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Women and Work in Michigan, Two Years Into the Pandemic

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

To: Interested Parties

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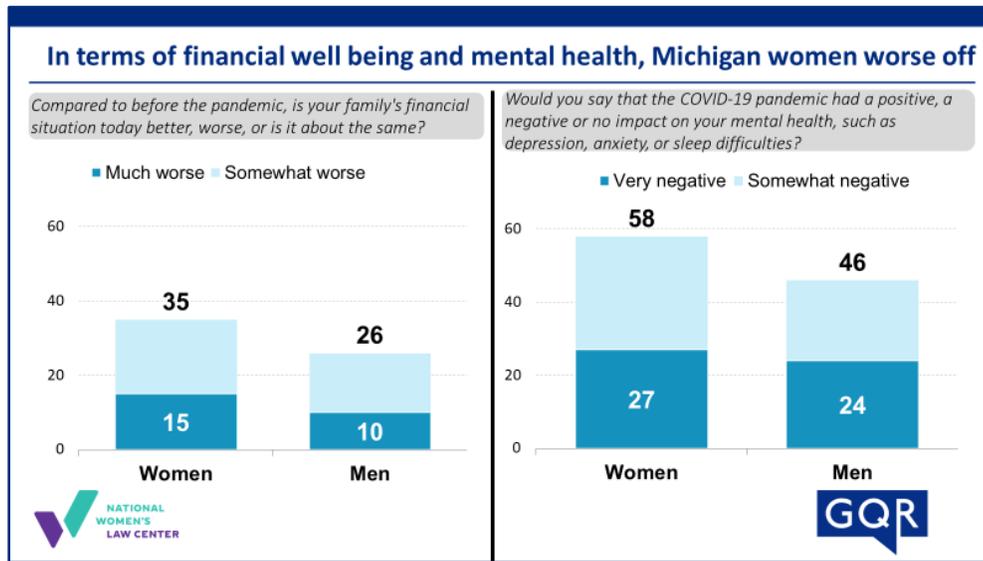
Michiganders have faced a volatile work landscape during the pandemic with many losing, quitting, changing, and finding jobs—but the impact has not been uniform. Michigan women face unique and higher barriers than men in both reentering the workforce and thriving in the workplace. They are more likely to say they took on additional child care and caregiving responsibilities during the pandemic and face less job flexibility than men, in terms of ability to work from home and access to paid time off. At the same time, Michigan 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 Michigan 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 Michigan are based on a representative oversample of 371 adults. Margin of error on a probability sample of this size for the state is +/- 5.1%. 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 Michigan 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 18 percent of Michigan women feel better off financially today than at the onset of the pandemic, while almost twice as many (35 percent) report being financially worse off. In contrast, 26 percent of Michigan men say they are better off, and an equal share (26 percent) reports being financially worse off.
 - A majority of women in Michigan report they have worse mental health now than when the pandemic began. Nearly six in ten women (58 percent) say the pandemic had a negative impact on their mental health, such as depression, anxiety, or sleep difficulties. Comparatively, 46 percent of men say the pandemic had a negative impact on their mental health.
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- Among women in Michigan, 59 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 47 percent of men who say so. Nearly half (47 percent) of women cite bills and expenses as a top two stressor, as do 45 percent of men.
- Caregiving concerns are also a notable source of stress, especially for women: 32 percent of Michigan women cite caring for children, elderly family members, or balancing work and caregiving in general as a major stressor, compared to 28 percent of Michigan men.

Women less likely than men to have returned to work after pandemic job losses

The pandemic brought dramatic changes to the American workforce, with large numbers of workers losing or quitting jobs, changing hours, and changing jobs. More than 1 in 3 Michiganders say they lost or quit a job, reduced hours, or changed jobs in the two years since the pandemic began. Women are less likely than men to say they lost jobs or reduced hours, but are also less likely to be back to work than men.

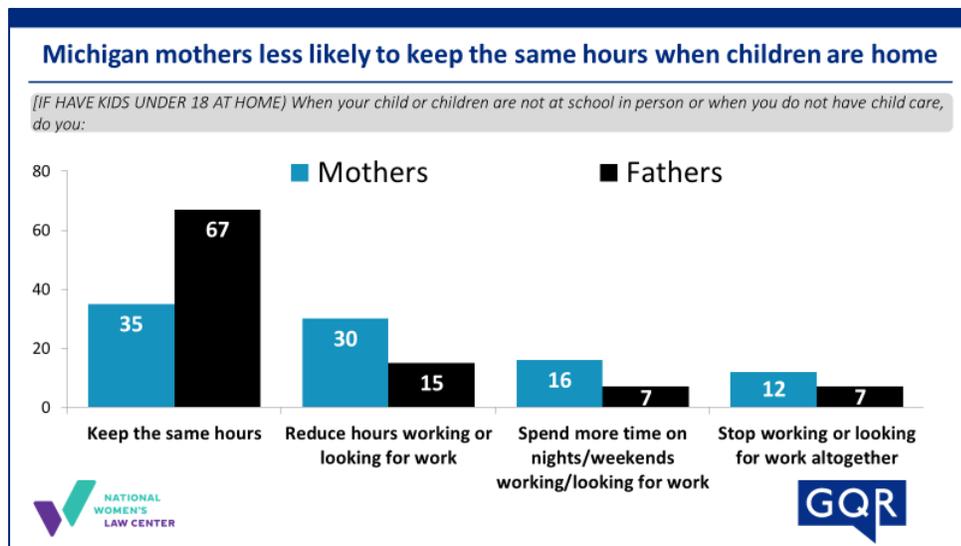
- Women in Michigan are less likely than men to say they lost a job or hours of work during the pandemic. Among those with jobs at the beginning of the pandemic, 18 percent of women say they lost or quit a job during the pandemic, compared to 27 percent of working men; 34 percent of working women report they lost hours, compared to 37 percent of working men.
- Women are less likely to have found a new job after leaving one: while 53 percent of Michigan women say they took a new job after losing or quitting a job, 75 percent of men say so.

- When it comes to what Michiganders 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 control over their hours, while men are more likely to seek growth opportunities.
- Looking forward, both women and men in Michigan say they see good job opportunities available, but women are less optimistic than men—a 65 percent majority of women in Michigan say there are good job opportunities available for someone like them, while 75 percent of men say so.

Low job quality and inadequate support to meet caregiving needs

Women in Michigan 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 many working people in Michigan 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. Among mothers in Michigan, only 35 percent keep the same work hours when children are home due to such disruptions, compared to 67 percent of Michigan fathers. Mothers are about twice as likely as fathers to say having kids at home means they must reduce working hours, work more nights and weekends, or stop working altogether.



- Similarly, Michigan 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 26 to 16 percent margin.
- While majorities of working women in Michigan say their job provides health insurance and a retirement plan, only 49 percent receive paid vacation, 43 percent receive paid sick days, 34 percent receive paid medical leave, and 31 percent receive paid family leave. Many men also lack

these key benefits: 50 percent of working men say they receive paid vacation, 39 percent receive paid sick days, 32 percent receive paid medical leave, and 27 percent receive paid family leave.

- More than one-third of women (37 percent) and a similar share of men (35 percent) in Michigan hold jobs paying \$15 per hour or less. Workers in these low-paid jobs are especially likely to lack access to benefits.

Getting Michigan 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 Michigan support all 12 of the policies tested. Overall, the most popular initiatives all involve structural changes that make it easier for women to work and support their full participation in the workforce. Michigan 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 increasing wages for tipped workers, expanding access to affordable child care and comprehensive health care, restoring the expanded Child Tax Credit, and raising the minimum wage.

Percent of Michiganders 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	88	90	90
Grant right to request work schedule change and 2 weeks' notice of work schedules for workers w/variable hours	84	82	76
Fund free pre-K for ages 3-4	83	86	77
Increase wages for tipped workers	79	87	72
Provide all workers with paid family & medical leave	79	82	68
Ensure access to high-quality, affordable child care	76	81	75
Provide access to comprehensive health care, w/no cost-sharing	74	81	75
Raise minimum wage to \$15 per hour, then increase w/median wages	73	80	66
Protect access to reproductive health care, including abortion	71	69	63
Protect employees' right to discuss salaries	68	69	73
Require employers to report pay data to improve enforcement of anti-discrimination laws	66	66	59
Ensure families can access expanded Child Tax Credit	63	70	74