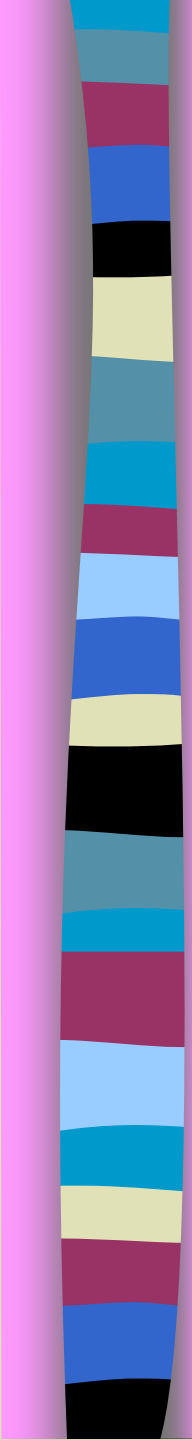




Leave take-up in Québec : challenges for fathers

- **Diane-Gabrielle Tremblay, Ph.D.**
- Professor, Téléuq, University of Québec
- Research Chair on the Socio-Organizational Challenges of the Knowledge Economy
- CURA on Work-Life Balance over the Lifecourse
- www.telug.ca/chaireecosavoir
- www.telug.ca/aruc-gats

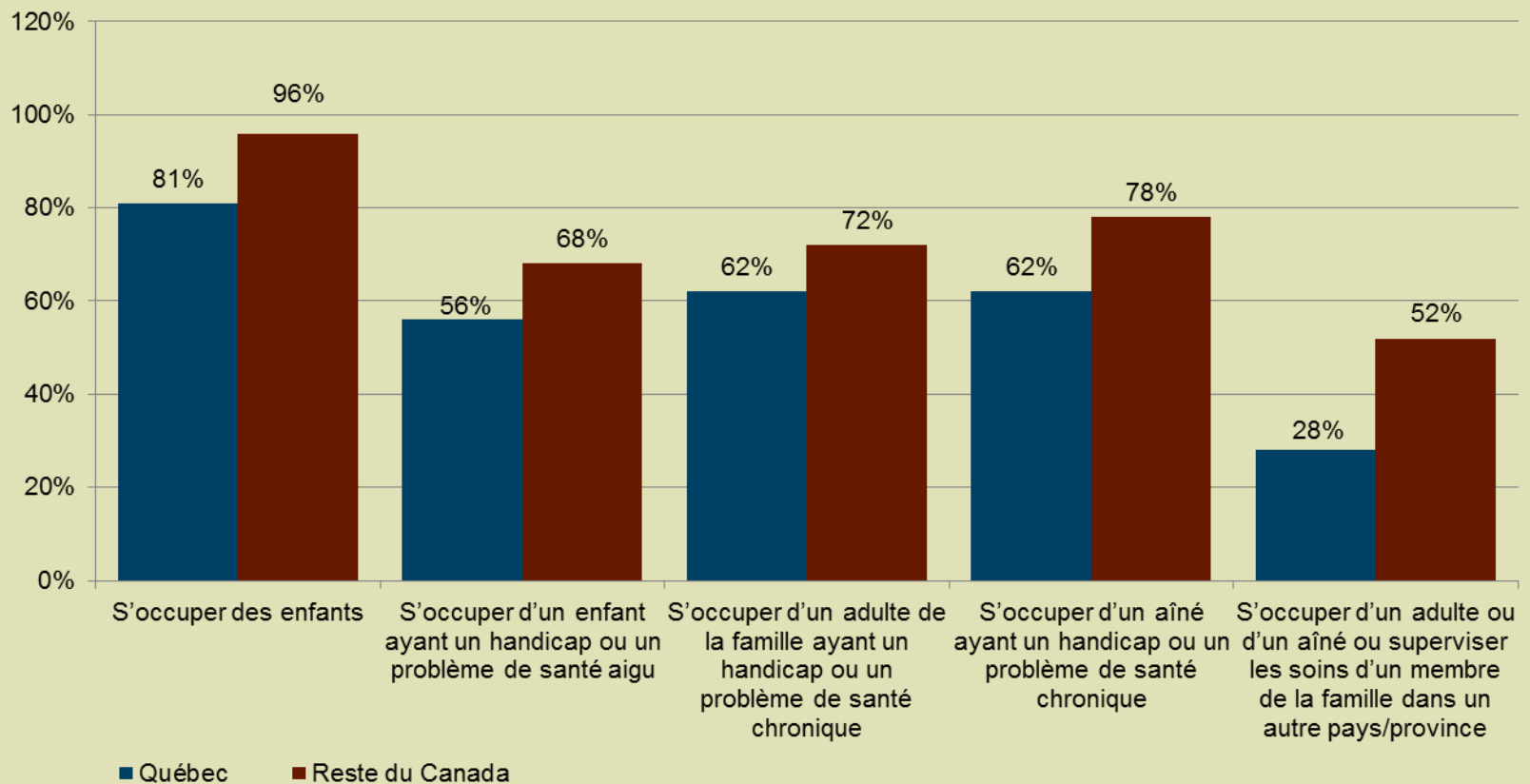


General context: Québec closer to Cumulative and Dual Earner Model of Work-Life relation

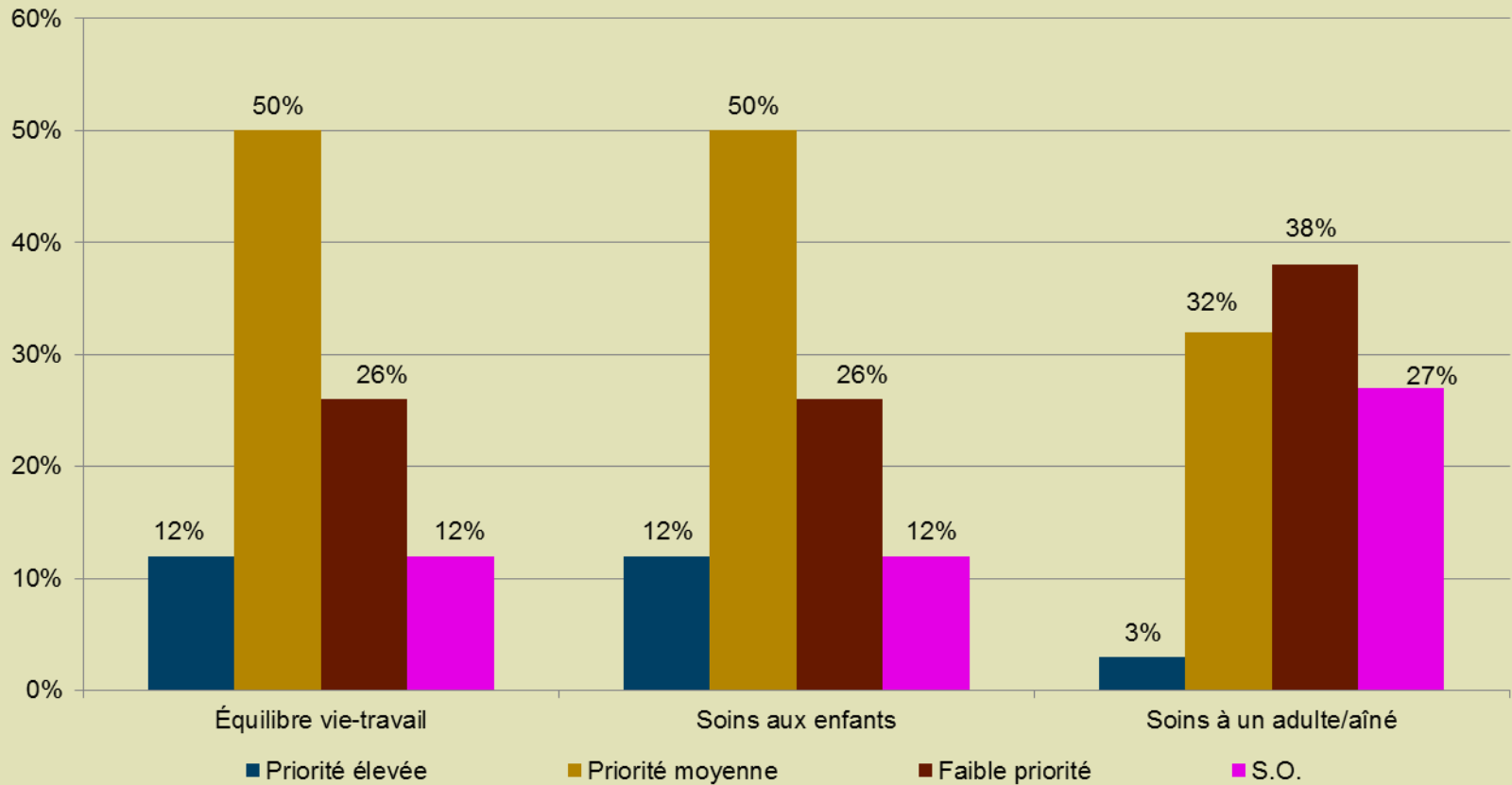
(Hantrais -Letablier)

- **Public policy favors work-life integration in Québec (Canada a bit less, as no paternity leave reserved for fathers)**
- **Also better daycare system in Québec; public low cost daycare system**
- **Dual earner model dominates and work-life integration, but choice is possible, and of course some more traditional couples with one or 1,5 earner**

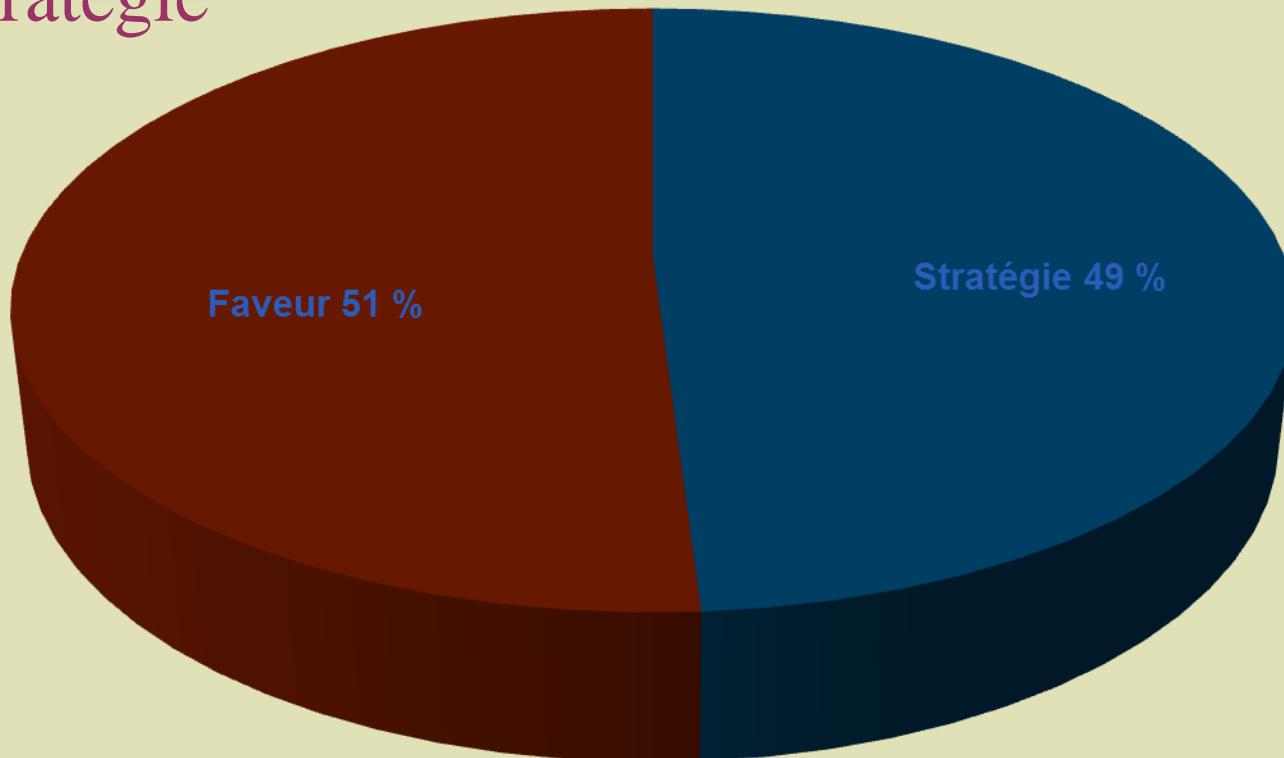
Expérience of employers whose employees assume some work-life support (Vanier + ARUC-GATS)



What is considered an organizational priority ?



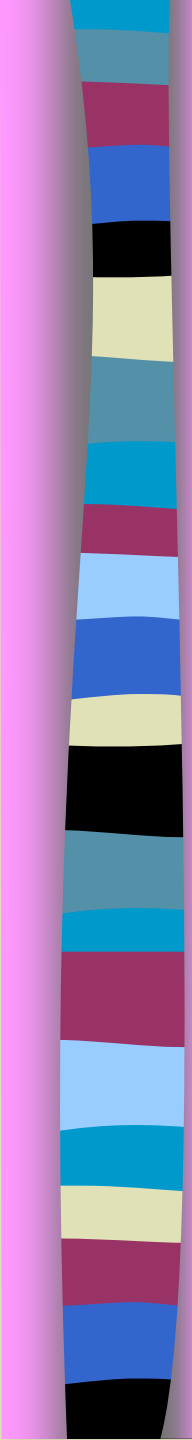
Care-Family support: is it a strategy or organizational priority ? Québec (canada: 51 %
stratégie





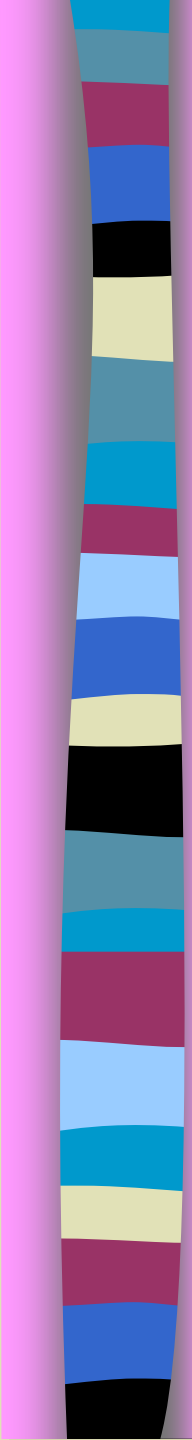
Paradox (WES research):

- Work-family support measures are linked to ‘good jobs’ and not necessarily to employees or positions where people need them (female restaurant, hotel and service workers, ...)
- **The offer of childcare or eldercare is more frequently found in firms where there are more men and women without children.**
- **Related to ‘human resources packages’ : good packages in good jobs**



Québec Parental Insurance Program (QPIP)

- Québec introduced the father's quota in 2006 and participation of fathers went from 22 % to 80 % today.
- 2 regimes:
 - 5 week leave with lower wage replacement
 - 3 week leave with higher wage replacement
 - Possibility to share the rest of the 35 weeks with mothers



Fathers who used only the Paternity Leave (and no part of Parental Leave)

-75 % chose the basic regime of 5 weeks leave (48 % because of longer length), and 25 % the special regime (49 % for higher wage replacement rate; 12 % because they had to return to work; 12 % because of mother's preference)

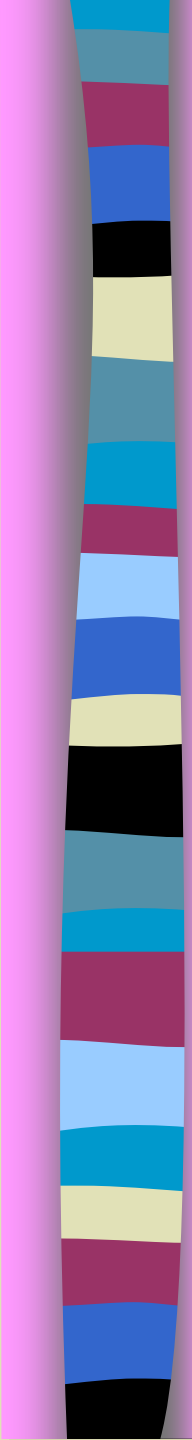
-Fathers who use the QPIP have a higher level of education than the average of Quebec workers (33 % have a university degree)

-71 % are aged 18 to 34 ans , 40 % have a unionized job, 50 % are taking leave for first child



Why do they take the paternity leave ?

- For 56 % , « to help the mother» is the first objective
- 35 %: to spend more time with the child
- 27 % : to take care of the child
- 9 % : take care of the other children
- 6% : spend time with the family
- 3 %: to rest...
- 2% : get used to their role as a father



Why do fathers not take more leave time ?

- mainly because they are sharing with mother (54 %) and she is taking most of the leave.
- 17 % *had to* go back to work
- 8 % *wanted* to go back to work
- 6% wage replacement was too low
- 5 % enough time off
- 4 % lack of information on the program

Also, mothers are on QPIP leave in 89 % of cases when fathers take only Paternity leave, in 51 % of cases when fathers use both Paternity and Parental leave



Positive impacts of fathers' leave

- In Quebec, fathers who used paternity leave are "more likely to be absent for family reasons, which in turn would contribute to changing attitudes in workplaces that were once very resistant to men's absenteeism for family reasons "(Baillargeon, 2013: 232-233).
- while the new regime has not succeeded in eliminating the gap between the number of weeks taken by mothers (46 weeks on average) and fathers (nearly 7 weeks now-13 weeks on average when they take both forms of leave), parental insurance contributed to reduce this gap, as fathers' participation jumped from two to five weeks almost immediately after the plan was introduced, an increase of 150% (Patnaik, 2016: 23).



Challenges in use of leave

- fathers on paternity leave are usually not replaced during this period: **the work is split between the remaining employees or the projects are postponed.** This poses particular **challenges in industries where there is no slack and where employees are already on a tight schedule,** with strong **work intensity.**
- **in IT, MM and gaming, several fathers mentioned the difficulty of taking more than five weeks off.** Of the total weeks took by fathers (49), two-thirds (32) were non-consecutive weeks, which means that fathers returned to work after a few weeks at home, and took some weeks of leave later. Only 17 fo 49 leaves were consecutive and it concerned almost all fathers (13) who took less than seven weeks.
- Paternity leave is managed as an annual vacation: **to avoid being overloaded on return, fathers often do not completely cut off from work.** The technologies allow them to be connected at all times, to do tasks already in progress and several fathers even checked their professional email every day. **Consulting e-mails or responding to calls from colleagues if necessary seems to be the norm in the multimedia and IT-MM sector which we studied in more detail**



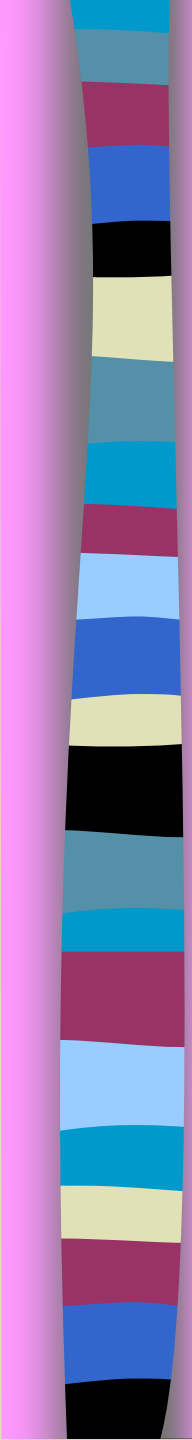
Timing and Length of Leave

- Companies often **ask the father to change the dates of his leave for a time which is more favorable for the company.**
- A management position can also prevent a father from using all the weeks he is entitled to, which can give a **negative example for other fathers:**
 - **taking responsibility as a manager often means refusing to be absent, even for the birth of a child.**
 - **The managers often have to make greater compromises in *timing and length of leave* not to disturb the work in the company... but this is also the case of many workers in sectors such as IT, MM, gaming ...or even finance counsellors...**



A few typical quotes:

- I wanted to take five weeks, as the plan allows. **But I was at that point in a *crunch*, so I could not. I was in a leadership position. I had the pressure, I did not feel it directly from the boss, but I certainly anticipated it.** So I took three weeks and took two weeks around Christmas break. I had to adapt the leave a little, considering the situation at work, it was not easy... Now I can say that after three weeks, my spouse would have liked to have me stay at home because at the third week, it was still a little difficult at home...
- I said: "Can I take three-four weeks?" And they said, "**It would best not to do that**". **No pressure, you can take them anyway, there are people who do it, but no, I did not take them.**



Using Parental Leave = more stress...but some fathers still take it

- Those who want to use a few weeks of parental leave on top of the Paternity leave (because Quebec fathers take an average of seven weeks) are faced with more stress when asking:

Some quotes:

- " To announce that I was going to take a leave, I found it really hard. Because I was the first, **nobody had ever done that. I was willing not to take it! If it was a problem for them... I did not want that, but I was trying to be flexible, I was ready not to take six months, I said: "I understand that, we can manage..."** You see, this kind of thing, I really left all the doors open. That's what I found most difficult about my job. " Pascal, 1 child, 22 weeks off)

" There's a stress ... You're really scared because all your career, you've been working in the same place for ten years. Every week, you're there 40 hours a week, that's what gives you cash to live, that's what pays your house, that's what makes your children live, you do not want your children to miss anything... But in the company, about the leave, I never had to blame anyone. **No pressure, nothing. No encouragement, no discouragement. You have the leave, you are not encouraged to take the weeks, but nobody will say anything.** (Marcus, 2 children, 24 and 28 weeks off)



Challenges and stress

- **The feeling of being a trouble-maker, of betraying his enterprise, of threatening the stability of his employment,** leads some fathers to shorten their leave, because they have clearly perceived the resistance. Some fathers thus **go beyond e-mail and telephone presence: for example, by agreeing to continue working part-time, even during the leave,** making the management of their personal schedules very complex.

An example:

- « I had asked for a full-time leave, because I thought I needed it, I was tired. At work, I was a little tired, there were things that did not suit my taste and it would have done me good, but **it was a difficult negotiation. Finally, they preferred than I do some *telework*. I could take care of my daughter the way I wanted, but they trusted me that my work would go forward anyway. I found it very difficult. Super difficult.** (Vincent, 3 children, 24 weeks each)



Impacts on promotions and career

- When fathers returned to work, some had seen promotions escape them because of the leave, whether it was clearly mentioned to them or just implicit.

For example:

- « During my leave, I received the results of an exam I had done at the beginning of the year. **While I was away, there were promotions that were given and I was not called. My employer did not consider my resume, he did not ask me for it. As I was not there, I went unnoticed in the process.** (Mario, 1 child, 5 weeks off)

« **Before I had children, I was a representative of my company in an organization with international travel and all that. And since then, this has been taken away from me and they have given it to someone else ... It's business, coincidences, I do not know, I'll never know, but it is weird.** (Vincent, 3 children, 24 weeks each)

« **At the annual evaluation, having a baby has delayed me. I was criticized for not necessarily being up-to-date about the products on the market and all that.** (Java, 2 children, 6 and 5 weeks off)



Overtime and Availability during evenings and weekends

- **Some fathers find other ways to continue their overtime as before. By teleworking, for example, when the company is open to this possibility.**
- **Quotes:**
- **« The employer is very, very, very nice, I have a key that allows me to work from home. So when my daughters sleep, I go back to work. I prefer to arrive early in the morning and leave early at night, and I have to work again after the girls are sleeping, if possible. (Mac, 2 children, 4 weeks each)**
- **« I was always doing at least 5 more hours per week. I have a laptop, I can do telework. So I arrive at home, I take care of the children, I make supper, then I... Bathing, sleeping, then at 8 o'clock, I open the laptop and I go on until about 11 pm. (Link, 2 children, 6 weeks off each)**



Leaving for another company

- Some fathers cannot find a solution and end up leaving their jobs. They clearly refer to **work-family conflict as the main reason for choosing a job with better working hours**; this is often explained also by **other frustrations, amplified by conflicts and tensions growing since the arrival of a child.**

For example:

- « I finally left my job to go to the public sector. I found that it did not make sense for my child: I left at 7:00 am, I arrived at home at 7:00, or 7:15 pm and my child is sleeping, I did not see him! He spends more time at the daycare than at home... **Where I am now, overtime is extremely rare. So it was a matter of work-life balance, that was really my reason for leaving.** (Joel, 3 children, 10, 8 and 8 weeks)

« I was tired of always having to struggle when it was time to leave work, feeling guilty because I was leaving and there were people who stayed. I did not quite agree with this way of operating. Because **even if I knew that sometimes we had rushes, I found the rushes that we had lasted relatively long.** (Abel, 2 children, 37 and 38 weeks)



Conclusion

- In general a very positive view of paternity and parental leave, and fathers take it (80 %)
- But some challenges and pressure from firms as regards **timing and length of leave, also real or anticipated impacts on career and continued overtime** ,
- Dominance of traditional male work culture of long hours, and dedication to the company projects for which they are responsible.....which can lead some to leave the company for better hours, in the public sector for ex., but others just accept the company requirements...