

From the Factory with Love:

A Study on Migrant Parent Workers in China





Research and design: CCR CSR

Artwork: Drawings from children who attended Factory Child Friendly Spaces in two factories in Guangdong Province in 2016.

“From the Factory with Love: A Study on Migrant Parent Workers in China” is a report carried out by the Center for Child Rights & Corporate Social Responsibility (CCR CSR) in 2017.

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A special thank you to Kesko for sponsoring the launch event of this study in Beijing on June 29, 2017.

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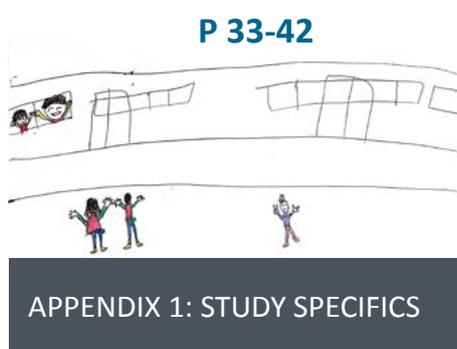
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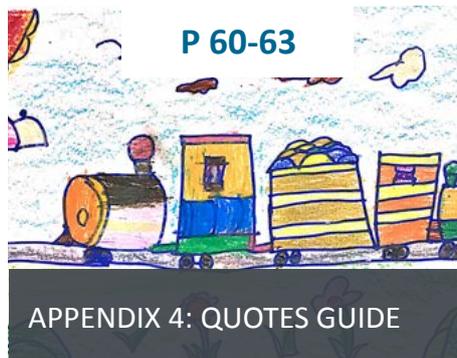
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FOREWORD

Most people who read about, worked or lived in China have heard of China's "left-behind children", and thankfully there are a multitude of efforts both by the Chinese government and private organizations to alleviate the situation by supporting children who grow up largely without their parents. Legal changes, as well as China's continued economic development, will likely have a positive impact and reduce the number of families torn apart by migration.

However, given the millions of families affected, this will take time. In the meantime, we decided to set out and once again take a closer look at the challenges, needs and opportunities of migrant parent workers – a task we deemed necessary, for one because we are convinced that manufacturers and buyers can have an immense, almost immediate, impact by supporting migrant parent workers, and secondly, because the number of buyers and factories who work to support migrant workers is still small and we are clearly missing out on a real opportunity to positively impact the plight of millions of children.

We hope that the results of this study will animate businesses on all levels of the supply chain to become more active and engaged in supporting migrant parent workers, knowing that our economic success is strongly intertwined with the plight of the people producing our products.

CCR CSR is very thankful for the support we received from a range of local factories who allowed us to enter their production floors and interview and survey workers. We thank ICTI CARE and Clas Ohlson who enabled access to factories for the worker surveys and in-depth interviews, as well as the 749 migrant workers,

96 factories, 24 brands and 15 children who invested their time and shared their experiences and views during the surveys and interviews. A special thanks also to the children from the Factory Child Friendly Spaces in two toy factories in Guangdong and all the other migrant children who contributed to this study with their beautiful drawings.

Finally, an immense thank you to all team members of CCR CSR, who worked long hours to ensure that we can once more give China's migrant parent workers a voice.



Ines Kaempfer,
Executive Director, CCR CSR

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2013, CCR CSR carried out a study that aimed to highlight the challenges faced by China's migrant parent workers who left their children in their hometowns and the impact this separation had on them and their career choices. Through this study we could see how these challenges not only impacted their personal lives, but how they spilled into the workplace as well, affecting their concentration and motivation.

Through quantitative and qualitative methods involving 749 workers, 96 factories, 24 brands and 15 children, "From the Factory with Love: A Study on Migrant Parent Workers in China" revisits the central themes of the 2013 study and compares key trends from then and now. It goes beyond the 2013 study however, by looking at parents who migrated with and parents who migrated without their children, and placing greater emphasis on the different types of support that migrant parent workers in factories need or can avail of and how additional support might not only benefit families, but also businesses.

We found that despite certain changes in Hukou and residence permit regulations, the majority of parents are still migrating without their children (74% within our sample), but that there is a trend of more families migrating with their children in the last few years.

The study also shows how external factors, such as length of migration, job rankings and quite importantly, the salary, correlate significantly with workers' decision to take their children with them or leave them behind.

In either situation, parent workers face challenges. Those who migrate with their children deal with immense economic pressure, and have trouble finding suitable childcare for their children.

The lack of childcare coupled with the long working hours of the parents means that migrant children spend an average of 5.7 hours a week unattended.

The parents who decided not to move with their children, in general, see their children twice a year or less and are very often plagued by guilt. While the study shows that parents surveyed for the 2017 study place much greater importance on their role as parents than was the case in 2013, it also shows that having

this heightened sense of responsibility but not having the means to live up to it, fuels feelings of guilt and insufficiency.

Many parents go quite some length to keep in close contact with their children back home. However, 46% of migrant parents think communication is challenging, and the in-depth interviews bear witness to their struggles in keeping their families together in a long-distance relationship.

As a consequence, a great number of migrant parents (34%), both amongst those who migrated with (20%) and without (40%) their children, say work impacts their relationship with their children negatively. Correlation analysis shows that this feeling is directly related to job satisfaction and the intention of staying in the factories.

This opens a range of opportunities for businesses, as the numbers are a strong indication that if businesses can mitigate this negative impact they can achieve greater retention in their factories. As a matter of fact, the factory and brand surveys reveal that there are still significant numbers (52% factories, 46% brands) that feel they have little understanding of the plight of migrant parents and the majority agree that they can play a role in supporting migrant workers. And while currently only 2% of factories have childcare facilities and in general, factories have quite limited support mechanisms aimed towards migrant parent workers, the workers themselves are clearly hoping for more support – starting with training in their role as parents, but also including daycare solutions. That it makes sense for factories to engage in such measures is supported by the results that workers from factories who invest in childcare display higher levels of job-satisfaction and longer retention.

While the report focuses mainly on the many challenges migrant parent workers face, it also reflects a story of resilience of all parties involved, and shows the amount of dedication many migrant parents have towards their children and how much hardship they are ready to take to create a better future for their children.

CHAPTER 1: PARENTS' MIGRATION CHOICES



1.1. How many migrant parents bring their children with them?

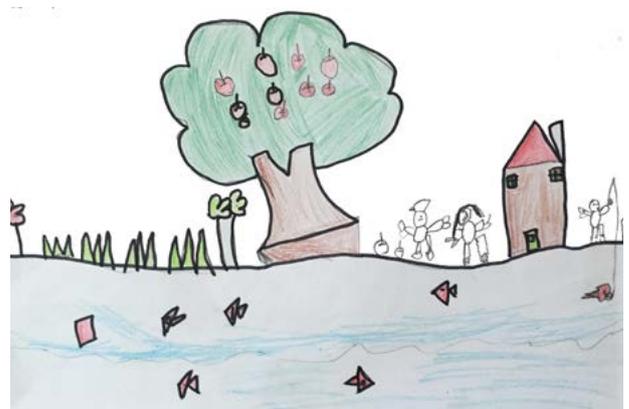
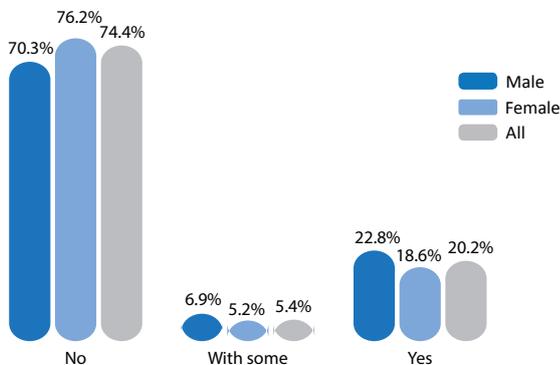
About 80% of the migrant parents in this study are separated from their children.

According to factories, 72% of their workers do not live with their children.

Amongst the parents in our sample, 74% of migrant parents are not living with any of their children under the age of 16 and about 5% are only living with some of their children. This means that about 80% of the migrant parents in this study have children who were left behind. While slightly more male workers live with some or all of their children under 16, the difference is not statistically significant, meaning that the situation is very similar for both male and female working parents in this study (Chart 1).

The factory survey reflects similar results. Managers of factories that collect information about workers' children (30%), estimated that about 72% of their workforce consists of migrant parents not living with their children. This number is very close to the results of the worker survey (Chart 1).

Chart 1. Do you currently live with all your children under the age of 16? (By gender)

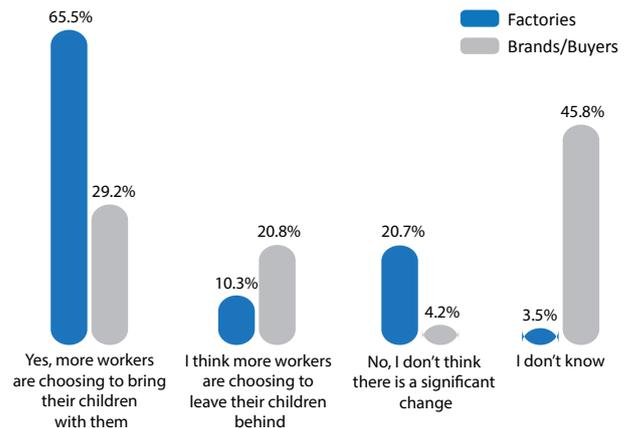


1.2 What do brands/buyers and factories think about the trend of workers migrating with or without children?

29% of the surveyed factories said they kept information about whether workers lived with their children (Chart 31 on page 21). Based on the information from the factories, we can conclude that while a majority of workers still leave their children in their hometown, the number of workers who migrate with their children has been increasing (see Chart 2).

Compared to the factory, significantly more brands/buyer representatives say they are unaware of trends related to migrant parents' choice to bring their children with them (46%). The ones who think more workers are choosing to bring their children with them (29%), are significantly more than the ones who think otherwise (20%, Chart 2).

Chart 2. Do you think there is a significant change in the percentage of workers who migrated together with their children?



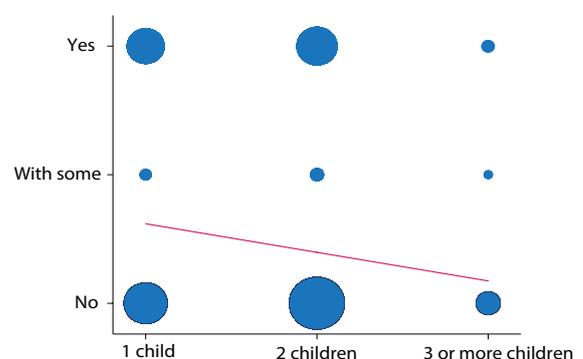
1.3 What are the factors associated with workers' decision to leave children behind?

The study reveals a set of factors that feeds into migrant workers' decision to bring their children with them or to leave them behind. As shown below, the number of children, the time spent as a migrant worker, the place of origin, the current job ranking and the monthly income are all linked to their decision.

The number of children

We found a significant correlation¹ between the number of children workers have and their decision to leave them behind. The more children the workers have, the more likely they are to leave them behind (Chart 3).

Chart 3. Do you currently live with all your children under the age of 16? (By number of children)



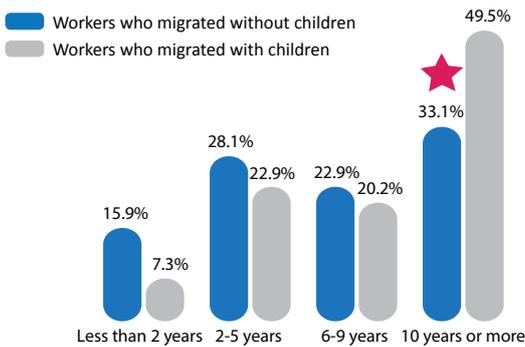
1. The correlation is $r = 0.1717$, $sig = 0.0000$.

Length of time spent as a migrant worker

The longer parents spend working as migrants, the more likely they are to bring their children with them and live together.

When we controlled for factors such as workers' age², we found that the length of time they spent working as migrants is significantly correlated³ with whether they are living with their children. As highlighted in Chart 4, workers who migrated with their children have been migrants for much longer than those who did not migrate with their children.

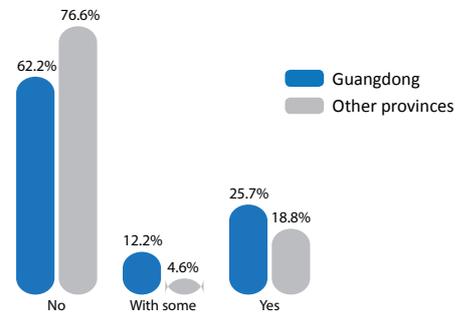
Chart 4. How long have you worked as a migrant worker?



Place of origin

Additionally, we looked at the top three origins of migrant workers – Guangdong (15%), Guangxi (13%) and Hunan Province (12%) – to identify possible trends related to migration and bringing children. As shown in Chart 5, workers from Guangdong Province are more likely to⁴ bring their children with them. This result makes sense when taking a closer look at the data; a large majority of workers (82%) participating in this study work in Guangdong Province, of which 34% originated from Guangdong. Amongst that group, 61% had their Hukou⁵ issued from the city where they currently work (local/urban Hukou), indicating that these workers have the option of settling down in their new place of work. Hukou allows them to easily access public services such as healthcare and education and thus increases the likelihood of them bringing their children.

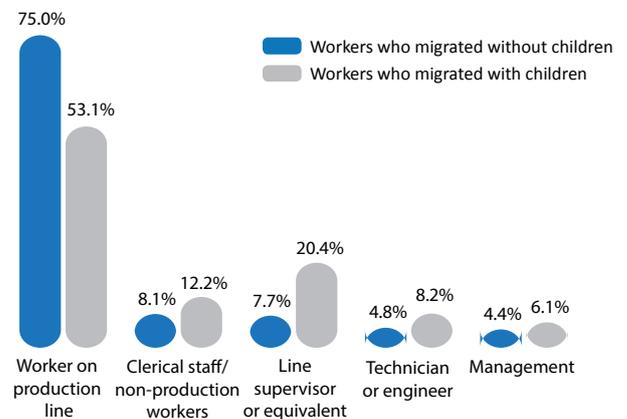
Chart 5. Do you currently live with all your children under the age of 16? (By province of origin)



Job rankings

A significant correlation⁶ was also found between respondents' job ranking and their likelihood to live with their children: respondents with higher-level positions, such as technical and administrative, are more likely to live with their children. Conversely, production workers are less likely to be living with their children (Chart 6).

Chart 6. What position do you hold in the factory?



2. Age of migrant workers are not significantly correlated with whether they are living with their children.
 3. The correlation is $r = 0.1458$, $sig = 0.0007$.
 4. The correlation is $r = 0.0799$, $sig = 0.0800$.
 5. Hukou is a household registration system in China, which records an individual's identity, including date of birth, parents, spouse, and city of residence. It also provides an individual with access to basic public services including healthcare, schooling for children etc. However, these are tied to the place that issued their Hukou, meaning many migrant workers are deprived of basic public services in the place they work. Please see Appendix 1 for more information on Hukou.
 6. The correlation is $r = 0.1501$, $sig = 0.0096$.

Income

Parents with lower income are more likely to leave their children behind.

Even when we controlled for job positions and other variables associated with workers' decision to migrate with their children, we found a negative correlation⁷ between their average earnings and whether they live with their children. That means parents with lower income are more likely to leave their children behind, as can be seen in the correlation graph (Chart 8). Chart 7 compares the difference between the average income of parents who left their children behind and those who didn't. While the correlation result is clearly significant, it is interesting to see that the actual difference is only 160 RMB a month (approx. 20 US Dollars), a possible indicator that with a rather minimal salary increase and financial support, parents might be more inclined to bring their children with them.

Chart 7. Average income of workers who migrated without their children vs. with their children

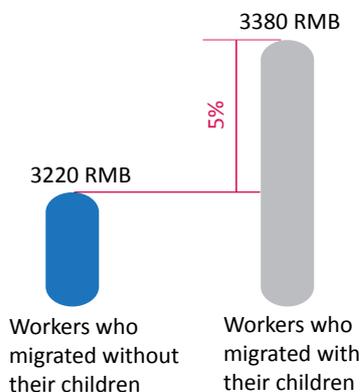
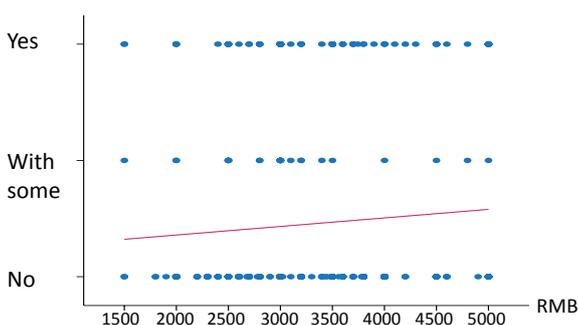


Chart 8. Do you currently live with all your children under the age of 16? (By average monthly salary)



This correlation result is reflected in many of the in-depth interviews with both parents and children – as a matter of fact, financial pressure has been named by many as a key reason for not living with their children:

“

My kids lived with us in Guangdong until they were two years old, but then we sent them back to the hometown for economic reasons. I'd like to bring them here but circumstances don't permit it because of our low salaries and the high living costs here,” Worker 6.⁸

“We've never thought about bringing our kids over because we wouldn't be able to afford the children's living costs,” Worker 5.

“I miss my parents. Because my dad and mom don't have money, so they went out to make money for us,” Child 15.

From the interviews it also became clear that for many, bringing children with them would mean renting accommodation outside the factory (and discontinue living in the dormitories) which in turn would increase the living cost:

“

I thought about bringing my children here to go to school, but that would mean renting accommodation, which is very expensive. Also, I'm not in the best state of health. I work the machines, which is very tiring work,” Worker 4.

7. The correlation is $r = -0.0847$, $\text{sig} = 0.00667$.

8. Background information on each worker and child quoted in this study can be found in Appendix 4.

1.4 How parents explain the reasons for not migrating with their children

The worker survey shows that for the majority of migrant parents, the decision to leave their children behind is rooted in workers' concerns about their children, such as not having caregivers to look after them while they are at work and/or lack of time to spend with their children. As can be seen in Chart 9, the number one reason for leaving children behind in this study, is not having anyone to take care of children while the parents work. CCR CSR's 2013 study "They Are Also Parents: A Study on Migrant Parents with Left-Behind Children" also examined the reasons for parents to leave their children behind, thus allowing for a comparison that may reveal new trends or changes over the past four years. While "lack of childcare support" was not a variable listed in the 2013 study, we could identify very similar patterns for the other top concerns, with the reasons ranked second, third and fourth in 2017 matching the top three rankings in 2013. Rather surprisingly, the number of parents who mentioned limited access to public schooling as a key concern has only dropped by less than 3 percentage points, despite the reforms to the Hukou system and new interim regulations on residence permits.

According to the majority of parents (61%), the main reason for not migrating with their children is not having caregivers available to look after them when they are at work.

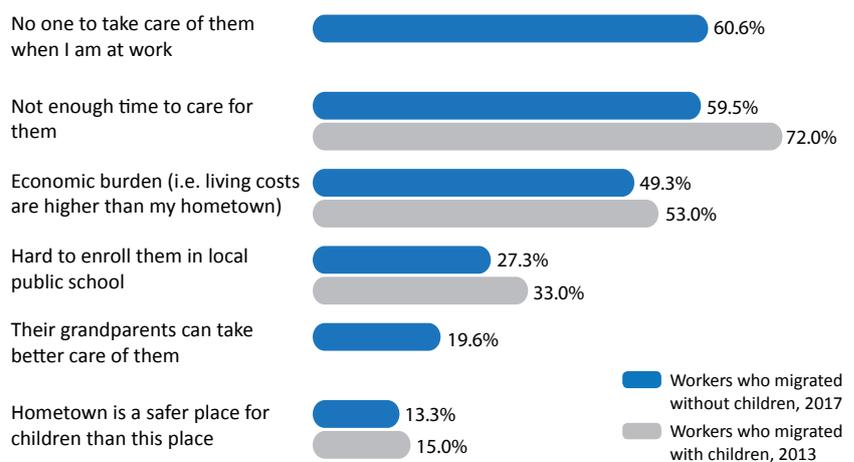
Reflecting the survey results, most workers cited practical challenges as influencing their decision to leave children behind, and the question of who would take care of their children was clearly one of the main concerns:

“

My husband and I came out to work for our children, but we couldn't take them with us. We don't have the time to take care of them or cook for them... so we left them with their grandparents,” Worker 8.

“There's no way of bringing him here because we have to work and there's no one to look after him. The grandparents [who would be looking after the children] won't be used to the life here so it's better for the child to be back in our hometown,” Worker 8.

Chart 9. Why didn't you bring your children with you?⁹



Another aspect mentioned by a range of parents is the better environment at home:

“

The children have some friends here, but it's more fun [for them] to run around in the home village,” Worker 2.

“It's hot here and the climate isn't as good as back in our hometown,” Worker 1.

9. Reasons for less than 10% of the respondents are not displayed. 2013 survey did not have some options, thus the missing data.

1.5 Change in awareness of parenting roles

There has been a dramatic improvement in migrant parents' awareness of their parenting responsibilities since 2013.

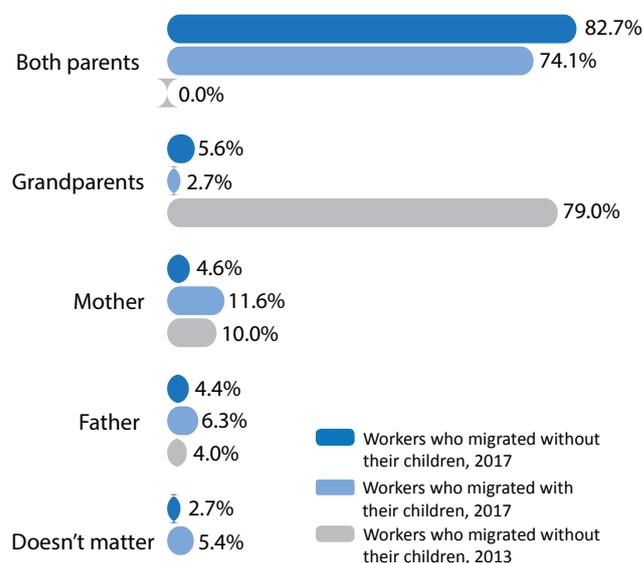
In our interviews in the past, we found that some parents thought it was “natural” and “traditional” for grandparents to take care of the children, and that this was the reason for leaving their children behind with their grandparents. In general, there is a strong tradition of family involvement in China, and it is extremely common on all levels of society for grandparents to play a hands-on role in raising their grandchildren.

In line with this tradition, our 2013 study found that 79% of parents of left-behind children believed that grandparents should be mainly responsible for the care of children. The 2017 results however show an entirely different picture. While still a considerable portion (20%) mentioned that one of the reasons for leaving their children behind was that the grandparents could take better care of them (Chart 9, page 7), in 2017 only 6% of parents who left their children behind thought grandparents should be primarily responsible for taking care of the children. This result is striking on two levels: first, it shows a dramatic change in attitude since the previous study, and secondly, when comparing the answers of parents who left children behind with those who migrated with their children, we can see that fewer (almost half) parents who migrated with their children believe grandparents should be the primary caretakers (3% v.s. 6%).

The result might be partly due to the fact that in our sample 57% of the migrant parents have received parenting training in the past and the online survey respondents follow CCR CSR's WeSupport eLearning platform¹⁰, where the bulk of content targets migrant parents and provides parenting advice. However we can also assume that this reflects changes within China's society. Both traditional and social media have put extensive focus on the important role of parents, as well as on the strengthened child protection law, which makes parent's responsibility a legal requirement (see also Appendix 1, page 34).

Even amongst the 20% who said that the grandparents were in a better position to take care of their children, 85% still believed that they themselves should shoulder the primary responsibility of caring for them. This indicates that their reasons for leaving their children behind can be largely attributed to external factors, and certainly not to a lack of awareness in parenting responsibilities.

Chart 10. In your opinion, who should be the primary caregiver for children?



“

It depends on our economic situation. If finances permit, we'll bring them to the city. When the kids are older, grandparents really can't take care of them anymore and parents should take over. To tell you the truth, if one has the financial means, kids should be brought up by their own parents from when they're young,” Worker 9.

“I think it's parents' responsibility to raise and educate children. But we didn't have any other choice, we had to come out and work. We had no one to take care of children while we were at work, so had to leave them with their grandparents,” Worker 10.

10. <http://www.ccrsr.com/sites/default/files/An%20Introduction%20to%20CCR%20CSR%27s%20Online%20Learning%20Tools.pdf>

1.6 Decision to migrate with children

20% of the surveyed migrant parents are currently living with all their children under the age of 16, and about 5% more are living with some of their children (Chart 1 on page 3). While looking at their reasons for migrating together with their children, we found that they are placing a strong emphasis on communication with their children, and providing them with better education and care (Chart 11). In addition, we also found that most migrant parents (52%) brought their children because they would miss them or worry about them otherwise. Additionally, a

“

I started to work as a migrant worker in 2007, but when I got pregnant with my daughter, I had to quit my job and go back to my hometown until she was 2 months old. I then brought her back to the city and raised her myself until she was four and could go to kindergarten. During that time, I didn't work. She's now five years old and goes to a public kindergarten,”
Worker 11.

considerable portion (27%) of parents did not have any other option because they did not have a caregiver to look after their children back in their hometowns.

“

If I sent my daughter back to the hometown, I wouldn't be used to it and would worry about her at work all the time: has she eaten? Is she behaving? Lots of things. I'd also be afraid that she'd overthink and convince herself that I don't love her. I asked her before whether she wants to go back and she said she doesn't,”
Worker 11.

Is there a difference between percentage of male and female migrant workers living with their children?

The worker survey result show that there is no significant difference between male and female workers living with their children, meaning that women are not more likely to live with their children than men. When we asked the factory management about this, we got mixed answers: some factories (48%) said more of their female employees live with their children, while 45% reporting no difference. No factory

management supported the scenario of more male migrant workers living with their children. In almost all of our interviews, migrant workers living with their children also live with their spouse, although we have talked to both mothers and fathers who lived with their children without the additional support of a present spouse.

Chart 11. Why did you bring your children with you?

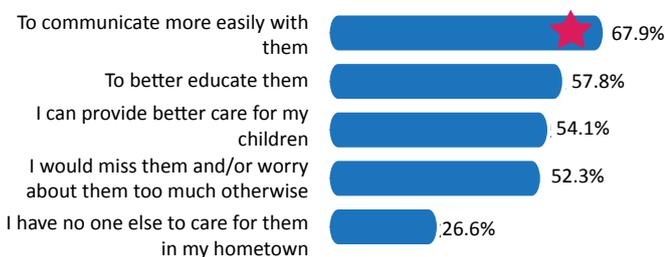
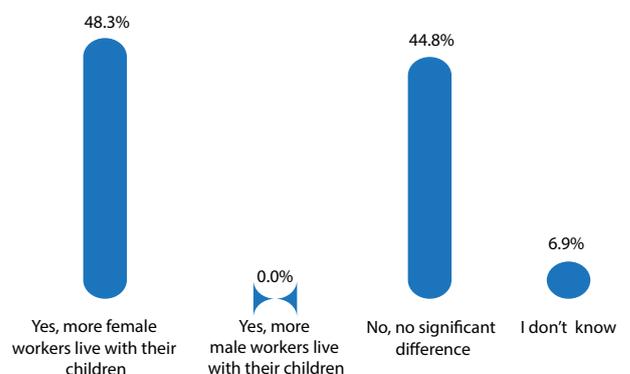


Chart 12. Do you think there is a difference between the percentage of female and male migrant workers who live with their children? (Factory survey)

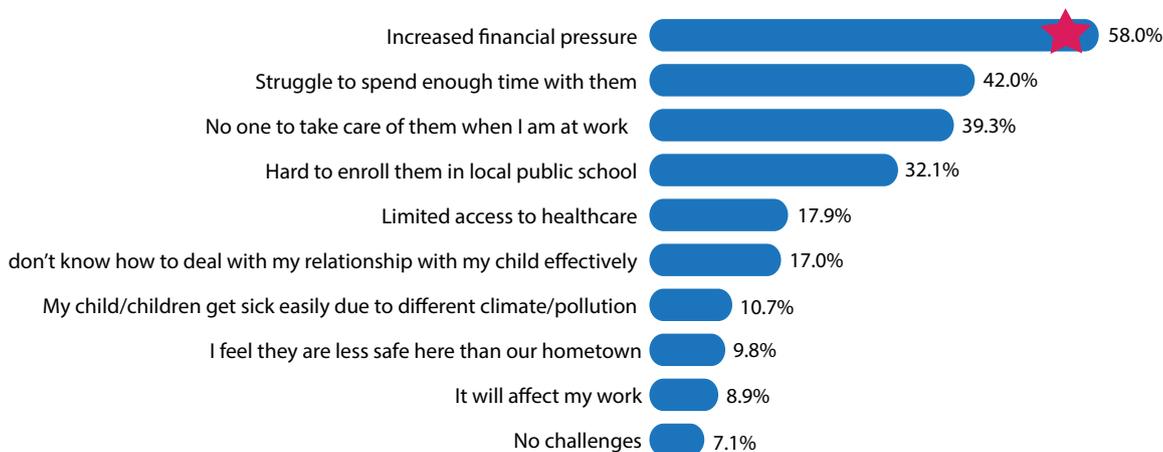


1.7 Challenges of migrating with children

93% of the migrant parents who are living with their children have faced/are facing certain challenges because of their choice to live with their children (Chart 13). It is not surprising that the biggest challenges for the migrant parents living with their children are also the top reasons for parents not to bring their children with them. More than half (58%) of the parents are challenged by increased financial pressure. In addition to the higher living costs of the industrial/urban zones they work in, limited access to public schools (32%) and healthcare (18%) also contribute to workers' increased pressure.

93% of the migrant parents who are living with their children have faced/are facing certain challenges because of their choice to live with them.

Chart 13. What challenges have you faced living with your children?



We found that there are no significant differences between male and female workers in their likelihood of facing the above-mentioned challenges. However, other factors might influence the degree to which they are facing such challenges. For example, younger parents struggle more to spend enough time with their children (no matter the age of their children). We will discuss these factors in more detail in the following chapters (see “2.4 Impact on Parents' Wellbeing” on page 18).

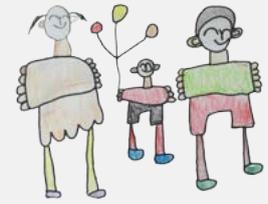
From the interviews with workers, we also know that workers struggle to find time to be present in their children's lives. Leaving work early or taking leave for school plays and events is often not only linked to salary deductions from time not worked, it can also be linked to losing out on attendance bonuses.

The following chapter will take a closer look at the challenges for both migrant parents and their children and how the decision of migrating with or without the children affects their lives.

“

Sometimes our child asks us to accompany him/her and go out to do something together. But the current factory rules are not very humane. Taking a half day off is considered a leave of absence and we lose our 300 RMB full-attendance bonus. So that means when you take time off you lose out on hundreds of Yuan,” Worker 3.

CHAPTER 2: CHALLENGES OF SEPARATION



In the previous section, we outlined some of the reasons that contribute towards migrant parents' decision to either migrate with their children or to leave them behind. In this section, we compare the impact migration has on the lives of workers and their children, as well as how their work affects their relationship with their children and vice-versa. We will look at how their family situation is associated with their psychological wellbeing, job satisfaction and retention. In order to highlight the challenges faced by migrant parents, we will compare the results with local parents where applicable.

2.1. Impact on children's wellbeing

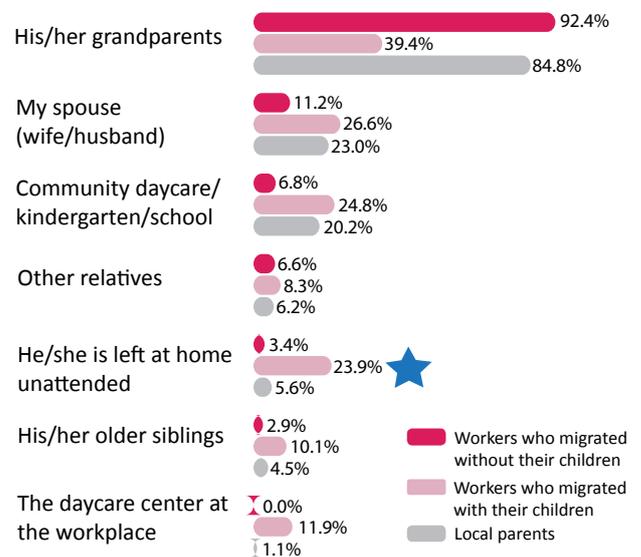
Children who migrated with their parents spent more time unattended than other children of factory workers.

As described in Chapter 1, a key finding of this study is that the lack of appropriate childcare is both the key reason for parents not to migrate with their children as well as the biggest hurdle to overcome for those parents who took their children with them.

When taking a closer look at who takes care of children while the parents are away or at work, we found that migrant workers living with children can rely much less on grandparents – only around 40% rely on grandparents to take care of their children, compared to 92% amongst the parents not living with their children. However, as can be seen in Chart 14, parents who migrated with their children are much more likely to avail of alternative childcare services either in their community or at their workplace.

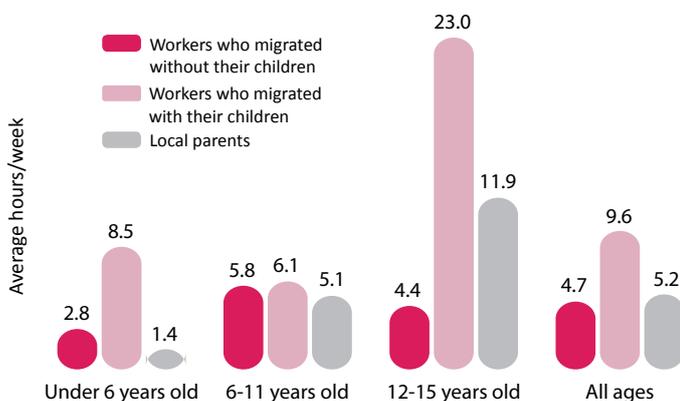
What is rather striking is the fact that children who migrate with their parents are left home unattended with higher frequency than those left behind.

Chart 14. Who takes care of your child/children when you are away from home/at work?



Probing into the above finding further, we compared the number of hours children spend without adult supervision among the three groups (local parents, migrant parents with left-behind children and migrant parents living with children). While the results for local parents and migrant parents with left-behind children are similar, children living with their migrant parents spent significantly more time unsupervised. In fact, as highlighted in Chart 15, these children spent over twice as much time alone than children left-behind in hometowns, once again highlighting migrant workers' strong need for childcare support.

Chart 15. About how many hours a week is your child/your children left without the care of an adult? (By age of child)



In addition to the increased risk of neglect that migrant children face, our study found that they spend less time with their parents than local children, which might negatively influence the parent-child relationship. Chart 16 compares the time migrant and local parents spend with their children. We can see that significantly more migrant parents spend two hours or less a day with their children (not including sleep time), while more local parents spend three hours or more with their offspring. From the interviews we learned that long working hours and night shifts of parents affect the children negatively:

“

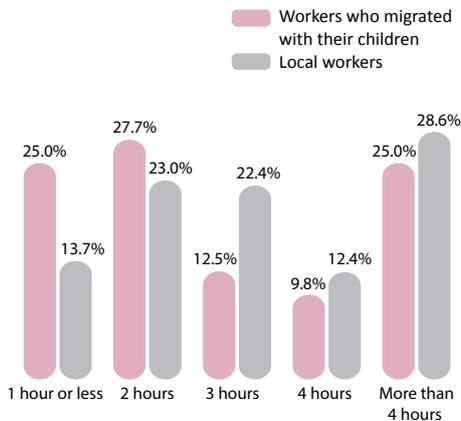
My parents normally get off work after eight, but I have to go to bed at 9:30. I think they spend too little time with me,” Child 6.

“My parents always work on Saturdays, and sometimes on Sundays. I once visited them at their place of work and saw lots of people working overtime and the conditions weren’t good,” Child 4.

“I don’t know at what time in the morning my mum comes home [after her nightshift]. She won’t prepare breakfast for me. I eat at school. But I get ready by myself and wait for the bus by myself while my parents are resting,” Child 7.

“My dad works overtime until 10pm every evening. He comes back really late when I’m already asleep. So I don’t get to see him much. And dinner, I usually have on my own as well. He also works on weekends without any days off during the week. He only has one day off a month,” Child 1.

Chart 16. How many hours do you typically spend with your children on a typical work day (not counting sleeping time)?



Despite the parents' long working hours, many children who live with their parents clearly enjoy being close to their parents and spending time with them:

“

Sometimes after work we play “123” wooden boy [a game whereby you freeze]. They sometimes take me to McDonald’s, or shopping, and often buy me clothes. What I like most is playing with my parents,” Child 8.

However, we can also see that some parents struggle to provide the attention and care their children need. Some of the interviewed children who migrated with their parents had stories of neglect:

“

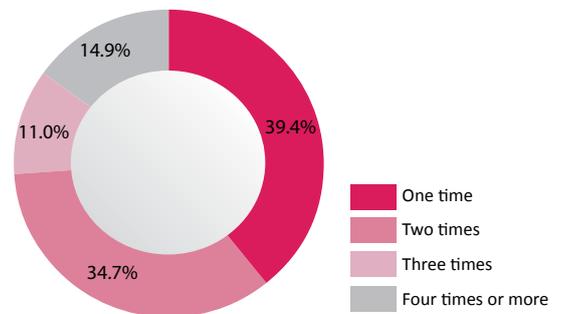
Last night my mother was working the night shift and my father played cards until midnight. He said this is the earliest he could come home,” Child 7.

2.2 Time spent with parents

While migrant children are often unattended, the children left in their hometowns may have more adult supervision, but they spend very little time with their parents.

The study found that a large majority (74%) of parents with children back in their hometowns go back to visit their children only twice a year or less (Chart 17).

Chart 17. On average, how many times do you visit your children/child per year?



The following interview excerpt is a vivid example of how much the separation can weigh on children and how important the visits are:

“I really miss my parents, especially when they first left. When I was in Grade 1, 2 and 3 we still lived together. After Grade 3, my parents left me in our hometown, so that they could go to work in the city. I spent lots of time crying into my blanket the day they left. I was just lying there and crying for hours. I still cried on the second and third day they left. Every time I thought about them not being here, I cried. Then I started thinking about them coming back and then having to leave again, which made me cry again. (Interviewer: So now every time your dad and mum leave, you still cry?) Yes I do. [...]

I just really miss them. There are other ‘left-behind children’ in our school. When your parents are here then you’re not a left-behind child anymore, but when they leave you are just back to being a left-behind child... One time my dad came back, and bought some meat and a fish. He made a really good pork rib soup. It was the first time I’ve ever had such a good soup. I finished it all,” Child 13.

2.3 Impact on parent-child relationship

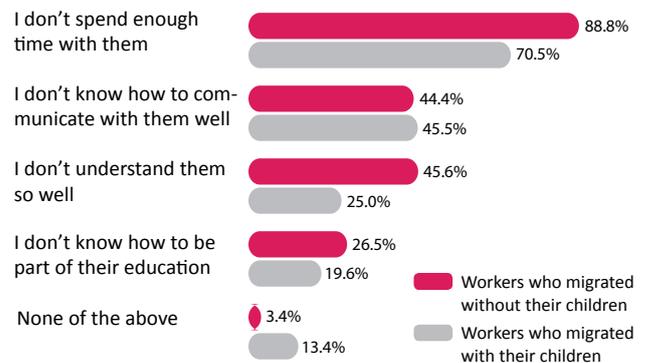
46% of the surveyed parents who migrated without their children say they do not understand their children well.

“

Every time I call home, it feels like a routine call. I talk to my mother for a few minutes, then joke around with my younger daughter. My older daughter usually has nothing to say to me unless I talk to her. I ask her about school and sometimes I try to find topics she likes, like her cat and puppy. Otherwise, she won't want to talk to me,” Worker 1.

About 32% of the surveyed parents who left their children in their hometowns think it is very difficult to let their children know they are loved while the parents are away. This finding coincides with the result that 46% of the parents not living with their children say they do not understand their children well or do not know how to communicate well with them (Chart 18). When we compare such sentiments (being inadequate in parenting functions) between parents who did not migrate with their children and those who did migrate together, we can see that while the sentiment of not spending enough time with their children is very common in both groups, those not living with their children struggle even more in their parenting functions.

Chart 18. Do you feel any of the following sentiments regarding your relationship with your child/children?



The feeling of not being around enough and failing their children was very much present in our interviews with both groups of parents:

“

I do feel guilty for not being around to take care of my son...” Worker 8.

“I feel guilty when there's a parent-teacher meeting [and can't go] or when no-one is looking after the child when we're at work,” Worker 13.

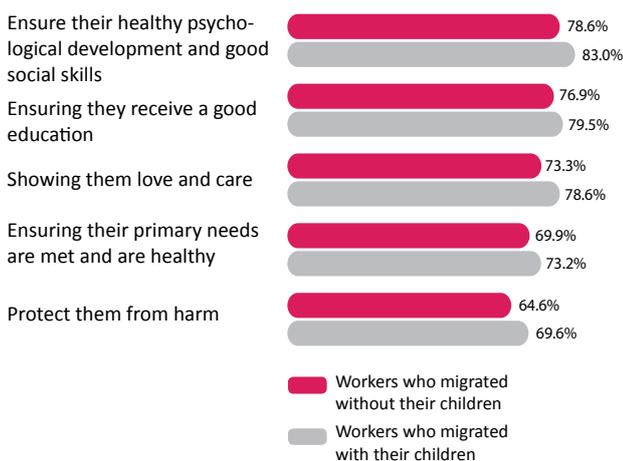
“To be honest, during the parenting training we were asked who our child's best friend is. I realized that I don't know who my daughter's best friend is and that certainly made me feel guilty,” Worker 1.

Perception of parenting responsibilities

Parents who didn't migrate with their children have a narrower understanding of their responsibilities towards their children than parents who migrated with their children.

When we compared the perceived parenting responsibilities of parents who left their children behind and those who migrated with their children, we found similar patterns between them. However, we also found that parents who left their children behind, on average, assume less responsibility for each category (Chart 19).

Chart 19. Perception of parenting responsibilities towards their children



However, adding to the pressure of parents who left their children behind, the survey data shows that those with a strong sense for parenting responsibilities are also more likely to feel inadequate and that they've failed their children.¹¹ While this indicates that parents' awareness has increased, those separated with their children are more likely to think they have failed to live up to their own expectations. In line with the finding that parents feel they do not spend enough time with their children, the interviews indicated the extent to which parents feel responsible and also that they fall short of these responsibilities.

“

I know it's parents' responsibility to raise children, not grandparents. But I have no other choice. I had to come out and work here, and leave them with their grandparents. I'm not able to raise them on my own while I work here. I don't agree with the parenting style of grandparents. They shout and beat the children if they make mistakes. I wouldn't do the same. I just feel guilty I never got to raise my own kids,” Worker 10.

“Left-behind children are slightly different. The teacher said that my daughter isn't very resilient and doesn't like talking to others. I asked the teacher about that because apart from the grandparents, the teacher knows her the best...” Worker 4.

“In my heart I have this idea. I have plans for her when she is older. But I don't actually have the capacity. I don't have the right educational level. I just have these ideas. I am conscious of what I should do, but do I actually do it? That I really don't know,” Worker 1.

11. There is a positive correlation between the number of responsibilities parents of left-behind children assume and the level of guilt they feel for perceiving to be inadequate in their parenting functions. The correlation is $r = 0.0928$, $\text{sig} = 0.0698$.

Distant communication

“

Sometimes when I'm resting, I start thinking about my son and wonder what he's up to. I can't be there for him in person, but at least I can chat with him on WeChat. I do feel regretful about that. I usually video chat with him and occasionally call. But sometimes he doesn't have much to say. He's very introverted and sometimes I can't make sense of what he's trying to say ... As long as I show interest in his life, he's happy to talk to me, but when I keep pressing about his school work, I can tell he gets agitated and will start ignoring me,” Worker 9.

As mentioned, the study found that most migrant parents who migrated without their children only return twice a year or less. This means they rely mostly on phone/online calls to maintain their relationship with their children. However, more than one third of parents (37%) talk to their children only once a week or even less (Chart 20), and for 37% of the parents, phone conversations usually last about 10 minutes or less (Chart 21). On the other hand, we did hear from parents during the interviews that they use WeChat to communicate with older children, send daily messages, and in some cases, video chat with them and/or ask them to send pictures and videos of their lives.

Chart 20. On average how often do you talk to your children on the phone or online?

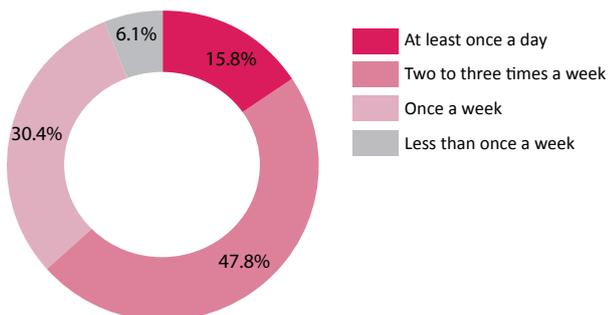
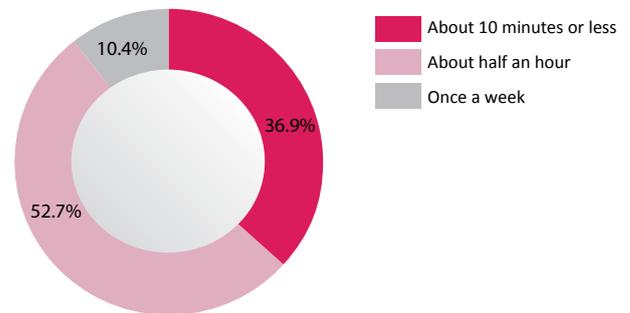


Chart 21. How long do your phone calls (or online chats) normally last?



The interviews with both parents and children show the importance of keeping up communication, and also the challenges they encounter when striving to do so. For many, long-distance communication is a challenge:

“

The communication with our kids is quite okay – but sometimes they don't want to tell me everything, and other times they whisper. Their communication with their dad is not so good though,” Worker 3.

“My children don't like talking to me because I usually give out to them and ask them all sorts of questions. They don't like it,” Worker 5.

“I have problems communicating with the oldest child, but the youngest one is close to his mum. The older one is quite cheeky because he's been raised by the grandmother since he was little, and doesn't say much to me and doesn't like to talk,” Worker 6.

“The little one is quite amenable, but the bigger one doesn't want to talk. He sometimes picks up and sometimes doesn't. The communication with him is rather troublesome,” Worker 2.

But the interviews also revealed the efforts parents make to keep up their communication:

“

My husband calls our kids every day. I call them once a week, but will send them a message every day,”
Worker 4.

“I call them once a week and chat with them via WeChat every day. We have a group chat with the teacher who’ll tell us about our kids,” Worker 6.

“We use WeChat to communicate. At the weekends we video chat, and throughout the week WeChat. There’s Wi-Fi at home. Sometimes we’ll type messages, other times, leave voice messages,” Worker 10.

Negative impact of work on relationship with children

Migrant parents who are not living with their children are more likely to perceive their job as having a negative impact on their relationship with their children.

“

The factory is no place to raise a kid and so I left them with their grandparents. Being away from them, not raising them has surely weakened our bond. I wish they were with me,”
Worker 6.

Without exception, all migrant parents we have come across tell us that the choice to migrate for work is ultimately for the good of their children. The migrant parents seem sorely aware of the fact that their migration takes a toll on their children, and this is true for both parents who migrated with their children and those who left them behind.

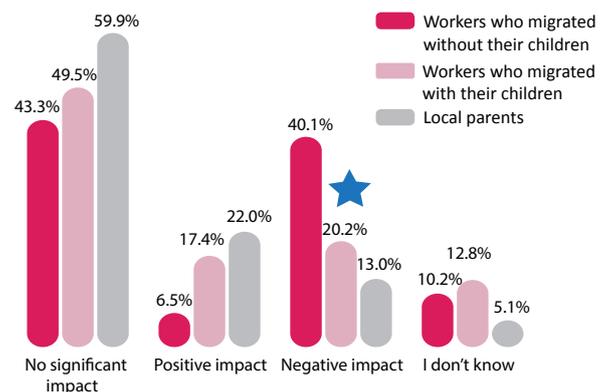
“

My younger daughter used to be outgoing when she was staying with me, but since she is back at her grandparents’ side she has become a little bit introverted and rarely talks. It would be better for all sides if we could take care of her on our own,” Worker 1.

“My mother-in-law tells my daughter that I don’t like her, that I only like my son. When she says this I give out to her and tell her that’s not true. But it is true that I’m not close to my daughter,”
Worker 4.

Understandably, many parents may have conflicting thoughts about the impact of their work on their children, especially on the relationship/intimacy they have. Our survey found that, compared to local parents, significantly more migrant parents¹² thought that this impact is more negative than positive. This difference is even more prominent among parents who left their children behind¹³ (Chart 22).

Chart 22. Do you think your work has an impact on your relationship with your children?



12. There is a significant correlation between migration status and believing that work has a negative impact on parents’ relationship with their children. The correlation is $r= 0.2029$, $sig= 0.0000$.
13. There is a significant correlation between whether parents living with or without children (migrant workers) and finding work has a negative impact on parents’ relationship with their children. The correlation is $r= 0.1697$, $sig= 0.0001$.

Just as the survey results show, the interviewed parents of children left behind speak of the negative impact their work has on their relationship with their children.

“

Our relationship has definitely been affected because of communication. The child has become more distant,”
Worker 6.

“He doesn’t talk much and is introverted. Sometimes, I don’t know what he’s saying... If I talk to him about why his mom and dad are not around he’ll get impatient and will ignore me,”
Worker 9.

“Leaving my child has had an effect on our relationship; I rarely pay him attention and we communicate less. On the first day of coming home, there won’t be much communication. On the second day there’ll be slightly more,”
Worker 12.

2.4 Impact on parents’ wellbeing

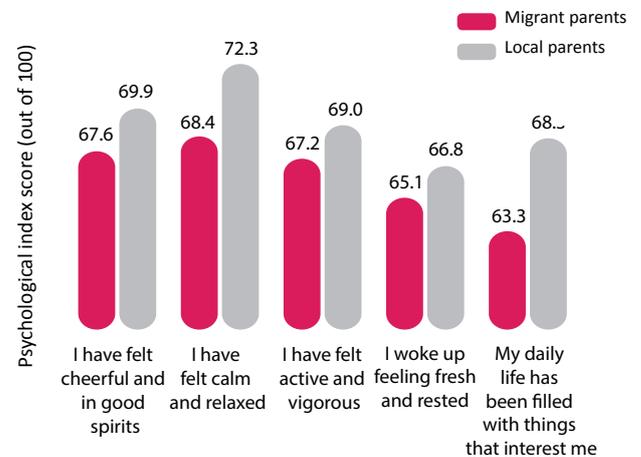
Psychological Wellbeing

Migrant workers are less happy than their local counterparts, possibly because they are more likely to perceive their work as having a negative impact on their relationship with their children.

The study found that migrant parents tend to be less happy than their local counterparts (Chart 23). To understand the possible reason, we looked at

factors that differ between migrant parents and local ones.

Chart 23. Psychological index scoring of migrant and local parents¹⁴



When keeping all other variables constant, we found a significant association between workers’ psychological wellbeing and whether or not they perceive their job as having a negative impact on their relationship with their children. When migrant workers find that work has a negative impact on their relationship with their children, they tend to be less happy¹⁵. As we learned from Chart 22 on page 17 in the previous section, migrant parents are more likely to perceive their work as having a negative impact on their relationship with their children, and this might explain why migrant workers tend to be less happy than their local counterparts.

The data further shows that workers’ psychological wellbeing (migrant and local workers alike) is not significantly associated with their income. However, we do see that age plays a role, with younger migrant parents showing lower levels of psychological wellbeing on average. This finding is consistent with our recent study on the use of our online learning platform, where we also observed that older workers tend to be happier than younger ones¹⁶, underscoring the general vulnerability of young, migrant factory workers. Some of the children also seem to sense their parents’ heavy burden:

14. WHO-5 used a 5-scale scoring system ranging from “All of the time” (5) to “At no time” (0). We converted the scores into 100-point scores
15. There is a significant correlation between migrant workers’ psychological index and finding work having a negative impact on relationship with children. The correlation is $r = 0.1164$, $sig = 0.0085$.
16. CCR CSR, Can WeChat Provide Learning for China’s Migrant Workers? (2016), Page 29

“

Sometimes my parents are not so happy mainly because my dad likes to chat on QQ or because he dozes off during work. I'm worried that one day he'll hurt his hands," Child 13.

“Their work is so painstaking. They won't be happy. Sometimes they will lose their temper," Child 12.

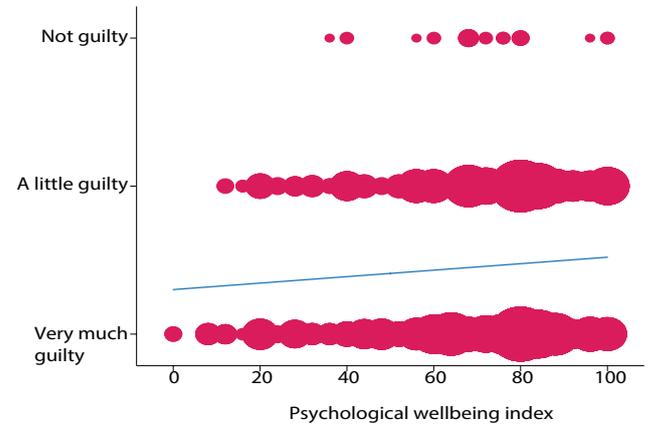
Guilt of inadequate parenting functions vs. psychological wellbeing

95% of the surveyed parents who migrated without their children feel guilty about being inadequate in their parenting functions.

Years of our work with migrant workers has taught us that guilt arising from being separated from their children is a negative emotion affecting many parents who don't live with their children and this guilt is an obstacle that prevents them from trying to get involved more in their children's education and upbringing. Our study yet again confirms this point: over 95% of parents who don't live with their children expressed feeling guilty about their inadequate parenting functions.

However, it must also be noted that only among parents not living with their children, was such guilt significantly associated with psychological wellbeing. The guiltier they feel, the lower their psychological wellbeing tends to be. Conversely, when they feel less guilty about their functions as a parent, they tend to be happier (Chart 24).

Chart 24. Guilt of inadequate parenting functions by psychological wellbeing

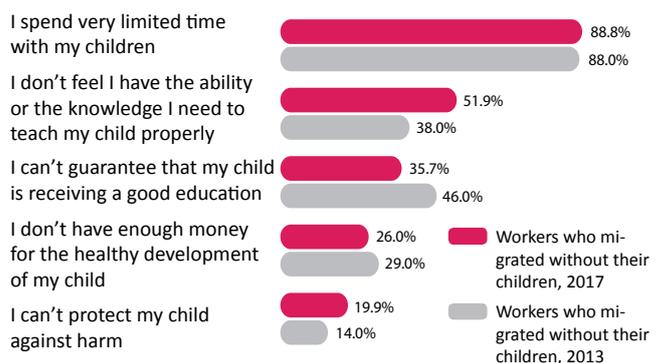


Comparing the perception of inadequate parenting functions among parents who left their children behind with the 2013 study

We compared the results of this study with our 2013 migrant parent study, focusing on feelings of inadequacy among parents who left their children behind. The two results follow a similar pattern with 88% and 89% respectively agreeing with the statement: "I spend very limited time with my children".

The comparison also shows that the portion of parents who worry about children's education has decreased significantly, which could be due to the improved schooling system in many places (Chart 25). However, parents' personal struggles are very much unchanged. The increase in parents who feel they have insufficient knowledge and skills to educate their children is likely an indication of increased awareness of parenting roles combined with them feeling unequipped (both in terms of time and knowledge) to fulfill these roles.

Chart 25. Perception of inadequate parenting functions among workers who migrated without children (2013 & 2017)



2.5 Impact on job satisfaction and loyalty

Migrant parents are less satisfied with their workplace and intend to stay at their jobs for a shorter period.

The study found no significant difference between migrant and local parents in terms of their trust in the management and their relationship with their supervisors. However, migrant parents are significantly less satisfied with their workplace (Chart 26), and as in numerous worker surveys by CCR CSR, this study also found a significant positive correlation¹⁷ between workers' satisfaction with their workplace and their plans to stay in the current workplace (retention indicator). Consequently, migrant parents who show a lower satisfaction level are also more likely to want to leave their jobs sooner (Chart 26).

Chart 26. In general, how satisfied are you with your workplace? (By migrant/local)

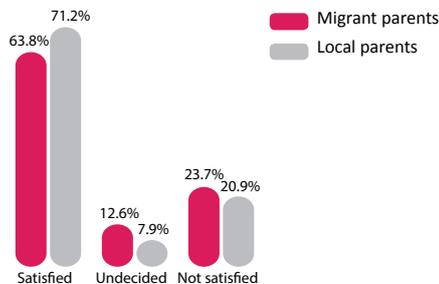
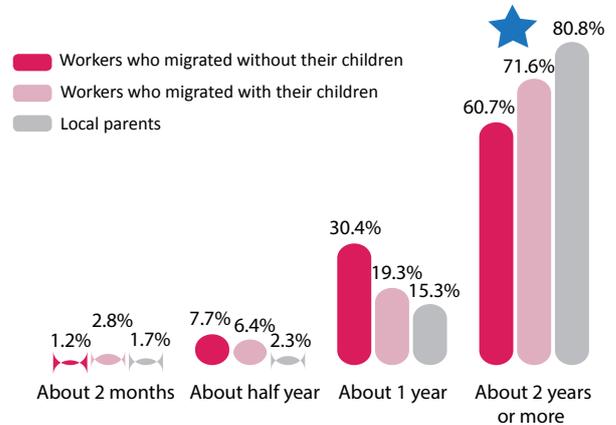


Chart 27 illustrates the different attitudes workers have towards the length of time they plan to stay in the factory, comparing three groups of workers: local workers, parents who left their children behind and parents who migrated with their children. While the satisfaction with workplace does not significantly differ between parents who left their children behind and those who migrated together, their commitment to staying in the factory contrasts significantly. We can see from the graph that significantly more parents plan to stay in the factory for two years or longer if they are living with their children than when they are separated.

Chart 27. How long are you planning to stay in this factory? (By migrant/local)



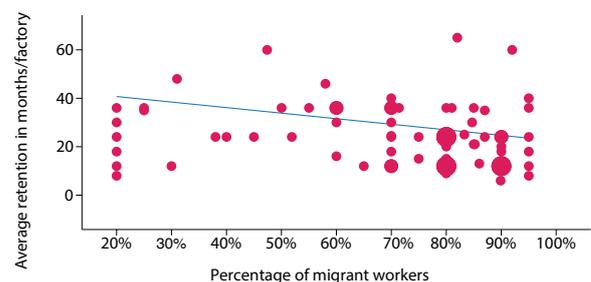
31% of the migrant parents have left a job before to take care of their children, and this is also the number one reason for migrant parents to leave a job.

31% of the migrant parents left a job before to take care of their children, and this happens to be the number one reason for migrant parents to leave a job.

Findings from the factory survey

The findings from the survey we conducted with factory management supports the result that migrant workers stay in their jobs for a shorter time than their local counterparts. When we looked at the percentages of migrant workers in factories and the retention rate, we found that the factories with more migrant workers have lower retention rates (Chart 28).

Chart 28. Percentage of migrant workers and retention in factories (factory survey)



17. The correlation is $r=0.3141$, $sig=0.0000$

Job satisfaction and negative impact of work on relationship with children

Migrant parents who perceive their work as having a negative impact on children are less likely to be satisfied with their workplace and are less committed to staying at the factory for a long time.

To understand why migrant workers tend to be less satisfied with their workplace and less committed to staying in their current jobs, we looked at differences between them that may be linked to these variables. We found that the perception that work negatively impacts their relationship with their children is significantly associated with parents' satisfaction and commitment to their workplace. Chart 29 shows that working parents (migrant parents and local parents alike) who believe that their work has such a negative impact are less likely to be satisfied with their workplace. As we discussed in Section 2.3 Chart 22, migrant parents, especially the ones who don't live with their children, are more likely to perceive their work as having a negative impact on their relationship with their children. This connection might explain why migrant parents are less satisfied with their workplace and why they plan to stay at the factory for a shorter length of time than their local counterparts.

Chart 29. In general, how satisfied are you with your workplace? (By impact of work on relationship with child)

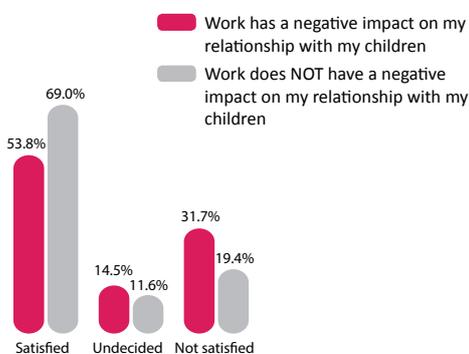
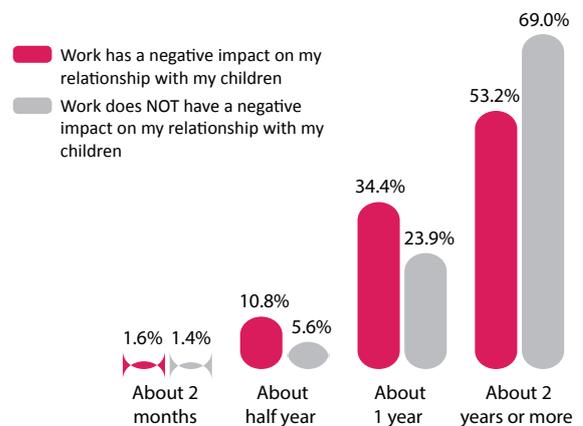


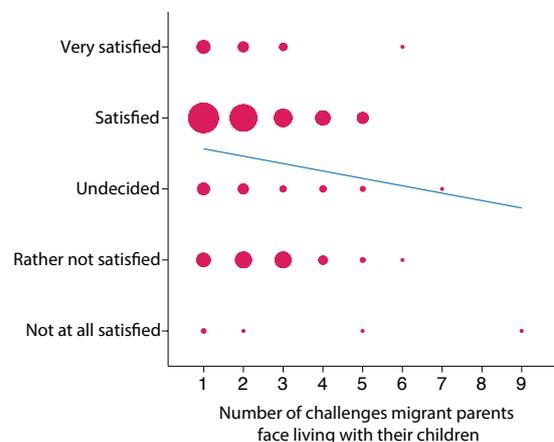
Chart 30. How long are you planning to stay in this factory? (By impact of work on relationship with child)



Job satisfaction and challenges migrant parents face

More than half of the surveyed brand representatives described a variety of challenges that migrant workers face and said that these challenges could influence worker turnover and therefore threaten the stability of the workforce. One representative who thought that separation from children is a major challenge, also believed that this separation makes workers “worry more and focus less, affecting product quality and production”. When looking at the worker survey results, indeed we found that the more challenges migrant parents face while living with their children, the less likely they are to be satisfied with their workplace.¹⁸

Chart 31. In general, how satisfied are you with your workplace? (By number of challenges)



18. The correlation is $r = -0.1526$, $sig = 0.0818$.

CHAPTER 3: SUPPORT FOR MIGRANT PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN



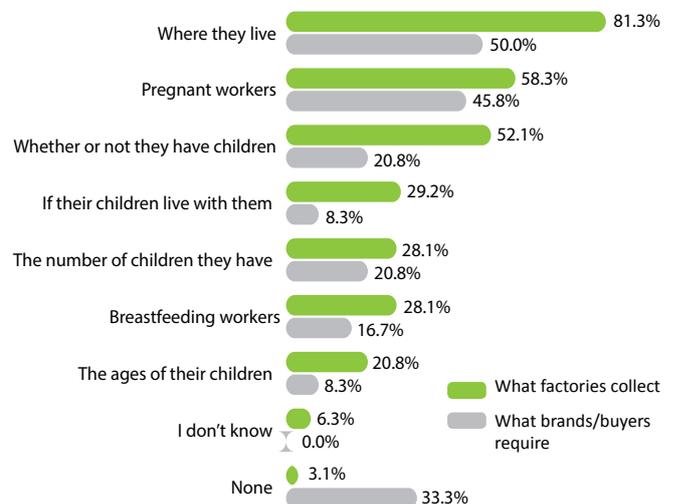
In the previous chapters, we introduced the different challenges faced by migrant parents, and how they play into their decision to bring their children with them. We compared their challenges with local parents to highlight their needs as migrant parents. We also compared the differences between parents who didn't migrate with their children and who that did migrate together, to emphasize the specific challenges they face and the needs that arise from their distinctive situations. In the following chapter, we will look at how much brands/buyers and factory management understand the challenges and needs of migrant parents, what they are doing to support them and what more they could do. We will also examine the business impact of providing additional support for migrant parents and their children, as well as the implications of too little support.

3.1 Awareness of brands/buyers' and factory management

Information factories collect about workers

We believe that the level of information factories collect about workers is a good indicator of how well they understand their situation. Significantly more factories surveyed in this study collect information about all listed aspects of workers' lives than the brands/buyers require from their suppliers (Chart 32). A third of the surveyed brands do not require their suppliers to collect any of the listed information, as compared to only about 3% of the factories that do not collect any of the information. While about half of the surveyed factories (52%) collect information about whether workers have children, less than a third (29%) document if they live with their children, how many children they have (28%) and how old their children are (21%).

Chart 32. Information factories collect about workers



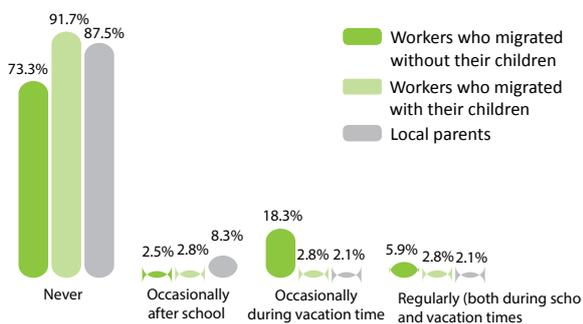
Compliance risk of changing trends in migrating with children

Parents who did not migrate with their children are most likely to bring their children to the factories when the children are visiting, which is likely due to lack of temporary childcare options.

As we explained in section 1.2, significantly more brand/buyer representatives think more migrant workers are choosing to bring their children with them than the ones who think otherwise. For brands/buyers who think more workers are choosing to bring their children with them, 72% think this trend can influence compliance risks. In particular, they mentioned that workers who migrated with their children tend to increase the risk of “parents bringing their children to the workplace”.

When looking at the worker survey, we can see that contrary to the assumption of some brands/buyers, parents of migrant children are least likely to have their children visit them at the factories (Chart 33). In fact, they are even less likely to facilitate visits than local parents. However, the parents who did not migrate with their children are most likely to bring their children to the factories when their children visit them – a trend that is likely closely linked to the fact that the grandparents are not around and that there is limited or no temporary childcare available. This result is consistent with our observation in factories that compliance risks of children appearing in factory production areas increase significantly during school vacations when children normally living apart from their parents come to visit them.

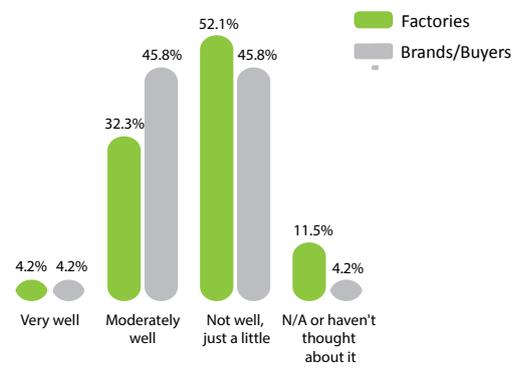
Chart 33. How often does your child/children come to the factory while you are at work?



Brands/buyers and factories’ familiarity with the biggest challenges faced by migrant workers

For both brand/buyer and factory representatives, very few (4%) believe they understand the situation of migrant parents very well. Compared to the factories (32%), more brand/buyer representatives (46%) think they have moderate understanding of migrant parents’ situation (Chart 34).

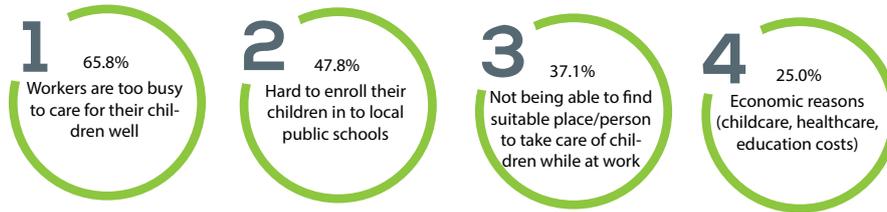
Chart 34. How well do you understand the situation of migrant parents?



For the 50% of brand/buyer representatives who said they understand the situation of migrant parents well enough, they were able to capture some of the challenges that migrant parents listed in the worker survey, such as parents not having enough time to spend with children, having no one to look after the children while they are at work, the difficulty of maintaining the relationship and communication with their children and providing them with good education.

36% of the factory management said they understand the situation of the migrant parents, at least moderately. The top three challenges they chose are indeed the main obstacles hindering migrant parents from bringing their children with them. For migrant parents living with their children these reflect the main challenges they face in their daily lives. However, while economic burden is the number one struggle for migrant parents living with their children, and the number three reason for not bringing their children, factories ranked it only in the 4th place.

Chart 35. What are the biggest challenges working parents face? (According to factory management responses)



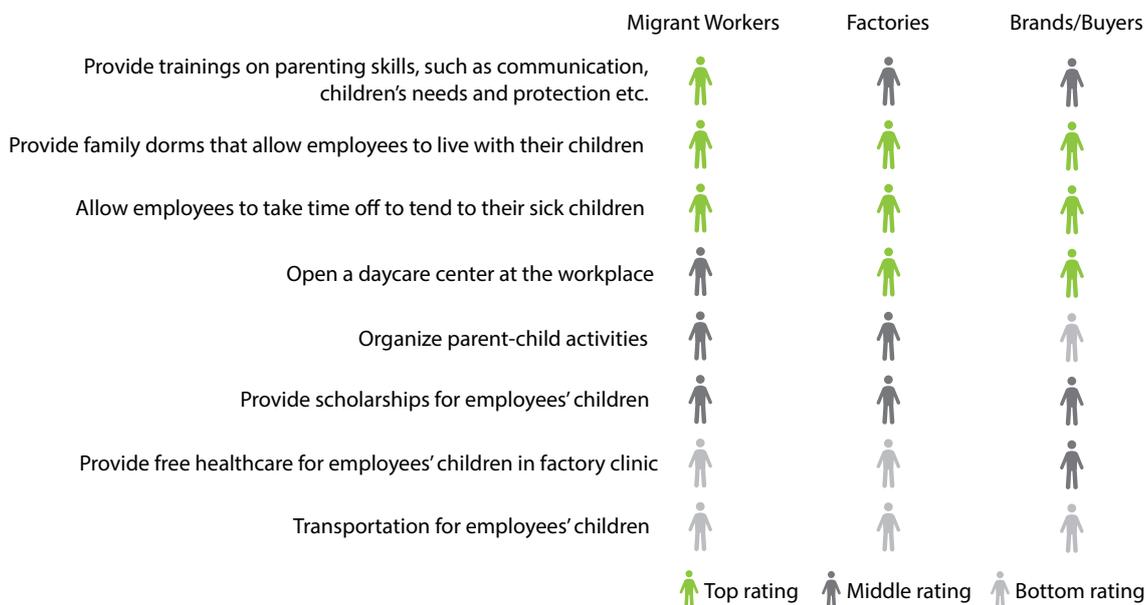
Brands/buyers and factories’ understanding of parent workers’ needs

What migrant workers, especially the parents who didn’t migrate with their children, need most from their workplace is training on parenting skills, such as better communication, understanding children’s needs and protection etc.

Chart 36 ranks the major needs of migrant parents according to themselves, factories and brand/buyers. In the factories’ responses, nearly all the areas they identified as necessities for parent workers are in line with the responses by migrant parents. However, both factories and brands rated the importance of parenting training less strongly than the workers themselves, amongst which this measure had the highest rating. (Chart 36).

Two out of three (67%) brand/buyer representatives think they should support factories to provide the above-mentioned benefits to workers. For the other one third (33%) who didn’t support the notion that factories should be supported in providing those benefits, the two main reasons listed were: 1) it is the responsibility of the government, NGOs and employers/factories; and 2) factories don’t want to share costs of the listed benefits.

Chart 36. What do migrant parents need from their workplace?



3.2 Existing programs in factories & gaps in support

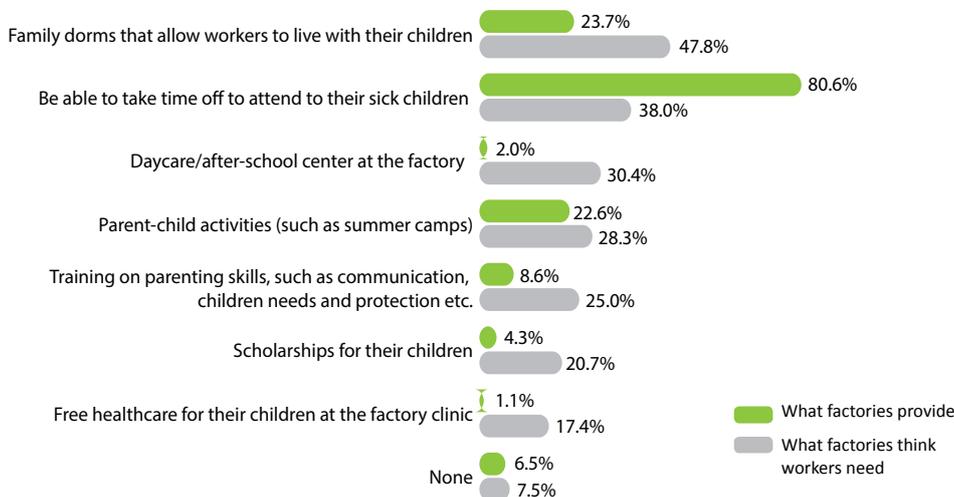
In this section, we introduce the most essential programs for migrant parents in factories based on their needs, and compare the results of the worker survey, factory management survey and brand/buyer survey. We will notice widely varying results in these surveys, which showcases the different levels of support workers receive, depending on the level of investment by brands/buyers and commitment by factories.

As shown in Chart 37, there seems to be a mismatch between the services/benefits that factory management think parent workers need from their workplace and what factories are currently providing. For most services/benefits, the number of factories who agree that workers need those benefits is significantly higher than the number who actually provides these services. The only exception is “time off to take care of sick children”. This is the one benefit that most factories (81%) provide for parents.

“

Programs are inconsistent, and involve widely varying levels of support...In China, where migrant parents used to be extremely common, factories are shrinking and an increasing number of migrant workers are bringing their families and establishing themselves locally. They look more like immigrants than migrants,” A brand representative

Chart 37. Perceived demand and supply of support for migrant parents from factories’ perspectives



In the following paragraphs, we will introduce some key services/benefits that factories provide for working parents, such as family dorms, daycare/after school centers, parent-child activities and parenting training.

Factory dorms for families

24% of the surveyed factories provide family dorms that allow workers to live with their children. However, only 61% of those factories allow access to all employees, including front-line workers.

44% of the surveyed workers said what they need the most from their workplace is family dorms that are accessible to all workers who want to live with their children (Chart 36 on page 24). According to the factory survey, the percentage of workers who live in dorms vary significantly between factories, ranging from 5% to 95%. On an average, 45% of the workers in these factories live in dormitories. Even though 58% of the surveyed factories have dormitories, only 24 % of them are suitable for families. The 23 factories with family dorms have a total 242 children living there with their parents. It is worth noting that only 61% of those factories give access to all employees including front-line workers. The remaining 39% of factories limit this benefit to management and/or employees with a position above a certain level.

Being able to take time off to tend to a sick child

In the worker survey, “being able to take time off to tend to a sick child” is ranked as one of the top three requests from workers. Interestingly, while 81% of factories say this is already possible, we understand from our interviews with both children and parents that in most cases workers are indeed free to leave, but that this leave is often unpaid and in some other cases, is linked to losing attendance bonus.

“

We’re allowed to apply for Saturdays off to take care of our children. But that means no income on Saturdays,” Worker 11.

“

Sometimes the children ask us to take leave to accompany them, like attending the Children’s Day celebration on June 1st. But we can’t really as it will come with a big loss of money so we are torn about what to do,” Worker 3.

With the negative impact of parent’s long working hours on children already outlined in Chapter 2, we can conclude that it is instrumental for children’s wellbeing that factories create a system that allows parents to be more flexible with their working hours when they need to tend to their children’s needs and that such flexibility doesn’t result in salary deductions.

Childcare support

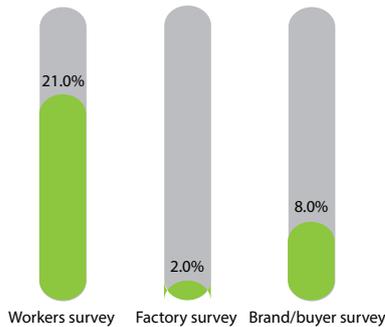
Although 57% of migrant parents say that securing someone to look after their children is their biggest challenge and 34% say factories should provide childcare, only 2% of the surveyed factories have daycare or afterschool centers at the workplace.

Having no-one to take care of children is one of the top challenges for migrant workers. Although 57% of migrant parents say securing a caregiver for their children is their biggest challenge and 34% of parents say factories should provide daycare, only 2% of the surveyed factories actually do so, indicating a big potential-gap in the existing programs. Even amongst the 21% of migrant parents in this study whose factories have daycare centers in their workplace¹⁹, 39% of migrant parents still say that finding a caregiver for their children while they are at work is their main challenge.

19. Note that this may not represent the daycare situation in all factories because some of the participant factories for the worker survey are project factories for our factory based child-friendly spaces.

From our work in factories we know that often the existing centers are not adapted to the frontline workers in terms of opening hours and we have seen examples where frontline workers were implicitly or explicitly excluded from the service.

Chart 38. Existence of daycare or afterschool center in the workplace

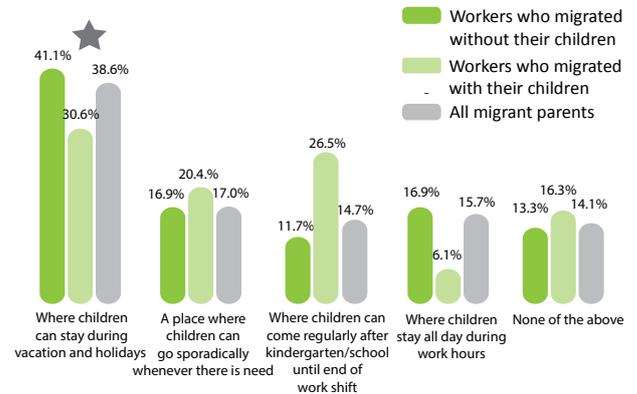


This lack of childcare contrasts starkly to brands' opinions: 71% of brand/buyer representatives think daycare/after school center at the factory is what parent workers need the most, and 82% of them believe brands/buyers should support such programs. In reality however, only 8% are supporting such programs in their supply chains.

While 58% of brand/buyer representatives say they believe their companies should support daycare/after-school centers, only 8% of brands participating in this study actually have programs supporting such centers.

For the other 79% of migrant workers who don't have daycare/after-school center in their factories, what they need most is a place where children can stay during vacation and holidays (Chart 39). Understandably, this need is greatest among parents who didn't migrate with their children, as many of their children will come to visit them during school vacations.

Chart 39. If there is a daycare center in the factory, which type of center do you want?



Parent-child activities

Organizing parent-child activities is among the top three things factories do to support migrant parents and their children. 87% of the migrant parents said they would be interested in participating in such activities during the summer if the factory were to organize it, indicating a strong interest among migrant parent for such programs.

The factory survey result shows that 23% of the factories organize parent-child activities.

The importance of child-parent activities echoes the interviews with children, who say that they are bored when their parents play cards, mahjong, or just stare at their phone.

“

“I would like to go hiking with my parents. They don't bring me out very often. I do not go out to play at weekends,” Child 6.

“My dad doesn't [take care of me a lot].... One day he told me that he would take me to buy a pair of shoes, but he didn't in the end. He still hasn't apologized for it,” Child 2.

Parenting training

57% of the surveyed workers have participated in parenting training; however only 9% of the surveyed factories provide such training to their workers

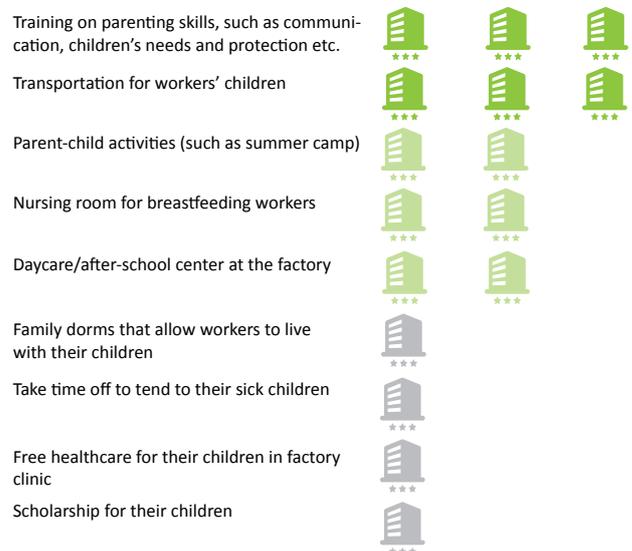
The number one need that migrant parents in this study hope for is that their workplace can provide training on parenting skills (Chart 36 on page 24). This is the same among both parents who have participated in such trainings in the past and those who haven't yet. Looking at the factory survey results, we found that so far only about 9% of the factories provide such training for their workers, which is possibly the better estimate of the existence of such support for parent workers²⁰.

The need for parenting support seems to be an area that most respondents agree on and is clearly related to the very common feeling of failing as parents, as highlighted in the interview quotes on page 14 and 15.

Brands/buyers' investment in the programs to support parent workers and their children

25% of the surveyed brands have programs to support parent workers and their children in their supply chains. Chart 40 lists such programs, and even though only a few brands/buyers are implementing each of these programs, 95 factories are benefiting from them in total. The brands/buyers are also aware of 14 additional factories that are implementing such programs without their support.

Chart 40. Number of programs brands/buyers currently invest in their supply chains to support parent workers and their children



20. For more information about the impact of parenting training, please refer to case study 3 in [Appendix 3](#).

3.3 Business impact of supporting migrant parents

After introducing the most essential in-factory programs to support migrant parents and their children and possible gaps in existing support services, we will look at the possible business impact of existing services by analyzing their connection to workers' satisfaction with their workplace and their commitment to stay in the factories.

Job satisfaction and loyalty to the workplace

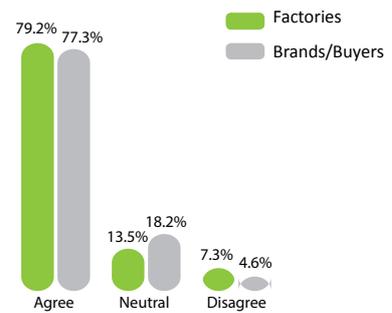
If migrant workers feel understood by their management they are more likely to be satisfied and to want to stay in the factory longer.

31% of the migrant parents say they have at one point left their job to take care of their children, making it the most common reason for migrant parents to leave a job, both according to workers and factory managers. Naturally this is especially so for female workers, which highlights the importance of supporting parent workers with childcare.

The top three reasons for migrant parents to leave a job is 1) to take care of children (31.4%), 2) for better pay (23.7%), 3) for marriage and childbearing (23.3%). According to the factories, the top reasons are 1) to take care of children (61.1%), 2) better personal development in another factory (53.7%), 3) for marriage and childbearing (46.3%).

Most of the brand/buyer representatives (77%) and factory management (79%) agree that the level of support parent workers receive is associated with their job satisfaction (Chart 41).

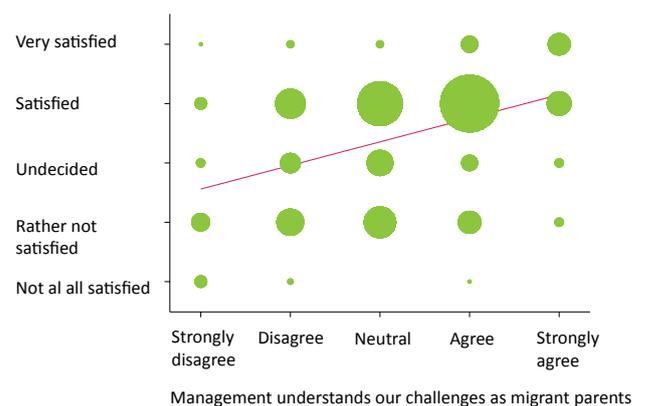
Chart 41. Do you agree with the following statement: "Level of support provided to the parent workers is associated with how much they are satisfied with their job"?



“ People [migrant workers who didn't migrate with their children] who worry are less able to focus on work, which may impact product quality and production. So an improved situation would imply an improvement of the above,” A brand representative.

The worker survey results confirm the point above: that when migrant parents believe management understands their challenges as working parents, they are more likely be satisfied with their workplace²¹ and are more likely to commit to staying at the factory for longer²² (Chart 42 and 43).

Chart 42. In general, how satisfied are you with your workplace? (By management understands our challenges as migrant parents)



21. The correlation is $r=0.4326$, $sig=0.0000$.
 22. The correlation is $r=0.2222$, $sig=0.0000$.

Chart 43. How long are you planning to stay in this factory? (By management understands our challenges as migrant parents)

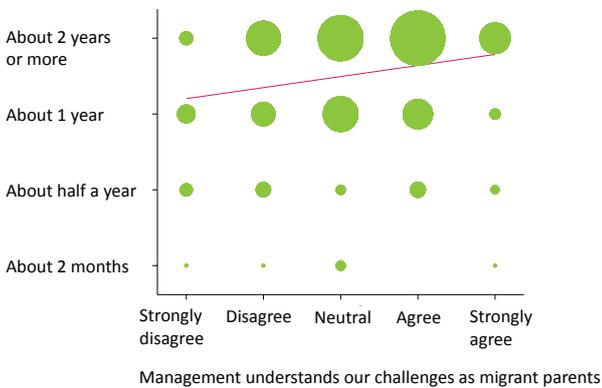
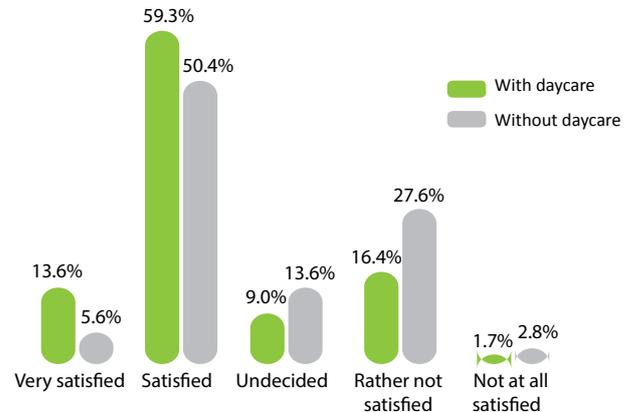


Chart 44. In general, how satisfied are you with your workplace? (By daycare/after-school center)

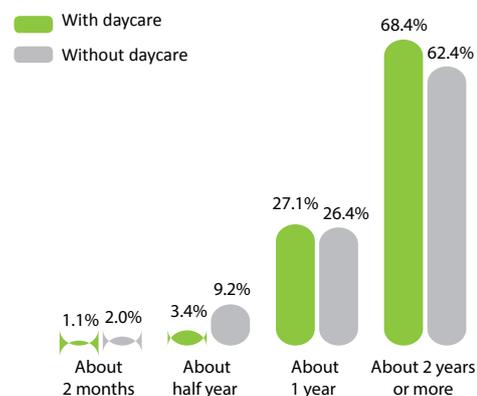


When there is a daycare/after-school center available, migrant workers are more likely to think management at work understands their challenges.

As the study found that workers' satisfaction with their workplace is also strongly associated with how long they plan to stay in the factory²⁵ we consequently saw a similar connection²⁶ between the daycare/after-school center and workers' commitment to stay in the factory (Chart 45).

Since workers' perception of how well the factory management understands their challenges is strongly associated with their job satisfaction and loyalty to the workplace, we looked at how some key support initiatives and benefits provided to them are linked with such a perception. The worker survey results show that when there is a daycare/after-school center available²³, migrant workers are more likely to think management at work understands their challenges. This result is not affected by whether their children use this service.

Chart 45. How long are you planning to stay in this factory? (By daycare/after-school center)



Migrant parents are more satisfied with their workplace and plan to stay longer when there is a daycare/after-school center available, regardless whether their children avail of this service or not.

From the worker survey, we found that migrant workers' satisfaction with their workplace is positively correlated with whether the factory has a daycare/after-school center available (Chart 44)²⁴. Interestingly, this association is true for all migrant workers, even the ones whose children don't go to the daycare/after-school center.

23. Regular daycare/after school center or only during school vacation.
 24. The correlation is $r = 0.1863$, $sig = 0.0001$.
 25. The correlation is $r = 0.3141$, $sig = 0.0000$. (The higher their satisfaction level, the longer they are ready to commit to staying in the factory).
 26. The correlation is $r = 0.0959$, $sig = 0.0477$. (If the factory has a daycare center workers are more likely to commit to staying a longer).

CONCLUSION

This study shows that for the great majority of migrant parents working in factories and their children, the migration to China's industrial areas in search for work has come with a great number of sacrifices, heartbreak and challenges. While migrant parents of children who stayed behind in their hometowns are plagued with guilt and feelings of inadequacy, those who migrated with their children struggle with little time for their children and increased economic pressure.

At the same time, many of the parents we met and surveyed in this study expressed how much they value and love their children, and how important their children are to them:

“

Everything we do, we do for our kids,” Worker 13.

The thought of creating a better future for their kids is what drives them to get up and work long hours in often taxing jobs.

“

I hope that they'll be different to me. I hope that my daughter will one day work in an office building and have light work. My son is very intelligent so I think he'll do better,” Worker 4.

“I hope my children's lives will be better than their dad's. I hope they live a good life, and have everything they need,” Worker 5.

As seen in Chapter 3, it pays for factories and their buyers to support their migrant parent workers in their endeavor – not just because it allows the companies to ensure they have a positive impact on their workers, communities and the society as a whole, but also because there is a clear business case.

Factories who have invested in supporting migrant

parents with childcare centers score higher in both job satisfaction and retention, and 67% of questioned buyers/brands agreed that supporting migrant parents is something they would like to engage in.

Around 86 million migrant workers, of which an estimated 50 to 60% are parents, are employed in China's manufacturing industry²⁷. And even with a slowdown of China's manufacturing industry in sight, China will remain the most important global manufacturer for the next decade. The outcome of this study is a strong indicator that factories and their buyers can have a significant sustainable and scalable impact on the wellbeing of millions of Chinese migrant parent workers and their children.

Based on both the numbers and the stories presented in this study, CCR CSR strongly recommends the following steps for factories and their buyers.

- Take a strong interest in the situation of the migrant parent workers in (supplier) factories. Ensure all factories are capturing relevant data and information, e.g. on the number of migrant parents who migrate with and who migrated without their children.
- Work, ideally in collaboration and through industry wide initiatives, towards the establishment of strong migrant parent support programs in factories.
- In line with workers' needs, these programs can focus on parenting training, establishing factory child friendly spaces to cover childcare needs, setting up after-school centers to reduce the number of hours migrant children spend unattended, and offer flexible working hours to parents to allow child-related leave without having to accept huge salary losses.

As shown in Appendix 3, companies, associations and factories have started to implement support programs for migrant parent workers – not just as projects or in the form of charity, but as long-term and systematic support that is thus changing the way factories manage their migrant parents workers – best practice examples that will hopefully inspire numerous imitators.

APPENDICES 1-4



Appendix 1



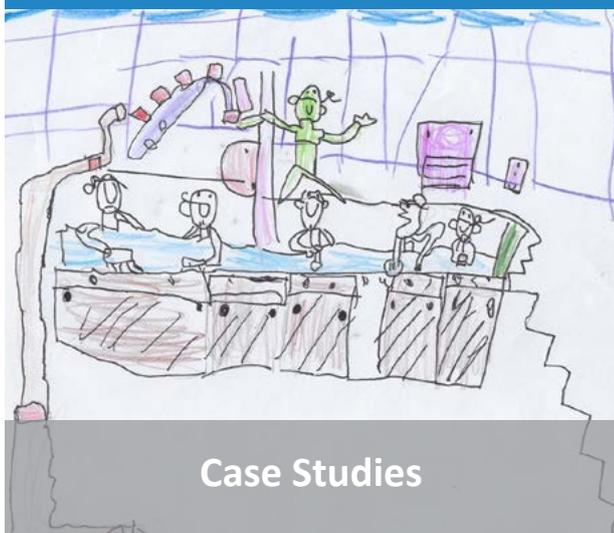
Study Specifics

Appendix 2



Case Stories

Appendix 3



Case Studies

Appendix 4



Quotes Guide

1.1 Background

In 2013, CCR CSR published a study that shed light on the challenges faced by migrant parent workers with left-behind children, particularly those working in factories, and how this separation affected their performance and career-related decisions. The study was enlightening for several reasons: one, it was the first study to examine the challenges long-term family separation poses to working parents; secondly, it clearly demonstrated the connection between migrant workers' family situation and the case for businesses to support their migrant parent workforce. By placing working parents at the heart of the study, it became clear that separation weighs heavily on them and that this in turn affects their attitudes towards work, their wellbeing at work.

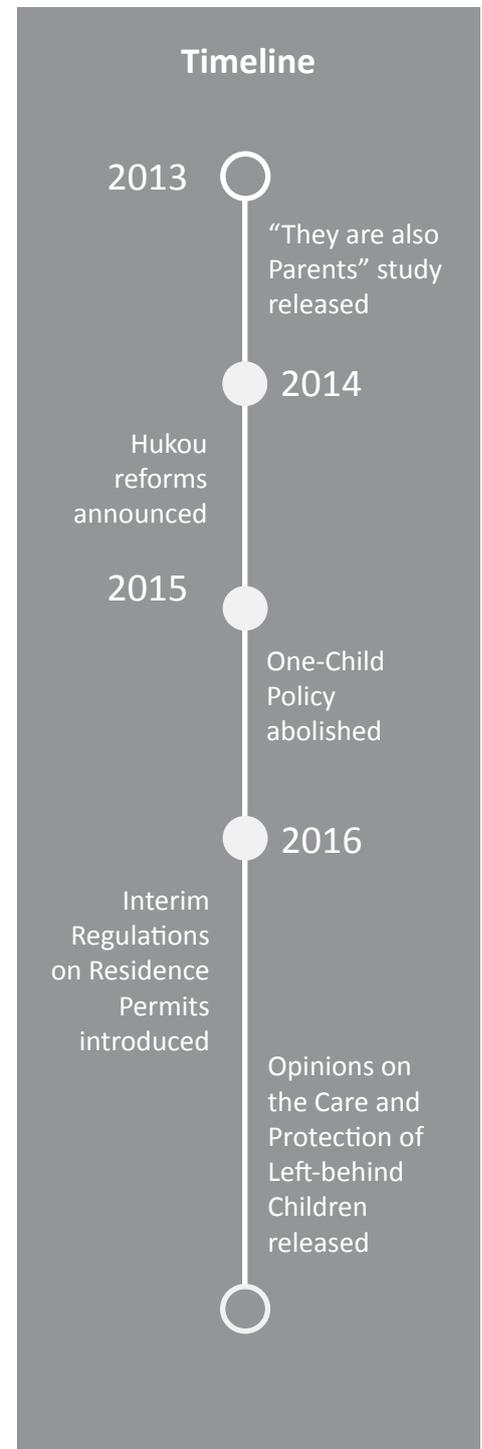
Within the four years after the report was published there have been significant socio-economic and legal changes in China.

In 2014, a formal announcement was made by the central government about an ambitious goal to make the urban Hukou¹ (household registration) more accessible to rural migrants through a points-based system, with a number of provinces following by issuing their own plans for reform in the months following.

The following year, in another historic move, China abolished the one-child policy, which for the first time since 1979, allowed all families in the nation to have two children.

Then on January 1, 2016, Interim Regulations on Residence Permits officially came into effect, with the goal of giving 100 million migrant workers residence permits by 2020. The interim regulations are significant in that those who qualify for the new residence permits gain access to basic public services including public education and medical services. Holders of the residence permit may also begin the process of transferring their rural Hukou to an urban one if they meet the criteria, but different criteria apply in different cities, with megacities like Beijing setting much stricter requirements. Nonetheless, the interim regulations on residence permits is making it easier and potentially more attractive for families to migrate with their children.

This was followed by yet another milestone. In the same year as the interim regulation on residence permits was



1. The Hukou system has dissected the nation between urban and rural since the late 50s, tying people's access to social services to their birthplace rather than place of residence. It is therefore seen as one of the root causes of China's left-behind children issue.

introduced, China, for the first time, published a set of guidelines calling for greater support and care of left-behind children in rural areas. While not legally binding, these guidelines signaled the recognition of left-behind children as a matter of national importance. The guidelines, named “Opinions on the Care and Protection of Left Behind Children”, define the different responsibilities of parents, society and government towards these children and lay out measures that can be taken to support them. The guidelines also echo the State Council’s “National Human Rights Action Plan for China 2016-2020”, which call for greater efforts in enhancing the construction of facilities for children’s activities and services in communities.

But it’s not only in the public realm where changes have been taking place. In the private sector, businesses are realizing the value of supporting workers and that this can translate into greater business gains. Faced with a shrinking labor force and more intense competition from other Asian nation states, workers’ challenges are no longer being ignored by factories that want to remain competitive. Compounded by a greater demand for higher ethical standards – by brands and consumers alike – factories are taking stronger actions to support their migrant parent workers. Many initiatives are taking place in the manufacturing industry, such as ICTI CARE Foundation’s program for Family Friendly Factory Spaces, IKEA’s After-School Center for the children of migrant parent workers and community activities such as auctions to benefit migrant schools etc. Companies like Flextronics have worked with local NGOs to support initiatives like setting up hotlines connecting left-behind children with their parents and providing free counselling services for migrant parent workers. And companies like Volvo and Hyundai have taken part in initiatives that

supported left-behind children directly in their communities including “Child Safety Centres” and “Children’s Inns”. What’s more, an increasing number of supplier factories are directly supporting the children of their workers, including Handan Lianfeng Clothing Limited Company in Hebei Province, which built a kindergarten that now has more than 200 children; or the Sinoer Mini-Harvard Kindergarten in Shandong Province set up by Sinoer Menswear Co. Ltd that has become a model kindergarten in the province for its high quality education and top notch facilities. A few examples of actions where CCR CSR has been involved are outlined in the case studies of this report.

In light of this new context, the time has come to once again put migrant parent workers under the spotlight. Are more parents choosing to migrate with their children now? What challenges do they face if they choose to do so? And are companies’ initiatives in line with migrant parent workers’ actual needs? By gaining a deeper understanding of the situation for migrant parent workers, as well as the extent and impact of the support available to them, this study can help inform and inspire companies to adapt targeted support programs that positively impact everyone.



1.2 Study Design

We implemented both quantitative and qualitative research to capture data on the above-mentioned objectives. The quantitative surveys included:

1. A field survey with parent workers in eight partner factories
2. An online survey with the subscribers of the CCR CSR WeChat public account
3. An online survey with factory managers
4. An online survey with brands/buyers

We collected 735 valid responses from workers through the field and online survey, 96 responses from factories and 24 from brands/buyers. In order to obtain more in-depth information that was not captured through the surveys, we also conducted in-depth interviews with migrant parents and their children.

We conducted rigorous analysis of three types of surveys (workers, factory management, brand/buyers) for possible association between different variables and disparities in different groups and subgroups. The study also compared some results we obtained through the worker survey with those of the factory management and brand/buyer survey. This enabled us to evaluate factories and brands'/buyers' level of awareness and understanding of migrant parents' situations more effectively. Where possible, the worker survey results were compared with our previous study on migrant parents in 2013, "They are also Parents", to observe any changes in patterns and trends.

Field survey with parent workers

The field survey with migrant parents targeted factory workers in eight of our partner factories, and we collected 511 valid responses in total. Most of these workers are the beneficiaries of our projects, such as Factory Child Friendly Spaces and/or parenting trainings etc. The worker survey captured quantitative data through 58 questions, which are mostly multiple-choice questions. The aim of the survey was to help us gain a better understanding of the most common challenges and needs of migrant parents, and how their separation and relationship

with children are possibly associated with their psychological well-being and work performance. In addition to collecting basic information about the workers, the survey sought to capture information on the following points:

- Current situation of the migrant working parents, i.e. their needs, reasons and challenges for leaving or bringing their children with them
- Migrant parents' relationship with their children, and their perceptions of their parenting roles, especially when they are separated from their children
- Migrant workers' satisfaction level with their workplace and the support they receive from their employers
- Migrant workers' psychological wellbeing

The survey was designed to take a maximum one hour to complete, and it took about 35 minutes on average. The survey was conducted with pre-selected workers on iPads. Two CCR CSR staff led the survey with a batch of 10 workers for each session. The survey in each factory took one full work day, with 50-80 workers selected from each factory. We filtered out the responses belonging to parents who do not have children under the age of 16, and kept 511 valid responses for the analysis.

Online survey with parent workers

The content of the online survey questionnaire was largely the same contents as the field survey except for a few minor differences designed specifically for the online survey. It was distributed through CCR CSR's WeSupport eLearning Platform, which had nearly 3000 followers at the time. We distributed posters about the survey to six partner factories to encourage their workers to follow our platform and complete the survey. The WeSupport Platform is targeted and publicized for factory workers, but since it is a public account, anyone can technically follow the account and access its content. Thus, specific questions were added to the survey to filter out non-factory workers.

In order to motivate workers to complete the relatively long survey with over 50 questions, we used a lottery system with three prizes, respectively in the amount of 1000 RMB (one person), 300 RMB (two people) and 50 RMB (28 people). Respondents interested in being considered for the lottery were asked to leave their phone numbers. To guarantee the validity of the data, we filtered out the responses that did not belong to factory workers, those who did not have children under the age 16, possible duplicate answers (same IP address and same content) and those that took less than five minutes to complete. On average the survey took about 15 minutes to complete. After cleaning up the data, we kept 224 valid responses. Together with the field survey data, we collected answers from 735 workers in total.

Online survey with factory managers

The survey with factory managers consisted of 48 questions, most of which were multiple choice questions. However, a considerable portion of questions asked factories to provide detailed information about the worker demographics, family situation (if applicable) and production etc. The main aim of this survey was to gain in-depth understanding of the following points:

- To what extent factories collect information about workers' children and their living situation
- Factory management's level of awareness of migrant parents' needs and challenges
- The level of support factories provide to migrant parents and their children
- The possible adverse business impacts caused by lack of support for working parents as well as the positive impact of sufficiently supporting them (through indicators such as job satisfaction, retention and work efficiency etc.)

The online survey link was distributed to our partner factories through a mass invitation as well as through email invitation by our brand/buyer partners. We collected valid responses from 96 factories.

Online survey with brands/buyers

The brand/buyer survey had 28 questions that were mostly qualitative, and their aim was to obtain in-depth information about the brands' awareness and involvement in supply chain programs supporting migrant parents and their children in China. The results were expected to complement the worker survey and factory management survey to help us better understand the level of support migrant parents are receiving and the possible gaps in support they need.

The brand/buyer survey was distributed to our current partners such as the Youth Development Working Group, as well as all our business contacts sourcing from China. We collected answers from 24 brands/buyers.

Interviews with migrant parents and their children

In addition to the surveys, we conducted in-depth interviews with 14 migrant parents and 15 children. Two of the children were left-behind (interviewed via phone) and the rest were migrant children living with one or both of their parents. The aim of the interviews was to complement the quantitative survey results and to give us a clearer picture of the lives of migrant parents and their children. The interviews were designed to encourage parents and children to share details about their relationships with their families, their struggles in life, their plans and hopes for future etc. The study references their words in the form of quotes to highlight the key results of the surveys. Additionally, we used the transcript of an interview with a migrant child and a left-behind child to draft two case stories that provide a glimpse into their lives (Appendix 2). As intriguing as their stories are, the struggles they experience while separated from one or both of their parents are likely to strike a chord with many other children in similar situations. In addition to the children's stories, we also included two stories about migrant parents to highlight their realities.

1.3 Survey Sample Description

1.3.1 Worker survey

735 factory employees participated in the survey, but not all of them are workers on production lines. Among the ones who provided such information, about 69% are production line workers and the rest are non-production line workers, technicians/engineers, line supervisors etc. Only a small minority (5%) are managers above line supervisor level.

Age distribution

The average age of workers who responded to the survey is 34.2 years. There is no significant difference between the average ages of female and male respondents. However, the average age of online respondents (31.9) is significantly younger than the field survey respondents (35.1).

Table A1. Average ages of worker survey respondents

Gender	All respondents	Field survey	Online survey	Migrant workers	Local workers
Female	34.1	34.9	31.5	34.2	33.8
Male	34.7	35.8	32.7	34.8	34.3

Chart A1. Age distribution of all worker survey respondents

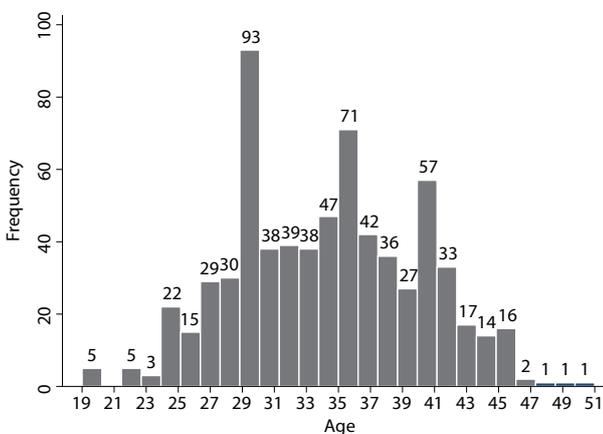
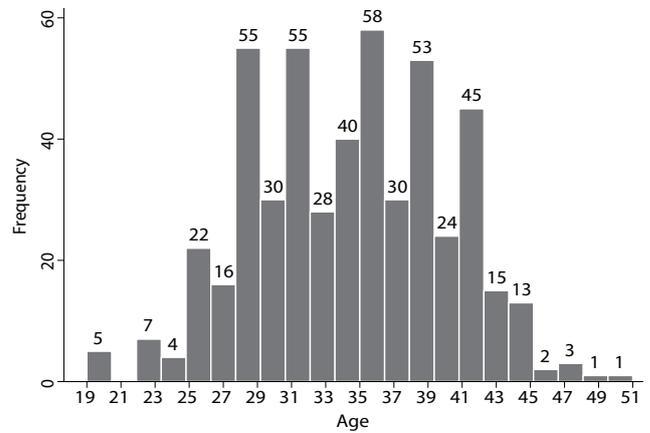


Chart A2. Age distribution of migrant workers



Gender distribution

About 75% of the respondents are female, and this number is even higher for the field survey (Table A2). The number for female workers is higher than the gender distribution in most Chinese factories, which can be explained by the fact that many survey participants have participated in migrant parent training programs, in which female workers are typically over-represented. To ensure the gender imbalance would not skew the results, we compared all results by gender, and presented the results where there is significant difference between the female and male respondents.

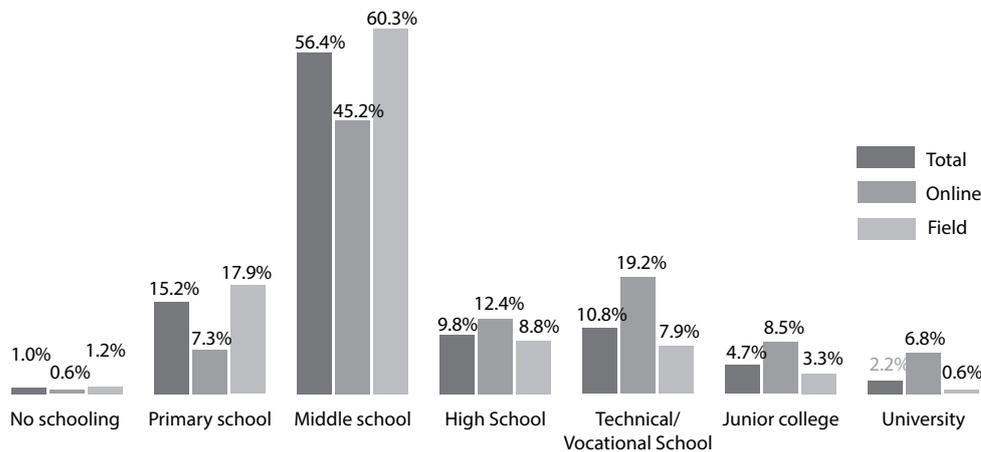
Table A2. Gender distribution of worker survey respondents

Gender	All respondents	Field survey	Online survey	Migrant workers	Local workers
Female	74.6%	77.6%	66.1%	71.6%	83.5%
Male	25.4 %	22.4%	33.9 %	28.4%	16.5%

Education background

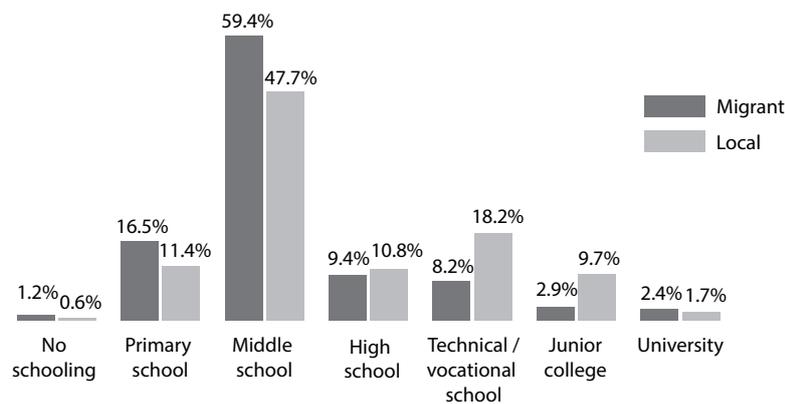
The majority of respondents are middle school graduates (Chart A3). The online respondents have significantly higher education levels than the field survey respondents, with more graduating from high school, technical school, junior college and college.

Chart A3. Education levels of online and field respondents



Comparing the education levels of migrant and local respondents, we can see that there's a significant difference. Local workers are better educated than their migrant counterparts (Chart A4).

Chart A4. Education levels of migrant and local respondents



Migration

76% of the survey respondents are migrant workers, and only 6% of them have the Hukou in the same town/city as they work. Of the ones who did not identify themselves as migrant workers (24%), 19% of them do not have the Hukou in the town they work, which technically makes them migrant workers even though they did not migrate from the countryside and does not fall into the category of rural migrant worker (Nongmin Gong) by Chinese definition. It is also possible that some migrant workers who migrated within the same province do not identify themselves as “migrant workers” even though their cities/towns of origin are different to their location of work. 13% of the respondents identify themselves as ethnic minorities, and most of these ethnic minorities (98%) are migrant workers.

Almost a third (30%) of the respondents are from Guangdong Province; followed by neighboring Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region (11%) in second place; and Hunan Province (10%) in third place, making these the top three origins of survey respondents. These three are also the top three origins for migrant workers who participated in the survey (Chart A5 (a)). As for the local workers, given that the majority of respondents are currently working in Guangdong, it is not surprising that the majority of locals are Guangdong natives (Chart A5 (b)).

Chart A5 (a). Places of origin of worker survey respondents (Migrant workers)

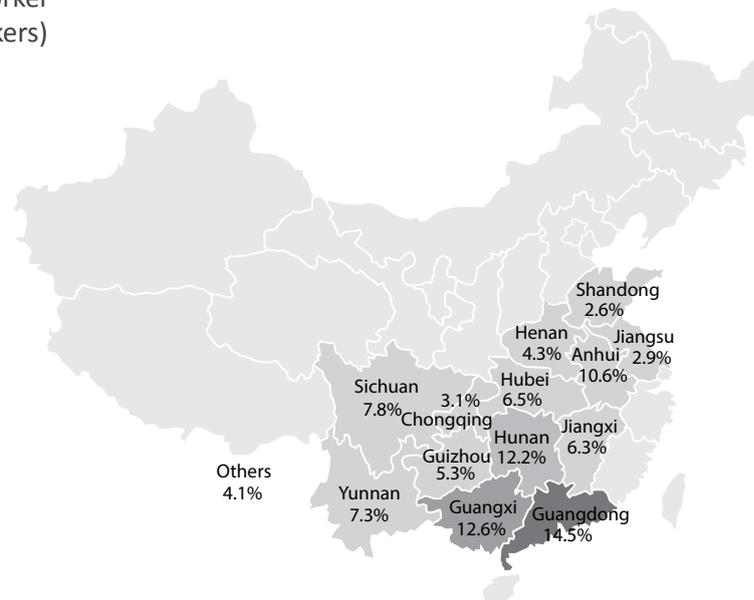


Chart A5 (b). Places of origin of worker survey respondents (Local workers)

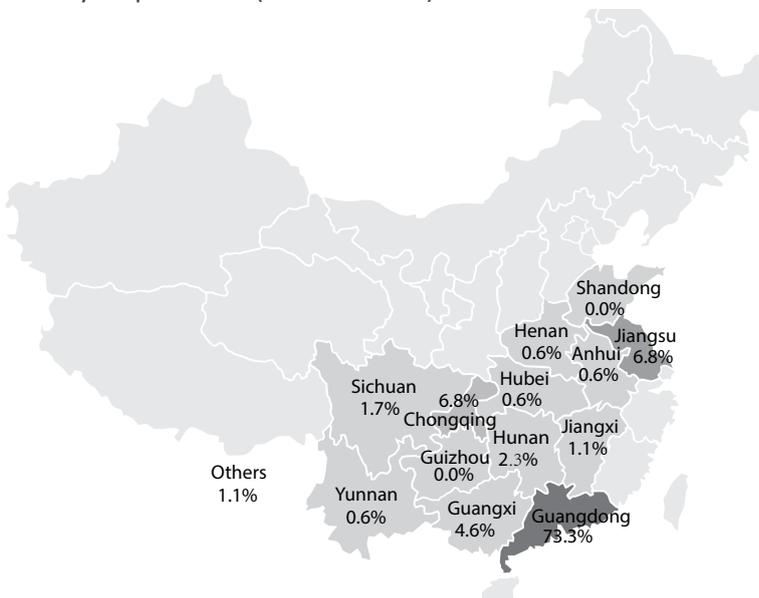
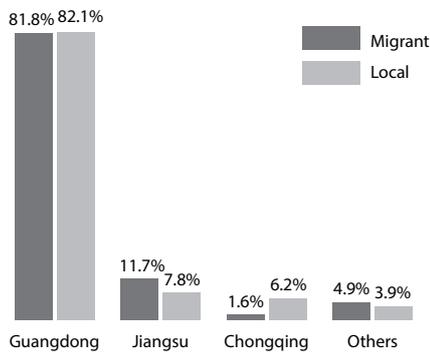


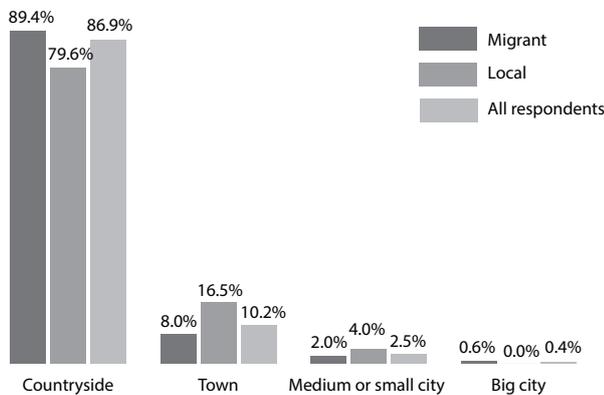
Chart A6. Current location of worker survey respondents



Most of the respondents grew up in the countryside (87%), and this number is even higher among migrant workers, making 90% of the migrant workers rural migrants. Also, 98% of the ethnic minority respondents are rural migrants.

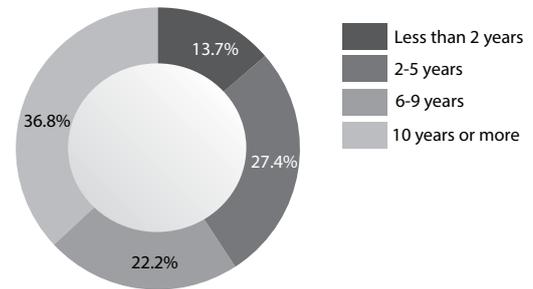
To understand the special needs and challenges of migrant parents, we compared some results by migration status.

Chart A7. Where the worker survey respondents grew up before turning 16



About 86% of the migrant workers who participated in the worker survey have been working as a migrant laborer for over two years, and a significant portion (37%) migrated 10 years ago or even earlier.

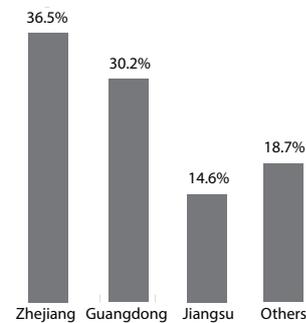
Chart A8. How long have you worked as a migrant worker?



1.3.2 Factory management survey

96 supplying factories in China completed the factory management survey. The respondents came from various departments such as HR, administration, operations, sales and export. 65% of respondents are female. The average age is 34.3, with a minimum age of 23 and a maximum age of 55.

Chart A9. Location of surveyed factories



The surveyed factories produce a wide range of products, with factories manufacturing toys and electrical appliances being represented the strongest.

Table A3. Products produced at the surveyed factories

Products	No. of factories
Textile & garments	3
Bags and shoemaking	2
Timber products	3
Furniture	2
Culture, art & recreation products & toys	19
Plastic & rubber products	7
Electronics and telecommunication products	11
Tools and equipment	15
Electrical appliance and apparatus	23
Instrumentation	9
Metal products	1
Chemical products	1

The surveyed factories are mostly small to mid-size factories with the average number of workers varying from 344 during the low production season to 446 during the high season.

Chart A10. Number of workers during the peak production season

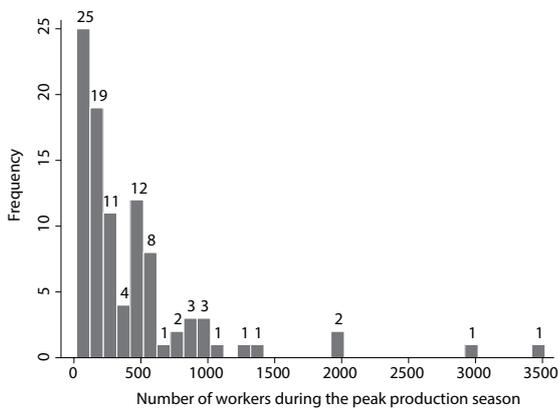
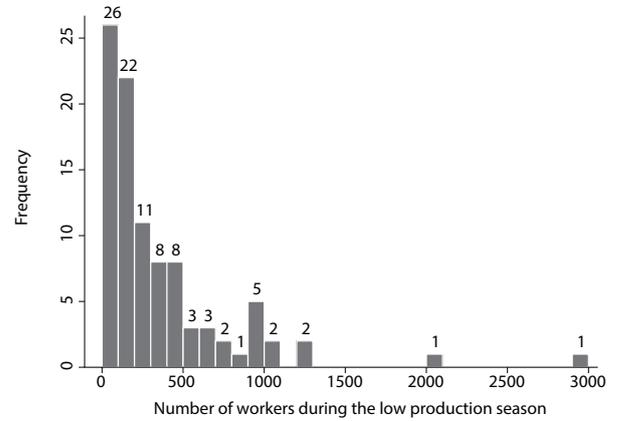


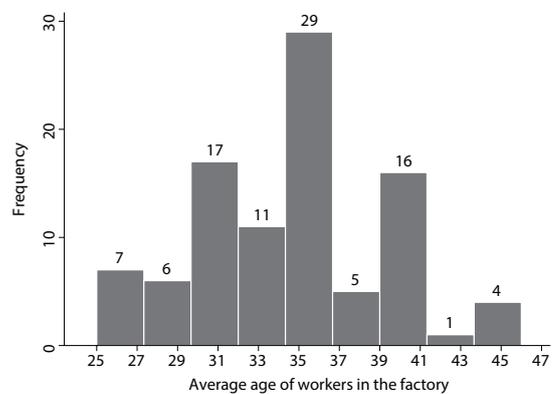
Chart A11. Number of workers during the low production season



The following is basic information about these factories and their workforce:

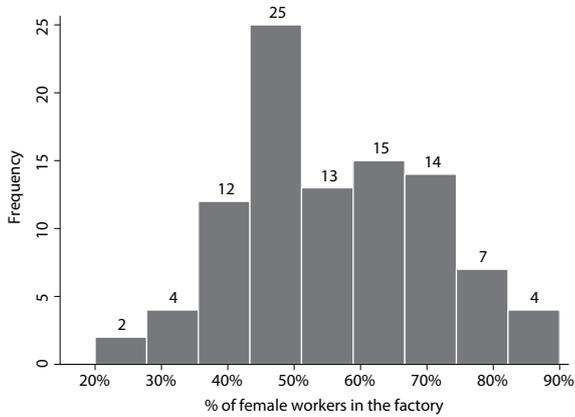
- 81% of the surveyed factories came from Zhejiang (36.5%), Guangdong (30.2%) and Jiangsu (14.6%) – all coastal provinces of China
- A large majority of these factories (72%) are located in industrial zones and most others (24%) in rural areas, with only a few exceptions (4%) in urban areas
- The average age of workers in these factories is reported to be 34.3 (minimum 25 to maximum 46), which is about the same as the average age of surveyed workers.
- 94% of the factories reported they had no juvenile workers (16-17-year-olds) in their factories.

Chart A12. Average age of workers in surveyed factories



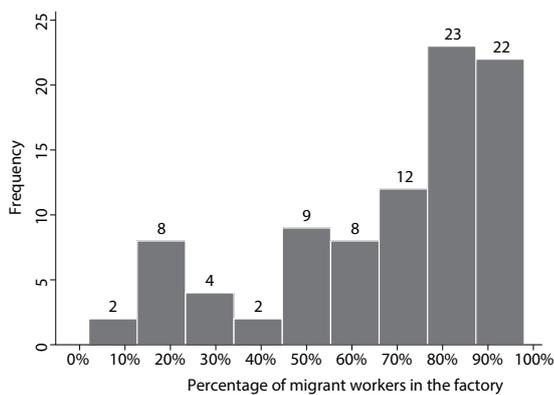
The average percentage of female workers in these factories is 56%.

Chart A13. Percentage of female workers in surveyed factories



The average percentage of migrant workers is 67%. Only 20% of the factories reported migrant workers as less than 50% of their workforce. According to the factories, most migrant workers come from Sichuan, Anhui and Hunan Provinces, making them the top three provinces of origin of migrant workers.

Chart A14. Percentage of migrant workers in surveyed factories



1.3.3 Brand/buyer survey

24 brands/buyer representatives participated in the online survey, 40% of them are female and 60% are male. Most of them are senior managers in the compliance department and a few others are from CSR and admin departments. On average, they have worked in the field related to supply chain management/social compliance/ethical trade for about 12 years, ranging from three to 18 years.

1.4 Children's information

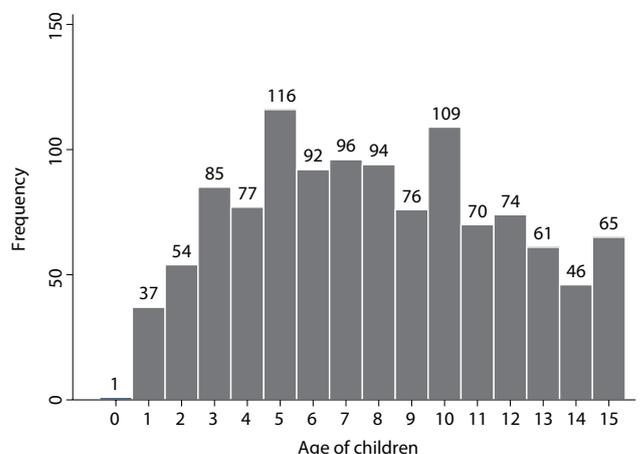
For the purpose of the study, we only included parents who have children under the age of 16.

The majority of parents have two children (54%), which coincides with the fact that most of these workers are rural migrant workers who already lived before the changes in the one child policy were allowed to have two children under the Family Planning Policy of China. Respondents of the worker survey have a total of 1153 children under the age of 16, and on average, have 1.6 children each. The average age of their children (who are under 16) is 7.9 years. The migrant parents have a total of 872 children under the age of 16, and also 1.6 children each, and the average of their children is eight years (Table A4).

Table A4. Number and ages of children

	Total	Migrant parents
Total number of children	1153	872
Average number of children	1.6	1.6
Average age of children	7.9	8.0
One child	47.8%	48.3%
Two children	45.1%	44.2%
Three children	6.3%	6.8%
Four children	0.8%	0.7%

Chart A15. Age of workers' children



Case Stories

1. THE STORY OF A MIGRANT MOTHER



A Family Separated by Economics

Xiao Hua* is the mother of two boys, who are eight and two years old. She talks fondly of them, but she had to send them to live with her husband's parents in Meizhou last year because they couldn't afford to economically support both kids while living in the city.

"We [would] be under huge economic pressure if [they] stayed with us, so we sent [them] back to the hometown for school. "

When her oldest son was still living with her, Xiao Hua used to attend the parent-teacher meetings. But now the grandfather attends the meetings, and she does not have an opportunity to connect with the teachers.

"Usually I understand his situation just through his grandparents. So, I don't know much about it."

She also worries about the quality of the education they are receiving. "When he went to kindergarten in Shenzhen, he studied English. But in my hometown, the primary school won't teach English until they are in third grade, so I am afraid he will forget what he learned in Shenzhen."

Xiao Hua tries to motivate her oldest son through video calls and phone calls, but the conversations are forced – he would only say something if she asks him a question. He also avoids eye contact when they are talking. He engages when she tries to help him with his homework, but becomes impatient when she asks him to study harder or listen to his grandparents.

She feels like they really don't talk much anymore, and her youngest son doesn't really want to be around her when she visits, as they

no longer have a close relationship.

Xiao Hua is thinking about going back home to take care of her children when her oldest son goes into middle school, because it will be hard for the grandparents to take care of them by that age. However, she would like to bring her children to the city if finance permits.

"Everyone wants to live in the city. The living condition is better here than in the hometown and so is the education. I hope that my older son will study hard so he can get an easy and skilled job instead of tiring and low-paid work like ours."

Xiao Hua has never received any parental assistance from her employer, but thought parent training could be useful, as she doesn't know how to educate her children in many aspects. Whenever she is not working, she wishes she could be by their side and thinks about what they are doing.

"My children are very playful. And maybe they will miss us too."

* Name changed to respect the privacy of the mother.



2. THE STORY OF A MIGRANT FATHER

A Migrant Father's Hope in Reuniting with his Increasingly Estranged Children

Li Wei left home over 20 years ago at the age of 14 to find work. So did most of the young men from his hometown in Hunan Province, looking to make a living beyond farming.

Now 34, Li Wei is married, with two girls aged 14 and three. His wife, Jing, works with him in a toy factory in the city of Heyuan, Guangdong Province. Their girls live back home with his parents, who still work on the family farm.

The longest Li Wei has been home in 20 years is two months, when he took off time to build his home. He now visits home once a year to see his children. When their second child was born, Li Wei and Jing tried to keep the family together, bringing her to live with them in their apartment near the factory. Jing took care of her full time, and Li Wei had to carry the financial burden of providing for the whole family. It proved too stressful, so once she was old enough to walk, they sent her back home.

Li Wei has worked in many different types of factories over the years, and is now a line supervisor. He lives as frugally as he can, and sends most of his money back home. The grandparents don't make much money from farming, and so his income helps support the whole family.

Li Wei feels distant from life back home, and has resigned to the fact that he is slowly losing touch with his parents and children: "I usually call my mother instead of calling my father because there is nothing to talk about with him. When I first left, my daughter was so sad and always cried. But now, I seldom see her crying and I feel the distance in our relationship."

Li Wei is struggling to find a way to stay

connected to his children's daily life. He and his wife use WeChat to call home once a week to talk, but he's worried about his oldest daughter.

"My older daughter is stubborn and she will cry immediately if someone criticizes her. The grandparents say that she loses her temper arbitrarily and locks herself inside her room, and they don't know how to communicate with her."

When she struggles with her studies, he feels guilty and helpless. He says he lacks the skills to intervene with the grandparents' parenting style. They are worn out and doing the best they can.

"I feel guilty. I have no idea who my daughter's friends are. My daughter used to perform badly at school and I insisted to send her to after-school class, but they were unwilling to pick her up and thought this was troublesome. I know I should educate my daughters well, but I don't think I'm equipped with the knowledge to do it."

As she grows older, he struggles to find his role and how to communicate with his children.

"I could help with her homework when she was in primary school, but now there is nothing I can do. Now when I call, the conversation usually only lasts 10 minutes. My older daughter will say she needs to do homework and ends the conversation."

Nonetheless, he keeps trying. He took advantage of a parenting course offered at his factory for migrant parents, and is experimenting with some new angles to keep the conversation going.

“I now joke with my younger daughter and ask her to sing songs for us. I will usually ask my older daughter about her studies, but now I also try to find some interesting things to talk about such as our pets (dog and cat) at home.”

Li Wei would still like to find a way to live with his daughters. He feels their separation has hurt their development.

“My younger daughter used to be outgoing when she was staying with me, but since she is back at her grandparents’ side she has become a little bit introverted and rarely talks. It would be better for all sides if we could take care of her on our own.”

If Li Wei could bring his children with him, he would. When he heard that some factories are offering free child-care support for migrant workers, he saw a glimmer of hope, and a vision for his children’s future:

“If there is a child-care center, I want to bring my children from my hometown. I hope that they could find a comfortable job instead of doing tiring work like their parents.”



3. THE STORY OF A CHILD LEFT BEHIND

You Can Work Without Worrying About Us; Take Care of Yourself

Jiao is 12 years old and in the fifth grade. She lives with grandmother and two brothers. Her parents are working in a factory thousands of miles away. Jiao loves and respects her grandma, but longs for more freedom.

“She is very kind to us. I help her with cooking and cleaning when she is too tired. However, I am not allowed to play with my friends, as she worries I’ll get into fights. So I have to stay at home.”

Jiao is independent, outspoken, and spirited. She knows what she wants and what she doesn’t. Jiao is behind in her studies, but it’s clear she’s smart, insightful and witty. It seems she has a little too much passion and opinions for the adults in her life. She’s determined to handle things herself.

“I don’t like my school; the teacher’s teaching method is not good. She won’t let me borrow books from the library, since I’m behind in my math and Chinese. I’ve never told my father that I want to read. I want to go to another school where the teachers can teach well. Actually, I can rent a room outside the school because I can cook for myself, but my father does not agree.”

Jiao wants to live with her parents. And if she can’t live with them, she’d rather go with less money and have them come home.

“I want to go to the place where my father and mother work. It will be better if I can live there for a period of time. I know my father and mother work very hard earning money for us. However, no matter how hard life is, I will never be afraid of it. We can spend money as frugally as possible. I just want them to stay with me all the time.”

She knows her parents try to stay in touch, but craves more connection. “Every three days my father doesn’t have to work overtime, and it’s on those days when he calls. Sometimes the call will last for an hour. There’s no wireless internet connection at home so I can’t use QQ or WeChat. I want to use them so I can contact my parents anytime.”

When thinking of her parents, Jiao gracefully rides her roller coaster of emotions.

She exclaims: “I was delighted and happy when they came home for Chinese New Year.” Her voice fades. “But they only stayed for one week. When they left the first time, I kept crying for a long time. I still cry every time they leave.” She perks up: “I hope my father and mother can buy a cake and celebrate birthdays for us together when they come back next time.”

It’s time for the interview to end, but Jiao doesn’t want to hang up. She wants her parents to know she understands their struggle. That she can take care of herself – and them.

“I would like to say to my parents: ‘you can work and make money without worrying about us. Take care of yourself.’” Jiao’s already planning ways to ease their burden. “I hope I can be a flight attendant and earn lots of money for my parents and grandparents.”



4. THE STORY OF A MIGRANT CHILD

Living Between Two Worlds: Home is Where the Heart Is

Meiqi is a shy, ten-year-old girl, with a sweet smile. Until she was six, Meiqi was a left behind child. She lived with her grandparents and brother in Anhui Province, while her parents worked at a faraway ceramics factory in Dongguan. Four years ago, the children left their home to reunite with their parents. They now live together in a small apartment near the factory.

At first Meiqi didn't want to leave. Not because of her friends – she only had a few. Not because life was easy – in fact she describes her hometown as “inconvenient”; but because of her grandparents. Having spent the first six years of her life with her grandparents, she has developed an unbreakable bond with them, and making sure she visits them regularly.

“After living in Dongguan, it is very troublesome and inconvenient to go back home, but I do go back to my grandparents almost every summer.” Her parents also take leave during the summer to join them.

Meiqi is adjusting well to her new life in Dongguan. In fact, she's becoming a regular city kid. She is excelling at a private school, just a 10-minute school bus drive from her parent's factory. She's got lots of friends, who are also migrant children – they share a common bond and all get along, no matter their hometown.

Meiqi is particularly fortunate because her parents work at a factory that hosts a “child friendly center” right on campus. Meiqi heads there after school to study and play. If she needs extra help, she takes advantage of the university student tutors, who volunteer there.

In the evening, she and her brother get quality

time with her parents, eating dinner as a family in the canteen every night. At around 8pm, they all head home, and her parents check her homework. She isn't too bothered that her parents spend the rest of the evening surfing WeChat on their mobile phones. She knows they are exhausted and they make up for it on weekends, taking her to the nearby park and bringing her to dance classes. Her only real complaint is her teenage brother, who doesn't have much time for her.

“My brother never goes with us and the relationship between my brother and me is not good. He never checks my homework unless my mother tells him to.”

By all accounts, Meiqi is thriving in her new life in Dongguan, but she's not planning on sticking around forever. Home is where her grandparents are. She misses them a lot and wishes they could talk more regularly.

“I miss them so much. I normally contact them once a week because my parents are too tired and I also do not want my grandparents to wait by the telephone for a long time.”

When asked where she wants to live in the future, she replied without any hesitation – “my hometown because I want to accompany my grandparents.” She wants to live up to their dreams for her.

“I want to be a teacher because my grandmother said that I can be either a teacher or a doctor. Dance is just a hobby.” Being away from home has opened the door to a whole range of opportunities and she is determined to use them not only for her own good but also for the wellbeing of her grandparents.



1. FACTORY CHILD FRIENDLY SPACES

The Challenge Facing Factories: Lack of Suitable Care for the Children of Migrant Workers

Factories face the ever-present challenge of retaining migrant parents. These parents, on the one hand leave home to provide a better life for their families, and yet are constantly worried about their children's wellbeing while they are away. With many migrant parents only able to return home once a year, and their children's caregivers often unable to access Wi-Fi or operate video-chatting apps, worries about their children's well-being run deep while at work.

“I was always worried about my kid's safety during the summer vacation, as every year I heard about accidents involving children such as children drowning in ponds or dying from electric shocks.”

– A 32-year-old father from Yunnan Province, with a four-year-old daughter left behind with his parents in the hometown.

Struggling the demands of parenthood and work can be just as challenging for migrant workers who live with their children. For them, one of the biggest challenges is not having anyone to look after their children during work hours.

This “invisible” and ever present worry of finding suitable care has a demonstrable negative impact on migrant parent workers' attitude and loyalty towards the factory. As highlighted by this study, finding someone to look after their children while they are at work was one of the main challenges migrant parent workers faced and those who perceived their

jobs as negatively affecting their relationship with their children were more likely to leave their jobs sooner.

To ease their worry, migrant parents are increasingly bringing their children with them to work, particularly during summer months. When they can't find care, they take their children to work, putting the child, factory, and its brand clients at high risk for child injury violations.

“My children have no place to go except for the dormitory, with no one there to look after them. Their main entertainment is watching TV. They get bored very quickly and I get really worried about them being unattended, so I bring them to the workshop. There they can do their homework by my side, or help me pack the finished products,” said a mother of two daughters aged eight and 10 from Sichuan Province who works in a garment factory.

“If my kids aren't with me, I'm always having negative thoughts at the factory. I feel lonely and I miss my children ...if there were jobs back at home then I'd definitely quit. The last time I came back from Henan, I was always thinking about how there was no one to look after my daughter.”

– A mother of two children aged eight and 15 years old from Henan Province.

Addressing the Challenge: Brands and Factories Partner to Meet Gaps in Care, Helping Migrant Parents Focus on Being their “Best Selves” at Work

In 2016 five leading factories were pursuing an innovative solution to the challenge of care for left behind children. Instead of losing parents they are supporting families by providing “Factory Child Friendly Spaces” (FCFS)² at work. With guidance and implementation support from CCR CSR, each factory developed a day care centre and either trained or hired professional teachers to care for and educate the children during the working day at no cost to their parents. Four factories offered programs during the summer months, and one offered care year round on an as needed basis. All children enjoyed a safe, caring and structured learning environment, exploring games, art, singing, dancing, outdoor activities, and reading exercises.

ICTI CARE Foundation was one of the partners in this pilot project supporting FCFS at two of their toy factories: “Our child friendly spaces pilots have delivered real benefits for migrant toy factory workers and their families, helping to improve family bonds, reduce levels of workplace stress and anxiety, and boost children’s development. We’ve also seen important business benefits at participating toy factories, with improvements in retention rates among workers who participated, higher levels of trust and better employee-management relationships” said Mark Robertson, spokesperson at ICTI CARE Foundation.

The results have indeed been striking. FCFS not only benefited parents and their children, it also had a measurable positive impact on workplace culture and operations. CCR CSR tracked the outcomes of the pilot program. Here’s what we found when we compared

participation results to the baseline.

On children and their parents:

- 63% of parents say children became more active and thoughtful
- 60% are less worried about them
- 43% feel closer to their children

“In the past I wasn’t motivated to go to work because I was concerned about my child...FCFS allows us to be together. It’s very safe, let’s us be at ease and they can make new friends,” a parent of 4-year-old daughter from Yunnan Province said.

“*I love coming here. The summer before last when my parents went to work, I stayed in the dormitory by myself. Now I come here. There are a lot of other children here. It is very interesting.*”

– A second grader from Henan Province.

“*He learned a lot of Mandarin here. You know we’re not Han people. He also learned painting. He loves dancing very much. His manner is better than in the past too. I feel that he can understand us more and listens.*”

– A father of five-year-old son from Yunnan Province.

2. CCR CSR Factory Child Friendly Spaces Impact Assessment, 2017: <http://www.ccrcsr.com/sites/default/files/CCR%20CSR%20FCFS%20Impact%20Assessment%202017.pdf>

On worker management relationships and worker satisfaction:

- 51% increase in number of workers strongly believing the factory understands their challenges as migrant parents
- 28% increase in number of participants reporting higher trust in management
- 26% increase in number of workers very satisfied with their factory

“[FCFS was] a fast and effective way to improve employee satisfaction and establish a good factory reputation,” a general manager of one project factory commented.

“*This is a very good project. We needed such projects for the satisfaction of our workers. Parents were very happy when they saw the progress their children made. I believe that the impact is long term and a win-win for all parties involved.*”

– General manager of one project factory.

On recruitment, retention and production efficiency:

- 35% higher likelihood of strongly recommending the factory to other workers
- 33% report being more efficient at work
- 33% higher rates of parents planning to stay at the factory for at least 2 years

“This project is very inspirational, particularly in how to retain workers in ways other

than salary. We might think of including the grandparents as well when they visit together during the summer,” a general manager said after the project.

“*My wife worked faster during the summer months and also made some more money... [we] have never seen such good factory.*”

– Father of a four-year-old girl from Yunnan Province.

In 2016, the Factory Child Friendly Space Program was successfully implemented in five factories in South China, benefiting 102 children and 78 families. The Child Friendly Spaces pilot demonstrated that through intention and creative partnership we can help factories solve their human resource challenges, enable parents be their best selves at work, and help children thrive. Thanks to its success, ICTI CARE and CCR CSR are expanding partnerships with brands and factories to scale up the project in 2017.

“We will definitely continue to do this next year. With the experience from this year, we can do it even better in the future,” a General Manager from the 2016 FCFS pilot program said.

“When workers are happy, we are happy too. Now we can sleep better at night,” he added.



2. WESUPPORT WECHAT E-LEARNING PLATFORM

The Challenge: Migrant Parents Feel Isolated at Work

For millions of migrant parent workers who leave their hometowns for work, staying socially connected and informed is a big challenge. Demanding work regimens leave little time to call or visit home. At the same time, these workers are navigating new systems and social norms in an unfamiliar environment. On top of that, they carry an “outsider” tag. As a result, many feel socially isolated and disconnected from their families at home as well as from their peers at work.

“From the Factory with Love: A Study on Migrant Parent Workers in China” shows the extent to which parents struggle with feelings of guilt and that they feel their work has a negative impact on their relationship with children. We know that in such an environment, supporting migrant parents with information on how to deal with their situation can be crucial, and although in today’s world access to information may seem like a mere click (or swipe) away, it is easy to feel lost and overwhelmed in finding the right type of support and resources to support a major life transition.

Addressing the Challenge: “Virtually” Connecting and Educating Workers

An increasing number of factories are tackling the challenge of keeping migrant parents connected by leveraging the power of technology, through WeChat. WeChat, is China’s most popular social media and communications app, boasting close to 900 million active users in the first quarter of 2017.

In partnership with leading factories, and with support from four international brands and UNICEF, CCR CSR launched “WeSupport”, a WeChat-based platform.³ The initiative

leverages the WeChat app to help migrant parents:

1. Stay connected to loved ones back home
2. Make friends and integrate into their new communities
3. Support their efforts to parent from a distance
4. Gain parenting knowledge and practical tips to strengthen engagement with children

Connection and Learning

WeSupport helps workers benefit from the social media value of WeChat, and also serves as an interactive tool for online learning. Workers utilize WeChat to connect to family and friends and get information on resources, happenings and most importantly, their children’s wellbeing. WeSupport then customizes their experience by pushing relevant content to support their efforts to parent from a distance and to fill knowledge gaps. To appeal to users of all education levels, lessons are shared in cartoon format, or through videos and quizzes.

Leading factories have taken note of the importance of supporting workers in their transition and finding social connection and are encouraging their workers to follow the platform. CCR CSR introduces the platform to workers during each factory-based activity, and factories hang up promotional posters in busy spots within the factory to help reach more people.

3. CCR CSR study “Can WeChat Provide Learning for China’s Migrant Workers? A Study on WeSupport, a WeChat-based Learning Platform”, 2016: http://www.ccrcsr.com/sites/default/files/CCR%20CSR%20Study%20on%20WeChat%20as%20a%20Learning%20Tool_EN.pdf

Once introduced, it is very well received. 43% of users recommend it to friends, both in and out of factory. Currently WeSupport boasts 3,000 followers, viewing over 150 posts 47,000 times.⁴

44% of users access the WeSupport platform on a daily basis and 50% share posts published by CCR CSR's WeSupport platform in their public WeChat "moments." Because WeSupport offers educational content on top of the WeChat app, it is also penetrating a harder to reach market: rural older and less educated parents.

The results: In less than a year, WeSupport/WeChat users are more engaged, connected to friends and family, integrated into their new environments, and happier! As parents, they feel closer to their children, are better educated on their needs, and better able to take care of themselves.

Here's what CCR CSR's impact study found: As individuals, users felt:

- **Connected:** Users cite "staying connected with friends and families" as the number one benefit and 40% relied on WeChat for staying in touch with their children.
- **Socially Integrated:** Users cite "making new friends" as the number 2 benefit and 64% said their engagement with WeChat helped them integrate into society.
- **Happier:** The 64% of users who found WeChat supported their social integration also scored higher on psychological wellbeing.

As parents, users felt:

- **Closer to their children:** Nearly 60% said WeSupport helped their relationship with their children
- **Educated on their children's needs:** 80% plan to continue to follow early child development content
- **Better able to take care of themselves:** Parent users ranked "taking care of oneself" as the number one most helpful content

"Recently, I read some contents on the WeSupport platform about effective listening and "tricks" about different ways to ask questions. I really tried to "experiment" with these tricks whenever I talked to my son..." a 37-year-old mother with an 11-year old son from Yunnan Province told us.

"We are too busy to learn parenting knowledge systematically, but whenever and wherever we are free, even if it's just for 5 minutes, we click on WeChat and learn some practical modern parenting skills."

– A 31-year-old mother, with a four-year-old child from Chongqing.

4. This number includes other factory participants – young workers and supervisors – who also have access to the platform, in addition to parent workers. The number was accurate at the time of writing.

“ *Through the WeSupport lesson I learned that I have to take care of myself first before I can take care of others. So now I use my free time to attend social events...and talk openly about my worries with friends. Previously I didn't want to tell my family about my work pressure because I didn't want to worry them but now I do and they give me more encouragement as a result.”*

– A 24-year-old father with a one-year-old son from Henan Province.

Factories and brands continue to innovate on the platform. Concord Pottery, a supplier for Starbucks is customizing the WeSupport platform to be able to post internal notifications, receive feedback from workers and upload its own eLearning content.

All in all, WeSupport WeChat eLearning Platform is effectively using the power of social media to connect and educate migrant parents. In the end, factories benefit from more socially connected employees, who are taking care of their whole selves: As individuals, workers, friends, and parents.

“ *In the past, when my kid asked me too many questions I would get impatient and annoyed and would easily snap at him, to the point where he simply stopped asking. After reading the lessons on WeSupport I know that my reaction was wrong and that it affected my child's curiosity and positivity. I'm slowly changing my ways now and calmly answer each of his questions.”*

– A 30-year-old father from Hubei Province who has a six-year-old son.



3. MIGRANT PARENT TRAINING

The Challenge for Factories: Strained Family Relationships Impact Operations

A substantial number of migrant parent workers only get to see their children once a year, usually during the Spring Festival break for a couple of days. As this study has shown, parents of left-behind children struggle to maintain close relationships with their children and to keep a strong line of communication going between them.

“ I feel very guilty about my son. I spend too little time with him. I owe him so much. He is going to take the university entrance exam soon, but I hardly have time to go back home to spend time with him. I promise we will go to the university to register together if he passes the exam. I want to make it up to him.”

— A 40-year-old father of a left-behind son from Guangxi Province.

According to one working mother whose 11-year-old son lives in her hometown in Jiangxi Province, time and distance has taken a toll on her relationship with her son: “We have been separated from each other for a very long time. I left home to work when she was only two years old. We don’t have many common topics to talk about, and we rarely communicate. As a result, I don’t know what she’s thinking. Every time I go back home, I see that she is closer to her grandparents than to me. Once, she even shouted at me ‘You didn’t raise me!’ My heart broke.”

Migrant workers are still parents at work, and so, not surprisingly, their feelings of inadequacy and strained parent-child

relationships impact their work performance. Workers with left-behind children are more likely to feel negative about their jobs, be distracted and make mistakes, which is likely to affect the length of time they stay at the factory. As a result, factories are faced with a “double-bind”: They are ill equipped to manage the negative impact that separation has on their workers’ mental health, yet experience the operational consequences.

“ I heard that when they call home, their kids sometimes are not very responsive...If you make a phone call and your child doesn’t really want to talk to you, it must be a horrible feeling.”

— A manager from a project factory.

“Parent workers face a lot of pressure due to separation. Often, when they hear about their children misbehaving or performing badly at school they lose their temper and scold them. On the one hand, they deeply care about their children but on the other, they feel helpless. For example, when news comes out about a workers’ child getting into an accident back home, the negativity quickly spreads among the whole workforce.” an HR manager from a factory in Shenzhen with 1,800 workers said.

Addressing the Challenge: Supporting Workers in their Role as Parents

To help factories address this human resource challenge and empower migrant workers in their role as parents, four international brands – Disney, Clas Ohlson, HP and ICA – formed an initiative called “WeSupport.” One of WeSupport’s signature offerings is an in-factory training called, “Parents at Work: Distance

without Separation”. The training provides migrant worker parents with the education and skills they need to play a key part in their children’s lives, even when separated by time and distance. Parents learned:

- To accept and value their choice to work away in order to provide for their children
- The rights and needs of their children at different developmental stages
- Remote communication skills that help them play an active role in their child’s education and emotional development

34 parent trainings were held in 18 factories in China, benefiting a total of 1,249 participants. Here’s how parents, children, and factories benefited.

For one, participants increased the actual amount of time parents communicated with their children. Parents who talked at least a half hour with their children increased by 26%.

“*After the training, I started to re-think our relationship. I call my son more often, from every two weeks in the past to every other day now.*”

— A mother from a Shenzhen factory.

The trainings empowered workers in their role as parents and improved their mental health. More parents started to pay attention to their own well-being, rather than solely focus on their children. Parents left feeling more confident in their ability to “parent from a distance” and less guilty about working away from home. After the training:

- The number of parents who believed they can educate their children from a distance

grew by 41 percentage points

- The number of parents who felt guilty about being away from their children decreased by 62 percentage points

“*In the past, I always get emotional and angry when I saw my children play on their mobile phones before they were done with their homework. However, in the training I learned to ‘put emotions first, things later’. After that, I tried to calm myself down first and control my temper before handling the issues. It really works!*”

— A 40-year-old mother from Guangdong Province with two children aged 17 and nine.

“I used to feel uncomfortable when I called my son, because I didn’t know what to say and we didn’t have common topics, so I hung up the phone quickly. I am very grateful that this training encouraged me to take the first step, now I am more confident and brave to make improvement,” said a mother who works in a factory in Shenzhen.

Participants also learned to be “well-rounded” parents. Many adjusted their mindsets about what matters most in their children’s lives, valuing emotional needs more equally with educational and physical needs. As a result, they also reported feeling closer to their children.

- 90% stated they will change their parenting style to better support their children’s emotional developmental needs

“My relationship with my son has improved a lot after the training. One of the reasons is that I started to find out what’s on his mind,

which I often neglected in the past,” said a mother who works in a factory in Dongguan.

“ I always thought if I could feed my child well, I had nothing else to worry about. After the training, I realized that I should pay more attention to my child’s mental health. I’ve started to change and taken more responsibilities as a mother.”

— A mother who works at a factory in Dongguan.

It is clear that the training was a success for parents and their children, but was it worth the investment by brands and factories? Yes.

- 23% more workers planned to stay in the factory for two years and longer
- 40% more workers were satisfied with their factory

“Before the training, many parent workers thought their main responsibility was sending money back home every month. However, what their children need most is to be supported emotionally, not materially. The training helped raised their awareness on the importance of contacting and communicating with children more frequently. It also helped build up workers’ trust in us. Some workers told us that in their many years working for various factories, this is the first time they felt that a factory actually cared about them. This training helps us manage workers’ emotions and performance more effectively,” said an admin manager from a factory in Shenzhen with 3,000 workers.

Participants of CCR CSR’s training programs

receive support after the training is over by following a WeChat-based eLearning platform called “WeSupport” that sends a continuous stream of parenting information directly to workers’ WeChat accounts every week. Content ranges from remote parenting lessons to early childhood development tips to advice on health and safety. Followers of the account can also send messages with questions and feedback, can take part in surveys, lucky draws and campaigns.

Parenting is a learned skill and a roller coaster of emotions. Initiatives like the above that support migrant parent workers can give them the confidence and skills to connect, communicate and support their children. As for the business impact: parents feel proud of their decision to work away from home, are less likely to return home early and are more satisfied in their jobs.



4. PHOTOVOICE PROJECT: WHERE THE LENS IS THE VOICE

The Challenge: Disconnect between migrant workers and their children

C&C garment factory in Wuxi, Jiangsu Province, China is a key supplier for US apparel brand Colosseum. 80% of C&C employees are migrant workers, the majority of whom have left behind young children. Like many factories with a large migrant workforce, C&C has high turnover rates. C&C found that their migrant parent's family situation was one of the key reasons workers were leaving. Research shows that when a migrant parent is worried about their child's well-being, they perform poorly at work and are more likely to quit. At C&C:

- 61% of migrant workers worried about their children while they were working
- 74% felt guilty about leaving home
- 48% saw their children only once a year

“Last year was my first time leaving my children behind to work elsewhere. It's been really hard for me and I thought about quitting the job several times.”

– A mother with three young left-behind children from Guizhou Province who works at C&C garment factory.

In large part, parental guilt stemmed from feeling emotionally disconnected from their children and disempowered to play an active role in their lives. At C&C, only:

- 23% of workers believed they could educate their children well from a distance
- 84% of migrant workers only visited their children once or twice per year
- 29% spoke to their children every day

Taking a Different “Lens” to Migrant Worker Turnover

C&C tackled their turnover challenge by getting to the root cause: Helping migrant parent workers stay connected to their children. C&C, in partnership with Colosseum and CCR CSR, launched a one-year training program, focused on best practices in remote parenting and communication. One of the most well received offerings was the PhotoVoice parent tool.

PhotoVoice teaches parents to use photography as a tool for engaging and communicating with their children in a fun and creative way. Workers learn basic photography skills and are given a camera, which they use after-hours and on home leave to capture their lives as both workers and parents.

At C&C, 64 workers and 11 supervisors took part in the program. Parents captured moments with their children during Chinese New Year. By consciously taking time to “pause” and enjoy special moments, they found new openings for connection with their children during their time together.

“Now every time when [my daughter] puts on new clothes, she will ask me to take a photo of her. When I took home the poster with her photos from the PhotoVoice project, she immediately ran out to her friends in the neighborhood to show it off. I know she was proud of me!”

– A local father who lives with his daughter and works at C&C.

Upon return, workers showcased their photo memories at a final exhibition and awards ceremony. They expressed joy and pride in collaborating with their children on a meaningful, shared project at home. They also bonded with their peers at work sharing together the happy memories of their children and loved ones.

Impact on Parents and their Children

Not only did workers learn a new creative skill and feel more connected, they also changed their behavior. Participants increased the actual amount of time they spoke to their children once back at work and made efforts to visit their children more regularly.

- 14% more parents spoke with their children every day
- 19% more parents spoke at least a half an hour or more during each call
- 11% more parents visited their children at least twice a year

Parents also adjusted their parenting approach, choosing to take more quality time with their children while at home.

“This Chinese New Year we were dealing with family issues, so I didn’t pay as much attention. When my daughter saw the camera, she asked me to take a photo of her. At that moment I realized that I really should spend time with my children. So I took lots of photos of my son and my daughter, and took them to the county’s amusement park. Now when I see their happy faces in the photo album, I remember those happy moments,” said a working mother who has a six-year old son and an eight-year old daughter back in her hometown in Shandong Province.

They also felt more empowered to parent from a distance.

“The [programs] made me feel confident that I can still educate my children well even when I am not around. Now I can enjoy [the] phone calls, [which] even last for one hour now!” a working mother with three young left-behind children from Guizhou Province commented.

And best of all, children felt the difference:

“Dad works for three days and then has one day off. That’s when he calls me. He usually asks about homework and whether I’m behaving, but now he also tells me about his work. Sometimes, the conversation lasts for a whole hour,” said a 12-year-old girl whose father works at C&C. She lives with her brothers and grandmother in a village in Guizhou Province.

Benefit to Brands and Factories

The saying goes “a picture is worth a thousand words”, and for factories, it was worth much more when it came to the bottom line. After participating in the program, there was an increase in worker appreciation for management and more participants planned to stay two years or longer.

“This project was good for the unity and stability of this factory’s workforce. If you don’t make arrangements that consider the family situation of workers, then they’re not likely to stay on very long,” C&C’s General Manager said.

It also strengthened the working relationship between C&C and its brand client, Colosseum.

“The migrant parent worker training and photo-voice program allowed us to support these parents and improve their relationship with their children back home. A secondary

motivation has been to help factory management decrease turnover by improving worker satisfaction and loyalty. We've seen success in both areas," said Kelsey Keene, CSR Director at Colosseum Athletics.

“ They understand our difficulties as migrant parents with children left-behind and care about us.”

– A working father with three left-behind children in Guizhou Province.

Looking at the outcome of this project it becomes clear that C&C and Colosseum found a way to create strong and positive changes for workers – one memory at a time.

Quotes guide: Background information on the interviewed workers

Title	Gender	Province of Origin	Years Working in Factory	Status of Children	General Overview
Worker 1	Male	Hunan Province	20 years	Has two daughters who didn't migrate with him, aged 14 and three.	Lives with his spouse in rented accommodation outside the factory. He participated in parenting training and would like more.
Worker 2	Female	Guang-dong Province	Almost 20 years	Has a son and a daughter who stayed behind in the home-town, aged 13 and 11 respectively. They are taken care of by the grandparents.	Migrated with her husband but they ended up working in different places. She lives in the factory dorm and has never received parenting training, although it is something she would be interested in.
Worker 3	Female	Guang-dong Province	Over a year	Has four children aged 11, seven, five and one-and-a-half. The oldest child can take care of the others and cooks for the rest of the children.	She is a local worker and her husband also works in the same factory as her. When they work, the grandparents look after the children but they go to home to them every evening.
Worker 4	Female	Jiangxi Province	Eight years	Has a son (six) and daughter (11) who are living with their grandparents in their home-town. Her daughter is very thoughtful and can look after herself when the grandparents are farming.	Her husband works in another province (Guangzhou). She said she would be willing to change her work situation for the sake of her children's education. She and her husband will communicate with their children every day and they seem quite close despite the distance.
Worker 5	Male	Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Province	12 years	Has two sons aged 13 and eight who live in a boarding school back in the hometown. The grandparents pick them up during holidays.	He migrated with his wife but they ended up working in different cities. He calls his children once a week and would be willing to change work for the sake of his children. Parenting training is something he would participate in if he has time.
Worker 6	Female	Born in Guang-dong Province but married in Hunan Province	Seven years	Has two children aged 15 and 12 who stayed behind in the hometown. They live with their grandmother.	Is Cantonese and lives with her husband (from Hunan Province) in rented accommodation. Her husband works at another factory. Their children will come to Dongguan together with their grandmother during summer holiday.
Worker 7	Female	Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Province	More than four years	Has two daughters and one son who live with their grandparents back in the hometown. They're aged 17, 15 and 10 respectively.	Migrated with her husband but ended up working in different industrial zones in Shenzhen. The grandparents look after the children but sometimes have little time to care for them because they need to farm the land.

Title	Gender	Province of Origin	Years Working in Factory	Status of Children	General Overview
Worker 8	Female	Hunan Province	10 years	Has two daughters and one son who live with their grandparents back in the hometown. They're aged 17, 15 and 10 respectively.	She separated from her husband who works at a construction site in Chenzhou, Hunan Province. She comes back to her hometown twice or three times a year to visit her children.
Worker 9	Female	Born in Jiangxi Province but married in Guangdong Province	14 years	Has two sons aged eight and two who are living with the grandparents back in their hometown in Meizhou, Guangdong Province. The grandparents' health is failing.	She and her husband are living together in Shenzhen now. Her husband was a taxi driver and he is talking about moving to Guangzhou soon. That means she may have to live in the factory dorm on her own soon.
Worker 10	Female	Hunan Province	15 years	Has three children aged 18, 13 and 11 who live with their grandmother in their hometown. The oldest child is receiving training to become a car mechanic.	Her husband works at a construction site in Guangzhou. She chats with her children every day through WeChat.
Worker 11	Female	Sichuan Province	More than 10 years	Has a five-year-old daughter who lives with them. She attends kindergarten and then goes to a nursery afterwards.	Lives with her spouse in rented accommodation outside the factory. They may send the child back to the hometown if they are not able to enroll her into public primary school.
Worker 12	Female	Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Province	Five years	Has one son aged 11 who lives with his father and grandparents in their hometown.	She migrated with her fellow-villagers and decided to separate from her family because of the relatively high income she gets at the factory.
Worker 13	Male	Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Province	13 years	Has one son aged 11 who lives with his parents. He attends a nearby primary school and always plays outside by himself.	Lives with his spouse in rented accommodation outside the factory. His spouse works in a shoe factory in Shenzhen too and takes on some temporary work during the weekend.
Worker 14	Female	Sichuan Province	More than 20 years	Has two children aged 16 (daughter) and 10 (son) who live with the grandparents in the hometown.	She and her husband are both working at Shenzhen but not at the same place. She would like to continue working and living in the big city, and wishes her children could come join her and have a better life in the future.

Quotes guide: Background information on the interviewed children

Title	Gender	Age	Province of origin	Current living status	General overview/Background info
Child 1	Female	8	Hunan Province	Lives with parents in Dongguan	Has been living with her parents and brother in Dongguan for two years. Most of her relatives including her grandmother are back in Yunnan. She's especially close to her dad but he has very little spare time and comes home late.
Child 2	Female	9	Yunnan Province	Lives with parents in Dongguan	Has been living in Dongguan for three years with her parents. Although she is living with her parents, she has few positive comments about her father. For example, she still remembers that her father broke a promise once. Despite this, she doesn't want to go back to her hometown for secondary school as she said she will miss her parents.
Child 3	Female	9	Anhui Province	Lives with parents in Dongguan	Has been living in Dongguan for three years with her parents and brother. Her mother and brother work at Concord Pottery and her father works at another factory, so they rent accommodation outside the factory. She attends Concord's childcare center after school and during weekends. He is slightly introverted and doesn't like going to school as she was physically punished by the teacher in her kindergarten once.
Child 4	Female	10	Anhui Province	Lives with parents in Dongguan	Currently in Grade 4, she initially didn't want to come to Dongguan as she was raised by her grandparents in her hometown. Her parents and brother all work in the same factory.
Child 5	Male	14	Yunnan Province	Lives with mother in Dongguan	Now in Grade 6, he has been living with his parents in Dongguan for two years. He has a brother who went back to the hometown a year ago. He finds it difficult to make friends in Dongguan and doesn't know whether he'll go back to the hometown to continue high school.
Child 6	Male	8	Hubei Province	Lives with parents in Dongguan	Lived with his grandmother up until he was six. Both parents are working in Dongguan. Has a brother living with their grandmother now who will come to Dongguan for the summer holiday.
Child 7	Male	8	Henan Province	Lives with parents in Dongguan	His mother works in a factory and his father works in transportation. His parents don't have much time to look after him. His mother often works late and his father is always occupied by social activities. He seems to admire his father and wants to surpass his achievements in the future.
Child 8	Female	7	Chongqing	Lives with parents in Dongguan	Now in upper class in kindergarten, she has been in Dongguan with her parents and sisters for three years. Her family is planning to go back to their hometown and she will go to primary school there.
Child 9	Male	8	Hubei Province	Lives with parents in Dongguan	He came to live with his parents at the age of three. He is the only child of his parents. His mother is working at a factory's canteen, and his father is the factory driver. His parents are strict with him on study, and he is learning kickboxing now.

Title	Gender	Age	Province of origin	Current living status	General overview/Background info
Child 10	Male	8	Hunan Province	Lives with parents in Dongguan	He came to live with his parents at the age of three. His father is managing the canteen by contract, and his mother works in sales.
Child 11	Female	8	Guang-dong Province	Lives with parents in Dongguan	He came to live with his parents in Dongguan at the age of four. She has a younger sister back in her hometown whom she misses very much. They video chat every day.
Child 12	Female	7	Guizhou Province	Lives with parents in Dongguan	Her older brother lives with them in the factory where her father works. Her older sister lives back in the hometown. She had another younger brother & sister, but her younger brother tragically passed away and her sister was given to another family. She is happy to help with housework for which she earns praise from her mother.
Child 13	Female	12	Guizhou Province	Left behind and living with grandparents	Currently in Grade 5, she lives in her hometown with her grandparents and brothers. Her older brother is 15 years old and her younger brother is 11 years old. Sometimes she will cry because she misses her parents very much and really wants to live with them together forever. She is very considerate and is very filial towards the older generation.
Child 14	Female	7	Sichuan Province	Lives with her parents in Dongguan	Lives with her parents and younger brother in Dongguan. She goes to an after-school centre straight after school where she waits for her parents to get off work. She has friends in Dongguan and likes living there.
Child 15	Female	6	Guizhou	Left behind and living with her grandma in Bijie	Lives with her grandma, younger brother and younger sister in Guizhou, while both her parents work in a factory near Shanghai. She walks to the local kindergarten by herself everyday. Her grandma takes care of five children by herself, while her grandpa works in other cities. She likes to eat the noodles cooked by her parents.



About CCR CSR

The Center for Child Rights and Corporate Social Responsibility (CCR CSR) has been a pioneer in consulting businesses on child rights since 2009, working in China, Hong Kong and Myanmar, Vietnam, Bangladesh and Malaysia. CCR CSR, a social enterprise, has extensive experience and expertise in helping companies improve, develop and implement sustainability strategies, programs and projects related to children, young workers and migrant parents.

For more information, please visit www.ccrcsr.com or email us on info@ccrcsr.com.

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