Women Today

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ForbesWoman And TheBump.Com 'Parenthood And Economy 2012' Survey Results

**Simpler times?** (Photo credit: kevin dooley)

For the third year running, [ForbesWoman](http://www.forbeswoman.com/) and [TheBump.com](http://www.thebump.com/) partnered to take the temperature of modern American mothers. This year we wanted to hear how real mothers feel about the various ways the economy has affected parenthood post- recession and the various ways our attitudes are shifting towards work in the aftermath of Anne Marie Slaughter’s painfully honest [*Atlantic*](http://theatlantic.com/) essay [“Why Women Still Can’t Have It All.”](http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/07/why-women-still-cant-have-it-all/309020/)

The survey polled nearly 1,000 US women (67% were working outside the home and 33% stayed at home with their children) about their employment decisions post-motherhood, and how their financial situation and the economy affected those choices. Survey results reveal everything from how moms feel about giving up their career (or not) for their baby to whether they resent the size of their husband’s or partner’s paycheck.

“Moms today are sacrificing more than just their ‘me’ time after having a baby,” says Carley Roney, editor in chief of [TheBump.com.](http://thebump.com/) “Personal spending and even full-time careers are taking a backseat to raising children and are ultimately having an effect on moms’ overall happiness. This survey reveals that whether working or stay-at-home, moms are feeling pressure from their financial situations and partners to choose their role.”

But beyond the sacrifices of motherhood, our survey also raises a red flag that young mothers have reached a breaking point in the struggle to “have it all.” As both men and women face more financial stress than ever in the wake of the recession, paired with the ongoing pressure to excel both at work and at home, and our survey reveals some troubling cracks in the facade of the have-it-all working mom.

In short: They’re an unhappy lot. The majority of working women tell us they consider the opportunity to stay at home with their children to be a financial luxury, and more than a third resent their partners for not earning enough to make it a possibility. This raises some significant questions for parents and the companies that hope to keep them in the workforce.

**Highlights from the 2012** [**ForbesWoman**](http://blogs.forbes.com/forbeswoman-views/) **and TheBump.com State Of Parenthood And The Economy 2012 Survey Include:**

**Women feel financial pressure to support their families.** Of the working moms surveyed, **69% say they feel pressure to work because their family can’t survive without the added income**, yet more than **half (52%) of the women surveyed say their partners or others sometimes make them feel that they aren’t devoting enough time to their child/children.** And 44% of stay-at-home moms say their partner or others sometimes make them feel like they’re not pulling their own financial weight.

**More than 10% of stay-at-home moms regret giving up their career.** Both working (84%) and stay-at-home moms (66%) agree that **being able to stop working to raise children is a financial luxury,** yet 38% of stay-at-home moms feel guilty about not going back to work, and 13% even regret giving up their career for their baby.

**Moms feel resentment toward their partners.** Whether they’re working or not, moms overall say they feel resentful toward their partners. Of the stay-at-home moms surveyed, **15% agree that they resent their partner for being the one to continue working** after baby was born. More than **a third of working moms (36%) agree that sometimes they resent their partner for not making enough money** for them to stay home with the baby/kids.

**Approximately half of working moms agree their overall happiness would increase if they didn’t work.** More than a third (34%) of working moms admit that their work performance was slacking a bit and they wished they were home with baby after returning to work. In fact, 47% agree that their overall happiness would increase if they weren’t working. On the other hand, only **nearly one in five (19%) of stay-at-home moms admit their overall happiness would increase if they worked outside the home.**

Credit: <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/07/why-women-still-cant-have-it-all/309020/>

**5 Feminist Myths That Will Not Die**

[Christina Hoff Sommers](http://time.com/author/christina-hoff-sommers/)

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**If we're genuinely committed to improving the circumstances of women, we need to get the facts straight**

Much of what we hear about the plight of American women is false. Some faux facts have been repeated so often they are almost beyond the reach of critical analysis. Though they are baseless, these canards have become the foundation of Congressional debates, the inspiration for new legislation and the focus of college programs. Here are five of the most popular myths that should be rejected by all who are genuinely committed to improving the circumstances of women:

**MYTH 1: *Women are half the world’s population, working two-thirds of the world’s working hours, receiving 10% of the world’s income, owning less than 1% of the world’s property.***

**FACTS:** This injustice confection is routinely quoted by advocacy groups, the [World Bank](http://wbl.worldbank.org/~/media/FPDKM/WBL/Documents/Reports/2012/Women-Business-and-the-Law-2012.pdf), [Oxfam](http://www.politifact.com/punditfact/statements/2014/aug/05/oxfam-ireland/do-women-own-1-worlds-land-no/) and the [United Nations](http://www.unc.edu/~pnc/WNIEO.pdf). It is sheer fabrication. More than 15 years ago, Sussex University experts on gender and development Sally Baden and Anne Marie Goetz, [repudiated](http://www.amazon.com/Feminist-Visions-Development-Routledge-Economics/dp/0415157900) the claim: “The figure was made up by someone working at the UN because it seemed to her to represent the scale of gender-based inequality at the time.” But there is no evidence that it was ever accurate, and it certainly is not today.

Precise figures do not exist, but no serious economist believes women earn only 10% of the world’s income or own only 1% of property. As one critic noted in an excellent [debunking](http://www.theatlantic.com/sexes/archive/2013/03/women-own-1-of-world-property-a-feminist-myth-that-wont-die/273840/) in *The* *Atlantic*, “U.S. women *alone* earn 5.4 percent of world income today.” Moreover, in African countries, where women have made far less progress than their Western and Asian counterparts, Yale economist Cheryl Doss [found](http://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/killer-factcheck-women-own-2-of-land-not-true-what-do-we-really-know-about-women-and-land) female land ownership ranged from 11% in Senegal to 54% in Rwanda and Burundi. Doss warns that “using unsubstantiated statistics for advocacy is counterproductive.” Bad data not only undermine credibility, they obstruct progress by making it impossible to measure change.

**MYTH 2: *Between 100,000 and 300,000 girls are pressed into sexual slavery each year in the United States.***

**FACTS:** This sensational claim is a favorite of politicians, celebrities and journalists. Ashton Kutcher and Demi Moore [turned](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/04/11/ashton-kutcher-demi-moore-trafficking_n_847291.html) it into a cause [célèbre](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Nouvelles_Causes_C%C3%A9l%C3%A8bres&action=edit&redlink=1). Both conservatives and liberal reformers deploy it. Former President Jimmy Carter recently [said](http://www.rawstory.com/rs/2014/04/09/jimmy-carter-violence-against-women-is-the-worst-human-rights-abuse-on-earth/) that the sexual enslavement of girls in the U.S. today is worse than American slavery in the 19th century.

The source for the figure is a 2001 [report](http://msnbcmedia.msn.com/i/MSNBC/Sections/NEWS/A_FOR%20EDIT/Complete_CSEC_020220.pdf) on child sexual exploitation by University of Pennsylvania sociologists Richard Estes and Neil Alan Weiner. But their 100,000–300,000 estimate referred to children *at risk* for exploitation—not actual victims**.** When three reporters from the *Village Voice* [questioned](http://www.villagevoice.com/2011-06-29/news/real-men-get-their-facts-straight-sex-trafficking-ashton-kutcher-demi-moore/) Estes on the number of children who are abducted and pressed into sexual slavery each year, he replied, “We’re talking about a few hundred people.” And this number is likely to include a lot of boys: According to a 2008 [census](http://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/CSEC_NYC_Volume1.pdf) of underage prostitutes in New York City, nearly half turned out to be male. A few hundred children is still a few hundred too many, but they will not be helped by thousand-fold inflation of their numbers.

**MYTH 3: *In the United States, 22%–35% of women who visit hospital emergency rooms do so because of domestic violence.***

**FACTS:** This claim has appeared in countless fact sheets, books and articles—for example, in the leading textbook on family violence, *Domestic Violence Law*, and in the *Penguin Atlas of Women in the World*. The *Penguin Atlas* uses the emergency room figure to justify placing the U.S. on par with Uganda and Haiti for intimate violence.

What is the provenance? The *Atlas* provides no primary source, but the editor of *Domestic Violence Law* [cites](http://chronicle.com/article/Domestic-Violence-a/47940/) a 1997 Justice Department [study](http://www.prisonpolicy.org/scans/bjs/vrithed.pdf), as well as a 2009 post on the Centers for Disease Control website. But the Justice Department and the CDC are not referring to the 40 million women who annually visit emergency rooms, but to women, numbering about 550,000 annually, who come to emergency rooms “for violence-related injuries.” Of these, approximately 37% were attacked by intimates. So, it’s not the case that 22%-35% of women who visit emergency rooms are there for domestic violence. The correct figure is less than half of 1%.

**MYTH 4**: ***One in five in college women will be sexually assaulted.***

**FACTS**: This incendiary figure is everywhere in the media today. Journalists, senators and even President Obama cite it routinely. Can it be true that the American college campus is one of the most dangerous places on earth for women?

The one-in-five figure is based on the [*Campus Sexual Assault Study*](https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/221153.pdf), commissioned by the National Institute of Justice and conducted from 2005 to 2007. Two prominent criminologists, Northeastern University’s James Alan Fox and Mount Holyoke College’s Richard Moran, have [noted](http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2014/08/10/sexual-assault-rape-survey-college-campus-column/13864551/) its weaknesses:

“The estimated 19% sexual assault rate among college women is based on a survey at two large four-year universities, which might not accurately reflect our nation’s colleges overall. In addition, the survey had a large non-response rate, with the clear possibility that those who had been victimized were more apt to have completed the questionnaire, resulting in an inflated prevalence figure.”

Fox and Moran also point out that the study used an overly broad definition of sexual assault. Respondents were counted as sexual assault victims if they had been subject to “attempted forced kissing” or engaged in intimate encounters while intoxicated.

Defenders of the one-in-five figure will reply that the finding has been replicated by other studies. But these [studies](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/cdc-study-on-sexual-violence-in-the-us-overstates-the-problem/2012/01/25/gIQAHRKPWQ_story.html) suffer from some or all of the same flaws. Campus sexual assault is a serious problem and will not be solved by [statistical hijinks](http://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2014/01/24/bias-clouds-campus-assault-solutions/RJYPBGvOwdScjxKlxB9u3M/story.html).

**MYTH 5**: ***Women earn 77 cents for every dollar a man earns—for doing the same work.***

**FACTS**: No matter how many times this wage gap claim is decisively refuted by [economists](http://www.consad.com/content/reports/Gender%20Wage%20Gap%20Final%20Report.pdf), it always comes back. The bottom line: the 23-cent gender pay gap is simply the difference between the average earnings of all men and women working full-time. It does not account for differences in occupations, positions, education, job tenure or hours worked per week. When such [relevant factors](http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/02/01/no-women-don-t-make-less-money-than-men.html) are considered, the wage gap [narrows](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/christina-hoff-sommers/wage-gap_b_2073804.html) to the point of vanishing.

Wage gap activists say women with identical backgrounds and jobs as men still earn less. But they [always](http://www.aei-ideas.org/2014/04/once-you-impose-the-ceteris-paribus-condition-the-alleged-23-gender-pay-gap-starts-to-evaporate/) fail to take into account critical variables. Activist groups like the National Organization for Women have a fallback position: that women’s education and career choices are not truly free—they are driven by powerful sexist stereotypes. In this view, women’s tendency to retreat from the workplace to raise children or to enter fields like early childhood education and psychology, rather than better paying professions like petroleum engineering, is evidence of continued social coercion. Here is the problem: American women are among the best informed and most self-determining human beings in the world. To say that they are manipulated into their life choices by forces beyond their control is divorced from reality and demeaning, to boot.

Why do these reckless claims have so much appeal and staying power? For one thing, there is a lot of statistical illiteracy among journalists, feminist academics and political leaders. There is also an admirable human tendency to be protective of women—stories of female exploitation are readily believed, and vocal skeptics risk appearing indifferent to women’s suffering. Finally, armies of advocates depend on “killer stats” to galvanize their cause. But killer stats obliterate distinctions between more and less serious problems and send scarce resources in the wrong directions. They also promote bigotry. The idea that American men are annually enslaving more than 100,000 girls, sending millions of women to emergency rooms, sustaining a rape culture and cheating women out of their rightful salary creates rancor in true believers and disdain in those who would otherwise be sympathetic allies.

My advice to women’s advocates: Take back the truth.