

Work and care: a study of modern parents

Gavin Ellison, Andy Barker and Tia Kulasuriya

YouGov

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This report presents the 'State of the Nation' in regards to parents and their working and caring responsibilities in 2009. The study was commissioned by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (the Commission) to inform its 'Working Better' initiative. Working Better was launched in July 2008 in response to evidence of poor progress for women in the workplace, frustrated desire from fathers to spend more time with their children, and increasing concerns about the quality of childhood and family life. This research project, along with a range of other studies, contributes to new thinking on the future of work, work-life balance issues including parental leave, the role of fathers, employment flexibility, family well-being and the concept of choice. Central to the goals of Working Better is the quest for answers on the big questions facing people in their working lives and the identification of innovative policy and practice solutions.

This research project is an original study. It contains the widest range of sub-group parent perspectives, to date, in Great Britain. This was achieved through a mix of quantitative and qualitative methodologies:

- A large scale online survey was conducted with 4,500 parents of children aged under 16. The number of parents taking part was substantial, allowing for significant sub-group analysis to examine the similarities and differences between for example; dual and lone parent families, religious and non-religious parents, lesbian, gay and bisexual parents and heterosexual parents and disabled and non-disabled parents.
- Eighteen qualitative immersion interviews with a range of parents.
- Six online discussion forums with groups of parents who were less represented in the interviews.

Views on work and childcare

The majority of modern parents no longer think about work and childcare in 'traditional' terms. Fathers want to spend more time with their children and parents want to share work and childcare. Forty-four per cent of fathers think they currently spend too little time with their children and half think they spend too much time at work.

A minority of parents (29 per cent) believe that childcare is the primary responsibility of the mother and that fathers are responsible for providing for the family (38 per cent). Signifying a break with the past, only 39 per cent think that their arrangements were informed by how they themselves were brought up.

Forty-seven per cent believe that the parent who is paid more should work, regardless of gender, with only 22 per cent disagreeing.

Half believe that they spend too much time at work. As might be expected, those who work over 40 hours per week are much more likely (64 per cent) to believe this than those who work fewer than 40 hours per week (34 per cent). There is also a marked difference according to the age of the child, with 56 per cent of fathers of children aged under one believing they spend too much time at work, compared with 47 per cent with children aged between one and six years. Women appear to share this view, with nearly half believing that their partner spends too much time at work. It is not just men who think their working hours are too long: nearly a third of women (31 per cent) also believe they spend too much time at work, with those in higher social grades (ABC1) being even more likely to believe this (38 per cent).

The strong belief that children have to come first was found in the quantitative and qualitative research. There is a belief that a child's welfare is the responsibility of the parent and does not lie with anyone else such as grandparents or the Government. Later in the report, there are clear findings from parents surveyed suggesting how Government and employers can support parents to balance work and childcare. Taken together, these findings suggest that parents want to take responsibility for

their own lives and children, though would welcome policies that enable them to do this more effectively.

The practical decisions that many parents make involve complex calculations, carried out at the micro level and reviewed and adjusted on a regular basis depending upon the resources at their disposal and the opportunities they have. This means that parents are increasingly flexible between roles and responsibilities, informing the arrangements that they put in place for child care and work.

Current arrangements – how parents manage work and childcare

Many parents display practical attitudes and hold modern values, but the arrangements they put in place for work and childcare are often constrained along traditional lines. Over three quarters of mothers state that in day-to-day life they have the primary responsibility for childcare in the home. There are significant differences between the perceptions of men and women about whether they share responsibility for childcare equally. Whilst a third of men believe that they share equally, only 14 per cent of women agree.

Fathers work significantly longer hours than mothers. Forty-six per cent report that they typically work between 40 and 49 hours per week, compared to just a quarter of mothers. With only five per cent of men working part-time (compared to over a third of women), the caring responsibilities of many families become entrenched.

Family units commonly deliver a team effort that includes flexibility between parental roles and often includes the involvement of the wider family network. However the scope to make choices is not vast. We found that for many parents the established framework of opportunities and resources is tight and they have learnt to optimise their arrangements within that framework.

Over half of mothers are a source of child care support for pre-school children, compared to just 18 per cent of men, but parents spread the caring net more widely. Nearly a quarter utilise private nursery / daycare at least once during a typical week and a fifth draw upon support from the children's grandparents.

Lone parents are particularly likely to draw upon extra family support: 23 per cent receive support from grandparents and 15 per cent from other family members, compared to 19 per cent for dual family units with grandparents and nine per cent with other family members.

The childcare requirements for school-age children outside the family unit are lower than those of pre-school children, with education playing a more significant role. The involvement of grandparents is reduced as the age of parents increases, but it remains important for many families. Wrap-around provision such as breakfast clubs and after-school activities becomes an increasingly important part of the childcare mix for many parents, but take-up is greater amongst those with higher income.

Most parents believe that within their framework of opportunities and resources they have achieved a good balance for the well-being of the family. Flexible workers are significantly more likely to think positively about the state of their work and childcare arrangements, providing evidence that flexibility delivers improvements. Less positively, a sizeable minority of parents report that their arrangements cause some stress or tension. Those with additional caring responsibilities, disabled parents or those with disabled children are significantly less likely to feel they achieve a good compromise between work and childcare.

The policy context

Flexible working

For the parents interviewed in this study, flexible working is an important element in getting the balance right between work and childcare and it is highly valued. Over a third of working parents (38 per cent) have some form of flexible working arrangement. Within this group, women and those within higher social grades (ABC1) are the most likely to work flexibly in some way. A further 18 per cent stated that flexible working is available to them but they do not currently take this up.

Parents in senior management roles are significantly more likely to work flexibly (56 per cent), compared to non-managers (39 per cent). Those in the public sector (42

per cent), third sector (55 per cent) and finance / business services (43 per cent) are more likely to report that they have flexible arrangements than those in manufacturing (26 per cent) and construction (31 per cent), traditionally male dominated industries.

Seventy percent of flexible working parents confirm that it enables them to spend more time with their children and a similar proportion report that it has improved the quality of family life. Women, disabled parents and those with younger children are particularly likely to insist that flexible options are important when considering a new job.

Paternity leave

A recurring theme is the desire for fathers to take a greater role in childcare and to achieve a better balance between work and family life. The reported take-up of paternity leave indicates that many fathers are keen to use policies that are offered to them. Over half of the fathers (55 per cent) in the survey reported that they had taken two weeks statutory paternity leave when their last child was born. Those who did take paternity leave appear to have significantly benefitted: over half (56 per cent) believe that taking paternity leave has led to them having a greater role in the care of their children and 69 per cent believe that it has led to improvements in the quality of family life.

The survey shows that one third of fathers (34 per cent) did not take statutory paternity leave despite being eligible to do so. Among these fathers, the most commonly cited reason for not doing so was because they could not afford to take the time off (49 per cent). This is particularly the case for those in the construction and transport sectors. The proportion of fathers taking paternity leave was lower among those employed in 'micro' businesses with fewer than 10 employees (37 per cent), who were more likely than other groups to report being too busy at work as a reason for not taking it. A significant majority of those that did not take paternity leave would have liked to have done so 'a lot' (69 per cent) or 'a little' (21 per cent).

How much choice do parents really have and what drives their arrangements?

In spite of the positive messages from many families about their ability to create a good compromise and secure the well-being of children, genuine choice appears restricted. Over half of parents (53 per cent) believe that their own arrangements are by necessity rather than choice and only around a third feel that parents have a choice whether to spend time at work or with the children.

The theme of cautious optimism remains prevalent, in that the majority of parents agree (46 per cent) or are neutral (26 per cent) that it is possible to meet your work / career needs and the needs of your children. Men (50 per cent) tend to be more positive than women (42 per cent), but 28 per cent of parents overall do not think it is possible.

Parents that work do so for a variety of reasons but financial necessity is the clearest and was mentioned by nearly two-thirds of all parents. Those with higher incomes are more likely than others to highlight financial necessity. Working to gain personal development and fulfilment was important for 38 per cent of working mothers, compared to 21 per cent of working fathers.

Income is a factor that affects choice. It is a key determinant of whether private nurseries and childminders form part of the pre-school childcare mix. Those with higher incomes are more likely to feel that they can meet the needs of both work and children. They are also less likely to believe that their arrangements came about through necessity rather than some degree of choice.

Parents of pre-school children feel the responsibility for childcare most strongly and for many the decision to provide childcare at home is driven by a preference to fulfil that important role and have a positive influence on their child's development. Mothers of pre-school age children stated a preference to look after the children (60 per cent) and feeling responsible for child care (50 per cent) as key reasons in not working.

For others, the cost of child care is very expensive and is often not affordable, and there is a lack of family support or trust in hired baby-sitters / child minders. The affordability of childcare was mentioned by 25 per cent of non-working mothers with pre-school children and a lack of family support was also notable among this group (28 per cent).

For all parents the availability of flexible work was seen as a key factor in determining whether they worked or not, particularly the availability of part-time jobs for women. Women more than men fear that their requests for flexible working will be refused (32 per cent, compared to 20 per cent of men). There is also evidence of a cultural bias against flexibility in that just under half of both men and women believe that asking for flexible working might mark them out as showing a lack of commitment. This is particularly the case in certain industries such as financial and business services.

The survey asked parents whether they thought mothers have the same access to good jobs as fathers. Less than a third believe that this is the case but there is a clear distinction between men's and women's perceptions: 40 per cent of men think mothers have the same access to good jobs as fathers, while only 24 per cent of women do.

What would help parents?

The following four factors were strongly backed by parents in enabling them to improve the balance between work and child care:

- A wider range of flexible working opportunities across all types of jobs;
- Government policies that reflect the social and economic benefits of work and care;
- More financial support from the Government for paternity and parental leave; and
- More affordable childcare.

Those who have experienced paternity leave are extremely positive about the effect on the family's quality of life. There is significant backing for longer paternity leave with half of parents supporting an extension (47 per cent of men and 53 per cent of women). Far fewer support longer maternity leave (21 per cent) or longer unpaid parental leave (13 per cent).

Fifty-two per cent support the transfer of extra paternity leave from maternity allowances, but more favour an additional four weeks paternity leave (65 per cent). The latter option is significantly more popular among women, which may be because it does not involve a reduction in the mother's allowance. Many of the parents we spoke to felt that two weeks paternity leave is insufficient time for fathers to bond and the family unit to be supported.

Increasing awareness of the current right to request flexible working should help parents, given that only 43 per cent of parents who do not work flexibly are aware of it. For parents from social grades C2DE the figure is only 35 per cent.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (the Commission) is the independent advocate for equality and human rights in Britain. It aims to reduce inequality, work to eliminate discrimination, promote and protect human rights and strengthen good relations between people, and ensure that everyone has a fair chance to participate in society.

This report presents the 'State of the Nation' in regards to parents and their working and caring responsibilities in 2009. The study was commissioned by the Equality and Human Rights Commission to inform its 'Working Better' initiative. Working Better was launched in July 2008 in response to evidence of poor progress for women in the workplace, frustrated desire from fathers to spend more time with their children, and increasing concerns about the quality of childhood and family life. This research project, along with a range of other studies, contributes to new thinking on the future of work, work-life balance issues including parental leave, the role of fathers, employment flexibility, family wellbeing and the concept of choice. Central to the goals of Working Better is the quest for answers on the big questions facing people in their working lives and the identification of innovative policy and practice solutions.

1.2 Aims of the research

The aims of this research were three-fold. The first was to capture the mood of a range of parents, regarding their aspirations for work and care, in 2008. The second was to gain a richer understanding of how parents organise and manage work and care. Where mothers and fathers feel they cannot meet their care and work aspirations, a third aim was to explore what would help them to do so.

1.3 Methods

The research study included a quantitative survey and qualitative research in the form of family immersions and discussion forums. More detail about each element is provided in this section.

Quantitative online survey of parents

The quantitative survey was conducted online between Monday 20 December 2008 and Friday 6 January 2009. A sample of 6,000 parents in Great Britain was taken from the YouGov online research panel of around 235,000 UK adults. There are few differences in findings between parents in England, Scotland and Wales. Where differences do exist, they are noted throughout the report where appropriate. In total, 4,443 parents responded to the invite, representing a response rate of 74 per cent.

The final figures were weighted for gender, parental age, family type, employment status, socio-economic classification, and industry sector (for those currently in work). The weighted and unweighted response profile for key demographic variables is presented in the figure below.

The proportions of key sub-groups, such as lone parent family units, ethnicity and adult disability, are consistent with known population data.

Table 1: Survey response profile

Variable	Value	Weighted	Unweighted
	Base	4,443	
Gender	Male	1,947	2,261
	Female	2,496	2,181
Family units	Dual family unit	3,819	3,703
	Lone parent unit	624	740
Disabled parent	Disabled parent	727	843
	Not a disabled parent	3,568	3,479
Disabled child	Disabled child	444	479
	No disabled child(ren)	3,850	3,841
Socio-economic classification	ABC1	2,444	2,443
	C2DE	1,999	2,000
Ethnicity	White	3,867	3,904
	Ethnic minority	393	356
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual / straight	4,133	4,136
	Lesbian, gay or bisexual	163	163
Region	London	489	494
	South	1,650	1,615
	Midlands	703	716
	North	1,016	1,028
	Scotland	375	371
	Wales	210	219
Age of children (multiple choice)	Under 1	651	512
	Under 6	1,949	1,656
	Between 6 and 16	2,901	3,217
	Over 16	710	873
Additional caring responsibilities	Caring responsibilities in addition to children	536	601
	No additional responsibilities	3,890	3,827
Age of parent	18 to 34	1,790	1,245
	35 to 44	1,894	1,876
	45 to 64	747	1,291
	65+	12	31
Household income	Up to £15,000	845	836
	£15,000 to £30,000	1,429	1,404
	£30,001 to £50,000	1,457	1,435
	£50,000 plus	712	768
Religion	None	2,153	2,103
	Christian, Jewish	1,841	1,910
	Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and others	376	356

Qualitative immersion interviews

Eighteen immersion interviews were undertaken with a wide variety of parents to reflect family variation by gender, age and ethnicity. Immersion interviews involve in-depth interviewing and ‘contextual observation’ with parents, together and on their own, in their homes, with the family around as ‘living stimulus’ material. The participants were invited from the YouGov research panel of 225,000 UK adults and sampled to match a pre-agreed demographic profile.

The profile of parents interviewed in immersions is shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Qualitative immersions profile

Sub group	Number of immersions
Lone parent family units	4
Couple family units	14
Disabled	3
Non-disabled	15
Ethnic minority	2
White	16
Scotland	3
Wales	3
South East and London	6
Midlands	3
North West England	3

Online discussion forums

Six online qualitative forums, where questions were posted and participants invited to provide detailed answers, also supported the survey. Each forum consisted of up to 15 people logging in to a discussion bulletin board, answering questions and interacting with each other in a virtual discussion, over a period of a week (see Appendix C). The profile of the forums was designed to enhance and expand the range of parents taking part in the qualitative research.

The profile of parents who took part in the online discussion forums is shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Online forum profile

Forum	Additional Details
Gay and Lesbian Parents	- All parents of children of different ages
Affluent Families	- All ABC1 - Household income >£50k
Young Families (1)	- All had pre-school children (under 5yrs) - All were male
Young Families (2)	- All had pre-school children (under 5yrs) - All were female - Some lone parents included
Established Families	- Mix of male and female - Mix of kids ages - Half on low income
New Families	- Mix of male and female

1.4 Structure of the report

The findings are presented over the following four chapters:

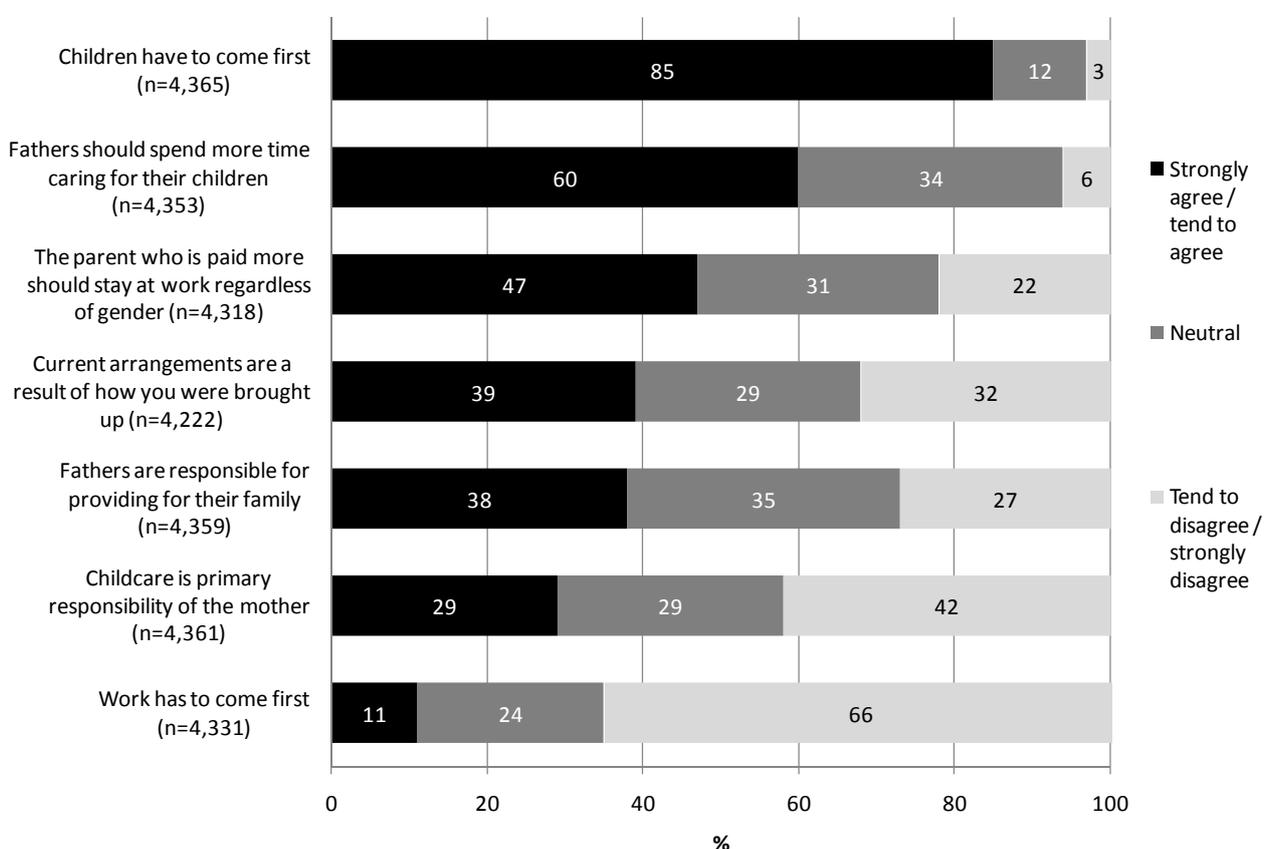
- Chapter 2 presents the attitudes of modern parents, exploring the extent to which they now hold what might be considered traditional and modern values. In this section parents consider what place their work and career has in their lives and how much time they spend with their children.
- In Chapter 3 parents consider the actual arrangements they have in place for managing work and childcare, the hours they work and the extent to which partners share responsibilities.
- Chapter 4 explores two policy areas that have a major impact on the way parents manage work and childcare. In the first part of this section they consider flexible working: particularly its availability, the forms it can take and its value to them and their families. Secondly, parents provided their thoughts on paternity leave, especially the take up and value of the current provision.
- In Chapter 5 the study explores the concept of choice, asking how much genuine choice parents believe that they have, to what extent choice is related to income and what it is that led to the arrangements they have put in place.
- Chapter 6 focuses on the ideas of parents and their reaction to measures that could help them to achieve their work and childcare aspirations.

2. VIEWS ON WORK AND CHILDCARE

2.1 The values of modern parents

Parents were presented with a set of value and attitudinal statements that challenged or supported some of the traditional concepts of gender, work and childcare (Figure 1). The majority of modern parents in the study do not think about work and childcare in ‘traditional’ terms.

Figure 1: Values and attitudes toward work and childcare



Base: All respondents, excluding don't knows

Only a quarter believe that the primary responsibility for childcare rests with the mother. Half feel that, regardless of gender, the parent who is paid more should stay

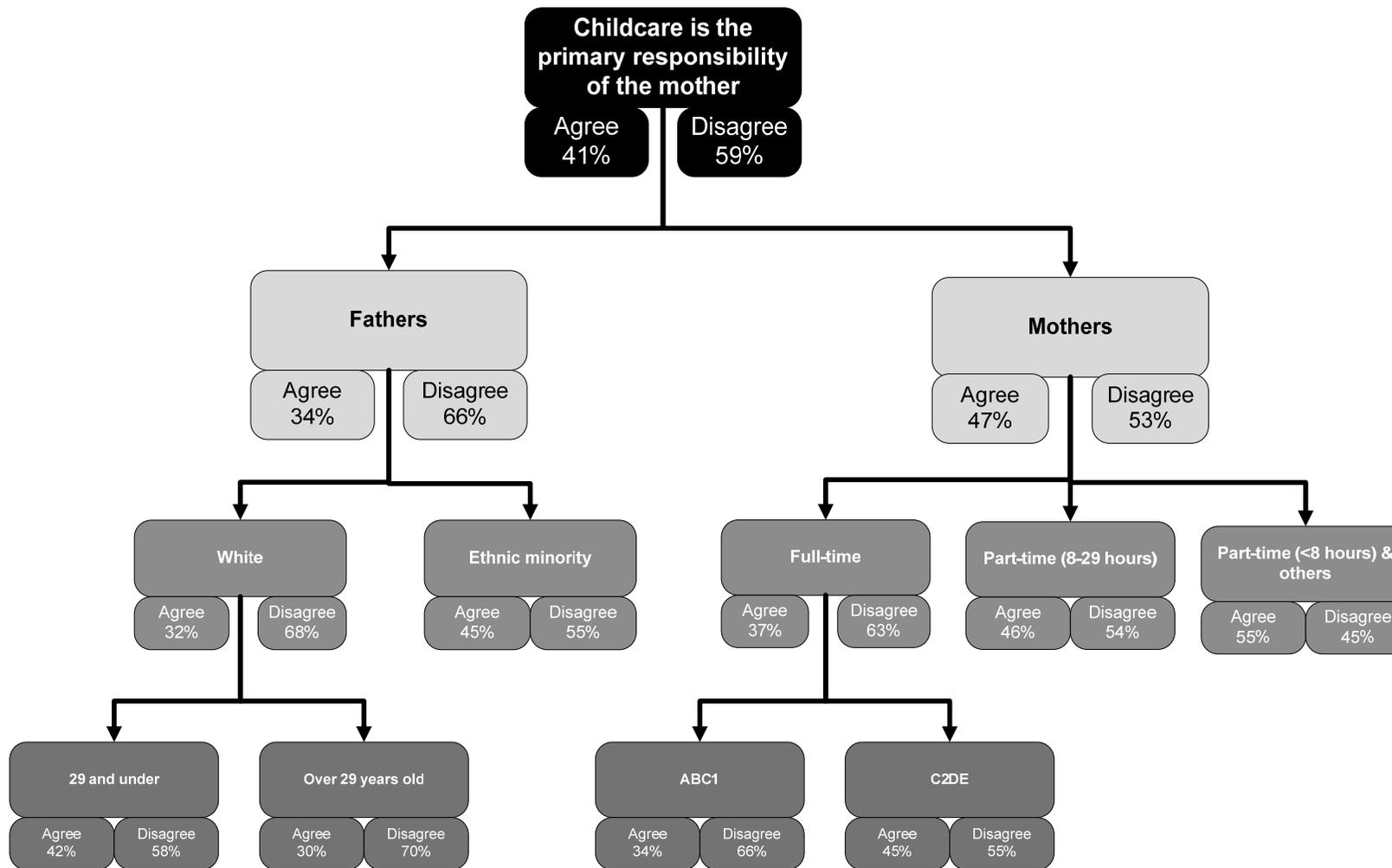
at work. Only one in five disagrees with this statement, and only two-fifths believe that fathers are responsible for providing for their family. There is further evidence of a break with the past in that just 39 per cent associate their arrangements with the way that they were brought up.

The belief that mothers have the primary responsibility for childcare is stronger amongst women than men (34 per cent of women compared with 23 per cent). Indeed gender is the key variable that determines the way a parent responds to this statement.

Markedly fewer parents (22 per cent) in Scotland agreed with this statement compared with those in the other countries.

Figure 2 shows that ethnicity is the most significant determinant among men, with ethnic minority fathers significantly more likely to agree and white (especially young) men far more likely to disagree that mothers have the primary responsibility for childcare.

Figure 2: Childcare is the primary responsibility of the mother (CHAID tree diagram)

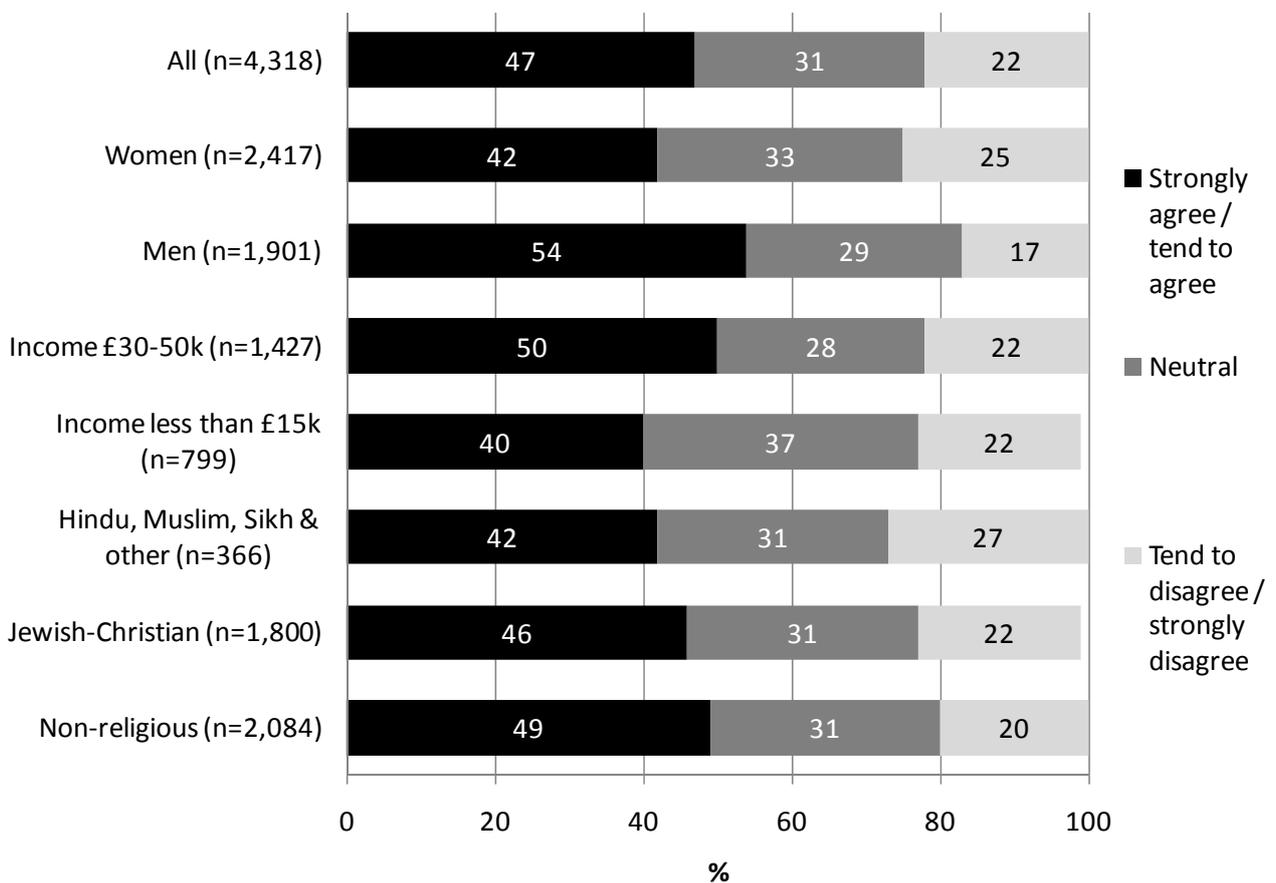


Note: Figures exclude neutral and don't know. The CHAID model tested seven demographic variables.

Among women, working status is a key determinant of a mother’s viewpoint with those in work (particularly ABC1s) far more likely to disagree. In summary, the traditional standpoint is most strongly held by women, particularly those not in work, whilst those most likely to disagree are young, white fathers.

Men are much more likely than women to agree that the parent who earns the most money should be the one who stays at work (54 per cent of men compared with 42 per cent of women).

Figure 3: The parent who is paid more should stay at work regardless of whether they are male or female



Base: All respondents, excluding don't knows

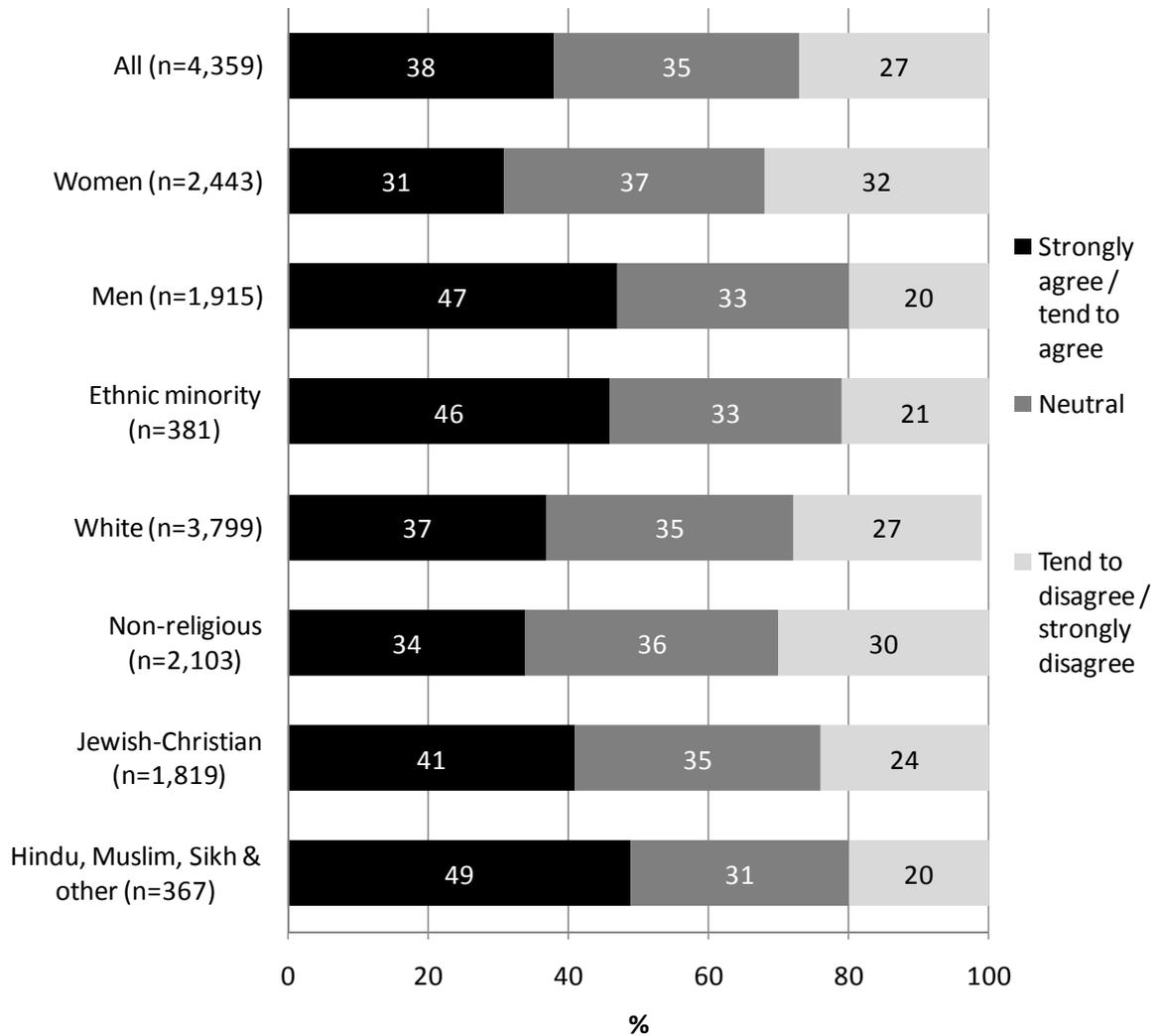
Fathers aged between 18 and 34 are much more likely to think this way than mothers. Family composition is also significant, with the attitudes of lone parents affected by their circumstances. Only 36 per cent of lone parents agree, compared to 49 per cent of those in a dual family unit.

Fewer than four in 10 parents (39 per cent) believe that they base their work and childcare arrangements on how they were brought up, signifying a break with tradition. There is some indication that ethnic minority parents are more likely to do so (44 per cent, compared to 39 per cent of white parents). Similarly, those identifying as religious are more likely to agree, although differences are indicative rather than significant.

The view that fathers are responsible for providing for the family alters with the age of the parent, with younger parents less likely to agree (35 per cent of 18 to 34 year olds compared to 43 per cent of 45 to 64s). Again, this view is less prevalent in Scotland, where only 33 per cent of parents agree with this statement.

As Figure 4 illustrates, there is a very clear distinction on this traditional value statement between those who identify as religious and those who do not. Half of those from the 'Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or other' group hold this view, compared to just 34 per cent of those who are not religious and 41 per cent of those in the 'Jewish or Christian' group. This is also reflected in terms of ethnicity with 46 per cent of ethnic minority parents believing that fathers are responsible for providing for the family compared to 37 per cent of white parents. Accordingly 36 per cent of ethnic minority parents feel that childcare is the primary responsibility of the mother compared to 28 per cent of white parents.

Figure 4: Fathers are responsible for providing for their family



Base: All respondents, excluding don't knows

2.2 Spending time with children

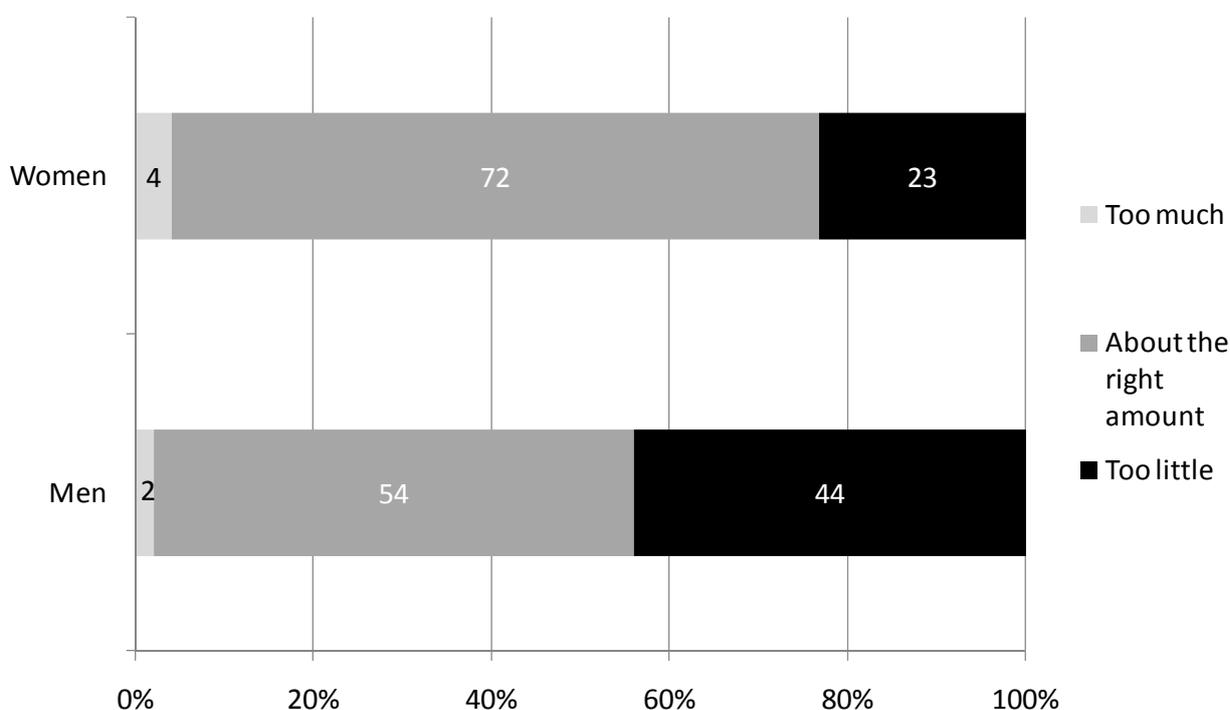
The survey data shows that nearly a third of parents feel that they spend too little time with their children. Men in particular share this view (44 per cent) in stark contrast to women (23 per cent) as Figure 5 sets out.

Those with children under one feel this lack of time particularly strongly. Fifty-three per cent of fathers state that they feel they spend too little time with their children and

52 per cent of their partners agree. The strength of feeling is lower amongst fathers with older children but is still significant for 40 per cent of those with children aged 6 to 16.

Parents in general, and fathers in particular, who work flexibly are significantly less likely to feel that they spend too little time with their children. Fifty-four per cent of working fathers who do not work flexibly feel that they spend too little time, compared to just 34 per cent of flexible working fathers.

Figure 5: Do you feel that you spend too much, too little or the right amount of time with your children? (by gender)



Base: All respondents, excluding don't know (men 1,911; women 2,398)

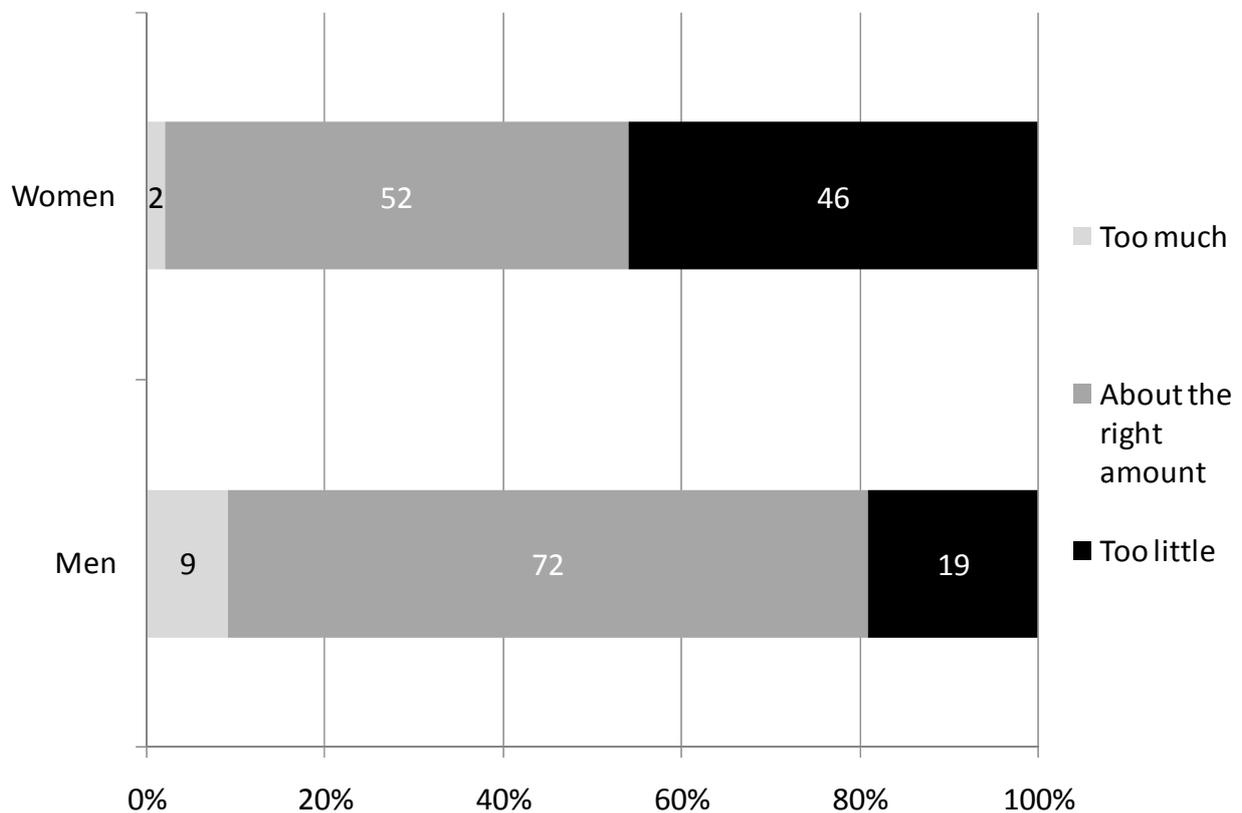
Nearly half of women (46 per cent) believe that their partner spends too little time with their children (see Figure 6) and just over half (52 per cent) think they have got it

about right. A fifth of men (19 per cent) think that their partner spends too little time with their children.

I have just gone back to work 20 hours a week over two days so I get to spend lots of time with my daughter which I love. But my partner works long hours so he comes home at lunch time just to spend some time with us.

(Mother, parent of a child under one, online forum participant)

Figure 6: Do you feel that your partner spends too much, too little or the right amount of time with your children? (by gender)



Base: All dual family unit parents, excluding don't know (men 1,855; women 1,927)

Although nearly a third of parents say they spend too little time with their children, 85 per cent say that children have to come first (see Figure 1). This figure is high for

both men and women, with 80 per cent of men and 89 per cent of women agreeing that children have to come first.

The strong belief that children come first was echoed in the qualitative research. There was a belief among the parents interviewed that a child's welfare is the responsibility of the parent and does not lie with anyone else such as grandparents or the Government. For example, even for a family who are struggling under the pressure of having four young children (of pre-school age) it was felt that it was up to them to care for their children and that they should not get 'special' help.

It was our choice to have four kids - so our responsibility... no-one asked me to have four children so why should we get special treatment?

(Female, married with four children under 10 in Scotland, family immersion)

Later in the report, there are clear findings from parents surveyed suggesting how Government and employers can support parents to balance work and childcare. Taken together, these findings suggest that parents want to take responsibility for their own lives and children, though would welcome policies that enable them to do that more effectively.

2.3 Spending time at work

Half of fathers surveyed believe that they spend too much time at work. As might be expected, those who work over 40 hours per week are much more likely (64 per cent) to believe this than those who work fewer than 40 hours per week (34 per cent). There is also a marked difference according to the age of the child, with 56 per cent of fathers of children under one believing they spend too much time at work compared with 47 per cent of fathers of children aged between one and six years. Women appear to share this view, with nearly half believing that their partner spends too much time at work. It is not just men who think their working hours are too long: nearly a third of women (31 per cent) also believe they spend too much time at work, with those in higher social grades (ABC1) being more likely to believe this (37 per

cent) than C2DEs (22 per cent). In Wales, both fathers (54 per cent) and mothers (41 per cent) are much more likely than parents in other regions to think they spend too much time at work.

Sixteen per cent of men feel that work comes first, compared to just six per cent of women. There is some indication that younger parents are even less likely to agree, with 8 per cent of parents aged 18 to 34 stating this compared to 15 per cent of those aged 45 to 64. However, the demands of childcare change significantly as children get older and it is likely that older parents may feel that the balance can shift towards work as their children grow up.

2.4 In summary

The majority of parents do not hold what we might consider to be traditional values, nor do many think that their work and childcare arrangements are a result of how they were brought up. Only a quarter of parents think that childcare is the primary responsibility of the mother, and only two fifths think that fathers are responsible for providing for the family. Women are more likely to agree that mothers are responsible for childcare, while men are much more likely to agree that fathers should be responsible for providing. Around half of the parents surveyed think that, regardless of gender, the parent who earns the most should stay at work. Women in higher social grades are particularly likely to agree with this.

Despite the majority of parents rejecting these traditional values statements associated with parenting, many fathers feel that they spend too little time with their children and too much at work, and their partners agree. These particular concerns are felt acutely by fathers of young children and those working long hours.

3. CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS – HOW PARENTS MANAGE WORK AND CHILDCARE

3.1 Profile of employment status and working time

Of the overall sample, 74 per cent of parents are in paid employment for at least one hour per week. Table 4 shows that this figure rises to 88 per cent for fathers and drops to 63 per cent for mothers. Fathers are much more likely to work full-time than mothers (83 per cent compared to 27 per cent) and are much less likely to work part-time (5 per cent compared to 36 per cent).

Table 4: Which of the following best describes your employment status?

	Per cent:		
	All	Men	Women
Working full-time (30 hours a week or more)	52	83	27
Working part-time (8-29 hours a week)	20	5	32
Working part-time (less than 8 hours a week)	3	1	4
Retired	1	2	1
Full-time student / in school	4	2	5
Unemployed but looking for work	5	3	6
Not working and not looking for work	11	3	18
<i>Base: All</i>	4,433	1,947	2,496

Working parents in this study will typically spend between 30 and 39 hours per week at work. A significant proportion work longer hours than these. Nearly two-fifths (39 per cent) work between 40 and 49 hours with 13 per cent working over 50 hours per week. Far more men than women report working longer hours with nearly half (46 per cent) of fathers working between 40 and 49 hours on average per week.

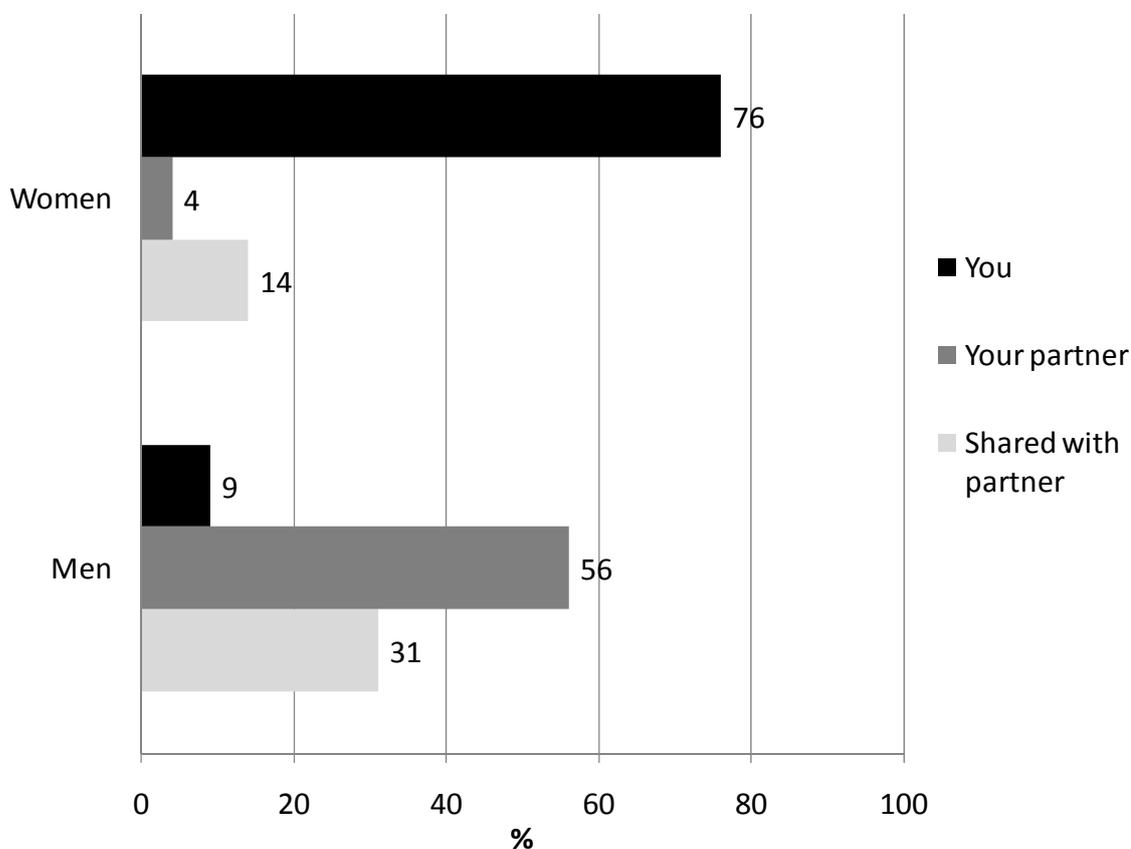
Table 5: On average, how many hours do you work in a week including overtime and weekends? (by gender)

	Per cent:		
	All	Men	Women
Less than 30 hours	3	3	2
Between 30 and 39 hours	45	37	64
Between 40 and 49 hours	39	46	25
Between 50 and 59 hours	9	11	5
Over 60 hours	3	4	3
<i>Base: All in full-time work</i>	2,300	1,561	716

3.2 Who has the primary responsibility for childcare?

Three quarters of mothers state that in day-to-day life they have the primary responsibility for childcare in the home (Figure 7). This snapshot of reality contrasts with the rejection of the value statement that childcare is the primary responsibility of the mother, to which less than a third agreed.

Figure 7: Who has the primary responsibility for childcare in your home? (by gender)



Base: All respondents (men 1,947; women 2,496)

There should be equal responsibility but society and employers assume women should be the main child carers.

(Mother, married with one child, online forum)

Men and women do not agree regarding whether or not childcare is shared. Nearly one third of men (31 per cent) state that they share childcare with their partner but only 14 per cent of women agree.

Within dual parent families, only eight per cent of men report that they have the primary responsibility for childcare. Male lone parents draw more heavily on support from the wider family than female lone parents. Twenty four per cent state that

grandparents or another family member takes primary responsibility for childcare (compared with just nine per cent of female lone parents), and five per cent state that they share responsibility with someone else. Female lone parents are more self-reliant, with 76 per cent having primary responsibility for their children.

There are differences by ethnicity and religious affiliation. More white parents (22 per cent) report sharing primary responsibility than ethnic minority parents (19 per cent), and there is less equal sharing reported by those identifying as religious (20 per cent of Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and others) compared to non-religious parents (24 per cent).

The view of 'mum' as the primary carer and 'dad' as the provider was not prevalent in the immersion interviews. Parenting appeared to be a team effort involving a small network of people beyond the core parental set. The qualitative work demonstrates that family units can be complex and fragmented. A range of individuals fulfil different aspects of caring roles.

After my partner and I split up my parents have been a big help, not just in helping care for the boys but in bringing them up. I feel sorry for my dad as he can't be fun 'Papa' as he has to take on the male ('dad') role of discipline in the house – this does make me sad but it's a massive help in bringing them up well.

(Lone parent, two children under 12 in Scotland, family immersions)

There were many strong examples of practicality rather than values driving roles and responsibilities. The day to day running of family life is centred around basic tasks such as the 'school run', housework, shopping and making meals. The person who carries out each of these tasks is often the one who is available at a particular time.

We work as a team in order to maintain childcare. My wife looks after the children during the day, and then three nights a week while she goes out to work, I do it. It lets me do things for them which I wouldn't otherwise get the opportunity to do.

(Father, online forum)

The pen portrait in Figure 8 highlights how responsibilities within a family unit are shared to ensure that daily tasks can be carried out.

Figure 8: Pen portrait one – Candice and Negus on sharing responsibility



Candice and Negus have been married for three years and have three children: Marlow, Jade and Crystal aged 10yrs, 4yrs and 18 months respectively.

Negus works full-time and Candice works part-time and they both share in the responsibility of caring for their children. Negus wakes up first and gets ready for work and then looks after the children while his wife gets ready for her day. He will then drop Marlow and Jade at school and Crystal at nursery and his wife at work before he goes to work. As he works full time, it is up to his wife to pick the children up from school and nursery. She will often then start dinner and have fed them before Negus comes home. Once home, he will help Marlow with his homework and wash and bed the younger children.

Family life is a careful juggling act between the two of them to make sure everything gets done. Negus feels he does his equal share but Candice feels she is often left with the main responsibility as she only works part-time, so is more flexible in terms of her time.

For many parents bringing up children involves complex decision making often made at the micro level, week by week or day by day. Roles are becoming more fluid as parents take advantage of flexible opportunities available in the workplace.

I look after my son at home, and work part-time. My daughter started school this year and my wife works full time. I was previously working full time but my wife and I swapped roles last year. We now have less money but get to spend every evening and weekend together and all eat together every evening.

(Father, young family, online forum)

Given that in reality much of the primary responsibility still lies with mothers, the next section examines wider sources of support for pre-school and school age children.

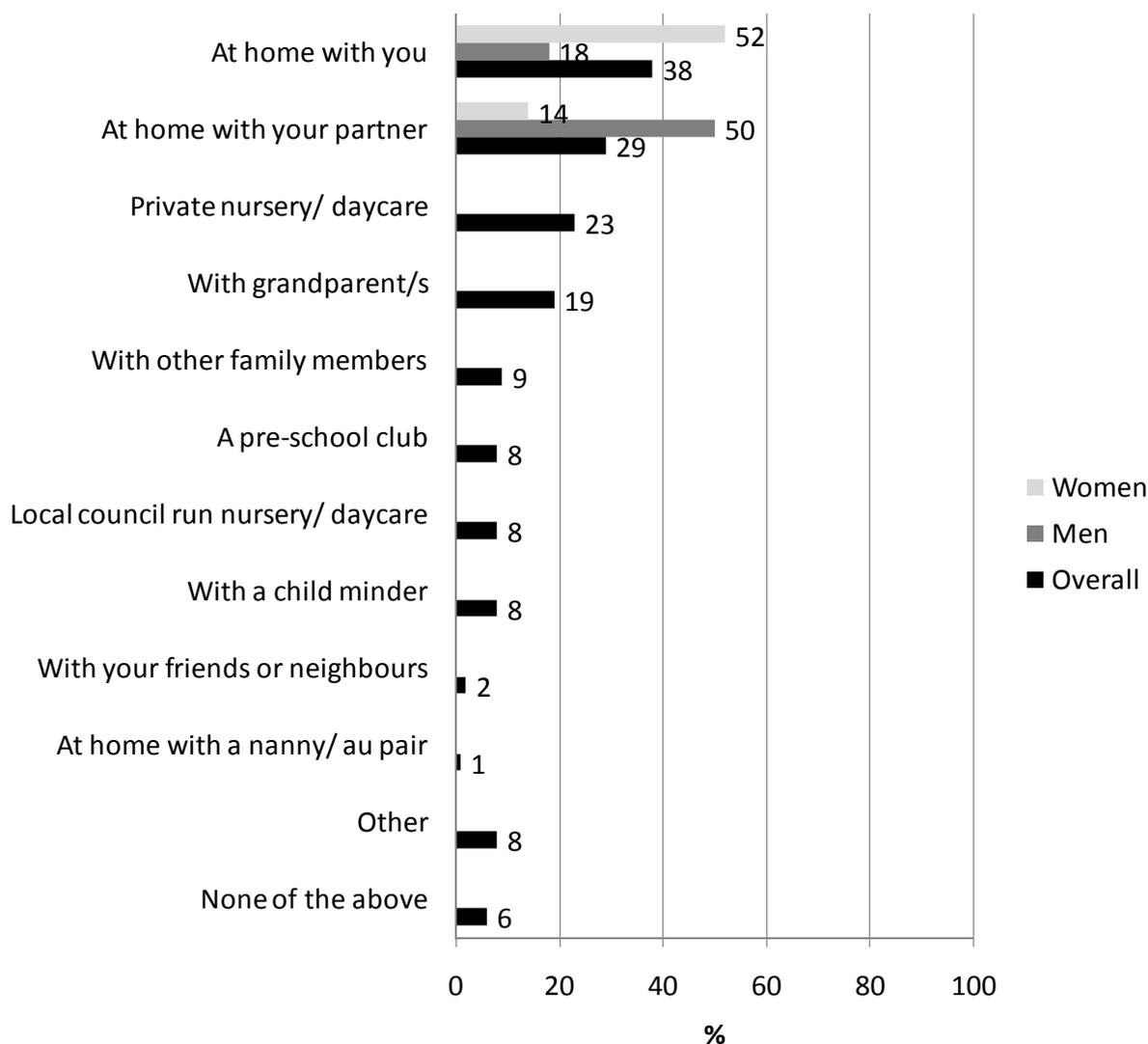
3.3 Sources of support for childcare of pre-school children

Parents of pre-school children were asked to name all of the sources of child care they draw upon from Monday to Friday during a typical week (see Figure 9). Over half (52 per cent) of the mothers surveyed stated that they provide pre-school childcare during the week, compared to just 18 per cent of men.

Nearly a quarter of parents use private nursery / daycare at least once during a typical week and nearly a fifth draw upon support from the children's grandparents. This figure is lower for parents in Wales, at 17 per cent. Lone parents are particularly likely to draw upon wider family support: 23 per cent receive support from grandparents and 15 per cent from other family members, compared to 19 per cent (grandparents) and 9 per cent (other family members) for dual family units.

The role of grandparents is notable for younger parents in particular, with 23 per cent of parents aged 18 to 34 drawing upon their support and 21 per cent of parents with a child under one, a proportion that declines as parental and child age increases. The role of grandparents is significantly diminished for disabled parents or parents of disabled children. Only 13 per cent of disabled parents call upon grandparents and just 10 per cent with a disabled child or children. For these families one or other parent is more likely to stay at home to cover childcare requirements.

Figure 9: What sources of childcare do you have for your pre-school age children on a typical week from Monday to Friday? (multiple choice)



Base: Parents with at least one pre-school age child (2,310)

The qualitative research added additional insights into the reasons behind parents' arrangements for pre-school children, particularly for those who stay at home rather than go to work. The main reasons were:

- Parents want to care for their children as they feel it will have a positive impact on their child's development;

- The cost of child care is very expensive and is often not affordable; and
- There is a lack of trust in using hired baby-sitters and child minders.

Among parents who had actively chosen to stay at home to care for their children, it was felt that they had an important role to fulfil through being at home. Most felt that raising a child is one of the hardest jobs someone can do and to do it well requires one person at home full-time.

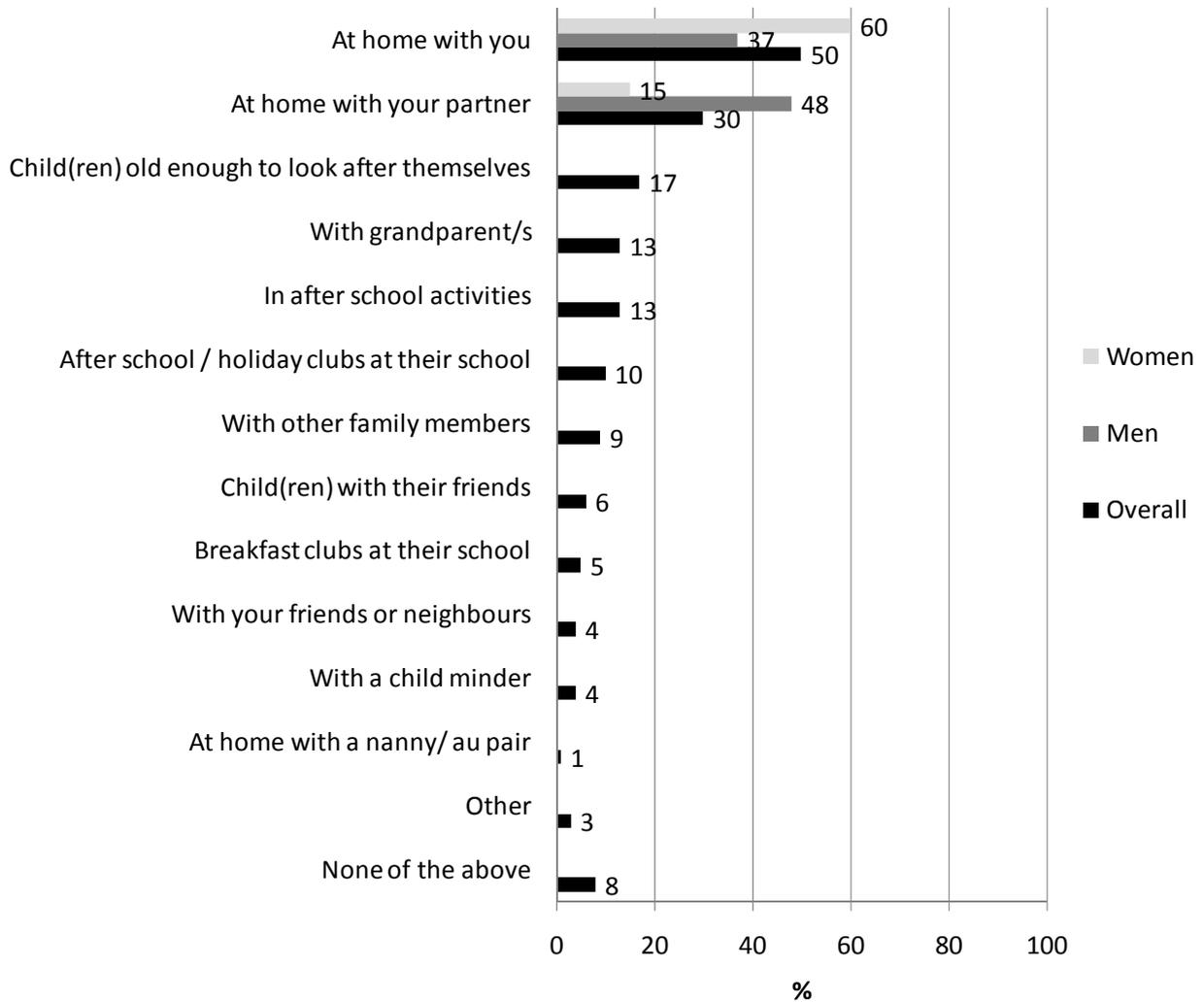
We're enjoying watching our son's development, and my wife is on maternity leave for a year so has lots of time to spend with him. I slightly resent missing out on some of this by having to work full-time, but am about to move to a new job that is only three and a half days a week, so we can share childcare and I can spend more time with our son.

(Father, affluent family, online forum)

The lone parents interviewed in the qualitative study relied more heavily on extended family to help with care as it allowed them to work and have someone they trust looking after the children.

For school-age children the requirements for childcare outside the family unit are lower than those of pre-school children (Figure 10). Compared to pre-school, there is a closer balance between parents with 60 per cent of women and 37 per cent of men being a source of childcare during the week. The role of grandparents reduces as the age of parents increases, but it is still important for many younger families. After school clubs and activities also make an important contribution for some parents.

Figure 10: Before and after school on a typical week from Monday to Friday, what sources of childcare do you have for your children? (multiple choice)



Base: Parents with at least one child at primary or secondary school age (2,901)

The qualitative research showed that after school clubs could also cause tension for parents especially when they had more than one child to deal with. Tensions often occurred when one child was attending a club in a different location to that of another child, as parents need to travel to two locations rather than just one.

3.4 Getting the balance right

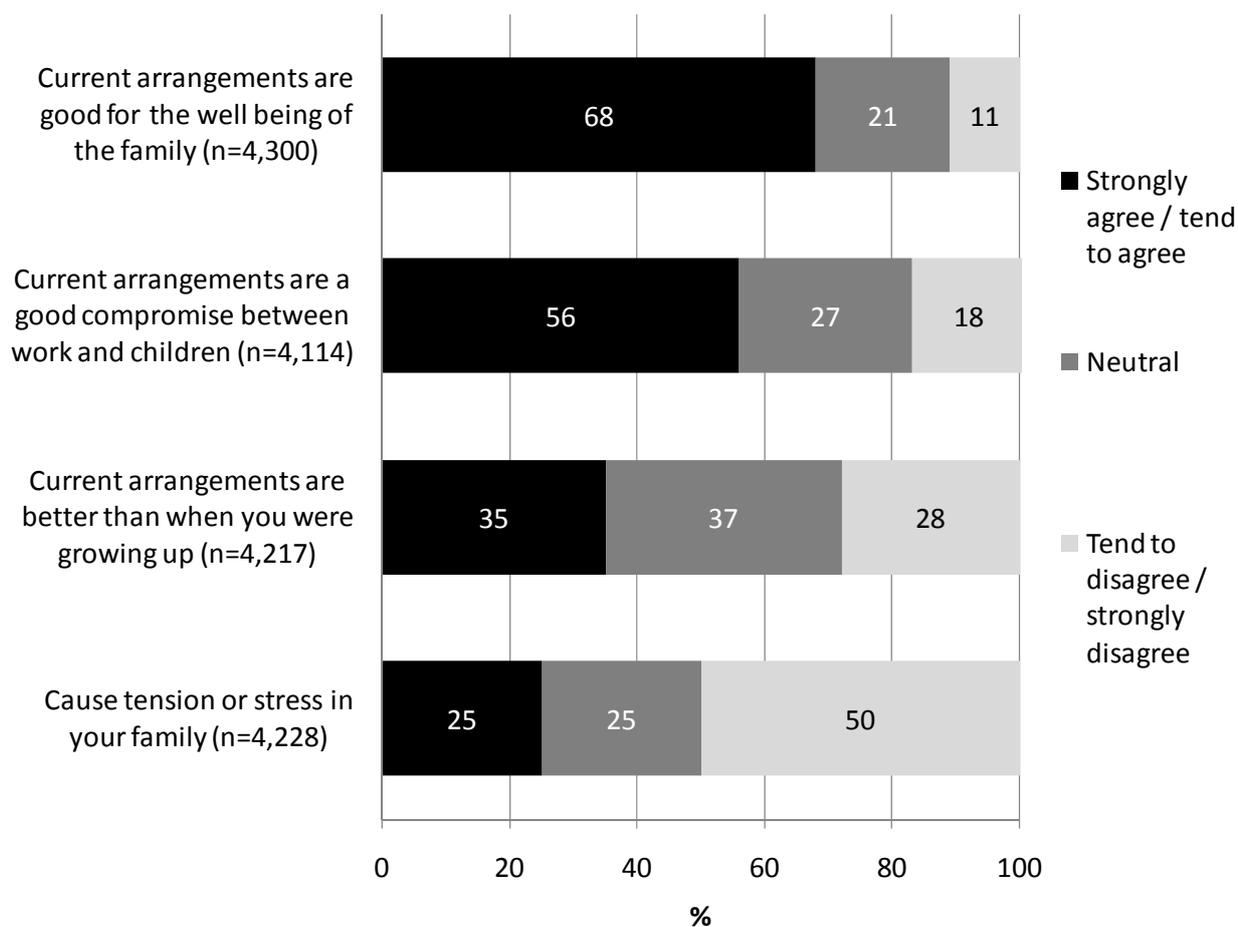
Despite the findings in Chapter 2 revealing that fathers in particular spend too much time at work and not enough time with their children, most parents are reluctant to state that their work-childcare balance is poor (Figure 11).

Over two-thirds feel that their current arrangements are good for the well-being of the family and only slightly fewer believe that their arrangements are a good compromise between work and children. Parents who work flexibly are more likely to say that the arrangements are a good compromise between work and family life:

[Advantages of working flexibly are...] children are not left with strangers and get continuity of care plus a better home life. I feel a real Dad to my kids as I can spend longer with them than I could have before. I really feel for those that cannot do this due to heavy workloads.

(Father, one child under one, online forum)

Figure 11: Views on current work and childcare arrangements



Base: All respondents, excluding don't knows

Many of the views held are positive, but there are tensions for a sizeable minority of families. A quarter believe that their arrangements are a cause of tension or stress. This is a particular issue for women who work long hours – for those who work 40 hours or more the proportion who feel that there are tensions is 38 per cent. In comparison only 26 per cent of men believe that the long hours they work causes tension. Parents in Wales are more likely (32 per cent) than those in other regions to agree that their work and care arrangements cause tension or stress.

Long working hours also affect parents' ability to reach a good compromise. Fifty-eight per cent of those working less than 40 hours a week feel that their arrangements are a good compromise, as opposed to 52 per cent of parents who work over 40 hours.

I consider myself quite a modern man but I still largely define myself by my job / career. Having said that I have made compromises and choices which have allowed me to work hours which bring in a good income but still allow me to see a healthy amount of my family. My wife has gradually reduced her hours to allow more time with the children which is very helpful to all of us.

(Father, affluent family, online forum)

A key difference between sub-groups is apparent amongst disabled parents or parents of disabled children. Although 58 per cent of non-disabled parents feel that their arrangements are a good compromise, this is in sharp contrast with the 46 per cent of disabled parents who think so. There is a corresponding difference on the basis of whether or not parents have disabled children.

Table 6: Current arrangements and disabled parents / parents with disabled children

How far do you agree or disagree that your current arrangements ...		Per cent			
		Disabled Parents		Disabled children	
		Disability	No disability	Disability	No disability
Are a good compromise between work and childcare	Strongly agree or tend to agree	46	58	47	57
	Neither agree nor disagree	33	25	31	25
	Strongly disagree or tend to disagree	21	17	22	17
	<i>Base:</i>	629	3,379	404	3,604
Cause stress or tension in your family	Strongly agree or tend to agree	28	24	29	24
	Neither agree nor disagree	26	24	28	24
	Strongly disagree or tend to disagree	46	52	43	52
	<i>Base:</i>	678	3,439	421	3,696

Tension is also more evident amongst those who have additional caring responsibilities not related to their children. Thirty-one per cent of these parents feel that their arrangements cause tension compared to 24 per cent of those without additional caring responsibilities.

Most of the parents who participated in the qualitative research were content with the balance of working and family life that they had managed to reach:

I am reasonably happy with the balance we have achieved now, my partner is less so, he would like to spend more time at home but we can't really afford that.

(Mother, young family, online forum)

Families had made adjustments in how they live and work to accommodate their needs. However, the findings highlighted some key tensions related to long working hours. Those who worked long hours were often tired when they got home and this sometimes caused tensions within the family:

[Arrangements are...] hectic, my husband and I don't see as much of each other as we would like as I have just gone back to work after being on maternity leave with my youngest daughter. I have fortunately managed to use my annual leave hours so that I only work a three or four day week until April, which is helping. The problems we have are negotiating time for ourselves, time for me to spend with the children (I don't want to miss anything) and time to work.

(Mother, new parent, online forum)

Significant tensions were also reported by parents with other caring responsibilities, such as looking after elderly parents, in the qualitative research.

3.5 In summary

The reality of the parents' arrangements for work and childcare reveal that mothers continue to bear the weight of caring responsibility. Only a small minority of mothers feel that caring is shared equally with their partner and there is a significant gap between mothers and fathers, in terms of being a source of childcare for pre-school and school age children, during a typical working week.

Parents draw upon a wide range of childcare support with many relying on grandparents and other family members for help with pre-school children, whilst parents of school age children are increasingly supported by wrap-around school provision and other clubs and activities.

Most feel that they are able to strike a good compromise between work and childcare and flexible workers in particular highlight the benefits of their arrangements to the well-being of their families. Others are not as positive: disabled parents, parents of disabled children and those with other caring responsibilities are more likely to experience tension and stress within the family.

4. THE POLICY CONTEXT

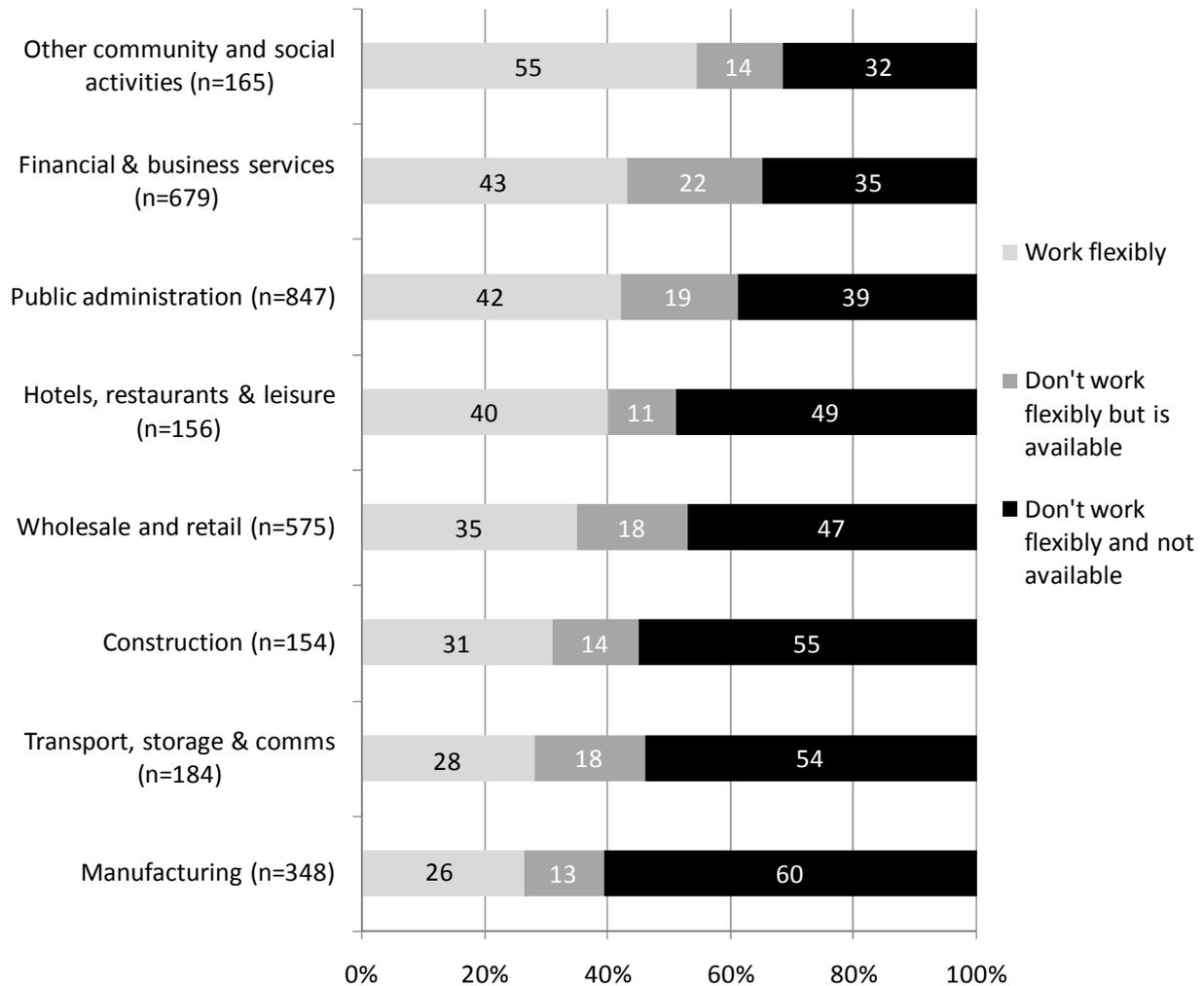
4.1 Flexible working

Flexible working is viewed by parents in the survey as an important element in getting the balance right between work and childcare. Over a third of working parents (38 per cent) have some form of flexible working arrangement. Within this group, women and those within higher social grades (ABC1) are the most likely to work flexibly in some way. A further 18 per cent state that flexible working is available to them but that they do not currently take this up.

Looking in detail at the employment background of those who work flexibly reveals a significantly higher incidence of flexible working amongst those in senior management positions (56 per cent), compared to non-managers (39 per cent). Accordingly, incidences of flexible working also become higher as income and age rises. Flexible working is also strongly connected to certain types of industry (Figure 12), with parents in the public sector (42 per cent), third sectors (55 per cent) and finance / business services (43 per cent) being particularly likely to report having a flexible arrangement. Those working in the male dominated manufacturing (26 per cent) and construction (31 per cent) industries, are less likely to work flexibly, or to report that flexible working is available.

The size of employer is also linked to the prevalence of flexible working. High levels of flexible working take-up (44 per cent) and availability are reported by parents who work for micro businesses (2 to 9 employees), while the lowest levels are seen among those working for small and medium sized employers. Parents employed by large organisations that are more likely to have formal policies and procedures are more likely to report take up (38 per cent), though not at the level of those working for micro businesses.

Figure 12: Do you currently have any forms of flexible working available to you? (by industry sector)



Base: All those in employment, industry sector only where more than 100 respondents

The parents in the qualitative study who worked for smaller companies tended to experience a more informal and ad-hoc approach to flexible working. Most of these parents felt that there was a degree of straightforwardness and common sense among their employers when it came to asking for flexible working arrangements. Juliet’s arrangement, shown in the following pen portrait, is a good example of how an employer’s common sense approach to flexible working can allow parents to fulfil both their caring and working roles:

Figure 13: Pen portrait two – Juliet on the practicalities of flexible working



Juliet is mum to Ava who is 3years old and works in central London. She works 2 days in the office and the other 2 at home, this allows her to pick her daughter up from nursery twice a week. However, there are weeks where she will work 3 days at home and 1 day in the office. Her boss doesn't mind where she gets the work done as long as it is done. There are days when Juliet has no reason to physically be in the office as her employer has given her a laptop (and Juliet has broadband at home), so her work can be done remotely. This gives her time to drop and pick Ava from nursery which she couldn't do if she had to travel into the office everyday. Juliet is often working at midnight or very early in the morning to get her work done but this means she doesn't miss out on being a mum and can see her daughter grow up. This is the perfect arrangement as it allows Juliet to fulfil her work and care aspirations.

Part-time working, staggered hours, flexi-time and home working are the most commonly reported types of flexible working available to parents in the survey, but there are significant differences between what is available to men and women (Figure 14). Over half of women with flexible working report that reduced hours or part-time working are available to them. This compares to just 21 per cent of men who, when they work flexibly, are more likely to report the availability of home working, staggered hours and flexi-time.

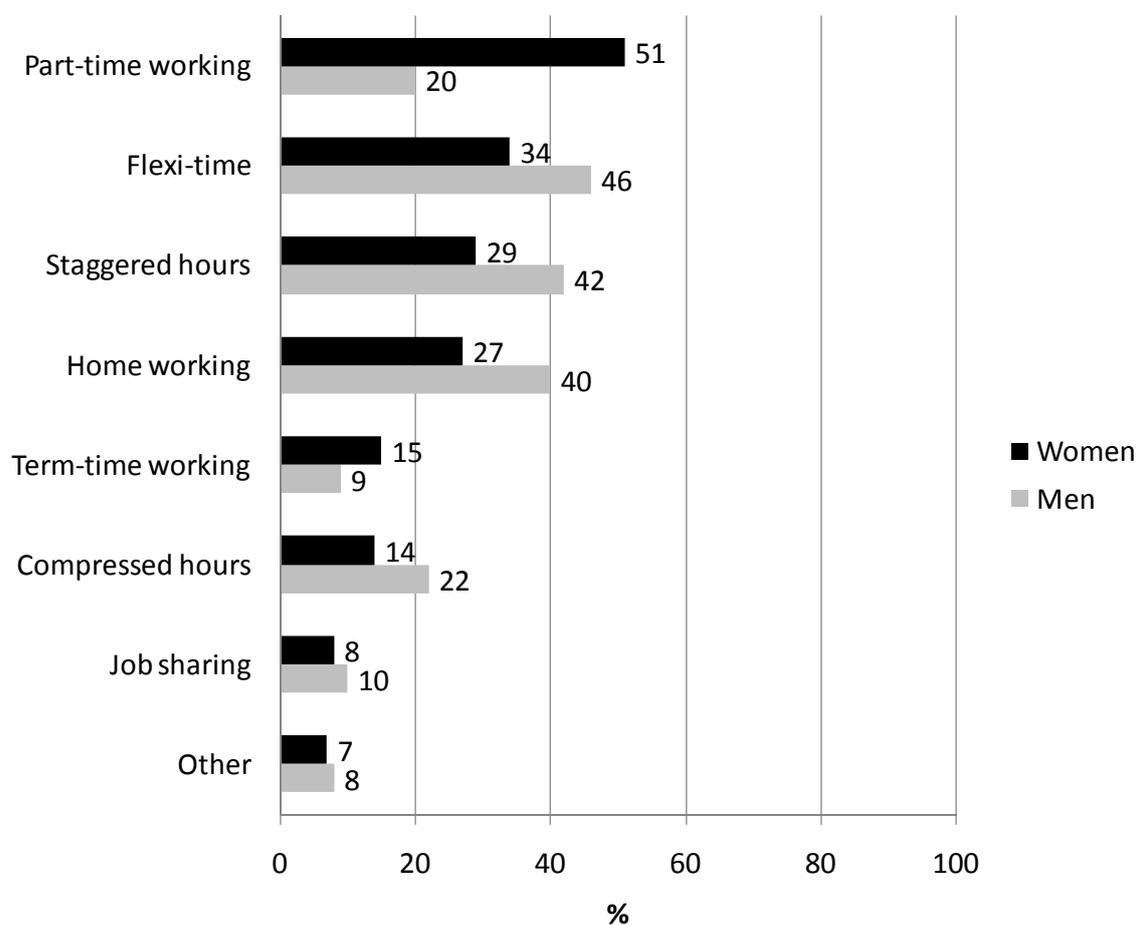
My wife works for the Civil Service and works in a job share. This works very well, I think the two of them do far more than any individual could do but this is recognised and works well for all. I genuinely think more firms should think of this, I would consider it as an alternative to redundancy at present.

(Father, with children over six, online forum)

Part-time working is also especially notable amongst mothers of younger children. Two thirds of mothers (compared to just 15 per cent of men) with a child under one year of age and three fifths (60 per cent, compared to 20 per cent of men) with a child under six report that this type of flexible working is available to them. Whereas the

proportions of those who say part-time is available to them stay the same as income rises, the availability of types of flexible working such as home-working (particularly in financial business services) is much more evident for higher income professions. Job sharing is predominately a feature of public sector jobs where flexi-time is also available to over half of parents employed in this sector.

Figure 14: What types of flexible working are available to you? (by gender, multiple choice)

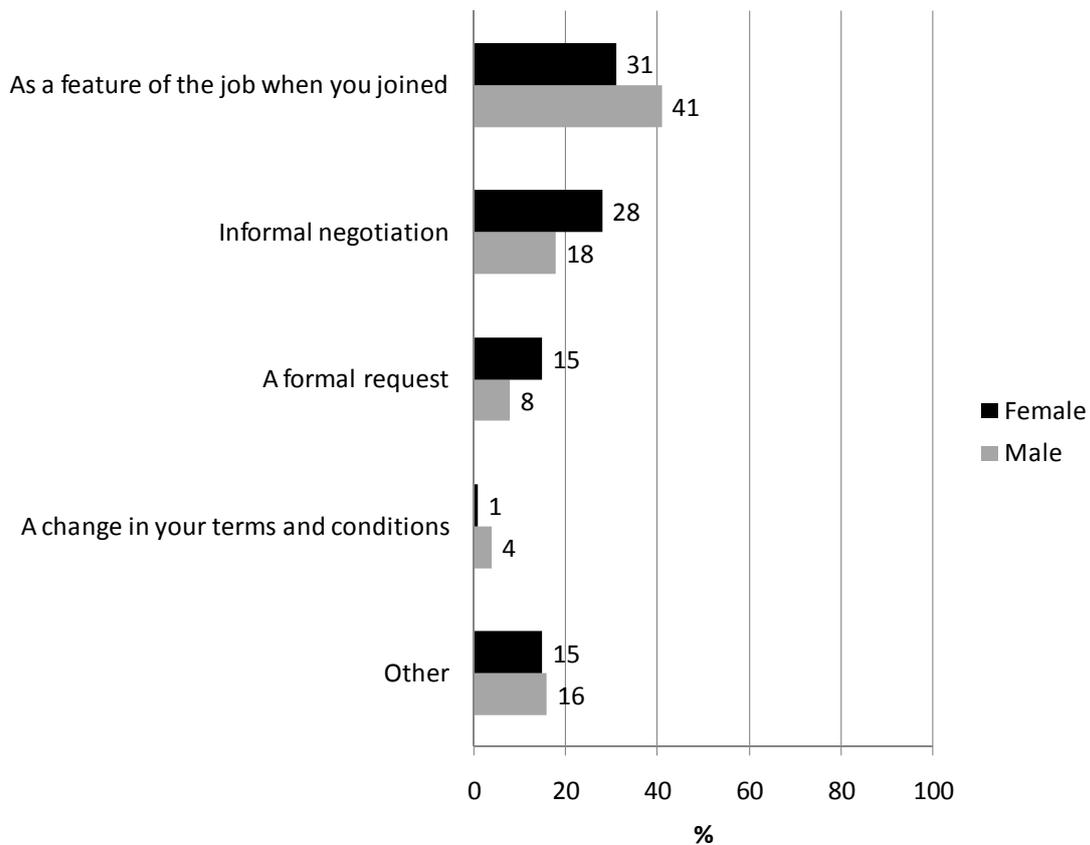


Base: Those who work flexibly or for whom it is available (men 814; women 948)

For many of those who work flexibly (35 per cent), their arrangements were a feature of the job when they started, while 24 per cent report that informal negotiations led to

their arrangements. Formal requests are relatively rare and tend to be reported by those working for medium or large employers. Both making a formal request and informal negotiation are more likely to be reported by women, as Figure 15 sets out.

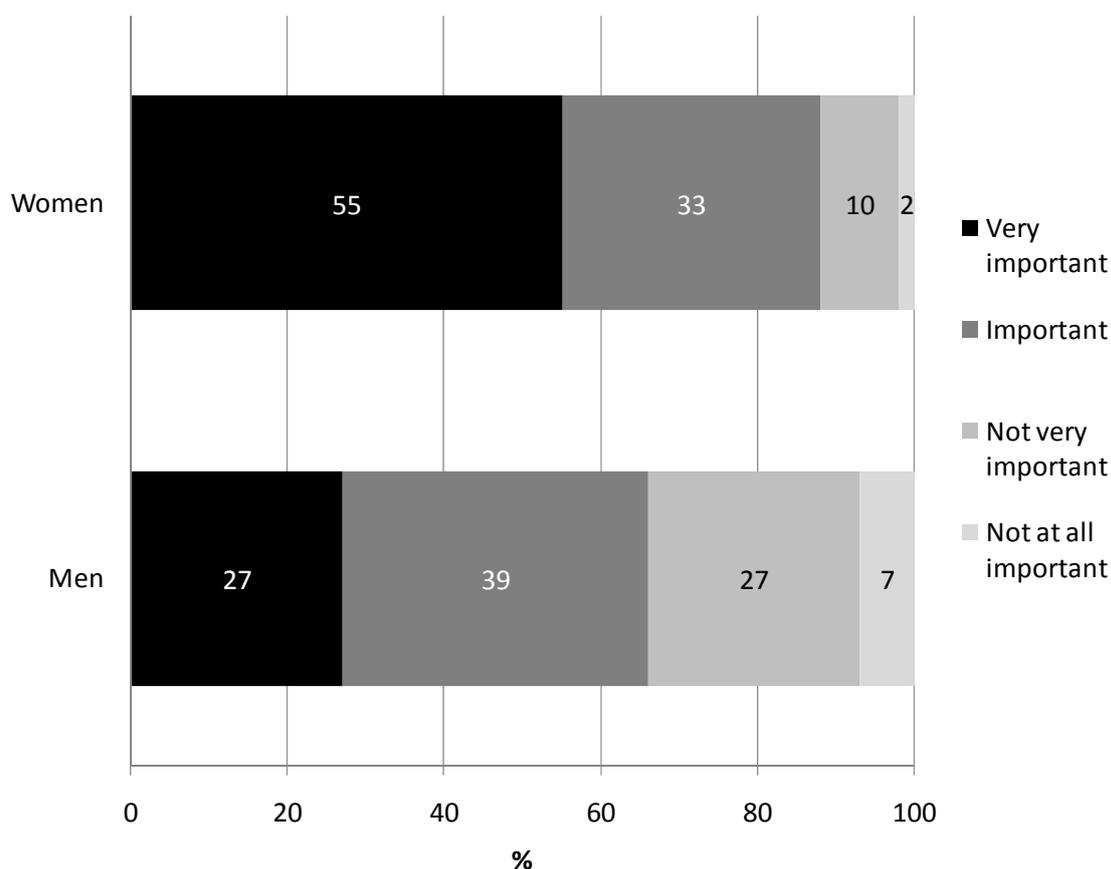
Figure 15: Did your flexible working come about due to any of the following? (by gender)



Base: All those currently working flexibly (1,201)

One way of assessing the value of flexible working is to ask parents how important they think it is when considering a new job. Over three-quarters (77 per cent) feel that it is either ‘very important’ or ‘important’. However, as Figure 16 illustrates, there is a clear gender divide, with 55 per cent of women believing it to be very important, compared to just 27 per cent of men.

Figure 16: If you were applying for a new job, how important a factor would the availability of flexible working be in deciding whether to apply? (by gender)



Base: All those currently in work excluding don't knows (men 1,635; women 1,503)

Disabled parents and those with disabled children are more likely than others to rate the importance of flexible working, as are parents of younger children and those working in the public and third sectors. Among those who currently work flexibly, the value of continuing to do so after switching jobs is underlined by the 94 per cent who rate it as 'very important' or 'important.' Even among those who do not currently benefit from flexible working, two-thirds (women in particular) believe that it would be an important factor in choosing a new job.

4.2 Paternity leave

A recurring theme in the analysis is the desire for fathers to take a greater role in childcare and to achieve a better balance between work and family life. The reported take-up of paternity leave and the feelings of those who did not use it, indicate that many fathers are in support of the current provision. Over half of the fathers (53 per cent) with a child born since paternity leave was introduced reported that they took the two weeks statutory leave. Those who did appear to have benefitted significantly: over half (56 per cent) believe that taking paternity leave has led to them having a greater role in the care of their children and 69 per cent believe that it has led to improvements in the quality of family life.

The survey shows that one third of fathers (34 per cent) did not take statutory paternity leave despite being eligible to do so. Among these fathers, the most commonly cited reason for not doing so is because they could not afford to take the time off (47 per cent). This is particularly the case for those in the construction and transport sectors. The proportion of fathers taking paternity leave is lower among sole traders (43 per cent) and those employed in 'micro' businesses (37 per cent). Fathers in these groups are more likely than others to report being too busy at work as a reason for not taking the leave.

A significant majority of those that did not take paternity leave would have liked to 'a lot' (69 per cent) or 'a little' (21 per cent).

I agree with increased support for paternity leave. From a personal perspective we wouldn't have benefitted as those who are self-employed seem to miss out on such benefits.

(Mother, young family, online forum)

Most families who were interviewed in-depth felt it was very important to have both parents there at the start of their child's life. It was felt that for new parents, having a child can be such a huge shock and change, that they need the support of their partners to see them through the first couple of weeks:

It was invaluable being able to take paternity leave, so the first couple of weeks of my son's life felt like a shared endeavour with my partner, we could make decisions together and begin to get used to being a family. Also I was so tired that I wouldn't have been much good at work anyway!

(Father, parent of child under one, online forum)

4.3 In summary

Flexible working is shown to deliver significant benefits, but it is not evenly distributed across the workforce. Those in management positions and sections of the economy such as the public sector and business services are more likely to have the opportunity to work flexibly. For those who do work flexibly, flexible working is so valuable that it would be a major factor when applying for a new job.

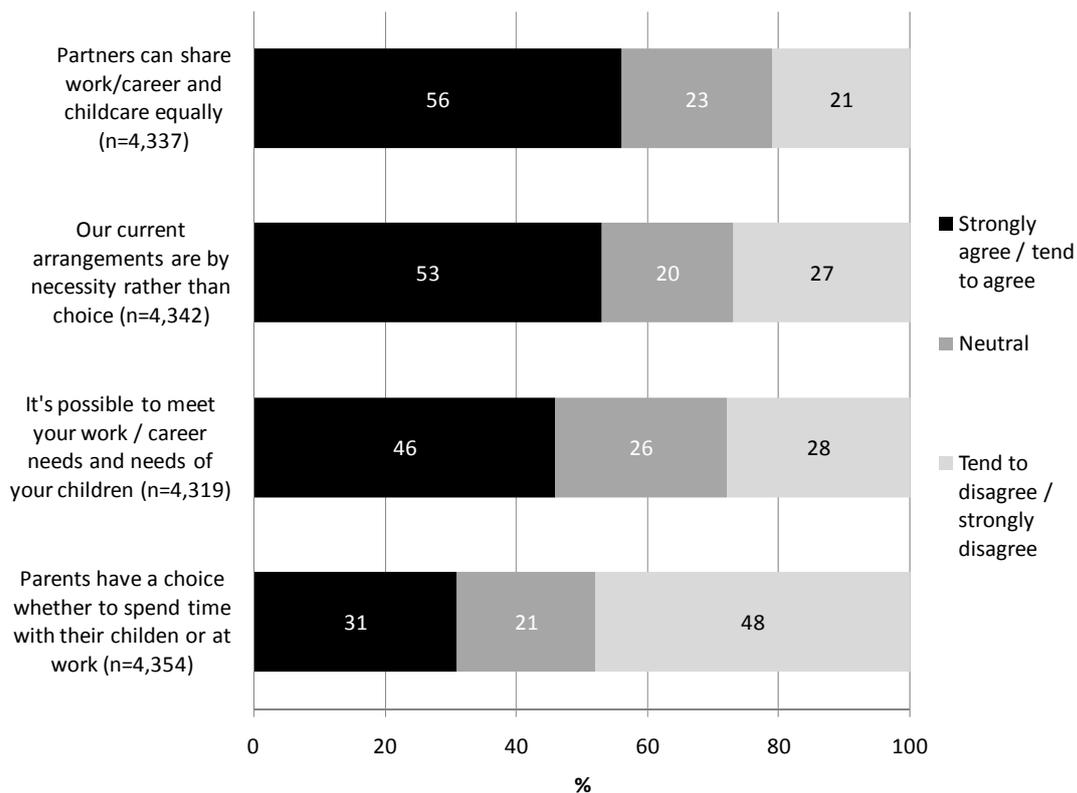
Over two-thirds of fathers who took paternity leave feel that it led to improvements in the quality of family life, and nine out of ten of those that did not take it would like to have done so. The majority of those who did not take it feel that they could not afford it, and take up was lowest in sectors such as manufacturing and construction, as well as among those working for micro businesses.

5. HOW MUCH CHOICE DO PARENTS HAVE AND WHAT DRIVES THEIR ARRANGEMENTS?

5.1 Opinions on choice and necessity

In spite of the positive messages from many families about their ability to create a good compromise and secure the well-being of children, genuine choice appears restricted. Over half of parents (53 per cent) believe that their own arrangements are by necessity rather than choice and only around a third feel that parents have a choice whether to spend time at work or with the children.

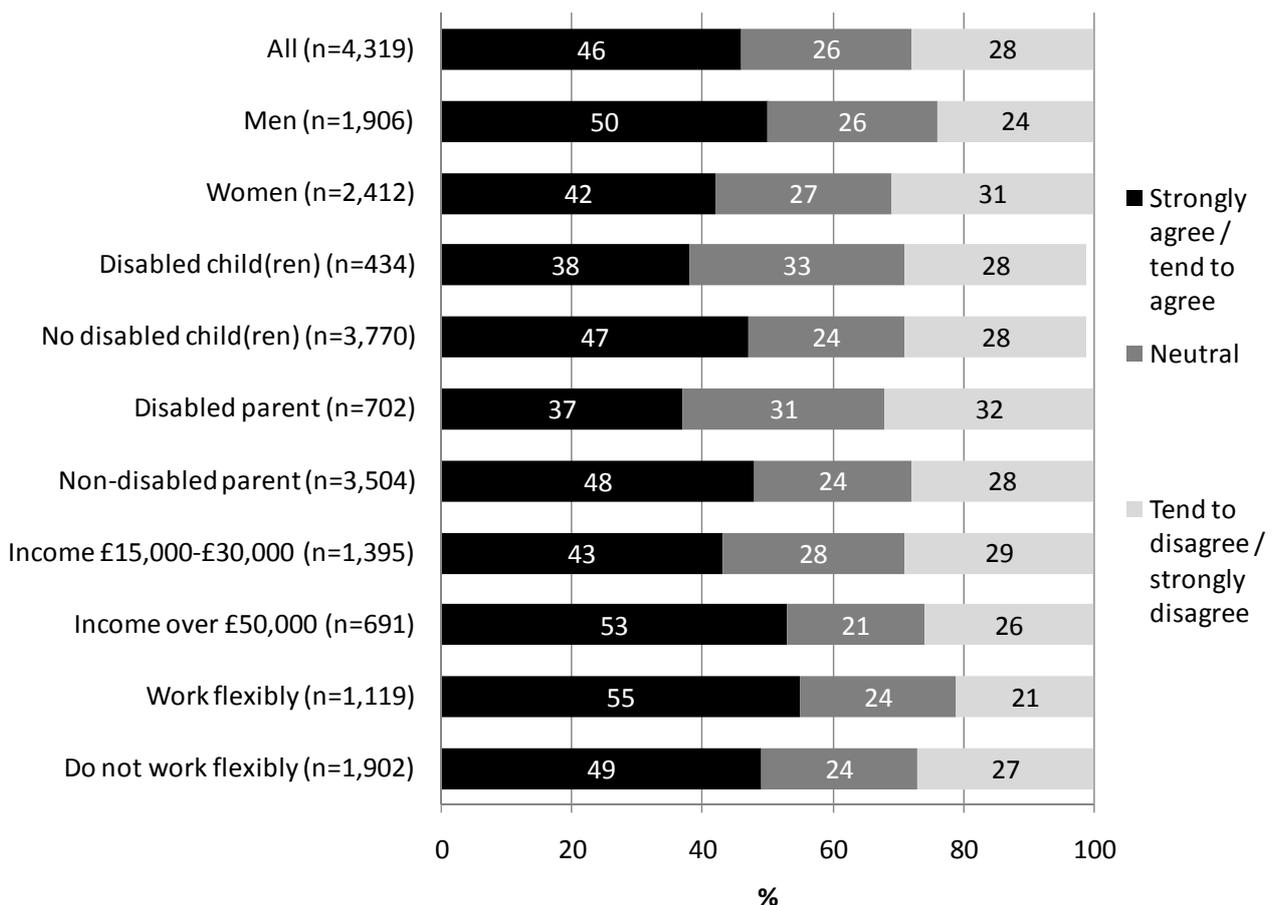
Figure 17: Parental attitudes on choice



Base: All respondents, excluding don't knows

The majority of parents agree (46 per cent) or are neutral (26 per cent) that it is possible to meet your work / career needs and the needs of your children. Twenty eight per cent do not think it is possible. Half of men think it is possible, a greater proportion than women (42 per cent). Disability is shown to be a key issue, with parents of disabled children less positive (38 per cent) than those without (47 per cent) and 37 per cent of disabled parents thinking it is possible, compared to a significantly higher 48 per cent of non-disabled parents.

Figure 18: It is possible to meet your work / career needs and the needs of your children

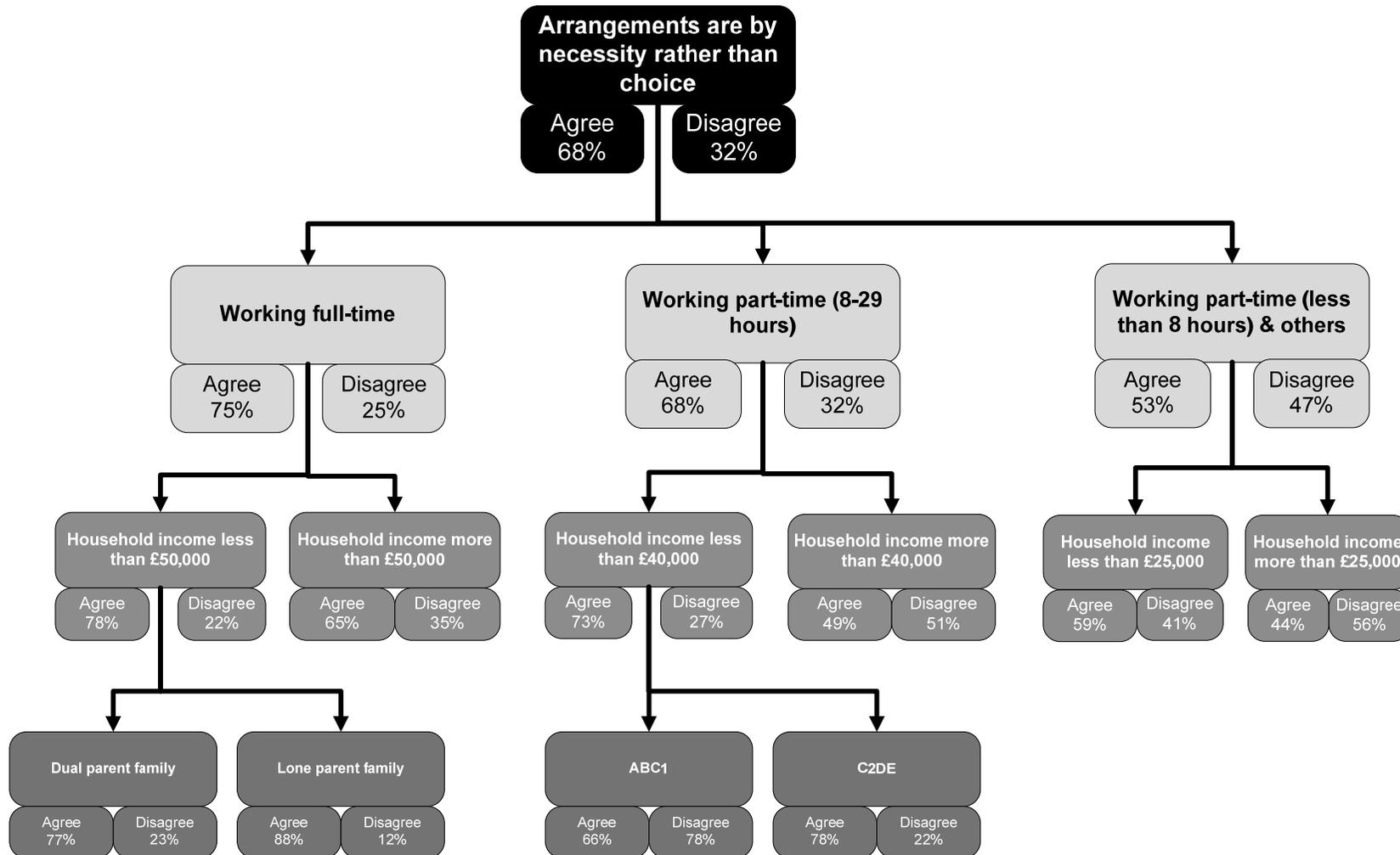


Base: All respondents, excluding don't knows

There is another clear indication of the effectiveness of flexible working in enabling parents to meet their career needs and the needs of their children. Fifty-five per cent of those who work flexibly feel that it is possible to meet the needs of career and children compared to 49 per cent of those who are employed but not currently working flexibly.

When parents considered how much choice they feel they have, the strongest determinant of their viewpoint is their working status (Figure 19). Those in full-time work are significantly more likely to agree that their arrangements are a result of necessity rather than choice. Within that significant sub-group, parents in households with an income below £50,000 per year are less likely to feel their arrangements are by choice, particularly if they are lone parents. Those who do not work or work fewer than 30 hours per week and have higher incomes are the least likely to agree that their arrangements are driven by necessity.

Figure 19: Arrangements are by necessity rather than choice (CHAID tree diagram)

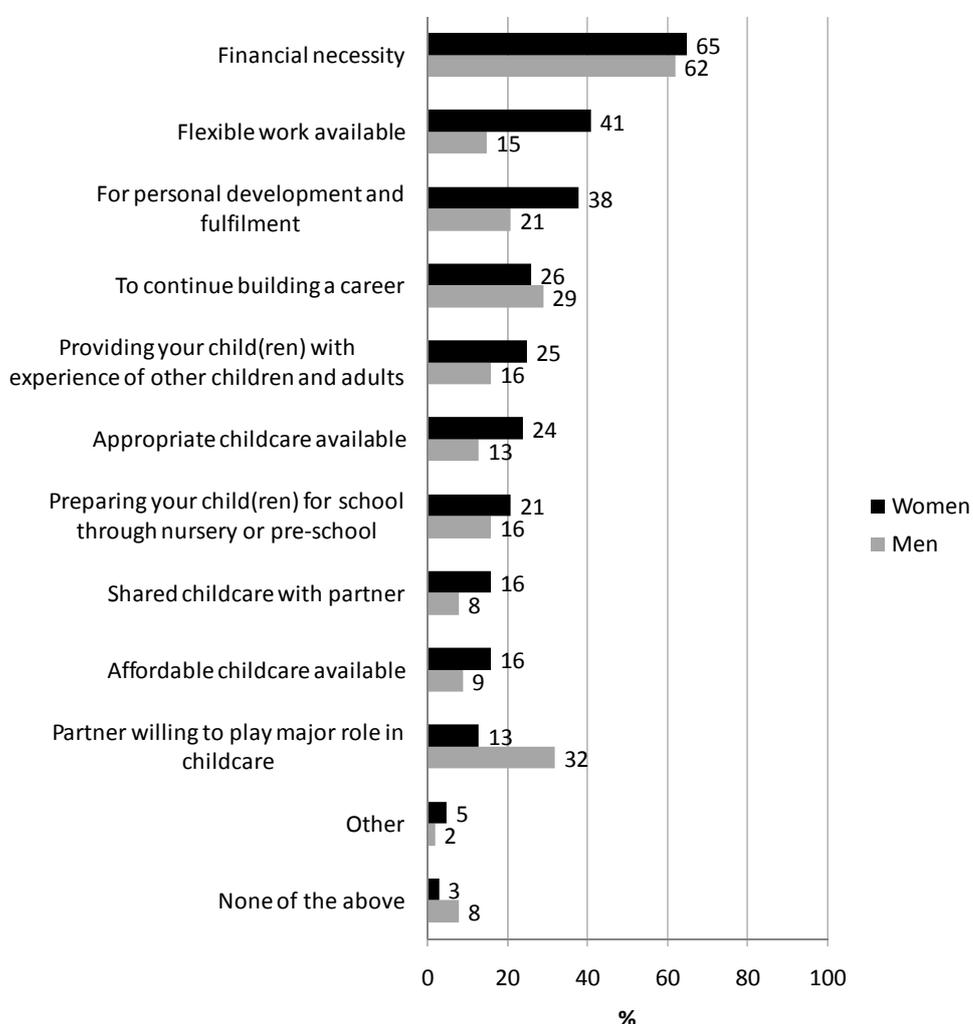


Note: Figures exclude neutral and don't know. CHAID model tested nine demographic variables.

5.2 The views of parents who work

Parents who work do so for a variety of reasons, but financial necessity is clearly the most common and is mentioned by nearly two-thirds of parents of pre-school and school age children. Figure 20 lists the important factors in the decision to work for employed parents of pre-school age children.

Figure 20: Working parents of pre-school children – were any of the following important factors in deciding to work? (by gender)



Base: Men (884) and women (811) in work with at least one pre-school age child

The list of drivers for working parents of pre-school age children divides into mechanistic and personal factors. The availability of flexible work is important for a significant 41 per cent of women and 24 per cent highlight the availability of appropriate childcare. Personal development and fulfilment is a key factor for mothers (38 per cent), as is the drive to continue building a career (26 per cent). The desire to work for personal fulfilment is stronger among lone parents (37 per cent) than those from dual family units (28 per cent), as is providing children with experience of interacting with other adults and children.

Among both pre and school age parents, those in the ABC1 socio-economic group are more likely to highlight financial necessity and personal development and fulfilment as reasons for working than those in the C2DE group. The link with income is clear, with 64 per cent of parents in higher income households (over £50,000) reporting financial necessity as an important factor in deciding to work compared to 55 per cent of those with an income under £15,000.

Similarly, building a career and achieving personal development and fulfilment become factors of higher importance as income increases. Working parents with higher incomes are more likely to cite the availability and affordability of childcare as important reasons why they feel able to work. The drivers of financial necessity and career building decline with parental age and an older profile of children within the family.

Parents in Scotland and Wales are particularly likely to work because of financial necessity. Sixty-nine per cent of parents in Scotland, and 72 per cent of parents in Wales cited this as one of the reasons for deciding to work. However, Scottish and Welsh parents are also more likely than average to consider personal development and fulfilment as a reason for working, while more parents in Wales than in the other regions say the availability of flexible working is one reason they are working (32 per cent).

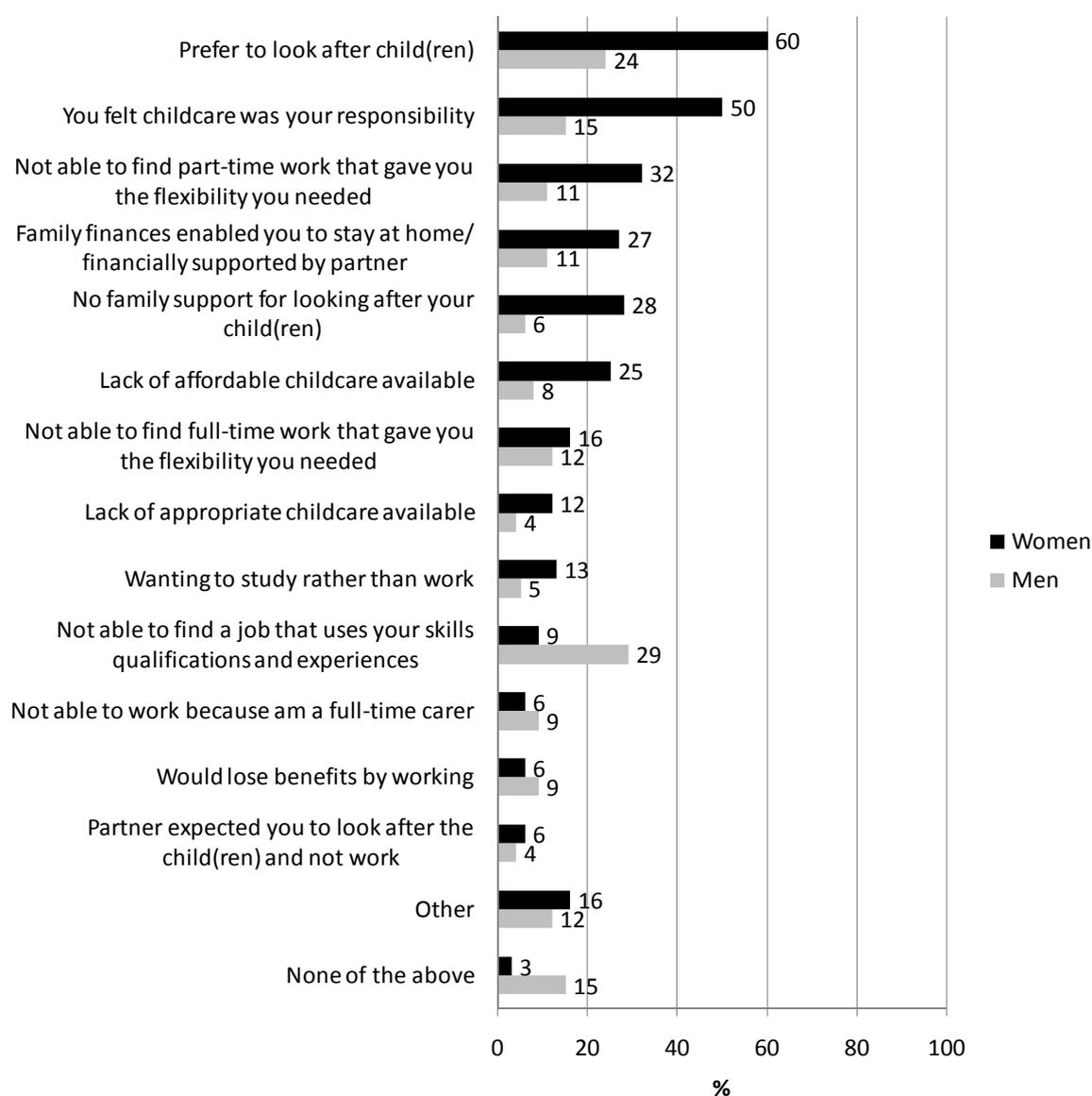
5.3 The views of non-working parents

Many non-working mothers of pre-school age children state that preferring to look after the children (60 per cent) and the feeling that looking after their children is their responsibility (50 per cent) are key factors in deciding not to work. However, a third of women in this group state that the lack of flexible

working opportunities, particularly part-time roles, is an important factor in not working. This indicates a preference to work if suitable employment were available.

Women also highlight a lack of family support (28 per cent) and affordable childcare (25 per cent) as Figure 21 sets out, while many men who are not working are simply unable to find a job at present.

Figure 21: Non-working parents of pre-school children – were any of the following important in not working? (by gender)

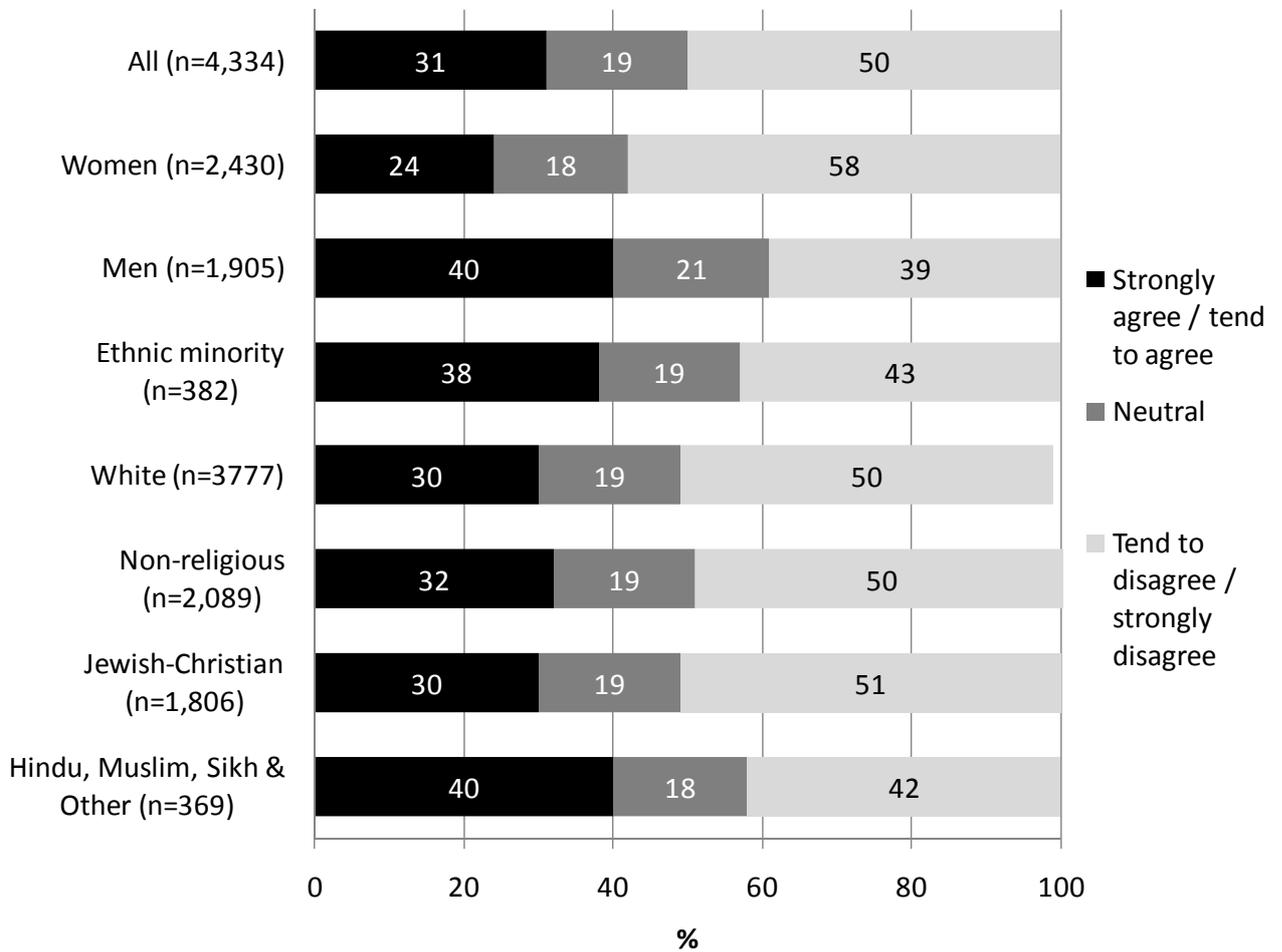


Base: Men (78) and women (538) not working with at least one pre-school age child

5.4 Access to jobs

The survey asked parents whether they thought mothers have the same access to good jobs as fathers. Overall only around a third believe that this is the case but there is a clear distinction between men’s and women’s perceptions: 40 per cent of men think mothers have the same access to good jobs as fathers, while only 24 per cent of women do.

Figure 22: Mothers have the same access to good jobs as fathers



Base: All respondents, excluding don't knows

Views do not significantly change with age or on the basis of working for employers of various sizes, but ethnic minority parents and those from a Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or other religious background feel that access is better than white, non-religious and Jewish / Christian parents.

Most women in the qualitative immersions felt that they did not have access to the same quality jobs as men. Some felt that because they were the primary carer, their working needs had to fit around the children thereby limiting their options. Many women had taken on a job because it fitted in with their child care responsibilities rather than because it was part of a considered career choice:

It is very difficult to have such a fulfilling career when you are at work for one day less per week. You sometimes get 'out of the loop' and some colleagues don't seem to think of you in the same way as they see you as 'part time'. As I have said before though, this is a small price to pay for spending more and higher quality time with each other and our son - I wouldn't trade it in for anything.

(LGB mother, online forum)

5.5 Making choices

For some of the families taking part in the qualitative research, the caring or working roles were approached from a practical point of view. The main wage earner tended to be the family member who retained the main responsibility for providing financially, while the other person changed their job, worked flexibly or took on the caring role full-time.

There were also cases where salary was not the key driver in deciding who took on the core responsibility of caring. For example, there were instances where one parent felt that their partner's career fulfilment was important to them and so agreed to take the primary caring role:

We couldn't afford nursery full-time so I am the chief carer for my daughter. We decided that as I had reached where I wanted to in my career and my wife had not, she would go back after maternity.

(Father in London, family immersion)

The message from the families who participated in the immersions was that their choices were often structured around what worked for them as a family unit. This was the same for all family types, from lone parents to gay couples and married people. This practical approach to balancing work and family life existed within a framework of opportunities and choices that were dependent on a long list of factors. These included the support available from the wider family; flexible working options; affordable and available external childcare; the differing salaries of each parent; and the types of paternity and maternity leave available from their employer.

We have learnt over the years that it helps for one of us to work only part-time, that way we can keep on top of 'managing' everything that goes on with school and work.

(Father, online forum)

This pragmatic approach to childcare was most apparent following a change in circumstances. For example, changes could be made to a parent's job if it did not fit in with a new family situation:

I had to change my job when I became a single mum as it was not practical to work the hours I did before.

(Mother, lone parent in Scotland, family immersion)

We saw earlier that few parents feel 'work comes first', rather, they feel that their working lives are organised around their children. The choices made by parents in the qualitative immersions tended to stem mainly from what was advantageous for the child, even if this meant working long hours to advance their careers:

We made a decision to have my wife give up work to concentrate on care, so this means I have to put the hours in to push my career forward.

(Father, young family, online forum)

Some parents felt that their choices were being eroded partly because of Government emphasis on getting parents to return to work, and especially if they were on benefits. Some felt that in encouraging parents back to work, most Government policies reflect a prioritisation of work over family life:

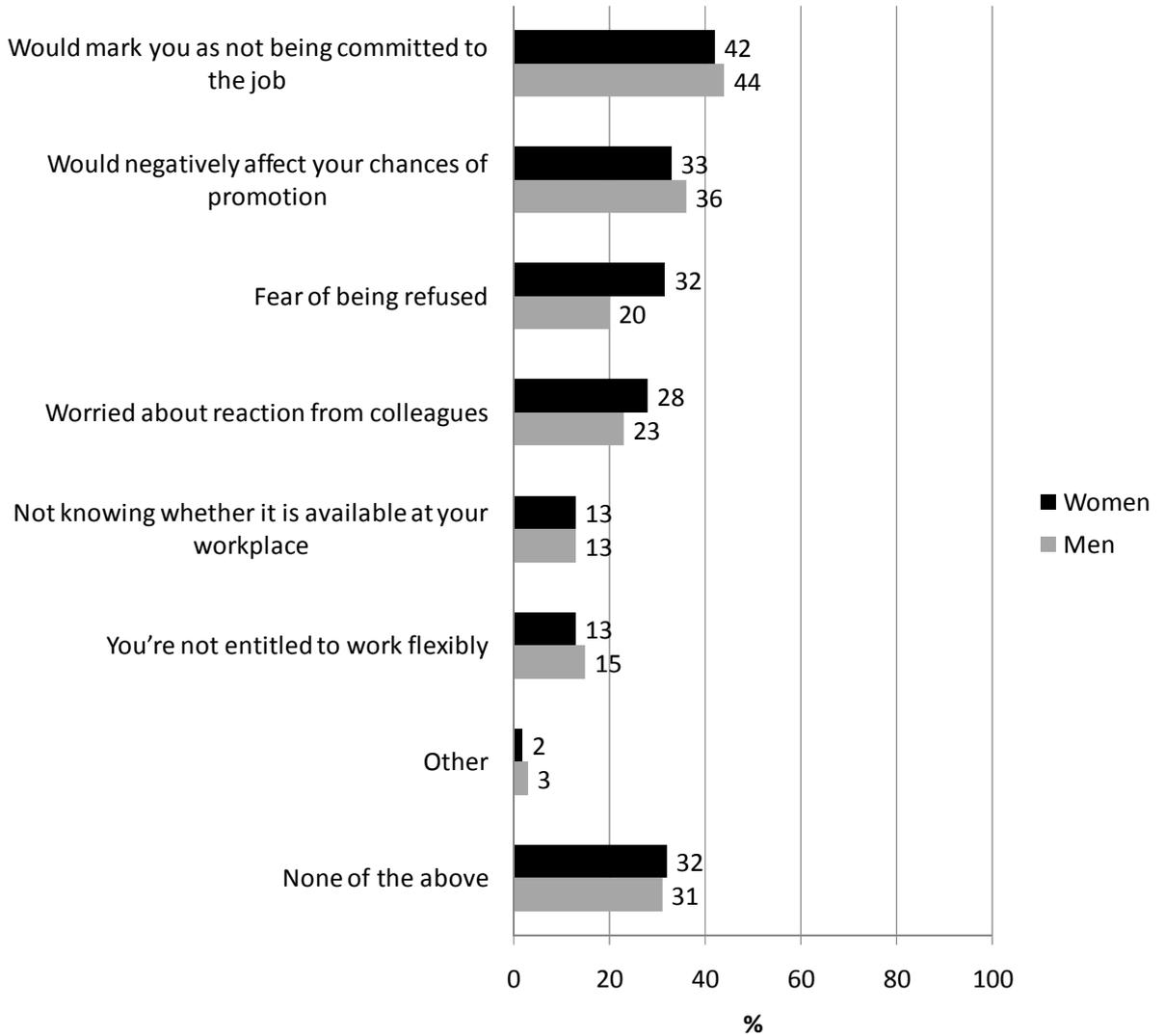
... society is geared that you should work. Government says that after your kid is 12 that you should work.

(Mother, lone parent in London, family immersion)

5.6 Barriers to the take-up of flexible working

Given the demand for flexible working and support for the extension of flexible working entitlements, what factors stop people requesting it? As Figure 23 shows, being marked out as not committed to their job (43 per cent), and the chance that flexible working would negatively affect chances of promotion (34 per cent) are key factors for both men and women. Fear of their request being refused is, however, of greater concern to women than men, as is worry about the reaction of colleagues.

Figure 23: What factors, if any, would stop you asking for flexible working? (by gender)



Base: All currently in work (men 1,720; women 1,579)

Concerns about promotion and commitment are more prominent for employees of large organisations and particularly those working in the financial and business services sector. Forty-one per cent of employees in this sector would be concerned about their chances of promotion and a high proportion would also have concerns about demonstrating commitment (50 per cent). This is shared by 46 per cent of parents who are employed in the manufacturing sector.

The concern of many financial and business services employees contrasts with the high numbers of flexible workers in that sector (see Chapter 4.1). This highlights issues of working culture within a sector that has been, along with public services, at the forefront of the expansion of flexible options.

Those who have some form of flexible working believe that it does not detract from their ability to do the job. Parents interviewed in the qualitative part of this study explained various strategies, including working late at night to get their work done:

My boss knows I am on my own so if the kids are sick she is ok that I need to leave to pick them up. But she also knows I will get the job done when I get home, even if it means I am working at midnight.

(Mother, lone parent in London, family immersion)

Evidence from the qualitative immersions suggests that parents avoid invoking the 'rights' element of the 'right to request' flexible working policy. Requesting flexible working is understood more in an informal sense, as the 'rights' aspect makes some parents feel uncomfortable rather than empowered. Some displayed cynicism with the policy for giving parents a right to ask, but not to get, flexible working. The feeling that 'demanding' rights can mark a person out as a difficult employee made some parents wary of their actions, particularly given the current economic climate:

I would never demand anything at work, especially at the moment with the credit crunch. I am over delivering as I need to make sure I can keep my job. So there is no way I would be demanding I have the right to time off! Especially as I am a dad with a disabled child, I don't want my peers to think I get special treatment.

(Father in Birmingham, family immersion)

5.7 How important is money?

Income is a key determinant of whether parents of pre-school children will include private nurseries in their childcare mix. Nurseries play a role for over a third (34 per cent) of those with an income over £50,000, compared to 17 per cent with an income between £15,000 and £30,000. Higher income families are also much more likely to use the services of a childminder, with the proportion of 12 per cent (with an income over £50,000) declining in relation to income.

For those with older children, income also determines how great a role after school clubs and activities play in the types of childcare that parents use. Ten per cent of those with incomes up to £15,000 include some after school activities, a proportion that rises with income to 18 per cent of those with over £50,000 per year.

Those with higher incomes are also more likely to refer to the availability of pre-school childcare as a reason for working, but also to value career building. There is some evidence that those with higher household incomes are less likely to believe that their arrangements are by necessity rather than choice. A third of those from households with incomes over £50,000 disagree, a figure that falls with income so that less than a quarter of those with a household income of less than £15,000 feel likewise.

Similarly parents with higher household incomes are more likely to feel that you can meet the needs of both career and children. Fifty-three per cent of those in high income households feel that this is possible, but this figure falls with income to 43 per cent of those in the £15,000 to £30,000 bracket. It was clear from the qualitative work that most parents on low to modest incomes with pre-

school children found private nurseries and other childcare unaffordable. Some families, in particular lone parents and families with disabled children were reliant on Tax Credit contributions towards the cost of nurseries.

5.8 In summary

Only around half of parents believe that their work and childcare arrangements are by choice rather than necessity, and less than half believe that you can meet the needs of both work and childcare. Financial necessity is the main factor for those parents who work, particularly in Scotland and Wales, although many working women mention personal fulfilment and the availability of flexible working as key reasons for doing so.

Many women who do not work choose to do so out of preference, but significant numbers of others cite the expense of childcare, the absence of support from the wider family and a lack of flexible work, particularly part-time jobs.

There is clear evidence that income affects the degree of choice that parents have. Those with higher incomes are more likely to include private nurseries and after school activities in their childcare mix. Higher income families are also more likely to believe that they can meet the needs of both work and care and are less likely to feel that their arrangements are bound by necessity.

6. WHAT WOULD HELP PARENTS?

6.1 Achieving a better balance

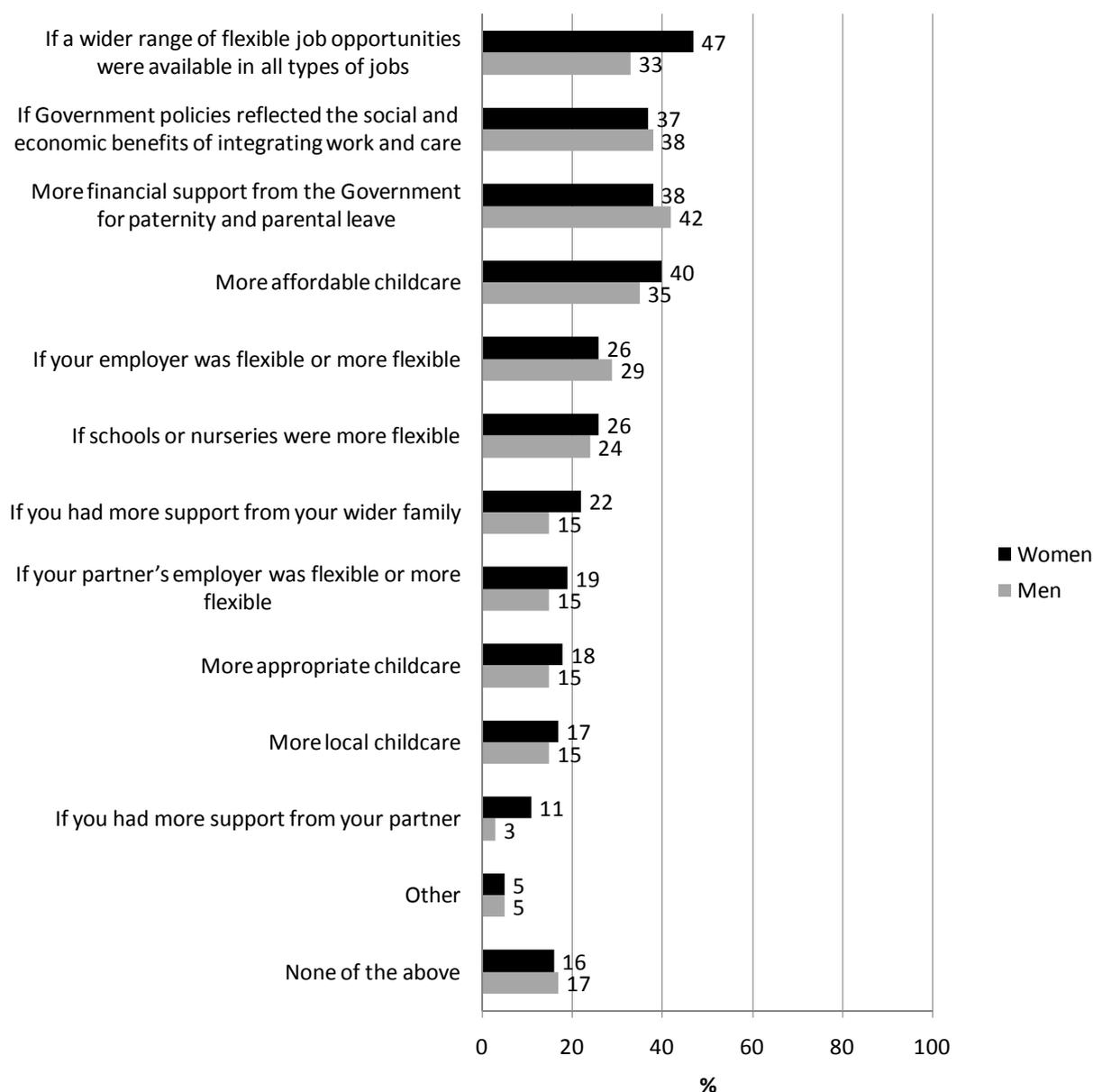
It has been established that some parents work long hours and do not spend as much time with their children as they would wish. Flexibility in working arrangements is seen as key to balancing work and care for many parents. When asked what would help their family to achieve a better balance, the most popular option is access to a wider range of flexible opportunities across all types of jobs. Women are particularly likely to think this (47 per cent), as Figure 24 shows. There is also a regional difference, with parents (and particularly mothers) in Wales being much more likely to choose this option (47 per cent of parents, 52 per cent of mothers) than parents in Scotland or the English regions.

Many parents, and fathers in particular, favoured greater Government support for paternity and parental leave. Parents also support a policy environment that would enable integration of work and care (38 per cent):

Government policies should be more balanced to suit everyone. They should recognise people who contribute to the economy (i.e. working parents - either single working parents, or both working parents) and offer various flexible solutions to help them. We have never had any financial support from the Government (as we both work) so have had to pay for private nursery care for our daughter and son. We had to delay having a second child as we just couldn't afford to pay private nursery fees for two kids at once. If I had stopped working, we would have received child tax credit. But what incentive is that when I want to work?

(Mother, parent of older children, online forum)

Figure 24: What would help your family achieve a better balance between work and children? (by gender)



Base: All respondents (men 1,947; women 2,496)

The role that money, or lack of it, plays in achieving a work-childcare balance is also shown in the responses. Thirty seven per cent think that more affordable childcare would help. This is particularly significant among women.

It was shown in Chapter 3 that there is a perception gap between men and women over whether childcare is equally shared. Although women are less likely than men to think that childcare is shared equally, this does not appear to translate into an identified need for more support from their partners (Figure 24). Nonetheless, the percentage of women stating this as an issue is greater than the proportion of men (11 per cent compared with three per cent of men).

There is also a clear message for employers to adopt more flexibility, particularly from women (47 per cent), and for flexibility to be consistently available across more types of industry.

Governmental support for flexible working for both men and women would make things much easier for many people. Also, many employers are unwilling to embrace technologies that would enable their employees to work from home. For example, there is no reason whatsoever why most contact centres couldn't use home workers (this is much more prevalent in the USA than the UK). I think there is a perception that home workers are skiving and not working.

(Mother, lone parent, online forum)

Flexibility was a theme outside the workplace as well, with a quarter requesting greater flexibility from schools and nurseries. This finding was echoed amongst some of the participants in the qualitative research:

I hear stories about people being fined for every minute they are late picking their child up from nursery; that just adds to the stress we working mothers are already under! There does need to be more flexibility in terms of opening hours and the type of care offered.

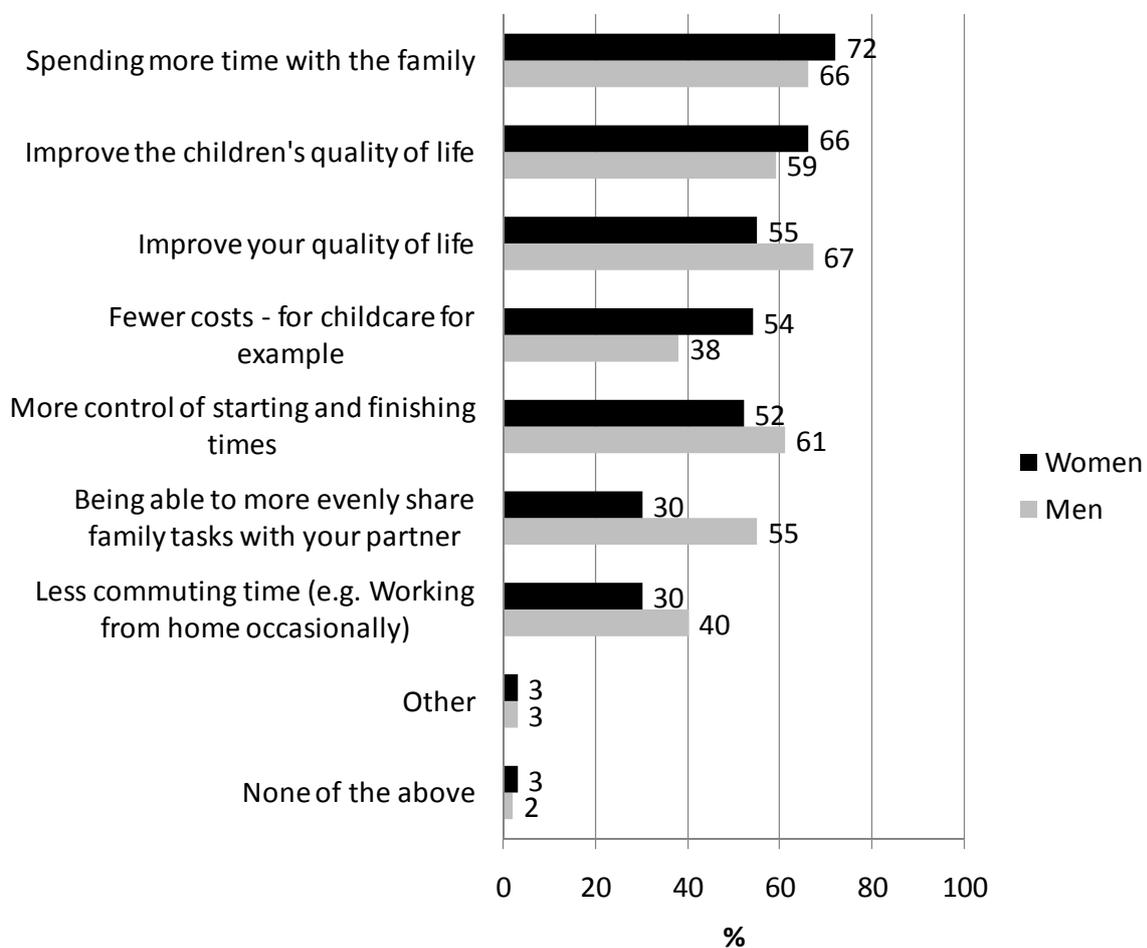
(Mother, new parent, family immersion)

6.2 The value of flexible working

Those who currently work flexibly clearly feel the benefits of doing so. Flexible workers spend more time with their family (70 per cent) and many believe that it

improves the quality of their (60 per cent) and their children’s (63 per cent) lives. Figure 25 illustrates how women are more likely than men to highlight the cost saving aspects of flexible working, whereas over half of men feel that it helps them to share family responsibilities.

Figure 25: What do you think are the main benefits of flexible working for you? (by gender)



Base: All those currently working flexibly (men 472; women 679)

The following pen portrait shows the value of working flexibly for a dad of two children who took action to reduce his hours and received support from his employer.

Figure 26: Pen portrait three – Paul on the value of flexible working



Paul is married with a daughter aged two and another aged 15 months. Paul cut his hours at work in order to help with child care at home. His employers are very supportive and flexible with his hours, he doesn't think he would be able to cope if they weren't so flexible. He feels that working flexibly is allowing him to be a 'real' dad as he can spend more time with his children. He has sympathy for parents who are unable to do this due to heavy workloads.

6.3 New ideas on maternity and paternity leave

While lengthening the current maternity arrangements is supported by one fifth of parents, there is greater support for lengthening paternity leave with over half of women (53 per cent) and 47 per cent of men demonstrating their support for this.

Table 7: Support for lengthening maternity and paternity leave and the entitlement for children under five to have up to 13 weeks unpaid leave (by gender)

	Per cent:		
	All	Men	Women
Maternity leave should be longer	21	20	22
Paternity leave should be longer	50	47	53
Current unpaid parental leave entitlement should be longer	12	12	13
<i>Base: All respondents</i>	4,433	1,947	2,496

As a father I feel that the two weeks I received wasn't enough time for me to be at home with our new addition to the family. I felt tired, stressed and never really got back into work for a couple more weeks after that.

(Father, parent of a child under one, online forum)

There are variations within the overall findings. The proportion of ethnic minority women believing that paternity leave should be lengthened is higher than average at 58 per cent. Similarly, parents of children aged under one are more likely than other parents to believe the time should be lengthened (61 per cent). On the other hand, sole traders and people employed in micro businesses (employing one to nine people) are least likely to want lengthened paternity leave. There is significantly lower demand for increasing the 13 week unpaid leave entitlement for those with children aged under five.

I think paternity leave is not long enough, if like me you are unwell after having a baby you want your partner there for support, I spent two weeks in hospital came out and my husband had to go back to work. Maternity leave is not too bad – better than nothing – and parental leave is a waste of time because I don't know anyone including us who could afford to take 13 weeks off unpaid.

(Mother, young parent, online forum)

Given those views on paternity leave, what do parents think would help them? The survey asked parents whether they supported or opposed two possible policies. The first was the introduction of additional paternity leave for fathers (or nominated carers) whose partner was in work. In order to qualify, their partner would need to transfer their unused maternity leave entitlement to the father or nominated carer. The second was that fathers (or nominated carers) should have an extra specific amount of paid leave time in addition to paternity leave. This could be up to four weeks in the child's first year.

The survey found good levels of support for both of these proposals, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Support or opposition on two paternity leave options

	Per cent:		
	Support	Oppose	Don't know
Additional paternity leave transferred from maternity allowance	52	20	28
Possible paid leave for 4 weeks on top of paternity allowance	65	12	24
<i>Base: All respondents</i>	4,433	1,947	2,496

There is firmer support for the idea of having extra paid leave in addition to paternity leave than for transferring unused maternity leave. There is, however, a high proportion of parents who are undecided about whether or not they support the proposals. It is possible that a more detailed explanation of the financial and practical implications would be required for them to reach an informed opinion.

There was uniformity of opinion between men and women on the idea of additional transferred paternity leave, but significantly higher support from women for an additional four weeks paid leave for fathers. In the case of the latter, two-thirds of women (68 per cent) supported the proposal in comparison with 61 per cent of men. Sharing or transferring a fixed allowance was viewed as a positive proposal by this online forum participant:

Being able to spend unbroken quality time with your child at the start of their life to build up general security and a special bond is immeasurable. We would have benefitted greatly if we could have shared the two parent allowance of time between us rather than just one of us getting the full year.

(Mother, civil partnership, older children, online forum)

Looking at the patterns of support and opposition, four weeks additional paid leave is favoured most strongly amongst younger and newer parents. Seventy-three per cent of those aged 18 to 34 support this compared to 48 per cent of those aged 45 to 64. There is some indication that those who identify as religious are less likely to support the transfer proposal. Forty-eight per cent of parents in the 'Hindu, Muslim, Sikh & other' religions group are in favour, compared with 53 per cent of those who are not religious. However, support for the additional four weeks is strong amongst all religious backgrounds.

There is greater support for leave transfer among higher income parents with 57 per cent of those earning over £50,000 supporting the idea, compared to 45 per cent of those with under £15,000. There is similar support across incomes for the additional four weeks paternity leave, peaking at 69 per cent of those with between £30,000 and £50,000 but falling to 62 per cent amongst the highest income group. This might reflect the older ages of parents or the presence of older children in higher income groups, and hence a lower degree of relevance.

There are also differences between those working for employers of different sizes and within different industries. Both ideas receive higher support from those working for large employers than from employees of micro and small organisations.

Supporting a proposal is one thing; taking advantage of a proposal if it came into being is another. When asked whether they would take advantage (or encourage their partners to take advantage) of any form of extra family leave time if they were having a baby, 58 per cent stated that they definitely would,

with a further 29 per cent believing that they probably would. Only 13 per cent thought they would not.

Most parents in the qualitative research felt that the current amount of maternity leave is sufficient and is an invaluable opportunity for mothers to get to know their baby and form a close bond. However, there was a sense that maternity leave is poorly subsidised and that parents have to rely on their savings or relieve financial pressures in other ways (such as through taking mortgage breaks) if they take the full maternity allowance:

I don't think it is adequate [maternity leave] ...it is difficult to take unpaid leave. I took a year off with both my children but took a break in my mortgage payments for three months with each child to help with this.

(Mother, young families, online forum)

Most of the qualitative research participants also felt that paternity leave needs to be longer in order for the other parent to bond with the child and provide support for the other partner. It was suggested that interchangeable maternity and paternity leave would be helpful by allowing each family to decide what works best for them.

6.4 Views on the right to request flexible working

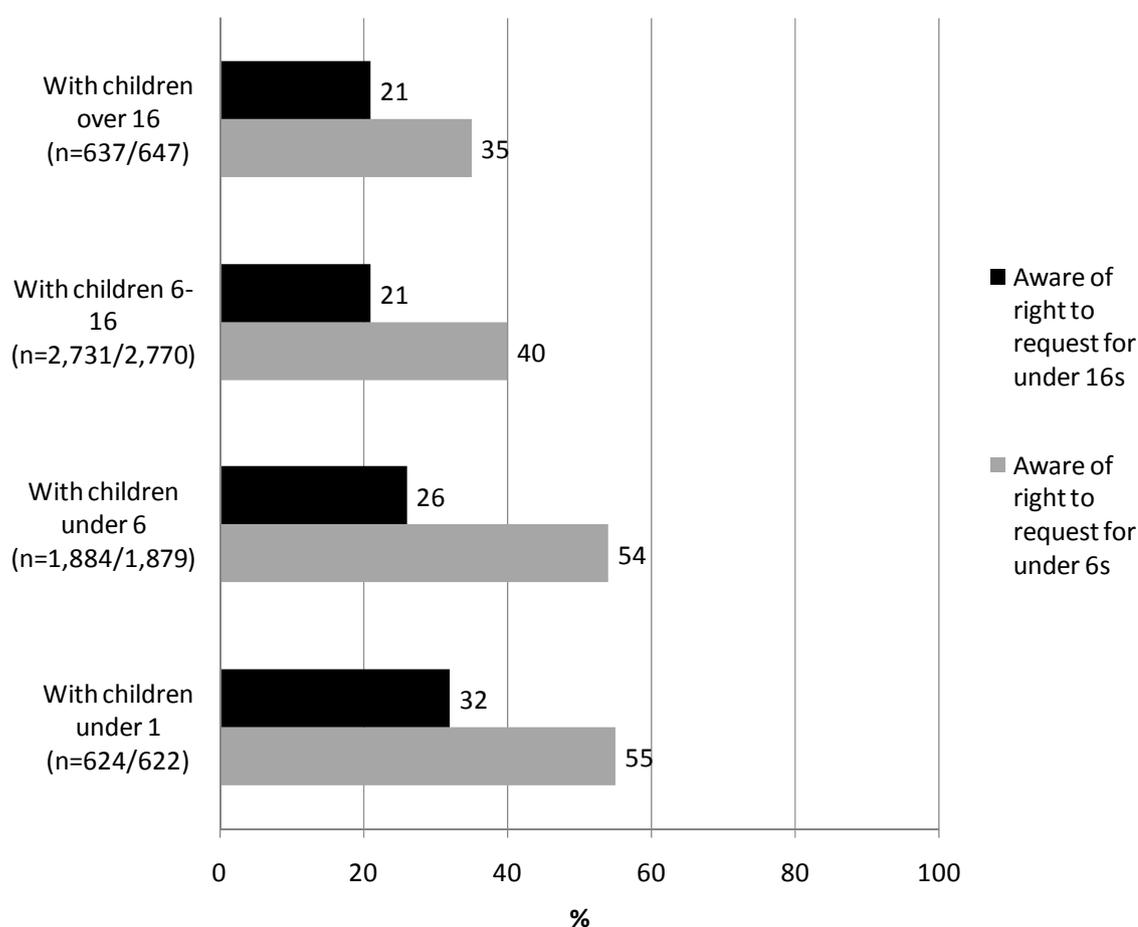
It was in Chapter 5 that those who currently work flexibly tend to view their work-care balance more favourably than those who do not. Under current legislation working parents with children aged under six years old have the right to request flexible working from their employer.

Awareness of this right is low with only 46 per cent being aware of it before taking the survey. For parents from social grades C2DE the figure is only 35 per cent, compared with 54 per cent of ABC1 parents. Accordingly, awareness also varies with household income.

As might be expected, awareness was greater amongst parents with younger children as they form the target group for the existing right to request flexible

working. At 54 per cent, among those with at least one child under six, awareness is higher than the average (see Figure 27).

Figure 27: Awareness of the right to request (by age of children)



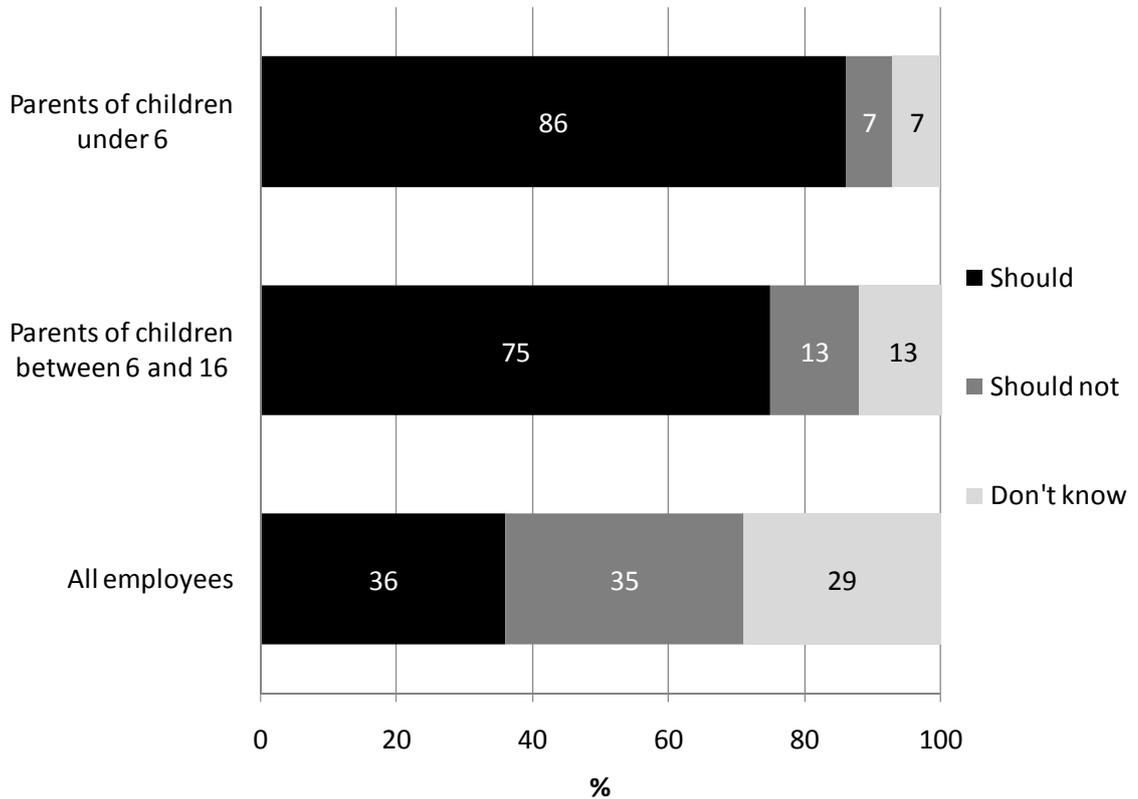
Base: All respondents (4,433)

Awareness of the proposed changes to extend the right to request flexible working to parents of children under 16 years old from April 2009 is even lower. Only 23 per cent are aware of this with those in the C2DE social grades again having the lowest level of awareness. Fourteen per cent of this group, compared to 30 per cent of those in the ABC1 group, are aware of the proposal.

6.5 Views on the right to have flexible working

Although awareness of the current right to request is low there appears to be strong support for the right to have flexible working, at least for parents of under 6s and under 16s, as Figure 28 illustrates.

Figure 28: Support for the right to have flexible working by broad age category of child



Base: All respondents (4,433)

Eighty-six per cent of parents believe that the right to have should be granted to parents with children under six years old. A slightly smaller proportion believe it should also apply to parents of children aged between 6 and 16. Only around a third think it should be extended to all regardless of whether they have children.

Women are stronger supporters, with 80 per cent supporting the right to have for parents of children aged between six and 16, compared to 68 per cent of men. The gap between men and women is closer for the right to have for

parents of under children under six, but women are still slightly more likely to support the idea.

Younger parents are more likely to support the right to have flexible working for both parents of children under age 6 and parents of children aged 6 to 16. For example, 76 per cent of parents aged 18 to 34 favour the idea for parents aged 6 to 16, while 69 per cent of older parents (aged 45 to 64) are in support.

6.6 In summary

When asked what would help them achieve their work and childcare aspirations, parents focused on the wider availability of flexible working, more Government support for paternity leave, more affordable childcare and Government policies that recognise the benefits of work and care for society as a whole.

Awareness of both the current right to request flexible working and this year's extension to parents of children up to 16 years was low.

There is significant support for (and little opposition to) extending paternity leave, but far fewer parents support the extension of maternity leave. Around half support the idea to increase paternity leave via a transfer from maternity leave, but more parents favour the simple addition of four weeks paid parental leave for fathers.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The majority of modern parents reject many of the traditional values associated with children, child care and work. Although parents no longer aspire to traditional work and care roles, the practicalities involved in meeting work and care needs drive parents to maximise the opportunities and resources at their disposal. The practical decisions that many parents make involve complex calculations, carried out at the micro level and reviewed and adjusted on a regular basis depending upon the resources at their disposal and the opportunities they have. This means that parents are increasingly flexible between roles and responsibilities that inform the arrangements that they put in place for child care and work.

However, although only 29 per cent of parents believe that childcare is the primary responsibility of the mother, 76 per cent of women state that in reality they have that responsibility. Few women feel that they share responsibility for childcare, although a third of men believe that they do. Although parents are increasingly flexible, the responsibility for childcare still falls disproportionately upon women.

Very few men work part-time and many work long hours. Sixty per cent of working fathers put in more than 40 hours a week, compared to just a third of working mothers. Many fathers (particularly those with young children) feel that they do not spend enough time with their children.

Flexible working is highly valued and parents who are able to work flexibly clearly believe it improves their family well-being. Mothers highlight the availability of flexible working as a key reason for being able or not able to work. When asked what would help improve their work and child care balance, the availability of flexible working across all types of jobs was the most popular response. This research has found that a wide range of flexible working options are available to parents, but not uniformly available across all industry sectors.

Access to flexible working tends to come about through informal negotiation or by starting a job where it already exists. Formal requests are less common. Many parents still fear that flexible workers are seen to be lacking commitment and women in particular are concerned about being refused if they do negotiate

or make a request. Awareness of the current and future rights to request are low, but support for a 'right to have' is strong for parents of children under one and under six.

Paternity leave is highly valued, and those who have experienced it are overwhelmingly positive about its impact on the family. Almost all of those who did not take it would like to have done so. Most parents believe that the current length of maternity and unpaid parental leave is about right, but there is strong support for longer, paid, paternity leave.

Just over half of parents support the idea of additional paternity leave transferred from maternity allowance, although a fifth disagree, particularly women. There is higher support among both men and women (65 per cent) for an extra four weeks' paternity leave, with only one in 10 disagreeing.

Families draw upon a wide range of childcare support options. The role of the wider family (especially grandparents) is crucial for many, as is the availability and affordability of private and public childcare. Schools are increasingly providing wrap-around care and this new sense of flexibility outside the workplace is strongly valued.

While there are many options and opportunities for parents to balance work and care, in practice the amount of money parents have at their disposal plays an important part in the choices they make and their ability to take advantage of these opportunities. Those with higher incomes do tend to feel that they have a better compromise between work and childcare. They are more likely to use private nurseries and access after school clubs and activities for their children, and to feel as though they are working through choice rather than necessity. However, few parents, regardless of income, feel that they have genuine choice and only half believe that it is possible to meet the needs of both work and children.

Parents are keen to be as self-sufficient as possible and have some concerns about the role Government should play in helping families to achieve a better balance between work and care. Measures that embed flexibility in the workplace, alter working culture, increase affordable childcare and extend

paternity leave are viewed positively for the benefits they offer to both children and parents.

APPENDIX A – SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

PAGE 6

BASE: All

Are you...

Male

Female

PAGE 10

BASE: All

How many children within each of these age bands do you have living at home with you?

Under 1

1 to 5

6 to 10

11 to 16

17 or 18

19 or older

None

1

2

3

4 or more

PAGE 15

BASE: All parents / carers

Which of the following best describes your employment status?

Working full-time (30 hours a week or more)

Working part-time (8-29 hours a week)

Working part-time (less than 8 hours a week)

Retired

Full-time student / in school

Unemployed but looking for work

Not working and not looking for work

Other

PAGE 16

BASE: Parents / carers who work full-time

On average, how many hours do you typically work in a week (including overtime and weekends)?

- Less than 30 hours
- Between 30 and 39 hours
- Between 40 and 49 hours
- Between 50 and 59 hours
- Over 60 hours
- Don't know

PAGE 17

BASE: All parents / carers

Do you have a partner living with you as part of your household?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

The next question is about caring responsibilities. By 'caring' we mean providing help and support to a partner, relative, friend or neighbour who could not manage without your help. You don't have to live with them or look after them full-time to be a carer, you may visit them regularly for example.

Apart from your children, do you have any other caring responsibilities?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

PAGE 18

BASE: All with a partner

Which of the following best describes your partner's employment status?

- Working full-time (30 hours a week or more)
- Working part-time (8-29 hours a week)
- Working part-time (less than 8 hours a week)
- Retired
- Full-time student / in school
- Unemployed but looking for work
- Not working and not looking for work
- Other

PAGE 19

BASE: All whose partner works full-time

On average, how many hours does your partner typically work in a week (including overtime and weekends)?

Less than 30 hours

Between 30 and 39 hours

Between 40 and 49 hours

Between 50 and 59 hours

Over 60 hours

Don't know

PAGE 20

BASE: Parents / carers who work full or part-time

Which of the following most closely describes your industry or profession?

AGRICULTURE, HUNTING, FORESTRY & FISHING

(mining and quarrying manufacturing / construction, farming, landscape gardening, fishing, hunting, environmental and land based industries, mining and quarrying etc)

ELECTRICITY, GAS AND WATER SUPPLY

(e.g. production and distribution of electricity, manufacture and distribution of gas, collection, purification and distribution of water)

MANUFACTURING

(e.g. manufacturing of chemicals, food and drink, textiles and footwear, electrical equipment, machinery, transport equipment, leather and wood products etc)

CONSTRUCTION

(e.g. demolition and construction of buildings, roads, sports facilities, water projects, civil engineering, building installation, plumbing, plastering, joinery, renting of construction or demolition equipment)

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, DEFENCE, EDUCATION & HEALTH

(e.g. army, navy, airforce, central or local government, police, fire, primary, secondary, higher and adult education, health and social work including nursing, dental, veterinary, charitable social work etc)

HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS & LEISURE

(e.g. hotels, camping and other holiday centres, self catering holidays, restaurants, take away food, bars, clubs, canteens and other types of catering)

WHOLESALE & RETAIL, REPAIR OF VEHICLES, PERSONAL & HOUSEHOLD GOODS

(e.g. sale, maintenance and repair of motor vehicles, retail sale of fuel, wholesale of food and drink, fuels, machinery, furniture, household goods including cosmetics and jewellery, textiles and

footwear, agricultural raw materials, waste materials etc. Shops including chemists, newsagents, clothing and footwear, food and drink, leather goods, furniture, lighting, household appliances, jewellery, clocks and watches, sports equipment, toys and games, mail order and online shopping, second hand stores, repair of personal and household goods etc)

TRANSPORT, STORAGE AND COMMUNICATION

(e.g. railways, taxis, buses, freight, haulage, cargo handling and storage, furniture removal services, transport via pipeline, water transport, passenger sea and water transport, airports and airlines, companies supporting land, water and air transport, travel and tour operators, tour guides, post and courier services, telecommunications)

FINANCIAL AND BUSINESS SERVICES

(e.g. legal, estate agents, banks, insurance companies, recruitment companies, business and financial, accountancy, book-keeping and auditing, management of retail, wholesale, construction, catering, motor trades, transport etc, architectural and engineering activities, security services, advertising, sales and marketing, PR, management consultants, IT and computing and related activities, research and development, renting of machinery and equipment, exhibition, fair and conference organisers, photographic, secretarial and translation services, design activities etc)

OTHER COMMUNITY, SOCIAL AND PERSONAL SERVICE ACTIVITIES

(e.g. sewage and waste disposal, trade unions, religious, political or other membership organisations, motion picture and video production, projection or other related activities, radio and television, theatre, amusement parks, discos, dance instructors, news agency activities, library archives, museums and other cultural activities, sporting activities, hairdressers, beauty treatments, other physical well-being activities, washing and dry-cleaning, funeral and related activities)

Which of the following most clearly matches your position at work?

Owner/ Proprietor / Partner

Chair / Chief Executive / Managing Director / Director / Non Executive Director

Other senior manager or director below board level

Middle manager

Junior manager / team leader / supervisor

Executive / clerical / other worker with no managerial responsibilities

Other

None of these

Including yourself, approximately how many full-time employees are employed by your organisation in the UK?

Just me

2 to 9

10 to 49

50 to 249

More than 250

Don't know

SECTION 1: BASELINE CURRENT WORK / CARE ARRANGEMENTS

PAGE 40

BASE: All parents / carers of pre-school age children

You said that you had a child or children aged up to five.

From Monday to Friday, what types of childcare do you have for your pre-school age child(ren)? [Please tick all that apply]

At home with you

At home with your partner

Private nursery / daycare

Local council run nursery / daycare

A pre-school club

With grandparent/s

With other family members

With your friends or neighbours

At home with a nanny / au pair

With a child minder

Other (please type in below)

None of the above

If you ticked 'other', please type in. Otherwise, please leave this box blank.

Please explain why you arrived at these arrangements?

PAGE 44

BASE: Parents who work (pre-school)

You said earlier that you are working full or part-time currently, and have a child or children aged up to five.

Were any of the following important factors in deciding to work? [Please tick all that apply]

Financial necessity

For personal development and fulfilment

Appropriate childcare available

Affordable childcare available

Shared childcare with partner

Partner willing to play major role in childcare

Providing your child(ren) with experience of other children and adults

Flexible work available

To continue building a career

Preparing your child(ren) for school through nursery or pre-school

Other (please type in below)

None of the above

If you ticked 'other', please type in. Otherwise, please leave this box blank.

PAGE 45

BASE: parents not working (pre-school)

You said earlier that you are not currently working, and have a child or children aged up to five.

Were any of the following important factors in not working? [Please tick all that apply]

Prefer to look after child(ren)

Family finances enabled you to stay at home / financially supported by partner

Would lose benefits by working

Not able to work because am a full-time carer

Not able to find a job that uses your skills, qualifications and experiences

Not able to find full-time work that gave you the flexibility you needed

Not able to find part-time work that gave you the flexibility you needed

Wanting to study rather than work

Lack of appropriate childcare available

Lack of affordable childcare available

No family support for looking after your child(ren)

You felt childcare was your responsibility

Partner expected you to look after the child(ren) and not work

Other (please type in below)

None of the above

If you ticked 'other', please type in. Otherwise, please leave this box blank.

PAGE 50

BASE: All parents / carers of school-age children

You said that you had a child or children aged between six and 16.

From Monday to Friday, before and after school what types of childcare do you have for your child(ren)? [Please tick all that apply]

At home with you

At home with your partner

Breakfast clubs at their school

After school / holiday clubs at their school

With grandparent/s

With other family members

With your friends or neighbours

At home with a nanny / au pair

With a child minder

In after school activities e.g. sport / drama

Child(ren) old enough to look after themselves

Child(ren) with their friends

Other (please type in below)

None of the above

If you ticked 'other', please type in. Otherwise, please leave this box blank.

Please explain why you arrived at these arrangements?

PAGE 60

BASE: Parents who work (school age)

You said earlier that you are working full or part-time currently, and have a child or children aged six to 16.

Were any of the following important factors in deciding to work? [Please tick all that apply]

Financial necessity

For personal development and fulfilment

Appropriate childcare available

Affordable childcare available

Shared childcare with partner

Partner willing to play major role in childcare

Children independent

Flexible work available

To continue building a career

Preparing your child(ren) for school through nursery or pre-school

Other (please type in below)

None of the above

If you ticked 'other', please type in. Otherwise, please leave this box blank.

PAGE 70

BASE: Parents not working (school age)

You said earlier that you are not currently working, and have a child or children aged six to 16.

Were any of the following important factors in not working? [Please tick all that apply]

Prefer to look after child(ren)

Family finances enabled you to stay at home / financially supported by partner

Would lose benefits by working

Not able to work because am a full-time carer

Not able to find a job that uses your skills, qualifications and experiences

Not able to find full-time work that gave you the flexibility you needed

Not able to find part-time work that gave you the flexibility you needed

Wanting to study rather than work

Lack of appropriate childcare available

Lack of affordable childcare available

No family support for looking after your child(ren)

You felt childcare was your responsibility

Partner expected you to look after the child(ren) and not work

Other (please type in below)

None of the above

If you ticked 'other', please type in. Otherwise, please leave this box blank.

SECTION 2: CHOICES & ATTITUDES

PAGE 80

BASE: All parents / carers

Do you feel that you spend too much, too little or about the right amount of time with your child(ren)?

Too much

Too little

About the right amount

Don't know

Do you feel that your partner spends too much, too little, or about the right amount of time with your child(ren)?

Too much

Too little
About the right amount
Don't know

Do you feel that you spend too much, too little, or about the right amount of time at work?

Too much
Too little
About the right amount
Don't know

Do you feel that your partner spends too much, too little, or about the right amount of time at work?

Too much
Too little
About the right amount
Don't know

Who has the primary responsibility for childcare in your home?

You
Your partner
Grandparent
Other relative
Shared with partner
Shared with grandparent
Shared with other relative
Other (please explain below)

If you ticked other, please type in

PAGE 90

BASE: All parents / carers

To what extent do you agree or disagree that your current arrangements...

Are a good compromise between work and children

Cause tension or stress in your family

Are by necessity rather than choice

Are good for the well-being of the family

Are a result of how you were brought up

Are better than when you were growing up

Strongly agree

Tend to agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Tend to disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

Not applicable

PAGE 100

BASE: All parents / carers

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Work has to come first

Children have to come first

It is possible to meet your work / career needs and the needs of your child(ren)

Partners can share work / career and childcare equally

Childcare is the primary responsibility of the mother

Employers can offer flexible working and maintain or improve their performance

The parent who is paid more should stay at work regardless of whether they are male or female

Parents have a choice whether to spend time with their children or at work

Young children should spend time away from their parents to develop important life skills

Fathers are responsible for providing for their family

Fathers should spend more time caring for their children

Women have the same access to good jobs as men

Mothers have the same access to good jobs as fathers

Strongly agree

Tend to agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Tend to disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

PAGE 110

BASE: All parents / carers

What would help your family to achieve a better balance between work and children? [Please tick all that apply]

More financial support from the Government for paternity and parental leave

More local childcare

More affordable childcare

More appropriate childcare

If schools or nurseries were more flexible

If you had more support from your partner

If you had more support from your wider family

If your employer was flexible or more flexible

If your partner's employer was flexible or more flexible

If a wider range of flexible job opportunities were available in all types of jobs

If Government policies reflected the social and economic benefits of integrating work and care

Other (please type in below)

None of the above

If you ticked other, please type in

PAGE 130

BASE: All parents / carers

Do you think that the economic downturn will affect your work and child care arrangements?

Yes

No

Don't know

PAGE 140

BASE: Parents / carers who think that the downturn will affect things

How might the economic downturn change things? [Please tick all that apply]

Need to go back to work to improve finances

Work longer hours

Cut down on formal childcare that you pay for (e.g. childminders or nurseries)

Rely more on childcare that you don't pay for (e.g. friends and family or school)

Less time to spend with children

Household income may fall

More pressure and stress at work

Risk of job loss / redundancy

Employers reduce or cut their flexible work arrangements on offer

Other (please type in below)

None of the above

If you ticked other, please type in

PAGE 150

BASE: Men, or women with a partner, with children under five years

The Government introduced two weeks' paid paternity leave in 2003.

Thinking back to when your last child was born, did you / your partner take the two weeks statutory paternity leave?

Yes

No

Not applicable (e.g. was not eligible, was not working at the time)

PAGE 160

BASE: Those who did not take statutory paternity leave

What was your / your partner's main reason for not taking paternity leave?

Could not afford to

Too busy at work

Did not want to

I / my partner did not expect it

Employer would have been unhappy

Might have affected promotion chances

Society doesn't expect men to take time off work to be with their baby

Other (please explain below)

Don't know

If you ticked other, please type in [Optional]

To what extent would you / your partner have liked to take paternity leave?

Would have liked to a lot

Would have liked to a little

Would not have liked to

Don't know

PAGE 170

BASE: Men who took paternity leave

Do you feel that taking paternity leave led to you taking a greater role in caring for your child(ren) or did it not make a difference to your role?

Yes, led to a greater role

No, it did not make a difference

Don't know

Do you feel that taking paternity leave led to improvements in the quality of your family life?

Yes, did lead to improvements

No, did not

Don't know

PAGE 180

BASE: Those who think it led to improvements

You said that taking paternity leave led to improvements in the quality of your family life. Please explain how in the box below.

PAGE 190

BASE: All parents / carers

Currently fathers have 2 weeks paid paternity leave, and mothers have 52 weeks maternity leave and pay for 39 weeks.

**Do you think that current MATERNITY leave arrangements...?
[Please tick all that apply]**

Are about right

Should be longer

Should be better paid

Should be more flexible

Reinforce the role of the mother as primary caregiver

Reinforce the role of the father as primary provider

Don't know

None of these

Thinking about your answers to the previous question, please explain why you think this in the box below.

**Do you think that current PATERNITY leave arrangements...?
[Please tick all that apply]**

Are about right

Should be longer

Should be better paid

Should be more flexible

Reinforce the role of the mother as primary caregiver

Reinforce the role of the father as primary provider

Don't know

None of these

Thinking about your answers to the previous question, please explain why you think this in the box below.

PAGE 200

BASE: All parents / carers

The Government is considering introducing additional paternity leave (for fathers or nominated carers) whose partners work. In order for the father to qualify for the additional paternity leave, their partner would need to 'transfer' their unused maternity leave to the father.

Do you support or oppose this proposal?

Support

Oppose

Don't know

Please explain why you support / oppose this proposal in the box below. If you ticked 'don't know', please leave the box blank.

PAGE 210

BASE: All parents / carers

It has been suggested that fathers (and nominated carers) should have an extra specific amount of family leave time, in addition to statutory paternity leave, such as four weeks paid leave (in the child's first year).

In principle, do you support or oppose this proposal?

Support

Oppose

Don't know

Please explain why you support / oppose this proposal in the box below. If you ticked 'don't know, please leave the box blank.

If you were having a new baby, would you take / encourage your partner to take the extra family leave time for fathers as described above?

Definitely would

Probably would

Probably would not

Definitely would not

Don't know

Please explain why you would or would not take this leave / encourage your partner to take this leave in the box below. If you ticked 'don't know', please leave the box blank.

PAGE 220

BASE: All parents / carers

Currently each parent with a child under five is entitled to 13 weeks of unpaid parental leave for each child in this age group. The purpose of this leave is to allow parents to care for their children, for example during sickness.

Do you think that current parental leave arrangements...?

[Please tick all that apply]

- Are about right
- Should be longer
- Should be better paid
- Should be more flexible
- Reinforce the role of the mother as primary caregiver
- Reinforce the role of the father as primary provider
- Don't know
- None of these

SECTION 3: FLEXIBILITY IN THE WORKPLACE

PAGE 230

BASE: Parents / carers who work full or part-time

The next question is about any types of flexible working which may be available to you, regardless of whether you take them or not.

Do you currently have any form of flexible working available to you?

- Yes – I currently work flexibly
- Yes – flexible working is available but I do not currently work flexibly
- No – flexible working is not available to me
- Don't know

PAGE 240

BASE: Those who have flexi working available

What type of flexible working is available to you? [Please tick all that apply]

- Part-time working (reduced hours)
- Flexi-time (flexible start and finish times and the ability to carry-over excess or deficit hours)
- Staggered hours (same hours but flexible start and finish times)
- Compressed hours (same hours in fewer working days)
- Job sharing
- Home working
- Term-time working (working extra hours during term-time to get more time-off during school holidays)
- Other
- None of the above

PAGE 245

BASE: Those who work flexibly

Did your flexible working come about due to any of the following?

A formal request that you made that might have involved your HR department

Informal negotiation with your manager

As a feature of the job when you joined

Due to a change in your terms and conditions that you didn't request

Other (please type in below)

None of the above

If you ticked other, please type in

PAGE 250

BASE: Parents / carers who work full or part-time

What do you think are or would be the main benefits of flexible working for YOU? [Please tick all that apply]

More control of starting and finishing times

Improve the children's quality of life

Spending more time with the family

Improve your quality of life

Fewer costs – for childcare for example

Being able to more evenly share family tasks with your partner

Less commuting time (e.g. working from home occasionally)

Other (please specify below)

None of the above

If you ticked other, please type in

PAGE 260

BASE: Parents / carers who work full or part-time

Thinking about applying for a new job these days...

How valuable do you consider flexible working options to be?

Very valuable
Fairly valuable
Not very valuable
Not valuable at all
Don't know

If you were applying for a new job, how important a factor would the availability of flexible working be in deciding whether to apply?

Very important
Important
Not very important
Not at all important
Don't know

PAGE 270

BASE: All parents / carers

If you have children under six you have the right to REQUEST flexible working from your employer and they must carefully consider whether it is possible. Before this survey were you aware of that?

Yes, I was aware
No, I was not aware
Don't know

From April 2009, if you have children under 16 you will have the right to REQUEST flexible working from your employer and they must carefully consider whether it is possible. Before this survey were you aware of that?

Yes, I was aware
No, I was not aware
Don't know

Do you agree or disagree that the right to REQUEST flexible working should be open to ALL employees (not just parents)?

Strongly agree
Tend to agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Tend to disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know

Which of the following do you think should have the right to HAVE (not just request) flexible working?

Parents of children under 6

Parents of children between 6 and 16

All employees regardless of whether they have children or not

Should

Should not

Don't know

PAGE 280

BASE: All parents / carers

It has been suggested that the Government should pay a wage or allowance to people who stay at home to care for children.

This would be additional to any other benefits which people may already receive.

In principle, do you support or oppose this suggestion?

Support

Oppose

Don't know

If the Government did pay a wage or allowance to people who stay at home to care for children, how would this affect your choices and your family's arrangements? Please give details in the box below.

PAGE 290

BASE: Parents / carers who work full or part-time

Thinking about making a request to work flexibly (or more flexibly if you currently do so), which, if any, of the following might STOP you from asking? [Please tick all that apply]

Fear of being refused

Would mark you as not being committed to the job

You're not entitled to work flexibly

Worried about reaction from colleagues

Not knowing whether it is available at your workplace

Would negatively affect your chances of promotion

Other

None of the above

PAGE 300

BASE: All parents / carers

Please think about the general topic of balancing work and childcare, and the different options which could be available. Imagine you could choose the work and care arrangements that would work best for you and your family. Please describe what they would look like, and your reasons for these choices.

PAGE 310

BASE: All parents / carers

We would just like to ask you some questions about yourself and your household. These will be used only for categorizing responses. Are your day-to-day activities limited because of physical or mental health condition, illness or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months? Including problems which are due to old age.

Yes, substantially affected

Yes, but not substantially affected

No

Don't know

Are the day-to-day activities of any of your children limited because of a physical or mental health condition, illness or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?

Yes, substantially affected

Yes, but not substantially affected

No

Don't know

The following questions may be sensitive, so please indicate if you would prefer not to answer. We require this information for classification purposes only.

We would like to ask you about your identity in terms of your sexuality.

Do you consider yourself to be...?

Heterosexual / straight

Gay or Lesbian

Bisexual

Other

Prefer not to say
Don't know

'Trans' includes people who are transgender, transsexual and transvestite.

Do you consider yourself to be trans?

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

Don't know

APPENDIX B – QUALITATIVE IMMERSIONS TOPIC GUIDE

Introduction (5 mins)

- Purpose of the research
- Nature of the process
- Anonymity and confidentiality

Warm Up & Context (5-10 mins)

- Tell us a little about yourself and your family
 - Probe for age of kids, what they do for a living etc
[Develop pen portrait of each family member]
- And how would you describe family life at the moment

Current (Family) Lifestyle (5-10 mins)

- Tell us about a typical week-in-the-life of your family, family member by family member
- What are the best parts of family life
- And what are the worst parts of family life
 - Probe for the trade-offs people have to make

Tensions in Family Lifestyle (5-10 mins)

- What are the main tensions in family life at the moment
- For each
 - Explore who, what, how, when, where, why
 - Understand the different roles people have to play
 - What does it mean to be a parent / worker? etc
 - Explore resolutions (short term and long term)
 - What are the practicalities of being a parent / worker?

Balancing Family Life (45 mins)

- How do you currently balance / integrate the various different demands of family life
- Specifically looking at 'working' vs 'caring' – (when we talk about care we mean childcare), tell me about the balance between those two worlds:
 - How balanced
 - Roles, who does what etc
 - What are you seeking, what are motivations, drivers (e.g. choice vs necessity)
 - What are tensions and barriers that stop you achieving what you want

- What works
- What doesn't work
- Tell us about typical family arguments in this area – every couple has recurring themes (e.g. 'Work always comes first'...)
- Explore compromises made, by whom, why
- Role of family
- Role of school
- Role of employer(s)
- Role of other local / public / private provision
- Role of wider community
- Examine the differences between men and women
- Explore how work could be carried out in a more effective way for family life
- Changes over recent years that have been observed – changes in values, attitudes, rights, responsibilities etc – do they see the pendulum swinging
- More recent changes as a result of credit crunch (and anticipated changes over next year or so)
- At what points (e.g. age of kids, time of year, other life events) are tensions worst
- Tell us about other people you know who balance their work / caring roles more / less successfully, how, why etc
- What are the issues in work / caring balance
- Why is it a problem (if a problem)
- Who benefits / loses out in current situation
- Tell us about compromises and trade-offs
- Tell us about how all this makes you feel
- Discuss maternity and paternity leave and how this fits in (explore retrospectively) – especially question take up of paternity leave and how this affects future roles
- Discuss parental leave – explore if any have used their allowance or if they haven't why not

Working Flexibly (15 mins)

- Focusing specifically on working flexibly, is this something you / partner can do
- How much do you know about your rights / employers' responsibilities in this area
- Tell us how this works for you
- Advantages / disadvantages

- Improvements to flexible working and whose responsibility to implement
- Role of technology

Positive Changes, Strategies, Solutions (10-15 mins)

- Tell us about some of the positive tactics you have for getting a better balance between working and caring
- What other solutions would you like to see

Room for Improvement (5-10 mins)

- Where are the areas where most improvement can be made
- What is the nature of the change you would like to see
- And by whom

What More Could be Done (By Government / Business) (10 mins)

- Summarise and explore how Government could improve the situation
- And also how employers / business could make changes which would help

Ideal World Scenario (10-15 mins)

- Going back to the typical week in your life that you described earlier – can you tell this story again but first of all in an ideal world
- Then re-tell the story somewhere between reality and the ideal and tell me what Government, business, you and the family could do at each key point to get closer to the ideal

Summary (5 mins)

- Finally could you summarise for us the following
 - Where the tensions are in your current work / life / family balance
 - Any positive changes that you or others have made to help
 - The changes you would like to see made in the future

For Immersions : for all of above collect relevant video and photo clips using real life context and situations

APPENDIX C – ONLINE DISCUSSION FORUMS TOPIC GUIDE

1. Introduction

- Purpose of the research
- Nature of the process – check any technical issues etc
- Anonymity and confidentiality

2. Context - to understand family life

- Tell us a little about yourself and your family
- And how would you describe family life at the moment
- Tell us about a typical week-in-the-life of your family, family member by family member
- What are the best parts of family life
- And what are the worst parts of family life
 - Tell us about the trade-offs you have to make
 - What are the main tensions in family life at the moment

3. Balancing Work and Family Life

- How do you currently balance / integrate the various different demands of family life
- Specifically looking at ‘working’ vs ‘caring’ – (when we talk about care we mean childcare), tell me about the balance between those two worlds:
 - How balanced
 - Roles, who does what etc
 - What are you seeking, what are motivations, drivers (e.g. choice vs necessity)
 - What are tensions and barriers that stop you achieving what you want
 - What works
 - What doesn’t work
 - Tell us about typical family arguments in this area – every couple has recurring themes (e.g. ‘Work always comes first’...)
 - Explore compromises made, by whom, why
 - Role of family
 - Role of school
 - Role of employer(s)
 - Role of other local / public / private provision
 - Role of wider community
 - Examine the differences between men and women
 - Explore how work could be carried out in a more effective way for family life

- Tell us about other people you know who balance their work / caring roles more / less successfully, how, why etc
- What are the issues in work / caring balance
- Why is it a problem (if a problem)
- Who benefits / loses out in current situation
- Tell us about compromises and trade-offs
- Tell us about how all this makes you feel

Probe to understand priorities between children and work, look to understand who is responsible for childcare.

- Tell us if the recent economic downturn will affect your work and child care arrangements
- How might this change because of recent economic events

4. Working Flexibly

- Focusing specifically on working flexibly, is this something you / partner can do
- Tell us how this works for you
- Advantages / disadvantages
- How much do you know about your rights / employers' responsibilities in this area

5. Positive Changes, Strategies, Solutions

- Tell us about some of the positive tactics you have for getting a better balance between working and caring
- What other solutions would you like to see
- Where are the areas where most improvement can be made
- What is the nature of the change you would like to see
- And by whom

6. Test key hypotheses for balancing work and family life better

For each of the solutions below, probe for appeal, relevance and areas for improvement.

- Other research we have been doing has suggested that there are some things that could be done which could make a real difference in helping you to achieve a better work / family life balance, let's discuss some of these in detail
For each we will discuss:

- Understanding – what does this mean to you / in your life
 - Appeal – how much does this appeal to you personally and why
 - Relevance – how relevant is this to you and your circumstances
 - Barriers for you – what would stop this working for you personally
 - Building the idea – how might you develop this idea further
1. If a wider range of flexible job opportunities were available in all types of jobs
 2. If Government policies reflected the social and economic benefits of integrating work and care
 3. More financial support from the Government for paternity and parental leave
 4. More affordable childcare
- And now let's discuss some more ideas that people have suggested:
 - If your employer was flexible or more flexible (probe for job shares, work part-time etc)
 - More local childcare (and consistency of quality wrap around care)
 - More appropriate childcare
 - If schools or nurseries were more flexible
 - If you had more support from your partner
 - If you had more support from your wider family
 - If your partner's employer was flexible or more flexible
 - Tax breaks for young families
 - Time off for parents with disabled children
 - Government to pay a wage for staying at home to care for children
 - A government movement that empathises the importance of family life
 - If you have a child under 16 you have the right to request flexible working from your employer
 - We are looking for which elements of the idea you think work well, which don't and how each idea can be improved

- Develop some other solutions in light of previous discussions

7. Discuss the issue of paternity / maternity and parental leave

- Explore and understand what people think of the current paternity / maternity and parental leave allowance
 - i. Probe to understand how many people took paternity leave and seek to understand the benefits of taking this leave
 - ii. Discuss in detail what they think of the Government's current regulation on paternity, maternity and parental leave i.e. is it enough? Should it be better paid etc?

NB. For each type of leave we will state what the current allowance is

- Understand how it could be improved
- Understand how each contributes to parents being able to perform a better caring role
- Tell us what you think to these ideas:
 - i. The Government is considering introducing additional paternity leave (for fathers or nominate carers) whose partners work. In order for the father to qualify for the additional paternity leave, their partner would need to 'transfer' their unused maternity leave to the father.
 - ii. Fathers (and nominated carers) should have an extra specific amount of family leave time, in addition to statutory paternity leave, such as four weeks paid leave (in the child's first year)
 - Understand if they would encourage their partner to take the extra family leave time as described if they were to have a new baby

8. Summary and close

For Forums: encourage both individual introspection and considered discussion of these issues - especially solutions

Contact us

You can find out more or get in touch with us via our website at:

www.equalityhumanrights.com

or by contacting one of our helplines below:

Helpline - England

Telephone: 0845 604 6610

Textphone: 0845 604 6620

Fax: 0845 604 6630

Helpline - Scotland

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Helpline - Wales

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This report is available for downloading from our website.

If you require it in an alternative format and/or language please contact the relevant helpline to discuss your needs.

This report presents the 'State of the Nation' in regards to parents and their work and care aspirations. The findings are based on an online survey carried out with 4,500 parents across England, Scotland and Wales, plus data from 15 online forums and 18 qualitative immersions with a wide range of parent groups.

WHAT IS ALREADY KNOWN ON THIS TOPIC:

- Mothers continue to take more responsibility for managing care, even when both partners work full-time.
- Many organisations do not offer the range of flexible working opportunities that would help parents manage work and care, despite encouragement from Government and evidence of positive outcomes for flexible employers.
- Fathers increasingly want to spend more time with their children and this is frustrated by long working hours, inflexible workplaces and outmoded policies that make it difficult for parents to share work and care responsibilities more equally.
- Far less is known about the work and care aspirations of lesbian gay and bisexual, disabled and ethnic minority parents.

WHAT THIS REPORT ADDS:

This report presents the widest range of sub-group parent perspectives, to date, in Great Britain. It finds that:

- Parents reject the traditional views of father as breadwinner and mother as responsible for childcare, and believe that work and care can be shared.
- Half of fathers think they spend too much time at work and three quarters think they spend too little time with their children.
- However, parents' work and care arrangements are driven by necessity rather than choice (although those with higher incomes are less likely to think this). In practice, the reality of combining work and care means that responsibility for childcare still falls disproportionately on women.
- Flexible workers are significantly more likely than other parents to view their work and childcare arrangements positively, while disabled parents and parents with disabled children are less likely to feel they achieve a good compromise.
- The majority of fathers who took paternity leave believe it enabled them to have a greater role in the care of their child and led to improvements in family life.
- Parents want to take responsibility for their own lives and children but would welcome policies – such as extended paid paternity leave and a wider range of flexible working opportunities across all types of jobs – that enable them to do this more effectively.