

# MODERN FAMILY INDEX 2018

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Working moms possess the very leadership skills needed to succeed in today's workplace. But new research shows a motherhood penalty keeps them from career-advancing opportunities.



## WHAT IS THE 'MOTHERHOOD PENALTY'?

Much has been written about the 'motherhood penalty' in the workplace. Stereotypes – that women are the primary caregivers or that it's their duty to be at home and raise children – mean working moms are often perceived to be less committed or less competent than other employees. This penalty impacts a woman's hiring and promotion potential. It also extends to a wage gap that's evident not only between men and women, but also between women who are moms and those who do not have children. This year's Modern Family Index, commissioned by **Bright Horizons**® and conducted by Kelton Global, explores the 'motherhood penalty' from the perspective of employed Americans, including working mothers themselves. Research finds that these women are overlooked when it comes to career-advancing opportunities, holding them back from the work experience they need to move into leadership roles. And when organizations don't have many working mothers at the top, it keeps them from realizing their full potential, as well.

### Lead like a mom

Becoming a mom doesn't stop women from striving towards their career aspirations. According to our study, most are ambitious and just as committed to their work as they are to their families. New research shows that most employed Americans agree that working moms bring important leadership skills to the table – from being supportive and motivating to communicative and approachable. And those surveyed also agree these skills, which are crucial to effective leadership in today's environment, are currently lacking in most workplaces.

Given this, motherhood just may be the best training program for the C-suite of tomorrow; employers can only stand to gain by tapping into the skills mothers bring to the boardroom. However, the 2018 Modern Family Index shows that moms in the workplace are facing a culture that perpetuates the idea that mothers don't work as hard as their peers or are incapable of managing family and work responsibilities. As a result, many working mothers are facing an unfair penalty – they're being passed over for career-advancing opportunities simply because they bear the title of "mom."

In order for organizations to reap the benefits that working moms bring to the table, workplace culture and mindsets must change. Providing mothers access to the same professional opportunities as the rest of their colleagues will go a long way and will arm them with the experience and confidence they need to lead successfully.

## MORE MOMS NEEDED IN LEADERSHIP

Professional work experience and lessons from motherhood make for a powerful combination of skills. And this year's Modern Family Index shows that the American workforce agrees: More moms are needed in leadership.

### THE SECRET TO SUCCESS

84% of employed Americans believe that having working moms in leadership roles will **make a business more successful.**



#### The missing ingredient to business success

People forge a company's success. And leading "like a mom" may be the missing ingredient a business needs to realize its full potential. Employed Americans in the 2018 Modern Family Index almost unanimously agree that working moms bring unique skills to leadership roles – so much so that there's demand for more moms to have a seat at the table.

- ▶ 91% of working Americans agree that moms can bring unique skills to leadership roles in an organization.
- ▶ 85% of respondents agree that being a mother helps a woman prepare for the challenges she will face as a business leader.
- ▶ 85% also agree that organizations need more moms in leadership roles at work.
- ▶ 84% believe that having mothers in leadership roles will make a business more successful.

## Working moms make better leaders

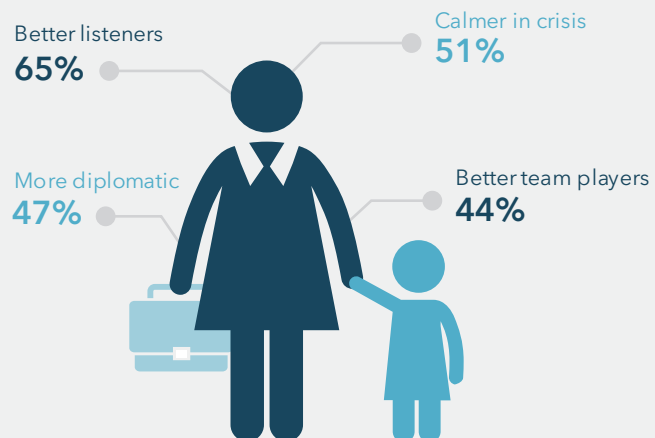
Employed Americans surveyed in this year's Modern Family Index acknowledge working mothers to be exceptional leaders – adept at listening, multitasking, and time management. Most (89%) agree that working moms in leadership roles bring out the best in employees.

- ▶ Almost twice as many working Americans describe working moms as better listeners than other groups of employees, such as working dads or non-parents (65% for working moms vs. 35% for working dads and non-parents combined). In addition, they also describe working moms as calmer in crisis (51%), more diplomatic (47%), and better team players (44%) than any other peer group.
- ▶ Survey respondents also believe moms are better at multitasking than others in the workforce (63% vs. 37%) and are better at time management (56% vs. 44%), as well.
- ▶ Employed Americans want their leaders to be more communicative (32%), organized (28%), supportive (26%), and motivating (26%), and these are the very traits that mothers believe they bring to the workplace. In fact, more working moms rate themselves higher than their colleagues rate themselves when it comes to those same traits – being supportive (59% vs. 45%), approachable (53% vs. 46%), communicative (44% vs. 36%), and motivating (38% vs. 33%).

## LEADING LIKE A MOM

**89% of American workers** agree that working moms in leadership roles bring out the best in employees.

As compared with working fathers or employees without children, they also describe mothers as:



## Ambitious and committed

Just as important, women are fully invested in their careers – and not just for the money. Careers are a source of pride.

- ▶ Family is important to almost all working moms (99%), as are their careers (90%).

- ▶ 74% of moms work because they love their careers.
- ▶ Moms in the workplace have their eyes set on what's next, whether it's their next promotion (33%), being a leader in the organization (28%), or journeying all the way to the C-suite (17%).

## LOSE THE ATTITUDE

Working mothers face major obstacles on the path to leadership – not just a glass ceiling, but negative attitudes from both senior leadership and coworkers. The truth is working moms in this year's Modern Family Index feel they need to prove themselves more than their peers on their way to management and beyond.

### Breaking the barriers

Many working mothers admit that putting in the effort at work may not always be enough to grow their careers; there are roadblocks along the journey to advancement.

- ▶ 82% of working moms say there are barriers that prevent them from becoming leaders.
- ▶ 78% also believe they must prove themselves more than others to gain a leadership position in the workplace.

### Unequal playing field for mothers and fathers

There is a double standard when it comes to how working parents are viewed in the workplace. Fathers are expected to work and are bolstered by a perception that they manage career and home responsibilities with ease. The same cannot be said for mothers.

- ▶ When comparing parents who work, survey respondents believe working fathers are more dedicated to their careers than working moms (75% vs. 59%). More working Americans also believe dads who work are better able to manage their responsibilities without being stretched too thin (77%) than mothers who work (66%).
- ▶ 53% also believe it is easier for men to manage working parent responsibilities than women.
- ▶ Despite these skewed perceptions, 80% of employed Americans agree that moms are often undervalued in business.
- ▶ 56% also feel that fathers are undervalued, which may show a trend that parents – not just working moms – are underestimated in the workplace.

## HALF THE RESPECT

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# 41%

Nearly half of employed Americans perceive working moms to be **less devoted to their work**.

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# 38%

More than one third judge them for **needing a more flexible schedule**.



### Top-down change

The current portrait of senior leadership is far from equal, with many moms describing it as male-dominated or a “boys’ club.” Greater empathy and less judgment may be the attitude change that’s needed at the top to create a more supportive environment that allows working mothers to realize their career potential.

- ▶ 38% of moms in the workplace reveal that male-dominated senior leadership is a barrier to their career progression, and almost a third (31%) admit that negative attitudes from senior leadership are holding them back from being leaders.
- ▶ These perceptions may influence fellow coworkers, too; 41% of employed Americans perceive working moms to be less devoted to their work and 38% judge them for needing a more flexible schedule.

## WORKING MOMS FEEL THE STING OF A MOTHERHOOD PENALTY

Even today, a number of workplaces are biased environments for working mothers. The motherhood penalty goes beyond their likelihood to be hired for jobs or receive equal pay. It’s a nearly invisible hurdle – moms are overlooked for career-advancing opportunities simply because they are mothers. The result? Many moms in the workplace feel they don’t have the necessary experience and doubt whether they can succeed in leadership roles.

### Held back in the workplace

It’s clear to the working moms in this year’s Modern Family Index that career-defining opportunities are going to others.

- ▶ 72% of both working moms and dads agree that women are penalized in their careers for starting families, while men are not.
- ▶ 73% of moms believe they get fewer career advancement opportunities than women who are not mothers – this is also agreed upon by 71% of women who are not mothers.
- ▶ Fewer than two in five (37%) mothers in the workplace feel they have access to as many professional opportunities as the rest of their peers at work.

## Riddled with self-doubt

In the workplace, experience builds knowledge, credibility, and respect. And when working mothers don't get exposure to career-defining projects, some worry they are not fully equipped to lead. Working moms question their own abilities and worry that it will be a challenge to push ideas forward (17%) or make their voices heard (17%) if they are ever in senior roles.

- ▶ With the senior ranks still so male-dominated, nearly two in five (37%) moms worry they don't even fit the mold of a leader.
- ▶ One in four (25%) moms admit they are concerned by colleagues' perceptions, worried that they won't be viewed as leaders (19%) or respected by others (13%).

## CONFIDENCE IN QUESTION



1 in 4 working moms are concerned about their peers' perceptions.

37%

Worry they don't fit the mold of a leader

19%

Worry they won't be viewed as leaders

# WORKPLACE CULTURES THAT TAKE WOMEN FROM MOM-IN-CHIEF TO CEO

The 2018 Modern Family Index shows that working mothers have a lot to bring to the leadership table. Organizations can better retain talent by changing from the top-down, valuing moms at work, and offering them equal consideration for opportunities for which they are qualified. This change in mindset and workplace culture will unlock a new class of future workplace leaders.

## Equal consideration for career opportunities

Despite strides in the right direction, only 34% of employed Americans say their workplace has equal male and female leadership. The only way to address the imbalance of gender representation in senior leadership is to ensure all employees have a fair shot at building their experiences.

- ▶ 69% of working Americans say that mothers in the workplace are more likely to be passed up for a new job than other employees.
- ▶ 60% say career opportunities are given to less qualified employees instead of working moms who may be more skilled.

## AN UNFAIR BIAS

60% of working Americans agree that **career opportunities are given to less qualified employees** instead of working moms who may be more skilled.



## Opening the door for working moms

Despite the negative perceptions that colleagues and managers have about working moms, nearly all (87%) employed Americans feel that companies can do more to support moms in leadership positions and reduce the fears that working moms carry throughout their careers.

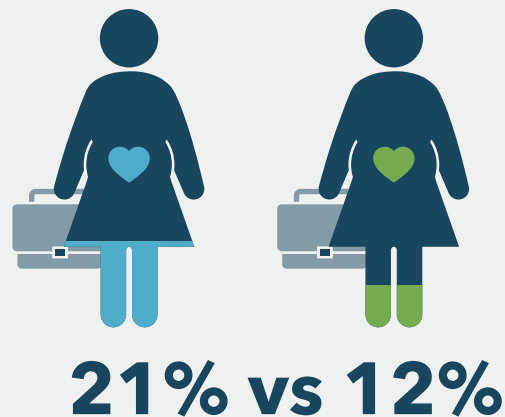


- ▶ With men still dominating leadership positions, 81% of working moms are nervous to approach their boss about certain topics and 21% would be worried to tell their boss they are expecting a child – almost **double** that from the 2014 Modern Family Index (12%).
- ▶ This is likely why over three in five (65%) women without children have worries about having a child, including 42% who worry their career trajectory would be negatively impacted, put on pause, or unable to advance as quickly as that of their peers.

## TWICE THE WORRY

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In the last 5 years, the number of women who would be worried to tell their boss they are expecting a child has **nearly doubled**.



As the fifth report in an annual series, the 2018 Modern Family Index shows that the skills working mothers bring to the table are the very skills leaders lack in today's organizations. In order to reap these talent benefits, senior leaders and colleagues need to stop running from motherhood in the workplace and start embracing it.

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### ABOUT THE BRIGHT HORIZONS MODERN FAMILY INDEX

The Modern Family Index is an Internet-based survey conducted by Kelton Global from October 29 to November 8, 2018. The sample consisted of 2,143 employed Americans over the age of 18 (994 Parents, 1,149 Non-Parents). The survey was conducted online and has a margin of error of +/- 2.1%.

\*Note: Please refer to the survey as the Bright Horizons Modern Family Index.



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