



# The Impact of Postpartum Employment on Maternal and Infant Outcomes

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## Background

- 73% of women in the U.S. return to work within 6 months after giving birth<sup>1</sup>
- The U.S. has no nationally required paid maternity leave

## Purpose

The purpose of this study is to understand the impact that work has on a mother and infant during the postpartum period.

## Methods

### Design:

- Descriptive, qualitative study

### Sample:

- Mothers 0-6 months post-partum
- Age 18 years or older
- From Tallahassee and surrounding areas

### Procedures:

- Demographics & Employment States (Table 1 and Figure 1)
- Zoom interviews:
  - Have you returned to work since your baby? Or will you return to work?
  - Did you want to return back to your profession?
  - When you are at work, where will your baby be?
  - When you are at work, who will primarily be caring for your baby?
  - Were you working before pregnancy? If yes, how do you feel about not going back to work?

### Data Analysis:

- Audio recordings were transcribed by an independent source
- Nvivo 12 Pro was used for coding and thematic analysis by two researchers

## Results

“I had a small supplement through short term disability, and that only paid for eight weeks of short-term disability, which was a fraction of my usual salary. It was a bit of a financial relief to go back to work, but it definitely was not my choosing to be going back at 12 weeks.”

### Theme 1: Motivations for Returning to Work

- Enjoyment/Fulfillment
- Finances
- Remote Option

“I love my work and I think that I am a better mother when I feel personally fulfilled”

“I'm thankful my job lets me work from home, so that if she's sick from daycare I can stay with her. ...and it's wonderful because you don't miss out on those moments.”

### Theme 2: Challenges Faced Returning to Work

- Bonding
- Breastfeeding

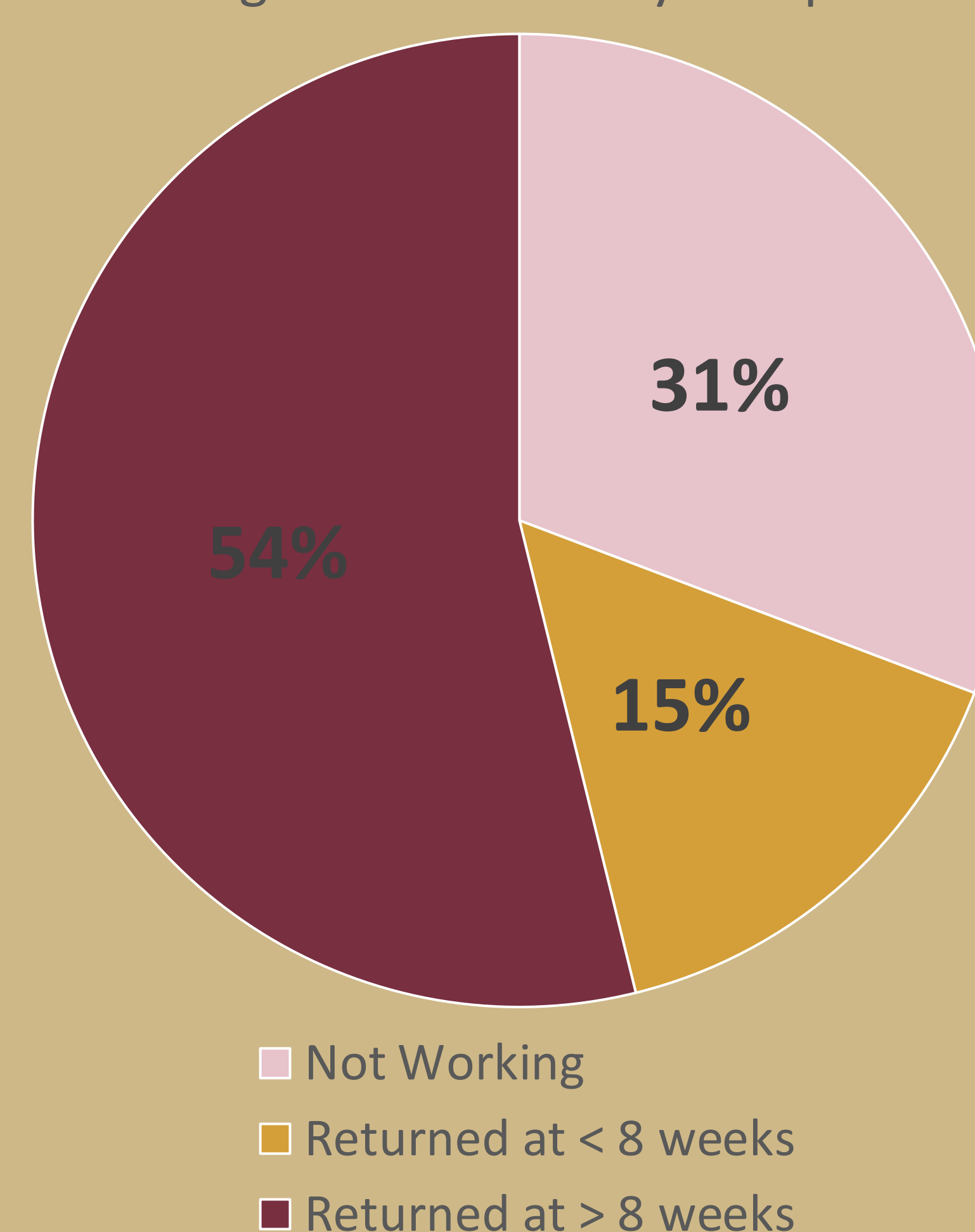
“I would say now that I'm back at work, balancing work and being a mom, I feel like there's just not enough time in the day for me to have with him. That's been a big struggle for me, just feeling like I'm not giving him enough time.”

“I knew that because I was going back to work, that I was going to be exclusively pumping ...that was one of the main reasons why I didn't even try to continue breastfeeding”

## Demographics

Table 1 (N = 13)		
	M ± SD	Range
Maternal Age (years) <sup>#</sup>	30.4 ± 4.9	22 – 37
Baby age at visit (days)	75 ± 50.9	17 – 169
	N	%
Marital Status (married)	13	100%
Education (college graduate)	11	84.6%
Race		
White	9	69.2%
Black	3	23.1%
Other/Mixed	1	7.7%
Hispanic, yes	4	30.8%
Infant sex (male)	8	61.5%
Birth Type (vaginal)	8	61.5%
Current breastfeeding (yes)	11	84.6%
<sup>#</sup> n = 12		

Working Status at Survey Completion



## Conclusions

- Mothers consistently felt like work interfered with their time with their baby
- Not having paid maternity leave and job security caused financial stress for mothers and led to many returning to work when they did not want to
- Work was a place mothers felt they were able to interact with other adults
- Working gave mothers a sense of purpose
- Working remotely was also spoken about as a solution for being able to balance work and spend time with their baby

## Strengths and Limitations

- Qualitative methods provided rich data
- Primarily a Caucasian, well educated, married sample of mothers.
- Mothers were anywhere from 17 days to 6 months postpartum

## Future Directions

- Qualitative data is still being collected and themes will continue to be added and expanded upon
- Researching/comparing productivity and feelings around work culture in jobs that do and do not offer a substantial amount of paid maternity leave
- Conduct a mixed-methods study to integrate qualitative and quantitative data to provide a deeper understanding of postpartum employment

## Acknowledgements

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## References

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