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Working parents voice need for flexibility

New evidence is confirming how important workplace flexibility and family-friendly benefits are for recruiting and retention in today's business environment.

Sixty-two percent of mothers and 36% of fathers say they have stopped working or switched to a less challenging job to allow more time to care for their kids. Likewise, 62% of moms and 44% of dads say they have passed up a job opportunity to have more time to care for their children, according to a recent [Washington Post poll](#).

Many parents pick their jobs primarily based on workplace flexibility and family-friendly benefits, such as flextime, telework, job-sharing, compressed workweeks, paid sick days and paid vacation time.

Also see: [Momentum building for paid leave](#)

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Sixty-seven percent of parents who worked after having their first child say they were satisfied with the flexibility in their work schedule to care for their children, the survey found. However, a gender difference persists. Fifty-nine percent of mothers said they were pleased with their work schedule, compared to 76% of dads.

Scaling back at work has become necessary for many parents, since the cost of child care can sap even a middle-class salary. Seventy-four percent of parents with minor children agree that child care is very or somewhat expensive in their area. At the same time, 53% say quality, affordable child care has been somewhat or very difficult to find, according to the survey.

In a separate survey from Care.com, the majority of working parents (89%) say thinking about the cost of child care is stressful. The national average weekly rate for a day care center for two children is \$341, according to the organization's 2015 Cost of Care Survey.

What about policy solutions? Fifty-one percent of parents responding to the Washington Post poll feel the federal government should require more flexibility in the workplace, while 42% feel the federal government should let employers decide how much flexibility to offer their employees who are parents, the survey found.

Also see: [Paid parental leave: Boston starts another party](#)

Many companies seem to be getting the message that employees want flexibility. In the last five years, the Society for Human Resource Management's annual survey has shown a gradual uptick in the percentage of employers offering telecommuting, paid sick leave, paid maternity leave and additional FMLA leave (beyond what the federal government and state require). But the rates for flextime, job-sharing and compressed workweeks have stayed flat.

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