

YouthBEAT^{Jr.}
A Division of C+R Research

THE MODERN PRESCHOOL PARENTING LANDSCAPE



EMERGE SMARTER eBOOK INSIGHTS



INTRODUCTION

Parenting the youngest kids is a whole new ballgame now. Long gone are the days when Boomer parents were reading the hardcover books of Dr. Spock for advice. Now, it's more common to seek support and recommendations from peers in the same boat, whether neighborhood parent groups on social media, or via word of mouth from family and friends.

Many Millennials have delayed parenthood for a complex set of reasons. They may feel crippled by student debt and unable to take on the financial responsibility of a child. Or, they may feel a sense of wanderlust and want to explore the world before nesting with a family. What that means at the end of the day is that the

parents of today's preschoolers aren't a cohesive cohort defined by their own ages; rather, they're sharing a life stage from a variety of directions and viewpoints. In recent years, the highest growth in birth rates is actually among Gen Xers over 40*, and Generation Z, the oldest of whom is now 22, are contributing as well.

The world of raising a preschooler is changing rapidly due to technology advances—and at the same time, some eternal truths of the journey from first steps to stepping into a classroom are constants. Here's what our YouthBeat^{Jr.} data shows, as we explore the landscape of parents of today's preschoolers.



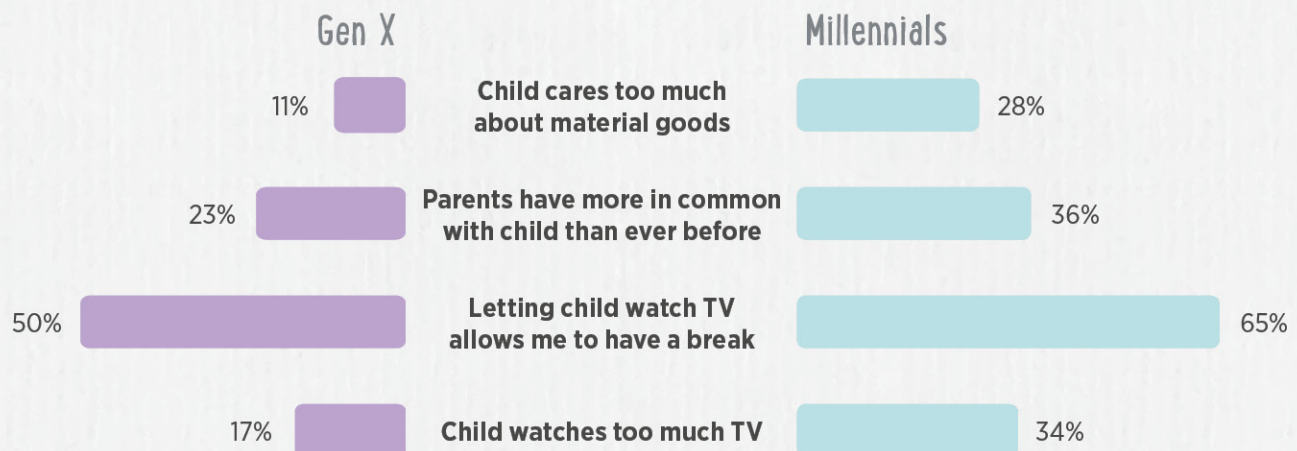
GEN X PARENTS ARE MORE CONFIDENT AND LESS WORRIED THAN MILLENNIALS

Gen Xers have been around a bit longer. They believe in themselves—and their children—more than their Millennial counterparts. Technology seems to play a central role: Millennial parents think they have more in common with their child than Gen Xers, and they're more likely to admit to using TV as a babysitter (but are also more worried about the amount of TV and material items their children consume).

Non-Millennials Are Confident in Their Parenting Choices



% Agree Strongly/Somewhat



2

ACTIVITIES AND PLAY HABITS ARE SHIFTING OVER TIME

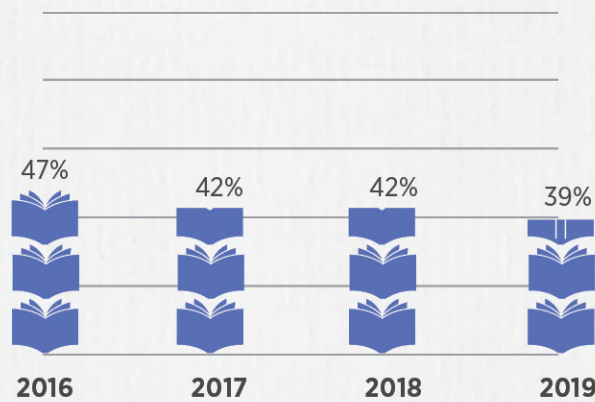
Over the last four years, parents are gaining less satisfaction from reading and playing outside with their preschoolers, while their interest in co-viewing media and just talking are ramping up. As young parents become aware of the emphasis on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) education, we also see play patterns for constructive and building play increase, while physical play decreases.



Favorite Activities Parents Like to Do with Child



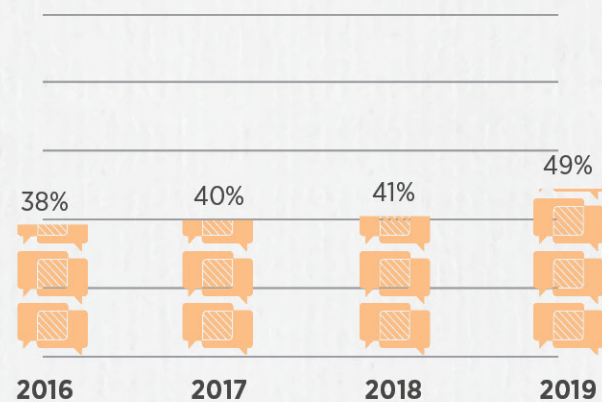
Read



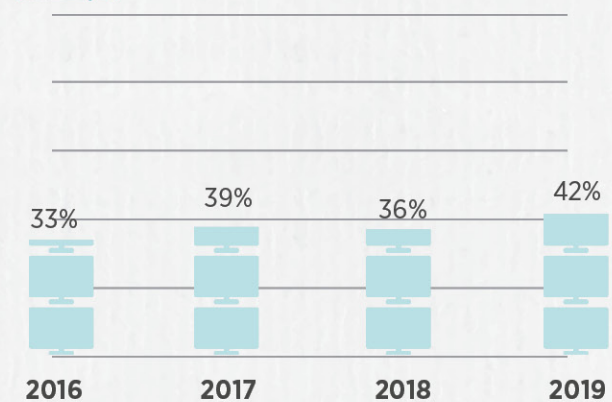
Play Outside/Hike



Just Talk to Him/Her



Watch TV/Movies at Home



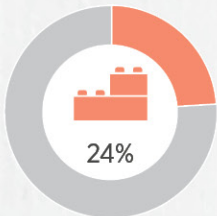
Child's Favorite Way to Play



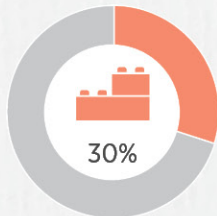
Building or Constructive Play,
like Playing with LEGOs



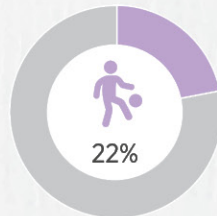
Physical Play, Like Sports or
Rough-and-Tumble Play



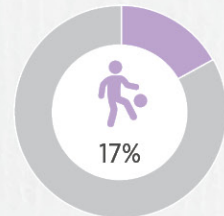
2016



2019



2016

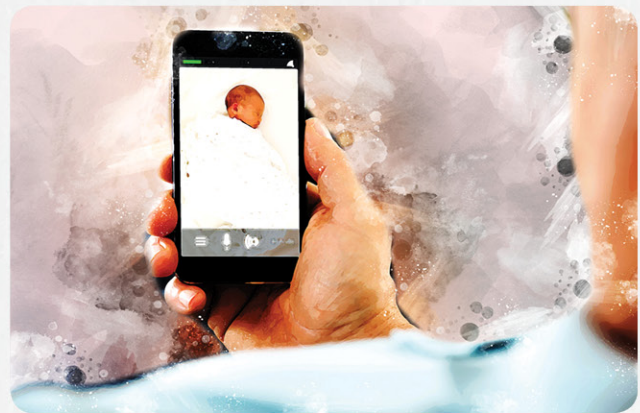


2019

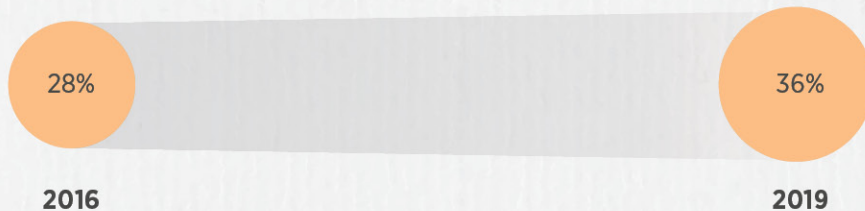
3

PRESCHOOL PARENTS WORRY ABOUT TECHNOLOGY DEPENDENCE

We could call it a “*Black Mirror Syndrome*,” to reflect Netflix’s sci-fi series about the impact of electronics in the modern world. Babies today are born into a world where they may never really be alone, with Alexa-equipped baby monitors able to play them lullabies or tell them stories when they fuss. And, it’s an increasingly wireless world that preschoolers inhabit, with wired cable subscriptions on the decrease and streaming services proliferating. Look for more providers on the horizon before the end of 2019!

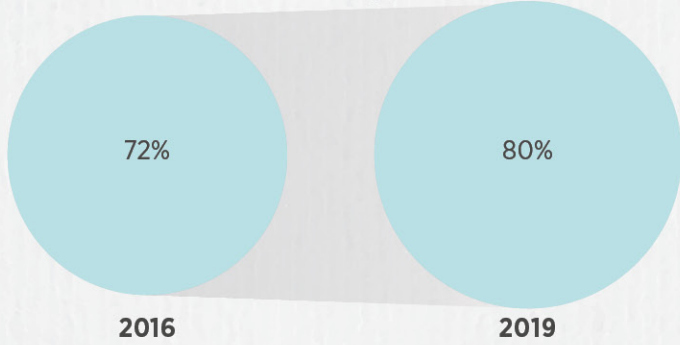


% Agree Strongly/Somewhat
Child Is Too Involved in Technology



% Agree Strongly/Somewhat

I Encourage My Child to Take a Technology Break



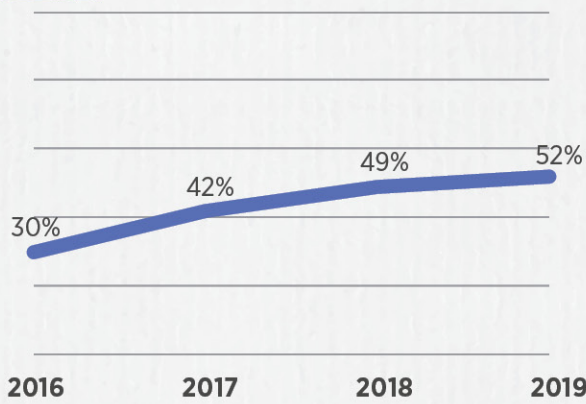
I Worry About My Child Relying Too Much on Technology



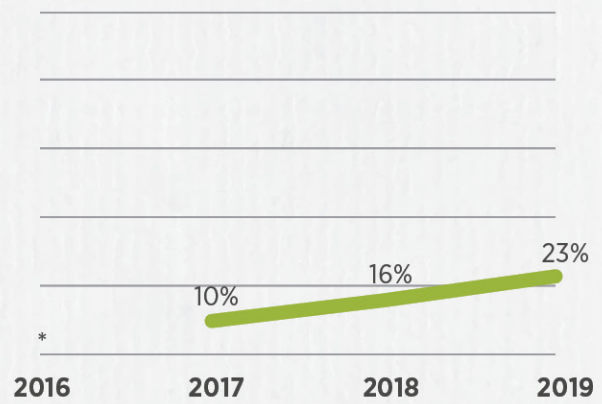
Electronic Devices in Household



Smart TV



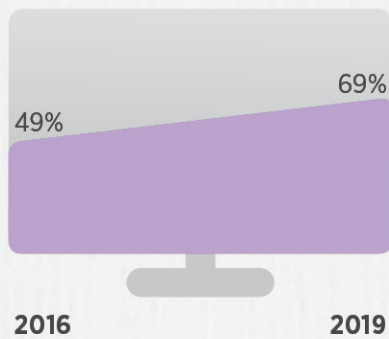
Smart Speaker



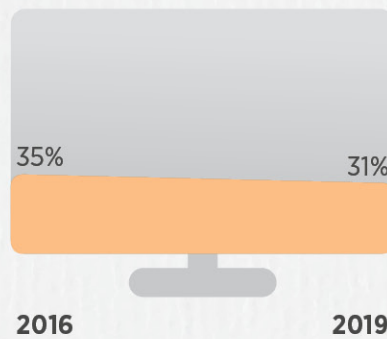
Type of TV Service Have or Use in Home



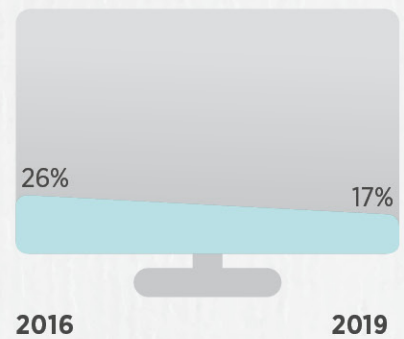
Streaming Service



Cable TV



Satellite TV



4

ECONOMIC CONCERNS ECLIPSING ENVIRONMENTAL IDEALS

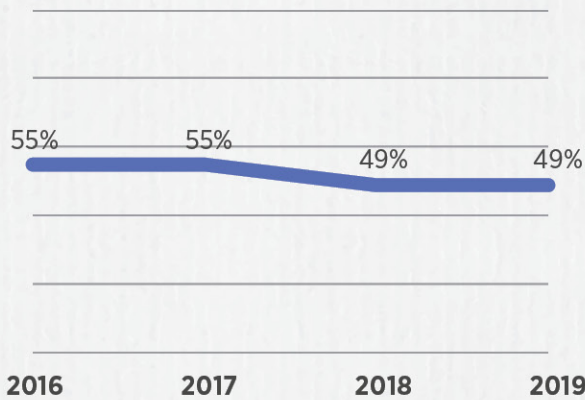
Parents of preschoolers, many of whom are strapped for cash, are growing less idealistic about buying and eating organic foods or worrying about the ethical sourcing of products. It may have been fashionable to buy grass-fed and free-range food a few years ago, but interest has waned. We hypothesize that more families are taking a holistic approach to diets, incorporating more meat-free days and not sweating the sourcing.



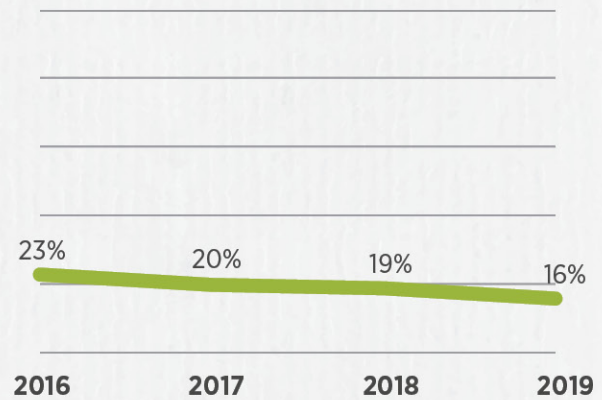
% Say Important When Buying Products for Child



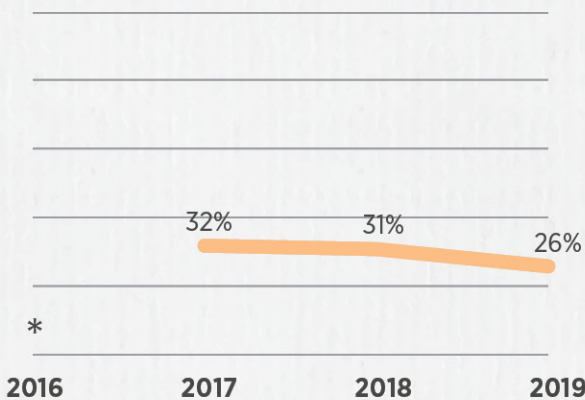
Avoiding GMOs



Organic/All Natural



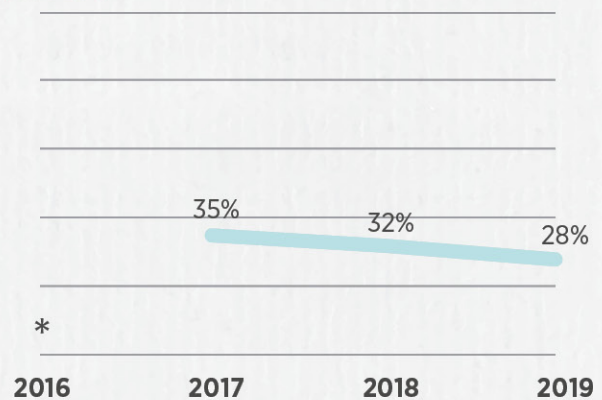
Cage-Free/Free-Range Eggs



*Added in 2017



Avoiding Non-Grass-Fed Meat/Dairy



*Added in 2017

5

GENDER PREFERENCES FOR ENTERTAINMENT REMAIN CONSTANT

In this kaleidoscopic world of parenting pre-schoolers, the challenges seem to be reborn on the daily. There's so much to worry about; it can be hard for parents to stay afloat. One thing that is more fluid now than in any parents' childhood is the idea of gender identity. Several states now allow parents to choose gender-neutral designations for their children at birth, and more allow this option for adults on their driver's license as well. One thing that hasn't

changed, however, is the presence of interest in different kinds of entertainment and play by gender. We saw this, too, in every country in our YouthBeat® Global studies over the last few years. It begs the question—doesn't the parent control the toys a child can access? And the answer is yes! And, when the child plays at a friend's house or has a differently gendered sibling with another set of toys, preferences become apparent.

Child's Favorite Character from a Movie
~ 2019 Ranked Order ~



Boys



Girls



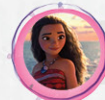
Spiderman



Lightning McQueen



Batman



Moana



Elsa



Anna/Poppy (Tie)

Top Things Child Plays with on a Regular Basis
~ 2019 Ranked Order ~



Boys



Girls



Cars, trains, or other vehicles



Construction/building toys



Having books read to him



Stuffed animals



Action figures



Stuffed animals



Dolls



Having books read to her



Dress-up clothes



Art supplies

Reading books to a preschooler transcends gender lines. Keep it up, valiant parents!



NOW WHAT? FOR YOUR BRAND:

Encourage parents of today's preschoolers to be gentle (and mindful) with themselves, their choices, and their children. Provide advice and guidelines for how their children can grow up well-adjusted in a technologically advanced world and forge new paths for the generations beyond.



Mary McIlrath, Ph.D.
Senior Vice President/Partner
YouthBeat[®]

Mary is a veteran expert in the youth + family space, having consulted for the past 20 years with Fortune 500 companies on developing youth strategies. At C+R Research, she's a partner and leads the youth + family division that offers innovative custom research approaches and produces YouthBeat[®], the leading syndicated publication focused on kids, tweens, teens, and parents in the U.S. and globally. Mary collaborates with leading brands in the CPG, toy, and media industries to leverage holistic, custom, and syndicated youth insights into product, service, and communication practices that meet young people's needs and benefit both providers and consumers. She is a published author, sought-after speaker, adjunct professor, and an academic advisory board member of the Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU). She holds a Ph.D. in Communication and Human Development from the University of California-Santa Barbara.



YouthBeat[®] is the Youth + Family Division of C+R Research. YouthBeat[®] Jr.'s "big sibling" is YouthBeat[®], which is a holistic study of kids, tweens, teens, and parents. Both YouthBeat[®] and YouthBeat[®] Jr. are available for subscription. For more information on our custom or subscription services, contact Mary McIlrath, Ph.D., at marym@crresearch.com.