The top 5 states for working moms in 2017

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, women make up almost half of the workforce, but they only made 83 percent of what their male counterparts made — and the gap only grows when other factors, such as race, are considered.

The gender pay gap hinders some single women from becoming homeowners despite their strong and consistent interest in buying, and mothers are impacted even more because of the pressure to sacrifice work in favor of taking care of the home — 39 percent of mothers have taken a "significant" amount of time off from work or have reduced their working hours (42 percent) to care for children and family members.

Another 27 percent have quit working altogether.

"Such obvious inequality has spawned a great deal of debate about gender roles in a shifting socioeconomic environment," noted WalletHub writer John Kiernan.

"Workplace inequality is important not only in the spirit of a merit-based economy but also for deeply ingrained social reasons. For instance, should women have to choose between career and family?"

In honor of Mother's Day, WalletHub released its annual list of the best cities and states where moms can be successful inside *and* outside of the home.

Source: WalletHub

Top states for working moms:

1. Vermont
2. Minnesota
3. New Jersey
4. Delaware
5. Connecticut

Those rounding out the top 10 were clustered in the Northeast (Massachusetts, Maine, Rhode Island and New York) with the exception of Illinois, which ranked 10th.

States at the bottom of the list included Alaska, Arizona, Nevada, Louisiana and Alabama, which came in dead last.

WalletHub identified the best and worst states by identifying 13 relevant metrics falling under three key categories: child care (40 points), professional opportunities (30 points) and work-life balance (30 points).

Vermont came out on top (for the second year in a row) with a score of 65.45 for its quality child care options (no. 3), plethora of professional opportunities (no. 7) and great work-life balance (no. 5).

Alabama ranked last due to low-quality child care options (no. 44), a lack of professional opportunities (no. 51) and abysmal work-life balance (no. 44).

Lowest Gender Pay Gap (Women's earnings as a % of men's)

1. Hawaii
T-2. District of Columbia
T-2. Florida
4. Delaware
5. New York

Highest Gender Pay Gap (Women's earnings as a % of men's)

T-44. Alaska
T-44. Louisiana
48. Alabama
49. Utah
50. North Dakota
51. Wyoming

In addition to the list, WalletHub spoke with a panel of experts to get their opinions on how to best improve the plight of working mothers.

One of those experts, Caitlyn Collins, assistant professor of sociology at Washington University in St. Louis, says companies need to expand the work-family policies they offer to employees and make employees, especially mothers, feel comfortable with actually taking advantage of those benefits.

“Policies like paid parental leave, flexible schedules and telecommuting options are a great place to start,” she said.

Collins said higher-ups should serve as role models by using work-family benefits, talking about them and openly supporting employees who use parental leave.

According to the experts, states can most effectively shift more control into the hands of working

moms through mandated paid leave, laws for unfair employment practices and improvements to child care, while employers should re-imagine workplace values to better include working parents.

Furthermore, the experts say it's important to not frame parental leave as a "women's only" issue, but to include men in the conversation so they feel more comfortable taking leave, which helps moms, too.

"The gender neutral [leave] policies are more appropriate for the contemporary world in which women are educated, and often more educated than men, and just as ready to assume work responsibilities," said Barbara Katz Rothman, professor of sociology at CUNY.

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Source: click here