



Who can 'have it all'?

Job quality and parenthood in the UK



Table of Contents

Executive summary	4
Introduction	6
The motherhood penalty in job quality	12
Parenthood and job quality trade-offs	28
Conclusions and recommendations	37
References	42
Appendices	47

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Executive summary

There is a motherhood penalty in job quality.

Whilst pay is an important marker of a ‘good’ job, other aspects of work – such as the demands it places on workers, the level of control they have, working hours, flexibility and job security - also impact employees’ wellbeing significantly.¹ This is known as ‘job quality’.

Our research shows that mothers, particularly those with young children, face multiple disadvantages when it comes to job quality. We have termed this the ‘motherhood penalty in job quality’.

Contrary to the perception that mothers are less committed to work, 70% would continue to work even if they didn’t need to financially. Yet, mothers of young children, in particular, report having less autonomy at work. For instance, mothers with children under five are 10 percentage points more likely than fathers with similar-aged children to say they have ‘no control’ over their working time. This group of mothers are also 14 percentage points less likely than equivalent fathers to say they have ‘a lot of control’ over their work tasks.

Mothers are also more likely to have jobs that are poor quality on multiple measures (which we term: ‘all-round poor-quality jobs’). For instance, mothers of school aged children are 5 percentage points (primary age) and 7 percentage points (secondary age) more likely to be in these poor-quality jobs than women without children. Conversely, mothers are under-represented in high-quality jobs – those with attributes including good work-life balance, control over working hours and control over job tasks. For instance, compared to women without children, mothers of primary aged children are 11 percentage points less likely to have these high-quality jobs.

Part time jobs are more likely to be poor-quality.

When it comes to the ability to control their schedule and have autonomy over their time and work location, mothers lose out. Ironically, this appears to be linked to them working part time, suggesting that, despite being understood as a form of flexible working, part time jobs provide less overall flexibility than full time jobs. Mothers are more likely than women without children to work overtime, again linked to working part time. This is likely because part time jobs have a full-time workload or are not financially viable, so additional paid hours are needed. This suggests both that part time jobs are not properly designed, not adequately paid, or both.

Mothers’ tendency to work part time also mostly accounts for their higher likelihood of working in all-round poor-quality jobs and their lower likelihood of working in all-round high-quality jobs.

¹ Green et al. (2024)



There is a 'fatherhood bonus' in some aspects of job quality.

Although fatherhood makes less difference to men's job quality than motherhood does to women's, our analysis also suggests a fatherhood 'bonus' in some areas, particularly flexibility, autonomy, and access to all-round high-quality jobs. For instance, in 2020/21, 45% of fathers said they had 'a great deal' of autonomy over what tasks to do at work, compared to 35% of mothers. A third of fathers said they had 'a great deal' of control over their working time and schedule, compared to a quarter of mothers. Such differences were not found between men and women without children.

Mothers and fathers make different job quality trade-offs.

Both mothers and fathers make job quality trade-offs, but of a very different nature. Mothers are more likely to sacrifice career progression and rewards in favour of control over their working time and flexibility. Fathers more commonly sacrifice family-friendly work schedules for high rewards and prospects. Mothers and fathers also explain and justify their job quality trade-offs in different ways.

However, in emphasising these trade-offs and their gendered nature, we should also remember that some mothers don't have the ability to make trade-offs: mothers are more likely to have jobs that are poor in all aspects, with no benefits whatsoever. Moreover, fathers are more likely to have all-round high-quality jobs, where no trade-offs are required.

Recommendations

1. Provide more support for working mothers
2. Improve the quality of part time jobs
3. Broaden the scope of flexible working and continue to make it more widely accessible
4. Conduct further research into the motherhood penalty in job quality



Introduction

Good quality jobs promote health and wellbeing, increase productivity, and reduce absenteeism.² In 2018, the government emphasised the importance of ‘good work’ as key to the UK’s industrial strategy.³ However, momentum was lost during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent cost of living crisis which has revealed and amplified massive inequalities in access to good jobs⁴. The newly elected Labour government has prioritised job quality, proposing improvements to workers’ rights, enhanced access to flexible working and family leave, and a ‘right to disconnect’. Against this background, maximising job quality is as important as it has ever been and a priority for policymakers, employers, unions and professional associations.

Parents face unique challenges in achieving job quality due to increased time pressure, the high cost of childcare, their changing needs, and gendered expectations. Yet parents’ job quality is an important influence on parenting behaviour and on the whole family’s wellbeing.⁵ For instance, parents’ non-standard work schedules have been shown to be detrimental for children’s educational attainment;⁶ while pressure and long hours are associated with work-life imbalance⁷ and familial conflict.⁸ Employers’ actions and employment policy on job quality therefore have the potential for far-reaching impact on society.

“Good work is more than employment. It is work that promotes dignity, autonomy and equality; work that has fair pay and conditions; work where people are properly supported to develop their talents and have a sense of community”⁹

Institute for the Future of Work, 2023

² Chandola & Zhang (2018); Preenen et al. (2017)

³ HM Government (2017)

⁴ Institute for the Future of Work (2021)

⁵ Perry-Jenkins (2022)

⁶ Betthäuser et al. (2023)

⁷ Boxall & Macky (2014)

⁸ Eby et al. (2005)

⁹ Institute for the Future of Work (2023)



What is job quality?

While there is consensus in the research literature that job quality comprises multiple dimensions, there is less agreement over exactly how we should measure it and which facets are most important.¹⁰ Figure 1 shows various aspects that could be considered.

In our selection of quantitative job quality indicators for this project, we were guided by three principles.¹¹ First, we only included measures that have the potential to impact workers' wellbeing.¹² Second, measures should focus on the objective attributes of the job (excluding, for example, job satisfaction, which is influenced by a worker's personal circumstances). Finally, while it is important to study individual aspects of job quality, we should also acknowledge its multi-dimensionality: there are a range of job attributes (good and bad) which can affect wellbeing, it is the interaction of these that matters,¹³ and it is only by studying several measures in tandem that we can truly understand job quality.

We also focused on dimensions that are available in up-to-date and high-quality data, as well as distinguishing between intrinsic and extrinsic job quality. 'Extrinsic' features of a good job relate to its core employment conditions including benefits, security and prospects for advancement, while 'intrinsic' job quality pertains to the day to day working environment.

¹⁰ Warhurst et al. (2017)

¹¹ Felstead et al. (2019)

¹² Green (2006)

¹³ Karasek (1979)



Figure 1. Dimensions of job quality.

Parenthood and job quality

Over the past 40 years, the UK has seen a steady rise in the proportion of women in employment, driven by the increased labour force participation of mothers. The rise has been particularly large among lone mothers and mothers of young children.¹⁴ The proportion of mothers in paid employment today stands at around 80% (see Figure 2), while fathers' participation has remained constant since 1996 at around 90%.

¹⁴ Roantree & Vira (2018)

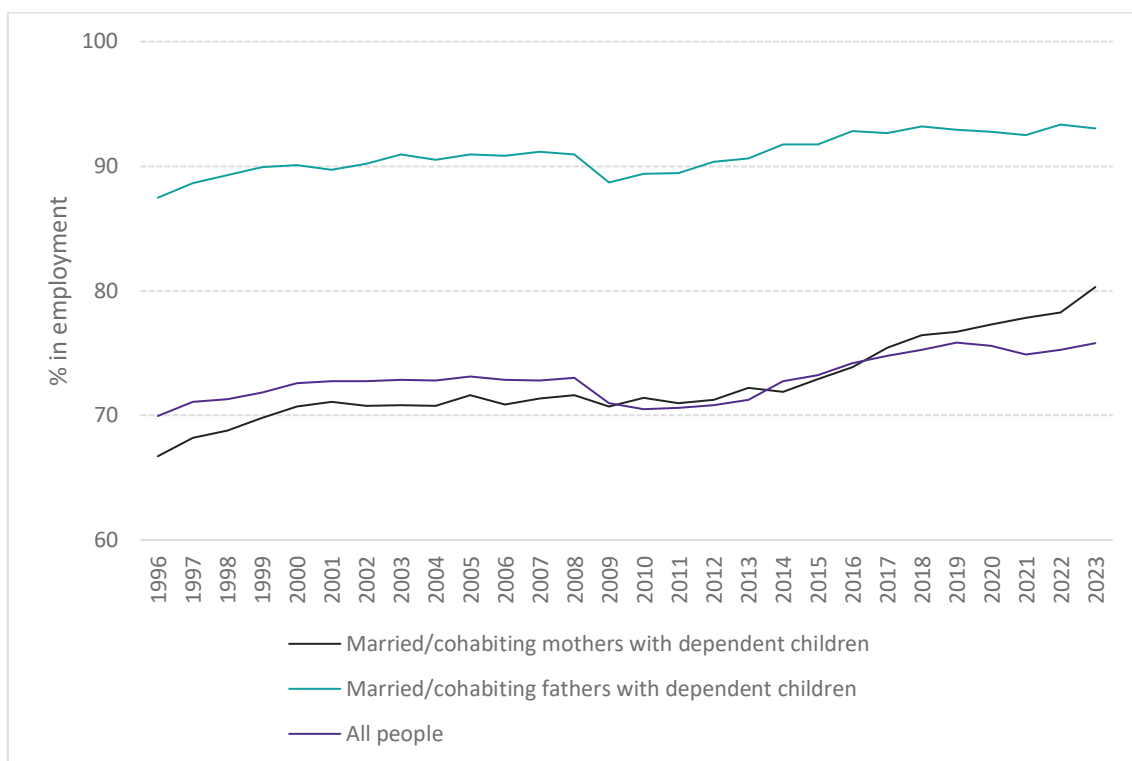


Figure 2. Percentage in employment by parental status, 1996-2023. Source: ONS (2024a)

Children’s age is a crucial factor shaping mothers’ employment. On initially becoming mothers, many women switch to part time hours. As shown in Figure 3, part time working is common among mothers of young children with almost half of mothers of 3–4-year-olds working part time. This rate declines when children start secondary school and more mothers transition back into full time work; however, a third of mothers of secondary school children still work part time. Regardless of their children’s age, only around 6% of fathers work part time.

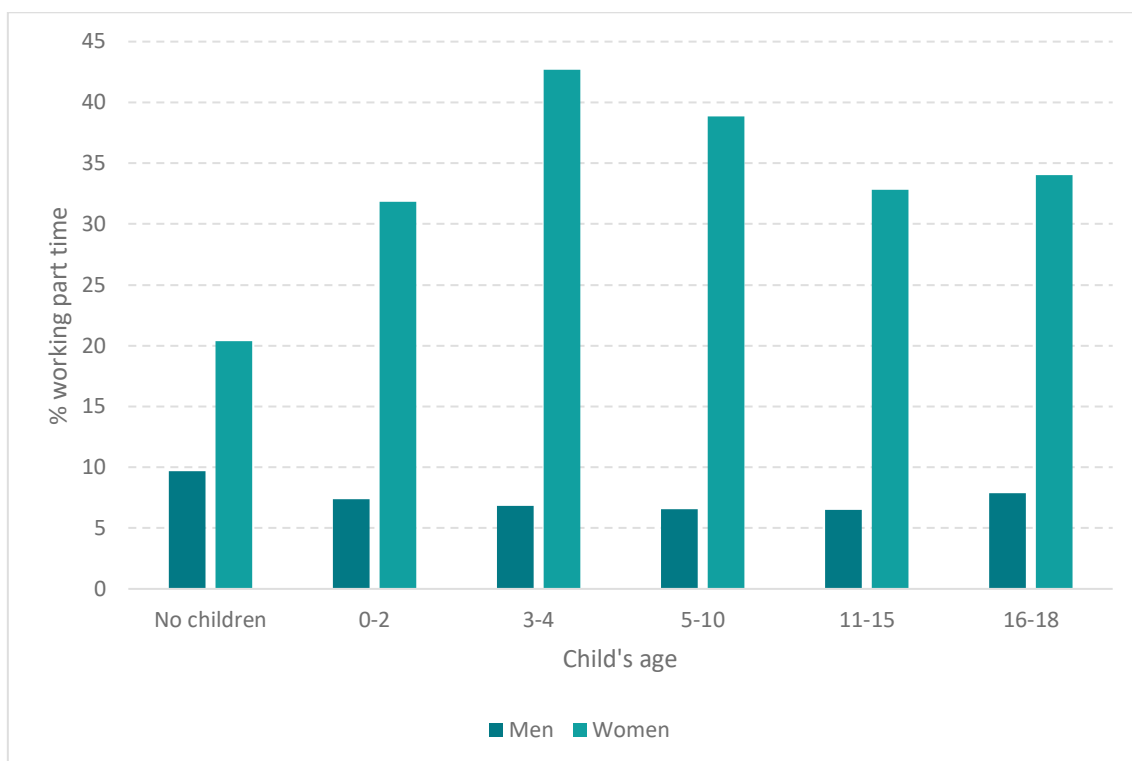


Figure 3. Percentage of adults working part time by age of youngest child, 2023. Source: ONS (2024b)

Parenthood fundamentally changes people’s expectations and experiences of work. Job quality is a useful framework with which to describe these changes since it captures the holistic experience of a job, which reflects multiple aspects of day-to-day working life and employment conditions. We have some knowledge on gender inequalities in job quality, but very little links this explicitly to parenthood. The motherhood penalty¹⁵ and fatherhood bonus¹⁶ in pay are well-researched; however, job quality has rarely been considered as an aspect of either.

¹⁵ Budig & England (2001)

¹⁶ Hodges & Budig (2010)



About the research

Who can have it all? Job quality and parenthood in the UK was a research project funded by the Nuffield Foundation from 2021-2024 and undertaken by researchers at King's College London and the University of East Anglia. It aimed to examine the relationship between parenthood and job quality in the UK, with a view to improving our understanding of the work-family interface. We undertook the following research activities, the findings of which are summarised in this report:

- We used data from the Skills and Employment Survey (SES) (1996-2017), UK Household Longitudinal Study (2010-2021) and Labour Force Survey (2019-2022) to explore time trends in job preferences and job quality for mothers, fathers and non-parents (Chapter 2).
- We used data from the UK Household Longitudinal Study (2017) to explore how multiple elements of job quality combine and are traded off against each other and how these trade-offs vary according to a person's gender and parenthood status (Chapter 3).
- In 2021, working in partnership with the work-life balance charity, Working Families, we conducted a series of six focus groups with diverse groupings of 27 working parents to explore their views on what makes a 'good job', particularly in the context of COVID-19 and associated disruption to working life and changing preferences around work (research referenced throughout the report).

In Chapter 2, we start by focusing on single dimensions of job quality and on mothers to start uncovering whether there is a motherhood penalty in job quality.



The motherhood penalty in job quality

About this chapter

In this chapter we analyse mothers' job quality across several dimensions, illustrating how this has evolved over time as mothers have become more integrated into the labour force over the past couple of decades. Using data from the Skills and Employment Survey, the UK Household Longitudinal Study, and the Labour Force Survey, we compare job quality for mothers, fathers, and non-parents, and explore how the age of children impacts on mothers' job quality. To complement the quantitative analysis, we also provide qualitative data from our focus groups.¹⁷

Key findings

1. Mothers are committed employees and want good jobs.
2. Some gender differences in job quality cut across parenthood status.
3. Compared to fathers, mothers have less autonomy at work.
4. Part time working explains some of the motherhood penalty.
5. Job quality challenges are heightened when children are young
6. There is a 'fatherhood bonus' in some aspects of job quality.

Why focus on a motherhood penalty?

While job quality is an issue for all employees, we argue it is particularly pertinent for working mothers. With high expectations both at work and at home, being a working mother today is extremely challenging. Increasing numbers of women are leaving the UK workforce (becoming economically inactive). According to the most recent data, 28.1% of women who are economically inactive cite long term ill health as the reason, overtaking 'looking after the family and home' and increasing by ten percentage points since 2014.¹⁸ While this is a new and poorly understood phenomenon, recent studies have started to highlight the link between job quality and retention within some female-dominated

¹⁷ For a more detailed report on our qualitative research, including its methodology, see GIWL et al. (2021)

¹⁸ ONS (2024c)

occupations in particular – teachers, for instance, have low levels of job autonomy, linked to poor job satisfaction and intentions to leave the profession.¹⁹

Our current knowledge on women’s job quality suggests it is better in some areas and worse in others: for instance, they have fewer promotion opportunities, less autonomy and report working harder, but also have more family-friendly working hours and safer workplaces.²⁰ Some studies suggest mothers, in particular, have an advantage in job security and working hours and schedules,²¹ but have less autonomy and are required to exert less mental effort at work.

The fact that women are increasingly citing their health as a reason for not doing paid work²² highlights the importance of gaining a better understanding of the experiences they are having in the workplace, with a view to improving retention. Keeping mothers in work is beneficial for their long-term health and wellbeing, including avoiding poverty in later life.²³ There are increasing numbers of female breadwinner families and maternal employment also shapes the intergenerational transfer of gender norms.²⁴ Moreover, the maternal workforce is an important contributor to countries’ economic wellbeing and progress.²⁵ Beyond retention, mothers’ job quality influences their parenting behaviour and family wellbeing.²⁶

Why is there a motherhood penalty?

Two theories - compensating differentials theory and gendered devaluation theory - may help us understand mothers’ job quality.

According to **compensating differentials theory**, mothers value job benefits and flexibility and are willing to sacrifice pay and promotion opportunities to access them. Any differences in job quality are a result of mothers’ preferences and mothers should do well when it comes to flexibility and benefits.

In contrast, **gendered devaluation theory** suggests that work undertaken by women and mothers has less cultural and societal value, and women have less power to change their working conditions. This implies that women’s jobs are likely to have lower job quality across the board.

¹⁹ Worth and Van den Brande (2020)

²⁰ Leschke & Watt (2014); Mühlau (2011); Gorman & Kmec (2007); Lindley (2016)

²¹ Piasna and Plagnol (2018)

²² The rise in economic inactivity has been greater for men than women but women are increasingly likely to cite ill health as the reason.

²³ Lacey et al. (2016); Vartanian & McNamara (2002)

²⁴ Kowalewska & Vitali (2021); Schmitz & Spiess (2022)

²⁵ Devercelli & Beaton-Day (2020)

²⁶ Perry-Jenkins (2022)



The role of part time jobs

We have seen that a large proportion of mothers work part time. Part time jobs in the UK have traditionally tended to occupy low status positions within the labour market. The propensity of mothers to work part time is driven by multiple factors including extremely high childcare costs,²⁷ poor paternity leave provision,²⁸ and unequal gendered division of household labour and childcare. Moreover, there are still strong social norms suggesting the best arrangement for heterosexual couples with children is for the father to work full time while the mother works part time.²⁹ Mothers' propensity to work part time is likely to be a contributing factor to their job quality.

Maternity discrimination

Maternity discrimination may also lead to a motherhood penalty in job quality. In our society, most people place a low value on motherhood when evaluating an individual's social status.³⁰ This has consequences for women's workplace experiences and treatment when they become mothers. At the sharp end, this can involve being fired while pregnant or on maternity leave. The new Labour government has proposed changes to outlaw such practices, but this will not address poor job quality among mothers who stay in their jobs. Mothers are routinely perceived by employers as less competent than other groups, and this can result in both formal and informal bias. Formal bias can include pay discrimination and bias in HR procedures such as promotion and performance appraisal, while informal bias includes poor treatment from colleagues or a lack of support.³¹ Mothers who work part time or flexibly may also be subject to flexibility stigma: the perception that flexible workers are less productive and committed.³²

Findings

Mothers are committed employees and want good jobs

Our analysis of data from the Skills and Employment Survey, supported by our qualitative research, shows that mothers are highly and increasingly committed to work and want the same things as other workers from their jobs.

Mothers' and fathers' preferences for different job features are largely the same (see Figure 4). Mothers highly value job security, with half saying this is 'essential', while 31 per cent say good pay is essential. Mothers are more likely than fathers to say that enjoyment is essential (50 per cent compared with 38 per cent of fathers). Both groups value using their abilities and initiative. Easy workload, good benefits and good prospects are the least valued job features by both mothers and fathers.

²⁷ OECD (2022)

²⁸ Koslowski (2023)

²⁹ Allen & Stevenson (2023)

³⁰ Ridgeway & Correll (2004)

³¹ Arena et al. (2023)

³² Chung & Van der Horst (2018)

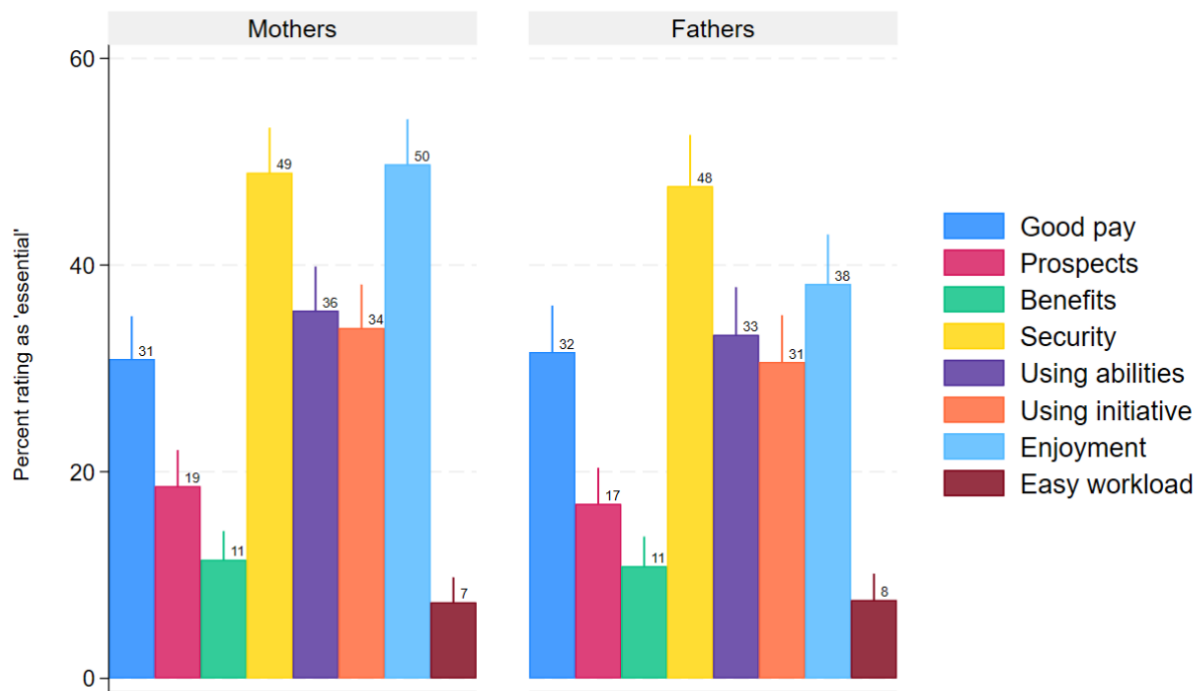



Figure 4. Job preferences by parenthood status, 2017. Source: Skills and Employment Survey

A key metric of work commitment is whether people say that they would continue to work even if they didn't need to financially. Over 70% of mothers say that they would. This refutes the widely held perception that mothers are less committed to work, the basis of maternity discrimination.

Over 70% of mothers say that they would continue to work even if they didn't need to financially.

Our qualitative research found that what parents value in a job shifts significantly after having children, with increased priority given to flexibility. However, echoing the quantitative findings above, parents also value job security, control, financial security and support from managers.

Mothers we spoke to mentioned being subject to inaccurate assumptions about what they wanted from work after becoming parents. They acknowledged that their needs and priorities had changed, but not necessarily in the way that employers assumed.



Assumptions included that they weren't interested in training and career progression, were less committed to their jobs, or wanted to work less.

“When you become a mum, sometimes ... the employer assumes, or my employer assumed, that I wasn't keen on the learning or the trainings. But obviously I still wanted to learn... I think it's about giving mothers the option for those who want to still progress to get those mentorship opportunities ... Just don't assume on behalf of us.”

Mother of 2 working in higher education

“... going from the top of my game, highly driven, viewed very highly before you have children, and return to work and there's less of an expectation on me now to even achieve because I'm a mother.”

Mother of 2 working in public services

These assumptions are often what lies behind maternity discrimination, a lack of access to career progression opportunities and low expectations and could be partly what is driving the motherhood penalty in job quality. For example, if mothers aren't trusted or viewed as competent, they will be given less autonomy and fewer opportunities to prove their ability and progress.

Employers also often assumed that flexible working – defined in quite a restricted way – was the central concern for mothers, neglecting other areas that might be important to them.

“Although we are working parents, and we need the flexibility, and we need the good pay... we also need jobs that are good for us. You know, we're not robots...we're not being greedy...we want decent roles.”

Mother of 2 working in healthcare

Some gender differences in job quality cut across parenthood status

Some job quality differences cut across parenthood status. Our analysis of job quality data from the UK Household Longitudinal Study shows that in some of the core working conditions, men have a better deal regardless of parenthood status. It is important to keep this in mind and to remember that gender inequalities at work affecting all women are distinct from motherhood penalties and should be tackled in a different way.³³

Figure 5 shows that all women are disadvantaged when it comes to receiving a bonus, which has changed little since 2010. Across the period, around 35-40 per cent of all men (fathers and non-fathers) say that they receive an annual bonus, whereas for women (mothers and non-mothers) this is around 20-25 per cent. Our further analysis shows that this is regardless of parenthood status and cannot be explained by age, education level, working hours or occupation.³⁴ Here, rather than a motherhood penalty, we see a straightforward gender difference that has changed little over the past decade.

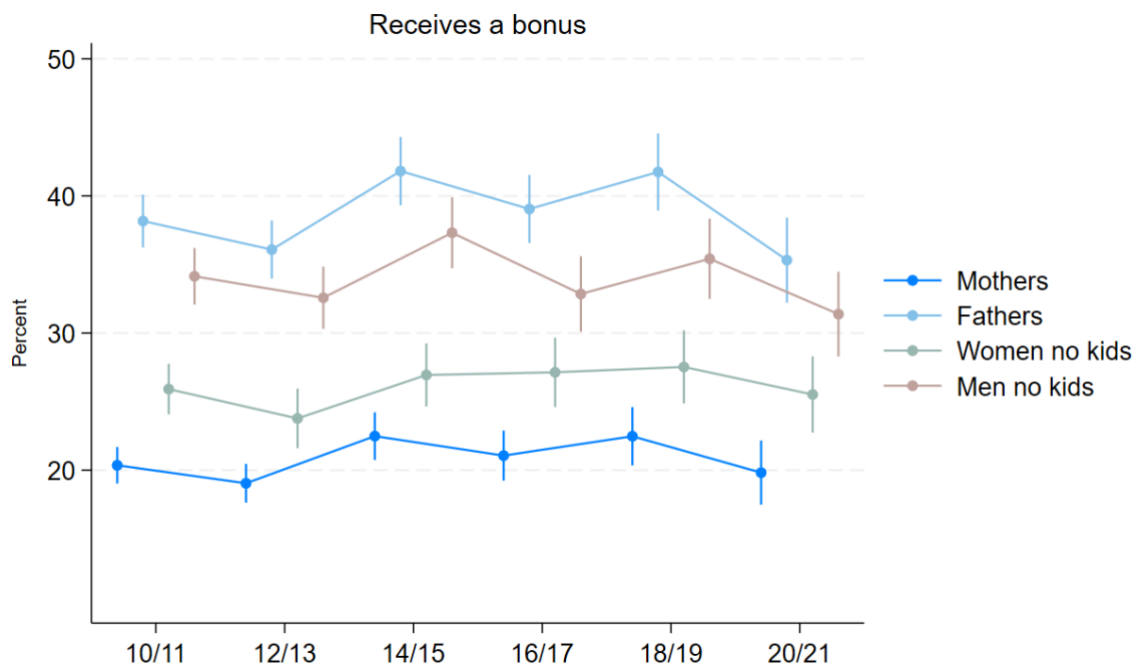


Figure 5. Trends in receiving an annual bonus by parenthood status, 2010-2021. Source: UK Household Longitudinal Study.

³³ Cha et al. (2023)

³⁴ See Appendix Figure A1.



Compared to fathers, mothers have less autonomy at work

Autonomy refers to the amount of decision-making power employees have over what tasks to do, when and how. Good jobs allow workers more autonomy and this contributes to wellbeing and retention since workers feel trusted. It is an especially important contributor to life satisfaction for women.³⁵

Autonomy is one of the areas of job quality showing decline over recent years, and falls into five categories:

- Task autonomy: control over what tasks to do
- Task order autonomy: control over the order of tasks
- Manner autonomy: control over how to do tasks
- Pace autonomy: control over pace of work
- Time autonomy: control over working time and schedules

Participants in the UKHLS were asked ‘In your current job, how much influence do you have over...[each type of autonomy mentioned above]’. Figure 6 shows trends from 2010-2021 in workers saying they have ‘a great deal’ of each type of autonomy. Fathers generally have the highest levels of autonomy and that this has changed little over the period, leaving mothers at a comparative disadvantage over the whole period, particularly when it comes to task and time autonomy. In 2020/21, 45% of fathers said they had a great deal of autonomy over what tasks to do, compared with 35% of mothers. A third of fathers said they had ‘a great deal’ of control over their working time and schedule, compared to a quarter of mothers.

³⁵ Wheatley (2017)

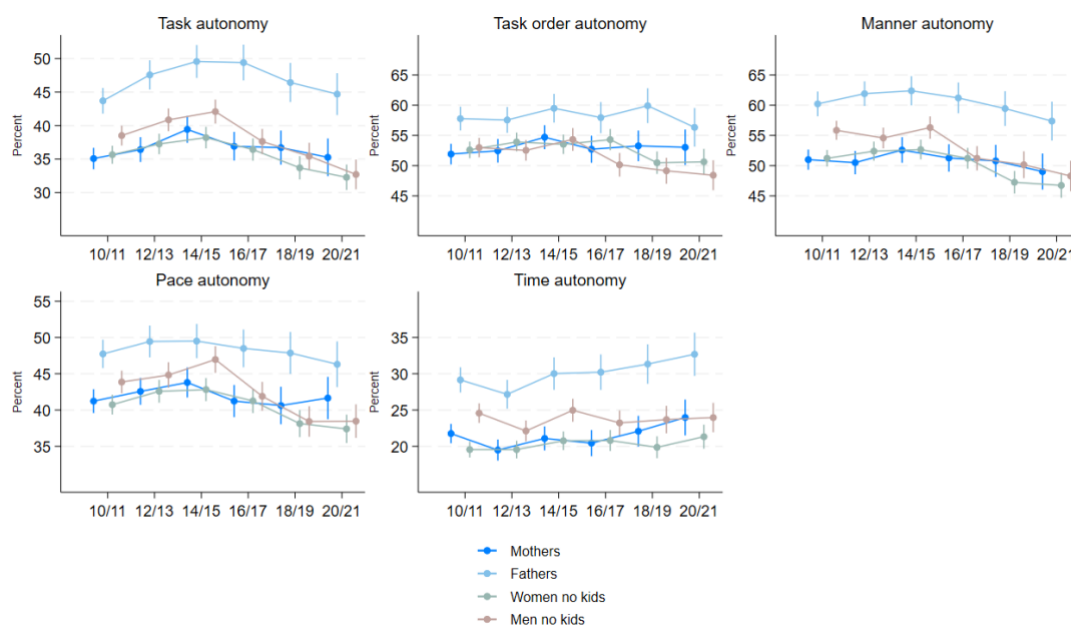


Figure 6. Trends in autonomy by parenthood status, 2010-2021. Source: UK Household Longitudinal Study.

We contextualised these differences in autonomy by:

- Breaking down the motherhood penalty: comparing (1) mothers with non-mothers and (2) mothers and fathers, as well as men and women with no children.
- Examining how the age of the children impacts on differences, comparing men and women who have no children, and those for whom the youngest child is under 5 (preschool), aged 5-11 (primary aged) and 11-16 (secondary aged).
- Examining the role of further contextual factors such as age, education level, working hours and occupation via regression models which control for these factors to see how far they account for the differences originally observed.

As shown in Figure 7, compared to fathers, mothers with preschool children are 10 percentage points more likely to say they have ‘no control’ over their working time, and 14 percentage points less likely to say they have ‘a lot of control’ over their work tasks. Those with primary aged children are 13 percentage points more likely to say they have ‘no control’, and 10 percentage points less likely to say they have ‘a lot of control’ over their work tasks. Even by the time the youngest child is at secondary school this gap remains, with mothers 10 percentage points more likely than fathers to say they have ‘no control’ over their working time. These differences appear to be explained by differences in working hours for mothers³⁶.

³⁶ See Appendix Figure A2.

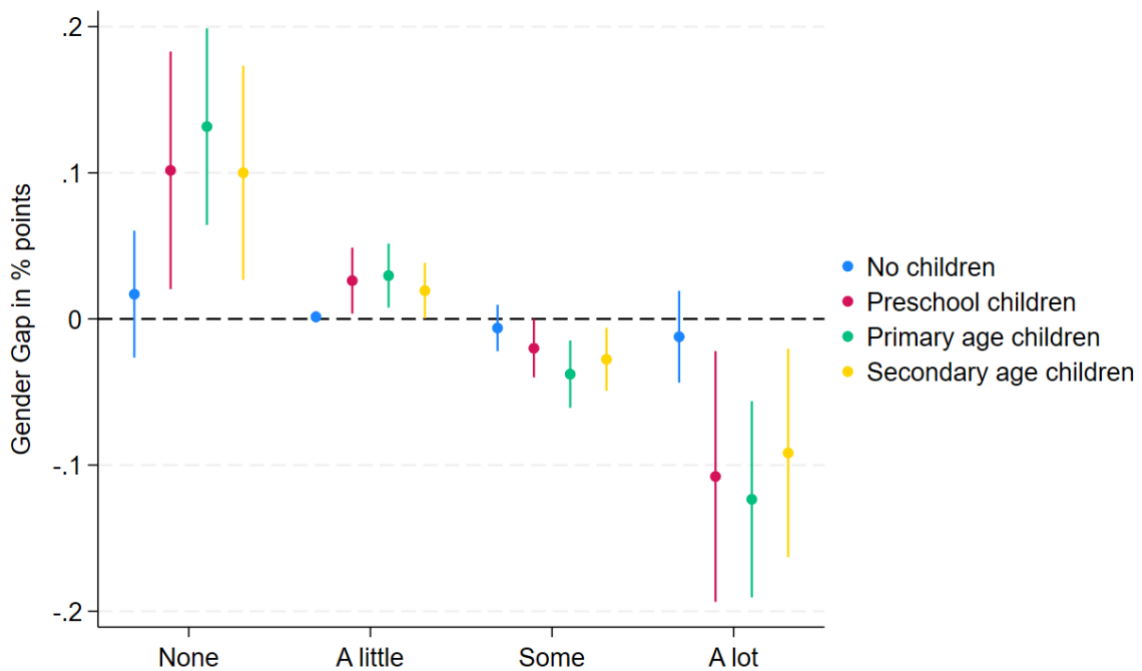



Figure 7. Differences between men and women in time autonomy (‘In your job, how much influence do you have over the time you start and finish your working day?’), by parenthood status, 2020/21. Source: UK Household Longitudinal Study.

Control over time and schedules was a topic that came up repeatedly in the focus groups as vital for parents but rarely considered by employers. Last minute changes and demands are especially problematic for parents who rely completely on formal childcare, especially single parents. This need for time autonomy is closely linked to the idea of preserving clear boundaries between work and family life, which was also a key concern for parents we spoke to.

“Before kids it was a case of: I’ll drop everything for my employer and do whatever it takes to get the project or work done... so whilst before I might think, I’ve got 10-12 hours to get this task done, now... that’s it, I have to leave at this particular point and pick the kids up”

Mother of 2 working in finance



“There's always something that goes wrong at 4 o'clock, or there's always a reason I can't get away on time and I have to really force myself now, because there's nobody else to collect my child from nursery. And that makes me feel quite guilty that I'm leaving my job half done, if that makes sense, I feel like I'm not as committed as I used to be”

Mother of 1 working in food manufacturing

Part time working explains some of the motherhood penalty

Our further analysis examined the role of working hours in job quality differences, using regression models. Working part time is a significant factor contributing to the motherhood penalty in various areas of job quality. For instance, compared to women with no children, women with preschool children are 12 percentage points more likely to work overtime and those with primary age children are 15 percentage points more likely to work overtime (Figure 8). The models show that this seems to be explained by mothers of pre-school children working part time³⁷.

Compared to women without children, those with preschool children are 12 percentage points more likely to work overtime hours, and those with primary age children are 15 percentage points more likely to.

These results suggest that part time pay is inadequate, and mothers need to pick up overtime hours to make it financially viable. This suggests that part time jobs are not working well for mothers of young children.

³⁷ This is suggested by the fact that the coefficient for parenthood status from model 3, where working hours are added to the model, (the green markers in Figure 8) is no longer statistically significant - there is no difference between mothers and non-mothers when working hours are accounted for, though a difference remains for mothers of primary age children.

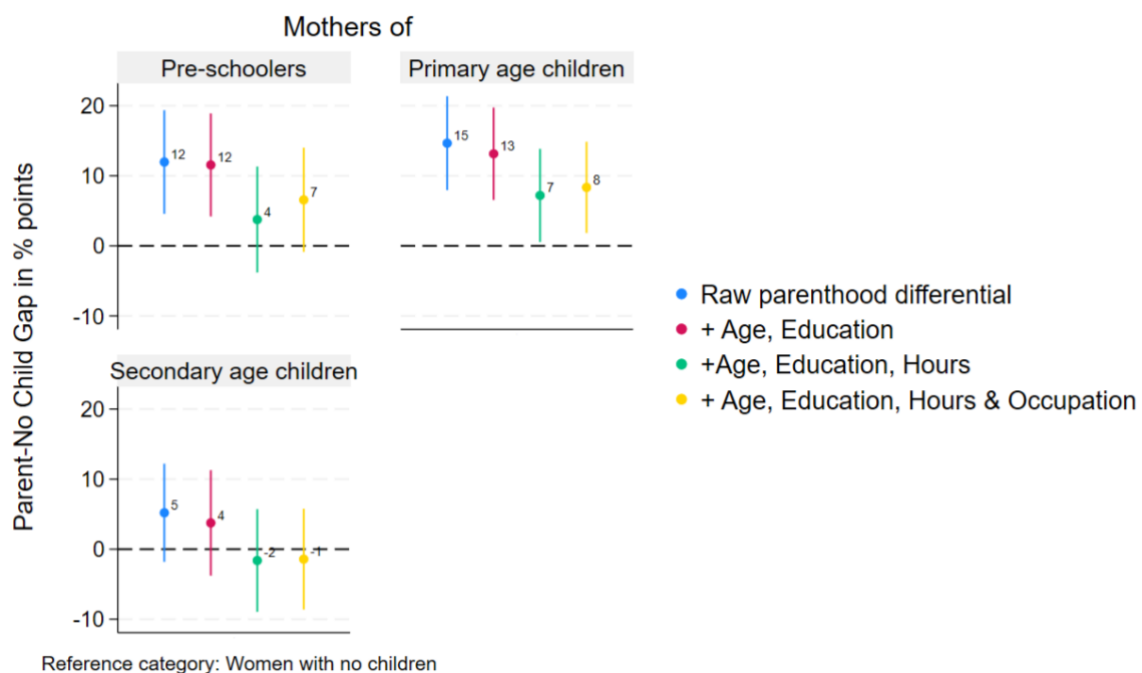


Figure 8. Differences between mothers and non-mothers in working overtime. Source: UK Household Longitudinal Study.


Many of the mothers we spoke to also told us that working part time, though sold as a form of flexibility, did not necessarily make life easier to manage.

“Even switching to part time, I was always working, and I was always stressed, and I was always on edge, working late...”

Mother of 4 working in mental health

It is mothers’ hours which also explain to some extent their relative lack of autonomy at work, as well as disadvantages in schedule and location flexibility. For instance, mothers of primary and secondary age children are less likely to have location flexibility than women without children. Moreover, women with secondary age children are 12 percentage points less likely to have access to schedule flexibility compared to male counterparts. This difference disappears when taking account of working hours. This suggests that the part time jobs that women with children often do are less flexible in terms of location than full time jobs.

This was reflected in our qualitative research. Some parents had actively chosen to work part time, and it was working well for them. But sometimes part time work was a



compromise because workplaces did not offer other types of flexibility, such as flexible scheduling. There was not always a desire to work less, but to have greater control over working hours. Several mothers had experienced multiple challenges and resistance in accessing the forms of flexible working that truly worked for them.

As a result, several had transitioned to freelance self-employment as they felt this was the only way to gain control over their hours while still working full time.

While becoming self-employed may deliver the required flexibility for some, it is obviously not possible for all workers. Moreover, recent research cautions against self-employment as a solution to mothers' poor job quality. The study finds that the transition to self-employment can increase working hours and domestic responsibilities for mothers, thereby entrenching inequitable gender roles.³⁸ Self-employed mothers spoke about some benefits to their situation, chiefly the flexibility and control, but also struggles in terms of the constant need to secure work and keep clients happy, leading to feelings of insecurity and anxiety.

"I don't mind the volume of work, but I need for it to be on my terms so that I can fit things in around it."

Mother of 2, self-employed consultant

"I don't want to have to take a pay cut... So, I'm more than happy to work at night once the kids are in bed and that's been tried and tested. To do that without dropping down to, like, 0.8 or 0.7. Because I don't see that there is really a need for me to cut my hours in that way."

Mother of 2, self-employed consultant

³⁸ Dinh et al. (2021)

Job quality challenges are heightened when children are young

The reduction in job quality hits mothers of young children hardest. However, some challenges continue for mothers of older children. Here we break down the main motherhood penalties in job quality according to the age of children.



Mothers of preschool children:

Compared to fathers in the same group:

- 12 percentage points less likely to have salaried jobs
- 12 percentage points more likely to work overtime
- 10 percentage points more likely to say they have ‘no control’ over their working time
- 13 percentage points less likely to say they have ‘a lot of control’ over their work tasks

Compared to women without children:

- 12 percentage points more likely to work overtime



Mothers of primary aged children

Compared to fathers in the same group:

- 5 percentage points less likely to have a permanent job
- 10 percentage points less likely to have a salaried job.
- 13 percentage points more likely to say they have ‘no control’ over their working time
- 10 percentage points less likely to say they have ‘a lot of control’ over their work tasks.

Compared to women without children:

- 15 percentage points more likely to work overtime



Mothers of secondary aged children

Compared to fathers in the same group:

- 10 percentage points more likely to say they have ‘no control’ over their working time,
- 12 percentage points less likely to have access to schedule

Compared to women without children:

- less likely to have location flexibility.

There is a ‘fatherhood bonus’ in some aspects of job quality.

On several measures of job quality, fathers were advantaged compared to mothers, and in some instances to all other groups (i.e. mothers; men and women without children). For instance, fathers are more likely than other groups to be paid a salary (as opposed to being paid by the hour or other methods of payment), with 80 per cent being paid a salary in 2020/21, compared to 69 per cent of mothers and 66 per cent of non-parents. We found high levels of job security across all groups, with over 90% holding a permanent job across the period; however, fathers had significantly higher levels of job security than all other groups on this measure (Figure 9).

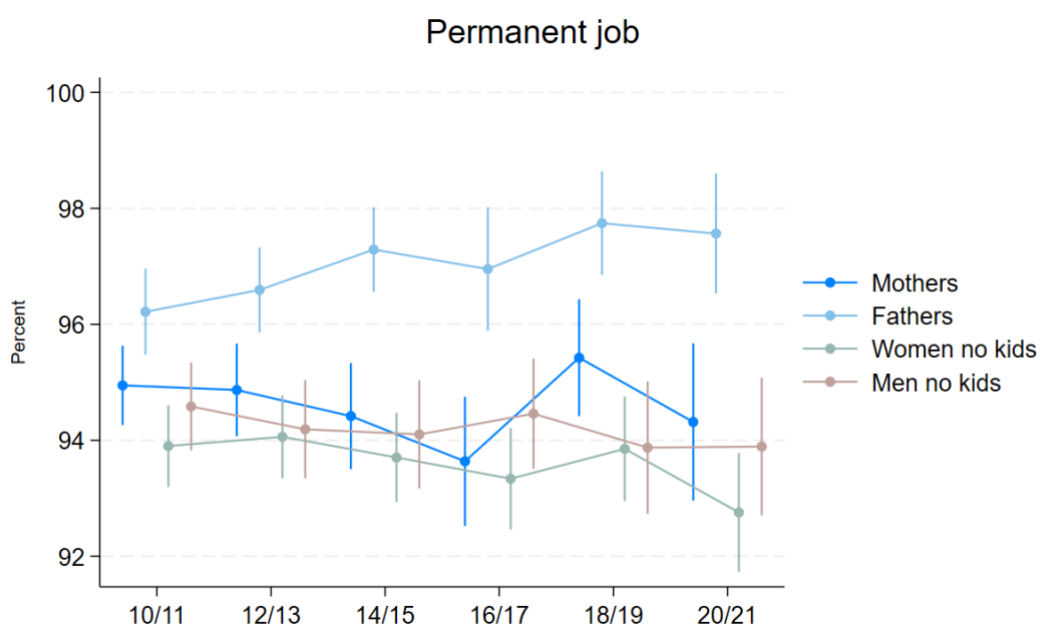


Figure 9. Trends in having a permanent job by parenthood status, 2010-2021. Source: UK Household Longitudinal Study.

Fathers generally have the highest levels of autonomy and that this has changed little over the period. In 2020/21, 45% of fathers said they had ‘a great deal’ of autonomy over what tasks to do at work, compared to 35% of mothers. A third of fathers said they had ‘a great deal’ of control over their working time and schedule, compared to a quarter of mothers.

When it comes to location flexibility, whilst this has been increasing across the period for all groups, especially since the pandemic, fathers have the best access - 30% of fathers said they had this in 2020/21, compared to 23 % of mothers. In terms of schedule flexibility, fathers again have the best access to this compared to other groups, with around 42% saying they can control their own schedules in 2020/21 compared to 36% of mothers.

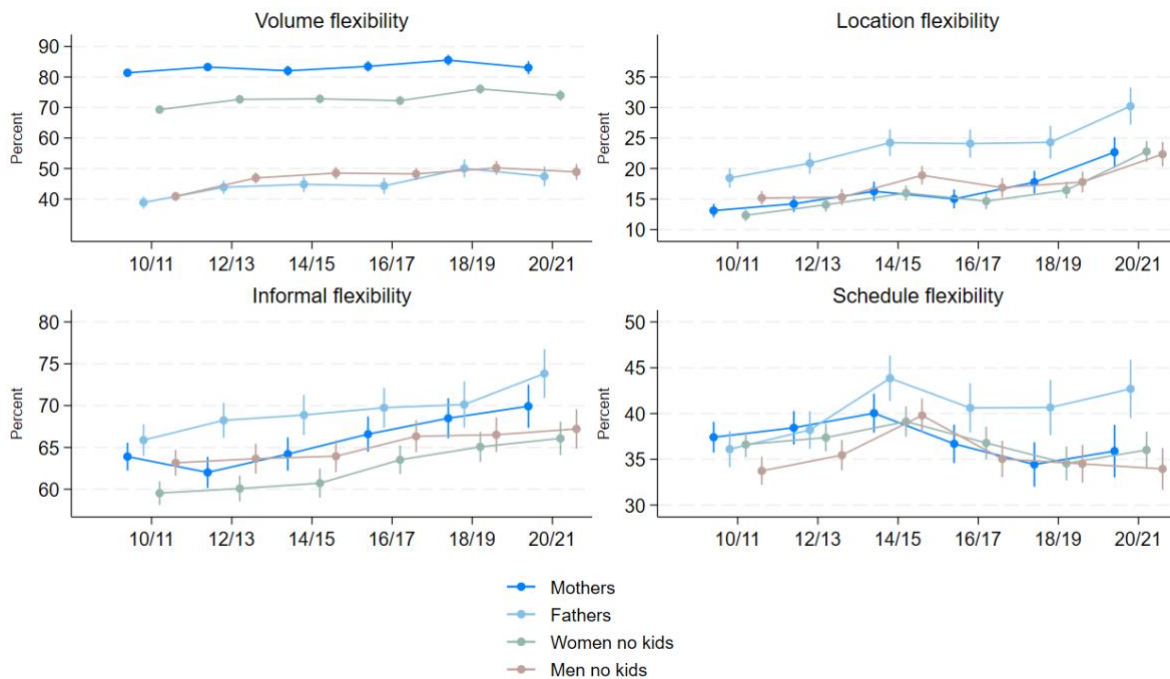



Figure 10. Trends in flexibility by parenthood status, 2010-2021. Source: UK Household Longitudinal Study.

Within research on the fatherhood bonus in pay, a recurrent question has been whether better paid men are more likely to become fathers, or whether becoming a father leads to a pay increase, due to fathers being perceived as more committed, competent and deserving of higher pay compared to other groups. Recent UK analysis³⁹ claims that any fatherhood bonus in wages is largely due to ‘positive selection’ of higher-earning men, or men with higher earning potential, into fatherhood. It could be that men with better job quality are also more likely to become fathers and similarly the reverse could be true for mothers. However, to identify such a phenomenon would require further research using longitudinal data.

Within our qualitative research, few fathers felt they had been treated better at work or received additional benefits because of their fatherhood status. In fact, many felt that this was barely recognised by employers and rarely even mentioned. For fathers who wanted to be involved in their children’s caregiving, many felt that this was not understood or accounted for by employers and a clear distinction was made between flexibility to enhance performance and flexibility for the purposes of childcare, with latter seen less favourably, echoing previous research⁴⁰.

³⁹ Mari (2019)

⁴⁰ Chung & Van der Horst (2020)



“I think it gets very gendered in terms of my caring responsibilities and the lack of understanding of that role. I feel under pressure to be present [at work], and so that’s kind of an ongoing challenge really trying to negotiate that, make that work”

Father of 2 working in higher education

However, a perceived need to provide financially and provide security had motivated the same participant to pursue better opportunities.

“I think for me when I think about my career and going into parenting, I think I had a lot of freedom in my work where I could move around and work in different countries and all of that kind of stuff, and that had to stop as soon as I had children...my first thought when we had children was that I needed to have some kind of permanent post.”

Father of 2 working in higher education

In this sense, social pressures informed by a ‘male breadwinner’ bias could also drive parenthood-based differences in job quality.. So, although fathers do seem to have better job quality in some areas, they are also prevented from fully optimising this due to the combination of increased expectations and a lack of understanding and accommodation of involved fatherhood by employers.



Parenthood and job quality trade-offs

About this chapter

The previous chapter focused on mothers and on individual measures of job quality. However, there are limitations to this approach given that job quality is driven by the combination of different factors. In this chapter we use data from the UK Household Longitudinal Study and construct a multi-dimensional measure of job quality to better understand how job quality differences impact men and women and the trade-offs they make. For a more detailed report on this analysis and its methodology, please see Jones et al. (2023). In this chapter, we also include findings from our qualitative focus groups to contextualise the findings.

Key Findings

1. Part time jobs are much more likely to be poor quality.
2. Mothers are more likely than fathers and non-parents to work in low reward jobs with high control over time.
3. Mothers are more likely than fathers and non-parents to work in all-round poor-quality jobs.
4. Fathers are more likely than mothers to work in all-round good quality jobs.
5. Fathers are much more likely to work in jobs with high rewards with long working hours than mothers.

Job quality trade-offs

As previously noted, there are multiple components of job quality, which encompass the working conditions of a job (including contract type and working hours) as well as the resources it provides to workers (such as pay, security, benefits, flexibility, opportunities to progress and autonomy). Some elements of job quality can be improved via ‘soft’ interventions while others require more regulation and policy change. It is important to take a holistic view of job quality because most jobs include both positive and negative elements. Also, components reinforce one another: for example, managerial support may enable access to flexible working. Some have an outside impact on workers: for example, the positive

effects of autonomy and control over work schedules may be insufficient to counteract the negative effects of long or unsocial hours.⁴¹

In our research we were interested in the trade-offs and compromises parents make: which aspects of job quality they can achieve and which ones they are more likely to lose. We explored this using both quantitative and qualitative data.

For our quantitative research, we used data on UK employees' job quality from the UK Household Longitudinal Study and a technique called latent class analysis to identify sub-groups with qualitatively different job quality profiles.⁴² This technique works by grouping individuals with similar response patterns across the range of job quality indicators.

Using multiple indicators of job quality, we found six main job quality types, summarised below and described in more detail in Jones et al. (2023). We then analysed the likelihood of holding a job of each type according to gender and parenthood status, and the role of working hours, sector and occupation in explaining any differences.

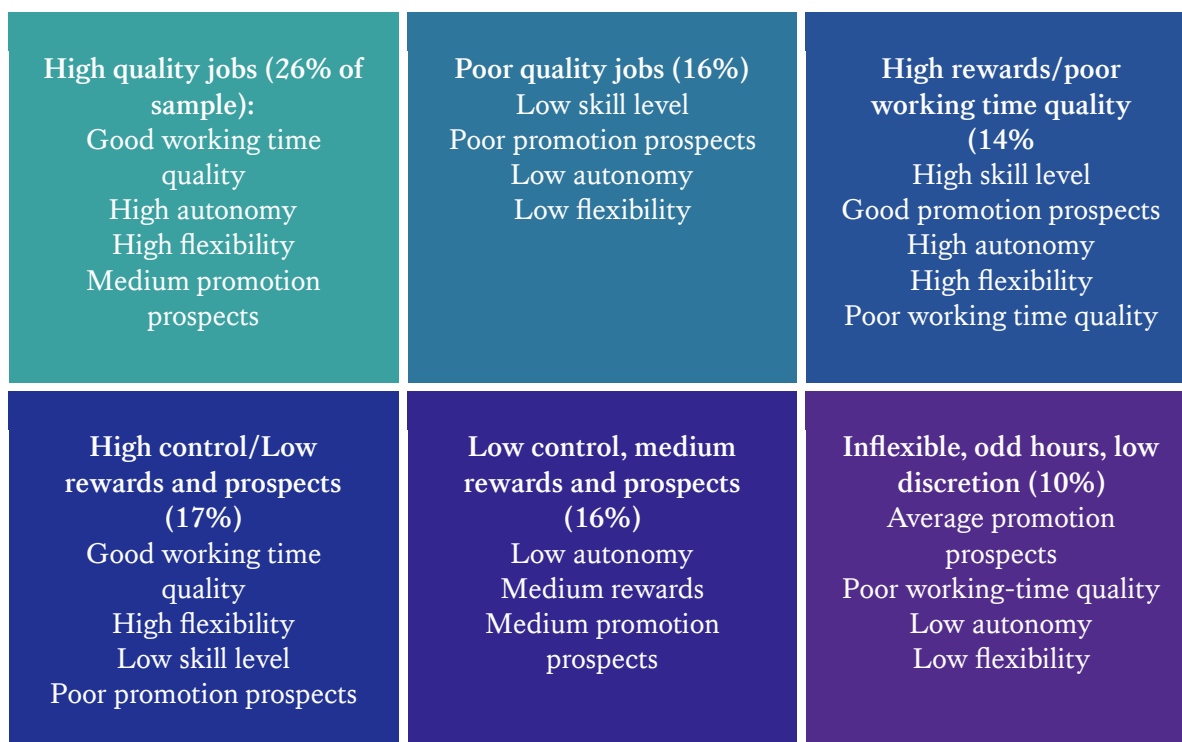



Figure 11. Job quality types and their most prominent features. Source: UK Household Longitudinal Study

⁴¹ Charlesworth et al. (2014)

⁴² Eurofound (2017); Holman (2013)



Two of the groups of jobs combine either high or low scores on most job quality variables and can be labelled as high- or poor-quality jobs. The other four job quality classes combine aspects of job quality in ways that appear to reflect trade-offs, combining both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ aspects.

A *high prospect, high reward class with poor quality working time* combines excellent access to training and promotion prospects with a relatively high chance of working long overtime and weekends. Women are generally less likely to have jobs in this class than men, a difference which is exacerbated by parenthood and widens with the age of the youngest child. This gender gap for parents persists even when hours, sector and occupation are controlled for.

Jobs in the category labelled *high control class with low rewards and prospects* score poorly in terms of skills and promotion prospects and have low access to more formal types of flexible working, yet workers have high levels of control over the nature and timing of their work and are unlikely to work overtime.

The remaining two job types include jobs with *Low control, medium rewards and prospects* and *Inflexible odd hours with low discretion* which also combine both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ aspects, with women more likely to be employed in the former and men in the latter. Parenthood is not a differentiator amongst women or men in terms of likelihood of employment in these jobs. In the former class, gender differences are mostly driven by sector, and gaps remain even when our models include a full set of controls (age, education, hours, sector, occupation).

We explored these job quality types, which represent different kinds of job quality trade-offs, with our qualitative research participants by asking them to rate the attractiveness of various hypothetical jobs combining good and bad job quality elements in similar ways to the above typology (Figure 11) and reflect on their own experiences. We were interested in exploring whether parents had indeed made these sorts of job quality ‘trade-offs’ or whether it was possible to achieve multiple components of job quality simultaneously.

The discussions showed that working parents sometimes make painful sacrifices to secure newly prioritised elements of job quality. For many of our participants, it is seemingly impossible to combine flexibility with other desirable aspects of a job, like pay and opportunities for career progression. They were deeply mindful of the trade-offs they are making to secure flexible work. For others, the security and control they desired had come at a cost.



Sacrificing pay and progression for flexibility

Several participants who benefited from flexible working mentioned that they had sacrificed pay to achieve this. This was mainly brought up in the context of reduced or flexible hours (rather than location flexibility). Pay had fallen because they had shifted from a higher paid job, where flexibility was either perceived or known to be unavailable or hard to access, into a job where flexibility was openly available, which was also lower paid. Several participants recognised that, with their skills and experience, they could earn more in another [less flexible] job, yet they were unwilling to give up their current flexible working arrangements, so were in a sense trapped. We saw evidence of both mothers and fathers making this type of trade-off. However, fathers tended to speak of such trade-offs in a more positive light, whereas for mothers, it was clear they were unwanted.

“I’ve absolutely compromised on salary... my salary’s gone down after I had children and that the trade-off in order to gain greater flexibility.”

Mother of 2, self-employed consultant

Sacrificing security and job benefits for flexibility

Unlike the trade-off between flexibility and progression and pay, which was mentioned by many participants across industries, the relationship between flexible working and other job quality characteristics is more complex and seemed to vary by industry. For example, some mentioned that finding a part-time or flexible hours job with a permanent contract and good benefits was difficult in their industry.

Sacrificing career progression for job security

Other types of trade-offs, not explicitly involving flexibility, also occur in the transition to parenthood. Several parents stated their strong desire for job security once they became parents. To secure this they had often sacrificed career progression, for example by leaving a job or position that had more prospects but where there was less stability. Job security and financial security are linked since the predictability of having a consistent monthly salary is considered important in the context of family demands.

Part time jobs are much more likely to be poor quality

Figure 12 shows the proportion of employees in each job quality type described in Figure 10, split by their working hours. It shows that employees working part time are much more likely to be working in poor quality jobs (32%, compared to 11% of full time workers). This suggests that part time jobs are more likely to be poor quality across multiple dimensions: to have low autonomy and flexibility as well as poor promotion prospects and skill levels, among other dimensions. Meanwhile, double the proportion of full time employees hold jobs classed as high quality – 30%, compared to just 15% of part time employees. Part time workers are also more likely to hold jobs classed as ‘high control with low rewards and prospects’ (35%, compared to 13% of full timers).

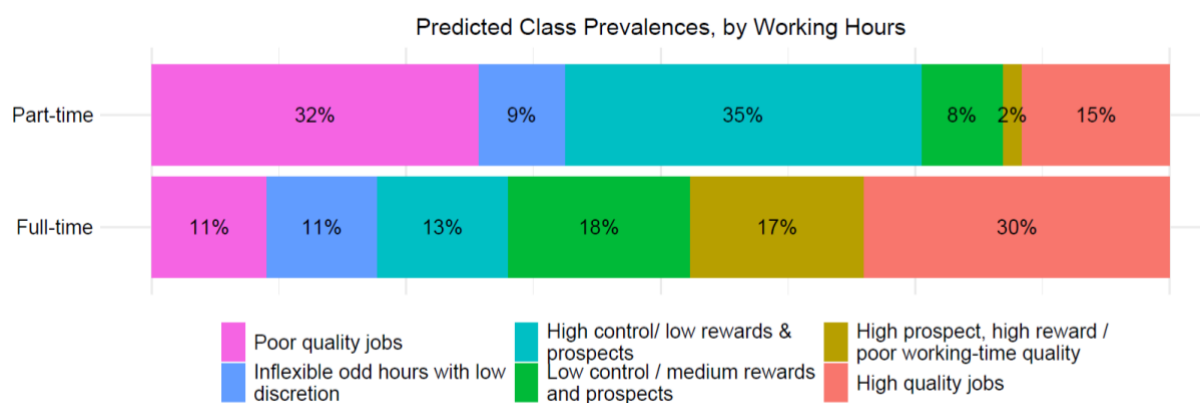


Figure 12. Job quality types by working hours. Source: UK Household Longitudinal Study

Parents in our qualitative research also reflected on the lack of prospects and other, multiple poor working conditions they had experienced in part time jobs.

“I have been openly told that if you work part time, then there's only a certain level that you can reach in the business”

Mother of 1 working in fashion

“Going from full time to part time was quite difficult because then finding a permanent contract with good benefits and decent pay was a lot harder to do than if I’d gone for a full time position”

Mother of 2 working in tech

Mothers are more likely than fathers and non-parents to work in low reward jobs with high control over time.

Reflecting the common trade-off described by our qualitative research participants, we found that mothers of pre-school and school aged children are more likely than fathers to have jobs which may have low rewards but do enable high levels of control over time (the job type labelled *High control, low rewards and prospects*). Mothers of primary aged children are the most likely group to have these jobs: almost a third of whom hold jobs in this class (Figure 13). A mother of a primary aged child is 12.9pp more likely than a father with a similar-aged child to be employed in this type of job. Comparing mothers to women without children (not shown in Figure 13), women with primary school aged children are over twice as likely as women without children to hold this type of job.

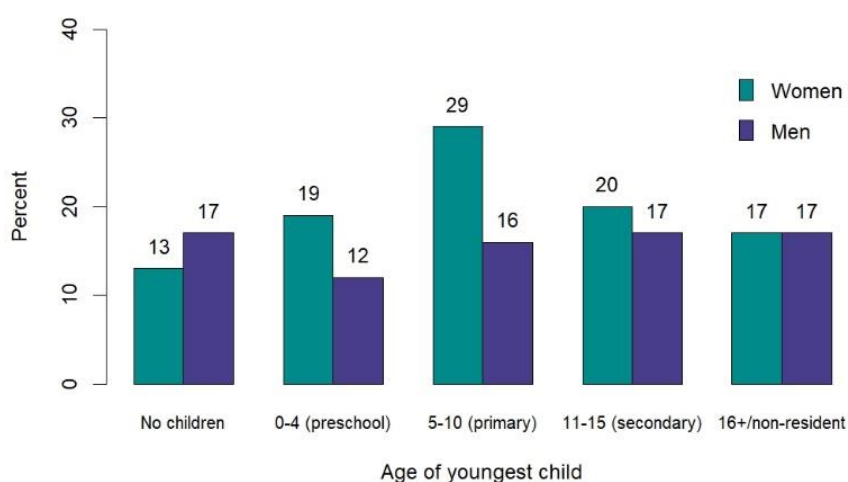


Figure 13. Percentage of women and men with high control over working hours but low rewards and prospects - by age of youngest child. Source: UK Household Longitudinal Study

Multiple participants in our qualitative research described the common perception that it is not possible to achieve career progression while working in a way that is other than full time standard hours. Some parents have therefore accepted that while working flexibly, they will be ‘stuck’ at a certain level. Several attributed this view to the lack of respect their employers have for part time employees and a working culture where ‘career success’ is inextricably linked to full-time standard working hours.

Mothers are more likely than fathers and non-parents to work in all-round poor-quality jobs

However, while the ‘high control-low rewards’ jobs described above do have some benefits in terms of their flexibility, mothers are also significantly more likely than fathers and non-mothers to have all-round poor-quality jobs – where there are few extrinsic or intrinsic benefits to the role, as shown in Figure 14. While there is no difference between men and women without children, women with children are between 4-8 percentage points more likely than fathers of similar aged children to hold poor-quality jobs. Compared to women without children (not shown in Figure 14), mothers of primary school aged children are 11.1 pp less likely than women without children to have these types of jobs. In both instances, this difference is mostly accounted for by differences in working hours. Once we control for part time hours there is no statistically significant relationship with parenthood⁴³.

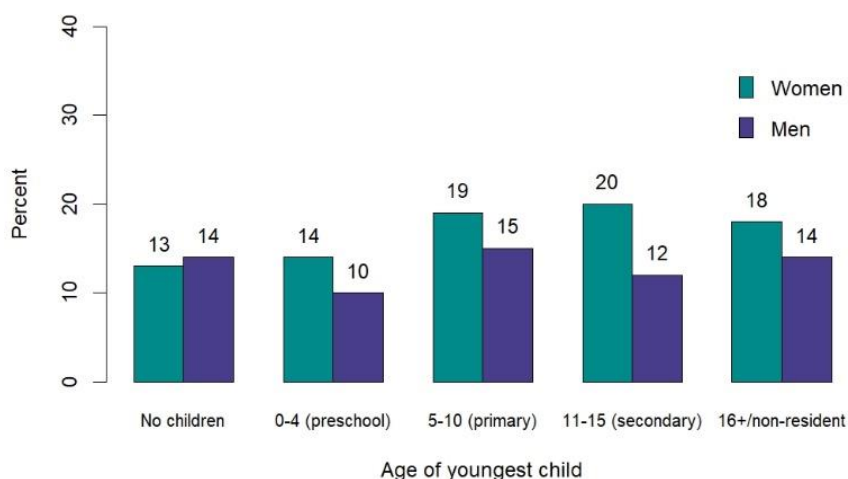


Figure 14. Percentage of women and men in poor quality jobs - by age of youngest child. Source: UK Household Longitudinal Study

⁴³ See our analysis in Jones et al. (2023)

Fathers are more likely than mothers to work in all-round high-quality jobs.

Our analysis also reveals a fatherhood ‘bonus’ in access to all-round high-quality jobs, wherein no trade-offs are required. While more women than men without children work in these jobs, among parents there is a clear and significant gender gap (Figure 15). As with poor-quality jobs, this difference is almost completely explained by mothers’ higher likelihood of part time working hours. However, in final models, taking into account working hours, sector and occupation, mothers of primary age children were still less likely to be employed in high-quality jobs, suggesting there is an additional disadvantage they face that is not explained by these factors. Though this difference could be caused by maternity discrimination on the one hand, or positive evaluations of fathers on the other, further research would be needed to establish this.

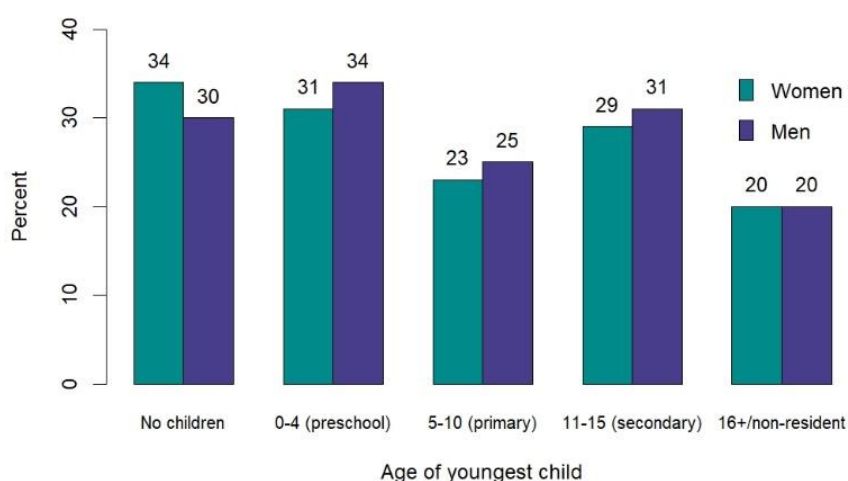


Figure 15. Percentage of women and men in high quality jobs - by age of youngest child.
Source: UK Household Longitudinal Study

“People don’t talk about your children... when I asked for the support from a manager, it’s like, why? Where do you need to go? Why do you need time off? What is your priority? Can your wife not pick up the children from school?”

Father of 2, charity sector

Fathers are much more likely to work in jobs with long hours and high rewards than mothers

Perhaps the most striking of all is the difference between mothers and fathers in jobs with that combine long hours with high rewards (Figure 16), representing a different kind of trade-off. It is here that the gender gap is most evident, with fathers 12 to 18 percentage points more likely than mothers to hold these jobs. For instance, a father of a primary age child is 16pp more likely than a mother with a similar-aged child to be employed in this type of job.

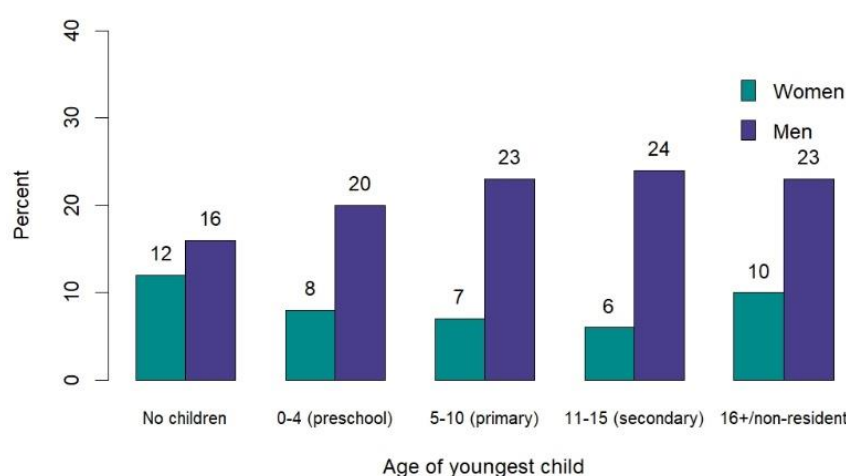


Figure 16. Percentage of women and men in jobs with long hours but high prospects and high rewards – by age of youngest child. Source: UK Household Longitudinal Study

While this could be seen as reflecting a ‘fatherhood bonus’ since fathers with this job type have higher levels of extrinsic rewards, there is some ambivalence due to the trade-off with working hours, which could be problematic for fathers who want to be involved in caregiving. This is consistent with other evidence⁴⁴ and possibly linked to fathers’ poor access to flexible working, especially types which reduce overall working hours.⁴⁵ Reflecting this, in focus groups, men who wanted to be involved fathers said that they felt that they face resistance and gendered assumptions within the workplace when they asked for greater flexibility or reduced hours.

⁴⁴ Eurofound (2020)

⁴⁵ Cook et al. (2021)



Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

The transition to parenthood has become a central focus within research on gender inequality in the workplace, yet up to now, there has been little evidence on gender and parenthood-based differences in job quality.

In this project, we explored differences in multiple aspects of job quality according to parenthood status in the UK. We particularly focused on whether there is a ‘motherhood penalty’, by comparing mothers, fathers, men, and women without children on both individual measures of job quality as well as our own multi-dimensional job quality typology. We investigated the role of working hours, occupation, and sector in explaining any gender and parenthood-related differences. We also explored parents’ preferences and experiences relating to job quality through focus groups with mothers and fathers working in different sectors across the UK.

Here, we summarise our key findings and use these to derive practical recommendations to improve the world of work for parents.


There is a motherhood penalty in job quality

While gender differences in job quality - regardless of people’s parenthood status - are important to acknowledge, there are some job quality penalties that affect mothers uniquely.

Mothers are highly dedicated to work. This corrects a widely held perception that mothers are less committed, the basis of maternity discrimination. Mothers care about good pay and job security, enjoyment, using their abilities and initiative.

Yet, mothers of young children report having less control over their day-to-day tasks and their working time than fathers. There is no difference in this respect between men and women with no children. Addressing mothers’ autonomy at work is important to retaining mothers in the workforce, since lack of autonomy is a major reason that people leave jobs.

Examining job quality more holistically, we found mothers not only have less autonomy, mothers of pre-school and school aged children are also more likely than fathers to have jobs which have a combination of low rewards and prospects, and high levels of control over their time. However, while the ‘high control-low rewards’ jobs do have some benefits in terms of their flexibility and control, mothers are also significantly more likely than fathers and non-mothers to have all-round poor-quality jobs – where there are few extrinsic or intrinsic



benefits. Mothers are also less likely to work in high-quality jobs than women without children and fathers, while almost half of mothers with primary age children are predicted to have jobs with limited access to training, promotions, more formal types of flexible working and low non-wage rewards – this is compared to a quarter of women without children and a third of fathers of primary age children.

Part time work isn't working


Working hours repeatedly emerged as a driver behind our findings. Our results suggest that part time work, although often understood as a form of flexible working, does not necessarily produce the kind of flexibility that mothers need. Mothers have good access to options that reduce the volume of work they are formally contracted to do (part time, job share, term time working). However, this is often a compromise that doesn't deliver the type of flexibility that would actually be useful to them. When it comes to the ability to control their schedule, have autonomy over their time and work location - all of which have been increasing since 2010 - mothers lose out compared to other groups. Ironically, this appears to be linked to them working part time, suggesting that part time jobs are less flexible than other jobs, echoed by many of our qualitative research participants. This also suggests that working part time leads to a lack of control and autonomy for mothers of young children. Our qualitative research also suggested that mothers who are working part-time feel less trusted, less respected and are viewed as less competent than other groups. The lack of career progression in part time jobs was another significant issue mentioned by many qualitative participants.

Mothers are much more likely to be working in all-round poor-quality jobs and this difference is mostly accounted for by working hours. Once we control for part-time hours there is either no statistically significant relationship with parenthood or a negative association. Whilst mothers are less likely than women without children to work in high quality jobs, controlling for part-time hours appears to account for much of this difference. In sum, part-time working accounts for some, but not all, of the observed associations between motherhood and job quality, with a motherhood gap regarding high-quality and high control, low rewards and prospects jobs remaining for some groups even after we take working hours into account.

Additionally, mothers are more likely than other groups to be working overtime and especially unpaid overtime, possibly because part time jobs have a full time workload or because part time jobs are not financially viable and additional paid hours are needed. This suggests both that part time jobs are not properly designed and not properly paid, or both.

There is a 'fatherhood bonus' in some aspects of job quality

Our analysis also suggests a fatherhood 'bonus' in some areas, particularly flexibility, autonomy, and access to all-round high-quality jobs. Although in general fatherhood made less difference to men's job quality than motherhood did to women's, fathers were more likely to combine good prospects and access to training with poor working time quality, consistent with other evidence that men's working time quality deteriorates when they have



children⁴⁶ and that fathers have poor perceived access to flexible working.⁴⁷ Fathers in our focus group felt subject to gendered assumptions which prevented them from maximising their job quality, or felt that their status as a father was completely ignored by employers. Our results support the contention that to create true gender equality in the workplace, including in job quality, the link between career ‘success’ and standard, or even long hours, working time must be severed. This way, mothers could gain equal access to important job quality attributes while fathers could contribute more to domestic unpaid work without sacrificing job quality.

Mothers and fathers make different job quality trade offs

Both mothers and fathers make job quality trade-offs, but of a different nature. Mothers are more likely to sacrifice career progression and rewards in favour of control over their working time and flexibility. The trade-off more commonly made by fathers is to sacrifice family-friendly work schedules for high rewards and prospects. Both sorts of trade-offs come with high costs.

However, in emphasising these trade-offs and their gendered nature we should also remember that mothers are more likely to have jobs that are poor in all aspects, with no benefits whatsoever: some mothers don’t have the ability to make trade-offs. Moreover, fathers are more likely to have all-round high-quality jobs, where no trade-offs are required.


Recommendations

1. Provide more support for working mothers

Our research suggests that mothers, particularly those with young children, are especially disadvantaged when it comes to job quality. The needs of mothers require greater attention from employers and policy makers to improve wellbeing and retention. In particular, the lack of autonomy afforded to mothers is concerning and needs addressing. Employers need to do far more than offering flexible working. They should try to understand what is happening with mothers in the organisation, especially in terms of working patterns, career progression, seniority and the links between these, and ask them what they need. A key first step is to **ensure that when gathering data on progression or retention, or when surveying employees, the outcomes are disaggregated by parenthood or caring responsibilities as well as factors like gender and ethnicity.** Secondly, when assessing whether your workplace is family-friendly, ensure that all aspects of job quality - including crucial issues around working hours, overtime and autonomy - are included as key criteria in addition to factors like leave provision and flexible working. Employers should use these insights to **develop tailored policies and support packages for mothers**, including returners programmes for mothers coming back after parental leave, and specific support for mothers working part

⁴⁶ Eurofound (2020)

⁴⁷ Cook et al. (2021)



time, such as support with career progression. Employers should also be doing more to tackle maternity discrimination as part of equality and diversity efforts.

2. Improve the quality and perception of part time jobs

Mothers' higher likelihood of working part time is a strong driver of job quality differences as part time jobs appear to be associated with poorer core working conditions, as well as less flexibility and autonomy. This is likely due to the strong association between part time working and lower status, 'dead end' jobs. However, part time jobs will continue to be necessary and the best option for many people with caring responsibilities. Recent research by Timewise suggests that almost 80% of female part-timers don't want a full-time job⁴⁸. Our research therefore adds to the call to **improve the quality of part time jobs via tackling progression opportunities and the negative perception of part time working**, which leads to job quality penalties for part time working mothers. This should be part of an overall equality and diversity strategy that centres parenthood and working patterns as inclusion issues⁴⁹. Negative attitudes towards part time working are more prevalent among people in managerial jobs⁵⁰, who are often the gatekeepers of flexible working, so efforts need to be targeted across all levels of seniority.

At the same time, policy makers should also **tackle constraints that force many mothers to work part time** when full time hours could potentially work better for them and their families. One such constraint is the high cost of pre-school childcare in the UK. Further, once children go to school, there is a 'post-code lottery' as to the availability of after-school clubs, breakfast clubs and holiday clubs. These factors mean many mothers feel forced to work reduced hours which we have seen can be associated with reduced job quality. We therefore add to calls for **improving funding and accessibility of pre-school childcare and childcare provision outside of core school hours**. Efforts to **improve parental leave and flexible working and make these more accessible to fathers** could also help to spread the load of parenting more equally so that mothers are freed up to work more hours. Other constraints that are potentially harder to tackle include social norms enforcing the 'one and a half earner' model and the unequal gendered division of domestic labour.

⁴⁸ Timewise (2023)

⁴⁹ For more on this, see Timewise (2023).

⁵⁰ Timewise (2023)



3. Broaden the definition of flexible working and continue to make it more widely accessible

Our research revealed confused, limited and inconsistent understanding and application of flexible working which has a knock-on effect on overall job quality. The Flexible Working Bill 2023 has increased the right of employees to request flexible working. However, **policy makers and employers should continue their efforts to make flexible working more effective and widely accessible, carefully distinguishing between location, schedule and volume flexibility, as well as between formal and informal arrangements.** Control over schedules and arrangements that allow for shorter working days are overlooked forms of flexible working that are vital for parents and would prevent many mothers from working part time involuntarily. One upcoming vehicle for such changes will be the Labour government's Employment Rights Bill.

The more widespread and creative adoption of flexible working arrangements should reduce the need for trade-offs and make sure those who need and value flexibility can access it regardless of their job role or industry. In relation to parents, it is vital that employers **ask working parents what they need** and value to both succeed at work and fulfil their family responsibilities and help them to achieve that, rather than relying on gendered assumptions.


4. Further research into motherhood penalty

Further research is required to fully understand the motherhood penalty in job quality, its drivers and impacts. Future longitudinal research will be able to better establish causality by examining the impact of *becoming a parent* on individuals' job quality, as well as investigating what might lead to differences - like job changes or occupational downgrading. Further research should also aim to:

- Better understand the drivers and consequences of maternity discrimination in the workplace.
- Better understand why mothers in part-time work are more likely to work overtime.
- Investigate the impact of poor-quality jobs on women's health and wellbeing, and workforce retention.
- Examine the distribution of job quality within heterosexual couples: whether women's 'hit' mirrors men's 'gain'.
- Establish the geographical and intersectional elements to gender and parenthood-based job quality gaps and disparities.
- Better understand father's feelings and motivations around employment and care.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Methods

Note:

- Information on the qualitative research methods can be found in GIWL et al (2021)
- Information on the analysis presented in Chapter 3 can be found in Jones et al (2023). Below we give additional information relating to the analysis in Chapter 2.

1.1 Notes on data

Skills and Employment Survey

A survey of the skills and employment experiences of people working in Britain. The SES forms part of a series of surveys of workers that stretches back over 35 years. These cross-sectional surveys provide the means to chart and explain the changing pattern of job quality and skills over time. For more information: <https://wiserd.ac.uk/ses/>

Sample: The sample is representative of people of working age living in private households in Great Britain, aged between 20-65 inclusive, currently with a paid job at which they work for at least one hour a week (both employees and self-employed). The sample for our analysis in Chapter 2 consisted only of employees surveyed in 2017, with the following sample numbers, by gender and parenthood status (unweighted counts):

	Male	Female
Parent	494	629
Non-parent	700	789

Measure of parenthood status: In the SES parenthood status is measured by a single survey question: Do you have any children under the age of 16 who are financially dependent on you? (children do not have to live in the same household as the respondent and do not have to be biological children).

Measure of job quality preferences: Preferences for different aspects of a job were measured in the SES using the following survey question: ‘I am going to read out a list of some of the things people may look for in a job and I would like you to tell me how important you feel each is for you’ (Response options: Essential, very important, fairly important, not very important).

- Good promotion prospects
- Good pay
- Good relations with your supervisor or manager
- A secure job
- A job where you can use your initiative
- Work you like doing
- Convenient hours of work
- Choice in your hours of work
- The opportunity to use your abilities
- Good fringe benefits
- An easy workload
- Good training provision
- Good physical working conditions
- A lot of variety in the type of work

Selected preferences from this list are reported by gender and parenthood status in Chapter 2 (Figure 4).

UK Household Longitudinal Study

The UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS or Understanding Society) is a nationally representative longitudinal survey of British households. The sample for our descriptive analysis in Chapter 2 were taken from consisting of employees aged 20-65 with the following sample numbers, by Wave, gender and parenthood status (unweighted counts):

	Wave 2 (2010/11)	Wave 4 (2012/13)	Wave 6 (2014/15)	Wave 8 (2016/17)	Wave 10 (2018/19)	Wave 12 (2020/21)
Mother	5,059	4,334	3,985	3,531	2,934	2,356
Father	4,259	3,706	3,445	2,930	2,320	1,915
Man, no children	6,456	5,627	5,495	4,603	3,840	3,264
Woman no children	7,248	6,263	6,097	5,347	4,773	4,172
Totals	23,022	19,930	19,022	16,411	13,867	11,707

Measure of parenthood status: We created a parenthood variable using the detailed fertility history data in the study and incorporating the age of the children. For the regression analysis, we divided our sample into five groups to comprise our ‘parenthood status + child age’ variable with the following categories:

- *No children*
- *Youngest child preschool age (0-4)*
- *Youngest child primary school age (5-10)*
- *Youngest children secondary school age (11-15)*
- *Youngest child 16+ or non-resident*

We were able to use detailed fertility histories available in the UKHLS for biological children to distinguish between those who never had children and parents whose children are not living with them, which many studies cannot do. However, the final category (youngest child aged 16+ or non-resident) was omitted from the results, so our parenthood variable refers to children of various ages who live with the adult in question. This is somewhat limiting when it comes to fathers since in most cases of separated parents, children live with the mother. UK data are generally poor at capturing so-called ‘own household fathers’.

Job quality variables: For details on the measures of job quality used in the UKHLS analysis, please see Jones et al. (2023).


1.2 Notes on analytical methods in Chapter 2

In Chapter 2 we report on results from a series of regression models using data from most recent available wave of the UK Household Longitudinal Study, collected in 2020/21.⁵¹ The first set of models calculated differences in each job quality measure among women, comparing non-mothers to mothers of pre-school children, primary age children and secondary age children. The second set of models calculated differences in each job quality measure for men compared to women across different parenthood status groups – people without children, those with preschool children, primary age and secondary age children.

We included control variables via a series of steps (see table below). After running the first models to get basic differences, we then control for age (and age-squared) and highest educational qualification (three categories – degree level or higher, A-levels or equivalent, GCSEs or less). Working hours, captured via a variable that measures part-time work (1 if respondent works less than 30 hours a week) are added in next, then finally in Model 4, occupation is added via a variable measuring five class NS-SEC.⁵²

⁵¹ The models have been run with other years’ data to ensure that they are not an artefact of the pandemic context of 2021/21 and results are much the same with previous waves’ data.

⁵² The National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) has been constructed to measure the employment relations and conditions of occupations, for more information see: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/standardoccupationalclassification/soc2020/soc2020volume3thenationalstatisticssocioeconomicclassificationnssecbasedonthesoc2020>



	Mothers compared to non-mothers	Women compared to men, by parenthood status
Model 1	Parenthood status + child age only	Sex only
Model 2	Model 1 + age, age squared and education level	Model 1 + age, age squared and education level
Model 3	Model 2 + working hours	Model 2 + working hours
Model 4	Model 3 + occupation	Model 3 + occupation

Depending on the measure of job quality under analysis and whether it was binary or had multiple categories, we used different types of logistic regression models:

Binary logistic regression	Ordinal logistic regression
Permanent Overtime Training Salaried Bonus Annual increment Volume flexibility Schedule flexibility Location flexibility Informal flexibility Better job in next 12 months (promotion prospects)	Task autonomy Pace autonomy Order autonomy Manner autonomy Time autonomy

We present results in terms of average marginal effects which enables us to explain the results in terms of percentage point differences in the likelihood of a given outcome, comparing our key groups. This is what is shown in Figures 7 and 8. For a more detailed explanation of average marginal effects, see Jones et al. (2023).

Appendix 2: Additional charts

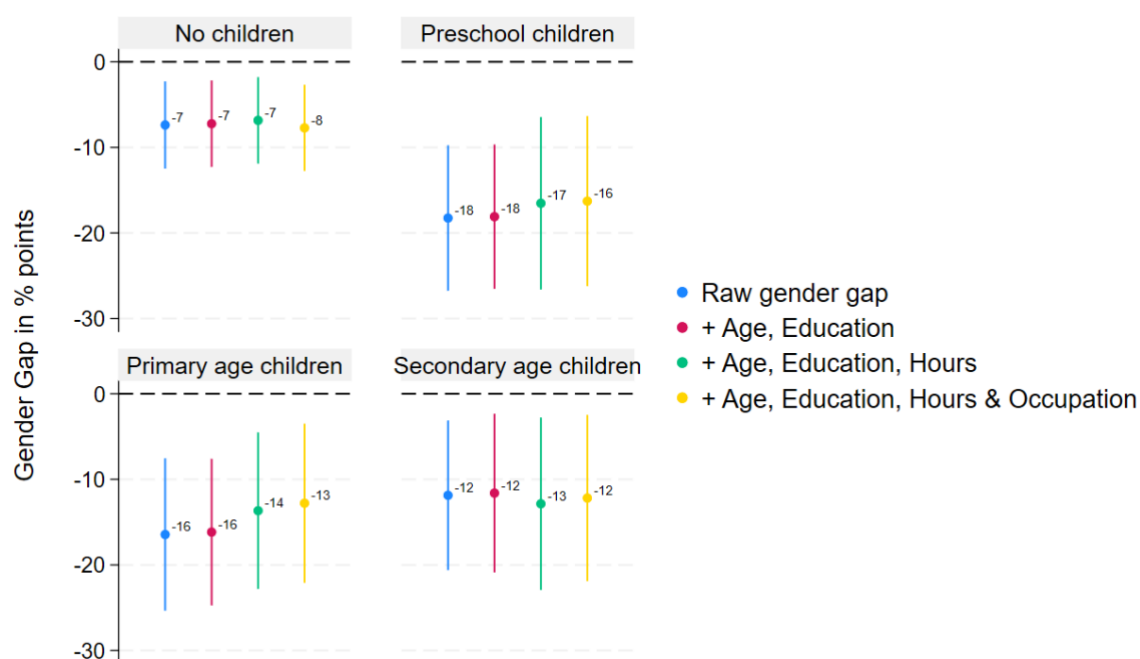


Figure A1. Differences between men and women in receiving a bonus by parenthood status, across four model stages, 2020/21 Source: UK Household Longitudinal Study.

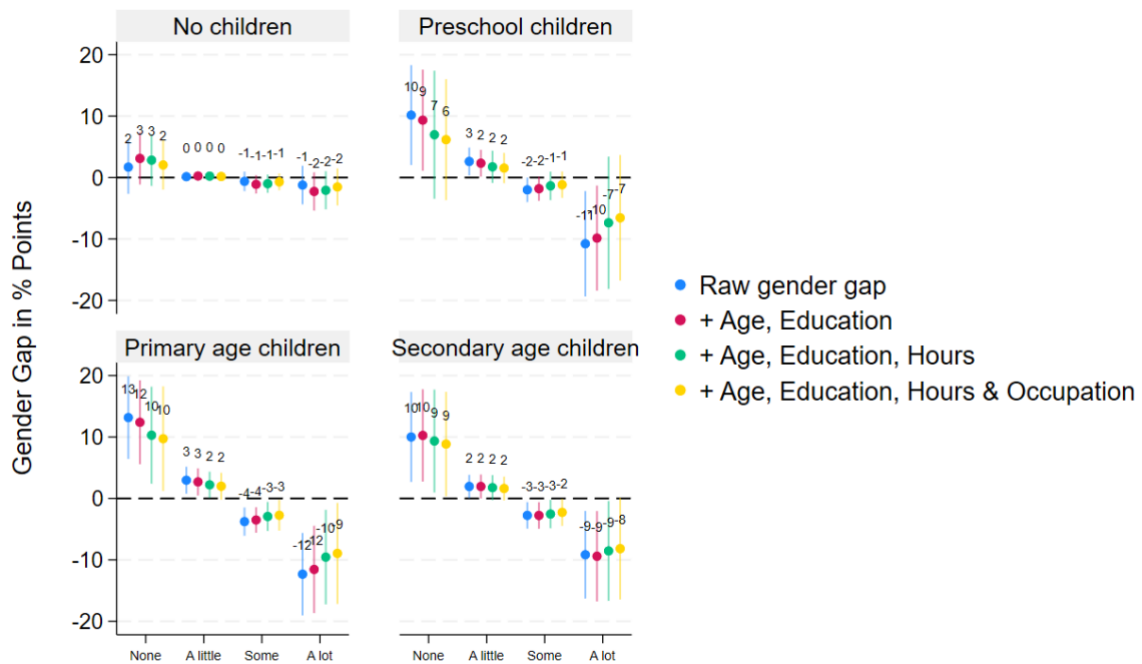


Figure A2. Differences between men and women in time autonomy (‘In your job, how much influence do you have over the time you start and finish your working day?’), by parenthood status, across four model stages, 2020/21. Source: UK Household Longitudinal Study.

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