



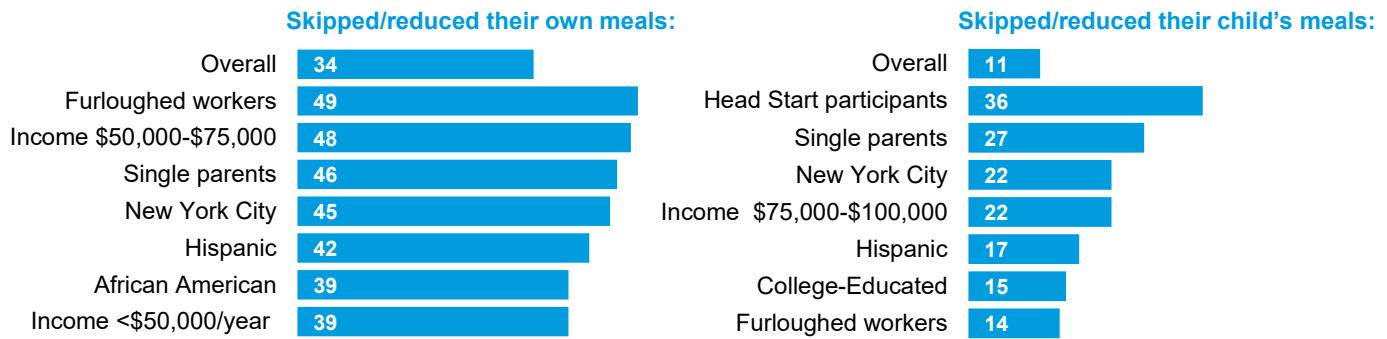
To: Interested Parties
From: Global Strategy Group
Date: April 30, 2020
Re: Parents of Young Children in New York Struggling Amidst Coronavirus Crisis

Global Strategy Group partnered with Raising New York to conduct an online survey among 402 parents of children under the age of four in New York State from April 18th to 22nd, 2020. Key findings from the research are outlined below.

Key Findings:

New York’s parents of infants and toddlers are experiencing intense financial insecurity during this time. Unemployment and temporary loss of work are affecting 16% of parents of young children in New York State. Even among employed parents, a third (34%) have had their hours or pay reduced or have taken time off work to care for their child or children as a result of the crisis, and two-thirds (67%) say they worry about losing their jobs or having their hours reduced in the future. More than half (51%) of parents overall say they feel “uneasy” about their own personal finances, and a majority (57%) worry about not being able to pay for basic expenses like food, housing, and health care if the crisis continues.

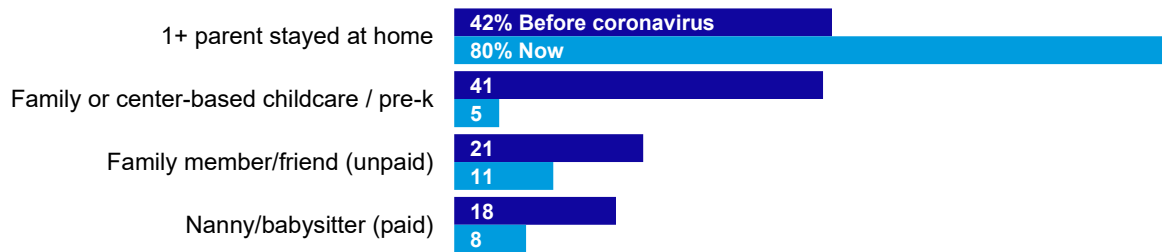
As a result of the crisis, many parents are skipping or reducing their family’s meals. Parents aren’t just worrying about money – they’re changing their behavior to compensate for a lack of steady income, fears of future financial instability, and food availability (including formula). Over a third of parents (34%) say they have skipped or reduced the size of their own meals as a result of the coronavirus crisis, and that number is significantly higher among furloughed workers (49%), middle-income parents (48%), single parents (46%), parents in New York City (45%), and Hispanic parents (42%) in the state. Overall, 11% of parents have skipped or reduced the size of the meals they provide for their children as well, which disproportionately affects parents of children enrolled in Early Head Start (36%), single parents (27%), and parents in New York City (22%).



For many New York families, the coronavirus crisis has been incredibly disruptive and put parents’ and young children’s well-being at risk. Most parents (73%) say the coronavirus crisis has significantly disrupted their home and family lives (particularly in New York City: 77%) and many worry about their own and their family’s mental health as a result of the coronavirus crisis (75%). Two-thirds of parents (68%) worry their child’s social, emotional, and cognitive development will suffer as a result of the coronavirus crisis, and three in four (77%) report their own levels of stress are higher than usual during this time. A staggering one out of four parents of young children (25%) worry about the impact of substance abuse and domestic violence on their family as a result of the coronavirus crisis, with worries about abuse particularly widespread in New York City (35%), among Hispanic parents (36%), and among parents of children with disabilities (39%).

The coronavirus crisis has significantly changed parents’ child care arrangements and other parenting supports. Before coronavirus, 41% of families relied on family- or center-based child care providers or pre-k and 42% had at least one parent staying home to care for their child. Now, just 5% say their child care/day care program is open and they are still attending, and 80% have at least one parent at home. In addition to the added burden of balancing working remotely with tending to their child/children (64% of parents say they are now working from home), parents are also disconnected from their usual support system. More than two-thirds (68%) of parents typically rely on friends and

family to help care for their child, which is unworkable for many parents while social distancing restrictions remain in place. Parents whose children participate in assistance programs like Early Head Start, Early Intervention, and home visitation have also experienced significant disruptions, with 38% reporting not receiving services during the crisis.



The current crisis has introduced a lot of uncertainty about child care for many parents of young children in New York, including essential workers. Just 66% of parents say they plan to return to the child care arrangements they had prior to the coronavirus crisis – 12% say they do not plan to return and 21% are unsure what they will do when the crisis is over. This uncertainty around child care cuts across all types of pre-pandemic arrangements, including previous stay-at-home parents who may be unsure if they could continue to care for their child at home (47% unsure/won't return) and low-income families (49%) who may be unable to afford their existing care if their financial situation worsens. Among essential workers (who make up 27% of parents of young children in the state), there is also uncertainty about what they can access: 22% are unsure whether they are eligible for child care programming for essential workers or were not aware this was available. Just 11% of essential workers say their child is receiving child care and 29% indicate that they are eligible but do not wish to use child care for the time being (these questions were asked prior to implementation of the state's plan to use federal stimulus funding for child care for some essential workers).

Government support can help struggling parents in New York. We tested an extensive list of potential supports for parents and young children and found parents receptive to all of the options that were proposed. As governments at the federal, state, and local levels look to understand and mitigate the sizeable negative impact of coronavirus on New York's families, policymakers and other advocates should look to close the below gaps between the things that parents think would be helpful to them in navigating the crisis (in light blue below) and the things they currently have access to now (in dark blue below). And this should extend beyond the current crisis as well: nearly all parents of young children (92%) say they support investing more public funds in expanding access to quality, affordable child care and preschool for families with young children in the state, including a majority (58%) who say they *strongly* support greater investment.

Would be helpful	Currently access	
91	29	Providing parents with free online resources to use with their children during this time
91	20	Providing free or increased internet access to families
91	17	Providing parents access to their child's doctor via telehealth through technology like a computer/tablet/phone
90	26	Providing meals that parents can pick up in their communities or have delivered to their home
90	12	Providing additional paid or unpaid leave so parents can stay home with their children during the crisis
89	28	Providing free online resources like virtual story time or other programming
89	27	Providing parents with creative activities for children using household items / other ways to limit screen-time
89	16	Sharing examples of resources to help parents support their child's development while they are at home
87	14	Connecting parents to resources that can help with food, housing, employment, health, & other needs
85	12	Providing ATM-like cards that parents can use to purchase food at local grocery stores
83	18	Facilitating connections to other parents so parents can share advice or tips for managing during the crisis
83	15	Providing additional unemployment compensation
82	14	Providing tips for parents on how to balance caring for their child while working from home
76	10	Lending or donating mobile technology devices like iPads/tablets to families

Some – but not all – parents have been in a position to make the most out of this time with their child, though more time at home has come at the expense of more screen time for infants and toddlers. While many parents report they have been able to spend more quality time with their child as a result of the changes to their routine and child care arrangements (76%, driven by unemployed parents at 89% and parents who earn more than \$100,000 per year at 81%), parents also report that their child spends more time watching TV (71%) and using devices like tablets (67%). Many parents say they spend more time playing games with their infant/toddler (72%), reading (57%), doing arts and crafts (51%), and to a lesser extent exercising (44%) and playing outdoors (40%). Additional ideas for creative activities that can be done indoors and keep kids away from the TV or offline can help parents as they navigate this new reality.

Key Areas of Need Moving Forward:

Based on the results of this survey, we have identified the following areas where we feel policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels should focus their efforts to further assist New York's parents:

- **Financial assistance.** As we note above, many parents have been laid off work, furloughed, or temporarily had their hours or pay reduced as a result of coronavirus, and a majority worry about not being able to afford basic expenses if the current crisis continues. Financial assistance for parents of young children during this period beyond what many families have already been able to access through state unemployment insurance and federal stimulus payments is a key area where New York families could benefit from additional support.
- **Food security.** One clear manifestation of financial instability is parents' ability to feed themselves and their families. In less than two months, this has already translated to greater food insecurity among significant proportions of parents. Families in New York City, African American and Hispanic parents, single parents, and furloughed workers are disproportionately more likely to report making the difficult decision to skip or reduce their family's meals and particularly need additional support.
- **Access to health, wellness, and support professionals.** A third of parents (34%) say they have missed health appointments for their child due to coronavirus and, as we note above, parents are receptive to staying in contact with their child's doctor through telehealth or telemedicine programs. In addition, it is a significant problem that many families are not receiving the Early Intervention and home visitation services that they need – one that may be made worse by lack of access to technology and the digital divide.
- **Support for parents and families.** Parenting even in normal circumstances can be challenging, and in the midst of the pandemic, parents are finding positive support in innovative ways through text messaging, use of developmentally appropriate resources, and fostering connections digitally. For the most vulnerable families who deal with issues such as addiction and abuse that may arise or be exacerbated as a result of the state's stay-at-home order, specific attention is essential to ensure availability of quality critical services for parents who need it.
- **Web-based supports and resources.** Many community-based organizations, libraries, museums, child care providers, and other entities are providing virtual tools and resources that families are using. More tools (and outreach to advertise them) like free online resources, developmental programming such as virtual story time, resources that can help with food, housing, employment, health, and other emergency needs, and connections to other parents are all widely viewed as helpful among parents.
- **Greater investment in early childhood programming moving forward.** As we note above, support for expanding access to quality, affordable child care and preschool for New York families with young children is incredibly high among parents of young children at 92%. As the state recovers from the devastating impact of the crisis and looks to reimagine the role of government in supporting New Yorkers, 83% of parents of young children also agree that the state should be doing more to ensure infants and toddlers in New York are healthy and developmentally on track at birth and throughout early childhood.

About this poll: The survey had a confidence interval of +/-4.9%. All interviews were conducted via web-based panel, including 58% of interviews conducted via mobile device. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic and demographic divisions of parents of young children in New York State are properly represented.