

The Win-Win imperative:
Supporting working parents in Australia

A national white paper on psychosocial safety, wellbeing, productivity and organisational performance

TELUS® Health in partnership with win win® parenting

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Executive summary

Workforce–Workplace Mismatch

Approximately 40% of the Australian workforce are working parents, with nearly three-quarters (73%) of couple families having two employed parents. Despite this demographic reality, most workplace cultures, structures, and expectations remain implicitly designed around employees with few competing demands outside the office. The mismatch between workforce reality and workplace design is at the heart of the challenges facing working parents. It also has important implications for psychosocial risk and safety.

When workplace factors such as high job demands, excessive workload, limited flexibility, low job control and inadequate support interact with significant caring responsibilities, the risk of stress, burnout and psychological harm can increase. Under Australian WHS frameworks, employers are required to identify and manage psychosocial hazards. The TELUS Mental Health Index reveals the cost of this structural mismatch and why sustainable change requires organisations to redesign systems, not simply offer disconnected programs.



A mental health and productivity crisis

Findings from TELUS Mental Health Index reveals a stark and consistent gap between the mental strain experienced by working parents and non-parents, highlighting the importance of examining whether workplace conditions are increasing psychosocial risk for employees with caring responsibilities.

Burnout and mental health

37%
of working parents find it increasingly difficult to stay motivated (vs. 31% of non-parents)

54%
end their workday mentally and/or physically exhausted (vs. 41% of non-parents)

Working parents are
80%
more likely than non-parents to report feeling extremely burnt out

Nearly half
(46%)
report feeling under constant stress (vs. 37% of non-parents)

40%
of working parents report anxiety symptoms (vs. 34% of non-parents)

These findings point to elevated stress and exhaustion among working parents and reinforce the need to identify and manage workplace psychosocial hazards that may be contributing to these outcomes. These trends are reinforced by other Australian research showing high levels of psychological distress, work-family conflict, burnout and difficulty balancing work and caring responsibilities.

Productivity impact



Working parents experiencing organisational wellbeing support still lose 31 working days annually, more than double the 13 days lost by non-parents feeling the same support.



Working parents with moderate-to-high organisational trust lose 36 working days annually, rising to 49 days for those with low-to-no trust, a 13-day productivity loss that underscores trust's impact on productivity

The findings highlight an important distinction: providing wellbeing support is not the same as managing psychosocial risk. Individual support should complement organisational action on workload, flexibility, job design, leadership and other workplace factors.

Stigma: An added barrier

Compounding the mental health burden is the stigma that surrounds it.



Two in five (41%)

working parents report they would feel negatively about themselves if they had a mental health issue (vs. 35% for non-parents)



56%

would be concerned their career options would be limited if their mental health issue became known in their workplace (vs. 48% for non-parents).

Working parents face a double bind: they are simultaneously more likely to need mental health support and more likely to fear the career consequences of seeking it.

The gendered reality

Nearly half (49%) of working parents report feeling overwhelmed, compared to 31% of non-parents. This burden falls disproportionately on working mothers: 54% feel overwhelmed (vs. 43% of fathers), and they are nearly 40% more likely to identify personal demands as the primary source. Working mothers face a disproportionate caregiving burden and greater structural barriers. This disparity extends to career progression and job satisfaction.

Only **56%**

of working mothers trust their organisation to be fair and honest (vs. 63% of working fathers)

Just **50%**

of working mothers report it is easy to understand their employer's health coverage (vs. 75% of working fathers)

Working mothers are **35%**

less likely than working fathers to highly trust their organisation to provide effective wellbeing support

Only **47%**

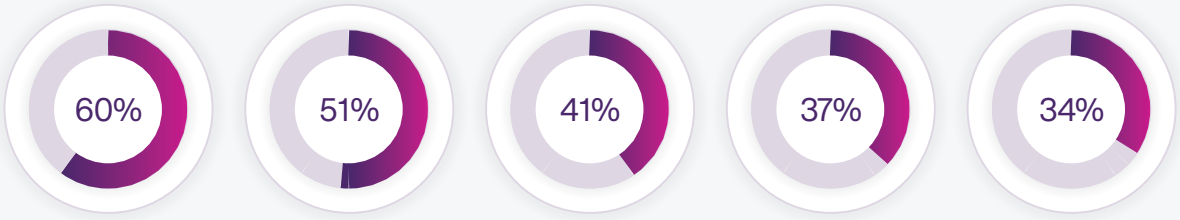
believe they could take on a leadership role without excessive stress (vs. 66% of working fathers)

These discrepancies do not reflect a lack of capability or ambition, but rather a rational response to the structural barriers and inequities working mothers systematically encounter in the workplace. They also highlight the importance of considering different levels of exposure to psychosocial risks across employee groups, rather than relying solely on workforce-wide averages.



The support gap

While 65% of working parents report their organisation's culture supports their personal wellbeing (slightly higher than non-parents at 61%), only 56% feel their workplace is genuinely family-friendly. When asked what they actually need, working parents identify:



Several of these priorities, particularly workload, flexibility and manager support, are also important considerations in psychosocial risk management. Critically, 38% of working parents, and 44% of working mothers, would prefer better wellbeing support over a 10% salary increase, signalling that this is not a fringe concern but a mainstream priority.

The role of people leaders

While the majority (71%) of working parents feel supported by their manager, 29% do not - with a persistent gender gap (73% of fathers vs. 68% of mothers). The fundamental barrier is that most managers are not equipped with the knowledge, skills, or organisational permission to support working parents effectively. Manager training programs rarely address the specific challenges of working parents. Equipping and supporting people leaders to recognise and address working parent psychosocial risks represents a significant, addressable opportunity for organisations.

A systemic framework for change

Sustainable change requires organisations to examine and redesign systems themselves. The five-step Win-Win framework for reducing psychosocial risks and creating family-friendly workplaces is:

1. **Conduct a working parent risk assessment** to identify psychosocial hazards, risk factors, support needs, and gender-specific disparities
2. **Train and resource people leaders** to recognise risks, support working parents effectively, and foster psychologically safe teams
3. **Offer tailored workplace wellbeing programs** that address the unique challenges of balancing work and family responsibilities, alongside organisational risk controls
4. **Build family-friendly workplace culture** where caregiving responsibilities are understood, respected, and supported without stigma or career disadvantage
5. **Monitor, report, and review** psychosocial risks, policies, programs, and workplace practices to ensure continuous improvement and accountability

The opportunity

Working parents represent a significant portion of Australia's workforce. They are experienced, skilled, motivated, and ambitious. Yet according to TELUS MHI data, many are losing more than a month of productive work annually due to unmet needs and inadequate support.

For organisations, supporting working parents is therefore more than a wellbeing or family-friendly initiative. It is also an opportunity to strengthen psychosocial safety, reduce organisational risk and improve productivity, retention and performance.

When working parents are supported to thrive at home, they are better able to thrive at work. Organisational action on working parent support is not merely a workplace initiative, it is part of a larger systemic shift toward recognising that employee wellbeing, family wellbeing, and organisational success are fundamentally interconnected. The question is whether organisations are ready to recognise this reality and act on it.



Full report below

For further insights, evidence, references and practical recommendations, continue reading our comprehensive full report to explore how organisations can better support working parents, strengthen psychosocial safety and create healthier, more productive and sustainable workplaces.



Introduction

The challenges facing working parents are not individual problems. They are the predictable outcomes of systems, workplace systems, social systems, and economic systems, that were not designed with working parents in mind. A working parent struggling to balance a demanding job with the needs of children and family is not failing at time management: they are navigating a structural contradiction. Yet most organisations respond to working parent stress with individual-level interventions: wellness programs, resilience training, flexible work policies framed as personal accommodations. These are valuable, but they are not sufficient.

Every day, working parents are required to navigate competing work deadlines, childcare and school responsibilities, sick children, sleep deprivation, household management, financial pressures, caring responsibilities, school holidays, and the emotional demands of parenting, often while maintaining the same performance expectations as employees without these additional caregiving responsibilities.

Under Australian Workplace Health and Safety laws, employers have a duty to identify and manage psychosocial hazards that may contribute to psychological harm. For many working parents, competing work and family demands, excessive workloads, inflexible work practices, caregiving pressures, and inadequate support can create significant psychosocial risks. These risks are not solely personal issues to be managed by individual employees. They are workplace factors that organisations have a responsibility to assess, mitigate, and monitor. When left unaddressed, these pressures can contribute to work-family conflict, chronic stress, burnout, reduced productivity, absenteeism, and poor mental health outcomes. Supporting working parents is therefore not only a wellbeing initiative, it is increasingly a workplace health and safety imperative and a critical component of creating psychologically safe, productive, and sustainable workplaces. Sustainable change requires organisations to examine and redesign the systems themselves.

Approach

While the primary data source for this white paper is the TELUS Mental Health Index (unless otherwise indicated), the analysis is strengthened by insights and evidence drawn from a range of national and international research studies, workplace reports, government publications, and industry surveys. Together, these sources provide a comprehensive picture of the challenges facing working parents and the organisational factors that influence their wellbeing, performance, and retention.

The TELUS Mental Health Index (MHI) measures the current mental health status of employed adults globally through quarterly online surveys. In Australia, each data collection cycle captures insights from 1,000 participants who live in Australia and are currently employed or were employed within the last six months. Participants are systematically selected to represent the age, gender, industry, and geographic distribution across Australia. The findings presented in this white paper draw from data collected between 2024 and 2026; unless otherwise indicated, all statistics reported are derived from the TELUS Mental Health Index.

This white paper documents the specific ways in which working parents in Australia experience work differently from their non-parent colleagues, identifies the systemic barriers that drive this difference, and offers a practical framework for organisational change.

The evidence is clear: when working parents are supported to thrive at home, they are better able to thrive at work. The question is whether organisations are ready to act on it.

Burnout, stress and mental strain

Burnout symptoms among working parents in Australia is not a marginal concern. They are a defining feature of many parents' working lives. Importantly, burnout is increasingly recognised as a potential outcome of unmanaged psychosocial hazards, making it a significant workplace health and safety concern rather than simply an individual wellbeing issue. When excessive job demands, work-family conflict, inadequate support, low job control, and chronic stress remain unaddressed, the risk of burnout increases, with consequences for employee wellbeing, organisational performance, absenteeism, turnover, and psychological safety.

Findings from TELUS Mental Health Index reveals a stark and consistent gap between the burnout experiences of working parents and non-parents:

37%
find it increasingly difficult to stay motivated (vs. 31% of non-parents)

54%
end their workday mentally and/or physically exhausted (vs. 41% of non-parents)

64%
report working when unwell at least once a week (vs. 53% of non-parents)

Working parents are
80%
more likely than non-parents to report feeling extremely burnt out

The TELUS Mental Health Index findings are not isolated. They are supported by multiple Australian studies that demonstrate similar patterns of work-family conflict, stress, burnout, and mental health challenges among working parents, including:

Parenting Today 2026 survey, reporting
45%
of Australian parents experiencing moderate psychological distress (12% high distress) with flow on effects to their children, according to the largest-ever national survey of parents.[1]

National Working Families 2024 Survey finding
74% of women &
47% of men
reported feeling stressed balancing work and family commitments.[2]

Beyond Blue's 2025 national research identifying parents and caregivers as one of the groups most at risk of workplace burnout, with approximately half of Australians reporting burnout in the previous year.[3]

Real Working Parents Report 2024 reporting
84%
of working parents reported feeling the strain of juggling work, parenting, and life responsibilities.[4]

The burnout gap extends beyond exhaustion and has impact across multiple dimensions of mental health and wellbeing. Nearly half (46%) of Australian working parents report feeling under constant stress, compared to 37% of non-parents. Two in five (40%) working parents report feeling anxious, and a third of working parents report feeling a sense of helplessness. These multiple, overlapping symptoms suggest that working parents are not experiencing isolated challenges, but rather a compounding crisis of mental health strain that might affect their emotional resilience, cognitive function, and sense of agency.

The TELUS Mental Health Index findings form part of a broader and highly consistent evidence base. Across multiple Australian studies, working parents report significantly higher levels of stress, exhaustion, burnout, and psychological distress, indicating that these multiple dimensions of mental health and wellbeing challenges are both widespread and systemic. Key findings include:

57%
of parents feel lonely at least occasionally and lonely parents are 3.6 times more likely to report high psychological distress.[5]

49%
of parents say tiredness gets in the way of being the parent they would like to be.[6]

The most common feelings experienced by working parents are anxiety (37%), stress (31%), guilt (30%), and sadness (25%).[7]

Almost **50%**
of working parents reported looking after their physical and mental health was the biggest challenge in balancing work and family commitments.[8]

1 Parenting Research Centre, Parent Mental Health and Wellbeing Insight Brief (April 2026) https://www.parentingrc.org.au/tools/parenting-today/
2 National Working Families Report (2024) The Impact of Work and Care on Australian Families. Family Friendly Workplaces. https://nationalworkingfamiliesreport.org/
3 Beyond Blue Workplace Burnout (2025) https://www.beyondblue.org.au/about/media/media-releases/1-in-2-Australians-Facing-Workplace-Burnout?
4 Real Insurance Real Working Parents Report (2024) https://www.realinsurance.com.au/news-views/the-real-working-parents-report-2024
5 Parenting Research Centre, Parent Mental Health and Wellbeing Insight Brief (April 2026) https://www.parentingrc.org.au/tools/parenting-today/
6 Ibid.
7 Real Insurance Real Working Parents Report (2024) https://www.realinsurance.com.au/news-views/the-real-working-parents-report-2024
8 National Working Families Report (2024) The Impact of Work and Care on Australian Families. Family Friendly Workplaces. https://nationalworkingfamiliesreport.org/

The cumulative weight of these stressors manifests most acutely in a pervasive sense of overwhelm. Half (49%) of Australian working parents report feeling overwhelmed by their responsibilities or commitments, compared to just 31% of non-parents. However, this overwhelm is not equally distributed across the working parent population. Working mothers are disproportionately experiencing this state, with 54% reporting feeling overwhelmed compared to 43% of working fathers. More significantly, working mothers are nearly 40% more likely than working fathers to indicate that personal issues are the primary source of their feeling overwhelmed. This pattern reveals a troubling reality: while both mothers and fathers experience the competing demands of work and family, mothers are more likely to experience these demands as the primary driver of their sense of being overwhelmed.

The gender differences in stressors are most acute when examining caregiving responsibilities. Working mothers are 70% more likely than working fathers to report parenting responsibilities as a source of personal stress. Even more strikingly, working mothers are 2.3 times more likely than working fathers to report caregiving responsibilities other than parenting, i.e., eldercare, care for family members with disabilities, support for extended family, as being a source of personal stress. This finding underscores that the caregiving burden extends far beyond childcare. Working mothers are more likely to be the primary caregiver not just for children, but for aging parents, ill relatives, and other family members in need. They are navigating multiple caregiving roles simultaneously, each with its own demands and emotional labour.

Sleep quality: A compounding factor

While dissatisfaction with sleep quality is common across the Australian workforce, the contributing factors differ dramatically when comparing non-parents to working parents. Personal and family responsibilities are the dominant factor disrupting sleep for working parents, cited by 47%, compared to just 19% of non-parents. This gap is not surprising; the mental load of parenting does not switch off at the end of the workday.

However, the picture becomes more complex when examining mental health challenges and financial worries as contributing factors to poor sleep. While these factors rank highly for non-parents (31% and 26% respectively), they are significantly more prevalent for working parents, at 46% for mental health challenges and 39% for financial worries. These findings are echoed in other Australian reports including:



Real Insurance Real Working Parents Report (2024) finding 49% of parents *"feel that the greatest pressures are ensuring financial stability for the family now and for the future"* [9]



National Working Families Report (2024) noting that over 30% of working parents reported a lack of sleep as one of the top barriers leading to work life tension[10]

This suggests that working parents are not simply dealing with the mental load of parenting: they are simultaneously managing elevated levels of anxiety, depression, and financial stress. These stressors compound one another, creating a particularly damaging combination.

9 Real Insurance Real Working Parents Report (2024), pg. 7 https://www.realinsurance.com.au/news-views/the-real-working-parents-report-2024

10 National Working Families Report (2024) The Impact of Work and Care on Australian Families. Family Friendly Workplaces. https://nationalworkingfamiliesreport.org/

The most striking finding emerges when examining sleep disruption by gender. Working mothers are 90% more likely than working fathers to cite personal and family responsibilities as a contributing factor to poor sleep quality. The disparity reflects the reality that, despite decades of progress toward gender equality, mothers continue to carry a disproportionate share of the responsibilities. The gender gap in sleep disruption is not incidental. It is a direct manifestation of the unequal distribution of caregiving responsibilities in most households; a distribution that most workplaces do not adequately account for or support.

Working mothers are not simply more stressed than working fathers; they are managing a fundamentally different and more demanding set of responsibilities, and their sleep, and by extension, their health, their cognitive function, and their work performance, are more likely to suffer as a result.

Stigma: An added barrier

Compounding the mental health burden is the stigma that surrounds it. In Australia, two in five (41%) working parents report they would feel negatively about themselves if they had a mental health issue and 56% are concerned their career options would be limited if their mental health issue became known in their workplace. These figures are higher than for non-parents (35% and 48% respectively), suggesting that working parents face a double bind: they are simultaneously more likely to need mental health support and more likely to fear the career consequences of seeking it.

This concern translates directly into avoidance of care. In the past year, one in five (19%) working parents reported avoiding or delaying seeking mental health support, compared to 14% of non-parents. While cost and long wait times for appointments are the primary barriers cited by both groups, stigma emerges as a distinctly working-parent issue. One quarter (26%) of working parents cite stigma as a reason for avoiding or delaying mental health support — compared to just 15% of non-parents. Working parents are therefore 75% more likely to cite stigma as a barrier to care.

Notably, this stigma barrier affects working fathers disproportionately. More than one-third (36%) of working fathers cite stigma as a reason for avoidance, compared to 17% of working mothers. This gender difference likely reflects the particular stigma surrounding mental health in masculinity. For working fathers, the fear of being perceived as unable to cope may be even more acute than for working mothers, creating an additional layer of risk.





The modern reality of work and family

The image of the single-income family with one parent at home and one at work is largely a relic of the past. Today, the vast majority of Australian families are dual-income households, with both parents participating in the paid workforce. Working parents now make up approximately 40% of the workforce. More strikingly, almost three-quarters (73%) of Australian couple families have two employed parents, a dramatic shift from just two decades ago. Since 2005, the proportion of couple families with children where both parents were employed has increased from 60% to 73%, while the proportion with just one parent employed has decreased from 33% to 22%[11]. This is not a temporary demographic blip. It is the new normal. And yet, the structures, cultures, and expectations of most workplaces have not kept pace. Organisations continue to implicitly design work around the assumption of an employee with few competing demands outside of the office. This mismatch between workforce reality and workplace design is at the heart of the challenges facing working parents.

Furthermore, working parents are facing a new and increasingly complex parenting challenge: supporting children with rising levels of neurodiversity and mental health needs while also managing work, financial pressure and family life. In Australia, ADHD is estimated to affect around 6 to 10% of children and adolescents, making it one of the most common neurodevelopmental conditions, while autism diagnoses have also increased significantly, with the ABS reporting 290,900 autistic Australians in 2022, a 41.8% increase since 2018, including 4.3% of children aged 5 to 14[12]. At the same time, young people's mental health has worsened, with AIHW reporting that mental disorders among Australians aged 16 to 24 rose from 26% in 2007 to almost 39% in 2020 to 2022[13], and Mission Australia's 2024 Youth Survey finding 22% of young people reported high psychological distress[14].

These pressures that were intensified by the pandemic, social isolation, disrupted learning, cost-of-living stress, and the growing influence of digital environments, continue today. While technology can offer connection and learning, research increasingly links problematic social media use and gaming with higher risks of anxiety, depression, sleep disruption, social comparison and emotional dysregulation[15]. For parents, this means that the daily work of raising children now often includes managing ADHD, autism, anxiety, emotional distress, screen use, gaming conflict and social media harms, yet many parents do not have specialist training, flexible time, affordable access to professional support, or the confidence to know what to do. For working parents, this creates a significant wellbeing and psychosocial pressure point that workplaces can no longer afford to overlook.

11 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2025, June). Labour Force Status of Families. ABS. https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-status-families/latest-release.

12 Australian Bureau of Statistics Autism in Australia 2022 https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/autism-australia-2022

13 Australian Government Institute of Health and Welfare Young People's Mental Health (12-24 years). Last updated May 2026 https://www.aihw.gov.au/mental-health/topic-areas/populations/young-people-s-mental-health

14 Mission Australia Youth Survey 2024 https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/what-we-do/evidence-impact-and-advocacy/research/youth-survey/youth-survey-reports/youth-survey-2024/

15 Agyapong-Opoku N, Agyapong-Opoku F, Greenshaw AJ. Effects of Social Media Use on Youth and Adolescent Mental Health: A Scoping Review of Reviews. Behav Sci (Basel). 2025 Apr 24;15(5):574. doi: 10.3390/bs15050574. PMID: 40426351; PMCID: PMC12108867. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12108867/

The competing demands

Working parents in Australia face stressors that non-parents simply do not encounter in the same way. Their top work-related stressors mirror the broader workforce: high workload (33%) and lack of work-life balance (27%); however, the context is fundamentally different. For working parents, a heavy workload is not just a professional inconvenience; it directly competes with the demands of caregiving.

When it comes to concerns specifically related to balancing work and family responsibilities, Australian working parents identify three primary sources:

39%
Stress from balancing work and family responsibilities

34%
Guilt for not spending enough time with family/children or missing family events

27%
Managing work deadlines while caring for children

These are not abstract concerns. They represent a daily negotiation between two sets of legitimate, non-negotiable responsibilities, a negotiation that most workplaces are ill-equipped to support.

Experiences of working parents: A gendered reality

Aggregating “working parents" as a single category obscures important differences. While working mothers and fathers share many of the same stressors, the distribution and intensity differ in meaningful ways.

For example, Real Insurance report (2024) highlights gender disparities in the experiences of returning to work after parental leave. Women report higher levels of anxiety (46% vs. 26%), stress (38% vs. 22%), and guilt (40% vs. 18%) when returning to work after parental leave compared to returning men. Moreover, 44% women feel they miss out on work opportunities due to parental responsibilities, compared to over 35% men. Women are also more likely to feel judged by colleagues or bosses (41% vs. 28%) and worry about job security (25%).[16]

The foundation of any supportive workplace is trust. While a majority (59%) of Australian working parents trust their company to be fair and honest in how it deals with employees, this trust is not equally distributed. Working fathers tend to be more trustful (63%) than working mothers (56%); a gap that suggests working mothers have less confidence that their organisation will treat them equitably. This gap likely reflects lived experience: mothers are more likely to have encountered bias in hiring, promotion, and flexibility decisions, and are therefore more cautious in their trust of organisational fairness.

This disparity extends to career progression and job satisfaction. Many women feel they have to put their careers on hold or reduce their working hours to manage their parental responsibilities. The report shows that 35% of parents have considered changing careers after returning to work, around 2 in 5 (41%) have reduced their working hours, and a significant 7 in 10 (70%) parents have put their careers on hold, with women (80%) more likely to do so than men (59%).

The caregiving burden that shapes working mothers' experience extends beyond the workplace into the broader labour market. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the most common reason women who wanted a job were unavailable to start within 4 weeks was 'caring for children'[17], a barrier that does not apply equally to men.

This finding underscores that the challenge facing working mothers is not merely about managing work and family simultaneously; it is about the structural barriers that prevent many women from participating in the paid workforce at all. For those who do manage to work, the caregiving burden remains the primary constraint on their career choices, flexibility, and advancement.

Despite the significant mental strain and caregiving burden documented above, Australian working parents demonstrate strong career ambition. Nearly three in five (57%) believe that taking on a higher-level leadership

16 Real Insurance Real Working Parents Report (2024) https://www.realinsurance.com.au/news-views/the-real-working-parents-report-2024

17 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2025, December). Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Australia. ABS. https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/barriers-and-incentives-labour-force-participation-australia/dec-2025.

role would be manageable without creating excessive stress, significantly higher than non-parents (37%). This finding is counterintuitive: one might expect that working parents, given their elevated burnout and overwhelm, would be less ambitious. Instead, they remain engaged and forward-looking.

However, this ambition masks a critical gender inequity. Working fathers are particularly confident in their ability to manage a leadership role (66%), while working mothers are considerably more cautious (47%). This does not reflect a difference in capability or ambition; rather, it reflects a rational assessment of structural barriers.

This perception gap extends to how working parents view the rewards of leadership. While 67% of working parents in general believe the additional effort required in a leadership position is matched by sufficient rewards, this perception is notably weaker for working mothers: only 61% hold this belief, compared to 73% of working fathers. Working mothers are not rejecting ambition; they are questioning whether the cost-benefit calculation makes sense for them, a reasonable conclusion given the disproportionate caregiving burden they carry.

Similarly, working mothers are less likely than working fathers to believe that leaders in their organisations can maintain a healthy work-life balance (57% vs. 66%), suggesting that working mothers are observing their senior leaders and concluding that the price of advancement is unsustainable. They are not lacking ambition; they are being realistic about what leadership demands in their organisational context.

Table 1: Working parent experience by gender

	Working parents	Working fathers	Working mothers
Organisational support and workplace culture			
Trust the organisation they work for to be fair and honest in how they deal with employees	59%	63%	56%
Agree it is easy to understand what their employer paid health coverage will pay for	65%	75%	50%
Would prefer better support for their wellbeing over a 10% salary increase	38%	32%	44%
Believe taking on a high-level leadership role would be manageable without creating excessive stress	57%	66%	47%
Believe the additional effort required in leadership position is matched by sufficient rewards	67%	73%	61%
Feel supported by their manager as a working parent	71%	73%	68%
Believe the workplace culture at their organisation supports their personal wellbeing	65%	71%	59%
Report high trust in their organisation to provide effective support for their wellbeing	19%	23%	15%
Stress and mental health risks			
Caregiving responsibilities (other than parenting) as a source of personal stress	10%	6%	14%
Are dissatisfied or uncertain with the quality of their sleep	42%	39%	46%
Report personal and/or family responsibility as a factor contributing to poor sleep quality	47%	32%	60%
Report experiencing anxiety symptoms	40%	38%	41%
Do not have an emergency fund to cover essential expenses	36%	32%	41%
Workplace productivity			
Current mental health is negatively impacting work productivity	39%	34%	43%
Go to work feeling unwell at least once a week	64%	58%	69%



Employer practices and gaps

> "Work like you aren't raising children and raise your children like you're not working."

This impossible standard is the lived reality of too many working parents and it is a standard that no individual can sustainably meet alone. The structural failures that create this impossible choice are not the responsibility of individual employees to overcome through personal resilience or better time management. They are the responsibility of organisations to address through deliberate policy, culture, and design.

The family-friendly workplace: Perception vs. reality

In Australia, 56% of working parents agree that their employer offers a family-friendly workplace. While this is broadly in line with global averages, it means that nearly half of working parents do not feel their workplace is family-friendly; this reflects a genuine mismatch between what organisations claim to offer and what working parents actually experience. This gap is particularly significant given that these employees represent such a substantial portion of the workforce.

Interestingly, nearly two-thirds (65%) of working parents report that the workplace culture at their organisation supports their personal wellbeing, slightly higher than non-parents (61%). This apparent contradiction, that working parents feel their wellbeing is supported, yet do not perceive the workplace as family-friendly, becomes even more striking when examining productivity outcomes. While non-parents feeling their personal wellbeing is supported by their organisation lose an average of 13 working days annually, working parents feeling supported lose 31 days, more than double the impact. This suggests that organisations may be offering general wellbeing support (fitness programs, mental health resources, flexible policies) without specifically tailoring these offerings to the unique needs of working parents, resulting in a significant gap between perceived support and actual capability to remain productive.

Although many organisations offer family-friendly workplace policies and flexible work arrangements, many working parents remain concerned that accessing these supports may negatively affect their professional reputation. Around half believe that employees who use flexible work options are perceived as being less committed to their jobs, creating a barrier to fully utilising the support available to them and men feeling less supported by their employer to take time off to care for their family. Moreover, 22% of women and 12% of men who took parental leave reported receiving negative comments from managers and supervisors as a result of taking time off [18].

18 National Working Families Report (2024) The Impact of Work and Care on Australian Families. Family Friendly Workplaces. https://nationalworkingfamiliesreport.org

What working parents actually need

The National Working Families Report 2024 cited these as the top 6 areas to better support working parents:



These are not aspirational "nice-to-haves." They are foundational features of a workplace that can sustainably support working parents. The fact that they top the improvement list suggests that many organisations are still falling short on the basics.

While health benefits is the top area cited for improvement in TELUS Mental Health Index, clarity around coverage is equally critical. Two-thirds of working parents (65%) agree it is easy to understand what their employer's paid health coverage will pay for. However, there is a significant gender gap: 75% of working fathers agree compared to only 50% of working mothers. This disparity suggests that working mothers are either receiving less clear communication about benefits, or are encountering more complex situations (e.g., family coverage, multiple dependents) that make benefit navigation more difficult.

More specifically, working parents' benefit priorities differ markedly from non-parents. While non-parent workers prioritise enhanced mental health coverage (44%), improved wellness programs (31%), and vision coverage (13%), working parents prioritise enhanced dental coverage (25%), alternative therapies (18%), and wellness programs (18%).

Nevertheless, these aggregate figures mask important gender differences. Working mothers are significantly more likely to want improved mental health support (21%) and wellness programs (25%) compared to working fathers (6% for both). Working fathers, conversely, are far more likely to prioritise dental coverage (44% vs. 13% for mothers).

These differences likely reflect different family circumstances and caregiving responsibilities. Working mothers, bearing a disproportionate caregiving load, prioritise mental health and stress management resources. Working fathers prioritise dental coverage, a benefit that may reflect different health priorities or different family structures.

19 National Working Families Report (2024) The Impact of Work and Care on Australian Families. Family Friendly Workplaces. https://nationalworkingfamiliesreport.org/

Reasonable workloads and a degree of control over when and where work is performed are widely recognised as critical factors in managing psychosocial risk and protecting employee wellbeing. For working parents, these factors are particularly important, as they help reduce work-family conflict and enable employees to balance work demands with caregiving responsibilities. Yet despite their importance, working parents consistently identify manageable workloads, flexible working hours, and flexibility in work location as among the support measures they most need from employers. This highlights a significant gap between what is known to reduce psychosocial risk and what many working parents currently experience.

From a workplace health and safety perspective, providing employees with appropriate job control and manageable workloads is not simply a matter of employee preference, it is a practical risk management strategy that can help prevent chronic stress, burnout, absenteeism, and psychological harm while supporting engagement, productivity, and retention.

Beyond benefits: The broader support gap

Across multiple dimensions of wellbeing, working parents consistently indicate that their employers could do more:

Areas where employer could provide better support	All Australian workers	Non-parents	Working Parents
Mental health and wellbeing counselling or resources (i.e., personal or relationship support)	26%	21%	32%
Physical health and wellbeing programs or resources (i.e., fitness programs)	24%	20%	29%
Financial consultation/education/resources	19%	13%	25%
Career development and skills training	29%	25%	34%
Stress management and resilience training	24%	18%	31%
Healthcare navigation (i.e. cancer care, menopause, men's health, fertility, etc.)	12%	8%	18%
Extending coverage to family members without benefits (i.e., parents, adult children, friends, etc.)	11%	8%	15%
Social connection and community building (i.e., volunteer opportunities)	9%	8%	10%

Across every category, working parents indicate a greater need for organisational support. This is not a sign of weakness or neediness; it is a rational response to the genuine complexity of their situation. Working parents are navigating more moving parts, more dependencies, and more competing demands, and they need organisations to acknowledge this complexity through more comprehensive support. Among the 59% of working parents who report moderate-to-high trust in their organisation's ability to provide effective wellbeing support, 36 working days are still lost annually. This figure climbs to 49 days among those with low-to-no trust, a differential of 13 additional lost days. While trust clearly matters, the persistent productivity loss even among supported, trusting working parents reveals that current offerings remain insufficient.

When it comes to providing practical support for working parents - employers need to go beyond these "broader" dimensions of wellbeing. To explain, most workplace wellbeing surveys, employee assistance programs, and mental health initiatives focus on general workplace stress, resilience, and individual wellbeing. While important, they often fail to address the specific challenges that working parents navigate every day. In order to mitigate the many psychosocial risks for working parents - organisations first need to identify the risk. This is explored in more detail in the Recommendations section below.

The Wellbeing-Over-Pay Preference

The most telling indicator of working parent priorities is their willingness to trade salary for support. 38% of Australian working parents overall, and 44% of working mothers, would prefer better wellbeing support over a 10% salary increase. This is not a fringe preference; it is a mainstream signal that organisations should be acting on. It also represents a significant risk: better benefits is one of the primary reasons why working parents would consider leaving their job, with working parents 75% more likely than non-parents to cite this as a reason for departure.

Workplace demands continue to present significant challenges for many employees, with nearly one-quarter of respondents (23%) identifying long working hours as their primary workplace difficulty, while a further 19% cited a lack of flexibility. These findings highlight the critical role that workload management and flexible work practices play in supporting employee wellbeing and work-life integration. The importance of flexible work arrangements to parents and carers is reflected in their willingness to prioritise flexibility when making employment decisions as noted in the National Working Families Report (2024).

More than three-quarters (76%) of respondents said they would not apply for a job that did not offer flexible working arrangements, while around one in four indicated they would be willing to accept a 10% reduction in pay if it meant retaining access to workplace flexibility (28% of women and 25% of men)[20]. These findings highlight that flexibility is no longer viewed as a workplace perk, but as an essential condition that enables many parents and carers to successfully balance their work and family responsibilities.

For organisations, this finding has clear implications. In a competitive talent market, the organisations that will retain working parents, particularly working mothers, are those that prioritise wellbeing support alongside or even above compensation. The cost of failing to do so is not merely the loss of individual employees; it is the loss of experienced, skilled workers at precisely the moment they are most valuable.

The impact of family wellbeing on psychosocial health and safety

A recent report by Deloitte (2024) *Mental Health and Employers: The Case for Employers to Invest in Supporting Working Parents and a Mentally Healthy Workplace*, highlights that the wellbeing of employees cannot be separated from the wellbeing of their families[21]. Children's mental health concerns, caregiving responsibilities, and work-family conflict are having measurable impacts on attendance, productivity, retention, and burnout. The findings support the need for employers to move beyond traditional wellbeing programs and provide targeted support for working parents through flexible work practices, psychologically safe management, family-friendly policies, and evidence-based parenting and family wellbeing programs.

Key findings on working parents include:

- 46% of working parents were concerned about their children's mental health, making it one of the most significant concerns affecting working families.
- Half of those concerned about their children's mental health reported that it negatively affected their work performance.
- 32% of concerned parents had considered reducing their working hours to manage their child's mental health needs.
- One in 100 working parents had left their job entirely because of their child's mental health challenges.
- Most parents sought support outside their workplace rather than approaching their employer, suggesting many organisations are not yet seen as a source of support for family-related challenges.

20 National Working Families Report (2024) The Impact of Work and Care on Australian Families. Family Friendly Workplaces. https://nationalworkingfamiliesreport.org/

21 Mental Health and Employers: The Case for Employers to Invest in Supporting Working Parents and a Mentally Healthy Workplace" (2024).

Deloitte's research demonstrates that family wellbeing is a workforce issue. Nearly half of working parents reported concerns about their children's mental health, and for many these concerns directly affected their performance, working hours, and career decisions.

These findings reinforce the importance of supporting family wellbeing as part of working parent support as part of an organisation's psychosocial risk management, wellbeing, and retention strategies

The role of people leaders

The behaviour of working parents' direct manager is a powerful factor influencing their wellbeing. Managers who actively support working parents create conditions in which those employees can be more present, more focused, and more productive.

Fortunately, the majority (71%) of working parents feel supported by their manager. The flip side is that 29% do not, and the gender gap persists (73% of working fathers vs. 68% of working mothers).

In Australia, 42% of working parents report that their manager has become more supportive of work-life balance over the past year. While this represents a positive trend, it also means that the majority of working parents are not experiencing improved support from their manager.

For many, manager support remains unchanged and, in some cases, may even be declining. Given the critical role managers play in shaping employee wellbeing, psychosocial safety, and work-life integration, these findings suggest there is significant opportunity for organisations to better equip and support people leaders to meet the needs of working parents.

The fundamental problem is that most managers are not equipped with the knowledge, skills, or organisational permission to support working parents effectively. Manager training programs rarely address the specific challenges of working parents: the mental load, the childcare logistics, the career ambition gap, the gender dynamics. This is a significant and addressable gap.

Furthermore, the National Families Report found that around three-quarters of men and two-thirds of women believe that managers who actively use flexible work arrangements themselves are better equipped to understand, support, and manage employees who access similar workplace flexibility[22].



22 National Working Families Report (2024) The Impact of Work and Care on Australian Families. Family Friendly Workplaces. https:// nationalworkingfamiliesreport.org/

Recommendations

Measure what matters: Conduct a working parent risk assessment

Perhaps the most significant gap of all is one that is invisible by definition: most organisations do not systematically collect or analyse data disaggregated by parental status or collect data on the specific challenges that working parents navigate every day. Without this data, it is impossible to understand the specific psychosocial risks for working parents, track whether interventions are working, or make the business case for investment. This is not merely a missed opportunity: it is a strategic failure that perpetuates the very inequities organisations claim to want to address.

Organisations cannot manage what they do not measure.

Deliberately collecting and analysing workforce data by parental status is the essential first step toward meaningful change. For example, concerns about a child's mental health, bullying, behavioural and emotional difficulties, neurodiversity, school engagement, extracurricular commitments, friendship issues, family conflict, sleep challenges, and developmental milestones can have a profound impact on a parent's wellbeing, stress levels, and ability to perform at work. Yet these issues are rarely explored in employee wellbeing assessments or addressed through workplace support programs.

Compounding the problem, many working parents are reluctant to disclose parenting-related challenges or seek support because they fear being perceived as less committed, less capable, or less suitable for career advancement. As a result, a significant source of stress remains largely invisible to employers, creating a substantial gap between the support organisations provide and the support working parents actually need.

Employers are often concerned about privacy when collecting data. However, generally Australian privacy laws do not prevent employers from asking employees about parental or career status and key work-family conflict issues, provided there is a legitimate workplace reason for collecting the information, participation is voluntary and it is handled appropriately.

Legitimate reasons include:



To effectively improve psychosocial safety and wellbeing for working parents, organisations need to adopt a comprehensive and ongoing approach to data collection and evaluation. This could include surveys, interviews, focus groups, and the inclusion of working parent representatives on wellbeing and WHS committees to ensure their experiences inform decision-making.

Data collection needs to extend beyond traditional employee wellbeing measures to include workload, flexibility, manager support, work-family conflict, and the day-to-day challenges associated with caring responsibilities. Organisations should also establish confidential feedback channels that enable working parents to raise concerns and share experiences without fear of negative career consequences.

To identify trends and areas of risk, organisations can analyse absenteeism, turnover, engagement, and wellbeing data by employee group, including working parents where possible.

Finally, workplace policies, practices, and procedures need to be regularly reviewed through a working parent lens to identify barriers, gaps in support, and opportunities to strengthen psychosocial safety, wellbeing, retention, and organisational performance.

Closing this gap requires organisations to recognise that family wellbeing and employee wellbeing are deeply interconnected, and that supporting parents in their caregiving role is an important component of managing psychosocial risk, preventing burnout, and fostering a psychologically safe workplace.

Address the gendered experience at work

These differences matter profoundly for program design. A one-size-fits-all approach to supporting working parents will inevitably leave some groups underserved. Working mothers and working fathers are navigating fundamentally different challenges: mothers are managing a disproportionate caregiving load and facing greater structural barriers to advancement, while fathers are more likely to experience confidence in organisational fairness and career progression, even as they also experience elevated stress and burnout.

Organisations need to understand these specific experiences and design accordingly. Supporting working mothers requires addressing the caregiving burden directly through flexibility, workload management, and explicit career progression pathways that do not penalise caregiving responsibilities. Supporting working fathers requires creating psychological safety for vulnerability and help-seeking, and ensuring that flexibility and caregiving support are equally available and equally valued regardless of gender. One framework cannot serve both groups equally; organisations must design with intentionality and specificity.

Australia's Paid Parental Leave scheme has expanded to provide eligible families with up to 26 weeks of government-funded leave, recognising the important role both parents and carers play in a child's early development. Importantly, the scheme includes a dedicated four-week "use it or lose it" entitlement for the second parent or carer in two-parent families. This provision is designed to encourage fathers and other carers to take parental leave, spend meaningful time bonding with their child during the critical early months of life, and share caregiving responsibilities more equally.

Research shows that when fathers and carers are actively involved from the beginning, children, parents, families, workplaces, and communities all benefit through stronger family relationships, improved wellbeing, and greater gender equity in both caregiving and workforce participation. One of the most significant benefits of greater father and carer involvement is the positive impact on mothers' wellbeing and career progression. Research consistently shows that when fathers and other carers are actively involved in caregiving from the early months of a child's life, mothers experience benefits in both wellbeing and career progression.[23]

Greater father involvement is associated with a more equitable sharing of childcare and household responsibilities, reducing the physical and emotional burden often carried by mothers. This can improve maternal mental health, reduce stress and burnout, and support a more sustainable return to work. Studies from the OECD have found that fathers who take parental leave are more likely to remain involved in childcare over the long term, contributing to a more equal division of unpaid work at home.

Evidence also suggests that father-specific parental leave can positively influence mothers' employment outcomes, labour market participation, and career continuity by enabling earlier and more sustained workforce engagement. As a result, policies that encourage fathers and other carers to take parental leave not only strengthen parent-child bonds but also support women's economic participation, career development, and overall wellbeing.[23]

[23] OECD (2025). Paid Leave for Fathers. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
Huerta, M. del Carmen et al. (2013). Fathers' Leave, Fathers' Involvement and Child Development: Are They Related? Evidence from Four OECD Countries. OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers.
Huerta, M. del Carmen et al. (2014). Fathers' Leave and Fathers' Involvement: Evidence from Four OECD Countries. European Journal of Social Security

Invest in manager training

Recent statistics speak to the need for manager training, where 22% of women and 12% of men who took parental leave reported receiving negative comments from managers and supervisors as a result of taking time off.[24]

People leaders play a critical role in identifying, monitoring, and mitigating psychosocial risks in the workplace. As the employees with the greatest day-to-day influence over workload, flexibility, support, and team culture, managers are often the first line of defence in preventing psychosocial hazards from escalating into stress, burnout, disengagement, or psychological injury. This is particularly important for working parents, who are recognised as a group facing elevated risks associated with work-family conflict, competing demands, and caregiver stress.

Australian WHS legislation places duties not only on organisations but, in some circumstances, on individuals with influence over working conditions. Most managers are never made aware of this. Where psychosocial risks are known but not acted on, the organisation carries the exposure. Equipping managers to recognise and respond to those risks is one of the most direct ways to reduce them[25].

Manager capability is not a soft issue; it is a critical lever for effectively supporting working parents. Organisations need to deliver comprehensive targeted training programs to equip people leaders with the knowledge and practical skills to provide this support. The following manager behaviours can make a meaningful difference for working parents:

- Proactively checking on wellbeing rather than waiting for employees to raise concerns
- Modelling healthy work-life boundaries themselves
- Treating flexibility as a team norm, not an individual exception
- Discussing workload openly and adjusting it when necessary
- Creating psychological safety for employees to disclose family-related needs without fear of career consequences
- Actively advocating for working parents in organisational decisions about workload, scheduling, and career progression
- Proactively working toward meeting KPIs centred on working parent psychosocial safety, performance and wellbeing.

Organisations that invest in equipping their people leaders to support working parents will see returns in engagement, retention, and performance, while also strengthening their ability to meet psychosocial health and safety obligations.



34%

of respondents suggested family-friendly specific training for managers as a top 5 way to better support working parents and carers

National Working Families Report 2024



43%

of managers report tension with colleagues or supervisors in relation to stress of balancing work-family commitments

National Working Families Report 2024

24 National Working Families Report (2024) The Impact of Work and Care on Australian Families. Family Friendly Workplaces. https://nationalworkingfamiliesreport.org/

25 Safe Work Australia Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work Code of Practice July 2022

Implement employee support programs designed for and dedicated to working parents

The growing challenges facing working parents, including rising work-family conflict, mental load, caregiver stress, burnout risk, and increasing psychosocial demands, highlights the imperative that organisations need more than standalone policies and manager training. They need targeted, evidence-based support programs that help employees navigate the realities of balancing work and family responsibilities.

Not all working parent programs are equivalent. Organisations evaluating options should look for:

- A genuine evidence base with content grounded in child development, psychology or occupational health research, rather than general wellbeing material repackaged for parents
- Practical application, with strategies parents can use at home that week, not awareness-raising alone
- Breadth across the parenting and caring lifecycle including support that spans parental leave and return to work, the early years, primary school, adolescence, the transition to young adulthood and caring for ageing parents, recognising that employees may have caring responsibilities across multiple ages and stages of life.
- Coverage of the issues parents actually face, including neurodiversity, screen time and gaming, bullying, anxiety and family conflict
- Peer connection opportunities for working parents to connect with and learn from others facing similar challenges, helping reduce the sense of isolation that the data shows is widespread.
- Sustained access with on-demand resources and ongoing touchpoints rather than a single session
- Measurable outcomes that include participation, feedback and wellbeing indicators that can be reported to WHS committees and executive teams

TELUS Health has partnered with Win Win Parenting over many years to provide evidence-based, practical programs tailored specifically for working parents and carers delivered across all levels of government and across small, medium and large workplaces.

These programs address the many challenges families face today, including work-family conflict, family mental and physical wellbeing, parenting stress, bullying, screen time challenges, child development, family relationships, and strategies for preventing burnout while supporting healthy family functioning.

Learn more: Explore how the program works | Work and family catalogue | Psychosocial safety programs

Feedback from program participants

Practical solutions for managing daily parenting struggles and impact on productivity

> “This has been very helpful for managing my family life which has a direct impact on my ability to work well.”

Overcoming parent guilt

> “As a single parent, I often feel torn between work and home—this program made me feel supported.”

Ways to raise issues with managers

> “This has given me confidence to speak with my manager about flexibility to better balance work and parenting.”

Building a genuinely family-friendly workplace culture

Policies, benefits, and support programs are only effective when employees feel safe and supported to use them. A genuinely family-friendly workplace culture normalises the reality that many employees are balancing work with parenting and caring responsibilities, creating an environment where working parents feel confident discussing work and family challenges with their managers and colleagues without fear of judgement, stigma, or negative impacts on their career progression. When leaders openly support flexibility, recognise caregiving responsibilities, and create psychological safety, employees are more likely to access the support available to them, seek help early, and remain engaged and productive at work.

Building a family-friendly culture requires ongoing commitment rather than one-off initiatives. Organisations can strengthen this culture by involving working parents and carers in wellbeing, WHS, and employee advisory committees, establishing working parent and carer community groups, recognising families in workplace communications and events, and celebrating the important role families play in supporting employee success. Providing year-round opportunities for connection, education, feedback, and support demonstrates that working parent wellbeing is not a temporary priority but an integral part of organisational culture. Over time, this helps foster belonging, strengthen employee wellbeing and retention, and create a workplace where employees can thrive both professionally and personally.

Feedback from program participants

Proactive approach to a family-friendly culture

“My employer providing this program demonstrates a genuine commitment to a family-friendly workplace culture. This is exactly the type of initiative that shows an organisation understands the realities of working parents.”

Employee loyalty

“My workplace offering this program makes me proud to work here. Seeing my employer invest in these sessions helps me feel loyal and engaged at work.”

Employer support

“Thanks for this great training. Practical advice I can immediately implement with my family. I will be downloading the resources. A great offering and a demonstration of a family-friendly employer.”

Monitor, report and review policies, programs and procedures

To ensure that policies, programs, and support initiatives are delivering meaningful outcomes for working parents and carers, organisations should establish processes to regularly monitor, evaluate, and review their effectiveness. Initially, this includes tracking participation and engagement in parenting and wellbeing initiatives, collecting feedback from employees and managers.

Later, as programs and policies are embedded, measuring indicators such as absenteeism, turnover, retention, engagement, productivity, and utilisation of support services become relevant. Organisations should also assess changes in employee wellbeing, mental health, burnout, work-family conflict, and psychosocial risk levels over time to determine whether interventions are reducing risks and improving outcomes for employees and the organisation.

Monitoring and reporting on working parent wellbeing forms part of broader psychosocial risk management, wellbeing, WHS, and Environmental, Social and Governance reporting frameworks. Including parenting-related data in reports to WHS Committees, Executive Leadership Teams, Boards, and ESG stakeholders helps ensure that the needs of working parents remain visible and informs ongoing decision-making.

Regular review of policies, programs, and workplace practices through a working parent lens enables organisations to identify emerging risks, adapt support mechanisms, and demonstrate leadership in both proactive psychosocial risk management and the creation of a genuinely family-friendly workplace. By measuring outcomes and continuously improving support strategies, organisations can strengthen employee wellbeing, retention, performance, and long-term workforce sustainability.



Conclusion

Working parents are asked to succeed in two full-time roles at once. They are expected to work as if they do not have a family and parent as if they do not have a job. Between these competing expectations lies one of the most significant yet overlooked psychosocial risks facing today's workforce, a risk with profound consequences for employee wellbeing, organisational performance, and the future of society itself.

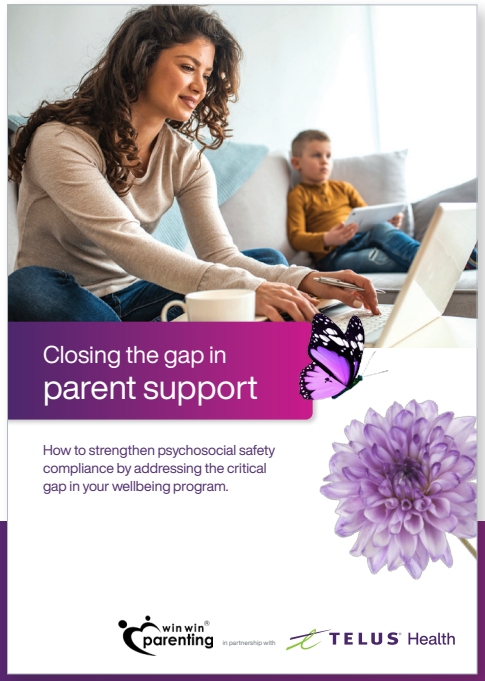
The challenges facing working parents are not individual problems. They are the predictable outcomes of systems, workplace systems, social systems, and economic systems, that were not designed with working parents in mind. Sustainable change requires systemic solutions. Individual resilience programs, while valuable, are not sufficient. The organisations that will make the greatest difference are those willing to examine and redesign the systems themselves.

As Australian Workplace Health and Safety laws increasingly require organisations to identify, assess, and manage psychosocial hazards, employers must adopt a proactive and systematic approach to supporting working parents. Rather than treating work-family conflict, stress, burnout, and mental health challenges as individual issues, organisations must recognise them as psychosocial risks that can affect employee wellbeing, safety, engagement, productivity, and retention. Effective risk management requires working parent support to be embedded within an organisation's broader psychosocial safety and wellbeing strategy.

This white paper proposes a five-step framework for organisations seeking to reduce psychosocial risks for working parents and create family-friendly workplaces:

1. **Conduct a working parent risk assessment** to identify psychosocial hazards, risk factors, and support needs, including gender-specific challenges and disparities.
2. **Train and resource people leaders** to recognise psychosocial risks, support working parents effectively, and foster psychologically safe teams.
3. **Offer workplace wellbeing programs tailored to working parents** that address the unique challenges of balancing work and family responsibilities.
4. **Build a family-friendly workplace culture** where caregiving responsibilities are understood, respected, and supported through policies, practices, and leadership behaviours.
5. **Monitor, report and review policies, programs and procedures** to ensure continuous improvement, accountability, and compliance with workplace health and safety obligations.

Organisations that adopt this systematic approach are better positioned to prevent psychosocial harm, reduce burnout, improve employee wellbeing and retention, and create sustainable workplaces where both employees and their families can thrive.



Closing the Gap in Parent Support:

A practical five-point guide for organisations, developed by Win Win Parenting in partnership with TELUS Health.

Download here

"Reframing parent wellbeing as shared social infrastructure, rather than an individual responsibility, is essential if governments are to address rising psychological distress among parents and build stronger foundations for child mental health, productivity, and long-term social wellbeing." [26]

[26] Parenting Research Centre, Parent Mental Health and Wellbeing Insight Brief (April 2026) https://www.parentingrc.org.au/tools/parenting-today/ Pg 12