



Working Parents Lose Sleep Over Summer Break Child Care Planning

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New research finds 90% of working parents are kept awake at night thinking about planning their children's child care and summer schedules

NEWTON, Mass.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--May 11, 2026-- For many working parents, the approach of summer brings added stress and anxiety at the thought of organizing their children's care and activities for the long school-free months ahead. This tension is particularly heightened for working parents of children aged 0-12, who face greater challenges in planning for and finding reliable, high-quality child care and camp options.

This mounting anxiety is the focus of the latest 2026 Modern Family Index (MFI) research wave, commissioned by Bright Horizons Family Solutions, Inc. (NYSE: BFAM) and conducted by The Harris Poll. The study of more than 2000 U.S. adults found that 85% of parents of children <18 years old are being kept awake at night as they think about their children's care and schedule during the summer months, with working parents being more likely than their counterparts to lose sleep over these issues (90% vs. 70%). The study found 67% of working parents are filled with a growing sense of dread as summer approaches.

The lack of access to camps and high-quality child care options is forcing many working parents to rely on their own PTO to fill the void. Another recent [Bright Horizons survey](#) found 60% of working parents are using up to two weeks of their PTO due to their child's school or child care being closed for vacation, professional development days, and snow days. This current wave of research found that the reliance on their PTO leaves most working parents (70%) feeling less refreshed when they return.

This new research aligns with data from last year's [summer study](#), which found 68% of parents reporting that summer feels like a break for everyone but themselves. Other key data points of note:

- 87% of working parents reported experiencing challenges with their children being home during the summer months, including work interruptions, worrying about what the children are up to while they are working, and being distracted at work thinking about their children's schedules.
- 76% of working parents said the level of focus they have at work during the summer is directly tied to the reliability of their children's summer schedules.

This revealing data is compounded by the fact that child care support networks or parenting villages are vanishing. A strong majority of working parents (81%) [report](#) that the traditional "village" of support has shrunk compared to prior generations. Similarly, in this wave of research, more than two-thirds (68%) of employed parents of children ages 0-12 report it is "extremely difficult" to find short-term child care for their children during the summer.

What is consistent from survey to survey, including the most recent data, is the majority of working parents (79%) say they want their employer to provide and/or help them navigate care for their children. Organizations like AT&T and The J.M. Smucker Co. have eased the summer care burden for their working parent employees, essentially "solving summer" by providing access and financial support in the form of on-site camps, high-quality child care, and back-up care options for children under 12, allowing parents to remain productive and engaged during the summer season.

"When we heard from employees about the challenges of summer child care planning, we looked for a practical way to help. As a parent myself, I know how quickly summer break can turn into a scramble for coverage. That's why we designed our on-site summer camp to give families real flexibility so parents can stay focused at work knowing their kids are safe, engaged, and cared for," stated Ben Jackson, AT&T Vice President, Global Benefits.

"Employers can play a pivotal role in alleviating the school break child care strain for their working parent employees," stated Stephen Kramer, CEO of Bright Horizons. "The organizations that provide meaningful solutions will stand out by setting a new standard for what truly supportive and engaged workplaces looks like."

Research Methodology:

The research was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll between April 14 – 16, 2026, among 2,030 adults ages 18 and older – among whom 616 are a parent or guardian of child(ren) under 18 years of age ("parent"), and 479 are an employed parent or guardian of child(ren) under 18 years of age ("employed parents"), including 379 who are parents of a child(ren) age 0-12 and 100 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 ± 2.7 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, back-up care, and workforce education 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 approximately 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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