

Article

Coronavirus and employment for parents in the UK: October to December 2019

An analysis of working parents with dependent children under 16, and the industries and occupations they work in

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1 . Main points

- There are 4.6 million households in the UK with dependent children aged under 16 years where all parents in the household are working, of which 3.7 million are couple households and 842,000 are lone-parent households.
- Half of these households have a dependent child aged five years or younger.
- If all households with a child under 16 years were to make changes to their working arrangements to provide childcare – either the lone parent or one parent in a couple – this could affect one in seven workers in the UK.
- In nearly half (48%) of working households with children under the age of 16 years, all parents in the household are employed full-time.
- Over 1.7 million parents in working households are employed in the education and human health industries.
- 532,000 parents in working households with dependent children aged under 16 years work as teaching and educational professionals.

2 . Overview of employed parents

In this article, a working household is defined by all adults in the household being in employment, either full- or part- time. The article focuses on the main industries and occupations in which the parent or parents in the household work. The accompanying data tables detail the full twodigit [Standard Industrial Classification](#) and three-digit [Standard Occupational Classification](#); the number of working households by age of youngest child; and a regional breakdown.

With schools and nurseries closed to the majority of children because of the outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19), millions of working parents are balancing a paid job with full-time childcare responsibilities.

Households arrange childcare in many ways, so it would not be expected that all parents would need to change their working pattern because of increased childcare demands. Under normal circumstances, [39% of working parents](#) with children under the age of 14 years made changes to their working arrangements because of childcare commitments in 2018. These changes ranged from reducing their working hours to taking unpaid parental leave.

There are just under 4.6 million households in the UK with dependent children aged under 16 years where all parents in the household are working, equal to 22% of all households in the UK. Of these, 842,000 are lone parent households, while the remaining 3.7 million are couple households. Nearly half (48%) of working couple and lone parent households are working full-time. For the remaining households, at least one parent is working part-time.

If all of the 4.6 million households with children aged under 16 years were to make changes to their working arrangements to provide childcare – either the lone parent or one parent in a couple – this could affect up to [14% of the UK workforce](#), or one in seven workers.

3 . Industries of parents in employment

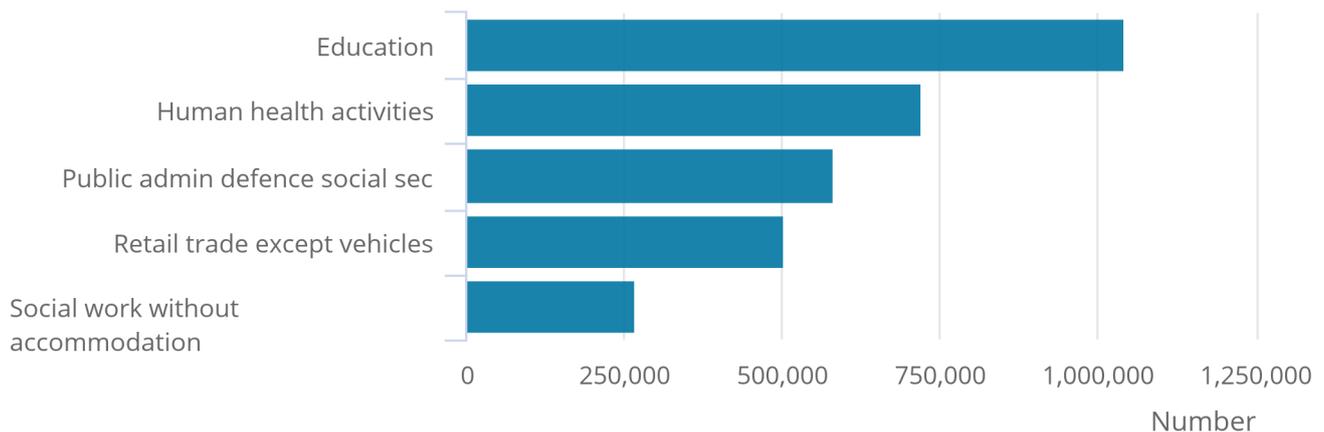
Education is the most common industry in which parents living in working households with dependent children aged under 16 years are employed, with over 1 million lone and couple parents working in this industry. This is equal to a third of the education industry workforce. A further 720,000 parents in working households work in the human health industry (31% of this industry), and 581,000 in public administration, defence and social security (29%). Lone parent and couple parent households both work in similar industries.

Figure 1: The education industry workforce contains over 1 million working parents

Number of parents in working households with dependent children under 16 years by top five industries, UK, October to December 2019

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Number of parents in working households with dependent children under 16 years by top five industries, UK, October to December 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics - Labour Force Survey

Education, human health, and public administration, defence and social security are the three most common industries within all four nations of the UK: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

4 . Occupations of parents in employment

Of those in public sector jobs, 42% are working parents with a dependent child aged under 16 years where all adults in the household are working, compared with 39% in the private sector.

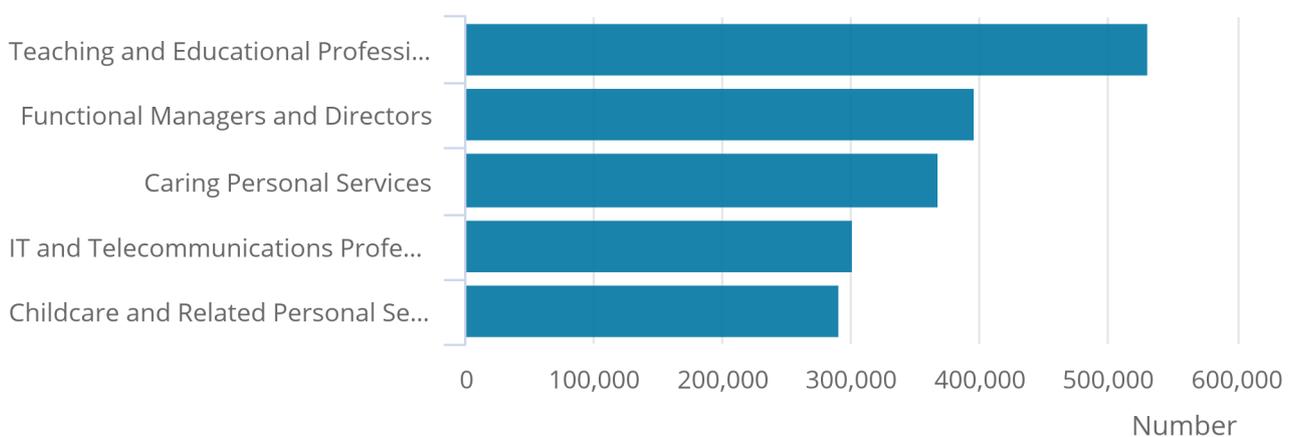
Working as a teaching and educational professional is the most common occupation for parents in working households with dependent children aged under 16 years, with over half a million (532,000) employees. This is equal to 33% of total employment in this occupation. This is followed by 397,000 working as functional managers and directors and 369,000 providing caring personal services.

Figure 2: Working as a teaching and educational professional is the most common occupation for parents in working households

Number of parents in working households with dependent children under 16 years by top five occupations, UK, October to December 2019

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Number of parents in working households with dependent children under 16 years by top five occupations, UK, October to December 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics - Labour Force Survey

The same top three occupations are seen within England and Scotland. However, the three most common occupations for parents in working households with dependent children aged under 16 years in Wales are teaching and educational professionals (33,000), caring personal services (26,000) and childcare and related personal services (19,000). In Northern Ireland these are teaching and educational professionals (17,000), caring personal services (10,000) and secretarial and related occupations (8,000).

5 . Data and methodology

This analysis has been conducted using the October to December 2019 Labour Force Survey (LFS) household-level dataset. Differences between estimates have not been tested for statistical significance; caution is therefore advised when making comparisons.

In the accompanying datasets, we have indicated those estimates that are based on small sample sizes and therefore are likely to be subject to greater uncertainty.

We have focused on parents in couple households and lone parent households, where there is at least one person aged 16 years and over in the household with a dependent child under the age of 16 years, and the lone parent or both of the couple parents are employed.

We have categorised by household type rather than family type. The parents with dependent children category can include households that contain both dependent and non-dependent children. Households with other family units have been classified under the “other households” category. There is more advice on [the difference between how the LFS categorises families and households](#).

For industry breakdowns, we have used the two-digit industry division level of the [Standard Industrial Classification 2007 \(SIC 2007\)](#). For occupation breakdowns, we have used the three-digit minor occupation groups from the [Standard Occupational Classification 2010 \(SOC 2010\)](#). In both cases, we analysed the greatest level of detail that did not result in large numbers of suppressed or unreliable estimates.