

## THE WORKING MOTHER REPORT

What  
→ moms  
choose ←

 **ERNST & YOUNG**

*Quality In Everything We Do*

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**The Working Mother Research Institute's**  
*powerful new research, What Moms Choose:  
The Working Mother Report, is the latest  
chapter in Working Mother Media's 32-year  
history of championing culture change.  
This important report — with the ultimate  
goal of making all employers more family-  
friendly — studies the internal and external  
factors that lead women to become stay-  
at-home and working mothers. Learn about  
the Working Mother Research Institute at  
[workingmother.com/bestcompanies/research](http://workingmother.com/bestcompanies/research).*

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# Dear Friends,

I am proud to present the results of our fascinating report, *What Moms Choose: The Working Mother Report*, a new study of more than 3,700 mothers prepared by Ernst & Young for the Working Mother Research Institute. *What Moms Choose* delves into the pressures mothers face each day when deciding whether to work, stay home, change jobs or create their own businesses. We also look at the impact of family history, relationships and education, as well as what employers can do to keep high-potential working mothers on the job at all levels.

This study yields surprising insights into both the differences and the similarities between moms who work outside the home and stay-at-home moms. For instance, guilt and worry are universal conditions for moms, regardless of employment status. Interestingly, both working moms and stay-at-home moms believe that one of the ingredients of being a good mom is showing your children women can succeed professionally. And the majority of moms believe that a flexible work schedule is the most important benefit a workplace can provide.

This research builds on last year's groundbreaking report, *What Moms Think: Career vs. Paycheck*. That nationwide survey revealed for the first time the real power that career-mindedness has to generate more satisfaction at work and home for women *regardless of job level or pay scale*.

This report would not have been possible without the support of our sponsor, Ernst & Young, which contributed to the survey design and data analysis. We thank Ernst & Young for its commitment to supporting research that benefits all working mothers.

We invite you to study this Working Mother Research Institute report for an abundance of in-depth revelations about why moms make the decisions they do regarding work and career and how those decisions may change over time.

All the Best,



**Carol Evans**  
President  
Working Mother Media



**Ernst & Young** is excited once again to sponsor research from the Working Mother Research Institute.

It seems to be an opportune moment to research the needs and attitudes of working families. The relationship of working parents to their careers is receiving attention in think tanks, on management committee agendas, in board discussions, and on a broad range of government and community agendas.

The economy has shaken businesses and families alike, but the good news is that working mothers have a strong desire to engage with businesses to build everyone's bottom line. As with any other aspect of positioning a company for the future, applying creativity to workforce solutions will move companies to the leading edge. Those companies know that, across the world, the empowerment of working women is seen as perhaps the greatest single lever to energizing uncertain or underdeveloped economies. We know that mothers want to make contributions drawing upon their unique gifts and perspectives. Everybody can win.

What's next? I challenge you to take up that question. The purpose of pulling together the knowledge from this research is so that each one of us in the business world can take concrete and effective action. Use these data to make the case for better engaging working mothers in their careers. Bring to your leaders the voices of the women who took time to share their concerns and aspirations with us. Tune your ears to hear the solutions that your own people will bring forward to both manage their personal lives and support your business success.

**We at Ernst & Young are eager to join with you to be part of the conversation — and part of the solution.**

***Billie Williamson***

Americas Inclusiveness Officer  
Ernst & Young

# *What Moms Choose*

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From Betty Friedan's 1963 *The Feminine Mystique* to the "Mommy Wars" and the "Opt-Out Revolution," every decade has its debate over a mother's decision to work or stay home with children. The Working Mother Research Institute has commissioned a new survey examining what women are choosing now when it comes to work and life. And, crucially, why?

Every ten seconds a baby is born in the United States, which means someone becomes a mother or adds to her family. There are tears, joy and suddenly lots more to do. *Plink!* The first domino tumbles in a complex trail that ends up in a big choice: Stay at home? Go back to work? Something in between?

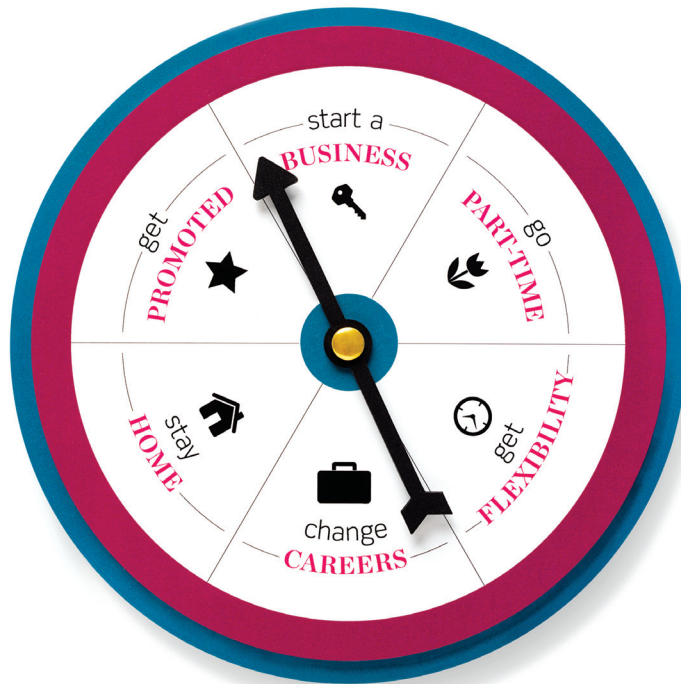
The Working Mother Research Institute has taken a close look at this chain reaction in *What Moms Choose*. We surveyed more than 3,700 women to find out who ends up at home, who goes back to work and all of the push-pull factors that shape those decisions. This report, our second annual, is part of the Working Mother Research Institute's ongoing mission to help all employers attract and retain women by becoming more family-friendly.

"We can't grow or face the challenges of the marketplace without women's perspectives and contribu-

tions—in fact, no business can," says Billie Williamson, Americas Inclusiveness Officer for Ernst & Young, which sponsored our efforts. "We knew the focus of these studies would give businesses the specific insights they need to engage women and working mothers more fully. For Ernst & Young, women, and the talent they bring to the table, are inseparable from our success as an organization."

"The factors that weigh on working mothers throughout their lives are endlessly complex and fascinating," agrees Carol Evans, president of Working Mother Media. "For more than thirty years, *Working Mother* has served women and the companies that employ them to fill the chasm that still separates work and family life. We have found the best and most productive employers are those who see the complete person, kids and all. But too





often, working mothers lack the support they need and must find another way to succeed.”

Indeed, our survey found widespread work/life disconnection: Women want one arrangement, but settle for another. Fifty-five percent of career-oriented stay-at-home moms we surveyed, for instance, would prefer to be working now. Equally troubling, 71 percent of mothers surveyed equate work with something done only to pick up a paycheck. Given these realities, the challenge is to get those career-oriented moms back into the talent pool *and* to better engage the workers who are there out of financial necessity.

This report continues a conversation begun with 2010’s *What Moms Think: Career vs. Paycheck*, a groundbreaking survey that showed how critical it is for daily work to have career meaning. The antithesis of “collecting a paycheck,”

a career means avenues for developing talents and growing toward goals. *What Moms Think* showed that being career-oriented is a prime predictor of higher satisfaction in nearly every measure of work and life. Moms who describe themselves as having a career are more likely to say their work matters, that their colleagues respect their opinions, and that their partners pitch in at home. In our new survey, roughly two-thirds of career-oriented working moms count themselves proud to work for their employers and willing to recommend their workplaces to others.

We also learned that career orientation isn’t about money; it’s about mindset.<sup>1</sup> To understand more, we asked moms this year about their role models in life, the work schedules they’d prefer and the sources of stress that impact their work life choices.

The results, which we’ll discuss in

<sup>1</sup> 2010’s *What Moms Think* showed half of all women who described themselves as career-oriented earned less than \$50,000 annually.

“As women, we tend to spend too much time thinking in detail of what didn’t work and not enough time recognizing our successes or our preparedness.”

—Karen Wilhelm Buckley, management consultant and co-author of *Savvy Leadership Strategies for Women*

detail, don’t fit old assumptions. At-home moms, for example, are more likely to say they felt frowned on by society than working moms, while working moms are far more likely to say they felt guilty about the cleanliness of their house than about spending too much time at work. It’s true that working mothers carry a greater burden of guilt and feeling judged than their at-home counterparts, but the gap is surprisingly slender.

Given that career orientation correlates to positive experiences in the workplace and at home, we wanted to dig further into this “career mindset,” so we traced it back to family life to see if we could correlate early role models with later work life decisions (in short, yes). We also discovered how the priorities of today’s career-oriented moms spell good things for the next generation of workers.

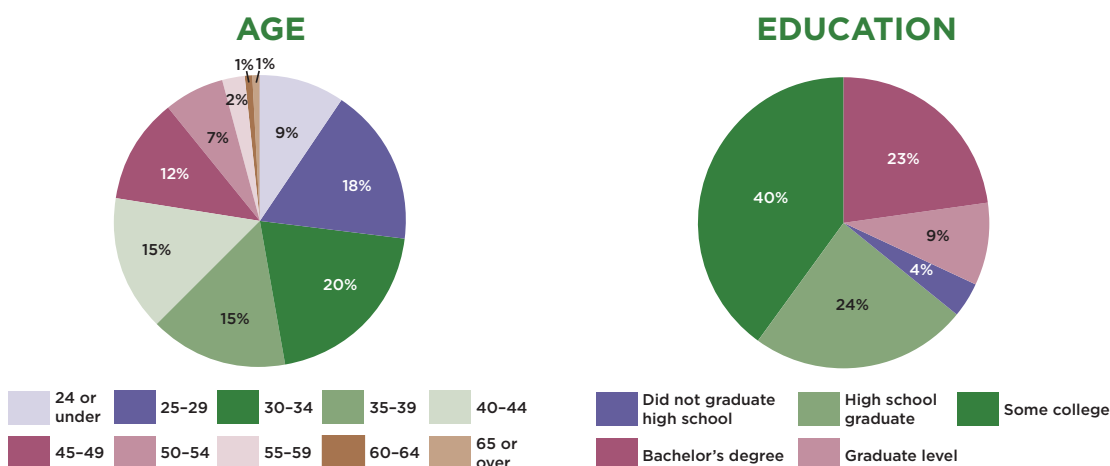
And finally, we wanted to know what a career orientation can imply

for a company’s bottom line. Plenty, it turns out. Career-oriented mothers score 11 percentage points higher on our engagement index (which factors in elements like pride in their company, loyalty and job satisfaction) than moms working primarily for financial reasons. Career-oriented moms also log more hours weekly than their financial-oriented counterparts.

The importance of this higher engagement can’t be overestimated, says Jeffrey D. Merrifield, associate director of Americas HR strategy and operations for Ernst & Young, who designed this survey for the Working Mother Research Institute. “At Ernst & Young, we’ve proven within our own organization that more engaged teams have better business outcomes,” Merrifield notes. “Where our people are highly engaged, we have higher retention and better financial outcomes, and clients and potential clients have a more favorable perception of Ernst & Young. There is

## WHO RESPONDED

The Working Mother Research Institute surveyed 3,781 mothers



a lot of academic research that demonstrates the value of engagement, and we see it in our own business results.”

## MOM'S MINDSET

A stressed, conflicted worker is often a less effective one. “I see guilt as one of the top limiters of success for women in any area,” says Karen Wilhelm Buckley, co-author of *Savvy Leadership Strategies for Women* and a management consultant who has worked with Clorox, Genentech and others. “It’s like putting one foot on the gas and one foot on the brake and trying to drive.” More than a third of all mothers working or at home say they frequently feel guilty about their contribution to the household. Here is what’s pushing their buttons:

### Some fretting falls along predictable lines...

Yes, working moms (51 percent) feel guilty about not spending enough time with their kids.

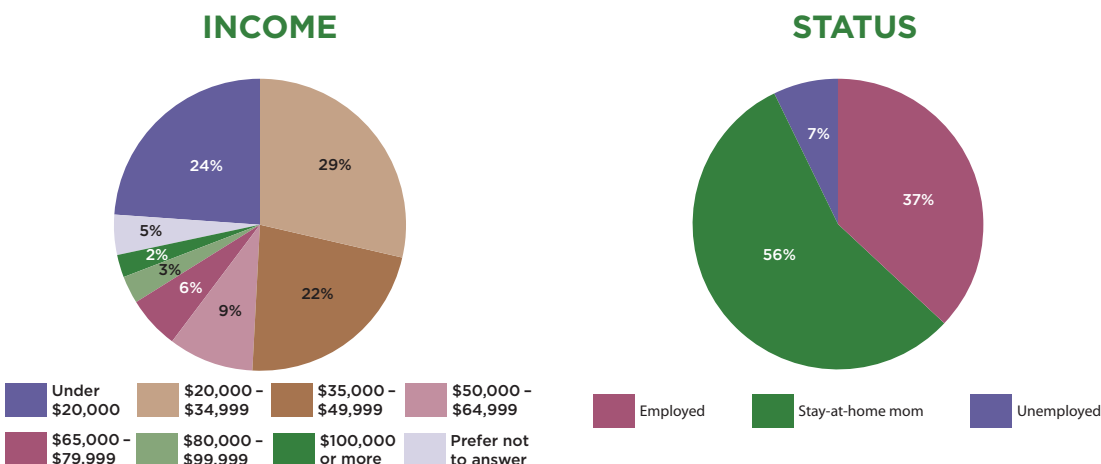
And stay-at-home moms (55 percent) worry about not making a contribution to the family finances.

### ...But some might surprise you.

*That nagging inner voice.* Who’s judging you: the unsympathetic manager, competitive co-workers, the demanding spouse? Nope. Women overwhelmingly say, “I am my own worst critic.” This response, selected by 49 percent of working mothers and 47 percent of stay-at-home moms, is at least ten percentage points higher than runner-up responses. On the work front, judgment by co-workers is a relatively minor factor, with working moms more than three times as likely to say they judge themselves versus feeling judged by coworkers.

*The house is dirty.* Or so moms fear. In fact, more working mothers report feeling guilty about the state of the kitchen than about the amount of time they’re spending with

through an online survey conducted in May 2010. Here’s who spoke up:



**“I felt huge guilt when I was a stay-at-home mother, for not using my education, for not being out there.”**

**—Lisa, federal policy analyst and mom of two**

their kids. (A whopping 55 percent, in fact, say they feel guilty about the house.) Stay-at-home moms don't feel particularly good about it either; 44 percent of them report frequently feeling bad about domestic dishevelment. Compounding the feelings of guilt, we also worry that others are judging us for those dust bunnies, according to 42 percent of working moms and 35 percent of at-home moms surveyed. There's reality to this, too. In 2000, women spent 12 hours less each week doing housework than they did in 1965.<sup>2</sup> The Council on Contemporary Families has concluded

**Working mothers feel most judged about...**

- 1. How clean my house is***
- 2. Not taking care of myself***
- 3. The amount of time I spend with my children***

that a chunk of that time is going to hands-on parenting. “We’ve ratcheted what it means to be a good mother way above what our own mothers or grandmothers had to do,” observes Jennifer Glass, a University of Iowa sociology professor who studies work and family life. “Even if you’re staying at home, it isn’t like Monday is wash day and Tuesday is baking day. You’re ferrying junior to gymnastics and mommy-and-me activities.”

*I don’t have enough time with my partner.* This touched a nerve: More than one third of moms report feeling angst about a lack of couple time. Longer workdays combined with more

intensive parenting are to blame for the fact that adult couple time has declined. Although dual-earner couples are not statistically more susceptible to divorce than others, some studies have tracked an overall decline in marital satisfaction, says Stephanie Coontz, co-chair and director of research and public education for the Council on Contemporary Families. “Keeping partners together is in a company’s best interest,” she says. “You can see valued employees’ performance deteriorate when they are going through a relationship disruption.” What can employers do to help? Have managers model behaviors that show respect for work life balance, says Kathy McDonald, a former Fortune 500 executive turned executive coach who authored *Creating Your Life Collage: Strategies for Solving the Work/Life Dilemma*. “Show it’s okay to occasionally leave early by doing it yourself, and don’t return emails at 11:30 at night,” she says. “If someone sees you were emailing then, even though you may be saying that it’s okay to have work life balance, the example

**Stay-at-home mothers feel most judged about...**

- 1. My contribution to family finances***
- 2. How clean my house is***
- 3. Not using my education***

you’re setting is that you’re really never allowed to be off.”

*I’m not taking care of myself.* Forty is the new 25? You bet your Botox.

<sup>2</sup> According to research done by UCLA sociologist Suzanne Bianchi: <http://www.soc.umn.edu/~elkelly/Bianchi2000MaternalEmployment.pdf>

## WHY MOMS STAY HOME

*We asked career-oriented at-home moms which factors most contributed to their decision to stop working.*

<b>44%</b>	<i>The needs of my children</i>
<b>35%</b>	<i>Cost of child care</i>
<b>26%</b>	<i>The salary I earned did not justify the cost of working</i>
<b>20%</b>	<i>Long-standing desire to be a stay-at-home mom</i>
<b>19%</b>	<i>Birth of additional children</i>
<b>19%</b>	<i>My spouse/partner expected me to stay home with children</i>
<b>12%</b>	<i>Lack of flexibility in start/stop time at work</i>
<b>9%</b>	<i>Lack of high-quality child care</i>
<b>8%</b>	<i>Lack of part-time work options</i>
<b>7%</b>	<i>Having to work more than 40 hours a week</i>
<b>5%</b>	<i>Lack of support from my manager</i>
<b>5%</b>	<i>Lack of meaningful part-time work</i>
<b>5%</b>	<i>Other family members expected me to stay home</i>
<b>5%</b>	<i>The amount of travel required by my job</i>
<b>3%</b>	<i>Lack of paid parental leave</i>
<b>3%</b>	<i>Discrimination against working moms by my employer at the time</i>
<b>2%</b>	<i>Lack of support from my co-workers</i>

“In an ideal world, I’d teach half of my students, for half of the time, but I carry the household’s health insurance so that’s not feasible right now.”

—Rita, public school teacher with 120 students and mom of a preschool daughter

Women are under unprecedented levels of pressure to stay fit, healthy and attractive. In our study, 48 percent of working mothers and 42 percent of those at home say they feel guilty that they’re not doing enough to take care of themselves. The good news is that this is an area where progressive employers are making a difference. Many Working Mother 100 Best Companies offer innovative programs that allow employees “me time” to attend to personal wellness, from General Mills’ on-site dentist and physician to Wyndham Worldwide’s grocery delivery service to Capital One’s on-site gym, campus walking trails and low-fat cafeteria

entrees. These offerings not only soothe stress, they also lower each company’s health-care costs.

## A CAREER COUNTS

Whether it’s setting your sights on the corner office or just wanting to manage your shift, having work that allows you to grow is a powerful thing. As we’ve noted, women who describe themselves as career-oriented are more certain that their talents are being well used and more optimistic about their long-term prospects. That said, we discovered in *What Moms Think*<sup>3</sup> that these career-oriented moms are juggling a lot. Compared with mothers who work for financial reasons, career-oriented moms

## HOW WORKING MOTHERS DEFINE A CAREER

If you’re looking to foster a career culture in your workplace, the good news is that women are generally in agreement on what “career” means. Nearly 80 percent surveyed say it means having job stability, an opportunity to learn and grow and opportunity for advancement. Some of the negative stereotypes of “career” seem to be dropping away, too. Less than half of respondents, for instance, say that having a career means high stress or having to be physically in an office.

Yet one major conflict persists. More than three-quarters of women surveyed equate “career” with needing to work full-time. And yet forty (or more) hours a week is *not* the scenario many women prefer.<sup>4</sup> A 2007 Pew Research Center study found that 60 percent of working mothers believe part-time employment is ideal.

But the reality is that meaningful part-time opportunities remain scarce.

“It comes down to working mega hours for a mega wage, or reduced hours for a pittance and no benefits,” says University of Iowa sociology professor Jennifer Glass. “For many women, there’s no real choice and they’re stuck on a forty-hours-per-week treadmill.”

Given that in 2010 nearly 60 percent of married families had two breadwinners juggling child and household duties,<sup>5</sup> “career” needs to be recast in more flexible terms to include ways to advance during periods of part-time work. This would benefit all workers, not just mothers, emphasizes Lois Backon, senior vice president of the Families and Work Institute. She notes that now “men are feeling pressure to do it all. They’re doing more in the house and more with children than ever before.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *What Moms Think*, p. 22

<sup>4</sup> Additionally, Pew data also showed that of the 74 percent of working women with full-time jobs, only 37 percent actually want that schedule.

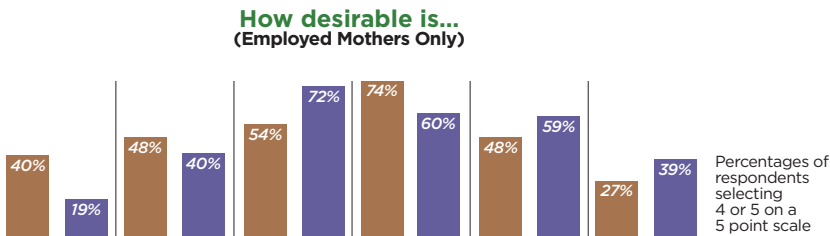
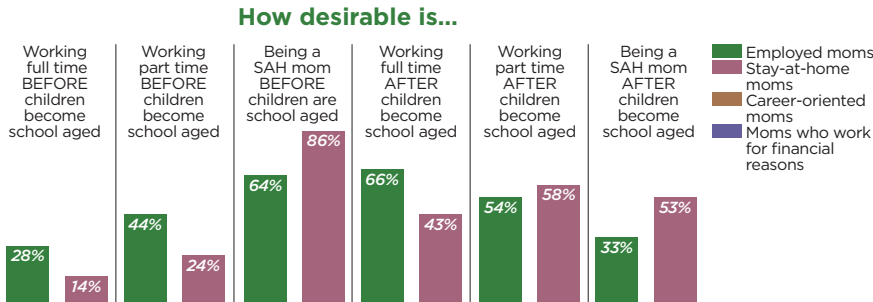
<sup>5</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, March 2011 <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/famee.nr0.htm>

<sup>6</sup> According to the Families and Work Institute report “The New Male Mystique,” the number of men who said they experience work-life conflict jumped to 60 percent in 2008 from 35 percent in 1977.

<sup>7</sup> Urban Institute, “The Business Case for Flexible Work Arrangements,” 2010.

## WHEN TO WORK

We asked working and stay-at-home moms when the best time is to work. Here's what they told us.



Source: *What Moms Think: The Working Mother Report*

are slightly more likely to be out nights either for work events or business travel, more likely to be balancing elder or family care, and nearly twice as likely to have attained supervisor/managerial responsibilities. But despite this heavier workload, they are more likely to describe their lives as balanced, healthy and fulfilled. No matter the age of their children, these working moms are more likely to say having a job's a good thing.

This goodwill, we discovered this year, translates into results. Career-oriented working mothers log nearly four more work hours each week, on average, than their paycheck peers. Looking for a productivity lever? On an annual basis, that stacks up to roughly five additional workweeks. According to the Corporate Leadership Council, every 10 percent gain in commitment yields a 6 percent increase in an employee's discretionary effort and a 2 percent performance boost.<sup>7</sup>

Career orientation also helps recruiting and retention. Career-oriented moms answered questions about their commitment to their employers more favorably, tallying up an engagement score that was 11 percentage points higher than their peers'. For instance, 65 percent of career-oriented moms say they'd recommend their employer as a great place to work, compared with only 52 percent of moms working for financial reasons. Couple that with the fact that 63 percent of at-home moms say they'd seek out an employer with family-friendly policies and you've got a powerful draw.

## UNTAPPED TALENT: AT-HOME, BUT CAREER-ORIENTED

Oh, the mythical stay-at-home mom! She bakes cookies, cleans the house, greets the school bus and doesn't give

## WHEN BABIES ENTER THE PICTURE

Women who wait to establish their careers before having children are most likely to report the highest incomes when they give birth...

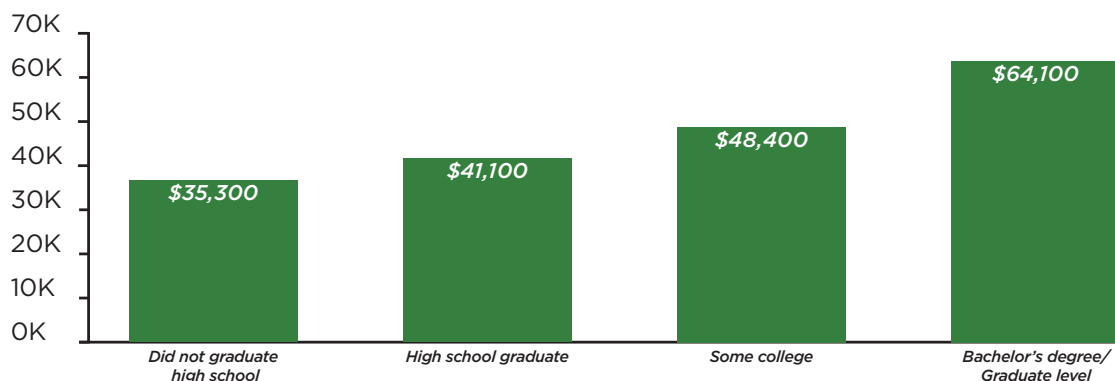
AGE AT 1st BIRTH BY INDIVIDUAL INCOME (PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS)							
Age at first birth	Under \$20,000	\$20,000-\$34,999	\$35,000-\$49,999	\$50,000-\$64,999	\$65,000-\$79,999	\$80,000-\$99,999	\$100,000 or more
19 or younger	32.2	30.6	26.4	6.2	2.3	1.2	1.2
20 to 24	27.3	34.9	21.6	8.9	4.0	2.2	1.1
25 to 29	21.8	28.7	22.7	10.9	9.4	3.9	2.7
30 to 34	17.7	23.5	27.8	10.2	9.6	5.9	5.4
35 to 39	18.4	22.4	18.4	18.4	11.8	5.3	5.3
40 and older	22.2	27.8	19.4	16.7	2.8	2.8	8.3

AGE AT 1st BIRTH BY COMBINED INCOME (PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS)							
Age at first birth	Under \$20,000	\$20,000-\$34,999	\$35,000-\$49,999	\$50,000-\$64,999	\$65,000-\$79,999	\$80,000-\$99,999	\$100,000 or more
19 or younger	23.9	29.1	22.5	12.2	5.7	3.4	3.2
20 to 24	16.2	24.2	22.9	15.3	8.8	7.3	5.3
25 to 29	8.9	15.6	19.6	14.6	16.3	12.1	12.9
30 to 34	7.9	11.4	16.9	16.3	14.5	13.0	20.0
35 to 39	10.4	11.9	17.3	21.3	12.4	11.9	14.9
40 and older	9.3	18.6	17.4	16.3	10.5	9.3	18.6

...as do women with higher education levels at the time they give birth

## EDUCATION'S IMPACT ON EARNING POWER

Average income increases with education level





## WHAT CAREER-ORIENTED WORKING MOMS REALLY WANT: SHIFTING PRIORITIES

When the economy is strong, attrition can be a business killer. Though the job seekers have been plentiful these last several years, it's still smart to consider ways to align your business to attract top talent. It's worth noting, for example, that only one third of respondents label themselves career-oriented. (In other words, pay attention to what these moms want, because they're a valuable minority.) Our survey underscores the importance of programs that take into account women's shifting priorities. For instance, what moms want when they have preschool children is different from what they prefer after children become school-aged. Women were asked to rate the desirability of various employment scenarios:

- **They'd like to work full-time before their children are school-aged.** Career-oriented moms were twice as likely as paycheck moms to rank this as a desirable scenario. It's good business strategy, too, because we found earnings increase with the length of time a woman spends establishing her career before having her first child.
- **They'd like to scale back during preschool years.** We discovered strong feelings about these early bonding years with about half of career-oriented moms ranking staying home with preschool children as desirable. Some 42 percent of career-

oriented moms, for example, said that allowing their children to be cared for by professionals did not meet their definition of being a good mother. Part of the issue is that moms are ambivalent about child-care centers: their cost, their quality and the enduring implication that "someone else" is raising their children.

- **They'd like to work full-time again after children are school-aged.** Nearly three quarters of career-oriented moms ranked it as desirable.
- **Though the preschool years are important, moms don't necessarily want to drop out completely.** In our survey, roughly half (48 percent) of all career-oriented moms say that working part-time before children are school-aged is desirable. That outranked working fulltime when their kids were young by 8 percentage points. For working moms as a whole (which includes moms working just for a paycheck), the difference is more dramatic: 44 percent said part-time was desirable versus only 28 percent ranking fulltime as attractive.<sup>8</sup>
- **They want a condensed day.** When asked to define what makes a good mother, 63 percent say being there when the kids leave for school and come home at the end of the day.

I don't get paid incredibly well, but I love what I do. I think it's good for kids to see both of their parents working.

—Jen, urban planner and mother of two

<sup>8</sup> The Pew Research Center, in 2003, found that 50 percent of mothers felt that too many children were being raised in day-care centers.

“Get your degree, that’s what my father taught us. He used to say it gives you options in life.”

—Trish, mom of three, entrepreneur

the workplace a second thought.

Guess what: Reality is a bit different.

Surprisingly, more than half of all career-oriented stay-at-home moms surveyed say they’d rather be working<sup>9</sup>, and there’s evidence in our survey that career-oriented moms try hard to hang on to their jobs. They return to work in slightly greater rates after having a first child than paycheck-driven workers, and they stay longer when they do, an average of three years before leaving. So, given their desire to stay in and their relative resilience, what ultimately pushes them out? The top reasons cited in our survey were children’s needs (with 44 percent selecting this as one of their top reasons) and the cost of childcare (35 percent). But many selected other factors, including a lack of flexibility (12 percent), no part-time options (8 percent), and having to work more than 40 hours per week (7 percent).

Cumulatively, these “push factors” paint a picture of employment as an either/or choice: You are committed either to your career or to your family — not both. It becomes a no-win situation. As a result, some researchers have argued, women “opt out,” and companies miss opportunities to diversify their ranks and to recruit talent with that valuable “career” mindset. Although this group represents only 10 percent of our survey respondents, the Center for Work-Life Policy estimates that 43 percent of highly qualified working mothers leave the workforce at some point in their career and stay out an average of two years.

The cost isn’t just in lost opportunity. According to new research

commissioned by the Council on Contemporary Families, women who want to work but don’t have a job run a greater risk of becoming depressed. On the flip side, a high-quality job seems to protect against depression. Even moms who didn’t want to work outside the house reported lower rates of depression when they secured a high-quality job.

For employers, these career-oriented stay-at-home moms represent an untapped or, at the very least, underused talent pool. Many can be rehired at bargain rates, salary-wise, relative to experience, because women generally pay a wage penalty when they take time off to raise children. It’s particularly severe for the most educated, qualified women. Women MBAs who take time off to be with children, for instance, see their pay drop 41 percent relative to male MBA earnings, according to work done by Harvard economist Claudia Goldin. The Center for Work-Life policy pegs the wage dip at 18 percent across a range of professional occupations. In our survey, about four in ten mothers currently at home say they believe their decision will carry long-term financial consequences.

## CULTIVATING CAREER ORIENTATION, FOR EVERYONE

Imagine a workforce where everyone feels plugged in and able to grow. It’s a huge opportunity, because the majority of moms (71 percent) we surveyed say they work or would work just to collect a paycheck.

First, let’s dive in deeper on the career mindset. Employers hire adults, but

<sup>9</sup> In his book *Home Alone*, Pennsylvania State University sociologist Paul Amato reported that 40 percent of full-time homemakers wanted to have a job.

## THE MOST IMPORTANT BENEFITS FOR MOMS

Percentage indicates how many respondents rated each benefit as one of three most important

<b>57%</b>	<i>Flexible work hours</i>
<b>51%</b>	<i>Ability to use sick leave to care for children</i>
<b>36%</b>	<i>Predictable work hours</i>
<b>24%</b>	<i>Availability of part-time work</i>
<b>23%</b>	<i>Paid maternity leave</i>
<b>22%</b>	<i>Subsidized health insurance</i>
<b>19%</b>	<i>Option to telecommute</i>
<b>17%</b>	<i>Access to child-care benefits</i>
<b>13%</b>	<i>Meaningful part-time work</i>
<b>10%</b>	<i>Career support for working mom</i>

our survey shows career orientation starts to develop years earlier. We found parental expectations exert a strong influence on a woman's choice to work or stay at home, and to an even greater extent on whether work is seen as a career. Fifty-nine percent of career moms say their parents prepared them to pursue a career, versus 43 percent of at-home moms.

The stage is set, then, early in life. We found women tend to fulfill the early picture they develop of their life, particularly if they envision going back to work after the arrival of

their first child (66 percent said they planned to go back full-time after the birth of their child, and did.) When the answer is "I never thought about it," the results are more split between home and working.

Career moms already do some powerful things to prepare their children to view work as meaningful. In fact, answering a question that generated one of the strongest responses of our survey, 85 percent of career moms said that "showing my kids that women can succeed professionally" is one of the important parts of being a good mother.

## DRIVERS OF ENGAGEMENT

**The factors most associated with engagement of working mothers**

- 1. I have confidence in company leaders*
- 2. I am treated fairly at work*
- 3. My manager's actions match their messages*
- 4. I trust the people I work with*
- 5. Working gives me a sense of purpose*
- 6. Work gives me a sense of accomplishment*
- 7. I like the work I do*
- 8. Work allows me to be creative*
- 9. I have control over my work*
- 10. I have friends at work*
- 11. Mastering my work takes time and effort*

What else was important for career moms? Providing for their children financially and modeling that moms can have outside work that's enjoyable.

It's also clear that the age at which a woman decides to have children and how many years she works beforehand have profound impacts on her career and earning power. For instance, most women don't continue their educa-

tion after having their first child. The difference between stopping at a high school degree and going on to earn a bachelor's degree nets out to an average of \$23,000 annual additional income (see "When Babies Enter the Picture" on page 14).

"Women often ask, 'When is the best time to have children?'" notes survey designer Merrifield. "From an income potential point-of-view, the answer is clearly 'Wait until after your twenty-fifth birthday and after you've finished a college degree.'" At least. Our survey shows that women who wait even longer, and spend more time establishing their career first, are most likely to report the highest individual incomes. In terms of household income, women who have their first child between the ages of 30 and 34 fare the best, with roughly 20 percent of that group netting a six-figure combined household income.



# FIVE MARCHING ORDERS FOR EMPLOYERS

Employers who can provide career paths for women at all levels—and all life stages—as well as respond to women’s top workplace needs will reap big benefits in improved productivity and bottom-line gains. Here’s where our survey suggests employers should focus:

## **Establish a culture of trust**

Ernst & Young’s Billie Williamson sees a common thread in the 11 drivers of engagement our survey identifies. “You see a key theme of trust: trust in the organization’s direction and in the people around me, and trust that I’ll be treated fairly.” For Ernst & Young, she adds, “being able to trust one another is an absolute requirement for our business success. When there is trust, people can feel safe to consult with one another, to ask questions, to challenge

how work is done in order to improve it, to raise issues or concerns, or to ask for help.” In fact, trust underpins other crucial work life programs, says Williamson. “With trust, flexibility can work for anyone, because at the heart of it is the belief that people will get the job done and we don’t need to monitor when and where work occurs.” Ernst & Young isn’t alone. Best Buy has replaced the old notion of “face time” with ROWE, or results-only work environment. The program allows employees to work where and when it fits best with their lives (they can leave at 2 p.m. to pick up a child or spend mornings at home with little ones) so long as they get their jobs done. And the whole thing hinges on trust. As a result, Best Buy has seen employee

turnover drop and productivity rise.

### **Focus on being family-friendly**

Familiar news, yes, but this survey shows again what a huge competitive advantage family-friendly policies are in attracting and keeping talent. “The fact that such a low percentage (22 percent) of stay-at-home moms say they would return to their previous employers speaks volumes about better understanding and addressing the needs of working mothers,” notes Ernst & Young’s Jeffrey Merrifield. “Employers should note that a very clear majority of these same women say they would seek out an employer with a reputation for being a good employer for working mothers (58 percent) and family-friendly policies (63 percent).”

### **Provide Flexibility**

Simply put, women covet flex, which is why it topped our rankings of important workplace benefits, vaulting over such offerings as paid maternity leave, telecommuting and access

to child-care benefits. One area, in particular, to be flexible? Start and stop times. The majority of women in our survey say that greeting their children at the beginning and end of the day is important to them. To that end, Denmark-based toymaker LEGO Systems allows U.S. employees to start their workday anytime between 7:30 a.m. and 9 a.m., with the end time adjusted accordingly. Although flextime has been more commonly a perk of salaried jobs, some studies show it can be a powerful productivity tool for hourly workers as well. In a 2009 survey conducted by Corporate Voices for Working Families, managers of hourly workers reported that flex improved customer service, productivity, responsiveness and absenteeism by more than 70 percent.

### **Allow Employees To Use Paid Sick Leave To Care For a Sick Child**

When school calls to say that Jack is running a fever, the stress-o-meter goes sky high with the one-two punch

of worrying about your child's well-being and the guilt over the work that won't get done that day. (And possibly the next, since many child-care centers enforce a 24-hour minimum wait period before a feverish child can return to school.) Parents don't want to have to sneak around faking their own illnesses; they need their employers' support to do what needs to be done.

### **Provide Predictable Work Hours**

Sounds simple, huh? But for hourly workers, being inconsistently scheduled is a source of enormous stress and household instability, causing everyone to scramble to make arrangements for children. "Our Best Companies for Hourly Workers know that plenty of planning for schedules is a key benefit their employees need," says Working Mother Media's Carol Evans. "A large majority of our Best Companies give their employees advance notice of their monthly work hours, and all allow their employees to trade shifts as needed."

### **Conclusion**

For more than 30 years, the mission at Working Mother has been to make the workplace environment more just, equitable and family-friendly. This report's findings, matched with last year's key research *What Moms Think: Career vs. Paycheck*, we've proven the importance of a career orientation and its positive impact on job productivity and home satisfaction. We've also explored the factors that push women out of the workforce and the priorities of today's career-oriented moms.

Although women's lives remain our core focus, the need for work life balance has never been more universal — or more needed. A 2010 Families and Work Institute study showed the majority of men are now experiencing work life conflict as they take on more housework and child care. As a result, more flexible ways of managing work and life are necessary for everyone if we're to achieve our full economic potential as a nation.

# *Methodology*

The Working Mother Research Institute, in partnership with Ernst & Young, facilitated a dialogue to identify what we wanted to learn and Ernst & Young designed a survey to accomplish our goals.

New York City-based research company Walker Communications fielded a national survey through a series of email blasts sent by Survey Sampling International (SSI) in May 2011, and a total of 3,781 individuals submitted online questionnaires. Walker Communications received and tabulated the responses, which were then analyzed by the Ernst & Young research team.

The final results are documented in this report, which was written by the Working Mother Research Institute.

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The Working Mother Research Institute (WMRI), a division of Working Mother Media, is home to the Working Mother 100 Best Companies, Working Mother Best Companies for Multicultural Women, Working Mother Best Companies for Hourly Workers and the National Association of Female Executives' Top Companies for Executive Women, among other initiatives. WMRI produces insightful benchmarking reports as well as important research papers studying work life and the advancement of women and conducts surveys, such as *What Moms Choose: The Working Mother Report*, to further corporate culture change nationwide.

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