



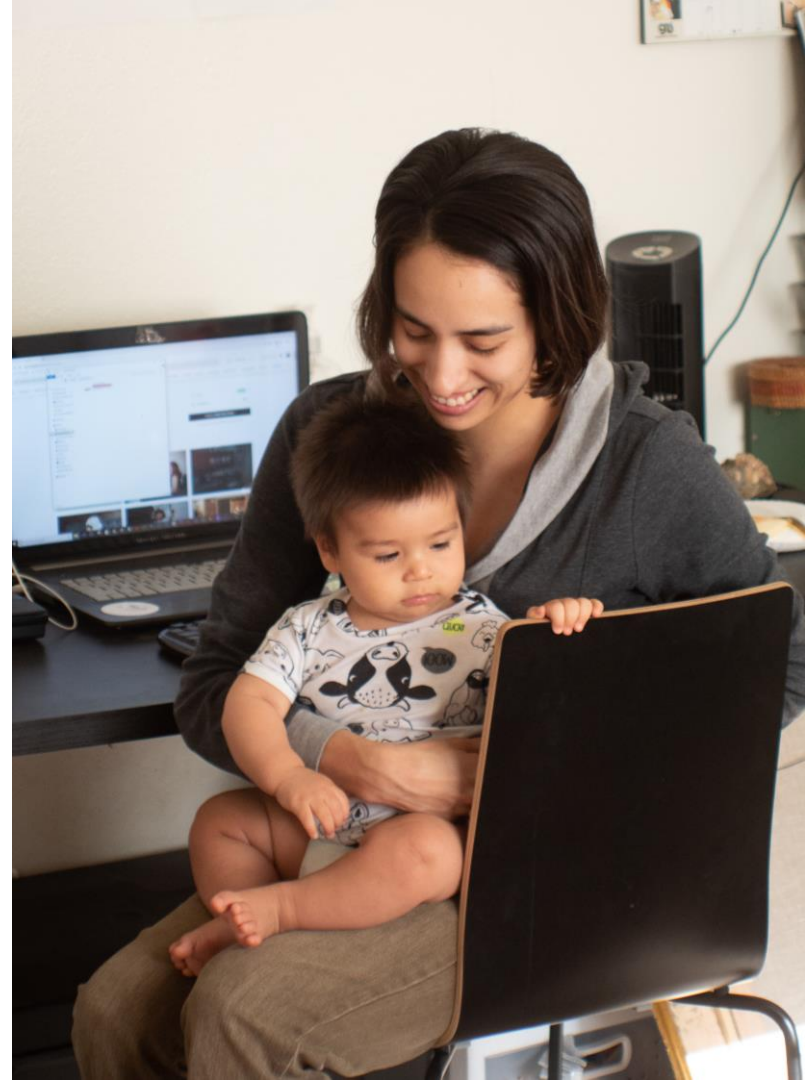
Dr. Jessica Calarco, Department of Sociology

# Universities and the Crisis of Care

pre-pandemic, women did a disproportionate share of care work

unpaid/underpaid care work takes a toll on women's wellbeing and careers

the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified inequalities in care work



**How has the pandemic impacted the work and wellbeing of university faculty, staff, and associate instructors with care responsibilities?**

Data collected via Qualtrics survey,  
12/9/2020 through 1/9/2020

IU faculty, staff,  
and associate  
instructors (AIs)

IRB protocol  
#88167667

	N	%
Total	340	
Women	253	74%
Men	81	24%
Nonbinary/Self-Identified	6	2%
White, Non-Hispanic	299	88%
People of Color	42	12%
Faculty	152	45%
Staff	161	48%
Associate Instructors	28	8%



Data collected via Qualtrics survey,  
12/9/2020 through 12/12/2020

	Caring for Children <11		Other Care Roles*		No Care Roles	
Women of Color (N=28)	10	36%	13	47%	5	18%
White, Non-Hispanic Women (N=224)	88	39%	91	41%	45	20%
All Women (N=252)	98	39%	104	41%	50	20%
Men of Color (N=12)	1	8%	5	42%	6	50%
White, Non-Hispanic Men (N=70)	29	41%	23	33%	18	26%
All Men (N=82)	30	37%	28	34%	24	29%
<b>Total (N=334)</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>22%</b>

\*other care roles include care for children ages 11+, care for sick, elderly, or disabled adults, and workplace care, such as informal mentoring and support of colleagues, taking on the work of colleagues who are sick or unable to work, and working to improve workplace culture



## summary

caregivers have continued to fulfill core duties during the pandemic, and many have increased their paid work

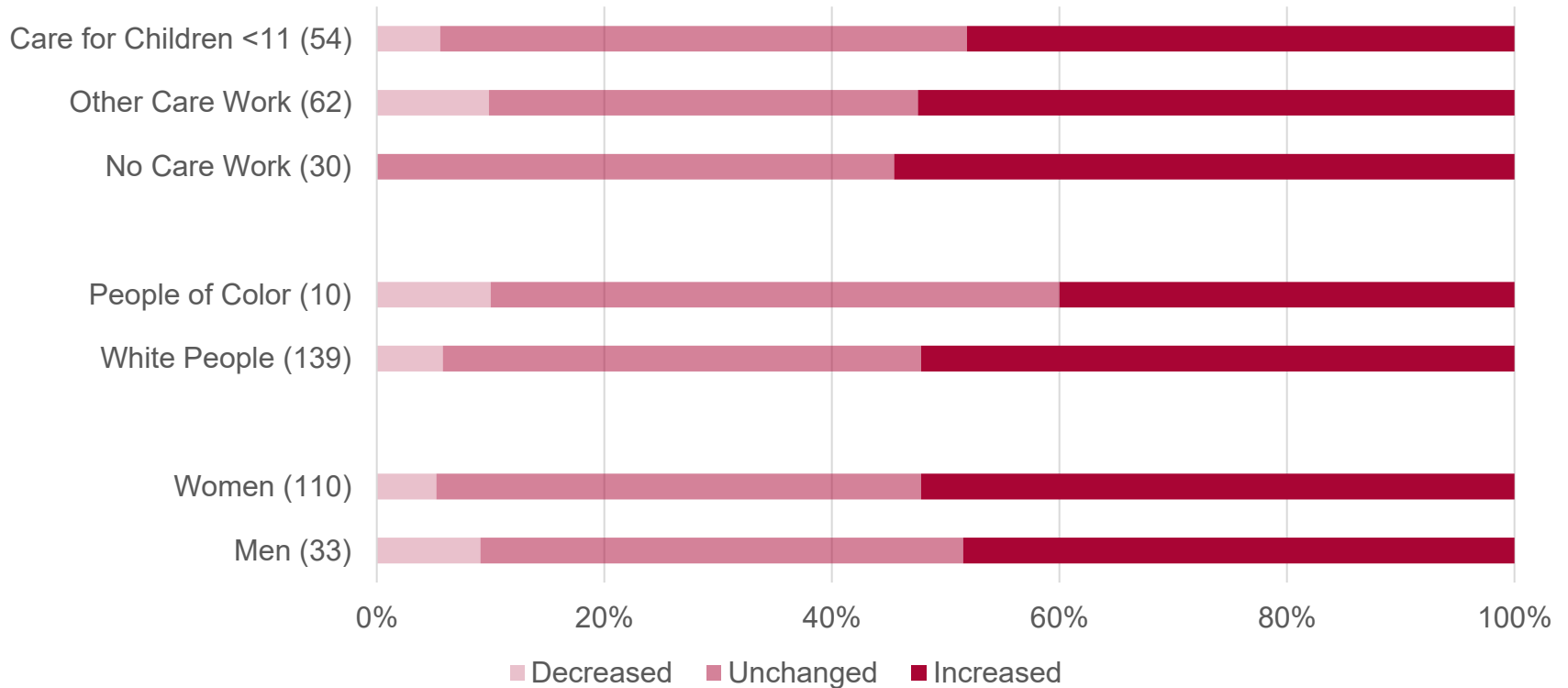
combining paid and care work is taking a serious toll



**Caregiver staff have not reduced their paid work time...**

**...and have increased their time as much as other employees**

## Percent of Staff Reporting Decreased, Unchanged, or Increased Time on Work Responsibilities, by Care Roles, Race, and Gender



\* p<.10; \*\* p<.05; \*\*\* p<.01



# **staff, white woman, workplace care responsibilities and responsibilities caring for a disabled family member**

A colleague retired on August 1 and our department claims that the hiring freeze and budget cuts prevented them from rehiring someone for that role. I was assigned 100% of that person's duties. Approximately 75% of my previous duties were reassigned to others in my department. I received no additional compensation for these job changes.



# staff, white woman, mother of a toddler

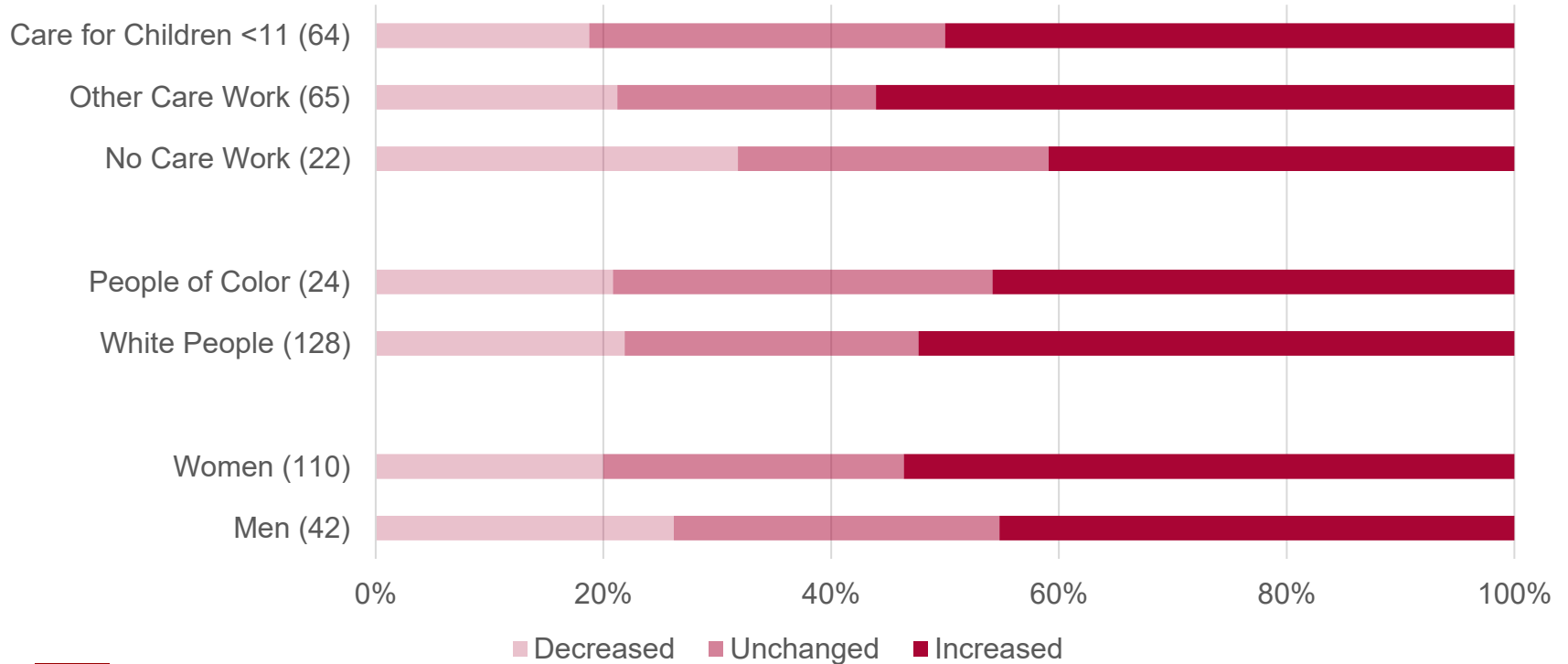
While I did not experience any disciplinary action for using IU's paid time off for childcare, my supervisor expressed frustration with my performance during the period in which my child was not in childcare, noting that I was distracted and only available intermittently



**Caregiver faculty/instructors have not reduced their teaching or service...**

**...and they've increased their teaching and service as much as other employees**

## Percent of Faculty and Instructors Reporting Decreased, Unchanged or Increased Time on Service, by Care Roles, Race, and Gender



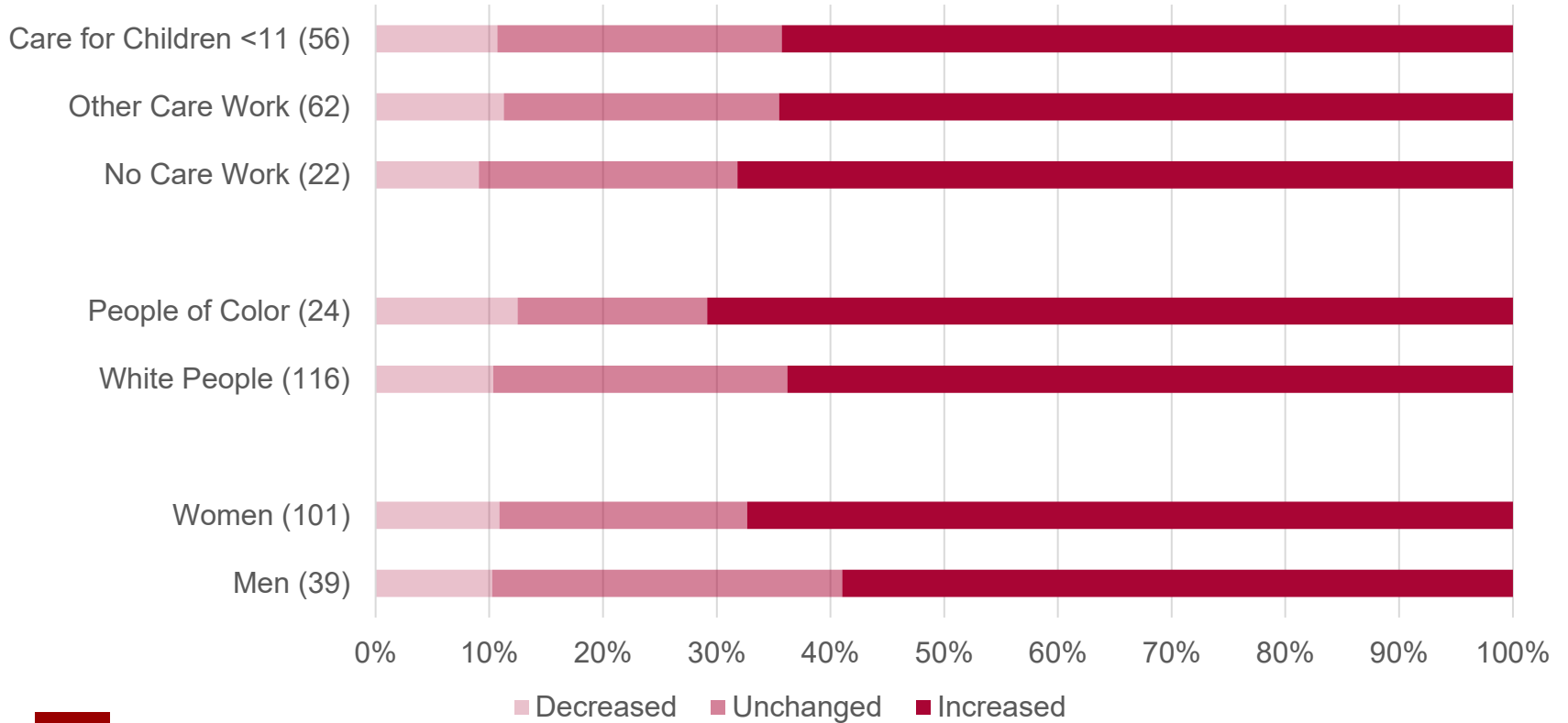
\* p<.10; \*\* p<.05; \*\*\* p<.01

# full professor, white woman, workplace care responsibilities

It is important that to acknowledge that those in large service responsibilities such as DUGS/DGS/Department Chairs have taken on a lot of extra responsibilities during the pandemic... and the fact that staff was gutted from many departments prior to the pandemic and that the few that remain often have large responsibilities at home in terms of childcare etc, this workload has been greatly amplified for those in service positions. I'd really like the university to reinvest in providing supporting staff in departments so that they don't exploit both staff and faculty.



## Percent of Faculty and Instructors Reporting Decreased, Unchanged, or Increased Time on Teaching and Mentoring, by Care Roles, Race, and Gender



\* p<.10; \*\* p<.05; \*\*\* p<.01

# assistant professor, white woman, parent of a preschooler and an elementary-aged child, workplace care responsibilities

I have had to reframe expectations for my own work as I am home with small children (one, school age, the other, pre-school age). I am working to maintain my research, teaching, and service by working odd hours. It is not a pace I will be able to maintain forever, but trying to keep it up for this year. Also, I realize that overall, I will not be as productive across the board, and have just had to accept that reality. For example, I may delay my tenure by a year, something I would not like to do, but the reality is, I'm providing caregiving during the day (shared with spouse who also holds full-time employment at IU) which includes helping with online school... Meanwhile, I'm keeping my work going the best that I can.

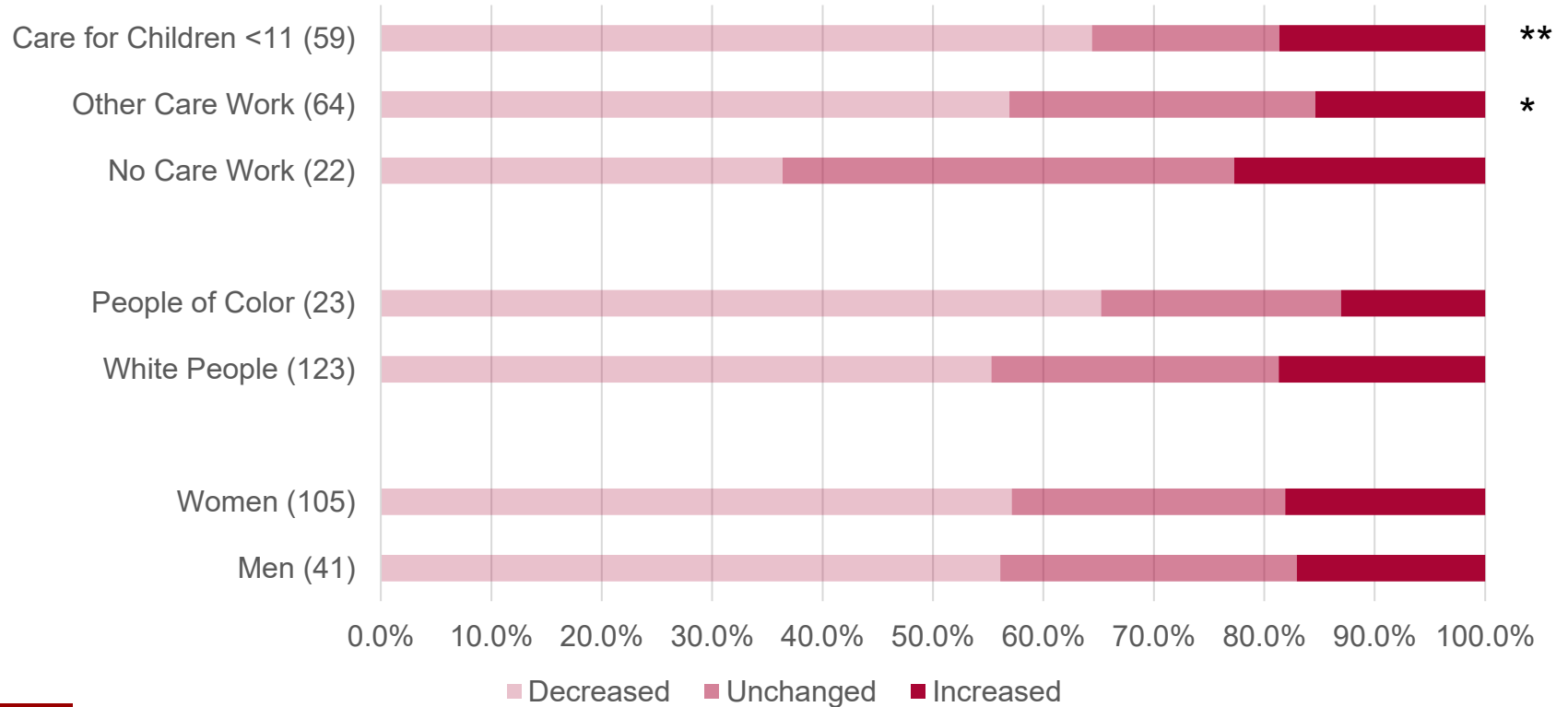


**Many faculty/instructors have reduced their time on research...**

**...and those reductions are especially common among caregivers**



## Percent of Faculty and Instructors Reporting Decreased, Unchanged, or Increased Time on Research, by Care Roles, Race, and Gender



\* p<.10; \*\* p<.05; \*\*\* p <.01



# **associate professor, Latina woman, elementary-aged children; workplace care responsibilities**

The stress of the pandemic itself, in addition to rapid pivoting, uncertainty for family members' health abroad, and need to care for students both graduate mentees and those in my classes has frayed my mental health. Making it difficult to concentrate. In the early months of the pandemic there were days I just could not focus, my brain felt like mush. All I could do were shorter, immediate tasks related to my work, and no deep thinking or writing. That feeling has returned in waves in the middle and later moments of the pandemic. Colleagues with little to no care responsibilities seemed to cruise through, and take advantage of this time to write and work as normal. Seeing how little they understand of the other side of the pandemic effects, and how unwilling they are to reduce service burdens, is further demoralizing, increases my stress levels and makes me feel unwelcome in this institution.



# associate professor, white woman, no caregiving responsibilities

Covid impacts us in such different ways. I have had more time for writing and research. I'm putting this in so that the results will show the spectrum of experiences, knowing that so many of my colleagues have found their lives negatively impacted in ways that I hope do not escape notice.



# full professor, white man, parent of a teenager

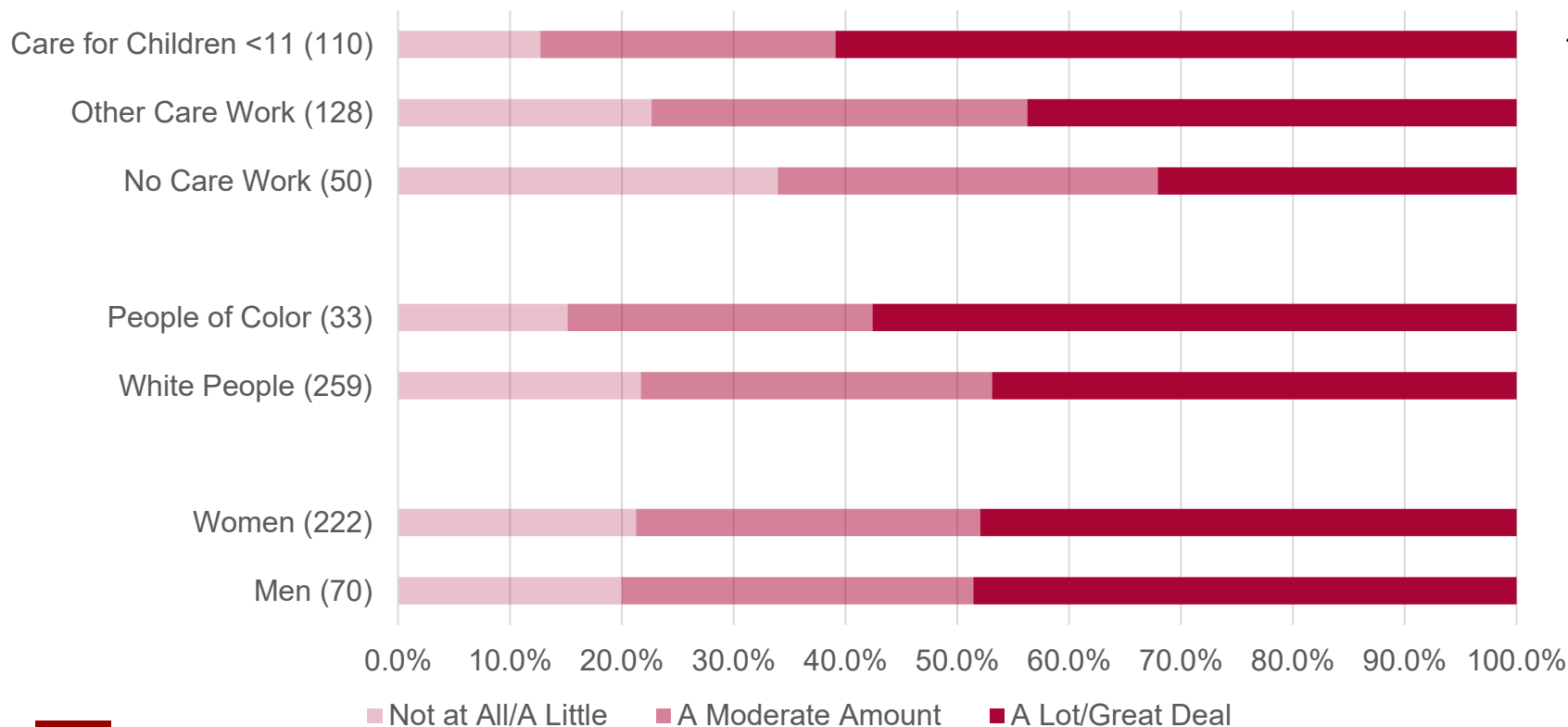
Our child has been physically at school (or camp/activities) a total of 45 days since March. While I have been able to keep up with basic work responsibilities by sharing care with my spouse, by working weekends and by getting up very early in morning, etc., it has been impossible to do more. I deeply resent facing an annual evaluation as if this was a regular year. It leads me to conclude that the university has no interest in my circumstances.



**caregivers are significantly more likely to be experiencing increased stress at work...**

**...sacrificing sleep, mental health, and relationships to complete the work they have been asked to do**

## Percent of Respondents Reporting How Work Stress They Have Experienced in the Last Two Weeks, by Care Roles, Race, and Gender



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\* p<.10; \*\* p<.05; \*\*\* p<.01



# associate professor, white woman, parent of an elementary-aged child

I am stressed out, have not slept more than six hours a night for months, and am having problems concentrating and, recently, speaking (i.e. can't find words when I try to speak). I am with my child 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and need to have one eye on what he is doing at all times. I rarely have the opportunity to concentrate on a task and finish it.



# assistant professor, Latina woman, workplace care responsibilities

The impacts of collective exhaustion and normalization of poor mental health, as well as the lack of breaks and sense of pressure to continue working and maintain a normal level of production (eg. article output, research project development, grant writing), are visible in my own life as well as that of my colleagues and students. Additionally, the weight of care work for students facing daily traumas (several students lost friends to suicide, had family or friends ill with covid or were ill themselves, many had insecure housing or food accessibility, all were battling extreme stress and exhaustion) has been incredibly heavy. I have the financial capacity to pay for external support (therapy, massage, cleaning help, food delivery, secure housing), but many do not, and the lasting impacts of the stress and trauma of this moment are extreme.





# full professor, white woman, parent of a teenager, elder care responsibilities, workplace care responsibilities

Students need more and more support, especially grad students who are not getting support they usually get from peers. I have met each of my grad students no fewer than six times each this term. I am also getting calls from grad students whose advisors have basically abandoned them, and I am trying to get them to degree. It's a ton of work that goes entirely unnoticed. I wish my colleagues would pick up their share instead of making me department mom.



**because of these challenges, IU is at risk  
of losing employees, especially women  
caregivers**

\*nearly half of women with young children have considered leaving in the last two weeks,  
compared to only a quarter of men with young children

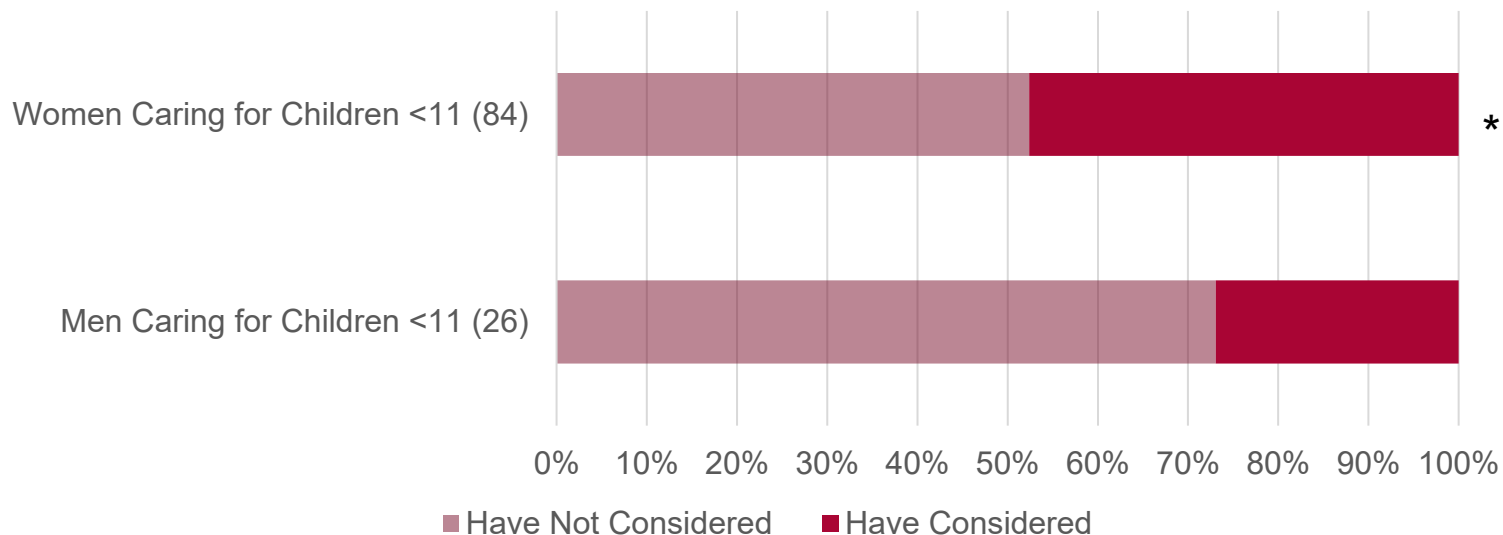
## Percent of Respondents Reporting They Have/Have Not Considered Leaving their Job in the Last Two Weeks, by Care Roles, Race, and Gender



\* p<.10; \*\* p<.05; \*\*\* p<.01



## Percent of Caregivers for Young Children Reporting They Have/Have Not Considered Leaving their Job in the Last Two Weeks, by Gender



women caring for young children  
are at particularly high risk for leaving  
(nearly 50% have considered)



# **full professor, white woman, parent of a teenager, eldercare responsibilities, workplace care responsibilities**

I have not been this bone-tired since my child was an infant. I am looking into options for early retirement. My increased childcare and eldercare responsibilities did not reduce my ability to do my job because I work around them.



# **staff member, white woman, elder care responsibilities, workplace care responsibilities**

I have thought about switching jobs which is also stressful due to the hiring freeze and not wanting to leave my office without someone during this time. When I do have the chance to go live with my elderly parents for several weeks to help take care of them, it is difficult to get work done sometimes while trying to help them with everything. Also there is pressure to keep things 'status quo' which is hard.



**caregiver faculty, staff, and AIs are, by their own accounts, doing an unsustainable and potentially harmful amount of work**

**most caregivers are asking for  
recognition, compensation, and logistical  
support to sustain their work efforts – not  
a reprieve from work**



**interventions are needed to sustain  
Indiana University as a research institution  
and one committed to equity**

**current steps to reduce workloads may not be sufficient on their own, especially with possible (re)closure of local schools**

# recommendations

- encourage participation in the IU Work and Care Work survey to identify the full scope of the challenges employees are facing  
<https://go.iu.edu/3ua0>
- continue efforts to reduce, recognize, and redistribute work
- support employees in sustaining their work efforts and their commitment to the institution
- consider medium and long-term steps (<https://go.iu.edu/3ua1>) for:
  - mitigating the gendered and raced crisis of labor
  - maintaining IU's reputation as an elite research institution and one that is committed to equity



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**INDIANA UNIVERSITY BLOOMINGTON**



**additional quotes**

# non-tenure-track faculty, white woman, parent of young children

I became a widow 4 months before COVID impacted the US. Navigating the loss of a partner to help with children, on top of the impact COVID has had on my ability to work efficiently has been tremendously difficult. I also was supposed to finally receive an equity pay adjustment (first time NTT faculty were even allowed to apply for one) and that was put on hold, and now likely eliminated. Everything feels unfair and unsustainable.



# **staff member, white woman, parent of three children in preschool through high school**

I was never supposed to be the primary caregiving parent. My partner works PT on campus in an essential job and I have been the primary caregiver for more hours than my spouse despite being the one who works FT. It has completely upended our division of labor and I have never felt so undervalued and alone as I do now.



# staff member, white woman, parent of school-age children

The biggest struggle is staying focused and having focused time to work. with school age children home and a spouse that works outside of the house, it leaves the burden to me to get them started on their day, answer any questions they have, check their work, talk with them about how to find and receive help from their teachers, etc. With so many interruptions in the day, it makes it difficult to get any big projects done that require focused attention.





# **non-tenure-track faculty, white woman, parent of young children, elder care responsibilities**

I appreciate the ways my colleagues are being flexible to accommodate the schedule shifts I've had to make for childcare and overseeing remote education for a young elementary school child. I personally find the shifts I've had to make to my working hours (getting a lot of focused work done at night when my child is sleeping so I can concentrate) very distracting. The whole process feels disjointed, and I'm fairly exhausted.



# staff member, white woman, elder care responsibilities, workplace care responsibilities

I have felt torn constantly between fulfilling my duties to the fullest for work and meeting the needs of my aging mother and disabled friend. My boss was very understanding but I wasn't willing to let myself off the hook for things that should have been completed sooner at work.... I feel lucky to have flex time, working remotely, and an understanding boss. However, the stress of deadlines and workload didn't go away even with all those accommodations because I had to pull the wait for one staff member who has children that he had to provide the majority of the care for and one staff member who had to have constant hand holding. It caused me to have to carry the stress of three instead of just stress for my own job.



## **assistant professor, white woman, parent of middle and high school students**

I have been able to perform the basics of my work responsibilities, but I have cut out all extra items and probably work 4 hours a day (instead of the 7-8 hours a day I worked before the pandemic). I feel tons of my time is spent cooking three meals a day for my ravenous tween/teens and then cleaning up the dishes! I think IU has been supportive and realistic about what folks can get done. I am concerned though, about how my CV will compare to others (without children?) going forward.

