Parents Say the Village is Vanishing — New Research Confirms

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81% of Working Parents Report Fewer Child Care Supports Than Previous Generations

NEWTON, Mass.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Mar. 9, 2026-- The long-held notion that “it takes a village” to raise a family feels increasingly out of reach for today’s working parents and was the focus of the first wave of research in the 2026 Modern Family Index (MFI) research study, commissioned by Bright Horizons Family Solutions, Inc. (NYSE: BFAM) and conducted by The Harris Poll.

The new research reveals that the village has all but vanished for many working parents, with 81% reporting the “village” of people that parents can rely on to help with their child care during the workday has shrunk compared to previous generations, and 77% agree that raising child(ren) requires a village.

Family dynamics have shifted and its impact is putting added pressure on working parents. An article from Forbes points out “the absence of a traditional village” only magnifies the stress that parents face today.

Research from Stanford’s 2025 RAPID Survey highlights that relatives and neighbors, traditionally a safety net for child care emergencies, are now far less consistently available, leaving families without the backup support they need. It’s no surprise then that 60% of working parents who have people they can rely on to watch/care for their child(ren) during the workday admit they often depend on a patchwork network of individuals—even though 88% say they would prefer to rely on a consistent set of caregivers during the workday.

“Forward-thinking employers are redefining what it means to support the modern workforce. As the needs of working parents continue to evolve, they deserve dependable care solutions that allow them to thrive both at work and at home,” said Bright Horizons CEO Stephen Kramer. “When organizations invest in these supports for their employees, we believe they unlock a more engaged, loyal, and productive workforce.”

Working parents surveyed also noted the difficulties in arranging child care during work hours, with many feeling at the mercy of others or feeling guilty for having to ask for help. Some additional findings among working parents:

- 63% wish they had more reliable, formal care for their children during the workday.
- 65% wish their employer played a bigger role in their “parenting village” by providing access to resources (e.g., on-site child care center, back-up services/options, etc…) to help them care for their children.
- 62% say finding other people to watch and/or 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 their workday.
- 56% are constantly stressed about what they would do if their regular child care fell through or was unexpectedly unavailable during the workday.
- 25% are also currently providing unpaid care for an older parent or other relative, likely adding additional stress and responsibilities to their already full plates.

To download Wave One of the Bright Horizons Modern Family Index, click here.

Research Method

The research was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll between January 8 – 12, 2026, among 2,097 adults ages 18 and older – among whom 611 are an employed parent or guardian of child(ren) under 18 years of age (“employed parents”), including 470 who are parents of a child(ren) age 0-12 and 141 who are parents of a child(ren) age 13-17 (but none who are 0-12). 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 provider of high-quality early education and child care, comprehensive back-up care solutions, and educational advisory services. For 40 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. For more information, go to **www.brighthorizons.com**.

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