

# Expecting more than a baby:

## Closing the employee experience gap for working parents in India

Working parents feel guilty about not being the parents they want to be because of societal pressures and a lack of flexible working options.

**Here's what employers can do to stop demotivation in its tracks.**

# Introduction

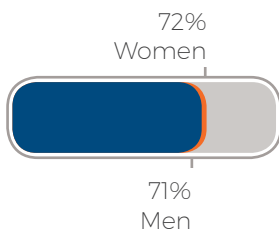
In India, employees benefit from working for organisations that understand the needs of parenthood. Nevertheless, men feel that their career progression is stilted by having children. The greatest challenge for both men and women is that childcare is traditionally undertaken by the extended family, and paying for childcare is frowned upon. Coupled with this, mothers are often discouraged from returning to work after giving birth.

66%

of working parents feel they are in some way failing to be the parent they want to be because of work pressures.

As such, organisations who wish to keep talented people and support working parents shouldn't only consider expanding parental leave policies. They should look at supporting parents at work through coaching and genuinely flexible or agile working cultures. Currently, parents feel guilty that they are failing to be the parents they want to be and overwhelmingly want more flexibility in how they work.

## KEEN TO RETURN TO WORK AFTER HAVING A CHILD



68%

of parents are generally happy with the amount of time they spend with their children overall.

## WE SURVEYED 1,015 WORKING PARENTS IN INDIA AND THIS IS WHAT WE LEARNT:

- In India, 68% of parents are generally happy with the amount of time they spend with their children overall. Nevertheless, 65% report still feeling guilty that they don't spend enough time with them (women 67% v men 63%).
- Just over three quarters of respondents agree that work pressures often negatively impact their ability to be the parent they would like to be.
- Almost 9 out of 10 people we spoke to think that using nurseries or carers outside the immediate family is still frowned upon in society.
- Over half of respondents agree that they wouldn't take extended parental leave even if it was offered to them.
- 71% of respondents were keen to get back to work after having a child (women 72% v men 71%).
- Just under 4 in 5 respondents agree that their organisation has practices and policies in place to support parental leave, and the same number agree that their organisation has a very inclusive culture.
- Nearly 80% of respondents have a clear understanding of their company's policy on parental leave.
- 78% of respondents agreed that their line manager or HR department was really effective in helping with a smooth transition from taking parental leave to being reintegrated at work.
- On average, working parents in India spend just under 3 hours per day with their children, with women spending around half an hour more than men do.
- Over three quarters of working parents use their own parents or other family members as primary caregivers.

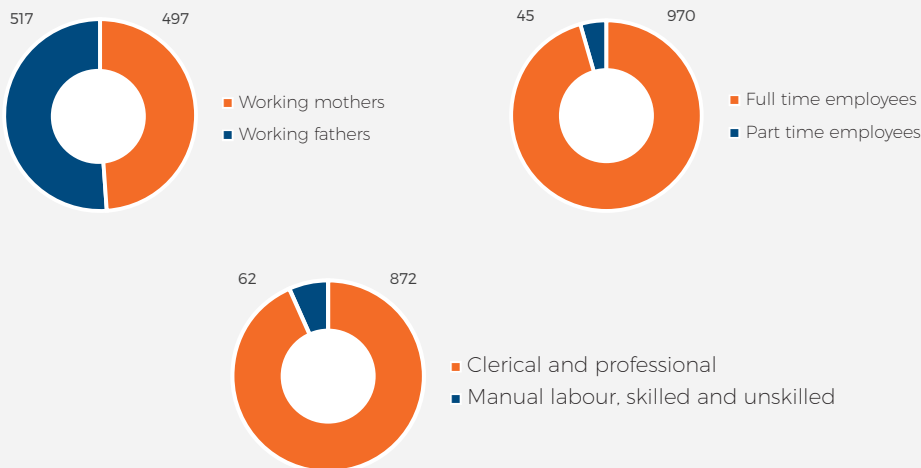
## SHRINKING THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE GAP MUST BECOME A TOP PRIORITY

The findings of our research are detailed in the following paper. We look at the pressures working parents face, as well as their views on parental leave and how effectively their company supports them. We also suggest ways for organisations to reduce stigma and shift workplace culture so that parental leave for men and women, as well as flexible working policies and practices, become the accepted – and expected – norm. If organisations want to have a real impact that reaches beyond corporate policy and goes into sincere, on-the-ground change for the people they employ, they need to start making these tangible changes.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Talking Talent commissioned in-depth, independent global research from Censuswide. Researchers surveyed 8,089 parents in the UK, the US, Switzerland, Hong Kong, Singapore, China, India and Australia. Respondents included a representative sample of professionals across a range of ages, industry sectors and regions. This report focuses on the respondents based in India.

#### INDIAN RESPONDENTS INCLUDED:



Researchers surveyed 8,089 working parents in the UK, the US, Switzerland, Hong Kong, Singapore, China, India and Australia

This report focuses on the respondents based in India.

Reduce stigma and shift workplace culture



# 1. The new deal for new dads: Parental responsibility vs. career progression

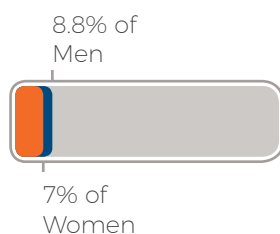
Making parental leave more attractive to working parents is central to mothers and fathers being able to progress in their careers. In India, almost 3 in 5 respondents agree that their career progressions slowed down after having a child (women 64% v men 48%).

Nearly **7 in 10** respondents think that fathers who take extended parental leave find it has a detrimental effect on their careers.

Working parents are concerned about how having a child will affect their careers, particularly men. Nearly 7 in 10 respondents think that fathers who take extended parental leave find it has a detrimental effect on their careers. It seems that the onset of parenthood also affects how satisfying many working Indians find their careers, with 62% agreeing that it is difficult or challenging to keep an interesting job role while being a parent. This view is higher among women (67%) than men (58%).

## FATHERHOOD PENALTY

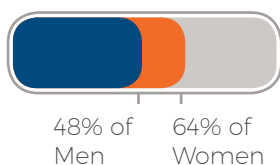
FELT UNSUPPORTED BY MY LINE MANAGER TO TAKE PARENTAL LEAVE



The perceived “fatherhood penalty” could be harmful to businesses because it sets up a vicious cycle.

From a man’s point of view, it opposes equal parental responsibility to valuing career progress. This highlights underlying attitudes that women have had to contend with for years. But gender equality shouldn’t mean that men have to find being a working parent as hard as women have in the past.

AGREE THAT THEIR CAREER SLOWED DOWN AFTER HAVING A CHILD



Since we know that sharing responsibilities is key to shaping a better future for all working parents – as well as being a key factor in women progressing in their careers – **organisations should urge both men and women to be more positive about parental leave in general.**

Organisations which fail to address this perceived fatherhood penalty could experience problems in keeping and engaging men as they look for workplaces where all working parents are supported. What’s more, organisations will continue to struggle with a lack of female leadership in the C-suite if workplace norms around parental leave continue reinforcing the message that women should give up their careers once they have had a child.

## PRESSURE TO RETURN EARLY

66% of dads and mums reported that they had taken less parental leave than they would have liked.

## LEAVE EXPERIENCE BY GENDER

TOOK SHORTER LEAVE THAN THEY WOULD HAVE LIKED



66%  
Men & Women

WOULD NOT HAVE TAKEN LONGER LEAVE IF IT HAD BEEN OFFERED TO THEM



53% 55%  
Men Women

THINK FATHERS HURT THEIR CAREERS BY TAKING EXTENDED PARENTAL LEAVE



66% 69%  
Men Women

THINK THEIR CAREER HAS SLOWED DOWN



48% 64%  
Women Men

FEEL LESS COMMITTED OR AMBITIOUS



54% 63%  
Men Women

## STRUGGLES ALL AROUND

Professional working parenthood may not be a 50:50 split, but **we have found a clear overlap between the challenges facing working mothers and fathers**. More than three quarters of all working parents agreed that work pressures affect their ability to be the parent they'd like to be, with women only marginally more likely to agree (76%) with this statement than men (75%).

**In terms of the challenges experienced by working parents, there are challenges where men significantly have a harder time on the personal and home front.** This was the case, for instance, in terms of not spending enough quality time with children (men 40%, women 36%), keeping up performance at work (men 33%, women 29%) and supporting child(ren) with homework/exams/school preparation (men 33%, women 26%).

## WORKING PARENT GUILT

When it comes to "working parent guilt", slightly more women (67%) than men (63%) regret not spending enough time with their children. Perhaps this can be traced back to the tradition in India of women being expected to give up work once they have children. **Our survey shows that 77% of respondents agreed that parents, parents-in-law and grand-parents discourage women from working after childbirth.** This is bound to create extra pressure and instil a sense of guilt when mums go back to work. According to our study, women spend around half an hour more with their children each day than men do (3.17 hours and 2.76 hours, respectively), and yet women feel more guilt. Can this be traced directly to going against the grain of family expectations?

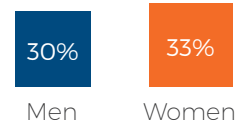
Another key struggle is that **using carers or nurseries outside the immediate family is frowned upon in Indian society**. An overwhelming 89% of respondents agreed with this, highlighting that there is a very real disconnect between what the family expects, and what the realities of being a working parent are – such as needing greater flexibility to balance careers and the responsibilities of being a parent.

NOT HAVING ENOUGH DOWNTIME FOR MYSELF



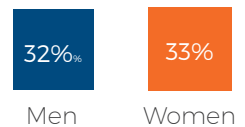
Men Women

LACK OF SLEEP CAUSED BY LOOKING AFTER CHILDREN



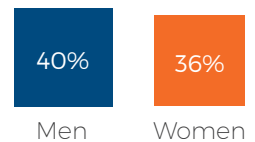
Men Women

FINDING TIME TO EXERCISE



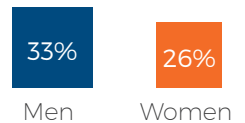
Men Women

SPENDING ENOUGH QUALITY TIME WITH MY CHILDREN



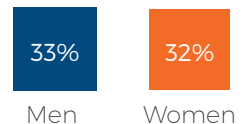
Men Women

SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH HOMEWORK/EXAMS/SCHOOL PREPARATION



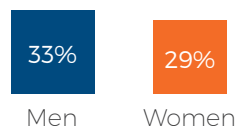
Men Women

MANAGING CHILDCARE WHEN MY CHILDREN ARE (OR THE USUAL CAREGIVER IS) ILL



Men Women

KEEPING UP MY PERFORMANCE AT WORK



Men Women

## AVOIDING RE-RUNS

Motherhood penalties are well documented but we need to start talking about fatherhood penalty, too. And organisations need to start addressing them.

Companies must recognise that **promoting parental leave (for fathers as well as mothers) means greater employee engagement from both genders**. Paternity leave, which is leave taken by new dads, relieves the pressure on working mums and, on a bigger level, promotes gender equality.

In some ways, we used to see the “motherhood penalty” as a grim yet unavoidable reality. **But attitudes are changing, and parenting roles are shifting**. It’s time to take the lead and learn from mothers’ experiences by ensuring that positive shifts in workplace practices are beneficial to men as well. If not, we’ll end up rerunning the same negative experiences which stopped working mums from progressing in the past – and working dads, too.

Attitudes are changing, and parenting roles are shifting.

## EXPLORING THE FATHERHOOD PENALTY

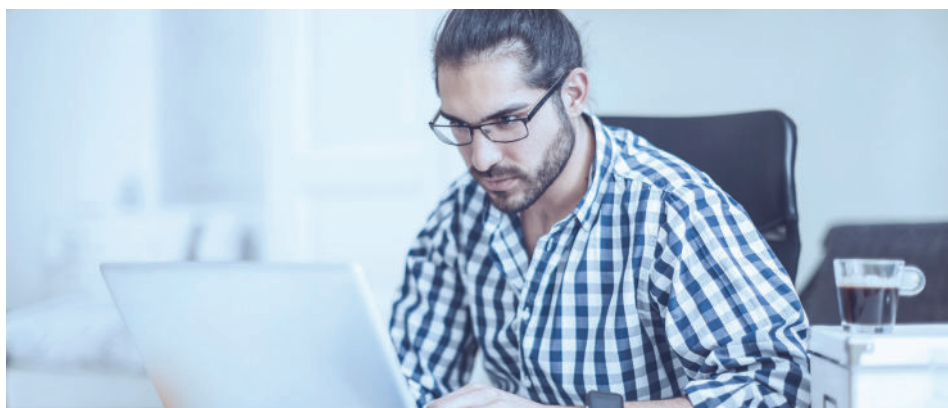
The results of our survey provide an interesting contrast to a much-cited 2014 study: **The Fatherhood Bonus and the Motherhood Penalty: Parenthood and the Gender Gap in Pay**.

The research, conducted by University of Massachusetts professor Michelle Budig, found that, on average, men’s earnings increased more than 6% when they had children, while women’s earnings decreased by 4% for each child. Our survey suggests that fathers feel penalised for taking leave and they believe their careers have slowed down after having children.

The results of our survey provide an interesting contrast to a much-cited 2014 study “The Fatherhood Bonus and the Motherhood Penalty: Parenthood and the Gender Gap in Pay.”

It could be that our respondents’ perception of a fatherhood penalty is different from what actually appears in their monthly salary. Or, perhaps the stigma associated with paternity leave is short-lived for fathers (i.e. penalties don’t extend into their careers over the long term). Alternatively, we may find that workplace practices are changing rapidly.

As paid bonding time for fathers becomes more common, dads who take advantage of that benefit – and who are more involved dads overall – may experience negative career and wage impacts that extend well into their careers.



## 2. Maintaining a positive experience

Words show what an organisation wants to be. Actions and follow-throughs show what it is.

78%

said that their organisation offers extended parental leave.

Happily, in India, it appears that working parent policies and desired behaviours are actually being implemented across the majority of organisations.

The results of our survey are telling. 78% of those we asked agree that their organisation offers extended parental leave. **Meanwhile, nearly 4 in 5 reported that their company has a very inclusive culture, and the same number agreed that they found it very easy to understand their organisation's parental leave policy.**

### INACCESSIBLE POLICIES

Yet even when policies are in place, many employees find that there could be room for improvement in terms of a cultural shift towards more flexible working. **53% of respondents agree with this statement: "I work part time because full-time work schedules are not compatible with looking after my children."** This view is higher among women (57%) than it is among men (49%). This is a significant and underappreciated issue: having great parental leave policies fall by the wayside if parents feel their organisations aren't flexible about accommodating childcare beyond the period of parental leave.

### MANAGERS CAN DO BETTER

**Managers are doing well but there is still room for improvement.** Not only that, the commitment to supporting working parents needs to be visible and consistent in every area of the organisation. **Overall, 78% of our participants agreed that their line manager or HR department was very effective in helping with their transition to working parenthood.**

From our on-the-ground experience coaching managers, we know how rare it is to find a manager who will admit they could have been more supportive.

**It's clear that managers can still improve, and to do so, they need support.** From the consistent and significant positive impact we see in our management interventions, we know that the change needs to come from the top down.

**Aligning experience with your message.** As employers, you need to find ways of aligning the policies you advertise and the employee experience you deliver. Otherwise we're stuck in a vicious cycle that both grinds away individual self-confidence and creates organisational ignorance.

Ensure you follow through on working parent support policies, like parental leave and flexible working. This is the only way to show that you have confidence in the importance – and good business sense – of promoting gender equality. But getting from policy to practice demands active manager support across the business.

When employees see their employers delivering what was promised, they will have more reason to feel confident and valued in their workplace, and with that comes the associated commercial benefits of a fully engaged workforce.



78%

of participants agreed that their line manager or HR department was very effective in the parental transition.

# 3. Younger working parents: New expectations meet rising dissatisfaction

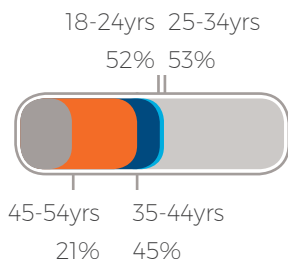
Our study shows that 73% of respondents have expectations around working and parenting that differ from their parents' generation. Today's working parents want to embark on fulfilling careers, so traditional expectations about who should look after children, as well as where this should happen, are being challenged.

## YOUNGER PARENTS

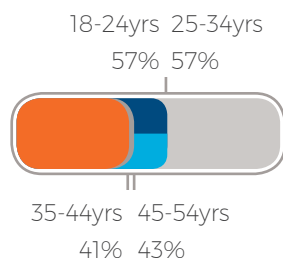
Using nurseries or carers outside the immediate family is definitely still frowned upon in society, and this is a concern to younger working parents – especially mums. This view is held most strongly by working parents in the two youngest age-group segments we surveyed, with the 18–24 and 25–34 groups agreeing most strongly that this is the case, at 52% and 53%, respectively.

What this means in practical terms is that **it's going to take quite a bit of time before nurseries – even those within offices – are accepted as a valid form of childcare**, and this is going to have an impact on women more than anyone. Businesses are losing talent because mums stay at home once they have a child. **One obvious way to deal with this in the short and medium term is offer flexible and part time working solutions.** That way, mums don't have to give up their careers while they share childcare with their extended families. And businesses can retain more people who contribute to their success.

AGREEING THAT USING NURSERIES OR CARERS OUTSIDE THE IMMEDIATE FAMILY IS DEFINITELY STILL FROWNED UPON



AGREEING THAT EXTENDED FAMILY DISCOURAGED MUMS WHO WISH TO CONTINUE WORKING AFTER HAVING CHILDREN



We can see the pressure women face after having a child in our findings. 50% of respondents said that extended family discouraged mums who wish to continue working after having children and this is much more prevalent with younger generations.

Overall, **almost 40% of respondents aged 25-34 strongly agree that work pressures often negatively impact their ability to be the parents they want to be**, compared with 32% of respondents in the 34-44 and 45-54 age groups.

The sense of changing expectations among younger professionals means they need higher levels of support at work than their predecessors. Yet, they are far more likely to find a noticeable gap between workplace messaging around new-parent support and what actually happens.

## MORE SUPPORT RECEIVED... AND DESIRED

**While 78% of 25-34 year olds agreed that there was enough support for working parents within their organisation, 73% of these also said they would have liked some specialist external coaching.** In particular, having more confidence about being able to conduct difficult or courageous conversations with their families would go a long way to addressing the twin challenges of childcare and women giving up work after childbirth.



## USING LESS AVAILABLE LEAVE

While none of the generations took all the parental leave available to them, **younger parents report not using all their available time, as well as being generally unhappier with the time they did take.**

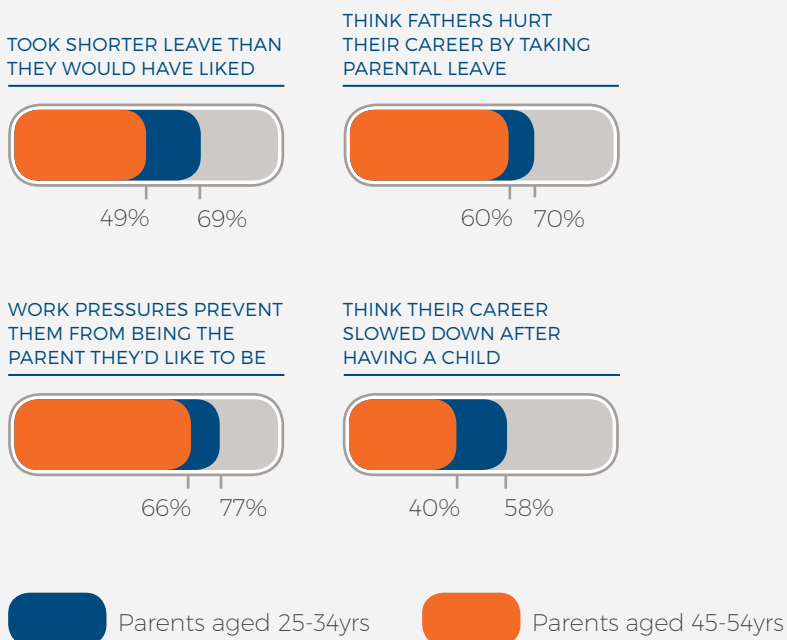
This shift highlights a key challenge for organisations: policies themselves do not change employee experience.

Many employees will not take the paid leave made available to them unless organisational attitudes and habits shift. This includes stronger support from managers, encouraging more parents to take leave and lead the way, addressing workload issues and reducing parenthood penalties.

**Employers should recognise that senior decision makers who are shaping policy and experience for younger employees are not seeing the full picture.**

Policies themselves do not change the employee experience unless organisational attitudes and habits shift.

## LEAVE EXPERIENCE VARIES BY AGE



## TOP HURDLE CONSISTENT ACROSS GENERATIONS

Once we move beyond issues of parental leave, the differences between generations are not as noticeable. This is because the challenges working parents face are recurrent and are shared across all age groups.

The table on page 10 reflects the top five toughest challenges experienced on first returning to work after becoming parents, as ranked from first to fifth by working parents of different ages.

## CHALLENGES FACED BY NEW WORKING PARENTS

Rank	25-34 yrs	35-44 yrs	45-54 yrs
1	Spending quality time with your partner	Giving your family enough attention	Managing priorities
2	Self-care	Having a good social life	Self-care
3	Giving your family enough attention	Managing priorities	Spending quality time with your partner
4	Managing priorities	Self-care	Giving your family enough attention
5	Having a good social life	Spending quality time with your partner	Having a good social life

Spending quality time with one's partner ranks highly for 25-34 year olds

### CONCLUSIONS

We can see that managing priorities is something that gets more important with age. This is possibly attributable to the central role the immediate family fulfils in providing childcare.

Spending quality time with one's partner ranks highly for 25-34 year olds, but drops off significantly for 35-44-year-old working parents. This is hardly surprising as marital satisfaction generally lessens after partners have become parents – especially if this happens once each partner's career is well underway. Unfortunately, relationship strain has been associated with physical and mental health problems and an overall decrease in life satisfaction. Working parents would do well to make this issue a high priority.

Simply put, being a working parent will always be a balancing act. In terms of keeping these working parents engaged and satisfied, one of the biggest areas of risk – and opportunity – arrives early in their parenting experience. Millennials want to take the parental leave they are entitled to, but they don't feel like they can. Therefore, organisations need to do more than shift policies; they have to shift habits and culture.

This means strengthening manager support, highlighting dads who take parental leave, and showcasing dads who take advantage of other new-parent support, such as paternity leave coaching.

Watch closely to how you're talking about parenting obligations. Be sure you're framing them as a family matter that impacts all parents. To effect real change, go beyond messaging and give your managers and employees the coaching they need to overcome cultural norms. Give parents support to step away and help transition back in when leave is over.

# 4. Parent vs. professional: Working parents torn in two

More than three quarters of working parents say work pressures erode their ability to be the parent they want to be.

**77%**  
use their immediate families for childcare.

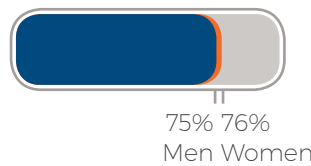
We all know that perfection is unattainable, but working parents often feel divided between two ideals. For both men and women, the pressure to perform at work and at home can have compounding effects, as each identity disrupts and complicates the other.

Many parents feel they need to choose, or compromise, which is why nearly 60% of working parents agreed that since they had children they have been less ambitious and committed to their jobs. And yet, nearly two thirds of our respondents said that they regularly feel guilty for not spending enough time with their children. This is despite the fact that 77% use their immediate families for childcare.

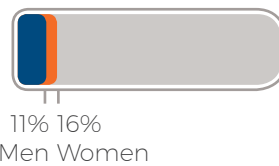
More tellingly, perhaps, is that 89% agree that childcare outside the family is almost taboo in society. Parents' hands are tied; they are trapped between an often-inflexible working culture and a conservative family background that actively limits childcare options.

## PARENTS TORN BETWEEN WORK AND HOME

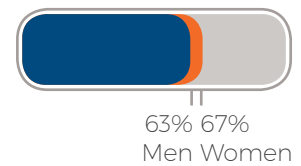
**WORK PRESSURES PREVENT ME FROM BEING THE PARENT I'D LIKE TO BE**



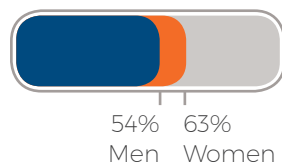
**I AM UNHAPPY WITH THE AMOUNT OF TIME I SPEND WITH MY CHILDREN**



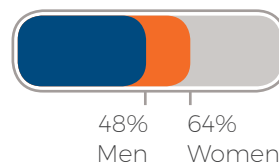
**I OFTEN FEEL GUILTY I DON'T SPEND ENOUGH TIME WITH MY CHILDREN**



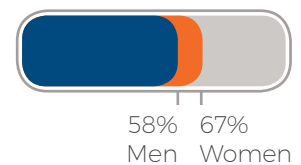
**I BECAME LESS AMBITIOUS OR COMMITTED TO WORK AFTER BECOMING A PARENT**



**MY CAREER SLOWED DOWN AFTER HAVING A CHILD**



**IT'S HARD TO KEEP AN INTERESTING OR CHALLENGING ROLE WHILE BEING A PARENT**



**89%**  
agree that childcare outside the family is almost taboo in society.

Traditionally, women have been criticised for being less motivated at work after having children. But our research shows that a large proportion of men are also likely to say that they became less ambitious or committed to their work after becoming fathers (54% for men v 63% for women). This could be because of shared stress-factors, like burnout and sleep deprivation, or it could be that men are simply more confident in expressing a shift in their priorities.

82%

of respondents reported wanting a flexible work arrangement at some time in their career.

## FLEXIBLE WORKING

Being open to flexible working practices is, as our research shows, another key way of giving Indian working parents the support they need to balance work and parenthood. About 82% of respondents reported wanting a flexible work arrangement at some time in their career.

A popular myth suggests that women ask for flexible work more frequently than men, but in fact we found that both 90% of women and 90% of men have made a flexible working request.

As for why flexible work requests are rejected, respondents gave a number of reasons, such as having a negative impact on performance, the organisation not offering flexible working, the role requiring a physical presence in the office, not being senior enough to work flexibly, fear of negatively affecting the team or business, lack of trust, fear of setting a precedent, incurring costs, or simply because the work cannot be reorganised among other employees.

While it is true that not every single role in every single organisation lends itself to flexible working, improving policies along with real-life practices and workplace culture is crucial to parental engagement and retention.

Here again, it's likely that employees are experiencing a gap between company policy and actual reality. We have found that even when flexible working policies exist, manager support can vary widely from team to team. Employees are often denied flexible working requests not because their role couldn't accommodate it, but because their manager doesn't understand or doesn't want to adapt to newer, more agile ways of working.

By offering flexible working, employers will be able to directly address the aforementioned statistic that 53% of working parents feel they would need to work part time because their current work schedules aren't compatible with caring for their children.

For parents, striving towards unobtainable perfection results in mental and physical exhaustion. Without proper support, opposing demands between work and home are likely to increase guilt, as parents feel like they're not doing well enough in either realm. Guilt is distracting, and parents who feel guilty will not be wholly effective employees.

Organisations have a role to play here, both in reassuring employees, and by making the role of the "working parent" seem like less of a binary choice. Balance isn't just about where working parents spend their time, it's about whether they are made to feel that they should be spending it somewhere else or that they're exactly where they need to be.



# 5. Career-catapult, not career-killer: Parenthood enhances professional performance

What challenges you, changes you.

Our survey shows that people absolutely feel more skilled and capable as a result of having kids.

## TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

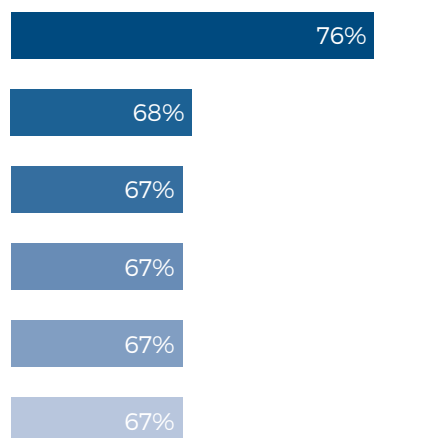
Focusing too closely on the innate challenges of being a working parent could distract us from the transferrable skills that parents naturally develop. Most parents have a vague sense that all their multitasking, planning and prioritising – as well as the constant negotiation with children, family and others – must surely have some positive upshot at work.

We found that people feel more skilled and capable as a result of having kids. After having a child, men reported that their abilities improved dramatically in a number of areas such as self-confidence (76%), managing people (68%), career planning (67%), networking (67%), time management (67%) and personal wellbeing (67%). Women reported a similar phenomenon: self-confidence (68%), networking (67%), time management (65%), managing change (64%), managing people (63%) and organisational skills (61%).

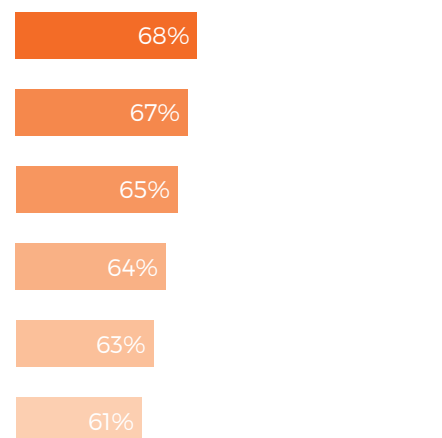
## SELF REPORTED SKILLS INCREASE WITH WORKING PARENTHOOD



DADS: SKILL GAIN



MUMS: SKILL GAIN



- Confidence
- Managing people
- Confidence
- Networking
- Career planning
- Networking
- Time management
- Managing change
- Time management
- Personal wellbeing
- Managing people
- Organisational skills

76%

of fathers reported a huge confidence boost immediately following a period of parental leave.

### EARLIER: OVERALL CONFIDENCE SOARS

The results speak for themselves – 72% of respondents felt that their confidence grew immediately following a period of parental leave. This was even more prevalent among fathers, with 76% of them reporting a huge confidence boost. The key driver behind this may be that new parents feel satisfaction at fulfilling traditional family expectations by literally producing the next generation.

Nevertheless, don't forget that there is a downside to this: we know that many women are pressured by their families into giving up work once they have children. So yes, it is wonderful to see an initial burst of confidence, but these first months back at work represent a key time when new parents, especially women, need additional support and coaching to be able to have courageous conversations with their extended families around continuing with their careers.

### LATER: AN 'I'VE GOT THIS' ATTITUDE

In every skill area surveyed, **parents were far more likely to report that their skills had increased rather than decreased** as a result of balancing career and family life.

### CONCLUSIONS

We now have conclusive evidence that many working parents experience a significant positive shift in their self-reported capability and confidence after becoming parents. Employers who ignore this are missing out. With the right kind of management, this positive shift in self-perception will have a significant impact on the individuals involved and collectively enhance business performance.



# Summary

Indian parents are confident, and they generally agree that being working parents means they develop a range of transferrable workplace skills. Where they stumble, however, is how they handle the issues of the role of women in society, plus the lack of childcare options outside the extended family.

These parents feel they have a lot to contribute to the workplace and yet **there's a persistent (even growing) dissatisfaction with what they're missing out on at home**. Most parents take shorter parental leave than they would like and most say that work pressures prevent them from being the kind of parent they want to be.

Today's new working parents expect much more than just a baby. They want paid family bonding time and cultural support, so they can make use of what has been allotted to them. They desire to be involved mothers and fathers, and be engaged professionals with interesting, challenging work.

We can no longer focus our efforts on supporting women who want to "have it all". All parents want it all.

Unfortunately, social stigmas around parental leave still exist, and dads feel it. **We know that paternity leave plays a significant role in advancing women, particularly when working fathers take the same kind of leave that working mothers take.**

Researchers suggest that fathers who take leave become more involved parents in the long-run, enabling mothers to advance their own careers. Such long-term gains would have an even greater impact if we could overcome the immediate consequences of taking a parental leave. In theory, judgements and penalties would be on a par if both parents took similar time off work.

How your organisation talks about parental leave – how openly it communicates – sends a bold message about your commitment to gender equality. To send a clear, positive message, employers should continue being transparent and proactive when promoting their policies on parental leave.

However, it's clear that workplace habits are not yet aligned with workplace policies. That means closing the gap has to be a cultural effort. This report challenges all of us, at organisational, line management and individual working parent level, to look around at what we are actually doing, how well it is truly working and whether we are going far enough.

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# Conclusions and Recommendations



## 1. PRIORITISE PAID FAMILY LEAVE

In today's talent market, employees have unprecedented access to information about your culture and benefits. Organisations that don't offer – or support – paid family leave put their employer brand at risk.

Beyond being a recruitment tool, **many organisations view paid family leave as a significant contributor to employee engagement.**

Companies cite **correlations in retention and productivity.** Others frame paid family leave in terms of **living out organisational values,** making sure their own people policies are aligned with corporate ideals. And many understand that **paid family leave is a valuable tool to close the wage gap and get more women into the C-suite.**

Shifting policies and practices around parental leave is one concrete way your organisation can make a difference in terms of engagement and gender diversity in leadership. Determine whether you offer equal paid bonding time for all new parents and, more importantly, whether employees – particularly men – are using the time available.

Of course, employers in India should remain cognisant that with the government's recent increase in parental leave allowance to six months, some parents will be worried that having a baby could lead to a backlash from the organisation. In particular, women worry that they may be discriminated against when they announce they are pregnant.



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## 2. WAKE UP TO WORKING FATHERS

### Address all aspects of paternal inclusion:

from enhanced paternity and shared parental leave policies, to cultural norms about men taking career breaks, to coaching support as their responsibilities and stress levels expand. Equip managers with the tools they need to give working fathers

the confidence to take paternal leave, and this will be beneficial to individuals, their families, their performance and, ultimately, your business.

### Send the message that it's okay for dads to take time away from work. Or better yet, send the message that it's not just okay to take leave, but that it's expected.

Ensure that all employees, at every age and level of the organisation, understand that a period of leave is the natural, ordinary step after welcoming a new child. Prioritising paid leave for all employees helps foster a culture in which women have equal opportunities for advancement.



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## 3. HELP WITH COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

Although organisations in India are to be commended for the support and clarity they offer working parents around leave, more can be done to help parents, particularly mothers, have courageous conversations with family members. **Not all parents want childcare to be provided by their families, and certainly not all women want to give up work once they have a baby.** Giving people the strength to be brave will pave the way for greater engagement and loyalty to your organisation.





The key to success is establishing clear communication about what is on offer.



#### 4. INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FLEXIBLE AND PART-TIME WORKING

Organisations can help by introducing policies that allow flexible working, not just for working parents but for all employees.

Ultimately, balance is making sure working parents feel they are in the right place at the right time. Organisations can help by introducing policies that allow flexible working, not just for working parents but for all employees. Managers will depend on policies and procedures that are already in place at their organisation, and all new flexible working policies have to be tailored to suit each firm. However, the key to success is establishing clear communication about what is on offer, and ensuring that employees understand the boundaries and expectations that come with this benefit. In India, cultural issues around childcare could be addressed by remote working, more part-time options and even on-site childcare facilities.



#### 5. RESPOND TO MILLENNIAL PARENT PRIORITIES

Younger working parents are leaning hard into more equitable divisions of parenting roles and responsibilities. Organisations who want to retain talent need to be ready, making sure both policy and culture enable this. Through targeted coaching, you should help younger employees create

healthy, sustainable work habits by providing exposure to role models, as well as practical support to manage both workload and their perception of leader and team expectations.

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## 6. CAPITALISE ON PARENTS AS PROVEN PERFORMERS

Parenthood, for all its challenges, **provides your employees with an invaluable boost in essential transferable skills**. When you support working parents with flexible schedules, coaching and progressive management attitudes, you help avoid discrimination against working parents. Evaluate advancement and reward practices to determine whether you're undervaluing caregivers and employees who work a reduced schedule. Provide training around caregiver discrimination and coach parents on how to advocate for themselves in the workplace.



Some organisations – perhaps even yours – feel they are already doing a lot to support this critical talent pinch point. Others have dipped a toe or two in the water, haven't yet got traction, and are wondering how on earth they can shift the dial. Many more have yet to make the business case for investment of time, leadership focus and funds into managing the parental transition. Whatever your organisation's position, we hope this report will prove a springboard to formulating the next steps.

Talking Talent's 13 years' experience leading global best practice support for the transition to working parenthood uniquely positions us to answer the principle question that comes out of this report – what, specifically, to do to address its conclusions? We welcome further conversation with you to understand your needs and share specific solutions.

A working mother in India may be eligible for **26 weeks maternity leave** (12 weeks for a woman who already has two or more children). Eligible working fathers may receive **15 days of paternity leave**.

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