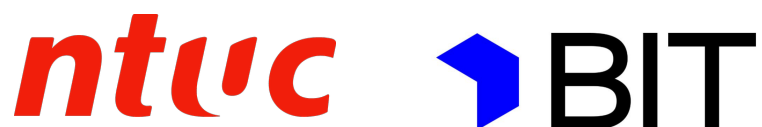


RESEARCH STUDY ON **PARENTHOOD STATUS AND FAIR HIRING IN SINGAPORE**



Research Partnership between
National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) and **Behavioural Insights Team (BIT)**



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CONTENT

2	Executive Summary
4	Chapter 1 Background
7	Chapter 2 Methodology
13	Chapter 3 Key Insights
25	Chapter 4 Recommendations
28	Chapter 5 Conclusion
29	Research Project Team
30	Annex – Full Survey

Executive Summary

Background

Women in Singapore are concerned about career disadvantages when they become parents. Internationally, extensive academic research has examined the “motherhood penalty”, where differences in earnings and employment outcomes are observed between mothers and child-free women. Conversely, fathers experience a “fatherhood premium”, or more favourable work outcomes than men without children. This study therefore aimed to examine such differences in the Singapore workplace, and how they may shape (i) employment decisions such as hiring, and (ii) the granting of flexible work arrangement (FWA) requests. This will enable the government and unions to develop policies and interventions to promote fair and progressive workplace practices.

Methodology

In contrast with the predominantly quantitative-only approaches in prior international studies, we designed and conducted a two-phase, mixed-methods study. The first qualitative phase involved interviews with eight Human Resources (HR) personnel and hiring managers. Insights from this phase were used to inform the research design of the second phase: a quantitative online study using experimental methods to examine the causal impact of parenthood and gender signals on hiring and FWA decisions. This study involved 2,273 working professionals in Singapore. It was structured in three sequential parts: 1) a discrete choice experiment (DCE) to assess hiring preferences, 2) a randomised controlled trial (RCT) to examine FWA-granting decisions, and 3) a set of attitudinal questions to capture explicit perceptions of parenthood at work. Academic evidence supports the use of these experimental methods for reflecting real-world behaviour.



Key Insights

1. Hiring decision-makers demonstrated less favourable hiring outcomes for parents while general employees did not.
2. Participants from larger companies demonstrated more hiring bias than participants from SMEs, but held less sceptical views about parenthood than participants from SMEs.
3. Experience and organisation scale may entrench rather than reduce implicit hiring biases.
4. Mothers were seen as less available for work while fathers were seen as more career-oriented, which could affect employment decisions beyond hiring.
5. FWA requests were approved regardless of employee gender or whether the request was parenthood-related. Caregiving was perceived as the most legitimate reason.

Overall Recommendations

1. Promote broader acceptability of FWAs through stronger implementation support and transparency
2. Foster inclusive workplace cultures and caregiving support for all genders and life stages to mitigate bias



Chapter 1: Background

In Singapore, eight in 10 working-age women are in the labour force.¹ This high participation rate among those aged 25 to 64 still falls short of the nine in 10 men who are in the labour force. There is evidence of a gender pay gap in Singapore, even after accounting for human capital and labour market factors.² Working women also express concern about disproportionate career consequences when they become parents,^{3,4} including pay cuts and unjust dismissal. There are fears that becoming a parent may signal lower career ambition or reduced commitment to work.

Tripartite partners have taken measures to promote workplace equity. The Workplace Fairness Bill was passed in 2025. The Workplace Fairness Act (WFA) provides a formal avenue for redress for adverse employment decisions such as recruitment, appraisal, promotion, training, and dismissal based on protected characteristics, including sex and caregiving responsibilities. This is helpful in protecting workers at the individual level, for demonstrated instances of purposeful discrimination (e.g. worker who is unlawfully terminated).

However, the WFA is intended to address identifiable, individual acts of discrimination. It is less equipped to address bias that is embedded more broadly in workplace decision-making (e.g. unaccountable discrepancy in proportion of women and men who are promoted). We currently have little understanding of how such biases operate and how they should be addressed.

In April 2026, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) announced a new inter-agency Marriage & Parenthood Reset Workgroup to develop a whole-of-society approach to better support Singaporeans in their marriage and parenthood journeys, in response to Singapore's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) falling to a new low of 0.87 in 2025, compared to 0.97 the year before. The Workgroup will produce a full report with its findings in early 2027, though it may make recommendations earlier. In August 2026, Minister Indranee Rajah said that a set of interim policy recommendations was advanced to enable action on areas where there was clear consensus, so that Singapore does not lose time in addressing the falling TFR. This study therefore in part aims to contribute to the evidence base and add to the Workgroup's efforts by providing fresh, evidence-based insights.

¹ Manpower Research and Statistics Department, Ministry of Manpower. (2025, November). Labour force in Singapore: Advance release 2025. Ministry of Manpower.

https://stats.mom.gov.sg/iMAS_PdfLibrary/mrds_2025Labourforce.pdf

² Ministry of Manpower. (2023). Update on Singapore's adjusted gender pay gap. Manpower Research & Statistics Department. <https://stats.mom.gov.sg/Pages/Update-on-Singapores-Adjusted-Gender-Pay-Gap.aspx>

³ Nithiananthan, S., & Rafey, A. (2025, May 20). Pregnant women in the workplace deserve better. *The Straits Times*. <https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/pregnant-women-in-the-workplace-deserve-better>

⁴ Shafeeq, S., & Wee, M. (2026, March 14). Kids, in this economy? Singaporeans on the barriers to having more children, if at all. *The Straits Times*. <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/kids-in-this-economy-singaporeans-on-the-barriers-to-having-more-children-if-at-all>

Impact of parenthood status on employment decision-making

Many international studies report that mothers experience less favourable outcomes on a range of workplace outcomes compared to child-free women.^{5,6} This “**motherhood penalty**” may result in mothers earning less than women without children and being less likely to be hired. The reasons most commonly identified in the current literature are that employers may perceive mothers to be less committed to their work, or are concerned that their competence will be compromised by the demands of caregiving.^{7,8}

Conversely, fathers tend to experience a “**fatherhood premium**”. Fathers may be viewed more favourably at work than child-free men, earning higher wages, and facing less risk of being let go.^{9,10} Employers tend to perceive fathers as more committed and reliable than child-free men as they expect fathers to provide financially for their families as the “breadwinner”. Hence, a father is seen as an ideal worker who is committed primarily to work without any competing priorities.¹¹

Understanding how parenthood may be associated with different workplace outcomes is essential to supporting both parents and non-parents through different life and career stages. This will also enable policymakers and unions to design targeted interventions to mitigate any penalties and foster more progressive workplaces. In addition, alleviating the career concerns of working parents will also support broader efforts to address Singapore's low fertility rate.

To fully understand the penalties and barriers that parents face at work, it is also necessary to explore decisions around flexible work arrangements (FWAs). FWAs are a critical enabler for working parents to balance employment and caregiving responsibilities. This is reflected in the growing policy attention to FWA provision in Singapore, such as through the release of the Tripartite Guidelines on Flexible Work Arrangement Requests (TG-FWAR) in 2024.¹² Despite this, there are ongoing concerns

⁵ Cukrowska-Torzewska, E., & Matysiak, A. (2020). The motherhood wage penalty: A meta-analysis. *Social Science Research*, 88–89, 102416. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2020.102416>

⁶ Kleven, H., Landais, C., & Leite-Mariante, G. (2025). The child penalty atlas. *The Review of Economic Studies*, 92(5), 3174–3207. <https://doi.org/10.1093/restud/rdae104>

⁷ Aranda, B., & Glick, P. (2014). Signaling devotion to work over family undermines the motherhood penalty. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 17(1), 91–99. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430213485996>

⁸ Halrynjo, S., & Mangset, M. (2025). Motherhood penalty—beyond bias? From stereotypes to substitutability structures. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 32(4), 729–755. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxae027>

⁹ Glauber, R. (2018). Trends in the motherhood wage penalty and fatherhood wage premium for low, middle, and high earners. *Demography*, 55(5), 1663–1680. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-018-0712-5>

¹⁰ Mari, G. (2019). Is there a fatherhood wage premium? A reassessment in societies with strong male-breadwinner legacies. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 81(5), 1033–1052. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12600>

¹¹ Hodges, M. J., & Budig, M. J. (2010). Who gets the daddy bonus? Organizational hegemonic masculinity and the impact of fatherhood on earnings. *Gender & Society*, 24(6), 717–745. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243210386729>

¹² Ministry of Manpower. (2026, February 24). *Tripartite Guidelines on Flexible Work Arrangement Requests (TG-FWAR)*. <https://www.mom.gov.sg/employment-practices/good-work-practices/flexible-work-arrangements>

about the stigma of requesting FWAs.^{13,14} To support the government and unions in reviewing the effectiveness of the TG-FWAR, we must understand how decisions about granting FWAs are made, and how parenthood status may influence these decisions.

Research aims

This study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent does the parenthood penalty exist in Singapore's labour force?
2. To what extent does the experience of parenthood penalty differ between fathers and mothers?
3. How does the parenthood penalty affect hiring and FWA decisions?



¹³ Tham, D. (2026, April 22). *IN FOCUS: Why the stigma over flexible work persists in Singapore*. CNA. <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/flexible-work-arrangements-wfh-home-office-hybrid-remote-in-focus-6067366>

¹⁴ Seah, V. (2026, April 27). *Commentary: Working from home isn't the flexibility that Singapore families need from employers*. CNA. <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/commentary/flexi-work-arrangement-work-home-parents-caregivers-support-6075556>

Chapter 2: Methodology

Following a literature scan of academic and grey literature as well as consultations with Human Resources (HR) industry professionals, we designed and conducted a two-phase, mixed-methods study. The first qualitative phase involved interviews with HR personnel and hiring managers. Insights from this phase informed the research design of the second phase: a quantitative online study using experimental methods to examine the causal impact of parenthood and gender signals on hiring and FWA decisions.

This methodology marks a departure from the predominantly quantitative-only approaches undertaken in past studies of the parenthood penalty.^{15,16} The mixed-methods approach of this study enabled the quantitative findings to be complemented by qualitative insights that provide additional context and depth.

Phase 1: Qualitative Interviews

The first phase of the study examined the localised context surrounding employment and FWA decisions. Eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with HR personnel and hiring managers, with each interview lasting approximately 60 minutes. These interviews explored how recruitment, FWAs, and other employment-related decisions are made in practice. Other topics covered included general workplace conditions, organisational culture, and hiring decision-makers' own perceptions of their roles. Finally, interviewees viewed draft candidate summaries and provided feedback on the summaries' comprehensiveness, realism, and relevance to their workplace context. Each candidate summary included a brief CV summary (e.g. education, work history) and interview notes (e.g. candidate's response to a case study, interviewer's overall impression).



¹⁵ Van Winkle, Z., & Fasang, A. E. (2020). Parenthood wage gaps across the life course: A comparison by gender and race. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 82(5), 1515–1533. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12713>

¹⁶ Cooke, L. P. (2014). Gendered parenthood penalties and premiums across the earnings distribution in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. *European Sociological Review*, 30(3), 360–372. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcu044>

Phase 2: Quantitative Online Study

The second phase of the study looked at the extent to which parenthood and gender information of a candidate subconsciously affect intention to hire and other HR or FWA decisions. To isolate the causal effect of parenthood and gender signals on hiring preferences and FWA decisions, these signals were systematically varied using a survey experiment. Other candidate attributes were also randomly varied.

This design isolates the effect of parenthood and gender signals from the many other factors that confound them in real hiring records, such as career history and employment gaps. The experimental nature of this design means the effect we isolate is causal, something real hiring records cannot establish. Although the decisions are simulated, evidence suggests that well-conducted choice experiments are indicative of real-world behaviour.^{17,18}

Sample

The study was conducted as an online experimental survey with a balanced sample of $n = 2,273$ working professionals in Singapore. Participants were stratified across two key subgroups: role in hiring decision-making (HR professionals and hiring managers versus general employees) and enterprise type (SMEs versus non-SMEs). This enabled the subsequent analyses to be broken down by these subgroups.

Study design

The online experimental survey was structured in three sequential parts: 1) a discrete choice experiment (DCE) to assess hiring preferences, 2) a randomised controlled trial (RCT) to examine FWA-granting decisions, and 3) a set of attitudinal questions to capture explicit perceptions of parenthood at work. Together, these components were designed to triangulate evidence on parenthood penalties – capturing both revealed preferences in simulated hiring and FWA decisions, and the stated attitudes that may underpin them.

1. Discrete choice experiment (DCE).

The DCE was designed to assess participants' hiring preferences in a simulated hiring scenario. Participants acted as a hiring decision-maker for a project manager position and had to select between two fictitious candidates. The two candidate profiles were presented side by side. Each profile contained a CV summary and interview notes. An example pair is shown in the figure below.

After viewing the profiles, participants were asked: *"Which of these candidates would you hire for the project manager position?"*. This decision task was repeated six times. Participants were shown candidate profiles with varying attributes in every round.

¹⁷ Hainmueller, J., Hangartner, D., & Yamamoto, T. (2015). Validating vignette and conjoint survey experiments against real-world behavior. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 112(8), 2395–2400.

¹⁸ Auerbach, A. M., & Thachil, T. (2018). How clients select brokers: Competition and choice in India's slums. *American Political Science Review*, 112(4), 775–791.

[Candidate]: Seth	[Candidate]: Lucy
[Education]: Bachelor of Management, Pacific University [Other Credentials]: Certified Associate in Project Management [Previous Roles]: Account Executive – Sunny Digital Media. <i>Managed advertising accounts, coordinated campaign deliverables, and managed client relationships."</i> Notes from interview: [Overall impression]: The candidate presented as confident and composed throughout the discussion, even when asked unexpected questions. Some of their responses were somewhat generic and required further probing to uncover concrete details. [Motivation for joining the company]: "The candidate expressed strong alignment with the company's mission in driving sustainable and future-ready solutions, and shared that this role offers the chance to contribute meaningfully to those efforts. Basic case study: [Scenario 1]: <i>You are managing a project and two key team members have a conflict that is affecting collaboration. How would you handle this?</i> [Response]: The candidate proposed speaking to each team member informally but did not articulate how to mediate the conflict or ensure alignment moving forward. There was no clear articulation of how to maintain team dynamics or proactively resolve the issue. (...) [Questions regarding the role]: Candidate asked about likelihood of working nights and weekends (due to children).	[Education]: Bachelor of Logistics, Lion City University [Other Credentials]: Salesforce Certified Associate [Previous Role]: Sales Administrator – OrchardGate Link Pte Ltd. <i>Prepared decks and progress reports, provided operational support to the Sales and other internal teams."</i> Notes from interview: [Overall impression]: The candidate was highly personable, demonstrating emotional intelligence throughout the interview. They relied heavily on qualitative anecdotes rather than specific metrics to validate their successes. [Motivation for joining the company]: - The candidate highlighted the appeal of the company's regional presence and diverse project portfolio, noting that the exposure would allow them to broaden their skills and cross-regional experience. Basic case study: [Scenario 1]: <i>You are managing a project and two key team members have a conflict that is affecting collaboration. How would you handle this?</i> [Response]: The candidate outlined a structured approach: first meeting with each member individually to listen without judgment, then hosting a mediated discussion focused on shared project goals rather than personal grievances. (...) [Questions regarding the role]: Candidate asked when office hours typically ended.

The highlighted text indicates the attributes that were varied every round. The attributes of interest were **gender** (implied through the candidate's name) and **parenthood status** (signalled through the candidate's "motivation for joining the company" or their "questions regarding the role"). This produced four distinct candidate profile types: female parent, female non-parent, male parent, and male non-parent.

Accessory attributes such as qualifications, prior experience, and responses to interview questions were included to reduce demand characteristics, making it more difficult for participants to guess the study's aim.

Each of these accessory attributes had 12 variations. To ensure that the differences would not strongly influence hiring decisions, the variations were calibrated to be equivalent in overall merit (e.g. similar qualification levels).

The accessory attributes were randomised, to ensure that these candidate characteristics would not confound the effects of gender and parenthood status. The randomisation generated a pool of 144 unique candidate pairs. For each decision task performed by every participant, one pair was randomly selected from this pool, further reducing the unintended influence of other candidate attributes like qualification or experience.

2. Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT).

The RCT was designed to examine FWA decisions in the context of existing employees. Each participant was randomly assigned to one of four scenarios. Each scenario had two factors that varied between participants: the requesting employee's gender (implied via name, male or female) and the reason for the FWA request (parenting-related or general).

Imagine that you are the manager of a team. One of your employees, *[Female Name / Male Name]*, has made the following request for Flexible Work Arrangements:

"I'd like to be able to leave the office early every Tuesday and Thursday to be able to [pick up my kids from school / volunteer at my kid's parent-teacher association / provide care for my elderly parents / volunteer with grassroots activities]. I will start early on those days to ensure my total working hours remain the same."

After reading the scenario, participants were asked whether they would grant the FWA request. This isolated test allowed us to measure whether the likelihood of approving a FWA request differed by employee gender, by the reason given for the request, or by the combination of the two.

3. Attitudinal questions.

Participants were asked five attitudinal questions to elicit participants' perceptions of working parents and FWAs.

For one of these questions (see below), participants were randomly assigned to one of two groups: one group answered questions regarding the impact of fatherhood on work-related outcomes, while the other answered the same questions regarding motherhood. Splitting the questionnaire so each participant would only see either "fatherhood" or "motherhood" questions minimised the risk of them recognising the study's purpose and adjusting their answers accordingly.

For the remaining questions, all participants saw the same version.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding parenthood and the workplace? (Scale: 1 - 5 from strongly disagree to strongly agree).

- Working [mothers/fathers] tend to be more efficient with their time during working hours than non-parents.
- The responsibilities of [motherhood/fatherhood] can negatively affect an employee's quality of work.
- [Mothers/Fathers] are generally less available for last-minute or overtime requests compared to non-parents.
- Being a [mother/father] increases an employee's career motivation and drive.
- Working [mothers/fathers] are more likely to prioritise job stability over career advancement than non-parents.

Analytical strategy

1. Discrete choice experiment (DCE).

Choice data were analysed using conditional logistic regression, which models each participant's choice between paired candidates as a function of the candidates' attributes. The main analysis estimated the effect of candidate gender and parental signal on the likelihood of being hired. Other attributes were included as covariates. Robust standard errors clustered at the participant level to account for the fact that each participant made six choices.

Results were reported as predicted probabilities anchored to a 50% baseline, using the male non-parent profile as the reference group – so any penalty or premium can be read directly as a deviation from a 50/50 chance of being hired. The same model was also estimated separately for HR professionals and hiring managers versus general employees, and for SMEs versus non-SMEs, to see whether and where parenthood penalties concentrate.

2. Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT).

FWA-granting decisions were analysed using logistic regression with an interaction term between employee gender and the reason for the request. This allowed us to test whether the effect of the reason given on approval differed depending on whether the requesting employee was male or female. The same subgroup models (HR professionals and hiring managers versus general employees, and SMEs versus non-SMEs) were estimated alongside the main analysis.

3. Exploratory attitudinal analysis.

Attitudes toward FWAs and parenthood were summarised descriptively as the percentage of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing with each statement, also broken down by hiring decision-maker status and company size. This descriptive approach reflects the exploratory role of the attitudinal data, which were used to help interpret the experimental findings rather than to test formal hypotheses.



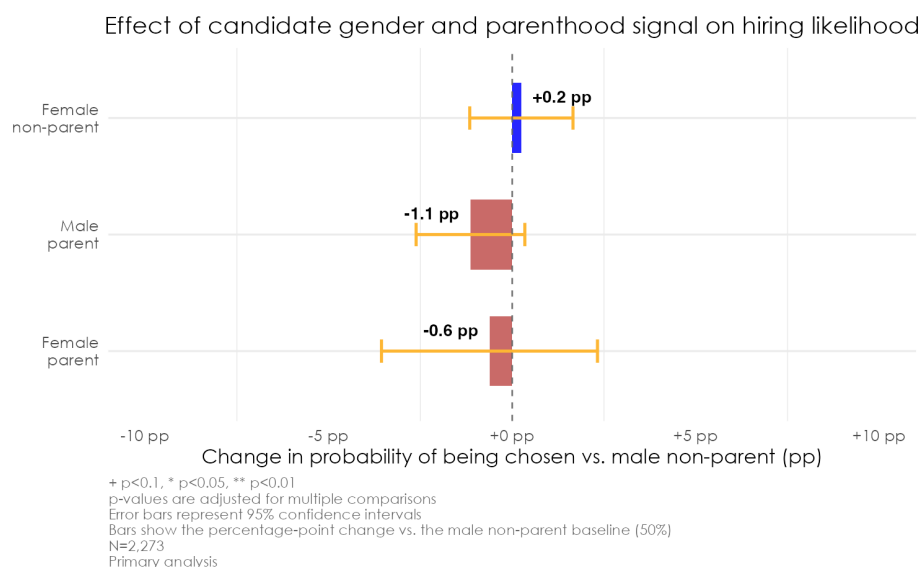
Chapter 3: Key Insights

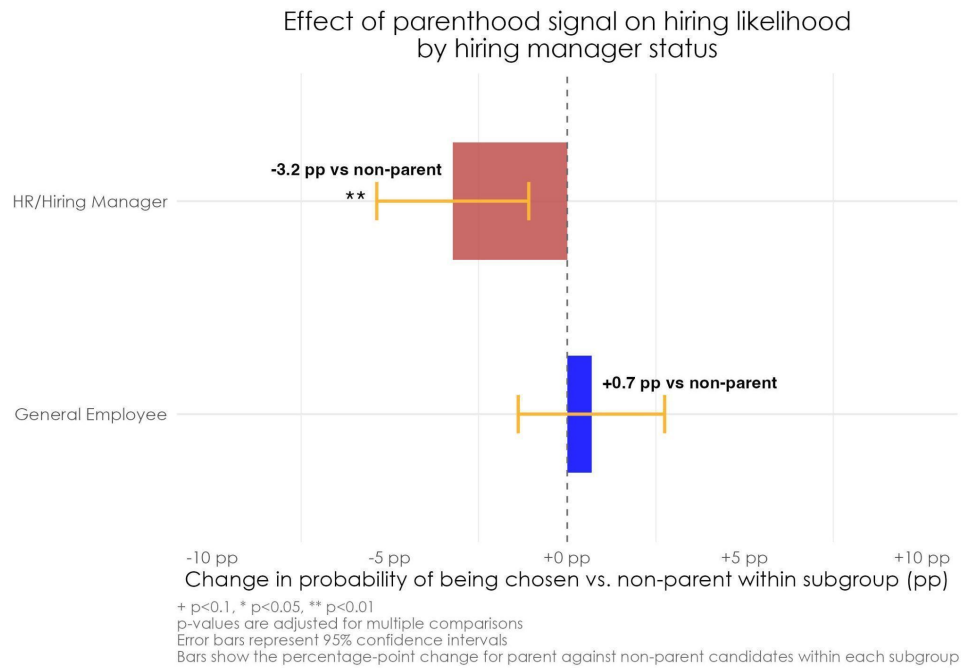
We derived five key insights from this study:

1	Hiring decision-makers penalised parents in hiring, while general employees did not.
2	Participants from larger companies demonstrated more hiring bias than participants from SMEs, but held less sceptical views about parenthood than participants from SMEs.
3	Experience and organisation scale may entrench rather than reduce implicit hiring biases.
4	Mothers were seen as less available for work while fathers were seen as more career-oriented, which can affect employment decisions beyond hiring.
5	FWA requests were approved regardless of employee gender or whether the request was parenthood-related. Caregiving was perceived as the most legitimate reason.

1. Hiring decision-makers demonstrated less favourable hiring outcomes for parents, while general employees did not.

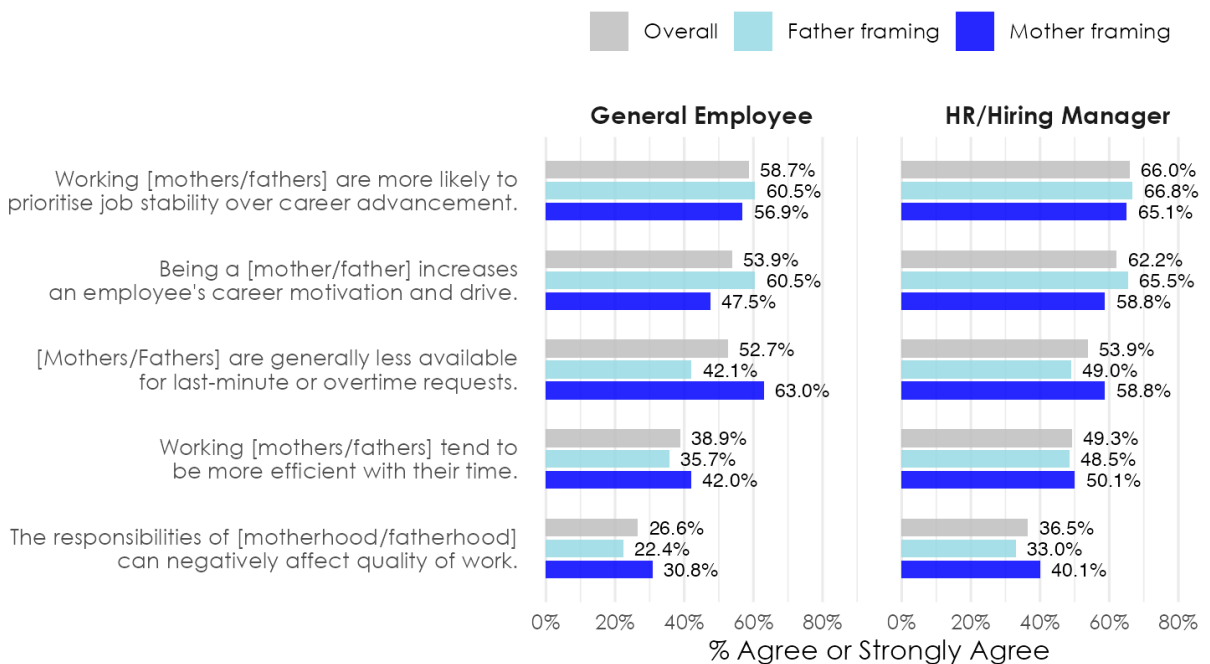
Regardless of the candidate's gender, HR professionals and hiring managers were less likely to hire parents than non-parents. This pattern was specific to participants with hiring decision-making responsibilities. No such difference emerged among participants who were general employees, or when the sample was examined as a whole.





This pattern was consistent with the views expressed by hiring decision-makers. Hiring decision-makers were more likely than general employees to believe that parenthood, regardless of gender, can constrain employees' careers. For example, a larger share of hiring managers and HR professionals believed that being a parent negatively affects employees' quality of work (36.5% versus 26.6%) and that working parents are more likely to prioritise job stability over career advancement (66.0% versus 58.7%).

Q7 - Attitudes toward parenthood and the workplace by hiring manager status



Interestingly, the findings from the online survey contrast with the self-reports from the qualitative interviews with HR professionals and hiring managers. Interviewees self-reported that demographic backgrounds did not influence their decisions, and that their hiring decisions were based on merit. This implies an **intention-action gap** where hiring decision-makers intend to hire based on merit, but do not do so in practice. This aligns with past studies which found that hiring decision-makers did not realise that they were affected by stereotypes and subconscious biases.^{19,20} Evidently, it is not enough for hiring decision-makers to commit to fair hiring practices. We need to equip them with the means to back this commitment with action.

Our company we are very inclusivity and diversity. So we don't stereotype to one gender. We don't stereotype to one race. We based on their qualification and their experience in the related field of our manufacturing industry.

Hiring manager, MNC in Manufacturing



We really do not consider the areas of ... 'What's your family commitment,' ... Those are not important to us.

- HR professional, LLE in Financial and Insurance Activities

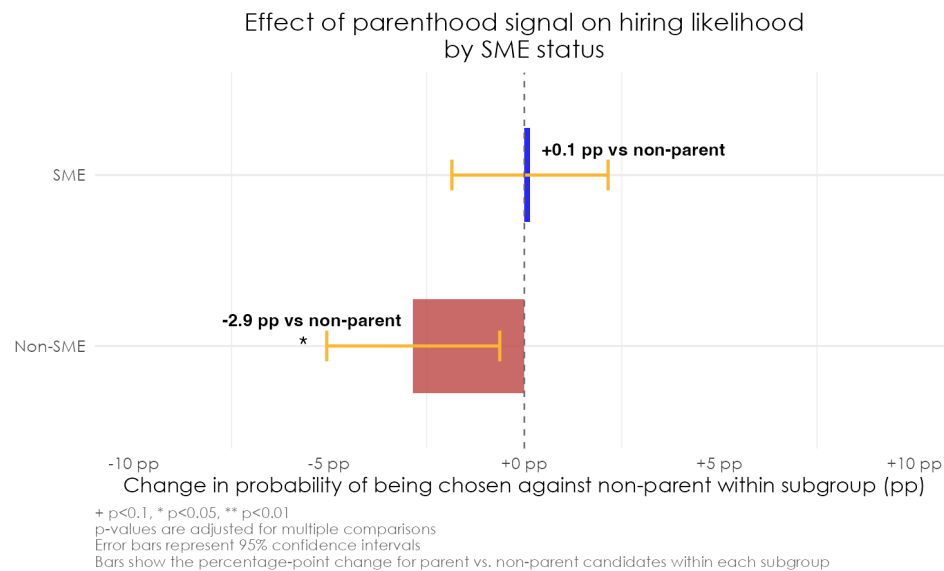


¹⁹ Pager, D., & Quillian, L. (2005). Walking the talk? What employers say versus what they do. *American Sociological Review*, 70(3), 355–380. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240507000301>

²⁰ Benard, S., Paik, I., & Correll, S. J. (2008). Cognitive bias and the motherhood penalty. *UC Law Journal*, 59(6), 1359–1388.

2. Participants from larger companies demonstrated more hiring bias than participants from SMEs, but held less sceptical views about parenthood than participants from SMEs.

Participants from larger companies demonstrated more bias against parents in hiring, but participants from SMEs did not display such bias.



However, participants from SMEs reported more sceptical views towards parenthood than participants from larger companies. For instance, participants from SMEs were more likely to agree that parents are less available for last-minute or overtime requests, and that parenthood can negatively affect work quality.

This reflects a gap between stated and revealed preferences in hiring decision making. The participants who perceived that parents may be less able to meet job demands are from SMEs, but the ones who penalised parents in hiring decisions are from larger companies. Decisions are also likely shaped by subconscious, automatic thinking that can sometimes contradict self-reported beliefs.²¹ It is therefore important to examine gaps between stated intentions and behaviour when addressing workplace bias.

²¹ Kahneman, D. (2003). "A perspective on judgment and choice: Mapping bounded rationality." *American Psychologist*, 58(9), 697-720

3. Experience and organisation size may entrench rather than reduce implicit hiring biases.

Based on the above findings, hiring decision-makers and employees within larger companies were more likely to be less favourable towards parents in hiring. This contrasts with international studies which found no association between hiring discrimination and firm size.²² This is not necessarily contradictory: our current findings reflect individual-level biases, which may be attenuated by organisation-level processes.

The first possible explanation is that individuals in larger companies have greater experience in making hiring decisions, which could result in them relying more heavily on **mental shortcuts (heuristics)** when evaluating candidates. As larger companies have greater organisational capacity, their employees have more opportunities to be involved in recruitment. Thus, they may draw more heavily from their past experiences and base their decisions on perceived similarities when evaluating current candidates. This faster, more intuitive form of decision-making is known as **Klein's Recognition-Primed Decision** model.²³ This may explain why the participants who were experienced hiring decision-makers were more vulnerable to implicit biases against parents than the participants with less hiring experience.

Another possible explanation is that individuals in larger organisations may be more exposed to **established corporate norms**. In larger companies, stricter norms may embed biases through perceptions of cultural fit and competency. For example, a study of Indian companies found that multinational corporations (MNCs) had narrower definitions of high-potential employees than SMEs.²⁴ Another study found that if certain groups (e.g. women) are underrepresented in leadership positions or the general employee demographic, this may perpetuate similar biases in hiring as women may be perceived as less competent. Conversely, having more women in senior leadership positions has been found to reduce gender stereotyping in organisations.²⁵ This may cause candidates to be evaluated by factors beyond job performance. Since individuals in larger companies may favour familiarity when making hiring decisions, they may hire candidates who conform to the established corporate norms, resulting in reduced workplace diversity and increased groupthink.

²² Baert S, De Meyer A, Moerman Y, Omeij E (2018), "Does size matter? Hiring discrimination and firm size". *International Journal of Manpower*, Vol. 39 No. 4 pp. 550–566, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJM-09-2017-0239>

²³ Klein, Gary. (1993). A Recognition Primed Decision (RPD) Model of Rapid Decision Making.

²⁴ Chaudhuri, S., Hirudayaraj, M., & Ardichvili, A. (2018). Borrow or Grow: An Overview of Talent Development/Management Practices in Indian IT Organizations. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 20(4), 460–478. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422318803345>

²⁵ Lawson, M. A., Martin, A. E., Huda, I., & Matz, S. C. (2022). Hiring women into senior leadership positions is associated with a reduction in gender stereotypes in organizational language. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 119(9), Article e2026443119. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2026443119>

Individuals in larger organisations may also be more accustomed to following formalised hiring processes.²⁶ Structured hiring processes generally mitigate biases at the organisational level.²⁷ However, an overreliance on formalised processes may atrophy individuals' capacity or motivation to question their own assumptions and biases. This is parallel to the concept of **cognitive offloading** where reliance on external tools reduces cognitive capabilities. For example, habitual use of GPS for navigation has been shown to reduce personal spatial ability and independent navigation.^{28,29} While this phenomenon has not been studied with regard to hiring decision-making, this could be a potential explanation for our current findings.

This does not mean that structured or formalised hiring processes are ineffective or undesirable. However, processes need to prompt critical evaluation rather than merely provide standardisation. For example, a study of public sector hiring in Brazil found that introducing blind written tests reduced the gender gap in hiring. However, for high-skill roles, this improvement was sustained only when interviews were retained. Removing interviews reduced the amount of information available about candidates, leading decision-makers to rely more heavily on stereotypes and assumptions.³⁰ This suggests that structured hiring processes need to be designed to provide the right information and actively engage decision-makers to form critical evaluations.

Lastly, it is also possible that our experimental design had a limited ability to elicit bias among participants from SMEs or participants who were not experienced in conducting recruitment. We had designed the study to mimic established hiring practices (i.e. candidate summary). However, as hiring practices vary across companies, some participants may have been less familiar with evaluating candidates based on a standardised summary. As such, they may not have adequately processed information from the candidate summaries or detected the parenthood signal. This mismatch between the study's format and their real-world hiring process may therefore have limited our ability to detect bias among this segment of the sample.

²⁶ Barber, A. E., Wesson, M. J., Roberson, Q. M., & Taylor, M. S. (1999). A tale of two job markets: Organizational size and its effects on hiring practices and job search behavior. *Personnel Psychology*, 52(4), 841–868. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.1999.tb00182.x>

²⁷ Wolgast, S., Bäckström, M., & Björklund, F. (2017). Tools for fairness: Increased structure in the selection process reduces discrimination. *PLOS ONE*, 12(12), Article e0189512. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0189512>

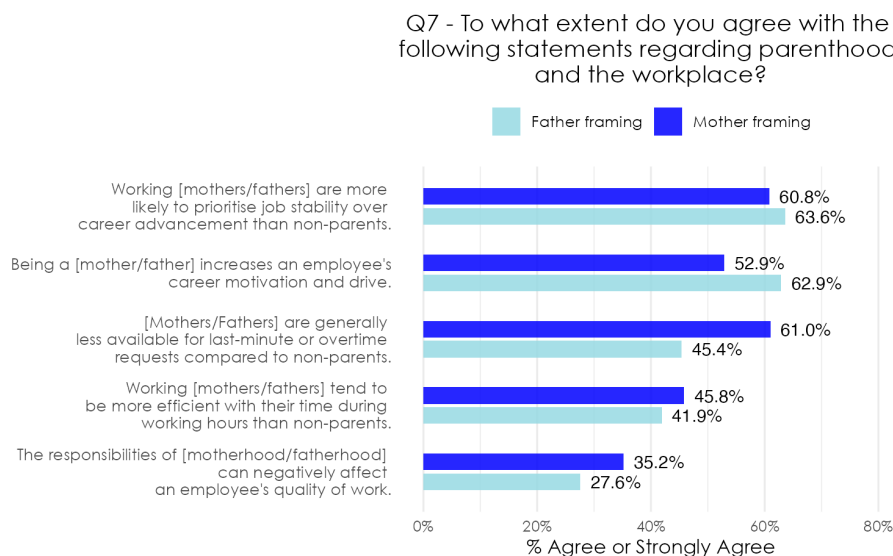
²⁸ Risko, E. F., & Gilbert, S. J. (2016). Cognitive offloading. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 20(9), 676–688. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2016.07.002>

²⁹ Dahmani, L., & Bohbot, V. D. (2020). Habitual use of GPS negatively impacts spatial memory during self-guided navigation. *Scientific Reports*, 10, Article 6310. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-020-62877-0>

³⁰ Mocanu, T. (2023, February 15). *Designing gender equity: Evidence from hiring practices and committees* [Job market paper]. https://economics.unibocconi.eu/sites/default/files/files/media/attachments/mocanu_jmp_hiring_compressed20230323102223.pdf

4. Mothers were seen as less available for work while fathers were seen as more career-oriented, which can affect employment decisions beyond hiring.

There were gendered differences in how working parents were perceived. Participants were more likely to perceive mothers as less available for last-minute or overtime requests than fathers and that mothers' work quality was impacted by their parenting responsibilities. On the other hand, participants were more likely to perceive that fathers had increased career motivation and drive compared to mothers.



These findings are aligned with extensive literature documenting the motherhood penalty and fatherhood premium in the labour market, where working mothers may be perceived as less committed to work and assumed to prioritise caregiving while fathers may be perceived as more committed and competent.³¹

Despite these gendered differences in perceptions of parents, participants were equally likely to hire mothers or fathers in our simulated hiring scenario. This might be because the fictitious candidate summaries that we used resembled a structured and standardised hiring process. This standardisation may have helped to attenuate gender-biased perceptions and prevent them from emerging during the hiring scenario.^{32,33}

³¹ Burgess, N. (2013). The motherhood penalty: How gender and parental status influence judgements of job-related competence and organizational commitment. *Seminar Research Paper Series*, 32, 1–11. https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/lrc_paper_series/32/

³² Bragger, J. D. N., Kutcher, E., Morgan, J., & Firth, P. (2002). The effects of the structured interview on reducing biases against pregnant job applicants. *Sex Roles*, 46(7–8), 215–226. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1019967231059>

³³ McCarthy, J. M., Van Iddekinge, C. H., & Campion, M. A. (2010). Are highly structured interviews resistant to demographic similarity effects? *Personnel Psychology*, 63(2), 325–359. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2010.01172.x>

However, not all companies – particularly SMEs – have implemented similarly structured hiring processes or standardised candidate summaries. When we piloted examples of the candidate summaries during our interviews, several SME interviewees shared that the candidate summaries were more detailed and structured than their usual practices. When hiring environments are less structured, gendered differences in perceptions of parents may not be counteracted by standardised evaluation criteria, resulting in the prevalence of bias.

“I think it [candidate summary used in study] is more detailed as compared to what we currently have because right now we have to manually key in the notes from interviews. So interviewers all key in different things as well. So to actually collate them, some of them are not as specific at certain times. So that is why I think this notes from the interview is a lot more detailed than what we have.”

HR professional, SME in Arts, Entertainment and Recreation



Even if gendered differences in perceptions of parents do not impact immediate hiring decisions, there is a risk of these beliefs influencing employees’ longer-term career trajectories, wages, and growth opportunities.^{34,35,36} This means that gendered biases may shape who gets promoted and who holds positions of influence within companies. It is therefore critical to address these biased perceptions, to ensure workplace equality for both mothers and fathers.

5. FWA requests were approved regardless of employee gender or whether the request was parenthood-related. Caregiving was perceived as the most legitimate reason.

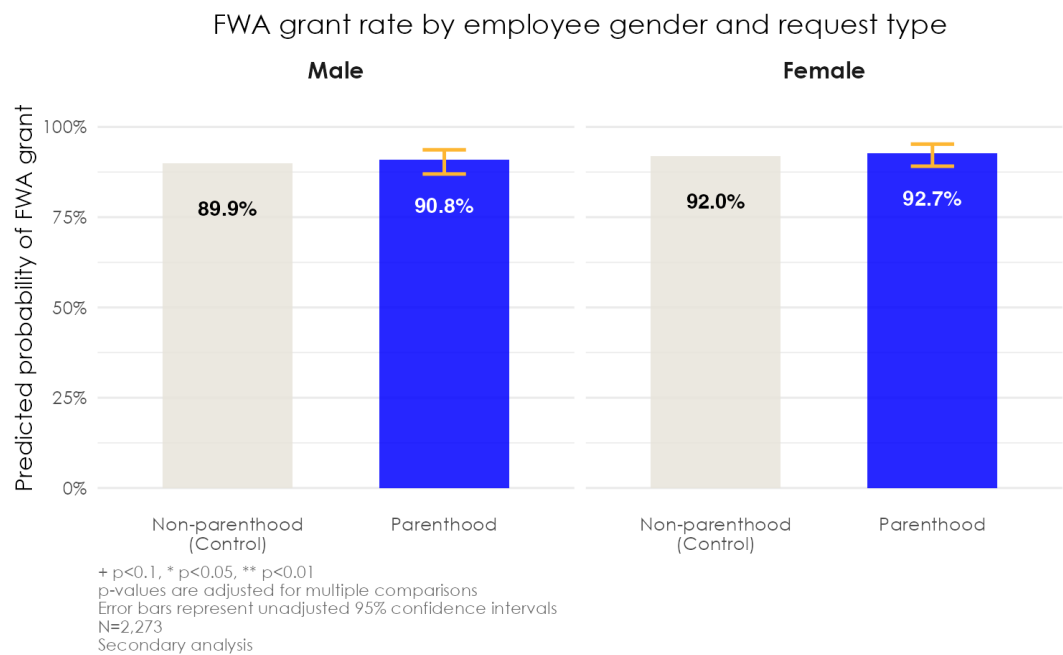
We found that an employee’s gender, or whether their request was parenthood-related, did not affect the likelihood of being granted an FWA in a hypothetical scenario. Across both genders and request types, the FWA request was granted nine out of 10 times. This is a similar statistic to a prior survey by the women’s advocacy wing of the People’s Action Party (PAP) and NTUC in 2025, which also found that nine out of 10 FWA requests were

³⁴ Brüggemann, O. (2024). Employees’ perceptions of co-workers’ internal promotion penalties: The role of gender, parenthood and part-time. *European Societies*, 26(3), 773–801. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2023.2270049>

³⁵ Budig, M. J., & England, P. (2001). The Wage Penalty for Motherhood. *American Sociological Review*, 66(2), 204–225.

³⁶ Di Leo, R., Epifanio, M., Scotto, T. J., & Troeger, V. E. (2026). The motherhood penalties: insights from women in UK academia. *Community, Work & Family*, 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13668803.2026.2618679>

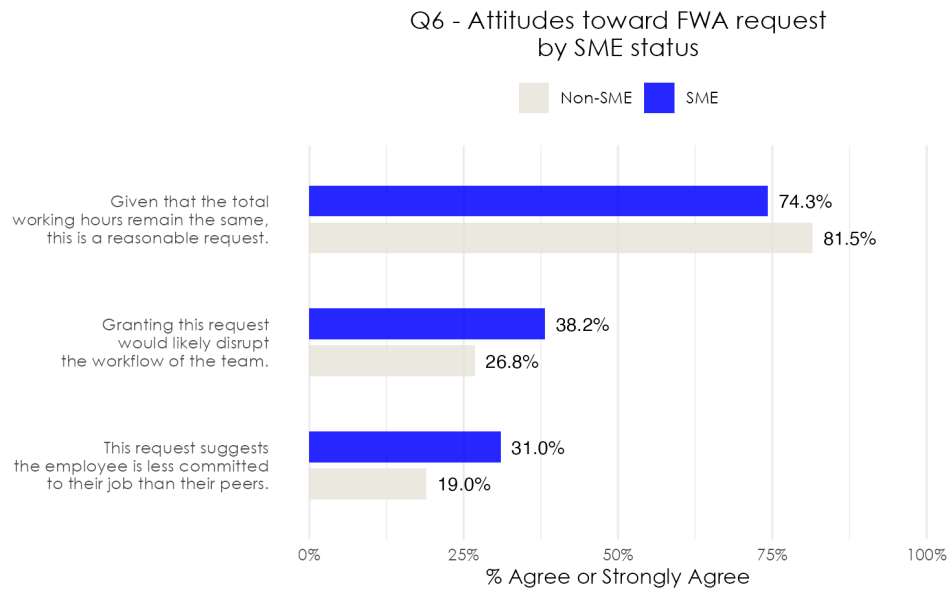
fully approved or approved with some modifications.³⁷ Interestingly, 1 in 3 expressed in that same survey that stigma was the primary limitation for them to request for FWAs.



The high FWA approval rate corresponded with the generally positive attitudes towards FWAs. 78% of respondents agreed that FWA requests are reasonable when total working hours remain the same. In addition, 72% of respondents agreed that employees utilising FWAs are just as productive as those working standard office hours.

However, SME respondents had more reservations about granting FWAs than respondents from larger companies. SME respondents were more likely to be concerned about disruptions to workflow, and to view an employee requesting FWAs as less committed than their peers. This likely reflects the realities of SMEs’ operational constraints, as they have tighter resources and leaner manpower than larger companies. Indeed, the qualitative interviews revealed that companies, particularly SMEs, were concerned about meeting operational needs and ensuring employee productivity when considering FWA requests. Taken together, it appears that while companies may be supportive of FWAs in principle, SMEs require greater support to better integrate FWAs into their business realities.

³⁷ Tham, D. (2026, April 22). *IN FOCUS: Why the stigma over flexible work persists in Singapore*. CNA. <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/flexible-work-arrangements-wfh-home-office-hybrid-remote-in-focus-6067366>



“So because we are in a setting that we also see there's a disengage in a fully working from home environment...When some employees are under the radar you know like this person is always maybe not responsive during the FWA arrangement then we will be very clear to them but you have to come to office.”

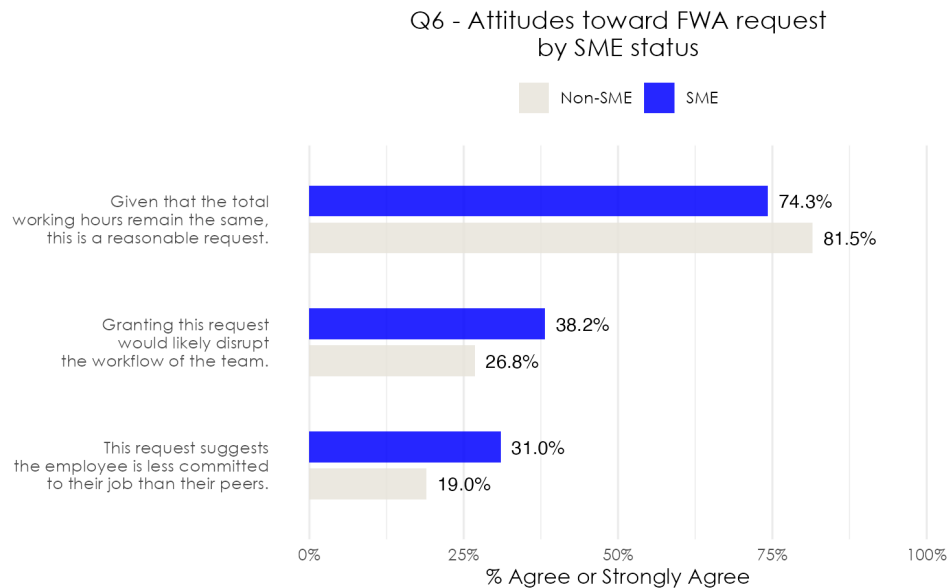
Hiring manager, SME in Construction



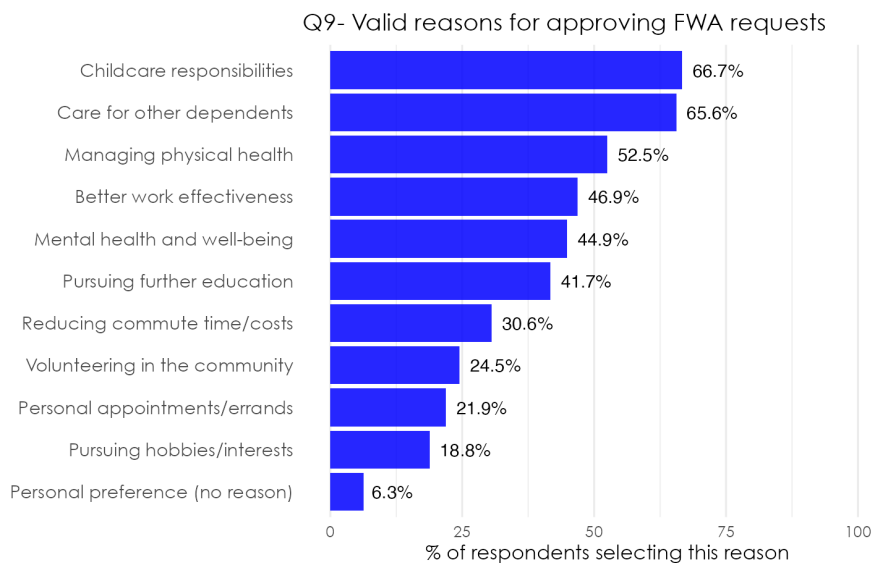
“For example, skill sets like my drivers, they cannot work from home. They are the people that's needed on ground.”

Hiring manager, SME in Transportation and Storage





Participants viewed FWA requests as most legitimate when they related to caregiving responsibilities. This included caring for children as well as other dependents. This was aligned with our qualitative findings, where respondents described caregiving or family-related reasons as the most acceptable for FWA requests.



**Generally, if you tell my boss that it's family-related?
90% [of FWA requests] he agree on.**

Hiring manager, SME in Transportation and Storage



Conversely, personal benefits or pursuits were viewed as the least legitimate reasons for requesting FWAs. This included pursuing hobbies/interests, personal appointments/errands, volunteering in the community, and reducing commute time/costs. This pattern suggests that FWAs are viewed through the lens of moral deservingness: flexible work is perceived as acceptable only for socially recognised obligations, rather than as an employee benefit in its own right. Because of this, employees whose requests are for discretionary personal needs may be systematically less likely to be granted flexibility and may feel even more stigmatised or discouraged.

However, flexible work is more than just an organisational productivity tool. Past research in Singapore has found that flexible work improves work-life balance and life satisfaction,³⁸ and influences family-planning decisions of Singaporeans.³⁹ Personal pursuits, such as volunteering or involvement in sports and the arts, also have wider social and civic value. These outcomes matter for talent well-being and retention, as well as beyond the workplace. There is hence a growing need to recognise flexible work not merely as an accommodation granted for business value, but also as a social good that supports healthier, happier workers and stronger communities.



³⁸ Tan, J., Lim-Soh, J. & Tan, P.L. (2024) The Impact of Teleworking on Women's Work–Life Balance and Life Satisfaction: a Longitudinal Study from Singapore. *Applied Research Quality Life* 19, 2595–2615. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11482-024-10340-x>

³⁹ Wang, S., & Dong, H. (2024). Flexible working arrangements and fertility intentions: A survey experiment in Singapore. *European Journal of Population*, 40(1), Article 33. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10680-024-09719-1>

Chapter 4: Recommendations

Promote broader acceptability of FWAs through stronger implementation support and transparency

All workers—parents, caregivers, and non-caregivers—have to manage family duties and personal exigencies, along with work commitments. However, our study found that FWA requests for caregiving reasons were viewed as the most legitimate, while requests for personal pursuits or benefits were the least accepted. While businesses were supportive of FWAs in principle, SMEs in particular remained concerned about implementing FWAs due to operational constraints. Workers also need to be empowered to ask for flexibility at work, and workplace cultures need to be supportive. Policy creates permission, while culture creates safety. Across both genders and request types, the FWA request was granted nine out of 10 times. This is a similar statistic to a prior survey by the women’s advocacy wing of the People’s Action Party (PAP) and NTUC Women and Family (WAF) in 2025, which also found that nine out of 10 FWA requests were fully approved or approved with some modifications.

NTUC and its tripartite partners can continue to represent workers’ rights and provide concrete implementation support for companies’ workforce transformation efforts to accommodate flexible work, particularly for SMEs that may not have the expertise or bandwidth. NTUC can promote FWAs as part of job redesign in their business-as-usual consulting and coaching services. For instance, companies who partner NTUC WAF to implement progressive workplace policies in return receive support to set up wellness corners and lactation rooms through the Better Workplace Programme. Tan Tock Seng Hospital’s nursing team also partnered with the Healthcare Services Employees’ Union through the CTC to develop an AI-powered rostering tool.⁴⁰ This tool has facilitated a “Liquid Nursing Workforce” where nurses have more flexible shift hours.⁴¹ For companies that are still hesitant about implementing flexible work, NTUC could support them to trial flexible working on a temporary basis, to determine how and whether FWAs can align with business priorities. This approach of trialling FWAs has been successfully done by two large companies in our qualitative study.

In addition, NTUC and its tripartite partners could encourage employers to provide upfront transparency about available FWAs during recruitment. For instance, companies with flexible roles can advertise in NTUC’s Yes, Flex! Jobs portal. BIT previously ran a randomised controlled trial with the job site Indeed in the UK. In the trial, we found that prompting companies to include indications of available FWAs in their job advertisements resulted in an increase in the number of jobs advertised as flexible, and a corresponding

⁴⁰ Wong, L. (2026, May 1). PM Lawrence Wong at May Day Rally 2026. Prime Minister's Office Singapore. <https://www.pmo.gov.sg/newsroom/pm-lawrence-wong-at-may-day-rally-2026/>

⁴¹ Tan Tock Seng Hospital (2025). Catalysing liquid nursing workforce growth through workplace innovations. CHI Learning & Development System (CHILD). <https://child.chi.sg/learn/child-collection/projects/catalysing-liquid-nursing-workforce-growth-through-workplace-innovations/>

increase in applicants to jobs.⁴² Specific details of FWAs available were also preferred over vague mentions.⁴³ The most attractive type of job advertisement included specific information about the flexible work available (e.g. “flexibility to choose your working days, hours, and preferred location”), together with company endorsement of work-life balance.⁴⁴ This transparency approach benefits both employers and workers, and NTUC could work with existing job platforms in Singapore to prompt employers to specify flexible work options.

Lastly, NTUC and its tripartite partners could conduct further research on sectoral differences in workplace flexibility. For instance, sectors could be ranked or scored based on their ease of implementing FWAs and their current uptake levels. These insights could be used to provide targeted support and interventions. This could support the need for further discussion and consultation on tripartite considerations surrounding workplace practices and norms.

Foster inclusive workplace cultures and caregiving support for all genders and life stages to mitigate bias

Our hiring experiment found that HR professionals and hiring managers were less likely to hire parents, indicating that parenthood is penalised during the selection process. However, our qualitative research revealed that hiring decision-makers generally believed that they were fair and unbiased in their hiring. It is important to address this gap, so that hiring decision-makers may play a collaborative role in reducing hiring bias. Our study also showed strong attitudinal differences in how the impact of parenthood on work is perceived for fathers versus mothers. While we did not find evidence of this impacting hiring decisions directly, prior research shows that this does impact other workplace decisions, such as pay and promotion. Workplace policies that accommodate all caregivers for different family members spanning the life course, reflect modern caregiving realities and better capture workers’ needs. By normalising caregivers of all genders and life stages, the disproportionate career penalties associated with motherhood can be reduced.

NTUC and its tripartite partners can advocate for caregiving policies that support all genders and life stages. Based on MOM’s Labour Force in Singapore 2025 report released in May 2026, the number of stay-at-home dads outside the labour force has risen from about 1,900 in 2022 to 3,000 in 2025. Over the same period, the number of stay-at-home mums fell from about 51,600 to 37,300. Women continue to more frequently take on the role of primary caregiver for children and other family members than men, but

⁴² Government Equalities Office, & Women and Equalities Unit. (2021, March 5). Encouraging employers to advertise jobs as flexible. GOV.UK. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/encouraging-employers-to-advertise-jobs-as-flexible-with-jobs-site-indeed/encouraging-employers-to-advertise-jobs-as-flexible>

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Wodak, S., & Freeburn, T. (2024, June 19). *How reframing flexible working can drive up female recruitment*. Behavioural Insights Team. <https://www.bi.team/blogs/how-reframing-flexible-working-can-drive-up-female-recruitment/>

the figures above point to a growing trend of more men taking on a more active role in parenting. NTUC's C U Back (CUB) at Work programme, which combines job redesign, flexible arrangements, and specialised training, supports caregivers of all genders.

One way to strengthen support for parents returning to work could be through offering more placement programmes. Skills and Workforce Development Agency (SWDA) could offer more placement programmes, like more Place-and-Train or Train-and-Place programmes, or reinstate the now-defunct Career Trial programme, to support returning parents. NTUC and its tripartite partners can continue to ensure that the language and eligibility of return-to-work support are gender-neutral.

NTUC can also consider partnering relevant stakeholders in this space to provide more corporate consulting services, workshops, or pilots, including workplace policy review and development, guided mediation, and training for HR staff, supervisors, and hiring managers, to help employers adopt family-friendly practices that support caregivers.

The WFA provides a formal avenue for redress for adverse employment decisions such as recruitment, appraisal, promotion, training, and dismissal based on protected characteristics, including sex and caregiving responsibilities.

To mitigate the awareness gap, where hiring decision-makers are unaware of how their biases may shape their decision-making, the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP) can explore supporting the Institute of Human Resource Professionals (IHRP)'s master practitioner programme to provide workshops and training for HR staff and hiring managers, to help employers adopt family and caregiving friendly practices. Furthermore, IHRP could help progressive companies in building **monitoring dashboards of unobtrusive indicators**. Unobtrusive indicators refer to metrics derived from administrative data of employee behaviour. They are commonly used in organisational culture audits, as they do not require engaging employees and are hence less prone to social desirability bias.⁴⁵ Examples of unobtrusive indicators of hiring bias could include application-to-interview rates, offer or callback rates, and rejection reasons, measured across demographic groups. Collection of data on these indicators would facilitate monitoring and comparison of actual hiring outcomes between different groups.

These findings could be shared at appropriate platforms to collaboratively discuss ongoing areas of concern and best practices to improve fair outcomes in hiring. Through these discussions, the most effective practices should also be published as visible industry benchmarks, providing a clear **injunctive social norm**⁴⁶ for companies to follow.

⁴⁵ Reader, T. W., Gillespie, A., Hald, J., & Patterson, M. (2020). Unobtrusive indicators of culture for organizations: a systematic review. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 29(5), 633–649.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2020.1764536>

⁴⁶ Gavrillets, S. (2020). The dynamics of injunctive social norms. *Evolutionary Human Sciences*, 2, Article e60.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/ehs.2020.58>

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Parents in Singapore face challenges in the workforce. This study provides evidence that hiring decision-makers may be less favourable towards parents during recruitment, despite their efforts to hire based on merit. Employees in general also perceive working mothers as less available for work and fathers as more career-oriented. These gendered perceptions could potentially lead mothers to experience less favourable hiring and employment outcomes throughout their career, while fathers could experience a fatherhood premium of additional career benefits.

While many support flexible work in principle, particularly for caregiving reasons, operational constraints remain a concern. Intended support may not necessarily be translated into action, and employees may still face difficulty in being granted FWA requests. In addition, FWAs for caregiving and productivity reasons are perceived as the most legitimate. As such, individuals with other reasons for requesting flexible work may be systematically denied or feel stigmatised in asking for flexibility. This also reveals a deeper assumption: that flexible work needs to be rationalised, rather than taken as a positive working condition and part of a supportive workplace culture for employees.

These findings indicate the need to provide concrete support in shaping the decision-making environment such that the impact of bias is reduced. This needs to be complemented by broader shifts in societal norms related to caregiving and flexible work. Looking further afield, as AI is starting to play a bigger role in HR functions, like recruitment, deployment, and even performance management, it is even more critical to ensure that bias and discrimination do not take root in the way systems are built.

This study contributes to a nascent body of evidence on parenthood penalties in Singapore and is among the few internationally to employ a mixed-methods approach. Nonetheless, a key limitation of this study is that it has only examined hiring decision-making within a simulated, online environment. Future studies may explore parenthood penalties in real-world hiring as well as other forms of employment decision-making, such as promotion and performance management.

Overall, the barriers that employees face when they become parents or seek flexible working are not inevitable. They stem from biases and norms, which can be both measured and mitigated. Going forward, where AI is poised to be used even more extensively in future, the usage of AI-enabled HR tools should be watched closely. After all, NTUC and its tripartite partners can continue to play a critical role in ensuring a fairer, more progressive, and healthier working environment for all workers. Indeed, supporting working parents is a key element of NTUC's broader commitment, because every worker matters.

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Annex - Full Survey

The items below in the list provide instructions for the development of the survey questions. The **Question label**: field should be used as the column name in the data file.

The text next to the **Question text**: field should be displayed to the participant.

The **Response type**: field indicated developer instructions for the survey input.

The **Screen**: field indicates exclusion criteria or instructions.

The **Display/skip logic**: field contains information about the selective display of various survey questions. These should only be displayed if previous values meet the conditions described. Otherwise they should be skipped. Where relevant we have included instructions about how to fill skipped responses in the data file.

Text highlighted in **orange** are instructions / comments not to be included in the survey.

Plain language statement and consent procedure.

You are invited to participate in a study on employment experiences in Singapore. This study aims to gather diverse perspectives from employees across various functions and departments to better understand how modern workplaces operate and hire. The research study is conducted by the Behavioural Insights Team Singapore.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and responses will be kept strictly confidential.

The survey will take around 10-15 minutes. Participants will be given a token of appreciation for their time, upon completion of this survey.

If you would like to withdraw your data after completion, or if you have any questions, please contact [contact]

- I acknowledge that I have read and understood the information above.
- I consent to participate in this survey

Screening questions + demographics

1. **Question label:** *employmentStatus*
 - a. **Question text:** *What is your current employment status?*
 - b. **Response type:** Single response.
 - c. **Options:**
 - i. Employed full-time
 - ii. Employed part-time
 - iii. Self-employed or freelance **[Screen out]**
 - iv. Not (currently) employed **[Screen out]**

[PAGE BREAK]

2. **Question label:** *employmentType*

- a. **Question text:** Which department or function do you primarily work in?
- b. **Response type:** Single response.
- c. **Options:**
 - i. Operations / General Management
 - ii. Sales / Marketing
 - iii. Human Resources **[HR/Hiring manager]**
 - iv. Finance / Accounting
 - v. IT / Engineering / Product
 - vi. Customer Service / Support
 - vii. Other

If Human Resources is selected, classify respondent as HR/Hiring Manager. If not, classification depends on question 3. All respondents continue to question 3.

3. **Question label:** Hiringmanager

- a. **Question text:** In the last 12 months, which of these roles have you fulfilled during a hiring process in your organisation? *Click all that apply.*
- b. **Response type:** Multiple response
- c. **Options:**
 - i. I was a key decision-maker in the hiring process for a role within my team or organisation **[HR/Hiring manager]**
 - ii. I have interviewed candidates
 - iii. I have reviewed CVs and/or other candidate materials
 - iv. Other involvement
 - v. I have not been involved in hiring (if this option is chosen, participants should not be able to choose the other options)

IF Option (i) is selected as one of their responses, classify respondent as HR/Hiring Manager. If Option (i) is not selected, classify as General Employee.

[PAGE BREAK]

4. **Question label:** gender

- a. **Question text:** What is your gender?
- b. **Response type:** Single response.
- c. **Options:**
 - i. Male
 - ii. Female
 - iii. Other / Prefer not to say

5. **Question label:** age

- a. **Question text:** What is your age?
- b. **Response type:** Single response.
- c. **Options:**
 - i. 18 – 24
 - ii. 25 – 34

- iii. 35 – 44
- iv. 45 – 54
- v. 55 – 64
- vi. 65 and above

Instructions for the choice task

You are supporting your hiring team to hire a mid-level project manager. The shortlisted candidates have already been assessed through two stages:

1. CV review
2. One round of interviews

Your hiring team has requested for you to make the final hiring decision. Both candidates are asking for a salary within budget and which aligns with the market rate.

Please read both descriptions carefully and decide which of the two candidates you would want to hire. You will do this for six sets of candidates.

Choice experiment

Candidate: {Name}	Candidate: {Name}
Name: {Name} Education: {Education} Other credentials: {Credentials} Previous Role: {Previous_role}	Name: {Name} Education: {Education} Other credentials: {Credentials} Previous Role: {Previous_role}
Notes from interview: Overall impression: {Impression} Motivation for joining the company: {Motivation} Case study: <u>Scenario:</u> Midway through a project, your client requests additional features outside the original scope. How would you approach this? <u>Response:</u> {Scenario}	Notes from interview: Overall impression: {Impression} Motivation for joining the company: {Motivation} Case study: <u>Scenario:</u> Midway through a project, your client requests additional features outside the original scope. How would you approach this? <u>Response:</u> {Scenario}
Question regarding the role: {Question}	Question regarding the role: {Question}

4. **Question label:** dce_1, ..., dce_6 **i.e., this question is repeated 6 times**
 - a. **Question text:** Which of these candidates would you hire for the project manager position?
 - b. **Response type:** Single response.
 - c. **Response options:**
 - i. {Name}
 - ii. {Name}

Randomised question

NOTE: The name and reason (highlighted in yellow) should be independently randomised. This means there are 8 unique combinations.

Imagine that you are the manager of a team. One of your employees, [Lily / Henry], has made the following request for Flexible Work Arrangements:

"I'd like to be able to leave the office early every Tuesday and Thursday to be able to [pick up my kids from school / volunteer at my kid's parent-teacher association / provide care for my elderly parents / volunteer with grassroots activities]. I will start early on those days to ensure my total working hours remain the same. "

5. **Question label:** fwaGrant
 - a. **Question text:** *Would you grant this Flexible Work Arrangement?*
 - b. **Response type:** Single response.
 - c. **Response options:**
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
6. **Question set heading:** To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding this request?
 - a. **Note:** Each of the following question set should include the same 5 item order response scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree.
 - b. **Question label:** commitmentBias
 - i. **Question text:** This request suggests the employee is less committed to their job than their peers.
 - c. **Question label:** requestReasonableness
 - i. **Question text:** Given that the total working hours remain the same, this is a reasonable request.
 - d. **Question label:** teamDisruption
 - i. **Question text:** Granting this request would likely disrupt the workflow of the team.
 - e. **Response type:** Single Response
 - f. **Response option:**
 - i. 1, Strongly Disagree
 - ii. 2, Disagree
 - iii. 3, Neutral
 - iv. 4, Agree
 - v. 5, Strongly Agree

Parenthood opinions

7. **Question set heading:** To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding parenthood and the workplace?
 - a. **Note:** Each of the following question set should include the same 5 item order response scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree.
 - b. **Question label:** parentEfficiency
 - i. **Question text:** Working [mothers/fathers] tend to be more efficient with their time during working hours than non-parents.

- c. **Question label:** parentQuality
 - i. **Question text:** The responsibilities of [motherhood/fatherhood] can negatively affect an employee's quality of work.
- d. **Question label:** parentAvailability
 - i. **Question text:** [Mothers/Fathers] are generally less available for last-minute or overtime requests compared to non-parents.
- e. **Question label:** parentMotivation
 - i. **Question text:** Being a [mother/father] increases an employee's career motivation and drive.
- f. **Question label:** parentStability
 - i. **Question text:** Working [mothers/fathers] are more likely to prioritise job stability over career advancement than non-parents.
- g. **Response type:** Single Response
- h. **Response option:**
 - i. 1, Strongly Disagree
 - ii. 2, Disagree
 - iii. 3, Neutral
 - iv. 4, Agree
 - v. 5, Strongly Agree

Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs)

- 8. **Question set heading:** For roles where it's operationally feasible, to what extent do you support or oppose the following types of flexible work arrangements?
 - a. **Note:** Each of the following question set should include the same 5 item order response scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree.
 - b. **Question label:** flexiTime
 - i. **Question text: Flexi-time:** where employees work flexibly at different timings with no changes to total work hours and workload (e.g. flexi-hours, staggered hours, flexi-shift, compressed work schedule)
 - c. **Question label:** flexiPlace
 - i. **Question text: Flexi-place:** where employees work flexibly from different locations aside from their usual office location (e.g. telecommuting, work-from-home)
 - d. **Question label:** flexiLoad
 - i. **Question text: Flexi-load:** where employees work flexibly with different workloads and with commensurate remuneration (e.g. job sharing, part-time work)
 - e. **Response type:** Single Response
 - f. **Response option:**
 - i. 1, Strongly oppose
 - ii. 2, Somewhat oppose
 - iii. 3, Neutral
 - iv. 4, Somewhat support
 - v. 5, Strongly support

9. **Question label:** fwaReasons

- a. **Question text:** In your opinion, which of the following should be considered valid reasons for approving a Flexible Work Arrangement request? (Select all that apply)
- b. **Response type:** Checkbox (multiple responses)
- c. **Response options:**
 - i. Childcare responsibilities (e.g., school pickup, sick days)
 - ii. Care for other dependents (e.g., elderly parents, partners)
 - iii. Reducing commute time and/or costs
 - iv. Managing physical health conditions
 - v. Mental health and well-being
 - vi. Pursuing further education/upskilling
 - vii. Pursuing hobbies and personal interests (e.g. sports, arts)
 - viii. Volunteering in the community
 - ix. Better work effectiveness and output
 - x. Personal appointments and errands
 - xi. Personal preference (no specific reason given)

10. **Question label:** fwaProductivity

- a. **Question text:** To what extent do you agree with this statement:
"Employees utilising Flexible Work Arrangements are just as productive as those working standard office hours."
- b. **Response type:** Single Response
- c. **Response options:**
 - i. Strongly disagree
 - ii. Disagree
 - iii. Neutral
 - iv. Agree
 - v. Strongly agree

Follow-up survey questions.

"Thank you! You're nearly there.

We just have a few final questions about your background and your organisation to help wrap things up."

Demographics

11. **Question label:** parentStatus

- a. **Question text:** Do you have any children?
- b. **Response type:** Single Response
- c. **Response options:**
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. Prefer not to say

- d. **Screen:**
 - i. “Yes” → include (to question 8)
 - ii. If Else → exclude (to question 9 onwards)

[PAGE BREAK]

12. **Question label:** childAgeRange

- a. **Question text:** [IF Yes] Please select the age range of your children (Select all that apply):
- b. **Response type:** Checkbox (multiple responses)
- c. **Response options:**
 - i. 0-2 years (Infant/Toddler)
 - ii. 3-6 years (Kindergarten)
 - iii. 7-12 years (Primary school)
 - iv. 13-18 years (Teenager)
 - v. Over 18 years (Adult)

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13. **Question label:** industrySector

- a. **Question text:** Which industry sector best describes your company's primary business activity?
- b. **Response type:** Single Response
- c. **Response options:**
 - i. Accommodation
 - ii. Administrative and Support Service Activities
 - iii. Agriculture and Fishing
 - iv. Arts, Entertainment and Recreation
 - v. Construction
 - vi. Education
 - vii. Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air-Conditioning Supply
 - viii. Financial and Insurance Activities
 - ix. Food Services
 - x. Health and Social Services
 - xi. Information and Communications
 - xii. Manufacturing
 - xiii. Mining and Quarrying
 - xiv. Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities
 - xv. Public Administration and Defence
 - xvi. Real Estate Activities
 - xvii. Retail Trade
 - xviii. Service Activities (Excluding Health or Social Services)
 - xix. Transportation and Storage
 - xx. Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities
 - xxi. Wholesale Trade Others (including Activities of Households as Employers of Domestic Personnel and Activities of Extra-Territorial Organisations and Bodies)
 - xxii. Others

14. **Question label:** companySizeSG

- a. **Question text:** How many employees does your company have in Singapore?
- b. **Response type:** Single Response
- c. **Response options:**
 - i. 9 or less employees
 - ii. 10 – 49 employees
 - iii. 50 – 199 employees
 - iv. 200 or more employees
 - v. I don't know

15. **Question label:** employeeProfile

- a. **Question text:** How would you describe the general profile of employees in your company?
- b. **Response type:** Single Response
- c. **Response options:**
 - i. Majority are Professionals, Managers, and Executives (PME) (e.g. operations manager, business development executive)
 - ii. Majority are Associate Professionals and Technicians (APT) (e.g. laboratory technician, engineering technician)
 - iii. Majority are non-PMET (e.g. security officer, delivery driver)
 - iv. Mixture of employee types with no clear majority
 - v. I don't know

16. **Question label:** unionStatus

- a. **Question text:** To the best of your knowledge, is the company you work for unionised?
- b. **Response type:** Single Response
- c. **Response options:**
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. I don't know

Examples of CV Summary Pairs

Example 1: Male parent v female non-parent

Candidate name: Kevin	Candidate name: Alice
Education: Bachelor of Management, Parklane University Other credentials: Coursera certificate in project management Previous role: Sales Operations Executive - Emerald City Properties; Managed sales performance data, coordinated agent commissions and contracts, and streamlined document submission processes for faster deal closure.	Education: Bachelor of Business Administration, Meridian National University Other credentials: Certifications in Asana and Jira Previous role: Project Executive - Jurong Industrial Corp; Coordinated project lifecycles, managed resource allocation across multiple sites, and prepared detailed progress dashboards for senior management.
Notes from interview:	
Overall impression: The candidate demonstrated clarity in communication, with clear and concise articulation of past experiences. They initially appeared reserved and hesitant, requiring some time to overcome a nervous demeanor. Motivation for joining the company: The candidate demonstrated strong commitment to the company, expressing clear intentions to build a long-term career here. Wanting to provide stability for their young family, they are highly driven to develop into a trusted industry specialist for the business. Case study scenario: <i>Midway through a project, your client requests additional features outside the original scope. How would you approach this?</i> Case study response: The candidate suggested a methodical approach. They noted they would cross-reference new requirements against the existing project timeline to visualise potential delays, subsequently offering the client a suite of viable options: increasing the budget, extending the schedule, or swapping out existing features. Question regarding the role: Candidate asked if employees have the chance for cross-departmental exposure	Overall impression: The candidate presented as confident and composed throughout the discussion, even when asked unexpected questions. Some of their responses were somewhat generic and required further probing to uncover concrete details. Motivation for joining the company: The candidate highlighted the opportunity to transition into a role with greater client-facing responsibilities, explaining that the company's projects provide a platform to strengthen such skills. Case study scenario: <i>Midway through a project, your client requests additional features outside the original scope. How would you approach this?</i> Case study response: The candidate highlighted the need to protect the team's capacity. They would draft a Change Order Form detailing the additional hours required and schedule a negotiation call with the client to approve the budget increase before any new work started. Question regarding the role: Candidate asked if the company provides budget for external training

Which of these candidates would you hire for the project manager position?

- ☐ Kevin
- ☐ Alice

Example 2: Male non-parent v female non-parent

Candidate name: Nathan	Candidate name: Sophie
Education: Bachelor of Supply Chain Management, Orchid University Other credentials: Coursera certificate in project management Previous role: Finance Administrator - CBD Financial Partners; Managed accounts payable/receivable workflows, reconciled monthly bank statements, and assisted in the preparation of quarterly financial audits.	Education: Bachelor of Business Management, Straits University Other credentials: Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM) Previous role: Account Executive - Sunny Digital Media; Managed advertising accounts, coordinated campaign deliverables, and managed client relationships.
Notes from interview:	
Overall impression: The candidate was structured in their communication, using a logical flow that showcased their specific contributions. However, they appeared noticeably flustered when asked a "curveball" question. Motivation for joining the company: The candidate was highly interested in the opportunity to pivot into this industry, noting that the company is a market leader and offers the best environment to apply their project coordination skills in a new, fast-paced context. Case study scenario: <i>Midway through a project, your client requests additional features outside the original scope. How would you approach this?</i> Case study response: The candidate proposed a strategy to pause and assess the situation. They stated they would map out the new requirements against the current Gantt chart to visualise delays, then present the client with a menu of feasible options: pay more, extend time, or swap out existing features. Question regarding the role: Candidate asked if employees have the chance for cross-departmental exposure.	Overall impression: The candidate brought innovative ideas to the discussion, offering fresh perspectives on industry challenges. They lacked specific examples of taking the initiative, positioning themselves more as a contributor than an outcome driver. Motivation for joining the company: The candidate highlighted the opportunity to transition into a role with greater client-facing responsibilities, explaining that the company's projects provide a platform to strengthen such skills. Case study scenario: <i>Midway through a project, your client requests additional features outside the original scope. How would you approach this?</i> Case study response: The candidate prioritised resource visibility, offering the client an informed choice: if new features are integrated, specific current tasks would be deferred to keep the budget neutral. They aimed to empower the client to make the final decision while ensuring the team remained productive and not overworked. Question regarding the role: Candidate asked if the company provides budget for external training.

Which of these candidates would you hire for the project manager position?

- ☐ Nathan
☐ Sophie

Example 3: female non-parent v female parent

Candidate name: Emily	Candidate name: Rachel
Education: Bachelor of Business Administration, Skyline University Other credentials: Microsoft Office Specialist: Associate (Microsoft 365 Apps) Previous role: Procurement Executive - Jurong Port Services; Managed the end-to-end procurement process for operational supplies, negotiated vendor contracts, and maintained the central supplier database.	Education: Bachelor of Business Administration, Meridian National University Other credentials: Certified Associate in Project Management Previous role: Business Operations Executive - Raffles Quay Trading Pte Ltd; Analysed operational workflows, coordinated inter-departmental logistics, and managed vendor service agreements to optimise office efficiency.
Notes from interview:	
Overall impression: The candidate was structured in their communication, using a logical flow that showcased their specific contributions. However, they appeared noticeably flustered when asked a "curveball" question. Motivation for joining the company: The candidate was highly interested in the opportunity to pivot into this industry, noting that the company is a market leader and offers the best environment to apply their project coordination skills in a new, fast-paced context. Case study scenario: <i>Midway through a project, your client requests additional features outside the original scope. How would you approach this?</i> Case study response: The candidate emphasised clarifying the new requirements in detail, then assessing their impact on timelines, budget, and resources. They proposed formalising this through a change request process to ensure transparency and stakeholder agreement. Question regarding the role: Candidate asked when office hours typically end	Overall impression: The candidate asked highly insightful questions that demonstrated deep research into the company, but they simultaneously appeared to lack confidence in their own achievements Motivation for joining the company: The candidate highlighted the company's track record of internal mobility, explaining that they are looking to establish themselves in a dynamic organisation that offers a clear, merit-based trajectory toward future team leadership. Case study scenario: <i>Midway through a project, your client requests additional features outside the original scope. How would you approach this?</i> Case study response: The candidate proposed a strategy to pause and assess the situation. They stated they would map out the new requirements against the current Gantt chart to visualise delays, then present the client with a menu of feasible options: pay more, extend time, or swap out existing features. Question regarding the role: Candidate asked about likelihood of working nights and weekends (due to children)

Which of these candidates would you hire for the project manager position?

- ☐ Emily
- ☐ Rachel

**Every
Worker
Matters**

