





Battle of the Sexes Gives Way to Negotiations

Americans welcome women workers, want new deal
to support how we now work and live today

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“**A** Woman’s Nation Changes Everything” documents in detail the many transformational changes in our economy and our society today because of the massive influx of women into the American workforce over the past few decades. But how do Americans overall feel about these changes? What effect, if any, do all these changes have on the beliefs and behavior of men and women? Is discord rising between the sexes or are men and women finding ways to co-exist and even reach consensus on important matters? How are modern families adjusting to the changes at home and in the workplace? Do men and women agree or disagree in their understandings of how families, work environments, and public policy should be structured?

The Rockefeller Foundation, in collaboration with *TIME*, set out to answer these and other questions about women and society in a landmark study of public opinion that was completed less than a month before the publication of this report. The research team, led by the authors of this chapter, set out to determine just how men and women view one another in this new era and how changes in the economy are influencing attitudes about gender relations, the family, and the workplace. Working with public opinion research firm Abt SRBI to design and execute our study, we interviewed more than 3,400 adults across the country to get a clearer picture of the state of gender relations today.

The results are striking. Contrary to much of the conventional wisdom about the battle of the sexes, our research finds basic alignment between men and women in terms of what they want in life and what they believe about one another. First and foremost, both men and women overwhelmingly agree that the rise of women in the workforce is a positive development for society—a viewpoint that crosses generational, ideological, partisan, and racial and ethnic lines.

Compared to earlier generations, men say they are perfectly comfortable with women working outside the home, women earning more money than men, and more men being stay-at-home dads. In turn, women say they are less dependent on men for financial security than women were in their mothers' generation and that many of the tensions between working and having a family life can be bridged.

Tellingly, these new attitudes are apparent in conversations across kitchen tables throughout our country. Both men and women say they are negotiating more than earlier generations about the rules of relationships, work, and family—a clear sign that the battle of the sexes has given way to a new era of gender diplomacy and mutual discussion about their increasingly harried and stressful lives. Both sexes disagree that men no longer know their role in work and life or that men and women are confused about how to interact with one another in this new era.

Yet our public opinion research also shows that mutual understanding doesn't mean changes in behavior have been equally forthcoming. Both sexes agree that women continue to bear a disproportionate burden in taking care of children and elderly parents, even when both partners in a relationship have jobs. Women overwhelmingly report that they are solely responsible for the care of their children and many say that they alone are responsible for the care of aging parents.

Given the ongoing difficulties many people face in balancing work and family life, it is not surprising that large numbers of Americans—men and women alike—view the decline in the percentage of children growing up in a family with a stay-at-home parent as a negative development for society. A majority of men—and even a bare majority of women—agree that it is still best for a family if the father works outside the home and the mother takes care of the children.

But rather than pining for family structures of an earlier generation, we heard loud and clear from Americans in this study that government and businesses have failed to adapt to the needs of modern families. Men and women are ready and

Survey methodology

The Rockefeller Foundation, in collaboration with *TIME*, contacted 3,413 adults nationwide by telephone from August 31 to September 15, 2009, including 1,599 men and 1,814 women. Telephone numbers were chosen randomly in separate samples of land-line and cell phone exchanges across the nation, allowing listed and unlisted numbers to be contacted, and multiple attempts were made to contact each number. Cell phone exchanges and ported numbers were hand-dialed. The survey includes “over samples” (polling parlance for measures to ensure all subsets of a population are captured in the poll) of African Americans and Hispanics selected from census tracts with higher than 8 percent concentration of each respective group. The sample includes a total of 446 African Americans and 383 Hispanics. The resulting interviews were weighted

into proportion by probability of selection. The sample was adjusted to census proportions of sex, ethnicity, age, education, and national region.

The margin of sampling error for adults is plus or minus two percentage points. For both men and women, it is three points; for African Americans, it is five points; and for Hispanics, it is six points. For smaller subgroups, the margin of error may be higher. Survey results may also be affected by factors such as question wording and the order in which questions are asked. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Questionnaire design and interviewing was conducted by Abt SRBI of New York. Center for American Progress senior fellows John Halpin and Ruy Teixeira coordinated the polling and analyzed the poll results.

willing to work out the details of their stressful lives. Many Americans will choose more traditional arrangements, and many may not. But regardless of family structure, Americans across the board desire more flexibility in work schedules, paid family leave, and increased child care support. Ever practical and pragmatic, our survey demonstrates that Americans understand that everything has changed in their work and lives today and that consequently they are working things out as best they can while looking to their government and their employers to catch up.

Americans strongly accept increasing role of women in our economy

In our survey, we asked Americans to evaluate the ramifications of the central premise of this report—everything changes in work and life because women today make up nearly one-half of the U.S. workforce. As Figure 1 highlights, more than three-quarters of Americans (77 percent) view this change positively, with more than 4 in 10 (42 percent) saying that it has been a “very positive” change for

American society. Less than one-fifth of Americans (19 percent) say the rise of women in the economy has had a negative impact on society.

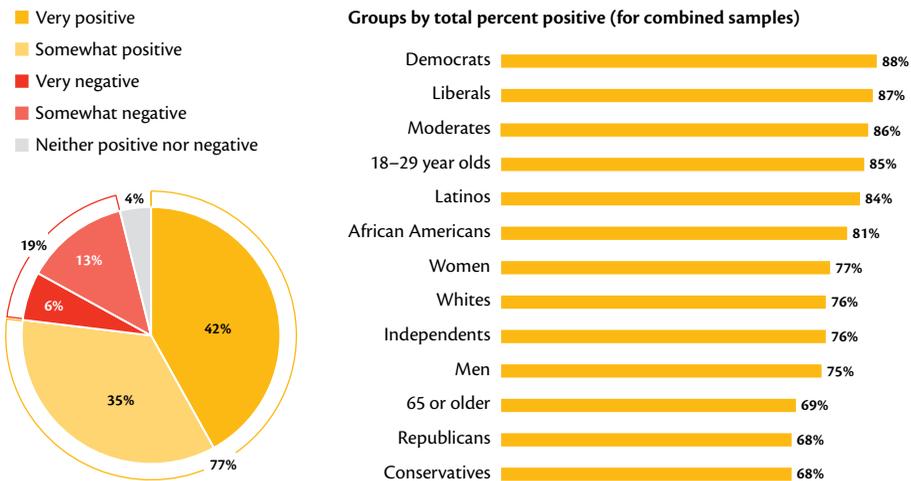
Positive views cut across the demographic and ideological spectrum, with strong majorities of men (75 percent), women (77 percent), whites (76 percent), African Americans (81 percent), Latinos (84 percent), liberals (87 percent), and moderates (86 percent) viewing women’s increased role in the economy positively. Even more traditional elderly and conservative audiences believe women working equally alongside men in the workforce is a net positive for society, albeit at lower overall levels than other groups.

Although every age and gender group thinks that more women going to work is a positive change for society, women under 45 are most enthusiastic about this development (55 percent very positive) followed by younger men (44 percent very positive). Less than 4 in 10 (38 percent) women over the age of 45 say they have

FIGURE 1

The American public overwhelmingly views the rise of women in workforce as good for society

Q: Forty years ago, just one-third of all workers were women. Today, about one-half of all workers are women. Do you think this change has been positive or negative for American society (split sample with “the American economy”)?



very positive feelings about this, but three-quarters of them (75 percent) hold at least a somewhat positive view of more women working in the economy.

One might think the movement of millions of women into the economy would cause friction between the sexes, particularly for men who might feel wrongly displaced from employment or left out altogether from the modern economy. To the contrary, the demonstrated lack of discord over this profound social shift in American life more likely signals convergence between the sexes due to the alignment of their views about major life goals and family desires.

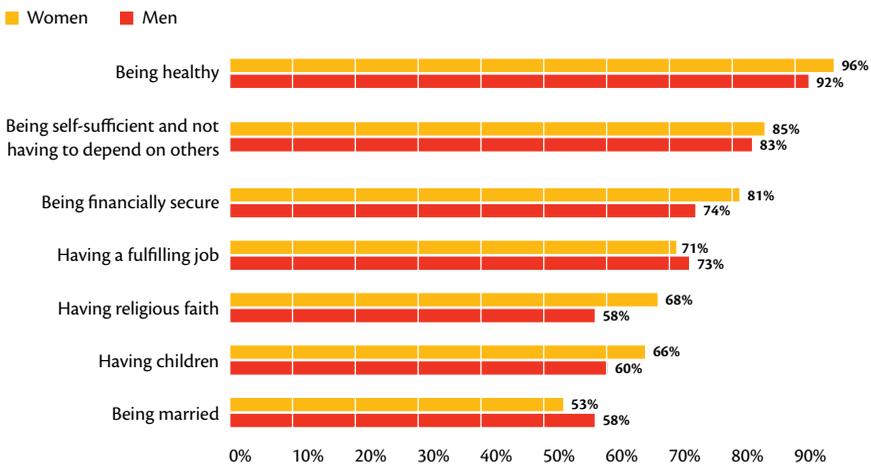
As Figure 2 shows, both men and women today agree almost down the line with one another about what is most important to them in their own lives. More than 9 in 10 men (92 percent) and women (96 percent) place being healthy at the top of their list in terms of what is very important to them, followed by being self-sufficient, being financially secure, and having a fulfilling job. Although women

FIGURE 2

Men and women agree on most life goals

Q: I'm going to read you a list of some things that different people value. Some people say these things are very important to them. Other people say they are not so important. Please tell me how important each thing is to you personally.

Percent saying "very important"



place a slightly higher premium on faith than do men (68 percent very important for women; 58 percent for men) and less of an emphasis on marriage (58 percent very important for men; 53 percent for women), the sexes are generally aligned on major life goals.

Similarly, men and women appear to look for the same traits and attributes in their mates. As seen in Figure 3, 82 percent of men and 75 percent of women told us that it is very important to them for their romantic partners to give them love and affection, and nearly 7 in 10 men (68 percent) and more than 6 in 10 women (62 percent) want their partners to have a family. And to whom will they turn in order to make family decisions and provide for the family? Our survey shows that both men and women are looking less to their partners to make major household decisions or to support them financially, though women are still twice as likely as men to look to their partners for financial support (30 percent very important versus 15 percent very important, respectively).

This last finding may be partially explained by the continued desire among both mothers and fathers for their daughters to have a traditional family structure over more individualistic measures of financial and career success. Looking at Figure 4, we find that 63 percent of fathers and 56 percent of mothers rank “a happy marriage and kids” as their chief desire for their daughters, compared to less than one-third of men and less than half of women who rank “financial success” and “an interesting career” as top goals for their daughters.

FIGURE 3

Men and women are looking for similar things from their partners

Q: Whether or not you have a romantic partner in your life right now, please tell me how important you feel it is for you personally to have that person do the following.

Percent saying “very important”

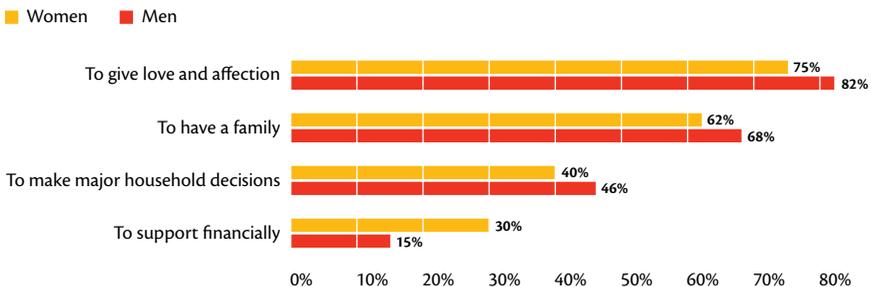
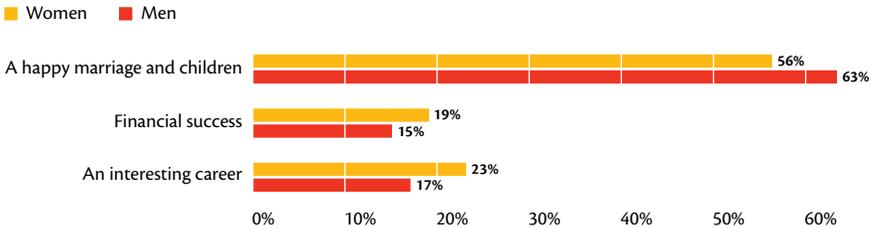


FIGURE 4

Mothers and fathers both want a traditional family arrangement for their daughters

Q: [FOR THOSE WITH DAUGHTERS OR STEPDAUGHTERS] Everyone naturally wants the best of all things for their children, but I'd like to know how you would rank these three things in importance. For a daughter of yours, which would you most want her to have? (Percent ranked "first")

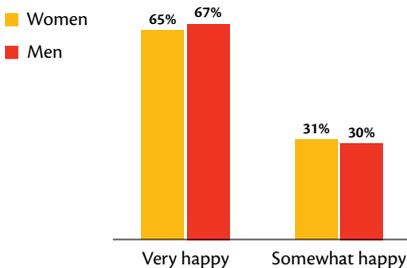


Although every age and gender group expresses a desire for their daughters to have a happy marriage with children above other goals, 30 percent of women under the age of 45 say they want their daughters to have an interesting career compared to 16 percent of men under 45. Only 18 percent of men and 19 percent of women ages 45 or older rank an interesting career as their top desire for their daughters. Intriguingly, looking below the surface we find that less than half of single men with kids (48 percent) and single women with kids (47 percent) rank a happy marriage and children as their top desire for the daughters.

FIGURE 5

Men and women are equally happy in their own marriages/relationships

Q: All things considered, how would you describe your marriage or partnership?



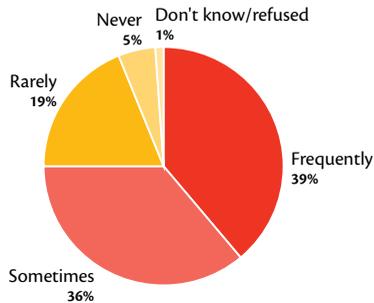
The ongoing importance of marriage for married parents is not that surprising, given what they told us about their own life experiences—roughly two-thirds of married men and women (67 percent and 65 percent, respectively) describe their own marriages as very happy, clearly a condition they would like for their own offspring.

Perhaps the strongest alignment between men and women in terms of their day-to-day lives involves the level of anxiety they are experiencing

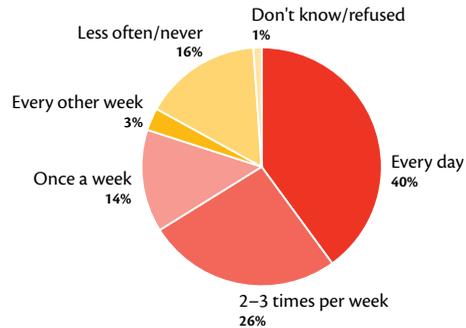
FIGURE 6

Americans are stressed in their daily lives; parents are coordinating more

Q: In general, how often do you experience stress in your daily life: never, rarely, sometimes, or frequently?



Q: Families today are very busy, juggling multiple and sometimes conflicting schedules, duties, and responsibilities. How often do you and your spouse/partner (need to) coordinate your family's schedules, duties, and responsibilities?



and the constant negotiations that must go on between partners to bring some order to their daily schedules. As Figure 6 shows, 75 percent of Americans report experiencing stress in their daily lives, with nearly equal percentages of men and women (39 percent and 40 percent, respectively) saying this stress occurs frequently. Given the hectic nature of modern life, no wonder two-thirds of Americans say they are coordinating their duties and responsibilities with their spouses or partners at least two to three times per week. Forty percent of Americans say they are negotiating these details daily.

The battle of the sexes is over

What can we conclude from these data? First, the profound shift in women's role in the U.S. economy has not led to massive conflict between men and women. In fact, the opposite happened—men and women view this change in quite favorable terms. Second, the lack of acrimony over this shift is partially a result of men and women largely sharing the same life ambitions, goals, and realities. Third, both sexes appear to be converging in their beliefs about gender relations and the role of women in society and the workplace rather than fragmenting along gender lines.

Although some divisions remain between genders and across ideological lines, the real story emerging from this study is the consistent and strong agreement of the sexes on many attitudinal measures of modern life. The bulk of our study asked people whether they agreed or disagreed with a range of statements about the status of men and women in society. Strikingly, we learned that strong majorities of both men and women agreed with one another on 24 of 31 measures—an agreement rate of more than 75 percent. In many cases, the attitudes of women were stronger than those of men, but the overall agreement rate is astounding—further highlighting the convergence of opinion between men and women.

Table 1 presents a comprehensive overview of the many areas of consensus between the sexes, ranked by the total level of agreement (or disagreement) among women. To get a sense of the areas where men and women are in greatest alignment these days, consider the following measures where the sexes are separated by only five percentage points or less:

- You are comfortable with women in households earning more money than men. (89 percent of men and women agree)
- Husbands and wives today are negotiating more than earlier generations about the rules on relationships, work, and family. (83 percent of men and 84 percent of women agree)
- Mothers cannot be as productive at work as fathers. (82 percent of men and 81 percent of women disagree)
- The realities of family life today are not adequately represented in news and entertainment media. (77 percent of men and 78 percent of women agree)
- Mothers cannot be as productive at work as people without children. (82 percent of men and 81 percent of women disagree)
- You are confused about the way men and women are supposed to interact these days. (72 percent of men and 71 percent of women disagree)
- Women need to behave more like men to be taken seriously in the workplace. (74 percent of men and 71 percent of women disagree)

TABLE 1

Basic alignment between genders on women and society; women stronger on many measures

Q: For each statement, please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree. (Total percent agree, unless indicated; ranked by total for women)

	Women		Men	
	Strongly	Total	Strongly	Total
You are comfortable with women in households earning more money than men.	65	89	61	89
Despite changes in the modern family, women today still bear the primary responsibility for taking care of sick or elderly parents.	52	86	27	66
Compared to previous generations, it is now more acceptable for men to be stay-at-home dads.	41	85	32	79
In households where both partners have jobs, women take on more responsibilities for the home and family than their male partners.	55	85	28	67
Husbands and wives today are negotiating more than earlier generations about the rules on relationships, work and family.	51	84	46	83
Women who have children are just as committed to their jobs as women who do not have children.	57	83	44	73
Mothers cannot be as productive at work as fathers. (Disagree)	63	81	56	82
The realities of family life today are not adequately represented in news and entertainment media.	47	78	47	77
It is possible for a woman to have a fulfilling life if she remains single.	54	78	38	67
Mothers cannot be as productive at work as people without children. (Disagree)	56	77	45	72
Today's women's movement is a movement that considers the needs of men and families too, not just women.	34	73	22	59
You are confused about the way men and women are supposed to interact these days. (Disagree)	46	71	46	72
Women need to behave more like men to be taken seriously in the workplace. (Disagree)	48	71	47	74
[WOMEN ONLY]: Compared to your mother, you are less dependent on your spouse for financial security.	48	70	-	-
[MEN ONLY]: Compared to your father, you are more comfortable having women work outside the home.	-	-	40	70
There would be fewer problems in the world if women had a more equal position in government and business.	39	69	24	54
Compared to past generations, men are becoming more financially dependent on women.	23	65	19	61
Women who work outside the home have less time and attention for their marriage or relationship.	26	63	25	65
With the rise of women in society and the workplace, men no longer know their role. (Disagree)	29	61	38	68
Men today are less interested in playing the macho role than they were in years past.	19	60	19	63
Men have lost the battle of the sexes. (Disagree)	26	58	31	62

- Compared to past generations, men are becoming more financially dependent on women. (61 percent of men and 65 percent of women agree)
- Women who work outside the home have less time and attention for their marriage or relationship. (65 percent of men and 63 percent of women agree)
- Men today are less interested in playing the macho role than they were in years past. (63 percent of men and 60 percent of women agree)
- Men have lost the battle of the sexes. (62 percent of men and 58 percent of women disagree)

On several other measures, we find that majorities of both men and women agreed with a certain statement but women were much stronger in their beliefs than were men. This is particularly true for matters related to the distribution of labor within households.

Fifty-two percent of women, for example, strongly agree (86 percent total agree) with the statement: “Despite changes in the modern family, women today still bear the primary responsibility for taking care of sick or elderly parents.” Only 27 percent of men strongly agree (66 percent total agree) with this statement. Similarly, 55 percent of women strongly agree (85 percent total agree) that “In households where both partners have jobs, women take on more responsibilities for the home and family than their male partners,” versus 28 percent of men who strongly agree (67 percent total agree).

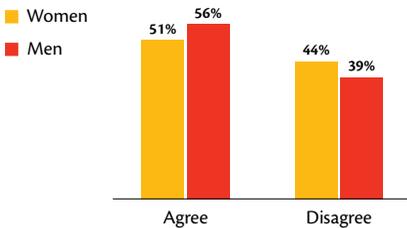
Balancing family life and the workplace seems to spark less disagreement. Fifty-seven percent of women, for example, strongly agree (83 percent total agree) that working mothers are just as committed to their jobs as women without children, with 44 percent of men strongly agreeing (73 percent total agree). Despite the more intense opinions of women on some issues, it is notable and important that majorities of men are at least somewhat in alignment with the attitudes of women on many measures of gender relations and the workplace.

Furthermore, as Figures 7 and 8 highlight, men and women are basically aligned in their attitudes about one of the more contentious issues between the sexes—the traditional family structure. Fifty-six percent of men agree (39 percent disagree) that “it is better for a family if the father works outside the home and the mother takes

FIGURE 7

Traditional family structure favored by a majority of men and a plurality of women

Q: It is better for a family if the father works outside the home and the mother takes care of the children?



care of the children.” At the same time, a bare majority of women agree with this notion—51 percent versus 44 percent disagreeing. Generational differences are clear on this measure. Women under age 45 are less inclined to agree that it is better for a family if the father works outside the home and the mother takes care of the family—less than one in five younger women strongly agree with this idea.

Perhaps more telling, we presented respondents with the fact that today less than 30 percent of children grow

up in a family with a stay-at-home parent compared to a majority of kids who grew up in this family environment in the mid-1970s. A full 65 percent of Americans—including 70 percent of men and 61 percent of women—believe this change has had a negative effect on American society compared to only 28 percent who view this change positively. Although concerns are widespread about the demise of the proportion of children growing up in a family with at least one parent at home, lower percentages of single and full-time working women, African Americans, and Latinos view this development as a negative change for society.

The battle is over, but differences remain to be negotiated

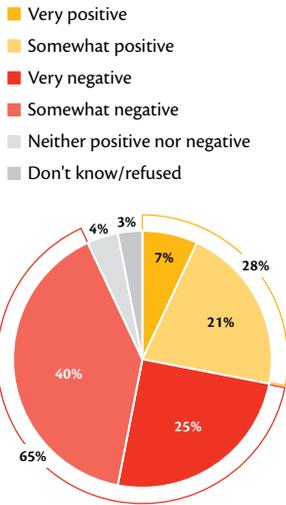
Despite general agreement among Americans on many measures involving women’s changing role in society, lingering differences still exist. Most of the differences are small and stem from divergent attitudes between men and women, and between liberals and conservatives, about the overall status of women and the relationship of working women to their children.

As Figure 9 highlights, there are four statements that produced noticeable gender gaps. In the first of these, 54 percent of men agree that it is “harder for a mother who works outside the home to establish as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work outside the home.” A roughly similar percentage of women, 56 percent, disagree with this sentiment. Women of all ages

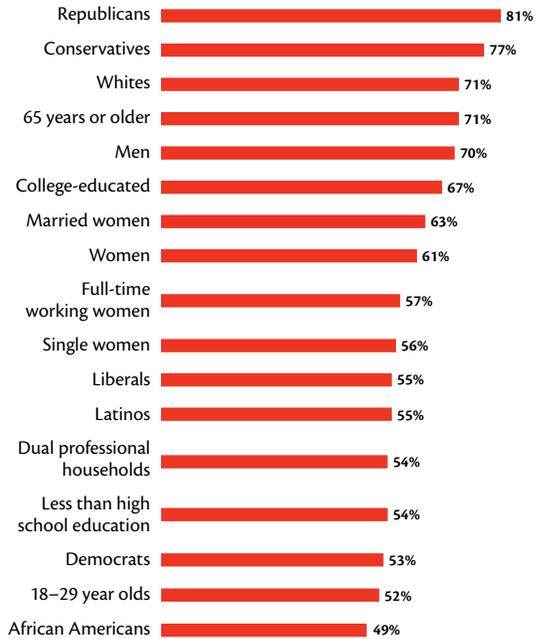
FIGURE 8

Public worried about effect on children without stay-at-home parent

Q: In the mid-1970s, a majority of children grew up in a family with a stay-at-home parent. Today about 30 percent of children grow up in a family with a stay-at-home parent. Do you think this change has been very positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative, or very negative for American society?



Groups by total percent negative



disagree with this notion while younger men (52 percent agree, under 45) and older men (55 percent agree, 45 or older) feel the opposite way.

Similarly, a majority of men (60 percent) believes that “there are no longer any barriers to how far women can advance in the workplace,” compared to only 50 percent of women who believe this is the case. On the flip side of the gender coin, a strong majority of women (68 percent) agrees that “men resent women who have more power than they do” versus only 48 percent of men. And 52 percent of women agree that “all things considered, men continue to have it better in life than women do,” while 53 percent of men disagree they occupy an elevated position in life.

FIGURE 9

Gender gaps still persist on important family and social status issues

■ Women ■ Men

It is harder for a mother who works outside the home to establish as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work outside the home.

All things considered, men continue to have it better in life than women do.

Men resent women who have more power than they do.

There are no longer any barriers to how far women can advance in the workplace.

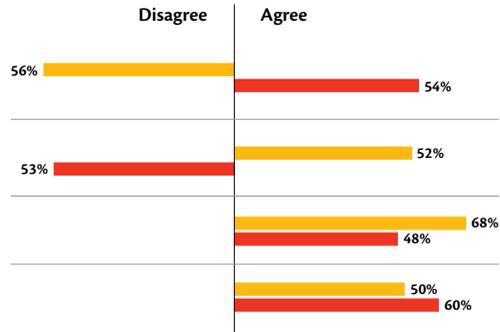


TABLE 2

Ideological and partisan gaps on key measures (percent total agree)

	Liberal	Conservative	Difference	Democrat	Republican	Difference
The government should provide more funding for child care to support parents who work.	84	49	+35	84	46	+38
There would be fewer problems in the world if women had a more equal position in government and business.	78	47	+31	75	44	+31
It is better for a family if the father works outside the home and the mother takes care of the children.	41	68	-27	45	67	-22
It is harder for a mother who works outside the home to establish as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work outside the home.	41	55	-14	41	54	-13
There are no longer any barriers to how far women can advance in the workplace.	48	61	-13	53	58	-5
All things considered, men continue to have it better in life than women do.	53	42	+11	53	42	+11

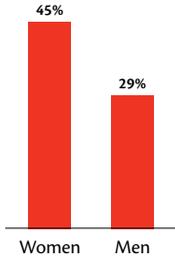
Ideological differences are even more pronounced than gender ones on many of these same measures. As Table 2 shows, there is a 27-point gap between conservatives and liberals on whether it is better for a family if the father works outside the home and the mother takes care of the children. And there is a 14-point gap between conservatives and liberals on the notion that it is harder for a working mother to establish as warm and secure a relationship with her children as one who does not work.

FIGURE 10

Women are more skeptical of female bosses than are men

Q: Female bosses are harder to work for than are male bosses.

Percent agreeing



In contrast, there is an 11-point gap between liberals and conservatives on the idea that men still have it better in life. Fifty-three percent of liberals believe this is the case but only 42 percent of conservatives agree with them.

There is one final and somewhat counterintuitive difference between the sexes that is worth noting, given many stereotypes about the workplace. Figure 10 shows that only 29 percent of men agree that female bosses are harder to work for than are male bosses, compared to 45 percent of women. The tension between female employees and their female bosses appears to be more concentrated among white-

collar workers and management professionals—49 percent of white-collar women and 47 of women professionals agree with this notion versus 38 percent of blue-collar women.

Behavior hasn't caught up with attitudes

The attitudes we have documented so far paint a picture of a more consensual and mutually respectful relationship between men and women. Men and women both accept the increasing role of women in the economy and do not view this change as a threat to the status of either gender. They are negotiating more about the details of their lives and understand that women are still bearing a larger share of child care and elder care. Both sexes also believe that it is okay for women to earn more than men and to contribute more to household income.

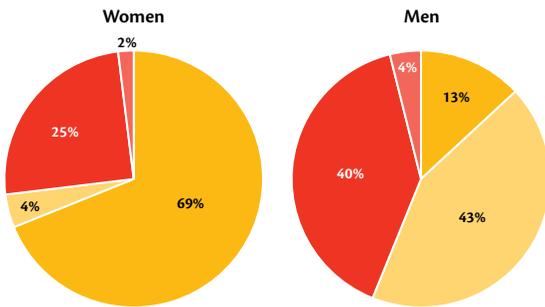
But we also find that the self-reported reality of men's and women's lives does not match the more progressive attitudes expressed in other areas of the study. Case in point: Figure 11 highlights a full 69 percent of women—including 64 percent of married women with kids and 86 percent of single women with kids—say they are mostly responsible for taking care of their children. In contrast, only 13 percent of men report a similar set-up. Forty-one percent of women also say that they are mostly responsible for taking care of their elderly parents compared to less than one-quarter of men who do so.

FIGURE 11

Behavior lagging behind attitudes—women still bear the burden of kids and elderly parents; men still bringing home more of the family income

Q: In your household, who is mostly responsible for taking care of your children?

■ Self ■ Spouse ■ Both ■ Other



Q: Personally speaking, who in your household has the most responsibility for caring for your elderly parents: you or your spouse or partner, or do both of you share that responsibility equally, or some other family member?

Percent responding "self"



Q: Are you the primary breadwinner in your household?

Percent responding "yes"



Q: [IF MARRIED OR PARTNER] What share of your family's income do YOU personally earn?

Percent responding "more than half or almost all"



Even with these greater family responsibilities, women report greater difficulties than men in getting time off from work to care for their children and elderly parents. Forty-two percent of women say they face difficulties getting time off to care for kids compared to 36 percent of men, and 27 percent of women find similar hurdles getting time to take care for parents compared to 18 percent of men (see Figure 12).

In terms of household earnings, 70 percent of men overall say they are the primary breadwinners in their households compared to 40 percent of women overall. This broadly reflects the analysis in other parts of this report, which demonstrates that workplace practices and expectations among employers that men are the primary breadwinners in households result in workplace behaviors that are often detrimental to women. Even more striking, 65 percent of men report that they bring home more than half or almost all of their household income compared to only 19 percent of women. There are definite class differences in terms of the primary breadwinner status, with trends inverted for blue-collar and white-collar women: 57 percent of blue-collar women say they are the primary breadwinners compared to 44 percent of women professionals.

Despite more enlightened attitudes and greater negotiations between the sexes, American women clearly have yet to reach parity with men on many in terms of household duties and earnings.

Americans overwhelmingly want better balance between work and life

Americans understand that they are unlikely to return to the traditional arrangements of an earlier generation given the changing nature of work and family, but they are not yet convinced that the modern workplace has adapted to the new reality and the needs of modern families.

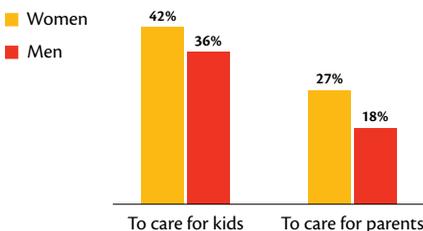
For starters, both men and women desperately want changes to their work structures. Presented with a list of possible things that would need to change in order to improve work and family life, 54 percent of women and 49 percent of men say that more flexible work hours and schedules would be their top choice. This is well above other options, such as more paid time off, better child care options or longer school hours.

In addition, we found broad and deep support among men and women for significant changes in governmental and business policies to better address the needs of modern families. As Figure 13 highlights, 53 percent of Americans *strongly*

FIGURE 12
More women than men having trouble getting time off from work

Q: Has there ever been a time when you wanted to take time off from work to care for (your child/your elderly parent), but you were unable to do so?

Percent responding "yes"



agree (84 percent totally agree) with the statement “businesses that fail to adapt to the needs of modern families risk losing good workers.” Seventy-six percent of Americans agree that businesses should be required to provide paid family and medical leave, and 73 percent of Americans say businesses should provide their employees with more child care benefits. A similar proportion of Americans—74 percent—says that employers should be required to give workers more flexibility in their work schedules.

TABLE 3

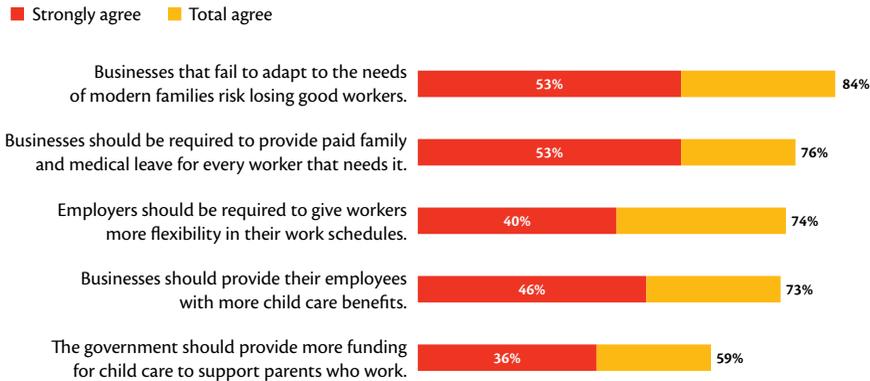
Men and women overwhelmingly want more workplace flexibility

Q: Which of these things, in particular, would need to change in order for working parents to balance evenly their job or business, their marriage, and their children?

	Women	Men
More flexible work hours/schedules	54	49
More paid time off	15	16
Better or more child care options	13	12
Longer school hours or school year	8	10

FIGURE 13

Public strongly supports policy changes to improve work-life balance



With the exception of increased government funding for child care, support for new measures to improve work-life balance cuts across partisan and ideological lines. For example, 73 percent of conservatives and 61 percent of Republicans agree with the statement that businesses should be required to provide paid family and medical leave, with 88 percent of liberals and 90 percent of Democrats similarly agreeing. Likewise, more than 6 in 10 conservatives (64 percent) and Republicans (63 percent) agree that employers should be required to give workers more flexibility in the workplace, with agreement topping 80 percent among liberals and Democrats.

Indeed, if there is one clear message emerging from this survey, it is that the lives of Americans have changed significantly in recent years, yet the parameters of

their jobs have yet to change to meet new demands. Political and business leaders who fail to take steps to address the needs of modern families risk losing good workers and the support of men and women who are riding the crest of major social change in America with little or no support.

The battle of the sexes is over. A new era of negotiation between the sexes is upon us. It is time for our major government, business, and social institutions to enter the dialogue.

Profile of the modern woman

Looking back at the descriptions of women in the 1963 report issued by the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women, it is striking how much progress has been made in terms of the opportunities for women but also how difficult women's lives continue to be even in this more enlightened age. The original report provided a fascinating portrait of the "two images" of women—one from the turn of the 20th century and another from the suburban perspective of the 1960s:

- In terms of the home, the turn-of-the-previous-century woman lived within a more community-based environment and knew how to cook and bake, sew, garden, and be a home nurse and teacher in addition to raising children. In terms of work, this early-20th-century woman had no bargaining power and faced low wages; and if she was an immigrant woman (and there were many), then she had to work on horrible terms with no labor laws to protect her or government social services to help her.
- The 1960s woman, in turn, had supermarkets and stores, a range of entertainment options, sports, arts, television, and time for volunteering and active work in the church or neighborhood. The typical woman got married young, had children, and then had many years to do something else after the children were

grown. Many post-war women gave up their own educational opportunities to support their husbands on the GI Bill, who after completing college had a wide array of well-paying, full-time career options to choose from to support the family single-handedly.

Almost a half-century later, as women cross the threshold to comprise half of the American labor force, what can we say about the modern American woman? How do working women differ from nonworking women in their characteristics, attitudes, and experience of daily life? Who are the female primary breadwinners? Characteristics of the respondents appear in Table 4.

Work status

- Fifty-seven percent of our female respondents are working or looking for work. Among those who are not working, nearly half are retired (48 percent), and just under one-third are keeping house or are full-time parents.
- There were few differences across racial/ethnic categories by working status, except for Latina women, who are 17 percent of working women, versus 10 percent of nonworking women. Marital/partnership status is similar between nonworking and working women, with a slightly higher percentage of married or partnered

Profile of the modern woman *(continued)*

women working (70 percent versus 64 percent non-working). There is a larger disparity between education levels of working and nonworking women.

- Just over half of the nonworking women have spouses or partners who work, and 46 percent have nonworking spouses/partners, attributed mostly to the fact that many of these couples are retired (38 percent of the spouses of nonworking women are retired). The vast majority (86 percent) of partnered working women have a spouse who also works.
- Fifty-two percent of professional women are married or partnered to another professional.
- Three quarters of nonworking women in our survey have their own children under the age of 18, while only 40 percent of working women do.
- Primary responsibility for taking care of children more often lies with nonworking women (83 percent versus 63 percent). More spouses/partners of working women are sharing the responsibility for children, 31 percent versus 13 percent of nonworking women.

Values

- Working women and nonworking women share similar values about their goals in life, as show in the table below.

Women’s values by working status

	Percent very important		
	Working	Not working	All women
Financial security	82.4	80.1	81.4
Self-sufficiency	86.0	84.5	85.4
Being married	48.4	59.9	53.3
Having children	63.2	70.6	66.3
Having a fulfilling job	75.3	68.4	72.4

- Although both working women and nonworking women value the importance of being married, working women are less likely to state that it is very important to them (48 percent) than are nonworking women (60 percent).

Changes for women

- Eighty-four percent of working women believe the increase of women in the workforce over the past 40 years has been positive, versus 74 percent of nonworking women, with the largest difference being in the extreme answer categories “very” positive.
- Working women say they are less dependent than their mothers were on their spouses for financial security than nonworking women.
- Not surprisingly, nonworking women have more traditional attitudes about mothers working outside the home: 34 percent of nonworking women “strongly agree” that it is better for a family if the father works outside the home and the mother takes care of the children versus 18 percent of working women. Responses are the same for “somewhat agree” to this statement.
- While working women and nonworking women share similar positive opinions about advancements of women in the workplace, their attitudes differ somewhat about motherhood and working. Nonworking women are more likely to strongly agree that it is harder for a mother who works outside the home to establish as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work outside the home. They have somewhat more traditional aspirations for their daughters as well: 63 percent of nonworking women ranked a “happy marriage and children” as most important for a daughter of theirs, versus 50 percent of working women.

- Working and nonworking women share very similar opinions about the role of a romantic partner in their lives and they are equally happy in their marriages and partnerships.
- Both working and nonworking women agree that more flexible work schedules are needed to accommodate working families.

Managing daily life

- Although more women are working today, they do not differ from nonworking women in the frequency with which they need to coordinate their family's schedules, duties, and responsibilities. While very few women disagree with their spouses about coordinating their daily lives "all" or "most of the time," twice as many nonworking women say this occurs all the time (11 percent) than women who work.
- The vast majority of working women have had to rearrange their work schedules in order to accommodate their family's needs.
- Sixty percent of working women have wanted to take time off of work to care for their children but have been unable to do so. Nearly two-thirds of these women consider themselves the primary caretaker of their children. Half of these women are in professional or managerial positions, versus 20 percent in blue-collar or pink-collar jobs.
- Working women more often report that they experience stress in daily life. Nearly half of working women experience stress "frequently" and less than one-third of nonworking women experience stress "frequently." Having kids under age 18 does not appear to affect the stress levels of working women.

Breadwinners

- Forty-one percent of working women from our survey are the primary breadwinners in their households, comprising mostly single women: Less than 40 percent of female breadwinners are married or partnered. Among the female breadwinners, 62 percent of the married partners have a spouse or partner who works, versus 77 percent of the women who are not breadwinners. Sixty percent of the female breadwinners in our survey are under 55 years old and are low or middle income: 55 percent earn less than \$40,000 per year.
- Seventy percent of the breadwinners do not have children under 18 in the home. Yet they share characteristics with women who are not primary breadwinners. The distribution of education is similar, with slightly higher percentages of nonbreadwinners with college education or more (44 percent of nonbreadwinners have college or more, versus 37 percent or more who don't).
- Change in the share of women's contribution to the family income is similar across female breadwinner status, with about one-quarter experiencing a decrease in their contribution to family income in the last year and with about 45 percent maintaining the same family income.
- Breadwinners coordinate with spouses and partners about their family activities and responsibilities at similar rates as nonbreadwinners, and they disagree at similar rates.
- The experience of stress in daily life does not differ between women who are primary breadwinners and those who are not; nor does this vary between those with kids under 18 and those without.

TABLE 4

Demographic profile of women today

Females only	N	%
Age		
18–29	248	14.3
30–44	431	24.9
45–64	684	39.4
65+	354	20.4
Total	1716	100.0
Income		
Less than \$40K	623	40.8
\$40–60K	312	20.4
\$60–100K	314	20.5
\$100K+	279	18.3
Total	1,528	100.0
Education		
Less than high school	140	8.1
High school grad—includes tech	475	27.5
Some college	406	23.5
College graduate	417	24.1
More than college	292	16.9
Total	1,730	100.0
College		
Less than college	1,022	59.0
College+	709	41.0
Total	1,730	100.0
Political ideology		
Liberal	526	31.4
Moderate	450	26.9
Conservative	639	38.2
Don't think that way	60	3.6
Total	1,674	100.0
Political affiliation		
Democrat	743	43.5
Independent	376	22.0
Republican	404	23.6
Don't think that way	50	2.9
Something else	135	7.9
Total	1,708	100.0
Work status		
Working	907	52.4
Not working	825	47.6
Total	1,732	100.0

Females only	N	%
Marital Status		
Married/partnered	1,177	67.9
Single	557	32.1
Total	1,734	100.0
Children		
Yes	1,407	81.0
No	330	19.0
Total	1,737	100.0
Children (under 13) in supervised care		
One	90	20.5
Two	71	16.2
Three	16	3.7
More than three	4	0.9
None	257	58.6
Total	438	100.0
Could not take time off work to care for family (ever)		
Yes	140	42.3
No	191	57.7
Total	331	100.0
Rearranged work schedule to accommodate family (ever)		
Yes	293	88.3
No	39	11.7
Total	331	100.0
Spouse/partner rearranged work to accommodate family (ever)		
Yes	319	83.9
No	60	15.8
Total	380	100.0
Elderly parents		
Yes	865	49.7
No	866	49.8
Total	1,731	100.0
Most responsibility for caring for your elderly parents		
You/respondent	357	41.2
Spouse/partner	16	1.9
Both equally	134	15.6
Some other family member	147	17.0
No need/they are independent	192	22.2
Other	14	1.6
Total	861	100.0

Females only	N	%
Ever a time wanted time off work to care for elderly parents, but unable		
Yes	134	26.9
No	359	72.3
Total	493	100.0
Frequency of coordination of family responsibilities with spouse		
Every day	159	35.0
2–3 times a week	126	27.8
Once a week	72	15.7
Every other week	15	3.3
Less often	49	10.7
Never	33	7.2
Total	453	100.0
Frequency of disagreement over family coordination		
All the time	29	6.9
Most of the time	26	6.3
Some of the time	194	46.1
None of the time	168	40.0
Total	417	100.0
Which, in particular, would need to change for working parents to balance work and family		
Longer school hours or longer school year	132	7.6
More flexible work hours/schedules	937	53.9
More paid time off	266	15.3
Better and/or more day-care options	228	13.1
Total	1563	100.0
In general, how often do you experience stress in your daily life		
Never	73	4.2
Rarely	297	17.1
Sometimes	675	38.8
Frequently	690	39.6
Total	1,735	100.0
Are you the primary breadwinner in your household		
Yes	695	40.0
No	999	57.6
Total	1,694	100.0

Females only	N	%
What share of your family's income do you personally earn		
Almost all or all	99	8.4
More than half	126	10.7
About half	322	27.4
Less than half	398	33.8
None or almost none	197	16.8
Total	1,142	100.0
Change in share of contribution to the family income over the past year		
Increased	320	27.2
Decreased	298	25.3
Stayed the same	534	45.4
Total	1,152	100.0
Total family income		
Less than \$10,000	87	5.0
\$10,000 to \$19,999	181	10.4
\$20,000 to \$29,999	147	8.5
\$30,000 to \$39,999	209	12.0
\$40,000 to \$49,999	167	9.6
\$50,000 to \$59,999	145	8.3
\$60,000 to \$74,999	139	8.0
\$75,000 to \$100,000	174	10.0
More than \$100,000	279	16.1
Total	1528	100.0
One or more child in supervised care		
Yes	181	41.3
No	257	58.7
Total	438	100.0