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BACKGROUND

Impacts of the recent economic recession reach far beyond financial hardship. Job loss, stock devaluation, real estate devaluation and tight lending markets create societal effects which can profoundly impact women's decisions regarding household matters. The H1N1 pandemic passed with serious outcomes, though not nearly as serious as what consumers were led to anticipate.

House cleaning can be an area of concern for busy women and working mothers, especially as it relates to maintaining a healthy environment for the family. Asthma and allergy triggers, toxins in cleaning chemicals and infectious disease threaten a healthy indoor environment yet many women have little time to tackle these threats. The study was a joint research venture between Maid Brigade and Mom Corps, the pioneer and leader of the flexible employment market. The two companies have allied to help women improve the quality of their lives through work/life balance. The two companies wanted to understand women's views on such issues, whether any shifts have occurred since the recession ended and to what extent those views impacted their actions.

OBJECTIVE

The Work/Life Balance survey was designed to compare and contrast the current attitudes and behaviors of women, especially mothers, to those revealed in a similar study conducted in 4th quarter 2009 regarding housework, infectious disease and work/life balance.

METHODOLOGY

The Maid Brigade/Mom Corps research project was administered via electronic (online) survey. Invitations to complete the survey were disseminated via banner ads, electronic and printed newsletters, and email campaigns. The survey was conducted between February 2 and April 4, 2011. Demographically, the sample base of 1,085 respondents closely aligns with Maid Brigade's customer profile.

One key change in methodology should be noted: this survey segregated the respondents based on whether they cleaned their own home (Do-It-Yourself, or DIY group) or had help with cleaning (either through a service or

an individual). Based on the female survey respondent sample size, extrapolated to the US female population ages 25 - 64, there is a 95% confidence level that the statistics are reliable within a sampling error of 3.24%.

STUDY SCOPE

The study included twenty-seven closed answer questions designed to explore the three essential themes:

Theme	Attitudes	Behaviors
General Housework	Perceptions of housework	Who cleans; how often
	Aspirations & priorities for a clean home	Use of green products
	Motivations for a clean home	
	Triggers for having help or DIY	
	Expectations for house cleaning outcomes	
Health, Infectious Disease & Germs	Evaluations of home cleanliness compared to others	
	H1N1 – a local threat?	Vaccine history/intentions
	Concerns about cross-contamination	Disinfection methods
Work/Life Balance	Perceptions of home sanitary-level	
	Perceptions of individual work/life balance	Use of cleaning help to achieve work/life balance
	“2 nd shift” phenomenon	
	Ability of outside cleaning help to improve or maintain work/life balance	

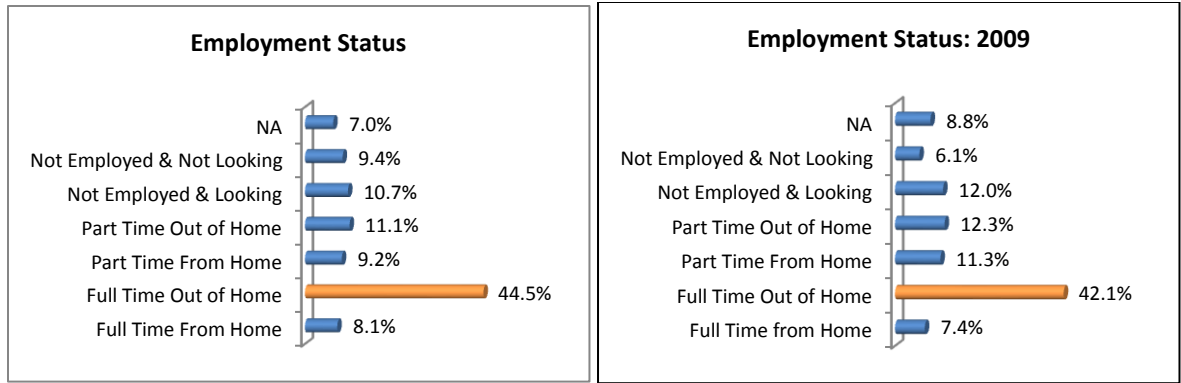
WORK/LIFE BALANCE.

STUDY FINDINGS

GENERAL HOUSEWORK

Changes in labor market. A comparison in employment status from study to study reveals an increase in the number of respondents with full-time employment and corresponding decreases in those with part-time employment and those unemployed but not looking for work.

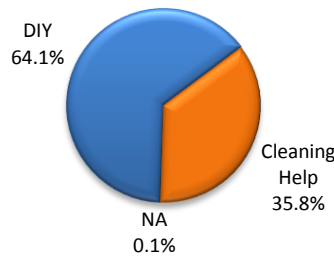




QUESTION 20: What is your employment status?

Who's Doing the Cleaning? Over one in three households uses outside cleaning help, an increase from one in four in the 2009 study. It is unknown whether this change is due to an improvement in the job market now that the recession is officially over or a need to return to the workforce as a means of financial recovery. Regardless, it is presumed to be a reflection of changes in the labor market due to the recovering economy.

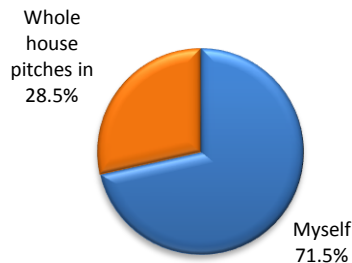
Do-It-Yourself OR Cleaning Help?



Question 1: Who cleans your home?

Those who clean for themselves (the Do-It-Yourself, or DIY, group), do so primarily alone. Less than one third of respondents have help from others sharing the home.

Does anyone help?

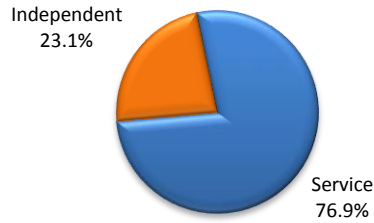


Question 2: [DIY] Are you cleaning primarily by yourself or does your entire household pitch in?

Those respondents who have outside cleaning help typically use a service rather than an individual. In addition to an increase in the number of respondents using some form of outside help for cleaning there was a slight, but probably negligible, increase in the number of households with help that use a service versus an independent.



What kind of help is used?

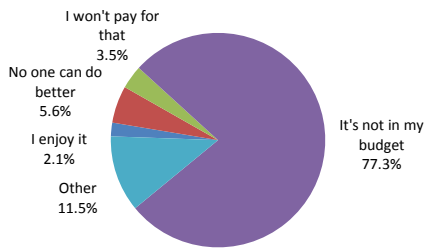


Question 2: [CH] Do you use a cleaning service or have a housekeeper?

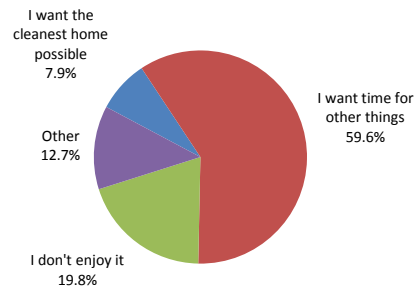
By comparison, in the 2009 study 73% of those with help used a service rather than an individual.

What Is the Reason for this Arrangement? The DIY group does the cleaning because of budgetary reasons. 77.3% say 'it's not in my budget', a decrease from 85.1% in the 2009 study. The group with cleaning help doesn't hire out the work in order to get expert results; they also do so because they want to do other things with that time.

Reasons I clean for myself [DIY]



Reasons I have help [Cleaning Help]

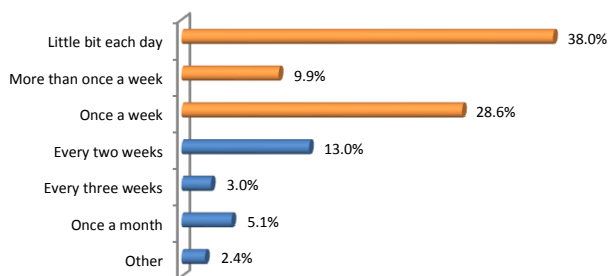


QUESTION 3: [DIY] I/we clean our home because... OR [CH] I have cleaning help because....

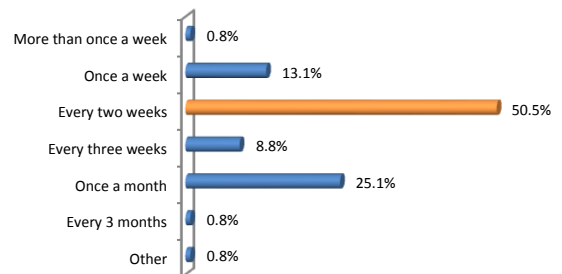
Only 7.9% of those with help say 'they want the cleanest home possible' while a full 59.6% indicate they 'want time for other things'.

Frequency of cleaning. The DIY group cleans at least twice as often as those with cleaning help: a full 76.5% cleans at least once a week, whereas those with help are usually cleaned every two weeks.

How often do you clean? [DIY]



How often do they clean? [Cleaning Help]

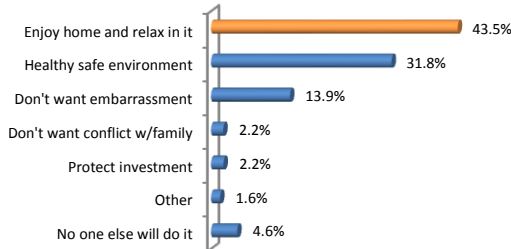


QUESTION 5: [DIY] How often do you clean your home? OR [CH] How often is your home cleaned?

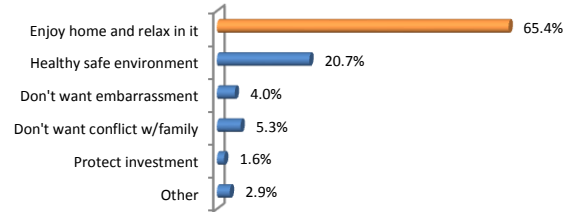


Motivations for a clean home. The number one reason respondents clean or have their homes cleaned is to 'enjoy my home and relax in it'. A full 51.4% of *total* respondents cited enjoyment and relaxation as the greatest motivation to clean or have a cleaning. 27.8% of *total* respondents chose 'healthy safe environment' as the secondary motivator, however the gap between the number one and number two choices differs noticeably between the DIY and cleaning help groups.

Greatest motivator [DIY]



Greatest motivator [Cleaning Help]



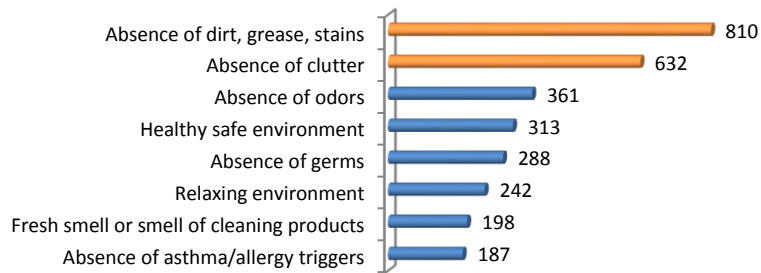
QUESTION 4: [DIY] What is the greatest motivator to clean your house? OR [CH] What is the greatest motivator to have your house cleaned?

This gap may be due to a pre-disposed bias on the part of the Cleaning Help group; presumably consumers of cleaning help hire out the service to delegate the responsibility.

The Cleaning Help group selected 'don't want conflict with family' twice as often as those who cleaned themselves. Focus groups conducted by Maid Brigade in 2006 identified conflict avoidance as a perceived benefit for having help for some consumers.

What IS a clean home? Respondents were asked to define a clean home by selecting three phrases from a list of eight. The primary and secondary concerns stand out dramatically from all other answers and are, interestingly, the only selections that describe *visual* outcomes of cleaning.

Define a clean home

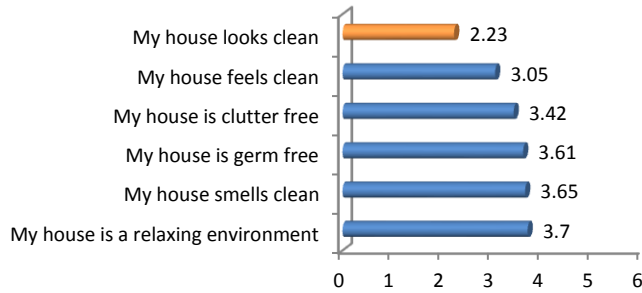


QUESTION 6: What three phrases best define a clean home in your opinion?

Odors rank a distant third, germs rank fifth and asthma and allergy triggers rank last. This suggests that consumers, whether cleaning for themselves or hiring it out, don't connect a clean indoor environment with health benefits. When ranking statements related to cleaning outcomes, consumers again placed the greatest importance on *appearance*.



Ranked Importance (1= Most Important)



QUESTION 7: Rank these statements in order of importance to you:

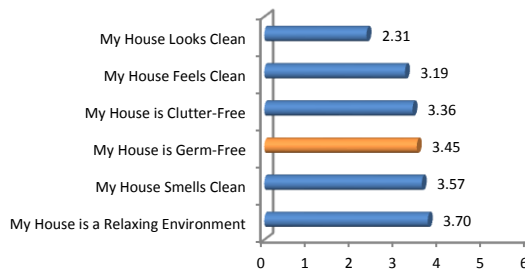
The gap between the ranking for ‘looks clean’ and the tight cluster of the five remaining answers (3.05 to 3.7 on a 6-point scale) reinforces the theory suggested by respondents’ definitions for a clean home – that cleaning for appearance is the critical aspect on which consumers are focused. It is ironic to note that although respondents said that a relaxing environment was the greatest motivator for having a clean home they place the *least* amount of importance on this statement. (see *Work/Life Balance*, page 10)

HEALTH: INFECTIOUS DISEASE, ASTHMA & ALLERGIES, GREEN CLEANING

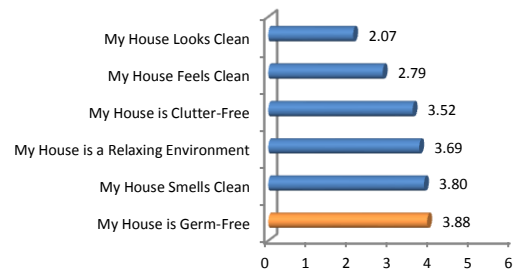
When segregating the ranked importance statements results for the two groups it is interesting to note the differences in rankings for the least important statement. The DIY cleaners rank a ‘germ-free home’ fourth in importance and a ‘relaxing environment’ last, just as in the graph above for all survey respondents. However the Cleaning Help group reported the direct inverse, placing a germ-free environment as their lowest priority. The low priority, or lack thereof, for a germ-free environment identifies another disconnect for consumers with regard to the health benefits of a clean environment.

WORK/LIFE BALANCE.

Ranked importance [DIY]



Ranked importance [Cleaning Help]

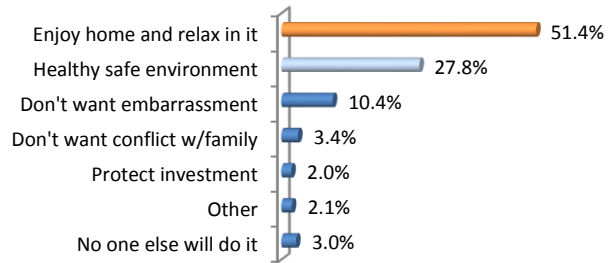


QUESTION 7

There is a contradiction between attitudes about germs when the context is cleaning versus infectious disease. When respondents are asked about motivations, definitions, and evaluations for home cleanliness, germs are a low priority.



Greatest motivator for a clean home



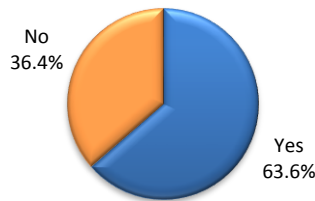
QUESTION 4

Only 27.8% of the survey group said that having a 'healthy, safe environment' was the greatest motivator for having a clean house.

'Absence of germs' ranks in the middle of the pack (fourth among eight) as the best definition of a clean home, as shown in Question 6 (see page 5). Respondents also assign medium priority (ranking it fourth among six possible responses) to a 'germ-free' home as the most important aspect of a clean home, as shown in Question 7 (see page 6).

Yet *there is significant concern about infectious disease*. Two in three respondents expressed 'concern about the threat of infectious disease affecting their community', retrospective to the H1N1 threat in the 2009/2010 flu season.

Did H1N1 cause concerns about infectious disease?

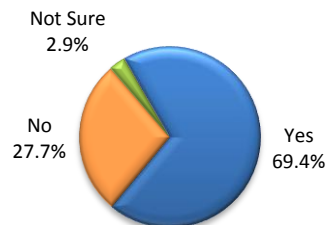


QUESTION 14: Although the H1N1 flu epidemic is over, did it raise your concerns about the spread of infectious diseases in general?

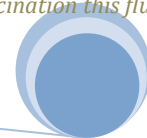
This is actually down from the previous study, where 77.4% indicated some concern over H1N1. [A change in methodology on this question could be a contributing factor to the reduction.] The decrease is not surprising considering the H1N1 pandemic did not reach the epic proportions anticipated.

Nevertheless, there was a notable increase in respondents who said someone in their household did or would get a flu vaccination during the 2010/2011 flu season. By comparison, 58% answered 'yes' in the last study.

Getting a flu vaccine this flu season?

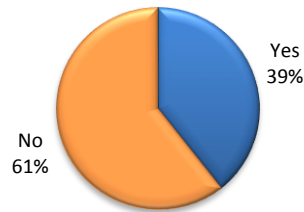


QUESTION 16: Did any member of your household have or do they plan to get a flu vaccination this flu season?



An apparent disconnect exists between house cleaning and infectious disease. Consumers may view their home as a “safe haven”, not seeing their personal living space as a source for germ exposures as well. Less than 40% of the survey group reported concerns about cross-contamination (transporting germs from one area to another) while cleaning, yet cross-contamination contributes to the spread of infectious disease.

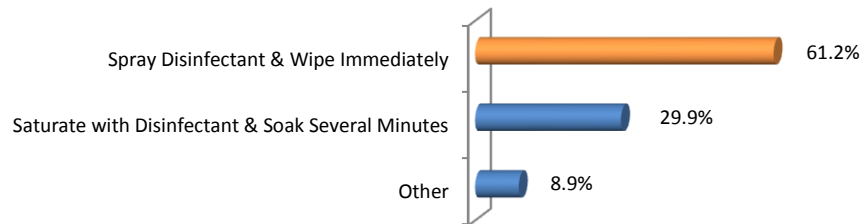
Concern about cross-contamination?



QUESTION 12: Do you worry about transporting bacteria from one room or surface to the next when cleaning?

Fewer than one third (29.9%) disinfect correctly, by spraying the surface and then letting the disinfectant sit for several minutes before wiping. Incorrectly, 61.2% of respondents spray and wipe immediately, not giving the disinfectant adequate “dwell time” time to kill bacteria and viruses.

What method is used to disinfect?

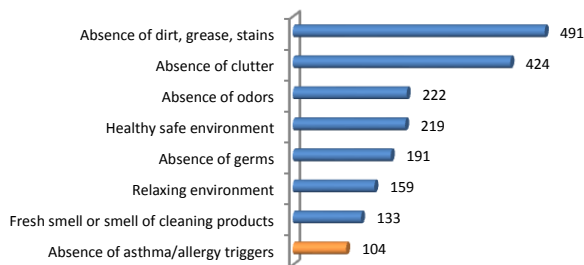


QUESTION 17: When disinfecting a surface or area in my home I usually...

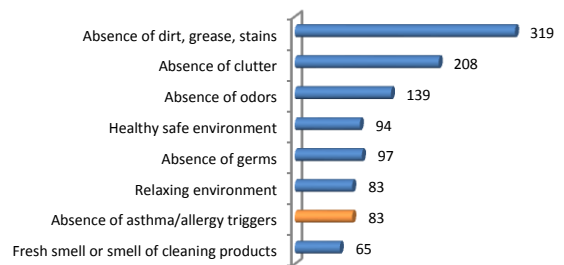
The findings pinpoint a gap in understanding about contamination prevention and disinfection techniques to control infectious disease and reduce exposure risks. There is also a gap in understanding about the links between cleaning and health in the context of infectious disease, the indoor environment and the family. It should be noted that there is no change from the previous study in findings related to cross-contamination concerns and disinfection technique.

Asthma and Allergy Alert: Consumers do not apparently recognize cleaning as a method to control asthma and allergy triggers in the home, based upon its lack of popularity among the various phrase selections to define a ‘clean home’.

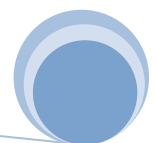
Define a clean home [DIY]



Define a clean home [Cleaning Help]



QUESTION 6

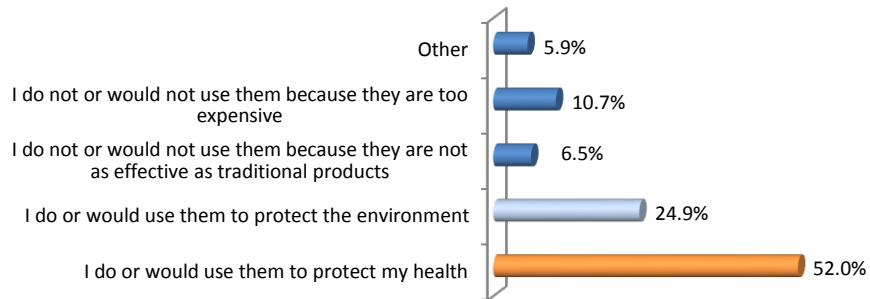


The phrase ‘no asthma and allergy triggers’ ranked seventh or eighth out of eight possible choices to define a clean home. For each group, the number of respondents choosing this option is a fourth or fifth option of those selecting the most popular choice, ‘absence of dirt, grease and stains’.

Another gap in understanding exists regarding asthma and allergies and cleaning. Based on the survey responses, consumers don’t see cleaning as a strategy for reducing triggers that cause asthma or allergy attacks indoors. Both indoor and outdoor triggers are present inside the home. Children can be threatened by pollen, dust, dust mites, pet dander, dirt, hair, insect detritus and VOCs from cleaning and other household chemicals in the indoor environment. The Centers for Disease Control announced in January 2011 that a slight increase in asthma cases in the US had been documentedⁱ based on a 2009 survey which estimated that 25 million Americans have asthma. The CDC study also finds that over 10 million children under 18 years of age have asthma (13.8% of all children less than 18 years of age). For allergies, the 2009 study found that over 7 million children have hay fever (9.8%), over 8 million have respiratory allergies (11%) and nearly 9 million have skin allergies (12%). Busy women would benefit from more information to help them become aware of and better avoid all the various asthma and allergy triggers that can be found indoors.

What about green cleaning? Respondents were asked about their use or intended use of green cleaning products for various reasons. Green cleaning products appear better understood today than they did five years ago. Half of respondents indicated awareness of health benefits and three in four consumers (74.9%) use or would use them for either health or environmental benefits.

Green cleaning product usage and reason



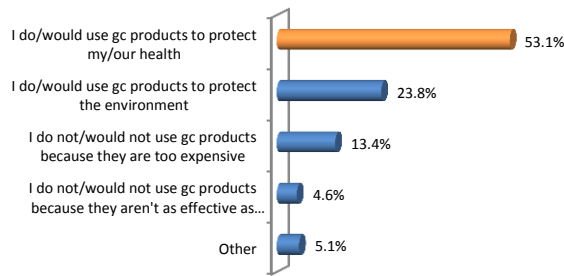
QUESTION 13: Which of these statements most accurately describes your situation?

Compare these data points with the 2007 Green Cleaning Survey, when only one in three respondents cited health benefits as the primary reason they began using green products and one in four cited health (prevention and wellness) as the greatest advantage of a green cleaning program.

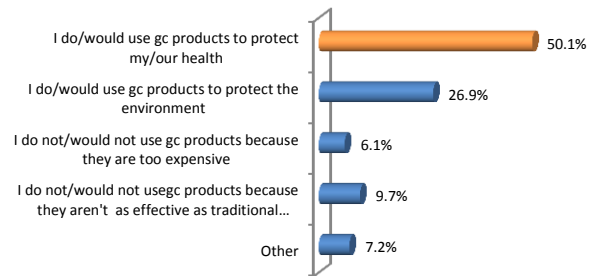
The distribution of responses for the DIY and Cleaning Help groups was very similar for the affirmative choices, but some subtle differences occur on the negative choices. Fewer than half as many in the Cleaning Help group cited expense as the reason they do not or would not use green cleaning products compared to the DIY group (6.1% versus 13.4%, respectively). Conversely, fewer than half as many in the DIY group indicated efficacy as the reason they do not or would not use green cleaning products compared to the Cleaning Help group (4.6% versus 9.7%).



Green cleaning product usage and reason [DIY]



Green cleaning product usage and reason [Cleaning Help]



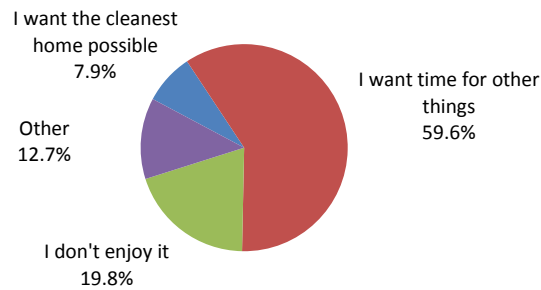
QUESTION 13

WORK/LIFE BALANCE

Necessity, not luxury. Although the number one reason respondents clean or have their homes cleaned is 'to enjoy my home and relax in it' (see Question 4, page 5), a 'relaxing environment' is the *least* important aspect of a clean home to them. (see Question 7, page 6)

Further, they are not relaxing once their home is clean; the majority of respondents (59.6%) who have cleaning help reported their reason for having help is 'I want to have time for other things'.

I have cleaning help because...

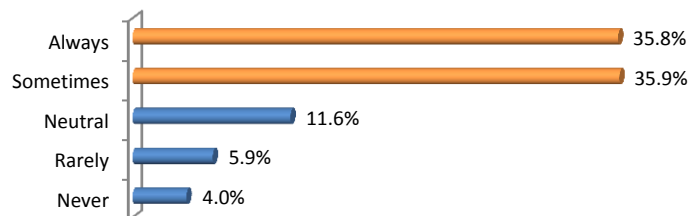


QUESTION 3: [CH] I have cleaning help because...

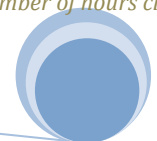
Finally, the *least* popular reason respondents have cleaning help is the professional expertise ('I want the cleanest home possible' was cited by just 7.9% of respondents with help.) (see Question 7, page 6)

Perhaps this is because 71.7% feel they work a '2nd shift', spending a number of hours cleaning and keeping house in addition to spending time in the paid workforce. There is no change compared with the prior study.

To What Extent Do You Feel You Work a "Second Shift" at Home?



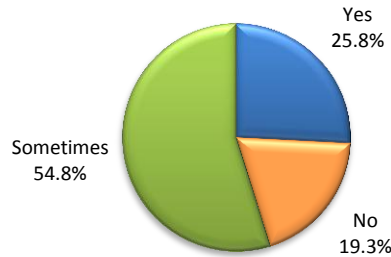
QUESTION 8: To what extent do you feel you work a "second shift": at home, spending a number of hours cleaning and keeping house, after spending time in the paid workforce?



Multi-tasking is mainstream. Women don't have enough time to do it all, and respondents feel burdened by their multiple roles.

25.8% of respondents said yes when asked whether 'they feel they manage the details of their life well and are able to maintain a proper work/life balance'. This is an increase over the 20% who answered yes in the prior study, which may be impacted by the higher percentage of respondents with cleaning help in the current study.

Manage the details and maintain proper work/life balance

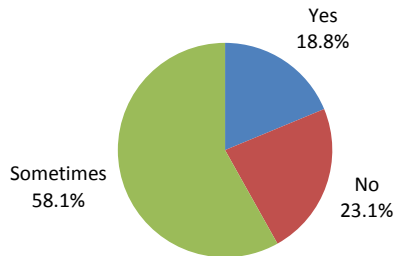


QUESTION 9: Do you feel that you manage the details of your life well and are able to maintain a proper work/life balance?

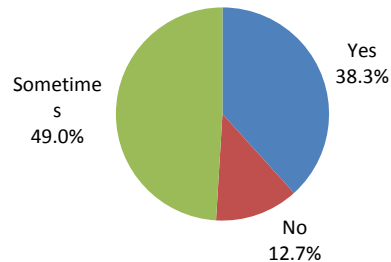
Still, three out of four respondents felt they did not have a proper work/life balance.

Compared to the DIY group, more than twice as many respondents with cleaning help say 'they manage the details well and have a proper work/life balance' (17.2% versus 35.7% respectively). Having cleaning help appears to improve quality of life by providing a better sense of balance according to survey respondents.

Manage and balance [DIY]



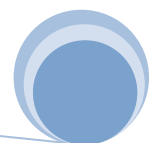
Manage and balance [Cleaning Help]



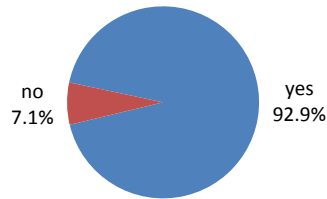
QUESTION 9

WORK/LIFE BALANCE.

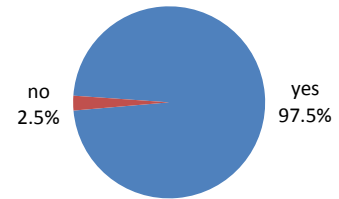
The cleaning solution. 97.5% of respondents who clean for themselves say cleaning help would give them better work/life balance, and 92.9% of those with help confirm that having cleaning help does give them better balance. These figures are very consistent with the 2009 study.



Having help would give me better balance [DIY]



Having help does give me better balance [Cleaning Help]

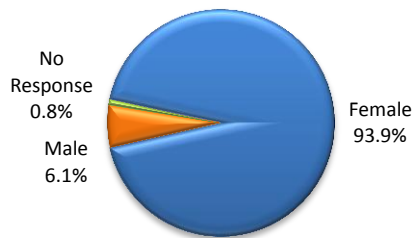


QUESTION 10: [DIY] Do you feel that having outside cleaning help would give you a better work/life balance? OR [CH] Do you feel that having outside cleaning help does give you better work/life balance?

DEMOGRAPHICS

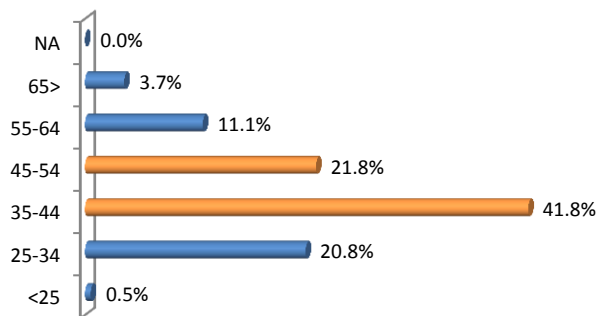
The respondent demographic makeup is consistent with the 2009 survey.

Gender Breakdown



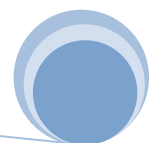
QUESTION 18: In which of these groups do you belong?

Female Age Breakdown

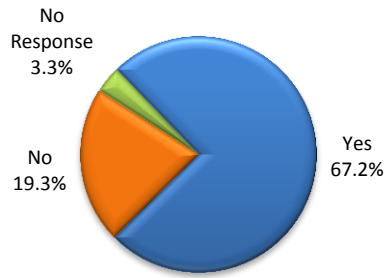


QUESTION 18

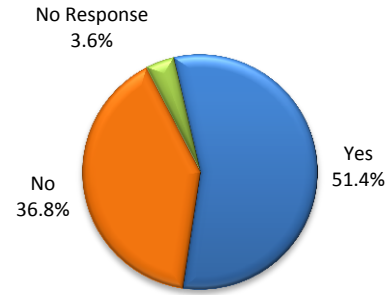
63.6% of female respondents are between 35 and 54 years of age.



Presence of Children [DIY]

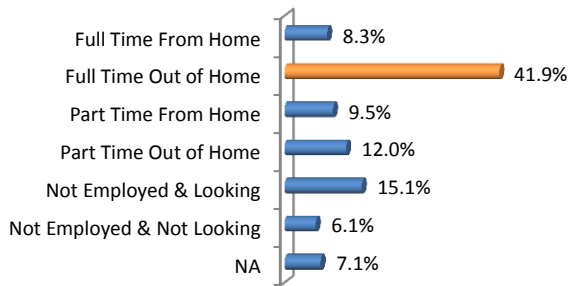


Presence of Children [Cleaning Help]

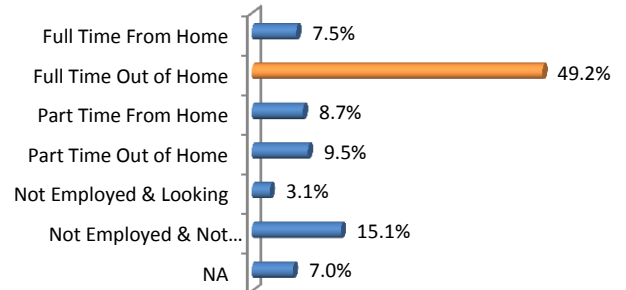


QUESTION 19: Do you have children living at home?

Employment Status [DIY]



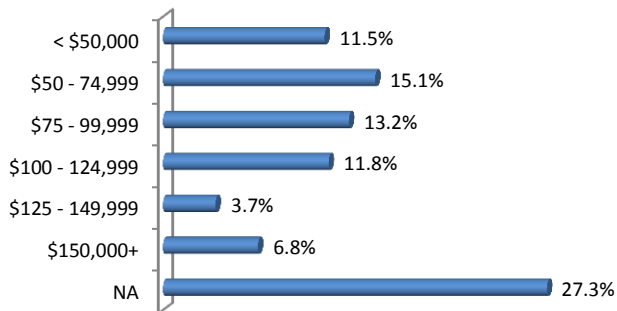
Employment Status [Cleaning Help]



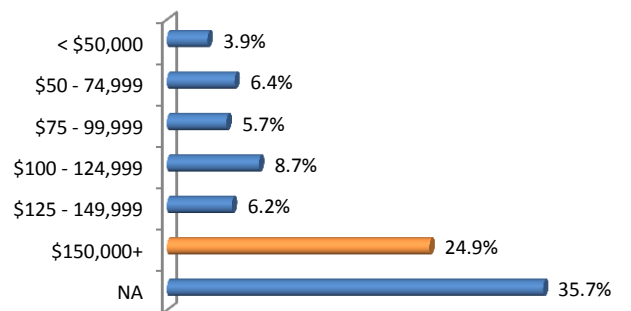
QUESTION 20: What is your employment status?

WORK/LIFE BALANCE.

Household Income [DIY]



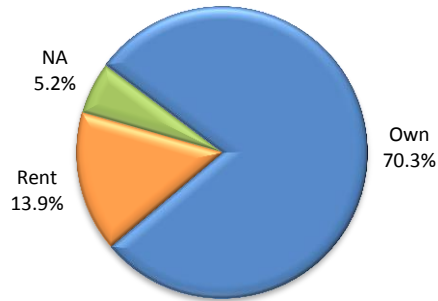
Household Income [Cleaning Help]



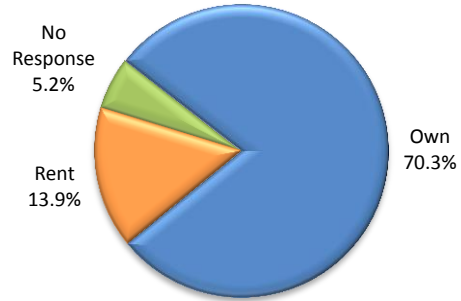
QUESTION 21: In which of the following income brackets does your household fall?



Rent vs. Own [DIY]

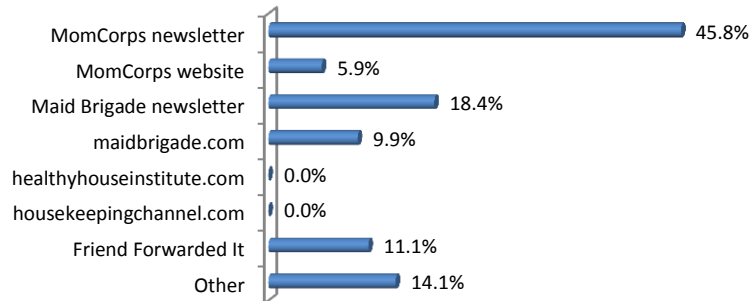


Rent vs. Own [DIY]



QUESTION 22: Do you own or rent your home?

How did you hear about this survey?



QUESTION 23: How did you hear about this survey?

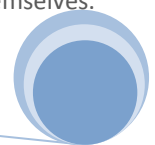
CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

The core audience for cleaning services is a time-starved female – one who is a working mother with a mortgage and several extracurricular obligations. For most women who have cleaning help, the service is an imperative rather than an indulgence.

Women with cleaning help don't relax, as intended, during the extra time that having cleaning help creates in their busy schedules. Instead they are doing other important things.

Women are largely focused on the visual outcome of cleaning, prioritizing a clean and clutter-free appearance above one that is germ-free, odor-free or free from asthma and allergy triggers. The data suggests consumers may not view the home as an exposure point for sickness – a disconnect between 'local' and 'immediate' environments as the sphere of risk. However, these other possible outcomes could improve quality of life for women and their families. Understanding about exposure points for infectious disease in the home could be improved; respondents lacked awareness on cross-contamination as a concern, do not disinfect properly and placed very low priority on a home free of asthma and allergy triggers.

Women seem to understand that green cleaning has health and environmental benefits. Those with cleaning help (skewed by the number of respondents who are Maid Brigade customers) seem to have a better grasp on the efficacy of green products and their relative expense than those who clean for themselves.



Work/life balance seems elusive; three quarters of women feel they work a '2nd shift' and do not manage the details of their lives well. They do not hire cleaning services because they want their home to be as clean as possible, they do so for the time-saving advantage. Women without help feel certain that having cleaning help would improve their sense of work/life balance and women who use outside help confirm that it does improve balance.

Overall the findings represented some key changes in perceptions and behaviors regarding cleaning, infectious disease and work/life balance.

The improving economy is reflected in respondent answers:

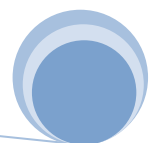
- More people using outside cleaning help
- Fewer DIY-ers citing budget reasons

Cleaning is not viewed as a strategy to control health risks such as infectious disease or asthma and/or allergy triggers.

The increase in use of outside cleaning help seems to improve quality of life and work/life balance:

- Overall feelings of balance increased in correlation with usage
- Twice as many respondents with help reported experiencing balance as those without help

To read all the survey questions, please see the [Appendix](#).



APPENDIX – SURVEY QUESTIONS

- Question 1: *Who cleans your home?*
- Question 2: [DIY] *Are you cleaning primarily by yourself or does your entire household pitch in?*
[CH] *Do you use a cleaning service or have a housekeeper?*
- Question 3: [DIY] *I/we clean our home because...*
[CH] *I have cleaning help because...*
- Question 4: [DIY] *What is the greatest motivator to clean your house?*
[CH] *What is the greatest motivator to have your house cleaned?*
- Question 5: [DIY] *How often do you clean your home?*
[CH] *How often is your home cleaned?*
- Question 6: *What three phrases best define a clean home in your opinion?*
- Question 7: *Rank these statements in order of importance to you:*
- Question 8: *To what extent do you feel you work a “second shift”: at home, spending a number of hours cleaning and keeping house, after spending time in the paid workforce?*
- Question 9: *Do you feel that you manage the details of your life well and are able to maintain a proper work/life balance?*
- Question 10: [DIY] *Do you feel that having outside cleaning help would give you a better work/life balance?*
[CH] *Do you feel that using an outside cleaning service gives you better work/life balance?*
- Question 11: [DIY] *Why do you feel outside cleaning help would give you better work/life balance?*
[CH] *Why do you feel outside cleaning help gives you better work/life balance?*
- Question 12: *Do you worry about transporting bacteria from one from or surface to the next when cleaning?*
- Question 13: *Which of these statements most accurately describes your situation?*
- Question 14: *Although the H1N1 flu epidemic is over, did it raise your concerns about the spread of infectious diseases in general?*
- Question 15: *What diseases are you concerned about?*
- Question 16: *Did any member of your household have or do they plan to get a flu vaccination this flu season?*
- Question 17: *When disinfecting a surface or area in my home I usually...*
- Question 18: *In which of these groups do you belong?*
- Question 19: *Do you have children living at home?*
- Question 20: *What is your employment status?*
- Question 21: *In which of the following income brackets does your household fall?*
- Question 22: *Do you own or rent your home?*
- Question 23: *How did you hear about this survey?*

ⁱ http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/41040703/ns/health-allergies_and_asthma/

