Why becoming a parent is a bad career move in UK - survey

**Many parents turn down promotions due to the challenges of juggling home and work**

Working parents are struggling to juggle [the pressures of their jobs and family life](https://www.theguardian.com/money/work-life-balance), with many deliberately stalling their careers or rejecting a new opportunity in a bid to restore balance, a survey shows.

The Modern Families Index found almost half (47%) of UK parents and carers said work affected their ability to spend time together as a family, with two in five (39%) saying it prevented them from being able to say goodnight to their children often or all the time. A similar proportion (42%) said work commitments meant they could not help their children with their homework.

The report, published by Working Families and Bright Horizons, found evidence of a “parenthood penalty”, which it says was preventing parents from fulfilling their economic potential.

The chief executive of Working Families, Sarah Jackson, called the findings a “wake-up call for UK plc”.

She said: “For mothers and for fathers, becoming a parent looks like a bad career move. Because the norm for people who want to get ahead is still to show up early, leave late and be on email out of hours – and parents have less time to give, putting them at a disadvantage.”

**A survival guide for working parents: how to balance family and career**

The index was based on responses from 2,671 working parents and carers with at least one child aged 13 or younger who lives with them at least part of the time.

Nearly one in five (18% ) said they had deliberately stalled their careers for family reasons. One in ten said they had refused a new job and the same proportion said they had rejected a promotion.

At the same time, many are working extra hours. Two in five full-time employees (40%) said they were working more hours than contracted and almost a third of those were working an extra seven hours - equivalent to an additional day each week.

A third (34%) of part-time employees said they were working extra hours, 30% of whom were putting in sufficient hours to qualify as full-time.

The report suggests [the right to request flexible working](https://www.theguardian.com/law/2014/jun/30/flexible-working-extended-all-employees-uk) has not had the desired impact. Less than half of parents (44%) felt that it was a genuine option in their workplace and a similar proportion (46%) said they did not work flexibly.

The responses also suggest [flexible working](https://www.theguardian.com/careers/2017/sep/14/how-to-request-flexible-working) is [not a panacea](https://www.theguardian.com/money/2016/jan/02/work-life-balance-flexible-working-can-make-you-ill-experts-say), with over a third of those who do so saying they feel burnt-out all or most of the time. And many who work flexibly in theory said they had restricted or no control over where they worked or their working hours.

Jackson said: “We need human-sized jobs that allow parents to fulfil their labour market potential and give families back the time together they need to thrive.”