A 360° View of Family Leave:

Support and Resources for Working Parents

Human Capital Institute
The Global Association for Strategic Talent Management

In partnership with KinderCare EDUCATION™

Contents

Executive Summary 1

Introduction 2

Supporting Transitions: Benefits and Policies for Working Parents 4

- Maternity and Paternity Leave Features 5
- Child Care Options for Working Parents 6
- Flexible Work Arrangements 7
- Additional Considerations for Work-Life Balance 8
- Recommendations—Educating Managers and Leaders 9

Defining Your Culture: Work-Life Integrators or Separators 10

- The Retention of Talent 12

Building a Family-Friendly Workplace 12

- Alignment to Talent Strategy 13
- The Business Case 14

Conclusion 15

- Recommendations—Best Practices for Supporting Working Parents 15
- End Notes 20

Appendices 21

- A: About the Research 21
- B: Benefits and Policies by Number of Employees 22
- C: Descriptive Statistics for Maternity and Paternity Leave Policies 25

Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

A 360° View of Family Leave: Support and Resources for Working Parents

Executive Summary

While the makeup of a traditional family is changing, the fact that working parents face a myriad of challenges has not. Parents must manage the demands of home, children, career advancement, and day-to-day tasks and priorities in their jobs. While some organizations remain unresponsive to the transitions in their employees' lives, smart companies understand that proactively supporting their employees through important life events is not just compassionate, it's good business. Offering family-friendly benefits and policies is a start, but it is not enough. The most positive impact on organizational outcomes occurs when leaders foster a conscious work-life culture that supports working parents.

This research report is a continuation work conducted in partnership between Kindercare Education and the Human Capital Institute. In 2013, we examined how family-friendly benefits and policies were impacting talent attraction and retention.[1] Today, we explored how organizations support employees as they transition into parenthood. Based on responses from nearly 400 organizations in the United States of America, we found:

- Flexible work arrangements are the least expensive policies to implement and the most popular offered.
- Most maternity and paternity leave that is taken are shorter than the time available; this is because parental leave is unpaid at the majority of organizations.

HCI Human Capital Institute
The Global Association for Strategic Talent Management

Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

- Larger organizations have more family-friendly benefits and policies including onsite and back-up child care, but the number of employees made no difference as to whether parental leave was unpaid or paid.

- In order to develop a family-friendly culture, HR practitioners and leaders are planning to develop trainings for managers on how to be supportive of the personal and family demands of their employees.

- Organizations classified as Integrators (that both offer many family-friendly benefits and policies AND hone a culture of support) experience the best talent outcomes including: higher revenue growth, lower high-performer turnover, higher employee engagement, and a stronger talent pipeline for critical positions.

- Most men and women are likely to return to work following maternity or paternity leave, but women are less likely than men. Organizational work-life Integrators rather than Separators retain more women at all employee levels after maternity leave.

- Value and culture are the top reasons for implementing family-friendly benefits and policies. It is difficult to make the business case for the offerings as the majority of organizations do not measure program outcomes.

Introduction

As work and personal time becomes more integrated, employers cannot afford to ignore major transitions in the lives of their employees, such as a new baby or caring for a sick child. In order to attract and retain top talent, how can organizations best support working parents? Flexible work arrangements are the most common policy.[2] Flexibility in where, when, and how works gets done should be a default offering rather than a perk though, as it leads to outcomes like higher retention, decreased stress, and improved health.[3] Moreover, employees with high access to flexibility are more satisfied in their jobs and less likely to leave.[4]

Beyond flexible work arrangements, an important benefit is offering parental leave that is both paid and extends beyond the mandatory twelve weeks through the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Currently, only 12% of U.S. private sector workers have access to paid family leave through their employer.[5] Paid leave is associated with a numerous benefits for mother and fathers and better health outcomes for children.[6] Attempts are being made to lessen the burden of unpaid maternity and paternity leave. President Obama's 2017 budget offers federal workers six weeks of paid administrative leave after a birth or adoption. High-profile companies like Google, Netflix, Adobe, and Microsoft are offering extended paid maternity and paternity leave as a talent attraction and retention tool.[7] Although

Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

such policies require high employer investment, especially when the employer covers full salary, studies are finding that the benefits may outweigh the costs. A survey of California employers affected by the state's paid family leave initiative found that more than 90% of organizations reported either positive or no noticeable effect on profitability, turnover, and morale since implementing the policy.[8]

Finding affordable, quality child care is another obstacle new parents must navigate. To ease the transition back into work, some organizations offer onsite child care, back-up child care, or child care subsidies or discounts. By addressing the child care needs of working families, employers can help retain working mothers. Rising costs of child care force some individuals (predominantly women, but also men) out of the workforce as the typical family spends 14% more on child care than they did in 1990 and the need for high-quality child care is increasing.[9]

While many men face similar responsibilities of balancing family and career, women are disproportionally affected by these demands. Today, 70% of mothers work and more than 40% of mothers are the primary breadwinners for their families.[10] However, in households where both partners work full-time, 41% of women report doing more child care and 30% report doing more chores.[11] Along with child care costs, this imbalance at home may cause some women to opt-out of the workforce once they have children. One-third of college educated women off-ramp their careers to care for family at some point in their lives.[12] And yet, recent business studies demonstrate clear economic benefits of attracting and retaining women in the workforce. Companies in the top quartile for gender diversity are 15% more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians.[13]

In order for business and HR leaders to respond to the realities faced by employees with children, this research report holistically examines the intersection between work and family life by showing what family-friendly policies support working parents. We explore the differences between offering family-friendly benefits and cultivating a work-life supportive culture where those benefits and policies are used and appreciated. Finally, this report details how to measure outcomes and ROI and build a business case for enacting policies that support working parents.

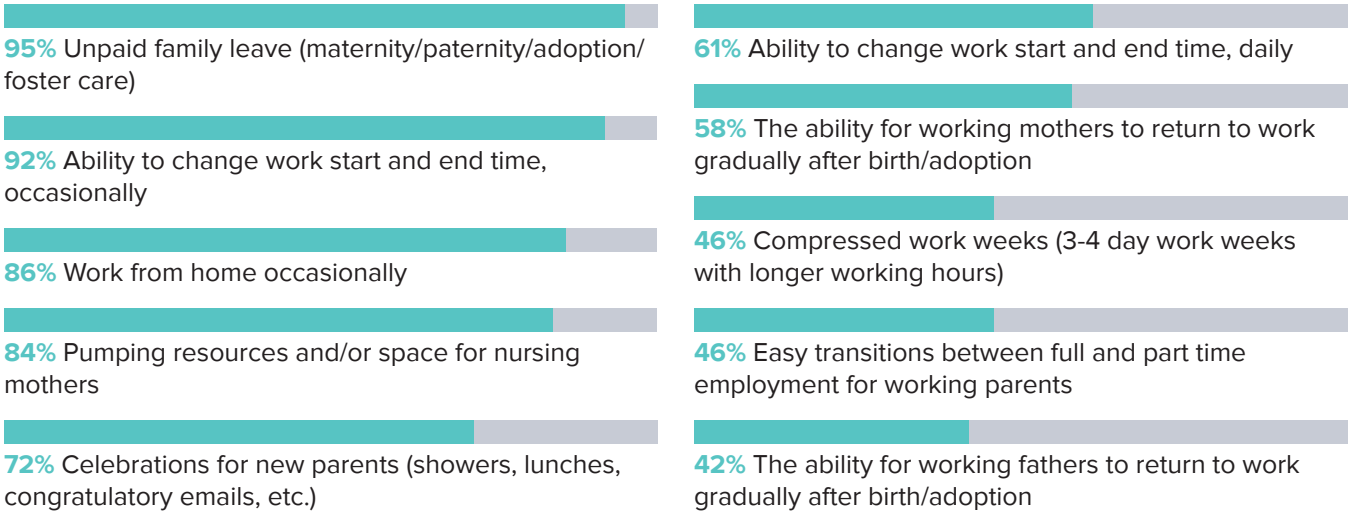
Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

Supporting Transitions: Benefits and Policies for Working Parents

Employers can offer a multitude of benefits and policies that help employees balance work and life responsibilities, thus enabling high levels of performance at work. Because each individual situation may be different, organizations that have many types of offerings are more prepared to support the transitions in their employees' lives. In this study, we are focusing on the needs of employees with children. Figure 1 lists the most popular benefits offered to workers. For United States employees, laws govern access to unpaid leave (usually under FMLA) and space for nursing mothers to pump, thus we see these as two of the most popular policies. Beyond that, flexible work arrangements are the most common offering, as the ability to work from home occasionally is available at 86% of all organizations.

The **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)** of the United States entitles eligible employees of covered employers to take unpaid, job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons with continuation of group health insurance coverage under the same terms and conditions as if the employee had not taken leave. The policy should protect twelve weeks for birth, adoption, or foster care within one year of birth or placement.

Figure 1. *The Top Ten Benefits/Policies Offered to All Employees.*



Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

Maternity and Paternity Leave Features

The majority of respondents in our research survey report that their organizations do not offer paid maternity or paternity leave, and very few companies plan to change that benefit in the near future (Table 1). In this case, paid maternity or paternity leave does not include sick or vacation time, but paid time off to care for a birth, adoption, or foster child at full or percentage of salary. Lack of access to paid leave is unfortunate as it is difficult for employees to take time off work to bond with a new child and/or recover from childbirth without an income stream. For most employees, leave taken after the birth, adoption, or placement of a foster child is supported by a patchwork of income sources: employer-paid full or partial maternity or paternity leave, short-term disability insurance, paid time off, vacation days, sick days, and/or savings.

Table 1. *Percentage of Organizations with Maternity and Paternity Leave.*

	Offered to all employees	Offered to some employees	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	Don't offer
Unpaid family leave (maternity/ paternity/adoption/foster care)	85%	10%	0%	5%
Paid maternity leave for birth (not including short-term disability)	29%	8%	7%	56%
Paid maternity leave for an adoption or foster care	30%	9%	6%	55%
Paid paternity leave for birth	26%	8%	6%	60%
Paid paternity leave for an adoption or foster care	25%	8%	6%	62%
Paid leave for an employee's spouse	8%	2%	2%	87%

There are no differences by organizational size to the number of weeks and amount of paid parental leave benefits. Unfortunately our sample size was not large enough to compare and contrast various industries and geographic regions. More similarities than differences emerge between men and women and access to paid parental leave. Both mothers and fathers take fewer weeks than are available to them and most of their time off is unpaid (Tables 2 and 3). However, women are eligible for more paid weeks and take more time off for any new child situation, whether through birth, adoption, or foster care.

Table 2. *Mean Number of Weeks for Maternity Leave Policies (n=127).*

	Weeks in Policy	Weeks Unpaid	Weeks Paid at Percentage of Salary	Weeks Paid at Full Salary	Number of Weeks Taken per Leave
Birth of child(ren)	12.60	8.71	2.35	2.57	10.53
Adoption of child(ren)	11.46	8.69	1.18	2.08	7.10
Foster care of child(ren)	10.09	7.87	1.12	1.65	5.76

Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

Table 3. *Mean Number of Weeks for Paternity Leave Policies* (n = *127*).

	Weeks in Policy	Weeks Unpaid	Weeks Paid at Percentage of Salary	Weeks Paid at Full Salary	Number of Weeks Taken per Leave
Birth of child(ren)	10.30	8.72	0.90	1.28	4.31
Adoption of child(ren)	10.24	8.57	0.90	1.32	3.80
Foster care of child(ren)	9.08	7.84	0.84	0.91	3.30

Child Care Options for Working Parents

Access to high-quality child care after parental leave ends helps ease employees' transition back to work. Larger organizations are more likely to offer onsite child care, child care subsidies and discounts, and back-up, emergency, or sick child care (Appendix B). At the very least, one quarter of employers report providing resources and information about local child care options for their employees. When regular child care options fall through because of a holiday, illness, or an emergency, a back-up care option eases the stress placed on the parent. As one research interviewee says:

> *"We receive great feedback on the back-up child care program. Employees think that it is a valuable resource and helps them transition back to work after parental leave and helps them when they do have that emergency and they need to get to work."*
>
> – VP of Benefits at Large Financial Institution

Table 4. *Percentage of Organizations with Child Care Offerings.*

	Offered to all employees	Offered to some employees	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	Don't offer
Resources/information for new parents about local child care options	24%	1%	3%	72%
Child care subsidies and/or discounts	11%	2%	1%	86%
Back-up, emergency, or sick child care	5%	1%	1%	93%
Onsite child care	3%	2%	1%	94%

Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

Flexible Work Arrangements

Because of increasing expectations of flexibility in where, when, and how work gets done, and the low cost of enacting such a policy, flexible working arrangements are a popular and attractive option offered by nearly all employers we surveyed. The most common policies allow employees to occasionally alter the beginning and end of the work day and to work from home. Important events in children's lives do not have to be skipped by working parents because employers allow fluidity in time management. Manger-employee expectations for flexible work should be clarified prior to starting a new arrangement. Although seldom offered, trainings on how to best utilize flexible work arrangements are helpful to ensure performance and engagement levels stay high among working parents.

Table 5. *Percentage of Organizations with Flexible Work Arrangements.*

	Offered to all employees	Offered to some employees	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	Don't offer
Ability to change work start and end time, occasionally	48%	44%	0%	8%
The ability for working mothers to return to work gradually after birth/adoption	31%	27%	3%	39%
The ability for working fathers to return to work gradually after birth/adoption	25%	17%	2%	57%
Easy transitions between full and part time employment for working parents	22%	24%	2%	52%
Work from home occasionally	21%	65%	1%	14%
Ability to change work start and end time, daily	21%	40%	1%	39%
Compressed work weeks (3-4 day work weeks with longer working hours)	13%	33%	4%	50%
Training for employees/managers on how to best use flexible work arrangements	12%	7%	8%	73%
Sabbaticals (paid leave of six months or more)	4%	6%	1%	89%
Work from home daily	2%	39%	1%	58%
Job sharing (part-time employees share a full-time job)	1%	11%	2%	85%

Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

Additional Considerations for Work-Life Balance

Beyond the major considerations for working parents such as parental leave, child care, and flexible work arrangements, discrete benefits and policies can have an impact on how family-friendly an organization is. Consideration of the benefits and polices in Table 6 enable employers to take a 360-degree view of issues that affect working parents, but most of these are not widely available in the organizations surveyed. Only 40% of respondents report that their organization develops plans to help manage the workload of a parent on leave by effectively allocating responsibilities and resources to other individuals. Haphazard planning for an upcoming leave burdens co-workers and puts extra stress on a new parent. In addition, the majority of organizations surveyed do not offer managers training or information about how to best support the personal and family lives of their employees. Very few organizations offer workplace perks such as onsite fitness centers, meal delivery, and concierge services to employees that help them manage their busy lives. While these offerings may be useful to some, it is important to match employee needs to what the company can realistically accommodate.

Table 6. *Percentage of Organizations with Additional Parental Benefits or Policies.*

	Offered to all employees	Offered to some employees	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	Don't offer
Pumping resources and/or space for nursing mothers	77%	7%	2%	13%
Celebrations for new parents (showers, lunches, congratulatory emails, etc.)	54%	18%	0%	28%
Formal plans to manage employees' workload during their parental leave	29%	11%	4%	55%
Training for managers on supportive work-life benefits and policies	16%	6%	11%	68%
Paid benefits to help cover the costs of adoption or reproductive services	12%	3%	2%	83%
Women's Employee Resource Groups (ERG)	11%	3%	5%	81%
Working parents' Employee Resource Groups (ERG)	5%	1%	4%	90%
Re-entry programs for parents transitioning back into the workforce	4%	2%	3%	91%
Onsite fitness centers	25%	12%	3%	60%
Meal preparation and delivery	8%	4%	0%	88%
Onsite concierge services	4%	3%	1%	92%

Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

Recommendations—Educating Managers and Leaders

Among those organizations that educate employees on family-friendly benefits and policies, respondents describe the training(s) in place for senior leaders and/or managers.

Coach to change attitudes.

- *"[Provide] **one-on-one coaching** from HR to those leaders that are resistant. More follow-up is needed to keep leaders interested in outcomes instead of daily absence critique."*

Help managers understand the differing needs and perspectives of their employees.

- *"We hold trainings for managers and have discussions about the different needs and diversity of our associates. Managers are encouraged to know a little bit about each of their associates and what their individual needs might be. All department managers **are required to attend these trainings**. We have had some success in helping managers be more aware of needs of their people. We have plans to put more efforts into this in the coming year."*

- *"We give information on how to balance work with the daily issues popping up in personal lives for the senior leader, and **identifying warning signs that their employees may be struggling**. We also reinforce the training with reminders for the services in this realm provided by our Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Senior leadership and other selected managers participate in the training. Outcomes have been positive as training attendees learned strategies for coping with the work/life balance and identifying resources for assistance."*

Make ongoing training and information available for managers.

- *"We have a 'quick start' training for new managers on FMLA; we also offer a formal training for new managers and we have **monthly ongoing training** on FMLA for managers when they need a refresher or have an employee going out for the first time."*

- *"We make part of the general manager training available **on-demand via [an] online training library**."*

- *"We hold monthly 'brown bag' lunches that cover a particular topic. For example, FMLA, LOA, work-life balance, etc. In addition to the topic of the month, we also do formalized quarterly trainings which all leadership attends. This has helped to reduce [negative] perceptions, enables Q&A, and the leadership team is equipped to answer employees' questions the right away. **It has fostered a more supportive environment**."*

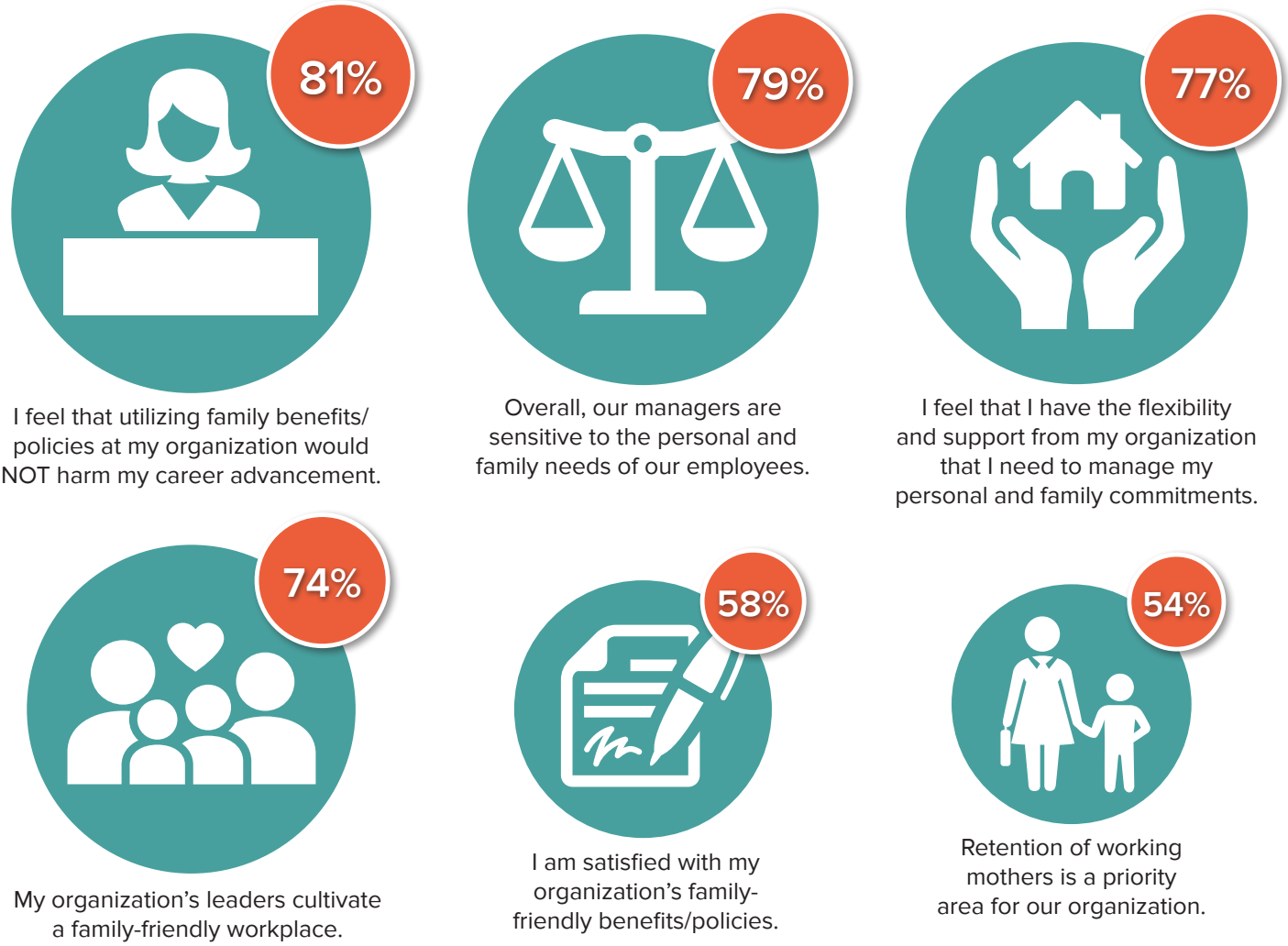
Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

Defining Your Culture: Work-Life Integrators or Separators

There is a notable difference between offering many family-friendly benefits and policies and developing a culture where such offerings are widely used and appreciated by employees. The tone of managers and senior leaders combined with observations of the application of policies may dissuade employees from taking full advantage of the benefits available to them. For example, a new dad may work from home a few days per week but his manager schedules in-person meetings without a conference line; or a new mom takes four weeks fewer of maternity leave due to fear of missing out on the promotion she is in line for. Thus, beyond offering family-friendly policies, it is important to determine whether your organization effectively supports or hinders a work-life balance.

We developed a measure to capture how supportive an organizational culture is as to the integration or separation of work-life demands. The statements in the Work-Life Support measure are found in Figure 2.

Figure 2. *Percentage Strongly Agree/Agree with Each of the Statements in the Work-Life Support Measure (alpha = .90).*



Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

This survey had 32 different benefits and policies and the mean number of offerings was 11. The mean score for the Work-Life support measure was 3.8 (on a 5-point scale). We high/low mean split the number of offerings and the Work-Life Support to determine the Work-Life Classification (Figure 3). One third of respondent organizations are Integrators, meaning they have above average Work-Life support and have more than the average number of family-friendly benefits and policies. Integrators report better talent and business outcomes. They report higher revenue growth, lower attrition of high performers, increased employee engagement, and a stronger talent pipeline for critical positions (Figure 4). Having a supportive culture with many offerings for working parents is associated more successful talent management practices and better business results.

Figure 3. *Respondents' Organization Work-Life Classification* (n = 265)

		ORGANIZATIONAL WORK-LIFE SUPPORT	
		Low	High
NUMBER OF BENEFITS/POLICIES	High	Dissuader **11%**	Integrator **33%**
	Low	Separator **29%**	Well-Intentioned **27%**

INTEGRATOR

Organizations that offer many benefits/policies for their employees that help them manage work and personal time, as well as foster a culture that allows employees to use the benefits and demonstrates that organization is supportive of their personal demands.

SEPARATOR

Organizations that have low work-life offerings and employees perceive them as being unsupportive, or in conflict of, their personal demands.

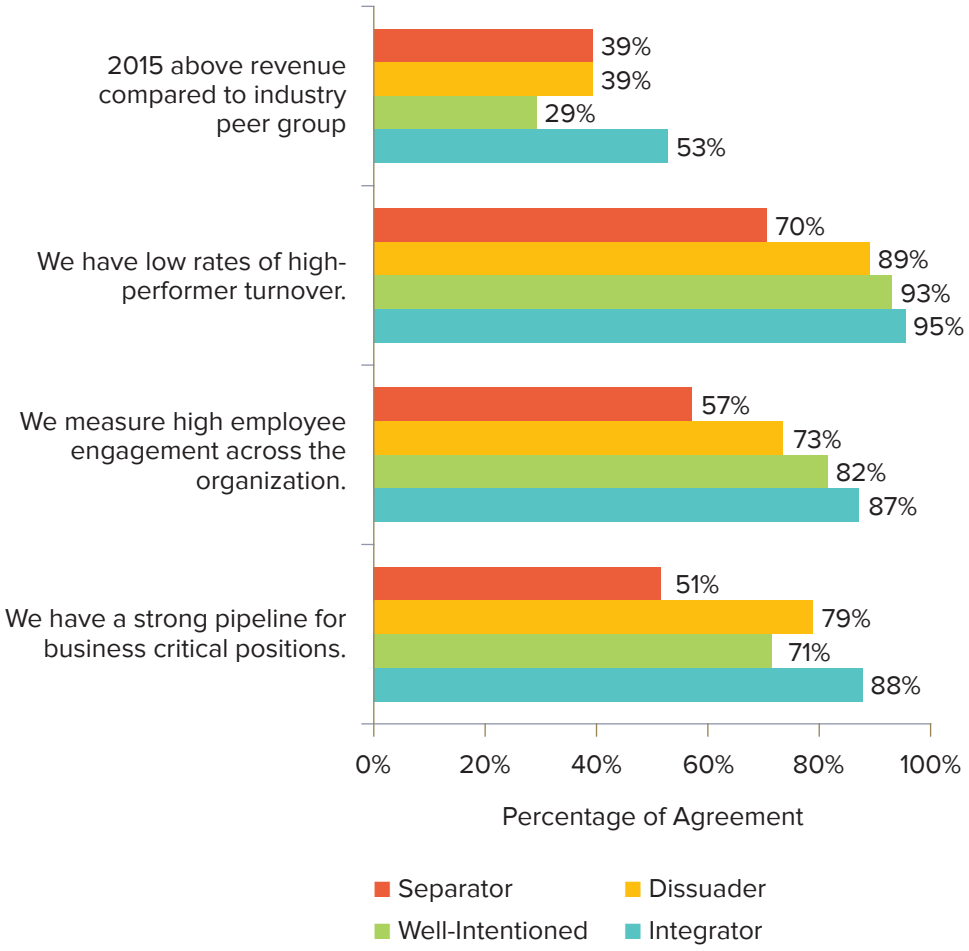
DISSUADER

Organizations that offer many work-life benefits/policies, yet employees perceive them as being unsupportive and most likely do not make use of the offerings.

WELL-INTENTIONED

Organizations with low numbers of work-life offerings, but employees perceive the organization as being supportive of their personal demands.

Figure 4. *Work-Life Classification by Business Outcomes.*

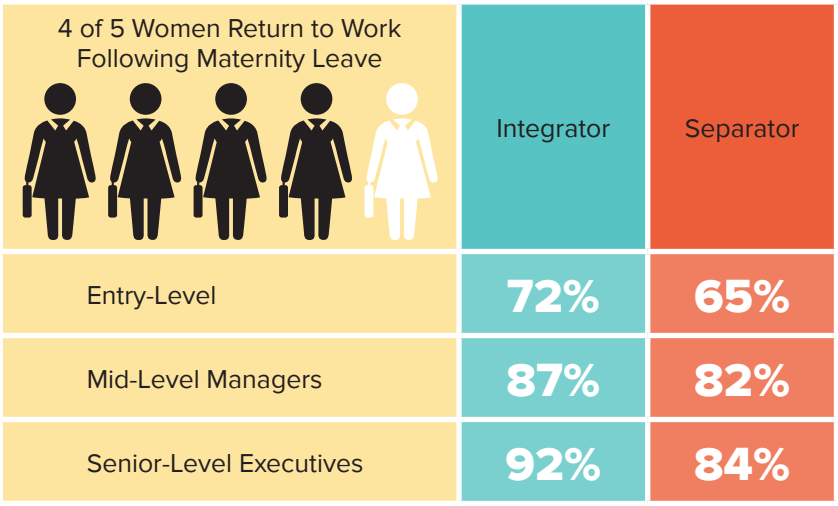


Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

The Retention of Talent

In our study we found that the majority of male and female employees are likely to return to work following parental leave. Interestingly, there was no difference in turnover rates for male employees by Organizational Work-Life classification, but there was a difference in female turnover rates. Integrator organizations are more likely than Separator organizations to retain women at all organizational levels following maternity leave. Women at entry-levels are more likely to opt-out of the workforce following a birth or the adoption/foster of a child (Figure 5), most likely because they earn less than women in leadership roles.

Figure 5. *Percentage of respondents who say 75% to 100% of women return to work following a birth, adoption, or foster care (i.e., does not turnover).*



Women with increased access to organizational support through family-friendly benefits and policies are less likely to leave a company after maternity leave. Men and women working in Integrator organizations (versus the other categories) have access to more weeks of paid leave and thus take more time for parental leave. Women at Integrators on average take 12 weeks of maternity leave for a birth of a child, compared to 9 weeks for those at Separator companies. Access to paid leave may be one of the reasons why mothers choose to stay in the workforce.

Building a Family-Friendly Workplace

To realize critical talent and organizational outcomes, employers must make family-friendly benefits and policies available, but also build and maintain a culture of work-life support and integration. Part of that cultural shift is controlled by managers' attitudes toward family-friendly workplaces. Thus, our respondents indicate that plans are in place to train managers on how they can be more supportive of working parents (Table 6). In addition, 42% of HR respondents report that they are planning to make changes to the parental leave policies in their organizations over the next 2 to 3 years. Changes are sorely needed as the United States is one of the few countries that does not guarantee paid leave for a birth, adoption, or

Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

"I think it is really about how you roll the benefit out. First, you need to know that the benefit is a desire. Will it be utilized? Will it have that impact? Is it really addressing top of mind issues for our employees today, and what is the sustainability of that?"

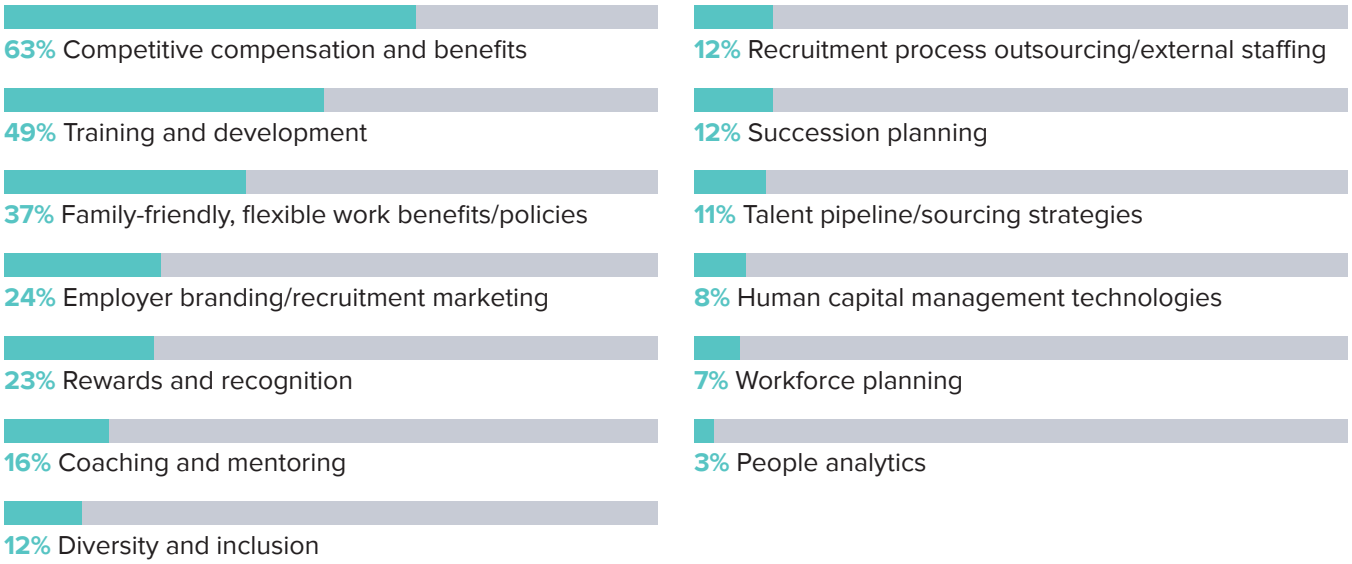
—VP of Benefits, Large Technology Company

foster care.[14] The majority of survey respondents believe that this issue should be changed. Fifty-nine percent agree that the United States should have government-sponsored paid maternity leave and 54% agree that the United States should have government-sponsored paid paternity leave.

Alignment to Talent Strategy

Before you add, remove, or modify any family-friendly benefit or policy, HR practitioners should evaluate how it fits into their organization's talent strategy. The talent strategy determines what areas or programs require investment in order to attract, retain, and engage key talent. For most organizations, competitive compensation and benefits, training and development, and family-friendly/flexible work benefits and policies are the top three areas for investment (Figure 6). Organizations classified as Integrators (versus Separators) are more likely to say family-friendly benefits and policies are part of their talent strategy.

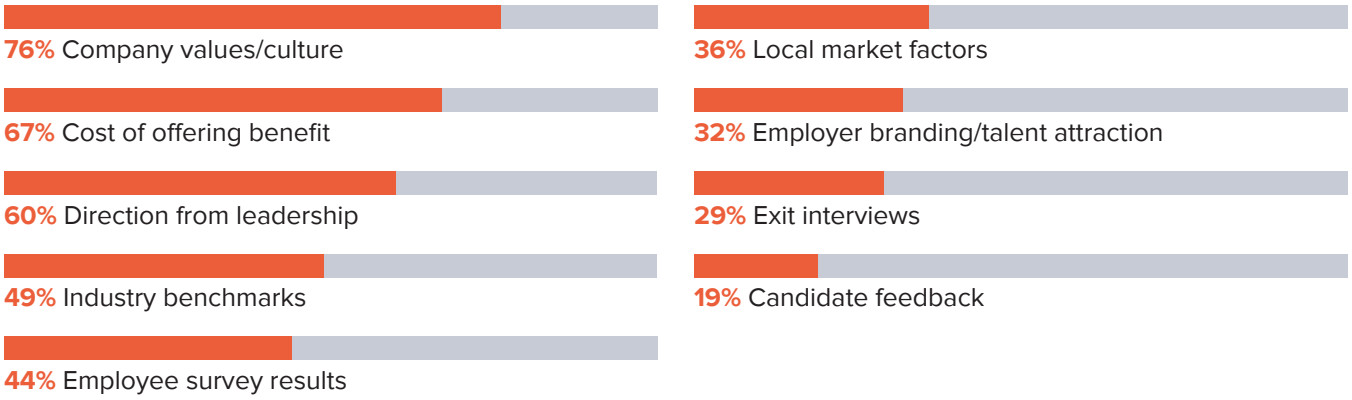
Figure 6. *Talent Strategy Investments (Respondents Chose Their Top Three).*



After determining the features of your talent strategy, HR leaders and practitioners must research and assess what family-friendly benefits and policies to offer. This decision should be made after considering a multitude of factors. Company values and culture, cost, and direction from leadership are most important determinants of whether or not to offer a work-life benefit or policy (Figure 7).

Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

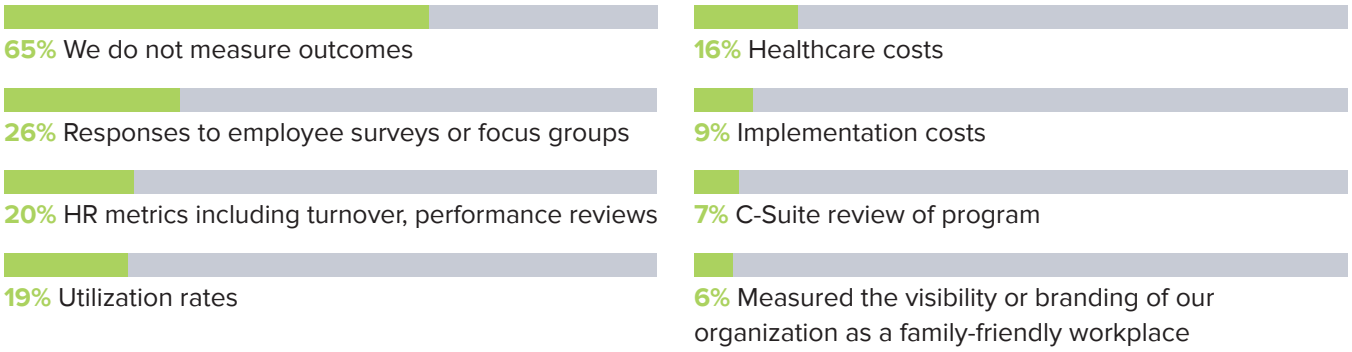
Figure 7. *Consideration Factors for Creating Family-Friendly Benefits and Policies (Respondents Selected All That Apply).*



The Business Case

Finally, as you build a family-friendly workplace, continuous evaluation of your offerings is a best practice. Sixty-five percent of survey respondents do not measure the impact or ROI of their family-friendly benefits. Employee surveys, HR metrics, and utilization rates are the most common methods used to evaluate these programs, and they are the easiest to implement. The business case for an offering depends on the measurement of outcomes. HR practitioners should consider ways to model ROI before implementation and evaluate ROI during the program, lest you risk failing to establish the family-friendly culture you wanted.

Figure 8. *What Does Your Organization Use to Measure the Outcomes or Return on Investment (ROI) of its Family-friendly Benefits/Policies? (Respondents Selected All That Apply).*



Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

Conclusion

Employers can either ignore or support their employees as they transition through major life stages, such as having children or caring for sick, aging parents. As companies compete for top talent and refine their talent strategy, it is recommended that they provide resources to help working parents manage the demands placed on them by work and family. Not all employees have or will have children and expectations for working parents should not be lowered, but ignoring major changes in employees' lives risks losing those employees who are stretched between work and home. This results in an additional burden to the co-workers and managers of working parents. HR leaders and practitioners must take a holistic, 360-degree view of the lives of the workers in their organizations and seriously consider offering resources for all aspects of having a child from flexible work policies, to child care, to support before, during, and after maternity and paternity leave.

Recommendations—Best Practices for Supporting Working Parents

As this research indicates, there are multitudes of ways companies can support working parents. Our HR survey respondents share best practices from their experiences around how organizations can support employees who are parents. The recommendations below provide an initial step-by-step outline of how your organization and its leaders can approach the development and implementation of family-friendly benefits and policies that encourage and support parents.

BEFORE PARENTAL LEAVE STARTS

1. Begin with a clear foundation and positive approach.

An organizations' decision to offer family-friendly policies and benefits for working parents should be dictated by what its employees need and want. Parents can proffer from many perks, but determining a clear rationale and adopting a positive mindset and approach toward enacting those policies is key.

No great employee—parent or not—wants to be a burden to his or her co-workers or hinder the success of the organization. Establishing a positive dialogue upfront and supporting your employees as they go through these transitions helps build engagement and maintain a positive, collaborative culture where new experiences are shared and celebrated.

Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

*"I think it is important to conduct a comprehensive **needs assessments**—what do your employees want? It is important to understand the audience, what are their needs, what are the demographics so you know more about the type of services they need based on their time of life."*

*"We treat [becoming a parent or having a child] as something **to celebrate**, not a burden or cause for the impacted employee to have feelings of 'not being a team player' or guilt over the '**burden to the team**,'—[these are things we know] lead to a fractured working relationship and disengagement."*

*"Be supportive and let [parents on leave] know they have a job waiting when they are ready. **Help them identify needs** they haven't considered and help with exiting and reintegration."*

*"...Employees need to be encouraged more that **work will be taken care of while they are out**. It is easy to be overwhelmed during that timeframe. Employers need to allow both parents time to bond with the child and family and not feel rushed back into working."*

*"Foster an environment of support and encouragement for employees to take the time they need [as their family grows]. **Very rarely has this been 'abused'** which is commonly a fear in these kinds of programs. I have also initiated PTO donation programs with success that has helped employees be able to supplement their wages."*

2. Determine a menu of standard benefits that support working parents.

Admittedly, no working parent is the same. Smart organizations consider what benefits and policies will be most successful for their employees and offer a menu of these offerings that they can take advantage of. These benefits and policies include paid parental leave, flexible schedule options, and child care support and/or subsidies. While these options are not without cost, they can have a big impact on the health and well-being of working parents, and can actively support the engagement and performance of these employees.

*"Paid paternity and maternity leave, aside from short term disability, is a major attraction for recruiting top talent, **though it does not seem to be widely used, and is something** that seems to be viewed as 'progressive' rather than the standard (speaking generally in the U.S versus other western countries)."*

*"We automatically enroll all eligible employees in company **short-term disability plan**."*

*"Resources could include extended paid leave, ability to work from home, flex schedule as needed, subsidies for **back-up child care for sick days and business travel, subsidized child care, and onsite child care**."*

Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

"Child care is always an issue. I know that some companies offer onsite child care which would ***relieve new parents' fears*** *of the care their children are receiving. Also, the ability to check on them during a break can also calm the feelings of guilt from returning to work."*

"Flexibility is key, whether it be work scheduling, the ability to go to the nursing mothers room during the day, or temporarily go to part time while your child is young. Typically, I would say that parents would ***give 110% if they had more flexibility to work with****. Most feel they are already at a disadvantage or being scrutinized more because they are parents."*

"We have an ***excused absence policy*** *that allows for children's appointments and illnesses without punishing parents for missing work."*

"We provide ***onsite pumping and milk storage*** *locations for nursing mothers to use."*

3. Clearly communicate policies and benefits to employees.

While seemingly simple, ensuring that employees understand the benefits available to them as parents is essential to the application and appreciation of such benefits. Working parents are often faced with situations that require them to work odd hours, take time off to care for a sick child, and other scenarios that arise quickly and without much warning. A clear recognition of the resources that are available to help employees in these types of situations ensures that the benefits the organization has worked to identify and offer are taken advantage of.

Moreover, communication of these policies among managers and employees is vital. This type of exchange fosters manager trust and collaboration, which play a crucial role during the transition of an employee returning to work after the birth or adoption of a child.

"We have a ***new parents' survival guide****. It is a brochure that we created that is mailed home when an employee goes out on a parental leave. The brochure lists all of the different resources that are available."*

"Communication is the key. Let the parents know beforehand what their partial pay will be, and about the opportunity to work from home if their job permits. During the leave, ***communication between the employee and the manager*** *is crucial for the relationship to continue positively."*

Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

BEFORE AND DURING PARENTAL LEAVE

4. Develop plans and communicate expectations for coverage.

One of the most nerve-wracking parts facing parents taking leave is the concern that their work and responsibilities will be neglected. Therefore, developing a comprehensive plan for coverage of key duties is a best practice. This enables the parent to feel more comfortable about taking leave, and also helps employees who are helping cover those responsibilities clearly understand the additional expectations upon them. Proactive organizations take this a step even further by outlining and enacting a communication plan with parents on leave, allowing them to stay updated on organizational progress, and continuing a dialogue with their colleagues.

*"The best practice is to **complete a plan** for parental leave so there are no surprises. The employee feels supported, and you can give the employee some peace of mind as to the delegation of [their] work."*

*"An agreement is commenced before the period of extended absence between the individual and the line manager where they consider **the appropriate amount of communication** between the staff member and the line manager during the period of absence. The staff member can state the preferred channels and frequency of communication, and if they wish to be included in weekly newsletters or all-staff emails during their leave."*

*"Coverage plans/succession plans that are determined and communicated before the leave are critical. **Regular check-ins** during leave ensure the employee is doing well."*

AFTER PARENTAL LEAVE

5. Build in transition plans to support re-orientation.

Equally as important as plans prior to a leave of absence are the plans in place to help an employee get back up to speed when they return. Especially after maternity leave, this re-orientation period is crucial. Many things can happen in an organization in a few months, and returning parents need to be aware of these shifts so they can transition back to work more effectively. Some organizations have taken the liberty of offering a gradual ramp-up timeline for mothers and fathers returning from leave, and have also implemented cohorts of working parents that can support one another during this transition.

Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

*"A **parental transitions program** is available to all employees with 6 months service. This program includes 16 weeks paid leave (or 32 weeks at half pay), regular luncheons with child care provided (to give employee an update of the business and a chance to catch up with colleagues), in-house child care center (in head office only at this stage), and a flexible working policy. The introduction **of this program has seen return to work rate increase to over 90%."***

---

*"Our company is smaller and we have time and resources that can be allocated to help parents transition back into their workforce. This program is similar to **onboarding a rehire**. Manager, employee, and dedicated resources participate in re-entry."*

---

*"After their leave, a **re-orientation** needs to occur. In the time missed, projects have moved along or been completed, key contacts may have left, and focuses have shifted. The employee will need to be brought up to speed on these changes in order to fully contribute quickly to the team."*

---

*"**Reduced work schedule options** upon return from leave—for example, beginning at 80% or 60% back either for an extended period of time—as a transition back into the business (3-6 months) is a valuable offering."*

---

*"After the leave ends, when the parents are returning to work, **give support and connect them** with other parents or nursing mothers. Help them coordinate a schedule with their manager that works for their new family life."*

Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

End Notes

1. Filipkowski, J. N. (2013). The family-friendly workplace: Integrating employees' work and life and the impact on talent attraction and retention. *Human Capital Institute*. Retrieved from http://www.hci.org/hr-research/family-friendly-workplace-integrating-employees-work-and-life-and-impact-talent

2. See Note 1.

3. Moen, P., Kelly, E. L., Fan, W., Lee, S-R., Almeida, D., Kossek, E., & Buxton, O. (2016, January 13). Does a flexibility/support organizational initiative improve high-tech employees' well-being? Evidence from the Work, Family and Health Network. *American Sociological Review, 81(1)*. Retrieved from http://asr.sagepub.com/content/81/1/134.abstract

4. Galinsky, E., & Matos, K. (2011). Workplace Flexibility in the United States. Retrieved from http://familiesandwork.org/site/research/reports/www_us_workflex.pdf

5. DOL Factsheet: Paid Family and Medical Leave. (2015, June). Retrieved from https://www.dol.gov/wb/PaidLeave/PaidLeave.htm

6. Gibson, K. (2016, April 7). Paid parental leave: Finally coming to America? *CBS News*. Retrieved from http://www.cbsnews.com/news/paid-parental-leave-finally-coming-to-america/

7. See Note 6.

8. The Economics of Paid and Unpaid Leave. (2014, June). Retrieved from https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/leave_report_final.pdf

9. Samuels, C. (2015, May 28). How Much Are You Paying for Child Care? Maybe Not as Much as You Think. *Edweek*. Retrieved from http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/early_years/2015/05/how_much_are_you_paying_for_child_care_maybe_not_as_much_as_you_think.html

10. The American family today. (2015, December 17). *Pew Social Trends*. Retrieved from http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/12/17/1-the-american-family-today/

11. Women in the Workplace. (2015). *McKinsey & Company*. Retrieved from http://womenintheworkplace.com/ui/pdfs/Women_in_the_Workplace_2015.pdf

12. Programs to help women relaunch careers plummeted during recession. (2014, October 17). *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/local/wp/2014/10/17/back-to-work-women-whove-opted-out-face-stigma-struggle-to-get-back-in/

13. See Note 11.

14. Family and Medical Leave Act. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.dol.gov/whd/fmla/

Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

Appendices

Appendix A. About the Research

From April 11 to May 2, 2016, a survey link was distributed via e-mail to a 25-item questionnaire to opt-in members of HCI's Survey Panel and electronic mailings. The research survey was promoted on HCI's social media channels and on HCI.org. We received 347 completed questionnaires. Because family and parental leave policies differ based on country-specific laws and we did not have a large enough sample from each specific country to make comparisons, this research report only includes survey results from 286 respondents who work in the United States of America.

Demographics

Level of Seniority	%
C-level	4%
VP-level	8%
Director-level	27%
Manager-level	41%
Individual contributor	20%

Number of Employees	%
Under 100	17%
> 100 and ≤ 1,000	43%
> 1,000 and ≤ 5,000	20%
> 5,000 and ≤ 10,000	7%
> 10,000 and ≤ 50,000	10%
> 50,000	3%

Function	%
Human Resources/Talent Management	95%
Executive Management	5%

Industry	%
Manufacturing	16%
Financial Services/Real Estate/Insurance	16%
Business/Professional Services	11%
Non-Profit	10%
IT Hardware/Software	6%
Government	6%

Note. *n* = 286. Only categories with at least 6% of the sample are displayed.

Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

Appendix B. Benefits and Policies by Number of Employees

		Number of Employees		
		Less than 100 (A)	Between 100 and 1,000 (B)	Greater than 1,000 (C)
Child Care				
Onsite child care[b,c]	Offered to all employees	0%	1%	8%
	Offered to some employees	0%	1%	4%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	0%	1%	2%
	Don't offer	100%	98%	87%
Child care subsidies and/or discounts[a,b,c]	Offered to all employees	2%	8%	17%
	Offered to some employees	0%	2%	3%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	0%	1%	1%
	Don't offer	98%	90%	79%
Back-up, emergency, or sick child care[a,b,c]	Offered to all employees	0%	2%	11%
	Offered to some employees	0%	1%	1%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	0%	1%	1%
	Don't offer	100%	96%	87%
Resources/information for new parents about local child care options[b,c]	Offered to all employees	15%	19%	34%
	Offered to some employees	2%	2%	1%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	2%	4%	0%
	Don't offer	80%	75%	65%
Parental Leave				
Unpaid family leave (maternity/paternity/adoption/foster care)	Offered to all employees	81%	84%	87%
	Offered to some employees	8%	11%	9%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	0%	0%	1%
	Don't offer	10%	5%	4%
Paid maternity leave for birth (not including short-term disability)	Offered to all employees	35%	29%	27%
	Offered to some employees	4%	7%	12%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	4%	8%	6%
	Don't offer	56%	56%	55%
Paid maternity leave for an adoption or foster care	Offered to all employees	33%	28%	32%
	Offered to some employees	2%	7%	14%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	4%	8%	6%
	Don't offer	61%	57%	49%
Paid paternity leave for birth	Offered to all employees	26%	28%	26%
	Offered to some employees	2%	7%	11%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	4%	7%	6%
	Don't offer	67%	58%	57%
Paid paternity leave for an adoption or foster care	Offered to all employees	26%	24%	26%
	Offered to some employees	2%	7%	12%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	2%	8%	5%
	Don't offer	70%	61%	57%
Paid leave for an employee's spouse	Offered to all employees	6%	7%	10%
	Offered to some employees	0%	2%	4%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	2%	2%	2%
	Don't offer	91%	88%	85%

Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

Flexible Work Arrangements				
Easy transitions between full and part time employment for working parents	Offered to all employees	21%	24%	19%
	Offered to some employees	25%	22%	24%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	0%	2%	4%
	Don't offer	54%	52%	53%
The ability for working mothers to return to work gradually after birth/adoption/ foster care	Offered to all employees	40%	31%	28%
	Offered to some employees	15%	25%	32%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	2%	5%	1%
	Don't offer	44%	39%	39%
The ability for working fathers to return to work gradually after birth/adoption/ foster care	Offered to all employees	33%	24%	22%
	Offered to some employees	13%	15%	19%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	2%	4%	0%
	Don't offer	52%	57%	59%
Ability to change work start and end time, occasionally[b,c]	Offered to all employees	67%	54%	33%
	Offered to some employees	25%	40%	57%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	0%	1%	0%
	Don't offer	8%	6%	10%
Ability to change work start and end time, daily	Offered to all employees	25%	25%	15%
	Offered to some employees	33%	33%	50%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	0%	2%	0%
	Don't offer	42%	41%	35%
Compressed work weeks (3-4 day work weeks with longer working hours)[b]	Offered to all employees	15%	14%	13%
	Offered to some employees	29%	24%	44%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	6%	5%	1%
	Don't offer	50%	57%	43%
Sabbaticals (paid leave of six months or more)[c]	Offered to all employees	4%	3%	5%
	Offered to some employees	0%	3%	11%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	2%	1%	2%
	Don't offer	94%	93%	82%
Work from home occasionally	Offered to all employees	35%	23%	13%
	Offered to some employees	46%	67%	71%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	2%	0%	1%
	Don't offer	17%	10%	15%
Work from home daily[b]	Offered to all employees	6%	2%	1%
	Offered to some employees	21%	36%	51%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	0%	1%	1%
	Don't offer	73%	60%	47%
Training for employees and managers on how to best use flexible work arrangements	Offered to all employees	15%	8%	15%
	Offered to some employees	4%	3%	12%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	4%	12%	5%
	Don't offer	77%	77%	68%
Job sharing (part-time employees share a full-time job)[b,c]	Offered to all employees	2%	2%	1%
	Offered to some employees	0%	5%	24%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	2%	2%	2%
	Don't offer	96%	91%	73%
Re-entry programs for parents transitioning back into the workforce after an extended time away to raise a family	Offered to all employees	2%	2%	6%
	Offered to some employees	2%	2%	2%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	2%	2%	5%
	Don't offer	94%	93%	88%

Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

Supportive Resources				
Paid benefits to help cover the costs of adoption or reproductive services[b,c]	Offered to all employees	6%	10%	18%
	Offered to some employees	0%	1%	7%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	2%	2%	2%
	Don't offer	92%	87%	74%
Pumping resources and/or space for nursing mothers[a,b]	Offered to all employees	60%	83%	79%
	Offered to some employees	6%	4%	12%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	0%	3%	1%
	Don't offer	33%	10%	8%
Celebrations for new parents (showers, lunches, congratulatory emails, etc.)[b,c]	Offered to all employees	77%	61%	36%
	Offered to some employees	8%	13%	28%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	0%	1%	0%
	Don't offer	15%	25%	37%
Trainings for leaders and managers on how to be supportive of family and personal lives of their employees[a,c]	Offered to all employees	25%	7%	20%
	Offered to some employees	4%	5%	8%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	8%	15%	7%
	Don't offer	63%	74%	65%
Working parents' Employee Resource Groups (ERG)[b,c]	Offered to all employees	2%	2%	9%
	Offered to some employees	0%	1%	3%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	2%	5%	3%
	Don't offer	96%	92%	86%
Women's Employee Resource Groups (ERG)[b,c]	Offered to all employees	2%	5%	23%
	Offered to some employees	0%	1%	7%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	2%	6%	4%
	Don't offer	96%	89%	66%
Formal plans to manage employees' workload during their parental leave	Offered to all employees	44%	28%	24%
	Offered to some employees	2%	12%	15%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	0%	7%	2%
	Don't offer	54%	54%	59%
Wellness/Lifestyle				
Onsite fitness centers[c]	Offered to all employees	25%	23%	28%
	Offered to some employees	8%	7%	18%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	4%	2%	3%
	Don't offer	63%	68%	52%
Meal preparation and delivery[a]	Offered to all employees	4%	7%	11%
	Offered to some employees	0%	2%	7%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	0%	0%	0%
	Don't offer	96%	90%	82%
Onsite concierge services	Offered to all employees	2%	3%	5%
	Offered to some employees	4%	2%	4%
	Planning to offer in 2-3 years	0%	2%	1%
	Don't offer	94%	93%	90%

Note.

Number of employees: less than 100 (n = 48), between 100 and 1,000 (n = 123), and greater than 1,000 (*n* = 113)

U.S.-based sample only

a = Statistically significant t-test difference between groups (A) and (B), $p<.05$

b = Statistically significant t-test difference between groups (A) and (C), $p<.05$

c = Statistically significant t-test difference between groups (B) and (C), $p<.05$

Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

Appendix C. Descriptive Statistics for Maternity and Paternity Leave Policies

Leave Situation	Statistic	Number of Weeks Available in Policy	Number of Weeks Unpaid	Number of Weeks Paid at Percentage of Salary	Number of Weeks Paid at Full Salary	Number of Weeks Taken for Leave
Maternity leave for birth of child(ren)	Mean	12.60	8.71	2.35	2.57	10.53
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean (lower)	11.62	7.46	1.69	1.84	9.87
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean (upper)	13.57	9.96	3.00	3.30	11.20
	5% Trimmed Mean	12.20	8.13	1.94	2.09	10.58
	Median	12.00	10.00	0.00	0.00	12.00
	Std. Deviation	5.49	7.01	3.67	4.10	3.73
	Minimum	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Maximum	52.00	52.00	12.00	18.00	18.00
Maternity leave for adoption of child(ren)	Mean	11.46	8.69	1.18	2.08	7.10
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean (lower)	10.45	7.42	0.64	1.41	6.18
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean (upper)	12.47	9.95	1.71	2.76	8.03
	5% Trimmed Mean	11.28	8.21	0.68	1.61	6.99
	Median	12.00	12.00	0.00	0.00	8.00
	Std. Deviation	5.66	7.11	3.01	3.80	5.20
	Minimum	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Maximum	52.00	52.00	12.00	16.00	18.00
Maternity leave for the foster care of child(ren)	Mean	10.09	7.87	1.12	1.65	5.76
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean (lower)	8.89	6.55	0.59	1.03	4.78
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean (upper)	11.29	9.19	1.65	2.26	6.74
	5% Trimmed Mean	9.77	7.30	0.61	1.13	5.55
	Median	12.00	10.00	0.00	0.00	6.00
	Std. Deviation	6.75	7.42	2.99	3.45	5.52
	Minimum	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Maximum	52.00	52.00	12.00	16.00	16.00
Paternity leave for birth of child(ren)	Mean	10.30	8.72	0.90	1.28	4.31
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean (lower)	9.20	7.51	0.40	0.77	3.55
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean (upper)	11.40	9.93	1.39	1.79	5.08
	5% Trimmed Mean	10.14	8.39	0.37	0.77	4.06
	Median	12.00	12.00	0.00	0.00	2.00
	Std. Deviation	6.18	6.79	2.76	2.88	4.33
	Minimum	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Maximum	52.00	52.00	12.00	12.00	16.00

Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

Paternity leave for adoption of child(ren)	Mean	10.24	8.57	0.90	1.32	3.80
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean (lower)	9.15	7.36	0.40	0.80	3.00
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean (upper)	11.34	9.79	1.39	1.84	4.60
	5% Trimmed Mean	10.08	8.22	0.37	0.81	3.48
	Median	12.00	12.00	0.00	0.00	2.00
	Std. Deviation	6.15	6.83	2.76	2.91	4.52
	Minimum	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Maximum	52.00	52.00	12.00	12.00	16.00
Paternity leave for the foster care of child(ren)	Mean	9.08	7.84	0.84	0.91	3.30
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean (lower)	7.86	6.57	0.35	0.47	2.50
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean (upper)	10.30	9.11	1.32	1.35	4.09
	5% Trimmed Mean	8.79	7.41	0.31	0.45	2.93
	Median	12.00	10.50	0.00	0.00	1.00
	Std. Deviation	6.85	7.14	2.73	2.46	4.46
	Minimum	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Maximum	52.00	52.00	12.00	12.00	16.00

Note. n = 124; United States employees only.

Copyright © 2016 Human Capital Institute. All rights reserved.

Human Capital Institute
The Global Association
for Strategic Talent Management

Publication date: July 28, 2016 v.1
Author: Jenna Filipkowski, PhD (Jenna.Filipkowski@HCI.org)

1110 Main Street, Suite 200
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202
www.hci.org