

Spark!

GALLUP®

Built With Care:
**UNIFYING COMMUNITIES
THROUGH MOTHERHOOD**



Thank you to the 4,000+ Idahoans who took time to participate in this project. Your voices, experiences and perspectives are greatly appreciated. And a special thank you to the J.A. & Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation for supporting our vision for Idaho moms.

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Table of Contents

2	Executive Summary
3	Built With Care: Unifying Communities Through Motherhood
8	Revealing Motherhood
14	Reinvesting in Motherhood
23	Conclusion
25	Appendix



“As a mom, I have the power to co-create a strong foundation for my kids – giving them the emotional attention, wisdom-based guidance and compassion-filled focus to know they are loved and can live their dreams.”

From *To (M)others From the Hood: Conquering Fear, Uncertainty, Chaos and Division in Life's Most Difficult Hood*,

a memoir by Shannon McGuire

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Communities that are strong and adaptable thrive amid growth and change. Their fortitude is not a matter of their size, location or name; it is built through the hard work of their citizens' hands and hearts.

Many of those hands and hearts belong to mothers.

This report examines motherhood in Idaho, drawing on the perceptions and experiences of more than 4,000 Idahoans to illuminate the roles, experiences and needs of mothers that so often become overshadowed in conversations about resources and policy.

This report *revisits* the conceptualization of motherhood, *reveals* the lives and worlds of Idaho's mothers, and offers a blueprint for unifying communities – built by and through *reinvesting* in mothers.

Highlights:



Nearly three-quarters of Idaho mothers endorse that **“being a mother is the most important part of who [they are] as a person.”**



Nearly two in five mothers say they feel tired or burned out, and nearly half do not feel comfortable asking for more help or support in their day-to-day activities.



Idahoans are **nearly unanimous about the importance of mothers to their families**, and the majority view mothers as crucial in their communities.



Mothers who are satisfied with the quality and accessibility of resources in their communities are **more likely to feel that they have the support** they need to be good mothers.



Social support and community cohesion are critical to mothers' roles, as well as their overall wellbeing and life satisfaction.

BUILT WITH CARE: UNIFYING COMMUNITIES THROUGH MOTHERHOOD

EVERYONE EVERYWHERE HAS ONE THING IN COMMON: OUR LIVES ARE SHAPED BY MOTHERS.

Mothers include our family members, friends, neighbors and coworkers. They are everywhere, acting as a guiding light, a glue that binds family and friends, and a steadfast foundation that sustains so much of daily life in homes and neighborhoods across the globe. Whether we realize it or not, our world is profoundly influenced by mothers and all they do to build people, families and communities.

In so many ways, how we support the mothers of the world influences how we live today and how future generations will live tomorrow.

What if all mothers had the resources and support they need to be the best versions of themselves? What could the world be?

This is a dream that we have the power to manifest. It starts by taking the time to think about mothers intentionally – their roles, responsibilities and experiences – and listening to how mothers think and feel.

AND IT STARTS IN IDAHO.



Why Idaho?

Idaho exemplifies the changes that characterize so many places today. In recent years, Idaho has experienced the greatest population growth relative to its population of any state in the country. Most of this population growth is a result of migration from other U.S. states.¹ *Something*, or many somethings, is drawing people to Idaho.

However, population growth can strain even the strongest communities, and not just in terms of a proliferation of people. Migration is like a tide that rolls in, bringing with it new demographics, ideas, worldviews, cultures and ideologies. Communities in Idaho aren't just getting bigger – they are changing.

Change – and the progress that comes with it – can be refreshing. But it can also cause uncertainty or be unsettling, and this can lead to fear, tension and regression. The difference-maker is whether people confront or embrace change and the resources they have to do so. For these reasons, Idaho represents what many people face across the globe.

Gallup and Spark! Strategic Solutions² collaborated on this report to share the perceptions and experiences of Idahoans as they pertain to mothers' roles in their lives and communities, as well as the perspectives of Idahoan mothers themselves. Results are based on the Idaho Voices Survey, with responses from more than 4,000 Idaho residents, including more than 1,700 mothers, and the Idaho Voices interviews, which comprised in-depth interviews with 50 Idahoans³ (see appendix for more details). By focusing on the insights provided, we can all learn about building a stronger world – community by community.

Revisiting Motherhood

Although the term is used casually, there is a great deal of meaning in the word “mother,” much of which has nothing to do with bearing children. “Mother” is an idea as much as a title, and it carries many connotations and expectations.

The “mother” Idahoans see is a caregiver, guardian, creator and pillar of society. She is a community-maker as well as a homemaker. She plays a vital role in the day-to-day activities of her family, as well as local schools, services and the economy. As one Idahoan summarized, “Mothers just make the world go ‘round.’”

Above all, Idahoans credit mothers with the profound responsibility of maintaining the health and happiness of their families. The Idaho Voices Survey indicates near unanimity on the importance of mothers in children's upbringing and family functioning. Ninety-seven percent of Idahoans say mothers are “very” or “somewhat” important for supporting children's education and academic success, and 98% say the same of mothers' roles in overseeing children's health and wellbeing and teaching children values and morals.

1 Idaho is one of only seven states where domestic migration surpassed birth rates between 2020-2022; proportionally, Idaho is at the top of this list, with a level of domestic migration nearly twice that of reported births. Source: *Annual and cumulative estimates of the components of resident population change for the United States, regions, states, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2022*. [n.d.]. United States Census Bureau. Retrieved March 26, 2023, from <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/tables/2020-2022/state/totals/>

2 [Spark! Strategic Solutions](#) is a community development and leadership-coaching organization based in Boise, ID. For further context, see the Closing Statement section.

3 The Idaho Voices Survey sample comprised a representative sample of Idahoans that varied by demographic characteristics and geographic location within Idaho. Surveys and interviews included the perspectives of mothers and people who are not mothers.

Likewise, mothers are viewed as integral to the wellbeing of the family unit. Ninety-nine percent of Idahoans agree that mothers are very or somewhat important in creating a positive environment, and an overwhelming majority endorse mothers' importance in keeping daily routines running (89% say they are very or somewhat important) and upholding ties among extended family networks (87%).

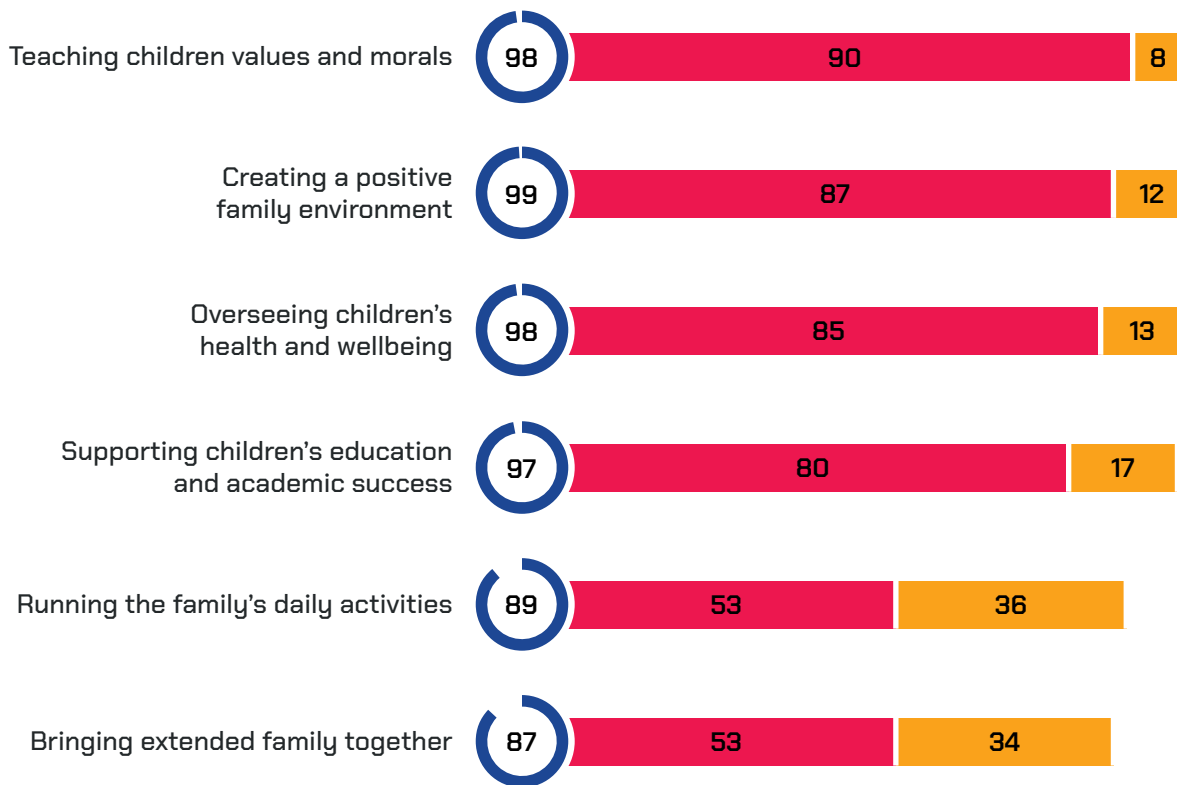
“The mother is a central point of a home.”
—Cindy B.

FIGURE 1

Idahoans' Perceptions of Mothers' Importance in Family Roles

In your opinion, are mothers important or not important for ...

■ % Very important ■ % Somewhat important ● % Very + Somewhat important



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to ±1%.

Yet, the purview of *motherhood* does not end at the doorstep. The proportion of Idahoans who believe that mothers are very or somewhat important for making neighborhoods safe (83%) is just as high as those who say mothers are very or somewhat important for housekeeping and homemaking roles (82%). Majorities of Idahoans also place a high degree of importance on mothers' roles in supporting schools and education systems (76% say they are very or somewhat important), organizing community gatherings and activities (69%) and contributing to public services (62%).

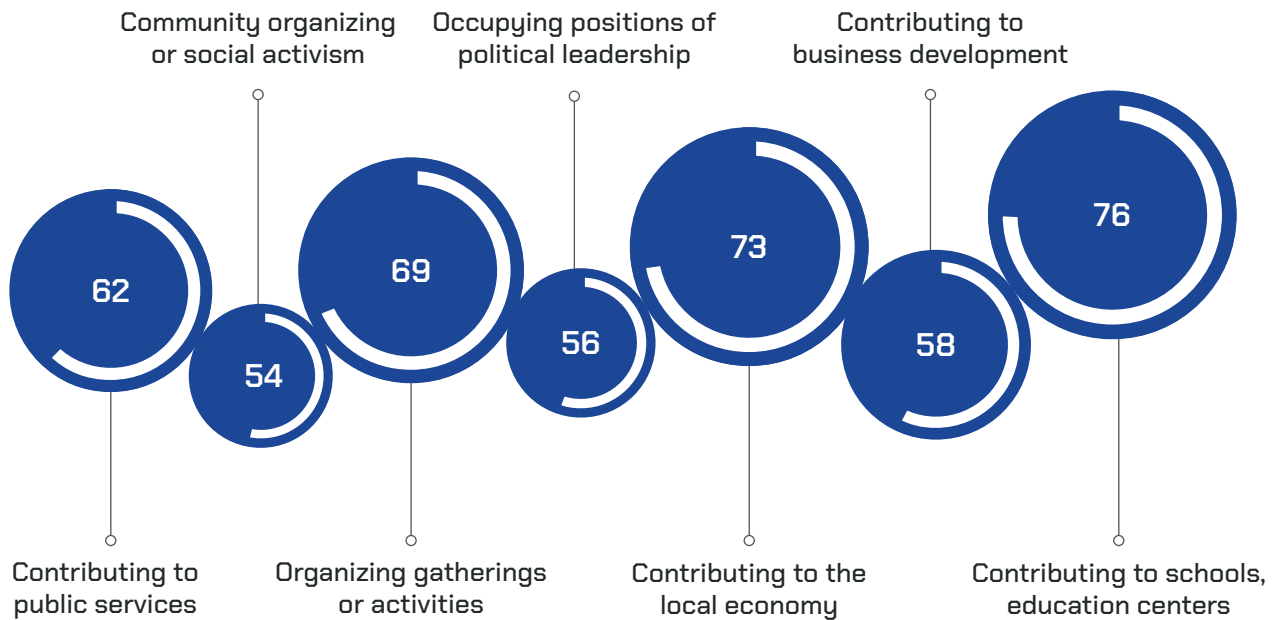
Idahoans see mothers as valuable to their workplaces, businesses and economies as well. Nearly six in 10 (58%) rate mothers' roles in business development⁴ as very or somewhat important, and nearly three-quarters (73%) say the same of mothers' contributions to the local economy. More than half of Idahoans also endorse the importance of mothers for community organizing or social activism (54%) and political leadership (56%).

So many facets of life in Idaho rely on mothers, and the value Idahoans place on the diverse roles mothers take on within their families and communities demonstrates what “motherhood” really means in Idaho: It is being the foundation for children’s lives and the axis around which family life rotates, but it is also about the many social, economic and political functions mothers take on within their communities. Motherhood is all these things, and all these things are motherhood.

FIGURE 2
Idahoans’ Perceptions of Mothers’ Importance in Communities

Mother is not just a position in the family. When it comes to their communities, Idahoans say mothers are important for ...

% Very + Somewhat important



⁴ The Idaho Voices Survey referred to “business development” generally, but common definitions of business development can include contributing to the operation of a family-owned or other type of business, starting a new business, or supporting others in starting or operating a business.

“[Mothers] are the core of the family. Their guidance is so important to the strength and the growth of any family.”

-Laura W.

“Moms are important for the values that a community grows up with. The mom is directly creating the values of the community.”

-M.D.

“Mothers are one of the biggest impactors of how a community does. If mothers are impacted negatively there, you can see the ripple effects within the community.”

-Christina V.

REVEALING MOTHERHOOD

Life as a mother is full of paradoxes: It is energizing yet exhausting, empowering yet defeating, draining yet restorative. The daily emotional experience of mothers is a clear reflection of this complexity.

When asked about the emotions they experienced the previous day, Idaho mothers report far more positive than negative ones. Eighty-four percent of mothers say they experienced happiness, and 72% experienced joy a lot of the day. Mothers also report feelings of gratitude (88%) and hopefulness (76%).

At the same time, approximately one in five mothers felt sadness a lot of the previous day, and a similar number of mothers say they felt anger (21%) or loneliness (17%). More than half of mothers report feeling stress (54%) a lot of the day.

DIVERSITY IN THE MOTHERHOOD EXPERIENCE. Not every mother experiences motherhood in the same way. This variability is particularly evident in the rate at which Idaho mothers report experiencing negative emotions – sadness, stress or anger – a lot of the previous day.

Higher Rates of Negative Emotions the Previous Day



Lower household incomes, especially under \$48,000 per year

Mothers who are divorced or are widows

Idahoan mothers with family histories in Idaho

Lower Rates of Negative Emotions the Previous Day



Higher household incomes, particularly over \$90,000 per year

Mothers who are currently married

First-generation-Idahoan mothers

The positive and negative emotions mothers experience are not mutually exclusive; mothers may experience seemingly conflicting emotions within a single day. Even among mothers who report experiencing happiness a lot of the previous day, 13% felt loneliness, 16% felt sadness, 17% felt anger, and half felt stress.

Mothers who experienced stress a lot of the previous day are far more likely to report experiencing other negative emotions: They are more than four times as likely to report feeling loneliness a lot of the day (6% among not-stressed mothers vs. 27% among stressed mothers); nearly seven times as likely to report feeling sadness a lot of the day (5% vs. 34%); and more than 18 times as likely to report feeling anger (2% vs. 37%).

Yet, a greater proportion of mothers who felt stress experienced more positive than negative emotions: 62% felt joy, 68% felt hopefulness, and 85% felt gratitude a lot of the previous day. Even among mothers who experienced sadness and anger a lot of the day, more than half still experienced joy and a majority experienced hopefulness and gratitude.

Why so many mixed emotions? Mothers do *a lot*, and their job description is both challenging and rewarding – often at the same time.

Mothers with children in the house spend a vast amount of time caring for them – even more than fathers with children in the house⁵ – and 30% of these mothers say they are responsible for at least one child who has a physical, mental or emotional condition that requires additional support or care. Nearly one in five mothers also report that they help care for someone else’s children, free of charge, at least 2-3 times per month.

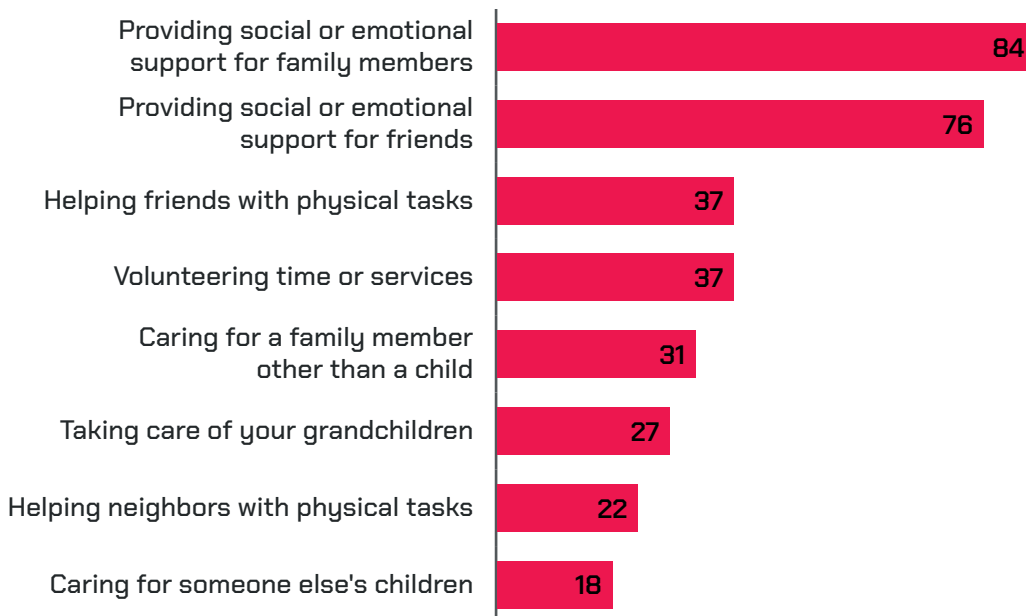
Mothers also regularly care for their grandchildren (27% report 2-3 times a month or more often) or other family members (31%), help neighbors (22%) and friends (37%), and perform volunteer work (37%). And even as they take all this on, mothers continue to offer social and emotional support to their friends and family members. Mothers are a sounding board when difficult decisions must be navigated; they are motivators in the face of adversity and inspirators in the wake of disappointment; they offer a warm hug, a wise word or a stern reminder that can sometimes make all the difference.

FIGURE 3

Mothers’ Engagement in Other Caretaking Activities

How often do you engage in the following activities?

% 2-3 times per month or more often



⁵ Idaho Voices Survey data indicate that 91% of mothers report caring for their children 5-7 times per week, compared to 80% of men with children in the household.

Notably, mothers are more likely to report engaging in many of these activities than those who are not mothers. For example, only 12% of Idahoans who are not mothers care for grandchildren, and 25% care for other family members at the same frequency. Mothers are also more likely to provide social and emotional support for family members than non-mothers (84% vs. 71%) and friends (76% vs. 61%) and to volunteer their time and services (37% vs. 32%).

Why do they do so much? In interviews, more than three-quarters of mothers expressed that they draw a sense of meaning and purpose from their children and families or from being a mom.

For many mothers, it is a defining feature of their identity: Nearly three-quarters of mothers in Idaho (74%) support the idea that “being a mother is the most important part of who I am as a person” is *mostly* or *very much* like them. Interviews with Idaho mothers reveal that their descriptions of themselves teem with references to their role as a mother and their love for their children or family.

“I’m a mom. Other than that, everything else is second.” – *Collette W.*

“The most meaning right now in my life is being a mom.” – *Theresa S.*



Mothers know they are important to their families and communities. In fact, they are more likely to rate mothers as “very important” for responsibilities than Idahoans who are not mothers.

FIGURE 4

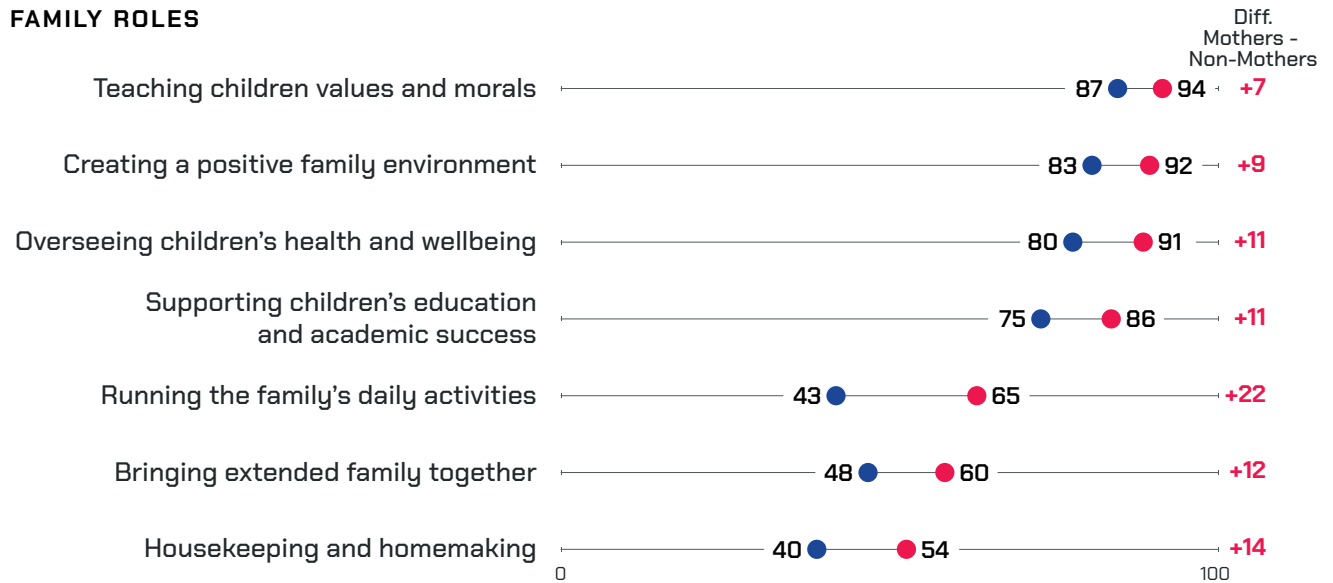
Perceptions of Mothers’ Importance Among Idaho Mothers vs. Non-Mothers

In your opinion, are mothers important or not important for ... ?

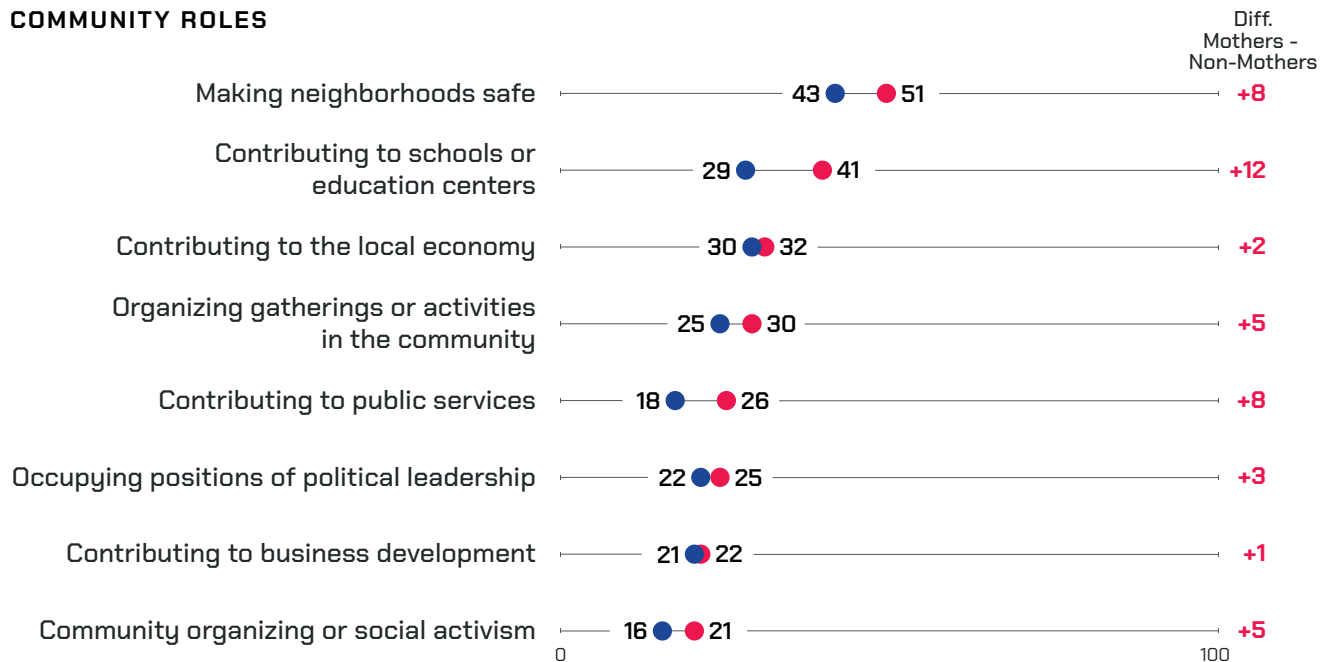
% Very important

● Mothers ● Non-mothers

FAMILY ROLES



COMMUNITY ROLES



Note: Due to rounding, differences may vary by ±1%.

The vast majority of mothers feel confident that this valuation is generally shared by those closest to them: 94% of mothers in Idaho agree or strongly agree that their family values their role as a mother, and 84% see this appreciation reflected by their community.

This sense of being seen and recognized enhances mothers' inner power. Most mothers in Idaho feel they know their strengths as a person (91% agree or strongly agree), but mothers who say their families and communities value them are more empowered to use those strengths in their everyday lives and feel more positive about who they are as people.

Among those who agree or strongly agree that their family values their role as a mother ...

Among those who agree or strongly agree that mothers are valued in their city ...

	% Agree or Strongly Agree	% Disagree or Strongly Disagree	Pct. Pt. Difference		% Agree or Strongly Agree	% Disagree or Strongly Disagree	Pct. Pt. Difference
I have the opportunity to use my strengths each day.	83	59	+22	I have the opportunity to use my strengths each day.	85	63	+22
I feel good about being who I am.	88	78	+10	I feel good about being who I am.	90	75	+15

IDAHO MOTHERS SPEAK ABOUT THEIR VIEWS ON THE ROLE OF MOTHERHOOD:

“Mothers are the ringleaders.”

— *Sherrille S.*

“Mothers are the glue in the family.”

— *Joyce*

“Moms make things happen; [we] create the gatherings and bring the family together.”

— *Theresa S.*

“They are the core of the family. Their guidance is so important to the strength and the growth of any family.”

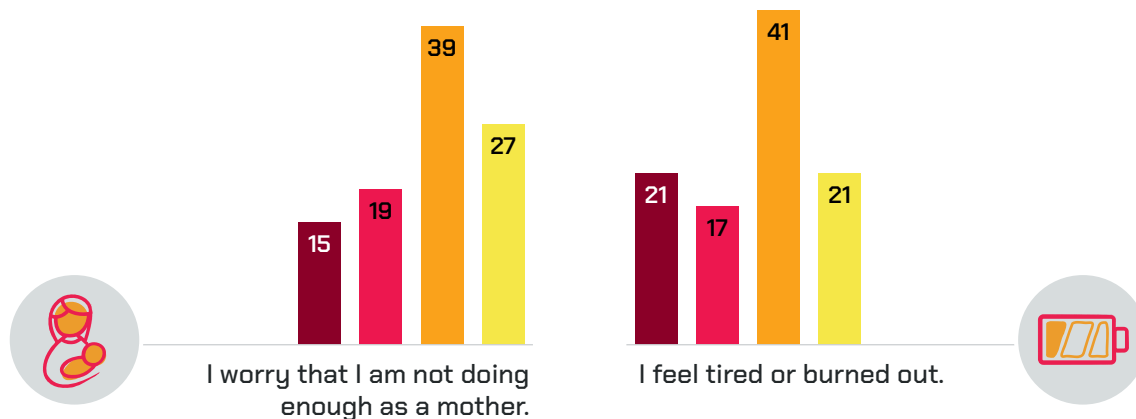
— *Laura W.*

And yet, mothers also feel the weight of their many roles and responsibilities. More than a third of mothers describe themselves (“mostly like me” or “very much like me”) as feeling tired or burned out (38%) or worried that they are not doing enough as a mother (35%). Four in 10 mothers say these descriptions sound at least “a little” like them (41% and 39%, respectively).

FIGURE 5

Feelings of Inadequacy or Burnout Among Idaho Mothers

■ % Very much like me ■ % Mostly like me ■ % A little like me ■ % Not at all like me



Only about a quarter of Idaho mothers say they are able to make time to take care of their physical [28%] or emotional [25%] wellbeing, and an equal number spend most of their days just struggling to get by [26%]. Mothers who feel this strain are twice as likely to report feeling stressed and four times as likely to feel sadness or anger a lot of the day. They are also less likely to report feeling happiness [26% less likely], joy [36% less likely] or hopefulness [25% less likely] and 75% less likely to have a high degree of overall life satisfaction (i.e., be “thriving”).

FAITH AND SPIRITUALITY ARE A SOURCE OF MEANING AND STRENGTH FOR MANY IDAHO MOTHERS. Approximately two-thirds of Idahoans agree or strongly agree that their faith or spirituality is a source of meaning that gets them through tough times, and those who are mothers are even more likely to feel this way [75% of mothers agree or strongly agree].

And it shows.⁶ Mothers who feel their faith or spirituality has a positive impact on their lives are less likely to report struggling through their days [24% vs. 33%] or feeling like they don’t belong [18% vs. 31%], and they are less likely to describe themselves as tired or burned out [33% vs. 53%]. They are also less likely to say they experienced sadness [19% vs. 27%] or anger [18% vs. 27%] a lot of the day yesterday and more likely to report feeling joy [76% vs. 61%] and hopefulness [80% vs. 64%].

Additionally, mothers who place meaning and importance in their faith or spirituality are more likely to make time to take care of their physical [77% vs. 58%] and emotional [79% vs. 61%] wellbeing and to have positive social experiences, such as seeing people work together toward common goals [77% vs. 62%] and treating one another with dignity and respect [72% vs. 59%].

⁶ Note: While the impact of agreeing or strongly agreeing that “faith or spirituality is a source of meaning that helps during tough times” is sometimes stronger among Idahoans who are mothers, all Idahoans who endorse this statement report lower levels of negative feelings, high levels of positive feelings, greater levels of self-care and several other positive benefits.

REINVESTING IN MOTHERHOOD

Most Idaho mothers agree that their role is valued by those around them. Feeling valued is critical, but it's not enough. For mothers to truly live up to their potential – for their sake and for everyone who depends on them – they need to be actively *supported* with real, tangible resources and opportunities.

More than eight in 10 Idahoans – and nearly nine in 10 mothers in Idaho – feel a mother's primary concern should be their family's needs. But 38% of Idaho mothers say their communities do not provide the support they need to be good mothers, and 44% say their communities do not provide the support they need for their own wellbeing. By not supporting mothers fully and effectively, Idahoans miss out on so much mothers have to offer.

But it's not just about missed opportunities. Leaving mothers to struggle is a risk to the wellbeing of Idaho's children, the safety of its neighborhoods, the social fabric of communities, and the education, healthcare and other services everyone depends on. Mothers should not have to struggle to fill their critical niche in their families and communities.

When mothers can cultivate their own wellbeing, they are more likely to spend time helping friends and neighbors. Mothers who feel more connected to and supported by others spend more time offering their hands, minds and hearts to those around them. When mothers are thriving, they are energized rather than burned out, and they give back to their communities more by volunteering their time and services.

Communities can boost this chain reaction by providing the resources, support systems and empowerment mothers need to be their best.

WHEN COMMUNITIES INVEST IN THEIR MOTHERS, EVERYONE WINS.

Think Globally, Act Locally. Reinvesting in motherhood may sound like a monumental feat, but massive global movements can be amassed one community at a time. The support and respect mothers receive in their families and communities is more impactful to their outlooks and wellbeing than how they perceive their place in society more broadly – which means starting close to home may be the best way to make an impact.



Putting All the Pieces in Place

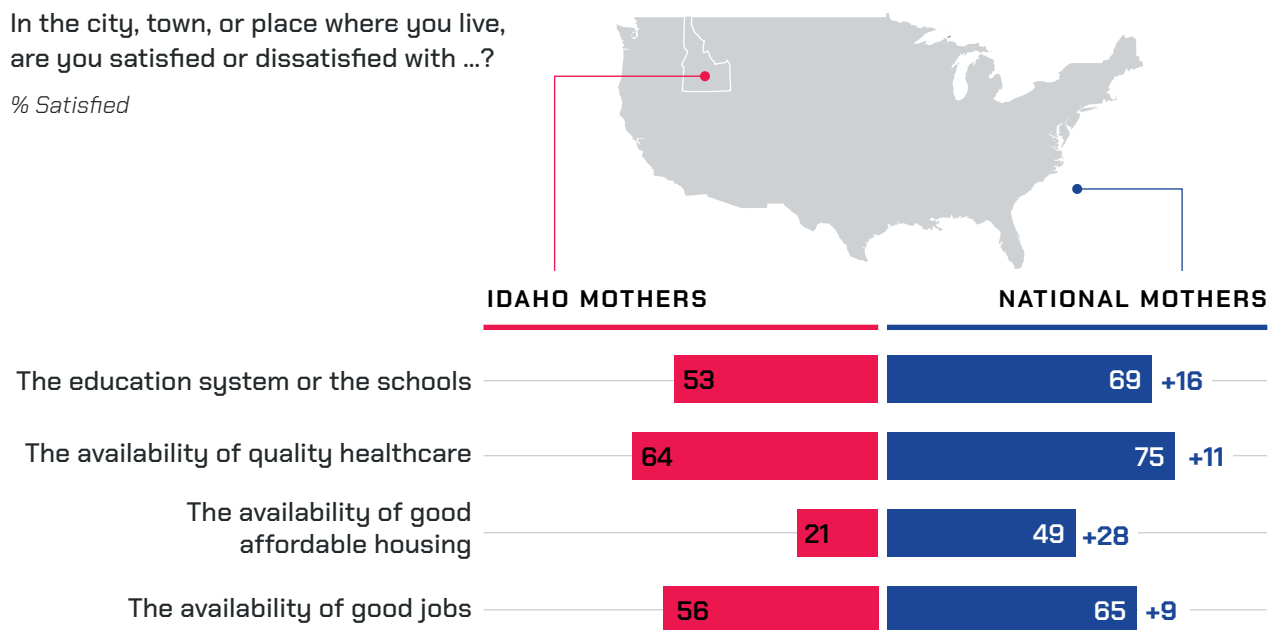
Mothers should be able to rely on their communities to provide the basic provisions for a life well-lived. Access to high-quality healthcare, good jobs, affordable housing and quality education are unquestionable necessities. Yet, Idaho communities seem to lag the national average in fulfilling these promises in the eyes of their residents. Notably, only half of Idahoans are satisfied with local schools or education systems, and only two in 10 are satisfied with good, affordable housing availability.

FIGURE 6

Mothers' Satisfaction With Key Community Resources

In the city, town, or place where you live, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with ...?

% Satisfied



Note: Due to rounding, differences may vary by $\pm 1\%$. National comparison data are derived from a nationally representative survey of U.S. respondents conducted by Gallup in July 2023.⁷

Overall, only 12% of mothers in Idaho are satisfied with all four of these resources in their communities – a smaller percentage than the proportion of mothers who are not satisfied with *any* (17%). Two-thirds of mothers are satisfied with half (two of the four) or less.

Levels of satisfaction with these resources are key differentiators in mothers' perceptions of the support their communities provide. When mothers are satisfied with at least three of these resources, 83% agree or strongly agree that mothers in their community have the support they need to be good mothers, and 80% agree or strongly agree that mothers in their community have the support they need for their own wellbeing. Conversely, when mothers are dissatisfied with at least three of these resources, perceptions of support for mothers plummet by at least 40 percentage points.

⁷ This Gallup national survey was selected as a comparison due to the similar content of the survey and close timing of the survey administration period with the Idaho Voices Survey.

Residents depend on their communities to support their health and wellbeing through more than jobs, houses, schools and doctors. Importantly, Idahoans are more likely than other Americans to say it is “very easy” to access healthy fresh foods and outdoor recreation opportunities.

However, Idahoans are less likely to report easy access to other vital resources. Compared to the national average, Idaho residents are three times as likely to say it is “very difficult” to access affordable child care where they live (33% vs. 11% nationally). Idahoans are also more than twice as likely to say it is “very difficult” to access high-quality healthcare (10% vs. 5% nationally) and mental health services (18% vs. 8% nationally).

Only 15% of Idaho mothers have “easy” or “very easy” access to all these resources – **mental health services, healthy foods, recreation, extracurriculars and child care** – that are so crucial to raising their children, supporting their families and communities, and protecting their personal wellbeing; nearly a third have easy or very easy access to two or fewer. Once again, these tangible supports have the power to make or break mothers’ perceptions that their communities have their needs in mind.

FIGURE 7

Mothers’ Perceptions of Access to Fresh Produce and Outdoor Recreation

How easy or difficult is it to access the following where you live?

% Very easy

■ Idaho mothers ■ National mothers

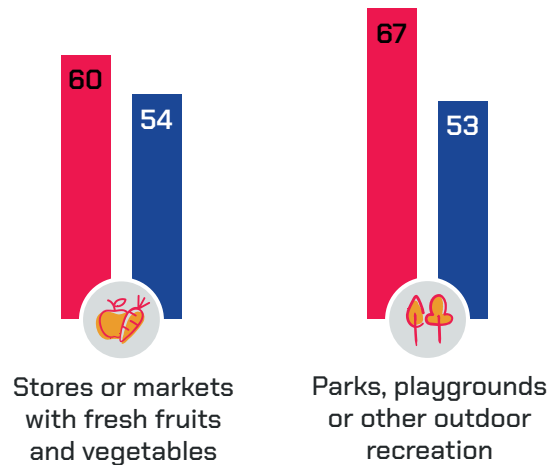


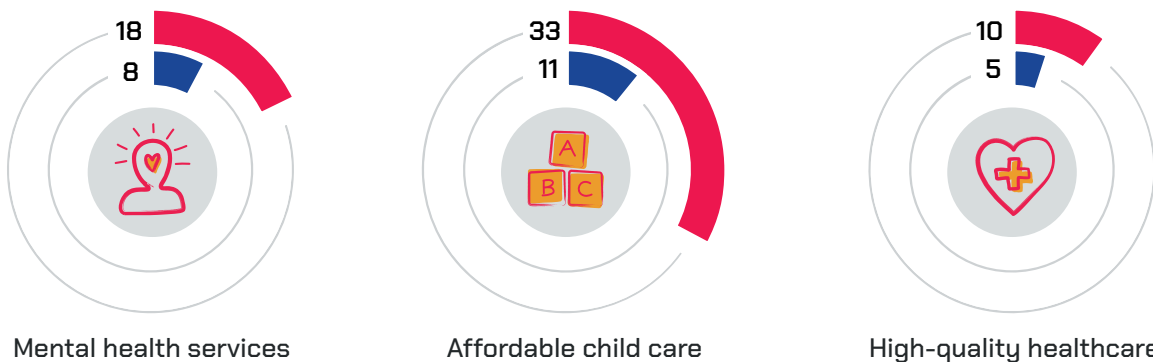
FIGURE 8

Accessibility of Healthcare and Child Care Among Idaho vs. National Mothers

How easy or difficult is it to access the following where you live?

% Very difficult

■ Idaho mothers ■ National mothers



Note: National comparison data are derived from a nationally representative survey of U.S. respondents conducted by Gallup in July 2023.

Does the Daily “Grind” HAVE to Be a Grind?

It is no secret that balancing job demands and motherhood is a challenge. In Idaho, mothers who work full time are more likely to say they wish they had more help (40%, vs. 31% of part-time working mothers and 28% of full-time homemakers), and half report feeling tired or burned out — a rate 32% higher than among homemakers and 41% higher than among part-time working mothers.

Many working mothers wish they had more time to spend with their families and friends, participate in their communities or do something for themselves. Only 16% of full-time working mothers in Idaho would want to work full time if money were not a factor, while just 2% of part-time working mothers and 4% of homemaker mothers would prefer to work full time.

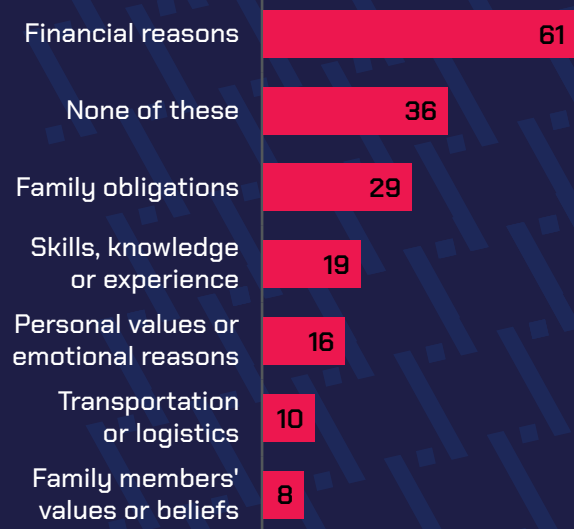
Part-time work is an attractive work-life blend to many Idaho mothers, and the flexibility and freedom to devote more time to things outside of work is a luxury many mothers in Idaho enjoy and value. Forty-one percent of full-time working mothers would prefer part-time work, and nearly one in five homemakers would rather work part-time. Forty-five percent of mothers who currently work part time say it is their ideal arrangement.

Mothers who are full-time homemakers are most likely to be satisfied with their current work arrangement, with 64% preferring their role as is. More than a quarter of full-time working moms (27%) and more than a third of part-time working moms (35%) would also prefer to stay at home as homemakers full time.

What’s stopping mothers from doing what they really want to do? It turns out that many of the most common barriers could be overcome by supporting mothers with more community resources, thereby giving them the agency to choose the solution that would allow them to maximize their contributions to their families and communities and safeguard their wellbeing in the process.

FIGURE 9
Barriers to Mothers’ Ideal Work Option

Which of the following, if any, are barriers to you in choosing this ideal option? Please select all that apply.



Addressing the dissatisfaction and inaccessibility Idahoans report regarding good jobs, affordable housing and affordable child care could help to mitigate the financial barriers and burden of family obligations many mothers experience.

Communities can also find ways to support mothers in acquiring jobs, skills and education. Considering the high value Idahoans place on their communities and helping one another, tapping into the spirit of volunteerism may provide avenues for community members to offer training, mentorship and other skill-building opportunities at little to no cost.

Galvanizing Social Supports

Some of the most important resources within a community are not services or institutions but its people. Community members depend on each other for many needs that are unseen but felt deeply: help and encouragement, advice and information, and empathy and compassion.

Community – i.e., a sense of being connected and supporting one another – is an important value in Idaho. Yet, when we examine the building blocks of social cohesion, it is clear that not everyone is encompassed within this ideal. Two in 10 Idaho mothers feel they do not have neighbors they can turn to for help. Three in 10 disagree or strongly disagree that people treat one another with respect, that they can trust people to do the right thing or that they can see people come together to work toward common goals. And nearly half say they feel they cannot express their opinions without fear or repercussions.

FIGURE 10

Mothers' Perceptions of Five Key Elements of Community Cohesion



Only 40% of Idaho mothers agree or strongly agree with all five statements about the cohesion of their communities, and 31% could only agree or strongly agree with two or fewer. Moreover, nearly three-quarters of mothers did not strongly agree with *any*.

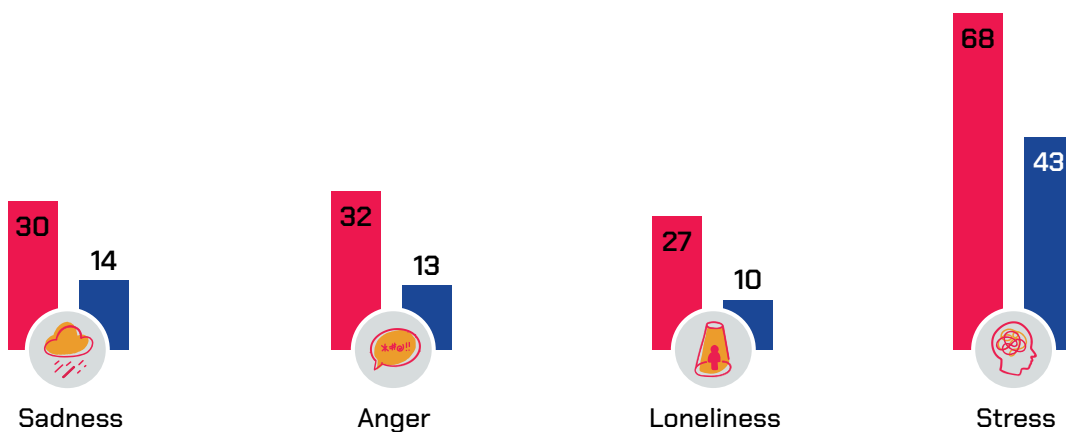
Mothers who live in communities with a high degree of social cohesion – i.e., they agree or strongly agree with four or five aspects of community – report substantially higher levels of life satisfaction than those in less cohesive communities (61% thriving vs. 35%, respectively) and are more likely to report experiencing positive emotions like happiness, joy and hopefulness in their daily lives.

Conversely, mothers who say their communities lack three or more of these critical elements of cohesion are more than twice as likely to report experiencing sadness or anger a lot of the day yesterday and nearly three times as likely to report experiencing loneliness. These mothers are also nearly three times as likely to say they spend their days struggling to get by.

FIGURE 11
Community Cohesion and Mothers' Reports of Negative Emotions

Percentage who experienced the following negative emotions a lot of the previous day among ...

- Mothers who agree/strongly agree to 3/5 or fewer elements of community cohesion
- Mothers who agree/strongly agree to 4/5 or 5/5 elements of community cohesion



When communities go through considerable change, it can disrupt the social systems and connections that bring people together and foster divisiveness, especially when those changes are unproductive or unequal. In Idaho, where recent changes are perceived as having generally benefited everyone, 72% of mothers report a high degree of community cohesion, but this rate is cut to only 44% where changes have only benefited some people and 32% where changes have generally benefited no one.

Mothers' own sense of social support and belonging is greatly impacted by the social constitution of the community as a whole: When mothers report a low degree of community cohesion, they are three times less likely to say they have a network of people they can rely on or feel a sense of belonging.

It is clear that the adage "it takes a village to raise a child" is just as much a statement on motherhood as it is about childrearing. Mothers need social ties.

Four Ways Social Ties Impact Motherhood

- 1 A strong social network and a sense of belonging are ingredients for **life satisfaction**.
- 2 Mothers whose social needs are met are half as likely to describe themselves as **tired or burned out**.
- 3 Mothers who feel they belong and have social circles they can rely on **feel better about being themselves**.
- 4 Mothers with strong social ties are less likely to report unmet needs for **help or support in their daily lives**.

Give Mothers a Voice – Then Listen and Act on It

Families and communities cannot afford to miss out on what mothers have to offer. But it is not just about what mothers *do*; what mothers think, feel and say is just as important.

Mothers have a unique vantage point in society because they are involved in so many aspects of communities and their family’s lives. As one resident commented, “Mothers have the pulse in Idaho.” Others also noted that mothers have distinctive and valuable perspectives, both because of how much they know and because they always have the best interest of their families at heart.

A quarter of mothers in Idaho strongly agree that they feel confident expressing their ideas, and another 58% agree. But one in five mothers does *not* feel confident expressing their ideas – which could mean that one-fifth of mothers’ good ideas are overlooked or never even heard.

Mothers who feel their communities value their role and provide the support they need feel more empowered to express their ideas; mothers who feel underappreciated or unsupported are nearly twice as likely to feel reticent about doing so.

Ideas are among people’s greatest personal assets, and when people feel their ideas are worth sharing, they feel good about themselves, recognized and valued, and emboldened to use their strengths. In many ways, listening to what people have to say unlocks their full potential. Notably, having the support and self-assurance to express ideas is even more impactful to mothers than other Idahoans.

“Mothers are how you know how a community is doing. They’ll talk to one another, share the information, and ensure that everybody in the community is cared for.”
-Nick H.

“I FEEL CONFIDENT IN EXPRESSING MY IDEAS.”

	Non-Mothers			Mothers		
	% Confident	% Not Confident	Pct. Pt. Difference	% Confident	% Not Confident	Pct. Pt. Difference
Life satisfaction [% thriving]	50	32	+18	56	26	+30
I feel good about being who I am	92	64	+28	95	54	+41
People recognize my strengths and value	91	66	+25	91	52	+39
Use strengths daily	84	56	+28	88	52	+36

Note: Due to rounding, differences may vary by ±1%.

Mothers draw strength and satisfaction from feeling they can share their thoughts and opinions with others. Mothers who feel confident expressing their ideas are more satisfied with their lives overall (by 30 percentage points). In their daily lives, these mothers are considerably more likely to feel a sense of hopefulness (by 22 percentage points) and are far less likely to feel sadness (by 21 percentage points), anger (by 20 percentage points) or loneliness (by 19 percentage points).

There are clear benefits to mothers when they can feel confident expressing their ideas, but whether communities benefit from their ideas depends on the willingness of others to listen, take to heart and act on what mothers choose to share.

ESPECIALLY WHEN MOTHERS ARE ASKING FOR HELP.

Nearly half of Idaho's mothers say they do not feel comfortable asking for more help or support in their day-to-day activities. When mothers are hesitant to ask for what they need, they are 54% more likely to have low (struggling or suffering) levels of life satisfaction and are much less likely to say they make time to take care of their own physical or emotional wellbeing.

FIGURE 12

Impact of Feeling Comfortable Asking for Help on Mother's Likelihood of Practicing Self-Care

- % Agree or strongly agree
- % Disagree or strongly disagree

I MAKE TIME TO TAKE CARE OF MY PHYSICAL WELLBEING.



I MAKE TIME TO TAKE CARE OF MY EMOTIONAL WELLBEING.



Even more concerning, 81% of mothers who wish they had more help or support in their daily lives do not feel comfortable asking for it. These mothers struggle the most with their roles: Half worry they aren't doing enough as a mother, feel tired or burned out, or say they spend their days struggling to get by.

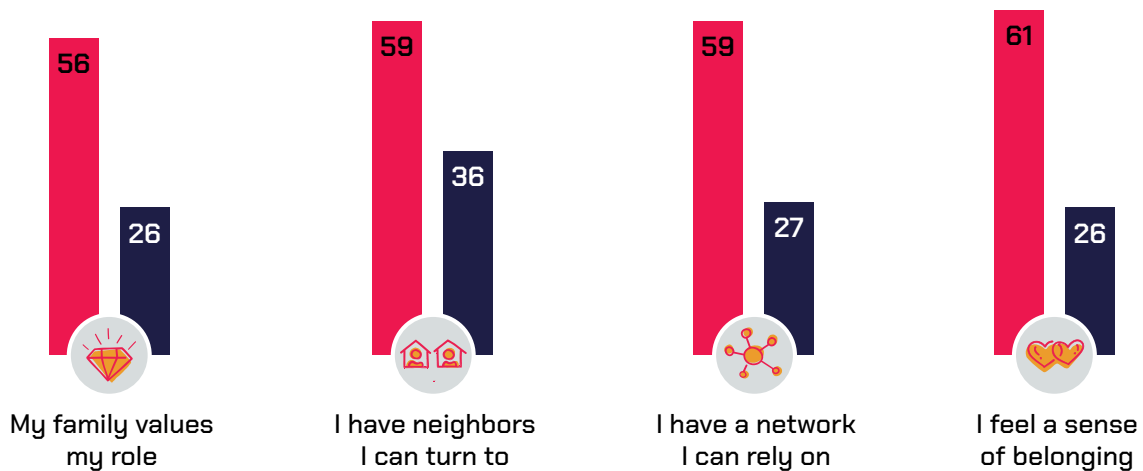
Mothers take on a lot and feel a high degree of responsibility for all that they do. As a result, asking for help or support can be a daunting task. Mothers with good support systems – families who value them, a network they can rely on, neighbors they can turn to – are more likely to feel comfortable asking for help.

FIGURE 13

Impact of Social Support on Mothers' Comfortability Asking for Help

Percentage of mothers who feel comfortable asking for help or support among those who ...

■ Agree or strongly agree ■ Disagree or strongly disagree



Safeguarding that all mothers feel justified, encouraged and secure in asking for the help or support they need is critical to helping ensure that mothers can be at their best. And when they do, people have a duty to make sure that request is honored – just as mothers go above and beyond to help others every day.

However, that does not mean we should wait for mothers to ask for help. The families and communities who depend so much on their mothers have every ability to band together to support and reinforce them, make sure mothers have what they need and offer to share the load. Sometimes, even a little relief can go a long way.

CONCLUSION

It's nearly impossible to imagine a thriving community without its mothers – they nurture the next generation and keep our schools and healthcare systems running. Mothers tie together the branches of family trees and weave a tight web of community around us. Mothers are the backbone of their families and communities.

The insights shared in this report present a deeper look into motherhood in Idaho and are pertinent well beyond its borders.

In a world that is changing, diverging and, at times, discordant, the role and importance of mothers is something that bonds us. It transcends differences and divides. We all benefit from the families and communities that mothers shape.

It is time that communities are built with mothers in mind – and at heart. Communities that invest in and reinforce the strengths of mothers will surely be the strongest communities of all.

Report Summary:

Revisiting Motherhood. Motherhood is more than a title or matter of biology; it is a critical role in families and communities.

Revealing Motherhood. Motherhood is wonderful, gratifying and difficult.

Reinvesting in Motherhood. Communities, family members, neighbors and friends are all vital sources of support and reinforcement for mothers – whether those mothers are their own flesh and blood, spouses, neighbors, teachers, lawyers, postal workers or yoga pals.



Above all else, I'm a mom - in Idaho.

As a mother of four children (and a grandma of one), I understand the importance of motherhood. While I hold many titles in my day-to-day life – *entrepreneur, strategist, speaker, mentor, coach, community leader, changemaker* – being a mom is the most valuable role I play. It's the position that has helped me build connections, consensus and collaboration to advance community wellbeing in our nation.

Since 2010, I've led decision-makers in business, government and philanthropic organizations as they co-create plans and partnerships that improve the health of our communities. I've facilitated and attended countless conversations about the best solutions to create positive community change. We've discussed the wisest and most leverageable investments and where they should occur in health, education and economic development. During those discussions, moms were at the table but not on the agenda. The mother and motherhood perspectives were missing.

Hindsight will always be 20-20. The pandemic was a challenge for us all – especially moms. We stood battling on the front lines to defend our families. We made it through. Now, it's time for us to *reclaim* and *redefine* what it means to be mothers in today's world.

The foundation of this report was born from my mom heart. At its core, it's designed to spark conversations about the power of mothers and what we can learn from their strengths, challenges and aspirations. The data are designed to enhance conversations by centering the motherhood experience in community decision-making – starting with Idaho, my home. I want to help it keep that something special, and I believe this can be done by investing in our mothers' wellbeing for the community's betterment.

By understanding and supporting moms like me, we activate more caring bridge-builders. Those who feel a sense of belonging and connection to their community. Those ready to extend compassion and kindness to others. Those working to increase access to community capital to support their family's and neighbors' wellbeing. Those who recognize their personal power and opportunity to help improve humanity.

It is my hope that this report sparks a movement to build a more caring world where eight billion people live more days feeling good about being themselves. To live in that world, I know it must start with me. It must start with my home. It must start with our mothers.

TOGETHER IN UNITY,

Shannon McGuire

Mom of Four

Chief Empowerment Officer: Spark! Strategic Solutions

Founder: Supreme Moms and Project BB Foundation



JOIN OUR MOVEMENT!

APPENDIX

Idaho Voices Survey. All survey data pertaining to Idaho residents (including Idaho mothers) reflects findings from the Idaho Voices Survey, completed by 4,088 Idaho residents aged 18 and older between Aug. 22, 2023, and Oct. 17, 2023. Of these respondents, 1,753 identified themselves as mothers.

This survey was conducted in English. Respondents were recruited through address-based sampling techniques. Initial recruitment was conducted by mail, but respondents were given the option to complete the survey through a mail survey or by web survey. The web survey was accessible through a survey weblink or by scanning a QR code.

Gallup weighted all data to ensure samples are demographically representative of the adult population in the state of Idaho using the most recent Current Population Survey figures. For results based on this sample, the maximum margin of sampling error, which takes into account the design effect from weighting, is ± 2.2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Margins of error for subgroups are higher. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

Idaho Voices Interviews. This report includes references to findings or themes from interviews with Idahoans and includes several direct quotes from Idaho residents. These are derived from a qualitative research study conducted by Gallup in partnership with Spark! Strategic Solutions in October-December 2022. Gallup researchers conducted 50 30-minute in-depth interviews with Idaho residents. All respondents were members of the Gallup Panel™ who currently reside in Idaho. Interviews were conducted by trained Gallup researchers who used a semi-structured interview guide to ask questions about Idahoans' experiences, perceptions and opinions.

The sample for the in-depth interviews comprised 20 respondents from the Treasure Valley region of Idaho and 26 respondents from other geographic regions throughout the state; four did not report geographic information. Respondents included 17 mothers and six women who were not mothers. Of the men who participated, eight reported having children in their household, and 17 reported having no children. Respondents ranged from 28 to 83 years of age.

National Comparison Data. In this report, any comparisons made to national (U.S.) data refer to results of a nationally representative Gallup web study completed by 12,684 U.S. adults aged 18 and older, July 26-Aug. 10, 2023. The survey was conducted in English. This study did not cover individuals without internet access. The Gallup Panel recruited 6,663 respondents for the study and supplemented them with 6,051 respondents from a third-party sample provider.

The Gallup Panel is a probability-based panel of U.S. adults whom Gallup selects using address-based sampling methods and random-digit-dial phone interviews that cover landlines and cell phones. Demographic targets were specified for the third-party sample provider to improve representativeness of the sample. Gallup uses a multistage weighting process to ensure samples are demographically representative of the U.S. adult population using the most recent Current Population Survey figures; this process includes weighting Black, Hispanic and White respondents separately for each sample source before combining the sample.

For results based on this sample, the maximum margin of sampling error, which takes into account the design effect from weighting, is ± 1.7 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Margins of error for subgroups are higher. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

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