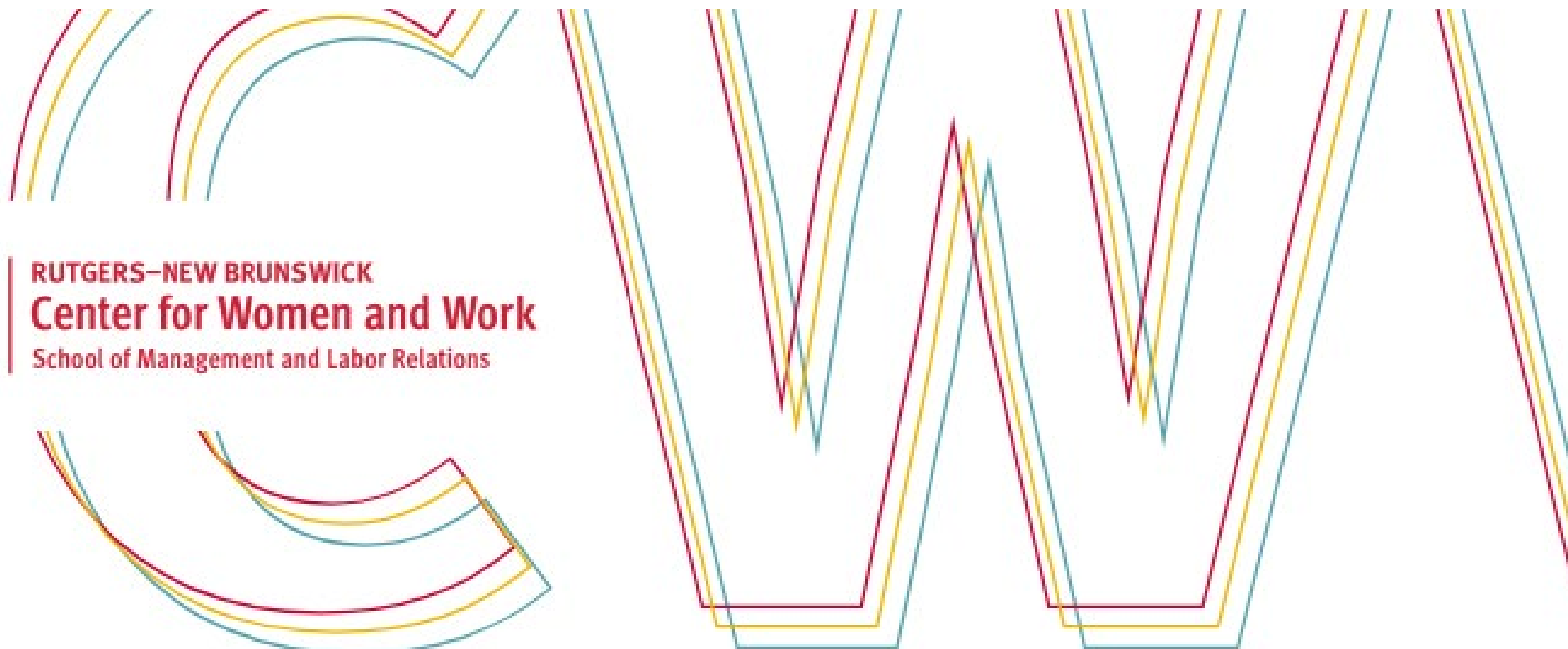




RUTGERS-NEW BRUNSWICK  
**Center for Women and Work**  
School of Management and Labor Relations



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THE MOTHERHOOD PENALTY  
BECKY LOGUE-CONROY, MSW, PHD  
ACNJ LUNCH AND LEARN

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# WHAT IS THE MOTHERHOOD PENALTY?

- Penalty experienced by working mothers that leads to lower wages and slower career advancement compared to women without children, and relative to men regardless of parenthood status.
- New Jersey
  - All workers – mothers earn 60% of what fathers earn (\$35,000)
  - Full-time workers – mothers earn about 72% of what fathers earn (\$27,000)

# WHAT COULD BE THE CAUSES OF THE MOTHERHOOD PENALTY?

Leave Taken at  
Childbirth

Increased  
Child Care  
Prior to School

Workplace  
Perception

Change in  
Occupation

Occupational  
Segregation

Change in  
Work Hours

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# MOTHERHOOD PENALTY IN THE US - THEORIES

## Individual or Family

Preference  
Extended Absences  
Part-time work  
Division of Labor

## Workplace

Access to Flexibility  
Expectations of the “Ideal Worker”  
Hiring or Promotion Practices

## Policy

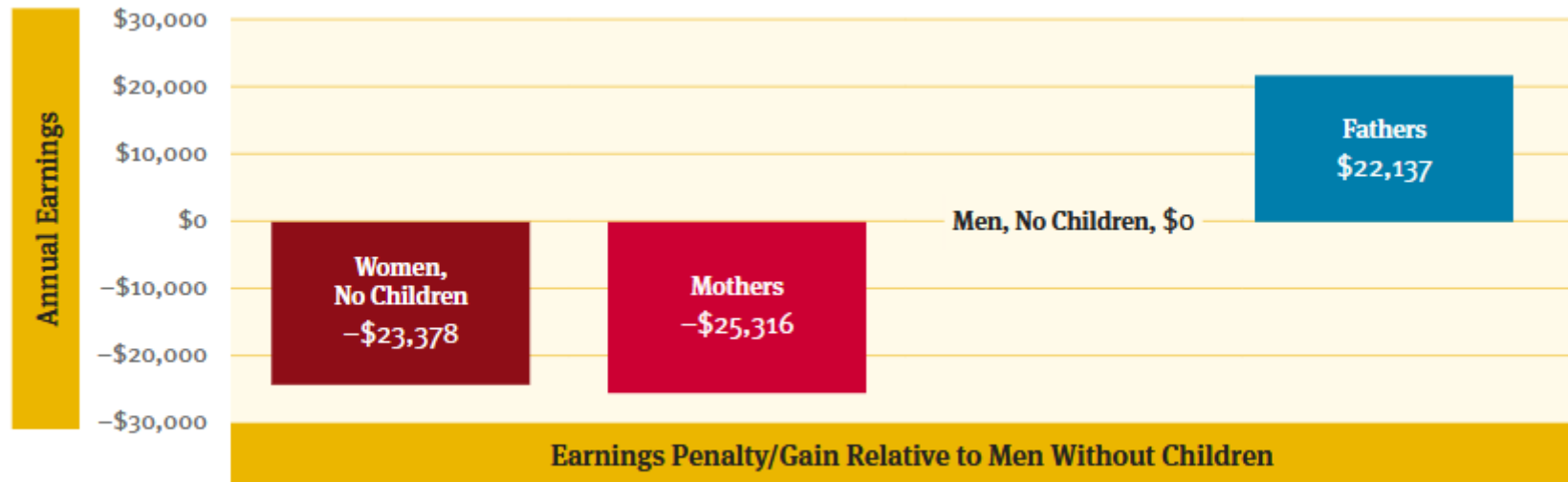
Paid Leave  
Child Care Access

**NEW JERSEY**



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# NEW JERSEY'S MOTHERHOOD PENALTY



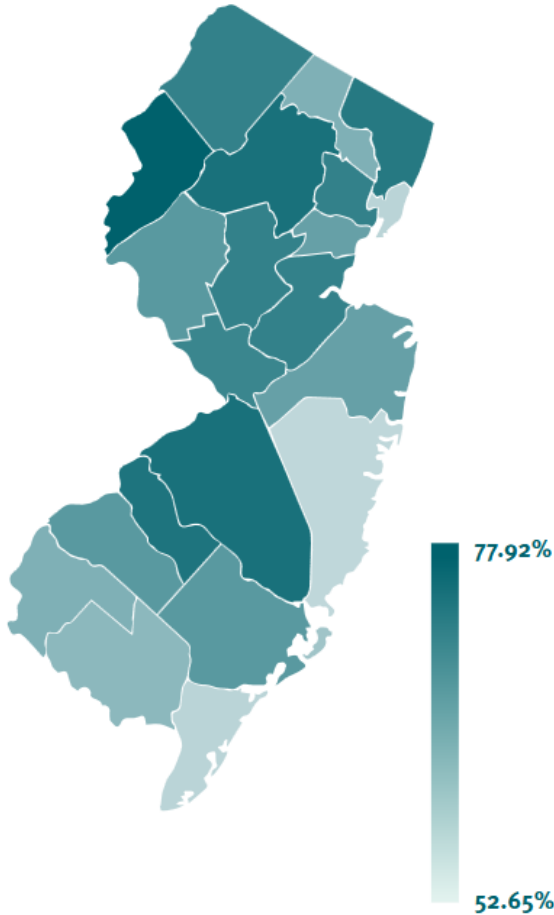
Source: CWW analysis of 2018–2022 American Community Survey microdata.

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# LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION OF PARENTS

**FIGURE 9.** Percent of children living with both parents, with all available parents in the labor force



Source: CWW analysis of 2018–2022 American Community Survey.

# MOTHERHOOD PENALTY BY COUNTY

## Highest Penalty

- Monmouth County
- Hunterdon County
- Sussex County

## Lowest Penalty

- Essex County
- Passaic County
- Union County

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# POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS? INDIVIDUAL VERSUS STRUCTURAL

## Individual

- Paternity Leave
- Length of Absence
- Choice of Occupation
- Division of Household Labor

## Structural

- Incentivize men
  - Change Company Culture
  - Leave Policies
  - Child Care Policies
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# SUMMARY

Causes

Solutions

Complexity

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# REFERENCES

de Linde Leonard, M. and Stanley, T.D. (2020), The Wages of Mothers' Labor: A Meta-Regression Analysis. *J. Marriage Fam*, 82: 1534-1552. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12693>

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