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Working parents amid COVID-19

Moms are more likely than dads to
burnout juggling work and family



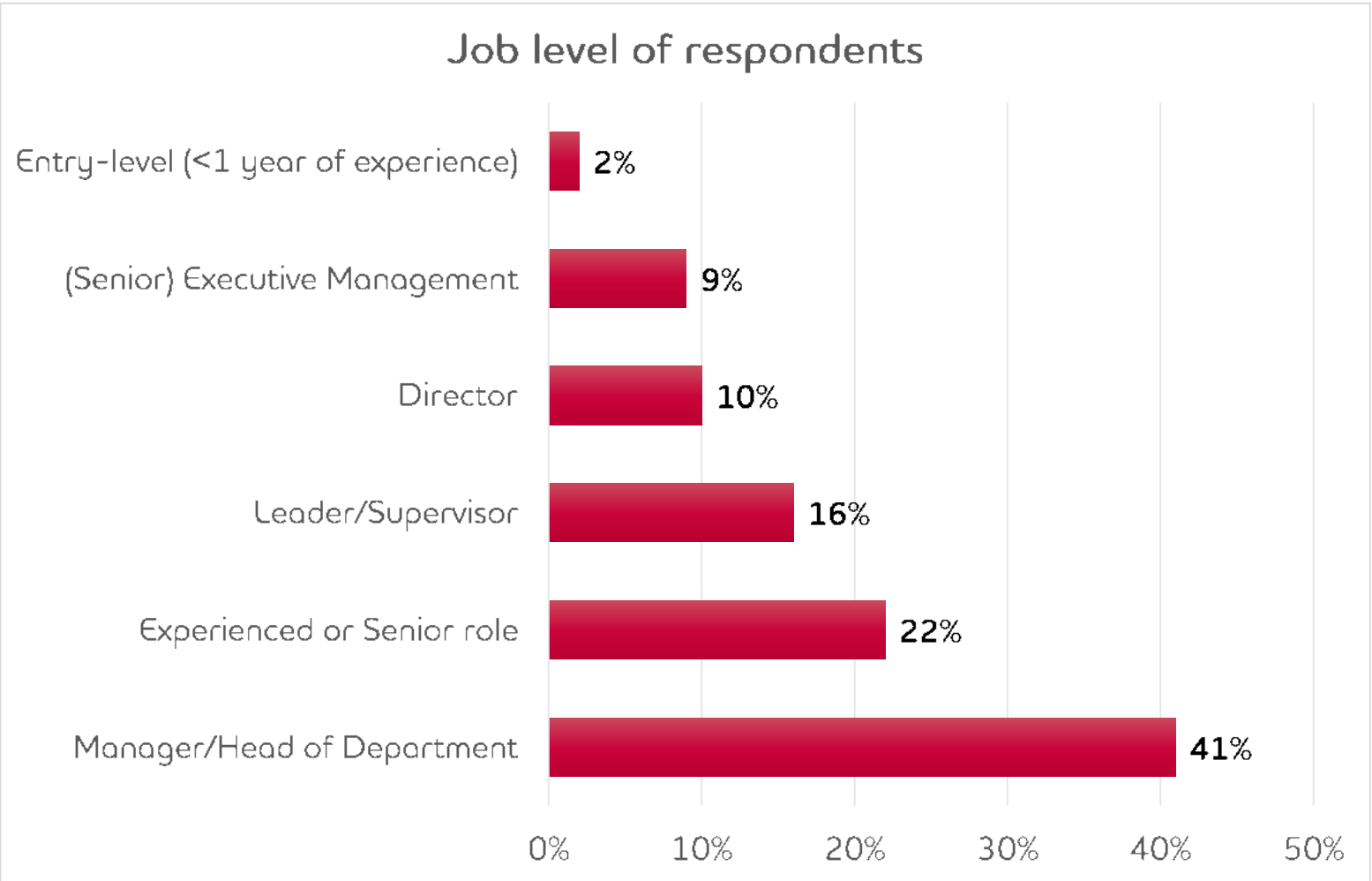
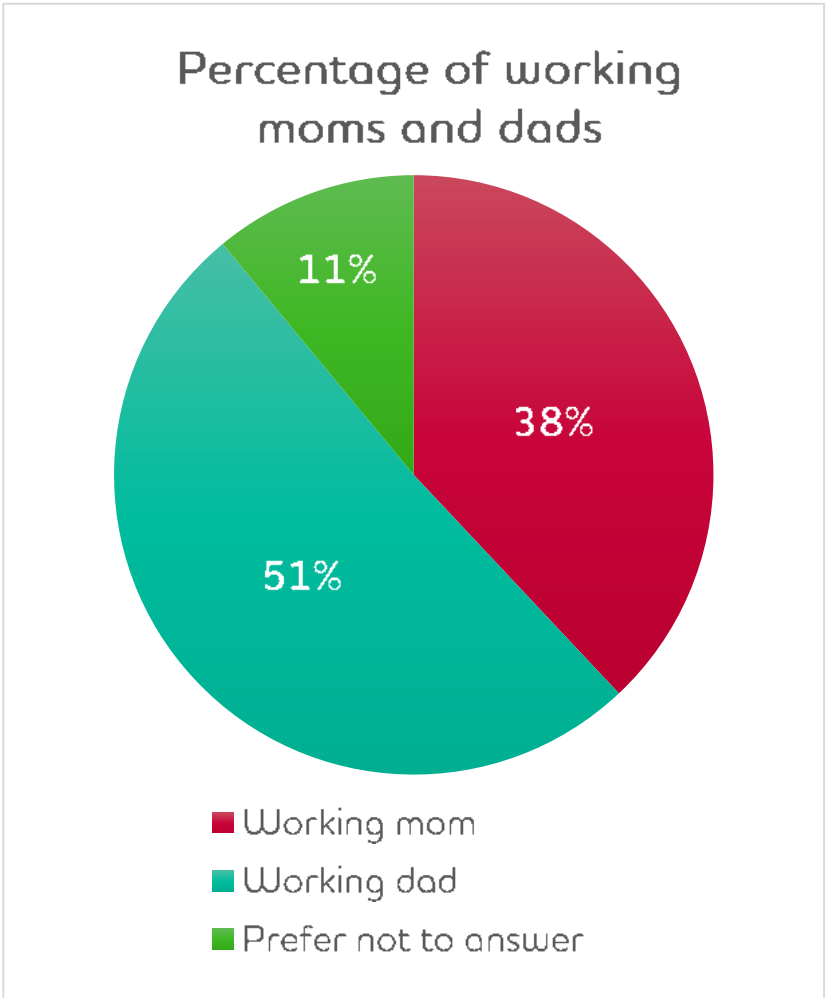
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About this survey

Adecco Vietnam conducted a countrywide survey in August 2021 with 390 respondents on the topic "COVID-19: What do working parents say?".



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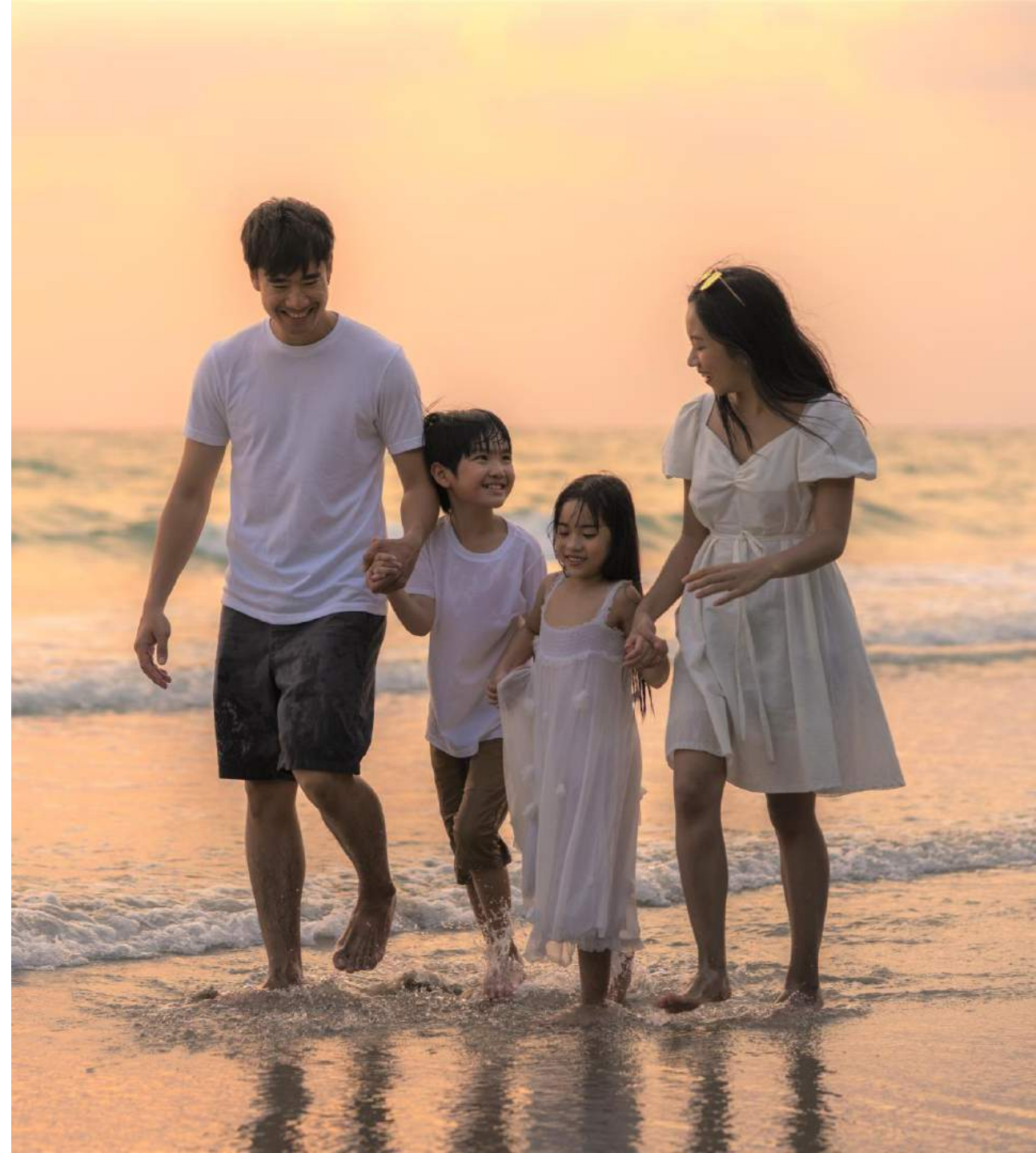
Working parents at work

Before we start...

Let's meet **An and Hoang**, parents of a 7-year-old boy and 5-year-old girl.

An is working as a Service Manager at an international medical clinic in Ho Chi Minh City, and her partner Hoang is an Account Manager at a media agency.

With the switch to remote work, their homebound children, and housework, they are both having a full plate.

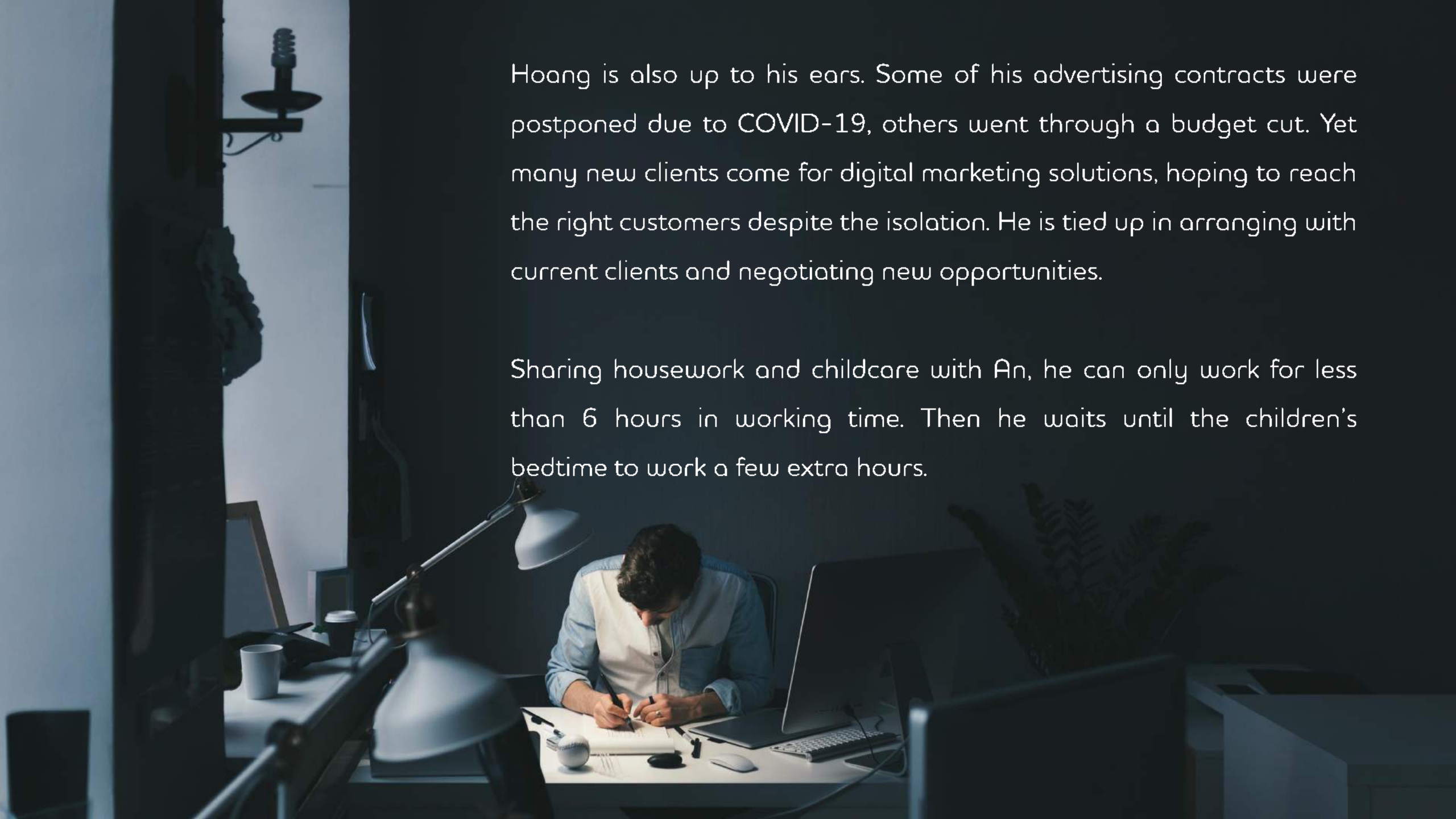




An is looking for ways to engage with her customers and keep them updated about the changes in the clinic's operation.

She plans a long to-do list within a month, from virtual workshops, weekly newsletters to new home medical service launching and a compelling new customer discount.

Usually, during the daytime, An has to spend hours cooking and homeschooling the children, so she has to work overtime almost all night.

A man in a light blue shirt is sitting at a desk in a dimly lit room, leaning over and writing in a notebook. The desk is cluttered with various items: a white mug, a black coffee cup, a laptop, a keyboard, a mouse, and a small potted plant. Two desk lamps are visible, one of which is turned on, casting a soft glow. In the background, there are two large computer monitors and a window with a dark frame. The overall atmosphere is quiet and focused, suggesting a late-night work session.

Hoang is also up to his ears. Some of his advertising contracts were postponed due to COVID-19, others went through a budget cut. Yet many new clients come for digital marketing solutions, hoping to reach the right customers despite the isolation. He is tied up in arranging with current clients and negotiating new opportunities.

Sharing housework and childcare with An, he can only work for less than 6 hours in working time. Then he waits until the children's bedtime to work a few extra hours.

An & Hoang are not alone.

To balance both work and family duties with the new work arrangements, market changes, and parenting duties amid COVID-19:

>58% of working parents are working from home, with their kids around

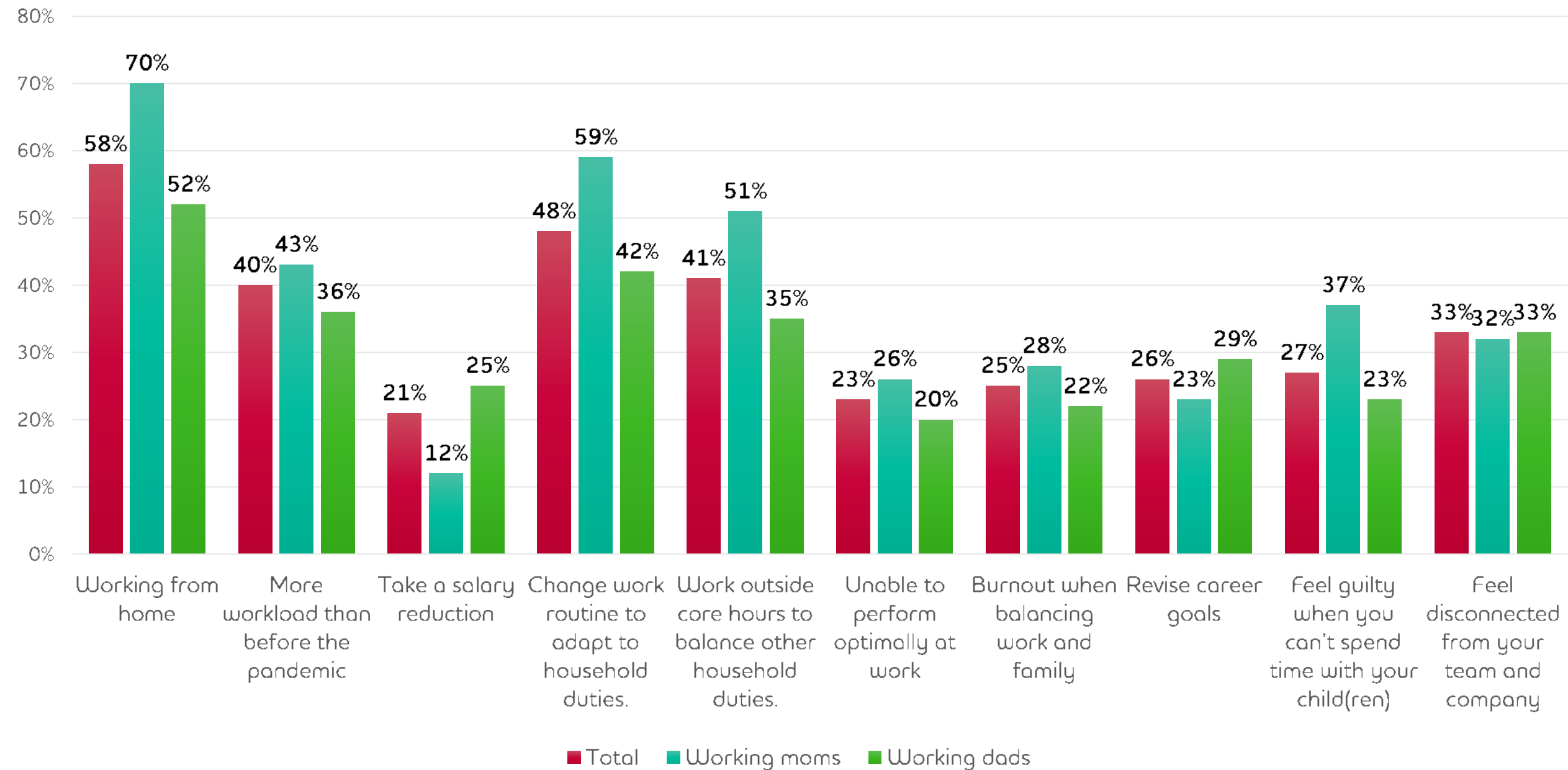
40% have “more workload than before”

48% have to change their work routine

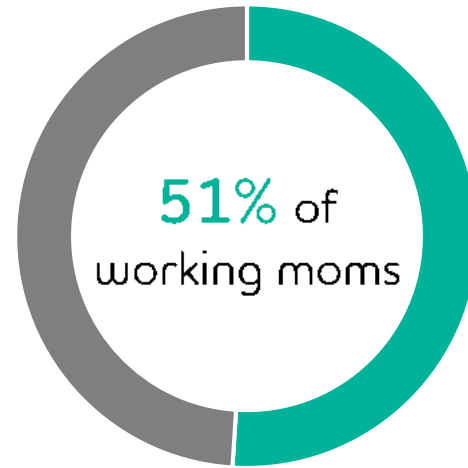
41% need to work outside of core hours



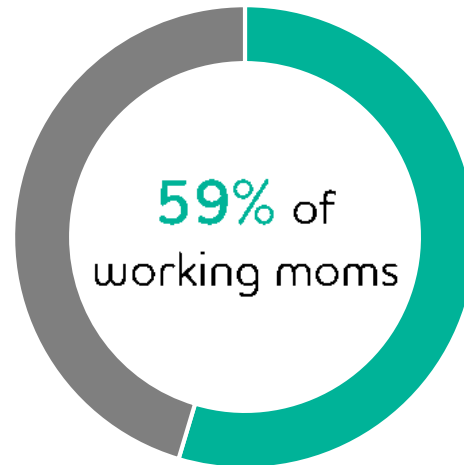
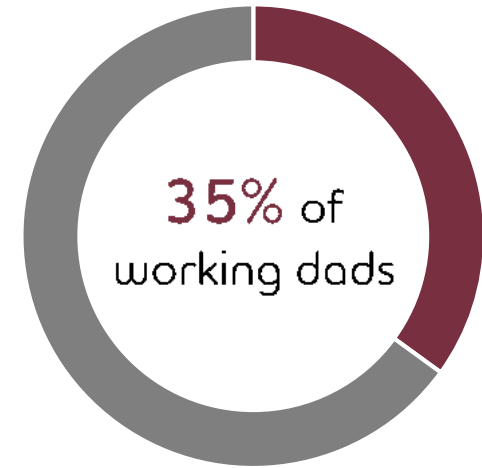
Impact of COVID-19 on working parents



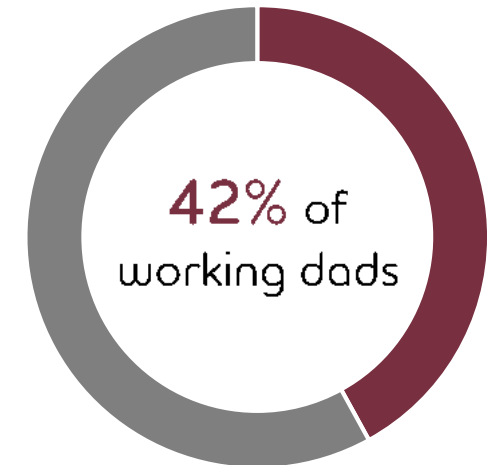
On a closer look,
working moms have
more daily
adjustments compare
to working dads.



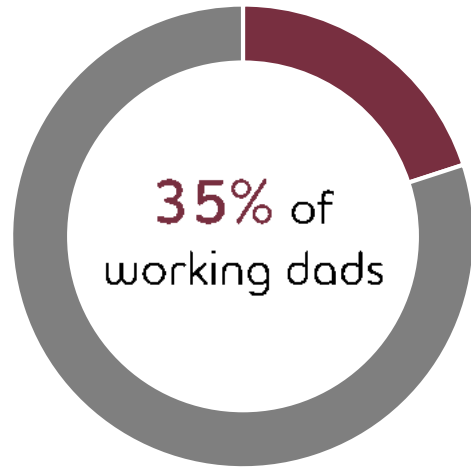
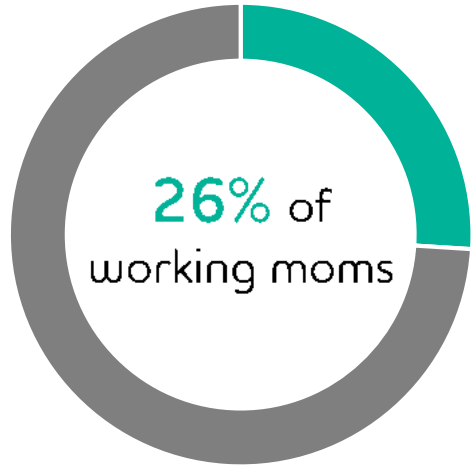
Need more working time besides the core schedule



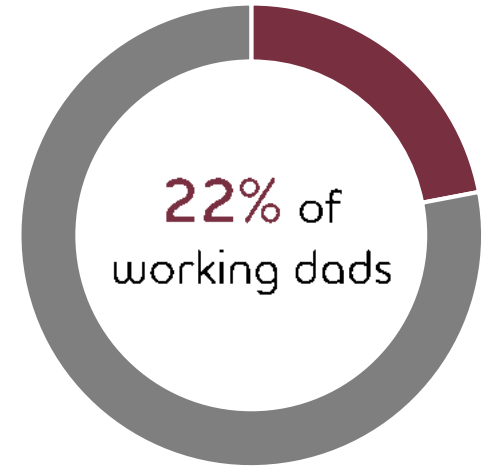
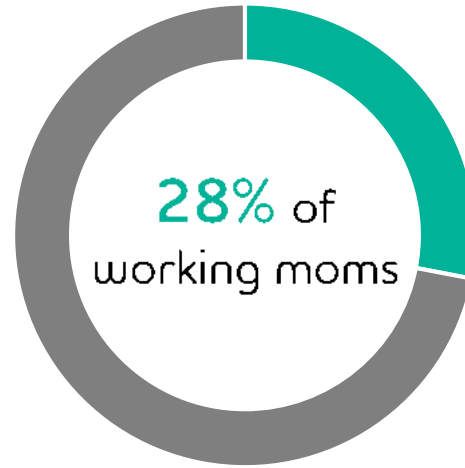
Change work routines to ensure family duties



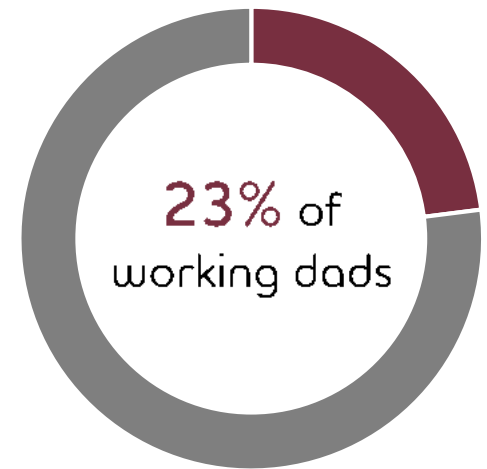
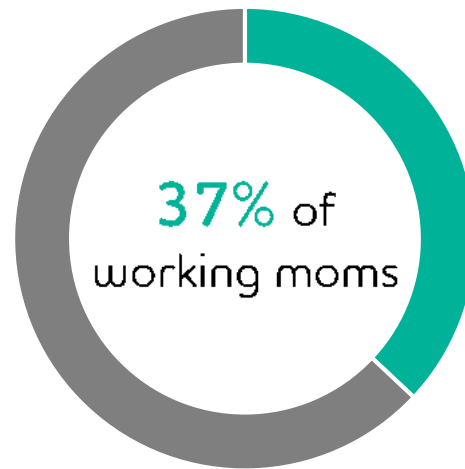
Unsurprisingly, **moms struggle more to perform optimally** at work than dads.



More than a quarter of working parents suffer from burnout, also more common with moms than dads.



27% of respondents say they feel guilty when they can't spend time with their children, which is, again, more prominent among working moms.



To explain this, Ms. Van Ho, Country Head, Sandoz Vietnam, points out **traditional culture** as the key reason.



“Most people have still seen childcare and housework as women’s duties. This hard work is taken for granted and accepted among couples for generations. In today’s modern life, there is no longer a distinction in earning money between men and women, plus the notion that Vietnamese women are both good at work and home, making it even more difficult for women.”

Van Ho,
Country Head, Sandoz Vietnam



On the other hand, working dads experience more fluctuations at work.

Up to 25% of working dads had their pay cut, much higher than 12% of working moms.

29% of dads even revise their career goals.





Notably, **over 33%** said they feel disconnected from their team and company.

(Senior) Executive Management roles are the ones who experience this the most compared to other levels with **41%** surveyed.

It's not that tough to keep working parents connected and engaged at work.

Businesses can **start with a flexible working schedule** that allows parent employees to direct all their attention on work and interactions with colleagues.



*"They can start small with flexible meeting scheduling that depends on when the parent staff can be most focused. Over time, **flexibility** can progress into staggered hours within a fixed schedule, variable work schedule, or compressed workweek.*

*One other thing, employers can consider launching a **working parent support group**. Then organize online engagement sessions on family and parenting topics, and share weekly updates on company activities."*

Chuong Nguyen,
Associate Director, Recruitment Business, HCMC Office, Adecco Vietnam



Mr. Eric Asato, Career Consultant/Acting Manager, Career Consulting & Development, RMIT University Vietnam, shares with us many practical tips from his own experience to stay productive and positive through disruptions these days. He introduces us to the **Pomodoro Technique**, which involves completing a single task for 25 minutes then taking a 5-minute break

“

So much gets done in just 25 minutes uninterrupted, even with household or work duties. I'm a fan of the Pomodoro technique, but only during the pandemic I have truly appreciated it for household responsibilities. A 25-minute music playing helps me enjoy housework and relax, which I had previously thought of as not so pleasant tasks.

”

Eric Asato,
Career Consultant/Acting Manager, Career Consulting &
Development, RMIT University Vietnam



A close-up photograph of a person's hands writing in a notebook. The person has bright red nail polish. Their left hand is resting on the left page of the notebook, which shows a calendar for August. Their right hand is holding a green pencil and writing the words "Do Not Disturb!" in a large, black, handwritten font on the right page. The notebook is open on a light-colored, textured surface.

Do Not
Disturb!

Eric also reminds the use of “**do not disturb**” mode, “Setting do not disturb time and turning off email can help you focus on important tasks and be much more productive”.

As a working dad himself, Eric encourages others to step in and help their partner ease the burden of childcare and errands.

“When fathers have the mindset that childcare or household duties are playtime or exercise time to enjoy, then we can have a balance of family and household duties with work duties.”

Eric believes **an open mind and curiosity will benefit both parents** when they have to spend all day long with their children, *“Learn from our children, as they can, and will teach us more than we can teach them in our lifetime. This is an amazing opportunity to play and develop relationships with our children”.*



Now, let's dig deeper into their anxiety.

While both sides are equally concerned about staying productive, there are specific aspects that weigh on each parent's mind.

Working moms

The safety and health of the family

The lack of childcare support

The lack of childcare support

Working dads

Financial status

Security and job prospects

Relationship with their partners.



Also, those most worried about job security and career prospects are Experienced or Senior staff, Leader or Supervisor, and Manage or Head of the department.

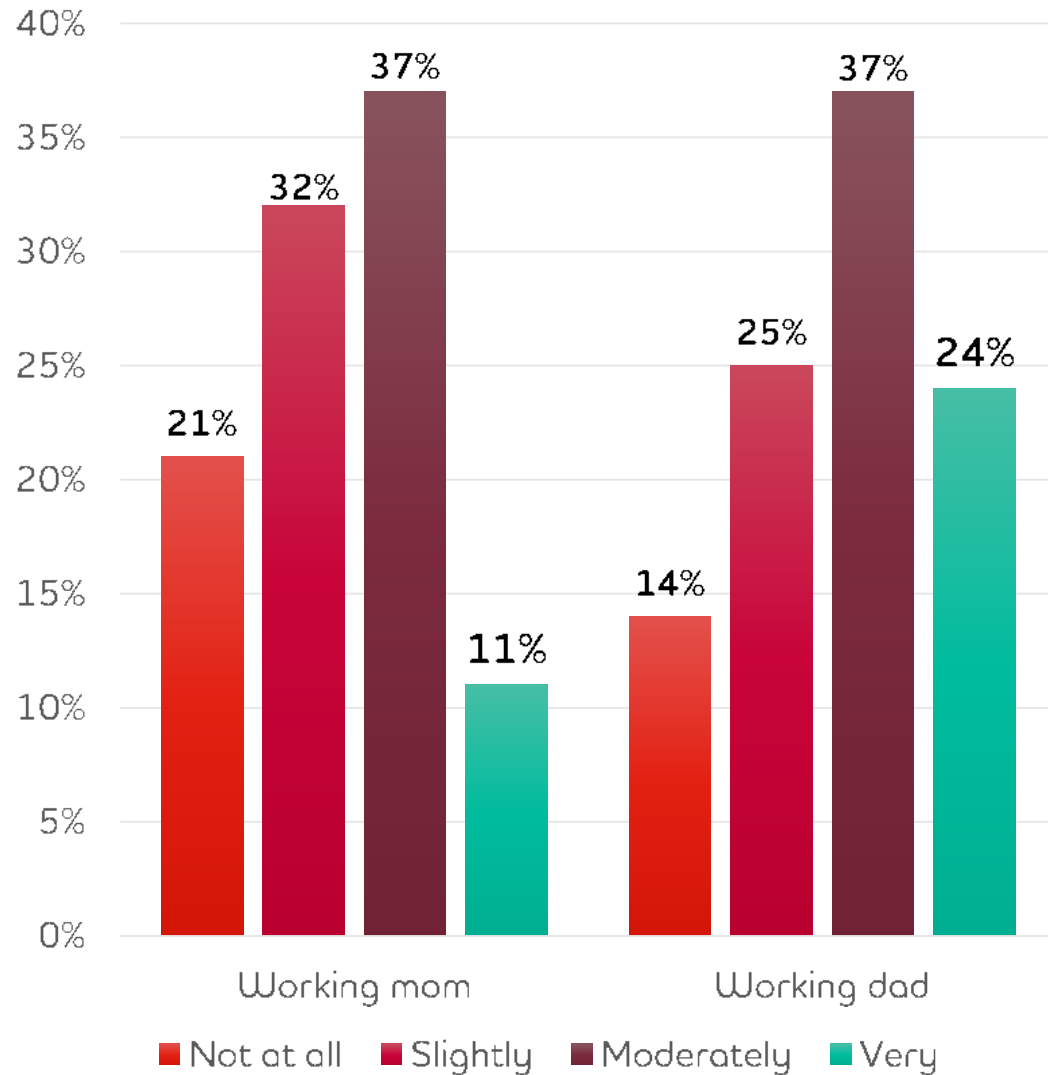


Dads are more comfortable than moms discussing the challenges of working parents at work.

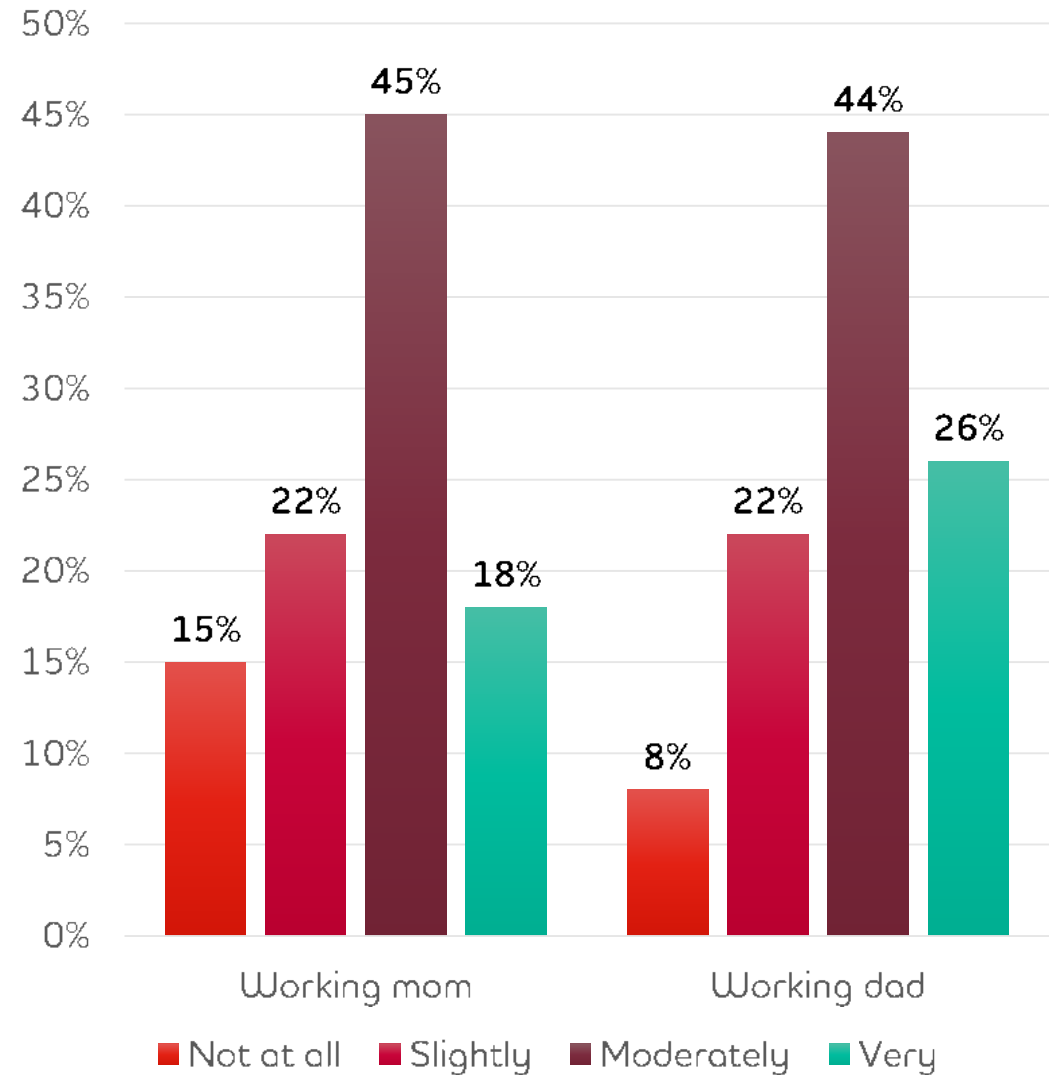
For working moms, 47% of them are very or moderately comfortable discussing this issue with their leaders, and 63% with co-workers.

For working dads, these figure are 60% and 70%, respectively.

Comfort level to talk about parenting challenges with leaders



Comfort level to talk about parenting challenges with co-workers



This difference is likely not related to women's openness, but probably reflects Vietnamese cultural expectations for working parents.

“ *Women are traditionally expected to juggle family and work. So far, this invisible work has been done without being noticed for many years due to cultural norms. Under lockdown, Vietnamese dads are discovering the new lifestyle of being home with their children all the time. Now the formerly invisible housework that was done by women becomes much more visible.* ”

My Holland,
Executive Coach, Trainer, & CEO EQuest Asia Ltd.



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Labor Division: Childcare & Housework Duties

Let's go back to the story of our couple.

With two school-age children, An and Hoang get key support from **the schools and teachers there**. Plus, An has **her family lives nearby**, so her parents frequently help in picking up the kids from school or prepare meals when she and her husband come home late from work.

During the previous school breaks, the children sometimes visited Hoang's parents in Da Nang for a while.

But that was before the social distancing order.





Since the 4th outbreak began, the couple has had to handle almost everything on their own.

As a father in a modern family, Hoang often joins hands in housework errands. While An cooks, Hoang will play with the kids. Or when An reads for them, Hoang will do the laundry. If one gets swamped in their job, the other will take the lead.

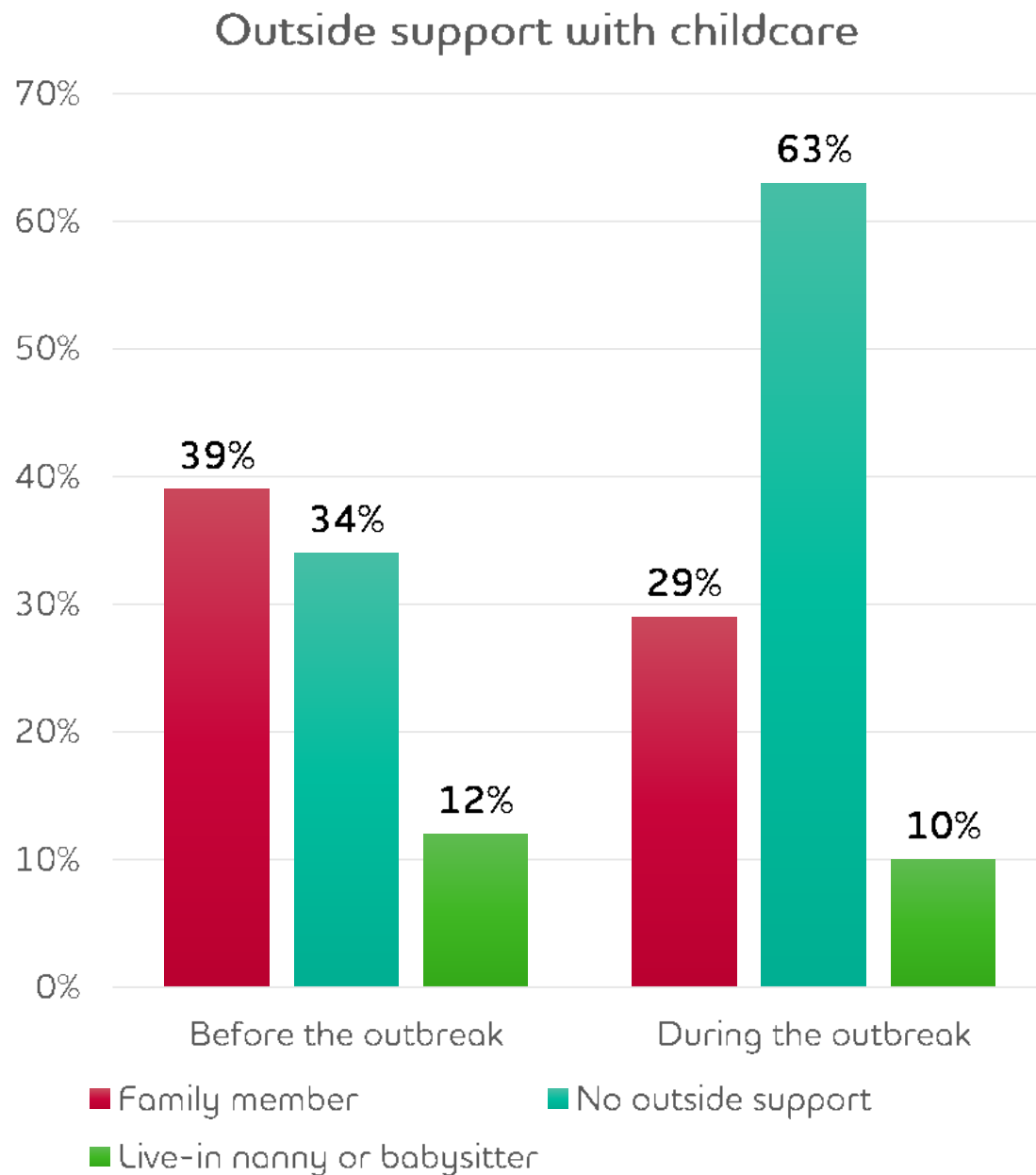
So, some days it feels like An does more, other days it's Hoang. Yet at the end of the day, they all see housework and family as a shared responsibility.

Is this common with working parents during the pandemic?

Our survey says yes.

Earlier, most working parents (39%) have their family members to help with childcare, followed by **34%** with no support.

During the prolonged outbreak with the application of directives 16, 16+ and other directives to prevent the spread, this rate took the lead with **63% of parents taking care of their children by themselves.**



As a result, the time spent doing housework and childcare recorded an increase during the pandemic, especially for working moms.

	Average total hours/week	Average total hours/week for working moms	Average total hours/week for working dads
Pre-pandemic	16.9	19.5	15.2
Current	23.2	26.8	20.5
Increase	6.3	7.3	5.3

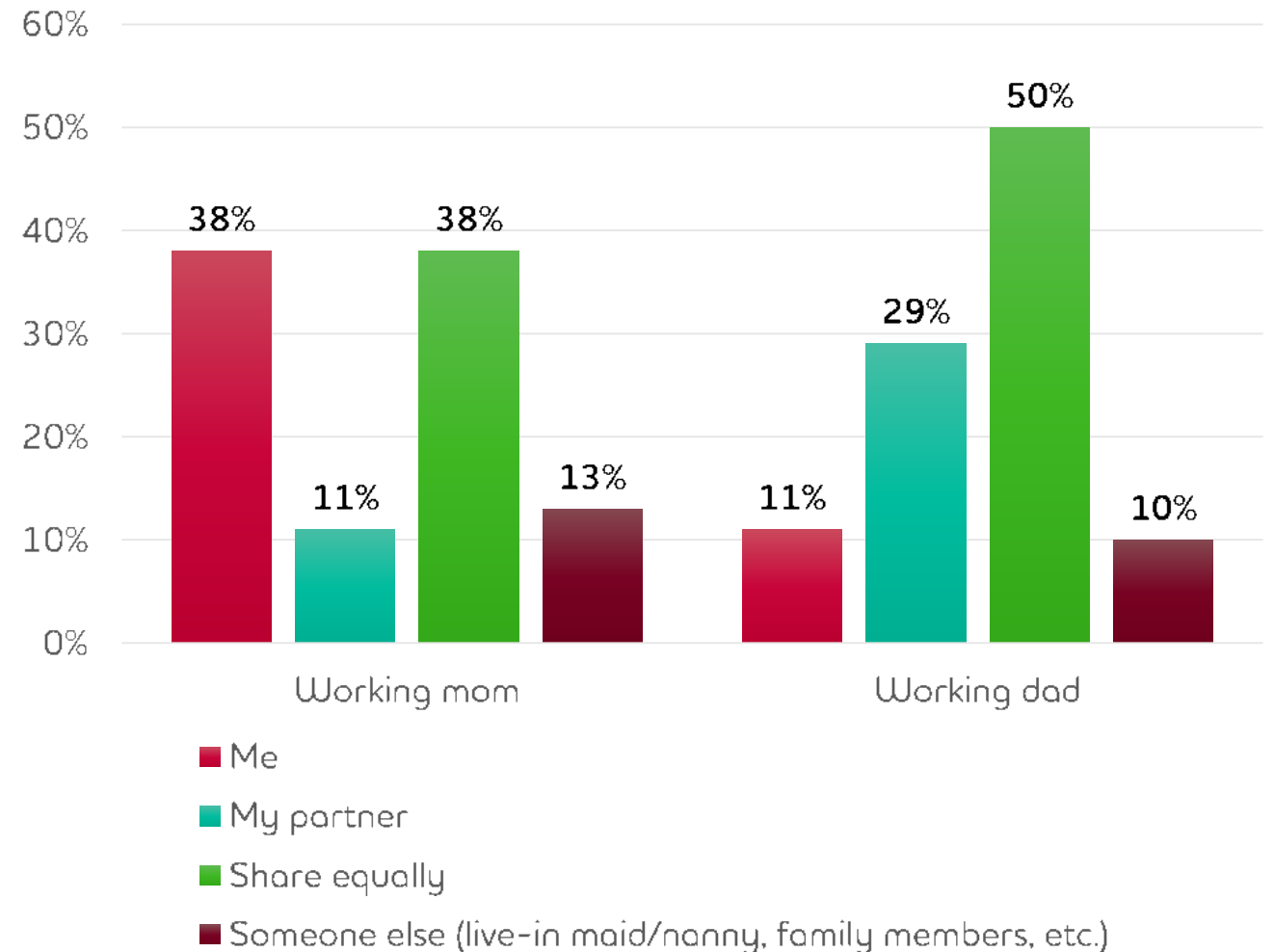
This finding reinforces the opinion that, although the majority of respondents indicates household and childcare responsibilities were equally shared, working moms still tend to take on more responsibilities.



38% of working moms & **50%** of working dads find a balance in household tasks.

39% of working moms & **11%** of working dads say they are primarily responsible for housework.

The one who takes the main responsibility for housework & childcare



For both sides to harmoniously share housework and childcare, Van suggests couples have an honest discussion about this issue.

“Women should openly ask their husbands to help with housework and childcare with a reasonable division of time. When the two cultivate together, they can truly have a happy life.”

Van Ho,
Country Head, Sandoz Vietnam



Agreeing with Van, Chuong states, *"In Asian culture, it's a bit more towards women to do household, so we need to encourage them to do less and "empower" the men to do more. Working dads also need to take on "hard" things at home, such as cleaning the air conditioner, cleaning the house, or gardening."*



Chuong Nguyen,
Associate Director, Recruitment Business, HCMC
Office, Adecco Vietnam



When it comes to childcare, it's important to **plan and assign tasks based on each parent's personality and strengths.**

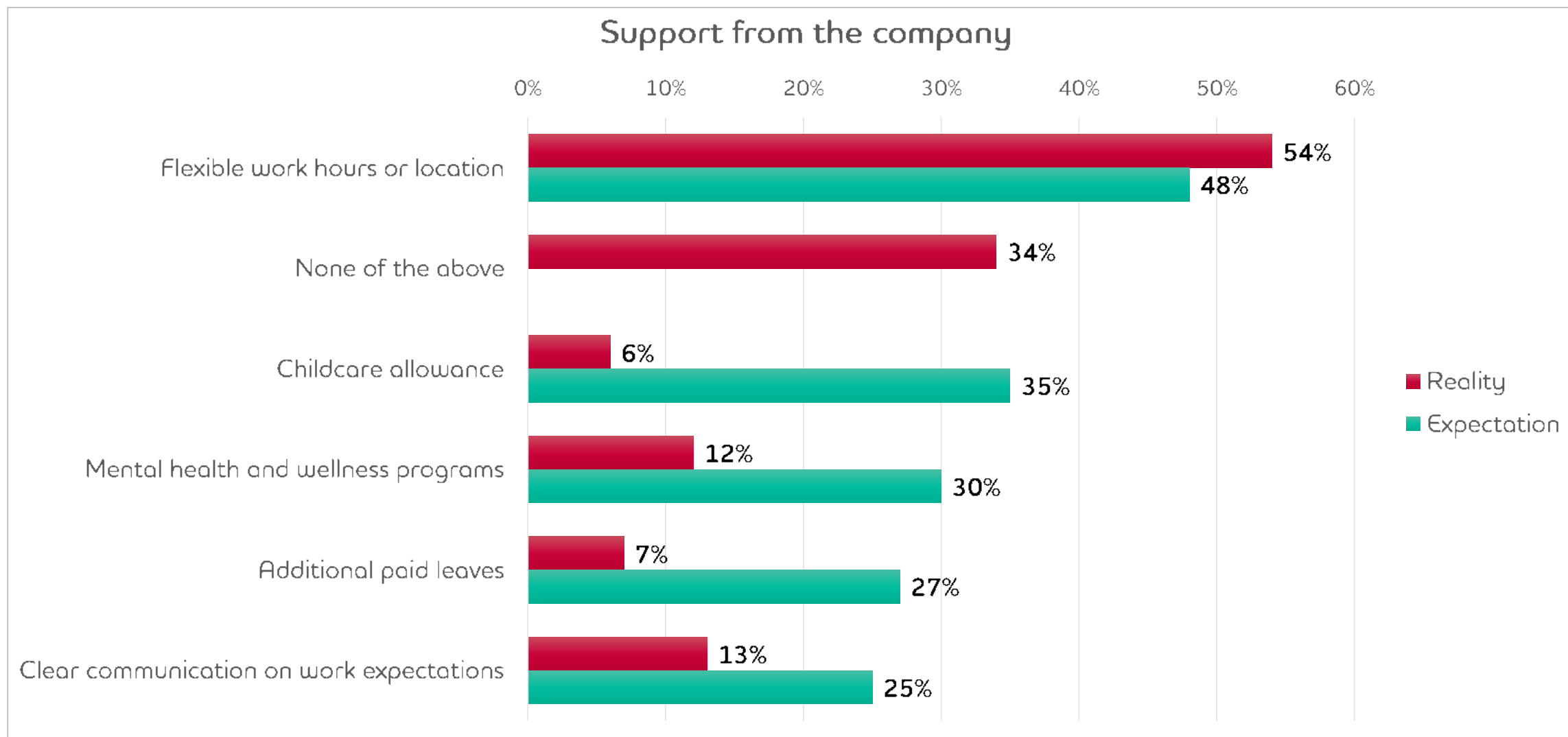
"If the father likes football, spend time playing football with the kids. If the mother is a more patient person, homeschooling may be appropriate.", Chuong gives an example.

*"**Again, a community for parents at work can help.** Companies can start groups or connect dads together so they can inspire each other and share practices on repairing kinds of stuff, doing household chores, and taking care of the kids".*

Chuong Nguyen,
Associate Director, Recruitment Business, HCMC
Office, Adecco Vietnam



Business's support policy for working parents is still limited. Unsurprisingly, working-parent employees expect more than that.





Our last survey “Hybrid work, Reskilling & Mental health: A multi-generational” revealed **80%** of employees attach great importance to their mental health.

Now, with working parents, mental health issues continue to play an important role. Though **30%** of working parents consider mental health support as the top 3 most desirable, currently **only 12% of businesses provide related support.**



“Companies should provide access to an *Employee Assistance Program* for all employees, not just working parents. When investing in people’s psychological wellbeing, they go further as they have appropriate strategies to cope, with support from counselors. *To feel listened to and have our emotions validated is a necessity for all, both people wellbeing and company’s productivity.*”

She continues, “Most men may see the focus on emotional wellbeing as a sign of weakness and prefer to dismiss it, but *leaders have the duty to educate and change this mindset*, especially in these difficult times”.

My Holland,
Executive Coach, Trainer, & CEO EQuest Asia Ltd.



Working Parents and the Return to On-site Work



One day, we will return to the office when the epidemic is under control.

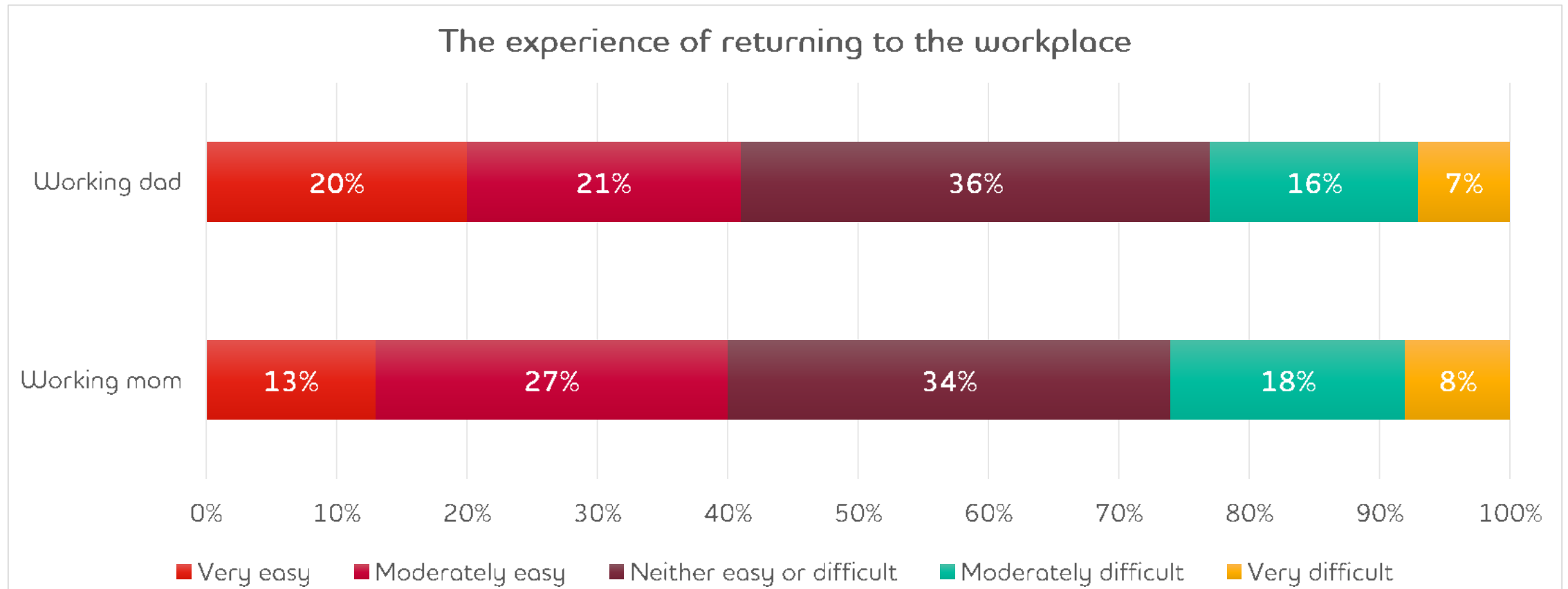
Both An and Hoang are eager to get back to their normal routine, with their children at schools, support from family, and works done during work hours.

However, sometimes An finds herself in a dilemma. On the one hand, it's a relief when everything is back to the way it was. On the other hand, she worries that the shift to on-site work will cut down on her time with her children. More importantly, there is always a potential risk of infection from outside.

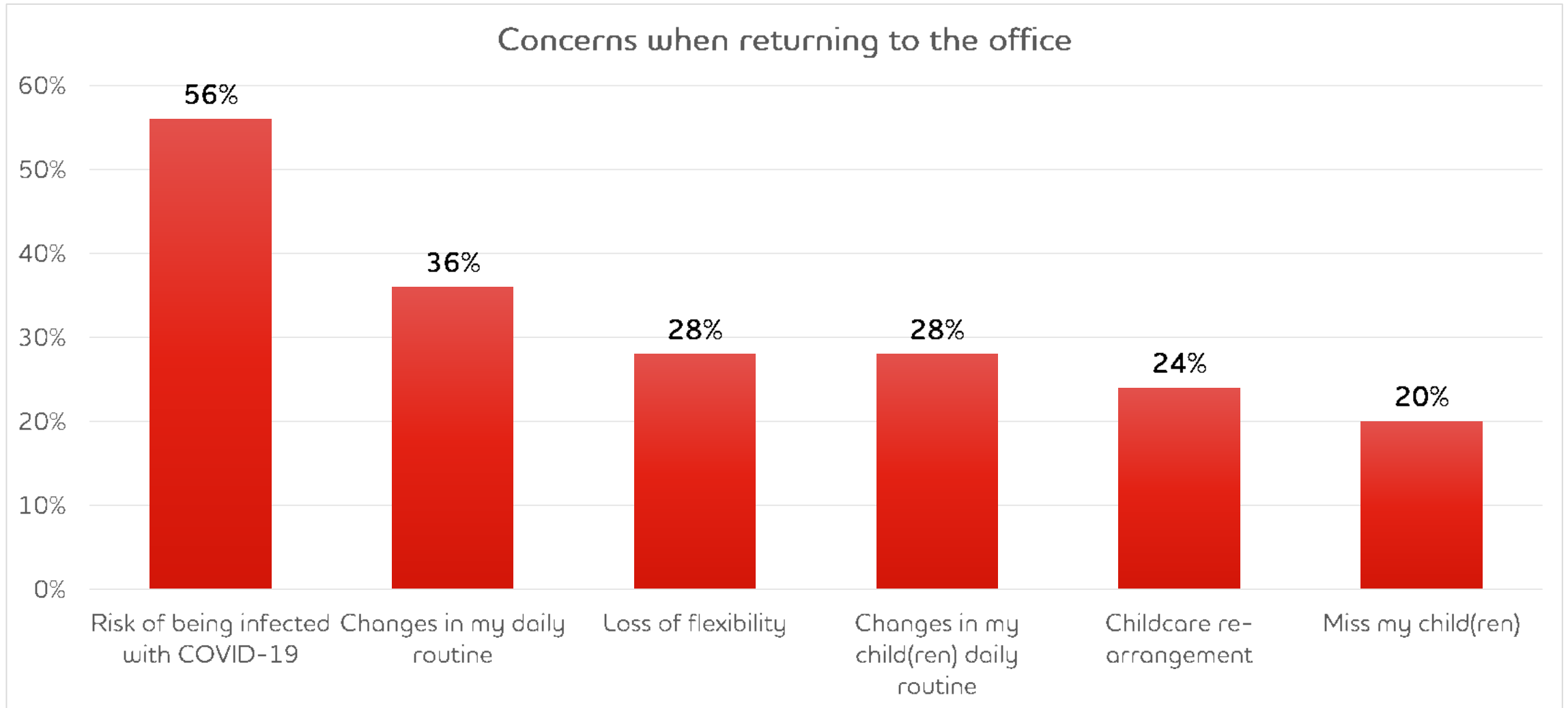
An is not the only one with ambivalent feelings.

The survey result implies that returning to the office is relatively a bit easier for working dads than moms.

26% of working moms and **23%** of working dads share that this would be a "moderately difficult" or "very difficult" experience.



Working parents have **certain worries when returning to work**, with the risk of being infected with COVID-19 ranked first.



For a smooth transition, Eric highlights both employees and leaders should act in developing a return to work plan.

“For employees, proactively suggest solutions to help you better adapt to potential changes when returning to work onsite. First, ask your manager what their expectations are. Take a step back to reflect, research, and then propose some solutions with your personal insights to cultivate a new norm”.

Eric Asato,

Career Consultant/Acting Manager, Career Consulting &
Development, RMIT University Vietnam

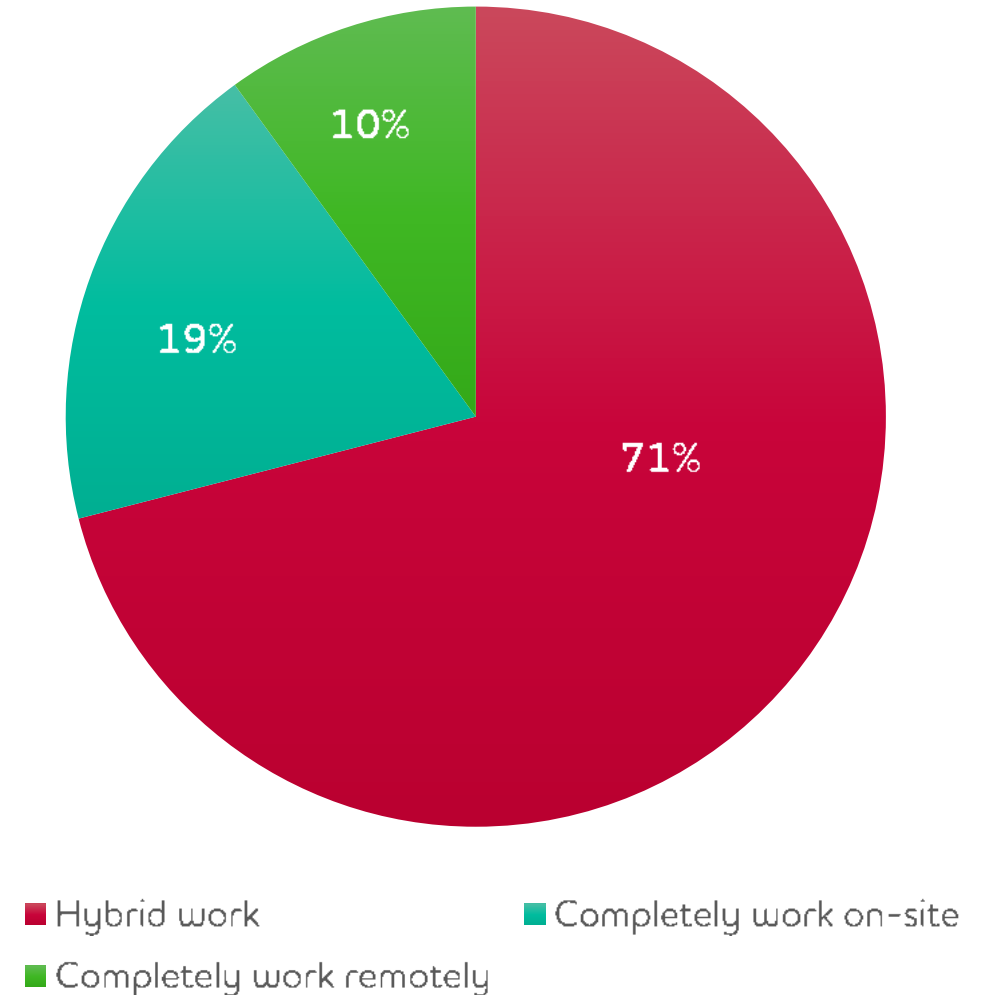


When asked about the desired work arrangement when returning to the office, the results showed that the **hybrid work model**, which is both at the office and home, is still the most desirable.

71% of working parents are looking for flexibility in this work model.

This result is consistent with our previous survey results [“Hybrid work, Reskilling & Mental health: A multi-generational”](#) showing that the hybrid working model is being interested in employees.

Expected work arrangement



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**Looking Forward, a Great
Place to Work for All Parents**

Fostering family-friendly work culture is a worthwhile effort.

“

Leaders should have conversations with managers and teams across the organization so employees can speak their mind. As a result, they will feel more supported, collaborate more effectively, and manage their workload better.

Organizational heads should encourage every leader to explore and experiment with new ways of working, and inspire their teams to do the same, to simultaneously improve the impact and well-being of the business, forming a win-win situation.

”



Van Ho,
Country Head, Sandoz Vietnam

With years of experience in the recruitment industry, Chuong suggests how a parent-friendly workplace starts right from **the hiring phase**.

"**The hiring process shouldn't discriminate by age or family status**, which means bullet points like 'preferably ages 25-35 or single' should be removed. This will create a diverse workplace with both single and married employees".

Chuong Nguyen,
Associate Director, Recruitment Business, HCMC
Office, Adecco Vietnam





“In addition to certain benefits such as flexible work applied to all employees, **employers can consider further parent-oriented components**, i.e. childcare benefit/allowance, gifts for Children’s day, or parental leaves.

As well, the HR team can **promote family-related topics during company-wide events** as good practices for well-being for working parents. When the normalcy return, think about “family day” or office visit for the kids at times.”

Chuong Nguyen,
Associate Director, Recruitment Business, HCMC
Office, Adecco Vietnam



Special thanks to our trusted partners who contributed to the analysis of this survey results:



Ms. Van Ho,
Country Head, Sandoz Vietnam



Mr. Eric Asato,
Career Consultant/Acting Manager, Career
Consulting & Development, RMIT University Vietnam



Ms. My Holland,
Executive Coach, Trainer, & CEO EQuest
Asia Ltd.



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The End.

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