

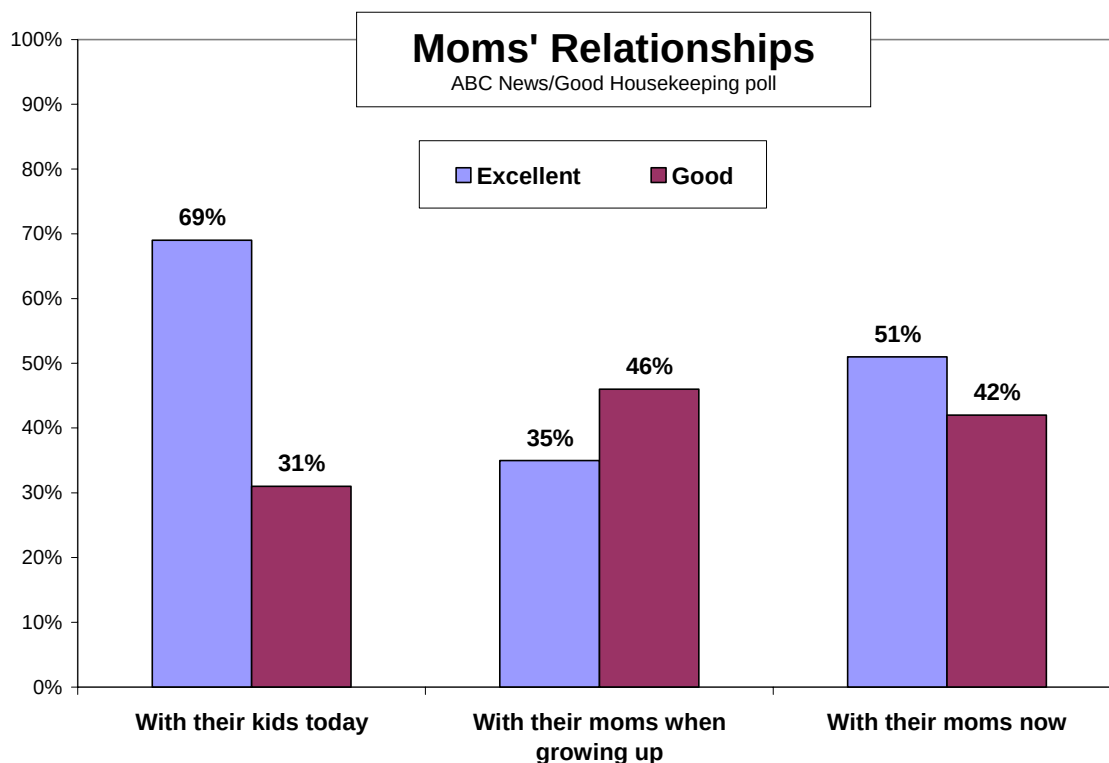
Work, Worry and Accomplishment Define Mothering in America, 2006

Motherhood is no easy job: Six in 10 moms worry about it. Half sometimes feel guilty that they're not better at it. Most say they're good but not great at it. Seven in 10 say it's harder now than it was a generation ago.

And then the kids hit their teens, and things get really tough.

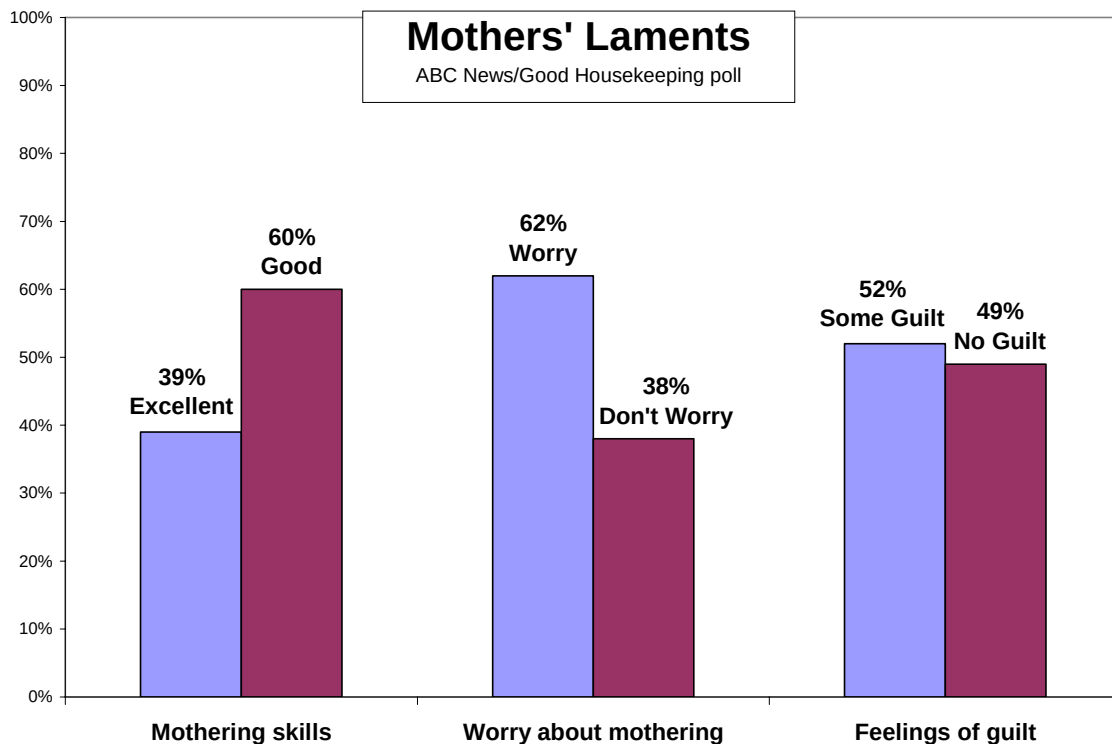
And oh, for a little more time: Six in 10 moms with kids under 18 hold down paying jobs, yet traditional social norms persist: Eighty-five percent still also maintain primary child-care responsibilities in the family. Make that two jobs, then.

Yet there's joy in mothering, and deep rewards: Seven in 10 mothers in this ABC News Good Morning America/Good Housekeeping poll report an excellent relationship with their children, twice as many as got along that well with their own mothers when they were growing up. Compared with their mothers, most moms today say they're more involved in their kids' lives. And while overindulgence is up, most moms by far also say they're maintaining at least as much discipline as their own mothers did.



Another result undermines the myth that working moms have more guilt; instead the survey finds that working mothers – even those on a career track – are no more apt than at-home moms to feel guilty about not always being a good enough mother. They’re also as confident of their child-rearing skills, and get along with their kids as well.

Lack of time with the kids is far and away the greatest cause of parental guilt among working moms. At-home mothers are more apt to cite other causes, such as discipline problems or a lack of money.



RELATIONSHIPS – One fundamental finding of this national, random-sample survey is that strong relationships carry on across generations. Women who grew up with a strong relationship with their mothers are far more likely to have the same kind of relationship with their kids, indeed it’s the strongest single factor in predicting such relationships.

The numbers are striking: Among women who had an excellent relationship with their mothers, 91 percent now report an excellent relationship with their own children. In contrast, women whose childhood relationship with their mothers was “good” rather than excellent are 35 points less likely to have the strongest relationship with their kids. It’s by no means the sole component of successful mothering – but there is a clear connection between strong intergenerational mother-child relationships.

HARD WORK and MOMMY GUILT – All told, 72 percent of mothers think raising kids is harder today than it was when they were children. And it brings agita: Sixty-two

percent sometimes worry about not being as good a mother as they'd like to be, especially younger and less confident moms, and those with more kids.

Worry extends to guilt for about half of mothers, 52 percent. A strong factor here is the number of kids, presumably because of the divided attention they require. Among mothers with one child, 44 percent sometimes feel guilty about their shortcomings as a mom. Among those with two kids, it's 52 percent; three or more children, 63 percent.

Sometimes feel guilty		
1 child	2 children	3+ children
44%	52%	63%

Verbatim answers on what causes mothers guilt show the range of yearnings, conflicts and pressures in child-rearing. "I worry if they are getting the best education possible, and if I know everything that can put them on the right path," said a 46-year-old mother of two, ages 13 and 14, in Idaho. While one mom said she's "too strict," a 33-year-old Californian with four kids has the opposite discipline problem: "You have to be firm and kids think it's a joke. Especially with a 15-year-old male."

"Lack of consistency" causes guilt in one mother; for a working mom with a 12-year-old in Florida, it's "not being home after school"; for a 37-year-old mom in New Jersey, "not doing as many cultural things with my son as I should." For a 31-year-old mother of four in Tennessee, guilt comes from a lack of "spiritual time, not going to church only, but at home." For another, it's that "he's bored, and I don't know what to do."

Some answers are poignant. Guilt for a 30-year-old mother of four in Washington state comes from "seeing your child hurt and there's nothing you can do to help them." For a 52-year-old in California, speaking of her 16-year-old daughter, it was "not seeing her as a separate person soon enough." For a 42-year-old mother of twins in Massachusetts, guilt comes from the desire "that I don't crush their spirit." A 32-year-old Texan with a 12-year-old expressed her guilt in a single word: "Divorce."

All these make other sources of guilt look simpler to deal with, such as this, for a 44-year-old mother of two in Indiana: "Not being a good cook." Quick, call Rachael Ray.

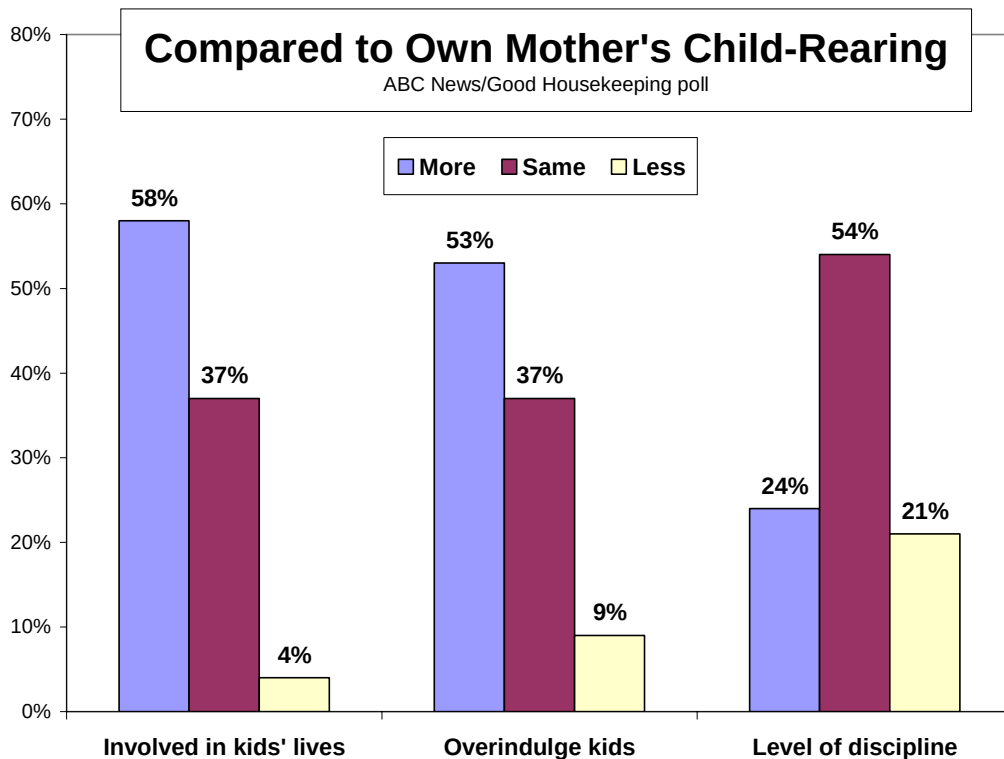
MORE PRESSURES – Another pressure on moms is the role of being primary caregivers. As noted, 85 percent say they shoulder the main child-care responsibilities in their household. Even among career women, 76 percent have the main child-care duties; that rises to 93 percent of at-home moms.

A quarter of moms face special pressures: they're single parents. Seventy-six percent are either married or living with a partner, but 14 percent of today's moms are divorced or separated and nine percent never married. There's a huge racial difference: Eighty-three percent of white moms are married or living with a partner, compared with just half of non-white moms.

Single moms rate their parenting skills and relationship with their children about the same as those in relationships. But singles have more intense worries: Twenty-eight percent of single moms worry “a great deal” about not being as good mothers as they’d like to be, compared with 19 percent of married moms.

Recognizing their challenges may be one source of modesty in mothers. Most say they’re good mothers (60 percent) rather than excellent ones (39 percent). “Excellent” self-ratings peak among moms who have fewer worries, no guilt, only one child, and, again, those who had an excellent relationship with their own mothers.

EFFORT – Despite the difficulties – or maybe fueling them – today’s moms expend a high level of effort. Fifty-eight percent feel they’re more involved in their children’s lives than their mothers were in theirs, including majorities of working and at-home moms alike.



Overindulgence is more of an issue – 53 percent of moms (particularly working moms) say they do more than their mothers did in terms of spoiling or overindulging their kids. Fewer, though, have moved the bar on discipline: A fifth of today’s moms say they go easier on discipline than their own mothers did, but the vast majority – 78 percent – say they apply the same level of discipline, or more.

THE TERRIBLE TEENS – For all the effort, a key factor in getting along with the kids is something no one can control: their age. Teens are tough: Among moms with only pre-

teen kids, 76 percent report an excellent relationship with their children. Among those with teen-agers, though, far fewer – 57 percent – say the relationship is an excellent one.

“Excellent” relationship with the kids	
Pre-teens	Teen-agers
76%	57%

Maintaining discipline is one issue with teens. Mothers of infants and toddlers are most apt to be more strict than their parents were – 33 percent say so. But that drops off as the kids age, and by the time they hit their teens it’s fallen by half, to 16 percent.

Similarly, mothers of teen-agers are the most likely to say being a mom now is harder than it was when they were kids. But some of them, of course, could just be forgetting their own teen years.

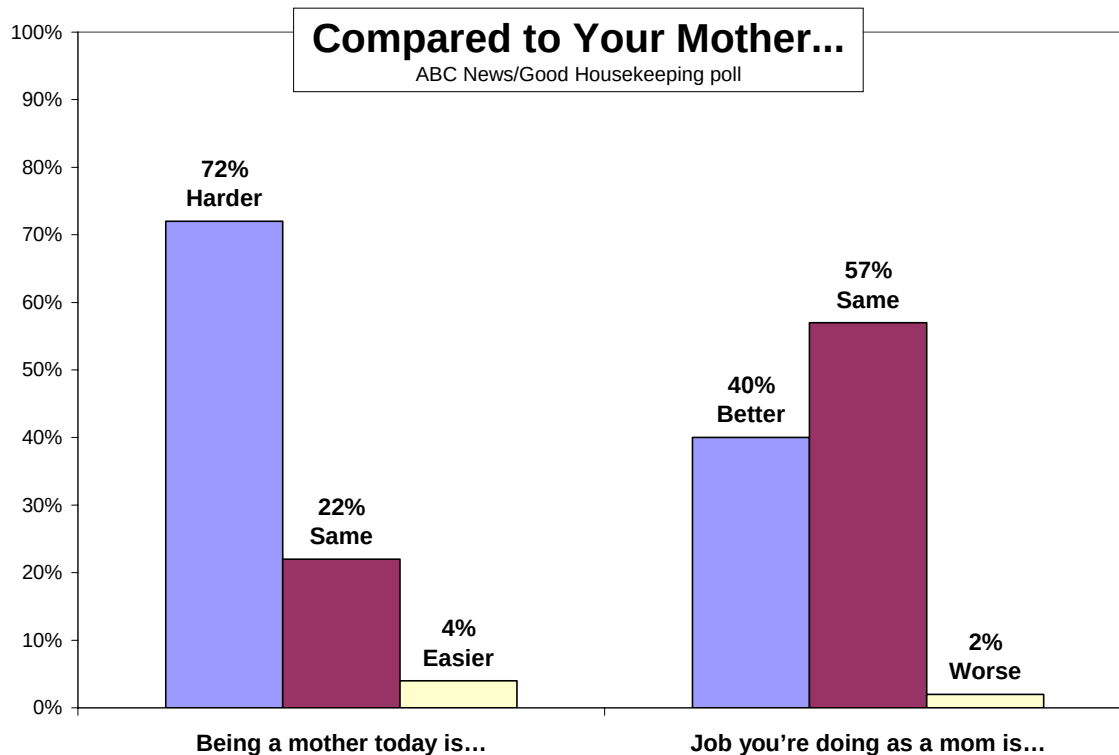
THE TERRIFIC TODDLERS – If teens occupy the more difficult side of the child-raising spectrum, infants and toddlers represent more pure fun. Mothers with kids age five and under are much more apt than moms with older children to rate their relationship with their kids as excellent, and much less likely to say being a mom is harder today than it was when they were growing up.

Among moms all of whose kids are five or under, 84 percent say the relationship is excellent; among those whose kids are all six or older, it’s a much lower 64 percent (as noted, bottoming out at 57 percent among those with teens). And while 58 percent of moms with little ones say it’s harder now to be a mother, that compares with 76 percent of moms whose kids are all older than six (peaking at 81 percent of moms with teens).

“Mothering is harder today”		
Kids age 0-5	Kids 6+	Teens
58%	76%	81%

MOTHER KNOWS BEST? – Although most of today’s moms see themselves as closer with their kids – more involved in their lives and more apt to have an excellent relationship – many hesitate to claim superior skills to their own mothers’. Plenty do – 40 percent say they’re doing a better job raising their kids than their mothers did. But many more, 57 percent, say they’re performing about the same. (Hardly any say they’re doing a worse job.)

Child-rearing styles inform this view. Among moms who are more strict than their mothers were, 59 percent say they’re doing a better child-rearing job overall. And among those who say they’re more involved in their kids’ lives, similarly, 56 percent say they’re doing better overall.



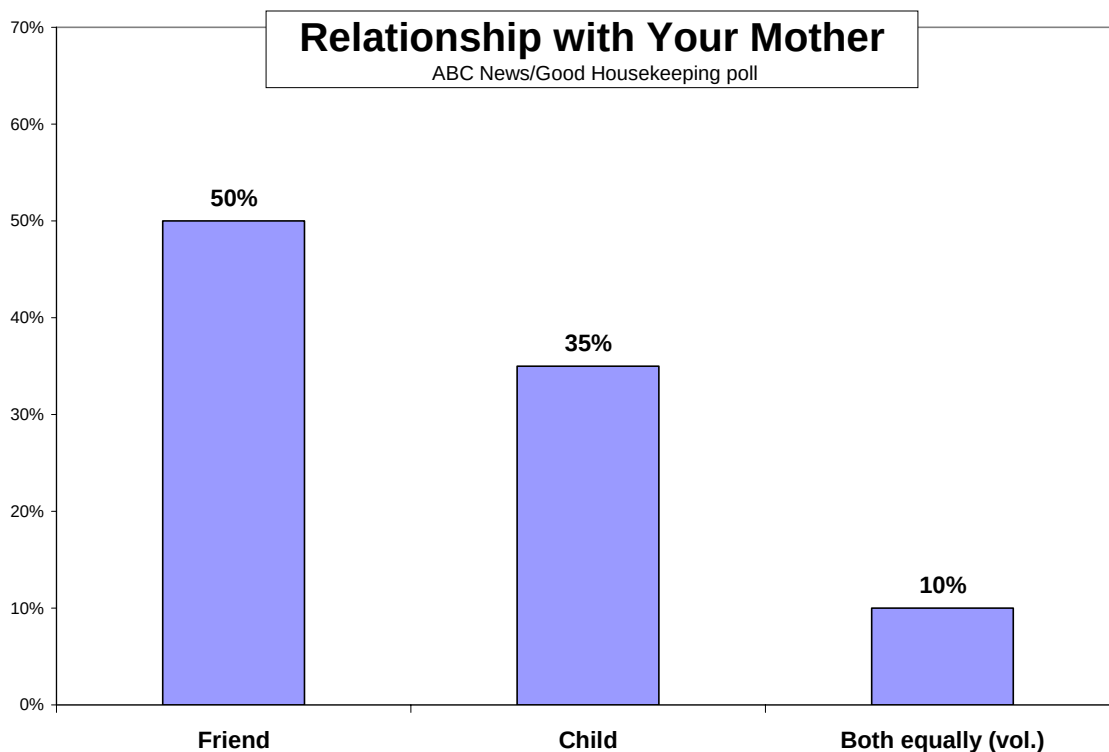
This judgment also is one place where work plays a role. At-home mothers are more apt to say they're doing a better job than their own mothers did; 47 percent say so, slipping to 34 percent of all working moms, and 29 percent of career-track moms. (It's worth noting that work for moms is nothing new: While 61 percent work for pay, as many, 59 percent, say they own mothers worked outside the home when they were growing up.)

OWN MOMS – All these views feed into moms' relationships with their own mothers, an area in which the word "complex" might work. Just 35 percent of moms say they had an excellent relationship with their own mothers when growing up. It's better now – 51 percent say their current relationship with their mother is excellent. But, as noted, many more moms, 69 percent, say they have an excellent relationship with their kids. (What the kids themselves say is for another survey.)

One aspect of that changing relationship is that today's moms are more apt to think of their own mothers as friends than as mothers, 50 percent to 35 percent. That looks to be a healthy thing: Women who had an excellent relationship with their mothers while growing up, and especially those who have an excellent relationship with their mothers now, are most likely to think of them mainly as friends.

Still, as important as it is, a great relationship in childhood is not a prerequisite for a great mother-daughter relationship in later life. Among women who had an excellent relationship with their mother while growing up, 86 percent still have an excellent relationship with their mothers now. Still, among those whose relationship growing up

was just “good,” 40 percent have improved that to an excellent relationship now – many fewer to be sure, but still a substantial number.



GIFT OF GAB – Intergenerational relationships among mothers are, among other things, sufficient to keep plenty of phone companies profitable. Eighty-three percent of moms with kids at home talk with their own mothers at least weekly, including 37 percent who do so once or more a day, and an additional 31 percent who talk with their mothers a few times a week.

What do they talk about? Six in 10 moms turn to their mothers for advice about life in general; 53 percent, for parenting advice. Fewer, 33 percent, ask their mothers for advice about marriage or partnerships; doing so is much more common among younger moms, who may still be working out the kinks.

Advice does flow, unasked, in the other direction: Sixty percent say their mothers sometimes give them unsolicited parenting advice. Surprisingly, slightly more call that helpful (46 percent) than call it annoying (38 percent). Younger moms, and those with younger kids, are more apt to see it as helpful; at-home moms are most apt to say it bugs them.

EGADS – A final result, like some others in this survey, turns conventional wisdom on its head. A minority of mothers, 38 percent, say – egads! – they sometimes feel like they’ve turned into their mother. But the real Mother’s Day kicker is this: Among those who do say so, 68 percent say the feeling is a good one.

METHODOLOGY –This ABC News Good Morning America/Good Housekeeping poll was conducted by telephone Jan. 30-Feb. 2, 2006, among a random national sample of 585 mothers with one or more children under 18 at home. The results have a four-point error margin. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, PA.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollvault.html>.

Media contact: Cathie Levine, (212) 456-4934.

Full results follow (*= less than 0.5 percent).

1. How good a job do you feel you're doing as a mother – excellent, good, not so good or poor?

	----Excellent/Good----			----Not so good/Poor----			No
	NET	Excellent	Good	NET	Not so good	Poor	opin.
2/2/06	99	39	60	0	0	0	1

2. Overall, how would you describe your relationship with your (child/ children) – excellent, good, not so good or poor?

	----Excellent/Good----			----Not so good/Poor----			No
	NET	Excellent	Good	NET	Not so good	Poor	opin.
2/2/06	99	69	31	*	0	*	*

3. Overall, how would you describe your relationship with your mother when you were a child – excellent, good, not so good or poor?

	---Excellent/Good---			---Not so good/Poor---			Mother absent/ not alive(vol.)	No
	NET	Excellent	Good	NET	Not so good	Poor		opin.
2/2/06	78	34	44	19	14	5	3	0

NET – Mother was present/alive

	---Excellent/Good---			---Not so good/Poor---			No
	NET	Excellent	Good	NET	Not so good	Poor	opin.
2/2/06	81	35	46	19	14	5	0

4. (IF MOTHER WAS ALIVE) Overall, how would you describe your relationship with your mother now – excellent, good, not so good or poor?

	---Excellent/Good---			---Not so good/Poor---			Mother infirm/ not alive(vol.)	No
	NET	Excellent	Good	NET	Not so good	Poor		opin.
2/2/06	76	42	35	6	3	3	18	0

NET – Mom is alive/not infirm

	---Excellent/Good---			---Not so good/Poor---			No
	NET	Excellent	Good	NET	Not so good	Poor	opin.
2/2/06	93	51	42	7	4	3	0

5. How much, if at all, do you worry about not being as good a mother as you would like to be - is that something you worry about a great deal, somewhat, not so much or hardly at all?

	---Great deal/Somewhat---			--Not so much/Hardly--		Never/not	No
	NET	Grt.deal	Somewhat	NET	Not so	Hardly	at all (vol.) opin.
2/2/06	62	21	41	34	13	21	4 *

6. (ASKED IF EVER WORRIES) Is not being as good a mother as you would like to be something you ever feel guilty about, or not? IF YES: Do you feel that way often, or just occasionally?

	-----Feels guilty-----			No	No opin.
	NET	Often	Occasionally		
2/2/06	53	6	47	47	0

5/6 NET

	---Worries/feels guilty---			Worries/	No	No
	NET	Often	Occasionally	no guilt	worries	opin.
2/6/06	52	6	46	45	4	* *

7. (ASKED IF EVER FEELS GUILTY) What's the main thing you feel guilty about as a mother?

	2/2/06
Not enough time	40
Short temper/impatience	12
Discipline/lack of discipline/control/	
freedom/independence	9
Not enough money or resources	8
Can't give child(ren) enough attention	7
Not a good enough role model	4
Having to work	3
Communication/trust/consistency	3
Education	1
Other parenting skills	3
Other	5
No opinion	4

8. (ASKED IF MOTHER STILL ALIVE) About how often do you talk with your mother - at least once a day, a few times a week, about once a week, a few times a month or less often than that?

	2/2/06
At least once a day	37
A few times a week	31
About once a week	15
A few times a month	7
Less often than that	6
(VOL) More than once a day	3
(VOL) Never	*
(VOL) Mother is sick/infirm	0
No opinion	0

9. (ASKED IF MOTHER STILL ALIVE) Thinking about your current relationship with your mother, do you think of yourself more as her (child), or more as her (friend)?

Both	Neither	Other	No
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	Child	Friend	(vol.)	(vol.)	(vol.)	opin.
2/2/06	35	50	10	2	1	1

10. (ASKED IF MOTHER STILL ALIVE AND NOT SICK/INFIRM) How often, if ever, do you turn to your mother for advice about (ITEM)? Is that something you do very often, somewhat often, not so often or rarely?

2/2/06 - Summary Table

	-----Often-----			-----Not often-----			Never	No
	NET	Very	Smwt.	NET	Not so	Rarely	(vol.)	opin.
a. being a parent	53	21	32	41	21	20	6	0
b. marriage or relationships	33	11	21	55	29	26	12	0
c. life in general	61	23	38	32	17	16	6	0

11. (ASKED IF MOTHER STILL ALIVE) Does your mother ever give you advice about being a parent when you have not asked for it, or not?

	Yes	No	No op.
2/2/06	60	40	0

12. (ASKED IF YES AT Q9) On balance, is that more (helpful), or more (annoying)?

	Helpful	Annoying	Both/neither/depends (vol.)	No opin.
2/2/06	46	38	16	0

9/10 NET

	-----Yes-----				No
	NET	Helpful	Annoying	Depends	opin.
2/2/06	60	27	23	9	40

13. Compared to when you were a child, in general do you think being a mother today is (harder), (easier) or about the same?

	Harder	Easier	Same	No opin.
2/2/06	72	4	22	1

14. (ASKED IF RAISED BY MOTHER) Overall, are you (more) involved in your (child's life/children's lives) than your mother was in your life growing up, (less) involved, or is it about the same?

	More	Less	Same	No opin.
2/2/06	58	4	37	*

15. (ASKED IF RAISED BY MOTHER) When it comes to discipline and manners, are you (more) strict with your (child/children) than your mother was with you, (less) strict, or about the same?

	More	Less	Same	No opin.
2/2/06	24	21	54	1

16. (ASKED IF RAISED BY MOTHER) When it comes to spoiling or over-indulging your (child/children), do you think you do that (more) than your mother did with you, (less), or about the same?

	More	Less	Same	No opin.
2/2/06	53	9	37	1

17. (ASKED IF RAISED BY MOTHER) In terms of parenting overall, do you sometimes feel like you've turned into your mother, or not?

	Yes	No	No opin.
2/2/06	38	62	*

18. (ASKED IF YES AT Q15) Is that a good feeling, or not so good?

	Good	Not so good	Mixed (vol.)	No opin.
2/2/06	68	18	13	*

17/18 NET

	-Sometimes feel turned into mother-				
	NET	Good feeling	Not so good	Mixed feeling	No opin.
2/6/06	38	26	7	5	62 *

19. (ASKED IF RAISED BY MOTHER) All in all, compared to the way your mother raised you, would you say you're doing a (better) job raising your (child/children), a (worse) job, or about the same? Is that somewhat better/worse or much better/worse?

	-----Better-----			-----Worse-----			About	No
	NET	Much	Smwt.	NET	Smwt.	Much	the same	opin.
2/2/06	40	23	17	2	2	0	57	1

20. Who has the main child-care responsibilities in your household?

	2/2/06
I do	85
Spouse/partner	2
Spouse/partner and me equally	11
Day care center	*
Grandparent	*
Another family member	*
Other	*

21. What is your current employment status - do you work full-time for pay, work part-time for pay, or are you a homemaker, a student, retired, currently unemployed, or what?

	2/2/06
Full-time for pay	45
Part-time for pay	16
Homemaker	27
Student	3
Retired	2
Currently unemployed	3
(VOL) Disabled	3
(VOL) Other	1

22. (IF WORKS FOR PAY) Do you consider the work you do to be a career or just a job?

	Career	Just a job	No opin.
2/2/06	60	39	1

23. When you were growing up - that is, before you were 18 years old - did your mother work outside the home, or not? IF SOMETIMES: Which was it mostly?

	Did	Did not	No opin.
2/2/06	59	39	2

24. How many children under age 18 are currently living with you?

	One	Two	Three or more
2/2/06	42	37	21

25. Are you married and living with your spouse, living as married with your partner, separated, divorced, widowed or never married?

	2/2/06
Married/living with spouse	71
Living as married with partner	5
Separated	4
Divorced	10
Widowed	2
Or never married	9

END