New Research by Bright Horizons Shows Remote or Hybrid Work Schedules Have Unexpected Roadblocks

May 15, 2023

Working parents are turning to employers for support as many deal with feelings of isolation and loneliness

NEWTON, Mass.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--May 15, 2023-- Working parents are struggling despite flexibility in work location, according to the ninth-annual Modern Family Index (MFI), commissioned by Bright Horizons (NYSE:BFAM) and conducted by The Harris Poll. The research reveals that even though more than half of working parents (58%) say the increased flexibility in their schedules are a source of fulfillment and relief, those working in remote or hybrid setting feel isolated, only talking to the people in their household, and some employees going days without setting foot outside the house (47% and 41%, respectively).

Challenges of Hybrid and Remote Work

Gen Z and Millennial parents are the most profoundly affected by the challenges of being a working parent in the hybrid and remote era. While they're more likely to appreciate the autonomy and freedom of remote and hybrid work, they simultaneously experience more of the drawbacks. They're more likely to grapple with isolation than their older counterparts, going days without going outside while remote working (49% Gen Z/Millennials vs. 31% Gen X/Baby Boomer) and are more likely to go without speaking to anyone beyond their household (53% Gen Z/Millennials vs. 40% Gen X/Baby Boomer).

As working parents strive to balance work and personal tasks, two in five hybrid or fully remote working parents (41%) say they at least sometimes feel like they need to hide their personal obligations from others in their workplace. Parents are likely hiding their burden because they likely have no guidance on how to manage fully remote and hybrid work and being a working parent at the same time. While remote work is permitted, many of those working in a hybrid environment are concerned about the impact it'll have on their careers. A third (35%) feel the arrangement negatively impacts their careers when they choose to work from home, and 42% of those working remotely or in a hybrid environment worry to bring up any complaints related to working from home as they fear speaking about it could result in a return to working in person.

"The Modern Family Index research confirms that many working parents are struggling personally and professionally. While they have embraced a more flexible work environment, it has come with unintended consequences that are impacting their mental health and their ability to manage life's responsibilities," stated Stephen Kramer, CEO of Bright Horizons. "The moment is now for employers to step in to fill these voids. This includes clearly defined benefit programs, mental and professional support services, as well as access to quality child and adult care. Giving this kind of assistance to working parents allows them to be more productive and bring more of themselves to work each day."

Working without a child care safety net

A lasting takeaway from lockdown is that working from home does not negate the need for child care. Extreme child care shortages have left 40% of parents saying they don't have access to the child care they need, with 41% citing cost as a barrier. And it's leaving a mark, especially since 50% of these parents agree their productivity at work suffers when they are stressed about child care, and 77% feel that having child care support is important to how productively they work. Nearly half (48%) say that arranging child care feels itself like a full-time job. Perhaps that explains why emergency child care (30%), and regular every day child care (29%) rank among the top five benefits employees say would make them much more likely to stay with a company/organization.

Working parents are turning to their employers for support. Nearly half (49%) wish their employers would do more to help, including offering to help pay for child care (43%). Other specific requests include:

- 34% want their employer to provide emergency child care benefits
- 32% want their employer to offer on-site child care
- 30% want their employer to offer FSA for childcare expenses

To download the full Ninth Annual Bright Horizons Modern Family Index report, click here.

About the Bright Horizons Modern Family Index

The research was conducted online in the U.S. by The Harris Poll on behalf of Bright Horizons among 2005 adults aged 18 and over who are employed with children under 18. The survey was conducted from February 23rd – March 6th, 2023. Data are weighted where necessary by age by gender, race/ethnicity, region, education, marital status, household size, employment status, household income, and propensity to be online to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population.

Respondents for this survey were selected from 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. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within + 3.0 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.

About Bright Horizons Family Solutions Inc.

Bright Horizons® is a leading global provider of high-quality early education and child care, back-up care, and workforce education services. For 35 years, we have partnered with employers to support workforces by providing services that help working families and employees thrive personally and professionally. Bright Horizons operates approximately 1,100 early education and child care centers in the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Australia and India, and serves more than 1,400 of the world's leading employers. Bright Horizons' early education and child care centers, back-up child and elder care, and workforce education programs 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/20230515005826/en/

Laura McDowell
Laura.McDowell@brighthorizons.com

Source: Bright Horizons Family Solutions Inc.