

BARRIERS TO EQUAL PARENTING



WE'RE STILL SOME WAY OFF EQUAL PARENTING

The UK has a **gender pay gap** of 13.1%.

The **motherhood penalty**: Mothers with two children take home **26% less income** than women without children, whilst men with at least two children are paid **22% more** than those without (Fawcett Society 2023).

In 2022, working fathers were spending only **65% of the time working mothers spent on unpaid childcare** (up from 54% in 2014/15) (Fatherhood Institute 2022).

Fathers are less likely to access **policies that support work and family** than mothers (Moran & Koslowski 2019).

WHY DOES EQUAL PARENTING MATTER?

Family wellbeing & equality

Increasing fathers' entitlement to paid leave leads to parents in heterosexual couples **spreading unpaid care and household responsibilities more equally**, even after their leave ends (Tamm 2019).

Taking paternity leave, particularly longer periods, is associated with **higher levels of mental wellbeing** for both fathers and mothers (Philpott et al 2022; Redshaw & Henderson 2013).

Gender pay gap

In Sweden, each month that a father took leave resulted in a **7% increase in the mother's earnings** (IFAU 2010).

Mothers are **more than twice as likely to be in work when their baby is 9 months old** if the father does the most or shares childcare equally with the mother (Norman 2020).

Child development

Taking paternity leave of two weeks or more led to **children having more positive views of their relationship with their father** (Petts et al 2020).

OUR NEW RESEARCH

In partnership with Wates Group, we surveyed 5,000 working fathers with at least one child age 0-17, across the UK.

We asked them about how they would like to balance parenting and work, their experiences in the workplace, and the changes they would want to see in the workplace.



74%

of working dads said
“I want to fully embrace equal
parenting, but still feel there is
a stigma around taking time
off work.”

- 50% of working fathers say they **feel nervous asking for flexibility/time off** from their employer for childcare responsibilities.
- 28% worry that asking for more flexibility would **make them look less committed**.
- 22% worry it would **affect their career progression**.
- 20% say there is a **perception their partner should cover all childcare instead**.

A GENERATIONAL STORY

Younger fathers are more worried about perceptions in the workplace

- **64% of Gen Z fathers** (28 and under) feel nervous asking for flexibility, compared to only **40% of Gen X** (45-60 year olds).
- **31% of Millennial fathers** (29-44 year olds) were worried that asking for flexibility would make them look less committed vs **22% of Gen X**.
- **84% of Gen Z fathers** said they wanted to embrace equal parenting but felt there was stigma around taking time off work, vs **67% of Gen X**.

QUESTIONING CHILDCARE RESPONSIBILITIES



21%

of working fathers have
been asked
“where’s your wife/partner”
when asking for time off for
childcare responsibilities.

- 21% of working fathers have been asked “**can your partner cover instead?**”.
- There were also questions around whether it was **really urgent** (20%) or whether they could **arrange alternative care** (19%).

DADS’ OWN WORRIES

- 24% **feel guilty** asking colleagues to cover their work.
- 22% worry their **boss will think less** of them.
- 20% feel their **partner is expected to cover all childcare duties**.

LEAVE FOR NEW FATHERS



of dads said they couldn't take as much parental leave as they wanted.



of dads took no leave at all.

- However, **73% of Gen Z dads** said they took the leave they wanted vs only **55% of Gen X dads**.
- 87% said they would be **comfortable taking their full paternity leave** for another child.
- Of those who wouldn't, 32% would be worried it would **affect their career progression** and 26% would be worried it would look like they **didn't take their job seriously**.



33%

of those who couldn't take as much leave they wanted said it impacted their mental health and the mental health of their partner.

ALL THE FAMILY IS IMPACTED



- 27% of fathers have missed out on **time with their child**.
- 26% have felt **stressed or guilty about not meeting their child's needs**.
- 24% have noticed an **extra strain on their partner**.

WHY FLEX FOR FATHERS MATTERS

Fathers told us what a difference flexibility made:

- 42% had been able to **spend more quality time with their child**.
- 42% had been there for their child when they were **sick or in an emergency**.
- 39% had been present at **key events in their child's life**.
- 37% had better **supported their partner**.



When fathers don't get the flexibility they need, **1 in 4 have missed out on key events in their child's life.**

WHAT'S THE GOOD NEWS?

- Millennial and Gen Z dads were the most likely (28%) to say in an ideal world they'd want to **do more of the childcare than their partner** (vs 16% of Gen X and 7% of Boomers (61-79 year olds)).
- 88% said they feel **able to talk about balancing work and being a father** in their workplace - and this was fairly consistent across generations.

WHAT ARE THE SOLUTIONS?

“More paternity leave. That is the sole issue”

“Better wages so parents aren't constantly working all the time”

“Equal pay for women”



WHAT DADS WANT

Working dads told us they wanted:

- 31%: **equal parenting leave** for all genders.
- 30%: more **flexible working hours**.
- 29%: more **open conversations**.
- 29%: better **awareness** of the barriers for working fathers.
- 28%: highlight **positive role models** of working dads.
- 24%: **normalise** dads taking time off for childcare.

WHAT EMPLOYERS CAN DO NEXT

Take the Family Friendly Workplace Certification

Use the Working Families' Supporting Fathers toolkit

- **Focus** on culture as well as policy.
- **Open up** conversations.
- **Normalise** fathers taking time for childcare responsibilities.
- **Offer** longer, better-paid leave for new parents of all genders.
- **Recognise** some fathers may face greater challenges at work.



WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU



Find out more about
Barriers to Equal
Parenting.

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