FIRST VOICE

ZERO TO THREE
Early connections last a lifetime

ZERO TO THREE's National Parenting Survey



PARENTS ARE LEADING WITH LOVE, BUT RUNNING ON EMPTY.

Parents can tell us things about raising young children that no one else can. What makes them proud? What keeps them up at night? And what would make everyday life a little easier?

First Voice: ZERO TO THREE's National Parenting Survey brings together the experiences of more than 2,200 parents across the country. Building on our 2015 research, First Voice explores how parenting has changed over the past decade and what families need today.

Their message is both inspiring and urgent: Parents are putting love into action, but many are stretched thin. These findings give policymakers, professionals, advocates and funders a direct line to what families need for shaping policies, services and investments that support them.

HERE'S WHAT PARENTS TOLD US

1

Parents are raising their children with love, connection and intention.

85% are proud of the parents they've become.

- **61%** say "I love you" more often.
- **59%** play with their kids more.
- **53%** read together more than their parents did.
- **57%** show more physical affection.
- **60%** say they focus more on their child's mental health.
- **53%** say they focus more on their own mental health than their parents did with them.
- **53%** say they focus on teaching and guiding their child rather than disciplining.
- **56%** say they won't use the physical discipline their parents used.

2 Being confident doesn't make parenting easy.

88% of parents say they feel confident in their parenting. Still…

- **53%** of parents say raising a child is harder than they expected.
- **80%** of moms lead day-to-day parenting, and **56%** want more help.
- **42%** identify managing their own mental health as a challenge they experienced in the past month.

3 Advice is everywhere. Trust is harder to find.

55% say there's so much information, it's hard to know who to trust.

- Parents use about five sources. Half turn to their own mom first.
- **18%** use AI for parenting advice.
- **63%** want more safety and quality regulation of social media and AI content for young kids.
- Of those who use AI, **76%** feel it's helpful, but only **32%** of parents say they trust the information they get through AI tools.

4 Parents are doing their part. They want policies that support them.

66% agree that the government should do a better job of providing resources that support families with young children.

- **63%** need universal free pre-K.
- **58%** say they need paid parental leave.
- **60%** need a clearer explanation of government and community programs for which heir family might be eligible.
- **56%** need more community resources for families like libraries or playgrounds.
- **54%** say they need child care options that better meet their needs (high quality, affordable, nearby).
- **53%** say they need access to affordable health care for themselves and their child, including prenatal care.
- **50%** need better access to programs like WIC, SNAP, Medicaid and subsidies to help with child care costs.

Supporting parents helps children build the relationships and skills they'll carry throughout their lives. That gives all of us a stake in making sure families have the time, trusted guidance and practical support they need. **Parents are putting love into action. Our policies, workplaces and communities must match that commitment.**

Hear from parents. Explore the findings. See where you can make a difference.

Learn more at **zerotothree.org/parentsurvey** or scan the code.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

The survey was conducted online by The Loran Group from July 28 to August 15, 2026, among 2,202 parents of children ages 5 and under. It included a nationally representative sample of 1,400 parents, plus additional booster samples of African American, Hispanic, Native American, and lower-income parents, which were weighted back to their national proportions. The margin of error is ±2% at a 95% confidence level. The survey was informed by 17 online discussion groups with parents held in June and July 2026.

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