

# MULTIPLE BIRTHS PARENTS' EXPERIENCE OF MATERNITY AND PATERNITY LEAVE

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TWINS & MULTIPLE BIRTHS ASSOCIATION



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## FOREWORD

The UK Government's approach to families expecting twins, triplets or more is almost 40 years out of date. Maternity leave was first introduced in 1975. The legislation only ever applied to the circumstances of having one child at a time and this pattern has been followed in subsequent legislation.

As a result, parents of multiples receive exactly the same amount of maternity and paternity leave and pay as families having only one baby. This fails to take account of the increased risk of ill health for mothers during pregnancy and babies being born prematurely and requiring care in a neonatal unit. It also fails to acknowledge the additional time and costs required to care for two, three, four or more babies once they finally get home. This appears to be a legal anomaly as no other legislation results in multiple birth children being treated as a single unit.

The financial consequences of having more than one baby at a time, which often necessitates partners working longer hours and a lack of available leave for many partners leaves many mothers isolated. The additional care needs of looking after more than one baby along with the isolation and difficulty mothers have in getting out are often regarded as contributing factors as to why these mums are twice as likely to develop postnatal depression as other mothers. Furthermore, research suggests that the pressures these families face, including the financial difficulties they encounter, contributes to the greater likelihood of relationship breakdown and divorce experienced among multiple birth families.

The results of this survey clearly highlight the need for change and our recommendations are covered on page 5 of this report.

*Keith Reed*  
Tamba CEO

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2013 Tamba Parental Leave survey collected the views of 1,118 parents of multiples (97% were parents of twins and 3% were parents of triplets). The online survey asked parents for their experiences of working during pregnancy, taking parental leave and returning to work.

### WORK AND PREGNANCY

Multiple pregnancies are considered 'high-risk' for a range of illnesses. This survey found that almost half of respondents (49.1%) said they experienced ill-health during pregnancy. Of these, just over a half (51.2%) were hospitalised. Of those respondents who experienced ill-health during pregnancy, 85% had to take sick days off work - over a half (58%) took more than a week off sick.

There is some evidence that employers did not always understand that multiple pregnancies were more 'at risk' and some discouraged employees from taking time off sick. Similarly, several respondents mentioned that their employers seemed unhappy about the greater number of antenatal appointments they needed to attend.

### BABIES IN SPECIAL CARE

Multiple births often occur ahead of schedule. Our survey found that over half (53.2%) of respondents' babies were born prematurely and needed to spend some time in neonatal care. Of those who were born prematurely, over two-thirds of families (67.7%) spent more than a week in neonatal care. Over 1 in 5 families (20.6%) with premature babies spent more than a month in neonatal

care. Many mothers of premature babies voiced concern that their babies would benefit from a longer maternity leave, as they were developmentally behind their peers, had additional health issues and still required a high level of care. Several mothers made the case that maternity leave should be "relative to the due date" and "did not take into account our babies 'corrected age'".

### MATERNITY LEAVE

Women employees have the right to take up to one year's maternity leave, with a few exceptions. Over half of all mothers of twins (55.8%) took 9-12 months maternity leave, with a small proportion (14.6%) extending their maternity leave beyond a year. Mothers of triplets were most likely to take a longer maternity leave, with almost half (45.5%) taking over a year. Self-employed respondents voiced a considerable degree of concern about their levels of vulnerability and lack of parental rights and entitlements. This survey found that self-employed parents of multiples tended to start their maternity leave later, take shorter maternity leave, and receive less maternity pay.

Many mothers talked of the 'injustice' of having the same amount of maternity leave and pay as mothers of singletons. Several respondents thought it was simply 'unfair' that they did not receive any additional maternity benefits. Others provided a range of reasons why mothers of multiples needed additional leave, for example, mothers of multiples are more likely to have post-natal depression, find the first year difficult and only just be finding their feet and enjoying being a

mother when their maternity leave ends, and experience problems finding suitable and affordable childcare.

However, the most common reason given for why mothers of multiples should have additional maternity leave is that their babies are more likely to be premature. Of those women who returned to work, most mothers (59.7%) would have preferred to have returned to work later. Ideally, most mothers (53.8%) would like 1-2 years maternity leave.

1 in 4 respondents experienced a range of difficulties with their maternity entitlements and benefits: 12.5% said their employer lacked knowledge about maternity entitlements and benefits; 5.8% were encouraged to start maternity leave earlier than they would have liked; 5.4% were encouraged to take time off or signed off on sick leave before they were ready to start maternity leave; 4.1% were encouraged to take less maternity leave; and 3.9% were put under pressure to hand in their notice.

Women experiencing the most difficulties were those on the lowest incomes and working in smaller workplaces.

### **MATERNITY PAY**

The vast proportion (89.7%) of respondents received Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) – paid to mothers by their employer for up to 39 weeks when you take time off to have a baby. Almost all the remaining respondents received Statutory Maternity Allowance (SMA). Just over a third (36.8%) of respondents received additional maternity pay and a small proportion (4.8%) received

additional maternity leave. However, only two respondents mentioned that their employers offered twin-specific maternity pay and none received extra leave to care for multiples. The two respondents who received twin-specific pay said it was “double Statutory Maternity Pay from weeks 6-39”.

Several mothers pointed out that there needed to be more flexibility in transferring maternity/paternity benefits between partners now that many women are the breadwinners: “the amount is a hangover from the days when the man was the breadwinner and women’s salary was additional small change.”

### **RETURNING TO WORK**

Over half of all mothers (54.5%) returned to work after their babies’ birth, although a further 29% intended to. Mothers of multiples most likely to return to work tend to be those on higher incomes, have partners with lower incomes, be self-employed, or work in larger workplaces. All of Tamba’s respondents were still on maternity leave, it is hard to compare the rate of return for parents of multiples and singletons.

However, there is evidence from Tamba’s previous analysis of the Millennium Cohort Study data, that mothers of multiples had a slower rate (or later rate) of returning to work than mothers of singletons.

Mothers gave a variety of reasons for returning to work, which did not noticeably vary according to income or employment profile, including financial reasons, their maternity pay/leave ending, and to protect their career prospects. Just

over a third (36.9%) said they wanted to return to work.

Of those mothers who did not return to work, the most frequently cited reason for not returning was the cost of childcare for multiples (68.8%). Although some nurseries and childminders offer discounts of around 5-10% for multiples, this tends to make little impact on the overall childcare costs. Many mothers said they calculated that they would have little or no income after childcare costs, with several saying they would lose money.

Many mothers who return to work after having babies choose to adapt their working pattern and request flexible working. 8 out of 10 respondents, who returned to work, requested some form of flexible working, with the most frequent request being for part-time working. However, 1 in 5 (21.8%) of those who applied for flexible working did not have their request approved.

### **TIME OFF FOR ANTENATAL APPOINTMENTS**

Fathers and partners do not currently have a legal right to paid time off work to accompany their pregnant partner to antenatal appointments. Several respondents said they needed weekly or fortnightly scans and it is not unusual for fathers to take 15-20 days unpaid leave or holiday to accompany expectant mothers of multiples to antenatal appointments or scans. Over half (58.8%) of partners took additional time off during pregnancy to attend antenatal appointments or scans. Of these, a third of partners (31.3%) took more than five days of unpaid leave.

### **PATERNITY LEAVE**

Employed fathers are entitled to take 1 or 2 weeks of Ordinary Paternity Leave within 56 days of their babies’ arrival and up to 26 weeks Additional Paternity Leave (if the children’s mother has returned to work). Approximately 3 out of 4 fathers of multiples (73.1%) took paid paternity leave, with most taking two weeks. The majority (67.2%) of employers made no special consideration for partners’ circumstances. In the absence of enough paid paternity leave, partners are using a variety of other leave entitlements to provide additional support during pregnancy or to extend the period of support they can offer after the babies are born. Almost 3 out of 4 partners (73.8%) took some form of additional leave during pregnancy or after the babies’ birth.

In total, 1 in 2 (50.8%) respondents said their partners experienced difficulties relating to paternity leave. Although several employers were sympathetic (particularly those who had multiples themselves), many fathers encountered a lack of understanding about the extra family demands of multiples. The main difficulties include: not being able to afford to take paternity leave (45.6%); taking time off work during a busy time of year for work (44.2%); qualifying for paternity leave (19.6%), employer’s lack of knowledge about paternity rights (14.5%), and pressure from employer (10.8%) or colleagues (4.9%).

The first month of looking after newborn multiples is very time-intensive. For example, 64.4% spend more than 6 hours a day feeding their babies in the first month. 9 out of 10 mothers (92.7%)

would have liked their partner to have had additional paternity leave to help them care for the babies when they were young. When asked how many weeks paternity leave would have been helpful, over half of parents of multiples (53.5%) would like 4 weeks paternity leave – double the current limit of two weeks.

### COPING WITH THE COSTS OF MULTIPLES

The majority of respondents (61.4%) did not have enough maternity and paternity pay to cover the cost of their (and their partner's) leave. Financial strategies used to 'get by' included using savings (72.6%), putting money on their credit card that they could not pay off in full at the end of the month (32.3%), borrowing money from family/friends (27.9%), working longer hours or taking on an additional source of income (21%), and taking out a loan from a bank or financial institution (7.7%). Even with these and a range of other coping strategies, a few respondents said they "ended up in financial trouble" and in one situation having to declare themselves bankrupt. Over half of respondents (51.4%) built up debt, with a quarter building up more than £2,000 debt.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Although Tamba welcomes the proposed plans for greater flexibility in parental leave arrangements, there is a need to recognise that families of multiples have additional needs and demands.

Emerging from this survey are the following policy recommendations for Tamba:

### LOBBY FOR LEGISLATION TO BE MULTIPLE-FRIENDLY:

- **Fathers and partners of multiples should be given the legal right to take unpaid leave for up to six antenatal appointments.** The proposed plans give fathers the legal right to take unpaid leave to attend two antenatal appointments.

However, multiple pregnancies tend to be 'high risk' and medically managed to a greater extent than singleton pregnancies. According to the latest NICE multiple pregnancy guidance, every expectant mother should receive at least six scans during the course of their pregnancy. This survey found that families of multiples were often attending weekly or fortnightly antenatal appointments in the second and third trimesters.

- **The Children and Families Bill should be amended to double the length of paid maternity and paternity leave for all multiple birth families.** Many multiple birth parents find the first eighteen months of their new babies' lives unnecessarily difficult contributing to higher rates of postnatal depression, financial hardship, relationship stress and mothers in particular appear to have less opportunity to return to work and consequently this reduces their ability to cope with the extra financial demands of multiples.

- **At the very least, maternity leave legislation should take prematurity into account, by using babies' expected (not actual) due date when calculating maternity leave.** Families would also welcome greater guidance and awareness training for employers on providing support for families with premature or sick babies.

### SUPPORT CAMPAIGNS THAT AFFECT VULNERABLE PARENTS OF MULTIPLES

- **Lone parents and families on low incomes:** This survey found parents on lower incomes were the most likely to receive no maternity pay, take shorter maternity leave, face difficulties with accessing their maternity entitlements, and struggle financially with the costs of multiples.

- **Self-employed parents:** Recognise that while in theory self-employed new parents enjoy greater flexibility to take leave, in practice they often take less leave for fear of losing business (clients, customers and future contracts) and the lack of maternity pay, holiday or sick leave places substantial pressure on families of multiples.

## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

In 2013 Tamba conducted a national survey of the extent to which parents of multiples are able to access their maternity and paternity rights. 1,118 parents completed the survey, of which 1,088 (97.3%) were parents of twins and 25 (2.7%) were parents of triplets. Most respondents (96.3%) were mothers, but 3.7% were fathers.

### MOTHERS' EMPLOYMENT PROFILE

Key characteristics of employment at the babies' birth include:

- **Employment status:** Most mothers (72%) were employed full time when they were pregnant, 18.2% were employed

part-time, 4.9% were self-employed, and 5% were neither employed nor self-employed.

**Occupational status:** Just over half (51%) of mothers' occupations were classified as professional, 17.9% as managerial, 16.7% as clerical/administrative, 7.3% as sales/customer service, 4.8% as personal/community services and 2.4% as manual/trade.

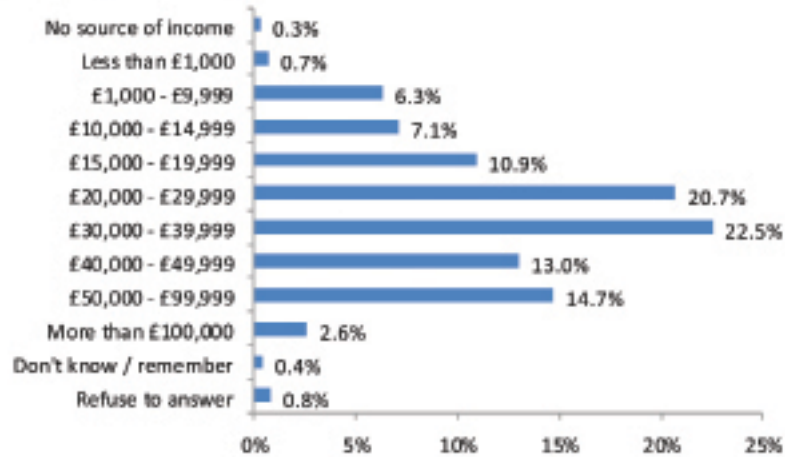
**Employment sector:** The most frequent sectors to work include health (19.9%), education (19.6%), banking and finance (10.8%) and local/central government (9%).

**Workplace size:** Over a third (34.1%) of female respondents' workplaces have more than 500 employees, 21.9% have 100-499 people, 21.5% have 25-99 people, 16.9% have 5-24 people, and 5.6% have less than 5 people.

**Sector:** The majority (51.2%) of female respondents work in the private sector, 44.6% in the public sector, and only a small proportion (4.2%) in the voluntary sector.

**Income: Figure 1** (overleaf) shows respondents' approximate income at the time of the babies' birth. However, this data should be treated with caution as it includes both full-time and part-time employees and covers a range of years and therefore does not capture wage inflation.

**Figure 1: Respondents' approximate total income at the time of the babies' birth**



## SECTION 2: COPING WITH ILL HEALTH DURING PREGNANCY

Multiple pregnancies are considered 'high-risk' for a range of illnesses, including: pre-eclampsia, Twin-to-Twin Transfusion Syndrome (TTTS), anaemia, vaginal bleeding, preterm labour, growth restriction, obstetric cholestasis, and gestational diabetes. Almost half of respondents (49.1%) said they experienced ill-health during their multiple pregnancy. Of those who experienced ill-health during pregnancy, just over a half (51.2%) were hospitalised.

During pregnancy, an employee absent due to a pregnancy-related sickness is entitled to receive contractual sick pay and Statutory Sick Pay in the same way as any other employee. However, if the employee is off work for a pregnancy-related illness in the 4 weeks before

the babies are due, maternity leave and Statutory Maternity Pay will start automatically. Periods of absence related to sickness during pregnancy are regulated by the statutory provisions related to maternity leave and pay.

Of those respondents who experienced ill-health during pregnancy:

- 85% had to take sick days off work - over a half (58%) took more than a week off sick - 16% took 1-2 weeks, 13% took 2-4 weeks, and 29% took more than a month. Just over a quarter (25.6%) had to take holiday days due to ill health.
- Almost two-thirds (60.8%) of those hospitalised during pregnancy were in for over 4 days, as shown in Figure 2.

There is some evidence from later questions that employers did not always understand that multiple pregnancies were more 'at risk' and some discouraged

employees from taking time off sick.

"Had to work full time whilst suffering from hyperemesis even against medical advice. Was put under pressure not to take sick time from work."

"Having twins, the companies don't understand you need more scans, rest, breaks etc. Everything is more risky and complicated - had a lot of fighting to get restricted duties in my manual job as risk assessment based on single baby pregnancies!"

Similarly, several respondents mentioned that their employers seemed unhappy about the greater number of antenatal appointments that pregnant mothers of multiples need to attend:

"Although [I was] never stopped, it was frowned on when taking hospital appointments"

"Some disquiet about number of antenatal appointments"

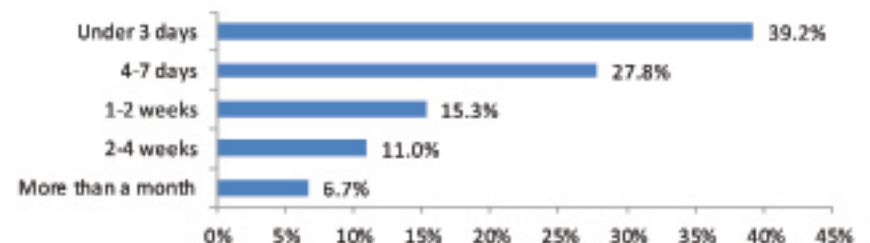
"I wish my employer was more understanding of the extra demands of a multiple pregnancy - extra appointments

etc. and accept the evidence given to them to account for those appointments."

Self-employed respondents were most likely to experience ill-health, with 60% reporting illness during pregnancy, compared to full-time employees (49.4%), part-time employees (45.2%) and those not in employment (40%). However, self-employed people do not qualify for sick leave and therefore it is not surprising that self-employed pregnant women are the least likely to take sick days with 38.7% of those experiencing ill-health taking no sick days, compared to those employed full-time (12.6%) or part-time (19.3%). As one self-employed respondent observed, "There is very little help for self-employed parents - urgently needed".

"We felt tied as we are self-employed. We opened our shop in June 2010 and became pregnant in July 2010! (Been trying for a while!) I was very poorly and by halfway through, very large so my input in the shop was minimal. If it hadn't been for my parents' support, we would have probably had to lose the shop, massive loss of money, huge stress etc ... "

**Figure 2. How many days did you spend in hospital?**



## SECTION 3: MATERNITY LEAVE & PAY

### STARTING MATERNITY LEAVE

Mothers in the UK can start maternity leave at any time in, or after, the 11th week before their babies are due. The average length of a multiple pregnancy depends on how many babies you are expecting:

- A single baby usually arrives at around 40 weeks
- Twins usually arrive around 37 weeks
- Triplets usually arrive around 33 weeks
- Quadruplets usually arrive at around 31 weeks

As noted above, maternity leave will start automatically if you are off work for a pregnancy-related illness from the fourth week before your baby is due. Almost

half (49.9%) of all mothers of twins start their maternity leave when they are 32-35 weeks pregnant, with almost a third (29.1%) starting at 28-31 weeks (see Figure 3). Mothers of triplets start their maternity leaves earlier, with 1 in 2 (50%) mothers of triplets starting their maternity leave at 28-31 weeks.

Self-employed respondents were most likely to start their maternity leave early, with 8.3% starting before 24 weeks, but also a greater proportion of self-employed respondents (16.7%) continued to work beyond 36 weeks compared to full-time (13.1%) or part-time (14.5%) employees.

Respondents in active jobs were also more likely to start their maternity leave early, which has implications for the amount of time they can spend with their babies after they are born, as one mother described:

Figure 3. How many weeks pregnant were you when you started your maternity leave?

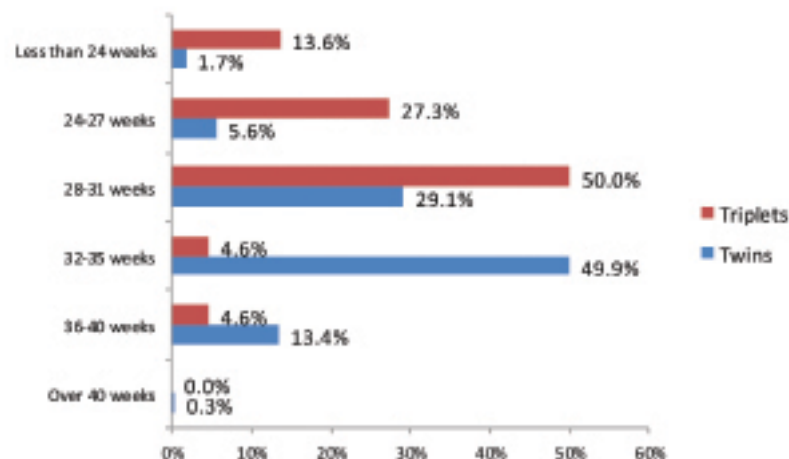
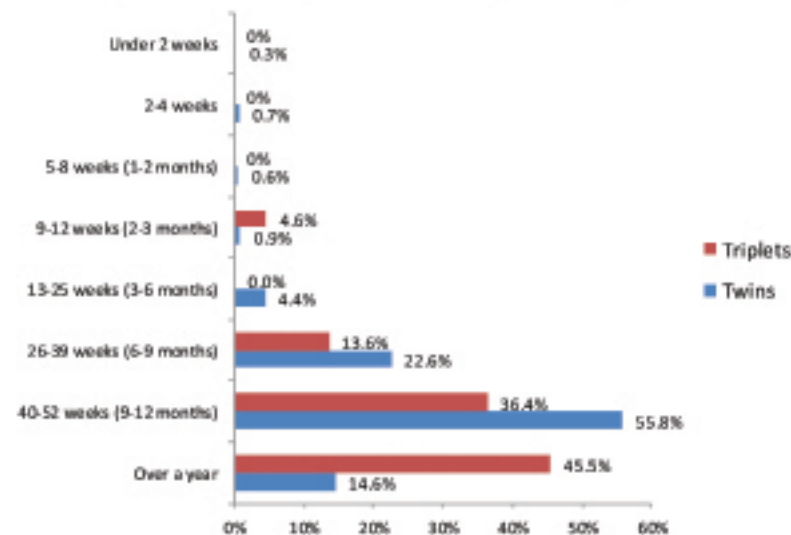


Figure 4. How many weeks maternity leave did you take?



“Due to my size I was unable to carry on my job after 27 weeks, although my pregnancy was very healthy and I carried them to 38 weeks. So I had to use 12 weeks maternity leave before they were even born. This meant that I had to go back when they were 7 months old as my pay had stopped and we could not afford this. I felt 7 months to be far too early and it caused a lot of stress and anxiety. I think that in active job roles some extra leave should be considered or a change in job role should be considered until ready to take leave.”

### DURATION OF MATERNITY LEAVE

Women employees have the right to take up to one year's (52 weeks') maternity leave, with a few exceptions.<sup>1</sup>

All employees must take at least two weeks Compulsory Maternity Leave immediately after the babies are born (or four weeks if they work in a factory). Over half of all mothers of twins (55.8%) took 9-12 months maternity leave, with a small proportion (14.6%) extending their maternity leave beyond a year (see Figure 4). Those respondents who took less than 6 months maternity leave were either on lower incomes (below £15K) or very high annual incomes (above £100K). Women who worked in smaller workplaces were also more likely to return to work earlier, with 15.2% of women who worked with fewer than 5 people returning to work within six months compared to 4.7% of respondents who worked with over 500 people. There was no noticeable difference between different occupations or sectors.

Mothers of triplets were most likely to take a longer maternity leave, with almost half (45.5%) taking over a year. The high costs of childcare for triplets combined with the greater likelihood of triplets being premature and requiring extra care in the early months meant that mothers of triplets tend to return to work later than mothers of twins and singleton mothers.

“I cannot afford to place three babies in childcare so feel mums of multiples should get a little longer off, say 6 months extra per multiple. It’s a struggle to even find anyone who will accept multiples at nurseries.”

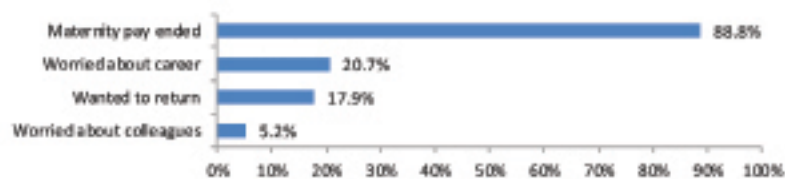
Self-employed women are not entitled to Statutory Maternity Pay, but may be able to receive Maternity Allowance up to 26 weeks (six months). It is therefore not surprising that self-employed women were most likely to return to work early, with 20% returning within six months compared to full-time (7.9%) and part-time (2.1%) employees. However, they were also most likely to extend their maternity leave beyond a year – 35.6% for self-employed, compared to full-time (14.4%) and part-time (14.1%) employees.

Of those mothers who returned to work, almost 1 in 3 mothers (32.7%) took less maternity leave than they were entitled. The majority of mothers who did not take all their maternity leave said their decision was financially motivated, with almost 9 out of 10 (88.8%) returning to work when their maternity pay ended (see Figure 5). 1 out of 5 (20.7%) respondents were worried about their career, 17.9% said they wanted to return and 5.2% were worried about their colleagues.

Self-employed respondents voiced a considerable degree of concern about their levels of vulnerability and lack of parental rights and entitlements (see Box 1). For example, one self-employed respondent said she didn’t take as much maternity leave as she would have liked because she “didn’t want to lose clients”, another said she was “worried about my business going downhill”.

This gap in maternity rights between employed and self-employed women led to frustration about the “discrepancy [between self-employed people] compared to most employees”.

**Figure 5. Why did you take less maternity leave than you were entitled? (please tick as many as applies)**



### BOX 1: SELF-EMPLOYED PARENTS – FALLING BETWEEN THE CRACKS OF PARENTAL ENTITLEMENTS?

**“We are in a horrible, horrible catch-22. We are self-employed professionals who can’t earn money if we aren’t working, yet with 3 children not yet at school, we can’t afford to pay for childcare. We’ve ended up with a mish-mash of part time working, part time nanny, and not enough income to support us. We don’t even have enough to pay the tax bill at the end of the month.”**

**“No entitlement for the self-employed even though they pay stamp.”**

**“There is a problem concerning the receipt of government maternity allowance regarding weeks worked before the birth to qualify. I dropped through the net by a few weeks which cost us an awful lot of money as I received nothing, being self-employed.”**

**“Very hard to take parental leave if you run your own business as need to maintain a presence; however does allow you to be flexible”**

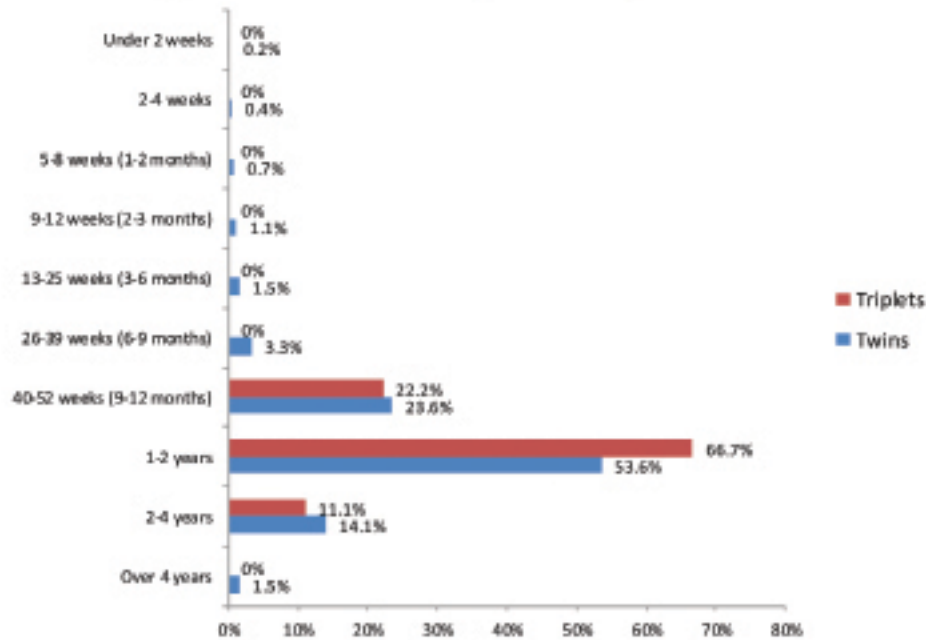
**“Self-employed are currently not entitled to paternity pay/holiday pay etc. I think they should be eligible for at least tax breaks on leave up to 5-6 weeks per year (equivalent to holiday pay)”**

Respondents in the teaching and legal profession were the most likely to say they did not have enough maternity leave and returned to work sooner than they would have liked. Many teachers/academics said they felt obliged to curtail their maternity leave at the start of the school year, either because they were worried about their colleagues or due to pressure from their employer. As one mother of twins said, “Due to the academic year starting in September, I was strongly encouraged to return to work then”.

Of those women who returned to work, most mothers (59.7%) would have preferred to have returned to work later. Interestingly, despite self-employed mothers returning to work sooner than full-time or part-time employees, more than half (54.6%) of self-employed respondents said they had enough maternity leave, compared to 37.7% of full-time employees and 47.2% of part-time employees.

The survey asked those respondents who thought they did not have enough maternity leave how much time they would have liked to have taken with their babies (see Figure 6 overleaf). Ideally, most mothers (53.8%) would like 1-2 years maternity leave.

**Figure 6. How much maternity leave would you have liked?**



Many mothers talked of the ‘injustice’ of having the same amount of maternity leave and pay as mothers of singletons. As shown in Box 2, several people thought it was simply ‘unfair’ that they did not receive any additional maternity benefits. Others provided a range of reasons why mothers of multiples needed additional leave, for example, mothers of multiples are more likely to have post-natal depression, find the first year difficult and only just be finding

their feet and enjoying being a mother when their maternity leave ends, and experience problems finding suitable and affordable childcare. However, as discussed later, the most common reason given for why mothers of multiples should have additional maternity leave is that their babies are more likely to be premature, require additional care and be developmentally behind their peers in the early years.

**BOX 2: MULTIPLE BABIES = MULTIPLE MATERNITY ENTITLEMENTS?**

“I had TWO BABIES. Just because they were born at the same time we should not be penalised. Everyone else who has two babies gets twice as much leave. Very frustrating.”

“I would have preferred it if the SMP was for a year with twins, as child-minding is double as is everything else. Or there should be some grant to help with twins and childcare costs.”

“It took me at least six months to confidently leave the house alone with my 3 under 2’s and the first few months were a total blur of breastfeeding/ changing etc & therefore by the time my maternity leave ended I really felt I only just had a handle on things. I just hadn’t had enough time with my babies!”

“It seems unfair to have the same amount of maternity leave as someone who just had one baby when I had two babies to bond and spend time with and care for.”

“I believe I should have got double-maternity leave with twins, as in other European countries.”

“The only reason I went back was financial. Why is it fair that those with multiples receive the same amount of money on maternity than those with one baby? What do the government want us to do? Not feed one of them?”

“Twins get less attention than singleton babies when born and in first few years, and having longer with them at home would have benefited their development”.

“Really felt I needed more time to be with my children. So much more to manage & adjust to with multiples & an older sibling who didn’t cope well with the transitions.”

“I think parents of multiples should get longer. It takes longer to get back on your feet, to get some sleep, to bond with both babies. Why should you only get same time as someone who has one?”

“Due to stresses with TWO babies, born prematurely with health problems and suffering from postnatal depression I didn’t really bond with them until they were 7 months old.”

**ENTITLEMENT TO MATERNITY PAY**

The vast proportion (89.7%) of respondents received Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) – paid to mothers by their employer for up to 39 weeks when you take time off to have a baby. Not all pregnant employees qualify for SMP for a variety of reasons.<sup>2</sup> Those

respondents least likely to receive SMP include self-employed respondents, those working in the voluntary sector, personal or community support services, and on lower incomes (annual income below £20K). Women working in smaller workplaces are also least likely to receive SMP. Employed



respondents working at professional/managerial level in large workplaces, in the public sector (particularly health/education/local government) and on higher incomes are the most likely to receive SMP.

Statutory Maternity Allowance (SMA) is paid to mothers who do not qualify for Statutory Maternity Pay. As of February 2013, it is £135.45 a week or 90% of your average weekly earnings (whichever is lower). SMA is paid for up to 39 weeks. In total, 20.7% of all respondents received SMA. The majority of SMA recipients are either on low incomes and/or self-employed; over three-quarters (77.8%) of self-employed respondents received SMA, compared to 15.7% of full-time employees and 23.4% of part-time employees. Of the remaining 22.2% of self-employed respondents who did not receive SMA, almost all received Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) – possibly those who own a limited company and pay themselves through PAYE entitling them to qualify for SMP if they meet the conditions. The remaining three self-employed respondents who received neither maternity pay or allowance had low annual incomes (£1-10K) and are likely not to have met the necessary conditions.<sup>3</sup>

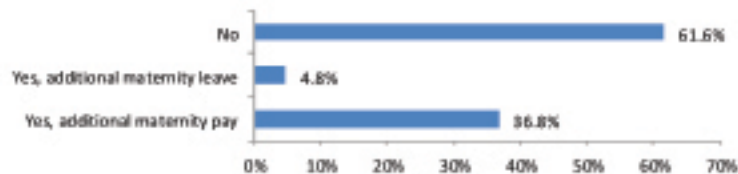
“I didn’t get SMA as my accountant said it wasn’t possible to claim it and then that it could only be claimed at the end of the financial year. My husband is a contractor and did not know if he was going to have work in the new year, so I went back to work to ensure we could pay the mortgage in January.”

Just over a third (36.8%) of all respondents received additional maternity pay and a small proportion (4.8%) received additional maternity leave (see Figure 7). Respondents received a variety of complex additional maternity pay and leave arrangements, often with full pay and then half-pay or SMP.

The most common arrangement was six months full pay (15% of comments), followed by three months full pay (14%). Four mothers received nine months full pay, three received one year, and one person received two years. Only two out of 912 respondents mentioned that their employers offered twin-specific maternity pay and none received extra leave to care for multiples.

The two respondents who received twin-specific pay said it was “double Statutory Maternity Pay from weeks 6-39”.

**Figure 7. Did your employer make any special considerations for your maternity leave/pay?**



A few mothers pointed out that there needed to be more flexibility in transferring maternity/paternity benefits between partners now that many women are the breadwinners: “My main issue is that as the main wage earner before pregnancy, we then struggled financially going from my usual salary (over £40k to Maternity Allowance). I don’t think Mat Pay is appropriate nowadays and the amount is a hangover from the days when the man was the breadwinner and women’s salary was additional small change.” Another noted that “the basic maternity entitlement remains in the stone-age - expecting the father to earn the lion’s share of the wages.”

There was a strong relationship between workplace size and the likelihood of receiving additional benefits. Larger workplaces were more likely to offer additional maternity benefits, with 18.5% of respondents working in a workplace with fewer than 5 employees receiving additional pay/leave compared to 52.4% for those in a workplace with over 500 employees.

The most likely respondents to receive additional pay/leave were those working in the professional (45.8%) or managerial (48.3%) sector, and the least likely to receive additional pay were those working in personal or community services (15.2%), sales/customer service (20%), or manual/trade (23.8%). Respondents on higher incomes were most likely to receive additional pay/leave, with respondents with an annual income of over £100K being most likely to receive

extra benefits (67.9% of respondents), compared to those with an income of less than £10K (8.7%). There was no difference in the likelihood of receiving additional maternity pay/leave between workers in the public or private sector, although those in the voluntary sector were the least likely to receive any extra benefits.

The availability of maternity leave 3 out of 4 respondents (75.1%) experienced no difficulties with their employer relating to maternity leave. However, a quarter of respondents experienced a range of difficulties with their maternity entitlements and benefits: 12.5% said their employer lacked knowledge about maternity entitlements and benefits; 5.8% were encouraged to start maternity leave earlier than they would have liked; 5.4% were encouraged to take time off or signed off on sick leave before they were ready to start maternity leave; 4.1% were encouraged to take less maternity leave; and 3.9% were put under pressure to hand in their notice (see Figure 8 overleaf for full range of difficulties).

Mothers working in smaller workplaces experienced the most difficulties with their employer relating to maternity leave, with 41% of respondents in the smallest workplace (fewer than 5 people) saying they had difficulties compared to 25.9% of those in the largest workplaces (500+ people). In smaller workplaces, the greatest problem was that the employer lacked knowledge about maternity entitlements and benefits (20.5% of those in 0-5 person workplace).

**Figure 8. Did you experience any of the following difficulties with your employer relating to your maternity leave? (Please tick as many as apply)**



Mothers on the lowest incomes were also the most vulnerable, experiencing more difficulties with their employer than those on higher incomes, with 48.3% of mothers under £10K and 42.2% of those earning £10-£15K having difficulties, compared to 24.6% for mothers earning £50-99K and 21% for those over £100K. The most common difficulties for those on low incomes were employers' lack of knowledge, being encouraged to take time off or signed off on sick leave, and being put under pressure to hand in their notice. There were no noticeable differences between employees in different sectors or occupations.

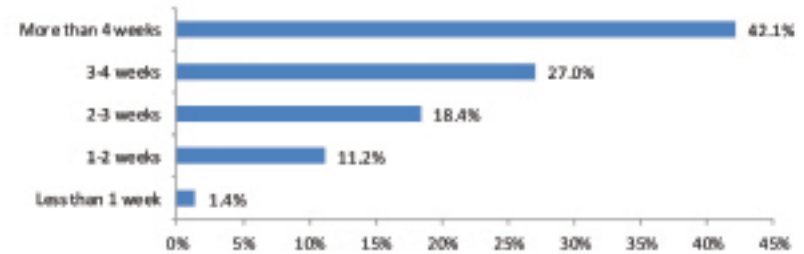
A small proportion (14 people – 1.6%) were made redundant or found that their temporary cover had replaced them while on maternity leave. As one mother described, "When I told them I was having twins they employed a full time PERMANENT man to cover me, and they made it very difficult for me to return to work 10 months later claiming they were over staffed".

### HOLIDAY ENTITLEMENT DURING MATERNITY LEAVE

While on maternity leave, employed mothers are entitled to their paid annual holidays. 61.6% of respondents used their holiday entitlement while on maternity leave. Of these, 42.1% used more than four weeks (see Figure 9). Those respondents who were least likely to use their holidays to extend their maternity leave include those who were:

- self-employed (80.5% did not use holidays);
- on lower incomes (52.2% of those on £10-£15K, compared to 32% for those earning over 100K); and
- in the education sector (68% did not use holidays during maternity leave, compared to 27.2% for those in the health sector) – several teachers noted that their maternity leave covered the school holiday period and this holiday entitlement was not received later 'in lieu'. Of the mothers who did not use their

**Figure 9. If you used holidays as part of your extended maternity leave, how many weeks did you use?**

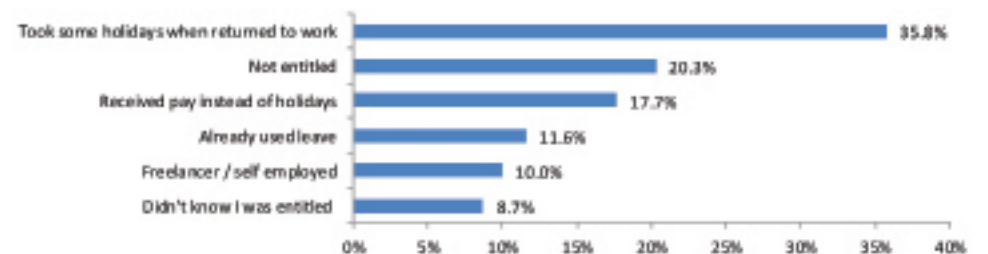


holiday entitlement, many chose to defer their annual leave or received pay instead. Others had already used their leave or were self-employed (see Figure 10). However, an issue of concern is that a small proportion (8.7%) did not know they were entitled to holiday while on maternity leave. Respondents on lower incomes were most likely to say they were not entitled or did not know they were entitled to holidays while on maternity leave, as were those working in personal/community services (who also tend to have lower incomes) or in the education sector.

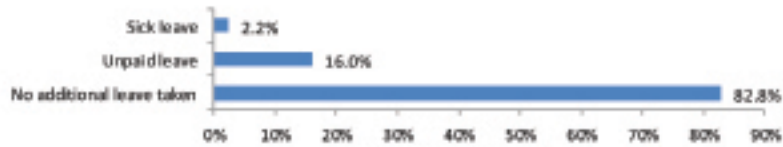
### UNPAID LEAVE DURING MATERNITY LEAVE

In addition to maternity leave and holiday entitlements, a further 16% took unpaid leave and 2.1% took sick leave during their maternity leave (see Figure 11 overleaf). Of those mothers, over two thirds (68.8%) took more than four weeks sick leave or unpaid leave, with a further 12.5% taking 2-4 weeks leave. Those respondents most likely to take unpaid leave were:

**Figure 10. If you did not use your full holiday entitlement while on maternity leave, what are the reasons for this? (please tick all that apply)**



**Figure 11. Did you take any of the following types of unpaid leave after the babies' birth? (Please tick as many as apply)**



- self-employed, with 24.4% of self-employed respondents taking unpaid leave compared to 15.3% of full-time and 15.9% of part-time employees;
- working in the manufacturing sector, with 36.7% taking unpaid leave, compared to 10.5% for those working in media/publishing;
- on lower incomes, with 23.5% of those earning £1-£10K taking unpaid leave, compared to 14.5% of those on £50-£100K; and
- in the public (17.5%) or voluntary (16.8%) sector, compared to the private sector (13.5%).

### IMPROVING THE LIFE OF MOTHERS

Mothers of multiples were asked what would have made their lives easier in the time after their babies were born – higher maternity pay paid over a longer period, higher paternity pay paid over a longer period, or improved access to good quality, affordable childcare. Respondents were only allowed to choose one option, and it is clear from the comments section below this question that many respondents would benefit from all three options! However, the largest proportion (41.9%)

said it would be most helpful to receive higher maternity pay paid over a longer period, making it easier to stay at home with their babies. As mentioned earlier in this report, mothers felt there was a strong case to be made for longer maternity pay for families of multiples due to their greater likelihood of being premature and having additional healthcare needs. In addition, mothers often have to start their maternity leave earlier due to the greater health risks of multiple pregnancies, meaning they have less time to spend with their babies when they are born. As one mother of twins said:

“Had to finish earlier due to fatigue (primary teacher), so had to go back earlier. Started maternity leave ten weeks earlier than I would have with a singleton, so lost that time with my babies as my pay ran out”

A further third (32.7%) chose improved access to good quality, affordable childcare. Childcare costs for multiples are often prohibitive, as will be seen later in the ‘Returning to Work’ section.

“RETURNING TO WORK AFTER A YEAR’S MATERNITY DIDN’T TAKE INTO ACCOUNT OUR BABIES’ CORRECTED AGE. THE AMOUNT OF WEEKS BABIES ARE PREMATURE SHOULD BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT AND ADDED TO MATERNITY LEAVE.”

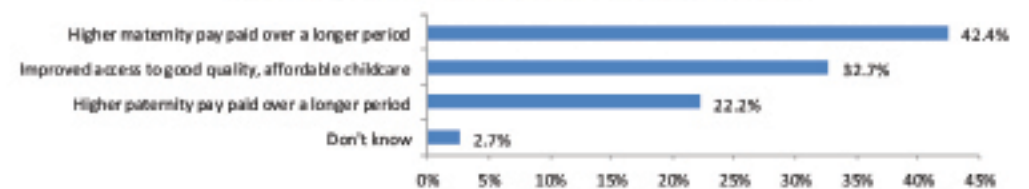
“Childcare should also be affordable – most parents of multiples are forced to give up work as childcare costs are more than earnings.”

A smaller, but still considerable, proportion (22.9%) said the most helpful solution would have been higher paternity leave paid over a longer period (see Figure 12 and Box 3 overleaf). There were no noticeable differences by occupation, sector or income. However, self-employed respondents were more likely to prefer higher paternity pay (see Box 3) than higher maternity pay or access to good quality childcare, whereas full-time and part-time employees would prefer higher maternity pay.

### BABIES IN SPECIAL CARE

Multiple births often occur ahead of schedule. Our survey found that over half (53.2%) of respondents’ babies were born prematurely and needed to spend some time in neonatal care. Of those who were born prematurely, over two-thirds of families (67.7%) spent more than a week in neonatal care (see Figure 13 overleaf). Over 1 in 5 families (20.6%) with premature babies spent more than a month.

**Figure 12. Thinking about the time after your babies were born, which of the following would have helped you most?**



### BOX 3: MAKING THE CASE FOR LONGER PATERNITY LEAVE FOR MULTIPLES

“Higher paternity leave especially important for parents of multiples so fathers can support the mothers in the first very difficult months.”

“My partner being able to take more than the allocated 2 weeks would have helped. Having a husband at home for only 2 weeks after the birth of the babies was difficult especially as I was in hospital a week after the babies were born due to complications and when I was discharged from hospital I was exhausted. (I lost 2 and a half litres of blood during surgery) and when discharged from hospital was severely anaemic still.”

“We didn’t have any family living nearby because we had both moved in order to work. Additional paternity leave would have made a massive difference, ideally double (for having twins) and extra during the period in special care - even an hour a day would have made a big difference.”

“When my husband returned to work after taking two weeks paternity and one week holiday I massively struggled

to cope with the twins and my 3 and 4 year old especially as I don’t drive. The babies had lip ties and ended up failing to thrive. A direct contributing factor was the lack of paternity leave available so I could focus on feeding the babies and sorting out their feeding problem.”

“I think if a mother has a C-section with multiples then extra paternity leave would have been so helpful, as driving and just things like lifting shopping and getting out of the bath is so painful / difficult.”

“I strongly feel two weeks paternity leave after the birth of twins is wholly inadequate. Two babies = double the time surely?! It seems logical to me. I found it so hard to be alone after two weeks. The first week was spent in the hospital so doesn’t really count!”

“Sweden [where families of multiples receive extra parental leave] seems to have a much better system than this country. Perhaps we should look at their system. Government want fathers to be more involved but this is difficult if they only have 2 weeks.”

Many mothers of premature babies voiced concern that their babies would benefit from a longer maternity leave, as they were developmentally behind their peers, had additional health issues and still required a high level of care. Several mothers made

the case that maternity leave should be “relative to the due date” and “did not take into account our babies ‘corrected age’”. Box 4 provides some examples of mothers of premature multiples’ experiences and views on maternity leave.

### BOX 4: PREMATURITY AND MULTIPLES – EXPERIENCES AND VIEWS ON MATERNITY LEAVE

“With premature twins they are constantly sick and susceptible to most illnesses; I would have preferred to stay home until they were 1 years old”.

“I didn’t have my babies home for almost 3 months after they were born as they were premature, so I feel I missed out on this time”.

“As my babies were 2 months early, their development was behind, meaning that I felt it wasn’t suitable to go back to work at 6 months as they were like 4 month adjusted age; so I had to add 2 months on to the maternity leave I WOULD’VE taken if I’d had just one full term baby.”

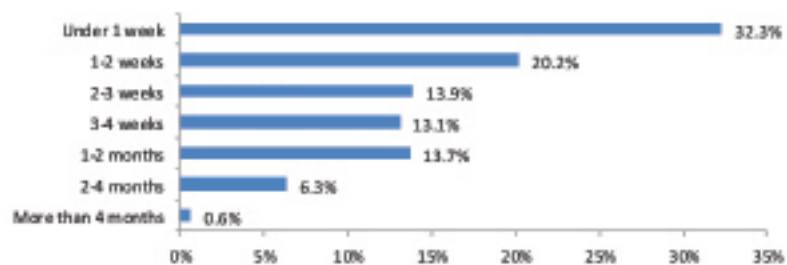
“My babies were premature and needed a lot of care, including regular physiotherapy, and I felt they needed me for health reasons but could not afford not to work.”

“Returning to work after a year’s maternity didn’t take into account our babies’ corrected age. The amount of weeks babies are premature should be taken into account and added to maternity leave.”

“I spent 2 months of my maternity leave visiting my twins in the neonatal unit. I think this time should be added on to the end of maternity leave, think it should really be treated like sick leave. I feel that I missed out those two months and would have loved to have had that time when my twins got home.”

“Employers have no understanding of babies born prematurely. Prematurity should be taken into account for maternity and paternity leave. When our babies arrived 10 weeks early, my partner was given 3 days compassionate leave and took 2 days holiday for the first week our girls were in intensive care and then had to return to work while they were still in intensive care. We had no choice and as a strong couple, we stuck together; however, I find this unacceptable. He should have been able to stay with his ill babies at least another week or two. When our babies came home, my partner took his 2 weeks paternity leave at this time. Employers need to be given awareness training re maternity/ paternity and prematurity and some legislative recommendations should be submitted.”

Figure 13. How many weeks did your babies spend in neonatal care?



## SECTION 4: RETURNING TO WORK

### EMPLOYMENT DECISIONS AFTER BIRTH

Over half of respondents (54.5%) returned to work after their babies' birth, although a further 29% intended to (see Figure 14). Mothers of multiples most likely to return to work tend to have:

- higher incomes, with 70.8% of mothers earning more than 100K returning to work compared with 48.3% for those earning less than 10K;

- partners with lower incomes, with 69.2% of mothers with partners earning less than 10K returning to work compared with 47.1% of those with partners earning over 100K;

- larger workplaces, with 58.2% of mothers in workplaces with 500+ people returning to work, compared to 49.1% of those in workplaces with fewer than 5 people; and

- are self-employed, with 57.5% returning to work, compared to 56% for full-time employees and 48.1% for part-time employees;

Figure 14. Did you return to work after your babies' birth?

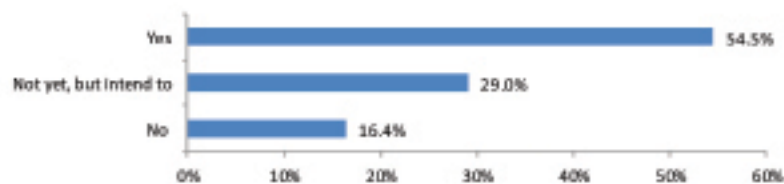
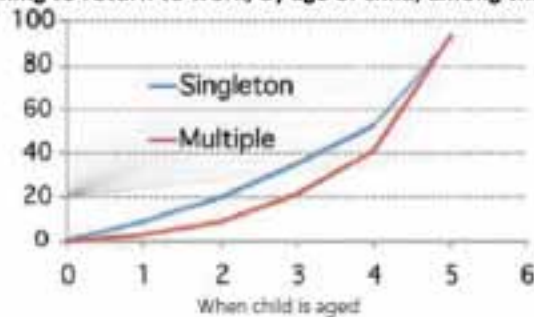


Figure 15. When planning to return to work, by age of child, among those planning to return<sup>7</sup>

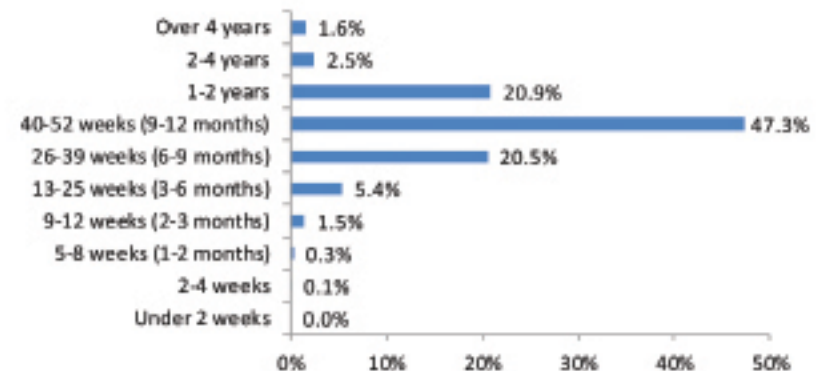


The national Maternity Rights Survey<sup>4</sup> series has found that 3 out of 4 mothers return to work between 12 and 18 months after birth. As several of Tamba's respondents were still on maternity leave, it is hard to compare the rate of return. However, there is evidence from Tamba's previous analysis of the Millennium Cohort Study data,<sup>5</sup> conducted by Professor Stephen McKay at the University of Birmingham<sup>6</sup> that mothers of multiples had a slower rate (or later rate) of returning to work than mothers of singletons (see Figure 15).

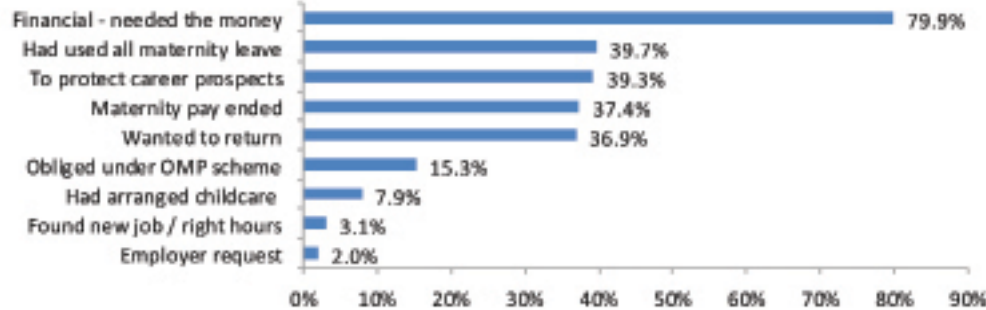
Of those mothers of multiples who returned to work (or intend to return), almost half (47.3%) took their full maternity leave of 9-12 months (see Figure 16). A small proportion (7.3%) returned within six months of their babies born – typically those who were self-employed and/or at managerial/professional level. 1 in 4 mothers of multiples returned to work over a year after their babies were born.

“AT THE VERY LEAST, ENTITLEMENT SHOULD BE GRANTED PER BABY. PARENTS OF MULTIPLES ARE CURRENTLY PENALISED FOR HAVING MULTIPLES. BY HAVING TWINS I LOSE A YEAR OF ENTITLED TIME THAT I WOULD'VE HAD IF THE TWO BABIES HAD BEEN BORN AT DIFFERENT TIMES”

Figure 16. How many months after your babies were born did you return (or do you intend to return) to work?



**Figure 17. What were your reasons for returning to work at the time you did? (please tick as many replies as applies)**



### REASONS FOR RETURNING TO WORK

Mothers gave a variety of reasons for returning to work (see Figure 17), which did not noticeably vary according to income or employment profile, including:

- Financial reasons: 79.9% said they needed the money;
- Maternity pay/leave: 39.7% had used all their maternity leave, 37.4% said their maternity pay had ended, and 15.3% were obliged to return under the Occupational Maternity Pay (OMP) scheme;

- Job tenure: 39.3% said they needed to return to work to protect their career prospects; and

- Desire to return to work: just over a third (36.9%) said they wanted to return to work.

### REASONS FOR NOT RETURNING TO WORK

There are a range of reasons that often contribute to the decision not to return to work (see Figure 18). Of those mothers who did not return to work, the most frequently cited reason for not returning was the cost of childcare for multiples

**Figure 18. What were your reasons for not returning to work? (Please tick as many as applies)**



(68.8%), followed by a desire to care for their children (48.1%) and the lack of suitable hours (33.1%). Although some nurseries and childminders offer discounts of around 5-10% for multiples, this tends to make little impact on the overall childcare costs. Many mothers

said they calculated that they would have little or no income after childcare costs, with several saying they would lose money (see Box 5). It is therefore of little surprise that those mothers of multiples on the lowest incomes are the least likely to return to work.

### BOX 5: PROHIBITIVE COSTS OF CHILDCARE FOR MULTIPLES – “WORKING FOR NOTHING”

“I was very sad that I would lose money if I returned to work because of the double cost of childcare. I desperately wanted to go back at least a couple of days”.

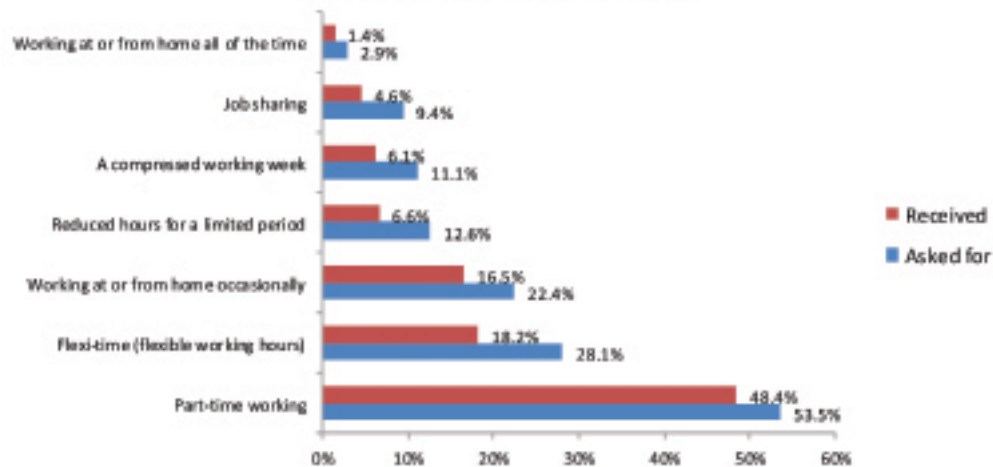
“If I had two babies nine months apart I would have been entitled to twice the time. I see no difference. I have to go back or I owe my employer £1000 for enhanced maternity pay. My total salary is also total childcare cost for both babies. It’s a nonsensical situation wherein I have no choice.”

“I am returning to what is essentially a well-paid job but my daily rate of earnings will be less than the cost of putting my 2 boys and my singleton pre-schooler into nursery for the day - it is gutting to be working for NOTHING whatsoever!”

“I can earn enough to pay childcare but it would take so much of my salary it would be pointless working.”

“I cannot afford to return to work but I have to. I’ve done everything the UK Government wanted me to do: gone to university, worked extremely hard to get to a point in my career where I could afford to have children. Child number 2 was twins so I now have 3 children - a 4 year old and 1 year old twins. I have a professional job in a senior role in local government but my daily rate of pay is less than my daily childcare costs for 3 children (even paying for the twins alone leaves me only with enough for train fare for the day). If I leave my job I will never be able to return to a similar position in the workplace. I have no family to help with childcare, both of my parents are still working and my husband’s family live abroad. We are not eligible for tax credits or anything like that. We are both professional people who work hard to pay the mortgage and have aspirations for our children but life is very stressful and is about to get tougher as I return to the workplace in 2 weeks’ time. I’m devastated (and crying as I type this).”

**Figure 19: When you returned to work, did you ask for and/or receive the following types of flexible working?**



## FLEXIBLE WORKING

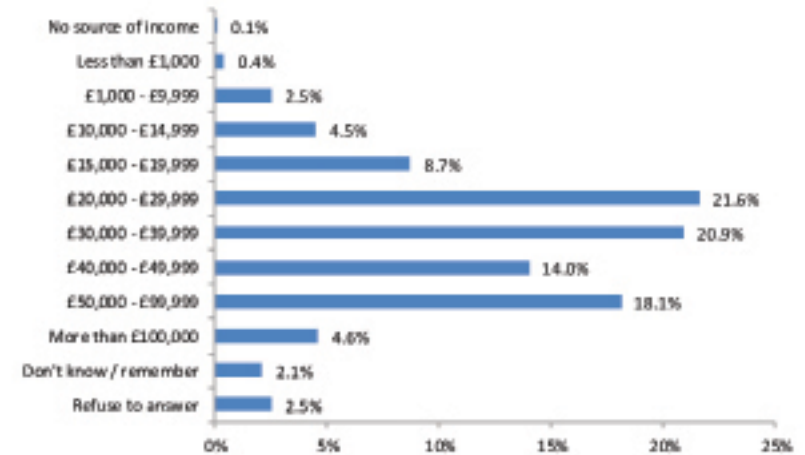
Many mothers who return to work after having babies choose to adapt their working pattern and request flexible working. From April 2003, the Employment Act introduced the right for parents of young and disabled children to apply to work flexibly, including changed hours, times and place of work. These requests must be taken seriously by the employer. Over 8 out of 10 (80.1%) respondents who returned to work, requested some form of flexible working. As Figure 19 shows, mothers of multiples have requested several types of flexible working. The most frequent request was for part-time working, with just over half of mothers (53.5%) requesting it and only a small proportion (5.1%) having their request to work part-time refused. Respondents also frequently requested a change in times to work flexible hours

(flexi-time); however this request was more likely to be rejected with 28.1% requesting to work flexi-time, but only 18.2% receiving it.

Respondents most likely to have their request for flexible working accepted include professionals, those working in the voluntary sector, in a smaller workplace with fewer people, and those on lower (below 14K) or higher (above £100K) incomes. However, 1 in 5 (21.8%) of those who applied for flexible working did not have their request approved:

“My employer was not understanding about wanting to work part time and I had to submit a written appeal and attend a hearing to get my hours and I have only been granted them on a trial basis.”

**Figure 20: Partners' approximate total income at the time of the babies' birth**



## SECTION 5: PATERNITY LEAVE

### FATHERS' EMPLOYMENT PROFILE

Almost all the respondents (98.6%) had a partner at the time of the babies' birth. Key characteristics of partners' employment at the babies' birth include:

- **Employment status:** Most partners (81%) were employed full time, 13.7% were self-employed, 2% were employed part-time, and 3.3% were neither employed nor self-employed.
- **Occupational status:** Just under half (46.3%) of partners' occupations were classified as professional, 20.5% as manual/trade, 18.3% as managerial, 6.7% as sales/customer service, 4.7% as clerical/administrative, and 3.6% as personal/community services.

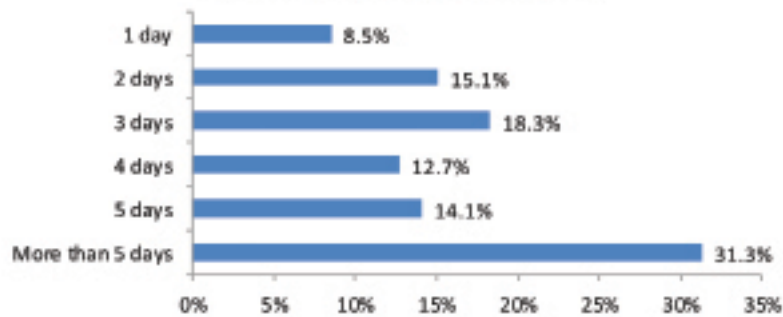
- **Employment sector:** The most frequent sectors for partners to work include construction, property and engineering (15.9%), technology (15%), and banking/finance (11.8%).

- **Workplace size:** Almost a third (30.9%) of partners workplace has more than 500 employees, 24.4% have 100-499 people, 17% have 25-99 people, 15.5% have 5-24 people, and 12.2% have less than 5 people.

- **Sector:** The majority (69.9%) of partners work in the private sector, 29.6% in the public sector, and only a very small proportion (0.6%) in the voluntary sector.

- **Income:** Figure 20 above shows partners' approximate income at the time of the babies' birth. Over half (57.6%) of all partners had a total income of £30,000 or over – above the average annual income of £28,700 for full-time male

**Figure 21. If your partner used unpaid days to accompany you to antenatal appointments / scans, how many days did your partner use?**



workers.<sup>8</sup> However, this data should be treated with caution as it includes both full-time and part-time employees and covers a range of years and therefore does not capture wage inflation.

### TIME OFF FOR ANTENATAL APPOINTMENTS

Partners do not currently have a legal right to paid time off work to accompany their pregnant partner to antenatal appointments. However, the government encourages all employers to allow expectant fathers and partners to attend antenatal appointments without loss of pay, as a matter of good practice.<sup>9</sup>

Multiple pregnancies are generally treated as 'high risk' and tend to be medically managed to a greater extent than singleton pregnancies with more antenatal appointments during the course of the pregnancy.

"My husband had to take holidays and unpaid leave to help me with antenatal appointments. Obviously with it being

a multiple pregnancy there were lots of antenatal appointments and extra growth scans when one of my twins was showing restricted growth. Also, the fact I was unable to drive after a certain time and walk the distance from the hospital car park to the maternity unit so I needed help."

The number and frequency of antenatal appointments varies according to hospital procedure, but follow clinical guidelines for multiple pregnancy produced by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE). Several respondents said they needed weekly or fortnightly scans and it is not unusual for partners to take 15-20 days unpaid leave or holiday to accompany expectant mothers of multiples to antenatal appointments or scans. As mentioned above, 58.8% of partners took additional time off during pregnancy to attend antenatal appointments or scans. Of these, a third of partners (31.3%) took more than five days of unpaid leave (see Figure 21).

### UPTAKE OF PATERNITY LEAVE

Employed fathers are entitled to take 1 or 2 weeks of Ordinary Paternity Leave within 56 days of their babies' arrival and up to 26 weeks Additional Paternity Leave (if the children's mother has returned to work). Approximately 3 out of 4 fathers of multiples (73.1%) took paid paternity leave. Of these, 17.7% took less than one week and over three-quarters (77.6%) took two weeks (see Figure 22). Only a small proportion (4.7%) took more than two weeks' paid paternity leave.

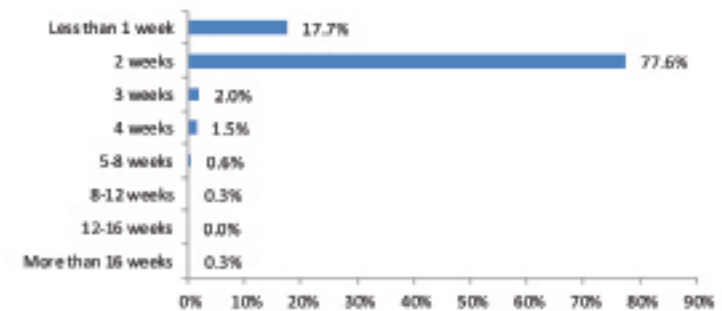
The majority (67.2%) of employers made no special consideration for partners' circumstances. However, as shown in Figure 23, 17.2% of employees received additional leave, 16.4% were allowed

to work flexibly, and 2.1% received additional pay.

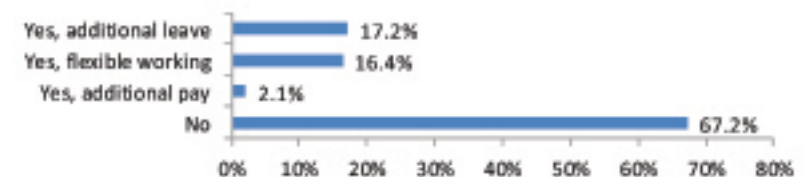
Partners most likely to receive additional leave, pay or flexible working from their employers include:

- Fathers of triplets: 63.6% received special consideration, compared to 34.3% of fathers of twins;
- Partners on high incomes: 37.2% of partners earning more than £100K received special consideration, compared to 15.8% of fathers earning less than £10K;
- Partners doing professional (38.7%) and managerial (42.5%) work, compared to manual/trade (19.8%); and

**Figure 22: How many weeks did your partner receive paid paternity leave?**

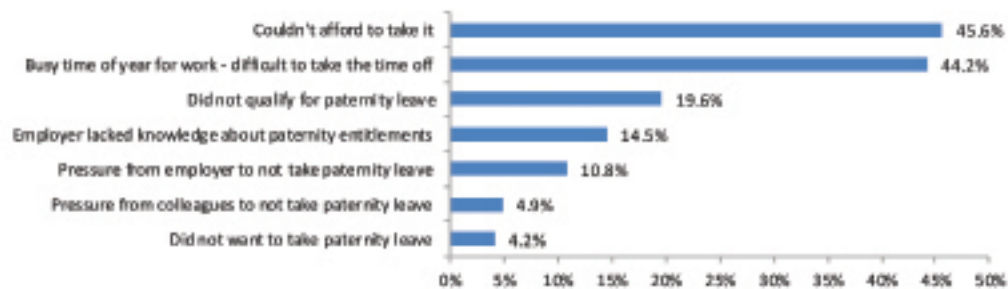


**Figure 23. Did your partner's employer make any special consideration for their circumstances?**





**Figure 24. Did your partner have any of the following difficulties relating to paternity leave? (please tick as many as applies)**



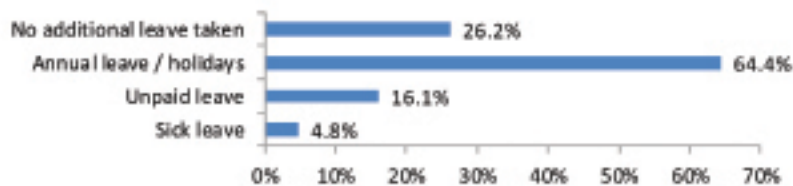
● Partners in larger workplaces, with 41% of those working with 500+ people receiving special consideration, compared to 24.7% of those working with less than 5 people.

There was little difference between those working in the public/private sector, although partners in the voluntary sector were the least likely to receive special consideration.

### DIFFICULTIES TAKING PATERNITY LEAVE

1 in 10 partners (11.5%) took less paternity leave than entitled. Partners who took the least paternity leave tended to work in the private sector, in smaller workplaces, in manufacturing/construction sectors and be on lower incomes. Self-employed partners were the least likely to take time off work after the babies were born. In the UK, only employees with employment contracts are entitled to statutory paternity pay;

**Figure 25: Did your partner take any of the following types of leave during your pregnancy or after the babies' birth? (Please tick as many as apply)**



there is no equivalent for self-employed fathers to claim.<sup>10</sup> As one respondent noted, although self-employed respondents are able to be more flexible, they lose money or business if they take too much time off: "He is self-employed, so easier on flexibility, but if he didn't work he didn't get paid" and "he just had to juggle things and keep working". "He works as a freelancer and for himself. He wouldn't ask for time off from a contract as they could just replace him and not use him again."

In total, 1 in 2 (50.8%) respondents said their partners experienced difficulties relating to paternity leave. Although many employers were sympathetic (particularly those who had multiples themselves), several fathers encountered a lack of understanding about the extra family demands of multiples. Box 6 provides some examples of the difficulties partners had accessing their paternity entitlements. Of those who experienced difficulties, financial reasons were the most frequently cited difficulty, with 45.6% of families saying their partner could not afford to take paternal leave.

### BOX 6: DIFFICULTIES WITH PATERNITY ENTITLEMENTS AND BENEFITS

"Although he was able to take his entitlement his employer was discouraging in their attitude towards additional leave. He was made to feel uncomfortable about any extra time he took off, which amounted to one afternoon."

"Not enough - had to work while babies in hospital so he could be on leave when they first came home."

"Babies were in neonatal so it would have been a big wage drop with no benefit."

"Company unfairly dismissed him a month before birth. Went to tribunal but had to restart contract so had to use 1 week holiday and 1 week unpaid tribunal."

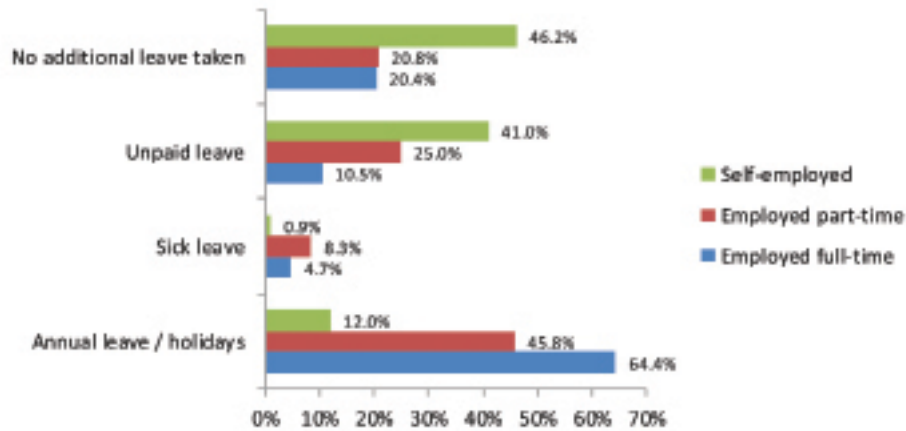
"We wanted to delay his leave until the babies came home from special care but they were not flexible".

"Employer lacked empathy when additional time requested and refused."

"Company tried to get him to lose paternity leave due to their incorrect interpretation of policy."

"Couldn't afford to take paternity leave, but took it because we had twins. Used a credit card to exist."

Figure 26: Uptake of additional leave, by partners' employment status



Other difficulties included: taking time off work during a busy time of year for work (44.2%); qualifying for paternity leave (19.6%), employer's lack of knowledge about paternity rights (14.5%), and pressure from employer (10.8%) or colleagues (4.9%). A small proportion (4.2%) did not want to take paternity leave.

Partners on lower incomes were the least likely to take additional leave, with 56.5% of partners earning less than £10K taking additional leave compared to

18.6% of those earning more than £100K. Self-employed partners were more likely than their employed counterparts to take unpaid leave (41%) or no additional leave (46%), and the least likely to take sick leave (0.9%) or annual leave/holidays (11%), as shown in Figure 26.

Only a small proportion (7.9%) took more than four weeks of additional leave. As shown in Figure 27, 21.5% took less than a week, 44.1% took 1-2 weeks additional leave and 26.5% took 2-4 weeks.

Figure 27. How many days of other leave did your partner take during your pregnancy and after the babies' birth?

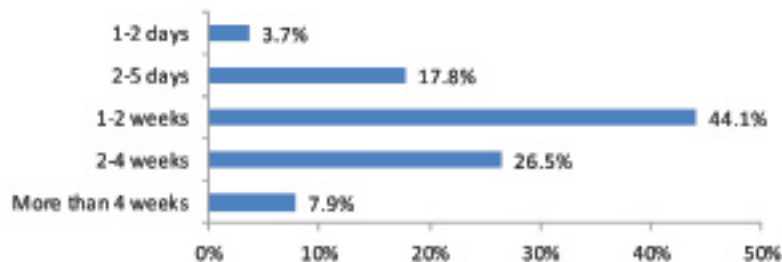
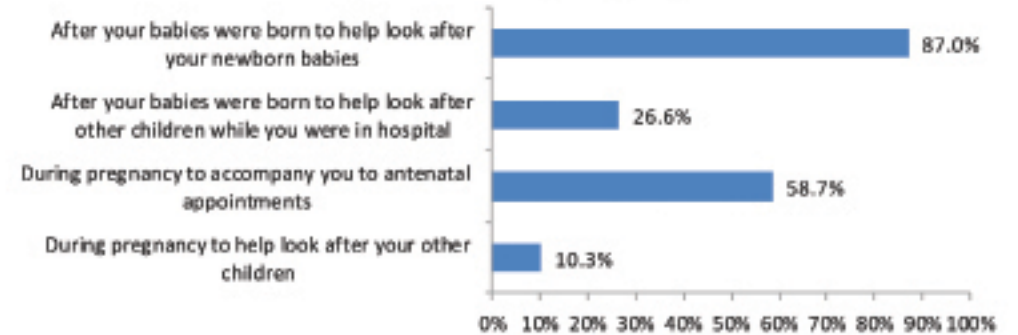


Figure 28. Did your partner use holidays or unpaid leave to help with any of the following? (Please tick as many as applies)



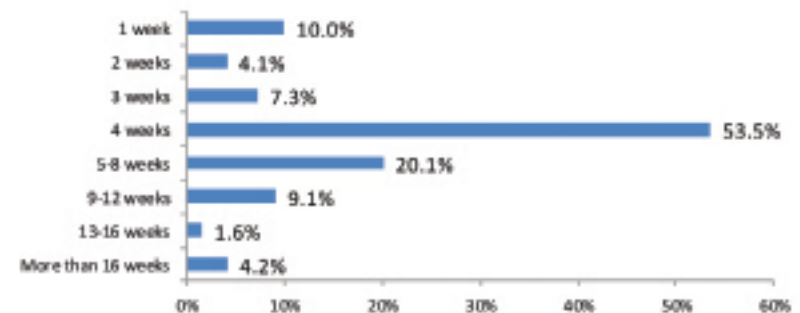
The main reasons for partners taking additional leave are to help out after the babies are born (87%), to accompany the mother for pregnancy scans (58.7%), to look after other children (26.6%) while in hospital and while pregnant (10.3%), as shown in Figure 28.

### NEED FOR EXTRA PATERNITY LEAVE

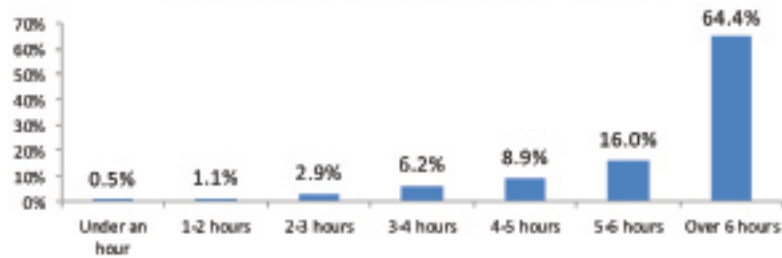
9 out of 10 mothers (92.7%) would have liked their partner to have had additional

paternity leave to help them care for the babies when they were young. A similar proportion (87.9%) thought their partners did not have enough (paid and unpaid) paternity leave. When asked how many weeks paternity leave would have been helpful, over half of parents of multiples (53.5%) would like 4 weeks paternity leave – double the current limit of two weeks (see Figure 29).

Figure 29: How many weeks paternity leave would you have liked in total?



**Figure 30. In the first month, on average how many hours did you spend during a 24-hour period feeding your babies?**

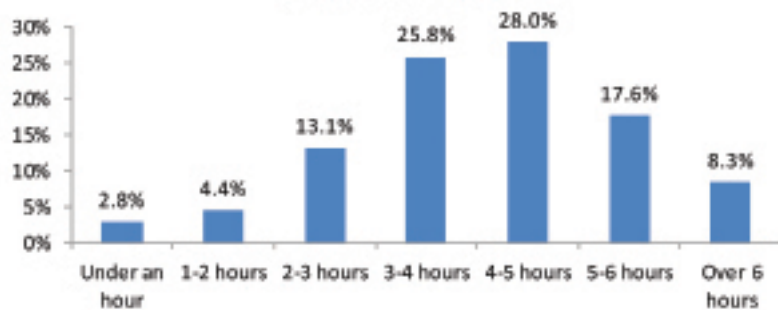


### TIME DEMANDS DURING FIRST MONTH

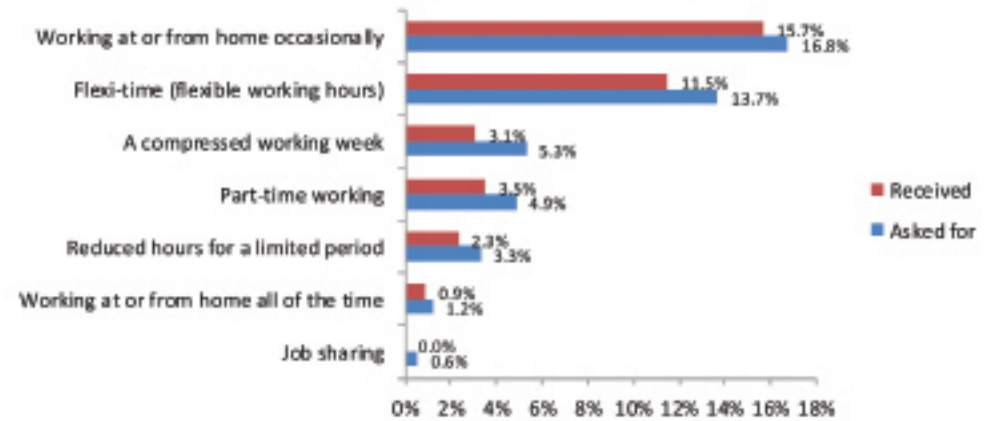
The first month of looking after newborn multiples is very time-intensive. As can be seen from Figure 30, 64.4% spend more than 6 hours feeding their babies in the first month. Other baby-related chores that take over an hour a day include changing babies' nappies and clothing, washing and cleaning babies, and soothing the babies' crying, not to mention shopping, cleaning the house, and looking after other children.

Although the average newborn sleeps for 16-20 hours a day, this is not all at once and not all at night! For multiples, the problem is compounded during the first month, because when one baby is asleep the other might be awake. This survey found that fewer than 1 in 10 (8.3%) new mothers of multiples get 6 or more hours sleep a night during the first month (see Figure 31). New mothers valued having a partner who did not have to work the next day to share the night-time routine of caring for multiples with – another reason why fathers of multiples should have longer paternity leave.

**Figure 31. In the first month, on average how many hours did you spend sleeping during a 24-hour period?**



**Figure 32. During the first year after your babies were born, did your partner ask for any of the following types of flexible working?**



### FLEXIBLE WORKING FOR PARTNERS

As with mothers, partners with a child under six years old have the right to request flexible work and to have their request taken seriously by their employer. Just over a third (34.2%) of partners requested flexible working during the first year after the babies were born (see Figure 32). Although most partners who asked to work flexibly were allowed, several respondents said the request was declined:

“He asked for compressed hours and general support and understanding in the days after the birth. He was refused everything. He just took sick leave and annual leave.”

Others did not ask because they knew the request would be declined because of the nature of the job (for example, partners who were teachers or working for the

RAF). However, several partners described a workplace culture whereby paternity leave was frowned upon: “Didn’t feel he could ask, felt it would impact his career prospects”. Self-employed partners were the most likely to work flexibly during the first year, although several respondents described how flexible working came at a cost:

“As a self-employed person, he had to reduce his working hours to help me look after the babies - therefore earning practically zero after a few weeks. This work has been very hard to get back.”

## SECTION 6: COPING WITH THE COSTS OF PARENTAL LEAVE

Families with multiple births are more likely to report a drop in their income level following the birth of their children, according to research conducted by the University of Birmingham.<sup>11</sup>

Using Government datasets on poverty and income, the research found that families of twins and triplets are twice as likely as families of singletons to report 'quite difficult' financial stress. The study also found that twins and triplets experienced higher levels of material deprivation, and their families were more likely to separate or divorce.

The 2013 Tamba Parental Leave survey also found high levels of financial stress and a widespread belief that government policies on parental leave, childcare and child benefits were not multiple-friendly:

"There just seems to be a fundamental misunderstanding of how much two babies at the same time costs! I think people assume we get a 2 for 1 deal on everything or something!"

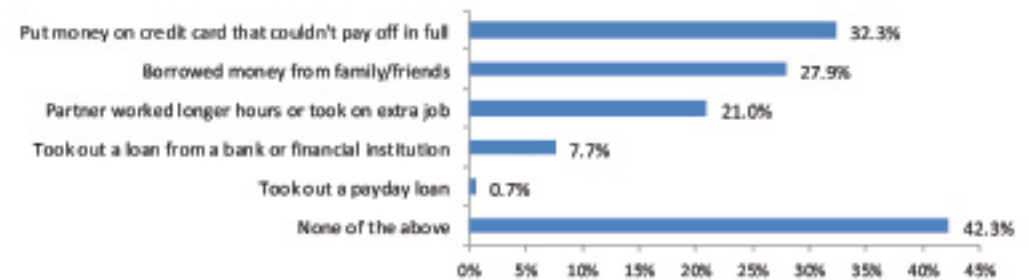
"I feel we are penalized for having 2 children at one time. There is no leeway in childcare vouchers for example (why not let us buy double the amount as our childcare costs will be double at the same time for a number of years?). The only thing we gained on was 2 ultrasound antenatal scan pictures for the price of one - everything else has & will cost us double."

A particularly vulnerable group are lone parents of multiples. As one mother described, "My husband left me when my babies were seven months old- there is no extra support for single mothers of twins. I had been back at work just two weeks when he left." The majority of respondents (61.4%) did not have enough maternity and paternity pay to cover the

Figure 33. Did you use any savings to 'get by' during your maternity leave?



Figure 34. In order to 'get by' during your babies' first year, did you do any of the following? (Please tick as many as apply)



cost of their (and their partner's) leave. "My husband and I had planned financially and logistically for 2 children, we felt we were being responsible. We now have 3 children, due to our second pregnancy being a multiple birth, which is a struggle financially and logistically, yet the government is currently adding to our financial stress by reducing our child benefit, and my work has terminated the childcare voucher scheme. We are being hit from all angles, and everything we had planned for, and the contingency we had built in, has been blown out of the water by the additional member of our family."

Almost 3 out of 4 families (72.6%) used savings to 'get by', with 31.3% using lots of their savings and 14% using all their savings (see Figure 33). Only a small proportion (13.3%) did not need to use their savings to "get by" during their maternity leave. A further small proportion (14.1%) did not have any savings.

Over half (57.7%) of families used a variety of other financial strategies to 'get by'

during the babies' first year, including putting money on their credit card that they could not pay off in full at the end of the month (32.3%), borrowing money from family/friends (27.9%), working longer hours or taking on an additional source of income (21%), and taking out a loan from a bank or financial institution (7.7%), as shown in Figure 34.

Other strategies used to cope with the costs of multiples during the first year included: re-mortgaging the home or taking a mortgage holiday; selling a car or other possessions; relying on friends and families for hand-me-downs or to buy things for the babies; using redundancy payments; using overdrafts; reducing bills and other outgoings; working overtime during pregnancy; and moving to live with grandparents and being 'gifted' money. Even with these coping strategies, a few respondents said they "ended up in financial trouble" and in one situation having to declare themselves bankrupt.

## BOX 7: COUNTING THE COST OF MULTIPLES ON FAMILIES' LIVES

"My husband had to give up work to look after the twins as mine was the major salary and we could not afford childcare. Led to us separating though as he found it hard."

"The cost of multiples can be crippling. We had to move and change car. Now we are in a situation where the cost of working barely pays for childcare and quite frankly it sucks. We love our children dearly and we would also like to work to pay for their upbringing but basically we can only afford for me to work one day a week. We are scraping the pennies at the end of the month to pay for necessities. Twins and multiples should be eligible for help with childcare, as well as increased parental leave."

"As we had a 3 year old in nursery once I had returned to work, even with the government covering 15 hours a week for my daughter our childcare costs for three children four days a week (grandparents covered one day) was in excess of £3k a month. Our house was too small and we were getting heavily into debt, so we had to sell our house when the market was poor to release the equity to pay for childcare. We are now

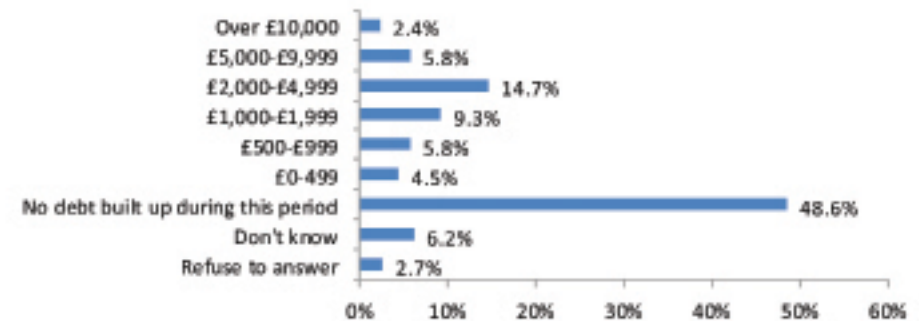
renting and probably without a lottery win we will not be able to afford to buy a house again for a very long time."

"It's not a choice to have twins. If I had two children one after the other I'd have gone back to work and I'd have had another years maternity pay but having them together means I have lost my job and our income has dropped significantly. Shouldn't the government have a responsibility to ensure everyone has the same opportunities regardless of whether they have had one child or twins or triplets or more?"

"If my voice could be heard, I have to say that it's people who are on a low wage but can't go back to work who are struggling as childcare costs are so, so expensive, I have no one to look after my kids so I can work, but I really need to. I'm trapped in a benefits system with nowhere to turn to and little choice. I can't work nights as I'm exhausted. There are parents out there really keen to go back to work but just because they have twins, they are penalised. Affordable childcare is the way to go before we lose our heads."

Over half of respondents (51.4%) built up debt during the time they were on parental leave. As shown in Figure 35, almost a quarter (22.9%) of respondents built up more than £2,000 debt, with a small proportion (2.4%) accumulating over £10,000 debt.

**Figure 35. How much (if any) debt did you build up or borrow during the time you (and your partner) were on parental leave?**



## ENDNOTES

**1** Women who do not have this right include: share fisherwomen; women who are normally employed abroad (unless they have a work connection with the UK); self-employed women; policewomen and women servicing in the armed forces. See Citizens Advice Bureau website.

**2** To qualify for SMP, you must: have worked for your employer for at least 26 weeks up to the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth; earn on average at least £107 a week; give the correct notice; give proof you're pregnant.

**3** Worked less than 26 weeks in the last 66 weeks (either for themselves or an employer) or had less than 13 weeks where they paid Class 2 NI contributions or held a certificate of small earnings exemption.

**4** Chanfreau et al. (2010)

**5** The Millennium Cohort Study follows a group of 18,500 children born in 2000/01, with interviews when the children are aged 9 months, three years, five years, and continuing.

**6** McKay (2010)

**7** Source: McKay (2010).

**8** Data from the Office of National Statistics (2012). <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-20442666>

**9** Maternity Action Information Sheet (2013) <http://www.maternityaction.org.uk/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/fathersandpartners.pdf>

**10** Dad Info: <http://www.dad.info/work/paternity-leave/what-if-i-m-self-employed>

**11** McKay (2010).

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