

# Are the Parents Alright?

Parenting and Well-Being in the U.S. Context

Ann Meier

University of Minnesota, USA

Collaborators: Kelly Musick, Sarah Flood, Rachel Dunifon, Jocelyn Fischer

# Contemporary U.S. Parenting

- Time-intensive
- Child-centered
- Good for children
- Good for parents?

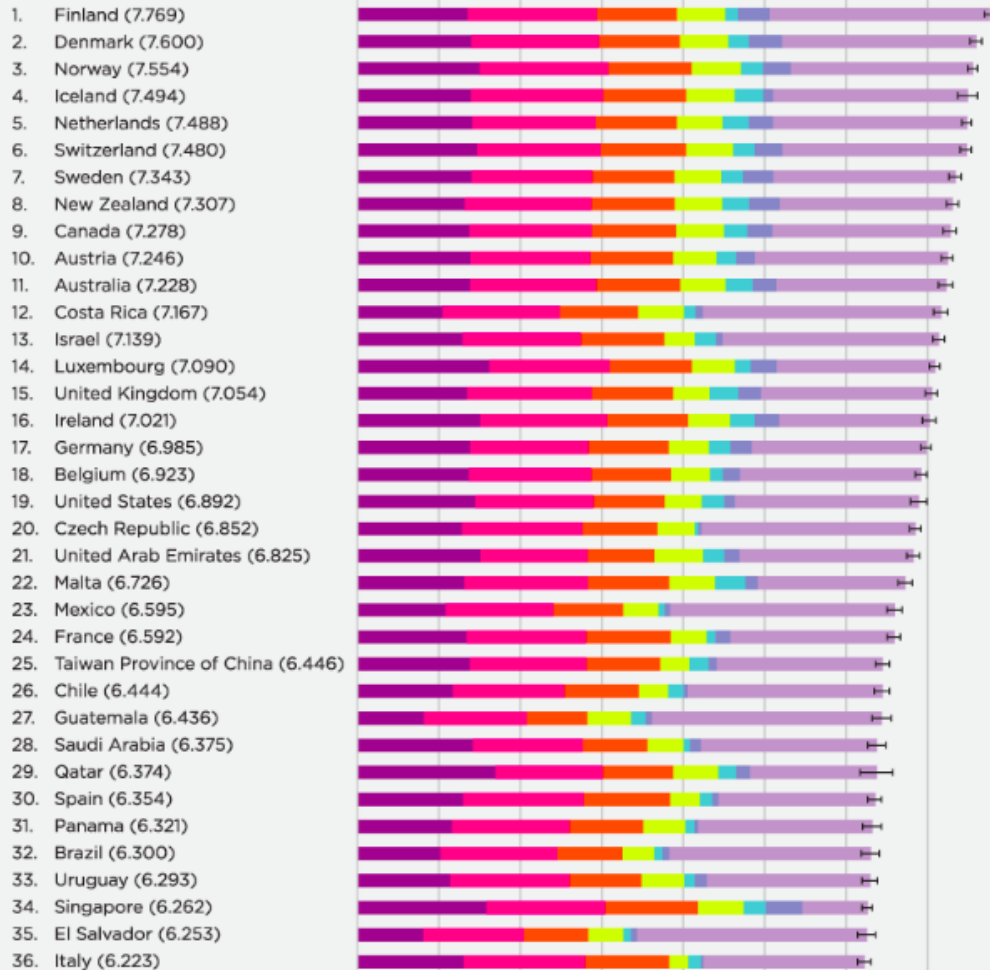


TABLE 3  
PARENTHOOD EFFECTS FROM FIXED-EFFECTS REGRESSION

Country	Combined Happiness (1)	2006–7 Happiness (2)	2008 Happiness (3)
Portugal (1) . . . . .	.77***	.61***	1.01***
Hungary (2) . . . . .	.46***		.49***
Spain (3) . . . . .	.31***	.27***	.65***
Norway (4) . . . . .	.20***	.22***	.19***
Sweden (5) . . . . .	.19***	.38***	.05***
Finland (6) . . . . .	.15***	.15***	.15***
France (7) . . . . .	.11***	.32***	.07***
Russia (8) . . . . .	.07***	-.22***	.31***
Belgium (9) . . . . .	-.01***	-.02***	-.01***
Germany (10) . . . . .	-.06***	.24***	-.34***
Czech Republic (11) . . . . .	-.09***		-.05***
Israel (12) . . . . .	-.12***		-.10***
Netherlands (13) . . . . .	-.22***	-.25***	-.20***
Denmark (14) . . . . .	-.28***	-.41***	-.06***
Australia (15) . . . . .	-.41***	-.35***	-.38***
Poland (16) . . . . .	-.50***	-1.30	-.22***
Switzerland (17) . . . . .	-.70***	-.49***	-.94***
New Zealand (18) . . . . .	-.82***	-.77***	-.76***
United Kingdom (19) . . . . .	-.83***	-.57***	-1.05***
Greece (20) . . . . .	-.87***		-.86**
Ireland (21) . . . . .	-1.00***	-.83***	-1.16
United States (22) . . . . .	-1.27	-1.21	-1.23

Glass,  
Andersson, and  
Simon (2016)

Figure 2.7: Ranking of Happiness 2016-2018



Helliwell, J.,  
Layard, R., &  
Sachs, J. (2019)

# What we know about parental well-being

- Earlier: parents less happy than those without children.
- Recent: parenting a mixed bag of costs and rewards.

## Navigating the 'cage match' of modern parenthood

Nation May 5, 2014 5:52 PM EDT

Newsweek

NEWS

DOES HAVI

BY NEWSWEEK STAFF ON 6

NEW YORK

Why Parents Hate Parenting --

JENNIFER SENIOR

ALL JOY  
AND  
NO FUN

THE PARADOX OF  
MODERN PARENTHOOD

U HAPPY?

\*All Joy and No Fun is an indispensable map for a journey that most of us take without one. Billions of parents and grandparents alike will find this is an interesting book that every parent should

# ***How*** we know about parental well-being

Compare well-being of parents:

1. to those without children.
2. before and after they have children.



# ***How*** we know about parental well-being

“All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life?”

- General
- Uni-dimensional
- Parenthood versus parenting
- Does not account for disposition

# ***How*** we know about parental well-being

Compare well-being of parents:

1. to those without children.
2. before and after they have children.
3. When with and away from children



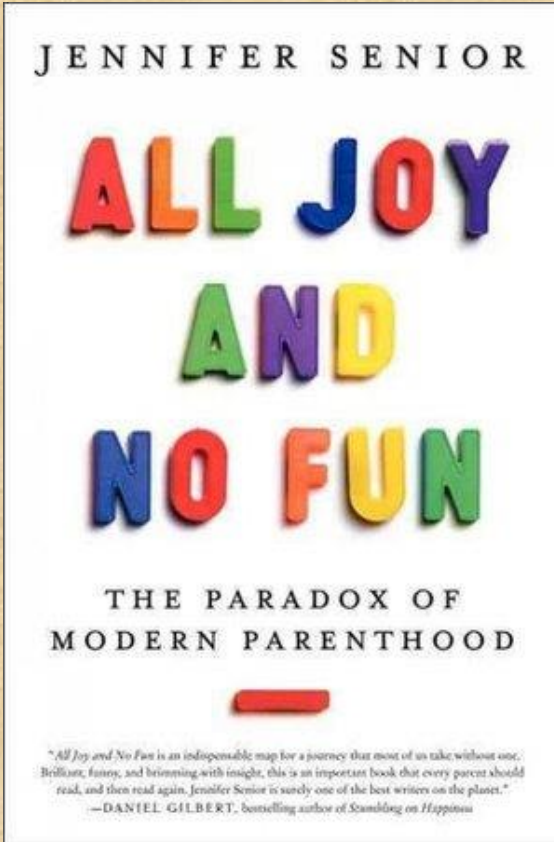
**Table 1.** Mean affect by situation. Positive affect is the average of happy, warm/friendly, enjoying myself. Negative affect is the average of frustrated/annoyed, depressed/blue, hassled/pushed around, angry/hostile, worried/anxious, criticized/put down. For each situation, the table shows the mean ratings on

affect descriptors, the average amount of time all respondents spent in the situation, and the proportion of respondents reporting at least one episode of that type. Episodes for which the respondent reported multiple activities or interaction partners were included in each of the corresponding computations.

	Mean affect rating					Mean hours/day	Proportion of sample reporting
	Positive	Negative	Competent	Impatient	Tired		
<b>Activities</b>							
Intimate relations	5.10	0.36	4.57	0.74	3.09	0.2	0.11
Socializing	4.59	0.57	4.32	1.20	2.33	2.3	0.65
Relaxing	4.42	0.51	4.05	0.84	3.44	2.2	0.77
Pray/worship/meditate	4.35	0.59	4.45	1.04	2.95	0.4	0.23
Eating	4.34	0.59	4.12	0.95	2.55	2.2	0.94
Exercising	4.31	0.50	4.26	1.58	2.42	0.2	0.16
Watching TV	4.19	0.58	3.95	1.02	3.54	2.2	0.75
Shopping	3.95	0.74	4.26	2.08	2.66	0.4	0.30
Preparing food	3.93	0.69	4.20	1.54	3.11	1.1	0.62
On the phone	3.92	0.85	4.35	1.92	2.92	2.5	0.61
Napping	3.87	0.60	3.26	0.91	4.30	0.9	0.43
Taking care of my children	3.86	0.91	4.19	1.95	3.56	1.1	0.36
Computer/e-mail/Internet	3.81	0.80	4.57	1.93	2.62	1.9	0.47
Housework	3.73	0.77	4.23	2.11	3.40	1.1	0.49
Working	3.62	0.97	4.45	2.70	2.42	6.9	1.00
Commuting	3.45	0.89	4.09	2.60	2.75	1.6	0.87
<b>Interaction partners</b>							
Friends	4.36	0.67	4.37	1.61	2.59	2.6	0.65
Relatives	4.17	0.80	4.17	1.70	3.06	1.0	0.38
Spouse/SO	4.11	0.79	4.10	1.53	3.46	2.7	0.62
Children	4.04	0.75	4.13	1.65	3.40	2.3	0.53
Clients/customers	3.79	0.95	4.65	2.59	2.33	4.5	0.74
Co-workers	3.76	0.92	4.43	2.44	2.35	5.7	0.93
Boss	3.52	1.09	4.48	2.82	2.44	2.4	0.52
Alone	3.41	0.69	3.76	1.73	3.12	3.4	0.90
Duration-weighted mean	3.89	0.84	4.31	2.09	2.90		
% time > 0	97%	66%	90%	59%	76%		

Source: Kahneman et al. 2004. *Science*, 306,3, 776-80. Sample = 909 employed women in Texas.

# NPR interview with Jennifer Senior (1/24/14)



“...what's truly amazing about Danny Kahneman's study is that when the women were answering this question, they didn't even realize they were ranking childcare so low. Daniel Kahneman did not design this study to determine how happy moms were. He simply wanted to know how happy people were during the day as they were going about doing their daily business. And only at the end ... when everything was all added up did he discover that parents would have preferred — yeah, napping, answering emails, shopping, watching TV ... housework, vacuuming clocked in higher which is amazing.”

# How do parents experience parenting?

- Differences for mothers and fathers?
- Differences by the age of the child?
- How is parenting experienced for working mothers?  
Sole mothers?



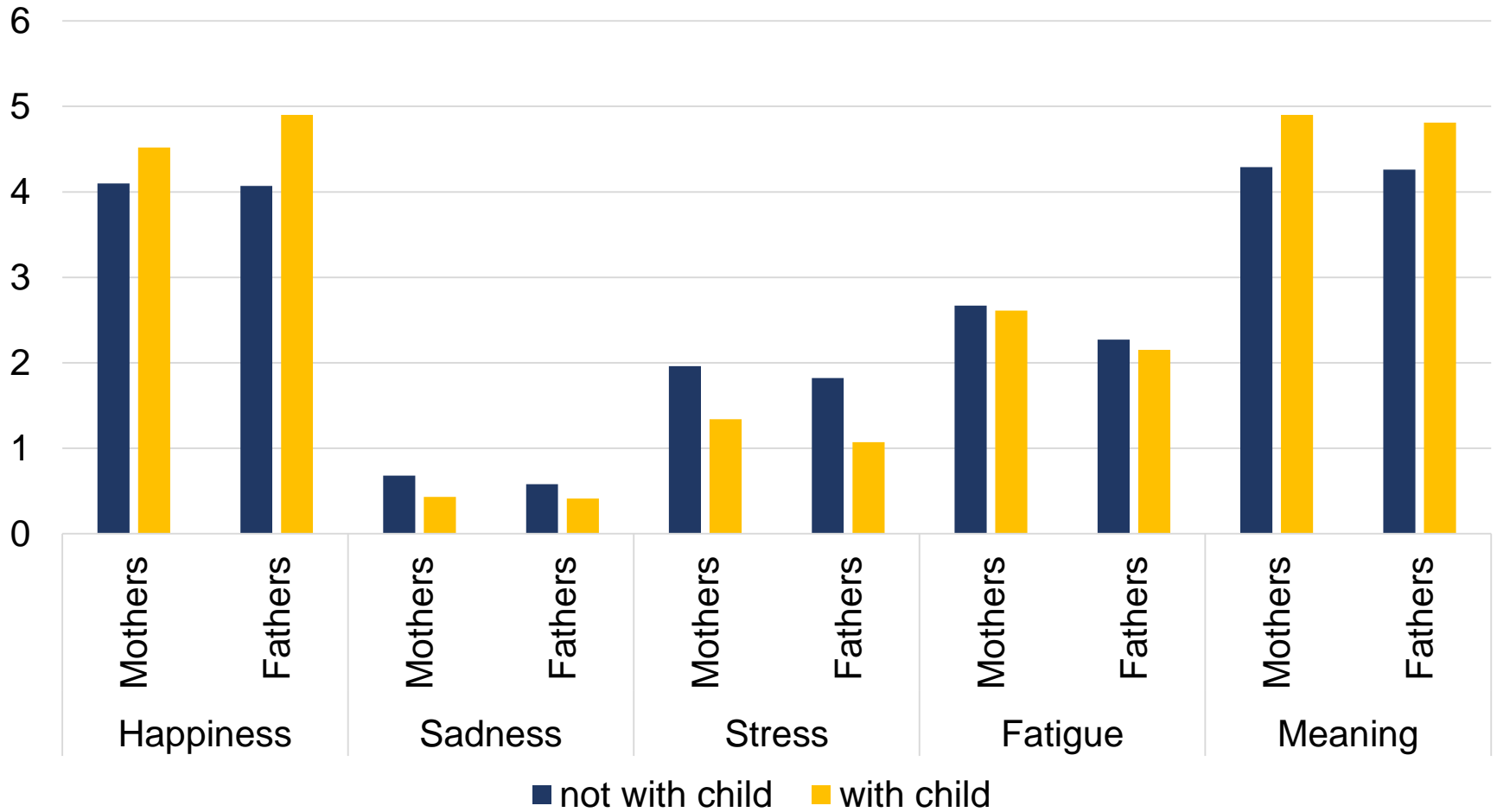
ATUS AHTUS MTUS  
AMERICAN TIME USE SURVEY EXTRACT BUILDER

HOME | SELECT DATA | MY DATA | FAQ | HELP



- American Time Use Survey (2010, 2012, 2013)
- How do parents feel in activities with their children?
- Account for individual dispositions
- Multiple dimensions: happiness, meaning, sadness, stress & fatigue

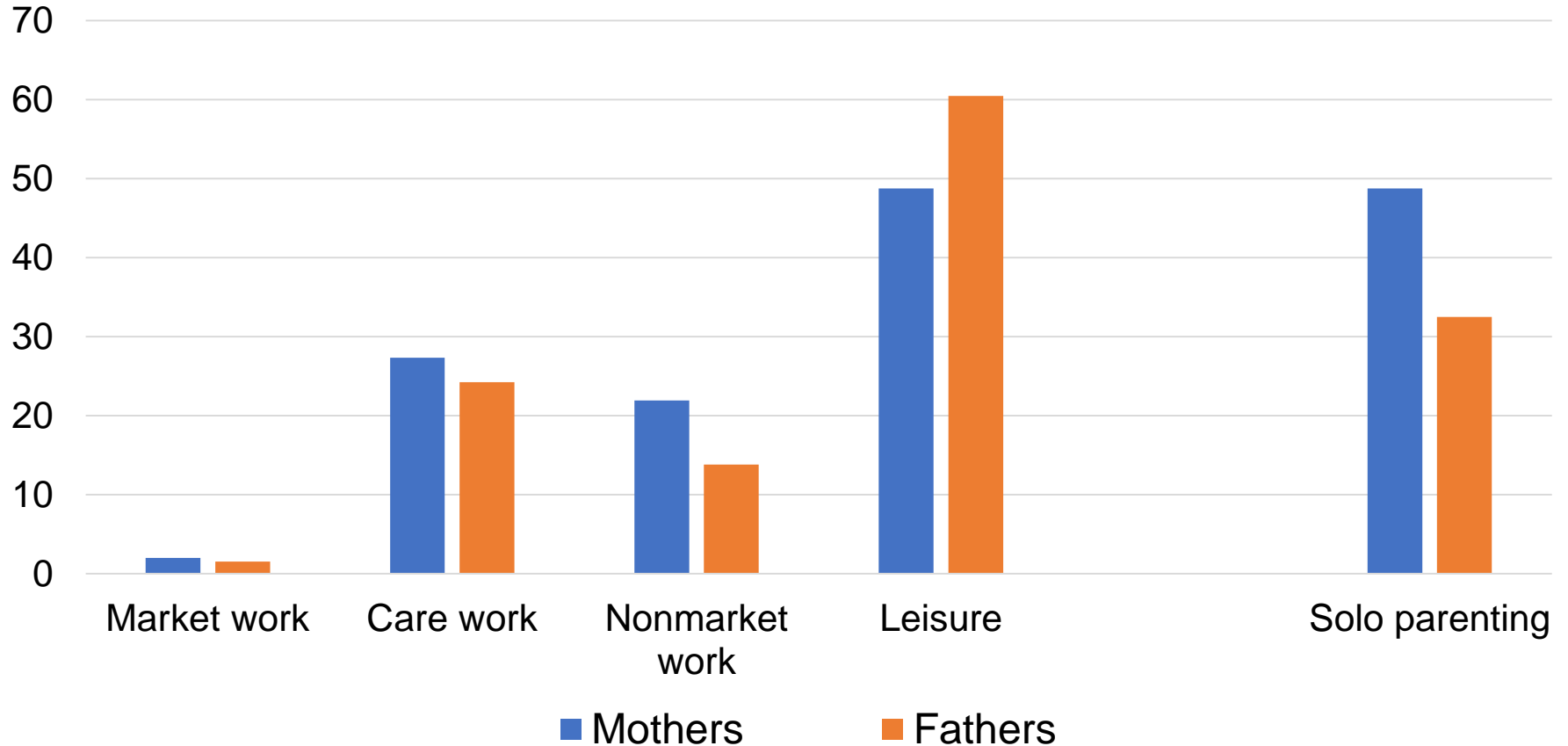
# Parental Well-Being: With and Not With Child



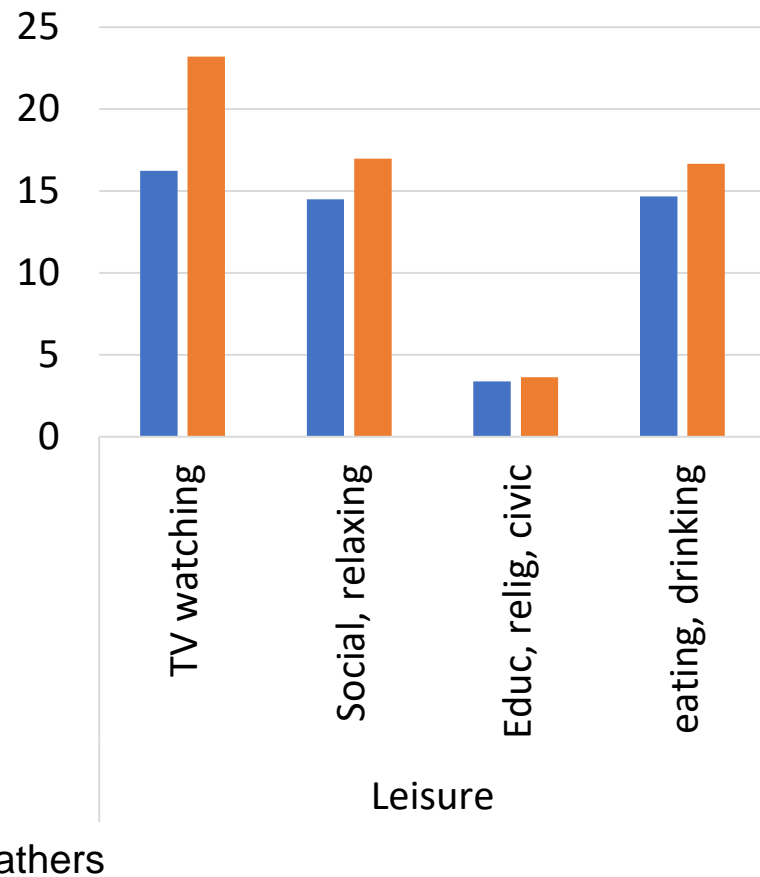
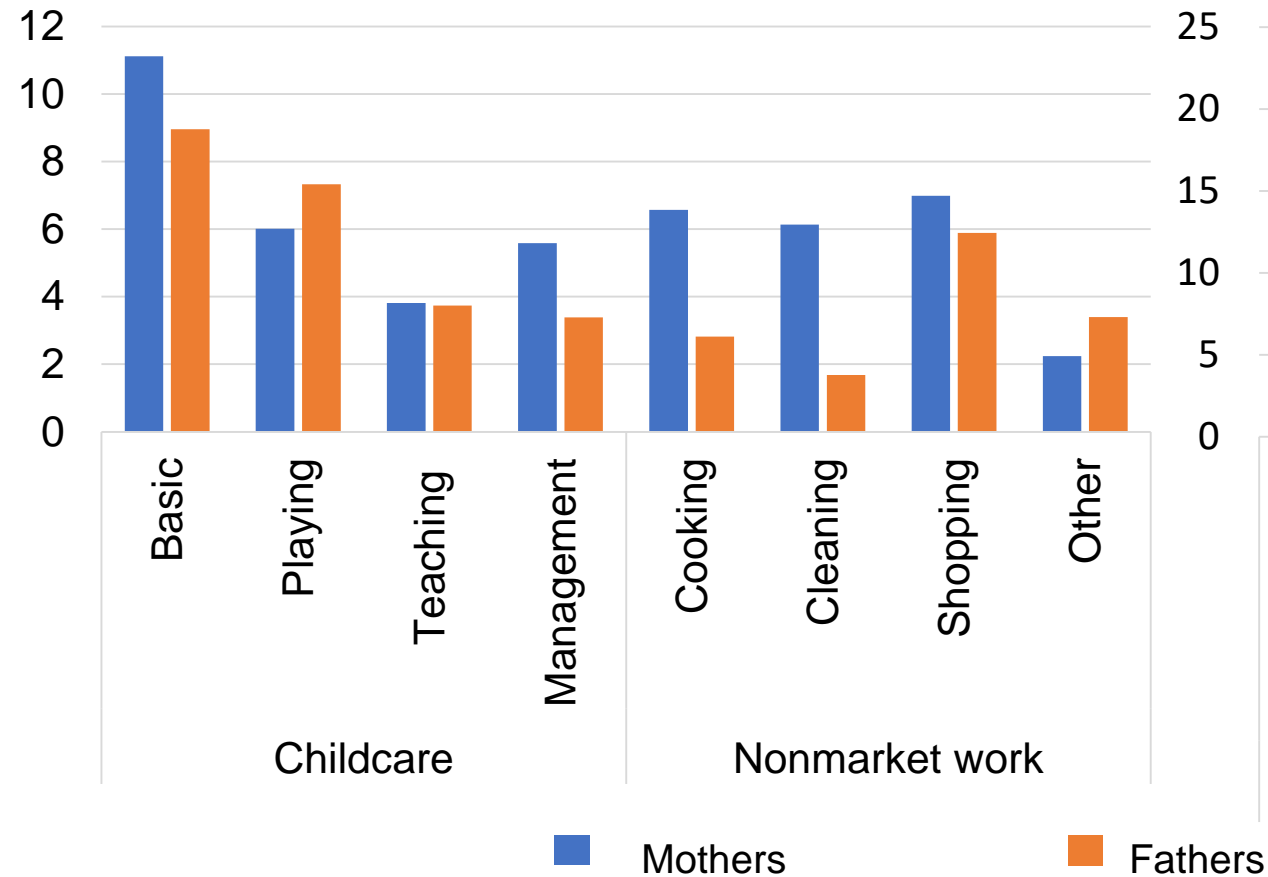


# Why are fathers better off in parenting?

## % Parenting Time by Activity Type



# Why Are Fathers Better Off? Detailed Activity Type

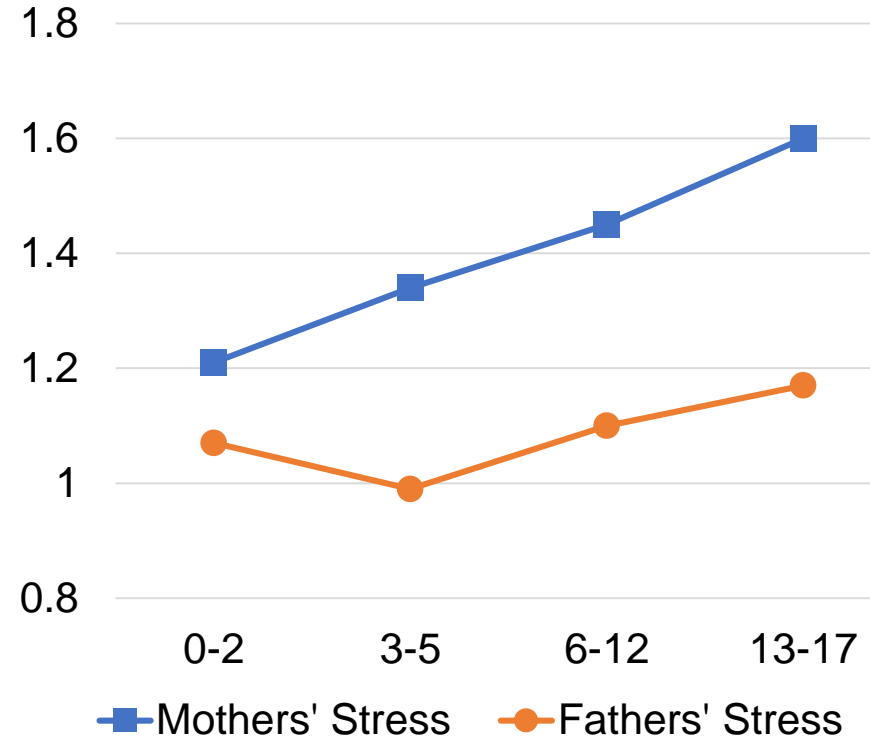
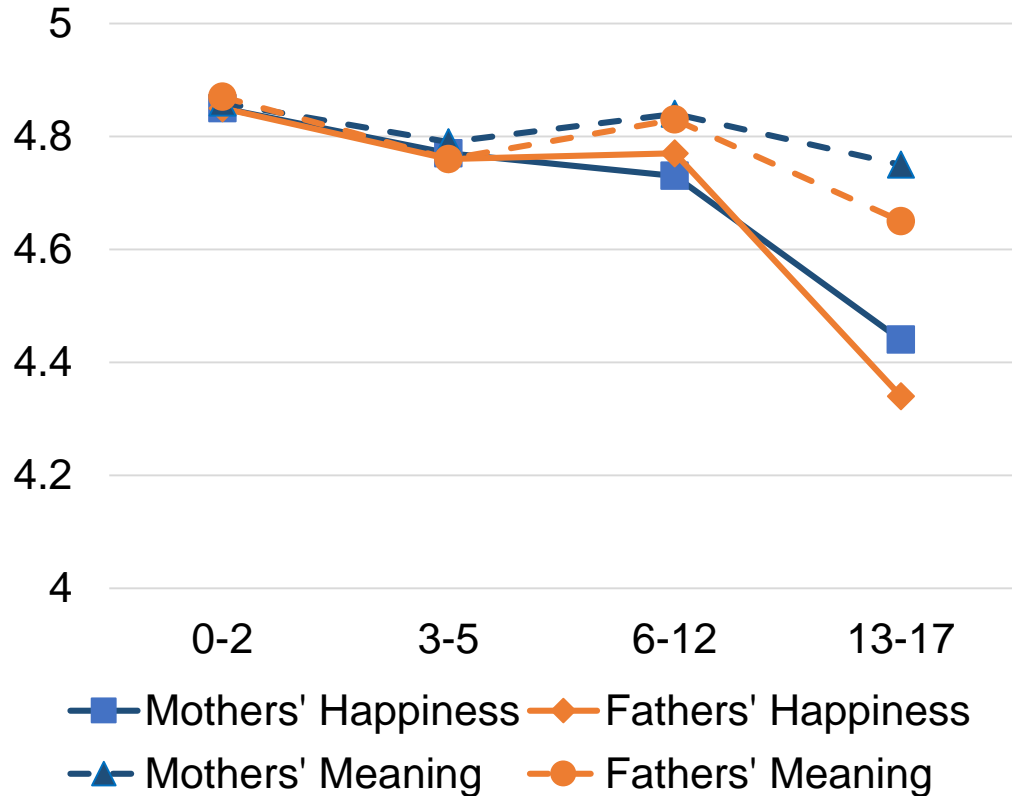




# Parental Well-Being by Child Age



# Parental Well-Being by Child Age and Parents' Gender



# Changing motherhood:

- 70% of mothers employed.
- Mother is primary earner in 40% of homes with children.
- 30% of children live with a single parent.

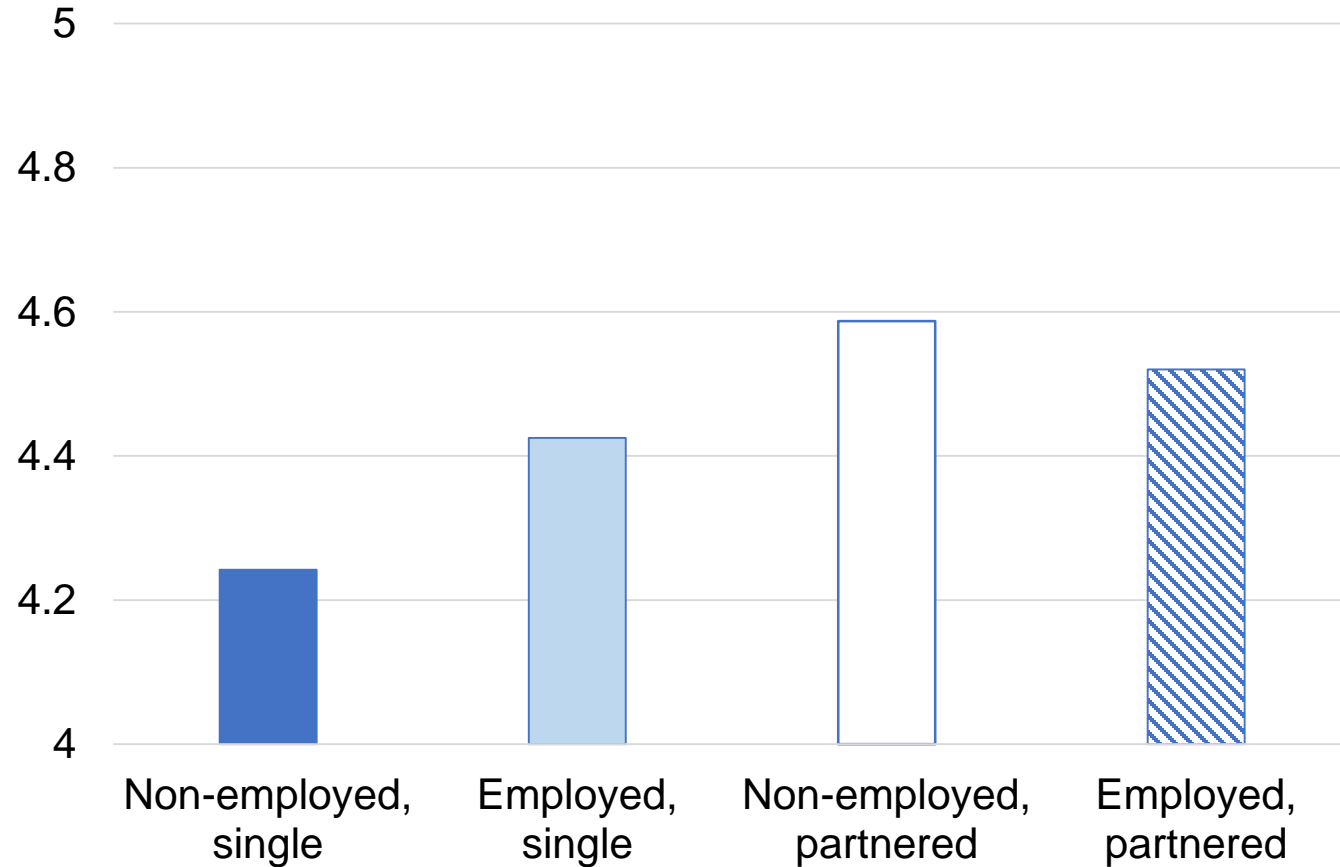
The New York Times

April 27, 2019

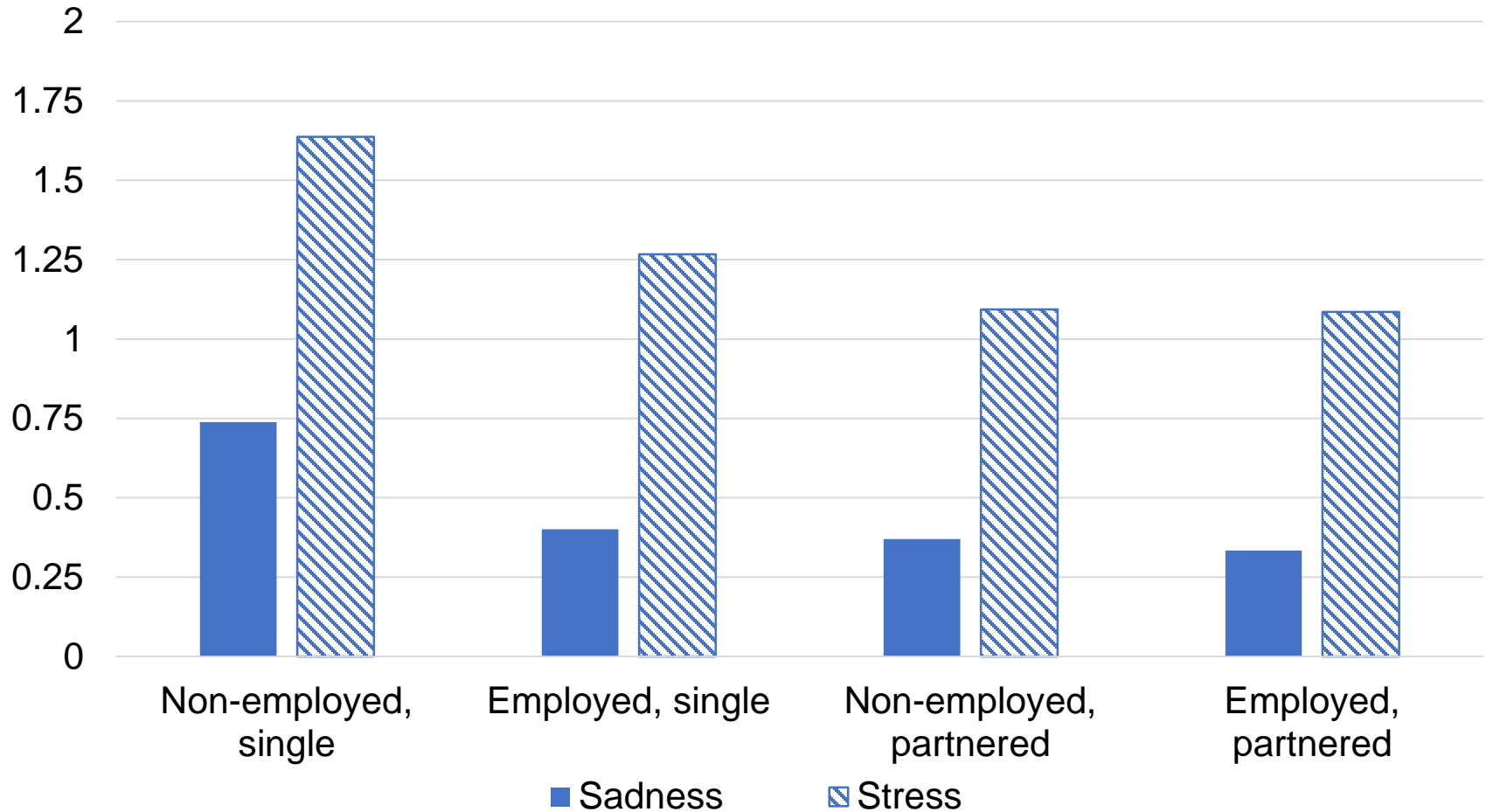


Credit:  
Shyama Golden

# Doubly Disadvantaged: Happiness



# Doubly Disadvantaged: Sadness and Stress



# Conclusions

- Parents ***better off when with their children.***
- Patterns ***favor fathers.***
- ***Adolescence is a low point*** for parents.
- Non-employed, single mothers are ***doubly disadvantaged.***

# What can be done?

- Facilitate time with children.
- Improve gender equality in parenting tasks.
- Extend parenting support through adolescence.
- Support single mothers to find employment.



*Thank you!*

meierann@umn.edu



# Are the Parents Alright? Seminar remarks

Dr. Kate Prickett

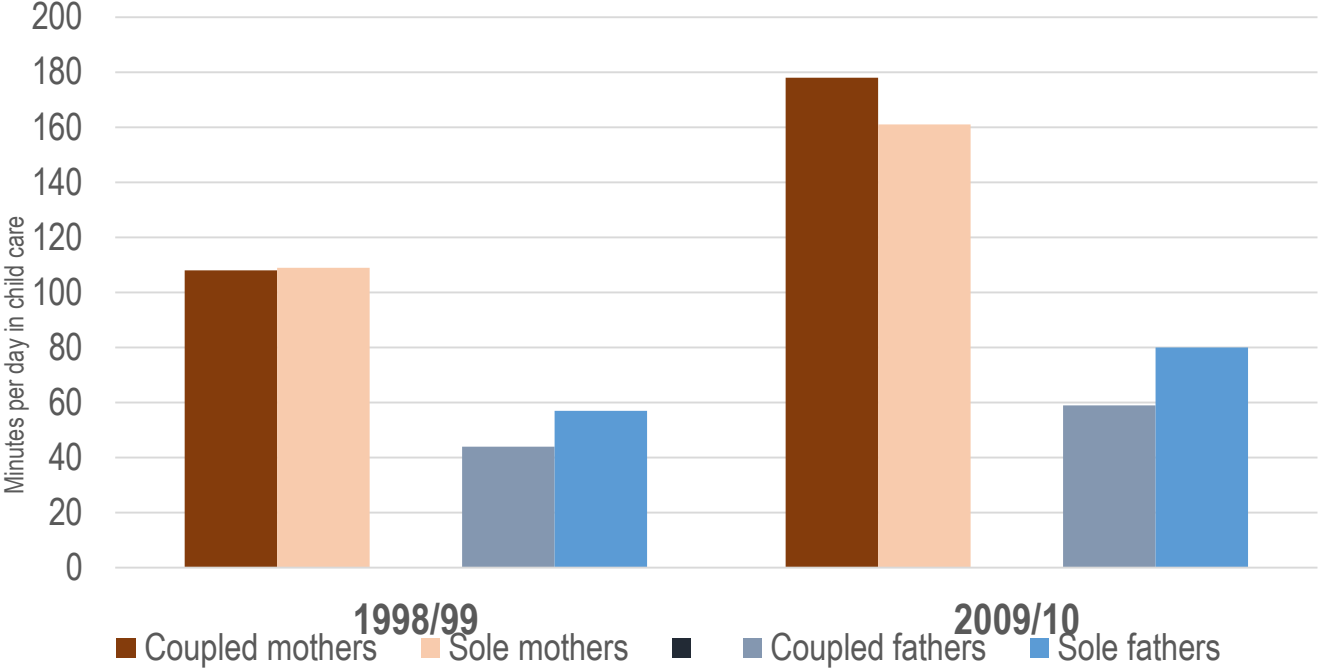
Roy McKenzie Centre for the Study of Families and Children  
School of Government, Victoria University

May 21st, 2019

Capital thinking. Globally minded.

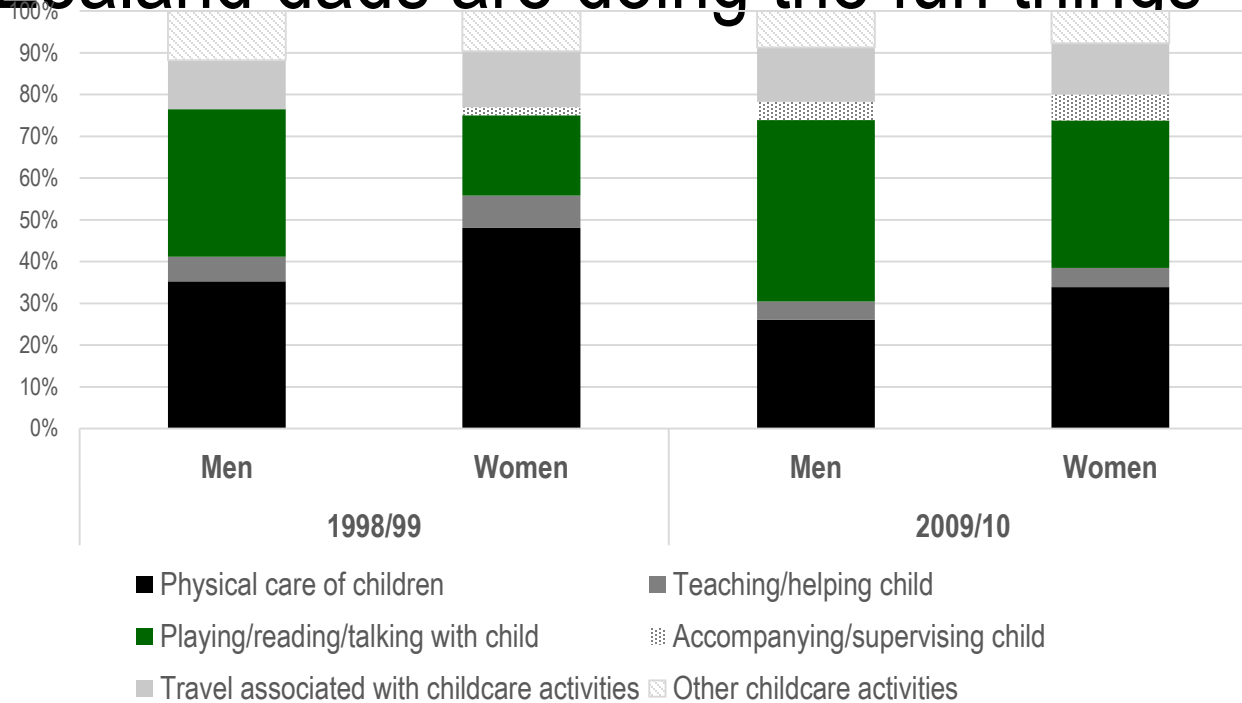


# New Zealand gender gap in child care time



Source: StatsNZ New Zealand Time Use Survey

# New Zealand dads are doing the fun things

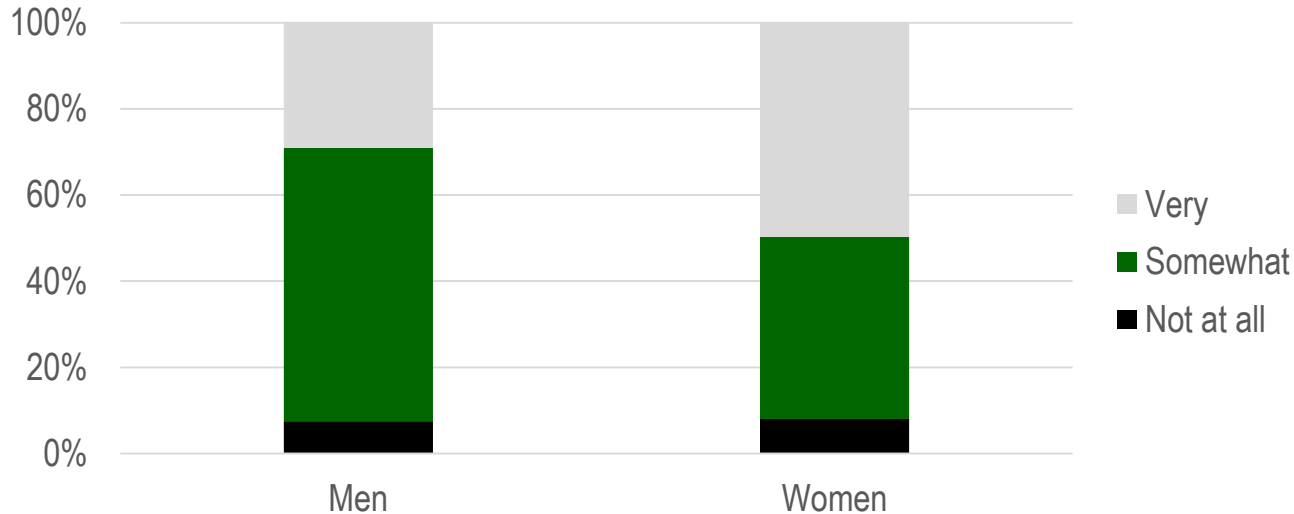


Source: StatsNZ New Zealand Time Use Survey

Capital thinking. Globally minded.

# Work-family satisfaction

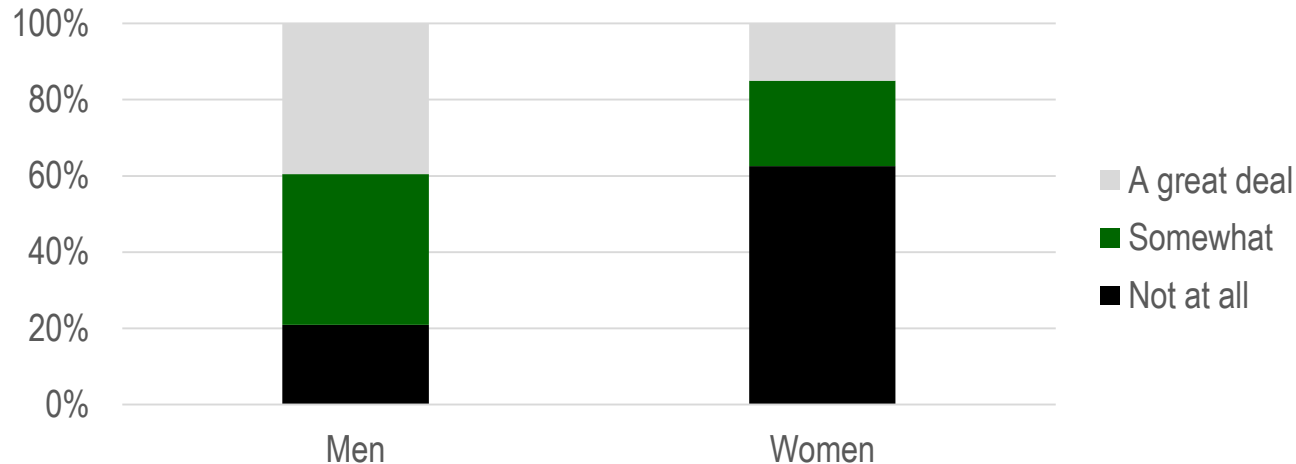
How satisfied are you with the balance between work and parenting in your life?



Gibb, Fergusson, and Boden, 2013.

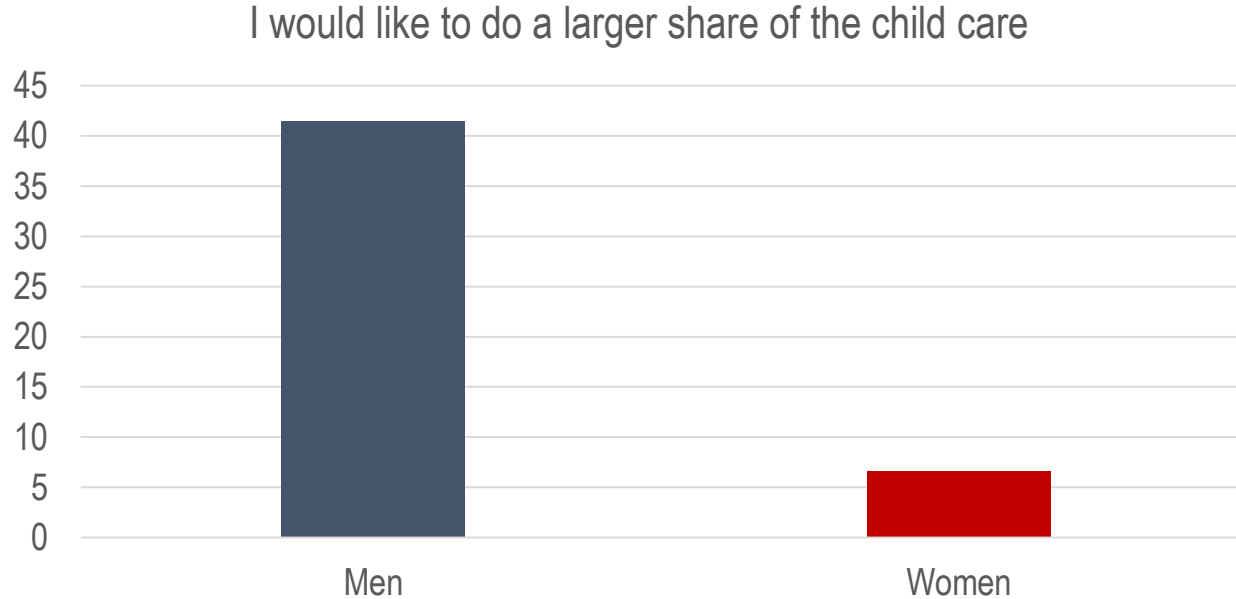
# Work-family satisfaction

To what extent has your involvement in parenting and childrearing been limited by your need to earn money through paid work?



Gibb, Fergusson, and Boden, 2013.

# Work-family satisfaction



Gibb, Fergusson, and Boden, 2013.

# Employment, parenting, and wellbeing

- Dads want more time with their children
  - How can work facilitate this in a way that allows both more time for dads and a greater balance in parenting activities?
- Work can promote parental wellbeing for single mothers
  - Work offers resources that can translate to parenting
  - Make work obligations *work*

