

Workingmums.co.uk survey highlights jobs impact of childcare issues during the pandemic - many say they are facing ongoing problems

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A quarter of working mums who have lost their jobs since the Covid pandemic began say it is due to childcare issues, according to a workingmums.co.uk (<https://www.workingmums.co.uk>) survey.

The survey of over 1,000 mums found lack of childcare during the initial lockdown and ongoing childcare issues had been an issue for some employees. For instance, the majority of those who asked to be furloughed because of childcare reasons over the past months were turned down.

While 20% of those furloughed were furloughed due to lack of childcare, 61% of those who asked to be furloughed for childcare reasons were not granted that request. 17% had been furloughed at some point over the last months, 4% since the start of the scheme. 69% said their furlough pay had not been topped up by their employer. An ONS survey out last week highlighted that many employees were living below the minimum wage level as a result of employers not topping up their wages while they were on furlough.

The Government has allowed schools and childcare to remain open during the second lockdown in England and enabled parents to access informal childcare via childcare bubbles. However, just 48% of mums surveyed said their childcare was back to normal after schools and nurseries reopened, with 14% lacking wraparound care and 10% lacking help with drop-offs. Others had children with special needs who were staying at home or had no access to school, some had chosen to keep their children at home due to anxieties about family members' health and some had left work to look after their children. 47% said they had mixed emotions about their children returning to school, with 30% feeling mainly relieved and 12% feeling mainly anxious.

A quarter of respondents had used parental leave and/or annual leave to get them through the lockdown period. 19% felt they would have to rely on unpaid parental leave or annual leave in the event of schools being closed in the future, although 37% thought their employer would be flexible and understanding. Eight per cent thought they could lose their job if schools and nurseries had to close or they could not work due to a lockdown.

When it came to who does the childcare, only 16% of mums who have a partner said they shared childcare/homeschooling equally with 54% saying they do more and 25% saying they do all of the childcare/homeschooling. 42% of those who did more of the childcare and homeschooling say this had created relationship tensions. Of those who do more of the childcare/homeschooling, 48% say they do so because they have always been the main carer, while half say it is because their partner works longer hours or more intensively than they do. Other reasons given by 18% of respondents included that their partner can't work from home or is ill or disabled or that the respondent is on maternity leave.

Finances have been a huge issue since the pandemic began. While 47% of respondents have received their normal income in the last months, 9% have had no income since the pandemic began. Eight per cent have had their hours and pay reduced. Other respondents have been on furlough, on the Self Employment Support Scheme, on Universal Credit or on maternity leave.

There was a divided picture with regard to employer support. A third said their employer was looking out from their mental health, while 40% said they were not. 49% say their employer is supportive or very supportive. 10% say their employer is not at all supportive.

And when it came to job searching, while a third are struggling to find a job in their field and 37% say there are jobs in their field but it is very competitive, a lot of respondents said they were not looking at the moment because of the competition and the ongoing uncertainty.

Looking to the future, hybrid working was the preferred form of working post-Covid with 48% choosing this. Flexible start and finish times were also popular and support for full-time home working was high with a third favouring this.

Maria Garrido is a Family Support Worker. In March at the time of the first lockdown she was not able to work from home so she had to leave her zero hours job in May due to a lack of childcare for her three-year-old daughter. Her partner was made redundant a week later. The family have since moved to Manchester from London to find more affordable housing and both have jobs now. Maria, who is working for an agency, can now work mainly from home and her daughter is at nursery, but she is pregnant again and is worried that, because she is unable to do home visits, she may have to stop working soon. She adds that she will not get SMP because she has not been in her new role long enough.

Gillian Nissim, founder of [workingmums.co.uk](https://www.workingmums.co.uk), said: "We are very concerned about the impact the pandemic has had and is continuing to have on women's jobs. It is vital that this impact is tracked and that measures are put in place to safeguard women's jobs where this is possible, to reskill women whose jobs have gone and to take into account the centrally important role of childcare in women's ability to work. Our survey also shows a very divided picture on the employer side, although some employers are clearly under greater stress than others. Employers who go the extra mile for their employees will be in a better position, with a more motivated and loyal staff, after the pandemic is over."

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