

Study on kids and a career: Traditional role models still largely exist

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Prof. Dr. Alexandra Wuttig, Chancellor of IU International University of Applied Sciences and Professor of Innovation and Entrepreneurship Credit: IU International University of Applied Sciences

A representative survey by IU International University of Applied Sciences reveals there are still significant differences between the sexes in career trajectories.

The first part of the representative IU study "[Work and career. Equal opportunities for all?](#)" revealed some clear differences between women and men in management positions. But what happens to the careers of women and men when children come into their lives is shown in the second part of the IU study "[Children and careers. Compatible for everyone?](#)"

A key finding of the second part of the IU study is that having children continues to have a greater impact on women than on men: according to the study, 19.4% of the working women surveyed stated that they had realigned their [career](#) goals due to parenthood. Among working men, the figure is only 11.3%.

Children are more likely to lead to a career break for women than for men: more than three times as many women (11.4%) as men (3.2%) have given up their management responsibilities due to the birth of a child.

However, working women rate the skills they have gained through motherhood higher than men: 54.4% of women compared to 41.1% of men believe that working parents can bring better organizational skills to their everyday working life in terms of their parenting skills. The situation is similar with time management (51.0% of women vs. 41.0%

of men) or the ability to multitask (36.7% of women vs. 24.2% of men).

"Children change careers—that is often the case. Reasons for this include the reorganization of priorities and the development of new soft skills that can be used in the job. As women continue to take parental leave much more frequently, they benefit particularly from these changes," says Prof Dr. Alexandra Wuttig, Chancellor of IU International University of Applied Sciences and Professor of Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

Men take far less parental leave, probably mainly for financial reasons

Other major differences between working fathers and mothers can also be seen in the take-up and distribution of parental leave: although each parent has been legally entitled to up to 36 months of parental leave since 2007, women take parental leave more often than men: 71.3% of women compared to 28.3% of men with child(ren) have taken parental leave at least once.

According to the Parental Leave Act, parental leave can be split between the parents, taken consecutively or in parallel. However, the IU study shows that 96.1% of women and only 18.9% of men have taken parental leave alone or for the most part. Two thirds of men even stated that their partner took the majority of their parental leave.

One reason why men take parental leave comparatively rarely could be financial concerns: 45.1% of the women and 37.4% of the men surveyed believe that taking parental leave has or could have a negative impact on them. And for 46.7% of men who believe that parental leave has disadvantages, these would be a reason not to take parental leave in the first place. This contrasts with 25.2% of women.

Companies offer flexibility above all

It is interesting to note that just as many working women as men—more than two thirds in each case—state that taking [parental leave](#) is well regarded and supported in their company.

However, a different picture emerges when it comes to the specific measures offered by companies: More than four out of five respondents state that their company offers some flexibility in terms of work organization. Women primarily mention the possibility of flexible working time models, men most frequently mention flexible working hours and forms of work.

Only a few companies offer support with childcare: Only a few of the respondents (9.7% of women and 12.9% of men) state that they are supported by their companies when it comes to childcare.

Men see themselves more often in the classic provider role

More time for the family—this is the most frequently cited reason for adjusting career goals due to parenthood among the [working mothers](#) (67.3%) and fathers (66.8%) surveyed. Many respondents (50.6% of women; 44.4% of men) also stated that children and parenthood had changed their priorities.

The biggest difference between the sexes is in terms of money: 42.5% of men want to earn more money in order to provide their children with a certain standard of living. Only 26.7% of working women say the same.

"Parenthood often reinforces role models that literally played no role before starting a family. Fathers want to earn more money, women

rethink their [career goals](#). Social pressure, structures and clichés reinforce these individual tendencies and behaviors, which are still reflected in [employment rates](#) and career paths years later," explains Prof. Dr. Malte Martensen, MBA course director and Professor of Human Resources & Organization at IU International University of Applied Sciences.

Almost a third of women are solely responsible for childcare

The inequalities and discrepancies are also evident in the division of [care work](#): 30.2% of women state that they do all the care work and a further 40.8% of working women state that they do most of the care work. 23.8% of women and 37.0% of men stated that care work was shared equally between their partners. It is interesting to note that men rate the division of care and housework as "equally shared" more often than women.

The study "Children and careers—compatible for everyone?" by IU International University of Applied Sciences shows what happens to the careers of women and men as soon as [children](#) enter their lives and how this affects [women](#) in particular. For the study, IU surveyed 4,480 people between the ages of 16 and 65 who are in employment, representative of the German labor market by age and gender.

Provided by IU Internationale Hochschule

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