



The Modern Family Index

Bright Horizons® has spent more than a decade tracking trends in working families. The resulting Modern Family Index research study highlights parents' unique challenges and priorities over the course of a consequential period in history. In 2026, this landmark piece of thought leadership, conducted by the Harris Poll for Bright Horizons, will focus on a variety of important topics impacting families, with waves of survey data released throughout the year. The first wave for 2026 is below.

Vanishing Villages

Most working parents say raising children takes a village. But many are struggling to find theirs — especially when it comes to reliable child care. Working parents say support villages are smaller than they used to be. They feel guilty asking for help, and the absence of consistent, reliable child care affects their productivity, and their ability to work at all. This struggle leaves a deeper impact, namely day-to-day stress, and a constant worry about child care arrangements falling through. As they grapple with piecing together care, they're also yearning for more stable options, and proactive support from their employer.





Shrinking support networks:

- ▶ **77% of working parents** of children under age 18 agree that “it takes a village” to raise children.
- ▶ **81% of working parents** feel that the “village” of others that parents can rely on to help support child care during the workday has shrunk compared to prior generations.
- ▶ **88% of working parents** who have others to rely on during the workday say that they would prefer to have consistent people in their life to watch/care for their children while they work.
- ▶ **25% of working parents** surveyed are also currently providing unpaid care for an older parent or other relative.
- ▶ **60% of working parents** who have others to rely on during the workday admit that in order to work, they have to rely on a patchwork of other people to help watch/care for their children — this rises to 71% for those that are also providing senior care to an older parent or other relative.
- ▶ **45% of working parents** are concerned their children’s care is not consistent (e.g., their children are around different adults, have inconsistent rules to follow depending on who is watching them, etc.).

Asking for help/being a burden:

- ▶ **62% of working parents** say that finding other people to watch/care for their children during the workday is more difficult than they expected.
- ▶ **62%** feel they are at the mercy of other people’s generosity when it comes to child care during the workday.

When scheduled care falls through:

- ▶ **56% of working parents** are constantly stressed about what they would do if their regular child care fell through or was unexpectedly unavailable during the workday.
- ▶ On average, among parents of children 0-12, care falls through **4 times per month**. For those with older children ages 13-17, care falls through **3 times per month**.
- ▶ **56% of working parents** try to ask different people to watch/care for their children during the workday to avoid over-burdening a single person.

Looking at options:

- ▶ **63% of working parents** wish they had more reliable, formal care for their children during the workday.
- ▶ **65% of working parents** wish their employer played a bigger role in their “parenting village” by providing access to resources (e.g., an on-site care center, back-up services/options, etc.) to help them care for their children.

Method statement

The research was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll between September 23-25, 2025, among 2,095 adults ages 18 and older — among whom 719 are a parent or guardian of child(ren) under 18 years of age (“parents”), and 588 are an employed parent or guardian of child(ren) under 18 years of age (“working parents”). Data are weighted where necessary by age, gender, region, race/ethnicity, household income, education, marital status, size of household, and political party affiliation to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population.

Respondents are selected among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. The sample data is accurate to within ± 2.5 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. This credible interval will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to other multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including, but not limited to coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments.



Contact us to learn more

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