

EMBARGOED – 00.01 THURSDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2012

THE HIGH PRICE OF MOTHERHOOD

British women are paying a shockingly high price for motherhood as they are forced into lower-skilled, part-time work after having children, according to the findings of a new survey by Netmums and independent think tank, Resolution Foundation.

The poll of over 1,600 part-time working mothers revealed almost half (48%) of mothers on low to middle incomes take a lower-skilled part time job on their return to work after having children – but so did more than a third (36%) of those on higher incomes. Even those mothers that held a degree could not find work which paid a salary commensurate with their skills: 42% of degree holders said they had taken a less skilled job because of working part time.

Working part time was much more likely to have been a positive choice for higher income and better educated women. 81% of women on a higher income and 76% of those with a degree said they had freely chosen to work part time, whereas just 65% of those on a low to middle income, 59% with GCSEs and 50% with no qualifications said it was a free choice.

The research found mothers on a low to middle income were hit with a 'triple whammy' of barriers to working full time. The mothers polled identified the following:

- Lack of affordable and quality childcare (47%)
- Working longer hours not being financially worthwhile (47%)
- Full time work not being flexible enough to fit with caring responsibilities (45%)

The high costs of childcare have been identified as one of the main reasons for a larger number of women working part-time in the UK than in other developed countries. Parents in the UK spend 33% of their net household income on childcare compared to on OECD average of 13%. (OECD figures)

But responses from the survey also highlighted the lack of flexibility from some employers. Nearly half (44%) of all mothers surveyed said they were unable to find a job with hours which fitted their caring responsibilities.

In total, almost all (93%) mothers polled worked full-time before having children and two thirds (67%) planned to increase their working hours once their children were older.

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.’

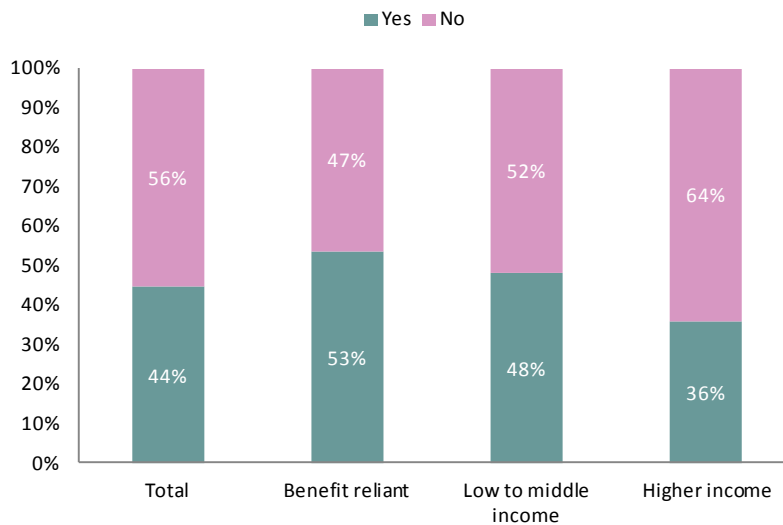
Sally Russell, Co-founder of Netmums, said:

‘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.’

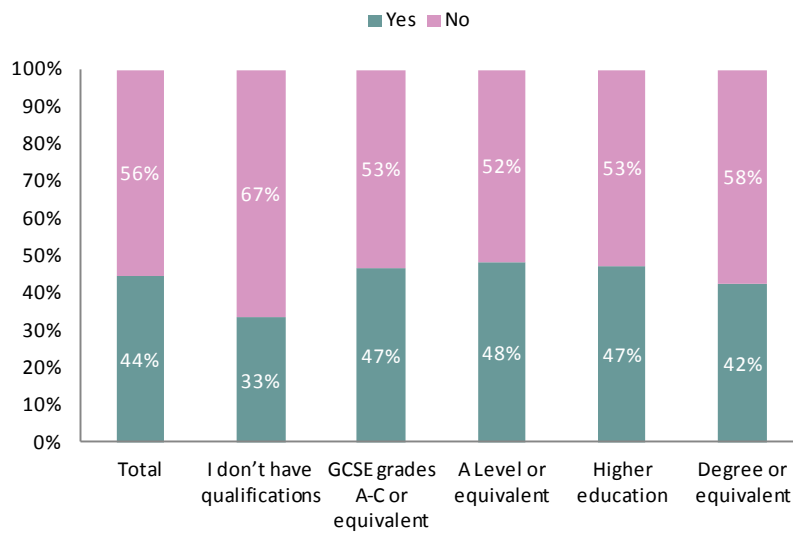
NOTES TO EDITORS

The poll was carried out online on Netmums.com during November and December 2011. A total of 1610 part-time working women responded. Full survey results are available at www.resolutionfoundation.org

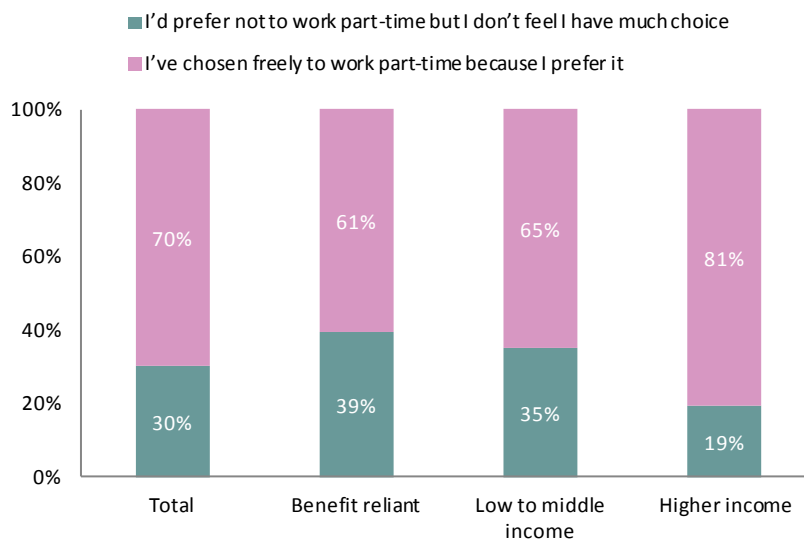
By working part-time, do you feel you’ve had to take a lower skilled job than you would have if you worked full-time?



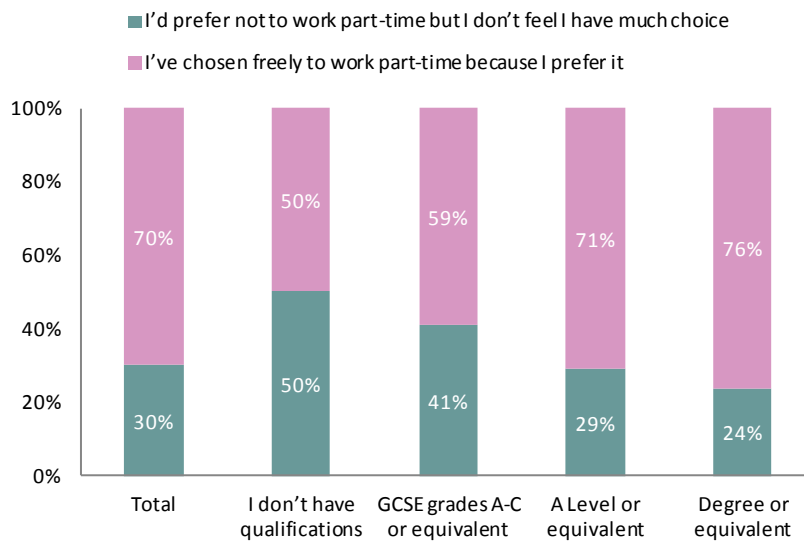
By working part-time, do you feel you've had to take a lower skilled job than you would have if you worked full-time?



Which of the following most closely fits your thoughts about part-time work? (by income group)



Which of the following most closely fits your thoughts about part-time work? (by skill level)



Further quotes and interviews with Vidhya Alakeson and Sally Russell are available on request.

Netmums:

Founded in 2000 Netmums is the UK's biggest parenting website. With over 1.2 million members and five million visits every month it is the UK's busiest social networking and information site for parents. The site hosts over 151 local websites and 500 national meet-up groups for mums. Each year over three and a half million parents are supported by Netmums specially trained teams of parenting experts, including staff from Relate, Women's Aid and the Family Rights Group. The site also provides one-to-one support for more than 30,000 of the UK's most vulnerable mums each year. Sally Russell is a Commissioner for the Resolution Foundation's Commission on Living Standards. www.netmums.com

Resolution Foundation:

The Resolution Foundation is an independent think tank which aims to improve the living standards of households on low to middle incomes (LMIs). Low to middle income households are defined as those of working age and living largely independently of the state, but with incomes below the median (middle) in the UK. In practice the definition includes a couple without children with a gross annual household income of between £12,000 and £29,000, or a couple with two children with an income between £17,000 and £41,000. www.resolutionfoundation.org

Media Contacts

Resolution Foundation – Felicity Dennistoun 0772 5560 654

Netmums – Jane Hamilton 0795 7634 371