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2017's Best & Worst States for Working Moms

by JOHN S KIERNAN, Senior Writer & Editor

Women make up nearly half of the U.S. workforce, and more than 70 percent of moms with children younger than 18 are working. Yet women earned only 83 percent of what men made in 2015 and have far less upward mobility, as evidenced by the fact that only 5.8 percent of S&P 500 companies' chief executives are female.

Such obvious inequality has spawned a great deal of debate about gender roles in a shifting socioeconomic environment. Workplace inequality is important not only in the spirit of a merit-based economy but also for deeply ingrained social reasons. For instance, should women have to choose between career and family?

The real question, however, is what we're doing about this fundamental problem. Progress appears to be taking shape at different rates across the nation. Not only do parental leave policies and other legal support systems vary by state, but the quality of infrastructure — from cost-effective day care to public schools — is also far from uniform as well.

So, in order to help ease the burden on an underappreciated segment of the population, WalletHub's analysts compared state dynamics across 13 key metrics to identify the Best & Worst States for Working Moms. A complete breakdown of our findings, as well as expert commentary and a detailed methodology, can be found below.

[Read the complete story here.](#)

Below, find the expert commentary provided by Wagner College sociology professor Bernadette Ludwig.

Bernadette Ludwig

Assistant Professor of Sociology and Director of Civic Engagement Minor at Wagner College

The biggest issue here would be not to limit the policies to “moms” and “parents” only, but to include other caregivers such as legal guardians, fathers, grandparents who are the primary caregivers of their grandchildren, etc. — regardless of their marital status. In addition, any policy must include adoptive parents, and not be limited to birth-parents.

What can companies do to help working parents balance home and work life?

- Flexible hours;
- Lactation rooms;

- Paid family leave policies that would cover maternal/paternal leave, caregiving for elderly parents, and/or any other family member;
- Offer caretakers/parents the opportunity to work part-time;
- Offer affordable health insurance which include affordable add-on policies for family members.

What careers are most difficult to balance work and family? Easiest?

- Any job that is outside the “regular 9-5” job category — childcare options are very limited and expensive for these “off hours.”

Most difficult:

- Single parents without a support network;
- Low-income wage earners;
- Hourly wage earners;
- Contract workers/employees;
- Parents of children with disabilities;
- Parents who have disabilities.

Easiest:

- Families who have access to a support network (e.g., grandparents who can babysit);
- High income families;
- U.S. senators, congress (wo)men, etc.

What can state and local governments do to support working mothers?

- Create laws that create mandatory paid parental leave policies like those that exist in EU countries;
- Not limit any policies to mothers only;
- Provide safe, affordable and educational child care options.

How likely is it that Ivanka Trump’s policies related to child care and paid family leave will be enacted?

- It should be a starting point, but, at its current state it only covers mothers, and excludes fathers, non-married mothers, non-birth mothers, adoptive parents, etc. and thereby is sexist and homophobic — and so it should not be enacted with these limitations.