



THE NEW DAD:

A STUDY OF FATHERS FROM AUSTRALIA

Conducted by Converge International and
Boston College Center for Work & Family

Executive Summary



where business meets life

WHOLLY AUSTRALIAN OWNED



BOSTON COLLEGE
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CARROLL SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

In 2012, Converge International collaborated with the Boston College Center for Work & Family to conduct a survey of Australian fathers. This survey was conducted as a follow-on study of U.S. fathers that was published by Boston College in June, 2011, titled *The New Dad: Caring, Committed and Conflicted*. The survey was completed on-line by a national sample of 784 Australian fathers.

This executive summary contains a comparison of these survey results from Australia to the key findings from the 963 fathers involved in the original study in the U.S.

METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

Converge International contracted with an Australian company pureprofile to identify the national sample of working Australian fathers used in this study. The survey was administered on-line by the Boston College Center for Work & Family.

In all, 784 fathers from Australia completed the survey: 39% were managers, 39% individual contributors (salaried) and 22% individual contributors (hourly). All of the fathers had at least one child under the age of 18 living at home. Their occupations were varied including accountants, customer service workers, doctors, lawyers, managers, directors, truck drivers, engineers, teachers, consultants, sales professionals, technicians, public servants and slightly over 100 information technology professionals (the most common occupation listed). Fathers in the sample worked for hundreds of different companies.

All of the Australian states were appropriately represented in the sample:

	Number of Responses
New South Wales	249
Victoria	199
Queensland	151
Western Australia	69
South Australia	64
Tasmania	25
ACT	20
Northern Territory	7

The sample of 963 working fathers in the United States was drawn from four large companies that are members of the Boston College National Work & Family Roundtable. All have revenues ranging from \$20-\$50 billion per year, but differ in their core products and services:

- an outsourcing services company
- a pharmaceutical company
- a global security company
- a transportation/logistics company

The U.S. sample was heavily “white collar”, comprised of 60% managers, 37% salaried professionals and 3% hourly workers. They were generally well educated and well-paid. A comparison of the demographics for the U.S. and Australian samples is included in Appendix A. Differences in the ways the samples were collected and in the make-up of the two samples (e.g. 22% hourly workers in Australia and 3% hourly workers in the United States) make it difficult to provide a statistically accurate comparison of fathers in the two countries. However, in analyzing the two populations we often reached similar conclusions and these findings are highlighted in this report.

KEY FINDINGS

In June, 2011 Boston College published the results of the U.S. study in a report titled *The New Dad: Caring, Committed and Conflicted*. The key findings from the study were included at the end of that report and are listed here in order to compare the results from Australia with the U.S. study. Differences and similarities in our findings are indicated in the text below.

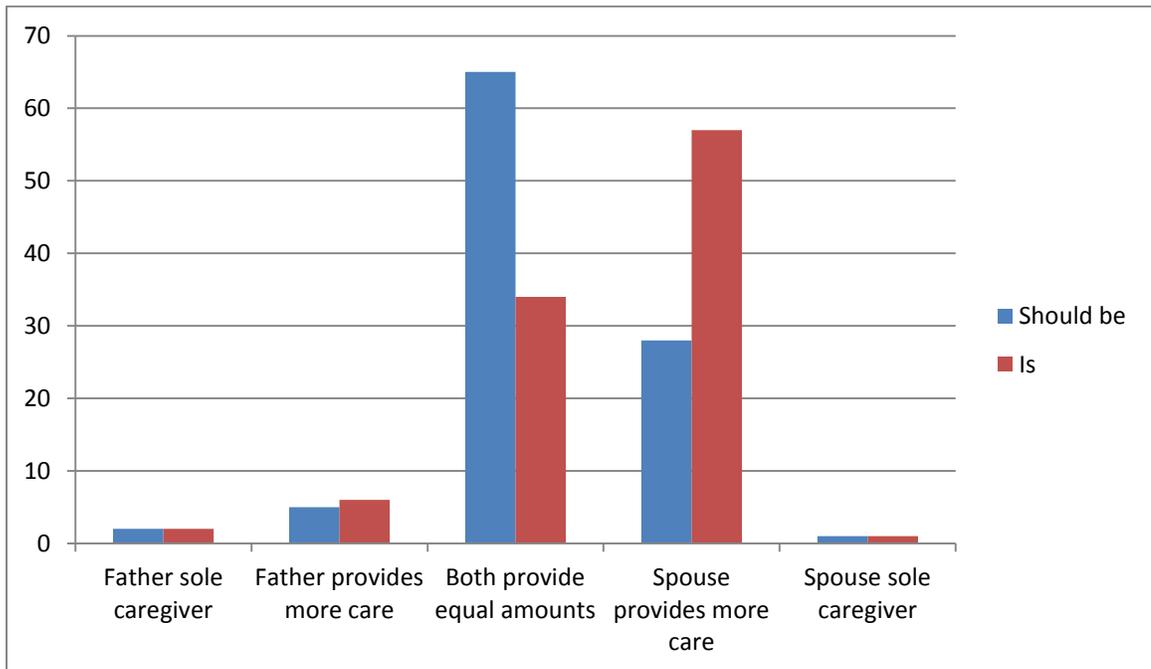
The U.S. study showed that the majority of fathers today do clearly see their roles as breadwinners and caregivers in a very balanced fashion. This was quite apparent in Australia as well, where 52% of fathers reported that they see their primary role as an equal balance between “both caring for my child and earning money to meet his/her financial needs.”

One of the most important findings in our U.S. study was that there was a significant gap between how fathers in the study felt caregiving should be divided vs. how caregiving responsibilities were actually divided in their current situation.

- **Most of the fathers in our study aspire to share equally in caregiving with their spouse/partner, but often are unable to bring this desire to reality.**

Similar to the U.S. study results, Australian fathers also showed a very large gap between their desired and current state: 65% said that both parents should provide equal amounts of care while only 34% said that this is actually the case; 28% responded that their spouse should provide more care while 57% said their spouse is currently providing more care.

How Caregiving Should be Divided and Is Divided - Australia Study



Perhaps the most telling finding from the study is the gap between fathers’ desires to equally share caregiving with their partners, and the reality of their situation – that most fathers are not equally sharing these day-to-day responsibilities with their partners. The gap between the “should be” and the “is” in the eyes of most of these Australian fathers is very significant. Perhaps much of this can be explained by the fact that 37% of their spouses/partners do not work outside the home, that spouses worked fewer average hours (27 hours/week on average while 89% of the men work 35 hours or more per week), or by the earning disparity between the men and women we studied. But whatever the reason, men do feel that there is a significant gap between what they are doing in terms of caregiving and what they would like to be doing.

In addition to this important baseline finding, there are a number of other important findings that may also explain some of this gap between the “is” and the “should be”.

- **Fathers need time to develop parenting skills, but they are not taking sufficient time off when their children are born to do this.** People are not born with the gene that teaches them all they need to know to be effective parents – neither women nor men. From the first days and weeks after childbirth, many (we hope most) women have the opportunity to spend time with their children, which facilitates both bonding with their newborn and developing competencies as new parents. In our study we found some significant differences between the U.S fathers and the Australian fathers in this regard. Similar to the U.S. fathers, 19% of Australian fathers report taking no time off after the birth of their most recent child, compared to 16% in the U.S. However, those who took time off in Australia tended to take more time off than the fathers in the U.S. As demonstrated in the two charts below, fathers in the U.S survey tended to take one week off or less, while fathers in the Australian survey were more likely to take one to four

weeks off. In Australia 29% of fathers reported taking 3 weeks or more off compared to only 5% in the United States.

How long was your time off for the most recent birth/adoption?

Australia Data

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Less than 1 week		94	15%
2	1 week		124	19%
3	1-2 weeks		230	36%
4	3-4 weeks		127	20%
5	5-6 weeks		27	4%
6	More than 6 weeks		29	5%
7	I quit my job to care for my child.		5	1%
	Total		636	100%

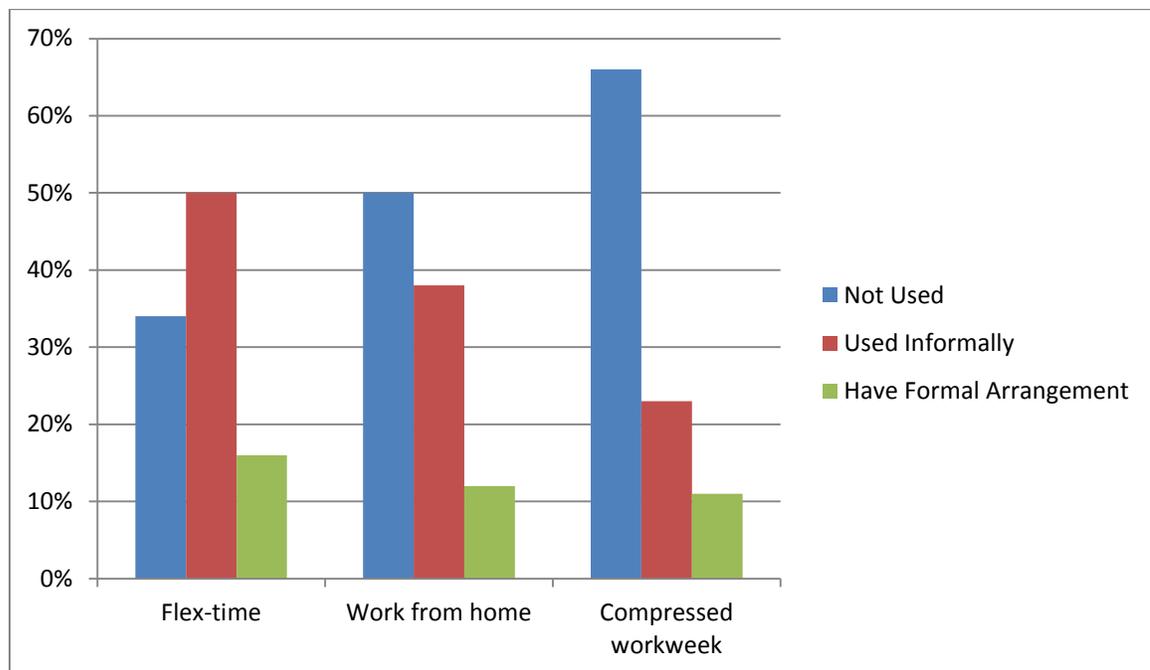
U.S. Data

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Less than 1 week		242	30%
2	1 week		347	43%
3	1-2 weeks		172	21%
4	3-4 weeks		36	4%
5	5-6 weeks		4	0%
6	More than 6 weeks		6	1%
7	I quit my job to care for my child.		0	0%
	Total		807	100%

Parenting is a skill that must be learned. If men are not afforded the opportunity to take the time early on to become intimately involved in caregiving for their new children, then they may never feel completely comfortable or competent in doing so. In many parts of Europe, most specifically the Nordic countries, men are encouraged and incited by government policy to take paid leave in their children’s earliest days. In Finland, fathers are entitled to 18 days of paternity leave in addition to parental leave that is shared with their spouses. In addition to helping fathers, this also contributes to the goal of attaining greater gender equity in those countries where such policies exist. In the U.S. no such government support exists, and that no doubt affects the amount of time off that fathers take. Although the Australian fathers in our study are taking more time off than the U.S. fathers, we believe that additional time off would still be valuable for the Australian fathers.

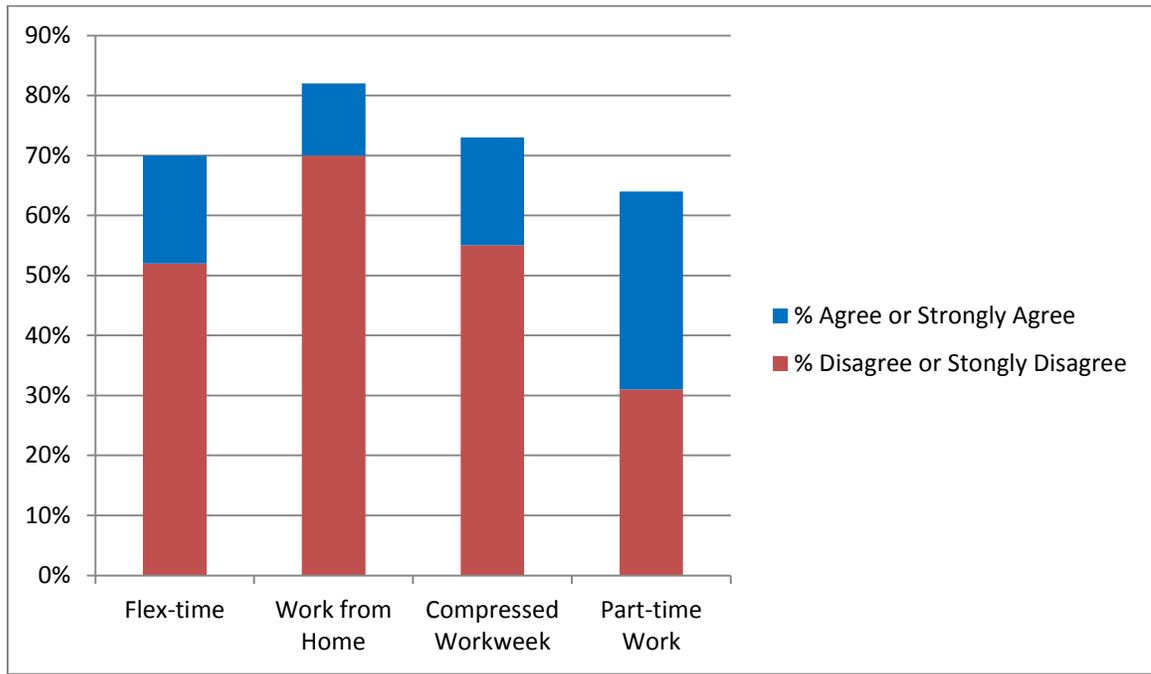
- Men do use flexible work arrangements, but predominantly in an informal manner.** A surprising percentage of the fathers in both our U.S. and Australian studies did use flexible work arrangements with flexible hours and working from home being the most common; however the large majority did so in an informal fashion. Again, this propensity may have a number of different explanations. Perhaps fathers feel a greater sense of entitlement to simply “take” flexibility and do not feel they need formal permission. Conversely, it may suggest that fathers are more comfortable using flexibility in a subtle or “stealth” fashion in order to avoid any negative organizational implications. Perhaps many of the organizations do not have formal programs but are comfortable with informal use. More than 97% of the fathers in Australia reported that their managers’ expectations either stayed the same or actually increased after the birth of their most recent child. With these expectations, and the all too common perception in many organizations that using flexibility is career limiting, perhaps it is not surprising that fathers tend to use flexible work arrangements in a predominantly informal way. This may have strong implications for employers who spend a great deal of time and effort focusing on formal flexibility programs and approaches.

Percent Usage of Flexible Work Arrangements – Australia Study



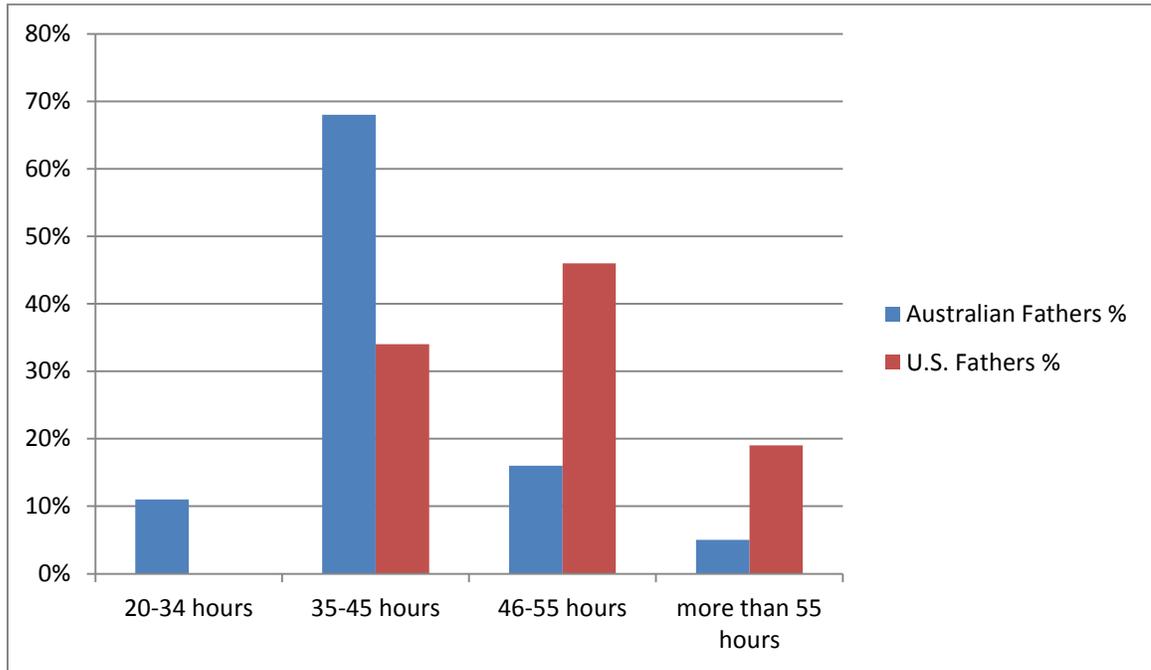
It is also useful to review the data for those who are **NOT** using these various arrangements. A high percentage of these Australian fathers do not believe that their employers would support the use of these various arrangements. This makes sense for jobs that actually require people to be at a particular location at a particular time, such as teaching or customer service work. However, in our information economy, more and more jobs can be performed effectively by employees who are using these types of arrangements. The chart below summarizes the responses from those who are not currently using these arrangements.

If I wanted to use this arrangement, my employer would support it - Australia Study
(Asked of those who were not using the flexible work arrangement specified)



- Although there are important differences between the two study samples of fathers in the U.S. and fathers in Australia (see Appendix A), the data we collected shows a difference in the amount of average weekly work hours in Australia versus the U.S. The U.S. study is mostly managers, and the Australian study contains mostly non-managers, so that may account for at least some of the difference. The chart below shows the number of weekly work hours reported in each study. The chart shows that the average hours worked in a typical workweek is clearly higher for the U.S. sample than for the Australian sample. This would lead us to expect the fathers in the Australian sample to have less work-to-family conflict than fathers in the U.S. sample. Our data does bear this out to an extent, as work-to-family conflict appears slightly higher in the U.S. study than the Australian study. But interestingly, family-to-work conflict appears to be higher in the Australian study than in the U.S. study. Again, these are simply observations of the data from two different samples, but there may be potential for additional research in this area.

Approximately how many hours do you work in a typical work week?



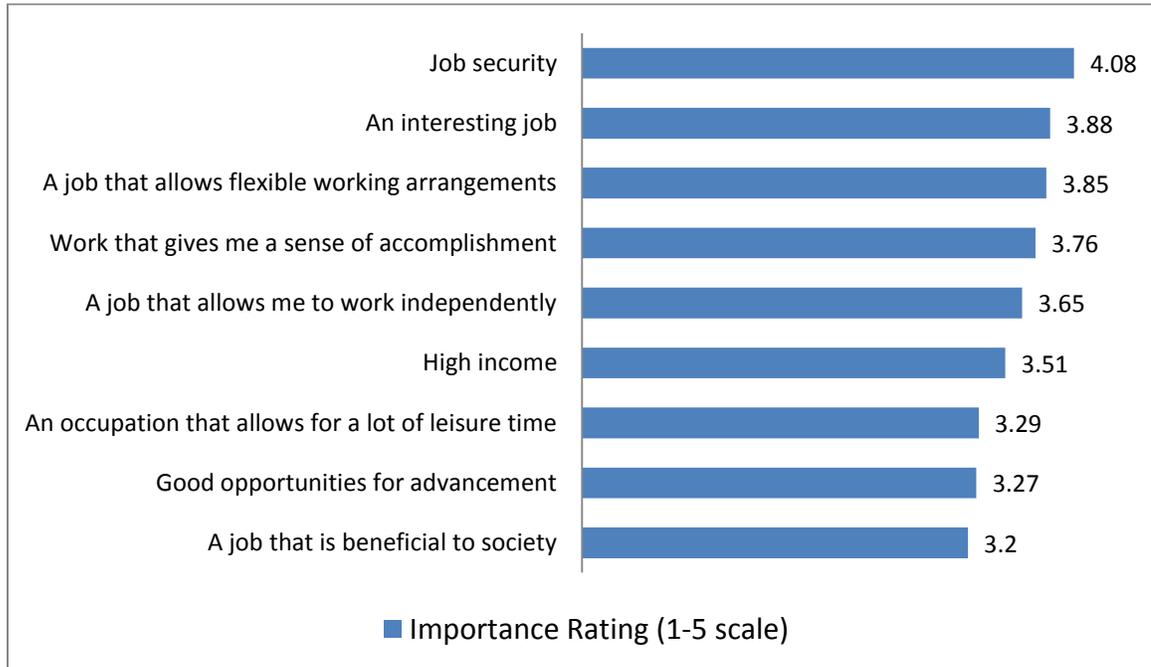
- **A family supportive culture reaps multiple rewards for fathers and their organizations.** A supportive culture where the employee is respected as a whole person has been shown to have beneficial impacts in study after study. Our U.S. study of nearly 1000 fathers strongly confirms the value of this type of working environment. Demonstrated through organizational policies, leadership support and manager and co-worker responses and actions, fostering a culture that is supportive of fathers in their multiple roles leads directly to more satisfied, loyal employees and a lower level of work-to-family conflict.

And finally, one other finding that companies should note:

- **Job security matters greatly to working fathers.** We live in a time when job security seems to be a workforce strategy from days gone by. Companies that were once committed to providing “lifetime employment” for their employees have mostly abandoned this commitment and those very few that remain committed to job security seem anachronistic. Instead, today we see organizations spending a great deal of money on employee engagement, talent management and total rewards programs to maintain top talent. Yet, what seems to matter most to our fathers is security. In Australia, as in the United States, fathers ranked “job security” as the most important attribute. In Australia, this is followed in importance by “an interesting job”. “A job that allows flexible working arrangements” is the third most important attribute, and “high income” is ranked 6th out of 9 total attributes. The complete list is shown in the chart below. While we recognize that it is more difficult for organizations to provide such security in the present economic climate and with the extremely volatile dynamics of operating in a global marketplace, it is nonetheless of tremendous value to recognize the great importance placed on job security by the fathers in our survey. While engagement, talent management, and total

rewards are certainly important, it seems that fathers' basic desire to be secure in their jobs should remain of paramount importance for organizations looking to retain and develop their talent.

Below is a list of job characteristics. Please rate how important you personally consider each to be - Australia Study



RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings discussed in this report, there is definitely room for improvement if we are to accept the realities of today's workforce, and help fathers achieve their goals of greater involvement in caregiving. Employers and employees in Australia need to take active steps to remedy the circumstances that keep fathers pigeonholed as breadwinners and which limit women's opportunities for advancement. Having a supportive environment both in the organization and at home (spousal support) helps fathers to achieve better work-family alignment. Better work-family alignment leads to greater job and career satisfaction and more involved and confident parents. Thus, our study confirms what past research has suggested: balancing work and family is not just a "woman's issue". We see that fathers, too, need a family-supportive work environment when it comes to aligning work and family, and this has tangible benefits for their jobs and careers, and in turn for their organizations. Therefore, we offer the following recommendations for employers and for the fathers themselves.

Recommendations for Australian employers

As part of our survey, we asked fathers the following open-ended question: “What is one thing your company can do to better support you as a working father?” It would seem that no one is in a better position to help companies create an effective father-friendly work environment than the fathers themselves. Their detailed responses are shown in the Detailed Report under question 21. We have analyzed and summarized these detailed responses, and used them in the recommendations below together with other findings from the study.

- **Fully Embrace Flexible Work Arrangements:** Although many of the Australian fathers felt their companies were doing a good job of supporting their needs, the most frequently cited need by fathers in the study was for greater flexibility. This took several forms but the two most commonly cited forms of flexibility fathers wanted were the opportunity to work flexible hours and to work from home. About two thirds of the fathers in the study were using flex-time, either informally or formally. However, there is still a large number who want to use flex-time, but who state that their companies will not support it. Similarly, approximately 50% of the fathers reported that they work from home either formally or informally, but 50% said they did not, and again there is clearly an unmet need for many of these fathers. There is no question that by design, some jobs require people to be in a certain location at a certain time, and do not lend themselves to these types of flexible work arrangements. Other types of arrangements such as trading shifts or overlapping shift scheduling can help support people who are in these types of jobs. However, there are still many jobs that can be done in a more flexible manner, but companies and certain managers resist these arrangements. Beyond accommodating working parents, the business case for these types of flexibility has clearly been made in recent years. Perhaps the most compelling example of this is a recent IBM study which showed the profound impact of these two specific flexible work options on employees’ ability to handle heavy workloads. In the IBM study (Hill, Erikson, Holmes, & Ferris, 2010) employees with schedule flexibility and the ability to work from home, were often able to work 8-16 more hours per week than employees without such flexibility, before work-life conflict became a pressing concern.

Finally there were many comments from the study participants that simply asked that their employers be more supportive and understanding of family needs. That certainly seems like a reasonable request.

- **Provide Benefits that Directly Support Caregiving:** Work-life benefits can run a broad spectrum from concierge services to fitness centers to resource and referral activities. While any of these may be helpful, the fathers in the study appear to be most interested in having time off to be with their children. Fathers wanted time off to care for their kids when they are sick, to be with them on school holidays, and they also asked for paternity benefits similar to those for mothers. As has been mentioned, this paternity time off would enable them to more effectively bond with their children and better prepare them to be primary caregivers. Study respondents also want their organizations to be more family friendly by encouraging family activities and allowing children to visit their workplaces. Several also mentioned the desire to have on-site childcare.

- **Recognize Father’s Caregiving Role:** It is evident from our research that societal, organizational, and professional norms still inhibit fathers from fully embracing their parenting role. Employers should not expect that women will continue to bear the burden of the majority of family responsibilities while they maintain their own careers. Organizations need to let go of outmoded thinking about gender roles and realize that fathers are increasingly as likely as mothers to want and need to be extremely active in parenting. Organizations that aggressively take this enlightened stance, encouraging and actively supporting all parents to find the ideal work-life fit, will be the employers of choice – for men and women, fathers and mothers.
- **Give dads a place and “permission” to talk:** Long-standing gender role stereotypes and organizational cultures may unintentionally create barriers to men discussing their caregiving roles. It is important that employers take proactive measures to encourage conversations among men about issues such as parenting and work-life balance. Establishing fathers’ affinity groups, offering brown bag seminars targeted at men, and ensuring the branding of your existing parenting and work-life supports are gender neutral, can all increase the likelihood that the conversation about these issues will not only be about men, but will include men.

Recommendations for fathers

Our recommendations for fathers are based in our own knowledge of fatherhood and careers, as informed by the studies we have done in this area.

- **Examine Your Caregiving Goals in Light of Your Career Goals:** Sylvia Ann Hewlett wrote an article in the *Harvard Business Review* in 2002 titled “Executive Women and the Myth of Having It All.” In it, Hewlett tries to help debunk the idea that women can have it all, or at least have it all at the same time. She lays out the challenge high performing women face of the “biological clock” and the decisions and trade-offs women must make to have a meaningful career at the same time as having a long-standing relationship and caring for children. The problem, as another work-life scholar puts it, is simple – the idea that one person can simultaneously be the ideal worker and the ideal parent is simply a myth. While men don’t face a “biological clock”, the dilemma for men who want or need to be engaged caregivers is the same – it is difficult if not impossible to have it all. Ideals regarding what constitutes success may need to be re-defined, not just from a whole person perspective but also a *whole-family* perspective. While seeking on-going development and advancement is a perfectly logical and desirable goal for nearly everyone, such goals may need to be tempered by what’s best for the family at any given point in time.
- **Consider Taking More Time Off After the Birth of Your Children:** On the positive side, our data suggests that fathers in Australia take more time off after the birth of their children than fathers in the U.S. However, as we have noted, the experience of fathers in countries that offer generous, extensive paternity leave suggests that fathers who take more time-off early in their

child's life will have a higher likelihood of being a hands-on caregiver than fathers who do not. Women are immersed in caregiving and nurturing their children from the moment they are born. There is no opportunity to wait for others to assume those roles. Fathers who take very limited time-off following the birth of a child are more likely to feel less competent and be more hands-off with their children. This is especially true if the spouse and perhaps others, such as the new grandparents, are also present. We recognize that many organizations do not offer paternity leave. If they do, it is of very short duration and much of it is unpaid, which many families cannot afford. But where possible, evidence would suggest that fathers spending time "flying solo" as a caregiver to their newborn will experience long-term benefits in terms of their relationships with their children over time.

- **Support Your Fellow Fathers:** We have discussed the fact that organizations and their cultures need to change if men are truly going to embrace their role as caregiving fathers. As has been made clear in this study, work-family is no longer simply a women's issue, men are also struggling to find their own work-family fit. But work-life scholar and lawyer Joan Williams, goes a step further saying that work-life isn't simply "also a men's issue, it *is* a men's issue." What does she mean by this? Most organizations and their cultures have been created by men, for men (Harrington & Ladge, 2009). They are built on assumptions about family responsibilities that are no longer valid in many instances. Because men have created workplace cultures and norms, and because they continue to control the vast majority of senior management positions (97% of CEOs in the ASX 200 are men according to the EOWA 2010 Census of Women in Leadership) only men can truly change most workplaces. Men need to attend to this whether from their influential positions as organizational leaders or through grass-roots efforts. Men can either reinforce "macho stereotypes" (e.g. only those who work excessive hours are truly committed) that make it difficult for women and men to be effective parents, or they can change the norms and recognize individuals' work and family responsibilities.

Appendix A: Comparison of U.S. and Australian Demographic Data

Personal Demographics				
	U.S.	Australia	NSW	Victoria
Number of Respondents	963	784	249	199
Average Age of Respondents	42.63	39.55	38.82	39.16
Average # of Children	2.34	2.14	2.07	2.24

	Categories	U.S. %	AUS %	NSW %	VIC %
Marital Status	Single, never married	2%	2%	2%	3%
	Living with partner (not married)	3%	12%	11%	13%
	Married	88%	79%	80%	81%
	Separated	2%	2%	3%	1%
	Divorced	5%	3%	3%	3%
	Widowed	0%	1%	1%	1%
Level of Education	Some high school	0%	8%	5%	6%
	Complete high school	1%	14%	12%	12%
	Some university	11%	27%	22%	23%
	Two-year university degree	10%	5%	6%	8%
	Four-year university degree	42%	29%	32%	35%
	Master's degree	30%	14%	20%	14%
	Doctoral degree	5%	3%	3%	4%
Race/Ethnicity	American Indian or Alaskan Native	1%	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Asian or Pacific Islander	4%			
	Black, not of Hispanic Origin	7%			
	Hispanic	5%			
	White, not of Hispanic Origin	81%			
	Other	3%			

Work-Related Demographics

	Categories	U.S. %	AUS %	NSW %	VIC %
Hours worked per week	Less than 20 hours	0%	0%	0%	0%
	20-34 hours	0%	11%	10%	10%
	35-45 hours	34%	68%	65%	71%
	46-55 hours	46%	16%	20%	14%
	More than 55 hours	19%	5%	6%	6%
Tenure in Organization	Less than 1 year	2%	10%	8%	10%
	1-5 years	20%	39%	44%	41%
	6-10 years	27%	25%	23%	27%
	11-20 years	30%	18%	20%	19%
	More than 20 years	22%	7%	5%	4%
Occupation	Individual contributor (hourly)	3%	22%	16%	22%
	Individual contributor (salaried)	37%	39%	43%	40%
	Manager/ Supervisor	60%	39%	41%	38%
Annual Personal Income	Less than \$25,000	0%	3%	2%	4%
	\$25,000-50,000	4%	16%	16%	12%
	\$50,0001-75,000	19%	28%	21%	30%
	\$75,001-100,000	32%	29%	32%	29%
	\$100,001-200,000	40%	21%	27%	20%
	More than \$200,000	4%	3%	2%	6%