

2015's Best & Worst States for Working Moms

by [John S Kiernan](#)



Although women now comprise roughly half of the American workforce, they still earn about three-quarters as much as men do and have far less upward mobility, as evidenced by the fact that less than 5 percent of Fortune 500 companies have female chief executives. Even the new crop of high-profile female CEOs seems to be [drastically underpaid](#) compared with their male peers.

Such obvious inequality has spawned a great deal of debate about gender roles in a shifting socioeconomic environment. Workplace inequality is important not only in the spirit of a merit-based economy, but also for deeply ingrained social reasons. For instance, should women have to choose between career and family?

The real question, however, is what we're doing about this fundamental problem. Progress, it would seem, is taking shape at different rates across the country. Not only do parental leave policies and other legal support systems vary by state, but the quality of infrastructure – from cost-effective day care to public schools – is also far from uniform as well.

So, in order to help ease the burden on an inherently underappreciated segment of the population, WalletHub analyzed state dynamics across 12 key metrics to identify the Best & Worst States for Working Moms. A complete breakdown of our findings, as well as expert commentary and a detailed methodology, can be found below.

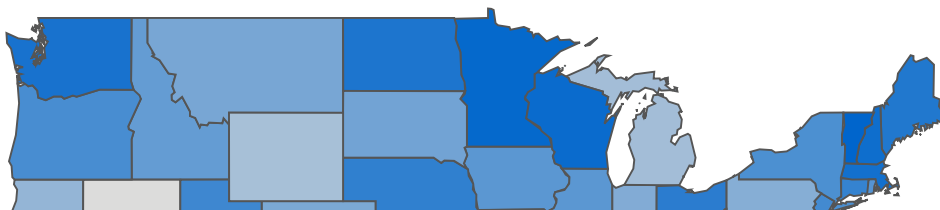
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Main Findings



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Overall Rank	State	“Child Care” Rank	“Professional Opportunities” Rank	“Work-Life Balance” Rank
1	Vermont	12	2	4
2	Minnesota	11	5	8
3	Wisconsin	16	15	5
4	New Hampshire	4	8	31
5	Massachusetts	5	10	22
6	Washington	16	14	12
7	North Dakota	7	19	14
8	Maine	31	9	5
9	Virginia	1	6	49
10	Ohio	15	23	13
11	Nebraska	36	3	19
T-12	Connecticut	22	27	7
T-12	Maryland	10	1	50
14	Utah	13	41	9
15	New Jersey	3	35	26
16	Oregon	34	38	1
17	New York	8	16	38
18	Delaware	8	10	43
19	Rhode Island	33	32	3

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T-20	Illinois	18	25	28
T-20	Iowa	35	23	11
22	Idaho	41	18	9
23	Tennessee	6	26	38
24	Kansas	19	31	16
25	South Dakota	25	17	23
26	Montana	39	42	2
27	Colorado	26	21	23
28	Indiana	14	49	20
29	Pennsylvania	23	32	26
30	Florida	24	12	44
31	Hawaii	48	6	33
32	California	44	22	15
33	Texas	2	47	46
34	District of Columbia	45	4	45
35	Michigan	37	29	21
36	Wyoming	31	43	17
37	Alaska	40	28	30
38	New Mexico	42	34	17
39	Missouri	27	35	34
40	Arizona	28	20	47
41	Kentucky	30	44	28
42	Oklahoma	21	46	40
43	North Carolina	29	37	34
44	West Virginia	37	45	25
45	Georgia	20	38	51
46	Arkansas	43	30	36
47	Nevada	49	13	48
48	Alabama	46	38	42

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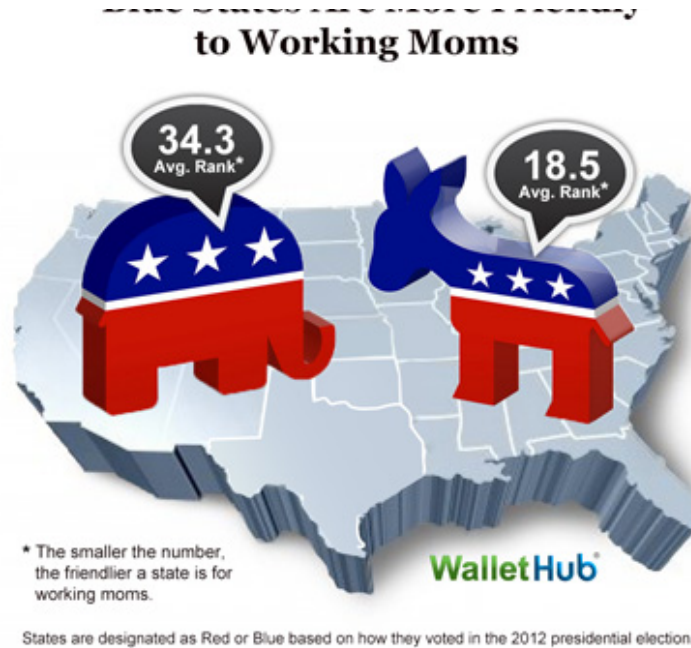
49	Mississippi	50	48	41
50	South Carolina	47	50	36
51	Louisiana	50	51	32



Highest Female-to-Male Executive Ratio



Lowest Female-to-Male Executive Ratio



Ask The Experts: Improving the Plight of Working Moms

It's clear that something must be done in order to increase workplace gender equality and ease the burden on working parents, but there is significant debate about what that "something" should be. For some added insight into the issue, we turned to an eclectic group of experts – from university professors who research gender roles and economics to the authors of some of the most popular career and women's blogs. Below, you can check out both our panel and their responses to the following key questions:

1. Is it becoming easier or harder for women to balance a career and family?
2. What can companies do to help working parents balance home and work life?
3. What careers are most difficult to balance work and family? Easiest?
4. What can state and local governments do to support working mothers?
5. What needs to be done to promote gender equality in the workplace?

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Is it becoming easier or harder for women to balance a career & family?



involvement in child rearing relative to prior time periods in U.S. history, most mothers continue to contribute a great deal more than fathers to childcare activities in the family (Bianchi, 2011). This appears to be especially true during the early years of child development (e.g., infancy, toddlerhood), when fathers report engaging in fewer childcare activities (Dayton, et al., 2015), and report that they see themselves as more influential as a parent to their older children than they do to their infants and toddlers

(Walsh, et al., 2014). This is likely to make the career/family balance especially difficult for mothers when their children are very young.

What can companies do to help working parents balance home and work life?

The foundation for the parent-child relationship and for the child's mental health is developed during the infancy and early childhood periods. Therefore, anything that companies can do - especially during these critical early years - to help parents spend quality time with their young children will help families raise physically and emotionally healthy children.

Examples of company policies that are family-friendly for families with young children include: private and comfortable stations for mothers to pump breast milk - preferably not in bathrooms; high quality, on-site childcare facilities that allow parents - mothers and fathers - to drop in and spend time with their infant/toddler/young child; flexible work hours that allow parents to tag-team in caring for their infant/toddler/young child; work from home options that allow parents to work flexibly throughout the day at a pace and schedule that allows them to spend time with their infant/toddler/young child (note that this option allows parents to secure less expensive childcare help so that they can work from home while a helper cares for the child -- and example of this is hiring a high school student for extra help with the baby after school - the parent can remain in the home and be available as needed but focus on work activities while the helper is present).

What careers are most difficult to balance work and family? Easiest?

For parents with young children, low-paying jobs tend to be especially difficult in terms of balancing the needs of infants/toddlers/young children with the job requirements. For a mother who is working a shift at a fast food restaurant, for example, taking the time to pump breast milk is typically not an option. Similarly, many low paying jobs offer the least flexibility in terms of hours of work and working from home options. In addition, low paying jobs often do not provide paid time off to take care of sick children.

What can state and local governments do to support working mothers?

Enact laws and policies that support job flexibility for parents of young children (see above), and don't place undue burden on small companies (not easy, I realize). Given the examples I've

like this are likely to save money -- for instance, when a parent is allowed to take time off for a well baby check up, that child is less likely to end up in the emergency room for what should have been routine medical care.

What needs to be done to promote gender equality in the workplace?

We seem to forget that fathers are parents too. In early child development, fathers are capable of doing everything mothers do except for breast feeding. When fathers spend time caring for their infants, for instance, they tend to feel more efficacious in their parenting and the mothers of father-involved babies and the babies themselves are better off as well (Dayton, et al., 2015; Alio, 2010). Company policies that allow flexible time and time off for fathers in their roles as parents will promote the health and development of young children and their families.

Methodology

WalletHub evaluated the attractiveness of the 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia based on the 12 metrics listed below, which were selected based on their significance to various aspects of a working mother's life – from the home front to the workplace and everywhere in between. We analyzed each state across three key dimensions, namely “Child Care,” “Professional Opportunities” and “Work-Life Balance.” Our data set is listed below with the corresponding weight for each metric.

Child Care – Total Weight: 5

- Day Care Quality Score: Double Weight
- Child Care Costs (Adjusted for the Median Woman's Salary): Full Weight
- Access to Pediatric Services (Number of Pediatricians per 100,000 Residents): Full Weight
- WalletHub's [“Best School Systems”](#) Ranking: Double Weight

Professional Opportunities – Total Weight: 5

- Gender Pay Gap (Women's Earnings as a Percentage of Men's): Double Weight
- Ratio of Female to Male Executives: Full Weight
- Median Women's Salary (Adjusted for Cost of Living): Full Weight
- Percentage of Families (Single Moms with Children Younger than 18) in Poverty: Full Weight
- Female Unemployment Rate: Full Weight

Work-Life Balance – Total Weight: 5

▼ women's Average Commute Time, Full Weight

Sources: Data used to create these rankings were obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Child Care Aware® of America, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the National Partnership for Women & Families and WalletHub Research.

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