The U.S. Department of Labor projects that by the end of 2009—for the first time ever—women will constitute more than half the nation’s workforce. Mothers are already the primary breadwinners or co-breadwinners in two-thirds of American families.

A call to action
In January, O’Leary got a phone call from Heather Boushey, senior economist at the Center for American Progress (CAP), a progressive think tank in Washington, D.C. O’Leary, a senior fellow at the center, knew John Podesta—its president and CEO, and former White House Chief of Staff to President Clinton—from her own days in the Clinton Administration, when she served as special assistant to the President in the Domestic Policy Council and senior policy adviser to the Deputy Secretary of Education.

She listened intently as Boushey explained that CAP had been neck-deep in examining women’s rising presence in the U.S. workforce. Shriver wanted to join forces with CAP to take an in-depth look at the implications of this rise, and CAP wanted O’Leary to help make it happen, though her role was yet to be determined.

“I jumped at the chance,” O’Leary recalls. “It was a perfect undertaking for CHEFS, because it aligns seamlessly with our mission to help develop policy solutions to the growing insecurity that American workers and families are facing.”

Even though O’Leary participated by phone during the first big brainstorming meeting between CAP and Shriver, she says that she and Shriver really hit it off. Eventually, O’Leary and Boushey were named co-editors of what ended up being a massive 439-page report—a rich collection of contributions from scholars, experts, and women’s leaders. (O’Leary says her original estimate that the project would take 50 percent of her time for six months was “comically inaccurate.”) The report includes extensive research data from a large-scale national poll, topical essays by renowned scholars, and interviews with...
women’s movement icons, prominent leaders, and public figures. Billie Jean King and Suze Orman each wrote an entry—Oprah Winfrey penned the epilogue.

**Enter Maria Shriver**

The first major national study on women was conducted in 1961—when Shriver’s uncle, President John F. Kennedy, appointed Eleanor Roosevelt chair of the first commission to report on women in America. That kind of fact is Kennedy family lore—and Shriver was aware that nothing quite as comprehensive had been attempted since.

A feminist, veteran national television news reporter, and—of course—the wife of California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, Shriver has hosted the annual California Women’s Conference since 2004. Its surging popularity prompted Shriver to engage her advisors after the October 2008 conference about a large-scale effort to address the dizzying list of concerns affecting women. (See Q&A, p. 17). She contacted CAP, spoke with Podesta, and a partnership was born.

Being Maria Shriver does make certain doors easier to open, such as the one into the Oval Office. Shriver talked to the Obama Administration, which created the White House Council on Women and Girls to look at government’s role in addressing their needs. She says she saw her project as a complement to the White House Council, and that it would reveal important facts and guide legislators on key women’s issues.

This past summer, Shriver and her team traveled to Atlanta, Detroit, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Silicon Valley to engage with everyday women and men about how this ongoing cultural upheaval has affected their lives. Some of those conversations also appear in the report, which aims to spark a national conversation about women’s emerging economic power and what it means to American life.

In conjunction with the report’s release in late October, Shriver spent a week discussing it on various NBC shows including *Meet the Press*. She also appeared with O’Leary on the *Today Show*, and the report was featured prominently in the October 26 issue of *Time*.

“Maria has been extraordinarily effective at publicizing the importance of these issues,” says O’Leary. “Running the California Women’s Conference and her background in journalism enables her both to connect with people and to get media attention. She’s a lovely person, very sharp, and has the ability to get these issues to a new level.”

**Breaking down walls—and myths**

Shriver and O’Leary lament the widely held notion that women have now achieved workplace parity with men—a misperception that is largely a media creation, bolstered by certain jump-off-the-page facts—such as women running more than 10 million small businesses with combined annual sales of $1.1 trillion.

“We’ve come a long way,” says O’Leary, “but not far enough.” *The Shriver Report* asserts that America’s labor standards are woefully outdated by virtue of being based on supporting “traditional” families—in which the husband works and the wife stays at home to care for the children. It calls for new policies that target flexible work hours, social insurance, equitable pay, paid family leave, child care, and elder care.

*The Shriver Report* supports its assertions with copious hard data and a comprehensive poll of nearly 3,500 Americans that reveals deep and permanent changes in the workforce,
More and more American women are looking to education as a bridge to greater opportunity and a heftier paycheck. But in her Shriver Report chapter, “Better Educating Our New Breadwinners,” professor and faculty co-director of Berkeley CHEFS Mary Ann Mason outlines why women’s increased participation in postsecondary education has yet to yield equal pay and benefits from the same array of professions as men. An excerpt follows:

Consider the impact of women’s education degree choices on their jobs and their wages. Women with degrees remain segregated in lower-paying occupations. Nearly all registered nurses (91.7 percent), elementary and middle school teachers (81.6 percent), and preschool and kindergarten teachers (97.8 percent) are women, but women comprise smaller percentages of the highest-paying occupations, such as lawyers and judges (36.5 percent), physicians and surgeons (31.8 percent), dentists (25.4 percent), civil engineers (11.8 percent), electrical and electronics engineers (7.8 percent), aircraft pilots and flight engineers (3.4 percent). What’s more, women with the same degrees still lag behind men’s pay and almost never catch up. Education raises women’s pay, but the gender gap remains at all educational levels.

In 2008, the ratio of women’s to men’s median hourly wages was about 77 cents on the dollar for those with college degrees as well as those with only high school degrees. Women who make significant investments in college educations earn more than they would otherwise, but they don’t earn as much as men, often because they remain in lower-paying female-dominated occupations.

It is not news that women do not receive equal pay for equal work, but what is depressing is that education, the much-touted engine for economic opportunity, fails to provide gender equality. Even with the increased numbers of women in higher education and in the workforce, the wage and power gaps remain large and stagnant at all educational levels. Women who are breadwinners simply cannot bring home a family income equal to a man with the same educational background.

One reason that women may be encouraged or even choose not to enter male-dominated educational fields and occupations is that once female graduates enter the workforce, they find inflexible workplace policies that can exacerbate gender inequalities (policies that are often inflexible across the board, but may be exacerbated in male-dominated fields). Knowing this, students choose jobs they perceive to be more family friendly.

Most workplaces still maintain the structure established in the late 19th century, when husbands worked full time to support their families and never needed to consider taking time off to care for their family member because most had a wife at home to attend to such matters. In this environment, workers are penalized for working less than full time, or for taking a break from their jobs to care for their family. In short, simply opening the door to higher education does not necessarily allow women to achieve true equality in the workforce.
“It makes perfect sense that Boalt would become deeply involved in a project like this,” says Skelton—who also worked in the Clinton White House and founded the California office of the Dewey Square Group, one of the nation’s top public affairs firms. “Boalt has made a serious hands-on push in recent years to produce positive changes in public policy.”

Among the renowned academics chosen to write chapters in the report were Boalt faculty member’s Maria Echaveste on immigrant women (see p. 21), and Mary Ann Mason on education’s failure to achieve equitable pay for women (see p. 16).

“A huge priority for the law school’s research centers is to have the access and ability to reach a national audience on important issues,” says Mason. “The Shriver Report is the ultimate example of that and CHEFS was well-positioned to help.”

Boalt students Eleanor Blume ’10, Tracy Petznick ’11, and Zoe Savitsky ’11 also worked on the project, researching academic literature to aid authors in analyzing how our societal institutions have responded over time to the massive changes in the American workplace and the American family.

In addition to co-editing the report, O’Leary co-authored a chapter with Karen Kornbluh, a work-family expert and former senior adviser to then-Senator Barack Obama, which breaks down government’s failure to support women who are both workers and caretakers. O’Leary notes that taxation schemes and social programs such as Social Security favor “traditional families” with a male breadwinner and a wife who stays home to care for children, which she says makes them “antiquated and inequitable.”

Lowballed on the fast track

Mason, Berkeley CHEFS’ faculty co-director and author of the 2007 book Mothers on the Fast Track: How a New Generation Can Balance Family and Careers, had spent years researching why well-educated women weren’t earning the same money or power as their similarly positioned men. She relished an opportunity to dig beneath the numbers—and to present that analysis to a national audience.

The problem, as Mason sees it, is one of perception. Women today receive 62 percent of college associate’s degrees, 57 percent of bachelor’s degrees, 60 percent of master’s degrees, half of professional degrees, and just under half of Ph.D.’s.

While the figures appear promising, Mason describes how women are institutionally diverted into less technical fields that that don’t pay as well as those traditionally identified with men. In college, for example, women dominate education and health departments but are a small minority in engineering or hard sciences. “And when they finish grad school,” says Mason, “they’re often grappling with the decision of when to have kids.”

What’s more, in male-dominated fields such as law, medicine, and science, Mason notes how professionals must do their important work in the first 10 years. “That’s when women are most likely to have care-giving responsibilities for young children,” she says. “So if they stop working for awhile, which many do, it’s hard to rise up again in a few years because they’re in a front-ended system that allows little room to re-enter.”

Calling all policy makers

Women now represent half of America’s workers—a number expected to surge even higher with robust job growth predicted in female-dominated industries such as education and health. Because women have always had the responsibility of maintaining the home and caring for children—the issue of work-life balance is gaining more attention.

But will legislators and business owners take note of the report’s findings and implement some of its recommendations? “They have to,” says Skelton. “Our report outlines how companies that retain women have a healthier bottom line, so companies that don’t respond to these findings do so at their own peril.”

### Calling all policy makers

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#### the new normal

**Changes in Family Structure and Work, Families with Children under Age 18, 1975 and 2008**

- Married, traditional (only husband employed)
- Married, dual earner
- Married, both parents unemployed
- Married, non-traditional (only wife employed)
- Single parent, employed
- Single parent, unemployed

Skelton sees powerful incentives for businesses to adopt policies that accommodate the needs of child care and elder care. “If they don’t, they’ll lose good workers,” she says. “Women are no longer going to put the golden handcuffs on for 20 years and just allow the rules of their corporation to determine their choices in life.”

Shriver, CAP, Berkeley CHEFS, and other partners in the project now want to spread the word as quickly and effectively as possible. They’re targeting congressional and business leaders through lobbying, meetings, and roundtable discussions across the country.

On November 13, O’Leary testified before the House Education and Labor Department Subcommittee on Workforce Protections. She highlighted the fact that mothers are now breadwinners making as much or more than their spouses—or doing it all on their own—in nearly 40 percent of American families.

In her testimony, O’Leary said that “the authors of the report find that our institutions have not adequately kept up with these changes. Our government still relies on social policies built around the traditional family. So too does our health system with access to insurance often tied to good jobs, which are more likely to be held by men than women.”

The problem? Half of American workers aren’t covered by this law. What’s more, any leave granted under FMLA is unpaid, meaning many workers can’t take advantage of it because they can’t afford the loss of family income.

In practice, notes O’Leary, the law favors families with one parent who makes less money—most often the woman—providing care while the higher-paid parent continues to support the family by working. The U.S. is also the only industrialized country without government-sponsored or employer-required paid maternity leave, and one of only a handful with no paid parental leave for fathers.

During her recent testimony before Congress, O’Leary also took aim at the failure of our employment discrimination laws to fully cover the needs of pregnant women and caregivers. O’Leary

### Social insecurity

*The Shriver Report* cites the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) as a prime example of governmental failure to keep pace with women’s labor force advancements. Passed in 1993, the law guarantees up to 12 weeks of job-protected unpaid leave for qualified employees for the birth or care of the employee’s child, care of an immediate family member with a serious health condition, or an employee’s own serious health condition.

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### Working wives bringing home half or more of family earnings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1967</th>
<th>2008</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All wives</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With child under 18</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With child under 6</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother with high school diploma</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother with some college</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother with college degree</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>35.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother under age 30</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother aged 30 to 44</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women under age 30</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women 30 to 44</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women 45 to 60</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>36.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*Note: Data include married couples with a wife over age 18. Data do not include gay or lesbian couples, regardless of marital status.*

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“This is an accurate and detailed portrait of American women and families at a transformational moment in our history.”

— Maria Shriver

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testified that while most Americans believe it is illegal to fire a pregnant worker, the gaps in our laws mean there are many lawful reasons to fire a pregnant worker—and that these reasons often disproportionately harm lower-wage workers. For example, a number of federal courts have interpreted the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 to mean employers that do not allow leave to recover from an illness or disability aren’t obligated to provide leave to pregnant workers.

O’Leary says the courts have also been clear that if a pregnant worker is told by her doctor that she shouldn’t lift heavy objects or should stay off her feet, “the Pregnancy Discrimination Act does not require her employer to accommodate these restrictions. Instead, the employer can legally fire the pregnant worker.”

The Shriver Report also urges government action to support predictable and flexible workplace schedules. Most American workers have no ability to control the time they start and end their work days, to work from a different location, or to reduce their work hours. Low-wage workers, often in retail, routinely find that their schedules are changed from week to week or even day to day. “That makes it almost impossible,” says O’Leary, “to organize consistent, quality child care or elder care.”

O’Leary also points to the quandary posed by social insurance, which was developed around the notion that couples are married for life, the husband earns the family income, and the wife tends to children or aging relatives. But many of today’s women, O’Leary warns, won’t have enough Social Security retirement money to live on because of years taken away from the workforce to raise children or care for ailing parents. This is particularly true of women who don’t qualify for spousal benefits either because they were never married or got divorced within their first 10 years of marriage.

“All of this means individuals and families have to face these problems as their own personal struggles,” O’Leary says. “That’s how we’re conditioned to think, rather than ‘How does your employer work with you?’” Her concern is that these struggles “have a negative impact on the health and well-being of our families and often cause economic detriment from lost income to lost jobs.”

Despite the myriad problems women face amid their perilous tightrope act in balancing work and family considerations, Shriver and O’Leary hope this new report provides the impetus for new solutions and lasting change.

“This is an accurate and detailed portrait of American women and families at a transformational moment in our history,” says Shriver. “Our hope is that policy makers, armed with our surveys and analysis, can develop updated policies and practices that address and support the needs of today’s American women, men, and families.”

Q&A

Maria Shriver discussed the creation of The Shriver Report with the same drive and enthusiasm that has made her an award-winning journalist and producer, and best-selling author. As California’s First Lady—and mother of four children—she has been a zealous advocate for women’s empowerment—while also promoting service and activism through programs on behalf of the working poor, the intellectually disabled, and families coping with Alzheimer’s disease. Shriver hopes that A Woman’s Nation will be a powerful catalyst in an ongoing process of bringing public policy and workplace practices into alignment with the new realities facing women, men, and their families. She recently discussed the report with senior communications writer Andrew Cohen.

Andrew Cohen: What prompted you to initiate this project?
Maria Shriver: For the past several years I’ve hosted the Women’s Conference, an annual conference for and about women held in California. Every year it has grown. When the 2008 conference sold out in just a couple hours, it hit me that something profound was going on with women. We’d program a workshop on caring for aging parents, and it was standing-room-only. We’d bring in speakers to talk about how to start up a business, and the room was packed. We couldn’t book enough sessions on empowerment, activism, and spirituality. All of them were filled.

I knew we needed to learn some new, hard facts about today’s American woman. Who is she? How does she live? What does she think? What does she earn? What are her politics? How does she define power?
How does she define success? What does she think of marriage? What does she really think of men? How does she want to live her life moving forward? I went to the Center for American Progress, which was in the midst of studying the impact of the changing economy on women as women were about to break through and account for half of all U.S. workers. I knew we needed to understand how this change is affecting our major societal institutions—government, business, media, faith-based organizations—and to understand how men and women were responding.

Why was Berkeley CHEFS chosen as one of the project’s main partners? Ann O’Leary participated in our initial brainstorming with the Center for American Progress. With leadership from Ann and Berkeley CHEFS, we were able to attract top-notch academic and policy experts from UC Berkeley and around the country to contribute to this project.

Women now constitute the majority of American workers, and most families have two wage earners. Why have our institutions failed to adapt to this reality? I think that for many years, our society was slow to understand that women’s entry into the workforce was a permanent shift. Women are now half of the workforce, and two-thirds of mothers are primary breadwinners or co-breadwinners. That’s where we are now, and that change affects all of our major institutions. Fewer than 30 percent of kids have a stay-at-home parent today. What impact does that have on the government, on business, on men, on women, on faith-based institutions? Our report concludes that all of these institutions have failed to adapt to this change and that in order for them to survive they must adapt and change.

How do you think the report will help influence policy? I think anyone who reads this report will conclude that it’s smart government policy to help and support American workers who are stretched, men and women, on both ends of the spectrum. I believe the report is already influencing and shaping policy by starting a national conversation about these issues. When I went on NBC’s Meet the Press with White House Senior Advisor Valerie Jarrett and Center for American Progress CEO John Podesta to launch this report, it was the first time in years that the issue of work-family challenges had been covered on a major Sunday morning news program—a program geared toward policy makers. Already we know the Obama Administration and Congress are paying attention. Vice President Biden covered them at a hearing for his Middle Class Middle Class Task Force, and legislators of both parties are examining the report to better understand the issues that workers and families face today.

Recently, a controversial and widely reported study, The Paradox of Declining Female Happiness, purported to show that women have become steadily unhappier since 1972. What’s your take on that study’s findings? I don’t think the findings of that study are terribly surprising. People are stretched thin with the responsibilities of work and home, and these responsibilities often impact women more acutely than men. As part of The Shriver Report, we conducted a poll along with Time and the Rockefeller Foundation that showed that our have not kept up with the change in American life. They feel government isn’t modern, isn’t smart about the way it deals with the American family. People also overwhelmingly think it’s been good that women have gone to work but that they need to be accommodated so they can be there for their children. Then people I would think get the best of both worlds. Men and women alike agreed that government and business need to provide supports to make it easier to both work and provide care.

“ Our society was slow to understand that women’s entry into the workforce was a permanent shift.”
Immigrant women are seen in communities across the country pushing strollers, feeding children, and playing in city playgrounds. An Asian face, a Caribbean accent, or the echo of Spanish reveals that millions of Americans entrust their most precious treasures—their children—to immigrants who are often undocumented. Many Americans entrust these same women, who sometimes have limited training and difficult-to-understand accents, with the care of their aging parents. They entrust their homes as well—thousands of housekeepers take public transportation across the country to dust, clean, and sweep for working individuals and families who are too exhausted to handle the burden of cleaning their own homes.

Immigrants also make up a substantial part of the countless workers who harvest fruits and vegetables across the country, who ensure a steady supply of milk and dairy products, and who slaughter chickens and cows for nightly dinner tables.

A significant number of those workers are immigrant women, who often risk sexual harassment from male supervisors and endure arduous physical labor in an effort to provide for their own families. Many are indigenous people, able to communicate more easily in Mixtec than in Spanish. And then there are the countless office cleaners who descend upon downtown buildings in cities across the country, ensuring that all the crumbs from a lunch eaten over the keyboard are vacuumed up and the trash can is empty when office workers return in the morning.

What is it about this work—child and parental care, home maintenance, food production, cleaning—that allows society to treat the workers in these occupations as invisible, or at least less important than the software developer, insurance adjustor, or any of the countless other occupations that have greater status in our society? If we measure status, or the lack thereof, by income, working conditions, benefits, and simple respect, then the above-described occupations clearly have very little. Is it that nurturing children and maintaining homes has been undervalued for decades, if not centuries?

In a society where knowledge workers are the most highly compensated, it is not surprising that those who work with their hands or engage in physical labor are undervalued. Or was the work once valued, but now easier to under-appreciate or ignore since it is increasingly performed by immigrants, legal and otherwise? Such an attitude ignores their significant role in the American labor force—the increase in the American workforce over that past decade is due to the levels of immigration, legal and otherwise.

The U.S. economy has lost millions of manufacturing jobs overseas, many of which are unlikely to return. In her Shriver Report chapter, “Invisible Yet Essential,” Boalt lecturer in residence Maria Echaveste writes that with our economy increasingly based on a growing service sector, “we need to challenge ourselves to value the work of women, and especially the work of immigrant women.” An excerpt follows:

**Invisible Woman**

Maria Echaveste

The U.S. economy has lost millions of manufacturing jobs overseas, many of which are unlikely to return. In her *Shriver Report* chapter, “Invisible Yet Essential,” Boalt lecturer in residence Maria Echaveste writes that with our economy increasingly based on a growing service sector, “we need to challenge ourselves to value the work of women, and especially the work of immigrant women.” An excerpt follows:

Public strongly supports policy change to support work-life balance

- Strongly agree
- Total agree

- Businesses that fail to adapt to the needs of modern families risk losing good workers.  
  - 53%  
  - 76%

- Employers should be required to give workers more flexibility in their work schedules.  
  - 40%  
  - 74%

- Businesses should provide their employees with more child care benefits.  
  - 46%  
  - 73%

- The government should provide funding for child care to support parents who work.  
  - 36%  
  - 59%