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Women executives working overtime, with help from spouses with flexible hours

By Rachel Hatzipanagos
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A survey released Wednesday shows that most women leading large businesses in Florida work more than the typical 40-hour workweek. But that doesn't mean they don't have time to raise children.

The key, in part, is having a partner with a flexible schedule, according to the study by Florida International University and The Commonwealth Institute South Florida.

"My husband works out of the home," said Joyce Elam, executive dean of FIU's College of Business Administration. "He's incredible support to me."

The study found that 70 percent of the women leaders' husbands had full-time jobs and 61 percent of the husbands had flexible work schedules.

The survey, the first of its kind in the state, was designed to analyze key characteristics of women executives and determine how they manage to balance work and home life.

"When a kid is sick, that's a problem," says Rosa Sugranes, president of Iberia Tiles, who has two children. "Women have a challenge when they have children."

It's not easy, says Sugranes.

"I would be in the office and a teacher would call and say my son is vomiting, and I would have to go and leave whatever I was doing," Sugranes said.

The study found that 74 percent of the 50 women surveyed work more than 40 hours per week, and 10 percent reported working more than 60 hours. Eighty-five percent of women surveyed not only hold the highest executive-level positions in their company, but also have a controlling ownership stake.

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While some women executives have found a work-life balance, it has not always been that way.

"Certainly things have improved tremendously," says Deborah Natansohn, president of Seabourn Cruise Line. "I joined [Seabourn Cruise] 1987 and at that time there were only seven women [in the cruise industry] who had positions as vice president. Now there are dozens of women in the roles of VP and senior VP."

Elam says the survey will be conducted annually to track future women executives.

"We want to discover the trends," she said. "We want to see the next generation."

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