

Single Mom Income and Time-Sharing Survey



Gender equality and time-sharing for
separated and divorced parents

WEALTHY SINGLE MOMMY

————— *with Emma Johnson*

Abstract



Equality in parenting time correlates with higher income for single moms and a greater sense of pride in their parenting. Also, equally shared parenting between moms and dads is popular with single mothers.

These are the biggest findings of the Single Mom Income and Time-Sharing paper, based on a survey of 2,279 single moms in the United States, which sought to understand the connection between single mothers' income and their time-sharing with their children's fathers.

There are 16 million single mothers in the United States, and one-third of all children, or 24 million kids, live with a single parent.

Survey highlights include:

- Moms with a 50/50 parenting schedule are 54% more likely to earn at least \$100,000 annually than moms whose kids are with them most of the time (with “visits” with the dad).
- Moms with a 50/50 parenting schedule are more than three times (325%) more likely to earn \$100,000 than single moms with 100% time with their kids.
- 13%, or 1 in 8, single moms have a 50/50 arrangement — and 98% of them are content with it.
- 51% of single moms surveyed have their children 100% of the time.
- Equally shared parenting is popular with single moms: The majority of single moms, 53%, either already enjoy a 50/50 schedule, or wish they had it.
- 9 in 10 single moms say they could earn more money if they had more equality in their parenting time.
- Moms with 50/50 parenting time are 34% more likely (23% vs 15%) to say they feel “awesome and proud” of being a mom when compared with moms who care for their kids 100% of the time.



Photo by WOCinTech

Takeaway: Gender pay equity cannot be achieved without equal parenting time between mothers and fathers. While it is not possible to legislate equal time-sharing between married parents, it is possible to legislate equality between separated and divorced parents,¹ who represent 20% of the U.S. parent population. Changing expectations for parenting arrangements between single parents present a unique opportunity to change gender culture and child-rearing practices for everyone.

The survey was conducted by Emma Johnson, journalist and founder of WealthySingleMommy.com.

About the survey

Gender pay equity cannot be achieved without equal parenting time between mothers and fathers. While it is not possible to legislate equal time-sharing between married parents, it is possible to legislate equality between separated and divorced parents, who represent 20% of the U.S. parent population. Changing expectations for parenting arrangements between single parents present a unique opportunity to change gender culture and child-rearing practices for everyone.

Mothers overall suffer a pay gap of at least 29%, earning an average of 71 cents for every \$1 earned by a dad — or an average of \$16,000 less per year, according to the [National Women’s Law Center](#).

This motherhood penalty is dramatically worse for single mothers. According to Pew Research,² single moms heading a household of three earn just \$26,000 per year on average, compared with \$40,000 per year for single dads heading a household of three — a 35% difference.

Motherhood pay gap

All mothers

29%

Single moms

35%

“Women and men know caretaking responsibilities affect their economic opportunity in the labor market — and this data confirms that more equitable care and child rearing responsibilities impact women’s labor market opportunities.”

— Kate Bahn, PhD, the director of labor market policy and an economist at the Washington Center for Equitable Growth

“Women still shoulder the majority of responsibility for caregiving, and that has an impact on women’s paychecks,” the National Women’s Law Center’s director of workplace equality, Maya Raghu, told Marketplace. The parenting pay gap exists for mothers at every income and education level, and in every U.S. state, with the gap widening for mothers of color.³

This gap is widening during the pandemic, as mothers overall, and single mothers in particular, are losing their jobs and feeling the pressure to quit work to take care of children. Mothers of children 12 years old and younger lost 2.2 million jobs between February and August 2020, a 12% drop, compared with just a 4% drop for fathers of young kids. Single moms of these young children lost 16% of jobs they previously held, compared with 6% of single fathers.⁴

The need for affordable child care, flexible work schedules, paid family leave and other policies that support working mothers has never been more urgent. But there’s another way to close gender gaps: Encourage or require separated and divorced fathers and mothers to share parenting time equally, creating gender equality for 20% of U.S. families with children. That’s according to Emma Johnson, a journalist and the founder of [Wealthy Single Mommy](#), an award-winning global platform representing hundreds of thousands of single moms.





During the summer of 2020, Johnson invited Wealthy Single Mommy readers, newsletter subscribers and social media followers to participate in a survey that looked at the relationship between shared parenting time and income of single moms. In her eight years of media work focused on single mothers, Johnson heard countless stories about single moms who found that sharing parenting time and responsibilities with their kids' father helped them grow professionally, financially and personally. In contrast, single moms who shoulder a majority of child care responsibilities tended to report struggling more to grow their careers, income and overall well-being.

Johnson used the survey to quantify and understand how single moms' co-parenting schedules are linked to their financial and personal well-being.

There are 16 million single mothers in the United States, and one-third of all children, or 24 million children, are living with an unmarried parent.^{5 6}

A total of 2,279 single moms participated in the survey. Dozens of single mothers were also interviewed about their experiences, along with economists and gender equality and financial experts.

While scores of studies about co-parenting have focused on child development, and many studies find that women are poorer after divorce, this is the first known large-scale look at the relationship between single mothers' earnings and parenting time.



“Emma Johnson is focusing on an important and almost completely overlooked piece of the complex gender equality puzzle.

She is absolutely right to point out that while social norms around equal parenting may be slow to change, reforming laws and practices governing divorced couples could make a big and beneficial difference for single mothers and fathers relatively quickly.”

— Anne-Marie Slaughter, CEO of New America



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Overview

Since the 1960s when divorce became mainstream in the United States, the vast majority of children in separated families have resided primarily with mothers, with weekend visits to dads — replicating a version of the mom-at-home, dad-as-breadwinner nuclear family ideal. This traditional model perpetuates gender stereotypes, with women expected to be primary caretakers, and fathers as primary wage earners (and child-support payors).

Simultaneously, the pay gap between single moms and single dads is greater than for married mothers and fathers, or men and women overall. It is no wonder why:

Unmarried moms meet cultural and legal expectations to be primarily responsible for caring for children — making it harder to devote time, energy and emotional bandwidth to growing a career and income compared to unmarried fathers.

While the majority of children of separated and divorced families spend most or all of their time with their mothers, there is a growing shift towards more equally shared parenting. Our culture is slowly but surely moving towards more egalitarian custody arrangements, while courts and policy are also making incremental, positive changes fueled by a growing body of research that finds that a 50/50 schedule benefits children. (In 2017, Kentucky became the first state to pass a law presuming equally shared parenting time when couples split.) In fact, a review of more than 60 peer-reviewed studies⁷ found that children fare best when kids spend approximately equal time with both parents.

The Single Mom Income and Time-Sharing Survey finds that moms benefit when they share parenting time equally with their kids' dads — both in terms of their income, as well as their personal well-being.

This data finds that mothers who have an equally shared, 50/50 parenting schedule with their kids' other parent (dads), are 54% more likely to earn at least \$100,000 annually than moms whose kids are with them most of the time. Moms who share custody equally are also more than three times (325%) more likely to earn six figures than single moms with full-time custody.

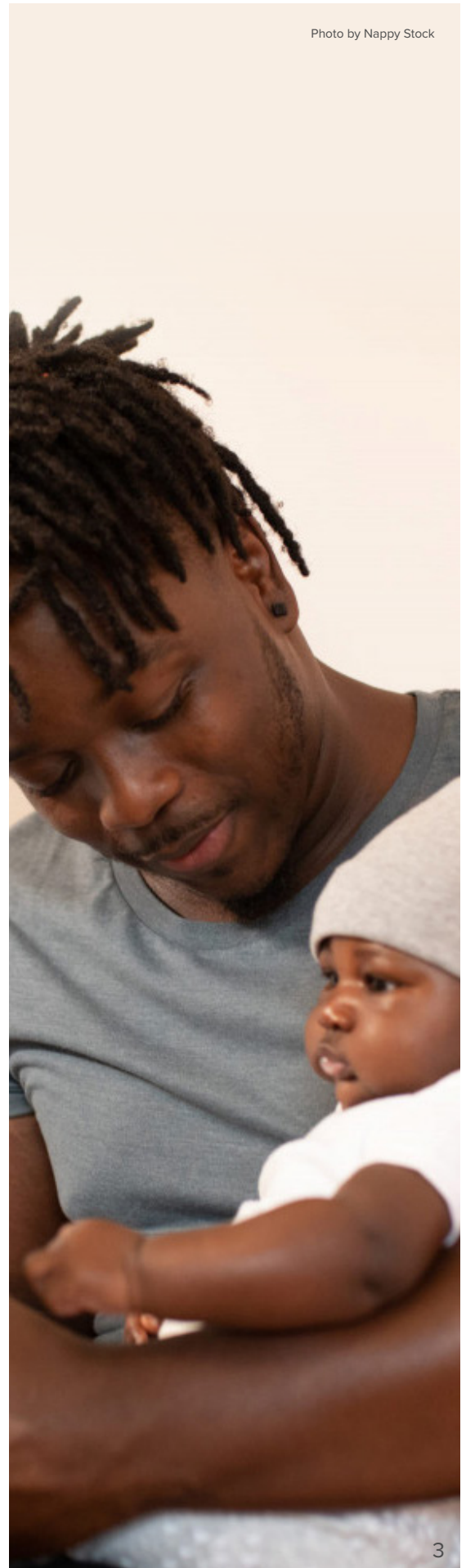
The Single Mom Income and Time-Sharing Survey also finds that the more equitably a single mom shares time with her children's dad,⁸ the more likely she is to be happy overall and proud of herself as a mom, and the less likely she is to be poor.

Further, the survey finds that equally shared parenting is popular, with 53% of mothers supporting the concept.

Almost all of the moms who have a 50/50 schedule already (1 in 8, or 13% of our total respondents) are content with it. Another 24% would like to share parenting equally, but can't get the dads onboard, while 18% say the dads are willing and they just need to figure out a schedule. In fact, 9 in 10 single moms who took the survey believe they would earn more money if they had more time-sharing with their kids' dad.

These findings present a unique opportunity to promote both policy and cultural changes that can close the gender pay gap — while also benefiting children, men and families overall. Legislative reform is needed across the country to create new norms for custody cases with a presumption of parenting time shared equally between parents. Until then, judges, attorneys and therapists serving these families can and should promote equality in parenting time.

Photo by Nappy Stock



Corporations also have opportunities to support separated parents of both genders with the understanding and expectations that moms and dads are equally responsible for raising children — whether their parents are married, divorced, separated or cohabiting. Paid family leave, subsidized child care, flexible schedules and other policies that support mothers and fathers equally benefit all working parents, as well as the company's bottom line, as support services for employees going through divorce are found to be helpful in retention and performance.⁹

“If we’re serious about gender equality, society and corporations must start supporting both men and women equally as caregivers — stop assuming that women are primary caregivers and that men do not have child care responsibilities. This survey expertly illustrates the reality for millions of single mothers in the United States who are presumed to be the primary or sole caretakers and yet are also the primary or sole breadwinners. While not surprising, it should be alarming in its unsustainability. Most meaningfully, this survey also presents opportunities to close gender gaps for everyone — regardless of their family situation.”

— Bethanie Baynes, director of Global Partnerships at Google, and founder of Breadwinning Women of Google

Individuals who care about equality, feminism, children and families can encourage and support loved ones by educating them about the universal benefits of equally shared parenting, and making 50/50 parenting the cultural norm — and expectation.

And finally, this is a call to single parents to step into equal parenting time, not just for themselves, or for their children, but because moms and dads can be a model of equality for others who are watching them now, and in the future.



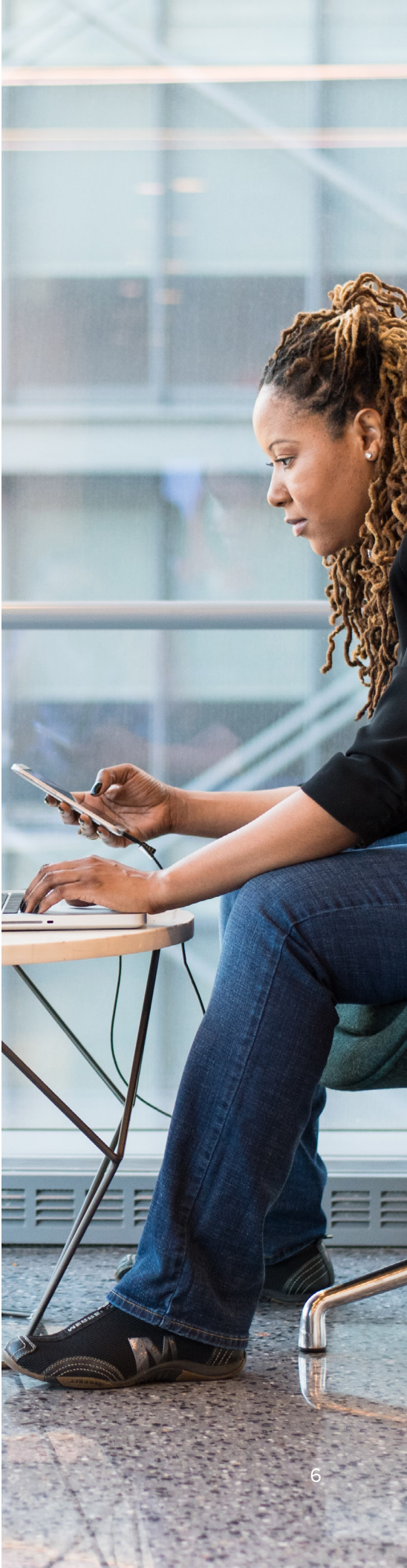
Single Mom Income and Earning Potential

The survey asked respondents about income level, employment status, sources of income and their feelings about their income and single motherhood.

Single moms are busy working

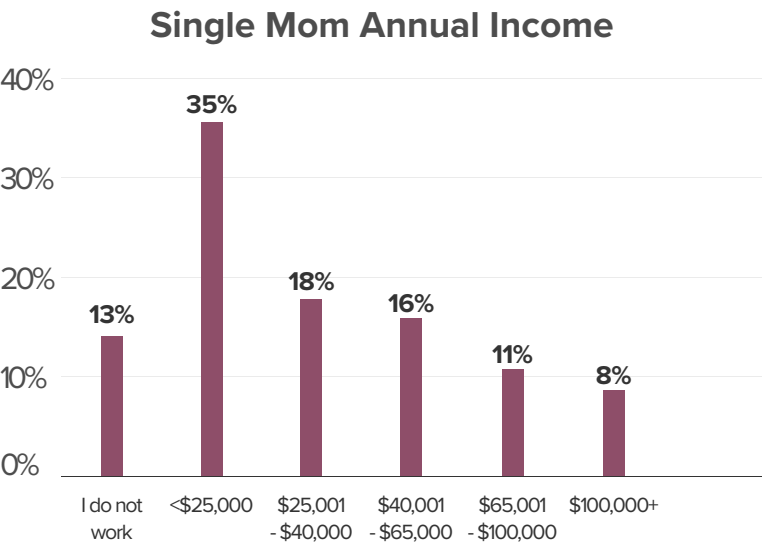
The overwhelming majority of single moms (90%) are either working, looking for work or are students.

Employment Status (more than one answer permitted)	
Employed 40 or more hours per week	44%
Unemployed and looking for work	21%
Employed up to 39 hours per week	16%
Student	15%
Self-employed business owner	11%
Freelance side gig (full- or part-time)	11%
Unemployed and not looking for work	2%
Unable to work	8%



Yet single moms are disproportionately poor...

Most single moms surveyed are poor. Nearly half — 48% — of respondents earn \$25,000 or less annually from a job or business, and only 8% earn \$100,000 or more. The percentage of single moms earning \$25,000 or less is even higher among Black and Latino respondents (59% and 51% respectively vs. 13% for white moms and 10% for Asian moms). U.S. Poverty guidelines for the lower 48 states is \$30,680 for a family of five.¹⁰



5 out of 10 single moms earn less than \$25,000 per year from a job(s) or business.



8% of single moms earn \$100,000+ annually

The majority of single moms do not rely on child support

Only 34% of these moms receive child support or alimony, and 16% receive unemployment benefits.

Of those getting child support or alimony, 76% of survey respondents report benefits averaging \$1,000 or less per month.

The average child support sum order in the United States is \$480 per month — and only \$287 on average is actually received, according to U.S. Census data.¹¹

Additional Sources of Income	
Child support/Alimony	34%
Unemployment benefits	16%
Disability benefits	3%



The majority of single moms are overwhelmed — but higher-earning moms are more likely to feel proud

Overall, single moms expressed mixed feelings about their single motherhood, though the majority agree with this sentiment:

“Overwhelmed, but I’m proud my kids see me doing my best.”

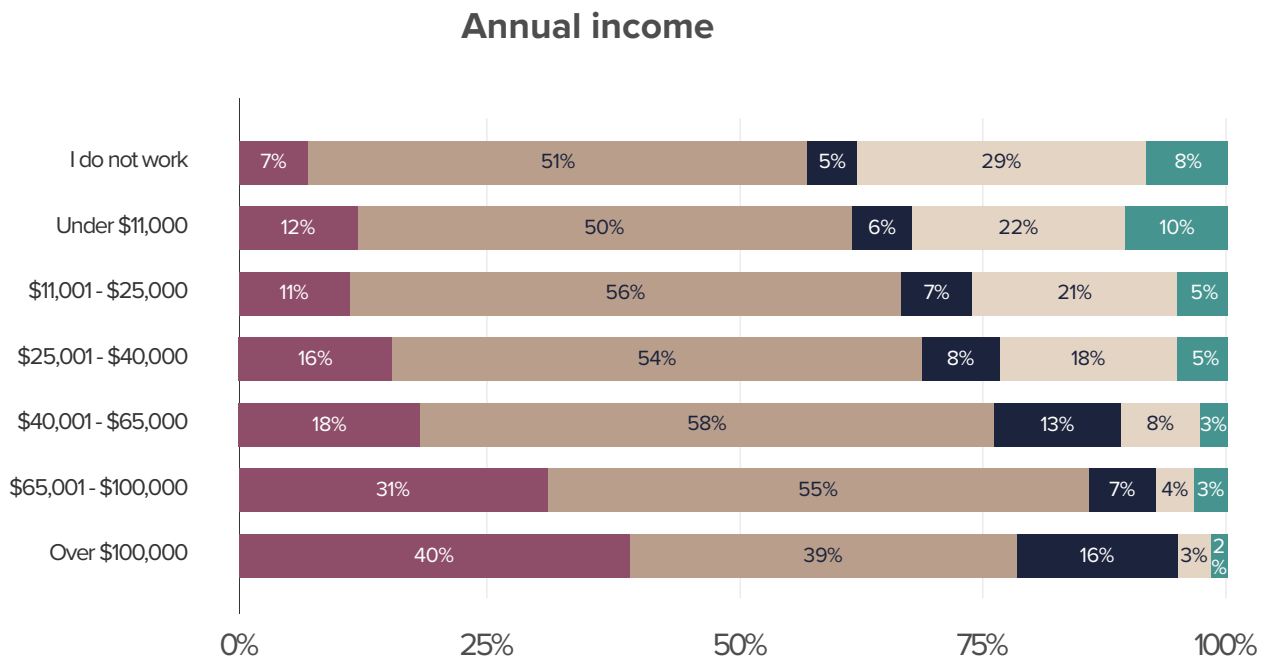
Higher income correlated with more positive feelings about motherhood, and lower income correlated with fear and shame.

Nearly 25% of the women polled say they are terrified of the future or ashamed of where they are in life now.

How do you feel as a single mom?	
Awesome, proud of what I have accomplished as a single mom	18%
Overwhelmed, but I’m proud my kids see me doing my best	52%
I’m a mess and am ashamed of where I am in life	16%
Balanced, life is what it is	9%
Terrified of the future	6%



1 | Single Mom Income and Earning Potential



- Awesome, proud of what I have accomplished as a single mom.
- Overwhelmed, but I'm proud my kids see me doing my best.
- Balanced, life is what it is.
- I'm a mess and am ashamed of where I am in life.
- Terrified of the future.



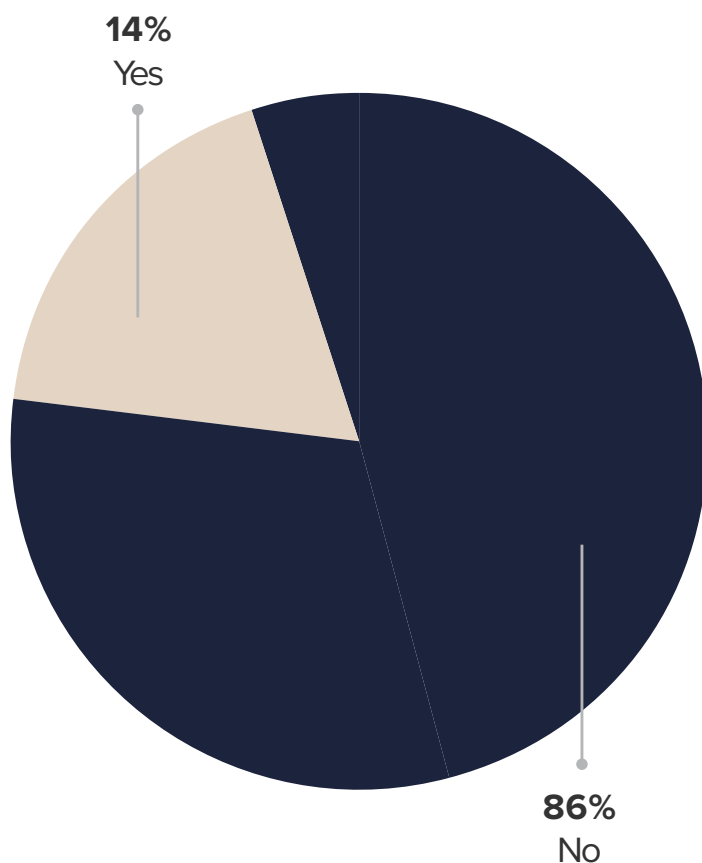
Single moms earning less than \$25,000 annually are seven times more likely to “feel like a mess and ashamed” than those earning more than \$100,000 (21% vs. 3%).

Single moms earning \$100,000 annually are four times more likely to feel “awesome and proud” of what they’ve accomplished as single moms, compared to those earning less than \$25,000.

Earning Potential

A full 86% of single moms say they are not reaching their earning potential. We asked the single mothers what they needed in order to earn more money. More than half answered that more child care — whether paid babysitting, or through more equitable time-sharing with their children's father — was key to increasing their income.

Do you feel like you're fulfilling your earning potential?



86% of single moms feel that they aren't fulfilling their earning potential.



Tasha: I’m a solo parent. If we had equal parenting time I would definitely be able to make more money. I know I am not making my most income potential because I’m a solo parent. And right now I’m having a hard time finding a child care provider who matches my hours and will actually show up.

**What do you need to increase your earning potential?
(More than one answer permitted)**

Continue your education	55%
Find/build a side-hustle	49%
Find a better job	47%
Get coaching and encouragement	34%
More child care	31%
Secure funds to start a business	29%
Share more parenting responsibilities with my kids’ other parent	21%

One-fifth of single moms say more shared parenting with their children’s father would increase their earning potential.





Parenting Schedule and Income

While many studies and media reports document inequity between married mothers and fathers when it comes to income, child care and career advancement, there is no known reporting on how time-sharing between the 16 million U.S. single mothers and their co-parents affects gender equality.

2 | Parenting Schedule and Income

This section explores the impact that different types of parenting arrangements have on single moms’ income. Of single moms surveyed:

- 13% have 50/50 parenting arrangements
- 36% have majority time responsibility, with visits with the dad
- 51% of single moms surveyed have their kids 100% of the time

Parenting Arrangement	
I have kids 100% of the time (full custody)	51%
I have primary custody and the kids have visits with their dad (majority time)	36%
Kids spend equal time between both parents’ homes, 50/50 (equal parenting)	13%
He has kids a majority of the time, with visits with me	1%
I don’t see my kids	0%

Note: The analysis focuses on parenting arrangements where the mom has full or majority time, or where time is equally divided between both parents, due to lack of statistical significance of the responses from moms who follow the other two arrangements.



Higher earning moms are more likely to have more equal parenting schedules

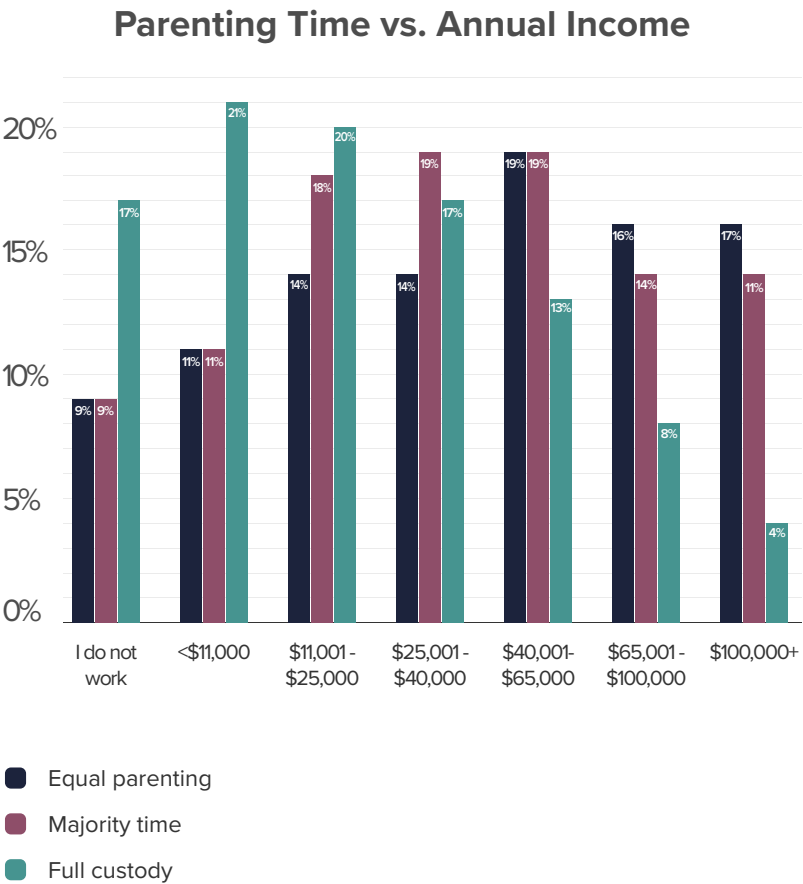
The survey compared annual income levels among the three main parenting arrangement segments (i.e. full custody, majority time and equal parenting) in order to understand the impact that parenting time has on single moms’ income.

- **Full custody:** 12% of those who have 100% time earn more than \$65,000, including 4% who earn \$100,000+.
- **Majority time:** 25% of those who have majority time earn more than \$65,000 including 11% who earn \$100,000+
- **Equal parenting:** 33% of those who have 50/50 time earn more than \$65,000, including 17% who earn \$100,000+.

Parenting Time Vs. Annual Income							
	I do not work	<\$11,000	\$11,001 - \$25,000	\$25,001 - \$40,000	\$40,001 - \$65,000	\$65,001- \$100,000	\$100,000+
Equal parenting	9%	11%	14%	14%	19%	16%	17%
Majority time (primary custody)	9%	11%	18%	19%	19%	14%	11%
Full custody	17%	21%	20%	17%	13%	8%	4%



Single moms who have an equally shared parenting schedule are **54% more likely to earn at least \$100,000** than moms who have majority time, and they're more than three times (325%) more likely to earn six figures than single moms with 100% full parenting time with their kids.





We found that 17% of single moms who share parenting time equally earn over \$100,000 annually, compared to 11% of those who have majority time and 4% of those who have 100% parenting time. This means that **single moms who share parenting time equally are more than three times more likely to earn more than \$100,000 annually than those who have full physical time with their kids.**

Similarly, single moms with equal time-sharing arrangements are less likely to be poor. Those with equal parenting time are less likely to earn less than \$25,000 annually (34%, compared to 58% of moms with full parenting time and 38% of moms with majority time).

When it comes to employment status, single moms with 100% time with their kids are 32% more likely to be unemployed and looking for work, and twice as likely to be unable to work, than those with 50/50 arrangements or majority time. On the other hand, single moms that have equal parenting schedules or majority time are more likely to be employed full-time.



Phylicia: I didn't want 50/50 but it's what we ended up with, and it has been the best thing for my finances and for my mental and emotional health! Because I didn't have the "security" of child support, I was open to side hustles to make up for the loss of my ex's income, and since he had the kids half the time, I was actually able to take on side hustles. I started a cleaning business and began investing in real estate. I was forced to take control of my finances. I would not have had the time or energy without 50/50 time-sharing, and I doubt I would have had the motivation if I were receiving child support.

Parenting Time vs. Employment Status

	Equal parenting	Mom has majority time	Mom has full custody
Employed full-time	53%	51%	38%
Employed full-time	12%	16%	15%
Self-employed/business owner	12%	11%	11%
Freelance/side gig (full- or part-time)	8%	12%	10%
Unemployed and looking for work	19%	16%	25%
Unemployed and not looking for work	2%	1%	2%
Student	13%	13%	16%
Retired	0%	0%	0%
Unable to work	6%	5%	10%

Single moms with equal parenting arrangements are **40% more likely to be employed full-time** than moms with 100% parenting time.

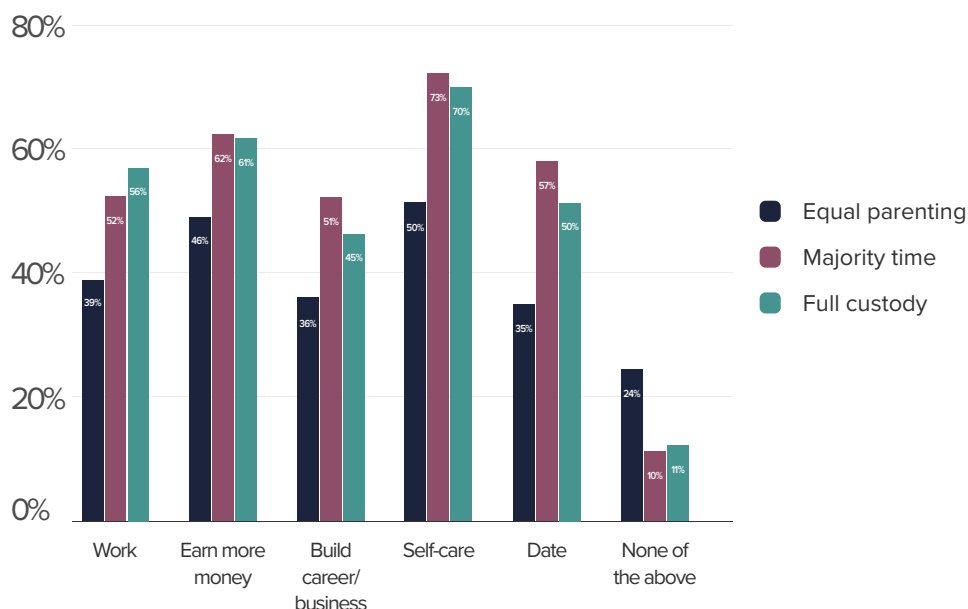


Amanda: *I’ve always had 50/50 and I just can’t see any way I could perform all the demands on my job without 50/50 custody. Tonight for example I’ll be working late, late, late because I know tomorrow my son will be home from school by 3:30 and the day is shot after that with making sure he’s situated and dinner is made, then bedtime routine. My custody arrangement means I get hours extra each week I wouldn’t otherwise have. My income has doubled since my divorce.*

Moms with majority parenting time have fewer hours for career and self-care

The less time moms share with their co-parent means less time for other activities such as work, developing a business, self-care or dating. The survey revealed a large difference between how majority-time moms and 50/50 moms feel about their time.

Do you feel your parenting responsibilities interfere with working, self-care or dating?



Of those who said parenting interferes with their ability to work:

- **56% have full custody**
- **52% have majority time**
- **39% have equal time-sharing**

2 | Parenting Schedule and Income

Single moms with majority or 100% parenting time are 35% more likely to feel that parenting interferes with their ability to earn more money, compared with those with 50/50 arrangements.

Similarly, 61% of moms with full custody and 62% of moms with majority time feel like their parenting responsibilities interfere with their ability to earn more money, while just 46% of moms with equal arrangements feel this way. This means that single moms with majority or full time parenting are 35% more likely to feel that their parenting responsibilities interfere with their ability to earn more money than those with equal arrangements.

The feeling that parenting time takes away from building a career or business is also more prevalent among moms with majority or 100% arrangements compared to those with 50/50 agreements. Respondents with majority custody arrangements are 42% more likely to feel this way than those with equal parenting arrangements.

In addition to interfering with their financial growth, single moms who have 100% or majority time are at least 70% more likely to feel that parenting responsibilities stand in the way of self-care.

Activities Parenting Responsibilities Interfere With

	Work	Earn more money	Build career/business	Self-care	Date	None of the above
Equal parenting	39%	46%	36%	50%	35%	24%
Majority time	52%	62%	51%	73%	57%	10%
Full custody	56%	61%	45%	70%	50%	11%

Moms with full custody or majority time are 35% more likely to feel that their parenting responsibilities interfere with their ability to earn more money compared to those with equal arrangements.



Cynthia: I am with our daughter 100% of the time. If he had her weekends I'd be able to have a part-time job without worrying about child care costs.

Melissa: I have my kids almost always. My income suffers greatly because of it. I'm way up from where I was, but I could have a better career if someone split the burden... not to mention the child care costs.



50/50 moms are happier and prouder

When asked how they feel as single moms, the majority of respondents agreed with this statement: “Overwhelmed, but I’m proud my kids see me doing my best” (52% of all respondents).

However, single moms with 50/50 time-sharing are 53% more likely to feel “Awesome, proud of what I have accomplished as a single mom” than those with full custody (and 27% more likely to choose that answer than majority-time moms).

Single moms with higher incomes are also more likely to share this feeling of pride, and those who earn at least \$100,000 annually are four times more likely to say they feel awesome and proud than those earning under \$25,000 annually (40% vs. 11%).

Parenting Agreement vs. How Single Moms Feel About Their Situations

	Awesome, proud of what I have accomplished as a single mom	Overwhelmed, but I’m proud my kids see me doing my best	I’m a mess and am ashamed of where I am in life	Balanced, life is what it is	Terrified of the future
Equal parenting	23%	50%	15%	7%	6%
Majority time	18%	55%	12%	9%	6%
Full custody	15%	52%	19%	8%	5%

“Single moms that share parenting time equally are 53% more likely to feel awesome and proud of what they’ve accomplished than those with full custody.”



Shannon: *I went from majority care/parenting time, to equal parenting time. Nowadays he probably has more parenting time because he works from home (and the kids have distance learning!) and I have to work in-person.*

I don't make more money because of it — but I have sooo much more free/leisure time and I can't put a price on that.

“If my kids’ dad shared more parenting time and responsibilities I could ... ”

Earn more money or otherwise advance my career	86%
More self-care: Relax/travel/spend time with friends	82%
Alone time	44%
Exercise more	35%
Be happier	32%
Date more	21%



9 in 10 single moms say they could earn more money if they shared more parenting responsibilities with their kids' dad.

That feeling is especially strong among moms who have full custody (89% vs. 82% of moms with majority time).

Self-care activities was the second most selected answer (82% of surveyed single moms) when asked what they could do if they shared more parenting responsibilities with their kids' dad.

One-third of single moms with full custody (33%) said that one of the top three things they could do if they shared more parenting responsibilities with their kids' dad is to simply be happier.

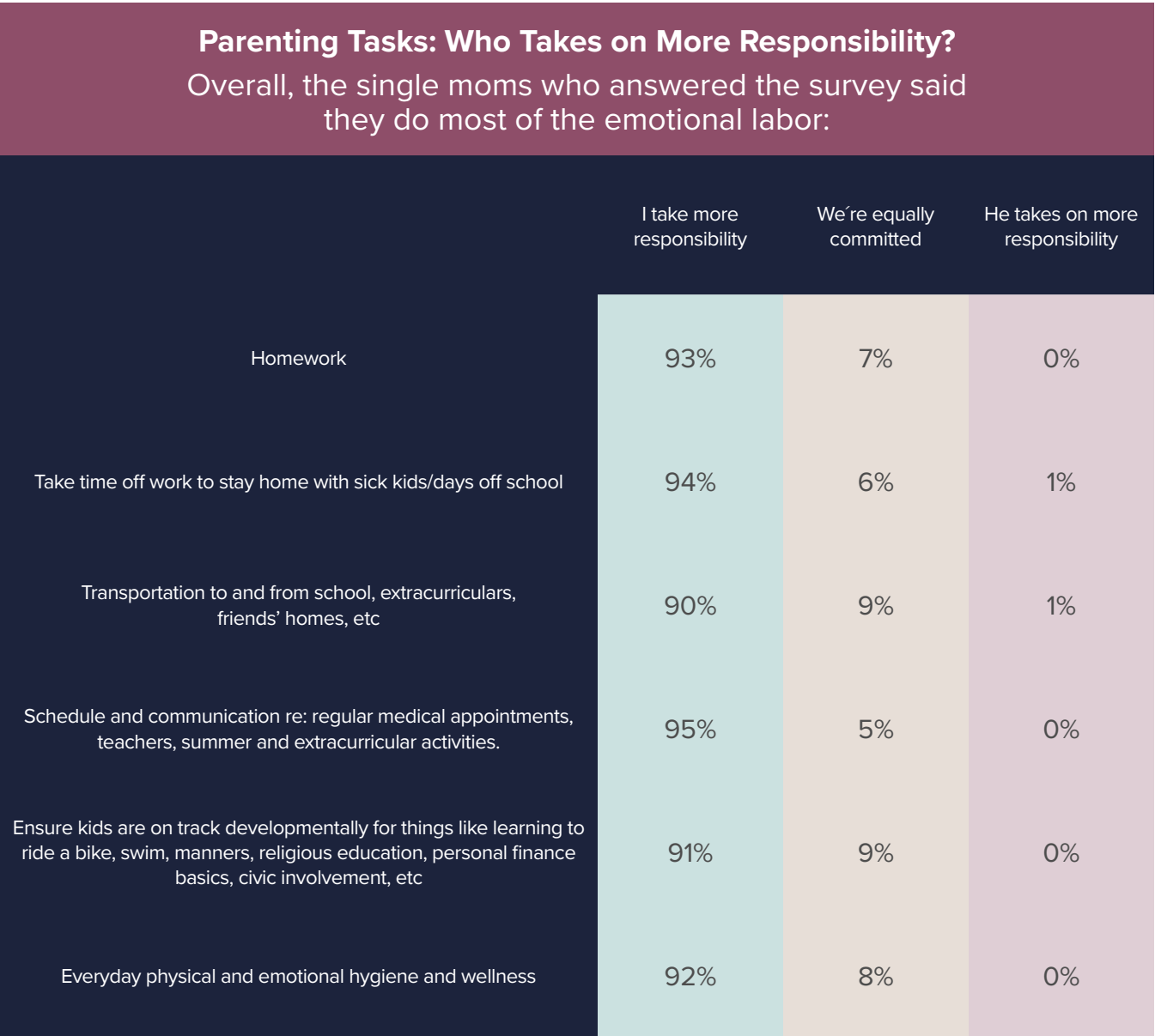




Emotional Labor and Parenting Schedules

Moms feel they do most of the emotional labor

Single moms of all parenting schedules overwhelmingly report that they take on more parenting tasks such as regular scheduling, transportation and homework — as well as the physical and emotional care of children. Fewer than 10% of the women claim that both parents are equally committed to these aspects of parenting.



9 out of 10 of single moms say they take on more responsibility than their counterpart on parenting tasks. Not surprising, more equality in parenting time correlated with more equality in emotional labor.

3 | Emotional Labor and Parenting Schedules

Parenting Tasks Responsibility Share vs. Parenting Agreement									
	I take more responsibility			We're equally committed			He takes on more responsibility		
	Full custody	Majority time	Equal parenting	Full custody	Majority time	Equal parenting	Full custody	Majority time	Equal parenting
Homework	100%	97%	55%	0%	3%	43%	100%	97%	55%
Take time off work to stay home with sick kids/days off school	99%	97%	64%	1%	3%	34%	100%	97%	55%
Transportation to and from school, extracurriculars, friends' homes, etc	100%	95%	43%	0%	5%	53%	100%	97%	55%
Schedule and communication re: regular medical appointments, teachers, summer and extra activities	100%	96%	74%	0%	3%	25%	100%	97%	55%
Ensure kids are on track developmentally for things like learning to ride a bike, swim, manners, religious education, personal finance basics, civic involvement, etc	100%	94%	52%	0%	6%	47%	100%	97%	55%
Everyday physical and emotional hygiene and wellness	100%	94%	55%	0%	6%	44%	100%	97%	55%

A photograph of a man with a beard and a young girl. The man is wearing a white t-shirt and a green and black plaid shirt over it. He is carrying the girl on his shoulders. The girl is wearing a yellow long-sleeved shirt, a dark blue puffer vest, blue jeans, and brown boots with pink laces. They are standing in a field of evergreen trees, possibly a Christmas tree farm, with a forest of trees in the background under a cloudy sky.

4.

Closing the Parenting Gap

Over half of the women surveyed, 53%, want a more equal parenting arrangement, but have to overcome hurdles to make it happen. The survey asked these 2,279 single moms why they do not currently have an equal co-parenting schedule, what they would personally achieve with equal parenting and what would need to happen to help realize equal parenting in our society today.

4 | Closing the Parenting Gap

Of the single moms with unequal parenting arrangements, 50% said the arrangement was by their (the mother's) choice, and 60% said it was the father's choice not to be any more involved. Other answers, of which respondents could choose more than one, included:

- Dad in jail
- Interference from a new wife or girlfriend
- Work conflict
- Court rulings

Reasons for Unequal Parenting Agreement (select all that apply)	
He chooses not to be any more involved	60%
He lives too far away	22%
I do not want him to be any more involved than he is	15%
His job prevents more involvement	12%
His girlfriend/wife prevents more involvement	8%
He is not allowed any more time by the court	7%
He's in jail	6%



With 60% of the women surveyed saying that their child's other parent chooses not to be more involved, this appears to be the biggest overall hurdle in the parenting arrangement from the moms' perspective.



Tonya: I don't have 50/50, but I've been pushing harder towards it as much as I can. When we first divorced I had the kids about 90% of the time. I had no time to do anything other than go to work, get my hours in and leave. I did a lot from home at night when the kids were in bed and I still excelled in what I did, received a prestigious award and was able to negotiate my salary. However, I couldn't really make big, future-shaping moves because I couldn't count on having the parenting help I needed.

Once I realized I needed to get hustling with my career I started slowly turning up the expectation for more help from my ex. It took time and it can still be a struggle but I got to a place where I could take some risks and make some moves. I took a job where I'd need to travel and my daily commute was extended so it naturally created a demand for him to be more available. Now we are closer to 60/40 and it works because when I need him more he's available. I've been able to significantly increase my income over the last 4 years.

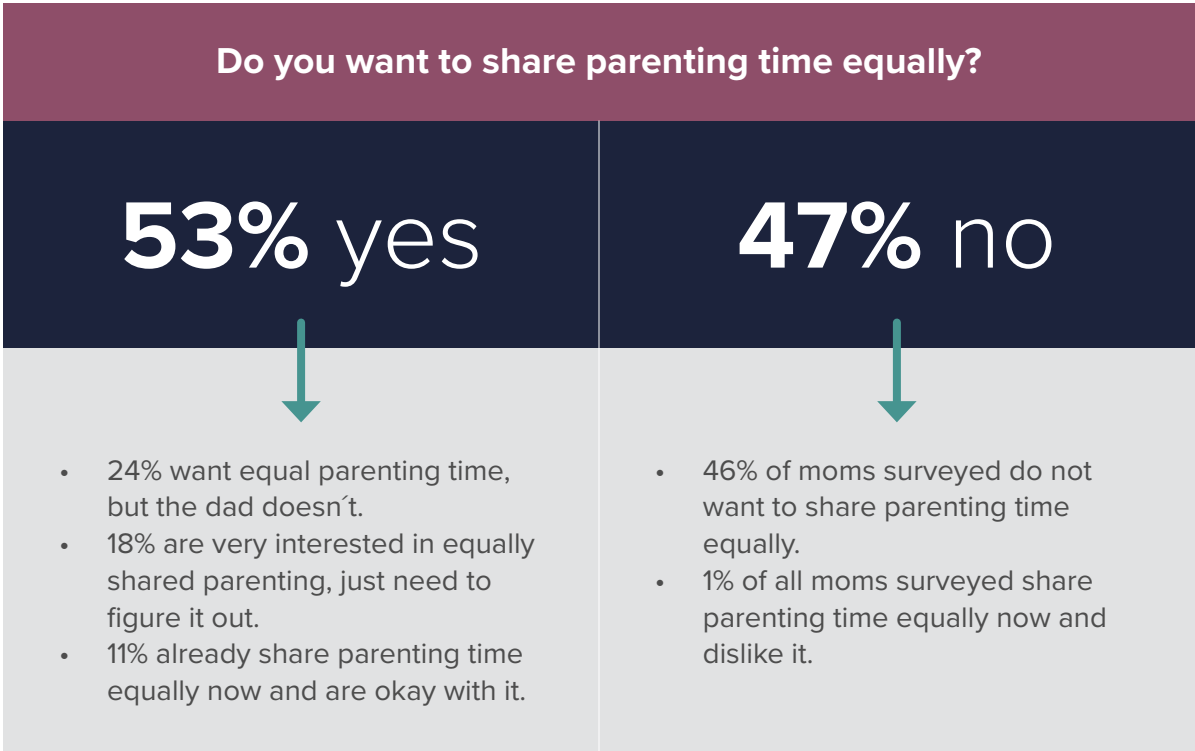
Most single moms accept or want equally shared parenting

Of moms who do have equally shared parenting time, 98% said they like it, and just 2% said they do not like it.

Of moms who have majority time, about half (48%) said they wish they did have a 50/50 arrangement. Three quarters (76%) of the moms who want 50/50, say their kids’ dad does not.

Fewer than half (46%) of all single mothers surveyed say they want their kids with them (the mom) the majority of the time.

Over half of single moms (53%) either want, express interest in or already have equal parenting time arrangements.



4 | Closing the Parenting Gap

Moms who want equally shared parenting say:

It's good for the kids to spend equal time with both parents	82%
I need more me-time to relax, date, exercise, recharge	55%
I need time to work	41%
If women want gender equality, that includes equal parenting time	17%
No good reason not to	15%
Other	8%



Moms who do not want to share parenting equally with their kids' dad say it is because (choose multiple):

He's a threat to my children's safety and well-being	52% (22% of all responses)
I'm a better parent	34% (14% of all responses)
I believe the mom should be the primary caregiver	8%
He chose to end the marriage/relationship so shouldn't be rewarded with parenting time	5%
I don't want my kids to spend time with their other parent's new partner	5%

How to promote equally shared parenting

The survey reveals 42% of the moms have asked their child’s other parent to share more parenting responsibilities to no avail. More than half suggest that public education, coaching and cultural change needs to happen to make equal parenting a reality.

To share parenting responsibilities equally, you need to:	
I’ve already asked him and he is not interested	42%
I’d like to take legal action but do not have the time or funds to do so	17%
Initiate the conversation and ask him	11%
Take legal action to get him more involved	8%





What is your top parenting responsibility priority to coordinate with your kids' dad that would make a difference in your life?

Basic time-sharing responsibilities each week and during time off school/summers	67%
Manage schoolwork, extracurricular programs	6%
Handling the grocery, apparel, school/sports equipment shopping	6%
Take responsibility for medical visits, emergency calls	3%
Carpool/drive the kids where they need to go	2%

How to get to 50/50 parenting

What do you think needs to happen in our society in order to make parenting more equal? (Select all that apply)	
Coaching and counseling for dads	62%
Culture change	57%
Public education about the importance of father involvement	57%
Public education about benefits to moms when dads are involved	46%
Coaching and counseling for moms	38%
Legislation	27%





5.

Solutions

Recommendations for equalizing parenting for separated and divorced parents

Policy Change

Change state law in each of the 50 states to establish a rebuttable presumption of equal time-sharing for parents who are divorced, separated or never married.

These laws work. In 2017, Kentucky became the first state in the country to pass an equally shared parenting law, one which creates a rebuttable presumption of equal parenting time for separated and divorced parents. That means that when you break up in Kentucky, time with the kids is equally split between both parents — and the onus is on one parent to argue the other should have less time.

Within two years of implementation of the law, the number of family court filings in Kentucky dropped by more than 11%, and the number of family court filings involving domestic violence charges dropped by 4%.

Further, the United States lags far behind most other countries that automatically guarantee father's rights at birth. Today, 40%¹² of U.S. children are born to parents who are not married, and fathers in these families do not have presumed visitation rights in most states, and many must spend lots of money in family court just to be recognized.¹³



The good news is such policy changes are relatively easy to implement, because they are free.

Says Kate Bahn, PhD, director of labor market policy and an economist at the Washington Center for Equitable Growth: “Legal changes to divorce and family court proceedings don’t require as many resources since they wouldn’t require appropriations or tax changes to fund a program, such as would be required for universal child care or a social insurance program that funds paid leave.”

Corporate Change

Family-friendly workplace policies that are gender-neutral are critical to supporting working parents of all genders. These can include:

- Generous paid family leave
- Flexible schedules
- Subsidized child care
- Quality family health coverage
- Highlight company leaders who prioritize time with their families
- Scrutinize messages to employees that celebrate long, grueling hours

“If we’re serious about gender equality, society and corporations must start supporting both men and women equally as caregivers — stop assuming that women are primary caregivers and that men do not have child care responsibilities,” says Bethanie Baynes, director of Global Partnerships and founder of Breadwinning Women of Google. “This survey expertly illustrates the reality for millions of single mothers in the United States who are presumed to be the primary or sole caretakers and yet are also the primary or sole breadwinners. While not surprising, it should be alarming in its unsustainability. Most meaningfully, this survey also presents opportunities to close gender gaps for everyone — regardless of their family situation.”

Judicial Education

Judges and attorneys are often open to advocating for equally shared parenting once they are educated about its benefits — including the fact that it decreases conflict between parents, reduces the number of frivolous family court cases, and creates better outcomes for children. There are pockets in the United States where 50/50 parenting schedules are the norm thanks to judges, attorneys and mediators in those communities that advocate for such change — regardless of the law in their state.

“Because of the adversarial nature of the legal system, parents are pushed into custody battles that few can afford and that hurt families,” says Ginger Gentile, former executive director of National Parents Organization, and award-winning director of the documentary *Erasing Family*.

Culture Change

Policy and cultural change go hand-in-hand. Everyone can help change parenting culture, and media leaders have many opportunities to promote this important change.

“Single moms like myself, and the dads we parent with, are increasingly modeling this movement, and I know from experience that my married parent friends are watching and learning (and possibly a little jealous, too),” says Julia Dennison, Digital Content Director, Parents magazine.

- Single parents can pursue 50/50 time-sharing through negotiations with their childrens’ other parent as well as the courts. These pursuits normalize this trend, even when the results are not entirely successful.

- Everyone can suggest and support equally shared parenting when a loved one is going through a divorce, breakup or have a child outside of a relationship. When friends and relatives default to unnecessarily acrimonious and unequal custody, educate friends and relatives about how children, families and equality benefit from 50/50 parenting.
- Journalists can educate the public about equal parenting. Angles include child welfare, human and civil rights, gender equality, politics and the law. There is an untapped demand for coverage of new acceptance of shared parenting and its benefits, as well court rulings that unfairly perpetuate unequal parenting schedules for millions of single-parent families.
- Makers of TV, film, theater and other media can portray equal parenting as a new norm, and explore the challenges of achieving this goal.
- Celebrities and influencers can continue to share their own equal parenting stories. #parentinggoals #5050moms #5050parenting





“In my 30 years as a family attorney, and 5 years as a mediation advocate and educator, I know that divorce lawyers truly do want to help families, but often do not understand the best way to do so.

Emma’s work on low-conflict, equal divorce and separation is a message that the American Bar Association and it’s over 400,000 members will want to hear, not only to help them achieve the best outcome for their families, but also for the viability of individual law practices and the legal industry.

The antiquated litigation model is slowly but surely falling by the wayside as the divorcing public and the professionals who help them realize that amicable and equal divorces are possible and are what is best for families as they restructure through a divorce.”

— Susan Guthrie, Nationally Recognized Family Law Attorney and Mediator and
Chair of the American Bar Association Mediation Committee

Future Work

More research is needed on this topic. Other issues to be explored:

How did moms feel about their parenting arrangements at the time of divorce/breakup? Was their initial time-sharing arrangement different initially? For example, did they first hate 50/50 but grew to like it? Did they initially have 100% or majority time, but later changed to 50/50?

What's the impact of dads' income on parenting time? Higher-earning women tend to be married to, and divorced from, higher-earning men — and these men can afford legal representation to fight for and win equal parenting time. At the same time, higher-earning dads are also more likely to work more traditional jobs with set hours, which makes it easier to adhere to a parenting schedule.

Compare time-sharing arrangements and experiences of women who were married vs. those who were not. Differences in income, race, education and age/marital status when their first child was born may tell two very different stories of single mothers in the United States. Fathers who are not married to their children's mothers in the United States typically have no presumed rights to their children, unless they wage expensive legal battles. This issue is not as prevalent in other countries.



How did income and child-care responsibilities during the marriage/relationship impact time-sharing after the breakup? In other words, were higher-earning professional women already sharing child care equally with their partner, which then carried over to post-divorce life?

What effect did the pandemic have on parenting arrangements? The survey was conducted during the thick of the pandemic, which disproportionately hurt women in terms of employment opportunities, and child care responsibilities. How do these trends compare with pre- or post-pandemic life?

What do the dads say?

Of course, these responses are just from the female parents, and there are two (and sometimes more!) sides to every story. Anecdotally, single dads' perspectives include:

- Dads don't share parenting responsibilities or time because they are not allowed more than minimum time per court orders or mothers' gatekeeping.
- A fight for parenting rights or more parenting time require expensive and stressful legal battles.
- Unaffordable child support orders require long work hours, and less time to parent.
- Dads are systematically marginalized as parents — so why would they show up equally?

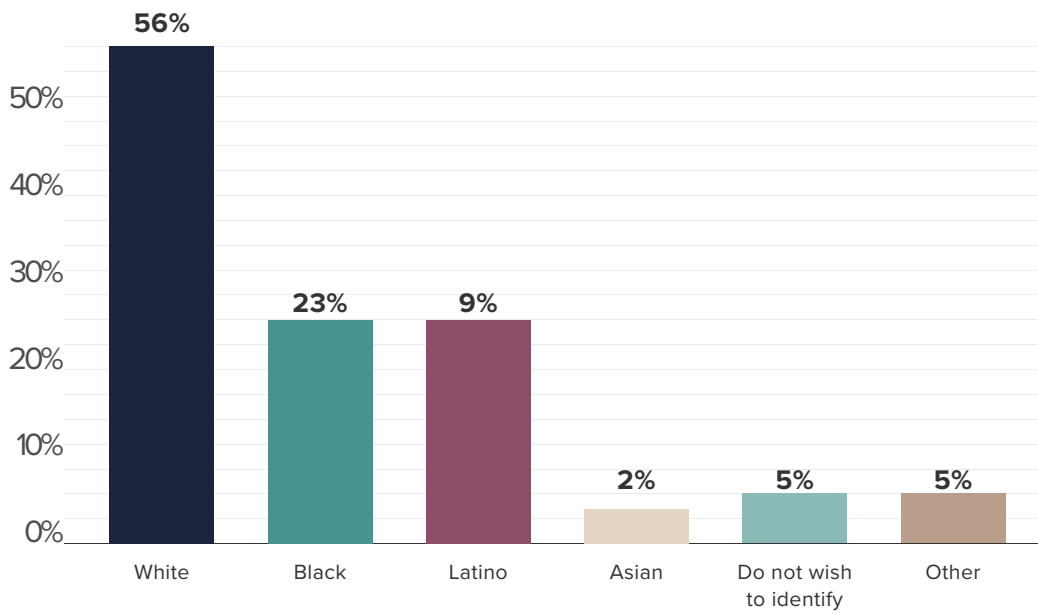




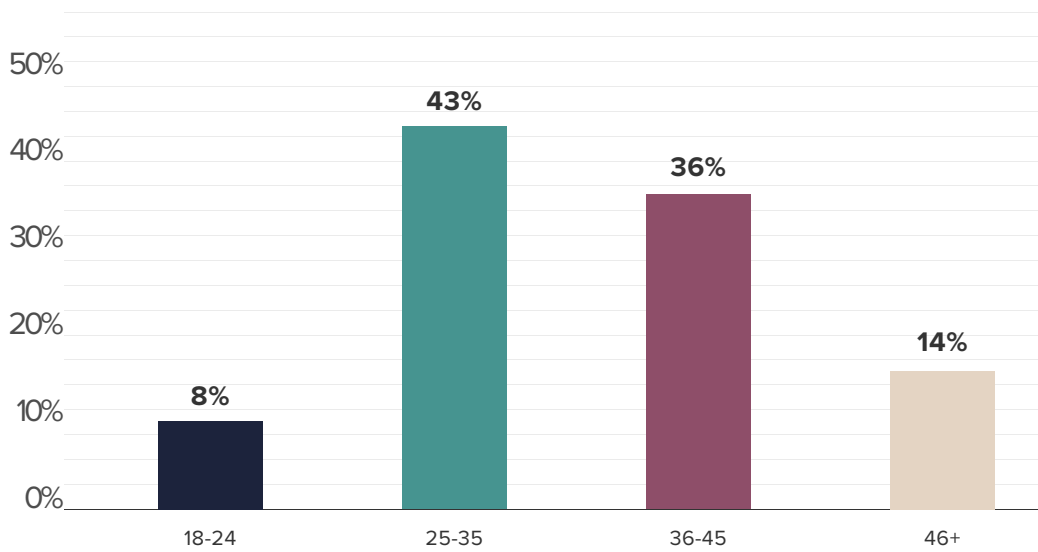
About the Survey

A total of 2,279 women from around the United States took part in this survey to help better understand the finances, parenting challenges and opportunities of single moms. The survey asked for participants' age, race, location and number of children. The responses offer a compelling snapshot of the single mom experience and shows how equally shared parenting might improve family life for everyone.

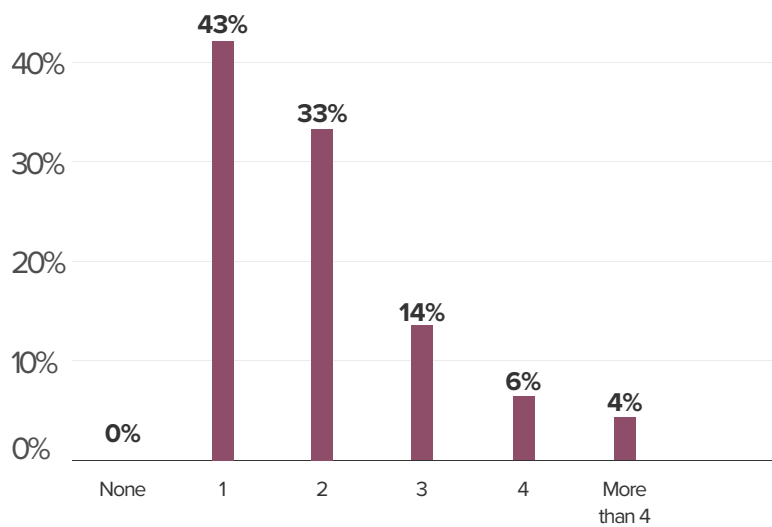
Race



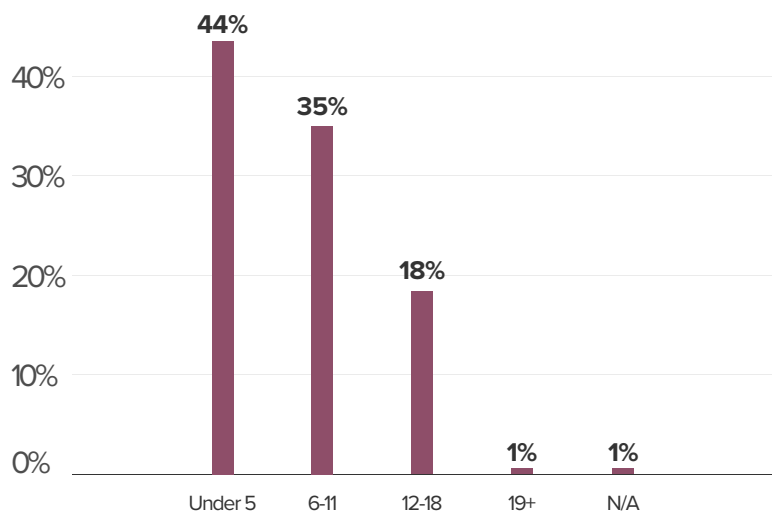
Age



Number of children



Children's ages



Methodology

The Single Mom Income and Parenting Time Survey was conducted via Survey Monkey. Respondents were recruited from Wealthy Single Mommy's social media, search traffic and email audiences, during the summer of 2020. Respondents came from all 50 U.S. states.

About the Survey Author

Emma Johnson is a journalist, activist, and the creator of WealthySingleMommy.com, the largest single mom community in the world.

A divorced mother of two who was herself raised by a single mother, Emma is the author of *The Kickass Single Mom* (Penguin), which was named by the New York Post as a "Smart, Must-Read." Emma has been quoted on single motherhood and gender equality in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, NPR, *The Doctors* and hundreds of other outlets.

Emma launched the activist group Moms for Shared Parenting as a call for policy and cultural change to focus on the benefits for children, women, men, feminism and our society when parents share equally in raising children.



Footnotes

¹Today, the term 'separated' is at least as relevant as 'divorce' when referring to single parents, as 64% of millennial moms have at least one child outside of marriage, according to Johns Hopkins: <https://krieger.jhu.edu/sociology/wp-content/uploads/sites/28/2012/02/Read-Online.pdf>

²<https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/07/02/the-rise-of-single-fathers/>

³<https://nwlc.org/press-releases/mothers-lose-16000-annually-to-the-wage-gap-nwlc-analysis-shows/>

⁴<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2020/09/28/mothers-are-3-times-more-likely-than-fathers-to-have-lost-jobs-in-pandemic>

⁵<https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2019/demo/families/cps-2019.html> Table A3, Line 57-F Others were never in a relationship.

⁶<https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2018/04/25/the-changing-profile-of-unmarried-parents/>

⁷<https://ifstudies.org/blog/10-surprising-findings-on-shared-parenting-after-divorce-or-separation>
Joint versus sole physical custody: Outcomes for children independent of family income or parental conflict, Linda Nielsen <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5154a075e4b08f050dc20996/t/5a6a58370d9297962b6ef1fd/1516918840631/2018+Child+Custody+60+studies+.pdf>

⁸ The survey did not ask respondents' sexuality, nor did any survey respondents identified as gay in any comments.

⁹ <https://www.bizjournals.com/nashville/blog/2014/03/the-cost-of-divorce-to-employers.html>

¹⁰ <https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines>

¹¹ <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2020/demo/p60-262.pdf>

¹² <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/unmarried-childbearing.htm>

¹³ <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/putative.pdf>