New Research Shows the “Mental Load” is Real and Significantly Impacts Working Mothers Both at Home and Work

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Share of Household and Family Responsibilities Even Higher for Women Primary Breadwinners

WATERTOWN, Mass.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Dec. 20, 2017-- A new study released today shows that even as women catch up to men as family earners and actually outpace them in academic achievement, they continue to bear a disproportionate portion of household and family responsibilities. According to the study, women who are primary breadwinners are doing more at home than their male counterparts *and* even more than working mothers who are not providing their family’s primary financial support. Mothers with jobs that provide their family’s major source of income are also two and three times more likely to be managing the household and children’s schedules than breadwinning fathers, and more than 30 percent more likely than other working mothers to be taking care of everything from family finances to organizing family vacations.

This press release features multimedia. View the full release here: http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20171220005984/en/



Female breadwinners run the show at home and at work. (Graphic: Business Wire)

The fourth annual report in the Modern Family Index (MFI) series, commissioned by **Bright Horizons Family Solutions®** (NYSE:BFAM), shows that the concept popularly known as “mental load” is real and measurable. More than just responsible for their half of the parenting and household duties, working mothers are also organizing, reminding and planning virtually all family matters. Surprisingly, the household responsibilities only increase when these women are bringing home the primary paycheck. While 40 percent of today’s families have female breadwinners:

- Breadwinning mothers are three times more likely than breadwinning fathers to be keepers of their children’s schedules and responsible for them getting to activities and appointments (76% vs. 22%)
- They’re three times more likely to volunteer at school (63% vs. 19%)
- They’re nearly twice as likely to make sure all family responsibilities are handled (71% vs. 38%).

While much anecdotal evidence about mental load exists, the 2017 MFI offers some of the first concrete data showing the effects on women are real. In an era where women and men may be working side-by-side as nearly equal parts of the workforce, workplace cultures continue to favor men as employees and women as mothers, unintentionally keeping the household responsibilities squarely in the women’s camp -- even as they carry a full professional load.

Despite the fact that 75 percent of mothers with children under 18 are employed full-time:

- 86 percent of working moms say they handle all family and household responsibilities
- 72 percent feel it’s their job to stay on top of kids’ schedules
- 63 percent have missed work to take care of their sick children.

More work at the office means more responsibility at home, too, with female primary earners taking on even more household jobs than other working mothers. Primary breadwinning women are:

- 34 percent more likely than other working mothers to manage the family finances (71% vs. 53%)
- 63 percent more likely than other working mothers to maintain the yard (31% vs. 19%)
- 30 percent more likely than other working mothers to organize family gatherings and vacations (73% vs. 56%)
- 38 percent more likely than other working mothers to take care of home maintenance (33% vs. 24%)

With so much on their plates, it’s not surprising to learn that working mothers are carrying much of this mental load into work. Women are committed to their jobs and eager to grow professionally – last year’s MFI showed that more than half of new moms are personally fulfilled by their job. But a large

number of this year's respondents say the mental load, and not just time commitments, requires them to work much harder to fulfill all their responsibilities:

- 69 percent of working moms say their responsibilities create a mental load
- 52 percent are burning out from the weight of their household responsibilities.

Dads Also Seeking Change

These unstated expectations may also explain why male breadwinners report being more than three times *less likely* to stay on top of the family's schedules. Fathers continue to be judged negatively by colleagues at work for taking care of issues at home, leaving women to take on the bulk of family responsibilities. Yet men want to be partners in parenting – in the 2015 Modern Family Index, working dads indicated they want more time at home and 46 percent experienced burnout at work due to lack of family time.

Today's working fathers are also hungry for change and even more likely than working mothers to crave evolution. This year's report showed working fathers are:

- 9 percent more likely than working mothers to wish their employer offered more family flexibility
- 32 percent more likely than mothers to give up a 10% raise for more family time.

Preserving Talent Pipelines in the Modern Era

The 2017 Modern Family Index paints a clear picture not just of overburdened women, but of modern families bumping up against outdated workplace cultures and stereotypes that have failed to keep up with women's professional strides despite many employers putting policies in place that are intended to support both women and men. The stereotypes serve to not only diminish women's contributions in the short run, but also stunt growth over whole careers. Despite massive gains for women in earning college degrees, men continue to occupy roughly 80 percent of corner offices.

"Now is a more important time than ever to break out of traditional male/female stereotypes – both at home and at work," said **Bright Horizons** CHRO Maribeth Bearfield. "The fact is that for most employers, much of their most valuable talent in the workplace is playing double duty as manager of family life as well. By providing supports to working women, they can help open up mindshare that can contribute even more to the workplace. And by creating environments where men are encouraged and valued for taking advantage of work/life supports as well, workplaces can start to catch up with the culture this generation of working families demands."

To download the full 2017 Bright Horizons Modern Family Index report, click here.

About the Bright Horizons Modern Family Index

The Modern Family Index is an Internet-based survey conducted by Kelton Global from October 11-20, 2017. The sample consisted of 2,082 employed Americans over the age of 18 with at least one child under the age of 18. The survey was conducted online and has a margin of error of +/- 2.2%.

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

About Bright Horizons Family Solutions® Inc.

Bright Horizons Family Solutions® is a leading provider of high-quality child care, early education and other services designed to help employers and families better address the challenges of work and family life. The Company provides center-based full service child care, back-up dependent care and educational advisory services to more than 1,100 clients across the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Canada and India, including 150 FORTUNE 500 companies and 80 of *Working Mother* magazine's 2017 "100 Best Companies for Working Mothers." Bright Horizons has been recognized 17 times as one of FORTUNE magazine's "100 Best Companies to Work For" and is one of the UK's Best Workplaces as designated by the Great Place to Work® Institute. Bright Horizons is headquartered in Watertown, MA. To learn more, visit www.brighthorizons.com.

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