

## US Working mothers Struggle Daily to Balance Family and career

### SUMMARY

A growing number of mothers in the United States are joining the workforce, from fewer than 50 percent in the 1970s to close to 75 percent today. And while U.S. labor policies in support of working mothers have come a long way, VOA's Julie Taboh reports they have not caught up to the realities of women who struggle daily to balance family and career.

It's a typical weekday morning at the Barnes Cohen household.

Alison Barnes is getting her kids fed and ready for school as she gets ready for her job.

This busy mother of three says she's been trying to juggle the needs of her family with her work.

Since I have become a mom about eight years ago I definitely have had periods where I've been able to achieve good balance and other and at other times that seems very elusive.

Barnes is a partner in a Washington DC law firm and that position gives her some flexibility in her job : She 's been able to take long maternity leaves and work just four days a week .

« I have Fridays with my children and that's very important and it has helped me feel like I have really achieved some sense of balance »

Barnes is among the most fortunate women who have those options available to them says Vicky Shavuot, she is the director of work and family programs at the National Partnership for women and families in Washington.

« White-collar workers and high-paid professional workers have more flexibility than they used to on telecommuting and policies that allow people to do work from home every once in a while or to set their own hours are increasing. For most of the women in this country they don't have choices about when they work or where they work for how much they're working. They don't have access to high policy child care they don't have access to six days and they certainly don't have access to paid parental leave or paid leave to take care of an ill family member .

And then says Shavuot there is the issue of the maternity leave which is one of the biggest concern for working moms .

« We are one of the few countries in the world that does not offer maternity leave to new moms and a slightly larger number that doesn't offer paid leave to new dads. Our key workplace policy is the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act which provides twelve weeks of unpaid job protected leave at new parents and to people who need to deal with their own serious health conditions or care for an ill child, parent or spouse »

But that, she says is only a start :

« My greatest hope is that we implement a national paid Family and Medical Leave insurance to bring ourselves up to the level of the rest of the world »

No matter what their job working mothers want what all caring parents want a society that recognizes us the value of happy healthy children.

Julie Taboh viewing news Washington