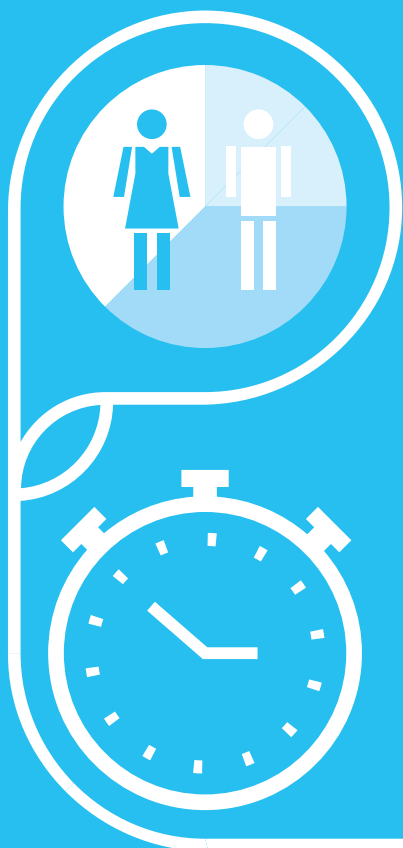


# Shared opportunity: Parental leave in UK business



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## Introduction

New parental leave legislation will come into effect in early 2015, giving parents the option of sharing leave over the course of a year. Campaigners are hoping these new proposals will encourage more men to share childcare, drive gender equality in the workplace and eliminate discrimination around maternity leave<sup>1</sup>, but what impact will these changes have on UK business?

The government anticipates that up to eight per cent of fathers will take up the new scheme from 2015. However, there's been only a limited uptake of the paternity leave entitlement currently available. According to a 2013 TUC analysis of a BIS report into shared leave,<sup>2</sup> just one in 172 fathers (less than 1%) are taking advantage of Additional Paternity Leave, which has been available to new dads since 2010.

In this research, we set out to understand organisations' attitudes to parental leave and their preparedness for the upcoming changes. We asked 1,000 employees and 789 managers about their own experiences of parental leave, their thoughts on the new proposals and about their employers' attitudes to maternity and paternity leave.

New shared parental leave proposals will soon become law, and organisations need to plan and prepare for the impact of these changes, addressing any operational or cultural barriers that may prevent their successful implementation. With over 800,000 births each year, it's in the interests of both new parents and their employers to ensure that the experience is as positive as possible, to minimise cost and disruption to their organisation, to maximise work/life balance, and maintain links between new parents and the workplace.

Managed effectively, the introduction of shared parental leave can build employee engagement and loyalty and provide opportunities to develop teams. It is a critical step to achieving equality in the workplace and enabling more women to proceed into senior roles. We know from our previous research, *Ambition and Gender in the Workplace*,<sup>3</sup> that career and salary progression often slows most when women take time out to have a family. These proposals, if embraced by employers, can help to halt the drain of female talent from the workplace by making shared parental care both more acceptable and a more attractive option for all parties.



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- 1 <http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk/about-us/press-room/response-to-shared-parental-leave>
- 2 TUC analysis of BIS Shared parental leave and pay administration consultation – impact assessment
- 3 *Ambition and Gender at Work*, ILM research report, <https://www.i-l-m.com/Why-ILM/Research-reports/Ambition-and-gender>

## Executive summary

In most organisations, the right to take maternity leave is well established, with 96% of new mothers taking more than the statutory two weeks off work after the birth of a child. The same is not true of paternity leave. Under 10% of men take more than two weeks of paternity leave after the adoption or birth of a child.

### Shared leave explained

Mothers are entitled to up to 52 weeks statutory maternity leave and fathers one or two weeks statutory paternity leave following the birth or adoption of a child. Since April 2010, new fathers have been entitled to ask for Statutory Additional Paternity Leave and Pay if their partner returns to work before the end of their maternity (or adoption) leave or pay period. The father's leave must currently start 20 weeks after the birth, effectively taking the 'second shift' of parental leave.

From 2015, a mother will retain the right to a year of maternity leave but will be able to choose to switch to the new shared leave scheme if she wishes. The new scheme will enable eligible mothers and their partners to take up to 52 weeks of leave in total, to be shared between them either in alternating blocks or taken together. Each employee will be required to give a minimum of eight weeks' notice of their intention to take each separate period of parental leave. Employees will only be able to take three separate sets of leave, or make three changes to the planned dates, during the 52 weeks. Employers will not be able to refuse leave, but they will be able to insist that leave is taken as a single block.

New fathers will also get a new right to take unpaid leave to attend up to two antenatal appointments.

These results suggest that employers are culturally less accepting of a father's rights to take paternity leave. We found that 63% of employees feel their organisation is supportive of mothers taking up to a year's maternity leave, but significantly fewer (58%) feel their employer is supportive of fathers taking just two weeks.

This is a striking imbalance, and one that is exacerbated as you rise up the ranks of management. Just 2% of male managers take more than two weeks leave compared to 94% of female managers, showing a great divide between the genders.

### Pressure for quick returns

In general, managers feel under pressure to return from parental leave sooner and take less leave than more junior employees. Managers feel a dual pressure to return to work, both for financial reasons, as they are likely to be earning more than their non-managerial counterparts, and because of the expectations of their employer or peers. This indicates that, in addition to any cultural expectations, new fathers also feel considerable financial pressure to return to work.

We know from the most recent studies into maternity and paternity pay<sup>4</sup> that just nine per cent of new fathers receive full pay for longer than two weeks when on paternity leave, while 70% of new mothers receive full pay between one and 38 weeks. Employers will not be required to enhance paternity pay to the same level as enhanced maternity pay as part of the new legislation, though they can choose to if they want to. This significant financial disparity has undoubtedly had an impact on the uptake of paternity leave.

# 25%

of employees think their employer is actively opposed to new shared leave legislation

## Disruption levels

Almost half (46%) of the employees we asked and 58% of managers said that parental leave was somewhat disruptive for their organisations, but very few employees (6%) said they thought leave was very disruptive. Nearly three-quarters of managers (72%) felt parental leave affected the efficiency and productivity of their teams, Employers will not be required to enhance paternity pay to the same level as enhanced maternity pay as part of the new legislation, though they can choose to if they want to. Leave was most disruptive when the absence was covered internally and small and medium sized organisations reported the greatest disruption across the board in terms of teamwork, cost and productivity.

Most employers cover parental leave internally, by sharing the workload across the team or department (43%) or by using an internal member of staff to cover the role (30%). Just a quarter (24%) go outside the organisation and use an external appointee to fill the role. However, this route was far more common among small businesses.

## Shared leave

Generally, both managers and non-managers are supportive of all forms of parental leave, including the proposed introduction of shared leave. However, they are far less sure of their employers' support for shared leave – just 37% of employees and 45% of managers believe their employer is supportive of the idea of leave being shared between the mother and the father, and 25% think their employer is actively opposed.

Managers in small organisations were shown to be more concerned about parental leave, and felt their employer was slightly less supportive of new shared parental leave proposals (43%) than those working in larger organisations (46%). Senior managers were also less supportive of maternity and paternity leave across the board than more junior managers, suggesting their greater distance from staff, and their focus on costs

and efficiency prevents them from fully embracing parental leave.

These perceived cultural barriers are likely to impede the uptake of the new shared leave proposals, and in fact already are impacting on the uptake of paternity leave, which remains low.

## Getting it right

The issue of parental leave sits at the heart of the diversity debate. We know from previous ILM research into gender and ambition<sup>5</sup> that gender gaps in terms of salary and career progress are often associated with female employees taking time out to start a family.

Despite changes to legislation on parental leave, there remains an ingrained expectation in many organisations that mothers will take on primary childcare in the first year of a child's life. If organisations are serious about realising the benefits of a diverse senior team, and meeting impending government targets for more gender balanced boards, the introduction of shared leave is a crucial step towards achieving equality in the workplace and enabling more women to progress into senior roles.

In order to give more mothers a realistic choice of returning early to their careers, organisations must first identify and address the cultural (and financial) barriers that risk preventing fathers from taking up their shared leave entitlement.

4 NatCen Maternity and Paternity Rights and Women Returners Survey 2009/10, Department for Work and Pensions, <http://www.natcen.ac.uk/media/24607/maternity-paternity-rights-women-2009-10.pdf>

5 Ambition and Gender at Work, ILM research report, <https://www.i-l-m.com/Why-ILM/Research-reports/Ambition-and-gender>

## Report findings

Maternity leave is firmly embedded in most UK organisations, with 96% of new mothers taking more than two weeks off work after having a baby. However, there is still very limited uptake of paternity leave beyond the statutory two-week period. This is particularly pronounced among male managers, who very rarely take more than two weeks' leave and often take no leave at all

### Parental leave – the current situation

While most women in this research take an average of between six and 12 months of maternity leave, men take, on average, less than two weeks off work after the birth of a child. Almost two-thirds of fathers (63%) take two weeks or less paternity leave, fewer than one in 10 (9.8%) take any more than two weeks and a quarter take no leave at all.

Seniority has a clear impact on the length of leave parents opt to take. On average, female managers take 10 weeks less maternity leave than more junior women. While over two thirds (69%) of female employees took 27 weeks or more of maternity leave, just 41% of female managers did the same.

Managers feel a dual pressure to return to work, both for financial reasons, as they are likely to be earning more than their non-managerial counterparts, and because of the expectations of their employer or peers. Three-quarters (74%) of managers agree that senior women are under more pressure to return to work sooner than less senior employees.

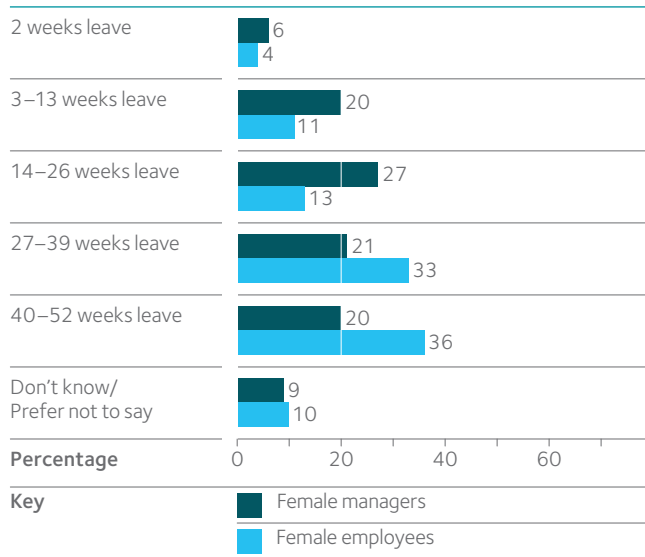
Among men this pattern is even more pronounced. Very few male managers (just 2%) took more than two weeks of paternity leave, and many (40%) took none at all. Periods of leave are again shorter, with male managers taking on average one and a half weeks compared to three weeks for employees. As men take less leave generally, this gap is less pronounced – but the difference is still significant.

This can be partly explained by the older demographic of these managers – the average age of a male manager in this study was nearly 45 compared to employees, who had an average age of 32. However, this finding indicates that senior men, like their female counterparts, feel increased pressure to return to work early – 71% of managers agree that male senior managers are under greater pressure to take no more than two weeks of paternity leave than non-managerial colleagues.

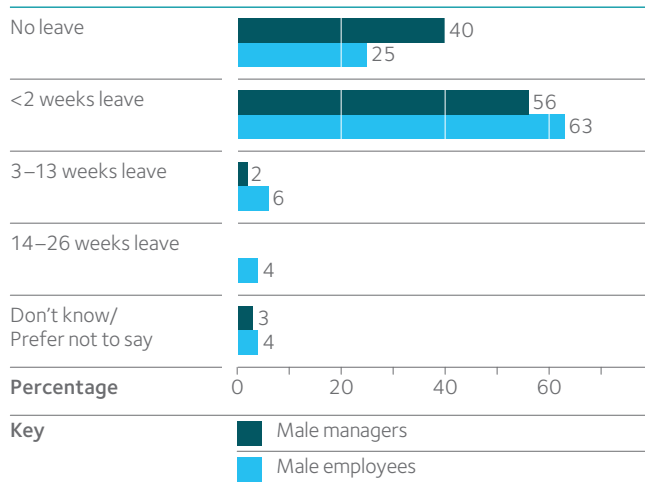
Further evidence of the financial responsibility felt by fathers can be seen in the numbers and types of men working part time. Our sample shows that more women than men are working part time (44% compared to 17%), in line with the national average. However, we see that while it is working mothers who tend to be working part time, for men it is those without children who choose a part-time role (68% of men working part time have no children compared to 32% with children). Women working part time are most likely to have chosen this route to care for children, but men are most likely to work part time before the birth of a child. This indicates that, once they become fathers, men appear to feel an increased financial pressure to bring home a full-time salary.

Once employees have had children, men's views towards parental leave become more traditional. They are slightly more likely to say that fathers shouldn't be expected to spend more than a couple of weeks with a new baby (37% of men with children supported this statement compared to 34% of men without children) and less likely to say they don't think it matters which parent is caring for a baby (68%) than men without children (75%).

**Figure 1: Time taken for maternity leave**



**Figure 2: Time taken for paternity leave**

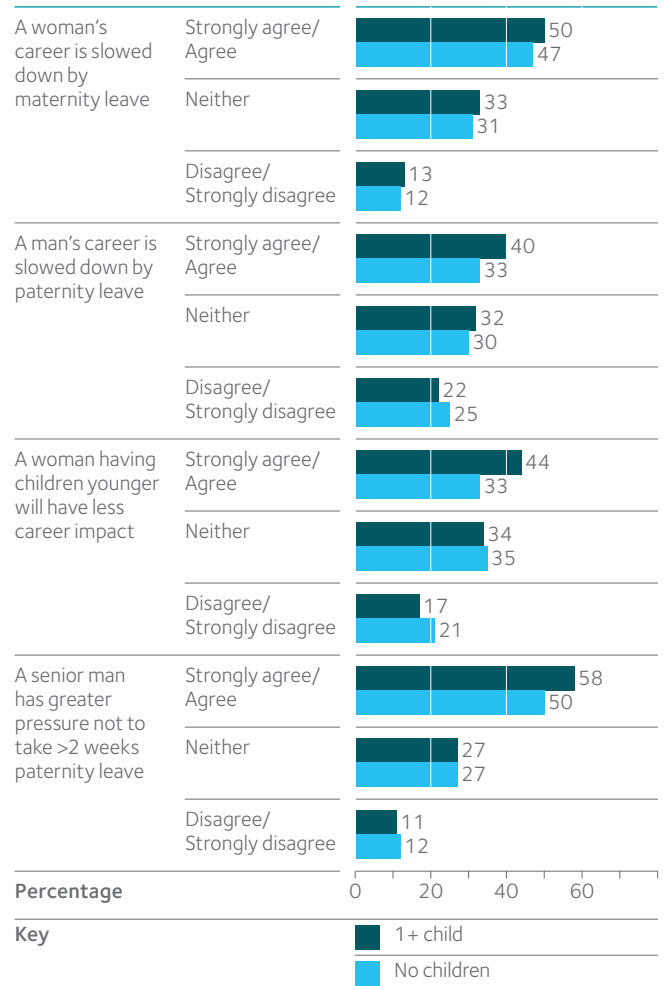


We believe this change in attitudes is largely caused by new fathers' realisation of the financial implications of paternity leave, which is often paid at a statutory rate of £136.78 a week (or 90% of full pay, whichever is less) and rarely topped up by employers past the two week mark.<sup>6</sup>

**Dealing with parental leave**

Half of the respondents (54%) indicated that someone in their team or department had taken maternity leave of more than two weeks in the last three years, and 31% said that a colleague or team member had taken more than two weeks of paternity leave.

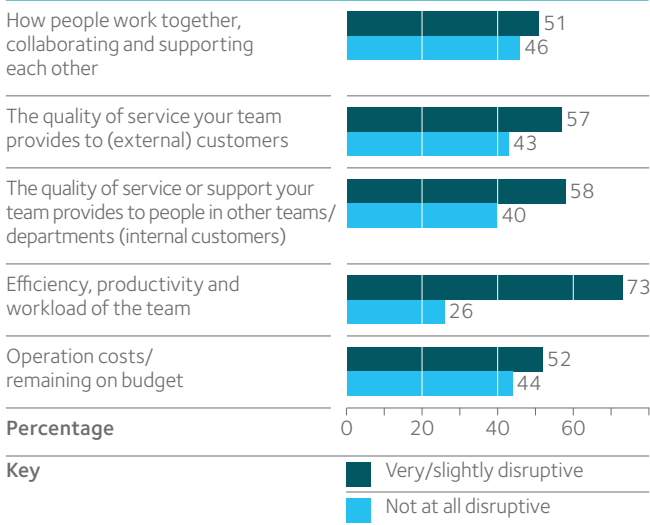
**Figure 3: Impact of children on careers**



The majority of organisations choose to cover parental leave internally, either by sharing the workload of absent members across the team or department (43%) or by using an internal member of staff to cover the role (30%). A quarter (24%) go outside of the organisation and use an external appointee to fill the role.

<sup>6</sup> NatCen Maternity and Paternity Rights and Women Returners Survey 2009/10, Department for Work and Pensions, <http://www.natcen.ac.uk/media/24607/maternity-paternity-rights-women-2009-10.pdf>

**Figure 4: Impact of parental leave on the business**

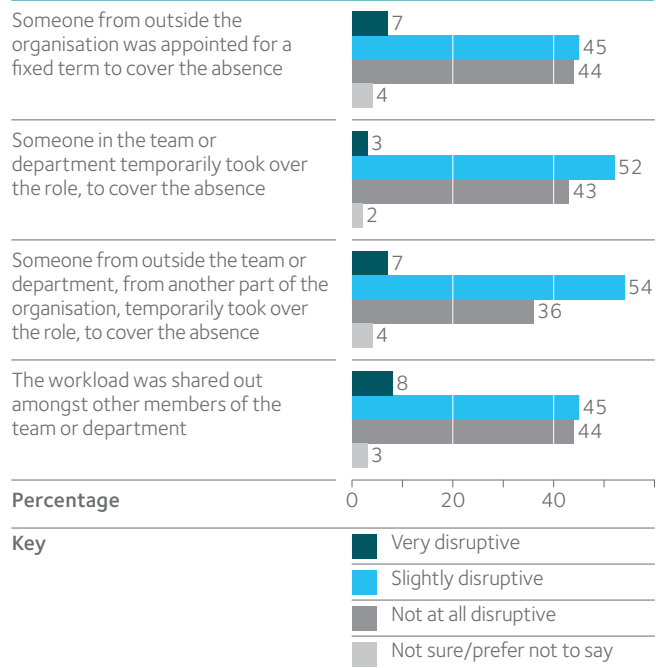


Smaller organisations are more likely to have to recruit externally to cover leave (35% compared to 25% of large organisations) and are also the least likely to share the workload throughout a team (35% compared to 63% of large organisations). These smaller organisations, with fewer team members and a higher likelihood of specialist roles, are the most likely to be at risk of operational or financial disruption. Because they have less capacity in-house to cover extended periods of parental leave they are the most likely to have to invest in additional staff, putting a strain on their budgets.

Over half (52%) of the employees we surveyed said that parental leave was disruptive at some level, but generally levels of disruption were seen to be very low, with very few employees (6%) describing leave as very disruptive, 46% as only slightly disruptive and a similar proportion (45%) describing it as not at all disruptive.

Managers found parental leave more disruptive (58% described it as very or slightly disruptive) and, almost three-quarters (72%) had seen a negative impact on efficiency and productivity when team members took parental leave. They also said that leave was disruptive but to a lesser extent on working together (51%), the quality of service to customers (57%), internal customer service (58%) and operation costs and budget (52%).

**Figure 5: Level of disruption by type of cover**



The more senior a manager was, the less supportive they were of leave across the board. It is not surprising that managers were more aware of the disruption caused by parental leave, as they are the most likely to have to undertake the additional work of allocating workload and managing the leave period. But the fact that so many non-managers also saw a negative impact emphasises that the disruption caused by parental leave does pose a challenge for managers and employers.

Recruiting someone from outside of the team to cover for the absent parent was seen to be the least disruptive method of cover (52% say it was very or slightly disruptive), though obviously the most costly for organisations. This is followed closely by sharing the workload across the team, which 53% of managers said was very or slightly disruptive. Most disruptive was using someone from another part of the organisation to cover the role, where 60% of managers found this disruptive.

Small and medium organisations found maternity and paternity leave more disruptive than larger organisations in all aspects across the board, saying it had a bigger impact on collaboration (62% compared to 48% of larger organisations), productivity (80% compared to 71%) and cost (62% compared to 49% of larger employers).



**Table 1: Attitudes to parental leave**

| Statements  | Managers Supportive | Employees Supportive |
|---|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1 I think mothers and fathers should be able to share a year on leave in any combination they want, looking after a new born baby                       | 81%                 | 86%                  |
| 2 I don't think it matters which parent takes leave as long as there is a parent looking after a new baby during its first year                         | 81%                 | 77%                  |
| 3 I think mothers should spend at least a year on leave looking after a newborn baby  | 52%                 | 68%                  |
| 4 I think fathers shouldn't be expected to spend more than a couple of weeks on leave with a newborn baby   | 27%                 | 28%                  |
| 5 I don't think either parent should spend more than six months on leave during the first year a baby is born   | 32%                 | 23%                  |
| 6 I don't think it's necessary for either parent to look after a new baby once the mother has recovered, as long as good quality childcare is available | 27%                 | 18%                  |

**What are the attitudes to leave?**

On an individual level, we see resounding support for parents' current leave entitlement and for the concept of shared parental leave. Managers are less enthusiastic than non-managers, and both groups feel their employer is not particularly supportive of new shared leave proposals

Generally, there are high levels of support for both current leave arrangements and the introduction of shared leave across the board. Non-managers were very supportive of sharing leave 50/50 between mother and father with the mother taking the first block (84%), as were managers, though slightly less so (72%). Some traditional views still remain, with 53% of employees and 66% of managers supportive of the idea of the mother taking all of the parental leave.

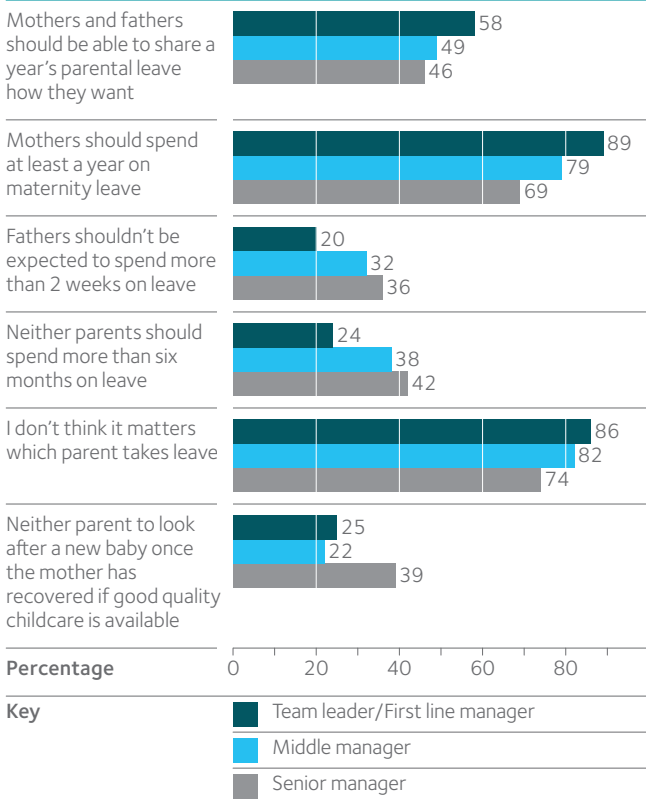
When it comes to the new shared leave proposals, perceptions are still largely positive, with managers receptive to the idea of shared leave taken in alternate blocks (52% are supportive) and employees positively enthusiastic (79% are supportive). The lower levels of support for alternating leave compared to leave taken as one consistent block could be because this style of leave is still untested, meaning managers in particular are unsure about the complexity of covering multiple periods of leave, and the impact this might have on their productivity and teamwork.

Managers are generally less positive about parental leave across the board than non-managers, although they are still largely positive on the whole. While their attitudes to leave are ranked in a roughly similar order to employees, they show a lower level of enthusiasm for parental leave than their employees across all of the options listed.

In particular, managers are less supportive of mothers spending at least a year on leave (52%) than employees (68%) and are more likely to agree that neither parent should spend more than six months on leave (32%) than those not at management level (23%). This pattern is reflected across all the available options, largely driven by the fact that managers must deal with the potential disruption caused by team members taking leave.

In turn, senior managers are generally less enthusiastic about all forms of parental leave than more junior management staff. They have less positive responses to the option of mothers and fathers sharing leave (46% were supportive compared to 58% of first line managers) and mothers spending at least a year on maternity leave (69% compared to 89% of first line managers). They were also more likely to support statements which favoured employees returning to work quickly, with 42% agreeing that neither parent should spend more than six months on leave compared to 20% of first line managers, and 39% agreeing neither parent should look after a new baby if childcare is available, compared to a quarter (25%) of first line managers.

**Figure 6: Support for parental leave (managers)**



While at first line management level it's the disruption of day-to-day work that causes concern, more senior managers see both the disruption and the financial implications of extended leave while remaining somewhat distant from the frontline. The senior managers in this sample are more likely to be older and also more likely to be male, which could play a role in their more negative attitudes to leave. They are also likely to be more distant from front line staff taking leave, and therefore more likely to see parental leave purely in terms of cost and disruption rather than the benefit to real people. They may not have a close relationship with the leave taker, and therefore may not be as understanding as a manager who works with them on a day-to-day basis. Their distance also means they may fail to see the benefits of parental leave on engagement and retention, particularly if these metrics are not being tracked in their organisation.

**63%**

of employees think their employer is supportive of up to a year's maternity leave

**58%**

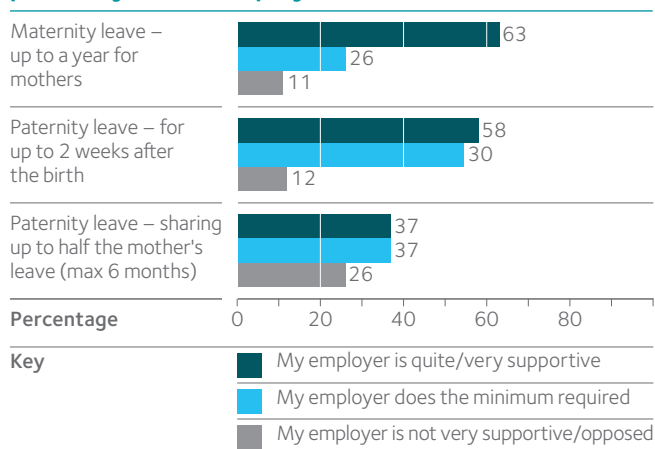
of employees think their employer is supportive of two weeks paternity leave

Managers in small organisations are consistently less supportive of parental leave than those working for larger employers, though they're still supportive generally. We know they are likely to face the most cost in dealing with parental leave as they are also the most likely to recruit external cover and the most likely to find leave disruptive, hence their more negative attitude to leave generally.

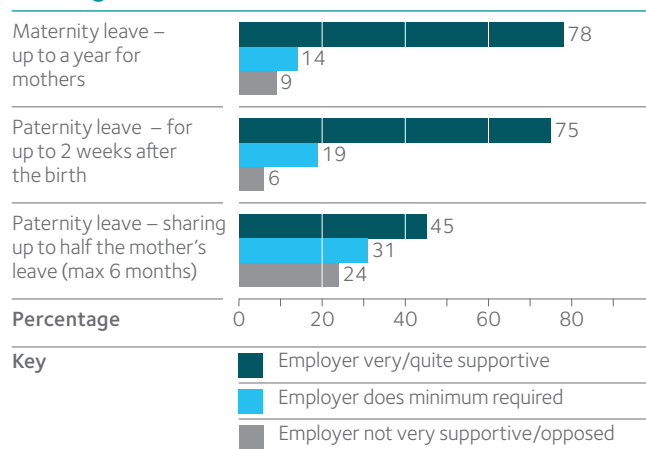
Employers are seen by all respondents to be broadly supportive of mothers' rights to take extended maternity leave, (63% of employees say they think their employers are very or quite supportive), and supportive (but significantly less so) of paternity leave up to two weeks (58% very/quite supportive).

In fact, 12% of managers and 19% of employees think their employer is actively unsupportive of two weeks paternity leave. The fact that there is far less perceived support for men taking a period of just two weeks away from work than there is for women taking up to a full year illustrates there are still significant cultural and attitudinal barriers to paternity leave in general, which is undoubtedly impacting on the level of male managers taking up this right.

**Figure 7: Employer attitudes to maternity and paternity leave (employees)**



**Figure 8: Employer attitudes to parental leave (managers)**



Non-managers believe their employers are much less supportive than they are themselves of new shared leave proposals, with just 37% saying their employer is very or quite supportive of fathers taking six months paternity leave shared with the mother, compared to their own relatively high level of support (86%).

Managers have a more positive perception of their employers' attitudes to parental leave. Over three-quarters (78%) of managers say their employer is very/quite supportive of maternity leave, 75% say they're supportive of paternity leave up to two weeks and 45% say they are supportive of new fathers sharing up to half the mother's leave. This means that over half of managers doubt that their employer is supportive of shared leave.

Where maternity leave is something of a known entity, with 96% of new mothers taking more than the statutory period of two weeks of leave, paternity leave is less so, as evidenced by fact that only two-thirds (63%) of men in this survey take even two weeks of leave. Shared leave, taken in alternating blocks as suggested in the new legislation, is a further step into the unknown. Both managers and employees are wary of their employers' attitudes to parental leave, which indicates significant potential cultural barriers to the update of Additional Paternity Leave or the new shared parental leave arrangements.

## Conclusions

**The fact that most respondents are supportive of both current leave practices and the prospect of shared leave shows a significant cultural shift in attitudes and perceptions, and (in attitude if not action at least) general acceptance of the concept of shared leave as a positive thing.**

However, it is interesting to note the stark contrast between the individuals' level of support for the new shared leave proposals and the clear perception that their employers are less supportive of shared leave of over two weeks. Both managers and employees suggest their employers will have a fundamental problem accepting extended periods of leave shared between two parents.

While currently there are low levels of men taking extended paternity leave (under 10%), this new legislation provides a chance for the situation to change. We may be approaching the tipping point for parental leave, and employers must recognise the shift is occurring and educate managers and teams on new leave proposals and how to manage them.

There are significant cultural issues at play here. Despite individual responses indicating they are generally supportive of shared leave, the results suggest that men are often not considered to have the same rights as women by their organisations. While maternity leave is well established and embedded in UK organisations, and is therefore a known entity, paid paternity leave is relatively new and uptake has been very low. As a result organisations have had little experience of dealing with extended paternity leave, are unsure of how to manage it and have been somewhat lax in promoting it to their employees.

In our *Ambition and Gender at Work*<sup>7</sup> research we found that fathers saw having kids as either positive for their careers or at least having no negative impact (52% compared to 27% of women), whereas 9% of men saw them as a barrier/serious barrier compared to 29% of women. This supports the hypothesis that men see having children as a positive incentive for stepping up their career, whereas women are likely to be more ambivalent because it is their careers that bear the brunt of the impact.

There are also considerable financial issues. We know that male salaries are, on average, higher than female ones – the *Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2012* showed the hourly rate of pay for men was £26.54, versus £18.32 for women.

Many organisations only offer the statutory minimum level of pay for anything past two weeks of paternity leave and new fathers are reluctant or unable to make the financial sacrifice. With statutory paternity leave paid at a rate of £136 a week, this can be a significant drop for senior managers to make. In the NatCen study, 26% of men who took no time off said it was because they could not afford to.<sup>8</sup> A report from *Working Families*, which was published in advance of the *Additional Paternity Leave* changes, showed that only 19% of the 60% of employers who had updated their policies to reflect APL planned to pay fathers six weeks on full pay when they took time off.<sup>9</sup> As part of the new shared leave legislation, employers will not be required to offer enhanced paternity pay in cases where they offer enhanced maternity pay, though they may choose to if they wish.

Despite changes to legislation on parental leave, there remains a clear cultural expectation that women will take on the majority of the childcare. We see growing support for paternity leave among both employees and managers in our survey, yet they feel their employers are largely unsupportive of anything that steps outside of the current cultural norm.

It is important to note that the gender pay gap is reversed when it comes to paid parental leave, with fathers paid significantly less on average by employers when on leave. This inequality of pay is a key factor that has impeded the uptake of paternity leave and is certain to limit the appeal of shared parental leave to cash strapped new parents.

This paternity pay gap not only creates practical financial barriers to shared parental leave, it also projects a cultural expectation that women will be the only ones taking extended periods away from the workplace, which may halt their career progression, stopping the flow of female talent. If organisations are serious about realising the benefits of gender diversity and encouraging more women into senior roles, one crucial step will be to ensure any remuneration above the statutory minimum is offered equally to mothers and fathers when on leave.

<sup>7</sup> *Ambition and Gender at Work*, ILM research report, <https://www.i-l-m.com/Why-ILM/Research-reports/Ambition-and-gender>

<sup>8</sup> NatCen *Maternity and Paternity Rights and Women Returners Survey 2009/10*, Department for Work and Pensions

<sup>9</sup> *Additional Paternity Leave: Survey of organisational readiness and approach*, *Working Families*

# Recommendations

## Pay both parents equally

There are significant financial factors at play which mean that the uptake of paternity leave remains low. Updating your maternity and paternity policy in advance of the shared leave legislation, particularly in terms of equalising the financial remuneration, will show employees that you are taking these changes seriously. For employers to show they are encouraging a more equal division of parental leave, pay for both new mothers and fathers needs to be at the same level. For example, if new mothers receive 90% of pay for the first six weeks, so should new fathers for their first six weeks of leave.

## Recognise the importance of parental leave to diversity

Women's careers often slow and stall when taking extended periods of leave to care for children, as we identified in our earlier research into gender and ambition.<sup>10</sup> Sharing leave between both parents enables new mothers to return to the workplace faster if they wish, and also enables new fathers to spend time with their children. As both sexes begin to share leave more equally, the stigma surrounding leave should diminish as it ceases to be seen as only a right for women. These changes could make a vital part of your diversity policy and keep talented women on the career path they desire.

## Model the way

Wherever possible every male manager should seek to take their full entitlement of two weeks paternity leave, to demonstrate this is an acceptable form of behaviour and lead the way for staff. Promoting internal case studies of men who have taken extended periods of paternity leave, particularly senior men, will also help to change attitudes and engage staff in a dialogue about the options open to new parents.

## HR matters

Our research shows that while managers and employees are receptive to shared leave, they believe their employers will be resistant. It is important for employers to address this perception by proactively communicating what the changes will mean for employees, and for leaders in the organisation to show their support for what is available.

## Cover leave the way it works for you

The best way to cover depends largely on the nature of the role – specialist roles are harder to cover internally and may require cover from outside the organisation. External cover was proven to be slightly less disruptive than internal cover, suggesting it could be a good option

if the budget is available. Consider the impact of the way you arrange cover not just on the bottom line, but on team morale and engagement.

## Plan for disruption

There will inevitably be some disruption when a team member is away from the workplace, but planning the time with your team member in advance, keeping the rest of your team informed and keeping communication lines open should help to minimise disruption both during and after the period of leave. Those opting into the new shared leave proposals will have to give eight weeks notice for each period of leave – to enable managers and employers to agree how to cover leave and factor in leave and return dates. Building a project plan around leave, assessing and sharing team workload and using keep in touch days prior to their return can all help to make periods of leave less disruptive for both employer and employees.

### 10 steps for managers dealing with parental leave

- 1 Treat any instance of parental leave as a project, with a deadline and a project plan
- 2 Have a frank discussion with the individual and confirm all dates and expectations
- 3 Have a clear discussion with your team on arrangements for leave
- 4 Look for opportunities to trial different ways of working – for example, using part-time staff to cover roles with some work being taken on by the existing team
- 5 Explore if there is a development opportunity for individuals within the team on a secondment or extra responsibility basis
- 6 Engage the parent in the handover process and involve them in preparing for their absence and upskilling the team or external cover
- 7 Show through your own behaviour that you recognise the importance of parental leave
- 8 Embrace flexible working generally – those organisations where flexible working is embedded already will find it easier to deal with parental leave when it happens than those which stick to rigid work patterns
- 9 Keep discussions with the team ongoing to identify any areas of concern or workload that may need to be moved
- 10 Prepare a 'welcome back' plan for the new parent and use their keep in touch days to bring them up to speed on new projects and developments before they return

<sup>10</sup> Ambition and Gender at Work, ILM research report, <https://www.i-l-m.com/Why-ILM/Research-reports/Ambition-and-gender>

## Methodology

**The research involved two distinct samples – 1,000 UK employees in non-managerial roles, all members of the Toluna online community, and 789 managers drawn from ILM’s members. Recruitment and participation in the online survey took place in the latter half of December 2013 and first week of January 2014.**

The quota sample of non-managerial employees was designed to reflect the population of parents in 2011 (based on data from the Office of National Statistics). The sample was drawn exclusively from the 25–39 age group, as the majority of births are to mothers and fathers in this age range, and they will also have more experience of employment practices, making their perspective better informed. It was split equally between men and women, 30% aged 25–29 and 35% in each of the age groups 30–34 and 35–39. This split was primarily pragmatic, as the younger age group (especially men) is particularly hard to engage with; however, it also ensured that we had a good mix of experience, including non-parents (55.5% of the sample), those with one (20.4%) and those with two or more children (24%) – older respondents are more likely to have more children.

Slightly fewer male respondents (43.7%) had children than female respondents (45.2%), as fathers tend to be two or three years older than mothers, so in a matched sample this reduces the number of fathers.

The manager sample was broadly reflective of the manager population in terms of age, level and employer size. UK managers have an average age of just under 46; the sample was only slightly younger, at just over 45. 55% of respondents were male, a significantly smaller proportion than the UK manager population (which is 65% male); however, this made comparisons between male and female responses statistically more valid, due to the larger female manager sample than would have been expected. (NB Further information about the UK manager population is available from the ILM Research Paper 3: UK Managers’ Profile, 2013)

The managers were drawn from first line (44.4%), middle (27.8%) and senior (also 27.8%) level positions, although the proportion of women declined with level, accounting for half the first line managers but slightly more than a third of senior level managers. On average, the managers had 1.6 children, with 28.6% being childless. The number of children increased with level and male managers had more than women (2.4 to 1.9) but this is likely to reflect age, as the incidence and number of children increased with age.

Most (56%) managers were from large (250+ employee) organisations, a quarter (26%) from small (under 50 employee) and the remaining 18% from medium sized enterprises. Although small businesses (1 to 50 employees) account for 97% of enterprises, they only account for 37% of employment. By contrast, the 2.5% of businesses that employ 50–249 people and the 0.5% of businesses employing 250+ people account for 15% and 49% of employment, respectively. Consequently, although the sample over-represented larger and medium sized businesses, it was only by a relatively small margin.

## About ILM

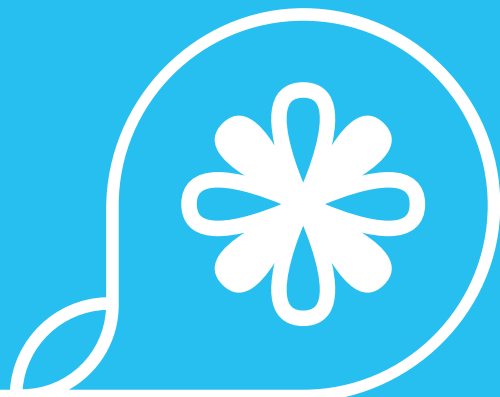
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