Mothers and Daughters
(and fathers and sons)
THE WORKING MOTHER GENERATIONS REPORT

SPONSORED BY SC Johnson
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Dear Friends,

I'm proud to present the results of our new Working Mother Research Institute study, Mothers and Daughters: The Working Mother Generations Report.

To commemorate the 35th anniversary of Working Mother magazine, we wanted to find out how the pioneering career moms who formed our readership back in 1979 affected the attitudes of their kids—both daughters and sons. We also wanted to see what’s changed in the work and family lives of younger families as the idea of women with careers has become mainstream.

We found that most parents look back fondly on childhood and remember their mothers as being happy, regardless of whether or not they worked outside of the home. We also learned that women whose mothers were the primary earners for their families are more likely to become breadwinners in their own families. (Check out our recent report, Breadwinning Moms: The Working Mother Report, for more about the implications of this dynamic.)

Our survey found interesting differences between the generations of parents in the workforce today: Boomers, Gen X-ers and Millennials each have different ideas about the best ways to manage career and family obligations—important differences employers should note as they tailor work life policies to benefit the widest range of working parents.

I would like to thank SC Johnson for sponsoring this important research. SC Johnson’s support of its own employee parents is evident in its status as a 25-year member of the Working Mother 100 Best Companies as well as its ongoing support of the Work Life Congress, both of which serve to improve workplaces nationwide.

I invite you to explore in this report the impact that gender and generational status have on work life choices among today’s parents, and to visit workingmother.com/wmri to download other important Working Mother Research Institute studies.

Carol Evans
President
Working Mother Media
Mothers and Daughters: the Working Mother generations report

SC Johnson is proud to sponsor Working Mother’s 35th anniversary study, Mothers and Daughters: The Working Mother Generations Report. As a family company, SC Johnson is committed to offering a great workplace for parents. But as a mother of two girls, I felt a personal connection to this research, which explores motivations and insights around moms of all ages.

For example, while nearly three quarters of moms today work outside of the home, outlooks on work life clearly vary by generation. Millennials are optimistic and believe in a balance between career and family. Gen X-ers tend to be stressed, often viewing work as a necessity. And new demands on Baby Boomers, such as caring for aging parents, have led them to feel more “stretched” than ever. Regardless of generation, today’s working women were influenced by the choices their mothers made. I know I was.

Under Carol’s leadership, Working Mother has done an amazing job of highlighting important issues, both for working parents and for businesses looking for the best talent. For the past 25 years, SC Johnson has shared Working Mother’s commitment to improving workplace programs for parents, including child care, paid family leave, flexibility and advancement. This year’s Working Mother Research Institute Report allows us to take our efforts further by offering clear, actionable insights into working moms’ behaviors by generation. By better understanding the needs of each generation, we can ensure we’ve developed programs and benefits that address each.

We firmly believe that to be a winning company, with the best talent, we’ve simply got to understand the needs of working parents and apply the valuable insights that research such as this reveals. We hope that you, too, will find these additional generational insights valuable.

Kelly M. Semrau
Senior Vice President—Global Corporate Affairs, Communication and Sustainability
SC Johnson

Kelly M. Semrau
When *Working Mother* printed its first issue in 1979, the ink was barely dry on legislation banning pregnancy discrimination in the workplace. The debate about a woman’s role in society was vigorous, and polarized. Mothers were joining the workforce en masse: About half of all U.S. women with kids under 18 were working outside the home.\(^1\) Now, in 2014, about 70 percent of U.S. moms work.\(^2\) Not only do most moms work today, many were also raised by working moms. The cultural conversation has shifted: Instead of debating whether mothers should work outside the home, we focus on how moms—and dads—balance their work with their families. We talk about how to get more women into C-suite jobs and onto company boards.

In honor of our 35th anniversary, the Working Mother Research Institute (WMRI), with sponsor SC Johnson, presents *Mothers and Daughters: The Working Mother Generations Report*, a study that investigates what we’ve learned from our working mothers, and how we apply these lessons to our work life choices today. We surveyed the three generations of men and women that make up the majority of the workforce now: Baby Boomers (born 1946–1964), Generation X (1965–1980) and Millennials (1981–2000). We found common ground for all working parents, as well as areas where generational and gender attitudes diverge. For instance, we see that all generations want flexibility, job security and a separation between work and personal time. Yet we also see that Millennials, for example, are more likely than Baby Boomers to say a working mother sets a positive example for her children. Millennials are also far more likely to express optimism on a wide variety of measures and to be the primary earner in the household.

“Choice and control make people feel optimistic in the workplace,” says Mark Agars, PhD, director of the Institute for Child Development and Family Relations at California State University, San Bernardino. “That’s something that’s different for today’s generations versus their parents.” That’s not to say our survey found only good news. Parents of all generations still struggle to make the work life pieces fit. Four in 10 moms say their challenges are greater than their mothers’ were. Half of Millennial moms and dads say part-time work is looked down upon at their company and their commitment to work is frequently challenged.

**How Our Mothers’ Choices Affect Us**

Working mom = a child who grows up to work? Yes and no. It turns out that most participants’ mothers did work at some point. Seventy-four percent of moms who are not working now had a mother who worked, versus 78 percent of currently working moms. Of male and female respondents whose mom worked during their childhood, the majority—71 percent—say she did so out of financial necessity. As a whole, participants were considerably less likely to perceive their moms as career-oriented than their fathers (less than a third of moms were dubbed career-oriented, compared to slightly more than half of fathers.)

Yet the work life choices their moms made when the participants were children did influence them in adulthood. For instance, men and women whose moms did not work in childhood are less likely to think that moms who work for pay are good role models. In contrast, participants who

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believe their mom had a meaningful career are more likely to work and to become breadwinners when they grow up. In fact, if a female respondent saw her mom outearn her spouse or partner in childhood, then that participant is more likely to be her own family’s primary earner—36 percent of breadwinner moms are second-generation in that role, as opposed to only 15 percent of respondents overall. From there, there are big implications for happiness. Breadwinning moms and dads who embrace their role as the primary earner report more satisfaction than other groups across work life measures. (WMRI recently studied the phenomenon in our report *Breadwinning Moms.*)

According to Claudia Olivetti, PhD, an associate professor of economics at Boston University, being raised by a working mother positively correlates with a daughter’s education level and her choice to work. Most men work regardless of what their mom did, but Dr. Olivetti’s research shows that a working mother’s example does influence her son. “Everything else being equal, we found for men that your wife is much more likely to work if your mother worked,” Dr. Olivetti says. “You tend to reproduce in your adult life the gender and labor roles you saw growing up.”
A Quick Guide to the Generations

Baby Boomers (born 1946–1964)
They’re 79 million strong, representing the post-World War II birth spike. According to studies conducted by the Pew Research Center’s Social and Demographic Trends team, Boomers feel younger than their age and intend to work longer and retire later than previous generations. (This is impacting Gen X, the generation poised and eager to move into leadership.) Boomers are beginning to close the technology gap with younger generations—they’re increasingly using social media.

Challenge for companies: The large Boomer group will leave a talent hole in their wake as they retire.

Generation X (born 1965–1980)
Roughly 49 million. Often referred to as the “baby bust” because of its small size relative to Boomers. According to research from the Center for Work-Life Policy, Gen X is ambitious, highly educated and overwhelmingly part of dual-earner couples. “Gen X gained their reputation as ‘slackers’ in the 1990s partially because they demanded more work life balance,” says Jean Twenge, PhD, a psychology professor at San Diego State University and author of Generation Me. But that label no longer applies—Center for Work-Life Policy research found that Gen X-ers covet advancement.

Challenge for companies: Because it’s a smaller population cohort, companies will compete to retain the best and brightest to replace departing Boomer leadership.

Roughly 50 million, with about 30 million currently in the workforce. They’re more ethnically and racially diverse than earlier generations, and they’re getting married later in life than their parents, according to the Pew Research Center’s Social and Demographic Trends team. Millennials embrace self-expression and rely on technology for it. This group includes a higher number of single parents than the other two. It’s one of the most educated generations in history—especially the women.

Challenge for companies: Millennials require more hands-on attention.

The Millennials
More optimistic than the other generation in our survey, Millennials report satisfaction across a wide variety of measures—from support from co-workers to positivity about their paycheck. The majority say they have a secure and stable job (65 percent) where their responsibilities match their interests well (63 percent). They also say they have opportunities to develop their skills—a good thing because this generation particularly yearns for coaching, mentoring and immediate, on-the-job feedback, according to demographer Neil Howe, author of Millennials in the Workplace. On the home front, Millennials are cheery about their family finances (64 percent upbeat), pleased with their relationship with their spouse or partner (71 percent positive) and even happier about the contribution their partner makes to taking care of kids (73 percent satisfied). Millennials feel both partners should contribute to household income, but do not assume that the man should earn more—83 percent of Millennials (men and women) are comfortable with their partner out-earning them. This may be a function of what they observed in childhood: Millennials saw greater earning parity between their parents, with nearly half seeing Mom earn the same as or more than Dad. A mere 16 percent of Baby Boomers had this situation.

Career-oriented, yet conflicted
More than the other two generations we surveyed, Millennial moms describe themselves as career-oriented. It’s a powerful finding. Previous WMRI research has shown that a “career orientation” is correlated with greater engagement on the job and satisfaction at home—regardless of income. Yet Millennial moms seem conflicted about child care. They are the group most likely to agree that one parent should be home to care for children (60 percent) and to say that a parent should be home when a child gets home from school (83 percent).

“Career-oriented” is a function that isn’t free from home life or child care. The Millennials are the generation that says “You can have it all, just not all at once.”

COMMON GROUND
Our survey finds that no matter their generation or gender, the majority of respondents (above three quarters) feel that:

- Couples should have equal input on how income is used regardless of who earns what.
- Children should be cared for equally by both parents.
- Work and personal time should be kept separate.

penalty to dropping out of the labor market or cutting down hours when you have children.” While flexibility does offer many advantages, traditional programs haven’t solved the conflict this generation feels, Dr. Olivetti says. “In many professions, flexibility is another word for a mommy track,” she notes, or something that creates an “always available” expectation.

More than half of all Millennials (men and women) say that flexibility causes work to interfere with family time. (In comparison, only a quarter of Baby Boomers agree with that statement.) In fact, Millennials complain more about workload than other generations. Roughly half feel they “cannot get away from work.” Yet Millennials report working the same average hours—7.8 hours daily—as the other generations.

Millennial Moms at a Glance

Mothers and fathers should share equally in caring for their children

Couples should have equal input on how their household income is used, regardless of how much each earns

I am comfortable with the idea of my spouse/partner earning more than I do

A parent should be home with children after school

Work time and personal time should be kept separate

Mothers and fathers should share equally in daily household responsibilities

One spouse/partner will always have to take on more household tasks

When a mother works outside the home, it sets a positive example for her children

One parent should stay at home to care for children

Both spouses/partners should make a significant contribution to the household income

I would prefer to work even if I did not have to for financial reasons

BUOYANT BREADWINNERS

The only group to outshine the Millennials in terms of optimism? Female breadwinners! Relative to other moms, they are happier about how at-home tasks are divided and more positive about the major relationships in their life (with children and their spouse/partner). They also give a thumbs-up to their own moms for working—two thirds say Mom’s decision to work made their childhood better. In our survey, if your mom was the primary earner in your household when you were growing up, you are significantly more likely to become a breadwinning mom as an adult. Based on this trend, it’s likely the Millennial moms are raising more female breadwinners than any previous generation.
**Generation X**

Middle of career, mid-life and all-around caught in the middle. If a generation looks stressed in our survey, it’s Gen X. “This is a generation at a life stage where they are in the thick of it all—trying to impress and move up at work, trying to impress at home as they raise children,” says Dr. Agars.

This generation was raised with a front row seat to work life tensions. In our survey, more than a quarter (27 percent) describe their own mother as having been career-oriented, but few saw flexible work arrangements (only 17 percent say Mom’s job allowed her to work from home, compared to more than a quarter of Millennials who say Mom could work from home).

As adults, Gen X respondents of either sex are the least likely to say that they are fulfilling a higher purpose through work than just making money (13 percentage points lower than Millennials and 8 percentage points lower than Boomers).

Slightly more than half say they work out of financial necessity—and of three generations, X-ers are the least likely to say they’d prefer to work even if they didn’t have to.

On the home front, things also look relatively tough: Gen X moms are less likely than Boomers or Millennials to say they have enough “me time.” About a third say they feel pressure to take care of family members other than their children. Forty-three percent complain that their work life struggle is harder than it was for their own moms—and of those, more than a third say it’s because parenting is much more hands-on than it was when they were kids. Despite the perceived extra hurdles of child-rearing, they are the generation least likely to say that their partner takes initiative with housework or child care. Perhaps for these reasons, Gen X moms want to limit work’s interference with home life—the majority (74 percent) would reject a job requiring frequent overnight travel.

“With Gen X, you have more dual-career couples and more mobility [than earlier generations], so you have less local family support that, historically, people have relied on,” says Dr. Agars. “Add in that you also have more elder care issues. Those have created substantial increased demands on work and family without providing much relief.”

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**Generation X Moms at a Glance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception / Norm</th>
<th>% of Gen X Moms Who Agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mothers and fathers should share equally in caring for their children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Couples should have equal input on how their household income is used, regardless of how much each earns</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am comfortable with the idea of my spouse/partner earning more than I do</td>
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<tr>
<td>A parent should be home with children after school</td>
<td><img src="73.png" alt="73%" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work time and personal time should be kept separate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mothers and fathers should share equally in daily household responsibilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>One spouse/partner will always have to take on more household tasks</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>When a mother works outside the home, it sets a positive example for her children</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>One parent should stay at home to care for children</td>
<td><img src="50.png" alt="50%" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Both spouses/partners should make a significant contribution to the household income</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would prefer to work even if I did not have to for financial reasons</td>
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**Baby Boomers**

With an average of nearly 20 years in the workforce, Boomer moms are more likely than the other generations to say their work life struggle is harder than their mother’s was. Of the moms who say that, half work more hours than their own mother ever did. They also manage a hefty number of kid obligations, and more than a quarter of Boomer moms report being pressured to care for family members other than their own children.

But despite their hefty household obligations, their ideas about division of labor are anything but old-fashioned: Boomer moms are as likely as Gen X or Millennial moms to agree that partners should share child-rearing and housekeeping duties equally.

Nearing retirement, this group is the largest one working for financial necessity. Yet the workplace news from this generation isn’t negative. More than half of Boomer moms and dads say they are fulfilling a meaningful purpose through work. They are the generation least likely to say their commitment at work is challenged or that they can’t get away from work. And they are also the generation most likely to say job flexibility has helped them handle family responsibilities. (Two thirds of Boomer men and women agree with this statement, 10 percentage points higher than Gen X-ers and 17 points higher than Millennials.) Dr. Agars notes, “Boomers are at a life stage where they are thinking about transitions—retirement, different family needs and beginning thoughts about legacy.”

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**Boomer Moms at a Glance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>% of Boomer Moms Who Agree</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mothers and fathers should share equally in caring for their children</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples should have equal input on how their household income is used, regardless of how much each earns</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
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<td>I am comfortable with the idea of my spouse/partner earning more than I do</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A parent should be home with children after school</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work time and personal time should be kept separate</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers and fathers should share equally in daily household responsibilities</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>One spouse/partner will always have to take on more household tasks</td>
<td>64%</td>
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<tr>
<td>When a mother works outside the home, it sets a positive example for her children</td>
<td>55%</td>
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<tr>
<td>One parent should stay at home to care for children</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both spouses/partners should make a significant contribution to the household income</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would prefer to work even if I did not have to for financial reasons</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Change in Progress!

Younger generations think differently from their predecessors. An old story, yes, but affirmed by Baby Boomer and Millennial responses to this survey.

Our data show significant differences in each generation's formative experiences: Millennial workers have fewer memories of Mom at home—nearly half (46 percent) say their mom went back to work before they were 3 years old, versus only a quarter of Boomers. Millennials are also more likely to say they're proud of their mom's decision to work (nearly half of Millennials, versus about a third of Boomers) and more likely to recognize that their mom gained a sense of independence from work. As adults, Millennials are more likely to say their partner values their contributions to the household income and to child care.

It raises the question—if Baby Boomers blazed trails for workplace equality, will Millennials broaden those paths so that more working parents get support, recognition and opportunities, both at the office and at home?

As a child, how did you feel about your mother’s decision to work?

- **MILLENIAL MOMS AND DADS**
  - I was proud of her for working
  - She was able to meet my needs even when working
  - I knew she had no choice
  - I wished she could stay home
  - I didn’t give it any thought
  - Her work made me feel less cared for

- **GEN X MOMS AND DADS**

- **BOOMER MOMS AND DADS**

Are you satisfied with each of the following aspects of your personal life?

- **The amount of time you spend with your children**
- **Your spouse/partner’s contribution to the family’s finances**
- **Your spouse/partner’s contribution to caring for your children**
- **The level of respect you get at home**
- **Your choice to be a working or stay-at-home parent**
- **Your relationship with your spouse/partner**
- **The amount of time you spend with your spouse/partner**
- **Your family’s financial stability**
- **How at-home tasks are divided between you and your spouse/partner**
Keep Your Best

Talent is often a company’s most powerful and sustainable competitive advantage. With many Baby Boomers transitioning out of the workforce over the next decade, companies that do the best job meeting each generation’s needs will excel.

For Boomers: Customize the Path Forward

**Speak to life stage.** Make sure flex options match needs—for instance, allowing workers to manage caregiving responsibilities. More than a quarter of Boomer moms say they care for family members other than their children.

**Maintain engagement.** Don’t assume that an established career means a Boomer isn’t interested in new challenges. For instance, in our survey, Boomers are the least likely to reject a job that required overnight travel.

**Address finances.** Less than half of all Boomers say they are satisfied with their family’s financial stability—and this is the generation closest to retirement.

For Gen X: Protect Your Middle

**Guard against attrition.** In our survey, 43 percent of Gen X moms say their work life struggle is harder than their mother’s. Plus, Gen X is at mid-career, a time when attrition rises for women in middle management.

**Emphasize results, not face time.** Our survey showed Gen X with hefty responsibilities—many say parenting is more hands-on than when they were kids. They also have little “me time.”

**Enable technology.** Forty percent of Gen X participants say being wired is a positive factor in helping them get everything done.

For Millennials: Communicate, Communicate

**Encourage unplugging.** In our survey, 41 percent of Millennial moms say they feel they “can’t get away from work.” Set protective standards for no contact on vacations, on weekends and late at night.

**Support affinity groups.** Millennial moms are career-oriented and positive about work, but they are also far more likely to say they feel isolated (36 percent of Millennial moms versus 15 percent of Boomers and 17 percent of Gen X). Help them find like-minded co-workers and mentors who can provide insights on work life balance.

**Provide on-ramps.** In our survey, Millennials show greater desire than other generations for “one parent at home.” Given this yearning, it’s likely many Millennial moms will try some years at home. Stay in touch with talented workers and provide paths to rejoin your company.

Methodology The Working Mother Research Institute developed a national survey and fielded it through a series of email blasts sent by Survey Sampling International in December 2013. A total of 2,163 individuals (all of whom had children under the age of 18 living at home with them at the time, and all of whom agreed that their mothers had played a large part in their upbringing) submitted online questionnaires. Bonnier Custom Insights (a division of Bonnier Corporation) received and tabulated the responses, which were analyzed by Maria S. Ferris Consulting LLC. The final results are documented in this report, which was written by the Working Mother Research Institute.
SC Johnson is a family company dedicated to innovative, high-quality products, excellence in the workplace and a long-term commitment to the environment and the communities in which it operates. Based in the USA, the company is one of the world’s leading manufacturers of household cleaning products and products for home storage, air care, pest control and shoe care. It markets such well-known brands as GLADE®, KIWI®, OFF!®, PLEDGE®, RAID®, SCRUBBING BUBBLES®, SHOUT®, WINDEX® and ZIPLOC® in the U.S. and beyond, with brands marketed outside the U.S. including AUTAN®, TANA®, BAMÁ®, BAYGON®, BRISE®, KABIKILLER®, KLEAR®, MR MUSCLE®, and RIDSECT®. The 128-year-old company, which generates $9 billion in sales, employs nearly 13,000 people globally and sells products in virtually every country around the world. www.scjohnson.com

The Working Mother Research Institute, a division of Working Mother Media, is home to the Working Mother 100 Best Companies, the Working Mother Best Companies for Multicultural Women and the National Association of Female Executives’ Top 50 Companies for Executive Women, among other initiatives. WMRI produces insightful benchmarking reports and important research papers on work life and the advancement of women and also conducts surveys, such as Mothers and Daughters: The Working Mother Generations Report, to further culture change nationwide.