



## Modern Family Index Shows Real Motherhood Penalty in American Workplace

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*Yet most working Americans believe moms make the best leaders*

WATERTOWN, Mass.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Jan. 28, 2019-- Results of a new study released today show that working women face a negative effect on their careers as they grow their families, and yet the same study shows working women bring skills to the workplace that can actually make them the best leaders. According to Bright Horizons' (NYSE:BFAM) fifth-annual Modern Family Index, 72 percent of both working moms *and* dads agree that women are penalized in their careers for starting families, while men are not. Despite being viewed by their peers as possessing the qualities that make for strong leaders, working moms find they come up against roadblocks at work. A full 78 percent believe they must prove themselves more than others to gain a leadership position at work. And with leadership roles often dominated by men, almost two in five (37 percent) working moms worry that they do not fit the leadership mold.

This press release features multimedia. View the full release here: <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20190128005060/en/>



Modern Family Index Shows Real Motherhood Penalty in American Workplace (Graphic: Business Wire)

### MOTHERHOOD IS THE BEST TRAINING GROUND FOR LEADERSHIP

The fifth annual report in Bright Horizons' Modern Family Index (MFI) series, conducted by Kelton Global, offers concrete data showing that working moms are the best equipped to bring 21<sup>st</sup> century leadership skills to the workplace. According to the survey, those who "lead like a mom" may be the missing ingredient businesses need to realize their full potential. Working Americans almost unanimously agree (91 percent) that working moms bring unique skills to leadership roles, and 89 percent feel they bring out the best in employees.

- The vast majority (85 percent) of those surveyed agree that being a mother helps women prepare for the challenges they will face as business leaders, and 84 percent believe having mothers in leadership roles will make a business more successful.
- Sixty-five percent of those surveyed describe working moms as better listeners than other employees.
- They also describe mothers as calmer in crisis (51%), more diplomatic (47%), and better team players (44%) than as compared with working fathers or employees without children.
- Working mothers were rated better at multitasking than others in the

workforce (63% vs 37%) and better at time management (56% vs 44%).

## DEEP-SEATED PERCEPTIONS HOLD WORKING MOMS BACK

Despite possessing the very skills needed to succeed in leadership, this year's Modern Family Index shows that working mothers are being held back in the workplace. According to the survey:

- Sixty-nine percent of respondents say working mothers are more likely to be passed up for a new job than other employees.
- Sixty percent of respondents admit that career opportunities are given to less qualified employees instead of mothers who are more skilled.
- Forty-one percent of working Americans view moms in the workplace as less devoted to their work, and 38 percent judge them for needing a more flexible work schedule.

The survey reveals little progress, and in some cases a worsening of the workplace culture in the last five years. Workplaces are still dominated by a culture that continues to favor men as business leaders despite women being ambitious and fit to lead. The data uncovers that in today's society, working mothers are under a microscope and negative perceptions from senior leaders and colleagues are not only holding moms back in the workplace, but are also increasingly impacting women's confidence:

- Nearly *twice* as many working mothers are nervous to tell their boss they are pregnant than five years ago (21% vs 12%), and over three in five (65 percent) women without children worry what having a child will mean for their career.
- Americans believe working fathers are more dedicated to their careers than working moms (75% vs 59%).
- They also believe dads who work are better able to manage their responsibilities without being stretched too thin (77%) than mothers who work (66%).
- One in four mothers admit they are concerned by colleagues' perceptions, worried that they won't be viewed as leaders (19 percent) or respected by others (13 percent).

## TRADITIONAL MINDSETS MUST CHANGE

The 2018 Modern Family Index demonstrates the current portrait of senior leadership is far from equal. In fact, 38 percent of mothers say that senior leadership is dominated by a "boys club". Nearly nine in ten (87 percent) of employed Americans feel that companies can do more to help foster moms in leadership positions. At the same time, moms are hungry for more opportunity and a path to the top free of unnecessary roadblocks. According to the findings, nearly two in five working moms (39 percent) say they will stay with a company if they get assurances that they will have the same growth opportunities as those without children. Almost one in three (32 percent) will also stay if they are guaranteed that no responsibilities will be taken from them. Existing leadership must break through the traditional gender norms and prejudiced notions of working moms in leadership to create a more supportive environment that allows these women to realize their career potential.

"We need to support and embrace motherhood in the workplace and learn from our leaders who are also parents," says Bright Horizons Chief Human Resources Officer, Maribeth Bearfield. "In order to move forward, change attitudes, and make progress, organizations should focus on supporting young female professionals and holding all employees accountable to make sure there is a real path to the top for women as they grow their families."

To download the full 2018 Bright Horizons Modern Family Index report, [click here](#).

### About the Bright Horizons Modern Family Index

Bright Horizons' Modern Family Index is an online survey conducted by Kelton Global from October 29 until November 8, 2018. The sample consisted of 2,143 working Americans over the age of 18 (994 Parents, 1,149 non-parents). The survey has a margin of error of +/- 2.1%.

### About Bright Horizons

Bright Horizons is trusted by families around the world to provide care and education for their children. Operating more than 1,000 child care centers, Bright Horizons cares for approximately 116,000 children annually in the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Canada and India. Used by more than 1,100 of the world's best employers across industries, Bright Horizons back-up child and elder care, education advising, tuition program management, and student loan repayment programs support employees through every life and career stage, and help people succeed at work and at home. For more information, go to [www.brighthorizons.com](http://www.brighthorizons.com).

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