

The Modern Family Index

Bright Horizons® has spent a decade tracking trends in working families, with the annual Modern Family Index research study highlighting parents' unique challenges and priorities over the course of a consequential period in history. In 2025, this landmark piece of thought leadership, conducted by the Harris Poll for Bright Horizons, will focus on important topics impacting families, with several waves of survey data scheduled to be released throughout the year.

What skills do parents want most for their children's future?

In the age of AI, new research shows human competencies in a virtual tie with some STEM skills for the top spot. Responses to the latest Modern Family Index illustrate distinct parental desires for early education, with creativity and confidence-building considered just as important in their children's classrooms as learning the alphabet. The takeaway is a generation of parents who see preschool and early learning as a foundation for more than just being ready for kindergarten — but for success in life, too.



Social skills a key focus

- **82%** of parents with children under age 18 agree that children entering kindergarten with confidence is just as important as being able to say the alphabet.
- **73%** feel that AI will have a significant impact on the skills that are important for children to develop early on.
- **79%** feel that developing creative skills (e.g., using their imagination, exploring new ideas, play) will be crucial for children growing up in an AI-driven world.
- **73%** feel that the rise of AI has made durable skills (i.e., “soft skills” such as creativity, social skills, emotional skills) just as important for children to develop early on as traditional academic skills (e.g., reading, writing, math).
- Similar proportions of parents say it’s absolutely essential / very important for children to develop durable skills such as socially responsible behavior (**75%**), social skills (**74%**), self-help skills (**73%**), creative skills (**72%**), or emotional skills (**69%**), as it is for them to develop more traditional academic skills like reading (**73%**), math skills (**70%**), or writing (**69%**) to prepare them for kindergarten.

Angling for readiness beyond kindergarten

- **83%** of parents with children under age 6 recognize the need to develop holistic skills (both traditional academic skills and soft skills) to be prepared for kindergarten.
- Parents with children under age 6 say social skills (**69%**) and creative skills (**69%**) are absolutely essential/very important in preparing for kindergarten, followed by reading (**68%**) and math (**67%**) skills.
- **71%** worry about properly preparing their children for kindergarten.
- **80%** place the responsibility on preschools and expect their child’s preschool to teach them the skills they need for kindergarten.
- **81%** feel preschools should build a foundation for life success beyond just being ready for kindergarten, **44%** who strongly agree with this sentiment.
- **80%** wish they had resources and support to better understand how to prepare their children for kindergarten.

Method statement

The research was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll between June 17-20, 2025, among 2,100 adults ages 18 and older — among whom 653 are a parent or guardian of child(ren) under 18 years of age (“parents”) and 235 are a parent or guardian of child(ren) under 6 years of age (“parents of younger children”). 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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