



Parents Face Tough Choices: Career Ambitions Versus Family Needs

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New research reveals 79% of working parents feel they must choose between making sacrifices at home or in the workplace

NEWTON, Mass.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Nov. 11, 2025-- For many working parents, “work-life balance” is more about self-sacrifice than self-care. New research from the [Modern Family Index](#) (MFI), commissioned by Bright Horizons Family Solutions Inc. (NYSE:BFAM) and conducted by The Harris Poll, reveals that 79% of working parents feel they must choose between making sacrifices at home or in the workplace, and 80% believe the workforce still hasn’t adjusted to reflect the care needs of modern families.

According to the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), both parents are employed in 67% of households with married couples with children under 18, leaving many to face a difficult dilemma: balancing career ambitions with family responsibilities. Notably, the survey found that 76% of working parents believe it’s easier for people without children to succeed at work, which may be why 62% admit they are cautious when talking about their family/children in front of their colleagues to avoid judgement – up from 45% in January 2024.

This research highlights the growing tension between the demands of professional life and the needs of family care, with around two-thirds of working parents (67%) feeling forced to choose between focusing on their career or taking care of their family. The findings underscore a stark reality: reliable child care is not just a support system, but a crucial pillar for career success and financial stability among working parents.

“Working parents are the backbone of our economy. If we want a thriving, sustainable workforce, employers must recognize that supporting their employees’ caregiving needs isn’t a perk—it’s a necessity. Employers are uniquely positioned to offer this critical support, strengthening both their workforce and their workplace culture,” said Stephen Kramer, CEO of Bright Horizons. “By investing in the needs of modern families, we’re not just helping parents succeed at work; we’re securing the future of our businesses and our communities.”

Key Research Findings: The Vital Role of Reliable Child Care

- 94% of working parents who rely on child care say having reliable child care is important for their success at work.
- 78% of working parents who rely on child care report the reliability of their children’s child care has a direct impact on their career success.
- Working parents with reliable child care cite a variety of advantages, such as the ability to focus on their work responsibilities (53%), greater peace of mind (52%), and the ability to pursue their career goals (41%).
- 61% of working parents who rely on child care report that a lack of child care has impacted their family’s financial stability.
- 62% of working parents feel it’s impossible to be a working parent without having negative impacts on their career – in fact, many report being a parent has forced them to miss a day of work entirely (38%) and decline to work overtime/extra hours (26%).
- 58% of working parents say they have considered taking a break from their career to stay home with their child(ren) due to child care availability and access.

About the Bright Horizons Modern Family Index

Over the past decade, Bright Horizons has tracked trends impacting working families through its annual Modern Family Index (MFI), highlighting the unique challenges and priorities they’ve faced. In 2025, the report was refreshed and encompassed several waves of survey data focused on timely topics released throughout the year.

This year’s data shed light on some of the top concerns working parents are grappling with, revealing that parents with children under 18 harbor serious concerns over the implications of screen time ([MFI Wave One](#)), filling gaps in child care during the summer months ([MFI Wave Two](#)), ensuring their kids are prepared with the necessary skills to succeed in kindergarten and beyond ([MFI Wave Three](#)), and how the demands of family life may negatively impact their careers and financial stability if they don’t have reliable child care ([MFI Wave Four](#)).

To download Wave Four of the 2025 Bright Horizons Modern Family Index, [click here](#).

Research Method

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.

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 more than 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 more than 1,000 early education and child care centers in the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Australia, and India, and serves more than 1,450 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.

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