

# All in Her Day's Work: Women from Atlanta Jewish Households in the Workplace

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**Brandeis**

MAURICE AND MARILYN  
COHEN CENTER FOR  
MODERN JEWISH STUDIES

**JWFA**

JEWISH WOMEN'S FUND OF ATLANTA

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Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies

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The Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS), founded in 1980, is dedicated to providing independent, high-quality research on issues related to contemporary Jewish life.

The Cohen Center is also the home of the Steinhardt Social Research Institute (SSRI). Established in 2005, SSRI uses innovative research methods to collect and analyze socio-demographic data on the Jewish community.



JEWISH WOMEN'S FUND OF ATLANTA

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What's on the minds of Atlanta's Jewish working women?

When the Jewish Women's Fund of Atlanta set out to conduct the first study that would uncover issues of critical importance to Jewish working women in our community, we were hoping to collect input from enough women locally to ensure that our data was thorough, accurate, and meaningful. When all was said and done, more than 600 Jewish working women participated in our survey, giving us an unprecedented look into their struggles, hopes for the future, and most urgent areas of opportunity to make a positive impact in their lives.

What we've discovered is truly groundbreaking in terms of actionable findings that meet the long-term needs and priorities of JWFA and represent a broad spectrum of perspectives.

In addition to the working women survey, JWFA's Community Needs Assessment also included key informant interviews with community leaders, both lay and professional, educators, rabbis, thought leaders and local activists. The study's findings create a virtual roadmap of vital guidelines to identify a path forward in terms of communal funding, policy, and planning. Our hope is that these results will not only inspire a healthy and robust conversation, but offer concrete opportunities to establish multiple partnerships in order to best address the needs of Jewish working women in greater Atlanta.

JWFA engaged the Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (Cohen Center) at Brandeis University, a renowned multi-disciplinary research institute dedicated to the study of American Jewry and religious and cultural identity. The Cohen Center provided a skilled research team led by principal researcher, Fern Chertok, who used the most advanced techniques to create a high-quality survey and generate reliable and relevant findings. Key learnings include our constituent wants and needs both personally and professionally; the urgent call to redefine "having it all"; as well as behaviors and attitudes that mirror issues of significance confronted by all working women in the 21st century.

JWFA extends our sincere appreciation to its trustees and the members of the Jewish Community Needs Assessment Taskforce who served as the main lay leadership advisory group for the community study, representing Jewish Family & Career Services, Sojourn, Jump Spark, the Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta, and Jewish HomeLife.

Special thanks to all of the women who took the time to participate in the survey. Their willingness to share their honest thoughts and opinions offers us a unique window into specific challenges they face and shines a light on issues of immediate priority for this specific population. It is our expectation that this report is the beginning of our larger Jewish community joining together in an effort to address ways in which strategic investments can best address the needs and concerns of all Jewish working women in Atlanta. We invite you to review these findings and reach out with any questions or comments to Dina Fuchs-Beresin at (561) 242-6606 or [dberesin@jewishatlanta.org](mailto:dberesin@jewishatlanta.org).



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# Acknowledgments

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We also wish to thank our colleagues at the Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS) who helped in the implementation of the study. In particular, we thank Breanna Vizlakh, who assisted in our interviews and in the development and fielding of the survey. Hannah Taylor and Yi He worked on transcription of interviews, and Harry Aaronson assisted with data presentation. Rebecca Rose aided in coding survey responses. Our thanks also extend to Deborah Grant and Masha Lokshin for their editorial and production assistance and to Ilana Friedman for managing day-to-day operations of CMJS.

Finally, we want to thank all of the working women who shared with us their experiences and perspectives. Their insights and openness were inspiring and form the core of the research.



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# Introduction

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Riv-Ellen Prell, a scholar of American Jewry noted, “The Jewish family economy has changed since the 1970s” as Jewish women entered the paid labor force in increasing numbers (Hartman & Hartman, 2009; Prell, 2007). Despite their growing presence in the workforce, women, including those from Jewish households, face many challenges to their professional success. Women continue to be paid less than men (Alkadry & Tower, 2011; Graf, Brown, & Patten, 2019). As of 10 years ago, even after accounting for working full time and educational attainment, Jewish women earned only about 56% of what Jewish men earned (Hartman & Hartman, 2009). Societal expectations for women to be less ambitious and less demanding in salary negotiations create “glass ceilings” to upward movement in job titles and compensation (Bowles & Babcock, 2012; Davies et al., 2018).

Founded in 2012, Jewish Women’s Fund of Atlanta (JWFA) promotes social change to strategically impact the Atlanta community by addressing the most pressing needs of local women and girls. To support this goal, JWFA commissioned the Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies

(CMJS) of Brandeis University to conduct research with the goal of expanding JWFA’s systematic knowledge about the needs and concerns of contemporary working women in Jewish households. This research was designed to produce actionable findings that would enable JWFA to make decisions about how to best allocate resources to empower Jewish women and promote their equitable access to opportunities and wellbeing.

On top of responsibilities at work, women are still overwhelmingly expected to take on the “second shift,” the unpaid work of household management and childcare (Hochschild & Machung, [1989] 2012), and are expected to “pull back” from work when faced with childcare responsibilities (Damaske, 2011). Researchers have noted that although Jewish women are more likely to participate in the paid labor force than the broader American population, “Jewish women do not have as high occupational achievements as Jewish men, and they have lower incomes from their jobs” (Hartman & Hartman, 1996; 2009). These researchers also noted that, “Especially among Jewish women, family responsibilities have exerted a pull out of the labor force, at least temporarily or partially (to part-time

employment), despite their high educational level.” This practice results in “opportunity costs” in the form of self-limited pursuit of advanced roles and responsibilities.

According to recent research, Georgia is the sixth-worst state in the nation for working mothers (Kiernan, 2019; Vejnaska, 2016). The ranking was based on measures of professional opportunities; gender-based gaps in pay; availability of affordable and quality childcare; and work-life balance policies, such as parental-leave, length of work week, and commute time.

The current study examined the issues and challenges facing working women from Jewish households in Greater Atlanta, including women who identified as Jewish, as well women who were not Jewish themselves but were partnered to someone who identified as Jewish. Starting with an exploration of their animating concerns and desires for themselves, their careers, and their families, the study addressed the following research questions:

- What are the self-identified needs and concerns of working women?
- What challenges face women entering the workforce or re-entering after prolonged absence?
- What obstacles and issues have women faced in achieving their desired level of work-life balance?
- How satisfied are women with the opportunities available to them for mentoring and career advancement?
- What are the experiences of working women with gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment in their places of employment, and how have these affected their careers?

- In what ways, if any, do current programs, activities, and institutions address the needs and concerns of working women, and where do available resources fall short?

CMJS employed a mixed-methods strategy to develop a nuanced understanding of the concerns and needs of working women in Jewish households in the Greater Atlanta area. This approach included information gathered through interviews and an online survey. Interviews were conducted with local key informants who represent a range of perspectives on the challenges faced by and resources available to working women. This group included Jewish professionals and leaders of institutions, both Jewish and secular, that provide services and programming for women. We also interviewed women who are either currently working or seeking paid employment. An online survey was also used to collect information from 764 women from Jewish households in the Greater Atlanta area. The survey asked about current work status, challenges encountered in the workplace, and perspectives on career advancement and work/life balance. Complete methodological details are provided in the Appendix.

The report begins with a description of the women who responded to our survey followed by discussion of the issues at the forefront for these women. The topics of work-life balance, issues facing working parents, challenges in finding work and career advancement, gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace, and economic security receive particular attention. The report concludes with an exploration of suggested next steps for JWFA.

### Characteristics of Women Surveyed

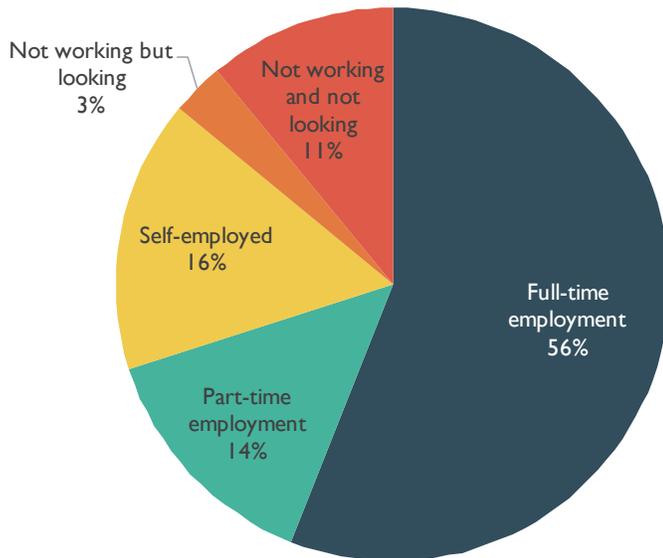
Intended to reach women in Jewish households, the survey also included those who are not Jewish themselves but are partnered to someone who identifies as Jewish. The vast majority of survey respondents (97%) identified as Jewish. The remaining 3% of respondents did not consider themselves Jewish, but were married or partnered to a Jew.

Overall, 86% of respondents were working at the time of the survey, and over half were working full time (Figure 1). An additional 3% were not currently working, but were looking for work. Among the 11% neither working nor looking for work, most were retired

(44%), caring for children (26%), or did not financially need to work (25%). Twenty percent of respondents not currently working indicated that they plan to look for work within the next three years. In terms of educational attainment, nearly all respondents (95%) reported earning at least a bachelor’s degree, with 60% having completed a graduate degree.

Among married survey respondents, 87% had employed spouses, 72% of whom worked full time. In 76% of married households, both the respondent and her spouse were working; in 9%, the respondent was working and her spouse was not. In 10% of households, the respondent was not working but her spouse was; and in 4%, neither was working.

Figure 1: Current work status



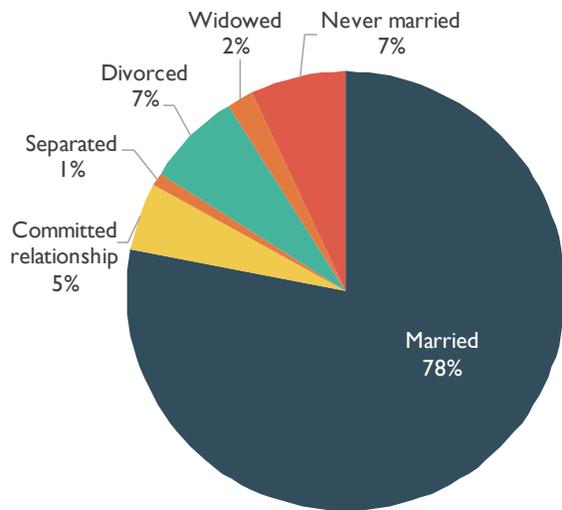
Note: n=660

Over three quarters (78%) of respondents were married at the time of the survey, and another 5% reported that they were not married but in a committed relationship with a partner (Figure 2). Seven percent had never been married.

More than three quarters of respondents (79%) indicated that they were parents. Fifty-eight percent of respondents had children ages 22 or younger, and another 21% had children

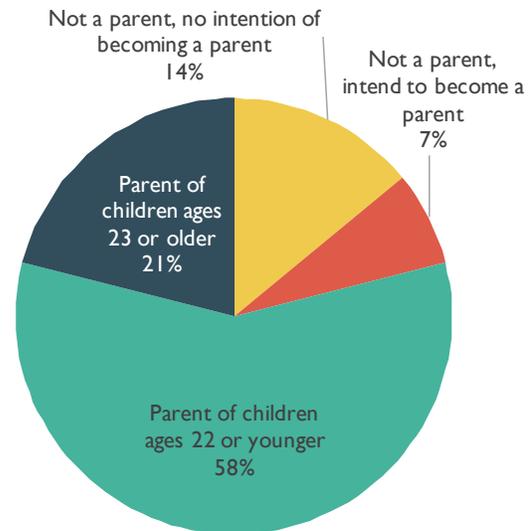
ages 23 and older (Figure 3). Among parents of children ages 22 and younger, 20% had infants and preschool age children, 32% had elementary school age children (Grades K-5), and 62% had middle or high school age children (grades 6-12). Seven percent of respondents were not currently parents but intended to have children in the future, and 14% neither had nor intended to have children.

Figure 2: Current relationship status



Note: n=646

Figure 3: Parental status



Note: n=644

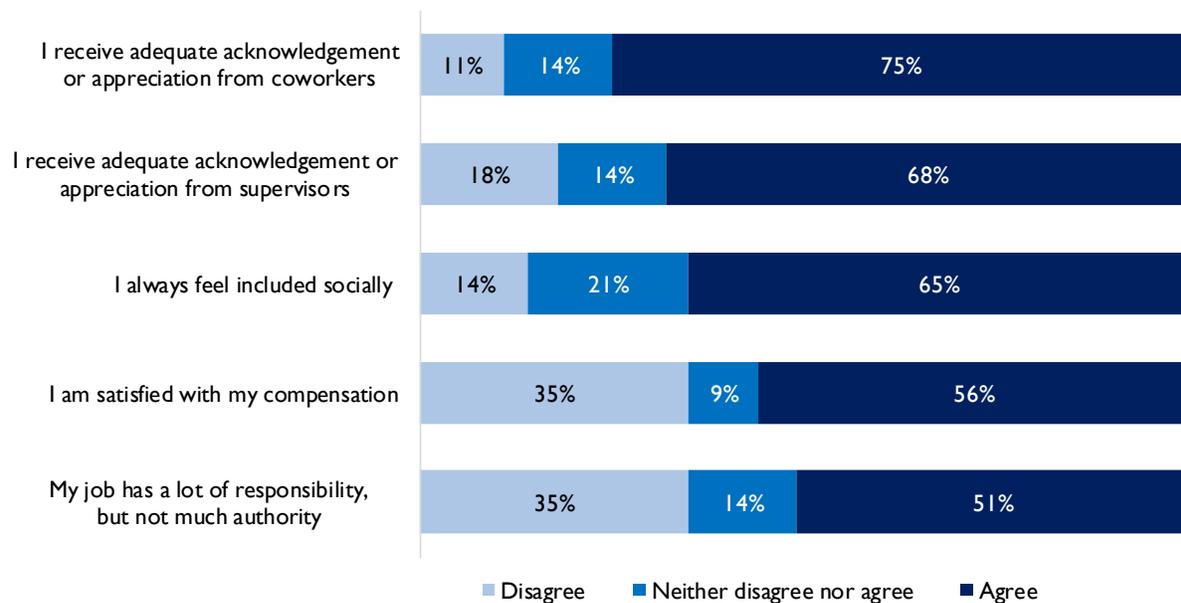
# Findings

## Concerns of Working Women

Nearly all the working women surveyed agreed (at least somewhat) that they were proud of the work in which they (94%) and their company/organizations (90%) are

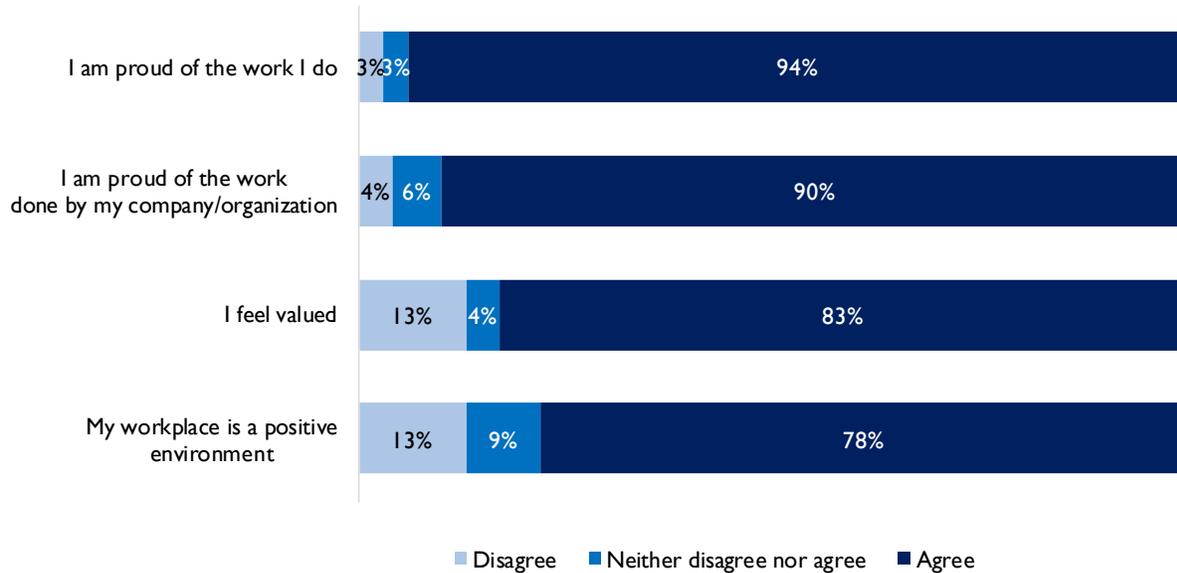
engaged (Figures 4 and 5). The majority also indicated that they feel valued (83%), appreciated by co-workers (75%) and supervisors (68%), and see their workplace as a positive environment (78%). Just over half were satisfied with their compensation.

Figure 4: Perspectives on workplaces (A)



Note: n=487

Figure 5: Perspectives on workplaces (B)



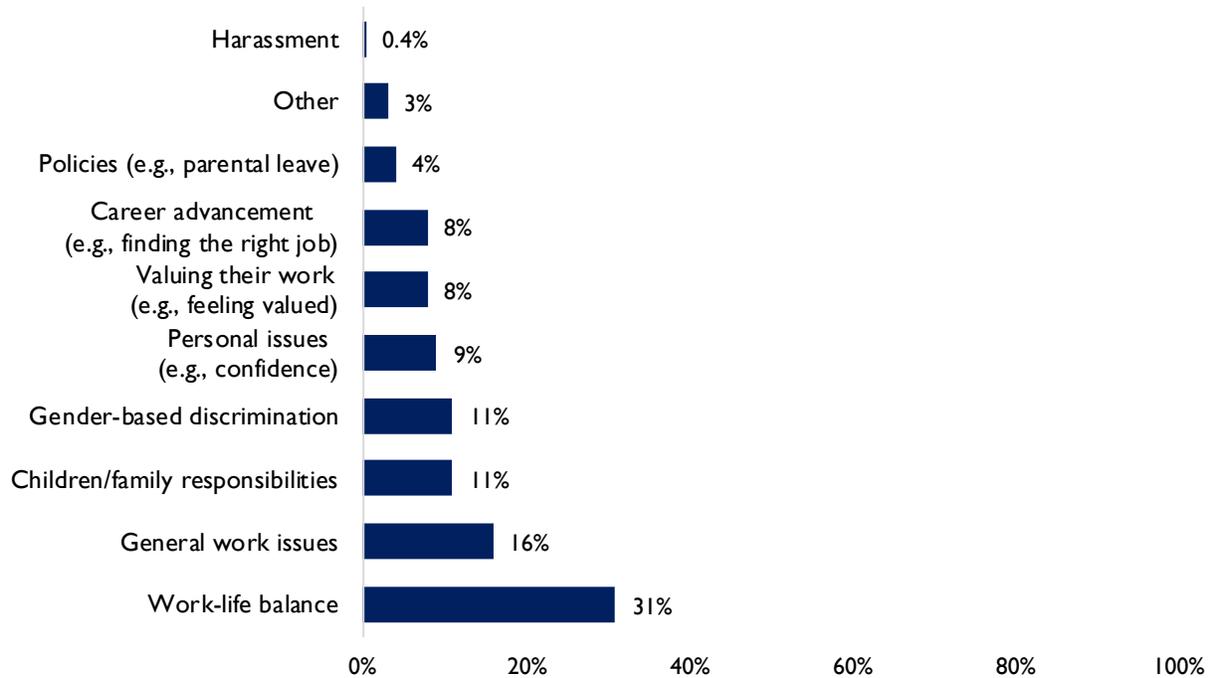
Note: n=487

The survey asked respondents to list the three most difficult challenges limiting their success in the areas of work and career. These responses were then coded. As shown in Figure 6, the most frequently named challenges pertained to work-life balance (31%), general work issues (not tied to gender) (16%), child and family responsibilities (11%), and gender-based discrimination (11%). General work issues not specifically tied to gender included challenges around workload, keeping up to date with technology and other

skills or certifications, working with colleagues, dealing with management or leadership, and lack of support at work.

In the following sections, we examine many of these issues in greater depth. We pay special attention to those related to work/life balance, navigating work as a parent, gender-based discrimination, challenges in career advancement and finding a job, and harassment in the workplace.

Figure 6: Self-identified challenges



Note: n=549

### The Daunting Task of Balancing Work and Family Responsibilities

Jewish female role models like Sheryl Sandberg (2013) have encouraged women to “lean in” and pursue their careers, despite the challenges of balancing responsibilities to work, home, and the community. Working women face demanding work schedules, but must also contend with “inflexible constraints of institutions,” such as childcare facilities, school and extracurricular schedules. The time and attention required by religious life also falls mostly to women (Berhau, Lareau, & Press, 2011; Bernstein & Fishman, 2015; di Leonardo, 1987). Women perform more unpaid labor, especially in relation to household work and caregiving for children and older adult family members, compared to men (Bianchi et al., 2000).

Women also carry the emotional burden of choices between career and care, often feeling guilty or “like a failure” in their responsibilities to work and family. One recent study found that, unlike women in other countries who blame unrealistic cultural expectations and structural barriers for not being able to “do it all,” American women blame themselves (Collins, 2019). In dual-earning families, women still experience a “leisure gap” with less free time than men for personal interests and relaxation (Hochschild & Machung, [1989] 2012; Milkie, Raley, & Bianchi, 2009). In interviews and on the survey, many women told us that they are motivated to do their best in all aspects of their lives and meet or exceed the expectations of employers, co-workers, spouses, children, and extended family. At the same time, these women described feeling that they face a Sisyphean task. The work-life

balance challenges described by women highlight the time and energy it takes to cover all of their work, and household and family responsibilities. As one interviewee told us, “There’s no such thing as work-life balance. It’s never 50/50”—choosing to prioritize work or family can mean a sacrifice in the other. One respondent directly cited “the second shift,” Arlie Hochschild and Anne Machung’s ([1989] 2012) concept of women taking on the bulk of unpaid labor in the home, and others echoed the concern about meeting their household and childcare responsibilities.

*Trying to balance all of the priorities—taking care of the house, being a mom, being a wife, trying to have time with friends and time for myself, and feeling guilty that I’m never enough. (Survey respondent)*

*My husband is great, but he doesn’t even see the dust, let alone plan the play dates, email the teachers, research and meet the repairmen, etc. All the tasks of running the house fall to [me]. (Survey respondent)*

*Believing that I ‘could do it all.’ I had always been told I could and felt like a failure when I couldn’t. It is literally impossible to do it all, at least, at the same time. (Survey respondent)*

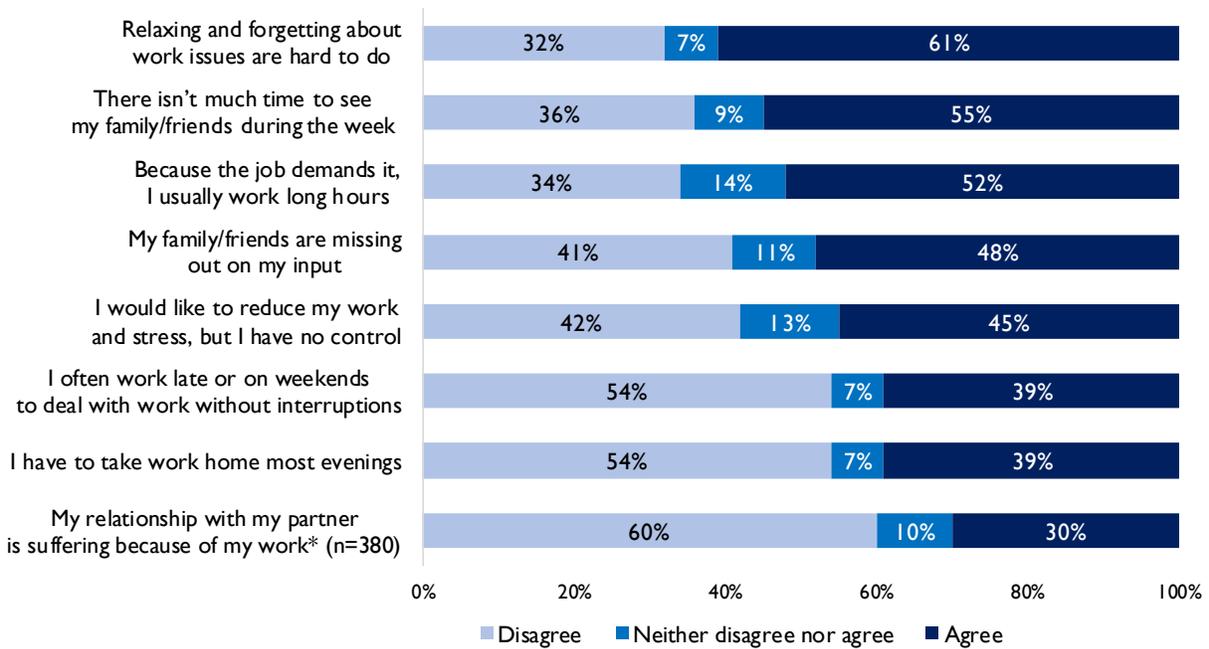
*[Work] events often occur in the evenings, when I’d prefer to be home with my family. So I have sacrificed client development and the potential for additional money for the sake of spending time with my kids. (Survey respondent)*

*You’re rewarded for working longer hours. There’s this constant struggle of do I need to stay longer? I want everybody to think I’m working hard and doing a good job, but I would really also like to pick my kids up from the bus today. Just balancing that struggle between the needs of the kids and the family and the needs of what it takes to be successful in the workplace. (Interviewee)*

*I think for women, what it comes down to is the idea that you have to do it all, and you have to do it all well or you’re not doing it right. That’s what I hear a lot of. I think that we are hard on ourselves a lot. (Interviewee)*

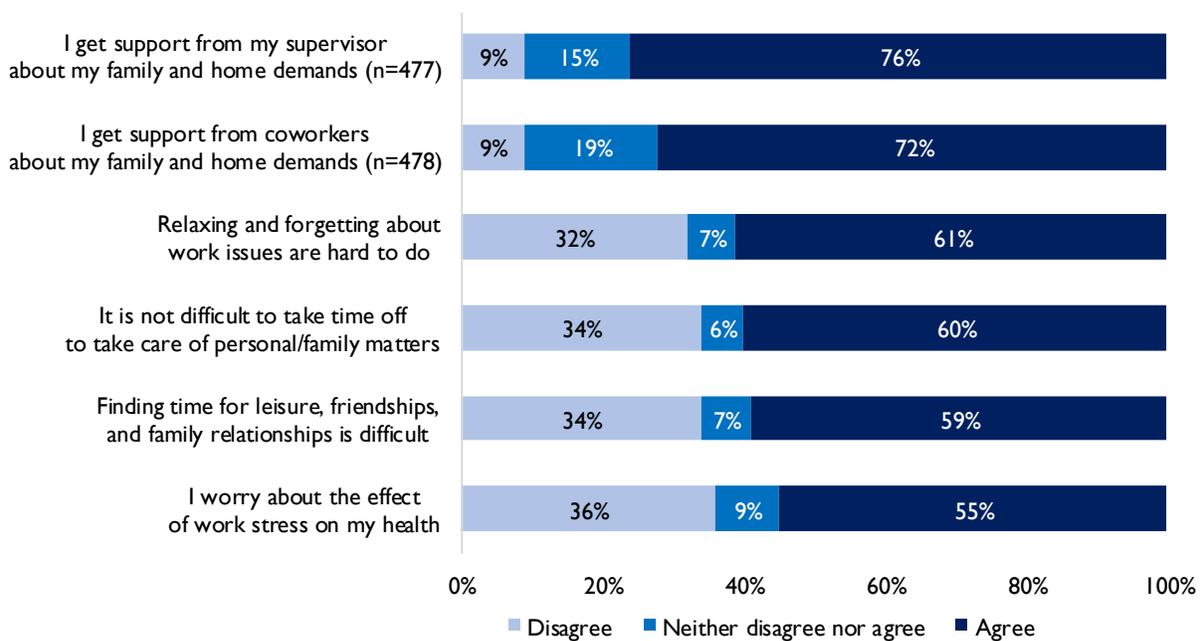
The majority of survey respondents agreed that they receive support from their supervisors (76%) and co-workers (72%) about their need to meet family and home demands (Figures 7 and 8). At the same time, more than half of women agreed that it is difficult for them to escape work issues (61%), find time for leisure and relationships with friends and family (59%), or have time to see family or friends during the week (55%). Over half also agreed that they worry about the impact of work stress on their health (55%), and almost one third (30%) are concerned that the demands of their job negatively affect their relationship with their spouse/partner.

Figure 7: Perspectives on work/life balance (A)



Note: n=464 unless noted. \* Only asked of married or partnered respondents.

Figure 8: Perspectives on work/life balance (B)

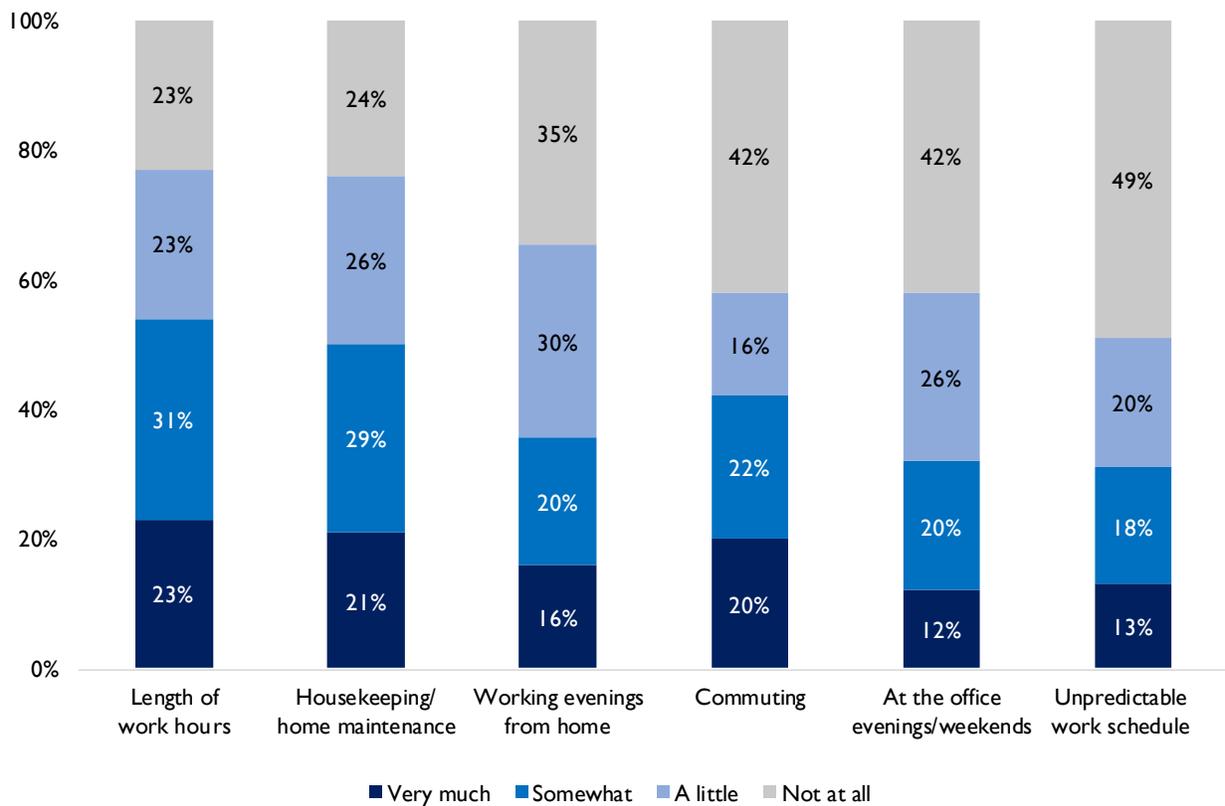


Note: n=464 unless noted.

The survey asked women to rate the extent to which a variety of factors impeded their ability to achieve their desired work/life balance. Three quarters (77%) of respondents said that the length of their work hours and the need to perform housekeeping and home maintenance responsibilities (76%) were barriers to their desired balance (Figure 9). Notably, at least half of respondents said that each of the potential barriers to their desired work/life balance was, to some extent, a concern.

Survey responses suggest that many working women felt that the amount of time they spend at their workplace and their commute to that location are impediments to their work/life balance. At the same time, substantial portions of those surveyed reported that their current employment did not provide options for working remotely (42%) or flexible hours (31%).

Figure 9: Barriers to desired work/life balance



Note: n=465

## The Challenges of Navigating Work as a Mother

Work is a significant source of personal identity for many women, but working mothers also confront the cultural image of the “Supermom” who can effortlessly tackle her career, run a household, and be the primary caregiver (Genz 2010; Hochschild & Machung [1989] 2012). Some of the working mothers we interviewed felt that they were in an impossible situation struggling to meet the needs of their children and work.

*[One challenge is] being able to be there for my kids—having the physical time to do what needs to be done and the mental space to be present and supportive. (Survey respondent)*

*I just feel like balance is such a buzzword and it's impossible. I either feel like I'm killing it with my kid, or I'm killing it at work. Very few times do I feel like I'm successful in both arenas. Either my child is happy or my house is a mess, or my house is clean and I haven't seen my daughter all day. Or, I feel like I've gotten so much 'me time,' and I'm being a great friend, but I haven't seen my daughter or my husband all day. I don't ever feel like I'm successful in all areas of my life. It's so, so, so hard to feel like you're a great employee, and a great mother, and a great wife, and a great friend, and a great daughter. (Interviewee)*

In interviews and surveys, working mothers described the challenges they face in fulfilling their roles as employees, business owners, and parents. In addition to their concerns about balancing all of their responsibilities, working mothers also suggested three areas of particular concern: parental leave, childcare, and the impact of being a parent on their career trajectory.

## Parental Leave

The United States is one of only three countries worldwide without national paid maternity leave policies (Jou et al., 2018). The Family and Medical Leave Act provides certain employees with unpaid leave. The lack of federally mandated paid leave presents challenges to working families and may impede women's career advancement.

Among survey respondents who work for an employer other than themselves, 39% said their jobs provide paid parental leave. Over one quarter (28%) of respondents indicated that their job provides no paid maternity leave. Five percent of working women surveyed said that their employer provides more than 12 weeks of paid maternity leave, while 3% have only one or two weeks available.

One third of respondents did not know their employer's paid parental leave policy. Within this group, 19% were ages 39 or younger; 33% were ages 40-49; and the remaining 48% were ages 50 or older. This finding suggests that many women who are in child-bearing years are not aware of the maternity leave benefits to which they are entitled.

The vast majority (85%) of women indicated that they are not satisfied with the amount of paid leave they receive from work, and 34% felt the amount was too little. Strikingly, six percent of respondents noted that the amount of paid leave they are entitled to led them to delay having a child or to decide to not have a child.

*As a federal employee, I do not have any maternity leave. I used all of my sick leave and all of my annual leave. I took off pretty much as much time as I could without taking time unpaid. That was stressful to feel like I didn't have a choice. (Interviewee)*

### Issues with Childcare

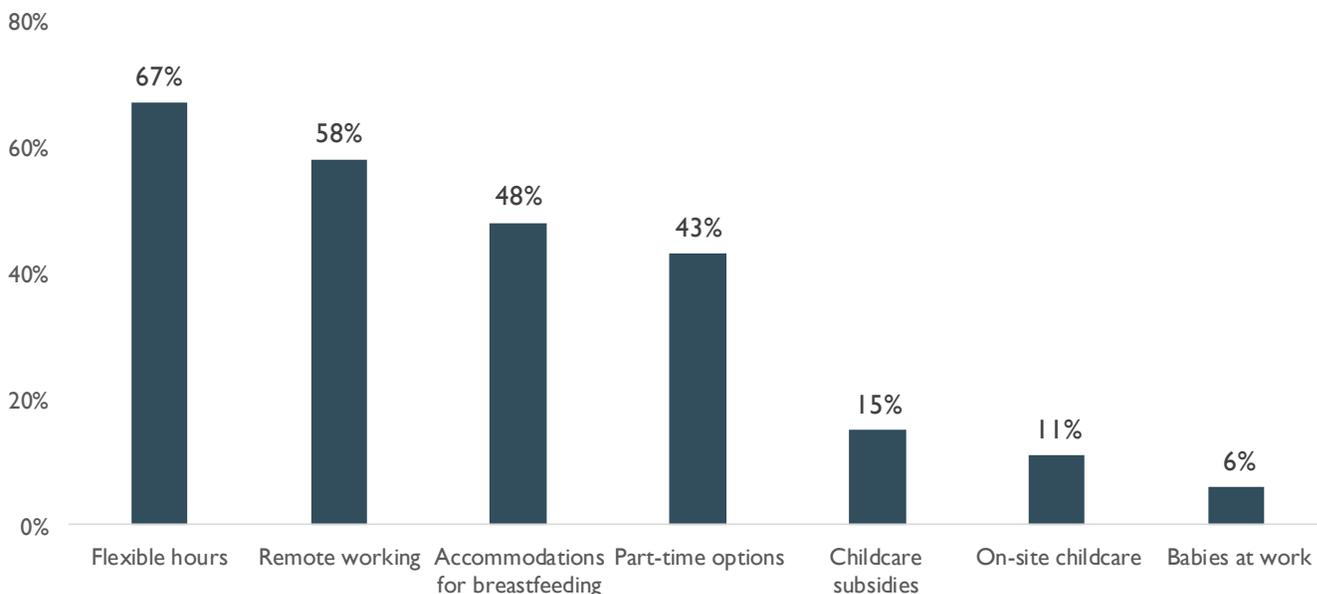
Scholars have found that family-friendly benefits such as onsite childcare and childcare subsidies can positively impact job satisfaction and promote work/life balance (Kim & Wiggins, 2011). GenX and millennial employees are changing the workplace, looking for more flexibility in work schedules and for employers' understanding of the importance of family time (Gursoy, Maier, & Chi, 2008).

The survey asked working women who are not self-employed to indicate which family-friendly benefits are available to them at their current workplace. As shown in Figure 10, more than half of respondents indicated they

had access to flexible hours (67%) or remote working (58%). However, less than half of respondents indicated that their workplace has accommodations for breastfeeding (48%), and an even smaller portion of respondents have access to childcare subsidies (15%), on-site childcare (11%), or the option to bring infants to work (6%).

In interviews and survey responses, working mothers noted the challenges they faced in finding quality, affordable, and geographically accessible childcare. They described orchestrating the schedules of care, school, and child activities, as well as their own household commitments, as substantial hurdles.

Figure 10: Family-friendly benefits at current workplace



Note: n=497

Several interviewees and survey respondents mentioned the challenge of containing their work hours so they could drop off and pick up children on time from childcare. Others encountered substantial difficulties in finding after school childcare, especially when the need was for only a few hours a day.

*[There need to be] support/ services for childcare (day/ evening options), particularly for women who are single mothers or whose husbands/ partners are not available to assist with childcare. (Survey respondent)*

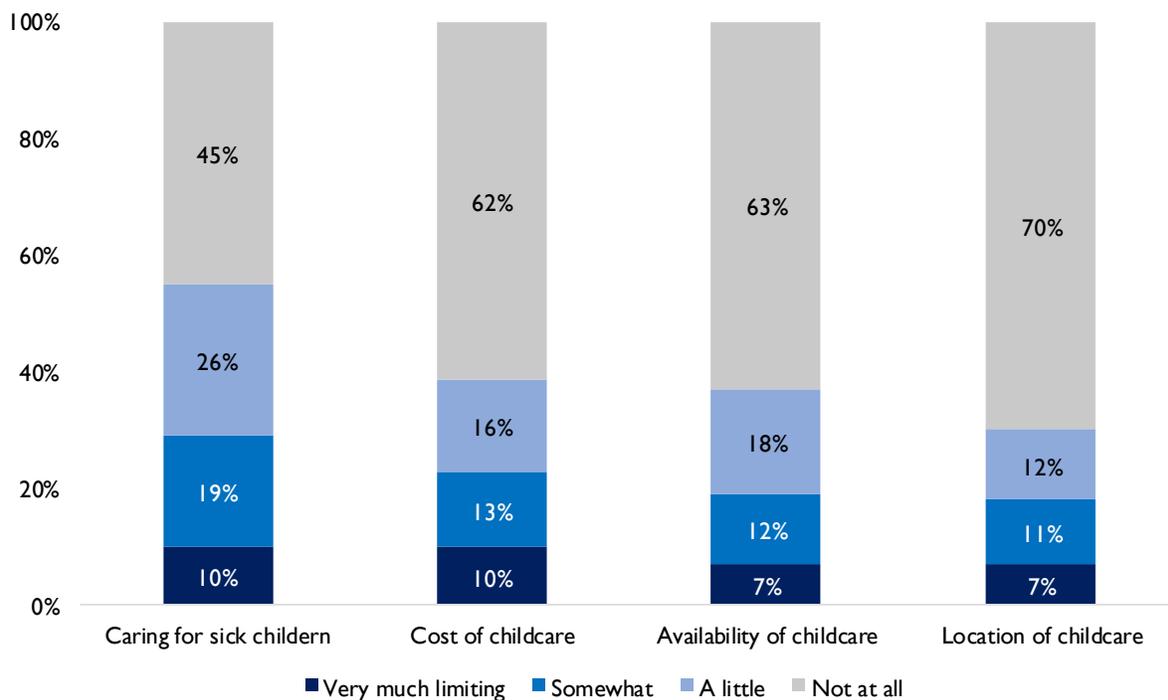
*I needed someone to pick [children] up after school because I needed to be in the office every day. So then it was find somebody for three hours, even though I really only needed them for an hour and a half, to come pick [the children] up, help make sure they got their homework done and just kind of be there. I had somebody and then we went through three different people. Trying to find somebody that could take those*

*hours, was willing to commute, that [the children] connected with was a tough balance. (Interviewee)*

*Most of the time I hire people to help me with the kids. We outsource everything that we can't do internally just because we don't have a huge network. We don't have a large, for lack of a better term, 'village of help' outside of people that we hire or pay for help. (Interviewee)*

The survey asked working mothers to indicate the extent to which factors related to childcare hindered their success at work (Figure 11). Just over half (55%) said that caring for sick children limited their success at work, with 10% reporting that it has been a substantial challenge. Substantial portions of working parents viewed the cost (39%), availability (37%), and location (30%) of childcare as barriers.

Figure 11: Childcare factors limiting success at work



Note: n=384

### The Impact of “Sandwich Generation” Caregiving on Working Mothers

A recent Pew Research Center report (Livingston, 2018) highlights that one-in-ten US parents are in the “sandwich generation,” caring for children at the same time that they have responsibilities to care for an adult family member, often aging parents. The study also found that, “Moms who are multigenerational caregivers spend 45 more minutes a day providing adult or child care than comparable dads.” Echoing this finding, another study reported that women spend twice as much time providing care to elderly parents than do male siblings (Grigoryeva, 2017).

In our interviews with working women, many noted that taking care of aging parents takes a toll on them and their families. One interviewee who serves as the caregiver to an ailing parent found that between going to the hospital and taking care of her children, she had not gone to the grocery store in a month. Getting food was made possible through online grocery shopping and delivery, which was convenient but incurred additional costs.

*There's the reality that a lot of times [it] takes two incomes to raise your own family. So when mom or dad calls and says, 'Hey, I've fallen' or 'Dad's going to the hospital' or whatever, immediately you're having to take off work, you're having to take off time. That's very hard. And then [there's] the guilt of figuring out do I have to bring in a caregiver and the cost with that, or do I have to consider a community and the cost with that? (Interviewee)*

*You know, caregiving is not just about taking care of that person. It's also that there's a toll on the caregivers in terms of their own effort and stress and frustration. What's available in the area for caregivers? (Interviewee)*

Interviewees were particularly concerned with the physical and psychological isolation of aging family members. Aging parents with dementia or Alzheimer's also contend with the psychological isolation of declining health and sociability. Finding resources to support mental health—for aging adults and caregivers—can be challenging.

### Stepping Back in Careers

Over half (53%) of working mothers reported feeling the need, when at work, to minimize their role as a parent. In interviews and survey responses, mothers described having to combat the perception that they are less committed to their work.

*It's just an hour to go pick somebody up and drive them home, or drop off in the morning. I don't believe that two hours for your driving makes you less dedicated. However, I think that was the perception. It seemed to be [that] any reason that you would need to excuse yourself from a work call at 6pm was viewed as not being dedicated to work. (Interviewee)*

*The time it takes to invest in work, takes away from family. You have to choose to spend time outside of the 9-5 on those things instead of playing with your kids or being there for bedtime. (Survey respondent)*

Many of the working mothers we interviewed described ways in which they had stepped back in their careers to accommodate their role as parent. Some chose a less demanding career path, while others delayed seeking new and/or more challenging positions.

*I think my responsibilities to my kids and husband definitely changed my career goals. I did step off a more professional career track. Just the fact that I made a life in a much more flexible part-time, gig way was definitely not what I had envisioned for myself. It's certainly changed the trajectory of my career. (Interviewee)*

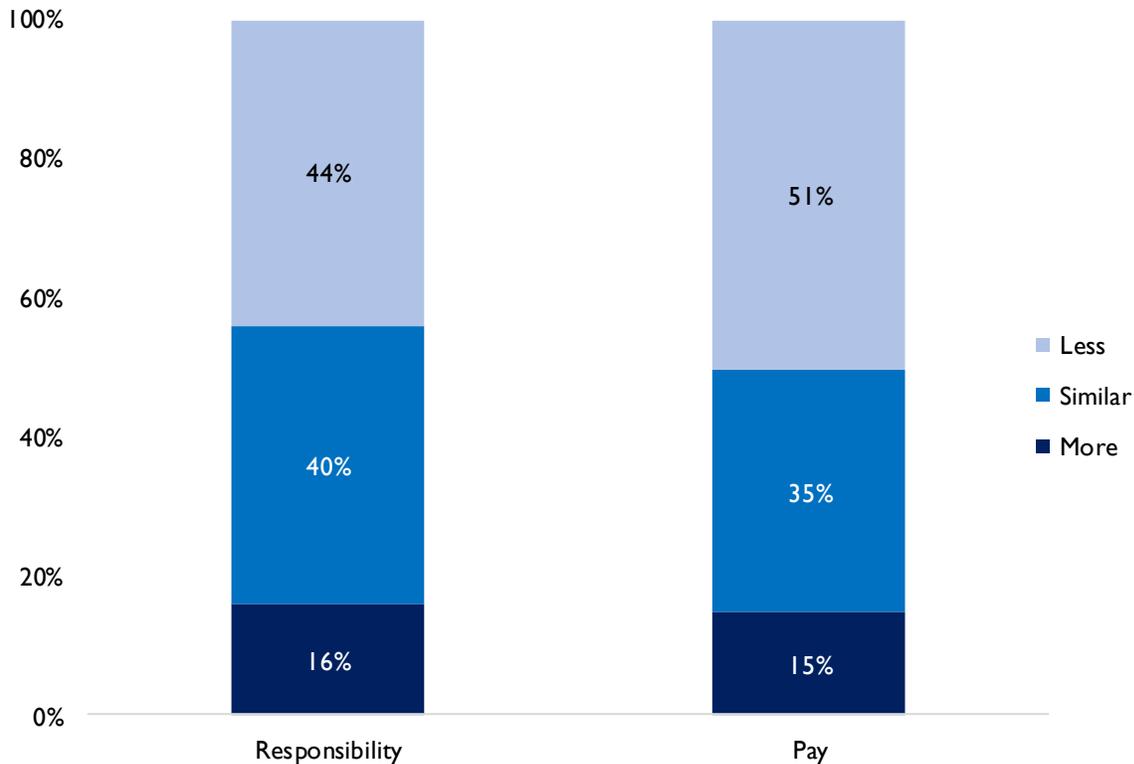
*I did something that is fairly typical. I took a large pay cut and part of that was to be less available, and so I felt more comfortable. (Interviewee)*

*I tell myself this is just not my season to rock it at work. I have a young child. It doesn't make sense to be going after a more ambitious career when I know that I'm going to get pregnant and then go on maternity leave, and then be in that whole postpartum period and not that effective at work because you're pumping and you're tired...I feel pretty stagnant and not challenged, but I also acknowledged that I'm just going to have to feel that way for the next two to three years...I also recognize how ridiculous that is. I shouldn't have to feel this way. I shouldn't have to make this decision. (Interviewee)*

*I put a lot of things that I want to do on the back burner. When I was first starting out and before I had kids... I was probably a lot more ambitious. Once I had kids, I really just wanted to do something that I liked. I wanted to make some money and hopefully like my job, but it's more about how it fits in with my family. (Interviewee)*

About one third of working respondents had stopped working for a period of time since 2009 before reentering the workforce. Just over half (52%) of respondents left work in order to care for a child. Although the majority of those who returned to paid work did so to jobs that had a similar or greater level of responsibility than before they stopped working, a substantial portion (44%) returned to jobs with less responsibility (Figure 12). More than half (57%) of those who re-entered the workforce in less demanding jobs actively sought out work with less responsibility. Half (51%) of those respondents who left work to care for children returned to the workforce earning less than they had before.

Figure 12: Responsibility and pay after returning to work



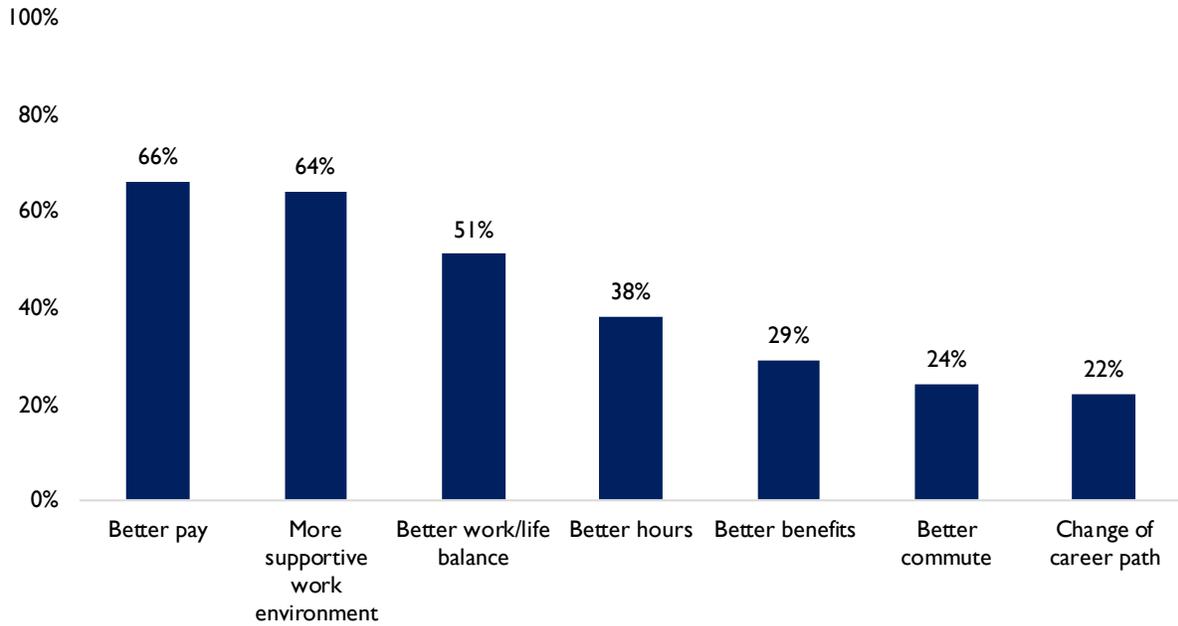
Note: n=81

### Job Search and Career Advancement Challenges

Less than half (43%) of working women surveyed agreed that they have opportunities to advance their career in their current place of work. Seventeen percent of employed survey respondents indicated that they are currently seeking another job. Two thirds of respondents were looking for a job with better pay, and 64% desired a more supportive work environment (Figure 13). About half (51%) of respondents were looking for a position that would afford them better work/life balance.

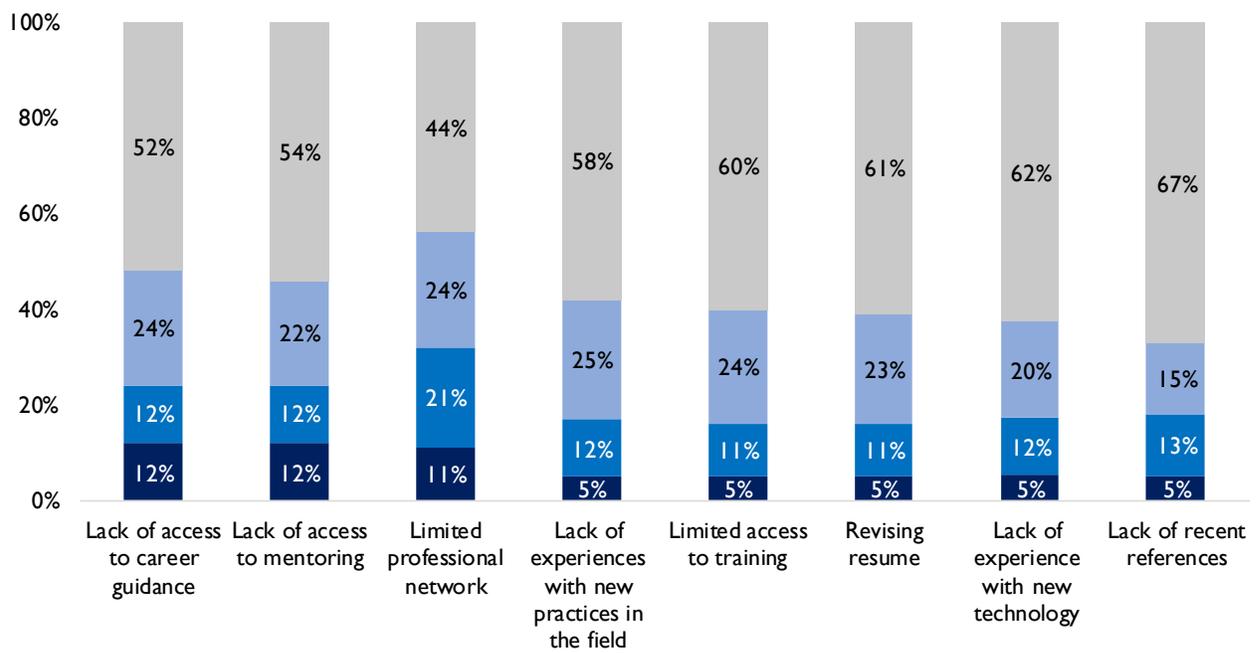
The survey asked women who were currently seeking work to share the challenges they face as they search for a new job. Women who had previously returned to work after taking time off were asked to reflect on the challenges they faced in that job search. More than half (56%) of respondents from these two groups identified a limited professional network as a challenge in their job search (Figure 14). Nearly half, described lack of access to career guidance (48%) or mentoring (46%) as barriers to a successful job search. Substantial portions indicated that their pursuit of new jobs was hindered by lack of knowledge of new practices in their field (42%) or by limited access to training to refresh skills (40%).

Figure 13: Reasons for seeking a different job



Note: n=85

Figure 14: Challenges to job search



Note: n=470

■ Very much ■ Somewhat ■ A little ■ Not at all

Research indicates that mentoring is crucial in women's career advancement (Hill & Wheat, 2017; Schipani et al., 2009). Mentors serve as critical role models by demonstrating advanced career options and by setting an example for and promoting work-life balance (Dworkin et al., 2018).

In interviews, women told us that mentors were particularly important in helping them understand and navigate workplace culture. Several women recounted the important role that their mentors played as sounding boards, role models, and coaches.

*There's definitely women at [place of work] that have young children that are in more senior level roles that I know, and that I've talked to and that I could talk to. (Interviewee)*

*Networking and having mentors were really important. I ask questions, and I have a mentor who told me that I know what I know and know what I didn't know, and I know how to ask for help. So all of that has helped me be successful. Having somebody else to ask: Am I thinking about this correctly? The mentorship has been really key. (Interviewee)*

*I have selected mentors. They all happen to be women... They're all former bosses of mine. They are the women that gave me a chance. I realized that some of my skills are modeled off of things that I learned from them. At various times that I've needed help, I've gone to them. (Interviewee)*

Less than half (46%) of survey respondents indicated that they have access to mentoring. In interviews, women described the difficulty of finding peers or mentors that had the time and "bandwidth" to provide them with guidance and support.

*There's not really those opportunities to mentor at the bigger company. They did a good job of matching with*

*people who are in your direct department or line. But it just takes longer to break through the superficial parts of it to where it becomes a meaningful relationship, and you never really get there. [In] the smaller environments, everyone is really just too busy. (Interviewee)*

## Gender-Based Discrimination and Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

Gender-based discrimination takes many forms. Discrimination is often considered in two broad categories: illegal and environmental. The latter refers to the general climate of a workplace, which, while pernicious, is not technically against the law. While the survey did not gather demographic information on racial/ethnic identity or sexual orientation, previous research indicates that LGBTQ individuals and people of color experience higher rates of harassment and discrimination in the workplace compared to white and/or heterosexual peers (Kattari et al., 2016; Skaggs & Bridges, 2013).

We asked survey respondents about their experiences of discrimination over the last ten years (since 2009). Survey respondents and interviewees described experiences of women being passed over for promotions and double standards for men and women in the workplace as common examples.

*Not being offered promotions while younger less-experienced men were offered them. (Survey respondent)*

*My style, communication, etc. being taken one way as a woman, and it coming off a different way from a man. (Survey respondent)*

*Being required culturally to be modest about my role, success, and accomplishments. It holds me back from obtaining greater success. (Survey respondent)*

*I was speaking to someone in my office [about] how some of the women are pushed harder from a performance perspective than men. We have a very challenging CEO who accepts things at face value when they're told by men. But when women say them, it's like, 'how do you know that?' That can be really challenging because I'm spending my time redoing contracts, renegotiating things when I could be moving onto the next thing, whereas [with] men, their explanations are more easily accepted. (Interviewee)*

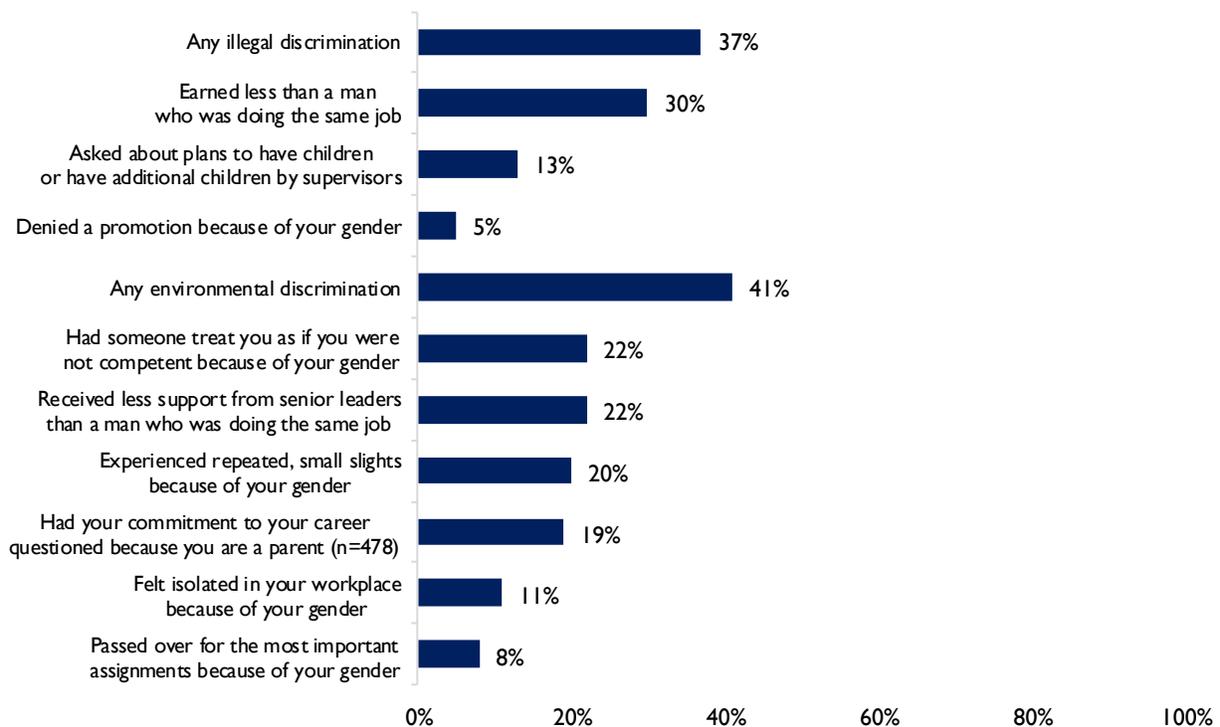
*I have been successful but not recognized for that success. I also know that my salary has been crap and that people who are doing worse jobs make more money because they're men. (Interviewee)*

*It's not just that our salaries are different. It's what does it look like when a man takes credit for a woman's job. What does it look like when you don't say your opinion because you're sitting next to a man? What does that mean for women? ... Also that mentality, we can pay her less [because] she has a*

*husband who has a job .... But what about the woman who's working, who's not going to get married? Or who's divorced or who's supporting kids? What does that mean for her salary that we're setting it so low? (Interviewee)*

Forty-one percent of survey respondents experienced at least one form of environmental discrimination, such as receiving less managerial support than a man or less desirable assignments because of their gender (Figure 15). Thirty-seven percent of respondents reported experiencing at least one form of illegal discrimination, such as earning less than a man or being asked about plans for having children. Half (49%) of respondents reported that they experienced at least one form of either type of discrimination over the past 10 years, with 29% reporting that they experienced illegal and environmental forms of discrimination in that time period.

Figure 15: Experiences of gender-based discrimination



Note: n=545 unless noted.

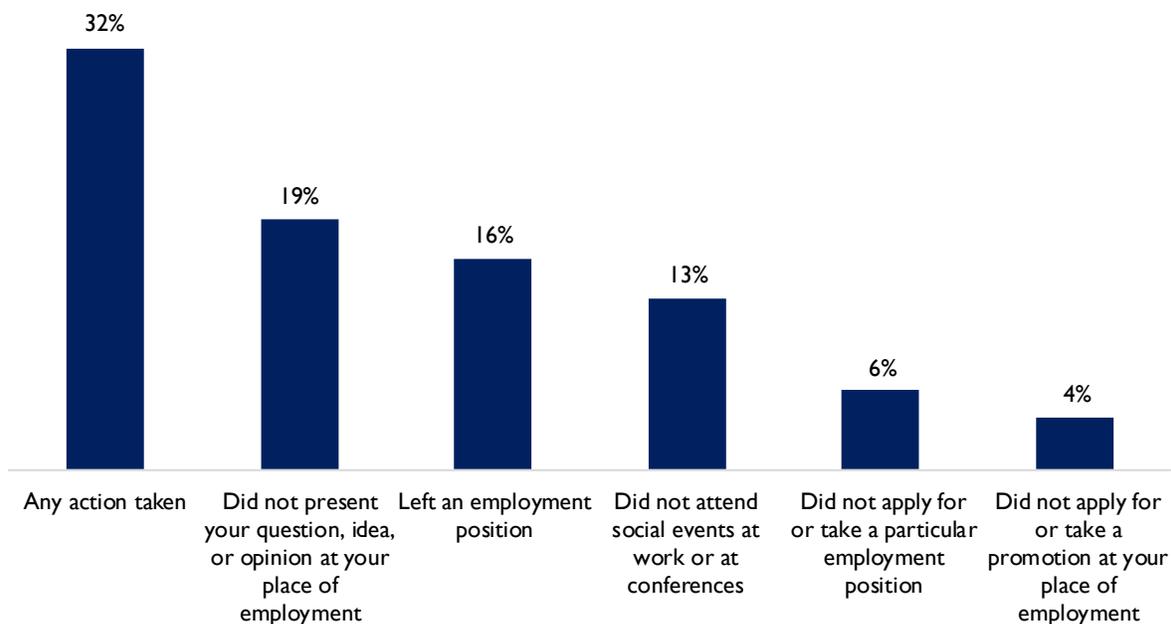
Although 89% of survey respondents agreed that their current workplace feels safe, 32% of women reported that they chose not to participate in at least one work or career-related activity in an effort to avoid unfair or disrespectful treatment at work (Figure 16). Just under one fifth (19%) of women reported that they self-censored themselves at work, 16% actually left a job, and 13% avoided professional social events or conferences.

Over one quarter (26%) of women reported that they had experienced at least one form of sexual harassment in the workplace sometime over the last 10 years (Figure 17). The most common form of harassment reported by

respondents was having sexual remarks made to them or in their presence (23%).

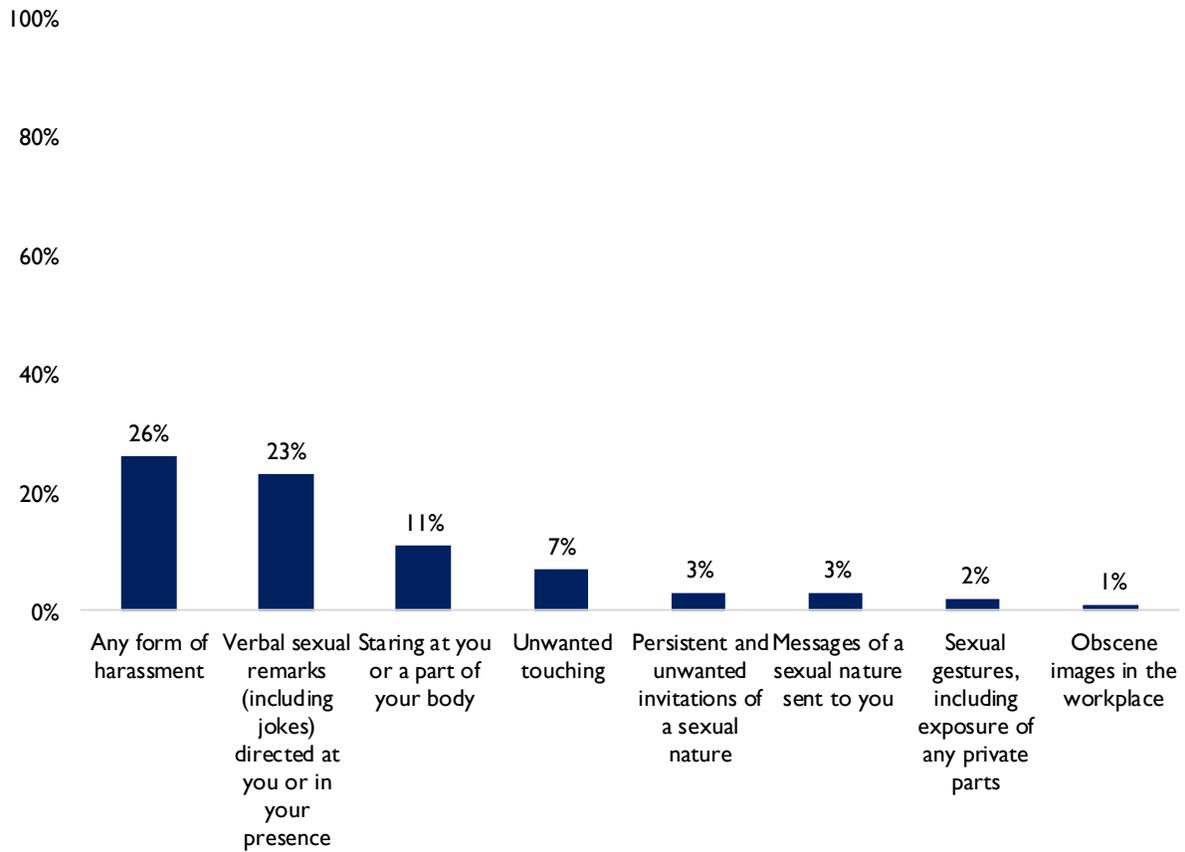
Among women who experienced at least one type of discrimination or harassment, 77% did not report any of their experiences, and another 18% reported some, but not all of the incidents (Figure 18). Proportions of reporting and not reporting were similar whether the respondent had experienced illegal or environmental discrimination, or any type of harassment. Among the 23% who reported at least one instance of discrimination or harassment, only 38% were satisfied with the outcome of their complaint.

Figure 16: Actions to avoid harassment or discrimination



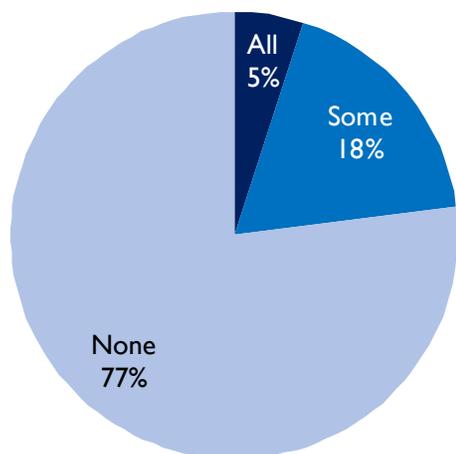
Note: n=545

Figure 17: Experiences of harassment



Note: n=545

Figure 18: Reported discrimination or harassment

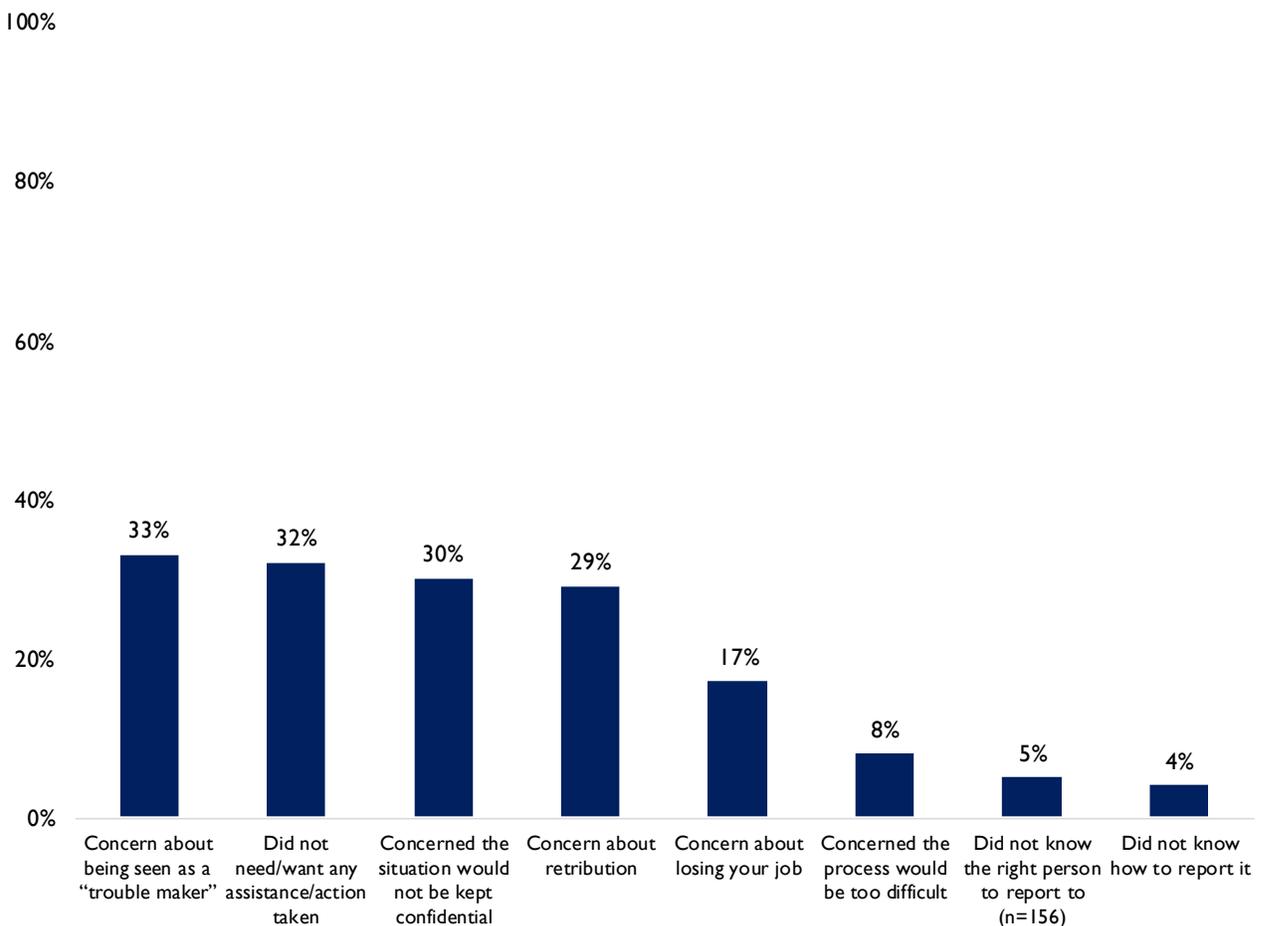


Note: n=234

The survey asked women who experienced but did not report any instances of discrimination or harassment to indicate their reasons for not reporting. One third indicated that they were concerned about being seen as a “trouble maker,” 30% were concerned about a potential breach of confidentiality, 29% were worried about retribution from the offending party, and 17% feared the loss of their job (Figure 19). Only very small portions did not know to whom (5%) or how (4%) to report an incident.

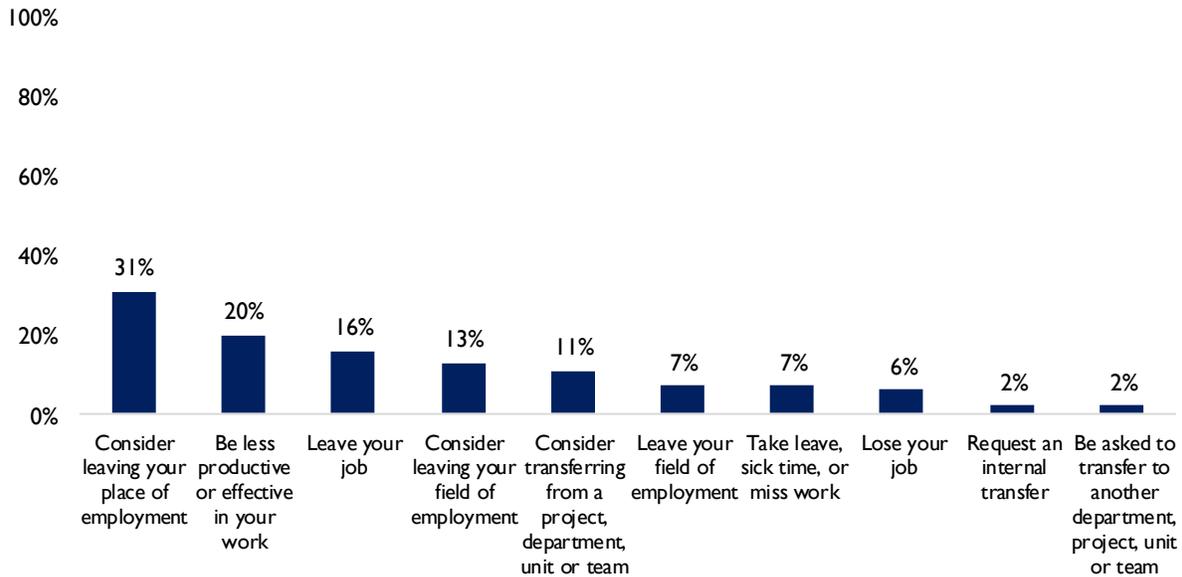
Survey responses suggest that incidents of harassment and discrimination continued to negatively impact the working lives of the women affected. In the aftermath of harassment or discrimination, 31% of women considered leaving their jobs, and 16% actually did so (Figure 20). Thirteen percent of women considered leaving their field of employment and 7% actually did so. Eleven percent of women considered an internal company transfer, with 2% following through on this decision. Six percent reported that they lost their job following an incident, and 2% were asked to transfer to another department or team.

Figure 19: Reasons for not reporting discrimination or harassment



Note: n=222 unless noted.

Figure 20. Actions subsequent to discrimination or harassment

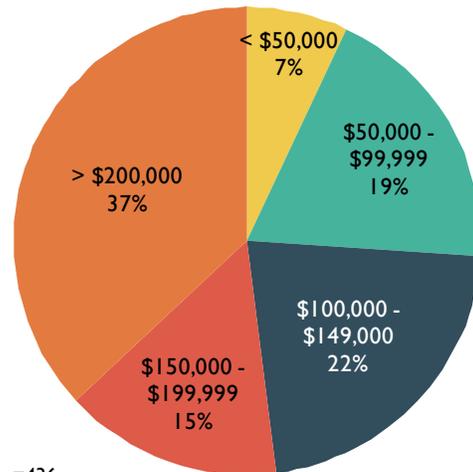


Note: n=274

**Economic Security**

According to the 2017 American Community Survey, the median household income in the Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell metropolitan area was \$65,381 (US Census Bureau, 2017). The Pew Research Center (2015) defines middle class income as between 67% and 200% of median income, making it \$43,805-\$130,762 for the Atlanta metro area. Responses to our survey suggest that 21% to 39% of working women have household incomes that fall below the middle class category (Figure 21).<sup>1</sup>

Figure 21. 2018 Household income



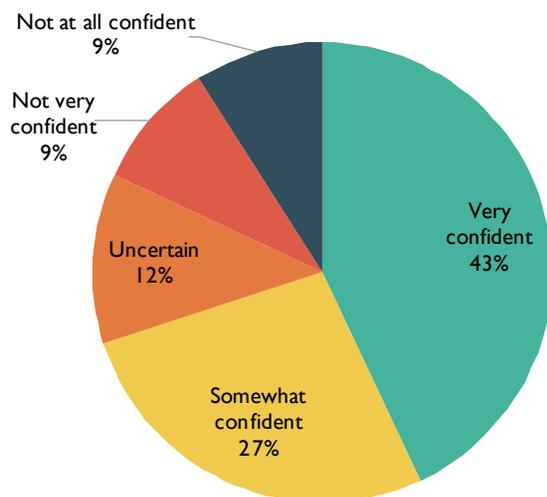
Note: n=436

<sup>1</sup>A consequence of the survey’s sample frame is that those who completed the survey are likely to be more economically well off than the Atlanta Jewish community as a whole. The contact list used underrepresents younger women, who are more likely to be un-partnered and have lower salaries, and those not affiliated with the federation, who are also less likely to be as well off.

Income, however, is only one way to determine economic security and not always the best metric. The survey also asked women to describe their financial circumstances. One tenth of respondents described themselves as “prosperous,” 39% responded they are “living very comfortably,” and 41% indicated they are “living reasonably comfortably.” Most of the remaining respondents (9%) said their standard of living is “just getting along.”

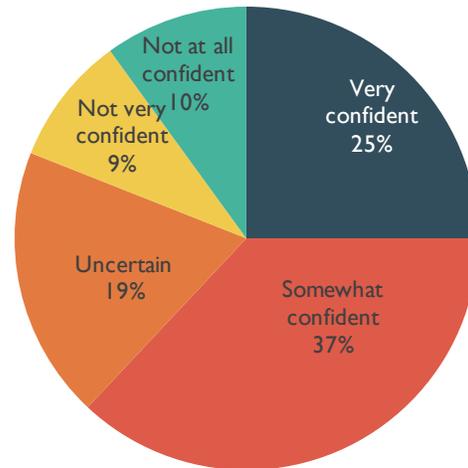
The survey also asked respondents to rate their confidence in their ability to save for different purposes. As shown in Figure 22, 30% were, at best, “uncertain” about their ability to save for their children’s future college education. An even larger portion (38%) were uncertain to not at all confident that they could save for their own retirement (Figure 23).

**Figure 22. Confidence in ability to save for children’s college**



Note: n=412

**Figure 23. Confidence in ability to save for retirement**



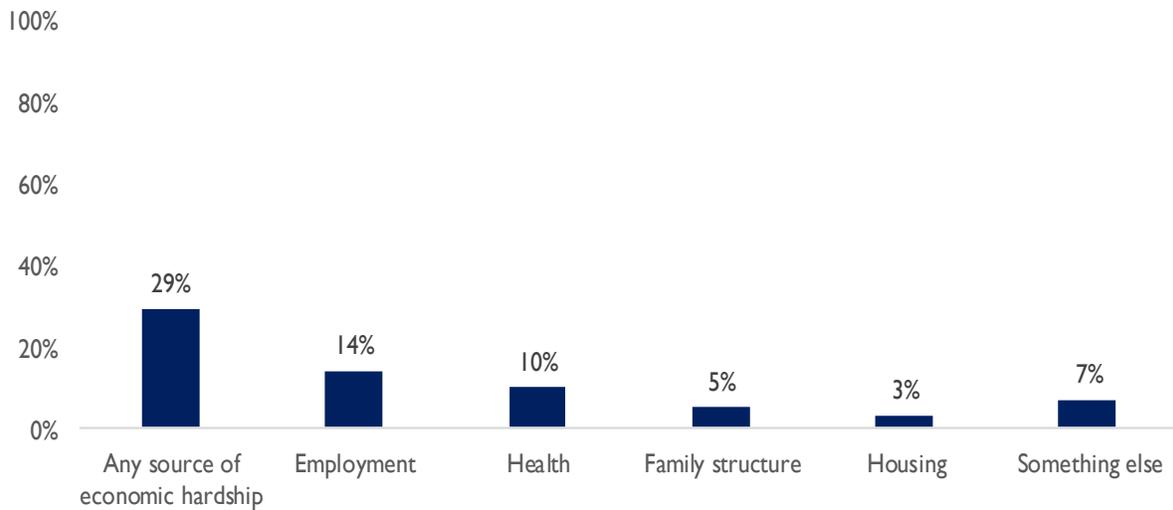
Note: n=532

The term “economically vulnerable” is not fully dependent on a household’s income. The category describes families whose earnings appear sufficient to meet their needs but are susceptible to becoming financially unstable (Chertok & Parmer, 2013). These households often have a limited financial safety net, and unexpected costs can destabilize their situation. For example, economically vulnerable families are unlikely to have savings that they can deploy in the case of an emergency expense. A 2011 study (Bankrate.com) finds that just 24% of families have a six-month financial cushion. A study by the Pew Charitable Trusts (Boguslaw et al., 2013) indicates that when families without personal savings encounter unexpected expenses they often resort to credit, loans with high interest rates, and money they had saved for retirement or children’s education.

Among survey respondents with a partner or spouse, less than half (46%) were confident that they could maintain their household’s standard of living without the partner’s income. Although almost all (96%) have the funds to cover a \$400 emergency expense, a smaller portion (78%) reported having “rainy day” funds that would cover three months of household expenses.

The survey also asked women to indicate the forms of economic hardship they experienced in the prior year. Twenty-nine percent experienced at least one threat to their economic security in the prior year. Fourteen percent experienced loss of or reduction in wages, and 10% encountered economic hardship because of health issues (Figure 24).

Figure 24: Sources of economic hardship in past year



Note: n=539

### Women Working in the Jewish Communal Sector

In a 2018 opinion piece on the online Jewish resource site eJewish Philanthropy, Rabbi Lauren Holtzblatt (2018) argued that the Jewish community needs to “allow women to advance in a world that seeks to bring their gifts and their values to organizations, equally.” In the following months, several more articles were published on the site documenting the fact that while almost three quarters of the workforce at Jewish nonprofits identify as female, “embarrassingly few women” are in senior levels of leadership in the Jewish community (Cooks, 2018; Shapiro-Plevan & Sirbu, 2019).

Seventeen percent of working respondents indicated in the survey that they currently work for a Jewish organization. The results of the survey make clear that women working in the Jewish communal arena generally face the same challenges at similar levels to women in other sectors of work. However, in some areas, women working for the Jewish community face greater challenges.

Only 20% of the women working for Jewish organizations reported on the survey that their employer provides paid maternity leave. While 47% did not know about their organization's paid leave policy, most of them are older and paid parental leave is less directly relevant. Similarly, over half did not have an opinion or found it not applicable to be satisfied with the amount of paid parental leave at their organization. Over one third (37%) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were satisfied with the amount of paid parental leave offered by their organization, and the same proportion agreed it was too little. Just over one third (36%) of respondents had accommodations for breastfeeding at work. Both of these family-friendly benefits were reported less frequently by women working at Jewish organizations than women working at other organizations.

*Working for a small Jewish nonprofit without maternity leave policies. While everyone said they were supportive, numbers and policies spoke otherwise. (Survey respondent)*

*Short-term disability should not be a maternity leave because having a baby is not a disability. (Interviewee)*

*They haven't thought about it being feminist in these issues. I think we're 10 years behind the rest of the community. So I think even talking about these [issues] and getting them on the forefront, it's really helpful. I think reminding people [of] their Jewish values on how we treat our communal professionals. It's really important. (Interviewee)*

A study by Leading Edge (2018) found that women in Jewish nonprofits perceive fewer opportunities to advance and felt less comfortable voicing their opinions in the workplace. Another recent article in eJewish Philanthropy (Sheanin, 2019) noted that gendered issues in Jewish nonprofits include “the pernicious persistence of pay inequity and the regular undervaluing of our work by male colleagues and supervisors.”

In line with these national trends, we found that 28% of survey respondents employed by Jewish organizations agreed that they have opportunities to advance at their organizations and only 38% are satisfied with their compensation.

*Pay scale in Jewish community is lower than most jobs—and stagnant. (Survey respondent)*

In our survey, 18% of women who work for Jewish organizations indicated that they are looking for another job. Of those looking, 79% want a more supportive work environment, and 57% are looking for better work/life balance.



## Summary and Next Steps

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*Talking about the issues...is a great first step. You can't solve a problem unless you know it's a problem. (Interviewee)*

This study was premised on the idea, voiced in the quote above and echoed by change theorists (Schein, 1996), that the critical first step to addressing an issue is acknowledging that it exists. Our exploration of the experiences and concerns of working women from Jewish households in the greater Atlanta area suggests that women are committed to and proud of their work. At the same time, when asked to name their top concerns, work/life balance was by far the most frequently mentioned. Women feel stretched to meet the needs of employers and family, a situation exacerbated by limited paid parental leave and other family-friendly workplace policies. Faced with the challenge of meeting the demands of work and home, many women told us that they stepped back from their careers, choosing jobs or fields that were more compatible with their role as a parent.

In surveys and interviews, many women also told us that they lack opportunities for career advancement or access to mentors that could guide and sponsor their success in the workplace. Women viewed their lack of access

to career guidance, professional networks, and mentoring as critical barriers to finding employment.

On an even more concerning note, half of women who responded to our survey reported that in the last decade they experienced at least one form of discrimination based on their gender, and one quarter reported experiencing at least one incident of sexual harassment in the workplace. The vast majority of these women did not report these incidents, not because they did not know how to do so, but because they feared the consequences in terms of loss of privacy, retaliation, or termination from their job. Many women avoided opportunities at work and professional activities to prevent being the target of disrespectful or harassing behavior.

Some companies and organizations are responding to this need for work-life balance and additional resources for working parents. Business magazines and employment sites run headlines for lists of top-rated companies who excel in these areas (Jackson, 2019; Montanez, 2018). In large and small companies, policies for the length of the work day, flexibility in work hours, and resources for health and well-being influence perspectives of work-life

balance. The organization Working Mother created a comprehensive guide to the best places of employment for working moms (2018). The most common criteria included:

- Expanded parental leave policies: fully paid, gender neutral, adoption included. Phase-back programs for return to the workplace
- Flexibility in work hours, including telecommuting
- Health, wellness, and family resources: fertility reimbursement, provide childcare or childcare reimbursement (including before and after school care, holiday childcare, traveling with children), caregiver resources (including counseling, referrals, consultation, subsidies)
- Career development programs: opportunities to move in and out of leadership tracks, tuition reimbursement

On many dimensions of work-life quality, women who worked for Jewish organizations fared similarly to their peers who worked outside of the Jewish communal arena. In two areas, the experiences of women in Jewish organizations were less positive. A smaller portion of women working for Jewish organizations, as compared with other types of organizations, reported that their workplace provides paid maternity leave or accommodations for breastfeeding. Women in Jewish organizations were also less likely to feel that they have opportunities for career advancement.

This report represents the first but not the last step in the process of raising awareness about the challenges facing working women in the Atlanta area. As JWFA continues this work, we would suggest an integrated, two-pronged approach. First, the work of

consciousness raising needs to continue and expand to include women and men, laypeople and policy makers, employers and employees talking, together and separately, about the issues raised in this report. Many of the women we interviewed would welcome opportunities hosted by the Jewish community to discuss these and related issues.

*The whole discussion of the role of women and family and how you balance those things—those are discussions that don't seem to be held publicly. I would say that's an area that the Jewish community specifically could address better. (Interviewee)*

Second, JWFA should also serve as a catalyst for efforts to promote innovative approaches to address the issues raised in this report and in the conversations that follow. Nationally, programs have developed to support female Jewish professionals through mentoring and the creation of spaces for women to connect and share their experiences (see Mentoring for Equity and Voices for Good). The Atlanta Jewish community would benefit from similar programs within and outside the Jewish communal sphere.

As Sheryl Sandberg told Barnard College in her 2011 commencement speech, “We need women at all levels, including the top, to change the dynamic, reshape the conversation, to make sure women’s voices are heard and heeded, not overlooked and ignored.” Women must help and support one another to face the challenges of the workplace, pursue their career development, and reimagine an environment that supports a healthy work/life balance.

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## Appendix: Methodology

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This study employed a mixed-methods strategy that included collection of information through interviews and an online survey.

**Key Informant Interviews:** We conducted interviews with eight key informants from the Atlanta area who represent a range of perspectives on the needs of working women and the resources available to them. This group included Jewish professionals and leaders of institutions, Jewish and secular, that provide services/programming for women. We used these interviews to situate our findings in the larger context of the lives of working women in the Atlanta area. Key informant interviews were also used to explore the potential cooperation of institutions in the recruitment of women for interviews and focus groups.

**Interviews and Focus Groups with Working Women:** Researchers conducted individual interviews with 18 women who are currently working or seeking paid employment. An additional 15 working women attended a focus group. The goal of these individual and group conversations was to document the full range of experiences and challenges encountered by women in the

world of work. Interviews conducted prior to the development of the survey served as the basis for generating the array of topics to be covered. Additional interviews were conducted during and after the fielding of the survey and were used to clarify or expand upon issues raised by survey responses.

To locate and recruit interview participants, we cast a wide net, reaching out to potential interviewees in Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, Dekalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, and Rockdale counties. Recruitment included dissemination of invitations to potential interviewees through programs and institutions geared toward working women as well as through local synagogue sisterhoods. We also advertised through social media channels not directly tied to religion or the Jewish community. The survey also asked respondents to indicate if they would be willing to participate in an interview. Interviews were conducted in person or by phone and recorded and transcribed for analysis. The results were systematically analyzed for themes that are common to multiple interviews as well as for the varieties of individual experience.

**Survey of Working Women:** An email invitation to complete a survey was distributed to a list of women in Jewish households provided by Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta. The online survey asked about current work status, experiences, and challenges encountered in the workplace and perspectives on career advancement and work/life balance. The survey was in the field in June and July 2019. Follow-up efforts, in the form of multiple reminder emails, were employed to bolster survey response. Of the 7,831 names on the original list, 314 emails were returned as undeliverable. An additional

536 individuals received the email and asked that their names be removed from the list. The final number of women entering the survey was 764, a response rate of 10%. This response rate is similar that achieved for other general attitude surveys. There are a number of possible explanations for why more women did not respond to the survey, including not seeing the invitation in the first place (possibly due to invalid contact information), not having time to complete the survey, not being Jewish themselves, or not feeling personally invested in the topic.