



The Prince's Responsible Business Network



Report

WHO CARES?

2022

Transforming how we combine work with caring responsibilities

In partnership with



With support from



REPORT

WHO CARES?

TRANSFORMING HOW WE COMBINE WORK WITH CARING RESPONSIBILITIES

FOREWORD

Business in the Community's (BITC) Who Cares? campaign seeks to better understand contemporary experiences and attitudes around combining paid work and care, and to enable employers (and wider policy makers) to more effectively support working carers.

Developed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic – which highlighted the ongoing challenge, many, but particularly women, face when trying to combine work and care, this report details the results of a survey conducted in partnership with Ipsos UK of 5,444 people across the U.K.

The findings make for startling reading, detailing an alarming gap between the wants and needs of the nearly half of the UK workforce who are combining paid work and care at any one time, and the experience they have when trying to combine these with 'day jobs'.

This 'gap' is coming at an extremely high cost: undermining gender equality at work (and beyond); impacting on other groups' inclusion and progress at work (notably those from Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other ethnically diverse backgrounds), and denying different groups equitable access to care. This impacts not just on individuals, families and wider society- it also undermines businesses concerned about their bottom lines: a lack of diversity impacts on profitability.

On a more positive note, we found some clear steers around how to build a working culture more in tune with the workers of today – and tomorrow. The second half of this report details our recommendations, developed in consultation with some 60 businesses across our network. The Who Cares? Campaign is calling on employers and policy makers to transform the way we think about combining paid work and care. Only when we do this can we hope to create a truly equal working world – and support a fairer and more equitable society where everybody who wants or needs to can care.

Charlotte Woodworth
Gender Equality Campaign Director, Business in the Community



We are delighted to have worked with BITC on this fantastic research. Research we believe can lead to real change in the workplace. The findings showcased in Who Cares? illustrate the need for employers to re-evaluate how they support their employees to combine paid work and caring responsibilities. Companies have a responsibility to empower people, irrespective of gender, to find a better balance and, in doing so, they will edge us closer towards true gender equality in the workplace.

Kelly Beaver
Chief Executive, Ipsos UK

As a mum, CEO and Gender lead at Business in the Community, I'm passionate about creating an equal world for all. So, I'm delighted that at BITC we've just completed new research into how caring responsibilities affect careers. It really highlights the changes that need to be made to redress the balance.

During the lockdowns we saw and felt, first-hand, the difficulties of balancing caring responsibilities with working life. Many took on home-schooling and others were looking after relatives who were living alone. Whatever the reasons for caring, it became clear women take on most of the responsibility. This links to women being lower earners, they're more likely to be looking for new roles and flexibility. When compared with the trend, men are more likely to take on senior roles, the imbalance in the workplace, and at home, is reinforced.

Workplaces can make a real difference with more inclusive policies, allowing others to take on more caring responsibilities. I know many dads who would love to feel able to get more involved at home. So, it's time to move away from outdated gender stereotypes and give everyone equal opportunities to thrive at both home and work.

Sarah Bentley
CEO, Thames Water

What we found

Caring is a widespread concern

- Approaching half of the UK workforce (44%) are combining paid work with care at any one time.
- The majority of those with responsibilities are looking after children under the age of 18, but 36% of carers are responsible for an adult of working age or older.

The majority (but not all) of those caring want to share care with someone else – but this is not always possible

- 94% of those polled agreed that 'caring responsibilities' should be shared equally, regardless of gender; 68% of carers said they were 'joint carers', 22% said they were lone carers.
- 1 in 2 women trying to share care said they ended up doing more than their fair share – and 40% of these women said it was because their partner / other carers' 'working pattern/culture is not supportive of combining work and care'.

Difficulties combining paid work and care are pushing some groups down and out of the workforce

- 4 in 10 carers say their caring responsibilities have prevented them from applying for a job or promotion.
- This is more common among women (58%) and carers from a Black, Asian, Mixed Race, or other ethnically diverse background (50%), as compared to men (20%) and white carers (39%). 19% of all the women we polled said at some point in their working lives they had left a job because of the challenge of combining paid work and care

Our Calls to Action for employers

Consider caring the norm, not the exception

Ensure your policies and wider approach reflect the depth, breadth and variety of caring responsibilities your employees will be managing at any one time - and the way some groups feel

less supported, e.g., those looking after old adults, or face bigger hurdles to combine work and care, e.g., those on lower incomes. Apply a broad caring lens to relevant policies, e.g., carers leave but also consider this agenda in other business areas, e.g., financial planning. Share publicly the details of relevant policies on your website.

Champion equitable access to care for all genders - men and women - in your policies

Most people (whether they have caring responsibilities or not) think people should be able to share their caring responsibilities with partners and others, whatever their gender. But all too often organisational policies better support women to care, especially around parenting responsibilities. Provide equal access to care across genders where you can, and take steps to 'level up' what you offer where you can't, e.g., extending paternity leave. Take a transparent approach, showcasing take up rates among eligible groups and consider setting targets.

Foster a culture that supports men to care

Efforts to support women to combine paid work with care will only go so far in unpicking this core driver of gender equality at work; we must also ensure men are better empowered to care. Alongside the policy changes mentioned above, take steps to ensure your working culture and ethos supports this.

Promote flexible working directly to men

Of those who feel men are less likely to be supported to undertake care at work, 70% said improving access to flex working was the no. One way this imbalance could be rectified. As the world continues to adopt more widespread hybrid working practices, employers should ensure equitable access to this way of working; not only will this help address caring imbalances that drive gender inequality; it will also help address 'flex stigma' that can undermine women's status as work.

1. INTRODUCTION: WOMEN, WORK AND GENDER EQUALITY IN THE UK IN 2022

A record number of women are now in paid work in the UK. As of February 2022, women make up nearly 50% of the UK workforce.ⁱ But while they may have entered the formalised working world in their droves, they are not experiencing it on an equal footing with men. There are four primary areas of division:

- Pay: women are more likely to earn less;ⁱⁱ
- Power: women typically have lower status and less senior roles;ⁱⁱⁱ
- Job security: women are more likely to be employed in less secure jobs than men;^{iv}
- Discrimination and harassment: women face a much higher risk of gender-based harassment and discrimination at work.^v

These inequities have many drivers that interact with each other and do not play out in a uniform fashion. Characteristics and identities outside gender, including race, age, and socio-economic status, can powerfully inform individual women's experiences. For example, Black women are the least likely to be among the UK's top earners compared to any other racial or gender group,^{vi} disabled women are more likely to experience sexual harassment at work^{vii} and older women typically face a larger gender pay gap than younger women.^{viii}

Efforts to 'close the gap' and create a more inclusive, equitable working world have had mixed levels of success. Women now hold more than a third of roles in the boardrooms of Britain's top 350 companies^x and there has been some positive progress on persistent gender pay gaps.^x However, the overall picture is one of glacial progress. In recent years, the UK has fallen in global rankings of gender equality^{xi} and new research argues that many of the policies aimed at addressing the gap have made little to no difference.^{xii}

The price business pays for gender inequality

Failing to enable women, of all backgrounds and identities, to access and flourish in paid work on a par with men undermines gender equality in and beyond the world of work. For example, women's higher risk of poverty can be linked to a lifetime of lower earnings.^{xiii}

“MY WIFE TOOK A LOWER PAID JOB IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO TAKE ON MORE RESPONSIBILITIES FOR CHILDCARE.”

Father, full time

But it is also bad for business and the wider economy. Greater involvement of women in work has been shown to not only widen the labour pool but also increase average wages, for both women and men.^{xiv} More gender diversity on senior teams has been proven, time and again, to enhance business profitability,^{xv} while more women in leadership positions can see a wider variety of leadership styles modelled, such as 'transformational leadership' where leaders establish themselves as role models by gaining followers' trust and confidence (rather than more transactional models.)^{xvi}

At a time when many are warning that women are leading the 'great resignation'^{xvii} – those women are more likely to be looking for new jobs than men^{xviii} – what business can afford not to prioritise gender equality?

“I MANAGE TO DO THINGS... BUT I DON'T REALLY HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO THRIVE DOING THIS.”

Sandwich carer, part time

Tackling a core driver: who cares?

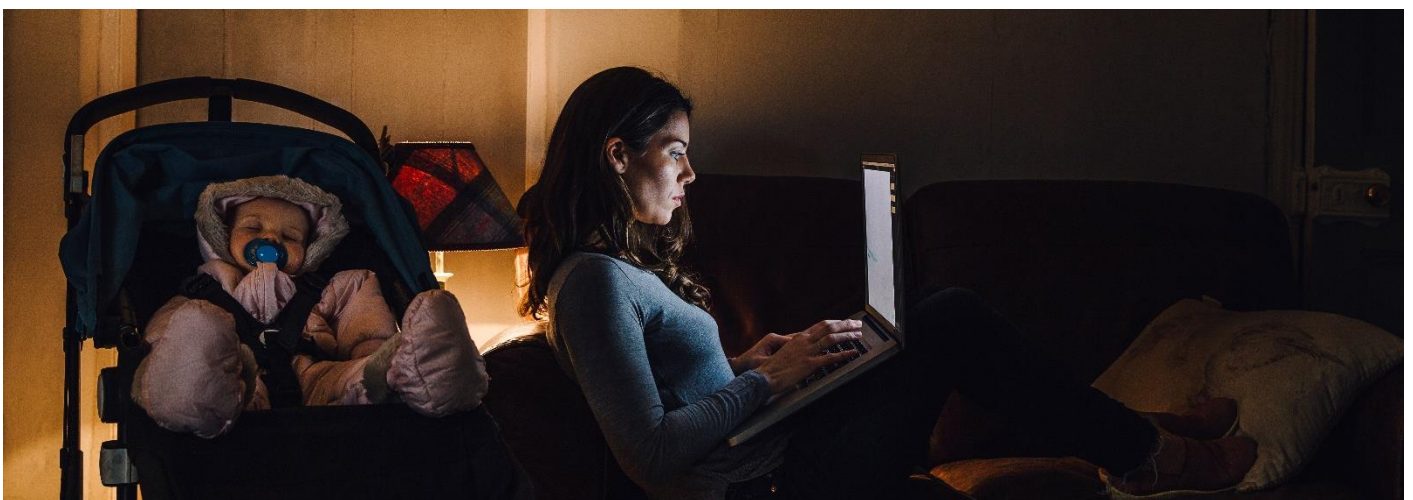
A range of things fuel gender inequality at work.^{xxix} Norms for where, when and how work is done that make it hard to integrate paid work with caring responsibilities (for example, rigid working hours that conflict with school drop off and pick up times), combined with women's tendency to shoulder the bulk of these responsibilities) are key. Some estimates suggest this drives up to 40% of the gender pay gap.^{xx} Women with caring responsibilities can find it harder to access roles (and by extension sometimes whole industries) that envisage the average employee as automatically able to work certain hours, in a certain location, across a certain working pattern, to in effect make life 'fit' around their job. This can undermine women's engagement in the labour market at a particular moment in time but can also drag down women's longer-term prospects: damaging longer term career trajectories, and so earnings, and positioning them as 'default carers' within their relationships in the future.^{xxi} Nor does this affect only women with caring responsibilities. Research regularly shows the perception of women as carers -or likely to become them- can drive workplace stigma towards working women full stop.^{xxii}

But while we know this issue is a large, longstanding challenge to the equality agenda, the pandemic has also ushered in new opportunities to drive change.

Fresh debate on dominant, preferred working styles, means we have a unique opportunity to change norms that hinder carers' career progression, and can also challenge the tendency for women to manage the lion's share of care.

Could the choices we make to design a 'new normal' enable us, for the first time, to hardwire greater gender equality and inclusion *in*, rather than try and retro fit it *out*?

The impact of caring inequalities on different groups was painfully highlighted during the height of the pandemic when, for example, working mothers were 1.5 times more likely than fathers to have either lost their job or quit, and were more likely to have been furloughed (by May 2020).^{xxiii xxiv} Furthermore, there were reports of increases in pregnancy discrimination.^{xxv}



2. UNDERSTANDING CONTEMPORARY ATTITUDES AND EXPERIENCES AROUND COMBINING PAID WORK AND CARE

In November 2021, BITC and Ipsos UK surveyed 5,444 people across the UK to better understand contemporary attitudes and experiences of work and care. Those surveyed were representative of the UK population across key demographics, including age, geography, employment status (including those who are in work, unemployed, in education, and retired), and sector (amongst those currently in work).^{xxvi}

OUR FINDINGS

1) Who has what caring responsibilities?

- Combining paid work with caring responsibilities is a mainstream, common experience

At any one time, our survey suggests 44% of working adults identify as carers, meaning that alongside their 'day jobs' they are looking after children or dependent adults of some kind.^{xxvii}

A similar proportion of men and women consider themselves to have caring responsibilities (34%/37%). But those from Black, Asian, Mixed Race or other ethnically diverse background are more likely to say they have caring responsibilities than those from a White background (41%/34%)

- Children under the age of 18 are the most common type of caring responsibility (72%), but 36% of carers are responsible for an adult of working age or older.

8% of carers identified as 'sandwich carers', i.e., they have caring responsibilities for any adult and a child

- Most carers said they shared their caring responsibilities with another person (68%), but 22% said they were lone carers.

More than two thirds of all lone carers are women (69%), with this figure even higher amongst lone carers for children (85%).

12% described themselves 'secondary carers,' or a carer who does not live with the person for whom

they provide care, such as a parent who does not live with their child, or someone who is responsible for a person living in an assisted living facility.

2) How do they want to care – and does this happen in practice?

“IT’S NOT THROUGH LACK OF TRYING TO WORK IN A WAY THAT BETTER BALANCES MY WORK AND HOMELIFE. MY WIFE WORKS FULL TIME AS WELL, BUT SHE HAS TO PICK UP ALL THE BURDEN.”

Father, full time

- Most people think caring responsibilities should be shared equally, regardless of gender

94% of those polled agreed that 'caring responsibilities should be shared equally, regardless of gender', an opinion strongly held by both women (96%) and men (93%).

- But half of those trying to share care with someone else find this doesn't happen in practice, with working cultures often to blame

1 in 2 of those who identify as joint carers say that care is not shared fairly. 52% of women who identify as joint carers say they do 'more than my fair share' (in comparison to 10% of men), 30% of men say they 'do less than my fair share' (in comparison to 4% of women).

Among women who said they did more than their fair share, 57% said it was due to their partner's job having longer hours, with 40% saying it was because their partner's working pattern/culture is not supportive of work and care. 40% of women who said they did more than their fair share also said it's what made sense for them financially. Men who said they did less than their fair share credited similar reasons, with 53% citing their job's longer hours; 42%, it's what made sense for them financially, and 36%, their working pattern/culture is not supportive of work and care.

3) How do caring responsibilities and paid work interact?

- A powerful impact on what jobs people can or want to apply for, progress in, and stay in - particularly for women and those from ethnically diverse groups

4 in 10 carers say their caring responsibilities have prevented them from applying for a job or promotion. This is more common among women (58%) and carers from a Black, Asian, Mixed Race, or other ethnically diverse background (50%), as compared to men (20%) and white carers (39%)

Looking more broadly, our research further highlights working pattern differences between women and men, which can be attributed in large part to the skewed way in which caring responsibilities are managed: a majority of women in work (64%) have at some point worked part time, in comparison to 31% of men. This finding is of particular significance as women's increased likelihood of working part time has been shown to play a key role in driving the gender pay gap.

- A significant impact on people's ability to stay in work

Nearly 3 in 10 of all adults said they had left or considered leaving a job because of difficulties balancing work and care. Again, women were significantly more likely to report this (19% of women said they have left a job for this reason in comparison to 9% of men, 17% vs 12% had considered leaving a job.).

"WE MADE A JOINT DECISION THAT I WOULD WORK LESS HOURS TO FIT IN WITH CHILDCARE SO I WOULD BE AROUND FOR THEM WHILE HE IS THE MAIN EARNER."

Mother, part-time



- Day-to-day clash, especially for some groups

Almost half of current workers (46%) have had childcare responsibilities come up 'during the working day', a third (33%) have had 'caring responsibilities other than childcare come up.'

Women are significantly more likely than men to say their day job has been interrupted because of caring responsibilities (52 per cent v 42 per cent reported that childcare had come up, 37 per cent v 31 per cent reported other caring responsibilities had come up.)

However, men are more likely than women to say they do not feel supported to balance childcare with paid work (22 per cent of men versus 15 per cent of women.)

Beyond gender, there were also notable differences according to working pattern, household income and type of caring responsibilities:

- Nearly three in ten (28%) of those working shifts said they 'do not feel supported with managing their childcare by their employer' (in comparison to 10% of those who work regular office hours);
- While some 75% of those earning £26,000 a year or more said they felt supported by

their employer to manage their caring responsibilities for children, this dropped to just in 1 in 2 people earning less than that.

- Those caring for older adults are least likely to feel supported (42%), as compared to those with childcare responsibilities (69%), or those caring for working age adults (57%).

- **...that damages people's careers, especially women's careers**

Moreover, most people think these 'clash' moments are damaging for people's careers – especially if they are women. For example, nearly 1 in 2 people agree that childcare coming up during the working day is 'more damaging to the career of a women' than a man (49%), versus those that think it's equally damaging for men and women (34%) and those that think it is not damaging to anyone (6%).



4) What do people want to see change

When it comes to combining paid work with caring responsibilities, our polling found some clear steers for employers and policy makers to consider:

- **It's about policies – and culture**

When asked what the most important things workplaces could do to support those balancing work and childcare, 46% of those polled said 'having good policies and practice to support working parents', 43% said 'support a good work life balance.' Similar numbers endorsed these as key to supporting those balancing paid work with caring responsibilities for working age or older adults.

“WHAT WOULD MAKE THE MOST DIFFERENCE? IF CARING FOR AGEING PARENTS WAS GIVEN THE SAME STATUS AS CARING FOR CHILDREN.”

Sandwich carer, full time

- **Flexibility is key**

Enabling employees some flexibility around their working hours was cited as vital. 44% said this would help those with childcare responsibilities, 54% said this would help those with responsibilities for working age or older adults. When thinking particularly about what would enable men to more fully manage caring responsibilities.

“IT'S NOT ALWAYS ABOUT CHILDREN. PEOPLE HAVE A LIFE OUTSIDE OF WORK WHICH MEANS YOU CAN'T BE AVAILABLE 24/7.”

Mother, part time

- **Employers must do more to support men to care**

The research shows clearly both the disproportionate share of caring responsibilities women hold, and the outsize impact this has on their engagement with paid work.

Yet the polling also highlights the way in which men are more likely to say they do not feel supported when it comes to balancing paid work and childcare; (22% of men saying they don't feel supported by their employers, as compared to 15% of women). Follow up questions pointed to clear levers employers could pull.

When asked what 'would be the best way for employers to support men to combine paid work and care', those who had said support was less available for men recommended:

- Ensure flexible working is promoted to men and women (70%);
- Challenge stigma at work around male care givers (46%);
- Offer longer paid time for new fathers (36%);
- Share examples of senior men combining work and care (20%).



3. TRANSFORMING THE WAY WE THINK ABOUT COMBINING PAID WORK AND CARE

Our survey, one of the largest to explore the intersection of paid work and care in the UK in recent times, paints a picture of working policies and practices that are out of touch with the needs and expectations of modern workforces.

This 'gap' is coming at an extremely high cost. It is undermining gender equality at work (and beyond), impacting other groups' inclusion and progress at work (notably those from Black, Asian, Mixed race and other ethnically diverse backgrounds), and denying different groups equitable access to care.

CALLS TO ACTION

The *Who Cares?* campaign is calling on employers and policymakers to transform the way we think about combining paid work and care, moving the issue out of the shadows and into the spotlight and building a working culture that is in tune with the workers of today, and tomorrow. Only when we do this can we hope to create a truly equal working world – and support a fairer and more equitable society where everybody who wants or needs to can care.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

1. Consider caring the norm, not the exception

While it may be a widespread responsibility, our research finds caring can have a dramatically negative impact on people's ability to access and progress in work, with high levels of variation across different caring groups. Women, shift workers, those on lower incomes, those looking after working age or older adults (as opposed to children) and, most starkly, carers from Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other ethnically diverse groups reported much higher levels of challenge than others, with working patterns (e.g., long hours, lack of flexibility, or working culture) often cited.

There were consistently clear steers on the steps employers can take to better enable people to combine work and care. These are included in the below recommendations. Organisations should:

- **Consider caring mainstream:** approaching half if not more of your workforce will be combining paid work with care at any one time, and so foster a working culture, and design policies and working practices, that support them to do this, rather than treating this as a niche concern. For example, envisage a high number of varied employees, with mixed responsibilities, needing to access policies designed for working carers (and those more indirectly involved, e.g., flexible working) and adjust your business planning, budget process and efforts to foster an inclusive working culture accordingly.
- **Proactively tackle unequitable access to care,** recognising the issue in the design, promotion and 'operationalising' of policies designed to support carers considering the demographic divides our research highlights, the way those looking after working age or older adults feel less supported and the increased challenges lower paid and shift workers face in combining work and care. Monitor and track access and take-up to relevant policies across your workforce, actively identifying and addressing any blockers.
- **Embed flexibility** into your working model as far as possible. This was consistently cited as one of the top two ways organisations could better support working carers. Consider carefully what style of flexible working is of most relevance to your workforce, consulting with networks and deploying 'listening surveys' to understand different groups' experiences and needs. As with wider policies related to this agenda, closely monitor access and take-up across different demographics, functions and levels of the business.
- **Give relevant policies and practices a 'profile' appropriate to the sheer number of people that may need to know about them.** Publish full details on parental and carers leave, flexible working and other related policies on your website, including worked examples of how

WHO CARES?

they operate in practice. Consider revealing take-up levels, e.g., what proportion of your workforce has accessed specific policies.

Routinely spotlight relevant initiatives at townhall meetings or similar occasions.

In addition, organisations should consider any other barriers to accessing support to care that could be out of step with the modern workforce's experiences, e.g., qualifying requirements requiring a certain length of services (often found around access to flexible working).^{xxviii}

2. *Champion equitable access to care for all genders - men and women - in your policies*

“I’M DEFINITELY KEEN TO SEE MORE EQUITY IN PARENTAL LEAVE POLICIES. PERHAPS IT DOESN’T HAVE TO BE 50/50 FOR BOTH PARENTS, BUT ANYTHING IS BETTER THAN TWO WEEKS. OTHERWISE, YOU ARE GOING TO END UP WITH A PRIMARY AND SECONDARY CARER.”

Father, full time

Our research finds that, across all metrics, women report a worse experience than men in balancing work with care. Men and women are similarly likely to consider themselves to have caring responsibilities (although women are significantly more likely to hold solo caring responsibilities). But women carers are much more likely to report they do more than their fair share of care, to reduce their working hours, to be prevented from applying for jobs or promotions because of their caring responsibilities, to leave (or consider leaving) jobs because of the challenge of combining paid work and care, than men.

Efforts to address this have typically focused on better enabling women to combine paid work and care.^{xxix} While this should continue, our research

demands that employers must also think again about enabling all genders to care.

Organisational policies that explicitly privilege one gender over another when it comes to caring (as is the norm among most policies designed to support new parents^{xxx}) do not reflect contemporary needs and attitudes, among people of all genders. Worse, they can fuel gender inequality forcing those in mixed gender caring partnerships wishing to share care to develop skewed, lop-sided models because of unequal support from employers. At a broader social level, this can nurture prejudice against working women (whether they have caring responsibilities or not) as employers perceive them to be higher risk or less committed hires.^{xxxi}



WHO CARES? RECOMMENDS EMPLOYERS OFFER

- **Equal parental leave:** Offer parents of all genders access to the same support when a new baby arrives / a child is adopted, considering time off, pay during this period and other benefits, e.g., the option of staggered returns, buddies, coaching support, etc. In this way, organisations can both better meet the needs and expectations of most carers (and the wider workforce, more generally) while also starting to unpick much of the stigma many

working women face because of their actual or perceived role as carers. If men are as likely to take time out to care, women are no longer the riskier hire.

- Many organisations report challenges around adopting this approach, other 'steps to equality' to consider include:
- **Enhanced support for partners wishing to access Shared Parental Leave.** This is the up to 50 weeks of leave (37 of which are state subsidised) partners may take if mothers 'transfer' some of their maternity leave across. Ensure your organisation has clear, simple guidance on how to access this leave considering process, cover arrangements and return arrangements. And provide a financial subsidy for those wishing to take it, e.g., giving users the same support you give to those taking maternity leave.
- **Enhance leave explicitly targeted at fathers and/or 'secondary carers',** i.e., paternity leave. Extend the time available. Consider how you might subsidise access to this – for example, matching the level of state support offered around maternity leave (6 weeks pay at 90%).

In addition, employers should:

- **Review 'other' policies aimed at carers to address any inadvertent gender bias in the design, promotion and access to these.** For example, consider whether guidance related to any 'emergency carers leave' support has been developed and promoted inclusively. Research has shown that men can have lower levels of knowledge around the policies and support available.
- **Ensure appropriate promotion of all these policies specifically to men as well as to women:** previous research has suggested that knowledge around policies and practices designed to support working carers is gendered, with men's ability to know about / access these policies less supported than women's.^{xxxii}

- **Monitor and make public take up of these policies,** comparing access across different genders (and other demographics), functions and eligibility as appropriate. Act on any findings and consider setting specific targets.

3. Foster a culture that supports men to care

Our research found men were more likely to report that they feel unsupported by their employers in trying to combine paid work with caring responsibilities (specifically around children), than women. This builds on other research interrogating this topic, notably our own *'Equal Lives: parenthood and caring in the workplace'* which showcases the way that culture (beyond policies like those detailed above) can play a fundamental role in helping (or hindering) men's ability to care.

As explored elsewhere in this report, failing to empower men to care can drive gender inequality, is out of step with modern attitudes and means accepting a situation where men are denied access to care.

Action to address this should include:

- **Tone setting at the top** via a dedicated 'exec sponsor' or senior lead of some kind. Senior leaders should champion organisational policies that support men to care. This should include C-suite level promotion of key policies, e.g., townhall showcases.
- **Role modelling across the organisation** (at different levels, in different functions) men who have taken time out to care (e.g., used Shared Parental Leave (SPL)) and have amended their working patterns (e.g., compressed hours) should be profiled internally via multiple channels. Specifically, you should explore the benefits and address the known fears (e.g., concerns about career progression).
- **Ensure dedicated support for line managers and team leaders.** Ensure relevant staff are familiar with policies, aware of organisational ambitions and targets around them, and clear on implementation, e.g., provide guidance and

WHO CARES?

case studies on how to manage, for example, cover for short periods of leave.

- **Nurture carers networks** aimed at men. Assess whether current resource groups or similar are primarily targeted towards/accessed by women and how this could be addressed. Consider separate networks or dedicated chapters, e.g., New Dad's networks.

In addition to the positive proposals cited above, organisations should also consider how to address known cultural barriers:

- Fear or uncertainty about what others will think. Carry out attitude surveys establishing common attitudes among colleagues about men accessing policies that will support them to care and share the findings, i.e. address 'pluralistic ignorance'.^{xxxiii}

4. Promote flexible working directly to men

Research shows flexibility, of all kinds, is the key to combining paid work and care. But our research^{xxxiv} in keeping with empirical data from the Office National Statistics, the Labour Force Survey and more, shows clearly that flexible working is primarily something accessed and used by women.

“AFTER THE BIRTH OF MY FIRST CHILD I CHANGED MY HOURS TO A 9-DAY FORTNIGHT. I FELT LIKE I WAS ‘CHEATING’ AND TRIED TO KEEP THIS UNDER WRAPS, HOPING NO-ONE ELSE WOULD NOTICE.”

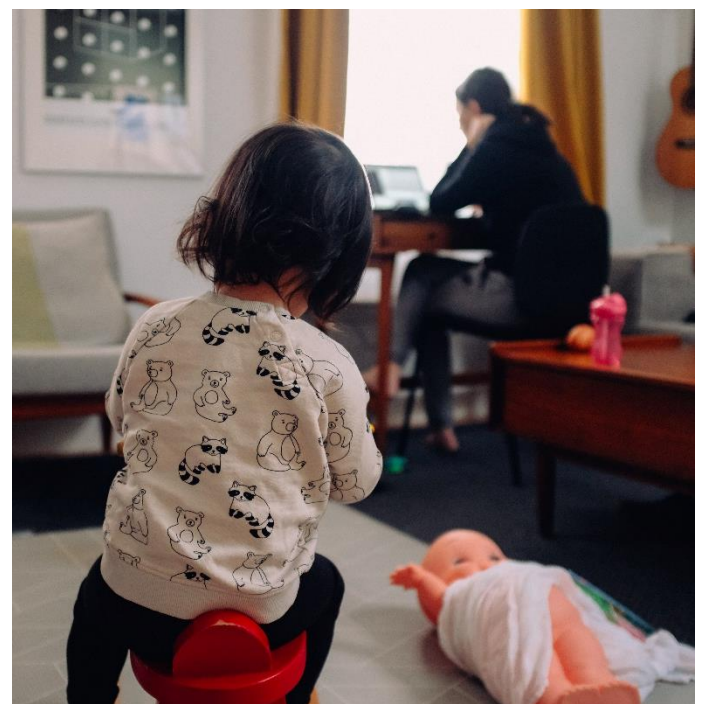
Father, full time

Of those who feel men are less likely to be supported to undertake care at work, 70% said improving access to flex working was the no. 1 way this imbalance could be rectified.

In order to achieve this, organisations should:

- Track and publish take-up rates among different demographics for flexible working, considering gender specifically.
- Consider setting targets for the demographics of workers accessing flexible working, specifically targeting men.
- Identify and address any specific organisational barriers, e.g., are some functions or roles historically considered 'inflexible'? could a task force or similar explore this? Is there a perceived wisdom that flexible working is only for a certain group?

More generally, many of the barriers to men taking up flexible working reflect wider 'flex stigma' and so similar tactics should be deployed. Profile role models showcasing men at all levels, in all functions, accessing it. Ensure line managers feel equipped to manage and lead teams with mixed flexible working patterns, and seek to monitor and address any real or perceived worries about the impact on career progression.



OUR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT AND POLICY MAKERS

We support calls for a significant overhaul of the legislative framework shaping what employers are required to offer working carers, including parents and others.

We also recommend that closely related policy areas, including flexible working are similarly considered through the lens of a modern workforce where caring is a mainstream concern yet proving difficult to combine with modern working practices.

Within this, we believe the Government should:

- Amend the Shared Parental Leave system, in particular it is reliance on the 'maternal transfer mechanism' in favour of introducing dedicated, ringfenced support for new Dads/non birth parents;
- Underpin this with adequate financial support for employers;
- Recognise the powerful role that 'statutory minimums' play in guiding organisational approaches and harness this power to drive through significant change;
- Enhance access to flexible working, ensuring employees have the right to request from day one.
- In keeping with the importance of these policies to current and prospective employees require firms publish parental / carer / flexible working policies on their website - including relevant take up statistics.



BITC is proud to take a trans inclusive approach to our work and seek to champion equity and inclusion for people of all genders, including trans men and trans women, as well as those who do not identify as any gender, across our campaigns. Throughout this document, the term 'women' is used to include all people who self-identify and engage with current/prospective employers as such. The term gender equality is used to describe equality for individuals of all genders, as well as those who do not identify as any gender. The Ipsos UK research showcased used ONS guidance to ask respondents about their gender identity, those identifying outside the male/female binary are included in the overall figures but did not comprise a large enough group to report separate findings.

With grateful thanks to the Equal Parenting Project at Birmingham University, Eliot Rae of Music, Football and Fatherhood; the Fatherhood Institute, TimesWise and Working Families for their generous advice and support in the design and development of this campaign.

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REFERENCES

ⁱ This can in part be attributed to an increase in the number of economically inactive men: : between January-March 2020 and October-December 2021, inactivity for men aged 16-64 increased by 8.7%, while inactivity for women did not change. This means that women now make up over 49% of the workforce, a record high, and up from 47% in 2019. See House of Commons Library analysis published in February 2022 for more information: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/will-more-economic-inactivity-be-a-legacy-of-the-pandemic/>

ⁱⁱ Whether considering the gap in pay between full time, part time, or overall employees; using the mean or median measure, women in the UK are consistently found to on average earn less than men. In 2021, considering all employees, the average gap stood at 15.4%. See ONS data

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/genderpaygapintheuk/2021>

ⁱⁱⁱ For example, Fawcett Society research has found: less than 1/3 of the UK's top jobs are filled by women. Across 5,166 positions of power in society, women make-up under a third (32%) what that means is that 919 are missing from the top roles. See here for more <https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/sex-power-2022>

^{iv} TUC research published in October 2020 found a higher percentage of working women are employed in *Insecure work, described as including agency, casual, seasonal and other workers ... workers whose primary job is a zero-hours contract and self-employed workers who are paid less than the National Living Wage* See more information here <https://www.tuc.org.uk/news/tuc-bme-women-are-twice-likely-be-insecure-jobs-white-workers>

^v For example, polling suggests half of working women have experienced sexual harassment at work - e.g. a survey carried out in 2020 found this - see more here <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/sexual-harassment-work-yougov-poll-b1874631.html>

- ^{vi} See data from the LSE Inclusion Initiative, cited here <https://www.lse.ac.uk/News/Latest-news-from-LSE/2021/c-March-21/Black-women-are-least-likely-to-be-among-UKs-top-earners>
- ^{vii} 'Sexual harassment of disabled women in the workplace', a TUC report available here <https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/sexual-harassment-disabled-women-workplace>
- ^{viii} Analysis by 'Rest Less' found that the gender pay gap is generally widest for women in their 50s, see here <https://restless.co.uk/uncategorized/gender-pay-gap-at-its-widest-for-those-in-their-50s/>
- ^{ix} See the latest report from the Hampton Alexander Review: <https://ftsewomenleaders.com/targets-progress/>
- ^x For example, in 2021, the ONs found, using the Annual Survey of Hourly Earnings, that the pay gap among full-time employees was 7.9%, up from 7.0% in 2020. This is still below the difference of 9.0% before the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic in 2019, and so the downward trend is continuing. See here for more <https://employeebenefits.co.uk/uk-gender-pay-gap-progress-slow/#:~:text=The%20UK%20gender%20pay%20gap,up%20from%207.0%25%20in%202020.>
- ^{xi} 2021's Global Gender Gap Report, the World Economic Forum ranked the UK as number 23, behind countries such as Germany, France, New Zealand. See https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf
- ^{xii} The IFS Deaton Review of Inequalities, see here <https://ifs.org.uk/inequality/themes/gender/>
- ^{xiii} For example see 'The Female Face of Poverty', Women's Budget Group, available here: <https://wbg.org.uk/analysis/the-female-face-of-poverty/>
- ^{xiv} For example, see 'working women in the city and urban wage growth in the United States' - a research paper available here: <https://doi.org/10.1111/jors.12336>
- ^{xv} Research has shown that 'companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams were 25 percent more likely to have above-average profitability than companies in the fourth quartile...the greater the diversity, the higher the likelihood of outperformance. Companies with more than 30 percent women executives were more likely to outperform companies where this percentage ranged from 10 to 30, and in turn these companies were more likely to outperform those with even fewer women executives, or none at all. See Diversity wins: How Inclusion Matters <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters>
- ^{xvi} A meta-analysis of 45 studies on leadership styles found that women were more likely than men to have a 'transformational' leadership approach (where leaders establish themselves as role models by gaining followers' trust and confidence) than a 'transactional' leadership approach (where leaders establish give-and-take relationships that appeal to subordinates' self-interest). Women are also perceived to adopt a more participative and collaborative style. See Eagly, A., & Carli, L., 'Women and the Labyrinth of Leadership', Harvard Business Review, September 2007
- ^{xvii} e.g., <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/nov/19/great-resignation-mothers-forced-to-leave-jobs> or
- ^{xviii} Linked in data analysis finds: 'Job transitions — which can mean any type of job change, from dropping out of the workforce altogether to finding a better-paying job — for women have jumped 54% compared with a year ago... in comparison to 46 per cent for men.' See here <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/great-resignation-women-quitting-changing-jobs/>
- ^{xix} Equality at Every Stage: A roadmap for change, Gender Equality and Economic Empowerment Policy Team, Government Equalities Office, July. Available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/821889/GEO_GEEE_Strategy_Gender_Equality_Roadmap_Rev_1_1_.pdf
- ^{xx} Research by the ONS has found that women in the UK do, on average, 60 % more unpaid work than men. See here: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/articles/womenshouldtheresponsibilityofunpaidwork/2016-11-10>
- ^{xxi} Recent discussion around the role of unpaid work in fuelling wage gaps include: 'Spirals of Inequality - how unpaid care work is at the heart of gender inequities', published by the Women's Budget Group and available here <https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Accompanying-paper-FINAL.pdf>
- ^{xxii} As Spirals of Inequality (See previous note) puts it: 'We can see that the uneven gendered division of unpaid work sets in train a vicious and reinforcing cycle: women's greater share of unpaid work is a key contributor to lower earnings and, in turn, the lower earnings of women relative to men mean that women are more likely to take time out of the workforce to care for a child or relative and, in doing so, perpetuate this inequality between men and women.'
- ^{xxiii} These and other related statistics are outlined in 'How has the coronavirus pandemic affected women at work?' - a report published by the House of Commons Library available here <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/how-has-the-coronavirus-pandemic-affected-women-in-work/>
- ^{xxiv} IFS Deaton Review of Inequalities, see here <https://ifs.org.uk/inequality/themes/gender/>
- ^{xxv} Maternity Action, a pregnancy charity, reported rising numbers of [pregnant](#) women and new mothers were being denied their [maternity pay entitlement](#) in the wake of the pandemic – see here <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/pregnant-women-maternity-pay-pandemic-b1964801.html>
- ^{xxvii} For further explanation see page 7 Carers UK (2020) Carers Week 2020 Research Report, available at: https://www.carersuk.org/images/CarersWeek2020/CW_2020_Research_Report_WEB.pdf

^{xxviii} Current legislation requires that employees must have worked for an employer continuously for 26 weeks before they are entitled to formally request flexible working. See more here <https://www.gov.uk/flexible-working>

^{xxix} For example, in the UK, the earliest form of maternity leave was brought into legislation in 1975, whilst paternity leave was only introduced in 2003. See <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmwomeq/358/35806.htm>

^{xxx} Working Families (2019) Top Employers for Working Families: Benchmark Report 2019, pg. 7. Available at:

<https://www.workingfamilies.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Working-Families-Benchmark-Report-2019-Final.pdf>

^{xxxi} X Moss, R. (2021) 'UK Gender pay gap progress slow', Employee Benefits, 27th October. Available at:

<https://employeebenefits.co.uk/uk-gender-pay-gap-progress-slow/#:~:text=The%20UK%20gender%20pay%20gap,up%20from%207.0%25%20in%202020>

^{xxxii} Where's dad? Exploring the low take-up of inclusive parenting policies in the UK (Birkett & Forbes, 2019)

^{xxxiii} <https://www.bi.team/publications/supporting-men-to-take-longer-parental-leave-and-work-flexibly/>

^{xxxiv} For example, 38% of women in employment were working part-time in 2020 compared to 13% of men. See Francis Devine, B., Foley, N. and Ward, M. (2021) Women and the Economy, Briefing Paper CBP06838, House of Commons Library, 2nd March. Available at: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06838/SN06838.pdf>