FATHERS, CAREGIVING AND WORK

“How providing a broad array of work/life programs and services that meet the needs of fathers, such as flexibility, time-off for bonding and parenting priorities, and access to resources that address parenting challenges, demonstrate an organization’s respect and support for fathers. To me, it is not only the right thing to do, but it reflects a commitment to the pursuit of being an employer-of-choice.”
— Wendy Breiterman, Director, Global Work/Life Strategies, Office of Diversity & Inclusion, Johnson & Johnson

How many fathers work?

Fathers are defined as male householders with children under the age of 18, either with or without a wife present. In the United States, there are more than 24 million fathers in the labor force, and close to 35 million families with children under the age of 18 (American Community Survey, 2008).

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What is the current face of fatherhood?

- The term is more broadly defined to include a father’s roles as both breadwinner and caregiver.
- A greater number of fathers wish to care for their children and enjoy doing so than did in the past.
- There is more interest in fathers sharing parental leave more equally with their spouse or partner than previously.
- Fathers have had increased school involvement over the past 10 years, including more participation in school events and classroom visitation.
- More married men now believe that family time is more important than career success.

% DID YOU KNOW?

- “The proportion of fathers taking time off and receiving paid parental leave benefits has increased sharply, from 3% in 2000 to 20% in 2006” (Marshall, 2008, p.8).
- “Most of the fathers who [take] leave [following the arrival of a new child] (98%) [report] they [like] caring for the child and [wish] they . . . shared parental leave more equally with their spouse or partner” (Seward, Yeatts, Amin, & DeWitt, 2006, p. 420).
- “Employed fathers spend significantly more time per workday with their children under 13 today than they did three decades ago, while the amount of time employed mothers spend with their children under 13 per workday has not changed significantly” (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2008).
- “Half of fathers, and particularly those who work long hours, believed they spent too much time at work, while 42 percent of fathers thought they spent too little time with their children. This figure rises to over half (54 percent) for fathers with children under one year” (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2009, p. 4).

How can workplaces support fathers?

(Galinsky, E., Aumann, K., & Bond, J., 2008)

- Consider fathers’ needs in the development of work-life efforts and mandates
- Understand what motivates working fathers—don’t assume traditional gender roles apply
- Provide examples of fathers who are successful both personally and professionally
- Offer “father support groups” to allow men of different generations to discuss their evolving caregiving roles
- Ensure that talent management processes and policies take into account fathers’ family responsibilities

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