



the one hundred percent project



# MEN AT WORK

WHAT THEY WANT & HOW UNCONSCIOUS BIAS STOPS THEM GETTING IT

July 2013

## MEN ARE NOT GETTING WHAT THEY WANT...

**Men are satisfied with their careers, but want to contribute more to their families and their communities and to pursue interests outside of work.**

- 87 percent of (the 138) men we surveyed are satisfied with what they are achieving in their careers. However, nearly 30 percent of men are currently not satisfied with the contribution they are making to their family, and more than 50 percent of men are currently not satisfied with the contribution they are making to their community and the time they are spending on other life pursuits.

**Men want greater work-life balance and say their life, as a whole, is better if they get it.**

- 76 percent of men said that there has been a time when they have needed greater work-life balance. 65 percent of men who are satisfied with their life as a whole agree that their work-life balance is right for their current situation. Only 40 percent of men who are not satisfied with their life think their work-life balance is right.

**Men don't ask for greater work-life balance, even if they perceive their organisation to be supportive of employees who do.**

- Even though 76 percent of men have needed greater work-life balance at some stage in their career, only 27 percent of men have asked for it. Men's perception of their organisation as supportive of employees having work-life balance did not increase the likelihood that they would request greater work-life balance for themselves.

**Men implicitly believe work-life balance is relevant and appropriate for women, not for men.**

- A test of unconscious cognition showed that men associate work-life balance with women more strongly than they associate it with men, at least implicitly. This suggests that they perceive work-life balance policies and flexible working arrangements to be more relevant, and more appropriately used by women than by men.

**Men won't ask for greater work-life balance for themselves, when they implicitly believe it is relevant and appropriate for women, not for men.**

- The stronger a man's implicit association with work-life balance and women, the less likely he is to request work-life balance for himself. Even if men explicitly indicate that they would like greater work-life balance, they are unlikely to ask for it when it conflicts with their own implicit beliefs that work-life balance policies exist for women, rather than for men.

**Women also implicitly believe that work-life balance is for women, not for men, and may be reinforcing men's reluctance to seek work-life balance**

- The (202) women that we surveyed also more strongly associated work-life balance with women than with men. This suggests that, at least implicitly, women believe that work-life balance policies and flexible working arrangements are more relevant for women, and more appropriately used by women, than by men. This is likely to reinforce men's reluctance to ask for greater work-life balance – when their female colleagues, and possibly even their female partner, do not support this choice.

## ... BECAUSE UNCONSCIOUS BIAS IS STOPPING THEM ASKING FOR IT.

## ... AND THIS IS PREVENTING WOMEN FROM GETTING WHAT THEY WANT TOO.

The women we have surveyed and conducted research with over the past years are just as committed to their careers as men. However, if men don't feel they can request the work-life balance they want, then women will continue to carry most of the burden of maintaining a home and raising the children. As they can't share this burden, more women than men will continue to ask for flexible working arrangements such as part-time work. This will perpetuate the inaccurate view that women who access these initiatives are less committed to their careers and not willing to put in the time required to climb the corporate ladder.

This study indicates that men's own unconscious bias about work-life balance actually has a bigger impact on whether they will access these initiatives than the support for work-life balance shown by their managers and the organisation's policies and practices. The implication for organisations is that, as well as providing support for work-life balance through gender-neutral policies and practices, there is a need to raise awareness of and reduce men's unconscious bias in order to make accessing these initiatives palatable to both genders.

Additionally, this study indicates that women are likely to, at least unconsciously, be acting in ways that reinforce men's reluctance to ask for greater work-life balance, by failing to support the men in their lives who are making this choice (colleagues, employees, husbands or partners). This suggests that it is very important to raise awareness of, and reduce, female managers' unconscious bias against men accessing greater work-life balance.

Challenging and addressing the reasons that men do not ask for the work-life balance they want, and encouraging men to take up opportunities for flexible working will:

1. Enrich their work and family life
2. Improve their job satisfaction and engagement at work
3. Enhance their overall sense of well-being, and
4. Help open up opportunities for women.

**The 100% Project is a not-for-profit organisation that aims to see 100 percent of Australia's leadership talent, female and male, equally contributing to our social and economic future. We exist because women are currently not given the opportunity to contribute equally, especially at senior levels. Women are under-represented on most Boards and in the senior management teams of most Australian organisations.**

**We believe the reasons for this can be found in the day-to-day practices and mindsets that shape how most organisations are run. The 100% Project's mission is to challenge leaders in Australian businesses and organisations to identify those practices and mindsets and take action to change them.**

**The 100% Project conducts research and runs other programs that are designed to help make this happen. We recognise we have to engage men if we are to achieve meaningful change – because men run most of the businesses and organisations where change is required and organisational culture is generally defined in male terms.**

**For more information about The 100% Project visit our website [www.the100percentproject.com.au](http://www.the100percentproject.com.au) and find out how to become a Champion, Volunteer or Corporate Partner.**

**Download the full report at [www.the100percentproject.com.au](http://www.the100percentproject.com.au)**

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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