

# Who We Are When We're at Home

A Study of Personality Type and Family Life

A Truity Report

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# INTRODUCTION

In the 1950's, Isabel Briggs Myers developed her theory of personality type with the aim of helping men and women find their places in the postwar labor market. In the ensuing decades, a large body of research has shown that personality type is a key predictor of the careers people choose. From CEOs to preschool teachers, our personality types can help point us to the professions that will make the most of our talents.

But what about our roles outside of the workplace? Certainly, our work as parents and spouses deserves the same amount of attention as what we do from 9 to 5. But little is known about how our personality types might affect the roles we take on in the family.

We designed a study to address this information gap, and to investigate how personality type might drive the choices we make in our family lives. Are some types more likely to have children young, or to have big families? Are some types more drawn to leave their careers in favor of full-time parenting? Are some types more likely to decide not to have children at all?

We conducted four separate surveys to investigate the link between personality type and parenting. In three of these surveys, we supplied a survey questionnaire along with the free TypeFinder personality type assessment on our website, Truity.com. In the final survey, we reached out to the members of our mailing list to solicit comments on the findings, adding a personal perspective to the data.

## METHODS

### MEASURES

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The first three phases of the study consisted of an online questionnaire coupled with our TypeFinder personality assessment (Research Edition). The TypeFinder RE assessment is a 52-question personality indicator which looks at an individual's preference on the four dimensions of type developed by Isabel Briggs Myers, specifically:

- Extraversion vs. Introversion - one's style of managing and replenishing personal energy
- Sensing vs. Intuition - one's style of gathering and processing information
- Thinking vs. Feeling - one's style of prioritizing personal values

- Judging vs. Perceiving - one's style of organizing and structuring daily life and work

After completing the TypeFinder personality assessment, respondents were given feedback about their personality types, and given the option to answer question about their attitudes and experiences regarding parenting.

## SAMPLE

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The first online questionnaire looked at family roles and childcare responsibilities. Respondents who said they were parents were given the opportunity to answer questions about their role in the family: whether they worked or stayed home with the children, what their spouses' responsibilities were, and what their ideal division of labor might look like. In total, 2,525 women and 924 men answered some or all of the survey questions.

The second questionnaire looked at attitudes towards parenting and satisfaction levels. Respondents who identified themselves as parents were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements such as "My children are one of my greatest sources of satisfaction in life." A total of 2,689 women and 818 men responded to some or all of the survey questions.

The final online questionnaire was offered to all respondents, whether they had children or not. This survey consisted of basic demographics and an inquiry into the respondent's attitude towards having kids: did they have them already, plan to have them in the future, or plan to remain childless? A total of 10,643 women and 5,152 men answered the survey question.

## SCORING

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We scored each respondent's result on the TypeFinder assessment to determine their personality type. The scoring process calculates the respondent's preferred style on each of the four dimensions of personality type, ultimately assigning a four-letter type code. The four-letter type codes produced by the TypeFinder follow the format originally created by Isabel Briggs Myers, i.e. ISFP, ENTJ, ENFP, and use comparable narrative descriptions of each type's characteristics and qualities.<sup>1</sup>

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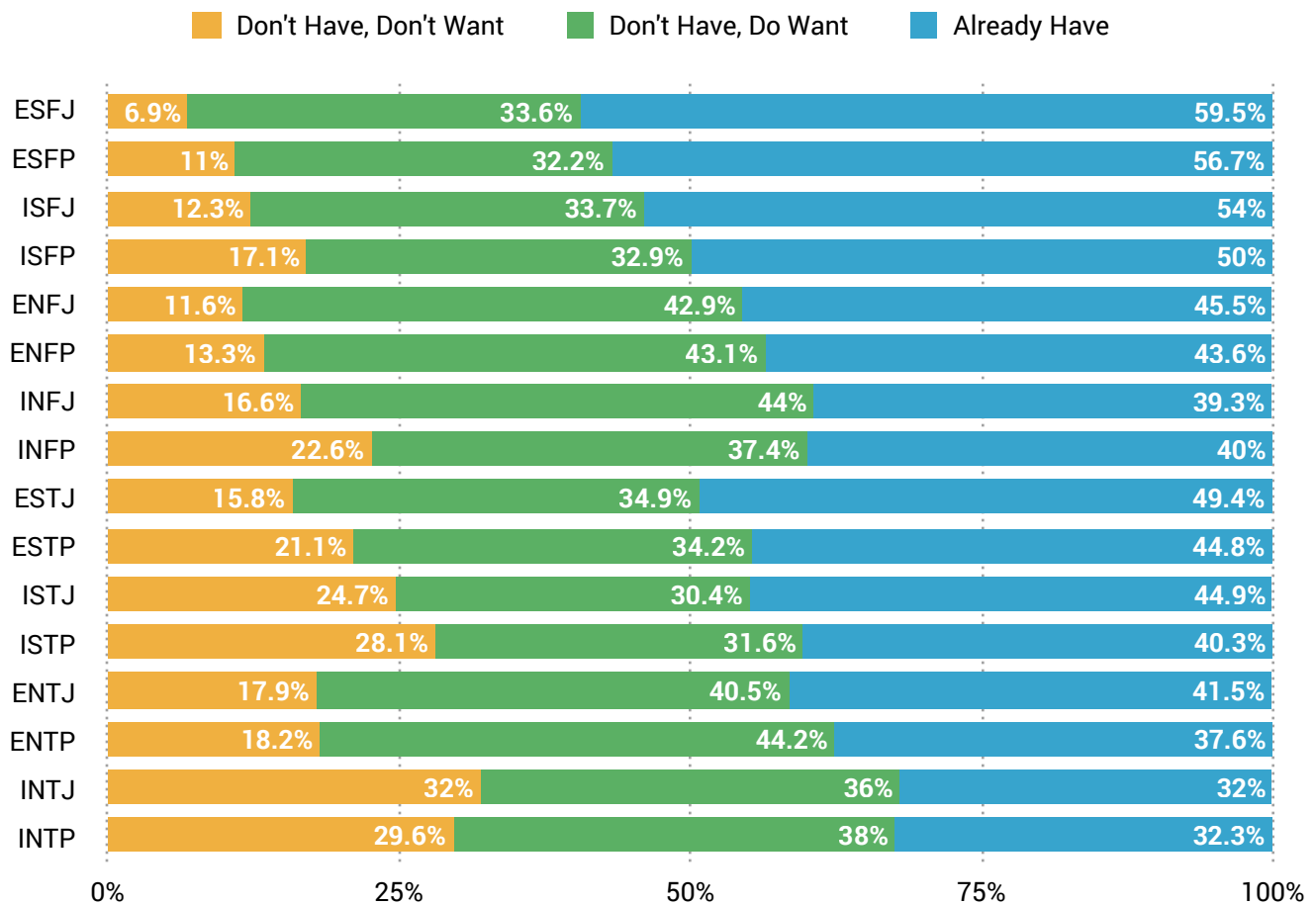
<sup>1</sup> For complete descriptions of the 16 personality types, see <http://www.truity.com/types>

# RESULTS

## TAKING THE PLUNGE

Although most adults envision themselves having kids, about 14% of Americans reach age 45 without having children.<sup>2</sup> Often, the assumption is that adults who do not have children were not *able* to do so, either due to infertility or other life circumstances. Adults who simply prefer a life without children are often regarded as a curiosity. However, we suspect that the choice to create a family—or not—might have to do with an individual’s personality type.

We surveyed 10,643 women and 5,152 men about their attitudes toward having children, and segmented the responses by personality type. We additionally segmented the data by age, to focus on respondents in their prime childbearing years. The graph below shows the responses to the question, “What is your attitude towards having children?” for subjects age 25 and over.



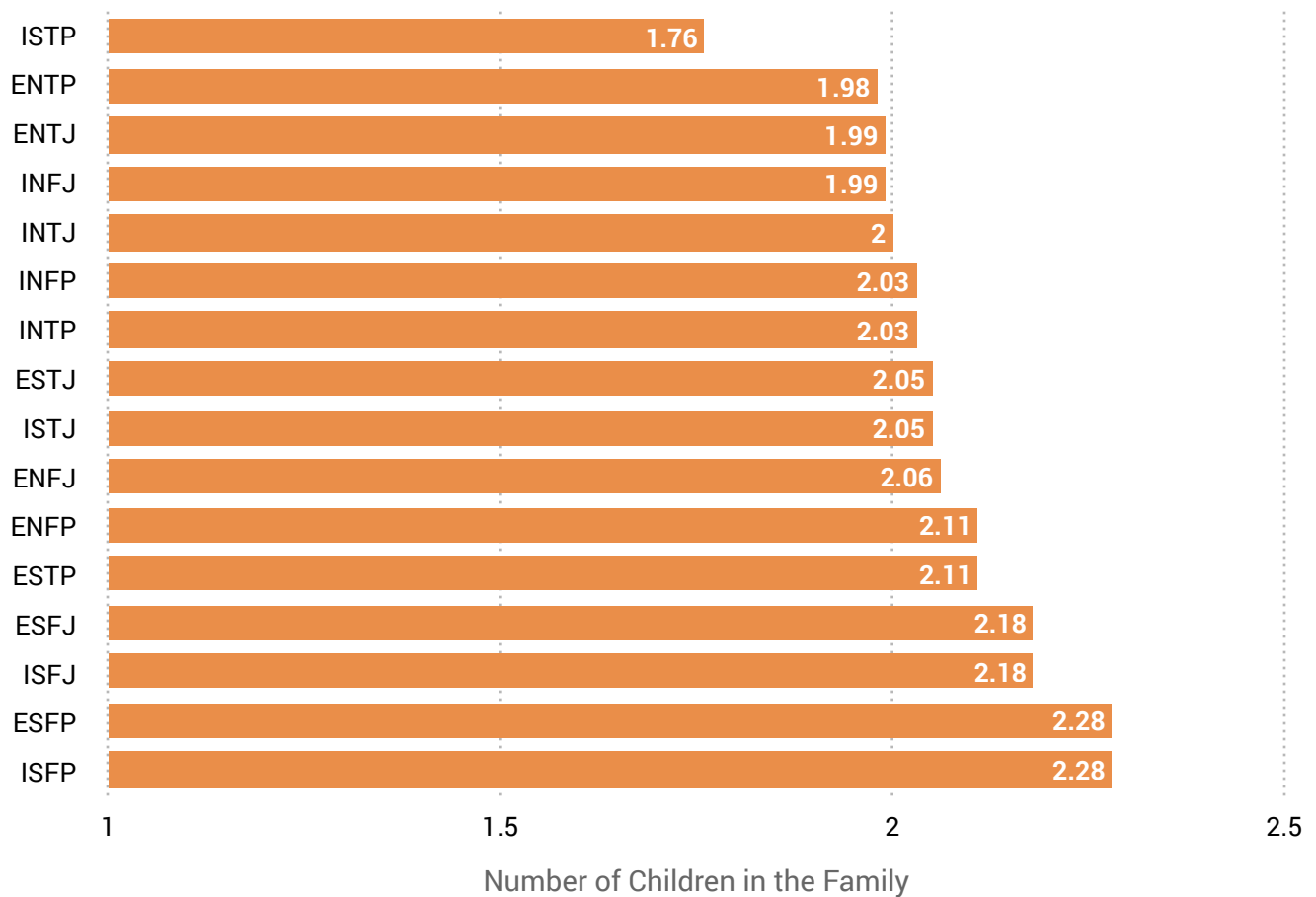
<sup>2</sup> Newport and Wilke, 2013.

ESFJs were the least likely of all types to report that they planned to remain childless (and the most likely to already have children), while INTJs were the most likely to say they did not want children. Overall, Thinking types were much more likely than Feeling types to report that they had no desire to become parents.

Some types, including ENTP, ENFP, ENFJ, and INFJ, were less likely to already have children, but expressed an interest in doing so in the future, indicating that these types may be more likely to start their families later in life.

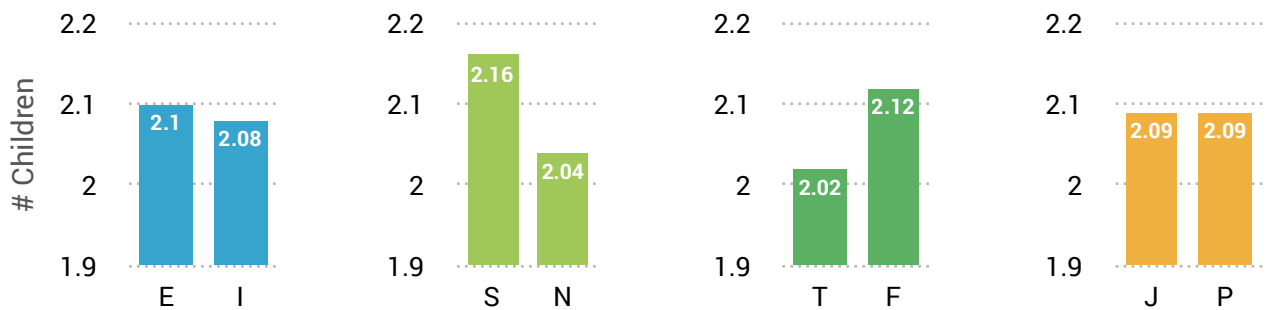
## BIG FAMILIES AND SMALL

We asked respondents in two separate surveys how many children were in their families. A total of 6,894 respondents shared their family size. The below graph shows the average number of children by personality type.



We also wondered whether any particular personality dimension might predict family size. For instance, it stands to reason that Extraverts, who typically prefer the company of larger

groups, might have larger families than Introverts. In fact, while Extraverts did have a slightly higher number of children compared with Introverts, other dimensions of personality made a larger impact on this figure. Sensors had more children than Intuitives, and Feelers had more children than Thinkers. Below, we have graphed average family size by each of the four personality dimensions.



## FAMILY ROLES

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Amidst the highly politicized debate about women’s roles at work and home, little attention is paid to the issue of how individual characteristics might lead a parent to choose a particular path. The “Mommy Wars” pit stay-at-home moms against working moms, with the underlying criticisms complimentary to neither camp: stay-at-home moms are portrayed as overly soft, not particularly intelligent or driven, and lacking in awareness of feminist principles; while working moms are accused of being cold, too ambitious and selfish, and unwilling to accept their innate responsibility in the upbringing of their children.

Perhaps a more constructive way of thinking about how we gravitate towards different family roles would be to understand these choices as reflective of an individual’s talents, strengths, and needs. Caring for children is a particular type of work, and just as with any type of work, some people will be more naturally suited for it—and find it more personally rewarding—than others.

Previously, we discovered a disparity in family responsibilities in our survey of career outcomes among the types. Here, women with NT preferences were much less likely to report that they were stay-at-home parents, while INFP and ISFJ women were much *more* likely to say they were filling this role.<sup>3</sup> However, because we did not ask respondents in this survey

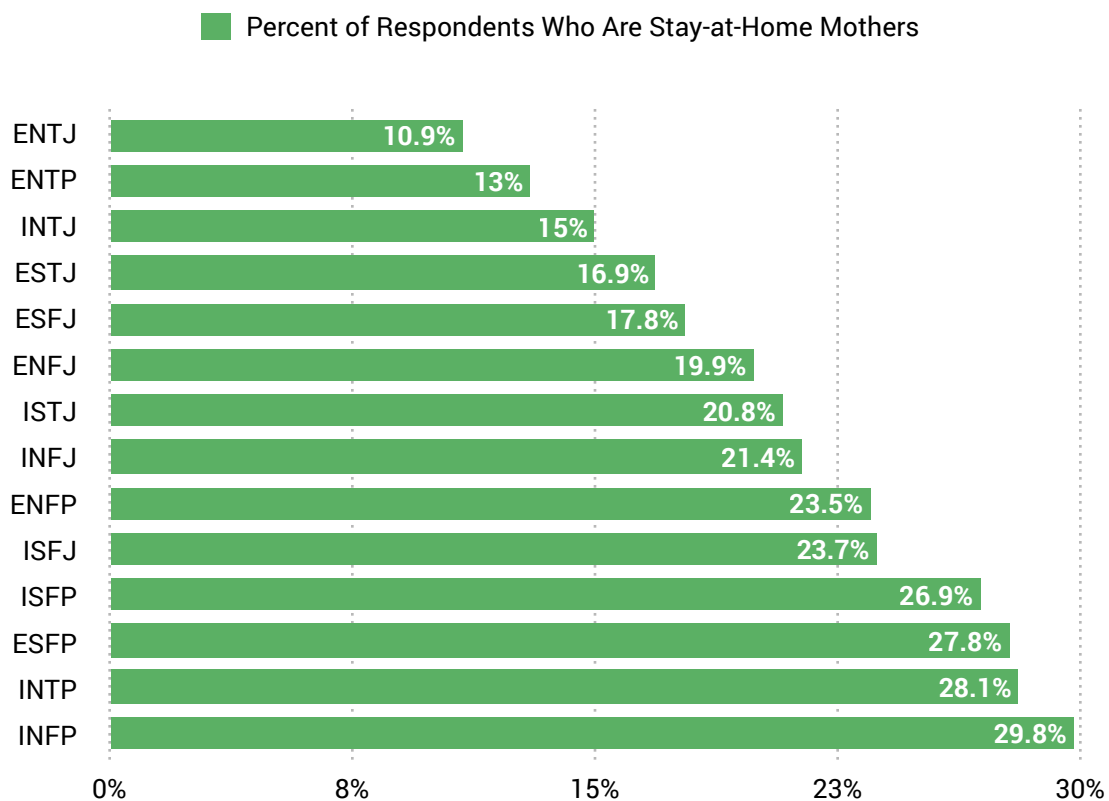
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<sup>3</sup> Owens, 2015.

whether they had children, we didn't know whether NT types were having kids but not staying home with them, or not having them at all.

The present survey addresses these questions in more detail. Among 4,024 parents, 662 reported that they were currently staying home with their children. Of these, 613 were women, and 34 were men (the remainder declined to share their gender). Because the sample of stay-at-home fathers was so small, and to eliminate confounding due to gender, we conducted most of our analysis of stay-at-home parents using only the female sample. Although it would be interesting to investigate whether men of certain types are more likely to choose this nontraditional path, a much larger sample would be needed.

Our findings were similar to those in our previous research, in that certain types were much more likely to be stay-at-home moms. The graph below shows the percentage of each type in the sample who reported they were staying home with their children. ESTP and ISTP are excluded from this graph due to small sample size.

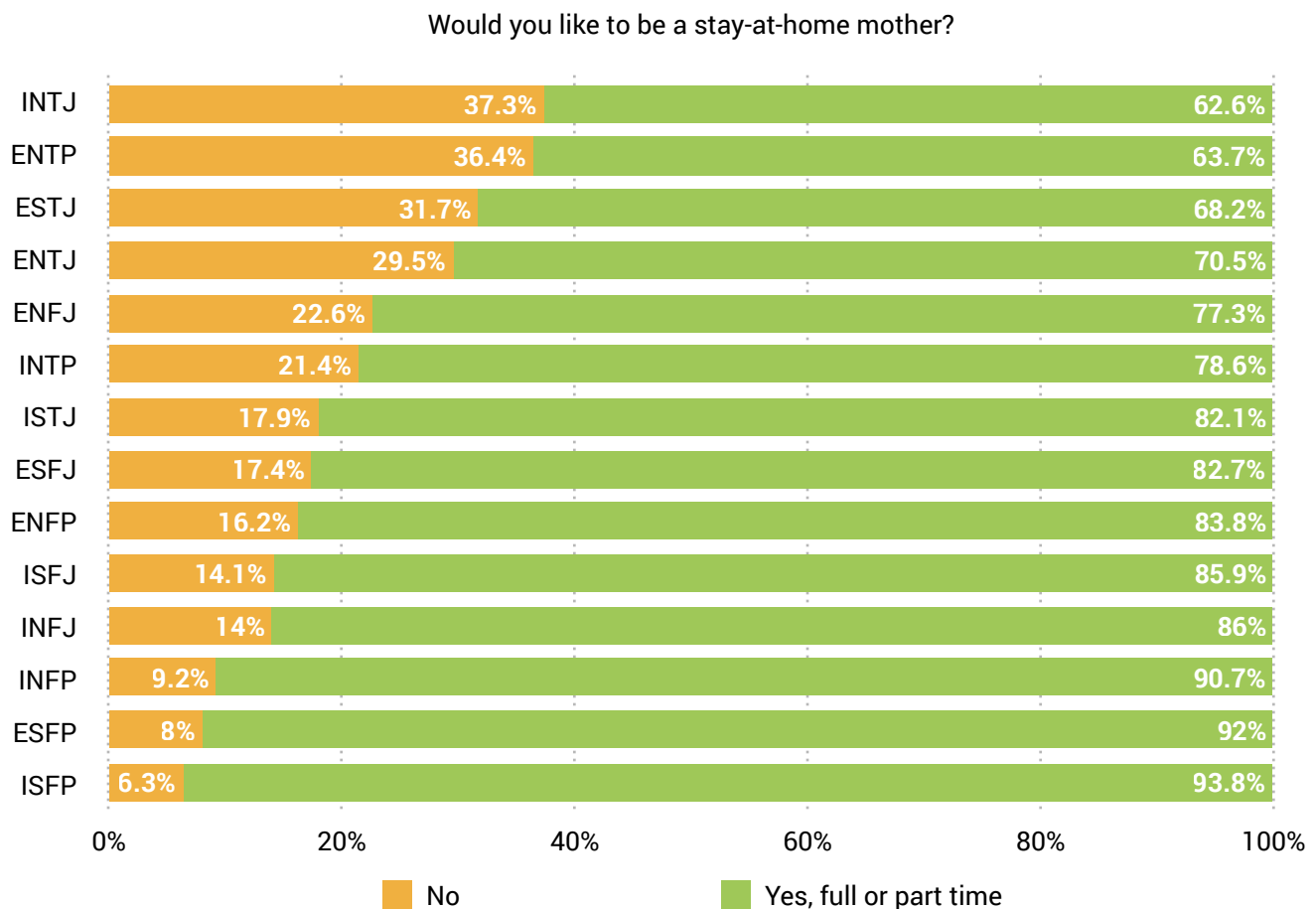


We observed a higher proportion of INTPs among the stay-at-home mothers sample than expected. In our study of career outcomes, INTPs were among the least likely to report this

status.<sup>4</sup> However, as we saw in the previous section, INTPs are one of the types most likely to say they do not want to have children at all. It seems that INTPs are more likely to forego children, but when they *do* have them, they are more likely to parent full-time.

One salient issue is whether these differences are really due to individual preferences. Although some women can freely choose to work or stay home, for most, their chosen path depends on practical and financial concerns. Since we have previously observed that average salaries vary quite a bit among types,<sup>5</sup> financial concerns may differ for women of different types. For instance, INFPs tend to be one of the lowest-earning types, and it is possible that they might tend to stay home because it is more sensible financially.

To discover how much of the trends we observed were due to personal preferences, and how much might be the result of other factors, we asked respondents about their ideal family situation. The following graph illustrates the pattern of response among female subjects asked, “Assuming finances were not an issue, would you like to be a stay-at-home parent?”



<sup>4</sup> Owens, 2015.

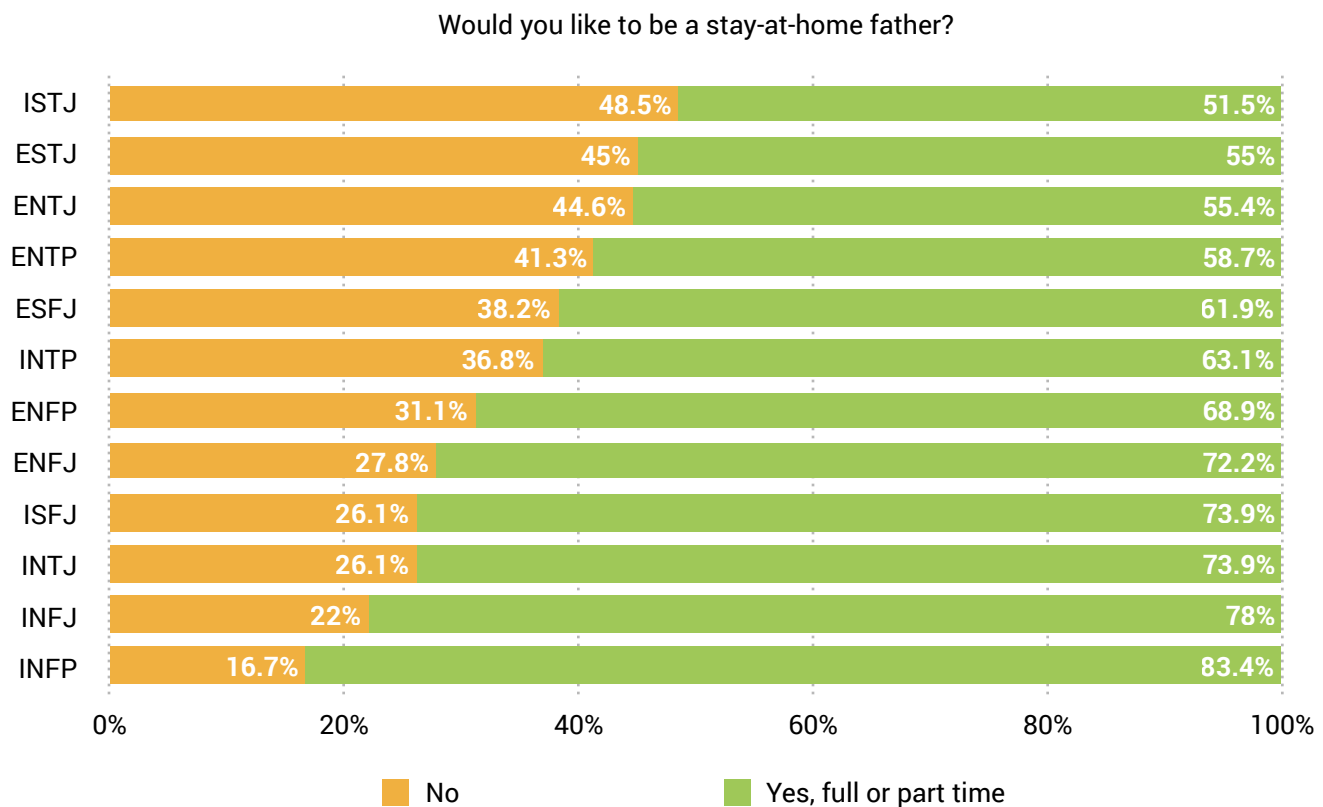
<sup>5</sup> Owens, 2015.



This analysis indicates that for the most part, women’s roles within the family do reflect at least some aspect of their personal preferences. The fact that we see many INFPs staying home with their children appears to be a reflection of the fact that most INFPs *want* to stay home. On the other end of the spectrum, NT women are generally less likely to say they’d like to stay home, and also less likely to be found in this role.

The one anomaly is INTP women; although they are less likely than average to say they want to stay home, they are more likely than average to report that this is the role they’ve adopted. It’s possible that for INTP women, who tend to earn lower salaries on average, the decision to stay home is more about necessity than desire.

This question also allowed us to examine attitudes among men of different types when confronted with the possibility of stay-at-home fathering. Overwhelmingly, the men in our survey were open to the idea, although some types more so than others. The chart below summarizes the responses to the same question among men. The SP types are omitted due to small sample size.



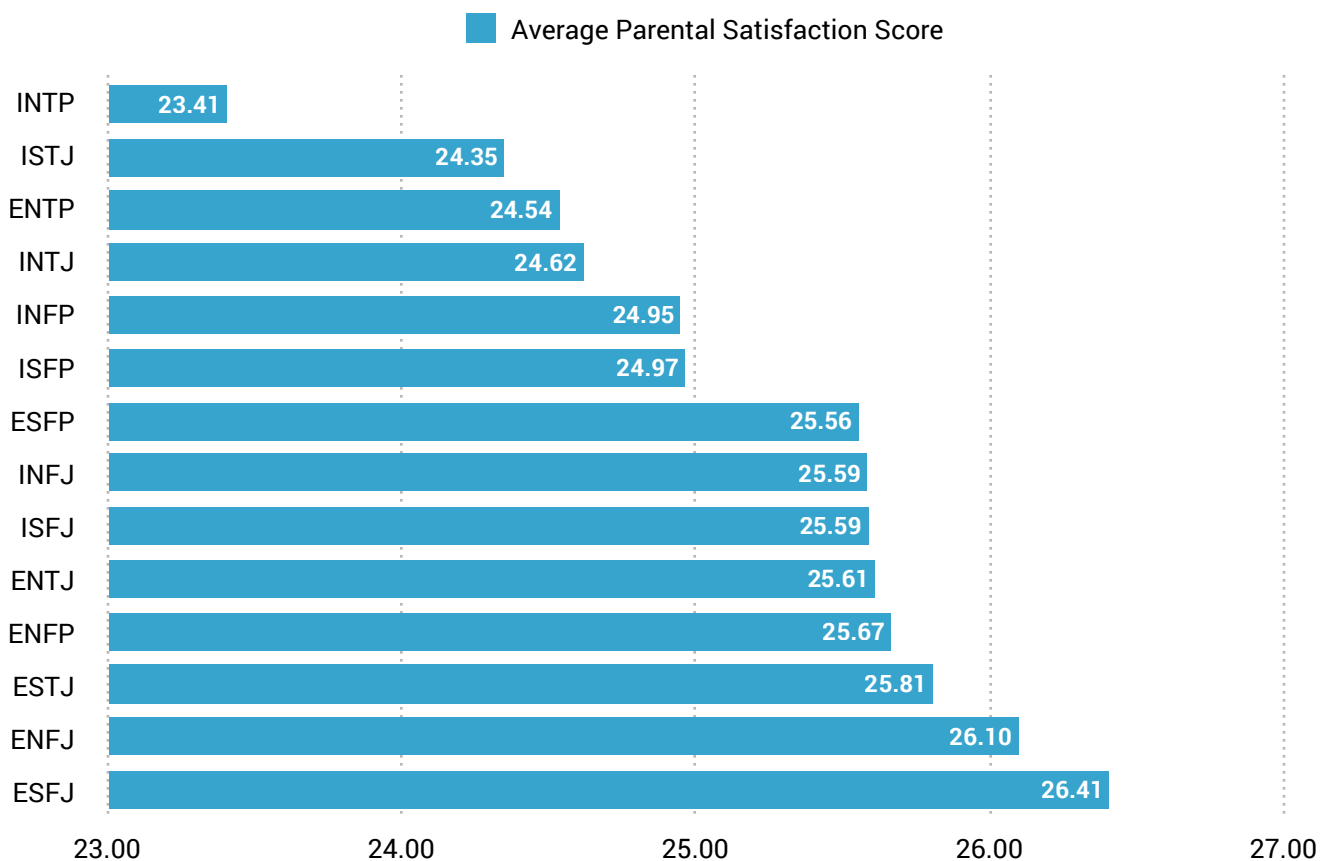
These data suggest some interesting conclusions when it comes to compatibility; perhaps career-driven ENTJ women would do well to pair up with INFP men, who by and large seem very willing to tend to home and hearth.

## THE SOUL OF A PARENT

Once we had established that there were wide differences in the sorts of roles that different personality types adopt in the family, the obvious question was: *why*? Certainly, we are aware that different personality types experience the world in very different ways, and it stands to reason this would include the experience of parenting. But we wanted more insight into how different types navigate this particularly central role in their lives.

To gain some initial understanding of this issue, we surveyed 2,689 mothers and 818 fathers with a set of questions designed to assess various aspects of parental satisfaction. Statements such as “I think my child would consider me a good parent” were rated on a scale from one to five, with five indicating strong agreement.

In general, most respondents expressed positive sentiments about parenting, with average ratings above 4.0 for individual questions. However, there were pronounced differences observed in the average scores among different types. The below graph shows the average total score for all six satisfaction questions by type. ESTP and ISTP are omitted due to small sample size.



For the most part, Extraverted types were more likely to express high levels of parental satisfaction than were Introverted types. Although this may seem to indicate that Extraverts are somehow more suited to parenting, we would caution against this conclusion. Previous studies have shown that Extraverts are more likely to express positive emotions in general; in fact, it has been suggested that the expression of positive emotion is actually the core of the dimension of extraversion.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, we can expect that Extraverts will score more highly on any measure where they are asked about emotions such as happiness and joy. Although it's possible that Extraverts do get more out of parenting than Introverts, we do not feel that our findings on this survey are evidence as such.

Examining scores for the individual questions on the satisfaction survey yielded some interesting results. ESTJs and ESFJs consistently gave higher ratings than other types across a range of questions. It seems these types are confident in their parenting and find the experience generally rewarding as well. This result is consistent with the ESTJ and ESFJ type descriptions; both these types are typically painted as responsible, civic-minded, traditional, and family-oriented.<sup>7</sup>

Other types, including INTPs, INTJs and ISTJs, tended to score nearer the bottom of the charts. Although these types still generally expressed satisfaction as parents, they were less likely to enthusiastically agree with statements like “The work of parenting is worthwhile in the long run.”

INTPs and INTJs are typically described as rational, independent, and unconventional, all qualities that perhaps make adapting to a parenting role somewhat more difficult. On the other hand, ISTJs are typically assumed to be dutiful members of any societal structure, including the family.<sup>8</sup> It is unexpected, therefore, that we should find them among the ranks of the least satisfied parents, and we would suggest this as a topic for further study.

Below, we show the highest and lowest scoring types among men and women for each of the six survey questions.

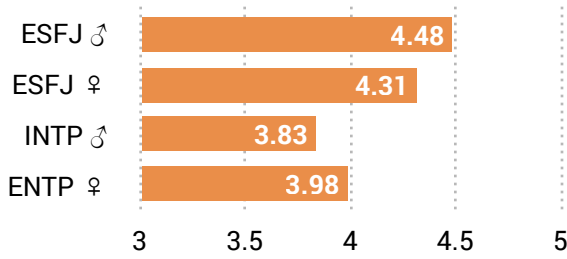
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<sup>6</sup> Nettle, 2007.

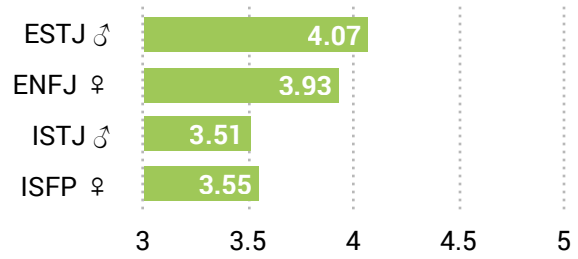
<sup>7</sup> Keirse, 1998.

<sup>8</sup> Keirse, 1998.

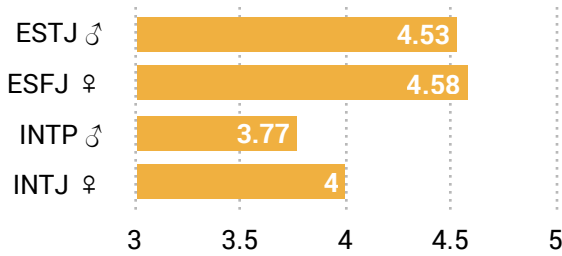
"I think my children would consider me a good parent"



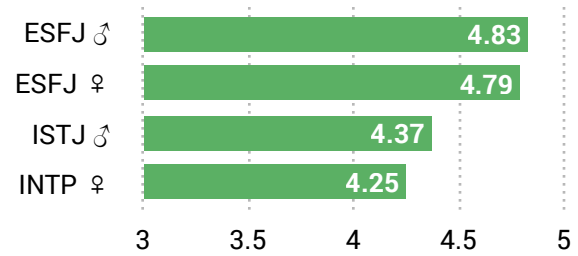
"I am happy with my parenting skills"



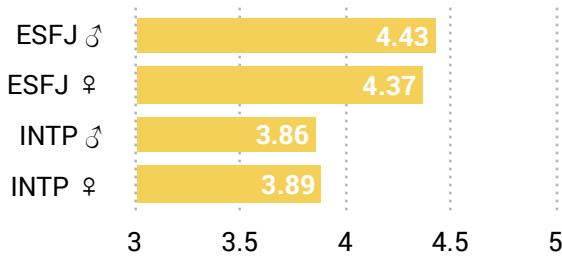
"My children are one of my greatest sources of satisfaction"



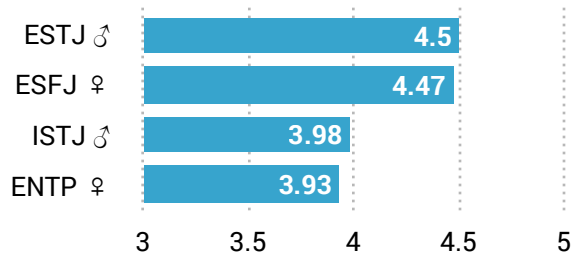
"The work of parenting is worthwhile in the long run"



"I am happy with the relationship that I have with my children"



"My children bring me a lot of joy"



## PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES

Ratings on a scale from one to five can only tell us so much about what it's like to parent as each of the 16 personality types. Although we can see some broad trends in the data, the numbers don't tell us why, for instance, INTJs are the type most likely to say they never want

children. Do they prefer to focus on their careers? Do they anticipate being overly burdened by parenting responsibilities? Or is there some other, uniquely INTJ logic behind this finding?

The data on other types present new mysteries. For instance, it is interesting (and seemingly contradictory) that ENTPs were some of the least likely to say that their children would consider them to be good parents, however they were among the *most* likely to say that they were happy with their parenting skills (Perhaps they would dub their parenting style “unappreciated genius”). Then there’s the curious case of the INFPs, who were among the most likely to be found staying home with their children, but had some of the lowest satisfaction scores as parents. Are these INFPs taking on a role that doesn’t truly suit them, and if so, why?

To dig into the very personal experiences of these very different personality types, we surveyed members of our mailing lists about their experiences as parents. We sought out INTJs, ENTPs, and INFPs, along with a few other types responsible for the most interesting trends in our data, to get more insight into these individuals’ lives. Respondents told stories of joy, heartbreak, frustration and satisfaction—and some interesting themes emerged. Ultimately, these personal stories shed light on the multitude of paths we all wander in our quest to be connected, loving, and supportive parents.

## **INTJ Parents: An Annoying, Astounding Path to Personal Growth**

In our study, INTJs emerged as reluctant parents, with many of them choosing not to have children at all and those who do showing lower-than-average levels of satisfaction with their roles. Indeed, our INTJ respondents reported that parenting is often a stretch for their rational, independent personalities. But the INTJs who did choose to become parents said it allowed them to grow and stretch in ways they could never have anticipated.

INTJs had the highest response rate of all the types we surveyed. A selection of their comments follows.

“There are days when I wonder what I was thinking when, in my thirties, I urged my husband to consider having kids. To be sure, it is a REAL challenge to raise kids as an INTJ. I am a scholar and a thinker. As such, I am also a lover of the Transcendentals: the true, the good and the beautiful. Few things in this universe can help put life in perspective like children. Though exasperatingly irrational, incorrigibly inefficient, and inherently undisciplined and emotional, children also unfailingly compel one to self-sacrifice, and have

the potential to bring out the best in one's character. They force one to prioritize and adhere to...the true, the good and the beautiful!”

*-Miguelina, INTJ mother of three*

“I never wanted to have children then I met a wonderful man and he wanted children so I agreed. I love my children dearly but hate the act of parenting. It seems to require all of my energy as I am determined to parent in the way I think is the best way for each of my children individually. The hardest part for me has been the loss of unlimited solitude. I enjoy thinking and solving difficult problems but having children greatly diminishes solitude and I found this to be quite unnerving.

Although I have found parenting to be extremely difficult I have managed through thinking and educating myself to create children that are kind and interested in making the world better for all of us.”

*-Kathy, INTJ mother of two*

“I don't have any children and I don't want any. My reasons for this are simply that to have them requires a large investment of time and resources to fulfill a purposeless and mundane task. I like children, and I have very strong family values; I just see life as too short to waste on something so consuming and ultimately arbitrary.”

*-Jacqueline, 25-year-old INTJ*

“I'm not good at things like messy, spontaneous play—although I will do it. But I do a really good job of providing him with learning experiences and encouraging him to grow into whatever he is meant to grow into. It's really important to me that he is independent and comfortable with who he is.”

*-Lourdes, INTJ mother of a 2-year-old*

“I am an INTJ and have 3 kids, but have always worked. I am a terrible stay at home mom—I have tried it, but hated it. The tasks like running errands and driving kids around offer no stimulation for me. I am awful at doing laundry and cleaning the house.

I do love having kids, but I can get so caught up in analyzing and problem solving that I don't show enough compassion. Planning and analyzing is great for work, but not as great when dealing with people. Somehow, my kids have turned out great and I love them to death. I can't imagine my life without them.”

*-Liz, INTJ mother of three*

“As an INTJ, being free and able to grow and learn is very important to me, so being a parent can be a challenge. I have to constantly carve out time for reading, thinking and quiet, which can be a real challenge. But, if I can find some maintenance time for myself, I can be a really good parent. If I don't my impatience with my children really surfaces in a nasty way.”

*-INTJ father of four*

“I was on the fence about kids, but a friend said I didn't want to miss it. I prepared with my usual unswerving manner, research, parenting books, buying children's books, the whole shebang. I thought I would be carefully molding and raising my children... I learned that children have their own little personalities and quirks. It is not at all about molding them, but a daily discovery of who this other person is.”

*-INTJ mother*

“So far, I have no kids. I wanted to have many when I was a child myself, but now I have the feeling that as a parent, I would have to give up most of the things that I really like and would have to lead a boring life with few intellectual challenges and a lot of repetition.”

*-Andrea, 34-year-old INTJ*

“I became a very intense parent, because I am always intense. I ended up homeschooling my children and coaching their debate team. Now they are extremely successful adults, and they are two of the precious few people on the planet who understand me—I am not easy to get to know.”

*-A.F., INTJ mother*

“Honest to say, I've never been comfortable around children, except for my own.”

*-INTJ mother of two*

“As a parent, I am much less affectionate and "soft" as I'd like to be. I can't help but place instruction, correction, discipline and teaching above showing affection to them. When my four year old son cries because I tell him he can't do something, I notice that I often tell him that he's acting unreasonably.

Lately I've been trying to convince myself not to feel bad about how I am as a person. As long as I provide them with the emotional support that they need, even if I have to make an effort to do so, they will be fine (and smart).”

*-Brittney, INTJ mother of two*

“I was a *terrible* stay-home-mom! I stayed home for two years while our kids were babies, and I was convinced that my brain was—literally—shrinking the entire time.

I do have to say that I credit being an INTJ with my parenting success so far: I spend an enormous amount of time reading and researching how to specifically parent my two children's (now teenagers) vastly different personalities. My husband, an ESTP, relies on me to help him figure them out.”

*-Amie, INTJ mother*

## INFP Parents: Connecting with Kindness and Sensitivity

We surveyed INFPs with several questions on our minds: Why is this type more likely than all other types to stay home with their children? Given their seeming willingness to give parenting their all, why are their satisfaction levels lower than average? And how to explain the fact that, while many of them are parenting full-time, a good percentage of them say they don't want children at all?

The survey responses provided some insight, and painted a picture of a sensitive, thoughtful INFP parent who refuses to give their children anything less than their total devotion. Several INFPs expressed anxiety about raising children in what they saw as a troubled, imperfect world. On the other hand, they shared their tremendous joy in discovering and connecting with their children.

“When I become a mother, I would like to give my everything into parenting, at least the first few years. I want to be around my children, I want to give them as much love as I can, I want to teach them fascinating things, I want to help them build themselves as happy and kind people.”

*-18-year-old INFP*

“I stayed home with my kids from day one. I truly enjoyed it. My favorite place to be is with them and my animals and of course my husband.”

*-Denise, INFP mother of two teenagers*

“I am blessed because of that because painful as it is sometimes, to see something in myself I don't like in my older son, or have some cherished belief, value or self-perception shattered by my younger son, it's all learning. And learning about people: how they think and how they become thinkers is endless fascinating to me.”

*-Scott, INFP father of two*



“I think I was more likely than other parents to consider who my kids innately were and adjust their raising to their personality type. I didn't try to make everything 'fair' and 'equal', I tried to make things suited to who the child is and what my individual child needed.”

*-INFP parent*

“I never had plans to have kids. When I found out I was pregnant, I realized it was time to get serious about being a mom. It did not really hit me that I was going to have a real live baby until I was almost due, and I realized that after the baby was born, I was supposed to go back to work! I could not do it. I went in and put in my two weeks notice right then.

Many of my family members did not agree with the way I raised my son. They thought I was too soft on him. He is thoughtful and emotional. I understood that, so I treated him accordingly. Now my family tells me what a good son I have. They tell me how he turned out to be such a good upstanding person. I'm glad I stuck to my convictions. I'm glad I did not let anybody bully me into raising my son according to THEIR societal norms. I think because I am an INFP, it made me more sensitive to my son's feelings.”

*-Trisha, INFP mother of one*

“When raising both my boys I always went with my gut feelings about all types of issues, from getting them off to sleep when they were babies to dealing with health issues and anything else that cropped up really. I was very independent when it came to solving any problems that might crop up.

I was not strict with them but had certain boundaries. I always spoke to them as they were an equal and explained my reasons clearly if I did not want them to do something. Throughout their formative years people often remarked how happy they were in themselves and how calm I seemed to be most of the time. I totally enjoyed bringing them up, even though before I had children I did not see myself as the parenting type at all. Once I'd had them, however, they were the light of my life and have been ever since.”

*-Jackie, INFP mother of two grown sons*

“I have chosen to have no kids, although I love children. I am always anxious about how the violent world today treats kids and why people give birth to children so irresponsibly! I firmly believe that the root of all human sufferings is in wrong methods of raising the young. Parenting to me is the most important position one can have and few people are qualified to be mothers or fathers. A child is so vulnerable and the slightest mistake can affect his or her whole life and those related to him in future!”

*-Afrooz, 43-year-old INFP woman*

“I struggle a lot with the sensory overload of a toddler—the noise, the loudness often overwhelms my senses and I can feel frustration creeping in. I feel like it inhibits me from really enjoying my son in those moments when I'm just overwhelmed by his yelling. Or, when I've been home all day with him and when my husband comes home I have a hard time being kind or patient with him because I just have no reserves left.

And at the same time, I think I feel more deeply than non-INFP's and it's a true joy to parent. I feel SO much love for my son, I can't even imagine not having him. I feel like I have always been missing him, my whole life. I spend a lot of time thinking and reading about respectful parenting and want to create an atmosphere of safeness and freedom for my son to feel and express those feelings. I was often told to "tone it down" as a child or that I was "too sensitive." I want to parent from that sensitivity and raise children who feel deeply, are compassionate and have integrity and courage and character.”

*-Julia, INFP mother*

“I have been thought to be quite odd for not wanting kids. Not because I don't love kids, I do, I really do. I just don't think I'll be able to handle it. Yes, it might be because I am young that I think this, but it's still a pretty solid thought. What if my kids turn out to be bad humans? What if the method I use to raise them doesn't quite work? What if I just generally fail at parenting, and my kids don't get the love, safety, and warmth they need? I cannot take such a risk at possibly ruining not only my child's life, but many other's lives as well.”

*-Solaf, 16-year-old INFP*

“I wasn't sure I wanted to have kids. In fact I really struggled with the whole concept of being a mother. In the end I went for it and found it difficult coming to terms with being a mother when I had my first child. I worried a lot about getting it right. When I had my second child I felt much more confident and enjoyed the whole experience a lot more. I realized that I could do it my way and didn't need to be someone else.

I was made redundant just before I had my second child and I never went back to work. I miss earning money and feeling like I am contributing to society in a paid role, but I think it's important that I am around for my children at this stage (4 and 7) and I want to be the person who knows them best and helps them become who they are.”

*-Rebecca, INFP mother of two*

## ENTJ Parents: Training the Next Generation of Achievers

While ENTJs are generally enthusiastic about having children, they are one of the types least likely to be interested in stay-at-home parenting. As we consulted real-life ENTJ parents, we realized: these driven types apply the same ambition to their home lives as they do to their careers. They believe they can have it all, and they often do.

For women, this often means carving out nontraditional roles. ENTJ women are the least likely of all types to be stay-at-home moms, and the most likely among females to say that they would prefer their partners to be primarily in charge of childcare.

“I worked up until the day before giving birth with all 3 children and was back at work part time within 2 weeks and full time within 12 weeks.

I didn't find having children 'life-changing' and was just very frustrated not to be able to plan and work through my usual series of tasks and activities; I wasn't able to cope with what I perceived to be the mundane nature of childcare, and so chose the easy and more motivating option for me—returning to my meetings, conference calls and emails as quickly as possible.

Having had all 3 children in my 20s I have only learned to really appreciate my children and truly form relationships with them in the last year, as I have taken a 5 month career break and MADE myself do this. It does not come naturally to me but with a lot of mindfulness and being present in the moment—sacrificing myself to the children and not trying to juggle 10 things at once which I find highly motivating—I think that I am gradually becoming a better parent.

I have always believed that I have been a great role model to my children until recently. However, through lots of very tough feedback I have learned that being a complete workaholic is probably not being a great role model and I have to learn to be more balanced as any kind of extreme is not great for the children.”

*-Natalie, ENTJ mother of three*

“As a parent I discovered that I really love my job. I was also more calm; I felt more in control of my life after I returned to work from maternity leave. It was a confusing time as other parents were saying, ‘Why would you have children if you were just going to put them in day care?’ Learning more about who I was and how I functioned was a huge leap in understanding why I felt the way I did and that it was not wrong, just different to other

parents. I hope I am showing my son and daughter how to equally share the work load, and how women should take control of their finances and their career.”

*-Sarah, ENTJ mother of two*

“My struggles are trying to not place too many expectations on my children, and tuning into my emotional side. Fortunately, my husband is an ISFJ so he fulfills that part for our kids. I tend to put the kids on a schedule and rationalize everything and I have to remember sometimes they just need encouragement.

I believe being an ENTJ I have a tendency to be a perfectionist. But I also feel this is good for the kids in that they're not too lackadaisical in their attitude. I see many parents struggle with issues about their kids, but I think because I hold them accountable for their actions and have certain expectations of them, I don't really see it as an issue.”

*-Hanna, ENTJ mother of five*

“I see motherhood as more of a career. I have a strong desire to learn what is the "right" way to teach and treat my child. I think knowledge and professional skills are more important than love—that is not to say that love is not important, actually I love my son so much. But motherhood is a serious thing.”

*-25-year-old ENTJ mother*

“After three months at home with each of my daughters, I was chomping at the bit to go back to work! I wanted to be a mom and love being a parent but I need ‘me’ time on a regular basis. My personal identity is still strong and I was never one to ‘lose’ myself in my kids. I push my daughters to do well in all that they do and I won't allow them to accept mediocrity and I encourage them to try their best.”

*-Jennifer, ENTJ mother*

## **ENTP Parents: Enjoy the Adventure, and Don't Sweat the Details**

Like ENTJs, the majority of ENTPs want children, although both ENTP men and women are among the least likely to express interest in staying home to parent full-time. ENTPs also had one of the lower scores on our parental satisfaction scale. Another telling detail emerged when we crunched the data: when both sexes are analyzed together, ENTP parents are the type most likely to say that they would prefer their partner be primarily responsible for childcare.

ENTPs also showed one of the odder profiles in our satisfaction survey. They appeared very confident as parents, as one of the types most likely to say they were happy with their parenting skills. However, they also showed some of the lowest scores for statements like, “I am happy with the relationship I have with my children,” and, “I think my children would consider me to be a good parent.” These results seem difficult to reconcile.

However, our survey results shed some light on these findings. ENTP parents seem excited and stimulated by the opportunity to facilitate learning in their children. On the other hand, they are impatient with details and bored by the mundane. Put together, these qualities make for a particularly idiosyncratic parenting style.

“I think I was a great parent. I was a single parent of a boy. I think being an ENTP helped me to step back and let go when I needed to. However, I was also somewhat strict because, practically speaking, I knew that if I didn't get control of this little person early that I would have no control later. I did not sweat the small stuff, like perfect grades and even mischievousness and we also had a lot of fun doing things together. My life is an adventure and I chose to take my son along with me and I think he is better for it.”

*-Karen, ENTP mother*

“The idea of staying home and being the primary caretaker of children sounds stifling, and like a total waste; I've spent huge amounts of time building a skill set that can help create innovative solutions to large systematic problems. Why would I want to throw that out the window to change diapers and watch Frozen on repeat while covered in vomit? That doesn't seem like a very fun use of my energy. It also sounds mind-numbingly awful.”

*-Valerie, 32-year-old ENTP*

“I'm a high performing, career-driven working mum, with a supportive INFP husband who is less career focused, and more likely to leave work early to make sure the after school activities can happen.

I can come across as quite harsh with our children at times. I use the word ‘think’ synonymously for ‘feel.’ I realize that this tends to make all my family members feel that I'm judging them rather than trying to express how I feel. Yes, I'm an emotional luddite! Consequently, I'm an avid reader of parenting books. I'm the strategizer, my husband facilitates implementation.

We have a shared and consistent approach to family expectations and discipline. We don't smack our children, but we also do not put forward threats. If there is a stated consequence

for breaking the rules, we enforce it. As I consistently tell my children: 'I'm a good mother, not a nice one—there's a difference.'”

*-Sharon, ENTP mother of two*

“I personally would delay any sort of children until after 30 years old at least. I'd be very annoyed having important routine things I'd have to do and nearly all of the early child care, besides educating your child how to speak well, is mundane and boring. All things menial I have a great disdain for, so anything involved in being a parent that is menial or mundane would bore me terribly. But I'd love to see the perspective such a future child would have, even if it differed from my own.”

*-Derek, 18-year-old ENTP*

“When I was young I had no plans to marry or have children. When the time came I still wasn't sure. So I interviewed my artist girlfriends who did and didn't have kids and asked them if they had any regrets in their choices. In my findings (such a Thinking type thing to do!) I discovered that the people who had children seemed to be more well rounded and fulfilled in their lives and those who didn't seemed more neurotic.

So we had the kids. I stayed home to raise them while my husband taught art. I was frustrated to the degree that I could not pursue my art career in the way I planned. I rationalized it to myself that they were creations that needed attending and that I would go back to my art practice when they went to school. Which I did.

My parenting style as an ENTP is to have fun and experience everything in a positive way. I would have the kids help me make piñatas for their birthday parties and we always did creative things. I gave birth to two girls but rarely dressed them in dresses. My thinking was that if they fall or get dirty the pants they wore would protect their knees and they would be free to be physical. I was a feminist early on, and conflicted about being the stay home parent.

Our style has been what we call the 'natural consequences' style of parenting. When the kids were young and it was cold out they would fight about not wearing mittens and snow pants. My fellow moms would force their kids kicking and screaming to put all the scarves and gear on. I just said 'Okay, but you know it's very cold out.' Then I would let them go out they way they wanted. Next day, they put their own mitts and scarves on. I never forced them to do anything they didn't want to.”

*-Sylvia, ENTP mother of two teenagers*

“I seem to be equal parts engaged, playful, and ‘childlike’ as well as (unfortunately) cold, rational, and detached—the latter when I’m absorbed in a work project.

I’m a ‘facilitator’. I dislike playing one to one (no patience to sit still very long) and would rather be playing team sports or some kind of family trip or experience. If my kids are interested in a subject, I’m very motivated to provide them with whatever they need to learn and challenge them.

They are creative and hilarious, competitive athletes, high performers, autonomous, and love each other like crazy. So I guess the benign neglect juxtaposed with real affection and heavy investment in their individual interests is sort of an effective formula for parenting success!”

*-Erin, ENTP mother of three*

## INTP Parents: Love, Unconventionally

INTPs showed a seeming contradiction in our research: although they were one of the least likely to have children (among respondents over 25) and most likely to say they didn’t want children at all, when we surveyed mothers, INTPs were more likely than other types to report that they were stay-at-home moms. Since one could fairly assume that the decision not to have children arises out of a general distaste for childcare, why would INTPs be both disinterested in having kids, but more likely than average to parent them full-time? Our INTP respondents provided some insight.

“I chose to be a stay at home dad. Once the kids could respond I enjoyed trying to show and explain the world to these new beings who are amazed by the things we see as mundane. I enjoyed the chance to make learning interesting for them, making exercise games and little projects. Sometimes though, I’m pretty sure the projects were more for me.

Biggest struggle was sometimes resenting feeling tied down by responsibilities. My kids tell me they had the best possible childhood, so hopefully that didn’t show.”

*-Hans, INTP father of two*

“I did not want kids, became pregnant by accident, and now have two sons. I have chosen to be a stay-at-home mom and homeschooling mom (at least for the time being), yet have had trouble finding fulfillment in motherhood alone.

My greatest struggles with motherhood have been: being emotionally sensitive to my kids needs; struggling to fit in with other moms and hating ‘mom-talk;’ struggling with cultural expectations (like traditional femininity, or excitement toward the holidays); and not



particularly enjoying 'play' yet considering the creative endeavors among the most important aspects of childhood.

I let my kids take risks, trust them, and am okay with them learning lessons 'the hard way' so long as they are following basic safety rules (e.g. one son has been attempting to fly, and we have rules about flying upward rather than off of high places)."

*-Theresa, INTP mother of two*

"I am a stay-home dad. I work independently, while my wife has an office job, so I take care of my daughter most of the time. Sometimes I wonder if I should have not engaged in a committed relationship at all and even fantasize about disappearing, but then I know with absolute certainty that I would never leave my daughter. She is the one person in the world I would not dare leaving.

I am not good with children, I don't like a kid looking at me in the street, I don't like the kids of my friends or relatives to want to play with them, so my relationship with my daughter is very specific."

*-Ricardo, INTP/INFP father*

"I love seeing my children grow and the opinions they form about things, the interests they develop and being able to help them explore those things more. I love seeing them use their imaginations and being creative. I really enjoy seeing them dress themselves and the self expression it brings."

*-Carissa, INTP mother of two*

"Sometimes I chastise myself because I look at parenting like a series of small experiments to see what her reactions will be in an effort to raise a kind, thoughtful and educated human being."

*-Kim, INTP mother of one*

"My number one reason to not want children is because I feel NO need to control another human being. I will in able to influence my children in ways I won't even be aware of. I help shape their thoughts, beliefs, response to emotions.... How could I ever know that I'm teaching them the "right" way? There are people who fly across countries weekly, dive deep into oceans, go to prestigious Ivy League schools, or have even been born into poverty. All separate experiences... and I can only give my children certain experiences... how awful. I could never teach them enough, could never prepare them enough for this world and the



complex structure of each understanding of it. I refuse to ever be in control of another sentient being.”

-Lindsay, 19-year-old INTP

“I think being an INTP parent there is a willingness to let the children be themselves, as far as their personalities; a letting go of trying to make them what I want them to be; a respect for them as individuals to make their own life choices.”

-James, INTP father of three

## 16 Types of Parent

Most parents report that one of the best ways to cope with the struggles of parenting is to hear from other parents going through the same challenges. In this respect, personality typing can be a unique form of stress relief for parents. As we have seen, the challenges of parenting—although innately human—do take different shapes depending on our type. Sensitive INFPs struggle to come to terms with the reality of bringing children into a troubled world, while ambitious ENTJs are more concerned about how to achieve the ultimate level of success both at work and at home.

Although we could not include stories from all 16 types here, we hope this discussion has opened the door for a more open examination of how we each use our unique talents to raise happy, loving, and successful children—and to grow, ourselves, in the process.

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