

MOMS BILL LESS: REPORT

Once they have children, women lawyers' billable hours drop, says a controversial University of Calgary study by sociologists Jean E. Wallace and Marisa C. Young on parenting and productivity of lawyers.

The study correlates parenthood and productivity of 670 Alberta lawyers, finding that childless women produce more billable hours than any male or female counterparts. Women without children billed an average of 1,597 annual hours, women with children billed an average of 1,387 annual hours, while fathers outperformed non-fathers on average, but only slightly with respective billing figures of 1,541 and 1,491 hours annually.

The reduced hours translate into substantial income, says the report, based on an average figure of \$450 an hour. "Parenthood and productivity: A study of demands, resources and family-friendly firms," published earlier this year in the *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, says mothers with preschool children bill \$88,650 less per annum than non-mothers, while mothers with children six to 12 years of age bill \$63,900 less than non-mothers.

The study essentially looks at productivity both pre- and post-parenthood. However, it does not paint a longitudinal picture within the groups showing a billing pattern over a total career path. But, based on the segments provided by Wallace and Young, male billable hours remain fairly constant, rising slightly when fatherhood kicks in. A woman's billable hours peak early and then have the largest drop after childbirth before starting to climb again. The study shows women with children 13 years and older "are as productive as women without children."

Young, a University of Toronto PhD student, says the report "absolutely" points out how "the different patterns" emerge at differing points of parenting and non-parenting and how that translates to billing. "Women produce more in the back-



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end, and once their children reach a certain age, they are back to producing at a higher rate," she says. However, one of the report's findings is women still largely bear the brunt of child-rearing, as men often have a stay-at-home spouse.

Young says the findings dispel a notion that family-friendly firms detract from productivity for mothers; rather, the report found it was fathers who used the time for leisure activities while mothers devoted time to domestic duties.

Vancouver's Janet Derbawka, a shareholder in Boughton Law Corp. and mother of two pre-school children, says her 45-member firm has a progressive culture with a family-friendly attitude, which pays dividends in terms of keeping talented mothers in the firm and bringing them back to work sooner. "It's not unusual to see children in the office," says Derbawka. Boughton has moved mothers to larger offices to accommodate baby gear such as playpens. If daycare is suddenly closed,

parents know they can bring the child in.

Derbawka points out that the study shows mothers are on average 35 when having children and, career-wise, are often at a career peak, and the firm should aim to keep that valuable expertise. "We know we have to accommodate people."

Derbawka, though, points out the study's sampling of 225 women, of which 40 per cent had children, was relatively small. The greatest productivity reduction comes at the time of the birth and subsequent months. She says the report uses only billable hours as a measure but in many firms, new mothers are often given non-billable administrative duties. As well, the report only looks at productiv-

ity lost to parenting. "In the last five years, one lawyer has been off on maternity leave for four or five months in our office, but there has been three male lawyers on extended health leave."

The reduction in billable hours, as cited by the report, is only moderate. The average annual difference between mothers and non-mothers is 210 hours. "That's about 45 minutes a day," she says. It is

also offset by increases during the woman's peak earning years.

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Janet Derbawka

A world champion in her spare time

Jennifer Jones doesn't change out of her business suit and into her curling uniform in a phone booth — it only seems that way.

The in-house counsel at Winnipeg-based Wellington West Capital Inc. followed up her second Canadian curling title in February by skipping her team to its first world championship belt in March. Competing against a field that included a number of players for whom curling is their full-time occupation, Jones continues to hold

down a full-time job in the legal department of one of the fastest-growing financial services firms in the country.

Wellington West sponsors her team,



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