



**EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS  
RESEARCH SERIES NO. 50**

Maternity and Paternity  
Rights and Benefits:  
Survey of Parents 2005

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The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Trade and Industry or the Government.

# Foreword

The Department of Trade and Industry's aims to create the conditions for business success, and help the UK respond to the challenge of globalisation

We want a dynamic labour market that provides full employment, adaptability and choice. We want to create workplaces of high productivity and skill, where people can flourish and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

The Government is committed to helping working parents balance work and family life in ways that are compatible with and beneficial to business. A substantial package of new and improved laws for working parents came into force in April 2003 – extending the period of paid and unpaid maternity leave, introducing for the first time paid leave for fathers and adopters and giving a right to parents of young and disabled children to request flexible working.

This survey of parents was designed, in part, to help gauge the impact of these new laws on working parents. It also establishes a baseline of evidence for new proposals (to extend paid maternity leave and improve arrangements for parents to take paid leave after the birth of a child) that are included in the Work and Families Bill, which is currently before Parliament.

This was a joint research project with the Department for Work and Pensions, without whose contribution this survey would not have been possible. We thank them for their considerable assistance.

The views expressed in this document are solely those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Trade and Industry or the Department for Work and Pensions.



Grant Fitzner

Director, Employment Market Analysis and Research

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# Abbreviations

AML	Additional Maternity Leave
CBR	Child benefit records
ERA	Employment Rights Act 1996
LFS	Labour Force Survey
MA	Maternity Allowance
MRS 05	Maternity and Paternity Rights and Benefits Survey 2005
NICs	National Insurance contributions
OML	Ordinary Maternity Leave
OMP	Occupational Maternity Pay
SMP	Statutory Maternity Pay
SPP	Statutory Paternity Pay

# Glossary

Additional Maternity Leave  
(AML)

Women who have completed 26 weeks of service by the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth have the right to 26 weeks of Additional Maternity Leave which is taken after their entitlement to 26 weeks of Ordinary Maternity Leave.

Maternity Allowance  
(MA)

Women who do not qualify for Statutory Maternity Pay (see below) may be entitled to Maternity Allowance from the Department for Work and Pensions for 26 weeks – extended from 18 weeks in 2003. Women qualify if they have been an employed or self-employed earner in any 26 weeks in the 66-week period ending the week before the week in which the baby is due. They must also have earned an average minimum of £30 over any 13 weeks in this period.

Lower Earnings Limit

Earnings which reach the National Insurance threshold of £89 a week in 2005 (£82 in 2002/3) commence National Insurance contributions. Note that the Lower Earnings Limit differs from the National Insurance threshold.

Ordinary Maternity Leave  
(OML)

All employed women are entitled to Ordinary Maternity Leave regardless of length of service. This leave was extended in duration in 2003 from 18 to 26 weeks.

Occupational Maternity  
Pay (OMP)

Occupational Maternity Pay may be paid to women by their employer as part of their employment contract. Employers are not required by law to pay OMP. The amount and duration of OMP differs according to employer. Women who qualify for SMP and receive OMP will usually have their SMP incorporated into their OMP. Women who qualify for MA and receive OMP will usually receive MA in addition to their OMP.

Parental leave	Parents with one year's service have the right to 13 weeks of unpaid leave which can be taken until their child's fifth birthday. Parents of disabled children can take 18 weeks of unpaid leave until the child's 18th birthday.
Paternity leave	Fathers with 26 weeks of service by the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth have the statutory right to two weeks of leave.
Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP)	Women who have completed 26 weeks' continuous employment with their employer by the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth and have earned at least, on average, the lower earnings limit for National Insurance contributions are entitled to SMP. Payment is received for 26 weeks, up from 18 weeks since 2003. Women receive 90 per cent of their earnings for the first six weeks followed by a flat weekly rate of £75 in 2002, £100 from 2003 and £106 from 2005.
Statutory Paternity Pay (SPP)	Fathers with 26 weeks of service by the 15th week before the birth of their child have the statutory right to two weeks of paternity pay at a flat rate of £106 per week in 2005.

# Executive summary

*A telephone survey was carried out in 2005 of a nationally representative sample of 2,504 mothers, 17 months after the birth of their child. The questionnaire, similar to a postal survey of such mothers in 2002, asked about their use of maternity leave and their receipt of maternity pay. It was shown that increases in maternity leave and pay introduced since 2002 had been matched by increased take-up of leave, from an average of four to six months. As many returned to work as before, eight out of ten working mothers, but mothers in 2005 found fewer obstacles and greater flexibility that aided their return, including more part-time work. The proportion that changed their employer halved from 41 to 20 per cent. Financial considerations most guided the decision to return.*

*Fathers took more leave than previously around the birth of their child and also reported more chances to work flexibly. A quarter of mothers and a third of fathers welcomed proposals to share leave between them.*

## **Summary of the survey findings**

Beginning in 1979, the Government has commissioned a series of surveys to evaluate the impact of legislative change upon the behaviour, experiences and employment of mothers around the time of childbirth. Later surveys included fathers. This is the report of the latest survey in this series – Maternity and Paternity Rights and Benefits: Survey of Parents 2005 (MRS 05). This 2005 survey was smaller than earlier surveys and departed from earlier postal survey methods in favour of telephone interviews, which necessitated some changes in question wording. For these reasons the 2005 survey should be seen as an interim survey in the series. The findings reported in this document highlighting change or continuity should be seen as indicative.

## **Mothers' use of maternity leave (chapter 3)**

Between the 2002 and 2005 surveys Ordinary Maternity Leave (OML) was extended from 18 to 26 weeks and Additional Maternity Leave (AML) from 29 to 52 weeks. Response to these changes has been significant.

- In 2002 just 9 per cent of mothers took six months' maternity leave and five per cent one year or more. Instead, nearly half the mothers in 2002 took up to four months of leave.

- In 2005 nearly half the mothers took exactly six months of maternity leave and a further 14 per cent took their full 52-week entitlement.

The amount of leave taken differed by a number of personal characteristics:

- The response of mothers who had better-paid jobs prior to childbirth was more diverse than others. More of them took less than six months but more of them took a greater amount of leave too.
- The self-employed took less leave than employees. Managers returned to work the most quickly and mothers in clerical/secretarial occupations during pregnancy were the most likely to take 52 weeks' maternity leave.
- Lone mothers were somewhat less likely to return to work at all after childbirth but those who did return, returned sooner than partnered mothers.

The single most important factor explaining the duration of maternity leave is duration of maternity pay. Financial considerations above all else determine the length of time mothers remain on maternity leave.

### **Parental leave (chapter 3)**

Parental leave entitles both mothers and fathers to 13 weeks of unpaid leave up to their child's fifth birthday. Parental leave is not, however, used widely in the first 17 months of their child's life and when used at all it is taken for only short periods of time – a situation which has remained fairly stable since 2002. In 2005, 11 per cent of mothers took parental leave after their maternity leave ended, typically for just one week.

### **Mothers' experience of maternity pay (chapter 4)**

- In 2002, 67 per cent of mothers received maternity pay for four months or longer. One-third of mothers (32 per cent) took less than their statutory right to 18 weeks of maternity pay (whether eligible for MA or SMP).
- By 2005 the proportion who received maternity pay rose to 90 per cent and only one-fifth (22 per cent) of mothers took up less than their full statutory right to 26 weeks of maternity pay.
- The proportion of mothers who said they were receiving Statutory Maternity Pay remained stable at 92 per cent in both 2002 and 2005. However, the proportion of mothers receiving MA fell – from 8 per cent in 2002 to 5 per cent in 2005.

Mothers with higher prior earnings, employed in higher-skilled occupations, were more likely to receive maternity pay and were more likely to receive Occupational Maternity Pay (OMP). OMP tends to be paid at a higher rate and/or for a longer period of time than basic SMP or MA. Employers said to be providing the benefits of OMP tended to be larger,



employed more than 100 staff, recognised trade unions in their workplace and were most likely to be found in the public sector.

### **Returning to work after childbirth (chapter 5)**

Of the mothers employed during pregnancy, 80 per cent had returned to work by the time of the interview. Six per cent, it turned out, returned only on a temporary basis, so 74 per cent were still employed at the time of the interview.

#### **Non-returners**

- Mothers not returning to work said they were influenced primarily by the desire to care for their children on a full-time basis (77 per cent). They were more likely to have more than one child, suggesting perhaps a stronger orientation toward family life or were discouraged by the complication, effort and extra costs associated with arranging care for more than one child.
- Compared with 2002, fewer mothers who were out of work in 2005 reported an obstacle to securing employment such as the inability to find suitable childcare (12 per cent), difficulties in finding a job that paid well enough (27 per cent), or finding a job at all (22 per cent).
- Most non-working mothers planned to return to work once their child had reached nursery or primary school age.

#### **Returners**

- Mothers in higher-level jobs providing flexible opportunities, often in unionised workplaces, and treated well by their employers, were the most likely to return to work after maternity leave.
- Personal characteristics are less important than these job- and employer-related factors. However, low-income mothers were less likely to return to work.
- Having a mortgage pushes mothers back to work, as does having a partner on a low income. By contrast, mothers have higher odds of remaining at home if they have a partner with higher-than-average earnings.

#### **Changing jobs or patterns of work**

- The majority of mothers returning to work in 2005 made some sort of change to their employment upon returning from maternity leave (88 per cent of mothers of one child and 68 per cent of those with more).
- Usually they reduced their hours, on average from 26 hours a week during pregnancy to 22 hours on return.
- Mothers with more than one child were already more likely to be working part-time during their recent pregnancy than were first-time mothers (58 per cent and 36 per cent respectively).

- Nearly one-fifth of mothers assumed a different set of tasks upon returning to work after maternity leave. Around one in ten mothers appeared to experience some form of downward mobility by returning to a job with fewer responsibilities but a similar proportion of mothers returned and assumed more responsibilities.
- By 2005 more employers were said to provide time off for emergencies, career breaks, flexi-time opportunities, retraining schemes, home-working, compressed working weeks, school term-time working and job sharing.
- Around three-quarters of mothers returning to work in 2005 returned on a part-time basis, half used flexi-time and one-quarter worked from home occasionally.
- Employers' provision of flexible working arrangements was actually more widespread than their use.

### **Employer/employee communications (chapter 6)**

- Most mothers informed their employer of their pregnancy within the first trimester and nearly all had informed their employer of their condition by the time they were five months pregnant. All the mothers in the MRS 05 survey therefore complied with their legal requirement to notify employers.
- Fewer than half were able or willing to indicate the date that they would return to work – despite the significant degree of clustering in practice around the six-month maternity leave period.
- About one-fifth of mothers who changed their minds either about returning to work or about the date of return, gave their employers less than a month's warning. Half of those who departed from their stated intentions gave less than two months' notice.
- During their maternity leave nearly one-quarter of mothers experienced a 'keep in touch' scheme with their employers (comparable to the 21 per cent of mothers in 2002) while a little over half the mothers interviewed in 2005 had been contacted by their employer by some other means.

### **Mothers' and fathers' views on proposed new rights (chapters 7 and 11)**

- The Work and Families Bill introduced into Parliament in October 2005 contained, among other provisions, new opportunities planned for 2007 onwards for 'leave sharing' between parents. Fathers would have the right to take up to 26 weeks of additional paternity leave, some of which could be paid if the mother returned to work early. Mothers and fathers were asked to say how they would have responded to this option.<sup>1</sup>
- A quarter of all interviewed mothers said they would have considered an option for leave sharing if it had been available

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<sup>1</sup>For example, mothers were asked: If you had been able to transfer some of your statutory maternity leave and pay to the father of your baby, so that he could stay at home with your child while you went out to work, do you think you would have done so?

whereas a third of fathers said they would have wanted to stay at home with their child while their partner went to work. These answers are a helpful guide to parents' attitudes towards these new provisions but they may not be an accurate predictor of their future behaviour.

- The proposal for leave sharing was least popular among higher-paid fathers. While 39 per cent of fathers earning less than £2,000 per month were interested in the transference of APL, this figure fell to just 22 per cent of fathers earning £3,000 or more.

### **Fathers' time off around childbirth (chapter 9)**

- Following the introduction of Statutory Paternity Leave and Statutory Paternity Pay in April 2003, fathers in 2005 took more leave around the birth of their child than fathers took in 2002. The proportion of fathers taking more than two weeks rose from 22 to 36 per cent in just three years. The proportion taking five days or fewer fell correspondingly from 39 to 25 per cent.
- Self-employed fathers, like their self-employed partners, took less leave than employees in 2005: typically 8 and 11 days respectively. Fathers in low-paid or lower-skilled jobs tended to take less time off around childbirth as did fathers employed in the construction industry or employed in smaller workplaces.
- Among the fathers who took time off after the birth of their child and were employees, one-fifth did not use paternity leave, relying instead on annual or other forms of leave. Nearly half the fathers used paternity leave exclusively and the remaining 30 per cent used a combination of paternity and other forms of leave.

### **Fathers' job changes and opportunities for flexibility (chapter 10)**

Following the birth of their child, fathers made a wide array of changes to their own working patterns. In total, 71 per cent of fathers made at least one of the changes to their working arrangements listed below:

- 18% worked shorter hours
  - 14% started and ended work later
  - 23% started and ended earlier
  - 27% changed working hours to fit in with partner's job
  - 36% worked more regular hours
  - 12% moved to a shift system of work
  - 22% changed job or place of work
  - 21% made other unspecified changes to their working patterns
- In 2002, 22 per cent of fathers claimed that the opportunity for part-time working was provided by their employer, 22 per cent had access to flexi-time and 20 per cent could work at home occasionally. By 2005 these figures roughly doubled to 47, 54 and 39 per cent respectively.

- However, the percentage of fathers actually using these part-time opportunities remained negligible, rising from just 2 to 4 per cent. The use of flexi-time, by contrast, trebled from 11 to 31 per cent and working at home doubled from 14 to 29 per cent.

## **Summary of the changes in mothers' and fathers' use of maternity and paternity provisions and their patterns of work between 2002 and 2005**

### **Mothers**

#### **Maternity leave**

Mothers took longer periods of maternity leave in 2005 compared with 2002. This appeared to be a direct consequence of longer periods of Statutory Maternity Pay and longer maternity leave entitlements. Most mothers took around six months' leave in 2005 compared with four months in 2002.

#### **Maternity pay**

The proportion of mothers who said they received some form of maternity pay remained the same in 2002 and 2005: 92 per cent. Among mothers receiving any maternity pay fewer received Maternity Allowance (5 rather than 8 per cent) with a corresponding rise in the proportion receiving Statutory Maternity Pay (from 92 per cent to 95 per cent). These findings are consistent with the slight decline in lower earnings limit (LEL) thresholds, combined with earnings inflation.

#### **Returning to work**

The proportion of mothers returning to work within 17 months of the birth of their children remained stable: 80 per cent in both 2002 and 2005. However, fewer obstacles to securing or maintaining employment after birth were reported in 2005 compared with 2002. More mothers stayed at home because they wanted to care for their children. Fewer mothers in 2005 described problems such as being unable to find childcare, being unable to earn enough or failing to find the right sort of job.

There has been a dramatic decline in the proportion of mothers who changed employer upon returning to work after childbirth – down from 41 per cent in 2002 to 20 per cent by 2005.

By 2005 more employers were said to provide time off for emergencies, career breaks, flexi-time opportunities, retraining schemes, home-working, compressed working weeks, school term-time working and job sharing.

## **Fathers**

### **Paternity leave**

Following the introduction of Statutory Paternity Leave and Statutory Paternity Pay, fathers in 2005 took more leave around the birth of their child than did fathers in 2002. The proportion of fathers taking more than two weeks off rose from 22 to 33 per cent.

### **Parental leave**

As in 2002, about one in ten fathers in 2005 used their entitlement to unpaid parental leave.

### **Emergency leave**

A little under one-third of fathers used emergency leave in 2002 and 2005. Change was however evident in the willingness of employers to pay for emergency leave in full – rising from half the fathers in 2002 to 80 per cent in 2005. Employers are not legally obliged to pay staff taking emergency leave so these results suggest a greater acceptance among employers of the need to implement work–life balance measures.

### **Flexible working arrangements**

Comparisons in the availability of flexible working arrangements between 2002 and 2005 reveal some dramatic changes. In 2002, 22 per cent of fathers claimed that part-time working was provided by their employer, 22 per cent had access to flexi-time and 20 per cent could work at home occasionally. By 2005 these figures had roughly doubled to 47, 54 and 39 per cent respectively.

Greater provision led to greater use. Whereas few worked part-time, the use of flexi-time trebled from 11 to 31 per cent and working at home doubled from 14 to 29 per cent.

## **Conclusions**

New measures extending maternity and paternity rights and increasing benefits were introduced in April 2003. Ordinary Maternity Leave was extended from 18 to 26 weeks and Additional Maternity Leave from 29 to 52 weeks. As a result, a number of changes in the behaviour and experiences of mothers and fathers can be seen in comparisons of surveys of new parents carried out in 2002 and 2005.

Both mothers and fathers now take more time off work in the period following childbirth. Financial considerations continue to be of prime importance in decisions relating to maternity and paternity leave and, as a consequence, the duration of leave taken is determined primarily by the duration of Statutory Maternity and Paternity Pay. Relatively few of those who returned to work had made use of larger amounts of unpaid leave.

Parents reported an increase in the provision of flexible working arrangements by their employers and both mothers and fathers have used these facilities. More mothers and fathers used flexi-time and worked from home and noticeably more mothers worked part-time. Increased provision signals a greater willingness among employers to support family-friendly policies, particularly large employers who may be more able to smooth out the effects of staff absence. This is matched by a greater willingness among parents, particularly new fathers, to use them. This may signal a general change in occupational culture towards family-friendly working, which legislation has both encouraged and in turn reflected.

Since the extension of maternity and paternity leave and benefits in 2003, the incidence of mothers changing employer upon returning to work fell from 41 to 20 per cent of returners. This fall may be associated with a combination of factors, including the more general changes in the shared occupational culture cited above. But it remains an important finding that has significant implications for reducing downward occupational mobility among mothers and increasing their lifetime earnings and eligibility for pensions.

## **About this survey (chapters 1 and 2)**

The findings presented in this report are based on a survey of mothers and fathers using a stratified random sample of 2,504 mothers and 1,512 co-resident fathers drawn from DWP Child Benefit records. The interviews were carried out by NOP and the analysis by the Policy Studies Institute, an independent research contractor. The full technical report can be found at [www.psi.org.uk](http://www.psi.org.uk). The full dataset and accompanying documentation is available from the ESRC Data Archive ([www.data-archive.ac.uk](http://www.data-archive.ac.uk)).

## **Methodology**

Earlier surveys of maternity and paternity rights and benefits used postal surveys. The methodology of this 2005 survey differed by changing the data collection method to the use of telephone interviews. Such a change may impact on the distribution of findings from a survey in many ways. It can change the composition of the achieved sample, since everyone has a letterbox but not everyone, even now, has a telephone. People differ in their willingness to answer postal and telephone surveys, some favouring one but shunning the other. And answering questions on the telephone by choosing perhaps among a list of alternative answers read out to you is not the same thing as reading the same answers written down and then making a choice with a pen. These and similar considerations will affect the reliability of comparisons made with earlier surveys, particularly between the 2002 postal survey and this new telephone survey in 2005.

## **Sample**

Parents were sampled from the Child Benefit Register, which has almost universal coverage and can identify parents who had new children during the chosen period 17 months prior to the interview fieldwork. The Child

Benefit Register, on the other hand, does not usually record telephone numbers and these were subsequently obtained for only about a third of the parents sampled. The telephone survey was successful in securing interviews with 60 per cent of the mothers for whom telephone numbers were obtained, but this means that the overall or gross response rate was 20 per cent. There was, however, an acceptable fit between the social, economic and demographic profiles of this sample and what is known nationally of these distributions among parents who have recently begun or added to their families. Remaining differences were then accounted for by weighting the survey data appropriately.

Fathers were asked for an interview only if they lived with the sampled mother and interviews were obtained with 40 per cent of these.

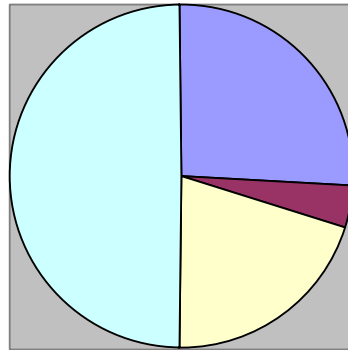
### **How sub-populations of the sample appear in this report**

This survey, like others before them, concentrates on mothers and fathers in work, of any hours a week, during the pregnancy. The survey then examines their choices and behaviour during the 17 months between birth and the interview. There are sections of this report, however, when mothers and fathers not in work are introduced into the analysis. These variations in the sample base are found as follows:

- The Maternity Leave section looks at all mothers who were employed during pregnancy.
- The Maternity Pay section analyses all mothers who were employed during pregnancy plus mothers who had worked for at least six months in the 15-month period before the birth of their child.
- The sections dealing with mothers' return to work and their employer/employee communications consider only those mothers employed during pregnancy.
- The sections dealing with views on proposed new maternity and paternity rights include all mothers and fathers, working or not.
- The sections dealing with fathers' time off around childbirth apply only to co-resident fathers who were employed during their partner's pregnancy. In practice, this includes virtually all fathers because 93 per cent of them were employed both before and after the birth.

As a guide, the graph below shows the distribution of mothers working before and/or after the pregnancy and birth, or neither, or both.

**The employment status distribution of the full sample of 2,504 mothers, before and after pregnancy and birth**



- Employed neither before nor after the birth
- Not employed during pregnancy but employed after the birth
- Employed during pregnancy but not after the birth
- Employed during pregnancy and after the birth



# 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Over the past few decades an increasing proportion of women have entered the workforce, rising most steeply among mothers with younger children (McRae, 1991; Harrop & Moss, 1995; Dex et al., 1998). Part-time and flexi-working opportunities have expanded, with attitudes and values changing in favour of mothers' labour market participation (Marsh and Perry, 2003). Employment legislation has progressed and mothers now take shorter periods away from paid work following childbirth and increasingly work full-time (Sly, 1996; Rubery & Grimshaw, 1994).

Despite greater female participation in the labour force overall, including an increase in the proportion of mothers employed in higher-status occupations, full equality of pay, prospects and conditions has not yet been achieved (Bradley et al., 2001). Many theories have evolved to explain this persisting inequality and occupational segregation (both horizontal and vertical)<sup>2</sup> between male and female workers but regardless of their theoretical perspective, nearly all writers recognise that the point at which mothers return to work after childbirth is crucial to their future employment prospects (Dex, 1987; Dex et al 1998; Joshi et al., 1996). Taking an extended break from work often reduces mothers' occupational status and places them in lower-paid positions. This setback can persist as many mothers never really recover the position in pay and seniority that they would otherwise have maintained had they remained continuously in work.

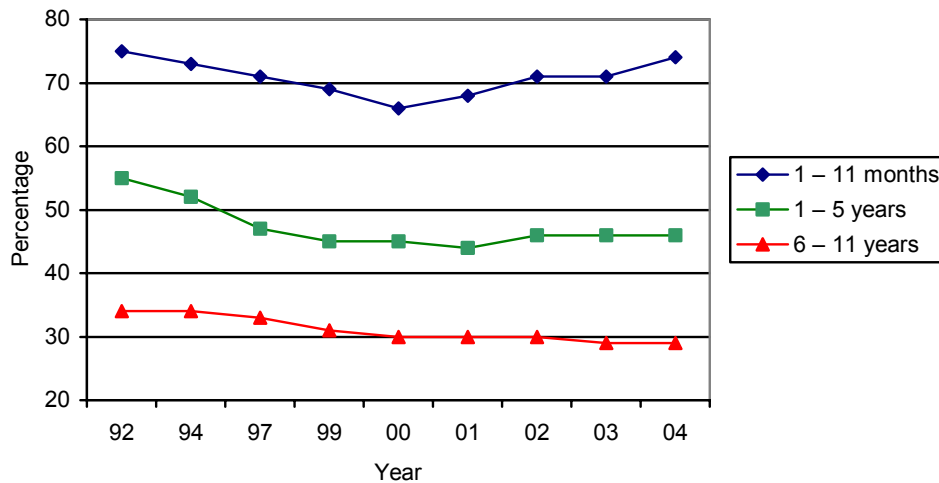
Progress towards equality of opportunity for mothers in the British labour market began noticeably in the 1980s<sup>3</sup> (Crompton et al., 1990; Dex et al.; 1996). Rates of return after childbirth rose, condensed career breaks became more common, and the downward occupational mobility associated with a return to work after childbirth lessened. By the end of the 20th century, more than half the mothers of children aged 1-5 and seven out of ten of mothers with children aged 6-11, were employed or economically inactive (see Graph 1), which is a rate of labour market participation similar to that of men aged over 55. By contrast, the effects of longer maternity leave can be seen in a fall in activity rates since the year 2000 among mothers with the youngest children less than a year old.

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<sup>2</sup> Horizontal segregation divides men and mothers into distinct occupational groups. Vertical segregation, sometimes referred to as the glass ceiling, divides men and mothers within organisational grading hierarchies hence mothers are under-represented in the most senior positions.

<sup>3</sup> Largely associated with the Employment Protection Act of 1976, which introduced the statutory right of mothers to return to their original jobs within seven months of birth

**Graph 1: Percentage of mothers not working by age group of youngest child**



Source: LFS spring each year

Note: Individuals on maternity leave are classified as not working – a restriction relevant only to mothers of children under the age of one.

With fertility rates declining, the dependency ratio<sup>4</sup> is set to rise in coming years. This imbalance, together with a general undertaking to improve living standards in the UK (DTI, 2005) have prompted a number of policy initiatives since 1997 designed to promote more continuous labour market participation among mothers over their years of family formation. Specific measures include:

- The work-life balance campaign designed to facilitate the combination of caring and paid working roles.
- Increased nursery provision and expansion of affordable childcare for children up to the age of 14 as part of a National Childcare Strategy.
- The legal entitlement among parents of children under the age of six to request flexible working options or a reduction in working hours.<sup>5</sup>
- Maternity pay of 26 weeks and the right to return to the same job up to one year after childbirth.<sup>6</sup>

These measures were designed to reduce labour market disengagement among mothers. It may sound paradoxical to say that increasing mothers' temporary absence from the labour market might produce greater long-term attachment. But the underlying rationale was that the provision of longer periods of maternity leave and the statutory right to return would encourage more mothers to return to work. It would allow mothers to

<sup>4</sup> The ratio of the working age population to those of pensionable age.

<sup>5</sup> A request that employers are not legally obliged to honour but are bound to consider seriously and refusals must be justified.

<sup>6</sup> Enacted under the Employment Rights Act 1996, amended by the Employment Act 2002. Details set out in the Maternity and Parental Leave Regulations 1999 and the Maternity and Parental Leave (Amendment) Regulations 2002.

return to their jobs in a planned and ordered way and work the shorter hours and other flexible arrangements that have previously been concentrated in a narrow range of occupations. This is a particularly valuable development for the growing proportion of mothers who have no earning partner living with them.

Mothers' access to part-time work is especially useful when children are very young. Comparative analyses of mothers' employment across Europe find a strong positive relationship between labour force participation and the availability of part-time jobs. In countries where mothers predominantly work full-time, participation rates are relatively lower (Daly & Rake, 2003).

Overall, combining with Working Tax Credits with their increased support for the cost of formal childcare, and Child Tax Credit, these policy initiatives were intended to reduce poverty by increasing young families' market incomes at times when previously their incomes were lowest.

Less is known about how men have responded to change in the labour market participation of mothers with young children. The 2002 Maternity Rights Survey found that only a quarter of fathers were aware of their entitlement to 13 weeks' unpaid leave; a similar fraction had only partial awareness of this, while half remained unaware. Most fathers took some time off during their partner's pregnancy and after the birth, although this typically amounted to just a few days away from work and the majority used their annual leave to do this. The most recent Eurobarometer survey for the EC indicated that 84 per cent of fathers had taken no extended time off work for paternity nor intended to in the future, even though the majority were aware that some rights existed that would allow them time off. On the other hand, quite large minorities said that better paternity pay (38 per cent) and stronger job guarantees (30 per cent) would encourage them to consider staying at home and caring for an infant. Recent qualitative research (Hatten et al., 2002) highlights a tension between the need adequately to fulfil a breadwinner role, perceived as the predominant focus by the majority of fathers, and a desire to spend time with their children. In practice, very few fathers interviewed in this study made any significant change to their employment behaviour after the birth of their children which might have permitted more involvement in family life. Indeed, the majority of fathers were entirely content with their current levels of involvement. More recent research by Thompson et al. (2005), sponsored by the Equal Opportunities Commission, suggested that more than half the fathers of young children reject the idea that their primary role is one of breadwinner. And nine out of ten fathers took some time off around the time of their child's birth.

## **1.2 Maternity and paternity rights legislation in Britain**

The legislative context to the 2005 Maternity Rights Survey (MRS 05) is one of considerable change, both in the recent past and planned for coming years. The longer-term legislative background is summarised in Table 1.1, which highlights the main changes that have taken place since 1994.

### *Changes to mothers' rights and benefits since the last survey in 2002*

- Increases in flat rate SMP/MA from £62.20 to £75 per week from April 2002, to £100 per week from April 2003, rising to £106 a week by April 2005.
- Payment period of SMP and MA extended from 18 to 26 weeks.
- Qualifying period for AML eligibility reduced from one year to 26 weeks (by the fourteenth week before the mother's expected week of confinement).
- Introduction of the right for parents with children under the age of six to request flexible working patterns (from April 2003).
- Extension of AML from up to 29 weeks after the birth to up to 52 weeks after the start of maternity leave.

### *Changes to fathers' rights and benefits since 2002*

From April 2003 the introduction of paternity leave and pay rights. These give eligible fathers the right to take paid leave to care for their child or support the mother after the birth of their baby.

Fathers must fulfil the following eligibility criteria:

- They must have responsibility for the child's upbringing, and be the biological father of the child or the mother's husband or partner.
- They must also have worked continuously for their employer for 26 weeks by the 15th week before the baby is due.
- Fathers are eligible for one or two consecutive weeks of paternity leave (not single days) within the first 56 days of the child being born.
- Eligible fathers are entitled to Statutory Paternity Pay (SPP) from their employers. SPP is paid at the same flat rate as maternity pay so the fathers in the survey received £100 per week, or 90 per cent of average earnings if less than the flat rate. Fathers earning less than £82 a week were not entitled to SPP.

The right to request flexible working:

- The right to apply to work flexibly applies to all parents of children under the age of six – both mothers and fathers.

### *Parental leave*

A statutory entitlement to parental leave was introduced in 1999. Thereafter, mothers and fathers who have completed one year's service with their employers are entitled to 13 weeks' (unpaid) parental leave to care for their child. Parental leave can usually be taken up to five years from the date of birth, or in cases of adoption five years from the date of placement (or the child's 18th birthday, if that is sooner).

Parents of disabled children are entitled to 18 weeks' parental leave (previously 13 weeks) up to the child's 18th birthday, providing they have

the qualifying length of service. All employees are also entitled to take a reasonable amount of (unpaid) time off work to deal with an emergency or unexpected situation involving a dependant.

### *Qualifying criteria for maternity pay and leave*

One of the central concerns of this report is the use of maternity leave and maternity pay by mothers. It is therefore helpful to review the qualifying criteria which apply to maternity pay and maternity leave. These are distinct entitlements with differing rules for qualification. In 2005 all mothers who were currently employed were entitled to Ordinary Maternity Leave (OML) of six months. Mothers who had worked for their current employer for nine months by the time their baby was due were entitled to Additional Maternity Leave (AML) of a further six months in addition to the six months of OML.

In terms of maternity pay eligibility in 2005, mothers who had worked for their current employer for nine months by the time their baby was born and had earned at least £82 per week on average were entitled to Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) for six months. For the first six weeks of payment mothers receiving SMP are entitled to 90 per cent of their average salary (with no upper limit). For the remaining 20 weeks, SMP is paid at a flat rate, which was £100 per week at the time mothers interviewed for MRS05 would have been in receipt.

Mothers who did not meet the above length of service criteria, but who had been employed for at least six months in the 15-month period before their baby was due and earned an average minimum of £30 a week during this period were entitled to Maternity Allowance (MA) for six months. Maternity Allowance is paid at the same flat rate as SMP, for the full 26 weeks.

### **1.3 Wider policy context**

The extension of maternity and paternity rights for employed parents in Britain has been accompanied by parallel changes in the tax and benefit system affecting working families with dependent children. In the 1960s falling tax thresholds and rising out-of-work benefit levels meant that many families, especially those with several children, really were better off unemployed compared to their net incomes in work. A series of policy changes beginning in 1971 added to working families' incomes in work culminating in the present system of tax credits, which now include elements of childcare support.

These changes increased low-income families' incentives to work, especially so for lone parents, only 29 per cent of whom worked 16 or more hours a week in 1991, increasing to about half now. The effect on partnered mothers is less straightforward, especially so if their partner is working but is low paid and receives tax credits. Such a mother's return to work is accompanied by a loss of tax credits and other in-work benefits. On the other hand, this loss can be seen simply as the outcome of greater

choice. Supplementing the wage of the sole working parent provides the non-working parent with some greater degree of choice in when to return to work since the 'cost' of the income foregone by remaining at home is smaller. Thus the combination of maternity leave and maternity pay, underwritten by tax credits for those with low-paid partners, now provides a sound basis for family income at a time when, in the past, it was often the most difficult.

Further legislative developments having a direct impact on maternity and paternity rights and benefits, which are outlined in the Work and Families Bill 2005, are discussed in chapter 7.

## **1.4 Structure and contents of the report**

This report is presented in two parts. Part I deals with the results of the mothers' survey and Part II with the fathers' survey:

The mothers' survey:

- Chapter 2 discusses the survey methodology used, sampling and weighting procedures, and provides an indication of comparability of findings with the 2002 survey.
- Chapter 3 discusses the duration of maternity leave, followed by a review of mothers' use of annual leave and parental leave.
- Chapter 4 is devoted to maternity pay, both the type of maternity pay received and the duration of pay.
- Chapter 5 considers mothers' decisions to return to work – who returns, when they return and what are the reasons for returning to work or remaining at home after childbirth.
- In chapter 6 the quality and quantity of communications between employer and employee during pregnancy and maternity leave is explored, as well as how mothers believe they were treated by their employers during their pregnancy.
- In chapter 7, mothers' views on proposed changes to maternity leave and 'leave sharing' opportunities are discussed.

The fathers' survey:

- Chapter 8 provides information on the fathers' survey sample and sets out the legislative context for studying the behaviour and attitudes of fathers around the time of childbirth.
- Chapter 9 assesses the incidence and length of time taken off during the pregnancy of their partners and after childbirth. Both paternity and parental leave are evaluated.
- Chapter 10 explores information on the incidence of job change and the use of flexible working opportunities is presented.
- Chapter 11 considers the planned new rights of 'leave sharing' from the fathers' perspective, in addition to an assessment of how fathers feel their lives could be improved in the period following the birth of their child.

Throughout the report, charts and graphs are included in the body of the text while all tables are placed at the end of the report in Appendix 1.

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# **Part I**

## **Survey of mothers**



# 2

## Methodology

Since 1979, the Government has commissioned a series of surveys to examine the behaviour, experiences and employment of mothers around the time of childbirth (Daniel, 1980; McCrea, 1991; Callender, Millward, Lissenburgh and Forth, 1997; Hudson, Lissenburgh and Sahin-Dikmen, 2004). This paper reports on an interim survey which followed this series but one that took a new methodological approach – Maternity and Paternity Rights: Survey of Parents 2005 (MRS 05).

The methodology of this current survey differs from that of previous surveys. Previous surveys in 1996 and 2002 used postal questionnaires but these suffered low response rates, falling in 2002 to 35 per cent. Consequently, it was decided in 2005 to change to using a telephone to determine whether better response rates could be achieved. Telephone surveys have the added advantage of eliminating much of the missing data associated with the complex question routing of the earlier postal surveys, resulting in a fuller and more complete dataset.

The telephone survey was very successful, both in securing the co-operation of mothers who were contacted and in achieving fully completed interview schedules with few missing values on individual questions. The survey was unfortunately less successful in securing valid telephone numbers for the initial sample of mothers. The MRS 05 therefore has an acceptable response rate of 60 per cent based on the sample of eligible mothers with telephone numbers, but a low response rate of 20 per cent based on the full initial sample of eligible mothers. Further details are provided in section 2.1 and the Technical Report.

The MRS 05 survey was carried out during May 2005. Mothers with babies born in December 2003 were selected for interview, which means they were interviewed 17 to 18 months after the birth. The fathers were contacted via the mothers and were also interviewed in May 2005.

### **2.1 Sampling**

The sample was randomly selected from the administrative Child Benefit Records (CBR). Child Benefit has an almost universal take-up and so these records provide a fully representative sample of mothers in Great Britain. CBR do not, however, include telephone numbers for all mothers so an electronic and manual matching exercise was undertaken. From an original CBR dataset of 12,322 mothers, telephone numbers for only 3,022 (i.e. 25 per cent) could be traced (see Appendix 3 for a description of the telephone look-up process and an account of the inherent difficulties in securing up-to-date telephone numbers). A letter was sent

to those for whom a telephone number could not be traced, asking them to take part in the survey and requesting their telephone number (either by returning a form or contacting a Telephone Helpline). This boosted the telephone number count to 4,197 (35 per cent). Of the 4,197 telephone numbers secured 4,184 were eligible and 2,504 interviews were achieved representing a response rate of 60 per cent of all mothers for whom we had telephone numbers. The overall response rate was 20 per cent of the original 12,322 Child Benefit recipients.

Fathers were contacted directly as CB recipients, which was rare, or approached as the partner of the mothers for whom we had valid telephone numbers. The total eligible sample for fathers was 3,747 of the 4,197 telephone numbers acquired. A total of 1,512 interviews were achieved representing a 40 per cent response rate.

A technical note describing the sampling methodology and response rates is provided as Appendix 4.

## **2.2 Sample composition – mothers**

In this section a description of survey participants is provided as background information and as an assessment of whether the sample is representative of the population as a whole. The composition of the full sample, in terms of individual characteristics, is presented in Table 2.1 using unweighted data.

Sample participants varied in age from 16 to 49, with 13 per cent under the age of 26 and 5 per cent aged above 40. The largest cluster of mothers, at 38 per cent, were aged 31–35.

The majority of participants were living with a husband or male partner, with just 13 per cent living as lone mothers. Nearly half the sample were first-time mothers.

One-tenth owned their homes outright, but the majority of mothers (68 per cent) were paying a mortgage. The remainder were distributed among private, public and shared ownership rentals.

The majority of respondents were White British, with just 13 per cent classified within a further six ethnic groups. Given the small numbers of those who were not White British, which precludes robust estimations, subsequent analyses will not investigate ethnicity.

Table 2.2 presents a profile of the employment characteristics of the sample during pregnancy. These factors are known to be the key determinants of the labour market outcomes of mothers following delivery. The majority of mothers had been employed during their pregnancy, with nearly three-quarters employees and just 4 per cent self-employed. One-fifth earned less than £6 gross per hour, one-quarter earned £6–9 per hour, a further fifth earned £9–12 per hour, with the final third earning more than £12 per hour.

In terms of occupational group, the largest clusters of mothers were found in associate professional (such as nursing) and secretarial or clerical jobs. The smallest group of mothers were in craft (such as sewing machinist and clothing worker) jobs, working as plant and machinery operatives and in 'other' unskilled jobs (such as cleaners and bar workers).

Mothers from the sample were concentrated in education, health and social work and retail/wholesale industrial sectors.

A separate description of the composition of fathers is presented at the beginning of Part II of the report, which is devoted to a discussion of findings from the Fathers Survey.

### **2.3 Weighting the data**

In order to ensure that a representative sample of mothers was achieved, the profile of 2,504 mothers was compared with both (a) the source Child Benefit Records (CBR) dataset and (b) the Labour Force Survey (LFS) of spring/summer 2004. The LFS was manipulated to approximate the MRS dataset and to this end a sub-sample of mothers with children aged between birth and two years was extracted.

The MRS 05 sample of mothers was derived from an initial sample of 12,500 mothers who gave birth in December 2003, extracted at random from the Child Benefit Records held by the Inland Revenue. From the initial 12,500, 52 per cent were first-time mothers. Of these first-time mothers, 6 per cent had another child after the baby born 17 months ago. The interview made it clear that this survey was interested in the behaviour of mothers around the time of the birth of the baby born in December 2003. The achieved sample for the MRS 05 has 49 per cent first-time mothers, an acceptable level of difference compared with the original CBR dataset.

The second set of information derived from the original CBR relates to mother's age. It is evident from Table 2.3 that the MRS 05 data is skewed toward mothers aged 31–35 at the expense of younger mothers aged under 26, a bias confirmed by the LFS data.

Compared with the LFS, then, MRS 05 has too few young mothers and too many better-qualified mothers: 38 per cent of MRS 05 exceeded NVQ level 4 compared with 26 per cent among the LFS (Table 2.4).

Comparisons with the LFS 2004 indicate that in terms of ethnic group, housing tenure and marital status, the MRS 05 sample closely approximates the distribution of respondents in the population at large. There were 7 per cent fewer lone mothers than was expected but this is a function of the over-representation of older mothers and mothers with higher qualifications.

Weights have been constructed to correct for the age and qualifications deviance from national estimates. The data can therefore confidently be

used to draw conclusions which will apply nationally to the population of mothers with young children as a whole. Table 2.5 brings together pre- and post-weighted MRS 05 data and data from the LFS 2004 to demonstrate the extent to which the weighted data more closely approximate the profile of LFS mothers on key variables, thereby indicating the achievement of a representative sample.

## **2.4 Recall error and mothers' knowledge**

In any survey gathering data on personal histories, responses are subject to recall error. The longer the gap between the event of interest (such as maternity leave) and the point at which data is collected, the more likely memory bias will arise. The MRS 2005 interviewed mothers 17 to 18 months after the birth of their babies. This timing represented a compromise between allowing a sufficiently long time for mothers to have considered their work choices fully but not so long as to present a problem with recall. Nevertheless some degree of imprecision is inevitable. Dates are particularly prone to inexact recollection. In order to minimise the possibility of recall inaccuracy, multiple question approaches were used to elicit information in key areas of interest. For example, the survey asks mothers how many weeks' maternity leave they took. In addition, mothers are also asked the exact date they left work and the date they resumed employment. The more straightforward single question 'weeks of leave' tends to generate consistently more reliable results, in keeping with expectations, given current maternity benefit rules and regulations.

A second issue which gives rise to uncertainty is maternity pay. As discussed in the relevant sections below, lower proportions of mothers than expected claimed to receive OMP while higher than expected proportions of mothers claimed to receive no maternity pay. However, in addition to self-reported receipts of maternity pay, the survey data also permits analysis of mothers' eligibility for different types of maternity pay. A mother's eligibility for MA and SMP can therefore be determined with reference to employment tenure and earnings data. It can also be ascertained whether a mother is likely to have received OMP using information on the amount and duration of pay received during maternity leave. Both self-reported and derived estimates are presented in the relevant chapters to give readers access to the full set of results. The derived figures are considered to be more reliable as they are not dependent on mothers' potentially incomplete knowledge of the names and rules associated with the various maternity pay schemes.

## **2.5 Comparisons with findings from 2002**

One of the aims of this report is to provide an overview of change in the behaviour of mothers subsequent to the legislative developments enacted in 2002 – described in detail in section 1.2 above. In order to assess the impact of this policy shift, comparisons are made, where relevant and possible, between the current 2005 MRS and the last MRS survey carried out in 2002 (Hudson et al., 2004). The report based on the 2002 survey, published in 2004, focused exclusively upon mothers eligible for at least

the most basic Statutory Maternity Pay and leave provision, i.e. mothers who had been employed for at least 26 weeks during the 15-month period prior to the birth of their baby in January 2001. In tables and graphs showing change between 2002 and 2005 the same criteria are applied to the 2005 sample, i.e. the base includes all mothers eligible for SMP or MA. Bases are indicated at the foot of each table.

Both the 2002 and 2005 surveys applied weights to correct for slight biases in the profile of mothers in the final sample (see section 2.3 in this report and Appendix 2 in Hudson et al., 2004). Both datasets were compared with the Labour Force Survey to ensure nationally representative samples were ultimately achieved. As a consequence these datasets can be validly compared despite the changed methodology described in section 2.1 which gave rise to pre-weighting differences in the overall profile of mothers and fathers.

Comparing social survey results over time always has pitfalls. Even when instruments are identical, circumstances and contexts change in ways that affect how respondents treat questions. Particular caution is necessary in drawing conclusions about changes in the results of the 2002 and 2005 surveys. The 2005 sample is smaller and the change in method from postal questionnaires to telephone interviews was a significant departure. Sometimes the content of questions had to change and in these cases new question wording is indicated in the text of this report. Even when questions appear the same, postal respondents can, for example, mull over a list of alternative responses they see written down, which is not the same as choosing among the same alternatives read out to them. Therefore, the findings reported in this document highlighting change or continuity should be seen as indicative. It is also worth stressing that this 2005 survey, with its changes in wording and method, was always intended to be an interim survey rather than part of an unbroken time series.

## **2.6 Interpretation of tables**

Full and part-time employment is differentiated according to the number of hours mothers report working. They are classified as full-time if they typically work 30 hours or more per week.

Where appropriate, associations between outcomes of interest and the following characteristics are assessed throughout the report:

### *Individual characteristics*

- Lone parent status
- Whether a first-time mother
- Age
- Housing tenure
- Employment status (not employed, employee, self-employed)

### *Job characteristics*

- Income during pregnancy
- Occupation during pregnancy
- Full-time/part-time status

### *Employer characteristics*

- Industry during pregnancy
- Size of employer
- Unionisation
- Level of flexible working practices and facilities provided
- Public / private sector

If a table is not shown it can be assumed that no significant association exists between the characteristics and factors in question. Chi-square tests of significance were used. As an indication of the leeway associated with results from different sample sizes, the following table shows relevant confidence intervals.

**Table 2.1: 95 per cent confidence intervals for given sample estimates and sample sizes**

Sample size	Sample estimate		
	10%	25%	50%
50	+/-8.3%	+/-12.0%	+/-13.9%
100	+/-5.9%	+/-8.5%	+/-9.8%
250	+/-3.7%	+/-5.4%	+/-6.2%
500	+/-2.6%	+/-3.8%	+/-4.4%
750	+/-2.1%	+/-3.1%	+/-3.6%
1,000	+/-1.9%	+/-2.7%	+/-3.1%
2,000	+/-1.3%	+/-1.9%	+/-2.2%

Unless otherwise indicated, job and employer characteristics relate to positions held during pregnancy rather than after the birth, although in many cases these coincide.

Where associations by income are presented, both weekly and hourly earnings data are used where informative. Weekly data are useful when considering maternity pay eligibility as mothers are excluded from SMP if they earn less than the National Insurance Lower Earnings Limit of £82 a week. Falling within this group may also have a bearing on a range of other outcomes. Weekly earnings do, however, have analytical limitations as they fail to account for hours worked per week. A mother earning just £100 per week may be regarded as on a low income unless, for example, she works just one day a week for five hours. Hourly and weekly pay data therefore complement each other and provide a more complete picture of the relationship between income and a range of outcomes of interest.

Where percentages fall below 0.5 per cent cells are indicated in the following manner:

If a raw value of zero is achieved this is indicated with a 0.

Occupational groups are divided according to the Standard Occupational Classification 2000. To promote understanding of the type of jobs that fall within the broad classifications, the list below indicates the most prevalent

occupations within each category among the mothers sampled for this survey.

	Typical occupation among the MRS 05 mothers
Manager:	Functional, financial, office and retail managers
Professional:	Teachers, health & business professionals
Associate professional:	Nurses and public service jobs
Admin & secretarial:	Financial admin, secretaries & office assistants
Personal service:	Nursing assistants, childminders
Sales/customer service:	Check-out operators, call centre agents
Manual: <sup>7</sup>	Cooks, sewing machinists, waitresses, cleaners

Industrial sector divisions used throughout the report are grouped according to the Standard Industrial Classification (1992). The 17-division SIC classification is reduced for analyses in this report to the following seven groups:

1. Agriculture, fishing, forestry, mining, quarrying, construction and manufacturing
2. Retail, hotels, restaurants and transport
3. Finance, property, computer industries and other business
4. Public administration
5. Education
6. Health and social work
7. Recreation, culture and 'other'

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<sup>7</sup> Including skilled craft, semi-skilled plant & machinery operatives and unskilled manual workers. These are, respectively, major groups 5, 8 and 9 within the SOC2000 classification.

# 3

## Maternity leave

### 3.1 Introduction

Changes to maternity provision introduced in April 2003 extended OML and AML as follows. Prior to 2003, women who had one year's service by the 11th week before the week their baby was due were entitled to AML. AML ran from the end of OML up to the end of the 29th week after the baby was born. There was no fixed length of AML as it would depend on when OML started and when the baby was born but women were entitled to AML up to 29 weeks after their baby was born.

From 2003, women with 26 weeks' service by the 15th week before the baby is due (i.e. were employed by that employer before they became pregnant) are entitled to AML. The length of service for AML therefore matches service for SMP. AML runs for 26 weeks after the 26-week OML period. Women therefore have a total of 52 weeks' leave after the start of OML.

This chapter explores the impact these developments might have had upon the length of maternity leave taken by mothers, who are now entitled to longer periods of leave supported by extended periods of maternity pay.

The use and amount of statutory and extra-statutory maternity leave taken by mothers is examined. Where appropriate, the duration of maternity leave taken in 2004–2005 is also compared with the duration observed in 2002. In section 3.2 the duration of maternity leave is presented and in section 3.3 maternity leave taken is contrasted with maternity leave availability. In section 3.4 the factors affecting the duration of maternity leave are explored and in section 3.5 access to annual leave while on maternity leave is examined.

The bases for tables examining the duration of maternity leave are either all mothers employed or self-employed during pregnancy (N=1,860) or a subset who took maternity leave and knew the duration of that leave (N=1,748). Not all of these mothers returned to work after the birth of their babies.

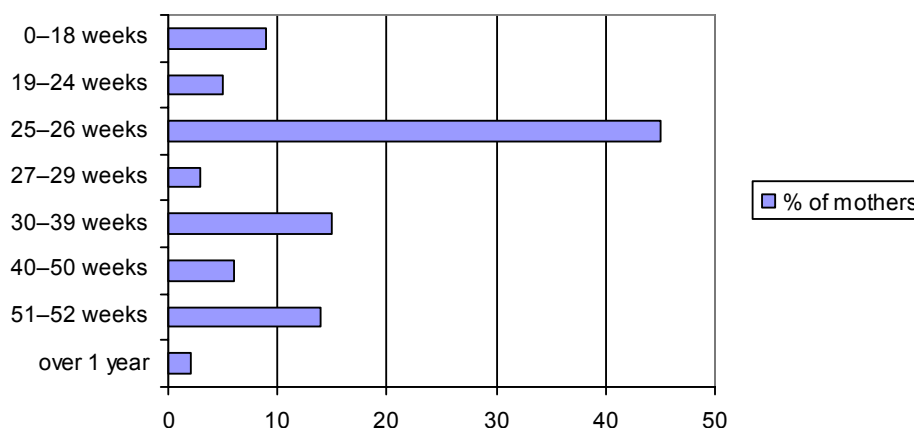
### 3.2 The duration of maternity leave

Chart 3.1 provides a detailed breakdown of the duration of maternity leave in order to highlight clustering and to reveal responses to new leave entitlements introduced in the spring of 2003. The statutory right to 26 weeks' paid leave among the majority of mothers who were eligible for



SMP/AML accounts for nearly half the mothers taking six months' leave and just 14 per cent taking less than this amount. Two further clusters can be identified at 30–39 weeks (seven to nine months) and at one year. The response to legislation granting mothers eligible for SMP/AML the right to 52 weeks' maternity leave has not, however, been strong, with just 14 per cent of mothers taking the full leave entitlement (this percentage applies to all mothers and to eligible mothers). The profile of mothers taking these longer periods of leave is investigated below in order to establish the extent to which the duration of leave is associated with labour market advantage in terms of income and occupation.

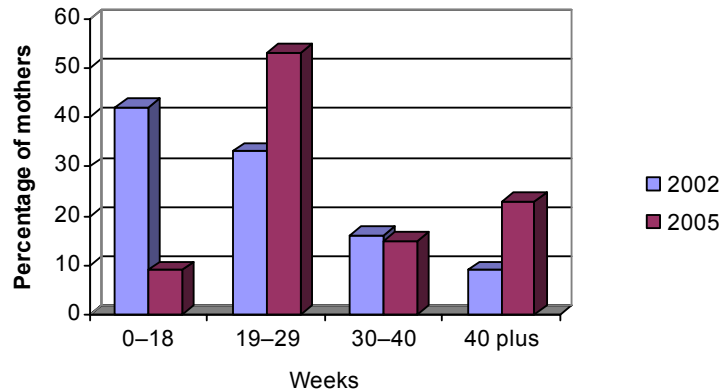
**Chart 3.1: Maternity leave taken – paid and unpaid**



Base: 1,748 mothers employed during pregnancy who took maternity leave and knew length of maternity leave

Chart 3.2 highlights the impact of legislative change between 2001 and 2005. The Maternity Rights Survey of 2002 was carried out when mothers eligible for AML were entitled to 29 weeks' (seven months') leave of which 18 weeks were paid. At this point in time, in order to qualify for AML, it was necessary for a woman to have worked for her employer for one year by the 11th week before the expected week of confinement. By 2005, mothers eligible for AML had a one-year maternity leave allowance (of which 26 weeks were paid), with a reduction in the qualifying length of service to 26 weeks before the expected week of confinement. As a consequence of these changes, the proportion of eligible mothers taking 18 weeks' maternity leave or less dropped dramatically from a little under half (42 per cent) in 2002 to just one in ten (9 per cent) by 2005. Half the mothers took five to seven months' maternity leave in 2005 compared with one-third of mothers in 2002 and one-quarter of mothers in 2005 remained on leave in excess of nine months (40 weeks) compared with just 9 per cent in 2002.

**Chart 3.2: Maternity leave taken in 2002 and 2005 – paid and unpaid**



Base: all mothers employed during pregnancy (2002=2,971, 2005=1,748)

### **Maternity leave duration and income**

To what extent is the duration of maternity leave associated with mothers' earnings levels during pregnancy? Among mothers earning less than £15 per hour, between 10 and 14 per cent took less than 26 weeks' maternity leave (Table 3.1a), rising to 17 per cent among mothers earning £15 or more per hour and reaching almost a fifth of mothers who had earned over £20 per hour. Conversely, there was a downward linear trend associated with higher earnings and taking exactly 26 weeks' leave; the more mothers had earned the more likely they were to go on to take seven months or more leave whereas mothers earning the least were notably less likely to take leave in excess of the statutory six months.

Table 3.1b shows this relationship between prior earnings and leave taken using weekly earnings. Correspondingly, these show that mothers earning less than £200 per week are far less likely to take more than six months' maternity leave.

In summary, the higher earners appear to exercise more choice, with the more affluent mothers departing from the pattern of the less well-paid and returning to work following a wider range of periods following birth.

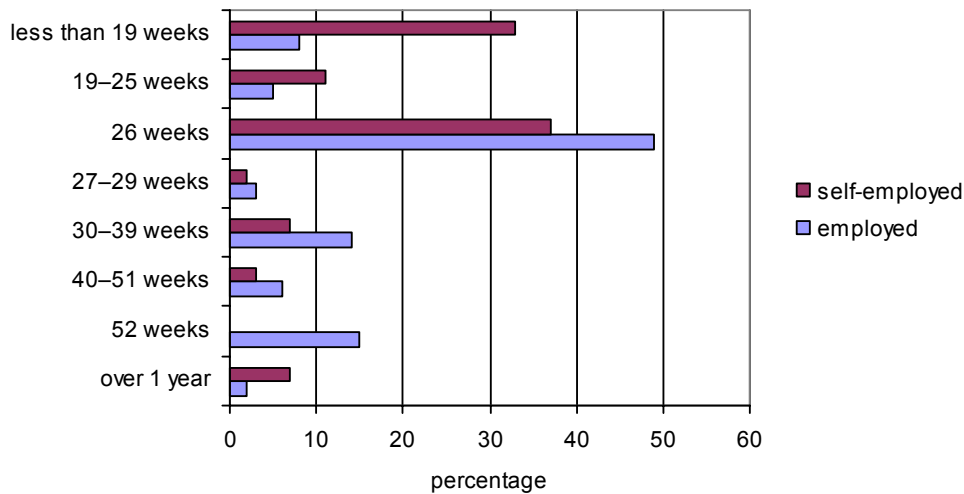
The better-off mothers also tend to have higher-earning partners, giving them access to greater financial resources at the family level. Mothers in the lowest earnings bracket have partners who earn, on average, £369 net per week. Mothers on the highest incomes have partners with an average income of £719 per week. Low-earning mothers are also more likely to have more than one child. Fifty per cent of mothers with the lowest earnings are first-time mums compared with 60 per cent of mothers earning more than £450 per week.

Tables 3.2a and 3.2b look at the relationship between prior earnings and the type of maternity leave and maternity pay taken. Those receiving OMP

and SMP had had much higher earnings compared with those receiving MA or those who, more rarely, received no maternity pay at all.

As may be expected, the relatively few self-employed mothers took significantly less maternity leave than the employees; a third of them took less than 19 weeks compared with just 8 per cent among the employees (Chart 3.3) and they were half as likely to take more than six months. In addition to short-term financial requirements, the self-employed may also find it necessary to return to their business quickly to maintain their reputation and place in their market.

**Chart 3.3: Maternity leave taken – paid and unpaid – by employment status during pregnancy**



Base: 1,748 mothers employed during pregnancy

### Employment status

The self-employed are self-defined and while it is possible that a few may have misclassified themselves as self-employed when in fact they were employees in their own business it would not be possible to establish that fact. However, given the size of the businesses the self-employed are running it is doubtful that they are incorporated and therefore misclassified. The self-employed have a quite different pattern of eligibility for types of maternity pay compared with employees. SMP is paid by employers to their employees, which means that the self-employed do not qualify. Self-employed workers are entitled to MA if they pay class 2 National Insurance contributions (or hold a small earnings exception certificate). Therefore it is not surprising, given the importance of financial support in guiding these decisions, that the self-employed are away from work less than employees, on average. Although it is recognised that self-reported maternity pay is not entirely reliable, it should be noted that while 9 per cent of employees claimed not to have received any maternity pay this figure rose to 28 per cent of the self-employed mothers.

## **Occupational group**

Table 3.3 shows the amount of maternity leave taken by occupational group. Mothers employed as managers during pregnancy are the most likely to return to work within six months of the birth of their baby (22 per cent). Mothers employed in sales and retail jobs are the least likely to return so soon (8 per cent). The majority of all mothers take exactly six months' leave apart from professional mothers who are slightly more likely to take 6–11 months' maternity leave. Only a small proportion of mothers take advantage of their newly acquired right to one year of maternity leave (15 per cent on average), the only significant exception being clerks and secretaries, one-quarter of whom took one year or more of maternity leave. This may reflect the higher earnings of clerical/secretarial jobs compared with sales, personal & protective and manual jobs. Mothers from higher-status professional/managerial positions characterised by higher salaries may be under pressure to return more quickly for career-related reasons. It is also likely that less pressure to return arises where a strong market for temporary and agency workers prevails. There exists wide provision for secretarial and clerical temporary coverage. The relative ease with which workers in these sectors can be replaced on a short to medium-term basis may account for their higher than average incidence of one year's maternity leave.

## **Industry**

Table 3.4 sets out the association between the numbers of weeks of maternity leave taken by mothers and the industry in which they worked during pregnancy. The numbers employed in the recreation and culture industries are too small to reach any definite conclusions and are therefore omitted from discussion. On average, as was discussed above, 14 per cent of mothers take less than six months' maternity leave. The only mothers to depart significantly from this level were employed in the health industries; only 8 per cent of mothers in the health sector took less than six months' leave. Instead, mothers employed in the health sector were more likely to take exactly six months' maternity leave. Teachers and other mothers employed in the education sector were most likely to take between 6 and 11 months' maternity leave. Among the minority of mothers taking one year of maternity leave, those working in public administration or finance, property, computer and 'other' business sectors were over-represented.

## **Entitlement to maternity pay**

The entitlement to SMP, OMP or MA has a clear impact upon the duration of maternity leave, as Chart 3.4 shows. Mothers eligible for MA have a significantly reduced probability of remaining away from work more than six months – just 23 per cent of MA recipients compared with 38 per cent of SMP recipients and 42 per cent of mothers receiving occupational maternity pay.

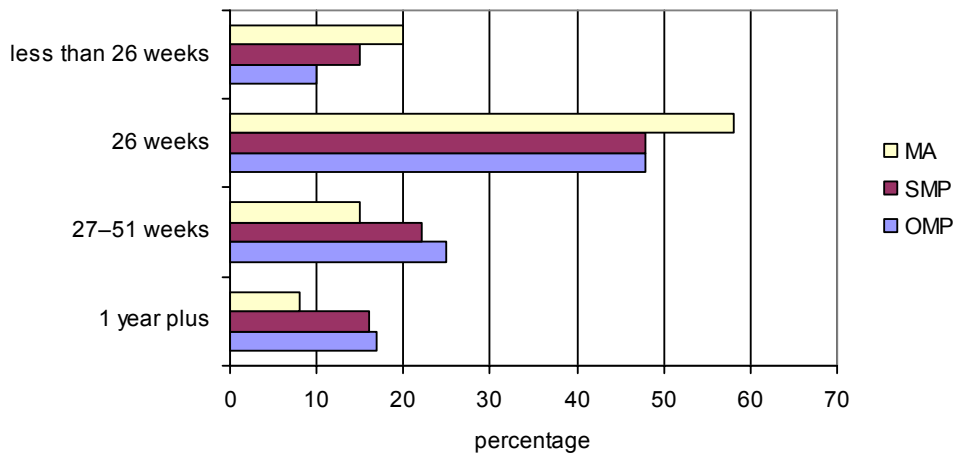
The rate of maternity pay differs for MA and SMP recipients. Eligibility for MA confers the right to a flat rate of pay for 26 weeks (at £100 per week

or 90 per cent of earnings if lower). Mothers receiving SMP are entitled to 90 per cent of their earnings for the first six weeks of confinement followed by the flat rate of pay for the remaining 20 weeks.

For all groups of mothers the majority take 26 weeks' maternity leave but the average number of weeks taken varies as follows:

Mothers eligible for:	No maternity pay	27 weeks
	MA	27 weeks
	MP	32 weeks
	MP	33 weeks

**Chart 3.4: Maternity leave taken – paid and unpaid – by receipt of SMP/OMP/MA**

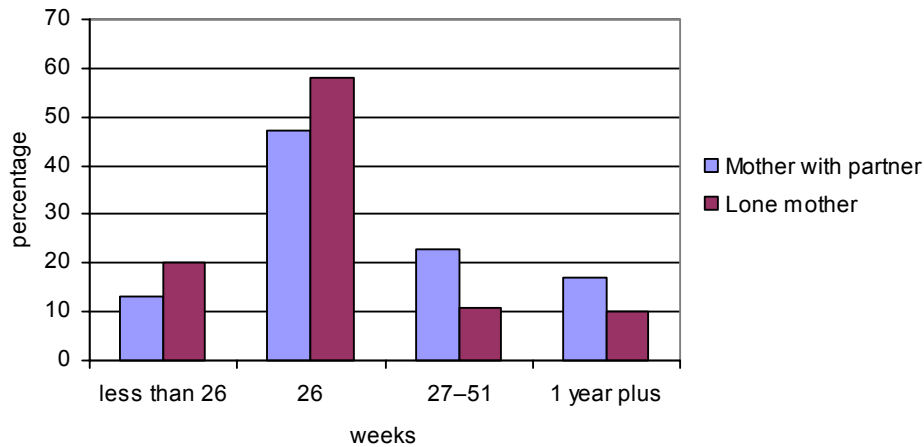


Base: 1,738 mothers employed during pregnancy. Maternity pay derived.

### Lone motherhood

Lone mothers take less maternity leave than mothers with partners (Chart 3.5). This association is likely to reflect an element of financial need since lone mothers have typically much lower household incomes. This may encourage lone parent mothers back to work sooner among those who do return to work. Work return rates do differ slightly for lone and partnered mothers who worked during pregnancy: 64 per cent of lone mothers had returned to work at interview compared with 75 per cent of mothers living with their partners.

**Chart 3.5: Maternity leave taken according to lone motherhood status**



Base: 1,748 all mothers employed during pregnancy.

### 3.3 The availability of maternity leave

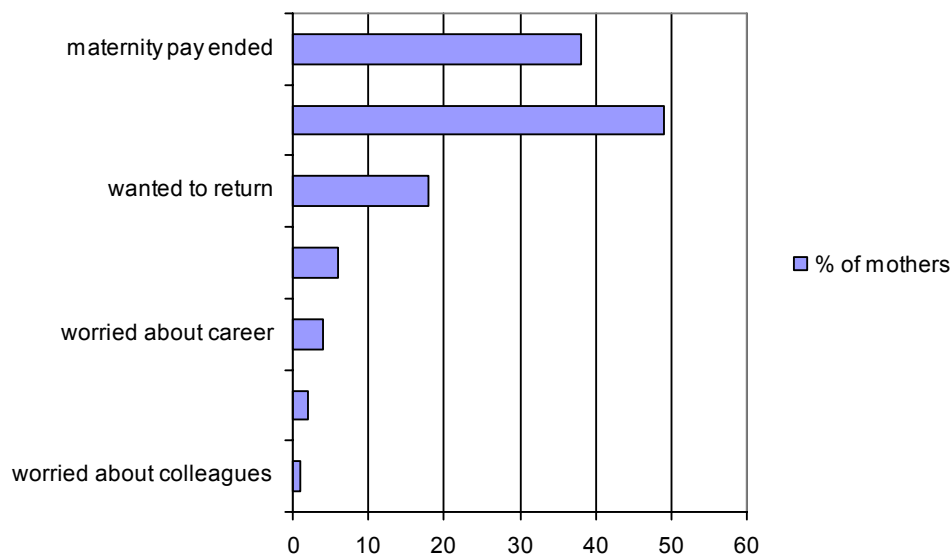
Sixty-six per cent of the mothers who were employees during pregnancy said they were entitled to more leave than they actually took. Of these 1,109 mothers, 86 per cent said they could have taken a whole year of maternity leave. Chart 3.6 lists the reasons they gave for taking a shorter period of maternity leave than was available.

An international study of employment after childbirth based on qualitative research by Lewis (2005) indicated that a widespread intensification of work was having an impact on work return rates. Their research suggested that mothers were not being replaced by temporary workers during their maternity absence and as a consequence more pressure was placed on remaining work colleagues, causing a guilt-based early return to work. Evidence from Chart 3.6 does not support the significance of this factor as an influence upon when mothers choose to return to work. Just 1 per cent of mothers were concerned about the impact of their absence on colleagues' workload. This difference in results arises in part from the distinct methodologies used – the qualitative interviews allow for deeper exploration of motives whereas survey-based interviews capture initial responses which inevitably form just part, though possibly the most important part, of a cluster of motivations for behaviour.

Another factor reported as a key determinant of when mothers return to work among professional and managerial mothers is the perceived harm that prolonged maternity breaks might have upon subsequent career prospects (Crompton, 2002; Hirsh et al., 1992). However, just 3 per cent of mothers said they returned to work earlier than necessary for career reasons. More support is found for the findings of Smeaton (2005a) which suggested the increasing significance of financial factors in pushing

mothers back to work quickly. The most common reasons for early returns to work are the end of maternity pay and 'other' financial reasons cited by one-third and one-half of the sample respectively. Seventy per cent of mothers cited at least one of these financial reasons for taking less leave than was available to them. The primacy of financial considerations among mothers' decisions is highlighted by the response to a question asking mothers what would most have helped them in the period after childbirth. Nearly one-fifth of the mothers chose 'improved access to good quality, affordable childcare' while three-quarters were emphatic that higher maternity pay, paid over a longer period, would have offered the most significant improvement to their lives. One-fifth of mothers returned because they were keen to resume their jobs and possibly regain the company of workmates.

**Chart 3.6: Mothers' reasons for taking less maternity leave than they were entitled to**



Base: 1,109 employees who took less leave than available.

Despite the salience of financial motives there is little association between earnings and mothers' reasons for taking less leave than they were entitled to. There are three exceptions:

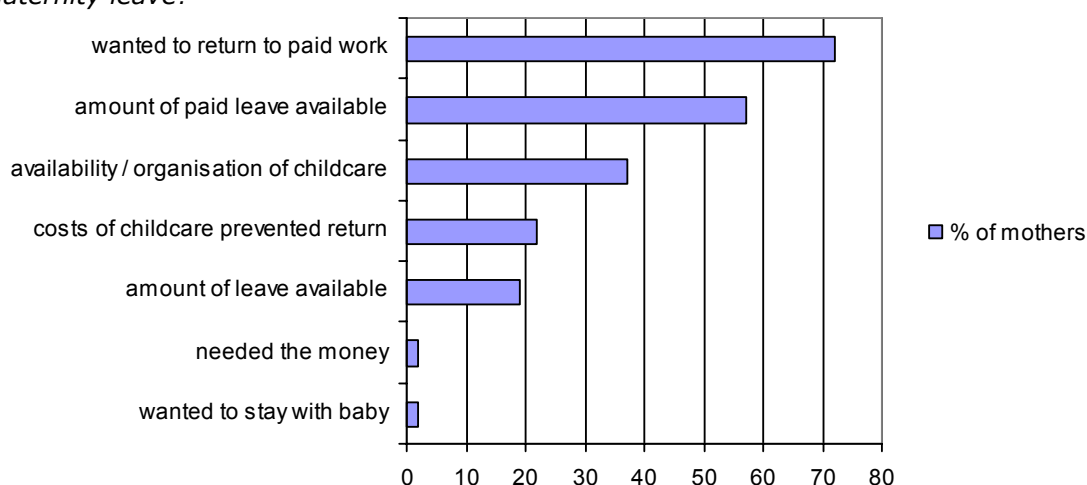
- mothers who earned less than £6 an hour were most likely to take less leave than they were entitled to because their maternity pay came to an end (41 per cent compared with 32 per cent of mothers earning over £15 an hour);
- better paid mothers who earned more than £15 per hour were more likely than mothers from lower income bands to take less leave than they were entitled to because they 'wanted to' (25 per cent compared with 16 per cent of lower-paid mothers);
- higher-earning mothers were also more likely to cite career considerations although the incidence of such concerns was still low (7 per cent compared with 3 per cent of mothers on lower incomes).

### 3.4 Factors affecting the duration of maternity leave

Chart 3.7 highlights the factors affecting the length of maternity leave taken by mothers. Over half said their return to work was determined by the length of time maternity pay was available to them. Just one-fifth claimed the length of leave itself was important. A little over one-third of mothers said that their return to work depended on the successful search for suitable childcare while one-fifth claimed that the cost of childcare prohibited return. The most common reason for the timing of mothers' returns to work was expressed as a simple desire to get back to work – although as an account it does leave considerable scope for speculation. Why did the mothers want to return at the point they chose? Potential reasons may range from a desire to return to the stimulation of employment to financial pressures provoking a sense of need.

**Chart 3.7: Factors affecting amount of time taken as maternity leave**

*'Did any of the following factors affect the amount of time you took off work as maternity leave?'*



Base: 1,748 – all employees and self-employed who worked during pregnancy.  
Multiple responses possible. Percentages will therefore not sum to 100.

Chart 3.7 suggests a greater degree of voluntarism than Chart 3.6 did: 71 per cent of mothers in Chart 3.7 claimed their return to work reflected a desire 'to return to paid work'. This compares with just 17 per cent in Chart 3.6. The difference arises partly due to the different bases but primarily due to the distinct question wording in each case. In the question relating to Chart 3.6 mothers were asked spontaneously to list any reason for returning to work before their statutory entitlement had ended. In Chart 3.7 the mothers were asked to respond 'yes' or 'no' to whether each and every factor listed affected the amount of time they took off work. When prompted, most mothers agreed that they did want to return to work at the point they chose. Without prompting, the reasons which came to mind most readily were financial.



In Table 3.5 the relationship between the type of maternity pay received and the factors affecting the duration of maternity leave are shown. The accounts are fairly consistent across all groups of mothers except that mothers who received OMP were more often influenced by the duration of maternity leave while MA recipients were least likely to claim this as a reason for the duration of their leave. OMP recipients were the least likely, and MA recipients the most likely, to name childcare costs as an influential factor. The starkest contrast arises among mothers who received MA who were notably less inclined to say that they returned to work simply because they wished to at that point in time.

The time that mothers return to work is determined by the same factors for both employees and the self-employed (Table 3.6), although the latter are twice as likely to cite 'other' unspecified reasons, indicating the potentially unique pressures facing own account workers and business owners.

The factors determining the length of maternity leave taken are similar for all mothers in different earnings bands (Table 3.7). One obvious exception to this uniformity is the cost of childcare which prevents the lowest paid from returning to work to a far greater extent than better-off mothers. The lowest earners are also less likely than other groups of mothers to be influenced by the duration of maternity pay.

The duration of maternity pay and childcare costs are also the only factors which differentiate mothers from different occupational backgrounds. These are therefore the only factors listed in Table 3.8. Consistent with the findings discussed above, mothers from lower-paid occupational groups are less likely to account for their return to work with reference to the length of maternity pay. For these groups of mothers the cost of childcare is the more prevalent obstacle.

## **Annual leave**

Mothers on maternity leave remain entitled to their paid annual holidays. During OML mothers are eligible for their contractual holiday entitlement. During AML mothers continue to accrue statutory holiday of four weeks a year. In this subsection the provision of these legal entitlements is investigated. There is some concern that not all mothers receive their full annual leave entitlement while on maternity leave. Reasons for not receiving their full entitlement are also explored.

Of the mothers who took maternity leave, 63 per cent said they received their full holiday entitlement for the time they were on maternity leave, 31 per cent said they did not receive their annual leave entitlement and a further 4 per cent were unsure of their situation. Of the mothers who claimed not to have received their annual leave entitlement many received pay instead or chose to defer their annual leave – discussed further below. Tables 3.9–3.10 break these figures down according to earnings, occupation and industrial group.

It is evident from Table 3.9 that mothers earning less than £9 per hour were significantly less likely than those on higher incomes to say they had received their holiday entitlement. Lower than average proportions of mothers employed in professional, personal and protective, and manual or 'other' unskilled jobs said they had received their holiday entitlement while on maternity leave (Table 3.10). In terms of industrial sector, mothers employed in the retail sector, hotels, restaurants, recreation or cultural industries were among the least likely to say they had been given their annual leave entitlement during a maternity leave period (Table 3.10). Mothers employed in the education sector exhibit the lowest rates of annual leave receipt while on maternity leave which is likely to reflect the long holidays received by teachers and the inflexibility of holiday timing in this profession.

Most mothers given annual leave take it as holiday, but one-quarter forfeit time off in favour of pay (Table 3.11). Among the mothers who took the time off, roughly half added the annual leave to their maternity leave while a little less than half (39 per cent) waited until they had returned to work before taking any annual leave owed (Table 3.12).

Overall, one-third of mothers claimed not to have received their holiday entitlement, rising to half the mothers earning less than £6 an hour. Upon closer inspection, however, these figures may be an overestimate of the incidence of non-compliance among employers. Mothers were also asked to account for why they did not receive their annual leave entitlement. Their reasons are listed in Table 3.13. It is clear from the last column that for most mothers, non-receipt of annual leave is explained by receipt of pay, or by previous use of full leave entitlement or their choice to defer annual leave. Only one in ten mothers was unaware of her entitlement and a further one in ten claimed they were not entitled. Six per cent of mothers were freelancers and therefore organised their own leave arrangements – rising to one-fifth of the mothers earning £20 or more an hour. Mothers in the lowest income band were least likely to receive pay as an alternative to leave and most likely to have already used their leave.

### **3.6 Parental leave**

In 1999 parental leave was introduced as a right for parents with one year of continuous service with their employer. Under this right parents can take up to 13 weeks of unpaid leave to look after a child up to the age of five. Parents with disabled children (for parental leave disabled children are those for whom an award of Disability Living Allowance has been made) are entitled to 18 weeks of unpaid leave until the child's 18th birthday. The law stipulates the requirement to give an employer at least 21 days' notice, giving the dates when the leave is to start and finish although an employer may waive this requirement. Under the law, parents must take parental leave in blocks of one week or more, up to a maximum of four weeks per year for each child but again, in practice, employers may allow parental leave in shorter blocks. Parents of disabled children can take the leave in periods shorter than a week.

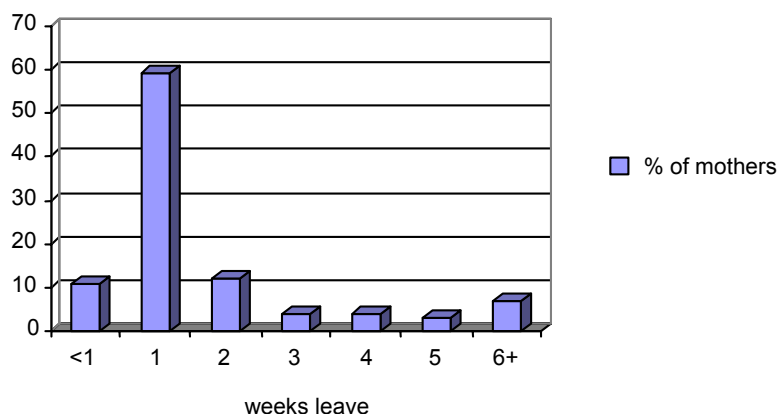
If an employer believes an absence would disrupt business, they can postpone the leave up to a maximum of six months after the date requested – unless the parental leave is taken immediately after the child’s birth or the placement of a child for adoption.

Among mothers who were employed during pregnancy and had returned to work again, 11 per cent had taken any parental leave since their maternity leave ended. This represents a small increase since 2002 when 8 per cent of mothers stated they had used unpaid parental leave (Table 3.14). For the majority of mothers who took parental leave (78 per cent), the leave was taken some time after their maternity leave period had ended. One in ten prolonged their maternity leave by taking parental leave immediately afterwards and a further one in ten took parental leave both immediately and some time after their maternity leave.

Chart 3.8 shows the duration of parental leave taken by the mothers. More than half took just one week of unpaid parental leave, 12 per cent took two weeks and a further 18 per cent took three weeks or more.

Overall, the entitlement to parental leave is not taken up widely and, when used, most mothers take short periods of leave. In chapter 11 we see that fathers took similarly short periods of unpaid parental leave, with just 8 per cent of fathers taking any time off under this scheme. Examination of the earnings, occupation and industry of mothers who used parental leave indicates no association between these factors and the actual take-up of unpaid leave entitlements.

**Chart 3.8: Duration of parental leave**



Base: 142 mothers who used parental leave.

# 4

## Maternity pay

### 4.1 Introduction

Since 2002 the flat rate of SMP and MA has increased (from £62.20 a week to £100 from April 2003) along with their payment periods (from 18 to 26 weeks in April 2003). However, no changes in the qualifying period or qualifying earnings for entitlement to SMP or MA were made. Therefore no change in the proportion of mothers receiving some form of maternity pay, either SMP or MA, is expected.

The only change in qualifying criteria applies to SMP entitlements. The rules are the same – mothers' weekly earnings must have reached the National Insurance Lower Earnings Limit on average over an eight-week period. The threshold did, however, change between 2002 and 2005, dropping from £89 in 2002/3 to £82 in 2005/6. Coupled with inflation these changes might be expected to have slightly raised the proportion of mothers entitled to SMP rather than MA.

In this chapter mothers are differentiated according to whether they received SMP, MA or OMP. Mothers employed for at least six months continuously by the same employer the 15th week before their expected week of confinement (or, roughly, employed before the pregnancy began) are eligible for SMP for 26 weeks. If they do not meet these criteria but were employed or self-employed for at least six months over the 66-week (roughly one year and three months) period prior to the expected date of delivery then they are eligible for MA for 26 weeks. The flat rate of pay was £100 per week for both groups of mothers at the time the mothers interviewed for MRS 05 were in receipt. The SMP recipients, however, receive 90 per cent of their earnings with no upper limit for the first 6 of their 26-week entitlement. Earning requirements for SMP eligibility are an average income of the lower limit for National Insurance contributions. MA eligibility is dependent upon an average income of at least £30 per week for the six month qualifying period. In addition to SMP or MA mothers may have been in receipt of OMP, an extra-statutory maternity payment provided by employers on a discretionary basis as an added benefit for employees.

Of the 2,504 mothers in the MRS 05 sample, 1,860 worked during pregnancy, i.e. 75 per cent of the total. In addition a further 54 mothers described themselves as not working during pregnancy but did complete at least six months' paid work between September 2002 and the birth date of their baby. These mothers are included in the maternity pay data.

## 4.2 Maternity pay receipt

The Venn diagram displayed as Chart 4.1 shows which type of maternity pay, if any, the mothers claimed to receive during their maternity leave: 72 per cent said they received SMP and 20 per cent received OMP, but these groups overlapped with 14 per cent receiving both SMP and OMP. Just 5 per cent of mothers received MA and a further 10 per cent claimed that they received no maternity pay at all. Six per cent of mothers were uncertain which type of maternity pay they received. Of those that worked during pregnancy, 90 per cent claimed to receive some form of maternity pay during their maternity leave – 92 per cent of the employed but just 72 per cent of the self-employed. Lower than average proportions of mothers earning less than £6 per hour or working in manual occupations also claimed to have received maternity pay.

There are inconsistencies between information provided by respondents:

- at different points in the interview,
- in previous survey data, and
- in DWP administrative data.

These inconsistencies indicate that many mothers were unclear as to whether they received maternity pay and the type of pay they received. New figures indicating eligibility for MA and SMP were therefore generated, calculated according to employment tenure and weekly earnings. In addition, using information provided on the length of time maternity pay was received and the amount received over that period, an estimate of the number of mothers receiving OMP was also derived.

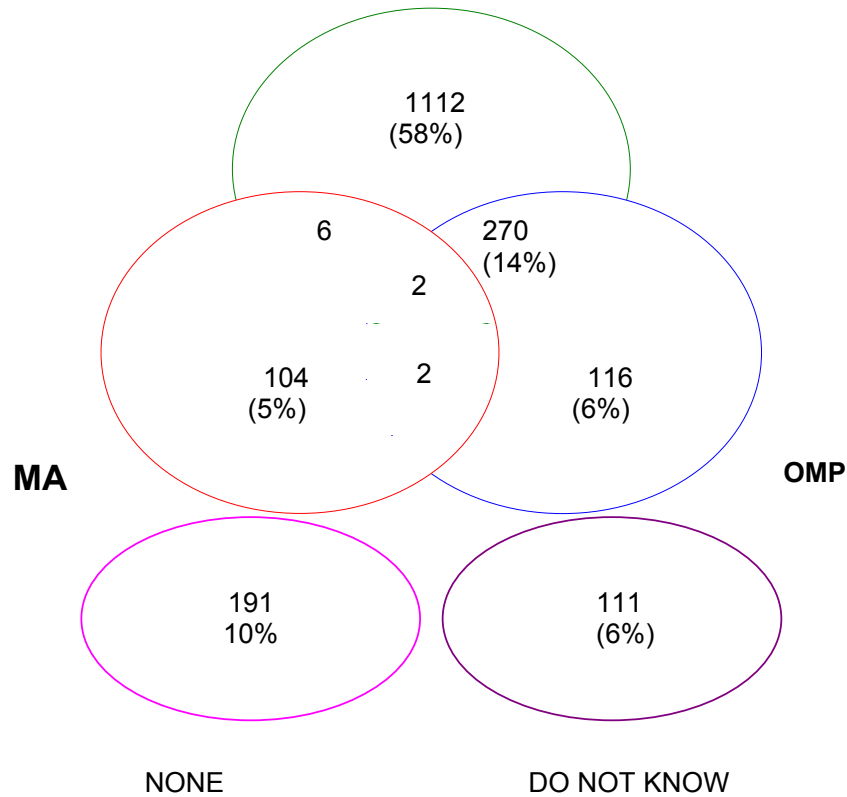
Mothers who received over £433 for more than six weeks or received payment for longer than 26 weeks were assumed to have been receiving OMP.

Mothers employed continuously for at least 40 weeks prior to the birth of their child and earning at least £82 per week were assigned SMP status.

Mothers who did not qualify for SMP according to the above criteria, but who had been employed for at least 6 months over the 15-month period before the birth of their child with an income of at least £30 per week were assigned MA status.

The self-employed are excluded from these derivations as it cannot be established whether the self-employed mothers in the sample are employees in a limited company or whether they have been making the appropriate National Insurance contributions. Their maternity pay entitlements cannot therefore be assessed.

**Chart 4.1: Self-reported SMP/OMP/MA receipt**  
**SMP**

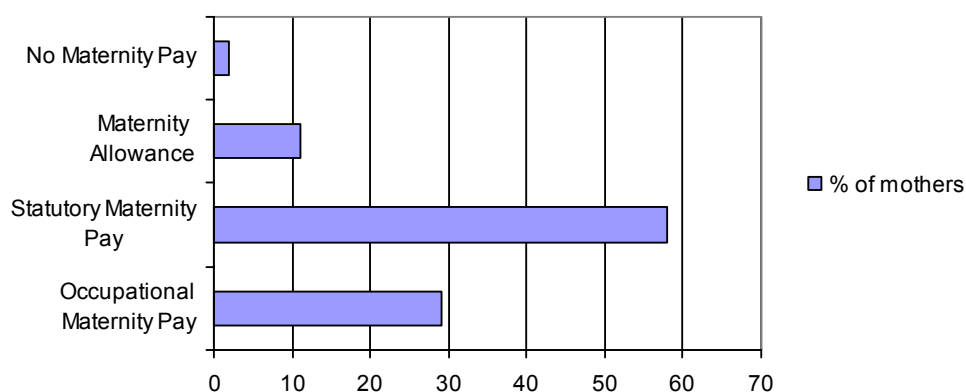


Base: N=1,914 – 1,860 mothers employed during pregnancy plus 54 mothers who described themselves as not working during pregnancy but did work for at least six months between September 2002 and December 2003.

Isolating the 191 mothers who stated they received no maternity pay, 158 were employed during pregnancy, the remainder were not employed but said they had worked for six months between September 2002 and December 2003. Homing in on the mothers who worked during pregnancy, 17 per cent were self-employed and therefore it is likely that their claim to have received no maternity pay is accurate as the self-employed are not eligible for SMP and are only entitled to MA if they are registered with HM Revenue and Customs and pay class 2 National Insurance contributions or hold a small earnings exception certificate. Of the remaining 104 mothers, the average length of service with their employer was just over two years, with only 25 mothers claiming employment tenure of less than six months. The vast majority of mothers claiming not to have received any maternity pay are therefore likely to have been mistaken. Low earners are over-represented among the mothers reporting to have received no maternity pay, with 56 per cent earning £1–6 per hour compared with just 22 per cent among the sample overall.

Chart 4.2 shows the proportion of mothers receiving no maternity pay, MA, SMP and OMP according to the newly derived estimates as opposed to the self-reported figures. The derived estimates suggest that just 2 per cent of mothers employed during pregnancy or employed for at least 6 months during the 15-month period preceding the birth of their baby received no maternity pay. The estimates indicate that 11 per cent of mothers would have received maternity allowance, double the self-reported figures. Details on the amount and duration of maternity pay suggest that over half of the mothers (58 per cent) received Statutory Maternity Pay, with a little under one-third (29 per cent) benefiting from an Occupational Maternity Pay scheme which incorporates SMP.

**Chart 4.2: Derived estimates of MA/SMP/OMP receipt**



Base: 1,815 mothers employed during pregnancy or employed for at least six months between September 2002 and December 2003. Employees only.

Table 4.1 shows the proportion of mothers who received any maternity pay and the proportion of mothers who received SMP, OMP and MA using derived figures. The distribution of maternity pay according to earnings, occupation and workplace characteristics is included. A range of other factors were assessed but found to have no association with the type of maternity pay received.

Although OMP and SMP are treated as separate categories, mothers receiving OMP also receive SMP. The combination of OMP and MA, while theoretically possible, is, in practice, a rare occurrence. In Chart 4.1 just four mothers claimed to have received both MA and OMP.

The probability of a mother receiving OMP increases the higher their earnings, while the probability of receiving just MA or no maternity pay is heightened among low- income mothers (earning less than £9 per hour or £83 per week). Managers, professionals and associate professionals are significantly more likely to benefit from OMP than other occupational groups, with mothers employed in retail jobs the least likely to be offered OMP. Mothers employed in manual and unskilled jobs are the most likely to be ineligible for any maternity pay. Working in a public sector organisation or in a workplace with union representation both enhance the

probability that a mother will receive extra-statutory maternity pay in the form of OMP. Workplace size is also associated with OMP receipt, with mothers employed in establishments of 500-plus twice as likely to receive OMP as mothers in establishments of less than 100 (47 per cent and 25 per cent respectively). Thirty-seven per cent of mothers in workplaces of 100–499 received OMP.

**Table 4.1: Proportion of mothers in receipt of maternity pay**

	% receiving maternity pay				Row percentages
	OMP	SMP	MA	NONE	Total N
All	29	58	11	2	1,815
By gross hourly pay band during pregnancy					
£ 0–5.99	14	55	26	5	308
£ 6–8.99	23	67	8	2	387
£ 9–11.99	40	57	1	2	328
£ 12–14.99	40	58	3	0	228
£ 15–19	42	56	2	0	190
£20+	36	62	1	0	148
By gross weekly pay band during pregnancy					
£0–82	14	0	68	18	119
£83–200	21	71	7	2	431
£201–300	34	60	4	1	393
£301–450	35	63	2	1	308
£451–650	34	63	3	0	220
£651+	38	62	0	0	144
By occupational group during pregnancy					
Manager	32	64	3	1	268
Professional	32	65	3	..	266
Associate professional	39	55	4	2	373
Clerical/ secretarial	26	65	8	2	367
Personal & protective	23	59	14	4	186
Sales	12	62	22	4	154
Craft / plant / other	19	49	22	10	133
Unionisation					
TU at work	39	53	6	2	908
No TU at work	17	69	11	3	718
Employment sector					
Public	37	54	7	2	833
Private	19	67	11	3	820
Organisation size					
1–24	24	58	16	3	348
25–99	25	66	8	1	325
100–499	37	54	9	1	252
500+	47	48	4	1	285

Base: 1,815 mothers who worked at least six months since September 2002. Using derived maternity pay.

Comparisons with 2002 are drawn in Table 4.2. The figures are merely indicative, however, as changes in the question wording have reduced comparability. In 2002 respondents were asked to indicate whether they received OMP including SMP or MA, SMP only or MA only. These categories were treated as mutually exclusive with only one option permitted. In 2005 multiple responses were possible in order to determine precisely which combination of maternity pay types mothers received.

Attempts to derive estimates for 2002 equivalent to those derived for 2005 were hampered by small response rates to income questions in



2002. Comparison of derived figures in 2002 and 2005 were therefore not viable. Table 4.2 therefore compares self-reported data at both points in time from employees only. As expected, the proportion of mothers claiming to receive some form of maternity pay remained stable at 92 per cent. Also as predicted, given changes to the LEL threshold, combined with inflation-driven increases to income, the proportion of mothers who received MA fell from 8 to 5 per cent. The proportion of mothers who received SMP or OMP plus SMP increased by 3 per cent to 95 per cent between 2002 and 2005. The proportion of mothers who claimed to have been in receipt of OMP is shown primarily to highlight potential uncertainty among mothers and the impact changed question wording can have. It is unlikely that OMP receipt fell from 42 per cent to 25 per cent between 2002 and 2005 and the change in question wording is likely to be the explanation for it.

### **4.3 Maternity pay duration**

Table 4.3 highlights the impact of changes in maternity benefit between the years 2000 and 2003 by comparing the duration of maternity pay among mothers surveyed in 2002 and 2005. Over half the mothers in 2002 received pay for exactly four months (58 per cent) with a further third receiving pay for less than 18 weeks. By 2005 three-quarters of mothers received pay for a full six months. An interesting and unexpected impact of these changes is a shift in the proportion of mothers using their statutory entitlements. In 2002 one-third of mothers (32 per cent) took less than their statutory right to 18 weeks of maternity pay (whether eligible for MA or SMP). By 2005, only one-fifth (22 per cent) of mothers did not take their statutory right to 26 weeks of maternity pay. The reason for this development is not obvious but one possible explanation is that legislation providing most mothers with up to one year of maternity leave and greater provision of leave for fathers has had an impact upon organisational cultures which may increasingly accept the legitimacy of prolonged periods of absence around the time of childbirth.

Table 4.4 shows the relationship between the type of maternity pay and its duration. All mothers, regardless of maternity pay type, were entitled in 2004/2005 to 26 weeks of paid leave. Mothers receiving MA had a slightly increased chance of receiving maternity pay for less than six months (20 per cent compared with 13–14 per cent of other mothers) reflecting their greater likelihood of returning to work early as shown in Chart 3.4. In keeping with statutory provision, no mothers receiving MA or SMP received maternity pay in excess of six months. By contrast, 12 per cent of mothers receiving OMP were paid for longer than six months.

The results showing maternity pay duration by hourly and weekly pay band are displayed in Tables 4.5a and 4.5b. Mothers in the highest weekly pay bands are three times as likely as mothers in the lowest weekly pay band to receive maternity pay for less than 18 weeks (26 per cent compared with 10 per cent) (Table 4.5b). Consistent with the earnings-related findings, mothers in the better paid managerial and professional occupations are the most likely to have received maternity pay for less than 18 weeks (Table 4.6). There may be a number of explanations for

this outcome. First, the outgoings such as mortgage costs and other bills are likely to be higher for mothers on high salaries as they can, when working, afford more. For these mothers, the flat rate of maternity pay, after the first six weeks of salary-linked pay, will fall further below their committed outgoings compared with mothers with lower prior earnings and therefore smaller commitments. Second, the shorter duration of maternity pay receipt simply reflects the period of time mothers choose to remain away from work. Professional and managerial workers may simply wish to return to their satisfying jobs more quickly. Evidence from chapter 3 would suggest that concerns about career prospects are not, however, a dominant consideration.

Reflecting the shorter periods of maternity leave taken by the self-employed, Table 4.7 shows that the self-employed typically receive maternity pay for a shorter period of time compared with employees. One-fifth of employee mothers were paid for less than six months whereas a little over one-third of the self-employed mothers received maternity pay for less than six months.

# 5

## The return to work: choices and barriers

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines mothers' employment in the year and a half following the birth of their child in 2003. It identifies the proportion of mothers who have returned to work by the time their child is 17 months old and investigates the timing of such returns. Comparisons with previous surveys are presented. Three groups of mothers are analysed and reasons for their choices explored:

- mothers who returned to work but have since left;
- mothers who returned to work and are still in paid employment; and
- mothers who did not return to work.

The extent to which these labour market outcomes may result from preference and choice, rather than reflecting barriers or constraints, is discussed. The chapter examines the factors associated with returning to work and investigates the extent to which mothers change jobs and/or employers when they return after maternity leave. Reasons for changing jobs or employer and opportunities for flexible working or use of family-friendly schemes are also presented.

### 5.2 The decision to return to work

Three-quarters of mothers worked during pregnancy (1,860). Of these, 6 per cent returned to work after childbirth but subsequently left employment, 20 per cent did not return to work and 74 per cent returned and were still in work at the point of the survey. This chapter focuses only upon those mothers employed during pregnancy in order to understand the circumstances associated with the decision to return to work or resign from employment after childbirth.

Trends in the timing of mothers' returns to work are presented as Table 5.1. Each row shows the proportion of mothers who had returned to work by the time their baby had reached 9 months, 11 months and 17 months of age in 1988, 1996, 2002 and 2005. Gaps in the series reflect the timing of the surveys. The proportion of mothers returning to work increases cumulatively as time passes after the birth. This must be taken into account when comparing the percentage of mothers who have returned to work in each of the surveys under consideration. In 1988 the mothers

were interviewed nine months after childbirth and so no data exists beyond the first row. In 1996 mothers were interviewed 11 months after childbirth (1996 data is not available for the proportion who had returned to work at nine months as mothers were not asked when they had returned to work but only *whether* they had at the time of the interview). In 2002 mothers were interviewed 13–17 months after childbirth. Using data on the date that mothers returned to work and the duration of their maternity leave it is possible to produce figures for 2002 indicating what proportion of mothers had returned to work by the time their child was 9 and then 11 months old in order to assess developments since 1988.

The first row shows a large increase in the proportion of mothers who had returned to work by the time their baby was nine months old, up from 45 per cent in 1988 to 60 per cent by 2005. The low return rate of 1988 is likely to reflect the comparatively ungenerous maternity rights and benefits context of that time. Many mothers did not return to work as the right to return up to 29 weeks after birth was reserved for mothers with an employment service of at least two years. By 11 months after childbirth a somewhat more stable picture is evident. Between 1996 and 2002 an increase from two-thirds to three-quarters of mothers had returned to work within just under one year of childbirth. By 2005 the proportion of mothers who had returned to work by the time their baby was 11 months old fell back to levels previously seen in the mid-1990s. This more recent trend reflects the right, introduced in April 2003, to 52 weeks of maternity leave. In Chart 3.2 (chapter 3) it was shown that the proportion of mothers taking over nine months' leave more than doubled between 2002 and 2005 from 9 per cent to 23 per cent. In 2002, 80 per cent of mothers had returned to work by the time their child was 13–17 months old – a figure which remained unchanged by 2005.

**Table 5.1: Incidence and timing of work return over time**

Proportion who had returned to work within	Cumulative column percentages			
	1988	1996	2002	2005
9 months	45			60
11 months		67	73	68
17 months			80	80

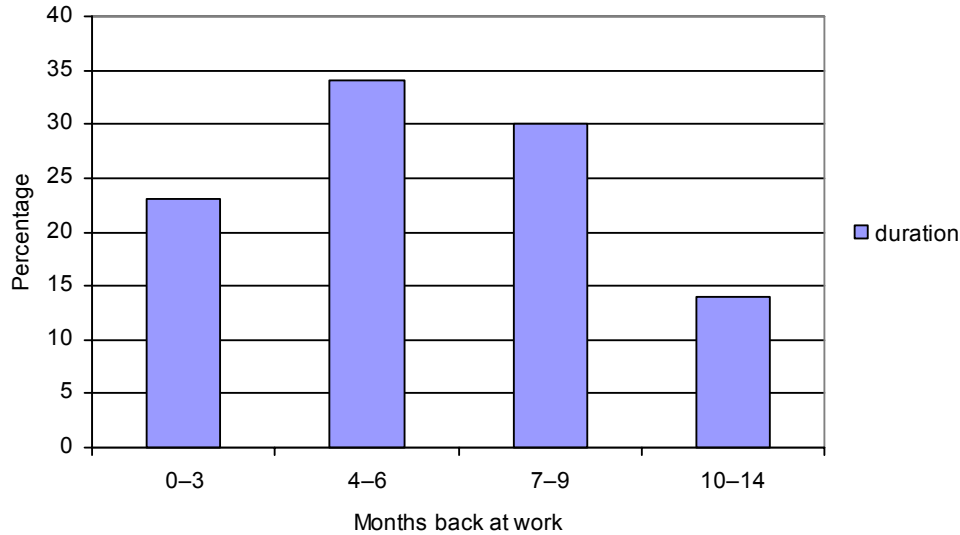
Base: Mothers who worked during pregnancy, took maternity leave and provided information on the duration of maternity leave (2005 N=1,860).

### 5.3 The temporary returners

The first sub-group of mothers under consideration are those who returned to work at some point after childbirth but have since left work again: 133 mothers or 5 per cent of the total sample fell into this category (119 were employed during pregnancy and 14 were not). Those who dropped out of work having returned after childbirth differed little from those who returned and persisted in work. They took similar amounts of leave. From Table 5.2 it is evident that 15 per cent of the temporary returners took less than six months' maternity leave while nearly half took their statutory six months – figures which are directly comparable to

those of all mothers employed during pregnancy. One-quarter of the temporary returners remained in work for less than four months, with another third lasting four to five months before leaving work again. Nearly half the mothers returned to work for six months or more before giving up work whether on a short- or long-term basis (Chart 5.1).

**Chart 5.1: Duration back at work among temporary returners**



The reasons for returning to work among the mothers who returned to work for a period of time, but have since left, mirror the reasons given by all mothers who returned to work (Table 5.3). Half the sample of mothers cited end of maternity pay, or maternity leave and the desire to return as causal factors. The largest group, at two-thirds of the mothers, returned because they needed the money.

The importance of financial need was not, however, enough to keep these mothers at work. Among reasons offered for leaving work (Table 5.4), becoming pregnant once again was fairly common, with one-third of mothers reporting that a new baby caused their departure. The desire to care for their children among another third of the temporary returners apparently outweighed their sense of financial need. Sixteen per cent of the mothers who returned to work temporarily did not remain in work because their earnings were insufficient to meet the costs of childcare and 14 per cent left work because their hours were incompatible with their caring responsibilities. These employment obstacles also feature in the accounts of mothers who did not return to work at all, discussed in the next section.

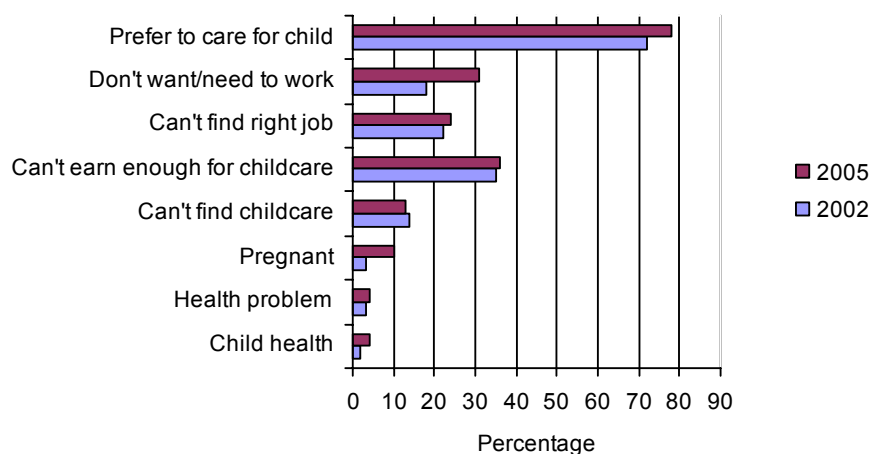
#### **5.4 The non-returners**

The second group of mothers to be investigated are those who did not return to work after the birth of their child. One-fifth of mothers employed during pregnancy had not returned 17 months after the birth of their baby – the same proportion of mothers who did not return to work in 2002. Their reasons for not returning are listed at Chart 5.2. The most common

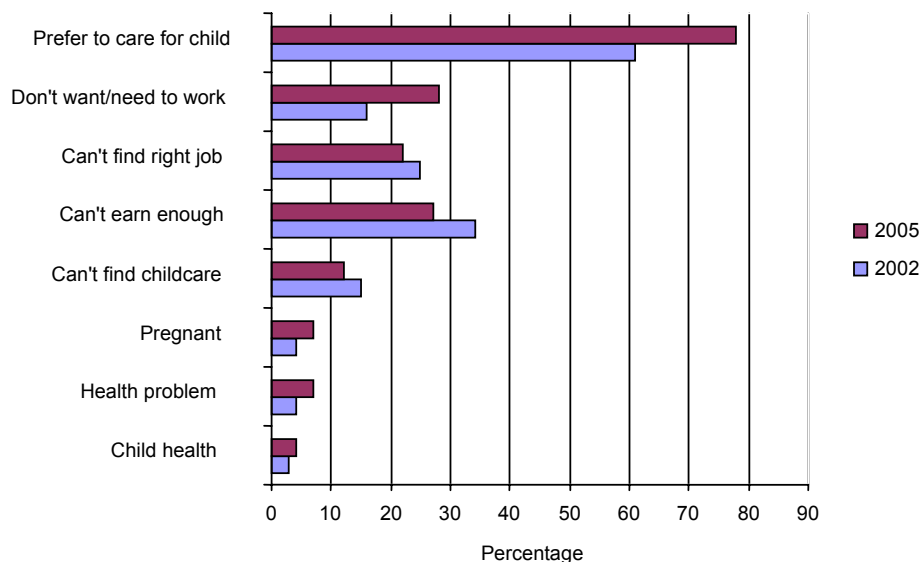
reason for remaining at home after childbirth, cited by more than three-quarters of mothers, is the simple desire to care for their own children who are still of pre-school age. Most of these mothers therefore appear to be acting in accordance with their preferences and exercising a choice not to work while their children are young. One-quarter, however, suggested that the costs of childcare present an obstacle to their return to work, while a little under one-fifth (17 per cent) could not find work with suitable hours. Combining the reasons which represent obstacles to paid employment (cannot find a job, cannot find a position with the right hours, cannot earn enough to pay for childcare or cannot find suitable childcare) a little over one-third (36 per cent) of mothers are constrained from finding work having experienced one or more of these barriers to work. There is no association between experiencing these obstacles and occupation, industry or earnings of the mothers involved. Differences between 2002 and 2005 are not significant apart from the proportion of mothers, suggesting either they did not need or did not want to work, which increased by 13 per cent (this may reflect change to question wording – in 2002 the response option was ‘I prefer not to work’, in 2005 ‘You did not want or need to work’).

Extending the sample to include all mothers not in paid employment, whether they worked during pregnancy or not, some changes between 2002 and 2005 in mothers’ reasons for not working can be discerned. There were fewer references to employment obstacles. The proportion of mothers remaining at home because they wanted to care for their children on a full-time basis increased from 61 per cent to 79 per cent (Chart 5.3). At the same time, there was a decline in the proportion of mothers who remained at home because they could not find a job with the right hours or could not earn enough for childcare. These shifts may reflect the greater dispersion of employers’ policies allowing workers a more favourable work–life balance and the new right to request flexible working patterns. The developments may also point to the impact of working and child tax credits which increase the disposable income of families on low wages. Whereas this effect is said by economists to be a disincentive to work for partnered mothers, it does offer greater choice to mothers with working partners in timing their return to work.

**Chart 5.2: Reasons for not working since birth of child among mothers employed during pregnancy**



**Chart 5.3: Reasons for not working since birth of child among all mothers not employed 17 months after childbirth**



Having more than one child is an important determinant of employment status: 79 per cent of first-time mothers were employed during their pregnancy compared with 61 per cent of mothers having their second or subsequent child. Eighteen months after the birth of their children 60 per cent of first-time mothers were in paid employment while just 47 per cent of mothers with more than one child were in employment. Basically, some mothers tend to have their children in pairs separated by a year or two and not to return to work much between the two pregnancies. Of the mothers who worked neither during pregnancy nor post-childbirth, 75 per cent had more than one child. There are few significant differences in the accounts for not working between the mothers who had worked during pregnancy and those who had not.

The majority of mothers caring for their children on a full-time basis were not searching for work (Table 5.5), but three-quarters said they intended to look for employment in the future and they had a fairly clear idea about when they would like to return. One-quarter of mothers intended to return to work once their youngest child reaches the nursery school age of three. At this point, however, the majority of children attending state nursery schools are only offered morning or afternoon places of 2.5 hours duration, thus restricting available time for those wishing to work. It is therefore not surprising to find that a larger proportion of mothers (one-third), plan to wait until their youngest child reaches the age of four and starts primary school before returning to paid employment. Primary age children remain in school for a little over six hours a day thereby freeing parents from direct childcare activities for a period of time that realistically can be given to paid work, though of course the school holidays present their own problems.

Comparisons with 2002 indicate little change in work orientations among non-working mothers. Few plan to return to work much before their child

reaches the age of three, with the majority, at both points in time, aiming to return when their children start primary school.

## 5.5 The returners

In this section mothers who had returned to work are investigated and the factors associated with their return examined. There were notable differences in the proclivity to return to work according to personal characteristics, the job mothers held while pregnant and the type of employer they had worked for. These relationships are highlighted below in bivariate (two-way) tables showing simple associations and then subsequently pulled together in a number of multivariate analyses which consider the influence of relevant factors in tandem. Initially the section presents the rate of return to work, mothers' preferences for when they return and the reasons mothers give for returning to work at their chosen time.

Chart 5.4 shows the rate of return among mothers who had been employed during pregnancy and were also employed at the point of their interview. Nearly two-thirds had returned to work by the time their baby was six months old. The biggest moves back to work were at four to five months and five to six months. Among those steadily trickling back to work after the six-month point, mothers in professional and clerical occupations are most prevalent as are OMP recipients, mothers receiving no benefits, higher earners and employees rather than the self-employed (see chapter 2).

**Chart 5.4: The rate of return to work among those employed during pregnancy and currently employed**

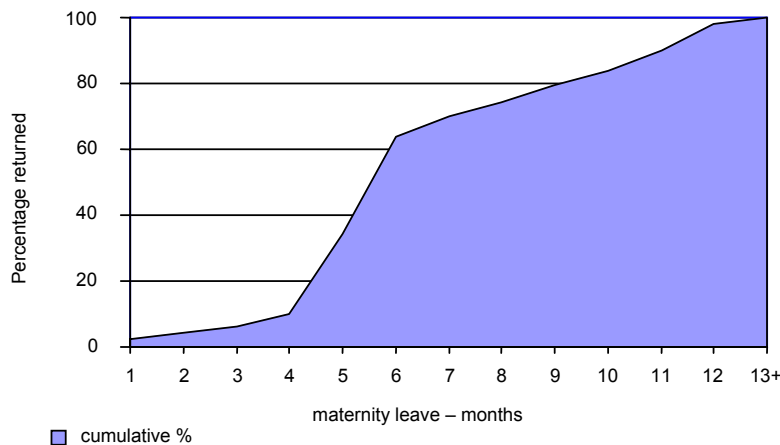


Table 5.6 shows whether the point at which mothers returned to work was consistent with their preferences. It also shows the reasons given for the timing of their return to work.

The majority of mothers who returned to work said they had returned at their preferred time. However, one-fifth of mothers would have preferred to return to work at some later stage. Among mothers who were returning to work the difference between those happy and unhappy with the timing



of their return, in terms of maternity leave taken, is small. Mothers happy with their return-to-work timing took, on average, 32 weeks maternity leave (about seven months) compared with mothers who would have preferred to return later who took an average of 27 weeks maternity leave (about six months). A tiny 2 per cent would have preferred to return to work sooner than they actually did.

For the majority of mothers, their return to work was dictated by financial imperatives. A little over two-thirds of mothers felt the pressure of financial need and perhaps could not afford to remain out of work for longer – a figure which rose to over three-quarters of the mothers who returned to work before they felt ready.

### **5.5.1 Factors associated with returning to work**

Personal characteristics such as age, educational achievement, being a first-time mother or a lone mother were investigated to determine whether they played a role in a mother's decision to return to work after maternity leave. A number of job- and employer-related characteristics were also assessed. Factors of significance are listed in Tables 5.7a–f.

#### *Personal characteristics*

Reduced probabilities of returning to work are associated with being under 25 or being a lone mother. Increased qualification levels, however, enhance the ability or desire to return to work (Table 5.7a).

#### *Job characteristics*

Job-related factors are presented in Table 5.7b. Being self-employed enhances the likelihood of returning to work after maternity leave – 87 per cent returned compared with 77 per cent of employees. Earning less than £9 per hour (especially earning less than £6 per hour) or having been employed in a job during pregnancy with less than two years' service, depresses the incidence of a mother returning to work. Mothers employed on a full-time basis during pregnancy were also less likely than those employed part-time to return to work (71 per cent and 84 per cent respectively). One potential explanation for this outcome is the need among mothers of young children to work reduced and/or flexible hours. Mothers who were employed part-time had already secured these more suitable conditions while some of the full-time mothers may have experienced difficulties in achieving the necessary degree of flexibility with their original employer and not yet found an alternative.

Mothers' occupation during pregnancy was also an important determinant of employment outcomes after childbirth (Table 5.7c). Mothers employed in professional or associate professional jobs were more likely to return to work after maternity leave (87–90 per cent). The experience of managers and office administrators / secretaries was similar, with average return-to-work rates of 78–80 per cent. Mothers in lower-level occupations had lower rates of return, falling to just 59 per cent of manual and elementary

occupation workers. Of interest, the occupational profile of mothers returning did not change significantly between 2002 and 2005.

### *Employer and workplace characteristics*

In terms of employer- or workplace-related characteristics (Table 5.7d), a number of factors are associated with mothers' propensity to return to work. Being employed in public sector jobs such as health, education or public administration is associated with higher rates of return to work as is working for an employer that provides a wide variety of opportunities to work flexibly.

Mothers employed during pregnancy in workplaces of 25–99 or 100–499 staff had typical return rates of 80 per cent, while mothers in small workplaces of just 1–24 staff were less likely to return to work (72 per cent) and mothers in large workplaces employing more than 500 staff were more likely than average to return to work (88 per cent) (Table 5.7e). Organisational size therefore exerts an influence on whether a mother will return to work. Organisational size, however, acts as a proxy for other factors which are more likely to have a direct impact upon work-return rates. These 'other' factors are likely to include unionisation, provision of occupational maternity pay and the ability to accommodate non-standard employment terms and conditions such as term-time working and other flexible options – all of which are associated with workplace size. No significant change in the relationship between organisation size and work-return rates is evident between 2002 and 2005.

The proportion of women employed at a mother's workplace was not a significant determinant of work-return rates. By contrast, employment sector did have an influence on the willingness or ability to return to work with 86 per cent of public sector mothers returning compared with 73 per cent of mothers in the private sector – figures which are nearly identical to those reported for 2002.

How a mother felt she had been treated by her employer during pregnancy also had an impact upon whether she returned to work. Just 62 per cent of mothers who felt they had been treated unfairly had returned to work compared with an average of 80 per cent. Pregnancy-related discrimination is therefore harmful in both the short and longer term, having an adverse effect upon a mother's desire or ability to become re-engaged in the labour market after birth.

Of considerable importance is the type of maternity pay received during maternity leave (Table 5.7f). A little over one-third of mothers ineligible for any maternity pay returned to work while two-thirds of mothers who received MA had returned to work. SMP recipients exhibited a roughly average propensity to return to work, while mothers benefiting from an occupational maternity pay scheme were the most likely to return to work (87 per cent). This association between maternity pay type and the probability of returning to work is also linked to length of service which determines maternity pay eligibility.

### 5.5.2 Modelling the decision to return to work

Do the mothers who returned to work differ from those who chose to remain at home in any significant way? In order to investigate this question multiple regression techniques were used to determine how important various factors were in influencing mothers' working decisions. Bivariate ('two-way') analyses, discussed above, indicated the importance of a variety of personal characteristics, employment status, job and employer characteristics (during pregnancy) in the likelihood of returning to work. In order to assess whether each of these factors remains important when all are considered at the same time, multivariate analyses were performed. For example, it seems fair to suggest that the reason we find that mothers employed in larger organisations are more likely to return to work might be due to more widespread trade union presence, which, in turn, promotes the ability of mothers to secure better terms and conditions more suitable for reconciling the demands of work and family. If this was the case, when we include both organisation size and union presence in a model, organisation size may turn out to be unimportant and unionisation important or 'significant' in explaining mothers' return rates. It is also of interest to establish the relative causal strength of personal, job and employer-related characteristics in determining whether a mother will return to work. Policy implications will emerge from such findings – at what level would government and other institutional interventions be most effective?

Table 5.8 indicates, in a simplified manner, which factors are significant in predicting whether a mother, employed during pregnancy, will return to work after the birth of her baby. Those with a positive sign (+) are significantly associated with a return to work, for example in three models mothers with mortgages on their homes are more likely to return to work *independently of the effects of other variables in the model*. Conversely, those with negative signs (-) are significantly associated with not returning to work, for example, in Model One, being a lone parent. 'Ns' stands for 'no significant relationship', again controlling for the effects of all the other variables in the model.

The full models are presented in Appendix 2.

Five sets of models were run differentiating between individual, job and employer characteristics in order to determine the relative importance of each type of explanation.

- The first column of Table 5.8 shows the results of the first-stage model which included individual characteristics only – age, whether a single parent, whether a first-time mother, highest educational qualification.
- To this list was subsequently added housing tenure – shown in Model 2.
- The third column shows the results of the second-stage model, which adds to individual characteristics facets relating to the job held during pregnancy, including: whether full- or part-time, occupational

group, hourly pay, whether employed or self-employed and length of service. These first three columns include the self-employed.

- In columns four and five employer-related characteristics are added which, by definition, exclude the self-employed. Employer characteristics include: size of workforce; industry; whether experienced unfair treatment at work during the pregnancy; whether public, private or voluntary sector; whether trade unions recognised in the workplace; whether mother was a union member; the number of flexible employment practices in the establishment and the presence of specific flexible practices or facilities such as the availability of flexi-time (available to 57 per cent of mothers), part-time working (available to 82 per cent of mothers) and career breaks (available to 18 per cent of mothers).
- The final column, Model 5, excludes lone mothers as it seeks to establish the significance of partners' earnings in the decision whether to return to work or not.

Model 1 highlights the importance of age, qualifications and lone parent status. Mothers aged 30–34 or 40-plus are the most likely to return to work as are mothers with degrees or higher level qualifications. Lone parents are less inclined, for a variety of reasons, to return to work. The addition of housing tenure to Model 2 renders lone parent status insignificant and instead it is evident that having a mortgage to pay pushes mothers back to work, while living in public sector or housing association accommodation holds a mother back from work after maternity leave. This, in turn, is likely to be associated with her receipt of Housing Benefit, which increases the withdrawal rate of Working Tax Credits typically from 50 to 69 per cent and this adds a further disincentive for most out-of-work lone parents to seek low-paid work.

In Model 3, with the features of a mother's job added, individual characteristics are no longer relevant in determining whether a mother will return to work (apart from being aged 35–39 which is associated with a greater likelihood of remaining at home). Returning to work is positively associated instead with working as a professional or associate professional, being self-employed or working part-time during pregnancy, earning above £6 per hour and having a longer service history. Having a mortgage to pay also remains an important determinant of returning to work.

Adding employer-related characteristics to Model 4 undermines the significance of occupational background in determining return-to-work decisions. Being ineligible for any maternity pay (associated with short employment tenure or very low weekly income, in turn associated with short hours of employment) depresses the probability of returning to work as does earning less than £6 per hour. Receiving OMP improves the odds of returning. Employment in a public sector job also improves the chances of a mother returning to work but industrial sector was not important in any versions of the models and is therefore not included in Table 5.9. If a mother is in a Trade Union or employed in a workplace that recognises Trade Unions she is more likely to return as is a mother employed in establishments with more than 100 staff. It is particularly interesting that

the size of establishment and trade unionisation are independently linked to returns to work. However, if treated unfairly, a mother is less inclined to return to work. Other factors positively associated with returning to work are availability of flexi-time opportunities or being employed on a part-time basis.

Model 5 focuses on mothers with partners in order to establish the importance of family-level income in employment decisions. In this reduced model, age, housing tenure, maternity pay type, private sector employment and availability of flexi-time opportunities are no longer significant. Unionisation and working in an establishment with 500-plus staff still encourage mothers back to work. The remaining factor associated with returning to work in this model is mothers' occupation – professionals and associate professionals have greater odds of returning as do mothers with incomes above £9 per hour. Higher-earning mothers on £15–19 per hour, however, are less likely to return to work than mothers on mid-level incomes. Partners' incomes are also an important determinant of mothers' employment decisions after childbirth. Mothers with partners on lower incomes of less than £1,100 per month are more likely to return to employment, while mothers with partners in the highest earnings group of £2,701-plus per month are significantly less likely to return to work. This finding emphasises the importance of financial resources in providing mothers with choices.

Overall, mothers in 'good' higher-level jobs with flexible opportunities, often in unionised circumstances and treated well by their employer are the most likely to return to work after maternity leave. Employers therefore have an important role to play in the decision-making process of mothers after the birth of their children. Personal characteristics are less important than these job- and employer-related factors. Financial circumstances are also important since low-income mothers are less likely to return to work. Their reluctance may be related to a number of other factors, such as the likely loss of benefit or tax credits, or the unattractiveness of much low-paid work. By contrast, mothers have higher odds of remaining at home if they have a partner with higher than average earnings and are more likely to return if he has a job but earns little. Among the better off, it is having a mortgage that seems to push mothers back to work.

## **5.6 Changing jobs and patterns of work**

This subsection explores the extent to which mothers make changes to their working lives upon returning to work after childbirth. Specific changes examined include moving to a new employer, the adoption of new tasks or working schedules with the same employer and subsequent modifications to pay rates. Reasons for making these changes are also explored. Chart 5.5 shows the range of changes made by mothers who returned to work.

A little over three-quarters of mothers made some sort of change to their employment upon returning from maternity leave. A larger proportion of first-time mothers made changes compared with mothers of more than

one child (88 per cent and 68 per cent respectively). Mothers tend to make changes to their hours of work with the arrival of their first child, hence the mothers with more than one child were already more likely to be working on a part-time basis during their recent pregnancy than first-time mothers (58 per cent and 36 per cent respectively).

The majority of mothers making a change to their working arrangements worked fewer hours when they returned. Comparing aggregate figures, the average number of hours worked among mothers during their pregnancy was 26. Upon returning to work the average number of weekly hours fell to 22.

Nearly one-fifth of mothers assumed a different set of tasks upon returning to work after maternity leave. Around one in ten mothers could be described as experiencing some form of downward mobility by returning to a job with fewer responsibilities but a similar proportion of mothers return and assume more responsibilities. It is beyond the scope of this study to establish whether the mothers who are waiting until their children reach nursery or primary school age before returning to work will experience a reduction in occupational status and/or earnings.

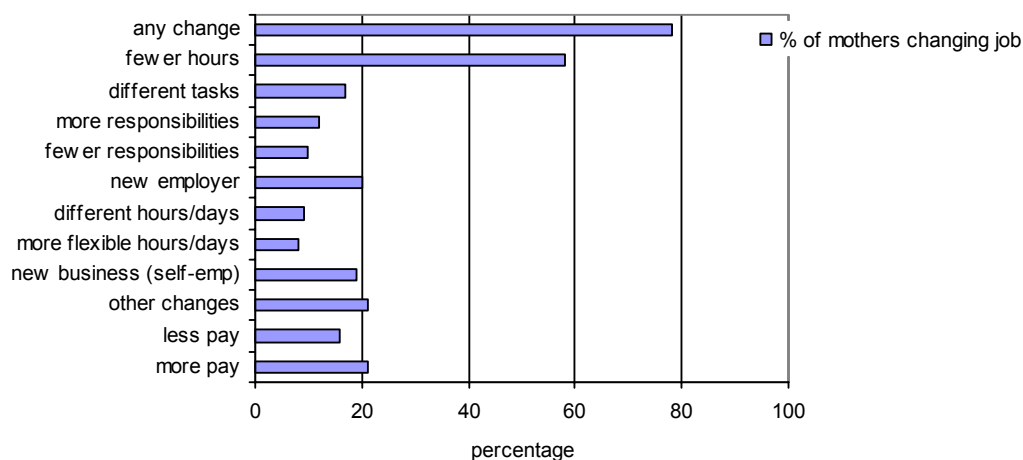
Included in the 'other changes' category are modifications to shifts worked, fewer days, working from home and shifts to freelancing status. No more than 5 per cent of mothers cited any of these reasons.

One-fifth of mothers changed employer after maternity leave, or, if self-employed, set up a new business. This is an interesting group of mothers given that changing employer after the birth of a child has been directly implicated in the unequal outcomes of men and mothers in terms of career development and lifetime earnings (Dex, 1987; Joshi et al., 1996; Rake, 2000). The main reason for changing employer was either to work more flexible hours (47 per cent), fewer hours (41 per cent) or to work on a part-time basis (43 per cent). Two-thirds of mothers changing employer cited one of these three reasons. One-third of mothers who changed their employer did so in order to work more closely to home and 16 per cent to work from home. Fifteen per cent of mothers claimed their old job no longer existed and a further 15 per cent claimed their resignation was prompted by a lack of support from their old employer.

What impact did these employment transitions have upon the mothers in terms of occupational mobility? As the raw numbers involved are quite small, with just 270 mothers moving to a new employer, a robust analysis of occupational change is not possible. The following discussion should therefore be treated as indicative only. Overall, mothers employed in managerial and associate professional occupations during pregnancy were the most likely to experience downward occupational mobility by changing employer. Just one-third of managers remained in a professional or managerial position after their move. A little over half the associate professional mothers remained in a similar or higher status job. These figures compare with 79 per cent of professionals and 70 per cent of administrative/secretarial employees who were able to preserve or improve their occupational status. One-fifth of the managers and one-fifth

of the associate professionals transferred to a job in sales, such as shop assistant. As a consequence of such movements the proportion of mothers employed in sales jobs increased from 13 per cent during pregnancy to 19 per cent post-childbirth.

**Chart 5.5: Proportion of mothers who changed some aspect of their jobs on returning to work**



Base: 1,377 mothers who worked before and after birth.

### 5.6.1 Developments in the proportion of mothers changing employer 2002–2005

Between 2002 and 2005, the proportion of mothers who changed employer upon returning to work fell significantly from 41 per cent to 20 per cent. Yet, as was seen earlier in this chapter, the same overall proportion of mothers had returned to work by 17 months after childbirth. What conditions have changed to push fewer mothers out of their jobs of origin after maternity leave? Two contextual factors may account for this degree of change.

First, in 2005 mothers returned to work, on average, more slowly than mothers in 2002 as a direct consequence of improved maternity pay and extended rights to maternity leave. As a result, the length of time mothers had been back at work by the time their children were 17 months was longer for the mothers in 2002. This provided an increased period of time for a mother to decide she would like to change her job and employer. As time passes, increasing numbers of the original sample of mothers will change their jobs for a wide variety of reasons.

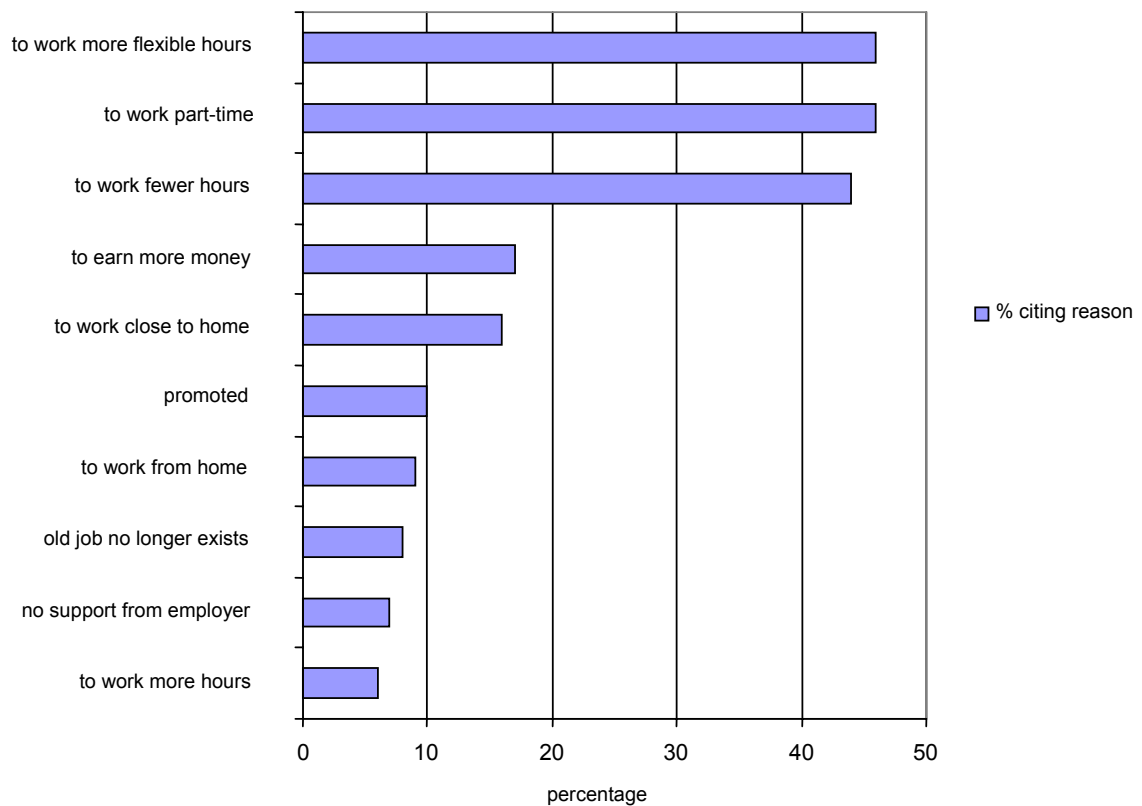
Second, and perhaps more importantly, the right to request flexible working patterns and reduced hours was enacted in April 2003. Many mothers who would otherwise have had to change employer to secure a shorter or more flexible working week could, by 2005, remain with their original employer.

A similar proportion of a little under one-fifth of mothers who changed jobs in both 2002 and 2005 claimed they were forced to find a new employer because their old job was no longer available.

### 5.6.2 Reasons for changing job or working arrangements

Given that the most common change made by mothers returning to employment after a maternity break was a reduction in hours worked, there are few surprises in the reasons offered for making a change – presented in Chart 5.6. A desire to work more flexibly, part-time or just fewer hours was cited most often. Around 15 per cent of mothers changed their job or working arrangements to earn more money and a further 15 per cent to work more closely to their home. A minority of mothers, less than 10 per cent, claimed their change was prompted by encouraging reasons such as promotion or to work more hours. However, others cited discouraging factors such as the disappearance of their old job or lack of support from their original employer.

**Chart 5.6: Reasons for changing job or working arrangements**



Base: 1,080 mothers who have changed their employer or job in some way.

### 5.7 Opportunities for and take-up of flexible working

In order to promote retention rates among mothers, a range of 'family-friendly' initiatives have been introduced throughout British companies over the past few years. These are designed to help parents achieve a



reasonable balance between their family responsibilities and their desire to earn a living. The need to accommodate these competing demands becomes more acute as increasing numbers of families become 'dual earners'. Family-friendly schemes range from career breaks which allow mothers extended periods of time off work with the guarantee of a job when they choose to return, to flexi-time opportunities permitting greater variety in the times that employees start and end their working day (although often restricted by the requirement that core hours be covered). Other family-friendly provisions are statutory. Emergency time off for dependants is provided under schedule four of the Employment Rights Act 1999. It confers the right to unpaid time off, for a reasonable period of time, to deal with a family emergency involving a dependant, such as a child falling ill, disruption of care provision or a death. The right extends to all employees regardless of length of service.

The MRS 05 asked mothers whether their employers provided a range of flexible practices and family-friendly facilities. These included any of the following:

- Part-time working
- Job-sharing
- Flexible working hours (flexi-time)
- Working reduced hours for a limited period
- Working only during school term-time
- Working a compressed working week
- Working at home occasionally
- Working at or from home all the time
- Financial or other support for childcare
- Time off for family emergencies
- Career breaks for family reasons
- A telephone to use for family reasons

It is expected that a number of these flexible options will be practised more widely by 2005 compared with 2002, given the introduction in April 2003 of the statutory right of parents with children under the age of six to request a change in their working time regimes. Also, there have been improvements in the extent and type of support offered to parents in the workplace. What effects might these improvements have had on mothers' labour market participation rates? Overall, the proportion of mothers returning to work 17 months after childbirth since 2002 remained constant at 80 per cent. Is there, on the other hand, evidence of their greater use of flexible working?

Charts 5.7a and 5.7b show the proportion of mothers' take-up of a variety of flexible working arrangements alongside the proportion of mothers who worked for an organisation which offered these arrangements. Figures are provided for 2005 in Chart 5.7a and 2002 in Chart 5.7b.

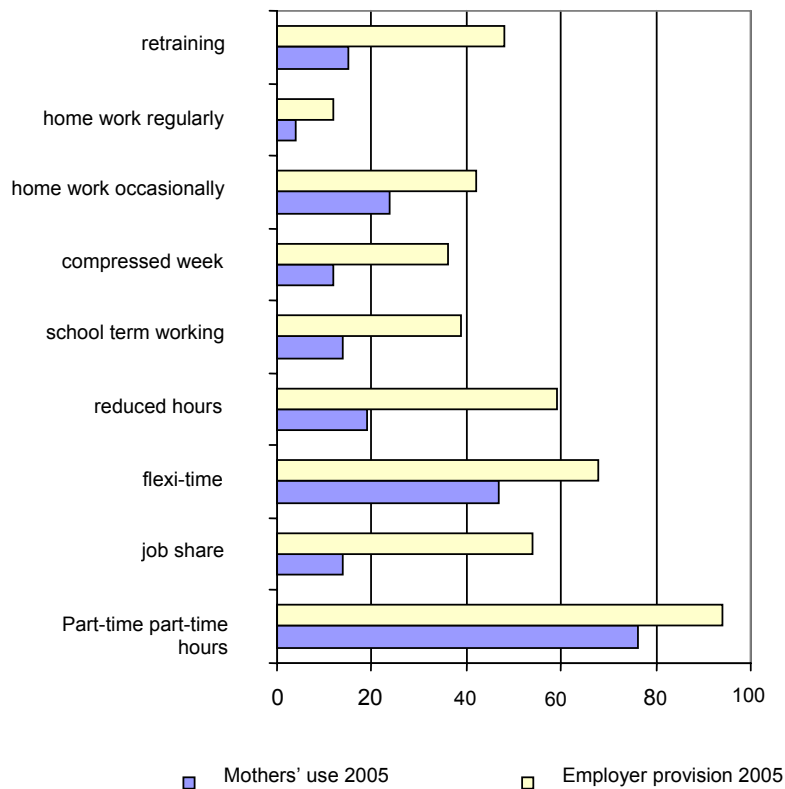
Looking first at 2005, the most popular flexible arrangements in terms of mothers' take-up were part-time employment and flexi-time. Lower income groups were the most likely to make a transition to part-time employment.

A reduction in hours and home-working were also taken up by one-quarter and one-fifth of the mothers respectively. Smaller proportions of mothers, around one in ten, retrained upon returning from maternity leave, worked from home regularly, worked a compressed week (i.e. working the same number of hours over fewer days) or worked during school term-time only.

There were large gaps between mothers' take-up of and employers' provision of job-sharing opportunities (14 per cent of mothers were job-sharers despite the provision being available in over half the workplaces.) Twenty per cent of mothers reduced their hours (without being classified as part-time) though 60 per cent of employers provided this option.

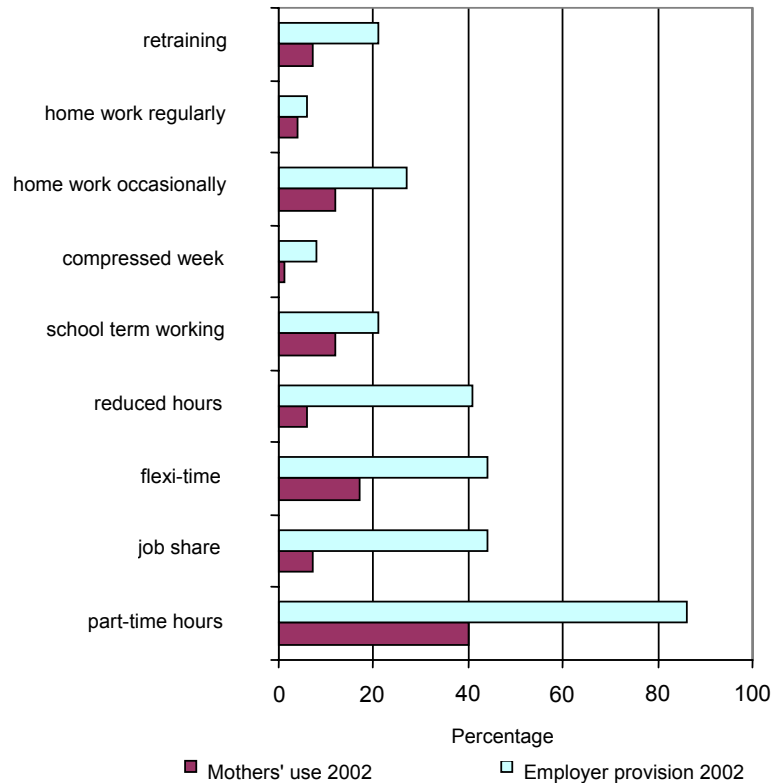
Compressed working weeks, school term working and occasional home working were all made available by roughly one-third of the mothers' employers. Nearly half provided retraining opportunities. Over half the employers offered reduced hours or flexi-time and nearly all employers offered part-time hours. A range of flexible working opportunities were therefore fairly widespread throughout organisations in the UK.

**Chart 5.7a: Employers' provision and mothers' take-up of flexible working arrangements in 2005**



Base: 1,333 – all employees currently at work.

**Chart 5.7b: Employers' provision and mothers' take-up of flexible working arrangements in 2002**



**5.7.1 Change in the provision for and use of flexible working arrangements 2002–2005**

While similarly large proportions of mothers in 2002 and 2005 indicated that their employer provided part-time working opportunities, in 2002 less than half the mothers took advantage of this provision compared with three-quarters of mothers in 2005 (see Charts 5.7a and 5.7b). This growth in mothers' take-up of part-time opportunities may well indicate the effectiveness of the right to request flexible working introduced in 2003.

After part-time hours, flexi-time is the most widely available facility designed to promote a better work-life balance. Change is evident between 2002 and 2005 in the proportion of employers making flexi-time available. A little under half the mothers indicated that flexi-time was available to staff in 2002 (44 per cent), rising to 68 per cent by 2005. In 2002, 17 per cent of mothers took up the opportunity to use flexi-time, increasing significantly to 47 per cent by 2005.

The provision of job-share opportunities rose from 44 per cent of mothers reporting these in 2002 to 54 per cent in 2005. Use of job share, however,

doubled over this period of time from a low base of 7 per cent up to 14 per cent.

All remaining flexible working arrangements show signs of growth between 2002 and 2005 in both employer provision and employee take-up, the only exception being the very low and stable use of regular home-working.

## **5.8 Family-friendly schemes and facilities**

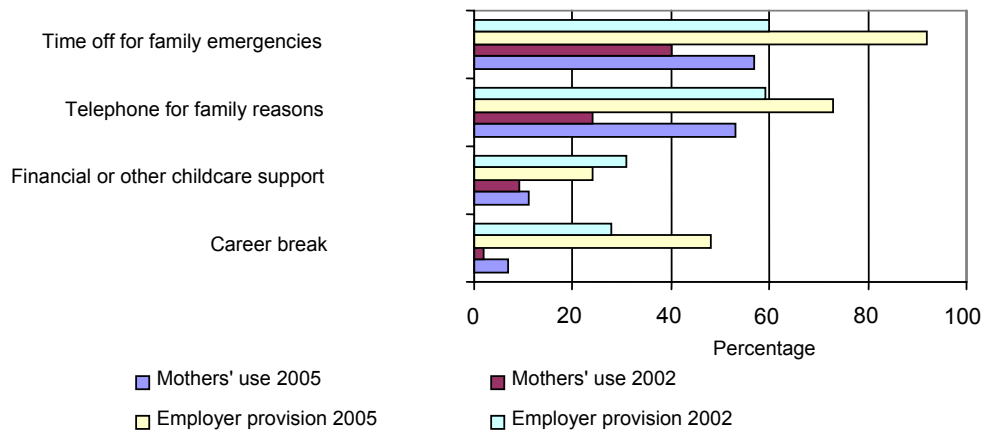
Chart 5.8 shows for 2002 and 2005 the proportion of mothers' take-up of a variety of family-friendly facilities alongside employers' provision. Around half the mothers had taken time off work to deal with a child-related emergency since their return to work (up from 40 per cent in 2002). For three-quarters of these mothers their time off was paid in full, a further one-fifth were unpaid. Twenty per cent of the mothers who took time off for a family emergency had to make up their lost hours subsequently.

Half the mothers had used a work telephone for family reasons compared with just one-quarter in 2002. Far fewer mothers received financial benefits or other support such as a crèche from their employer – just one in ten, a figure that remained stable between 2002 and 2005. A small minority of mothers (7 per cent) had used a career break scheme. It should be noted that only mothers who had returned to work were questioned about family-friendly arrangements in the workplace. It is possible that some of the non-working mothers in the MRS 05 sample were still on a career break 17 months after the birth of their baby, meaning the total number of mothers taking advantage of such a provision may have been slightly higher. In 2002 only 2 per cent described themselves as having used a career break scheme.

In terms of availability rather than use of family-friendly provision the vast majority of mothers (92 per cent) worked for an employer who complied with the legal requirement to allow time off for family emergencies – up from 60 per cent in 2002. Three-quarters of the mothers had access to a telephone for family emergencies, an increase of 14 per cent since 2002.

Half the mothers could have taken a career break (assuming that the provision was available to all categories of worker within the organisation) but far fewer mothers (one-quarter) benefited from the availability of financial or other childcare support from their employer. Fewer mothers in 2002 had access to career break schemes – just over one-quarter. It is, perhaps, noteworthy that in terms of employers' provision, the only decline was in the incidence of financial or other childcare support, down from 31 per cent to 24 per cent.

**Chart 5.8: Mothers' use and employers' provision of family-friendly facilities**



Base: 1,333 – all employees currently at work.

# 6

## Employer and employee communications during pregnancy and after the birth

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates the point at which expectant mothers informed their employers of their pregnancy, their plans for maternity leave and their intentions to return to work or otherwise. The nature, content and regularity of communication between employer and employee are considered to be important in influencing mothers' attitudes towards and decisions about returning to work with their existing employers and for organisations to prepare and make necessary accommodation for prolonged absence.

A recent Equal Opportunities Commission report (Adams et al., 2005) investigating discrimination against mothers during pregnancy concluded that employers are experiencing difficulties in managing pregnancy among staff primarily due to the uncertainty surrounding the return to work. The report suggests that better planning and dialogue between employer and employee can ease such disruption and that superior management of pregnancy can achieve high staff retention rates, improved morale and lower absenteeism.

To place these issues in context, the findings from this study show that, of the mothers who were employed during pregnancy:

- 20 per cent did not return to work
- 17 per cent returned to their original employer but only for a few months<sup>8</sup>
- 4 per cent returned to work but not to the same employer.

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<sup>8</sup> Seven per cent currently not in paid employment and 10 per cent currently with a new employer.

In total, 41 per cent of mothers did not return to their existing employer or returned only for a relatively short period of time. This may be a source of uncertainty for employers and may impose additional costs, for example a recent Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development study estimated that the average cost of replacing an employee is £4,625 (CIPD, 2005). Equally, though, it challenges employers to consider their need to retain their female employees beyond childbirth and embrace the flexible working culture that these recent changes in maternity rights and pay are aimed to encourage.

For their part, expectant mothers must inform their employer in writing of the pregnancy and the date upon which they would like to start their maternity leave. The employer must be informed no later than the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth, i.e. before the sixth month of pregnancy. In turn, the employer must respond in writing within 28 days of this request informing the employee of the date they should return to work.

Should an employee wish to change the date of return, 28 days' notice is required.

## **6.2 Keeping employers informed**

Table 6.1 shows that most expectant mothers said that they informed their employer of pregnancy within the first trimester and virtually all informed their employer of their condition by the time they were five months pregnant. All the expectant mothers in the MRS 05 survey reported that they complied with their legal requirement to notify employers.

The majority of expectant mothers said that they informed their employer of the time they wished to start their maternity leave at least four weeks beforehand (Table 6.2). Thirteen per cent of expectant mothers gave less than four weeks or no warning at all. These mothers may have left employment very early in their pregnancy due to unanticipated discomfort, difficulties or more serious problems which prompted a need to stop work. Under these circumstances, longer notice may have been problematic. The regulations allow women to give shorter notice where it is not reasonably practicable to give four weeks and maternity leave may anyway begin early due to illness.

Table 6.3 shows the nature of information provided to employers. The vast majority of expectant mothers informed their employer of the due date of their baby and also indicated the date they preferred to commence maternity leave. Somewhat fewer mothers, 76 per cent, informed their employer of their intention to return to work after the birth of their baby (up from just 55 per cent in 2002). Fewer than half were able or willing to indicate the date that they would return to work – despite the significant degree of clustering in practice around the six-month maternity leave period evident in chapter two (43 per cent in 2005 and 44 per cent in 2002). There is, though, no legal requirement for them to do so unless they are planning to return before the end of their full leave entitlement.

Inevitably there is considerable uncertainty surrounding the decision and timing of work returns given the number of factors involved. Mothers need to find suitable and affordable childcare. They may also encounter a wide variety of emotional responses and experiences associated with the period following childbirth including the sleeping patterns of babies and varied individual responses to sleep disturbance. Hence one-fifth of mothers who intended to return to work changed their mind and one-fifth of mothers changed their mind about the date they would return to work (see Table 6.4). However, one in ten expectant mothers who said they informed their employer that they would not be returning to work also said they changed their minds subsequently.

Among the mothers who changed their mind about their return date, virtually all (97 per cent) returned later than planned. Delays to return date were very short on the whole with three-quarters of mothers delaying by two weeks or less. A further 20 per cent of mothers returned between four and six weeks later than planned.

Employers responded in writing to confirm the information given by mothers in 70 per cent of cases.

From the perspective of the employer, Table 6.5 shows that about one-fifth of mothers changed their minds about either returning to work or about the date of return, giving their employers less than one month's warning. Half of those who changed their stated intentions gave less than two month's notice. A large organisation may be able to absorb the extra work or costs that short-notice entails without any adverse impact upon productivity or profitability. A smaller employer, by contrast, may experience non-compliance with previously agreed return plans as problematic without adequate notice. As discussed above, though, the problems and obstacles that mothers may encounter are often highly unpredictable – this kind of commentary might be more appropriately discussed in the conclusion.

### **6.3 Keeping employees informed**

In this subsection we consider the nature and incidence of employer-initiated communications with employees. Employer contact with employees on maternity leave may be limited to formal exchanges of information relating to return-to-work timing. Alternatively, communications may be more personal, designed to allay concerns about losing touch with developments at work. Regular updates may be provided, possibly in the context of a 'keep-in-touch' scheme, including the dispatch of newsletters, minutes of staff meetings or information on social events. Union representatives may send branch or workplace newsletters or other union information. Benefits of such ongoing communication may include a smoother transition back to work and better staff retention rates.

During maternity leave nearly one-quarter of mothers experienced a 'keep-in-touch' scheme with their employers (comparable to the 21 per cent of mothers in 2002), while a little over half the mothers interviewed



had been contacted by their employer by some other means (Table 6.6). The main reason for contact, directed as one-third of mothers, was to confirm whether and when she was returning to work. One-quarter of mothers heard from their employer about important changes at work and 15 per cent of mothers were contacted for more personal reasons such as checking on the welfare of mother and baby.

Comparing the contact of employers with employees in different earnings bands (Table 6.7) suggests that mothers on the lowest earnings are least likely to be contacted at all. Keep-in-touch schemes are available to a little under one-quarter of all mothers and differences among mothers from distinct earnings categories are not significant. Among the mothers who are contacted by their employer the most notable finding is the increased likelihood that a mother will be informed of changes at work as her earnings increase. Mothers earning more than £15 per hour were nearly three times as likely to be kept up to date in this manner as mothers earning less than £6 per hour.

Any general contact of mothers by their employers did not have a positive impact on the probability of a mother returning to work. The existence of a specific 'keep-in-touch' scheme did, however, slightly elevate the chances of a mother returning to work – up to 87 per cent compared with 80 per cent of all mothers.

#### **6.4 Treatment by employer during pregnancy**

Under the Sex Discrimination Act (1975) and the Employment Rights Act (1996) employers are prohibited from treating a pregnant woman less favourably and from dismissing her as a result of pregnancy or maternity leave (see James, 2004, for an overview of the legal framework protecting mothers from pregnancy-related discrimination). Examples of unfavourable treatment include: being overlooked for promotion or training, the imposition of a change of hours or other conditions of employment, or sick pay withheld.

The MRS 05 was not designed to provide a meticulous, detailed examination of discrimination against pregnant mothers in the workplace. Instead a more concise indication of the nature, type and pervasiveness of discriminatory practices was presented. Respondents were asked, 'During your pregnancy do you think you were treated unfairly at work as a result of your pregnancy?' Eleven per cent said they were.

If a mother claimed to have been treated unfairly she was then presented with a list of discriminatory practices and asked to indicate which applied to her. The prevalence of different types of discrimination experienced by the mothers is shown in Chart 6.1. The most common problem experienced by mothers who felt they had been treated unfairly because they were pregnant, was the allocation of an excessive workload. It is not clear whether new tasks had been given to the mothers or whether they felt they should have had their workload reduced. One-third of the mothers who experienced discrimination (3 per cent of all employed

mothers) felt compelled to leave their employment because they were treated so badly.

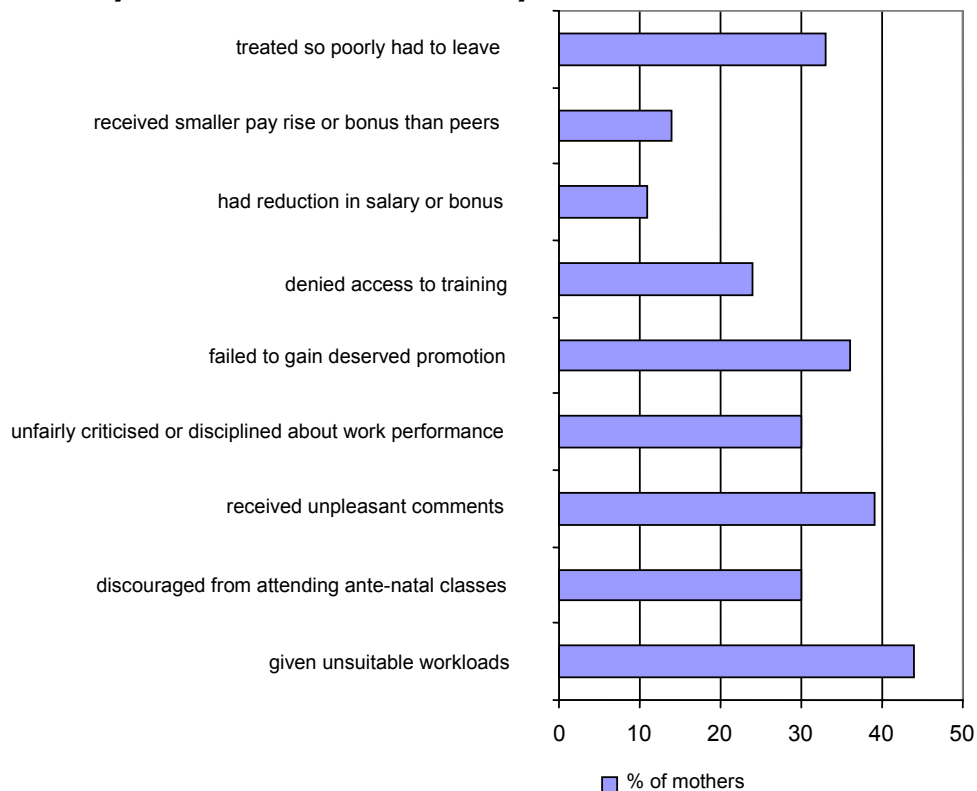
Around a third of mothers treated unfairly received unpleasant comments and a third felt they were unfairly disciplined or criticised for their work performance. Other discriminatory practices reported by the mothers included the failure to secure a deserved promotion or increase in salary or bonus and the denial of training opportunities they would otherwise have received.

Under the Employment Retention and Advancement, employers must allow pregnant mothers to attend ante-natal classes during their pregnancy on full pay, yet nearly one-third of mothers claiming to have been treated unfairly said that they were discouraged from taking time off for such purposes (3 per cent of all employed mothers).

The experience of discrimination was fairly evenly distributed among mothers from all occupations, income levels and age groups.

Seven per cent of all employed mothers felt strongly enough to have considered taking their complaints to an employment tribunal, although less than 1 per cent actually made a formal approach.

**Chart 6.1: Incidence of discriminatory practices among mothers who felt they had been treated unfairly**



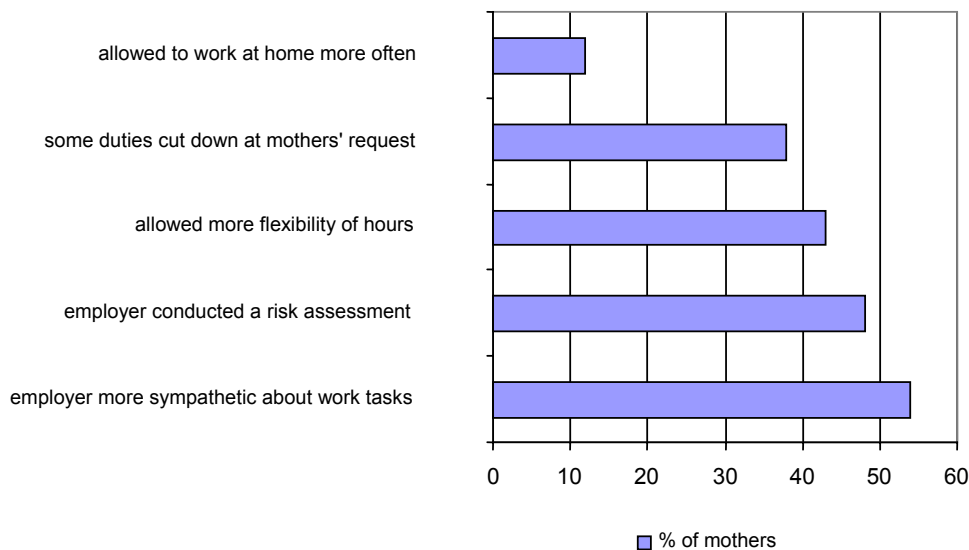
Base: 176 mothers who claimed to have been treated unfairly at work during pregnancy.

Mothers were also asked whether they had experienced other specific difficulties with their employers. These are presented in Table 6.8. From the list, the largest proportion of mothers (19 per cent) claimed their employer lacked knowledge about their maternity entitlements and benefits. Lack of knowledge was more likely among mothers in small workplaces with fewer than 25 employees (25 per cent) than in larger establishments with 100-plus employees (16 per cent).

Far smaller proportions of mothers, ranging from 3 to 6 per cent, described their employer as unhappy about allowing them to take their maternity leave, keen to encourage the mothers to depart work earlier than they would have liked, or as applying pressure on the mother to resign.

While one in ten expectant mothers said that they were made to feel that being pregnant was a problem at work, most expectant mothers said that employers were sympathetic and accommodated their changing needs. The variety of ways in which employers helped expectant mothers in relation to their pregnancy are listed in Chart 6.2. In general, over half the mothers felt that their employer was sympathetic to their needs in terms of the suitability of a variety of work tasks they would normally perform. Around a third of expectant mothers were permitted either to change or cut down on their normal set of duties. Nearly one-half of the mothers had a risk assessment carried out and nearly one-half were allowed greater flexibility in the hours they worked. For a minority of mothers (11 per cent), working at home was allowed more often.

**Chart 6.2: Measures taken by employers to help the pregnant mothers**



Base: 1,761 mothers employed during pregnancy, excluding the self-employed.

# 7

## Views on proposed new rights

### 7.1 Introduction

The Work and Families Bill, introduced into Parliament in October 2005, set out a range of new measures for working parents. In particular, from April 2007 an extension to the period of paid maternity leave from six months to nine months was proposed, with the aim of extending this to 12 months thereafter. In addition, the Bill contained provisions for eligible fathers to take up to 26 weeks additional paternity leave, some of which could be paid if the child's mother returns to work early. The Government has said that it expects to reserve the first six months of leave and pay for the mother. The detail of these arrangements will be set out following further, detailed consultation. The aim of this proposal is to give both parents greater choice and flexibility in the way they balance work and family responsibilities.

It remains unclear how mothers and fathers will respond to these new 'leave sharing' rights as they represent a new approach to caring for babies and it may take time for parents to adjust to the possibility that both mothers and fathers can assume caring responsibilities. Indeed, the legislation may play an active role in the evolution of traditional attitudes toward, sex roles both at work and in the home.

The MRS 05 included a number of questions designed to elicit how mothers may have responded, had the legislation been in place at the time of their pregnancy. In this chapter, anticipated responses to both extended leave and leave-sharing proposals are explored. It is fair to say at this point that answers to hypothetical questions are an interesting test of attitude and intentions but their predictive value for parents' behaviour may be limited.

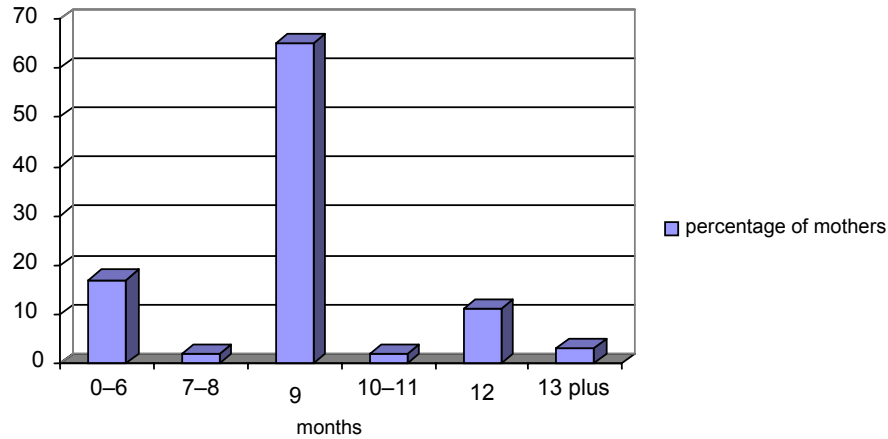
### 7.2 Anticipated response to proposed extended maternity pay

Chart 7.1 shows how much leave the mothers believe they would have taken had nine months' leave, paid at £106 per week after the first six weeks, been available. Two-thirds of mothers believe they would have taken the full nine months' entitlement (65 per cent) while 17 per cent would have taken the current level of entitlement at six months or less. The main reason given for expecting to take less than six months was financial – cited by 58 per cent of mothers, but a little over one-quarter

would have returned earlier than necessary because they were keen to return to work (Chart 7.2).

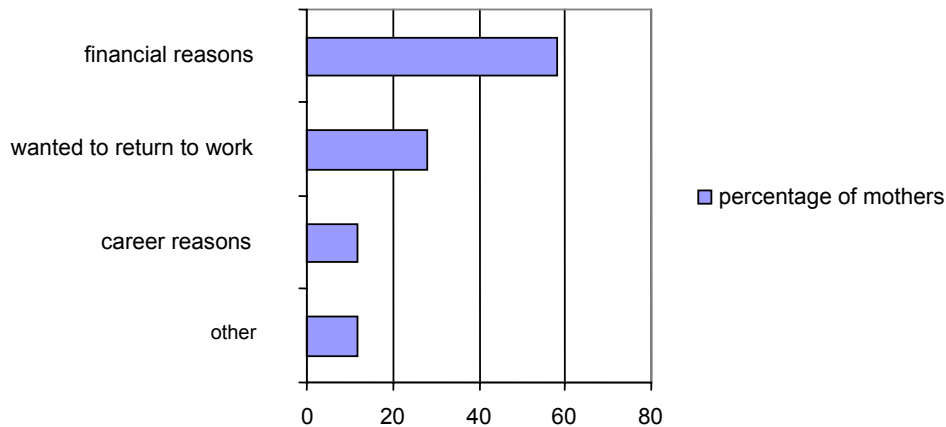
**Chart 7.1: Anticipated leave if more were available**

If you had been able to take nine months’ leave, paid at £106 per week after the first six weeks, how much leave would you have taken?



Base: 2,030 mothers who provided a response.

**Chart 7.2: Reasons given by mothers who would only take six months’ leave**



Base: 348 mothers. Multiple responses possible.

**7.3 Anticipated response to proposed ‘leave sharing’**

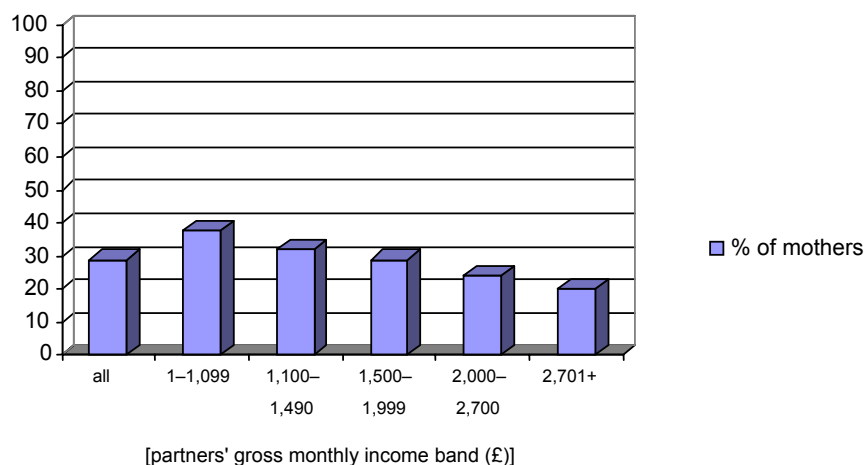
Chart 7.3 shows the anticipated reaction among mothers to the idea of sharing maternity leave with their partner. One-quarter of all interviewed mothers claimed that they would have taken advantage of such a provision. The apparent reluctance to share maternity leave entitlements

may reflect traditional attitudes toward family roles with a presumption that mothers rather than fathers should be present during the early months of infancy. The evidence from previous sections suggests that many mothers would in fact prefer to remain at home for longer and are prevented from so doing by financial constraints. It is possible, nevertheless, that the take-up of leave transfer provisions would be greater following discussions between mothers and fathers, which had not taken place prior to the survey interview.

Among the mothers who said they would have used the transfer option, one-third would have assigned less than two months to their partner and one-quarter would have allocated three months. A further quarter would have given up four months or more (Table 7.1).

**Chart 7.3: Proportion of mothers who would have transferred leave if sharing with father had been an option**

If you had been able to transfer some of your Statutory Maternity Leave and Pay to the father of your baby, so that he could stay at home with your child while you went out to work, do you think you would have done so?



Base: all mothers with partners.

Chart 7.3 also shows whether there are differences in response to the issue of 'leave sharing' according to partners' earnings band. Willingness to share leave is greater among mothers on the lowest pay level of under £6 per hour. The reasons for this are not clear but are likely to reflect the fact that these low-earning mothers are the most likely to have partners on low pay too; there is a strong correlation between the income bands of mothers and fathers. It is evident from Chart 7.3 that as a partner's income increases the less likely a mother is to state that she would have transferred some of her leave to him. It makes less financial sense for a high-earning father to take time off work and forfeit considerable family income.

Examination of the number of months that the willing mothers would transfer indicates income-related differences, with the lowest earners inclined to transfer more months than the highest earners. Mothers with partners in the lowest earnings band would also transfer the most amount of leave (Table 7.2). These choices are economically rational given that the lowest earners among the fathers have the least to lose financially by taking paternity leave.

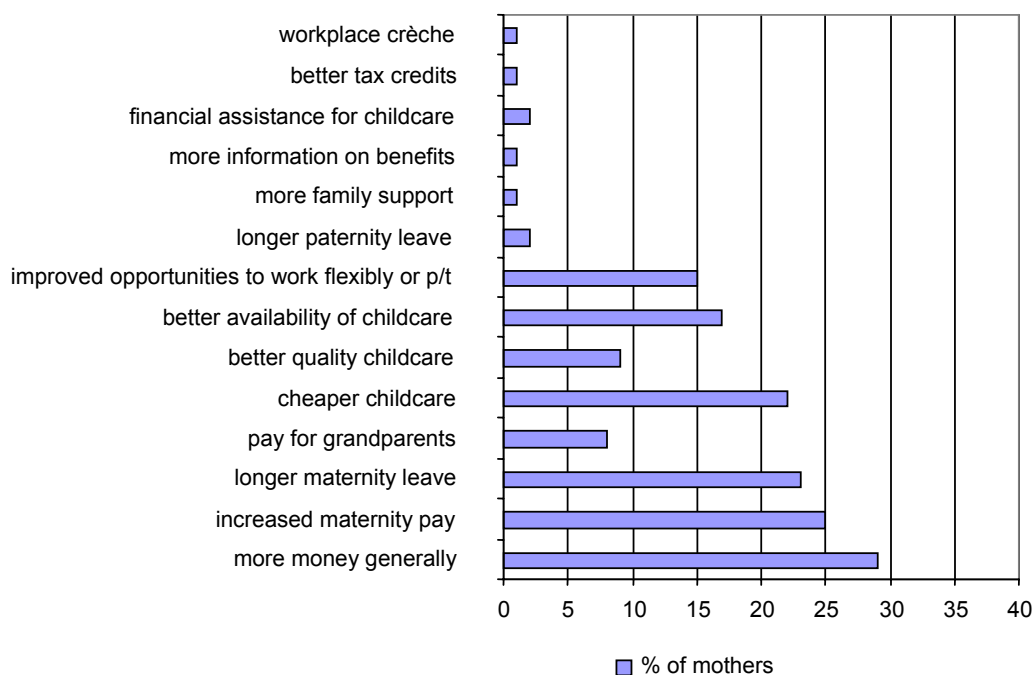
Comparing the earnings of fathers and mothers reveals a small difference in the proportion of mothers who would transfer some of their maternity leave entitlement according to their relative earnings. Thirty-three per cent of mothers with a monthly income that exceeded their partners' would, in principle, transfer some of their maternity leave. A smaller proportion of mothers (27 per cent) who earn less than their partner would transfer their leave.

#### **7.4 How to improve the life of mothers**

Mothers were asked what would have made their lives easier in the first year after their baby was born. Chart 7.4 describes the unprompted provisions spontaneously listed by mothers. The list includes facilities, benefits and help which are supplied variously by the state, private businesses, employers and family. Aside from the need for more money generally, cited by the largest proportion of mothers (29 per cent), and better provision of higher-quality and affordable childcare, most mothers spontaneously listed factors which fall within the remit of state provision. These included increased maternity pay and longer maternity pay. In the 'private business' domain, one-third of mothers called for cheaper and better quality childcare. From employers, 15 per cent of mothers said that improved opportunities to work flexibly or on a part-time basis would have improved their lives. Just 1 per cent of mothers said that more family help would have benefited them in the one-year period after the birth of their child.

Focusing on childcare provision, most mothers would appear to be content with the quality of available care, with just 8 per cent claiming that improved quality would have been beneficial. Of greater concern was childcare availability and while government plans to extend 'wraparound' childcare are welcomed, these apply to school age children. More relevant for this group of mothers is the expansion, under the National Childcare Strategy, of registered childcare places (up by 525,000 between 1997 and 2004) (Mothers and Equality Unit website). The most widely cited aspect of childcare however, perceived to be most problematic for families, was the cost of childcare – raised as an issue by nearly one-quarter of mothers.

**Chart 7.4: Provisions that would have made life easier for mothers**



Base: all mothers

In an ideal world where budget constraints and financial trade-offs were not a consideration, mothers may well request a range of improvements to their benefit entitlements and childcare provision. However, in the context of finite resources, mothers were invited to consider which type of assistance would have most improved their circumstances in the period after childbirth: improved access to good quality, affordable childcare making it easier to return to work or higher maternity pay, paid for a longer period of time, making it easier to remain at home with their baby. The first column of Table 7.3 presents findings applicable to all mothers and three-quarters favoured additional support that would enable them to remain at home for longer while their babies were young. One-fifth of mothers favoured improved childcare provision enabling an easier return to work.

These findings suggest that financial pressures are driving the expansion of employment participation rates among mothers of young children with a widespread latent preference for longer periods at home in the period after childbirth. While there is little doubt that most mothers wish to participate in the workplace in a context of equal opportunities with men these results highlight the fact that for relatively short periods of time, while children are very young, many mothers would appreciate the opportunity to fulfil a full-time caring role.

Among lone mothers, the need to ensure adequate income from employment and the requirement for high-quality affordable childcare would appear to be more pressing than for other mothers, with a little over one-quarter favouring the childcare provision.



# **Part II**

## **Survey of fathers**

# 8

## Introduction

Developments in the legal provisions for new fathers included first the introduction of 13 weeks of unpaid parental leave, emergency leave to give parents the right to periods of time off to deal with unexpected events (introduced under schedule four of the Employment Rights Act 1999) and, more recently, the right to two weeks paid leave (introduced in April 2003). The planned introduction of Additional Paternity Leave (APL, described in section 7.1 above) also aims to ease the conflicting pressures of paid work and parenthood, particularly associated with the growth in dual-earning families.

These rights promote the involvement of fathers in the care of their young children and, it is hoped, provide mothers with some additional support at a time of considerable change within the family. Moreover, the extension of parental leave to fathers undermines discrimination directed toward women where employers believe the costs of recruiting and promoting women are higher than those for men, given the range of rights and benefits to which mothers are entitled.

Planned developments to paternity rights will also allow mothers to resume their careers more quickly if they so choose. The introduction of improved paternity rights and benefits therefore reinforces strategies promoting labour-market participation among mothers.

The next three chapters explore fathers' use of parental, paternity, emergency and other leave, assess their knowledge of their rights, determine their use of flexible working opportunities and gauge their reaction to planned shared leave entitlements introduced in the Work and Families Bill (October 2005).

### **8.1 Profile of new fathers**

Table 8.1 provides a demographic and economic profile of the fathers sampled for this survey, all of whom were living with their child's mother at the time. The absent fathers of lone mothers were not included. Most resident fathers are typically aged 30 to 40, fairly evenly distributed throughout the occupational spectrum apart from clerical, personal and protective, and sales jobs where their representation is low. Very few fathers earn less than £1,000 per month. Fathers are mainly clustered in manufacturing, finance, property, computer or other business industries.

The occupational, qualification, employment status and age profile of fathers was compared with that of fathers with children under the age of

two in the Labour Force Survey 2004 to ensure that the sample obtained was nationally representative. The distributions were comparable with no more than a couple of percentage point differences within each category. It was therefore not necessary to apply a weighting structure to the fathers' dataset.

The occupational and industrial categories used for analysing the fathers are identical to those used for mothers (described in section 2.6), with two exceptions. Given the concentration of fathers in skilled manual craft occupations and the construction industry, these are treated as distinct groups.

# 9

## Time off during partner's pregnancy and after the birth

### 9.1 Introduction

Since April 2003 fathers have been entitled to two weeks' paternity leave paid at a flat weekly rate of £100 (Statutory Paternity Pay – the rate was increased to £106 a week in April 2005). As a consequence, both the incidence and the length of leave taken by fathers are expected to have increased between 2002 and 2005. In addition to paternity leave fathers are entitled to take up to 13 weeks' unpaid parental leave up to their child's fifth birthday. Parents may also take emergency time off in the event of a crisis which affects their children or other dependants. Examples of such a crisis might include a child's illness or disruption to their normal care arrangements. While parents need to have one year's service to qualify for parental leave and six months' service for paternity leave, these conditions do not apply to emergency leave. The permitted length of emergency leave is not stipulated because the amount of time agreed to be reasonable will vary according to the circumstances.

In this chapter we explore the following aspects of fathers' use of paternity, parental and other leave arrangements:

- Patterns of leave during their partner's pregnancy and fathers' reasons for taking time off during the pregnancy.
- Time taken off after the birth of their baby.
- The length and type of leave taken after the birth.
- Payments associated with any leave.
- Whether their leave provision is arranged on a formal or more informal discretionary basis.
- Finally, the reasons given for the length of leave taken are assessed to understand why some fathers take more or less than the statutory provision.

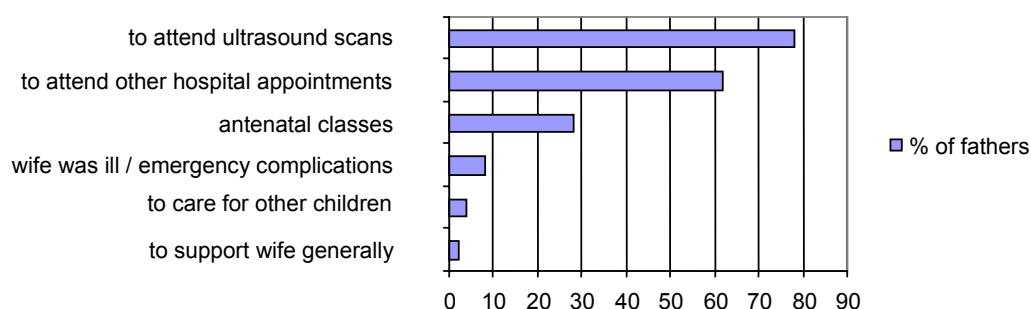
These findings are broken down by demographic and employment-related characteristics including: age, income, occupation, workplace size, industry and whether the workplace recognised trade unions. Discussion throughout tends to be confined to factors significantly associated with the

outcomes of interest, except where null findings are so against expectations to be of interest.

## 9.2 Time off work during partner's pregnancy

Half the self-employed fathers took some time off work during their partners' pregnancy (50 per cent), while a little under half (44 per cent) of the fathers who were employees took some time off. Reasons given for taking time away from work during the pregnancy are listed in chart 9.1. Usually they were attending ultrasound scans or other hospital appointments. The only other reason cited by a substantial number of fathers was to attend antenatal classes with their partner – mentioned by just under one-third of fathers.

**Chart 9.1: Reasons given by fathers who took time off work during the pregnancy**



Base: all fathers who took time off during pregnancy.

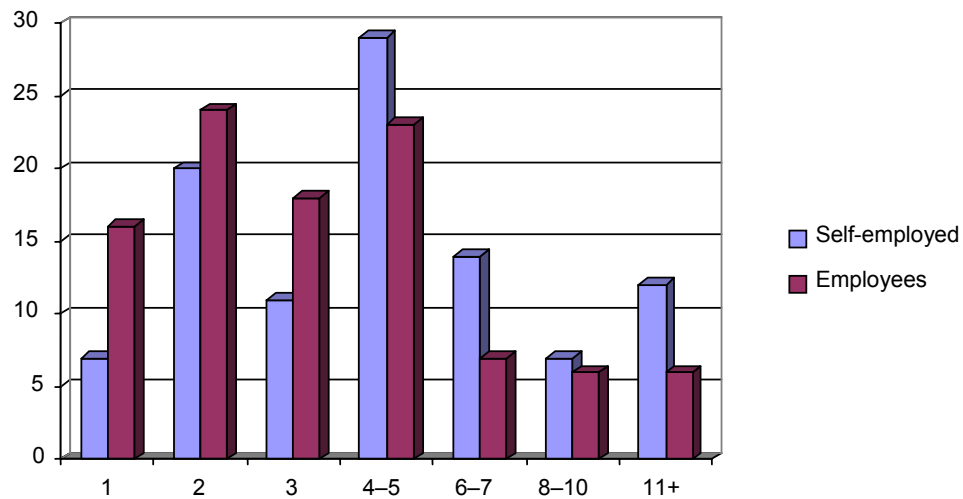
There are no associations between the incidence of days off during pregnancy and income, occupation or industry etc.

The self-employed tend to enjoy greater autonomy than employees and have more control over their days and hours of work. Consequently, the self-employed tend to take somewhat more time off work during their partners' pregnancy than employees. Chart 9.2 shows that employees are more likely than the self-employed to have taken just one, two or three days off. Overall, the self-employed took eight days' leave on average compared with six among employees.

## 9.3 Time off work around childbirth

More fathers took time off around the time of their child's birth than during the pregnancy – 83 per cent of the self-employed and 93 per cent of employees.

**Chart 9.2: Number of days' leave taken during partners' pregnancy by employment status**



**Chart 9.3: Number of days taken as leave by fathers after the birth of their baby, 2002 and 2005**

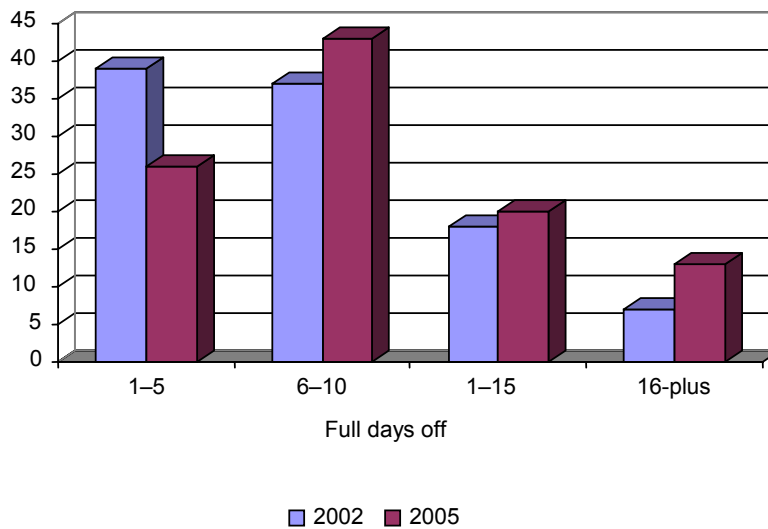


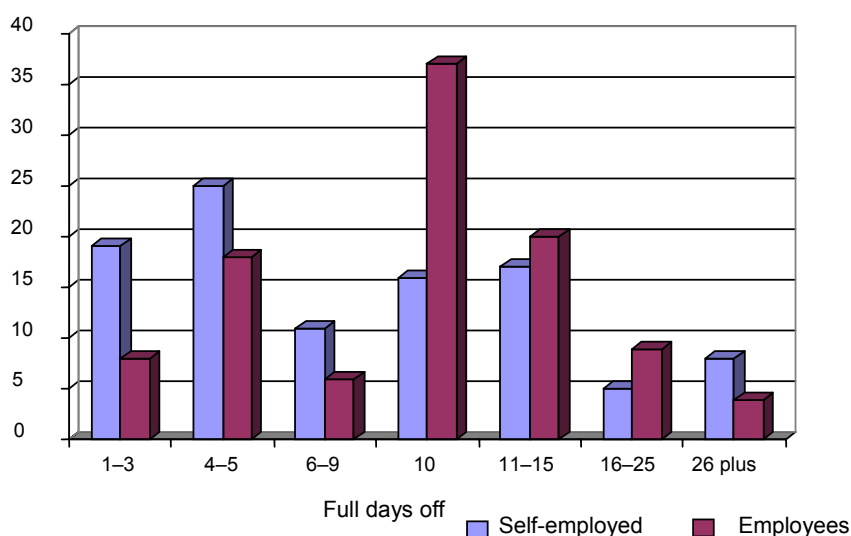
Chart 9.3 compares the number of days' leave taken by fathers in 2002 and 2005. In 2002 most fathers took some time off after the birth of their baby, with two-thirds of fathers claiming to be eligible for paternity leave – provided by employers at that point in time on a voluntary rather than statutory basis. Paternity leave entitlement tended to be between one and five days. Most fathers used annual leave either exclusively or to supplement their paternity leave. Three-quarters of fathers took one to two weeks' leave, with a further quarter taking over two weeks.

By 2005, subsequent to the introduction of Statutory Paternity Pay (SPP) and leave, fathers were taking more time off after the birth of their

children: 43 per cent of fathers took six to nine days of leave and one-third of fathers took more than two weeks' leave in the months after the birth of their babies.

Chart 9.4 compares the incidence of leave in 2005 among the self-employed and employees. These figures show a reversal of the patterns of leave taken before their child's birth, when the self-employed were more likely to take time off and took more days than employees. One-quarter of employees took just one week's leave or less, and a little over one-third took exactly two weeks. A further third took more than the statutory two weeks provision. The self-employed exhibited very different patterns of leave, with just 16 per cent taking exactly two weeks off. A little under half the self-employed took less than two weeks and less than one-third took more than two weeks. Overall, the self-employed took an average of 11 days' leave (with a median figure of 8 days) whereas employees took an average of 12 days (with a median of 11).

**Chart 9.4: Number of days taken as leave by fathers after the birth of their baby according to employment status**



The length of time taken as leave after their babies' birth is associated with the fathers' age, job and employer.

- Older fathers took less time off work after the birth of their babies: 19 per cent of 17–29-year-old fathers took just one week of leave compared with 25 per cent of those aged 30–39, and 32 per cent of those aged 40 or above.
- Fathers earning less than £1,000 gross per month were far more likely to take less than two weeks' leave around the time of childbirth – 49 per cent compared with less than one-third of fathers earning £1,000 or more per month.
- Unskilled manual workers were the most likely to take just one week of leave (32 per cent compared with 24 per cent among the

remainder). At the other end of the leave continuum both managers and unskilled manual workers are the least likely to take over two weeks (27 per cent compared with 36 per cent among the remainder).

- Fathers employed in retail/wholesale/hotels or restaurants take the shortest periods of leave, with 31 per cent taking just one week (compared with 25 per cent overall) and 24 per cent over two weeks (compared with 32 per cent overall). At the other extreme, fathers employed in the transport sector or in public administration take the most leave, with 15 per cent taking just one week and 47 per cent taking more than two weeks.
- Working in the public sector slightly increases a father's probability of taking more than two weeks of leave (37 per cent compared with 30 per cent in the private sector).
- Working in a unionised workplace also increases the odds of taking more than two weeks of leave (37 per cent compared with 28 per cent in a non-unionised workplace) as does working in a larger organisation (37 per cent of fathers in a workplace employing 500+ compared with 28 per cent of fathers in workplaces of less than 25).

Among the 7 per cent of employed fathers who took no leave around the time of their baby's birth, more than one in ten (13 per cent) claimed they could not afford to take any time off. A further 13 per cent said that they were too busy. Twelve per cent of these fathers suggested that their work patterns fitted in with the birth and they therefore did not need to take any leave.

#### **9.4 Paternity leave**

Among the employed fathers who took time off after the birth of their child, one-fifth used none of their paternity leave entitlement, relying instead on annual leave or other forms of leave. Nearly half the fathers used paternity leave exclusively and the remaining 30 per cent used a combination of paternity and other forms of leave.

Table 9.1 shows the distribution of fathers' use of paternity leave according to their income, industry, occupation and workplace size. Fathers earning less than £1,000 a month or working in the construction industry are the most likely to take no paternity leave at all. Men employed in clerical/secretarial occupations were the most likely to have taken their statutory two weeks of paternity leave (44 per cent), while unskilled manual workers are the least likely (28 per cent). Roughly one-third of all remaining fathers took two weeks. Fathers taking no paternity leave at all were fairly evenly distributed among all occupational groups. Fathers employed in workplaces of more than 500 staff or in public administration, education or health industries were the most likely to take two weeks or more.

Fathers in MRS 05 who did not take their full paternity leave entitlement were asked why this was the case. The main reason given was financial – 33 per cent of the fathers could not afford to take two weeks' paternity leave at the SPP rate. Investigation of the incomes of fathers who claimed



not to be able to afford to take their full entitlement surprisingly yielded no significant difference between income groups. Seventeen per cent of fathers were too busy to take two weeks, 4 per cent said they were not allowed to take longer than they did and 1 per cent said they took annual leave instead.

Compared with employees, fewer of the self-employed claimed that financial constraints limited the number of days they were able to take off around the time of their child's birth – 38 per cent compared with 48 per cent of employees. Instead, self-employed fathers were more likely to cite pressures of work as a limiting factor – 21 per cent compared with 10 per cent of employees.

## **9.5 Payment of paternity leave**

While the statutory entitlement of fathers taking paternity leave was a flat rate of £100 per week at the time the fathers surveyed were eligible in 2005, the majority of fathers received full pay for at least some of the days they took off. Most employers therefore appear willing to exceed their statutory obligations by paying employees in full during some or all of their paternity leave.

- For one-fifth of fathers, none of their paternity leave was at full pay.
- For 39 per cent of fathers, between one and five days of their leave was at full pay.
- Five per cent of fathers received full pay for between six and nine days.
- One quarter of fathers (27 per cent) received their entire paternity leave allowance of two weeks at full pay.
- One in ten fathers received full pay for longer than two weeks.

Expressed as a proportion of the number of days' paternity leave they took, 20 per cent of fathers were not paid in full for any of their paternity leave while 70 per cent were paid in full for all the days they took as paternity leave. The remaining 10 per cent of fathers received payment in full for some of their paternity leave.

Sub-group analysis shown in Table 9.2 reveals an association between the number of days' paternity leave paid at full pay and fathers' incomes. While nearly half (45 per cent) of the fathers earning less than £1,000 a month received no paternity leave at full pay, just one-quarter of fathers earning £1,000–£1,999 a month, one-fifth of fathers earning £2,000–£2,999 (17 per cent) and less than one in ten (9 per cent) of fathers earning more than £3,000 a month received no fully paid paternity leave.

A similar linear relationship exists between workplace size and the incidence of paternity leave on full pay. The larger the company the more likely the father is to receive at least some of his paternity leave (regardless of how much he takes or receives) on full pay.

Divisions between fathers employed in the public and private sector are also evident. Only 12 per cent of fathers employed in the public sector received no paternity leave on full pay compared with fathers employed in the private sector who were twice as likely (24 per cent) to receive no fully paid paternity leave. Fathers in the construction industry fared less well with a little under half receiving full pay for all their paternity leave compared with nearly three-quarters (72 per cent) of all remaining fathers.

Among fathers employed in the craft trades 65 per cent received a period of full pay. Unskilled manual employees were the least likely to receive any full pay for leave – 60 per cent of them. At the other end of the scale, 81 per cent of managers and associate professionals received full pay for all of their paternity leave.

Among the fathers for whom some or all of their paternity leave was not paid in full, 65 per cent received a flat weekly rate, 11 per cent received a proportion of their salary and 21 per cent received some other form of remuneration or did not know what they had received.

Only one-third of fathers who took paternity leave claimed they received the Government's set rate of paternity pay. A little over one-half received paternity pay which reflected their employer's own official policy. One in ten was paid through an informal arrangement with their employer.

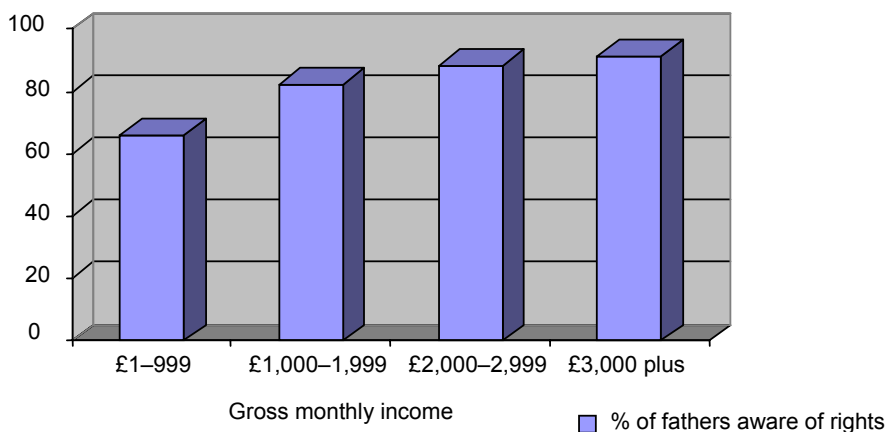
The overwhelming majority of fathers who took paternity leave took it all at once in a single block (92 per cent). One-third made a formal written request for their paternity leave and two-thirds reached a less formal agreement with their supervisor or line manager.

Fathers were invited to comment on whether any factors had limited the amount of paternity leave they took around the birth of their child. The only explanations to be given by more than a handful of fathers were financial constraints, the pressure of work and the amount of time allowed by their employer, cited by 23 per cent, 14 per cent and 5 per cent respectively.

## **9.6 Awareness of rights**

Knowledge of paternity rights was fairly widespread among fathers, with 85 per cent claiming they knew, before the baby's birth, that they were entitled to paid paternity leave. This figure varied according to fathers' incomes and Chart 9.5 highlights the linear relationship between income band and the proportion of fathers with knowledge of their rights to SPP – ranging from 66 per cent of fathers earning less than £1,000 per month to 91 per cent of fathers earning £3,000 or more.

**Chart 9.5: Proportion of fathers who were aware of their right to paid paternity leave by earnings band**



There were somewhat smaller differences in levels of awareness among fathers employed in workplaces of different sizes, ranging from 80 per cent of fathers in establishments with 1-24 staff to 91 per cent of fathers in establishments employing over 500 people.

Whereas 85 per cent of fathers knew they were eligible for SPP, fewer (76 per cent) were aware of the number of days' paternity leave they were entitled to and fewer still (59 per cent) knew how much pay they would be allowed.

## 9.7 Parental leave

Few fathers used their entitlement to unpaid parental leave, a situation that remains unchanged since 2002. Ten per cent of fathers describing themselves as entitled to parental leave in 2002 took advantage of this provision. A similarly small proportion of fathers in 2005 used parental leave – just 8 per cent. These results were unchanged when fathers who had recently changed jobs and who therefore had a shorter service history, were excluded from the analysis.

There is no association between income and fathers' use of parental leave and, given the small number of men taking parental leave, no further sub-group analyses were possible.

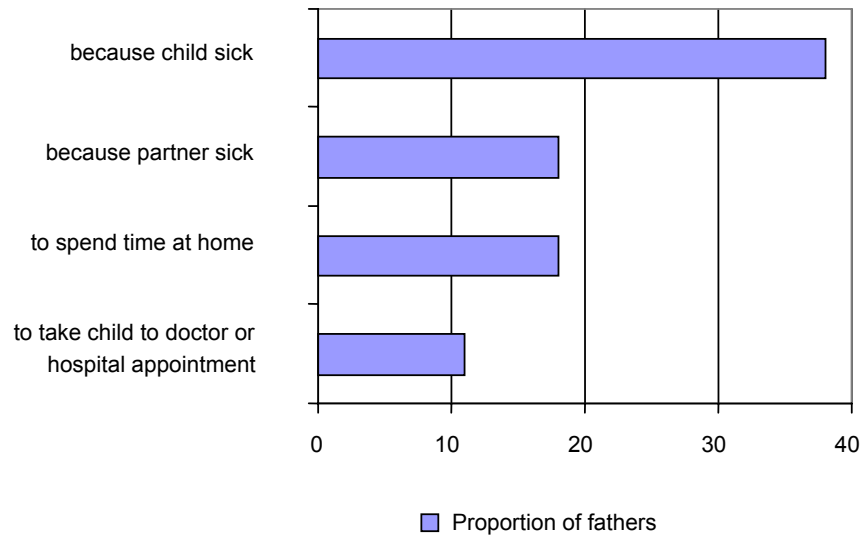
Of the fathers who used parental leave in 2005, three-quarters took less than one week. This form of leave is therefore used rarely and when used it is primarily reserved for short periods of time.

Fathers who had taken parental leave since their baby was born were asked whether the amount of time taken was limited for economic reasons or due to pressures of work. One-fifth of fathers agreed that they

minimised their leave due to financial constraints, while 16 per cent agreed that pressure of work was a constraining factor.

Chart 9.6 highlights the reasons fathers gave for taking parental leave. Interestingly, the main reasons cited concerned health problems that arose for their partner or their child. This is precisely the sort of crisis that emergency leave was designed to deal with. Most fathers (30 per cent) took parental leave due to a child's sickness, one-fifth were responding to a partner's illness. A further one-fifth said they took leave simply to spend time at home. One in ten of the fathers taking parental leave did so in order to take a child to see a doctor or for a hospital appointment.

**Chart 9.6: Reasons for use of parental leave**



Base: 95 fathers who took parental leave.

Percentage

One-fifth of fathers made a formal written request for parental leave while over three-quarters reached an informal agreement with their supervisor or line manager.

### **9.8 Emergency leave**

Among fathers employed in the 2002 survey, 12 per cent had used unpaid emergency leave, 15 per cent had taken fully paid emergency time off and 3 per cent had used partly paid emergency time off. In total 30 per cent of fathers had taken some emergency leave, typically of one to three days' duration (76 per cent). Nineteen per cent took four to seven days.

No change was seen in the 2005 survey in the incidence of fathers using emergency leave, when 29 per cent of fathers claimed to have taken time off to deal with an emergency involving one of their children. As in 2002,

three-quarters of fathers taking emergency leave took between one and three days.

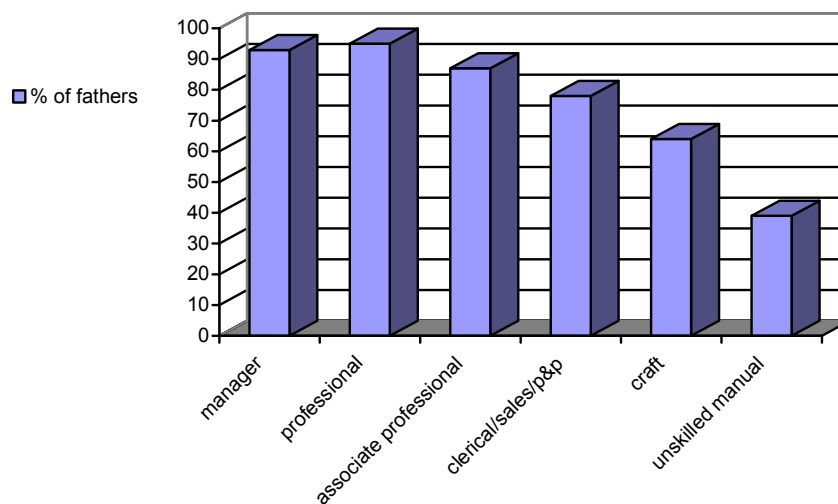
The only change to have taken place between 2002 and 2005 was in the response of employers to the use of emergency leave. Many more employers in 2005 were said to have paid this form of leave in full. In 2002, half the fathers taking emergency leave were paid in full. By 2005, 80 per cent of fathers were paid in full for their emergency leave. In 2002, 40 per cent of fathers took emergency leave on an unpaid basis compared with just 18 per cent in 2005. Employers are not legally obligated to pay staff taking emergency leave so these results suggest a greater acceptance among employers of the need to implement work-life balance measures.

Fathers employed in retail/wholesale/hotel and restaurant sectors were the least likely to take fully paid emergency leave, while public administration, health and education employees were the most likely. In other words, the public sector is most likely to exceed statutory requirements.

The occupational group of fathers is also associated with fully paid emergency leave, highlighted in Chart 9.7. Fathers in higher-status jobs are more likely to receive fully paid emergency leave than fathers in lower-skilled jobs. This relationship is also reflected in an association between emergency leave payments and the income of fathers, with higher earners more likely to have employers that exceed their statutory obligations.

One-fifth of fathers taking emergency leave were required to make up their hours at a later stage. The most common reason given for taking emergency leave was the sickness of a child (60 per cent), sickness of a partner (17 per cent) or an unspecified illness (19 per cent).

**Chart 9.7: The proportion of fathers taking emergency leave on a fully paid basis by occupational group**



Base: 355 fathers who took emergency leave.

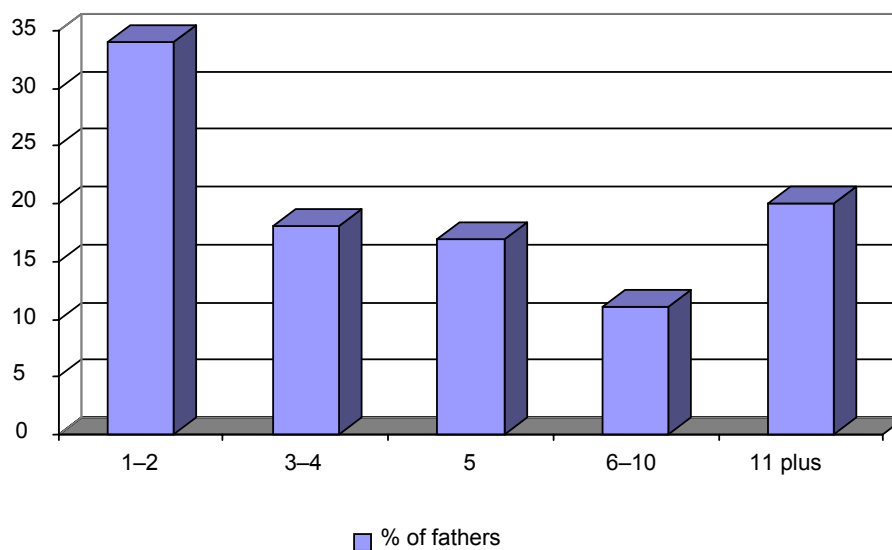
## 9.9 Other leave taken by fathers

In addition to paternity, parental and emergency leave, fathers were also asked whether they had taken any other type of leave in the period after the birth of their baby. One-third of fathers had taken other leave including annual leave, flexi-time, unpaid time off, sick leave and other types of absence.

Three-quarters of fathers who took other forms of leave took annual leave, 11 per cent of fathers took some flexi-time, 13 per cent took unpaid time off, 7 per cent took time off as sick leave and 8 per cent took some other sort of leave or time off.

Chart 9.8 shows the number of days taken using annual leave, flexi-time, sick leave, unpaid or 'other' leave combined. Half took less than one week, nearly one-fifth took exactly one week and one-fifth took more than two weeks.

**Chart 9.8: Number of days taken as annual leave, flexi-time, unpaid or 'other' leave**



Base: 406 fathers who took 'other' leave.

## 9.10 Employer provision of paternity leave

Employers must provide paternity leave, if requested, to all fathers who have, or expect to have, responsibility for a child's upbringing, are the biological father of the child or the mother's husband or partner. The father must also have worked continuously for their employer for 26 weeks ending with the 15th week before the baby is due. Over one-third of the fathers sampled (38 per cent) were under the impression that their employer extended these rights to all new fathers, with just one-fifth (17 per cent) claiming that their organisation restricted paternity rights to

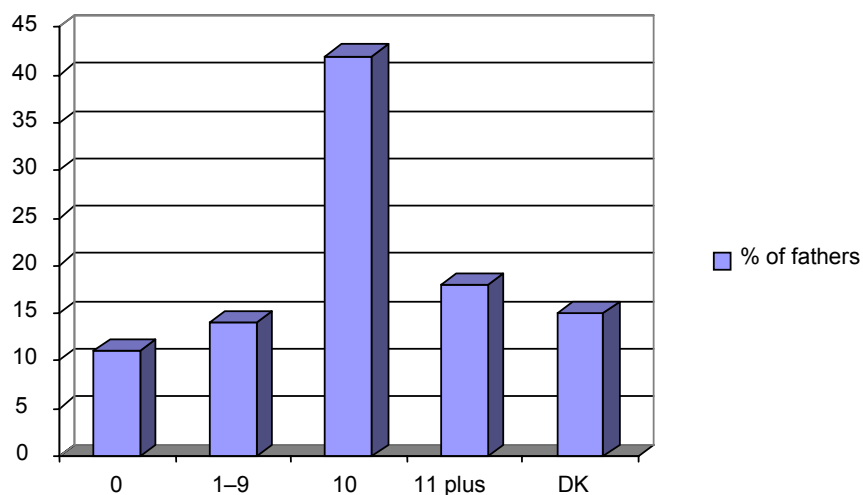
fathers who had the requisite six months of service. Nearly half (44 per cent) simply did not know their company's policy on this matter.

Fathers employed in public administration were notably more likely than fathers in other industries (57 per cent compared with 38 per cent on average) to say that their employer extended paternity rights to all fathers as were fathers employed in unionised workplaces (43 per cent compared with 36 per cent of fathers in non-unionised workplaces).

Overall, only half the fathers' employers had informed them about their entitlement to paternity leave (48 per cent). This figure fell to 32 per cent among fathers earning less than £1,000 a month, 35 per cent of fathers employed in semi- and unskilled manual jobs and just 25 per cent of fathers employed in the construction industry. There were also significant differences in the provision of information by employers according to workplace size. The larger the company the more likely the father was informed of his entitlements – ranging from 31 per cent of fathers in workplaces employing fewer than 25 staff to 61 per cent of fathers in workplaces of over 500 staff.

Fathers fulfilling the criteria described above are entitled to two weeks of paternity leave. Fathers were asked how many days' paternity leave were made available to them by their employer (see Chart 9.9). Ten per cent claimed they were not eligible for any paternity leave. Surprisingly, given the clarity of legal provision, 14 per cent claimed less than two weeks had been made available to them (i.e. 1–9 days). Half the fathers claimed that exactly two weeks were made available and 18 per cent were offered more than two weeks. The final 15 per cent did not know how many days were available to them.

**Chart 9.9: Number of days fathers said their employer provided as paternity leave**



In terms of written documentation, over half the fathers reported they worked for employers who had written company policies on paternity

leave (68 per cent), parental leave (54 per cent) and emergency leave (55 per cent).

The existence of written policies related to company size, workplace recognition of trade unions and whether the father was employed in the construction industry. Written policies were more likely to be reported by fathers working for larger companies and unionised companies. There is some variety among different industries but the construction industry stands out as particularly unlikely to provide written statements regarding these entitlements – just 35 per cent being said to provide a written paternity leave policy and around 25 per cent a parental or emergency leave policy.

A very small proportion of fathers claimed they experienced a problem or difficulty with their employer regarding paternity, parental or emergency leave – just 8 per cent. Five per cent had a problem relating to paternity leave, 4 per cent with emergency leave and 2 per cent with respect to parental leave.



# 10

## Job change and opportunities for flexible working after the birth

The majority of mothers make changes to their work arrangements when they return to work after childbirth – usually a reduction in their hours of work. To what extent do fathers make similar adjustments? Fathers were asked whether they had made changes to their patterns of work in a range of ways because of the birth of their baby. A wide array of changes was made by fathers as follows:

- 18% worked shorter hours
- 14% started and ended work later
- 23% started and ended earlier
- 27% changed working hours to fit in with partners' job
- 36% worked more regular hours
- 12% moved to a shift system of work
- 22% changed job or place of work
- 21% made other unspecified changes to their working patterns.

In total, 71 per cent of fathers had made at least one of the changes listed above. These figures suggest that the majority of fathers nowadays are prepared to allow the arrival of new children and the needs of their infancy, to impact on their own working patterns. The nature of these changes suggests at least a willingness to make time to contribute directly to childcare or to use their time to support the child's mother in indirect ways, perhaps by taking on other tasks. Fathers did not appear to be narrowly focused on their traditional breadwinner role but instead were making changes which would allow for a more hands-on approach to childcare such as working fewer or more regular hours.

Other changes appear designed to accommodate dual earning within the family, for example over one-quarter of fathers changed their hours to fit in with their partners' job. It is possible that starting and ending work earlier or later, or starting shift work, may also be motivated by a need to cover childcare throughout the day and night while both parents work.

The ability to make some of these changes was dependent on income: fathers earning more than £3,000 a month were the most likely to work fewer hours after the birth of their child. It is uncertain whether this adjustment arose because it was more economically viable for these higher-earning fathers or whether they were originally working extremely long hours which they reduced to a more average level. The higher earners (£3,000 a month plus) were also somewhat more likely to work more regular hours suggesting that the latter interpretation may be more accurate. These changes particularly affected managers and professionals.

A linear relationship exists between the probability of a father changing job after the birth of his child and income band. While 30 per cent of fathers earning less than £1,000 a month changed their job, this figure fell to 19 per cent among fathers earning £3,000 a month or more.

Fathers' ability to move to a shift pattern of work depends on their occupation. While very small percentages of managers and professionals made such a change (7 and 3 per cent respectively), far more fathers employed in plant and machinery or unskilled manual jobs were in a position to make such a transition (29 per cent). Associate professionals were also a little more likely than average to move to shift work (18 per cent). There is also some association between shift working opportunities and industry. At one extreme 20 per cent of fathers employed in the retail/wholesale/hotels and restaurant sector took on shift working, at the other extreme just 5 per cent of fathers working in construction or the financial services, computer or other business sectors made such a modification to their working arrangements. Ten per cent of the self-employed changed their business primarily to achieve higher pay.

### **10.1 Flexible working arrangements – employer provision and employee use.**

In addition to the statutory provisions associated with maternity and paternity leave and pay, parents can also benefit after the birth of their children from a variety of supporting arrangements provided by employers. While these arrangements are voluntary, since the introduction in 2003 of a parent's right to request flexible working arrangements, an employer can refuse a request only where there is a clear business reason.

The availability of flexible work patterns influences mothers' work-related decisions, including whether to return to work or to return to the same employer. As the proportion of dual-earning families expands, the need for greater flexibility in hours worked by *both* parents becomes more acute. These provisions also have the potential, if used, to promote a more active role among fathers in the home. Greater equality of opportunity may therefore emerge in the workplace, with women freed to spend longer hours and more of their lifetime at work while men devote more time to their children and the home.

Clearly the degree to which men use family-friendly working provisions is dependent upon their availability in the workplace. Table 10.1 shows the

extent to which employers offer flexible opportunities in addition to the extent to which fathers take up these provisions.

**Table 10.1: Employers' provision and fathers' take-up of flexible working opportunities (alongside mothers' employers' provision).**

	Fathers' employers' provision	Mothers' employers' provision	Fathers' use
Part-time working	47	94	4
Job sharing	28	54	2
Flexible working hours (flexi-time)	54	68	31
Reduced hours for a limited period	44	59	8
School term-time working	15	40	3
A compressed working week	25	36	6
Working at or from home occasionally	39	42	29
Working at or from home all the time	10	12	2

Base: 1241 employed fathers

The most widely available arrangement among fathers is flexi-time (54 per cent), followed by part-time working (47 per cent) or temporarily reduced hours (44 per cent). Over one-third of fathers also have access to home working on an occasional basis and one-quarter are able to condense their working week into less than five days. The proportion of fathers using these provisions, however, is largely very small with the exception of flexi-time and occasional home working used by around one-third of fathers in each case.

The provision of flexible opportunities made available to mothers is also added to Table 10.1 to highlight the extent to which the expectation that mothers will exclusively or primarily perform the caring role after childbirth is institutionalised. Hence the proportion of employers providing part-time working, job sharing or school term-time working is at least double for mothers compared with fathers. On the other hand, these figures may simply reveal reduced levels of awareness among fathers who have no intention of using such arrangements after the birth of their children. The differences also reflect industrial and occupational differences in the availability of flexible working opportunities and entrenched gender-based occupational/ industrial segregation. Differences between mothers and fathers in the availability of flexi-time, temporarily reduced hours, compressed working weeks and home working are all less marked however.

There is an imbalance in the distribution of flexible working opportunities throughout British industries, in different occupations and among fathers in different income bands. Size of workplace and recognition of trade

unions in the workplace are both also associated with the prevalence of flexible working arrangements.

Fathers working in male dominated industries or occupations are far less likely to have opportunities for flexibility than other fathers. Focusing on the availability of part-time working, 30 per cent of fathers in construction and 38 per cent of fathers in manufacturing industries claimed part-time hours were available at their place of work. These figures contrast with fathers employed in public administration or health/education industries for whom 56 per cent and 60 per cent respectively said they were aware they had access to part-time hours. While only 20 per cent of fathers employed in craft occupations (such as the building trades) thought they could work part-time, 60 per cent of fathers employed in clerical/secretarial positions said this option was open to them.

The ability to balance home and family by means of reduced hours was also enjoyed more by higher earners. Among fathers earning less than £2,000, £2,000–3,000 and more than £3,000 per month, 40 per cent, 48 per cent and 58 per cent respectively worked part-time if they wished.

Smaller workplaces appeared less able to accommodate non-standard hours among their male employees either for reasons of cost, recruitment difficulties or extra bureaucratic workload. Only 32 per cent of workplaces employing 1–24 staff were said by fathers to have made part-time working available compared with 57 per cent of workplaces of more than 100. Fifty-five per cent of unionised workplaces offered non-standard hours compared with 40 per cent of non-unionised.

Comparisons in the availability of flexible working arrangements between 2002 and 2005 reveal some dramatic changes. Focusing on the most widely available provisions in 2002, 22 per cent of fathers claimed that part-time working was provided by their employer, 22 per cent had access to flexi-time and 20 per cent could work at home occasionally. By 2005 these figures roughly doubled to 47, 54 and 39 per cent respectively. The work–life balance campaign would appear to have been absorbed more widely throughout British companies over the past three years. Changes between 2002 and 2005 in the proportion of fathers using these provisions reflect the growth in availability although the percentage of fathers using part-time opportunities remained negligible in 2005 rising from just 2 to 4 per cent. The use of flexi-time, however, trebled from 11 to 31 per cent and working at home doubled from 14 to 29 per cent.

## **10.2 Family-friendly schemes**

In section 5.8 above the prevalence of family-friendly schemes in the workplaces of mothers was explored. The same issues were also raised for fathers, who were asked whether their employers provided any of the following arrangements:

- Financial or other support for childcare
- Time off for family emergencies
- Career breaks for family reasons

- A telephone to use for family reasons.

The proportion of fathers who had access to such schemes and facilities and the proportion that used them are shown in Chart 10.1. While a minority of fathers (14 per cent) were offered financial or other childcare support, far more of the fathers' employers provided career breaks for family reasons (34 per cent), telephones for family purposes (65 per cent) and time off for family emergencies (81 per cent). These proportions are all lower than those reported by mothers. Far fewer fathers made use of these provisions either because they had no need to use them, for example an emergency had not arisen, or did not wish to use them.

**Chart 10.1: Availability and use of family-friendly schemes and facilities**



Base: 1,241 employed fathers.

# 11

## Views on proposed new rights

### 11.1 Introduction

There is some evidence to suggest that fathers have been changing their orientation toward family life and increasingly rejecting the traditionally strict demarcation line between home-based caring roles and the work-based role of financial provider. Findings from Thompson et al. (2005) indicate that in 2005 fathers largely accept that they have an important role to play at home in the development and nurturing of their children beyond the narrow confines of providing for them financially.

Responding to the needs of fathers, mothers and babies, paternity leave and paternity pay have been extended to fathers but currently provision is minimal. Plans to provide fathers with the option to take more leave in order to care for their children, outlined in section 7.1, are explored in this section. Given the apparent growth in fathers' orientation toward the family, will they welcome opportunities to swap their jobs outside the home for caring roles at home with their children for a period of time?

### 11.2 Leave sharing

This subsection is somewhat speculative as it invites fathers to imagine how they would have behaved under a different legislative regime. They were asked how they would have responded to the right to transfer paid leave from the mother to the father so that the mother could return to work. One-third of fathers said they would have wanted to stay at home with their child while their partner went to work, paid at a rate of around £100 per week, if this option had been available.

Differences in response are evident among fathers of different earnings brackets. While 39 per cent of fathers earning less than £2,000 per month were interested in the transference of Additional Paternity Leave (APL), this figure fell to just 22 per cent of fathers earning £3,000 or more. The drop in income associated with taking this form of leave is clearly far greater for high-earning fathers and therefore less economically viable or welcome.

Fathers typically thought they would have taken only small amounts of transferred leave. One-third would have taken less than a week, one-fifth would have taken exactly one week, 8 per cent exactly two weeks and 14

per cent three weeks or more. One-quarter of fathers were unable to commit themselves and did not know how long they might have taken.

The higher his income the shorter the length of leave a father would have taken.

### **11.3 How could life be improved?**

Fathers were also invited to think about their needs as a father and asked what would have made their life easier in the first year after their baby was born. Fathers were not prompted and the incidence of their spontaneous responses is listed below along with the proportions giving each reply. Responses given by fewer than 2 per cent of fathers are not listed.

Longer paid paternity leave	23%
Higher paternity pay	13%
More flexible working hours/arrangements	8%
More money (unspecified)	8%
More affordable childcare	7%
More/higher benefits/grants/tax credits	5%
More time off with family	4%
More or better availability of childcare	3%
Reduced working hours	3%
More understanding/tolerance from employer	3%
More information about rights/benefits	3%
Nothing	21%

A fifth could think of no improvement. The remaining fathers appeared to answer this question within the context of the questionnaire as a whole and centred their responses on issues of employment and pay. Paternity leave is clearly the most significant issue raised by fathers – one-quarter would have welcomed paternity leave paid for longer than two weeks and 13 per cent would have appreciated a higher rate of paternity pay. Many fathers could not afford to take even two weeks at £106 per week. Money was also an issue for fathers who said that more money generally would have helped them (8 per cent) and for fathers who would have benefited from more affordable childcare (7 per cent). A number of fathers would have liked the opportunity to work more flexible hours (8 per cent). Remaining factors were mentioned by fewer than 5 per cent of fathers in each case.

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# Appendix 1: Tables

**Table 1.1: Legislative developments in maternity, paternity and parental rights and benefits**

	1994	2000(April)	2003 (April)
<b>Ordinary</b>			
<b>Maternity Leave</b>			
Qualifying length of service	None		
Length of leave	14 weeks	18 weeks	26 weeks
<b>Maternity Allowance</b>			
Qualifying length of service	26 out of 66 weeks prior to ewc <sup>1</sup>	26 out of 66 weeks prior to ewc <sup>1</sup>	26 out of 66 weeks prior to ewc <sup>1</sup>
Qualifying earnings	26 weeks of NIC contributions	Min. of £30 pw for 26 weeks	
Length of pay	18 weeks	18 weeks	26 weeks
Rate of pay (flat rate)	£55.70 or £48.35	£62.20 (or 90% of earnings) <sup>2</sup>	£100 (or 90% of earnings)
<b>Additional</b>			
<b>Maternity Leave</b>			
Qualifying length of service	2 years (by 11th week before ewc)	1 year (by 11th week before ewc)	26 weeks (by 14th week before ewc)
Length of leave	max 40 weeks (up to 11 weeks before expected birth and 29 weeks after childbirth)		52 weeks in total
<b>Statutory</b>			
<b>Maternity Pay</b>			
Qualifying length of service	26 weeks continuously with the same employer before ewc)		(by 15th week before ewc)
Length of pay	18 weeks	18 weeks	26 weeks
Qualifying earnings	Average at least equal to lower limit for NIC (= £82 2005/6, £89 2002/3)		
Rate of pay	90% of average salary for 6 weeks. Then flat rate of £55.70	Then £60.20 pw flat rate	Then £100 pw flat rate (£106 in 2005) or 90% of earnings if less.
<b>Parental Leave</b>			
Length of leave		13 weeks unpaid (child <5) <sup>3</sup>	
Qualifying length of service		1 year	
<b>Paternity Leave</b>			
Qualifying length of service			26 weeks (by 15th week before ewc)
Rate of pay			£100 (in 2003) or 90% of earnings if less.
Length of pay			2 weeks
<sup>1</sup> ewc : expected week of childbirth <sup>2</sup> Whichever is less <sup>3</sup> 18 weeks unpaid (child disabled <18) Empty cells indicate no change in legislation			

**Table 2.1: Individual characteristics**

	% of base sample	N
<b>Total</b>	100	2,504
<b>Age</b>		
16-25	13	331
26-30	23	583
31-35	38	956
36-40	20	511
41+	5	123
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married/cohabiting	87	2,180
Single	10	248
Widowed	..	1
Divorced/separated	3	74
Refused	..	1
Lone mother	13	324
First-time mother	49	1,222
<b>Highest qualification</b>		
NVQ 5/6 (degree & higher)	30	760
NVQ 4 (GCSE A level)	12	308
NVQ 3 (ONC/BTEC)	17	434
NVQ 2/1 (GCSE O level a-c)	27	660
Other	8	198
None	5	128
<b>Housing tenure</b>		
Own outright	9	212
Own mortgage	68	1,692
Rent Local Authority /	7	169
Housing Association	5	130
Rent privately	8	211
Other	363	
<b>Ethnic group</b>		
White British	87	2,169
Other White	5	115
Mixed	1	19
Asian or Asian British	4	99
Black or Black British	2	60
Chinese	..	7
Other	1	29
Refused	..	6

.. less than 1%

**Table 2.2: Employment-related characteristics during pregnancy**

	%	N
Current Status		
Employed	53	1,333
Self-employed	5	131
Not employed	42	1,038
Pregnancy status		
Employed	70	1,761
Self-employed	4	99
Not employed	26	644
Hours (current job)		
Full-time (30+ hours)	33	486
Part-time	67	978
Gross hourly earnings during pregnancy		
£0-5.99	20	328
£6-8.99	24	404
£9-11.99	20	333
£12-14.99	14	237
£15-19.99	12	193
£20+	10	159
Weekly income during pregnancy		
£0-82	7	124
£83-200	27	455
£201-300	24	404
£301-450	19	316
£451-650	14	230
£651+	9	152
Occupational group during pregnancy (employees and self-employed)		
Manager	15	283
Professional	15	281
Associate professional	22	404
Secretarial / clerical	21	376
Craft	2	28
Personal & protective	11	207
Sales	9	156
Plant & machinery	1	22
Other unskilled	5	90
Industrial group during pregnancy (employees only)		
Agriculture / fishing / .. mining		6
Manufacturing	9	155
Construction	1	13
Retail / wholesale	13	222
Hotels / restaurants	4	66
Transport	4	74
Financial	8	135
Property	3	44
Computer / R&D	2	40
Other business	8	138
Public administration	9	146
Education	14	237
Health / social work	20	337
Recreation / culture	2	36
Other	2	31

.. less than 1%

**Table 2.3: Age of mothers, comparison of MRS 05 with CBR source dataset and LFS**

	CBR (12,500)		MRS 2005 (2,504)		LFS (3,367)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
16-25	3,002	24	331	13	792	24
26-30	3,010	24	583	23	895	27
31-35	3,797	30	956	38	1,029	31
36-40	2,192	18	511	20	537	16
41+	499	4	123	5	114	3

**Table 2.4: Highest qualification, comparison of LFS and MRS 05**

	LFS	MRS
No qualifications	12	5
NVQ 1/2	36	27
NVQ 3	18	17
NVQ 4	9	12
NVQ 5/6	20	30
Other qualifications	6	8
N	3,305	2,504

Base: LFS all mothers with children <2

MRS all mothers (with children 17 months)

**Table 2.5: Pre- and post-weighted MRS 05 data compared with LFS 2004 data**

	MRS 05 Unweighted %	MRS 05 Weighted %	LFS %
<b>Age</b>			
16-25	13	23	24
26-30	23	26	27
31-35	38	30	31
36-40	20	17	16
41+	5	4	3
<b>Marital status</b>			
Married/cohabiting	87	82	82
Single	10	15	14
Divorced/separated	3	3	4
Lone mother	13	18	19
<b>Highest qualification</b>			
NVQ 5/6 (degree & higher)	30	21	20
NVQ 4 (GCSE A level)	12	10	9
NVQ 3 (ONC/BTEC)	17	16	18
NVQ 2/1 (GCSE O level a-c)	27	39	36
Other	8	6	6
None	5	8	12
<b>Housing tenure</b>			
Own outright	9	7	6
Own mortgage	68	61	60
Rent Local Authority	7	10	15
Housing Association/privately	13	17	19
Other	3	5	2
<b>Current status</b>			
Employed	53	49	47
Self-employed	5	5	4
Not employed	42	47	49
<b>Occupational group during pregnancy</b>			
Manager	15	15	11
Professional	15	12	15
Associate professional	22	19	17
Secretarial/clerical	21	22	23
Craft	2	2	2
Personal & protective	11	13	14
Sales	9	11	10
Plant & machinery	1	2	2
Other unskilled	5	7	6

**Table 3.1a: Maternity leave taken – paid and unpaid – by hourly pay band<sup>1</sup>**

	0-5	6-8	9-11	£ 12-14	15-19	20+
<i>Column percentages</i>						
< 26 weeks	14	10	12	14	17	19
26 weeks	64	57	42	33	32	30
27-51 weeks	11	18	24	35	32	30
1 year plus	10	14	21	17	19	21
Total N	287	386	323	228	188	156

<sup>1</sup> Gross hourly pay during pregnancy  
Base: 1,568 mothers employed during pregnancy

**Table 3.1b: Maternity leave taken – paid and unpaid – by weekly pay band<sup>1</sup>**

	0-82	83-200	201-300	£ 301-450	451-650	651+	All
<i>Column percentages</i>							
< 26 weeks	12	10	12	13	22	21	13
26 weeks	68	58	47	40	34	32	48
27-51 weeks	14	17	23	27	28	30	22
1 year plus	7	14	18	20	17	18	16
Total N	103	428	384	307	222	150	1594

<sup>1</sup> Gross weekly pay during pregnancy  
Base: all mothers employed during pregnancy

**Table 3.1c: Maternity leave taken – paid and unpaid – by hourly pay band<sup>1</sup>**

	0-5	6-8	9-11	£ 12-14	15-19	20+
<i>Column percentages</i>						
< 26 weeks	13	12	13	15	18	21
26 weeks	62	59	45	33	33	28
27-51 weeks	17	19	28	35	35	34
1 year plus	7	11	14	17	14	17
Total N	179	281	260	197	156	135

<sup>1</sup> Gross hourly pay during pregnancy  
Base: 1,208 mothers employed during pregnancy who returned to work

**Table 3.2a: Hourly earnings by SMP/OMP/MA receipt***Column percentages*

£	OMP	SMP	MA	None
0-5	12	23	69	56
6-8	22	31	22	29
9-11	27	18	3	15
12-14	16	11	3	0
15-19	14	9	2	0
20+	10	8	1	0
Total	495	937	133	24

Base: 1,589 all mothers employed during pregnancy

Maternity pay type based on derived variable not self-reported receipt

**Table 3.2b: Weekly earnings by SMP/OMP/MA receipt***Column percentages*

£	None	MA	SMP	OMP	All
0-82	59	60	0	4	9
83-200	23	22	38	23	32
201-300	13	11	25	29	25
301-450	4	4	18	21	17
451-650	0	3	12	13	11
651+	0	0	7	10	7
Total	33	137	947	498	1,615

Base: all mothers employed during pregnancy (excluding self-employed)

Maternity pay type based on derived variable not self-reported receipt

**Table 3.3: Maternity leave taken by occupational group during pregnancy**

	Weeks leave				Total N
	< 26	26	27-51	1 year plus	
<i>Row percentages</i>					
Manager	22	40	21	17	273
Professional	17	33	36	14	269
Associate professional	13	43	27	16	393
Clerical/secretarial	10	48	19	23	353
Personal & protective	14	58	18	10	191
Sales	8	63	19	10	146
Craft, plant & machinery operative & other	17	59	13	11	111

Base: 1,736 mothers employed during pregnancy who took maternity leave and knew length of leave



**Table 3.4: Maternity leave taken by industrial group during pregnancy**

	< 26	26	Weeks leave 27-51	1 year plus	Total N
<i>Row percentages</i>					
Agric/mining	16	47	22	15	168
Retail/hotels/ restaurants	13	52	18	17	335
Finance/ property/ computer/other business	13	38	26	23	341
Public admin	11	54	16	20	143
Education	14	36	40	11	224
Health/social work	8	60	20	11	323
Recreation/culture/ other	11	62	12	12	63

Base: 1,597 mothers employed during pregnancy who took maternity leave – employees only.

**Table 3.5: Which factors affected the amount of time taken as maternity leave by SMP/OMP/MA eligibility**

	All	MA	SMP	OMP
Desire to return to work	72	63	73	73
Amount of paid leave available	55	40	56	62
Availability/ organisation of childcare	37	31	37	36
Costs of childcare prevented return	22	27	23	17
Amount of leave available	19	21	19	21
Other	11	10	12	9
Total N	1,681	129	1,012	513

Base: all employees and self-employed who worked during pregnancy. Derived maternity pay type. Multiple responses possible. Column percentages will therefore not sum to 100.

**Table 3.6: Which factors affected the amount of time taken as maternity leave by employment status during pregnancy**

	Employed	Self-employed
Amount of leave available	19	21
Amount of paid leave available	55	49
Costs of childcare prevented return	22	20
Availability/organisation of childcare	37	43
Desire to return to work	72	75
Other	10	26
Total N	1,681	82

Base: 1,763 employees and self-employed who worked during pregnancy.  
Multiple responses possible. Column percentages will therefore not sum to 100.

**Table 3.7: Factors which affected the amount of time taken as maternity leave by hourly pay during pregnancy**

	£0-5	£6-8	£9-11	£12-14	£15-19	£20+
Amount of leave available	17	17	23	17	25	29
Amount of paid leave available	41	57	63	65	66	56
Costs of childcare prevented return	33	25	17	18	15	7
Availability/organisation of childcare	36	37	37	37	38	38
Desire to return to work	67	77	69	71	72	81
Other	11	11	11	8	11	11
Total N	298	386	325	232	190	155

Base: 1,586 employees and self-employed who worked during pregnancy and provided pay data.  
Multiple responses possible. Column percentages will therefore not sum to 100.

**Table 3.8: Factors which affected the amount of time taken as maternity leave by occupational group during pregnancy**

Occupation	Duration of maternity pay	Cost of childcare
Manager	59	16
Professional	67	13
Associate professional	66	15
Clerical/secretarial	54	26
Personal & protective	46	28
Sales	49	35
Craft, plant & machinery operative & other	37	26

Base: 1,681 employees and self-employed who worked during pregnancy.  
Multiple responses possible. Cell percentages.

**Table 3.9: Receipt of annual leave while on maternity leave by earnings**

*Cell percentage of mothers who 'received their holiday entitlement for the time they were on maternity leave'*

Hourly earnings band					
0-5	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-19	20+
50	61	74	73	70	74

Base: 1,586 mothers who took maternity leave and provided income data.

**Table 3.10: Receipt of annual leave while on maternity leave by occupational group**

*Cell percentage of mothers who 'received their holiday entitlement for the time they were on maternity leave'*

All	63
<b>Occupation</b>	
Managers	69
Professionals	55
Associate professionals	75
Clerical/secretarial	68
Personal & protective	49
Sales	65
Craft/Plant & other unskilled	47
<b>Industrial group</b>	
Agriculture/manufacturing	74
Retail /hotels/restaurants	63
Finance/property/computer	70
Public administration	77
Education	45
Health	75
Recreation/culture/other	48

Base: 1,752 mothers who took maternity leave and provided occupation details. 1,611 mothers providing industrial sector details.

**Table 3.11: How annual leave was used**

As holiday	878	76%
As pay	253	22%
DK	21	2%

Base: 1,152 mothers who received annual leave entitlement.

**Table 3.12: When annual leave taken as holiday was used**

Added on to maternity leave	489	56%
Taken upon return to work	328	37%
DK	61	7%

Base: 878 mothers who received annual leave entitlement, added on to maternity leave.

**Table 3.13: Reasons for non-receipt of annual leave entitlement**

	Hourly pay £						All
	0-5	6-8	9-11	12-14	15+	20+	
Received pay instead	14	28	34	27	21	26	24
Didn't know I was entitled	13	12	11	10	6	3	11
Not entitled	13	7	7	11	17	8	10
Freelancer	3	6	5	10	4	20	6
Already used leave	22	9	9	6	9	3	13
My choice to defer annual leave	6	12	7	10	11	13	9
DK	20	10	7	1	5	0	11

Multiple response options.

Base: 550 mothers who did not receive their annual leave entitlement.

**Table 3.14: Proportion of mothers who used parental leave**

2002	8%
2005	11%

Base: mothers who returned to work after childbirth.

**Table 4.2: Maternity pay type received**

	2002		2005	
Employed during pregnancy	3,535		1,663	
Received maternity pay	3,242	92%	1,531	92%
Received MA only	269	8%	81	5%
Received SMP only	1,617	50%	1,071	70%
Received OMP (plus SMP or MA)	1,356	42%	379	25%

Base: mothers employed during pregnancy who knew whether they received maternity pay – employees only.

**Table 4.3: Maternity pay duration**

	2002	2005
Less than 18 weeks	32	10
18 weeks	58	5
19–25 weeks	4	7
26 weeks	2	74
27-plus weeks	3	4

Base: 1,661 mothers employed during pregnancy claiming to be in receipt of maternity pay.

**Table 4.4: Maternity pay duration by maternity pay eligibility**

	MA	SMP	OMP
Less than 18 weeks	15	15	13
18–25 weeks	8	6	7
26 weeks	77	79	68
More than 26 weeks	0	0	12
Total N	120	946	512

Base: 1,578 mothers who received maternity pay having worked during pregnancy. Using derived maternity pay.

**Table 4.5a: Maternity pay duration by hourly pay band**

	Column percentages					
	0–5	6–8	9–11	£ 12–14	15–19	20+
Less than 18 weeks	12	11	16	16	18	23
18–25 weeks	5	5	6	10	8	10
26 weeks	82	81	74	69	69	63
27 weeks plus	2	3	4	6	5	4
Total N	270	364	312	224	178	146

Base: 1,494 mothers who claimed to receive maternity pay and provided earnings data.

**Table 4.5b: Maternity pay duration by weekly pay band**

	Column percentages					
	0-82	83-200	201-300	301-450	451-650	651+
	£					
Less than 18 weeks	10	10	13	13	25	26
18-25 weeks	4	5	4	10	11	8
26 weeks	82	82	77	73	61	63
27 weeks plus	5	3	5	3	4	3
Total N	95	403	370	295	209	146

Base: 1,518 mothers who claimed to receive maternity pay and provided earnings data.

**Table 4.6: Maternity pay duration by occupational group during pregnancy**

	<18	18-25	26	27-plus	Total N
<i>Row percentages</i>					
Manager	21	10	64	5	260
Professional	20	11	64	5	255
Associate professional	12	8	76	5	368
Clerical/secretarial	10	6	83	2	339
Personal & protective	13	6	77	3	171
Sales	14	2	82	2	133
Craft/plant/other	15	4	77	4	135

Base: 1,661 mothers who received maternity pay and were employed during pregnancy.

**Table 4.7: Maternity pay duration by employment status**

	<i>Column percentages</i>	
	Employed	Self-employed
Less than 18 weeks	14	19
18-25 weeks	6	17
26 weeks	76	62
17 weeks plus	4	1
Total N	1,577	67

Base: 1,644 mothers who received maternity pay having worked during pregnancy.

**Table 5.2: The duration of maternity leave among 'temporary' work returners**

*Column percentages*

The duration of maternity leave	
0–5 months	15
6 months	48
7–11 months	27
12 months plus	10

Base: 133 mothers who worked for a period after childbirth but not currently working.

**Table 5.3: Why mother returned to work after childbirth**

*Cell percentages*

Needed the money	62
Maternity pay ended	57
Had used up maternity leave	50
Wanted to return	48
Had arranged childcare	47
To protect career prospects	29
Employer request	24
Found a new job with right hours	21
Obliged under OMP scheme	16
Total N	133

Base: 133 mothers who worked for a period after childbirth but not currently working.  
Multiple responses possible.

**Table 5.4: Why mother stopped work after childbirth**

*Cell percentages*

Pregnant/on maternity leave	32
Other	32
Preferred to care for children	29
Not earning enough for childcare	16
Did not want/need to work	14
Job did not allow suitable hours	13
Could not find suitable childcare	12
Health problems	11
Child's health problems	5
Total N	133

Base: 133 mothers who worked for a period after childbirth but not currently working.  
Multiple responses possible.



**Table 5.5: Plans for returning to work**

	<i>Cell percentages</i>	
	2002	2005
Currently looking for full-time work	3	1
Currently looking for part-time work	16	13
Currently looking for any work	3	3
Plan to look in the future	69	76
No plans to look	2	5
DK	9	2
Total N	1,077	904
Among those who plan to look, hope to return within:		
0-6 months	10	5
6-12 months	6	7
1-2 years	8	11
When youngest at nursery school (age 3)	31	24
When youngest at primary school (age 4-5)	34	37
When youngest at secondary school (age 11-12)	2	2
Other	7	7
DK	2	8
Total N	843	687

Base: Mothers who have not worked since childbirth.

**Table 5.6: Reasons and preference for return-to-work timing**

		<i>Column percentages</i>		
<b>Timing preference</b>				
This was my preferred date to return		75		
I would have preferred to return sooner		3		
I would have preferred to return later		21		
Unsure of preference		1		
Total N		1,466		
		<i>Cell percentages</i>		
<b>Timing reason</b>	All	Preferred date of return	Preferred to return later	
Needed the money	70	68	80	
Wanted to return	56	65	22	
Had arranged childcare	56	61	40	
Maternity pay ended	56	56	59	
Had used all maternity leave	51	53	48	
Employer request	25	26	24	
Found new job/right hours	24	25	17	
To protect career prospects	21	22	18	
Obligated under OMP scheme	14	15	10	
Other	8	7	10	
Total N	1,466	1,102	307	

Base: mothers currently in paid work.  
Multiple responses possible.

**Table 5.7a: Whether mother returned to work according to a range of personal characteristics**

		<i>% of mothers employed during pregnancy who returned to work</i>
All		80
Age group		
Less than 25		63
25-29		76
30-34		83
35-39		78
40 +		79
Lone mother status		
Lone mother		65
Mother with partner		80
Highest Qualification		
None		70
GCSE O level/CSE		70
GCSE A level/HNC/HND		81
Degree or above		87

Base: 1,496 mothers who returned to work.

**Table 5.7b: Whether mother returned to work according to a range of job characteristics**

	<i>% of mothers employed during pregnancy who returned to work</i>
Employment status	
Self-employed	87
Employee	77
Hours of work	
Full-time	71
Part-time	84
Hourly pay	
£0-5	61
£6-8	79
£9-11	85
£12-14	89
£15-19	85
£20+	87
Years of service	
Less than 1	65
1	68
2-5	81
6-10	88
10+	86

Base: 1,496 mothers who returned to work.

**Table 5.7c: Whether mother returned to work by occupational group during pregnancy**

	<i>% returned to work 2005</i>	<i>% returned to work 2002</i>
Manager	80	85
Professional	90	89
Associate professional	87	90
Clerical/secretarial	78	78
Personal services	73	72
Sales	72	73
Manual/elementary	59	64

Base: 1,496 mothers who returned to work.

**Table 5.7d: Whether mother returned to work according to a range of employer characteristics**

	<i>% of mothers employed during pregnancy who returned to work</i>
Industry during pregnancy	
Agriculture/manufacturing	79
Retail/hotels/restaurants	73
Finance/property/computer	76
Public administration	87
Education	84
Health	86
Recreation/culture/other	78
Number of flexible work options provided by employer	
0	63
1	67
2-3	78
4-6	85
7+	81
Employment sector	
Public	86
Private	73

Base: 1,496 mothers who returned to work.

**Table 5.7e: Whether mother returned to work by size of establishment during pregnancy**

	<i>% of mothers employed during pregnancy who returned to work</i>			
	1-24	25-99	100-499	500 plus
2002	75	81	82	87
2005	72	78	80	88

Base: 1,496 mothers who returned to work.

**Table 5.7f: Whether mother returned to work by maternity pay received**

	<i>% of mothers employed during pregnancy who returned to work</i>			
	Not eligible	MA	SMP	OMP
	38	63	77	87

Base: 1,496 mothers who returned to work.

**Table 5.8: Factors associated with the decision to return to work**

	Individual Model 1	Individual + Model 2	Job Model 3	Employer Model 4	Employer Model 5
First-time mum	ns	ns	ns	dropped ns	dropped ns
Lone parent	-	ns	ns	dropped ns	dropped ns
Age group (ref: 30-34)					
<25	-	-	ns	ns	ns
25-29	-	ns	ns	ns	ns
35-39	-	-	-	-	ns
40+	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Highest qualification (ref: none)				dropped ns	dropped ns
NVQ 1/2		ns	ns	ns	
NVQ 3/4			ns	ns	ns
NVQ 5/6		+	+	ns	
Housing tenure (own outright)					
Mortgage		+	+	+	ns
Rent (public sector/HA)		-	ns	ns	ns
Rent (private sector)		ns	ns	ns	ns
Other		ns	ns	ns	ns
Occupation (ref: clerk/secretary)					
Manager			ns	ns	ns
Professional			+	ns	+
Associate professional			+	ns	+
Personal & protective			ns	ns	ns
Sales		ns	ns	ns	
Manual		ns	ns	ns	
Self-employed			+	dropped n/a	dropped n/a
Part-time (ref: full-time)			+	+	ns
Hourly pay (ref: £9-11)					
£1-5			-	-	-
£6-8			ns	ns	-
£12-14			ns	ns	ns
£15-19			ns	ns	-
£20+			ns	ns	ns
Months employment service			+	ns	ns
Maternity pay (ref: received smp)					
None				-	ns
MA				ns	ns
OMP				+	ns
Industry				ns dropped	ns dropped
Treated unfairly				-	-
Sector (ref: public)					
Private				-	ns
Voluntary				-	-
Number of flexible opportunities					
0-1				ns	
2-3				ns	
4-6				ns	
7 plus				ns	
Availability of part-time				ns	ns
Availability of flexi-time				+	ns
Availability of career break schemes				ns	ns
Union recognised				+	+
Mother in a union				+	+

Workplace size (ref: 1-24)					
25-99			ns		ns
100-499			+		ns
500			+		+
Workplace composition (ref: all women)					
Mostly women			ns		ns
50:50			-		-
Mostly men			-		ns
Partner's monthly income (ref: £1,500-1,999)					
£1-1,099					+
£1,100-1,499					ns
£2,000-2,700					ns
£2,701+					-
N	1,860	1,860	1,638	1,046	776

Model One: All mothers employed during pregnancy.

Model Two: All mothers employed during pregnancy.

Model Three: All mothers employed during pregnancy who provided information on their occupation and earnings.

Model Four: All mothers employed during pregnancy who provided information on their occupation, earnings, industry and employer-related characteristics (excluding the self-employed).

Model Five: All mothers employed during pregnancy who provided information on their occupation, earnings, industry, employer-related characteristics and partners' earnings (excluding the self-employed and lone mothers).

**Table 6.1: Time informed employer of pregnancy**

*Column percentages*

0-11 weeks pregnant	50
12-20 weeks	46
21-25 weeks	3
26 weeks plus	1
DK	1
Total N	1,761

Base: all mothers in paid employment during pregnancy.

**Table 6.2: Time informed employer of maternity leave start date**

*Column percentages*

Less than 4 weeks before	8
4 or more weeks before	84
No advance notice	5
DK	3
Total N	1,761

Base: all mothers in paid employment during pregnancy.

**Table 6.3: Information provided for employer***Cell percentages*

<i>Information provided</i>	Yes
Due date of baby	91
Maternity leave start date	89
Intention to return to work	76
Date intended to return to work	43
Intention to not return to work (1)	32

Base: 1,761 – all non-self-employed mothers in paid employment during pregnancy.

(1) Base: 259 mothers who did not inform their employer of their intention to return to work or return date.

**Table 6.4: Incidence of changed decisions***Cell percentages*

<i>Did you change your mind after informing employer about:</i>		
	Yes	Base
Maternity leave start date	21	1,112
Intention to return to work	20	973
Intended date of return	22	549
Intention to not return to work	10	42

Base: all mothers in paid employment during pregnancy who informed their employer of each detail listed.

**Table 6.5: Period of notice given to employer of changed decision***How long before you originally intended to return to work did you inform employer that you no longer intended to return to work?*

	<i>Column percentages</i>
Less than 1 month	19
More than 1 month but less than 2 months	33
More than 2 months but less than 3 months	15
More than 3 months	17
DK	10

*How long before you originally intended to return to work did you inform employer that you changed your mind about the date of return to work? (N=195)*

Less than 1 month	19
More than 1 month but less than 2 months	40
More than 2 months but less than 3 months	20
More than 3 months	9
DK	12

Base: 195 mothers who changed their mind about returning to work or the timing of their return to work.

**Table 6.6: Employer contact with mothers during maternity leave**

	<i>Cell percentages</i>	
	N	%
Employer operated a 'keep in touch' scheme	379	23
Employer contacted mother during maternity leave	927	55
Contact to confirm whether or when mother returning to work	531	32
Contact to provide information relating to important changes at work	416	25
Contact for personal reasons	249	15
Contact for work questions	36	2

Base: 1,681 mothers employed during pregnancy who took maternity leave, employees only.



**Table 6.7: Employer contact with mothers during maternity leave by hourly pay during pregnancy**

	<i>Cell percentages</i>					
	0-5	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-19	20+
Employer operated 'keep in touch' scheme	19	20	26	25	25	22
Employer contacted mother	46	50	57	59	61	66
<b>Reasons for contact among those contacted</b>						
To confirm whether or when returning to work	58	55	52	53	63	66
To provide information on important changes at work	23	39	47	46	64	60
Contact for personal reasons	38	31	27	26	23	22

Base: 1,761 mothers employed during pregnancy, employees only.

**Table 6.8: Difficulties mothers experienced with their employer**

*Did you have any of the following difficulties with your employer relating to your maternity leave before you stopped work to have your baby?*

Employer lacked knowledge about maternity entitlements and benefits	19%
Employer unhappy about letting mother take maternity leave	3%
Put under pressure to hand in notice	3%
Encouraged to take time off or signed off on sick leave before ready to start maternity leave	6%
Encouraged to start maternity leave earlier than would have liked	5%
Other difficulties	5%

Base: 1,761 mothers employed during pregnancy – employees only.

**Table 7.1: Expected duration of transferred months among mothers who would have transferred leave if sharing with father had been an option**

<i>If yes, how many months would you have transferred?</i>	
0-1.99	32
16	
24	
13	
6	
7 months or more	9
Total N	500

**Table 7.2: Expected duration of transferred months by partners' income band**

<i>If yes, how many months would you have transferred?</i>					
1	27	32	32	38	34
2	11	16	14	11	24
3	25	33	28	31	28
4 plus	37	19	26	21	13
N	87	84	71	71	52

Base: 365 mothers willing to transfer leave, who provided partners' pay data (excluding lone mothers).

**Table 7.3: What improvement would have most helped mothers?**

	All	Lone mothers
Improved access to good quality, affordable childcare, making it easier to go back to work at the end of your maternity leave or sooner	18	26
Higher maternity pay paid over a longer period, making it easier for you to stay at home with your baby	75	67
Don't know	7	8

Base: 2,504 mothers

**Table 8.1: Individual and employment characteristics of fathers during mothers' pregnancy**

	%	N
Total	100	1,512
<b>Employment status</b>		
Employed	82	1,241
Self-employed	11	171
Not working	7	100
<b>Age</b>		
Less than 25	3	37
25-29	12	188
30-34	44	658
35-39	24	361
40+	18	268
<b>Highest qualifications</b>		
No qualifications	7	105
NVQ1/2	24	363
NVQ 3	19	286
NVQ 4	11	162
NVQ 5/6	32	479
<b>Ethnic group</b>		
White British	86	1,298
Other White	6	86
Mixed	1	13
Asian	4	55
Black	2	29
Chinese	..	3
Other	2	28
<b>Occupation</b>		
Manager	25	353
Professional	19	266
Associate professional	17	239
Clerical/sales/personal & protective	7	96
Craft	18	249
Plant/elementary	14	201
<b>Industry</b>		
Agriculture/fishing/mining/manufacturing	21	254
Construction	8	99
Retail/wholesale/hotels/restaurants	14	167
Transport	9	105
Financial/property/computer/other business	25	305
Public administration	10	116
Education/health/social work	11	134
Other	3	31

**Table 9.1: Number of days' paternity leave taken by fathers**

	0 days	less than 2 weeks	2 weeks	more than 2 weeks	
<b>Income (£ per month)</b>					
0-999	34	27	28	11	
1,000-1,999	16	32	37	15	
2,000-2,999	22	37	31	11	
3,000 plus	21	35	36	9	
<b>Occupation</b>					
Manager	25	35	31	10	
Professional	21	34	37	8	
Associate professional	14	35	39	12	
Clerical/sales/personal & protective	19	24	44	13	
Craft	22	30	33	15	
Plant/elementary	22	37	28	14	
<b>Industry</b>					
Agriculture/fishing/mining/manufacturing	24	35	32	11	
Construction	31	33	31	6	
Retail/wholesale/hotels/restaurants	27	31	31	11	
Transport	14	33	26	28	
Financial/property/computer/other business	20	38	34	8	
Public administration	10	27	49	15	
Education/health/social work	12	34	44	10	
<b>Workplace size</b>					
1-24	25	29	36	9	
25-99	24	25	36	14	
100-499	22	36	33	9	
500+	13	33	41	13	
All					
	%	21	34	34	11
	N	238	384	389	131

**Table 9.2: The proportion of paternity leave taken by fathers which was paid in full**

	None	Some	All
<b>Income</b>			
0-999	46	10	44
1,000-1,999	26	11	64
2,000-2,999	17	11	72
3,000 plus	9	10	82
<b>Occupation</b>			
Manager	11	8	81
Professional	17	12	72
Associate professional	9	10	81
Clerical/sales/personal & protective	16	14	70
Craft	35	8	59
Plant/elementary	40	12	48
<b>Industry</b>			
Agriculture/fishing/ mining/manufacturing	27	12	62
Construction	52	4	44
Retail/wholesale/hotels/restaurants	23	14	64
Transport	19	10	72
Financial/property/computer/other business	15	8	84
Public administration	5	10	71
Education/health/social work	15	14	79
<b>Workplace size</b>			
1-24	32	7	61
25-99	24	10	65
100-499	16	8	75
500+	9	14	77
<b>Sector</b>			
Public	12	12	76
Private	24	9	67
All	20	10	70
N	172	89	613

## Appendix 2: Factors associated with the decision to return to work

	Employees only				
	Individual Model 1	Individual + Model 2	Job Model 3	Employer Model 4	Employer Model 5
First-time mum	.117	.162	.113	.156	dropped ns
Lone parent	-.348*	.028	.177	-.054	dropped ns
<b>Age group (ref: 30–34)</b>					
<25	-.707***	-.402	-.009	.361	.305
25–29	-.378***	-.210	.120	.179	.000
35–39	-.353**	-.361***	-.624	-.566**	-.441
40+	-.304	.287	-.400	-.023	-.292
<b>Highest qualification (ref: none)</b>				dropped ns	dropped ns
NVQ 1/2	-.001	-.132	-.293		
NVQ 3/4	.515	.355	.136		
NVQ 5/6	.872***	.696***	.354		
<b>Housing tenure (own outright)</b>					
Mortgage		.359*	.436*	.494	.565
Rent (public sector/HA)		-.802***	-.253	-.259	.276
Rent (private sector)		-.333	-.054	-.136	.263
Other		-.237	-.041	-.538	-1.01
<b>Occupation (ref: clerk/secretary)</b>					
Manager			.170	.253	.318
Professional			.596**	.432	.754*
Associate professional			.434*	.348	.882**
Personal & protective			.378	.464	.464
Sales			.254	.126	.214
Manual			-.238	-.442	.052
Self-employed	.		955**	dropped n/a	dropped n/a
Part-time			.949***	.333	.228
<b>Hourly pay (ref: £9–11)</b>					
£1–5			-.963***	-.766**	-.239***
£6–8			-.275	-.273	-.739*
£12–14			.166	-.174	-.704
£15–19			-.222	-.482	-.909**
£20+			-.021	-.648	-.149
Months employment service			.005***	-.000	.002
<b>Maternity pay (ref: received smp)</b>					
None				-.1.04*	-1.30
MA				.238	.598
OMP				.434*	.445
Industry				ns dropped	ns dropped
Treated unfairly				-.633***	-.668**
<b>Sector (ref: public)</b>					
Private				-.548***	-.341
Voluntary				-1.10***	-.995**
<b>Number of flexible opportunities</b>					
0–1				.823	.577
2–3				1.05**	.446
4–6				.397	-.651
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Availability of part-time				.181	.560
Availability of flexi-time				.497**	.425
Availability of career break schemes				-.37	-.263
Union recognised				1.13***	1.37***
Mother in a union				.498**	.562*

**Appendix 2: Factors associated with the decision to return to work  
(continued)**

	Individual Model 1	Individual + Model 2	Employees only Job Model 3	Employer Model 4	Employer Model 5
<b>Workplace size (ref: 1–24)</b>					
25–99				.241	.240
100–499				.642***	.367
500				.564**	1.22***
<b>Workplace composition (ref: all mothers)</b>					
Mostly mothers				-.341	-.165
50:50				-.776*	-.929*
Mostly men				-.627	-.702
<b>Partner's monthly income (ref: £1,500–1,999)</b>					
£1–1,099					.953**
£1,100–1,499					.007
£2,000–2,700					.421
£2,701+					-.742*
<b>N</b>	1,860	1,860	1,638	1,046	776

Model One: All mothers employed during pregnancy.

Model Two: All mothers employed during pregnancy.

Model Three: All mothers employed during pregnancy who provided information on their occupation and earnings.

Model Four: All mothers employed during pregnancy who provided information on their occupation, earnings, industry and employer-related characteristics (excluding the self-employed).

Model Five: All mothers employed during pregnancy who provided information on their occupation, earnings, industry, employer-related characteristics and partners' earnings (excluding the self-employed and lone mothers).

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