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Women and Work in Arizona, Two Years Into the Pandemic

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

To: Interested Parties

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Arizonans have faced a volatile work landscape during the pandemic with many losing, quitting, changing, and finding new jobs—but the impact has not been uniform. Arizona 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. The uneven and difficult impacts of the pandemic help explain why policies that address the barriers facing working and unemployed women are so popular—and even more so among women.

The following summary details key findings from the Arizona 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 Arizona are based on a representative oversample of 376 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. The data are statistically weighted to ensure the full sample's regional, age, race, and gender composition reflects that of the estimated general population of adults in the U.S. In June 2022, income weights by race were also applied, leading to small data adjustments from the prior version.

Women are 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. Among all Arizonans, 43 percent say they lost or quit a job, reduced hours, or changed jobs in the two years since the pandemic began. Among those employed prior to the pandemic, women are less likely to say they lost jobs than men, but among those who lost work, women are less likely to have found a new job since.

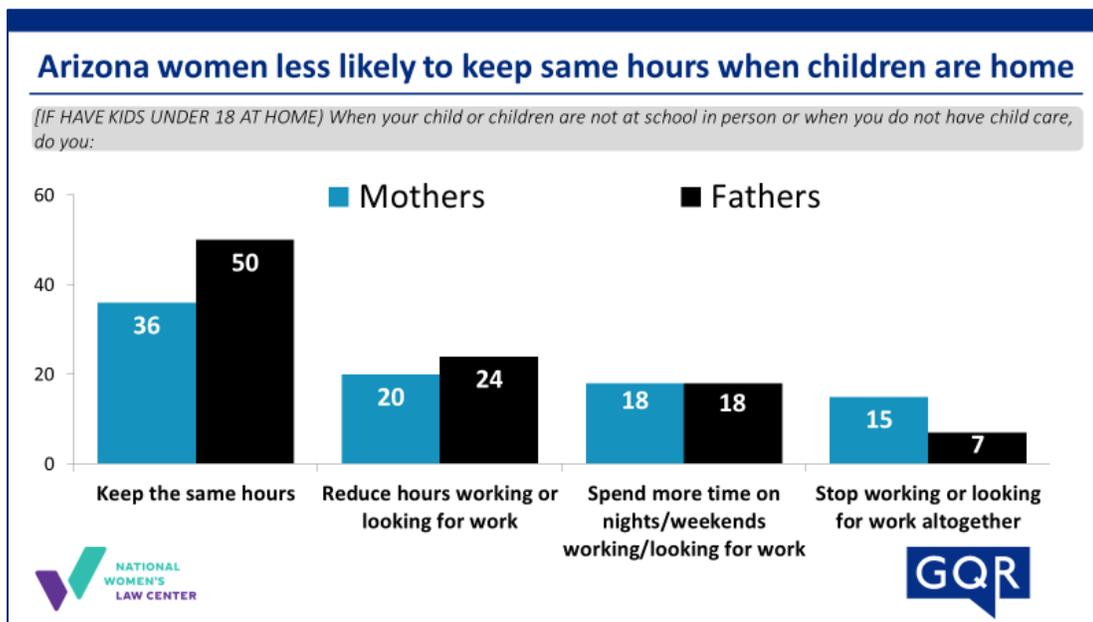
- While Arizona women were less likely to lose a job during the pandemic than Arizona men, those women who did lose jobs are finding it harder than men to return to work. Among all Arizonans who were working in February 2020, 24 percent of women say they lost or quit a job during the pandemic, compared to 38 percent of men; 34 percent of working women report they lost hours, compared to 30 percent of men. But while 69 percent of Arizona women say they took a new job after losing or quitting a job, 76 percent of men say so.

- When it comes to what Arizonans 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 identify control over their hours and the ability to work from home as most important, while men are more likely to name growth opportunities and having good coworkers and managers.

Low job quality and inadequate support to meet caregiving needs

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

- Women in Arizona are more likely to say that school and child care disruptions affect their ability to work or look for work. Among mothers, 65 percent say having children at home affects their ability to get work done or to look for work, compared to 43 percent of fathers; only 36 percent of mothers keep the same work hours when kids are home, compared to 50 percent of fathers. Mothers are more than twice as likely as fathers to say having kids at home means they must stop working altogether.



- Despite being more affected by child care obligations, Arizona women are less likely to say they have accommodating employers. Among women workers with caregiving responsibilities, 48 percent say employers will allow schedule changes to accommodate caregiving needs; more than half (56 percent) of men with caregiving responsibilities report that their employers are accommodating.

- Working women are a bit less likely than working men in Arizona to say they receive benefits from their jobs. While over half of both working women and working men in Arizona say their job provides health insurance, only 48 percent of women receive paid vacation, 54 percent receive paid sick days, 32 percent receive paid medical leave, and 31 percent receive paid family leave. Comparatively, 55 percent of men say they receive paid vacation, 51 percent receive paid sick days, 44 percent receive paid medical leave, and 41 percent receive paid family leave. In fact, 28 percent of working women in the state say they receive none of these benefits, compared to 24 percent of working men.
- More than 1 in 3 Arizona women (37 percent) hold jobs that pay \$15 per hour or less, compared to 23 percent of men. Workers in these low-paid jobs are especially likely to lack access to benefits.

Negative effects on mental health and financial security

A majority of all Arizonans say their mental health is worse off now than it was when the pandemic began, while a plurality say they are financially worse off now. Unlike in national data where women report being relatively worse off than men in terms of finances and mental health, women and men in Arizona are about equally likely to say their financial and mental health worsened during the pandemic.

- Only 24 percent of Arizona women feel better off financially today than at the onset of the pandemic, while 27 percent feel financially worse off. Similarly, 23 percent of men say they are better off, while 31 percent say they are worse off.
- A majority of women in Arizona (53 percent) and a similar share of men (56 percent) report that the pandemic has had a negative impact on their mental health, such as depression, anxiety, or sleep difficulties. Among Arizonans with worsening mental health, 1 in 5 women (20 percent) sought treatment from a mental health professional, such as therapy or medication, compared to 16 percent of men; among those who did not seek treatment, 37 percent of women say they did not get help due to costs, lack of time, or difficulties in finding a provider.
- Among women in Arizona, 48 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. More than 4 in 10 (41 percent) of all Arizonans cite bills and expenses as one of their top two stressors.
- Caregiving concerns are also a notable source of stress: nearly 1 in 3 Arizonans (30 percent) cite caring for children, elderly family members, or balancing work and caregiving in general as a stressor.

Getting Arizona 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 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. Arizona women with household incomes under \$50,000 a year are even more likely to support a number of these initiatives relative to those women with higher incomes, especially free pre-K for 3- and 4-year-olds, granting the right to request work schedule changes without retaliation, and protecting employees’ right to discuss their salaries with coworkers to help reduce discrimination.

Percent of Arizonans who <u>support</u> initiative	Women	Women, HH income under \$50k	Men
Provide all workers with paid family & medical leave	90	89	86
Increase funding for home- and community-based services for seniors and people with disabilities	84	84	78
Ensure access to high-quality, affordable child care	84	77	85
Increase wages for tipped workers	78	76	53
Provide access to comprehensive health care, w/ no cost-sharing	76	68	76
Grant right to request work schedule change and 2 weeks’ notice of work schedules for workers w/variable hours	75	81	77
Fund free pre-K for ages 3-4	69	78	79
Protect access to reproductive health care, including abortion	69	67	65
Raise minimum wage to \$15 per hour, then increase w/ median wages	68	73	74
Protect employees’ right to discuss salaries	67	73	69
Ensure families can access expanded Child Tax Credit	62	64	74
Require employers to report pay data to improve enforcement of anti-discrimination laws	54	59	51