

Mothers going back to work pushed into lower-paid jobs ^[1]

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Source: Nursury World

Format: Article

Publication Date: 9 Feb 2012

EXCEPRTS:

The Resolution Foundation and Netmums poll of 1,600 part-time working mothers revealed that almost half of mothers on low and middle-incomes took a lower-skilled part-time job when they returned to work after having children. This was also the same for women on higher incomes, with more than a third taking a lower skilled job.

The average household income for the low and middle-income group is considered to be £25,600 before tax, and £43,800 for the higher-income group.

Nearly all of the women (93 per cent) in the survey, *The price of motherhood: women and part-time work*, worked full-time before having children, and two thirds said they planned to increase their working hours once their children were older.

When asked whether moving to working part-time (30 hours or less a week) was a choice, 70 per cent of all mothers with children under five said they had freely chosen to work-part time so not to miss their child's early years. However, over a third of women in the low to middle income group said that working part-time had not been a choice.

The lack of affordable and quality childcare was one of the main barriers given by both women on low to middle incomes (47 per cent) and those reliant on benefits (57 per cent) to working full-time. Whereas, the majority of women on higher incomes (40 per cent) said that the reason for not working full-time was a lack of jobs with hours that suited their needs. This was also a problem for the women in the other income groups.

In total, 43 per cent of women stated that they didn't think it was worth their while working full-time.

When asked under what circumstances they would be prepared to work full-time, mothers in the higher income group were more likely to say that they wouldn't under any circumstances work full-time than those in the low to middle and benefit reliant groups.

Higher income mothers were also less likely to be motivated to increase their working hours if they had access to better childcare or more flexible employment than those in the other income groups unless their financial situation deteriorated.

The authors of the report suggest that along with providing greater access to affordable childcare, more flexible working, and increasing well paid high skilled employment on a part-time basis, the working lives of mothers with young children could be improved by restoring the pre-April 2011 levels of childcare support through the tax credits system.

They go on to say that employers need to provide a greater range of flexible working options, such as compressed hours, home working and term-time only hours, which need to be offered to fathers as well as mothers. As well as, more part-time employment opportunities at all levels of the workforce not just in low-skilled, low paid sectors.

Vidhya Alakeson, director of research at the Resolution Foundation, said, 'Childcare costs are a big issue in the UK and are eating up a large chunk of household incomes, stopping many women from working longer hours if they want to ease the squeeze on their household finances. Such barriers to work are bad news for the economy, but also bad news for the living standards of households, already struggling in the current climate.'

Sally Russell, co-founder of Netmums, said, 'Employers are wasting an incredible pool of talent by forcing mums into lower paid, part-time work. It's unbelievable that women are encouraged to climb the career ladder only to be forced back to the lowest rung when they have children.'

-reprinted from *Nursury World*

Related link: *The price of motherhood: Women and part-time work* ^[2]

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