

Millennial  
**THE NEW DAD**

**Understanding The Paradox of Today's Fathers**

---



**Brad Harrington**  
**Jennifer Sabatini Fraone**  
*Boston College Center for Work & Family*

**Jegoo Lee**  
*Stonehill College*

**Lisa Levey**  
*Libra Consulting*

**Boston College 2016**



BOSTON COLLEGE —————  
**Center for Work & Family**  
CARROLL SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

---

## To Fred Van Deusen:

*For your 10 years of outstanding contributions as a Senior Research Associate at the Boston College Center for Work & Family. Your focus, expertise, and exemplary teamwork made The New Dad research series possible, contributed greatly to the national dialogue on the changing roles of fathers, and made the Center a much richer and more enjoyable place to work each day. Best wishes in your retirement! We'll try not to call for advice (too often)!*

I. Introduction.....	2
II. Methodology .....	4
III. What Changes When Millennial Men Become Dads? .....	5
IV. Challenges For Millennial Fathers.....	6
a. Traditional gender norms and expectations.....	6
b. Career decision making .....	7
c. The Influence of corporate culture.....	8
d. The desire to “have it all” .....	9
V. Three Paradigms Of “The New Dad” .....	11
VI. Signs of Change .....	19
VII. Summary.....	21

# I. Introduction

Since 2009, our Center has been exploring the changing role of fathers in America. In our series called *The New Dad*, we have examined a diverse set of issues including the transition to fatherhood, the experiences of at-home dads, shared caregiving, and paternity leave. We believe this work has dramatically increased a long-overdue dialogue on the role of fathers in contemporary families and the work-life-family struggles that these men face. Through this process we have developed a more rich and accurate representation of today's fathers and hopefully have mitigated some of the outdated and inaccurate stereotypes of fathers and their role in the American family. We have endeavored to accurately portray the desire and commitment of today's fathers to play an important role as parents and family members, not simply as financial providers.

When discussing the changes we observe, we have often been asked, "Is this all a Millennial thing?" Are the changing attitudes about fatherhood the result of a generational shift that is underway, as this next generation (i.e. Gen Y or Millennials) becomes the largest age cohort in the workplace? This is why we set out to explore the attitudes of "Millennial dads" to see how these young men view parenting, careers, and work-family balance and how their views compare to those of Millennial moms.

Much has been written and said about the Millennial generation. Perhaps no age group has generated more articles, books and blogs than our present crop of young adults (ages 18-36) or been saddled with more labels, clichés and stereotypes. As Professor Jeffrey Arnett and his colleagues have observed in the journal *Emerging Adulthood*, "Although denigrating the young is an ancient tradition, it has taken on a new vehemence in our time" (Arnett, Trzesniewski and Donnelan, 2013). "Generational consultants" have become a cottage industry with a variety of experts charging sometimes exorbitant fees to help organizations understand how to communicate with and manage Millennials (Wall Street Journal, 2016). The problem is these "experts" often make conflicting assertions about this generation of young adults, labeling them variously as lazy, hard-working, entitled, ambitious, self-centered, socially responsible, disloyal, and committed...take your pick. It sometimes seems that if you apply enough contradictory labels to any large group of individuals, some of those are bound to be accurate some of the time. At the very least, they will have the ring of truth to those who are disposed to that point of view. But they hardly equate to knowledge grounded in rigorous research.

But as we pointed out in our 2015 study, *How Millennials Navigate Their Careers* (Harrington, Van Deusen, Fraone and Morelock, 2015) generalizations about large groups of people, especially those connected only by arbitrary birth date specifications, are bound to be fraught with problems.

It is reasonable to believe that the times we are raised in, and the accompanying societal trends, do impact individuals and groups. Most researchers would agree there are changes that have occurred in the last two decades that have impacted this generation. These include, for example, the rise in pervasive technologies (especially handheld devices such as smart phones), changes in the career contract, and the impact of globalization on consumers and the workplace.

Two trends seem particularly noteworthy in terms of this report on Millennials fathers. One is *the delays in Millennials making "adult commitments."* Millennials are less likely than previous generations to have completed the traditional milestones of "adulthood" by age 32. Today, young adults get married later, have children later, and are less likely to own a home by age 30 than was the case a generation ago (Taylor et al., 2014).

The other relates to *changing gender roles*, particularly in relation to higher education, the workplace, and in homes. Women now earn the majority of bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees awarded in the U.S. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). In one quarter of dual-career couples' households, wives earn more than their husbands, and if one looks at all U.S. households, women are now the primary breadwinners in 2 of 5 (Wang, Parker, and Taylor 2013). These striking statistics call into question our long-held stereotype of "the male breadwinner." Millennial men are far more likely to have a spouse working full-time than was the case a generation ago (EY, 2015). As a result, young

men today express a strong need and desire to be involved parents and see their role in the family as being an equal balance between breadwinner and caregiver (Harrington, Van Deusen, and Humberd, 2011).

This study explores the experience of Millennial fathers. We sought to better understand the attitudes and aspirations of Millennial dads and to contrast those with three reference groups – Millennial mothers, Millennial men without children, and fathers who were aged 22-35 in 2011.

Throughout the seven years that we've been conducting our fatherhood research, we've heard many questions about this emerging group of young dads. Are they really more involved? Do they all want equally active roles as parents? As researchers, we often felt uncomfortable making generalizations based on our research. It seemed that on average, new dads were more involved as fathers, or at least aspired to be. We could also observe families in our own lives exhibiting this new approach to shared parenting.

But do all Millennial dads fit this description? This year's analysis has led us to conclude that the answer, in short, is no. What became necessary was an exploration of a "paradox" in which some Millennial men find themselves, namely the desire to be an equal parent, which is espoused by 67% of the Millennial dads in the study. This figure is in contrast to the 30% who report that this is what actually happens in their homes. We wanted to understand how the experience and awareness of this "paradox" impacts men's career and life satisfaction.

We hope that our analysis will provide new insights into the group of men becoming fathers today. They do not all fit one mold, and in fact, our exploration has led us to identify three paradigms of today's young fathers. We look forward to sharing our interpretation of these findings, and hope they provide a better understanding of "The New Dad."

## II. Methodology and Research Sample

In 2015, the Boston College Center for Work & Family published *How Millennials Navigate Their Careers: Young Adults Views on Work, Life and Success* (Harrington, Van Deusen, Fraone, and Morelock, 2015), research aimed at better understanding the ways in which Millennials navigate their careers and prioritize their career-life choices. This study surveyed individuals, aged 22-35 with at least two years of professional work experience, who were employed at one of five large, global corporations. All organizations were members of the Boston College Workforce Roundtable and included employers engaged in the insurance, financial services, accounting and consulting business sectors.

The study included both a quantitative and a qualitative element. The quantitative survey was conducted on-line. While all of the businesses were global in scope, the survey was only administered within their US operations. A total of 1,100 employees completed the survey across the five companies. The companies used their employee databases to randomly select participants who met the study criteria. Employees' participation in the study was voluntary.

For this exploration of Millennial fathers, we will draw mainly from the responses from the 33% of study subjects (327 participants) who were parents and especially the 151 fathers. We will, however draw from the larger sample (n = 1,100) for the purposes of comparison (e.g. comparing the responses of single men with fathers).

The sample of parents had the following characteristics:

	Mothers	Fathers
Number	176	151
Average age	32	32
Years of work experience (avg.)	9.9	9.6
Number of employers (avg.)	2.24	2.05
Percent working full-time	94%	100%
Education		
Bachelors	60%	66%
Masters or Doctorate	30%	28%
Average earnings (range)	\$55,000-75,000	\$75,000-100,000
Race/ethnicity		
White	80%	90%
Black	7%	3%
Hispanic	3%	2%
Asian or Pacific Islander	10%	6%

### III. What Changes When Millennial Men Become Dads

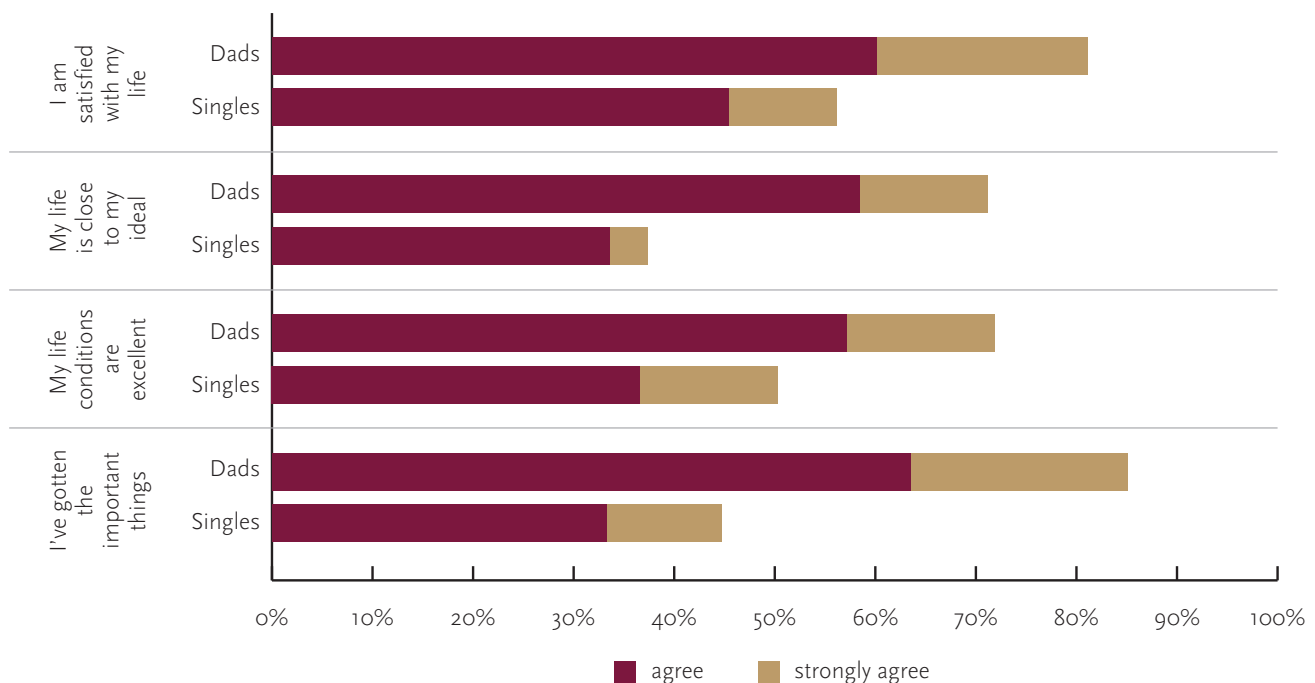
In our analysis, we compared the responses of Millennial dads to those of their single counterparts to discern significant differences between the two groups. We discovered a number of major differences that were particularly noteworthy.

Regarding their professional roles, Millennial dads reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction with their workplace and their career achievement when compared to the male-singles. Millennial fathers also were significantly more likely to indicate an intent to stay with their employer and to agree that the “organization’s problems are their own” (66% of Millennial fathers agreed / strongly agreed with this statement vs. 37% of single men). They also indicated a very high level of involvement with their job.

The only “downside” from an organizational perspective is not entirely surprising. While Millennial dads are more loyal and feel greater ownership for the organization’s challenges, it appears they are not willing to go to the same lengths as their single counterparts to advance in the organization. For example, the dads were less willing to relocate to advance their career (dads 40% willing vs. single men 58% willing), were less likely to seek international assignments (dads 43% would seek vs. single men 61% would seek), and much less likely to pursue advancement if it meant less time for their family / personal life (dads 16% likely to pursue vs. single men 40% likely). But at the same time, fathers were less likely to judge their success based on salary growth rate (67% dads vs. 81% single men) or in comparison to their peers (28% dads vs. 51% single men).

Perhaps most notable, Millennial fathers reported significantly higher levels of life satisfaction than their unmarried male counterparts. As the chart below demonstrates, fathers scored significantly higher than the single men on a range of important life satisfaction indicators including positive responses to statements such as “I’ve gotten the important things I want in my life,” “My life conditions are excellent,” and “In most ways my life is close to my ideal.” The difference between the two groups was highly significant and responses ranged between 20-40% more positive for the fathers on these important questions. These results once again stress the tremendous impact that meaningful family relationships have on an individuals overall sense of well-being.

**Life Satisfaction (comparing Dads and Single Men)**



## IV. Challenges For Millennial Fathers

As is the case for nearly all parents today (e.g. mothers and fathers, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, etc.), the struggle to achieve work-life balance or fit is a near constant. When discussing this challenge, it appears that Millennial fathers confront obstacles that reinforce the divide between their desires to be fully engaged fathers and the realities they face juggling their work and family priorities. These challenges include:

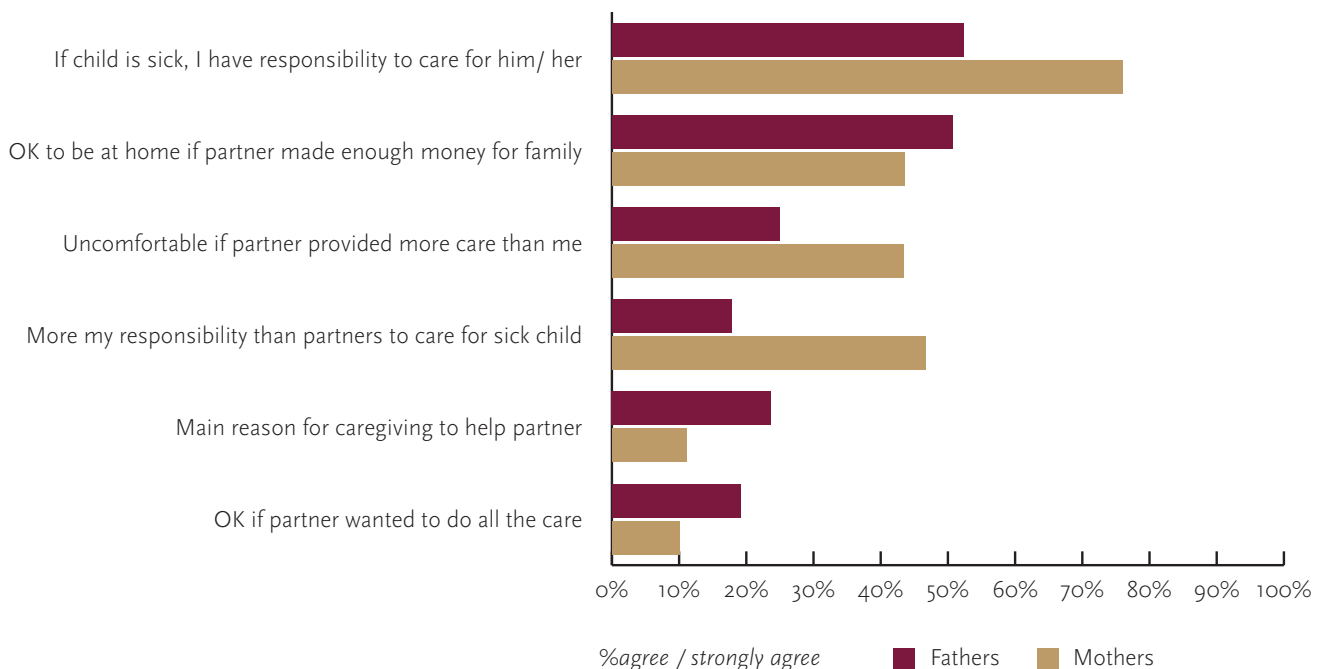
- The persistence of traditional gender expectations and norms
- Their approach to career decision making
- Their sensitivity to corporate cultural norms
- Their belief in the ability to “have it all”

### a. Traditional gender roles

Traditional gender expectations and norms continue to exert a strong influence on the experiences of Millennials, even those who espouse the value of gender equality. A substantial divide persists between their espoused egalitarian ideals and their actual behavior. Among Millennial parents in our sample, childcare followed more traditionally gendered patterns with 62% of men reporting they provided less care than their spouses and 40% of women reporting they provided more than their spouse.

While the majority of Millennial dads believed in equally sharing childcare with their spouses, at the same time they signaled in various ways that caring for their children was less of a priority than was the case for their female peers. Nearly one-in-four dads maintained that the main reason for providing childcare was to help his partner rather than to assume parental responsibility. For example, 62% of Millennial dads disagreed with the statement, “It is more my responsibility than my partner’s to care for our sick child.” Men more often portrayed themselves as helpers - or backup - rather than primary care givers for their children.

### Spousal Sharing of Childcare





While gender equality was the goal for most fathers and mothers, the belief in equality differed substantially by gender. Nearly one-in-three Millennial fathers, in contrast with only 2% of Millennial mothers, thought their spouse should provide the majority of childcare.

Although many Millennial dads expressed some ambivalence about being full partners in shared caregiving, we were surprised to find that over half of Millennial dads (more, even, than Millennial moms) said they would be willing to consider being a stay-at-home parent if their spouse made enough money to support the family (51% of fathers agreed with this statement vs. 44% of mothers). Given many fathers' indication that the locus of childcare responsibility lay primarily with their spouses, it is noteworthy that so many fathers reported they would be comfortable being the at-home, primary care provider if their spouse could financially support the family. This would clearly seem to indicate a growing acceptance of the at-home parent role for men.

## b. How dads make career choices

The drive for career success, as defined by more traditional motivators such as status and salary, remains powerful for Millennial men. Fathers have high career aspirations and seek professional success, though they are willing to make some important tradeoffs in the process.

One way to understand how men navigate their careers is to explore what their priorities as they contemplate leaving a current employer or joining a new one. For Millennial parents, recruitment and turnover drivers revealed some gender differences in their approach to career decision-making.

### Top Criteria for Employer Selection (% very important/ extremely important)

#### Mothers

1. Work-Life Balance (86%)
2. Job Security (81%)
3. Salary (80%)
4. Benefits (80%)
5. Career Growth Opportunities (77%)

#### Fathers

1. Career Growth Opportunities (83%)
2. Benefits (76%)
3. Work-Life Balance (75%)
4. Salary (74%)
5. Job Security (71%)

Millennial parents were asked to assess the importance of a wide variety of criteria for selecting an employer ranging from salary to flexibility to the opportunity to do meaningful work. Career growth was rated highest by fathers while mothers put work-life balance at the top of their list. Despite this difference, fathers and mothers selected the same top 5 criteria for employee selection albeit in a slightly different order of priority.

We also asked respondents what reasons would most likely cause them to leave their present employers, with 15 different possible factors provided.

### Top Reasons for Leaving an Employer (% somewhat likely / likely / very likely)

#### Mothers

1. To Make More Money (81%)
2. Time with Family (67%)
3. Work-Life Balance (66%)
4. Advancement (64%)
5. Growth Opportunities (62%)

#### Fathers

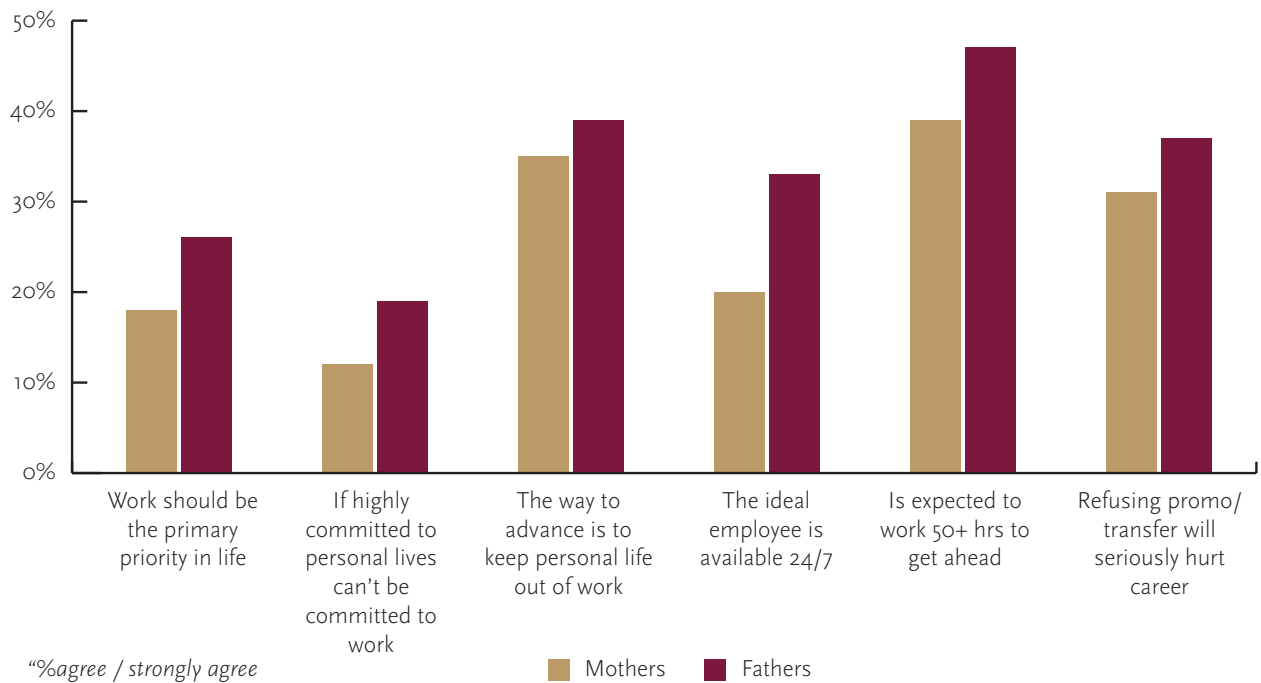
1. To Make More Money (87%)
2. Advancement (75%)
3. Growth Opportunities (71%)
4. Time with Family (61%)
5. Work-Life Balance (56%)

When considering leaving their current employer, fathers prioritized money, career advancement, and growth opportunities as their top three potential reasons. In comparison, mothers also rated money as the most important factor, although to a lesser degree than men. Mothers reported a greater inclination to leave for issues related to integrating career and family, although men also cited this in their top 5 factors considered.

### c. The Influence of corporate culture

As Millennial dads strive to reach their professional goals, they seem to be keenly aware of, and perhaps influenced by, their workplace culture. In our study, fathers indicated greater awareness and sensitivity to the demands of their employers and to the vision of the ideal worker than their female counterparts. Men were more likely to characterize their work environments as requiring a great deal in terms of time, energy, and focus.

#### Perceptions of Work Culture



Fathers were more likely than mothers to characterize their work environments as requiring work to be primary. Constant availability was seen as the expectation for one-third of fathers (vs. 20% of mothers) and nearly half of fathers saw 50 hours as the baseline commitment expected in order to “get ahead.” Slightly more Millennial dads than moms believed keeping their personal life out of the workplace was important for advancement. Relative to their female peers, Millennial fathers were more likely to believe that turning down a promotion or transfer would seriously hurt their careers and were more inclined to believe that their employer felt work should be primary in one’s life.

Despite the high hurdles for career success, fathers indicated a greater willingness to do what was necessary to succeed professionally and to make tradeoffs impacting their personal and family lives. Nearly 87% of men with children were willing to put in a great deal of effort at work beyond what was normally required (compared to 77% of mothers). Fathers characterized themselves as highly engaged with their work and expressed a deep sense of professional responsibility. 4 out of 5 described themselves as being very involved personally with their jobs and over half experienced their organization’s problems as their own. Importantly, dads were twice as likely as mothers to want to advance if it meant less time with their children (although that number was still quite small at 16%) and nearly twice as likely to be willing to relocate.

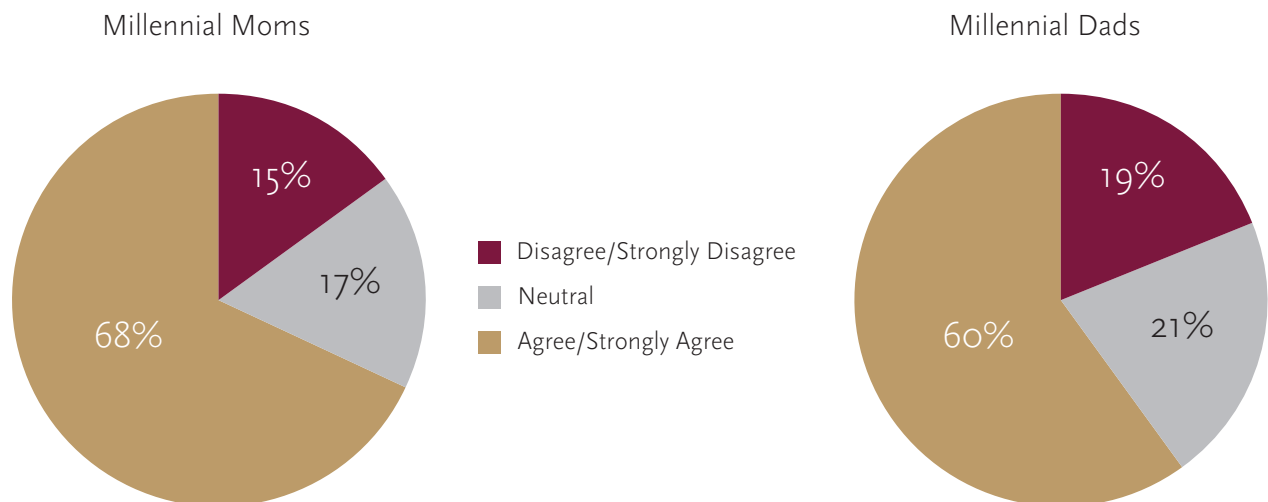
The heightened sensitivity of fathers to organizational norms might be explained by the reality that men reap greater professional rewards - with regards to opportunities and compensation – than mothers. Research has shown, for example, that while women experience a “motherhood penalty” in terms of diminished earning after becoming a parent, men receive a “fatherhood bonus” (Hodges and Budig, 2010, Budig, 2014). This sensitivity may also come from understanding the costs that can be associated with more conspicuous family focus. While research indicates the motherhood penalty is steep, the penalty for highly involved fathers may be even steeper. (Williams, 2010; Berdahl and Moon, 2013). For fathers who are the sole or primary breadwinners, the risks of prioritizing family at the cost of focus on work, may simply seem too high.

While fathers portrayed the terms of engagement for professional growth as very demanding, and with attendant costs, they were more willing to meet those terms in their pursuit of career success. This leaves fathers with less time and energy for active involvement as care givers and equal partners at home, thwarting their efforts to get closer to an egalitarian ideal.

#### d. Trying to “have it all”

While in the past, being a “good father” may have been more equated with being a good financial provider, supporting the family financially is no longer considered the ideal. Today, most men define being a good father more in terms of both active involvement with their children and meeting their family’s financial needs (Harrington, et. al, 2011). As a result, it appears that many of today’s fathers are in the throes of learning how to combine work and family more proactively and effectively. When we compared mothers’ and fathers’ responses to the demands of combining work and family, we see surprisingly similar results. 15% of Millennial moms and 19% of Millennial dads report finding it difficult to combine work and family in their current roles and fewer dads than moms report that combining work and family is “easy.” It seems that as Millennial fathers increasingly experience the challenge of integrating their work and family lives, they experience greater work-family conflict.

#### It is easy to combine work and personal life/family



Compared to Millennial mothers, dads prioritize wanting greater challenges (dads 88%, moms 74%), responsibility at work (dads 87%, moms 73%), and advancement (dads 82%, moms 69%). Moms, alternatively rated work providing a feeling of security (dads 68%, moms 76%) and career progress (dads 66%, moms 73%) higher than dads.

At the same time that Millennial men have high aspirations for their professional lives, they also want more time for their lives outside of work. They want time for activities they enjoy and the flexibility to get involved with community service. Nearly three out of four fathers (74%) want more time with their children than they have at present (78% of mothers said the same). Men's desire to have more time with their children while also seeking work roles with greater responsibility, would seem to indicate that men have joined the struggle to "have it all" - greater career success, more active family involvement, and more time to pursue passions and priorities beyond work and family.

While dads are struggling to figure out how to combine work and family in new ways, they do report high levels of life satisfaction. To a greater extent than the mothers in the study, fathers report that they are satisfied with their lives (dads 80%, moms 60%), the conditions of their lives are excellent (dads 71%, moms 60%), and their lives are close to their ideals (dads 70%, moms 62%).

Men indicated a willingness to make tradeoffs for their careers, but in response to the statement, "I want to advance in my career even if it means spending less time with my family or on my personal life" 64% of fathers disagreed that this was the case (compared with approximately 82% of mothers who disagreed.)

When dads considered how important their career was to their identity compared with their life outside of work, personal life and family were reported to be significantly more important. Of the fathers surveyed, 72% indicated that their life outside of work was very or extremely important to their identity and how they define themselves. In contrast, only 21% of fathers reported that their career was very or extremely important to their identity and how they define themselves. Rather than being work-centric, these dads report being dual-centric with a strong desire for a meaningful life and an identity based on much more than job titles or organizational status.

It seems that Millennial fathers have joined Millennial mothers in the quest to "have it all." The good news is that as the rules of engagement are changing for men, they have an enormous opportunity to drive the evolution of work cultures to allow caregivers to thrive professionally and to make gender equality a far greater reality at work and at home.

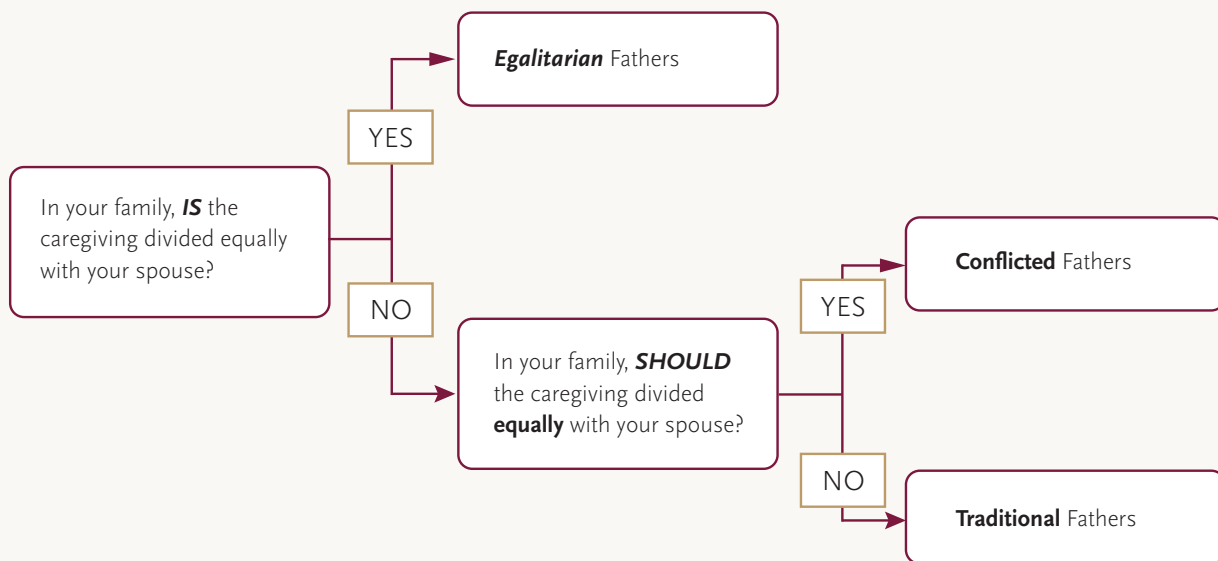
## V. Three Paradigms Of “The New Dad”

In order to understand whether and how Millennial fathers have different views toward caregiving at home, we further analyzed three groups of fathers based on their responses to the following two survey questions. The first question targeted each respondent’s current caregiving situation while the second targeted his aspirations toward caregiving.

- “In your family, how IS the care-giving for children divided?”
- “In your family, how do you believe the care-giving for children SHOULD be divided?”

Among Millennial fathers who are involved in caregiving, we classified three groups of fathers as presented in the logic tree below.

### How Millennial Fathers Approach Caregiving Differently



In our survey, the first group of fathers responded “both provide equal amounts of caregiving at home” for both questions, i.e., “IS divided” and “SHOULD BE divided”. This group of “**egalitarian**” fathers believes that they should provide equal caregiving at home and perceives that they are doing so. They comprised approximately 32% of the sample.

Another group of fathers replied that their “spouse provides more caregiving at home,” for the first question (IS divided), but answered “both provide equal amounts of caregiving at home” for the second question (SHOULD BE divided). Regarding their caregiving-at-home issues, these “**conflicted**” fathers have a dissonance between their aspiration (SHOULD be) and reality (IS). They comprised approximately 30% of the sample.

The last group of fathers answered “spouse provides more caregiving at home” for both “IS divided” and “SHOULD BE divided” questions. This father group has a consistent viewpoint that their spouses are providing as well as should be providing more caregiving at home. Compared to the first two groups, this group has a more “**traditional**” perspective toward caregiving. They comprised approximately 30% of the sample.

As can be seen, our sample of fathers was split nearly evenly among the three paradigms (a small percentage of dads did not fit into these three categories). These results led us to explore the question of whether all Millennial fathers experience a paradox in their work-family life integration (i.e. aspiring to do more but not living up to their aspirations). Approximately one-third of the fathers fit a more **traditional** breadwinner model and one-third have achieved a more **egalitarian**, shared-caregiving model. The final third of the fathers, who we refer to as the **conflicted** dads, is the group that is genuinely experiencing the “paradox” of Millennial fathers: they aspire to be an equal caregiving partner,

yet they have not achieved that objective. As we review the differences between these Millennial dad paradigms, we will explore the impact of these fathers' feelings of conflict on both their professional and personal lives.

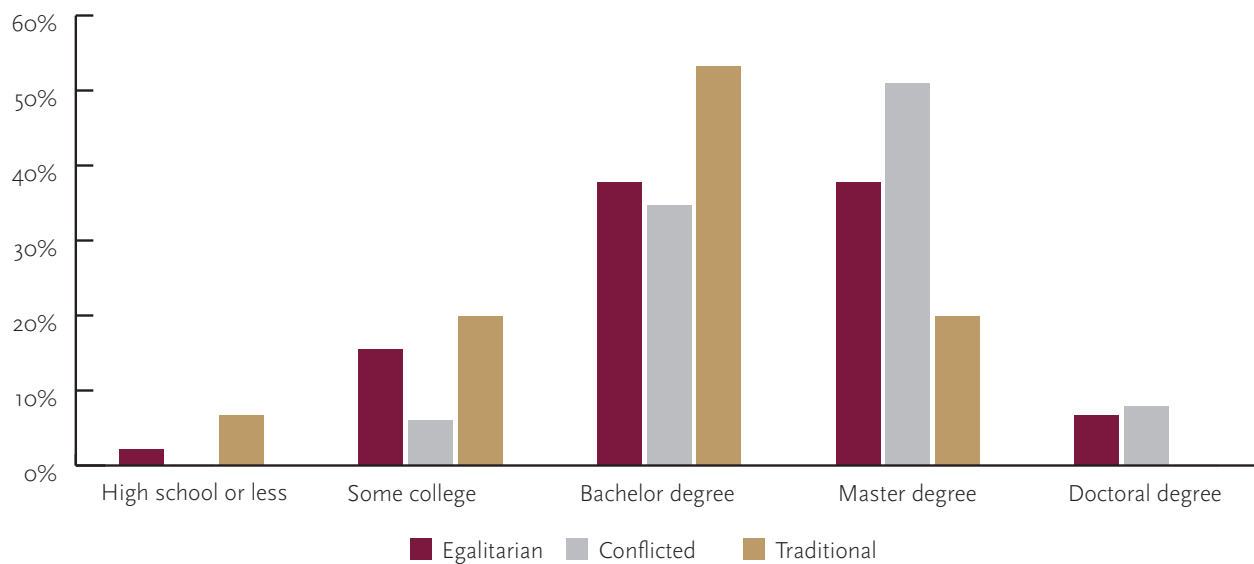
Our study found two broad issues or factors associated with different attitudes toward caregiving held by Millennial fathers, their relationships with spouses, and their satisfaction with jobs/careers/lives.

## Millennial Fathers' Spouses

### Spouses Educational and Economic Backgrounds

We examined the backgrounds of Millennial fathers' spouses such as their education, employment status, working hours, annual income, and contribution to family income.

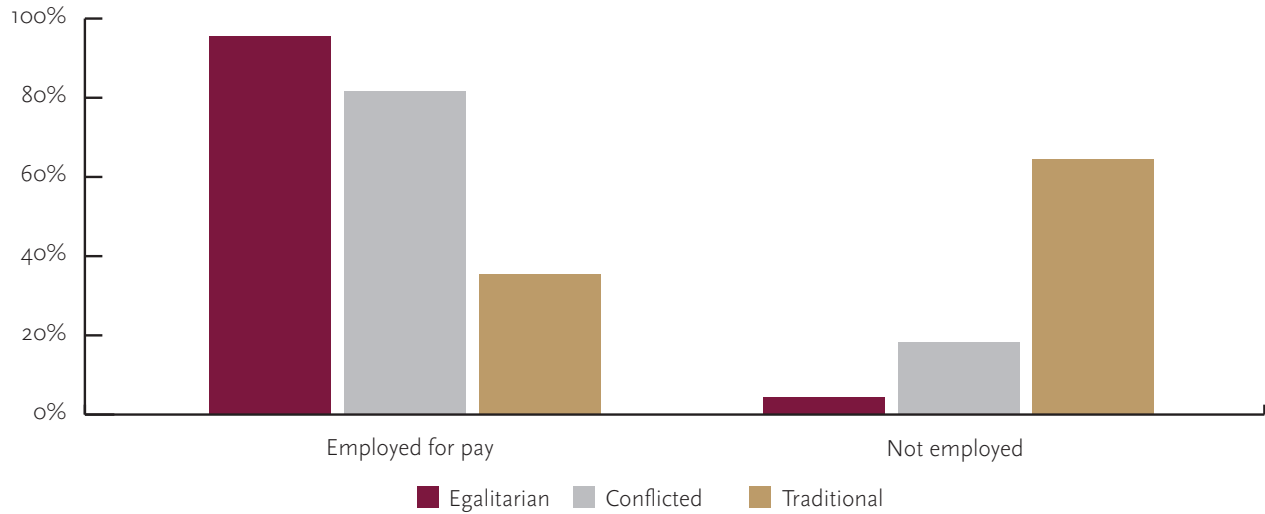
#### Spouses' Education Levels



Overall, 78% of the Millennial fathers' spouses had completed at least a bachelor's level education. Conflicted fathers' spouses had the highest level of education levels of the three groups with nearly 60% holding a master's or above compared to 44% of egalitarian fathers and 20% of traditional fathers. This result implies that spouses' education levels impact the struggle Millennial fathers experience between the aspiration and the reality of their caregiving. If the spouse has attained an advanced degree, it seems to increase the likelihood that fathers will be expected to share caregiving more equitably. Unlike the egalitarian fathers who do in fact share caregiving equally, conflicted fathers are caught in a dilemma: whether to follow the traditional gendered roles or to seek a more equitable caregiving arrangement with their spouses.

We also investigated economic activity and work-related issues of Millennial fathers' spouses. Regarding their spouses' employment status, 96% of egalitarian fathers and 82% of conflicted fathers' spouses are employed for pay outside of the home. By contrast, only 36% of traditional fathers said that their spouses are working outside the home.

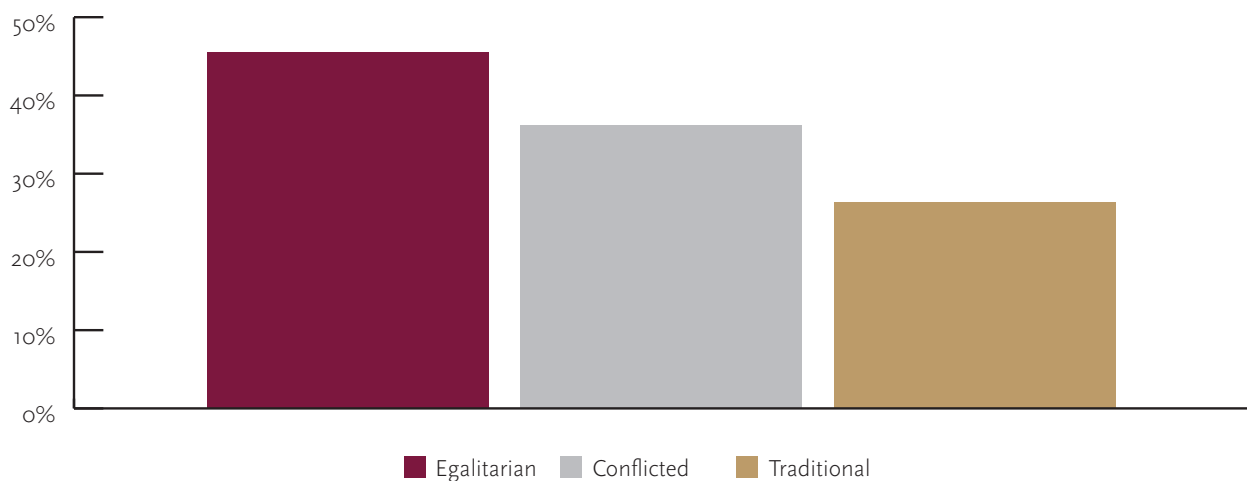
## Spouses' Employment Status



When asked, “How many hours does your spouse work per week?” responses from three groups of fathers also differed markedly. Of the spouses that worked outside the home (full-time mothers are not factored into the average hours worked or average salaries in the following paragraphs), spouses of egalitarian fathers’ worked an average of 40 hours per week, spouses of conflicted fathers 36 hours per week, and spouses of traditional fathers 27 hours per week.

Next, we explored the spouses’ contributions to family income to better understand whether their spouses’ income levels influenced Millennial fathers’ attitudes toward caregiving. To explore this dimension, we analyzed two relevant topics: the spouses’ income and the percent of contribution the spouse was making to family income overall. The spouses of egalitarian fathers contributed 46% of their family income on average; the spouses of conflicted fathers contributed 36% of their family’s income; and spouses of the traditional fathers’ contributed 26%. (This percentage of family income only includes those spouses that worked. If we included all spouses, the percentage contribution of spouses to family would be lower in all groups, but that would be especially true in traditional couples where nearly two-thirds of spouses are not employed).

## Spouses' Contribution to Family Income



Egalitarian fathers' spouses have the highest level of income --- they share nearly equally in both breadwinning and caregiving responsibilities. Traditional fathers' spouses are far more likely to be either an at-home parent or part-time employee and have the lowest income level among the three groups, thereby reinforcing the fathers' primary breadwinner status. In these more traditional arrangements, the fathers focus more on work and do so feeling their spouses are responsible for the majority of the caregiving responsibilities.

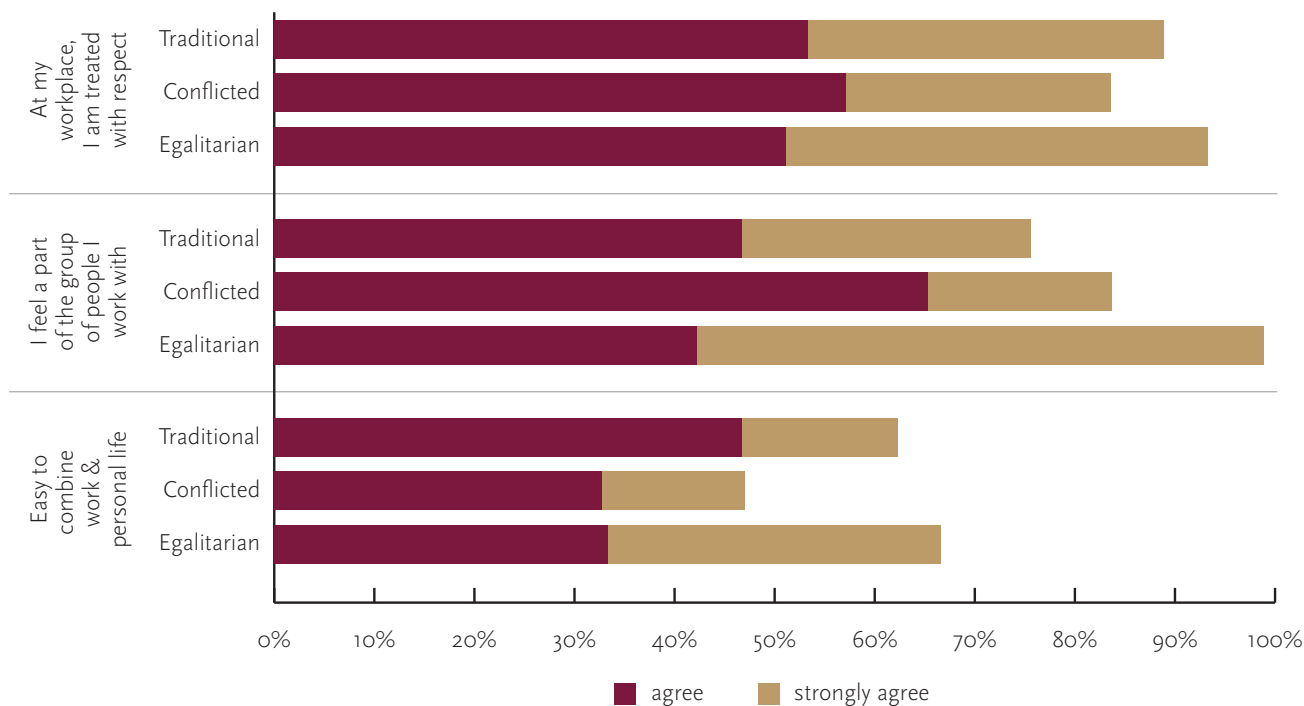
Again, the conflicted fathers seem to be suspended in between the other two groups. Their highly educated spouses make a significant contribution to family income, yet the father retains the role of primary breadwinner. These fathers state their desire is to be equal partners in caregiving, yet they may also feel pressure to earn greater income and ensure job security in the workplace

## Millennial Fathers' Satisfaction Levels

### Job Satisfaction/Commitment

In order to better understand how these paradigms impact work and life satisfaction, we examined three broad and important issues regarding job satisfaction of Millennial fathers. These included their perception of dignity at the workplaces, their sense of belonging, and their ability to balance their professional and personal lives. These three issues relate to Millennial fathers' feelings of enrichment in their professional lives.

#### Job Satisfaction and Commitment





First, for the statement “at the company or organization where I work, I am treated with respect,” the conflicted father group showed lower agreement level (84%) than the egalitarian group of fathers (93%) and traditional fathers (89%) in their perception of being treated with respect at work.

Second, regarding the sense of belonging fathers perceive in the workplace, Millennial fathers responded with their agreement / disagreement levels to the statement “I feel I am really a part of the group of people I work with.” 56% of the egalitarian father group strongly agrees with this statement, as compared to only 18% of conflicted fathers and 29% of traditional fathers. Meanwhile, 65% of conflicted fathers agree with it, and 47% of traditional fathers and 42% of egalitarian fathers did so. Again, the egalitarian fathers felt attachment to their workplace colleagues more than the conflicted fathers.

Finally, we asked Millennial fathers' about the ease of balancing work and personal life. When given the statement “In my current role it is easy to combine work and personal life,” 33% of egalitarian fathers strongly agreed as compared to 14% of conflicted fathers. Perhaps surprisingly, only 16% of traditional fathers also strongly agreed. However, when we look at agreement with this statement overall (combining agrees and strongly agrees) both egalitarian and traditional fathers were much more likely to agree that it was easy to combine work and family (67% and 63% respectively compared to only 47% of conflicted fathers. In addition, 25% of conflicted fathers disagreed with this statement, as compared with only 9% of traditional fathers and 11% of egalitarian fathers. Thus it seems that conflicted fathers perceive significantly greater difficulty as they strive to balance their work and personal lives.

We conjectured that the conflicted father group's lower satisfaction level with these job characteristics would be associated with pressure from their workplaces. Thus, we studied three more factors about organizational culture. Specifically, we asked Millennial fathers to respond to three statements regarding organizational culture.

For the statement, “To be viewed favorably by top management, employees in this organization must consistently put their jobs ahead of their families or personal lives,” 39% of conflicted fathers agreed / strongly agreed. This compares with only 16% of egalitarian fathers who agreed / strongly agreed. Traditional fathers' responses were only slightly higher than those of egalitarian dads.

We also asked the fathers to mark their level of agreement / disagreement with the statement, “To get ahead at this organization, employees are expected to work more than 50 hours per week, whether at the workplace or home.” We found that, either for success or survival, the group of conflicted fathers regarded longer working hours as important. 57% of them agreed or strongly agreed that they “are expected to work more than 50 hours per week.” By comparison only 31% of egalitarian and 48% of traditional fathers agreed / strongly agreed that this was the case.

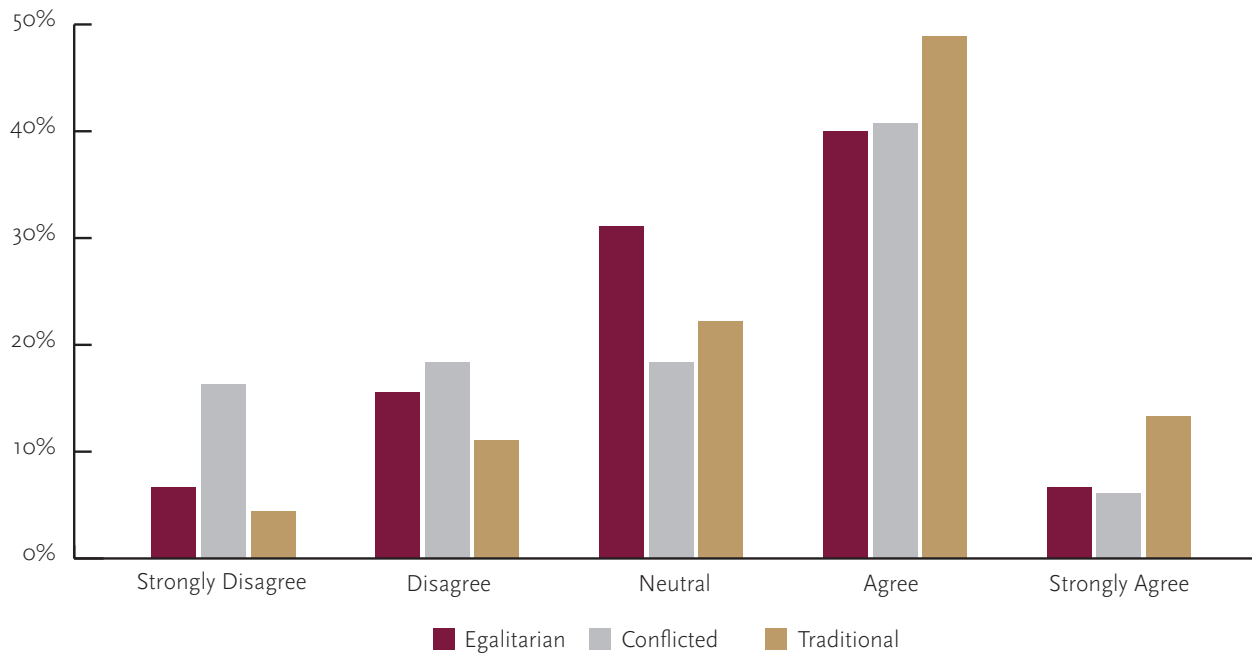
In summary, it appears that on many measures conflicted fathers were the least satisfied with their jobs, especially when compared to egalitarian fathers. The conflicted fathers felt less respected and less of a sense of “belonging” than fathers from the other two groups. They also found it more difficult to combine their personal lives with work. Feeling a dilemma regarding their contribution to caregiving seems to reduce Millennial fathers' satisfaction levels in the workplace. In addition, the group of conflicted fathers seem to be more sensitive toward the cues imbedded in the organizational culture which stress long work hours and working at home and on personal time.

## Career Satisfaction

We also investigated Millennial fathers' career satisfaction in two areas – advancement and income.

First, we looked at the Millennial fathers' agreement/disagreement with a statement “I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for income.” As the following chart shows, 62% of traditional fathers agreed / strongly agreed with this. However, less than half of the other two groups of fathers agreed or strongly agreed with this (47% of egalitarian fathers and 47% of conflicted fathers). 35% of conflicted fathers disagreed / strongly disagreed that they were satisfied with progress toward income goals versus 16% of traditional fathers and 22% of egalitarian fathers who were not satisfied with their incomes.

## Satisfaction with Progress Toward Income



Second, we asked Millennial fathers to respond to the statement “I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for advancement.” Interestingly, 78% of traditional fathers agreed / strongly agreed with this statement compared to 51% of conflicted fathers and 58% of egalitarian fathers. 29% of conflicted fathers disagreed / strongly disagreed that they were satisfied with their goals for advancement, compared to only 9% of traditional fathers and 18% of egalitarian fathers.

With regard to their progress toward income and advancement, again the conflicted fathers’ level of satisfaction was lower than either of the other two groups, especially the traditional fathers. This would seem logical since most of the traditional fathers are the primary breadwinners and therefore feel they are more able to focus on their careers while their spouses retain the role of primary caregiver.

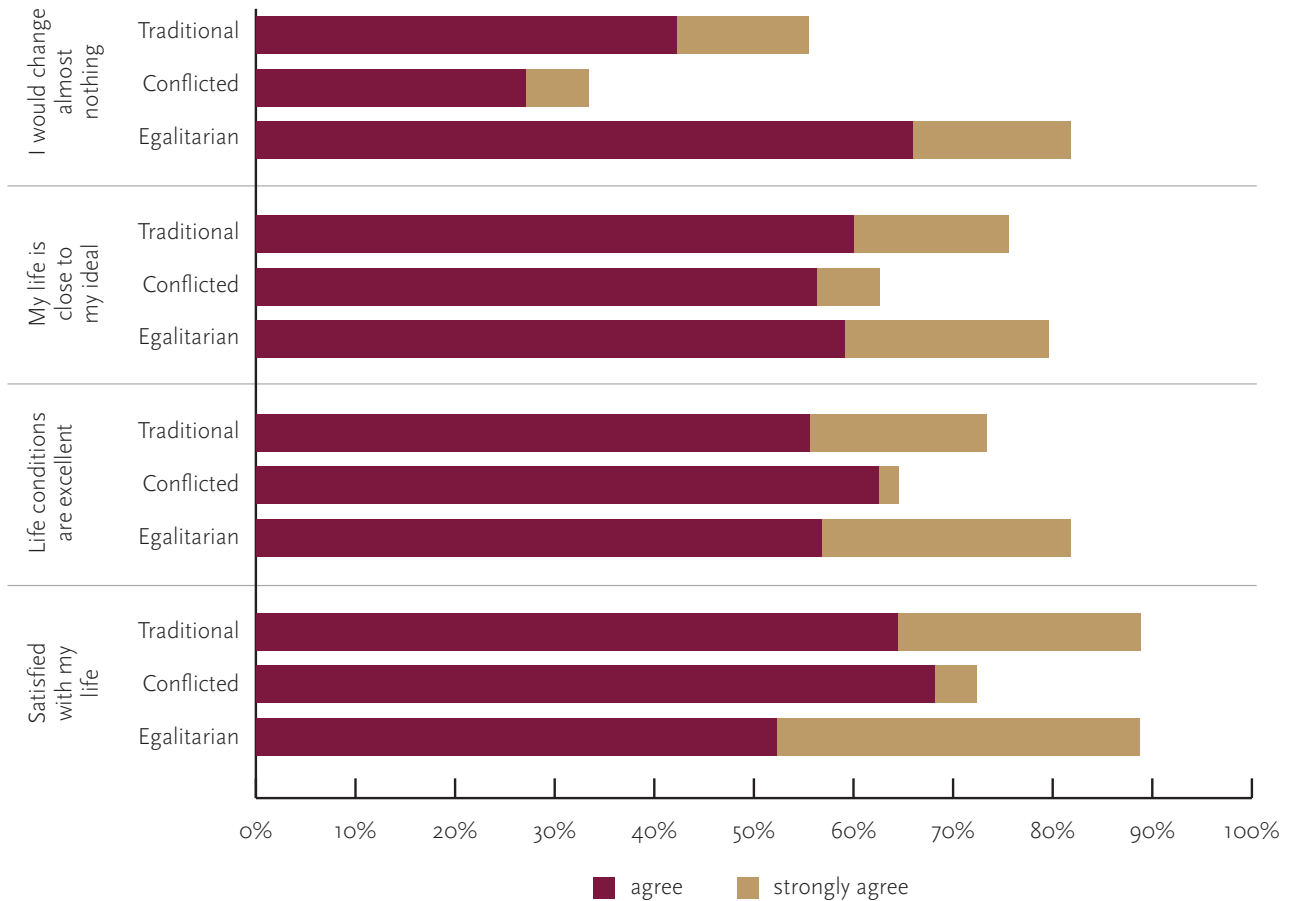
## Life Satisfaction

Next, we analyzed the three Millennial father groups’ attitudes toward life satisfaction, specifically how the conflicted group of dads are different to other two groups of fathers. We asked Millennial fathers how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statements about life satisfaction:

- I am satisfied with my life.
- The conditions of my life are excellent.
- In most ways my life is close to my ideal.
- If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

First, Millennial fathers responded to a statement “if I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.” 82% of egalitarian fathers and 56% of traditional fathers agreed / strongly agreed with this statement, as compared to only 33% of conflicted fathers. Moreover, 35% of conflicted fathers disagreed with this statement while only 4% of egalitarian fathers and 13% of traditional fathers disagreed.

### Millennial Fathers' Life Satisfaction Levels



The next two statements asked how Millennial fathers think about the conditions of their lives. 20% of egalitarian fathers and 16% of traditional fathers strongly agreed that their lives are close to their ideal. By contrast, only 6% of conflicted fathers strongly agreed that this was the case. Moreover, 17% of conflicted fathers disagreed / strongly disagreed that their lives are close to their ideal, as compared to 7% of egalitarian and traditional fathers.

In response to the statement “the conditions of my life are excellent,” 25% of egalitarian fathers and 18% of traditional fathers strongly agreed this was the case compared to only 2% of conflicted fathers. 10% of conflicted fathers disagreed / strongly disagreed with this statement versus only 2% of traditional and egalitarian fathers who did so.

Lastly, regarding overall life satisfaction, only 4% of conflicted fathers strongly agreed that they are satisfied with their life overall. 36% of egalitarian dads and 24% of traditional dads strongly agreed. In addition, 26.5% of conflicted fathers disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, indicating that they are not satisfied with their life in general. So the conflicted fathers are not only less satisfied with their lives in general, but are also more dissatisfied with it in comparison with the other two groups of fathers.

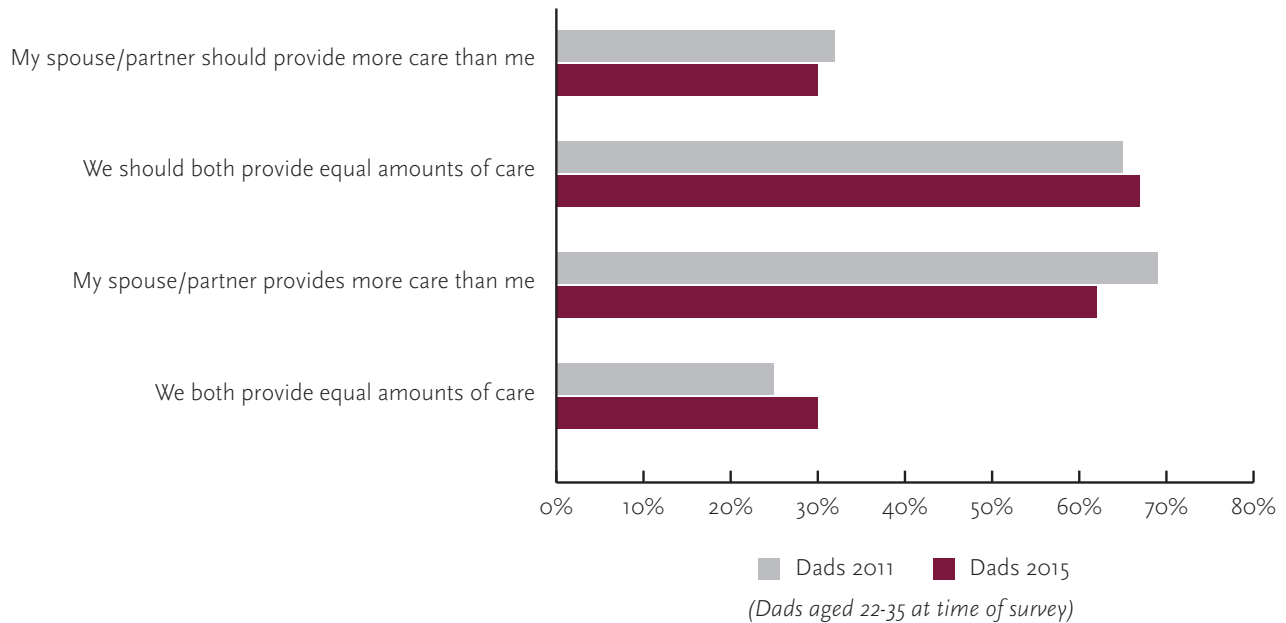
In short, more than half of the conflicted fathers would like to change something in their lives. Meanwhile, less than half of traditional and egalitarian fathers would do so. Regarding the conditions and current status of life, the conflicted father group is not as satisfied as the other two groups of fathers are. However, both egalitarian and traditional father groups are more satisfied with and less dissatisfied with the conditions of their lives.

The egalitarian group of fathers appears most content with their current life situation, and perhaps we can conjecture that they feel they are “having it all” in some manner that works well for their professional and family life. The traditional dads are also quite satisfied with their lives, and although we did not ask what aspects they would change in response to the first question above, it seems that nearly half would wish for their lives to be different in some capacity. The conflicted fathers are clearly struggling the most.

## VI. Signs Of Change

We now shift gears to review a separate analysis, in which we compared data from a previous study to explore possible differences between the fathers we surveyed in 2011 (those aged 22-35 at the time) and the Millennial dads we studied in 2015. While the samples are limited and come from different sets of companies, many of the same questions were asked of the two groups of fathers.

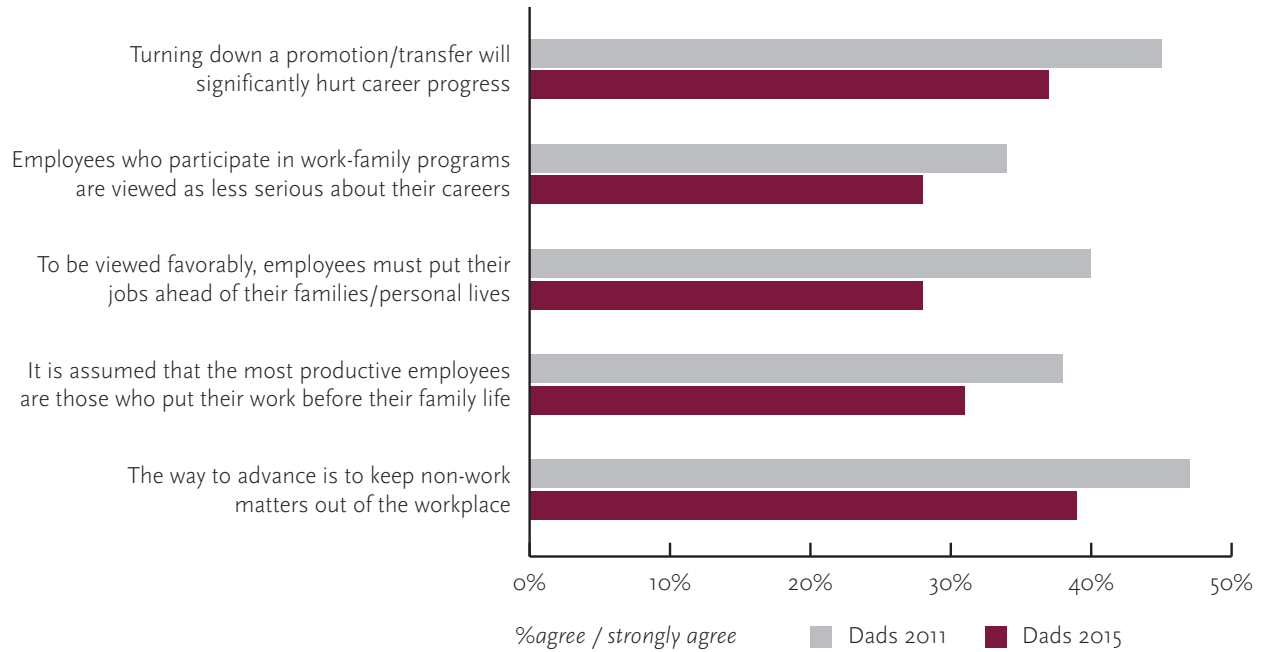
### Perceptions of Caregiving Roles



The results over time provide us with cause for cautious optimism. Men in the 2015 research played a slightly larger role in caring for their children than their same-aged peers from the earlier study. A greater percentage of fathers in the 2015 sample were “equally involved” in providing care for their children (30% vs. 25% in 2011) while there was a corresponding decrease in the number of couples where the spouse provides more care (62% in 2015 vs. 69% in 2011). There was also a slight increase (67% in 2015 vs. 65% in 2011) that indicated they should be equally involved in providing care. One-in-four fathers from the 2015 research reported they would be uncomfortable if their spouse provided more care than they did while less than 20% of dads from the 2011 research had an issue with this inequality.

The research suggests another area of promise in the continuing evolution of work cultures. Fathers in the 2015 sample experienced their work cultures more positively and as less punishing than dads in the same age cohort from 2011. For example, dads from the 2011 research were twice as likely to report that attending to personal needs was frowned upon and while 28% of the 2015 fathers believed being viewed favorably at work required putting one’s job before one’s family, over 40% of 2011 dads reported this result. The 2015 dads perceived their work environments as more favorable to combining their work and family lives. As men have become increasingly vocal about their desire to be involved fathers, perhaps it has paved the way for other men in the workplace to do the same.

## Perceptions on Combining Work and Family



The final observation to note is related to the willingness of men to consider the role of at-home parent. In the 2015 study 51% of dads compared with 44% of moms would consider being a stay-at-home parent. This may indicate that men's feelings about being an at-home parent have become more positive, and that they would be open to this fulfilling this role themselves.

In addition, we have seen a shift in perceptions of the father's role in caregiving at the societal level. The stream of announcements from companies who are offering or increasing paternity leave or gender-neutral parental leave has become nearly a weekly occurrence. In one year, between 2015-2016 the companies that were named on Fatherly's 50 **Best Companies for Working Dads** have increased paid parental leave from offering an average of four weeks to an average of 7.5. Connections are being made at the organizational and government levels between men's involvement in caregiving and women's professional advancement. Prominent CEO's are taking parental leave sending a positive signal about fathers' involvement in caregiving. All of these are encouraging signs and will make it increasingly acceptable for all dads to follow suit.

## VII. Summary

To summarize the highlights of this study, we would make the following key points:

When Millennial men become Millennial fathers, there are a few clear trends. **Millennial fathers' satisfaction with their jobs and their lives is significantly greater than that of their childless counterparts.** Dads express a markedly higher sense of success and satisfaction at work. They feel very committed and invested in their jobs, and feel a high level of ownership for the problems of the organization they work for. They express a significant preference to stay with their current employer. The only "negative" characteristic from the employer's perspective is that fathers are more tempered in their ambition and their willingness to pursue success at a significant personal / family cost than their single counterparts.

**Millennials dads experience similar levels of work-family conflict to Millennial moms.** While work-family balance is the most important criteria considered in employer selection for Millennial mothers and not for Millennial fathers, it is fathers' third most important criteria with three quarters of Millennial dads rating it as very / extremely important. When it comes to reasons why a Millennial parent would consider leaving his or her employer, making more money is the top criteria for both moms and dads, while greater work-life balance and time with family are among the top five reasons given by both genders for considering a change.

While the differences seem to be lessening over time, **Millennial dads continue to have a stronger focus on career advancement and seem to be more sensitive and impacted by the expectations of "the ideal worker" than their female counterparts.** Millennial dads perceive that their workplace cultures encourage thinking that includes the ideas that work should be primary, that the ideal employee is available 24/7, and that good employees work long hours.

It is clear that **most men do face conflict in trying to rectify their desire to be engaged fathers and spend more time with their children and their desire to "climb the corporate ladder"** – advancing in the organization, seeking jobs with greater responsibility, and pursuing a career in senior management. This results in the dilemma that women have faced for many years, can one really "have it all?"

**Not all fathers face the same level of conflict or stress when it comes to the career-life challenges they face.** *Traditional* fathers (those who think their wives should do more at home and they actually do) and *egalitarian* fathers (those who think care giving should be divided equally and indeed do this) show markedly higher levels of life satisfaction than *conflicted* fathers, who are caught in a state of dissonance. These fathers feel they should be doing more to share care giving but admit to not doing so. Conflicted dads report significantly lower satisfaction with their careers and their lives outside of work. This speaks more to the importance of congruence in one's life between one's values and actions. Egalitarian fathers have the highest quality of life overall, including for the most part, their lives at work. It would seem reasonable to suggest that fathers who have high levels of conflict regarding shared caregiving with their spouse should seek ways to address this conflict as it clearly has a detrimental impact on the quality of their (and no doubt their spouses') lives.

This study echoes many of the findings of our past research on fathers, once again making the point that Millennials are not so different from the previous generation of fathers in terms of what they value at home or in the workplace. While traditional gender roles and values continue to exist in significant numbers, it is clear that for the majority of Millennial dads, there has been significant movement toward greater gender equality and the need for fathers to find a way to share more equally in caregiving and on the home front. The egalitarian fathers in our study give evidence to the fact that doing so will very likely yield the highest levels of career and life satisfaction.



BOSTON COLLEGE

Center for Work & Family

CARROLL SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

Boston College Center for Work & Family  
22 Stone Avenue • Chestnut Hill, MA 02467  
Phone: (617) 552-2844 • E-mail: [cwf@bc.edu](mailto:cwf@bc.edu)  
On the web: [www.bc.edu/cwf](http://www.bc.edu/cwf) • [www.TheNewDad.org](http://www.TheNewDad.org)

## References

- Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, Kali H. Trzesniewski and M. Brent Donnellan. 2013. *The Dangers of Generational Myth-Making: Rejoinder to Twenge*. *Emerging Adulthood*, Vol. 1 Iss 1 pp. 17-20.
- Jennifer L. Berdahl and Sue H. Moon. 2013. *Workplace Mistreatment of Middle Class Workers Based on Sex, Parenthood, and Caregiving*. *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 69 Iss 2 pp. 341-366.
- Michelle Budig. 2014. *The Fatherhood Bonus and the Motherhood Penalty: Parenthood and the Gender Gap in Pay*, The Third Way
- EY. 2015. *Global Generations: A Global Study on Work-Life Challenges Across Generations*. Published by EYGM Limited.
- Brad Harrington, Fred Van Deusen, Jennifer Sabatini Fraone and Jeremiah Morelock. 2015. *How Millennials Navigate Their Careers: Young Adult Views on Work, Life and Success*. Research report published by the Boston College Center for Work & Family.
- Brad Harrington, Fred Van Deusen and Beth Humbert. 2011. *The New Dad: Caring, Committed, and Conflicted*. Research report published by the Boston College Center for Work & Family.
- MJ Hodges and Michelle Budig (2010). *Who gets the daddy bonus? Organizational hegemonic masculinity and the impact of fatherhood on earnings*. *Gender & Society* 24 (6), 717-745
- National Center for Education Statistics. 2012. *The Condition of Education 2012*.
- Paul Taylor, Kim Parker, Rich Morin, Eileen Patten and Anna Brown. 2014. *Millennials in Adulthood*. Pew Research Center, March 7, 2014.
- Wall Street Journal. 2016. *Helping Bosses Decode Millennials—for \$20,000 an Hour* by Lindsay Gellman. May 18, 2016.
- Wendy Wang, Kim Parker and Paul Taylor. 2013. *Breadwinner Moms- Mothers Are the Sole or Primary Provider in Four-in-Ten Households with Children; Public Conflicted about the Growing Trend*. Pew Research Center, May 29, 2013.
- Joan C. Williams. 2010. *Reshaping the Work-Family Debate: Why Men and Class Matter*. Published by Harvard University Press.