

# British Mums getting back to work thanks to grandparents childcare, researchers find <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS

The extent of grandparents providing childcare in the UK is much higher than previously thought and is a factor in assisting mums, who had taken time out from work to have children, to get back into the workplace, according to new research carried out at the University of Birmingham.

The study, published in the *Journal of Social Policy*, found that grandparents were the first named source of after school and weekend care for 36 percent of school entry year children for lone parents and 32 percent for partnered mothers. It was found that grandparents are providing care for mothers with all levels of educational attainment.

The research suggests that grandparent provided care is extensive in the UK and has had a major impact on the work force with grandparent care having a causal effect on mothers' going to work, raising mothers' participation by 26 percent (12 percentage points of participation).

The study was also found to benefit mothers from all levels of education. Grandparent care raised participation of mothers with degree level qualifications by 20 percent which makes a big difference because these mothers are more likely to be able to get work.

It also made a big difference to mothers without qualifications who were less likely to be able to get a job, raising their lower participation by about 40 percent, while for women with a low level of qualifications (NVQ1) it raised their participation by 25 percent.

So for women with fewer qualifications, grandparent taking care of the grandchildren, can make all the difference in terms of whether mothers work or not.

Researchers at the University of Birmingham examined secondary data of more than 14,000 mums from the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS), a nationally representative study of babies born in the UK over a 12-month period, from the year 2000.

The study also found that in the UK many grandparents live close to their grandchildren, with around 40 percent of mothers located within 15 minutes of their parents.

However, with the recent changes to the age of the state pension, the research points to grandparents facing an increased conflict between providing care for their grandchildren and participating in paid work.

Dr Shireen Kanji, University of Birmingham said:

'The contribution of unpaid work, often performed by women, is often unrecognised. Grandparents are having a large causal effect on mothers' participation in paid work in the UK but grandparents themselves are under pressure to extend their paid working lives as a result of recent changes to the state pension age.'

With a competitive job market and expensive childcare options in the UK, the researchers found that there was a strong degree of extended family support to assist mothers back into the workplace.

Dr Kanji added: 'The evidence is clear that working parents in the UK rely heavily on grandparents and the degree of intergenerational solidarity is surprisingly high in what many regard as a liberal market economy.'

However the study did point to further research being required to find out more about motivations for using grandparent childcare.

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mother's labour force participation <sup>[6]</sup>

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