



New Mothers Speak Out: National Survey Results Highlight Women's Postpartum Experiences

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*Helping women and health professionals
make informed maternity care decisions*

- Formerly Maternity Center Association
- Mission: to improve the quality of maternity care through research, education, advocacy and policy
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Listening to Mothers II

- *Listening to Mothers II* conducted in 2006 by Harris Interactive for Childbirth Connection in partnership with Lamaze International
- *LTM II* survey of 1573 mothers, 18-45 who gave birth in a hospital to a single baby in 2005
- Results weighted to reflect target population
- *New Mothers Speak Out*, postpartum follow-up survey with same women: July 2006, 903 (57%) of *LTM II* survey participants
- www.childbirthconnection.org/listeningtomothers/



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Survey's Core Team

- Eugene Declercq, PhD, MBA, Boston University
- Carol Sakala, PhD, MSPH, Childbirth Connection
- Maureen P. Corry, MPH, Childbirth Connection
- Sandra Applebaum, Harris Interactive



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Listening to Mothers II: National Advisory Council

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Katherine Browne, MPH: National Partnership for Women and Families
Carol Bryce-Buchanan: Families and Work Institute
Maureen P. Corry, MPH: Childbirth Connection
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Debora Sawyer, MD: Permanente Medical Group
Carol Sakala, PhD, MSPH: Childbirth Connection
Kathleen Rice Simpson, PhD, RNC, FAAN: Assn. of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses



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Listening to Mothers II: Freedom and Constraints in Labor

- 2 in 5 mothers drank something during labor
- 15% ate during labor
- 24% walked around after regular contractions began
- 57% reported being on their backs while pushing and giving birth
- 35% were slightly propped-up
- 4% were on their side, 3% were upright and 1% were in hands-and-knees position



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Listening to Mothers II: In Her Own Words

"My first delivery I had a nurse yelling at me that I had to push, and this time around...it was the same scenario. A nurse that had not been in my room the whole time was yelling at me, telling me that I had to push".



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Listening to Mothers II: Mode of Birth

Table 9. Mode of birth

Base: all mothers n=1573

Vaginal 68%		
Vaginal/no previous cesarean 66%		
Vaginal birth after cesarean (VBAC) 2%		
Unassisted	60%	1%
Vacuum or forceps assisted	6%	1%
Cesarean 32%		
Primary (first) cesarean 16%		
Repeat cesarean 16%		
Unplanned	13%	3%
Planned	3%	13%

Percent is proportion of all respondents

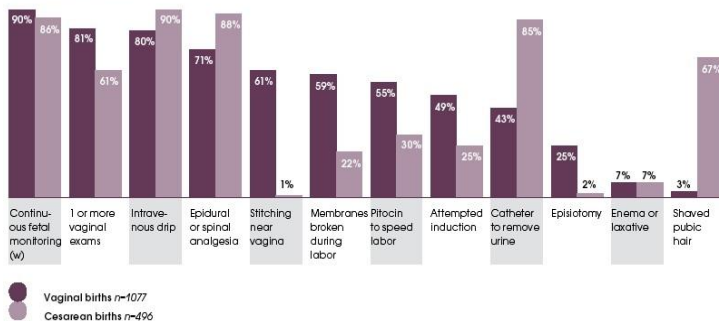


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Listening to Mothers II: Interventions by Mode of Birth

Figure 5. Use of selected interventions, by mode of birth

Base: all mothers n=1573



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Listening to Mothers II: In Her Own Words

“Doctors have become very touchy about the possibility of being sued. When I stated my desire to have a VBAC, I was told many times that a c-section was better, the odds of a successful VBAC were 20% or less. The morning of my induction as I was getting my IV, the doctor popped in to say “are you sure you don’t want a c-section, we can roll you in to the OR in about 20 minutes”. They were all very pushy, like I was inconveniencing them”.



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Listening to Mothers II: Baby’s Location After Birth

- During first hour after birth, about 1 mother in 3 had newborn mostly in her arms, and about 1 in 7 said baby was mainly in husband’s or partner’s arms
- Almost 50% of all babies were primarily with staff during this period, most (39%) for routine care
- 69% mothers with vaginal birth reported rooming-in compared to 49% with cesareans



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Listening to Mothers II: In Her Own Words

“The worst thing was being separated from my baby for more than 5 hours...It was excuse after excuse with things that could have either waited or been done in my room. I told them I did not want my baby given a bottle, but they did it anyway. Since I had a cesarean section, I was unable to go to my baby in the nursery. I still get emotional when I think about it”.



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Listening to Mothers II: Newborn Feeding

Table 13. Infant feeding intention and actual feeding practice from 1 week to 12 months after birth

Base: all mothers n=1573	Intention at end of pregnancy	One week	Current feeding method (months since birth)			
			0-3 months n=192	4-6 months n=469	7-9 months n=465	10-12 months n=447
Breast only	61%	51%	22%	12%	6%	3%
Formula only	20%	27%	54%	28%	22%	21%
Both	19%	21%	20%	8%	2%	2%
Solid food, with any of above or alone	na	na	4%	53%	71%	74%



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Listening to Mothers II: In Her Own Words

“And to top it all off I had some nurse trying to pressure and scare me into giving my baby formula when I expressed that I was going to breastfeed only. She would say things like she’s not getting enough to eat and if she doesn’t gain any weight by the time you are discharged, we’re going to keep her here for failure to thrive”.



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Listening to Mothers II: Postpartum Mental Health

- Almost 2 out of 3 mothers (63%) were likely to be suffering some degree of depressive symptoms in 2 weeks before the survey
- 26% of mothers who were likely suffering from depression visited a health care or mental health professional with their concerns



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Listening to Mothers II: In Her Own Words

"Having suffered post-partum depression with my first child, I knew what to look for with my second child, but still felt a bit "outside the box". PPD is still a disease that is very much neglected, swept under the rug, etc. Everyone expects you to be deliriously happy, and while you are happy at times, the PPD is overwhelming and you often feel very alone in your suffering. A support group through the hospital would be an excellent resource".



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New Mothers Speak Out

Survey mothers

- 903 (57%) of *LTM II* moms
- 69% vaginal birth; 7% assisted
- 2% VBAC
- 31% cesarean; 17% primary, 14% repeat
- Demographic profile parallels birthing population: race/ethnicity, age, birth attendant, parity



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New Mothers Speak Out

- Asked 3 open ended questions:
- What gives you a special sense of pride and accomplishment in baby's first 6 months?
- What was the most challenging aspect of life during the first six months?
- What is your biggest overall concern as a parent?



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New Mothers Speak Out: Scope of Survey

- Part I: Maternal Well-Being
- Part 2: Child Well-Being
- Part 3: Employment and Maternity Leave
- Part 4: Family and Relationships



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New Mothers Speak Out

- Postpartum Depression Screening Tool (Beck) used in LtM II
- Patient Health Questionnaire (9 item depression screening tool) used in postpartum survey
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Symptom Scale (self report version)
- Medical Outcomes Study Social Support Survey (adapted to a 4 item tool)



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New Mothers Speak Out: Maternal Well-Being

Postpartum Physical and Emotional Health
Concerns: Postpartum Office Visit

- 6% of mothers did not have office visit for these reasons:
- 35% felt fine & didn't need to go
- 14%, too hard to get to office
- 10% didn't have insurance



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New Mothers Speak Out: Maternal Well-Being

Postpartum Physical and Emotional Health

Concerns: Vaginal Birth (629 women)

- Almost half cited painful perineum as problem; 15% major problem
- 27% that cited this as major problem had episiotomy
- About 1 in 20 (5%) cited perineal infection as problem; 1% said lasted to 6 or more months after birth



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New Mothers Speak Out; In Her Own Words

- “Having the episiotomy was the worst thing about my birth experience. It really made healing a lot more difficult”



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New Mothers Speak Out: Maternal Well-Being

Postpartum Physical and Emotional Health
Concerns: Cesarean Section (274 women)

- 8 out of 10 cited pain at site of incision as major or minor problem; 33% major problem
- 1 in 5 reported infection associated with cesarean
- 61% cited itching and 57% numbness in first 2 months



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New Mothers Speak Out: In Her Own Words

- “The most challenging thing was remembering to let myself recover from the c-section. I kept wanting to jump right back in and do everything I did before, but if I did that I would be in agony. It was hard to stay resting when I had children that needed me”



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New Mothers Speak Out: Maternal Well-Being

Postpartum Physical and Emotional Health Concerns:

General Problems after at least 6 months

- 62% physical exhaustion; 24% major problem
- 61% sleep loss; 29% major problem
- 59% sore nipples/breast tenderness; 19% major problem
- 58% feeling stressed; 23% major problem
- 50% weight control; 23% major problem
- 43% lack of sexual desire
- 1 in 3 cited feelings of depression



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New Mothers Speak Out: In Her Own Words

- “I felt sick all the time. I was exhausted. I NEVER got enough sleep”
- “Something that I’m still dealing with now is the lack of sleep. I go to sleep tired. I wake up tired. There is no real rest in between....I don’t know if I can go through this again..”



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New Mothers Speak Out: Maternal Well-Being

Postpartum Physical and Emotional Health Concerns: General Problems

- 36% backache
- 32% painful intercourse; 30% w/o episiotomy, 44% w. episiotomy
- 30% breastfeeding problems other than infection
- 1 in 4 (29%) bowel problems; 28% vaginal, 31% cesarean
- 24% urinary problems; 29% vaginal, 17% cesarean



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New Mothers Speak Out: Maternal Well-Being

Postpartum Health Concerns: Rehospitalization

- 7% of mothers readmitted to hospital overnight
- 41% (3% of entire sample) gall bladder
- 8% fever or infection
- 2% vaginal bleeding
- Experienced mothers (9%) more likely than first-time mothers (5%) to be rehospitalized



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New Mothers Speak Out: In Her Own Words

- “A week after my baby was born, I had to go back into the hospital for 5 days. It was very difficult for me to have to spend this much time away from my new baby. When I got out of the hospital it took a couple of more months before I felt that my health was better. And then I had to go back to work”



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New Mothers Speak Out: Maternal Well-Being

Postpartum Physical and Emotional Health Problems:
Interfered with Caring for Baby in First 2 Months

- 1/3 of mothers reported postpartum physical health or emotional health interfered at least “some”
- Only 10% in each case reported “fair amount”
- Mothers w. cesarean (55%) far more likely to report physical problems interfering than those w. vaginal birth (27%)



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New Mothers Speak Out; In Her Own Words

- “Due to the fact that I had a cesarean, I had a lot more physical recovery than I had planned on. I was unable to lift things (even sometimes my baby) which even made breastfeeding hard. I had a lot of pain and even had an infection at the incision site”



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New Mothers Speak Out: Feelings After Birth

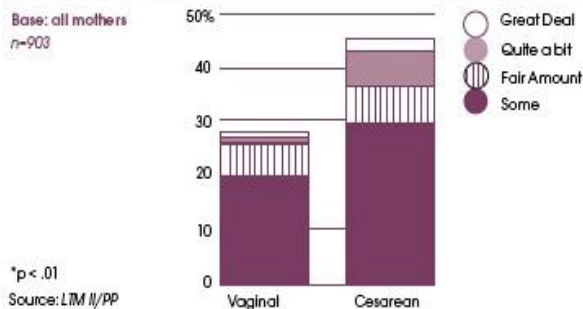
- Fatigue 93% tired, 10% rested
- Supported 76%
- Confident 54%
- Unsure 45%
- Isolated 39%



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New Mothers Speak Out: Maternal Well-Being

Figure 1. Interference of mother's physical health with ability to care for baby in first two months after birth, by method of birth*



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New Mothers Speak Out: In Her Own Words

- “It was overwhelming. I really didn’t know what I was signing up for! Many of the things on this list I experienced intensely the first few months. I felt out of control of my body during childbirth and breastfeeding”
- “My biggest concern was SLEEP. Took the baby’s nap time to do other things. Felt very unorganized and discombobulated”



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Listening to Mothers II Maternal Well-Being

Postpartum Emotional Health Concerns:
Current Mental Health Status (PDSS,
short version)

- About 1 in 3 mothers reported experiencing a problem for at least several days in past 2 weeks:
- 36% “feeling down, depressed or hopeless” or having “little interest or pleasure in doing things” (34%)
- 6% bothered by these feelings nearly every day



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New Mothers Speak Out Follow Up Mental Status

- During the past two weeks have you been bothered by the following?
- Little interest or pleasure in doing things
Not at all 66%, several days 20%, most days 14%
- Feeling down, depressed or hopeless
Not at all 64%, several days 22%, most days 15%



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New Mothers Speak Out: In Her Own Words

- “NOTHING gives me a special sense of pride. I AM RIGHT NOW IN AN EMOTIONAL SLUMP”
- “Right on the dot at six at night I’d get depressed. And just a feeling of foreboding. It was awful. I’m a glass half full kind of girl...to feel that despair was just yucky”



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New Mothers Speak Out: Maternal Well-Being

- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Symptom Scale
- 18% suffering some PTSD symptoms
- 9% met all the criteria for PTSD
- Black mothers (26%) more likely to suffer some PTSD symptoms than White/non-Hispanic (17%) or Hispanic (14%) mothers
- 16% of mothers younger than 25 & 3% of mothers over 35*
- 15% medicaid vs 5% private insurance
- More frequent in women who had reported depressive symptoms in earlier survey



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New Mothers Speak Out: In Her Own Words

- “I was forced against my will to stay in the hospital for 11 days and I was forced against my will to have a cesarean. No one listened to me and did everything the opposite of what I asked. They wouldn’t let me have the curtain down. I was harassed and assaulted while in the hospital by the hospital staff”
- “Being strapped down for the cesarean..is a horrible feeling that left me feeling vulnerable and totally helpless”



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Consulting a Professional about Emotional or Mental Well Being

- Listening to Mothers II 18% had consulted a professional
- More likely if women reported not able to care for their babies (33% versus 12%)
- New Mothers Speak Out: Mothers reporting symptoms of birth trauma (42%) most likely to seek help



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New Mothers Speak Out: In Her Own Words

- “I was pretty depressed after I had the baby. I never had images in my head of hurting her, but I had very graphic images of hurting myself. I finally talked to my doctor and was put on medication. It has helped a lot..”



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New Mothers Speak Out: Maternal Well-Being

Maintaining Wellness:

Getting enough exercise: 49% not at all well, 20% somewhat well

Eating a healthy diet: 23% not at all well, 27% somewhat well

Managing stress: 14% not at all well, 27% somewhat well

Getting enough sleep: 22% not at all well, 31% somewhat well



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New Mothers Speak Out: In Her Own Words

- “The most difficult was balancing my physical life with my emotional rollercoaster. Too many ups and downs kept me from keeping control of things like diet and exercise. I didn’t have time for myself...I satisfied every craving with an attitude that I deserve to eat so I will.”



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New Mothers Speak Out: Child Well Being

- Sources of Parenting Information
- First time mothers: 31% provider, 25% parents, 11% internet
- Experienced mothers: 50% prior experience, 17% provider, 9% parents, 7% internet

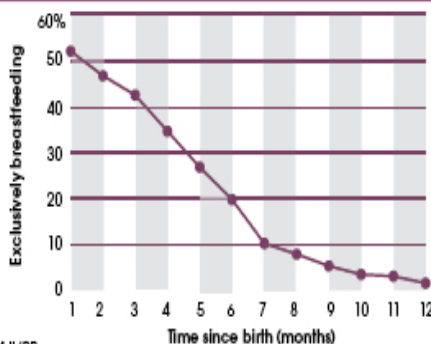


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New Mothers Speak Out Breastfeeding Duration

Figure 4. Rate of exclusive breastfeeding from birth through 12 months

Base: all mothers
n=1573



Source: LTM II and LTM II/PP



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New Mothers Speak Out: In Her Own Words

- “I was especially proud about breastfeeding for the first time. I did it from birth until 13 months. I didn’t breastfeed my first. I didn’t think I could do it. I did it with my second and I stuck to it!”
- “I know breastfeeding is the best for my baby and I didn’t think I would be able to do it but I went above and beyond the expected time frame I had set for myself and as a result I have a very healthy baby”



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New Mothers Speak Out: Child Well-Being

Breastfeeding Duration

	7-12 months (n=411)	13-18 months (n=492)	All (n=903)
Breastmilk	24%	11%	19%
Formula	71%	10%	39%



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New Mothers Speak Out: Reasons for Not Establishing Breastfeeding

- Mothers who intended to but did not breastfeed (10%) in Listening to Mothers II
- 42% formula more convenient
- 38% "too hard to get breastfeeding going"
- 37% "baby had difficulty nursing"



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New Mothers Speak Out: Child Well-Being

Satisfaction with Duration of Breastfeeding:
Mothers breastfeeding at one week, but
not at time of survey (n=491)

- 46% breastfed as long as they wanted
- Wealthier, older, married more likely
- Black non-Hispanic mothers, mothers with income under \$35,000, and unmarried mothers less likely to report breastfeeding as long as they would have liked

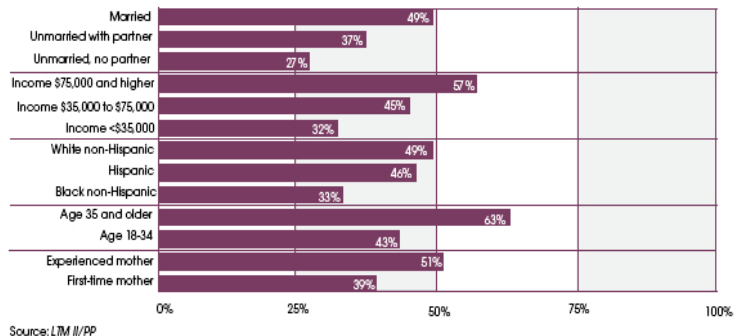


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New Mothers Speak Out: Satisfaction with Duration of BF

Figure 5. Proportion of mothers reporting they breastfed as long as they wanted

Base: breastfed at one week and was not breastfeeding at time of LTM II/PP survey
n=491



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New Mothers Speak Out: In Her Own Words

- “Going back to work full time was the most challenging. I didn’t like putting her in the care of strangers. I didn’t like that I wasn’t able to nurse her. My milk production went way down, and I had to stop breastfeeding before I was ready”
- “It was a special accomplishment that we were successful with breastfeeding and that I was able to pump when I was at work to make sure he had enough at day care each day without me needing to supplement with formula”



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New Mothers Speak Out: Child Well-Being

- 80% of mothers reported their sons were circumcised
- White 88%
- Black non-Hispanic 89%
- Hispanic (34% first time mothers)
- Hispanic experienced mothers (63%)*



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New Mothers Speak Out: Child Well-Being

- 18% reported baby always slept in bed with them in first 6 months and 25% often or sometimes did
- 50% black non-Hispanic (always or often)
- 36% Hispanic (always or often)
- 21% white (always or often)

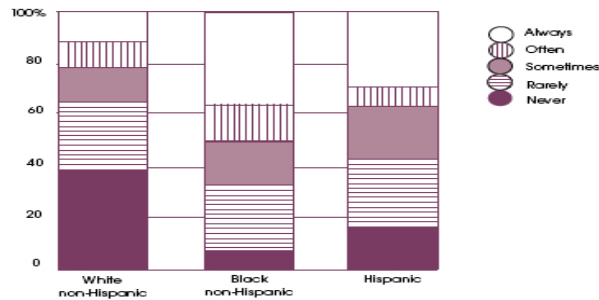


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New Mothers Speak Out: Co-Sleeping

Figure 6. Co-sleeping in first six months after birth, by race and ethnicity*

In the first six months, how often did your baby sleep in the same bed with you or anyone else?
Base: all mothers
n=903



*p < .01 for differences by race/ethnicity
Source: LTM II/PP



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New Mothers Speak Out: Employment & Maternity Leave

Patterns of Employment

- Among those who returned to paid work, most (84%) were back by 12 weeks
- Represents 57% of all formerly employed mothers
- 80% returned to same employer; 10% to part-time; 13% switched employers; 2% self-employed



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New Mothers Speak Out: Employment & Maternity Leave

Maternity Leave Benefits Employed Full-Time During Pregnancy (n=622)

- | | |
|----------------------|-----|
| • no maternity leave | 50% |
| • 1-4 weeks leave | 6% |
| • 5-8 weeks | 28% |
| • 9-12 weeks | 13% |
| • 13-16 weeks | 2% |
| • 17+ | 1% |

Of women 622 women employed full-time during pregnancy, 50% rec. no salary during leave; only 26% received 100% of salary



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New Mothers Speak Out: Maternity Leave Benefits

Table 13. Mothers' experience with paid maternity leave benefits

Base: mothers who were employed full time during pregnancy

Number of weeks received paid maternity leave		n=622	Percent of regular salary received during maternity leave		n=622
None	50%		None	50%	
1-4	6%		1-25%	3%	
5-8	28%		26-50%	6%	
9-12	13%		51-75%	12%	
13-16	2%		76-99%	2%	
17+	1%		100%	26%	

Note: 40% of survey participants indicated they had been employed full time during pregnancy
Source: LTM II and LTM II/PP



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New Mothers Speak Out: Employment & Maternity Leave

Stayed Home as Long as Wanted

- 52% stayed home as long as wanted

How Long Should Maternity Leave Be

- 28% said 6 months was ideal amount of time off with baby
- 22% said 12 months
- Overall average was 7 months with 60% indicating a fully paid leave of 6 months+
- Contrast: 1% of mothers employed during pregnancy reported fully paid leave of 4 months or more



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New Mothers Speak Out: Transition to Employment

Table 14. Challenges in mothers' transition to employment (w)

In returning to work, how challenging were the following issues?

Base: mothers who were employed at

time of survey

(w) n=704

	Not a challenge	A minor challenge	A major challenge
Being apart from my baby	14%	30%	49%
Child care arrangements	42%	30%	20%
Breastfeeding issues	42%	21%	16%
Amount of support from my partner/spouse	59%	22%	14%
Lack of support in the workplace for me as new mother	62%	16%	13%

Source: LTM II (w)



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New Mothers Speak Out: In Her Own Words

- "My biggest challenge was going back to work and not actually spending enough time with my child. And I wanted to be in his life as much as possible, and I wasn't able to"
- "Returning to work was a major adjustment...just getting out the door was a chore"
- "Going back to work was my biggest challenge. I hated leaving him and I was not getting enough sleep. Plus I was trying to breastfeed and pumping at work was really hard"



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New Mothers Speak Out: Family & Relationships

Hoped for Number of Children

- On average 3 children with 2 (34%) and 3 (34%) the most common responses
- 6% wanted 1 child
- 17% wanted 4
- 9% wanted 5 or more

Marital Status

- 74% married, 7% unmarried without partner, 19% unmarried w. partner



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New Mothers Speak Out: Family & Relationships

Child Care Arrangements

- 30% husband or partner, 35% another family member
- 30% family day care providers, 23% child care centers

Sharing Child Care w. Husband or Partner

- 73% of mothers with husband or partner provided more of child care
- 25% equally shared, 2% husband/partner provided more care



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New Mothers Speak Out: Child Care

Table 15. Child care arrangements, by employment status

While you are at work who watches the child born in 2005? (Check all that apply)

Base: mothers working outside the home and not currently pregnant or who have had another child

	Full time n=240	Part time n=83	All n=323
Family member other than husband or partner	35%	43%	37%
Husband or partner	30%	51%	34%
Family day care provider	30%	8%	23%
Staff at a child care center	23%	13%	18%
Friend or neighbor	8%	10%	9%
Me	4%	7%	13%
Nanny	2%	-	2%

Source: LTM II/PP



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New Mothers Speak Out: In Her Words

- “I feel like I am doing this by myself and not getting help from my partner”
- “I was so proud of how my husband and I shared duties and relied on each other in the first weeks. We took turns sleep and doing chores and caring for our baby”



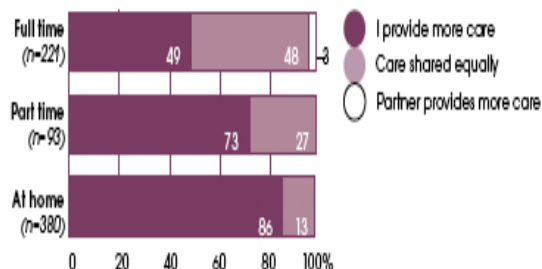
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New Mothers Speak Out: Childcare & Employment Status

Figure 7. Responsibility for child care, by employment status

Do you and your husband or partner share the daily care for your child who was born in 2005 equally or does one of you provide more of your child's daily care?

Base: Has husband or partner



Source: LTM II/PP



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New Mothers Speak Out: Family & Relationships

Types of Support from Husband/Partner

- Emotional 29% all time, 26% most, 7% none
- Practical 26% all, 26% most, 11% none
- Affectionate 36% all, 30% most, 12% none
- Enjoyment 11% all, 26% most, 8% none



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New Mothers Speak Out: Support from Husband/Partner

Table 11. Types and level of support from husband or partner

Since the birth of your baby in 2005, how often are the following types of support available from your husband or partner?

Base: all LTM II/PP mothers n=827	None of the time	Little of the time	Some of the time	Most of the time	All of the time
Affectionate, such as showing me affection and helping me feel wanted	4%	12%	18%	30%	36%
Emotional, such as listening to my concerns and giving good advice	5%	14%	19%	32%	29%
Practical, such as helping me get things done or get needed information	4%	17%	27%	26%	26%
Enjoyment, such as having fun or relaxing together	3%	17%	27%	28%	25%

Source: LTM II and LTM II/PP



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New Mothers Speak Out: In Her Words

- “I just felt like nobody really understood me and what I was going through”
- “Besides meeting our newest member of our family the best thing about my child’s birth was the closeness that it brought my and my husband’s marriage...”



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New Mothers Speak Out Major Takeaway

- Typical postpartum experience women are burdened with physical and emotional health concerns while caring for their newborn



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New Mothers Speak Out: Major Takeaway

- System is failing to provide mothers and babies with the care and support women have always needed in the days and months after the birth of their babies



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New Mothers Speak Out: Action Steps

- We owe mother and babies the safest, most mother- and baby-friendly care possible, and we know how to achieve it.
- What happens at the birth influences how mother and baby fare during the postpartum period
- Women need to know what to expect and how to get support



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- Raise awareness about PTSD and postpartum mood disorders



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"My biggest concern is that these children reach adulthood with the tools they need to reach as much of their potential as I (and their father) can possibly help them develop. That they feel loved and are best taught how to be part of society while being the best people and happiest they can be".

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