

Facts about dads today

This briefing draws on the findings of two EOC research reports and other sources to present some of the key facts about fathers' employment patterns, their changing role within the family and how changing expectations require new, more flexible approaches to working practices.



Working long hours

Fathers are more likely to be employed, and to work longer hours, than men without dependant children.

- 4.6 million male employees in Great Britain have dependent children – over a third of all male employees.¹
- 89% of fathers are in employment compared with 74% of men without dependant children.
- Fathers are less likely to work part-time (4%) than men without children (9%), unlike mothers, who are more likely to work part-time (60%) than women without children (32%).¹
- UK fathers work the longest hours in Europe - an average 46.9 hours per week, compared with 45.5 hours in Portugal, 41.5 hours in Germany, 40 hours in Ireland and 35.5 hours in France.²
- Around one in eight fathers in Great Britain work excessively long hours of 60 hours or more, and almost 40% of fathers work 48 hours or more a week.²
- While 80% of fathers and mothers are satisfied with their working hours, satisfaction levels drop to 60% for men working more than 48 hours a week and to 50% for those working more than 60 hours a week.³
- Fathers working more than 50 hours a week spend less time looking after children than fathers working shorter hours.²

Spending more time with children

Younger men's aspirations are different to previous generations.

- Fathers are spending more time with their children: in the late 1990s, fathers of children under 5 were spending an average of 2 hours a day on child-related activities, compared to less than 1/4 an hour per day in the mid 1970s.²

- Fathers' time spent with their children accounts for one third of total parental childcare time.²
- Where mothers work, one third cite fathers as the main child carer while they are at work.²
- Some fathers sacrifice their own career ambitions in order to spend more time with their children at a certain point in their lives.⁴

"The value of the father as a child carer is vastly underrated. I do spend quite a lot of time with him, and I think I am equally capable as his mother at looking after him."

Father of 5-year-old child, working in the public sector.⁵



Gender pay gap makes the problem worse

The fact that men's earnings are generally a higher proportion of the family income than women's can limit the time men are able to spend with their children. Different patterns emerge where women earn more.

- Women's hourly earnings from full-time work are 19% less than men in full-time work - and women's earnings from part-time work are 41% less than men's for full-timework.¹
- Women's lower pay levels means that it is women in the main who reduce working hours after children are born, reinforcing traditional gender roles in many families.
- Men are more closely involved in looking after children where the mother earns more than they do.²
- Women earn the same as, or more than their partner in a quarter of couples where both partners are working 16+ hours per week in 1996/97.⁶

Father-friendly employment

Many employers still see flexible working or family-friendly working policies as something for women.

- Male-dominated workplaces, especially in traditional craft industries and occupations are less likely to offer flexible working arrangements than other employers.⁴

- Fathers often feel discouraged by workplace norms and culture from taking time off work for family, or expressing a wish for flexible work.⁴
- Father's expectations about whether they would have access to work life balance policies are lower than for mothers.²

"I think it's probably tougher for fathers because the sort of impression you get is that women are the people who go and take the kids to the doctor's, they pick them up from school. The mothers have to be more flexible than the fathers in doing that. So there's more pressure for the father to stay in the job, stay there and keep on working." Private sector, HR Manager.⁵

The lack of opportunity for fathers to use flexible work practices to look after children is worrying, as children whose fathers have been actively involved in their lives have better outcomes², including:

- higher educational achievements
- more satisfactory relationships in adult life
- protection from mental health problems
- less likelihood of being in trouble with the police.

Early involvement of father with child is associated with continuing involvement with that child through childhood and adolescence.²

The key thing that fathers request is flexibility and understanding from employers - even limited flexibility can allow many fathers to play a more active role with children such as attending sports days, having time off for family emergencies or for hospital appointments.⁵

"... if I could have, even if it was one day a week, where I was out of here at 4pm to be home by 5pm, then I think that would be great."

Father of child aged one, employed in the private sector.⁵



Questions for Dads

- Can you own up to being a dad who shares the childcare, or is discussion about children and family responsibilities discouraged in your workplace?
- Do you know that you have a legal right to two weeks' paternity leave when your baby is born and a right to request flexible work if you have a child under 6 years old?
www.dti.gov.uk/workingparents
- Are you able to take paternity or parental leave, request flexible hours, or take time off in an emergency?
- Do you fear that your job or career prospects would be undermined if you took a period of leave to be with your child?
- Do you think women are more likely to be allowed time off for family reasons in your workplace?
- Do you think you have been discriminated against? If so, you may wish to contact the EOC for advice.

Questions for Employers

- Do you know how many fathers are employed in your organisation?
- Are your flexible working options open to fathers as well as mothers?
- Does your organisation have a long hours culture?
- Have you thought about the effect of long hours at work on the family life of your employees?
- Do you know that relatively modest and inexpensive adjustments to the way the workplace is organised could help ease pressures for a large number of fathers?
- Do you lead by example - encourage a culture so fathers can use flexible policies to be with their children?

What is the EOC doing?

- The EOC wants to raise awareness of the changing role of fathers
- The EOC wants fathers to have more opportunities to be actively involved in looking after children
- We offer information on our website www.eoc.org.uk and can advise individuals through our Helpline - **0845 601 5901**
- The EOC can support cases through legal advice and assistance. For example, Neil Walkingshaw, a vehicle technician whose employer refused to let him work part-time so he could help look after his son won his sex discrimination case against his former employer with assistance from the EOC
http://www.eoc.org.uk/cseng/news/press_releases_2001_49.asp
- We are looking at the kind of working practices that are needed to make it easier for mothers and fathers to share the care of their children
- We are building a Caring and Parenting Coalition with other interested organisations
- We want organisations providing services to children and their parents, such as schools and hospitals, to consider whether their services encourage fathers to be actively involved in the care and welfare of their children.

Where to get more information

EOC Research

Balancing work and family: Research findings summarising the key points from two EOC reports that explore how fathers fulfil their roles both within the family and at work and what support could be of most benefit to them in combining these roles.
[http://www.eoc.org.uk/cseng/research/fathers%20balancing%20work%20and%20family%20\(english\).pdf](http://www.eoc.org.uk/cseng/research/fathers%20balancing%20work%20and%20family%20(english).pdf)

Working Fathers: Earning and Caring A review of recent literature on fathers in employment and secondary analysis of existing data sets.
<http://www.eoc.org.uk/cseng/research/ueareport.pdf>

Dads on Dads: needs and expectations at home and at work: Research which examines fathers' roles at home and at work through interviews in six case study organisations and focus groups
http://www.eoc.org.uk/cseng/research/dads_on_dads.pdf

Shared Caring, Bringing Fathers into the Frame: Research exploring current academic and policy developments to examine how fathers can be supported to balance their employment and family commitments, by Margaret O'Brien.

http://www.eoc.org.uk/cseng/research/shared_caring_wp18.pdf

Time use and childcare: A briefing summarising time spent by fathers and mothers caring for children and other activities, based on EOC analysis of the UK Time Use survey undertaken by the Office for National Statistics in 2000/01.

http://www.eoc.org.uk/cseng/research/time_use_and_childcare.pdf

National Family and Parenting Institute

In October 2003, NFPI launched the Family Friendly Campaign, a nationwide project which over the next 10 years will aim to make this a better place in which to raise a family.

www.nfpi.org/family03www.nfpi.org/family03

Fathers Direct

Fathers Direct is the UK's national information centre for fatherhood. It exists to support the welfare of children by the positive and active involvement of fathers and male carers in their lives.

<http://www.fathersdirect.com/><http://www.fathersdirect.com/>

Department for Trade and Industry

For information about employment rights for fathers contact the DTI:

www.dti.gov.uk/workingparentswww.dti.gov.uk/workingparents

or ring the ACAS helpline **08457 474747**

- 1 EOC (2003) Facts about women and men in Great Britain 2003. Manchester: EOC
- 2 O'Brien, M & Shemilt, I (2003) Working fathers: earning and caring. Manchester: EOC
- 3 Worklife Balance Survey 2000 (as quoted in Working Fathers: Earning and Caring, see ref 2 above)
- 4 Dex, S (2003) Families and work in the twenty-first century. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- 5 Hatter, W et al, (2002) Dads on Dads: Needs and Expectations at Home and at Work. Manchester: EOC
- 6 Pullinger, J & Summerfield C (eds) (1998) Social Focus on women and men. London: The Stationery Office

photographs courtesy of the Pre-school Learning Alliance and Sure Start/DfES

