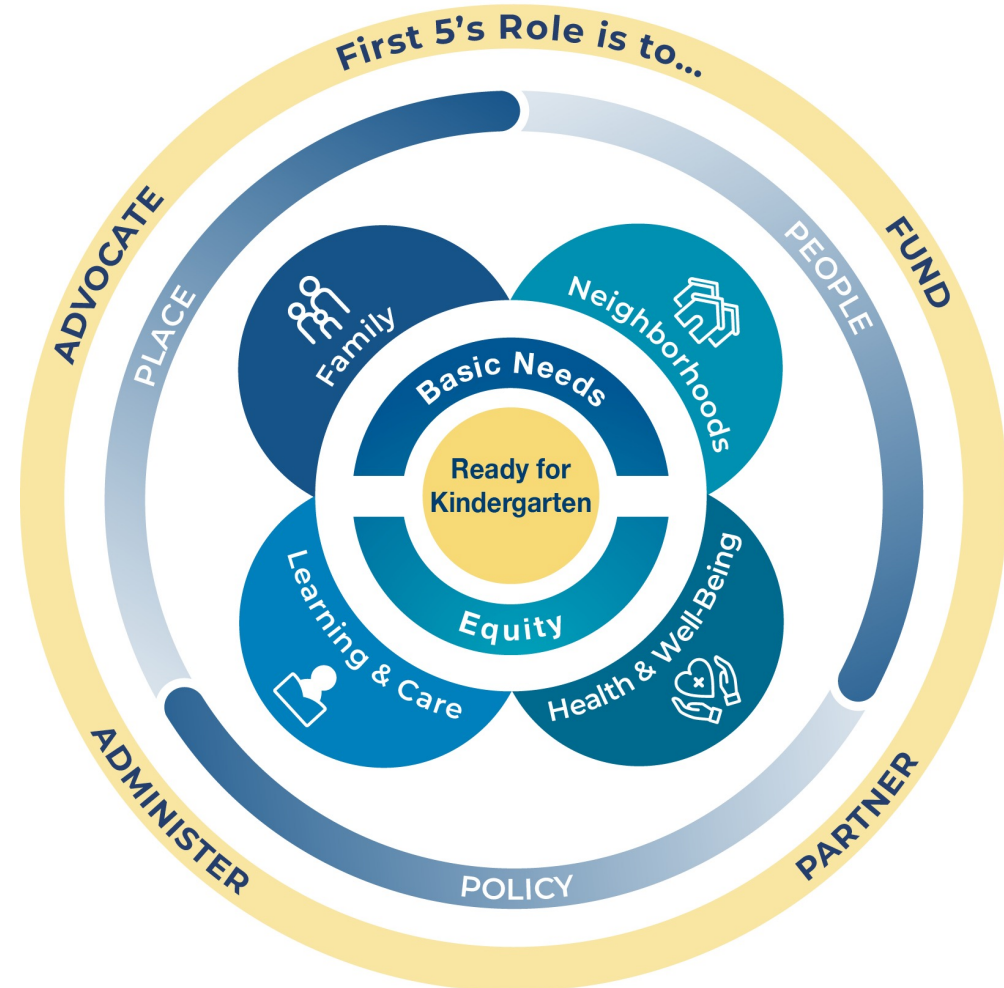
- Economic supports
- Mental health
- Family navigation and care coordination
- Affordable, quality child care
- Community investments
- Racial Justice
- Stable and consistent funding

In upcoming slides:

A * signals a top policy priority identified by the Research Advisory Group

3 Categories of Findings & Recommendations

1. Supporting *Children and Families*
2. Supporting *Communities*
3. Supporting *ECE Professionals, Teachers, and Care and Education Systems*



Findings & Recommendations:
Supporting Children and Families





Economic Supports and Basic Needs

FINDINGS

As in past research, family income was strongly related to readiness

- 29 families in the study participated in the Oakland Resilient Families guaranteed income pilot; they reported significantly higher readiness than other similar families
- Families want policymakers to invest in supporting families' basic needs, including food and housing
- Help with finding and connecting to resources is a top need for families (reported by 65% of families)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support policies that **increase job creation with family sustaining wages, economic supports like Universal Basic Income and expand programming that supports family's basic needs like** diapers, freeing up resources to purchase other necessities like child care, housing, transportation.*
- Strengthen policies and practices that **expand access to quality affordable housing and utility assistance.***
- **Continue policies that were implemented during the pandemic to improve access to services** including Medi-Cal continuous eligibility, free school meals to all children, and flexible redetermination processes for Cal Fresh and WIC.

“The Child Tax Credit and the Universal Income are programs that are proven to improve the lives of children. It keeps food on tables, rent paid and allows parents to pay for sports or other fun things children need. They need to be permanent.”

Parent survey respondent



Child Health/Mental Health & Well-Being

FINDINGS

Child health and well-being associated with higher readiness

- Over half of ECE professionals and K/TK teachers say absences and illness increased during COVID
- Compared to 2019, the percent receiving screenings dropped by as much as 19 points
- 37% of children missed a health check-up during COVID
- Child emotional well-being and health/safety are the top concerns for ECE professionals and K/TK teachers
- Percent of parents very concerned about child well-being increased 22 points during COVID

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Systems need to improve access to **affordable, culturally responsive, mental health services and supports** for families and children within their community. *
- Systems need to expand access to **quality health, vision and dental care services** for children and their parents/caregivers in the community.

“Kids need social and emotional support at school to help with the mental health impacts of pandemic isolation.”

Parent survey respondent



Parent/Caregiver Experiences of Stress and Discrimination

FINDINGS

Past research in Alameda County found lower levels of parenting stress were linked to higher readiness

- The percent of parents/caregivers reporting high stress levels increased 13 points during COVID
- Experiences of discrimination almost 10 times higher in county relative to national sample
 - Black and multiracial parents/caregivers over twice as likely as White parents/caregivers to report experiencing discrimination
- Families want policy makers to fund/provide more mental health services

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Invest in programs, services, and policies that are affirming and responsive to the cultural and language needs of communities to **address historical inequities and mitigate current experiences of discrimination.***
- Invest in **family resource centers, provide access to resources and navigation support.**
- Invest in **parent/caregiver peer groups**, including those that are culturally, gender specific.

“We need more mental health support for students, their families, and educators.”

K/TK teacher survey respondent



Early Care & Education

FINDINGS

Past research in Alameda County found ECE participation predicts higher readiness

- Families reported needing activities for young children and child care the most when asked what supports they need (needed by 73% and 69% of parents/caregivers, respectively)
- 75% of families reported barriers to ECE, primarily closures, reduced hours, and safety concerns due to COVID, and the cost of care
- Families want policymakers to fund/provide more affordable, high-quality child care

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase access to **affordable, quality child care options.***
- Expand **apprenticeships and workforce pipelines via Early Care and Education for parents.**
- Expand **quality development/educational experiences for children in family, friend and neighbor care.**
- Increase **child care based food programs.**

“Helping pay for child care has been the biggest help I’ve received this year.”

Parent survey respondent

Findings & Recommendations: *Supporting Communities*





Family Navigation and Care Coordination

FINDINGS

Connection to resources was significantly correlated with higher readiness

- 65% of families said help connecting to resources was important to them, but only 12% said they had received this kind of help
- Community resource use was lower in 2021 compared to 2019
- Help Me Grow participants were more likely than other caregivers to say they were connected to resources like free food and other basic needs, playgroups, and parent/caregiver groups

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase **identification of and support for children with special needs**. One strategy is to improve connections to early screening and intervention services and systems in the community.*
- Support strategies and programs that improve timely **access to community supports through family navigation and care coordination**.

“More communication is needed with the community to let them know about the help that exists in our area.”

Parent survey respondent

Neighborhoods, Assets, and Place-Based Investments

FINDINGS

Families who resided in a higher-income neighborhood reported higher readiness

Research shows a positive correlation between neighborhood assets and readiness, regardless of family income

- Neighborhood assets were lower in 2021 compared to 2019

Receiving help from the place-based Neighborhoods Ready for School (NRFS) initiative was associated with higher readiness overall

- NRFS families reported using more community resources

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Invest in the **local economic development** to support job creation and advance living wages particularly for Black and Brown communities.*
- Advance policies that **promote family-friendly neighborhoods**.*
- Increase **family leadership opportunities and civic engagement**.
- Expand **place-based strategies and intentional partnerships**.

“We need safe, clean, green spaces for families to access in East Oakland. We need playgrounds that have grass and shade and bathrooms. We need places to gather as neighbors. We need access to the places that we can’t afford. Zoos, aquariums, museums etc.”



Kindergarten Transition Supports

FINDINGS

Use of kindergarten transition supports, especially among fathers, linked to higher readiness

- Use of kindergarten transition supports by families dropped from 2019 (e.g., 87% visited the school in 2019, while 44% visited in 2021)
- Over half of K/TK teachers and 4 in 10 ECE professionals reported that transition activities were moved online or cancelled during COVID
- Some transition supports were *more likely* to be offered by K/TK schools in 2021 compared to 2019 (e.g., parent-teacher meetings, home visits), while others were less likely (e.g., kindergarten orientations)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Expand access to kindergarten readiness activities and transition supports** that are accessible to all families within their community. Support includes summer programs, play groups, parent support, school events, and activities for children in K/1st grade who missed opportunities because of the pandemic.
- Promote policies and practices that intentionally **engage and welcome fathers in programs and services** from prenatal to kindergarten transition.

“I have had good to excellent engagement with my families because I offer both in person and zoom meetings for required conferences as well as optional conferences when parents need to talk.”

K/TK teacher survey respondent

Findings & Recommendations:
*Supporting ECE Professionals,
Teachers, and Care and
Education Systems*



Support for ECE Professionals & TK/K Teachers

FINDINGS

ECE professionals and K/TK teachers need support to manage the stress and challenges of COVID

- Stress among ECE professionals and K/TK teachers has increased during COVID pandemic and is highest among K teachers (51% pre-COVID, 88% in the past week), relative to TK teachers and ECE professionals
- Those who reported high levels of stress were over 4 times more likely to say they plan to leave the profession
- ECE professionals experienced the greatest changes to their hours and income during COVID: 49% reported decreased hours, 43% decreased wages, and 57% decreased household income

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Access to affordable quality **mental health and self-care resources for ECE professionals and educators**, as well as mental health consultation for the classroom to support child educational achievement.*
- Advance policies and supports **for professional development, capacity building, and equitable compensation and working conditions** which support providers and quality care.

“Although teachers have access to these human resources for mindfulness and trauma education, we are asked to take our own time to utilize the resources. Unfortunately, many teachers do not because working beyond your workday is stressful in itself.”

K/TK teacher survey respondent



Support for Care & Education Systems

FINDINGS

Families want policy makers to improve teaching and schools through teacher and student supports

- 70% of ECE professionals, 58% of TK teachers, and 46% of K teachers need training in Social Emotional Learning (SEL)
- ECE professionals and K/TK teachers are:
 - *most* likely to have access to COVID supplies (available to 82% of ECE professionals, 96% of TK, and 85% of K teachers)
 - *least* likely to have access to mental health/self-care resources (available to 17% of ECE professionals, 26% of TK, and 23% of K teachers)
- Fewer than one-third of ECE professionals have access to supports for families like family services referral lists (29%) and translation support (21%) or child mental health consultants (19%)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support **communication, collaboration, and partnerships** between the home, informal care settings, early care and education professionals, community programs, and schools to facilitate the transition to TK/K.*
- **Expand family navigation and care coordination services to ECE settings and schools to promote community partnerships** that help connect families to available programs and services in the community.*
- **Supports to mitigate learning** including smaller ratios and training to support students' social-emotional development.

"I would say [we need] more funding for SEL programs and staff training to help the children better cope with the new stresses they are encountering due to COVID/Pandemic."

ECE Professional survey respondent

Research Advisory Group Perspective



Edgar Chavez
Executive Director, Hayward
Promise Neighborhoods



LaRichea Smith
Parent and ECE Center Director



Clarissa Doutherd
Executive Director,
Parent Voices Oakland

Questions?

