



MOTHERHOOD

Today

The state of moms
and what it means
for the Church



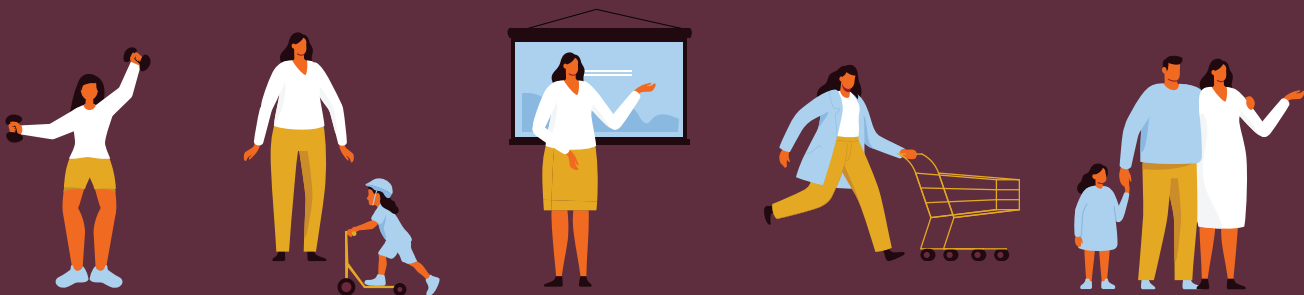
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MOTHERHOOD *Today*

The state of moms and what it means for the Church



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A Preface from The MomCo by MOPS International

Throughout history, few experiences have been as universally transformative as motherhood. Across cultures, generations and geography, the profound influence of mothers has shaped the course of civilizations. Yet, in the ever-evolving landscape of the modern world, the journey of motherhood has faced urgent challenges.

This study captures some of the raw, unfiltered realities of motherhood today, going beyond the idyllic portrayals of being a mother to shed light on the unspoken moments of doubt and pressure that many moms face.

But there's also an untapped well of strength and influence that mothers possess. What should this mean for the Church?

Start With Moms

When The MomCo by MOPS International—then, simply known as MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers)—was founded in 1973, emerging



Mandy Arioto

*President & CEO
of The MomCo by
MOPS International*

conversations around feminism, gender norms, the role of motherhood, reproductive rights and sexual liberation were starting to take center stage in the United States.

In the midst of this, seven women in Colorado invited moms to meet regularly to grow as women, parents and leaders, with the ultimate goal of reaching women with the hope of Jesus. Today, the small gathering they called MOPS now extends to 72 countries, 18 languages, 72,000 meetings a year and influences over a million moms annually. Through these groups, in the last seven years, more than 49,000 women have decided to follow Christ.

As the largest outreach to moms in the world, The MomCo by MOPS International is a pioneering movement defined by thought leadership and an ability to understand the times.

We have watched for decades as the marketing industry harnesses the attention and influence of moms across every business sector. Major brands allocate time and resources to focus on strategically utilizing the influence of moms. What would it look like for the Church to take moms seriously as well?

At The MomCo, we believe **reaching moms is exponential evangelism** and key to bringing

new families to church. When a mom comes to know Jesus, chances are her kids will, too. What we are seeing being sparked around the globe in the next Jesus movement is, once again, starting with one of the most overlooked groups of people: moms.

Even as trust in the Church wavers for some, moms are particularly open to faith conversations and want to raise their kids with values and a spiritual underpinning. With this, the Church has a unique opportunity to provide practical, relevant programming and resources for parents, especially mothers.

Motherhood Today includes groundbreaking data challenging long-held assumptions about moms. Our hope is that this research will also help you unleash the latent potential of mothers in your church right now.

May this be a new season of intentionally mobilizing the moms in your community. May women searching for hope flock to your church in droves. May you find joy as uncharted outreach methods take shape for and with moms, sparking a revival in your church and city. Amen, and let it be so. ♦



An Introduction by Barna Group

The saying goes, “A mother’s work is never done.”

Motherhood is a lifelong assignment filled with nurturing, teaching, guiding ... and a fair amount of multitasking. Mothers are central in rearing honest, contributing members of society’s next generation—but not without sacrifice.

Barna Group’s 2018 study *Christians at Work* finds mothers are making compromises as they pursue a family and / or career. While moms are relatively fulfilled in their family relationships, working moms are well behind fathers, single men and single women when it comes to satisfaction—relational, spiritual, emotional and beyond.¹

Our 2019 report *Households of Faith* tells the story of a mother’s influence, specifically in Christian homes. Consistently, Christian teens identify their mother as the principal housemate for almost all activities. When it comes to eating meals together, watching TV or movies, talking

about God and working through confrontations, mothers are right there.²

Adult respondents in the same study say they rely on their moms as sources of strength, companionship and wisdom. In turn, mothers meet a range of needs and provide support for their grown children and, for many, their grandchildren.³

Another Barna study, *The Impact of Women*, reports on the economic influence women—including mothers and grandmothers—have on the day-to-day management of individual and family income, financial decision-making and philanthropy. Half of U.S. adults (49%) say their mother has been the best example of generosity in their life, and 23 percent identify their grandmother as a model for generosity.⁴

All this to say, **congregations and organizations have much to gain if they intentionally represent, empower and partner with mothers.**

With numerous responsibilities, though, overwhelm and exhaustion are a reality for many moms. Knowing the lasting imprint of a mother's mark, how can churches encourage and equip these women?

This study, produced in partnership with The MomCo by MOPS International, seeks to help pastors find answers regarding the moms in their congregation, as well as those other moms who may attend or have stopped attending church.

Our partners at MomCo are not alone in their view that mothers are the linchpin of healthy families. But as you'll read in this report, moms today face unprecedented pressures. Parenting is harder than ever in a culture experiencing long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, along with economic uncertainties and chaotic, often confusing cultural times. But what happens when moms are supported? And what might support look like? These are the driving questions this study will ask—and help answer.

Moms & the Church

Motherhood Today illuminates and amplifies the perspectives of mothers from various demographics and seasons of life. Despite having different backgrounds and life stages, we see that many moms are experiencing a similar set of challenges—and similar feelings of isolation.

While Christian mothers are most often meeting the need for discipleship and faith formation of their children, Barna data reveals they are notably underserved by the Church. And with all that moms do, it can be easy to conflate their motherhood with their personhood, overlooking key components that speak to their gifts, goals, identity and purpose.

But there's great opportunity and hope for the road ahead. Moms today are in search of community—a sense of togetherness and affinity with other moms, as well as help and recognition from those around them. What better place for them to find this sense of belonging than in the Church.

This will take intentionality though—leaders who are willing to do the work to better understand the needs of moms, and supportive faith community that exemplifies Christ's care and concern for others. What might ministry to and with moms look like in these times? This report is written with this question in mind, offering data-informed reminders for both pastors—and mothers themselves—throughout.

Mothers could play a critical role in the next phase of outreach and growth in the Church. Get to know the state of motherhood today to better connect moms with God, their families and each other. ♦

At a Glance

- ◆ **Mothers highly value their role as a mom, viewing motherhood as a large part of who they are.** No matter a mom's age, being or becoming a mother is what's most important to her. And in spite of the various responsibilities and stressors that come with motherhood, most moms strongly agree "being a mother is rewarding."
- ◆ **A mother's influence stretches into every sphere of life, but many moms fail to recognize their value or impact.** Less than one in five moms (19%) says they regularly feel they are "able to contribute meaningfully to the world."
- ◆ **Many mothers (including Christian moms) don't think very highly of their community.** Moms see the necessity of community in their lives and say they have community around them. How these moms describe their community and where they fit in these circles, however, leaves room for improvement.

- ◆ **Along with gaps in community, anxiety and exhaustion are evident in the lives of most moms.** A strong majority of mothers says it is true "I usually find myself worrying about something" and "I feel tired most of the time."



- ◆ **Faith correlates with stronger emotional well-being among mothers.** Compared to non-Christian mothers, Christian moms are more likely to say they regularly feel "satisfied with my life choices," "fully present," "able to meaningfully contribute to the world" and "confident in myself."

- ◆ **Christian moms prioritize church attendance and say they do so primarily to grow their personal faith.** Though their child's spiritual growth may be important to them, most moms are going to church for their own sake first.



- ◆ **Yet ministry and resources specifically for mothers are limited in churches.** Just one in 10 U.S. pastors strongly agrees their church prioritizes mothers, and nearly half of moms say that their church “never” provides materials to help support them as a mother.
- ◆ **Furthermore, nearly one in four Christian moms is dissatisfied with their church.** There's a disconnect between pastors and mothers in their view of motherhood and the role women play in society.



More Than Children's Ministry

**How churches currently serve mothers
and why it's time to pivot**



There's no shortage of examples of motherhood in scripture. Mary's humility and obedience as she carried Jesus. Hannah's hope for a child and faithfulness to dedicate her firstborn, Samuel, to the Lord. Jochebed's courage to do the unthinkable to protect her son Moses. The lasting spiritual guidance of Lois and Eunice, the grandmother and mother of Timothy. Again and again, we see what's possible when a mom loves her child in light of God's love.

Before looking deeper at the state of motherhood, it's important to start with the Church. A godly mother is often pouring energy into her children. Two in five Christian mothers (39%) even have a personal goal of modeling a strong faith for their children. How, then, are moms being replenished spiritually?

Based on the data, there's opportunity for churches to reimagine how they engage with and

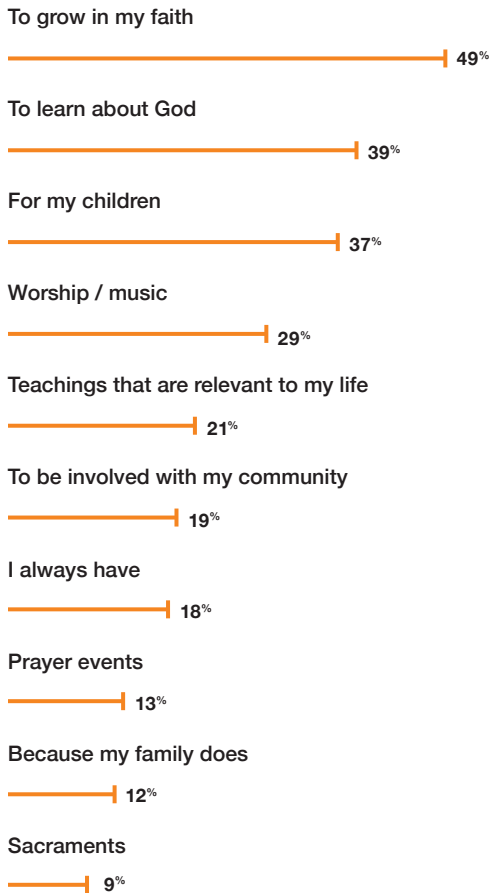
minister to moms. For instance, many mothers are attending a church that doesn't have a ministry to serve them specifically. It also appears that, Christian or not, moms continue to feel the weight of societal expectations, which can play a role in how they act and feel in church. This, and a number of other realities, might be causing a disconnect between moms and their local church. While ministry to children and women encompass parts of what it takes to serve mothers well, unique aspects pertaining to motherhood are likely left on the outskirts.

When Expectations Follow Moms to Church

Becoming a mother undoubtedly has an impact on church involvement, something our research backs. Christian mothers tell us that, since becoming a mom, they are significantly less likely to

Why Christian Moms Attend Church: Their Top 10 Reasons

Base: Christian mothers



n=691 U.S. self-identified Christian mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

be very involved (15% vs. 21% before becoming a mom) in their church. While over half of mothers (57%) recall being at least somewhat involved in their church before having children, today their reported involvement is lower (49%).

Even though the busyness of motherhood can make it more difficult to be directly involved in church, Christian moms still prioritize church attendance for various reasons. Roughly half (49%) say they go to church to grow in their faith. Another two in five go to learn about God (39%) and for their children (37%). After this, many Christian mothers attend church for the worship / music (29%). **Motherhood is just one dimension of how a Christian mom shows up in church; their own relationship to God remains their focus.**

When asked about the aspects of church Christian moms are satisfied with, small group ministry emerges as a clear favorite among the options listed (63%). Worship (35%), community

Christian Moms Admit They're Less Active in Church

Before you were a mother, how involved were you with your church?

Base: Christian mothers

- ◆ Very involved
- ◆ Somewhat involved
- ◆ Somewhat uninvolved
- ◆ Not at all involved
- ◆ Did not attend



Today, how involved are you with your church?



n=691 U.S. self-identified Christian mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

and spiritual growth (26% each) also receive notable agreement prompt satisfaction.

On the other end of the spectrum, moms are least satisfied with the mental health support (23%) and emotional support (16%) at their church. Another 15 percent are dissatisfied with the mothers' ministry (this question was asked of Christian moms, regardless of whether their church offered the listed ministries).

When Christian moms do make it to church, societal and household expectations sometimes follow them into these sacred spaces.

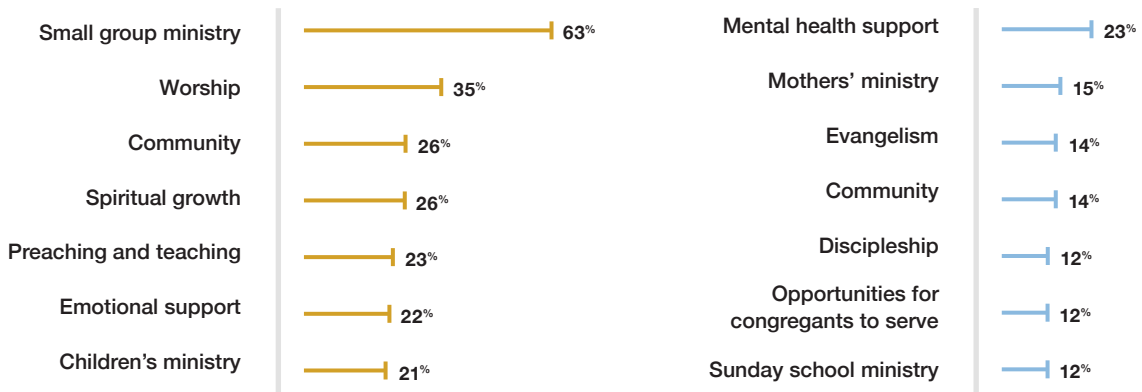
Given a list of items that might be expected of them at church, the plurality of mothers (37%) chooses “none of the above.” However, around three in 10 moms say “making sure your children are well behaved during service” (31%), “taking care of your child” (29%) and “being on time to

A Glimpse of How Christian Moms View Their Church

Thinking about your church, which of the following are you **most** / **least** satisfied with? Select up to seven.

Base: Christian mothers

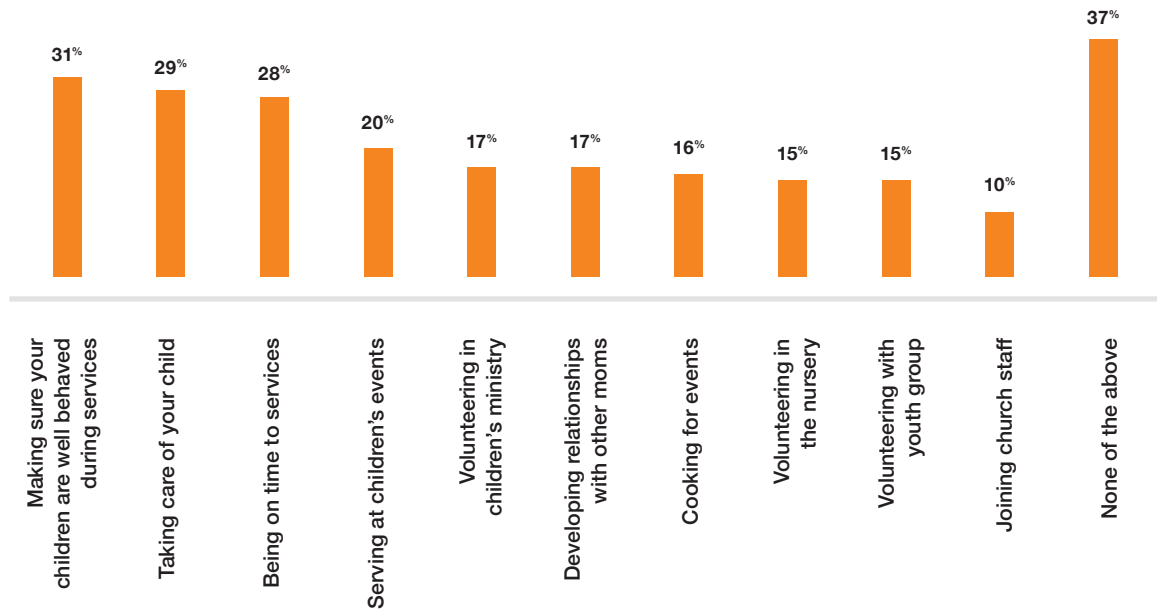
◆ Most ◆ Least



n=691 U.S. self-identified Christian mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

As a mother, do you feel like any of the following are expected of you at church?

Base: Christian mothers



n=691 U.S. self-identified Christian mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

services” (28%) are expected of them. Even at church, mothers are often acutely aware of how others perceive them or expect them to act in their role as a mom.

What Exactly Is Mothers' Ministry?

With so much expected of mothers both at home and in society, it can be especially valuable when churches show up for them in supporting and encouraging ways. Let's assess how this is currently being done—and where gaps exist.

When asked if her church offers any of the listed ministry efforts specifically for mothers, just over one in three Christian moms (35%) says their church offers childcare during services, and another one in five (22%) says their church

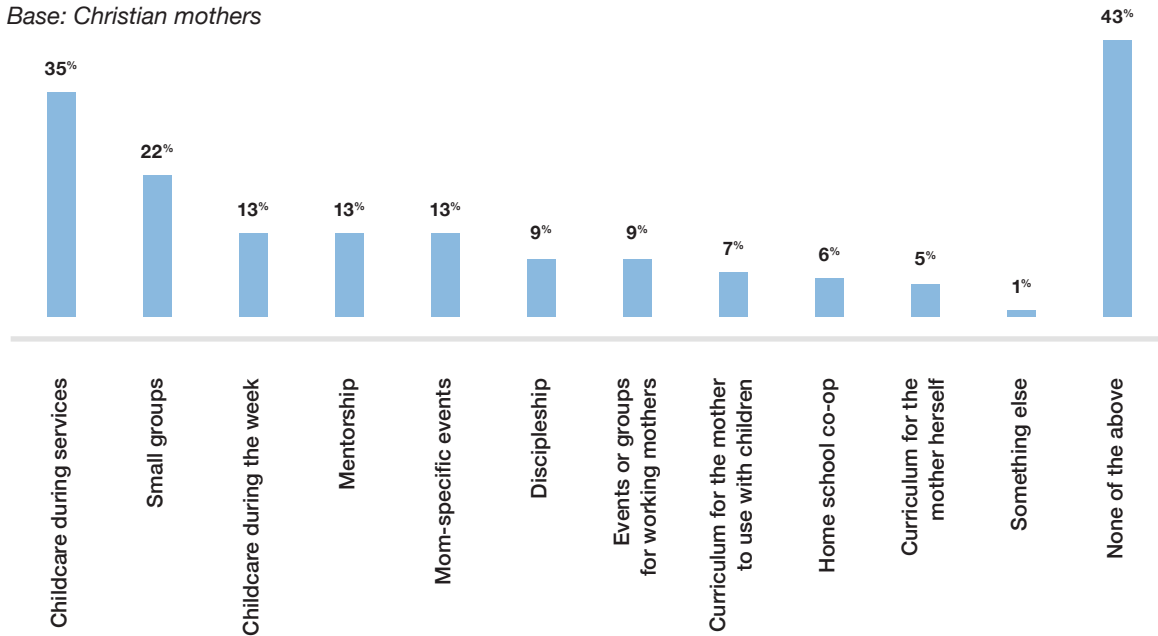
offers small groups specifically for mothers. Discouragingly, however, of all the options Barna listed, mothers largely said “none of the above” is offered by their church (43%).

There's also room for improvement when it comes to resources for mothers. Nearly half of Christian mothers (47%) say their church never offers them mom-specific resources. Currently, just under three in 10 Christian moms (28%) say their church provides them with materials specifically designed to support them as moms at least monthly (13% weekly, 15% monthly). Another 11 percent say this happens every three to six months, while 14 percent say it happens less often than that.

The Absence of Moms' Ministry

Does your church offer any of the following specifically for mothers?

Base: Christian mothers



n=691 U.S. self-identified Christian mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

Pastors offer similar responses to the same question, showing mothers have an accurate read of the lack of services and resources for them at church. When asked how often their church provides materials specifically intended to support mothers, the plurality of pastors (38%) says “never.”

Twenty-two percent of pastors state their church provides helpful resources to moms at least monthly, while 18 percent say this happens every three to six months. Just under one in four (23%) says this happens less often than every six months.

Asked if the churches they currently attend do anything particularly well to support mothers, the majority of moms says “no” or that they are

unsure. One mom even states, “I cannot think of anything, and this disturbs me.”

Others, however, share the ways their churches actively support mothers. “They have mothers’ support groups and Bible study groups, sometimes weekly and sometimes monthly,” says one mom. Another notes, “The church I currently attend makes quite a few accommodations that support mothers. They have recently set up a room specifically for breastfeeding mothers [and they provide] childcare during services.”

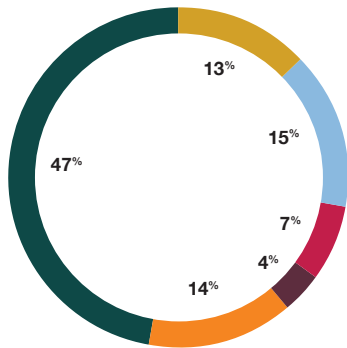
“They have a beautiful women’s ministry,” comments another mom, “and we meet for ‘Mug & Muffin’ Saturdays. We share breakfast and a fun craft.” These practical examples show

Christian Moms See a Gap in Resources at Church That Pastors Often Don't Recognize

How often do leaders from your church provide you with materials specifically intended to help support you as a mother?

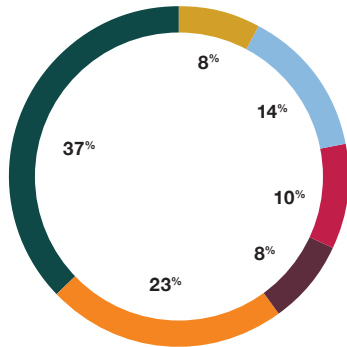
Base: Christian mothers

- ◆ Every week
- ◆ At least once a month
- ◆ At least once every 3 months
- ◆ At least once every 6 months
- ◆ Less often than that
- ◆ Never



How often does your church provide women with materials specifically intended to help support them as a mother?

Base: Pastors



n=691 U.S. self-identified Christian mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022; n=453 U.S. Protestant pastors, January 10–18, 2023.

how even simple gestures and accommodations can go a long way with mothers.

While some mothers list children’s ministry or childcare as a way that their church supports them, other mothers don’t see this as something that directly ministers to them. One mom explains, “[My church offers] children’s church, but [parents] often need to be part of it. [If] I miss the sermon and the kids are essentially in daycare, what spiritual growth is happening then?”

Remember, the data shows that most Christian moms are going to church first of all for their own spiritual growth. Here we see evidence of this desire and how a disconnect can arise.

Another mom shares, “There is a difference [between] women’s and mothers’ ministries. Most churches do not focus on mothers but instead bundle all women *together* for ministry.”

More than anything, moms seem to appreciate efforts that acknowledge their needs and promote meaningful community. But based on the above data, it seems churches aren’t quite hitting the mark—and many pastors may be unaware.

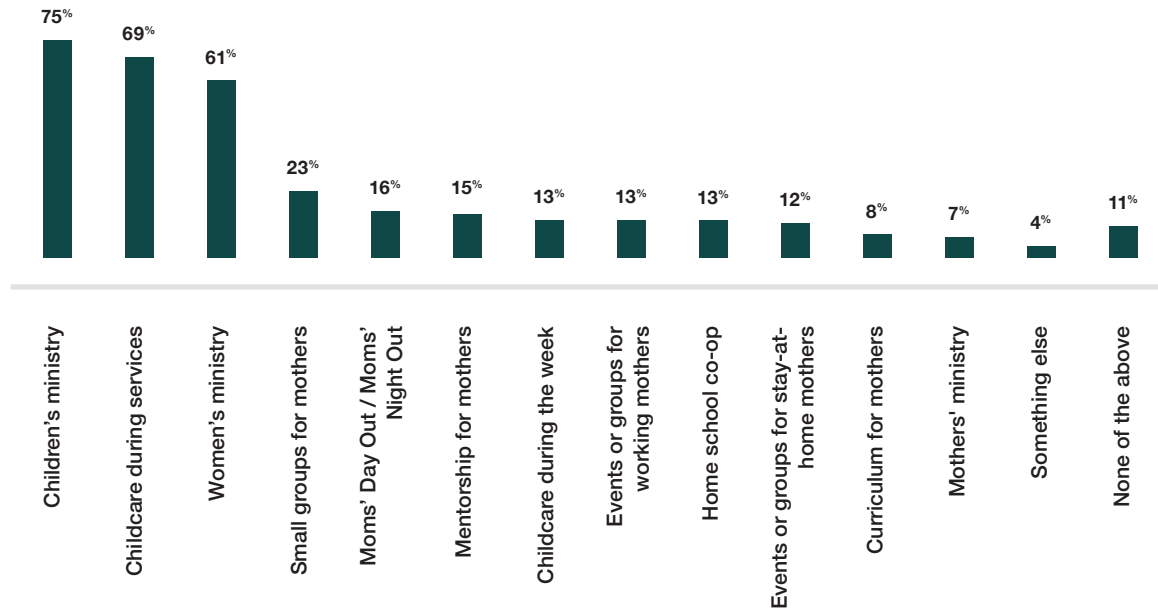
Nearly seven in 10 pastors (69%) feel their church’s ministry to mothers is at least somewhat strong (13% “very,” 56% “somewhat”). And only one in five pastors (21%) says they would like to see their church do a better job in serving mothers.

Where is the miscommunication happening? Perhaps part of the answer can be found in what pastors see as a ministry to moms versus what mothers see—or hope to see.

Asked what their church specifically offers to mothers, just 7 percent of pastors state that their church offers a mothers’ ministry. Instead, the majority choose children’s ministry (75%), childcare during services (69%) and women’s ministry (61%) as the ways their church supports mothers. Just under a quarter (23%) says their church offers small groups for mothers.

Does your church offer any of the following specifically for mothers? Select all that apply.

Base: Pastors



n=453 U.S. Protestant pastors, January 10–18, 2023.

In other aspects of the survey, we see that most pastors tend to emphasize how mothers are similar to all women, instead of how they may be a distinct subgroup of women.

Similarly, pastors often equate ministry for children and ministry to mothers. But it's important to remember that childcare—while allowing all parents a time to worship without having to monitor their children—isn't specifically a ministry for mothers.

Analyzing mothers' and pastors' responses side by side makes it clear that churches can, and should, be doing more to support mothers in more intentional and specific ways.

What Moms Want from a Church

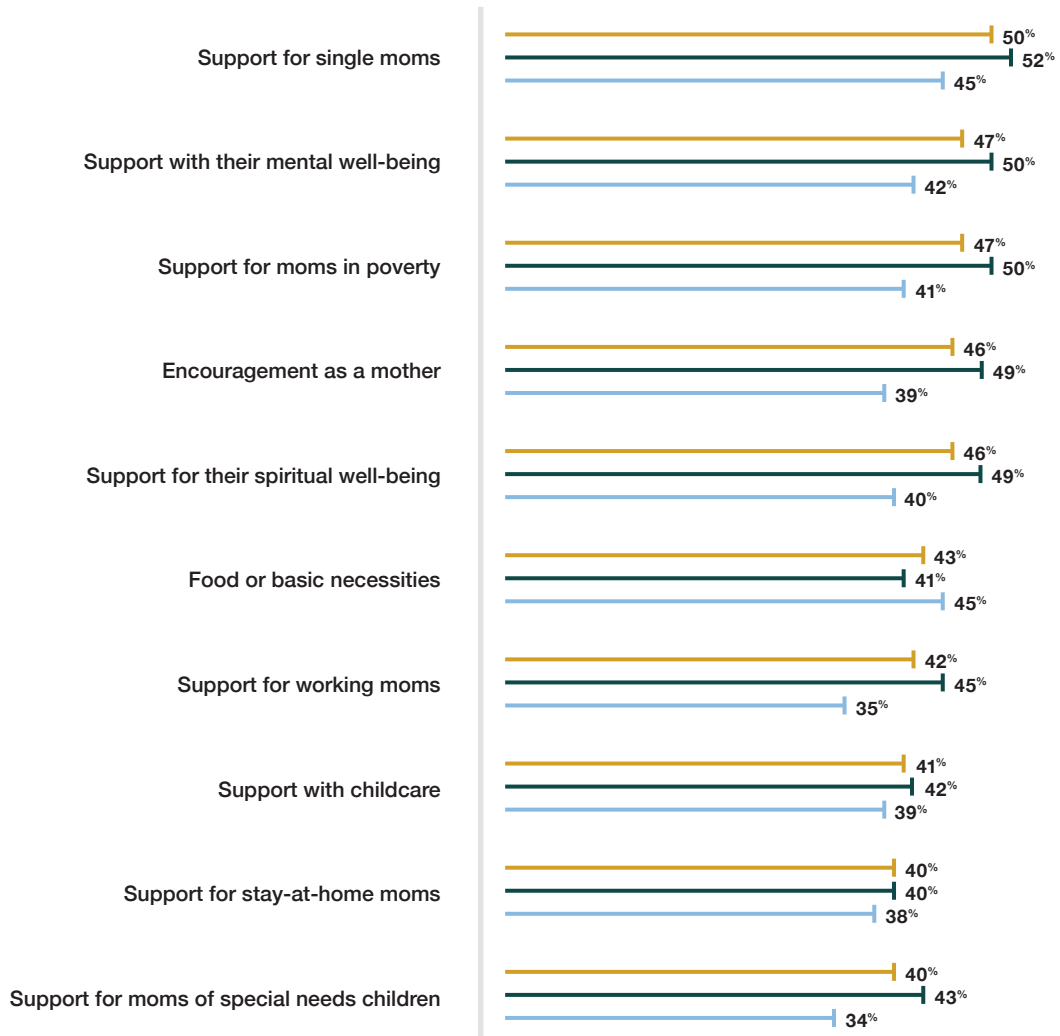
U.S. moms, both Christian and non-Christian, shared with Barna what they believe churches should provide mothers. Top selections include support for single moms, support with their mental well-being, support for moms in poverty, encouragement as a mother and support for their spiritual well-being.

Non-Christian moms are more likely than Christian moms to also look for practical support, saying the church should provide food or basic necessities (45% vs. 41%) and housing for mothers (34% vs. 23%).

Moms Expect Various Forms of Support From Churches

Do you believe a church should provide any of the following for a mother? Select all that apply.

◆ All U.S. moms ◆ Christians moms ◆ Non-Christian moms



n=1,008 U.S. mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

To moms, the church is viewed not only as a resource for spiritual growth, but also as a place that considers their holistic well-being. If these expectations feel overwhelming or outside of your “know-how” as a pastor or leader, think about where partnership might be beneficial. Additionally, here are some examples from moms of what they’d appreciate:

- ◆ “Providing workshops for relevant parenting / motherhood themes so that moms can further develop their friendships and relationships with others in the church community.”
- ◆ “Offering regular counseling and providing childcare during the week for working mothers.”
- ◆ “Hosting more seminars and events to support mothers’ mental health.”
- ◆ “I wish there were more families and women to lean on—[more] mentoring between older and younger women.”
- ◆ “It would be nice to have a community or small group of mothers instead of just all women or all parents.”
- ◆ “Timing of sessions for moms [is important]. Activities for kids feel like they are geared toward stay-at-home moms [rather than kids] with both parents working.”

The Impact of Women & Mothers in Leadership

Moms are looking for churches to go the extra mile in acknowledging the mothers in their midst. While three-quarters of Christian mothers (75%) believe their pastor respects mothers, fewer agree that their church leaders celebrate them as a mother (59%), equip them to be a better mother (56%) or understand the unique needs of mothers (55%).

Also, less than half agree that their pastors prioritize mothers’ emotional well-being (48%) or prioritize mothers in general (46%).

Could the makeup of church leadership have a direct impact on how mothers’ needs are prioritized in ministry? Perhaps. Research confirms that women are often less represented in church leadership—and this can negatively correlate with a mom’s satisfaction with her church. Christian moms in a church that has some female leadership are 9 points more likely than other Christian moms to be “very satisfied” with their current church.

How likely is it that Christian moms have seen women represented in leadership roles in their churches?

Less than one in 10 have had a female senior pastor (8%) or youth pastor (9%) at some point in life.

Looking beyond the pulpit, two in five Christian mothers say that, at their current church, women are present in the role of secretary or administrator and youth or children’s ministry leader (39% each). Another 36 percent say a woman leads the women’s ministry. Fewer have a woman leading the worship ministry (23%), serving as an elder (13%) or as a pastor other than the lead pastor (12%).

Meanwhile, three in 10 Christian moms (31%) say women are not leading in any of these roles at their church.

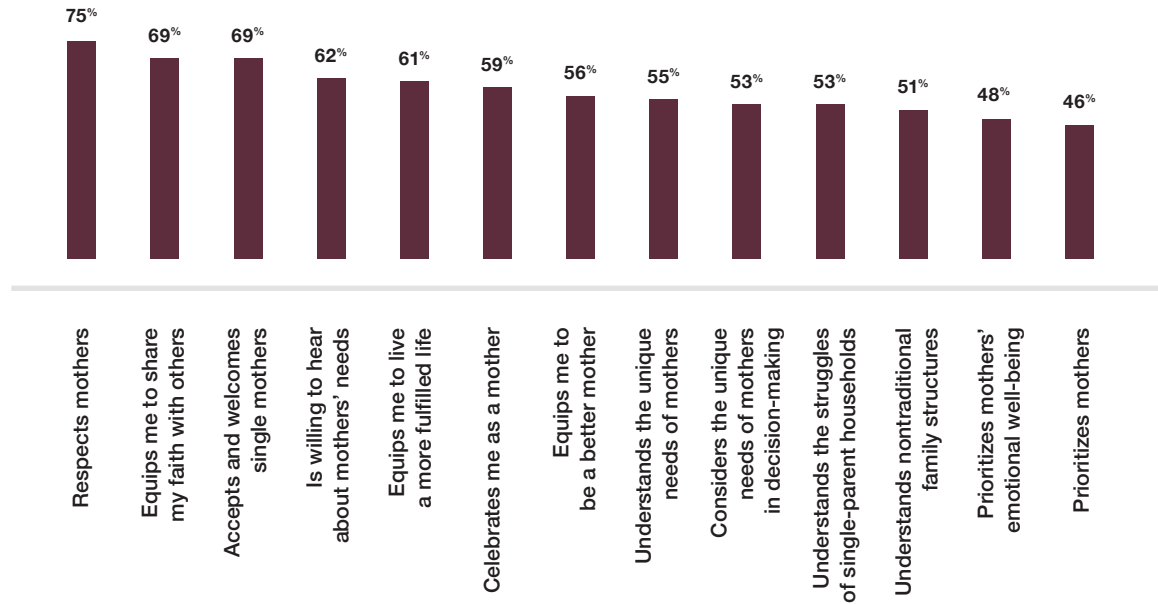
Of course, there are denominations that reserve pastoral and teaching roles, as well as eldership only for men, and mothers who attend such churches may not expect to see women in these positions; some of this is reflected in the data.

But even with these denominational restrictions accounted for, three in five Christian moms (60%) agree at least somewhat that their church would be open to having a woman step into the

Overall, Christian Moms Hold a High View of Their Pastor

“My pastor ...”

Base: Christian mothers



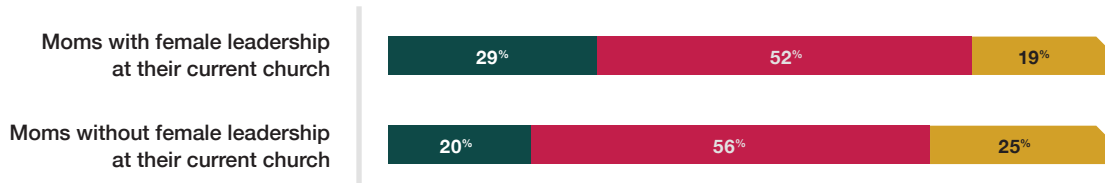
n=691 U.S. self-identified Christian mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

Moms' Church Satisfaction Is Higher When Women Lead

How satisfied are you in each of the following areas of your life today?

“Your church”

◆ Very satisfied ◆ Satisfied ◆ Not satisfied



n=691 U.S. self-identified Christian mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

role of lead or senior pastor. Further, moms' belief that their church would be open to women leading in other capacities at their church only increases from there.

There's some optimism among mothers about how their church might begin to serve and utilize them—and this is good news! Though these women may not currently be experiencing ministry that's specifically for moms, many

remain hopeful and still desire opportunities to grow and develop at church.

Since moms are coming to church for their own spiritual growth first, how can this experience be more meaningful for them? Based on the chart on page 18, "support" in various forms is what moms are expecting most. Let this be a starting point as you think beyond children's and women's ministry to show mothers you care. ♦



There's Power in Partnership

When I hear that moms aren't getting what they need from church, I am saddened but not surprised. Fortunately, in our church, we've discovered how MomCo is able to powerfully address the needs of moms. [This] ministry actually does all of the things that pastors got into ministry for—outreach, evangelism, discipleship, charity. And because you're finding a group of people who are in such a tangible and visceral point of need, it has explosive, exponential impact.

In our church, we want to position all of our ministries to become “circles of revival” where people can encounter God in a fresh, beautiful, new kind of way. [This ministry to moms] has actually become one of the greatest circles of revival in our church.

MomCo had to fight an uphill battle for 10 years to even get space in our church to gather. We completely ignored it and minimized it because we didn't think it was important. We were blind to the needs of moms.

Right now, every church in America has a group of women who are in real, tangible need of others to come alongside them and help them out in an incredibly significant and vital stage of life. You also have a significant number of women who are incredibly equipped to step into that moment right now.

Pastors, allow God to open your eyes to both the women who are in need and the women who are positioned to come alongside them. You have an unbelievable opportunity to see God move in lives bigger than you could have possibly imagined. ♦



Jamie Wamsley

*Associate senior
pastor & campus pastor
at The Chapel*

Q+A Kristen Wilkerson

Speaking to the Unique Experiences of Moms

Q • In this research, we see that most pastors think of women’s ministry and children’s ministry / child-care as ministry to moms. Many mothers, however, desire ministry and programs that are specifically for them. Why is it important to not paint moms—and ministry to them—with a broad brush?

A • As a pastor and a mom of three young kids and one on the way, even just this last year I’ve gone through a challenging time of motherhood with one of my children. I recognized the need for this (specific ministry to moms) and how it’s important to understand that moms go through seasons.

You do have the moms of preschoolers who are in the “life is chaotic, and I’m just trying to hold it together” stage. But then you’ve got moms whose kids are growing up and going through big changes. They’re wondering how to navigate all of the questions. [For one mom it’s] her kid won’t eat chicken nuggets anymore. [For another mom, it’s] her kid talking about social media.

This is where small groups can come into play. I think small groups need to have specific focuses for moms so that the women in your church feel like they can go and be with someone who understands what they’re going through or can be a shoulder for them while going through it. These small-setting ministries are necessary for moms.

Q • Nearly one in four Christian moms is dissatisfied with their church. What unique needs and experiences among moms might leaders be overlooking?



Kristen Wilkerson is a pastor, speaker, writer, wife, mother and—above all—an encourager. She enjoys speaking life into others, inspiring and challenging them to live out their God-given purpose. Kristen and her husband, Taylor Wilkerson, lead Trinity New York. kristenwilkerson.com

A • I actually think that the issue isn’t so much about our ministries and more of our lack of multi-generational churches.

This is kind of a different idea, but I think a lot of our churches today can be divided generationally. We’ve got all of these new church plants; my church is one of them. We don’t have a lot of older men and women of God in our community yet. And that’s something that we’re aware of and asking God, “How can we do this? How can we serve? How can this be a church that the grandmas and the babies can be at?”

[Because] it’s one thing for me to sit down and talk with one of my peers, one of my best friends about what’s going on. It’s another thing to call “sister Pat” from my mom and dad’s church who’s 75, has raised kids, has prayed through

and has grandkids that she's praying through. There's "I'm with you." Then, there's *wisdom*. "I'm on the other side, and here's how you go through these seasons."

This mentorship, this spiritual mothering is lacking in our churches today. [Even beyond this], there's a lack of depth in spiritual maturity in our churches. Having wise voices would transform a generation that's being taught by social media.

Q • How does vibrant ministry to moms benefit a church? How does it benefit a mother?

A • Let's be honest, for some moms just *getting* to church can be a place of burnout. So, when a mom is poured into and she's receiving, she knows, "I didn't get my kids out of the house and go through all of this for nothing. I know that I'm getting poured into. I know that I'm going to be refreshed."

Proverbs [11:25] talks about how those who are refreshed, refresh others. The whole church feels the impact of a refreshed mother. She's able to have the strength to lead her home with a little more endurance and perseverance. And you see it on all levels in your church—serving, small groups, attendance, discipleship.

When a mom's poured into, there's a legacy that's built onto it. So, you may not even see it right now in your churches or when you have this Moms' Night or this Women's Night. But what's happening is this generational blessing that, 10 years down the road—because mom was taken care of—her sons and her daughters are big parts of the church, building the Church.

Kristen's reminder to mothers:

God didn't make a mistake when he made you the mother of your children. He knew exactly the kind of mom that they needed. It's not just that he gave you those kids. He gave those kids *you* as their mother.

As a young mom, I remember crying and thinking, "Who's going to take care of me?" Here I am caring for this little one-week-old baby asking, "God, how am I going to do this? How are you going to help me?" And I felt the Holy Spirit pull me in close and say, "Everything you need to be a mom, I've already placed within you."

As a woman, when we're born, all of our eggs are already in the womb with us. Which is just an unbelievable idea when you think of how creative and extravagant God is. The DNA to make up that child 26 years down the road, when I was born, it was already in me. So, even scientifically, everything I needed to be a mom was there.

With God's help, we can do it. He is always good to provide the wisdom, the strength, the endurance, and he knows how to raise our kids better than we do. Trust that he's given you those children, and he's given them you as their mother. You're doing better than you think you are. ♦

Find extended interviews and podcast content to further explore *Motherhood Today* at barna.com/motherhood.





No Such Thing as a Supermom

An honest picture of the mental and emotional well-being of today's mothers

The idea of being “super” has long been a fascination of society. In fiction, having extraordinary abilities to overcome any circumstance is often celebrated. In a memorable scene from the 2004 film *Spider-Man 2*, Peter Parker’s Aunt May—the strongest maternal figure in his story—declares, “Everybody loves a hero.

“People line up for them, cheer them, scream their names. And years later, tell how they stood for hours in the cold rain just to catch a glimpse of the one who taught them to *hold on* a second longer.”⁵

Being a mom is one of the most rewarding roles and also one of the hardest. A mother might wish she had superhuman abilities for the job—but she doesn’t.

In reality, connecting these lofty ideals to motherhood can prove harmful. While usually meant to be a celebratory term, the “supermom”

label plagues many mothers, pushing them into “mom guilt” and other insecurities that challenge their identity and worth. With the rise of social media use among moms, the interactions many mothers—especially new moms—have online are also causing higher levels of stress as they compare their parenting to others.⁶

Barna research shows that today’s moms understand the importance of prioritizing mental health, self-care and other practices for a healthy lifestyle. Yet, many mothers admit they don’t always prioritize this for themselves.

The little girls who were told “You can have it all”—a family, a career, time for hobbies and friends—are now moms who embraced this ideal and feel a sense of “having to *do* it all.” What does this mean for their well-being? And how might the Church help?

The Mind of a Mother

When we asked mothers what it's like to be a mom today, they often note the weight they feel. Christian moms in Barna-led focus groups used words like “responsibility” and “doer of all.” Single moms emphasize “anxiety,” “stress” and “hard” as words to describe motherhood. Non-Christian moms associate motherhood with a “juggling act” and being “busy.”

Thinking about the goals they have for their kids, most mothers say they want their children to love and accept who they are (78%), grow up to be kind people (72%) and be financially stable (57%). For themselves, moms have goals of financial stability (68%), building a stable and healthy home environment (59%), “loving and accepting myself” (58%) and “making time for myself” (52%).

Motherhood involves a range of emotions, and it's evident in this research. Although U.S.

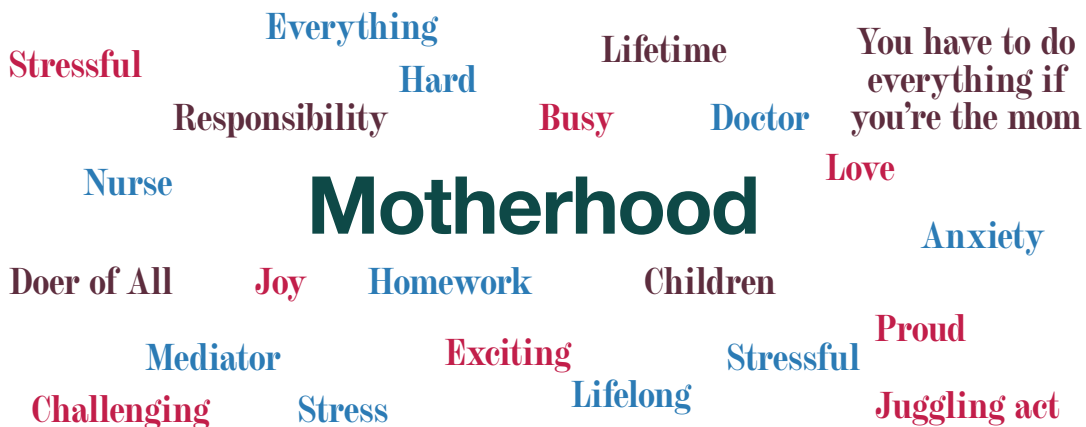
moms often report feeling someone cares for them (48%), fewer than half say they experience this on a regular basis. Roughly this same number of mothers report regularly feeling anxious about important decisions (44%), overwhelmed with responsibilities (44%) and uncertain about the future (43%).

Data hints of a need to improve how moms are recognized and encouraged. Only about two in five moms say they regularly feel “someone believes in me” (38%) and “deeply cared for by those around me” (37%).

For many mothers, their optimism and contentment with life could also use a boost. In addition, less than one in five moms (19%) says they regularly feel they are able to contribute meaningfully to the world.

Words Moms Associate with Motherhood

◆ Christian moms ◆ Single moms ◆ Non-Christian moms

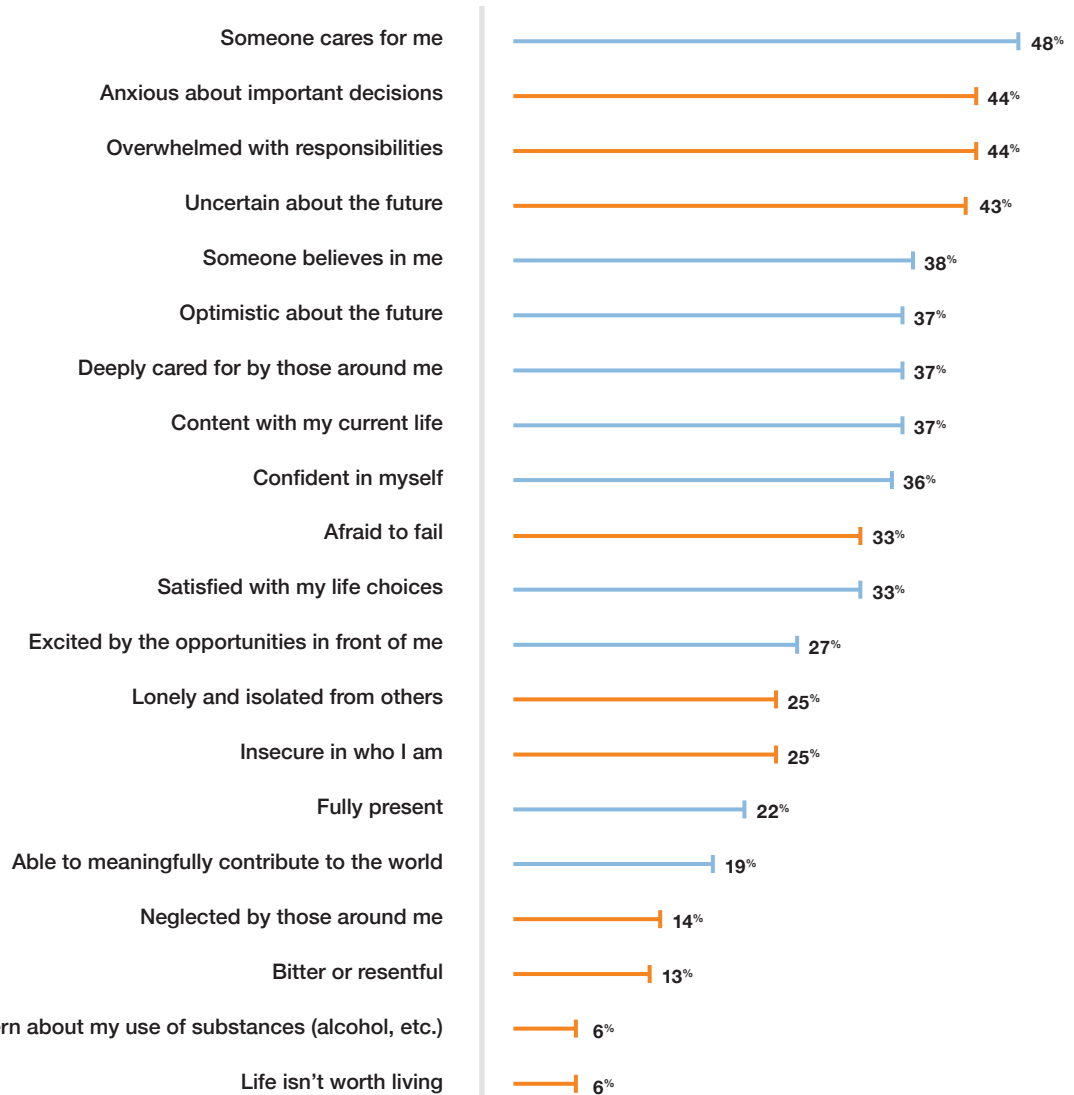


Responses from Barna-led focus groups of U.S. mothers of children under 18, August 2022.

How Moms View Their Life & Circumstances

Of the following, which would you say you feel or experience on a regular basis? Select all that apply.

◆ Positive ◆ Negative

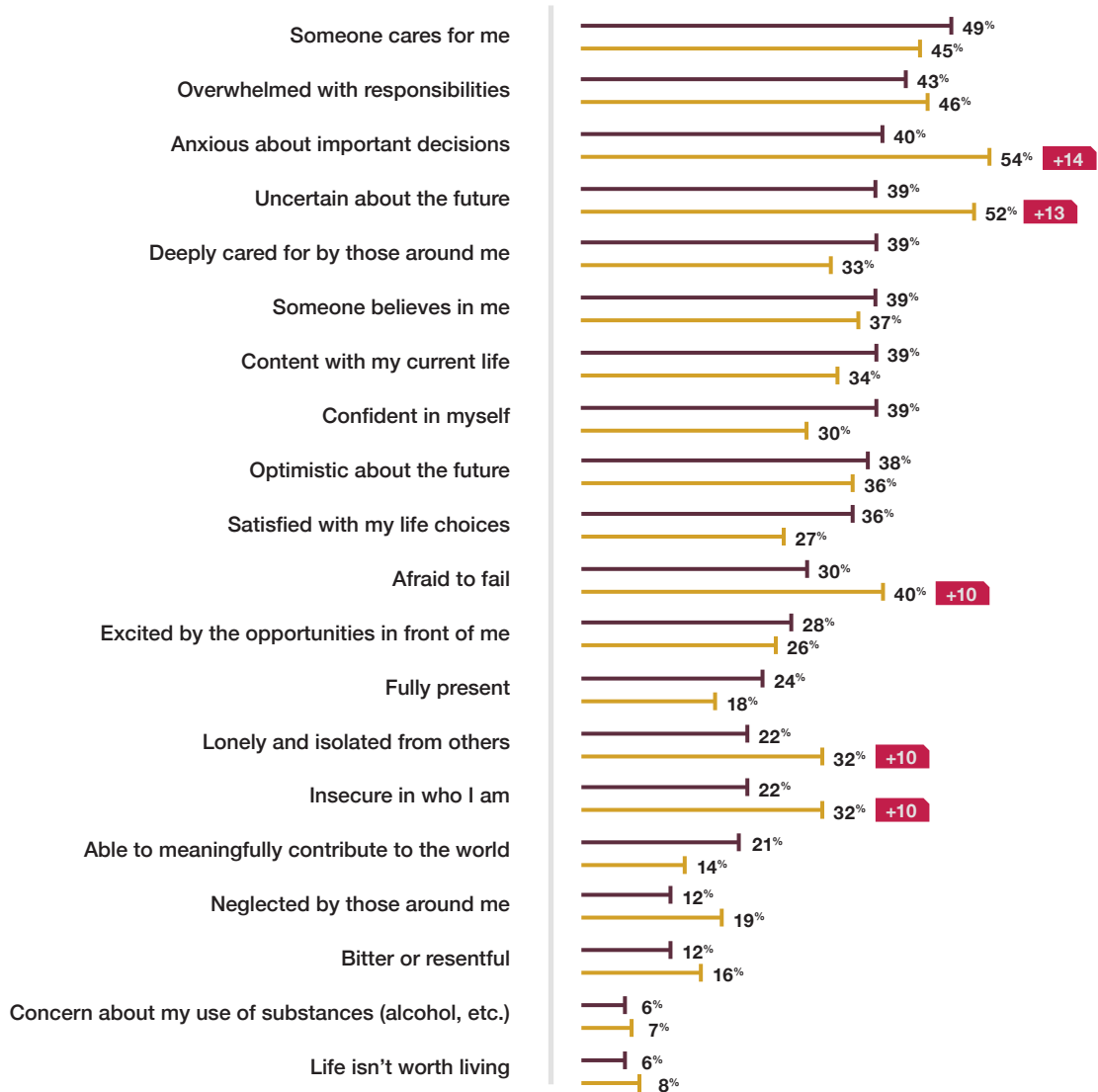


n=1,008 U.S. mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

Perceptions of Life: Where Christian & Non-Christian Moms Differ

Of the following, which would you say you feel or experience on a regular basis? Select all that apply.

◆ Christian ◆ Non-Christian ■ Significant percent differences



n=1,008 U.S. mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

Despite a mother's significance, many moms fail to see just how crucial their motherhood is to society.

Christian faith does seem to improve a mother's outlook in some regards, though the Church's role in helping a mom navigate the mental and emotional load of motherhood requires a holistic approach that includes, but isn't limited to, helping her grow spiritually.

To a notably higher degree than non-Christian moms, Christian moms say they

regularly feel "confident in myself" (39% vs. 30% of non-Christian), "satisfied with my life choices" (36% vs. 27%) fully present (24% vs. 18%) and able to meaningfully contribute to the world (21% vs. 14%). Non-Christian mothers, on the other hand, are more likely to report regularly feeling uncertain about the future (52% vs. 39% of Christian moms), anxious about important decisions (54% vs. 40%) afraid to fail (40% vs. 30%), and lonely and isolated from others (32% vs. 22%).

Stress Among Mothers Through the Pandemic Era

Even before COVID-19, numerous studies and articles revealed that moms are more likely than dads to report dealing with high stress levels.⁷ For many mothers, this was only amplified when everything shut down due to the pandemic.

In an early 2022 Barna survey, when asked how they felt about the pandemic, nearly two

in five working mothers (36%) said "I am overwhelmed" (compared to 23% of working fathers).⁸ In research for *Motherhood Today*, we see that high levels of stress worsened for most moms during the COVID-19 pandemic (56% of moms say their stress increased during the pandemic).

Stress Levels Among Moms During the Pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, has your overall stress increased, decreased or remained the same?

◆ Increased ◆ Stayed the same ◆ Decreased



n=1,008 U.S. mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

Factors such as feeling disconnected from others, changes in children’s education / schooling, mental health and work-life balance caused moms the most stress. Their own physical health, as well as the physical and mental health of their children, also became a bigger concern. For two in three moms (66%), just *being a mother* during the global pandemic was a source of severe or moderate stress.

Fast-forward to today—we continue to see the importance of a mother caring for herself, having healthy thoughts and habits and maintaining proper balance and boundaries.

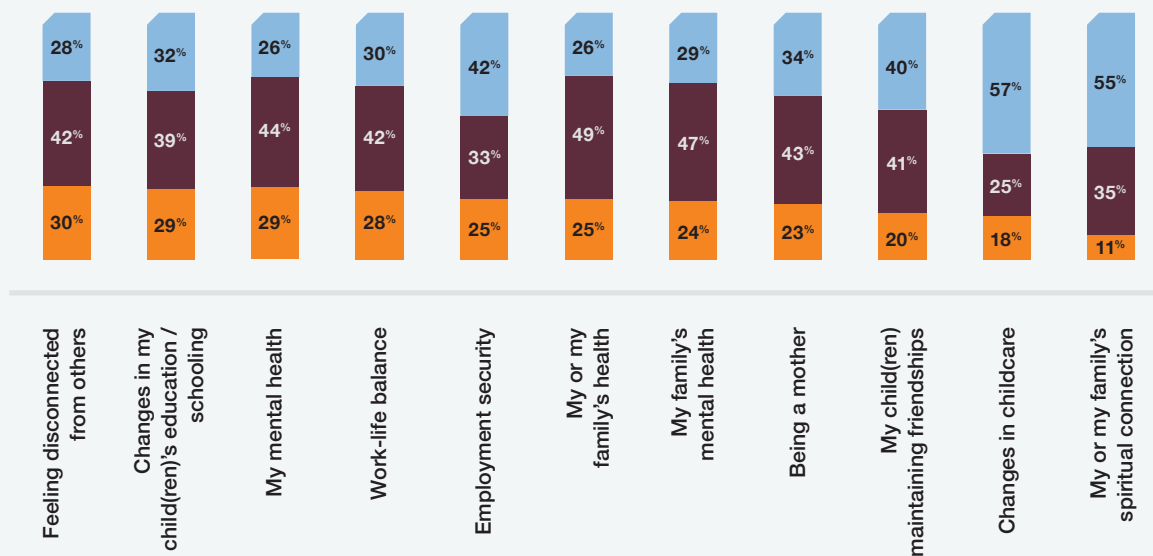
Despite the strain and stress of motherhood, an overwhelming majority of women in our study

(68%) say that being / becoming a mother is the most important thing to them. Seven in 10 mothers also say they’re “very satisfied” with being a mother (71%) and their relationships with their child or children (70%).

Could it be that moms assume stress is an automatic result of motherhood, and therefore are more prone to overlook (or simply “just deal with”) the negative effects this can have on their lives? In an area where moms may not advocate for themselves as much as they should, how might your leadership, church or community help moms be more mindful of the mental and emotional load they carry?

During the COVID-19 pandemic, how much stress did each of the following cause you?

◆ Severe ◆ Moderate ◆ None

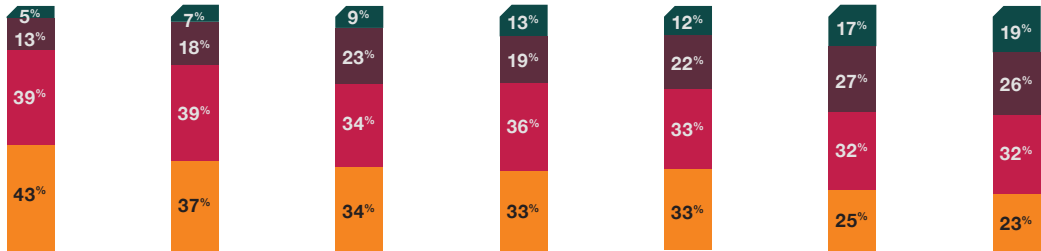


n=1,008 U.S. mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

The Reality of Mom Guilt

We'd like to ask you a few questions about being a mother in today's world. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

◆ Agree strongly ◆ Agree somewhat ◆ Disagree somewhat ◆ Disagree strongly



Being a mother is harder than ever today

To be a mother, I have had to put my own ambitions aside

I rarely have "me time" as a mother

I struggle to feel like I am enough as a mother

I often feel guilty for prioritizing my own wants or needs

I often feel criticized for my decisions as a mother

I often feel judged by other mothers

n=1,008 U.S. mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

Momma Needs a Break

Looking at how moms view motherhood uncovers some of the pressures they often feel. Over two in five mothers (43%) strongly agree being a mother is harder than ever today. Today's mothers also struggle to feel like they are enough as a mother (33% agree strongly, 36% agree somewhat) and agree they "often feel guilty for prioritizing my own wants or needs" (33% agree strongly, 33% agree somewhat).

Anxiety and exhaustion are a glaring reality for moms today. Three in four mothers (77%) say it is at least somewhat true "I usually find myself worrying about something," a sentiment that remains whether a mom is Christian or not. A strong majority of these mothers also say it's true "I feel tired most of the time" (68% of all moms, 65% of Christian moms and 74% of non-Christian

moms). These experiences trickle down into how a mother shows up day to day.

Just 22 percent of moms in this study say they experience being "fully present" on a regular basis. Instead, more than two in five moms (44%) say they regularly experience being overwhelmed with responsibilities, and one in four (25%) reports regularly feeling lonely and isolated from others.

How, then, are moms relieving this strain—if at all? To get an idea, we asked moms a series of questions surrounding self-care (defined in the survey as "practices or acts that you intentionally do to promote your own well-being").

Rest or sleep is the top way mothers practice self-care (70%). Other forms of self-care that mothers prefer are also largely passive. For example, a mom's common choice to listen to music

(61%) or watch TV or movies (58%) doesn't require much effort on her part.

Spiritual practices aren't at the top of the list for moms when it comes to the ways they practice self-care. Above prayer (46%) and connecting with God (45%), Christian moms are more likely to say taking time to rest or sleep (70%), listen to music (58%) and spend quality time with family (58%) is what it means for them to practice self-care. Watching TV or movies, having quiet time, and eating or drinking also rank higher than prayer and connecting with God among Christian mothers.

Focus groups for *Motherhood Today* reveal the conflicting thoughts moms have about self-care. For some, this is where "mom guilt" comes into play:

"There was a lot of guilt [when making] time for myself knowing that hands-on motherhood was not forever. So instead of going out with my friends during the week [or] going to do something for me, I felt very guilty about being away from my kids. And I would say even still to this day."

Another mom talked about the importance of making time for self-care, even in small ways.

"We set up walks," she said of her friend group. "We've moved around a lot, but we always keep in touch. I have three different friends who I've set up walks with. We figure out what time works for everybody and at least once a week, I have somebody to walk with. We talk or vent or whatever."

No matter their idea of self-care, moms admit it's not always a priority. Mothers in these focus groups expressed a "bad habit of knocking my self-care to the side" or not being good at "making the time for [yourself] when your children are your focus."

In a previous Barna study, 30 percent of working mothers said they could achieve better work-life balance if they "had more quiet time to regain perspective" and "more opportunities to exercise."⁹ This offers a glimpse into what a break or relief could look like for moms.

Most mothers say they are able to practice self-care at least weekly (30% daily and 33% weekly). About one in four moms reports practicing self-care monthly (17% a few times a month and 7% at least once a month).

Top Seven Ways Christian Moms Practice Self-Care

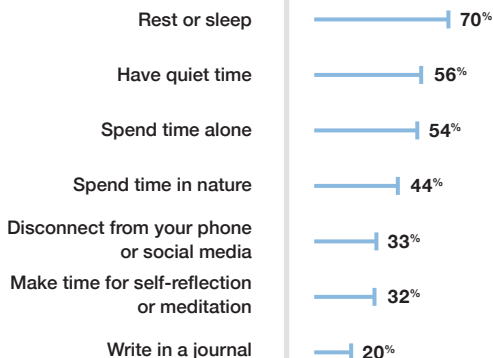


n=1,008 U.S. mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

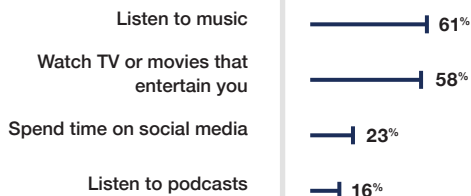
How Moms Practice Self-Care

Using the following list, what does it mean for you to practice self-care? Select all that apply.

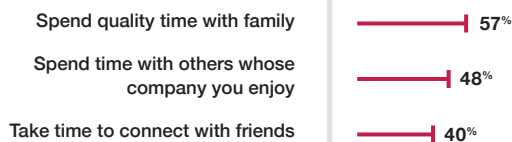
Quiet / Introspective



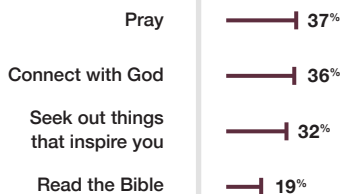
Passive



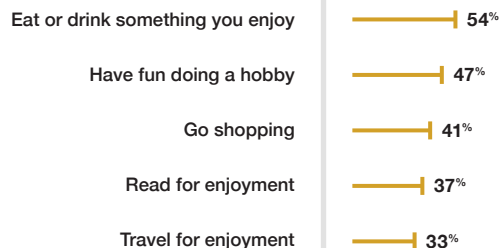
Social



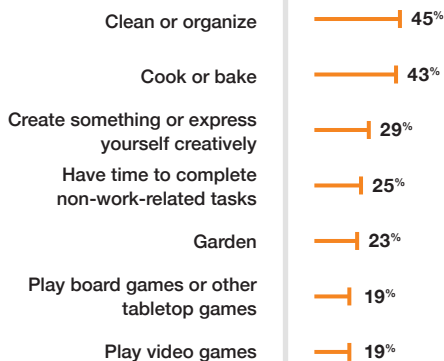
Formative



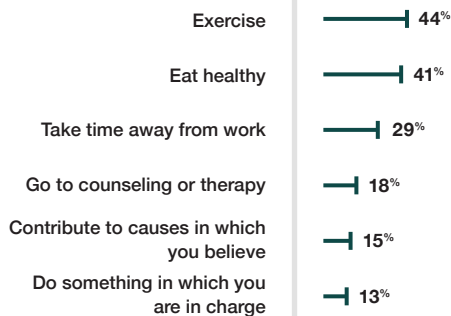
Indulgent



Hands-on



Lifestyle-related



n=1,008 U.S. mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

In Search of Satisfaction

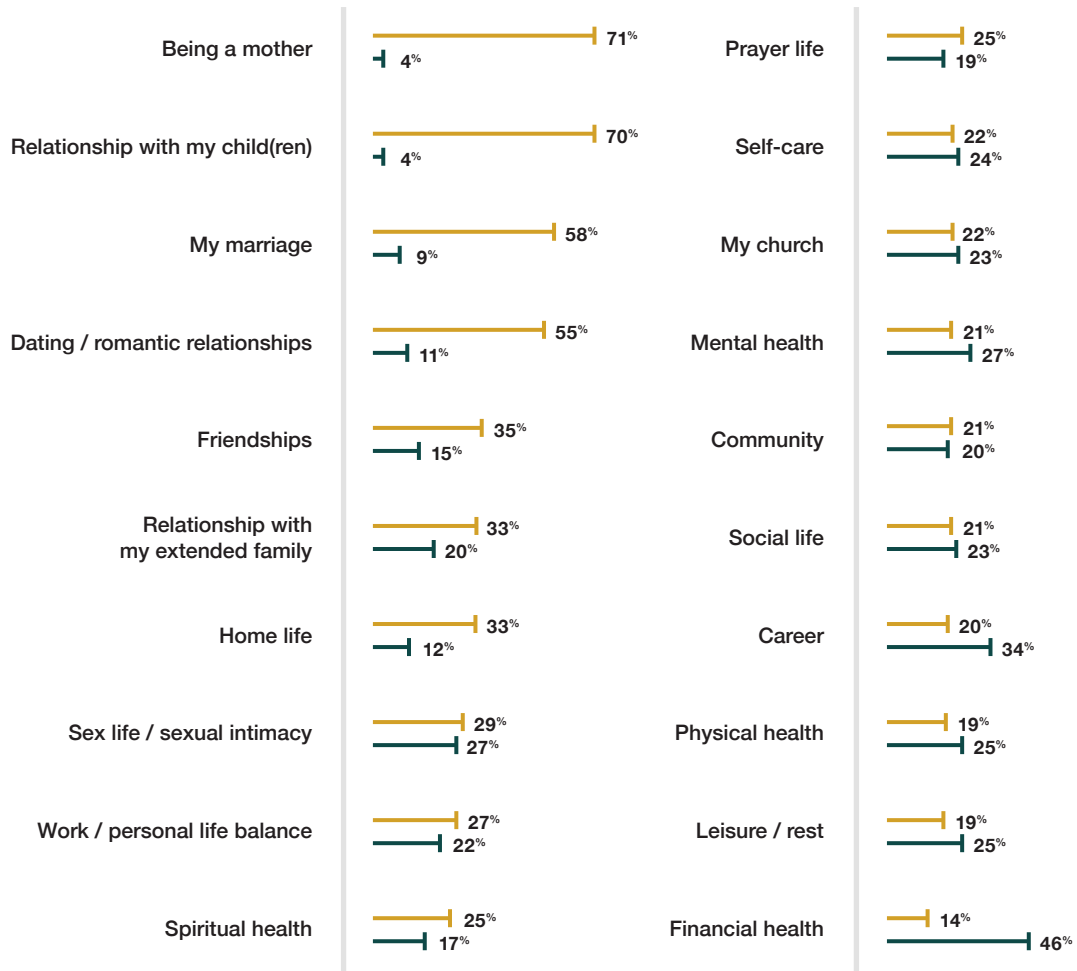
While mothers pour themselves into their children, satisfaction in other areas falls behind. Today's moms are most satisfied with being a mother (71%), their relationship with their

children (70%) and their marriage (58%) or dating relationship (55%). A mom's financial health, career, leisure / rest and physical health are all areas with much lower levels of satisfaction.

Above All Else—Moms Are Satisfied by Being “Mom”

How satisfied are you in each of the following areas of your life today?

◆ Very satisfied ◆ Not satisfied



n=1,008 U.S. mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

Notably, just over one in four mothers (27%) says they are “not satisfied” with their mental health. When asked in the survey to describe why they feel this dissatisfaction, many moms attribute it to anxiety or anxiousness.

Hoping to combat some of their doubts and struggles, most mothers (58%) say they have a goal of “loving and accepting myself.” Non-Christian moms (67%) strive for this even more. In addition, about a third of mothers (32%) say they’re working toward building confidence to ask for help when they need it.

Still, being upfront about one’s needs or insecurities isn’t always easy. This is where churches and organizations can be proactive by providing encouragement and safe spaces for moms. An authentic environment with relationships to match may help nurture these intangible goals moms have for themselves.

Motherhood in Light of the Gospel

Perfection—in motherhood or anything else—is unattainable in this world. And with so many moms feeling mounting pressure and responsibility in motherhood, this is an important reminder for them. The myth of the mom who effortlessly does it all can distort a mother’s perspective, leaving her feeling weary and disillusioned. This is where the Church can step in—countering the lie of needing to do and have it all with the truth of the gospel. Burnt out, overwhelmed mothers can find solace in Christ. How will you help lead them there?

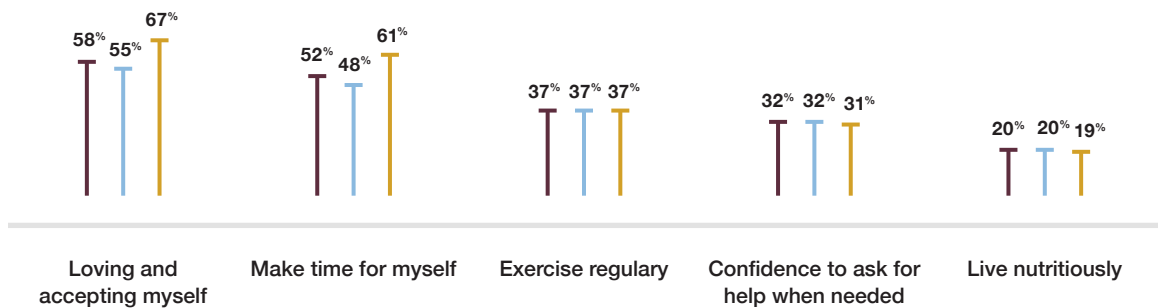
Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”
Matthew 11:28–30 ♦

Moms Want to Improve Self-Love & Care

As a mother, are any of the following goals you have for yourself?

Select the five most important.

◆ Christian moms ◆ Single moms ◆ Non-Christian moms



n=1,008 U.S. mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

Recognize the Gifts & Perspectives of Women

My worldview is from a male perspective. I will never read scripture as my daughters do, or as my wife does. But what I can try to do is [go the extra mile] so I begin to understand their context. Same goes for other groups. I have an African Bible commentary. I use that for every sermon. I have a Jewish Bible commentary. I have a Women's Bible commentary.

Our women's groups are also strong. My wife leads a women's group. They have women with little kids, and they have women who are grand-moms. All of them are in the same group, and I think that's meaningful.

For a long time, we've asked a woman to have some important role on Mother's Day. From that, we asked our creative pastor, Allison Harrell, who was first our preschool pastor, if she would start preaching regularly.

Our teaching pastor, Allison Leamon, started with us [years ago] as an intern. We said, "We're going to hire her the day she graduates," and we did. She said, "I want to go to seminary." And we said, "Great. We'll pay your way." One Mother's Day, she shared her story of infant loss ... a powerful story. We planted trees of remembrance at our church and asked women if they would like to tie a ribbon in memory of a child that they've lost. Now, Allison (Leamon) teaches once a month, and every time she preaches, not only do men in our church love her perspective, women in our church [connect with] her heart.

My advice to other pastors is first, investigate a church-based, Christ-centered program for moms. Second, make sure that your women's

ministry understands and addresses the needs of women and mothers. Third, have women on your worship planning teams. Our creative pastor is a woman. It's never, "What would a man say?" or, "What would a woman say?" She brings wisdom and insight.

Also, figure out women's programming that simply says to a woman, "We know you're here; we see you. We may not understand everything about you, but we want to try to meet needs that are in your life."

Lastly, you have to *ask*. Sixty percent of our staff are women, many of them mothers. At our all-staff meeting, we probably have 30 women in there, and 10 of them have "pastor" with their name. So, we're always getting that needed perspective. ♦



Paul Basden

*Author, cofounding & senior
pastor of Preston Trail
Community Church*

Q+A Dr. Anita Phillips

What You Need to Know About Mental Health & Motherhood

Q • A strong majority of mothers says it is true “I usually find myself worrying about something” and “I feel tired most of the time.” What might it look like to help a mom face mental health challenges like anxiety and exhaustion?

A • Find some way to have support groups for moms, maybe providing opportunities for babysitting so moms can have breaks when they need it. [Give mothers] the opportunity to connect. Also, once a quarter, I encourage all churches to have a mental health fair. Bring in a few therapists from the community. Let them hang out in the lobby, give out their cards and maybe run a group for moms. Reach out into your community; pull in those resources.

From the pulpit, [it's also] very important to present multiple models of motherhood and family life as acceptable. Often, the pastor is male and he and his wife become the model. But this can leave other moms and other families [outside of that model] feeling less than. ... I would encourage pastors to make sure they are presenting and speaking about multiple [family] models as acceptable. I'm not talking about models outside of what scripture says. I'm talking about moms who work, moms who don't work outside the home, moms who homeschool, moms in school and so on. Don't let the model be so narrow that moms who don't fit that model feel less godly.

Q • What are some unique challenges that moms of color face today that church leaders should be paying attention to?



Dr. Anita Phillips is a mental health expert, trauma therapist and life coach recognized for her work at the intersection of mental health, faith and culture. She is the author of *The Garden Within: Where the War with Your Emotions Ends and Your Most Powerful Life Begins*. anitaphillips.com

A • Moms are facing similar challenges, [but] when you add being a mom of color, you add other issues that are unique to having a racialized experience in this country. Moms worry about their kids at school. But I'm a Black mom ... Black boys are being expelled from *preschool*. ... There are research studies [on this]. There is bias in the system in places that we would not expect it. So, there is added pressure of wondering if my child is being treated fairly. Is my child safe?

For any church, any leadership, your key is always to listen. Listen to what people are saying they are experiencing, and always give people you are leading the gift of your belief. Not your skeptical response, not your requirement for data, not even a redirection. Don't spiritually bypass people's emotional experiences. Listen and then go to

Continued on page 40.

When a Church Understands:

Five Benefits for Moms

When the Church speaks to the needs and desires of mothers, it can have a transformative effect on both moms and mission. Here's a glimpse of just how valuable understanding faith community can be to a Christian mother:

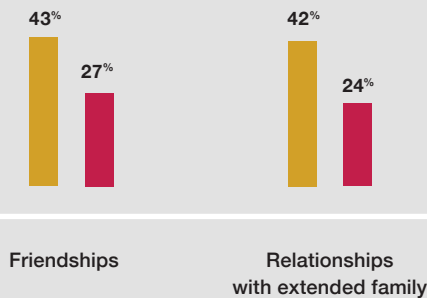
1 A deeper sense of connection

Moms who are embedded in a church that understands them are more open to the possibilities for meaningful relationships beyond the home. In turn, these moms are less likely to feel alone, and more attuned to the community that friends, neighbors and people from their church can offer.

Moms who regularly feel lonely and isolated from others

15% vs. **33%**

% of moms very satisfied with ...



n=691 U.S. self-identified Christian mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

- ◆ Moms with church leaders who understand the unique needs of mothers
- ◆ Moms without church leaders who understand the unique needs of mothers

2 Feeling valued by the world around them

These moms feel seen and valued, not only in faith community, but in society.

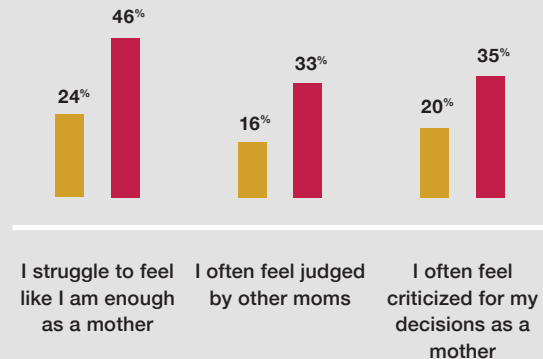
"I feel valued in society as a mother"



3 Confidence in their motherhood

An understanding church environment is part of a supportive culture where a mom can find certainty and assurance in her role as a mother.

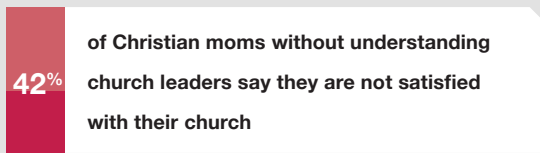
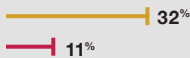
Moms who strongly agree ...



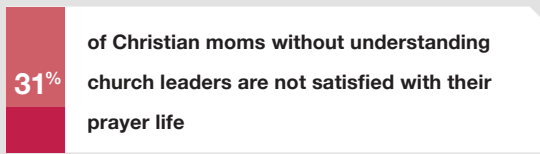
4 Greater faith-life satisfaction

A mom with understanding church leaders has a greater affinity for her faith community, which naturally can positively impact her faith practices.

% of moms very satisfied with their church



% of moms very satisfied with their prayer life

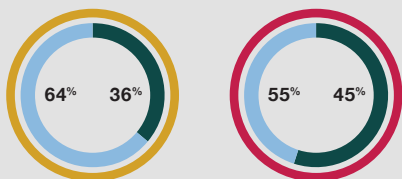


5 Continued church involvement

Church participation can dwindle some after entering motherhood, but moms in supportive churches tend to stay involved alongside motherhood.

Today, how involved are you with your church?

◆ Involved ◆ Not involved

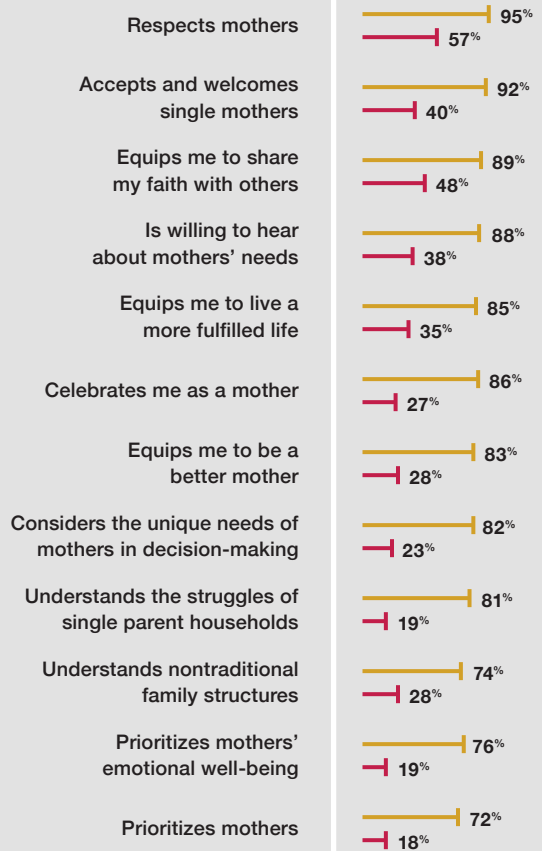


- ◆ Moms with church leaders who understand the unique needs of mothers
- ◆ Moms without church leaders who understand the unique needs of mothers

What does it mean to have church leaders who understand the unique needs of mothers?

Being respected, accepted and equipped are common themes among these moms, showing the importance of church leaders who not only treat mothers well but also show they're invested in the well-being and spiritual development of moms.

% of moms who agree their church leadership ...



Continued from page 37.

God. ... We can always do the right thing when we listen, when we believe and when we seek God.

Q • More than one in four moms says they are not satisfied with their mental health. In addition to this, half of Christian moms feel the Church should support the mental well-being of mothers (the same number says the Church should support a mom's spiritual well-being). What's your advice to pastors for talking about mental health from the pulpit?

A • It is not a difficult translation process from the language of scripture to the language of mental health. Beliefs, heart, mind, behavior, knowing, feeling, thinking, doing. These are the aspects of the human experience. And we see so much about this in scripture. [When] the Bible talks about the heart, that includes our emotional lives. When the Bible talks about the mind, that includes our thought lives. We're talking about the same things.

Dig into scripture and look for those examples, [rather than giving] quick cultural answers [like] "renew your mind and you'll be fine." "Take those thoughts captive and you'll be fine." [You can do these things] and still be tormented because it's not just about what is going through your mind. ... If we can encourage people to take care of themselves emotionally, they will be stronger mentally.

Dr. Phillips' reminder to mothers:

Every year that ticks by in our children's lives brings back to our remembrance that time in our own life. When we have unresolved [childhood] trauma, it can really surface whether consciously or subconsciously when our children hit the ages that we were when we experienced that trauma. If we haven't brought it to the forefront, been open about it, done some of the work that we need to do to heal, [it's] possible for that trauma to repeat generationally because we are not on top of it. I know that's scary [to think about] because we moms are already trying to do everything right. *Now, I have to worry about my childhood trauma coming back.* But I truly believe the best gift we can give our children is our own healing. ♦

Find extended interviews and podcast content to further explore *Motherhood Today* at barna.com/motherhood.





A Mom's Role

How mothers are viewed and show up in the world

The subject of a woman's place in society—and in ministry—has long been a point of contention in the Church. While this study is not meant to prove or disprove any one theological or ideological position, there are insights to apply when it comes to fair recognition of moms in Christian community, seeing them as valuable and necessary.

Undoubtedly, today's mothers live in a different world than their mothers and grandmothers. The domesticity of motherhood exists side by side with the strivings of education and career, and the image of a mother reflects a spectrum of empowered women. A "home" might mean a white picket fence, a condo or "van life." "Working mom" might mean a CEO, an entrepreneur or a mother who cares for the kids and the home full-time. Yet no matter which path a mom chooses for herself and her family, there can be obstacles along the way. Let's explore how mothers are navigating their

role in society, and how church leaders are presently journeying alongside them.

Being a Mom Today

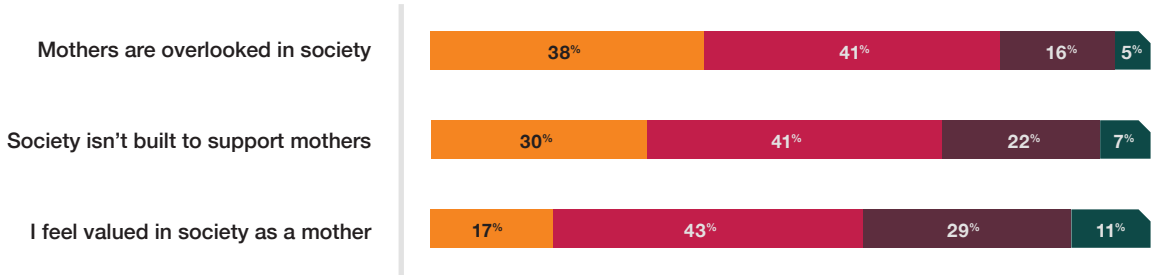
Most moms (67%) strongly agree being a mother is rewarding (26% somewhat agree, 5% somewhat disagree, 1% disagree). However, for many mothers, the prize of motherhood isn't actualized in how they are treated in society.

The majority of moms agrees that mothers are overlooked in society (38% agree strongly, 41% agree somewhat) and society isn't built to support mothers (30% agree strongly, 41% agree somewhat). Many of today's moms also feel undervalued in the world. Two in five mothers disagree with the statement "I feel valued in society as a mother" (29% disagree somewhat, 11% disagree strongly).

Many Moms Feel Ignored & Unsupported

We'd like to ask you a few questions about being a mother in today's world. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

◆ Agree strongly ◆ Agree somewhat ◆ Disagree somewhat ◆ Disagree strongly



n=1,008 U.S. mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

Their sentiments worsen when comparing how men and women are treated. For instance, only 14 percent of moms strongly agree society equally respects men and women. And just one in five mothers believes “how women are viewed in society is improving” or that “when women and men put in the same level of work, they receive

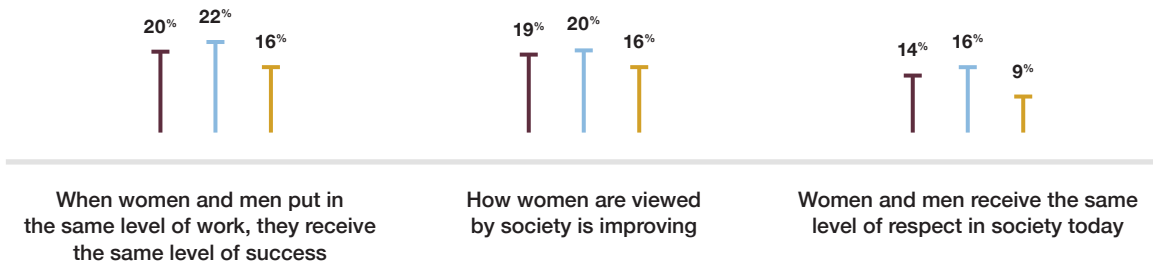
the same level of success” (19% and 20% strongly agree with these statements, respectively). While Christian moms have similar beliefs about how society treats men compared to women, non-Christian mothers are stronger in their negative responses to these statements.

This Trend Continues When Moms Compare Men vs. Women

Thinking about men and women in society today, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

% agree strongly

◆ All moms ◆ Christian moms ◆ Non-Christian moms

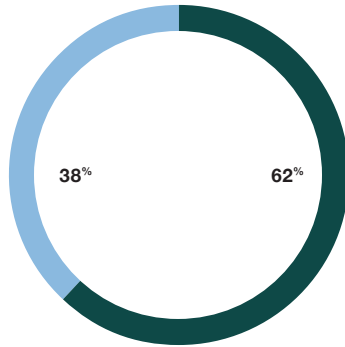


n=1,008 U.S. mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

Moms Feel Motherhood Can Get in the Way of Their Goals

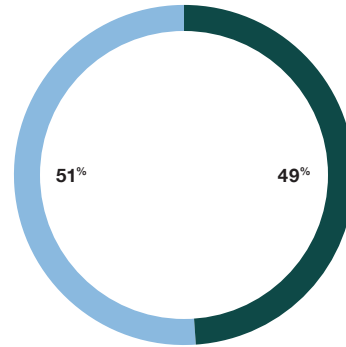
Have you ever felt held back because of your gender?

◆ Yes ◆ No



Have you ever felt held back because you are a mother?

◆ Yes ◆ No



n=1,008 U.S. mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

Interestingly, most moms (62%) say they personally haven't felt held back because they are a woman. Instead, just over half of all moms surveyed (51%) feel they've been held back because they are a *mother*. This number grows significantly among the youngest mothers in our study. Two in three Gen Z moms (67%) say they've been held back by being a mother (compared to 57% of Millennials and 44% of Gen X). This could, in part, be a byproduct of becoming a mom as a teen or very young adult.

The Enigma of Working Moms

Where does career fit in a mom's view of her role in society? Data shows that working mothers often find themselves in a liminal space that can be difficult to navigate.

Overall, most working moms are satisfied with their jobs (78% agree) and happy with their performance at work (93% agree)—that's good news! But their feelings about career and vocation are also nuanced. For instance, two in five

mothers (38%) disagree with the statement "I believe my work is a calling." This could be cause for concern or a sign that some mothers could benefit from finding occupations that are a better fit for them. However, it may also simply indicate that mothers have a sense of calling that isn't defined by their career or paycheck. After all, women in general tend to have a strong sensibility toward meaning and purpose in their lives.

In 2019, Barna conducted a survey for the book *You on Purpose* and found that women are significantly more likely than men to agree we are each made for a specific purpose in the world (78% women vs. 66% men), and everyone is created for meaningful work (78% vs. 68%).¹⁰ That "work" might occur on the clock, and beyond. Certainly, moms see part of their purpose in their parenting.

There is no one formula or guidebook for how working mothers should integrate their on-the-clock role with their broader responsibilities. Are work-life boundaries and balance difficult for mothers to navigate? Over one in four working

Working Moms Hold Conflicting Views of Work-Life Balance

Today, do you feel like you have work-life balance?

◆ Yes ◆ No



How satisfied are you in each of the following areas of your life today?

Work / personal life balance

◆ Very satisfied ◆ Satisfied ◆ Not satisfied



n=572 U.S. working mothers of children under 18, October 12–27, 2022.

moms (27%) says they don't have work-life balance, while the same percent say they are "very satisfied" with theirs.

Asked in Barna-led focus groups how they navigate work-life balance, moms expressed the difficulty of juggling work and parenting. One mother explained, "I think [work-life balance] is imperative. It's easy to get wrapped up in your job. It's really easy to be in the middle of a conversation with your kids, and the phone comes up, it's your boss, and [your kids have to wait]. As my kids were growing, I had to make those decisions."

Some moms expressed that the workplace could set the stage for how to navigate work-life balance. "Any place that I work, I want them to hold the same values about my family that I hold about my family," a mom of a teenager said.

When asked what their employer might do to help them manage their work-life balance, several suggestions were offered. Childcare and flexibility were two prominent themes:

"If more employers offered more childcare assistance."

"We shouldn't have to pay another mortgage to have someone watch our kids."

"Flexible schedule options."

"I think sometimes work doesn't understand.

Sometimes I just need my work to be a little bit more flexible."

In lieu of workplaces being able to accommodate mothers in these ways, mothers put an immense amount of pressure on themselves to establish and maintain balance. When asked who is responsible for an employee's work-life balance, 70 percent of working mothers say this responsibility rests on them solely. Many companies now take a great deal of care and intentionality in encouraging employees to take time for themselves and manage their work-life balance. But for mothers, there's a high amount of self-inflicted pressure to navigate these challenges alone—and they know it! When asked "What would make your work-life balance better?"—nearly half of working mothers (48%) say "Reducing the amount of pressure I put on myself."

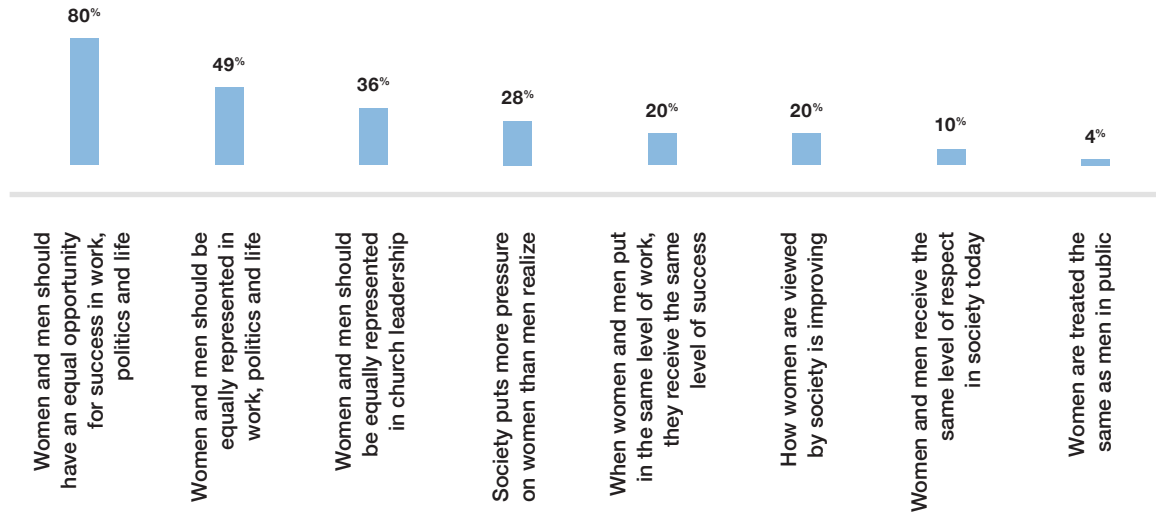
A Pastor's Perspective of Women & Moms

As mothers look for both empathy and camaraderie in society, church is one place moms might find comfort. However, the data shines a light on ideas among church leaders that could get in the way of effectively reaching mothers.

Pastors Hold Conflicting Views About the Experiences of Men vs. Women

Thinking about men and women in society today, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Base: Pastors, % agree strongly



n=453 U.S. Protestant pastors, January 10–18, 2023.

Early in this report, we detailed some of the ways churches minister to mothers—and that often they simply don’t. Assessing how pastors view the role of women and mothers in society, we continue to see a need for better understanding of the experiences and desires of moms.

While a majority of pastors agree “women and men should have an equal opportunity for success in work, politics and life” (80% agree strongly), they are far less emphatic about statements like “women and men should be equally represented in work, politics and life” (49% agree strongly), “mothers are overlooked in society” (21% agree strongly) and “society isn’t built to support mothers” (17% agree strongly).

With most U.S. pastors being male, there’s likely some natural unawareness of what women

and mothers face today. Half of moms strongly agree society puts more pressure on women than men realize.

Knowing there’s female leadership is rare in today’s churches (just 9 percent of Christian mothers have had a female senior pastor or youth pastor in their life), where are moms seeing women lead?

Nearly seven in 10 mothers (68%) say they had a primary teacher who is a woman. Three in five (59%) have had at least one female boss. In higher education and the higher echelons of companies, women have historically been underrepresented. This is borne out in the data for *Motherhood Today* as well. Just over one in three mothers (36%) says they’ve had a female college

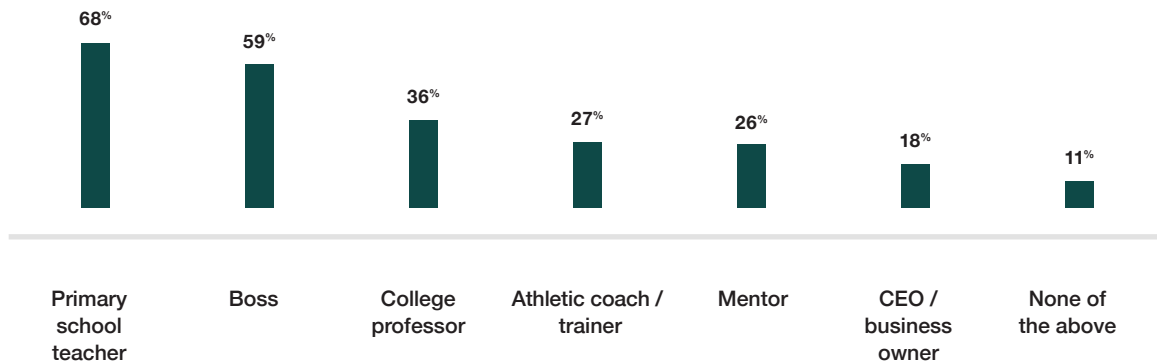
professor, and only one in five (18%) has worked under a female CEO or business owner.

Altogether, these insights on moms in society reflect the clear needs today among mothers. With few pastors who are in touch with the reality of motherhood—and few female leaders in general—how can the Church ensure mothers are *seen*?

Pastors play a critical role in leading *all* of their congregants. Going above and beyond to better understand and empower the mothers in their midst could prove beneficial for connecting with such an influential group. ♦

Moms' Experiences with Female Leadership

Have any of the following people in your life been a woman? Select all that apply.



n=972 U.S. mothers of children under 18, October 12–27, 2022.



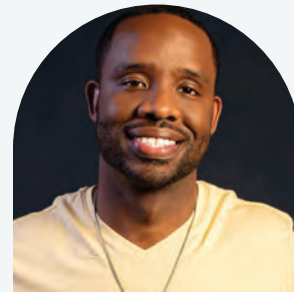
Love Like Jesus

I'm saddened to learn that mothers feel overlooked in society. Those who give and nurture life should themselves be nurtured. Jesus exemplified this. One of Jesus' final statements from the cross was uttered in the care of his own mother.

Pastors should take our cues from Jesus. Though we are committed to giving ourselves for the service of many, may we not neglect our own mothers. It is from our heart for our own mothers that a sincere love and compassion for all mothers grows. It's no wonder then that Paul told Timothy to treat older women as he would his own mother (1 Timothy 5:1-3).

In a practical sense, I think churches should have a tangible way to reach out to mothers who have recently given birth. When mothers are on maternity leave from worship, our churches should intentionally nurture them through prayers, relational support and gifts of love. Also, our churches should allow mothers to give voice to motherhood. We practiced this at my church this last Mother's Day. In lieu of a traditional sermon, I interviewed my mom and wife. Our

conversation gave me the opportunity as husband and son to model appreciation for mothers. The occasion was sweetened by the unique telling of my mom's story as a single mom. We partnered with The Current Project (a nonprofit focused on supporting the well-being of Black single mothers) to tell her story as a single mom. Her story gave hope to other mothers and glory to God. ♦



Darrell Hall

*Author, speaker and
pastor of The Way
Community Church*

Q+A Kadi Cole

Ways to Recognize, Develop & Empower Mothers

Q • In this research, we see that Christian moms often don't see women in leadership roles in their churches outside of women's or children's ministry. What's your advice to pastors when it comes to how they think about assigning leadership roles?

A • One of the biggest challenges for pastors in stewarding the leadership gifts of women in their congregations is the lack of examples we've all had of women leading at higher levels or outside of women's and children's ministries. And when we haven't seen something or experienced it personally, our brains naturally build assumptions, and we repeat patterns that reinforce our assumptions. I did this for a long time, even as a female leader myself.

The best way to counteract these assumptions is to begin thinking less about gender or life season when placing people into ministry roles and more about giftedness and skillsets. When we reframe the conversation, we open up a whole new world of possibilities for women. Rather than making assumptions that a mom of three little kids would be best in children's ministry, we can start the conversation about what her major was in college and why. We can learn about her past jobs and ministry experiences and begin to look for ways she can contribute those gifts. This is often how we place men into ministry roles, and it works just as well for women.

I remember talking with a senior pastor about this idea and challenged him to think of one female leader that seems to stand out to him—perhaps she asks insightful questions or is always



Kadi Cole is author of the bestselling book *Developing Female Leaders*, founder of MinistryChick.com and host of *The Together Project Podcast*, where she helps men and women navigate the unique challenges that may arise in pursuit of their call together.

Kadi is an engaging speaker and thought leader on a variety of topics related to leadership, organizational development, multisite ministries, spiritual growth and strengthening diversity within team cultures. kadicole.com

the one that ends up leading the team where she serves—and have a conversation about her past ministry experience, education and sense of calling. He did and quickly discovered that this mom who served faithfully for several months as a nursery worker actually had earned a seminary degree, spoke two languages and had spent a year on the mission field before having a family. She was delighted to be able to share her thoughts with the senior pastor and now runs their missions program for the same amount of time and investment that she was making serving every

week in the nursery. That change in mindset and asking some deeper questions is paying off in big ways for the church, for the pastor and for this female leader.

Q • What are some clear steps church leaders can take to develop the mothers in their midst?

A • Hands down the number-one thing we can do to invest in developing leaders who are mothers is to provide childcare for developmental opportunities such as trainings, meetings and serving opportunities. It tends to be the top limiting factor for moms and impacts them significantly more than dads.

Another helpful step is to make sure your leadership development opportunities include both men and women together. Oftentimes churches leave developing female leaders up to their women's ministries or pastor's wives. This tends to be more discipleship oriented rather than leadership development. ... Integrating men and women together teaches them how to work together with healthy boundaries, as well as builds leadership relationships that are necessary for church cultures to be healthy and productive.

[Also], provide flexibility for staff or volunteer leaders. High-capacity women thrive when they

can integrate and balance many responsibilities at once. Motherhood is unpredictable. Sometimes a child gets sick, priorities shift. Oftentimes there are daily needs that don't require full-time attention, but they do require a mom be available at a certain time and place. When we craft our leadership roles to be based on results rather than hours in an office, we open up the opportunity for [these] women to lead well at home *and* contribute in significant ways in ministry.

Kadi's reminder to mothers:

Please remember that God has *many* callings on your life; motherhood is one. But as a Christian, so is leadership in your church. And you probably have many others. God has called you to all of them, and he has a pathway for you to be faithful in each of your callings. It's easy to feel stuck if you fall into an either / or mindset that somehow one calling is more or less important than the others. It's also an easy trap to assume you have to do all your callings at once.

There is time for all that God has called you to. The key is to embrace what he has for you today, be fully available for however he chooses to use you, and hold loosely your expectations of what a "good mom" is or is not. ♦

Find extended interviews and podcast content to further explore *Motherhood Today* at barna.com/motherhood.





It Takes a Village for Mothers, Too

How connection and community influences a mom's livelihood

Scientific research shows that the desire for connection and relational intimacy is more common among women than men. Women—especially mothers—often have higher levels of oxytocin, the “love hormone” linked to bonding and social connections.¹¹ An article published by *Psychology Today* adds that “Men tend to be more cognitively self and instrumentally focused [while women are] more relationally oriented in their cognitive styles.”¹² Yes, science has shown that community and friendships can affect a mother’s well-being.

Barna researchers built on this knowledge and spent significant time and energy diving into the topic of relational wellness for mothers. Data show that moms are aware of their need for community and even say they have community around them. But they also communicate some significant areas of need.

The Power of a Confidant

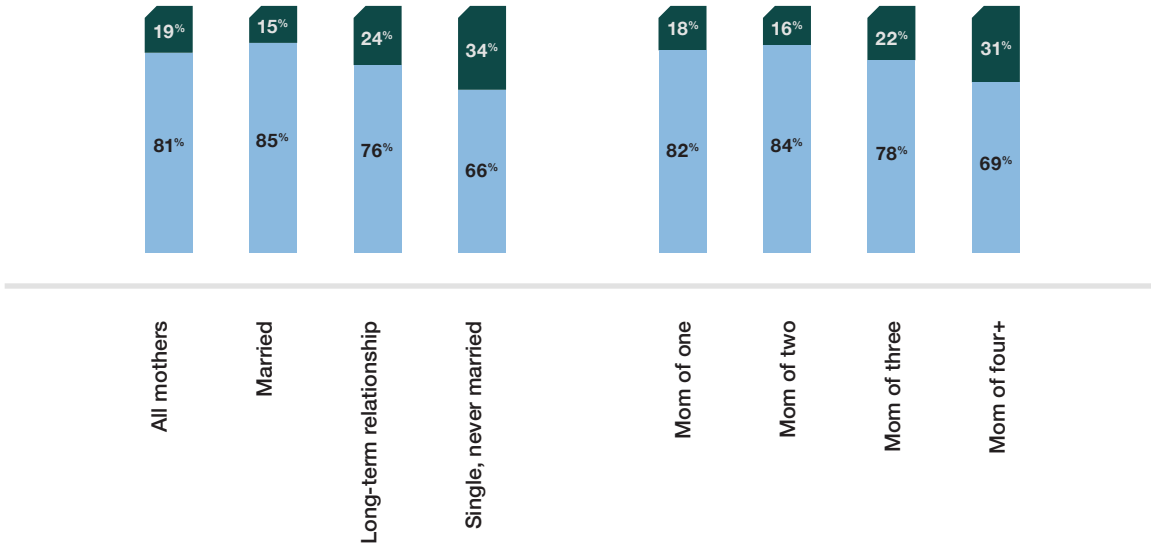
Over the last few years, Barna has found that the presence of even just one trusted friend in someone’s life is a significant predictor of personal well-being.¹³ For mothers especially, we must consider how a confidant impacts everything from their outlook on life, to goals they set for themselves, to their job, home and church satisfaction.

In this research, a confidant is described as “someone who can be confided in, not including a partner or spouse;” that is, someone who a mom would feel comfortable sharing their feelings or personal stories with. Four in five mothers currently have a confidant (81%). Christian mothers are significantly more likely than non-Christian mothers to say this relationship is a part of their life (84% vs. 73%).

Having a Confidant: Single Moms & Moms with Multiple Children Lag Behind

Do you have someone you can confide in (not including your partner or spouse)? This is someone who you feel comfortable sharing your feelings or personal stories with.

◆ Yes ◆ No



n=1,008 U.S. mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

Who is less likely to be journeying with a trusted friend? Gen Z mothers, among whom fewer than two in three say this is true of them (65%). Additionally, only 66 percent of mothers who are single and have never been married have a confidant, perhaps revealing a blind spot in the ways we offer community to single mothers and opportunities for them to form meaningful friendships. Also, as the number of children a mother has increases, their chances of having a confidant decrease. Among mothers with four or more children, 69 percent have a confidant, compared to 82 percent of mothers with one child.

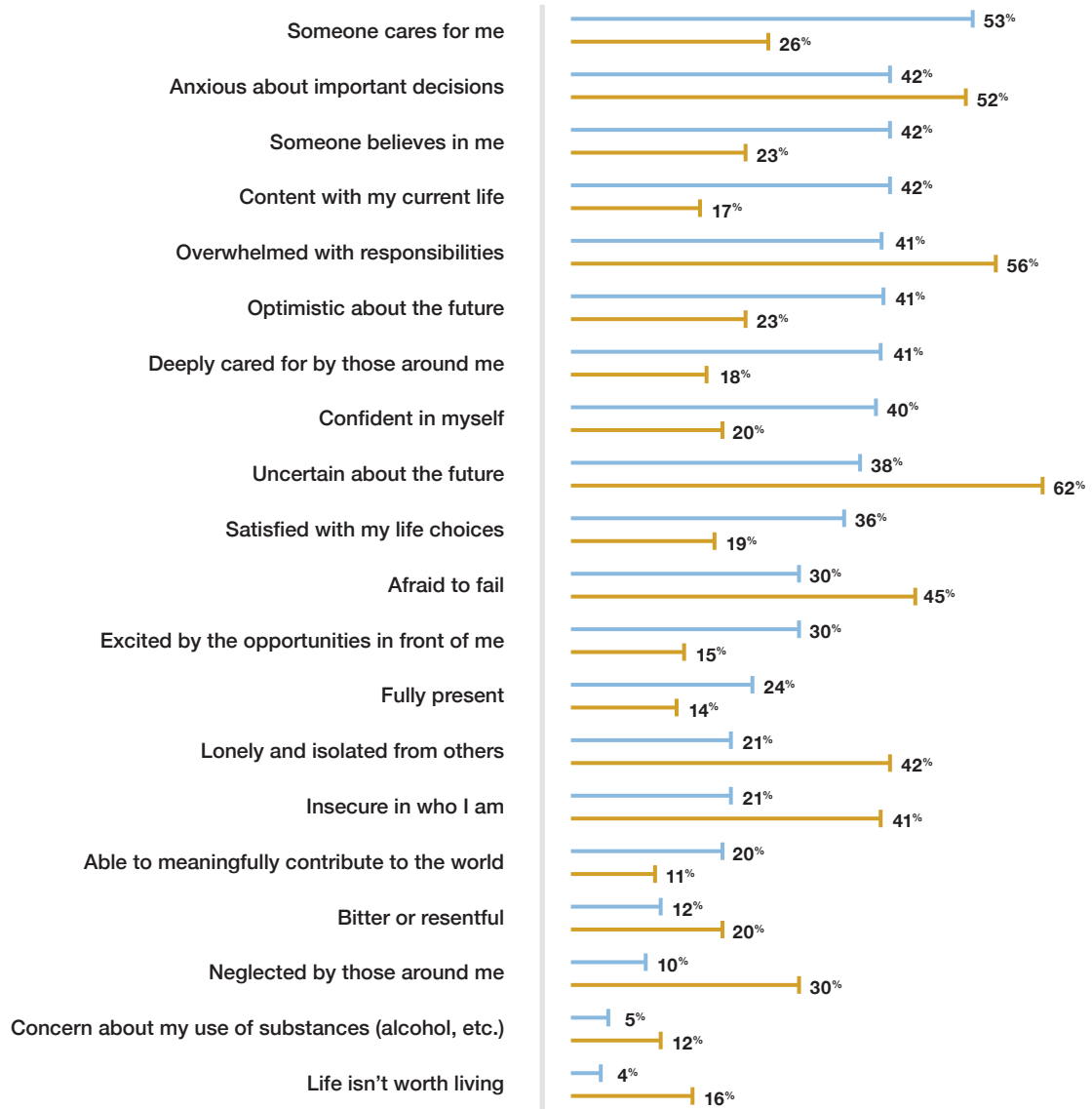
Unsurprisingly, most mothers with a confidant say this person is a woman (74%). However, interestingly, one in three Millennial mothers (31%) says this person is male. Mothers in the Millennial generation are the most likely to report having a confidant who is older than them (46%), while 41 percent say this person is their same age. Most mothers of all ages choose confidants who have children themselves (80%), pointing to the value of trusted friends being in similar seasons.

The research clearly shows that the presence of a confidant in a mom's life is strongly correlated with positive benefits like higher levels of work-life balance (if employed), regular self-care,

The Immense Impact of a Having a Confidant

Of the following, which would you say you feel or experience on a regular basis? Select all that apply.

◆ Moms with a confidant ◆ Moms without a confidant

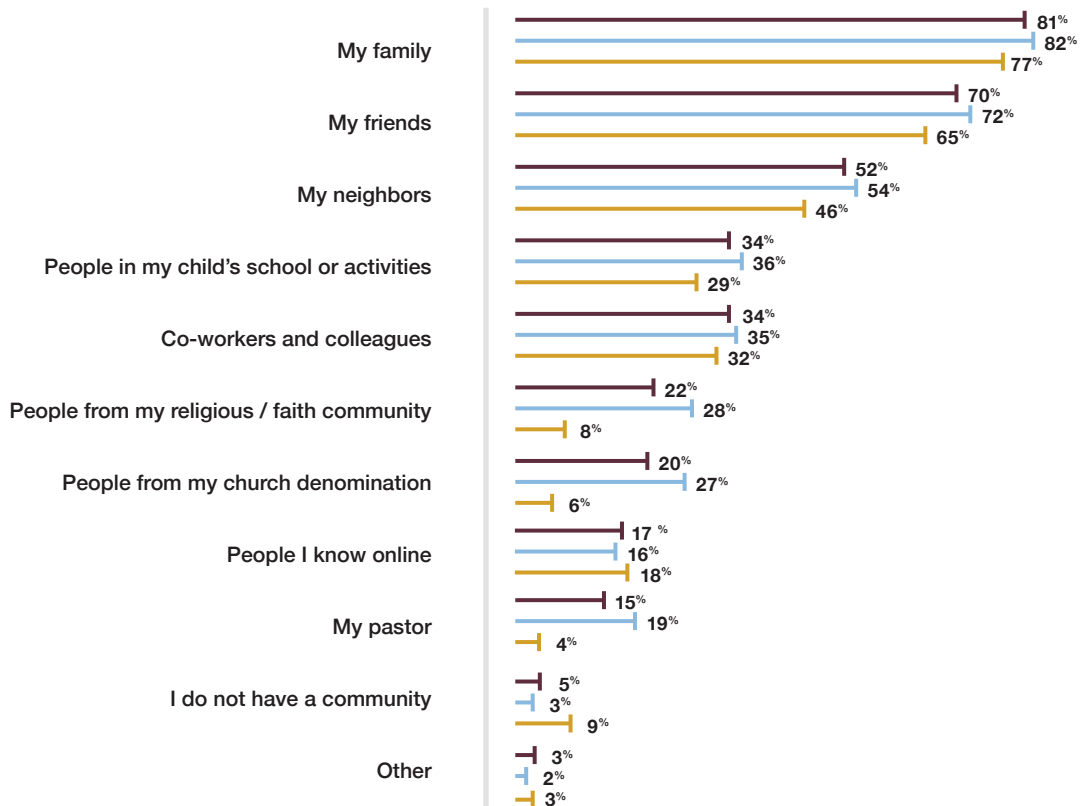


n=1,008 U.S. mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

The People Moms Hold Close

Today, who would you consider part of your community? By community, we mean a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common. Select all that apply.

◆ All moms ◆ Christian moms ◆ Non-Christian moms



n=1,008 U.S. mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

desires for self-love and acceptance, and not feeling held back because of gender—to name a few.

A Mother's Community

We've explored the presence and value of confidants in mothers' lives. Now, let's zoom out and study mothers' communities at large.

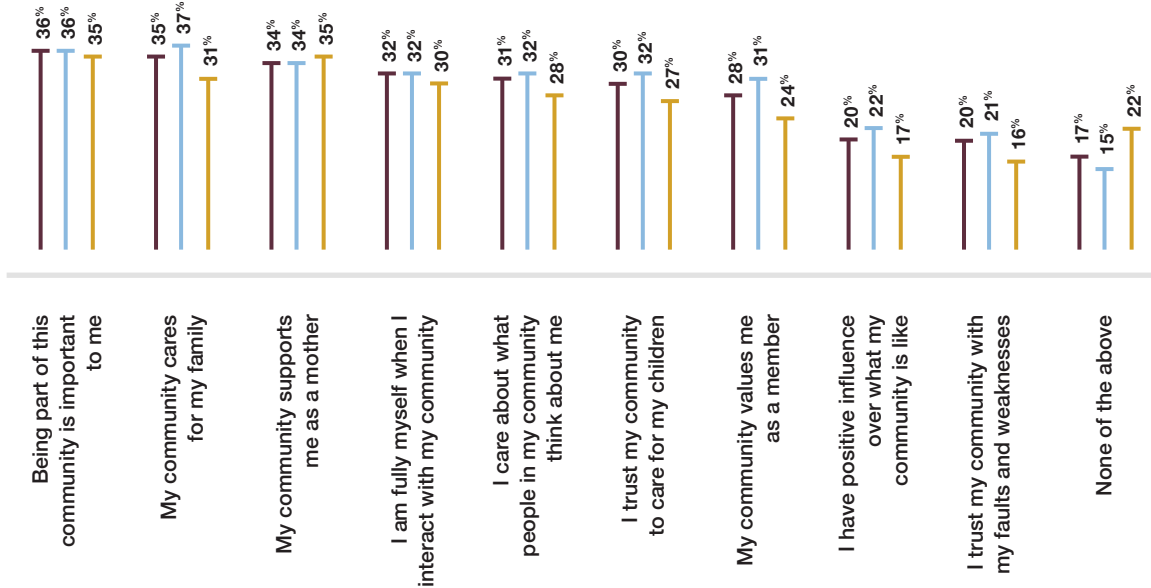
When asked who they would consider a part of their community (meaning a group of people

living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common), moms are most likely to list their family (81%) and friends (70%). We also see elsewhere in the data that friendships are important to moms; one in three mothers goes so far as to say that "positive friendships" are one of the top five most important goals they have for themselves.

Christian or Not, Moms Aren't Enthusiastic About Their Community

Thinking about your community, are any of the following true? Select all that apply.

◆ All moms ◆ Christian moms ◆ Non-Christian moms



n=1,008 U.S. mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

Proximity is a big factor for who makes the cut in a mom's community. In descending order, their community members include neighbors (52%), coworkers (34%), people in their child's school or activities (34%) and people from their religious or faith community (22%). When isolating only Christian mothers, "people from my faith community" still falls far behind the others (28%). Why might this be? Well, only 50 percent of pastors "definitely" believe their church is a place where mothers can form relationships with confidants (30% mostly, 20% somewhat). This further points to the opportunities churches have

to foster deeper engagement and relationships among mothers in their congregation.

Fortunately, only 5 percent of mothers openly admit "I do not have a community." However, this number jumps significantly for mothers of four or more children (12%); these moms are also less likely to consider their family to be a part of their community, suggesting that they have weaker support systems when, in fact, they probably need stronger ones. Perhaps relatedly, those without a confidant are far more likely to say they have no community (14% vs. 3%), illustrating again the importance of mothers having at least one trusted friend.

While the data above illustrates how most mothers have friendships and communities around them, Barna researchers found that fewer than half of mothers (43%) say they are satisfied with their community. In most cases, discontentment is present for women of all ages, and for Christians and non-Christians alike. Let's zoom in on a few key areas in need of improvement:

Care for the family: Only 35 percent of mothers say their community cares for their family, and three in ten (30%) trust their community to care for their children. Older mothers are especially hesitant to trust others with their children's well-being.

Authenticity: One in three mothers (32%) says they are fully themselves when they interact with their community and even fewer trust their community with their faults and weaknesses (20%). While Christians are slightly more willing to show up vulnerably in their friendships, most Christian mothers still do not feel comfortable doing so.

Emotional buy-in: About one in three mothers (36%) says being a part of their community is important to them, and few mothers (20%) believe they have a positive influence within their community. Gen Z mothers feel especially detached emotionally from their communities.



Awareness of Support Systems

Many local organizations provide support and resources to moms who need it. However, a plurality of mothers (44%) says they aren't aware of these kinds of organizations in their neighborhood. Generationally, younger mothers tend to be more aware of these kinds of organizations.

While Barna's data can't speak to the effectiveness or impact of such organizations or services, it does note a significant relationship between a mom's awareness of local organizations that serve mothers and her satisfaction with her community overall. Mothers who are not satisfied with their community are significantly more likely to say they aren't aware of any nearby organizations that serve mothers in need (57% vs. 40% of mothers who are satisfied with their community).

As the Church aims to help strengthen mothers' communities, leaders must consider the formal and logistical support networks being offered to these women every day. The kinds of support mothers are most likely to say they would have benefitted from are support for stay-at-home moms (41%), working moms (37%), moms of younger children (30%), single moms (27%), moms of elementary-age children (24%) and moms in poverty (22%).

The state of motherhood points to the value of trusted friendships, vibrant community and present and active support systems for mothers. While the phrase "it takes a village" is often associated with the rearing of children, it's important not to forget mothers need a village, too. ♦

A Grandmother's Love

For many women, becoming a grandmother is the cherry on top of motherhood. These women have raised a family of their own and now they get to experience the great reward of loving their children's children. For grandmothers, few things compare to the richness of this experience.

In a recent Barna study of older adults, nearly half of grandmothers (49%) surveyed say that “being a grandmother” not only defines them, “it is core to who I am.”¹⁴ Where women in the throes of motherhood often struggle to preserve their sense of self—who they are apart from being a mother—many grandmothers seem to embrace and celebrate the idea that who they are is, in large part, defined by the fact that they have been mothers. As grandmothers, they get to experience a sort of “Motherhood 2.0,” with the added benefit of age and experience.

Grandmothers continue to play a unique and significant role in the family system, shaping many aspects of a grandchild's life. In *Households of Faith*, David Meggers, associate pastor at Concordia Lutheran Church, puts it this way:

Part of the power in the grandparent relationship comes from the space afforded by the generational distance. Mom or dad typically have to deal with the almost constant pressures, needs and expectations of parenting, giving them little space for the kinds of conversations and experiences grandparents can offer. They recognize that they can be a helping hand in the faith formation of their grandchildren and, to some extent, have a second chance to influence their faith development of their adult children.”¹⁵

Along with leaving a spiritual legacy for their grandchildren, grandmothers are credited by younger generations for leaving a legacy of generosity. Nearly one in four U.S. adults (23%) identifies their grandmothers as a model of generosity.¹⁶

Grandmothers as Mothers

For many women, being a grandmother isn't as simple as spoiling the grandkids and sending them back to mom and dad. U.S. census data shows that 7.1 million American grandparents are living with their grandchildren under 18, and some 2.3 million of those grandparents are responsible for their grandchildren.¹⁷

This extended, sometimes unexpected season of caregiving can significantly change the trajectory—or at the very least the expectations—of grandmothers' later years.

Even as times change, grandmothers remain beloved and highly esteemed figures. Don't overlook these moms who have nurturing and experience to share, as well as faith to keep growing and living out. ♦



Focus on Relationships

Andy: Moms are generally carrying the burden of family and children. This season of life is complicated, [and] as a church, we recognize the complexity of life. The church should be there to help. [To do this], we focus on the connection and the relationships. Life change happens within the context of relationship, and the thing that we tend to economize, especially in the busy years of raising kids, is connections. The way we say it is, “Circles are better than rows. Life is better connected.” We focus on connecting moms with other moms.

Christianity is very relational. Success in parenting is relational. To have a healthy relationship with your children once they’re grown is relational. So, when we think about preaching and teaching in the broadest sense, most of our preaching and teaching is going to be relational, whether it’s relationship with our heavenly Father or with each other.

Sandra: What’s so important to understand when you talk to moms is there are so many different categories of moms. You’ve got your single moms, married moms, foster moms, adoptive moms, younger moms, older moms. Understand who’s sitting in the room; understand who you’ve got. Then, figure out the best way to communicate to them, [taking note of] the different categories of things that are important to certain moms. ♦



**Andy & Sandra
Stanley**

*Authors, speakers and
cofounders of North
Point Ministries*

Q+A Elsie Iudicello

Helping Moms Belong

Q • Our data points to the power of a confidant in a mom's life, impacting everything from her life outlook and goals to home and church satisfaction. Why is friendship and mentorship so crucial to a mom's livelihood?

A • There is nothing stagnant about motherhood. Motherhood changes our bodies, our purpose, our chemistry, our habits, our instincts and more. We never move on from motherhood. It stays with us until the breath leaves our bodies. Meanwhile, motherhood itself is constantly changing and moving into new iterations. Companionship is crucial because of the nature of this ever-changing, permanent role that transforms us. We are beings made for fellowship, and motherhood heightens our awareness of this need.

Motherhood is a sisterhood with a language of shared experiences. When women go through difficult seasons of motherhood, the balm of having someone experienced look back and say, "This too shall pass," cannot be overstated. Nor can the power of someone taking your hand and saying, "I will walk beside you." Stories, celebrations, [losses], illness, victories—they all mark us indelibly. Sharing in it, or voicing it out loud to another person, means we have made ourselves known to someone else.

When my friend walked her child through terminal illness, she sought out other mothers who had done the same. Mothers who knew the vocabulary of nurturing the dying, who understood the holy moments others beheld with veiled



Elsie Iudicello is a homesteader, homemaker and homeschooling mother to four boys. She writes for various publications and speaks regularly at homeschool conferences. She is passionate about collecting books, raising hogs, remembering old ways, adventuring with her boys and studying reformed theology.

farmhouseschoolhouse.com

horror. Mothers who knew the shape of grief long after the sympathy cards ceased to fill the mailbox.

Q • What are some ways (both spiritual and practical) that moms benefit from having a village? How does this help a mom feel a sense of belonging?

A • Physical presence matters. A solely digital community cannot enter into your home and physically minister to your family.

There are moments in motherhood when the language of experience is relayed through physical care and tending of another's home and family. When words fail to connect us—the covered dish, the load of laundry, the swept

floor—communicates kinship and care and belonging. Years ago, I suffered a devastating medical accident on the heels of a painful miscarriage. Meals were delivered to our kitchen and a few friends entered my room to hold my hand and pray. One dear friend walked in with a tray of brownies, looked me in the eye and said, “I don’t know what to say to you. Let’s pray and grieve together with the Lord.” While we prayed, our other friend was in the living room, playing with my two toddlers. In the absence of answers, community kept me rooted, fed and ushered into continued prayer.

Q • What practical advice would you give to pastors and church leaders who want to better serve mothers?

A • Make them welcome in the physical space where you meet. I once attended a church where the nursing mothers area was in a janitor’s closet. Who wants to feed their baby in an enclosed space permeated with the smell of industrial chemicals? Make a point early on in your service to welcome nursing mothers and mothers with young children; make it known that you welcome the noises and smells and cries that come with it.

I once attended a church with a prayer group of mothers with older children and a few spiritual mothers. It was a beautiful, vibrant part of the church’s life together. These women prayed not only for their own teen / adult children, but others in the church, too. Young adults without families were often adopted by these praying moms. It fostered the opportunity for natural mentorship relationships. ♦

Find extended interviews and podcast content to further explore *Motherhood Today* at barna.com/motherhood.





Hope for the Journey Ahead—Together

Key reminders for your future ministry with mothers in mind

The state of motherhood today reveals that **moms merit specific attention**. Scripture paints the picture of godly mothers as caretakers, comforters and faithful women who are devoted and prayerful.

Motherhood is important to God; therefore, the Church must act to better help moms succeed in this sacred role. Find encouragement in these three reminders as you explore what holistic discipleship to mothers looks like in your context:

The Church is uniquely suited to provide the kind of life-giving community that moms need. Many mothers are second-guessing their parenting skills and even their worth as a mom. But the gospel counters the daily grind of motherhood. Rather than the expectations of others, the promises of Christ can offer solace to the hectic “mom life.”

Among all your current and potential efforts to reach mothers, get innovative to incorporate encouragement and mentoring that helps

mothers navigate overwhelming moments. An intentional shift to prioritize, serve and empower moms could bring exponential change to their lives—and to the life of your church or organization.

Moms want and need support; giving this support doesn't have to be overwhelming. Mothers hold a critical role in their family, greatly influencing the upbringing of their children. With this can come a host of responsibilities—and internal and external pressures surrounding how to get them done.

Data shows that community, even as small as one other person a mother can entrust with her thoughts and feelings, has an impact on everything from her outlook on life, to the goals she sets for herself, as well as her job, home and church satisfaction. It also makes a difference when moms have leaders who take time to recognize their needs and value.

The infographic on page 38 gives a glimpse of what moms might appreciate from their faith community. Moms ministry might look like helping mothers engage in Bible study and prayer (personal and corporate) alongside other responsibilities. But it can also look like random acts of kindness and appreciation, taking something off a mom's to-do list, listening to her ideas or creating opportunities for mothers to connect and share experiences with each other. Don't underestimate the practical ways you can serve mothers, now.

Specific ministry to moms can be instrumental in reaching everyone in the home. Previous Barna research shows that moms are seen by their children as the confidants, providers of support and drivers of faith formation. We also know that many Christian mothers aspire to be a model of strong faith to their children making spiritual growth a key part of their journey as a mother.

If you haven't already, begin to build a leadership team and / or find partners who can help you do the work to reach and serve mothers well. Currently, the plurality of Christian moms says their church fails to offer any ministry specific to their life space as a mother. Many pastors even admit their church could better serve moms. You can do something about this! Vow to minister to moms differently and develop this wide-reaching group.

Through motherhood, moms exemplify generosity, patience, consistency and compassion, among other things. Imagine what's possible when these positive traits—coupled with a mom's individual giftings—are nurtured and utilized in a biblical context. Mothers may very well be the key component to carrying out your church and evangelism strategies. ♦



Thank you, moms.

It's been exciting to partner with The MomCo by MOPS International for Barna's first study of mothers and their unique experiences. With this project came the special opportunity to spotlight our talented colleagues who are also moms we respect and admire. Barna would like to acknowledge these mothers who played a significant role in the development of this report, ultimately helping leaders understand what motherhood today means for the Church.



Annette Allen
Art director, book designer
Mom of two



Cicely Corry
Editorial strategist at Barna
Mom of two



Ashley Ekmay
Research specialist at Barna
Mom of two



Katie Kick
Senior creative director at OX Creative
Mom of one



Savannah Kimberlin
Associate vice president of church engagement at Barna
Mom of one



Marian Liautaud
Vice president of digital content & marketing at Barna
Mom of four, grandmother of four



Verónica Thames
Content development manager at Barna
Mom of one



Amy Turner
Creative director at OX Creative
Mom of one



Brenda Usery
Production manager at Barna
Mom of two



Alyce Youngblood
Executive editor at Barna
Expectant mom

Christian Mothers

Demographics

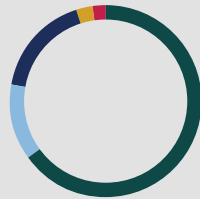
Generations

- ◆ Gen Z - 7%
- ◆ Millennials - 43%
- ◆ Gen X - 43%
- ◆ Boomers - 7%



Ethnicity

- ◆ White - 65%
- ◆ Black - 13%
- ◆ Hispanic - 17%
- ◆ Asian - 3%
- ◆ Other - 2%



Employment Status

- ◆ Full-time - 42%
- ◆ Part-time - 16%
- ◆ Not employed - 42%



Number of Children

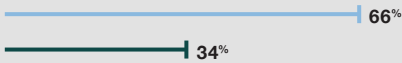
- ◆ 1 - 33%
- ◆ 2 - 37%
- ◆ 3 - 18%
- ◆ 4+ - 12%



Well-being

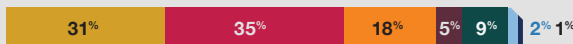
Practices Self-Care

- ◆ Yes
- ◆ No



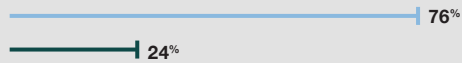
How often are you able to practice self-care?

- ◆ Daily
- ◆ Weekly
- ◆ A few times a month
- ◆ At least once a month
- ◆ Less often
- ◆ Never
- ◆ I am not sure what "self-care" is or means

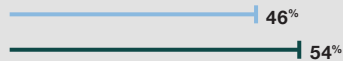


Has Work-Life Balance

- ◆ Yes
- ◆ No



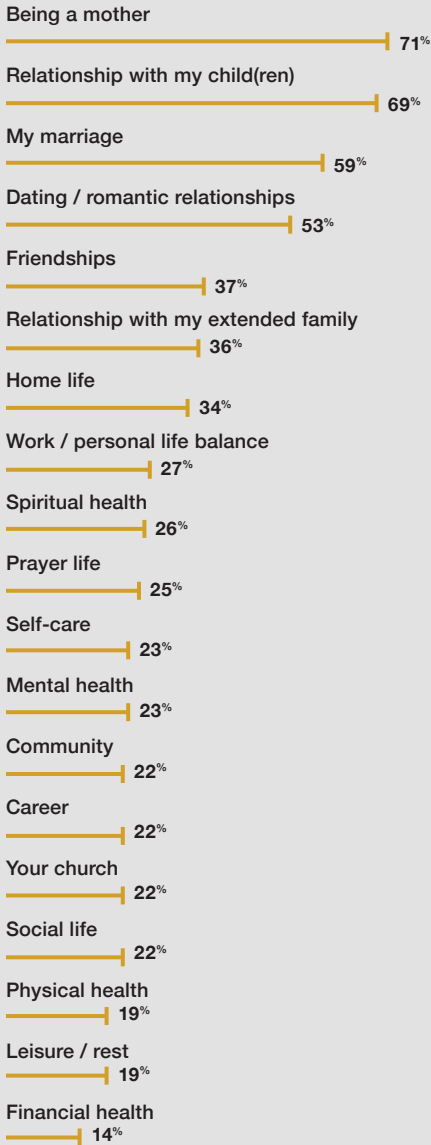
Have you ever felt held back because you are a mother?



n=691 U.S. self-identified Christian mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

Satisfaction

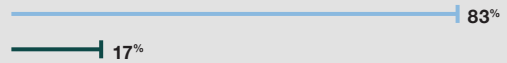
% very satisfied with the listed area of her life



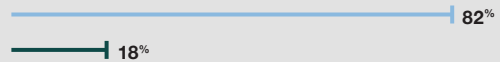
Community

Has a Confidant

◆ Yes ◆ No



Satisfied with Community



Goals

Top Five Most Important Goals for Herself

- ◆ Financial stability (68%)
- ◆ Building a stable and healthy home environment (60%)
- ◆ Loving and accepting myself (55%)
- ◆ Make time for myself (48%)
- ◆ Model a strong faith for my children (39%)

Top Five Most Important Goals for Her Child(ren)

- ◆ Love and accept who they are (76%)
- ◆ Grow up to be kind people (75%)
- ◆ Are financially stable (57%)
- ◆ Have access to quality education (51%)
- ◆ Have access to quality food and exercise (32%)

n=691 U.S. self-identified Christian mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

Profiles of Motherhood

Non-Christian Mothers

Demographics

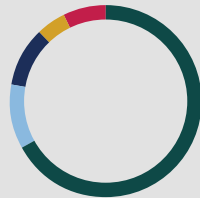
Generations

- ◆ Gen Z - 14%
- ◆ Millennials - 49%
- ◆ Gen X - 34%
- ◆ Boomers - 3%



Ethnicity

- ◆ White - 67%
- ◆ Black - 11%
- ◆ Hispanic - 10%
- ◆ Asian - 5%
- ◆ Other - 7%



Employment Status

- ◆ Full-time - 39%
- ◆ Part-time - 15%
- ◆ Not employed - 46%



Number of Children

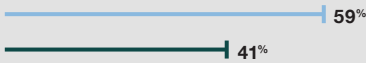
- ◆ 1 - 39%
- ◆ 2 - 35%
- ◆ 3 - 16%
- ◆ 4+ - 10%



Well-being

Practices Self-Care

- ◆ Yes
- ◆ No



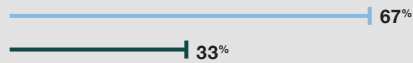
How often are you able to practice self-care?

- ◆ Daily
- ◆ Weekly
- ◆ A few times a month
- ◆ At least once a month
- ◆ Less often
- ◆ Never
- ◆ I am not sure what "self-care" is or means

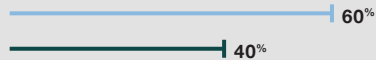


Has Work-Life Balance

- ◆ Yes
- ◆ No



Have you ever felt held back because you are a mother?



n=317 U.S. non-self-identified Christian mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

Satisfaction

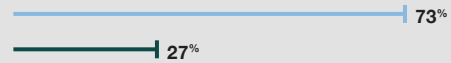
% very satisfied with the listed area of her life



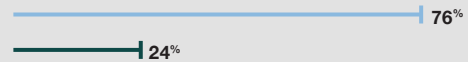
Community

Has a Confidant

◆ Yes ◆ No



Satisfied with Community



Goals

Top Five Most Important Goals for Herself

- ◆ Financial stability (70%)
- ◆ Loving and accepting myself (67%)
- ◆ Make time for myself (61%)
- ◆ Have an identity outside of being a mother (43%)
- ◆ Exercise regularly (37%)

Top Five Most Important Goals for Her Child(ren)

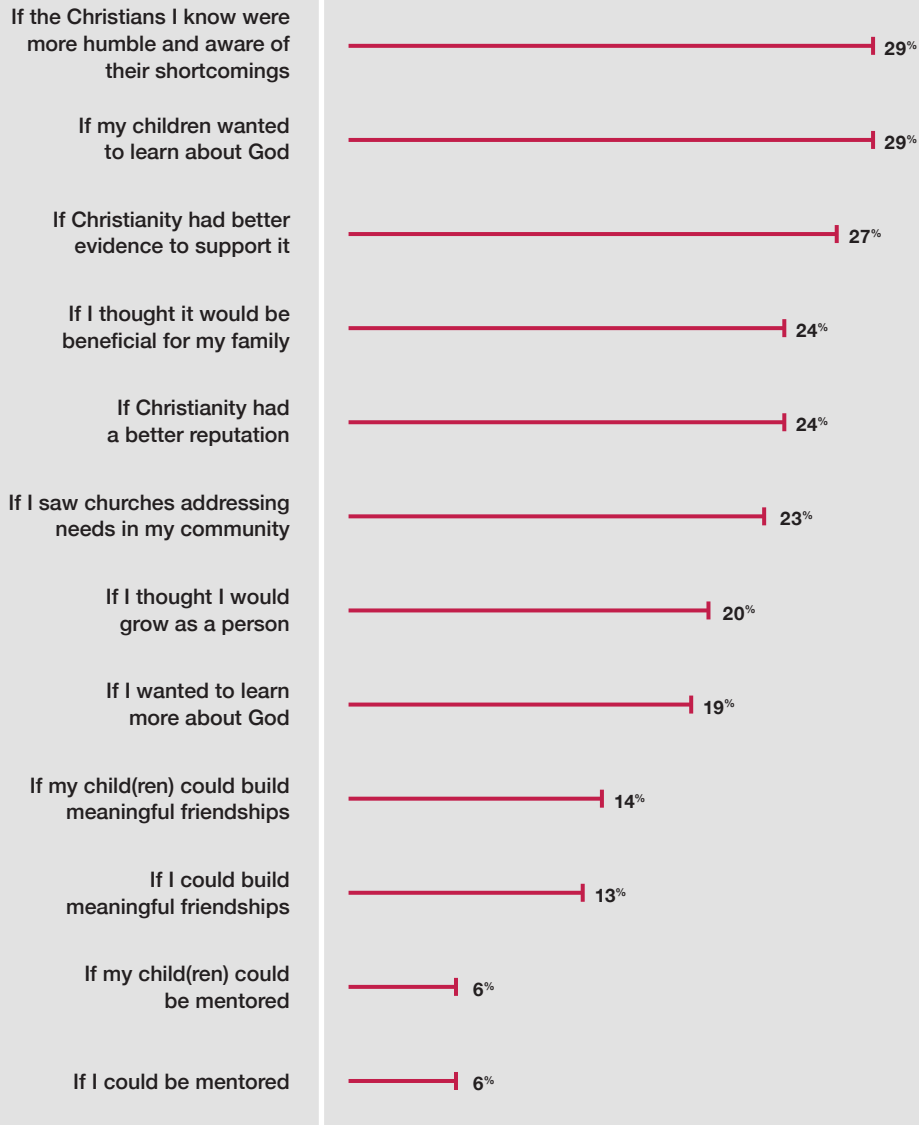
- ◆ Love and accept who they are (81%)
- ◆ Grow up to be kind people (67%)
- ◆ Are financially stable (59%)
- ◆ Have access to quality education (45%)
- ◆ Have access to quality food and exercise (34%)

n=317 U.S. non-self-identified Christian mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

Feelings About the Church

Would any of the following make you more interested in the Christian church?

Base: Non-Christian mothers



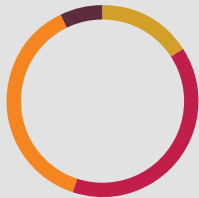
n=317 U.S. non-self-identified Christian mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

Single Mothers

Demographics

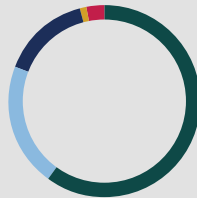
Generations

- ◆ Gen Z - 16%
- ◆ Millennials - 39%
- ◆ Gen X - 38%
- ◆ Boomers - 7%



Ethnicity

- ◆ White - 60%
- ◆ Black - 21%
- ◆ Hispanic - 15%
- ◆ Asian - 1%
- ◆ Other - 3%



Employment Status

- ◆ Full-time - 44%
- ◆ Part-time - 22%
- ◆ Not employed - 34%



Number of Children

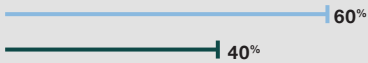
- ◆ 1 - 41%
- ◆ 2 - 30%
- ◆ 3 - 16%
- ◆ 4+ - 13%



Well-being

Practices Self-Care

- ◆ Yes
- ◆ No



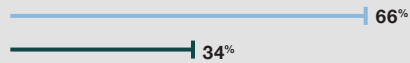
How often are you able to practice self-care?

- ◆ Daily
- ◆ Weekly
- ◆ A few times a month
- ◆ At least once a month
- ◆ Less often
- ◆ Never
- ◆ I am not sure what "self-care" is or means

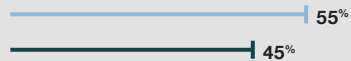


Has Work-Life Balance

- ◆ Yes
- ◆ No



Have you ever felt held back because you are a mother?



n=148 U.S. single mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

Satisfaction

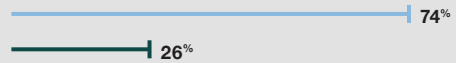
% very satisfied with the listed area of her life



Community

Has a Confidant

◆ Yes ◆ No



Satisfied with Community



Goals

Top Five Most Important Goals for Herself

- ◆ Financial stability (75%)
- ◆ Loving and accepting myself (60%)
- ◆ Building a stable and healthy home environment (58%)
- ◆ Make time for myself (52%)
- ◆ Healthy work-life balance (35%)

Top Five Most Important Goals for Her Child(ren)

- ◆ Love and accept who they are (78%)
- ◆ Grow up to be kind people (71%)
- ◆ Are financially stable (63%)
- ◆ Have access to quality education (50%)
- ◆ Have access to quality food and exercise (30%)

n=148 U.S. single mothers of children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

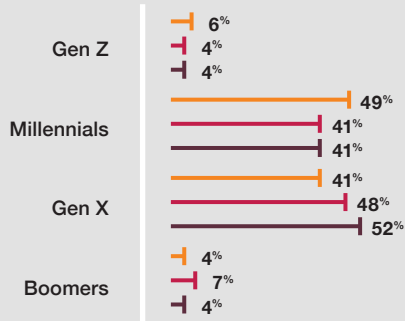
Profiles of Motherhood

Mothers of Multiple Children

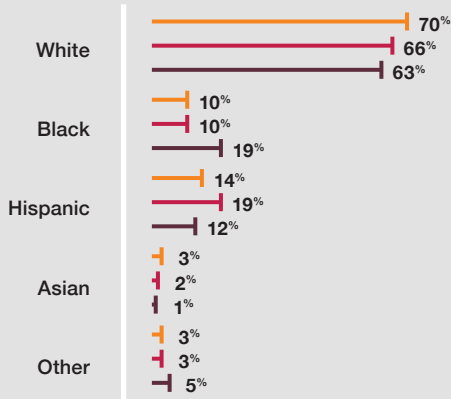
Demographics

◆ Mom of two ◆ Mom of three ◆ Mom of four+

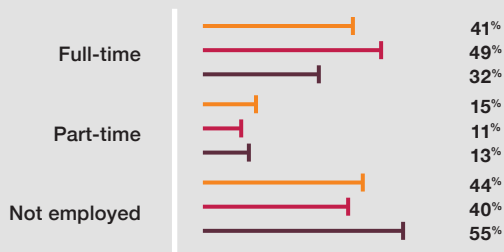
Generations



Ethnicity



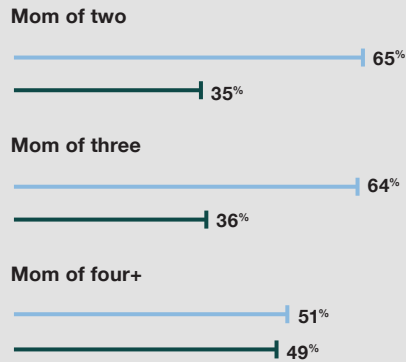
Employment Status



Well-being

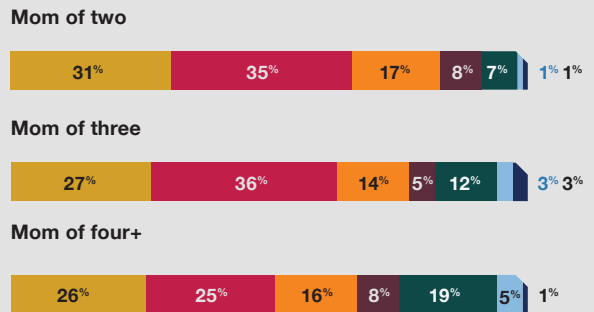
Practices Self-Care

◆ Yes ◆ No



How often are you able to practice self-care?

◆ Daily
◆ Weekly
◆ A few times a month
◆ At least once a month
◆ Less often
◆ Never
◆ I am not sure what "self-care" is or means



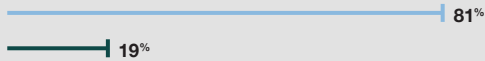
n=369 U.S. mothers of two children under 18, October 12–20, 2022; n=172 U.S. mothers of three children under 18, October 12–20, 2022; n=111 U.S. mothers of four or more children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

Well-being

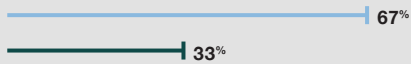
Has Work-Life Balance

◆ Yes ◆ No

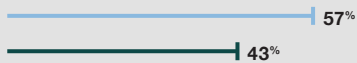
Mom of two



Mom of three

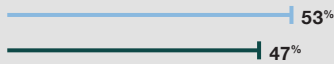


Mom of four+

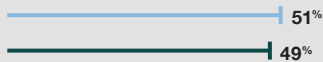


Have you ever felt held back because you are a mother?

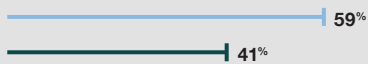
Mom of two



Mom of three



Mom of four+

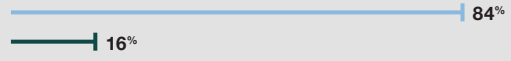


Community

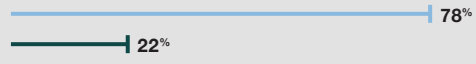
Has a Confidant

◆ Yes ◆ No

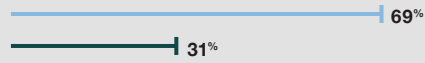
Mom of two



Mom of three

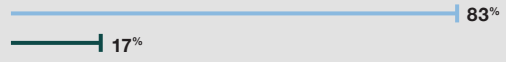


Mom of four+

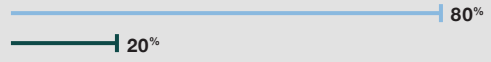


Satisfied with Community

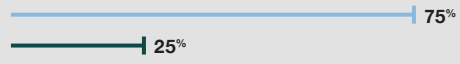
Mom of two



Mom of three



Mom of four+

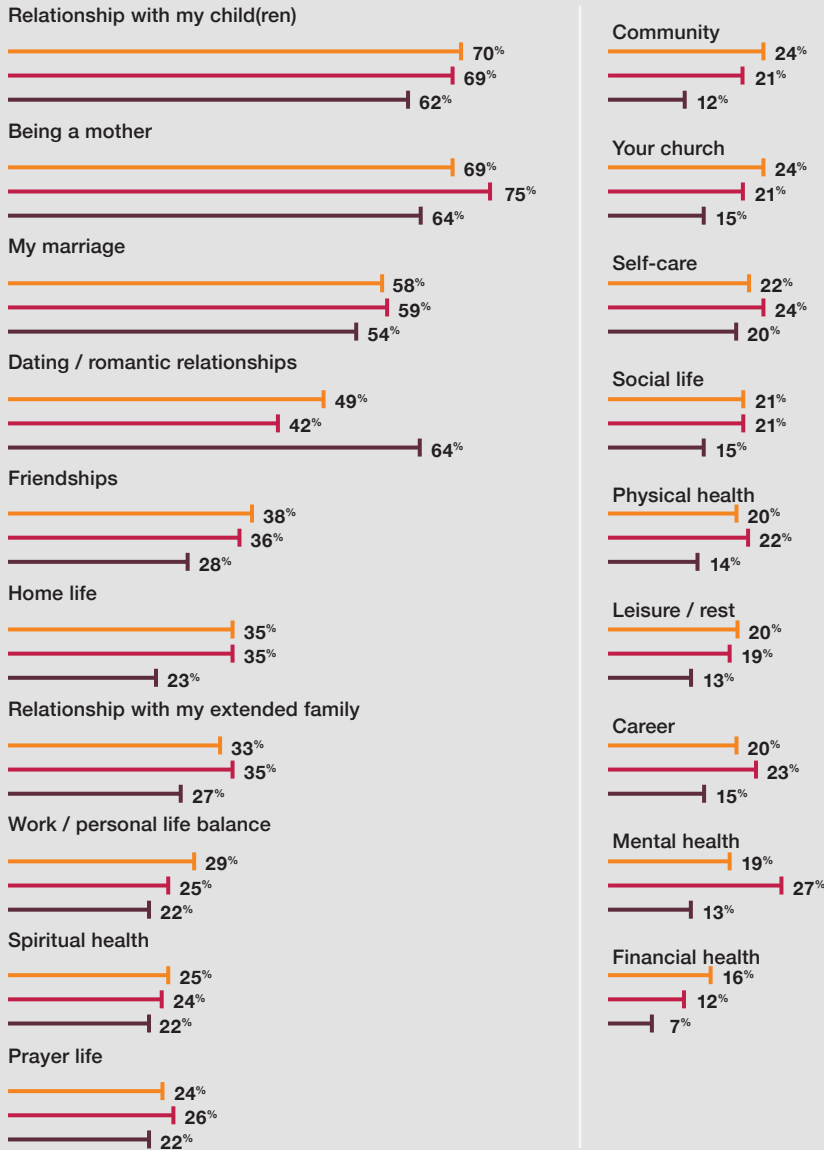


n=369 U.S. mothers of two children under 18, October 12–20, 2022; n=172 U.S. mothers of three children under 18, October 12–20, 2022; n=111 U.S. mothers of four or more children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

Satisfaction

% very satisfied with the listed area of her life

◆ Mom of two ◆ Mom of three ◆ Mom of four+



n=369 U.S. mothers of two children under 18, October 12–20, 2022; n=172 U.S. mothers of three children under 18, October 12–20, 2022; n=111 U.S. mothers of four or more children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

Goals

◆ Mom of two ◆ Mom of three ◆ Mom of four+

Top Five Most Important Goals for Herself

Goal 1

- ◆ Financial stability
65% 77% 76%

Goal 2

- ◆ Building a stable and healthy home environment
62% 64%
- ◆ Loving and accepting myself
59%

Goal 3

- ◆ Loving and accepting myself
59% 60%
- ◆ Building a stable and healthy home environment
57%

Goal 4

- ◆ Make time for myself
52% 54% 48%

Goal 5

- ◆ Positive friendships
40% 35%
- ◆ Exercise regularly
41% 35%

Top Five Most Important Goals for Her Child(ren)

- ◆ Love and accept who they are
80% 81% 84%
- ◆ Grow up to be kind people
73% 75% 72%
- ◆ Are financially stable
55% 60% 63%
- ◆ Have access to quality education
51% 47% 45%
- ◆ Have access to quality food and exercise
35% 29% 25%

n=369 U.S. mothers of two children under 18, October 12–20, 2022; *n*=172 U.S. mothers of three children under 18, October 12–20, 2022; *n*=111 U.S. mothers of four or more children under 18, October 12–20, 2022.

Methodology

This study involved multiple phases of data collection from 2022–2023.

Quantitative Survey of U.S. Mothers

A survey of 1,008 U.S. adult women with at least one child under the age of 18 in the home was conducted from October 12–20, 2022. The margin of error for the sample is +/- 2.9 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. For this survey, researchers used an online panel for data collection and observed a quota random sampling methodology. Quotas were set to obtain a minimum readable sample by a variety of demographic factors, and samples were weighted by region, ethnicity, education, age and gender to reflect their natural presence in the American population (using U.S. Census Bureau data for comparison).

Qualitative Research of U.S. Mothers

In August 2022, focus groups were conducted with 21 mothers of at least one child under the age of 18. Focus groups were comprised of Christian mothers, non-Christian mothers, mothers employed full-time and mothers who are not employed outside the home. The goal of these group

compositions was to examine the diversity of women’s faith and work backgrounds. These focus groups were conducted virtually and were moderated by a trained female researcher.

Quantitative Survey of U.S. Pastors

An online survey among 453 U.S. Protestant senior pastors was conducted from January 10–18, 2023. Participants are all members of Barna Group’s proprietary Pastor Panel. Minimal weighting has been used to ensure the sample is representative based on denomination, region and church size.

Qualitative Research of U.S. Pastors

Additional qualitative research was conducted in April 2023 utilizing a short-form, open-ended survey among senior Protestant pastors. Fifty-five pastors were included in this qualitative survey. This group included male and female pastors, as well as pastors of varying lengths of ministry and church tenure, varied marital status and multiple denominations in both mainline and non-mainline contexts. ◆

Glossary

Generations:

Gen Z: Born between 1999 and 2015

(The sample for this study only includes Gen Z mothers born between 1999 and 2004.)

Millennial: Born between 1984 and 1998

Gen X: Born between 1965 and 1983

Boomer: Born between 1946 and 1964

Faith Affiliation:

Self-identified Christians: Have self-identified as Christian or identify with a Christian denomination

Non-Christians: Those who do not identify as Christian

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About the Partners

Barna Group

In its 38-year history, Barna Group has conducted more than two million interviews over the course of thousands of studies and has become a go-to source for insights about faith and culture, leadership and vocation, and generations. Barna Group has worked with thousands of businesses, nonprofit organizations and churches across the U.S. and around the world.

Barna is an independent, privately-held, nonpartisan organization based in Dallas, Texas, with offices in Nashville, Tennessee; Ventura, California; and Atlanta, Georgia.

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The MomCo by MOPS International

The MomCo by MOPS International influences millions of moms each year across 72 countries in 18 languages by working in partnership with thousands of churches. The MomCo's mission is to encourage and equip moms to realize their potential as mothers, women and leaders in relationship with Jesus and in partnership with the local church. Over the last seven years, 49,000 MomCo participants have made the decision to follow Jesus.

themom.co

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Knowledge to Lead with Confidence in Your Church and in Your Home



Households of Faith

This report produced with Lutheran Hour Ministries paints a vivid portrait of the domestic lives of U.S. practicing Christians and provides vital principles to strengthen Christian families.



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Moms are key to the success of their household, and scripture reveres them as devoted leaders, teachers and encouragers. How, then, are mothers valued in society, by their communities and at church?

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- Work-life balance and societal views on motherhood
- Community satisfaction and the value of friendship to mothers

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