

Work-Family Balance: **Family Focused Solutions** **Perspective of Mothers in Europe**



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Mouvement Mondial des Mères (MMM)
World Movement of Mothers

about

World Movement of Mothers

- **MMM** founded in 1947 at UNESCO in Paris
- **MMM International:**
 - 1949 Special Consultative Status at UN
 - 2004 General Consultative Status at UN
 - Representations in New York, Geneva, Paris, Vienna
 - 43 Affiliate Associations in 35 countries pursue local grass-roots projects
- **MMM Europe** = European Delegation to EU & COE

about

FamilyPlatform.eu

- **Created** by Research Directorate of European Commission
- **Objective:** Formulate research agenda for research on family—to provide scientific data for evidence-based policy making
- **MMM Europe** is one of 12 research consortium members

the work of **FamilyPlatform.eu**

- ***Steps to Research Agenda***
 - Chart, assess, review contemporary knowledge of families in EU
 - Identify research gaps
 - Develop questions for future research
 - Elaborate future scenarios of family life to identify challenges
 - Identify key issues for family policy
- ***Recommended Areas for Future Research***
 - Care
 - Life-course and Transitions
 - “Doing Family”
 - Migration and Mobility
 - Family Policies
- ***Everything is published at www.familyplatform.eu***

Key Contributions by MMM-Europe

- ***“Realities of Mothers in Europe”***
 - Reviews European research and provides context for issues raised by the survey data
- ***“Survey of Mothers in Europe 2010”***
 - Provides data on mothers in Europe
 - Documents mothers’ priorities and concerns
 - Communicates messages sent by EU mothers to policy makers
- ***“Mothers’ Messages to Policy Makers”***
 - Messages in 10 languages from more than 7500 mothers in their own words

all available at www.mmmeurope.org

Survey of Mothers in Europe

- Online questionnaire in 10 languages:
 - English, French, German, Dutch, Spanish, Italian, Hungarian, Slovak, Swedish, Finnish
- Addressed to mothers in 16 countries
 - Through word-of-mouth, links on websites of MMM, affiliates, and other European CSOs
 - February 1 to August 31, 2010
- Total mothers responding: 11,887

Q: In talking to a woman pregnant with her first child, how would you describe what it is like to transition into being a mother?

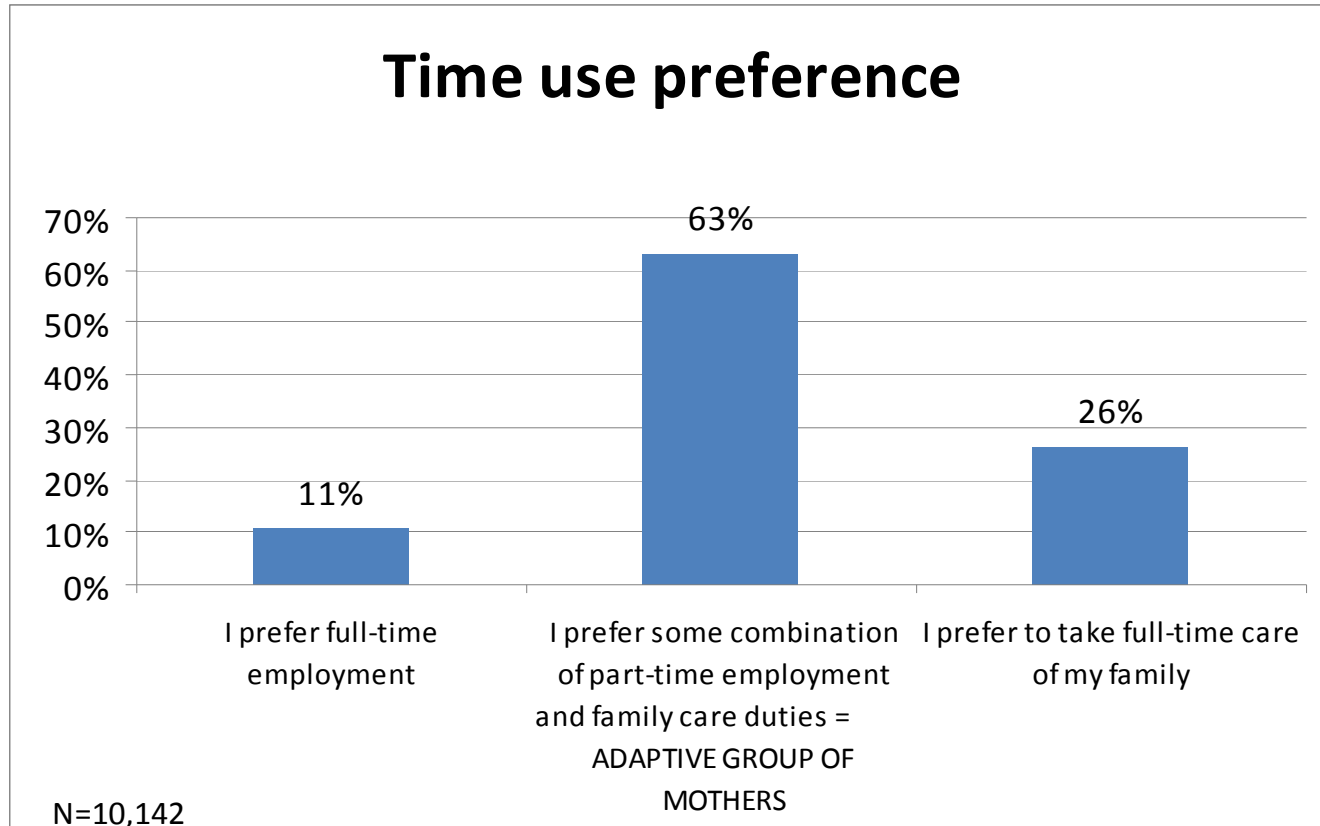
- The first birth transforms a mothers' focus, priorities and life course.
- Mothers express enormous love, commitment and responsibility to nurture and mentor the child through life.
- Mothers say the experience of rearing their child is worth all the sacrifice, caring and effort.
- Mothers say they are distinctive in their perspective.



***“Before I was just
me.
Now I am us.”***

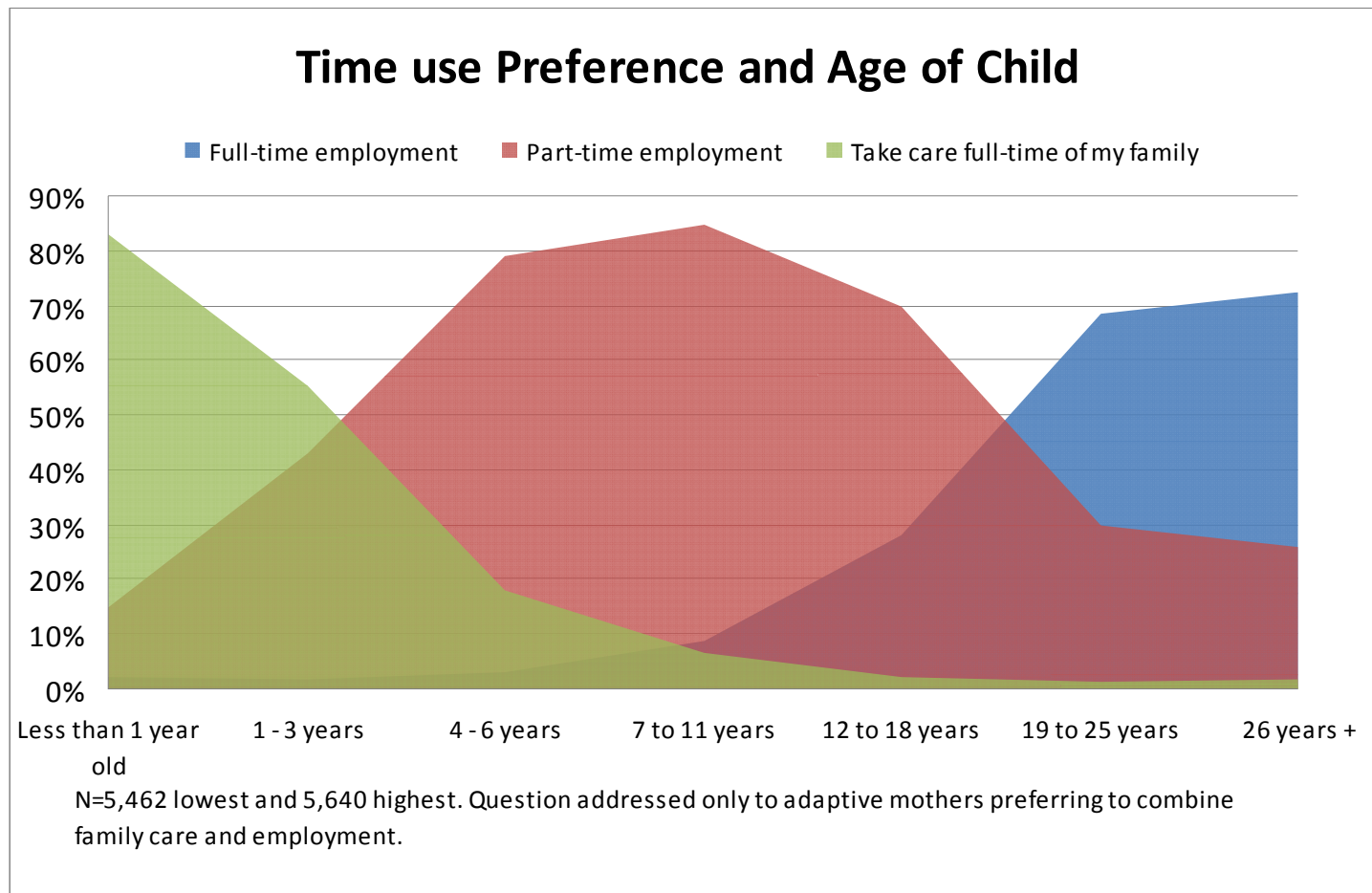
(UK)

Q: As a mother, what would be your time-use preference?



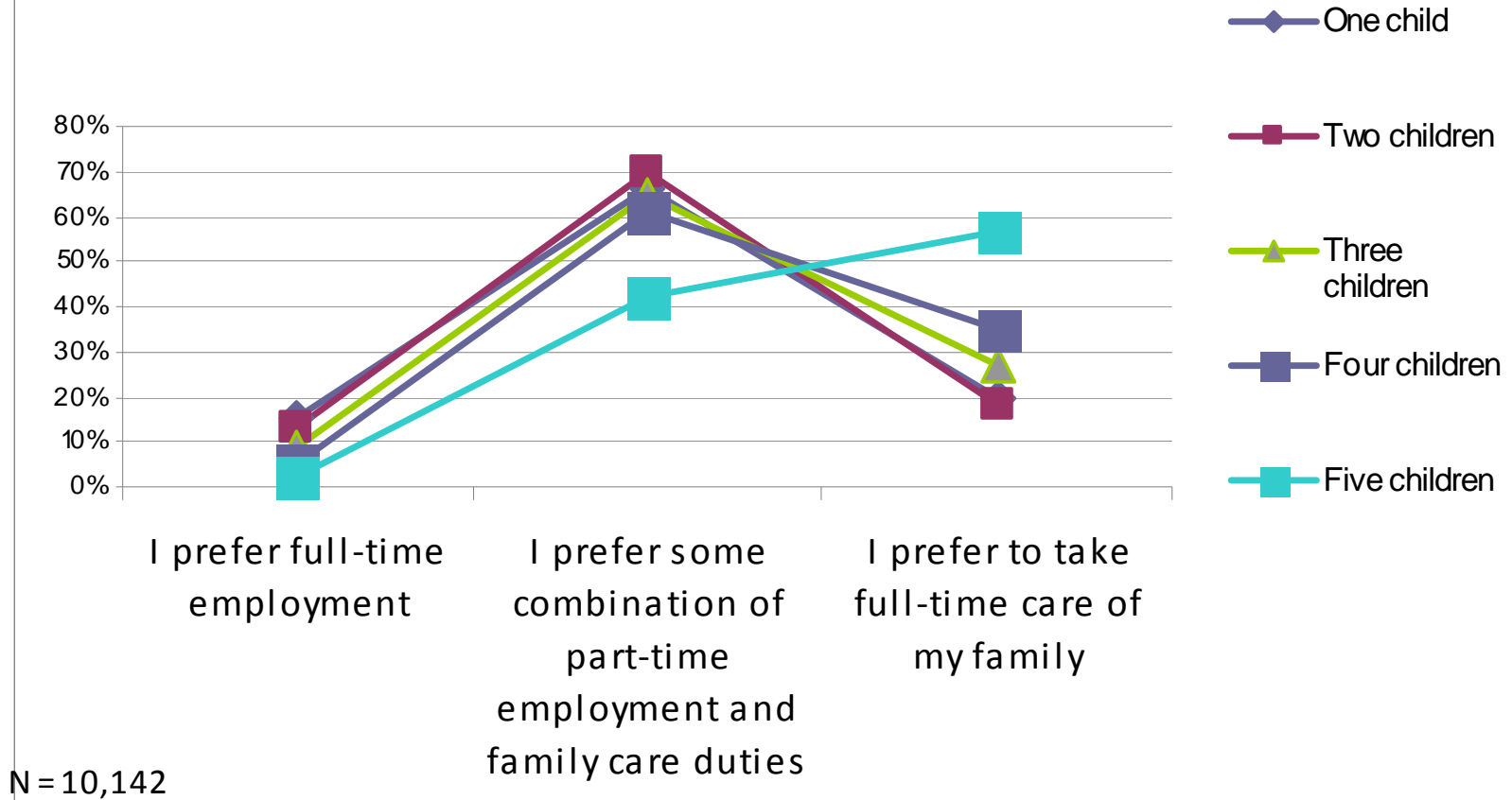
- Mothers have differing priorities in their time-use preference.

Q: If you had your choice, which option would you choose depending on the child's age?



- Her child's developmental needs dominate a mother's decision process.
- To the degree needs are being met, employment may become attractive.
- Mothers know that adolescent children cannot be left alone after school.

Mothers' time use preference based on number of children

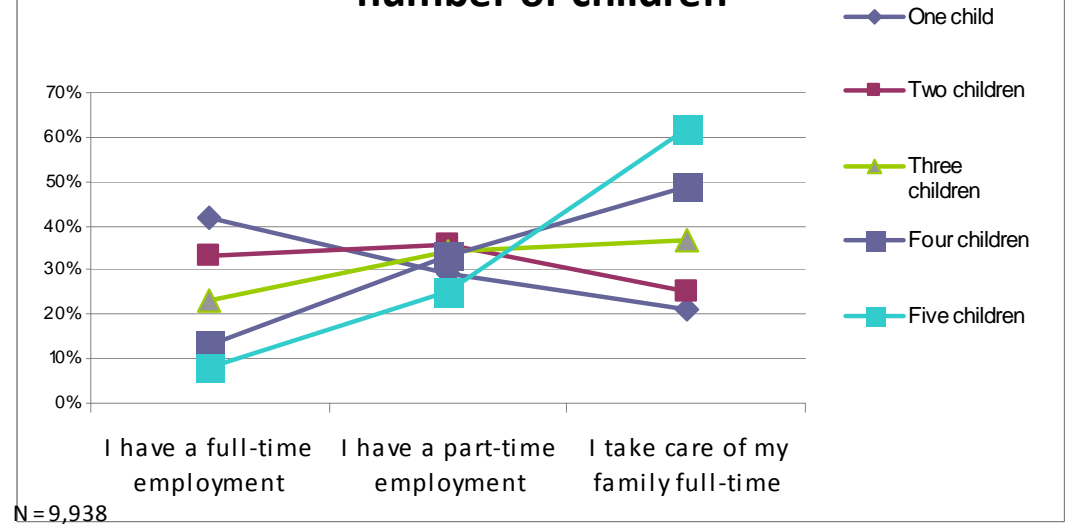


- Paid employment loses attractiveness as the number of children increases.

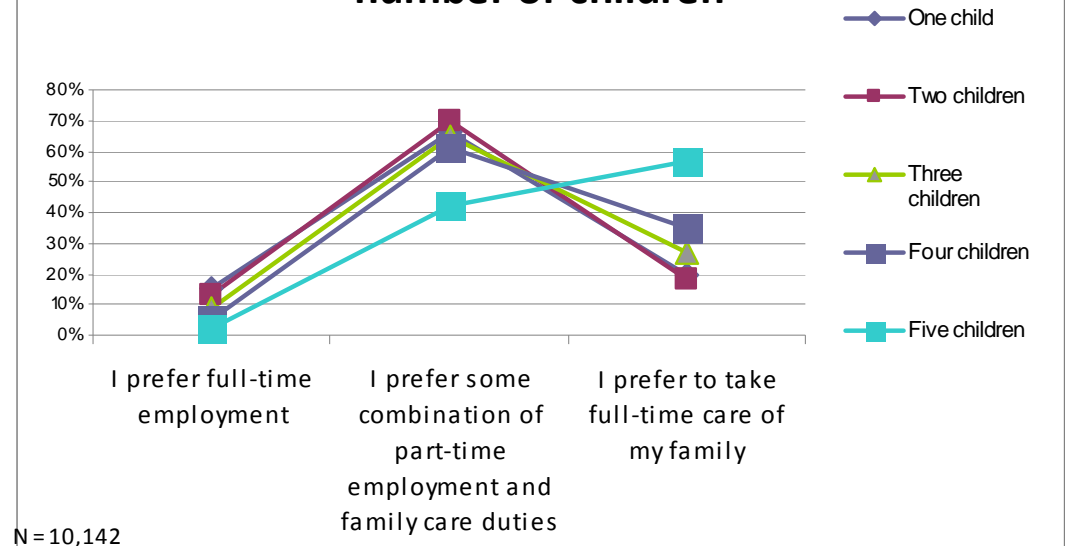
Q: In reality what is your daily life schedule?

- The more children a mother has the more likely she will be at home full-time.
- In reality both full-time employment and full-time home care exceed preference.
- For those mothers working full-time, there may be financial need or the ideal part-time work which fits her situation may be difficult for mothers to find.

Mothers' reality: actual time use by number of children



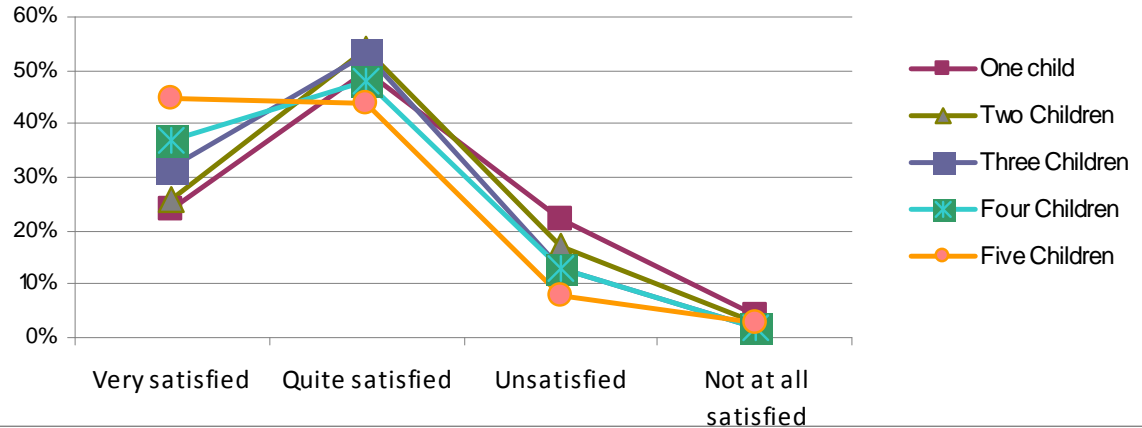
Mothers' time use preference based on number of children



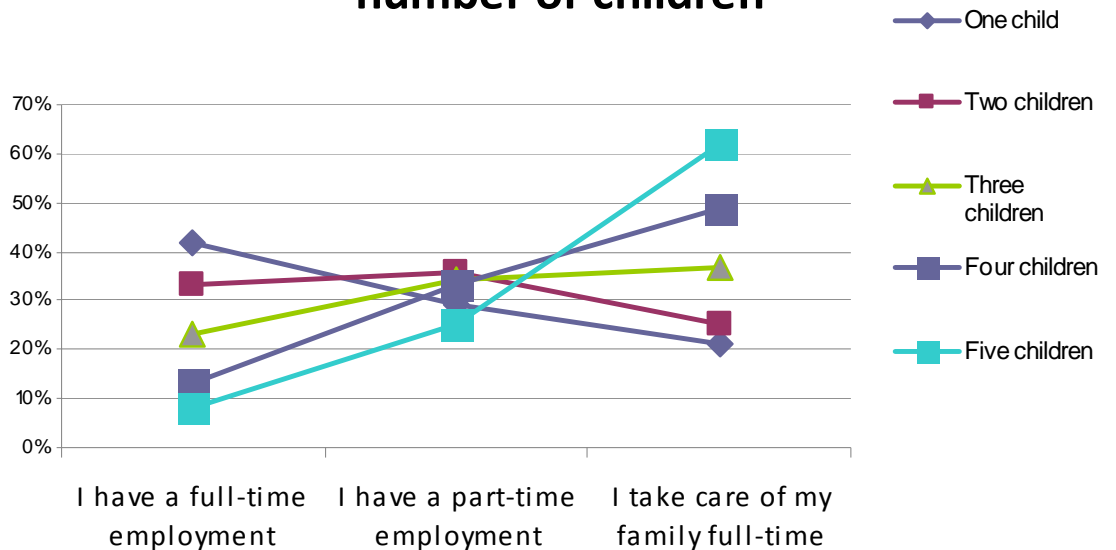
Q: How do you rate your current work schedule?

- Half of responding mothers with any number of children are “quite satisfied” with current time use.
- For those responding “very satisfied” the spread is larger, with mothers of 5 children being more satisfied than mothers of 1 child.
- For those responding “unsatisfied”, there is also a spread with a higher percentage of mothers of 1 child being unsatisfied than the percentage of mothers with 5 children.

Satisfaction with actual time use based on number of children



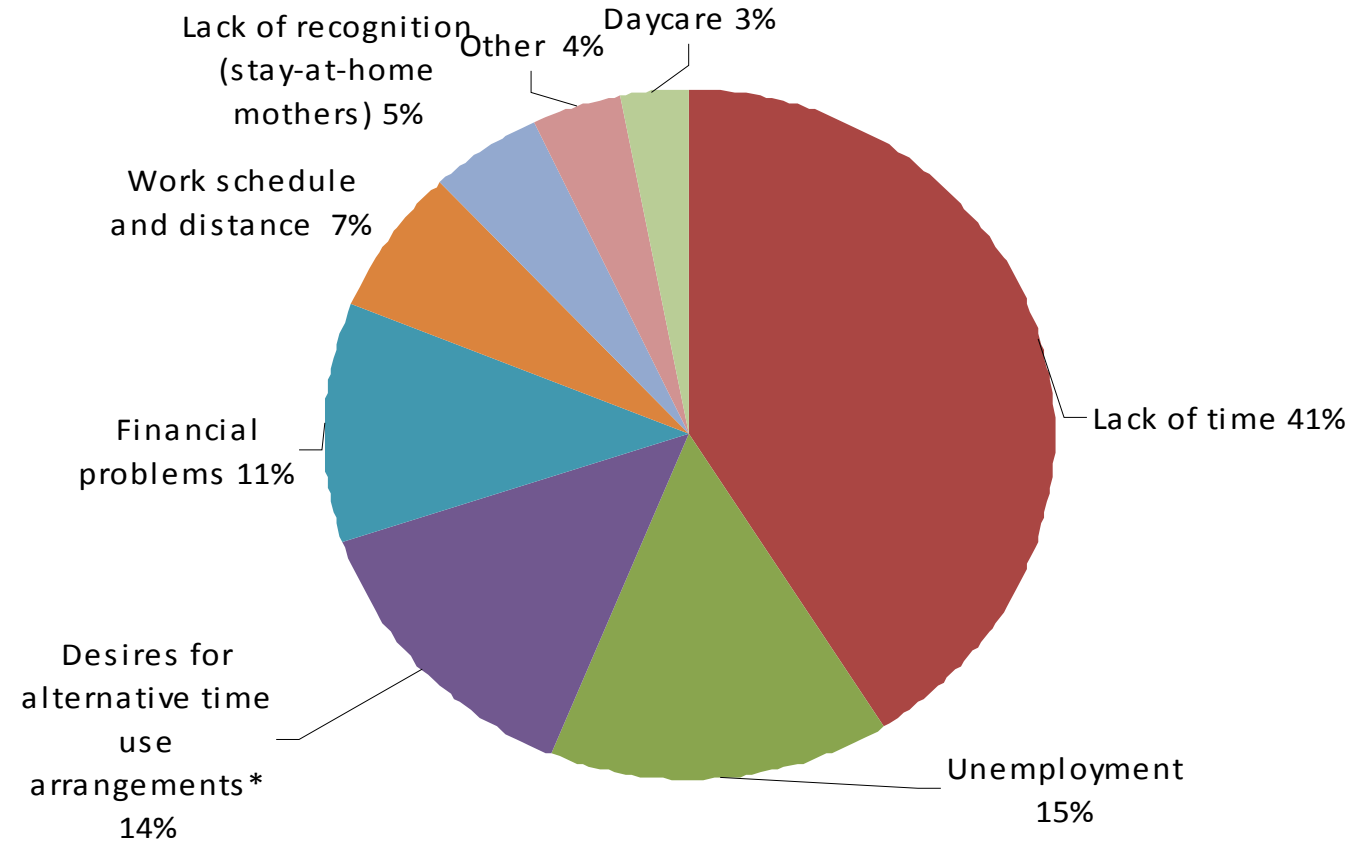
Mothers' reality: actual time use by number of children



N = 9,938

Q: Please explain why you are unsatisfied with your current work schedule.

Reasons for dissatisfaction



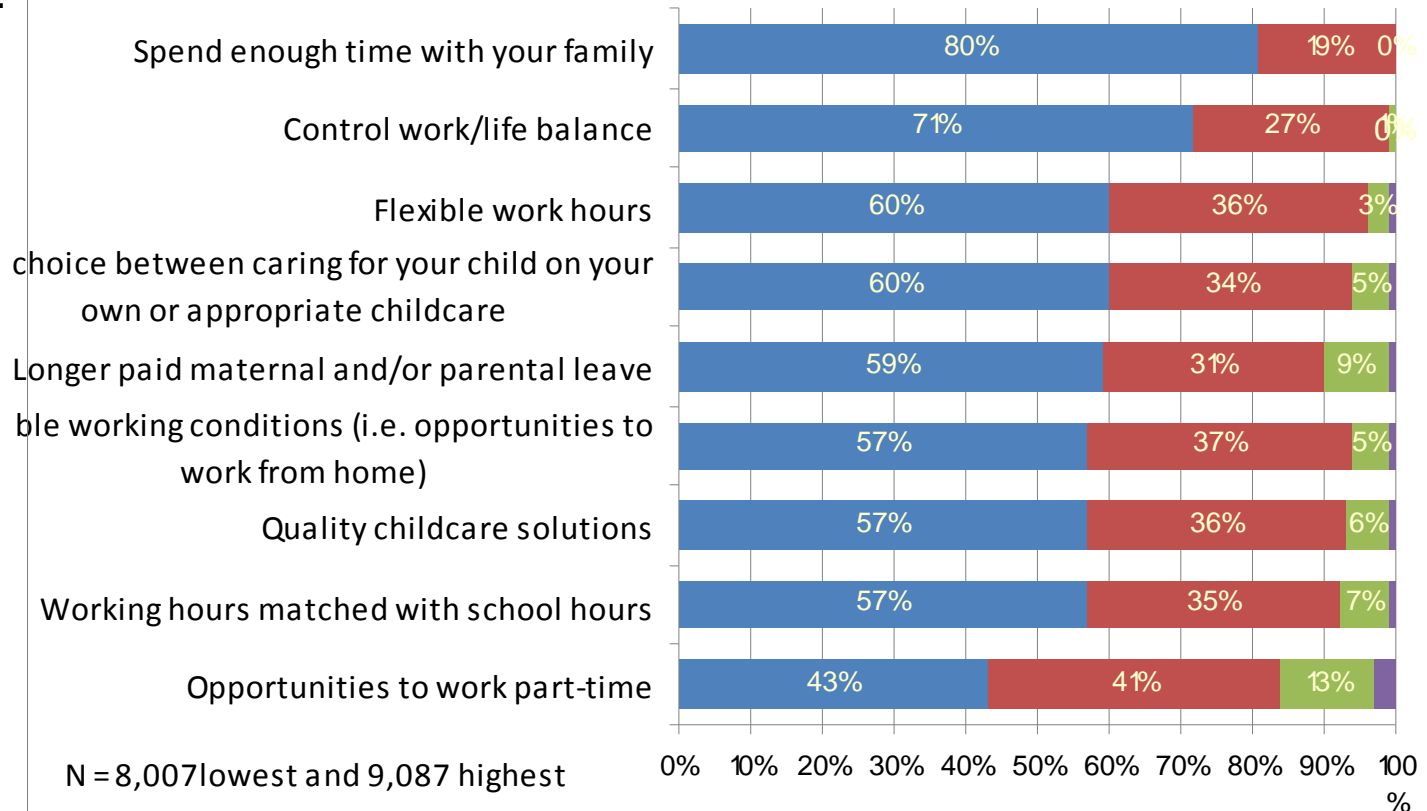
*Note: more than half those desiring change sought to care full-time for their family.

- More than half of dissatisfied mothers named lack of time, poor work schedule or desire to reduce employment time commitments.
- Financial problems and unemployment were important as well.

Q: Please indicate which factors are important in contributing to the well-being of mothers and families?

Work-family balance factors impacting well-being

■ Very important ■ Important ■ Less important ■ Not important



Two universally important themes:

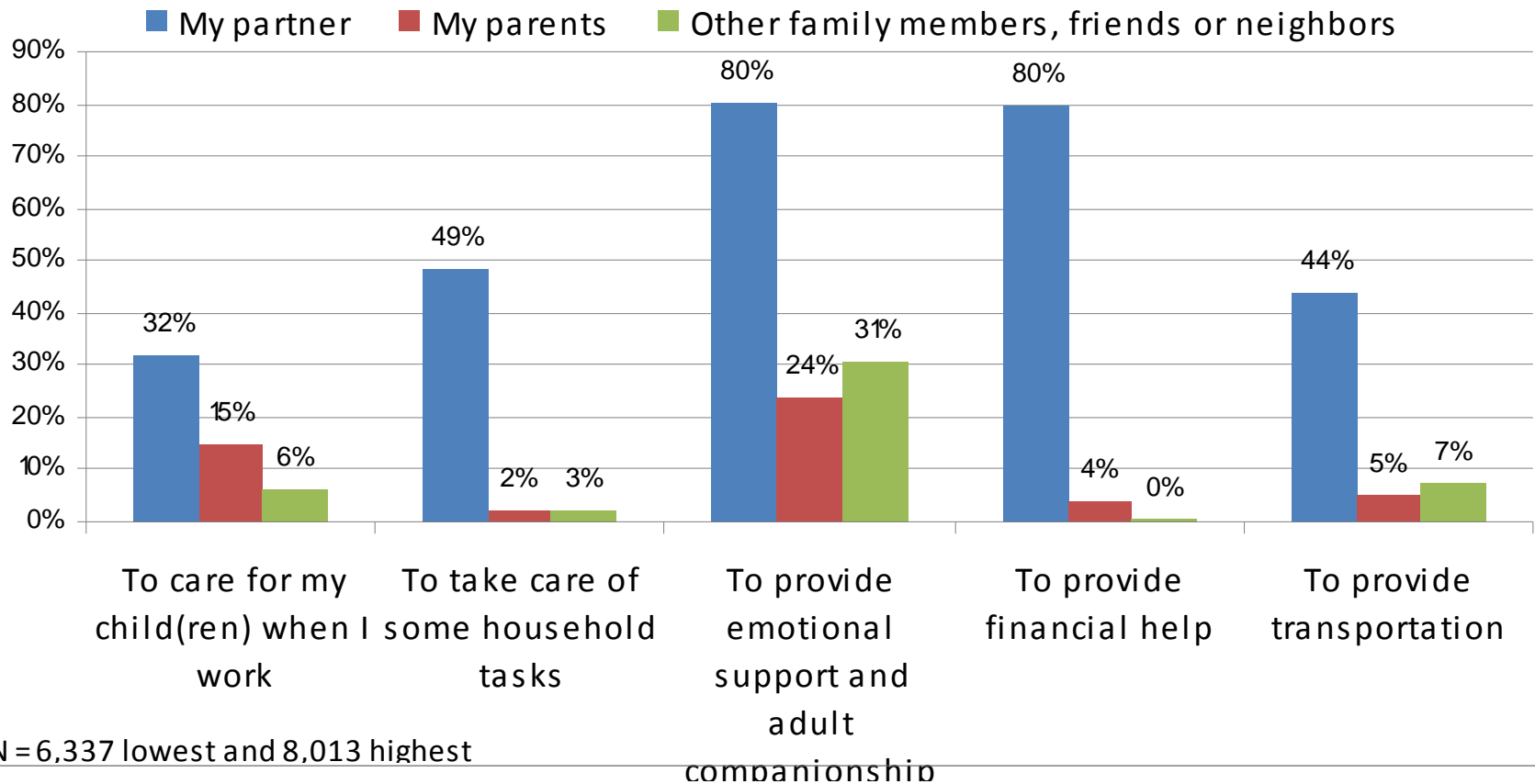
- SUFFICIENT FAMILY TIME.
- CONTROL over work-family life balance.

A third theme:

- AVAILABILITY of SUITABLE OPTIONS.

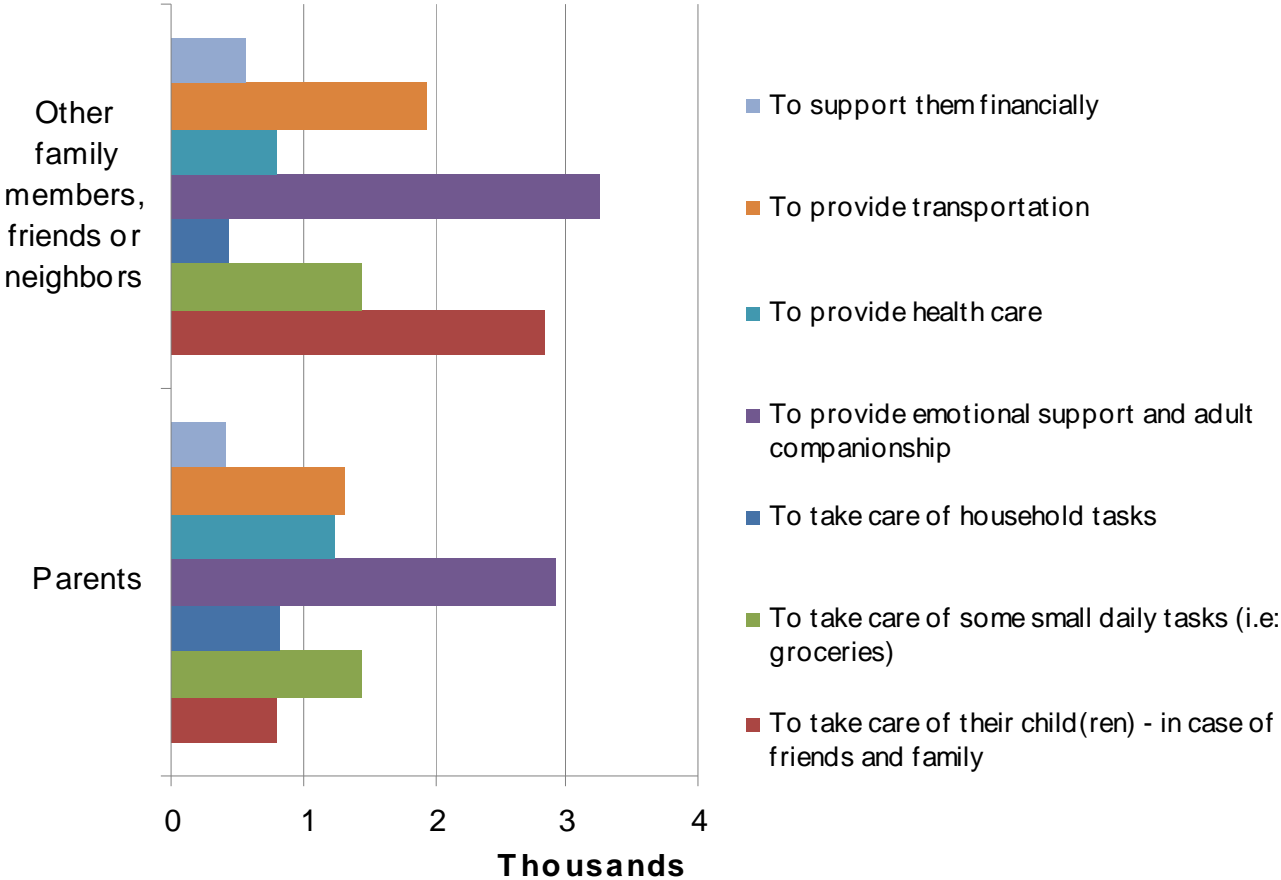
Q: In your daily life where do you turn for help and for what reasons?

Who helps mothers regularly?

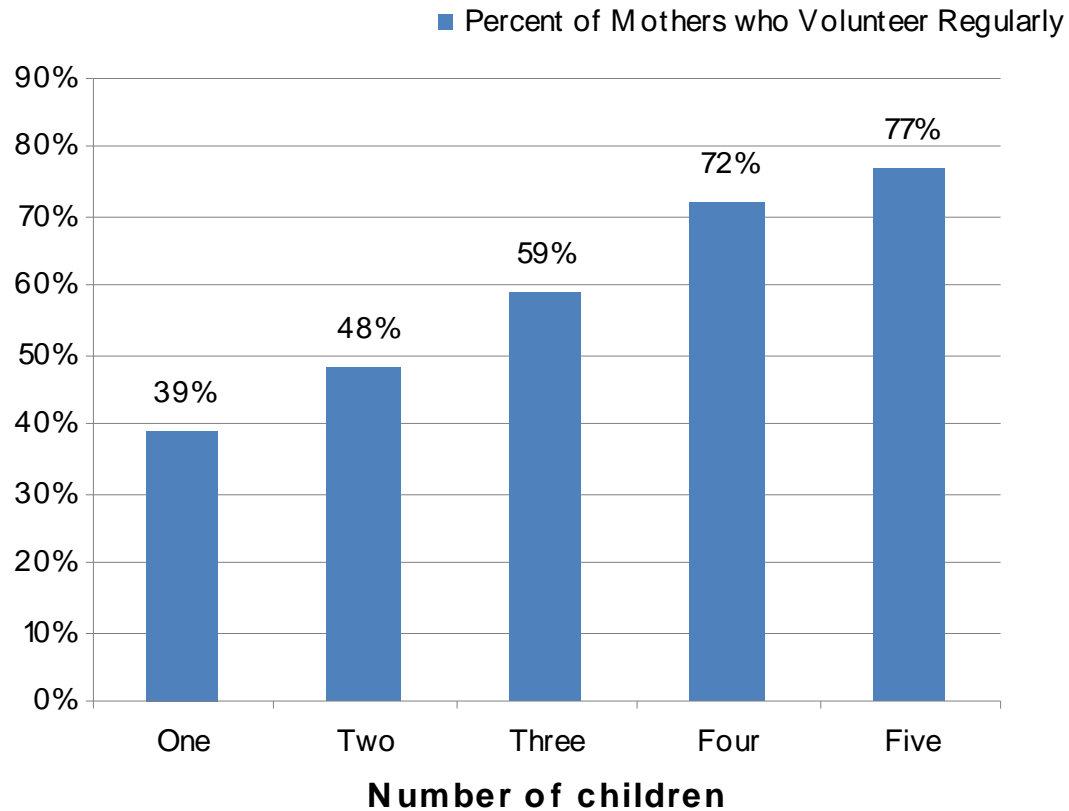


- Partners are mothers' major source of help.
- Mothers who care for children as they wish depend on financial support and companionship primarily from their partner.
- Help from partner with household tasks and childcare is proportional to the mother's time commitment to employment.

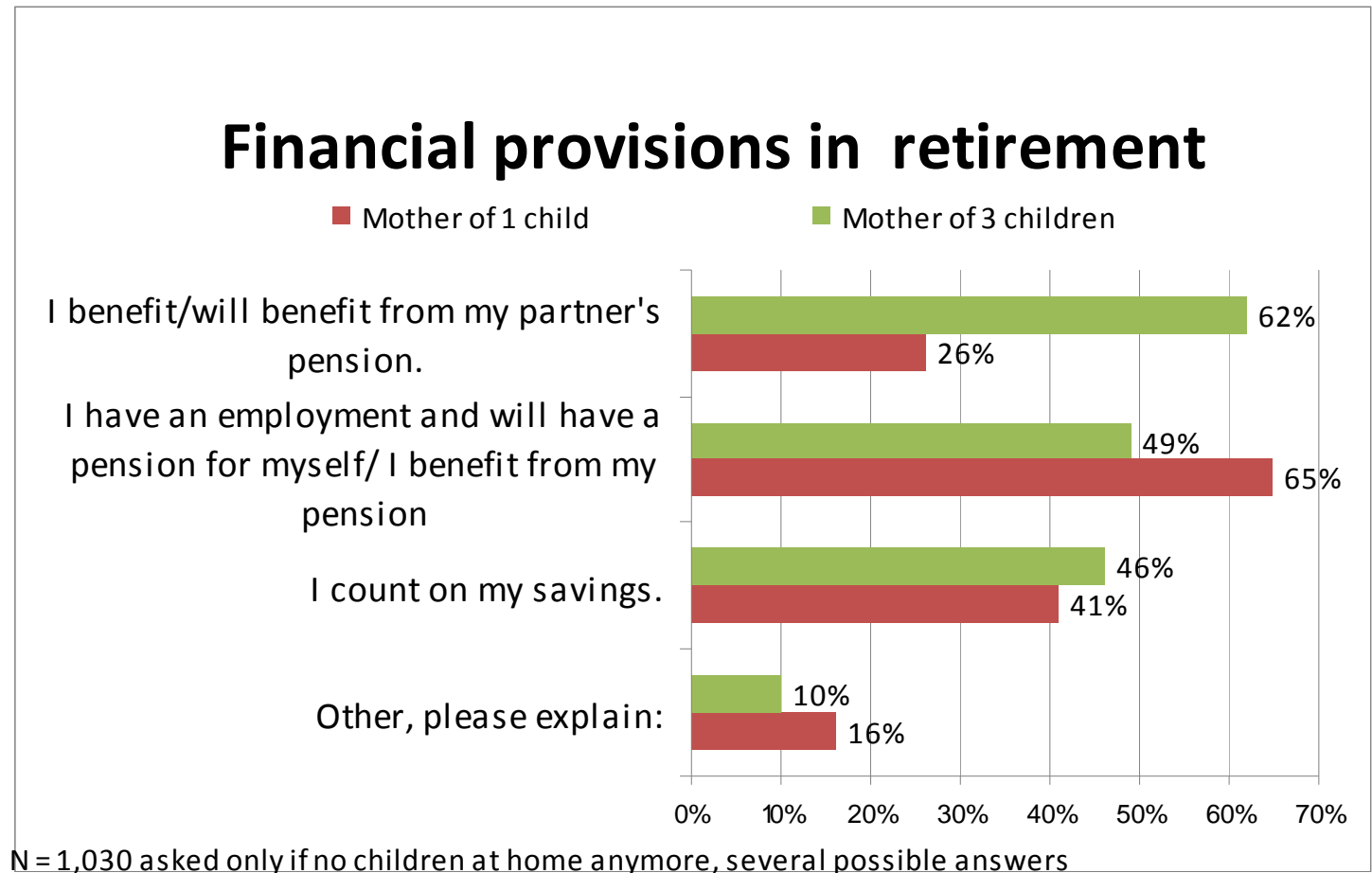
Who do mothers help REGULARLY?



Mothers' involvement in volunteering and number of children



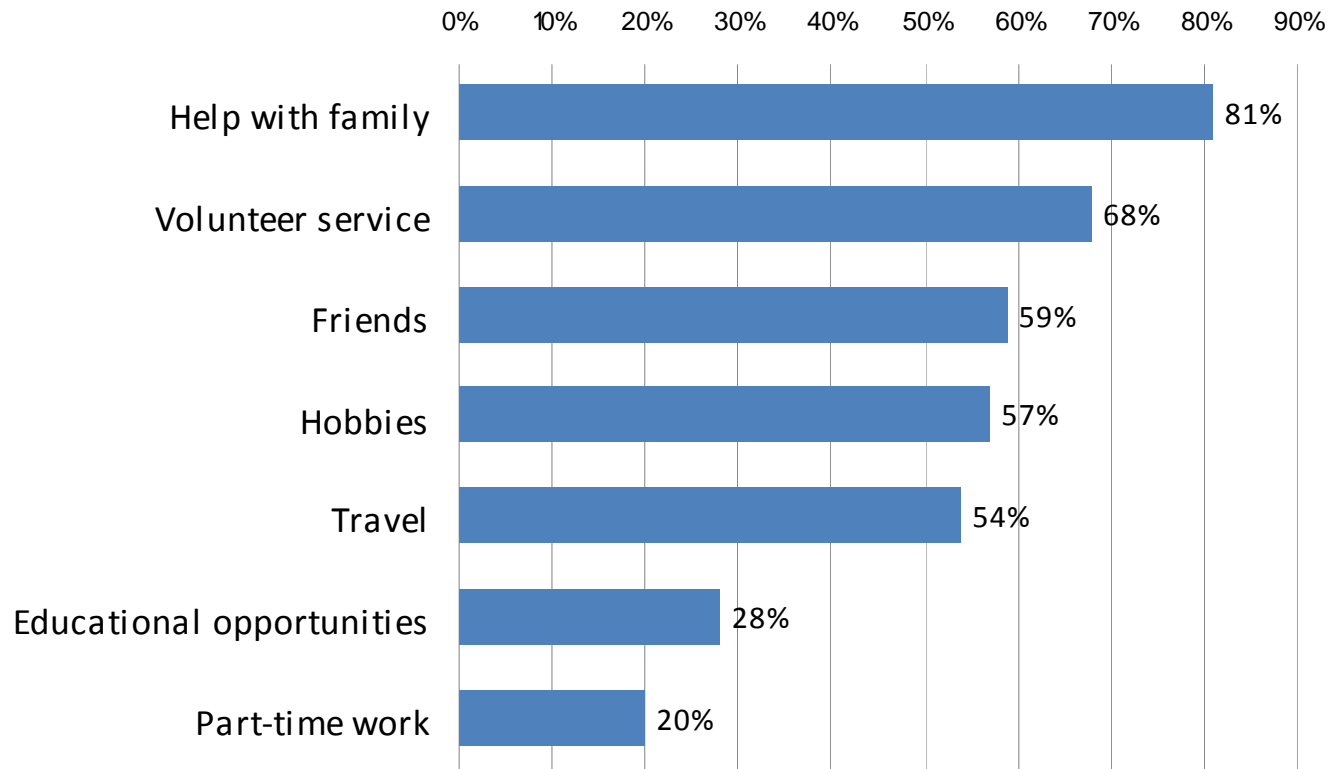
Q: How do you or will you provide for yourself in retirement?



- Mothers who have 3 or more children depend on the financial support of their partner and their stable relationship.

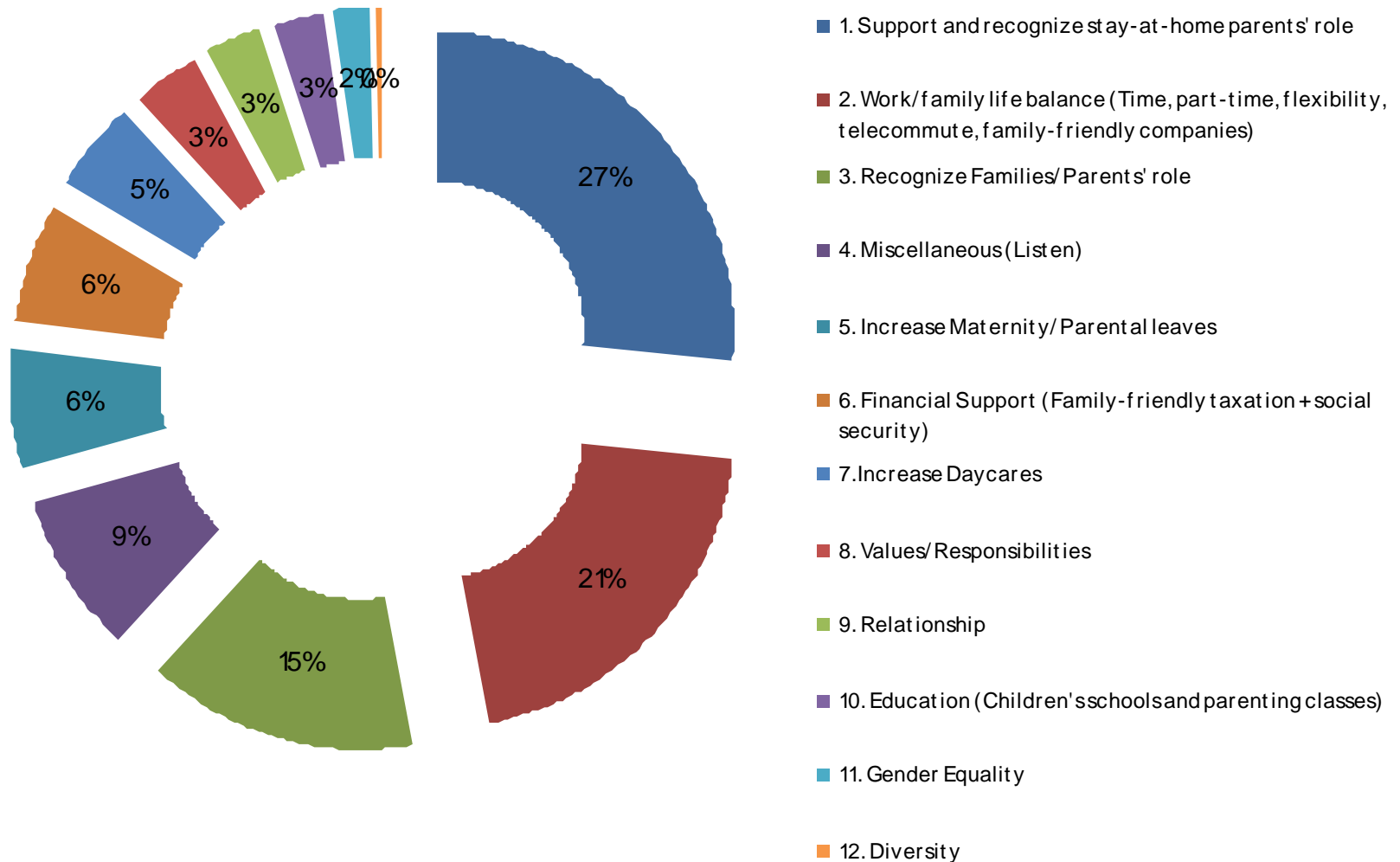
Q: In retirement how do you spend or envision spending your time? Check any that apply.

Plans for Time use during Retirement



Q: If you could launch a message to the political world in order to increase the family's well-being, what would it be?

Messages to Policy Makers by theme



What mothers tell us

- **Parental time is precious.**
- **Mothers want to invest time according to the individual needs of their developing children and to control the use of their time so as not to sacrifice their family.**
- **After a child starts school and even when the child is an adolescent acting with increasing “independence” mothers want to be present when children come home.**
- **At the same time mothers**
 - see opportunities to volunteer in school, neighborhood, community, etc.
 - maintain professional interests which attract them.
 - prefer more income for family needs.
- **Mothers’ availability for and engagement in employment and volunteering increases as their children grow in maturity.**
- **There are natural seasons in a mother’s life for both child rearing and employment / volunteer service.**

Recommendations

Based on survey responses from 11,887 mothers in Europe.

- **CHOICE and OPTIONS**
- **SEASONS**
- **TAX POLICY**
- **PART-TIME WORK and FLEXIBILITY**
- **UNPAID FAMILY CARE WORK**
- **RETURNING TO THE LABOR FORCE**

The Mothers of Europe



Thank you for listening.