



# Parenting in Adland



How agencies can best  
support moms and dads



With 64 million Millennials expected to become parents in the next decade, and the average age of talent in advertising ranging between 25 and 35, our industry is facing a huge baby boom, and is at threat for a brain drain.

To stay competitive, agencies are boasting luxury nursing rooms, expanded parental leave, and a growing effort to offer flex hours. But what is the reality for moms and dads in advertising?

Our 2016 Elephant on Madison Ave research of Ad Women revealed that only 39% were mothers. The vast majority of women had either left the industry once they became moms or chose not to have children. Those who stayed indicated that motherhood had negatively impacted their career. Caregiving is not just a 'women's issue'. Millennial dads are speaking up and saying things are challenging for them too. We wanted to know how rough it is for parents in advertising, so we partnered with VMLY&R to conduct the Parenting In Adland survey. Additionally, we hosted a series of focus groups for AdDads to hear how fatherhood has impacted their careers.

This is what we learned.

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It's Not Just a  
Moms Thing



## Adland can be tough

Some parents of both genders agree that becoming a parent has helped them in their roles within the agency (more patience, better time management, more insight into the teenage mind). However, nine in ten moms and eight in ten dads agree that “the advertising agency is a challenging place for parents.”

The advertising agency is a challenging place for parents



**9 in 10** Moms Agree



**8 in 10** Dads Agree

## Moms think...



"I feel like I am five years behind men of my same age. I'm currently pregnant and was placed on a mommy account with no mentor and low visibility in the agency."

"It feels impossible to both be a decent parent and meet the time and workload demands in an agency creative department."

### Getting It Right:

"Being a parent has helped me be a better boss. It's made me more patient and nurturing."

## Dads think...



"Leaving the office 'on time' to make it home for family dinner and bedtime creates a perception that you are not as hungry or passionate as those who seem to never leave or clock out."

"Not being available for certain opportunities negatively impacts my promotability."

### Getting It Right:

"My daughter is a constant source of inspiration and new ideas."

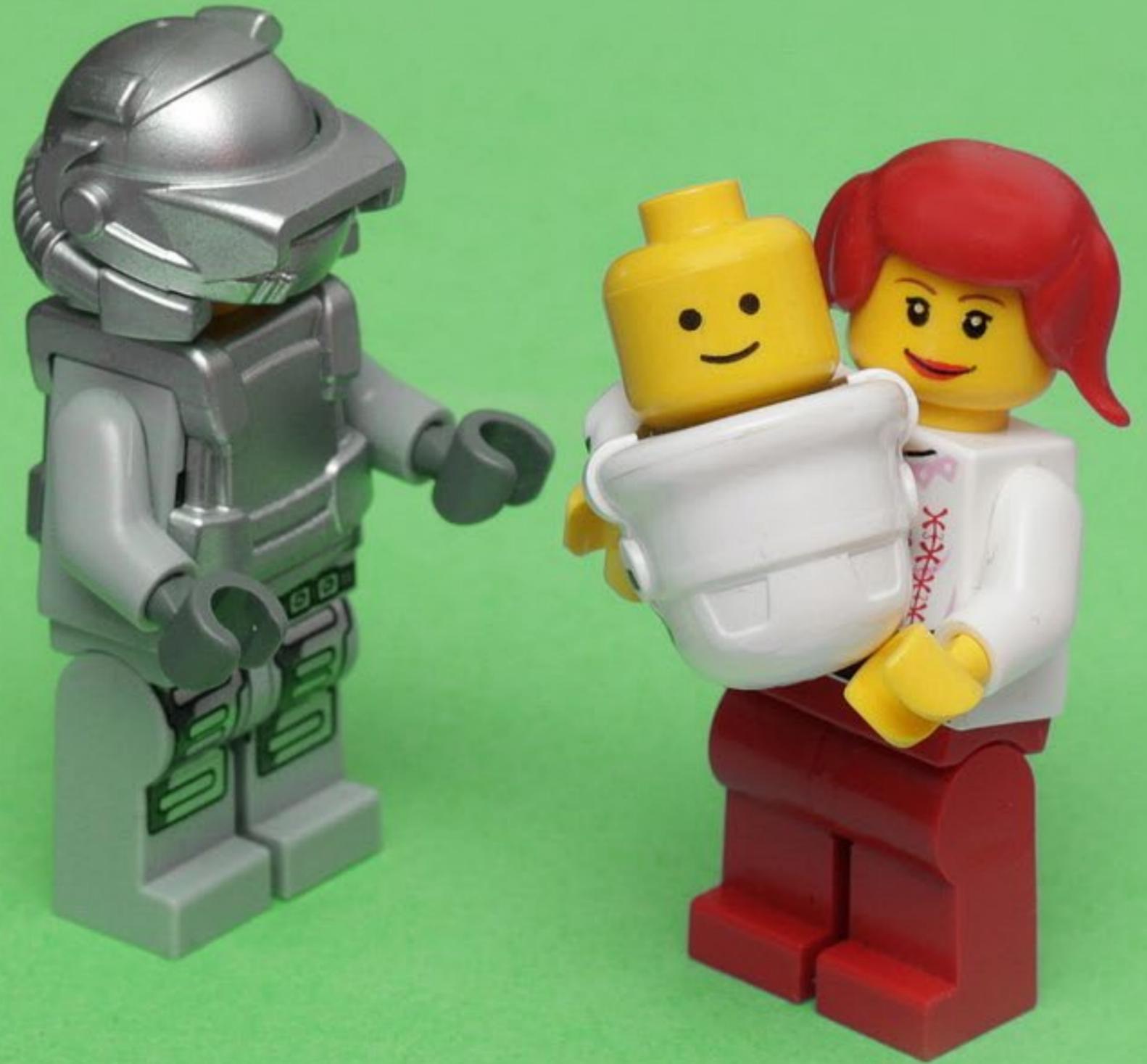


## Solutions

- Conduct an audit of assignments, promotions and pay raises for parents vs. non-parents to ensure there isn't an underlying issue around caregiver bias
- Lean in to the characteristics of parenting that can help you thrive in your day-to-day life (multi-tasking, patience, viewing the world through another lens)
- If you are a male leader at your agency, be an example to your team by walking the talk on work/life fit and by leaving at a reasonable time in order to put family first as appropriate.

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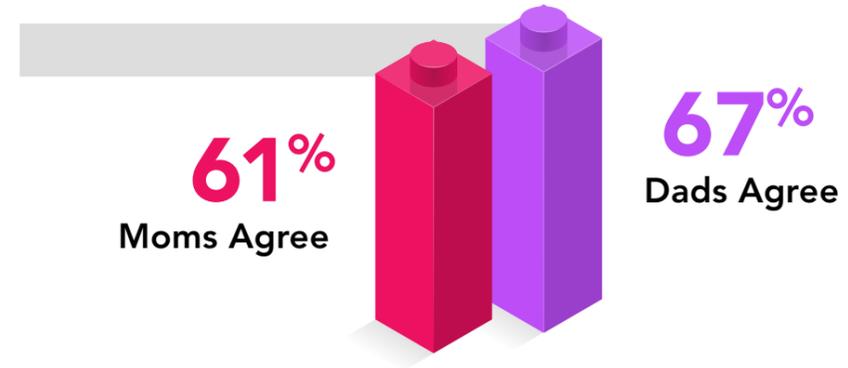
Dads are  
Misunderstood



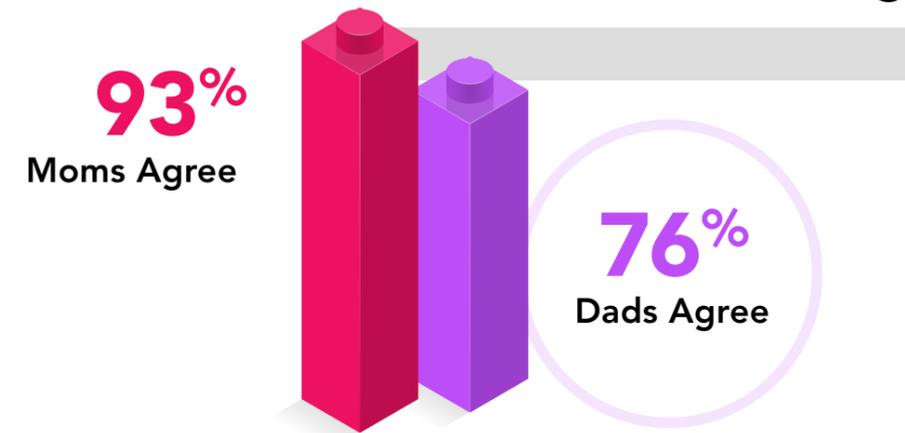
## Perception vs. reality

Although both moms and dads have similar challenges, there is a perception among moms that it is much easier for dads to thrive. 93% of moms agree that dads can thrive in advertising, whereas only 76% of dads agree with that sentiment. Both moms and dads agree that moms have it a little harder. Two in three dads believe that moms can thrive as do 61% of moms.

### Moms can thrive in Advertising



### Dads can thrive in Advertising





## Moms think...

"Dads (men) can thrive anywhere."

"Dads are seen as heroes, moms are seen as putting their job second."

**Getting it right:**

"Neither mom or dad can thrive without a village and supportive work environment."

## Dads think...

"It's true that moms CAN thrive (I know many who have), but equally true that for many it's harder to thrive than it is for men."

"There are some old ideas that haven't died off yet. I know women struggle because of how leadership looks at motherhood."

**Getting it right:**

"Work/life harmony is critical to my happiness at the agency."



## Solutions

- ➔ Survey dads and moms in your agency to understand their unique and collective challenges around caregiving and then create a task force to engage all employees in a conversation
- ➔ Celebrate news of parents who have thrived in the agency. Share their triumphs, challenges and solutions. Including who was there to help and support them to success along the way
- ➔ Have coffee with a mom/dad you haven't spent time with to understand his/her experiences

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Brain Drain  
Is Looming

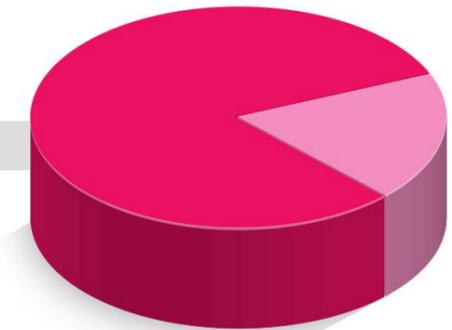


## Greener pastures

The toll on human capital is quite daunting...eight in ten moms in advertising and two in three dads have considered leaving. Their top reasons for considering leaving advertising is to achieve better work/life balance and more flexibility.

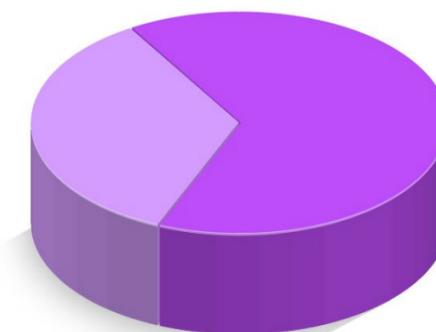
Moms who've considered leaving advertising

80%



Dads who've considered leaving advertising

64%



## Moms think...



“I did leave agency life to start my own company / freelance in order to have flexibility.”

“I don’t want to be 40 and have missed so much with my family and then be kicked out of advertising because I am too old.”

“I left and went client side. It has been a godsend.”

## Dads think...



“We have to compete with Google, Apple and Facebook for talent. They’re so aggressive on benefits and they don’t work nearly as hard as we do.”

### Getting it right:

“Our agency supports a healthy work/life balance, pays well, is very flexible, and has good leave policies. No reason to look anywhere else.”



## Solutions

→ If you already track turnover reasons, use the data. Conduct an audit of the women who have departed the agency over the last five years to become mothers and find out what percentage of your total turnover of women they represent

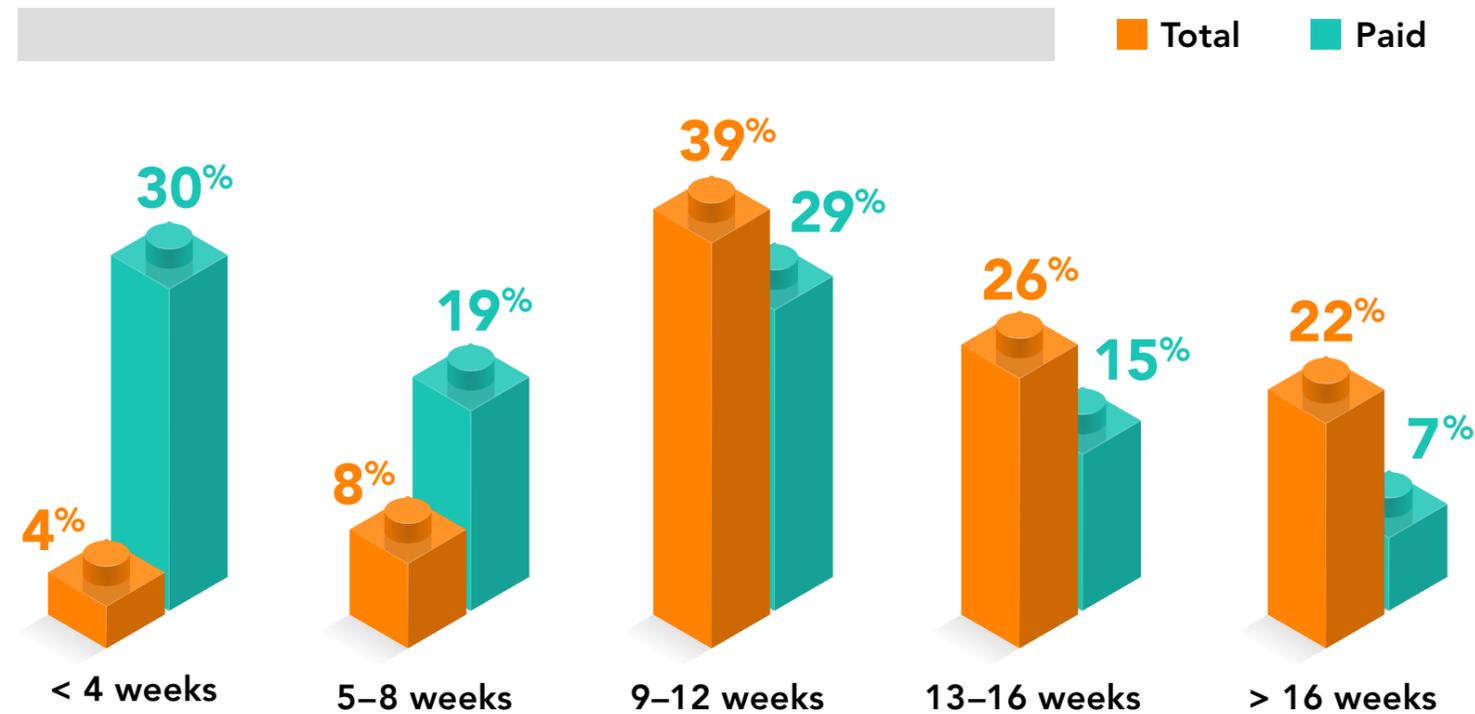
→ Before jumping ship, try working with your boss and leadership to discuss the challenges parents are facing at your agency. And, don’t forget to ask for what you want and need. Many respondents told us they didn’t bother talking to their manager about their challenges because they believed they wouldn’t get the support they needed

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## New Parents Struggle



## Total vs. paid leave moms took with youngest child



### Maternity Leave

Half of moms took off more than 13 weeks total leave with their youngest child, but less than one in four had that much paid leave from their agency - they supplemented their paid leave with vacation and sick days to bridge the gap when possible. It should come as no surprise that two in three moms were

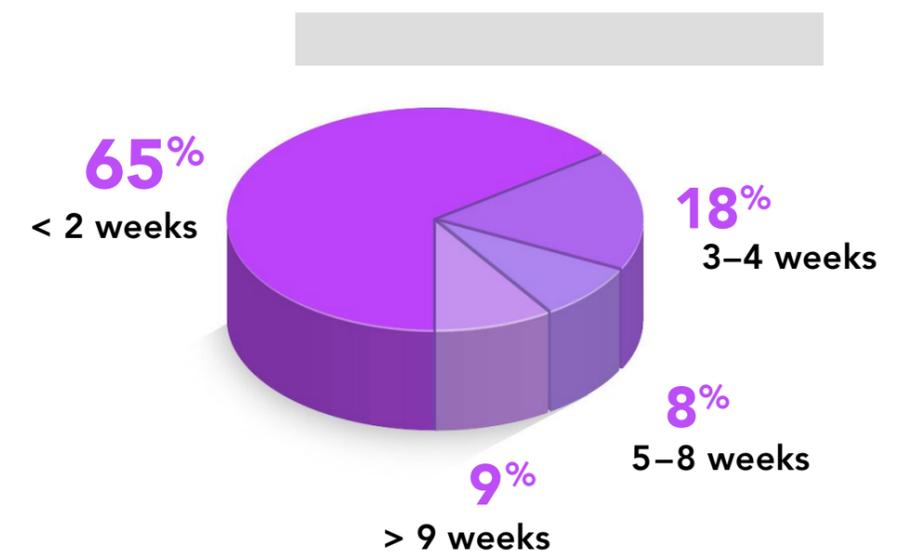
not satisfied with the quality of leave from their agency (time off, transition back, etc).

### Paternity Leave

The majority of dads took off less than two weeks with their youngest child. Fewer than one in ten took off nine weeks or more.

Becoming a mom or dad is the most life changing and exciting time of our lives. It is also a time of huge transitions, during which sleep is at a premium, but many agencies don't offer competitive leave policy.

## Total time dads took leave with youngest child



## Moms think...



"The leave is old fashioned, too short, and did not make me feel like an appreciated/valued employee."

"I adopted. I got no maternity leave."

"There should be a transition class when coming back to work."

### Getting it right:

"Very supportive during my pregnancy and while on leave. The transition back has been smooth and I have felt valued."

## Dads think...



"My wife had a C-section and I had to leave her with the baby alone after a week."

"It was only two weeks of paternity leave. It's a new life, a new human, and this is way too short."

### Getting it right:

"My agency provided adoption assistance and paid paternity leave. The CEO of the agency also threw a reception for me and my husband at our agency's bar when we finally got married after it became legal on a federal level."

## Solutions



→ Substitute "Family leave" for "Maternity leave" and make the pay and time off equal for both moms and dads. Offer paid leave for employees who need to care for aging parents or other family members

→ Draft a job plan for expectant parents outlining time off and including a transition plan for new parents when they come back to the office; make sure there is a well-appointed and welcoming mother's room for breastfeeding moms

→ Partner with your manager on that job plan. Be clear on what is working and not working for you. If you are ready to be all-in, or if you need more transition time, let your manager and/or HR know and work together to find a mutually beneficial solution

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Parents Want  
Time Mastery



### It's not about work-life balance... it's about time mastery

The willingness to work equally hard, but on their own schedule and at a location that works best for them. In order to achieve better balance, two in three moms have done at least one of these:

- Changed companies
- Downshifted hours/moved to part time role
- Changed roles within their agency
- Passed up a promotion

Half of dads have also done one of these to achieve better balance.

### Work From Home

Moms and dads are equally likely to work from home (three in ten).

### Flexible Hours

We were surprised to learn that dads were more likely to have flexible hours. However, some of this activity is 'under the radar'—only 17% of moms know a man with a flexible arrangement compared to 34% of dads. Dads are less likely to know of anyone with a flexible arrangement (54% of dads vs. 67% of moms).

### Job Sharing

While relatively rare in advertising (less than 2% of our respondents are involved in a job share), over one third of dads and half of moms are interested in job sharing.

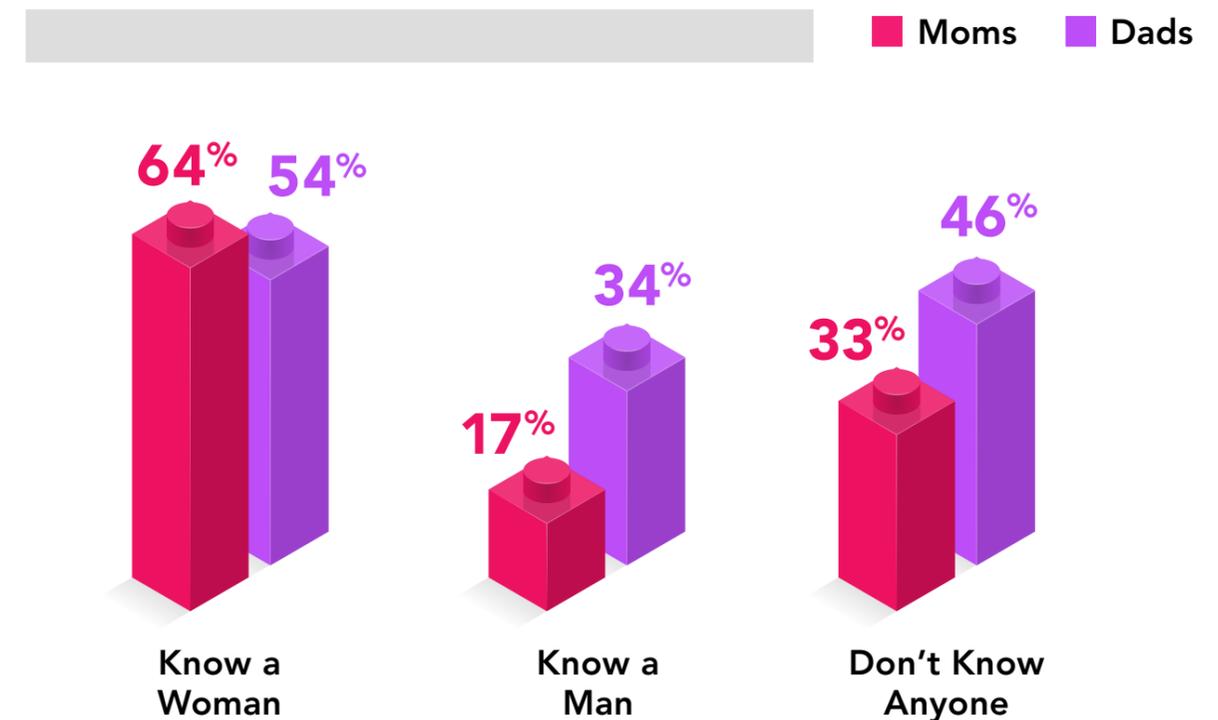
### % who can work from home



### % with flexible work hours



### % who know someone with a flexible work arrangement



## Moms think...



"I understand the situation you are in, but this is a business we are trying to run.' was the response when asking to work from home two days a week because my six-month-old needed physical therapy."

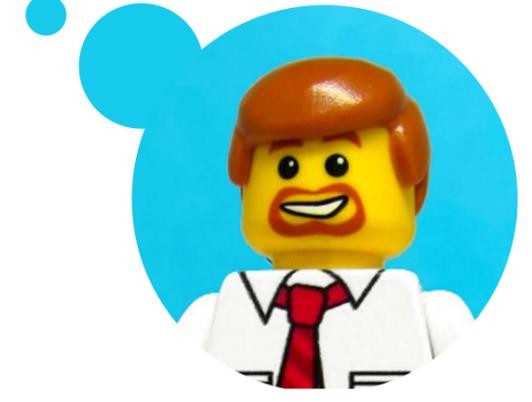
### Getting it right:

"I have 4 pm days at my office so that I can pick up my children and two days WFH monthly. These little things make a huge difference to managing my household."

### Getting it right:

"I went from a 5-day work week to a 4-day work week."

## Dads think...



"It's a mixed bag. Policy may be ostensibly supportive but culture isn't."

"I have asked multiple times to work from home once in a while, only to be shot down."

"It's looked down upon if you're out. People that don't know the details (of my life), assume I'm just late, or playing hooky."

### Getting it right:

"Coworkers cover for each other."

## Solutions



→ #ClockOutConcept – a hashtag for brilliance that happens off the clock and outside of the office. This combats the dangerous habit agencies have for valuing availability over creativity

→ Enable telework and make it a company policy that flexible work schedules should not affect anyone's opportunity for advancement

→ Explore the idea of job sharing to retain valuable employees, especially in transitions where fulltime work is not an option. Clients may value 50% of a high-skill employee over a fulltime low-skilled one

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# Bosses Got Your Back

(CEOs Not So Much)



# Support is a mixed bag

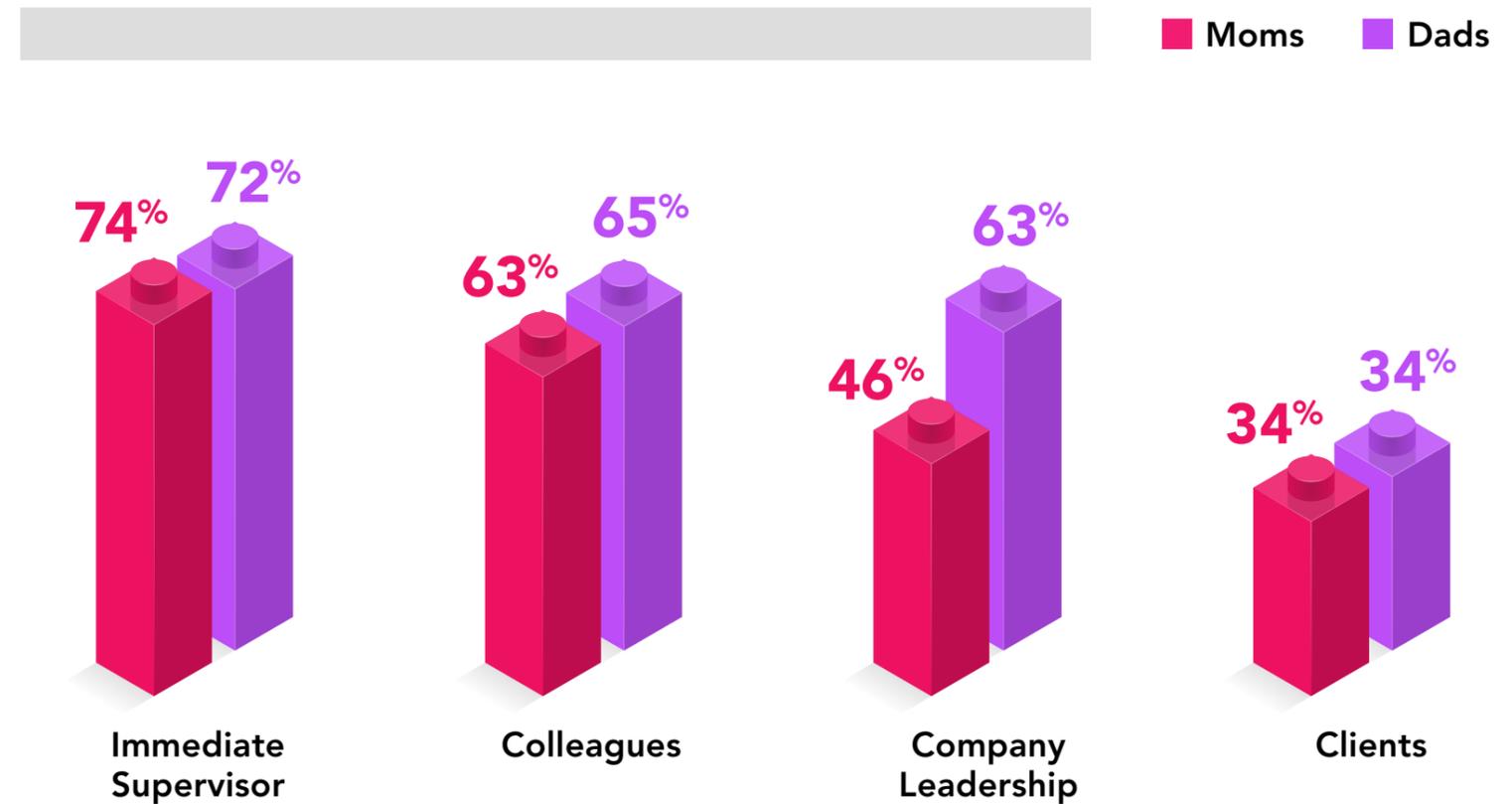
Three in four parents (both moms and dads) feel supported in their dual role as parent and co-worker by their immediate supervisor, and two in three feel supported by their colleagues.

While dads know that CEOs have their back, moms aren't feeling the love. Two in three dads feel supported by company leadership, yet fewer than half of moms feel that level of support. Perhaps this is why those moms have ingrained biases about dads having it easier?

Parents at larger agencies (250+ employees) also don't feel the love as much from their leadership. Only four in ten agree that they feel supported by company leadership vs. two in three of parents in agencies with fewer than 250 employees.

While clients can be more demanding, they seem to be equally harsh on both moms and dads.

## Level of support for parents (% who agree they are supported from the following)



## Moms think...



“My boss is great, but if I need time off it is done quietly out of sight of senior management.”

“Our agency needs a consistent work from home policy. I work with people who get that privilege but my manager will not allow that.”

**Getting it right:**

“My supervisor is 100% human and completely understands the complexity of work/life balance.”

## Dads think...



“Senior management does not agree with telecommuting.”

“Despite transparency around flex hours, I’ve been shamed for utilizing it.”

**Getting it right:**

“I have found many agency leaders who are just as fed up with the cliché of the drunken, divorced ad man as I am.”



## Solutions

- Conduct caregiver and motherhood bias training for senior leaders. Help them recognize their own shadow spots around face-time and train them to recognize everyone benefits when employees are given time mastery
- Manage client expectations to reduce number of fire drills and help clients understand that by supporting your employees around work/life fit, the clients will get better results
- Set up a fireside chat with senior leaders and parents to hear their perspectives

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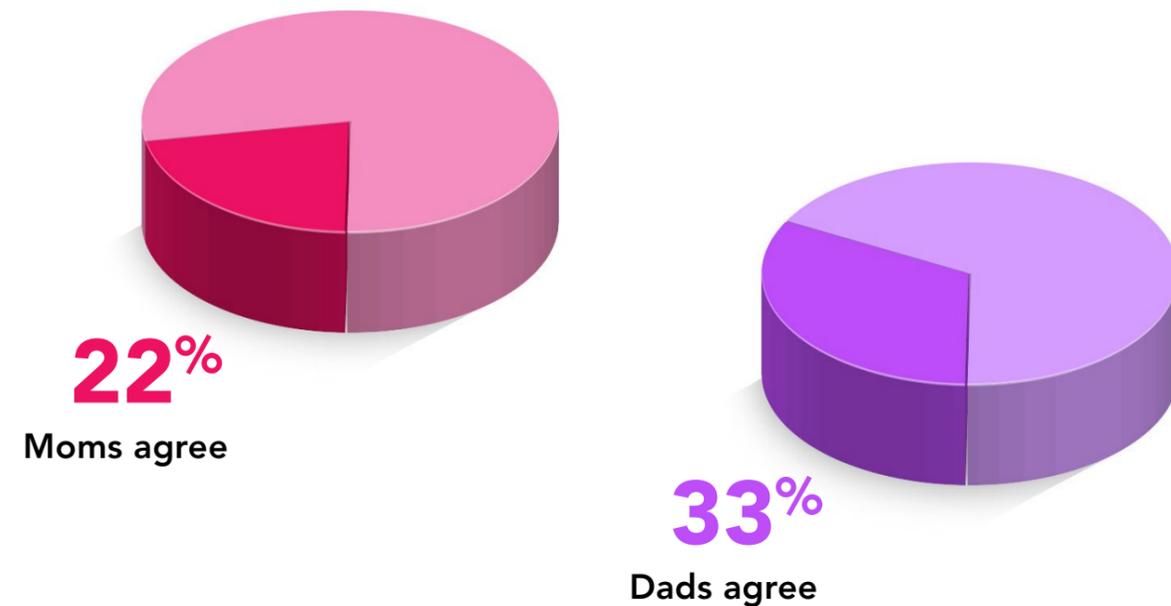
## New Business Pitch Fails



## Pitching ain't easy

Demanding clients and new business pitches are a key part of our business. Three in four moms and dads recognize that participating in new business pitches helps advance their careers (and the majority are involved with pitches). But it takes a toll on parents... eight in ten moms and dads agree that new business pitches require too much time in the office during nights and weekends, and only one in five moms and one in four dads believe that their agency does a good job of managing employees' time/involvement with new business pitches.

"Our agency does a good job of managing employees' time/involvement with new business pitches."



## Moms think...



"No respect for people's time, swirling around in inefficiency and valuing how LATE you're at the office, rather than the quality of the work being done."

"Plan them better, sheesh! They are just like mini, accelerated projects. Don't try to reinvent your agency for the pitch. Spend less time on the deck and more time on what you'll say. Trust your leads. Don't include ten people."

### Getting it right:

"My agency does TONS of new business pitches, we basically have it down by now. My team ends up working late often, but at home vs. having to stay in office."

## Dads think...



"We need to create a pens down time where we stop evolving the ideas and focus on the presentation and becoming well rested and mentally prepared for the presentation."

"Each new business pitch is a fire drill, as if it's the first time we have ever pitched anything."

### Getting it right:

"Don't pitch everything; invest properly in what is needed; spread around the responsibility to work on pitches."



## Solutions

→ Move from "Ready Fire Aim" to a more intentional approach before each pitch in order to ensure you are making the best use of each team members' time and abilities

→ Utilize tech solutions like Slack to keep the entire new business team engaged and up to speed without having to physically be in the office all hours of the day and night

→ Set up official 'debriefs' after each new business pitch to discuss how to improve process and make adjustments accordingly

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# Creatives Have it Worse



# Don't ask, don't get

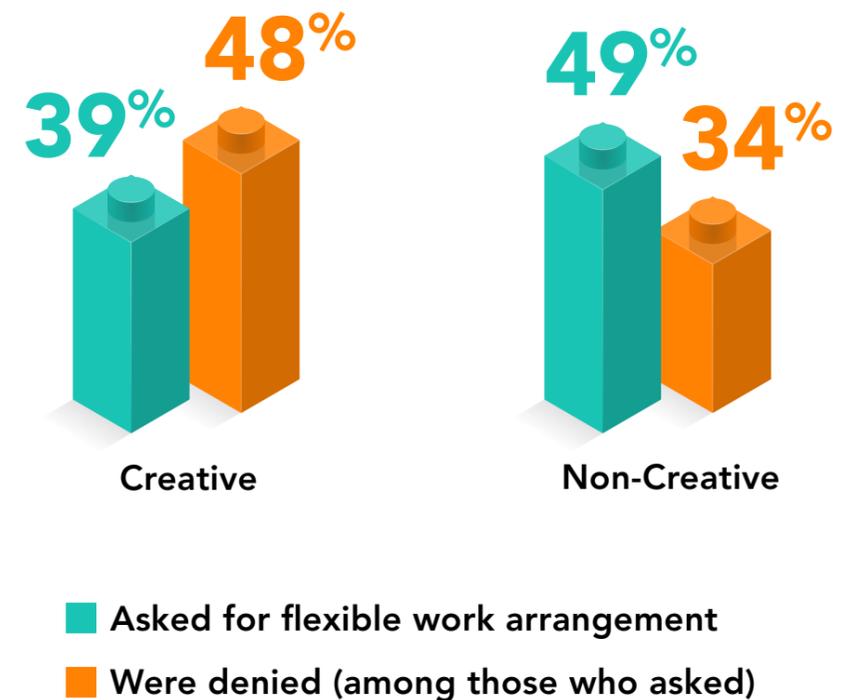
When it comes to time mastery, life gets a little more challenging for creatives in Adland.

Moms in creative roles are less likely to know people with flexible work arrangements...39% of moms in creative roles don't know anyone who has a flexible working arrangement (vs. 28% of moms in non-creative roles).

Moms in creative roles are less likely to ask for flexible work arrangements. 39% of moms in creative roles have asked for flexible work arrangements (vs. 49% women in non-creative roles).

Their requests are more likely to be denied. Among moms in creative roles who asked for flexible arrangements, 48% were denied (vs. 34% women in non-creative roles). Perhaps this is why they are less likely to ask in the first place!

## Moms in Creative roles are less likely to have flexible work arrangements



## Moms think...



"My single male ECD boss is a robot."

"Creatives are required to work at the office. All other departments are allowed to work from home."

## Dads think...

"I want to get in early and leave before 7, but the creative department is structured to start at 10."

"My career has suffered so that I could stay a strong presence in my children's lives."



## Solutions

→ Assess policies and practices for creative team vs. the rest of the agency. Track how creatives are using parental leave, flex-time, and other policies. Track moms vs. non-moms in the creative department. Are female creative leaders mothers? Are male creative leaders dads? If there is a difference, find out why

→ Consider whether the creative team is struggling with face-time bias. Could more time mastery make them even more productive? Leverage collaboration tools that will enable more flexibility within the creative team

## A final word

For years, agencies have accepted the brain drain of women leaving the industry once they became mothers and denied the need for better work-life fit across all employees. If this does not change, women AND men will abandon their advertising careers to find safer harbor in industries and companies that will allow them to meet both their personal and professional goals.

The focus of this study was on the specific needs and issues facing parents. Most of us will become caregivers at some point in our lifetime (aging parents, new puppy, health challenges of a friend or sibling). We recognize that all caregivers face similar challenges, and that agencies need to innovate to address this broader set of needs.

As an industry that prides itself on exceptional creativity, it is time to recognize that culture matters too.





## Diversity = Creativity = Profitability

At the 3% Movement, we believe who does the creative matters. We believe great creative comes from truly inclusive cultures. And, we believe innovative agencies know this.

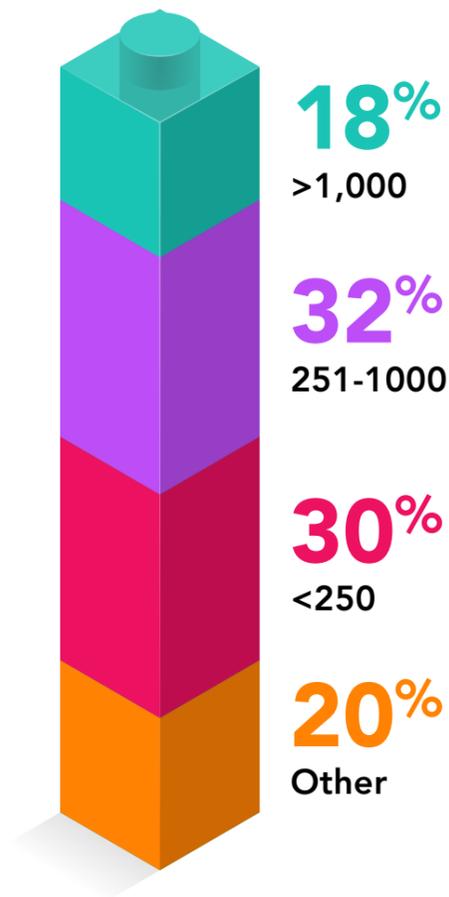
But understanding is not enough. It is time for agencies to move beyond awareness to activation. Through our 3% Consulting services and 3% Certification program, we partner with agencies to build stronger, more robust cultures that ensure all voices contribute to deliver the best work possible.

For further information about our solutions, contact Lisen Stromberg, COO of The 3% Movement [lisenstromberg@3percentconf.com](mailto:lisenstromberg@3percentconf.com)

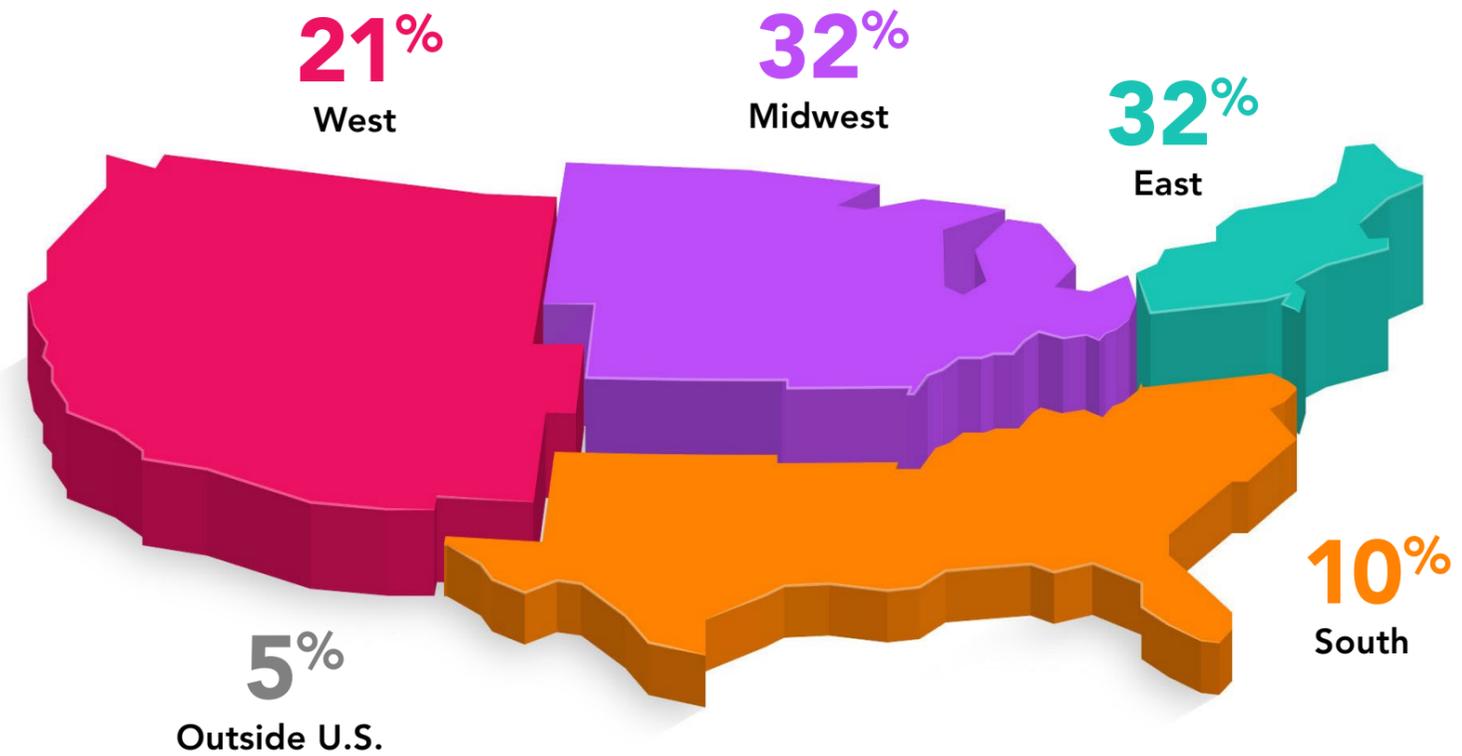
# About the Parenting in Adland Report

Parenting in Adland is a study conducted by the 3% Movement in collaboration with VMLY&R. In 2018, the 3% Movement surveyed 528 parents in advertising (144 dads and 384 moms).

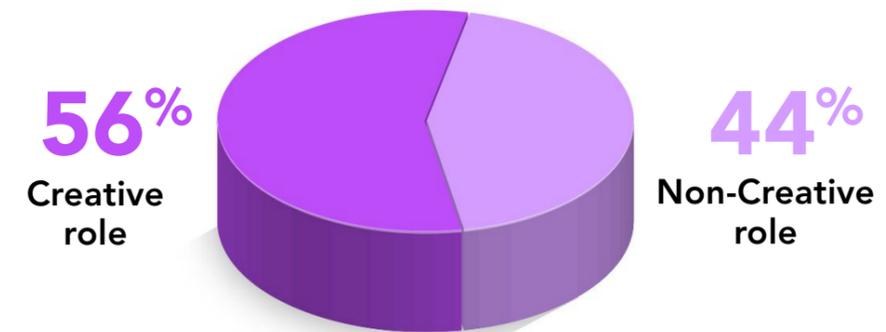
## Agency size (in employees)



## Regional composition



## Job function





#parentinginadland

[www.parentinginadland.com](http://www.parentinginadland.com)