

## Slide Deck

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# The Impact of COVID-19 on Childcare Access, Maternal Wellbeing, and Labor Force Participation

*A Mecklenburg County Case Study*



# Project Scope

Our project aims to inform WomenNC about the current state of childcare access in Mecklenburg County and its relationship to maternal wellbeing and labor force participation.

To do this, our team:

- Conducted a comprehensive literature review of relevant economics, public policy, and sociology research
- Created, distributed, and analyzed two surveys, the first going to childcare providers in Mecklenburg County, the second going to Mecklenburg County mothers and primary caregivers
- Identified childcare providers in Mecklenburg County and Facebook groups for Mecklenburg County mothers

With this information, our team will be able to:

- \* Make public policy recommendations for childcare access at a county- and state-wide level
- \* Create a foundation of information and recommendations for future research



## Client Goals



Expand WomenNC's existing research to include the Mecklenburg County area.



Gain an understanding of Mecklenburg County, maternal wellbeing and labor market participation using current literature.



Gather insight on the relationship between maternal wellbeing, labor market participation and childcare during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Produce tangible policy recommendations for the state and municipal levels.



Establish a foundation of childcare research that WomenNC scholars can build upon in future studies.



# Expanding WomenNC's Research & Gaining an Understanding of Mecklenburg County, Maternal Wellbeing, and Labor Market Participation

To complete this goal, our team conducted a literature review so that we would have a basic understanding of the relationships between childcare access, maternal wellbeing, and labor force participation. Additionally, we conducted research on Mecklenburg County so we would have a better idea of the area we were studying.

**Our findings were divided into three main sections:**

-  **Overview of Mecklenburg County**
-  **Maternal Health and Wellbeing, Influential Factors, and Child Development**
-  **COVID-19 and the Labor Market**



# Overview of Mecklenburg County

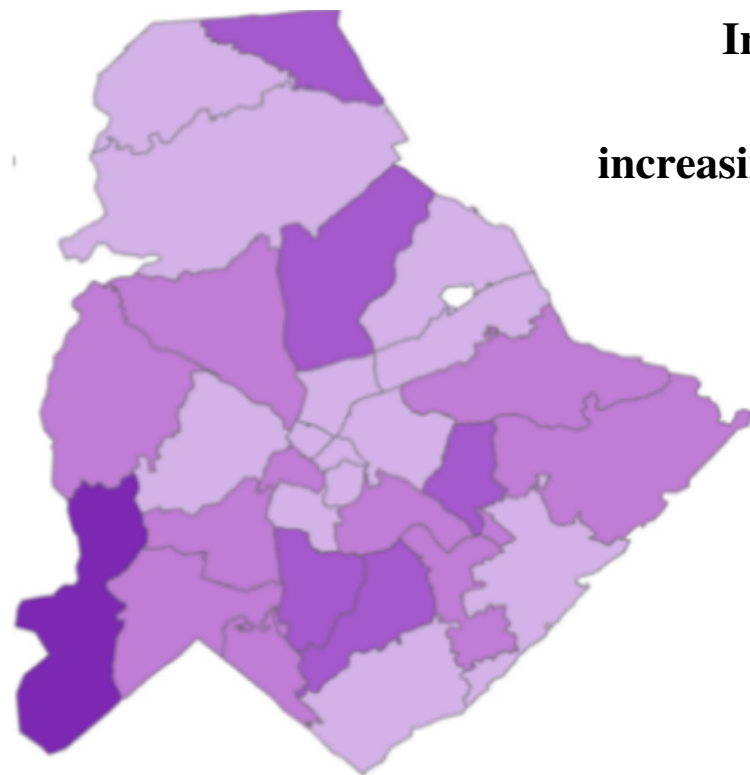
## *Main Findings*

- Charlotte is the **most populous city** in North Carolina and covers much of Mecklenburg County
- Mecklenburg County is one of the **ten fastest growing counties** in the United States (Khabazi, 2017)
- Charlotte's most prominent employer, Bank of America, encouraged investment in Charlotte that led to **extensive gentrification** (Smith & Graves, 2016)
- Mecklenburg County has a much larger proportion of **single-parent households** than the national proportion (Kramer, 2019)
- Mecklenburg County has partnered with Child Care Resources, Inc. (CCRI) to provide subsidized childcare to working families in Mecklenburg County (Child Care Resources Inc., 2019)
- As of 2019, **CCRI had served 6,315 families and 8,750 children** in Mecklenburg County.
- CCRI administered **\$61,684,710 in childcare subsidies**.
- CCRI delivered training, consultation, and coaching to **75 percent** of the licensed programs in Mecklenburg County to help early educators improve their knowledge, skills, and practices (Child Care Resources Inc., 2019)



# 1 Overview of Mecklenburg County

## Main Findings



**In Mecklenburg County, childcare supply is more adequate towards the center of the city, with the scarcity of supply increasing with the distance from Charlotte's city center (Belfield, 2020)**

*Children ages birth-5 in households with all parents present working as compared to the number of spaces in 4- and 5-star child care programs.*



Fewer spaces  
per child  
(26 children/slot)

More spaces  
per child  
(2.5 children/slot)

*Child Care Resources Inc. Annual Report. (2019).*



## Maternal Health and Wellbeing, Influential Factors, and Child Development

### *Main Findings*

- Social support systems can mitigate the negative influence of stress experienced by mothers (Ngai & Chan, 2011). The COVID-19 pandemic as **obliterated social support systems** through necessary quarantine and social distancing policies.
- The Family Enrichment Theory highlights the maternal emotional benefits of working, like improving confidence, opportunities for success, and alleviating financial stress (Teng et al., 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic has caused **a reduction in paid professional work hours** as children are unable to attend school and childcare centers (Huebener et al., 2020; Tani et al., 2020).
  - During the pandemic, **parents devote three hours per day to professional work**, whereas time devoted to housework can average around nine hours per day (Andrew et al., 2020).
- Men are more likely to think the bulk of this additional childcare and housework is evenly distributed; however, **women were more likely to report higher levels of anxiety** whereas their male counterparts reported increased relaxation during the COVID-19 pandemic (Heilman et al., 2020).





# ③ Women in the Labor Force pre-COVID-19

## *Main Findings*

- **Motherhood penalty:** a loss in wages compared with male colleagues attributed to women's need to reduce hours or take time out of the workforce sometime in the course of raising their children (Goldin 2019, Bertrand 2010, Kleven 2019.)
- **Second Shift:** a sociological phenomenon that describes how working mothers with male partners coming home from a full workday and completing a full load of household and caregiving labor. This leads to mothers having a more difficult time at work with less margin to balance a professional career and a family (Hochschild 1989).





# ③ Working Women During COVID-19

## *Main Findings*




- Time use data during the pandemic suggests that the second shift phenomenon has been amplified during the pandemic. When caregiving loads increased in March 2020 as schools and daycare centers closed, mothers in many different countries assumed the majority of the increased responsibility (Farre 2020, Hupkau 2020). Further, when even when a male partner was laid off and the female partner continued to work in the labor force, the female partner continued to bear a disproportionate share of the caregiving burden (Andrew 2020).



# Studying the relationship between maternal wellbeing, labor market participation and childcare during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We all know that the global pandemic of COVID-19 has impacted every aspect of our daily lives, therefore, it is the opportune time to measure how childcare services have changed, what primary caregiver's participation in the labor force market looks like today and how maternal wellbeing has been affected from it all. In order to research these details and the larger needs of the state, we narrowed down our research to the most populous and diversified areas of NC, Mecklenburg County.

## Overview:

-  **Preparation**
-  **Survey Design and Administration**
-  **Results and Outcomes**





## Preparation



Contacted over 400  
childcare facilities and services  
throughout Mecklenburg County, NC



UNC IRB approval:  
Non-Human Subject Research  
(NHSR)



## 2 Survey Design & Administration

### Surveys

Childcare  
Provider Survey



Caregiver Survey

Created appropriate  
questions & drafted  
consent forms

### Qualtrics

This online survey tool is:

- User-friendly
- Accessible via phone and/or computer
- Very elaborate in data reports
- Produces visualizations
- Distributes large email listservs

### Timeline



Live from April 1st-April 15th

- Initial email-April 1, 11am
  - Snowball Effect
- Follow-up email-April 12th, 9am
- Final email-April 14th, 1pm



## 2 Survey Design & Administration – Response Rate

Relying on snowball sampling and local social media groups for our caregiver survey has left us with an unknown N of people who received the caregiver survey. As a result, a response rate cannot be calculated.

Of the 263 emails our survey team sent, 29 emails bounced and 37 emails were duplicates. This means that our childcare provider survey reached 197 individual providers. We received 16 responses, making our response rate for the childcare provider survey 8.1%.

8%

OF CHILDCARE  
PROVIDERS  
COMPLETED THE  
SURVEY



## ② Survey Design & Administration – Barriers

- \* Incentive
- \* Social distancing
- \* Time constraints
- \* Dependency on technology
- \* Not a trusted community partner



*Photo accreditation: Green County Family YMCA*



## ③ Results and Outcomes – Primary Caregivers

After analyzing our survey results, we found some discrepancy with the population our survey reached and the population of Mecklenburg County at large.



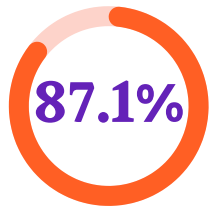
These differences may contribute to a skewed understanding of how COVID-19 has impacted childcare access, maternal wellbeing, and labor force participation.





## 3 Results and Outcomes – Primary Caregivers

### Survey Respondents



White



Bachelor's Degree  
or Higher

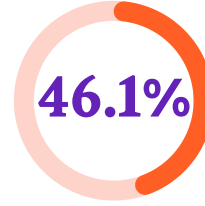


Single

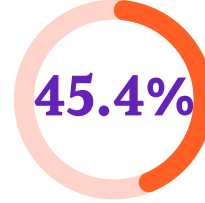
\$100,001-  
\$125,000

Median Income

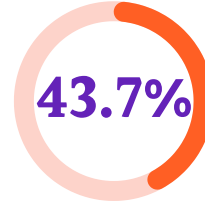
### Mecklenburg County



White



Bachelor's Degree  
or Higher



Single-Parent  
Households

\$66,641

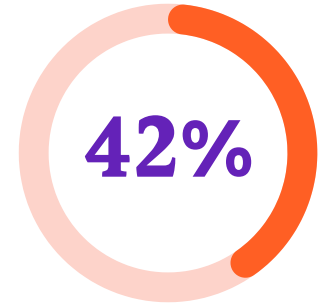
Median Income



## 3 Results and Outcomes – Primary Caregivers



Respondents reported high levels of stress and poor mental health outcomes



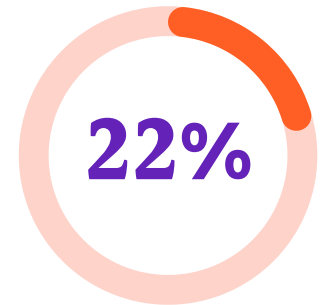
42.4% of respondents reported working from home as a result of COVID-19



96% of respondents identify as female

"I have had to work full time while taking care of my infant, and monitoring remote learning for my 6 year old

22% of respondents reported that they do not have access to child care (3.7% of respondents are currently on a waitlist for child care)



## 3 Results and Outcomes – Childcare Providers

75%

75% of facilities reported offering subsidized spots

29%

29.55% of respondents expressed that implementing social distancing was challenging

56%

56.25% of respondents reported a decrease in number of families served as a result of COVID-19

"Will your business be shut down if a child has COVID-19? Will you have enough funds saved to offset the cost of being closed?"

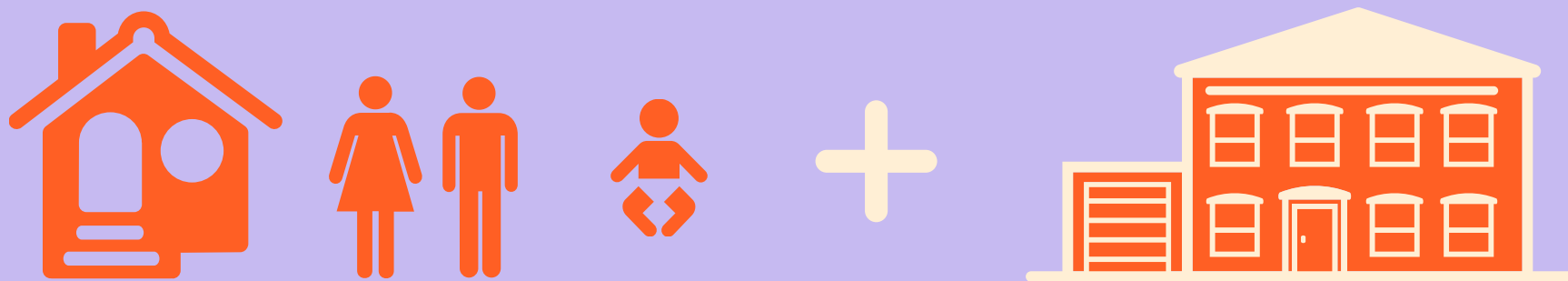
Respondents reported experiencing increased levels of anxiety and difficulties staffing their facilities as a result of COVID-19

"Staffing. We cannot find teachers willing to work."



## ③ Results and Outcomes – Overall

COVID-19 has negatively and significantly impacted child care from both a caregiver and care provider lens



# Moving Forward: Policy Recommendations

## Recommendations for Charlotte-Mecklenburg



Direct financial support of **shared-care** networks:

- \* Groups of providers networking to consolidate administrative, financial, and staffing burdens.



Reimplementation of DHHS Childcare subsidies:

- \* Provided by the state to providers based on maximum enrollment capacity.



Provisions for **mental-health** resources for caregivers:

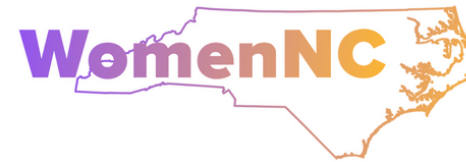
- \* State-supported hotlines, grants, and education.



# Moving Forward: Recommendations for WomenNC

- ① Expand on Caregiver Database to include **informal** facilities, with goal of obtaining more representative sample
- ② Re-administer survey with recommended **adjustments**:
  - \* Mail-in survey for low-tech centers
  - \* Spanish version for multi-lingual caregivers
  - \* Conduct focus groups alongside re-administered survey
- ③ Present identified gaps in accessibility to **stakeholders**





## Acknowledgements

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*-The WomenNC Capstone Team*