
Time, Health and the Family

What working
families want

2014 report



Foreword

Bright Horizons is delighted to sponsor Working Families' "Time, Health and the Family" research. Integrating work and family life is a crucial challenge for all of us, and the right kind of support for that challenge can make an enormously positive difference for workers and their employers alike. To make that support as relevant and effective as possible it is important to hear from families themselves - what they struggle with, and what they need. This report provides a valuable insight and context for all of us working in the field of employee wellbeing.

Supporting working families has never been more important than it is today. We are all more likely than ever before to be balancing busy working lives with caring for those who depend on us. Getting care right means more people can realise their true potential, while seeing those they love flourish too. Each family will have different family circumstances and individual requirements, and so the care solutions and services we need are the ones that reflect the reality of the modern family unit - sometimes complex, increasingly multi-generational, often geographically dispersed.

At Bright Horizons we've tried particularly hard to create an environment for our own staff that reflects the complex nature of today's care responsibilities. We've learned to work more flexibly, with greater agility and sensitivity, so that our people can combine fulfilling roles at work with family care responsibilities. Our strategies include formal policies such as job share, reduced hours and agile shift patterns. The aim is to build a flexible and collaborative working family culture, in which every line manager is empowered to help their staff to flourish both at work and at home.

We know that the business case for family-friendly workplaces is proven. We have assisted many clients with their employee wellbeing and dependant care programmes, and have witnessed those organisations improve their performance and sustainability through improved employee retention, better productivity and higher levels of engagement.

Like Working Families, we believe that today's workplaces need to reflect the reality of our caring responsibilities today – which include children, siblings, spouses, and elderly parents; and which reflect families of different types. This report gives us a mirror through which we can see the bigger picture of family life today, as well as the individual stories behind the figures. It's a call to action for us all. Let's heed it.



Carole Edmond

Carole Edmond
Managing Director
Bright Horizons

This *Time Health and the Family* report provides an opportunity to look at how well families feel they are doing today when it comes to balancing work and home. When I look back at the first *Time, Health and the Family* in 2004, it is encouraging to see that in many areas families seem to be doing better now. Long hours are not such an issue as they were, and people are more positive about their work and family balance. Flexible working is more widespread, and there are signs of increasing father involvement in family life. These changes reflect not only changing parental attitudes and aspirations around work and family, but also the work done by leading employers to develop family friendly workplaces, and the changes in legislation which have facilitated change.

Of course, there are still areas where there are issues, including working time, lack of flexible options for many, and the economic effects of the recession on how families are able to organise work and care. There is still work to be done, and on the horizon are two important changes which I believe will move the work-life agenda forwards: the extension of the Right to Request flexible working to all employees, which will bring flexibility even further into the mainstream; and the introduction, in 2015, of Shared Parental Leave which has the potential to introduce a whole new way of arranging work and care within families.



A blue handwritten signature of Sarah Jackson OBE.

Sarah Jackson OBE
Chief Executive
Working Families.

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Introduction

What is Time, Health and the Family for?

Time, Health and the Family provides a snapshot of family life of working families in the UK today. It aims to capture how families combine family life with work, and whether they are achieving the kind of balance to which they aspire. Reconciling paid work with family life and caring responsibilities is an issue that affects all of the families who took part in this survey. The way that work and life are integrated, and the effects this has on family and health are explored. *Time, Health and the Family* allows some insight into where families are feeling pressure, and also reports the diagnoses and solutions that parents themselves identify to some of these pressures.

Family in the UK today: some facts and figures

The numbers of married/co-habiting/civil-partnership parents with dependent children in the UK 2013 was 4.7 million. There were nearly 1.9 million lone parents with dependent children in the UK in 2013, a figure which has grown steadily, but not significantly, from 1.8 million in 2003. However, cohabiting families are the fastest growing families¹. Single-parent workers have moved into work faster than any other group. Yet, expensive and low-quality childcare and the problem of combining work with family life remain barriers to entering the workforce.^{2 3}

While households have become increasingly reliant on dual income earners, the UK is still significantly behind international comparators when it comes to women's work, especially regarding women over 50 and women with children. Women in the UK are also more prone to switch to part-time work once they have children, maintaining this arrangement after their children grow up. Just over 50 per cent of mothers with school-age children work fewer than 20 hours a week in the UK compared to an OECD average of 30 per cent⁴. Fifty nine per cent of women with dependent children in the UK work part time, compared to 16 per cent of men with dependent children⁵. Progress towards a more equal division of caring responsibilities between women and men is still very slow. Fathers tend to take a more equal share of childcare and household work when their partners work. But even in families where both parents work full-time, the pattern is that the mother takes most responsibility at home and stays home when a child is ill.⁶ Full-time men work on average 44 hours per week whilst full-time women work 40 hours per week.⁷

The high costs of childcare in the UK have been identified as one of the reasons for larger numbers of women working part-time than in other OECD countries. Parents in the UK spend 33 per cent of their net household income on childcare compared to an OECD average of 13 per cent.⁸ A recent survey from the Resolution Foundation and Mumsnet found that childcare costs are a barrier to work for women, particularly low paid women.⁹ Still, there has been improvement in access to childcare and paid leave as well as a drop in working hours among fathers, which have reduced conflicts over the division of domestic tasks and childcare among married couples.¹⁰ In the UK, parents find it hard to make time for their children and working hours were the main factor impeding 'quality time' with their children¹¹. Longer working time reduces opportunities for time

with families, and over-working is still an issue: the TUC estimate that 5.3 million workers put in an average of 7.2 hours of unpaid overtime per week.¹²

For parents with disabled children, reconciling work and family life is more difficult. *Finding Flexibility*, a Working Families survey in 2012 of parents with disabled children found widespread unemployment and under employment among parents of children with disabilities, putting these families at greater risk of living in poverty. The biggest barriers to paid work are finding appropriate childcare and finding jobs with the right hours that are sufficiently flexible.¹³ Grandparents are an essential part of childcare provision in the UK. Nearly three in five grandparents provide regular childcare.¹⁴ Grandparents Plus estimates that grandparents are providing an increasing amount of childcare, but grandparents are under pressure themselves, working longer and struggling to combine paid work with new caring responsibilities.¹⁵

Measures in place to assist families reconcile work and family life

There are a number of measures in place to assist parents balance work and family life, primarily the Right to Request flexible working (extended to all employees later this year). Additionally, provisions exist for maternity and paternity leave (more flexibility and the ability to share parental leave is in the pipeline), as well as time off for emergencies and unpaid parental leave. Many employers have discrete policies which further facilitate the integration of work and family life.

According to the Government's Work-Life Balance Survey 2012, the main advantages of flexible working are an increase in the amount of free time, increased time spent with family and improved work-life balance.¹⁶ Not all employees view flexible working in the same way, however. The same survey found that those with no qualifications, in routine and manual occupations and those with low household incomes were less likely to view the availability of flexible working as important.

Public sector workers were more likely than private sector workers to say at least one flexible working arrangement was available (97 per cent and 91 per cent respectively).¹⁷ The majority (92 per cent) of employees reported that some form of flexible working was available. Just over a third of employees (34 per cent) reported that between three and four arrangements were available, and a small minority of employees (three per cent) reported that eight types of arrangements were available.¹⁸ Forty-five per cent of parents working full time worked flexibly, compared with 38 per cent of non-parents.¹⁹ Women are more likely than men to use flexible working, with 77 per cent working flexibly in some way, compared with 70 per cent of men.²⁰

Childcare is an important aspect of work-life balance, and access to reliable, affordable childcare is a high priority for many families with young children. However, families do not necessarily want childcare that mirrors full-time working hours, but rather childcare that affords choice and allows for a balance between work and family life. Proposals to provide some kind of school-based wrap-around childcare which allows parents to work full time may be missing the point: parents want to be able to balance work and home. Placing children in before-and after-school childcare may increase parental availability for work; but it is not necessarily what parents or children want. That's not to say that such childcare isn't useful for parents who work atypical hours, and who currently struggle to find childcare which meets their needs; but care must be taken that wrap-around provision doesn't lead to assumptions that parents are able and willing to take up working patterns that assume they are relieved of their caring responsibilities.

The workplace and family

Working families today are able, in many instances, to take advantage of employer provisions for the balancing of work and non-work; although many of these provisions have roots in organisational policies and practices around maternity leave and return they have expanded in coverage and scope so that now work-life balance measures are available to many different types of employee such as fathers, parents of older children and carers. In many forward-thinking organisations policies are broadly available to all staff, regardless of their caring responsibilities. Regular benchmarking of policy and practice in the Working Families Top Employers annual benchmark shows not only the range of the provisions available, but also the growing understanding that work-life integration is linked to stress and wellbeing, trust in the workplace, and productivity and performance.

However, there are issues in the way that parents are able to combine work and family life, even though there are legislative and organisational provisions. There are a number of reasons why this is the case. Some types of flexible working, for example, are heavily gendered; there remains an assumption that women, not men, will reduce or adapt their working time to provide childcare. Working in family-friendly ways can have negative repercussions on careers, a powerful disincentive to pursuing a better balance especially when the income required for supporting a family is based on working full-time. Organisational policies, although comprehensive on paper, can be difficult for employees to take up in practice as a number of factors like employer expectation, workload and organisational culture act as a brake.²¹ Researchers at the OECD have noted that countries, like the UK, which have the best statistical information about 'family friendly' provision often have poor provision of statutory benefits and public childcare²², and are also sites of family-unfriendly phenomena like long hours²³. The economic downturn of 2008, and continuing financial turbulence have had an effect: pace, pressure and volume of work have all increased, while satisfaction and engagement with work have fallen, along with wellbeing.²⁴

Key findings

- In couple households, the model of full-time father employment and part-time hours for the mother remains dominant. Over 50 per cent of women in couple households work part time, whilst five per cent of fathers say they work part time (the national average is 13 per cent).
- More than half of parents report not being able to go home on time; the reasons for putting in extra hours include: it's the only way to get work done; there is a culture of putting in extra time; there is no time otherwise for proper planning and thinking; and that employers expect it. Even when parents may not be putting in very long hours at work, not being able to leave work on time on a regular basis eats into expectations of having time with their families, and creates uncertainty.
- Almost a third (31 per cent) of parents report that there is no flexible working on offer where they work. Education, retail and healthcare were the three sectors most likely not to offer flexible working.
- Grandparental care is the most popular type of childcare, with just under a quarter of families using childcare using this.
- Workplace stress is a significant issue. A quarter of parents reported being very stressed. Nor is stress decreasing, with 36 per cent saying that they are more stressed than a year ago, and a further 44 per cent saying that their stress had remained the same. Only 15 per cent have

noted a lowering of their work-related stress. Forty seven per cent of parents felt that their working life was becoming increasingly stressful.

- Fathers, particularly young fathers, are more resentful towards their employers about their work-life balance. Fathers in the 26-35 age group were the most resentful. Fathers with a single child tended to be more resentful towards their employers than fathers with more than one child.
- Mothers are the first port of call when things go wrong at school or care. Both fathers and mothers said that the mother would be called first. The only group for whom this was starkly different were young fathers between 26-35; they said that they were almost as likely to be called as their partner. Schools still seem to operate largely on the default setting that the mother is the carer.
- Less than a third of families find time to sit down and eat a meal together once per day. Forty-five per cent only manage a maximum of 3-5 meals as a family each week at best.
- Most families find that work impinges on family life to some extent, with over 40 per cent reporting this happens often or all the time. Unsurprisingly, resentment towards work is more pronounced the more family life is impinged upon. Those who found their time most impinged upon were young fathers aged between 26-35.

The findings

Methodology

This report uses data drawn from a survey commissioned by Working Families and Bright Horizons. Using a web-based interface, respondents from across the UK submitted their responses by clicking through the survey online. Respondents were either from couple families where the main respondent was employed either full time or part time; or single parents working full or part-time. 1037 surveys were completed – 507 men and 530 women. The survey was carried out in November 2013 and a breakdown of the responses can be found in Appendix 1.

The sample: some demographics

A brief description of the parents taking part in the survey follows, and demographic charts can be found in Appendix 1.

All respondents had dependant children, defined as 17 years or under, or, in the case of children with disabilities, 18 years and under. Of the families, 327 had children under five years of age. Thirteen per cent of the total sample reported having a disabled child. The mean number of children was per family was 1.67. The mean ages of children were: child one 10.24; child two 9.76; child three 8.89; child four 9.41 (very few families had five or more children). The number of children per family is shown in Figure 1 (Appendix 1).

A number of families provided care for an elderly relative (28 per cent). In comparison with nationally available figures (Carers UK estimate 12 per cent, or one in eight²⁵) this is somewhat above average. Figure 2 (Appendix 1) illustrates the breakdown.

Couple relationships (85 per cent) were by far the most common in our sample; the shape of families in terms of parental relationship status is shown in Figure 3 (Appendix 1). Lone parent households

were 15 per cent of the sample, broadly comparable to national figures.. Single parent figures for the UK as a whole show that 26 per cent of households with dependant children have a lone parent, and 60 per cent of lone parents are in work.²⁶

Work and working time

The working arrangements of families are shaped by their 'non-work' responsibilities, but they can also have a defining influence themselves into how family life is fitted around work. This space, between family-friendly work and work-friendly families, is one which most families try and negotiate through a combination of varying working time and place arrangements and putting in place childcare arrangements. The type, sector and level of job can obviously shape parental choice and opportunity in how they integrate work and family life.

The sectors in which parents work are show in Figure 4 (Appendix 1). Some sectors have been conflated for brevity.

Family household incomes are shown in Figure 5 (Appendix 1).

When looking at how families arrange work,, excluding single-parent families, there is a clear pattern of fathers working full time and mothers working less than full time. This is shown in Figure 6. This has been observed as the dominant pattern for a number of years, remaining relatively unchanged²⁷. It reflects a number of issues: that there are gendered expectations (and preferences) about who works and who cares; the gender pay gap may be dictating how families arrange work and care; organisational and employment culture is more tolerant (and has an expectation) of maternal reduced hours working arrangements. It is also notable that many fathers are working 35-48 hours per week: at the upper end this is a significant number of hours. British fathers remain more likely to work long hours²⁸. It is interesting to note that younger fathers (as can be seen in Figure 26) have a higher expectation of spending more time with their children; however, this has yet to translate into a closing of the gap between the number of mothers and fathers working in a reduced hours way. The introduction of Shared Parental Leave in April 2015 may increase the pace of change here.

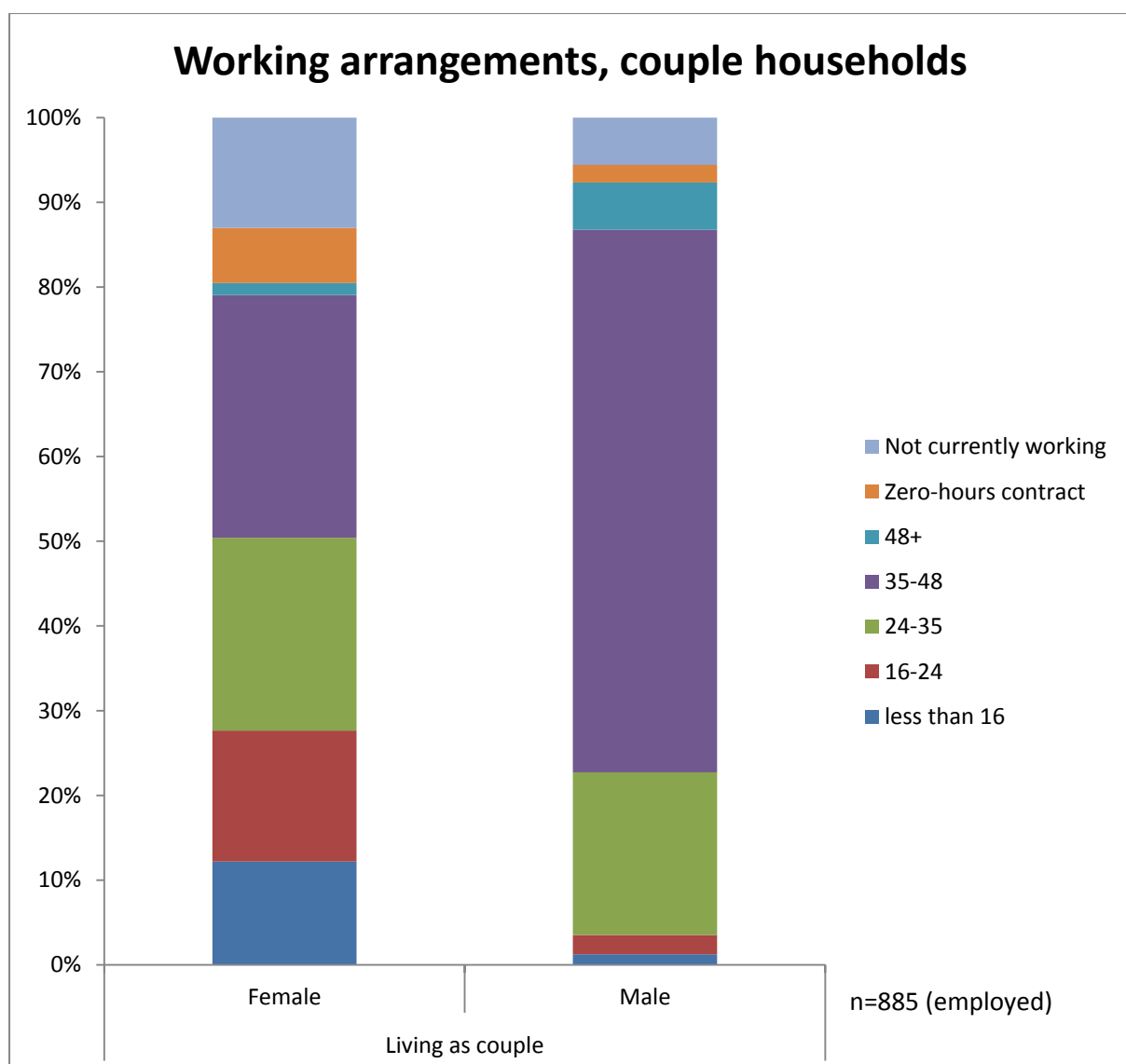


Figure 1

Working time shows that generally there is not a significant pattern of over and under-work. This is shown in Figures 7-11. Within their bands parents are not working excessive over-hours, although if they are working towards the top end of their band they will be working perhaps longer than they expect or want to. For those working less than 24 hours each week it is as likely that they will under as over work, but from 24 and 35 hours bands it is more likely that, if hours are expanding or contracting, they will slip into the next bracket above rather than fall into the one below. It is notable that for those contracted to work long hours (defined as 48+ hours) there is evidence of under working. This may be an effect of the economic downturn where under-employment has become an issue for some employees, where jobs have been preserved but hours have been cut.

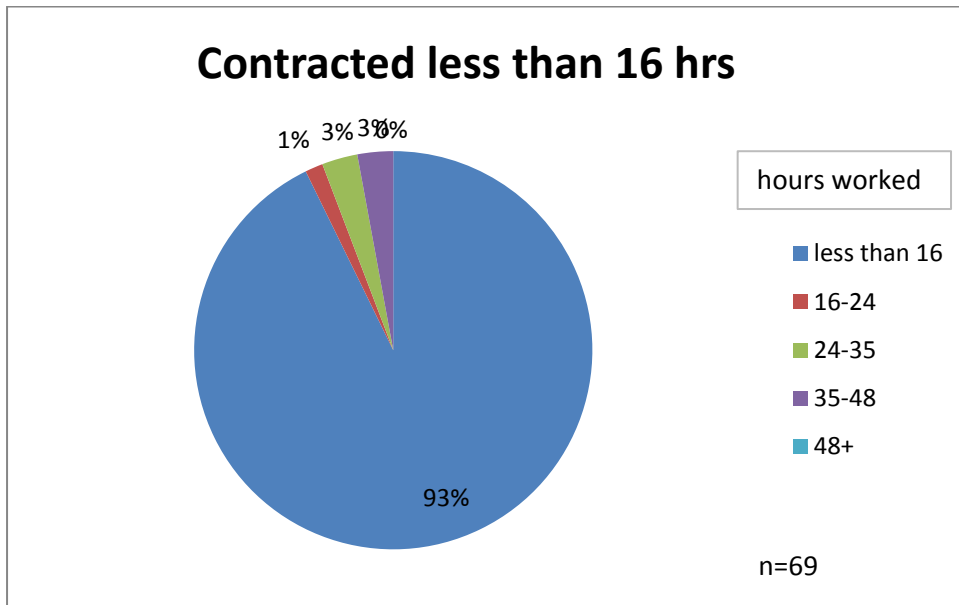


Figure 2

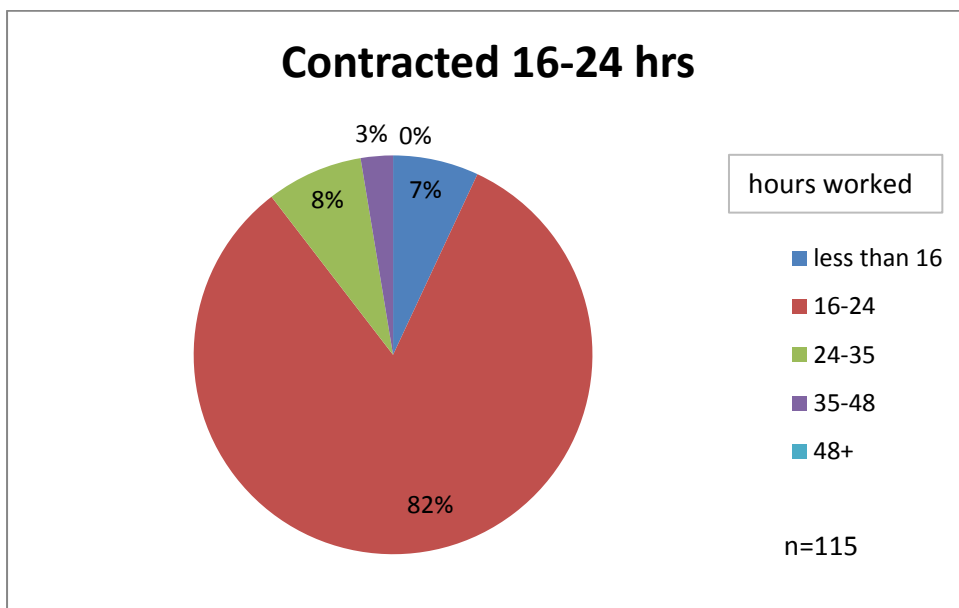


Figure 3

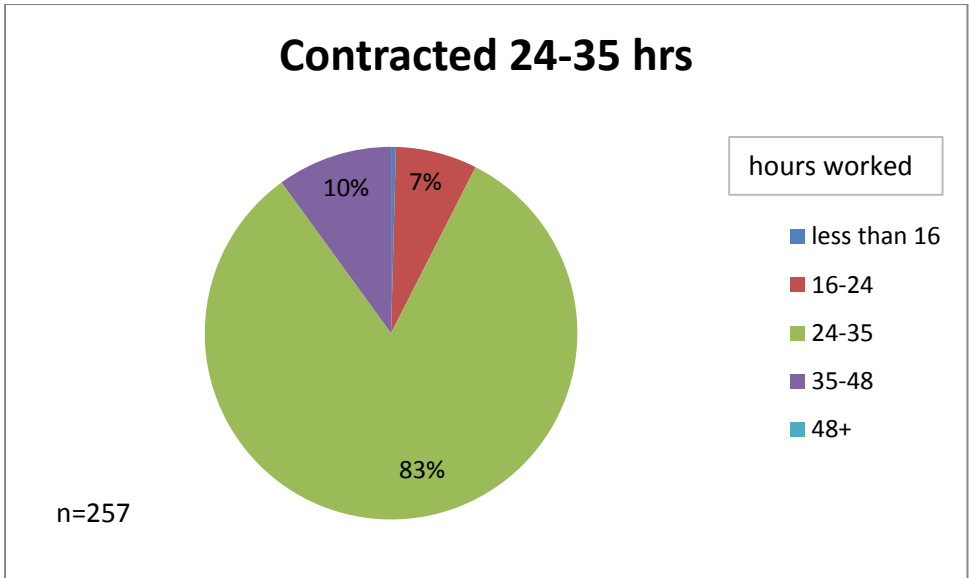


Figure 4

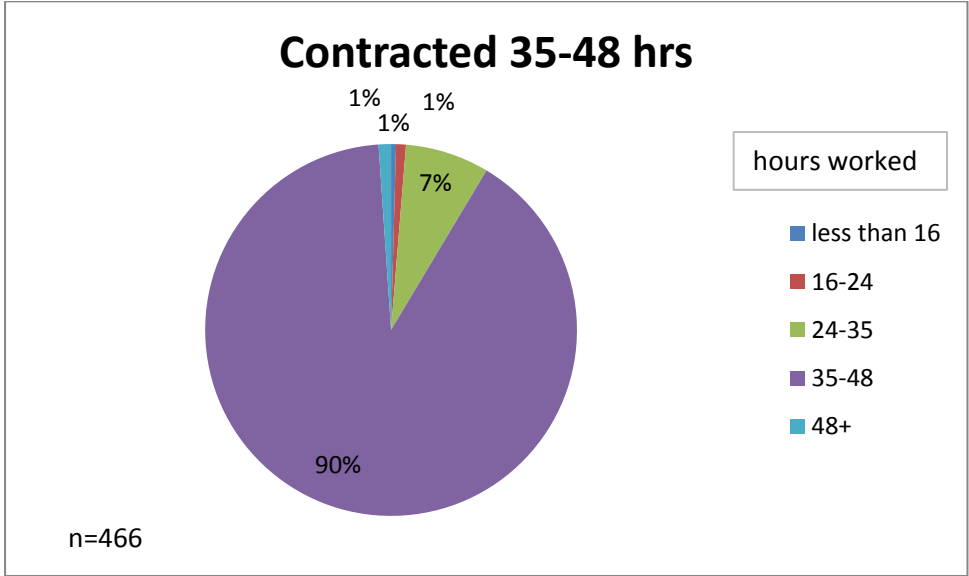


Figure 5

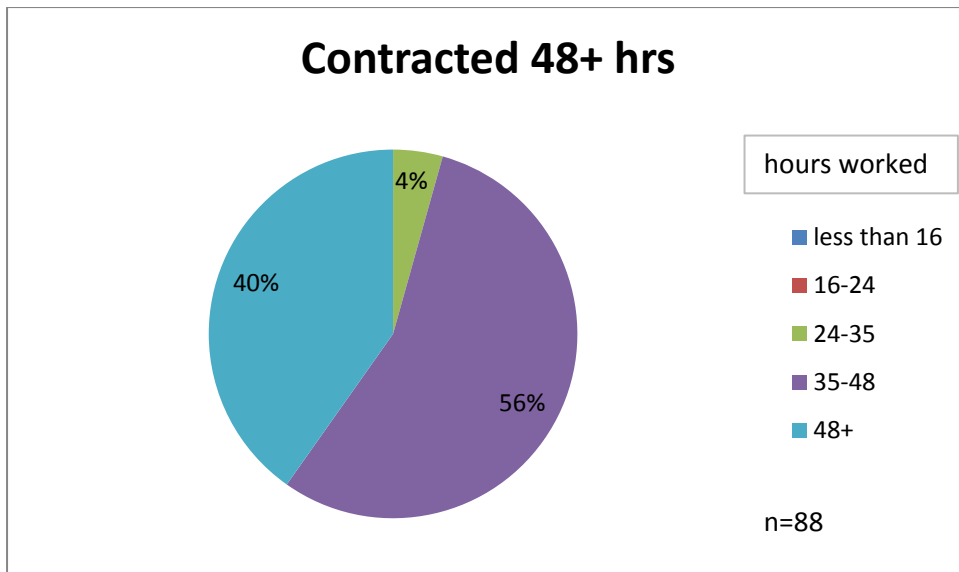


Figure 6

Although there is no pattern of regular significant long hours, parents report that getting away from work on time is not possible a lot of the time. Figure 12 shows how often parents leave work when they should. Fewer than half manage always to leave on time; slightly more (44 per cent) say that they can get away only half of the time or less, with nine per cent never leaving on time. Staying late is not a positive choice for parents (Figure 13), and it is likely that this low-level but consistent impinging of work on family time runs counter to parents' desire and expectations of having a good work-life balance and a family life. There are also implications for couple relationships, where work constrains the time that people can spend together, and where work negatively spills over into home life, the quality of that time is negatively affected.²⁹ Those most likely to be caught at work were parents working more than 24 hours per week.

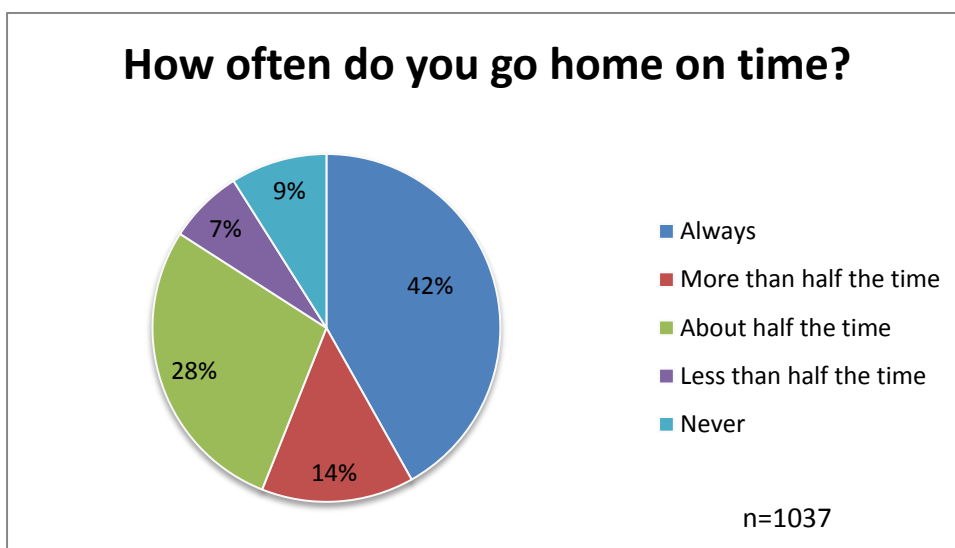


Figure 7

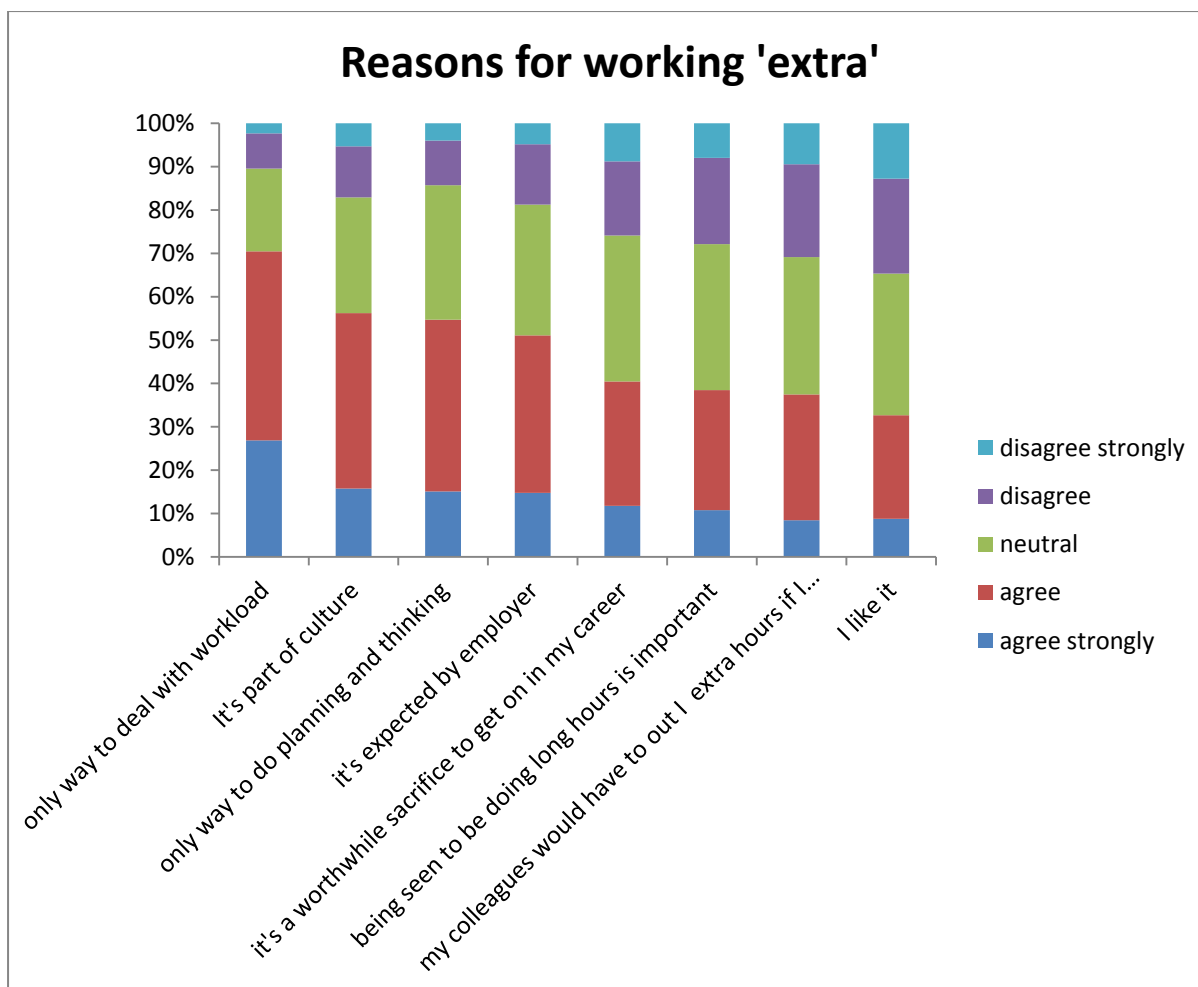


Figure 8

Workload pressures and culture are the main drivers of extra hours. These findings are consistent with last year's survey: generally, the mismatch of allotted hours to tasks is the cause, which can then become culturally 'normal': a result of work intensification that has been amplified by the recession.³⁰ Despite legislative and employer efforts to provide work-life balance opportunities through measures such as flexible working, the way that work is organised and prevailing workplace cultures and attitudes remain barriers.

Sixty per cent of respondents said that they worked flexibly in one or more ways. Of those (40 per cent) that did not work flexibly, 13 per cent said they could but didn't want to, 15 per cent said they couldn't but they had colleagues who did, and the remaining 72 per cent said there was no flexible working on offer where they worked. This is a high number. Current estimates³¹ claim that at least one type of flexible working is available in over 90 per cent of workplaces. Despite the extensions to the Right to Request flexible working, it appears that flexible working has yet to penetrate some workplaces, highlighting a gap between what is allowed for in policy but inhibited in practice. It is unlikely that all parents who report having no flexibility in their workplace have made a request and had it rejected. The sectors where flexibility was most constrained are shown in Figure 14.

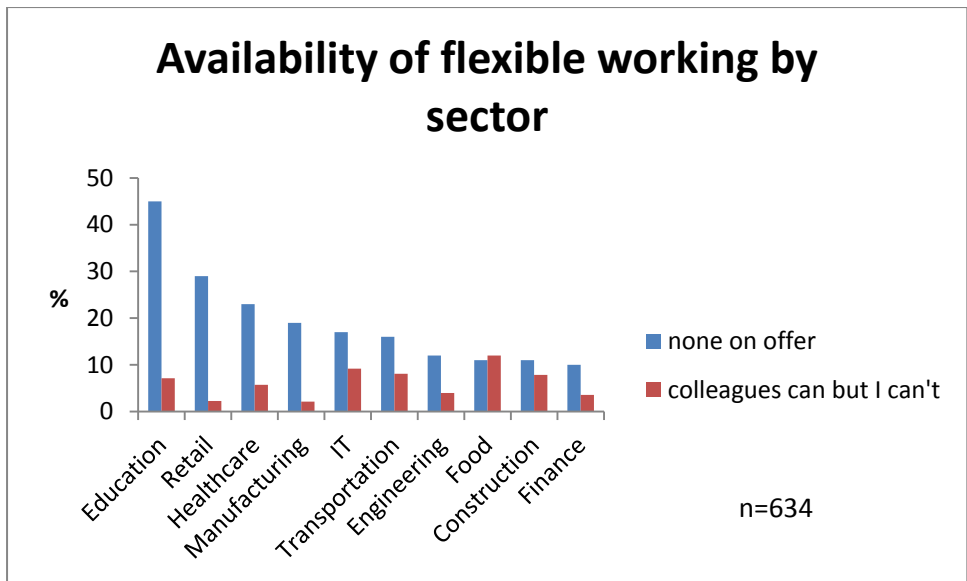


Figure 9

Where parents did work flexibly, the most common ways of doing this are shown in Figure 15. Varying working time (which can include schemes such as flexi-time) is the most popular option.

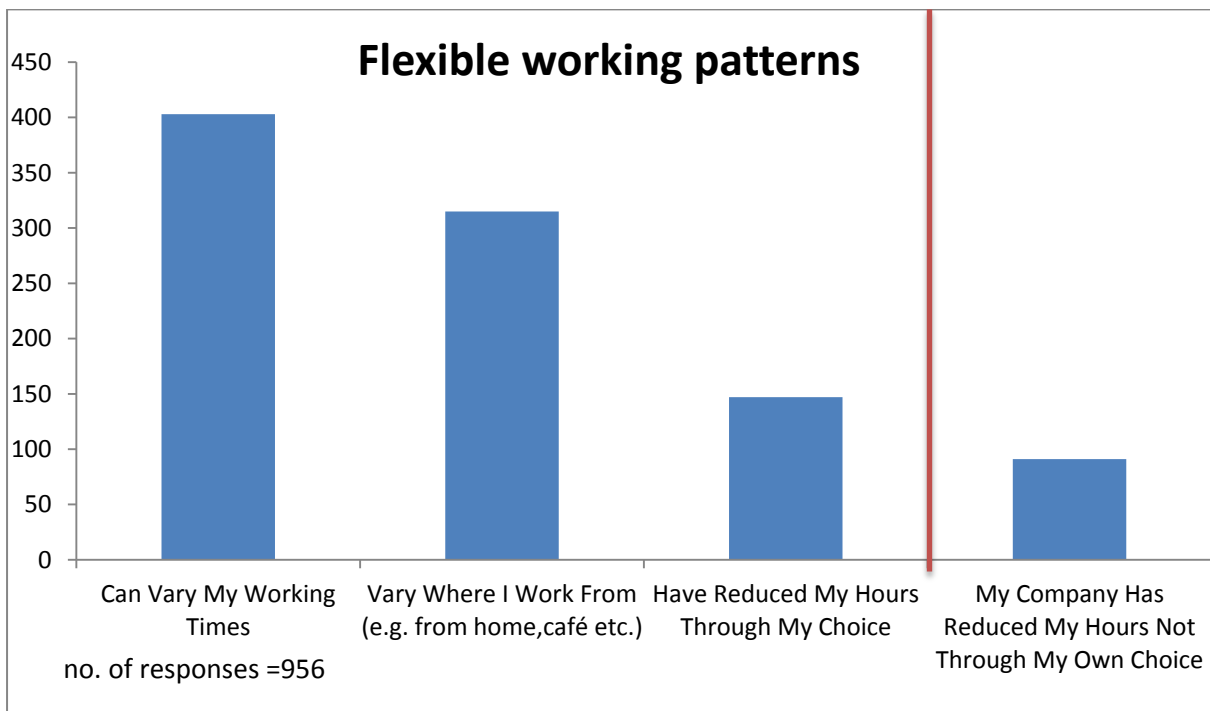


Figure 10

Childcare

A little under half (42 per cent) of the entire sample of parents used childcare that wasn't parental care. Those who did use childcare used a mixture of formal and informal types, as in Figure 16. Other parents reported that their children were of an age when childcare was no longer required from an external provider, but that parental care was still needed.

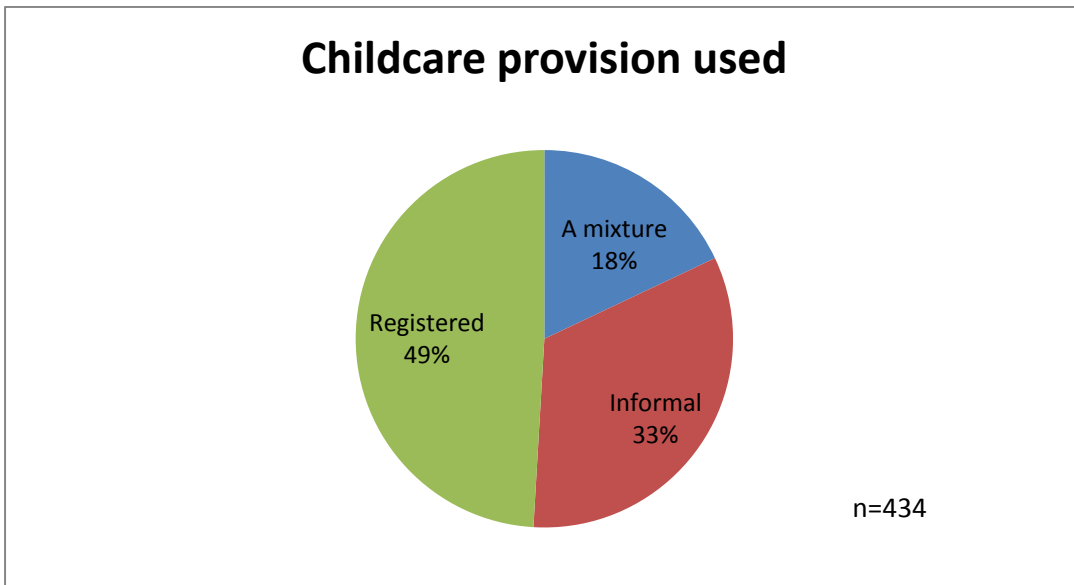


Figure 11

Where parents are doing the childcare themselves, they are choosing to organise it in various combinations: affordability (16 per cent) and suitability (6 per cent) were cited as barriers as can be seen in Figure 17.

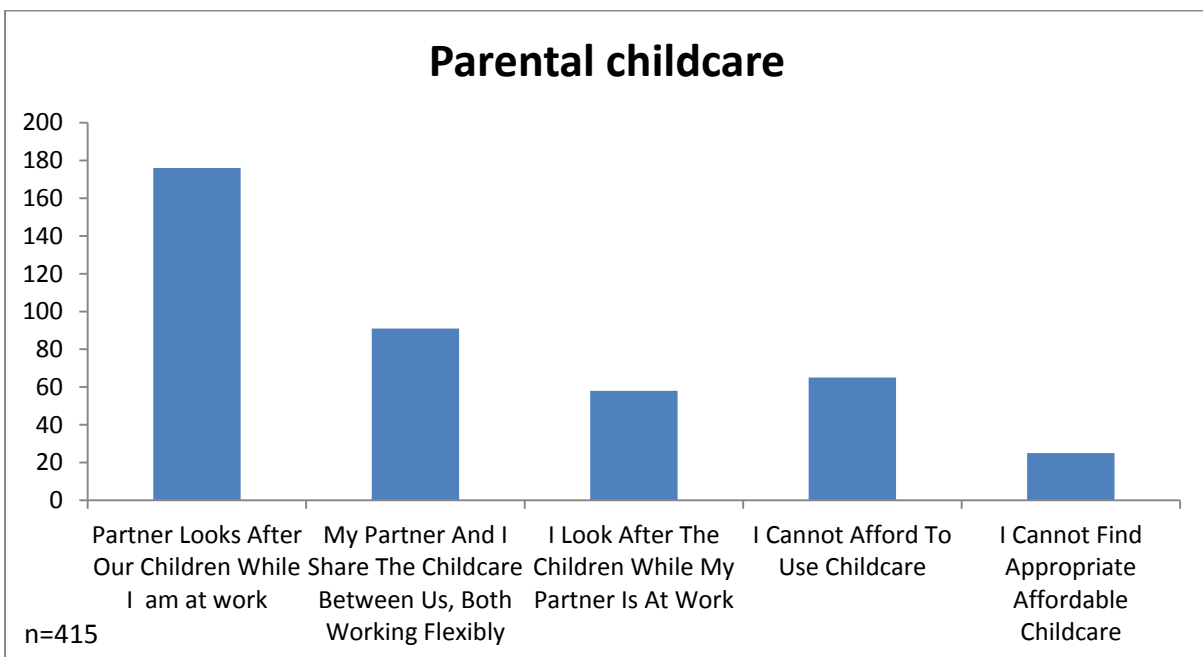


Figure 12

Childcare hours showed some variability as in figure 18. A third of those using childcare are using between 15 and 25 hours per week.

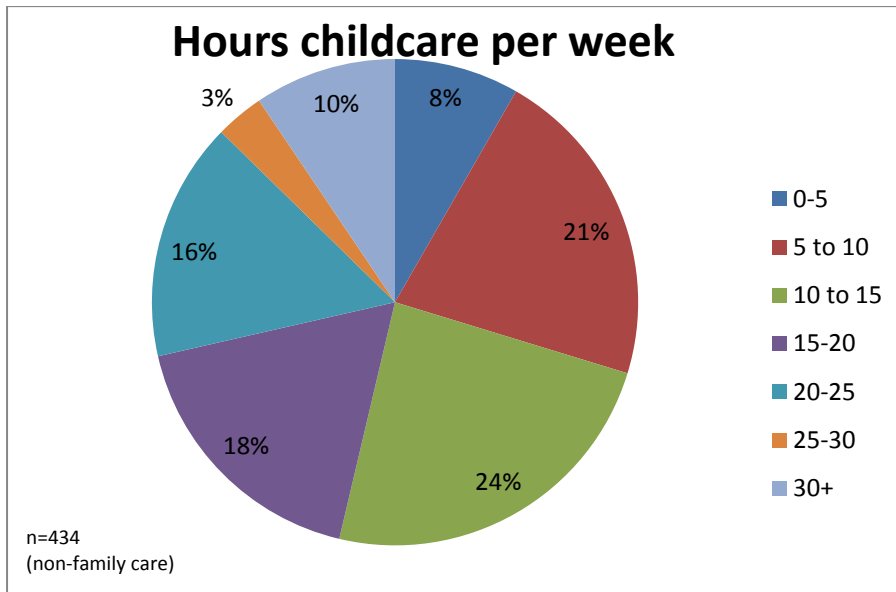
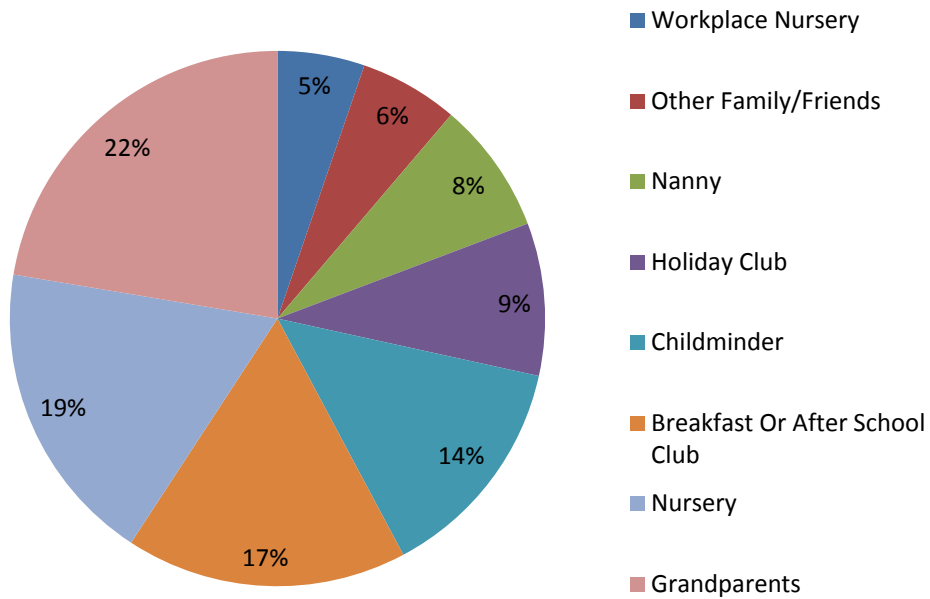


Figure 13

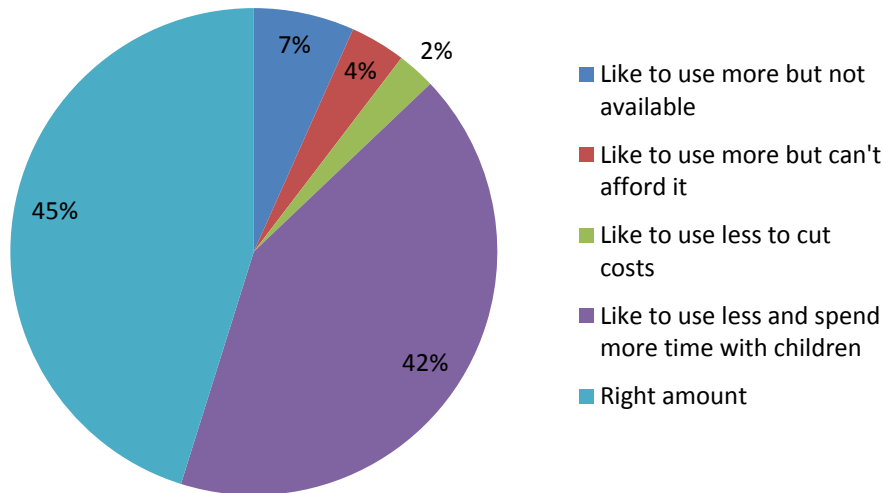
The type of childcare used (excluding parental care) is shown in Figure 19. Parents were able to select more than one type of care. Grandparental (22 per cent) care is the most frequently used care, frequently in conjunction with or as a supplement to other care. Parents (45 per cent) say they are satisfied with the care that they have chosen; slightly fewer (42 per cent) wanted to use less and spend more time with children (figure 20). It is worth noting that parents with children of 11 years of age expressed a strong preference for spending more time with their children and not using childcare. This is the age at which children typically transition to secondary, suggesting perhaps that there is a childcare 'spike' here. Childcare might be assumed to be less necessary once a child leaves primary school. It might be worth employers and policy makers noting that parents seem to want to be able to spend more time with children around this time.

What type of childcare do you use?



n=982 responses

Figure 14



n=434 non family care

Figure 15

Sixty-one per cent of parents using childcare paid for it, and Figure 21 shows the sorts of financial assistance for childcare people use .

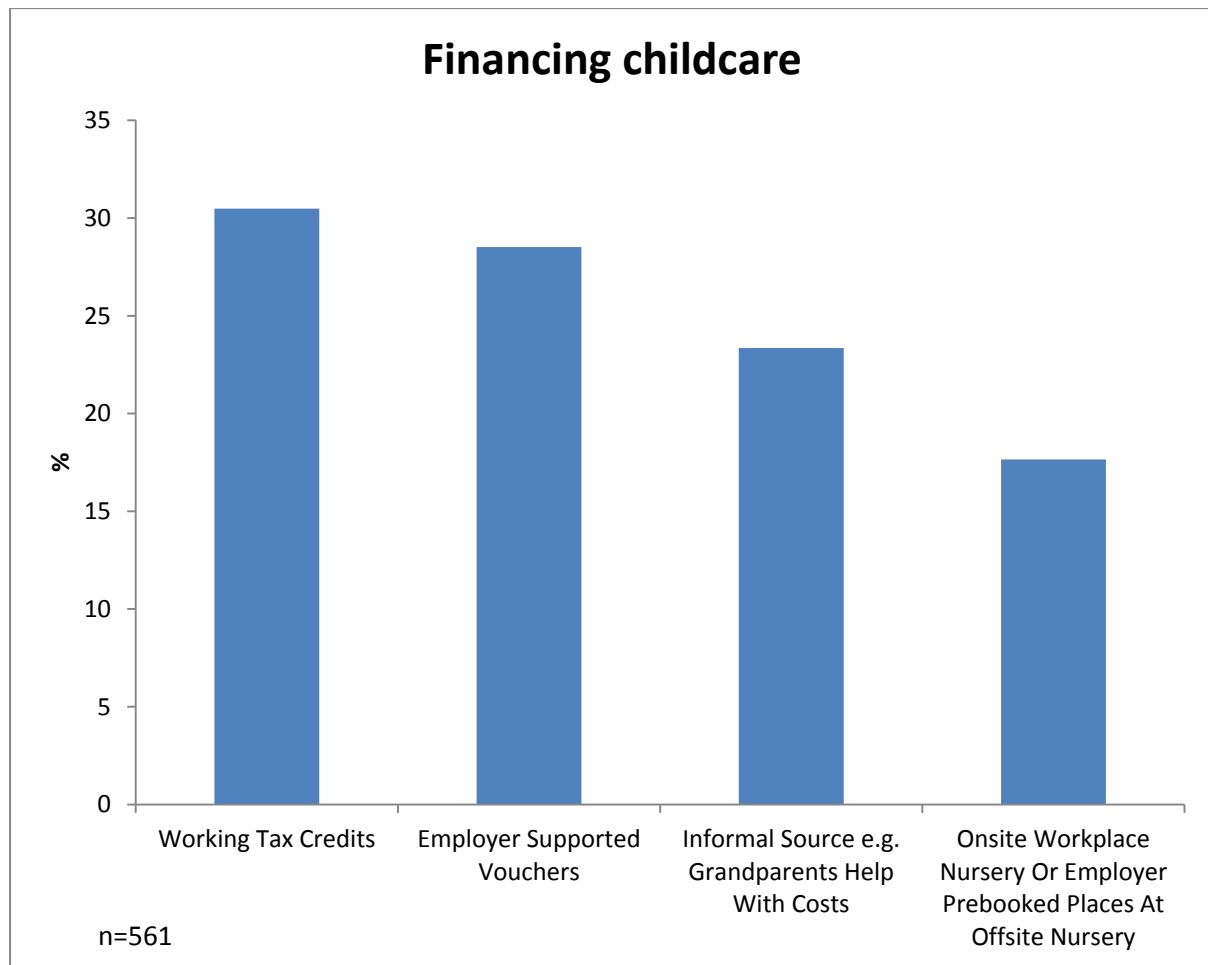


Figure 16

Childcare reliability is an important issue³², and childcare breakdown can disrupt parents' working patterns very quickly. Parents were asked if their childcare had ever broken down, and fewer than half (44 per cent) said that it had. The causes of childcare breakdown were not given, but it is important to note that this can often originate with a family and not with the provider, for example if a child has an illness that precludes them attending nursery or school. The effects of childcare breakdown can be seen in Figure 23. Fathers reported that they were more likely to have to take time off work than mothers when childcare did break down; 18 per cent of fathers in couple households who worked full-time said they took time off work when childcare broke down, while 13 per cent of women who worked full time did. This varies from figures in other research³³, where mothers have been found to be the more likely to take time off. This may be a sign that attitudes of parents - only 29 per cent of parents believe that childcare is the primary responsibility of the mother³⁴ - are translating into behaviour at work. Of those that were able to use employer provided emergency childcare, 66 per cent came from the manufacturing sector.

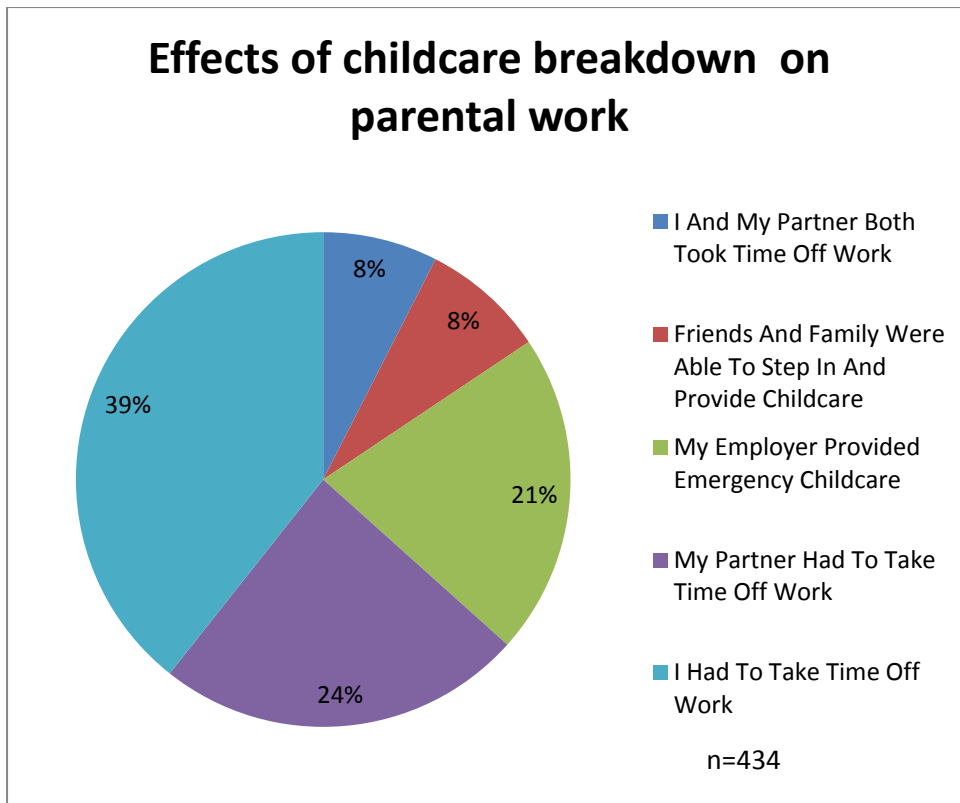


Figure 17

Health

Working families need time to be together and to function well. When trying to balance work and family life it is understandable that parents sometimes try and carve out extra time from other areas of their lives to make more time for family life. It is also the case that combining work with family life, especially when work demands are high or increasing, can have negative effects if parents and their families feel that time together is being short-changed. Finally, it is well known that work-related stress spills over negatively into family life. In some cases this can then spill back over into the workplace and a vicious cycle can be established.³⁵

Parents were asked about their work-related stress levels now, and compared with three years ago. The results can be seen in figures 24 and 25. Work related stress seems high, with 26 per cent of parents feeling quite or very stressed, and a further 35 per cent feeling appreciable levels of stress. Carrying such stress is neither likely to be good for family life, nor to produce consistent and high quality performance at work. Furthermore, stress does not seem to be abating, with only 15 per cent of parents reporting they are less stressed than they were three years ago. Tackling the causes of workplace stress is a key issue for parents..

How stressed by work are you in a typical week?

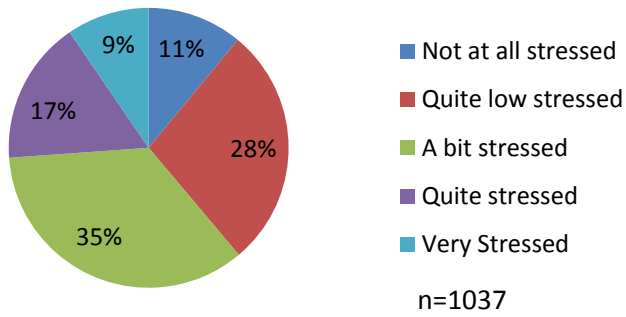


Figure 18

Are you more or less stressed than three years ago?

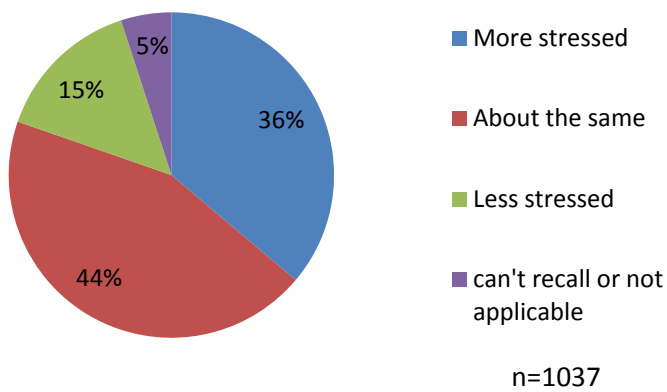


Figure 19

The effects of stress on parents can be seen in Figure 26. Parents could identify as many health effects as they wished. In terms of occupational sector, those working in manufacturing were the most likely to report the highest levels of stress.

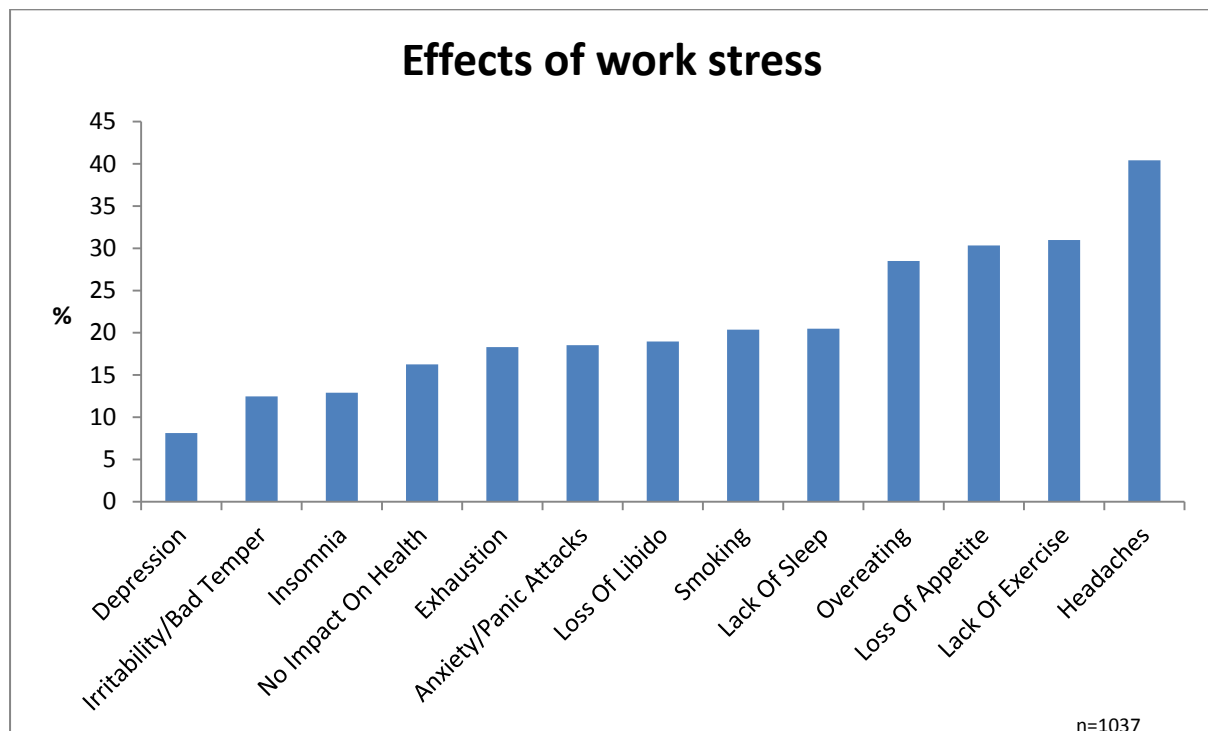


Figure 20

Family life and attitudes towards work

Parents were given a number of statements about their working lives and were asked if they agreed or disagreed. The results are in Figures 27-31. There is little appetite for reduced hours *and* reduced income, although parents (especially fathers) say that they would like to work fewer hours (Figure 32). In light of the economic constraints³⁶ on the 'hard-pressed families' of political rhetoric, it is unsurprising that many families cannot contemplate a reduction in income; of the 26 per cent who would take a pay cut, the group who agreed most strongly (49 per cent) were those whose household income was in the range £41-50000. There is, however, agreement that work life is becoming increasingly stressful, with only just over a quarter (27 per cent) disagreeing that stress is getting worse.

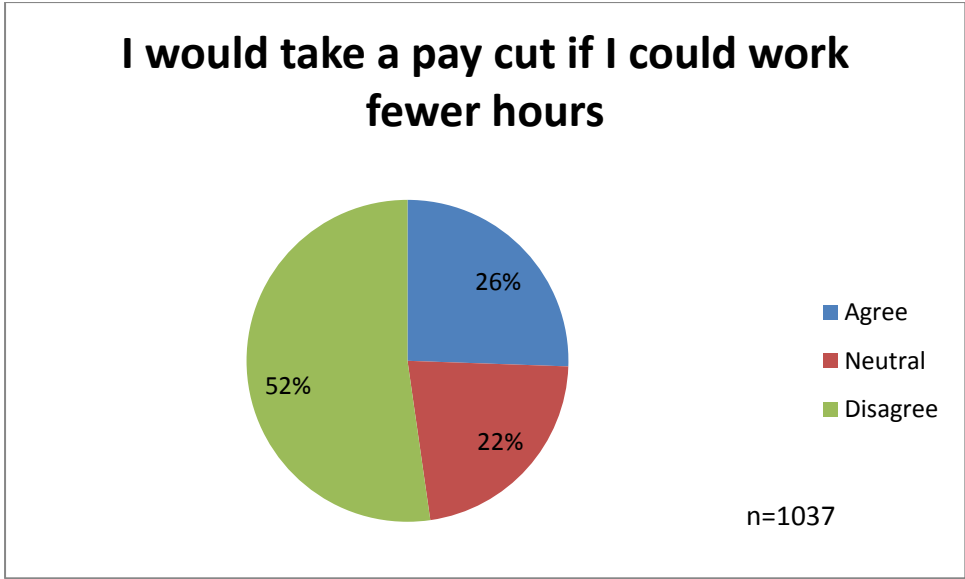


Figure 21

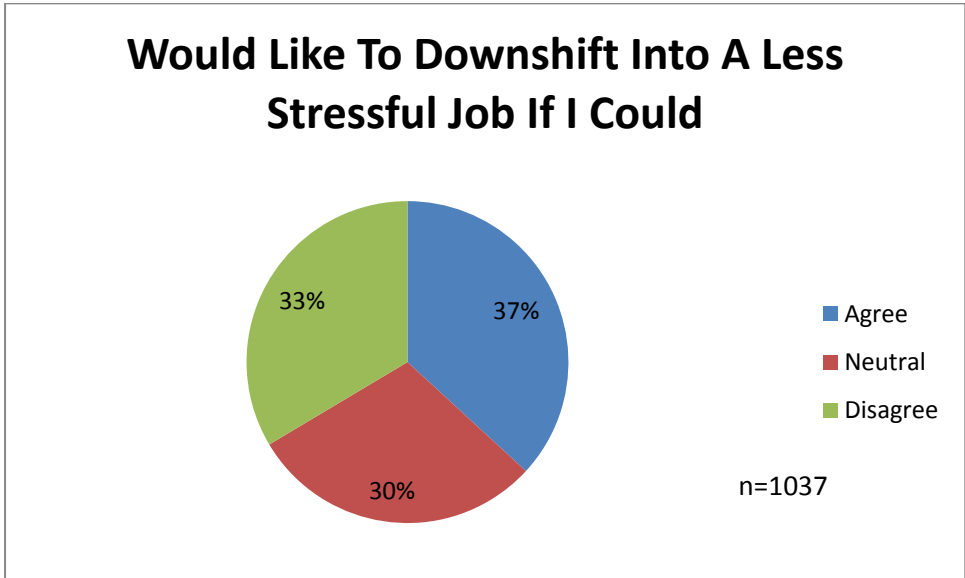


Figure 22

I Feel Resentful Towards My Employer About My Work Life Balance

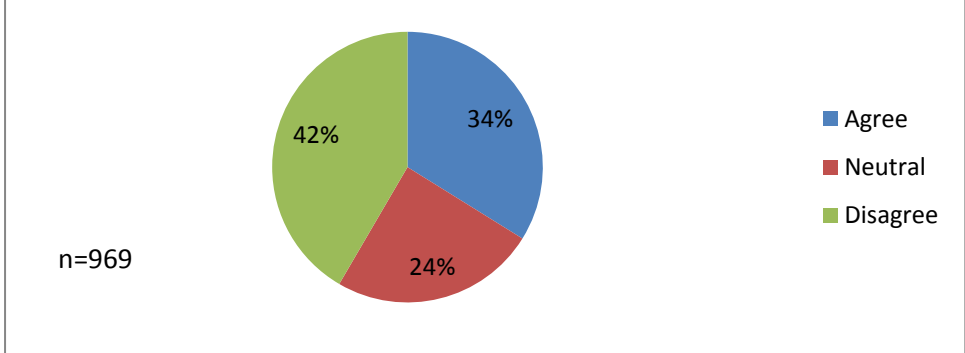


Figure 23

My Work Life Is Becoming Increasingly Stressful

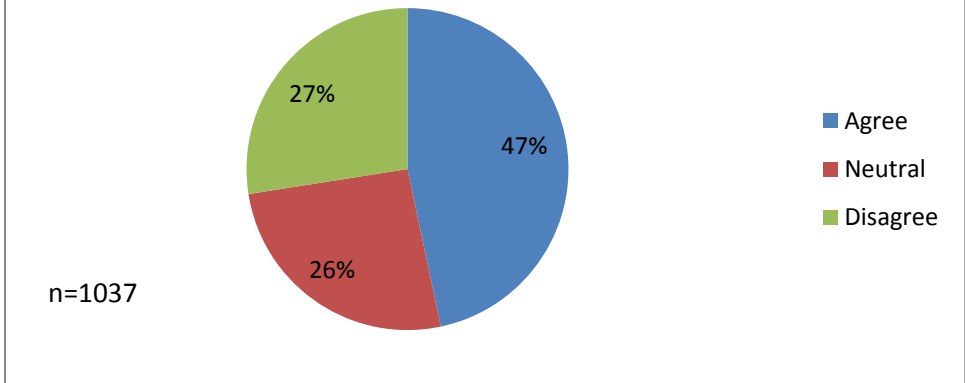


Figure 24

However, when looking at the statements for fathers only, there is much greater dissatisfaction with working life. Resentment towards their employer is also more apparent for fathers, with twice as many fathers as mothers strongly resenting their employer, particularly young fathers in the 26-35 age bracket (Figure 32). These fathers are the most likely to have young children. Fathers are most likely to feel strong resentment when they have one child. This corresponds with findings from other research³⁷, where the transition to fatherhood was particularly difficult for fathers as it is the first time that they experience work and family conflict. There are important implications for employers around performance and management as men become first time fathers. Some leading employers, such as the London School of Economics, have tailored policies towards fathers that specifically recognise the challenges that men face as they become fathers, and managers are trained to work with fathers to help with their transition.³⁸

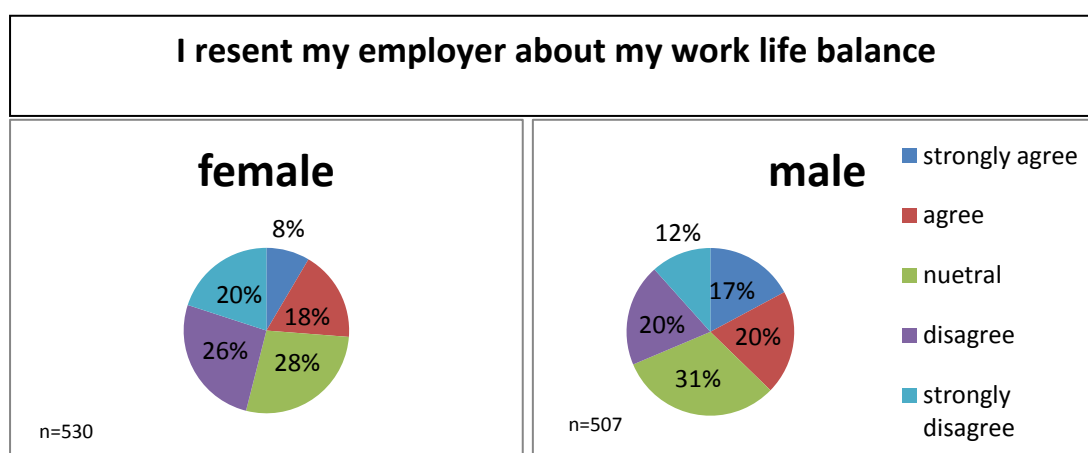


Figure 25

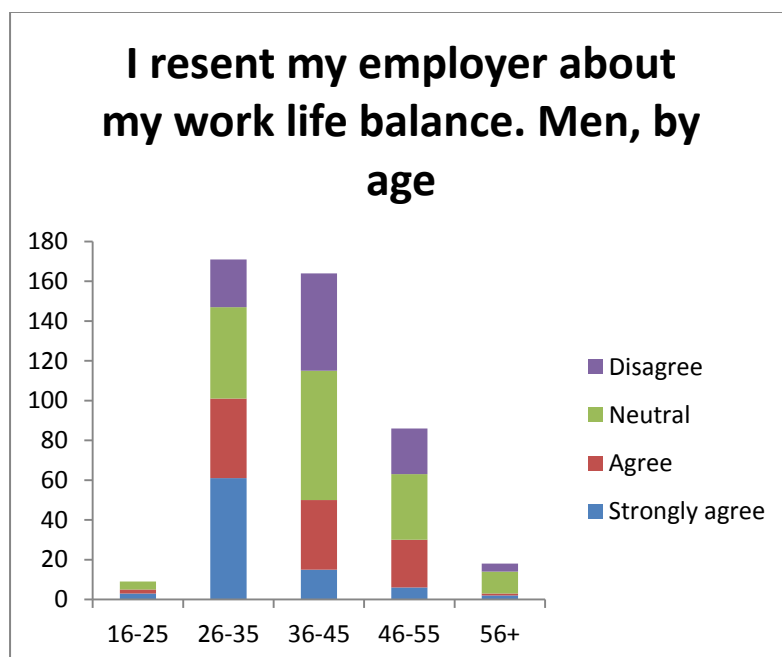


Figure 26

Combining work and family life

When asked who was called when there was a problem with childcare or school, there was a gender split (Figure 33), with both mothers and fathers reporting that the mother was more likely to be called. However, it is worth noting that men between 26 and 35 years old were more likely than all other fathers to expect to be called. Is this evidence of a shift towards more equal parenting, and more dads being involved in school runs and pickups, forcing institutions to re-evaluate their assumptions about caring roles and responsibilities?

However, women were still likely to find it easier to take time away from work than their male partners were, reflecting the deep rooted cultural beliefs around working and caring (Figure 34)

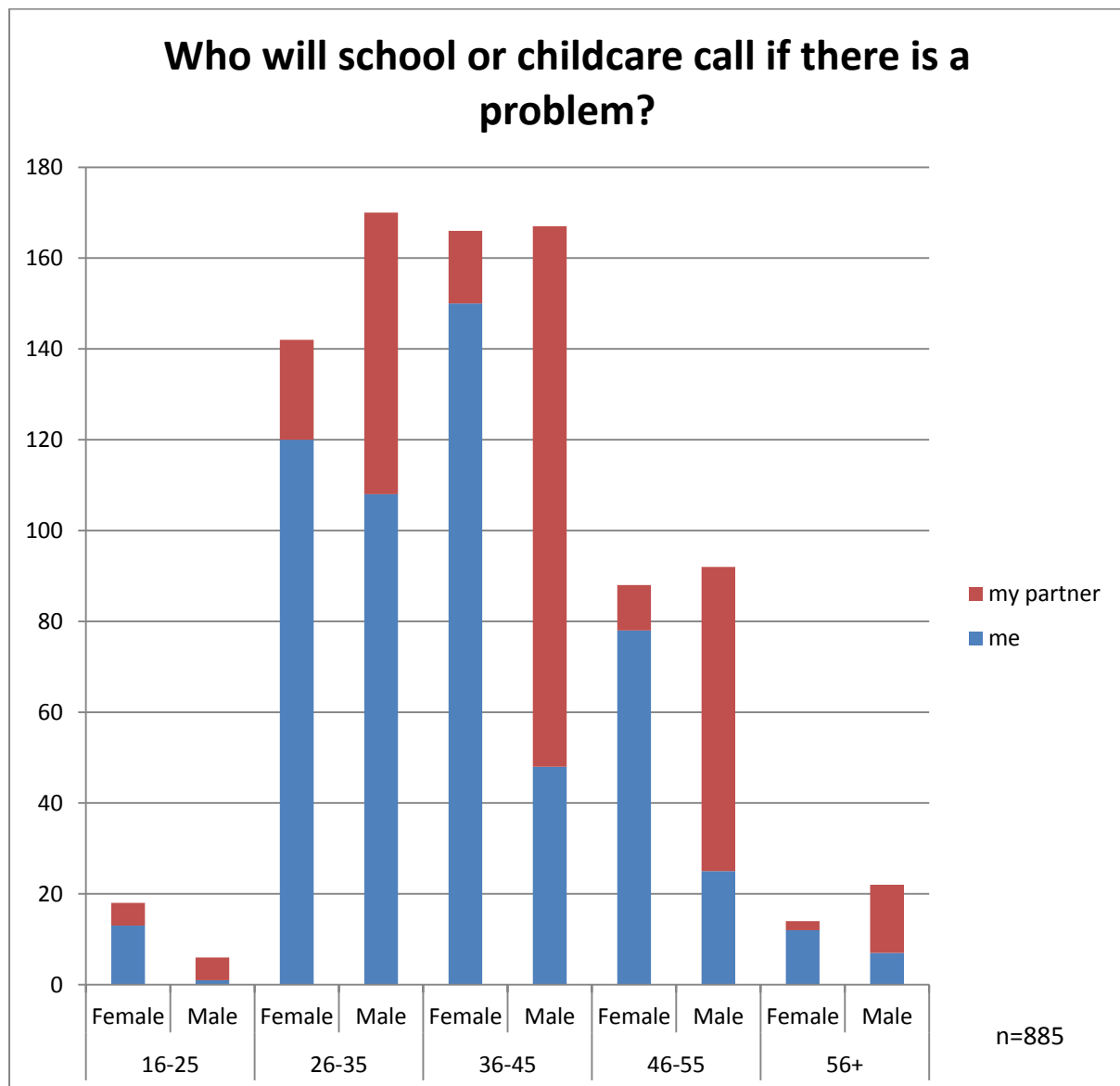


Figure 27

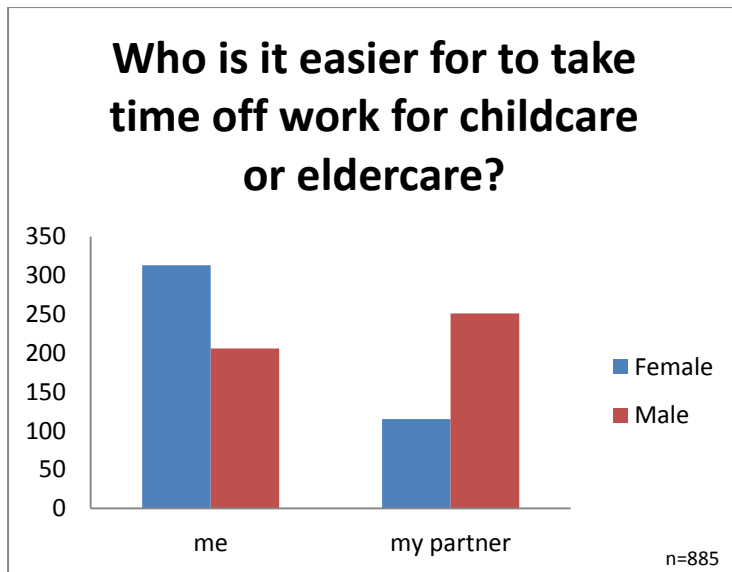


Figure 28

Family time

The pattern of time spent together as families was as expected, with more time being spent with children and partners at weekends than on weekdays. However, there appear to be constraints on everyday activities; less than a third of families find time to sit down and eat a meal together once per day and forty five per cent only manage a maximum of 3-5 meals as a family each week at best (Figure 35).

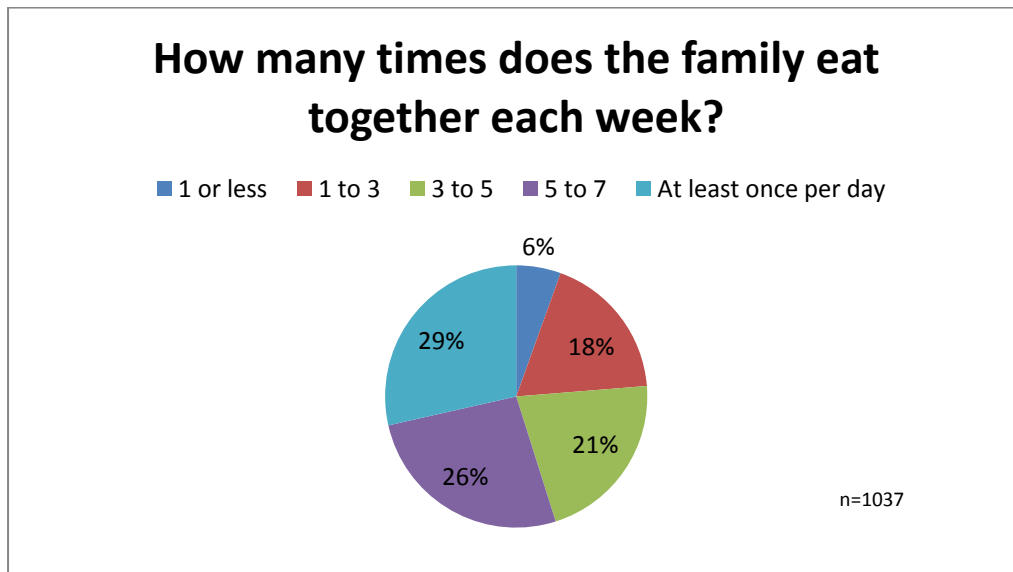


Figure 29

Parents were asked about a range of normal 'family' activities to assess how successfully they were able to combine work and home, as shown in Figure 36. Over 40 per cent of parents found that their ability just to spend time with their children was impinged often or all the time, and 37 per cent found that their ability to take children out was impinged upon and that their relationship with their partner was impinged upon as well. In all but one category, more than 50 per cent of parents had experienced the effect at least occasionally of work impinging on family life. The implications of this

are of some concern. Home life can act as a buffer with work life and improve resilience to stress, but where this is impacted by work overspill into family life it can be eroded.³⁹ Whilst it might be unavoidable that work might make demands which occasionally have a knock-on effect on family time, that it should happen on a regular basis is not compatible with the aspirations parents have for a family life. As might be expected, levels of resentment towards employers increase the more work impinges upon family life (Figure 37).

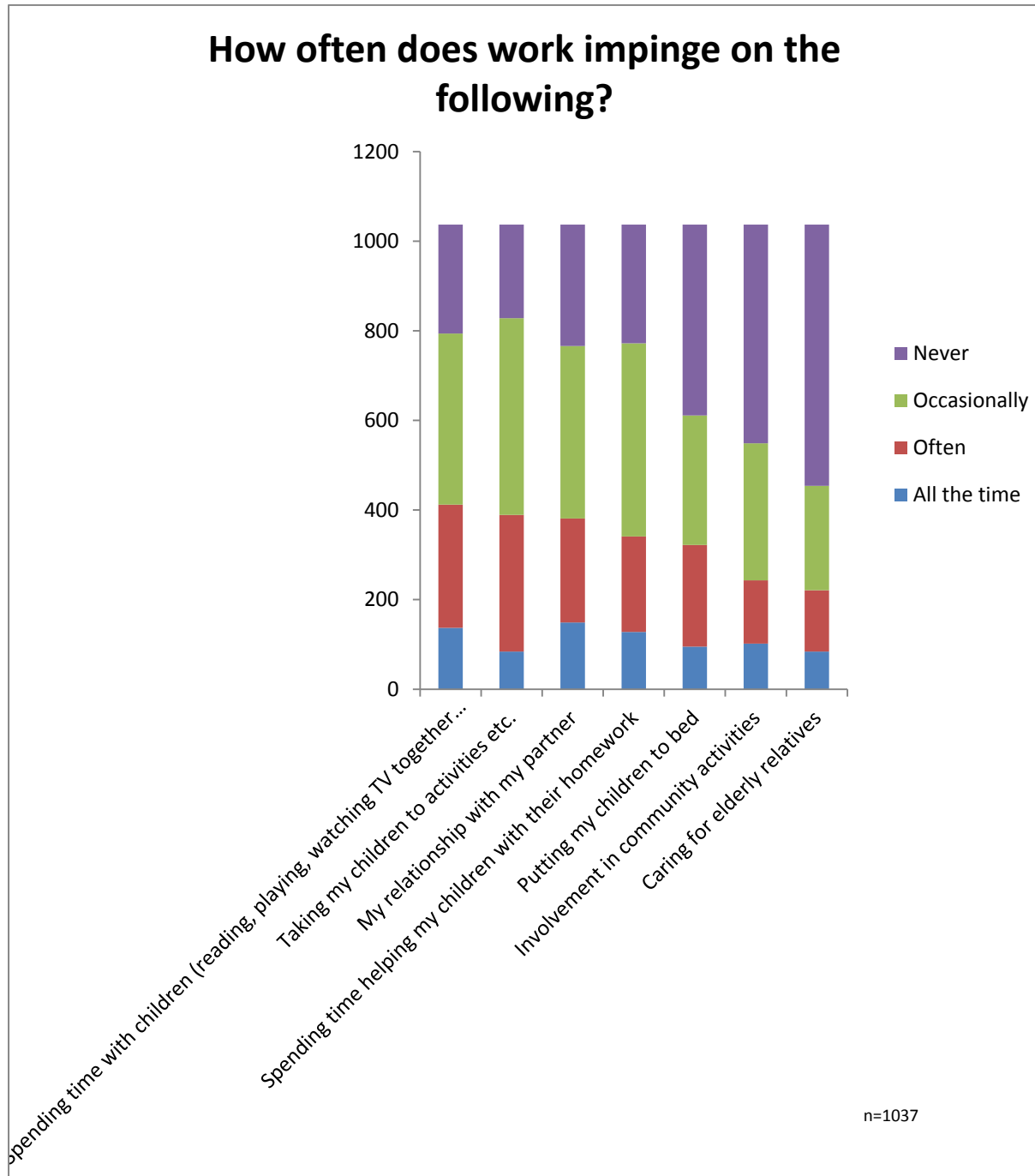


Figure 30

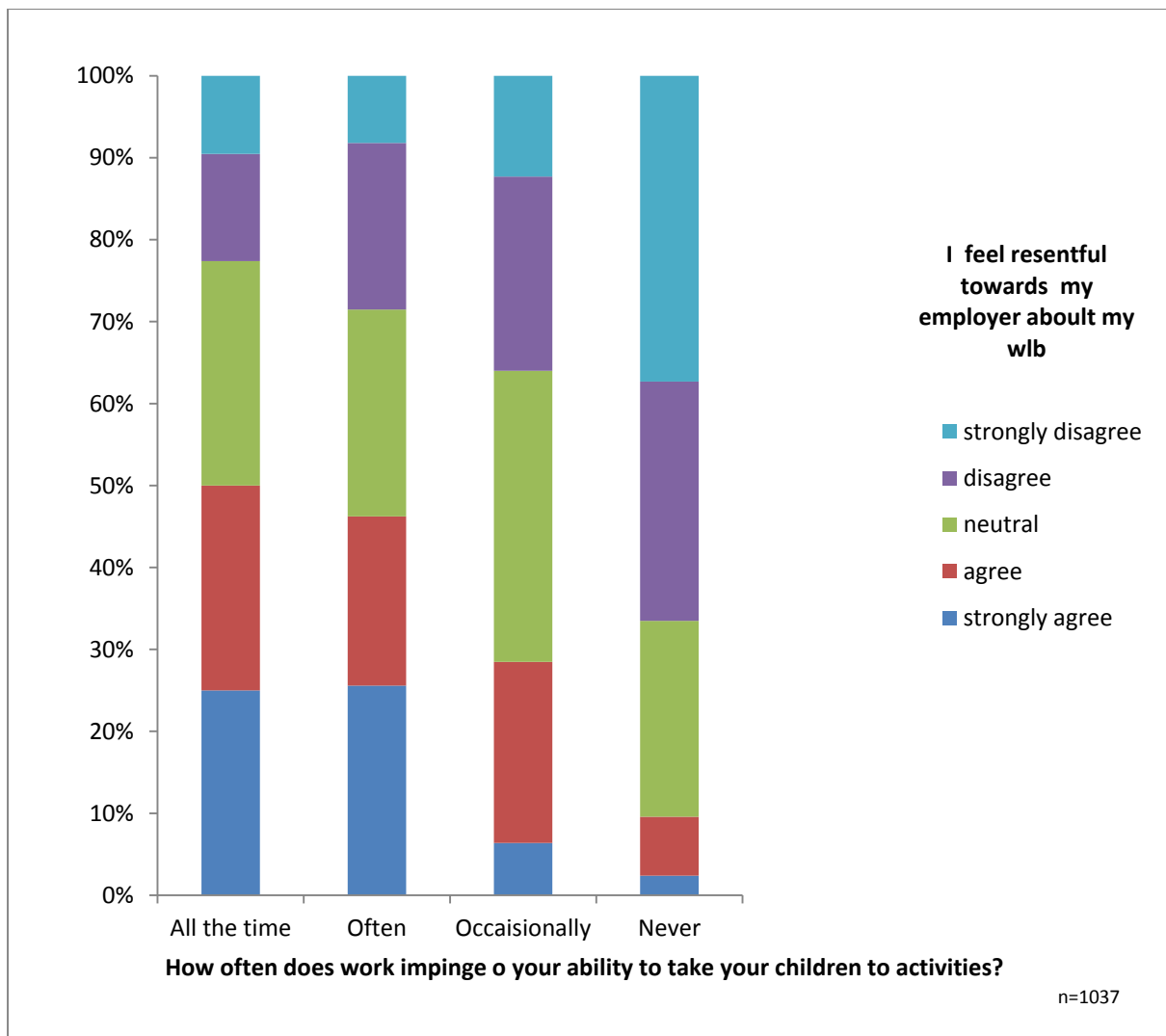


Figure 31

Work Life balance attitudes and aspirations

Parents were asked what they would like to change in their work life arrangements if they could. They were also asked about changes they would like to see in their partner’s work and life arrangements. There was little difference between what partners would choose for themselves and for the partners (if living as a couple). Figure 38 shows the choices that parents would make for themselves. Although men show an appetite to work fewer hours, this doesn’t translate into a desire to work part-time; it may be that men have a desire to reduce working time but in an undefined way. Women have a clearer picture of what reducing working time entails, possibly a result of experience and observation of workplace cultures.

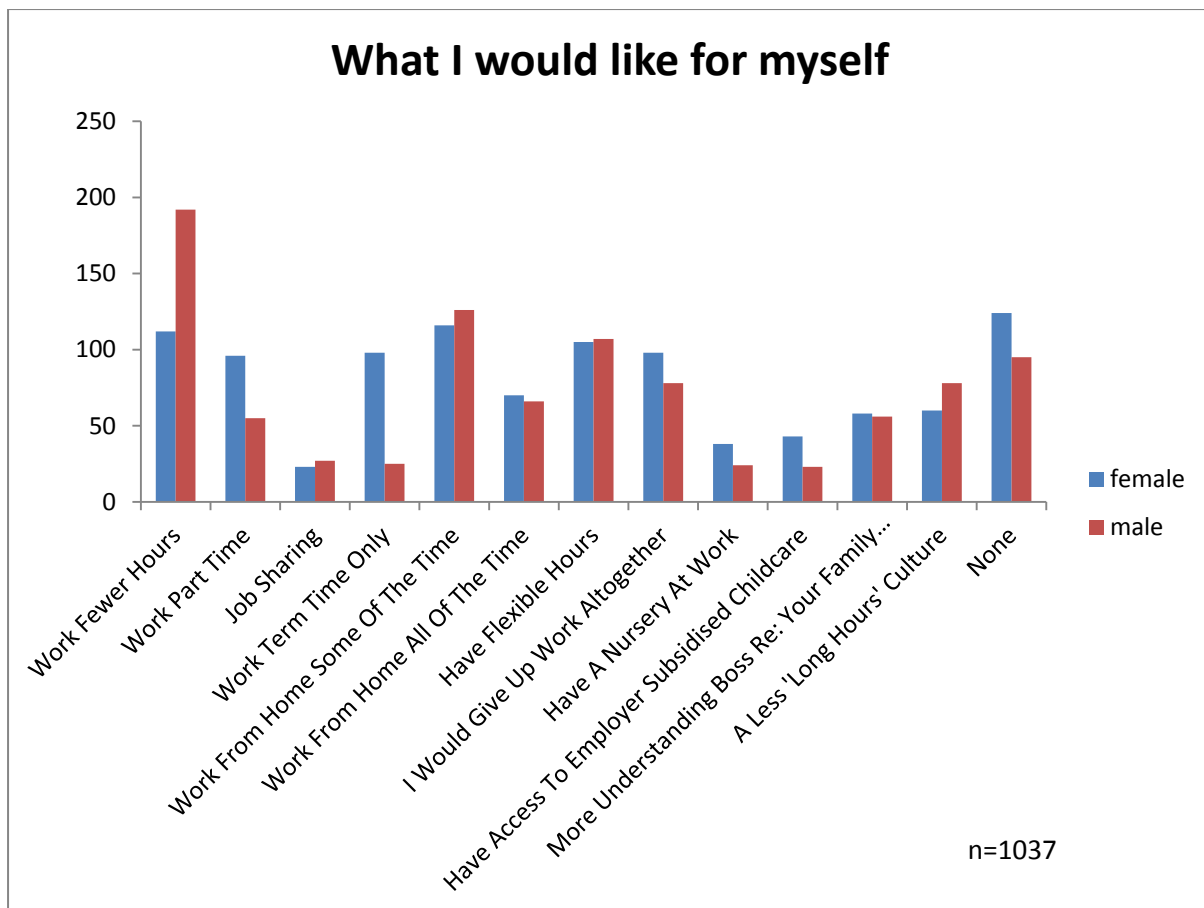


Figure 32

In terms of how parents perceive their work-life balance, there is a mixed picture. Many parents (50 per cent) are reasonably satisfied with their work and family life balance, and do not feel that family commitments and responsibilities are negatively impacting their working life. However, almost as many parents) agree (31 per cent) as disagree (35 per cent) that work affects home life, reflecting the overspill of work into family life. Almost a quarter (23 per cent) feel that they are torn, and that work and family life are in constant conflict.

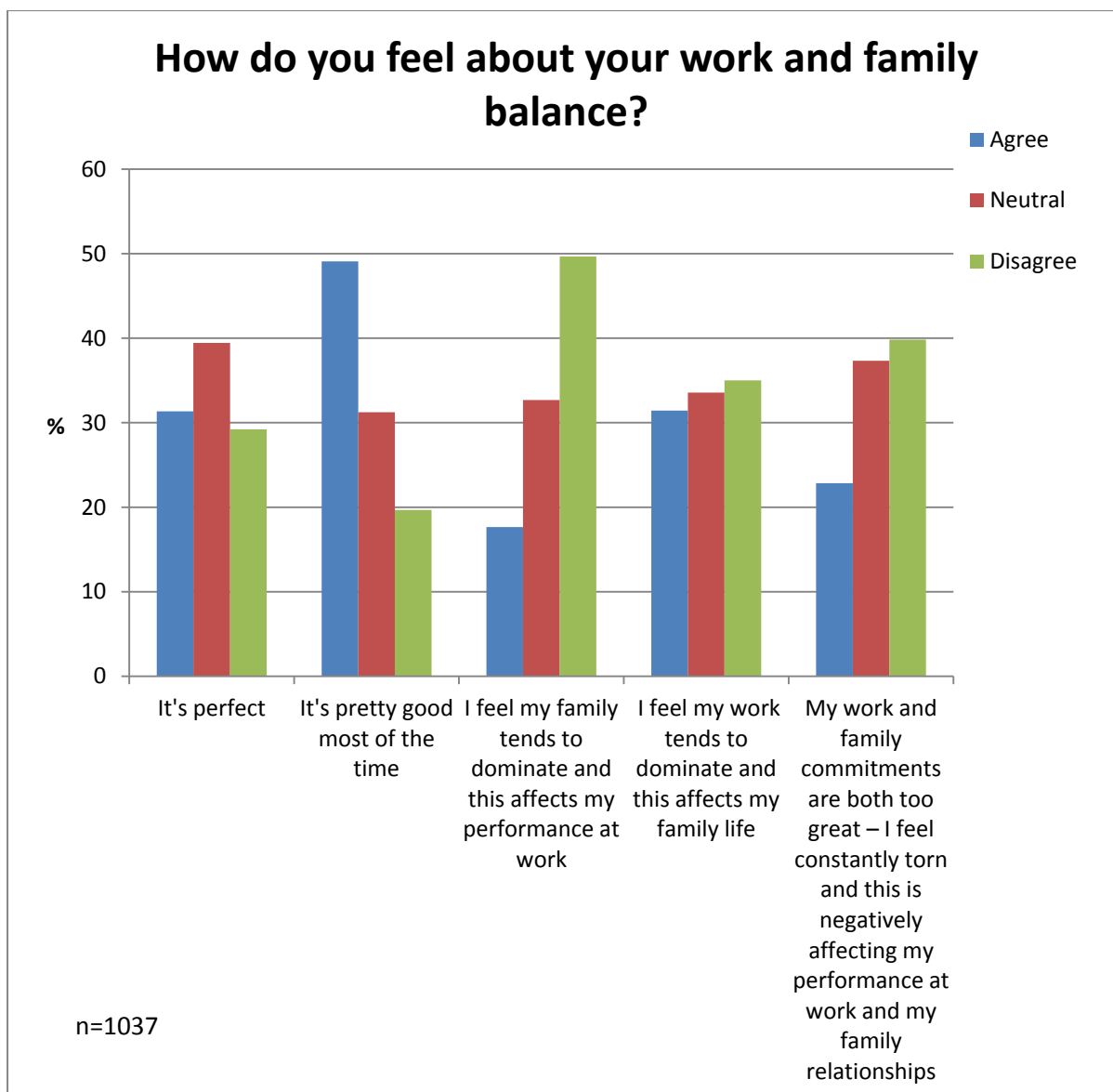


Figure 33

Discussion

Families require time together; they also require sufficient income. Finding the balance between income and time is, for many families, the main factor in the way they integrate work and family life. Navigating towards a satisfactory combination remains, for many parents, an evolving journey as their family circumstances change and the employment environment around them also changes. A 'lifecycle' approach is required. For example, what may be suitable work and childcare arrangements when children are at pre-school will change when children enter school, and again as they transition into secondary education (and parental time can be required again at the further education stage, too). Many families will also find themselves inheriting caring responsibilities for adults, and these usually occur in an unplanned way. Within the lifecycle of changing work life integration needs will be pressure points or periods where work and family are more difficult to reconcile, but there are also stable periods where families are able to achieve a good balance.

It is not, of course, just about fulfilling caring responsibilities. Families also aspire to simply spend time together. Work demands are high, and, it would seem that work itself is intensifying and, as technology blurs the boundaries between work and non work, seeping into areas of non-working life that may, for previous generations, have been entirely separate.

Nonetheless, families need an income, and as well as the economic benefits of work, there are benefits in terms of sense of purpose and fulfilment. The way that work is organised and rewarded, however, can make getting the balance right much harder: the part-time penalty and lack of men in reduced hours roles; the gender pay gap; organisational culture; atypical and zero-hours; and the stagnation of real wages are all factors.

Parents have a range of workplace family friendly arrangements that they can draw upon. In fact, employers have led the way, in many instances putting in place work-life balance policies and practices for parents (and other employees) that are well in advance of statutory provisions. In particular, flexible working practices are mainstream and have been accepted as not only a tool for individuals to arrange their working lives in a way that suits them, but also as a business tool that allows employers flexibility and agility. Employers have been able to save jobs and cut costs during the period of austerity post 2008 by using flexible working practices. The Right to Request flexible working, already available to parents, is due to be extended to all employees in 2014, further evidence that work-life balance is accepted as a normal part of employment. However, despite the many gains that employees who want flexibility have enjoyed, there are still some workplace barriers that persist and show no sign of diminishing. Workload and work organisation are two issues that are closely related and each can inhibit the take up and success of work-life balance measures, particularly those such as reduced hours working arrangements. Accurately calibrating hours worked and tasks will often determine the success of reduced hours working arrangements. Workplace culture and managerial attitude are also important aspects in the success or otherwise of flexible working practices; workplace culture that values long hours or high visibility are places where family-friendly working is less likely to thrive, and managers need to be confident in their skills around managing different types of flexible workers. The translation of policy aspirations around providing a family friendly workplace into actual practice resides at the managerial level; if line managers don't buy into it, it is much harder for all employees to realistically pursue flexible working options. Workplaces reflect wider cultural assumptions about who works and who cares, and despite changing societal attitudes around things like fathers involvement in childcare, the equation of flexible working with mothers of small children is still easily discernible. While penalties for part time work, in terms of career progression and income persist, a disincentive for fathers to adopt reduced hours working pattern exists.

Nonetheless, many employers are making concerted efforts to remove barriers to work-life integration, as they understand that by doing so they can build trust and boost performance. External pressures are also changing the workplace; attitudes, particularly of fathers of young children are different to their own fathers. They have a higher expectation of being involved more closely in the care of their children, and modern parents believe that care should be shared more equally between mothers and fathers. Shared Parental Leave, to be introduced in 2015, may provide real impetus to workplace change, as fathers will be as able as mothers to take extended periods away from work in the first year of their baby's life. It will no longer be practical to assume that it will be the mother who will take the majority of time off. Decisions made within households about

who works and who cares will also change as women's earnings equal and outstrip those of men (The Chartered Management Institute found, for example, that young female managers in their 20s earned 2.1 per cent more than men of the same age.)

Families need time together, although what they do together changes as children grow up, and the shape of this time changes. What parents of young children want might be very different to what parents of teenagers want, or those who have eldercare responsibilities. The overspill of work into family time is not a new phenomenon, and it is unreasonable to expect that work demands never impinge upon family life. However, what many families report in this report is frequent disruption of time together and of activities. It is unsurprising that this erosion of some family time fosters resentment. Even when working hours are not excessively long, a picture where half of parents are only able to leave work on time half of the time or less, and where forty per cent find their time with their families impinged often or all the time is one where the balance, for these families at least, is less than ideal. Families appear to be resilient, with contentment about work and family balance more positive than negative. But this may be fragile, and, with stress a real issue for many parents, time for the 'life' part of work-life balance needs to be protected. Family life needs to be sustainable, and this will best be achieved in a family-friendly economy rather than expecting families to configure themselves in an economy-friendly way.

Appendix 1

Demographic	Nat rep %	Got
16 - 25	9	35
26 - 35	17	352
36 - 45	20	386
46 - 55	17	221
56 +	15	43
Total		1037
Male	49	507
Female	51	530
Total		1037
North East	9	49
Yorkshire And Humber	3	87
East Midlands	4	74
East of England	11	70
London	7	207
south East	9	131
south west	5	81
West Midlands	8	86
North West	14	103
Scotland	12	92
Wales	9	57
Total		1037

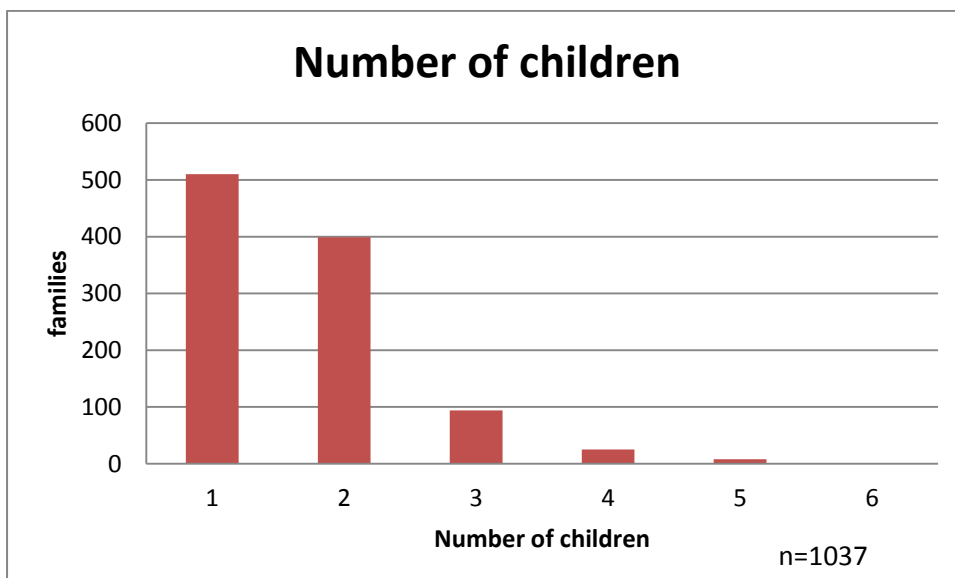


Figure 34

Do you provide care for an elderly relative?

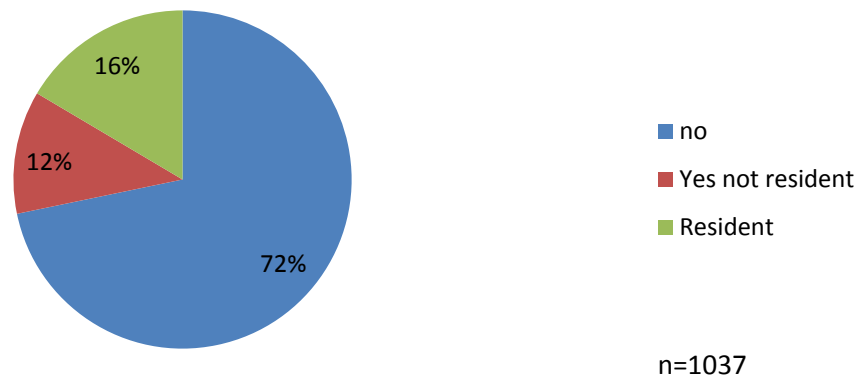


Figure 35

Relationship status

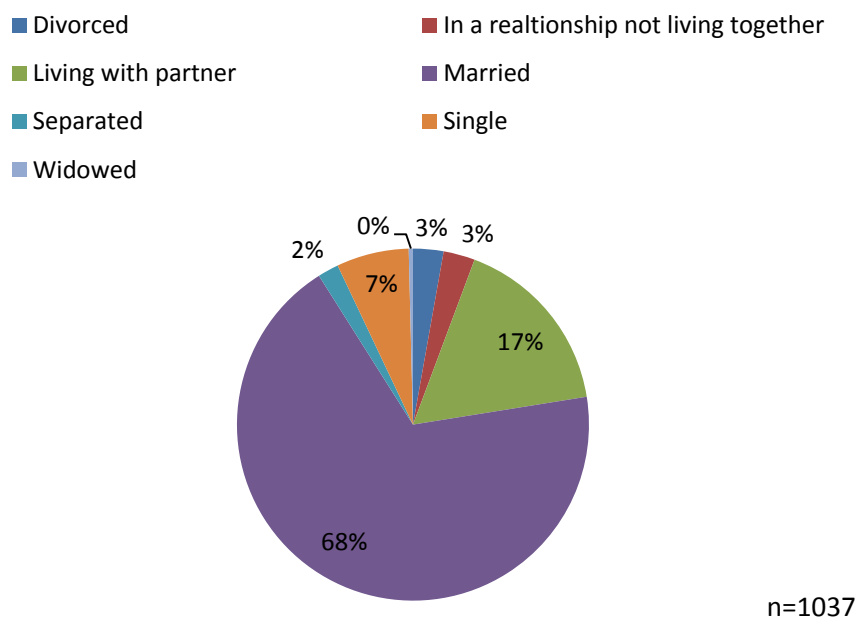


Figure 36

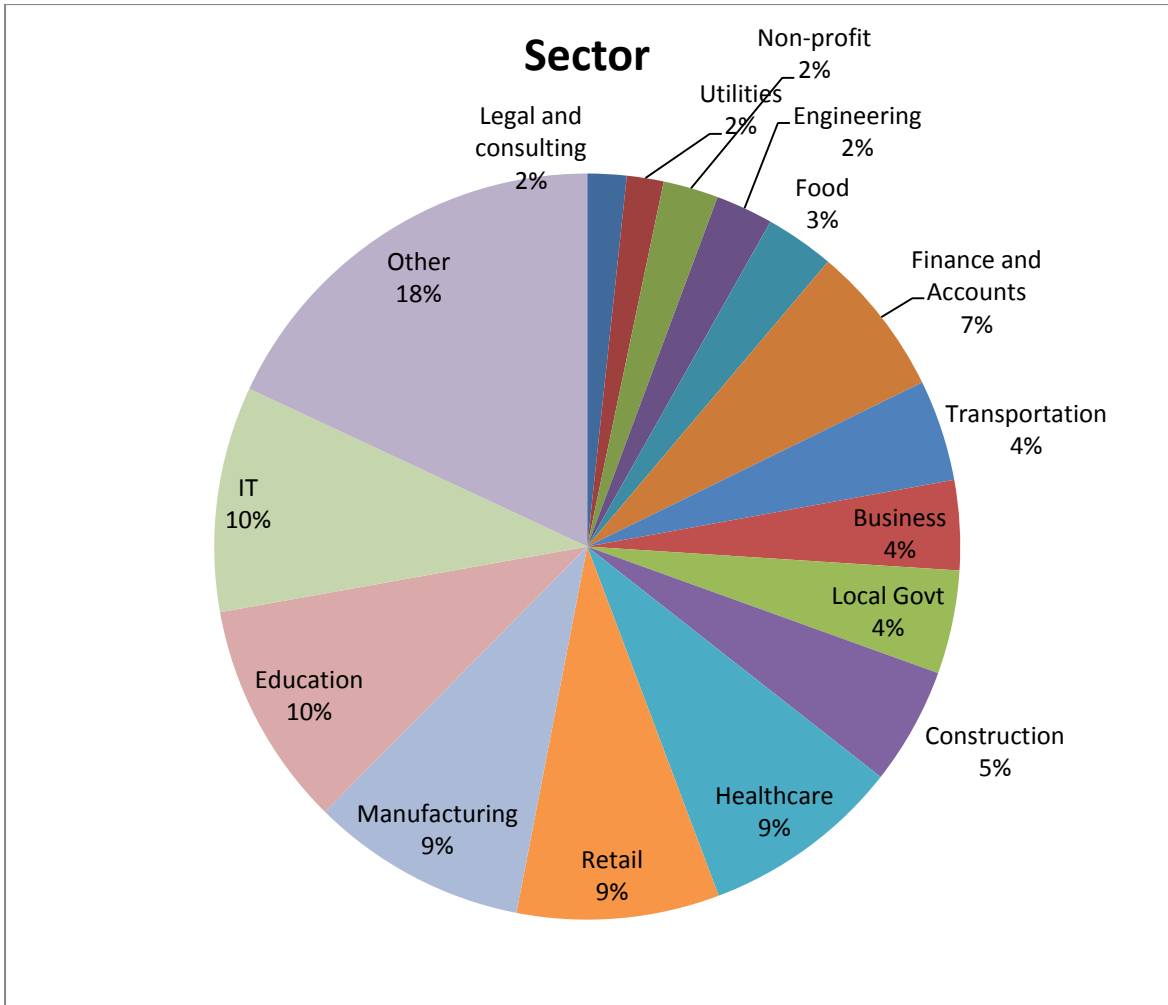


Figure 37

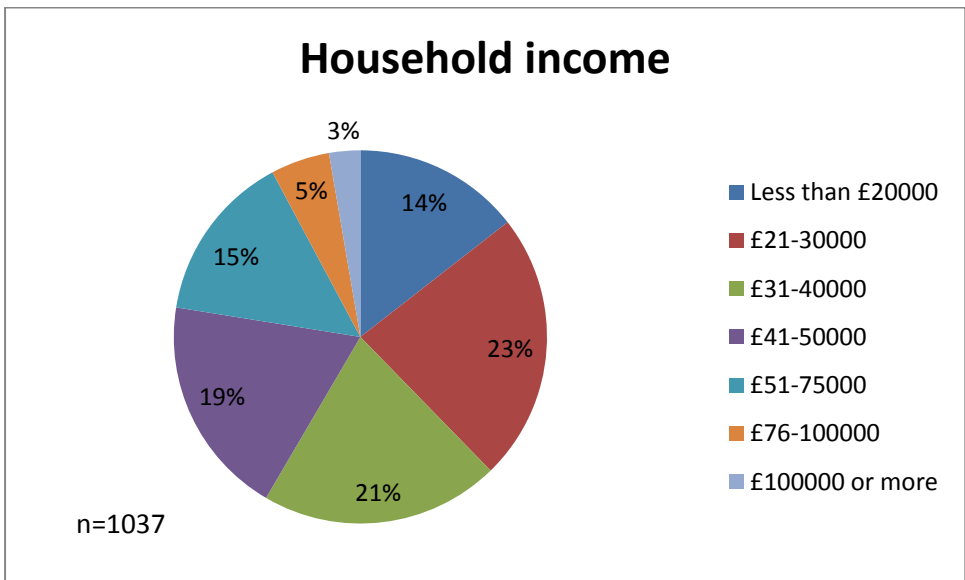


Figure 38

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Working Families is the UK's leading work-life balance organisation. The charity supports and gives a voice to working parents and carers, whilst also helping employers create workplaces which encourage work-life balance for everyone. The free legal advice service for working parents is available on 0300 012 0312 or email advice@workingfamilies.org.uk www.workingfamilies.org.uk

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