The State of Parenting in the GTA 2026

A Year One first look

What 119 parents of young children living in the Greater Toronto Area told us about finding childcare, keeping their jobs going and running their households. Survey fielded online, October 1 to November 13, 2026.

Summary of findings

DRAFT. The section "What this means, in Boogles' view" has not yet been approved by Catherine Esmail, Founder, Boogles Playhouse & Little Gift List.

The short version

The State of Parenting in the GTA 2026 is a Year One first look at what 119 parents of young children living in the Greater Toronto Area told Boogles Playhouse in an online survey, fielded October 1 to November 13, 2026. This is a self-selected sample, recruited partly through Boogles' own channels, not a random sample of GTA parents. Two answers lead this report: how early the parents surveyed joined childcare waitlists, and how often childcare or scheduling issues disrupted the working day.

Among parents surveyed who joined a childcare waitlist for their youngest child and said when, nearly half signed up before their child was born: 44 of 94 (47%).

And 78 of 103 (76%) parents surveyed who answered (excluding "Not applicable") said childcare or children's scheduling issues caused them to miss work, leave work early or significantly change their workday three or more times in the past 12 months.

What else parents told us

All figures are among the parents surveyed, and each one names the group it counts.

1. **Waitlists.** 95 of 119 (80%) parents surveyed had joined a childcare waitlist for their youngest child. Of the parents surveyed who joined a childcare waitlist for their youngest child and answered, 69 of 94 (73%) joined three or more waitlists. Asked what happened, the 94 waitlisted parents surveyed who answered gave answers including 33 of 94 (35%) who received and accepted a preferred childcare option and 5 of 94 (5%) who were unable to secure the care they needed.

2. **Careers.** 69 of 113 (61%) parents surveyed who answered said childcare or family-care responsibilities have affected their career or working life "a great deal" or "quite a lot".
3. **The organising load, in mothers' own account.** Among mothers surveyed who share parenting and answered about every task, 72 of 94 (77%) said that all five household organising tasks we asked about, from finding childcare to arranging backup plans, fall "mostly" or "more" to them than to their partner. Only 8 fathers took part, so the survey cannot compare mothers with fathers.
4. **When care falls through.** 65 of 118 (55%) parents surveyed rated their confidence 0, 1 or 2 on a 0–5 scale that their family could manage an unexpected childcare disruption without a parent or caregiver missing work or another important commitment. Leaving aside another parent or caregiver in the household, 52 of 119 (44%) parents surveyed said they could reliably call on one person or no one to care for their child unexpectedly.
5. **Care outside regular hours, and how well options fit.** Asked when, outside regular school or daycare hours, their family sometimes needs childcare, 64 of 118 (54%) parents surveyed who chose at least one answer chose "Evenings or weekends". Asked how well the childcare options available to them match the times they actually need care, 66 of 110 (60%) parents surveyed who answered (excluding "Not applicable") said "very well" or "fairly well".
6. **What parents said would help.** Asked to choose up to three changes that would make the biggest positive difference, the 119 parents surveyed most often chose lower general cost of living, 43 of 119 (36%); greater employer flexibility, 33 of 119 (28%); and more backup or occasional childcare, 31 of 119 (26%).

Disclosure: Boogles Playhouse designed and ran this survey, and sells childcare-adjacent services to families, including drop-in play and occasional care. Findings 1 (its waitlist outcomes), 3, 4, 5 and 6 above touch on the care families have and on backup, occasional and flexible care.

Who answered, and what this survey cannot show

This is a self-selected sample, recruited partly through Boogles' own channels. It is not a random sample of GTA parents: the findings describe the parents who took part, not all parents in the GTA. 111 of 119 (93%) parents surveyed were women. 61 of 119 (51%) live in Peel Region and only 19 of 119 (16%) in Toronto. The sample leans towards higher incomes: 36 of 119 (30%) reported household income of $200,000 or more. Because parents were invited through a business that sells drop-in play and occasional care, those who took part may be more interested in that kind of care than parents in general. The invitation email described pressures some families face, so parents who were finding things harder may have been more likely to take part. No margin of error is given, because a self-selected sample does not support one. For 83 of 119 (70%) parents surveyed, the youngest child is under 3.

What this means, in Boogles' view

This section is opinion, not findings. It is Boogles Playhouse's view, informed by what parents told us, and it carries no survey numbers of its own. DRAFT: for Catherine Esmail, Founder, Boogles Playhouse & Little Gift List, to edit and approve.

[NEW — needs Catherine] Our reading of these answers is that arranging childcare is ongoing work that parents carry themselves: it starts early, and it does not end once care is found.

1. **Childcare is part of how a working family runs, not a private side problem.** Employers and policymakers should plan for it the way they plan for transit or schools.
2. **Finding care should not depend on signing up before a child is born.** We would like to see waitlists that let parents know where they stand. [NEW — needs Catherine] The survey did not ask about that, so it is a wish, not a finding.
3. **Flexible work is part of childcare.** Predictable flexibility from employers, such as adjustable hours and remote days when care falls through, is one of the most practical ways to help.
4. **The invisible work of organising family life deserves to be seen and shared.** Too often it lands on one parent.
5. **Families benefit from a wider circle of support.** Communities, workplaces and neighbourhood spaces can all play a part. Boogles runs neighbourhood play spaces, so we have an interest here too.
6. **The gaps between care arrangements need answers too: PA days, evenings, weekends and school holidays.** These gaps deserve attention from schools, employers and every kind of provider, not just us. We have an interest here and say so: Boogles Playhouse designed and ran this survey, and sells childcare-adjacent services to families, including drop-in play and occasional care.

The full results and the methods

This summary is a selection. The full survey results (on report.boogles.ca, and after this summary in the PDF) give each question as it was asked, with the count and base behind every answer. Their Methods, Limitations and Conflict of interest sections set out how the survey was run, what it cannot show and Boogles' interest in it. Reporters can ask for the figure behind any number: media@boogles.ca.

Survey results

Key findings

All figures are among the parents surveyed. This is not a random sample of GTA parents: 111 of 119 (93%) were women, 61 of 119 (51%) live in Peel Region and only 19 of 119 (16%) in Toronto. The Methods and Limitations sections explain who answered.

Of the parents surveyed who had joined a childcare waitlist for their youngest child and said when, 44 of 94 (47%) first joined before the child was born.



44 of 94 (47%)

Of the parents surveyed who had joined a childcare waitlist for their youngest child and answered, 69 of 94 (73%) joined three or more waitlists.



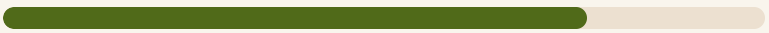
69 of 94 (73%)

Of the parents surveyed who answered (leaving out those who chose "Not applicable", mostly parents not in paid work), 78 of 103 (76%) said childcare or children's scheduling issues caused them to miss work, leave early or significantly change their workday three or more times in the past 12 months.



78 of 103 (76%)

Among mothers surveyed who share parenting and answered about every task, 72 of 94 (77%) said that for all five organising tasks we asked about, from finding childcare to arranging backup plans, the work falls "mostly" or "more" to them than to their partner. This is mothers' own account; only 8 fathers took part.



72 of 94 (77%)

Of the parents surveyed who gave a clear answer (leaving out those not seeking care outside their household and those not sure), 35 of 115 (30%) said they have the care arrangement they would prefer for their youngest child "completely". Of the parents surveyed who answered (leaving out "Not applicable"), 66 of 110 (60%) said the childcare options available to them match the times they need care "very well" or "fairly well".



35 of 115 (30%)



66 of 110 (60%)

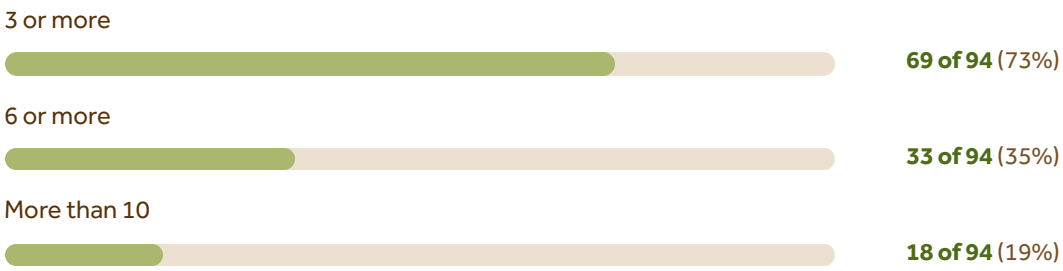
The findings above on backup planning and on the care families have now touch on backup and flexible care. Boogles Playhouse designed and ran this survey, and sells childcare-adjacent services to families, including drop-in play and occasional care.

Finding care: the search and the waitlist

Joining waitlists, often early. Of the 119 parents surveyed, 95 of 119 (80%) had joined a childcare waitlist for their youngest child. Of the 94 who joined and said when, 44 of 94 (47%) first joined before the child was born, and 80 of 94 (85%) had joined before the child's first birthday.

The questions were "Have you ever joined a childcare waitlist for your youngest child aged 0–10?" and, for parents who said yes, "When did you first join a childcare waitlist for this child?" The waitlist question offered only Yes or No.

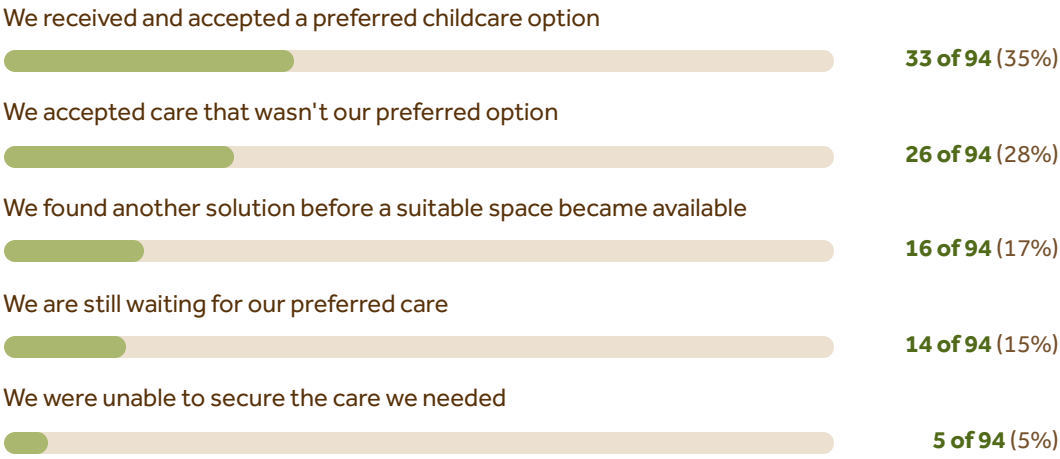
How many waitlists. Asked "Approximately how many childcare waitlists did you join?", the waitlisted parents answered as follows.



Number of waitlists joined	Parents (of 94 who answered)	Share
3 or more	69 of 94	73%
6 or more	33 of 94	35%
More than 10	18 of 94	19%

These rows overlap: a parent on more than 10 lists is also counted in "3 or more" and "6 or more".

How the wait ended. Waitlisted parents were asked "Which best describes what happened?" Every answer option is shown.



What happened	Parents (of 94 who answered)	Share
We received and accepted a preferred childcare option	33 of 94	35%
We accepted care that wasn't our preferred option	26 of 94	28%
We found another solution before a suitable space became available	16 of 94	17%
We are still waiting for our preferred care	14 of 94	15%
We were unable to secure the care we needed	5 of 94	5%

The online form also showed this question to some parents who had not joined a waitlist. Their 19 answers were removed, so the table covers waitlisted parents only.

Starting the search. Asked "Approximately how far in advance of actually needing childcare did your family begin actively looking for care?", 59 of 115 (51%) parents surveyed who answered said 12 months or more before they needed it, and 13 of 115 (11%) said they started looking only after they already needed care. This question was asked of everyone, so some parents who never looked for outside care may be included.

Care in place when it was first needed. Thinking back to when they first needed childcare for their youngest child, 40 of 106 (38%) parents surveyed who answered (leaving out "Not applicable / don't remember") had only a partial arrangement they pieced together, or none, including 25 of 106 (24%) who had no suitable care in place. Asked what they experienced while trying to secure childcare, 39 of 114 (34%) of the parents who answered said they delayed or changed their return to work, and 39 of 114 (34%) relied on family more than planned. These questions were asked of everyone, and refer to a time that may be years ago for some parents.

The care families have now

Asked "Overall, does your family currently have the care arrangement you would prefer for your youngest child aged 0–10?", 35 of 115 (30%) parents surveyed who answered said "Yes, completely", and 35 of 115 (30%) said only "Partly" or "No". In all, 80 of 115 (70%) said "Mostly", "Partly" or "No", and "Mostly" was the single most common answer. (Parents not seeking care outside the household, and those not sure, are not in this base.)

Parents who said "Mostly", "Partly" or "No" were asked for their main reasons, up to two each. Of the 80 who gave a reason, the most common included quality, safety or trust concerns, 21 of 80 (26%); needing more flexible or part-time care, 20 of 80 (25%); and cost, 18 of 80 (23%). Preferred care not being available and waiting for a space were each chosen by 14 of 80 (18%). Boogles Playhouse designed and ran this survey, and sells childcare-adjacent services to families, including drop-in play and occasional care.

Care is often a patchwork. 67 of 119 (56%) parents surveyed said three or more kinds of arrangement are regularly part of their youngest child's care in a typical month, including grandparents or other relatives for 72 of 119 (61%) and licensed childcare for 71 of 119 (60%). Of the 70 families using licensed childcare who answered, 49 of 70 (70%) said some of it is part of the $10-a-day program.

When care falls through

Disclosure: Boogles Playhouse designed and ran this survey, and sells childcare-adjacent services to families, including drop-in play and occasional care. Several questions in this section measure the need for backup and occasional care.

Confidence in a backup plan. Parents were asked "How confident are you that your family could manage an unexpected childcare disruption without a parent/caregiver missing work or another important commitment?" on a scale from 0 ("Not at all confident") to 5 ("Completely confident").



Rating (0 to 5)	Parents (of 118 who answered)	Share
0, "Not at all confident"	27 of 118	23%
1	26 of 118	22%
2	12 of 118	10%
3	29 of 118	25%
4	20 of 118	17%
5, "Completely confident"	4 of 118	3%

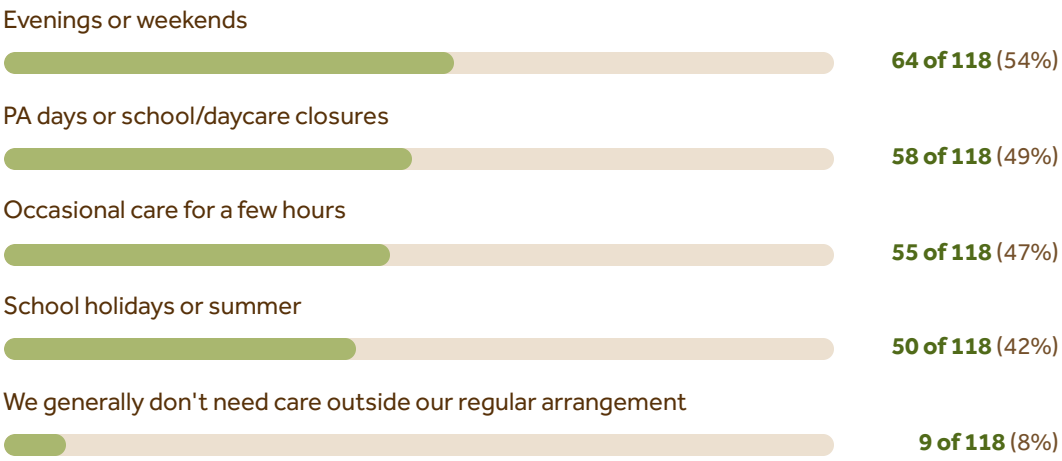
In all, 65 of 118 (55%) rated their confidence 0, 1 or 2, and 24 of 118 (20%) rated it 4 or 5.

What would happen tomorrow. Asked what their family would most likely do if their usual childcare unexpectedly fell through tomorrow (one answer), 48 of 117 (41%) parents surveyed who answered (leaving out "Not applicable") said "I would miss or change work/another commitment". Another 7 of 117 (6%) said "We probably would not have a workable solution".

People to call on. Leaving aside another parent or caregiver in the household, 52 of 119 (44%) parents surveyed said they could reliably call on one person or no one to care for their child unexpectedly, including 21 of 119 (18%) who said no one. For 54 of 118 (46%)

parents who answered, the nearest extended family member who could realistically help with childcare lives 30 minutes or more away, or they have no such family.

When care is needed outside regular hours. Asked when, outside regular school or daycare hours, their family sometimes needs childcare, the 118 parents surveyed who answered chose (as many as applied), including:



When	Parents (of 118 who answered)	Share
Evenings or weekends	64 of 118	54%
PA days or school/daycare closures	58 of 118	49%
Occasional care for a few hours	55 of 118	47%
School holidays or summer	50 of 118	42%
We generally don't need care outside our regular arrangement	9 of 118	8%

Asked "How well do the childcare options available to your family match the times you actually need care?", 66 of 110 (60%) parents surveyed who answered (leaving out "Not applicable") said "Very well" or "Fairly well", and 17 of 110 (15%) said "Not very well" or "Not at all well". These two answers come under the disclosure at the top of this section.

Work and careers

The workday. Asked "In the past 12 months, approximately how often have childcare or children's scheduling issues caused you to miss work, leave work early or significantly change your workday?", parents surveyed who answered (leaving out "Not applicable", mostly parents not in paid work) said:

- at least once: 90 of 103 (87%)
- three or more times: 78 of 103 (76%)

- six or more times: 42 of 103 (41%)

Careers. 69 of 113 (61%) parents surveyed who answered said childcare or family-care responsibilities have affected their career or working life "a great deal" or "quite a lot". "Not at all" was offered; nobody chose it.

Asked "Since becoming a parent, have childcare or family-care responsibilities contributed to you doing any of the following?" (as many as applied), the 117 parents who answered said, including:



Since becoming a parent, childcare contributed to me…	Parents (of 117 who answered)	Share
Using vacation or personal days to provide childcare	52 of 117	44%
Delaying my return to work	47 of 117	40%
Working while simultaneously caring for a child	47 of 117	40%
Reducing my working hours	37 of 117	32%
Turning down or not pursuing a job or promotion	28 of 117	24%
Leaving the workforce for a time	22 of 117	19%
Accepting lower earnings for greater flexibility	15 of 117	13%

Mothers' own account. Mothers surveyed who share parenting with another parent or caregiver were asked whose career or working life has been more affected by parenting and childcare. 76 of 97 (78%) said "Mine, much more" or "Mine, somewhat more", and 50 of 97 (52%) said "Mine, much more". This is mothers' own description of their

household. Only 8 fathers took part, so the survey cannot compare mothers with fathers.

The organising load at home

Mothers surveyed who share parenting were asked who usually takes primary responsibility for five tasks. The table counts "Mostly me" or "More me than them".



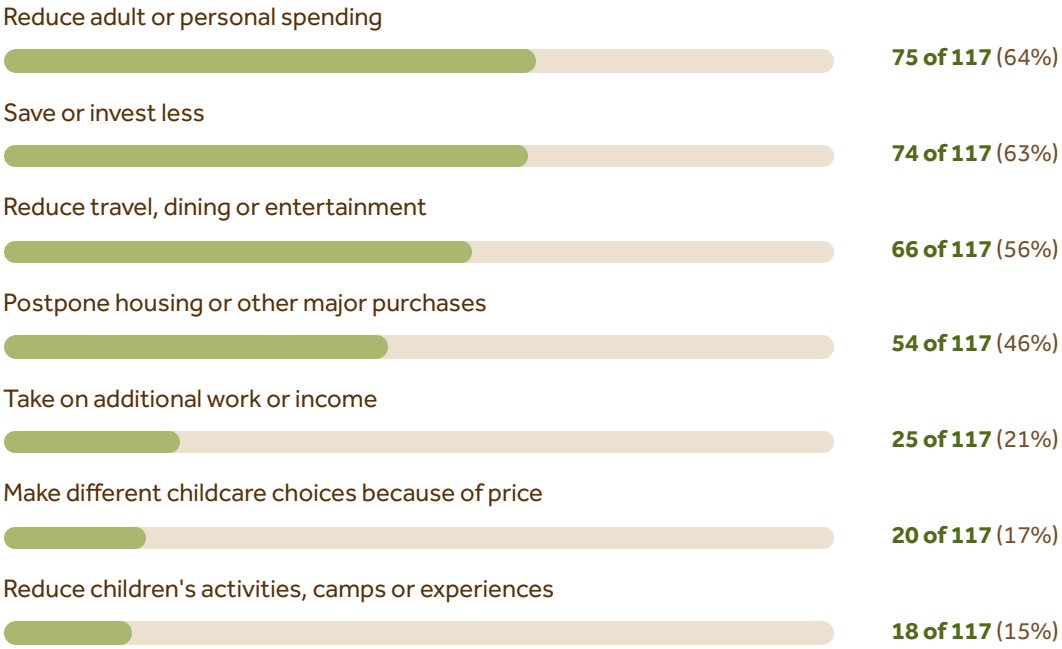
Task	Mothers who answered	Share
Keeping track of children's clothing, supplies and other needs	96 of 98	98%
Managing school/daycare calendars, forms and deadlines	90 of 96	94%
Booking camps, activities and appointments	90 of 97	93%
Finding and arranging childcare	87 of 97	90%
Arranging backup plans when normal care isn't available	85 of 96	89%

Across all five tasks, 72 of 94 (77%) mothers who answered every task said "Mostly me" or "More me than them" each time, and 52 of 94 (55%) said "Mostly me" each time. As above, this is mothers' own account, not a comparison with fathers.

Boogles Playhouse designed and ran this survey, and sells childcare-adjacent services to families, including drop-in play and occasional care.

Money and big decisions

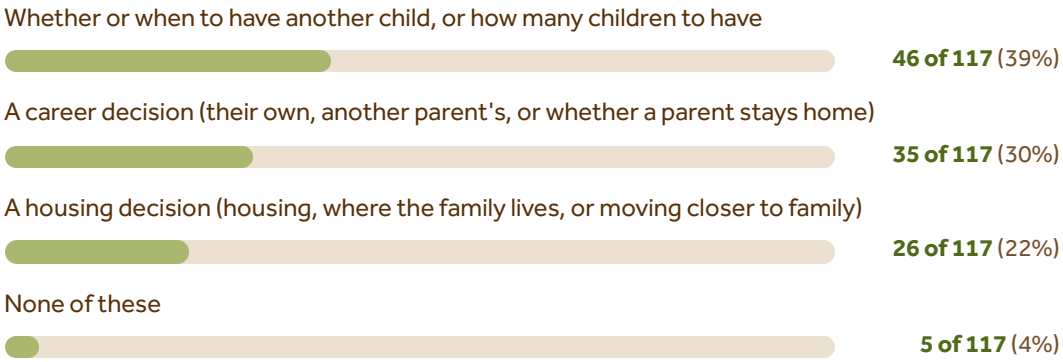
Trade-offs in the past year. Asked whether, in the past 12 months, the cost of raising children had caused their household to do any of a list of things (as many as applied), the 117 parents surveyed who answered said, including:



In the past 12 months, the cost of raising children led us to…	Parents (of 117 who answered)	Share
Reduce adult or personal spending	75 of 117	64%
Save or invest less	74 of 117	63%
Reduce travel, dining or entertainment	66 of 117	56%
Postpone housing or other major purchases	54 of 117	46%
Take on additional work or income	25 of 117	21%
Make different childcare choices because of price	20 of 117	17%
Reduce children's activities, camps or experiences	18 of 117	15%

Separately, 35 of 113 (31%) parents surveyed who answered said their family's current child-related expenses are "somewhat difficult" or "very difficult" to manage.

Family decisions. Parents were asked "Have childcare availability, childcare cost or the broader logistics/cost of raising children influenced any of the following?" The form allowed **only one answer**, although more than one could apply, so each figure below is each parent's single choice. The real share influenced in each area is likely higher.

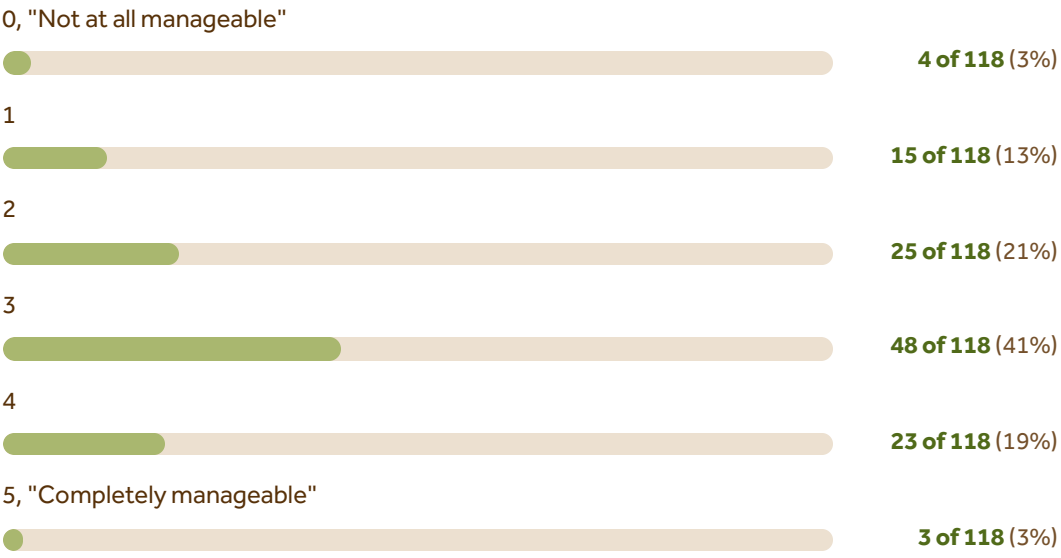


One answer chosen	Parents (of 117 who answered)	Share
Whether or when to have another child, or how many children to have	46 of 117	39%
A career decision (their own, another parent's, or whether a parent stays home)	35 of 117	30%
A housing decision (housing, where the family lives, or moving closer to family)	26 of 117	22%
None of these	5 of 117	4%

Another 5 parents wrote in that more than one applied; they are counted in the base but not in any row.

How it feels, and what would help

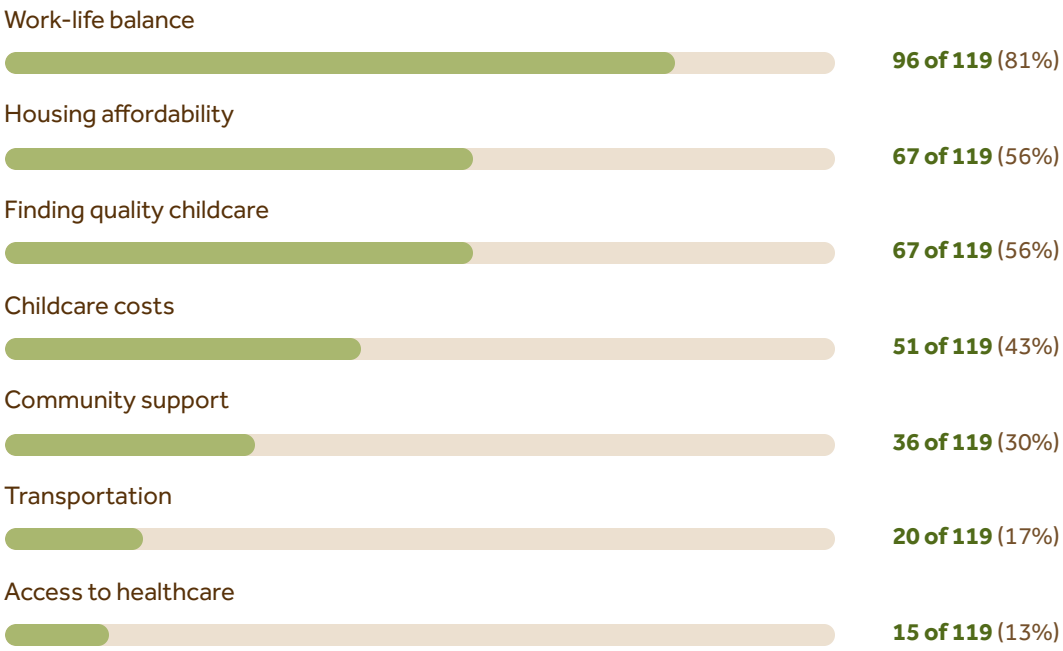
How manageable it feels. Asked "Overall, how manageable does raising young children in the GTA feel for your family right now?" on a scale from 0 ("Not at all manageable") to 5 ("Completely manageable"):



Rating (0 to 5)	Parents (of 118 who answered)	Share
0, "Not at all manageable"	4 of 118	3%
1	15 of 118	13%
2	25 of 118	21%
3	48 of 118	41%
4	23 of 118	19%
5, "Completely manageable"	3 of 118	3%

In all, 44 of 118 (37%) rated it 0, 1 or 2, and 26 of 118 (22%) rated it 4 or 5. This question asks how manageable family life feels. It is not a measure of stress, overwhelm or mental health, which this survey did not ask about.

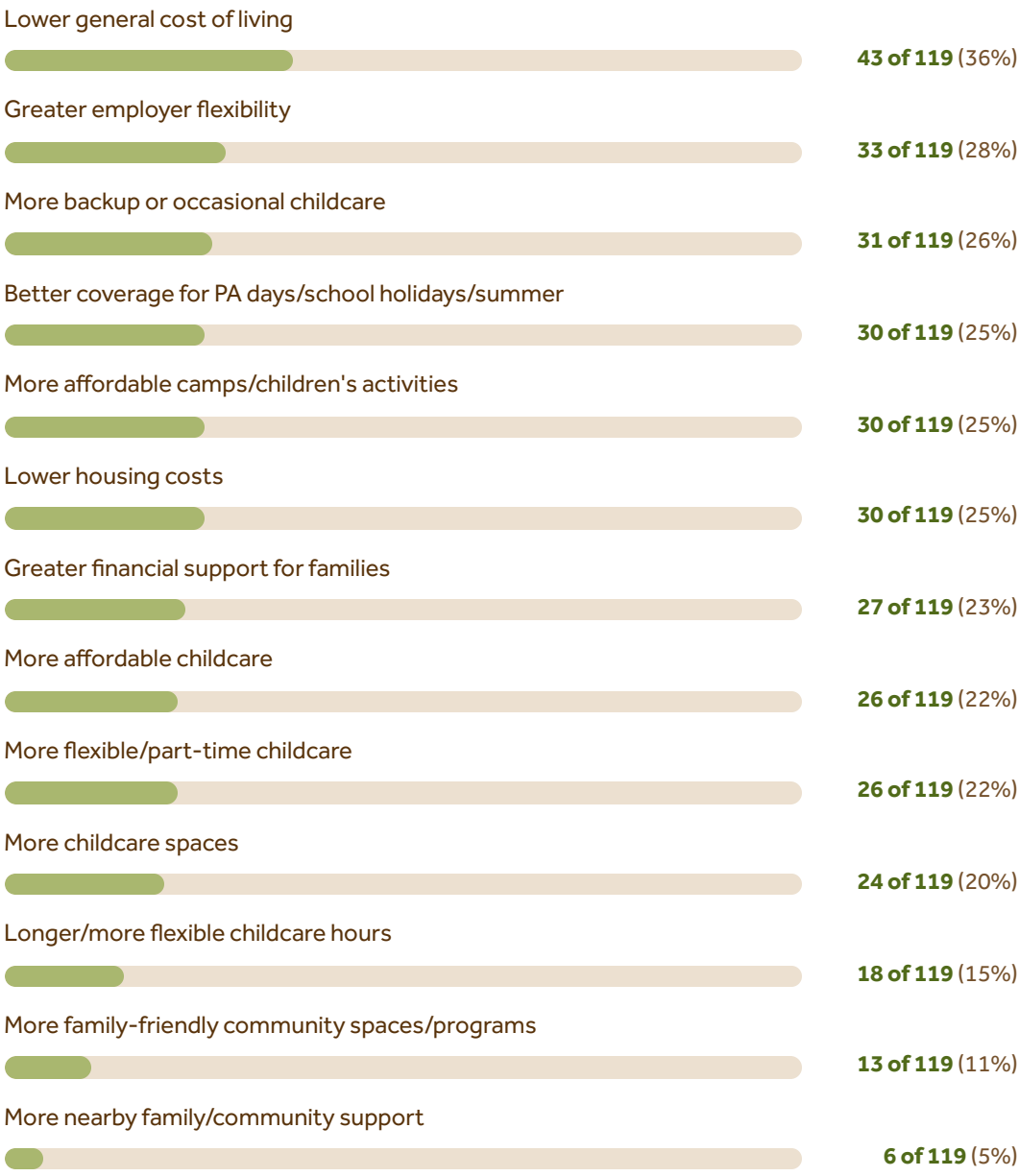
The biggest challenges. Asked "What are the biggest challenges you face as a parent in the GTA?" (as many as applied), the 119 parents surveyed chose:



Challenge	Parents (of 119)	Share
Work-life balance	96 of 119	81%
Housing affordability	67 of 119	56%
Finding quality childcare	67 of 119	56%
Childcare costs	51 of 119	43%
Community support	36 of 119	30%
Transportation	20 of 119	17%
Access to healthcare	15 of 119	13%

Parents could pick as many as they liked, so this shows how widely each challenge was felt, not which matters most.

What would help. Asked "Which THREE changes would make the biggest positive difference to your family's day-to-day life?", the 119 parents surveyed most often chose, including:



Change (up to three each)	Parents (of 119)	Share
Lower general cost of living	43 of 119	36%
Greater employer flexibility	33 of 119	28%
More backup or occasional childcare	31 of 119	26%
Better coverage for PA days/school holidays/summer	30 of 119	25%
More affordable camps/children's activities	30 of 119	25%
Lower housing costs	30 of 119	25%
Greater financial support for families	27 of 119	23%
More affordable childcare	26 of 119	22%
More flexible/part-time childcare	26 of 119	22%
More childcare spaces	24 of 119	20%
Longer/more flexible childcare hours	18 of 119	15%
More family-friendly community spaces/programs	13 of 119	11%
More nearby family/community support	6 of 119	5%

One parent chose the remaining option, "More support for children with additional needs".

Disclosure: Boogles Playhouse designed and ran this survey, and sells childcare-adjacent services to families, including drop-in play and occasional care. That relates to several of the options above, including backup or occasional care, flexible or part-time care, and coverage for PA days, school holidays and summer.

Differences between groups

These compare two groups within the sample. A gap is shown here only if both groups have at least 30 parents, the gap is at least 10 percentage points, and a two-sided Fisher exact test gives p below 0.05. The first two conditions were recorded in the analysis plan at the same time as the first results, so when they were set cannot be independently confirmed. The test was added after an internal review of the first results; it removed the label from six gaps and changed no number. It was used only to decide whether a gap could be called a "directional difference", and it was not adjusted for the 22 comparisons made, so about one of these could be chance. There were no controls and the groups overlap, so none of these shows a cause.

Groups compared	Outcome	First group	Second group
Partial or no suitable care when first needed, vs suitable care	Rated manageability 0–2 (0–5 scale)	28 of 40 (70%)	11 of 66 (17%)
Partial or no suitable care when first needed, vs suitable care	Career affected a great deal or quite a lot	28 of 37 (76%)	35 of 65 (54%)
Answered "Mostly", "Partly" or "No" about having their preferred care, vs "Yes, completely"	Rated manageability 0–2 (0–5 scale)	38 of 79 (48%)	5 of 35 (14%)
Could call on one person or no one, vs two or more	Rated manageability 0–2 (0–5 scale)	30 of 51 (59%)	13 of 66 (20%)
Born outside Canada, vs born in Canada	Nearest helpful extended family 30+ minutes away, or none	25 of 40 (63%)	29 of 78 (37%)
Born outside Canada, vs born in Canada	Rated manageability 0–2 (0–5 scale)	21 of 40 (53%)	23 of 78 (29%)
Household income under $150,000, vs $150,000 or more	Backup-care confidence 0–2 (0–5 scale)	27 of 38 (71%)	32 of 64 (50%)

Four of these rows use the same outcome, rating manageability 0–2 on the 0–5 scale, so they are not four separate signals.

"Born outside Canada" is not the same as "newcomer": of the 41 parents surveyed born outside Canada, 28 of 41 (68%) have lived here more than 10 years, and the survey was offered in English only.

Disclosure: Boogles Playhouse designed and ran this survey, and sells childcare-adjacent services to families, including drop-in play and occasional care. That relates to two rows

in the table above: the one grouping parents by how many people they could call on, and the backup-care confidence comparison.

Several other gaps did not meet the rule and are not reported as differences, including family living nearby or not (for manageability and for backup-care confidence), how many people parents could call on (for backup-care confidence), having suitable care when it was first needed (for specific career setbacks), being born outside Canada or in Canada (for backup-care confidence), household income (for finding child-related expenses difficult), a youngest child under 3 or older, and Peel Region compared with York Region.

One comparison that met the rule is not shown: parents not employed full-time against those employed full-time, on how much childcare has affected their career. The first group includes parents who left or paused paid work, so a gap there is partly true by definition and says nothing about full-time work.

In their own words

75 parents surveyed answered an optional question: "What is one thing you wish employers, policymakers, businesses or others making decisions about families better understood about raising young children today?" Of those 75, 35 of 75 (47%) wrote about workplace flexibility, remote work or work-life balance; 19 of 75 (25%) about the cost of living, housing or family finances; 16 of 75 (21%) about childcare availability, cost, spaces or waitlists; and 13 of 75 (17%) about school and childcare hours not matching work hours. These counts show what parents chose to write about, not how common each concern is, and the coding was one person's judgement. Quotes are shown exactly as written, with removed text marked […].

"childcare is no longer a personal lifestyle choice—it is essential economic infrastructure."

mother, York Region

"It doesn't make sense that society expects parents to work 9–5, yet publicly funded schools operate on a completely different schedule. Elementary school ends around 3 p.m., leaving parents to pay extra for childcare just to finish a standard workday. We need systems that actually support working families instead of expecting parents to constantly figure out how to make it all work."

mother, Toronto

"Parents NEED flexible working arrangements to remain in the workforce."

mother, York Region

"Flexibility and understanding is so important for parents. We don't have the village previous generations had. This parenting generation are making career decisions based on flexibility more so than money or fit."

mother, Toronto

"It feels like a never ending struggle to be a young family in the GTA. You get educated, work hard, make decent money, and still can't afford the quality of life that you had growing up. […] It's heartbreaking to know I did the "right" things and still can't afford to live a normal life. […]"

mother, York Region

"Everyone seems confused as to why people aren't having children but if you look at cost of living, cost of housing, lack of support for families, it seems very clear. The $10 a day childcare saved us but it seems to be the only comprehensive program to support families."

mother, York Region

"The idea of a one income household does not exist anymore but the education system has not caught up. The hours of schools and even daycares require one or both parents to miss work or pay for additional care in order to send your child to school. It's a barrier for women especially as this burden falls on us more often than not."

mother, Peel Region

What Boogles believes

This section is opinion, not findings. It is Boogles Playhouse's view, informed by what parents told us. It carries no survey numbers of its own. DRAFT: for Catherine Esmail, Founder, Boogles Playhouse & Little Gift List, to edit and approve.

1. **Childcare is part of how a working family runs, not a private side problem.** When it fails, it shows up at work, in careers and in big family decisions. Employers and policymakers should plan for it the way they plan for transit or schools.

2. **Finding care should not depend on signing up before a child is born.** We would like to see waitlists that let parents know where they stand, so that signing up early, and on many lists, is less of a necessity.
3. **Flexible work is part of childcare.** We believe predictable flexibility from employers, such as adjustable hours and remote days when care falls through, is one of the most practical ways to help.
4. **The invisible work of organising family life deserves to be seen and shared.** Booking, tracking and backup planning are real work, and too often it lands on one parent.
5. **Families benefit from a wider circle of support.** Communities, workplaces and neighbourhood spaces can all play a part. Boogles runs neighbourhood play spaces, so we have an interest here too.
6. **The gaps between care arrangements need answers too: PA days, evenings, weekends and school holidays.** Boogles sells drop-in play and occasional care, so we have an interest here and say so. We believe these gaps deserve attention from schools, employers and every kind of provider, not just us.

Methods

- **Design.** An online, self-completed survey of a recruited (convenience) sample. It is not a probability sample and the results were not weighted.
- **Who ran it.** Designed, run and funded by Boogles Playhouse.
- **Platform and language.** Jotform, in English only.
- **Fieldwork.** Responses were submitted from October 1 to November 13, 2026. All but one of the 119 analysed responses arrived by October 21.
- **How parents were invited.** Boogles Playhouse's recruitment channels included its subscriber email list and posts on its social media. No incentive was offered. The invitation email, signed "Catherine + the Boogles Team", said that Boogles Playhouse was conducting and funding the study, said it would take about 10 minutes, stated who could take part, and said that taking part would not sign anyone up for Boogles marketing emails. It described pressures some families face, such as feeling without a village, waiting months or years for childcare, and work and family life competing for time, and invited parents to take part whether their family was managing, struggling or had found support that works. It asked readers to forward the email or share the study page, so some respondents may have heard about it from another parent rather than from Boogles directly. The survey form did not record how each respondent heard about it.

- **Who could take part.** Self-declared GTA residents aged 18 or over who parent or regularly care for a child aged 0 to 10. Questions about "this child" refer to the respondent's youngest child aged 0 to 10.
- **Consent.** Respondents saw: "This voluntary survey is for GTA residents aged 18+ who parent or regularly care for a child aged 0–10. It is conducted and funded by Boogles Playhouse. Participation will not sign you up for marketing emails. Responses will be reported in aggregate; written comments may be quoted without your name in the report or shared with media."
- **Who was included.** 124 submissions were received. 5 were excluded: 3 from people living outside the GTA, and 2 from grandparents, because this report covers parents. No duplicate submissions were found. That leaves **119 parents surveyed**, all living in the GTA. Every figure in this report uses that group or a stated part of it.
- **Bases.** Each figure gives its own base: the number of parents who were asked the question and answered it. Some questions were shown only to some parents (for example, waitlist questions only to parents who had joined a waitlist). "Prefer not to answer" answers are always left out of a base, and so are "Not applicable" answers where the question offered that option; where leaving them out matters to how a figure reads, the figure says so.
- **Minimum group size.** No percentage, comparison or other result is reported for a group of fewer than 30 parents. Smaller groups appear only as counts, to describe who answered.
- **Scales.** Two questions used a 0-to-5 scale and are reported on that scale.
- **What we did not do.** No margin of error is given and no result is called statistically significant. A self-selected sample does not support either. Comparisons between groups follow a rule set out in the analysis plan (see "Differences between groups"); the two-sided Fisher exact test was used only to decide whether a gap may be called a "directional difference". The plan for cleaning the data and grouping answers was written before any comparison was run, but it was recorded at the same time as the first results, so it cannot be independently confirmed and is not a formal pre-registration. Bands such as "0–2 on a 0–5 scale" follow the scale, not the data, and the full distribution of each banded question is shown in this report.
- **Open-ended answers.** Coded into themes by one coder. An answer can carry several themes. One answer that named Boogles Playhouse was left out of the quotes. Quotes are reproduced exactly, with removed text marked […].
- **Reproducibility.** Every figure was produced by a script from the survey export, and each one is recorded with its question, base and caveats. Reporters can ask for the figure behind any number in this report.

Limitations

- **Who answered.** This is a self-selected sample, recruited partly through Boogles' own channels. The findings describe the parents who took part, not all parents in the GTA.
- **Interest in this kind of care.** Because parents were invited through a business that sells drop-in play and occasional care, those who took part may be more interested in that kind of care than parents in general.
- **Mostly mothers.** 111 of 119 (93%) parents surveyed were women and 8 were men, so the survey cannot compare mothers with fathers.
- **Higher incomes.** 36 of 119 (30%) reported household income of $200,000 or more, and 29 of 119 (24%) $150,000–$199,999. 13 of 119 (11%) reported under $75,000. 16 did not say. The sample leans towards higher incomes, and families with lower incomes may have different experiences.
- **Mostly Peel and York.** 61 of 119 (51%) live in Peel Region and 32 of 119 (27%) in York Region. Only 19 of 119 (16%) live in Toronto, and 7 in Halton and Durham combined, too few to report as groups.
- **English only, and mostly long-settled.** 41 of 119 (34%) were born outside Canada. Of those 41, 28 of 41 (68%) have lived here more than 10 years. Only 5 have lived in Canada less than 5 years, so the survey says little about recent newcomers.
- **Young children.** For 83 of 119 (70%) the youngest child is under 3, so the answers lean towards early-years childcare.
- **Groups too small to report.** Fathers (8), single-parent households (8), families with a child needing additional support (15) and recent arrivals (5) are too few to report as separate groups.
- **The invitation.** The invitation email described pressures some families face, such as feeling without a village, long waits for childcare and work and family competing for time, and its preview line read "This study began with a parenting reality I know many GTA families share." Parents who were finding things harder may have been more likely to take part, which could raise the share reporting difficulties.
- **Timing.** Fieldwork came soon after back-to-school and across Canadian Thanksgiving, and almost all responses arrived in the first three weeks. Answers about pressure and disruption may reflect that season.
- **Self-reported and remembered.** All answers are self-reported. Questions about when care was first needed, or when a waitlist was joined, ask parents to remember events that may be years ago.
- **Form issues.** The "family decisions" question allowed only one answer when more than one could apply, so those shares understate. The waitlist outcome question was shown to some parents who had not joined a waitlist; their answers were removed. The childcare-search questions were asked of everyone, including parents who never looked for outside care. Too few parents still waiting answered the question on months spent waiting, so it is not reported. On the time from

joining a waitlist to an offer they could realistically use, the form used 0 to mean "don't remember", so no figure is given for everyone who was asked: among parents who accepted care, it was a median of 12 months among the 44 parents who gave a figure; 15 more could not recall.

- **Not checkable.** The survey export has no completion times, so very fast responses cannot be screened out.
- **Not asked.** Questions planned on stress and overwhelm, and on which parent adjusts their work when care fails, were not included in the final form, so this report makes no claims about them.

Conflict of interest

Boogles Playhouse designed and ran this survey, and sells childcare-adjacent services to families. Boogles Playhouse funded the survey and wrote this report. It operates three playhouses in the GTA (Hillcrest, Square One and Upper Canada Mall) and sells drop-in play and occasional care. Several questions measure the need for backup, occasional and flexible care, which is close to what Boogles sells; those findings are marked where they appear. Boogles' own views are kept in "What Boogles believes" and are not presented as findings.

Media contact

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About Boogles Playhouse

Boogles Playhouse is a Montessori-inspired, educator-led playhouse brand supporting modern families through flexible drop-off play, early learning experiences, family programming and personalized birthday celebrations. It operates three locations in the Greater Toronto Area: Square One in Mississauga, Upper Canada Mall in Newmarket and Hillcrest Mall in Richmond Hill. Boogles designed and ran The State of Parenting in the GTA 2026.

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