

6TH ANNUAL MODERN FAMILY INDEX

Working parents are still struggling to manage work and family commitments, worrying that if they are honest about these commitments, it could cost them their jobs.



WHAT'S TROUBLING WORKING PARENTS

Since 2014, **Bright Horizons**[®] has been taking an annual pulse on the topics that matter most to working parents. In 2014, parents told us that family meant fired; in 2015 they told us they were burning out. And in 2020, this year's Modern Family Index, commissioned by Bright Horizons and conducted by Kelton Global, shows the grim reality – that in six years, not much has changed.

A revisit of key MFI issues shows working parents are still in the crosshairs. They remain fearful of both judgement from colleagues, and the repercussions family responsibilities will have on their careers. They're making tough choices between wanting to take on more at work and risking disappointment at home when they prioritize job over family events. And they remain afraid that the mere mention of family responsibilities could cost them their job. As such, in 2020, as in past years, working parents are still resorting to little lies to help them get by, and they are still burning out.

And it's not just the conflicts of work and family at issue. As we head into the new decade, this year's survey shows working parents dogged by a new worry – namely the political climate, bullying, and social media, and how it's affecting their children. Added to the stress of deadlines, meetings, and "on-call" workplace cultures that never seem to turn off, it's weighing parents down, and burning them out in greater numbers than ever before.

RULE #1: DON'T TALK ABOUT FAMILY

Data from this year's Modern Family Index shows that working parents are still unable to be honest and open at work out of fear that their family responsibilities will hold them back from career success. What's worse – the number of working parents who are sneaking out of work to take care of family has either remained the same or increased over the last six years, showing that while today's parents are more engaged in family life than ever before, they still don't feel it will be supported at work.

- ▶ A higher percentage of working parents today sneak out of work to take care of family responsibilities than in 2014, with 54% leaving unannounced because of family emergencies (up from 47% in 2014) and 47% leaving to take their children to the doctor (up from 38%).
- ▶ There has been no improvement over the past six years in the percentage of parents reluctant to talk family responsibilities with colleagues, with 1 in 4 faking sick days and 1 in 5 feeling they have to outright lie about their family responsibilities.
- ▶ Parents feel pressured to be available for work matters at all times. For some, this is the nature of their job (45%) or their own working style (43%). However, working parents say that their boss (25%), senior leaders (21%), or their peers (16%) expect them to be available outside of their normal hours.
- ▶ Even while working long hours, many still worry that attending to family responsibilities may result in getting fired (32%), being denied a raise (28%), or missing out on a promotion (26%), with no change in the last six years.
- ▶ According to last year's Modern Family Index, 81% of working mothers are nervous to approach their boss about certain topics, with 21% being worried to tell their boss they are expecting a child – almost double that from 2014's index (12%).

1 in 4 fake sick days

1 in 5 lie about their family responsibilities



Working parents worry that attending to family responsibilities may result in them:

Being fired
32%

Missing out on a promotion
26%

Being denied a raise
28%



PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENTS, PERSONAL COSTS

Parents pay the price at work and at home. Working parents report that if they didn't resort to some dishonesty at work, the alternative would be to miss out on family events altogether. The disappointment from their spouse and children that result from putting work first may even threaten the very family foundation working parents are trying so hard to nurture.

- ▶ 41% of working parents say their partner has given them a tough time for missing special occasions with their loved ones.
- ▶ 27% of working parents admit they've been unable to help with household responsibilities as a result of their job.
- ▶ More than half (53%) of working parents admit that their child has been upset that their job has caused them to miss a school or extracurricular event – an increase of 7% since 2017.
- ▶ More than 3 in 5 (62%) working parents admit they have been unable to participate in a family activity because of work.
- ▶ Many working parents have been forced to cancel a doctor's appointment (36%), missed an activity such as their child's sporting event, school play, or recital (36%), or had to skip family dinner (33%) due to work responsibilities.
- ▶ More than 27% have even been unable to go on a family vacation due to work.

Over half of working parents say their child has been upset that their job has caused them to miss a school or extracurricular event – **an increase of 7%** since 2017.



WORKING FATHERS FEEL THE PRESSURE TOO

The effects of unsupportive workplace cultures aren't only weighing on women. Fathers want to be increasingly involved in family responsibilities but struggle with colleagues and supervisors whose attitudes and expectations haven't caught up. Working fathers feel the need to tip-toe around their colleagues even more than working mothers, with 59% admitting they have snuck out of work to take care of their family because they couldn't be upfront with their colleagues, compared to 42% of working mothers.

- ▶ Mothers may be more likely than working fathers to burn out (43% vs. 32%), but fathers are more likely to trade in their work responsibilities to recover from burnout (70% vs. 65%). They are also more likely than working mothers to ask for a lighter workload (19% vs. 13%).
- ▶ Working fathers are more likely than working mothers to miss family events (65% vs. 58%) and family dinners (38% vs. 29%) because of work.

BURNOUT AMONG WORKING PARENTS HIGHER THAN EVER

Between being stretched thin at work and at home, keeping up with the little lies they tell to get by, and facing disappointment from family members, working parents are increasingly burning out.

- ▶ Today, the number of working parents who are suffering from burnout today all or most of the time (38%) has increased by a third since 2015.
- ▶ Nearly all (87%) working parents admit they feel stressed at least once a day while they are plugging away at work – a rate that hasn't budged since 2017.
- ▶ Balancing work and family is a major concern, with more than 2 in 5 (42%) stressing about it during work hours.

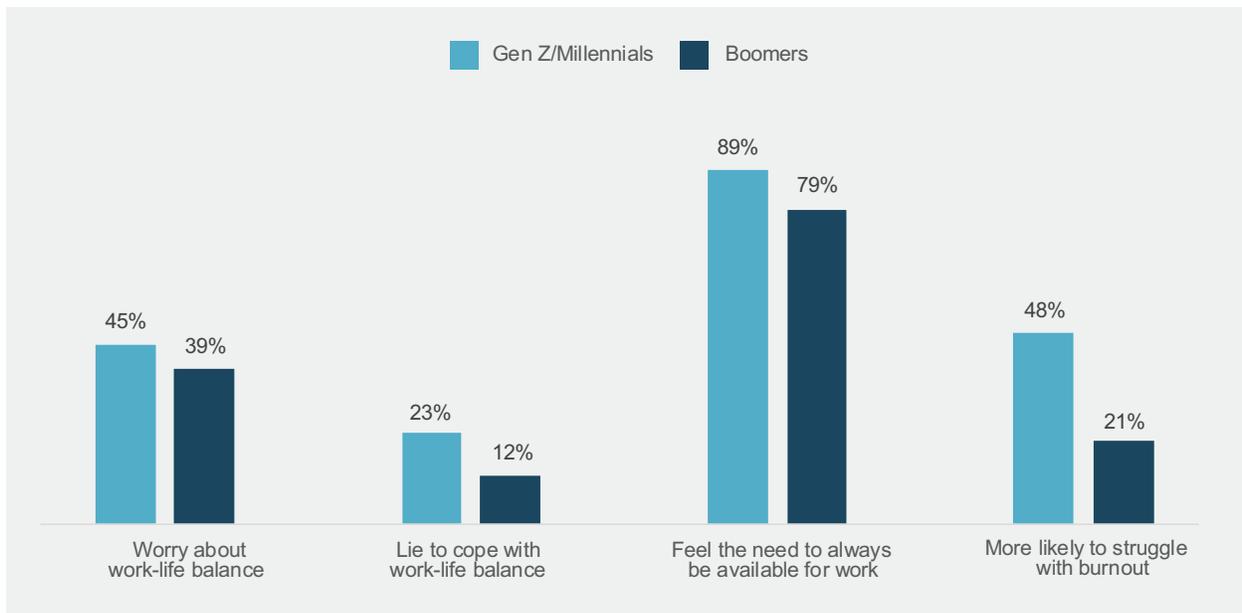
38%

of working parents suffer from burnout today – an **increase of a third** since 2015



GEN Z AND MILLENNIAL PARENTS STRUGGLE THE MOST

Young Gen Z and Millennial parents may have envisioned more enlightened workplaces than their own parents had. But this new generation is finding work-family conflicts an even bigger struggle than the Boomers who came before them.



POLITICAL CLIMATE WEIGHS HEAVILY ON WORKING PARENTS' MINDS

For parents, work isn't the only issue weighing heavily on them. In an election year and uncertain political climate, many working parents are concerned about the culture and how it's affecting their children.

- ▶ 87% worry about their children's future success given the current political climate
- ▶ 72% worry about their ability to pay for schooling
- ▶ 70% are anxious about how technology will affect their children
- ▶ 60% worry about the impact of social media
- ▶ 59% admit they frequently worry about the state of U.S. politics
- ▶ 57% worry about their child being bullied
- ▶ 49% worry about school safety

PARENTING MATTERS ARE NON-PARTISAN

At a time when the political parties are more divided than ever, work-family conflicts unite working parents, with parents on both sides of the aisle struggling with this tension.

- ▶ Regardless of party affiliation, parents feel they cannot be candid about their family responsibilities. Equal numbers of parents who identify as Republican and Democrat (55%) have had to sneak out of work to take care of a family matter; 25% have resorted to faking a sick day or lying.
- ▶ Parents registered as Republicans and Democrats both feel, in equal numbers, that they have to be available for work-related matters at all hours (over 85%); and both are equally likely to have missed out on family activities because of work (Democrat 63% vs. Republican 62%).
- ▶ Parents in both parties – Republicans, 38% vs. Democrats, 35% – are burning out.

Parents in both parties even worry equally about issues related to their children's future, including the education that they will receive in the future (Democrats 81% vs. Republicans 80%) the impact of technology (Republicans 72% vs. Democrats 70%), and bullying (Democrats 58% vs. Republicans 57%).



FALLOUT FOR EMPLOYERS

With employee burnout at an all-time high, employers will pay the ultimate price by not providing a supportive environment that enables working parents to be successful both at work and at home. According to the survey, employees are willing to walk out the door if things don't improve, and a significant majority will pull away to be able to manage their burnout.

- ▶ More than two-thirds (68%) of working parents are willing to abandon their professional commitments to deal with burnout. Almost half (46%) would take more time off, and 23% would seek more vacation days.
- ▶ 26% want a reduced work schedule and 16% would ask for a lighter workload.
- ▶ 13% would quit their jobs without having a new one lined up.

More than two-thirds

of working parents are **willing to abandon their professional commitments** to deal with burnout.



A NEW WORKPLACE FOR THE NEW DECADE

Six years of Modern Family Index data does more than illustrate the challenges facing working parents; it also sees continuing trends – in burnout and turnover – that promise to cost employers as much as parents. And many parents worry that it's only going to get worse, with a quarter concerned about longer hours and more family conflicts.

In 2020, employers that want to recruit and retain top talent have their work cut out for them. Modern working parents are determined to prioritize families. More than half of parents we surveyed for our 2016 Modern Family Index said they'd take a new job for less money, but more family friendliness. This year's MFI – showing that the majority of parents would leave jobs to manage burnout – hasn't backed off that trend. Employers need to bring workplaces in line with modern priorities. They need to meaningfully acknowledge – with policy and benefits – the challenges that come with working and raising children. And they need to address their cultures so that parents can deal with responsibilities out in the open, and no longer have to pretend their children don't exist.

ABOUT THE BRIGHT HORIZONS MODERN FAMILY INDEX

The Modern Family Index is an internet-based survey conducted by Kelton Global from November 4 to November 15, 2019. The sample consisted of 2,023 working parents aged 18+, with children under the age of 18 at home. The survey was conducted online and has a margin of error of +/- 2.2%.

*Note: Please refer to the survey as the Bright Horizons Modern Family Index.



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