

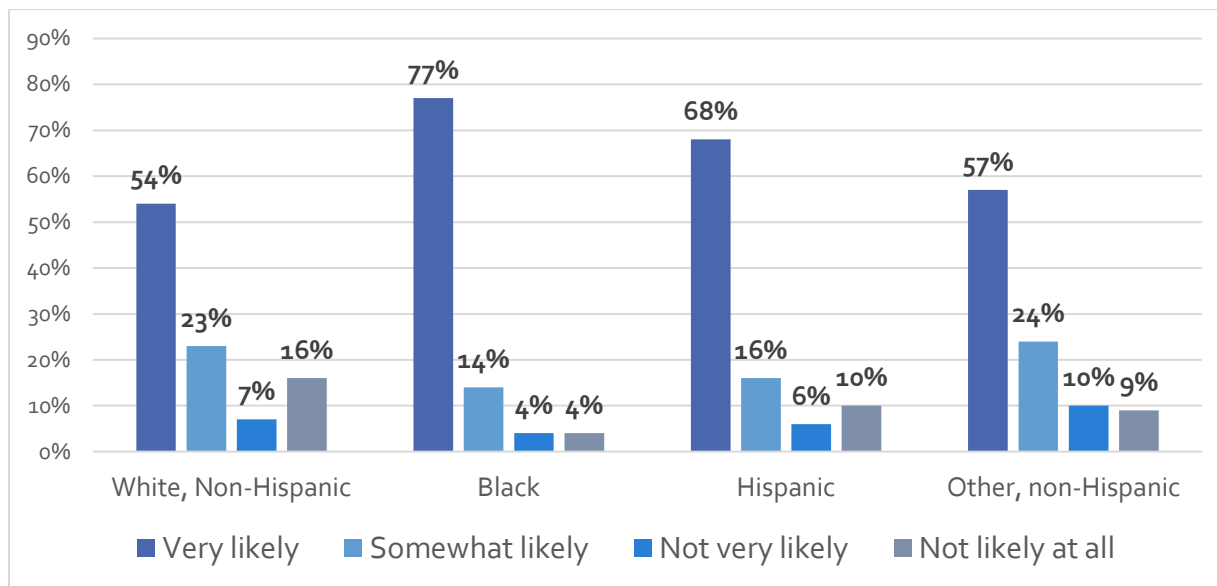
Who would attend UPK?

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With Universal Pre-K (UPK) receiving renewed attention at national and state levels, one question that policy developers must address is how many families will participate if high quality preschool education is offered to all 3- and 4-year-olds at no cost to their families. The few current statewide UPK programs—including those that start at age 3 in the District of Columbia and Vermont—are difficult to generalize to the rest of our highly diverse nation. To obtain more insight, NIEER asked a nationally representative sample of parents of 3-to 5-year-olds how they would respond to UPK. The survey was conducted from late May to early June, 2021 and included 794 parents whose children could be eligible for UPK next fall. Despite lingering concerns about the pandemic, 81 percent said they would be very (60%) or somewhat (21%) likely to enroll their children if offered free, high-quality pre-K in the fall. Few parents said they were not at all (13%) or not very (7%) likely to enroll a child in UPK. An 81 percent enrollment rate would be a substantial increase over recent rates of preschool participation.

Parent-reported willingness to enroll their children in free, high-quality pre-K varied by ethnic background. African-American and Hispanic parents were more likely to report they were very willing to enroll in UPK and less likely to report that they were not very or not at all likely to enroll. This is especially noteworthy for Hispanic parents as their preschoolers have had the lowest rates of pre-K participation (public or private), only about 50 percent attended any preschool program in 2019.

Reported Likelihood of Participating in Proposed Free High-Quality PreK for All



About NIEER

The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at the Graduate School of Education, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, conducts and disseminates independent research and analysis to inform early childhood education policy.

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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. Kwanghee Jung is an Assistant Research Professor at NIEER.