

FEBRUARY 2021

RAiSiNG
NEW YORK

THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

Increased support to parents of infants and toddlers is critical for parents' and young children's well-being and New York's economic recovery.



In April 2020, we asked parents of infants and toddlers about their experiences during the early days of the coronavirus pandemic. At the top of parents' concerns were child care, food security, and the continued healthy development of their young children, along with contracting the coronavirus.

Almost one year later, our follow-up poll reveals that parents remain challenged by child care availability and affordability, overwhelmingly concerned about their family's mental health and their children's cognitive and social development, and feel that government supports have provided a necessary, but incomplete lifeline.

Our February 2021 poll makes clear that the pandemic-related challenges parents, families, and children face continue to mount as the crisis continues.

HERE ARE FOUR KEY FINDINGS THAT highlight the critical need for state leaders to act quickly to support families of infants and toddlers

- 1** The pandemic continues to be disruptive to parents and families.
- 2** Parents are concerned about the long-term impact of the pandemic on their children and families.
- 3** Parents report disruptions to schooling, work, and careers and are using more federal, state, and local supports to keep their family afloat.
- 4** There is overwhelming support for increased investment in high-quality, affordable infant and toddler care and other supports that will provide much needed relief to families.

FINDING ONE: The pandemic continues to be disruptive to parents and families.

Disruptions have disproportionately impacted low-income, Black, and Latinx households

71%



of parents from low-income households

63%



of Black parents

51%



of Latinx parents

Indicated that they feel uneasy thinking about their family's personal financial situation over the next few months.

The health impact of the coronavirus

80%



of parents know someone who has been infected with the coronavirus

50%



of parents have had a family member infected with the coronavirus

51%



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/daycare

More parents are experiencing an increased level of stress since the start of the pandemic

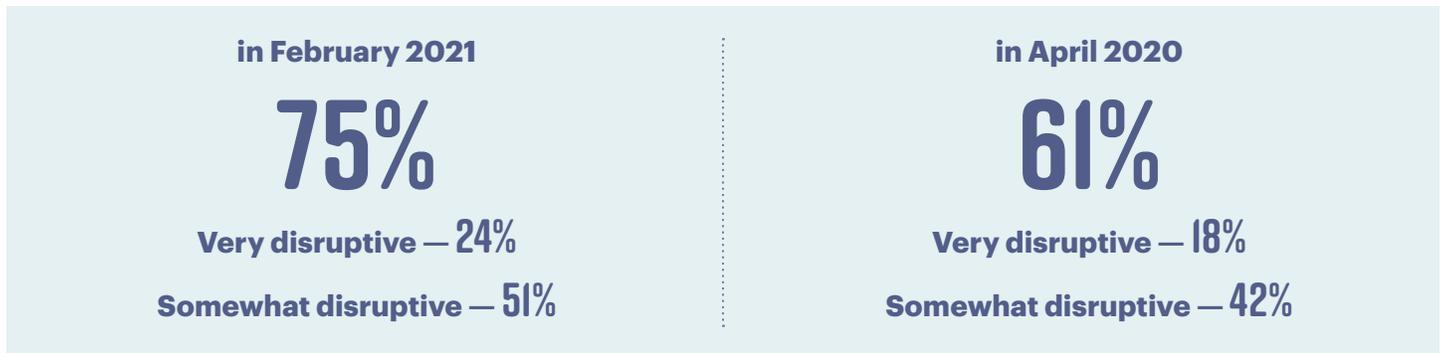
February 2021

83% | of parents reported an increased level of stress

April 2020

77%

More parents report that changes to routine have been disruptive to their infant/toddler.



*Figures are rounded and the sum of percentages may not add up.

Food insecurity continues to be a significant issue for families with infants and toddlers.



FINDING TWO: Parents are concerned about the long-term impact of the pandemic on their children and families.

Long-term impact of the pandemic on children and families

75%



of parents worry about their family's mental health

73%



of all parents are concerned about their child being educationally and socially prepared for preschool/ kindergarten

62%



of all parents

75%



of Latinx parents

Are concerned that their child has lost developmental and emotional skills

51%



of all parents

54%



of parents of color

Think their child might need counseling or other social emotional support

February 2021

32% | of all parents

April 2020

25%

Reported increased worry about the impact of substance abuse and domestic violence on their family

FINDING THREE: Parents report disruptions to schooling, work, and careers and are using more federal, state, and local supports to keep their family afloat.

Parents say they are concerned about the lack of affordable, high-quality infant and toddler care options for their family.

76%



of all parents

81%



of Latinx parents

89%



of New York City parents

Lack of access to affordable, high-quality infant and toddler care is impacting parents at work.

60%



report limited access to child care

56%



report limited access impacts their ability to retain a steady job

58%



report limited access has caused financial struggle

For many families, the lack of access to affordable high-quality child care comes with financial implications.

62%



of all parents report sacrificing career/schooling for child care

61%



of parents with a 7-12 month old say that they or their partner has intentionally reduced their hours to take care of their child

47%



of parents say that they or their partner has intentionally reduced their hours to take care of their child

25%



of parents say that they unintentionally missed shifts to care for a child

Parents and families are increasingly relying on support from government programs during this time.

51%



of parents say that they are on food assistance programs to help cover the cost of groceries

29%



of parents say that they receive a subsidy or financial help from the local, state, or federal government to pay for child care, up from 22% in April

31%



of parents report using food payment assistance programs

FINDING FOUR: There is overwhelming support for increased investment in high-quality, affordable infant/toddler care.

Child care remains a critical issue for parents of infants and toddlers.

17%



of all parents report that their current child care situation is not workable

48%



say their current child care situation is only somewhat workable

24%



of Black parents say their current child care situation is not workable

31%



of parents from low-income households say their current child care situation is not workable

Parents also support additional ways the government can help provide relief and assistance to New York families

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 to throughout early childhood, **including 53% of parents who would strongly support this elected official.**

97% of parents approve of extending New York's Empire State Child tax credit to include children under the age of four years to over 400,000 working families, **including 72% who strongly support this initiative.**

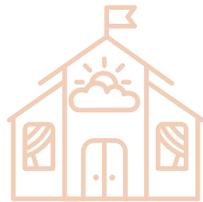
89% of parents say that they support streamlining the state's rules around child care co-pays to make it more consistent and affordable for all working families, **including over a majority 56% who strongly support.**

Parents overwhelmingly support investment in early childhood education programs.

Expanding access to child care for New Yorkers who live in “child care deserts” — geographic areas where families that lack access to high-quality child care for infants and toddlers

94% Support

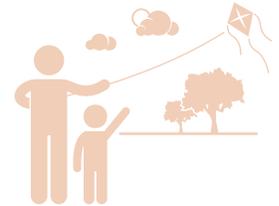
56% Strongly support



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

91% Support

55% Strongly support



Investing more into early intervention and preschool special education evaluations and services for families with infants and toddlers

93% Support

58% Strongly support



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

90% Support

48% Strongly support



Working to encourage childhood education programs that are culturally sensitive, inclusive, and linguistically responsive

93% Support

54% Strongly support



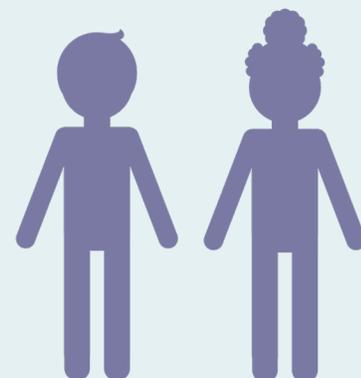
Supported by the results of this poll, policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels should focus their attention on:

Adopting a plan to improve access and affordability of child care.

The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed New York’s long tenuous child care system to the brink and demonstrated how critical high-quality child care is to the state’s economy. In a recent statewide poll, a majority of New York State businesses reported that the lack of accessibility and availability of high-quality child care for infants and toddlers negatively impacted their business, which underscores the importance of high-quality child care to New York’s long-term economic recovery. Federal funding should prioritize infant and toddler child care subsidies for communities hit hardest by the impacts of the pandemic, including communities of color, low-income, and immigrant communities. Federal funds should be used to expand access to high-quality child care and provide financial stability to providers, which will ensure that existing capacity for infants and toddlers is maintained in the short term and expands as the economy recovers.

Improving access to technology that will increase the availability and quality of infant and toddler support services like early intervention and home visitation for low-income families.

The first three years of a child’s life are a critical time for their lifelong development. Policymakers should increase resources, alignment, and coordination for Early Intervention (EI) and Preschool Special Education programs to ensure that families have access to all the support they need during a formative period in a child’s life. Furthermore, the State should move forward with Medicaid investments in home visiting and other “First 1,000 Days” initiatives.



Prioritizing mental health support for families who have been most impacted by disruptions in employment and child care.

Families of infants and toddlers have been hard hit by the pandemic and are worried about their children's emotional development and their family's well-being. Mental health services for communities that have been hardest hit by the child care crises, namely child care deserts, should have access to emergency and acute mental health support which could include community-based organizations, telehealth, social workers and family counselors.

Continuing pandemic supports that supplement the costs of family basic necessities.

Financial stability can help reduce the devastating effects of chronic stress on families with young children. Last year's Executive Budget proposed an expansion of the Empire State Child Credit to include children under 4 years old and would help address child poverty by offering relief to the families of the youngest New Yorkers. In addition, two bills (S.9012/A.11063) commit the state to reducing child poverty by half by 2030, with requirements for specific steps to reach that goal.

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