

# THE NEW DAD

## The Career-Caregiving Conflict

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**Brad Harrington**  
**Jennifer Sabatini Fraone**  
*Boston College Center  
for Work & Family*

**Jegoo Lee**  
*Stonehill College*

**Boston College 2017**



BOSTON COLLEGE —————  
Center for Work & Family  
CARROLL SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT  
—————



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*Our kids are pretty smart. They understand that life won't always be perfect, that sometimes, the road gets rough, that even great parents don't get everything right. But more than anything, they just want us to be a part of their lives. In the end, that's what being a parent is all about — those precious moments with our children that fill us with pride and excitement for their future, the chances we have to set an example or offer a piece of advice, the opportunities to just be there and show them that we love them.*

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA, 2011 FATHER'S DAY SPEECH

## I. Introduction

For the past eight years, the Boston College Center for Work & Family has explored, researched, published and led discussions on the role of fathers in the workplace and in the home. Our work has put a spotlight on the way men's roles are changing and has met with very receptive audiences in the media, among major employers, and with the public at large. In some cases, we feel we can take a modicum of credit for significant progress that has occurred among major employers accepting the role that fathers play in recent years. This is especially true in regard to paid parental leave for fathers.

Our studies have focused mainly on US, college-educated, "white-collar" fathers who work in large, global organizations. We have researched a wide range of topics pertaining to fathers including their transition to fatherhood as new dads, the career-life challenges facing a broad range of fathers with children living at home, at-home fathers, fathers' desire for and feelings about paternity leave, and most recently, Millennial fathers. Through each new research project, we have broadened and refined our portrait of today's American father.

Throughout our years of research, one finding has emerged in nearly every study. While today's fathers are caring and committed to their roles in the workplace and at home, many are also highly conflicted. We've seen frequent evidence that supports this: Fathers who state their desire to climb the corporate ladder but at the same time want to spend more time with their children. Fathers who assert that their children's interests are their top priority but who are also highly susceptible to the demands of their corporate cultures. And perhaps most conspicuously, fathers who state that caregiving should be divided 50/50 with their partner, but admit they are unable to do so. In our research, 2-out-of-3 fathers said that caregiving should be divided equally with their partners, but fewer than 1-out-of-3 actually do so.

So the notion of fathers being conflicted became a major element of our findings and our messaging. Clearly many, but not all, fathers felt this conflict. In this study, we wanted to explore in greater depth a number of issues. Which fathers did struggle with this conflict between work and family? How did being conflicted impact their satisfaction and their fulfillment in their roles in the workplace and at home? To what degree is our understanding of fathers and these challenges attributable to generational differences? And, do Millennial fathers experience the same levels of conflict as fathers from previous generations regarding their caregiving role?

*Today there aren't as many parents that can get by raising children on one salary alone. That changes the blueprint on what a Dad is responsible for. I believe this actually creates a more well rounded family. It creates an opportunity for a Mom to have the time to have her own personal space. My hope is that it also helps with my long-term relationship with my own children, in that, they have the same type of relationship with their Dad that they do with their Mom when it comes to nurturing and support.*

EGALITARIAN DAD, 48, FATHER OF 2 YOUNG BOYS

This report does a deep dive into a large sample of today's fathers to understand, to the degree possible, the source of their conflicted feelings. We look at the ways that these conflicted feelings impact their work, their career aspirations, and their home life. Finally, we offer a set of recommendations for fathers, and for their employers, regarding ways to help fathers work through these feelings to try and alleviate the career-caregiving conflict.

## II. Methodology

The results presented in this report analyze data from two fatherhood samples we have collected in 2011 and 2015. The methodologies and samples for each are described below.

In 2011, we conducted research on fathers with at least one child at home (age 18 or under) and who worked for one of the four Fortune 500 companies that agreed to administer the study within their organization. The four companies are all large, global organizations and had revenues ranging from \$20-50 billion per year. All were members of the Boston College Center for Work & Family. The companies differed in terms of their core products and services and included an outsourcing services provider, a pharmaceutical company, a global technology security company, and a transportation/ logistics company. In total, we collected data from 963 working fathers. After ensuring that all fathers in this sample were either Generation X or Baby-boomers, we were able to use a total of 742 fathers for this 2017 study: 498 Generation X fathers (those born between 1964-1980) and 244 Baby-boomer fathers (those born between 1946 and 1964). Results from this study were initially reported in the Center's publication, **The New Dad: Caring Committed and Conflicted** (2011).

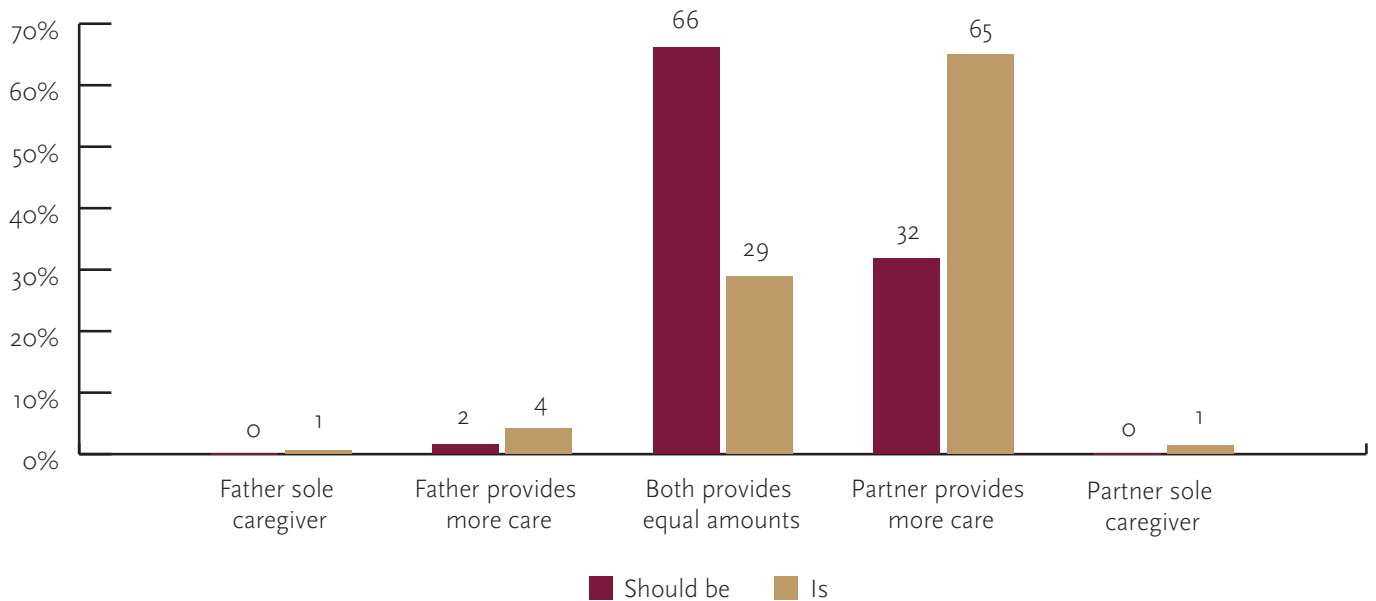
In 2015, we conducted a significant project on how young adults navigate their careers and prioritize their career-life choices. Our sample included individuals aged 22-35 with at least two years of professional work experience. All were employed at one of five large, global organizations in the insurance, financial services, accounting and consulting business sectors. Once again all organizations were members of the Boston College Center for Work & Family. That study included both a quantitative and a qualitative element. The quantitative survey was conducted on-line. While all of the businesses involved in the research were global in scope, the survey was only administered within their US operations. A total of 1,100 employees completed the survey across the five companies. The companies used their employee databases to randomly select participants who met the study criteria. Employees' participation in the study was voluntary. From that overall sample, one-third of the subjects were parents and 151 were fathers. We were able to use the responses of 127 Millennial fathers for purposes of this 2017 analysis. Data from the fathers was analyzed and originally published by the Boston College Center for Work & Family entitled **The New Millennial Dad: Understanding the Paradox of Today's Fathers** (2016).

In the 2016 analysis of the Millennial fathers, we reviewed our sample's answers to two important questions:

1. How do you believe caregiving **should** be divided between you and your partner?
2. How **is** caregiving divided between you and your partner?

When we combined the two samples from 2011 and 2015, the fathers responded in the following manner to questions about their aspirations for caregiving and the reality of their caregiving role.

*Note: On the surveys, we used both "spouse" and "partner" and at times "spouse/partner." For the remainder of the report we will be using the more inclusive term "partner."*

**CHART 1: How Caregiving “Should Be” versus “Is” Divided**

This sample showed clearly that while most fathers (2 out of 3) desire to be an equal caregiver with their partner, more than half of those fathers are unable to do so. So many fathers fall short of their own expectations creating a “caregiving dilemma.” In our 2016 report, we found that those Millennial fathers who faced this dilemma were also struggling in other areas --- they showed the lowest levels of life, job and career satisfaction.

The fact that many fathers feel conflicted is a major finding of our years of fatherhood research. For this new study, we wanted to better understand which fathers felt this conflict and how it impacted their levels of job and career satisfaction.

*The biggest challenge is that fatherhood is not how I envisioned it; don't get me wrong, I love being a father and it is extremely rewarding. But growing up with my mother being the primary caregiver and my father being the primary provider, it's just different. Morning routines include getting the girls dressed, making sure they brush their teeth, and putting their hair in a respectable ponytail. I drive to dance, gymnastics, and even chaperone field trips. I'm not taking away from what my father did, it was hard work. I believe dads are more hands on than they were 20-30 years ago. The partnership between husband and wife, mom and dad, is no longer he maintains outside the walls and she maintains inside the walls.*

EGALITARIAN DAD, 40, FATHER OF TWO YOUNG GIRLS

### III. Results

Throughout this report we will make frequent references to two groupings of “threes.” The first is the “three fatherhood types.” The first grouping of fatherhood clusters is based on the way the study participants answered the study questions and describes the fathers as having dominant behavioral traits when it comes to caregiving. “The three fatherhood types” are Egalitarian, Traditional and Conflicted fathers. The second group is “the three generations of fathers.” These clusters are simply based on the fathers’ date of birth. The three generations of fathers are Millennials, Generation X, and Baby-boomers. While this can make reading the report challenging, it allows us to make differentiations of the fathers from those based on caregiving dispositions (i.e. which are more personality or situationally based) as opposed to age cohort. We believe that in the past, the lack of differentiation has sometimes led to flawed attributions of fathers’ behavior.

#### The Three Fatherhood Types

In our combined data set of Millennial, Generation X, and Baby-boomer dads, the fathers broke into three relatively equal-sized groups. The first group of fathers responded that caregiving at home should be divided equally and that it indeed is. We labeled this type the “**Egalitarian**” fathers and they comprised 30% of the sample. A second group of fathers responded that caregiving should be divided 50/50 but admitted that their partner provided more hands-on care than they did. This second type we labeled “**Conflicted**” fathers due to the dissonance between their aspirations (SHOULD be) and their reality (IS). They comprised approximately 38% of the sample. The third group believed that their “partner should provide more caregiving at home” and they were doing so. We labeled this type “**Traditional**” fathers to reflect their more traditionally gendered views on parental roles and caregiving. They comprised approximately 32% of the sample.

#### FATHERS’ CAREGIVING DILEMMA

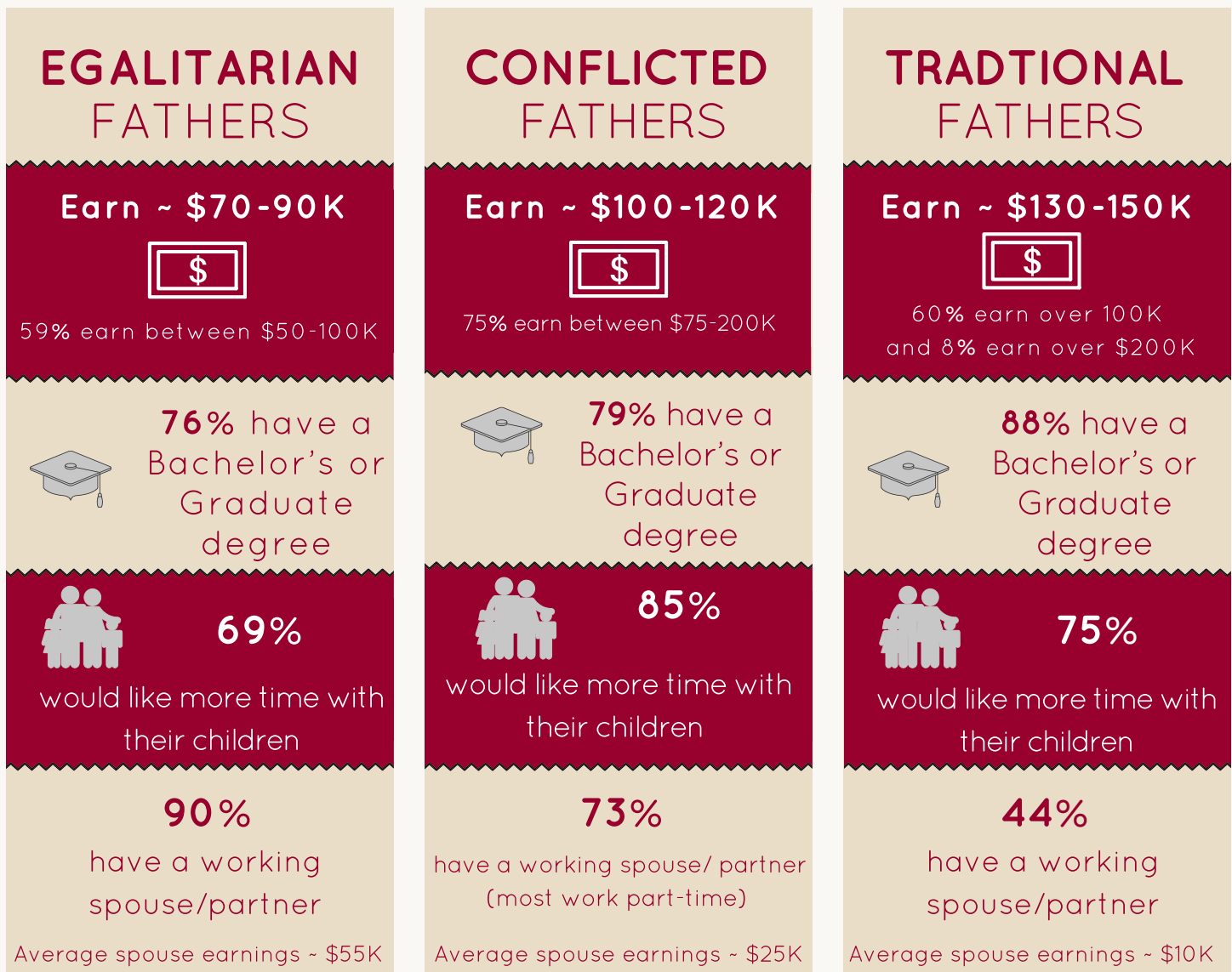
Fatherhood Type (% of overall sample)	Aspiration “Should be” caregiving approach	Reality “Is” caregiving approach
Egalitarian (30%)	Father = Partner	Father = Partner
Conflicted (38%)	Father = Partner	Father < Partner
Traditional (32%)	Father < Partner	Father < Partner

This table demonstrates the dissonance experienced between Conflicted fathers’ aspirations and their reality. While Egalitarian fathers’ and Traditional fathers’ aspirations are met, those that are Conflicted desire a caregiving approach with their partners that they are unable to attain.



Through analysis of the responses of the fathers in our sample, there is clearly evidence that a significant percentage of fathers experience a high level of conflict in balancing their professional and parenting roles. Despite being caring and committed to both roles (working and parenting), conflicted fathers expressed their dissonance in a number of ways. For example, conflicted fathers wanted to climb the corporate ladder but at the same time wanted to spend more time with their children. Conflicted fathers asserted that their children's interests were their top priority but were highly susceptible to the work demands of their corporate cultures. And most conspicuously, conflicted fathers asserted their belief that caregiving should be divided 50/50 with their partner, but admitted they did not do so. In both the 2011 and 2015 samples, two-out-of-three fathers said that felt they should be equal partners in caregiving, but less than one-out-of-three actually did so.

We have developed profiles for the three types of fathers to help illustrate some of the different characteristics of the average father who represents each type. The graphic depiction focuses on father's average earnings, their level of education, their expressed desire for more time with their children and their partners' work status and average earnings.



## The Three Generations of Fathers

We are often asked if fathers' increased commitment to being more engaged parents is due to a generational change that has occurred. The assumption is that today's Millennial fathers are much more egalitarian than previous generations of fathers. By testing this assertion with both our 2011 and our 2015 datasets we were able to better answer this question and provide evidence that either supported or undermined this conventional wisdom.

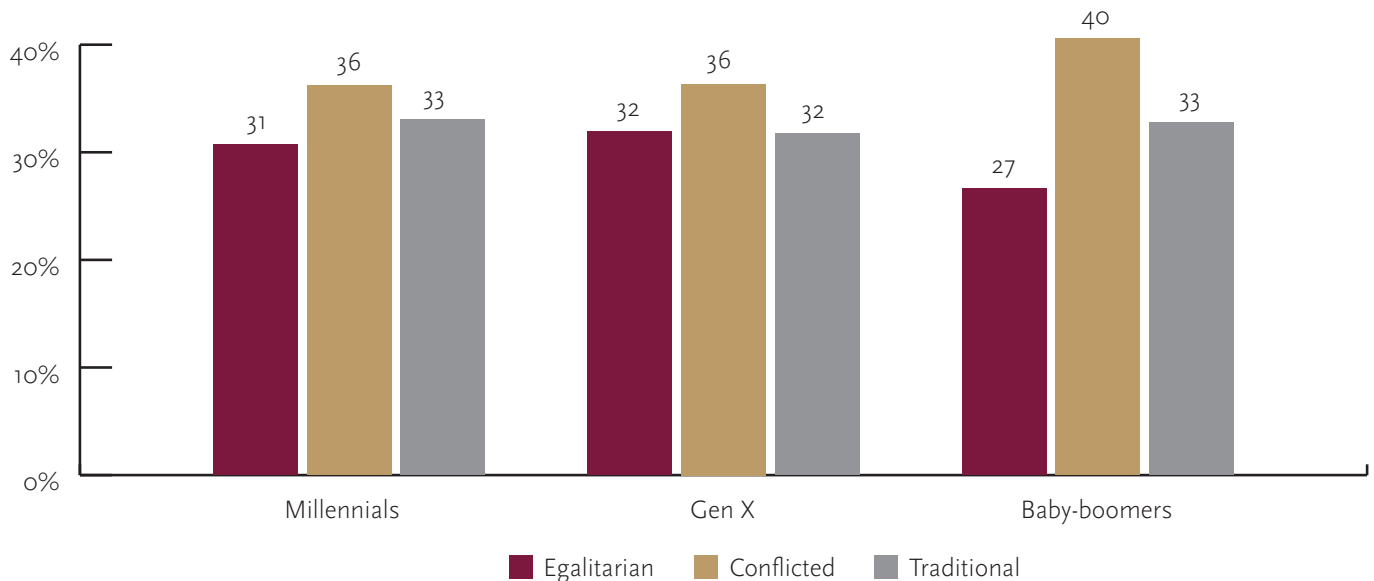
In analyzing our 2011 sample of Generation X and Baby-boomer fathers, we found a similar profile although a somewhat different representation of the three fatherhood types. Generation X fathers were more similar to the Millennials: 32% were Egalitarian, 32% were Traditional, and 36% were Conflicted. Among the Baby-boomer dads, 27% were

Egalitarian, 33% were Traditional and slightly over 40% were Conflicted. So while there was a higher percentage of Egalitarian fathers amongst Millennials than among Baby-boomers, there were slightly fewer Egalitarians in either of these generational groups than there were amongst the Generation X dads. So the notion that the shifts in fathers' attitudes about caregiving is attributable to generations did not hold completely true in our sample. However, if you do compare the two younger generations of fathers together (i.e. Generation X and Millennials) to Baby-boomers fathers, there were 4% more Egalitarian fathers and fewer Conflicted fathers among the younger generations than among Baby-boomers. Chart 2 illustrates the breakdown of the Three Types of Fathers across the Three Generations.

*We split the duties evenly; from feeding, cleaning bottles, changing, doing laundry to putting him to sleep and keeping him entertained. A team effort is essential in caring for a child as it keeps one parent or guardian from getting burned out. By sharing duties, one of us is still able to do other non-baby related duties such as cleaning, dishes, our laundry, and yard work*

EGALITARIAN DAD, 36, FATHER OF INFANT BOY

**CHART 2: Three Father Types across Three Generations**



When we compared the responses to subsequent questions indicating, for example, the fathers' satisfaction on a number of work indicators, a clear pattern emerged. Overall, Egalitarian and Traditional fathers expressed higher levels of satisfaction in their jobs and their careers. As researchers, we discovered that these categories presented a highly useful way to conceptualize the work-life experiences of today's fathers.

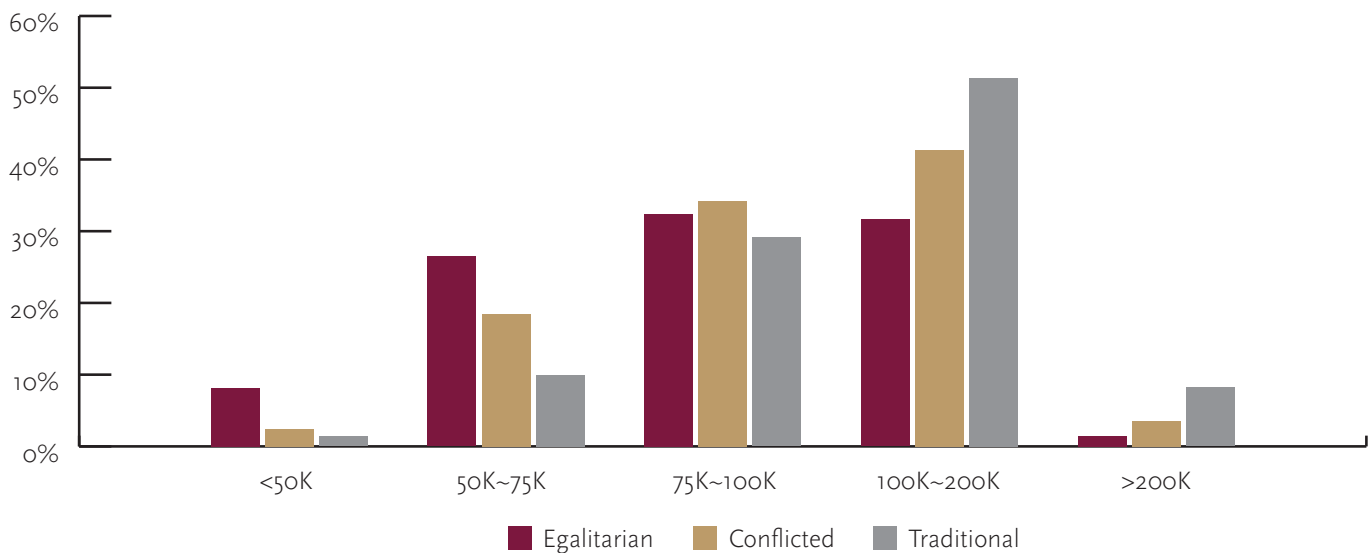
## FURTHER EXPLORATION OF FATHERS AND THEIR PARTNERS

### Income levels of three father types

When we look at our total dataset (n=869) broken into the three fatherhood types, we begin to see distinct patterns across the three types. There is very little difference in age across the three father types. Egalitarian fathers' average age is 40.8; the Traditional fathers' is 40.9; and the Conflicted fathers' average age is 41.4. The age of the men in the three fatherhood types lends support to our assertion that the push toward higher parental engagement levels is not purely a generational phenomenon.

In terms of income Traditional's income is the highest and Egalitarians' is the lowest. More than one-third (34.4%) of the Egalitarians earned less than \$75,000 as compared to only 12% of the Traditionals and 22% of the Conflicteds. On the upper end of the earnings scale, nearly 3 out of 5 (59.4%) Traditional fathers earn more than 100K compared to 44% of Conflicted fathers and 32% of Egalitarian fathers.

**CHART 3: Fathers' Income Levels**



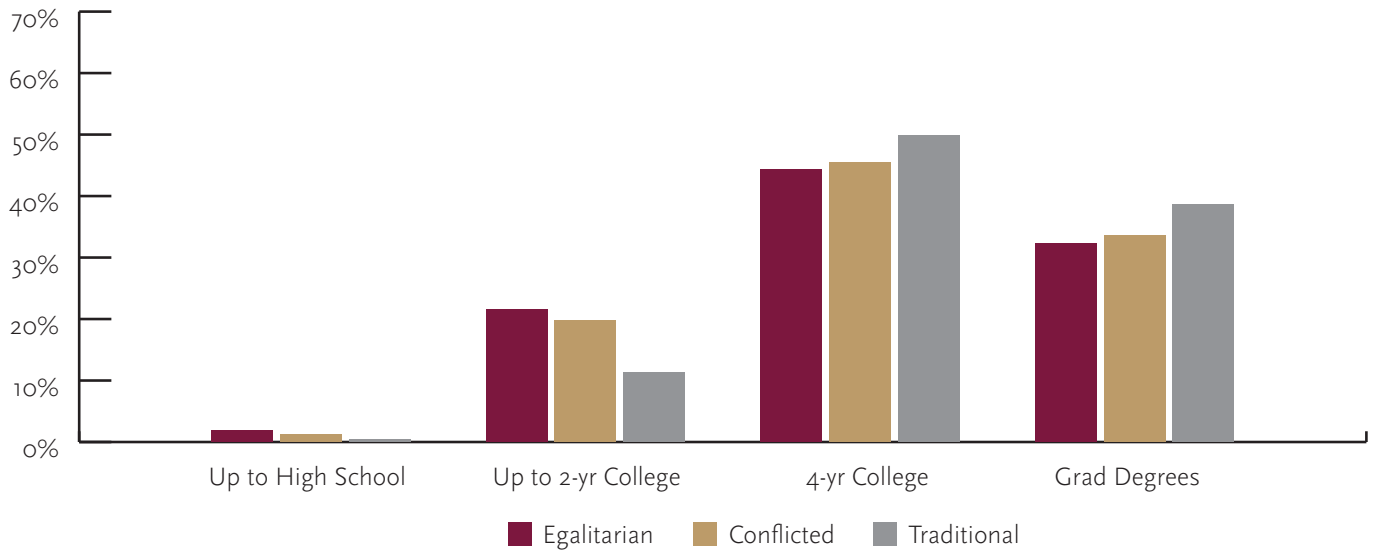
*I would describe myself as somewhere between “Traditional” and “Conflicted.” I am traditional since I am the breadwinner. However, my wife works as well. I am also “Conflicted” as I’d like to give more time and patience to my children but I usually let my wife take care of most situations regarding child rearing.*

TRADITIONAL DAD, 43, FATHER OF TWO YOUNG GIRLS

### Education levels of three father types

Since our research was with mainly “white-collar” professionals, the vast majority of the fathers in the sample attended college with between 75% and 90% holding at least a bachelor’s degree and/or a graduate degree (77% of the Egalitarians, 80% of the Conflicteds, and 90% of the Traditional dads). Less than 1% possessed only a high school diploma. In general, the more educated a father is, the more likely he belongs to the Traditional father type. Of course, one explanation for this is that fathers with professional degrees are also the most likely to earn the highest income levels, thereby enabling a partner to stay at home with children if the couple are inclined toward this arrangement.

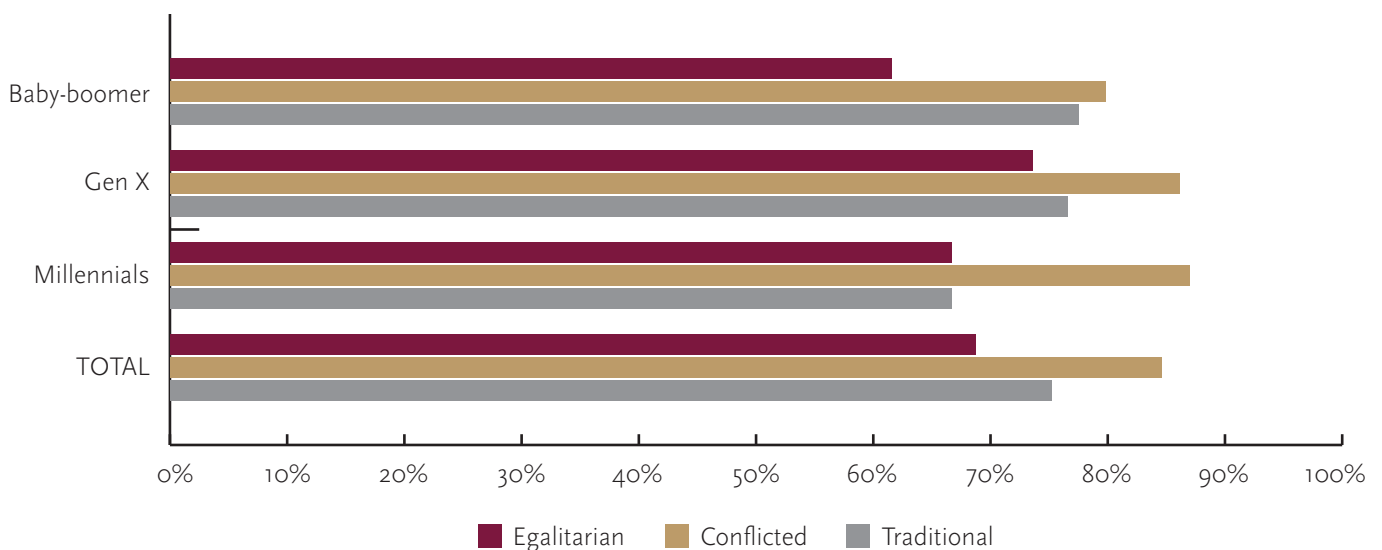
**CHART 4: Fathers’ Education Levels**



## Amount of Time Spent with Children

When asked to choose one of the following statements “I would like to spend more time with my children,” “I am satisfied with the amount of time I currently spend with my children,” or “I would like to spend less time with my children,” a clear pattern emerged that was consistent across all three generations. Conflicteds were the most likely to agree with the statement that they would like to spend more time with their children. Overall, nearly 85% of Conflicteds responded they wanted more time, compared with 75% of Traditionals and 69% of Egalitarians. This again illustrates the relatively low level of comfort Conflicteds feel towards the current state of their work-family balance when compared with the other two fatherhood types. This difference was especially pronounced among the Millennial fathers where the Conflicteds were much more likely than Traditionals and Egalitarians to indicate that they want more time with their children.

**Chart 5: I would like to spend more time with my children**



*I really try to set boundaries and understand what absolutely has to be done for work and then do that and then be as effective as I can the hours I'm at work. And then when I'm home I try my hardest to be as effective with the kids and hands on and I try to put the phone down. It's sometimes hard. If I start to feel like I'm so busy that that time with the kids is getting cut into, I'll cut into sleep and I'll either work really late or I'll get up at like 4:00 and get work done.*

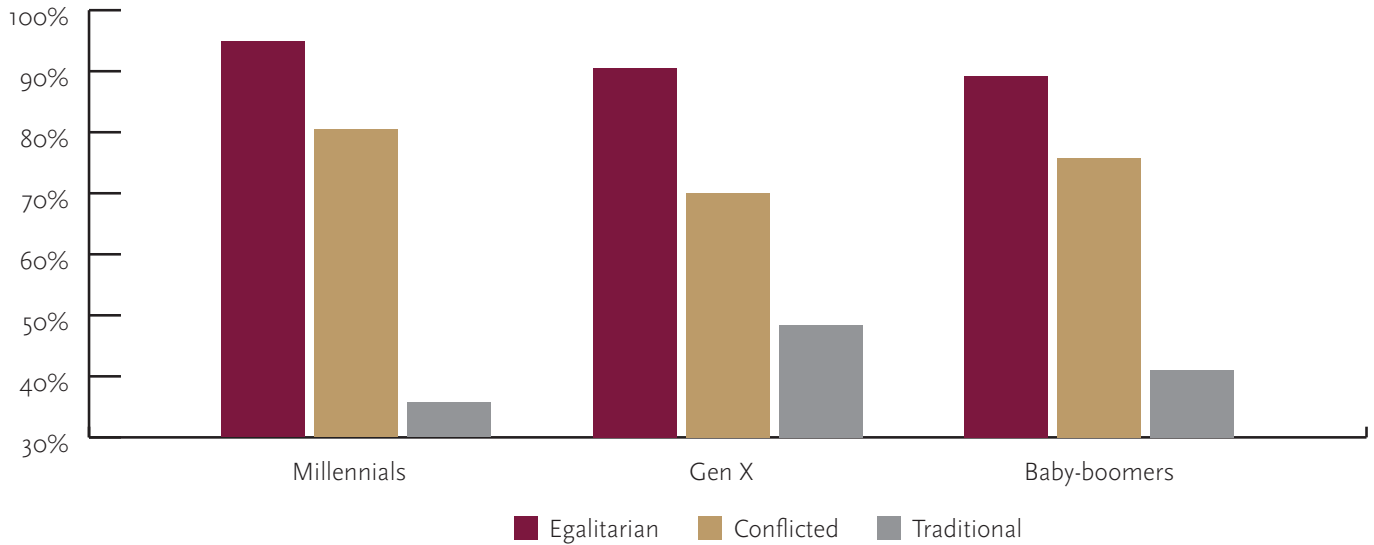
CONFLICTED DAD, 33, FATHER OF TWO TODDLERS

## Partner Profile: Background, Work Patterns, Income and Support

Not surprisingly, there is a marked difference in the working patterns of the partners of the three types of fathers. Slightly more than 90% of the Egalitarians' partners are employed, more than twice as many as the partners of the Traditionals (44%), while nearly 3 out of 4 of the Conflicteds' partners are employed.

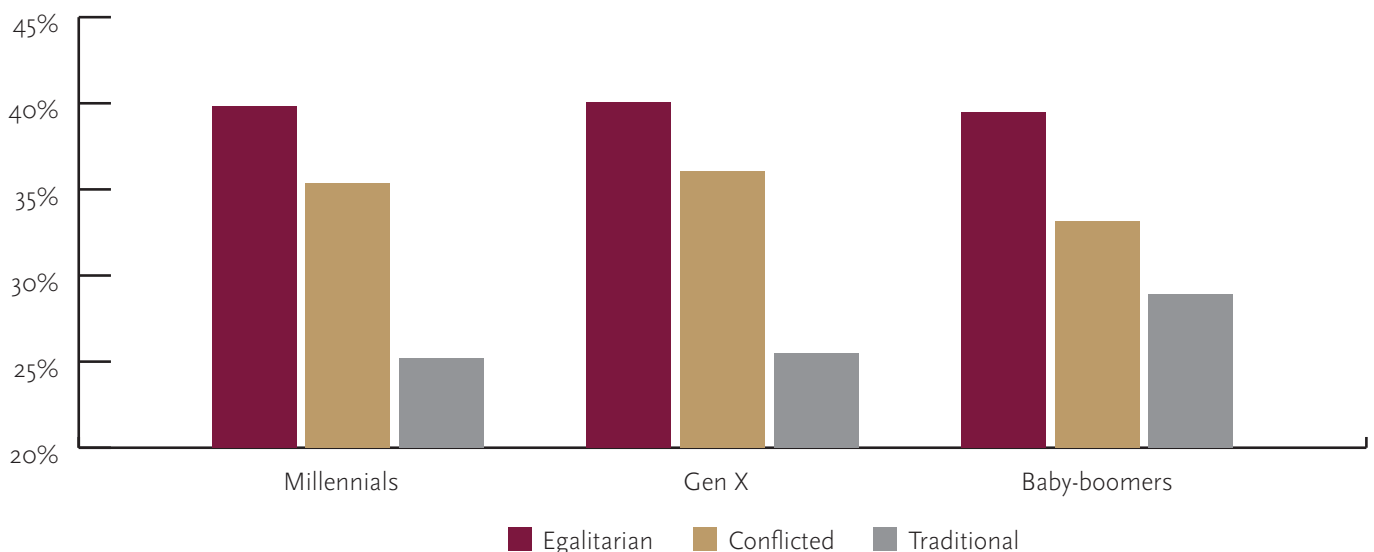
This pattern is found across all three generations, as chart 6 illustrates:

**CHART 6: Partners' Employment across Three Generations**



On average across all three fatherhood types, half of the partners were employed. For those that did work, the average number of hours in paid employment was 35 hours per week. As can be seen below, for partners that worked outside the home, Egalitarians partners worked nearly 40 hours per week, Conflicted partners averaged 35 hours, and Traditional partners 26 hours.

**CHART 7: Partners' Work Hours across Three Generations**



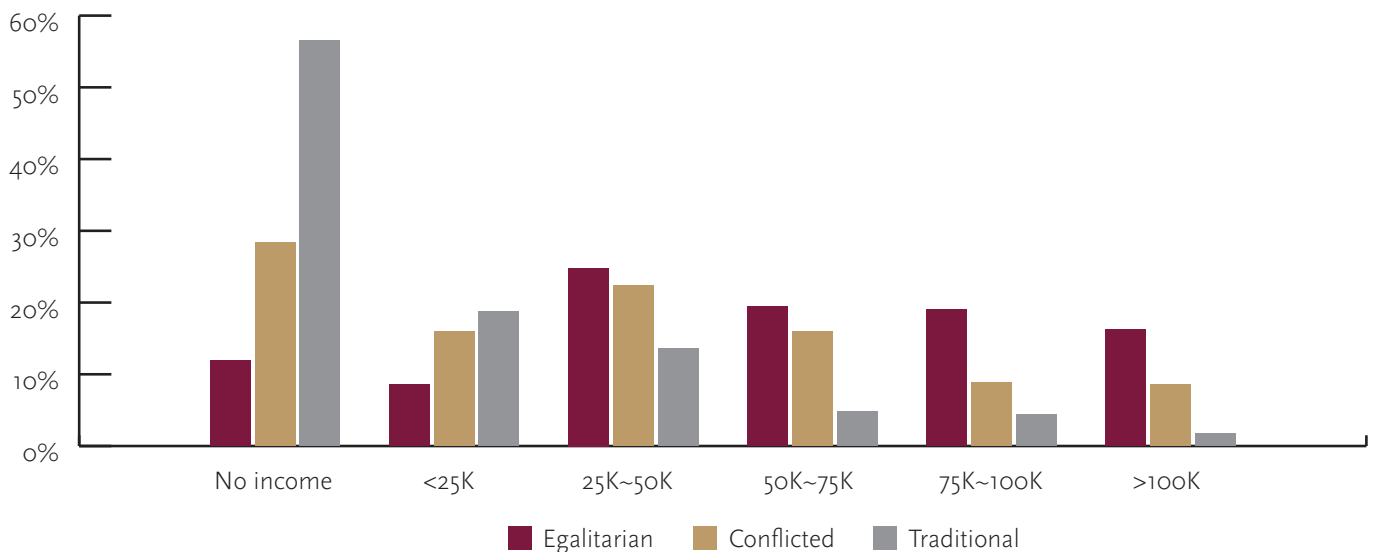
However, when we factor into this analysis partners who did not work outside the home, the differences become much more dramatic as can be seen in Table 1.

**TABLE 1: Average partners' weekly work-hours (including those not in paid employment)**

Egalitarian	Conflicted	Traditional	Total
27.81	20.16	9.54	19.44

Chart 8 below summarizes partners' income levels. As one can see, 56% of Traditionals' partners do not work for pay compared to 28% of Conflicteds' partners and only 12% of Egalitarians' partners. When Traditionals' partners do work, they are the most likely to be in the lowest income bracket (<\$25K per year). By contrast, Egalitarians' partners are the most likely to be in the highest income brackets with over 35% earning \$75K or more per year compared to only 6% of Traditionals' partners earning in the higher income brackets.

**CHART 8: Partners' Annual Income Levels**

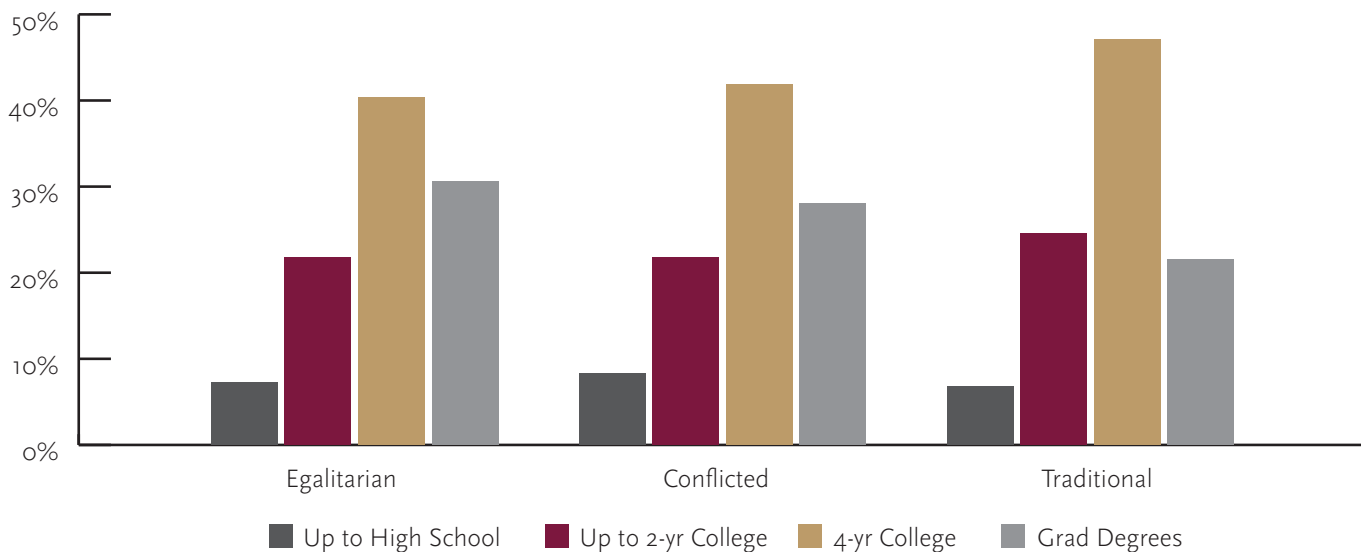


**Partners' Education Level**

Across the three father types, a very similar pattern is in evidence for their partners' education levels. In all three fatherhood types, the most common level of educational attainment of education is a bachelor's degree with over 70% possessing 4-year college and advanced degrees. The education levels of the partners of the three fatherhood types are quite similar, with the majority of partners having earned a 4- year degree or a graduate degree (Egalitarian 72%, Conflicted 70% and Traditional 70%).

Egalitarians and Conflicteds were significantly more likely to have a partner with a graduate degree than was the case for Traditional fathers. Perhaps this factor, coupled with the earnings of the father and the acceptance of more traditional gender roles have the greatest bearing on which fatherhood type the men will end up in. However, it is difficult to determine the cause and effect. It could be that men who have a more traditional orientation toward parenting are more likely to pursue highly demanding careers without regard to caregiving responsibilities. On the other hand, one could speculate that having a more highly educated partner who is also more career-oriented would increase the likelihood that the father would be part of a dual-career couple that shares caregiving more equally. Without further exploration, it is difficult to draw a definitive conclusion.

**CHART 9: Partners' Education Levels**



### Partner Support and Involvement in Caregiving

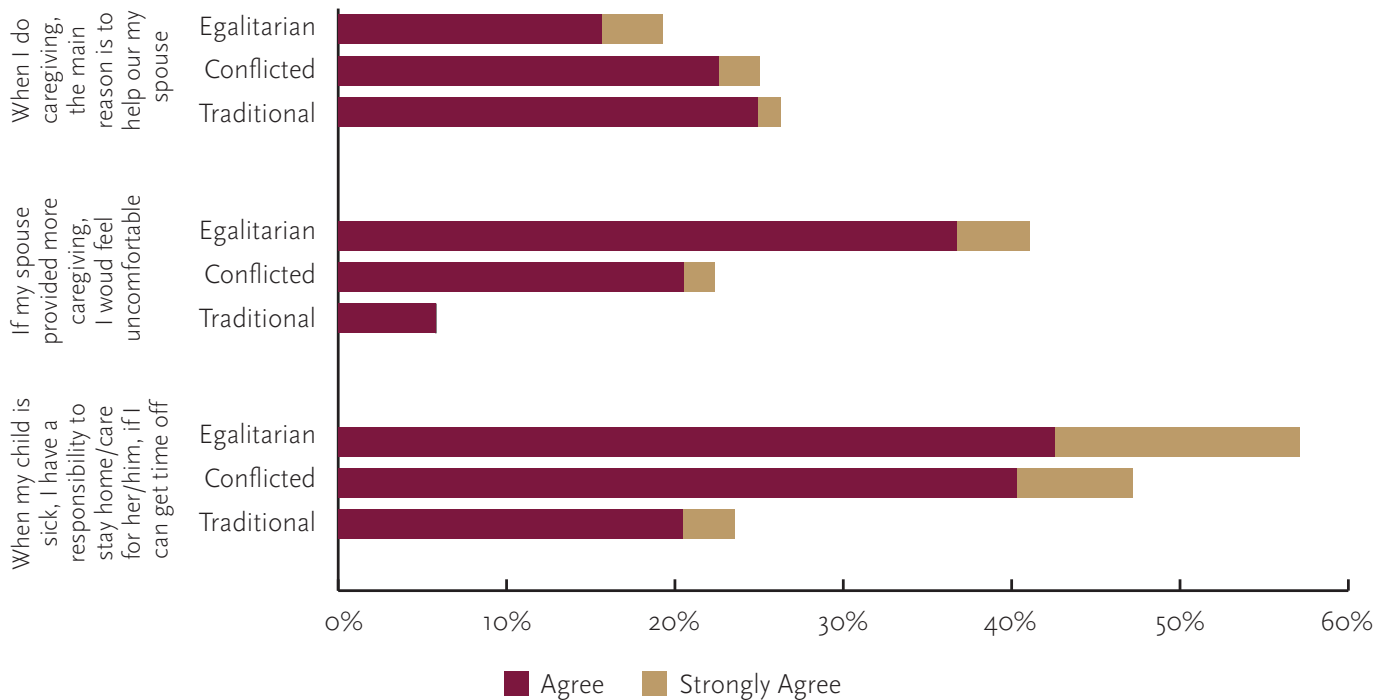
For questions regarding involvement in caregiving, the three fatherhood types showed significant differences in their responses. Egalitarians were significantly more likely to agree that if their child is home sick on a work day, they have a responsibility to stay home and care for their child when compared to Traditionals, in fact the number of dads who responded this way was doubled: (58% of Egalitarians vs. 24% for Traditionals). The majority of Egalitarian dads feel that caring for a sick child is their responsibility, while less than a quarter of Traditional dads agreed. Nearly 50% of Conflicted dads agreed or strongly agreed that they have a responsibility to care for a sick child.

There was an even more dramatic differential between these two types (Egalitarians and Traditionals) when asked if they would feel uncomfortable if their partners provided more care than they did. Both Conflicteds and Traditionals responses lean toward feeling comfortable if this were the case. Over 40% of Egalitarians agreed or strongly agreed that they would feel uncomfortable about this prospect, indicating their greater commitment to shared caregiving. And, not surprisingly, Egalitarians were less likely than Traditionals to see their caregiving as “helping out their partner.” On all of these questions, Conflicteds registered responses between the other two types.



## Fathers' Views on Shared Caregiving

**CHART 10: Fathers' Views on Shared Caregiving**



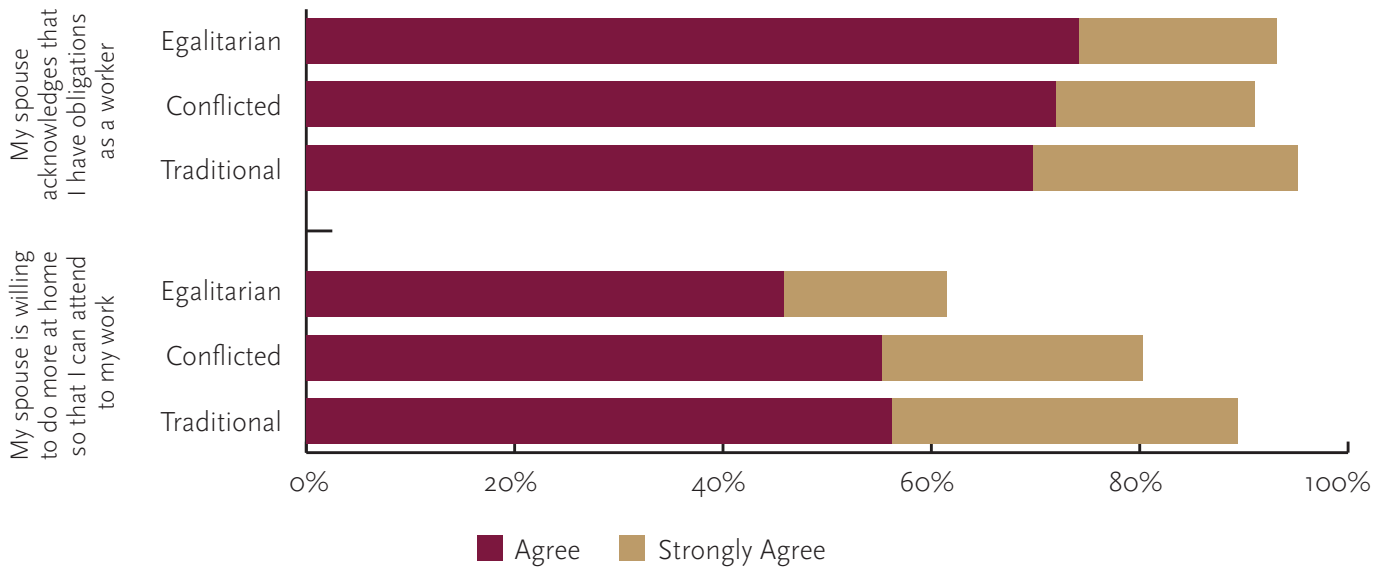
We provided the fathers with a range of statements in order to assess the level and type of support they received from their partner. From those, we identified significant differences on three items. For example, Traditional fathers were significantly more likely than Conflicted or Egalitarian fathers to respond that their partner is willing to do more at home so that the father can attend to his work. However all three types responded that their partner acknowledged their obligations as a worker with scores over 4 on a 5-point scale.

*Having a child is a full time job in itself, so even after coming home from work, work isn't done. An infant relies on his/her parents for everything. You never realize how much there is to parenting until you become a parent. It's a 24/7 job in itself.*

EGALITARIAN DAD, 36, FATHER TO INFANT BOY

## Partners' Support for Father as Worker

CHART 11: Partners' Support for Father as Worker

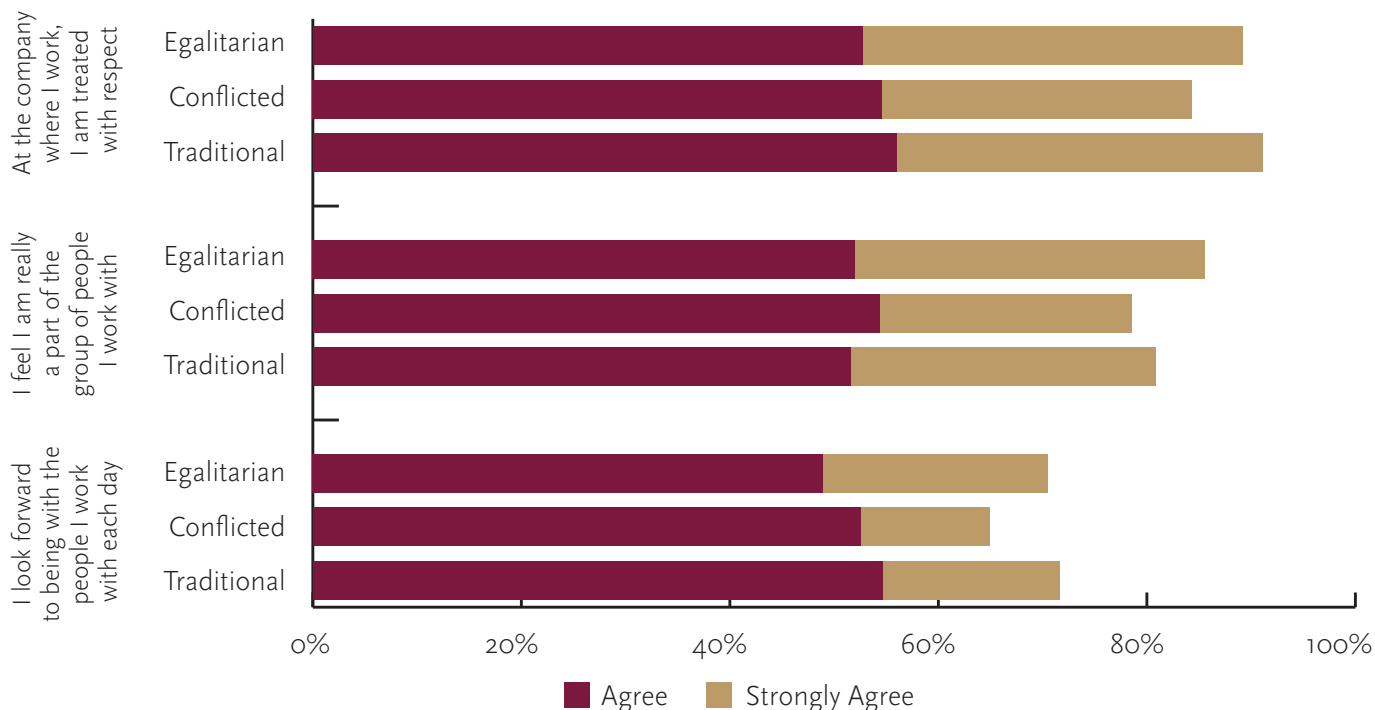


## FATHERS' EXPERIENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

We have thus far described the fatherhood types, demographics in terms of age, education, income, and caregiving as well as a profile of the fathers' partners. We now turn our attention to how fatherhood types and generations impact the father's satisfaction in the workplace. We will look at a broad range of issues including job satisfaction, relationships with colleagues, desire to stay in their present jobs, organizational culture and career satisfaction. Career satisfaction explores how the fathers perceive their work from a long-term perspective, not simply their current job status.

### Job Satisfaction & Commitment

When it comes to job satisfaction, the clear pattern that emerges is that the Traditional and Egalitarian fathers are consistently more satisfied than Conflicted fathers. While all three fatherhood types show high levels of satisfaction with their jobs (positive responses are consistently between 70-90% which speaks highly of the employers they work for), overall, Conflicted fathers are the least satisfied in their jobs. In particular, the Conflicted fathers show statistically significant lower scores in job satisfaction on the following three items, all of which describe aspects of "belonging" at work.

**CHART 12: Job Satisfaction & Commitment**

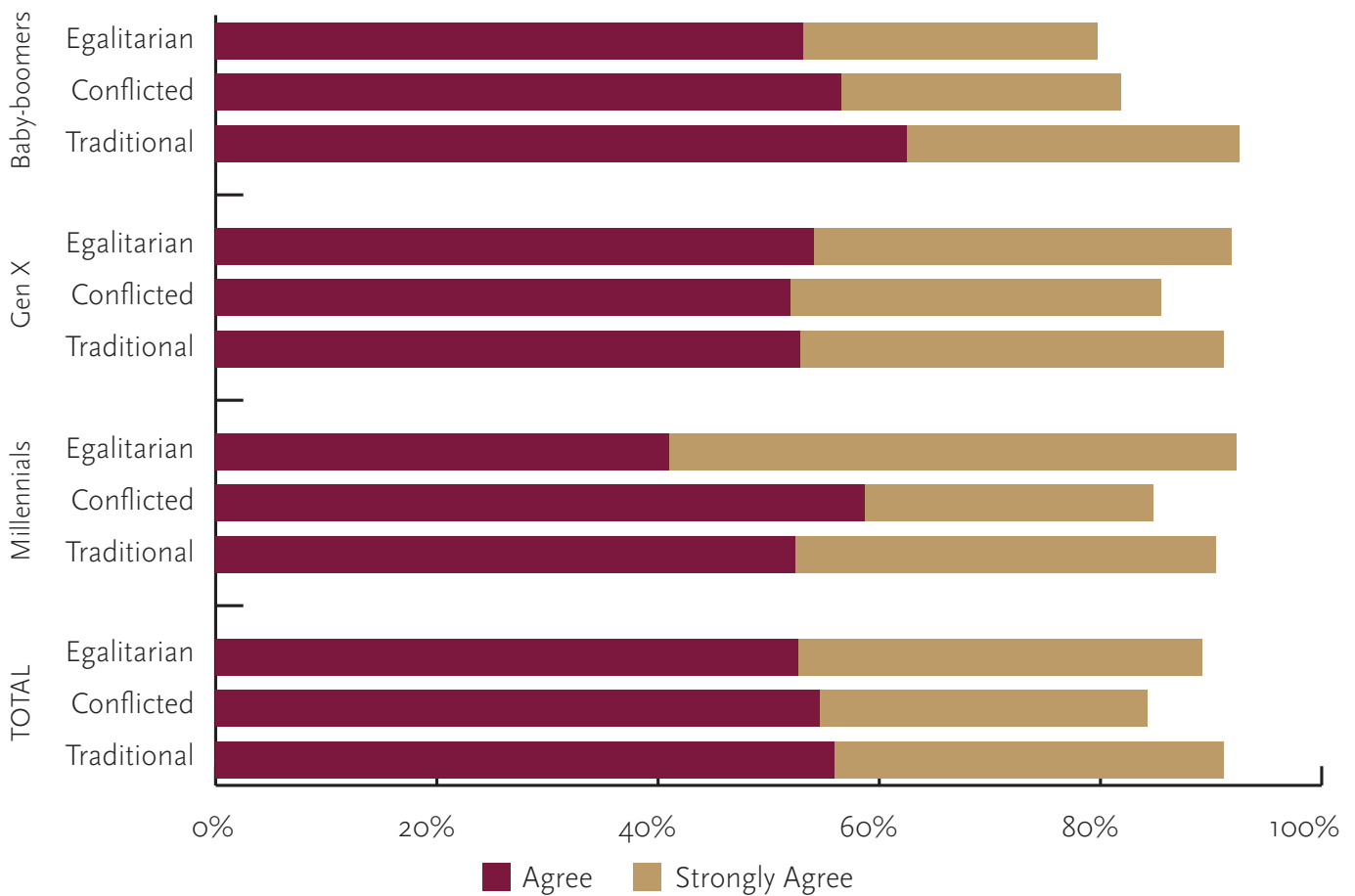
When we analyze the responses to the statement “At the company or organization where I work, I am treated with respect” across the three generations another interesting pattern emerges. While Traditional and Conflicted fathers’ responses are highly consistent across the three generations, the Egalitarian fathers’ responses are not. Egalitarian Baby-boomers scored the lowest on this question compared to the other two groups, while Egalitarian Millennial fathers scored the highest.

*In my 20 years in the corporate world, I worked in a very prestigious organization with many driven individuals who put in long hours whenever needed. My wife was home with the kids for a while when they were very young. The organizational culture along with my family situation established a very traditional pattern for me and I was very work-centric. Now, years later, even though I am in a very different organization and my wife works full-time, I continue to struggle with the pull between work and family. I often feel I am not doing either particularly well.*

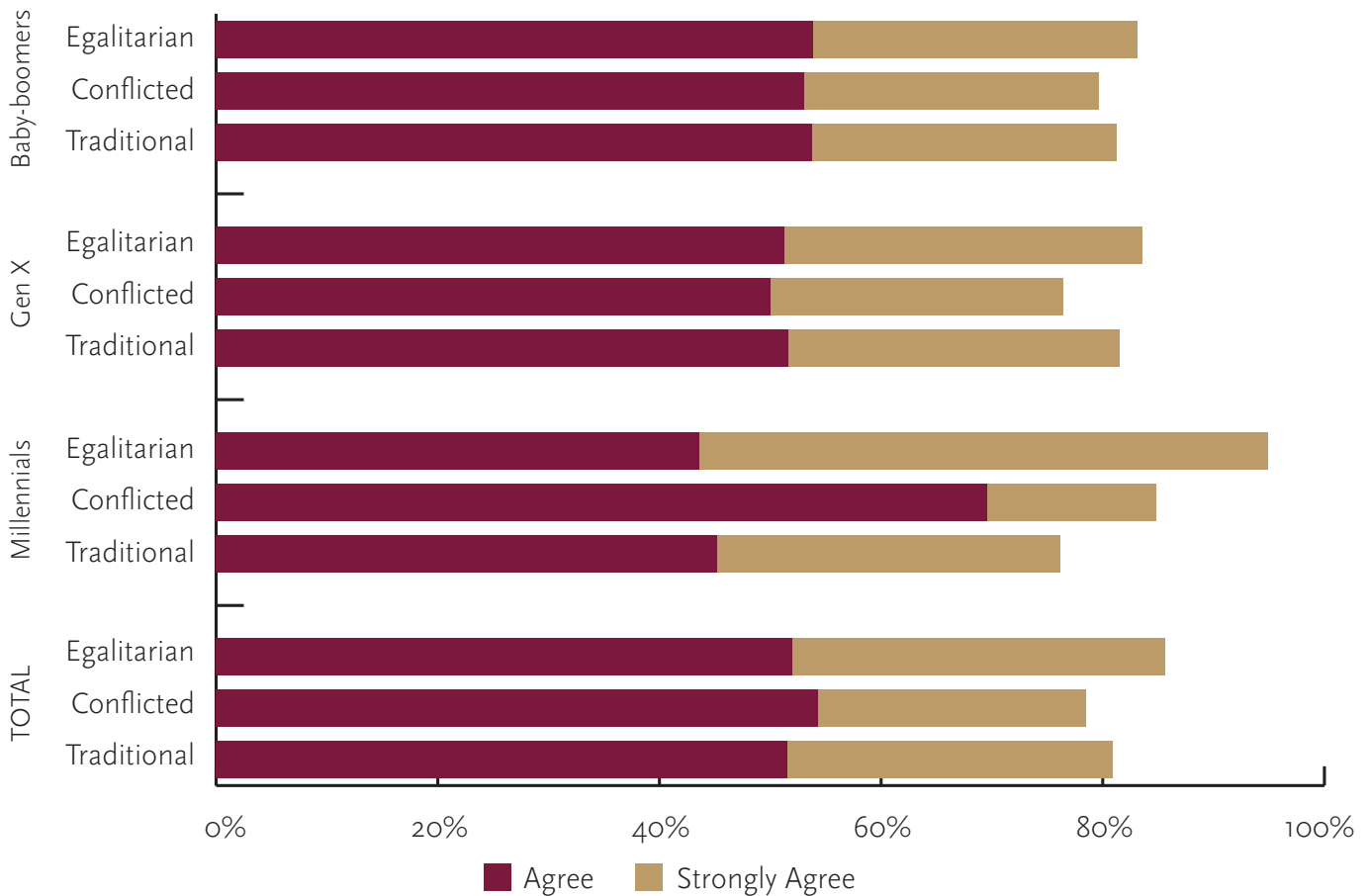
CONFLICTED DAD, 55, WITH THREE MILLENNIAL CHILDREN

These findings suggest that there has been a shift in people’s attitudes toward Egalitarian dads in the workplace. While Egalitarian Baby-boomer fathers were the least likely to feel they were treated with respect, Egalitarian Millennial fathers were the most likely to strongly agree that they are treated respectfully. In fact, more than 51% of Millennial fathers strongly agreed that they were treated with respect which is dramatically higher than any other group.

**CHART 13: I’m Treated with Respect**



When asked if they really felt a part of their workgroup, once again the Conflicteds reported the lowest levels of satisfaction. Millennial Egalitarians again showed the highest levels of satisfaction, significantly higher than earlier generations of Egalitarian fathers and all other father types.

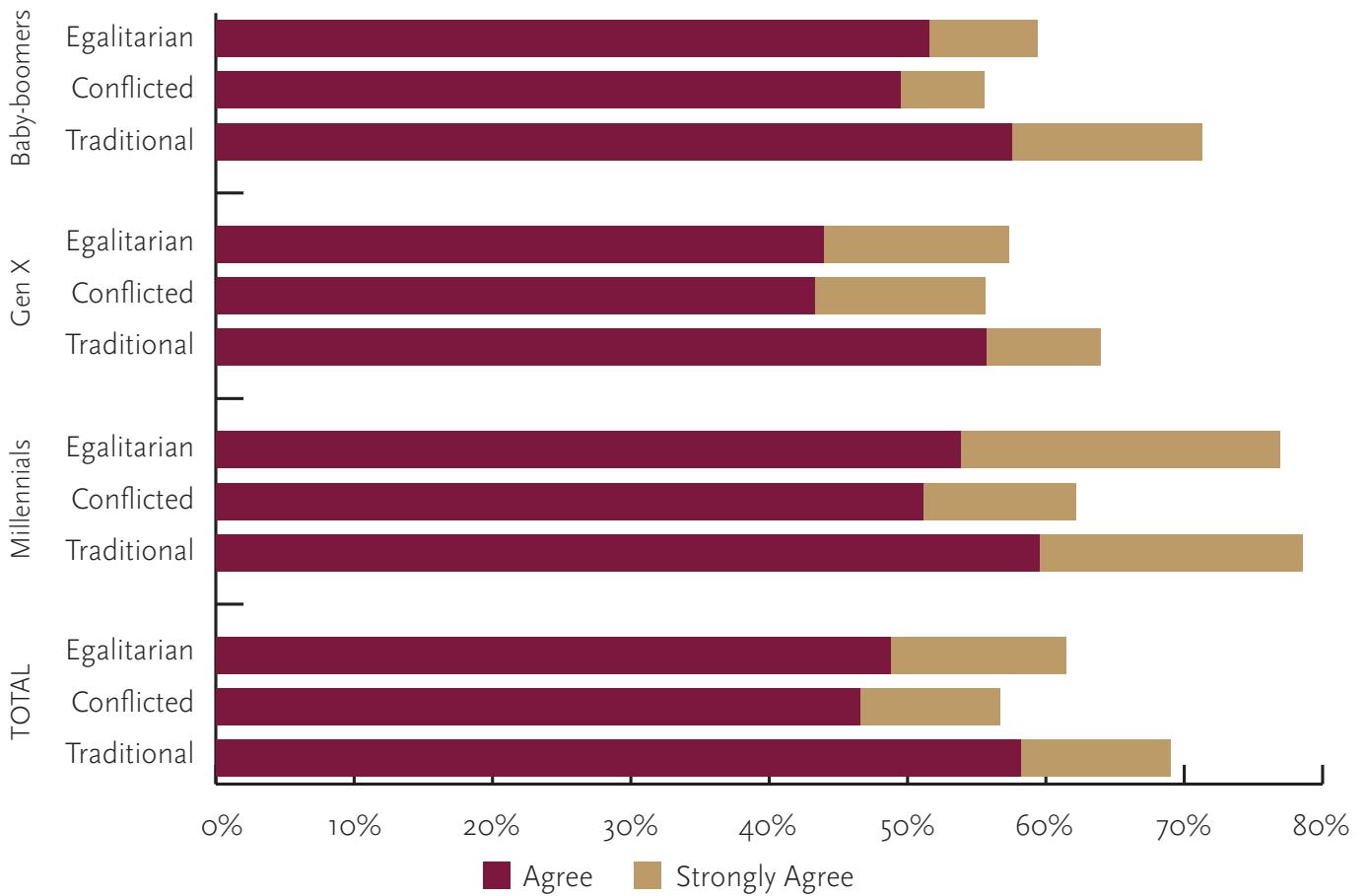
**CHART 14: I Feel a Part of the Group**

A very similar pattern could also be perceived when the fathers were asked if they look forward to being with the people they work with each day. Once again, the Conflicted fathers across all generations expressed the lowest levels of agreement with this statement and the Millennial Egalitarians were the most satisfied.

Generally, all of the fatherhood types showed similar levels of contentment about their work with fairly consistent responses to statements such as "My work makes me feel good about myself" and "My work is very enjoyable" although the Conflicteds registered the lowest levels of agreement on these questions.

Across all three generations, the Conflicteds showed the lowest level of feelings of security based on their work. This was particularly true among the Millennials. Millennial Traditionals and Egalitarians were twice as likely as the Conflicted fathers to strongly agree with the statement "My work gives me a feeling of security."

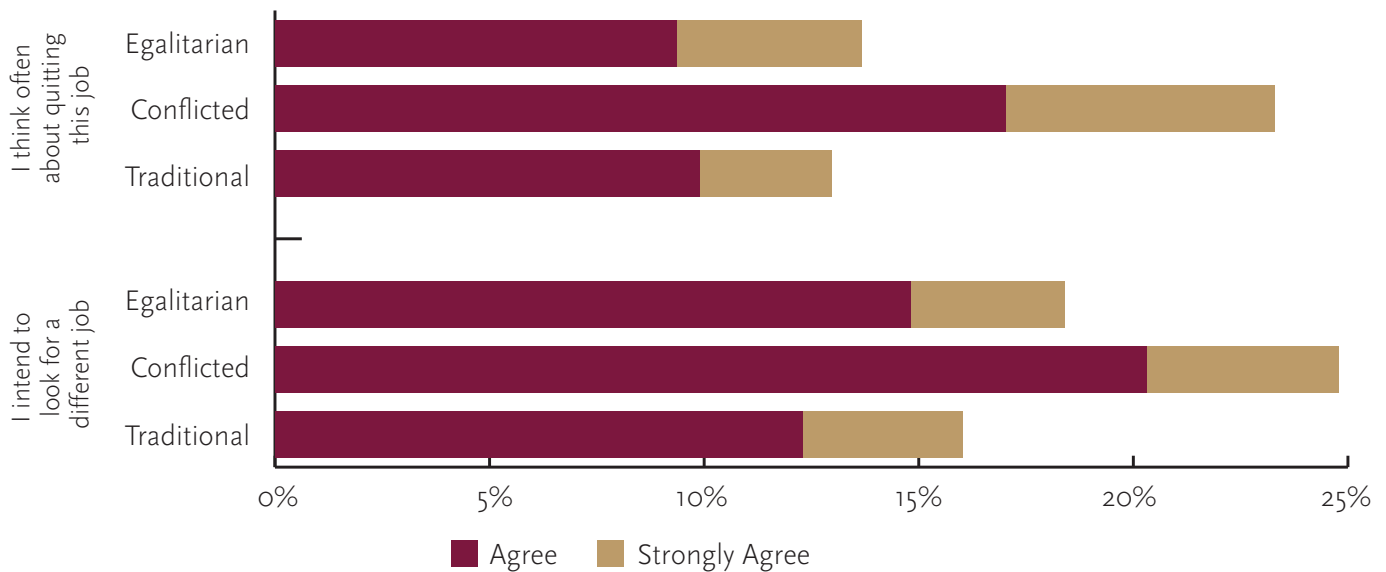
**CHART 15: Feeling Security from Work**



On items that explored discontent, Conflicted fathers show the highest level of job withdrawal intentions. This included both their intention to look for others jobs as well as their thoughts about quitting their jobs outright. In general, Conflicted fathers were about 10% more likely than the other two fatherhood types to think about quitting their jobs and are 7-9% more likely to report looking for another job. When we looked at this question in terms of generational differences, the pattern was the same across all generations.

## Job Withdrawal Intentions

CHART 16: Job Withdrawal Intentions



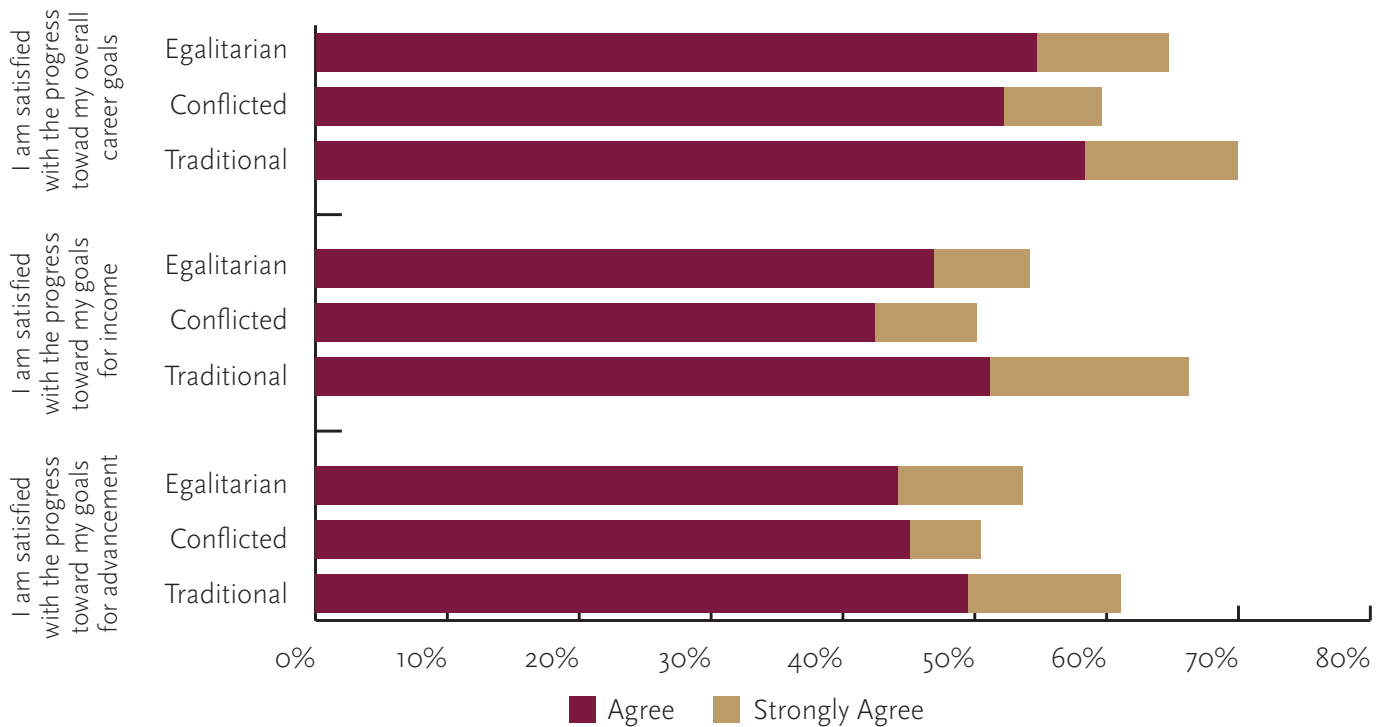
## CAREER SATISFACTION

Career satisfaction measures look less at the fathers' satisfaction in their present role and more at their satisfaction with their career over the long term (e.g. satisfied with advancement, satisfied with their earnings growth, etc.). At the risk of being repetitive, Conflicted fathers once again had the lowest levels of satisfaction on these career satisfaction items. But in this category, there was a significant shift in satisfaction vs. job related success indicators. In the area of career satisfaction, the Traditionals reported the highest levels of satisfaction on all questions and significantly more on three items: progress toward career goals, income, and advancement.

*Becoming a dad made me think of my career as providing for others, not just my career and what it does for me.*

TRADITIONAL DAD, 43, FATHER OF TWO YOUNG GIRLS

**CHART 17: Career Satisfaction**

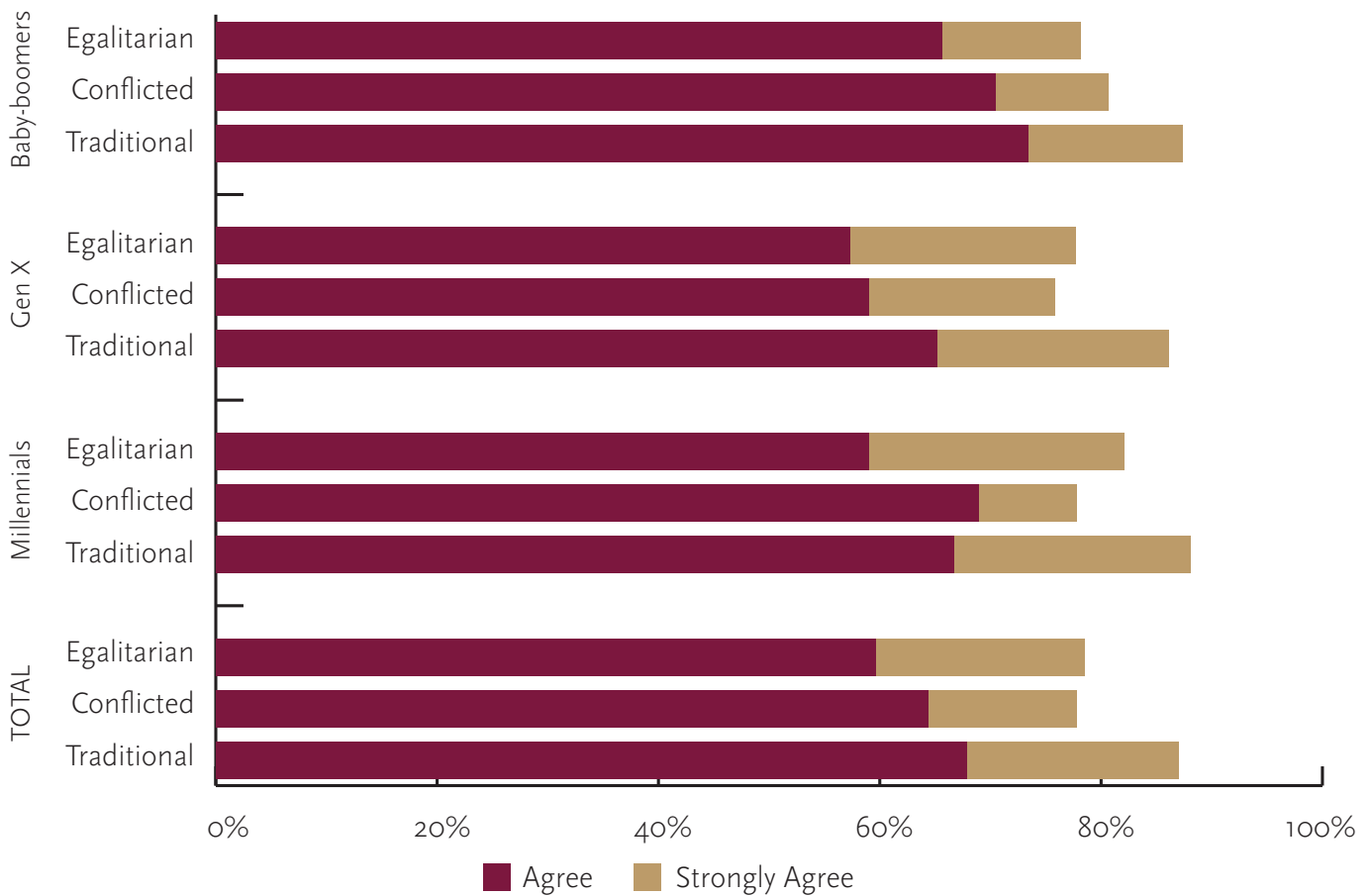


When we analyze career satisfaction of three father types across three generations, another interesting pattern emerges for Egalitarian fathers. When one looks at the scores by generation, there is a trend toward higher satisfaction for the younger Egalitarian fathers versus older ones, (i.e. Millennials are the most satisfied, followed by Generation X, followed by Baby-boomers).

There are a few possible reasons why this may be the case. First, Baby-boomers have had the longest careers. Therefore, they have had the most time to assess long-term career progress and may have a more accurate assessment of what being an Egalitarian father has “cost” them in terms of career progression. Second, this could be a sign of the growing acceptance men feel in playing a more egalitarian role. For Baby-boomers, being an Egalitarian father was likely seen more as the exception than is the case for today’s young dads.

Finally, we analyzed responses to the statement, “I like my career.” For Generation X and Millennials, as well as the sample overall, Conflicted fathers show the lowest satisfaction levels while the Traditional dads have the highest satisfaction levels. However, Egalitarian Baby-boomers reported liking their careers the least, possibly emphasizing again that being an Egalitarian father in previous generations was more difficult.



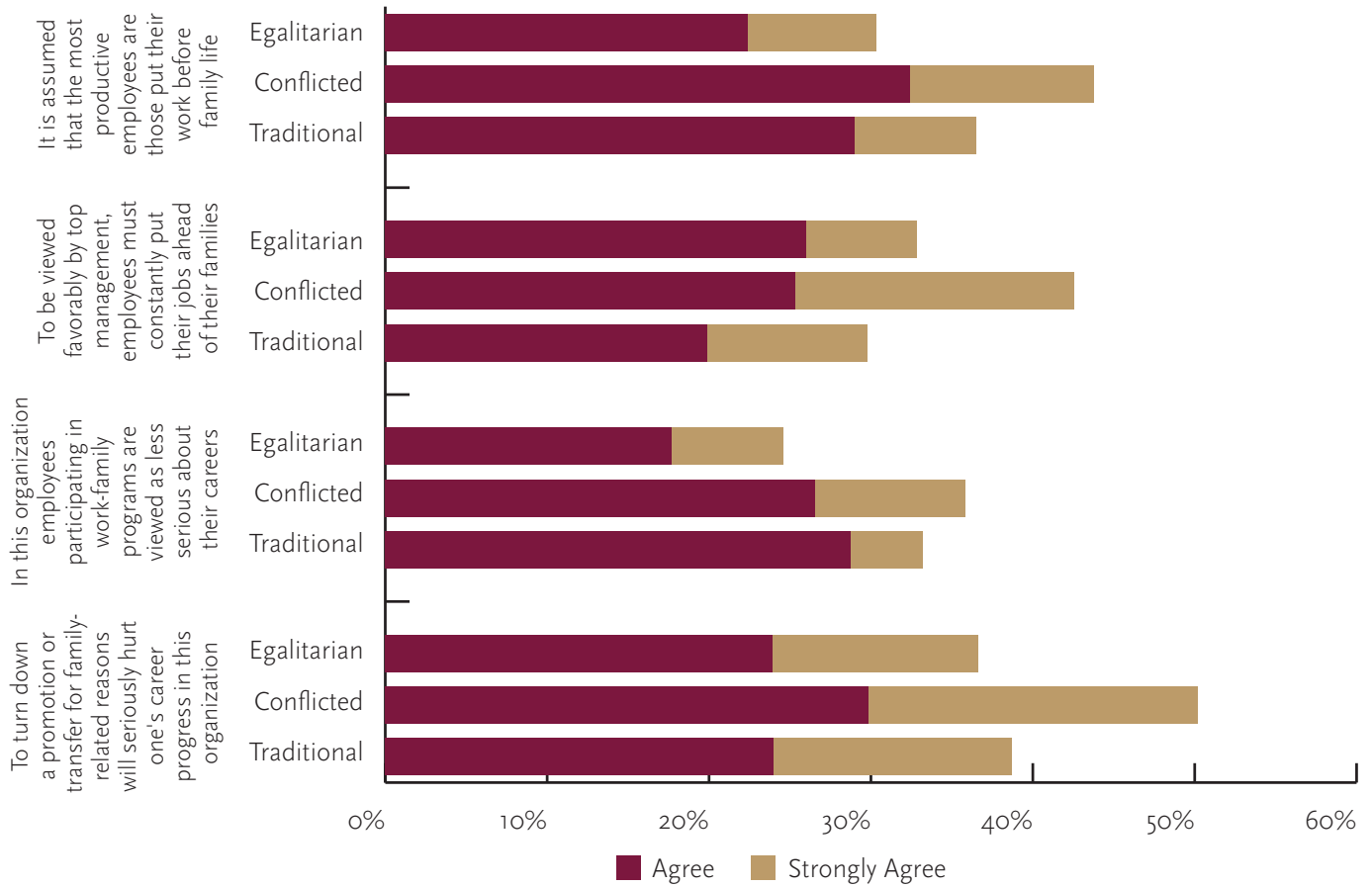
**CHART 18: I Like My Career**

## ORGANIZATION CULTURE

We provided participants with a series of statements regarding the culture of their organizations. These addressed the degree to which they saw their employing organizations' culture as work-centric and whether employees who conspicuously addressed work-family challenges through taking advantage of work family programs would be perceived as less likely to succeed in their organizations. We clustered these statements into one of three groups: the degree to which family values need to be seen as secondary, the degree to which personal concerns should not intrude in the workplace (both of these clusters addressed the undesirability of personal/family to work spillover), and the extent to which their work culture placed demands on the fathers that was detrimental to their personal/family life (work to personal/family spillover).

A pattern that emerged in each of these areas was that Conflicted fathers consistently displayed higher levels of agreement with statements that work was central, work hours were long, and personal/family issues should be left out of the workplace. Conversely, Conflicteds had the lowest levels of agreement with questions that suggested their corporate culture was supportive of family issues. Egalitarian dads seem to feel the least affected by cues from their organization that work should come before family. Perhaps this is because the Egalitarian dads and their partners made a commitment to share caregiving equally and they are comfortable following through with this commitment, even if there are signals that they should do otherwise.

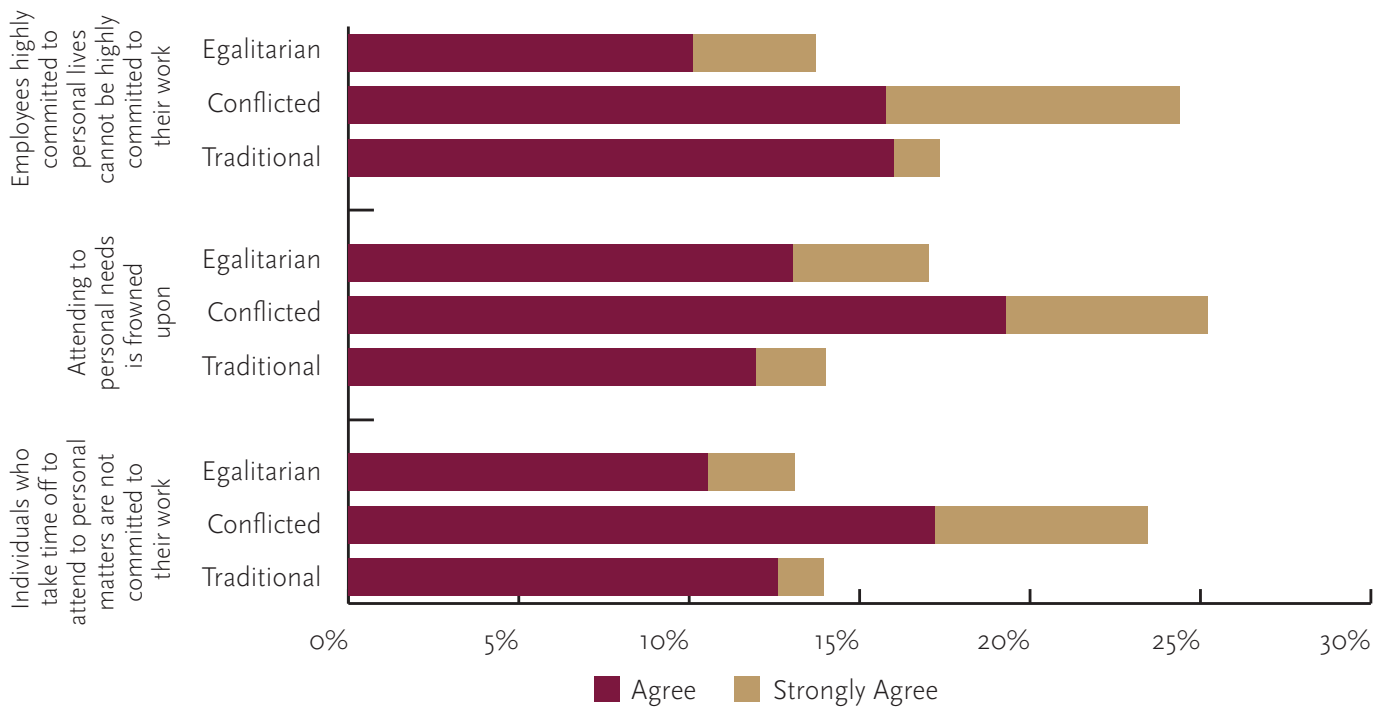
**CHART 19: Family-Oriented Values**



*Having a child made me appreciate the value of having a flexible job that supports maintaining a good work-life balance. I thought I was busy prior to becoming a dad. Ha. Work time is pretty much the same, but I am more tired on certain days. Go to bed early every now and then to catch up on sleep so work performance doesn't suffer. Dad time takes over and there is very little extra time to do yard work, cleaning, physical exercise, hobbies, etc.*

TRADITIONAL DAD, 34, FATHER OF A TODDLER

CHART 20: Personal Values

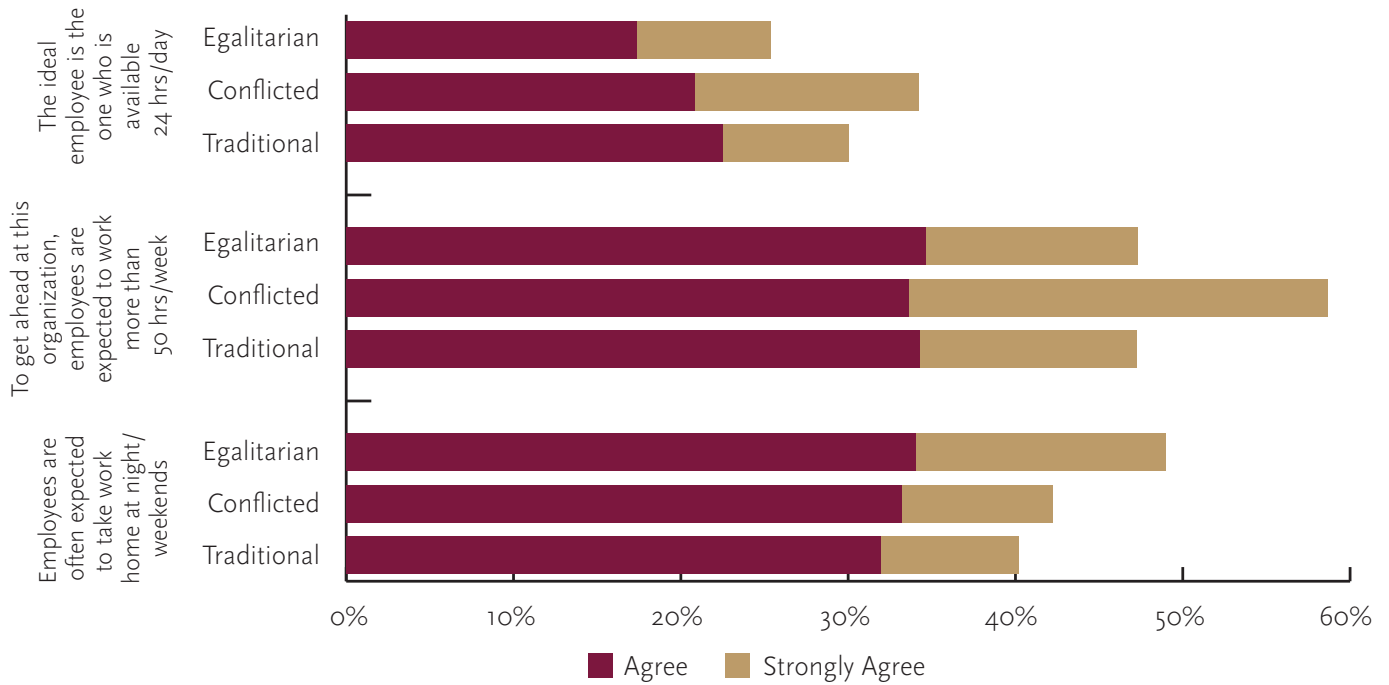


As can be seen in Chart 21, the Conflicted fathers were the most likely to agree that their culture reinforced an “ideal worker” model, one which places a higher priority on work than on personal or family life (i.e. employees must work long hours and must be available 24 x 7). The only exception to this pattern was on the statement that employees were expected to do work on nights and on weekends. In response to this statement, Egalitarian fathers were the most likely to agree/strongly agree (49%) as compared with the Conflicted (42%) or Traditional (40%) fathers. This may be due to the fact that Egalitarian fathers often need to maintain the most rigid schedule of the three father types due to their caregiving commitments. In order to compensate for this, Egalitarians may be more willing than the other two types to do work at home and during off-hours.

*Don't assume that a couple is egalitarian or traditional; do not write company policies that reflect your own opinions regarding child rearing.*

TRADITIONAL DAD, 43, FATHER OF TWO YOUNG GIRLS

**CHART 21: Ideal Worker Values**



*I think everything changed after kids. Before children my job entailed a lot of travel and long hours. Having a spouse that also works full-time, I knew after kids that parenting was a 50/50 shared responsibility and that meant taking a second look and prioritizing some of the things at my job to make sure our kids and my spouse had the support they needed at home. It really meant delegating some of my responsibilities at work in order to alleviate some of the travel as well as taking a second look at how I arrange my work calendar and making the most use out of the time I was in the office.*

EGALITARIAN DAD, 48, FATHER OF 2 YOUNG BOYS

## IV. DISCUSSION

### Isn't this all a generational thing? Yes ... and no

In our years of researching the changing role of fathers and fathers' increasing desire to be more hands-on, engaged parents, perhaps no question has arisen more often from the media and from corporate groups than, "Isn't this all a generational thing?" The implication is that Millennials have grown up in a time of greater gender equality and that is what has led fathers today to seek this greater engagement in caregiving.

There is evidence to support this generational assertion that can be found in surveying current research. First, as we have frequently pointed out in our writings about today's fathers, there are societal changes occurring that would impact this growing trend. Second, young women today are much more likely to receive a bachelor's or master's degree than their male counterparts – the numbers generally cited put the difference at 3-2. This suggests that young women are in an advantageous state in terms of their prospects in the labor market (Harrington and Ladge, 2009). Third, Millennials are much more likely than their older counterparts to be in a dual-career relationship. According to a recent EY study, nearly 80% of Millennials will have a full-time working partner versus less than half of Baby-boomers (EY, 2015). Finally, far more Millennial men have grown up with mothers who have had careers in professional and management positions than was the case for earlier generations. Evidence shows that men who had working mothers growing up spend nearly twice as much time on family and child care as those who grew up in more traditional households (McGinn, Castro, and Lingo, 2015). These factors indeed have resulted in higher levels of awareness and sensitivity to the work-family challenges that are present in dual-career situations and the need for fathers to be more hands-on caregivers.

Overall however, our research does not demonstrate dramatic differences between the fatherhood cohorts by generation. While there is a higher percentage of Millennial Egalitarian fathers than Baby-boomer Egalitarians (31% vs. 27%), there were slightly fewer Egalitarians in the Millennial sample when compared to Generation X fathers (31% vs. 32%). Another noteworthy difference is that the percentage of Conflicted fathers in our sample has decreased 4% from Baby-boomers to Generation X and Millennials (i.e. 40.5% of Baby-boomer fathers were conflicted vs. just over 36% of Generation X and Millennials who fell into this classification).

That said, the differences noted consistently throughout our sample were far more pronounced by the fatherhood type than by which generation the fathers belong to. Regardless of generation, the most observable pattern across a broad range of questions was the distinctly lower scores on job and career satisfaction experienced by the Conflicted fathers. On question after question, the Conflicted fathers reported lower levels of satisfaction, greater sensitivity to the work-centric values of their organization, higher intention of leaving their present employer, and other indicators that would raise concern for their employers.

As we have shown, the three fatherhood types present an interesting look at how the fathers balance their careers with their caregiving responsibilities. In our analysis, it is clear that the Conflicted fathers who struggle the most regarding their roles as caregivers (they feel it should be a 50/50 proposition with their partners but their partners do more than they do) also report significantly lower levels of career satisfaction than either of the other two types of fathers.

In addition to the data we were able to glean from our two samples, it is worth noting that in our 2015 Millennials' study, we asked those fathers an extensive list of questions about life satisfaction (beyond their career). When given statements such as, "I am satisfied with my life," "The conditions of my life are excellent," and "My life is close to my ideal," the Conflicted fathers were less likely to agree with these statements by a significant margin ranging from 15-50% (depending on the specific question). When it came to **life satisfaction**, which Millennials reported was significantly more important than career satisfaction, Egalitarian fathers scored the highest on all questions, Traditionals were second highest, and Conflicted fathers scored the lowest. Unfortunately, these life satisfaction measures were not part of our 2011 research so we cannot state with certainty that the results would have been the same among Generation X and Baby-boomer fathers.

It is important to note that the ambivalence and dissatisfaction that these Conflicted fathers experience may go well beyond their work and caregiving dilemma. We may find, on further exploration, that their problem of feeling conflicted plays out in other activities and assessments that are unrelated to their parenting role. As Professor Tory Higgins

of Columbia University pointed out, “The notion that people who hold conflicting or incompatible beliefs are likely to experience discomfort has had a long history in psychology” (1987). That said, struggling with dissonance on issues as central to one’s identity as work and family can be particularly problematic and troubling. While not an easy proposition, striving to resolve conflict on such fundamental issues would seem an extremely important undertaking.

*Since I am the primary breadwinner with a demanding job, I need to focus much of my attention on work. This often leaves me feeling like I am not part of the “inner circle” of what is going on with my kids, which is hard. I miss out on a lot.*

CONFLICTED DAD, 48, FATHER OF TWO TEENAGERS

It seems that what these Conflicted fathers are experiencing is exactly analogous to the dilemma that working women have faced for years, “Is it possible to have it all?” In that sense, this is not a new phenomenon. The struggle to have a professional career while also being an engaged caregiver is one that many if not most mothers would easily relate to. What is new is this struggle is being amplified far more for today’s working dads.

As our Millennial study results indicate, young fathers are finding it more difficult to balance work and family than their female counterparts. This parallels the findings from other parenting research, which suggests fathers are having more difficulty with this issue than mothers. There are many reasons why this may be the case. Those may include:

- Fathers typically work longer hours than mothers do. It is still the case that far more women leave the workplace or reduce their hours to part-time than men do following the birth of children.
- The increasing number of women who contribute a significant percentage of family income. This is still a relatively recent phenomenon that men have begun to respond to only in recent years.
- Men/fathers in our Millennial study were significantly more likely than women/mothers to be susceptible to the cues they receive from the organizational culture regarding what it means to be an ideal worker. In addition to the men themselves, organizational leaders may be less forgiving of men who take time for caregiving. While doing so can be career limiting for women, it may be even more problematic for men who do not fit the image of the hegemonic male.

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

### For fathers – how to reduce conflict

Clearly, Conflicted fathers have lower levels of job and career satisfaction than that of the other two father types (i.e. Egalitarian and Traditional). On one level, it makes sense that people who feel their actions are not congruent with their values would feel greater dissatisfaction. Yet it was a somewhat surprising finding, especially in that there was virtually no area of the many we explored where Conflicted fathers had higher levels of satisfaction and fulfillment. Other scholars' research validates these findings and demonstrates that dissonance between one's espoused beliefs and one's actions often has a deleterious effect on individuals' emotional state.

While suggesting that being congruent in one's values and actions seems a straightforward proposal, reducing the incongruence is easier said than done. This dissonance is the result of holding two conflicting, deeply held, and equally valid points of view on topics of importance and few things in life are more important to individuals than one's family and career. So, while fathers' intentions to provide equally shared care is likely sincere, these intentions compete with their own career advancement goals as well as the signals that most men receive in the workplace - that "real men" put their careers and breadwinning responsibilities first. Given this conundrum is grounded in powerful belief systems regarding gender, work and family, it is highly unlikely that men would resolve this conflict without significant effort.

While much of our report focuses on the Conflicted dads, we acknowledge that fathers who fall into the other two types likely also experience some levels of work-life conflict and these recommendations could be applicable to them as well. One way to overcome this conflict is to engage in a thorough, in-depth career-life planning activity. For such an undertaking to be impactful, it would necessarily include a significant self-assessment component. That component would explore in-depth the values, life goals, external forces and personal histories that drive these individuals to act in a given way. The aim of such an activity would be to bring conflicting values and goals to the surface so they could be explored and hopefully resolved.

To complement this approach, or as alternatives if such a career-life planning endeavor is not accessible, there are other things fathers can do to help them reduce their conflicted feelings:

- Talk to other fathers formally or informally to share common struggles and brainstorm potential solutions. If a father's employee resource group does not exist in your organization, explore the possibility of establishing one with your fellow dads and your employer's human resource department. Dads groups are also growing in many local communities (see City Dads Group) for social connections and support.
- Invite in speakers for brownbag sessions. This can be on the changing role of fathers, parenting skills, or achieving greater fit between work and family life.
- If your organization offers paternity leave, strongly consider taking this time off to bond with your child and to gain experience in "hands-on parenting." This will increase your confidence and competence in your parenting skills. It will also help you establish very early on your role as a co-caregiver with your partner.
- Have frequent conversations with your partner about your roles at home and at work and your goals for your family. Our research has demonstrated that couples who hold these discussions more frequently have higher life satisfaction (***How Millennials Navigate Their Careers: Young Adult Views on Work, Life and Success, 2015***).
- Support other fathers at your workplace who are caregivers. Changing organizational culture requires more than changes in policies or even statements of support from senior leaders. Men who support colleagues in their effort to be engaged parents will help to shift the organizational culture to one that is more equitable and encouraging of men as caregivers. This will in turn, help to promote the advancement of women in the organization as well.

## For organizations – supporting dads in the workplace

Over the past 30 years, employers have made significant strides toward understanding and addressing the dual-agenda that women face in trying to succeed at work while also carrying the lion's share of caregiving responsibilities at home.

*Work-life balance is an issue that impacts both moms and dads. It's okay to be a working dad who makes this a priority. And it's up to the working dad to define the right balance for his particular family situation.*

TRADITIONAL DAD, 45, FATHER OF 3 CHILDREN

In recent years, there is a growing acknowledgment that fathers are struggling at least as much as their female counterparts with work-family conflict. However, to date there is little evidence that employers have begun to embrace these challenges. While there may be a tendency to discount these concerns, it is important to recognize the struggles that men, and specifically fathers, are experiencing and to understand that men's ability to address these issues may be the single most important factor in facilitating women's advancement.

There are a number of steps organizations can take to help fathers grapple with and address the conflict they feel which is undermining their career and life satisfaction:

- Consider having a father's employee network that provides dads the opportunity to discuss their concerns and needs regarding caregiving and balancing their work-family demands.
- Make parental leave policies gender neutral and offer the same amounts of paid leave for fathers that mothers currently receive (beyond the time birth mothers are given for delivery and recovery). This will demonstrate that the fathers' role in parenting is given the same weight as the mothers' role.
- Cultivate a flexible work environment at your organization. Offering flexible work options can support dads as they strive to meet both their professional and personal responsibilities. In our research, we found that 95% of fathers view workplace flexibility as important, with 79% reporting it is very or extremely important to them. The ability to shift start and stop times, work from home, or take time off as needed is a critical element in enabling dads' work-life success.
- Consider establishing a voluntary mentoring program for fathers interested in not just career-related dialogue but which also includes conversations regarding the work-family dilemmas and challenges men face.
- Conduct a survey with fathers in your organization to assess whether they feel the climate is as accepting of fathers' engagement in caregiving as it is for mothers.
- Offer in-depth training (perhaps a 2-3 day program) that helps fathers sort through the career-life challenges they are faced with. Such training done right will provide fathers with a clearer sense of the roles they want to play on the work and home front and reduce the conflict many are currently experiencing which yields lower levels of career and life satisfaction. For this training to be effective, it will need to include a significant amount of rigorous self-assessment in order for fathers to clearly identify the source of their conflicts and to think clearly and creatively about ways to resolve these.

A clear goal of these efforts is to assist fathers with the complex dilemma of blending work and family. A special focus on working with Conflicted fathers would seem likely to yield the most positive results and would likely have a dramatic and positive effect on the work and life satisfaction, and possibly retention, of this very large group of working fathers.



## VI. CONCLUSION

After eight years of researching fathers we have surfaced a number of surprising findings, many of which challenge conventional wisdom. In our studies of white-collar fathers working in large organizations, we have learned that the vast majority of those fathers do not see themselves primarily as breadwinners but equally as caregivers. That the vast majority of fathers want to spend more time with their children than they currently do, but also are ambitious in seeking work roles with greater responsibility. That, in spite of the fact that women far outnumber men in the role of full-time caregivers, more young men than young women say they would consider being an at-home parent.

What is clear is that fathers are in a period of transition in the US. The old stereotype of fathers as career-centric, detached parents who do not seek intimate relationships with their children is outdated. But transitions are rarely smooth or seamless. And as many men go through this transition, a significant number are caught between two competing ideals - those of ideal worker and ideal parent. The desire to succeed at both roles yields conflicted feelings which do not lead to positive outcomes for fathers, their families, or their employers.

Ultimately, for everyone's sake, reducing the conflict would be "good news." But doing so will not be easy. It will require organizations to understand that advancing women in the workplace requires leaders who will acknowledge and respect fathers' role in the home. It will be dependent on a society that celebrates a broader definition of manhood - one that encompasses nurturing and caregiving, And most importantly, it will require that fathers do the difficult work of resolving the competing challenges and conflicts that harmonizing work and family presents.

Addressing these difficult dilemmas will bring positive benefits for all parties - families, organizations, communities, and most of all, fathers themselves. Aligning their aspirations with their actions will result in fathers finding greater satisfaction and fulfillment in their work and their home lives and alleviating the career-caregiving conflict.

*Prioritize everything in your life and set personal goals as much as professional goals. I think a lot depends on the father as an individual. I'm not sure all fathers have an innate desire to handle or share childcare 50/50. I believe everyone can find the healthy balance between personal and professional goals. You will have to make some sacrifices and nothing will be predictable. You have to be ready to "roll with the punches." Listen to your children and determine if they "need" you in any way. Develop a one-on-one bond with each child to make sure you are aware when they might need you. Have an open communication with your employer about your personal goals tied to family matters. If you maximize your time, I believe you can do both.*

EGALITARIAN DAD, 48, FATHER OF 2 YOUNG BOYS

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Boston College Center for Work & Family  
22 Stone Avenue • Chestnut Hill, MA 02467  
Phone: (617) 552-2844 • E-mail: [cwf@bc.edu](mailto:cwf@bc.edu)  
On the web: [www.bc.edu/cwf](http://www.bc.edu/cwf) • [www.TheNewDad.org](http://www.TheNewDad.org)