



The Impact of Having Children on Careers

**Environics
Institute**
For Survey Research



[Environics Institute for Survey Research](#) conducts relevant and original public opinion and social research related to issues of public policy and social change. It is through such research that organizations and individuals can better understand Canada today, how it has been changing, and where it may be heading.

 **Future
Skills
Centre** Centre des
**Compétences
futures**



The [Future Skills Centre \(FSC\)](#) is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to driving innovation in skills development so that everyone in Canada can be prepared for the future of work. We partner with policymakers, researchers, practitioners, employers and labour, and post-secondary institutions to solve pressing labour market challenges and ensure that everyone can benefit from relevant lifelong learning opportunities. We are founded by a consortium whose members are Toronto Metropolitan University, Blueprint, and The Conference Board of Canada, and are funded by the [Government of Canada's Future Skills Program](#).

**TED
ROGERS
SCHOOL
OF MANAGEMENT**

DiVERSITY
INSTITUTE



[The Diversity Institute](#) conducts and coordinates multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder research to address the needs of diverse Canadians, the changing nature of skills and competencies, and the policies, processes and tools that advance economic inclusion and success. Our action-oriented, evidence-based approach is advancing knowledge of the complex barriers faced by underrepresented groups, leading practices to effect change, and producing concrete results. The Diversity Institute is a research lead for the Future Skills Centre.

Canada 

The Impact of Having Children on Careers is funded by the Government of Canada's [Future Skills Program](#).

The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.



About the Survey on Employment & Skills

The [Survey on Employment and Skills](#) is conducted by the Environics Institute for Survey Research, in partnership with the [Future Skills Centre](#) and the [Diversity Institute](#) at Toronto Metropolitan University.

In early 2020, the survey began as a project designed to explore people's experiences with the changing nature of work in Canada. Such changes included technology-driven disruptions, increasing insecurity and shifting skills requirements. Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the survey was expanded to investigate the impact of the crisis on employment, earnings and work environments in Canada. Additional waves of the survey (Waves 2 to 6) were conducted between December 2020 and November 2023.

This seventh wave of the study consists of a survey of 5,855 Canadians aged 18 and over, which was conducted between May 30 and July 4, 2024, in all provinces and territories. It was conducted both online (in the provinces) and by telephone (in the territories). This wave of the survey includes oversamples of people living in smaller provinces and territories, those under the age of 34, racialized Canadians and Indigenous People in order to provide a better portrait of the range of experiences across the country. The survey results in this report are weighted by age, gender, region, education and racial identity to ensure that they are representative of the Canadian population as a whole.

Survey reports can be found online at:

- > www.environicsinstitute.org/projects/listing/-in-tags/type/survey-on-employment-and-skills
- > fsc-ccf.ca/research/survey-on-employment-and-skills/
- > www.torontomu.ca/diversity/research/future-skills/survey-on-employment-and-skills/

Table of contents

1

Executive
summary

5

Interest in having
children

16

Reported impact of
having children on
careers

3

Introduction

7

Expected impact of
having children on
careers

20

Reasons for
reporting a positive
or negative impact



Executive summary

This report presents the results of survey questions asking Canadians age 18 to 44 who are in the labour force about their expectations and experiences relating to having children and its impact on their careers. The findings address two related issues. The first concerns the penalties women face when they become mothers, notably loss of employment income and diminished career opportunities. The second is the concern that younger adults in Canada today may be less interested than previous generations were in having children.

A plurality of Canadians age 18 to 44 in the labour force who do not have children say that having children in the future would have no impact on their career. However, one in four expect that it would have a negative impact. Women are more likely than men to expect that having children would have a negative impact on their career. And women are twice as likely to anticipate a negative impact as they are to expect a positive one (30% compared to 15%).

Among women, the proportion expecting a negative career impact from having children is highest for those who work in professional occupations or as an executive, manager or business owner, compared to other occupations. Women with a university degree are also more likely to expect that having children would negatively affect their career.

Those who anticipate that having children would negatively impact their career are most likely to explain their view by mentioning reasons related to the diversion of time and attention away from work, including: the long hours involved in juggling work and family responsibilities; missing time at work while caring for young children; and not being able to focus exclusively on career development. The second most common type of reason relates to financial concerns, particularly the worry of not being able to afford having children and having to find a better paying job as a result. Among those expecting a negative impact, women are three times more likely than men to say that it would be because of time away from work due to maternity leave or the need to care for young children. Men are more likely than women to worry about the financial strains of having children.

For those expecting that having children would have a positive impact on their careers, the two most common reasons have to do with the extra motivation that having children would provide, including the drive to work harder and to focus on one's career, and the more general incentive to provide a good quality of life for one's children. Among those who expect a positive impact, men are three times more likely than women to say it is because they would be more motivated to work hard and focus on their career.

The survey also asked those who are already parents about the impact that having children has had on their careers. Once again, the most common answer is that having children has not really had an impact. But one in three say that having children has had a positive impact on their career, compared to only half as many who say the impact has been negative.

Mothers are less likely than fathers to say that the impact of having children on their career has been positive, and more likely to say the impact has been negative. In the case of fathers, the proportion who say parenthood has been beneficial far outweighs those who say it has been negative. For mothers, however, the numbers are more evenly split between positive reporting positive and negative impacts.

For those reporting a negative impact, the most common reasons relate to time management, including the lack of time for work and family, the need to take time off work (e.g. for maternity leave), and the difficulty in focusing on one's career. But one in five mention a drop in income due to time away from work, and 15 percent mention the difficulty finding good childcare. Women are more likely than men to mention the need to take time away from work as a reason why having children has had a negative impact on their career, and to mention the difficulty finding good childcare.

Several of the top reasons given by *parents* for the negative career impact of having children are the same as those given by *non-parents* for why they expect that having children would have a negative impact. But two reasons are mentioned by a significant number of parents, but not non-parents – indicating that these factors come more as a surprise after having children. These are the drop in income due to time away from work, and the difficulty finding good childcare.



Finally, there is a strong and expected relationship between a person's interest in having children in the future, and the impact that they think that having children will have on their careers. Most notably, among those who say they would *not* like to have children, a plurality expect that the impact of having children on their career would be negative, and only five percent expect the impact would be positive. Again, there are differences in view between men and women. One in two women who do not wish to have children expect that becoming a parent would set back their career – almost twice the proportion as for men with that preference.

The findings do not necessarily mean that expectations about the career impact of having children *cause* people to decide, one way or the other, whether to have children, although this may be possible for some. But the fact that those who do not wish to become parents are twice as likely to say they expect that having children would have a negative career impact (compared to those who would like to have children) suggests that the issue itself is recognized as being relevant, or as a legitimate consideration.



Introduction

This report addresses two related issues. The first concerns the penalties, particularly loss of employment income and diminished career opportunities, that women face when they become mothers. As noted in a recent [peer-reviewed article](#):



“The arrival of children results in large losses that are not equally distributed within couples. Fathers do not appear to be adversely affected by children in terms of earnings and employment, whereas women experience penalties that persist over the long term.”

This ‘motherhood penalty’ is one factor contributing to the gap in employment income between women and men.

The second issue is the concern that younger adults in Canada today may be less interested than previous generations were in having children. Statistics Canada recently reported that [Canada’s fertility rate](#) had reached “a new record-low in 2023,” and according to the agency “Canada’s rate has been generally declining for over 15 years and reached a new low in 2023 of 1.26 children per woman...Canada has now joined the group of ‘lowest-low’ fertility countries, including South Korea, Spain, Italy and Japan, with 1.3 children per woman or less.”

Multiple factors have contributed to this decline, but it is plausible that among them is the concern among women in particular about the loss of employment income and opportunities that follow the birth of a child.

Other research has addressed these issues by analyzing the [changes in employment](#) and earnings that Canadians experience when they become parents. The Survey on Employment and Skills (Wave 7, June 2024) takes another approach, by exploring expectations and experiences. The survey asks Canadians age 18 to 44 who are in the labour force and who are not parents about their interest in having children, and about how becoming a parent might affect their careers. The survey also asks parents about what the impact of having children on their careers has been.

The survey finds that, among those who are not parents, women are more likely than men to expect that having children would have a negative impact on their career. Similarly, among parents, mothers are more likely than fathers to say that the impact of having children on their career has been negative. Among non-parents expecting a negative career impact, women are three times more likely than men to say that it would be because of time away from work due to maternity leave or the need to care for young children. These results point to the necessity for both employers and governments to continue to take steps to minimize the labour market penalties that working women face when they have children.





Interest in having children

Most Canadian adults under the age of 45 who are not already parents say that they would like to have children in the future (note that, in this survey, this question is only asked to those in the labour market).¹ Three in five (61%) express this preference, evenly divided between those who say they would definitely like to have children (31%) and those who say they would probably like to (30%). One in three (33%) say they would probably or definitely not like to have children. Women in this age group who are not parents are slightly more likely than men to say they would definitely like to have children in the future (34% compared to 29%); however, women are also slightly more likely than men to say they definitely would not like to have children (19% compared to 14%).

These figures exclude those who are already parents. Considering all those in this age group (and who are in the labour market), 38 percent are already a parent, 37 percent would definitely or probably like to have children, and 20 percent would definitely or probably not like to have children.

¹ These questions were asked only to those age 18 to 44 who are in the labour market. A person is considered to be a parent if they say they are the parent to a child or to children under the age of 25 living with them in their household, or if they respond to the question about wanting children in the future by saying they already have children. A person is considered not to be a parent if there are no children under the age of 25 living with them in their household, or if they say they are not the parent to any of the children who are living with them in their household. Note that the proportion in this age group who are classified as parents may differ from that reported in other surveys, both because these results exclude those not in the labour market, and because this survey considers someone not to be a parent if there are no children living with them in their household.

CHART 1: Interest in having children

Subsample: age 18 to 44 and in the labour force

Would you personally like to have children in the future?

Including parents

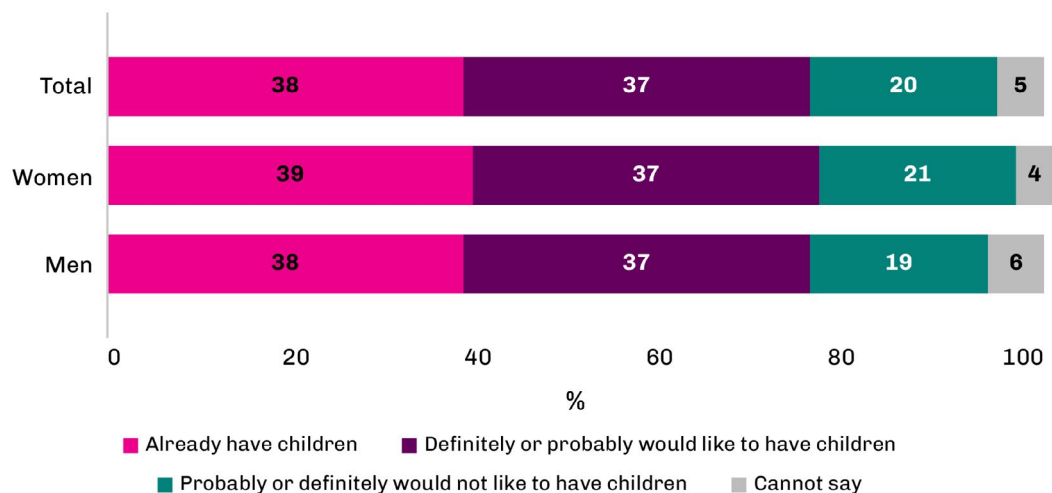
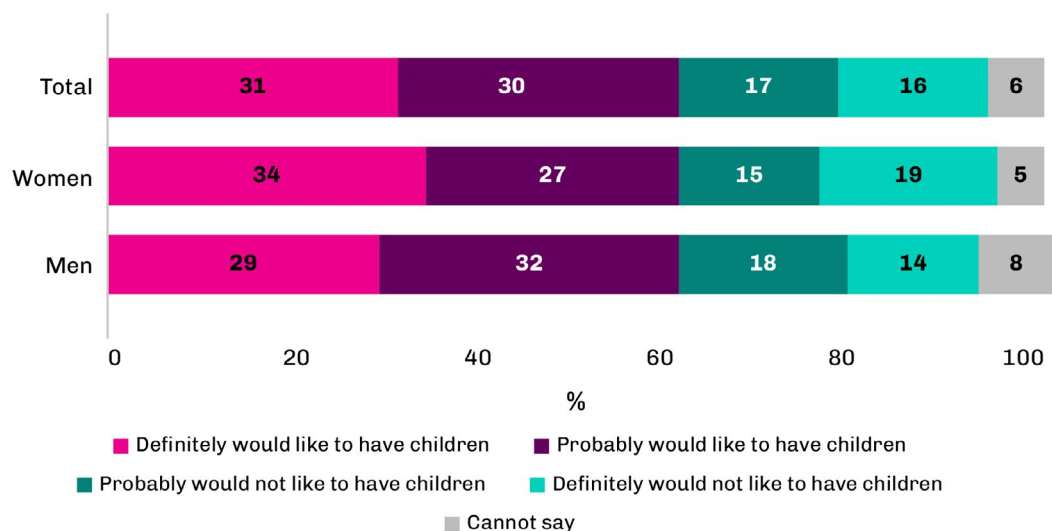


CHART 2: Interest in having children

Subsample: age 18 to 44 and in the labour force

Would you personally like to have children in the future?

Excluding parents





Expected impact of having children on careers

To explore the issue of how younger Canadians feel about the prospect of having children, the survey asked about the expected impact that having children might have on careers. This question was asked of those between the ages of 18 to 44 who are in the labour force and who are not already parents.

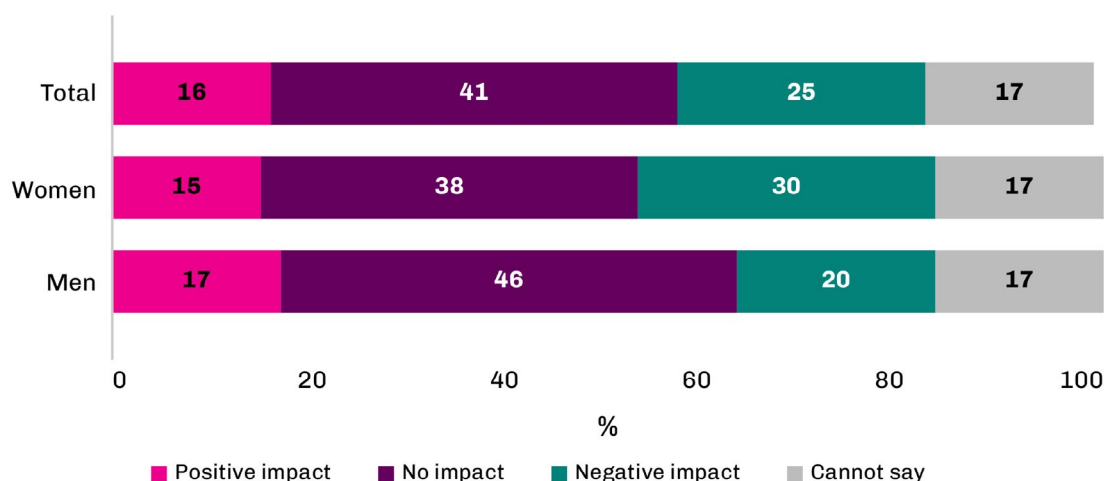
The most common answer is that having children would have no impact (41%). An additional 17 percent did not offer an opinion either way.

However, one in four (25%) say that having children in the future would have a negative impact on their career, compared to only 16 percent who say it would have a positive impact.

Women (30%) are more likely than men (20%) to expect that having children would have a negative impact on their career. And women are twice as likely to expect a negative (30%) rather than a positive (15%) impact. By comparison, among men, the gap between the proportion expecting a negative (20%) rather than a positive (17%) impact is only three percentage points.

CHART 3:
Expected impact of having children on careers
 Subsample: age 18 to 44, in the labour force and do not have children

If you were to have children in the future, how do you think this would impact your career?



Region

Among women, there are only minor variations in expectations by region. The proportion of women expecting that having children would have a negative impact on their careers is slightly above the national average in Ontario (33%), close to the average in the West (31%) and Quebec (28%), and slightly below average in Atlantic Canada (26%). It is notable that the expectations of women in Quebec are not significantly different from those in the rest of the country, despite the province's more developed program of publicly subsidized childcare.

Occupation and education

Among women, the proportion expecting a negative career impact from having children is highest for those who work in professional occupations or as an executive, manager or business owner: 37 percent of women in these occupations expect a negative impact. The proportion is almost as high (34%) for those working in clerical, administrative or office support positions. It is somewhat lower for those working in sales or service occupations (29%) or in trades, transportation or manual labour (24%).²

² Note that the subsample size for women working in trades, transportation or manual labour is very small (82).

CHART 4:
Expected impact of having children on careers, by occupation
 Subsample: age 18 to 44, in the labour force and do not have children

If you were to have children in the future, how do you think this would impact your career?

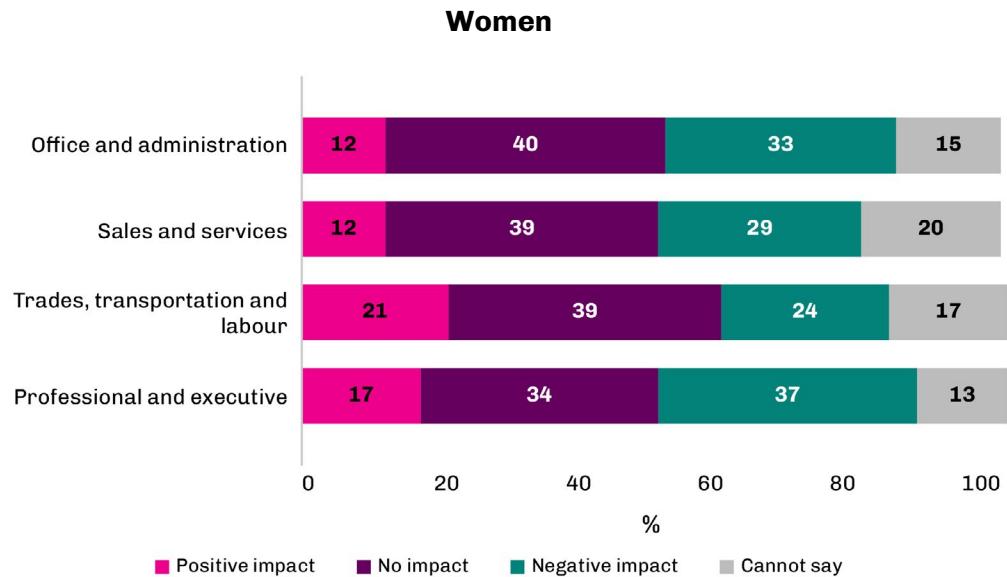
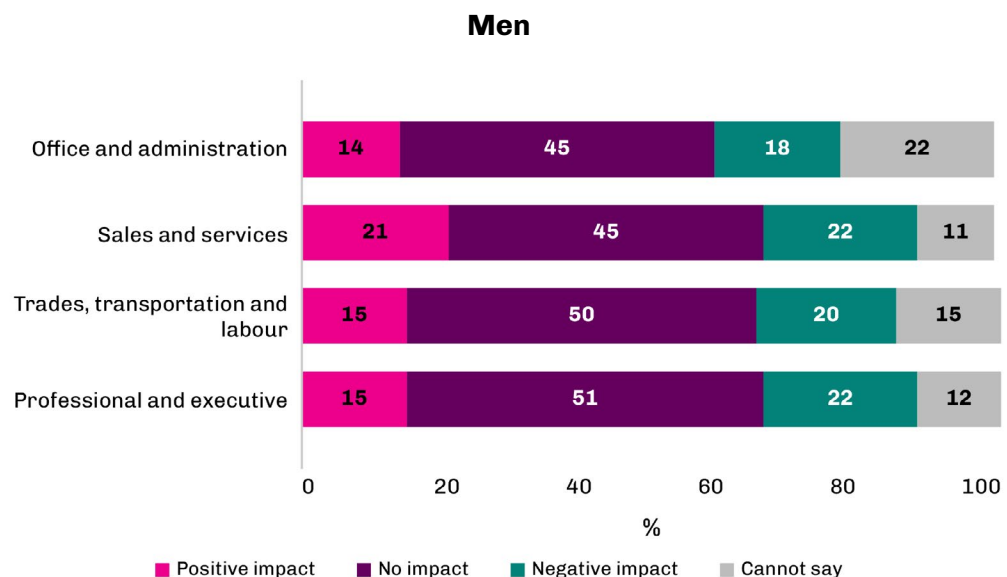


CHART 5:
Expected impact of having children on careers, by occupation
 Subsample: age 18 to 44, in the labour force and do not have children

If you were to have children in the future, how do you think this would impact your career?



The expectations of women also vary according to their educational attainment. Women with a university degree are more likely to expect that having children would negatively affect their career (39%) than are women with a college diploma or training certificate (23%), or women with no post-secondary education (29%).

Among men, there is much less variation in view based on either occupation or education.

Employment sector and unionization

Those employed in the public and the private sectors have similar opinions about the potential impact that having children in the future might have on their careers – and this is the case for both women and for men.

Those who are members of a labour union (21%) are slightly less likely than those who are not (26%) to expect a negative impact on their careers, should they have children in the future. In the case of women, those who are union members are slightly less likely (compared to women who are not union members) to expect a negative impact, and also more likely to expect a positive impact. As a result, the proportion of women who are union members expecting a negative impact (27%) is only slightly higher than the proportion expecting a positive impact (25%). But among women who are not union members, the proportion expecting a negative impact (31%) is twice as high as the proportion expecting a positive impact (15%).

Racial identity

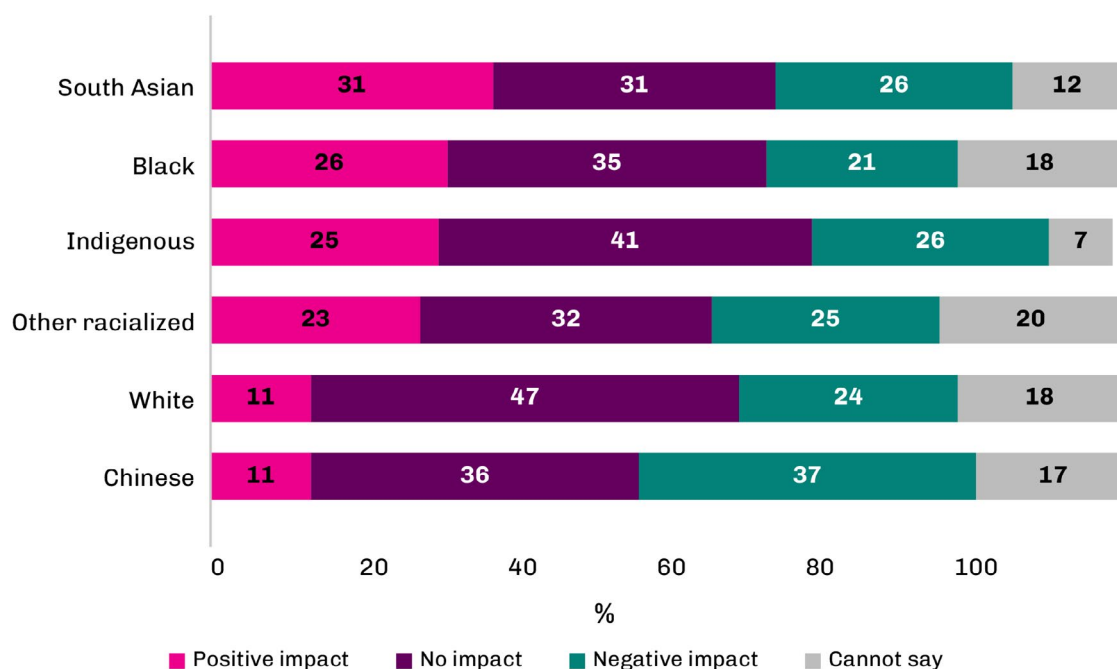
There are significant differences in view on this question among different racial identity groups.

Those who identify as South Asian (31%) or Black (26%) are more likely than average to expect that having children in the future would have a positive impact on their careers. This is also the case for those who are Indigenous (25%). Those who identify as white (11%) or as Chinese (11%) are much less likely to expect this positive impact. Those who identify as Chinese (37%) are also much more likely than others to expect a negative career impact from having children.



CHART 6:
Expected impact of having children on careers, by racial identity
 Subsample: age 18 to 44, in the labour force and do not have children

If you were to have children in the future, how do you think this would impact your career?



Reasons for expecting a negative impact

Those who anticipate that having children might negatively impact their careers were asked in a follow-up question to explain why they think this would be the case. This was an open-ended question, meaning that people could answer in their own words. Similar answers are grouped together under common themes.³

Four types of answers stand out. Overall, about one in five (21%) are concerned about having enough time to dedicate to both work and family. A similar proportion (20%) worry about not being able to afford having children and having to find a better paying job as a result. Almost as many (17%) mention the need to take time off from work to care for children (either in terms of parental leave after having a child, or to care for children when they are sick). And 16 percent anticipate that they simply wouldn't be able to focus enough on their careers once they became a parent.

³ This question was asked of those between the ages of 18 to 44 who are in the labour force and who are not already parents, and who say that, if they were to have children in the future, it would have a negative impact on their career. The specific question wording is: "In what ways would having children have a *negative* impact on your career?" The question was asked to 475 respondents, including 285 women and 181 men.

TABLE 1**Reasons why having children would have a *negative* impact on careers**

Subsample: age 18 to 44, in the labour force and do not have children; anticipate a negative impact

In what ways would having children have a negative impact on your career?

| | Total % n=475 | Women % n=285 | Men % n=181 |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Lack of time / working long hours / wouldn't be able to dedicate enough time to work and family / finding work-life balance is hard | 21 | 20 | 21 |
| Lack of money / children are expensive / would need to find extra work or a better paying job | 20 | 16 | 27 |
| Time off work (maternity leave, caring for a sick kid) that would affect my progress at work | 17 | 22 | 7 |
| Cannot focus on my career / would inhibit me from professional growth / would take me away from my education | 16 | 17 | 16 |
| Lack of energy required to take care of home responsibilities in addition to job duties / lack of sleep | 7 | 6 | 8 |
| Employers are less likely to hire / contract a parent | 4 | 5 | 1 |
| Drop in income / forced to spend less time working / pass on jobs that require travelling | 3 | 1 | 7 |
| Other | 12 | 11 | 12 |
| Cannot say | 23 | 26 | 18 |

Of these four answers, three have to do with the diversion of time and attention away from work, though in slightly different ways: the long hours involved in juggling work and family responsibilities; missing time at work while caring for young children; and not being able to focus exclusively on career development. What these answers have in common is a sense that it is difficult to combine responsibilities as a parent with those at work at the same time, and that this can impede advancement at work. Overall, 48 percent of those worried about the negative career impact of having children mention at least one of these reasons.⁴

⁴ This number is slightly smaller than the addition of the percentage mentioning each of the three reasons separately, because some mention more than one of the three.

In addition to the one in five who express concerns about the cost of having children, small numbers mention that parents are less likely to get chosen for jobs or contracts by employers (4%), or that having children will lead to a drop in income (3%). A little more than one in four (27%) mention at least one of these three financial reasons for expecting a negative impact.

There are notable differences in the answers given by women, compared to men. Women (22%) are three times more likely than men (7%) to say that having children would have a negative impact on their careers because of time away from work due to maternity leave or the need to care for young children (for instance, when the children are sick and need to stay home from school). Men (27%), however, are more likely than women (16%) to worry about the financial strains of having children.

Considering together the three reasons related to the diversion of time and attention away from work, these are more likely to be mentioned by women (52%) than by men (42%). However, one of the three finance-related reasons are more likely to be mentioned by men (35%) than by women (22%).

There are also differences by occupation and education. Those working as professionals, or as executives, managers or business owners, are more likely than average to mention at least one of the three reasons related to the diversion of time and attention away from work (61%, compared to 44% for those in all other occupations). The same is true of those with a university education (54%, compared to 45% for those without a university degree).

Concerns about not being able to afford having children are much more likely to be mentioned by racialized (31%) than by non-racialized workers (12%), when asked why having children might have a negative impact on their careers. At least one of the three related financial reasons is mentioned by 36 percent of racialized workers, compared to 20 percent of those who are not racialized.

Note that almost one in four (23%) decline to provide a reason for why they would expect a negative impact.



Reasons for expecting a positive impact

Those who anticipate that having children might have a positive impact on their careers were also asked in a follow-up question to explain why they think this would be the case.⁵

The two most common answers have to do with the extra motivation that having children would provide, including the drive to work harder and to focus on one's career (mentioned by 23%) and the more general incentive to provide a good quality of life for one's children (17%). Combined, one or both of these answers is mentioned by 32 percent of those expecting that having children would have a positive impact on their career.⁶

5 As with the previous question, this was an open-ended question, meaning that people could answer in their own words. Similar answers are grouped together under common themes. This question was asked of those between the ages of 18 to 44 who are in the labour force and who are not already parents, and who say that, if they were to have children in the future, it would have a positive impact on their career. The specific question wording is: "In what ways would having children have a *positive* impact on your career?" The question was asked to 319 respondents, including 133 women and 181 men.

6 This number is smaller than the addition of the percentage mentioning each of the two reasons separately, because some mention both.

TABLE 2**Reasons why having children would have a *positive* impact on careers**

Subsample: age 18 to 44, in the labour force and do not have children; anticipate a positive impact

In what ways would having children have a positive impact on your career?

| | Total % n=319 | Women % n=133 | Men % n=181 |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Being more motivated / driven to work hard / focus on my career | 23 | 12 | 35 |
| Striving to care for them / provide them with a good quality of life | 17 | 15 | 19 |
| They bring joy / happiness / my life is fulfilled by them | 8 | 10 | 6 |
| I am never alone / would have a supportative family / makes me look forward to coming home to | 6 | 1 | 7 |
| Being a parent / having kids is a blessing to my life | 6 | 6 | 5 |
| Wanting to find a better, stable, well paying job | 5 | 5 | 6 |
| Becoming more efficient with time / balancing work-family life | 5 | 9 | 0 |
| Being a parent teaches me how to better handle responsibilities / learn new skills | 4 | 5 | 3 |
| Working for a better future for our family | 4 | 7 | 1 |
| Other | 12 | 12 | 12 |
| Cannot say | 33 | 33 | 34 |

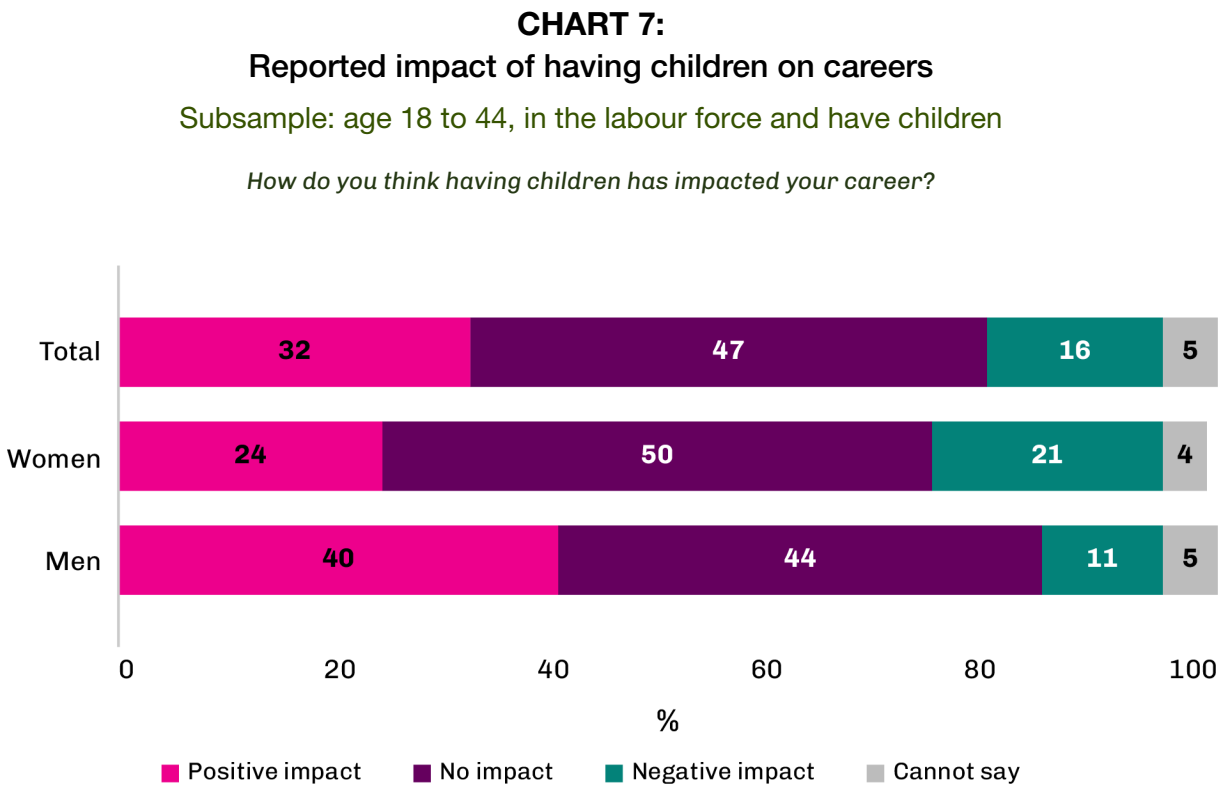
However, there is a significant difference in perspective between men and women. Compared to women who expect a positive impact (12%), men with positive expectations (35%) are three times more likely to say it is because they would be more motivated to work hard and focus on their career. The two related answers combined – being more motivated to work hard and striving to provide children with a good quality of life – are also much more likely to be mentioned by men (41%) than by women (24%). Women (9%), however, are more likely than men (0%) to say the impact of having children would be positive because they would become more efficient at balancing work and family life.

Note that almost one in three (33%) decline to provide a reason for why they would expect a positive impact.

Reported impact of having children on careers

The survey also asked those who are already parents about the impact that having children has had on their careers. This question was also asked only to those between the ages of 18 to 44 who are in the labour force, and who in this case are parents to children living with them in their household.

Once again, the most common answer (47%) is that having children has not really had an impact. One in three (32%), however, say that having children has had a positive impact on their career, compared to only half as many (16%) who say the impact has been negative.



Mothers (24%) are less likely than fathers (40%) to say that the impact of having children on their career has been positive; conversely, mothers are 10 percentage points more likely to say the impact has been negative (21% compared to 11%). In the case of fathers, the proportion saying the impact has been positive (40%) far outweighs the proportion saying it has been negative (11%), whereas for mothers the proportions reporting a positive (24%) and negative (21%) impact are roughly equal.

Overall, the proportion of parents reporting a positive career impact of having children (32%) is twice as high as the proportion of non-parents who expect the impact would be positive, should they have children (16%). But this difference between the reported and expected impacts is much greater for men than for women. The difference between the proportions of parents reporting a positive impact, and of non-parents expecting a positive impact, is 23 points in the case of men, but only 10 points in the case of women.

CHART 8:
Impact of having children on careers: expected vs. reported
Subsample: age 18 to 44 in the labour force

If you were to have children in the future, how do you think this would impact your career?
How do you think having children has impacted your career?

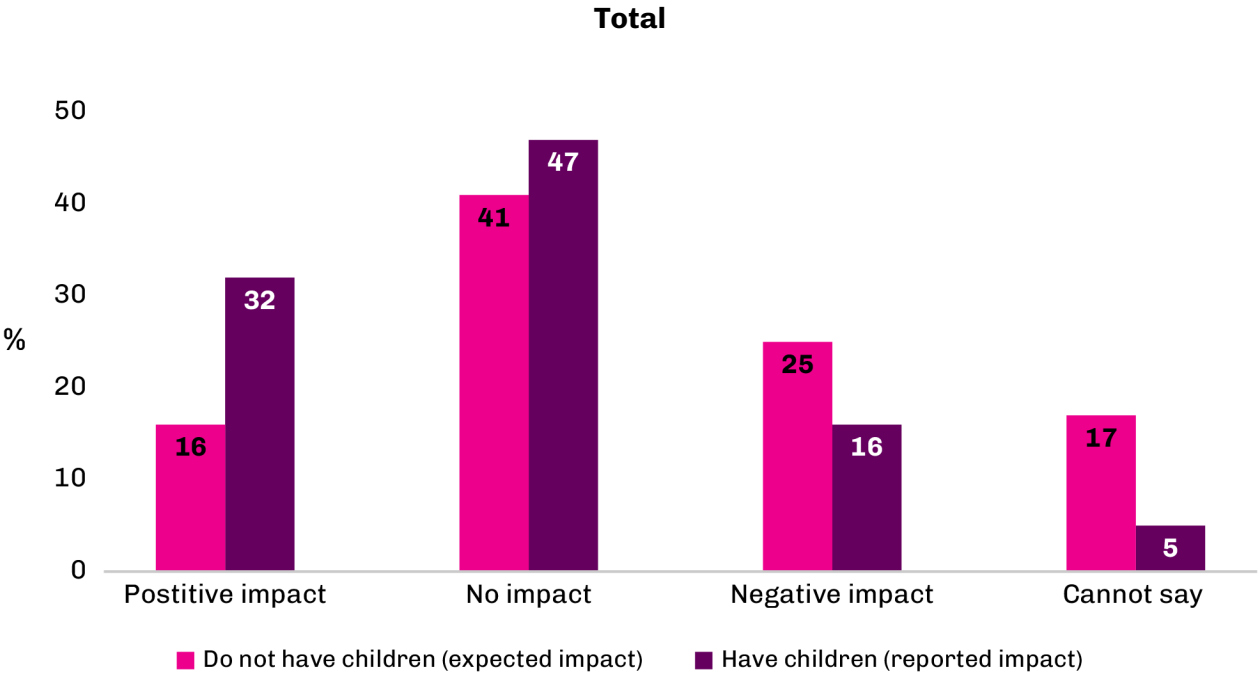


CHART 9:

Impact of having children on careers: expected vs. reported

Subsample: age 18 to 44 in the labour force

*If you were to have children in the future, how do you think this would impact your career?
How do you think having children has impacted your career?*

Women

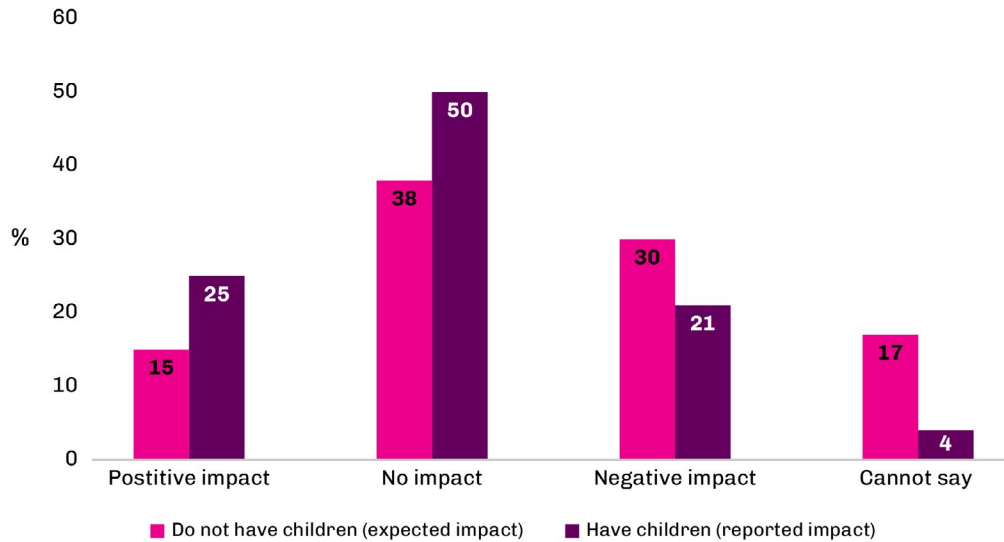


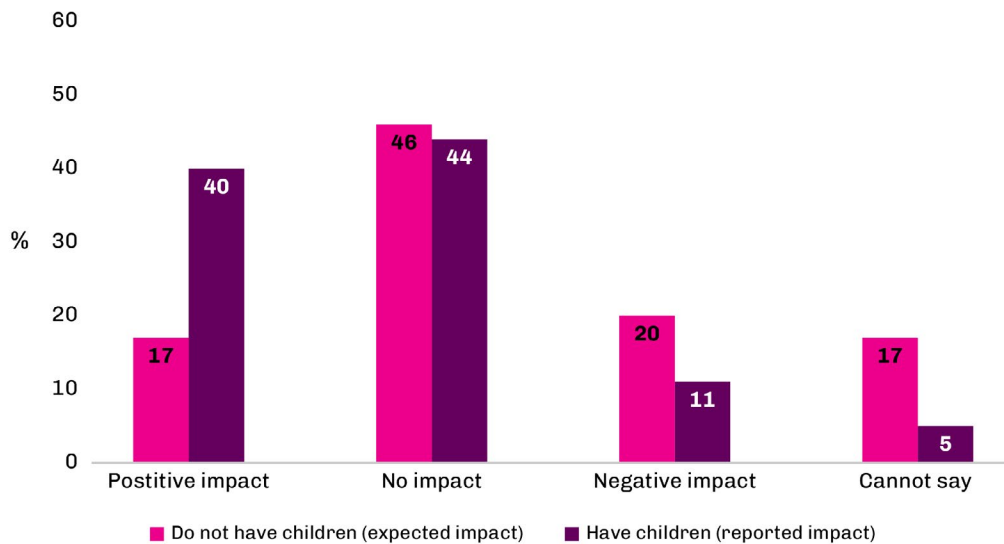
CHART 10:

Impact of having children on careers: expected vs. reported

Subsample: age 18 to 44 in the labour force

*If you were to have children in the future, how do you think this would impact your career?
How do you think having children has impacted your career?*

Men



There is a notable difference in opinion on this question across racial identity groups. Racialized parents (37%) are more likely than those who are not racialized (29%) to say that the impact of having children on their careers has been positive. The proportion reporting a positive impact is especially high among those identifying as Black (48%) and South Asian (40%). Those with a Chinese background are an exception among racialized parents, as they are less likely than average to say the impact has been positive (22%).

Relatedly, immigrants (40%), and especially recent immigrants (44%), are more likely than those born in Canada (29%) to report a positive career impact from having children.

Finally, the proportion of parents who say that having children has had a positive impact on their careers increases as job satisfaction increases: 45 percent of those who are very satisfied with their current job report a positive impact, compared to 31 percent who are somewhat satisfied and 16 percent who are very or somewhat dissatisfied. This suggests that, for parents, the sense that their work can be combined with their family responsibilities likely contributes to greater job satisfaction.





Reasons for reporting a positive or negative impact

Parents were asked to say why having children has had either a positive or a negative impact on their careers.⁷

For those reporting a positive impact, the most common reason given is that it has provided motivation to work harder or to focus on their careers (23%). Other reasons include: encouraging them to strive to provide a good life for their children (12%), the joy and happiness that children bring (10%), and that having children has led them to have a better perspective on life (10%) or to get better at handling responsibilities (8%).

The top reasons given by *parents* for the *positive* career impact of having children are the same as the top three reasons given by *non-parents* for why they expect that having children would have a *positive* impact. In other words, for those who see the positive side of having children (in terms of impact on careers), the main expectations tend to match actual experiences. One minor exception is that parents are slightly more likely to report a positive influence on their perspective on life and their ability to handle responsibilities, than non-parents are to expect these.

⁷ As with the previous question, this was an open-ended question, meaning that people could answer in their own words. Similar answers are grouped together under common themes. This question was asked of those between the ages of 18 to 44 who are in the labour force and who are already parents of children living with them in their household, and who say that having children had had either a positive or a negative impact on their career.

CHART 11:
Reasons for positive or negative impact of having children on careers:
expected vs. reported

Subsample: age 18 to 44 in the labour force

If you were to have children in the future, how do you think this would impact your career?
How do you think having children has impacted your career?

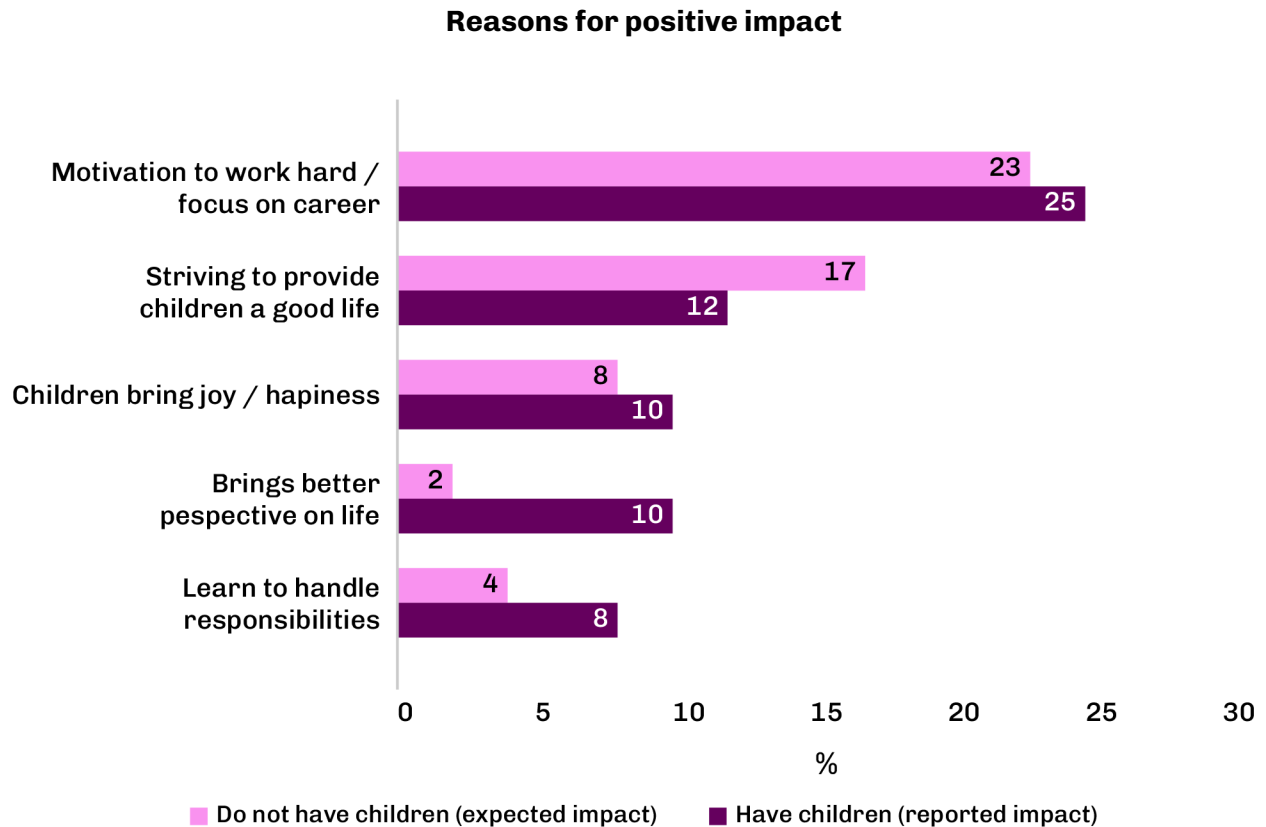
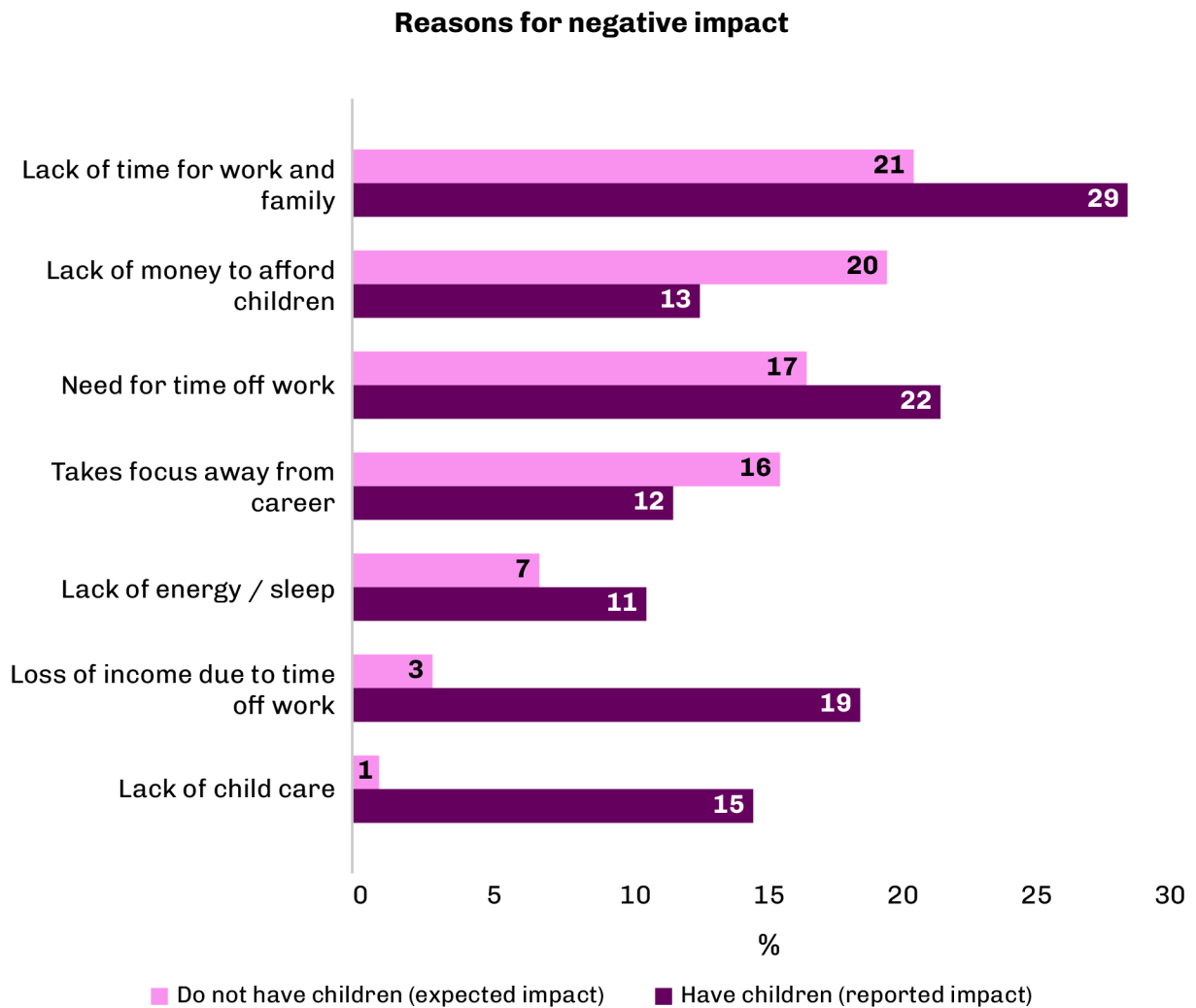


CHART 12:
Reasons for positive or negative impact of having children on careers:
expected vs. reported

Subsample: age 18 to 44 in the labour force

If you were to have children in the future, how do you think this would impact your career?
How do you think having children has impacted your career?



For those reporting a negative impact, the most common reasons relate to time management, including the lack of time for work and family (29%), the need to take time off work (e.g. for maternity leave) (22%), and the difficulty in focusing on one's career (12%). In addition, 19 percent mention a drop in income due to time away from work, and 15 percent mention the difficulty finding good childcare. Other reasons include the lack of money to afford children (13%), and a lack of energy or sleep (11%).



Women are more likely than men to mention the need to take time away from work as a reason why having children has had a negative impact on their career (27% compared to 10%), and also mention the difficulty finding good childcare (19% compared to 6%). As the number of women (124) and particularly of men (73) who were asked this question is small, these results should be treated with caution.

Several of the top reasons given by *parents* for the *negative* career impact of having children are the same as those given by *non-parents* for why they expect that having children would have a *negative* impact. These include the lack of time for work and family, the need to take time off work, the lack of money to afford children, and the difficulty in focusing on one's career.

But two reasons are mentioned by a significant number of parents, but not non-parents – indicating that these factors come more as a surprise after having children. These are the drop in income due to time away from work (mentioned as a reason for a negative impact by 19% of parents, but only by 3% of non-parents), and the difficulty finding good childcare (mentioned by 15% and 1% respectively).

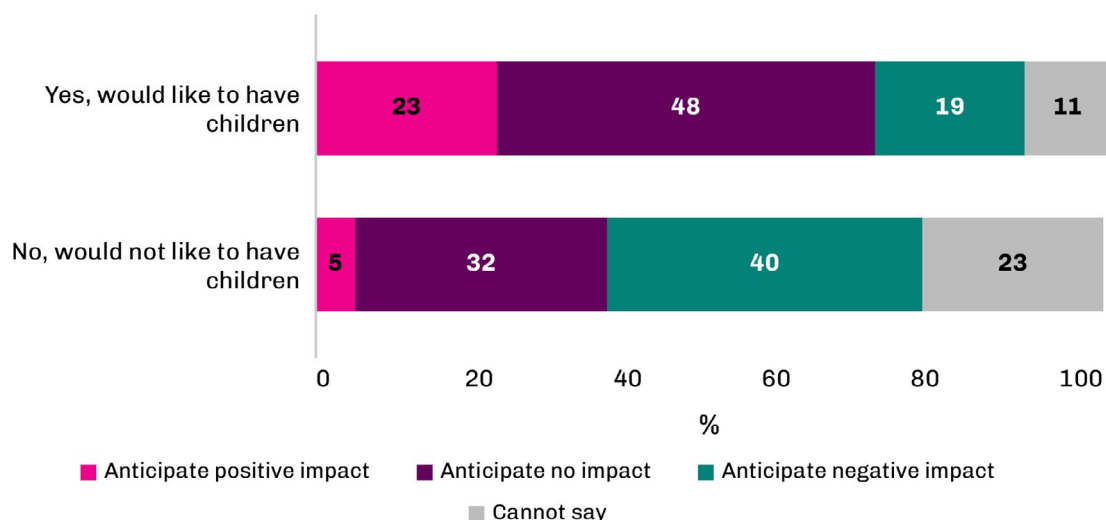
Interest in having children and concerns about the impact on career

There is a strong and expected relationship between a person's interest in having children in the future, and the impact that they think that having children will have on their careers (this section considers the views of those between the ages of 18 and 44 who are in the labour force and who are not parents to any children living with them in their household).

- Among those who say they *would* like to have children, 48 percent expect this to have no impact on their career, while 23 percent expect the impact to be positive, and 19 percent expect it to be negative (an additional 11 percent do not offer an opinion either way).
- Among those who say they *would not* like to have children, a plurality (40%) expect that the impact of having children on their career would be negative. Almost one in three (32%) say there would be no impact, and only five percent expect the impact would be positive (an additional 23 percent do not offer an opinion either way).

CHART 13:
Expected impact of having children on career, by interest in having children
 Subsample: age 18 to 44 in the labour market and do not have children

*Would you personally like to have children in the future?
 If you were to have children in the future, how do you think this would impact your career?*



It is important to recognize that this does not necessarily mean that expectations about the career impact of having children *cause* people to decide, one way or the other, whether to have children, although this may be possible for some. It is just as likely that people rationalize the decisions they have already made, by choosing to emphasize positive or negative consequences. It is natural that someone who wishes to have children is more likely to think about how this could help keep them motivated to do well at work. Conversely, someone with little interest in having children will be more likely to think about how having to look after children could make success at work more difficult.

The relationship between interest in having children, and the expected impact on careers, is still worth considering, however, because, at the very least, it points to the salience of career concerns. The fact that those who do not wish to become parents are twice as likely to say they expect that having children would have a negative career impact (compared to those who would like to have children) suggests that the issue itself is recognized as being relevant, or as a legitimate consideration.

This is especially so, given the difference in view between men and women. Among men, those who do not wish to have children are 12 percentage points more likely than those who do to expect that becoming a parent would have a negative impact on their careers (16% compared to 28%). Among women, however, this difference is much larger (29 points). One in two women who do not wish to have children (50%) expect that becoming a parent would have a negative impact on their career. Considerations about the career impact of having children therefore appear to be more top-of-mind for women than for men.

CHART 14: **Expected impact of having children on career, by interest in having children and gender**

Subsample: age 18 to 44 in the labour market and do not have children

*Would you personally like to have children in the future?
 If you were to have children in the future, how do you think this would impact your career?*

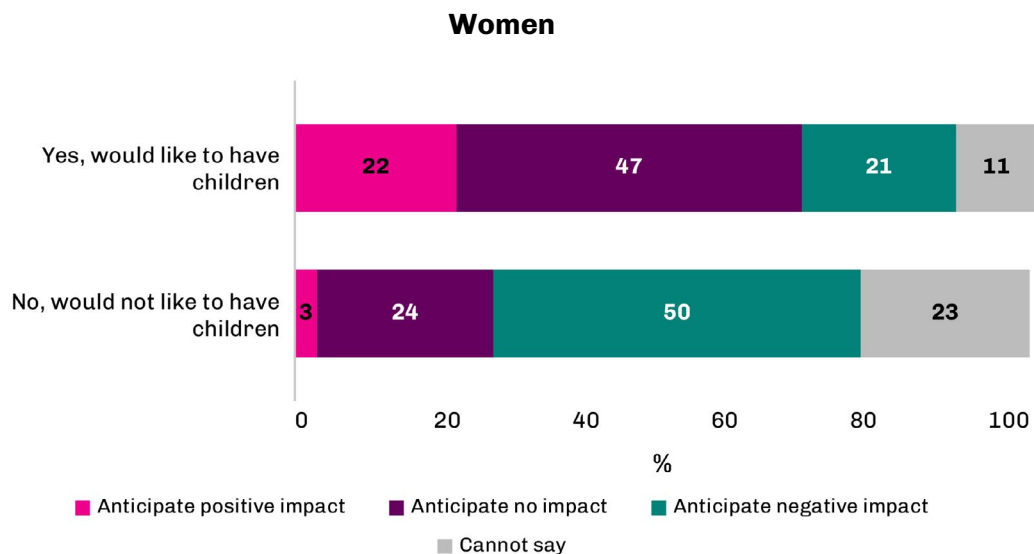
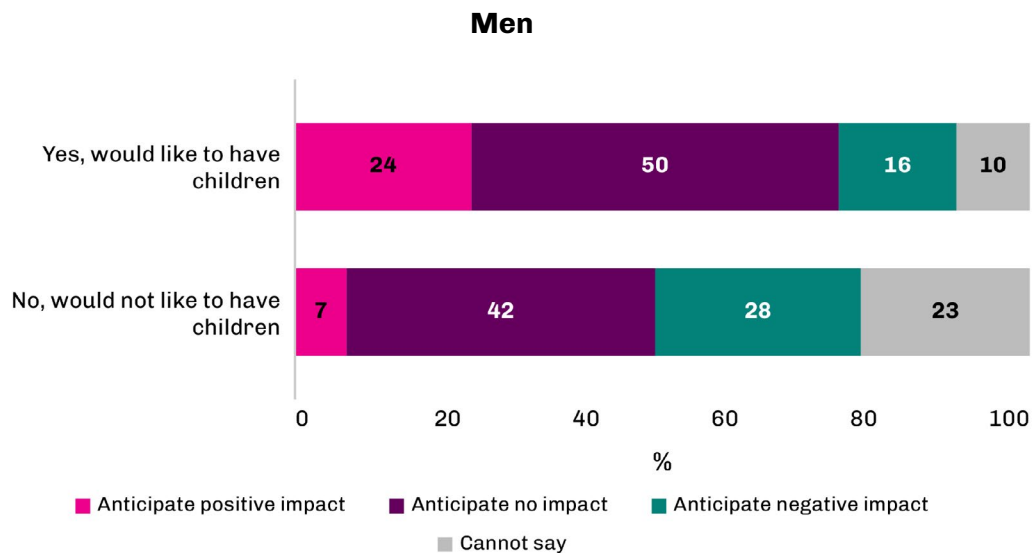


CHART 15: **Expected impact of having children on career, by interest in having children and gender**

Subsample: age 18 to 44 in the labour market and do not have children

*Would you personally like to have children in the future?
 If you were to have children in the future, how do you think this would impact your career?*



This finding can be reinforced by looking again at the reasons given for expecting that having children will have a negative impact on careers. Recall that a negative career impact is expected both by some who do not wish to have children, and by some who do (in other words, some wish to have children even though they expect doing so might negatively affect their careers).

As discussed earlier, the most common group of reasons mentioned by those expecting a negative career impact have to do with the diversion of time and attention away from work. It is notable, however, that this reason is more or less just as likely to be mentioned by those who wish to have children (52%) as it is by those who do not (46%).

This overall result, however, obscures a significant difference in view between women and men. Women who do not wish to have children (56%) are much more likely than men with this preference (27%) to say that they expect a negative impact because of the diversion of time and attention away from work.⁸ This type of concern, therefore, is much more top of mind for women who do not intend to have children.

Among those who do wish to have children, and who expect a negative career impact, the diversion of time and attention away from work is mentioned by 59 percent of men – suggesting that while this challenge is recognized by many men, it does not coincide as strongly with reticence about becoming a parent as in the case of women.

There is also a gender difference when it comes to the financial concerns associated with having children.⁹ Among those who expect a negative career impact of having children, financial concerns are more likely to be mentioned as a reason by those who do not wish to have children (33%) than it is by those who do (21%). But this 12-points difference is much larger in the case of men (27 points) than in the case of women (6 points). When men who don't want to have children articulate what it is that they think might impede their careers, they are much more likely to mention financial concerns than are women with this preference.



⁸ This refers to the combination of the three separate answers grouped together under this category.

⁹ This refers to the combination of the three separate answers grouped together under this category.

CHART 16:
**Reasons why having children would have a *negative* impact
on careers, by interest in having children**

Subsample: age 18 to 44, in the labour force and do not have
children; anticipate a negative impact

In what ways would having children have a negative impact on your career?

**Mentioning a reason related to the diversion of time and
attention away from work (%)**

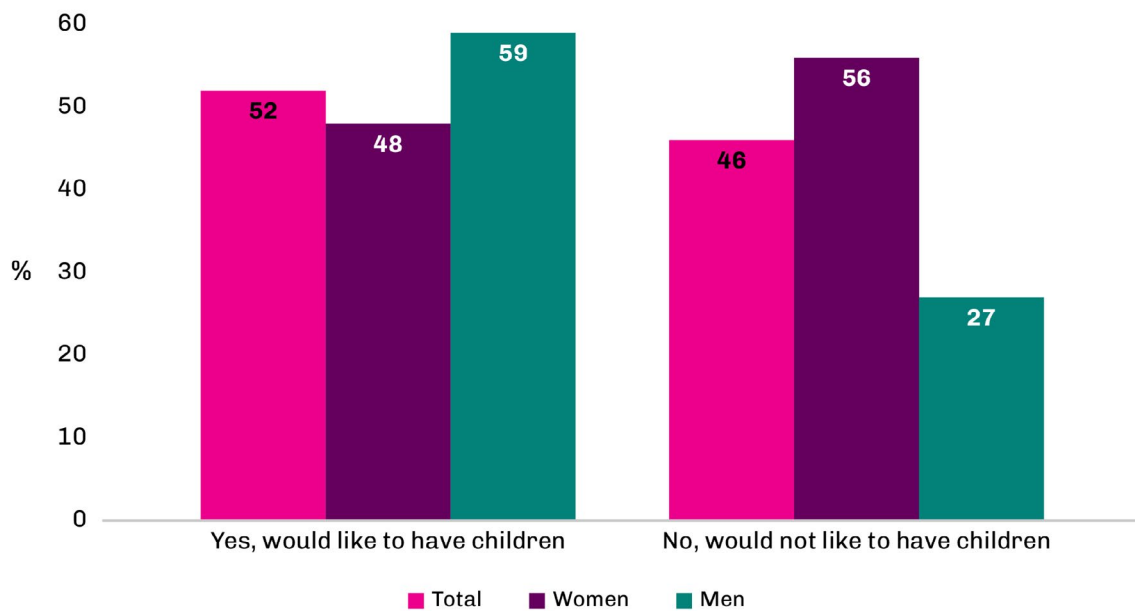
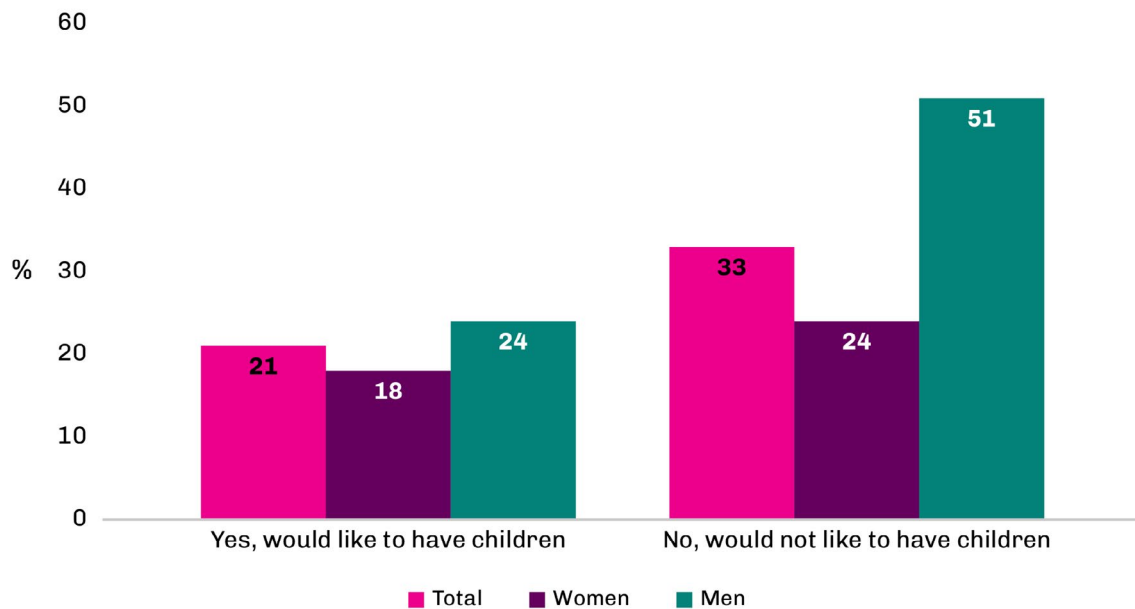


CHART 17:
Reasons why having children would have a *negative* impact on careers, by interest in having children

Subsample: age 18 to 44, in the labour force and do not have children; anticipate a negative impact

In what ways would having children have a negative impact on your career?

Mentioning a reason related to the financial challenges associated with having children (%)



These findings can also be summarized as follows: among those who do not wish to have children and who expect that having children would have a negative impact on their careers:

- women (56%) are much more likely to mention a reason related to the management of time than they are to mention financial concerns (24%);
- the opposite is true in the case of men, who are much more likely to mention financial concerns (51%) than issue related to the management of time (27%).



**Environics
Institute**
For Survey Research



**Future
Skills
Centre**

**Centre des
Compétences
futures**

**TED
ROGERS
SCHOOL
OF MANAGEMENT**

**DiVERSITY
INSTITUTE**