

Measuring Change

How We Track and Analyze Our Impact

The Better Life Lab works at the intersection of research, policy, journalism, and popular culture to tell ethical, human-centered, solutions-focused stories and develop and support storytellers. We seek to shift paradigms, paint a vision of what's possible, and inspire action through changing cultural narratives and educating decisionmakers. Our work advances work-family justice, gender equity, care, and well-being.

We **measure our impact** on American culture, workplaces, and family-supportive policies through three indicators:

1. The overall reach of our work to U.S. publics
2. The influence we have on discourse in key communities
3. The effect we have on individual action and social structures, like shifting workplace norms and public policy

We track how our work has changed narratives through online tools, testimonials, and feedback.

Our **theory of change** holds that educating individuals can change attitudes and individual behavior. These changes prompt community-level conversations that spark action and create cultural change which motivates policy change. Simultaneously, we understand that the attitudes and priorities of relatively few decisionmakers have an outsized influence on Americans' lives, so we also engage directly with these audiences in policy and the private sector. We work to shift the "common sense" that governs how families, workplaces, and policies operate.

Our Reach

Better Life Lab staff and grantees have crafted stories, assessed public policies, and produced practical tools—such as interventions for a more equal division of labor at home and toolkits for workplace design—that have reached millions of readers, listeners, and viewers.

Our work has educated audiences about the realities of work, care, and gender injustice and provided evidence-based alternatives to our current norms.

Our placement strategy seeks to reach broad media audiences, including those often overlooked by national legacy media, decisionmakers, and stakeholders in conversations about care, work-family justice, and intersectional gender equity. Our work reaches:

- Mainstream news audiences (The New York Times, Washington Post, Vox's The Weeds)
- Local communities (Salt Lake Tribune, Appalachia's The Daily Yonder)
- Business leaders (Harvard Business Review, Fast Company, Fortune)
- Care practitioners and advocates (Early Learning Nation)

Our newer focus on entertainment media, spearheaded by Vicki Shabo, has propelled our reach beyond news media consumers to television and film stories shaped by media executives, creators, writers, directors, and early-career creatives from under-represented communities. Our materials, briefings, and 1:1 script review conversations are geared toward influencing storylines on primetime television and mainstream films, and our audience research appeared in *Variety*, one of the three most-read trade publications in the industry.



Our Impact on Discourse

Our stories and those written about our research, events, and ideas are published in hundreds of outlets—from local to national and niche to general audiences. They draw our audiences' attention to the links between their everyday struggles balancing work and care to larger histories, systems, policy choices, and political and economic forces, and thus shape how people and organizations discuss these issues moving forward.

First-time North Carolina political candidate Sophia Chitlik used ideas from our 2023 report, [A Playbook to Transform How America Cares](#), for her campaign's care platform. She was new to politics and unseated a 10-year incumbent in a primary, bringing new energy and new volunteers to her state senate race.

Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) shared BLL Director Brigid Schulte's New York Times piece on [home care workers](#) and the need to improve their jobs on social media, building the public case for including home care workers in Build Back Better legislation and universal care infrastructure.

Our Impact on Action

Better Life Lab editors have funded, trained, and helped publish dozens of diverse voices, including journalists and researchers to expand the depth and breadth of the work-care conversation and build bridges to new audiences. Our practical interventions and policy resources have given business leaders, employees, and policymakers the evidence-based language, tools, and strategies to make systemic change. Meanwhile, our BLLx initiative has given hundreds of families actionable experiments to raise awareness and more fairly share the unpaid work of care and home at an individual level.

Two entrepreneurs [devised a set of solutions](#) for parents struggling with child care at home inspired by Brigid Schulte's [interview](#) on National Public Radio's Fresh Air in May 2020.

In 2022, Better Life Lab writers Haley Swenson and Rebecca Gale published a reported opinion piece in the Columbia Journalism Review arguing that every news outlet needs a dedicated child care beat. In 2023, the LA Times hired its first-ever [dedicated early education and child care reporter](#).

Our public policy and strategy expertise, led by fellow Vicki Shabo, contributed to the passage of the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act (covering an estimated 2 million federal employees per year), the Pregnant Workers' Fairness Act and numerous state paid family and medical leave programs (covering tens of millions of workers). Campaigns at the federal, state, and local levels have made major advances resulting from our insights, resources, and suggestions for expanding their coalitions.

Harvard University employed Brigid Schulte's [Coronormal Workplace Toolkit](#) for designing and implementing its hybrid work policy transformation during the pandemic. "It was so well crafted and spot on," one leader said. Other organizations have shifted policies and implemented strategies for more effective and equitable work based on Schulte's [Better Work Toolkit](#) and design-thinking workshops.

