Marriage and parenthood among early and mid-career accountancy professionals

SNIPPET REPORT • **SURVEY CONDUCTED JUNE - JULY 2026**

Aspirations remain, but work demands, visibility expectations and practical considerations shape how accountancy professionals navigate marriage and parenthood.

FAST FACTS

585
total respondents
survey sample

64%
are open to marriage or intend to marry
not currently married

79%
say work demands reduce relationship opportunities
single, not dating

71%
say parenthood feels difficult alongside professional demands
without children

81%
feel pressure to be visible to be seen as committed
all respondents

69%
identify flexible work as the top workplace support
all respondents

What the findings suggest

Young accountancy professionals are not simply opting out of marriage and parenthood. Many remain open, but face practical constraints around work intensity, relationship formation, parenthood costs, childcare, career confidence and the usability of support.

The central implication: support must close the gap between policy design and lived experience - across relationships, parenthood and work.

Report structure: This report brings together survey findings and insights from the ISCA Young Professionals Advisory Committee (YPAC) across relationship formation, parenthood and fertility, workplace realities, support gaps and stakeholder roles.

Source: **ISCA Marriage & Parenthood Sentiments study, June - July 2026.** Figures shown as percentages; bases vary by question and survey routing.

Respondent profile

Predominantly mid-career, across relationship and family stages

585

total respondents

survey sample

70%

aged 35 - 45

mid-career majority

64%

married

current family stage

74%

have children*

among ever-married

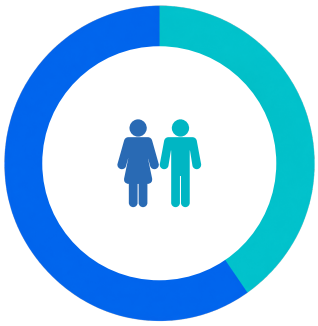
24%

single, not dating

relationship formation lens

Gender mix

59%
women



41%
men

Working experience

74%

have more than 10 years of working experience

Why this matters:

The study captures perspectives across a range of relationship and family stages, from those who are single to those who are married and raising children.

Respondents are also predominantly mid-career, with many navigating marriage, parenthood and caregiving alongside work.

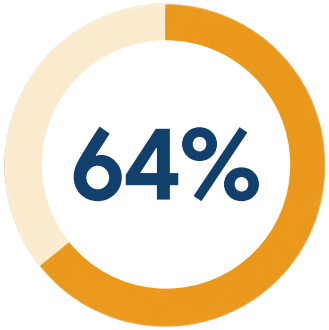
KEY INSIGHT

This gives the study a useful spread of perspectives across different life stages and experiences relevant to marriage and parenthood.

Base: all respondents n=585. "Parenthood base: married, separated, divorced or widowed respondents.

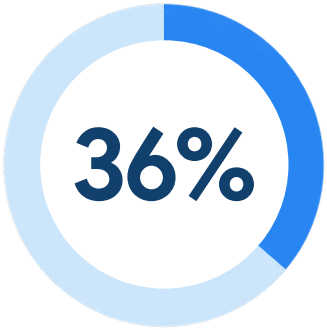
Marriage remains relevant, but many remain open and undecided

Work demands and social fatigue can constrain relationship formation



are either open to marriage or intend to marry

Base: not currently married



are open to marriage but unsure

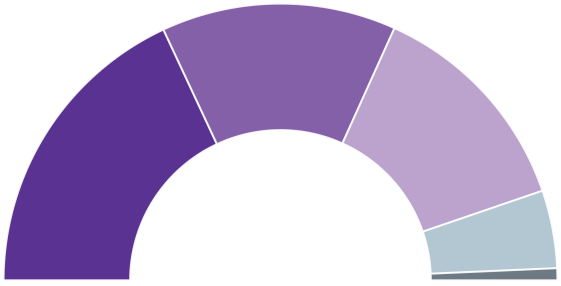
Base: not currently married



say work demands affect ability to build and sustain relationships

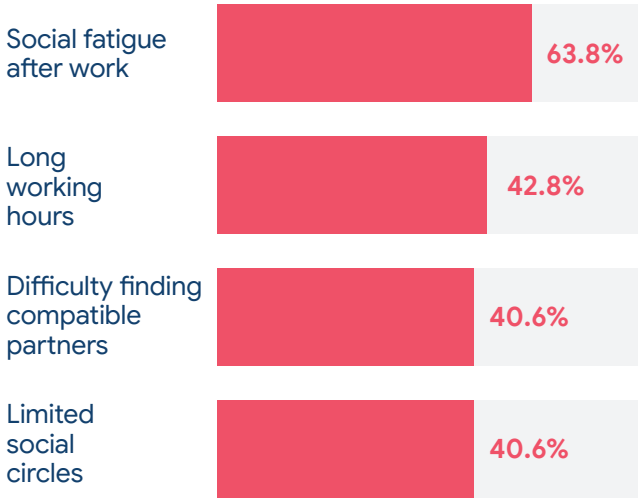
Base: not currently married

Marriage outlook



Open but unsure	36.1%
Intend to marry	27.4%
Do not intend to marry	26.0%
Not thought about it	9.1%
Other	1.4%

Relationship formation pressures



KEY INSIGHT

The issue is not only aspiration.

For many single accountancy professionals, work demands reduce the time, energy and opportunities available to form meaningful relationships.

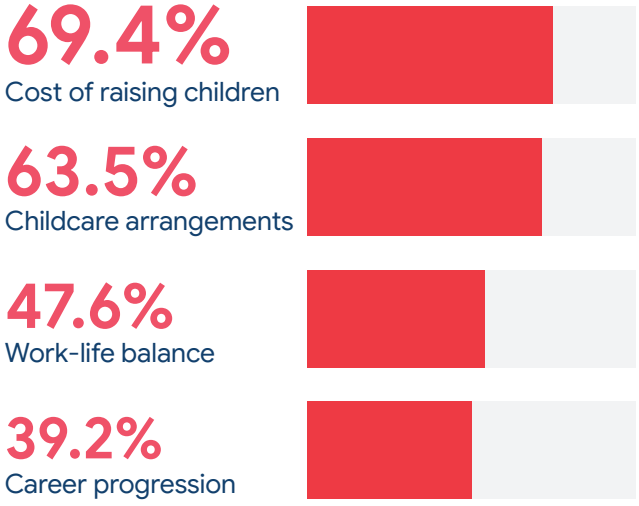
Bases: marriage outlook and attitude sentiments n=206; relationship formation barriers n=138.

Parenthood decisions involve multiple practical, career and biological considerations

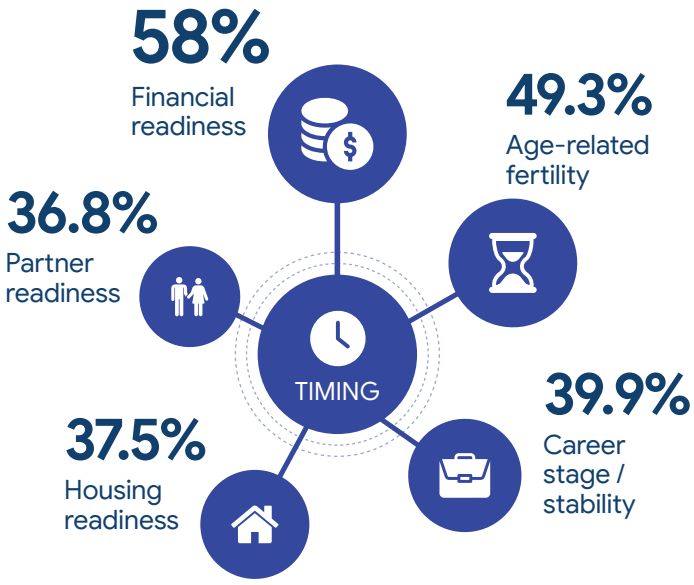
Intentions and timing are shaped by financial readiness, childcare, work-life balance, career stage and fertility considerations



Before becoming parents, top concerns



Factors influencing timing



KEY INSIGHT

Parenthood is not a single-factor decision. Cost and childcare matter, but so do work-life balance, career progression, housing, partner readiness and age-related fertility considerations

Bases: parenthood outlook n=297; pre-parenthood concerns n=288; timing question routed to parents, parents base n=288.

Support is established, but expectations may be moving faster

Established measures are visible, but satisfaction and awareness are uneven across the support journey.

Established support such as housing, childcare and leave is comparatively better recognised, but even better-rated areas attract only around half saying they are fairly or very satisfied. Parental and caregiving leave, in particular, receives mixed assessments, with a substantial proportion also seeing significant room for improvement.

all respondents, n=585

Relatively better regarded

% aware and fairly / very satisfied

- 54.0% Childcare / infant care
- 51.3% Housing support
- 51.1% Parental / caregiving leave

Improvement pressure points

% aware but dissatisfied / significant improvements needed

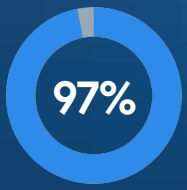
- 42.9% Financial support
- 42.6% Parental / caregiving leave
- 40.5% Childcare affordability

Lower awareness

% not aware of existing measures

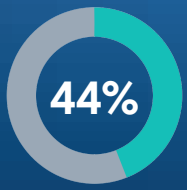
- 49.1% Fertility support
- 46.5% Social connection
- 44.3% Family planning

Fertility knowledge gap



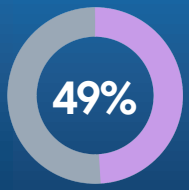
aware fertility declines with age

n=297



feel sufficiently informed about fertility options

n=297



not aware of fertility-related support / preservation options

n=297

KEY INSIGHT

Established support is comparatively well recognised, but satisfaction remains moderate and expectations may be moving faster. The pressure points appear to be shifting from whether support exists to whether it remains adequate for current needs, while awareness gaps are more evident in newer or less traditional areas such as fertility support, social connection and family planning.

Bases vary by support and fertility questions. Figures shown in percentages.

Visibility culture can make flexibility feel less career-safe

Commitment is still associated with being seen, working long hours and remaining available beyond normal working hours.

81% feel pressure to be visible or present at work

61% say long hours are perceived as commitment

60% feel expected to remain available outside working hours

32% feel career progression is compatible with marriage and parenthood

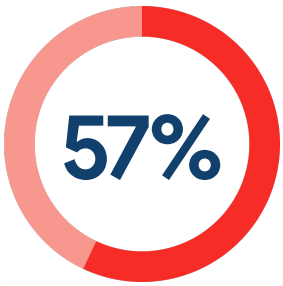
The career-safe flexibility gap

Perceived career risk

69.7% Caregiving time may harm progression

69.6% Caregivers viewed as less committed

67.7% FWA may harm progression



experienced or observed caregiving-related career disadvantage

Confidence to use flexibility

42.4% Comfortable using FWA for caregiving

35.0% FWA without negative judgement

What young accountants want

Flexible and hybrid work are the two most frequently selected workplace measures.

69% Flexible work

53% Hybrid work

KEY INSIGHT

Flexible work arrangements (FWA) is the most frequently selected workplace support, yet visibility, long hours and after-hours availability can make it feel unsafe to use without judgement or career cost.

Bases: workplace culture items n=585; career disadvantage question n=585

Perspectives from ISCA Young Professional Advisory Committee (YPAC)

Support exists, but lived realities expose design and experience gaps.

YPAC members recognised existing support, but their discussion showed that gaps emerge when policies meet real-life journeys, access constraints and workplace realities.

01

Support does not always match today's life journeys

Support before marriage, during the path to parenthood and as family needs evolve can differ from lived realities, including housing, fertility considerations and older grandparents.

The support after the baby is delivered is good. But before that, there is probably more we can do."

KEY INSIGHT: Support may need to follow a more varied and extended life journey, rather than assume a standard sequence from marriage to parenthood.

02

Access and experience matter as much as existence of support

Support may be available, but practical access and experience can differ across touchpoints such as maternity care, childcare and flexible work.

With the public route, you don't get to stay with one gynae."

KEY INSIGHT: Availability alone is not enough; convenience, accessibility, usability and confidence in using support shape its real value.

03

Workplace culture can undermine otherwise supportive policies

Parental leave and flexibility can still carry workplace and career costs when culture, workload and progression expectations are not aligned.

On paper, a lot of companies have that. But in reality, how many of us can take it with peace of mind?"

KEY INSIGHT: The challenge is not simply to offer more flexibility or leave, but to make family-supportive practices workable for employees, teams and employers.

04

A more integrated and sustainable system is needed

Ideas include more responsive support, team coverage, career protection, work redesign and practical help for employers.

The more children you have, your needs vary."

KEY INSIGHT: YPAC members are pointing towards a more integrated ecosystem that connects family support, workplace practices and employer capacity.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The next phase of Marriage & Parenthood support should combine targeted new measures with a more joined-up approach that closes gaps between policy and lived experience.

YPAC members verbatims lightly edited for readibility.

Turning family-friendly policies into workplace practices

Government policies provide an important foundation, but meaningful change also depends on how employers translate these policies into everyday workplace practices, supported by professional and membership bodies through sector-wide initiatives.

How different stakeholders can contribute

Employers / Profession

Turn policy intent into workable day-to-day practices.

01 Make flexibility usable
Support flexible work with clear expectations, outcome-based performance and manager support.

02 Strengthen career confidence
Reduce perceived career penalties linked to maternity, caregiving and flexible work

03 Design for team sustainability
Plan workload, coverage and job design so flexibility works for employees, teams and business continuity.

Professional & Membership Bodies

Provide sector-level support, advocacy and implementation tools.

01 Build sector infrastructure
Develop practical solutions where market gaps persist, including flexible talent and temporary backfill.

02 Represent and advocate
Bring professionals' lived experiences into policy and employer conversations.

03 Convene and amplify good practice
Share workable approaches, guidance and tolls that help organisations implement family-friendly practices.

Effective Implementation • Workplace Practice • Sector Solutions

NEW

NEW ISCA INITIATIVE

FlexConnect



Supports changing workforce preferences and marriage & parenthood aspirations, while helping employers manage temporary coverage and workload needs.