

The Power of Partners

3 ways partners can support their counterparts in achieving work-life integration



Welcome

We are pleased to present the results of our most recent report, *The Power of Partners*. This research explores the impact of partnerships on parents' ability to not only integrate work and home life but also be productive and feel confident in their careers.

At The Mom Project and Werklabs, we also know that many moms come to our platform as single moms, in need of more supportive, flexible work opportunities, so that they may be able to better provide for their families. For these moms, we know that instead of support coming from a spouse or partner, it often comes from friends, community members, and family. The need to be strong and resilient while striving to be role models to their children is a daily reality for single moms, and it is our plan to highlight the unique experiences of these moms in future research.

Similarly, it is also important to acknowledge that this research primarily explores the impact of partners in heterosexual relationships. We know that differences exist in the experiences of parents with same-sex partners and it is not our goal to ignore these nuances. As with single moms, this is another intended area of future research.

More specifically, then, the present research explores the scope of parenting in mom-dad relationships, to determine what factors and forms of support from a partner have the greatest impact on parents being able to successfully integrate work and home life.

We surveyed more than 3500 moms and dads and asked them to rate their experiences with their partners providing support on a variety of dimensions. Our ultimate goal has been to understand the specific support factors from partners that most contribute to parents being able to best integrate home and work. In the end, we develop a framework for parents and organizations to utilize, to facilitate more positive home experiences that impact work performance.

With the present research we show that when parents feel empowered and supported in their personal lives, navigating the ever-changing and unexpected realities of parenthood, their professional lives reap the benefits. In the report that follows we not only share these findings, but also highlight recommendations to moms, dads, and organizations.

Sincerely,
Pam Cohen, PhD
Chief Research & Analytics Officer
Werklabs & The Mom Project





“The most important career decision you’ll make is who your life partner is.”

- Sheryl Sandberg



The data paints a prettier “co-parenting” picture for dads than it does for moms.

Through predictive modeling, Werklabs developed a **Co-parenting Satisfaction Index**, where moms and dads were asked to rate how they feel their current co-parenting situation impacts their ability to achieve satisfaction in their (1) personal and (2) professional lives. On a 100-point scale, dads score 71.3 and moms score 59.4— a full 12 points lower.

Why?

— **Reason #1:** Encouragement, positive reinforcement, and validation are critical for both moms and dads to receive. However, for moms there exists a greater gap between the encouragement they desire and what they actually receive.

— **Reason #2:** Moms receive significantly less child care help and home support from their partners. This kind of support ranges from hands-on caregiving to logistical support in navigating unexpected changes to child care plans. When moms say they need flexibility at work to a greater extent than dads, this is why— they are typically managing more at home.

— **Reason #3:** Encouraging words are appreciated, but lack the impact of actual action. Though many moms feel as though their partners express an eagerness to support their home and work needs, fewer express the eagerness or actual ability to provide tactical support.

What is the impact?

Based on Werklabs' Co-Parenting & Career Satisfaction Model, there are clear actions that can be taken within households and by organizations to lessen the gap between moms' and dads' experiences. But why change the co-parenting status quo? The answer is simple and one that not only benefits parents but also organizations: more positive co-parenting experiences, ones where mutual support and partnership exist, yield greater levels of career confidence and work productivity.



Methodology

Werklabs constructed its Co-Parenting Questionnaire asking moms and dads to rate their experiences with their partners providing support on a variety of dimensions, on a scale of 1 to 10.

A rigorous quantitative analysis was performed to evaluate the measurement model and assess which questionnaire items best “fit together” to define predictors of co-parenting satisfaction that ultimately impact outcomes such as productivity and career confidence. Based on Grounded Theory, to minimize bias, there were no preconceived notions assumed of what characteristics were likely to emerge given the topic; the data came together to create the story. Once groupings were tested, a label was used to describe the concept or theme. In this case, three predictors of co-parenting satisfaction were identified: a Partner’s (1) Meaningful Encouragement (2) Child Care & Home Support, and (3) Work Flexibility.

In doing so, through this research, Werklabs not only establishes a direct relationship between how a partner’s emotional encouragement and at-home support positively impact career confidence and productivity but also how the extent to which a partner has flexibility in work impacts these outcomes as well.

Demographics

Nearly 3500 moms and dads completed the survey and served as the foundation for the development of Werklabs’ Co-Parenting & Career Satisfaction Model. 89% identified as a mom, 7% as a dad, and 3% identified as a guardian to a child, but not a parent. The majority of parents (86%) report that at least one of their children is of an age requiring adult supervision.



Identified as a mom, 7% as a dad, and 3% as a guardian to a child, but not a parent.



Additionally, the majority of respondents have more than one child in their household.



3 Keys to Unlocking the Powerful Potential of Partnerships

In rank order of impact on Co-Parenting Satisfaction, Career Confidence, and Work Productivity

1. Meaningful Encouragement

For parents, the number one impact a partner can have to power work-life integration and career success is through encouragement. To parents, encouragement is meaningful words coupled with tangible actions that reinforce, validate, and motivate. Having a built-in cheerleader is welcomed, but not the same as having a partner who takes action to alleviate workload and responsibilities when and where possible. A highly impactful form of encouragement desired by parents is having a partner who helps to create uninterrupted work time and space. Many moms, however, note that their partners, whether due to long hours, work travel, or other job inflexibilities, are less physically present, and thus encouragement tends to skew to words rather than action.

Regardless, some words have a more significant impact than others. Of note, being encouraged to pursue career ambitions is of critical and similar importance to moms and dads. Additionally for moms, having their partner reinforce their work is a priority in the relationship and household is key, not only from a personal standpoint but also to model the behavior they want to see replicated in their children's future. Dads, on the other hand, are more impacted by the extent to which their partner values their work contribution to the household.

What other types of encouragement are desired and shown to positively impact work-life integration? Partner's encouraging:

- ◆ The pursuit of personal hobbies and activities
- ◆ The prioritization of physical wellbeing
- ◆ The prioritization of mental health

“

He is my biggest cheerleader and pushes me to pursue opportunities.”

-Interviewed participant



2. Child Care & Home Support

Receiving child care and home support from a partner alleviates workload and reinforces an “in-it-together” mindset for moms and dads, ultimately facilitating greater work-life integration. Support at home ranges from equal partnerships to little support at all. Many moms fall in the middle: their partners do a lot for their children and the household, but mom often has to ask for help, or she finds herself carrying the bulk of the invisible mental and logistical load for the family. For some, the COVID-19 pandemic and new remote work capabilities allowed for a more equal distribution of child care and household responsibilities across partners.

The majority of moms surveyed (62.6%) report being the primary caregiver in their household. However, we see that differences in household caregiving exist depending on employment status:

— Far more moms who report being full-time employees (41.5%) report that caregiving is split 50/50 compared to moms who report being part-time employed (16%), self-employed (24.5%), on contract (18.3%), or unemployed (17.3%).

— Similarly, far fewer moms who report being full-time employees (52.9%) report that they are the primary caregiver in the household compared to moms who report being part-time employed (75.7%), self-employed (66.8%), on contract (70.9%), and unemployed (73%).

Overall, based on survey results, dads receive far more child care and home support from their partners than moms. So, what kind of support are moms missing, but needing the most? Primarily, moms are lacking support from their partners in:

- ◆ Making plans for children’s schedules and care so that they can attend work meetings, whether it be online, in person, or extended travel; and
- ◆ Managing child care arrangements, such as determining after-school care and summer camps.

“

He’s gotten a lot better. Before the pandemic, he hardly helped with cooking or homework. But now he does almost half and my mental health has improved so much. We both work full-time but I think the pandemic helped him to understand how much I do at home.”

-Interviewed participant



“

The most important way my partner supports my career is by having an employer who allows him to support my career.”

-Interviewed participant



3. Flexibility

Flexibility, in some form, is nearly always a driver to more positive work experiences. Period. This finding also applies to the present research, where the data illustrates a direct link between more positive work-life integration and the flexibility a partner has in work. In other words, having a partner with flexibility in work creates more positive co-parenting experiences. What's more, the impact of a partner having flexibility in work is relatively equal for moms and dads, demonstrating a universal need and case for flexibility. However, compared to the previous two factors, dads report that their partners have greater flexibility than moms.

More specifically, dads report that their partners have a greater level of team and organizational support for flexibility in terms of both work hours and location. Similarly, many moms report having partners in jobs or industries that offer little or no flexibility, such as the military, education, and medical fields. Moms also note that although on paper their partner may have flexibility in work, they do not feel like they can use it, often due to heavy workloads and organizational culture.

So, what is flexibility? It's organizational understanding to work to get the job done, rather than there being a set number of hours needed to work. It's also the ability to step away from work throughout the day, work off hours or an alternative schedule, and, when possible, work remotely. This flexibility impacts the extent to which a partner can take action to meaningfully provide encouragement and tangibly support child care responsibilities.

Supporting flexible work is how organizations can positively contribute to more positive co-parenting situations and lessen the gap that exists between moms and dads. Organizations ought to ensure flexibility is available and encouraged for all parents to use, not just primary caregivers or moms.



Mutual Support & Partnership

Supportive partnerships benefit moms and dads, and the positive results do not only impact their personal lives but professional careers as well. This report shines a research-backed light on key areas where partners and organizations can positively impact co-parenting experiences to power productivity and career confidence.



In the voice of moms

"He is the wind beneath my wings."

"It helps when he communicates how much he believes in me and what I can achieve even though I am self-motivated most of the time."

"I feel like my husband contributes a huge amount compared to other households, and it helps keep me sane. We each pitch in more when the other person is having a bad day, or when it's needed. It's a constantly changing balancing act, but I'm so grateful we approach this as a team effort."

"My husband and I divide childcare and household duties equally. We both work from home primarily and juggle childcare for our twin daughters and after-school care for our son. [He] is an exceptional partner and my total equal."





**Emotional
support**

In the voice of dads

“Could not imagine doing this without her, she’s our rock.”

**Verbal
affirmation**

“My wife is exceptional in her focus, commitment, and follow-through. Since the kids were babies, she has made a determined effort to both help support the family and also provide stability and love on the home front.”

**Balanced
duties**

“She does so much! I’m very lucky and feel like we have a true partnership— we each take the lead when the other is tired or stressed and make sure to show gratitude.”

“We schedule a time to check in with each other on our careers and stressors and identify places where we can lighten the load for the other given the current mix of household/ job/ kid things.”



Model

Werklabs' Co-parenting Questionnaire results formed the basis for a predictive model that identifies, first, what forms of support parents are or are not receiving from their partners. Then, through measurement and predictive analytics, the model demonstrates the expected effect of a change in any of these characteristics on performance outcomes such as co-parenting satisfaction, career confidence, and work productivity.

Scores

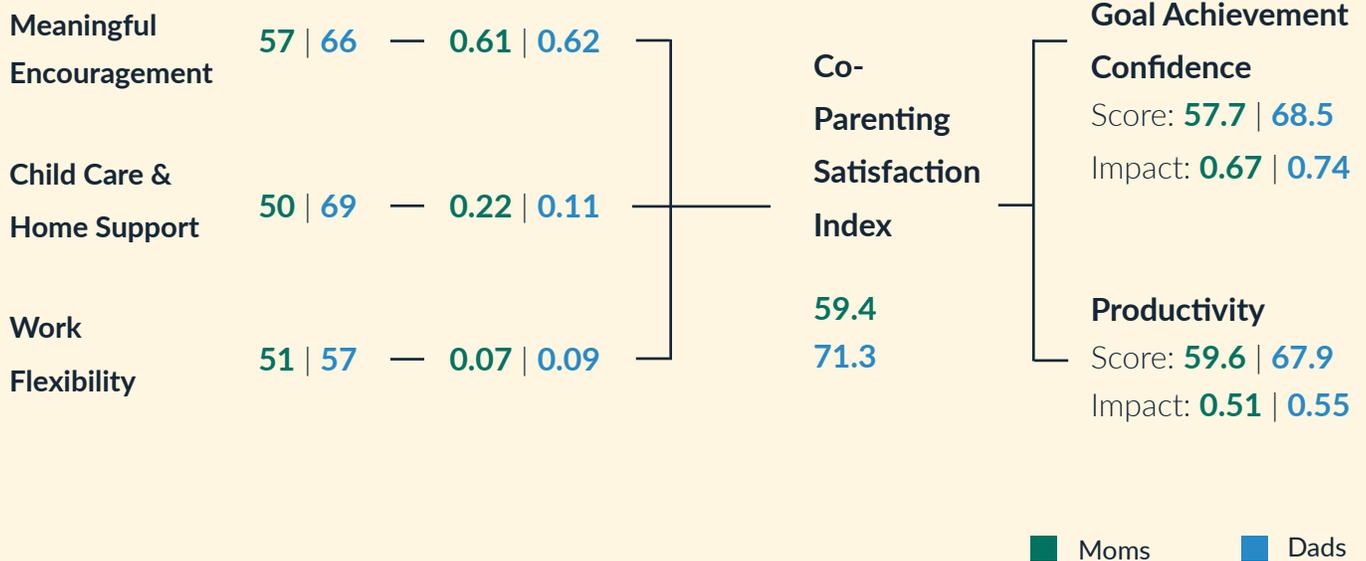
Current experiences on a 100-point scale

Impact

The expected effect of a 1-point change in score on the outcome

Outcome

Co-Parenting Satisfaction Index and Performance Outcomes



Want to learn more?

Visit us at Werklabs.com. Have questions? Email insights@werklabs.com

