

**EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS
OCCASIONAL PAPER**

Fathers' working hours: parental
analysis from the third work-life
balance employee survey and
maternity and paternity rights and
benefits survey of parents

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Executive summary

This report examines fathers' work hours and patterns of flexible working guided by the theoretical concepts 'father as breadwinner' and 'father as carer'. It presents a secondary analysis of two nationally representative employment datasets - The Third Work-Life Balance Employee Survey (2006) and the Maternity and Paternity Rights and Benefits Survey of Parents (2005). Both surveys were conducted just after the introduction of father-friendly employment legislation in Britain in April 2003: the right to request flexible working for fathers with a child under six years of age and an entitlement to a paid two week paternity leave period.

The Third Work-Life Balance Employee Survey WLB3 (2006) covers employed fathers work behaviours until the child reaches eighteen years and the Maternity and Paternity Rights and Benefits Survey of Parents PRS (2005) is focused on employed fathers whose partner had given birth in the previous seventeen months.

The report updates previous studies of fathers' working hours and their use of flexible working options. In addition, it contributes to the debate about whether the longer working hours, typically noted for fathers, is best explained by life stage or parental status. For men, fatherhood tends to coincide with the most occupationally active period in their life course.

The main findings are summarised below.

Flexible Working

- A majority of male full-time employees, both with and without children, 99 per cent, had used some form of flexible working option in the last twelve months.
- Flexi-time and working from home were the most favoured options by both groups of men with significantly greater use by fathers: 33 per cent of fathers and 28 per cent of non-fathers had used flexi-time in the last year; 28 per cent of fathers and 21 per cent of non-fathers had utilised a working from home option in the same time period.
- Thirteen per cent of fathers reported using a school term-time flexible working option in contrast to 6 per cent of fathers in the WLB1 baseline survey.
- In general, fathers' adoption of flexible working indicates an increase in use since WLB1 baseline, but little change in the diversity of flexible options used. Although fathers made more use of flexitime and home working options than men without children, no difference was found between fathers' and non-fathers' use of full-time and part-time flexible working options¹.

¹ Full-time flexible work option includes flexible work options which entail no loss of pay e.g. flex-time. Part-time flex work includes flexible work options which entail a reduction in income e.g. job-share.

Working hours

- Men working long hours before childbirth are more likely to report reduced working hours after the birth than men working medium or low hours before the birth² (M&P).
- The mean number of usual weekly hours worked by couple fathers in full-time employment was higher than for men in full-time employment without children (WLB3).
- Over a third of fathers regularly work long hours (over 48 hours per week) in comparison to just under a quarter of men without children (WLB3).
- Occupational status is the most important predictor of working hours after controlling for age, earnings, education and partner's work status. Men who work in professions or who are managers work longer hours per week than men not in professions or managerial jobs.
- Fatherhood status is a smaller, but significant predictor of working more weekly hours alongside being in a managerial or professional occupation, after controlling for age, earnings, education and partner's work status. (WLB3). That is, being a father, rather than being in a specific life stage, appears to be the more important driver for longer working hours.
- In terms of age of child, having the youngest child over six years predicts working more weekly hours for fathers (WLB3).

The data suggests that fatherhood roles are in transition. This study demonstrates the continuity of long working hours for fathers employed in full-time jobs, signalling the salience of father as breadwinner in the British context. However, the evidence also suggests that men are reducing long hours upon becoming fathers and are increasing their use of flexible working options in line with a father as carer model. Fatherhood roles are in transition, particularly for fathers with young children, suggesting that fathers may be beginning to exercise more choice over their working patterns than previously seen. These propositions come with caveats: firstly that work hours and flexible working use are rudimentary measures of fathers' behaviours and cannot capture the complexity of motivations and aspirations that fathers have for both work and family life; and, secondly that it is recognised that fathers are not a homogeneous group and that the categorisation of fathers into traditional and involved fathers is not a holistic approach to defining the father role.

² Low hours = below 35 hrs per week, medium hours = 35-48 hrs per week, Long hours = over 48 hours per week.

Work-family reconciliation policies, sensitive to the dilemmas of contemporary fathers, are at an early stage of development in the UK. Innovative solutions will be required in future policy development in order to respond to fathers' earning and caring aspirations.

Aims and objectives

The aims of this project were to examine fatherhood status in relation to working hours and flexible working, specifically:

- Is fatherhood status associated with longer working hours?
- Are fathers with children under 6 years working more hours than those with older children and more than non-fathers?
- What is the take up and pattern of flexible working for fathers?

About this project

The importance of balancing work with bringing up a family has been highlighted by BIS as of policy interest (Success at Work DTI, 2006), as increasing numbers of women have entered the workforce and are likely to continue to do so as workforce demands increase as a result of a predicted decline in the working age population. Fathers' working hours have attracted recent academic and policy interest due to their reported tendency to work the longest hours (Brannen, Moss et al. 1997; Matheson and Summerfield 2001; La Valle, Arthur et al. 2002 ; O'Brien and Shemilt 2003). The BIS postgraduate employment research scholarship award enabled parental analysis of two BIS datasets: the Third Work-Life Balance Survey 2006 and the Maternity and Paternity Rights and Benefits Survey of Parents PRS (2005).

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Background

Over the last thirty years, fathers' roles have been changing, from that of primary breadwinner, with economic provision as a focus, to a more caring role, where fathers are expected to be more involved in the care of children. The consequences of the industrial legacy of gender segregation in the world of work and family have taken many years to unravel (Crompton, 2006). In terms of role attitudes and expectations, there is a legacy of traditional gendered views about work and family responsibilities, with fathers constructed as the economic 'provider' (Hood, 1986) and mothers as responsible for childcare and domestic matters. These attitudes still exist today, although they are no longer the dominant view (Crompton, Brockmann, & Wiggins, 2003). In the same time frame, a combination of economic need, the cultural impact of feminism, and improvements in the work opportunities available to women has resulted in a large increase in the numbers of women now in the workplace, rising from 56.4 per cent of women in the workforce in 1971 to 70 per cent by 2008 (Office for National Statistics, 2008). As a consequence there is less time for working mothers to carry out childcare and domestic work. This time shortage has been partly addressed, individually, by greater use of public childcare and, organisationally, with greater provision of flexible working options. The time dilemma has also been met, in part, by fathers who have shown small increases in the care of children (Gershuny, 2001; Smith, 2007). The associated increase in UK dual earner families means that fathers are now under more time pressure from home responsibilities.

The UK governmental policy framework of the last decade has aimed to facilitate greater work-life balance, particularly for parents, through the Employment Act 2002 and the Work and Families Act 2006. Although the main policy attention has been on mothers, there has been an increasing focus on fathers, with the objective to extend work-family choice for both parents to earn and spend time with and children (Supporting Families, 1999). In particular, there has been strong policy steer to increase flexible working options for mothers and fathers. Of course informal voluntary flexible working arrangements had been in place before new legislation but not promoted or part of a formal "right to request". Examples include, flexi-time, working from home, part-time work, and school-term hours of employment. From April 2003 British fathers were given a legal right to take two weeks leave from employment at the birth of a child, introduced at a flat-rate. In terms of supporting flexible working, the same Act required employers to commence a legal 'duty to consider' requests for flexible working time arrangements from employees who are parents with responsibility for children aged under six (or under 18 in the case of disabled children) and who had worked for an organisation for six months or more. Governmental emphasis continues to focus on extending choice of flexible working options rather than impose working hour reductions (DTI, 2003; Walsh, 2008), and although the

government have accepted the EU Working Time Directive 1998, they have retained the opt out clause allowing employees to volunteer to work more than the 48 hour limit.

In the light of these policy developments this report examines British fathers' work hours and patterns of flexible working. There is less data analysis available on fathers' working patterns than for mothers', which this report seeks to augment. The report presents a secondary analysis of two nationally representative employment datasets - The Third Work-Life Balance Employee Survey (2006) and the Maternity and Paternity Rights and Benefits Survey of Parents (2005) building on previous analysis of both national data sets (O'Brien and Shemilt, 2003; Smeaton and Marsh, 2006). Both surveys were conducted just after the introduction of father- friendly employment legislation in Britain in April 2003. The analysis is guided by assumptions embedded in the theoretical proposition of the 'father as breadwinner model' (Hood, 1986) and compares its utility to the 'caring fatherhood model' (Bjornberg, 1992; Lamb & Lewis, 2004).

1.2 Fathers' and mothers' employment patterns

Fathers' roles have been changing, over the last thirty years, from that of primary breadwinner, with economic provision as a focus, to a more caring role, where fathers are expected to be more involved in aspects of childcare (Thompson, Vinter, & Young, 2005; Warin, Solomon, Lewis, & Langford, 1999). The male breadwinner identity stems from the era of industrialisation and development of the capital economy (Bernard, 1981). The breadwinner ideal stipulates that men provide for the family economically whilst the women undertake the household chores and caring responsibilities (Hood, 1986). The male breadwinner role, in real income terms, has rarely met the criteria of sole male economic provider for the family. These circumstances were briefly achievable for families between 1940 -1970 (Hood, 1986) and have been less economically possible for most families since then. In recent times, women's contribution to household income has been increasing at a higher rate than that of men. There has been a 31 per cent increase in contribution to household income for women compared to 13 per cent for men between 1996/97 and 2003/04. (Department for Work and Pensions, 2005). Nonetheless the psychological impact of the breadwinner concept has been longer lasting for the construction of male identity (Warin et al., 1999). In this qualitative study men still show strong connections to the breadwinner role as illustrated by one of the respondent fathers:

“Providing for them is absolutely critical because it justifies-it justifies to a certain extent my existence, that ‘why am I doing this?’” (Warin et al 1999:17).

Whilst achievement of the single earner 'ideal' status appears untenable in current economic circumstances, adherence to the breadwinner identity still seems strong for many men (Burghes, Clarke, & Cronin, 1997; Dex, 2003).

In contrast, societal attitudes towards family roles have changed with decreasing proportions of men and women agreeing with the statement: 'A

man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home': 28 per cent agreed with this statement in 1989, decreasing to 17 per cent by 2002 (Crompton et al., 2003). In studies of men's attitudes towards men's work time, high proportions of fathers wish to reduce their work hours to spend more time with the family (Kodz et al., 2003). Fatherhood scholars have outlined increases in fathers' involvement in family life (Lamb & Lewis, 2004 ; Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004) and surveys have revealed the dilemmas that fathers face in managing work and family (Thompson et al., 2005). Although there is evidence of the caring fatherhood model, when looking at the work hours and patterns of flexible working for fathers, compared to mothers, the gap is still large. Moreover, when comparisons between fathers and non-fathers are made for work hours, fathers have been found to work more hours than non-fathers (Kodz et al., 2003; O' Brien & Shemilt, 2003). However, recent evidence indicates that this effect of fatherhood status does not hold when other variables such as age and occupation are controlled (Dermott, 2006; Natti, Anttila, & Vaisanen, 2006). Further evidence on fathers' employment activity rate and work hours outlined below provide a background context from which the current issues have emerged.

In spite of a perceived transition of the father role, the structure of British fathers' employment remains significantly different to that of mothers', both in terms of working hours and patterns. Nonetheless, employment rate trends by gender from the Office of National Statistics (2001) show a convergence of men's and women's employment rates, with a steady increase in the rate of participation in employment by women of 47 per cent in 1959 to 70 per cent in 1999 and a parallel decrease in participation by men from 94 per cent in 1959 to 79 per cent in 1999, (Mill et al., 2001). By 2009 figures indicated that while employment rates had remained at this level proportionally for men and women, there were still more men within the workforce than women, 75 per cent men, 69 per cent of women (Office for National Statistics, 2009). In spite of the large increase of women entering the workforce over the last thirty years, the distribution of men and women within the workforce is still very different, with more men working full-time compared to women and differing gender composition across occupations. This gender disparity is largely due to the changes in work patterns of parents. The differences between mothers and fathers working patterns are greater than gender differences. For example, the proportion of fathers employed full-time in the workforce by 2001 stood at 86 per cent, a much higher rate than mothers at 31 per cent (O'Brien & Shemilt, 2003). Since 2001, figures showed that fathers with preschool children have higher employment rates than mothers, 90 per cent compared to 57 per cent for mothers in 2008 (Office for National Statistics 2008), A similar disproportion exists for part-time working parents, with 3 per cent of fathers working part-time in 2001 compared to 36 per cent of mothers (Mill et al., 2001).

Although UK working patterns are becoming more diverse, with more flexibility on offer, the majority of men still work full-time, 93 per cent in 2008. Numbers of men working part-time have increased in recent years, from 3 per cent in 2001 to 7 per cent in 2008, but not to the same degree as for mothers' working part-time, 38 per cent in 2008 (Office for National Statistics 2008).

Although one reason for this increase in male part-time working could be due to more fathers increasing their caring role, employment figures examining fathers' employment patterns show that: only 4 per cent of fathers worked part-time compared to 7 per cent of men without children in 2008 (Office for National Statistics 2008) suggesting that fathers are more likely to work full-time compared to men without children. Furthermore socio-demographic data shows that amongst couples with children, the UK has the highest proportion (40 per cent) of full-time/part-time households in Europe (Crompton, 2006; Franco & Winqvist, 2002), which primarily consist of male full-time earners and female part-time earners. International attitudinal survey evidence indicates a strong preference for the full-time breadwinner plus part-time carer model in the UK (Connolly & Gregory, 2008; Crompton & Le Feuvre, 2000) providing additional explanation for stability in fathers' high engagement in full-time employment in the UK.

These differences in gender ratios for full-time working, particularly those for fathers, suggest that mothers still take on the primary responsibility for childcare. Other figures also support this interpretation, for example in employment activity rates for parents at different ages across the life course. Differences in employment activity rates for fathers and mothers show a gap of 24 per cent at age 30-34 years, the prime years for birth of first child (mill et al 2001). Mothers' employment activity rate drops to 57 per cent at this time, not rising again until the child is 5 years, but fathers' employment activity rate remains high at 90 per cent (Office for National Statistics 2008, Paull, 2008).. This impact of child age upon mothers' work patterns can also be seen in mothers' work hours' reduction (Office for National Statistics, 2008) and goes some way to explaining the high prevalence of mothers' part-time work. In summary, the high employment activity rate for British fathers supports assumptions embedded in the father as breadwinner model

1.3 Fathers' work time

In analyses of fathers' work time from UK datasets spanning the last 24 years, fathers have been found to work longer hours than men without children (Brannen, Moss, Owen, & Wale, 1997; Kodz et al., 2003; O'Brien & Shemilt, 2003). Fathers' work time in the UK reached prominent status when it was reported in 1996 that UK fathers worked the longest hours in the EU, 46.9 hours per week (Deven, Inglis, Moss, & Petrie, 1998). Analyses of fathers working hours from the 2001 Labour Force Survey showed that, although no longer the highest hours in Europe, UK fathers' mean hours per week were still 47 hours per week in 2001 (O'Brien & Shemilt 2003). In the First Work Life Balance Survey in 2000 fathers showed a high tolerance for working long hours with 60 per cent of fathers satisfied with work-life balance at 48 hours per week and 50 per cent at 60 hrs per week (O'Brien & Shemilt 2003).

Whilst fathers' mean work hours are considered high, comparisons with non-fathers assess the significance of fatherhood status. In multivariate analyses, Brannen et al (1997) found that fathers worked longer hours than non-fathers when controlling for age and Kodz et al (2003) found that fathers were more

likely to work more hours than non-fathers when controlling for age, occupation and qualifications. This evidence supports the proposition that the breadwinner role for fathers is still predominant. More recent work by Dermott (2006) re-tested the disparity between fathers and non-fathers' work hours controlling for age, earnings, occupation, education and partner's work status and found no significant difference between fathers and non-fathers work hours once age was introduced into the regression analysis. Dermott (2006) suggested that fatherhood status had been conflated with career stage, as both life stages coincide. Natti et al (2006) also found no effect for fatherhood status in their regression analyses on men in Finland, which included the same variables. Given that age had been included in earlier analyses finding fatherhood status to be a significant predictor of work hours, it raises a question about the breadwinner model: Has the fatherhood role as breadwinner become less salient so that fathers are now adopting a working hour regime more typical of men without children? Or are significant numbers of fathers adopting the caring role and reducing their hours to the extent that they now cancel out the effect of traditional fathers? Data from a parents' survey carried out by the Equality & Human Rights Commission in 2009, suggests that the tolerance for long working hours maybe waning, with 56 % of fathers believing they spent too much time at work (Ellison, Barker & Kulasuriya 2009). A US study by Kaufman & Uhlenberg (2000) suggests that treating fathers as a homogeneous group will mask differences between groups of fathers undertaking changing roles. They found that fathers who saw their role as breadwinners worked longer hours compared to fathers who undertook the caring more involved role.

Kaufman & Uhlenberg's (2000) findings with regard to fathers' changing behaviour are supported by Reynolds et al (2003) study, which report that some fathers have been found to make sacrifices in their career prospects to spend more time with their children (Reynolds, Callendar, & Edwards, 2003). In the same manner recent evidence from the Millennium Cohort Survey (Tanaka & Waldfogel, 2007) found that fathers who worked less hours when their child was under one year spent more time in childcare activities such as changing nappies, feeding the baby and getting up in the night. Another study, (Yeung et al 2001) found that fathers' time with the child in play and care giving activities decreases as their child's age increases. Fathers in Yeung et al's (2001) study spent more time in the week with children aged 0-5 years³. It is also clear from a number of attitudinal studies (Fagan, 2003 ;Kodz et al., 2003) that fathers state that they would prefer to work reduced hours.

Clearly these findings run counter to the breadwinner hypothesis and empirical findings which show that fathers work more hours than non-fathers. However, in times of role transition it would be likely that contradictory behaviours are observed as fathers endeavour to find ways to accommodate new roles within existing social and economic constraints. Recent changes in legislation for paternity leave and the right to request flexible working have

³ Note: this effect is not solely due to fathers' availability, young children are, by the nature of their dependency on parents, also more available at a young age than when they are older and more independent.

enabled fathers to change their work patterns whilst their children are still under six years old.

The caring father model and evidence cited above suggests that fathers with young children under 6 years old may be more likely to work fewer hours than fathers with older children and non-fathers, whilst the breadwinner model suggests that fathers with young children will work more hours than fathers with older children and non-fathers. The effect of child age will be included in the analyses here to test previous UK work which did not include child age in their models.

1.4 Flexible working

UK government policy over the last decade has been to encourage and increase opportunities for fathers and mothers to take up flexible working options. The Employment Act 2002 provided a legislative push to require firms to take on a legal 'duty to consider' requests for flexible working time arrangements from employees who were parents with responsibility for children aged under six (or under 18 in the case of disabled children) and who had worked for an organisation for six months or more. Although many forms of flexible working had been available before this duty rolled out in April 2003, take up was low amongst fathers. Baseline analysis from the Work – Life Balance Survey 2000 showed fathers primarily using shift work (25 per cent), flexi-time (20 per cent) and term-time working (8 per cent) (O'Brien and Shemilt, 2003). Mothers' use of flexible working practices was higher than fathers across the board except in the case of shift work. The largest disparities in flexible working use between mothers and fathers seen in the 2000 survey were in part-time working (58 per cent of mothers compared with 6 per cent of fathers) and term-time only working (20 per cent of mothers compared with 8 per cent of fathers) (Hogarth, Hasluck, Pierre, Winterbotham, & Vivian, 2001). In 2008, ONS figures showed that a third of mothers used some form of flexible working compared to one fifth of fathers (Office for National Statistics 2008).

Comparing flexible work use across fathers and non-fathers will also be considered in this paper rather than the customary comparison between fathers and mothers, as mothers have a distinctly different employment pattern in contrast to fathers. By comparing fathers with non-fathers the similar employment experience of male employees can be accounted for whilst distinguishing between men by parenthood status. The breadwinner model would suggest that there will not be a difference in flexible work use between fathers and non-fathers, as it is aligned to the concept of financial provision and any flexible work options that reduced income would not fulfil this requirement. Therefore, we would expect fathers to primarily use flexible working options that do not involve loss of income such as flexi-time, a compressed work week and home working⁴. In contrast, under the 'caring' father model, with more fathers expressing the desire to spend more time with

⁴ Flexible work options not reducing income are referred to as 'full-time' flexible work options for this paper.

their families (Bjornberg, 1992), we would expect there to be a difference between fathers' and non-fathers' use of flexible work options, with fathers using a greater range of flexible work options and using them in greater proportions.

Fathers continued high employment rates and long working hours suggest that their commitment to work remains high in spite of attitudinal changes in relation to adopting a greater caring role within the family sphere. One conclusion from previous research suggests that the male breadwinner model remains a compelling theoretical explanation for fathers' commitment to work whether for reasons of identity or economic provision. If the breadwinner model remains salient despite evidence of a transition for the father role, then it could be expected that fatherhood status will be a significant variable in relation to levels of work hours and types of flexible working. These broad propositions are tested in this paper.

1.5 Research questions

The first research questions consider fathers' work hours compared to non-fathers and assess whether fatherhood status is a significant predictor of the number of hours worked. Recent evidence with different employment datasets (Dermott 2006; Natti et al 2006) shows that when age is taken into account, fatherhood status as a predictor of work hours, no longer has an effect. It has been suggested that the stage of fatherhood within the lifecycle, between 25-45 years, coincides with a key development stage for career, between 30-50 years, and that it is the career stage that has an impact on working hours rather than fatherhood (Dermott 2006).

This analysis proposes to add the age of child as a predictor of working hours, as the early child years make fatherhood status particularly salient (Flouri & Buchanan, 2003) and might therefore be a better predictor of fathers' behaviour. Age of child is considered a useful indicator of the level of caring responsibilities for parents as younger children require more caring time (Fisher, McCulloch, & Gershuny, 1999). Findings indicating a negative correlation between mothers' employment activity status and age of child, but not for fathers (e.g. Paull 2008) suggest that the breadwinner father model is still dominant.

There are a number of factors that have been found to influence working hours that cut across individual, job, organisational culture and economic levels of analysis. Factors under consideration here are: parental status, partnership status, age of child, occupation, pay, education and age. These factors have been chosen from previous research (see Section 2 for references) to test the hypothesis that fatherhood status is one factor which increases working hours in line with the theoretical breadwinner model and empirical evidence showing that fathers work longer hours than men without children (Feldman, 2002; Kodz et al., 2003; O'Brien & Shemilt, 2003).

The regression analyses on the Third Work Life Balance 2006 dataset aims to test Dermott's (2006) findings using the British Household Panel Survey and

the National Child Development Survey showing that, contrary to other studies (O'Brien & Shemilt, 2003; Smith, 2007), fatherhood status is not a sufficient predictor of working hours, and that working hours are more associated with life stage.

If the breadwinner model holds true we would expect fathers to work more hours than non-fathers even when controlling for other factors known to also affect working hours, such as income, education and occupation. In addition, we speculate that fathers with very young children, under 6 years old, will work more hours than father with children 6 years and over and non-fathers in order to make up for an expected loss of income, as British mothers often return to work part-time after maternity leave (Burchell, Dale, & Joshi, 1997; Connolly & Gregory, 2008). In contrast, under the 'caring father' model we would expect fathers with children under 6 years old to work less hours than fathers with children aged 6 years and over and non-fathers.

The analysis aimed to test two fatherhood models: The 'breadwinner' model implies that fathers will work long hours to fulfil the economic provider role and the 'caring father' model which suggests that fathers will work less hours and use flexible work options in order to be more involved in the family. The following questions were constructed using these two models to guide the analysis.

According to the Breadwinner model we might expect that:

1. Fathers will work longer hours per week than non-fathers when directly compared.
2. Fathers with children under 6 years will work more hours per week than fathers with children 6 years and over and non-fathers.
3. Fatherhood status is predictive of working hours per week for men with children controlling for: age, occupation, earnings, partner employment status, employment status, and educational level.
4. Fatherhood status is predictive of working hours per week for men with children under 6 years controlling for: age, occupation, earnings, partner employment status, employment status, and educational level.
5. Fathers work hours will increase after the birth of their child.

Under the caring fatherhood model we might expect that:

6. Fathers will make more use of full-time flex options compared to non-fathers. Fathers and non-fathers use of (full-time⁵) flexible working options are compared. i.e. 'flexi-time', 'working from home occasionally', 'working from home all the time' and 'a compressed working week'.

⁵ Full-time flexible work options do not entail any loss of income

7. Fathers who use (full-time) flexible working options will work less hours than those who do not use flexible working. We might expect fathers who use flexible work options to be more involved fathers and therefore work less hours.

CHAPTER TWO

Methodology

2.1 Datasets

This report presents findings from analysis of fathers' and non-fathers' employment behaviour from the Third Work-Life Balance Employee Survey (2006) and the Maternity and Paternity Rights and Benefits Survey of Parents (2005).

The Third Work-Life Balance Employee Survey is a cross-sectional survey conducted in February and March 2006 of adults of working age (16 to 64 for men and 16 to 59 for women) living in Great Britain, working as employees in organisations employing five or more employees at the time of the survey. The final number of interviews completed was 2,081. Further detail about the sampling methodology can be found in the main report (Hooker, Neathy, Casebourne, & Munro, 2007) and related technical report (Latreille & Latreille, 2008).

The Maternity and Paternity Rights and Benefits Survey of Parents 2005 is an interim survey in a series of cross-sectional surveys undertaken by government departments on this topic since 1979. The Maternity and Paternity Rights Survey 2005 survey was carried out during May 2005. Mothers with babies born in December 2003 were selected for interview, which means they were interviewed 17 to 18 months after the birth. The fathers were contacted via the mothers and were also interviewed in May 2005. 2504 mothers were interviewed and 1512 fathers. Further detail about the sampling methodology can be found in the main report (Smeaton & Marsh, 2006b) and related technical report (Smeaton & Marsh, 2006a)

2.2 Sampling

2.2.1 The Third Work Life Balance Survey (2006)

To achieve a representative sample, interlocking quotas were used at the sampling stage based upon sex, age and whether employee was employed in the public or private sector. After data screening a post-stratification weight based on SIC (Standard Industry Classification) was applied to the data. For further details on response rates and sampling methodology see the technical report (Latreille & Latreille, 2008).

The sample comprised 2081 employees working as employees in organisations employing five or more employees at the time of the survey, no self-employed people were included. There were 55 per cent, n1096 male employees and 45 per cent, n985 female. Fathers in the survey were defined as male with dependent child in household who was under 16 or under 19 and a full-time student. Of the total sample, 12 per cent, n244 were fathers and 13 per cent, n263 were mothers. As a proportion of just male employees, 27 per cent were fathers and, of the female employees, 39 per cent were

mothers. When compared to the Labour Force Survey (2007) sample, the Work Life Balance (2006) parents are proportionately under represented, particularly fathers. Of the total Labour Force Survey (2007) sample 22 per cent were mothers and 22 per cent were fathers and as a proportion of all males in the Labour Force Survey (2007), 43 per cent were fathers and of all females 46 per cent were mothers.

The mean age of fathers was 41 years compared to the mean age of all men of 40 years, and non-fathers 39 years.

2.2.2 Maternity and Paternity Rights and Benefits Survey of Parents (2005)

Comparisons of the fathers' data in the Labour Force Survey 2004 with fathers with children under 2 years show a similar profile across age, education, occupation and employment status therefore no weights were applied to this dataset. See the Technical Report for more details (Smeaton & Marsh 2006a).

Fathers for this survey were defined as male with dependent child in household who was under 16 or under 19 and a full-time student. 1512 fathers responded to this survey and all had children under the age of two at the time of the survey. Their mean age was 35 years. Respondent fathers had varying employment status. 82 per cent were employed at the time of the survey, 11 per cent were self-employed and 7 per cent were unemployed.

2.3 Design and analysis

Quantitative analysis was used to address the research questions using OLS regression, chi-square and t-test. Findings are reported if found to be statistically significant at the 5 per cent level, however given the small sample size some findings that are approaching significance are reported if they are of conceptual interest and highlight areas for further study. For cross-tabulations, if the minimum expected frequency is less than one, or the number of cells with an expected frequency of less than five applies to more than 20 per cent of the cells, the chi-square test is not valid.

2.3.1 Variables used in the analyses of the Third Work Life Balance Survey (Employees) 2006:

Dependent variable

The dependent variable is working hours using the question (B05) asking about the usual number of hours the respondent worked in the week. Hours worked per week is the respondent's reported total usual hours worked per week in their main job, including overtime.

Predictor variables

Predictor variables for the regressions were chosen on the basis of previous findings and theoretical importance. Variables were entered using hierarchical entry with hourly pay, education, occupation, age and partner's work status entered in block 1 and fatherhood status entered in block 2.

Fatherhood status

Fathers are defined for this analysis as male with a dependent child co-resident in the household (where the child is under 16 or under 19 and a full-time student). For this report the unit of father analysis is the majority category— those employed full-time⁶, in couple households⁷ who are compared to full-time men with no dependent children. This is to acknowledge the majority pattern of employed fatherhood. Fathers are not a homogeneous group and other notable sub-groups are lone fathers and part-time fathers with different circumstances for managing their work and family time. A focus on partnered fathers in full-time employment avoids data from other distinct sub-groups of fathers confounding the results. The numbers and proportions of couple full-time fathers for the analysis are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Sample proportions for couple, full-time fathers and full-time non-fathers

	% of total sample	N (unweighted base)
Fathers – full-time/ couple	10	195
Non-fathers – full-time	37	740
All males	55	1096
All employees	100	2081

Income

Income has been shown to be strongly associated with working hours (Weston, Gray, Qu, & Stanton, 2004) and for those occupations (manual/semi-skilled), where hours relate directly to income this is no surprise, however the relationship with income for professional occupations is less overt and long hours worked do not immediately translate into income, but contribute to an impression of work commitment which is then rewarded in terms of promotion at a later date (Kalleberg & Epstein, 2001). Income is nonetheless an important variable theoretically for this analysis because, if the breadwinner hypothesis holds true, then fathers should be motivated to earn more and work longer hours than non-fathers either in expectation of income or in the expectation of career progression.

Occupation

Long working hours are more common amongst men, managers, professionals, and operative and assembly workers. Manual workers usually get paid for overtime, while managerial and professional employees generally do not. Manual workers see the main benefit of long hours working in terms of increased earnings, while managerial and professional workers see it in terms

⁶ Full-time is defined as working over 30 hours per week and the variable constructed using question B05 (usual work hours) in order to boost fathers sample size. Constructing a full-time variable using question B04 (contractual work hours) had a high proportion of missing data.

⁷ Couple defined as living with partner, constructed using question Z01.

of improved promotion prospects and greater job security (La Valle, Arthur, Millward, Scott, & Clayden, 2002). There are also greater concentrations of fathers within managerial occupations which was also the case in this sample.

Education

Education has been found to be related to working hours via its links to occupation, but also directly for those with higher levels of education who work fewer hours than those with lower levels of education (Anxo, Boulin, & Fagan, 2006).

Fathers' age

Dermott (2006) found that age controls removed the significance of the relationship between fatherhood and working hours. Previous findings indicate that fatherhood tends to coincide with the most productive times for career stage between the ages of 30-49 years (Kodz et al 2003) and therefore fathers' working hours are likely to be highest during this life stage. Consequently age was categorised into three bands to reflect this: 16 – 30 years, 31 – 49 years and 50+ years.

Child age

Age of child is considered a useful indicator of the level of caring responsibilities for parents as younger children require more caring time (Fisher, McCulloch, & Gershuny, 1999). Child age has strong effects upon mothers' working hours with mothers of children under the age of 13 years working fewer hours per week than mothers with older children or women without children (Connolly & Gregory, 2008). Child age also appears to be negatively related to fathers' employment rates which decrease after a child age of 16 years (Walling 2005). There are fewer fathers with very young children in the WLB3 sample, therefore child age was categorised into two: under six years and 6 years and over.

Partner working/ not working.

Evidence on the impact of partner employment status on fathers' working hours is mixed (Pleck and Masciadrelli, 2004; Weston et al. 2004). Britain has a high proportion of households with one full-time and one part-time breadwinner (Weston et al., 2004) which could operate to increase fathers' working hours, but neither Weston et al. (2004) nor Deven et al. (1998) found any significant relationship with partner employment status. The WLB3 survey does not allow the part-time/ full-time partner work status to be examined as it only includes a dichotomous partner working/ not working question.

2.3.2 Variables used in the analyses of the Maternity and Paternity Rights and Benefits Survey of Parents (2005)

Working hours

Fathers' working hours for this survey were collected as interval data for the period before the birth. However after the birth, working hours were defined categorically, with fathers categorised as working 'less hours', 'the same hours' or 'more hours' than before the birth of their child. Therefore in order to carry out a chi-square analysis, fathers hours before the birth were recoded

into three categories, 'low' (less than 35 hours per week), 'medium' (35-48 hours per week) and 'high' (over 48 hours per week).

Flexible working

A range of eight flexible working types were included in the survey. These types were re-categorised into full-time flexible working and part-time flexible working using the criteria of income, i.e. does using the flexible working option reduce income? As such, flexi-time, home working, annualised hours and a compressed working week were classified as full-time flexible work options and term-time working, job-share, part-time and reduced hours options were classified as part-time flexible work options.

2.3.3 Treatment of 'Don't knows' and 'Other' responses

The 'don't know' and 'other' responses are included within the unweighted bases of tables. Notes in the tables explain what is included in the bases. The exception to this is where responses are recoded to enable meaningful comparisons between sub-groups (please see Annex 1 on recodes).

CHAPTER THREE

Findings

This section presents the major findings about fathers' working hours and their use of flexible working options from both the Third Work-Life Balance Employee Survey WLB3 (2006) the Maternity and Paternity Rights and Benefits Survey of Parents M&P (2005). Descriptive statistics involving comparisons of couple fathers' working patterns with men without children, and mothers are presented. The section also presents inferential statistics examining fathers' working hours in the light of the research questions outlined above.

3.1 Third Work Life Balance Survey 2006 Findings

3.1.1 Parental profile

The sample comprised 2081 employees working as employees in organisations employing five or more employees at the time of the survey, no self-employed people were included. There were 55 per cent, n1096 male employees and 45 per cent, n985 female. Of the total sample, 12 per cent were fathers and 13 per cent were mothers. As a proportion of all male employees, 27 per cent were fathers and of all female employees 39 per cent were mothers. The following parental characteristics were considered for the profile analyses: partner status, parental status and economic activity status. The parental types considered in the regression analyses are couple full-time employed fathers compared to full-time employed men without children.

Fathers' key characteristics across the variables used in the analysis are compared against non-fathers. The following descriptive analyses compare parental status and work status (see Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2. Fathers' economic activity rates

Economic Status	Couple fathers		Non-fathers	
	%	N Unweighted Base	%	N Unweighted base
Full-time employed	95	195	89	740
Part-time employed	5	9	11	89
Total	100	204	100	819

In line with previous findings (O'Brien & Shemilt 2003), parental occupational trends remain the same, with the more couple fathers working full-time (95 per cent) compared to full-time couple mothers (46 per cent). There are a greater proportion of couple fathers working full-time compared to non-fathers (89 per cent), contrasting with couple mothers' full-time rates (46 per cent) compared to non-mothers (68 per cent), confirming the tendency for mothers to reduce employment on transition to parenthood whilst fathers do the reverse and increase employment (Table 3). Gender occupational trends remain the same with more non-fathers (89 per cent) working full-time than non-mothers (68 per cent).

Table 3. Mothers' economic activity rates

Economic Status	Couple mothers		Non-mothers	
	%	N	%	N
Full-time employed	46	86	68	473
Part-time employed	54	99	32	216
Total	100	185	100	689

3.1.2. Parental Working Hours

Comparisons of couple full-time fathers with equivalent mothers' working hours show that fathers work more hours per week (45.7 hours) on average than mothers (38.9 hours). Although non-fathers' weekly work hours (43.5 hours) are still higher than non-mothers' weekly work hours (40.5 hours), the differential is much smaller (2 hours compared to 7 hours). As shown in Table 4, couple full-time fathers work three more hours per week than men without co-resident children⁸. Similar differences in median work hours across full-time parental groups are significant ($X^2(5, n=1569) = 125.25, p=.001$)⁹ and support previous findings that show differences between fathers' and non-fathers' work hours in a direct comparison (O'Brien & Shemilt 2003; Kodz et al 2003).

⁸ T-test significant at $p=.001$

⁹ Krusal Wallis test (uneven sample sizes)

Table 4. Mean and median parental working hours

	Mean work hours per week	Standard Deviation	Median work hours per week	N Unweighted base
Couple full-time fathers	45.7	8.67	44	195
Couple full-time mothers	38.9	7.51	37	86
Full-time non-fathers	43.5	8.10	40	740
Full-time non mothers	40.5	7.79	40	473

3.1.3. Fathers' working hours

Working long hours, over 48 hours per week, is of policy concern and previous research has indicated that fathers as a group work particularly long hours (Hayward, Fong, & Thornton, 2008; Hooker et al., 2007). In this sample it was also found that a substantial proportion of fathers worked long hours. As shown in Table 5 the proportion of fathers working over 48 hours per week (35 per cent), using banded hours, is significantly more than non-fathers (22 per cent)¹⁰. However, within the long hour category of over 48 hours there is no significant difference between the mean work hours per week for fathers (56 hours) and non-fathers (55 hours).

Table 5. Fatherhood status - long working hours proportions

Usual work hours per week (Banded)	<30hrs		30-35		35-40		40-48		>48		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
(Unweighted Base)												
Couple FT FATHERS	3	2	7	3	76	38	46	22	63	35	195	100
FT NON-Fathers	14	2	53	7	308	43	204	27	161	22	740	101*

*Over 100% due to rounding

3.1.4. Factors predicting fathers' work hours

In spite of evidence from fathers' and non-fathers' work hour comparisons further analysis has found that fatherhood status is not a significant predictor of work hours once other variables are controlled, particularly that of age (Dermott 2006 and Natti et al 2006). In the present study regression models are also

¹⁰ Chi-Sq, p=.004

adopted in line with Dermott’s procedure. The control variables are: income (weekly earnings), education, occupation and partner’s work status (working or not working).

Age

Fathers’ age distribution across the three age bands shows a high concentration of fathers in the age band 31-49 years (80 per cent) compared to non-fathers (40 per cent) who are more evenly spread across the age bands¹¹, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Age band distribution - Fathers/non-fathers

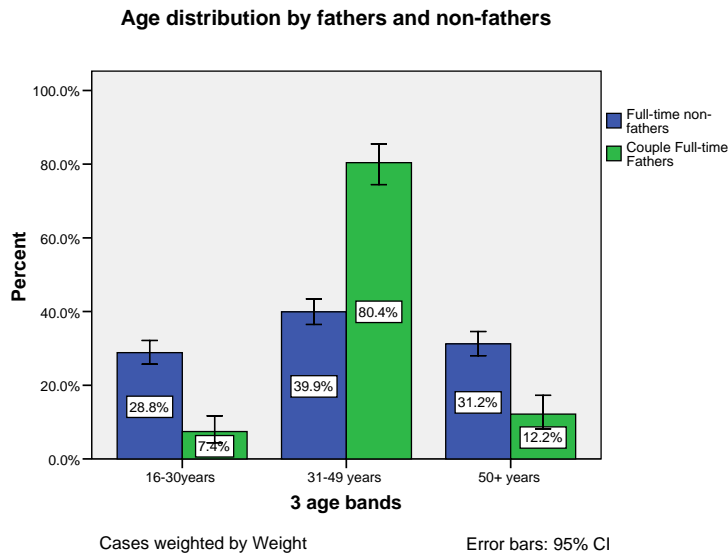


Table 6. Age band distribution – Fathers/non-fathers

Age Bands	Couple fathers		Non-fathers	
	%	Unweighted Base	%	Unweighted Base
16-30 years	8	13	29	206
31-49 years	80	154	40	306
50+ years	12	26	31	222
Total	100	193	100	734

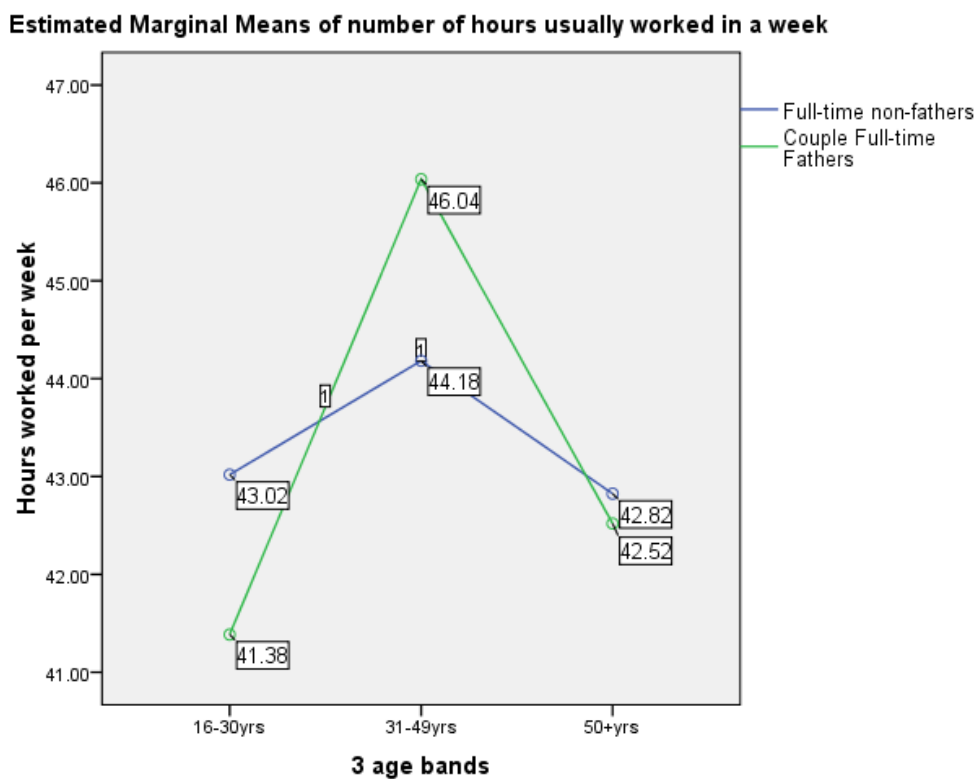
A two way between groups ANOVA comparing fathers and non-fathers in age band groups against work hours shows that there is a significant main effect of age¹²; that is there are different mean work hours per week for each age band for both fathers and non-fathers. There is no main effect of fatherhood status,

¹¹ Chi Square, significant p=.000

¹² F(2, 925) = 5.46, p=.004

nor an interaction effect of age and fatherhood status. Post – hoc tests¹³ showed a significant difference in mean work hours between the 16-30 age group and the 31-49 age group and also between the 31-49 age group and the 50+ age group as can be seen in Figure 2 below. In summary, the age band has a significant influence on both fathers’ and non-fathers’ mean work hours per week, but fatherhood status has no significant effect on mean work hours per week and there is not a significantly different effect for fathers’ work hours depending what age band they are in compared to non-fathers’ age bands¹⁴.

Figure 2. Mean differences in work hours by age category and fatherhood status



¹³ Tukey HSD, 16-30 vs 31-49, $p=.013$. 30-49 vs 50+, $p=.005$

¹⁴ The N for fathers in the 16-30 years and 50+ age bands is small (13, 26), re-running this analysis on a larger sample of fathers and non-fathers would be useful given the age and fatherhood status conflation issue.

Occupation

As can be seen in Table 7 below, there are significantly more fathers in managerial occupations than non-fathers¹⁵.

Table 7. Occupation proportions

Occupation ¹⁶	Couple fathers		Non-fathers	
	%	Unweighted Base	%	Unweighted Base
Professional/ managerial	57	113	46	346
Non- professional	43	69	54	350
Total	100	182	100	696

Partner's work status

Although slightly higher proportions of fathers (34 per cent) have partners who do not work to non-fathers (29 per cent), this is not statistically significant.

Table 8. Partner's work status proportions

Partner's work status	Couple fathers		Non-fathers	
	%	Unweighted Base	%	Unweighted Base
Partner works	66	131	71	293
Partner does not work	34	64	29	118
Total	100	195	100	411

Child Age

There are more fathers with the youngest dependent child being 6 years and over (n123) in this sample than fathers with children under 6 years (n53).

¹⁵ Chi Square, p=.018

¹⁶ Constructed variable from y04x

Fatherhood status as a predictor of work hours

Model 1. Fatherhood status as a predictor of work hours

Variable	Standardised Beta	Sig
Hourly pay	.070	.118
Education	.064	.142
Occupation	.291	.000
Partner works	-.029	.427
Partner does not work	.018	.629
Age – 31-49 years	-.074	.067
Age – 50+ years	.037	.361
Father	.081	.042

Constant:

Education: No quals/ gcse/ other vs. Voc/ A level/ degree/ higher degree

Occupation: non-professional vs. professional

Partner: No partner

Age: 16-30years

Fatherhood: non-father vs. father

Using OLS regression to control for age, earnings, education, managerial status and partner work status, variables were entered in block 1. Only one significant predictor from model 1 emerges, that of occupation; specifically being in a managerial or professional job. Adding fatherhood status in block 2 significantly improved the model, but by a small amount, 0.4%, $p < .05$ ¹⁷. Fatherhood status was a significant predictor of working hours and occupation remained a predictor of increased work hours. However, the beta values for occupation and fatherhood status indicate that occupation (beta=.291, $p < .001$) is a more important predictor of work hours than fatherhood status (beta=.081), $p < .05$).

This analysis suggests that fatherhood status is a small but significant predictor of working more weekly hours alongside being in a managerial or professional occupation, after controlling for age, earnings, education and partner’s work status.

The finding about the salience of fatherhood status this regression model aligns with Kodz et al (2003) early analysis of the WERS 1998 data set, but does not confirm Dermott’s study (Dermott 2006) nor Natti et al’s (2006).

The next regression model includes further fatherhood variables which distinguish between child age, 0-6 years, and over 7 years testing the breadwinner hypothesis that fathers with very young children, 0-6 years, will work longer hours per week than non-fathers and fathers with children over 7 years.

¹⁷Model 1 $R^2 = .096$, $F(7,711) = 11.91$, $p < .001$. Model 2 $R^2 = .100$, $F(8,710) = 10.99$, $p < .001$. R^2 change = .004, F change (1,710) = 4.14, $p < .05$.

Model 2. Fatherhood and child age as predictors of work hours

Variable	Standardised Beta	Sig
Hourly pay	.067	.141
Education	.059	.186
Occupation	.291	.000
Partner works	-.028	.434
Partner does not work	.017	.644
Age – 31-49 years	-.077	.063
Age – 50+ years	.043	.290
Father with dependent child Under 6 years	.028	.466
Father with dependent child Over 6 years	.085	.031

In model 2, fathers with older children (6 years and over) significantly predict work hours $R^2 = .10$, $p=.000$, not supporting the breadwinner hypothesis that fathers with younger children would work more hours. Occupation also remains significant predictor of work hours.

Although both models are significant, they only explain a small proportion of the variance in men's work hours, 10 per cent, indicating that other variables need to be included in the model and further statistical analysis undertaken to explore this further.

3.1.5 Fathers' flexible working patterns

Fathers' flexible working behaviours were explored and, from those who had worked flexibly over the last 12 months¹⁸, the most favoured flexible working options amongst fathers were: flexi-time (33 per cent), home working (28 per cent), a compressed working week (15 per cent) and term-time working (13 per cent), Figure 3. These figures show an increase in proportions of fathers working flex-time compared to levels in the first Work-Life Balance Survey 2000 of 20 per cent of fathers working flexi-time, 6 per cent working from home, 5 per cent working a compressed working week and 8 per cent working term-time (O'Brien & Shemilt 2003)

Amongst men without children, favoured flex working options were: flexi-time (28 per cent), home working (21 per cent) and annualised hours (15 per cent). A chi square test showed that higher proportions of fathers worked flexi-time and from home than non-fathers, $X^2 (8, N=407) = 15.70$, $p=.047$, Cramer's $V = .196$. Notably, only 1 per cent, N4 of both fathers and non-fathers did not use any flexible work option, suggesting that working flexibly is not only a practice for workers with children.

¹⁸ 99 per cent, N403 of both fathers and non-fathers had worked some form of flexible working in the last 12 months

Figure 3. Flexible work options by fatherhood status

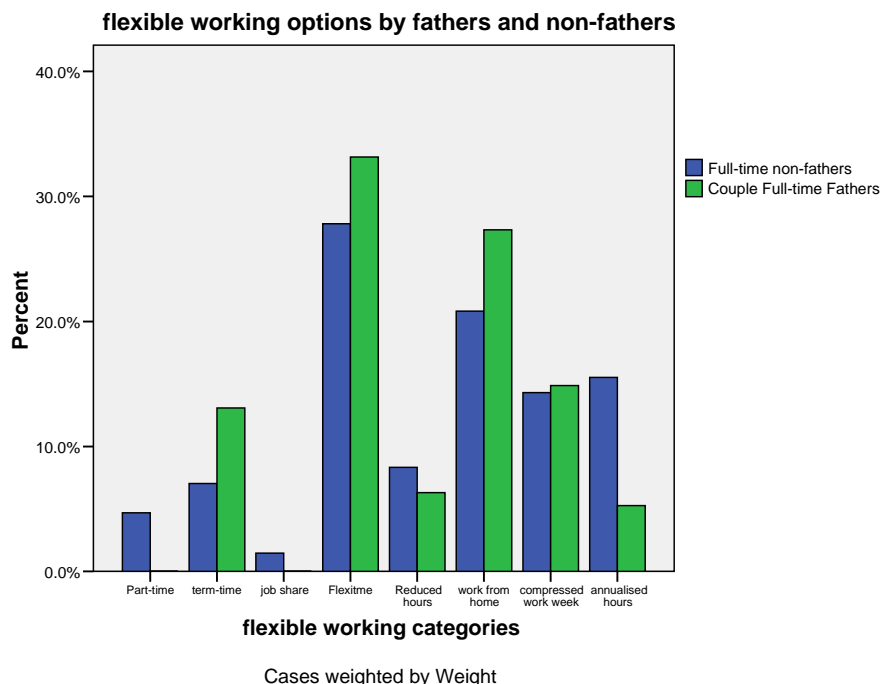


Table 9. Fathers' flexible work options in order of most used option

Flexible work option	Fathers		Flexible work option	Non-fathers	
	%	N *		%	N *
Flexi-time	33	32	Flexi-time	28	92
Work at home	28	25	Work at home	21	69
Compressed work week	15	13	Annualised hours	16	44
Term-time working	13	13	Compressed work week	14	45
Annualised hours	6	5	Reduced hours	8	24
Reduced hours	6	6	Term-time working	7	23
Part-time	0	0	Part-time	5	15
Job share	0	0	Job share	2	4
TOTAL	101[^]	94	TOTAL	101[^]	316
*N as unweighted base	^ due to rounding				

The low numbers of fathers (n1) and non-fathers (n3) not working any flexible work option precluded any analysis comparing characteristics of fathers and non-fathers across flexible working and non-flexible working. However, it was possible to compare fathers who worked full-time flexible work options, that is: options which do not reduce income such as flexi-time and home working, against those fathers who worked part-time flexible work options, that is flexible work options which reduce income. A two way cross-tabulation comparing fathers and non-fathers by those working full-time flex options against those

working part-time flex options showed no significant differences between fathers' and non-fathers' use. Whilst fathers used more full-time flexible work options (81 per cent) than part-time (19 per cent), as hypothesised from the breadwinner model, this was not significantly different to non-fathers' use of full-time flex use (79 per cent) and part-time flex use (21 per cent).

3.2. Maternity and Paternity Rights dataset 2005 findings

The Maternity and Paternity Rights surveys, initiated by Government in 2002, especially targets the very early years of parenthood. This analysis uses the most recently available dataset from 2005 which has been fully reported by Smeaton and Marsh (2006). Special attention is given to paternal working hours which were not covered in depth by Smeaton and Marsh (2006)

3.2.1. Fathers' working hours

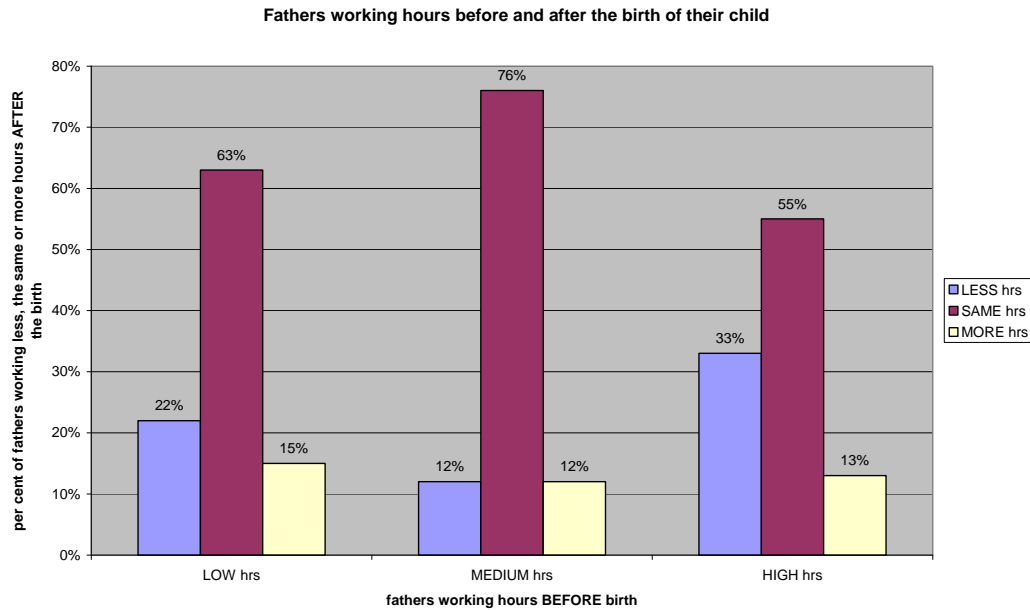
Mean usual work hours before the birth for expectant fathers were 45.6 hours per week, (SD=11). The survey did not measure work hours after the birth directly. Fathers were asked instead whether they had increased, made no change to or decreased their work hours after child-birth. 12 per cent, n170 reported increasing their work hours, 69 per cent, N950 had made no change and 19 per cent, n247 reported decreasing their work hours.

In order to test the hypothesis that men who were working long hours before the birth would be more likely to decrease their hours after the birth than those working average hours and those working low hours, working hours before the birth was categorised into three bands: high (over 48hrs per week), medium (between 35-48hrs) and low (below 35hrs). These working hours' bands before the birth were then compared to the same group of fathers but grouped into those who stated that they worked more hours, the same hours and more hours after the birth.

A significant chi-square test¹⁹ showed that 33 per cent, n118 of fathers in the long hours' group reduced their work hours after the birth compared to 12 per cent, n98 of fathers in the medium hours group (see Figure 4 below). It would appear that the number of hours that fathers work before the birth of their child is associated with the degree to which they report reducing their hours after the birth. In particular, fathers working very long hours, over 48 hours per week, are more likely to report working reduced hours post birth.

¹⁹ Chi Sq test $X^2(4, 1192) = .71.03, p=.001$

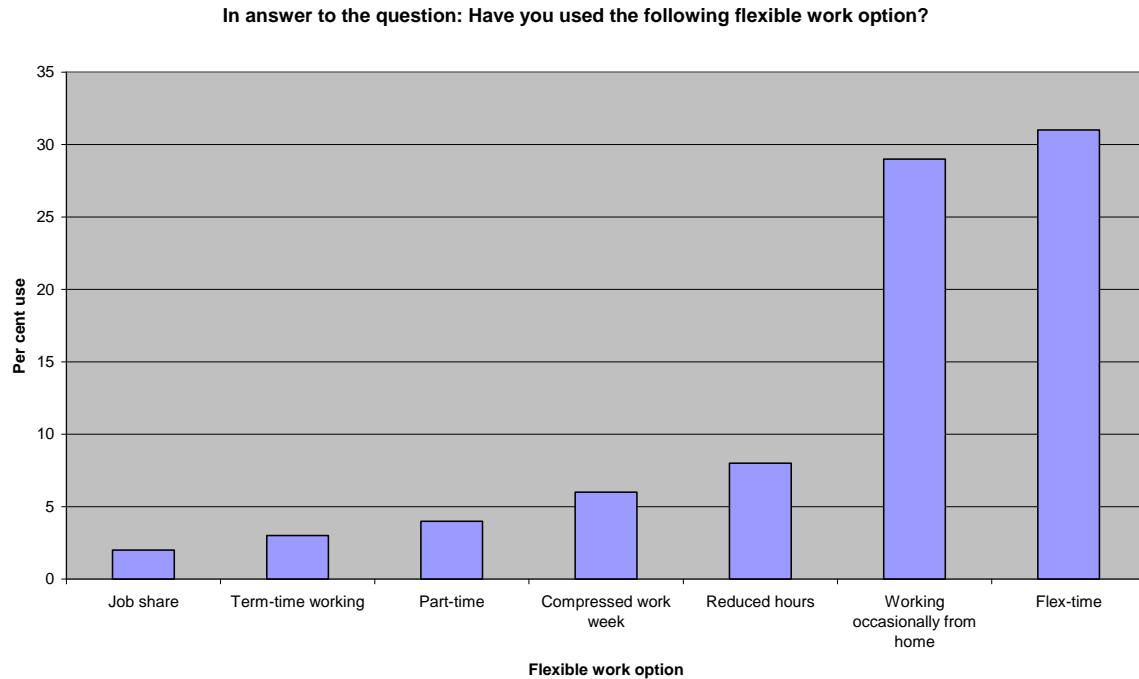
Figure 4. Fathers' working hours before and after the birth



3.2.2 Fathers' flexible working and work hours after child-birth

Fathers' use of flexible working options in early parenthood mirror the general patterns found in the Work Life Balance Survey 2006. Thirty-one per cent of new fathers used flexi-time and 29 per cent occasionally worked from home. However, very few other forms of flexible working were adopted by fathers; 6 per cent used a compressed working week, 4 per cent worked part-time, 8 per cent reduced hours for a limited period (see Figure 5). Smeaton and Marsh (2006b) report a greater uptake by new fathers when compared to the first maternity and paternity rights survey in 2002. It should be noted that 80 per cent of sampled mothers had returned to work by the survey point, most returning in the fourth to sixth month after childbirth. A majority of mothers had reduced their weekly working hours to 22 hours per week and use of flexible working arrangements was much more widespread amongst employed mothers, for instance, 47 per cent of mothers worked flexi-time compared with just 17 per cent in 2002 (Smeaton and Marsh, 2006b).

Figure 5. Fathers' flexible work use
Maternity and Paternity Rights Survey 2005
 (Base: 1241)



One of the hypotheses proposed in this analysis is that fathers who use full-time flexible work options would be more likely to work fewer hours than fathers who do not use any flexible work options. A chi-square was used to compare fathers across these two groups. As no continuous data was available in the dataset for post birth work hours, these were created by using hours prior to birth, categorised as low, medium and high, and using a sub-sample of fathers who had remained on the same hours post birth to give reasonable approximations of hours that these fathers were working after the birth.

A chi-square showed no significant differences in working hours between the fathers who used full-time flexible working options and those fathers who did not use any flexible working options.

CHAPTER FOUR

Discussion

Cultural references to fathers as the economic providers for families are still ever present despite the growth of maternal employment and powerful countervailing discourses stressing 'new men' and 'involved fathers'. By 2001 seventy per cent of all British mothers were economically active with thirty-one per cent in full-time employment (O'Brien and Shemilt, 2003) and women's employment rates are predicted to rise in the future as their education levels increase, notwithstanding the recent economic down turn (Wilson, Homenidou, & Dickerson, 2004). In this complex societal context, the current report puts a spotlight on work-family reconciliation issues from the perspectives of fathers. It presents a secondary analysis of fathers' work hours and patterns of flexible working using two nationally representative employment datasets - The Third Work-Life Balance Employee Survey (2006) and the Maternity and Paternity Rights and Benefits Survey of Parents (2005). It also addresses the thorny question about whether the longer working hours typically noted for fathers is explained best by life stage or parental status.

Analysis has been guided by the theoretical concepts 'father as breadwinner' and 'father as carer'. There has been much interdisciplinary work on the characteristics of these roles and the degree to which they differ and overlap. In real terms, it is clearly possible for fathers to identify with both a breadwinner role and a caring role. The data from both the surveys considered in this report is richer on fathers' time spent in employment than fathers' time devoted to care of children.

Overall findings show that, although the breadwinner behaviour model for fathers remains strong, there are some indications of a shift to a caring model, particularly on the transition to parenthood for men. There appears to be a move by fathers towards greater work-family flexibility although this could be a factor of increase in flex use generally, and warrants further study. There is also evidence of a reported decrease of long working hours by men after childbirth in the early phase of parenthood.

Findings from the Work Life Balance Survey 2006 indicate that the employment trajectory for fathers remains one of full-time work with long weekly hours. These data show that 95 per cent of fathers work full-time, with an average working week of 46 hours and that 35 per cent of fathers regularly work over 48 hour per week. On the face of it this employment pattern corroborates the breadwinner model; however more detailed analysis reveals some changes in employment behaviours. Fathers' working long hours, over 48 hours per week, show the greatest change in behaviour in the transition to fatherhood period, according to findings from the Maternity and Paternity Survey 2005 parental analysis. This analysis

shows that fathers who work very long weekly hours are more likely to report reducing these hours following the birth of their child suggesting that there may be a ceiling effect on fathers' hours whilst their children are infants. Moreover, those fathers working standard hours before the birth of their child are more likely to remain working those hours following the birth, running counter to a breadwinner hypothesis that fathers will work longer hours upon becoming a parent. It is possible that recent changes in legislation on paternity leave and the right to request flexible working for parents with children under six years may have a bearing on these patterns.

Analysis of fathers' use of flexible working showed that fathers are making more use of flexi-time and home working than non-fathers. In addition, their use of flexi-time and home working has increased since 2000 when assessed in the baseline work-life balance survey (O'Brien & Shemilt 2003). Twenty per cent of fathers in the Work Life Balance survey 2000 reported using flexi-time options in contrast to thirty- three per cent in 2006. The analysis also shows a significant increase (although not large in real terms) in term-time only working, from 7 per cent in 2000 to 13 per cent in 2006, a flexible option more often associated with mothers.

Similarly results from the Maternity and Paternity Rights Survey 2005 give some evidence for an increase in uptake of flexitime and occasional working from home for new fathers since the baseline. Thirty-one per cent of new fathers used flexi-time and 29 per cent occasionally worked from home, both substantial increases from levels among new fathers in the first Maternity and Paternity Rights Survey. However, very few other forms of flexible working were adopted by fathers; 6 per cent used a compressed working week, 4 per cent worked part-time, 8 per cent reduced hours for a limited period.

However, in general, the evidence from both surveys shows that fathers' utilisation of flexible working arrangements, despite increases, remains relatively low in comparison with mothers, but comparable to use by men with no children. It appears that fathers' flexible work pattern of use has not strayed too far from full-time flexible working options which maintain income levels. Notably, only 1 per cent of both fathers and men without children did not use any flexible work option, suggesting that working flexibly is not only a practice for workers with children.

Fathers' flexible working is, of course, dependent upon the provision of flexible work options at their workplace, of which there is still uneven distribution amongst workplaces particularly across gender lines (Hayward et al., 2008). Although, results from the 2007 Work Life Balance Employer Survey showed an increase in the availability of flexible working arrangements, 95 per cent of workplaces had at least one provision, usually the option to work part-time, in contrast for example to 83 per cent in 2003 (White, Hill, McGovern, Mills, & Smeaton, 2003).

A further element to the report has been an exploration of the extent to which the longer working hours typically noted for fathers, as compared to comparable men without children, is explained best by life stage or parental status. The extent to which having a parental status added to an adult age status promotes greater economic activity has been hotly debated in academic circles (e.g. Dermott, 2006). Assumptions underlying traditional role theory would suggest that the presence of children enhances the salience of a breadwinner role for men activating the elevation of working hours. The results of the WLB3 analysis reported here does indeed confirm that fatherhood status (being a father rather than not being a father) is a small but significant predictor of working more weekly hours alongside being in a managerial or professional occupation, after controlling for age, earnings, education and partner's work status. Although this finding may be interpreted as a forced or chosen work ethic connected to fatherhood in the British context, it may also reflect cohort and selectivity effects. The interplay of working hours, parental status and life stage is complex and cannot be fully understood through cross-sectional investigation. It clearly requires further analysis especially through longitudinal cohorts and more detailed psychological studies (Kaufman and Uhlenberg, 2000). The emerging picture is limited by the inherently narrow scope of quantitative employment activity data but nevertheless suggestive of issues worth pursuing in further studies.

The other significant factor predicting work hours for men was occupation. Those in managerial and professional occupations were more likely to work longer hours than those not in these occupations. This pattern has been found to be the case in other studies and has been suggested to occur as a result of managers and professional jobs being subject to increases in work intensity (Green, 2001; Kodz et al., 2003) and having greater autonomy and control over the job (Hayward et al., 2008) .

In summary, there appears to be some shift in employment working patterns for fathers, particularly for fathers with young children, suggesting that fathers may be beginning to exercise more choice over their working patterns than previously seen. Increases in flexible working options, greater legislative provision for parents and changes in expectations for gender roles are likely contributors to such change.

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Annex A: Recodes

See Latreille & Latreille (2008). The Third Work Life Balance Survey: Technical Report for original questions and recodes. Don't know and other responses were coded as missing.

Variable	Description	WLB 2006 employee's survey – Q no.	Derived variable	Notes
Usual working hours per week	Working hours in main job including overtime but not commute time	Q.B05	Q.B05	
Earnings (Gross) (using hourly pay)	Earnings	Q.Z7a(i) (ii), Q.Z7b (i) (ii), Q.Z7c (i) (iii)	HOURPAY3	(Derived from weekly pay (z07c1) divided by B05 – usual hrs)
Level of educational qualification	GCSE/CSE grades 2-5/O Levels A Levels Below degree qual/ vocational Degree Higher degree	Q.Z2	EDUDUM	No quals/gcse/ other vs. Voc/A level/degree/ higher degree
Fatherhood status	Father = with dependent children 0 -16 years, co-resident and 16-18 years in FTE Non-fathers = no dependent children	FAHTFT Derived from WORKGENDER and GENPARENT	CUPFTFA2 Couple, full-time fathers & full-time non father.	
Work status	Full-time = over 30hrs per week Part-time = under 30hrs per week	Revised original full-time definition which used B04 contracted hours to derive full-time variable by using B05 (more data, increases fathers' N)		
Partner status	Living with partner	Q.Z01		

Variable	Description	WLB 2006 employee's survey – Q no.	Derived variable	Notes
Age of child	Fathers with infant children (under 6 years) Fathers with children 7-18yrs (Constant non-father)	Q.A04	under6, over6.	Derived from CUPFTFA 2 and YOUNGCHILD
Occupational category	Professional/managerial vs. Operatives and unskilled, services and sales, clerical and skilled manual (NB: only 2 –way category in Dermott 2006)	Q.Y04	RECODE y04x into PROFDUM	
Partner status	Partner is in paid employment/ partner is not in paid employment (Constant no partner)	Z.05	Partner 1 (works) / Partner 2 (does not work)	

