

2024

National
Working
Families
Survey

Executive Summary

Full report to be released 30th May 2024



Deloitte.



Introduction

In 2019, Parents At Work and our partners released our landmark National Working Families Report, following a survey of more than 6,000 working Australian parents and carers. We reported on the difficulties experienced by workers in balancing their work and family commitments, with their personal wellbeing and family relationships suffering as a result.

That report led to real change.

Since then, in the face of a global pandemic and social distancing orders, Australian workplaces shifted overnight to remote and flexible working.

In 2021, Parents At Work partnered with UNICEF Australia to develop and deliver Family Friendly Workplaces, a benchmarking and certification for Australian workplaces that meet the world's best practice National Work + Family Standards.

Now, five years on, 2024 provided an opportunity to update and reissue the survey, to measure the impact of changing workplace trends on more than 6,200 of Australia's working parents and carers.



Introduction cont.

The results highlighted the effect of gender norms underpinning family friendly policies and workplace attitudes. Survey findings reveal industries dominated by men tend to have fewer family-friendly policies when compared to those dominated by women or with a more balanced gender distribution. This data mirrors the expectation reported by half of respondents that it is seen to be less acceptable for men to take time off or work flexibly to care for their families than it is for women.

The report found women continue to bear the majority of caring load as well as household duties - nearly double that of men - despite working similar hours to men. Crucially, stress has increased since 2019 and is felt more acutely among women.

For men, the most common reason cited for taking too short a parental leave period was that they were not eligible for longer PPL based on their company policy.

At a time when gender inequality and the harm it can cause is frequently making headlines and considered a core issue for the top decision-makers in the country, this report will provide practical, and tangible recommendations to address these issues in Australian workplaces.



About the Survey



About the Survey

This groundswell of support for the 2019 survey was a clear message from parents and carers that it was time to ‘**have a say**’ and voice the challenges they face in their daily work-life juggle.

The recommendations arising from the [2019 National Working Families Report](#) led to the creation of [National Work + Family Standards](#) and the [Family Friendly Workplaces initiative](#).

Five years on, the survey was undertaken for a second time in March 2024, with the results forming the basis of a 2024 Report to be released on 30th May 2024, analysing the results against the 2019 report.

The aim is to identify any significant changes and progress trends, particularly considering the impact of the pandemic on workplace culture, gender equality and wider employee wellbeing with initial findings due to be released in May during National Families Week.



About the Survey

The Survey was designed to address the following research questions:

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

In addressing these questions, the survey asked working parents and carers about how they are managing their work and family commitments; the impact it has when balancing work and family becomes a challenge; and what employers are doing and could do to better support them. Participants were also asked about their access to and use of flexible work arrangements and paid parental leave.

A significant addition to the 2024 Survey was asking participants if they were an employee of a certified Family Friendly Workplace. The comparative results of the two groups – non-certified and certified – were revealing.

The survey and upcoming Report have been designed with the support of Deloitte Access Economics.



Key Themes



Key Themes

1. Stress has increased since 2019 and is felt more acutely among women.
2. Biggest challenge in balancing work and family commitments continues to be looking after their physical and mental health.
3. Women continue to bear the majority of caring load as well as household duties - nearly double that of men - despite working similar hours to 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 PPL based on their company policy.
6. Flexible work arrangements are of more importance for women than men when considering a new job.
7. Men are 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 still cite concerns about their reputation at work when using flexible work policies.
9. Three quarter 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.



There is a clear business benefit in investing in FFW practices ~ they deliver, not just for people but for the economy

- Results highlighted the effect of gender norms underpinning family friendly policies and workplace attitudes. **Survey findings reveal industries dominated by men tend to have fewer family-friendly policies** when compared to those dominated by women or with a more balanced gender distribution. This data mirrors the expectation reported by half of respondents that it is seen to be less acceptable for men to take time off or work flexibly to care for their families than it is for women.
- Results suggest **workplace 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.
- **Certified Family Friendly Workplaces are more likely** than non-certified workplaces **to offer flexible workplace policies**, and employee awareness and uptake of these policies is higher in certified organisations.

Importantly, employees within certified organisations were found to be less likely to have negative experiences when using flexible working policies, more satisfied with their work-life balance and feel that their workplace is more accepting of men using family-friendly work arrangements.



Key Findings



FFW policies have become mainstream but caring challenges for working parents have not shifted much in 5 years

Wellbeing has improved

With 46% of Australia's working parents report difficulties looking after their own physical and mental health as they attempt to balance competing work and family pressures compared to 62% in 2019



Managers are more approachable

15% of employees are not comfortable talking to their manager about work and family leave compared to 20% in 2019

Flexibility still comes at a professional cost

50% of respondents say that an employee's commitment to their job is questioned if they used family-friendly working arrangements compared to 46% in 2019.

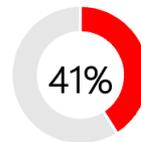
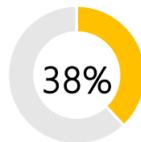


Employer's risk losing talent

28% of working parents say they have considered leaving their job in the next 12 months due to difficulties combining their job with caring responsibilities, the same rate as in 2019.

Access to childcare remains a challenge

38% of people want more access to caring support from their employer compared to 37% in 2019



Parents want longer parental leave

41% of parents report their parental leave being too short (45% of fathers, 39% of mothers) compared to 38% of parents (57% of fathers and 33% of mothers) in 2019



Parents & carers are more stressed than ever

- 74% of women feel stressed when balancing work and family commitments compared to 57% of men. (This has increased from 2019 where 34% of men and 51% of women reported feeling stress)
- 42% have difficulties looking after their own physical and mental health to balance competing work and family pressures. This includes 50% of female compared to 35% of men (This is an improvement on the 2019 survey, where 62% reported feeling the same way)
- 58% are often too physically or emotionally drained when they get home from work to contribute to their family (This is an improvement on the 2019 survey, where 62% reported feeling the same way)

Chart 5: Top difficulties for parents and carers outside of the workplace

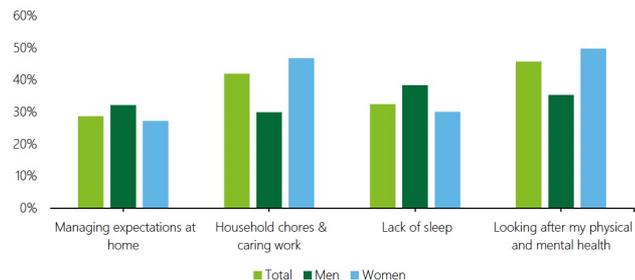
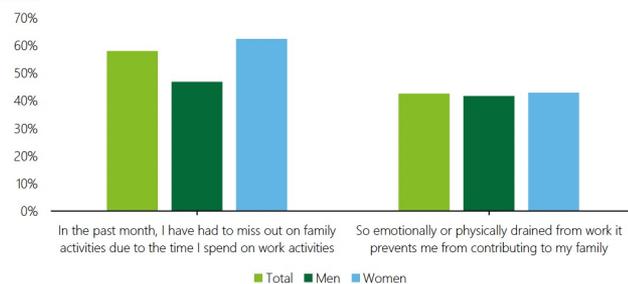


Chart 6: Respondents who selected 'somewhat agree' or 'strongly agree' to the below statements



Flexible working is very important to working parents & carers

- 26% were worried about their reputation at work if they used flexible working arrangements offered by their employer. This is higher than in 2019 where 22% of men and 12% of women were concerned about this factor.
- 28% of women, 25% of men agreed they would consider a 10% pay cut for their workplace to adopt or continue working flex
- 60% of women would not apply for jobs that didn't offer flexibility, compared to 32% of men

Chart 9: Flexible working arrangements that were used by respondents in the past 12 months

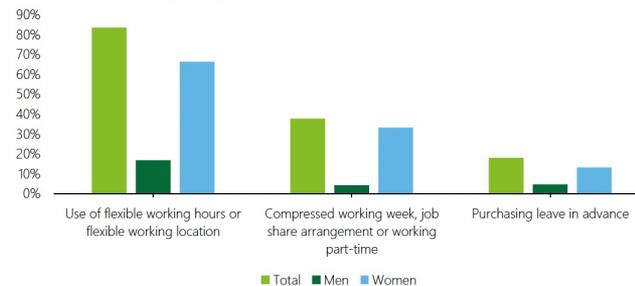
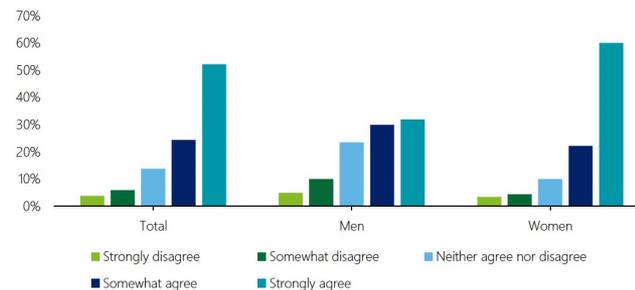


Chart 10: Responding to "If I were to look for another job, I wouldn't apply for jobs that did not offer flexible working arrangements"



Paid Parental Leave - We need better paid access for men

- 48% of men take less than one month leave (54% in 2019)
- 91% of women take longer than four months (88% in 2019)
- Among those who took parental leave, 45% of men (57% in 2019) and 39% of women (33% in 2019) report the length too short.
- 2/3 of those parents indicate financial reasons for not taking longer. This impacts 38% of men (18% in 2019) compared to 69% of women (15% in 2019)
- 51% of men (24% in 2019), 31% (8% in 2019) of women stated they were not eligible for longer PPL based on employer policy
- 22% women, 12% men reported receiving negative comments from managers for using PPL in the last 12 months (1% improvement for each gender from 2019)

Chart 13: Length of parental leave taken for last child

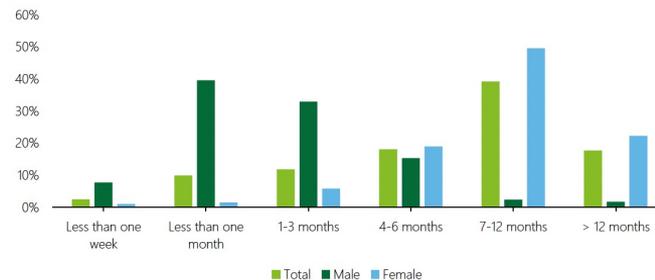
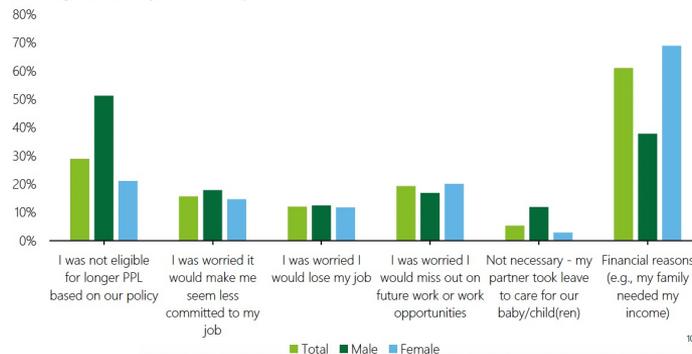


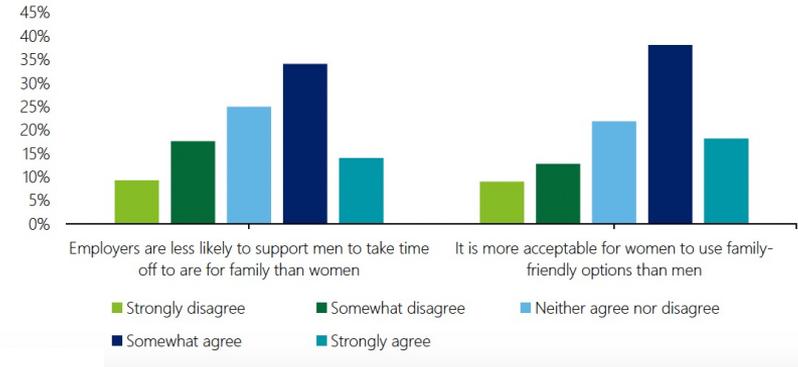
Chart 14: Reasons respondents reporting taking too short a period of parental leave did not take longer when they most recently used it



Attitudes towards caring responsibilities and paid parental leave is still poor

- 50% of respondents indicated that they agree workers' commitment to their job is questioned if they use family-friendly work arrangements (45% in 2019)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ of men surveyed (74%) and $\frac{2}{3}$ of women (67%) agreed that managers who have adopted flexible work leave policies themselves are better at managing employees who also adopt these policies.
- When asked about attitudes towards PPL, nearly half (48%) of respondents agreed that employers are less likely to support men to take time off to care for family (57% in 2019)
- 56% of respondents indicated that they agree it is more acceptable for women to use family-friendly options than men (64% in 2019)

Chart 16: Employee perception attitudes towards family-friendly policies



Despite efforts, caring is still one of the main barriers to closing the gender divide due to structural barriers around gender roles

- Most difficult challenge balancing work & family is 'managing expectation at work' (in 2019 it was managing household chores and caring work)
- More men indicated difficulty with lack of flex and long working hours
- 60% felt that having more control over when and where they worked was selected as the most useful workplace strategy (43% in 2019)
- 41% women (41% in 2019), 29% (33% in 2019) men reported access to childcare would be useful
- 43% men (16% in 2019), 27% women (13% in 2019) said having a more predictable working week would be useful managing work and caring

Chart 17: Top difficulties for parents and carers within the workplace

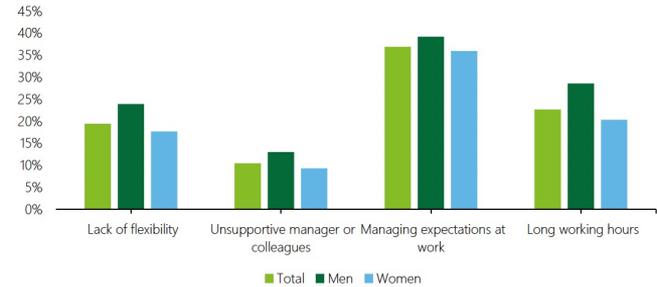
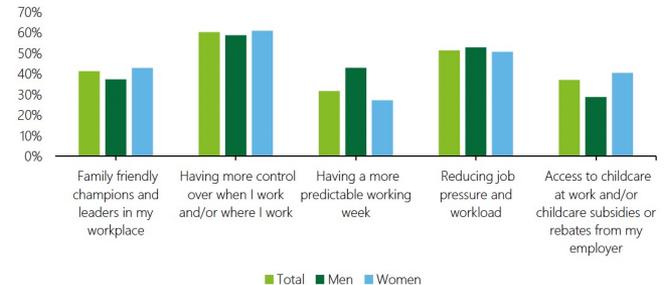


Chart 18: Workplace strategies that respondents identified as what would be the most useful



**Companies that invest in
family-inclusive policies and
practices see better outcomes**



Employees in Family Friendly certified workplaces work more flexibly

- 29% work at certified family-friendly workplaces
- Certified employers (92%) more likely to offer flexible work hours and location compared to non-certified (75%)
- Certified employers (76%) offer the ability to purchase annual leave in advance compared to non-certified (50%)
- Employees in certified workplaces are more likely to be aware of and use family friendly policies
- Despite having more access to part-time and compressed working weeks employees in FFW organisations utilise the entitlements at a similar rate than those at non-certified workplaces

Chart 15: Access to flexible work policies by Family Friendly certified and not certified workplaces

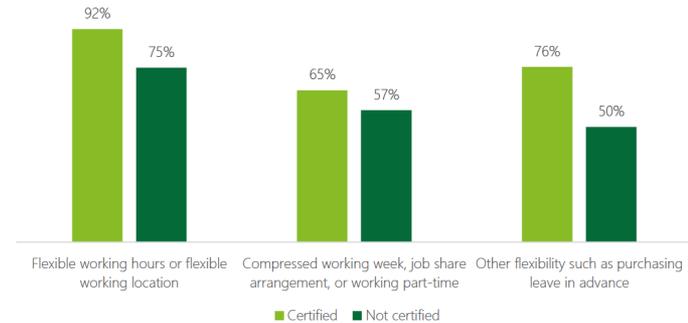
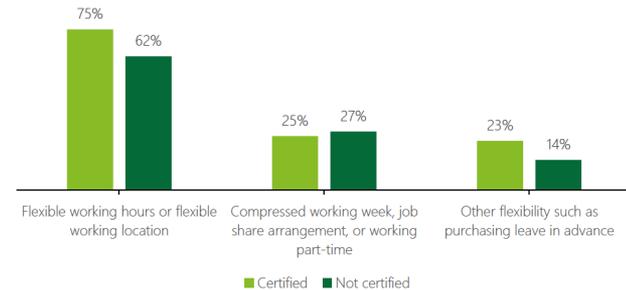


Chart 16: Use of flexible work policies by Family Friendly certified and not certified workplaces



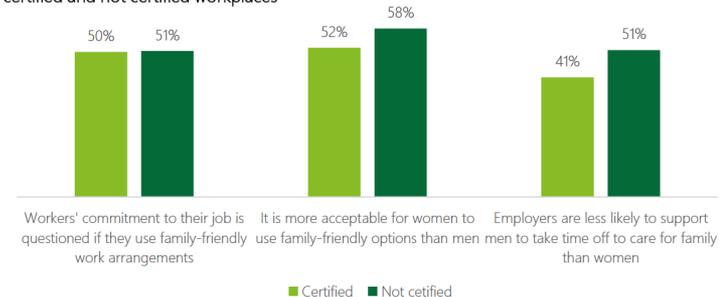
Employees in FFW certified workplaces experience fewer negative consequences from working flexibly

- Employees in certified orgs are less likely to experience negative impacts from utilising flexible working policies
- 65% are more satisfied with their work life balance (compared to 58%)
- 83% are more likely not to apply for a different job that did not offer flexibly (compared to 74%)
- More accepting of men utilising entitlements
- Employees from certified orgs more likely to identify culture related measures like FF champions and training for managers
- Employees from non-certified orgs more likely to identify policy related measures i.e. flex working arrangements

Chart 17: Agreement with consequences for using flexible work entitlements by Family Friendly certified and not certified workplaces



Chart 18: Agreement with consequences for using flexible work entitlements by Family Friendly certified and not certified workplaces



2024 Survey Key Demographics

- 6,204 parents and carers participated in the survey
- Number of Women: 73%
- Number of Men: 27%
- Children: 77% were couples with children
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander: Less than 3%

Chart 1: Respondent employment status

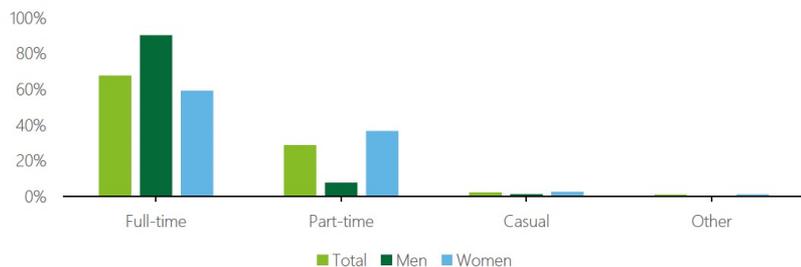


Chart 2: Who respondents primarily care for

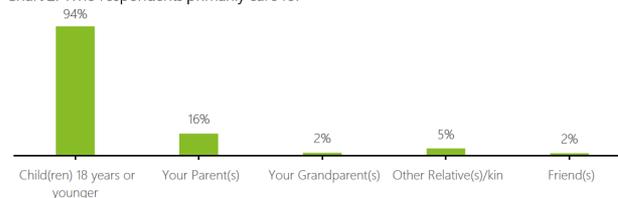


Chart 3: Respondent's identified gender

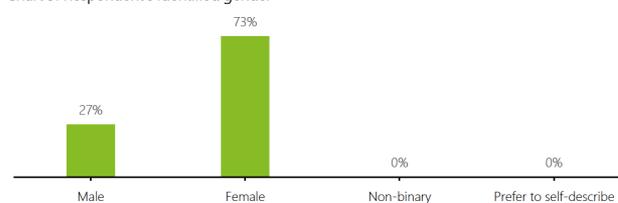
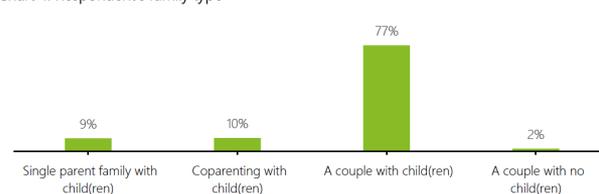


Chart 4: Respondent's family type



Where were participants from?

Participants were from a diverse range of industries and occupations:

All 18 Australian industry categories were represented in the survey.

The most common industries represented were professional, scientific and technical services (15%); health care and social assistance (14%); Education and training (10%), and Information and technology (4%).

One third were managers (27%); half were professionals (45%); and a number were clerical or service workers (15%).

92% were employed in an organisation, 5% were self-employed and the remainder indicated they were currently on parent or carers leave.

68% of all participants were employed full-time; 29% were part-time employed and the remainder were casual or employed on a different basis.

Survey partners and sponsors

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.



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