

Labour Force and Annual Population Surveys User Conference
19 June 2025

A profile of shiftworking fathers and mothers of young children in the context of the Employment Rights Bill

Martha Done, Q-step undergraduate University
of Kent

Rebecca Goldman, Fatherhood Institute

With thanks to Dr Robert De Vries, University of Kent

Fatherhood Institute

Our vision

Our vision is of a society that:

- Gives all children strong and positive relationships with their father and any father-figures
- Supports both mothers and fathers as earners and carers
- Prepares boys and girls for a future shared role in caring for children

Our work

The Fatherhood Institute works to build a society that values, prepares, and supports men as involved fathers and caregivers.

Our work focuses on policy, research, and practice. We:

- Publish research reviews
- Take part in new studies and test promising family interventions
- Advocate for policy change
- Produce practice resources
- Train practitioners in perinatal, early years, education, and social care services

1

Introduction and features of our analysis



Objectives of analysis of the 2022-24 Labour Force Survey

A descriptive analysis to profile the demographic, socio-economic, employment, and family characteristics of **shiftworking fathers of young children** and **shiftworking mothers of young children**

Aim is to influence the design of a follow-on multi-method research project to inform employment policy and practice

...and facilitate balancing and sharing of work and parental childcare for fathers and mothers with young children

The context

Employment Rights Bill Requires employers to give 'reasonable notice' of shifts and compensation for cancelled/changed shifts - Fathers & mothers will be able to arrange childcare more readily, do 'shift-parenting', & avoid unnecessary childcare costs

A focus on hybrid/home-working post-Covid in media/policy/research **BUT a 'two-tier labour force'** of 'hybrid' office workers and those who cannot work from home including critical public services (*Timewise, 2025; Felstead et al, 2025; McCollum, 2025*)

Recent published analysis of shiftworkers (UK-wide samples) is scarce and **does not incorporate parental status** (*ONS, 2018 & 2021*)

Definitions of shiftwork in law/policy/practice/research

No single or legal definition, and **sometimes conflated with working non-standard hours**

“The health, safety and wellbeing of shift workers in healthcare environments”
(NHS Employers) - *“Shift worker means any worker whose work schedule is part of shift work... Shift work means any method of organising work in shifts whereby workers succeed each other at the same workstations according to a certain pattern...”*

A working practice at level of the employer - Do all shiftworkers know they are a shiftworker or understand the term? (e.g. if they work at the same time each week)

OUR definition of shiftwork

SHFTWK99 asked (all waves) in April to June LFS quarter each year

Do you do shift work in your (main) job...1 [always/] most of the time; 2 occasionally; 3 or never?

Our definition - where shiftwork is done **for all or most of the time**

Cf **non-standard/atypical hours** (eg 'night shifts'), a broader group with **separate LFS questions about WHEN respondents work**

Around 40% of fathers/mothers working non-standard hours report that they are a shiftworker (*measurement error?*) whereas around 90% of shiftworkers work non-standard hours

Our analysis

Weighted combined person-level quarterly LFS dataset for **April-June quarters 2022, 2023 & 2024** with Waves 1-4 only

Fathers and mothers **who work shifts** (most/all of the time in main job) **and are co-resident** (Family Unit/main household) with **at least one dependent child** (birth/adoptive/'step') **under 10 years**

Involved Own Household ('non-resident') Parents living separately from child/ren (all or most of the time) can't be identified in the LFS

Restricting analytic samples to: **employees working mainly outside the home/grounds of home**

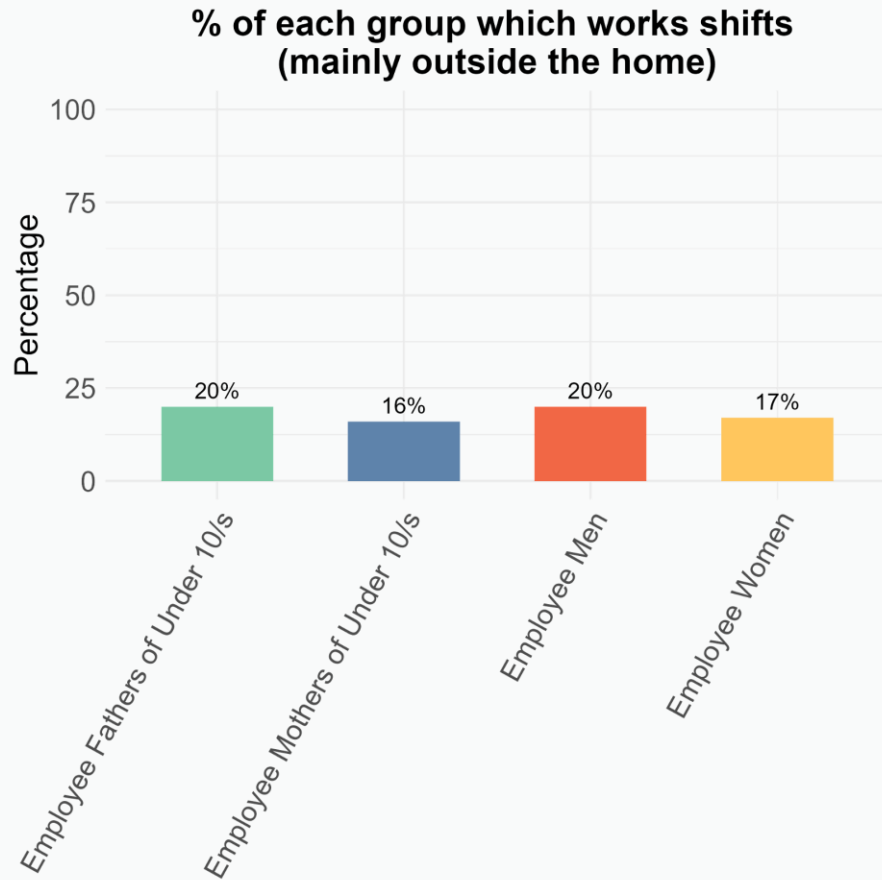
2

Key findings about shiftworking fathers and mothers of young children



Shiftworking (co-resident) fathers and mothers of <10s

Key Percentages



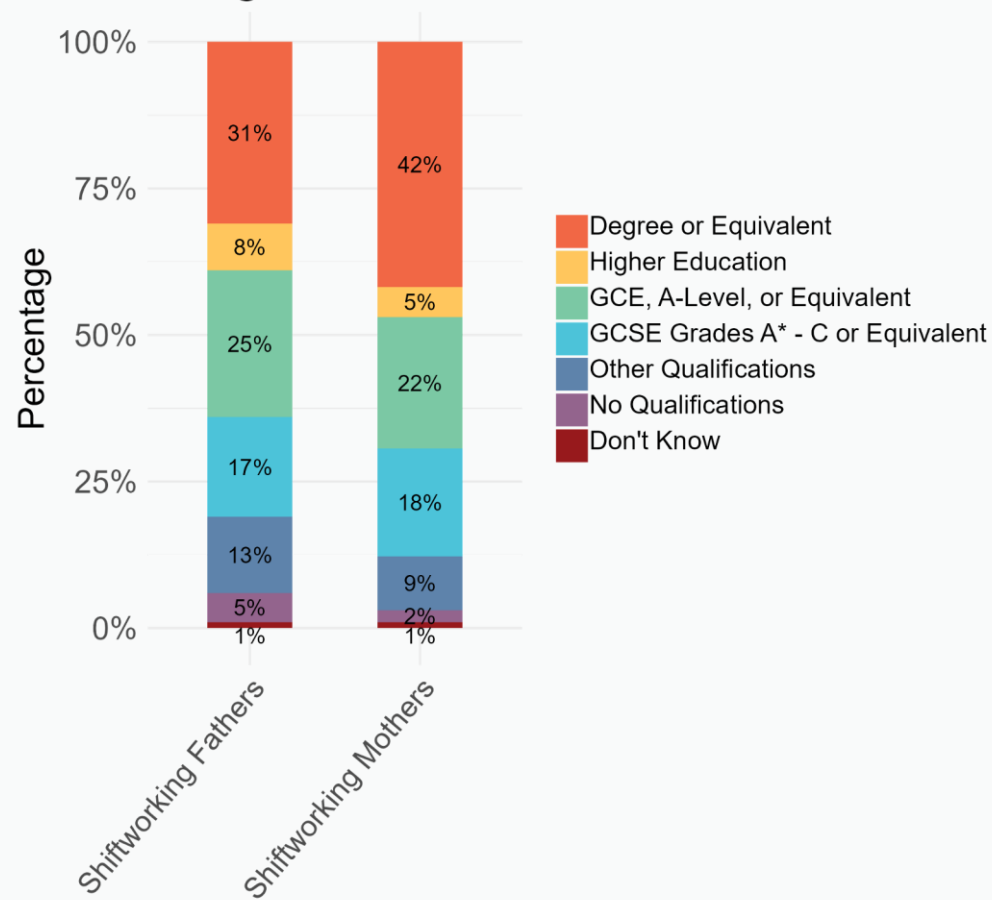
- **20%** of **employee fathers** (working mainly outside home) of under 10/s **work shifts**
- **16%** of **employee mothers** (working mainly outside home) of under 10/s **work shifts**
- **21%** of **employee male shift workers** (working mainly outside home) are a **father of under 10/s**
- **21%** of **employee female shift workers** (working mainly outside home) are a **mother of under 10/s**

The Samples

- **671 shiftworking fathers** co-resident with child/ren < 10 who (in main job) are employees and do not mainly work from home/grounds of home
- **608 shiftworking mothers** co-resident with child/ren < 10 who (in main job) are employees and do not mainly work from home/grounds of home

Demographics (co-resident shiftworking fathers/mothers of <10s)

Educational Attainment for Shiftworking Fathers and Mothers



Age

- **Shiftworking fathers** - Mean age **38 years**, with **16%** aged between 45 and 54
- **Shiftworking mothers** - Mean age **35 years**, with **8%** aged between 45 and 54

Highest Educational Qualification

- 31% of **shiftworking fathers** with **degree**
- 41% of **shiftworking mothers** with **degree**

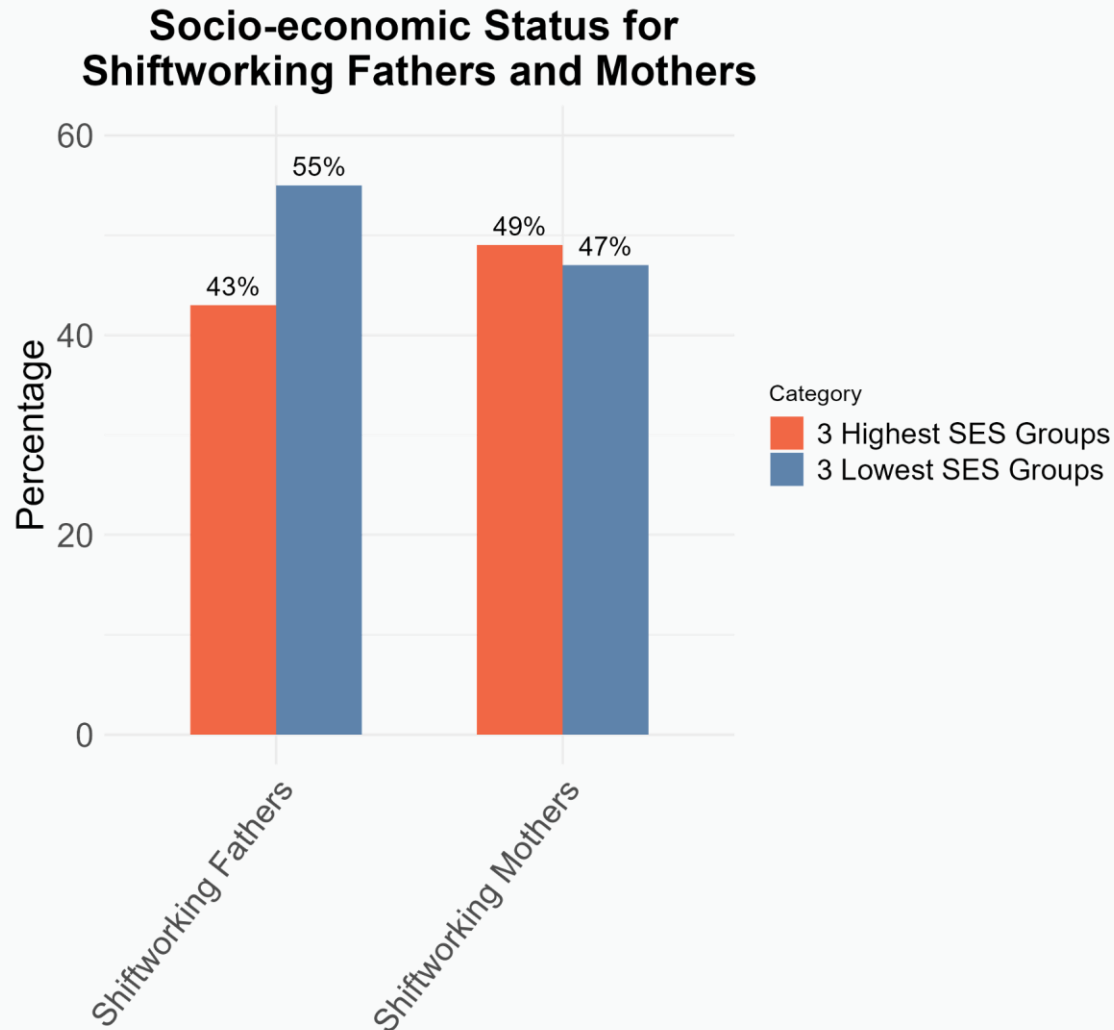
Ethnicity

- **Shiftworking fathers** - 62% White, 18% Asian, 15% Black/Caribbean/African, 6% Mixed/Multiple/Other
- **Shiftworking mothers** - 73% White, 10% Asian, 13% Black/Caribbean/African, 3% Mixed/Multiple/Other

Country of birth

- **42% of shiftworking fathers** and **39% of shiftworking mothers not** born in the UK

Socio-economic status (co-resident shiftworking fathers/mothers of <10s)



Socio-economic status (NS-SEC)

- **Shiftworking fathers** 55% in lowest 3 SES
- **Shiftworking mothers** 47% in lowest 3 SES

Manager, supervisor, or other worker

- **Shiftworking fathers** – 17% managers, 20% supervisors, **63% not M/S**
- **Shiftworking mothers** - 15% managers, 19% supervisors, **66% not M/S**

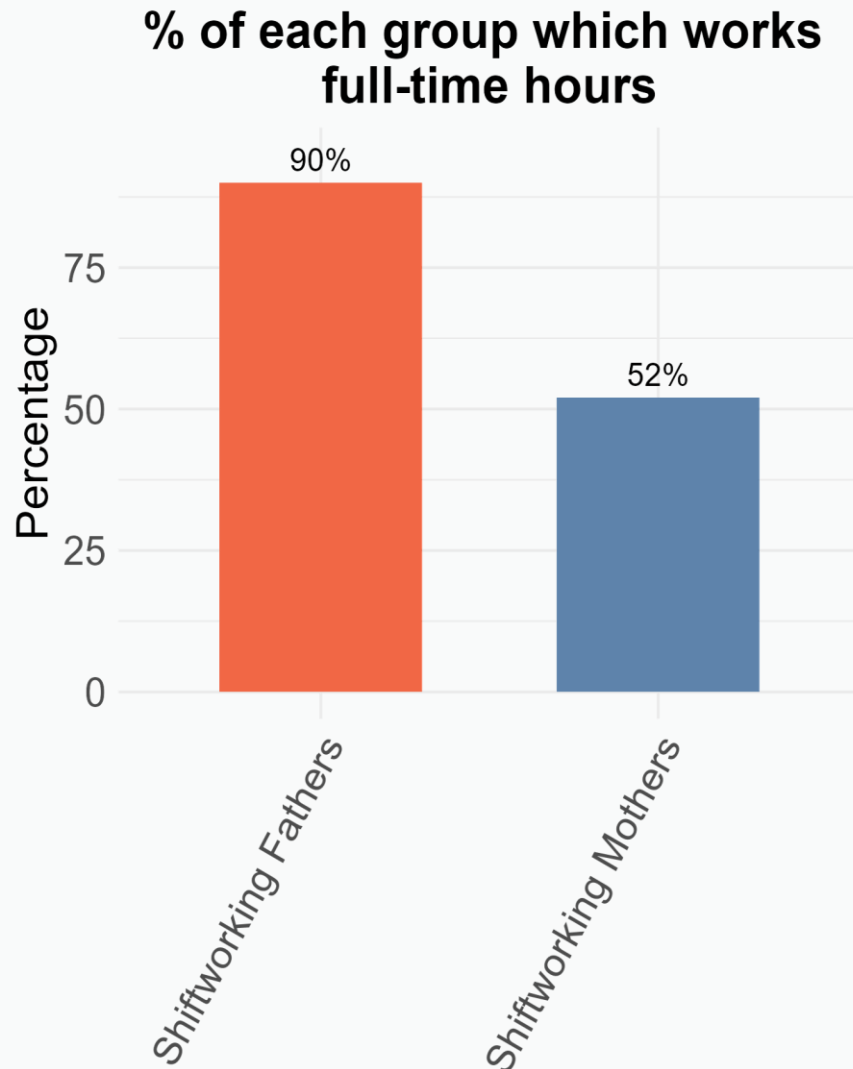
Receipt of in-work benefits

- 10% of **shiftworking fathers**
- 29% of **shiftworking mothers**
- Linked to around a quarter of the mothers being in one-parent households

Family Units (co-resident shiftworking fathers/mothers of <10s)

Family Unit type	Number of dependent children	Ages of dependent children
Shiftworking fathers: 99% in 2-parent-households) [Involved Own Household 'non-resident' Fathers not identifiable]	Shiftworking fathers: Mean 1.5 children under age 10, and Mean 1.9 children under age 16	Mean age of youngest child under 10 is 4 years for both shiftworking fathers and mothers
Shiftworking mothers: 76% in 2-parent households and 24% in 1-parent-households	Shiftworking mothers: Mean 1.4 children under age 10, and Mean 1.8 children under age 16	Mean age of oldest child under 19 is 7 years for both shiftworking fathers and mothers

Work hours (co-resident shiftworking fathers/mothers of <10s)



Total Usual Work Hours Per Week including overtime (main job)

Shiftworking fathers: Mean 42 hours, 33% work 45+ hours

Shiftworking mothers: Mean 32 hours, 10% work 45+ hours

Non-Standard Work Hours

Around 90% of both shiftworking fathers and mothers work at **non-standard times** (evenings, nights, and/or weekends)

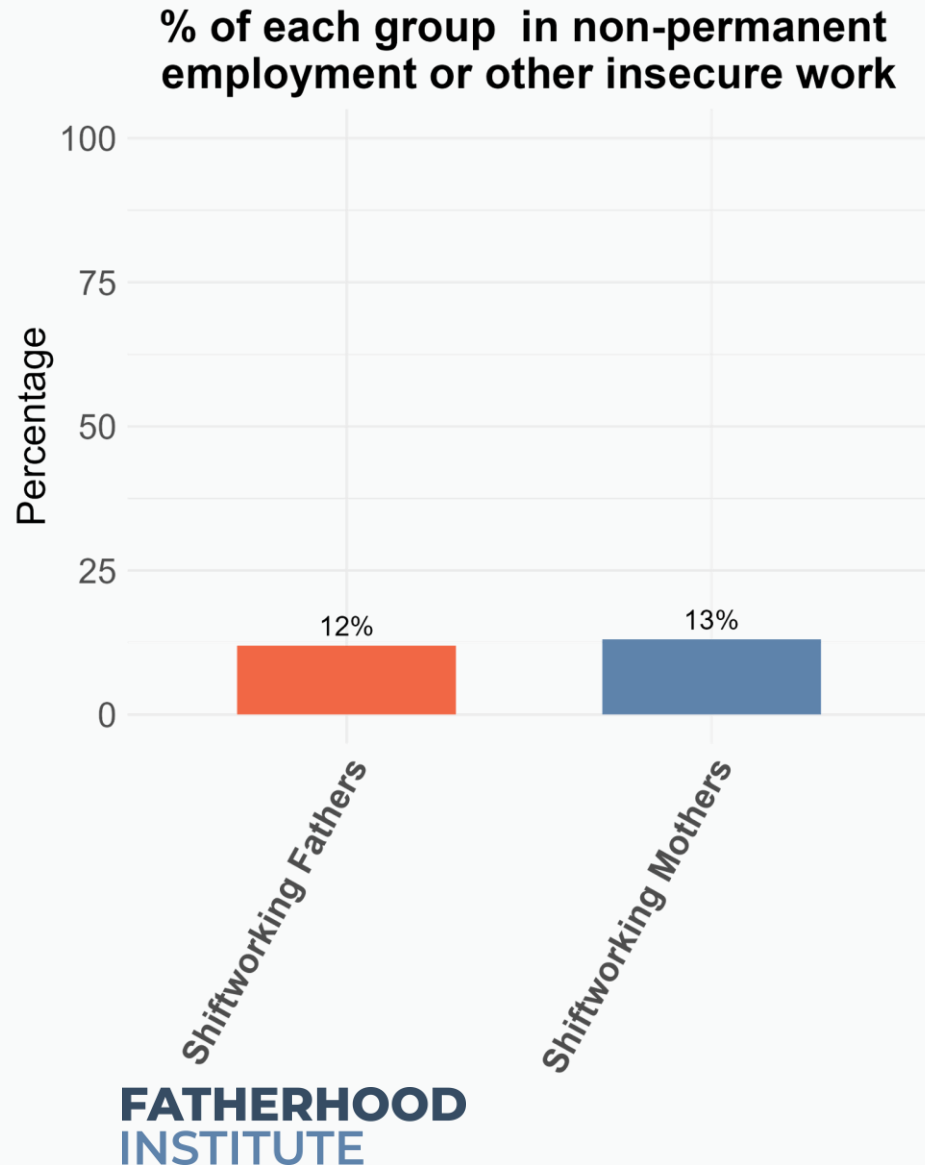
Around **60%** of **shiftworking fathers** and **50%** of **shiftworking mothers** work nights

Around 70% work evenings

Around 60% work at least one weekend shift

5% of fathers and 3% of mothers work 'on-call'

Insecure employment (co-resident shiftworking fathers/mothers of <10s)

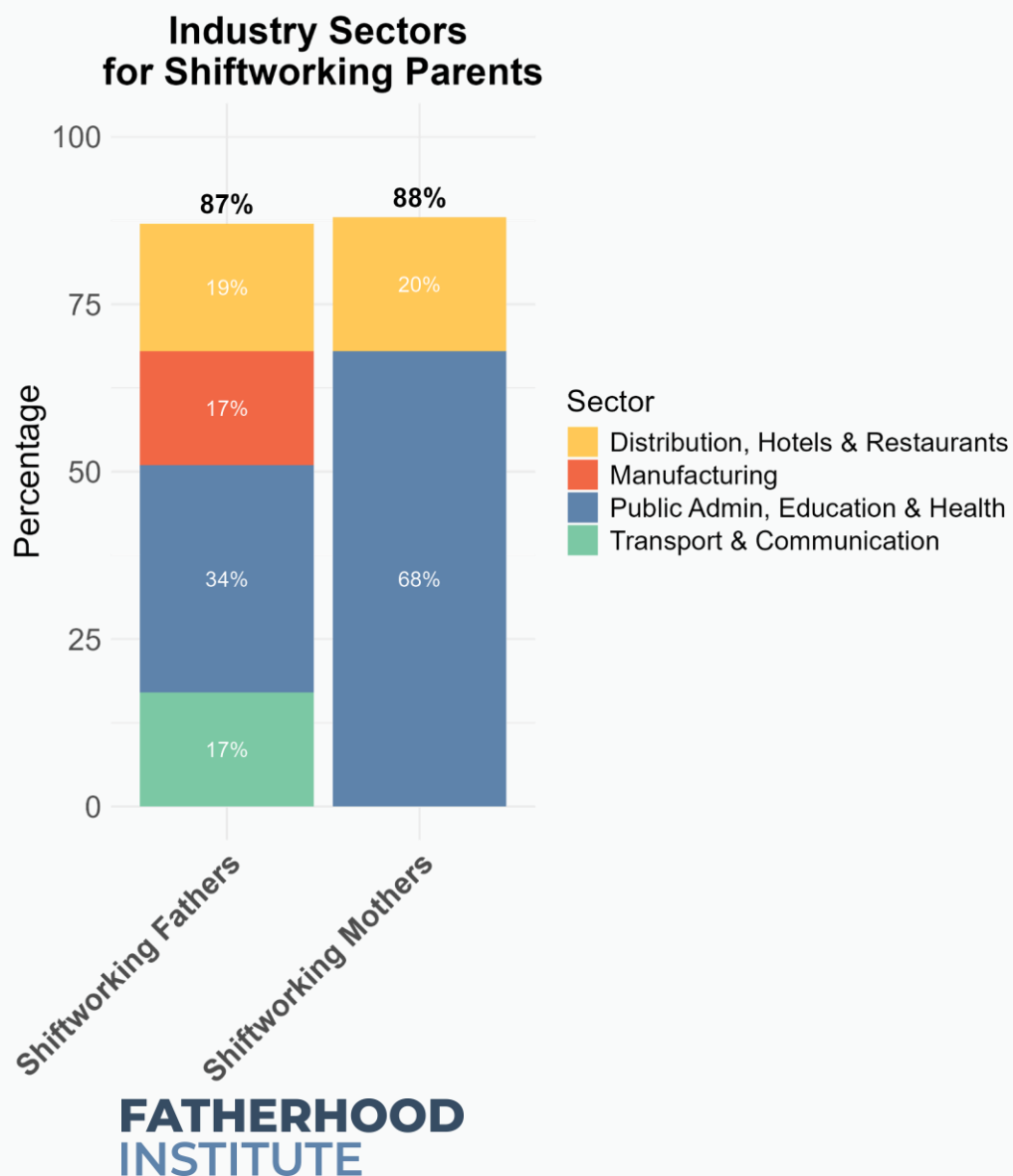


12% of shiftworking fathers and **13% of shiftworking mothers** are in temporary employment or other insecure employee work

7% of shiftworking fathers and **6% of shiftworking mothers** are in temporary employment (mainly fixed term contracts /employment agency work)

Around 5% of each parent group report a **zero hours contract** and Around 5% of each parent group are **agency workers (as employees)**

Where do we find co-resident shiftworking fathers/mothers of <10s?



Main industries

- **87% of shiftworking fathers in four sectors** - distribution/hotels/restaurants, manufacturing, public admin/education/health and transport/communications
- **88% of shiftworking mothers in two sectors** - 20% in distribution/hotels/restaurants and 68% in public admin/education/health

Biggest employer sectors

- **Private firms/companies**- 71% of shiftworking fathers and 57% of shiftworking mothers
- **NHS/local government**- 19% of shiftworking fathers and 38% of shiftworking mothers
- Around a third of each parent group work for **small workplaces** (less than 50 employees)

3

Conclusions and next steps



Conclusions and limitations

Shiftworking fathers and mothers (living with young children) are **fairly evenly split** between higher socio-economic and lower socio-economic workers

Fathers mainly in 4 industrial sectors and mothers mainly in 2 sectors – Useful data for targeting follow-on research and policy/practice work

Just over a tenth in temporary/insecure work; Very small proportions with zero hours contracts or in agency work

Benefit of large-scale dataset for studying smaller groups in UK population

BUT low response rates to LFS over the period studied, with likely response bias, and **relatively small sample sizes of shiftworking fathers/mothers**

Possibly under-reporting of shiftwork in responses to LFS question **SHFTWK99**

Our preliminary analysis comparing **shiftworking fathers** to the much bigger sample of **shiftworking men** shows few employment-related differences (but key demographic differences) which is reassuring

Next steps

Look out for our report – probably autumn 2025

Hopefully a follow-on multi-method project to inform employment policy & practice (focus on lower SES workers and those who are not a manager or supervisor)

Get in touch if you would like to collaborate or fund!

r.goldman@fatherhoodinstitute.org

Resources

Fatherhood Institute reports include:

- [Closing the Gap](#) (using ONS time use data)
- [Where's the Daddy?](#) (How fathers are identified & defined in key UK cross-sectional surveys and longitudinal studies – and the gaps)

Our services for researchers and research funders

Electronic library, research reviews, interviewer training, and roles on longitudinal & secondary analysis projects

[More info](#)

References

Felstead, A., Davies, R., Gallie, D., Green, F., Henseke, G. and Zhou, Y. (2025) *Is the Office Dying? Findings from the Skills and Employment Survey 2024*. Cardiff: Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research and Data, Cardiff University.

McCollum, D. (2025) *Post- pandemic geographies of working from home: More of the same for spatial inequalities?* Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, 00, e12749.

ONS (2018) *Tables looking at numbers and percentages undertaking shiftwork, and numbers by type of shift, by sex for 2007 to 2017 for selected industry groups*.

ONS (2021) *Shift workers in the public sector*.

Timewise (2025) *Ending the Two-Tier Workforce:- Towards Greater Control and More Predictable Work for Frontline Workers*.