

Modern Families Index 2018

Summary Report

The *Modern Families Index* is the most comprehensive survey of how working families manage the balance between work and family life in the UK. Now in its sixth year, it has been published annually by charity Working Families and Bright Horizons Family Solutions since 2012.

Who took part in the *Index*?

The *Index* provides a snapshot into the lives of working families from across the UK; 2,761 working parents and carers responded with at least one dependent child aged 13 or younger who lives with them some or all the time.

The sample gathered equal numbers of fathers and mothers of all ages. Respondents represented a range of household incomes and family structures and were spread equally across the 12 regions of the UK including Scotland and Wales. Most respondents (63%) identified as being from couple households, a very high proportion of whom had both parents working full time (71%). The most common household income was between £25-49,000 (44%) for couple households, and £21-30,000 for single parent households.

To download the full report, and for helpful advice and information for working parents, carers and employers, please visit workingfamilies.org.uk and brighthorizons.co.uk/solutionsatwork

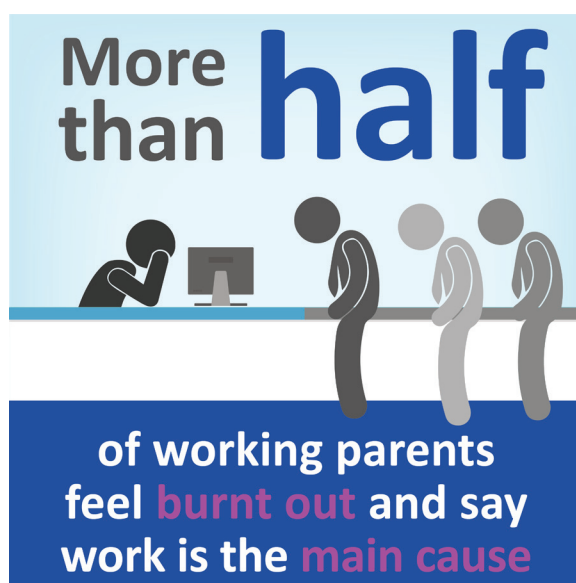
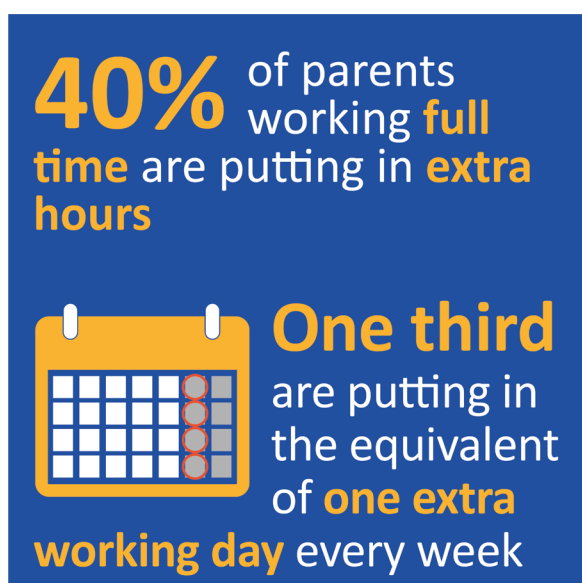
Burning the candle at both ends

Parents are working far beyond their contracted hours. For those parents working 'normal' full time jobs (7 – 8 hours a day, five days a week), the number putting in extra time is substantial, despite evidence that longer hours are counterproductive.

- Of those parents contracted to work 35-36 hours per week, 40% are putting in extra hours — of whom almost a third are putting in an extra 7 hours — the equivalent to an extra working day — each week.
- Of those parents contracted to work 25 hours per week, 34% are putting in extra hours. 30% of these are putting in enough hours to qualify as full time workers, clocking up around 35 hours per week.
- The main drivers for parents putting in extra hours are that it's the workload (it's the only way to deal with it) and organisational culture (it's expected by my manager; it's a worthwhile sacrifice to get on in my career). Clearly, these working practices are not family friendly and discriminate against those (very often women) with caring responsibilities who cannot put in extra hours.

These long hours are causing damage — intruding on time spent together as a family; and on parental relationships and wellbeing.

- For nearly half (47%) of parents and carers, work affects their ability to spend time together as a family. For nearly two in five parents (39%), work prevents them being able to say goodnight to their children often or all the time; and for more than two in five parents (42%), work prevents them being able to help their children with their homework.
- For many families work means arguments at home; more than a quarter of parents (28%) reported work leads to arguments with their partner. It means eating less healthily and failing to take enough exercise, for 38% and 42% of parents, respectively.
- Unsurprisingly, a third of parents said they felt burnt out all or most of the time, with more than half identifying work as the main cause of their burn out.



Times are tough for the UK's working families

Many families aren't even 'just about managing' — with neither the time *or* money they need. This is despite the high number of dual full time earners that took part in the study; and the number of hours parents said they spend working.

- Over half (52%) of parents said it is becoming financially more difficult to raise family (a 5% increase from last year).
- 36% of parents said they had neither the time or money they need for their family to thrive.
- The amount of time parents feel they need to spend at work to increase their family's income has profound implications on their wellbeing. 15% of parents said they have had to increase their working time to bolster their family's income, of whom many reported their work life balance is becoming increasingly stressful.

Trade-offs and the 'parenthood penalty'

Working parents are taking significant action. Family is their highest priority; and the way work is organised and its effect is causing a number of parents and carers to make changes — despite any financial implications — to preserve time spent together.

- When asked what they have already changed in their working life for family reasons, nearly 1 in 5 (17%) have deliberately stalled their careers.
- More than 1 in 10 (11%) have refused a new job and 1 in 10 have said no to a promotion because of a lack of good work life balance opportunities. These figures are the same for mothers and fathers.

This is evidence of a 'parenthood penalty' — with parents unable to fulfil their economic potential and move agilely in the labour market, simply because they have become parents.



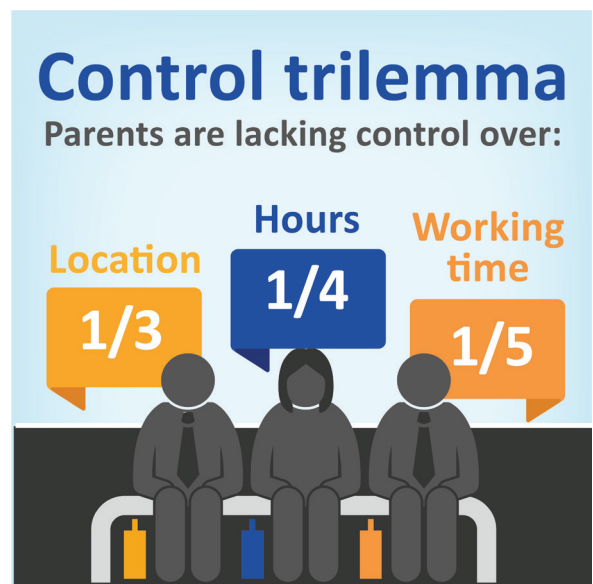
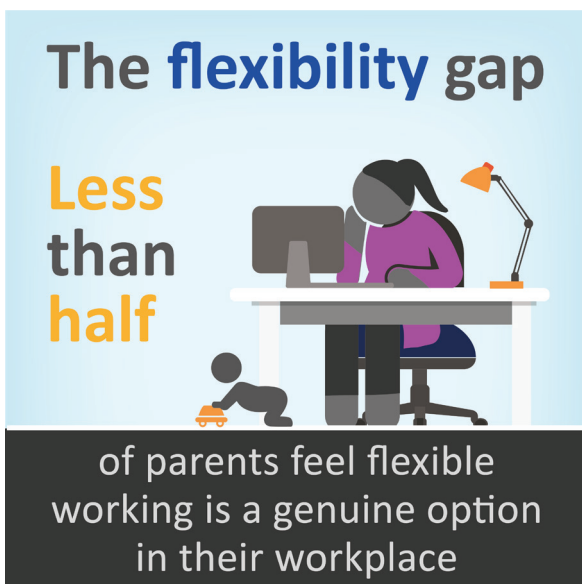
Flexible working: putting parents in control?

The right to request flexible working does not go far enough. It is far from the normal way of working in the UK, despite successive legislation to increase access to it.

- Less than half (44%) of parents felt that flexible working was a genuine option for mothers and fathers in their workplace.
- 46% of parents did not work flexibly. Of these, 45% said they did not because flexible working was not available at their workplace; and 36% said that the type of flexibility they wanted was not available in their current role.

For parents that work flexibly, it is still the best way of gaining some control over their working lives.

- Parents who did not work flexibly had lower levels of control over where they work, their working time (start and finish), and the hours they work — than parents who did use flexible working.
- Part-time and reduced hours roles offered lower levels of control — particularly in terms of location (from which control over start and finish times, and number of hours worked, tends to flow).
- For some parents, working flexibly isn't, on its own, delivering enough control to help achieve a better work life balance. Of those parents that work 'flexibly', nearly one third (31%) had restricted or no control over where they work, a quarter had restricted or no control over their working hours and one fifth had restricted or no control over their start and finish times.



Care: parents' ongoing trilemma

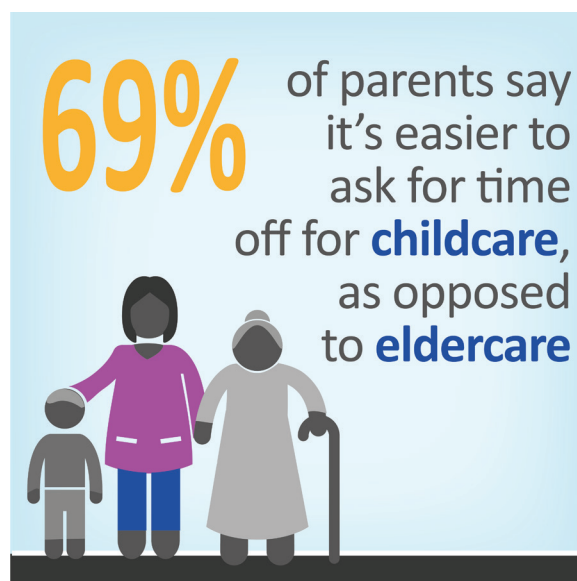
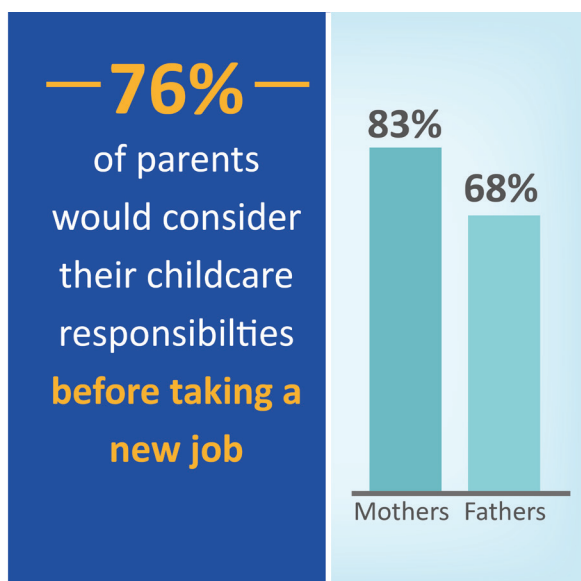
Parents and carers need affordable, appropriate care for their child, available at the right time, to fulfil their potential in the labour market and contribute to the UK's economic success.

- For parents that took part in the study childcare affordability was a barrier for 23%, availability was a barrier for 6% and finding appropriate childcare was an issue for 5%.
- A high number of parents (76%) would consider their childcare responsibilities before taking a new job. This was not confined to mothers alone; 83% of mothers and 68% of fathers said that childcare would have a key bearing on their decision.
- Working parents and carers need practical care solutions for the whole family. Almost a quarter (including fathers and mothers, and millennials) of parents that took part in the study have caring responsibilities for people over 18; expected to rise to nearly one third in five years' time.
- Seven in ten (69%) of carers agreed that it was easier to ask for time off when it was for childcare reasons, as opposed to eldercare.

Who works and who cares?

The 'father working full time' model is still prevalent. This suggests fathers and mothers — for both of whom family is their highest priority — are not afforded a great deal of choice over who works and who cares.

- Most fathers (90%) in the survey worked full time, whilst 51% of mothers did. Only 4% of men worked part time, whereas 40% of women did.
- Fathers were more likely than mothers to make use of workplace and working time flexibility. Twice as many mothers than fathers worked flexibly by reducing their hours.
- Fathers reported higher incomes than mothers. More than a third of mothers (36%) earned less than £15,000 per year, an effect of part time work.



What needs to change?

1 Flexible working is, too often, an ‘individual arrangement’ for individual employees, frequently mothers. And many parents don’t even see it as an option for them. The UK needs a flexible working revolution. The UK Government’s review of the extension of the right to request flexible working in 2019 is an opportunity to turn the labour market on its head and deliver **flexibility as the normal way of working**; as well as to start a conversation with employers about how the flexibility on offer can be made less ‘rigid’.

2 As recommended in Matthew Taylor’s 2017 review of modern employment practice, employers should **use Working Families’ Happy to Talk Flexible Working strapline and logo** to recruit for more flexible *and* ‘human-sized’ jobs – because as well as flexible recruitment *Happy to Talk* prompts employers to think through the roles they recruit for – and what can realistically be done in the hours allocated to them.

3 Whilst the UK has decided to leave the EU, there must be **no curtailing employment legislation supporting working parents and carers**. The *Index* shows the damaging impact of long working hours on family life. The UK Government must consider the message any amendment of these laws would send about the importance of time for family and for work performance - both to parents and to employers.

4 Parents and carers are struggling to find the flexibility and the control over working time that they need to support family life. Enabling choice needs to be a key part of any new initiatives to support working families. The 2017 Conservative manifesto included a commitment to introducing a statutory entitlement to one year’s carer’s leave. The UK Government should set out its plans for this leave; which should include it being flexible and properly paid - enabling working parents and carers to plan to deal with a new or altered family situation, without leaving the labour market.

5 For many families the childcare trilemma – affordability, accessibility and inequality – is an all too vivid reality. Given the high numbers of respondents in this study reporting that childcare considerations prevent them being agile in the labour market and a significant number reporting that they have already deliberately stalled their careers, employers, employees and government are all at risk of losing out. **A more comprehensive, flexible, generous and progressive childcare infrastructure** is therefore required for the UK. Local authorities and employers are crucial to putting this provision in place but childcare needs to also be a central plank of government industrial and economic strategies across the UK.

6 Tackling gendered assumptions about who works and who cares is crucial to broadening parental choice. **Parental and paternity leave rights from day one** in a new job should be available to all parents, in the same way that women have access to maternity rights. Whilst the introduction of Shared Parental Leave has helped to kick start a change in attitudes and norms, the government can and should go further. The creation of a **properly paid, standalone period of extended paternity leave for fathers** means that it is more likely they will use it – and continue to be involved with their children’s care later. Introducing this measure would show the UK Government is serious about equality at work and tackling the gender pay gap.