

2020 SURVEY TOPIC BRIEF

BY THE STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING ENGAGEMENT AND EQUITY COMMITTEE
OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS ASSOCIATIONS

CHILDREN & DEPENDENT CARE

The 2020 SE3 Children and Dependent Care Brief explores the impact and perceptions related to care of children and dependents in the structural engineering profession based on the responses to a nation-wide survey.

In developing the 2020 SE3 survey questions for this topic, the Committee sought to understand the percentage of structural engineering professionals with children, the impact of having children on their careers and the perceptions of having, or not having children and how these vary amongst demographic groups.

The survey asked respondents to select from the following options (all that apply): no children or dependents, infant through pre-kindergarten child(ren), kindergarten through 12th grade child(ren), adult child(ren) and sick or elderly dependents.

Out of approximately 2,400 respondents who indicated they had children or dependents, sick or elderly dependents represented less than 4%. Therefore, throughout this brief, the terminology children and dependents are used interchangeably noting that the majority of dependents are children, including adult children.

BRIEF HIGHLIGHTS

1. 55% of male respondents have children, compared to 33% of female respondents.
2. 87% of women report providing 50% or more care to their dependents compared to only 42% of men.
3. 57% of women report choosing between work and caregiving often or always, as compared to 20% of men.
4. 61% of women felt that having a dependent had a negative impact on their career as opposed to 17% of men.
5. 61% of respondents agreed that employees who do not have dependents should be more available to work overtime hours.
6. When asked, only 4% of respondents felt their employers are supportive of employees with dependents.

DEMOGRAPHICS

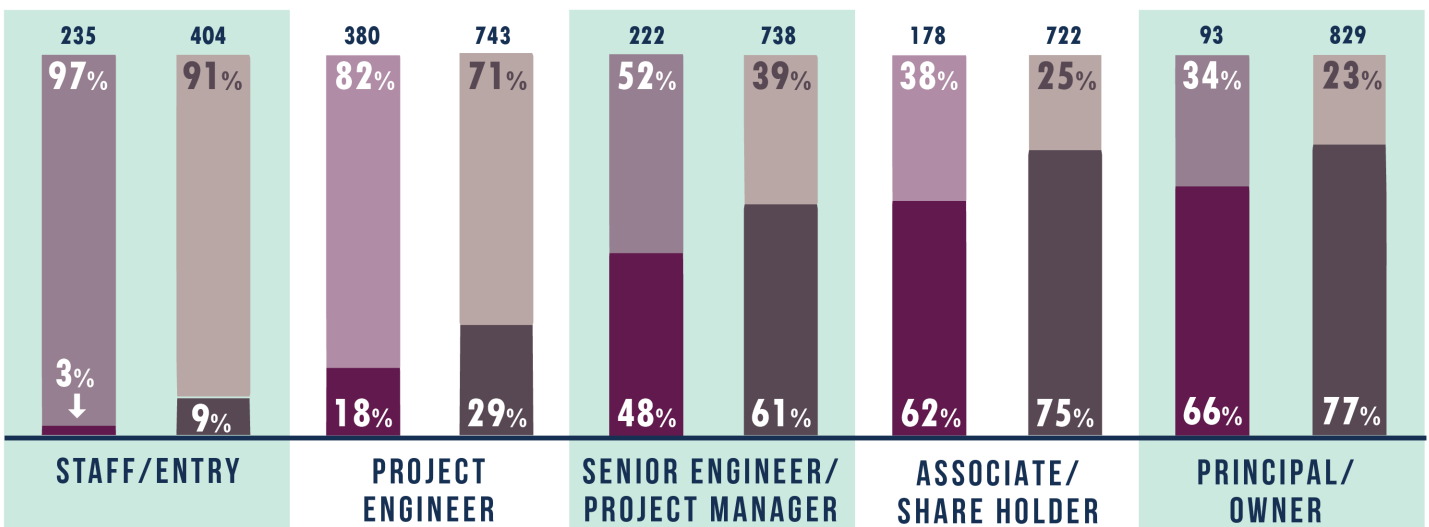
50% of all respondents to the 2020 SE3 Survey have children. However, this skews heavily towards male respondents. 55% of male respondents have children compared to 33% of female respondents. This trend holds across all position levels. 29% of male project engineers have children compared to 18% of female project engineers, and 77% of male principals have children compared to 66% of female principals.

Increasing age, position, and years of experience correlate with a higher probability of having dependents, across all racial demographics. However, White respondents were most likely to have dependents, compared to other racial groups. White and LatinX respondents were also more likely to have children at a younger age than other racial groups, including Black, Asian, and Middle Eastern respondents.

Respondents from smaller firm sizes are more likely to have dependents. Respondents from firms with less than ten employees are more than twice as likely to have children than respondents who work at larger firms (500 person or more). This trend holds across firm sizes. Respondents from firms with 10-49 employees are approximately 25% more likely to have children than respondents from firms with 50+ employees. Respondents who work at all female-led firms are more than twice as likely to have children than respondents who work at all male-led firms.

Respondents from firms with non-homogenous leadership teams (mixed gender and mixed race) are less likely to have children than firms with homogeneous leadership composition (all male, all female, all white, or all non-white). This observed effect, though statistically significant, is likely explained by other compounding factors, such as firm size.

CHILDREN BY POSITION



WOMEN
WITH
CHILDREN



WOMEN
WITHOUT
CHILDREN



MEN
WITH
CHILDREN



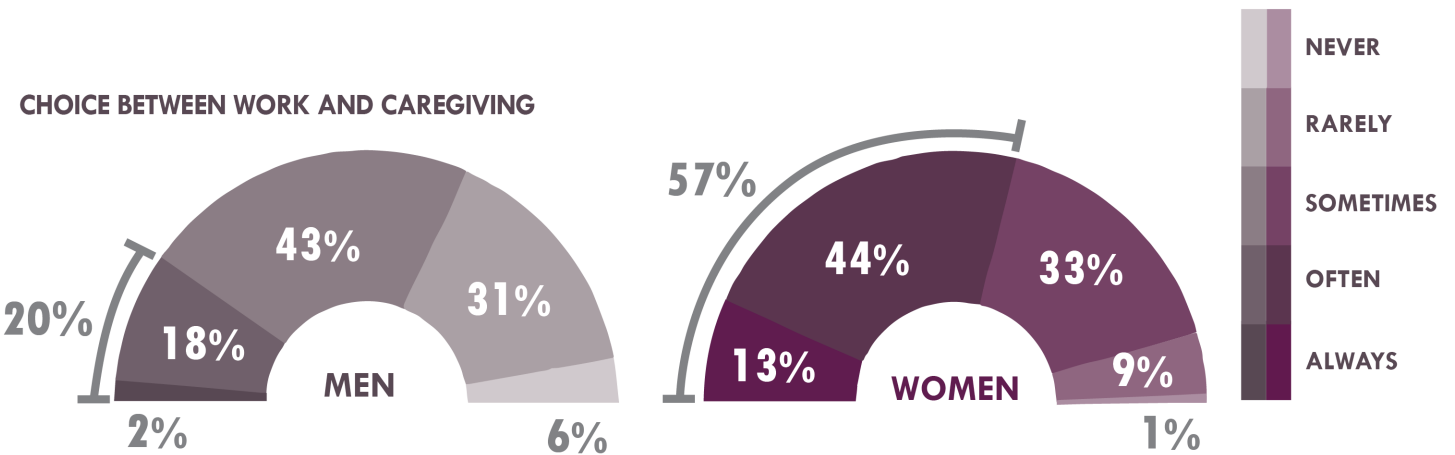
MEN
WITHOUT
CHILDREN

CAREGIVING

In exploring the topic of dependent care, the Committee asked questions regarding the percentage of care provided by respondents, the frequency of choice between work and caregiving, and perceived impact on one's career. We found that percentage of care varies significantly by gender, age, and position level but not by race.

Female respondents report providing a markedly higher percentage of care than male respondents. 87% of women report providing 50% or more of care to their dependents compared to only 42% of men. Individuals in lower level positions also indicate a higher percentage of care. 57% of project engineers provide 50% or more of care to their dependents, compared to 42% of Principals.

The survey findings do not indicate a generational difference in caregiving by gender, meaning the breakdown in percentage of care reported by older men and women does not vary significantly with that reported by younger men and women.



When asked how often respondents felt they had to choose between work or caregiving, women report a much higher occurrence. 57% of women report choosing between work and caregiving "often" or "always", compared to 20% of men.

This trend holds even when comparing only women and men who report providing more than 50% of care. Of this smaller subset, 65% of women report choosing between work and caregiving "often" or "always", compared to 23% of men.

WHAT CHANGED?

Whereas the 2018 NCSEA SE3 study examined productivity and motivation to advance after having children, the 2020 survey focuses on the relationship between dependent care and impact on one's career.

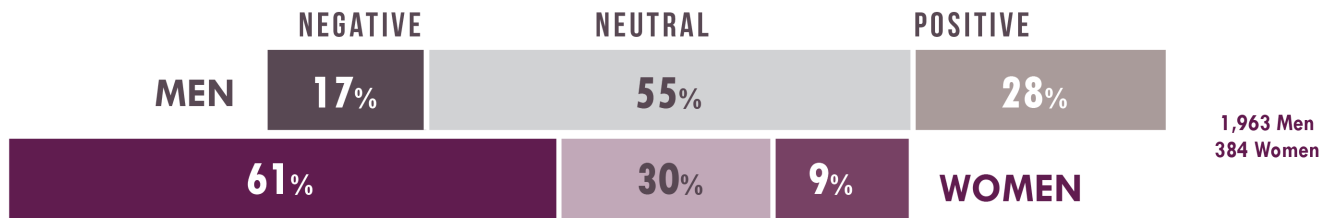
The 2020 findings demonstrate that the perceived impact of having children for women structural engineers is worse than for men, regardless of percentage of care provided.

GENERAL PERCEPTIONS

PERCEIVED IMPACT OF CHILDREN ON CAREER

Of those respondents who provide dependent care, 61% of women felt that having a dependent had a negative impact on their career as opposed to 17% of men. Interestingly this perception does not vary significantly between men who provide more or less care, and between women who provide more or less care.

Even when comparing only women and men who provide more than 50% of care, women are more likely to perceive a negative impact on their careers. Of this smaller subset, 67% of women and 15% of men felt that having a dependent had a negative impact on their careers.



AVAILABILITY FOR OVERTIME

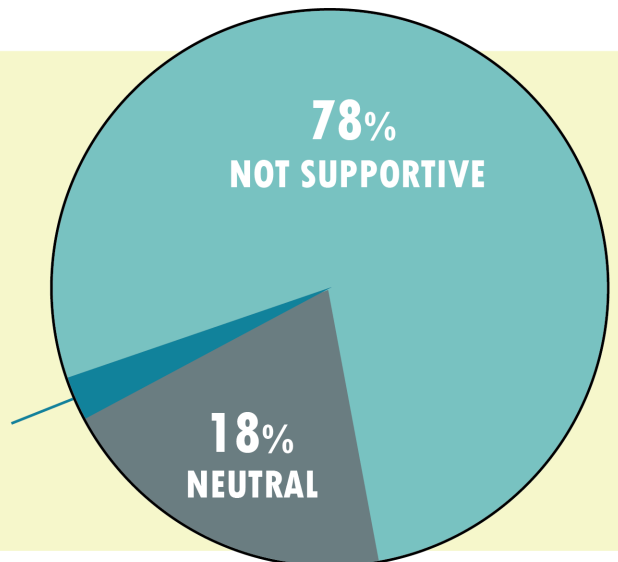
When asked if employees who do not have dependents should be more available to work overtime hours, 61% of respondents agreed. Women were statistically more likely than men to agree, 72% versus 57%. And respondents who do not have dependents were more likely than respondents with dependents to agree, 67% versus 55%.

EMPLOYER SUPPORT OF EMPLOYEES WITH DEPENDENTS

When asked if their firms are supportive of employees with dependents, only 4% of respondents agreed. 78% of all respondents disagreed and 18% were neutral.

Women were twice as likely as men to disagree, and respondents under the age of 40 were more likely than respondents over the age of 40 to disagree.

ONLY 4%
OF RESPONDENTS FEEL
THEIR EMPLOYERS ARE
SUPPORTIVE OF EMPLOYEES
WITH DEPENDENTS.



Ultimately respondents who have dependents reported more satisfaction than respondents who do not, for all the main satisfaction metrics (work-life balance, flexibility, income, advancement, overall career, professional development, etc.). This statistic is consistent with the findings from previous SE3 surveys in 2016 and 2018. However, of all the main satisfaction metrics, people with dependents seem less happy with "amount of supervision received" and "opportunities to gain or practice new skills". This leads to the conclusion that they may be less happy with their short term work arrangements even if they are happy with their overall career.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think respondents from smaller firms are more likely to have children?
2. What can employers do to show their support of employees with children? What challenges do employers face in showing their support?
3. Why should people without children be more or less available to work extra hours?
4. What are some potential reasons that women perceive a more negative impact of children on their careers than men?



The information contained in this report was gathered from an NCSEA sponsored survey administered online by the SE3 Committee in early 2020. The survey is an on-going effort to identify trends, to understand the underlying factors, and to initiate conversations on engagement and equity within the profession. The 2020 SE3 Survey was developed with a focus on key study topics; including career development, compensation, work flexibility, and overall retention, among others. While we believe the information presented in this document is an accurate, unbiased representation of the data received in the survey, the matters discussed are sometimes subject to differences in opinion or approach. As such, neither NCSEA nor its Board, committees, writers, editors, firms, or individuals who have contributed to this report make any warranty, expressed or implied, or assume any legal liability or responsibility for the use or reference to findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed herein.

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