

Expecting more than a baby:

Closing the employee experience gap for working parents in Singapore

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

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

Introduction

Working parents in Singapore come under pressure from long hours, coupled with all-too-often inflexible organisations when it comes to taking parental leave. For many women, this is a particular issue as there exists a perception that job security and career progression will be affected if they take time off.

70%

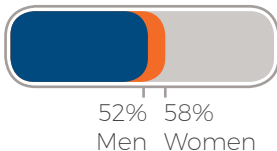
of respondents agree that work pressures often negatively impact their ability to be the parent they would like to be.

However, parental leave is actually shown to be good for career progression. The trick is to balance time spent at work with family time at home. **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.

WE SURVEYED 1,003 WORKING PARENTS IN SINGAPORE AND THIS IS WHAT WE LEARNT:

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WORKING BETWEEN 41-50 HOURS PER WEEK. RESPONDENTS TYPICALLY WORK 47 HOURS EACH WEEK.



A quarter of respondents say that giving their family enough attention was one of the greatest challenges when they first returned to work after having their most recent child.

- 58% of female respondents work between 41-50 hours per week, compared with 52% of men. The total average number of hours respondents typically work each week is 47.
- Over 7 in 10 respondents agree that work pressures often negatively impact their ability to be the parent they would like to be.
- A quarter of respondents say that giving their family enough attention was one of the greatest challenges when they first returned to work after having their most recent child.
- Almost a quarter of female respondents say getting back into a routine was one of the greatest challenges when returning to work, compared with just 14% of male respondents.
- Nearly two thirds of respondents agree that their organisation has practices and policies in place to support parental leave.
- **Nearly half of respondents agree that their career progression slowed down after having a child (41% for men and 54% for women), and almost half of respondents (47% of men and 51% of women) agree that since they became a parent they haven't been as ambitious and committed to their job as they used to be.**
- 39% (35% of mums and 44% of dads) reported taking less parental leave than they would have liked.
- Almost half (46%) of respondents agree that fathers who take extended parental leave find it has a detrimental effect on their career.

SHRINKING THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE GAP MUST BECOME A TOP PRIORITY

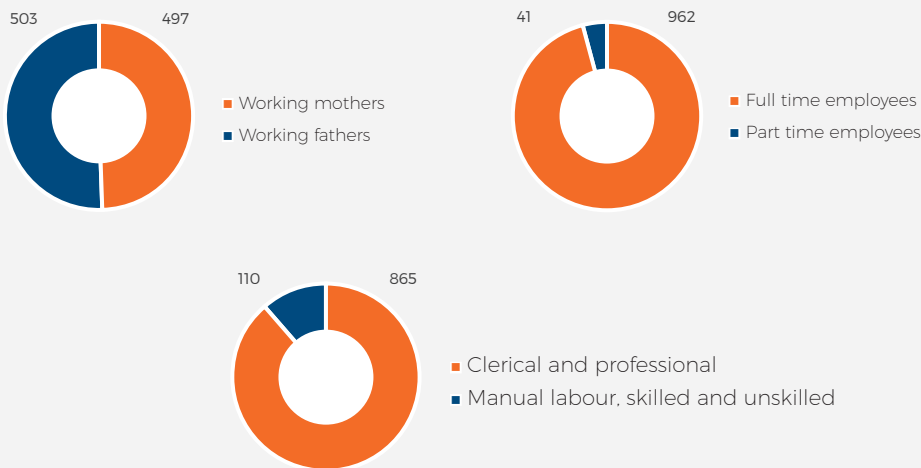
The findings of our research are detailed in the following paper. We look at the pressures working parents face, as well as their views on parental leave and how effectively their company supports new parents. We also suggest ways for organisations to reduce stigma and shift workplace culture so that 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.

Reduce stigma and shift workplace culture

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 Singapore.

SINGAPOREAN RESPONDENTS INCLUDED:



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

Making parental leave more attractive to fathers is central to mothers being able to progress in their careers. However, almost half of respondents agree that fathers who take extended parental leave find it has a detrimental effect on their careers. This view is held by over half of men and two fifths of women we asked.

Working parents are concerned about how having a child will affect their careers, particularly women.

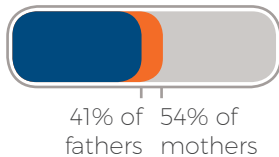
FATHERHOOD PENALTY

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.

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.**

RESPONDENTS AGREE THAT THEIR CAREER PROGRESSION SLOWED DOWN AFTER HAVING A CHILD.



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 look after families while men should place work first.

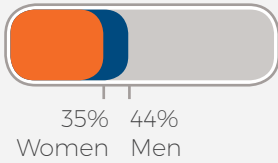


PRESSURE TO RETURN EARLY

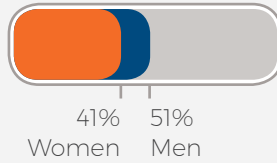
44% dads and 35% mums reported that they had taken less parental leave than they would have liked.

LEAVE EXPERIENCE BY GENDER

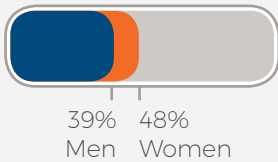
TOOK A SHORTER LEAVE THAN THEY WOULD HAVE LIKED



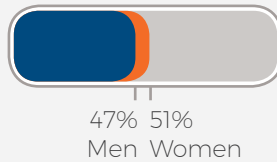
THINK FATHERS HURT THEIR CAREERS BY TAKING EXTENDED PARENTAL LEAVE



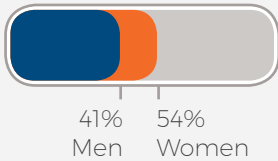
WOULD HAVE TAKEN LONGER LEAVE IF IT HAD BEEN OFFERED TO THEM



FEEL LESS COMMITTED OR AMBITIOUS



THINK THEIR CAREER HAS SLOWED DOWN



STRUGGLES ALL AROUND

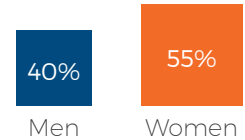
Professional working parenthood may not be a 50:50 split, **but we have found a clear overlap between the challenges facing working mothers and fathers.** More than two thirds of all working parents (72%) agreed that work pressures affect their ability to be the parent they'd like to be, with men slightly more likely to agree (73%) with this statement than women (71%).

In terms of the challenges experienced by working parents, women do 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 (women 61%, men 50%), experiencing sleep deprivation (women 57%, men 44%) and not having enough downtime for themselves (women 55%, men 40%). Interestingly, not finding enough time to exercise was split equally (women 44%, men 44%).

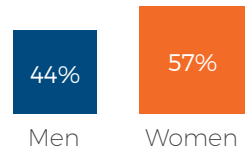
WORKING PARENT GUILT

When it comes to "working parent guilt", slightly more women (69%) than men (60%) regret not spending enough time with their children. This is the case, despite our survey showing that women aren't spending all that much more time with their children than men are. According to our study, women spend around half an hour more with their children each day than men do (2.36 hours and 2.04 hours, respectively).

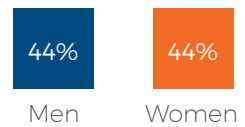
NOT HAVING ENOUGH DOWNTIME FOR MYSELF



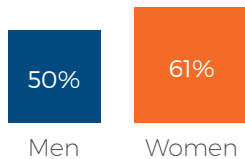
LACK OF SLEEP CAUSED BY LOOKING AFTER CHILDREN



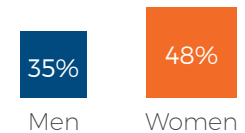
FINDING TIME TO EXERCISE



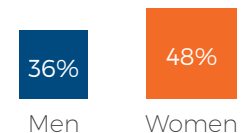
SPENDING ENOUGH QUALITY TIME WITH MY CHILDREN



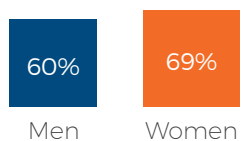
SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH HOMEWORK/EXAMS/ SCHOOL PREPARATION



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



WORKING PARENT GUILT



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.

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.

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.

But attitudes are changing, and parenting roles are shifting.

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.**”



2. Closing the experience gap

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

31%

said that their employer still had no policies at all for supporting parental leave (2018).

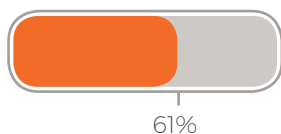
How confident are you that your working parent policies and desired behaviours are actually being implemented across the organisation?

On the surface, the findings suggest that organisations in Singapore are taking steps to support working parents. For example, just over 6 in 10 respondents agree that their organisation has practices and policies in place to support parental leave, with almost half of respondents agreeing that their organisation offers extended parental leave.

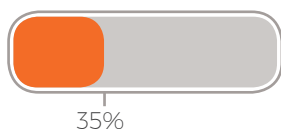
Yet even when policies are in place, many employees find them incomprehensible.

Over a third of parents struggled to understand their company's policy on parental leave. This is a significant and underappreciated issue: no amount of workplace support is useful if employees don't know how to access it.

HAVE POLICIES IN PLACE



HAVE EXPERIENCED A GAP BETWEEN POLICY AND ACTION



47%

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

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 need to be transparent and proactive in promoting their policies on parental leave.

MANAGERS CAN DO BETTER

Not only that, the commitment to supporting working parents needs to be visible and consistent in every area of the organisation. **Overall, 47% 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. **While it is natural to assume that someone else is at fault, a significant 16% of Singapore managers were viewed as less than very effective by the working parents they employ. It's clear that managers need to 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.

16%

of Singapore Working Parents said their managers were less than very effective in helping with a smooth transition to leave and return to work

85%

of respondents reported wanting a flexible work arrangement

FLEXIBLE WORKING.

Being open to flexible working practices is, as our research shows, another key aspect of giving working parents the support they need. **About 85% 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 both 80% of women and 80% of men have made a flexible working request. Perhaps more intriguingly, 84% of men have had a request turned down at some point, compared with 78% of women.

As for why flexible work requests are rejected, respondents gave a number of reasons, such as the nature of their role requiring physical presence, lack of trust, extra costs to the business, negative impact on the team, past misuse of flexible working options, fear of setting a precedent for others, lack of sufficient seniority, inability to meet customer demand, a general inability to reorganise the work accordingly, or simply that their organisation does not offer flexible working arrangements.

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.

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.

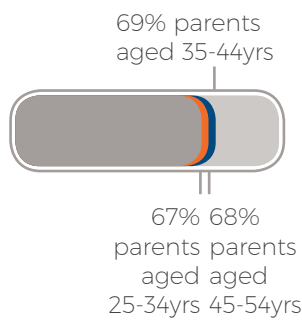
When employees see their employers delivering what was promised, they will have more reason to feel confident and valued in their workplace, and with that comes the associated commercial benefits of a fully engaged workforce.

3. Younger working parents: New expectations meet rising dissatisfaction

63% of working fathers expect future generations of dads to take a larger role in the practical aspects of childcare.

YOUNGER PARENTS

% THAT BELIEVE THAT THEIR CHILDREN'S GENERATION WILL FIND IT AS HARD TO BALANCE WORK AND PARENTING



Yet all parents, including younger millennials, are not confident that future generations will find life easier than they did. Among parents aged 25-34, (67%) believe their children's generation "will find it just as hard as my generation to balance work and parenting". That's compared with 69% of respondents aged 35-44 and 68% of respondents aged 45-54.

The sense of negativity among younger professionals holds true with the dissatisfaction they express in their parental leave experience. Young professionals report getting greater 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

Just over half of 25-34 year olds agreed that there was enough support for working parents within their organisation. However, 46% of these also said they would have liked some external coaching in this area, which implies that, overall, younger professionals do expect more coaching in the workplace.



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

USING LESS AVAILABLE LEAVE

While neither generation took all the 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.**

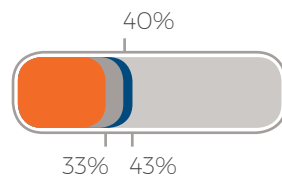
This shift highlights a key challenge for organisations: policies themselves do not change employee experience.

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.

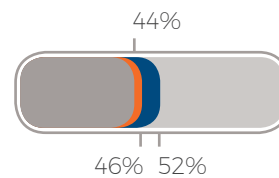
Employers should recognise that senior decision makers who are shaping policy and experience for younger employees are not seeing the full picture.

LEAVE EXPERIENCE VARIES BY AGE

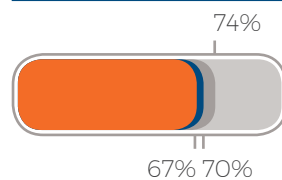
TOOK SHORTER LEAVE THAN THEY WOULD HAVE LIKED



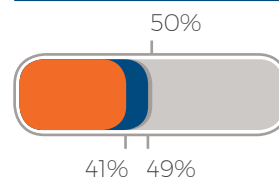
THINK FATHERS HURT THEIR CAREER BY TAKING PARENTAL LEAVE



WORK PRESSURES PREVENT THEM FROM BEING THE PARENT THEY'D LIKE TO BE



THINK THEIR CAREER SLOWED DOWN AFTER HAVING A CHILD



Parents aged 25-34

Parents aged 35-44

Parents aged 45-54

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 below 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	Financial pressure	Financial pressure	Financial pressure
2	Spending quality time with your partner	Spending quality time with your partner	Giving your family enough attention
3	Giving your family enough attention	Giving your family enough attention	Spending quality time with your partner
4	Feeling like you are being a good parent	Maintaining emotions	Maintaining emotions
5	Maintaining emotions	Feeling like you are being a good parent	Feeling like you are being a good parent

Challenges faced by new working parents.

CONCLUSIONS

We can see that all generations of parents rank financial pressure as the most significant challenge.

Interestingly, **spending quality time with one's partner was a priority across the two younger generations of working parents.** This is hardly surprising as marital satisfaction generally drops when partners become parents. 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.

Parents in 45-54 age group ranked giving your family enough attention more highly than their younger counterparts.

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.

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 issue 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 two in three working parents say work pressures erode their ability to be the parent they want to be.

49%
of working parents agreed that they have become less ambitious and less committed to their jobs.

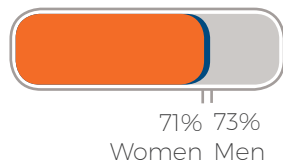
We all know that perfection is unattainable, but working parents often feel divided between two ideals. For both men and women, the pressure to perform at work and at home can have compounding effects, as each identity disrupts and complicates the other.

Many parents feel they need to choose, or compromise, which is why nearly half of working parents agreed that since they became a parent 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. Indeed, one third of respondents agree that domestic helpers make it harder for working parents to demand more time for family life for themselves.

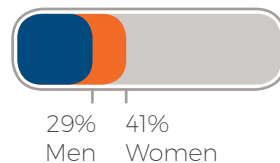
Furthermore, the average number of hours that respondents typically work per week is 47. And almost 6 in 10 female respondents typically work between 41-50 hours per week, this is compared with just over half of male respondents.

PARENTS TORN BETWEEN WORK AND HOME

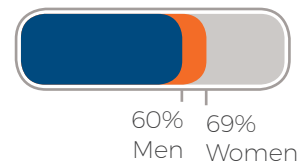
WORK PRESSURES PREVENT ME FROM BEING THE PARENT I'D LIKE TO BE



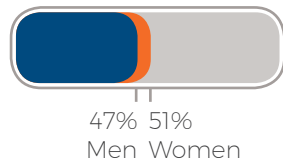
I AM UNHAPPY WITH THE AMOUNT OF TIME I SPEND WITH MY CHILDREN



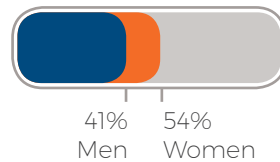
I OFTEN FEEL GUILTY I DON'T SPEND ENOUGH TIME WITH MY CHILDREN



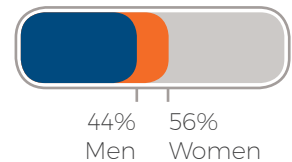
I BECAME LESS AMBITIOUS OR COMMITTED TO WORK AFTER BECOMING A PARENT



MY CAREER SLOWED DOWN AFTER HAVING A CHILD



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



47%
of fathers say they became less ambitious.

51%
of mothers said the same.

COMMITMENT TO WORK

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 (47% for men v 51% 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.

SLOW AND UNSATISFYING

Again, when we talk about the responsibilities and challenges of being a working parent, the traditional focus has been on working mothers. Yet when working parents were asked if their career progression slowed down compared with their childless colleagues, **2 in 5 men (compared with over half of women) reported this to be the case.**

A lot has been said about the challenges working mothers face in finding career satisfaction – and yet, 56% of women say it's difficult to keep an interesting job while being a parent – but far less has been written about new fathers, despite the fact that 44% of men find this a challenge too.

This decline in engagement should be an alarm bell for employers: sustaining a positive employee experience and providing support throughout the transition into working parenthood, to both mums and dads, is of the utmost importance.

CONCLUSIONS

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.



53%

of mothers were significantly more likely than men to say that their career progression slowed down.

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

What challenges you, changes you.

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Focusing too closely on the innate challenges of being a working parent could distract us from the transferable skills that parents naturally develop.

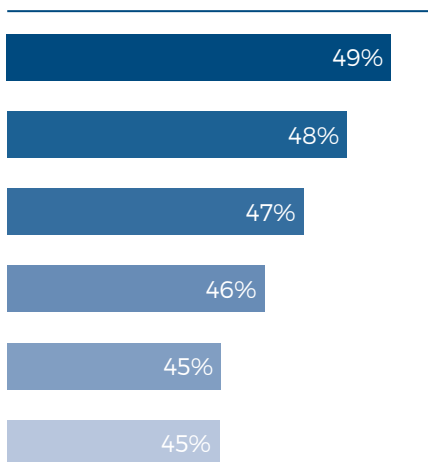
Most parents have a vague sense that all their multitasking, planning and prioritising – as well as the constant negotiation with children, family and others – must surely have some positive upshot at work.

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

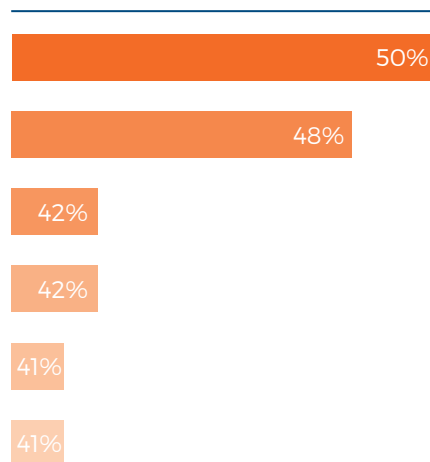
We found that people feel more skilled and capable as a result of having kids. After having a child, men reported that their abilities improved in a number of areas such as time management (49%), managing change (48%), self-confidence (47%), personal wellbeing (46%), organisational skills (45%) and managing people (45%). Women reported a similar phenomenon: time management (50%), managing change (48%), personal wellbeing (42%), having courageous conversations (42%), organisation skills (41%) and managing people (41%).

SELF REPORTED SKILLS INCREASE WITH WORKING PARENTHOOD

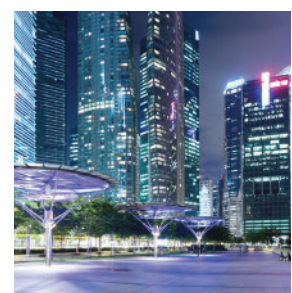
DADS: SKILL GAIN



MUMS: SKILL GAIN



- Time management ■ Managing change
- Confidence ■ Managing Wellbeing
- Organisational skills ■ Managing people
- Time management ■ Managing change
- Managing Wellbeing ■ Courageous conversations
- Organisational skills ■ Managing people



EARLIER: CONFIDENCE TAKES A TEMPORARY HIT

While respondents did report that becoming a working parent made their confidence grow, they took a different view on confidence immediately following a period of parental leave.

This is a sensitive time when parents are getting back into work routines and dealing with new pressures and time constraints.

As such, 19% of new mothers reported a loss of confidence on returning to work, compared with 11% of men.

Here again we see that men report a similar challenge to women. This could be because of the 'fatherhood penalty' perception as men anticipate more negative judgement for taking time away from work.

Either way, these first months back at work represent a key time when parents need additional support and coaching to bolster their confidence and capability to succeed as a working parent.

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.

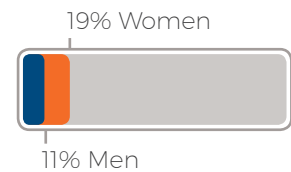
CONCLUSIONS

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.



LOSS OF CONFIDENCE ON RETURNING TO WORK



Summary

Singapore 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 are handling life at home, with concerns about how much time they spend with their children and their partners.

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. **Importantly, working dads and millennials are more likely to express dissatisfaction than working mums and older parents.**

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.

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.

39.1% of parents agreed to taking shorter parental leaves than they would have wanted to.

7.2% of parents **STRONGLY AGREED** to the same question.

71.5% of parents agreed that work pressures prevent them from being the kind of parent they want to be.

17.8% of parents **STRONGLY AGREED** to the same question.

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 whether employees – particularly men – are using the time available.

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.

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.

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.

Take a long, hard look at your policies, recruitment, and HR messaging and then assess whether the employee experience truly matches up.

Organisations who want to retain talent need to be ready, making sure both policy and culture enable this.

3. PLUG YOUR WORKING PARENT POLICY-PRACTICE GAP

Lack of line management support for parental leave will continue to impede inclusion.

Take a long, hard look at your policies, recruitment and HR messaging and then assess whether the employee experience truly matches up. Support line managers and senior leadership in creating the workplace culture that parents need – through targeted training or on-demand coaching support. For HR look at providing more generous parental leave policies given that Government leave policies are some of the lowest in the region.

4. INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FLEXIBLE AND PART-TIME WORKING

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.

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.

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 14 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.

Whatever your organisation's position, we hope this report will prove a springboard to formulating the next steps.

In some of the top-tier workplaces, paid child bonding time is extended equally to men and women.



Parenthood, for all its challenges, provides your employees with an invaluable boost in essential transferable skills.

As a working mother in Singapore, you will be entitled to either **16 weeks of Government-Paid Maternity Leave** or **12 weeks of maternity leave**, depending on whether your child is a Singapore citizen and other criteria. Eligible working fathers, including those who are self-employed, are entitled to **2 weeks of paid paternity leave funded by the Government**.



ASIA PACIFIC HEAD OFFICE

14/f Manning House,
Queens Road Central,
Central,
Hong Kong.

rachael.jay@talking-talent.com

T: +852 5280 7375

cherry.lee@talking-talent.com

T: +852 9801 9515

UK HEAD OFFICE

T +44 (0) 1491 821 850

AUSTRALIA HEAD OFFICE

T +61 414 647 529

US HEAD OFFICE

T +1 212 612 3329



info@talking-talent.com



www.talking-talent.com



Talking Talent



@TalkingTalent

This report forms part of a global series covering other countries, please contact us directly to find out more.