

WerkLabs

FEBRUARY 2021

# MOMS OF COLOR

WORKING & BEING A MOM DURING THE PANDEMIC



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**A STUDY OF 1500+ MOMS ON THE TOPIC OF WORK  
AMIDST COVID-19 IMPLICATIONS, HEIGHTENED RACIAL  
STRIFE, AND CALLS FOR ACTION IN THE US.**

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# ABOUT THE STUDY



## INTRODUCTION

WerkLabs surveyed over 1500 moms to learn more about the work experiences of moms in 2020 amidst COVID-19 implications, heightened racial strife, and calls for action in the US. In particular, the aim of this research is to assess how work during this difficult time may be experienced differently by moms of different races and ethnicities.

To begin this research WerkLabs interviewed a sample of moms who self-identify as a person of color. From these interviews, a custom survey instrument was developed and fielded to conduct quantitative analyses for both the aggregate and subsets of responses. The subsets included in this analysis are Asian, Black, Latinx and White moms.

This report includes the findings of this quantitative analysis. It opens with a brief summary of some positives experienced by moms Next, more general workplace findings are presented. The remainder and majority of the report, discusses (1) what drives employee experience for moms during this time, and (2) how experiences regarding these drivers differ between Asian, Black, Latinx, and White moms.

To view a comprehensive summary of key themes derived from WerkLabs' 1:1 interviews, please see our ***Employee Voices: Moms of Color Report.***

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# THE POSITIVES OF THE PRESENT TIME OF WORK

## THOUGH LESS COMMON, SOME MOMS DID EXPRESS POSITIVE CONSEQUENCES OF WORKING AMIDST COVID-19

Many moms comment on how the implications of COVID-19 on work have been a **“blessing in disguise.”** For some, being furloughed/laid off forced a career move that they’d been wanting to make for a while. For others, being able to work from home, has allowed them to escape toxic work environments, noting an improvement to wellbeing.

Working from home also wasn’t an option for many prior to COVID-19. Not only are moms grateful to have the opportunity to work from home, but they also express gratitude that working from home has now been normalized, so that most all employees, not just moms, are demonstrating the feasibility of working remotely and maintaining productivity goals.

It is undeniable these are particularly trying times for moms. Nonetheless, many moms do actually note that their organizations are doing everything possible to support employees while still achieving business goals.

We also see moms comment on how the pandemic has forced new ways of working and business models onto organizations, which have resulted in some positive opportunities at work, such as more face-time with leadership.

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***I WAS TEMPORARILY FURLOUGHED BY MY FORMER EMPLOYER FOR 6 WEEKS WHEN QUARANTINE INITIALLY HIT. THIS WAS A BLESSING IN DISGUISE, AS I REALIZED MY COMPANY WAS NOT ALLOWING ME THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE I NEEDED. I FOUND EMPLOYMENT WITH ANOTHER COMPANY THAT WAS MUCH MORE ACCOMMODATING AND SYMPATHETIC TO MY NEEDS AS A SINGLE WORKING MOTHER WHO WAS HOMESCHOOLING HER CHILDREN DUE TO THE PANDEMIC.”***

***-BLACK MOM***



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# UNDERSTANDING MOMS WHO ARE LEAVING THE WORKFORCE

OVER 1/5 OF THE MOMS WE SURVEYED LEFT AN EMPLOYER DURING COVID-19

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**I WORK FOR A FORTUNE 100 COMPANY WHO CLAIMED TO SUPPORT WORKING PARENTS. AFTER REPORTING THE LACK OF SUPPORT FROM MY MANAGER AND THE GENDER DISCRIMINATION AND BIAS I'VE SUFFERED SINCE COVID, I WAS LAID OFF. DESPITE THE HR TEAM STATING THAT MY MANAGER INDEED BROKE THE POLICIES OF THE COMPANY AND THAT MY TEAM MEMBERS CONFIRMED I WAS SINGLED OUT."**

**-BLACK MOM**

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Of the moms who indicated having left an employer amidst the pandemic. The reason for leaving varied:

**39%** were laid off  
**33%** chose to permanently leave their job  
**18%** chose to take a temporary leave  
**12%** were furloughed

The race/ethnicities of moms having left an employer amidst the pandemic also varied.

**22%** Black/African American moms  
**20%** Asian American moms  
**19%** Hispanic/Latinx moms  
**12%** White moms

The ability to work from home amidst the pandemic also varied as a function of race/ethnicity. One third of Black moms and one fourth of Latinx moms report being unable to work from home during the pandemic. Comparatively, only 1/10 of both White and Asian moms were unable to work from home during the pandemic.

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**BECAUSE OF COVID-19, AND HOW MY EMPLOYER AND LEADERSHIP HANDLED IT, I'M NOW DETERMINED TO BECOME SELF-EMPLOYED & CHOOSE A DIFFERENT CAREER PATH THAT ALLOWS ME TO WORK ONLINE AND BE MY OWN BOSS."**

**-ASIAN MOM**

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# THE DRIVERS OF EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

## THE TOP 3 FACTORS IMPACTING EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE FOR MOMS OF COLOR AMIDST THE PANDEMIC ARE FLEXIBILITY, ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT, AND LEADERSHIP

The extent to which an organization offers flexibility and acknowledges the unique flexibility needs of its employees was rated as the most impactful driver of employee experience for moms of color. The support offered to moms from their organization is the second most impactful followed by leaderships' effectiveness in communicating and taking action that benefit its employees.

Other impactful drivers of employee experience for moms of color include:

- **Organizational Culture:** the extent to which the work environment cultivated by moms' co-workers/managers is positive
- **Workload:** the manageability and support moms receive in accomplishing workload/meetings
- **Work Connectedness:** the extent to which moms feel connected to leaders/peers at work
- **Childcare:** the ability for moms to manage childcare demands and work
- **Parenting:** the degree to which parenting-related stress is manageable for moms
- **Career Advancement:** the ability for moms to continue to advance their careers

The remainder of the report goes into greater detail on each of these drivers.

It is important to note that the findings found in this report may be influenced by socio-demographic factors such as, industry of work, ages of children, annual household income, and whether or not the mom is a co-parent (see right for additional information).

### KEY SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CONSIDERATION FACTORS FOR UNDERSTANDING SURVEY RESULTS

**Industry of Work:** The industry of work moms are in may impact what they want/expect to see from employers. In this survey, significantly more Black and Latinx moms work in government. Significantly more White moms work in Marketing & Advertising

**Age of Children:** More Black and Latinx moms than White and Asian moms reported having children 11+ years old.

**Annual Household Income:** Significantly more Asian and White moms have annual household incomes of \$125,000+, whereas, significantly more Black and Latinx moms have incomes below \$50,000.

**Single Motherhood:** Significantly more Black and Latinx moms report being single mothers.

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# FLEXIBILITY & LEADERSHIP

**THE NEED FOR FLEXIBLE WORK STRUCTURES AND EMPATHETIC LEADERSHIP HAS NEVER BEEN MORE URGENT**

**“ I LEFT MY PREVIOUS JOB BECAUSE FLEXIBILITY WAS NOT A CHOICE FOR ME, CAUSING CHILDCARE ISSUES.”**

**-LATINX MOM**

Having flexible work policies is a critical driver for all moms in cultivating their employee experience. In particular, having flexible work policies in place is two times more impactful for Asian moms.

### **Alternate Work Hours**

Significantly more Black and Latinx moms report **not** being able to work alternate hours compared to White moms.

### **Co-Parent Flexibility**

Raising kids with a partner who also has flexibility in work, can significantly lessen the burden on working moms. Of moms who co-parent with a partner or spouse, 15% more Latinx moms report that the person with whom they co-parent with does not have flexibility in his/her job.

### **Leadership Communications**

Interestingly, with regard to leadership communications, we tend to see White and Asian moms expressing greater dissatisfaction on how their leadership has communicated with employees on key topics like Black Lives Matter, Employee Wellbeing, and Diversity & Inclusion in the workplace.

However, in comparison to White moms, the impact of leadership communicating and taking action on topics of BLM, parenting, and mental health is 30% greater for Black moms and 80% greater for Latinx moms.

*\*With our survey sample the impact to Asian moms appears to be little to none.*

**“ I KNOW MY COMPANY IS TAKING ACTIVE STEPS TO ADDRESS DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE. WE HAVE REGULAR FORUMS AND COMMUNITY DISCUSSIONS TO TALK ABOUT THESE ISSUES. MY COMPANY HAS EVEN ESTABLISHED A DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE.”**

**-BLACK MOM**

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# CULTURE, WORKLOAD & SUPPORT

## HAVING A CARING WORK CULTURE, A MANAGEABLE WORKLOAD, AND ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT ARE KEY FACTORS

With regard to organizational culture, moms of color tend to express more negative sentiments, experiencing a greater amount of pressure and demands from their organizations. To many moms, this pressure makes them feel as though they are being 'put to the test.'

2x

as many moms of color, compared to White moms, report feeling as though their workplace is testing employees to see who persists and remains resilient.

20%

more moms of color, in comparison to White moms, report feeling as though their workplace assumes working from home means that employees have more time to work, despite competing childcare and pandemic realities.

For moms, working amidst COVID-19, childcare shortages, and schooling demands, means that workload extends far beyond the demands of "work" and beyond the typical 9-5 day. We see this heightened burden being most felt by Black moms.

We asked moms what percentage of household responsibilities they possess.

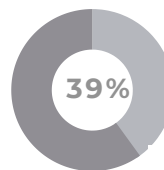
**2x more Black moms report doing over 90% of household work in comparison to White & Asian moms**

Nonetheless, Black moms along with Latinx moms report greater levels of support from their organization in managing their workload.

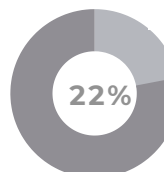
“**IT'S REALLY DIFFICULT BEING A SINGLE PARENT DURING COVID. I FEEL A LOT OF PRESSURE FROM CHILDLESS COWORKERS WHO FEEL LIKE THEY HAVE TO DO MORE.**”

**-LATINX MOM**

While expressing negative sentiments with regard to organizational culture, a greater percentage of Black, Latinx, and Asian moms agree that their organization is, at the very least, attempting to support their employee base.



In comparison to White moms, approximately **39% more Black and Latinx** moms agree that their organization is in touch with the needs of its employees



Similarly, approximately **22% more Asian** moms than White moms agree that their organization is in touch with the needs of its employees

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# CAREER ADVANCEMENT & WORK CONNECTEDNESS

## COVID-19 HAS MORE MOMS PRESSING PAUSE AND FEELING STUCK

Black and Latinx moms rate the impact of COVID-19 on their ability to advance their careers as **15% more negative** than White moms.

Asian moms report higher than average scores in terms of experiencing work connectedness.

For Asian moms, the impact on employee experience of feeling connected and visible at work is:

- 2x** greater than Black moms
- 4x** greater than Latinx moms
- 2x** greater than White moms



***I HAVE NO ENERGY TO PURSUE ROLES OR OPPORTUNITIES THAT I MIGHT HAVE PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED."***

***-ASIAN MOM***

Across **all demographics of moms** surveyed, we see that:

**61%**

feel as though they have had to pause career development efforts

**50%**

feel as though they are absent from critical decision making at work

**72%**

indicate that they do not have time to engage in off-hours career development opportunities

**34%**

are concerned about being perceived as uncommitted to work within their organization





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# PARENTING & CHILDCARE

**PRIOR TO THE PANDEMIC, BALANCING WORK AND MOTHERHOOD WAS ALREADY DIFFICULT...NOW IT OFTEN FEELS IMPOSSIBLE**

It's undeniable that parenting and childcare implications have impacted the lives of working moms since the onset of COVID-19.

Looking at moms overall, we find:

**82%** report feeling **overwhelmed** in attempting to balance work and home demands.

**75%** report experiencing **mom guilt** while working, for not being able to give their children full attention.



**CHILDCARE CONSISTS OF A LOT OF SCREEN TIME. IT FEELS TERRIBLE TO BE SPENDING TIME AT HOME, BUT HAVING TO BE MORE CONNECTED TO WORK AND COLLEAGUES ONLINE THAN WITH THE CHILDREN THAT ARE PHYSICALLY IN YOUR PRESENCE."**

**-ASIAN MOM**

The impact of parenting related stress on overall work experience is over **2x greater** for Asian and Black moms than it is for White and Latinx moms.

Of moms surveyed, the impact of an employer supporting childcare-related needs on the employee experience for Black moms is 64% more impactful compared to White moms.

In an effort to better support moms of color, supporting childcare needs and supplemental help for parents should be considered a priority for organizations as they seek to attract and retain diverse employees in the workplace.

# THE IMPACT ON PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

**WORK AMIDST COVID-19 IS SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACTING MOMS & THEIR LIKELIHOOD TO (1) STAY AT THEIR EMPLOYER, (2) RECOMMEND THEIR EMPLOYER AND (3) BE MORE PRODUCTIVE IN THE COMING YEAR**

Looking at all moms surveyed, moms who indicate they are extremely likely to stay at their current workplace report...

**2X** higher scores in terms of the benefits and resources they receive as parents from their employer

**37%** more positively in terms of the impact of COVID-19 to their career development

**2X** higher scores in terms of how well leadership keeps employees in the know

**the impact of a mom's overall employee experience on anticipated productivity is approximately**

**27%**

higher for Black mom employees than White moms, emphasizing the ROI for businesses in taking action to support its moms, and specifically moms of color at work.

**“ I WILL BE LEAVING MY JOB WITHIN THE NEXT MONTH DUE TO LACK OF CHILDCARE. WITH THREE YOUNG KIDS (4 AND UNDER) I CAN'T MANAGE MY WORKLOAD OF CARING FOR THEM AND WORKING FULL TIME.”**

**-WHITE MOM**

In breaking down retention by ethnicity/race, White and Asian moms report being more likely to leave their employer within the next year.

- White & Asian moms are **9%** more likely to leave their employer, in comparison to Black moms,
- and **14%** more likely to leave their employer compared to Latinx moms.

We also see White moms being the least likely to recommend their employers. In comparison to White Moms...

- 21%** Latinx moms are 21% more likely to recommend
- 10%** Black moms are 10% more likely to recommend
- 6%** Asian moms are 6% more likely to recommend

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# NEXT-STEPS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

## WERKLABS' RECOMMENDATIONS TO BETTER SUPPORT MOMS OF COLOR

Above all else, moms of color identify the need for organizations to drive conversations within the workplace regarding parenting and race. The discussions need to include honest dialogue rooted in empathy and a genuine eagerness on the part of the organization to understand the challenges they face.

### BEING COGNIZANT

As an employee, manager, or leader, increasing personal awareness and being more cognizant of struggles facing co-workers is an inexpensive, yet impactful action that can be taken to support moms of color. More specifically the call to action includes:

- The onus is on organizations to learn about the opinions of moms of color, critical events, and available resources. They should not expect that a person of color should automatically be the spokesperson for their ethnicity. Similarly, ERGs should not be solely responsible for driving conversations, events, or resources.
- Allow moms of color to show distress and talk about stress. The expectation that moms of color be perennially resilient can also be interpreted as saying that the organization will not make relevant and necessary changes.
- Engage in active listening, realizing that "listening" also occurs via text-based communications, such as email and IM.
- Encourage equal participation during meetings to ensure not just the loudest voices are heard, which often occurs with video calls.

### PRIORITIZING DE&I EFFORTS

A critical point of a gender equality progress backslide coupled with the childcare crisis and racial inequities in America has been reached. Power positive DE&I positive outcomes through:

- Offering unconscious bias training and increased education. Host workshops, webinars, and widely communicate these opportunities
- Increasing transparency on hiring and promotion processes.
- Creating an ally network



***I REALLY WANT TO TALK TO A HUMAN ABOUT THIS... I THINK THAT IS THE KEY PIECE THAT'S MISSING ... IT'S ENGAGING AND HAVING THESE CONVERSATIONS THAT ARE IMPORTANT."***

***-MOM OF COLOR***

### PROMOTING FLEXIBILITY

It is not enough to claim flexibility, Organizations need to follow through and show respect for the needs of moms of color. To follow through on flexibility commitments,

- Provide a Childcare Stipend
- Expand PTO policies
- Support fathers in getting offline throughout the day to care for children
- Minimize meetings and video calls throughout the day
- Allow for alternate work schedules

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# A NOTE FROM WERKLABS

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Our goal in this study has been to highlight the experiences of moms of color whose voluntary participation, giving voice to this study, have showcased the unique challenges and circumstances they have experienced over the course of the last year during the pandemic, at their workplaces and beyond.

As mentioned in the introduction, we began this study by interviewing many moms of color on the topic of being not only a working mother amidst COVID-19, but also a person of color. Our hearts broke listening to the stories of these moms, who often expressed that they felt like they were being tested by their employers, who were trying to see which employees were the "strong and weak."

All of this research is qualitative in nature. Nonetheless, the richness of the stories and themes that arose from these interviews are critical to share, which is why we are including a link to our **Employee Voices: Moms of Color Report**, here.

We understand that in surveying 1,500 moms we captured many common themes that moms may be experiencing, and we also recognize that some unique insights and perspectives have yet to be captured. Please know that our intention is always to be inclusive in the research we conduct, so that our insights can drive meaningful change in creating more diverse & inclusive workplaces across the country.

We hope that you stay tuned for additional reports to come, as our team looks to continue to shine a spotlight on critical and often understudied topics regarding the intersection of work and family.

Sincerely,



Pam Cohen, PhD  
Chief Research & Analytics Officer  
WerkLabs/The Mom Project



Allison Robinson  
Founder, CEO  
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