

# What Matters to Mothers in Europe

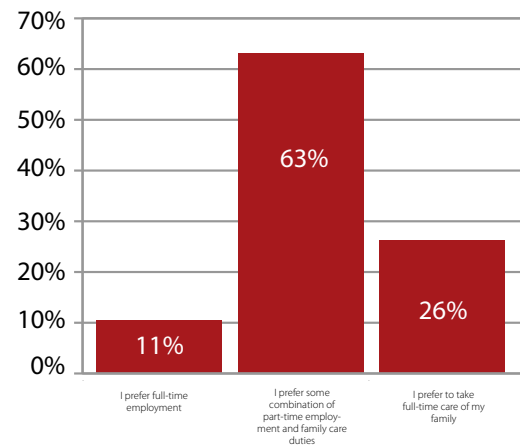
Survey of Mothers in Europe

*2011 results*



AH

Time use preference



By MMM Europe (Mouvement Mondial des Mères-Europe)

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Mouvement Mondial des Mères Europe  
Make Mothers Matter Europe



## Preface

The Survey of Mothers in Europe was achieved by the European delegation of Mouvement Mondial des Mères (MMM Europe). The results of this survey were subject to careful handling and strict control. Further questions or comments about this survey can be addressed to:

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For additional information, please review *"Facts & Figures: Survey of Mothers in Europe 2011"*, downloadable at [www.mmmeurope.org](http://www.mmmeurope.org).

*"No other experience is like it in the world  
and no greater accomplishment, degree or  
career can outweigh that love."*



# MMM

Mouvement Mondial des Mères (MMM), founded in Paris in 1947, is an international, apolitical and non-denominational NGO. It represents mothers and their families to national and international institutions, and has **general consultative status at the United Nations**. It also raises awareness of policy makers and public opinion on the vital role of mothers for promoting peace and contributing to social and economic progress.

Its **European delegation (MMM Europe)** works to voice the priorities and concerns of mothers in Europe to institutions and policymakers of the European Union and raises awareness of mothers' impact on the educational, cultural, and economic development of their countries.

MMM Europe also recognises the specific role of fathers as essential. It supports measures encouraging fathers to be actively involved in the care and upbringing of their children.



*"When things are in place, the love shared outweighs all the sacrifices that are a must."*



# Introduction

In 2009, MMM Europe became partner in the European Commission's Seventh Framework FAMILYPLATFORM project ([www.familyplatform.eu](http://www.familyplatform.eu)). Among its assignments, MMM Europe issued a report on the "Realities of Mothers in Europe\*" which critically reviewed research on families from the mothers' point of view.

In order to consult with mothers across Europe, MMM Europe launched an online survey, the "Survey of Mothers in Europe 2011", to learn the concerns, priorities and recommendations of mothers in Europe, particularly relating to social and employment policy in Europe. **Over 11,000 mothers responded** and provided information on their **challenges, priorities and wishes with regard to their wellbeing and that of their families.**

Obviously mothers do not function alone in society. There is no doubt about the importance of the **role of fathers** in the life of European families. Fathers, children, parents, grandparents, other family members, and friends are all integral part of family life in Europe and have essential roles to play. However, they are only partially covered in this report in connection with their implication in the mothers' wellbeing.

It is exceptional that mothers are recognized as specific and distinct participants with a special role and identity. This is a unique opportunity for them to speak with their own voice. According to Eurofound, **76% of European women of 18 years or older are mothers.** The objective of this report "**What Matters to Mothers in Europe**" is to relay what this too-often silent majority has to say...

\*Available for download at [www.mmmeurope.org/realities\\_of\\_mothers\\_in\\_Europe.pdf](http://www.mmmeurope.org/realities_of_mothers_in_Europe.pdf)



# Executive Summary

1. When a woman becomes a mother she experiences a profound and irreversible change in perspective, priorities, and preferences. Mothers should be allowed to speak for themselves and their perspective taken into account by policy makers.
2. Mothers are vitally concerned for the welfare of their children, and a high percentage (89%) want to be present and to personally care for their own children *at some time during their lives*.
3. Mothers (74%) also want to participate in the paid labour force *at some time during their lives*, but most mothers request the possibility to adjust their employment according to the needs of each child, the ages, and number of children. The threshold is three or more children when mothers reconsider their time-use in favour of their family. The level of satisfaction rises with their choice.
4. Current conditions make it difficult to raise children while full-time employed: more than 2 in 3 mothers prefer part-time employment whereas only 1 in 3 has that opportunity. Mothers do not want their lives controlled by the imposition of a standard model, based on economic criteria.
5. Mothers want options to choose from, and they need support for their choices.
  - a. For family care:
    - An allocation permitting parental choice of child-care.
    - Taxation policies which are supportive to families: income splitting, deductions for dependants, VAT reduction on child-care items.
    - Family care work recognised in pensions.
  - b. For employment:

There is an essential season of child-bearing and child-rearing during which mothers need special adaptations in employment arrangements.

    - More opportunities to work part-time.
    - More flexibility in work schedules, taking into consideration school hours and holidays/vacations.
    - More and better adapted day care solutions, including onsite company day cares.

6. Given the falling birthrate and the future demographic needs of an ageing society, mothers need to be listened to, and their role as mothers respected and valued.
7. Mothers report having help from their spouse/partner and extended family for child-care and household tasks. They also give of their time to help extended family, neighbours, and volunteer in their communities.
8. The more children they have, the more mothers depend on the present and future financial support of their spouse/partner (including his pension).
9. Mothers ask that their re-entry into the labour force following the season of child-bearing and child-rearing be facilitated.
10. In retirement, most mothers look forward to helping with the extended family and to volunteering.

**Clearly, mothers want families to be considered as source of social cohesion and resource for the entire society. By raising and caring for their children, they are working for the future of our societies.**



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## Methodology

The “**Survey of Mothers in Europe**” was launched on February 1, 2010 by MMM Europe and ran through August 31, 2010. The survey was conducted online. It was directed to mothers living in Europe. It sought to identify their realities and to record their opinions, concerns, and priorities in relation to key life issues and the wellbeing of their families. The questionnaire contained about 25 questions (including several open-answer questions) and took an average of 25 minutes to complete.

- **Respondents**

A total of 11,887\* unique responses were received. Respondents were self-selected, having learned of the survey through word-of-mouth, email, and links on the websites of affiliates of MMM or other civil society associations serving mothers and families in Europe. This type of sample has been referred to as a “snowball sample”, “affinity sample” or “network sample”. The sample was therefore made up of persons that recruit each other to take the survey.

\*70% of the responses have been received during the first two months.  
The rejection rate is estimated to be 14%.



- **Languages and countries**

The Survey of Mothers in Europe was launched in 10 languages: German, English, French, Dutch, Spanish, Italian, Hungarian, Swedish, Slovak\* and Finnish\*, thus addressing mothers in 16 countries (Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, The Netherlands, Belgium, Luxemburg, Spain, Italy, Hungary, Sweden, Finland, UK, Ireland, Malta, and Slovakia). Representation across countries is not equal. Some countries such as France, Belgium and Spain are clearly over-represented.

- **Support & Analysis**

Translation and some of the analysis (of open questions specifically) have been done by a dozen of volunteers each working in their mother tongue in dialogue with MMMEurope staff in Brussels. Scientific counsel was graciously provided by several university partners and researchers throughout the process (from set-up of questionnaire through to analysis).

The survey tool was graciously provided by [www.qualtrics.com](http://www.qualtrics.com), a leading market research tool used by Fortune 500 companies in the USA and increasingly world-wide.

The survey was solely accessible via the Internet. Although this may be a limitation, the latest Eurostat 2010 data indicates that 70% of the households in the European Union have Internet access, of which 61% have large bandwidth access.

\*Slovak was added in March 2010 and Finnish was added in April 2010.



## Profile of surveyed mothers

The general profile of the respondent is a mother with a certain maturity, high level of education, married or living in couple (87%), with, on average, 2.6 children, majoritarily (58%) employed or on parental leave, and a propensity to offer volunteer service.

Based on this profile, we can confidently suggest that this panel is a sample of **active, politically concerned and educated mothers**, with an above-average representation of French and Spanish speakers.

For comparison with European data from Eurofound, please consult the detailed report "Facts & Figures: Survey of Mothers in Europe 2011" (available at [www.mmmeurope.org](http://www.mmmeurope.org)).

Voluntary Service	
No	45%
Yes	55%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>41% in non-profit associations</li> <li>21% at school</li> <li>16% in community aid</li> <li>22% in other ways, of which half volunteer in their parishes</li> </ul>	
Area of Residence	
City	57%
Countryside	25%
Suburbs	18%

Number of Children	
1	24%
2	31%
3	22%
4	13%
5 or more	10%

Marital Status	
Married or living with partner	87%
Separated or divorced	8%
Single (never married and do not live with partner)	3%
Widowed	2%

Employment	
Employee, or self-employed	50%
Parental leave (employed)	8%
Retired	4%
Full-time homemaker	23%
Unemployed	3%
Other	12%

Migration Background	
Yes	10%
No	90%

Age of Mothers	
18 or less	0%
19 - 25	1%
26 - 40	52%
41 - 55	36%
56 - 70	10%
71 or more	1%

Education	
Primary	1%
Secondary	13%
Post-secondary	37%
University and more	49%

Language Chosen to Complete Survey	
French	47%
Spanish	15%
German	9%
Hungarian	8%
English	6%
Italian	5%
Dutch	4%
Swedish	3%
Slovak	2%
Finnish	1%



# Transition to motherhood



*"Before I became a mother, it was just  
ME; now I am US" (UK)*




## Becoming a mother leads to an irreversible transformation of priorities and concerns


As part of the survey, mothers were asked: *"If you were talking to a woman who is pregnant with her first child, how would you describe the transition to motherhood?"* 8282 mothers responded to this question with much emotion. The overwhelming messages\* are:


- The birth of the first child constitutes a major and irreversible change in focus, priorities, and life-course. A mother never sees life as she did before becoming a mother.
- The responsibility of motherhood is supremely challenging, highly demanding, and worth everything it costs.


**When a woman becomes a mother, she develops a distinct perspective and should be allowed to speak for herself.**

\*To do full justice to these 8282 messages will require considerable additional effort and the use of sophisticated analytical tools.

 *"It is the achievement of an enormous project! It calls for great responsibility, and for commitment and for giving of oneself. But it brings with it great happiness."*

 *"Before I was just ME; now I am US."*

 *"A total change of life. One no longer lives for oneself, but one is obliged to think first of one's children. With one's partner/husband one is no longer a couple but a family."*

 *"A big shock, everything changes, intense and impossible to describe in words...when things are in place, the love shared outweighs all the sacrifices that are a must. No other experience is like it in the world and no greater accomplishment, degree or career can outweigh that love."*





# Time use and preferences - impact on well-being



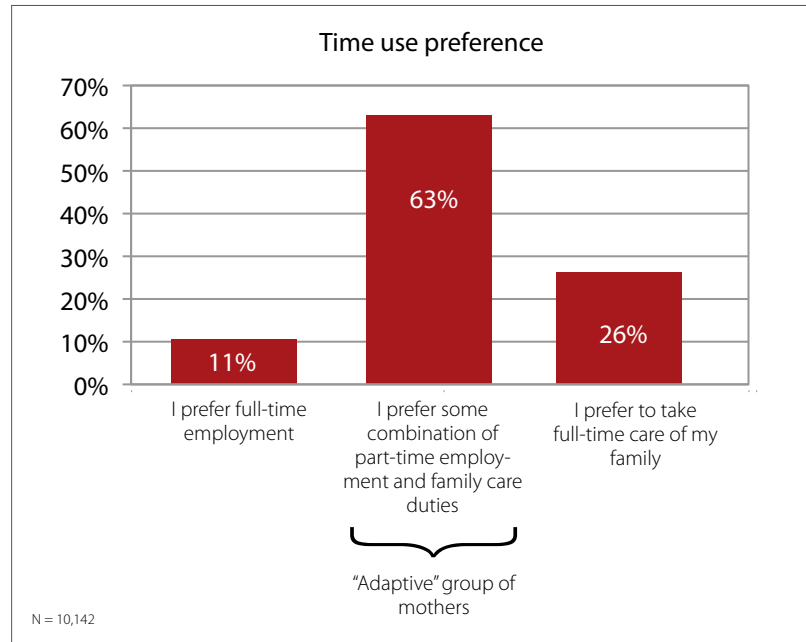
*"We mothers would like the possibility to raise our own children and the flexibility to manage the hours of our employment or to take a career break, according to the ages of our children. Please facilitate our re-entry into the paid labour force when the children become old enough to go to regular school."*



## Key finding:

### The majority of mothers prefer to combine part-time employment and family care.

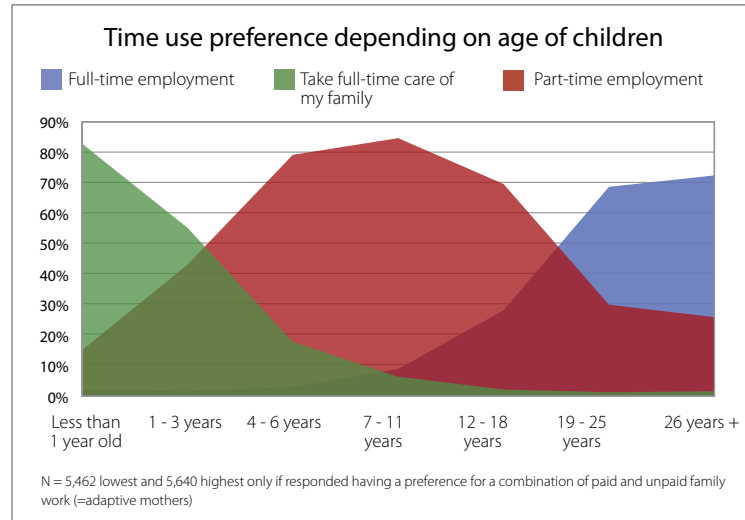
- 1 in 10 respondents expressed a preference for full-time employment.
- 3 in 5 mothers want to combine part-time employment and family care.
- 1 in 4 mothers prefers to take full-time care of her family.
- For 89% of mothers, personally caring for their families is a high priority (63% + 26%).
- But 74% also want either full or part-time employment (11% + 63%).
- Younger mothers have shown a stronger preference to take full-time care of their family.



## Key finding:

### Time use preference in the “adaptive” group of mothers is linked to the age of their children.

- In the “adaptive” group of mothers (combination of part-time employment/family care), time use preference varies according to the child’s age.
- For children aged 0-1 year, 20% of mothers in the “adaptive” group wish to be employed part-time and 80% prefer to care for their child full-time.
- For children aged 1-3 years, 50% of mothers prefer part-time employment while 50% want to care for their children full-time.
- For children aged 4-6 years, 80% of mothers prefer part-time employment.
- During adolescence, 70% of mothers prefer part-time employment and 30% desire to full-time employment.
- 84% of mothers agree that adolescents can’t be left alone after school.
- It is only when the child reaches 18 years that 70% of mothers want full-time employment.



**Of all surveyed mothers, 78% want to care full-time for their infant, 0-1 year and 61% want to care full-time for their children aged 1-3 years. It drops to 37% when the children attain school-age (4-6 years).\***

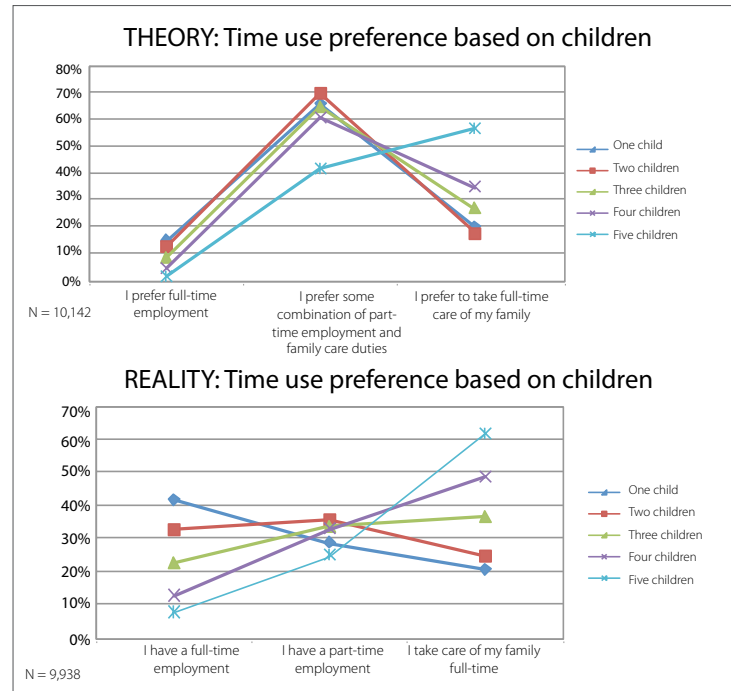
\* For more information on calculation used, please consult "Facts & Figures: Survey of Mothers in Europe 2011", found at [www.mmmeurope.org](http://www.mmmeurope.org)



Key finding:

**In theory, mothers' preference does not vary much based on the number of children they have. In reality, it does vary a lot.**

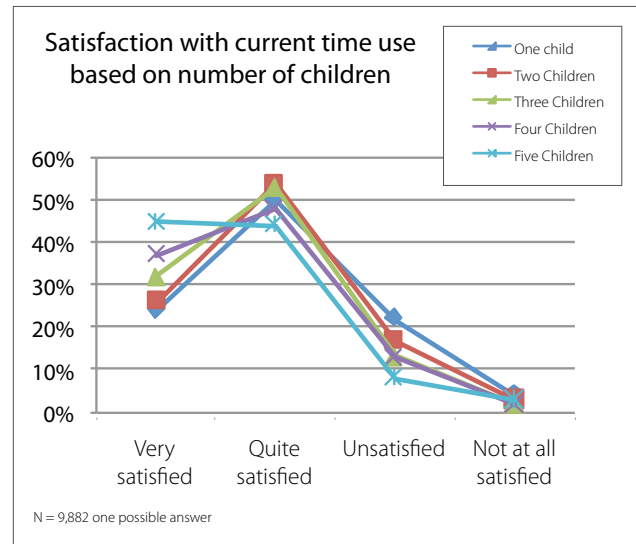
- Mothers with 1 or 2 children show a slightly higher preference to work full-time with 15% and 13% respectively. On the contrary, mothers with 3, 4 or 5 children express a preference for homecare with 27%, 35% and 56% respectively.
- In reality, the number of children makes a big difference: mothers with 3 or more children are half as likely to work full-time and twice as likely to be home for full-time care of the family.  
**The threshold appears to be passing from 2 to 3 children.**



## Key finding:

### The more children mothers have, the more satisfied they are with their time use.

- Half of the responding mothers are *quite satisfied* with their current time use and 1/3 are *very satisfied*.
- The most satisfied mothers are by far the ones between 56 and 70. (They are out of the “rush hour” of motherhood.)
- On the contrary the very young mothers (19-25) include strong opposites. Nearly 40% are *VERY satisfied* mothers, while also 6% are *VERY unsatisfied*.
- Mothers on maternity or parental leave and stay-at-home mothers are more likely to be satisfied, followed closely by self-employed mothers. Those working full-time seem less satisfied than those working part-time.
- Mothers who are in a partner relationship are more likely to be satisfied than single, divorced or separated mothers.



**The more children respondents have, the more they seem satisfied with their time use. Do mothers with 3 or more children better assume their time use choice?...and acknowledge more easily they are not super-women?**

## Key finding:

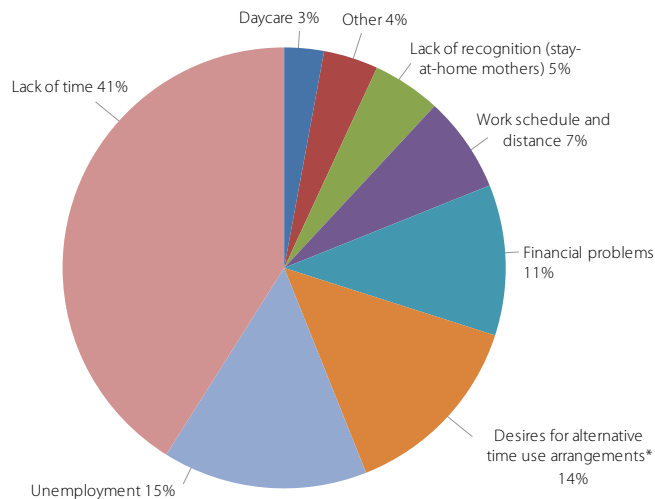
### Lack of time with their family is a major issue for mothers.

- To understand **reasons for dissatisfaction**, a total of 1,857 unsatisfied surveyed mothers were asked in an open-answer question to explain why they are dissatisfied with their current time use.
- The highest number of spontaneous responses were linked to **lack of time**:



*"I lead two work days in a single day: my labour outside the home at my employer's and my work to care for my children when I return to my home. There are meals to prepare, supervision of children's homework, and housework, without counting errands. I would love to have more time to concentrate only on my children without having to tell them constantly, 'tell me later, we have to hurry now.' I have the impression to be running constantly and to lack time for everything. I'm burning out."*

Reasons for dissatisfaction (spontaneous responses)



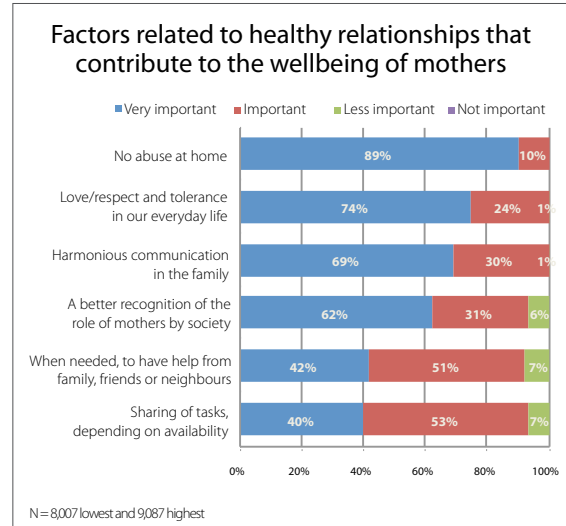
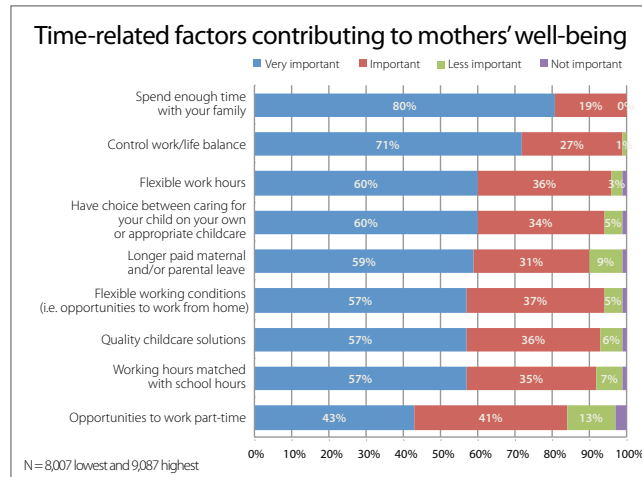
\*More than half of those who expressed desires, spoke about their wish to care full-time for their family.

## Key finding:

### Healthy relationships and time are essential to most mothers in Europe.

- There is a **strong agreement among mothers of all background and all ages** on the **MOST IMPORTANT** factors that contribute to family wellbeing: no abuse at home and healthy relationships, as well as enough time with one's family and ability to control work/family life balance.

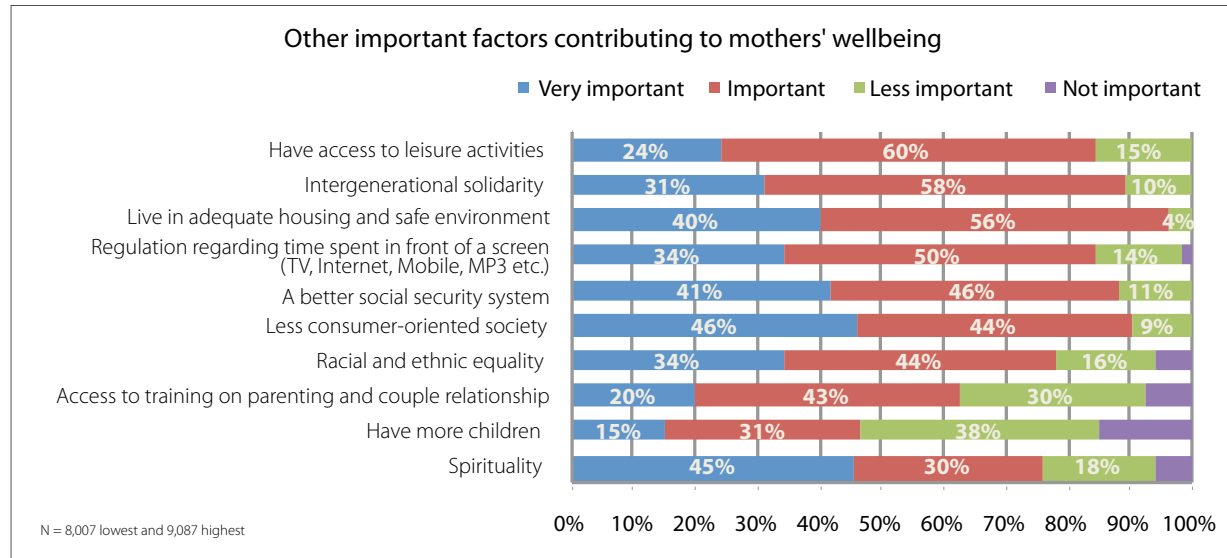
*Are these important factors interconnected?  
Does more time allow for healthier family relationships?*



## Key finding:

### Housing and intergenerational solidarity are also important.

- Next important factors include living in an adequate housing and safe environment, a less consumer-oriented society, more intergenerational solidarity, and a better social security system.
- Note that 46% of total mothers (nearly 1 in 2) rated “have more children” as *important* or *very important*, which could make a difference in the demographic picture.





# Who helps mothers and whom do they help?



*"Realise the importance of the mother's role for the well-being of society in general. It is through her that the value of peace, respect for others, the giving of self for others, and all that goes into living peacefully with one another, starts in the home."*

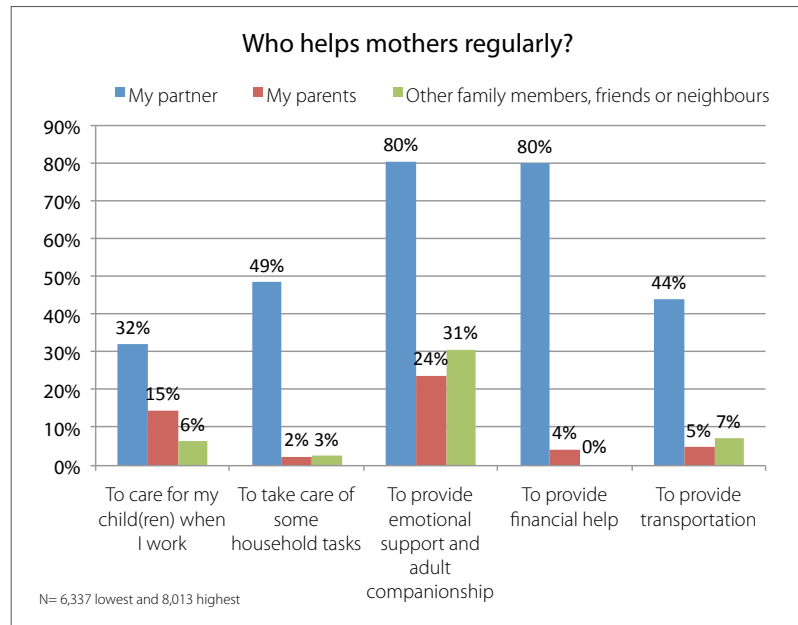


Key finding:

**The mother's spouse/partner is usually the first helper in the family, especially in providing emotional and financial support.**

- Primary support from partners is related to emotional and adult companionship, as well as to financial support.

***Family is undoubtedly the most important help provider for mothers.***





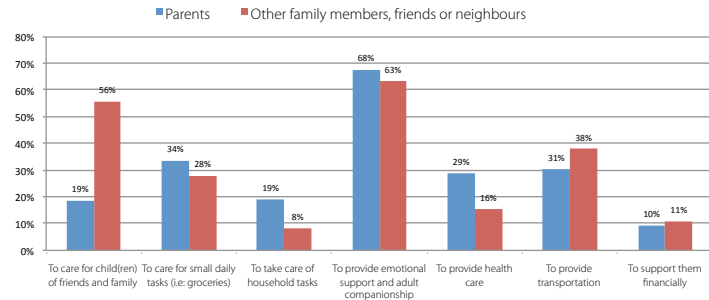
## Key finding:

### Mothers are important actors of social cohesion.

- Mothers help their family members, friends and neighbours to take care of their children, provide emotional support and help with transportation.
- They also tend to provide healthcare to their parents.
- Mothers with fewer children are slightly more likely to help their parents.
- The more children mothers have, the more likely they are to volunteer.

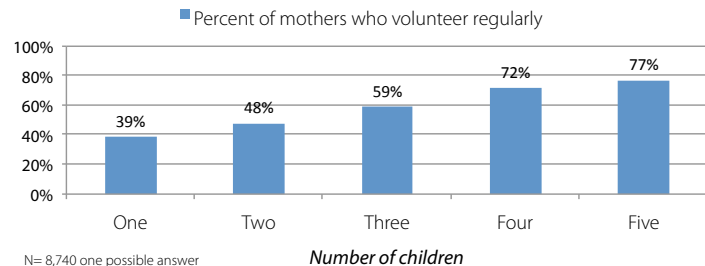
*Because they actively help their parents, other family members, friends and neighbours, and because they volunteer, mothers are important actors of social cohesion.*

#### Whom do mothers help regularly?



N= 5,698 lowest and 7,195 highest

#### Mothers' involvement in volunteering and number of children



N= 8,740 one possible answer

# Retirement



*"When a mother chooses to give of her time to care for her children or other family members, she does so at the risk of her future pension. Can we not envision some remuneration for home-makers with social benefits and credit for the calculation of pensions?"*

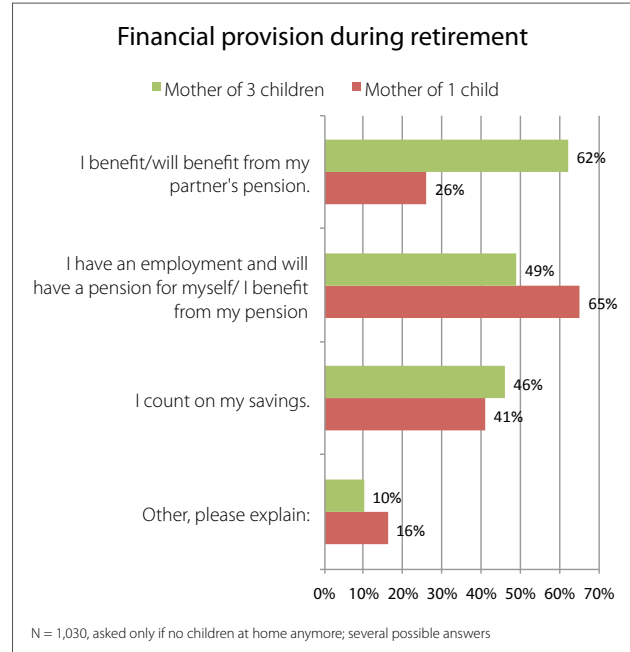


## Key finding:


### The more children mothers have, the more they depend on their spouse's pension.

Mothers who do not have children living under the same roof were asked several questions related to their retirement:

- Regarding financial provision, the more children respondents have, the more they depend on their partner's pension.
- Health-related issues represent the highest concern about retirement for 2 in 3 mothers. Financial issues are a concern for a little more than one third of the respondents. (In Eastern countries, finance is the number one issue).
- Relative to time-use, the vast majority have said that they will spend time helping their respective families (81%) and volunteering (68%). Leisure aspects (friends, hobbies and travel) are also frequent responses. One in four would like to continue studying.
- Regarding lodging during retirement, the vast majority wants to keep their own house or other independent housing as long as possible. The second choice is a retirement facility if their health gets difficult.



# Mothers' messages to policy makers

 *"Let mothers have real choice about whether or not they want to be with their children full time. Elevate the status of mothering in our societies. Use our increased longevity to take time out from work while our children are young, and allow women to go back to work when their children are grown without having to feel that they are 'too old' to be useful."*



## Key requests from mothers: **time, choice and recognition**

At the end of the survey, mothers could write a spontaneous message to policymakers on how to improve their well-being and that of their family. Over 8000 responded, many at great length and with evident emotion. Clearly, mothers were motivated by the opportunity to send a message which they hoped would be heard. The commonalities clearly over-arch the differences, especially with regards to the top three recurring themes: **TIME for their family, CHOICE about childcare and RECOGNITION for their role as a mother**

- **Time:** Respondent mothers clearly ask for measures that have a direct impact on their daily life to improve their work/family life balance:
  - Enough time to care for and rear their children (especially the younger mothers who have children still at home)
  - An increase in maternity and/or parental leaves.
  - More and better adapted daycare solutions including companies' day care centers.
  - More flexibility in their work schedule taking into consideration school hours and holidays.
  - More possibilities and opportunities to work part-time.
  - More family-friendly companies.
- **Choice:** Surveyed mothers want a better recognition of the role of mothers and fathers who decide to stay at home (part or full time) to take care of their children. They want to have an economically-feasible choice between an outsourced care solution or an in-family care solution enabling mother or father to take care of their under school-age children themselves.
- **Recognition:** Respondent mothers want a better recognition of the importance of **family care** and motherhood in society. They ask that families be recognised as a major resource for the entire society and as a source of social cohesion. By caring for and raising their children, mothers and fathers are working for the future of our society.
- Less recurring topics were related to **relationships, education/schools, gender equality** and **diversity**.










Messages by theme	%
1. Work/family life balance*	32%
2. Support and recognition of stay-at-home parents' role	27%
3. Recognition of families/parents' role	15%
4. Financial support (Family-friendly taxation and better social security)	6%
5. Values/Responsibilities	3%
6. Relationship	3%
7. Education (Children's schools and parenting classes)	3%
8. Gender Equality	2%
9. Miscellaneous**	9%


\*Includes messages about time, part-time employment, number and quality of daycares, maternity/parental leaves, flexibility, telecommute, and family-friendly companies


\*\* Includes several different and less frequent topics


For description of methodology used for the analysis of these responses, please consult "Facts & Figures: Survey of Mothers in Europe".


## Representative quotations from 8000 spontaneous messages written to policymakers


-  "In a time of demographic ageing when children should be our future, having children feels frightening to me, or like a punishment. Nowadays I give birth to children who must be raised by others. Maternity leave is too short, space in a daycare center is hard to find, work hours and school hours do not correspond, and what to do with children in the summer while parents work? Give mothers a reasonable status, so that those who choose maternity don't have to opt between over-tiredness (burnout) and poverty." (Belgium)
-  "Consider the family as a resource for the entire society: real family policies, more crèches, flexible working conditions (part-time jobs, telecommuting, flexible hours) and a familyfriendly taxation system, which considers the family as a unit (couple, children, and other dependent members)." (Italy)
-  "In Slovakia, families do not have enough money to provide for more than one child. We should have lower taxes and better salaries."
-  "Instead of social benefits, create jobs which pay a father enough to support a family, so that a mother might work only part-time or not at all while children are young." (Hungary)
-  "The work hours of mothers should match those of the children, and mothers should be able to take time off during school holidays." (France)
-  "In Spain, the grandmothers used to care for children while the mothers worked, but grandmothers are working more and who will care for the children? Work and school schedules and calendars do not correspond. Parents should adapt to the children's timetables, and men might also reduce their working day to help with childcare responsibilities."
-  "Stop pushing mums to go back to work. Give people a choice and provide equal support, either to stay home to care for young children or to go out to work." (UK)
-  "We need support for childcare at home (economic and mental); one sum per child so a mother or father can make the choice for homecare or not, until the child is 18. We need smaller groups in daycare centers and schools." (Finland)
-  "Recognise the value of a mother's love and teaching in the home. Schools cannot compensate for what the home fails to do." (Belgium—FR)

 "Let us have the right to choose for ourselves. I feel trapped in a feminist crusade where I and my free will do not exist. Society is reprogramming us to think we can only work and have our children raised by others. I am young and can work outside our home when the children get older. Right now I miss out on their childhood, and their picture of mom is a stressed out woman who does not prioritise them, but goes to work." (Sweden)


 "Employees should not have to work overtime, which is very bad for families and for others, but in Denmark people feel pressured to do so because of the high numbers of the unemployed looking for jobs."


 "The State no longer has to give to us; it would be enough if the State would take less from us. There should be much higher tax allowances for children." (Germany)


 "Create a family-friendly tax and social security system that takes into account the substantial additional costs of raising a family, as compared to childless couples. Eliminate the exploitation of mothers who work without pay to raise and educate the children who will support the pensions of people who have not raised children." (Germany)


 "I find it difficult now in Germany to admit that I am a mother who would prefer to be home as long as the chil-

dren are there. Freedom of choice should exist without disdain for either alternative."

 "Every mother is a working woman. Cease to defame family women with "back to the kitchen." He who speaks as a politician today on family women often despises in hindsight the performance of his own mother as a homemaker." (Germany)

 "Respect women for everything they embody—recognise their vital work in the home, their invaluable volunteer service in the community, and their equal place in the world of work." (Belgium—FR)

 "The social message must be coherent. You cannot, on the one hand, advocate a harmonious combination of work and family life and on the other hand maintain inflexible employment regulations. If something goes wrong with a child, people are quick to accuse the parents of neglect, but if parents choose to spend more time with family, then they are considered lazy. Society must permit choices, and politicians must defend that freedom." (Belgium—NL)

 "I have the impression that to be a mother at home is judged as a leisure activity, but if I am employed outside the home I have to pay someone to do what I did when I didn't work."



# Next steps and conclusion



*"Let's integrate mothers into the decision-making process because they have much experiential knowledge and they are motivated to act for the benefit of the public welfare."*



## Mothers' recommendations to policy makers

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Acting as the voice of the mothers\*, MMM Europe relays to policymakers, employers, and other involved stakeholders, some actionable recommendations that mothers have made:

### **Related to WORK/FAMILY life balance:**

There is an essential season of child-bearing and child-rearing during which mothers need special adaptations in employment arrangements:

- Recognise the desire of mothers to have more time to care for and rear their children.
  - Acknowledge the essential role of mothers and fathers in society and in European demography by taking measures allowing them to fulfil their responsibilities and desires as parents.
  - Recognise and acknowledge the difference of needs and requirements that parents (mothers and fathers) have at different times of their life and accommodate the working arrangements accordingly. For the many mothers on the European labour market, the highest career pressure usually coincides with childbearing and family care peak. This is usually called a "rush-hour".
- Allowing flexible time periods in the working life of a mother versus a linear career path, is crucial.
  - Given the demographic evolution of Europe, recognise and acknowledge the difference of needs based on the number of children mothers have. A professional life is more compatible for mothers who have 1 or 2 children. Having 3 children or more seems to be the threshold. Allowing possible "career breaks" to allow time for children.
  - Increase number, form and quality of day-care arrangements.
    - Look into creating on-site company day-cares.
  - Increase the length of "maternity leave" and "parental leave" in some countries.
  - Find imaginative solutions to recognise unpaid family care work.
    - Include the unpaid family care work in the calculation of GDP to better recognise its importance.
    - Include career breaks for family care purposes in pension calculation.

\*All measures could also apply to fathers, and MMM supports the active involvement of fathers in child-care.

## Mothers' recommendations to policy makers (continued)

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- Value and offer more part-time job opportunities for both women and men that match their children's school hours and holiday schedules without penalising them in terms of pensions and future career opportunities. Responsibilities should be shared between employers AND state, and not employers-only to support such actions.
- Ensure equal opportunities and salaries on the workplace for women versus men, for parents vs. non-parents.
- Encourage family-friendly and flexible work-environments, including opportunities for telecommuting and flexible work hours (again adapted to the school/holiday schedule of employees' children.)
- Encourage workplaces to offer job shares that allow teams of people to share certain tasks.
- Encourage work opportunities close to home of employees.

### Related to families' FINANCIAL support

- Launch and encourage a family-friendly taxation system (VAT) across Europe (For example: income splitting, increased deductions for dependents, reduced VAT on child-care services and goods).
- Allow access to family allowances from the birth of the first child.

### Related to parents & parenting:

- Implement measures encouraging fathers' involvement in family care work.
- Better recognise the value of education and care work provided by parents to raise their children as carrying important social, economic and cultural value for society.
- Strengthen early intervention and prevention services for families.
- Empower parents by enhancing their parenting skills (Offer more support to civil organisations who support parenting).

***Mothers have expressed that they want to be listened to. Europe's mothers are major actors and decision makers in many essential processes determining the sustainability of Europe and they need to be heard.***

## Conclusion

Being a mother is a source of great satisfaction to almost all respondents. However, the MMM *“Survey of Mothers in Europe”* reveals a general and strongly voiced concern about a lack of choice, time and recognition, particularly for mothers who are in a precarious situation, single mothers who raise their children alone, or mothers who have difficult family situations.

This survey has shown that mothers express their need to be valued and listened to. No matter their background, age, or socio-demographic profile, 11,000 mothers across Europe have expressed similar opinions, wishes and concerns. Respondent mothers have a strong sense of responsibility towards their families and children. They also know that being a mother is essential to them, to their children, to their family and to society. For most European families, time is a difficult issue because of the tension between employment and family life, and in particular during the “rush hour” of their life. Employers, policy makers and public opinion should be aware of the difficulty for mothers to follow a linear path in their career if they are to be more involved in the care and upbringing of their children.

In light of our European democracies, MMM’s mission is to help society evolve in a better way by relaying the voice of mothers. We hope that policy-makers will listen to the voices of these mothers and adapt policies to the needs and desire of their constituents, and find with employers and other stakeholders innovative ways to support European mothers and families, knowing that the children of today are the European citizens of tomorrow.



# Acknowledgements

We express our sincere gratitude to all the **people and associations** who have helped to create, disseminate (by word-of-mouth) and participate in the *Survey of Mothers in Europe*.

Our very special thanks go to the **extraordinary team of volunteers** for their precious contributions in their support for translation and in capturing the messages, but also all the **experts** who have provided precious scientific advice and council:

Karin Bengtsson (HARO, Sweden), Brigitte de Vaumas (Accion Familiar, Spain), Katharina Droste (Germany), Monique Geens-Wittemans (Belgium), Zsuzsa D. Kormosné (NOE, Hungary), Anna Kováčová-Habovštiaková (Donum Vitae, Slovakia), Martina Leibovici (Fit for kids, Austria), Anna Lines (FTM, UK), Jacques Marquet (UCL, Belgium), Bernard Masuy (UCL, Belgium), Michiel Matthes (European Alliance for Childhood), Catherine Matuschka (Germany), Marie Peacock (UK), Lorenza Rebuzzini (Forum delle Associazioni Familiari), Eszter Sandor & team (Eurofound), Eija Sevon (University of Jyväskylä, Finland), Sylviane Stolberg (Germany), Karla Van Leeuwen (KUL, Belgium) and the MMM Europe and international teams.

Our gratitude also goes to the **thousands of European mothers** who have trusted us with their thoughts and concerns. They have given us insight. We hope that the gold mine of experiential knowledge they have provided us will be listened to and put into application by policy makers in Europe and across their member states.

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In partnership with



## Additional information

For additional information on this survey, please review "Facts & Figures: Survey of Mothers in Europe 2011" downloadable at [www.mmmeurope.org](http://www.mmmeurope.org).

The complete list of the 8,000+ messages left by the surveyed mothers to all policymakers is also downloadable (*8000+ Messages from European Mothers to Policy Makers*) at [www.mmmeurope.org](http://www.mmmeurope.org).

Qualified researchers are invited to request data as CSV, SPSS or NVIVO files for secondary analysis. Send requests to [info@mmmeurope.org](mailto:info@mmmeurope.org).

## Future projects

MMM's mission is to represent the voice of mothers to the International and local institutions in order to improve their day-to-day life. Our future project ambitions include:

- **Continuing a dialogue** with the 5000+ mothers who have left us their email address and engaged with us through this survey and increase number of mothers engaged.
- **Mothers re-entering the labour market** after having taken a break usually for family care reasons, including pilot programs
- **Mothers or family-friendly working environments**, including pilot programs
- Possibly investigate **What Matters to Fathers in Europe**

Any interested partner, foundation or contributors can contact us at: [info@mmmeurope.org](mailto:info@mmmeurope.org). Thank you.



Claire: *"Thank you for this very comprehensive questionnaire. It will enable many mums to raise important questions about their role in the family and society. ... I will forward it to the greatest number of mums I know."*

Frederikke: *"I am very pleased to see that there are initiatives in this direction to improve the conditions of mothers."*

Veronica: *"Thank you to mothers worldwide."*

Alessandra: *"Grazie per interessamento di questo argomento."*

Marion: *"Retired mothers are also entitled to respect and to voice their opinions! Thank you for your action."*

Ede: *"Thank you for the great work done by MMM on the subject of families."*



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