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## Women and Work in Georgia, Two Years Into the Pandemic

Summary Findings for the Georgia Oversample in NWLC's National February Survey

**To:** Interested Parties

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Georgians have faced a volatile work landscape during the pandemic, with many losing, quitting, changing, and finding jobs—but the impact has not been uniform. Georgia women face unique and higher barriers than men in both reentering the workforce and thriving in the workplace. They are more likely to say they took on additional child care and caregiving responsibilities during the pandemic and face less job flexibility than men, including less access to paid time off. At the same time, Georgia women are more likely than men to say they are worse off now, in both financial and mental health, compared to two years ago. The uneven and difficult impacts of the pandemic help explain why policies that address the barriers facing both working and unemployed women are so popular across gender groups—and even more so among women.

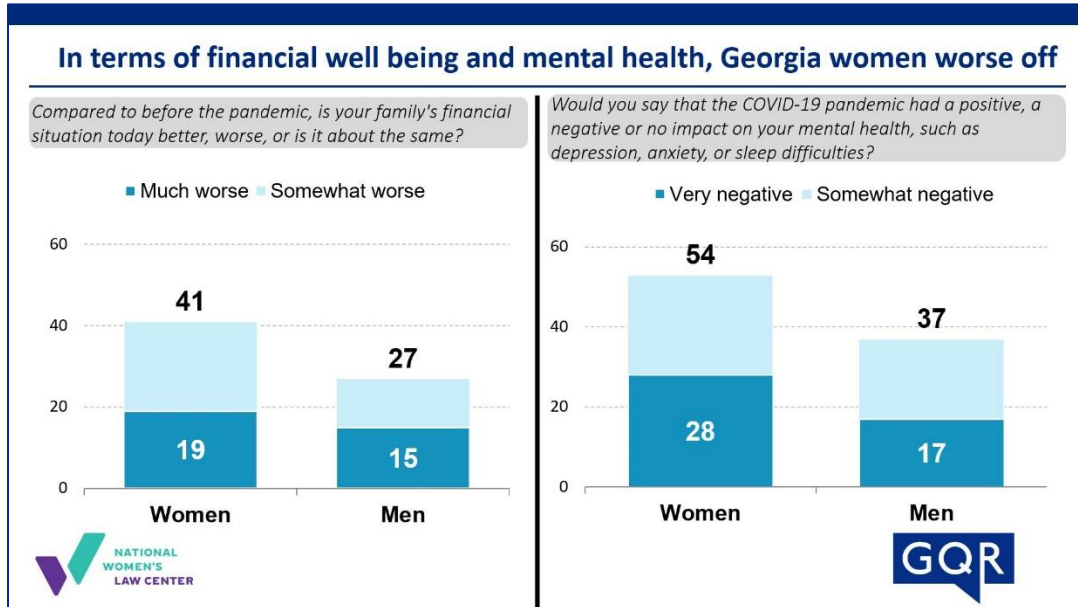
*The following summary details key findings from the Georgia oversample of the recent national poll of 3800 adults in the United States, conducted via web and live telephone interviewing from February 7-25, 2022. Nationally, half of all interviews were conducted online, while 29 percent were conducted by cell and 21 percent were conducted by landline. The findings from Georgia are based on a representative oversample of 401 adults. Margin of error on a probability sample of this size for the state is +/- 4.9%. Margin of error is higher among subgroups; due to sample size constraints, the state-level data cannot be disaggregated by race/ethnicity in combination with gender.*

### Negative effects on mental health and financial security

Women in Georgia are less likely than men to say they are better off than just two years ago. At the same time women feel worse off financially and bear more responsibilities at home, they feel their mental health is worsening.

- Only 20 percent of Georgia women feel better off financially today than at the onset of the pandemic, while twice as many (41 percent) report being financially worse off. Men in Georgia are much more likely to say they are better off (37 percent) than worse off (27 percent).
- A majority of women in Georgia have worse mental health now than when the pandemic began: 54 percent say the pandemic had a negative impact on their mental health, such as depression, anxiety, or sleep difficulties. Comparatively, 37 percent of men say the pandemic had a negative impact on their mental health.

- Among Georgia women who report a negative mental health impact, 31 percent say they pursued treatment from a mental health professional, such as therapy or medication, for mental health issues, compared to 20 percent of men. Among those women who did not pursue help, about one in three (32 percent) say treatment or professional help was not affordable, too hard to access, or that they did not have time to pursue it.



- Among women in Georgia, 54 percent say their own or their family’s physical and mental health is one of the top two causes of stress for them, compared to 45 percent of men who say so. Nearly half (45 percent) of women cite bills and expenses as one of their top two causes of stress, compared to 40 percent of men.
- Caregiving concerns are also a notable source of stress: 32 percent of Georgia women cite caring for children, elderly family members, or balancing work and caregiving in general as a major stressor.

### A highly volatile employment landscape

The pandemic brought dramatic changes to the American workforce, with large numbers of workers losing or quitting jobs, changing hours, and changing jobs. Almost 4 out of 10 Georgians (39 percent) say they lost or quit a job, reduced hours, or changed jobs in the two years since the pandemic began.

- Among Georgians working at the beginning of the pandemic, women are about as likely as men to say they lost or quit a job during the pandemic: 20 percent of women say they lost or quit a job during the pandemic, compared to 23 percent of men. However, working women in Georgia are more likely than men to say their hours were reduced during the pandemic, by a 42 to 35 percent margin.

- Both women and men in Georgia are struggling to get back to work after losing or quitting jobs during the pandemic: Only 54 percent of Georgia women and 56 percent of Georgia men say they took a new job after losing or quitting a job in the past two years. This employment landscape differs significantly from the national landscape—where men are much more likely to have returned to work than women—and is primarily driven by lower rates of return to work among men, as opposed to higher return rates among women.
- When it comes to what Georgians are looking for in a new job, both women and men are most likely to say their top priority is salary and benefits. After that, women are most likely to prioritize the ability to work from home, while men are more likely to seek growth opportunities.
- Looking forward, both women and men see good job opportunities available, but women are much less optimistic than men: a 62 percent majority of women in Georgia say there are good job opportunities available for someone like them, while 85 percent of men say so.

### Low job quality and inadequate support to meet caregiving needs

Women in Georgia are significantly more likely than men to say increased responsibilities are hindering their ability to work, as child care and other caregiving responsibilities are falling more heavily on women. And working women in Georgia are particularly likely to lack the flexibility, wages, and benefits they need to care for themselves and their families.

- Women are more likely to say that school or child care disruptions affect their ability to work or look for work. In Georgia, 14 percent of mothers say they must stop working or looking for work altogether when kids are home from school or child care, while only 5 percent of fathers say they are unable to work when children are home.
- Georgia women are more likely than men to say they have caregiving responsibilities at home for loved ones who are ill, disabled or elderly, by a 35 to 30 percent margin.
- Working women are less likely than working men in Georgia to say they receive benefits from their jobs. Only 46 percent of working women in Georgia say they receive health insurance, compared to 54 percent of men. Among working women, 43 percent receive paid vacation, 40 percent receive paid sick days, 31 percent receive paid medical leave, and 31 percent receive paid family leave. Comparatively, 49 percent of men say they receive paid vacation, 53 percent receive paid sick days, 37 percent receive paid medical leave, and 38 percent receive paid family leave. In fact, 39 percent of working women in the state say they receive none of these benefits, compared to 22 percent of working men.
- More than one in three Georgia women (37 percent) hold jobs that pay \$15 per hour or less, compared to 26 percent of men. Workers in these low-paid jobs are especially likely to lack access to benefits.

## Getting Georgia women back to, and thriving at, work requires real support

We tested a set of policies designed to address the challenges women are facing that surfaced in the survey, including measures to improve workplace conditions, support caregiving, and improve access to health care without cost barriers. Majorities of both women and men in Georgia support all 12 of the policies tested. Overall, the most popular initiatives involve structural changes that make it easier for women to work and support their full participation in the workforce. Georgia women with household incomes under \$50,000 a year are even more likely to support most of these initiatives, relative to those women with higher incomes, especially providing all workers with paid family and medical leave, ensuring access to high-quality and affordable child care, raising the minimum wage, and restoring the expanded Child Tax Credit.

Percent of Georgians who <u>support</u> initiative	Women	Women, HH income under \$50k	Men
Increase funding for home- and community-based services for seniors and people with disabilities	85	86	89
Provide all workers with paid family & medical leave	82	86	76
Ensure access to high-quality, affordable child care	82	88	70
Grant right to request work schedule change and 2 weeks' notice of work schedules for workers w/variable hours	82	83	64
Fund free pre-K for ages 3-4	76	74	73
Provide access to comprehensive health care, w/ no cost-sharing	74	77	72
Raise minimum wage to \$15 per hour, then increase w/ median wages	73	78	69
Increase wages for tipped workers	70	71	68
Protect employees' right to discuss salaries	70	67	70
Require employers to report pay data to improve enforcement of anti-discrimination laws	65	63	64
Ensure families can access expanded Child Tax Credit	64	72	66
Protect access to reproductive health care, including abortion	60	57	61