

A young girl with dark, curly hair is resting her head on the shoulder of a man with a beard and curly hair. She has her eyes closed and a gentle smile. The man is wearing a blue shirt. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be a couch and some greenery.

Modern Families Index 2022

Spotlight Report



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Who took part?

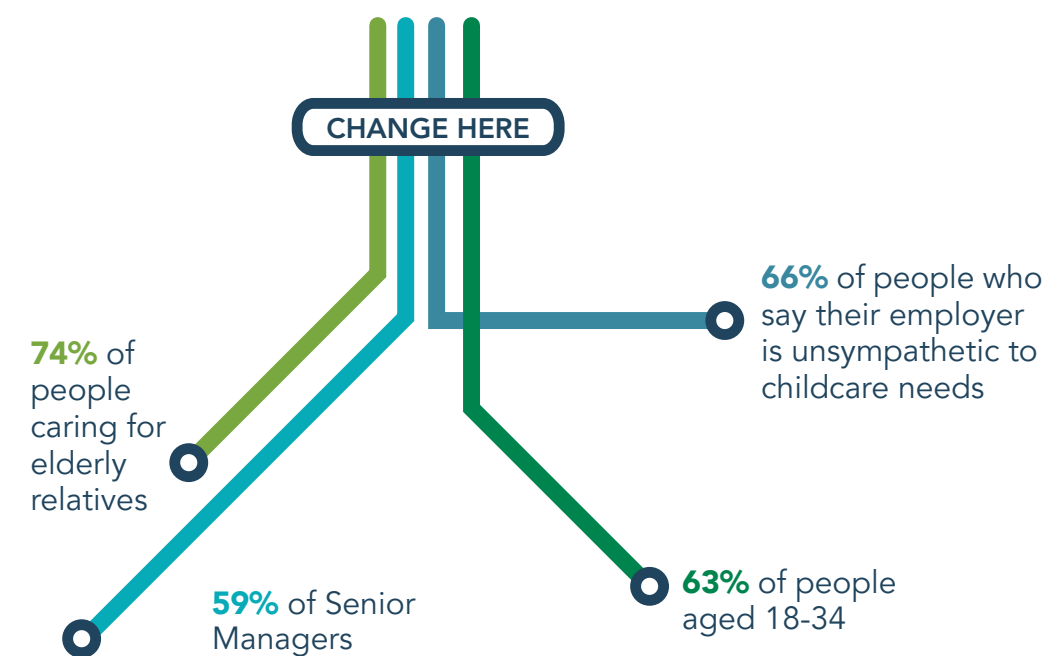
Our survey population:

- 1001 working parents, with at least one child aged 0-17 years, were randomly selected from across UK regions and across sectors.
- 540 identify as male, 461 identify as female. No participants selected 'Other' or 'Prefer not to say'.
- 75% work full-time, 25% work part-time (29 or fewer hours per week).
- 33% also have a caring responsibility for an adult or elder.
- 86% are in an opposite sex couple sharing a household.
- 4% are in a same-sex couple sharing a household.
- 10% are a single parent household.
- 25% are aged 18-34, 64% 35-54 and 11% are over 55.



Key Finding: Flight Risk

Whatever your workforce demographic, there are multiple leaks of concern in the future talent pipeline. Well over a third of people (38%) are likely to look for a new job in 2022; some more than others as our findings reveal. Nearly 3/4 of those who care for elders are actively seeking alternatives.

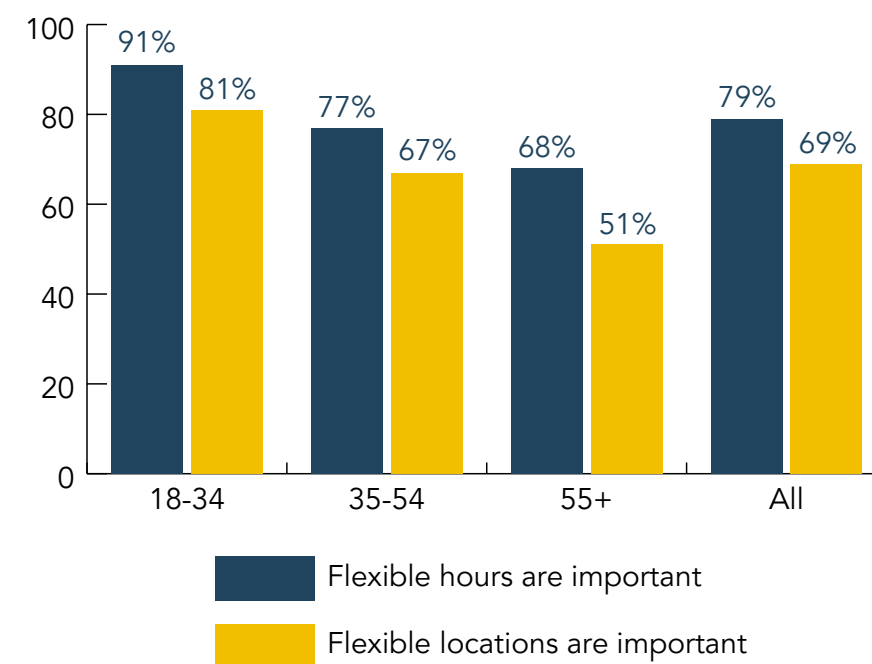


What can employers do?

1. Support and value your working carers: ensure they have flexibility and access to care and advice, as well as having an understanding manager.
2. Trust working parents to deliver their workload and be practical when care breaks down. If possible, provide direct childcare support.
3. Be alert that some of the most loosely attached people are senior managers and high earners, and they are looking for support with both hybrid working and family.
4. Rethink how you engage younger workers, as they seek a sense of purpose and support with family in addition to the usual job perks.

Key Finding: Next Level Flex

Flexible hours are even more important than flexibility of location, especially with younger workers for whom it is an almost unanimous expectation. Just under 8 in 10 (79%) of all workers say the opportunity to work flexible hours is important when considering a new employer. Over 2/3 (69%) also look for flexible locations, so hybrid matters too.

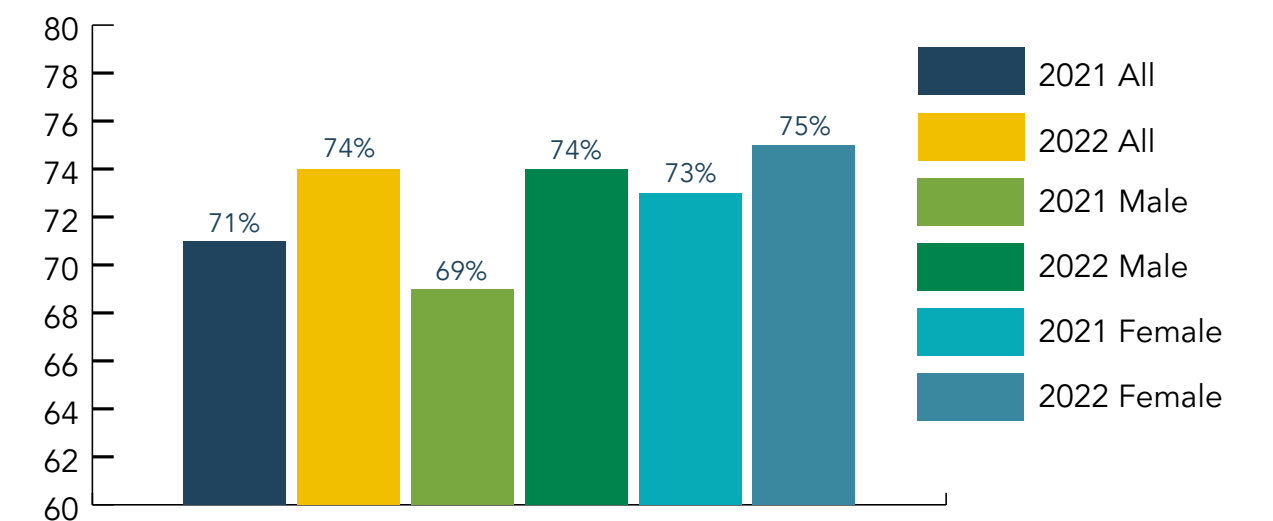


What can employers do?

1. Be flexible! Don't force hybrid working plans into a fixed shape. Understand that flexible hours give autonomy and are important for all workers, but especially so for younger workers (and some other groups, explored further on p5).
2. Find fresh ways of measuring performance that get beyond counting the hours and face time, and instead identify performance standards (with freedom on when and how to deliver).
3. Keep in mind flexibility is particularly vital in attracting and retaining younger workers. The desire for flexibility rises to over 9 in 10 of 18-34 year olds. A flexible location (hybrid working) is sought by well over 8 in 10 of 18-34 year olds.

Key Finding: Family First

Three quarters of respondents carefully consider their childcare before accepting a new job or promotion. That's more than last year for everyone and even more of an increase for men.



What can employers do?

1. Recognise that childcare concerns are top of mind for 3 in 4 new hires or promotions, and the 7% increase in childcare concern for men means employers must avoid stereotypical assumptions.
2. Where possible, put in place supports that help employees manage their childcare.
3. Eldercare concerns run even higher (see p7), so consider whether you offer practical solutions.
4. Whatever supports you have in place, ensure they are visible to new hires.

Key Finding: Flight Risk

Nearly 4 in 10 workers overall are rethinking their future. Whatever your workforce demographic, this will impact you:

- Look out for working parents and carers
- Value your senior managers
- Nurture your younger workers, especially those who perceive they have less flexibility now than a year ago
- Look after your front-line workers

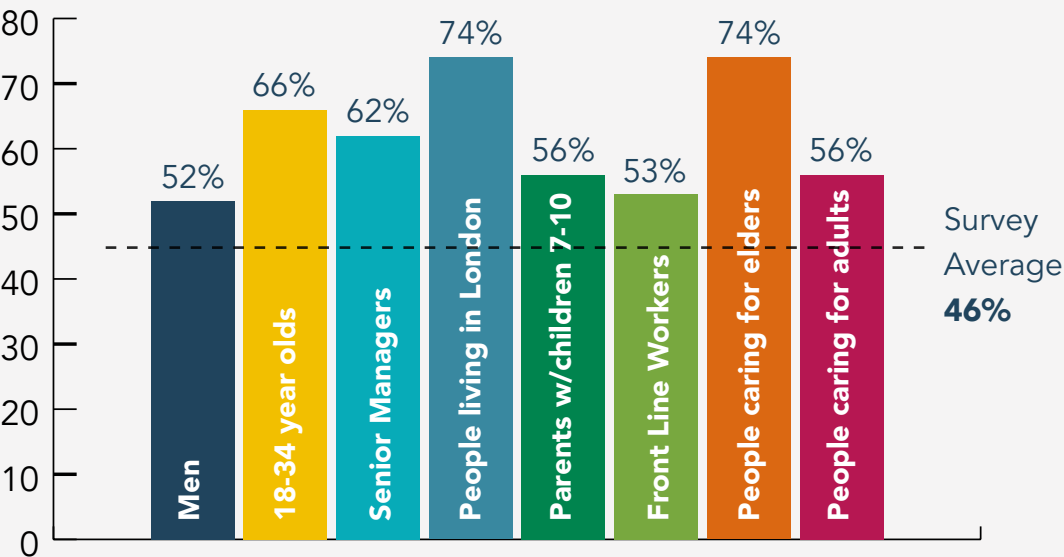
Workers with eldercare responsibilities often represent years of experience and seniority. Small changes can help keep work manageable and avoid the talent drain. This group particularly values opportunities such as working from different locations.

For working parents, in an average year, childcare breaks down 8-10 times (even outside of a pandemic). People who feel unsupported with childcare are at high risk of leaving according to our data.

Among supports they would have liked from their employer, senior managers placed the highest value on 'enhanced parental leave'; 'technology to enable remote or hybrid working' and 'advice or educational resources to help me as a parent'.

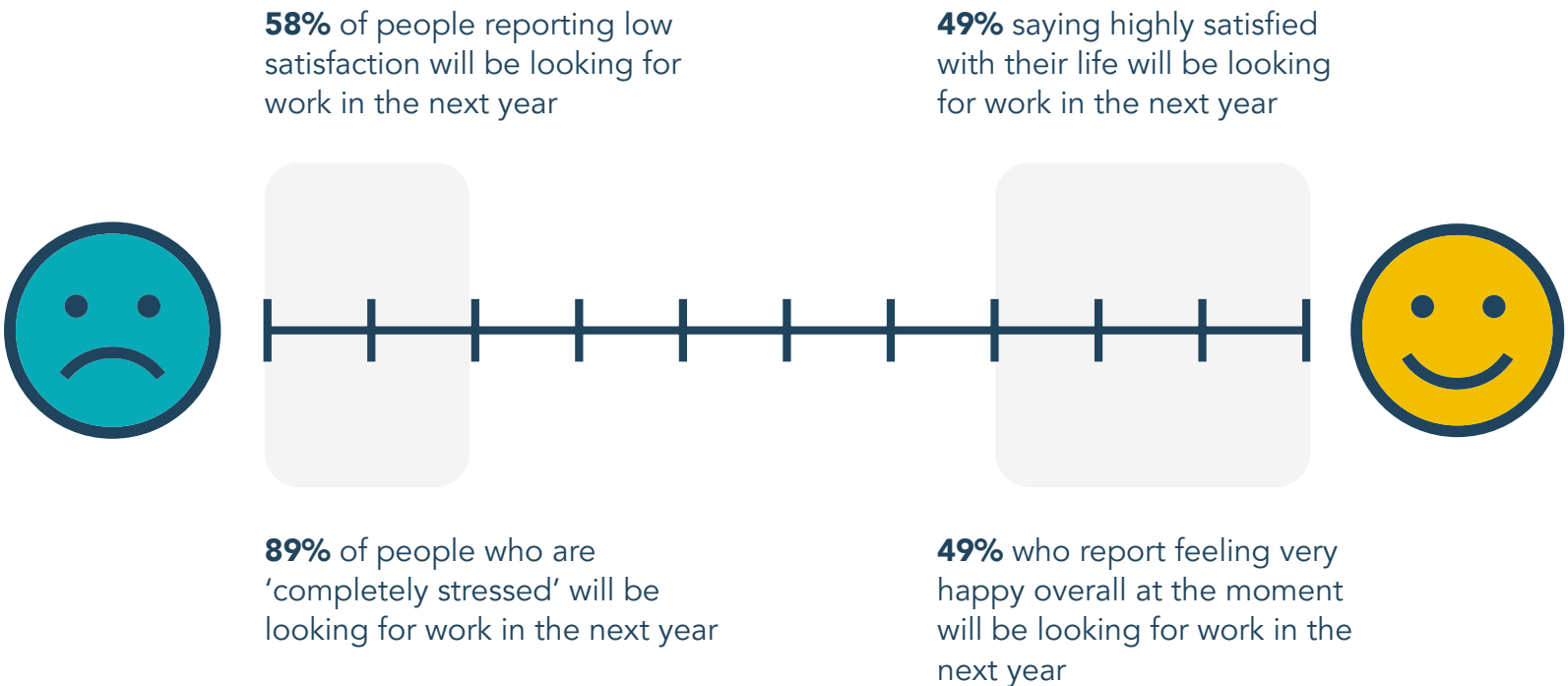
Is Life Becoming More Stressful?

We asked whether people's lives were becoming more stressful. These 8 groups in particular said Yes.



All roads lead to the great reset

We asked a variety of questions around stress and satisfaction/dissatisfaction with participants' lives. The findings all point one way – whether your employees are stressed or not so stressed, satisfied or not, nearly 4 in 10 overall (38%) will be looking for a new job in the next 12 months. Even among people who rate themselves as having a good work-life balance, 62% are highly likely to look for new employment this year.



Perhaps we are seeing less of a 'Great Resignation' and more of a 'Great Reset and Rethink'? In particular, younger workers' expectations of their employers have changed as shown in a recent survey by the [CFA Institute](#). Perhaps our participants are not in every case moving away from pain, but rather towards pleasure, seeking a new role that fits their rethink or indeed will allow them to sustain a new-found work-home balance (when perhaps their current employer is not committed to sustaining that beyond the pandemic).

We made space for free text comments in the survey addressing how their employer could retain them. Responses showed a strong interest in greater autonomy as well as a wish to be more valued, which included inevitable calls for more pay and also more trust and appreciation. There's a hygiene factor to attend to, where pay rises have been paused and inflation is rising. But employees are more than ever looking to be trusted to deliver their work with flexibility over time and place and to have a sense that it is meaningful. Many also wanted more help with care, or carer days as well as clear career progression routes.

CHANGE HERE

'Trust me to get my work done whether home or office.'

Female, 35-54, South East

'Wellbeing support and work life balance is number one.'

Female, 35-54, North West

'Be more understanding of the difficulties people face with childcare and rising cost of living.'

Female, 35-54, North East

Key Finding: Next Level Flex

There is a strong desire to seek flexibility from an employer, particularly among younger workers.

There Are High Expectations of Flexibility When Considering an Employer...

The demographics below are the most likely to look for flexibility of time and/or place when considering a new employer (at least 80% of each demographic group). Flexible working hours are highly desired by the majority of employees, but 18-34 year olds, eldercarers and senior managers in particular desire flexibility on place as well.



Flexibility (Time)

All participants	79%
Women	82%
18-34 yr olds	91%
Parents with children 0-10	83%
Single parent households	83%
Eldercarers	92%
Non-front-line workers	83%
Senior managers	86%
Middle manager	80%
Exec/clerical (non-manager)	85%



Flexibility (Place)

All participants	69%
18-34 yr olds	81%
Eldercarers	90%
Senior managers	86%

What Drives the Need for Flexibility in 2022?

We asked why participants work flexibly. It appears flexibility is more embedded than in 2021, with a 20% uplift in people working flexibly simply because their employer has embraced it, and a smaller uplift in flexibility for their own wellbeing with nearly 1 in 3 people now doing this. An increasing number also work flexibly around childcare (nearly 4 in 10) or eldercare.

16% I need to work flexibly to fulfil my eldercare/adult care commitments

18% I choose to work flexibly to pursue outside interests/hobbies

30% My employer has embraced flexible working and most of the workforce works flexibly

32% I choose to work flexibly to manage my wellbeing

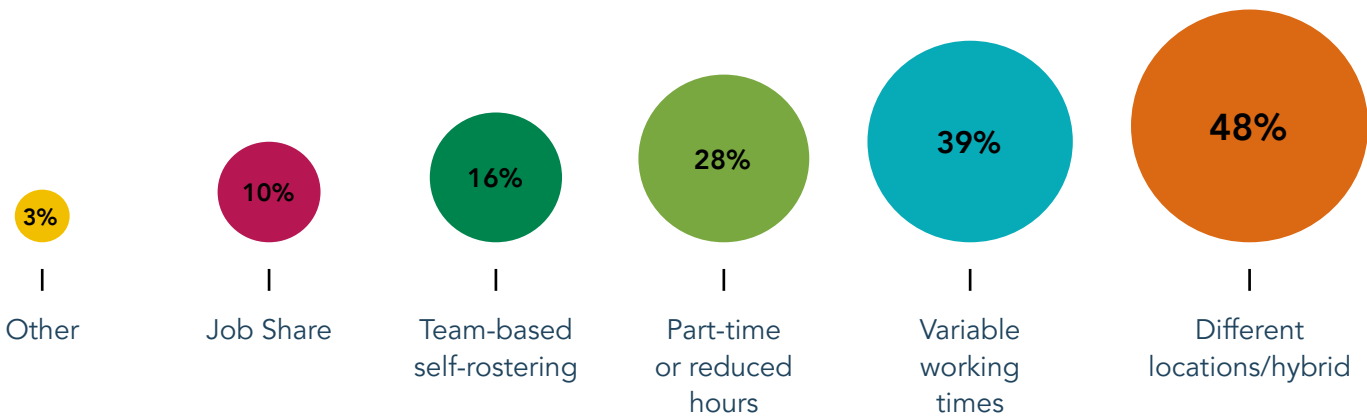
39% I need to work flexibly to fulfil my childcare commitments

Drivers for working flexibly

What Types of Flexibility Are in Use?

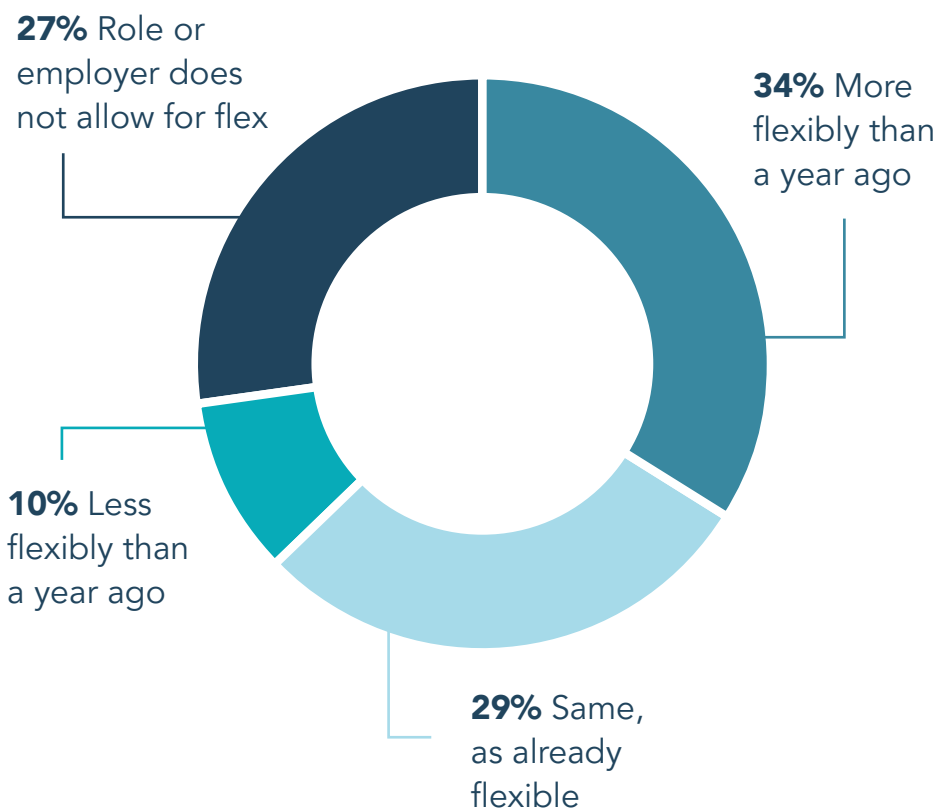
Hybrid and flexible working are now becoming embedded in our culture. Of those working flexibly, just under half (48%) are hybrid working and nearly 3 in 10 (28%) are working part-time or reduced hours. Part-time has increased 75% since 2021 (when 16% worked part-time or reduced hours).

Employers need to be aware that there has been a cultural normalisation of flexible working. This must be reflected in both existing and prospective roles if they wish to attract and retain talent.



Has the Ability to Work Flexibly Changed?

In the survey, over a third (34%) reported that they can now work more flexibly than the previous year and a further nearly 3 in 10 (29%) already had flexibility which has remained the same. However, 1 in 10 (10%) are working less flexibly than last year and for over a quarter (27%) their role or employer does not allow for flexibility. Employers who do not support flexible working, even where it is possible, need to expect repercussions. The wider survey findings earmark these employees as the first to reset and rethink their jobs in 2022.



The Office is Coming Back into Fashion

There is a 38% increase in those wanting to work 100% from the office, though the largest group who could work from different locations still prefers a blend.

We also found that hybrid workers wanting to work more than 50% from home was down by 38%, while hybrid workers wanting more than 50% in an office rose by 63%, so the trend is towards a blend that favours the workplace over the home, but still with a mix.

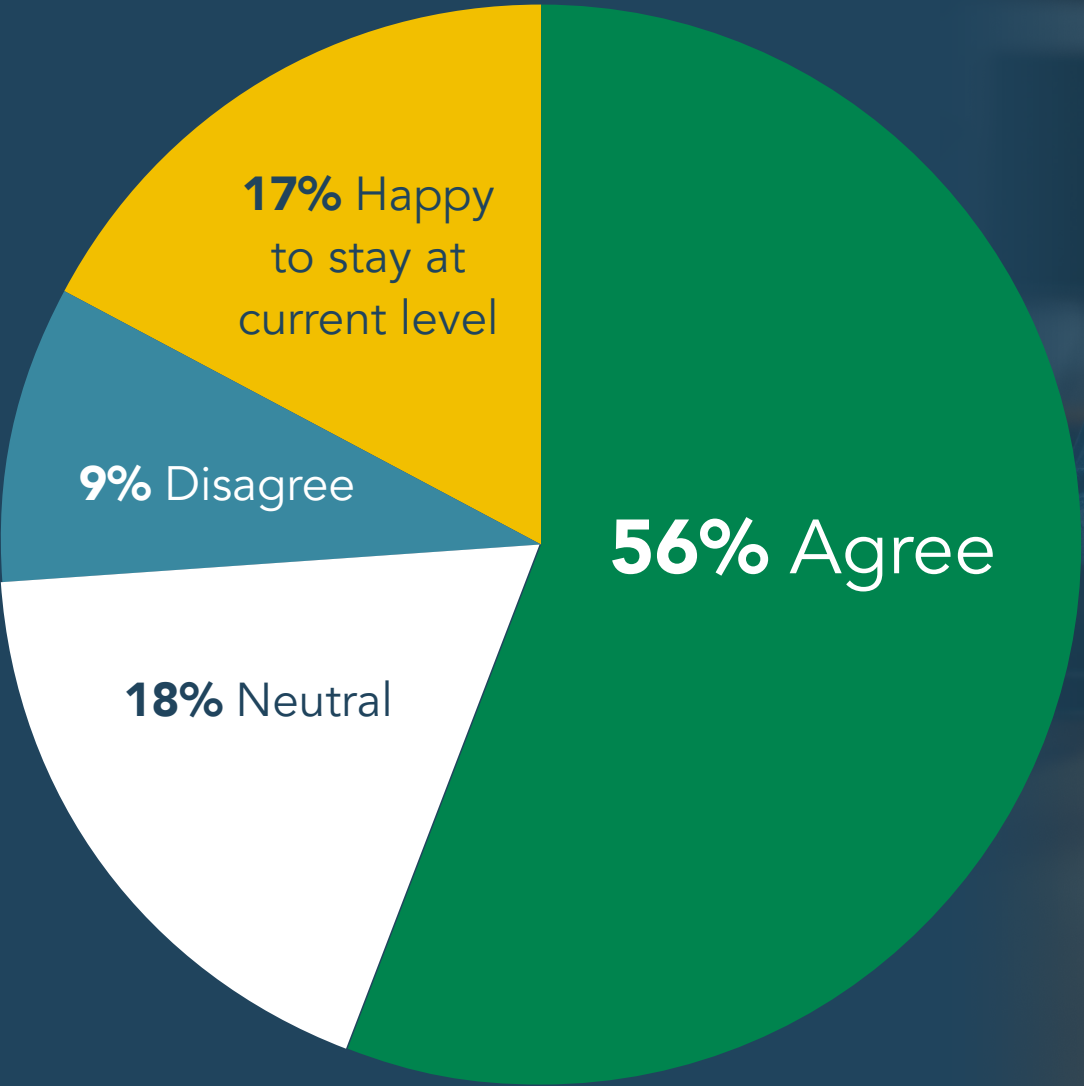
These findings would appear to show the pieces falling into place more decisively for hybrid working. Employees do not favour an all or nothing scenario. Employers would be wise to empower their people to work out hybrid working patterns that enable a mix of home and office work; and to provide the facilities and supports that go with these.



Can You Progress Your Career While Working Flexibly?

Over half believe they are able to progress in their career while working flexibly, compared to just 9% who do not believe career progression is available with flexibility. On the other hand, 18% remain neutral, whilst 17% are happy to stay at their current level or are not looking for career progression. This satisfaction with staying at their current level increases to 23% for women, compared to 12% for men.

Employers who wish to retain their talent should deliver on the optimism of the 56% and ensure that progression is possible in practice, with flexibility.



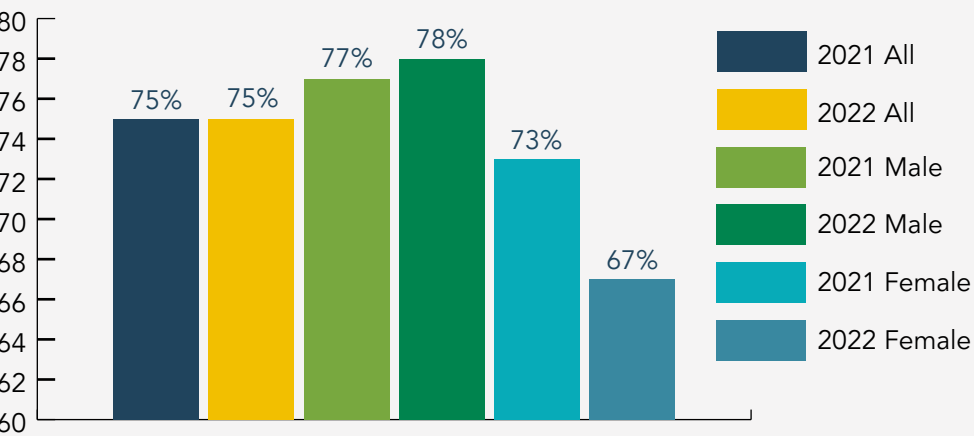
Key Finding: Family First

There remains a strong focus on adult and eldercare, as well as childcare, provision before accepting a new role or promotion.

Caring for adult/elder dependants is a particular concern for men (78%) compared with women (67%). Strikingly, for those with adult/ eldercare responsibilities, the concern is also highest in younger workers: it is reported to be a consideration for over 9 in 10 (93%) of 18-34 year-olds, for nearly 2/3 (63%) of 35-54 year-olds and for well over half (58%) of workers over 55.

Employers must be wary of falling into the trap of assuming that their younger workers are the group with the fewest family responsibilities. Supporting them will protect the talent pipeline and increase the attractiveness of the company in the hunt for new talent.

Eldercare Matters When Considering a New Role



93% of 18-34 year olds with adult/eldercare responsibilities would need to consider eldercare options before accepting a new job or promotion...



High Expectations of Employer’s Help with Care

These groups in particular consider support with care (either childcare or adult care) an important factor in any new employer.

Pre-pandemic, employers might have assumed that parents of young children required the most care support. As we adjust to the new post-pandemic realities, it is becoming increasingly apparent that this need extends to many other groups.

Eldercarers	91%
18-34yr olds	86%
Senior managers	81%
Parents with children 0-10yr	76%
All participants	68%

Do Employers and Managers Care About Work-Home Balance?

Overall, 61% feel their organisation cares and 62% feel their manager cares about work-home balance. In 2021, these figures were 58% and 59%). Women are less likely to feel this type of care from their organisation (53%) or manager (55%). The sense of the employer or manager caring also drops markedly by age (76% of 18-34 year-olds feel their manager cares vs 45% of those aged 55+).

Further, two fifths (40%) feel their employer is ‘sympathetic to childcare responsibilities and allows them to work flexibly or offers support to help them manage childcare’ (same as 2021). A further quarter (25%) find that their employer is ‘understanding, but only up to a point and does not offer any practical help with childcare’.

Importantly, of the 35% of working parents who said their employer is not at all sympathetic, 39% rated their current stress levels at 8-10 (compared with 26% of overall participants).



Working parents with unsympathetic employers are 50% more likely to rate their stress level at 8-10 than the overall survey population.

Parents Are Concerned About Educational Catch-Up

All our experience of partnering with top employers confirms that leading practice goes beyond just equipping people to work. Employers are now more aware that parents carry out a huge daily juggling act, made even more intense during school lockdowns, and that parents have deep worries about the pandemic’s impact on their children’s development.

The responses to this survey also bear this out: over half of parents have concerns about their children’s educational catch up (55%) and mental health (54%) as well as social skills (52%).

Employers should consider how to reduce some of the emotional load of their working parents through providing access to tutoring programmes; nurturing internal networks in which parents can exchange mutual support and advice; or providing channels through which volunteers can collate useful information for others.

Parents’ Concerns about Their Children			
Educational catch-up	Social skills	Physical health	Mental health
55%	52%	46%	54%

Parents commented on their children's worries:

'Social skills are difficult to develop when not seeing people face to face'

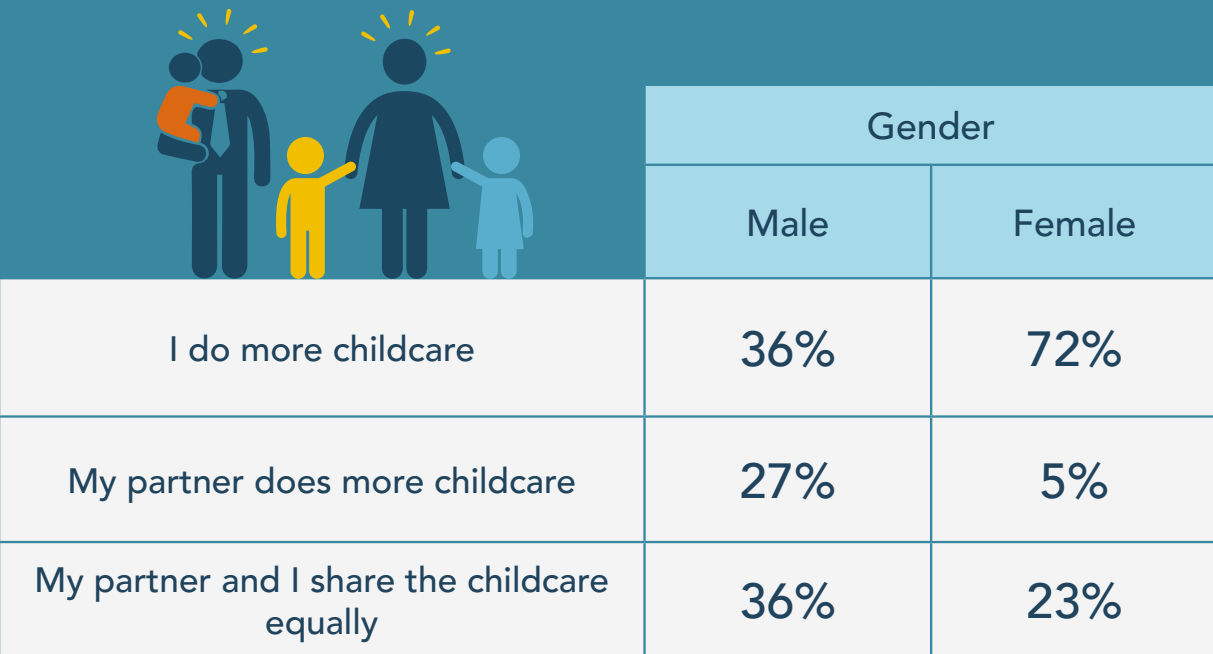
'Child thinks they have missed out on school, career and future'

'Anxiety, missed opportunity in life, less friendship time'

'Taking GCSEs when she has missed a lot of education due to home learning last year'

How Is Childcare Shared at Home Now?

There has been much media coverage of the burden of home-schooling falling disproportionately on **women** and, at the same time, the way that **fathers** have leaned in and done more at home.



A re-balancing is definitely taking place, even if the genders see it slightly differently.

When asked this year what the balance was a year ago, 82% of women said they had been doing more childcare, and only 13% of people said it was shared equally. Now, 31% overall feel they share the childcare equally, though more men perceive this than women. By age, nearly 2/3 of 18-34 age group said it had changed over the past year.

Employers would do well to note that nearly two-thirds (64%) of participants overall who have taken on more childcare in the last year would like to continue to do so, again highlighting new expectations about the balance of work and family.

Coming back to the first finding of our report – the pressing need to retain groups of employees who are particularly looking around for a new employer – it is noteworthy that:

- Well over 8 in 10 (86%) of men who are taking on more childcare would like to continue to do so.
- Over 8 in 10 (81%) of younger workers (18-34) also want to continue taking on more childcare.

Parents of children aged 7-10 years are most concerned:

- 57% are worried about educational catch-up
- 62% about mental health
- and 38% of these parents rate their current stress levels at 8-10, compared to 26% of overall participants

These parents age and gender are also noteworthy in the concerns felt. 62% of fathers and 47% of mothers are concerned about educational catch-up. Over ¾ of younger parents are worried: 77% of those aged 18-34 are concerned (against 49% aged 35-54 and 45% over 55s).

Again, in order to be an engaging employer for parents generally, and especially younger workers and fathers, providing advice and access to educational support would enhance the employee experience.



The findings overall from this important annual dataset show an urgent need for employers to pay attention to flexibility and supports for family life. Employee support can play a decisive role in talent retention and attraction.

About Bright Horizons

Bright Horizons provides exceptional support for working families. Through innovative nursery care and workplace solutions, we enable the holistic combination of work and family, ensuring that our clients' working parents and carers are amongst the most engaged and productive members of any team. The business now globally encompasses approximately 1,000 nurseries and over 10,000 emergency childcare and back-up care providers. We work with over 400 clients in the UK and Ireland, and more than 1,300 of the world's leading employers globally, providing a full range of work and family support.

For over 30 years, we have always looked forward - for better ways to support the changing needs of our families and communities. Our bespoke services address the practical, wellbeing and cultural needs of organisations and individuals. With operations in the US, UK, India and the Netherlands, we specialise in supporting multi-national clients. We have a strong commitment to corporate sustainability, which is reflected in a number of ways including our registered charity, Bright Horizons Foundation for Children. We are consistently redefining the solutions for employers and their working families, helping them to build a brighter future.

To learn more, please visit: **solutions.brighthorizons.co.uk**

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