



A Generation Forever Changed by the Pandemic

April 14, 2021

Bright Horizons Modern Family Index Reveals Parents Worried about Children's View of What a Healthy Childhood Should Be and Lasting Impact on Social and Emotional Development

NEWTON, Mass.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Apr. 14, 2021-- One year after the COVID-19 pandemic swept the world, working parents are more concerned than ever before about how the worries, fears and pressures driven by the last year are impacting their family. According to the seventh-annual Modern Family Index (MFI), commissioned by Bright Horizons (NYSE:BFAM) and conducted by Kelton Global, 79% of working parents are worried about their children's view of what a healthy childhood should be, as well as their children's confidence and self-esteem (71%) and their waning interest in activities outside the house (73%).

Without consistent child care or in-person schooling, parents are predicting negative consequences for their children, with 69% somewhat or very concerned that their children will not be able to meet key developmental milestones, particularly social and emotional milestones (76%), followed by communication (70%), cognitive (68%), and physical (64%) development.

When it comes to academic performance, 30% of working parents with school-age children learning from home say that their children are falling behind academically, and 74% of parents of high school students are very concerned their children will not be prepared for the college admissions process.

Parents are not just focused on the immediate impacts of the pandemic. Many are concerned these negative effects will be long-term, primarily on academic progress (43%), social and emotional development (42%), and communication skills (39%).

"Social isolation compounded with the stress and anxiety of the pandemic have turned children's worlds upside down and forced many of them to carry some of the mental load that was once reserved for the adults in the family," says Rachel Robertson, Vice President of Education and Development at Bright Horizons. "It has never been more important to focus on children's social and emotional development and well-being. The good news for parents is that children are resilient and have enormous capacity to adapt. This has not been a year lost, but a year changed, and as the world re-opens and children begin to socialize and reengage in group environments, we will find they quickly develop many of those skills that may have been delayed."

The mental load parents were carrying before COVID-19 has only been further exacerbated by the pandemic. Nine in ten parents are worried about their own (91%) mental load and that of their spouse/partner (91%). They are also worried about the impact their mental well-being is having on the health of their family, with 28% admitting that concerns about their family dynamic outweigh everything else.

Returning to "Normal"

As working parents look to turn the page on the pandemic, they are focused on getting their children back in school and with their friends, with most agreeing that in-person school (90%) and interacting and collaborating with friends (93%) are important for their children's return to "normal" life.

When it comes to work, most working parents say their employers have understood their needs (81%), been sympathetic to their situation (80%), and provided both the right kind of (78%) and enough (78%) support during the pandemic.

But as life begins to normalize, they are looking to employers to support them in new ways as they get their families back on track. After a year of going it alone, working parents have especially high expectations around child care, with nearly half (46%) wanting their employer to provide some form of child care or emergency child care, and more than one in four looking for their employer to offer academic (27%) and college preparation (26%) tutoring or resources that will benefit their children.

Additionally, many working parents hope their employers continue to provide flexibility, with 58% saying they would prefer to continue working remotely. Half of working parents (50%) want flexible work hours, while 45% want to work remotely in emergency scenarios, and 41% want to work remotely as often as they want.

"The pandemic has certainly left its mark on the world and has forever changed the employer-employee contract," says Maribeth Bearfield, Chief Human Resources Office at Bright Horizons. "Gone are the days when foosball tables and on-site gyms topped the list of must-have perks," she continues. "Employees need real family and personal support, and the employers who provide those supports will reap the benefits of a workforce that is engaged, productive, and loyal."

To download the full Seventh Annual Bright Horizons Modern Family Index report, click [here](#).

About the Bright Horizons Modern Family Index

The Seventh Annual Bright Horizons Modern Family Index is an online survey conducted by Kelton Global from February 2-12, 2021. The sample consisted of 2,083 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%.

About Bright Horizons

Bright Horizons® is a leading global provider of high-quality child care and early education, back-up care, and workplace education services. For more than 30 years, we have partnered with employers to support workforces by providing services that help working families and employees thrive personally and professionally. We operate approximately 1,000 child care centers in the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and India, and serve more than 1,300 of the world's leading organizations. Bright Horizons' child care centers, back-up child and elder care, and workforce education programs, including tuition program management, education advising, and student loan repayment, help employees succeed at each life and career stage. For more information, go to www.brighthorizons.com.

View source version on [businesswire.com](https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20210414005121/en/): <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20210414005121/en/>

Kristen Raymaakers
kristen.raymaakers@brighthorizons.com

Source: Bright Horizons