

National **Working Families** Report 2024

**The impact of
work and care on
Australian families**



Family Friendly Workplaces is proudly supported by:



Contents

- Foreword 3
- Executive summary 5
- Key findings..... 6
- Survey demographics 7
- Introduction 8
- Key insights14
- Recommendations 33
- Conclusion 40
- References41

Acknowledgements

About this Report

The 2024 National Working Families Report is a not-for-profit initiative of Family Friendly Workplaces spearheaded by Parents At Work and UNICEF Australia, undertaken independently by Deloitte Access Economics, and in collaboration with corporate and community organisations.

Supporters

Thank you to our Media Partners: Kiindred, Women’s Agenda and FTI Consulting

Our Advocacy Partners: Australian Multiple Birth Association, Care & Living with Mercer, Challenge DV, Connected Parenting, Diversity Council Australia, Domestic Violence NSW, DR Care Solutions, Franklin Women, Genea Fertility, Gidget Foundation, Kiddo, KidsCo, Le Courier Australien, National Association of Women in Operations (NAWO), PANDA, Rainbow Families, SMS4Dads, SNAICC, The Fathering Project, The Inclusion Circle, UN Women Australia, Working Parents Connect.

Major Sponsors

With special thanks to:



Foreword

Ann Sherry

Chair,
UNICEF Australia



“Family-friendly workplace policies are a vital component in fostering the wellbeing of working parents, carers, and their children. At UNICEF Australia, we’ve seen how important quality connection time is essential for children and their parents and carers to thrive. Our recent survey of 6,000 Australian working parents and carers has brought to light the growing issue of work-related stress and its detrimental effects on family life, including the wellbeing of children. The survey findings also highlight the urgency to challenge and change persistent gender biases and outdated norms that continue to impede equality and wellbeing in our workplaces.

The encouraging news comes from certified Family Friendly Workplaces, where employees report significantly more positive experiences. This is a testament to the power of intentional, inclusive policies in creating meaningful change. Such policies not only support children and families but also lead to enhanced engagement, retention, and productivity, benefiting businesses and communities as a whole.

We celebrate the companies that have already embraced this journey and extend a warm invitation to others to take the first step towards developing your own customised Work and Family Action Plan. By joining forces, we can cultivate workplaces where families flourish, and businesses thrive, creating a brighter future for all.”

Emma Walsh

CEO,
Parents At Work



“The number of Australian working families needing to strike the balance between work and care commitments is growing at pace and is only likely to accelerate further over the next decade with the cost of living pressures, and as our population ages. Yet the patterns of how work and caregiving intersect and are experienced by women and men in workplaces remain starkly different along gendered lines. The findings show a significant skew towards women bearing the majority of caregiving and household duties - nearly double that of men - despite working similar hours.

This imbalance is reinforced by under-funded, unequal parental leave practices, and precarious access to flexible work in workplaces making it very difficult for families to share caring responsibilities without a detrimental impact on their career, financial and family wellbeing outcomes.

Adequate investment in policies and workplace cultural attitudes towards employee caregiving responsibilities is emerging as one of the biggest workforce participation, engagement and productivity challenges facing business and government as they balance the need for economic growth with health outcomes and community expectations.

We urge policymakers to rapidly invest in and promote family-friendly policies that de-stigmatise, respect and normalise caregiving as something most employees will need to do in their working lifetime regardless of gender.”

Grainne O’ Loughlin

CEO,
Karitane



“We see so many parents who are juggling feeding, sleeping, settling and often perinatal mental health as they try to balance care and work responsibilities. With increasing shared parental leave and load, workplaces have become such a critical component of the village that supports families to thrive. The survey highlights the increased stress that parents are feeling.

As employers, we need to recognise and understand the impact of our policies, practices and culture on working parents and carers. Workplaces play a critical role ultimately on children’s welfare and outcomes, especially in the critical First 2000 days. Our policies around flexibility and parental leave need to reflect and support parents/carers mental health and wellbeing, time for caregiving and important milestones and events. It is part of our responsibility to children, families and community to have policies that ensure parents and carers can have the time they need, when they need it, regardless of gender.”

Tony Stuart

CEO,
UNICEF Australia



“As CEO of UNICEF Australia, I’m proud to lead the charge with Parents At Work in establishing the Family Friendly Workplaces initiative and the national Work and Family Standards. Our global call for more family-friendly workplaces is gaining traction, with Australia paving the way. It’s heartening to see the rise in family-friendly practices among certified organisations.

Yet, the latest data points to a persistent challenge: support for working parents has seen little improvement over five years. With 38% of parents seeking more support from employers, it’s clear we must continue to innovate and advocate for policies that ease the stresses on working families.

Our mission is clear: to create a society where every child can thrive, and a great place to start is with the support we provide to working families. I invite more companies to join us in adopting policies that help balance work and family responsibilities, for the betterment of children, families, and our future.”

Jonathan Groves

Chief Risk Officer,
QBE Australia Pacific



“As a Family Friendly Accredited Workplace, QBE recognises that we’re all part of different family dynamics, facing unique experiences at any given time. For many of our people, the ability to integrate work and family is critical to feeling a sense of belonging and safety to speak up to seek support at various life stages.

Being a family-friendly workplace makes good business sense and has many benefits at an individual and organisational level. We strive to normalise conversations that haven’t traditionally been discussed in workplaces, such as support for people experiencing pregnancy loss, raising awareness about menopause and family and domestic violence (FDV), recognising these are real life issues and that our workplace response is critical to their wellbeing and feeling supported.

By actively demonstrating our commitment to these issues, we’re better able to support employee and family wellbeing, normalise shared care and flexible working, challenge outdated gender stereotypes and support our safety to speak up culture.”

Georgie Dent

CEO, The Parenthood



“The National Working Families Survey 2024 presents us with a unique opportunity to take a snapshot of how workplaces are accommodating parents - or not. It will help reshape workplaces and ensure family-friendly practices are a given, not a goal.

Despite improvements, the survey findings highlight that we still have a long way to go in effectively supporting families. Our policies must catch up to the realities faced by working parents, ensuring they’re able to sustainably combine their caring responsibilities with their need to financially provide for their family. For parents, carers and children to truly thrive, we need one year of paid parental leave to be shared between parents, including super, and universal access to affordable early childhood education and care, delivered by a well-supported and properly paid workforce. These are critical supports for parents to combine work and care.”

Pip Dexter

Chief People and Purpose
Officer, Deloitte



“The 2024 National Working Families survey shows we cannot afford to be complacent when it comes to creating family-friendly workplaces. We know at Deloitte that close to 40 per cent of our people have caring responsibilities and we recognise they want flexibility to be able to manage their professional and personal lives.

We are proud of our leading employment practices but we know a cohesive and practicable flexible work policy isn’t one you can set and forget. It requires constant engagement with employees of all levels, a willingness to try new things, and a realisation that business-wide blanket rules usually don’t work.”

Executive Summary

In 2019, Parents At Work partnered with a number of organisations to release the landmark National Working Families Report, which followed a survey of more than 6,000 working Australian parents and carers. The report laid out the difficulties experienced by these workers in balancing their work and family commitments, and highlighted how their personal wellbeing and family relationships were suffering as a result of these strains.

In 2020, the way we approached work and wellbeing shifted dramatically in response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, with Australian workplaces having no choice but to embrace remote and flexible working.

In 2021, Parents At Work partnered with UNICEF Australia to create the National Work + Family Standards, delivered through the Family Friendly Workplaces Program. This is an Australian first that provides workplaces with a benchmarking and certification framework to support employers in becoming more family-inclusive.

Today, we find ourselves in a pivot period of change within the Australian workforce landscape, with heightened focus on the challenges faced by working parents and carers by prominent think tanks and policy institutes, and the Australian Government signalling its commitment to enable a more equitable paid parental leave system through recent changes to the Commonwealth-funded Paid Parental Leave Scheme.

In the wake of so much structural change, conducting the survey again in 2024, five years following the initial survey, provided an opportunity to measure the impact of these changing workplace trends on Australian working parents and carers.

The key findings from the survey have highlighted that while many employers offer flexible work and parental leave policies, gender norms continue to underpin caring policies and attitudes within the workplace. Survey respondents reported that it is still less acceptable for men to use family-friendly workplace arrangements or leave, and that men generally have less access to paid parental leave than women. As such, stereotypes relating to men as the primary income earner and women as the primary caregiver have remained largely entrenched in attitudes towards workplace arrangements and entitlements.

These attitudes extend beyond the workplace, as women continue to bear the majority of the caring load and household duties, despite working similar hours to men. Notably, the level of stress felt by working parents and carers has increased since 2019, and this stress is felt far more acutely by women. Opportunities identified by respondents to alleviate some of the stress they face include granting employees greater flexibility in where or when they work, reducing overall job pressure and workload, and having more family-inclusive culture initiatives, particularly among leadership.

Working parents and carers cannot achieve a less stressful work-life balance without the active support of their employer. To see tangible improvements in the wellbeing of working parents and carers in Australia, employers need to lead the way forward. Should limiting attitudes and policies towards employees with caring responsibilities persist, organisations risk productivity losses, high attrition rates and a shrinking talent pool.

This report comes at a time where awareness of the impacts of gender inequality and poor workforce wellbeing is prominent in public discourse, and policymakers are making it a top priority.



The findings explored in this report offer insight into persisting challenges faced by working families and it offers practical and actionable recommendations to tackle these issues within Australian workplaces.

Key Findings

- 1.** The level of stress felt by working parents and carers is higher than it was in 2019, and this is felt more acutely among women.
- 2.** The biggest challenge in balancing work and family commitments continues to be the ability for working parents and carers to look after their physical and mental health.
- 3.** Despite working similar hours to men, women continue to bear the majority of the caring load and household duties - nearly double that of men.
- 4.** A significant proportion of men and women continue to miss out on family activities due to work commitments.
- 5.** The most common reason cited by men for taking too short a parental leave period was that they were not eligible for longer paid parental leave based on their company policy.
- 6.** Women are far more likely to use flexible work arrangements than men, and the availability of flexible work arrangements are of more importance for women than men when considering a new job.
- 7.** There is still a perception that it is less acceptable for men to take time off or access flexible work, with men feeling less supported by their employer to take time off to care for their family.
- 8.** While more men and women are taking advantage of flexible working hours or locations, many are still concerned that their reputation at work may suffer when using flexible work policies.
- 9.** Three quarters of respondents consider their workplace to be family-friendly, but half agree that workers' commitment to their job is questioned if they use family-friendly work arrangements.
- 10.** Having more control over when and where respondents work was identified as the top workplace strategy that would be the most useful to working parents and carers in the workplace.





Survey Demographics

The 2024 National Working Families Survey was developed in consultation with key partners and was designed to complement the 2019 survey by providing comparable data points, and specifically to address the following research questions:

- Overall, how are parents and carers feeling about their ability to manage work and family commitments?
- What are the key challenges and priorities for parents and carers?
- Are current workplace policies and practices enough to support families at work?

Participant demographic

In addressing these questions, the survey asked working parents and carers about how they manage to balance their work and family commitments, the challenges and stressors they face while doing so, and how they were being supported by their employers and what could be improved. A total of 6,204 parents and carers responded to the survey. 94 per cent of respondents primarily care for children aged 18 years or younger, while another 16 per cent indicated they care for their parents.

73 per cent of respondents identified as women, and 27 per cent as men. This was an improvement on the previous survey with respect to male participation, which was at 19 per cent in 2019. 92 per cent of respondents identified as heterosexual, and 77 per cent of the cohort were couples with children.

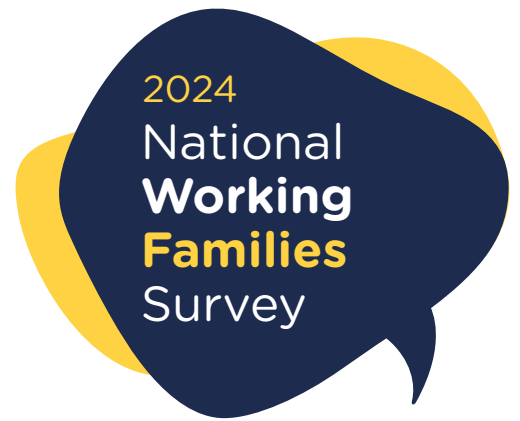
30 per cent of respondents were born overseas, and less than 3 per cent identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

The highest proportion of respondents (47 per cent) were aged between 35-44 years old. A quarter were aged between 45-54, and 19 per cent were aged between 25-34.

Respondents displayed a diverse range of occupation profiles and industries:

- 92 per cent of respondents were employed in an organisation, 5 per cent were self-employed, and the remainder were currently on parental or carers' leave.
- 68 per cent of respondents worked full-time, and 29 per cent were part-time employees.
- The top industries represented among respondents were Financial and Insurance Services (18 per cent), Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (15 per cent), Healthcare and Social Assistance (14 per cent) and Education and Training (10 per cent).
- The top occupations reflected by respondents were Professionals (45 per cent), Managers (27 per cent) and Clerical and Administrative Workers (12 per cent).

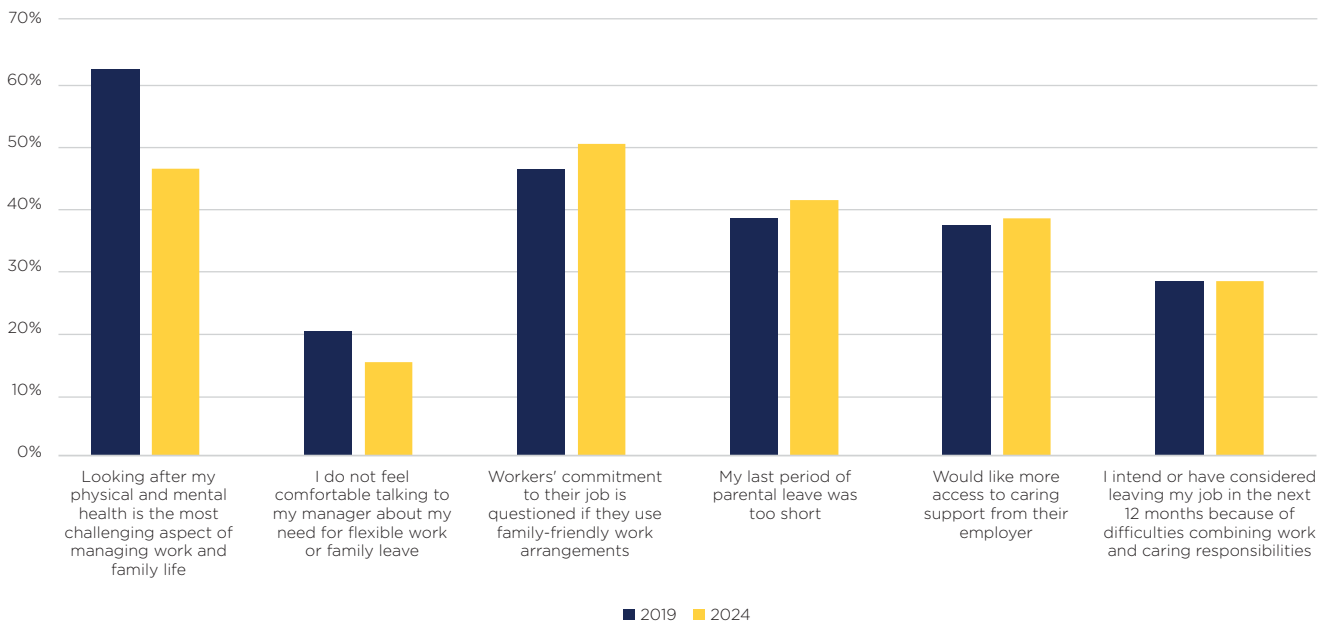
Introduction



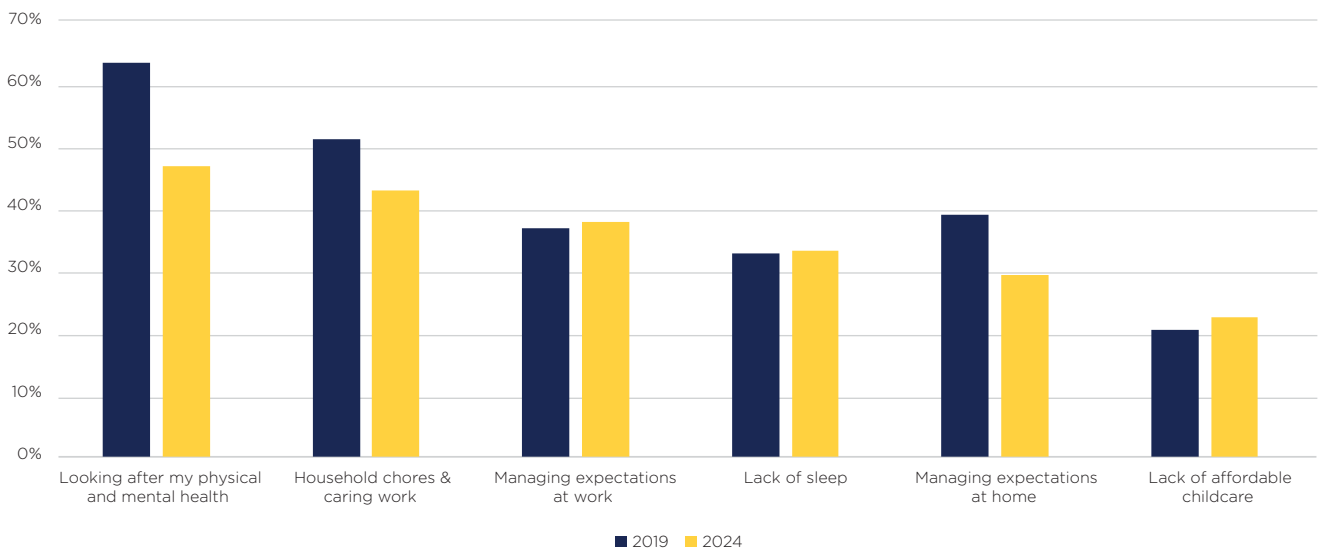
This report details findings arising from the 2024 National Working Families Survey. It aims to provide an overview of the challenges, needs and experiences of working parents and carers in Australia in 2024, and to provide employers with actionable recommendations to support parents and carers in balancing their working and caring responsibilities.

The survey results indicate that the wellbeing of working parents and carers is continuing to suffer because of balancing competing work and family demands, and that women are feeling the stress of managing caring and household responsibilities with their workload at far higher rates than men.

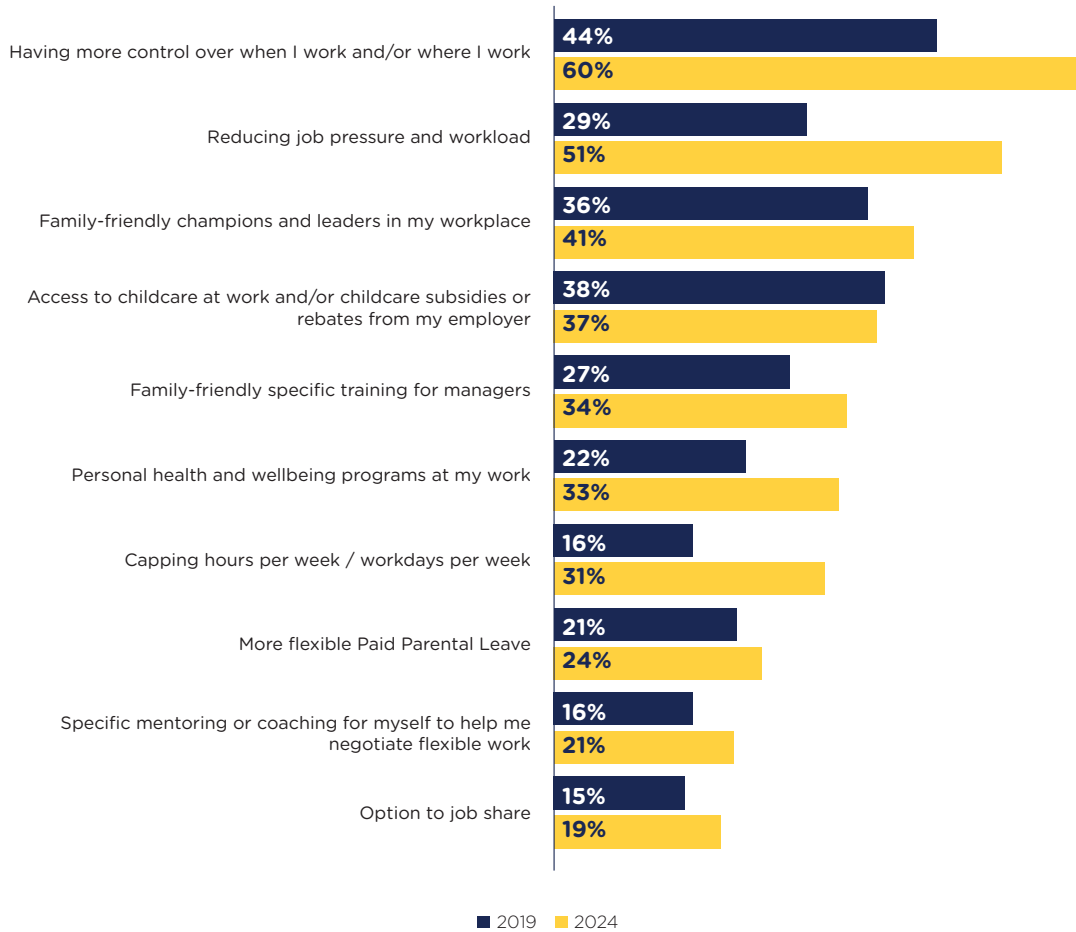
Comparing 2019 to 2024: Headline results



Comparing 2019 to 2024: Top barriers leading to work life tension



How can we better support working parents and carers?



Australia continues to lag other OECD nations in the support offered to working parents and carers, putting the competitiveness of our economy at risk, and limiting the ability of Australian employers to attract high quality talent. Supporting working parents and carers in Australia and promoting the fair share of work and caregiving responsibilities can significantly improve wellbeing outcomes for Australian families. Through easing these challenges, we can increase morale and productivity, decrease absenteeism, and promote gender equality. This, in turn, benefits the health and prosperity of our broader community and economy. At a workforce level, employers can realise these benefits by making an active commitment to cultivating a family-inclusive workplace.

This involves implementing family-friendly policies and nurturing a culture that assists employees with caregiving responsibilities, which can relieve some of the pressure on parents and carers. In addition, improving outcomes for working families requires a fundamental shift in perceptions and expectations associated with how people should behave based on their gender (i.e. gender norms). Structural barriers to progress, such as the limited access to flexible work options and parental leave for men, creates barriers to choices and opportunities which in turn reinforces and perpetuates the imbalance of household and caregiving responsibilities between genders.



We are in an era where the boundaries between work and personal life continue to blur. As the workforce evolves, so do the expectations and needs of employees balancing the demands of their careers with raising children and caring for dependents.



The past few years has seen an unprecedented level of local, national and global change that is impacting the way we approach work and the role of the workplace. The COVID-19 pandemic saw a sudden and significant increase in the number of Australian workers forced to work flexibly or remotely. The pace of workforce and workplace change has increased dramatically, aided by the rapid growth of collaboration and workplace technology, and these shifts are largely occurring independent of industry.

The shift towards flexible work has seen the lines between work and life become increasingly blurred, particularly for working parents and carers. Indeed, the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) reported in June 2021 that working at home did not necessarily facilitate a more manageable work-life balance, as survey findings revealed that those working at home and actively caring for children at the same time very often reported difficulties in balancing work and care responsibilities.¹

Childcare affordability and the cost-of-living crisis compounds the challenges faced by working parents and carers further. UNICEF has reported that Australian parents pay some of the highest childcare fees in the world,² and that many families in regional, rural or low socio-economic areas have limited access to quality childcare services.³ The current cost-of-living crisis has seen Australian families face increasing financial pressures, rendering childcare even more inaccessible.

Yet despite the challenges of remote or flexible work, employee expectations have shifted towards widespread support of flexible work arrangements. The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) found in 2020 that 92 per cent of Australian workers wanted to continue to access some kind of flexible working arrangement even after the pandemic ended.⁴

Despite widespread shifts towards more flexible work, there remains a gendered dimension to the way working and caring responsibilities are upheld in Australia.

Access to flexible working arrangements has increased, irrespective of gender – WGEA data has shown that there is an upward trend in the number of organisations setting engagement targets for flexible working arrangements, including targets set specifically for men.⁵ Yet amid this shift, women continue to bear the bulk of the caring and household load.

Subsequent AIFS reports revealed that gender patterns of caring did not change much through the pandemic, despite the shift towards flexible work – prior to the pandemic, 54 per cent of respondents reported that mothers always or usually cared for children, compared to 8 per cent of fathers. During the pandemic, these figures negligibly shifted to 52 per cent of mothers and 11 per cent of fathers.⁶

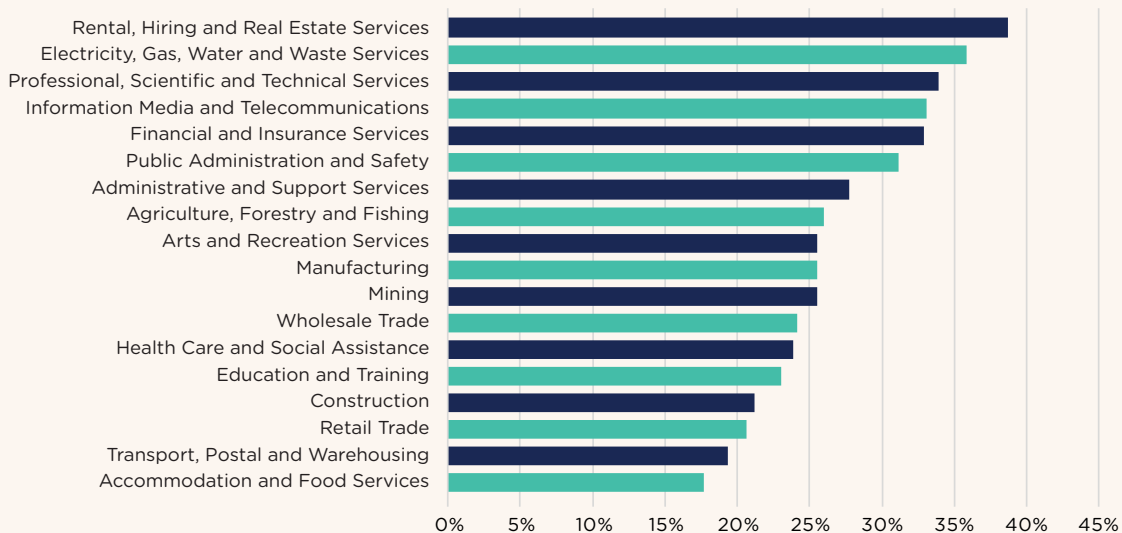
The Grattan Institute has reported that the gender gap in unpaid and paid work is more pronounced in Australia than in most advanced economies,⁷ and in the post-pandemic world these patterns have persisted. In a report released in May 2023, the AIFS reported that gendered patterns of employment remain in heterosexual couple families, with mothers much more likely to reduce employment to care for young children than fathers.⁸

Data from WGEA reports on paid parental leave indicates that while more employers are offering paid parental leave than ever, half of employers in male-dominated industries do not offer any form of paid primary carer’s leave, highlighting the structural barriers to a more equitable distribution of labour.⁹ However, the availability of paid parental leave is not necessarily the only factor at play.

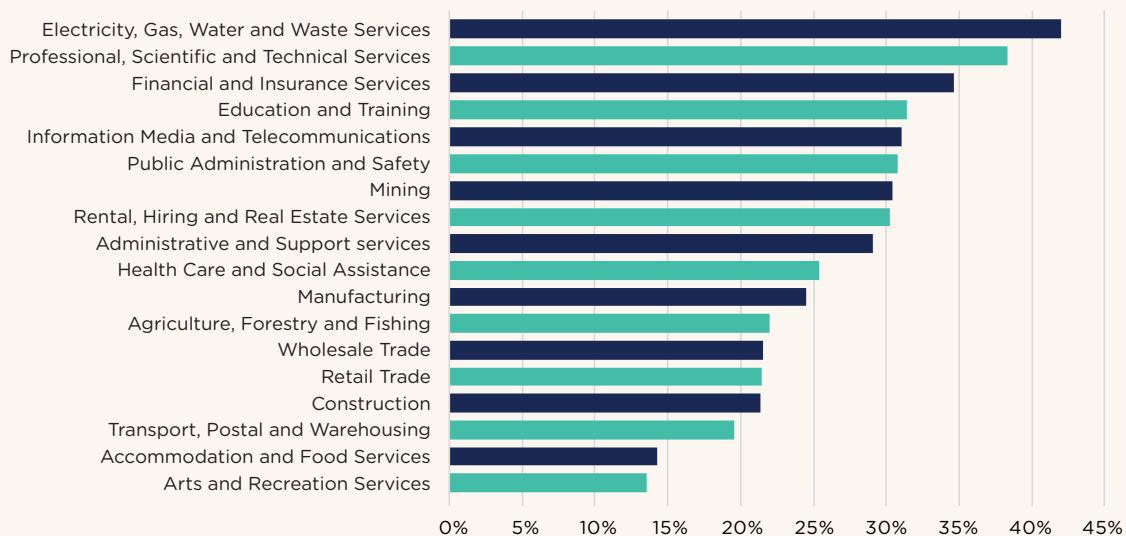
WGEA reports reveal that among employers who do offer paid parental leave, only 12 per cent of men take it,¹⁰ indicating that social or cultural norms and expectations are also playing a role and that there is a significant gap to close in enabling and encouraging fathers to take parental leave.

Flex and care support by industry

Flexible working hours and location

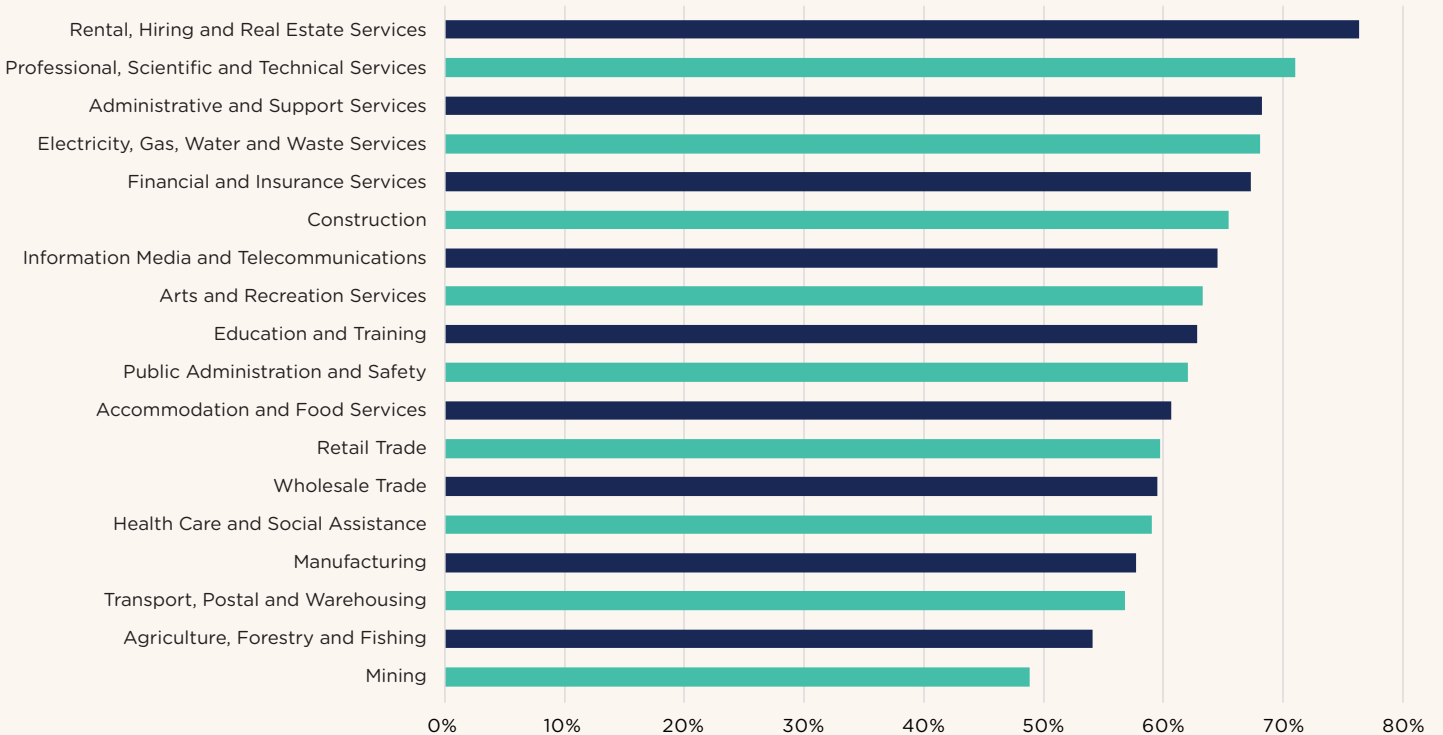


Breastfeeding/childcare facilities/reproductive health support



Perceived support of leadership by industry

Leaders actively champion and encourage work-family balance



Melanie Evans

CEO, ING Australia



“Working parents and carers make a significant contribution to workplaces, the economy and society. While it’s disappointing that stress balancing work and family commitments has increased for parents since the last National Working Families Survey, it’s clear that family-friendly workplace policies can and are making a positive difference.

At ING we’re committed to doing what we can to support working parents and carers. In 2019 we were the first Australian bank to remove primary and secondary care labels from our parental leave policy. In doing so we took away the stigma around men taking paid parental leave. In 2023 more men (53%) than women (47%) took paid parental leave and men are now taking longer periods of time off than ever before. Changing the way care is shared in the home can help reduce the day to day worries and stress that one or both parents face.

Policies help but we also need to lead by example. It’s important for senior leaders in business to normalise parenthood and the demands it places on parents and carers. At ING, we encourage senior leaders to share their own experiences and show that it’s ok to prioritise family moments. This creates a safe space for employees to be open about their own experiences. It can also help to break down traditionally held views, and misconceptions about being a working parent and barriers to career progression.”

Melanie Evans, CEO, ING Australia

Difficulties in managing work-life balance and gendered patterns of working and caring are impacting on the wellbeing of working parents and carers in Australia, but they can't change things on their own.

Research has shown that the status quo for working families is not working. Balancing work and family is a more common and more significant stressor for women, but men are more likely to feel the effects of work-family conflict and feel as though they are 'missing out'.¹¹ Moreover, the Grattan Institute reports that while the division of household and caring labour has been found to be substantially less satisfactory for women than it is for men, the wellbeing of both parents is reduced as fathers are working longer hours on the job with little time at home with their families.¹²

The unequal distribution of home and care labour is not necessarily by choice. Surveys show that many working parents and carers are supportive of a more equitable distribution of labour at home and at work,¹³ and three in four fathers told the Australian Human Rights Commission that they would have liked to take additional carers leave had they not been constrained financially.¹⁴ Moreover, the State of the World's Fathers 2023 report highlighted that personal benefits abound for both men and women who are satisfied with their level of involvement in caring for their children.¹⁵

A key finding from the State of the World's Fathers 2023 report was that the issues behind the challenges facing mothers and fathers are structural, and that women and men can't do it alone. The report indicated that the cost of childcare and lack of affordable care rated among the highest reported barriers to receiving adequate care support among parents.¹⁶

Modelling from Deloitte Access Economics has found that moving beyond prescriptive gender norms and adopting more flexible ideas around gender could lead to \$128 billion in higher GDP each year and 461,000 additional full-time employees.¹⁸

There are clear benefits to moving beyond these gender patterns. On a national scale, a more equitable distribution of care responsibilities will help reduce the gender pay gap and increase the GDP through greater women's workforce participation.¹⁷

The adoption of shared care responsibilities has also been shown to benefit Australian organisations. There are a significant number of commercial benefits to implementing workplace policies that promote shared care, including higher retention and lower turnover, improved engagement, morale and productivity, and greater ability to attract talent.¹⁹

Working parents and carers are facing many challenges and can't improve wellbeing outcomes on their own. There is a clear business case for employers to lead the way forward.

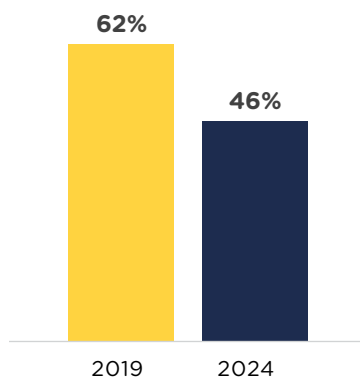


10 Key Insights

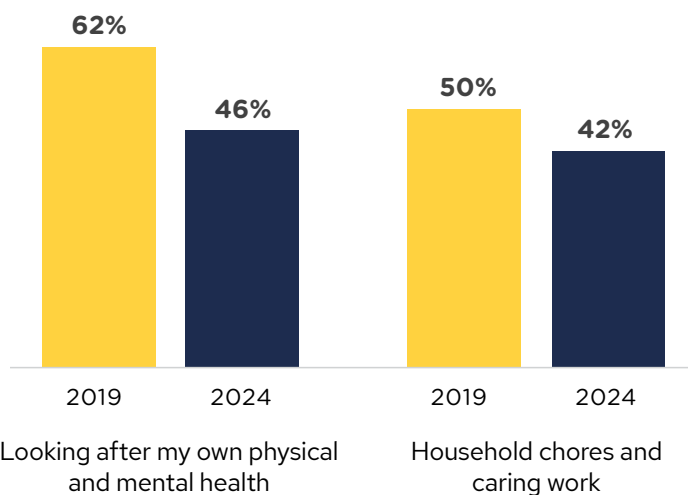
1. Over the past five years family-friendly workplace policies have become mainstream and are showing improved outcomes for working parents and carers, but caring challenges have not vastly improved.

Wellbeing has improved for some parents and carers...

Respondents reporting difficulty looking after their own physical and mental health while balancing competing work and family pressures



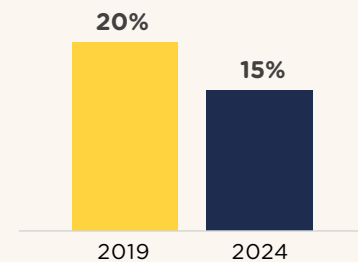
...but it still remains their most significant challenge



The comparable data points from **2019 to 2024** highlight that while family-friendly policies in the workplace are becoming more mainstream, working parents and carers continue to face many of the same challenges at much the same rates as they did in 2019.

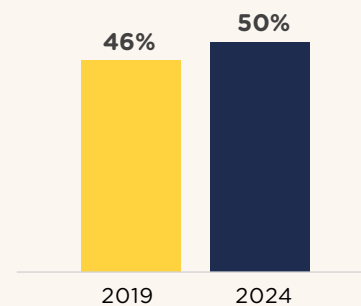
Managers are more approachable...

Respondents who reported not feeling comfortable talking to their managers about work/family leave



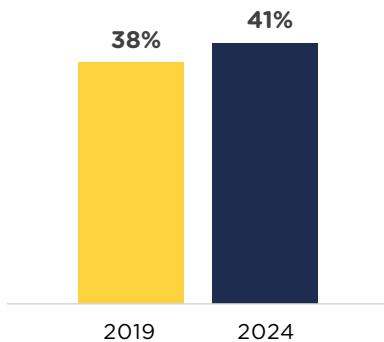
...but flexibility is still seen to come at a professional cost

Respondents who agreed that an employees' commitment to job is questioned if they use family-friendly work arrangements



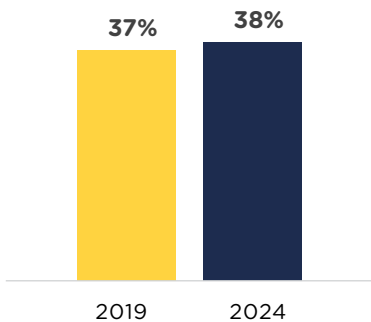
Parents want longer parental leave...

Respondents who felt that their length of paid parental leave was too short



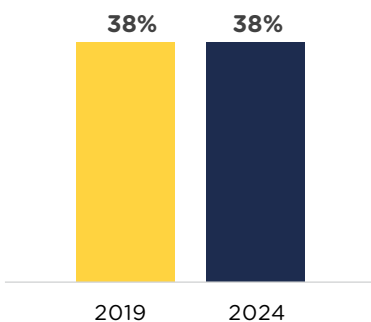
...and the desire for greater access to childcare through employers remains

Respondents who want more access to caring support from their employer



Importantly, employers continue to bear a cost in failing to support parents and carers by implementing policies to ameliorate the challenges they face.

Respondents who have considered leaving their job in the next 12 months due to difficulties combining their job with caring responsibilities



It seems that despite significant paradigm shifts in the way we work and approach wellbeing within the workplace, negative attitudes towards those who adopt flexible work arrangements have not shifted greatly, and parents and carers are still facing the same challenges in balancing their work and wellbeing.



2. Managing wellbeing continues to be a significant challenge and parents and carers are feeling more stressed than ever

Balancing work, family life and looking after their own physical and mental wellbeing remains the most significant challenge faced by working parents and carers, and this is particularly felt among women.

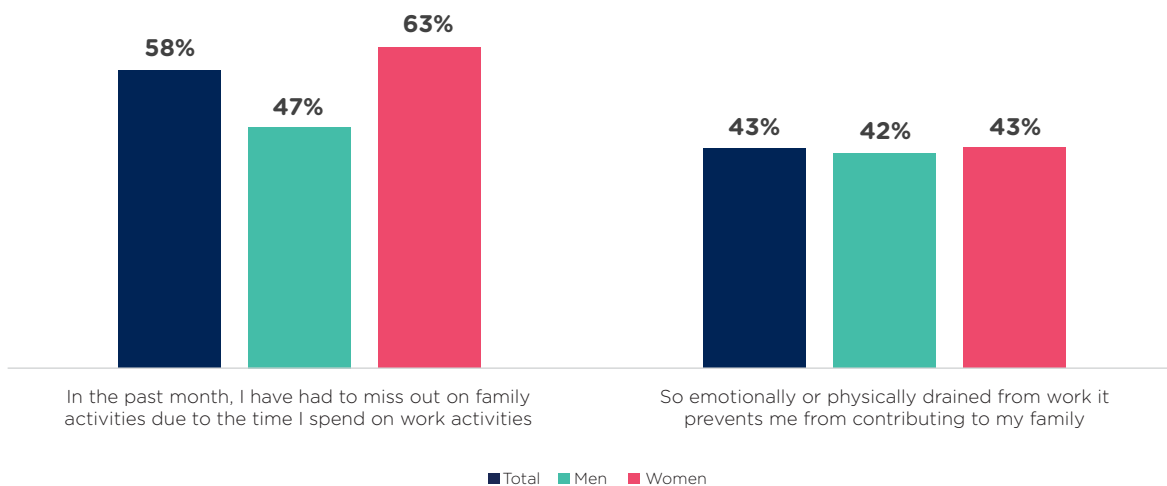
Despite fewer respondents reporting challenges in managing their mental and physical health since 2019, it collectively remains the most significant difficulty experienced by parents and carers outside of their work responsibilities.

When exploring this data through a gender lens, differences can be observed in the key challenges reported by men and women. Female respondents were much more likely to report household chores and caring work as a top difficulty (47 per cent) compared to men (30 per cent), and women were also overrepresented in respondents reporting difficulties in looking after mental and physical health (50 per cent, compared to 35 per cent of men).

Conversely, the top difficulty reported by men in the 2024 survey was lack of sleep (38 per cent), and higher rates of men also reported difficulties in managing expectations at home (32 per cent, compared to 27 per cent of women).

The stress felt when juggling caring responsibilities and work is also not felt equally between men and women. Over 74 per cent of women agreed that they feel stressed when balancing work and family commitments, compared to 57 per cent of men. This is an increase for both men and women from 2019, where 34 per cent of male respondents, and 51 per cent of women respondents, reported feeling stress.

Respondents who selected 'somewhat agree' or 'strongly agree' to the below statements



This data shows a pattern of women reporting greater stress and citing greater difficulties balancing the responsibilities of work, home life and the caring load, which leads us to further explore the relationship between gender and caring and household duties.

Women continue to bear the majority of the caring load and household duties, despite working largely the same hours as men.

On average, women reported spending 36 hours per week on caring responsibilities, and 17 hours on household duties. By comparison men reported spending 19 hours on caring responsibilities and 11 hours on household duties. However, on average both men and women reported spending at least 33 hours per week at work, including commuting time, indicating that, on average, women are spending far more time on caring responsibilities and household duties despite working similar hours.

These patterns broadly hold true when comparing the experience of men and women on the basis of employment status. Women continue to spend more hours on caring responsibilities and household duties than men regardless of whether they work full-time or part-time.

On average, women who work part-time contribute an extra 11 hours per work on caring responsibilities than those working full-time. Conversely the difference in caring responsibility by men differs only by one hour across full-time and part-time workers.

Notably, participants were asked about the most useful strategies for alleviating stress in the workplace, and one option included a need for access to childcare at work and/or childcare subsidies or rebates from their employer. 41 per cent of women reported that this would be a useful strategy, compared to only 29 per cent of men, indicating that caring responsibilities also seem to occupy a larger space in the mental load born by women.

The onus is on parents and carers to balance their work and family commitments.

More than half of respondents indicated that they find it difficult to strike the right balance between juggling work and family commitments – this was felt by half of men and two-thirds of women. It seems that the onus is on parents and carers to achieve an optimal work-life balance by managing workplace expectations and family commitments, and this remains a significant concern for working families in 2024.

While it seems that finding the right balance between work and family remains an overall challenge, access to flexible work options is making a notable difference.

Interestingly, survey responses indicate that utilising flexible work options to balance life and work feels easier in certain circumstances. Respondents indicated that flexing work when their children or dependents were ill, and for handling personal calls and emails during the day was reasonably easy.

However, when it came to attending school events or concerts, 40 percent of all respondents encountered challenges. Notably, this difficulty was slightly more pronounced among male respondents (45 percent) compared to women (42 percent).

Two-thirds (62%) of parents and carers highlight that work-family demands now significantly contribute to stress or tension in their relationships with partners, children, or dependents. This percentage has doubled since 2019, indicating a notable shift in the challenges faced by modern families.



3. Access and support for the utilising flexible working is critically important to working parents and carers

So far, we have seen that working parents and carers are reporting heightened rates of stress and significant challenges in balancing their workload with their family and care commitments, and this is particularly felt among women. There is no doubt that parents and carers are wearing the cost of these challenges as their physical health, mental health and family relationships are all seen to be suffering, which begs the question – what workplace accommodations are in place to support working parents and carers, and are they working?

Working flexibly across hours and location is the most common and most useful flexible work arrangement identified by respondents.

Respondents were asked to indicate which types of flexible working arrangements their employer offers, and of these options which one/s they have personally used in the past twelve months. 84 per cent of respondents indicated they had taken advantage of flexible working in relation to ‘hours of work’ and ‘work location’ in the past twelve months – the next most common arrangement was a compressed working week; job share arrangement or part-time role (38 per cent).

The value of flexible work arrangements to parents and carers can be seen in the rates of respondents agreeing with the statements, “If I were to look for another job, I wouldn’t apply for jobs that did not offer flexible working arrangements” (76 per cent) and “I would take

a 10% pay cut if it meant my workplace would adopt / continue to offer flexible working arrangements” (28 per cent of women, 25 per cent of men).

The importance of flexible work arrangements can also be seen in the workplace strategies identified as most useful in supporting working parents and carers by survey respondents. The top strategy selected by respondents was having more control over where and when they work – 60 per cent of respondents selected this option, compared to 44 per cent in 2019. Moreover, 23 per cent of respondents and 19 per cent of respondents cited long working hours and a lack of flexibility as their top difficulties in the workplace respectively.

Women are accessing flexible working arrangements at far higher rates than men.

Of the 84 per cent of respondents who indicated that they used flexible working hours or location in the last twelve months, 66 per cent were women. Furthermore, 33 per cent of the 38 per cent who indicated they use a compressed working week, job share arrangement or worked part-time were also women.

This can also be seen in the questions quantifying the value of flexible work – 60 per cent of women strongly agreed that they would not apply for jobs that did not offer flexible work arrangements, compared to 32 per cent of men.

Managers are able to take advantage of flexible working hours and location more than other employees, but this does not translate to a less stressful work-family balance.

In terms of role type, managers, professionals, and clerical and administrative workers were amongst the respondents who made the most use of flexible working arrangements. This may reflect the feasibility of working flexibly with respect the type of work carried out by these roles. Flexible working hours or location were again the most commonly used policies, with at least 80 per cent of managers and professionals making use of these in the past twelve months.

While those in senior positions appear to be able to make use of flexible work policies more readily, this does not directly translate to a more manageable work-family balance. Managers, professionals, and clerical workers are among those reporting the highest levels

of stress when balancing work and family commitments. They also report the highest rates of work-family demands contributing to stress or tension in their family relationships. This suggests that although flexible work options might be more accessible, the balance between work and home life can be less clear, resulting in elevated stress levels.

While the stress of balancing work-family commitments seems to be felt more in the family relationships (67 per cent of respondents in manager roles reported tension in their familial relationships), there exists an impact on working relationships, with 43 per cent of managers reporting tension with colleagues or supervisors.

Insights from the 2024 survey data suggest that flexible work arrangements alone are not enough to support working parents and carers in managing their work and family responsibilities. It also suggests that the impacts of work and life stressors is not limited to personal relationships, with workplace relationships suffering also.

4. Greater access to paid parental leave for men benefits working families, employers and the broader community

Access and utilisation of paid parental leave is not distributed evenly across men and women.

The majority of employers (81 per cent) offered paid parental leave. Women are currently accessing longer periods of paid parental leave, with nearly all women (91 per cent) reporting taking more than four months leave, compared with 48 per cent of men surveyed reporting taking less than one month leave, and a third of men reported taking between one and three months.

Among those who took parental leave, 45 per cent of men and 39 per cent of women reported that the length they took was too short. The most common reason cited for not taking longer leave was financial reasons, which was reported by 69 per cent of women, and 38 per cent of men. This was an improvement from 2019, where 85 per cent of respondents reported financial constraints on taking longer parental leave.

However, more than half (51 per cent) of men stated that they did not take longer parental leave as they were not eligible based on their company policy – this was only reported by 21 per cent of women.

Women continue to access paid parental leave (PPL) at higher rates, and for longer periods than men, and there remains structural barriers within company policy that prevent men from accessing the same amount of leave. The impacts of the disproportionate access to PPL appears to be worn primarily by women, who are much more likely to report experiencing fatigue, anxiety, or depression upon their return to work after parental leave than men.

5. Workplace attitudes toward caring responsibilities and paid parental leave have not shifted, and continue to hinder the adoption of family-friendly workplace practices

Negative perceptions around family-friendly work arrangements are stopping some parents and carers from using them.

When asked about their current workplace, the majority of respondents indicated that they considered their workplace to be family-friendly (75 per cent), and that their workplace helps them to balance work and family commitments (74 per cent). Over half of respondents (62 per cent) stated that they felt their leaders actively champion and encourage work-family balance.

However, there seems to be a disconnect between the availability of family-friendly workplace policies and perceptions of those who access them, as 50 per cent of respondents indicated that they agree that their commitment to their job is questioned if they use family-friendly work arrangements.

Indeed, when respondents who had not used flexible work arrangements in the past twelve months were asked why, a quarter indicated that they were worried

their reputation at work would suffer if they were to access these policies. Moreover, 22 per cent of women and 12 per cent of men who took parental leave reported receiving negative comments from managers and supervisors as a result of taking time off. There has been negligible improvement on this since 2019, when 23 per cent of women and 13 per cent of men reported the same thing.

It is possible that this disconnect stems from a lack of understanding around the purpose and collective benefit of encouraging the utility of flexible work arrangements particularly for working parents and carers, as three quarters of men and two-thirds of women surveyed agreed that managers who access flexible work policies themselves are better at managing employees who also adopt these policies.

6. Despite efforts to address the divide, caregiving remains a primary obstacle to closing the gender gap due to entrenched structural barriers related to gender roles

Workplace attitudes and policies towards flexible work reinforce gender norms to the detriment of both men and women.

The differences in how men and women are using flexible work arrangements and paid parental leave merits a closer look at how workplace policies, practices and attitudes might be influencing their behaviour.

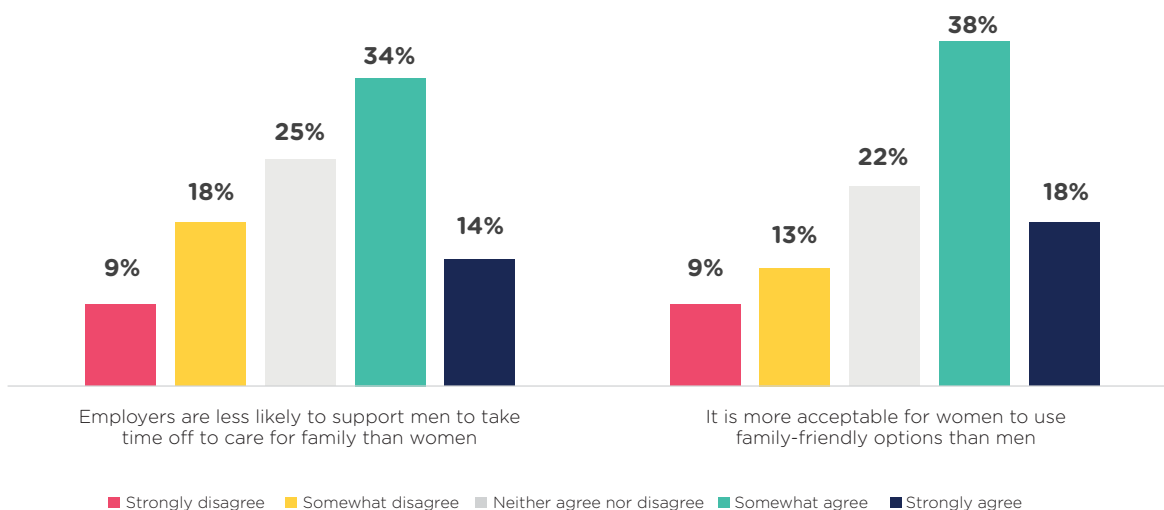
These attitudes have been shown to extend into policies and practices through analysis of survey data that explored the difference in family-friendly policies offered by male-dominated industries, female-dominated industries, and industries with a balanced gender distribution. It was found that male-dominated industries typically offer fewer family-friendly work policies than female-dominated or gender balanced industries. An exception to this is the purchasing of leave in advance, with 29 per cent of male-dominated industries offering this policy compared to 20 per cent of female-dominated industries.

It seems that workplace policies, practices and cultures are geared towards supporting men as the primary income earner and women as the primary caregiver, to the disadvantage of both men and women. Earlier findings, that men typically take or have less access to longer paid parental leave further highlights perceptions or practices that lead to women taking more time off to attend to caregiving duties. Indeed, that the option to

purchase leave in advance is more likely to be offered in male-dominated industries speaks to these findings, as less access to paid parental leave likely accounts for why there might be a greater need for men to purchase leave in advance. This places a financial constraint upon men who might not have access to sufficient paid parental leave, thus incentivising them to take less time off to care for their children, thus further entrenching these gender roles.

The way in which stress manifests between respondents in male-dominated industries and female-dominated or gender balanced industries further demonstrates this divide. Respondents from male-dominated industries reported higher rates of tension or stress in the workplace due to the competing demands of balancing work and family, whereas those from gender balanced or female-dominated industries were more likely to report feeling the stress in their family lives than in the workplace. In summary, the survey data reinforces the impact of gender norms with respect to caregiving, with women feeling the load more heavily in their home lives, while men feel it more acutely in their work lives despite the balance of hours spent at work being largely the same between genders.

Employee perception of attitudes towards family-friendly policies

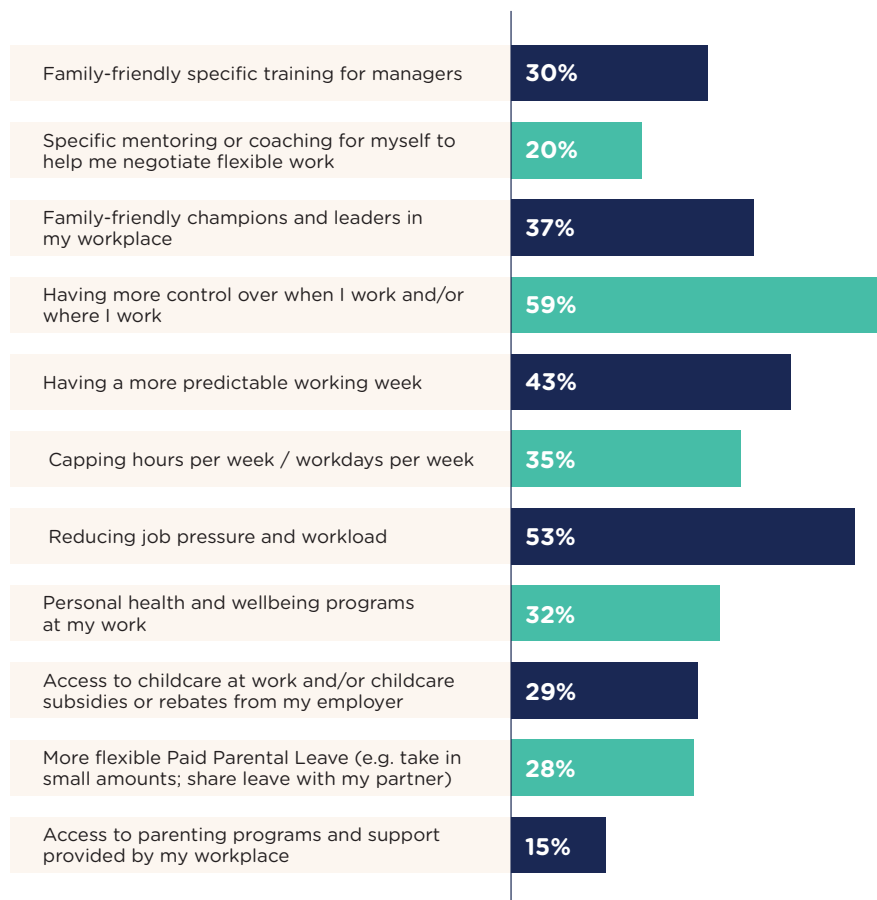


Men are looking to family-friendly workplace champions and leaders to inspire a culture shift and enable greater flexibility for working fathers

Over one-third of male survey respondents (37%) indicated that having family-friendly champions and leaders in their workplaces would be helpful to them. Top priorities for men are centred around making the workplace more accommodating of parental and caregiving needs, with greater control over where and when they work, and reduction in overall workload pressures. This indicates that fathers and male carers may be struggling against prohibitive gender norms within their organisation (i.e. with male parents and carers are expected to keep their working hours and status the same as before having children/caring responsibilities).

This is corroborated by respondent's perception of people utilising flexible working arrangements in the workplace, with over half of respondents from certified workplaces (52%) agreeing that it is more acceptable for women to use family-friendly work options than men. This was higher when looking at respondents in not-certified organisations (58%). Furthermore, nearly half of all respondents (48%) agreed that it is more acceptable for women to use family-friendly options than men.

Workplace strategies that male respondents identified as the most useful





7. A greater understanding of the diverse needs of parents and carers is required within workplace carer policies and practices.

There is a lack of awareness of the challenges faced by those who care for parents or elderly relatives, and carer policies do not always accommodate the needs of these employees.

The majority of respondents to this survey indicated that they primarily care for children, however when survey data is understood on the basis of those who care for parents or elderly relatives, a slightly different picture begins to emerge.

The biggest challenges faced by carers differ depending on whether they care for children or for other relatives. The biggest challenge reported by those who care for someone other than their child was managing expectations at work (44 per cent, compared to 36 per cent of parents). They also reported challenges with long working hours at higher rates (29 per cent, compared to 22 per cent of parents), and unsupportive managers or colleagues (12 per cent, compared to 10 per cent of parents). This data shifts again when carer profile data is segregated further – respondents who primarily care for grandparents reported challenges with unsupportive managers or colleagues at far higher rates than other carers (21 per cent, compared to 15 per cent of those who care for their parents and 10 per cent of those who care for children).

The challenges reported by those who care for parents or other relatives contribute to a larger assumption that the responsibilities of these carers are not well understood within the workplace. This assumption is supported by some of the free-text responses provided by respondents:

“Flexibility to care for elderly parents isn’t as supported as for those wanting flexibility to care for children.”

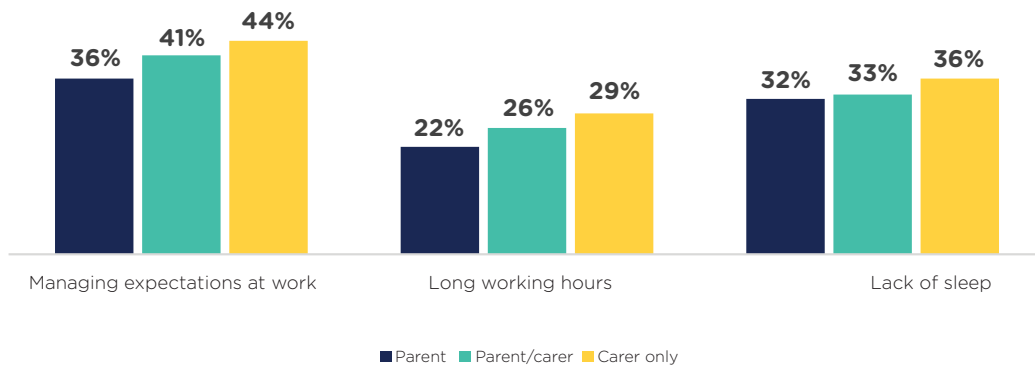
“Having responsibilities to elderly parents is treated as not being as important as looking after children.”

“My workplace policies are very evolved in regard to caring for children but not so much in regard to caring for elderly relatives. With an aging population this is another family responsibility many of us are facing.”

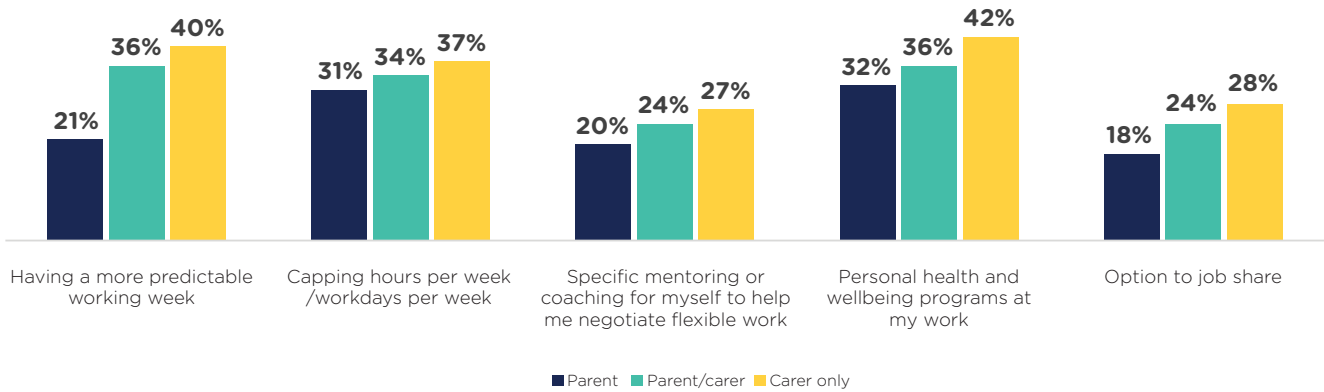
Survey data surrounding the most effective workplace strategies put forward by respondents indicates that these carers also have different support needs in the workplace to parents. Those who care for someone other than a child were more likely to want a more predictable working week (40 per cent, compared to 31 per cent of parents), capping hours per week or workdays per week (37 per cent, compared to 31 per cent of parents) and specific mentoring or coaching to help them negotiate flexible work (27 per cent, compared to 20 per cent of parents). They were also more likely to want personal health and wellbeing programs at work (42 per cent, compared to 32 per cent of parents) and the option to job share (28 per cent, compared to 18 per cent of parents).

These data points highlight that diversity and flexibility in carer policies is required in order to meet the needs of different groups of carers.

Differing challenges faced by parents and carers



Differing workplace strategies identified as useful by parents and carers



Workplaces need to build more family-inclusive cultures and practices to better support single parents.

Survey responses highlighted that single parents feel like they are frequently missing out on opportunities for team connection and network building as well as opportunities for professional development, as they are unable to share caring responsibilities. They reported a lack of understanding within the workplace of the acute pressures faced by single parents and lack of inclusive practices and policies.

“Family friendly environments need to be inclusive of single parents. They often assume you can attend events and the other parent will care for the child in your absence. For single parents this is not the case... They miss out on work events... Single parents also miss out on opportunities for promotions and training, due to the extra work-life balance required.”

“There are added pressures on single parent families that are not realised in families with two parents. More pressure, higher costs... All responsibilities fall on me and just me... When there is no extended family in town, or support to help, it can be difficult to manage.”

“Being a single parent - I think there are so many more stresses. There is no sharing the school drop off or pick up, and even with a supportive manager - colleagues just don't understand.”

There needs to be a greater understanding within carer policies and practices of the challenges faced by carers experiencing domestic violence and those with more complex care requirements.

Respondents also called out the need for greater understanding of the challenges faced by those experiencing domestic violence or those caring for family members who experienced domestic violence, and a need for greater support to be embedded within carer policies and practices. They reported on the additional pressures that they face, including stress, exhaustion, financial strain, the need to attend additional appointments and undertaking legal processes.

“We have the care of 2 of our grandchildren who have PTSD due to trauma from domestic violence & drug exposure. Needless to say, we are required to attend meetings & training, complete documentation etc. during work hours. This is all difficult.”

“Family violence required extra time within work hours to manage. Stress and exhaustion played a big part.”

“I look after my 16-year-old niece who is a victim of family violence. I do not have a formal court order, but I have full financial responsibility for her. I have limited support from work because there isn't a provision in the enterprise agreement because there isn't a legal arrangement.”

“Family violence - after leaving there is a lot of time needed to attend to legal processes to ensure children's ongoing protection.”

Respondents also indicated that support for those experiencing domestic violence includes the need for an understanding employer or manager.

“As a single mum my employer is very understanding if I need to attend school for an event, need to pick my child up if she's sick and I have accessed all of my 10 DV days without question.”

“My employer/management have supported me leave DV and go through separation settlement while giving me the opportunity to access [sic] flexible working arrangements to remain a full-time employee.”

Some carers also indicated that they had more complex caring responsibilities, including those who cared for parents as well as their children, those supporting family members with mental or physical health challenges, parents of children with disabilities, and parents of children who require extra developmental support. These parents and carers described the extra challenges and pressures that they face in managing their more complex care responsibilities.

“My children have additional needs and attend multiple appointments... In addition to this, my husband also sustained a workplace injury and hasn't been able to work since being operated on (2021). I also assist my elderly parents who are in a more isolated town in rural NSW... They rely heavily on myself to assist with their shopping, transport to medical appointments in larger regional towns.”

“I am still the main carer for my 30-year-old child who has challenging mental health conditions and requires a lot of emotional and organisational support. I also share care for my elderly parents-in-law who do not live with us but require support frequently. This means regularly needing to attend in-person medical or telehealth appointments, provide practical living support, deal with agencies, support organisations and numerous service providers.”

The additional responsibilities and pressure that these parents and carers face is not always understood or supported by workplace policies, and this can negatively impact on their overall health and wellbeing.

“The demands to take time off to support children with specific needs is higher and not always factored into work policy.”

“My employer only allows full time contracts... I have 3 children with a diagnosis, ADHD, ADHD and ADHD/ASD. As such my kids have more support needs and I have to attend more allied health and specialist appointments. I always have to use my personal and annual leave for those appointments, this leaves me with not enough leave for my own needs.”

Survey participants with more complex care requirements highlighted the benefit of an understanding employer, family-inclusive culture and flexible workplace in supporting them through these challenges.

“The organisation I work for has provided the support and flexibility to juggle all my personal commitments with work without stress or tension. They are leading the way with being a family-inclusive workplace.”

“My employer allows me to work flexibly between the office and home and focuses on me getting the job done, not which hours I do it in. Without this flexibility and understanding, I would not be able to work full-time, if at all.”

Some participants suggested that carer policies should go a step further to recognise the specific challenges faced by this group of carers and provide them with extra support.

“I would love to see more personal leave allocated to mothers... factoring in needs of children with health or development challenges.”

“Would be useful to recognise specific challenges that parents face when they have a child with a disability as this adds complexity when looking at work-life balance.”

8. Discussions around the stressors felt by working parents and carers benefit from the application of an intersectional lens to understand the extra challenges that some parents and carers may face.

Carer policies and practices should be complemented by greater cultural awareness and diversity training within the workplace to ensure that all parents and carers feel safe in seeking support from their employers.

Survey data was also analysed to understand the nature of the challenges faced by respondents of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent, respondents who were born overseas and respondents who identified as part of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Respondents of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent represented 3 per cent of the total survey sample. Over half of these respondents indicated that they agree with feeling stressed when balancing work and family commitments (64 per cent).

Respondents of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent also reported greater difficulty in balancing caring responsibilities with work commitments. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents were more likely to report difficulties in needing to take time off for sick children or family members (53 per cent, compared to 40 per cent of the total survey sample), taking family calls and emails during the workday (44 per cent, compared to 31 per cent of the total survey sample), and attending a school event or concert (48 per cent, compared to 43 per cent of the survey sample).

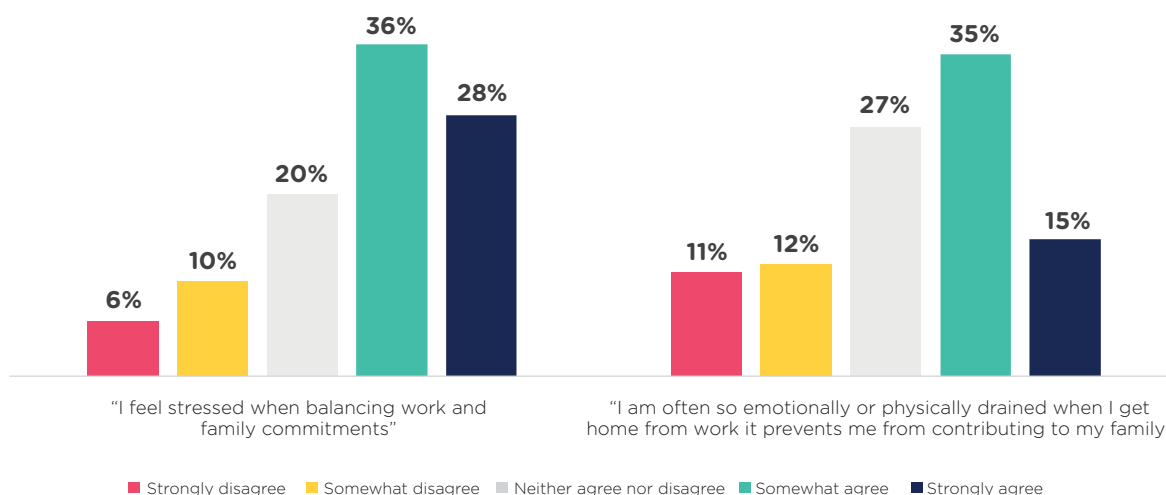
When this data is considered in conjunction with free-text responses provided by participants, it leads to an assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and carers may be less willing to seek support from their employer in managing these stressors in fear of stereotyping or discrimination.

“As a carer I haven’t disclosed much to work about the constraints and was isolated during covid. As a single indigenous mother and worker, I felt it would be better perceived to not disclose much info or share with colleagues in case it would affect any job opportunities.”

Data from respondents who were born overseas paints a similar picture where concerns around personal or professional reputation may stop these respondents from seeking support from their employer.

Respondents who were born overseas reported that they would benefit from the ability to work flexibly at higher rates (64 per cent, compared to 53 per cent of those born in Australia), and were also more likely to not apply for jobs that did not offer flexible work arrangements (59 per cent, compared to 50 per cent of respondents born in Australia).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander responses





However, respondents born overseas were also more likely to not access flexible work arrangement due to worries about the effect on their career or reputation (33 per cent, compared to 23 per cent of respondents born in Australia).

They were also more likely to not take longer paid parental leave out of fears they would miss out on future work or opportunities (22 per cent, compared to 16 per cent of those born in Australia). It is possible that respondents born overseas were more likely to seek out jobs that already offer a culture of flexibility as the potential for reputational impact is lessened if working flexibly is already the norm within the organisation.

“Work and family balance is even more challenging if you come from CALD, CARM background and have other intersectionalities too such as woman, faith, colour, race and appearance.”

Free-text survey responses also highlighted that migrant families are feeling the strain of balancing work and family as they have minimal or no extended family around to provide support.

“As a migrant couple, raising kids in Australia with no relatives or extended family support is incredibly tiring.”

“Sometimes it is hard to manage work-life balance with kids. We are a migrant family and have no family support at all times. As such, we rely on work to be flexible enough to help us helping our loved ones.”

Survey data was also analysed to understand the challenges faced by parents and carers who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community. While the sample size for this group of respondents was quite small (around 5 per cent), when the data is placed in the context of other data from the report and free-text responses, some early assumptions can be drawn about policy barriers and discrimination experienced by these respondents in the workplace.

Survey data has already shown that men are less likely to be eligible for paid parental leave entitlements in the workplace, and this was similarly seen among the respondents that identified as gay. 17 per cent of gay respondents indicated that they were not eligible for paid parental leave at their workplace (compared to 10 per cent of heterosexual respondents and 8 per cent of lesbian respondents).

The data also showed that gay and queer respondents are much more likely to agree that they felt depressed when returning to work after parental leave (60 per cent and 63 per cent respectively, compared to 14 per cent of heterosexual respondents and 13 per cent of lesbian respondents).

Lesbian respondents were more likely to agree that they received negative comments from workmates or colleagues for using flexible work arrangements (25 per cent, compared to 16 per cent of heterosexual respondents). Lesbian and queer respondents were also more likely to strongly agree that they received inappropriate or negative comments from their manager or supervisor when returning to work after parental leave (11 per cent and 20 per cent respectively, compared to 8 per cent of heterosexual respondents and 6 per cent of gay respondents).

A free-text response from one participant also highlighted the challenges faced by parents and carers who are members of the LGBTQIA+ community:

“As non-birthing parent in a two mum and child family has presented some compounding discrimination and cultural mental load. Safety and inclusion for our family is the priority and unfortunately that is threatened.”

9. Issues surrounding the cost and availability of childcare is placing even more pressure on working parents and carers, particularly within the current cost of living crisis.

The cost of childcare is placing an increasing financial strain on working parents and carers, and any financial support from the government is being outpaced by the rising cost of living.

Free-text responses from survey participants highlighted the financial strain that working parents and carers are feeling due to the cost of childcare, and the frustrating paradox of parents and carers needing to work more to afford childcare, but then needing childcare to cover the period that they are working more.

“Juggling work and childcare is a struggle - the more days I work, the more childcare I need so I end up working to pay for childcare!”

“The cost of childcare is a constant financial pressure. Also, the incompatibility of work vs school hours when children are just starting school, and the obligation to then pay for out of school care adds to the financial burden.”

“I (the mum) am working a second job to earn extra spending money. My first income is used up almost entirely by the post-subsidy childcare fee.”

“Childcare that is both affordable and accessible at all ages is significantly lacking. I see centres go up all the time but despite this the cost of childcare is disproportionately high considering my community’s socioeconomic realities.”

The financial strain felt by these parents and carers is also worsening amid the cost-of-living crisis. The paradox of working to afford childcare is felt even more deeply here, as the cost-of-living crisis is forcing working parents and carers to return to work sooner than they would have liked after parental leave, which then necessitates paying for childcare during work hours. Respondents reported that these struggles are also compounded by the ‘return to office’ push from many organisations wanting employees to spend more time working in the office.

“Cost of living and childcare are significant factors that impact on stress for women carers.”

“I feel that the cost of living is forcing so many people to return to work after parental leave a lot faster or longer hours than they would prefer and what their families need.”

“There’s an increased push to have people return to work which I find incredibly disappointing. Also find it quite hard to deal with high cost of childcare, increasing mortgage and generally high cost of living with wages that in no way keep up.”



Respondents also reported issues with the government-funded childcare subsidy not keeping up with the rising cost of living. The Childcare Subsidy is designed to support families by subsidising childcare fees, yet respondents report that it is not sufficient to cover the rising costs of childcare and that the income cap is not proportionate to the cost of living and fails to account for factors such as geography or other carer responsibilities.

“The childcare subsidy scheme is not supportive of higher-income people returning to work. Next year I will need to put two children in daycare, and we exceed the income cap to be eligible for the childcare subsidy. Paying full daycare rate for two children exceeds my personal daily income, and therefore we are seriously considering not returning me to work until the children are in school. This is detrimental to my career.”

“We have to pick up more shifts to cover bills and when we do so, our percentage of subsidy decreases and hence we are paying more. The subsidy needs to take into account how many hours parents work as more days means more childcare and should actually be an increase in subsidy rather than making parents pay more for picking up more shifts. This would drastically impact many families’ cost of living pressures.”

Difficulty accessing quality childcare is also a cause of stress and financial strain for working parents and carers, particularly those in regional areas.

Participants also reported that access to quality childcare was a significant source of stress for working parents and carers, particularly in regional areas. This is causing a different kind of financial strain, as some parents and carers are unable to return to work due to the lack of childcare in their area. Free-text responses indicate that this issue seems to be affecting women in regional areas in particular.

“I live in a regional town in Vic, am caring for my 6-month-old and cannot even consider returning to traditional work until I find a childcare spot for my daughter. There are two other mums in this predicament in my mother’s group alone. Even if my employer offers me my job back, I can’t take it in my current situation.”

“My partner has not been able to find places for them in childcare and will likely have to quit her job.”

“Childcare availability is the key issue. I would work full time again if I had access to care 5 days a week. I have no family nearby and no choice but to work part-time. In working part time, I have missed out on bonuses, and 2x parental leave has negatively affected my super.”

“Government support is largely inaccessible to us and has been throughout childcare years, with no subsidy. There is an assumption that over a certain household income level, financial support is not required. This ignores factors such as geography, where people have to live in order to sustain employment and income levels, and other carer commitments such as for parents which may create financial obligations.”

“School holidays are hard for working parents. The cost of holiday programs is expensive, and we don’t qualify for the subsidy due to our income, but cost of living uses that income.”

The pressures of the cost of living are again felt particularly strongly among migrant families, and part of this may be due to the fact that only Australian citizens, permanent residents and special category visa holders qualify for the childcare subsidy scheme.

“My partner and I are both migrants with no family in Australia to support us. We both have full time jobs. This means all childcare and house related work have to be managed between us both, in addition to our work commitments as there is no other outside support. Given the current economic situation it is not feasible for either of us to go down from full-time work either.”

“We live in a rural area 50 minutes from town. It is incredibly difficult to share the load as parents. The vast majority of parenting and domestic duties fall to me given the long and unpredictable hours my husband works. The distance to town also makes it impractical for sharing drop off/pick up at school and childcare. Childcare is also very minimal.”

“Lack of availability of childcare, and also the cost of it. Main issue is availability though.”

Survey data seems to support some of the findings of the free-text responses, as it indicates that those in regional areas are more likely to work in industries in which flexible work arrangements are harder to support, such the Healthcare and Social Assistance industry, and that participants in regional areas are more likely to work part-time (40 per cent, compared to 33 per cent of those in metro areas).

10. A commitment to enabling family-friendly workplaces is better for business, better for Australian families and better for our economy

Employees in certified Family Inclusive Workplaces work more flexibly and experience fewer negative consequences from doing so.

Within the survey sample, 29 per cent of respondents worked in an organisation that has been certified as family-inclusive in alignment with the National Work + Family Standards developed by UNICEF Australia, Parents At Work and partners. Within this 29 per cent the predominant industries were financial and insurance services, professional, scientific and technical services and healthcare and social services.

Workplaces with a Family Inclusive Workplace certification are performing ahead of non-certified employers in enabling access to flexible work practices. They are more likely to allow flexible working hours and location (92 per cent) than non-certified workplaces (75 per cent) and are more likely to have policies supporting the ability to purchase leave in advance (76 per cent) than non-certified workplaces (50 per cent).



The survey also revealed that employees in certified workplaces are more inclined to be aware of the family-friendly policies offered by their organisation and are more likely to utilise them compared to those in non-certified workplaces. An exception to this finding is with respect to part-time or compressed working week arrangements, which are used by employees in certified organisations at the same rate as those in non-certified organisations.

The survey also highlighted that employees in certified workplaces tend to have a more positive experience using family-friendly arrangements. These employees were found to be less likely to miss out on development opportunities, less likely to be held back from promotion, and less likely to receive negative comments from colleagues or managers regarding their family-friendly work arrangements than those in non-certified workplaces. Furthermore, they were more likely to be satisfied with their work-life balance (65 per cent) than those in non-certified organisations (58 per cent) and were more likely to feel that their workplace was accepting of men accessing family-friendly workplace entitlements. Half of these respondents, however, still felt that their commitment to their job would be questioned if they were to use family-friendly job arrangements, indicating that the process of embedding family-friendly culture in these workplaces is still ongoing.

Certified workplaces also appear to be leading non-certified workplaces in terms of their development as a family-inclusive workplace. When asked about additional strategies that their workplace could implement to better support parents and caregivers, respondents from certified organisations were more inclined to suggest culture-related initiatives, such as appointing family-friendly champions or providing training for managers. Respondents from non-certified workplaces were more likely to identify policy-related measures, such as offering flexible work arrangements and expanding parental leave options – measures that align with the benchmarks set by the National Work + Family Standards.

Despite the advent of structural shifts in the way we work since 2019, working parents and carers are still experiencing a wellbeing crisis and employers are wearing a significant share of its cost.

Despite the introduction and widespread adoption of the National Work + Family Standards as a benchmark for enhancing outcomes for working parents and carers, they still appear to be struggling with a wellbeing crisis. Respondents are reporting heightened levels of stress, and parents and carers are still compromising their mental and physical health in order to meet the competing demands of their work and family lives.

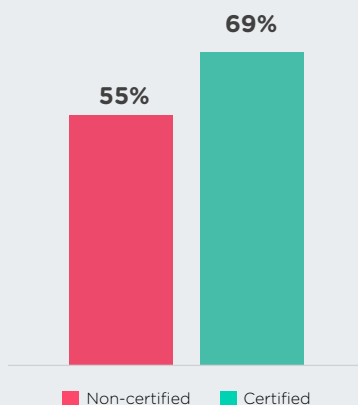
Meanwhile, women continue to bear the disproportionate burden of this stress in caring and household duties, while men still lack equitable support in access and utilisation of family-friendly work arrangements and parental leave for caregiving responsibilities.

While many workplaces now have structural supports in place, that stress levels and the wellbeing of respondents has collectively seen only negligible improvement since 2019 indicates that employers need to make a more active commitment to improving outcomes for working parents and carers. The cost of this wellbeing crisis is undeniably worn by parents and carers, however there is a significant cost to employers too.

Indeed, low wellbeing and poor mental health costs the Australian economy up to \$70 billion each year. Improving worker work-life balance can help improve wellbeing, and is also associated with higher productivity, increased business returns and reduced absenteeism. While the relationship is complex, research indicates that every \$1 spent to improve mental health at work can generate a return between \$2.8 to \$4 through employer savings and improved employee productivity.²⁰

The gendered dimension of work and care responsibilities also has an economic impact. A Treasury report in 2022 found that during the first five years of parenthood, Australian women reduced their hours by around 35 per cent, and that women's earnings are reduced by an average of 55 per cent during this same time period.²¹

Survey findings showed that 28 per cent of working parents and carers reported that they were considering leaving their job in the next twelve months due to difficulties in combining their job with caring responsibilities. These findings are at the same rate as those reported in 2019, indicating that workplace policies alone cannot generate tangible change; a cultural shift needs to take place to support the uptake and embedment of family-friendly and gender equitable workplace experiences for parents and carers.



This National Working Families Survey found that women in workplaces with a family-friendly certification were more likely to work full-time than non-certified workplaces (69 per cent, compared to 55 per cent), indicating that enabling shared care responsibilities within the workplace can have a tangible economic impact and can help address the gender pay gap.

Effecting real change requires employers to demonstrate commitment to improving the work-life experience of parents and carers by embedding family-friendly policies, practices, and culture in the workplace.

Survey respondents were asked about the biggest challenges they face in the workplace when balancing work and family commitments, and the top difficulty reported was “managing expectations at work” (37 per cent). Lack of flexibility and long working hours were also among the top concerns of respondents, particularly for men – 24 per cent of men reported lack of flexibility to be a concern (compared to 18 per cent of women), and 29 per cent of men cited long working hours (compared to 20 per cent of women). These data points mirror earlier findings men experience greater difficulty in accessing flexible work options, influenced by both workplace attitudes toward males taking time away from work and the availability of structural supports that enable flexible working arrangements or taking leave for care for family.

When asked about strategies employers could use to support working parents and caregivers, survey participants identified the top three priorities.

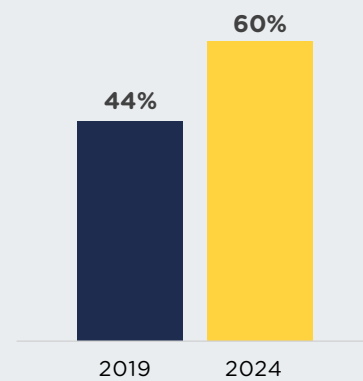
The top strategy “Having more control over when I work and/or where I work” (selected by 60 per cent of respondents, up from 44 per cent in 2019). This was followed up by reducing overall job pressure and workload (51 per cent, up from 29 per cent in 2019), and ensuring there are family-friendly champions and leaders in their workplace (41 per cent, up from 36 per cent in 2019).

Interestingly, working parents and carers are reporting the same priorities they did in 2019 but at higher rates. The path to progress remains much the same as it did in 2019, and effecting change requires action.

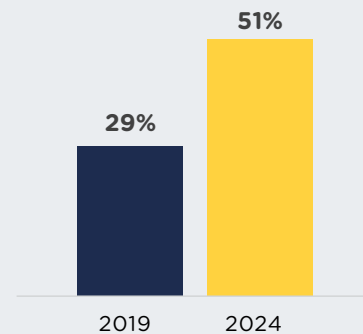
Analysing data from employees of organisations with and without Family Friendly Workplace certification has highlighted that certified employers are leading the way in developing family-friendly policies and practices. Moreover, their level of maturity as a family-inclusive workplace surpasses that of non-certified organisations. Certification offers a clear framework for addressing challenges faced by working parents and carers in the workplace and serves as a benchmark for fostering a more family-inclusive environment. It will continue to play a pivotal role in guiding organisations toward progress in this area.

Top three priorities to support working parents and caregivers

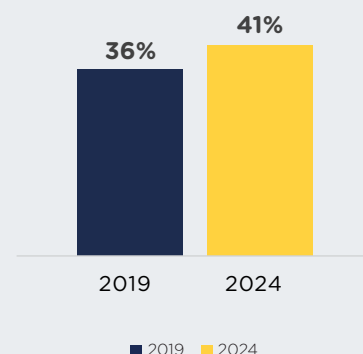
1. Having more control over when I work and/or where I work



2. Reducing overall job pressure and workload



3. Ensuring there are family-friendly leaders in their workplace



Advancing a family-friendly Australia: Recommendations for Employers and Policymakers

The 2024 National Working Families Survey has underscored the pressing need for workplace policies and attitudes to evolve in support of employees grappling with work-life conflicts. Of particular concern is the persistent gender divide and the heightened stress experienced by women juggling work and caregiving responsibilities.

These findings have far-reaching implications, impacting not only individuals and their families but also reverberating throughout businesses and the broader economy. Despite on-going efforts by both government and business to improve gender equality outcomes, the survey reveals a lack of substantive progress between 2019 and 2024 to ease work and care pressures experienced by working parents and carers.

Workplace cultures continue to be geared towards supporting men as the primary income earner and women as the primary caregiver, with industries dominated by men typically having fewer family-friendly policies. This suggests that in some workplaces, caring is still seen as a 'women's job' despite results revealing that both men and women want more flexibility and accessibility to care. So much so, that around 1 in 4 men and women said they would be willing to consider a pay cut if their workplace adopted or continued flexible work allowances.

This underscores the urgency for leaders in business and government to double down on efforts in addressing the underlying issues that penalise women and children and exclude men from the opportunity to partake in caregiving responsibilities.

We urge policymakers to take bold steps towards meaningful change by eliminataing gender biases surrounding caregiving, investing in family-friendly policies as part of broader health, safety, and productivity measures, and valuing caregiving as essential work.

Recognising that the current pace of progress is inadequate and has significant repercussions for individuals, families, and society at large, policymakers must prioritise the development and implementation of strategies that foster a more inclusive and supportive work environment, where people can thrive at work and at home. Moreover, it is essential to recognise that caregiving responsibilities are not solely the domain of women. Most Australians will need to balance work commitments with caregiving responsibilities at some point in their lives, highlighting the collective importance of addressing these challenges as a nation.

The National Work + Family Standards provide a valuable framework for policymakers to improve family-friendly workplace policies and practices. This includes safeguarding flexible work policies gained during the pandemic, ensuring continued advancements in contributions to Paid Parental Leave (PPL) schemes to align with OECD standards, and promoting greater access to affordable early childhood education and care.

Workplaces play a pivotal role in improving social impact outcomes for their workforce. They must take greater strides to break down gender and traditional stereotypes attached to caregiving duties, equalise access to PPL and flexibility, and prioritise the collection of workforce data and employee input to tailor solutions that meet diverse needs effectively. Frontline managers should be equipped with the necessary training to understand the significance of work-life challenges and provide appropriate support to employees during critical life moments.



Practical Actions for Employers to Drive Change

The findings of the National Working Families Survey highlight critical areas where workplace policies and attitudes must evolve to better support employees facing work-life conflicts.

The following key recommendations emerged from the survey data:

1. Evaluate the Cost Benefit Analysis of Being a Family Friendly Workplace

Understand the work-life conflict and caring conditions of your employees to build a business case for change

Organisations should prioritise measuring and improving their social impact by embedding family-friendly work practices. This should include benchmarking against industry standards and engaging employees to define solutions that meet their diverse needs effectively.

Specific ways employers can action this are:

- Formally recognise the broader economic and societal implications of work-life conflicts. The personal toll on employees and their families reverberates through the economy, affecting workforce engagement, productivity, and overall wellbeing.
- Employers are encouraged to align their workplace policies and practices with the National Work + Family Standards.
- Consult with employees and leaders on how engagement, productivity and wellbeing outcomes are linked to economic impact to develop a strong business case for creating a family-inclusive workplace.
- Educate leaders on importance of embedding and normalising family-friendly work policies and practices.
- Encourage leaders to support and actively communicate the necessity of these policies.
- Identify formal blocks or stigmas obstructing uptake of PPL and flexible work to remove them.



2. Address the Cultural Gender Divide in Your Organisation

Disrupt gender bias through equitable access to family-friendly workplace policies

Urgent action is needed to tackle the persistent gender divide in caregiving responsibilities. Despite efforts to improve gender equality, workplace cultures still predominantly support traditional roles, with caregiving perceived as primarily a women's responsibility.

Specific ways employers can action this are:

- Ensure workplace family policies and practices are fully inclusive of all employees regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, cultural background, length of service or family type.
- Measure employees' level of work-life balance satisfaction noting any differences between genders.
- Seek feedback from employees on what is needed to reduce work-family conflict and embed family-friendly workplace practices.

3. Take Action to Relieve Workplace Stress Levels

Invest in employee mental health and wellbeing

The survey findings identify a significant increase in stress experienced by women, in particular. There is a plethora of simple actions employers can implement to alleviate some of this stress in the workplace, which not only benefit individual employees but their immediate teams at work, their personal health and their family's wellbeing.

Specific ways employers can action this are:

- Devise and implement a wellbeing strategy linking the caring needs of employees and the importance of work-life balance with physical and mental health.
- Promote education, wellbeing, and caring support programs to foster a culture of healthy work-life balance within the organisation.
- Create open and safe communication channels for employees to discuss job stress or excessive workloads and outside of work challenges.
- Organisations should ensure sufficient workplace policies and practices including leave and education exists to support victims and perpetrators of domestic violence and family abuse as part of efforts to improve safety and wellbeing at work and at home leveraging Respect@Work, Fair Work and Safe Work Australia guidelines.

4. Invest in Paid Parental Leave

Progress paid parental leave provisions

Advance contributions to the Paid Parental Leave (PPL) scheme that includes paid superannuation to better align with OECD best practice standards. Organisations should support employees taking PPL with flexible work arrangements and care support, ensuring a smooth transition back to work.

Specific ways employers can address this are:

- Align paid parental leave policies with best practice, which constitutes between 18-26 weeks paid parental leave to new parents.
- Ensure paid parental leave is given at full pay including superannuation to help address retirement earnings gap between men and women.
- Remove tenure requirements from paid parental leave – vital to help attract and retain talent but also to tackle gender-biased hiring decisions and career-related discrimination.
- Ensure caring policies are label-free and gender-neutral – remove primary and secondary carer labels from policies to encourage men to take PPL, support women's career progression and limit gender stereotypes; also ensures schemes are accessible to all new parents including same-sex parents, adopting parents, kinship carers, foster care parents, and those who have a child through surrogacy.
- Offer other forms of leave – paid fertility leave for those undergoing IVF treatment, miscarriage leave for those experiencing pregnancy loss.
- Offer relief from financial or non-financial KPIs' when returning from PPL to take ease pressure.
- Allow for a 'transition' period to re-onboard and make necessary adjustments to ease an employee's return – particularly when changing roles or moving to part-time work.
- Provide return to work support programs that provide resources and practical ideas of how to transition back to the workplace with ease.
- Put measures in place to ensure work and family needs are addressed and seek employee feedback on the return-to-work experience. For example, measuring engagement and setting targets for the retention of employees who not only return from leave, but remain with the business 12 months and 24 months later will further support this.
- Regularly communicate with employees regarding entitlements/options to ensure awareness and actively encourage dads/partners to take parental or carer's leave.

5. Promote Flexibility and Accessibility to Caregiving Responsibilities

Foster a culture of work-life integration and employee wellbeing for men and women that is normalised and embedded into the culture of the business

Employers should prioritise strategies that empower employees to have more control over when and where they work. Ensure that gains made in flexible work arrangements during the pandemic are not rescinded. Embrace the future of work by designing jobs, leverage collaborative technology and work environments that empower individuals to integrate career, family, and wellbeing needs effectively.

Specific ways employers can address this are:

- Allow paid parental leave to be taken flexibly – can take in a single block, can work part time for a while, can take it at same time as partner or separately over days at a time, can take it at any point during first few years of child entering family.
- Encourage leaders to demonstrate how they are accessing and using workplace flexibility and paid leave options.
- Offer clear and documented flexibility guidelines for managers to support hybrid work structures within their teams.
- Communicate clearly the strategy of the business so that employees have clarity of the outcomes required to be able to deliver in their roles, while leveraging flexible working options.
- Develop and disseminate guides and training to embed flexible ways of working practices.
- Review/enhance flexible work, parental leave, carer and other family related policies such as domestic violence policy and communicate throughout the organisation, internally and externally.
- Set success measures for increasing flexibility by gender, role type / level and types of flexible leave aiming to reduce the career penalty and stigma associated with both men and women undertaking caring responsibilities.

“

“Over the past year there has been a lot of debate about what the new normal for workplaces should look like – with some reverting to pre-COVID life of fully back in the office and others granting flexibility, but with grey boundaries that can make employees feel like they’re ‘always on’ or being judged. The results of these things are clear – it’s really disappointing to see that employees, particularly women, are more stressed than ever, and this is feeding into family life.

Life as a parent is really hard when you’re worried that your job commitment is being questioned, or too drained to contribute to your family when you get home from work. We know that family-friendly policies such as flexible work and parental leave are valuable for the wellbeing of working parents and their children, but we must make these more accepted and the norm in workplaces, for men and women. It is good for gender equality, and by supporting the wellbeing of parents and carers we can safeguard the wellbeing of the children or loved ones in their care – to be happy, healthy and safe.”

Nicole Breeze
Chief Advocate for Children, UNICEF Australia

”

6. Leadership and Policy Action

Leader education and role modelling of family-friendly workplace practices

Bold steps are needed to remove gender biases, invest in family-friendly policies, and integrate caregiving considerations into health, safety, and productivity measures. Educating leaders, policymakers and managers is the only way cultural shift will become widespread throughout an organisation.

Specific ways employers can address this are:

- Challenge gender stereotypes surrounding caregiving responsibilities and promote equal access to PPL and flexibility. Provide training for frontline managers to understand and support employees balancing work-life needs, particularly during critical life moments.
- Invite feedback from managers on challenges and concerns they have around resourcing, team impact, job design, seasonally busy periods etc. to ensure they are adequately supported to embed family-friendly work policies and practices within teams. This includes addressing any negative team bias towards team members working flexibly to care for family and / or managing own wellbeing and ensuring workloads are realistic, in particular, for those working part time, aligning KPI's and output to their days of work.



How Employees Can Help Lead the Change

7. Support for Caregiving

Develop policies and offer provisions that acknowledge and address the diversity of carer needs

Prioritise support for caregiving responsibilities, recognising that it is not solely a women's issue but a concern for all including providing affordable childcare options, business subsidies and support to access other care support services.

Specific ways employers can address this are:

- Develop a formal care policy or guidelines that meets increasingly diverse carer needs.
- Review policy and procedures and promote these to ensure all employees are given the best opportunity to access appropriate flexible work options needed to achieve immediate work and family commitments and wider career and life goals.
- Ensure care policy is widely communicated and understood among employees and leadership.
- Develop committed action plan to address employee needs to balance work and caring responsibilities.
- Support with accessing affordable early childhood education and care, before and after school care and vacation care.
- Provide access to carers or family leave for all forms of care, such as childcare, eldercare, disability, family member illness or medical treatment.
- Enable flexible work patterns for short periods to resolve caring challenges.
- Employer contribution towards childcare and other caring support services. For example, providing areas in the workplace that are child friendly; offering subsidies; salary sacrificing for care; back up or emergency care; respite support; and vacation care programs.

Parents and carers are encouraged to lean in to help direct the systemic shift required by workplaces. As the survey has revealed there are very clear suggestions from employees that, if followed, will equate to better wellbeing outcomes for families and ultimately better outcomes for their employers.

Employees are encouraged to voice their requirements with their employer, including at the interview stage, so that both parties are clear on expectations. The more these needs are vocalised the more likely they will become mainstream conversations and filter through to company policy.

We encourage parents and carers to bring forward new ideas and innovative ways to work as some employers may, for example, have not considered alternative ways to work flexibly or have explored the options for how Commonwealth funded paid parental leave can be taken between parents.

The real question for parents and carers to ask themselves: Is my employer family-friendly in the way they help me thrive at work and at home?

Actions for Policymakers to Drive Change

The 2024 National Working Families survey results present a stark picture of our nation's families. To ease the challenges faced by Australian families it is critical that action by governments and employers are aligned and work hand in hand.

Recent investment made by government, such as the reforms to the Commonwealth Paid Parental Leave scheme, should be reinforced by employer led action as highlighted in the previous section. Government policy plays a key role in addressing the problems that Australian families face.

To accelerate overall progress towards these shared outcomes, we encourage continued action from governments on the following four areas for action.

1. Increase affordability and access of early childhood care and education (ECEC) for all children and families.

To assist parents and carers to meet the demands of caring whilst being able to work, early education and care need to be affordable and accessible. Australia has made some progress and has a National Early Years strategy, but childcare is still too expensive, especially as the cost-of-living crisis plays out, meaning more reforms are needed. Women still do most of the unpaid care in Australia. The Productivity Commission found that 28% of Australian parents did not work in 2022, mainly because early childhood education and care was too costly.

We encourage continued leadership by federal, state and territory governments to ensure substantial investments have their desired effect by:

- Ensuring that the major investment that is currently being made in reducing the cost of childcare is not neutralised by cost of living pressures.
- Commit to action which exerts downward pressure on the market to stabilise disproportionate fee increases to ensure that government investment is translating into lower costs for families.
- Prioritise measures that boost participation of vulnerable families in high quality and affordable early childhood education and care and increase the opportunity for women in these families (including single parents) to enter the workforce and/or increase the hours working. This includes relaxing or abolishing the activity test for the Childcare Subsidy.
- Commit to the implementation of the National Early Years strategy, and respond to recent ACCC and Productivity Commission Inquiries in ways which chart a course towards universal access of Australian children to quality and affordable ECEC.



2. Continue to drive uptake in progressive reforms to gender neutral Paid Parental Leave

Continuing to promote the uptake of gender-neutral Paid Parental Leave (PPL) is essential for fostering a balanced and supportive workplace.

It plays a crucial role in redistributing care responsibilities more equitably between men and women, nurturing a culture of shared parenting, and reinforcing workplace equality. The ongoing modernisation of PPL policies, aimed at being more inclusive and comprehensive is critical in addressing the concerns raised in the 2024 National Working Families Report.

We encourage governments to maintain the momentum in this area by:

- Accelerating the reform of the Commonwealth's PPL scheme to enhance its length, flexibility, accessibility, and gender equity.
- Conducting timely evaluations of the expanded Commonwealth PPL scheme to ensure it achieves its intended effects, including increasing men's participation in PPL.
- Seeking ways to encourage and incentivise employers to update their PPL schemes in line with the pressures identified in this report, such as:
- Eliminating the distinction between 'primary' and 'secondary' carers.
- Extending the length and duration of PPL schemes.
- Including superannuation contributions during parental leave.
- Aligning with the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's (WGEA) best practice guidelines for employers.

3. Continue to drive meaningful progress towards gender equality under the framework of Australia's new gender equality strategy

The Australian Government's new national gender equality strategy, *'Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality'*, targets critical areas such as gender-based violence, care responsibilities, economic security, health, and leadership representation. It lays the foundation for enduring advancement towards a more equitable and just society.

In alignment with this strategy, we encourage continued actions that:

- Improve transparency around the gender pay gap, which is currently a significant 13% or \$254 per week and take targeted actions to reduce this gap.
- Boost women's leadership and representation across all levels of political, judicial, public service and non-governmental sectors.

- Act on the recommendations of the WGEA Act review to drive change within the private sector.
- Provide the necessary support for women who wish to work more, considering the part-time and casual nature of women's employment.
- Back initiatives that challenge cultural biases preventing men from embracing caregiving responsibilities by leveraging workplace policies designed to facilitate this shift.

4. Embed family-friendly policies as a key strategy in the workplace

Embracing family-friendly policies is a strategic move to promote gender equality in Australian workplaces. These policies help employers to not only meet but exceed standard requirements, creating adaptable environments for parents and carers. This approach is pivotal for challenging traditional roles and fostering a culture where flexible work and shared caregiving are normalised.

Within this context we encourage governments to continue to:

- Explore strategies that encourage and incentivise employers to exceed their basic duties by creating flexible workplaces for parents and carers. This includes:
 - Supporting men to take a more equitable share of parenting and unpaid care by promoting the use of flexible or part-time hours and parental leave.
 - Ensuring that working flexibly is not a barrier to promotion or leadership by supporting flexible arrangements in leadership roles.
 - Eliminating the distinction between 'primary' and 'secondary' carers and advocating for the payment of superannuation on parental leave.
- Endorse the **National Work + Family Standards**, which offer a structured approach for employers to enhance family-friendly policies and practices, alongside continued support for the **Family Friendly Workplaces** initiative that actively engages employers and provides practical support for them to achieve best practice.

5. Invest in research to improve and enhance the National Working Families Survey (NWFS) for future trends and comparisons with an emphasis on expanding the diversity of Australian families represented.

Investment would allow the NWFS survey tool and its use to become a key method to identify the challenges for Australian working parents and caregivers, with the aim of designing solutions.

Conclusion

Advancing Australia as a family-friendly nation requires collaborative efforts from policymakers and government working alongside employers and employees to drive change.

The recommendations outlined in this report underscore the imperative for workplaces and policymakers to prioritise the reduction of work-life conflict and promote gender equality.

Organisations focussed on improving social impact report better results when benchmarked against The National Work + Family Standards. They set measurable actions to embed standards and as a result see tangible benefits for their employees, the business performance.

By taking proactive steps to support employees in balancing work and care responsibilities, employers foster a more inclusive, supportive, safe, and productive work environment positively benefiting families, business, and the wider economy.

The 2024 National Working Families Survey is a not-for-profit Family Friendly Workplaces initiative spearheaded by Parents At Work and UNICEF Australia, undertaken independently by Deloitte Access Economics, and in collaboration with corporate and community organisations.



References

1. Australian Institute of Family Studies (June 2021), 'Families in Australia Survey: Towards Covid Normal, Report no. 2: Employment & work-family balance in 2020,' https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/2105_2_fias_employment_and_work_family_balance_in_2020_0.pdf.
2. Anna Gromada and Dominic Richardson (June 2021), 'Where do rich countries stand on childcare?' <https://www.unicef.org/innocenti/media/5431/file/UNICEF-Where-Do-Rich-Countries-Stand-on-Childcare-2021.pdf>.
3. Associate Professor Peter Hurley (March 2022), 'Childcare deserts & oases: How accessible is childcare in Australia?' <https://www.vu.edu.au/mitchell-institute/early-learning/childcare-deserts-oases-how-accessible-is-childcare-in-australia>.
4. Workforce Gender Equality Agency (December 2021), 'Flexible work post-COVID,' https://www.wgea.gov.au/publications/flexible-work-post-covid#_ftn1.
5. WGEA, 'Flexible work post-COVID.'
6. Australian Institute of Family Studies (July 2020), 'Families in Australia Survey: Life During COVID-19, Report no. 1: Early Findings,' https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/covid-19-survey-report_1_early_findings_0_0.pdf.
7. Danielle Wood and Owain Emslie (September 2021), 'Dads days: How more gender-equal parental leave could improve the lives of Australian families,' <https://grattan.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Dad-Days-Grattan-Institute-Report.pdf>.
8. Jennifer Baxter (May 2023), 'Employment patterns and trends for families with children,' <https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-05/Employment-patterns-and-trends-for-families-children.pdf>.
9. Workplace Gender Equality Agency (February 2022), 'Australia's Gender Equality Scorecard: Key results from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's 2021-21 employer census,' https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020-21_WGEA_SCORECARD.pdf.
10. Workplace Gender Equality Agency (November 2023), 'Australian's Gender Equality Scorecard: Key results from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's Employer Census 2022-23,' <https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2022-23%20WGEA%20Gender%20Equality%20Scorecard.pdf>.
11. Wood and Emslie, 'Dad days.'
12. Wood and Emslie, 'Dad days.'
13. Wood and Emslie, 'Dad days.'
14. Australian Institute of Family Studies, 'Fathers and Parental Leave.'
15. Equipundo (2023), 'State of the World's Fathers 2023: Centering Care in a World in Crisis,' <https://www.equipundo.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/State-of-the-Worlds-Fathers-2023.pdf>.
16. Equipundo, 'State of the World's Fathers 2023.'
17. KPMG (2021), 'Enhancing work-life balance: A better system of paid parental leave,' <https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/au/pdf/2021/better-system-for-paid-parental-leave-report.pdf>.
18. Deloitte Access Economics (November 2022), 'Breaking the norm: Unleashing Australia's economic potential,' <https://www.deloitte.com/au/en/services/economics/perspectives/breaking-norm-unleashing-australia-economic-potential.html>.
19. Parents At Work (July 2023), 'Advancing Share Care in Australia through Paid Parental Leave,' <https://21057339.fs1.hubspotusercontent-na1.net/hubfs/21057339/PL%20Whitepaper%202023%20FINAL.pdf>.
20. CEDA (2022), 'Mental health and the Workplace: How can employers improve productivity through wellbeing?' <https://www.ceda.com.au/researchandpolicies/research/health-ageing/mental-health-and-the-workplace>; Black Dog Institute (n.d), 'Workplace wellbeing,' <https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/resources-support/wellbeing/workplace-wellbeing>; NSW Government (2017), 'Mentally Healthy Workplaces in NSW: A Return-on-investment study,' https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/320132/Mentally-healthy-workplaces-A-return-on-investment-study-August-2017-SW08735.pdf.
21. Elif Bahar, Natasha Bradshaw, Nathan Deutscher and Maxine Montaigne (October 2022), 'Treasury Round Up: Children and the gender earnings gap,' <https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-11/p2022-325290-children.pdf>.



Family Friendly Workplaces is proudly supported by:



CONTACT:

info@familyfriendlyworkplaces.com



familyfriendlyworkplaces.com