

Nearly half of working mums would consider sharing parental leave

Submitted by: Working Mums

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Some 44% of working mums would consider sharing their maternity leave with their partner, according to Workingmums.co.uk (<http://www.workingmums.co.uk>) annual survey.

The number of women who would consider sharing their leave when the new shared parenting legislation comes in next year has risen by 3% since last year and may in part be due to a rising number of women who are the main breadwinners in their families - over 17% of women who were living with a partner say they are the main breadwinner and only in a small number of cases is this because their partner has been made redundant or had to reduce their hours.

The survey of over 2,390 working parents, sponsored by McDonald's Restaurants Ltd, covers a wide variety of issues, from childcare and flexible working to finances, discrimination and self employment.

It shows that, despite the rise in women breadwinners, the number of women who claim to split childcare and housework equally with their partners is just 21%, down from 27% last year. Some 17% say their partners work flexibly with 4% of partners working part time.

Many women said the economic situation was affecting how long they took for maternity leave. Some 46% had returned to work early due to the recession or cost of living. Some 10% only took between one and three months' maternity leave. The majority, however, took between seven and 12 months. Although 70% said they went back to work because they needed the money, 60% said they would work even if money was not an issue.

Other findings from the survey include:

- 56% of women say they earn less pro-rata than they did before having children.
- 49% say employers discriminate more against women in the current climate
- 60% think they have to work harder than men due to unconscious bias
- the number of parents using grandparents for childcare has risen. 56% make use of grandparents to reduce their childcare costs, 18% use tax credits, 25% have childcare vouchers; 23% use friends; 8% get older siblings to help and 18% get help from other relatives (many use a combination of options)
- 41% (up 11% on last year) spent nothing on childcare while 20% pay over GBP500 per month
- 32% say homeworking is their most favoured type of flexible working and homeworking is the most likely thing to encourage more women to work full time.
- 53% said that more flexible working would aid them in their career development
- Most women got the flexible working they requested, but 23% did not with 11% feeling their employer did not even consider their request at all
- Only 13% who had taken a career break found a job fairly easily afterwards
- Most women (53%) want part-time work and 15% of part timers work at least 6-8 hours extra a week
- Just 4% do a job share
- 74% of working mums are logging on to emails outside of their working hours, with 48% doing so regularly.
- 14% of respondents were on a zero hours contract or variable shifts - of these 54% prefer it as it

offers flexibility, but 17% find it difficult to arrange all the childcare they need. 28% like it for the flexibility but also find it a challenge with childcare.

Gillian Nissim, founder of Workingmums.co.uk, said: “Our annual survey always throws up a wealth of information on the way women are working or would like to work and what the hurdles many face when attempting to reach their potential. It is interesting to note the appetite for shared parenting in the light of expectations that initial take-up will not be significant. This perhaps reflects a growing awareness among couples of the link between equality in the workplace and at home. It is vital that policy supports parents in having greater choice over how they balance work and family life.”

Full details can be found here (<http://ow.ly/BgQvK>).

Contact Mandy Garner on 07789 106435 or email mandy.garner@workingmums.co.uk for more information

Notes to editors:

*The survey was based on responses from 2,391 working parents. 98% are women. 24% are aged between 25-34 years old, 52% are between 35-44 years old, and 24% are either below 24 or above 45. The most common household income brackets was over GBP50k (32%). 12% have a household income between GBP40k and GBP50k per year and 13% have a household income between GBP30k and GBP40k per year. The rest have a household income less than GBP30k per year. 69% of the respondents are currently working. 72% have more than 10 years work experience, with 49% having more than 15 years experience. 34% are management level or above, with 32% having had more than 5 years management experience.

*Workingmums.co.uk is the number one jobs and community site for professional working mothers. It has over 320,000 registered users and works with thousands of employers.

*Partnering with franchisees, McDonald's Restaurants Ltd operates just over 1,225 outlets in the UK, delivering a quick service restaurant experience to over 3 million customers per day. One of its greatest strengths is its diversity; it has 97,000 employees ranging in age from 16 to 85 and originating from over 100 different countries. Its fast paced environment appeals to all ages and its experience has shown that the right blend of youth and experience can make a real difference.

Around 45% of its employees are women; many of them juggling a career with family commitments. Its restaurants offer part time positions, flexible working and even the opportunity to work on the UK's first 'Friends and Family' contract – which allows friends and family working in the same restaurant to share and cover each other's shifts without the need to inform management in advance. This flexibility has particularly benefitted women with caring responsibilities and students with deadlines to meet.