

# Behavioural evidence on what works to support men to share the care

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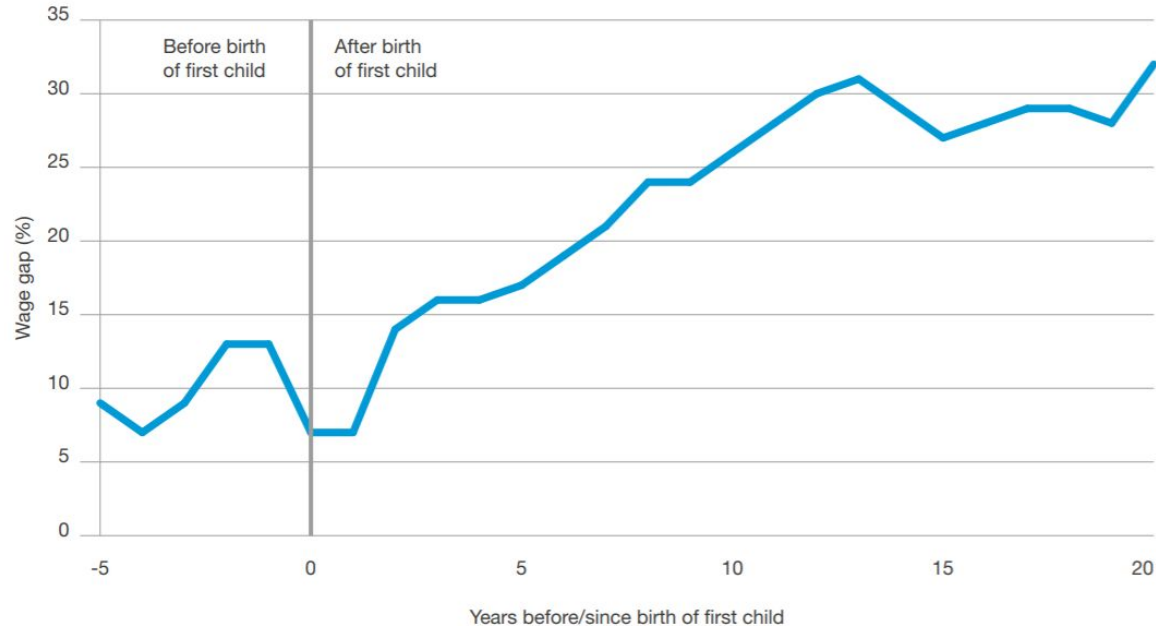
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# Parental leave, part-time working, and gendered divisions of care are a primary driver of the gender pay gap

Gender wage gap by time to/since birth of first child



Source: Costa Dias et al. (2018) analysis of BHPS 1991–2008 and Understanding Society 2009–15.

# Even when policies encourage more equal care - behavioural barriers can prevent this

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- In Santander UK, eligible secondary carers are entitled to take four weeks of paid paternity leave, and up to 16 weeks of paid Shared Parental Leave\*.
- However, **53.8% men take less than four weeks of leave** (and 23.1% of men take exactly 4 weeks of leave)\*\*.
- This suggests that **men may limit the amount of leave they take - even when they can financially afford to take the leave.**
- Similarly, Santander encourages flexible working among staff - but this is not taken up by all.

\* in addition to the legal entitlement to share up to 50 weeks of Shared Parental Leave

\*\* based on period Mar - Sept '19

# **We hypothesised that ‘pluralistic ignorance’ might be one factor at play**

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**A situation where most people hold the same opinion, while mistakenly believing the majority holds a different opinion**

- Men may think that their peers do not support dads taking long parental leave.
- This might mean they take shorter leave, even if they would prefer to take more.
- Pluralistic ignorance often occurs when norms are evolving rapidly

Schroeder, C. M., and Prentice, D. A. (1998). Exposing pluralistic ignorance to reduce alcohol use among college students. *J. Appl. Soc. Psychol.* 28, 2150–2180. doi: 10.1111/j.1559-1816.1998.tb01365.x

# First we had to find out what men thought....and what they thought other men believed

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We conducted an online **baseline survey**. This tested:

- Participants' **personal opinions** about men who take long leave and work flexibly
- Participants' **perceptions about their colleagues' beliefs** about men who take long leave and work flexibly
- Participants' knowledge of Santander policies
- Demographic data

**Sample:** 1,045 men at Santander UK

**Response rate:** 46%

**Timing:** Jan-Feb 2020

## What did this look like in practice?

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We asked a series of questions about men's personal opinions, and then later in the survey asked them to respond to the same questions, but from the perception of what they thought other male colleagues would answer.

**How many weeks of parental leave would you encourage a male colleague to take?**

**How many weeks of parental leave would men in your workplace encourage a male colleague to take?**

Response options were limited to categorical options e.g. 'up to 2 weeks', '2-4 weeks', '4-8 weeks', '8-16 weeks' and 'more than 16 weeks'

# Results from the survey showed pluralistic ignorance occurred for both parental leave and flexible working

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## Parental leave

On average, participants would encourage men to take **8** weeks of leave, but thought that others would encourage only **6** weeks.

## Flexible working

On average, participants thought that **65%** of their colleagues would encourage other male colleague to work flexibly to balance their work and non-work responsibilities, while in reality **99%** would do so.

## Little evidence of negative stereotypes

# **We set out to test whether providing feedback on men's actual beliefs would change behavioural norms**

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We conducted a second online survey - this time a **Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT)**

We randomised participants into a treatment and control version of the survey

Participants in the 'treatment' condition received the following feedback...

**Sample:** 2,330 men at Santander UK

**Response rate:** 50.6%

**Timing:** June-July 2020



## Family Leave - What some Santander colleagues have already told us.

We have already asked some male colleagues in Santander their views on family leave. Their responses revealed that:

The majority of male respondents would encourage their male colleagues to take 5 or more weeks of family leave.

We are now interested in your views.

## Flexible Working - What some Santander colleagues have already told us.

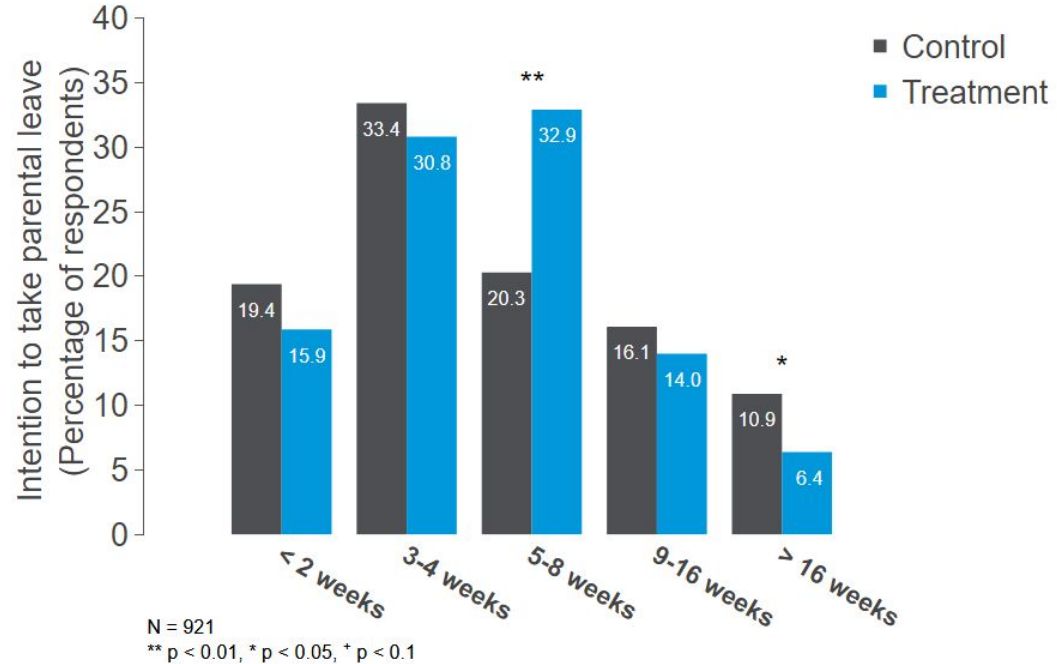
We have already asked some male colleagues in Santander their views on flexible working. Their responses revealed that:

Almost 100% of male respondents would encourage their male colleagues to work flexibly in order to balance their work and non-work responsibilities.

We are now interested in your views.

# Men who received feedback were significantly more likely to plan to take between 5-8 weeks of parental leave

- We **significantly increased the number of men intending to take between 5-8 weeks** of leave by 12.6pp (increase of 62% in comparison to control).
- At the same time we unintentionally **significantly decreased the number of men intending to take more than 16 weeks** by 4.5pp (decrease of 59% in comparison to control).

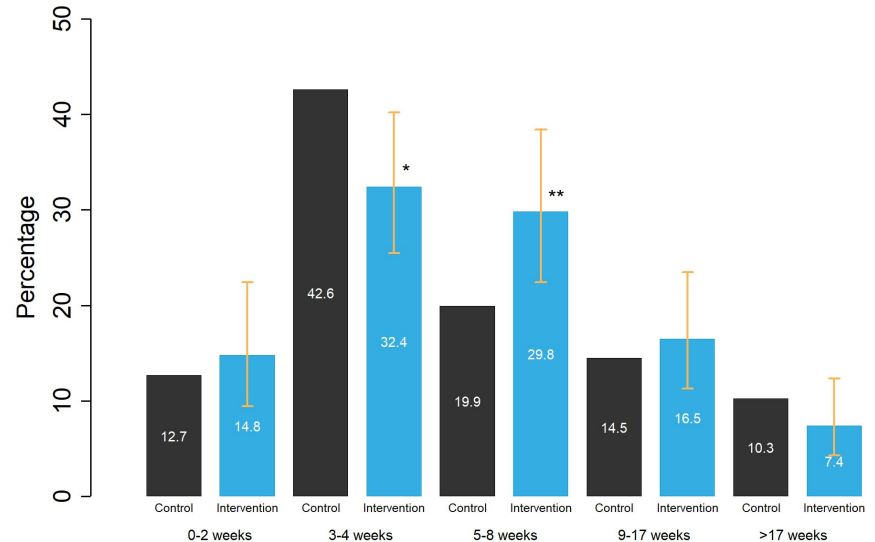


# We replicated the trial with another bank - rephrasing the feedback - and managed to avoid reducing leave at 17+ weeks

We **significantly increased the number of men intending to take between 5-8 weeks** of leave by 9.9pp (increase of 49.7% in comparison to control).

## Feedback:

*“We invited 1,100 men at [this bank] in the UK to tell us their thoughts on men taking parental leave. Of the respondents: 7 in 10 managers told us that they would be supportive of men they manage taking at least 6 weeks’ parental leave. Of those managers, 74% were supportive of men they manage taking at least 12 weeks parental leave.”*



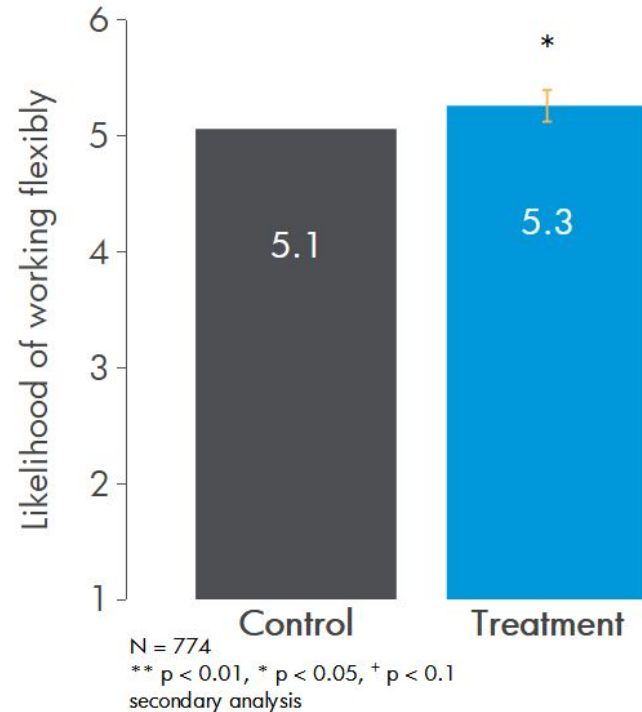
N=649

Exploratory analysis

\*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05, + p<0.1

# At Santander UK, men who received feedback were significantly more likely to plan to work flexibly in the future


The likelihood that participants would work flexibly in the future significantly increased by 4%.



# Key take aways

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- Even when the right structural incentives are in place - behaviours can prevent men from sharing the care
- Social norms are very influential
- But this can be particularly dangerous if we misinterpret group norms
- Providing feedback on actual beliefs can correct *pluralistic ignorance*:
  - it encourages men to plan to work flexibly and take longer parental leave in the future
  - it increases men's support for other men to do the same
  - and it reduces the gap between actual and perceived norms
- If you're looking to this, make sure to:
  - measure existing attitudes
  - share feedback through different channels
  - avoid anchoring men to take less leave by combining info on norms with info on policy entitlements



**The majority of male staff at your organisation would encourage their male colleagues to take 5+ weeks of family leave**

# Helpful resources from the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT)

[Blog](#)

[Detailed report](#)

[Infographic](#)

[Animation video](#)

Questions? Get in touch:

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## What works to improve gender equality in the workplace?: Sharing parental care



Government Equalities Office

### What is the problem?

A key driver of the gender pay gap and gender inequality is that care for children is disproportionately carried out by women.

Mothers and fathers can find themselves falling into traditional gender roles even if they intended to have a more equal balance.<sup>1</sup>

30% of mothers with a child aged 14 or younger reduce their working hours, compared to just 5% of fathers.<sup>2</sup>

Women carry out 26 hours of cooking, caring for children and adults and housework whereas men do 16 hours on average.<sup>3</sup>

### What is the Solution?

#### Inform and simplify

Let men know that they are legally entitled to take up Shared Parental Leave. Make information about leave policies simple and easy to access.

#### Encourage conversations

Giving new parents tools to help them discuss and divide household tasks may help them share childcare and housework in a way they're both happy with.

#### Share true social norms

Many men mistakenly believe that their colleagues disapprove of them taking parental leave. Highlighting high levels of support can increase the amount of parental leave men intend to take in future by 50-62%.

<sup>1</sup>OECD Research to work, parental decision making, Research report, 2016, <https://www.oecd.org/emp/parental-decision-making-research-report/>

<sup>2</sup>OECD Research to work, parental decision making, Research report, 2016, <https://www.oecd.org/emp/parental-decision-making-research-report/>

<sup>3</sup>OECD Research to work, parental decision making, Research report, 2016, <https://www.oecd.org/emp/parental-decision-making-research-report/>

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