

## WHAT'S IN A WORD: FAMILY WELL-BEING

For policies and programs to be effective, it is essential to listen to the voices, perspectives, and language of people whose lives are most impacted by them. To capture those perspectives, Ascend, working with Lake Research Partners, conducted 12 online focus groups of parents across race, ethnicity, and geography in fall 2020 to ask parents with young children how they were experiencing this unique moment in our history and language that could describe families' hopes, goals, dreams, and challenges. Across groups, the parents had a robust set of ideas and values associated with the term Family Well-Being.

While we did not discuss family well-being in every group, it resonated in the groups where we did discuss it. Some feel a big responsibility for their entire family's well-being. Others think of it in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, whether it is staying healthy or having the fortitude to deal with the changes the pandemic necessitates. There are overlaps between family well-being and child well-being, but child well-being invokes more discussions on individual health, well-being, and growth, whereas family well-being invokes more conversations on family communication and balance.

- **"Making sure everyone is happy."** — *Black/African American father, OH/MI/PA*
- "Like, part of that is like I have heard a couple of men in this group say, you know like, they come from a line of good fathers and people who have been there, you know like, generation after generation. And I will be honest, like, I wasn't blessed with that, but I am trying to start that with my sons, you know what I am saying. My family's well-being is basically in my hands right now to influence the future generations to take the role that they are supposed to as they grow. That's kind of how I look at it." — *Black/African American father, OH/MI/PA*
- "Stay positive." — *White non/partial-custodial father, nationwide*
- **"Stability."** — *Black/African American father, OH/MI/PA*
- **"Keeping your child healthy and you know unstressed,** whether that be, like, making sure that they are taken care of; like they are entertained at all points; and they don't really have to stress about what is going on in their life and where their next meal is and stuff like that. It is just taking care of your children." — *White non/partial-custodial father, nationwide*
- **"I think making sure that their central needs are met** - they have somewhere to live, you know, the food is taking care of, they are not worried where their next meal is going to come from. They have clothes on their back. You know mentally they are stimulated all the time. They are where they should be educational wise and that sort of thing." — *White non/partial-custodial father, nationwide*
- **"It feels like a balancing act these days because we are all home** – the four of us – in this one confined place, and my husband is stuck in a room all day and I am thinking okay, how can I make him feel like he is appreciated and also not



\*For all word clouds, the size of the words correlate to how often they were stated. Word Cloud Generated by wordclouds.com

going crazy in his room and how can I find what I need to make me not want to scream from the balcony and how can I be there for my mom who is getting older and she has her needs. I feel like I don't want her to be neglected. And for my son. It's just like having this balance, right, and making sure that...everybody is different. Everyone is a different human being. **And trying to make sure that everyone is feeling like they are getting something that they want.**"  
— *Asian mother, nationwide*

- "Well-being is happy, healthy and safe, and family well-being is more like **having a balanced life.**"  
— *Asian mother, nationwide*
- "I think family well-being means couple, a relationship between couples and the relationship with the child and how you communicate always with your child and how you relate to solve the problem. What is a way that you solve the problem with your husband or your child? So, I think that is important." — *Asian mother, nationwide*