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### How the Transition to Working Remotely May Impact Maternity Leave Policy; Lessons from the Pandemic

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## BACKGROUND: The widening gender employment gap

Since the beginning of the pandemic women have faced a disproportionate amount of job loss compared to men, particularly mothers. On the flip side, a “fatherhood premium” has been seen, in which fathers have been the most protected against job loss (Dias et al, 2020)

The United State falls far behind most other nations in its maternity leave policy, and falls short of the recommendations put out by the WHO (Vahratian and Johnson, 2009), as does the most comprehensive policy PFL in NYS.

Policy protecting American working mother in every states also falls short of the recommendations made by the ILO (Burtle and Bezruchka,2016)

## METHODS

1. Snowball/convenience sample
2. Qualitative Survey of mothers who took maternity leave both before and after start of COVID-19 pandemic
3. Survey contained demographic questions, and open-ended text questions about PFL experience
4. Content analysis of responses

## RESULTS

- Highly privileged sample
- Most mothers in this sample seem to care more about time than pay
- Most mothers would want at least 6 months or more off
- Some mothers mentioned the idea of transitioning back to work

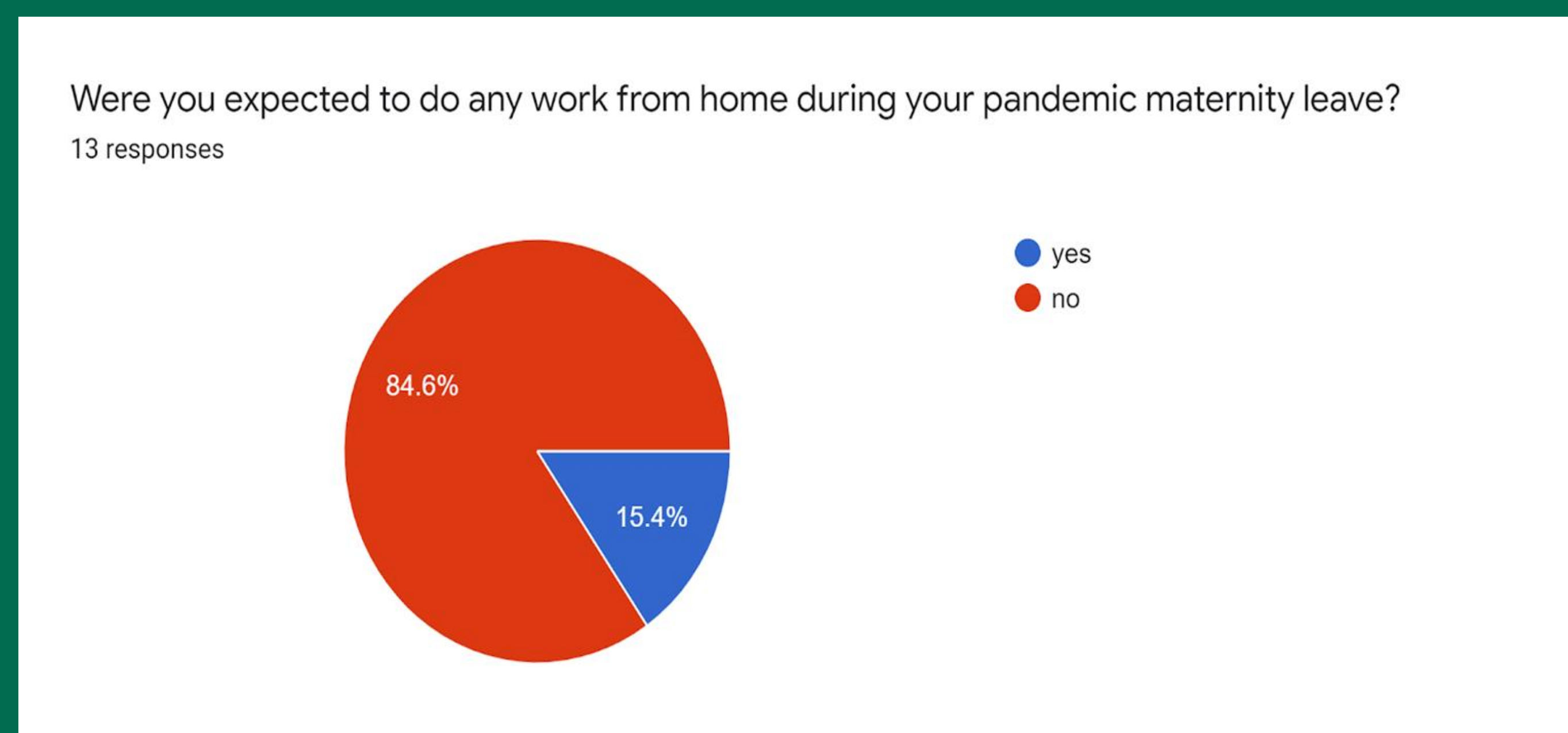
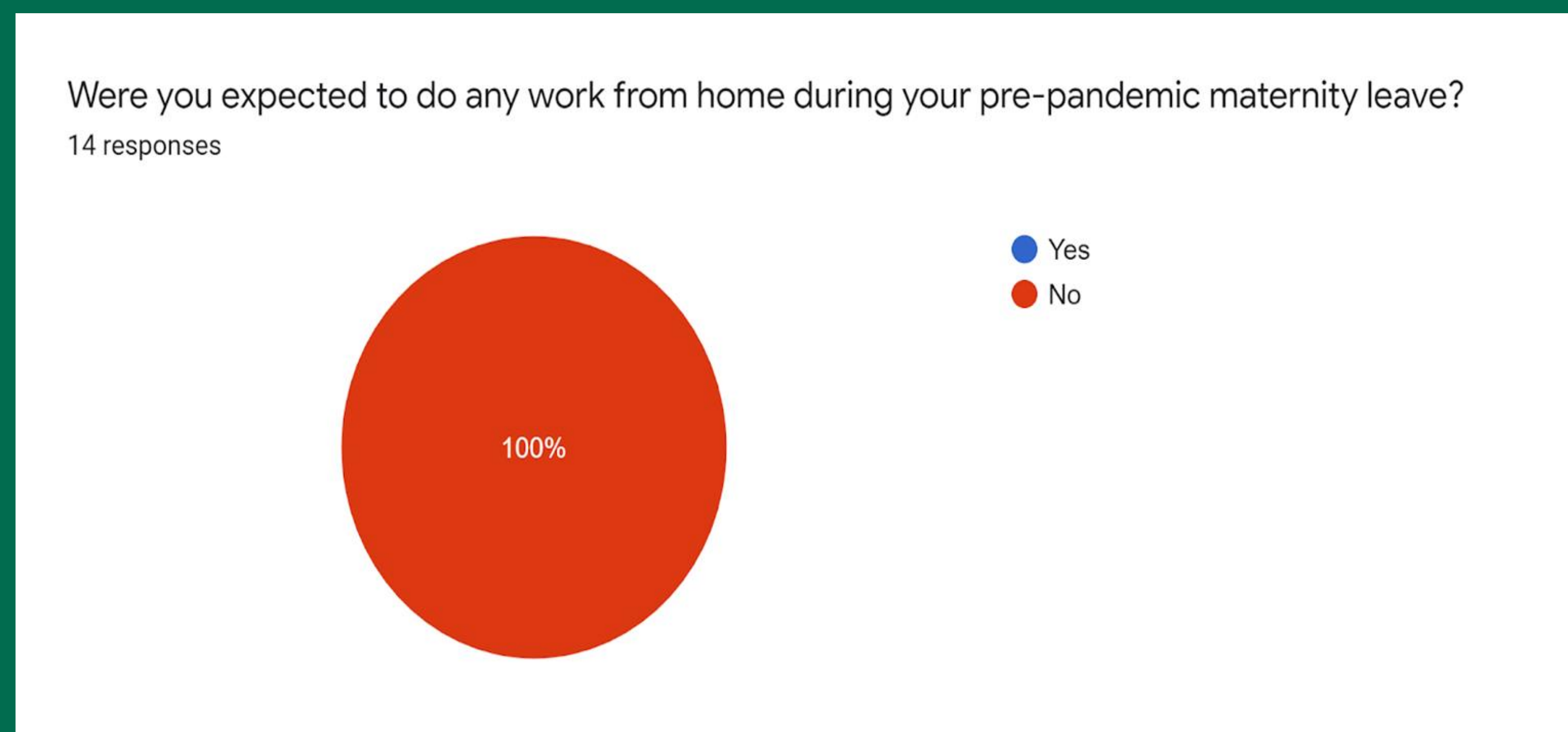
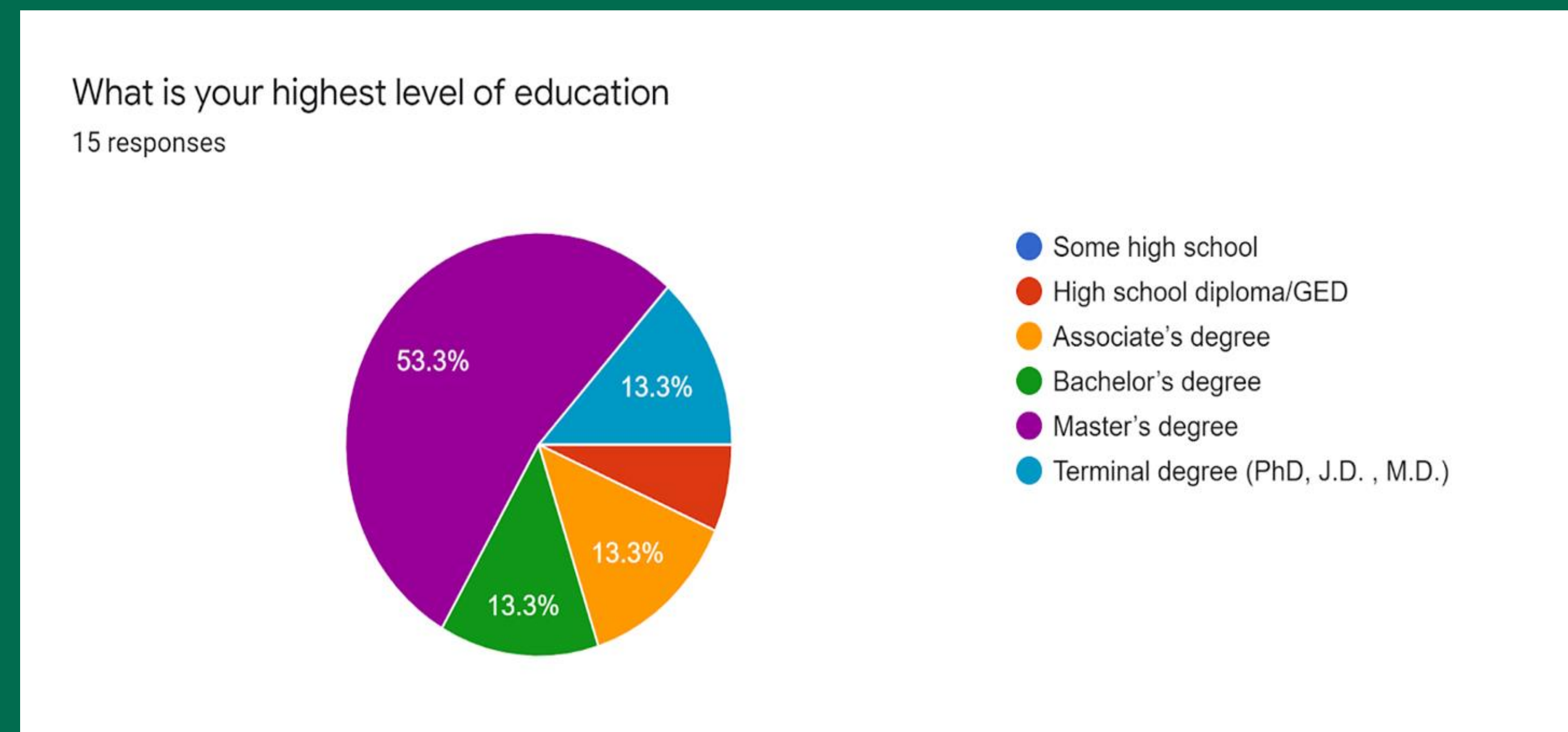
# How the Transition to Working Remotely May Impact Maternity Leave Policy; Lessons From the Pandemic

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Increased governmental regulation through New York State’s Paid Family Leave has encouraged improvements in company maternity leave options, but **mothers are still struggling. The Pandemic has also worsened conditions** for working mothers.

Major/Minor Theme	Responses
Insufficiency in both company policy, and PFL	-Even though many mothers were offered longer, half of the responses describing ML both before <i>and</i> after PFL mentioned extending leave with other
Dissatisfaction with time allotted	Most mothers indicated that <b>at least 6 months</b> of maternity leave would be ideal -Many said up to a year would be ideal
Moderate dissatisfaction with pay provided	No mothers said that less than 12 weeks without full pay would be sufficient, but fewer mentioned pay when asked about their ideal leave
Lack of Support from Employer	“I witnessed my company culture become much less accepting of working mothers in general during the pandemic as everyone became a remote employee.” My employer did nothing to help this transition with regard to balancing the increased family demands.”
Lack employer support for partners	-More than ⅔ that responded to this question said their partner took 2 weeks or less off, while most mothers said at least 4 weeks for partners would be ideal -“my husband took 2 weeks and was guilty and made to feel horrible about this.”



## Discussion...

- Legal incentive does seem to improve company maternity leave policy
- Mothers are still dissatisfied with time off
- Pay is less important to *this* demographic
- More time off must be made a realistic option for partners
- This was a highly privileged sample, nearly all respondents were white, all were married, all were over 28, most were highly educated .This sample represents some of the best maternity leave experiences of any mothers in America.

## Future research

- Additional research indeed on a larger sample, and an underprivileged sample.
- The legal relationship between motherhood and disability
- Would better maternity leave options disincentivize hiring women?

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\*Additional references may be made available upon request\*