

Fathers and Work

Authors: Sara Connolly, Matthew Aldrich, Margaret O'Brien, Svetlana Speight and Eloise Poole

As more women move into the labour market, what is known about how British couples with children organize their paid work? How has the archetypal male full-time sole breadwinner fared? Is the classic British 1.5 earner household where father works full-time and mother part-time still as popular?

More generally, how have fathers' hours of work changed over the last decade? Are British fathers still working long weekly hours? This paper includes a range of evidence on fathers' work patterns using data from the EU Labour Force Survey 2001-2011.

Labour market trends

In 2011, 74% of men and 64% of women were in employment. Of those, 89% of men and 62% of women were employed full-time. This is a decrease in full-time working for men and an increase for women compared to 2001: a decrease from 92% to 89% for working men and an increase from 60% to 62% for working women.

The concern of this paper is couple households and couple parents, and the rest of this paper focuses on these households.

In 2011, 89% of fathers in couple households were in employment compared to 68% of mothers. Economic activity rates for male parents are higher than for men in couple households who do not have co-resident children (83%), but lower for coupled women without children (73%).

Fathers with dependent children are slightly more likely to work full-time (93% of those in full-time employment) than partnered men who have no dependent children in the household (92% in full-time employment). For women, mothers with dependent children are much less likely to work full-time (48% of those in full-time employment) than partnered women without dependent children (70% in full-time employment).

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Over the decade, part-time working has increased for fathers with dependent children (3% to 7% of those employed), partnered men without dependent children (6% to 8%) and all men (8% to 11%).

Working patterns of couple households with children

A diverse set of working patterns amongst couples living together with children were identified. However, three types account for over four fifths (82%) of all such households in 2011:

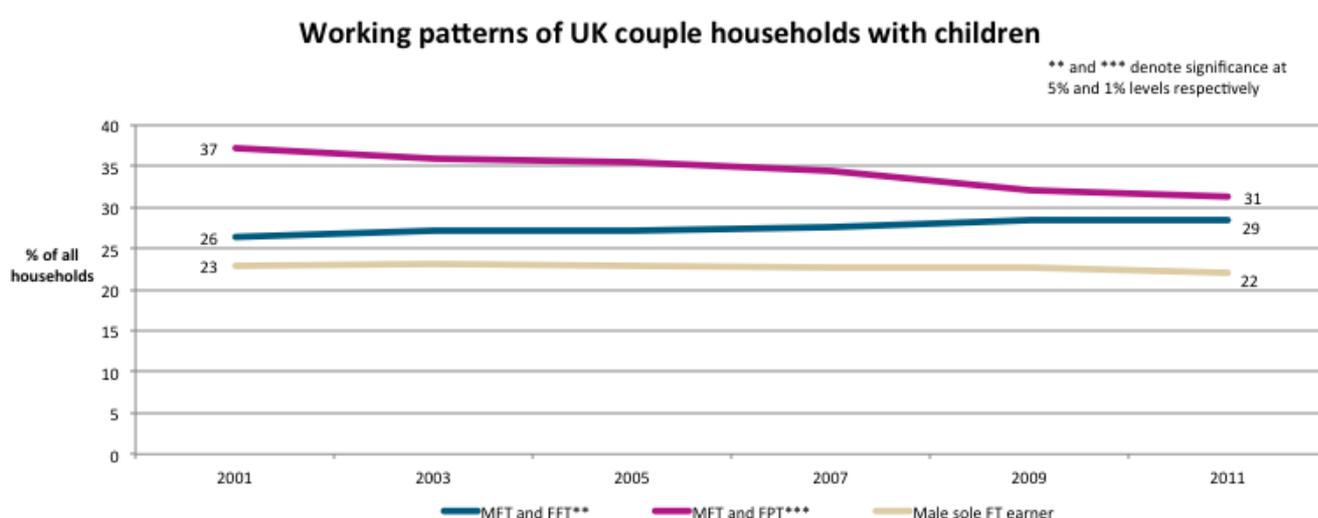
- the classic one and a half (1.5) earner (MFT and FPT) – 31%
- the dual full-time earner (MFT and FFT) – 29%
- male full-time sole breadwinner (MFT) – 22%

Other patterns include: dual part-time earners, sole part-time earner, female full-time sole breadwinner and workless households.

There have been some significant changes in working patterns between 2001 and 2011:

- The proportion of households with two full time earners has increased from 26% in 2001 to 29% in 2011.
- The proportion of households with father working full-time and mother working part-time has decreased from 37% in 2001 to 31% in 2011.

The proportion of male full-time sole breadwinner households has remained stable over the decade.

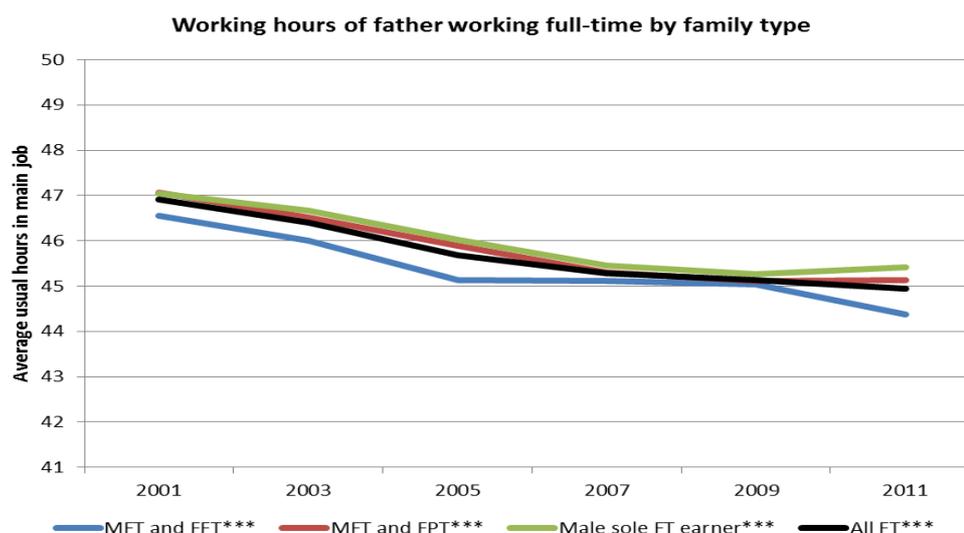


Working hours of fathers and mothers

Over the decade, the usual weekly working hours of all fathers working full-time in couple households with children have fallen (47 to 45 hours per week), as have the usual weekly working hours of all men working full-time (46 to 44 hours per week). At the same time, working hours of all women working full-time have fallen only slightly (40.5 to 40 hours per week).

- Usual weekly working hours of fathers in full-time employment have fallen, regardless of whether their partners work or how many hours their partner works.
- Mothers who work part-time, who have partners working full-time, now work longer hours (17.7-18.2 hours per week).
- Usual weekly working hours of mothers working full-time have remained stable at 39 hours per week.

Fathers still work longer hours than other men and mothers work shorter hours than other women, but it seems that we are now seeing some convergence.



In summary, there has been a decline in the incidence of the British 1.5 earner household where the father works full time and the mother part-time. Furthermore, within that household type, the father's hours have declined and the mother's hours have increased.

All in all, these findings suggest some convergence in economic provisioning between British parents. British families are not reliant on the male sole full-time breadwinner model – in fact, this way of organizing work-family arrangements accounts for only 22% of households.

Work intensity and non-standard hours of work

Over the decade, there has been a decline in work intensity for fathers in couple households – as measured by incidence of fathers working very long hours. In 2001, 40% of fathers in couple households worked 48 hours or more per week and 13% worked 60 hours or more, compared with 31% and 10% respectively, a decade later. The decline took place in each of the three main household type (dual full-time earner, 1.5 earner and male sole breadwinner).

Work intensity also declined for all men: from 35% in 2001 to 29% in 2011 for those working 48 hours or more, and from 11% to 9% for men working 60 hours or more.

There has been no decline in work intensity for women and mothers.

Long weekly hours	All fathers working FT		Fathers in dual earner households		Fathers in classic 1.5 earner households		Fathers who are sole breadwinners	
	48 hours or more	60 hours or more	48 hours or more	60 hours or more	48 hours or more	60 hours or more	48 hours or more	60 hours or more
2001	40	13	38	12	41	13	42	13
2003	38	12	36	12	39	12	40	13
2005	36	10	33	9	37	10	37	11
2007	33	10	33	9	33	9	34	11
2009	32	10	31	10	32	10	34	10
2011	31	10	30	8	32	11	32	12

In 2011, fathers were much less likely to be working shifts than in 2001 – a fall from 24% to 21%, which was statistically significant in two of the three main household types – dual full-time earner and classic 1.5 earner households.

Furthermore, there has been a marked decline in the proportion of fathers working non-standard hours (evenings, nights or week-ends). The proportion who never work evenings has risen from 33% to 52%, never work nights has risen from 66% to 76% and never work at the weekends has risen from 26% to 45%.

In conclusion, the male sole breadwinner model is well and truly behind us in Britain and the dual earner is emerging as the most common model for families with children. Furthermore, fathers in families where the mother also works are working less intensively - shorter hours - and are less likely to be at work when their children are at home (evenings and weekends).

Data definitions and reporting conventions

- Parenthood is defined by living with a dependent child (biological, adopted or step) under the age of 15.
- Adult couple (married and cohabiting) households with co-resident dependent children - defined as under the age of 15.
- Age restriction on the household reference person, usually the male – 16-64 years.
- Employment status: working full-time (FT) is defined as working 30 hours per week or more (not including hours of overtime). Part-time work (PT) is defined as working 1-29 hours per week (not including hours of overtime).
- Definition of working hours - "usual" weekly hours worked per week in the *main* job.

In the 2011 dataset, there were 20,569 couple households of which 6,092 had at least one child under the age of 15 living in the household. Children may be biological, step or adopted.

Changes or differences in working patterns or hours are only reported when they are statistically significant at the 5% level.