

# One in five Britons say their careers have been held back by childcare or other care duties

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One in five people (19%) in Britain say their childcare or other caring responsibilities have prevented them from applying for a job or

promotion at work, or have caused them to leave or consider leaving a job, according to a major new international survey.

[The research](#), by Ipsos and the Global Institute for Women's Leadership at King's College London, finds that women in Britain (26%) are twice as likely as men (13%) to say this has been the case for them, underscoring a well-established gender divide in caring duties.

And while there is a recognition among the public that women tend to lose out in terms of progression at work because of these kinds of commitments, there is still a gender divide in views:

- 2 in 5 Britons (41%) say having childcare responsibilities come up during the working day is more likely to damage the career of a woman, compared with one in ten (9%) who think this is more likely to damage a man's career and one in five (23%) who think it's equally likely to damage the career of both. However, men (26%) are around half as likely as women (56%) to think women's careers will probably suffer more because of this.
- Similarly, the public are most inclined to say it's more likely that a woman's career will be negatively impacted by caring responsibilities other than childcare coming up during the working day (35%)—but men (22%) are much less likely to think this than women (46%).

There is also a divide in perceptions of how gender-equal employers are: half of men (51%) say that workplaces in Britain treat men and women equally, but this falls to a third among women (32%).

While concerns about the impact on careers were not one of the top reasons for delaying or choosing not to have children in the last two years for Britons under age 50 (5%), financial concerns are the top reason for those under 50 to not have or delay having children (14%).

Financial concerns were the top reason for Millennials (21%), and one in 10 Millennials cited concerns about the impact on their career as a reason for not having children (8%).

One in six people (16%) say that balancing work and caring responsibilities is one of the two or three most important issues facing women in Britain, rising to one in five (20%) among women themselves. This is on par with the global country average of 14%.

Domestic abuse (31%), [sexual harassment](#) (27%) and sexual violence (23%) emerge as the top issues affecting British women, according to the public overall.

Beyond the workplace, Britons were more likely to see a range of institutions as treating women worse rather than better than men, although often many felt they were treated equally.

Perceptions of bias against women were particularly high when it comes to media and social media: two in five Britons think women are treated worse than men by the media (43%), and half think the same for social media (49%).

Two in five Britons (42%) think the government treats women worse than women. However, there are some signs of progress toward gender equality at an institutional level, with half of Britons thinking educational institutions (50%) and health services (52%) treat men and women equally.

## **Families and careers around the world**

Looking across the 30 countries included in the survey reveals:

- Among 11 European countries surveyed, people in Sweden are

least likely (12%) to say their childcare responsibilities have prevented them from applying for a job or promotion, or caused them to leave or consider leaving a job. Meanwhile, Romania is the highest in Europe, with 31% saying this.

- Sweden also ranks lowest among European nations polled for the belief that childcare (17%) or other caring responsibilities (21%) are more likely to damage the career of a woman.
- In Europe, people in France (32%) and Belgium (33%) are least likely to feel that workplaces in their respective countries treat men and women equally with only a third saying they do.
- Globally, being able to choose when to start and finish work is the aspect of flexible working that interests people most, with four in 10 (a global country average of 38%) saying this would be a priority for them if they could work flexibly.

And there is little gender difference globally in terms of types of flexible working preferred—for example, among both women and men, one in seven (a global country average of 14%) say they'd be interested in the ability to have a job share or split a role with another person.

Kelly Beaver, Chief Executive of Ipsos UK, said: "This latest research highlights the fact that for women to become truly equal in the workplace, men need to become truly equal at home, ensuring that caring responsibilities and all they entail are split evenly.

The data also shows the continuing perception gap with men thinking things are more equal in workplaces than [women](#)—a gap that must be overcome to make progress on workplace gender equality."

Professor Rosie Campbell, Director of the Global Institute for Women's Leadership at King's College London, said: "The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the fact that childcare is core infrastructure. While access to affordable, high-quality childcare has increased in the UK over recent

decades, Britain remains behind many other European nations, and this has a knock-on effect on both individuals and society's ability to reach our full economic potential."

## Survey details

These are the results of a 30-country survey conducted by Ipsos on its Global Advisor online platform. Ipsos interviewed a total of 20,524 adults aged 18–74 in the United States, Canada, Malaysia, South Africa, and Turkey, aged 21–74 in Singapore, and 16–74 in 24 other countries between Friday, January 21 and Friday, February 4, 2022.

The sample consists of approximately 1,000 interviews in each of Australia, Brazil, Canada, mainland China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Spain, and the U.S., and 500 individuals in each of Argentina, Belgium, Chile, Colombia, Hungary, India, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, and Turkey.

The samples in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, and the U.S. can be taken as representative of their general adult population under the age of 75.

The samples in Brazil, Chile, mainland China, Colombia, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, and Turkey are more urban, more educated, and/or more affluent than the general population. The [survey results](#) for these countries should be viewed as reflecting the views of the more "connected" segment of their population.

The data is weighted so that each country's sample composition best reflects the demographic profile of the adult population according to the

most recent census data.

"The Global Country Average" reflects the average results for all the countries where the survey was conducted. It has not been adjusted to the population size of each country and is not intended to suggest a total result.

Where results do not sum to 100 or the "difference" appears to be +/-1 more/less than the actual, this may be due to rounding, multiple responses, or the exclusion of "don't know" or not stated responses.

The precision of Ipsos online polls is calculated using a credibility interval with a poll of 1,000 accurate to +/-3.5 percentage points and of 500 accurate to +/- 5.0 percentage points. For more information on Ipsos' use of credibility intervals, please visit the Ipsos website.

Provided by King's College London

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