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UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll: Men and Women Have Differing Views on the Domestic and Career Impacts of Having a Child

Mothers are more likely than fathers to say they do more around the house than their partner, and women are more likely to say having a child is an obstacle for job security.

CHICAGO, December 14, 2021 – When it comes to raising children, men and women have different perspectives on the division of household labor, ranging from changing diapers, to offering emotional support, to cooking the family meals, according to a new study from the [University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy](#) and [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#). The new study also reveals important differences in how men and women perceive the impact of having a child on job security and workplace success.

Mothers are more likely to say they perform more of the household responsibilities, while fathers are more likely to say they share the responsibilities equally with their partner. In fact, thirty-five percent of mothers report doing more than their partner for each of the eight household responsibilities asked about on the survey, compared to just 3% of fathers who report the same.

“Although the gap between what mothers and father report is significant, it is not what either anticipates before they have children – and that’s what is so interesting,” said Yana Gallen, a labor economist at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy who studies the gender pay gap. “Prior to becoming parents, most men and women expect that they will share the division of labor equally across all household activities, but their views on whether that is actually the case diverge after they have a child.”

The perceived impacts of having a child are not limited to household division of labor. When it comes to the workplace, half of adults who have been employed say having a child is an obstacle to employee advancement, and about 4 in 10 say the same regarding job security and the opportunity for a raise.

Americans’ perspectives on children in the workplace is tied to gender as well, with 47% of women saying that having a child is an obstacle for job security compared to 36% of men.

Similarly, adults making less than \$50,000 a year are more likely than higher income adults to say having a child is an obstacle for job security (50% vs 35%) and job advancement (55% vs 46%).

“Women and lower-income Americans are especially likely to feel they are paying a penalty at work for becoming a parent,” said David Sterrett, senior research scientist with The AP-NORC Center. “Whether it comes in the form of limited job choices because of the need for a schedule that accommodates parenting or having less job security, these groups feel they are missing out on career opportunities compared to their co-workers without children.”

The poll also finds that in order to manage their work and personal lives, two-thirds of adults have chosen a job with a schedule that allows them to manage their other responsibilities and 68% get support from friends or family.

And when thinking about whether or not to have a child, more than 8 in 10 Americans say having a stable partner and having a secure job are important factors that they consider.

Among the key findings from the report:

- Forty-three percent of adults without a college degree say having a child is an obstacle to getting a raise, while 32% of adults with a college degree say the same.
- Parents are more likely than non-parents to have chosen a job with a schedule such that they can manage their personal responsibilities, spent less time at their job to focus on friends or family, and to have made sure they had support of friends or family.
- Women are more likely than men to have chosen a job with a schedule such that they can manage their personal responsibilities (70% vs 61%) and made sure they had the support of friends or family (73% vs 64%).
- Seventy-four percent of Americans without children say having enough savings is an important factor when thinking about their decision whether or not to have children, compared to 59% of parents who said it was important.
- Women are more likely than men to say flexibility at work is important when thinking about whether or not to have a child (74% vs 66%).

About the Study

This study was conducted by the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research with funding from NORC at the University of Chicago. Staff from Harris Public Policy and The AP-NORC Center collaborated on all aspects of the study.

Data were collected using the AmeriSpeak Omnibus®, a monthly multi-client survey using NORC’s probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. Interviews for this survey were conducted between October 7 and October 11, 2021, with adults age 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,054 completed the survey — 987 via the web and 67 via telephone – including 660 parents. Interviews were conducted in English. The final stage completion rate is 20.0 percent, the weighted household panel recruitment rate is 19.1 percent, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 75.1 percent, for a cumulative response rate of 2.9 percent. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 4.0 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

A full description of the study methodology for the survey can be found at the end of the report on www.apnorc.org.

The proper description of the survey’s authorship is as follows: This study was conducted jointly by the [University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy](#) and [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#).

About the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy

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About The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research

The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research taps into the power of social science research and the highest-quality journalism to bring key information to people across the nation and throughout the world.

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The two organizations have established The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research to conduct, analyze, and distribute social science research in the public interest on newsworthy topics, and to use the power of journalism to tell the stories that research reveals.

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