



THE NEW DAD:

THE CAREER-CAREGIVING CONFLICT

Fathers today want to be active and engaged with their families, with more than 2-out-of-3 expressing a desire to be an equal parenting partner. Unfortunately, our research shows less than one-third are able to achieve that goal, leaving many fathers feeling conflict between personal and professional life. The Boston College Center for Work & Family has explored the changing roles of fathers in the workplace and in the home over the past nine years, led by Professor Brad Harrington, the Center's Executive Director. In our latest report, the eighth in The New Dad series, we analyzed data from more than 850 fathers collected between 2011 and 2015.

Exploring three generations and three types of fathers

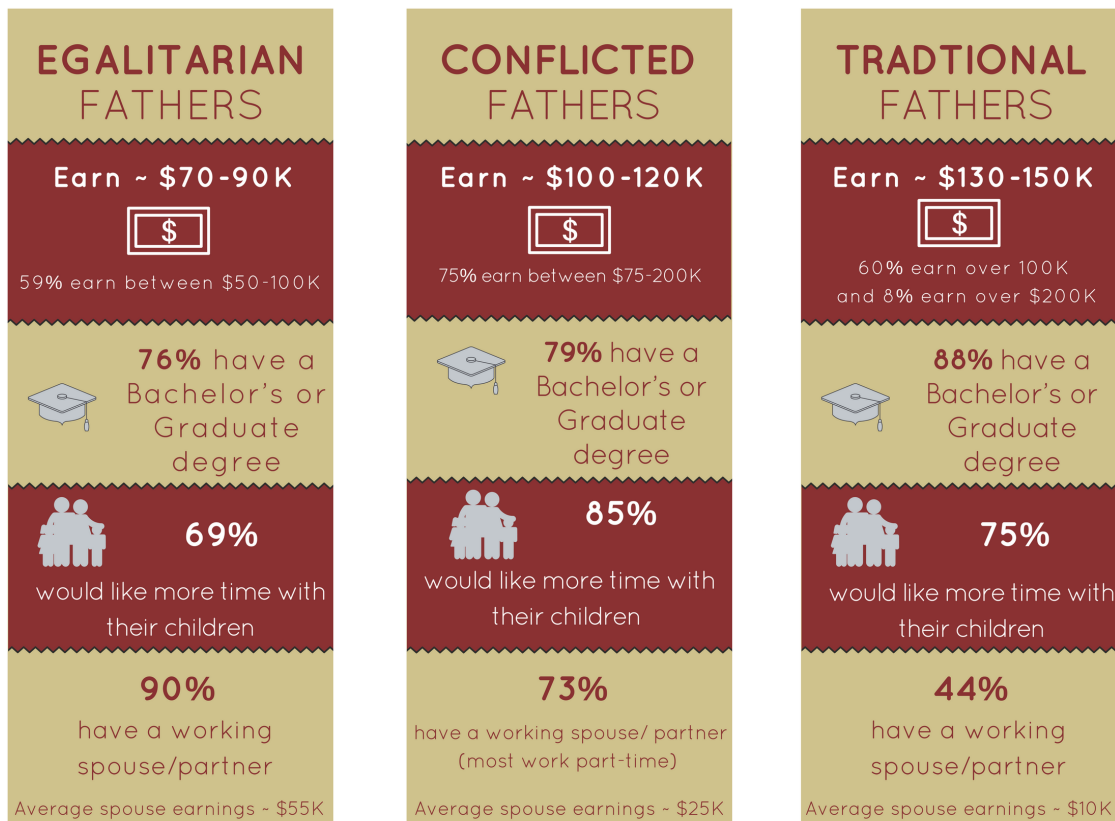
In analyzing the results, we looked at the fathers from two distinct perspectives. We are frequently asked about whether differences among fathers when it comes to career and caregiving are mainly the result of the age/generation of the fathers. So our first means of analysis was by generation, looking at differences and similarities between Millennial, Generation X, and Baby-boomer fathers.

The second grouping we identified related to the predispositions of the fathers with regards to their career and their caregiving responsibilities. This analysis yielded three distinct "fatherhood types." The first group thought caregiving should be divided equally with their partners and it was. These are the **Egalitarian** fathers. The second group felt caregiving should be divided equally with their partners but admitted their partners did more than they did. These we labeled the **Conflicted** fathers. The third group of fathers felt their partners should do more caregiving and in fact that was the case. These are the **Traditional** fathers.

From our sample:

The breakdown:
30% were Egalitarian
38% were Conflicted
32% were Traditional

We then created profiles to describe the average dad in each of three fatherhood types (below):



Our analysis and report looked at income and education levels, contentment with the amount of time spent with children, as well as the profiles of the partners of the three fatherhood types. We also looked at the fathers' job and career satisfaction, as well as their perceptions of organizational culture. We wanted to understand which fatherhood types were the most and least satisfied and why. Regardless of generation, we found that Conflicted fathers scored lowest on job and career satisfaction on virtually every indicator.

"The desire to have it all, to be an ideal worker and a highly engaged parent is an experience that many women have struggled with for decades. Thinking of these work-life struggles as being felt even more acutely by men is new and what's clear is that fathers who don't resolve this conflict pay a significant price in terms of career and life satisfaction."
-Dr. Brad Harrington, Boston College Center for Work & Family



“Work-life balance is an issue that impacts both moms and dads. It's ok to be a working dad who makes this a priority. And it's up to the working dad to define the right balance for his particular family situation.”
Traditional dad, 45, Father of 3 children

It is clear from our research, that many of today's fathers:

- Are caring and committed to their roles in the workplace and at home, but are also highly conflicted.
- Want to climb the corporate ladder but also want to spend more time with their children.
- Assert that their children's interests are their top priority but are also highly susceptible to the demands of their corporate cultures.

Work-life challenges and the experience of being pulled in two directions is not limited to the Conflicted dads. Egalitarian and Traditional dads are also doubtless affected.

Recommendations:

For fathers, one way to address this conflict is to engage in an in-depth career-life planning activity, one which includes a significant self-assessment component. This will allow dads to align their career and parenting responsibilities in a way that is consistent with their values. Another option would be to join or form a fathers' group to share the struggles and successes men are experiencing in their efforts to be engaged parents and successful professionals.

Employers can also take steps to help fathers address the conflict that is undermining their career and life satisfaction:

- Start a father's employee network and/or mentoring program that focuses not only on career development but also the work-life struggles that men are experiencing.
- Promote training to help fathers do a more effective job of career-life planning.
- Offer flexible work options to support dads as they strive to meet both their professional and personal responsibilities.
- Provide gender-neutral parental leave so dads can bond with their child and learn hands-on caregiving skills.

In conclusion...

Regardless of the generation they are part of, fathers are in a period of transition. The old stereotype of fathers being career-centric and somewhat emotionally detached from family does not describe today's fathers. But societal transitions happen slowly and often experience many bumps along the way. Reducing the conflict that fathers feel is not an easy process, but over time, recognizing these issues and bringing them to the forefront will have positive benefits for fathers in the workplace and at home.

