EXPANDING WORK-LIFE PERSPECTIVES:

TALENT MANAGEMENT IN ASIA

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MAKING THE CASE FOR WORK-LIFE EFFECTIVENESS IN ASIA

Work-life effectiveness is a key concern for employees in many Asian regions[1] where rapidly developing local economies and work cultures often require long hours and overtime.[2] The issue is drawing the attention of global organizations.[3]

Yet despite increased interest, the topic of work-life effectiveness in Asia remains relatively unexamined in the research literature. Greater understanding of which workplace initiatives best apply in different cultural contexts and within specific local economies[4] must be developed. As with other workplace strategies, implementing work-life programs requires the thoughtful integration of a global approach and local customs to ensure the strategies make sense in employees' day-to-day lives.[5]

This report seeks to contribute to this understanding by providing a snapshot of the perspectives of high-potential employees who were tapped by their company as promising future leaders. These women and men are among the best and the brightest, making important contributions to organizations based in some of the fastest-growing global economies. Understanding respondents' work-life experiences can help organizations consider:

1. Viable strategies, programs, and practices to increase workplace effectiveness within diverse cultural contexts.
2. How flexibility can become a tool to recruit and retain high-potential employees in Asia.
3. How to best address the work-life needs of both women and men working in these regions.

Work-life concerns are especially relevant to women's workforce participation and advancement. In many regions of Asia, women are a viable yet largely underutilized talent pool. Hiring skilled women can provide a competitive advantage for global companies,[6] especially in countries such as India and China, where women's economic and workforce participation is on the rise.[7] Global enterprises have the potential to influence employment practices–across both borders and continents,[8] creating work environments that foster greater consideration of employees' unique work-life challenges and that are more inclusive of women.

1. Boston College Center For Work & Family, Executive Briefings Series, *Work-Life in India* (2008) and *Flexible Work Arrangements in Asia* (2010). Anthony McDonnell, Pauline Stanton and John Burgess, "Multinational enterprises in Australia: Two decades of international human resources management reviewed," *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, vol 49, no. 1 (2011): p. 9-45; Winnie Ng, "The State of Work-Life Balance in Hong Kong" (October 2010) and Winnie Ng and Kate Vernon, "The State of Work-Life Balance in Seoul" (June 2010); Amy Wharton and Mary Blair-Loy, "Long Work Hours and Family Life: A Cross-National Study of Employees' Concerns," *Journal of Family Issues*, vol. 27, no. 3 (March 2006): p. 415-436.
2. Winnie Ng; Winnie Ng and Kate Vernon; Amy Wharton and Mary Blair.
3. Boston College Center For Work & Family, 2008, 2010; Deepali Bagati, *2010 India Benchmarking Report* (Catalyst, 2011). McDonnell et al.; Peng Wang, John J. Lawler and Kan Shi, Work-Family Conflict, "Self-Efficacy, Job Satisfaction, and Gender: Evidence from Asia," *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, vol. 17, no. 3 (2010): p. 298-308.
4. Anne Bardoel and Helen De Cieri, "Developing a Work/Life Strategy in a Multinational Enterprise (MNE)," *Sloan Work and Family Research Network Encyclopedia* (2006). Htwe Thein, Siobhan Austen, Janice Currie and Erica Lewin, "The impact of cultural context on the perception of work/family balance by professional women in Singapore and Hong Kong," *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, vol 10, no. 3 (2010): p. 303-320.
5. Bardoel and De Cieri.
6. Elizabeth Harrin, "The Gender Advantage for Multinational Firms," *The Glass Hammer* (January 27, 2011). Carmen Nobel, "It Pays to Hire Women in Countries That Won't," *HBR Research & Ideas* (October 11, 2010). Jordan Siegel, Lynn Pyun' B.Y. Cheon, "Multinational Firms, Labor Market Discrimination, and the Capture of Competitive Advantage by Exploiting the Social Divide," HBS Working Paper 11-011 (January 7, 2011).
7. Boston College Center For Work & Family, *Gender Diversity Benchmark for Asia 2011*. *Intercultural Communication News*, "India Strives To Keep Women In The Workplace" (March 23, 2011).
8. McDonnell et al.

ABOUT THE STUDY PARTICIPANTS

This study focuses on the experiences of a sample of 1,834 high-potential employees (44 percent women and 56 percent men) working in Asia and in the context of a U.S.- or European-based global organization.[9] Specifically, respondents worked in China, Hong Kong, India, Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, and Thailand. For more information on participant professional and demographic profiles, please see Appendix 1.

DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS USED IN THIS REPORT

Though work-life concepts and definitions may vary, the idea of "work-life" entails one's ability to manage the demands of work and personal life, as well as whether the demands associated with different roles might conflict with one another. Within the workplace, work-life often becomes synonymous with programs that support employees' work-life needs.[10] Some important concepts that are used in this report include:

▶ **Work-Life Fit:** The ability to manage work and personal life demands effectively.[11]

▶ **Work-Life Effectiveness:** A workplace strategy and approach that supports achieving work-life fit both in employees' personal and professional lives.[12]

▶ **Workplace Effectiveness:** Refers to workplaces that adopt a Work-Life Effectiveness approach to how work gets done.

▶ **Flexibility:** The ability to define how, where, and when work gets done as well as how careers are organized.[13]

▶ **Flexible Work Arrangements:** A variety of work structures that support workplace flexibility. Examples include flexible scheduling, such a compressed workweek and alternative work schedules, flexibility in the number of work hours (e.g., reduced hours, job shares), and flexibility in work location (e.g., telework).[14]

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9. The data used in this study are a subsample of the data from the global leaders survey conducted in 2006–2008 by Catalyst and the Families and Work Institute, Nancy M. Carter and Ellen Galinsky, *Leaders in a Global Economy: Talent Management in European Cultures* (Catalyst, 2008). The original study used quantitative and qualitative data from 4,585 senior and pipeline leaders (37 percent women and 63 percent men) from five global companies. For the purpose of these analyses only pipeline leaders were selected (see methodological Appendix for more information about both professional and demographic profile as well as country and gender distribution). Survey respondents all worked for a limited number of global companies hence, despite the large sample, we cannot generalize the findings beyond the context of this group.
10. Sloan Work and Family Research Network, Glossary.
11. Ellen Galinsky, Nancy Carter, and James T. Bond, *Leaders in a Global Economy: Finding a Fit For Talent* (Catalyst, 2008).
12. Lisa D'Annolfo Levey, Meryle Mahrer Kaplan, and Aimee Horowitz, *Making Change—Beyond Flexibility: Work-Life Effectiveness as an Organizational Tool for High Performance* (Catalyst, 2008).
13. D'Annolfo Levey, et al. The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Workplace Flexibility Initiative. Though not the focus of this research, workplace flexibility also entails career path flexibility, which provides a range of possible career development options, as well as the range of timing and speed of these movements over the course of an employee's career. This approach considers an employee's career path, the dual drivers of employee life stage, and professional ambitions and demands.
14. *Flexible Work Arrangements: A Definition and Examples* (Georgetown University Law Center, 2010).

Table 1: Findings at a Glance

WOMEN AND MEN IN ASIA	WOMEN IN ASIA
Reported that their current focus is on their job.	Reported they were less likely than men to say they would advance to senior/CEO positions in their career.
Stated that they wanted to advance to higher levels in their career.	
Said that having a good fit between life on and off the job was very important to them and that they appreciated their company's flexibility options.	Were less likely than men to say that their employers provided enough flexibility for them to manage work and personal life demands effectively.
Were more likely to struggle managing work and personal life because of work-related challenges (e.g., schedule conflict and overwork) than due to family/personal concerns.	

Both women and men respondents cited job pressures and stress, long hours, and other life priorities as the most important reasons for not aiming to achieve CEO or senior leadership roles in their overall career tracks.

SUMMARY

- Both women and men report high levels of job and career focus, *and* state that they value having a good fit between work and personal life.
- Work-life-related challenges, such as long hours, stress, and the inability to attend to other life priorities affected both women's and men's career decisions *but* were especially likely to hurt women's long-term career aspirations and goals.
- A "mismatch" emerged between women's and men's flexibility needs and their perceptions about the level of flexibility that their companies provide.

BOTH WOMEN AND MEN IN ASIA REPORT HIGH WORK FOCUS AND INTEREST IN ADVANCING

Regardless of gender or the country where they worked, high-potential employees in this group reported high levels of job focus and career ambition. When asked about their work-life priorities, 64 percent of respondents reported that their current work-life emphasis was on their job, 23 percent reported having "dual" focus (i.e., putting as much emphasis on work as they did on family), and the remaining 15 percent reported that their current emphasis was on their family (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: WORK, FAMILY, AND DUAL FOCUS (Overall Sample, By Gender)[a]
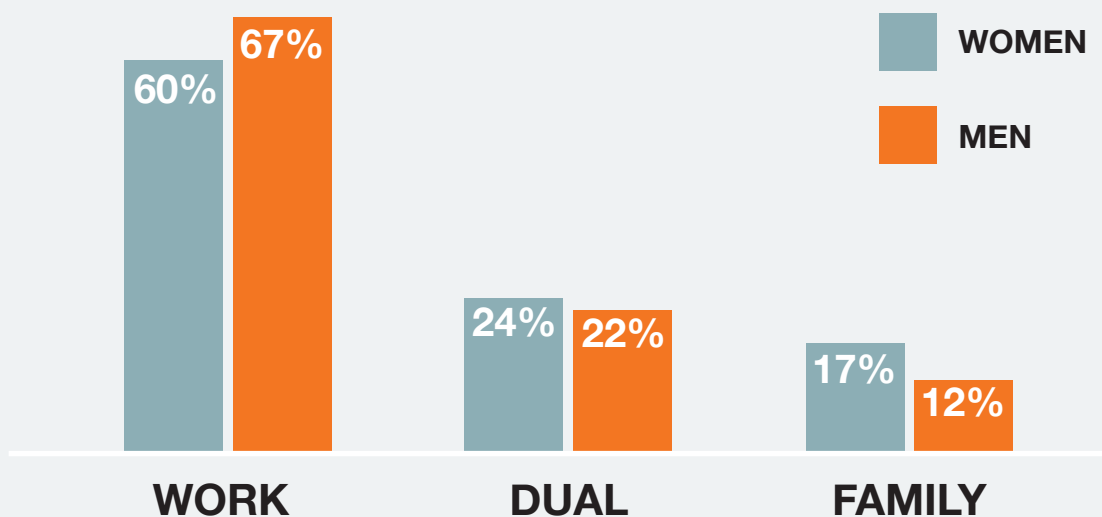
ᵃGroup percentages were rounded up; some totals amount to more than 100 percent.

Respondents also conveyed interest in advancing further in their careers. Eighty-nine percent of employees said that they wanted to move to a higher level position within the next five years (no gender differences) (see Figure 2), and more than half (56 percent) said that they were aiming to attain very senior (executive or CEO) leadership positions by the end of their careers (see Figure 3).

Men were more likely than women to say that achieving a senior role was their ultimate career goal.[15] However, regardless of gender, both women and men who had reduced their aspirations to attain more senior positions cited the same top four reasons for their decision: job pressures, long hours, stress on relationships, and other life priorities.[16]

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15. In the sample as a whole, men (64%) were more likely than women (46%) to say they aspired to a senior executive or CEO position while women (46%) were more likely than men (31%) to say they aspired to a middle managerial role. These gender differences were driven by China (for CEO/Senior Leader men 65% and women 39%, while for middle-managerial roles women 55% and men 32%), Singapore (for CEO/Senior Leader men 62% and women 40%, while for middle-managerial roles women 49% and men 34%), and Thailand (for middle-managerial roles only, women 57% and men 34%). No gender differences emerged in the other countries. See also individual country summaries.

16. Survey respondents were asked to mark any number of reasons that had affected their decision to scale down their career aspirations. The most frequently marked responses among both women and men were: "job pressures" (34% men and 38% women); "work hours" (30% men and 36% women); "stress on my important relationships" (30% men and 36% women); and "decision to emphasize other aspects of my life" (33% for both women and men).

FIGURE 2: ASPIRATIONS FOR NEXT LEVEL, NEXT FIVE YEARS
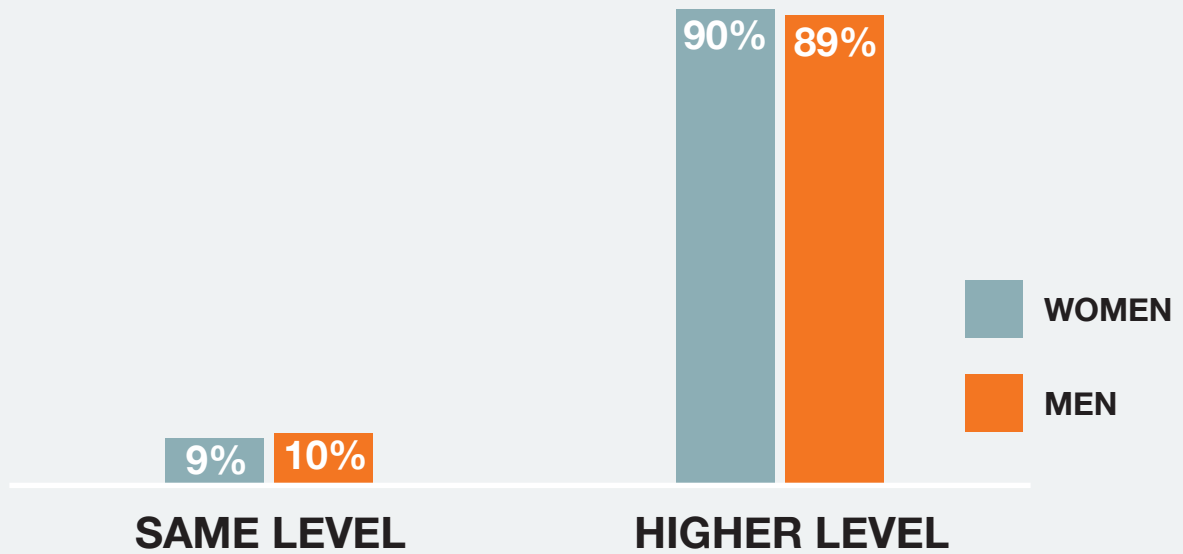(Overall Sample, By Gender)

WOMEN
MEN

90% 89%

9% 10%

SAME LEVEL   **HIGHER LEVEL**

FIGURE 3: ASPIRATIONS, CAREER OVERALL (Overall Sample, By Gender)[a]
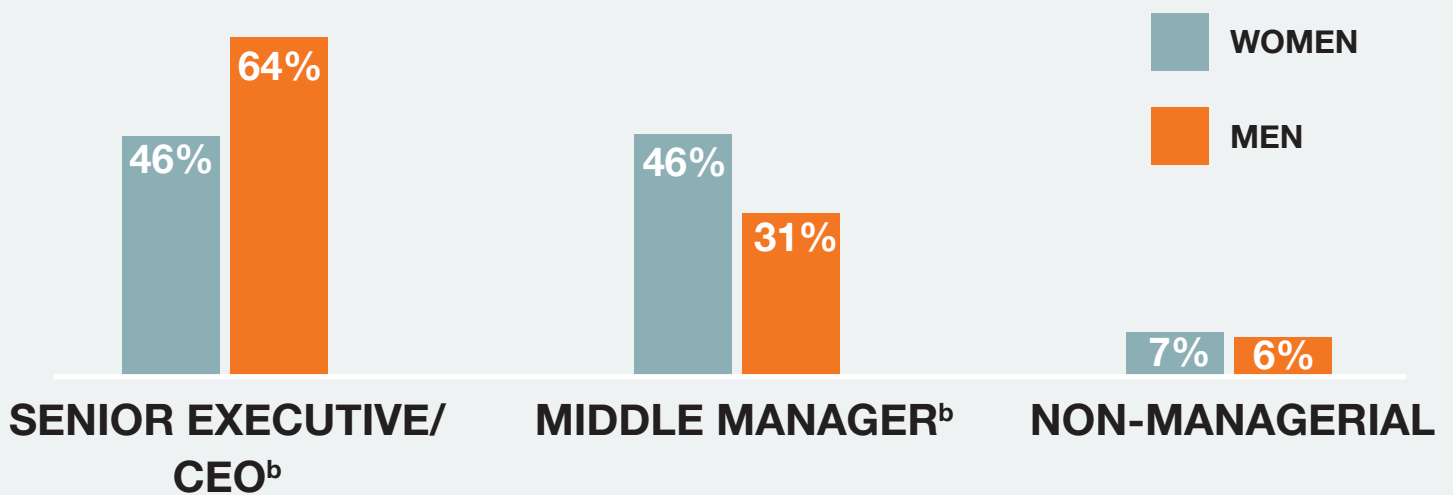
WOMEN
MEN

64%

46%   46%

31%

7% 6%

SENIOR EXECUTIVE/ CEO[b]   **MIDDLE MANAGER**[b]   **NON-MANAGERIAL**

[a] Group percentages were rounded up; some totals amount to more than 100 percent.

[b] Significant differences for $p<.05$.

BOTH WOMEN AND MEN IN ASIA VALUE WORK-LIFE AND WORKPLACE EFFECTIVENESS

Our findings show that, in addition to valuing their jobs and careers, high-potential employees in Asia appreciated work-life fit and workplace flexibility. In order to better understand respondents' experiences managing work and personal life, we looked at different types of responses, including:

- How they managed work and personal demands.
- To what extent they *valued* work-life effectiveness and flexibility at this particular point in their career;
- Whether their workplace provided enough flexibility to meet their work-life needs.

Both Women and Men Report Similar Experiences Managing Work and Personal Life

We found many gender similarities in women's and men's ratings of how they managed work and personal demands. About half of respondents said that managing work and other aspects of life was currently difficult for them (see Figure 4).[17]

Notably, among those who viewed managing work and personal life as challenging, the struggle came from work-related (e.g., schedule conflict and overwork)[18] rather than from family related concerns. Specifically:

- Respondents who reported challenges managing work and personal life were especially likely to report that they were frequently prioritizing work over family.[19]
- Respondents who said that it was easy for them to manage work and personal life were more likely to also say workplace flexibility was prevalent within their company; that is, the more flexibility, the easier for respondents to manage work-life demands.[20]
- Respondents who said that it was easy for them to manage work and personal life were also more likely to report high levels of well-being compared to employees who reported they had difficulty managing work and personal life.[21]

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17. Respondents who found managing work and personal life "easy" were also more likely to report high levels of well-being (correlation analyses).
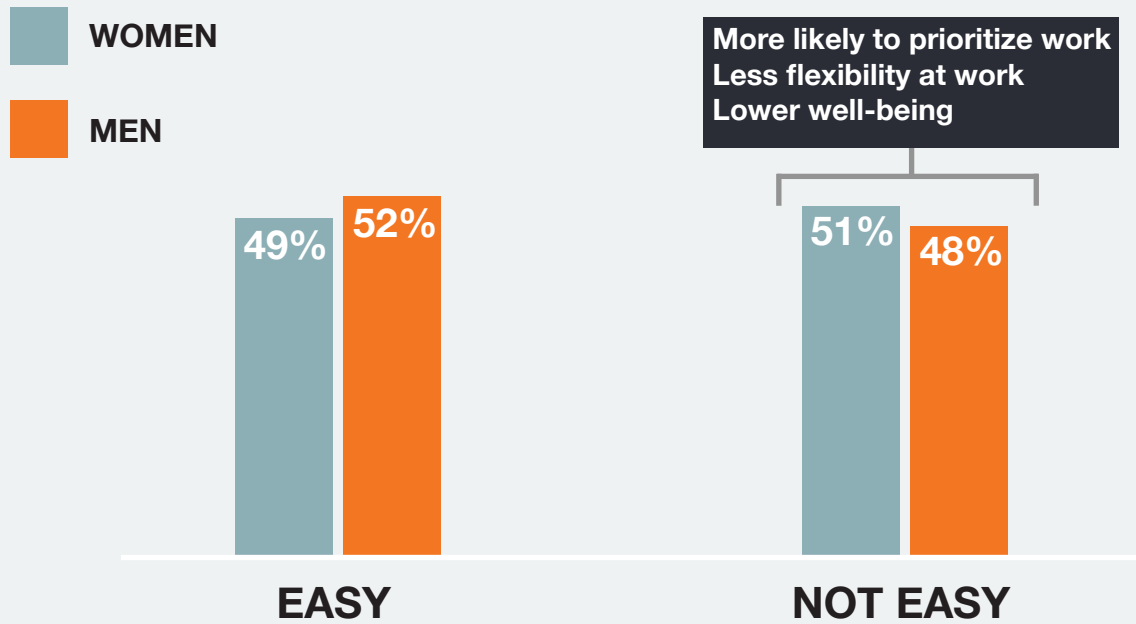18. When asked about what changes the company could make to help them better manage work and personal life, respondents' qualitative responses often addressed concerns related to face time and long hours, and mentioned flexible work options such as telecommuting and flex-time as strategies that would help them in their lives.
19. ANOVAs were run to test the differences between those respondents who rated managing work and personal life as currently "somewhat easy" or "easy" and those who rated it as "somewhat difficult" or "difficult" in terms of how often they had had prioritized work over personal life (and vice versa). Significant differences emerged ($p < .01$), where respondents who had reported challenges managing work and personal life were significantly more likely to report that they had frequently prioritized work over family than respondents who rated their ability to manage work and personal life as "easy."
20. See Appendix 2 for more information about the correlations analyses described in this section.
21. Survey respondents were asked to rate their current state of well-being based on a four-point scale, from "Poor" to "Excellent." See Appendix 2.

FIGURE 4: MANAGING WORK AND PERSONAL LIFE (Overall Sample, By Gender)

WOMEN

MEN

More likely to prioritize work
Less flexibility at work
Lower well-being

49% 52%

51% 48%

EASY

NOT EASY

Both Women and Men Value Work-Life Fit

A large majority of respondents (90 percent) indicated that they valued being able to manage work and personal life effectively.[22] As noted in Figure 5, regardless of gender, respondents rated having a good fit between life on and off the job as very important.

FIGURE 5: IMPORTANCE OF WORK-LIFE FIT (Overall Sample, By Gender)

WOMEN

MEN

89% 91%

2% 2%

9% 7%

NOT
IMPORTANT

**SOMEWHAT**
IMPORTANT

VERY
IMPORTANT
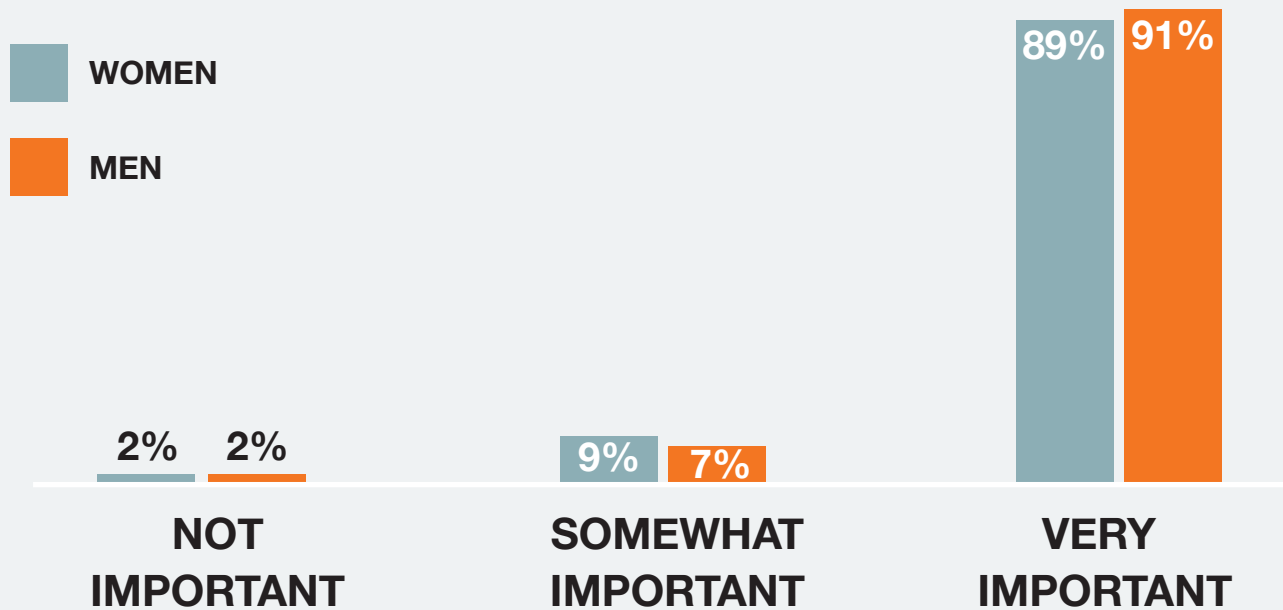
22. This measure was developed by averaging responses to four survey items: "Having the right fit between my work and personal or family life;" "having the workplace flexibility to manage my work and personal life;" "having a manageable workload;" and "having the time to focus on what's important to do at work;" Galinsky et al., p. 18.

Women Are Less Satisfied With Their Companies' Flexibility Options

When asked about their companies' flexibility approach, respondents were fairly positive, with more than 60 percent agreeing that their workplace was responsive enough to employee work-life needs.[23] Women, however, were less likely than men to agree that their workplace provided enough flexibility to manage work and personal life (see Figure 6).[24] Regardless of gender or country, working in a flexible organization was positively related to employee well-being.[25]

FIGURE 6: COMPANY PROVIDES ENOUGH FLEXIBILITY (Overall Sample, By Gender)

Greater well-being

WOMEN

MEN

DISAGREE[a]
WOMEN 38%
MEN 33%

AGREE[a]
WOMEN 62%
MEN 67%
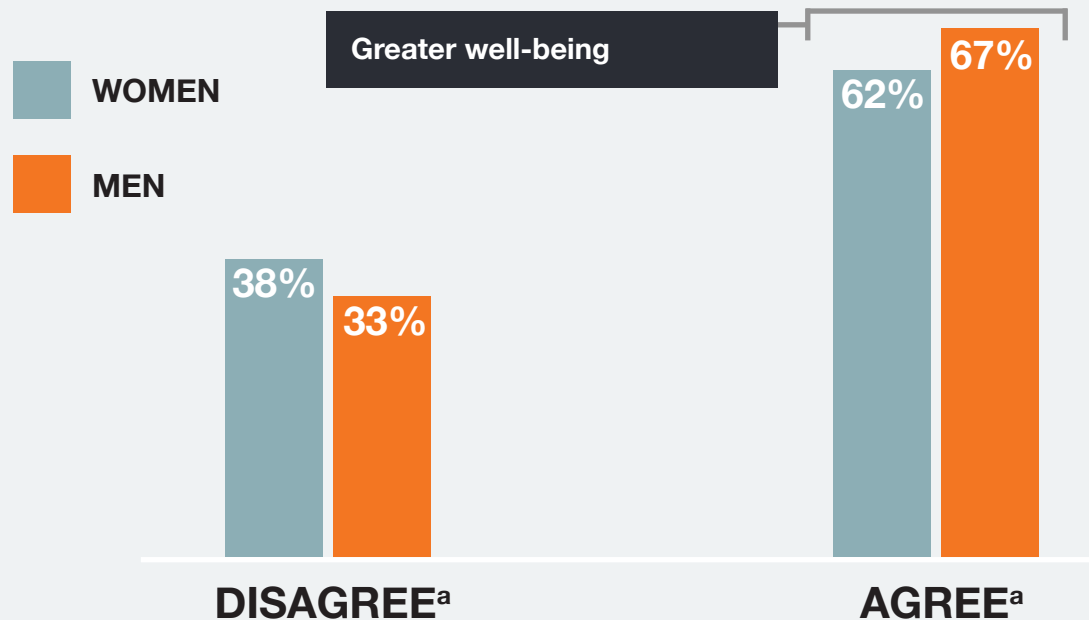
[a] significant for p<.05.

Despite Positive Ratings, an Implementation Gap Exists for Workplace Flexibility Programs

To better understand how workplace flexibility offerings met employees' needs, we compared respondents' ratings of their flexibility needs—how important work-life fit is in their own life—with their ratings of what work-life options the company provided (whether employees were given enough flexibility to manage work and personal commitments). This comparison allowed us to measure a potential "mismatch" or gap between what employees needed and what was available.[26] Despite the high percentage of respondents

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23. The workplace effectiveness measure was developed by averaging responses to three items: being able to arrange alternative schedules for family needs, having the flexibility to manage family/personal responsibilities, and not having to work on too many tasks at the same time.

24. In the sample as a whole, men (67%) were more likely than women (62%) to agree their company provided enough flexibility while women (38%) were more likely than men (33%) to disagree. These gender differences were driven by China (agree: men 63% and women 50%; disagree: women 50% and men 37%); Malaysia (agree: men 74% and women 63%; disagree: women 37% and men 26%); and Thailand (agree: men 75% and women 48%; disagree: women 52% and men 25%). No gender differences emerged in the other countries. See also individual country summaries.

25. See Appendix 2.

26. A repeated-measures MANOVA was conducted to examine differences in scores of work-life fit values and ratings of workplace flexibility options. Work-life values (M= 3.73, SD=.45) were significantly higher than workplace offerings (M=2.36, SD=.51) (F=6701, df 1, p < .001). Survey open-ended responses also suggest the need for increased flexibility options, with respondents mentioning flexible work hours, telecommuting, and a higher focus on results vs. face time as ways in which their companies can help them better manage work and personal life.

who felt their companies provided enough flexibility, for more than 80 percent of respondents our analyses showed a gap between their workplace flexibility and their work-life needs (see Figure 7).[27]

This gap might indicate that employees have lower expectations about what employers should offer or what employees are entitled to in terms of flexibility. Alternately, it may indicate a discrepancy between what programs are available and actual utilization by employees.[28]

WOMEN AND MEN

- 18% — Workplace Meets or Exceeds Needs
- 82% — Workplace Does Not Meet Needs
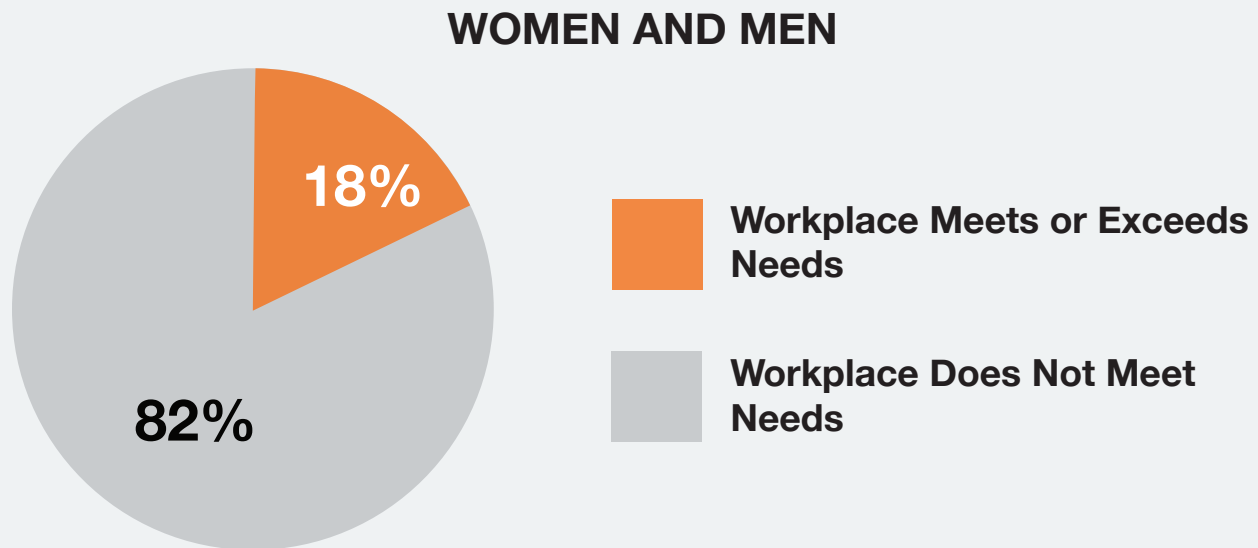
High-Potential Employees Want Employers to Provide Greater Work-Life Flexibility

This group of high-potential employees who are working in some of the fastest growing economies in Asia report:

- High levels of job focus and interest in advancing further in their careers to become the "future leaders" of their companies.
- Placing high value on work-life and workplace flexibility in their lives.
- That their organizations could be doing more to support employees' ability to manage work and personal demands.

While both women and men were highly driven and interested in getting ahead in their careers, women's experiences and expectations differ from men's in terms of the extent to which they reported that their organization was supporting their work-life needs. However, men were, on average, as concerned with long hours and job pressures as women were and cited similar challenges for managing work and personal demands.

In the end, by supporting employees' work-life effectiveness, workplaces assure that work-life demands do not hinder leadership aspirations among highly talented employees. Also, understanding the work-life needs of both women and men can inspire solutions that lead to broader buy-in across the organization.

27. A new variable was created to capture the relationship between respondents' values (work-life fit) and workplace effectiveness (workplace fit), a 3-level "gap" variable, where "1" indicates that the workplace exceeds its employees' expectations (values), "2" for workplaces that meet employees' values/expectations, and "3" for workplaces that do not meet those expectations.
28. Previous research shows that even when work-life programs and flexible scheduling options are available, employees might not feel comfortable using the programs for fear of negative career consequences. See Bagati. Catalyst, *After School Worries: Tough on Parents, Bad for Business* (2006); Peter Linkow and Jan Civian, "Men and Work-Life Integration: A Global Study" (May 2011), WFD and WorldatWork Publications.

"LOCALIZING" WORK-LIFE: FOCUS ON CHINA, INDIA, AND SINGAPORE

When it comes to work-life programs, global trends such as increased generational and workforce diversity and an increased need to accommodate different time-zones as well as technological advances have led to similar challenges and opportunities in workplaces around the world. [29]

Despite the similarities, these global trends play out differently within various cultural, economic, and national contexts, making it essential for companies—and multinational companies in particular—to localize their work-life approaches so that they make sense within specific settings where they operate.[30]

While respondents report similar experiences in terms of their work interests and goals, they do so in the context of different cultural values, expectations, and national policies. To better understand these variations, the following section focuses on three different cultural and national contexts: China, India, and Singapore.

We chose these three regions for their high level of economic impact and growth in the global marketplace and the resulting relevance of work-life concerns. Another reason for this selection is that respondents from these countries reported some different and complementary trends relating to their work-life emphasis.

China was among the countries where respondents expressed the highest levels (75 percent) of **job** focus.

Respondents from India (27 percent) and Singapore (26 percent) were more likely than other countries to report a **dual** (work-family) focus.
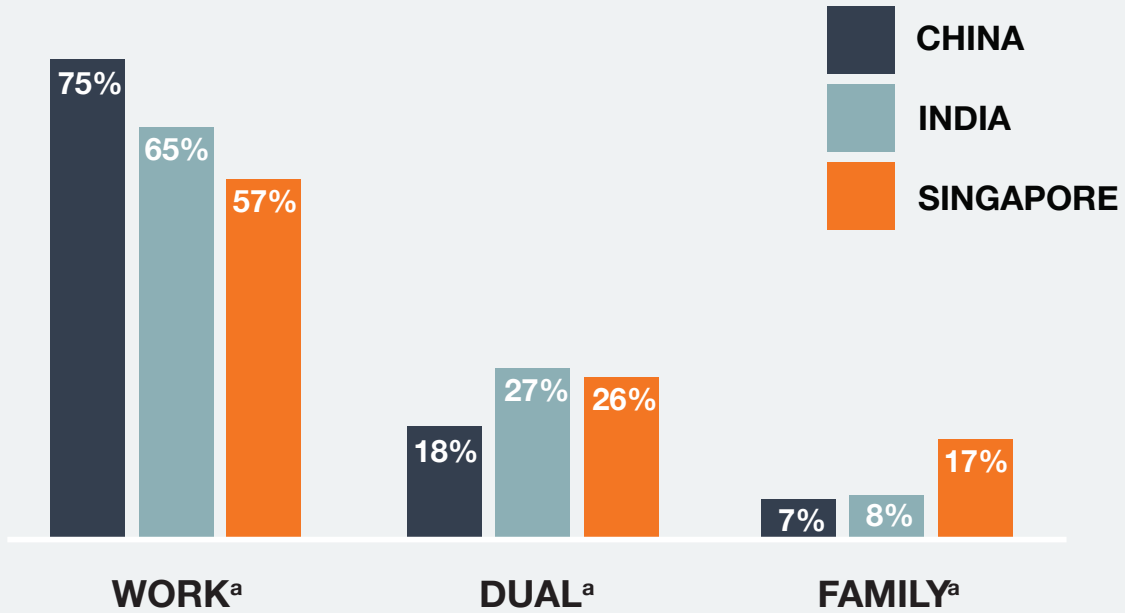
Singapore (17 percent) reported some of the highest percentages of respondents with **family** focus (see Figure 8).

Looking at these three regions provides additional insight into the work-life experiences of high-potential employees and can help companies develop culturally specific approaches to address their employees' needs.

29. Emily V. Troiano, *Workplace Trends: Today's Decisions, Tomorrow's Successes*, (Catalyst, 2008); Laura Sabattini, Anika Warren, Sarah Dinolfo, Emily Falk, and Mekayla Castro, *Beyond Generational Differences: Bridging Gender and Generational Diversity at Work* (Catalyst, 2010).
30. Bardoel and De Cieri.

FIGURE 8: WORK, FAMILY, AND DUAL FOCUS (China, India, and Singapore)

Legend:
- CHINA
- INDIA
- SINGAPORE

	WORK[a]	DUAL[a]	FAMILY[a]
CHINA	75%	18%	7%
INDIA	65%	27%	8%
SINGAPORE	57%	26%	17%

[a]Significant differences for p<.05.

Table 2: Findings at a Glance—China, India, and Singapore

CHINA, INDIA, SINGAPORE

| Respondents From All Three Countries:	However, Respondents From:
Reported high levels of job focus and career ambition.	**India** reported the highest level of interest in advancing to CEO and senior-executive roles.
	Singapore were more likely to say they were planning to stay at the same level over the next five years.
Reported valuing work-life fit and were effective in managing their work and personal lives.	**India** and **Singapore** were more likely to rate work-life fit as "very important."
Reported agreeing that their workplaces provided a good amount of flexibility.	**China** were less likely to agree that their workplaces provided enough flexibility to manage work and personal demands.

High Potentials in China, India, and Singapore Report High Work Focus and Career Ambition, With India Marking the Highest Ratings

As for the larger group, respondents in China, India, and Singapore reported high levels of drive to advance further in their careers, though some country-level differences also emerged, both in terms of their career plans in the next five years and in their careers as a whole (see Figures 9 and 10).

Though the numbers remain high across all three countries, Indian respondents (98 percent) reported more interest in moving to a higher-level position within the next five years than respondents in China (91 percent) and Singapore (86 percent). Respondents from China and Singapore were more likely than those from India to say they were planning to remain at the same level.

91% 98% 86% 9% 2% 14%

CHINA
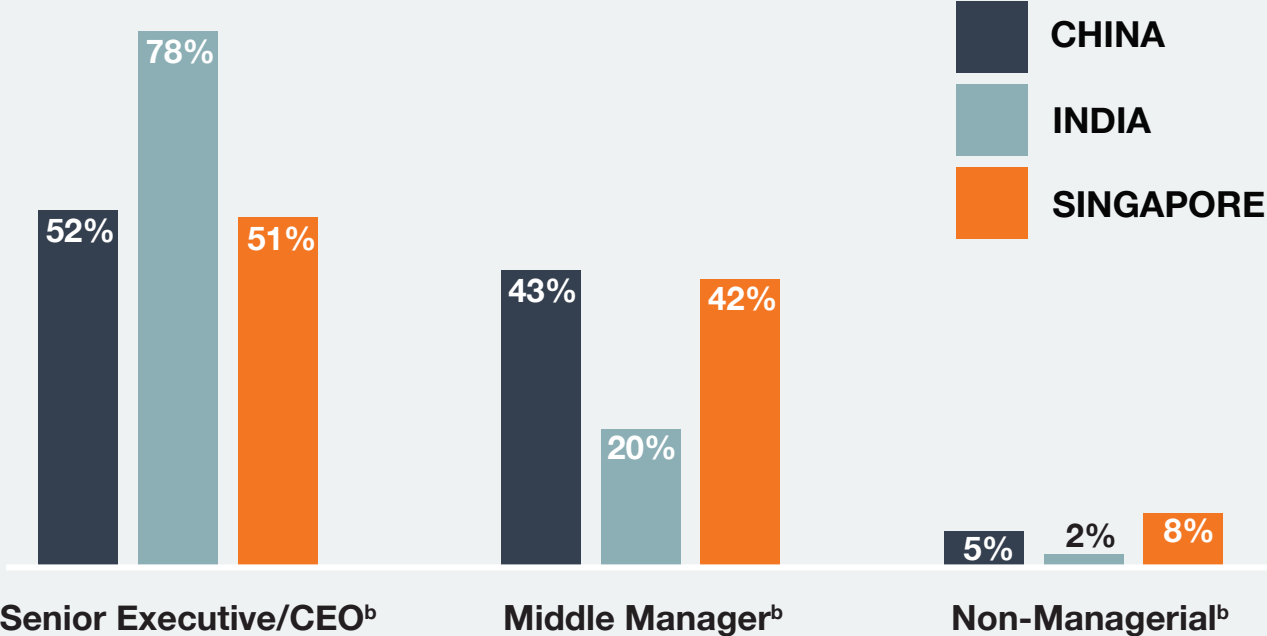INDIA
SINGAPORE

Same/Lower Level[a]   **Higher Level**[a]
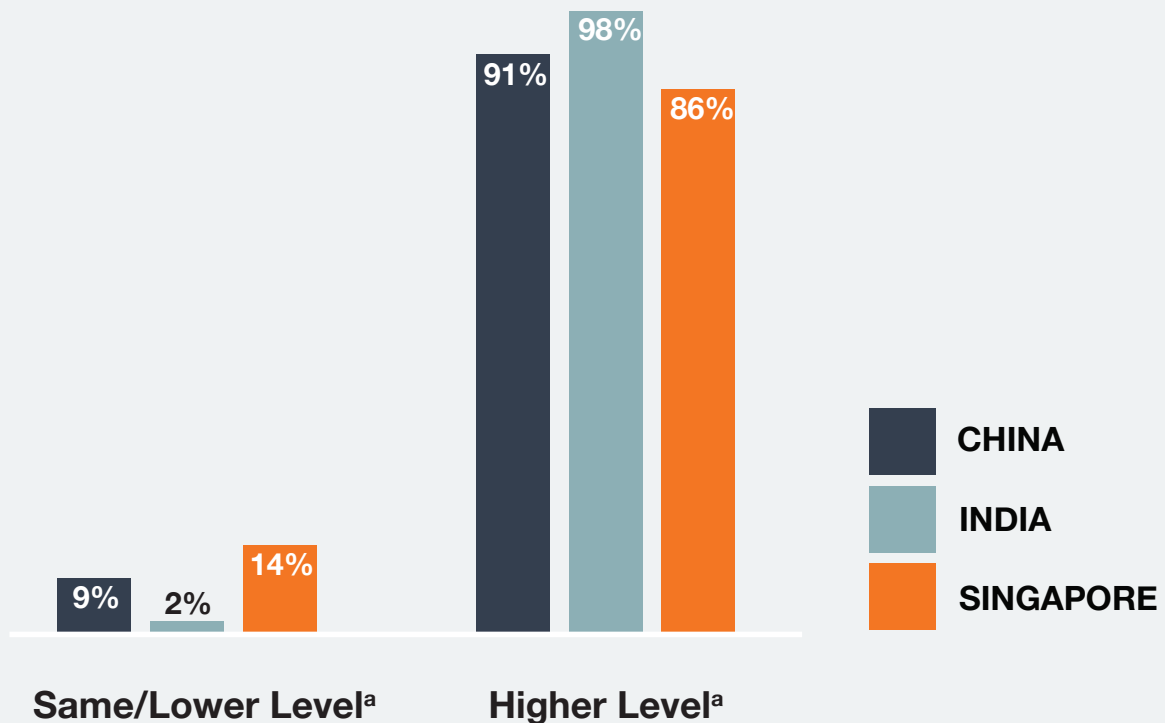
[a]Significant difference for p<.05.

In terms of respondents' aspirations in their careers as a whole, once again, Indian respondents reported the highest level of interest in moving up, with 78 percent of respondents saying that their goal was to reach CEO or senior leadership positions compared to 52 percent in China and 51 percent in Singapore.

Respondents from Singapore reported higher levels of interest for middle-managerial positions compared to those from China and India. Respondents from Singapore also reported higher interest in non-managerial roles compared to respondents from India (see Figure 10).

FIGURE 10: ASPIRATIONS FOR CAREER OVERALL (China, India, and Singapore)[a]

Legend: CHINA, INDIA, SINGAPORE

Senior Executive/CEO[b]: China 52%, India 78%, Singapore 51%
Middle Manager[b]: China 43%, India 20%, Singapore 42%
Non-Managerial[b]: China 5%, India 2%, Singapore 8%

[a]Group percentages were rounded up; some totals amount to more than 100 percent.
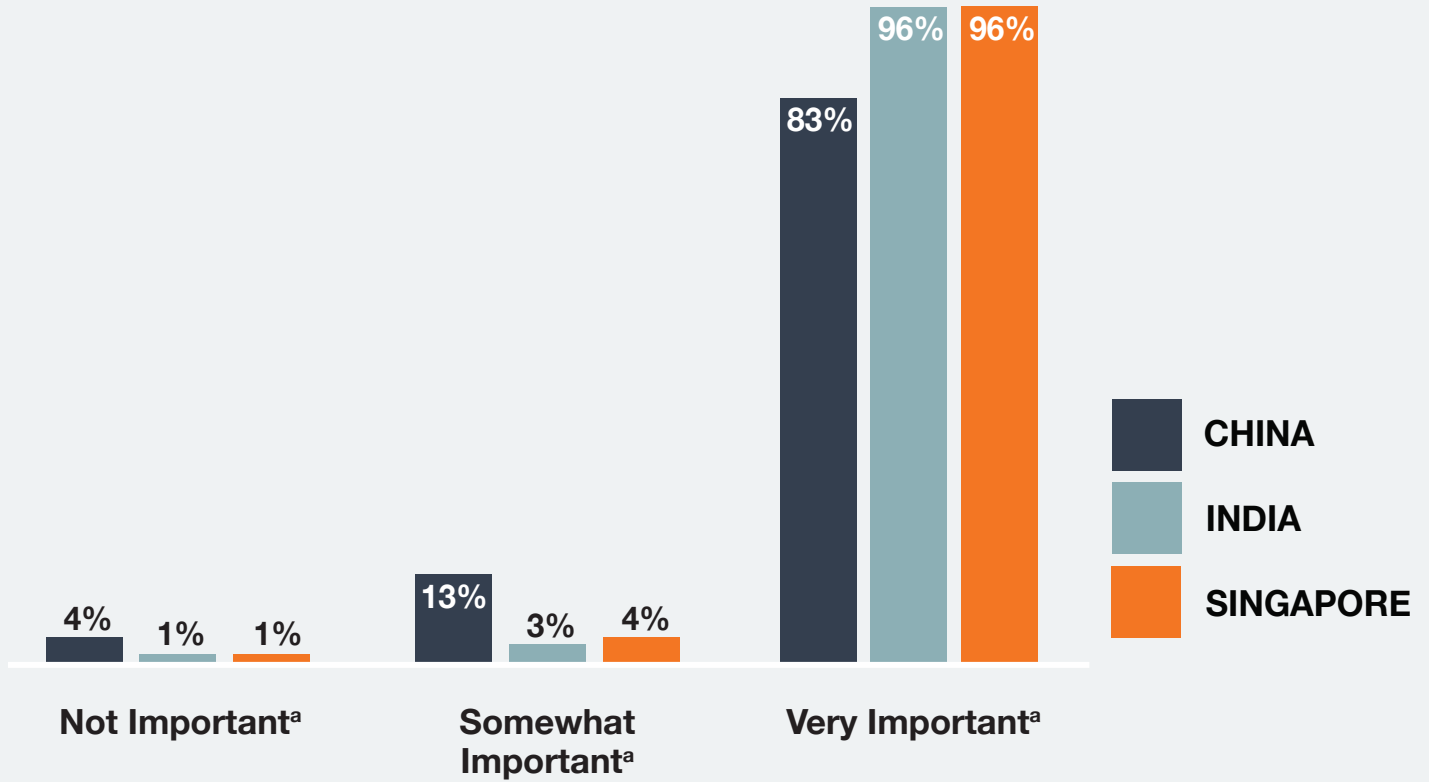
[b] Significant difference for $p<.05$.

Despite Varying Work-Life Emphasis, Employees in China, India, and Singapore Highly Value Work-Life Fit

Work-life fit was highly valued among respondents in China, India, and Singapore (see Figure 11).[31] Though the percentage of respondents was high among all three groups, respondents from China (83 percent) were less likely than those from India and Singapore (both 96 percent) to say work-life effectiveness was very important to them and more likely to say it was somewhat or not important (17 percent of respondents from China vs. 4 percent and 5 percent of respondents from India and Singapore, respectively).

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31. No country-level differences emerged in terms of respondents' experiences managing work and personal demands; on average, a little over half of respondents said it was "easy" for them to do so.

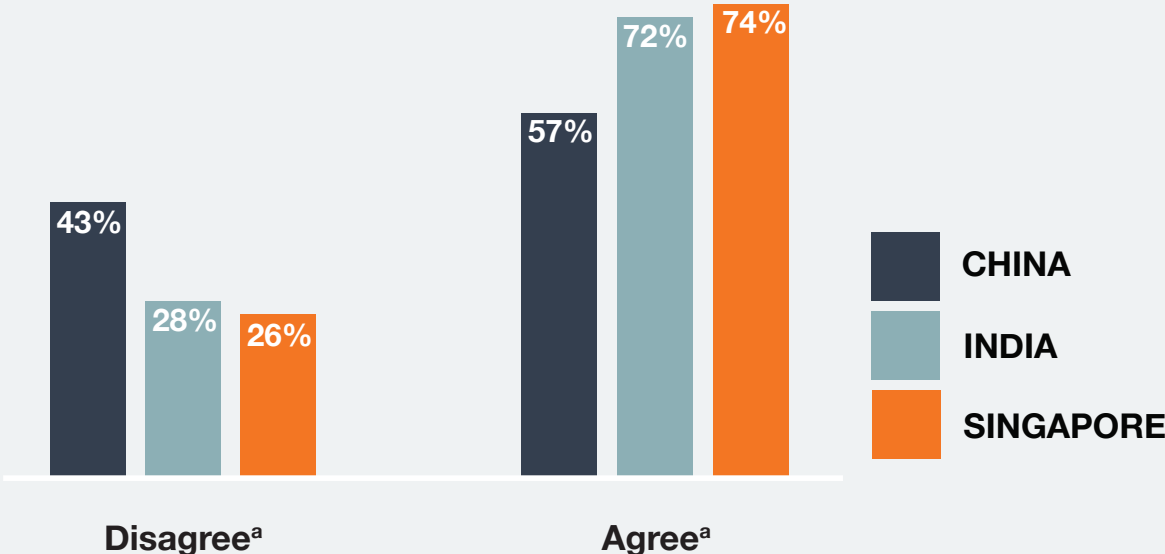|	CHINA	INDIA	SINGAPORE
Not Important[a]	4%	1%	1%
Somewhat Important[a]	13%	3%	4%
Very Important[a]	83%	96%	96%

[a]Significant difference for p<.05.

The analyses showed some country-level differences for respondents' perceptions of their workplace effectiveness (see Figures 12 and 13), with respondents from China expressing less satisfaction with the level of flexibility their companies provided (see Figure 12). These findings are especially interesting in light of the fact that, as noted earlier, India and Singapore had reported a higher family and dual focus compared to China, and that respondents from China had rated work-life effectiveness as less important compared to respondents in India and Singapore.

FIGURE 12: COMPANY IS PROVIDING ENOUGH FLEXIBILITY (China, India, Singapore)

Bar chart showing:

Disagree[a]
- China: 43%
- India: 28%
- Singapore: 26%

Agree[a]
- China: 57%
- India: 72%
- Singapore: 74%

Legend:
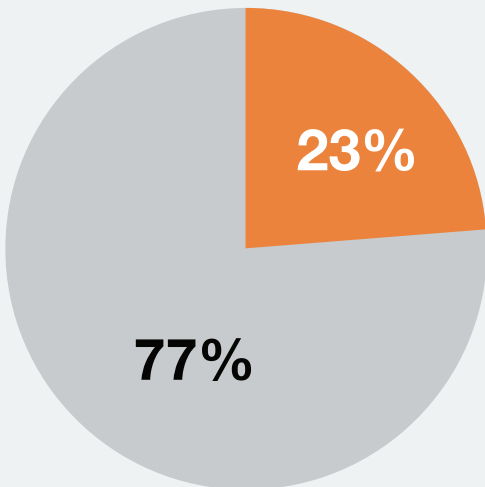- CHINA
- INDIA
- SINGAPORE

[a]Significant difference for p<.05.

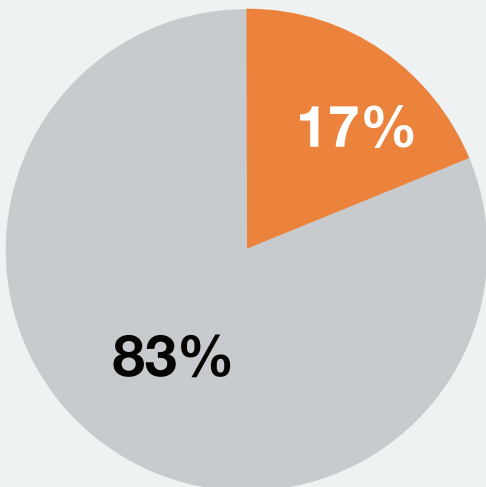Finally, the analyses revealed a gap between respondents' work-life needs and their rating of the range of flexibility their companies provided. China had a somewhat smaller gap than India and Singapore (see Figure 13), largely driven by respondents' lower ratings of work-life fit (see Figure 11).
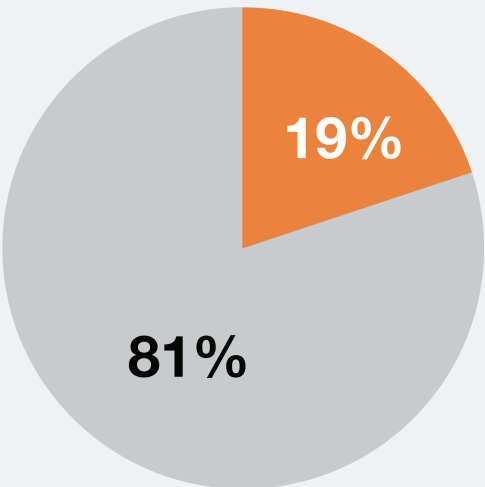
FIGURE 13: GAP BETWEEN CURRENT WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY AND WORK-LIFE NEEDS (China, India, Singapore)
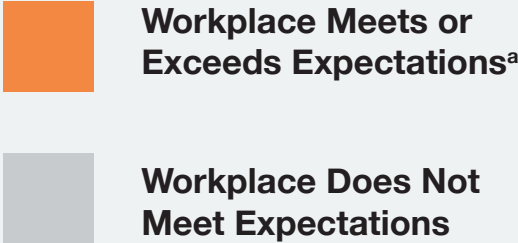
23%

77%

CHINA

17%

83%

INDIA

19%

81%

SINGAPORE

Workplace Meets or Exceeds Expectations[a]

Workplace Does Not Meet Expectations

[a]Significant difference for p<.05.

NEXT STEPS: ISSUES TO CONSIDER WHEN INTEGRATING GLOBAL AND LOCAL CONCERNS INTO WORK-LIFE FLEXIBILITY PROGRAMS

This study shows that, despite similarities—a majority of respondents working in China, India, and Singapore reported high levels of job focus, career ambition, and interest in work-life fit and workplace flexibility—important country-level differences exist when it comes to work-life experiences within different Asian countries. This study's findings contribute important information to support the talent development of high-potential employees within the context of global organizations and emphasize the need for companies to localize their work-life strategies and programs to better fit specific cultural contexts.

Consider these questions when thinking about work-life concerns in different cultural, national, and organizational contexts:

1. What does "work-life fit" mean for your employees? What kinds of workplace supports are most helpful in your specific cultural context?

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. What does flexibility look like in your organization? Consider which programs are available, and discuss cultural norms about using flexibility.

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. What can your organization do to help employees manage work and personal life more effectively (e.g., providing family care options, access to technology, addressing concerns)?

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. How are extended families involved in your employees' day-to-day lives? Does the support of extended family alleviate work-family conflict, or does it increase the number of obligations?

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. Do women and men use flexibility programs in similar or different ways within your company? What are some of the challenges to ensuring these programs are both effective and utilized by all employees?

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX 1: RESPONDENTS' PROFESSIONAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

This study focuses on the experiences of a sample of 1,834 high-potential employees (44 percent women and 56 percent men) working in Asia and in the context of a U.S. or European-based global organization.[32] Specifically, respondents worked in:

- China
- Hong Kong
- India
- Korea
- Malaysia
- Philippines
- Singapore
- Taiwan
- Thailand

Professional Profile

Survey respondents were
- Highly educated, with 93 percent holding a college degree or higher.
- Experienced pipeline professionals working full-time in large U.S.- and European-headquartered organizations.
  - Nearly a quarter of respondents had at least five years' experience (23 percent).
  - More than half (58 percent) had more than 10 years' experience.
  - Again, more than half of respondents (55 percent) had worked in their current organization for five years or more at the time of the survey.

Other relevant professional characteristics include:
- Half of respondents (50 percent) were non-managerial or entry-level professionals; the other 50 percent were first- or second-level managers.[32]

- Among managers, the vast majority (95 percent) supervised up to 50 employees; remaining respondents oversaw larger numbers of employees.
- Nearly half of respondents (48 percent) reported being in a line position, 14 percent in both a line and a staff role, and the balance (37 percent) in a staff position.
- Respondents were evenly distributed in terms of how long they had been in their current position:
  - 32 percent less than a year.
  - 36 percent from one to three years.
  - Remaining respondents three years or more.
- One-third (33 percent) of respondents had worked abroad at some point in their careers.

Demographic Profile
- Out of the 1,834 high-potential pipeline leaders, 44 percent (N=797) were women, and 56 percent (N=1,037) were men.
- About half of respondents (54 percent, N=977) were 21–35 years old; 34 percent (N=607) were 36–45 years old; and remaining respondents (12 percent, N=222) were 46 years old or older.
- The majority (68 percent) of respondents were married or living with a partner; 29 percent were single and never married; and the remaining 3 percent were divorced, separated, or widowed.
- Among married/partnered respondents, 73 percent reported that their spouse or partner was employed.
  - Men (39 percent) were significantly more likely to say their spouse or partner was

---

32. The data used in this study are a subsample of data from the global leaders survey conducted in 2006-2008 by Catalyst and the Families and Work Institute, Nancy M. Carter and Ellen Galinsky, *Leaders in a Global Economy: Talent Management in European Cultures* (Catalyst, 2008). See Footnote 9 in this report.
33. These analyses focused on a subsample of mostly pipeline employees whose companies had designated them as high-potential for future leadership (see Carter and Galinsky).

not employed or retired compared to women (5 percent).

- India and Korea had the highest percentage of respondents (52 percent and 48 percent, respectively) reporting that their spouse or partner was not employed or retired.

• A majority (53 percent) of respondents reported having children younger than 18 years of age living at home.

- Women (57 percent) were more likely than men (40 percent) to say they didn't have any children under 18 living at home.
- More than half of respondents in Korea (63 percent), India (60 percent), and Singapore (61 percent) had children younger than 18 years of age at home; 50 percent of respondents from the other countries had children younger than 18 living with them.

• Eldercare responsibilities were prevalent among respondents, regardless of gender, with 41 percent reporting having some level of eldercare responsibility in the past year.

- India had the highest percentage (58 percent) of respondents who reported they had some level of eldercare responsibility in the past year, followed by Taiwan (53 percent), and Thailand (48 percent).

APPENDIX 2: CORRELATIONS ANALYSES

As noted in Table 3 respondents' ratings of their *workplace flexibility* (Workplace Fit) were positively correlated with their flexibility values in regards to successfully managing work and personal life *as well as* with their current ability to manage work and personal life effectively (i.e., how easy or difficult it was for them to manage the two). Furthermore, working in an organization with higher ratings of flexibility was positively related to subjective perceptions of well-being.

Also, respondents with higher work-life fit were more likely to report higher levels of well-being. Not surprisingly, respondents who reported increased "ease" managing work and personal life were also more likely to report increased well-being.

TABLE 3 Spearman Rho Correlations	Workplace Fit	Work-Life Fit	Managing Work-Life (Low Score=easy)	Well-Being
Workplace Fit				
Work-Life Fit	.07**			
Managing Work-Life	-.34**	n.s.		
Well-Being	.31**	n.s.	-.33**	

**Significant difference for $p<.001$.

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