

WORKING AMERICA

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America's Working Women Need a Raise – And a Break

Economy Driving Women to Work More, Rest Less

Finds Sixth Working America/AFL-CIO *Ask a Working Woman* Survey

(Washington, DC, June 25) – Working women spend more time at work than ever, they talk more to their coworkers than their family members and they have no free time. Yet a raise is the most desired change in their work lives, according to the sixth Working America *Ask a Working Woman* survey, overtaking health care, which was the top issue in the 2006 survey.

“Working women want to spend more time with their families, but they can’t afford to,” says Karen Nussbaum, Executive Director of Working America. “Working women say they want more cash in their wallets, even more than other benefits, like health care. Unemployment is up, the credit crunch is squeezing people and gas prices are hitting record highs. America’s working women need a raise and a break.”

A 10 percent raise topped affordable, high-quality health care or childcare as making working women’s lives easier, according to half of the 2008 *Ask A Working Woman* survey respondents. Given the economy, if working women had more available time, they are most likely to say they would work another job, ahead of spending more time with friends and family, exercise, taking a class and getting more sleep.

“Prices for everything have soared out of control while wages stagnate,” wrote Judith, a 2008 *Ask a Working Woman* respondent.

Working women also need a break. They are talking to their coworkers more than their children or friends. They are extremely busy and have little time for themselves. Thirty-seven percent say they work during their breaks or have no breaks. After work and family responsibilities, a plurality of respondents say they have an hour or less to themselves a day (11 percent none, 34 percent less than an hour). A quarter say they have two hours to themselves, 16 percent have three hours, 10 percent have somewhere between four and six hours, and only 4 percent have more than six hours to themselves. Respondents in their 30s and 40s are particularly likely to say they only get an hour or less to themselves a day (58 percent and 53 percent respectively), as are those who are parents (72 percent). In spite of their lack of personal time, they are most likely to say they would work another job if they had free time.

“I have to choose everyday if I am going to buy food or gas to get work. Gas always wins, because I need my paycheck to support my family. I never have enough money, ever.” – Kelly, a 2008 *Ask a Working Woman* respondent.

Working women are doing more with less, saddled with debt and facing rising prices. Working women are using their credit cards to pay for durable goods and everyday items. Six in 10 respondents have at least some credit card debt, and many won’t be able to pay off their credit cards in the near future. A quarter say they will be able to pay off their balance within the next year and 12 percent say within the next two years, 18 percent say in more than two years. Six percent say they will never be able to pay off credit card debt.

Working women need a break, especially when it comes to the gender gap. “Women in the workforce need to have equality in pay and promotions - we need to bridge this gender gap NOW!” – Jenny, a 2008 *Ask a Working Woman* respondent. Almost half of respondents said they know or suspect men make more than they do. Having children is seen as having a negative impact on women’s careers, while it makes little difference for men. Eight in 10 respondents say having children hurts their career and prospects in the job market (27 percent say hurts strongly), while only 8 percent feel having children hurts men’s career prospects, and 70 percent say it makes no difference for men.

Released on June 25, the 2008 *Ask a Working Woman* survey report digests data from the online survey that was conducted May 7 to June 20 from 12,000 respondents. Some 20,000 working women took the survey. This year’s survey is the sixth edition; it has been conducted in various forms since 1997. For the survey results, please visit: <http://www.workingamerica.org/>

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