

WHAT'S IN A WORD: FAMILY PROSPERITY

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 Prosperity.

Many participants thought "family prosperity" means success. It invoked thoughts of the family succeeding as a whole, and success carrying on for generations.

To these parents, prosperity means having the resources to achieve success and growth, keeping things together for as long as they can, and keeping their families safe. It also means staying strong, sticking together, good communication, family growth, rising up, life being easier, positive energy, and burdens being lifted. In the past, family prosperity has invoked more of a financial conversation, but it tested very strongly and more broadly this time.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

- "I think it's the perfect description because you're essentially setting the family up to succeed as a whole." — Mother (mixed races), under 200% FPL prior to pandemic, MN
- "Yeah, it sounds good to me too. It sounds like something that could definitely carry on generationally, so that's awesome." — Mother (mixed races), under 200% FPL prior to pandemic, MN
- "For me, **it's basically having the right resources**, right? Be it physical resources, be it mental resources, whatever, having the right resources to meet, basically grow in both personal life as well as career, in just **everything as an individual, as a family to achieve success and continuously see growth.**" — Mother (mixed races), under 200% FPL due to pandemic, NJ/CT/MD
- "**Keeping families together** for as long as I can and the best that I can, as healthy as I can, keeping everybody safe." — Mother (mixed races), under 200% FPL due to pandemic, NJ/CT/MD
- "I'd say to me, family prosperity is us all **working together to build each other up**. If I prosper, we're all going to prosper, so if I can do it, you can do it and just motivate them and show them, okay, if I'm doing this, you can do the same exact thing. Along with that comes tough love too because I'm not going to do everything, and you expect to get what I have without putting in the work." — Mother (mixed races), under 200% FPL due to pandemic, NJ/CT/MD
- "I would myself consider prosperity and happiness, **overall happiness of the family**. You know mom and dad being on a, you know being great role models for our children. Children growing up, you know, having some respect for your parents, being, you know, good students. Just that, you know kind of, you know your typical kind of happy family." — Latino father, WA/OR/CO
- "A house, some kind of **generational wealth** I can pass onto my kids." — Latina mother, WA/OR/CO
- "We all as family, we are going to be successful." — Latina mother, WA/OR/CO



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

- "I guess that's the foundation right there, you know. You know, the family is prospering and everyone benefits from it. So, I think that it is growth, and it is essential, and it a perfect dynamic that shows that if you have family prosperity that most likely that you are in a position to do well. You know, if you have family support from not only your mom and dad, but you have support from grandparents, and siblings, and aunts, and uncles. I think that **just having that dynamic you can succeed and do well.**" — *African American father, nationwide*
- "Peace, and unity, and everybody on the same page." — *African American father, nationwide*
- "**Keeping the family together.** You know, just having a father in the house to maintain the peace and passing things down, you know." — *African American father, nationwide*
- "Everybody I love got to play. That's the image that comes to mind. Everybody that is involved with me as far as family is doing well. They ain't hungry. They are chilling." — *Black/African American father, OH/MI/PA*
- "Generational wealth." — *Black/African American father, OH/MI/PA*
- "**Everyone is not only prospering emotionally but financially as well.** So, all their needs are met." — *Black/African American father, OH/MI/PA*
- "I am telling you right now this is real. That's the goal." — *Black/African American father, OH/MI/PA*
- "You can rise, you can elevate not only for you and your family, but for your household. **Your household elevation.** Y'all, that's manifestation, family prosperity. If everybody in my family prospering and I'm picking up your slack or there is no slack, that's prosperity. That's definitely I'm prospering, we're prospering." — *African American mother, TN/MS/GA*
- "As in a person is able to complement each other, and life become easy." — *African American mother, TN/MS/GA*
- "**I think of growing closer together and being successful together,** not just in a financial aspect, but in an emotional and mental way." — *Mother (mixed races) and college student, NJ/CT/MD*
- "I was going to say communicating better with one another." — *Mother (mixed races) and college student, NJ/CT/MD*
- "The first thing that comes to my mind is just doing things differently than previous family members did and just educating yourselves to actually be able to achieve the goals that you want to achieve." — *Native American mother, nationwide*
- "When you said that, **the first thing that came to mind is generational wealth.** I've got extended family that I have learned, like, that's what they did. You know, they had relatives that came back, you know, came over here from Eastern Europe years ago. They started a small store. The grocery store turned into a restaurant. They put their kids through college. Two generations later, they're doctors, and lawyers, and accountants, and now, you know, even artists and, you know, more creative passions. And then they plan out that my family was, you know, farmers and farmers, and you know, healthcare workers and farmers. And they had, they didn't really pass on knowledge or wealth to the next generation. They were kind of like; oh, you make your own in life and I learned that you need to support your kids. So I'm hoping to change that in my family." — *Native American mother, nationwide*
- "I think family prosperity would be like **achieving your goals, achieving your dreams, and just prospering in life,** you know. I think that's it." — *Native American mother, nationwide*
- "I guess just your family life is rich, **you know rich in love.** The only thing I can imagine." — *White mother, TN/MS/GA*
- "Setting your, like maybe you're **setting your family up for a good future.** Say, I know that she said rich in love, I would say rich in um, what's it called? Like how to handle things, like rich in information. Yeah." — *White mother, TN/MS/GA*
- "I think it's a foundation of family." — *White mother, TN/MS/GA*
- "...Like. what you, what you base your family off of, the beliefs that you pull from." — *White mother, TN/MS/GA*
- "**I think it's more just setting your family up for a more rich future.** Not so much as right now, but the, the foundation and the building towards a richer, not necessarily monetarily, but just overall experience. You're setting your children up for the ability to go to good schools; you're setting them up for a better opportunity in life than what either A), you were given, or where you started from." — *White mother, TN/MS/GA*
- "It means family bonding. **It means everyone doing well.** Like, financially were doing well, and kids are doing well in school, and everyone is sort of getting along. Just overall, not worrying and stress free and not worrying about safety. Just overall things are progressing in the right directions." — *White non/partial-custodial father, nationwide*
- "**I would say mentally and physically healthy and financially healthy.** Just everybody is okay. You know, no major issues or concerns at the time. Just continually heading towards a goal of peaceful tranquility or something like that." — *White non/partial-custodial father, nationwide*

- “The same thing that (redacted name) talked about. That everyone is doing well. Not only financially, but like, emotionally and spiritually as well. Everybody is kind of in the same pandemic together and I think it is very difficult to feel like your family is experiencing prosperity right now. So, for example, we are having to spend a lot more of our savings and that makes me feel I'm not as well off and I am not being as prosperous as I could be.” — *White non/partial-custodial father, nationwide*
- “Well an education....” — *Asian mother, nationwide*
- “Education and wealth.” — *Asian mother, nationwide*
- “Happiness. When I hear that, it just makes me smile and that you are just happy together.” — *Asian mother, nationwide*