



To: Interested Parties

From: Global Strategy Group

Date: February 11, 2021

Re: Parents of Infants and Toddlers Continue to Struggle During the Ongoing Pandemic

Global Strategy Group partnered with Raising New York to conduct an online survey among 400 parents of children under the age of four in New York State from January 26th – February 4th, 2021. This is the second survey among parents GSG has conducted with Raising New York on this topic, following an earlier survey in April of 2020 (conducted April 18th – 22nd). Key findings from the most recent round of research are outlined below.

Key Findings:

Nearly a year on, the coronavirus crisis continues to be incredibly disruptive and put parents' and young children's well-being at risk. Three-in-four parents (75%) say the change to routine caused by the coronavirus crisis has significantly disrupted their home and family lives (particularly in New York City: 78%) and many worry about their and their family's mental health as a result of the pandemic (75%). Eighty-three percent of parents report their own levels of stress are higher than usual during this time (a 5-point increase since April), while almost nine in ten (85%) parents worry their child's social, emotional, and cognitive development will suffer because of the coronavirus crisis (a 17-point increase since April). As for long-term impacts, parents are most concerned about their child not being able to interact with other children (83% concerned) and that their child's emotional well-being will be negatively affected (76% concerning). Worry about the impact of substance abuse and domestic violence on their family as a result of the coronavirus crisis (32%) has also increased since April (up 7 points).

New York's parents of infants and toddlers continue to experience significant financial and job-related insecurity. Unemployment and temporary loss of work are affecting more than one in ten (12%) parents of young children in New York State. Even among employed parents, nearly one-third (30%) say that they have had their pay or hours reduced as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. In addition, more than half (60%) are worried about job loss/reduction in hours – especially low-income families (65%). Finances are particularly concerning for low-income parents and parents of color: 71% of low-income parents and 55% of parents of color, including 63% of Black parents, say they feel uneasy about their personal finances over the next several months (compared to 43% among parents overall) and 70% of low-income parents worry about paying for basic expenses (52% overall).

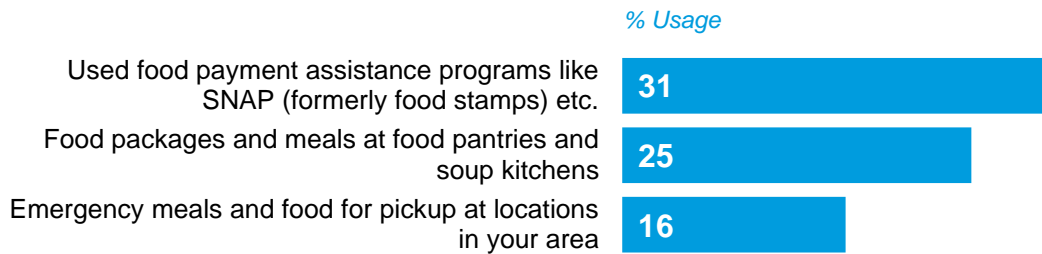
The lack of accessible and affordable infant and toddler care has negatively impacted parents' job performance. Three-in-four parents (76%) say they are concerned about the lack of affordable high-quality infant and toddler care options for their family – with Latinx (81%) and New York City (89%) parents the most concerned. For many, this comes with financial implications: 47% of parents say that they or their partner has intentionally reduced their hours to take care of their child, while 25% say that they unintentionally missed shifts to care for their child.

Additionally, the majority of parents say that the lack of accessible and affordable infant and toddler care has negatively impacted their job performance in other ways: 60% say that it has negatively impacted their own or their partner's productivity at work, 58% say that it has caused their or their partner to financially struggle to provide for their family, and 56% say it has negatively impacted their or their partner's ability to retain a steady job. With almost half of parents burdened with balancing working remotely with tending to their child/children (46% of parents say they are working remotely), this is a particularly concerning issue.

Many parents and families are facing food insecurity that has forced them to skip meals or rely on food assistance programs. Over the last year, parents have continued to compensate for a lack of steady income, fears of future financial instability, and food availability (including formula). Over a third of parents (37%) say they have skipped or reduced the size of their own or their child's meals as a result of the coronavirus crisis, consistent with the numbers we saw early on in the pandemic (38%). That number increases significantly among low-income parents (52%), non-college parents* (43%), parents in Upstate New York (43%), and in New York City (42%). Half of parents of infants and toddlers in New York (51%) have used one or more food assistance programs during this time – particularly low-income

parents (72%) – with about a third of parents overall (31%) relying on food payment assistance programs like SNAP to help cover the cost of groceries.

Please indicate if you have used any of the following as a result of the pandemic. Select all that apply.



For many parents, returning their child to a family-or-center based child care center is a challenge. Twenty percent of parents (up from 5% in April) now say that their child is attending a child care center program. However, parents who have returned to their family-or-center based child care cite a decrease in accessibility and affordability of child care. Before the pandemic, 52% of parents say that their child would attend their child care center all or most weekdays for full days, now over a third of parents (34%) report that their child care facility has limited its hours. Additionally, 49% of parents say that their family-or-center based child care center’s cost has gone up, with over a quarter parents overall (29%) disclosing that they have received a subsidy or other financial help from the government to cover the costs of their program (7-point increase since April). Parents are also worried about the health implications now that their child has returned to family-or-center based child care. Eighty-five percent of parents are worried that they or someone in their family will contract the coronavirus as a result of their child being in child care. Vaccinating child care workers could help assuage these concerns for many parents: 83% say that staff having the COVID-19 vaccine is the most important factor in deciding whether their child will return to a formal child care program.

Parents overwhelmingly support action from New York State officials to address existing gaps in infant and toddler child care. Many parents are looking for ways local and state governments can better invest in the future of their children. Ninety-six percent of parents support New York State investing more public funds in expanding access to quality affordable child care to families with children ages 0 to 3 (63% very important; 4-point overall increase since April), and 96% also think it is important to improve access to affordable, high-quality child care (71% very important). Parents of infants and toddlers strongly support each of the policies, outlined below:

For each one, please indicate whether you support or oppose New York State doing each.

% support / strongly

94 / 56	Expanding access to child care for New Yorkers who live in "child care deserts" - geographic areas where families that lack access to high-quality affordable child care for infants and toddlers
93 / 58	Investing more into early intervention and preschool special education evaluations and services for families with infants and toddlers
93 / 54	Working to encourage childhood education programs that are culturally sensitive, inclusive, and linguistically responsive
91 / 55	Adopting a plan to achieve access to affordable high-quality child care for infants and toddlers for all families who want it within the next 5-10 years
90 / 48	Expanding voluntary maternal, infant, and early childhood home visits to provide expectant parents and parents of toddlers and infants services and support in the comfort of their homes

Parents also support additional policies that can help provide relief and assistance to New York families:

- **More than nine in ten parents say they would approve of an official who supports doing more to ensure infants and toddlers are developmentally on track:** 92% of parents would approve of a state elected official who supports doing more to ensure infants and toddlers are healthy and developmentally on track from birth through early childhood – this includes over a majority (53%) of parents who would *strongly* support this elected official.
- **Nearly all parents support extending the Empire State Child Tax credit to include children under the age of four:** 97% of parents approve of extending New York’s Empire State Child tax credit to include children under the age of four – 72% *strongly* support this initiative.

- **Nearly nine in ten parents support streamlining the rules around child care co-pays:** 89% of parents say that they support streamlining the state's rules around child care co-pays to make it more consistent and affordable for all working families – including a majority (56%) who *strongly* support.

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

**Non-college parents are parents who have an education below a four-year graduate/Bachelor degree level.*