

# Pregnancy and Maternity- Related Discrimination and Disadvantage:

Summary of key findings

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This report was prepared by IFF Research Ltd on behalf of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

## About IFF Research

IFF Research Ltd (IFF) is an independent research agency specialising in research in the fields of learning and skills, employment and welfare, equality and diversity, enterprise, and health and wellbeing. Established in 1965, IFF provides research for a range of clients across the public and private sectors.

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## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the large number of mothers and employers that generously gave their time to take part in the surveys and follow-up interviews.

We would also like to thank the Office for National Statistics and National Records of Scotland. Without their support, this research would not have been possible.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the demonstrable contribution to this research by members of our Academic Advisory Group. Their advice and scholarly outputs have helped to inform and steer all stages of this research project. Their time and valuable insights based on their significant expertise and experience are appreciated. The Academic Advisory Group is:

**Mark Beatson**, Visiting Professor at London Metropolitan University and Chief Economist at Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

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# Introduction

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) commissioned a programme of research to investigate the prevalence and nature of pregnancy and maternity-related discrimination and disadvantage in the workplace. The results in this report are based on survey interviews with 3,254 mothers and 3,034 employers. The two surveys cover the views and experiences of employers and mothers on a range of issues related to managing pregnancy, maternity leave and mothers returning to work from maternity leave. The survey findings are based on employers' and mothers' perceptions of their experiences. Mothers' experiences do not necessarily fall under the legal definition of discrimination. Only an employment tribunal can determine whether unlawful discrimination or unfair dismissal has occurred. In some cases the survey asked whether mothers felt their treatment was due to their pregnancy and/or maternity leave. However, in other cases, the survey captured whether or not a mother had experienced a particular situation (for example, dismissal) following their pregnancy but did not ask whether the mother believed it was because of their pregnancy. This report summarises the key findings from this research. The full research reports are published separately.

## Notes on interpretation

Where a figure is shaded in green  it signifies that it is a statistically significant difference that is better compared to the average, that is particular groups of mothers had a better experience compared to the average experience of mothers who took part in this research or particular groups of employers had more positive practices or attitudes than the average for employers who participated in this research.

Where a figure is shaded in red  it signifies that it is a statistically significant difference that is worse compared to the average, that is particular groups of mothers had a worse experience compared to the average experience of mothers or particular groups of employers had more negative practices or attitudes than the average for employers.

Multivariate analysis was performed to identify the key characteristics determining the likelihood of mothers reporting various experiences. Pages which use this multivariate analysis, as opposed to the type of statistical testing used on the tables shown in this document (t-test at the 95% confidence level) include: key findings by demographics. Multivariate analysis also appears on the key findings by sector page and is marked with a †. This analysis can be interpreted as assessing the effects of predictors (socio-demographic characteristic such as mothers' ethnicity, occupation

or sector) on the Dependent Variable (negative experience) while holding all other predictors equal and taking account of correlations between the predictors.

The term negative or possibly discriminatory experience refers to mothers' responses to a combination of survey questions including: feeling forced to leave their job; financial loss; negative impact on opportunity, status or job security; risk to or impact on health or welfare; harassment/negative comments; negative experience related to breastfeeding; negative experience related to flexible working requests, and any other negative experiences. The term negative impact on opportunity, status or job security refers to mothers' responses to a combination of survey questions including: not being informed about promotion opportunities; being denied training opportunities; removal of duties; being treated with less respect; and threatened with dismissal or put under pressure to hand in their notice or leave.

The industry sectors and occupation groups highlighted have been chosen because their findings differ the most from the norm. This does not mean that other industry sectors or occupation groups do not have significant findings; these are included in the full research reports. Where a protected characteristic has been highlighted, this is because there was a significant finding for this characteristic. Only statistically significant findings are reported on.

# Mothers headline findings summary

Overall, three in four mothers (77%) said they had a negative or possibly discriminatory experience during pregnancy, maternity leave, and/or on return from maternity leave.



If scaled up to the general population this could mean as many as 390,000 mothers a year

Around one in nine mothers (11%) reported they felt forced to leave their job. This included those being dismissed (1%); made compulsorily redundant, where others in their workplace were not (1%); or feeling treated so poorly they felt they had to leave their job (9%).



If scaled up to the general population this could mean as many as 54,000 mothers a year

One in five mothers (20%) said they experienced harassment or negative comments related to pregnancy or flexible working from their employer/colleagues.



This could mean as many as 100,000 mothers a year

One in 25 mothers (4%) left their jobs because of risks not being tackled.



This could mean as many as 21,000 mothers a year

One in ten (10%) mothers were discouraged from attending antenatal appointments.



This could mean as many as 53,000 mothers a year

Over two thirds of mothers (68%) submitted a flexible working request and around three in four of these mothers reported that their flexible working request was approved.

Around half of mothers (51%) who had their flexible working request approved said they felt it resulted in negative consequences.



This could mean as many as 150,000 mothers a year

# Employers headline findings summary

The majority of employers (84%) reported that it was in their interests to support pregnant women and those on maternity leave. The main reasons for this were because it increased staff retention (58%) and created better morale among employees (20%).

The majority of employers were positive about managing most of the statutory rights relating to pregnancy and maternity (for each statutory right, more than half of employers felt it was reasonable and easy to facilitate). However:



Some employers thought particular statutory rights were unreasonable or difficult to manage: 28% said that enhanced protection from redundancy during Ordinary Maternity Leave (the first 26 weeks of Maternity Leave) was unreasonable and 13% of those this was applicable to, said it was difficult to facilitate



Most employers (70%) said they felt women should declare upfront during recruitment if they are pregnant. A quarter of employers felt it was reasonable during recruitment to ask women about their plans to have children.



The majority of employers felt that pregnant women (80%) and mothers returning from maternity leave (78%) were as committed to work as other employees; however some employers had negative attitudes:

- 27% felt pregnancy put an unreasonable cost burden on the workplace;
- 17% believed that pregnant women and mothers were less interested in career progression and promotion than other employees; and
- 7% did not think mothers returning from maternity leave were as committed as other members of their team.



# Mothers' experience by employer size

	All mothers %	Small %	Medium %	Large %
Reported any negative or possibly discriminatory experience	77	75	81	77
Felt forced to leave their job	11	13	11	7
Reported financial loss	20	18	22	23
Reported a negative impact on opportunity, status or job security	50	48	54	52
Reported a risk or impact to their health or welfare	41	42	46	37
Reported harassment or negative comments	20	19	23	21
Reported a negative experience related to breastfeeding	5	4	6	5
Reported a negative experience related to a flexible working request	11	10	12	12

■ Difference is better than average

■ Difference is worse than average

### **Small employers**

- Mothers who worked for small employers (those with fewer than 50 employees) were more likely to say they felt forced to leave their jobs.
- However, they were less likely to say that they experienced financial loss or a negative impact on opportunity, status or job security.

### **Medium employers**

- Mothers who worked for medium-sized employers (those with between 50 and 249 employees) were more likely to report having a negative or possibly discriminatory experience.
- They were more likely to report a negative impact on opportunity, status or job security; or a risk or impact to health or welfare.

### **Large employers**

- Mothers who worked for large employers (those with 250 or more employees) were more likely to report financial loss.
- They were less likely to say they felt forced to leave their job or to have experienced a risk or impact to their health or welfare.

# Employer experience by size

	Eligible employers %	Small %	Medium %	Large %
Feel it is in the best interests of their organisation to support pregnant women and those on maternity leave	84	83	93	95
Feel women should declare upfront at recruitment if they are pregnant	70	72	57	37
Said all statutory rights are reasonable	32	31	35	47
Said all statutory rights are easy to facilitate	25	24	26	41
Said pregnancy puts an unreasonable cost burden on workplace	27	28	16	9
Reported low awareness of pregnant women's rights	10	11	6	3

■ Difference is better than average

■ Difference is worse than average

### **Small employers (under 50 staff)**

- Small employers were less likely to feel it was in the interests of their business to support pregnant women and those on maternity leave.
- Small employers were more likely to feel that during recruitment women should declare upfront if they are pregnant, or that pregnancy puts an unreasonable cost burden on their workplace. More small employers had low awareness of pregnant women's rights.

### **Medium-sized employers (50-249 employees)**

- Medium employers were more likely to feel it is in the best interests of their organisation to support pregnant women and those on maternity leave.
- They were less likely to feel that women should declare upfront during recruitment if pregnant, or to say pregnancy puts an unreasonable cost burden on the workplace, or to state they had a low awareness of pregnant women's rights.

### **Large employers (over 250 staff)**

- Large employers were more likely to feel that it is in the best interest of their organisation to support pregnant women and those on maternity leave.
- They were also more likely to state that all statutory rights were reasonable and easy to facilitate.
- They were less likely to feel women should declare upfront during recruitment if pregnant; to say costs of pregnancy puts an unreasonable cost burden on the workplace, or to report low awareness of pregnant women's rights.

# Key findings by nation

## Mothers

	All mothers %	England %	Scotland %	Wales %
Reported any negative or possibly discriminatory experience	77	78	73	71
Felt forced to leave their job	11	11	9	10
Reported financial loss	20	21	14	15
Reported a negative impact on opportunity, status or job security	50	51	46	46
Reported a risk or impact to their health or welfare	41	42	40	38
Reported harassment or negative comments	20	21	19	14
Reported a negative experience related to breastfeeding	5	5	3	4
Reported a negative experience related to a flexible working request	11	11	8	9

- Difference is better than average
- Difference is worse than average

## **Mothers**

- Mothers in Wales and Scotland were less likely than mothers in England to say they had a negative or possibly discriminatory experience
- Mothers in Wales and Scotland were less likely than mothers in England to report experiencing financial loss
- Mothers in Wales were less likely to say they experienced harassment or negative comments.

## Employers

	All employers %	England %	Scotland %	Wales %
Feel it is in the best interests of their organisation to support pregnant women and those on maternity leave	84	83	94	87
Feel women should declare upfront at recruitment if they are pregnant	70	71	59	65
Said all statutory rights are reasonable	32	31	34	36
Said all statutory rights are easy to facilitate	25	26	21	26
Said pregnancy puts an unreasonable cost burden on the workplace	27	27	19	23
Reported low awareness of pregnant women's rights	10	10	11	4

■ Difference is better than average

■ Difference is worse than average

### Employers

- Employers in Scotland were most likely to feel it was in the best interests of their organisation to support pregnant women and those on maternity leave and employers in England were least likely
- Employers in Scotland were also less likely to feel women should declare upfront during recruitment if they are pregnant and employers in England were most likely to think this.

# Key findings by sector

## Sectors where mothers were most likely to report positive experiences



### Education

Mothers were less likely to have felt forced to leave their jobs (7% compared to 11% on average); to report harassment or negative comments (14% compared to 20% on average); or to report a negative experience related to a flexible working request (7% compared to 11% on average).



### Public administration

Mothers were less likely to have felt forced to leave their jobs (3% compared to 11% on average) and less likely to report a risk or impact to their health or welfare (31% compared to 41% on average).



### Real estate and business

Mothers were less likely to report a risk to, or impact on their health or welfare (35% compared to 41% on average).

## Sectors where employers were most likely to have positive attitudes or behaviour



### Public administration

Employers were less likely to say they had low awareness of pregnant women's rights (3% had low awareness compared to 10% on average); and more likely to feel it is in the best interests of their organisation to support pregnant women and those on maternity leave (97% compared to 84% on average). They were less likely to say pregnancy puts an unreasonable cost burden on the workplace (14% compared to 27% on average); or that women should declare up front during recruitment if they are pregnant (50% compared to 70% on average).



### Real estate and business

Employers were more likely to say they were aware of pregnant women's rights (6% have low awareness compared to 10% on average) and to think all rights were reasonable (38% compared to 32% on average).



## Sectors where mothers were most likely to report negative experiences



### Utilities

Mothers were three times as likely as average to feel forced to leave their job and twice as likely to report a financial loss†.



### Transport and communications

Mothers were twice as likely as average to report financial loss or report harassment or negative comments†.

**Sector** was the most **important factor driving flexible working** experiences.

Those in **Arts, Culture and Leisure; Agriculture, Fishing and Mining; Manufacturing; Utilities;** and **Trade** sectors were one and a half to two times as likely as average to report a negative experience†.

## Sectors where employers were most likely to have negative attitudes or behaviour



### Finance

Employers were more likely to make pregnant women redundant (13% compared to 2% on average). In addition, they were more likely to turn down a flexible working request (43% compared to 14% on average), have negative attitudes around commitment (20% compared to 7% on average), or to have concerns about resentment and workload of the wider team or the value of pregnant women and new mothers†.



### Manufacturing, Construction, Agriculture, Fishing and Mining

Employers were less likely to feel supporting pregnant women and those on maternity leave is in the interests of their organisation (74% Manufacturing, 73% Agriculture, Fishing and Mining, and 70% Construction compared to 84% on average). They were more likely to feel women should declare up front during recruitment if pregnant (82% Manufacturing, 84% Agriculture, Fishing and Mining and 87% Construction compared to 70% on average).

# Key findings by type of organisation

## Mothers

	All mothers %	Public sector %	Private sector %
Reported any negative or possibly discriminatory experience	77	77	77
Felt forced to leave their job	11	8	13
Reported financial loss	20	18	22
Reported a negative impact on opportunity, status or job security	50	50	50
Reported a risk or impact to their health or welfare	41	43	40
Reported harassment or negative comments	20	18	22
Reported a negative experience related to breastfeeding	5	5	4
Reported a negative experience related to a flexible working request	11	8	13

■ Difference is better than average

■ Difference is worse than average

## **Mothers**

- Mothers who worked in the public sector were less likely than those in the private sector to have felt forced to leave their job, report financial loss, or report a negative experience related to a flexible working request.

## Employers

	Eligible employers %	Private sector %	Third sector %	Public sector %
Feel it is in the best interests of their organisation to support pregnant women and those on maternity leave	84	82	93	96
Feel women should declare upfront during recruitment if they are pregnant	70	74	58	45
Said all statutory rights are reasonable	32	30	33	42
Said all statutory rights are easy to facilitate	25	25	27	25
Said pregnancy puts an unreasonable cost burden on the workplace	27	28	25	14
Reported low awareness of pregnant women's rights	10	11	9	7

■ Difference is better than average

■ Difference is worse than average

## Employers

- Private sector employers were less likely to feel it is in the best interests of their organisation to support pregnant women and those on maternity leave, or to think all statutory rights are reasonable.
- Private sector employers were more likely to feel women should declare upfront during recruitment if they are pregnant; and that pregnancy puts an unreasonable cost burden on the workplace.
- Both third and public sector employers were more likely to feel it is in the best interests of their organisation to support pregnant women; and less likely to feel women should declare upfront during recruitment if they are pregnant.
- Public sector employers were more likely to say all statutory rights were reasonable and less likely to say pregnancy puts an unreasonable cost burden on the workplace.

# Key findings by mothers' occupation

Occupations where mothers were most likely to report positive experiences



## **Administrative and secretarial**

Mothers were less likely to report: negative impact on opportunity, status or job security (44% compared to an average of 50%); risk or impact to their health or welfare (30% compared to an average of 41%); or to have any negative experience overall (72% compared to an average of 77%). They were also more likely to feel their needs were willingly supported during pregnancy (87% compared to an average of 80%).



## **Professional**

Mothers were less likely to report: feeling forced to leave their job (6% compared to an average of 11%); having a negative experience related to a flexible working request (9% compared to an average of 11%); or any other negative experience (56% compared to an average of 60%).

They were also more likely to feel their needs were willingly supported during pregnancy (83% compared to an average of 80%).



## **Elementary**

Mothers were less likely to report a negative impact on opportunity, status or job security (37% compared to 50% on average).

## Occupations where mothers were most likely to report negative experiences



### **Caring, leisure and other service**

Mothers were most likely to say they felt forced to leave their job (19% compared to an average of 11%); to experience risk or impact to their health (54% compared to an average of 41%); or to report having any negative experience (82% compared to an average of 77%). They were also more likely to say they felt unsupported by their employer during pregnancy (8% compared to an average of 3%).



### **Skilled trades**

Mothers were more likely than average to report feeling forced to leave their job (38% compared to an average of 11% or to report a negative impact on status, opportunity or job security (69% compared to an average of 50%).



### **Associate, professional and technical**

Mothers were more likely to report experiencing financial loss (27% compared to an average of 20%); to say they were not informed about promotion opportunities (14% compared to an average of 9%); or to report disagreement about which job they returned to after maternity leave (9% compared to an average of 6%).



### **Sales and customer service**

Mothers were more likely to report being dismissed from their job (3% compared to an average of 1%), particularly during pregnancy.



### **Managers and directors**

Mothers were more likely to report disagreements with their employer about what job they should return to after maternity leave (11% compared to an average of 6%).

# Key findings by mothers' employment contract

	All mothers %	Full time %	Part time %	Permanent contract %	Fixed term contract %	Agency, casual or zero hours %
Reported any negative or possibly discriminatory experience	77	79	74	77	78	76
Felt forced to leave their job	11	10	12	10	12	16
Reported financial loss	20	24	13	21	16	8
Reported a negative impact on opportunity, status or job security	50	53	45	50	49	61
Reported a risk or impact to their health or welfare	41	41	41	41	44	50
Reported harassment or negative comments	20	22	18	20	22	23
Reported a negative experience related to breastfeeding	5	6	3	5	5	4
Reported a negative experience related to a flexible working request	11	12	8	11	12	10



■ Difference is better than average

■ Difference is worse than average

## Mothers

- Mothers working full-time were more likely to report any negative or possibly discriminatory experience.
- They were more likely to report financial loss; a negative impact on opportunity, status or job security; or a negative experience related to breastfeeding or a flexible working request.
- Part-time mothers were less likely to report any negative or possible discriminatory experience; report financial loss; report experiencing harassment or negative comments; report a negative impact on opportunity, status or job security; or report a negative experience related to breastfeeding or related to a flexible working request.
- Mothers on a permanent contract were less likely than average to say they felt forced to leave their job; however, they were more likely to report financial loss
- Mothers working on agency, casual or zero hours contracts were less likely to report financial loss; however, they were more likely to report a negative impact on opportunity, status or job security.

# Key findings by mothers' pay

	All mothers %	Earning up to £19,999 a year %	Earning £20,000 to £39,999 a year %	Earning £40,000 or more a year %
Reported any negative or possibly discriminatory experience	77	76	79	77
Felt forced to leave their job	11	13	8	7
Reported financial loss	20	17	21	31
Reported a negative impact on opportunity, status or job security	50	48	54	54
Reported a risk or impact to their health or welfare	41	43	41	35
Reported harassment or negative comments	20	20	20	22
Reported a negative experience related to breastfeeding	5	4	6	6
Reported a negative experience related to a flexible working request	11	10	11	16

■ Difference is better than average

■ Difference is worse than average

## Mothers

- Mothers earning up to £19,999 a year were more likely to say they felt forced to leave their job; however, they were less likely to report financial loss or negative impact on opportunity, status or job security.
- Mothers earning between £20,000 and £39,999 a year were less likely than average to say they felt forced to leave their job, but more likely to report a negative impact on opportunity, status or job security.
- Mothers earning £40,000 a year or more were also less likely to say they felt forced to leave their job, or to report risk or impact to their health or welfare.
- However, mothers earning £40,000 a year or more were more likely to report financial loss or a negative experience related to a flexible working request.

# Key findings by demographics

Mothers most likely to report negative or possible discriminatory experiences



## Age: 25 to 29

**Those aged 25-29 were most likely of all age groups to report they had any negative experience.**

They were more likely to report experiencing a risk or impact on their health or welfare, or a negative experience related to a flexible working request. They were almost twice as likely as those aged 40 and over to have 'other' negative experiences (most often feeling they were not supported willingly by their employer).



## Age: under 25

Mothers aged under 25 were more likely to say they were not supported willingly by their employers; felt under pressure to resign once they had announced their pregnancy, felt less valued by their employer once they were pregnant, and were more likely to leave the workplace as a result of risks not being tackled. They were also more likely to report financial loss.



## Long-term health condition

Those with a long-term physical or mental health condition were more likely to say they felt forced to leave their job, or to report a negative impact on opportunity, status or job security. They were also more likely to report a disagreement with their employer about when to return to work following maternity leave.



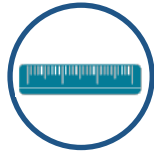
## Single mothers

Single mothers were more likely to report financial loss or a negative impact on opportunity, status or job security, than those who were married or living with a partner. They were also more likely to feel: unsupported by their employer (especially on return to work from maternity leave); that their employer was unhappy about them taking maternity leave, or under pressure to resign.



### **Ethnic minority**

Ethnic minority mothers were more likely than White British mothers to report financial loss; a negative impact on opportunity, status or job security; or to have had a negative experience related to breastfeeding.



### **Length of service**

Mothers who had less than a year's service were more likely than average to say they felt forced to leave their job or that they had experienced a risk or impact on their health or welfare. However, those that had worked with their employer for between two and five years were more likely to have said they had experienced a negative or possibly discriminatory impact on opportunity, status or job security, financial loss, or harassment or negative comments.



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**BIS/16/145**

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