

Research report

Lone Parent Obligations: following lone parents' journeys from benefits to work

by Nick Coleman and Timothy Riley

Department for Work and Pensions

Research Report No 818

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Abbreviations and glossary of terms

Anticipation effect	These include any effects a policy has on individuals' actions (in particular, likelihood to claim benefits) prior to the policy directly affecting them.
Child (for Income Support eligibility)	A person aged under 16 for whom an adult claims Child Benefit.
Child (for Child Benefit payments)	A person aged up to 16, or up to 20 and in full-time non-advanced education or certain forms of training, for whom Child Benefit can be claimed.
Child Benefit	A universal benefit available to all families with children under the age of 16 or up to 20 if in full-time non-advanced education or certain types of training. The level of payment depends only on the number of children in the family, with a higher payment for the eldest child. It is not income-based.
Child poverty	<p>There is no single, universally accepted definition of poverty. In the UK, three measures of poverty are used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• absolute low income: this indicator measures whether the poorest families are seeing their income rise in real terms;• relative low income: this measures whether the poorest families are keeping pace with the growth of incomes in the economy as a whole. It measures the number of children living in households below 60 per cent of contemporary median equivalised household income; and• material deprivation and low income combined: this indicator provides a wider measure of people's living standards. The government monitors child poverty against all three measures with a target attached to the relative low-income measure.
Children's centre	Children's centres provide easy access to a range of services, including: integrated early learning and childcare; family support; health services; and advice and information for parents, including signposting to employment and training opportunities.
Child Tax Credit	A payment made by the government for bringing up children. Families with children will normally be eligible if their household income is no greater than £58,000.
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions

Employees	Those who are in employment and paid a wage by an employer for the work that they do.
Employment	The number of people with jobs: people aged 16 or over who do paid work (as employees or the self-employed); those who had a job they are temporarily away from; those on government-supported training and employment; and those doing unpaid family work (working in a family business).
Employment full-time	A job of 30 hours or more of work per week.
Employment part-time	A job of 16 to 29 hours of work per week.
Employment part-time – mini-job	A job of fewer than 16 hours of work per week.
Employment and Support Allowance	From 27 October 2008, Employment and Support Allowance replaced Incapacity Benefit and Income Support paid on incapacity grounds for new customers. Employment and Support Allowance provides financial assistance as well as personalised support for people with limited capability for work to help them move into suitable work.
Employment Zones	Employment Zones aimed to help people who had been out of work for a long time to find and stay in work. There were four Employment Zones across the country, in areas that had the highest rate of long-term unemployment. In April 2009, Employment Zones were replaced by the Flexible New Deal programme in phase 1 districts. Flexible New Deal was replaced by the Work Programme in summer 2011.
ESA	Employment and Support Allowance
FACS	Families and Children Study
Final year quarterly work focused interview	In November 2008, final year quarterly Work-Focused Interviews were introduced for lone parents in the last year before their child reached the relevant age where they may lose entitlement to Income Support under the Lone Parent Obligations. The interviews enable advisers to provide advance notice of the changes and explain the differences in benefits and responsibilities when claiming Jobseeker's Allowance. They also allow advisers to offer an intensified service, helping the customer identify and tackle barriers to work, understand the help available to them from Jobcentre Plus and partner organisations, and move towards work.
Flexible New Deal	Flexible New Deal was a compulsory programme for all those who were unemployed and eligible to receive Jobseeker's Allowance, which ran between autumn 2009 and summer 2011, after which it was replaced by the Work Programme. Those who had been unemployed and on Jobseeker's Allowance for 12 months were required to join the Flexible New Deal. The Flexible New Deal programme was the fourth

and final stage of the ‘Jobseekers Regime and Flexible New Deal’. While the first three stages relate to claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance with Jobcentre Plus, Flexible New Deal was an employment programme delivered by a private or third-sector provider.

FND	Flexible New Deal
Formal childcare	Ofsted-registered childcare, including: day nurseries, out-of-school clubs, pre-school play groups and child minders; as well as formal providers not registered by Ofsted: nannies or childcarers in the home, and babysitters.
HBAI	Households Below Average Income
Income Support	Income Support is a means-tested benefit for those who do not have to sign-on as unemployed. This includes some lone parents, who are not subject to Lone Parent Obligations or are exempt from them.
Informal childcare	Childcare not defined as ‘formal’ (see above), including: friends, neighbours and family members providing childcare.
In Work Credit	In Work Credit is a payment of £40 per week (£60 in London) for lone parents who have been receiving out of work benefits for at least 52 weeks, and who are starting a job of at least 16 hours per week.
IS	Income Support
Jobcentre Plus Offer	The Jobcentre Plus Offer is part of Get Britain Working Measures. The offer aims to give Jobcentre Plus Advisers more discretion than they previously had to draw down a range of services to achieve outcomes for claimants, rather than focusing on completing specified activities and processes. The aim is to provide a more flexible, effective and personalised service for Jobcentre Plus customers to help them move into, or closer to, work.
Jobseeker’s Allowance	Jobseeker’s Allowance is the main benefit for people of working age who are out of work, work fewer than 16 hours per week on average and are available for and actively seeking work.
Jobseeker’s Allowance Agreement	An agreement that sets out the customer’s availability to work and the ways in which they will search for a job. The Jobseeker’s Allowance agreement usually include details on area and hours that customers are available for employment, as well as any restrictions, a description of the type of work that is being sought, and planned action.
JRFND	Jobseeker’s Regime and Flexible New Deal
JSA	Jobseeker’s Allowance

JSAg	Jobseeker's Agreement
LLSI	Limiting long-standing illness, disability or infirmity that limits activities.
Lone parent – generic definition	Parent or guardian with a dependent child under 16 who is not in a co-habiting relationship.
Lone Parent Obligations	Changes to entitlement conditions for lone parents claiming Income Support started in November 2008. Most lone parents with a youngest child aged 12 or over were no longer eligible for Income Support if they made a new claim for benefit only because they were a lone parent, subject to certain exemptions and conditions. Instead those able to work could claim Jobseeker's Allowance and were expected to look for suitable work in return for personalised help and support. Lone parents with limited capability for work could claim ESA. The change has been introduced in four phases: a youngest child aged 12 and over from 24 November 2008; a youngest child aged ten and over from 26 October 2009; a youngest child aged seven or over from 25 October 2010; and a youngest child aged 5 and over from 21 May 2012. Changes for existing lone parents and their entitlement to Income Support were also phased in, in line with the above timescales.
LPO flexibilities	Additional flexibilities have been incorporated in the Jobseeker's Allowance regime for parents (most are for all parents, not just lone parents). These are available to those with caring responsibilities for a child or children. These flexibilities include the hours that parents are available to work and whether appropriate/affordable childcare is available. Other flexibilities involve Jobcentre Plus staff following up parents if they fail to attend interviews before benefit entitlement becomes affected.
LPO	Lone Parent Obligations
LSI	Long-standing illness, disability or infirmity
ONS	Office for National Statistics
Sanction	This is a penalty imposed by a decision-maker. It is the removal of all or a proportion of benefit payment owing to a customer's non-compliance with conditions placed on benefit receipt.
Self-employed	Those who work on their own account, whether or not they have employees, in their main job.
SEN	Special Educational Need
SOC	Standard Occupation Classification

Unemployed	<p>Unemployed people are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1 those who are without a job, want a job and have actively sought work in the past four weeks, and are available to start work in the next two weeks;2 those out of work, have found a job and are waiting to start in the next two weeks.
Universal Credit	<p>In an effort to simplify the benefit system and improve work incentives, Universal Credit is set to replace the present benefit structure, from 2013. Universal Credit will simplify the benefits system by bringing together a range of working-age benefits into a single streamlined payment.</p>
WCA	<p>Work Capability Assessment</p>
WFI	<p>Work Focused Interview</p>
Work Programme	<p>In summer 2011 the existing welfare to work provision, including FND and Pathways to Work, was replaced by a single integrated Work Programme. The Work Programme assumes the task of supporting workless lone parents into employment, alongside other workless people, using an outcome-based, staged entry point model.</p>
Working Tax Credit	<p>Working Tax Credit provides financial support on top of earnings. This is payable on top of Child Benefit. Child support maintenance is wholly disregarded when calculating Working Tax Credit.</p>
WRAG	<p>Work Related Activity Group</p>
WTC	<p>Working Tax Credit</p>

Summary

Introduction

Changes to the benefits system for lone parents have been introduced in recent years, with an increasing focus on work preparation and obligations to look for work. As part of the Lone Parent Obligations (LPO) changes, from November 2008 lone parents with a youngest child aged 12 or over were no longer entitled to receive Income Support (IS) solely on the grounds of being a lone parent. Since then, in October 2010, the age of the youngest child was reduced to seven and over, and as part of the Welfare Reform Act in March 2012, these obligations were extended to lone parents with a youngest child aged five and over. Lone parents who are no longer eligible for IS have been able to move to other benefits as appropriate, including Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). The JSA regime has been amended to include flexibilities for lone parents, for example, in the hours of work they are required to seek.

This report presents findings from a national, quantitative survey of lone parents affected by LPO, specifically those with a youngest child of seven or eight when they leave IS. The survey is longitudinal. The first wave of the survey was conducted in 2010 while lone parents were still on IS. The second wave took place in 2012 after lone parents' eligibility for IS had ended, and tracks lone parents' destinations and experiences over time. These findings cover the survey as a whole, with a particular focus on the Wave 2 findings.

The survey is one element of a wider evaluation, whose aim is to explore whether and how lone parent employment interventions provide an effective incentive to look for paid employment, alongside an effective package of support for workless lone parents, to enable them to find, enter and sustain paid employment.

The main aim of the quantitative survey is to understand customers' decision-making around returning to work, and the relationship between decision-making and characteristics, attitudes, values and beliefs; destinations and behaviours; and progress through, and experience of, the LPO 'journey'.

Destinations after ending of IS eligibility

The lone parents covered by the survey were all due to end their eligibility for IS between January and March 2011, approximately one year before they were interviewed in the second wave of the survey. As a result, we are able to examine the destinations of these lone parents immediately after their eligibility for IS ended, as well as longer-term destinations in the subsequent year or so.

The analysis in this report excludes lone parents who were known to have remained on IS, and focuses on the destinations of those who became ineligible for IS. This shows that, immediately after leaving IS, lone parents were most likely to say that they moved on to JSA (55 per cent), while 12 per cent claimed Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), and 24 per cent got a job. Around half (48 per cent) of those that got a job did so before their eligibility for IS was scheduled to end.

Longer-term destinations (in the year or so since the ending of IS eligibility) showed that 45 per cent of lone parents had worked at some point since their IS claim ended, including six per cent who had worked (fewer than 16 hours per week) and claimed benefits at the same time.

Lone parents were more likely to have worked at some point since leaving IS if they had recent work experience or were actively looking for work while on IS. Movement into work was also more common among lone parents with higher qualifications, those with access to a vehicle and those who lived in a rural area. In addition, those who had used informal childcare while they were not working were also more likely to have moved into work. This suggests that having informal childcare networks in place can help the transition into work.

Lone parents with a limiting long-standing illness or disability (LLSI), especially those with mental-health problems, were less likely to move into work. There were also differences in terms of attitudes to work: those who were more family focused in their attitudes and less concerned about the stigma of being on benefits were less likely than other respondents to have worked at all.

As a whole, these findings confirm that a wide range of factors affect the likelihood of lone parents moving into work, including characteristics and circumstances, working history, access to childcare and attitudes to work.

The majority of respondents (68 per cent) had claimed JSA at some point since they left IS, and 31 per cent had only claimed JSA – they had not worked at all or claimed another benefit during this time. In total, 12 per cent of respondents had been on the Work Programme, mostly as part of a JSA claim. Longer spells on JSA were more common among lone parents without qualifications and whose first language was not English, as well as those without vehicle access. Those who had not worked in recent years were also more likely to have had a prolonged spell on JSA.

Around one in four respondents (23 per cent) had claimed ESA since leaving IS, including 12 per cent who had claimed both JSA and ESA. There was a range of experiences on ESA, including equal proportions who were in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG), the Support Group and found fit for work. In addition, some respondents who had made a claim for ESA had not yet had a Work Capability Assessment or were awaiting a decision or the outcome of a tribunal. The findings indicate that many lone parents who claimed ESA may have had a more complex journey and may not have moved directly from IS to ESA.

Lone parents who had claimed ESA included a high proportion who had a child with a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity (LSI), as well as those with an LLSI themselves. Those with responsibilities for caring for adults, as well as those with literacy or numeracy problems, were also more likely to have claimed ESA.

Five per cent of lone parents had neither worked nor claimed a benefit at all since they left IS, and at the time of the Wave 2 interview, nine per cent were neither working nor claiming a benefit; many of these respondents (52 per cent) had re-partnered.

The profile of JSA and ESA claimants (as observed at Wave 2) was similar to the original cohort of lone parents on IS (at Wave 1), although those on ESA were more likely to have an LLSI and to have a dependent child with an LSI, while those on JSA were older and with fewer dependent children.

Is work sustained?

Almost half of lone parents (45 per cent) had worked at some point since the end of their IS claim. In the majority of cases, these respondents were still in work at the time of the Wave 2 interview (84 per cent), and most of these respondents had been in their job for at least six months. One in six (16 per cent) had stopped working, most commonly because they had been in a temporary or fixed term job, or because of redundancy.

The survey is not able to assess whether lone parents will remain in work in the longer term, but the findings indicate that most respondents who had entered work had managed to stay in their job beyond the transitional stage from benefits to work, and that many had already been in work for a year or more (46 per cent of those in work at the time of the Wave 2 interview).

Respondents were less likely to have stayed in work if they had an LLSI, particularly if they had a mental-health problem, and if they were less well qualified. The same groups were also less likely to have moved into work (at all). Those working fewer than 16 hours per week were also less likely to have stayed in work.

Job characteristics

In most cases, those who had worked since the end of their IS claim were working as employees, while nine per cent were self-employed. Most respondents (86 per cent) were in permanent jobs. The work that lone parents were doing at the time of the survey, or had done since leaving IS, was generally low-skilled work (40 per cent in elementary occupations and 23 per cent personal service occupations). Around one in three of those in work (33 per cent) said that they were paid less than £6 per hour (the National Minimum Wage at the time of the survey was £6.08 per hour).

One in eight respondents (13 per cent) were working 30 hours or more per week, while 29 per cent were working between 17 and 29 hours, and 37 per cent exactly 16 hours per week. One in five (22 per cent) were working fewer than 16 hours per week. More skilled jobs were more likely to involve a greater number of hours per week. Two in five respondents (41 per cent) worked during school hours only.

One in six respondents (17 per cent) who were in work at the time of the Wave 2 interview said they had increased their hours since they started the job. This was particularly common among lone parents who had started their job while they were still claiming IS (and were, therefore, originally working fewer than 16 hours per week). In fact, 17 per cent of those who started their job while on IS said that they had either increased their hours or had taken a second job in order to move off benefits.

Respondents who were working more than 16 hours or more per week had greater problems balancing work and family: 60 per cent said that sometimes their job prevented them from giving their children the time they wanted to. At the same time, some respondents said that they had tried to increase their working hours (27 per cent of current employees), and the number of hours worked was often lower than respondents had previously indicated as their preference or the number that they were prepared to work. This suggests that there is a group of lone parents who are able, or would like, to work more hours per week than they are working at present.

In addition to part-time working, 38 per cent of lone parents said that some kind of flexible working was part of their job, such as working only in term-time (18 per cent) or flexi-time (14 per cent). However, around one-quarter (23 per cent) said that they would prefer a different working arrangement, most commonly flexi-time. Other findings from the survey show that existing working arrangements could make it difficult for lone parents to stay in work: 13 per cent of those in work said that a big barrier to staying in work was the pressure in their job to work longer hours, stay late or do overtime, while nine per cent said that a big barrier was that their employer was not very family friendly.

One in three lone parents in work said they wanted to get on and improve their pay and terms as quickly as possible (34 per cent), while the remainder wanted to stay as they were.

The majority of those in work said that it was very or fairly easy for them to stay in their job (71 per cent), while a smaller proportion (51 per cent) said that it was at least fairly likely that they would be able to get another job if their current one fell through.

Childcare

Wave 2 of the survey examined the childcare arrangements of lone parents while they were working. Around three in four lone parents (73 per cent) said that they used some form of childcare during their time at work. Use of childcare increased with hours worked: from 51 per cent of those working fewer than 16 hours per week, to 83 per cent of those working more than 16 hours per week. Those who did not use childcare mostly said that they only worked during school hours.

Lone parents were more likely to use informal (63 per cent) than formal childcare (30 per cent) when they were working. Those working more hours per week were more likely to use a combination of both formal and informal childcare.

Grandparents were the most commonly used type of childcare (used by 52 per cent of all childcare users), and accounted for a large proportion of the total childcare hours. Formal childcare was most likely to be breakfast or after-school clubs (21 per cent on school site, six per cent off site). This reflects the age profile of children covered by the survey – predominantly primary school age children, with very few pre-school children.

Over half (60 per cent) paid for formal childcare, while eight per cent paid for informal childcare. More than half (62 per cent) of those using informal childcare said they did something in return for at least part of the childcare they received. This was most common when respondents had help with childcare from other relatives (outside the immediately family) or friends and neighbours. This suggests that this type of reciprocal arrangement is an important element of childcare for working lone parents.

Around one in four lone parents said that their childcare arrangements broke down often or sometimes (26 per cent), and 43 per cent of these respondents said that this made it very or fairly difficult for them to stay in their job.

Among respondents who were not currently working but who planned to work in the future, there was a strong interest in using after-school or holiday clubs when they moved into work (among 45 per cent). This suggests the potential for a high level of take-up of these services in the future.

The majority of respondents (who did not already use them) were aware of breakfast or after school clubs (71 per cent), although awareness of holiday clubs was lower (23 per cent of non-users).

The survey also explored lone parents' recollections of discussions they had had about childcare at Jobcentre Plus. Around half of lone parents who had been on JSA said that they had discussed childcare during their claim (47 per cent), but this was much lower among those that had claimed ESA. Of those that had received childcare advice, 57 per cent said it was very or fairly useful, while 43 per cent said it was not useful.

Work attitudes and the future

On average, lone parents were closer to the labour market in Wave 2, after having gone through LPO, than in Wave 1, when they were claiming IS. At Wave 1, 59 per cent of respondents were either in work or looking for work, but this had risen to 81 per cent by Wave 2.

In total, 50 per cent of lone parents were looking for work. This included 68 per cent of those not in work (and 92 per cent of JSA claimants), and 25 per cent of those in work (who tended to be those working for jobs of fewer than 16 hours a week).

In line with other research, the amount of jobsearch lone parents had conducted at Wave 2 (mostly on JSA) was significantly higher than at Wave 1 (when claiming IS). Over 50 per cent of lone parents looking for work had applied for 11 or more jobs in the previous year, compared to only 20 per cent at Wave 1. In addition, lone parents were doing more to find jobs, such as putting their name on the books of private recruitment agencies, than they were at Wave 1.

Lone parents had a strong preference for part-time work. When asked about their most recent job application, 69 per cent of respondents had applied for part-time work, including 34 per cent who had applied for a job of 16 hours exactly (the minimum number of hours to be eligible for working tax credits). This broadly matched lone parents' preferences for working hours.

Moreover, lone parents had a strong preference for jobs that fit around their childcare responsibilities. Lone parents looking for work were often unwilling to work outside school hours; 56 per cent said they would be unwilling to work outside school hours, and 31 per cent said they would only work during term-time (with 29 per cent reporting that they would only be willing to work if their job was both during school hours and term-time only). Furthermore, 88 per cent said that flexible working arrangements were important, and around four in ten reported that they would not take a job that did not have flexible working.

On average, the time lone parents were willing to travel to work was longer than the average commute in the UK, again demonstrating a willingness to work. However, seven in ten UK commuters used a car to go to work, but only 34 per cent of LPO lone parents had permanent access to a motor vehicle.

Attitudes and constraints to work

Lone parents expressed a strong work focus in their attitudes, alongside a strong focus on parental childcare. In broad terms, attitudes towards work, parenting and childcare remained similar between Wave 1 (when lone parents were claiming IS) and Wave 2 (after the move off IS on to other destinations). However, at Wave 2, respondents were less likely to agree with some parental childcare focused statements (such as 'children do best if their mum stays at home to look after them'), and were more likely to agree with employment focused statements (such as 'having almost any job is better than being unemployed').

Lone parents who were in work were more likely than those claiming JSA or ESA to agree with employment-focused statements and statements suggesting motivation to combine work and childcare (such as 'working mothers have the best of both worlds'). However, there were less strong differences in opinion in relation to attitudes towards 'parental childcare' (such as 'children under five are happiest being looked after by their parents') and the social stigma of benefits (such as 'stay-at-home mums are not valued by society').

When respondents out of work were asked about their barriers to work, the most commonly mentioned barriers related to jobsearch constraints, such as there not being enough suitable job opportunities in the local area, or needing a job where they could take time off at short notice to look after children. The least commonly mentioned barriers to work related to peer pressure. On average, respondents noted 4.9 big barriers to entering employment (out of a possible 19). Those claiming ESA were more likely than those claiming JSA to cite 'personal' barriers to entering employment, such as having a health condition, or having personal troubles that needed to be sorted out. ESA claimants were also more likely to cite low confidence as a barrier to work.

When compared to responses in Wave 1, there was not a large shift in the likelihood of lone parents reporting different types of barriers. Nevertheless, there was a small shift in that barriers to work were less likely to be because of negative opinions about work but slightly more likely to reflect practical problems. Therefore, a higher proportion of lone parents reported that a lack of suitable job opportunities in the local area, or their health condition or disability were big barriers to work in Wave 2 compared to Wave 1. Conversely, smaller proportions said needing a job where they could take time off at short notice to look after their child(ren), being concerned about leaving the security of benefits, and not being sure they would be financially better off in work were big barriers in Wave 2 compared to Wave 1.

Respondents in work were less likely to perceive barriers to staying in work than those out of work were to entering work. In total, only two (out of 18) big barriers to staying in work were mentioned by a quarter of respondents or more. These were: not being sure about being financially better off in work (mentioned by 27 per cent) and a lack of suitable, affordable childcare (mentioned by 25 per cent of respondents). In total, respondents on average mentioned only 2.3 big barriers to staying in work.

Wellbeing and material deprivation

Around half of lone parents (52 per cent) had a weekly income of less than £200, with a further 25 per cent with a weekly income of £200 to £299. Lone parents in work had higher average incomes than those out of work: while 10 per cent of those out of work had an income of £300 or more a week, this applied to 30 per cent of those in work. Linked to this, given the increased proportion of lone parents in work at Wave 2, the average total household income of respondents at Wave 2 was higher than for the same lone parents at Wave 1.

Respondents who had worked since Wave 1 were less likely to experience a range of financial problems. Twenty-six per cent found it quite or very hard to manage financially (down from 40 per cent when the same lone parents were interviewed in Wave 1), 29 per cent never had money left over at the end of the week (down from 47 per cent) and 16 per cent had trouble with debt almost all of the time (down from 23 per cent).

When asked about whether respondents would like but could not afford a range of goods and services, lone parents were more likely to lack adult or household items, such as replacing worn out furniture and electrical goods, rather than items for children, such as having friends over for tea or a snack, or having leisure equipment, such as sports equipment or a bike.

Levels of material deprivation and low income among the cohort of all lone parents interviewed at Wave 1 were very high. In total, 67 per cent were in material deprivation and had a low income. This compares to 28 per cent of all lone parent families in the UK, as reported in the DWP's Households Below Average Income series. Material deprivation was particularly high among lone parents with lower qualification levels, among those without access to a vehicle, and those with fewer children.

Lone parents who had entered work or increased their hours between Wave 1 and Wave 2 were less likely to be in material deprivation. While 65 per cent of these lone parents had been in material deprivation and had a low income at Wave 1, this had fallen to 39 per cent by Wave 2. Nevertheless, this means that two in five households in which a lone parent had entered work were still living in material deprivation and with a low income, suggesting that in work poverty still remains a problem for these lone parents.

Relationship with Jobcentre Plus

Lone parents who had been on JSA were much more likely than those who had been on ESA to have received various types of advice and support from Jobcentre Plus, such as looking at job vacancies or looking at the sort of work they might do.

The same pattern applied to the support options available under the Jobcentre Plus Offer. Three in four JSA claimants (76 per cent on JSA only and 79 per cent who had been on both JSA and ESA) had discussed support options such as regular adviser meetings or training courses, compared with 38 per cent of those that had been on ESA (but not JSA). Actual attendance on these support options was also higher among JSA claimants.

The majority of respondents who had taken the various support options said that they had been helpful (ranging from 66 per cent to 81 per cent for the various activities).

Around one in seven lone parents who had been on JSA said they had received financial help from Jobcentre Plus towards expenses, most commonly travel costs. The proportion who had received financial help while on ESA was lower (six per cent).

In total, 12 per cent of respondents had been on the Work Programme and a further 17 per cent had discussed it with an adviser while on JSA or ESA.

A quarter (27 per cent) of those who had started work since Wave 1, or had increased their hours, said they had been in contact with Jobcentre Plus staff while they were working. An additional 13 per cent said they were offered this support.

Most JSA claimants (74 per cent) said that advisers had explained the conditions of claiming JSA very or quite well, and nearly all (87 per cent) said that they had been told that their benefit might be stopped or reduced if they did not agree to certain conditions.

Around one in four said that their benefit had been stopped (21 per cent) or reduced (seven per cent) for any reason while on JSA or ESA, although this may over-estimate the number who have actually been sanctioned; for example, respondents may have included issues with benefit payments in their transition from IS on to other benefits.

Most JSA claimants said they found it at least fairly easy to comply with the conditions for claiming JSA: signing on every two weeks (63 per cent), attending meetings (63 per cent) and actively looking for work (62 per cent). However, between 17 per cent and 21 per cent found each of these things difficult.

One in three (35 per cent) said that they were told there were things they were allowed to do or did not have to do, as part of the parent flexibilities on JSA. Two in three (64 per cent) said that at least one of the flexibilities applied to them, most frequently only having to look for part-time work (47 per cent) or only having to look for work that was during school hours (40 per cent).¹

Less than half of respondents said that they felt their individual circumstances were taken into account on JSA or ESA (45 per cent of those who had been on JSA only, 45 per cent on ESA only and 41 per cent on both JSA and ESA). These proportions were considerably lower than the corresponding figures in relation to IS (as stated at Wave 1). One in four (24 per cent) would have liked more time with Jobcentre Plus staff.

¹ The flexibility to look for work only during school hours applies during term-time only, and only to lone parents whose youngest child is aged under 13.

There were negative attitudes to the JSA and ESA regimes, and these were more negative than corresponding attitudes to the IS regime that were expressed at Wave 1. Many respondents did not feel that they had received help or advice while on JSA (37 per cent) or ESA (74 per cent), and respondents were more likely to agree than disagree that on JSA/ESA people were pushed into things they did not want to do. There were also mixed views on whether lone parents' needs are taken into account on JSA/ESA and whether they were given the right amount of support. Respondents were less positive towards JSA, and the extent to which their individual circumstances were taken into account, if they had an LLSI. However, in the JSA sample, some respondents did feel that JSA had made them more aware of job opportunities (41 per cent).

Conclusions

Nearly half of the lone parents in the survey had found work by the time of the Wave 2 interview, with a wide range of factors affecting movement into work. A move into work was not always accompanied by a move away from material deprivation, with many lone parents working in poorly paid jobs and/or working a small number of hours per week.

Wave 2 also saw most lone parents moving closer to the labour market, alongside more intensive jobsearch activity on JSA than was the case on IS. The survey also indicated an increased commitment to work at Wave 2, although respondents continued to express a need to prioritise children and family alongside work.

1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background to the research, an overview of the survey aims and methodological approach, and details of the report structure.

1.1 Background and policy context

1.1.1 Lone parents in the UK

There are an estimated two million lone parents in the UK who care for 2.6 million children (Labour Force Survey Household Datasets, Q2, 2012). Lone parents now make up one-quarter of all households with dependent children, and the UK has proportionately more lone parents than most Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. The median age for a lone parent is 38 and only 1.4 per cent of lone parents are teenagers. Thirteen per cent of lone parents come from ethnic minority communities and nine per cent of lone parents are fathers (Labour Force Survey Household Datasets, Q2, 2012).

The social composition of lone parent families has changed over the past 30 years. Hasluck and Green (2007) noted a diversity of circumstances among lone parents (including those who had never had a permanent partner and those who were separated, divorced or widowed), as well as differences in the age and number of children. These changes are the consequence of a number of factors, including: a trend for people to marry less frequently and later in life; and an increase in the rate of divorce and births outside marriage. Being a lone parent is often a transition stage. Marsh and Vegeris' (2004) analysis of a ten-year study of lone parents found a prevalence of re-partnering over time (a high proportion of which resulted in marriage).

1.1.2 Lone parents and employment

The employment rate for lone parents is currently 59.2 per cent (Labour Force Survey, Q2, 2012) and well over one million lone parents are in work. This rate increased steadily over a number of years owing to a combination of policy initiatives, changes in the characteristics of lone parents over time and more general improvements in employment rates in the UK. Since then the rate has levelled off.

Lone parents' experiences of employment are varied. Wave 1 of this survey, which focused on lone parents receiving Income Support (IS) whose youngest child was seven or eight when they were due to lose eligibility to IS, found that lone parents had either not worked since the birth of their oldest child (28 per cent), had worked since having children but were not working at the time of the survey (37 per cent), had never worked (24 per cent) or were currently working (ten per cent) (Coleman and Lanceley, 2011).

1.1.3 Child poverty in lone parent households

Children of lone parents are more likely to live in poverty than children in a two-parent family. In the UK, 14 per cent of all children and 28 per cent of children in lone parent families were in material deprivation with a low income in 2010/11.² Analysis of the Families and Children Study by Philo *et al.* (2009) found lone parent families were more than three times as likely as couple families to belong to the lowest income quintile (37 per cent and ten per cent, respectively). A child of a lone parent that works part time is almost three times less likely to be living in poverty than a child of a lone parent who is not working, and a child of a lone parent that works full time is five times less likely to

² Households Below Average Income 2010/11.

be living in poverty.³ Further to this, lone parent families, along with couple families where no parent worked, were more likely to experience material deprivation.

1.1.4 Employment support for lone parents

Given that worklessness is a large determining factor of child poverty, increasing parental employment is one of the key means of reducing child poverty. A series of welfare to work policies and programmes have been implemented over recent years to increase parental employment. Specific measures include: the introduction of mandatory Work Focused Interviews (WFI) for lone parents claiming IS; voluntary employment support for lone parents to help with a move from benefits into work⁴ and Lone Parent Obligations (LPO).

Since April 2011, Jobcentre Plus districts can offer lone parents who are not yet required to take part in the Work Programme (see below) access to support through the Jobcentre Plus Offer, which includes adviser support and a menu of flexible support options. Lone parents may have access to Jobcentre Plus provision or approved activities (contracted and non-contracted), financial incentives, the range of 'Get Britain Working'⁵ measures and help with expenses (for example, childcare, replacement care, travel or course costs) through a delegated flexible support fund, which reflects district priorities and needs.

With some exceptions (primarily specialist disability programmes), all Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) funded welfare to work provision, including Flexible New Deal, was replaced by a single integrated Work Programme from June 2011. The Work Programme assumed the task of supporting workless lone parents into employment, alongside other workless people. Lone parents who move on to Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) will generally be able to access the Work Programme 12 months after their claim starts.⁶

1.1.5 LPO

LPO was introduced from November 2008 and meant that lone parent claimants with a youngest child aged 12 or over would no longer be entitled to IS solely on the grounds of being a lone parent and that, by autumn 2010, those with a youngest child aged seven and over would lose entitlement. From 2012, as part of the Welfare Reform Act introduced in March 2012, these obligations were extended to lone parents with a youngest child aged five and over. It is estimated that this change will result in 20,000 to 25,000 extra lone parents in work, which in turn could help reduce child poverty.⁷

When IS eligibility on the grounds of being a lone parent ends, those able to work can claim JSA and are required to be available for and actively seeking employment. Lone parents with health problems or disabilities may, if eligible, claim Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Until April 2011, this was provided through the New Deal for Lone Parents and since then through the Jobcentre Plus Offer and work-preparation support.

⁵ These include Work Clubs, Work Together, Work Experience (for those aged 16–24), New Enterprise Allowance, Enterprise Clubs and sector-based work academies.

⁶ Lone parents aged under 25 will be referred to the Work Programme from nine months after the start of their JSA claim. Lone parents claiming IS in England can enter the Work Programme voluntarily.

⁷ *Conditionality Measures in the 2011 Welfare Reform Bill*, <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/conditionality-wr2011-ia.pdf>

Some lone parent claimants who have another reason for being entitled to IS, such as foster carers or those in receipt of Carer's Allowance, are exempt from LPO and continue to be eligible to claim IS. In addition, some groups of lone parent claimants are offered transitional protection and are entitled to continue to receive IS for a limited period of time. These groups include: lone parents on IS who are in full-time study or following a full-time course on an approved training scheme. This transitional protection applies only to the course of study or training that the lone parent is undertaking at the point the IS entitlement changes come into force. Transitional protection applies until the end of the course or the date the child reaches the relevant age in force at the start of the course, whichever comes first.

The LPO changes are being implemented for both existing and new lone parent claimants. They were anticipated to affect around 300,000 existing lone parent claimants (those with a youngest child aged seven or over) who claim IS because they are lone parents. The Welfare Reform Bill Impact Assessment estimates that around 75,000 lone parents per year in steady state will be affected now the age is reduced to five.⁸

In August 2011, there were 123,805 lone parents in receipt of JSA, of which 50,715 had a youngest child aged between seven and nine.⁹

The findings from this stage of the LPO research are relevant to the ongoing changes. The concluding chapter of this report (Chapter 9) considers what implications the findings may have for the government's future plans for welfare to work policy.

1.1.6 Universal Credit

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 also sets out reforms to the welfare system through the introduction of a Universal Credit. Universal Credit will provide a new system of means-tested support for working age people who are in or out of work. Support for housing costs, children and childcare costs will be integrated in the new benefit. It will also provide additions for disabled people and carers. Existing means-tested benefits that will be replaced by Universal Credit include income-based JSA, income-related ESA, IS, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit and Housing Benefit. Universal Credit is to be rolled out from 2013.

1.2 Evaluating Lone Parent Obligations

The evaluation of LPO has been ongoing as the policy has rolled out. A series of qualitative studies has been conducted. The first study focused on the first roll-out group, which was lone parents who had a youngest child aged between 12 and 15 years old. It also examined the IS regime for lone parents with a youngest child aged between one and six years. The study focused on claimants' experience of IS eligibility ending, before they had moved to another benefit or status (Gloster *et al.*, 2010).

The second qualitative study focused on a variety of destinations that lone parents moved to after losing eligibility to IS (including claiming JSA, claiming ESA, unknown destinations, being exempt from LPO and moving into work). The lone parents in the study had a youngest child aged between 12 and 15 (the first roll-out group) (Casebourne *et al.*, 2010).

The final piece of qualitative research evaluated the effect of LPO on lone parents whose youngest child is aged seven or eight. It also informed the delivery of the roll-out of LPO to lone parents with

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ The figures are for Great Britain.

a youngest child aged five or six. The research examined the work readiness of lone parents, their experience of childcare, reflections on when their youngest child started school, how they looked for work, experiences of JSA and of moving into work (Lane *et al.*, 2011).

This report presents findings from a national, quantitative survey of lone parents affected by LPO, specifically those with a youngest child of seven or eight when they leave IS (the third roll-out group). The survey is longitudinal. The first wave of the survey was conducted in 2010 while lone parents were still on IS. The second wave took place in 2012 after lone parents' eligibility for IS had ended, and tracks lone parents' destinations and experiences over time.

The report on the Wave 1 findings was published in May 2011 (Coleman and Lanceley, 2011). This report covers the survey as a whole, with a particular focus on the Wave 2 findings.

1.2.1 Research aims and objectives

The primary aim of the evaluation of LPO is to explore whether and how lone parent employment interventions provide an effective incentive to look for paid employment, alongside an effective package of support for workless lone parents to enable them to find, enter and sustain paid employment.

In addition, the quantitative survey aims to understand customers' decision-making around returning to work. Specifically, the survey explores the relationship between customers' decision-making and:

- characteristics, attitudes, values and beliefs;
- destinations and behaviours;
- progress through, and experience of, the LPO 'journey'.

This allows an increased understanding of lone parents affected by LPO, and highlights important issues for supporting these customers in the future.

1.2.2 Scope of the quantitative survey

The findings in this report are based on a quantitative survey with a nationally representative sample of lone parents in the third roll-out group (with eligibility ending when their youngest child was seven or eight).

This particular cohort gives a good indication of the issues facing the full range of lone parents affected by LPO. Respondents were selected as having a youngest child aged six or seven, but often also had children older than this, and therefore were relevant to other roll-out groups. At the same time, this group is most similar to the group newly affected by LPO: those with a youngest child aged five or six. The survey can, therefore, inform the roll-out of LPO to this group. In addition, the sample covered by the survey includes a wide range of customers in relation to work-readiness and distance from the labour market. As a result, the survey contains findings that have wider relevance for the provision of support for JSA/ESA claimants under the Jobcentre Plus Offer and the Work Programme, which will need to accommodate an increasingly greater range of customers.

More generally, this survey allows a detailed examination of lone parents on benefit who have school-age children. Most previous studies of lone parents have either covered all ages of children, or have focused on those with younger (pre-school age) children. As many issues are different for school-age children (for example in relation to childcare), the survey allows an opportunity to look at this group's needs and circumstances more clearly.

In addition, previous quantitative studies of lone parents on IS (the survey of IS customers conducted as part of the New Deal for Lone Parents evaluation¹⁰ and the survey of customers experiencing lone parent WFIs¹¹) were conducted some time ago, and had a specific focus. This survey updates our understanding of this customer group, and also has a deliberately broad coverage. As well as providing insight into their destinations as part of LPO, the survey gives a comprehensive insight into lone parents' characteristics, behaviour and attitudes, as well as detailed information on childcare arrangements and preferences.

1.3 Methodology

The findings in this report are based on a quantitative survey with a representative sample of lone parents in the third roll-out group of LPO across Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales).

The National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) were responsible for sampling, fieldwork, weighting and data processing. Further details on these technical aspects of the survey are provided in Appendix B.

1.3.1 Sample

The sample population for the Wave 1 survey comprised lone parents who were claiming IS in April 2010, and whose eligibility for IS was due to end between January and March 2011, when their youngest child was aged seven or eight. The sample population excluded known exemptions: those in receipt of Carer's Allowance. However, when interviewed, 12 per cent of Wave 1 respondents said that they had a youngest child aged under six; these lone parents would, therefore, also be exempt and entitled to continue their IS claim. In total, 2,779 lone parents were interviewed in the Wave 1 survey.

For Wave 2, it was decided to focus only on lone parents who were eligible for the LPO changes. As a result, respondents who were exempt, and therefore able to continue their claim for IS, were excluded from the Wave 2 survey. In practice, this meant excluding the following Wave 1 respondents from the Wave 2 survey:

- those who were identified as exempt on the basis of their answers at Wave 1, by having a child aged under six;
- those who were recorded in the administrative data as remaining on IS after their scheduled IS end date, either because they had another child or were receiving Carer's Allowance.

These lone parents were excluded, as well as respondents who did not agree to be re-contacted when interviewed at Wave 1. From the remainder, a random sample of Wave 1 respondents was drawn, in order to achieve a total of around 1,000 Wave 2 interviews.

Despite the removal of these exempt lone parents, the Wave 2 interviewed sample still included a proportion of lone parents who were exempt. This is discussed further in Section 1.4.

1.3.2 Fieldwork

At Wave 1, all selected cases were sent a letter giving them an opportunity to opt out of the survey. This is a standard procedure used when a sample is drawn from benefit records, and means that only the addresses of sample members who have not opted out are issued to interviewers to

¹⁰ Lessof *et al.*, 2001; fieldwork conducted in 2000/01.

¹¹ Coleman *et al.*, 2003; fieldwork conducted in 2002/03.

contact. Prior to Wave 2, a pre-notification letter was sent to all selected cases to inform them about the second survey. In addition, an advance letter was sent to selected cases shortly before the start of fieldwork. At both waves, the advance letter stressed that any information provided by respondents would be treated in strict confidence. A Welsh translation was provided for respondents living in Wales.

At Wave 1, eight interviewer briefing sessions were held between 17 May and 25 May 2010. Eight Wave 2 briefings were conducted between 15 and 23 February 2011. NatCen researchers conducted the briefings. In total, 127 interviewers were briefed and worked on the study. All were trained members of NatCen's interviewing panel.

At both waves, interviews were conducted face to face in respondents' homes. Only the named customer could be interviewed (no proxies were allowed) and, where this person had moved, interviewers attempted to trace the person to their new address.

Wave 1 interviews were conducted between 27 May and 25 August 2010. This meant that interviews took place between five and ten months before interviewees' IS eligibility was estimated to end. In total, 2,779 interviews were conducted.

At Wave 2, 1,088 interviews were conducted. The response rate was 75 per cent (see detailed response figures in Table A2.1). Wave 2 interviews were conducted in February to April 2012, between 11 and 15 months after respondents' IS eligibility was scheduled to end.

At each wave, lone parents who took part in the survey received £10 by way of thanks (in the form of a gift voucher) for their participation in the survey. This was given in recognition of the time the respondent had devoted to helping with the study.

Prior to each wave of fieldwork, a pilot survey was conducted. As part of the pilot, 84 interviews were conducted at Wave 1 and 36 interviews at Wave 2 (these interviews are not included in the survey findings presented in this report). Findings from the pilot informed the development of the final questionnaire.

The final questionnaire covered a similar set of topics at each wave:

- classification and demographics;
- current status and employment details;
- past employment;
- benefits;
- choices and constraints with regard to work and family;
- jobsearch;
- experience of Jobcentre Plus;
- childcare arrangements;
- income;
- health and other characteristics.

1.3.3 Weighting and data processing

An experienced data processing team carried out coding and editing of questionnaires at NatCen's Brentwood offices. Researchers at NatCen were continuously involved in all complex editing decisions.

At each wave, data were weighted to reflect the actual profile of the cohort, using both selection and non-response weighting. The Wave 2 weights reflected the revised sample population (excluding those who were known to be exempt).

1.4 Interpretation of the data

In total, 1,088 interviews were conducted. However, as noted above, the Wave 2 interviewed sample included a proportion of lone parents who were exempt from the LPO changes. Specifically:

- There were 79 respondents who had remained on IS, and these respondents are excluded from the analysis of destinations; this leaves a total of 1,009 respondents included in this analysis.
- A further 37 respondents were also exempt, as they either had no dependent children living with them or had moved into the Support Group as part of a claim for ESA. These 37 respondents, along with the 79 who remained on IS, are excluded from the rest of the survey analysis.

The bulk of the analysis on which this report is based, therefore, focuses on a sample of 972 lone parents who were affected by the LPO changes.

When interpreting the findings for this survey, it should be borne in mind that the survey is based on a **sample** of customers (not the total population). This means that all findings are subject to sampling tolerances. Differences highlighted in the report are statistically significant at the 95 per cent confidence level.

Some of the sub-groups included in the analysis are quite small; for example, the different groups banded by working hours, and current ESA recipients. As a general rule, we have focused the analysis on sub-groups that have at least 100 respondents, except where analysis of smaller sub-groups is integral to the findings. Where sub-groups sample sizes are less than 100, findings should be treated with a degree of caution.

A large number of tables appear in this report. The following conventions have been used:

- 0 = a 'true zero' (i.e. no responses in that category);
- * = less than 0.5 per cent, but more than zero responses.

1.5 Report structure

This report provides an examination of lone parents' destinations, experiences and attitudes. Specifically:

- Chapter 2 examines the destinations of lone parents affected by LPO – both their immediate destinations and their longer-term experiences in the year or so since their eligibility for IS ended.
- Chapter 3 looks at respondents' current experiences of work. As well as identifying the type of work done by lone parents, it also looks at whether work was sustained, and also lone parents' experience of family-friendly employment.

- Chapter 4 focuses on childcare, exploring the childcare arrangements of working lone parents, as well as possible future arrangements. This chapter also looks at advice and support on childcare provided by Jobcentre Plus.
- Chapter 5 examines work aspirations. It covers lone parents' preferences and flexibility in considering work, as well as their approach to looking for work. It also looks at recent training activities.
- Chapter 6 examines lone parents' attitudes to work and family, as well as the constraints to work that they face.
- Chapter 7 examines well-being and material deprivation – firstly for the full sample of lone parents interviewed at Wave 1, and then for those who were working at Wave 2. It also looks at household income and financial problems.
- Chapter 8 looks at lone parents' relationship with Jobcentre Plus while on JSA or ESA, including the types of support they received. It also includes general attitudes to Jobcentre Plus and the JSA and ESA regimes.
- Finally, Chapter 9 draws out the conclusions from the survey, and highlights key lessons from the evaluation as well as issues for the future.

2 Lone parent destinations

This chapter examines the destinations and journeys of lone parents after their eligibility for Income Support (IS) ended, and the characteristics of lone parents on different destinations. This helps to show which lone parents have been able to make the transition from benefits to work, as well as those who have remained on benefits or moved to other destinations.

The lone parents covered by the survey were all due to lose their eligibility for IS between January and March 2011, approximately one year before they were interviewed in the second wave of the survey. As a result, we were able to examine the destinations of these lone parents immediately after their eligibility for IS ended, as well as longer-term destinations in the subsequent year or so.

Section 2.1 looks at the immediate destinations of lone parents after leaving IS, while Section 2.2 examines longer-term destinations. In Section 2.3, we look at the characteristics of lone parents on different destinations.

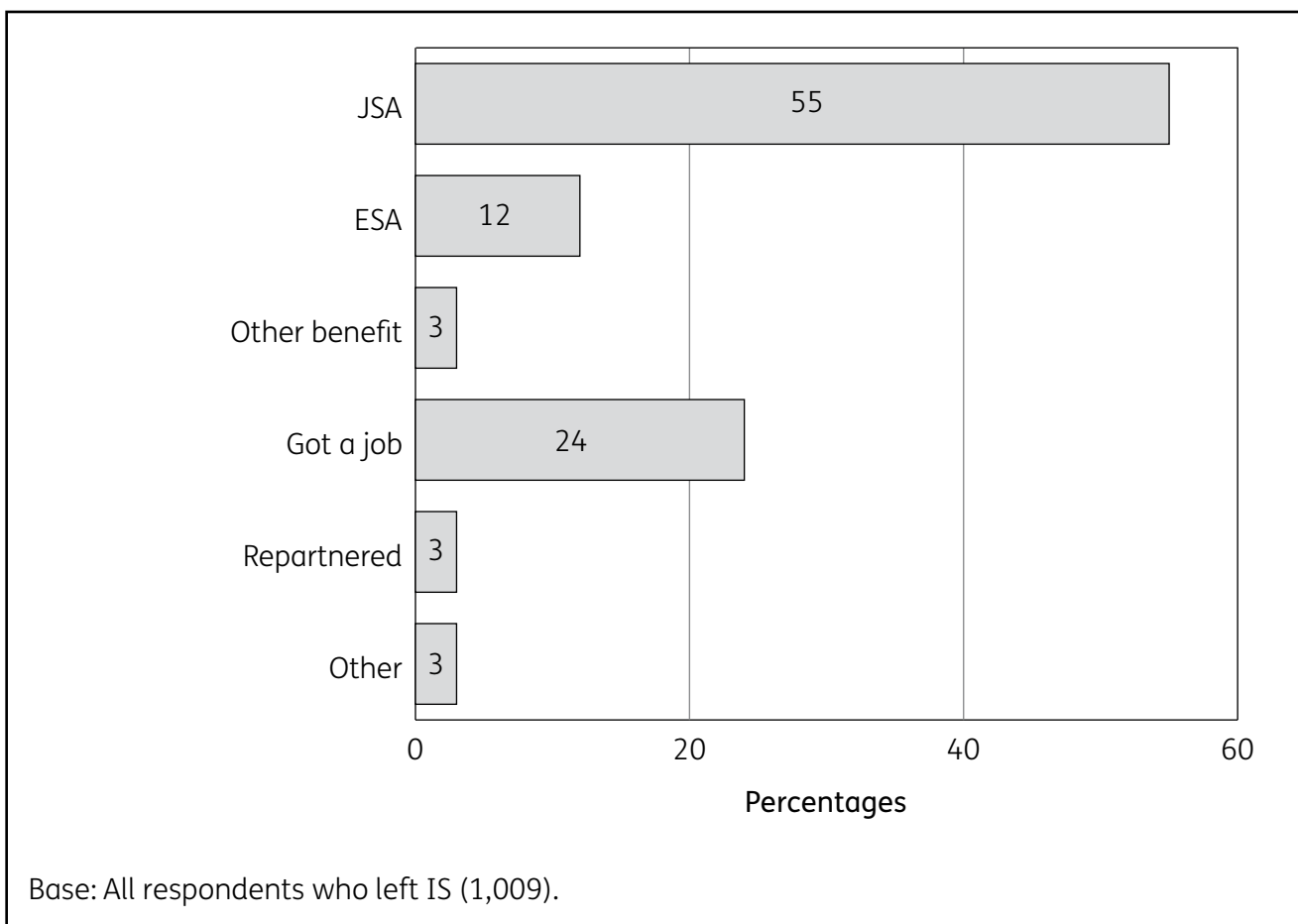
2.1 Immediate destinations

A proportion of lone parents covered by the survey remained on IS, as they were exempt from the Lone Parent Obligations (LPO) changes. This was either because they had another child, or because they were receiving Carer's Allowance or were foster carers.

The Wave 2 survey excluded respondents who were known to be exempt from the LPO changes, according to administrative data. In addition, 79 respondents (seven per cent of the total sample) were identified during the interview as still being on IS.

The analysis in this chapter excludes lone parents who remained on IS, and focuses on the destinations of those who became ineligible for IS.¹² Figure 2.1 shows the destinations of these respondents immediately after leaving IS. The findings are based on respondents' own answers, rather than administrative data. Lone parents were most likely to say that they moved on to Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) (55 per cent), while 12 per cent moved on to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and three per cent moved on to another benefit. Around one in four (24 per cent) said they got a job, while three per cent re-partnered and three per cent had an 'other' destination.

¹² The qualitative research noted that some lone parents who were exempt from LPO nevertheless moved on to another benefit. The research cited evidence of some potentially unnecessary journeys by customers who had been advised to claim another benefit. In practice, this means that a small number of respondents included in this chapter – who moved off IS – may have been exempt from LPO.

Figure 2.1 Immediate destination after leaving IS

Not all lone parents moved off IS at the same time that their eligibility ended. In particular, those moving into work left IS at different times. Analysis of those who got a job immediately after claiming IS shows that:

- 48 per cent moved off IS into work before their IS eligibility was due to end. In some cases, this may indicate an ‘anticipation effect’, in which lone parents moved off benefits before being required to move to JSA. However, some respondents may have found work and moved off IS at this time anyway, irrespective of the LPO changes, and this is confirmed in Section 3.1, which describes how movement into work can often be related to life changes or opportunities;
- 23 per cent moved into work at around the time their IS eligibility was due to end¹³;
- 29 per cent started work after their scheduled IS end date. This suggests that these respondents had a short gap between leaving IS and starting work, where they did not claim another benefit.

¹³ The second category (moved into work at around the time their IS eligibility ended) included respondents who said they started work between January and March 2011. It would be possible to analyse this group more precisely, by comparing the job start date with the scheduled IS end date for each individual. However, this level of precision is not warranted, due to possible inaccuracy in the dates given by respondents, and the possibility that eligibility for IS did not actually end at exactly the same time as the scheduled date.

2.2 Longer-term destinations

In this section, we look at the longer-term destinations of lone parents after moving off IS.

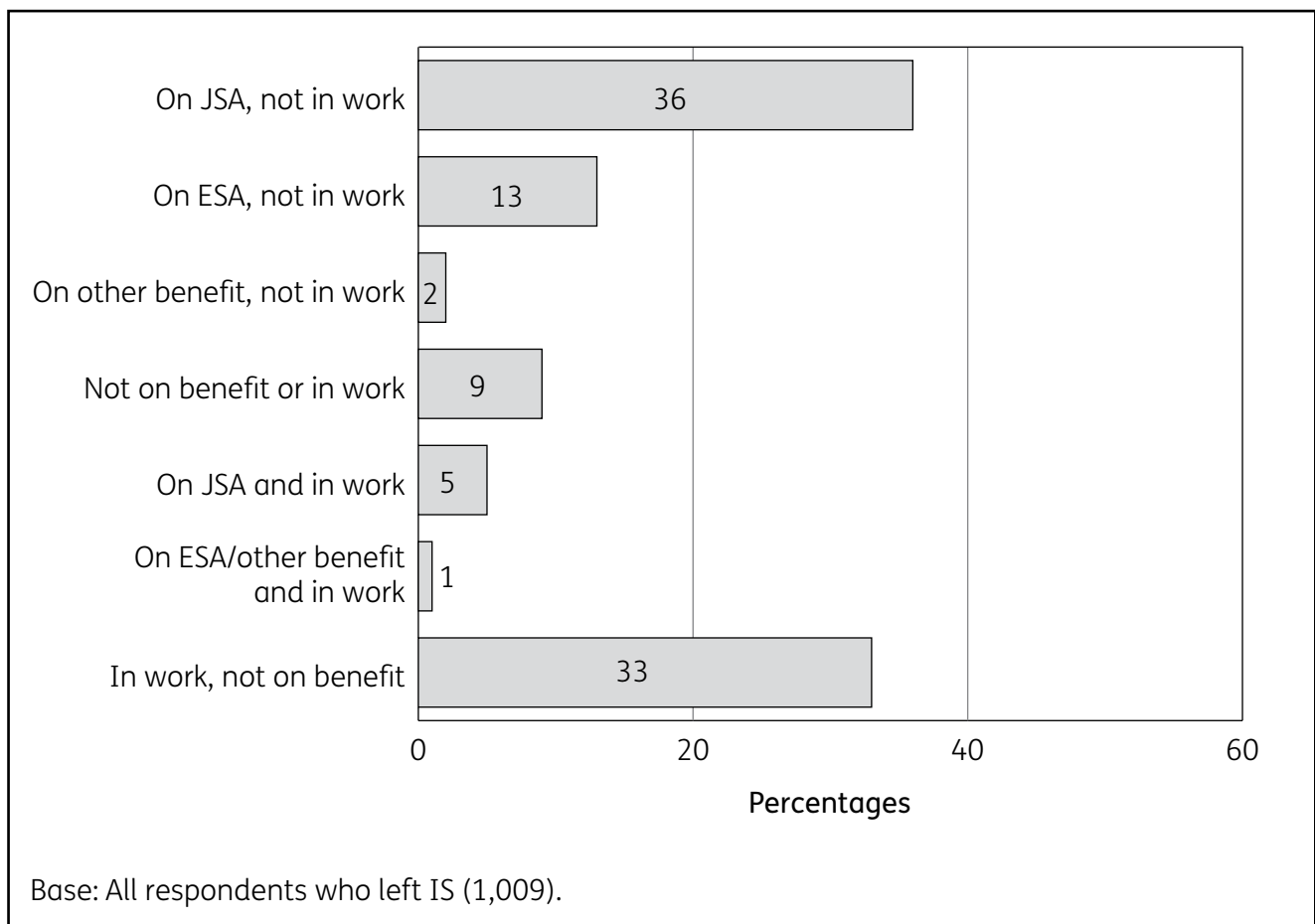
2.2.1 Status at the time of the Wave 2 interview

Firstly, we can see the status of lone parents at the time of the Wave 2 interview, approximately one year after their eligibility for IS was scheduled to end.

When interviewed at Wave 2, over one-third of respondents (36 per cent) were receiving JSA and were not working, while 13 per cent were on ESA. In total, 51 per cent of respondents were on a benefit and were not in work. A further nine per cent were neither working nor on benefits.

In total, 39 per cent of lone parents were in work at the time of the Wave 2 interview, including six per cent who were working (under 16 hours per week) while claiming benefits, most commonly JSA.

Figure 2.2 Status at the time of the Wave 2 interview



2.2.2 Lone parent journeys after Income Support ends

We can now look in more detail at the journeys that lone parents made between losing eligibility for IS and the Wave 2 interview. As already established in the qualitative research, the journeys that lone parents experience on LPO are 'wide-ranging and disparate' (Casebourne *et al.*, 2010). There are various permutations of possible journeys, involving spells of work and various benefits, so we have summarised the journeys into eight categories. These are shown in Figure 2.3 and described below.

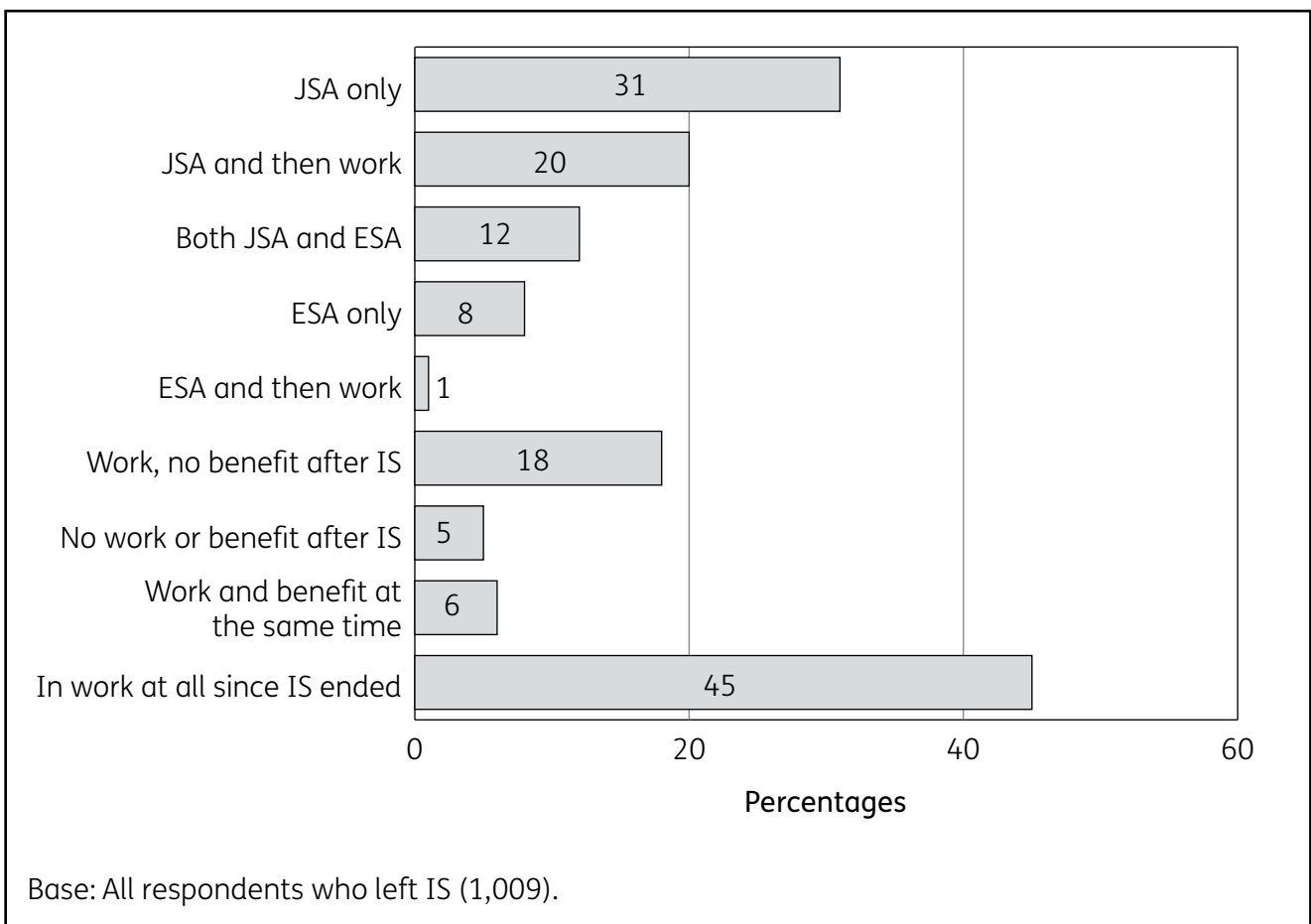
A total of 45 per cent of respondents had been in work at some point after leaving IS. This includes respondents who were initially on JSA or ESA, who then moved into work (20 per cent and one per cent respectively), as well as 18 per cent who had worked but had not been on any other benefit since leaving IS. A further six per cent had been in work while claiming a benefit at the same time (most commonly JSA).

Almost one in three lone parents (31 per cent) had only claimed JSA since their IS eligibility ended; they had not worked and had not claimed another out of work benefit. Most of these respondents had claimed JSA continuously since moving off IS, while the remainder had breaks in their JSA claim or did not start their JSA claim immediately after leaving IS.

Eight per cent of lone parents had only claimed ESA since moving off IS. In addition, 12 per cent of respondents had claimed both JSA and ESA at some point since leaving IS. Most of these respondents were initially on JSA and then had a subsequent ESA claim (65 per cent), while the others moved from ESA to JSA (e.g. when found fit for work in their Work Capability Assessment (WCA)).

Combining the various categories, a total of 68 per cent of respondents had claimed JSA at some point since their IS eligibility ended, while 23 per cent had claimed ESA at some point. A final group of respondents (five per cent) had not worked or claimed benefit at all since leaving IS.

Figure 2.3 Lone parent journeys after IS ends



2.2.3 Outcome of Employment and Support Allowance claim

If respondents had received ESA at all since leaving IS, they were asked what the outcome was of their ESA claim.

As shown in Table 2.1, lone parents were equally likely to go on to the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) (15 per cent of all of those who had claimed ESA) as the Support Group (14 per cent), while a similar proportion had also been found fit for work (16 per cent). These figures confirm the diversity of this lone parent cohort in terms of distance from the labour market. In addition, some respondents said that they were not required to have a WCA (five per cent), while others said that they had either withdrawn their claim (five per cent) or that the claim had been closed (seven per cent).

Many of those with an existing ESA claim had not yet had a WCA (19 per cent of all those with an ESA claim), or were awaiting the decision (four per cent) or the outcome of a tribunal (three per cent).

Overall, these findings show that those who claimed ESA had a range of outcomes and experiences, including many where the outcome had not been resolved by the time of the Wave 2 interview. In addition, Section 2.2.2 indicated that many ESA claimants had also claimed JSA (either before or after their ESA claim). As a whole, the findings, therefore, show that many lone parents moving on to ESA had a complex journey and may not have had a smooth transition from IS to ESA. This confirms the findings of the qualitative research, which found that *'complex and difficult journeys were most likely to be experienced by lone parent customers who had moved from IS to ESA'* (Casebourne *et al.*, 2010).

Table 2.1 Outcome of ESA claim

All who have claimed ESA since leaving IS	
	%
WRAG	15
Support group	14
Fit for work	16
Not required to have WCA	5
Withdrew claim	5
Claim was closed	7
Have not yet had WCA	19
Awaiting tribunal	3
Awaiting decision	4
Other	8
Don't know	4
<i>Base: All currently on ESA/on ESA at all</i>	
225	

2.2.4 Participation on the Work Programme

Given that respondents' eligibility for IS ended around a year before they were interviewed, many will have become eligible for transfer to the Work Programme; specifically, those with JSA claims lasting 12 months (nine months if aged under 25) and those who had been in the ESA WRAG. In addition, some lone parents may have moved on to the Work Programme early, either by volunteering or at the discretion of Jobcentre Plus advisers.

In total, 12 per cent of respondents said that they had been on the Work Programme at some point.¹⁴ Almost all of these respondents went on to the Work Programme as part of a JSA claim, although a small proportion had been on ESA (one per cent of respondents overall).

2.3 Analysis of destinations

In this section, we provide more detailed analysis of the different destinations taken by lone parents. Firstly, we provide a brief summary of the characteristics of lone parents in the main destinations groups (e.g. JSA, ESA, work). We then look more systematically at lone parent characteristics, work orientation and childcare arrangements. As a result, this analysis will provide a thorough understanding of the key characteristics and circumstances that affect lone parent destinations.

Throughout the chapter, destinations are analysed by respondents' characteristics and circumstances as observed at Wave 1, as this shows the features that are associated with a movement on to different destinations.

When considering the destinations of lone parents in this survey, it is important to bear in mind that the sample is very diverse in terms of characteristics, circumstances and barriers to work. The Wave 1 report noted considerable diversity in terms of work experience, health and disability, qualifications and other characteristics. It also found that, overall, lone parents in this survey showed greater levels of need or deprivation than lone parents in the population and in turn, that lone parents in the population show greater levels of need than mothers with partners. As a result, many lone parents in the survey faced considerable challenges in moving into work.

2.3.1 Summary of key characteristics

This section summarises the key characteristics of lone parents according to the main destinations. These characteristics are examined in more detail in the next section (Section 2.3.2).

Lone parents were more likely to have **worked at all since leaving IS** if they had recent work experience or were actively looking for work while on IS. There was also a link between movement into work and access to informal childcare. Movement into work was also more common among lone parents with higher qualifications, those with access to a vehicle and those who lived in a rural area.

Lone parents with a limiting long-standing illness or disability (LLSI), especially those with mental-health problems, were less likely to move into work. Analysis also shows that those who were more family-focused in their attitudes and less concerned about the stigma of being on benefits were less likely than other respondents to have worked at all.

The majority of lone parents **claimed JSA** after their IS eligibility ended. Longer spells on JSA were more common among lone parents without qualifications and whose first language was not English, as well as those without vehicle access. Those who had spent longer out of work before transferring to JSA were also more likely to have had a prolonged spell on JSA.

Lone parents who had **claimed ESA** include a high proportion who had a child with an LSI, as well as those with an LLSI themselves. Those with responsibilities for caring for adults, as well as those with literacy or numeracy problems, were also more likely to have claimed ESA. It is worth noting that lone parents with a child entitled to the middle or higher rate of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) are exempt from the LPO changes, and so were likely to be excluded from this sample.

¹⁴ As is the case throughout this section, analysis focuses on respondents who left IS (i.e. it excludes the small number of survey respondents who continued their IS claim and were exempt from LPO changes).

Some respondents **had not been in work or on benefits** at all since their IS eligibility ended. At the time of the Wave 2 interview, nine per cent were neither in work nor receiving benefits, and five per cent had not been in work or on benefits at all since the end of their IS claim. Looking in more detail at those who were not in work or on benefit at the time of the Wave 2 survey, many of these had re-partnered since their IS claim (48 per cent). This group was also younger than average, often with a large number of children (21 per cent of those with four or more children were neither in work nor on benefits at the time of the Wave 2 interview). Few respondents in this group had worked since leaving IS (nine per cent), and most were not looking for work (70 per cent). The income of these respondents was similar to others in the survey, often because of the presence of a partner or someone else in the household who was in work.

In total, nine per cent of lone parents had **re-partnered** by the time of the Wave 2 interview. As noted above, many of these were neither working nor claiming benefits at the time of the Wave 2 survey, while 23 per cent were in work and 28 per cent were claiming JSA. Those who re-partnered tended to be younger than average.

Lone parents were more likely to have been on the **Work Programme** if they had just one child (16 per cent) or if they had a child with special educational needs (16 per cent). The proportion who had been on the Work Programme was also higher among those with other adults in the household (excluding a partner) (16 per cent). However, overall there was very little variation in the proportion who had been on the Work Programme, according to different sub-groups.

Some of the lone parents who had been on the Work Programme were working fewer than 16 hours per week at the same time: eight per cent of those who had been on the Work Programme, and one per cent of respondents overall. This includes a group of lone parents who were originally working while claiming IS, and who continued to work fewer than 16 hours per week, firstly in the transition from IS to JSA, and then when moving on to the Work Programme.

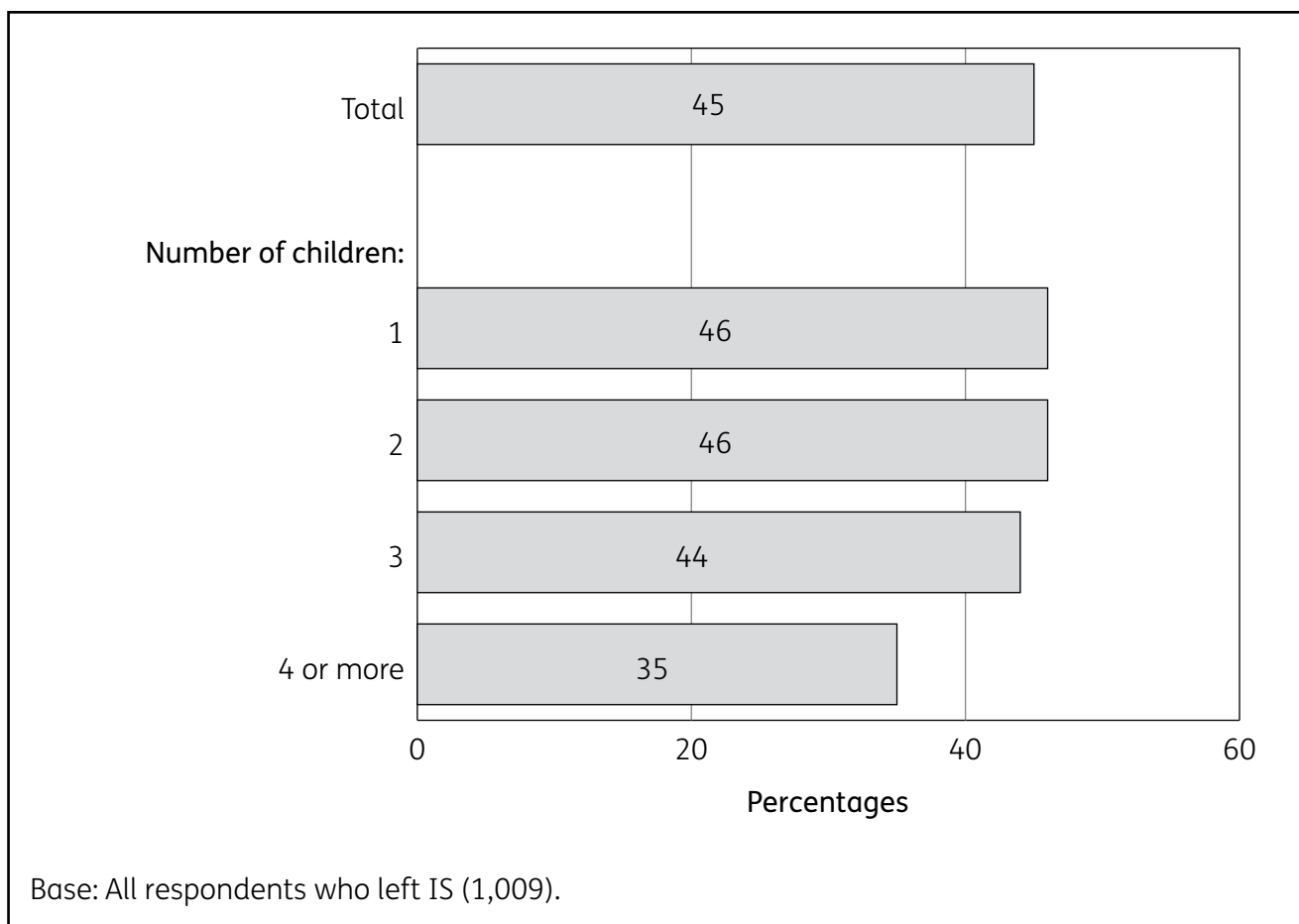
2.3.2 Characteristics of lone parents on different destinations

In this section, we look in more detail at lone parent destinations, according to key characteristics. This analysis focuses on characteristics that have been found to be important in determining entry to work or other destinations, and which were found to be distinctive or important in the Wave 1 analysis.

Children

Lone parents were less likely to have worked since leaving IS if they had four or more children (35 per cent). When looking at immediate destinations after leaving IS, the proportion that moved into work ranged from 28 per cent of those with one child, to 14 per cent of those with four or more children. Those with four or more children were also more likely than other respondents to have neither been in work nor on benefits since leaving IS.

There were no differences in destinations according to the age of children. Previous research has indicated that mothers of children with larger age gaps tend to return to employment more quickly (Brewer and Paull, 2006), but there is no evidence of this pattern for this group of lone parents.

Figure 2.4 Proportion in work at all since IS ended, by number of children

As shown in Table 2.2, lone parents with a dependent child with a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity (LSI) were less likely to have been in work since the end of their IS claim (39 per cent). They were also more likely than other respondents to have been on ESA since their eligibility for IS ended – either just ESA (13 per cent) or both ESA and JSA (17 per cent). This reflects the fact that lone parents were more likely to have a child with an LSI if they themselves also had an LSI, as reported at Wave 1.

Table 2.2 Destinations by whether dependent child has LSI

	Any dependent child has an LSI		
	Yes %	No %	Total %
Long-term destinations			
JSA only	26	33	31
JSA and then work	17	21	20
Both JSA and ESA	17	10	12
ESA only	13	6	8
ESA and then work	1	1	1
Work, no benefit after IS	12	20	18
No work or benefit after IS	6	4	5
Work and benefit at the same time	8	5	6
In work at all since IS ended	39	47	45
<i>Base: All who left IS</i>	286	723	1,009

Illness and disability

Around one in five lone parents in the sample (21 per cent) said that they had an LLSI. The destinations for these lone parents were different from other respondents, with a much lower proportion going into work (31 per cent), while a large proportion had been on ESA (50 per cent). Despite having an LLSI, many of these respondents had also been on JSA, including 22 per cent who had claimed both JSA and ESA. The qualitative research noted that '*lone parent customers with medical conditions experienced the most disparate range of destinations*' (Casebourne et al., 2010).

The lower entry into work among lone parents with an LLSI reflects findings from previous research. For example, health status was the only factor that was always independently significant to achieving work entry or benefit exits in analysis of destinations in the evaluation of lone parent Work Focused Interviews (WFI) (Thomas, 2007).

Table 2.3 Destinations by limiting long-standing illness, disability or infirmity

	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	Any dependent child has an LSI		
	Yes %	No %	Total %
Long-term destinations			
JSA only	22	33	31
JSA and then work	15	22	20
Both JSA and ESA	22	9	12
ESA only	24	3	8
ESA and then work	1	1	1
Work, no benefit after IS	10	20	18
No work or benefit after IS	2	6	5
Work and benefit at the same time	5	6	6
In work at all since IS ended	31	49	45
<i>Base: All who left IS</i>	219	790	1,009

We can analyse respondents with an LSI further, in terms of whether they had a physical and/or mental-health condition. This analysis shows that those with a mental-health condition were less likely to have been in work at all since their IS claim ended (27 per cent compared with 37 per cent of those with a physical condition). Those with a mental-health condition were also more likely to have claimed ESA (53 per cent compared with 45 per cent of those with a physical condition).

Qualifications

There is a broad distinction between those with high level qualifications, who were more likely to move into work, and those on lower qualifications, who were more likely to remain on JSA. This pattern is illustrated in Table 2.4. Previous research has also found lone parents' work entry to be associated with higher qualifications, and this increases if the lone parent improves their educational attainment while out of work (Marsh and Vegeris, 2004).

Specifically, the proportion who moved into work after their IS eligibility ended – and had not been on benefits at all – ranges from ten per cent of those without any qualifications to 27 per cent of those qualified to level 4 or above. The proportion who had only been on JSA since their IS eligibility ended (i.e. they had not been in work or on any other benefits) was highest among those without any qualifications (37 per cent).

Table 2.4 Destinations by qualification level

	Highest qualification level					Column percentages
	None	Entry level/ level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4 or above	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Long-term destinations						
JSA only	37	29	29	30	27	31
JSA and then work	17	21	23	22	15	20
Both JSA and ESA	13	10	13	10	11	12
ESA only	13	9	6	3	6	8
ESA and then work	1	1	0	1	3	1
Work, no benefit after IS	10	15	19	22	27	18
No work or benefit after IS	4	8	4	7	5	5
Work and benefit at the same time	5	7	6	5	4	6
In work at all since IS ended	34	45	49	50	50	45
<i>Base: All who left IS</i>	271	130	306	120	155	1,009

Language and literacy

Respondents who reported literacy or numeracy problems at Wave 1 were less likely to have moved into work by the time of the Wave 2 interview (35 per cent), and work was less likely to be their immediate destination after leaving IS. A relatively large proportion of respondents with literacy or numeracy problems moved on to ESA (in total, 32 per cent had been on ESA at some point). This confirms the overlap between literacy/numeracy problems and illness or disability, which was noted in the Wave 1 report. The lower proportion moving into work is consistent with previous research, such as the evaluation of lone parent WFIs (Thomas and Griffiths, 2004).

Lone parents whose first language was not English were also less likely than other respondents to have moved into work after their IS eligibility ended (37 per cent). A relatively high proportion had stayed on JSA without moving into work (39 per cent). Previous evidence suggests that language skills could be a barrier to work for these lone parents, as could cultural beliefs about the role of women in the workplace (Tackey *et al.*, 2006).

The findings for these and other sub-groups are summarised in Figure 2.5.

Other characteristics

Respondents with caring responsibilities for adults were less likely to have been in work since their eligibility for IS ended (38 per cent). A relatively large proportion of those with caring responsibilities had been on ESA (31 per cent) – often in the Support Group – and this includes a large proportion who had been on both JSA and ESA.

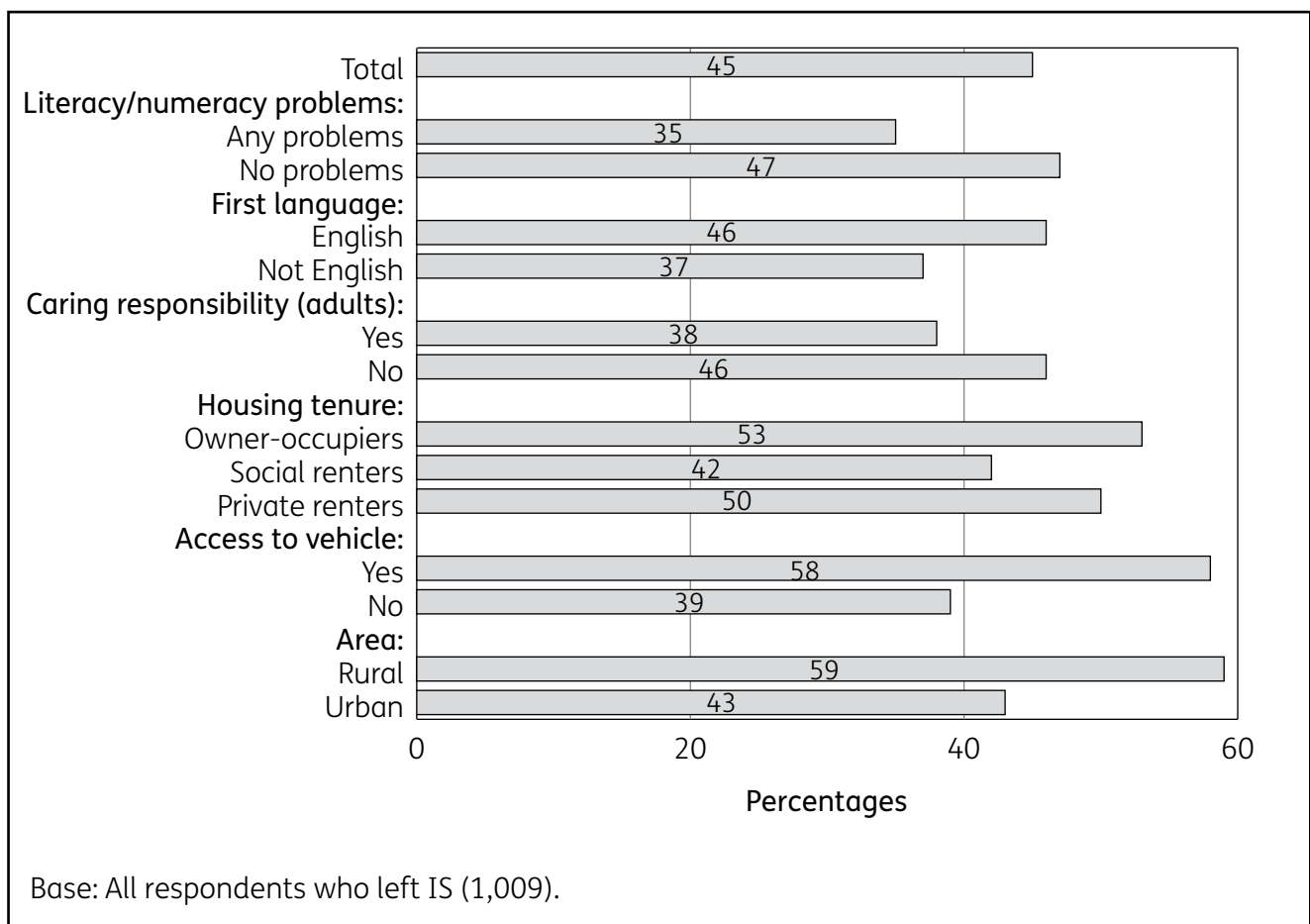
Owner-occupiers and private renters were more likely than social renters to have been in work at any time since their IS claim ended (53 per cent, 50 per cent and 42 per cent respectively). Previous evidence suggests that this may be related to the characteristics of respondents in different tenures, rather than aspects of their housing per se (Fletcher *et al.*, 2008).

There were large differences in the proportion who moved into work, according to vehicle access.

Over half (58 per cent) of those with access to a vehicle had worked since leaving IS, compared with 39 per cent of those without vehicle access. Correspondingly, the proportion that stayed on JSA (without moving into work or any other benefit) was much higher among those without vehicle access (36 per cent, compared with 21 per cent of those with vehicle access). Evans *et al.*, (2004) also found access to a car to be positively associated with movement into work among lone parents, and it has also been found to be an important driver of work entry for other benefit claimants. This is both because of its practical benefits, in providing greater access to workplaces and jobsearch opportunities, and because possession of a driving licence can be viewed as a type of ‘qualification’ or credential (Hales *et al.*, 2003).

Lone parents living in rural areas were much more likely than those in urban areas to have been in work since their IS eligibility ended (59 per cent compared with 43 per cent). Reflecting this pattern, Evans *et al.*, (2004) found the probability of entering work to be lower among lone parents living in London, the South East and North West regions (all more urban areas).

Figure 2.5 Proportion in work at all since IS ended, by various characteristics



2.3.3 Destinations by work orientation

This section looks at destinations according to respondents’ work orientation: their working background, their attitudes and expectations regarding work, and their barriers to work. The analysis focuses on work orientation as observed at Wave 1; this allows us to examine the way future destinations varied according to this orientation.

Looking for work

As might be expected, respondents who were looking for work at the time of the Wave 1 survey were more likely than those who were not looking for work to have found a job after their IS claim ended (48 per cent compared with 30 per cent).

A relatively high proportion of those who were not looking for work moved on to ESA (29 per cent). Table 2.5 provides details.

Table 2.5 Destinations by whether looking for work

	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	Looking for work at Wave 1	Not looking for work at Wave 1	Total
Long-term destinations	%	%	%
JSA only	34	34	31
JSA and then work	24	18	20
Both JSA and ESA	11	15	12
ESA only	4	13	8
ESA and then work	1	1	1
Work, no benefit after IS	19	8	18
No work or benefit after IS	4	7	5
Work and benefit at the same time	4	4	6
In work at all since IS ended	48	30	45
<i>Base: All who left IS</i>	<i>439</i>	<i>419</i>	<i>1,009</i>

Barriers and attitudes to work

Analysis of destinations in relation to barriers to work (as observed in the Wave 1 survey) confirms some of the sub-group patterns highlighted above. In particular, lone parents who said that they had difficulties owing to a health condition or disability were less likely to have moved into work, as were those who cared for someone with a health condition, disability or behavioural difficulties. In addition, respondents who said at Wave 1 that they had personal or family troubles that needed to be sorted out were less likely to have worked since their IS claim ended.

Lone parents' attitudes to work also had a bearing on destinations. When looking at the various attitudes to work covered in the 'Choices and Constraints' module, the 'family focused' statements are correlated with a lower probability of moving into work. In particular, lone parents who said (at Wave 1) that their children wouldn't like them to work, and those who agreed at Wave 1 that they 'might get a job one day but looking after my children is what I want to do now' were less likely to have been in work.

The perceived 'status' of being in work or on benefits also has a bearing on destinations. Respondents who said at Wave 1 that 'no-one should ever feel badly about claiming social security benefits' were less likely to have moved into work after their IS claim ended. By contrast statements expressing a strong commitment to work, such as 'I have always thought I would work' and 'a person must have a job to feel a full member of society' are positively related to job entry. This reflects previous research which found that the desire to work was the single factor consistently significant to achieving work entry and benefit exit among lone parents (Thomas, 2007).

As a whole, these findings confirm that attitudes and motivations, as well as characteristics and circumstances, are important factors in whether lone parents move into work.

2.3.4 Childcare arrangements

This section looks at destinations in relation to the childcare arrangements that respondents had in place at Wave 1. This shows the extent to which those who already had access to childcare support while they were not working were more likely to move into work.

As shown in Table 2.6, respondents who were using formal childcare while they were not working at Wave 1 were no more likely to move in to work than respondents who were not using any childcare. However, if lone parents were using informal childcare while they were not working, they were more likely than other respondents to move into work after the end of their IS claim.

This suggests that having access to informal childcare can be important in helping lone parents to make the transition into work. As noted in Chapter 4, informal childcare is also associated with longer working hours, because lone parents tend to use informal childcare for a greater number of hours than formal childcare. The qualitative research also noted that strong social networks were a potential asset in moving into work, particularly where family members could help with childcare at short notice.

Table 2.6 Destinations by childcare arrangements at Wave 1

	Childcare arrangements at Wave 1			Total
	No childcare arrangements	Used formal childcare	Used informal childcare	
Long-term destinations	%	%	%	%
JSA only	37	30	29	34
JSA and then work	22	21	20	21
Both JSA and ESA	14	12	9	13
ESA only	9	9	8	9
ESA and then work	1	2	1	1
Work, no benefit after IS	10	15	22	13
No work or benefit after IS	4	10	8	5
Work and benefit at the same time	5	2	3	4
In work at all since IS ended	37	39	47	39
<i>Base: All who left IS and who were not in work at Wave 1</i>	501	122	283	866

2.3.5 Regression analysis

As seen above, a number of different characteristics were associated with being in work. In order to identify the most influential factors affecting lone parents being in work after the end of their IS claim, binary logistic regression analysis was carried out. This analysis showed that the most influential characteristics in a move into work were whether respondents had recent work experience, whether they had an LLSI and whether they had access to a vehicle. Also important were whether they had any formal qualifications, whether they lived in an urban or rural area, and whether they had used informal childcare while they were not working.

2.4 Changing profile of lone parent cohort

The literature review for this evaluation noted the international evidence on the changing composition of the benefit population, as the implementation of work-related regimes (such as LPO) affects the caseload over time (Finn and Gloster, 2010). Essentially, the evidence indicates that over time the ‘welfare population’ comprises a higher proportion of those who have greater barriers to employment.

We can examine this issue in relation to LPO, by looking at the profile of the lone parent cohort when on IS at Wave 1, and comparing this with the profile of the lone parents who were on JSA or ESA at Wave 2. It is worth noting that this analysis excludes those who remained on IS (who were exempt from LPO).

This comparison shows that in many respects, the profile of lone parents on the different benefits was similar (see Table 2.7). The main differences were that (as expected) lone parents on ESA were more likely to have an LLSI, and that lone parents on ESA were also more likely to have a dependent child with an LSI. Those on JSA tended to be older and had fewer dependent children, compared with the original IS cohort.

Table 2.7 Comparison of profile of lone parents on benefits: Wave 1 versus Wave 2

	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	Profile of lone parent cohort:		
	on IS (Wave 1)	on JSA (Wave 2)	on ESA (Wave 2)
Highest qualification level:			
No qualifications	31	32	36
Entry level/level 1	13	12	15
Level 2	30	31	27
Level 3	10	10	8
Level 4 or above	14	13	12
Lone parent has LLSI	22	19	52
Mental-health condition	12	11	35
Physical condition	19	18	42
Lone parent has child with LSI	30	26	45
English not main language	13	13	9
Access to vehicle	28	24	25
Literacy/numeracy problems	18	18	22
Caring responsibilities for adults	9	8	14
Number of children			
1	32	38	27
2	38	35	49
3	20	19	17
4 or more	10	8	8
Age			
Under 25	6	3	2
25–34	50	43	49
35–44	37	46	39
45 or over	7	8	10
<i>Base: Respondents on various benefits at Wave 1/2</i>	<i>2,602</i>	<i>418</i>	<i>138</i>

2.5 Summary

- This chapter has examined the destinations of lone parents after leaving IS. The analysis excludes those who were exempt from the LPO changes and remained on IS. Immediately after leaving IS, lone parents were most likely to say that they moved on to JSA (55 per cent), while 12 per cent claimed ESA, and 24 per cent got a job.
- Longer-term destinations (in the year or so after IS eligibility ended) showed that 45 per cent of lone parents had worked at some point since their IS claim ended, including six per cent who had worked (fewer than 16 hours per week) and claimed benefits at the same time.
- The majority of respondents (68 per cent) had claimed JSA at some point since they left IS, and 31 per cent had only claimed JSA – they had not worked at all or claimed another benefit during this time.
- Around one in four (23 per cent) had claimed ESA since leaving IS, including 12 per cent who had claimed both JSA and ESA. There was a range of outcomes on ESA, including equal proportions who were in the WRAG, the Support Group and found fit for work.
- In total, 12 per cent of respondents had been on the Work Programme, mostly as part of a JSA claim.
- Five per cent of lone parents had neither worked nor claimed a benefit at all since they left IS; many of these respondents had re-partnered.
- Lone parents were more likely to have worked at any time since leaving IS if they had recent work experience or were actively looking for work while on IS. Those who had used informal childcare while they were not working were also more likely to have moved into work. Movement into work was also more common among lone parents with higher qualifications, those with access to a vehicle and those who lived in a rural area.
- Lone parents with an LLSI, especially those with mental-health problems, were less likely to have moved into work. Those who were more family-focused in their attitudes and less concerned about the stigma of being on benefits were less likely than other respondents to have worked at all.
- Longer spells on JSA were more common among lone parents without qualifications and whose first language was not English, as well as those without vehicle access. Those who had spent longer out of work were also more likely to have had a prolonged spell on JSA.
- Lone parents who had claimed ESA included a high proportion who had a child with an LSI, as well as those with an LLSI themselves. Those with responsibilities for caring for adults, as well as those with literacy or numeracy problems, were also more likely to have claimed ESA.
- The profile of JSA and ESA claimants (as observed at Wave 2) was similar to the original cohort of lone parents on IS (at Wave 1), although those on ESA were more likely to have an LLSI and to have a dependent child with an LSI, while those on JSA were older and with fewer dependent children.

3 Experience of work

This chapter looks in more detail at respondents who had been in work since they left Income Support (IS). It examines whether they were able to remain in work over time, and also looks at the characteristics of the jobs, including hours worked. It also looks at the availability of flexible working arrangements.

3.1 Entry into work

In total, 45 per cent of lone parents who left IS had worked at some point since their IS claim ended. The characteristics of these lone parents have been discussed in the previous chapter.

These respondents can be broken down as follows, in terms of their timing of entry into work:

- 17 per cent had started work while they were still on IS;
- 45 per cent started work immediately after they left IS;
- 35 per cent initially moved on to Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) after their IS eligibility ended, before subsequently moving into work.

Previous research has shown that it is often a life event or change of circumstances that enables lone parents to enter work, such as their children getting older (Sims *et al.*, 2010). Respondents who had started a new job since Wave 1 were asked whether something had changed that made it possible for them to start work at that time, and 37 per cent said that something had changed. This included:

- a suitable job coming up (for 28 per cent of those in work as a result of circumstances changing);
- children getting older (14 per cent);
- children starting school (for 13 per cent);
- finishing training or an educational course (ten per cent).

Other research has identified the financial security offered by employment to be an important trigger for lone parents starting work (see, for example, Ridge and Millar 2008).

3.2 Is work sustained?

The sustainability of work has been identified as a crucial factor in reducing worklessness among the population of benefit claimants. Research on lone parents has also found that more sustained work could make a substantial impact on the total number of lone parents in employment (Evans *et al.*, 2004).

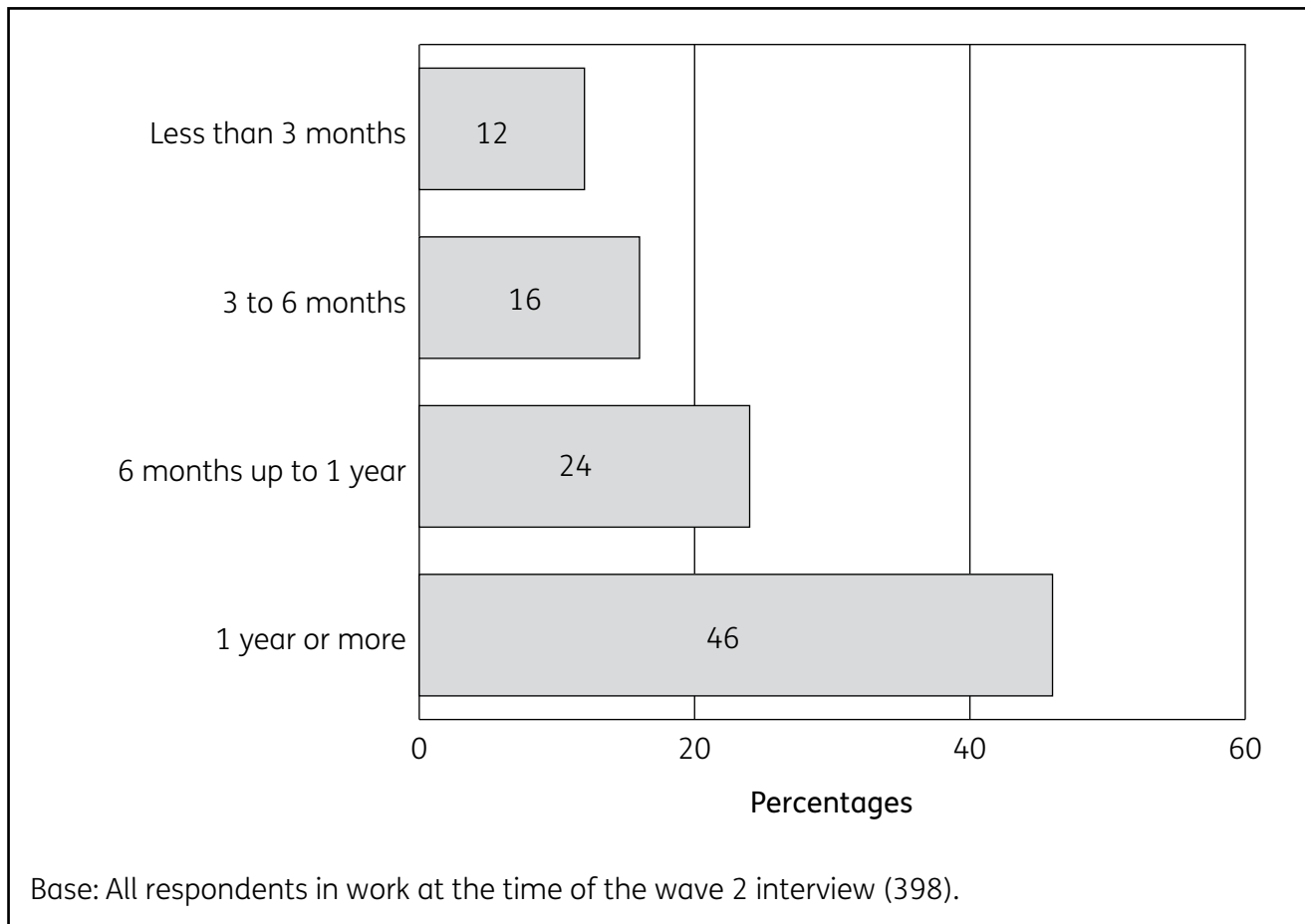
When interviewed at Wave 2 (around a year after the ending of IS eligibility), most respondents who had been in work had worked in just one job (82 per cent), while 16 per cent had been in two jobs and two per cent had worked in three or more different jobs.

The majority of respondents (84 per cent) were still in work and, as shown in Figure 3.1, many of these had been in their job for some time. Those that had been in a job for a year or more included the lone parents who had already started their job while on IS.

Only a small number of respondents (73) had left a job that they had been in since leaving IS.

Around one in three had stayed in the job for less than three months, but others had stayed in the job for a longer period of time (one in three were in the job for six months or more).

Figure 3.1 Length of time in current job



Overall, this analysis shows that most lone parents had managed to stay in work beyond the transitional stage from benefits to work, which can be difficult for lone parents to manage, and that many had already been in work for a year or more. However, because most respondents started work only recently, it is not possible to assess the extent to which jobs were sustained in the longer term. Previous research found that lone parents were almost twice as likely to leave their job as non-lone parents (Evans *et al.*, 2004). However, this survey is not able to assess the impact of LPO on lone parents' ability to stay in work in the longer-term.

3.2.1 Characteristics of lone parents in unsustained work

We now examine respondent characteristics according to whether they were still in work at Wave 2, in order to identify the characteristics associated with leaving work at an early stage.

As shown in Table 3.1, there were differences in terms of hours worked: those working longer hours were more likely to stay in work than those working fewer than 16 hours per week. In addition, those who started work after a spell on JSA or ESA were less likely to stay in work (24 per cent) than those who started the job immediately after leaving IS and those who had started working while they were still on IS.

Respondents were also less likely to stay in work if they had a limiting long-standing illness, disability or infirmity (30 per cent), particularly those with a mental-health problem, while those who were less well qualified were also less likely to remain in work (20 per cent of those who were qualified to no higher than level 1). As well as having more difficulty in sustaining work, the previous chapter showed that these sub-groups were also less likely to move into work (at all).

Table 3.1 Profile of sustained and unsustainable work

	<i>Row percentages</i>	
	Still in work	No longer in work
	%	%
Total	84	16
Hours worked		
Fewer than 16 hours per week	75	25
16 hours per week	84	16
More than 16 hours per week	89	11
When started job		
While still on IS	85	15
Immediately after leaving IS	88	12
After spell on JSA or ESA	76	24

Base: All respondents who had worked since end of IS claim (483)

The main reasons why respondents left their job were that it was a fixed term or temporary job or because of redundancy (the number of respondents that left a job is too small for any further analysis).

3.3 Two or more jobs at the same time

Nine per cent of those who had worked since the end of their IS claim said they had worked in more than one job at the same time. This proportion was higher among those respondents who had started work while on IS (18 per cent). Among the small number of respondents that worked in more than one job at the same time, the main reasons were that they needed more money or to increase their hours so that they would move off benefits.

Although numbers are small, these findings indicate that a group of lone parents who were working fewer than 16 hours per week while claiming IS subsequently increased their hours by taking on another job, in order to move off JSA. This is discussed further below in relation to increasing hours in the same job (see Section 3.4.2).

3.4 Job characteristics

The majority (91 per cent) of those who had worked since the end of their IS claim worked as employees, while nine per cent were self-employed.

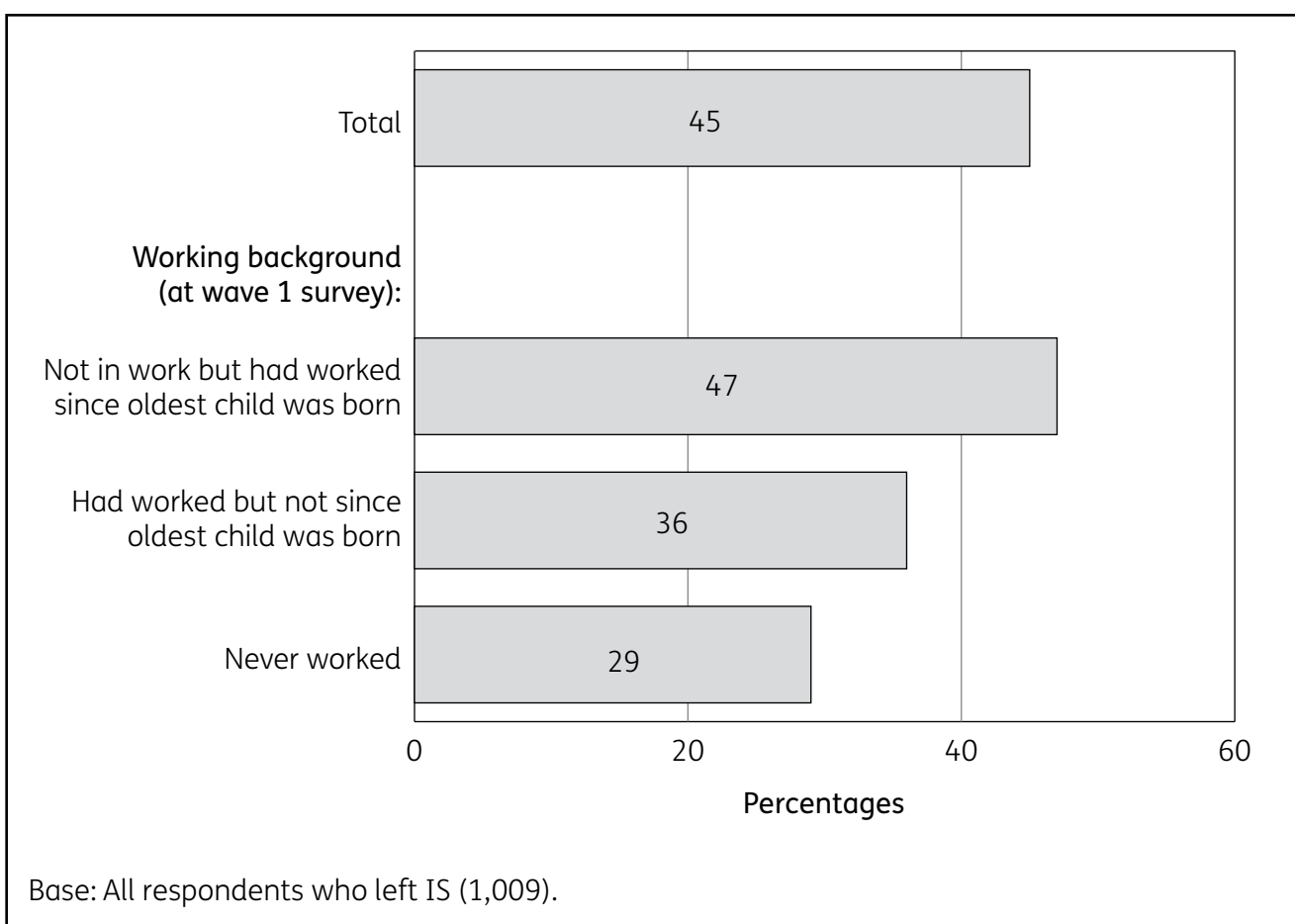
3.4.1 Hours

One in five respondents who had worked since the end of their IS claim were working fewer than 16 hours per week (22 per cent), while 37 per cent were working exactly 16 hours. Around one in eight worked 30 or more hours per week (13 per cent). Around half (46 per cent) of those working fewer than 16 hours per week were claiming benefit (mostly JSA) at the same time.

Work experience

Those with recent experience of work (as observed at the Wave 1 interview) were more likely to have gone on to work after their IS claim ended. As shown in Figure 2.6, 29 per cent of those who had never worked (at Wave 1) subsequently went into work, compared with 36 per cent who had worked but not since the birth of their oldest child, and 47 per cent of those who had worked since their oldest child was born. Those who had never worked were also more likely to have a sustained spell on JSA (41 per cent), compared with those who had not worked since the birth of their oldest child (37 per cent) and those who had worked since their oldest child was born (28 per cent).

Figure 2.6 Proportion in work at all since IS ended, by working background

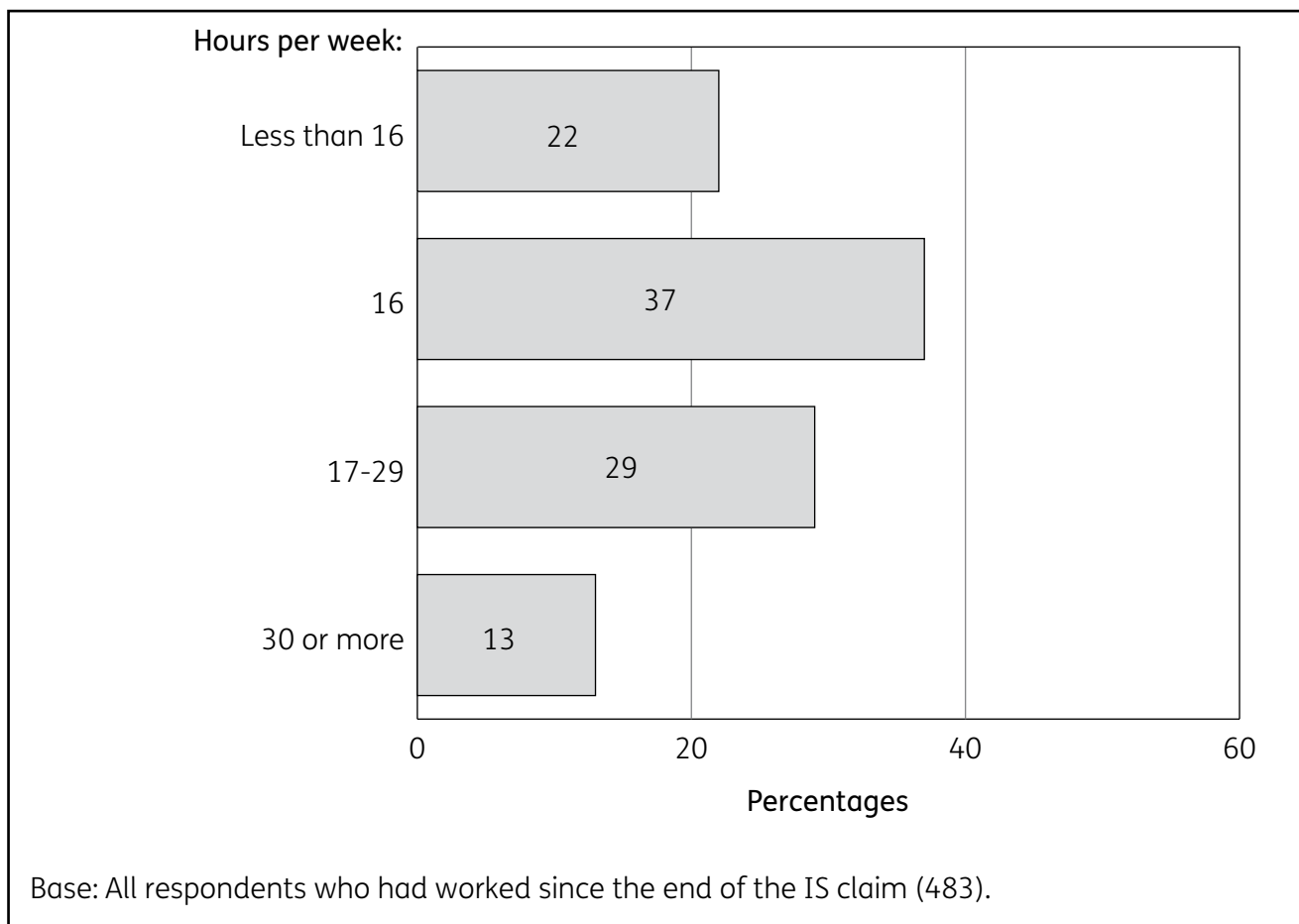


Those in work while on IS

The Wave 1 sample included a group of respondents who were working (fewer than 16 hours per week) while claiming IS. Most of these respondents were still working at the time of the Wave 2 interview: 24 per cent had continued working while moving to JSA, while 59 per cent had stayed in work but moved off benefits. The remainder were either claiming JSA without working (11 per cent) or were not in work or on benefits (five per cent).

In total, 12 per cent of these respondents had been on the Work Programme, and eight per cent said they continued to work (fewer than 16 hours per week) while on the Work Programme.

This group of respondents is discussed further in Chapter 3 in relation to working hours.

Figure 3.2 Hours worked

Respondents with a dependent child with a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity (LSI) were more likely to work fewer than 16 hours per week (32 per cent). There was also a link between hours worked and occupation, as discussed in Section 3.4.6.

If we compare the hours of these jobs with jobs that lone parents had done in the past¹⁵, we can see that they were less likely to be working 30 hours per week than in the past (15 per cent compared with 36 per cent) and more likely to be working between 16 and 29 hours (71 per cent compared with 46 per cent). The proportion working fewer than 16 hours per week was similar (13 per cent compared with 19 per cent). This corresponds with the findings from the Wave 1 report, which showed that lone parents tended to work fewer hours when they returned to work, compared with jobs they had done previously.

3.4.2 Increasing hours

One in six respondents (17 per cent) who were in work at the time of the Wave 2 survey said that they had increased their hours since they started the job.

The main reasons for increasing hours were that their employer asked them to do so or it was part of the job, to move off benefits, or because they needed more money.

¹⁵ These comparisons are based on those who had worked since they left IS, and who also had a previous job since the birth of their oldest child (as described at Wave 1).

Most of the respondents who had increased their hours said that it was very or fairly easy for them to do so (73 per cent), while 27 per cent said it was very or fairly difficult. These findings (and those in the previous paragraph on reasons for increasing hours) should be treated with caution due to the small number of respondents (59).

Table 3.2 examines the lone parents who had started a job while they were still claiming IS (and therefore were working fewer than 16 hours per week at that time), and who were still in work at the time of the Wave 2 interview. This analysis is based on fewer than 100 interviews, and, as such, caution should be exercised when interpreting these data. Some of these respondents (39 per cent) were still working fewer than 16 hours per week, while the majority were working 16 hours or more per week. Previous research has considered the extent to which lone parents working fewer than 16 hours per week can use this as a stepping stone to working more hours. Iacovou and Berthoud (2000) identified a pattern in which mothers moved from not working at all, through a transitional period in a mini-job, to working 16 or more hours per week. They suggested that a gradual transition might suit some people who found it difficult to move directly from not working to a 'full-time' job. However, Hales *et al.*, (2007) found no evidence for this when analysing Families and Children Study data, and Bell *et al.*, (2007) found quantitative evidence 'inconclusive' for the role of mini-jobs as a 'stepping stone' into work of longer hours. The evidence here suggests that a reasonable proportion of lone parents who were working in mini-jobs had increased their hours, although they tended to do so by only a small amount (as shown by the large proportion working exactly 16 hours per week).

One in six of these respondents (17 per cent) said that they had either increased the hours in their job, or taken on another job, in order to work more than 16 hours per week and, therefore, move off benefits. Although this is not necessarily linked to the LPO changes, it is likely that at least some of these lone parents increased their hours in order to avoid the change to claiming JSA. Moreover, other lone parents may have been influenced by the different conditionality regimes of IS (which does not strongly encourage claimants to work for 16 hours or more) and JSA (which does).

Table 3.2 Working hours of those who started job while on IS and still in work at Wave 2

	%
Fewer than 16 hours per week	39
16 hours per week	34
17–29 hours per week	22
30 or more hours per week	6
Increased hours or took on second job in order to move off benefits	17
<i>Base: All who started job while on IS and still in work at Wave 2</i>	82

3.4.3 Hours worked compared with preferences

We can compare the hours that respondents were working (as reported at Wave 2) with their preferences before they started work (at Wave 1). This shows that respondents who said they wanted to work 30 hours or more per week were often working fewer hours than this (in 67 per cent of cases – note that this analysis is based on fewer than 100 interviews, and as such caution should be exercised when interpreting this). By contrast, those who wanted to work exactly 16 hours per week were often (in 31 per cent of cases) working a greater number of hours. There was a spread of hours worked by those who had wanted to work between 17 and 29 hours per week.

Table 3.3 Hours worked, analysed by hours would like to work

Working hours in job:	Hours would like to work (as stated at Wave 1)		
	30 hours or more	17–29 hours	16 hours
	%	%	%
30 hours or more per week	34	9	4
17–29 hours per week	32	38	27
16 hours per week	21	35	49
Fewer than 16 hours per week	14	18	19
<i>Base: All who worked after IS claim ended, and who were not working at Wave 1</i>	73	103	172

Note: Respondents who said that they would like to work fewer than 16 hours per week are excluded from the table, because of the small number of cases.

We can also look at the maximum number of hours that respondents said they would be prepared to work, when interviewed at Wave 1. Again, many of those who were prepared to work 30 hours or more per week had actually moved into a job with fewer hours, and the same also applied to those who were prepared to work between 17 and 29 hours. In addition, a reasonable proportion (29 per cent) of those who said they would not be prepared to work more than 16 hours per week had actually moved into a job where they were working more than 16 hours per week.

Overall, this analysis suggests that many lone parents were working fewer hours than they would like or would be prepared to work, and therefore that there is scope (at least in theory) for these lone parents to increase their working hours. In this respect, the weak labour market at the time of the interview, in early 2012, may have hampered lone parents' attempts to increase their hours. At the same time, some lone parents had managed to work longer hours than they previously said they would be prepared to do, suggesting that some lone parents were more flexible in their hours than they had initially expected.

3.4.4 Working outside school hours

Among those who had worked since leaving IS, two in five respondents (41 per cent) worked during school hours only. The majority of those working fewer than 16 hours per week only worked during school hours (61 per cent), while the proportion was lower among those working 16 or more hours per week (36 per cent).

Once again, we can analyse these findings in relation to respondents' preferences before they started work (as stated at Wave 1). Most of those who said they would be prepared to work outside of school hours were doing this in their job – just 18 per cent of these respondents were only working during school hours. However, many of those who had said they would only work during school hours were actually in a job which involved working outside school hours (46 per cent). As with the analysis above on hours, this suggests that many lone parents were more flexible when taking up a job than they had previously anticipated. Note that the sub-groups used in the analysis are small (fewer than 100 respondents), so some caution should be used in interpretation.

Table 3.4 Working hours, analysed by hours prepared to work

Working hours in job:	When prepared to work (as stated at Wave 1)		
	Before or after school hours	School hours only	It depends
	%	%	%
In school hours only	18	52	35
Outside school hours only	42	23	29
Both in and outside school hours	37	23	35
It varies	1	3	1
<i>Base: All who worked after IS claim ended, and who were not working at Wave 1</i>	88	211	81

Column percentages

3.4.5 Industry sector

Respondents who had worked since the end of their IS claim were most likely to be working in the following industry sectors: wholesale, retail or repair (22 per cent), human health and social work activities (19 per cent), education (17 per cent), and accommodation and food service activities (16 per cent).

Respondents working fewer than 16 hours per week were particularly likely to be working in education (35 per cent), while those working 30 hours or more per week were more likely than other respondents to be working in human health and social work activities (29 per cent).

Comparing these jobs with work that lone parents had done in the past, the industry profile was similar, although respondents were more likely to have moved into jobs in education and in human health and social work, compared with the jobs they had done in the past.

3.4.6 Occupation

Previous research has shown the lone parent working population to be associated with lower-skilled occupations (see for example Maplethorpe *et al.*, 2010), and the analysis at Wave 1 showed that the jobs done by lone parents in this cohort were more likely to be in unskilled ('elementary') occupations, compared with the wider lone parent population.

Looking at the jobs that lone parents had done since leaving IS, respondents were most likely to work in elementary occupations (40 per cent), while the other common occupational groups were personal service occupations (23 per cent), and sales and customer-service occupations (19 per cent).

Compared to jobs that they had done in the past, lone parents were less likely to be in managerial positions (one per cent compared with six per cent) and were more likely to be working either in personal service occupations (23 per cent compared with 15 per cent) or in elementary occupations (36 per cent compared with 29 per cent).

There was a link between hours worked and occupation. Jobs in higher Standard Occupation Classification (SOC) groups, such as associate professional and technical occupations or personal service occupations, were more likely to be full-time jobs, while those in lower SOC groups were more likely to be for fewer than 16 hours per week. For example, 26 per cent of those working in elementary occupations worked for fewer than 16 hours per week, as did 25 per cent of those working in sales and customer-service jobs.

Related to this, the proportion working in elementary occupations was highest among those who had started their job while they were still on IS (56 per cent); this group was more likely than other respondents to work fewer than 16 hours per week.

There was also a link between SOC groups and level of qualification. Those qualified to level 4 or above were more likely to be in associate professional and technical occupations and in administrative and secretarial occupations, while the proportion working in elementary occupations ranged from 57 per cent among those qualified to no more than level 1, 42 per cent qualified to level 2, 26 per cent qualified to level 3, and just 11 per cent qualified to level 4 or above.

The findings on occupational level and hours worked reflect previous research, which has found that there are fewer part-time jobs available in higher level occupations (Grant *et al.*, 2005). A recent report also found a dearth of well-paid, part-time roles, alongside large numbers of women able to fill higher paid roles (Stewart *et al.*, 2012).

3.4.7 Permanent and temporary jobs

The vast majority (86 per cent) of respondents worked in permanent jobs, while nine per cent were in temporary jobs and five per cent had fixed term contracts. Lone parents were more likely to be in permanent jobs than they had been in the past (79 per cent in previous jobs), despite the fact that previous jobs were often in higher occupations.

3.4.8 Pay

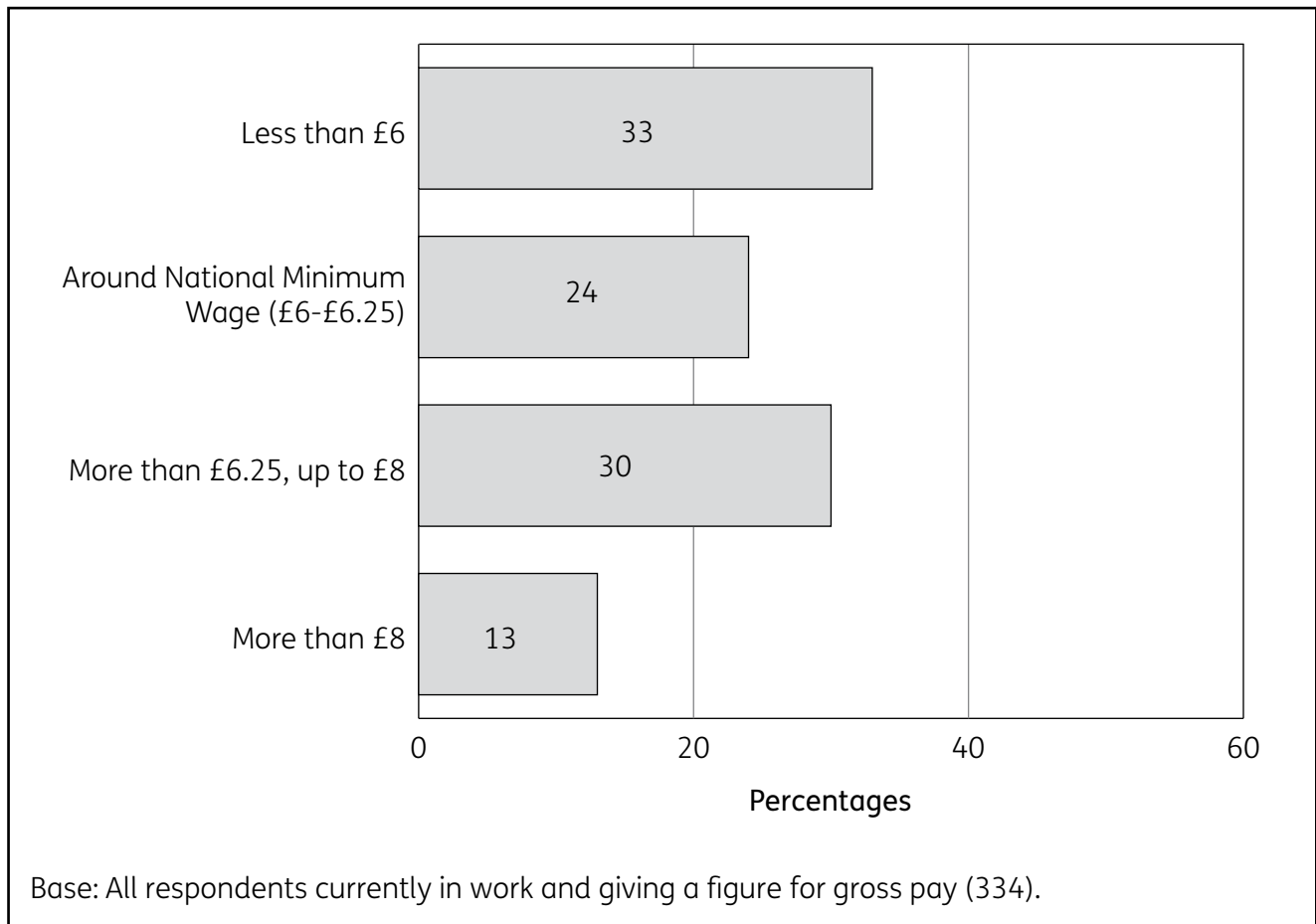
One in three respondents (33 per cent) said that their gross pay was less than £6 per hour, while around one in four (24 per cent) said that their gross pay was around the amount of the National Minimum Wage¹⁶, which was £6.08 per hour at the time of the survey. Details on hourly pay are shown in Figure 3.3.

As well as confirming that many lone parents were working in poorly paid jobs, this analysis suggests that a large proportion were being paid less than the National Minimum Wage. The precise figures should be treated with a degree of caution, because survey respondents can be inaccurate in providing financial details. It is also possible that, despite the question wording, some respondents gave a figure for 'net' pay rather than 'gross' pay.

Those working in elementary occupations were most likely to be earning less than £6 per hour (44 per cent), as were those who only worked during school hours (42 per cent).

In total, 40 per cent of respondents were earning less than £100 per week in their job, while 40 per cent were earning between £100 and £150. The remaining 20 per cent were earning more than £150 per week.

¹⁶ Respondents were categorised as having gross pay at around the amount of the National Minimum Wage if they gave a figure of between £6 and £6.25; this allows some margin around the exact figure of £6.08.

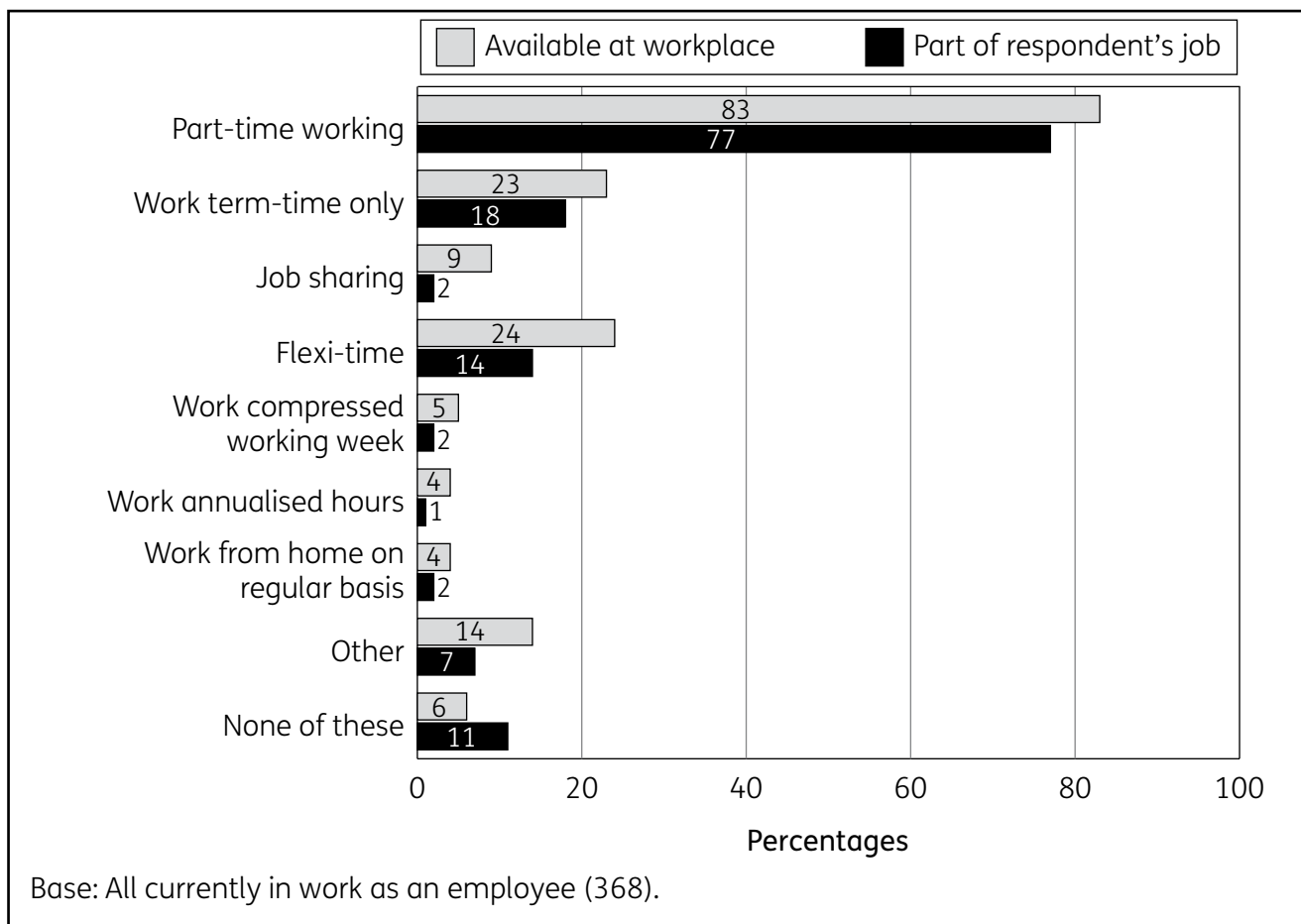
Figure 3.3 Hourly pay

3.4.9 Working arrangements

Flexible working arrangements have become more prevalent in recent years, and this has also been an important area of policy focus. Recent estimates suggest that 91 per cent of employees have access to at least one form of flexible working – most commonly part-time hours, flexi-time and job-sharing (Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), 2010b). It is also clear from previous research that lone parents' decisions about work can also be influenced by employers' flexibility (Bell *et al.*, 2005). In addition, the availability of flexible and family-friendly working arrangements can be a key element in lone parents' ability to balance work and care successfully, and therefore sustain employment (see for example, Ridge and Millar, 2008; Griffiths and Durkin, 2007).

Respondents who were working as an employee at the time of the Wave 2 interview were asked about the flexible working arrangements that were available at their workplace. In addition to part-time working, around one in four said that job-sharing was available, and a similar proportion said that it was possible to work in the term-time only.

The proportion of respondents who actually took advantage of these arrangements was smaller, although 38 per cent said that their job involved at least one of these types of flexible working (excluding part-time work).

Figure 3.4 Availability of flexible working arrangements, and whether part of job

Of those currently working as an employee, 23 per cent said that they would prefer a different working arrangement. The most common reason why respondents did not already work like this was because their current job did not allow this arrangement or suit it.¹⁷

The preference for a different working arrangement was higher among those working more hours (the proportion starts to increase once respondents work more than 24 hours per week). The most popular arrangement was flexi-time (mentioned by 41 per cent of those wanting a different arrangement).

Around three-quarters of current employees (74 per cent) said that their job included paid holidays, but only half (48 per cent) had sick pay and around one-third (36 per cent) said their employer offered a pension. It was very uncommon for employers to have a crèche or nursery at the workplace (just one per cent).

¹⁷ Under the Right to Request flexible working legislation, employees are entitled to request a different working arrangement, although employers are under no obligation to grant permission.

Table 3.5 Whether current employer offers any of the following benefits for any employees

	<i>Multiple responses included</i>
	%
Pension	36
Paid holidays	74
Sick pay	48
A car or van for your own private use	1
Creche or nursery at your workplace	1
Trade union membership	17
None of these	15
Don't know	4
<i>Base: All currently in work as an employee</i>	<i>368</i>

In the qualitative research (Lane *et al.*, 2011), lone parents who had moved into work felt that working had a positive effect on their lives, although they sometimes found it stressful combining work and family responsibilities. In the survey, around half of respondents who were currently working said that their job prevented them from giving the time they wanted to their children – at least some of the time (47 per cent). Findings vary according to the number of hours worked. Only 26 per cent of those working fewer than 16 hours per week said that that their job prevents them from giving the time they wanted to their children at least sometimes (note the small sample size of 80 respondents for this group), compared with 46 per cent of those working 16 hours per week and 60 per cent of those working more than 16 hours or more per week. At the same time, a proportion of those working more than 16 hours per week said that their job never prevented them from giving the time they wanted to their children (24 per cent), similar to the proportion who said that this happened all the time or often (27 per cent).

As was the case at Wave 1, the findings suggest that lone parents tend to find the balance between work and family life to be better when they work fewer than 16 hours per week rather than 16 hours or more. Given the importance of balancing work and family, this suggests that lone parents will often need encouragement and support to start work of 16 hours or more per week, and to stay in that work. This has implications for the introduction of Universal Credit, as discussed in the conclusions section (Chapter 9).

Table 3.6 Does a job prevent lone parents giving the time they want to their children?

	<i>Column percentages</i>			
	Working more than 16 hours per week	Working 16 hours per week	Working fewer than 16 hours per week	Total
	%	%	%	%
Always	14	9	6	10
Often	13	8	4	9
Sometimes	33	29	16	28
Hardly ever	16	21	8	16
Never	24	34	66	36
Don't know	1	0	0	*
<i>Base: All currently in work</i>	178	149	80	407

Current employees were also asked whether they had taken any steps to change their work situation or earnings since they started their job. Just over half said they had done something, such as trying to increase their hours (27 per cent), keep the same hours but work them in a more flexible way (19 per cent) and trying to get a better job with a different employer (15 per cent).

Table 3.7 Whether tried to change work situation or earnings

	<i>Multiple responses included</i>
	%
Tried to increase hours worked	27
Tried to reduce hours worked	6
Tried to keep hours the same but work in a more flexible way	19
Tried to get a pay rise	6
Tried to change to a different sort of work with the same employer	7
Tried to get a better job with a different employer	15
Tried to negotiate better benefits	6
None of these	45
<i>Base: All currently in work as an employee</i>	368

Those currently working fewer than 16 hours per week were particularly likely to say they had tried to increase the hours they worked (53 per cent). This finding, as well as the overall proportion who said they had tried to increase their hours, confirms that many respondents were working fewer hours per week than they would prefer. In addition, most of the respondents who said they had tried to increase their hours had not actually managed to do so (58 per cent). This indicates that it is not always possible for lone parents to work longer hours, even when they want to. This is likely to have been in part affected by the challenging labour market in the period leading up to interviews in early 2012. Again, this has implications for the introduction of Universal Credit, which will aim to increase the financial incentives for people to work longer hours. These findings suggest that there may be practical obstacles to lone parents being able to do this, irrespective of the financial incentives.

Overall, the findings on working arrangements indicate that some employers are offering flexible working arrangements to lone parents. However, other findings from the survey show that current working arrangements can make it difficult for lone parents to stay in work: 13 per cent of those in work said that a big barrier to staying in work was the pressure in their job to work longer hours, stay late or do overtime, while nine per cent said that a big barrier was that their employer was not very family friendly (discussed further in Chapter 6).

3.4.10 Advancement

A third of lone parents who were working as an employee at the time of the survey said that they wanted to 'get on and improve their pay and terms as quickly as possible' (34 per cent), while the majority (66 per cent) said they wanted to 'stay as they are for now'. The desire to get on and improve pay and terms increased with the number of hours worked: 65 per cent of those working 30 hours or more per week said they wanted to do this. The proportion also increased with qualification level, from 25 per cent of those qualified to level 1 or below, to 35 per cent of those qualified to level 2, and 43 per cent of those qualified to level 3 or above.

As noted in the Wave 1 report, the desire to progress in a job can be constrained by caring responsibilities (affecting the hours that lone parents can work) and the age of children; the employment retention and advancement evaluation found that lone parents were likely to be more interested in advancement as their children got older (Hoggart *et al.*, 2006). In addition, the possibility of advancement depends on the nature of the job. Ridge and Millar (2008) found that opportunities for advancement 'were restricted by the nature of employment which often had little scope for wage enhancement and/or advancement of any kind'. As seen above, many lone parents in this survey were working in elementary occupations.

3.4.11 Staying in work or getting another job

The majority of respondents who were working at the time of the Wave 2 survey said that it was very or fairly easy (71 per cent) for them to stay in their job, while just 11 per cent said that it was difficult. There were no differences in relation to hours worked.

However, respondents were less optimistic about the possibility of getting another job if their current one fell through. Half (51 per cent) said it was very or fairly likely that they would be able to get another job, but 43 per cent said it was unlikely or very unlikely. Again, there were no differences in the findings in relation to hours worked. However, respondents were more likely to say they would be able to get another job if they used childcare at all when they were working (55 per cent very/fairly likely compared with 38 per cent of those who did not use childcare). This suggests that access to childcare can increase lone parents' confidence in getting another job. This seems to confirm the finding noted in Chapter 1 on destinations, that lone parents who already had childcare arrangements in place were more likely to move into work.

Those with higher qualifications were also more inclined to say that they would be able to get another job; this is particularly pronounced in terms of those who said they would be very likely to get another job: 28 per cent of those qualified to level 3, falling to 16 per cent among those qualified to level 2 and just nine per cent of those qualified to level 1 or below.

3.5 Summary

- Almost half of lone parents (45 per cent) had worked at some point since the end of their IS claim. In some cases (17 per cent), this work had started while they were still claiming IS.
- Most respondents were still in work at the time of the Wave 2 interview (84 per cent), and the majority of these had been in their job for at least six months. One in six (16 per cent) had stopped working, most commonly because they had been in a temporary or fixed term job, or because of redundancy.
- In most cases, those who had worked since the end of their IS claim were working as employees, while nine per cent were self-employed. Most respondents (86 per cent) were in permanent jobs.
- One in eight respondents (13 per cent) were working 30 hours or more per week, while 29 per cent were working between 17 and 29 hours, and 37 per cent exactly 16 hours per week. One in five (22 per cent) were working fewer than 16 hours per week. One in six respondents (17 per cent) who were in work at the time of the Wave 2 interview said they had increased their hours since they started the job.
- Where respondents had started a job while they were on IS, and were still working at the time of the Wave 2 interview, 39 per cent were still working fewer than 16 hours per week, while 34 per cent were working exactly 16 hours per week. Around one in four (28 per cent) were now working more than 16 hours per week. In 17 per cent of cases, these respondents had either increased their hours or taken on a second job in order to move off benefits.
- Those who had worked since leaving IS were mainly in low-skilled occupations (40 per cent in elementary occupations and 23 per cent personal service occupations). More skilled jobs were more likely to involve a greater number of hours per week. Around one in three of those in work (33 per cent) said that they were paid less than £6 per hour (the National Minimum Wage at the time of the survey was £6.08 per hour).
- In addition to part-time working, 38 per cent of lone parents said that some kind of flexible working was part of their job, such as working only in term-time (18 per cent) or flexi-time (14 per cent). However, one-quarter (23 per cent) said that they would prefer a different working arrangement, most commonly flexi-time.
- Those working more than 16 hours or more per week had greater problems balancing work and family: 60 per cent said that sometimes their job prevented them from giving their children the time they wanted to.
- However, around one in four employees (27 per cent) said that they had tried to increase the hours they worked, and this was higher (53 per cent) among those who were working fewer than 16 hours per week. Where respondents had tried to increase their hours, 42 per cent had managed to do so.
- One in three said they wanted to get on and improve their pay and terms as quickly as possible (34 per cent), while the remainder wanted to stay as they were.
- The majority of those in work said that it was very or fairly easy for them to stay in their job (71 per cent), while a smaller proportion (51 per cent) said that it was at least fairly likely that they would be able to get another job if their current one fell through.

4 Childcare

The availability of good quality, reliable, accessible and affordable childcare has typically been construed as a cornerstone of a welfare system that would make work possible for lone parents. Reviews of the effectiveness of active labour market interventions in increasing the rate of lone parents' employment have typically indicated that provision of childcare is a vital part of these programmes (Harker, 2006; Freud, 2007).

The survey, therefore, includes a comprehensive examination of childcare for lone parents affected by Lone Parent Obligations (LPO). The Wave 1 report looked at the childcare arrangements of all lone parents in the survey. It found a high level of use of informal childcare, particularly grandparents, among those both in and out of work. This is similar to the wider population of lone parents and parents generally.

The Wave 2 survey focuses on lone parents who were in work, in order to examine their childcare arrangements in more detail. In this chapter, we look at the childcare arrangements that working lone parents use. The chapter also covers lone parents' future expectations for childcare in relation to work, and their awareness of childcare provided by schools. Chapter 6 places attitudes towards childcare in a more general context, by considering lone parents' attitudes to work and barriers to work, with childcare issues included alongside other attitudes and constraints.

The issues relating to childcare differ greatly according to children's ages, particularly in relation to formal childcare. It is, therefore, important to stress that the respondents included in this survey mostly had school-age children only. Therefore, while the findings provide a clear assessment of childcare issues for the lone parents affected by LPO, these issues differ from many previous studies of lone parents (which often focus on childcare for under fives).

4.1 Current arrangements: overall use of childcare

The findings on current childcare arrangements are limited to those respondents who were in work at the time of the Wave 2 survey. Questions asked respondents about their childcare arrangements while they were working. This is in contrast to the Wave 1 survey, which asked all respondents about their childcare arrangements, and included childcare used at any time.

Respondents who were in work at the time of the Wave 2 survey were firstly asked about their current use of childcare while in work. As part of the interview, respondents were read a definition of childcare: *'By childcare, I mean care carried out by anyone other than yourself or your partner (if any partner in household)'*. At the same time, respondents were handed a card listing the different types of childcare that could be considered part of this definition (the list corresponds to the items shown in Table 4.2).

Overall, 73 per cent of working lone parents said they used childcare of some kind during their time at work. Where respondents did not use any childcare, they were asked what they did instead. Most said they only worked during school hours (75 per cent).

Use of childcare steadily increased with hours worked (see Table 4.1). Only around half (51 per cent) of those working fewer than 16 hours per week used any form of childcare while they were in work (note the small sample size for this group), compared with 83 per cent of those working more than 16 hours per week. Related to this, only 53 per cent of respondents who worked during school hours only used childcare, compared with 87 per cent of those who worked outside school hours.

4.1.1 Formal and informal childcare

Different types of childcare can be classified as ‘formal’ or ‘informal’; a breakdown of the types of formal and informal childcare can be seen in Table 4.2. Overall, respondents were more likely to use informal than formal childcare while they were working (63 per cent compared with 30 per cent). This pattern was also seen at Wave 1 for all lone parents (whether working or not), and the same overall pattern applies to the wider population of lone parents and parents in couples. In other words, the greater use of informal rather than formal childcare is common to all parents, and is not particular to the group covered by this survey.

The main difference between those working more than 16 hours per week and those working fewer hours was the larger proportion using both formal and informal childcare: 28 per cent of those working more than 16 hours or more per week, compared with 14 per cent of those working 16 hours per week and nine per cent working fewer than 16 hours (again, note the small sample size for this last group). This suggests that, as hours increase, a package of childcare needs to be in place for many lone parents.

Related to this pattern by hours, use of both formal and informal childcare was higher among lone parents who were qualified to level 4 or above (41 per cent) and also those working in higher Standard Occupation Classification (SOC) groups. Both of these sub-groups were working a relatively large number of hours per week.

Use of formal childcare was also higher among those who only had primary school aged children; this was most commonly breakfast or after-school clubs.

There was no evidence of different childcare patterns among those that had increased their working hours while in their current job, or among those who had flexible working arrangements.

Table 4.1 Summary of childcare use

	<i>Column percentages</i>			
	All in work	Working more than 16 hours/ week	Working 16 hours/week	Working fewer than 16 hours/ week
	%	%	%	%
Use any childcare:	73	83	73	51
Any formal childcare	30	38	26	17
Any informal childcare	63	73	61	43
Formal childcare only	10	10	12	8
Informal childcare only	44	45	47	33
Both formal and informal childcare	19	28	14	9
<i>Base: All respondents in work at time of Wave 2 interview</i>	407	178	149	80

4.1.2 Types of childcare used

Table 4.2 shows the individual types of childcare used by respondents while they were working. The figures are based on those who used childcare at all. Grandparents were the most frequently used type of childcare, with ex-partners, older siblings, other relatives and friends/neighbours all being used by at least one in six respondents. The proportions using different types of informal childcare were broadly similar according to the number of hours worked.

These findings on the use of informal childcare confirm the importance of family and close friends to this group of lone parents. When considering barriers to work, many non-working respondents said they were only prepared to leave their children with family or close friends when they were working (34 per cent), and where family and friends were not available for childcare this was seen as one of their biggest barriers to work (33 per cent); see Chapter 6 for more details.

In particular, previous research confirms the prominent role played by grandparents. The Families and Children Study (2008) data show grandparents as the most common type of childcare across all age groups and different types of family. Other research has found that, for lone parents, *'grandparents played a key role in providing support across a range of areas including childcare, financial and emotional support'* (Ridge and Millar, 2008).

Breakfast or after-school clubs on school sites were the most commonly used type of formal childcare. This reflects the age profile of children covered by the survey – predominantly primary school age children, with virtually no pre-school children.¹⁸ The use of breakfast and after-school clubs was very similar by working hours. However, those working more hours were much more likely to use holiday clubs (16 per cent of those working more than 16 hours per week).

Some types of informal childcare were used more by those who had been in their job for less than six months: the ex-partner (23 per cent), other relatives (28 per cent) and friends or neighbours (31 per cent). This suggests that these informal networks are particularly important for lone parents in the early stages of a new job.

The use of grandparents was particularly high where respondents had a child with a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity (LSI) (68 per cent) and those who had only one dependent child (59 per cent).

¹⁸ Eight respondents (two per cent of those in work) had a new child aged one or under at the time of the wave 2 survey.

Table 4.2 Types of childcare used, among childcare users

	<i>Multiple responses included</i>		
	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	Working more than 16 hours/ week %	Working 16 hours/week or less %	Total %
Formal childcare			
Nanny or au pair or childcarer in the home	1	2	1
Baby-sitter who came to home	2	1	2
Breakfast club or after-school club, on school/nursery school site	23	19	21
Breakfast club or after-school club, not on school/nursery school site	6	6	6
Holiday club/scheme	16	6	11
Other childcare provider	8	6	7
Informal childcare			
My ex-husband/wife/partner/the child's non resident parent	19	12	16
The child's grandparent(s)	53	51	52
The child's older brother/sister	16	20	18
Another relative	26	19	22
A friend or neighbour	26	24	25
<i>Base: All working respondents using childcare</i>	<i>153</i>	<i>156</i>	<i>309</i>

In addition to the types of childcare shown above, six per cent of working lone parents said that their employer provided childcare of some kind or offered to help to pay for the cost of childcare.

4.1.3 Hours of childcare

The survey asked about the amount of time spent in childcare per child per week, both during term-time and school holidays. As with other questions, this focused on childcare while the respondent was actually working.

Table 4.3 shows the mean number of hours spent on childcare per week – both overall and for individual types of childcare. Figures show the mean number of hours for **all** respondents using childcare (of any type). This shows how the total childcare package was typically made up. It is not possible to analyse hours based on users of each individual type of childcare, as the numbers of respondents are too small. In general, users of each type of childcare typically used them for around five to ten hours per week.

The figures indicate that, overall, users of childcare used around 11 hours of childcare per week in term-time and nearly 17 in school holidays, and that this was made up predominantly of informal childcare. This was due to the greater overall use of informal rather than formal childcare (as discussed previously). In particular, childcare provided by grandparents accounted for a large proportion of childcare hours overall.

The Wave 1 survey (covering all respondents, including those not in work) observed a large number of hours of childcare provided by the ex-partner. However, this was less true at Wave 2, which focused on childcare during working time. The average number of hours provided by the ex-partner was no higher than for other types of informal childcare. At Wave 1, the question was posed about

the role of the ex-partner in helping lone parents to work or work more hours. This wave suggests that the ex-partner plays no bigger a role than other types of childcare, and is less important than the role of grandparents.

Table 4.3 Mean number of hours per week of childcare

Mean number of hours per child	All respondents using childcare	
	Term-time	School holidays
Formal childcare	2.20	2.95
Nanny, au pair or childcarer in the home	0.05	0.04
Babysitter who came to home	0.06	0.08
Breakfast club or after-school club, on school/nursery school site	1.29	0.70
Breakfast club or after-school club, not on school/nursery school site	0.50	0.11
Holiday club/scheme	0.30	2.02
Informal childcare	9.37	13.96
My ex-husband/wife/partner/the child's non resident parent	1.04	1.21
The child's grandparent(s)	4.73	7.94
The child's older brother/sister	1.24	1.68
Another relative	1.24	1.88
A friend or neighbour	1.12	1.25
All childcare	11.57	16.92

Base: All respondents using any childcare (309)

Note: the hours given for breakfast or after-school clubs in school holidays are likely to be an over-estimate. Some respondents said that their childcare arrangements were the same in school term-time and in school holidays, including hours of breakfast or after-school clubs; however, it is likely that these hours relate only to term-time.

4.1.4 Payment for childcare

There has been a strong policy emphasis on providing help with the affordability of childcare, particularly for those on low incomes. This includes tax credits: Child Tax Credit, a means tested annual amount paid directly to parents, and the childcare element of Working Tax Credit, which parents can apply for if they are using registered childcare (so excluding informal help from family/friends).

In this survey, around one in three lone parents that used childcare while they were working said they had to pay for at least some of it (31 per cent). While payment for informal childcare was unusual (eight per cent of those using informal childcare paid for it), more than half had paid for formal childcare (60 per cent of those using formal childcare). These figures are broadly similar to those obtained at Wave 1 for all lone parents (whether in work or not), and therefore (as reported at Wave 1) they are similar to the figures for the wider population of parents.

Table 4.4 Whether childcare users paid for each type of childcare

	%	<i>Base: All using each type of childcare</i>
Formal childcare	60	122
Informal childcare	8	259
All childcare	31	300

Base: All using each type of childcare

As well as payment for childcare, the survey asked whether lone parents did anything else in return for the informal childcare they received. Overall, 62 per cent of those using informal childcare while at work said they did something in return for at least part of the childcare they received. This was most likely to happen when respondents had help with childcare from another relative or friends and neighbours; specifically, 45 per cent of those using friends or neighbours for childcare said they looked after their children in return, as did 37 per cent using other relatives for childcare. Given the fairly high proportion of lone parents using these types of childcare, this suggests that reciprocal arrangements with friends and neighbours form an important part of the overall childcare package for many lone parents in the survey. A similar pattern was observed at Wave 1 for all lone parents (including those who were not in work).

4.2 Previous childcare arrangements

Respondents who were not in work at the time of the Wave 2 survey, but had worked since leaving Income Support (IS), were asked about the childcare arrangements in their most recent job. Because only 55 respondents were asked this question, it is not possible to conduct detailed analysis. However, it would appear that the proportion who used some form of childcare in their job was similar to those who were still in work at the time of the Wave 2 survey. In other words, there is no evidence from the survey that childcare arrangements (or a lack of them) had any impact on lone parents' leaving work.

4.3 Whether childcare arrangements break down

Respondents who were either in work at the time of the Wave 2 survey, or had worked since they left IS, were asked how often their childcare arrangements broke down. The majority said that they rarely broke down (74 per cent), although four per cent said they often broke down and 22 per cent said they sometimes did.

There were no discernible differences by hours or type of childcare, although those with just one dependent child were less likely to say that their arrangements broke down, compared with respondents with two or more children.

Among respondents who said that their childcare arrangements broke down often or sometimes, nine per cent said that it made it very difficult for them to stay in their job, while 36 per cent said it made it fairly difficult.

4.4 Future childcare arrangements

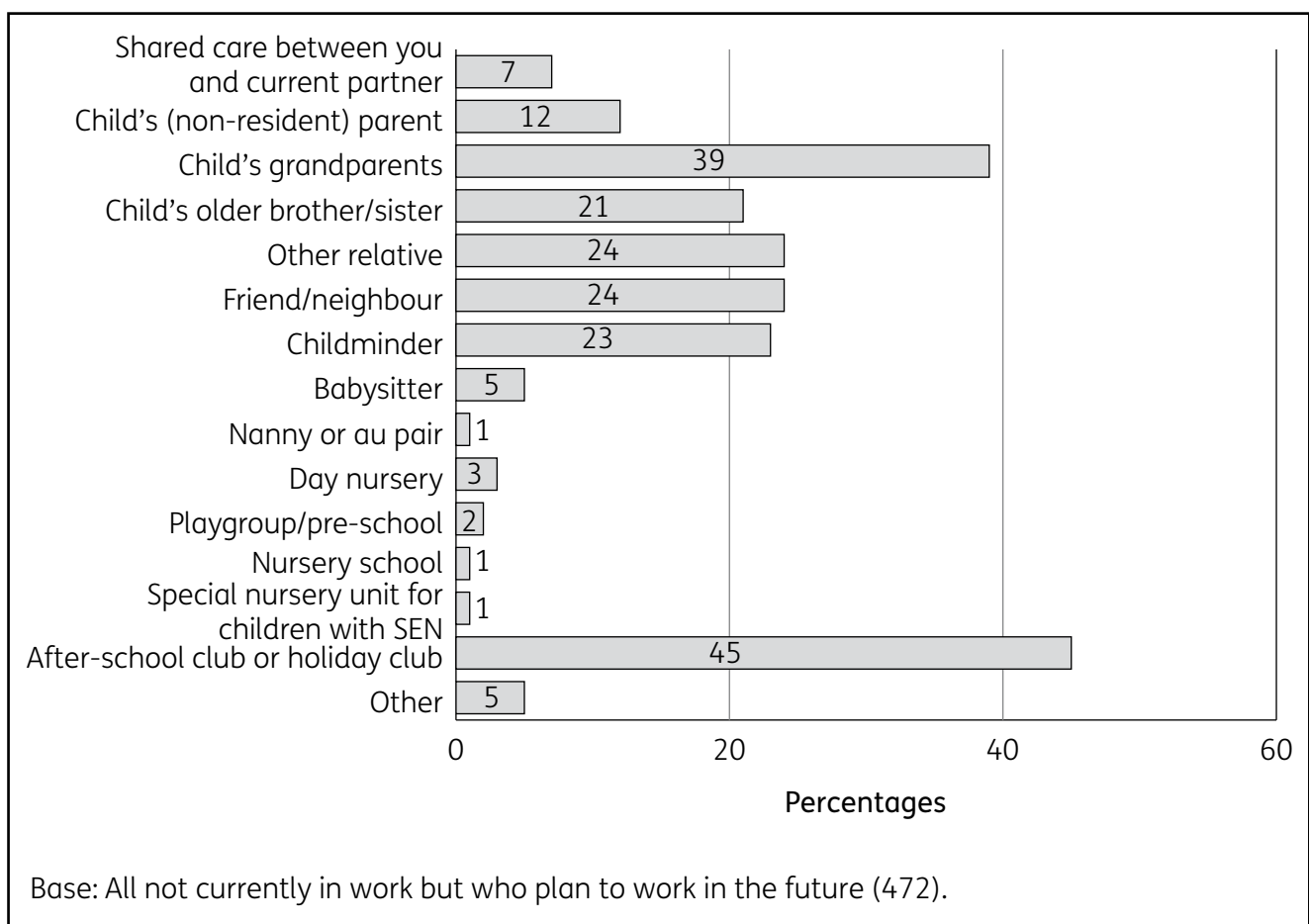
If respondents were not currently working but planned to work in the future, they were asked what types of arrangement they thought they would use when they moved into work.

Respondents expressed a strong interest in after-school or holiday clubs (see Figure 4.1). As was the case at Wave 1, interest in using after-school or holiday clubs was strongest among more highly qualified respondents (50 per cent of those qualified to Level 2 or above).

Taken at face value, the findings suggest a large potential take-up of after-school or holiday clubs. However, this is a hypothetical question, and may reflect an interest in the principle of after-school or holiday clubs, rather than a firm intention to use them.

Nevertheless, the survey findings suggest that there may be scope for encouraging more lone parents to use this type of childcare in the future, particularly if awareness can be increased (see below for findings on awareness of after-school and holiday clubs).

Figure 4.1 Intentions for future childcare



4.5 Awareness of childcare provided by schools

All respondents in the survey, other than those who were currently using breakfast/after-school clubs while at work, were asked if they were aware of these types of childcare. The majority (71 per cent) said they were aware of them, with awareness lower among:

- lone parents whose first language was not English (52 per cent);
- those in rural areas (60 per cent);
- respondents that had never worked (62 per cent).

Among those in work, awareness of breakfast or after-school clubs was lower among those working fewer than 16 hours per week than those working a greater number of hours.

Awareness of breakfast or after-school clubs was higher among those who had been on the Work Programme, although it is not clear whether this was owing to information received as part of their time on the Work Programme.

All respondents who did not currently use a holiday club while at work were also asked if they were aware of this type of childcare. Just 23 per cent said they were aware of it, and this was very similar across different sub-groups.

These findings suggest that an increase in awareness (particularly for holiday clubs, where awareness is relatively low) may encourage lone parents to make more use of them in the future. This is confirmed by the interest expressed by lone parents for using these types of childcare in the future (as noted in Section 4.4), and findings from the LPO qualitative research, which reported positive experiences and attitudes towards breakfast and after-school clubs, and a general softening in lone parents' attitudes towards formal childcare, in comparison to the more negative views observed previously (Lane *et al.*, 2011).

As noted at Wave 1, the role of holiday clubs is also important, as the LPO qualitative research identified a lack of school holiday childcare, describing this as a '*key gap in provision that could limit parents' job prospects*' (Gloster *et al.*, 2010).

4.6 Childcare advice from Jobcentre Plus

The survey explored lone parents' recollections of discussions they had had about childcare at Jobcentre Plus.

Around half of lone parents who had been on Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) (47 per cent) said they had discussed childcare during their claim. This was most likely to be discussion about the availability of different types of formal childcare in the area, or financial help with childcare costs that might be available if they started work or training. These figures were similar for lone parents who had been on the Work Programme.

Respondents who had been on Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) were much less likely to have discussed childcare during their claim (11 per cent), although this analysis should be treated with caution owing to the small number of respondents (72). Among lone parents had been on both JSA and ESA since leaving IS, 31 per cent discussed childcare while on one or other of the benefits.

The evaluation of the Jobcentre Plus Offer has found that there generally tends to be very limited discussion of childcare support by Jobcentre Plus advisers, but that lone parents were more likely than other parents to have discussed childcare with staff (Coulter *et al.*, 2012).

Table 4.6 Discussion of childcare support

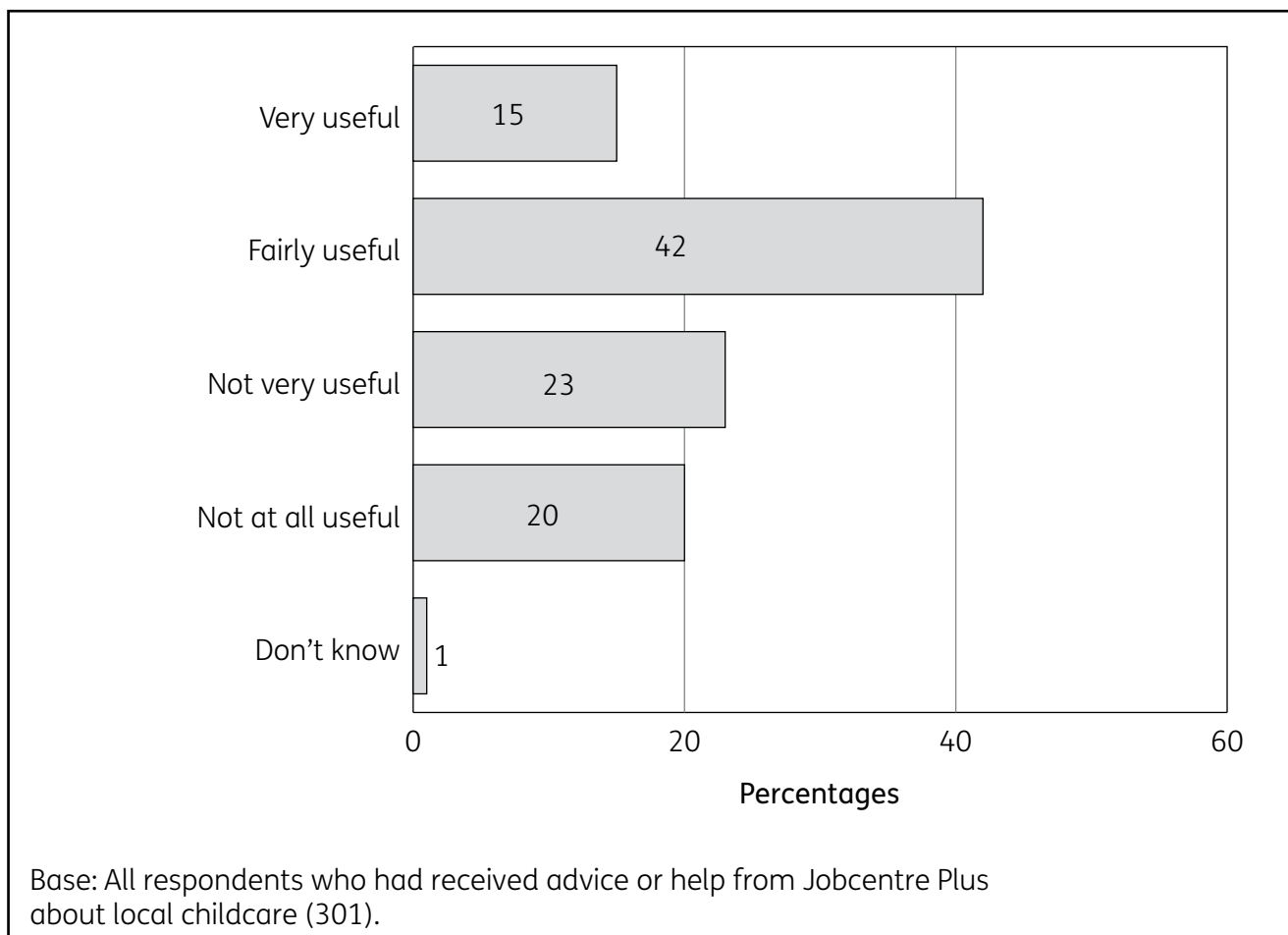
	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	Benefit		
	JSA %	ESA %	Both JSA and ESA %
Availability of different types of formal childcare in your area	33	7	21
The advantages of using formal childcare	7	1	6
Financial help with childcare costs that may be available if/when you start work or training	29	7	20
Where to go for further information about childcare in your local area	13	3	9
Any	47	11	31
<i>Base: All who have claimed JSA or ESA since Wave 1</i>	<i>540</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>121</i>

Of those that had received childcare advice, 57 per cent said it was very or fairly useful, while 43 per cent said it was not useful (see Figure 4.1).

Respondents were less positive about the advice they received if they had an LSI (51 per cent of whom did not find the advice useful). Respondents who were in work at the time of the Wave 2 survey (i.e. those who had moved off JSA or ESA into work) were also less positive (50 per cent said the advice was not useful, compared with 38 per cent of those not in work).

The qualitative research found that lone parents who had spoken to staff about childcare had often been given a leaflet about local childcare, which they found helpful. Where information was not helpful, this tended to be a reflection of a problem with childcare locally rather than the information from Jobcentre Plus (Lane *et al.*, 2011). However, previous research on the extension of New Deal Plus for Lone Parents and related policies for couple parents noted that ‘good quality information and advice about the availability of local childcare and any help towards paying for it, was said to be limited’ (Griffiths, 2011).

If respondents had not discussed childcare during their claim, they were asked whether they would like to get childcare advice from Jobcentre Plus. Over one-third of lone parents who had been on JSA said that they would like to get childcare advice (39 per cent if JSA only and 36 per cent if they had been on JSA and ESA). This proportion was lower among respondents who had been on ESA but not JSA (17 per cent).

Figure 4.2 Perception of advice or help from Jobcentre Plus about local childcare

Respondents who had received childcare advice were asked how much they knew about various issues. The findings are shown in Table 4.7. In general, respondents were approximately evenly split between those that knew a lot or a fair amount about the issues, and those who said they knew just a little or nothing about them. This suggests that the advice given by Jobcentre Plus varied in the amount of detail it contained.

Table 4.7 Knowledge of childcare help and support

	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	Where to get advice about availability of different types of childcare	Financial support that is available through tax credits for formal childcare	Help with childcare costs from Jobcentre Plus
	%	%	%
Know a lot	13	11	8
Know a fair amount	39	33	25
Know just a little	37	36	38
Know nothing about it	11	20	28

Base: All who have had childcare advice while on JSA or ESA (301)

4.7 Summary

- Around three in four lone parents (73 per cent) said that they used some form of childcare during their time at work. This was higher among those working more hours, ranging from 51 per cent of those working fewer than 16 hours per week, to 83 per cent of those working more than 16 hours per week.
- An increase in working hours also saw a greater likelihood of using both formal and informal childcare. Overall, 63 per cent of respondents used informal childcare while they were working, and 30 per cent used formal childcare.
- Grandparents were the most commonly used type of childcare (used by 52 per cent of all childcare users), and accounted for a large proportion of the total childcare hours. Formal childcare was most likely to be breakfast or after-school clubs (21 per cent on school site, six per cent off site).
- Over half (60 per cent) paid for formal childcare, while eight per cent paid for informal childcare. Reciprocal arrangements – looking after children in return – were also common in informal childcare, particularly among other relatives (outside the immediately family) or friends and neighbours.
- Around one in four lone parents said that their childcare arrangements broke down often or sometimes (26 per cent), and 43 per cent of these respondents said that this made it very or fairly difficult for them to stay in their job.
- Where respondents were not currently working but planned to work in the future, there was a strong interest in using after-school or holiday clubs when they moved into work (among 45 per cent). The majority of respondents (who did not already use them) were aware of breakfast or after school clubs (71 per cent), although awareness of holiday clubs was lower (23 per cent of non-users).
- Around half of lone parents who had been on JSA said that they had discussed childcare during their claim (47 per cent), but this was much lower among those that had claimed ESA (11 per cent of those that had claimed ESA but not JSA).
- Of those that had received childcare advice, 57 per cent said it was very or fairly useful, while 43 per cent said it was not useful.

5 Work aspirations and the future

Recent qualitative research with lone parents who were going through Lone Parent Obligations (LPO) and had moved on to Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) found that their jobsearch activities were often focused on finding work that fitted around parenting responsibilities. Moreover, lone parents, including those who had worked recently, reported that finding work was much more difficult than anticipated, and felt frustration about having to apply for large numbers of jobs (Lane *et al.*, 2011, p.37).

This chapter begins by examining respondents' distance from the labour market, before moving on to look at the nature and amount of their jobsearch activities, and preferences for the type of work they would like to do. The chapter concludes by examining training conducted by lone parents since Wave 1.

5.1 Distance from the labour market

Respondents were grouped according to their proximity to the labour market, based on their work and jobsearch status. Responses are shown in Figure 5.1, giving their positions at Wave 1 and at Wave 2.

Figure 5.1 shows that many lone parents moved closer to the labour market between Wave 1 and Wave 2. At Wave 2, most respondents were either in work or looking for work (81 per cent), and only a minority (19 per cent) were not looking for work. This is in contrast to Wave 1, when 41 per cent were not looking for work.

Figure 5.1 Distance from the labour market

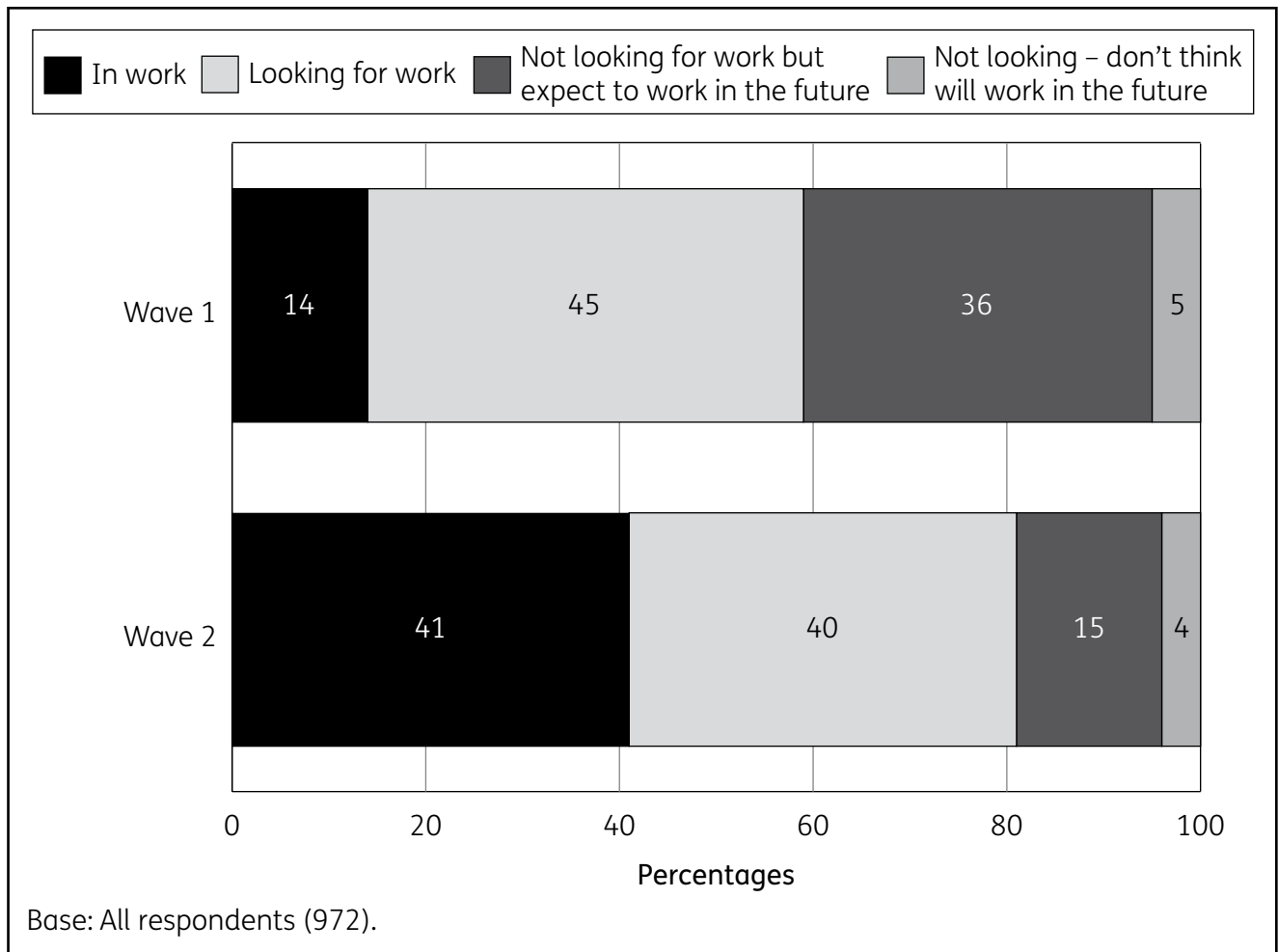


Table 5.1 indicates the movement between Wave 1 and Wave 2 in more detail, by showing distance from the labour market for respondents in Wave 2 split by their distance from the labour market in Wave 1. In addition, this also shows analysis by certain groups who were further from the labour market.

Results show that those further from the labour market at Wave 1 were still on average further from the labour market at Wave 2: the proportion who were not looking for work at Wave 2 was higher among those who were also not looking for work at Wave 1 (29 per cent). Nevertheless, over one-quarter (27 per cent) of those who were not looking but expected to work in the future in Wave 1 were in work by Wave 2, and 44 per cent were looking for work.

Table 5.1 Distance from the labour market at Wave 2, by sub-groups

	Distance from labour market at Wave 2				Row percentages
	In work %	Looking for work %	Not looking but think will look for work in future %	Not looking – don't think will work in future %	Base: All respondents
Proximity to the labour market in Wave 1					
In work	83	12	5	1	142
Looking for work	42	45	10	3	431
Not looking but think will work in the future	27	44	24	5	346
Whether made any Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claim					
Yes	10	35	41	13	194
No	48	41	9	2	778
Whether work restricted by caring for disabled child or disabled adult					
Yes	21	41	33	6	108
No	43	40	13	4	864

The sub-groups who were less likely to be in work or looking for work at Wave 2 were those who had made an ESA claim or had a disability, and those who cared for a disabled child or adult.

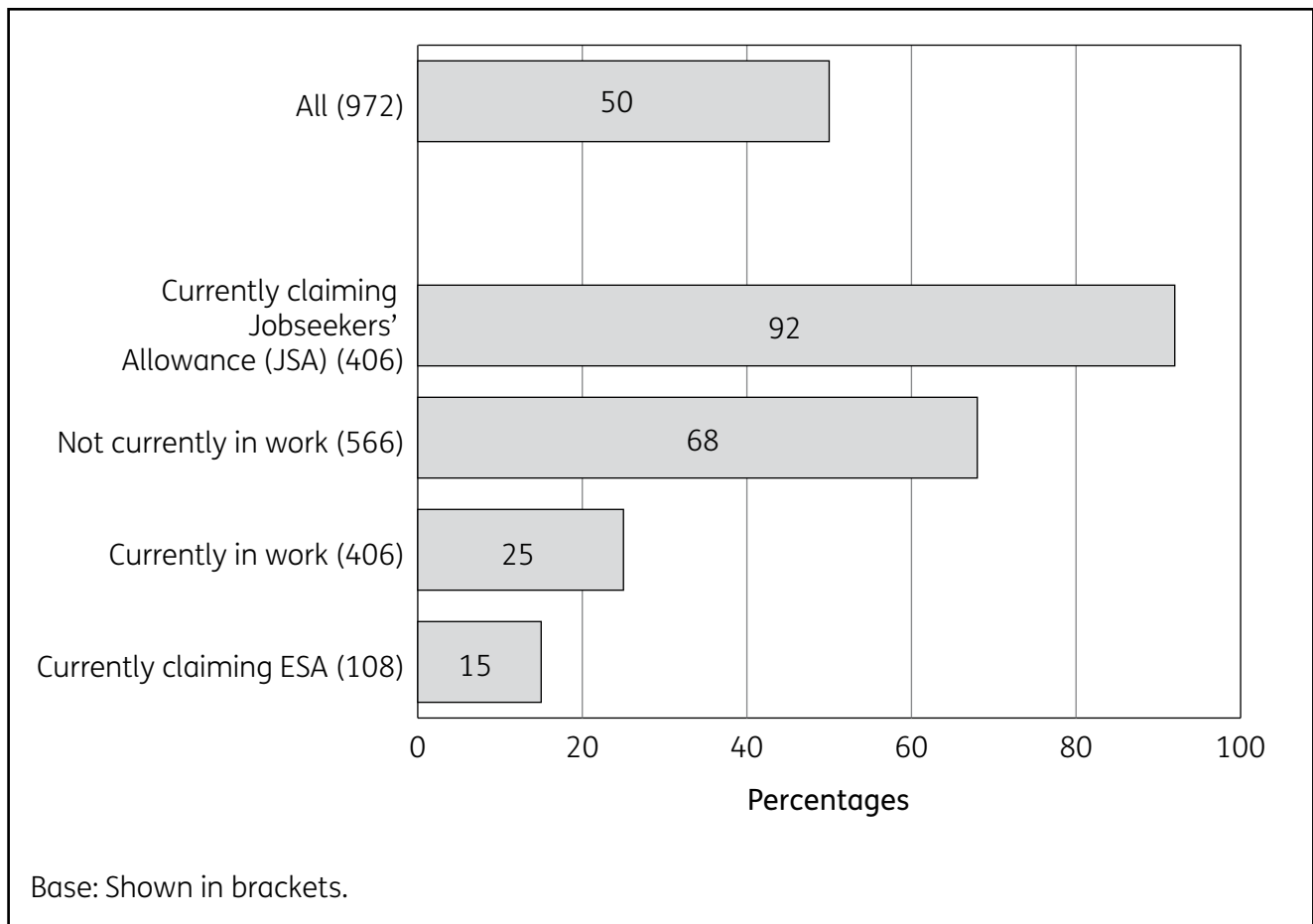
5.2 Looking for work

We now look in more detail at whether respondents were looking for work at Wave 2. Nearly all of those who were claiming JSA at the time of the Wave 2 interview said they were looking for work (92 per cent). By contrast, only 15 per cent of those claiming ESA were doing so (see Figure 5.2).

In addition, 25 per cent of those in work said that they were looking for another job. Those working fewer than 16 hours¹⁹ were more likely to be looking for work compared to those working 16 hours or more (58 per cent compared to 17 per cent). We have seen previously (see Section 3.4.9) that those working fewer than 16 hours per week were also more likely than other respondents to have tried to increase their hours.²⁰

¹⁹ Seventy-seven respondents asked this question were working fewer than 16 hours. As such, caution should be used when interpreting this finding.

²⁰ In addition, Table 5.5 shows that of those were looking for work or expected to look for work in the future, over 90 per cent of those currently working fewer than 16 hours, or who worked fewer than 16 hours in their last job, ideally wanted to work for 16 hours or more.

Figure 5.2 Respondents looking for work

Of those not in work at the time of the interview, a number of groups were more likely to be looking for work than others:

- Those respondents without a limiting disability were more likely to be looking for work than those with one (78 per cent compared to 42 per cent), reflecting the low proportion of ESA claimants who were looking for work.
- Those with one child were more likely to be looking for work than those with two or more children (77 per cent compared to 63 per cent).
- Those with a total household income of less than £200 per week were more likely to be looking for work than those with an income of £200 or more (73 per cent compared to 56 per cent). Those with higher incomes had often re-partnered and had a partner/spouse in work, and/or to have more dependent children than those with lower incomes, both of which could discourage them from looking for work.²¹

5.3 Jobsearch activities

A series of questions were asked about the jobsearch activities of respondents who were not in work at the time of the Wave 2 interview or who were working fewer than 16 hours per week, and

²¹ Moreover, as shown in Chapter 6, those with more children were more likely to agree with statements focusing on the importance of looking after their own children.

who were looking for work.²² Of those respondents, 74 per cent were looking for work of 16 hours or more per week, 19 per cent for work of fewer than 16 hours, and seven per cent either looking for any work, regardless of hours, or were not sure of how many hours they were looking to work for. In total, 93 per cent of these respondents had made a JSA claim since coming off Income Support (IS).

5.3.1 Number of job applications

Of those looking for work of 16 hours or more, 73 per cent had already made at least one job application in the previous 12 months, with 72 per cent reporting that they had found at least one of these vacancies through Jobcentre Plus. Supporting previous research, Table 5.2 demonstrates that those who had made at least one job application were likely to have made many. Over half had applied for more than ten jobs in the previous year, with 43 per cent having applied for 20 or more. Moreover, the intensity of jobsearch had increased when compared with figures from Wave 1: lone parent respondents in Wave 1 (when they were claiming IS) were on average making fewer applications than those who had applied for jobs in Wave 2 (most of whom were by then claiming JSA). This may show the effect of JSA of encouraging lone parents to look for work more intensely – this echoes previous research, which suggests that lone parents' jobsearch while on JSA was more intense than when they were on IS (Lane *et al.*, 2011, p.33).

Table 5.2 Number of job applications made in previous 12 months

	<i>Column percentages</i>	
	Wave 2	Wave 1¹
	%	%
1 or 2	10	35
3 – 5	16	27
6 – 10	19	18
11 – 19	11	8
20 or more	43	12
<i>Base: All looking for work in previous 12 months</i>	270	1,067

¹ Unlike most other longitudinal comparisons in this report, these figures are based on all Wave 1 responses to these questions, rather than just the same respondents as were asked the question in Wave 2. This is because most of those looking for work in Wave 1 were no longer doing so in Wave 2, meaning the base is small. Nevertheless, analysis shows that the Wave 1 responses of those who were looking for work in Wave 1 and Wave 2 follow the same pattern as that of all Wave 1 respondents.

The large number of job applications made by respondents may reflect the high levels of competition for suitable work. Previous research conducted with lone parents who had moved from IS to JSA found that they '*reported finding that their jobsearch was much more difficult than they anticipated. This included those who had been in work recently and those who hadn't worked for many years. Lone parents reported feeling frustrated at having applied for a large number of jobs and not been invited to interviews, or being invited to very few interviews*' (Lane *et al.*, 2011, pp.4–5). In part, 'the limited availability of part-time and schools hours jobs, and the strong preference for these jobs among lone parents, mean that there is potentially stiff competition for these roles' (Lane *et al.*, 2011, p.36).

²² This section does not include 47 respondents who were on a government scheme to help them enter employment.

5.3.2 Job application details

Respondents were asked to think about the job which they applied for (or intended to apply for, if they did not actually submit an application) most recently. Respondents showed a strong preference for part-time work: nearly seven in ten respondents had applied for a part-time job of between 16 and 29 hours per week (see Table 5.3). This includes a substantial proportion (half of those applying for part-time jobs and 34 per cent of all respondents) who had applied for a job of exactly 16 hours per week. In addition, 12 per cent of respondents applied for a job of fewer than 16 hours per week, with 19 per cent applying for a full-time job, of 30 hours or more a week. As seen in Table 5.3, these hours are very similar to those in jobs which lone parents were applying for at Wave 1, while they were still on IS. This suggests that the JSA regime has not affected the types of jobs that lone parents are applying for, in terms of hours.

The majority of these jobs were permanent jobs (73 per cent), with 22 per cent applying for temporary jobs lasting less than 12 months, and five per cent applying for fixed term jobs lasting between one and three years. The proportion of permanent jobs that lone parents had actually done since leaving IS (see Section 3.4.7) was higher (86 per cent). This indicates that lone parents who were looking for work were having to consider temporary work to a greater extent than those who had already found work since leaving IS.

Table 5.3 Number of hours of last job applied for

	<i>Multiple responses included</i>	
	Wave 2	Wave 1
	%	%
Fewer than 16 hours	12	13
16 hours exactly	34	34
17 to 29 hours	35	30
30 hours or more	19	22
<i>Base: All applying or intending to apply for a job</i>	261	710 ¹

¹ Unlike most other longitudinal comparisons in this report, these figures are based on all Wave 1 responses to these questions, rather than just the same respondents as were asked the question in Wave 2. This is because most of those looking for work in Wave 1 were no longer doing so in Wave 2, meaning the base is small.

Around half (52 per cent) of those who had made a job application had been for a job interview. Of those who had attended an interview, 41 per cent had attended only one interview, with 28 per cent having been to two, 13 per cent having been to three or four, and 17 per cent to five or more.

Those who were not in work, but looking for work, were asked what they had done in the past 12 months to help them find a job. As well as looking for work on their own, which nine in ten respondents had done, at least one in five had put their name on the books of a private recruitment agency, done voluntary work, been to a careers office or careers advice department, or attended an education or training course. Again, when comparisons are made against all Wave 1 responses (when respondents were still on IS), it is evident that those looking for work at Wave 2 were doing more activities to help them enter work.

Table 5.4 Activities done to look for work

	<i>Multiple responses included</i>	
	Wave 2	Wave 1
	%	%
Looked for a job on your own	91	81
Attended an education or training course	40	30
Been to a careers office or careers advice department	31	30
Done voluntary work	27	20
Put your name on the books of a private recruitment agency	24	13
Done something towards setting up your own business	7	5
None of the above	4	5
<i>Base: All not in work, but looking for work</i>	336	1,067

Previous research found that those looking for a job on their own would very often use internet searches to do so, but that some lone parents had trouble accessing the internet, for example, if their local library (with free access) was not close by (Lane *et al.*, 2011, p.35). Other research found that informal networks were also an extremely important source of jobs for lone parents (Casebourne *et al.*, 2010).

5.4 Work preferences

Lone parents who were either looking for work or said they thought they would look for work at a specified time in the future were asked about the types of work they would like to undertake, including the:

- hours they would be willing to work;
- times of year they would be willing to work;
- amount of time they would be willing to travel to work; and
- importance of flexible working arrangements.²³

5.4.1 Preferred hours

Previous research with lone parents on IS and lone parents who had gone through LPO and were claiming JSA has found that lone parents have a preference for part-time work, and a particular preference for work of exactly 16 hours per week (Lane *et al.*, 2011, p.34). In part, this is likely to reflect the financial incentives in the current benefit system, based on the marginal deduction rate of increasing working hours.²⁴ The threshold of 16 hours per week is also relevant in relation to tax credits: lone parents need to work 16 hours or more a week to claim help with childcare costs through Working Tax Credit. This has led some to suggest that the introduction of the Universal Credit could actually encourage some lone parents to work fewer hours than under the current benefits regime (Lane *et al.*, 2011, p.34).

²³ In this section it was not possible to compare the answers of those claiming JSA with those claiming ESA, as not enough ESA claimants either were looking for or expected to look for work in the future. This section also has looked specifically to draw comparisons between the work preferences of those who were in and not in work, where they are statistically significant.

²⁴ According to the government document *Universal Credit: welfare that works*, 'under the current system a lone parent working 16 hours at the National Minimum Wage would only increase their take home pay by £5 a week if they increased their hours to 25 hours' (Department for Work and Pensions, 2010).

As was found at Wave 1, most respondents (78 per cent) stated that they wanted to work part-time, between 16 and 29 hours, with more than half of those (representing 44 per cent of all respondents) wanting to work for exactly 16 hours. As shown in Table 5.5, those in work were more likely to be looking for full-time work, of 30 hours or more, than those not in work.

Table 5.5 Preferred hours for future work, by work status²⁵

	<i>Column Percentages</i>		
	Not in work	In work	All
	%	%	%
Fewer than 16 hours	5	4	5
16 hours exactly	46	36	44
17 to 29 hours	34	36	34
30 hours or more	15	24	17
<i>Base: All looking for work or intending to</i>	398	122	520

Table 5.6 compares respondents’ preferences for hours with the hours they worked in their current or previous job.

Those whose last or current job was fewer than 16 hours per week were more likely to want to work fewer than 16 hours or exactly 16 hours per week in the future, and less likely to want to work for 30 hours or more per week, compared with those whose current or previous job was for 16 hours per week or more. Nevertheless, 91 per cent of those whose last or current job was fewer than 16 hours per week ideally wanted to work 16 hours per week or more.

These findings confirm that there is a proportion of lone parents who want to work more hours than in their current or most recent job. This ties in with the findings in Section 3.4.3, which found a similar pattern.

Table 5.6 Preferred hours for future work, by current or previous hours of work²⁶

	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	Current or previous job 16+ hours	Current or previous job fewer than 16 hours	All
	%	%	%
Fewer than 16 hours	3	9	5
16 hours exactly	30	46	44
17 to 29 hours	40	33	34
30 hours or more	28	12	17
<i>Base: All looking for work or intending to</i>	197	116	520

When comparing the number of hours respondents would prefer to work, and the number of hours of the job most recently applied for, the figures are broadly similar – see Table 5.7. This suggests that respondents are mainly finding jobs to apply for that match their preferences. The one difference

²⁵ These percentages exclude answers of ‘Don’t know.’

²⁶ These percentages exclude answers of ‘Don’t know.’

was that more respondents wanted to work for 16 hours exactly than had applied for jobs offering these hours.

Table 5.7 Preferred hours for future work and hour of work applied for

	<i>Multiple responses included</i>	
	Last job applied for	Preferred hours of work
	%	%
Fewer than 16 hours	12	5
16 hours exactly	34	44
17 to 29 hours	35	34
30 hours or more	19	17
<i>Base</i>	261 ¹	520 ²

¹ All applying or intending to apply for a job.

² All looking for work or intending to.

5.4.2 Working outside school hours

Previous research has found that balancing work and childcare responsibilities is a major challenge for lone parents. In particular, it can be difficult to balance work and childcare if the parent is working out of school hours, or during the summer holidays (Haux *et al.*, 2012, pp.50-51). Previous evidence has also noted other factors which lead lone parents to want to work only while their child was at school. For those with older children, there was a desire to be around so that their children did not get into trouble, or mix with the wrong people, as well as a general desire not to spend less time with their children, and a (misinformed) belief for some lone parents that they would not receive financial support to pay for childcare (Lane *et al.*, 2011, pp.32-34).

To inform this issue, lone parents who were looking for work, or who expected to do so in the future, were asked whether they would be willing to work outside school hours and outside term-time (see Table 5.8).

Over half of respondents (56 per cent) said they would only be willing to work during school hours, and nearly one-third (31 per cent) said they would only be willing to work in term-time. In addition, 29 per cent of respondents reported that they would only be willing to work if the job was **both** in school hours and during term-time.

Table 5.8 Willingness to work outside school hours or in school holidays

Would you be prepared to work...?	%
Before/after school hours	21
Only willing to work during school hours	56
It depends	22
Throughout the year	51
Term-time only	31
It depends	17
<i>Base: All looking for work, or intending to</i>	539

A number of groups of lone parents were more likely to say they would only be willing to work in a job that was both in school hours and during term-time:

- those with a limiting disability were more likely than those without one (39 per cent compared to 26 per cent);
- those who had never worked or who had not worked since the birth of their oldest child (38 per cent) were more likely than those who had worked since the birth of their oldest child but were not currently in work (17 per cent);
- those living in socially rented accommodation (renting from housing associations or local authorities) were more likely than those living in privately rented accommodation (31 per cent compared to 20 per cent);²⁷
- those aged 35 and older were more likely than those aged under 35 (36 per cent compared to 20 per cent).

Other research has shown how the desire to work within school hours and not in school holidays has affected lone parents' jobsearch, in particular, by encouraging lone parents to apply for work in schools, such as, as teaching assistants or catering assistants (Lane *et al.*, 2011, p.34). However, Section 3.4.4 showed that lone parents who said they were only willing to work in school hours often worked outside these hours when they actually moved into a job.

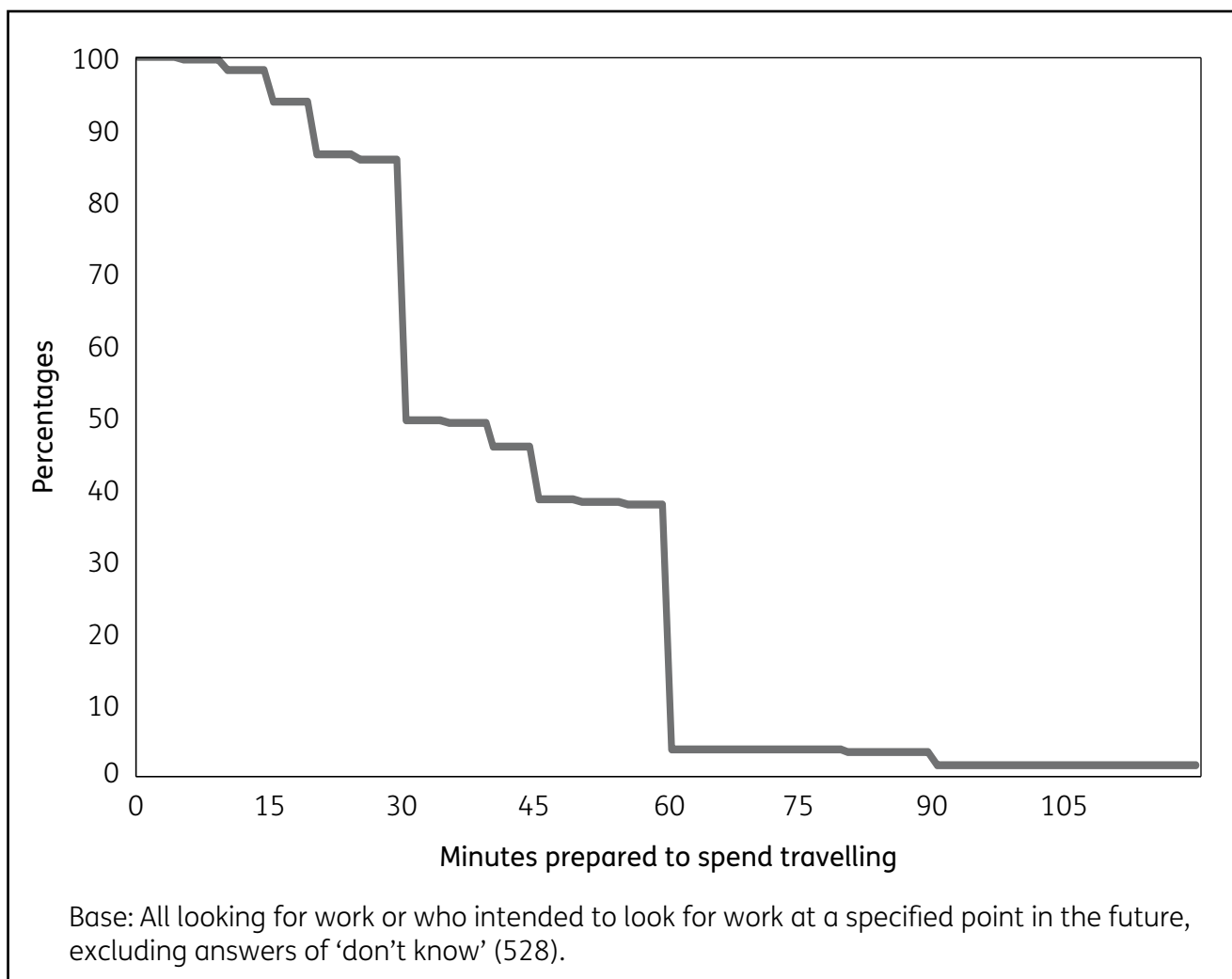
5.4.3 Importance of flexibility

Respondents were asked how important flexible working arrangements were in any jobs they applied for. In total, 88 per cent said flexible working arrangements were very or quite important, including 61 per cent who said they were very important. Only five per cent reported that flexible working arrangements were either not at all or not very important. All respondents looking for work, or intending to look for work at a specified point in the future (except those who said that flexible working arrangements were not at all important) were asked if they would take a job if flexible working arrangements were not available. In total, 42 per cent said the lack of flexible working arrangements would stop them taking a job, although 17 per cent were not sure. However, a significantly higher proportion, 57 per cent, of those who said flexible working arrangements were very important said the lack of them would stop them taking a job.

5.4.4 Travel to work time

Respondents were also asked how long they would be willing to spend travelling to work (one way), including any time necessary to take their children to or from childcare. In total, 51 per cent were willing to travel for 30 minutes or less (including 36 per cent of respondents for whom 30 minutes was the maximum length of time they would travel to work). On the other hand, 38 per cent were willing to travel for an hour or more (including 34 per cent for whom an hour was the maximum length of time they would travel). The average (mean) time was 43 minutes, and the most common answer (median) was 30 minutes. These findings are very similar to Wave 1 findings, for which the mean time was 40 minutes, and the median was 30 minutes.

²⁷ Those living in privately rented accommodation tended to be better qualified and have fewer children than those living in socially rented housing.

Figure 5.3 Time prepared to spend travelling to work (one way)

Some respondents were more likely to be willing to travel for more than 30 minutes to work. In particular, those living in privately rented accommodation (who tended to be better qualified and have fewer children) were more likely than those in socially rented accommodation to do so (62 per cent compared to 47 per cent). In addition, those in work at the time of the interview were less likely than those who were not in work to be willing to travel to work for more than 30 minutes (41 per cent compared to 52 per cent).

When compared against Office for National Statistics (ONS) data (2011), the times lone parents were willing to travel to work are on average longer than the average commutes experienced by workers in the UK, suggesting that travel to work time is unlikely to be a significant barrier to entering employment.²⁸ However, most commuters in the UK (71 per cent) used a car rather than public transport to get to work, but only 34 per cent of LPO lone parents had permanent access to a motor vehicle.

²⁸ See Section 6.3 for more about commuting as a barrier to work.

Table 5.9 Maximum time willing to travel and actual commuting times of all workers

	<i>Column percentages</i>	
	Actual commute times in UK	LPO lone parents – maximum time willing to commute
	%	%
Up to 30 minutes	75	51
31 minutes to 59 minutes	20	11
An hour or more	5	38
<i>Base:</i>	<i>Unknown¹</i>	<i>528²</i>

¹ Data from the Labour Force Survey presented in ONS (2011), 'Commuting to work – 2011'.

² All looking for work or who intended to look for work at a specified point in the future, excluding answers of 'Don't know'.

5.5 Training or education courses

Respondents were asked whether they had undertaken any training courses or education classes to improve their skills, help them do a job or find employment since they were interviewed in 2010. In total, 41 per cent of respondents had gone on such a course.

Those respondents who had made a JSA claim since moving off IS were more likely to have gone on a training or education course than those who had not (44 per cent compared with 34 per cent). However, this difference is partly the result of the Work Programme. Those respondents who had been on the Work Programme were more likely to have been on a training or education course, compared to those who had not (56 per cent compared to 39 per cent). If one examines only those who were claiming JSA who were not referred to the Work Programme, only 41 per cent did any training, which is not significantly different to the 34 per cent who did training and had not made a JSA claim.²⁹ Recent research found that lone parents considered that moving on to JSA '*meant the start of moving towards work via training, rather than having to be available for work immediately*', but that their expectations '*were at odds with the reality of the JSA regime*', where training was limited by the 16-hour rule and because it was not discussed as a matter of course with Personal Advisers (Haux *et al.*, 2012, pp.89-91).

A number of groups of respondents were more likely to have been on at least one training or education course. In particular:

- those respondents who did not have a limiting disability were more likely to have gone on a training or education course than those who did have one (43 per cent compared with 34 per cent). Those who had mental-health problems were particularly unlikely to have done any training (29 per cent, compared with 43 per cent of those who did not), although those with a physical limiting long-standing illness, disability or infirmity were no more or less likely to have gone on training compared to those who did not;

²⁹ In addition, it should be noted that 68 per cent of respondents undertaking at least one course went on one of their courses while in employment.

- those who lived in privately rented housing were more likely to have gone on a training or education course than those renting from a local authority or housing association (50 per cent compared to 39 per cent). Those living in privately rented accommodation tended to be better qualified and have fewer children than those living in socially rented housing;
- those with higher level qualifications at Wave 1 were more likely have undertaken training than those with lower level qualifications. While 45 per cent of those with qualifications at Level 2 or above had done some training or an education course since their Wave 1 interview, only 35 per cent of those with no qualifications or qualifications below Level 2 had done so.

The majority of those who had been on a course had only been on one course (60 per cent), but nearly one-quarter (22 per cent) had been on two courses, and one in six (17 per cent) had been on three or more. Twenty-nine per cent of respondents reported that staff at Jobcentre Plus had arranged at least one of their courses.

All those who were no longer doing one of their courses were asked whether they had completed their course(s). In total 87 per cent of respondents had completed all of their courses, but 13 per cent had not done so. The number of respondents who had not completed a course was not high enough to allow analysis of why they had not completed. However, the Wave 1 report suggested that the most common reasons for not completing a course for lone parents on IS were that they had become disaffected with their course, they experienced problems with childcare, they had become ill, or that they had some other domestic or personal reason.

Of those who had completed their course (or at least one of the courses they had done), nearly four in five (78 per cent) had gained a qualification. Of those who had gained a qualification (and the levels of the highest qualifications held by respondents from Wave 1 and Wave 2 were known), analysis suggests that around half of respondents (52 per cent) had gained at least one qualification level.

5.6 Summary

- On average, lone parents were closer to the labour market in Wave 2, after having gone through LPO, than in Wave 1, when they were claiming IS. At Wave 1, 59 per cent of respondents were either in work or looking for work, but this had risen to 81 per cent by Wave 2.
- In total, 50 per cent of lone parents were looking for work. This included 68 per cent of those not in work (and 92 per cent of JSA claimants), and 25 per cent of those in work (who tended to be those working for fewer than 16 hours per week).
- In line with other research, the amount of jobsearch lone parents had conducted at Wave 2 was significantly higher than in Wave 1 (when on IS). Over 50 per cent of lone parents had applied for 11 or more jobs in the 12 months before being interviewed, compared to only 20 per cent at Wave 1. In addition, lone parents were doing more to find jobs, such as putting their name on the books of private recruitment agencies, than they were at Wave 1.
- Lone parents had a strong preference for part-time work. When asked about their most recent job application, 69 per cent of respondents had applied for part-time work, including 34 per cent who had applied for a job of 16 hours exactly (the minimum number of hours to be eligible for tax credits). This broadly matched lone parents' preferences for working hours.

- Lone parents had a strong preference for jobs that fit around their childcare responsibilities. Lone parents were often unwilling to work outside school hours; 56 per cent said they would be unwilling to work outside school hours, and 31 per cent said they would only work during term-time (with 29 per cent reporting that they would only be willing to work if their job was both during school hours and term-time only). Furthermore, 88 per cent said that flexible working arrangements were important, and around four in ten reported that they would not take a job that did not have flexible working.
- On average, the time lone parents were willing to travel to work was longer than the average commute in the UK, again demonstrating a willingness to work. However, seven in ten UK commuters used a car to go to work, but only 34 per cent of LPO lone parents had access to a car.

6 Attitudes and constraints to work

Recent research has shown that the attitudes of lone parents towards work and parenting are ‘key predictors of future work outcomes,’ but also that attitudes are altered in response to changing circumstances. For example, ‘prolonged labour market inactivity ... strengthens a set of attitudes that appear to discourage lone mothers from seeking employment’ (Tomaszewski et al., 2010, p.33).

This chapter draws on a set of questions developed through the Family and Children’s Study (FACS) which look to measure respondents’ opinions and attitudes about a wide range of factors relating to work and parenting. The questions also analyze lone parents’ hopes and expectations for the coming years, the barriers to entering work of those who are not in employment, and the barriers to staying in work of those who are in (self-)employment.

A key interest in this chapter is how far lone parents’ attitudes, hopes and expectations for the future, and barriers to work have changed since Wave 1, when they were claiming IS and were yet to go through the Lone Parent Obligations (LPO) changes.

The ‘Choices and Constraints’ question set

Since 2006, the FACS has included a set of questions referred to as the ‘Choices and Constraints’ question set (Collins et al., 2006). This set of questions comprises three sections:

- self-completion questions on attitudes towards parenting, childcare, work and related issues;
- questions about future intentions, including the kind of work they may want to do in the future;
- card sort exercises in which respondents sort a series of statements by whether they perceive them to be a ‘big factor’, a ‘smaller factor’ or ‘not a factor’ in their decision to work, or their ability to stay in work.

Key findings from this question set, as asked of LPO respondents, are reported in this chapter.

6.1 Attitudes to work, parenting and childcare

Previous research has found that ‘the relationship between mothers’ attitudes towards caring and working on the one hand, and their employment on the other, is complex. While attitudes affect employment decisions they can also adjust to both changes in the mother’s own behaviour and, in the longer-term, to changes in social norms. Himmelweit and Sigala [2004] reported that when a conflict arises between the mothers’ attitudes and their working behaviour, they either adjust their attitudes or their behaviour’ (Tomaszewski et al., 2010, p.3).

In this research, we are able to measure lone parents’ attitudes to work, parenting and childcare after they stopped receiving Income Support (IS), and compare them with the opinions they held previously while on IS, in order to form judgements about how far LPO has affected lone parents attitudes.

Therefore, respondents were asked about their attitudes towards parenting, work and childcare through a series of statements, to which they were asked whether they agreed or disagreed. At Wave 1, factor analysis was conducted to reduce these 27 separate attitudes into four broader

themes. These were:

- parental childcare-focused attitudes;
- employment-focused attitudes;
- social stigma of staying at home;
- motivation towards combining work and parenting.

The results at Wave 2 show that, as in Wave 1, respondents were very work focused (see Table 6.1). Over seven in ten respondents agreed that having almost any job is better than being unemployed, keeping a job was important even if you did not like the job, and that working parents provide a good role model for their children. In addition, 86 per cent agreed that having a job is the best way to be an independent person. Nevertheless, strong parental childcare focused attitudes were also present; for example, 78 per cent of lone parents agreed that children aged under five are happiest being looked after by their parents, and 69 per cent agreed that it is always better if the parent can look after the child themselves.

When responses from Wave 2 are compared with responses of the same lone parents in Wave 1, an interesting pattern emerges. Respondents were more likely to agree with certain employment focused statements. For example, more respondents at Wave 2 than at Wave 1 agreed that 'Having almost any job is better than being unemployed' and that 'Once you've got a job, it's important to hang on to it, even if you don't really like it.' As well this shift towards employment focused statements, there was also an increase in the proportion who agreed with statements relating to the social stigma of benefits. In particular, more respondents agreed in Wave 2 than in Wave 1 that 'If you live on Social Security Benefits, everyone looks down on you' and 'The government expects all lone parents to work.'

There was less of a change in relation to parental childcare statements. In some cases, respondents were somewhat less likely to agree at Wave 2 than at Wave 1: fewer respondents agreed that 'Children do best if their mum stays home to look after them' and 'My job is to look after the home and family'. However, for other statements there was no difference between attitudes at Wave 1 and at Wave 2.

Overall, these findings suggest that lone parents' attitudes were more work-focused and, to some extent, less focused on parental childcare, after leaving IS and moving on to other destinations. However, it is important to note that the level of change (in percentage points) is relatively small, and the general pattern – of both a strong work focus and a strong focus on parental childcare – remained.

Table 6.1 Attitudes to work, parenting and childcare in waves 1 and 2

	<i>Column percentages</i>	
	Wave 1	Wave 2
	%	%
Parental childcare		
It's always better if the parent can look after the child themselves	73	69
Children do best if their mum stays home to look after them	50	45
Children under five are happiest being looked after by their parents	80	78
A job is all right, but I really want to be with my children at home	41	37
My job is to look after the home and family	57	51
I always thought that if I had children I would stay at home and look after them	52	50
If you work when your children are little you will miss out on seeing them grow and develop	70	67
No one should ever feel badly about claiming social security benefits	73	71
Employment focus		
Having almost any job is better than being unemployed	60	71
Once you've got a job, it's important to hang on to it, even if you don't really like it	64	73
Having a job is the best way for me to be an independent person	83	86
Working for pay is more fulfilling than looking after the home and family	21	20
Social stigma of benefits		
Stay-at-home mums are not valued by society	49	49
If you live on Social Security Benefits, everyone looks down on you	61	69
It's not possible to put your children first and work	45	42
The government expects all lone parents to work	61	72
A person must have a job to feel a full member of society	29	34
Combining work and family brings more problems than benefits	32	31
Motivation to balance work and family life		
Most of my closest friends think mums should go out to work if they want to	64	64
Working mums provide positive role models for their children	61	70
Working mothers have the best of both worlds	33	38
<i>Base: All LPO respondents, excluding 'don't know'</i>	931	968

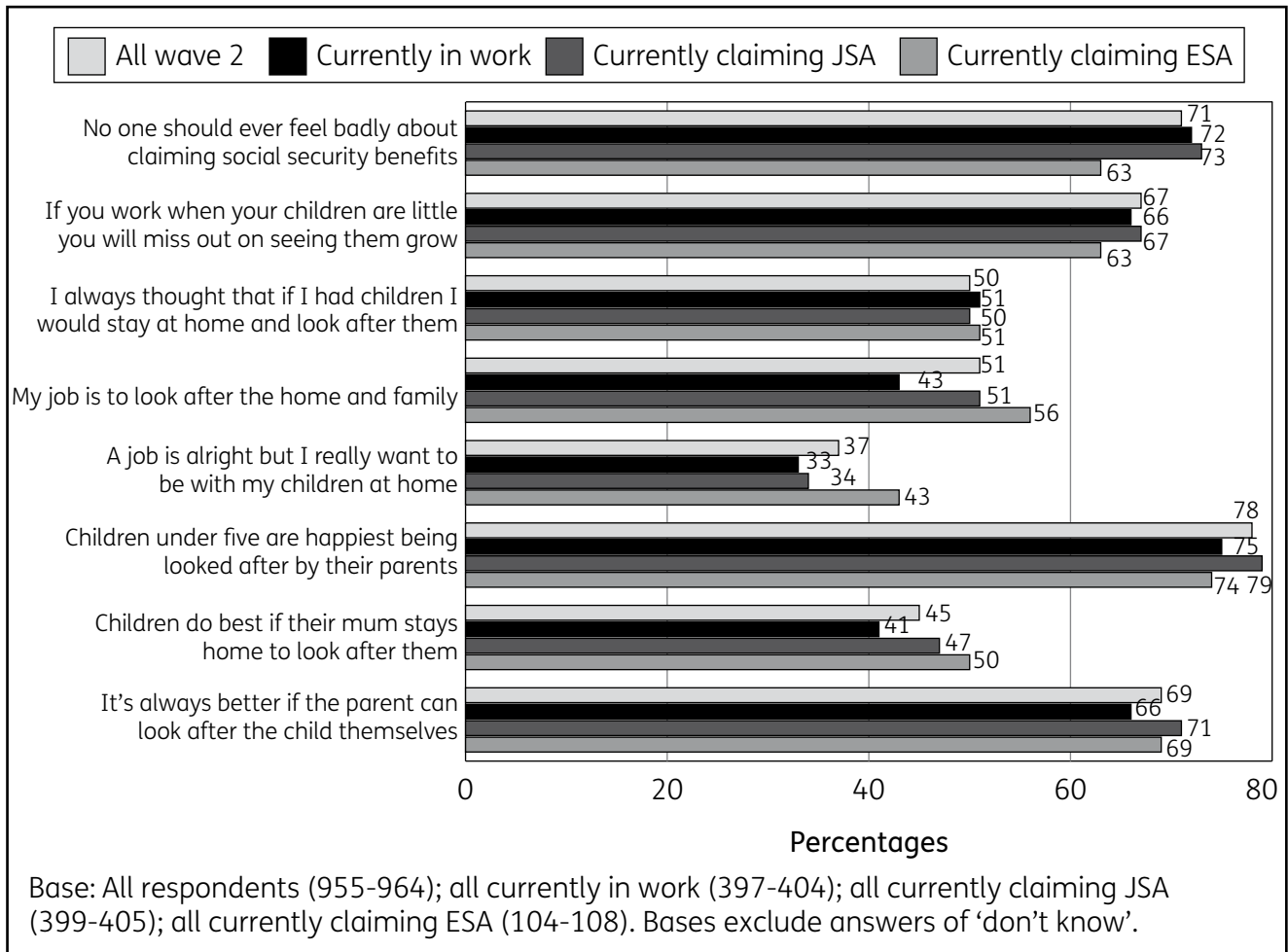
The rest of this section examines each of these groups of statements in turn, and has a particular focus on whether respondents' benefit/work status at the time of interview were related to their attitudes. In general, the attitudes of those in work, claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) were often very similar with regard to parenting and social stigma, although there were more differences with regard to employment focus and balancing work and family life.

6.1.1 Parental childcare-focused attitudes

Figure 6.1 shows the proportion of respondents who agreed with each statement related to parental childcare focused attitudes, comparing findings of all respondents against their work or benefit

status at the time of the interview. As noted above, the findings show a strong focus on parental childcare among most respondents.

Figure 6.1 Agreement with parental childcare-focused statements by current activity



Respondents' work/benefit status did not have any impact on their agreement towards these parental childcare focused statements, with one exception; unsurprisingly, those currently in work were less likely to say that their job was to look after the home and family. Overall, the similarities between groups suggest that these attitudes remained strongly in place irrespective of a move into work, JSA or other destinations. However, a number of factors did make it more likely for respondents to agree with these statements:³⁰

- those with more children were more likely to agree with statements compared to those with only one child;
- those with literacy or numeracy problems were more likely to agree with statements than those without;
- older respondents were more likely to agree than younger respondents;
- those who had never worked were more likely to agree than those in work or who had worked since the birth of their eldest child.

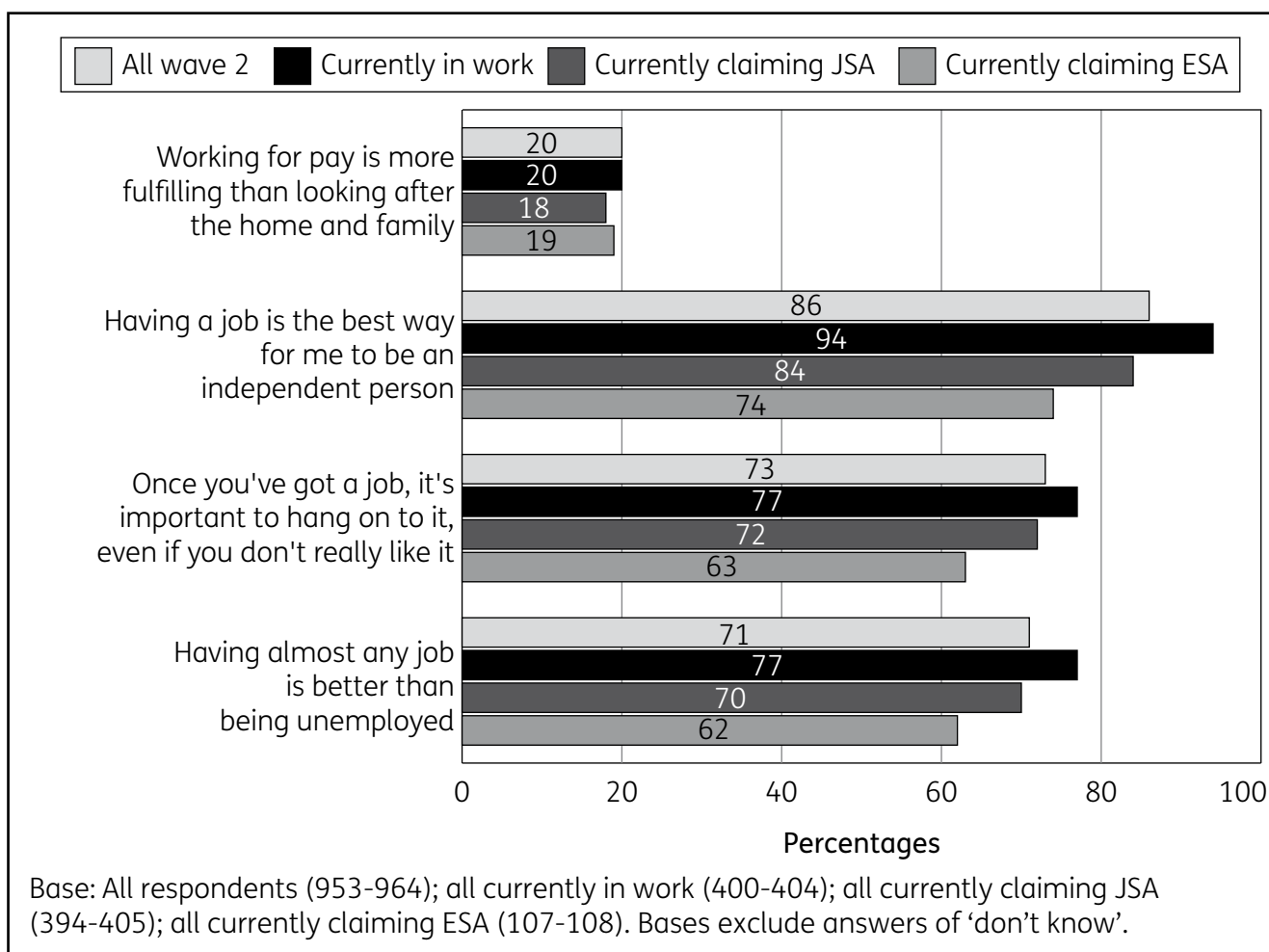
³⁰ The following groups saw significant differences in at least three of the attitudes above.

That the sub-groups of lone parents noted above were more likely to agree with these statements was in line with findings from Wave 1 one of the research. However, Wave 1 did not find that older respondents were more likely to agree with these statements than younger respondents.

6.1.2 Employment-focused attitudes

As noted above, lone parents expressed a strong employment focus in their attitudes, and there was a shift in Wave 2 towards higher agreement with employment-focused attitudes when compared with Wave 1.

Figure 6.2 Agreement with employment-focused statements by current activity



With one exception, there was a strong relationship between these statements and respondents' work/benefit history. Overall, respondents in work were the most likely to agree with them, and those claiming ESA (and, therefore, furthest from the labour market), least likely to agree. Reflecting these findings for ESA, those with a limiting long-standing illness, disability or infirmity (LLSI) were also less likely to agree with these statements.

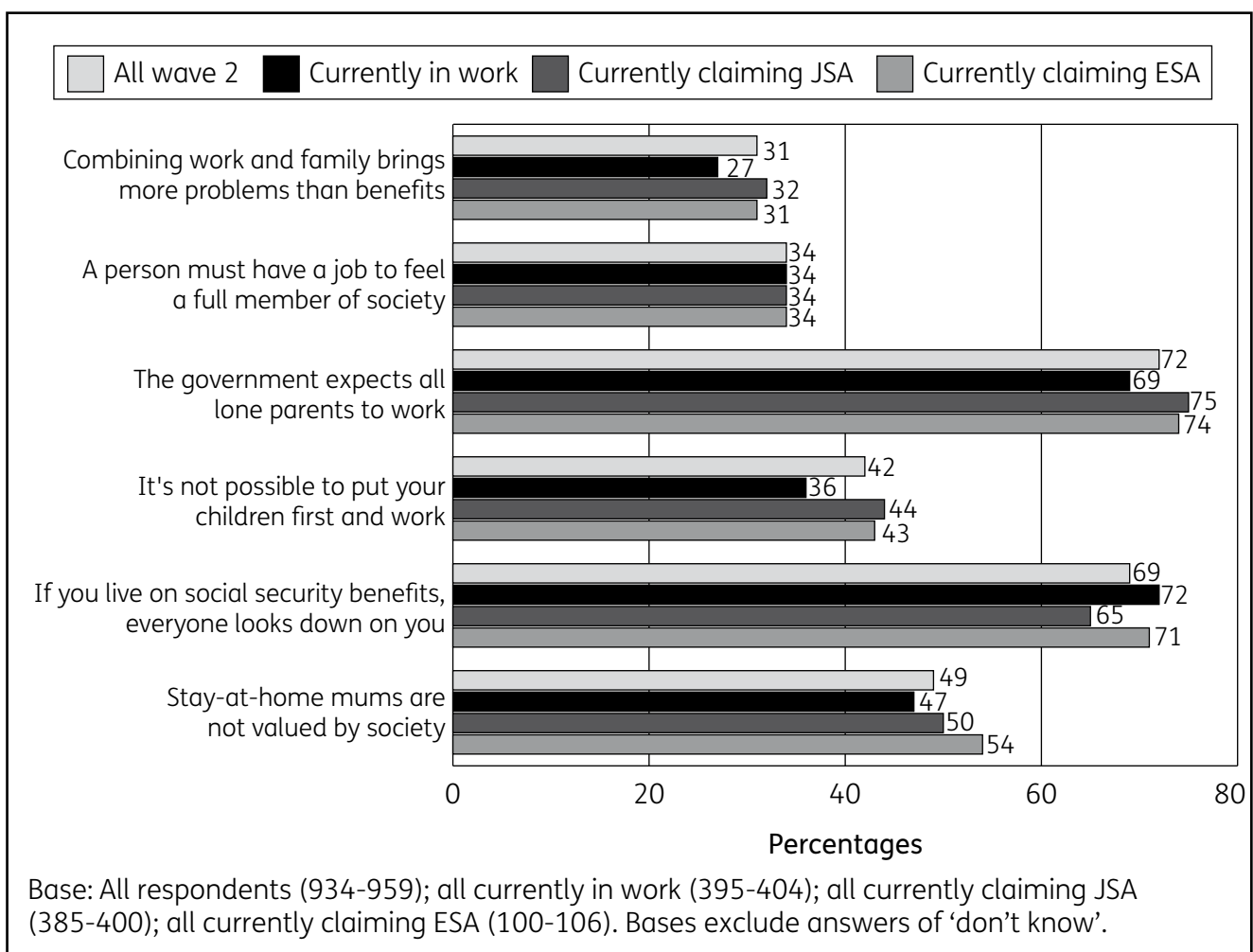
Those with lower level qualifications (below level 2) or no qualifications at all were more likely to agree with some of the statements. While 78 per cent of those with lower level or no qualifications agreed that 'Once you've got a job, it's important to hang on to it, even if you don't really like it' only 70 per cent of those with level 2 or higher qualifications did so. Similarly, while 25 per cent of those with lower level or no qualifications agreed that 'Working for pay is more fulfilling than looking after the home and family', only 16 per cent of those with level 2 or higher qualifications did so. This may

suggest that more qualified respondents were more selective about jobs they were prepared to do in order to ensure a positive work-life balance.

6.1.3 Social stigma of staying at home

Figure 6.3 shows the proportion of respondents who agreed with each statement related to the social stigma of staying at home, comparing findings of all respondents against their work or benefit status at the time of the interview. As noted above, there were higher levels of agreement with some of these statements in Wave 2 than there had been in Wave 1.

Figure 6.3 Agreement with social stigma statements by current activity



There was not a strong relationship between work/benefit status and agreement with statements relating to the social stigma of staying at home. However, respondents who were in work at the time of the Wave 2 interview were less likely to agree that 'It is not possible to put your children first and work' than those claiming JSA. Conversely, those in work were more likely than those claiming JSA to agree that 'If you live on Social Security Benefits everyone looks down on you.'

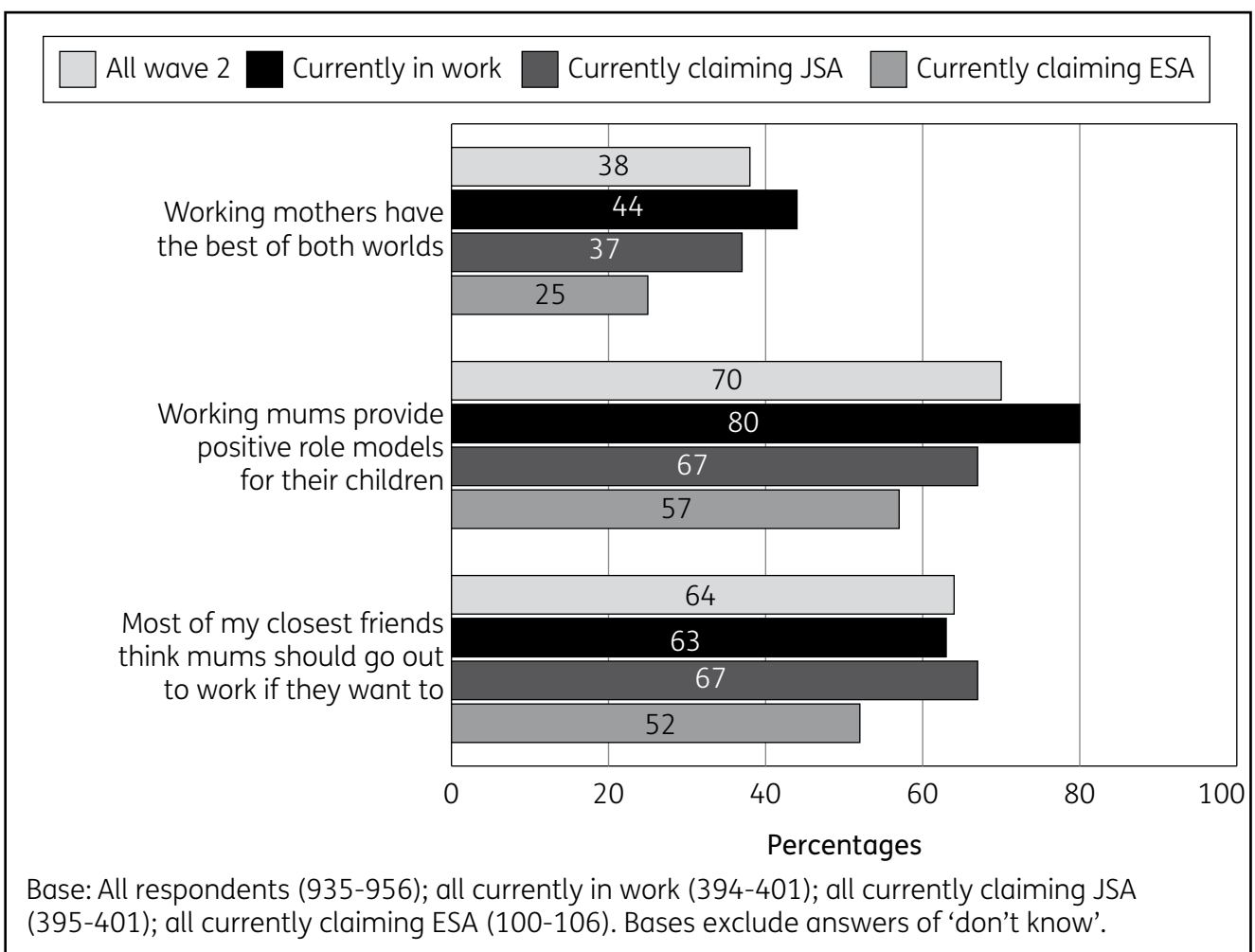
Those lone parents who had claimed ESA or JSA and been referred to the Work Programme were more likely to agree with some of these statements than those JSA/ESA claimants who had not been referred to the Work Programme. In particular, 83 per cent of JSA/ESA claimants on the Work Programme agreed that 'The government expects all lone parents to work' compared to 73 per cent of those who were not. Similarly, 60 per cent of JSA/ESA claimants on the Work Programme agreed that 'Stay-at-home mums are not valued by society', while only 50 per cent of those not on the Work Programme did.

On the whole, there were fewer clear patterns of responses by other lone parent sub-groups for these social stigma statements than for the parenting and employment focused statements noted previously. The main exception was that older respondents were more likely to agree with these statements than younger ones.

6.1.4 Motivation towards combining work and parenting

Figure 6.4 shows the proportion of respondents who agreed with each statement related to motivation towards combining work and parenting, comparing findings of all respondents against their work or benefit status at the time of the interview.

Figure 6.4 Agreement with combining work and childcare statements by current activity



There was a strong relationship between current work/benefit status and agreement with these statements. In particular, those respondents in work at the time of the interview were more likely to agree than those claiming JSA or ESA that 'Working mums provide positive role models for their children' and 'Working mothers have the best of both worlds.'

Some other groups of lone parents were more likely to agree with these statements than others.³¹ In particular:

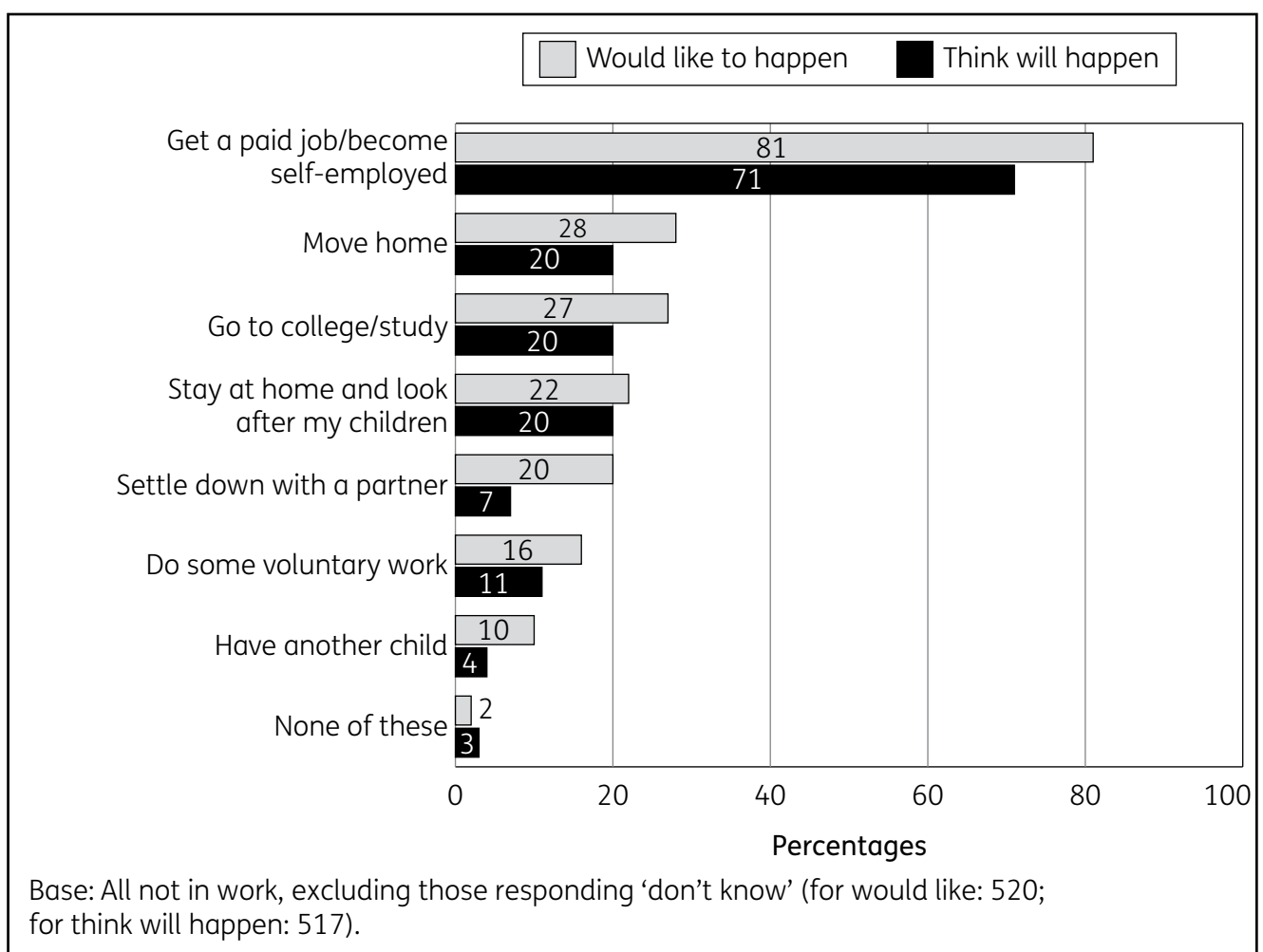
- younger respondents were more likely to agree with these statements than older respondents;
- those who did not have their ability to work restricted by caring for a disabled child or a disabled adult were more likely to agree to these statements than those who did have to.

6.2 Future expectations and intentions

Respondents who were not in work were asked whether they would like and whether they expected a range of things to happen to them in the next few years. The results are presented in Figure 6.5.

Eighty-one per cent of lone parents not in work wanted to enter work in the next few years, and 71 per cent expected that this would happen. The other most common aspirations were to move home (28 per cent), and to go to college or study (27 per cent), but these were much less commonly mentioned than entering work.

Figure 6.5 Respondents' views on what they want to happen in the next few years and what they think will happen



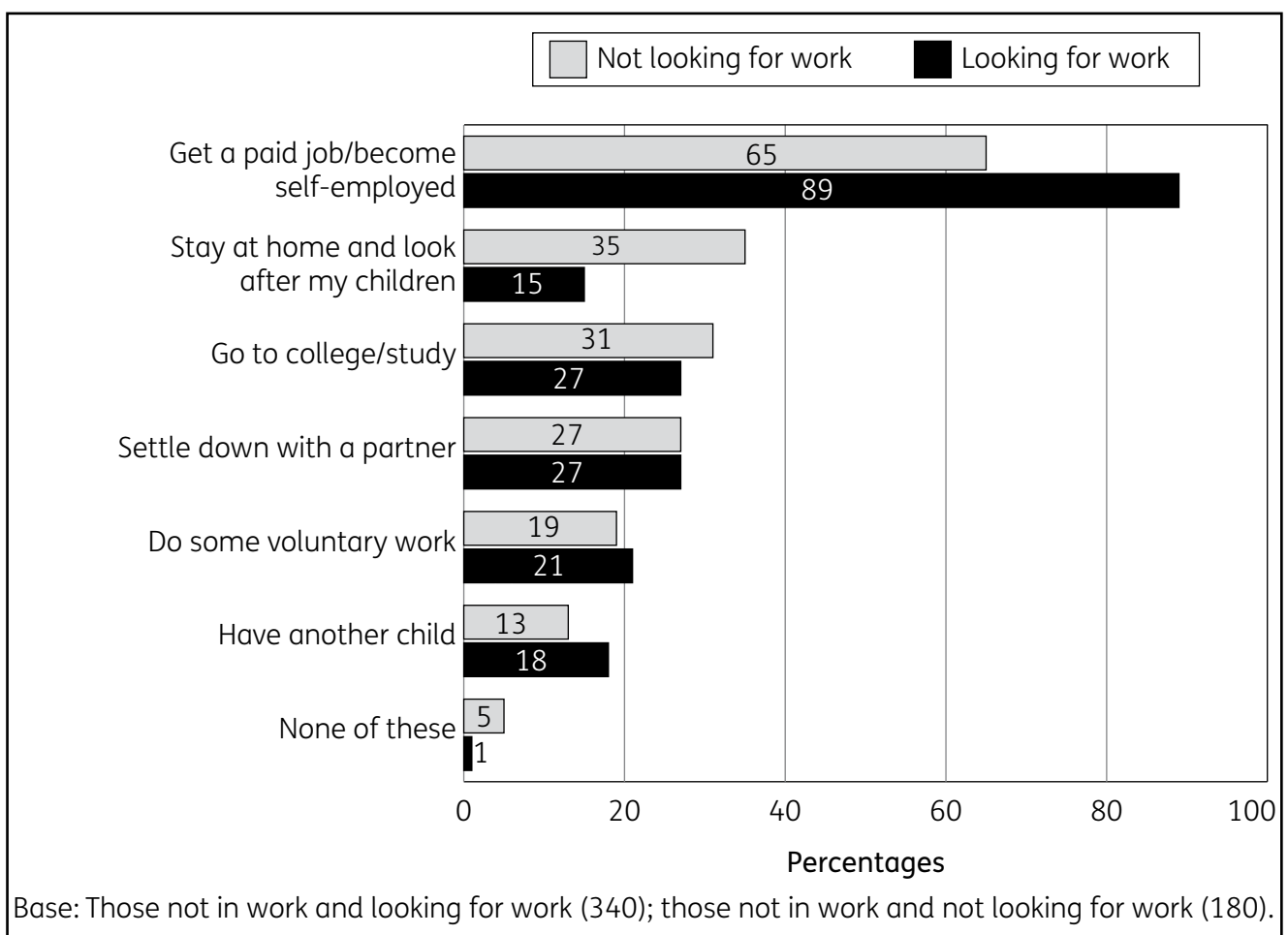
³¹ These sub-groups were significantly more likely to agree to at least two out of three statements.

Some groups of lone parents were more likely to expect to move into work in the next few years. In particular those who:

- had made any JSA claim since moving off IS were more likely to expect to move into work compared to those who had not (77 per cent compared with 50 per cent); and
- did not have an LLSI were more likely than those who did have one (77 per cent compared to 56 per cent).

Figure 6.6 compares the hopes for the future of those who were and were not looking for work at the time of interview.

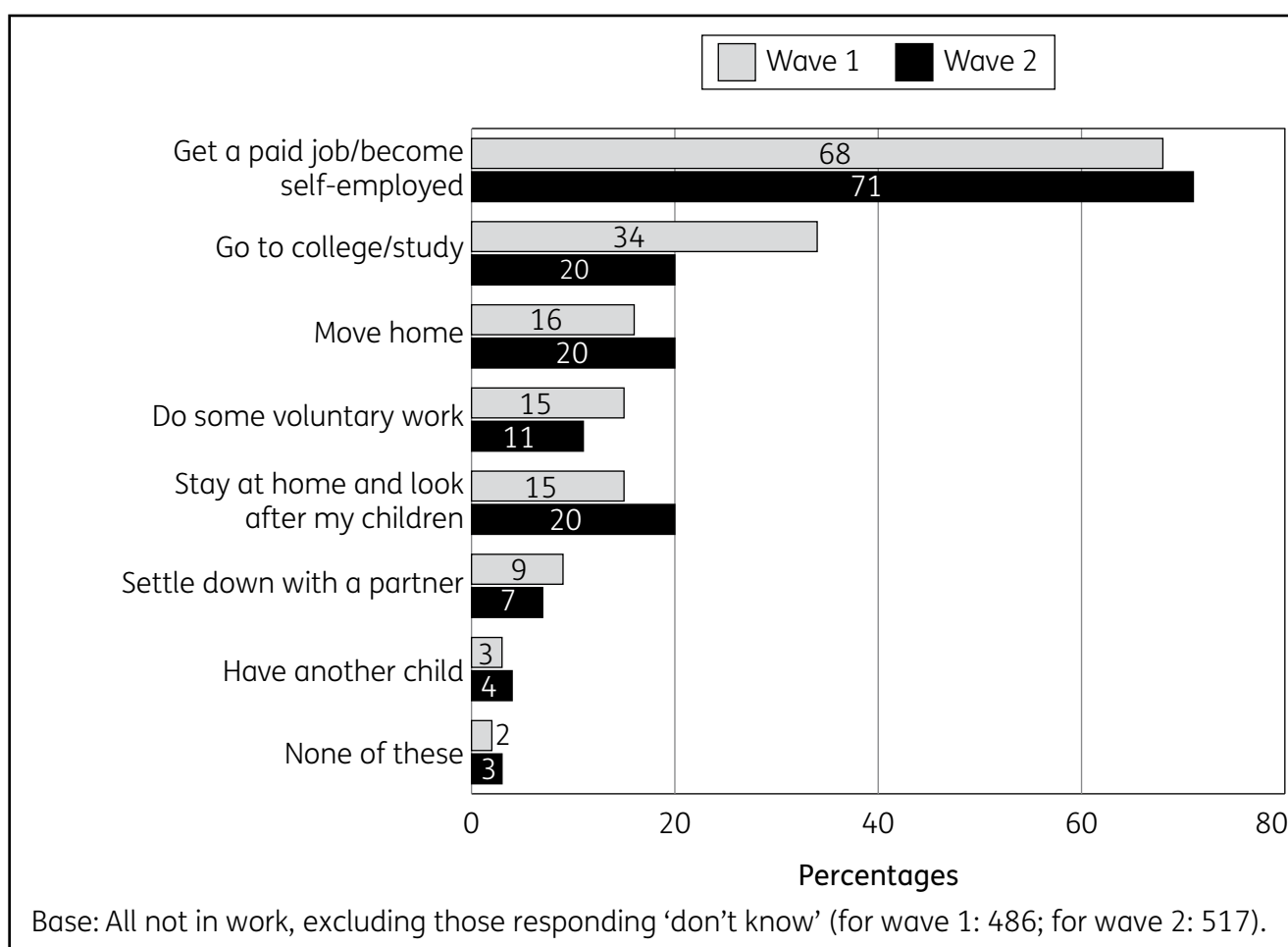
Figure 6.6 Respondents' views on what they want to happen in the next few years by whether looking for work



Those looking for work differed from those not looking for work in being more likely to say they hoped to get a paid job or become self-employed, and less likely to say they hoped to stay at home and look after their children. However, even though fewer of those not looking for work said they hoped to get a paid job or become self-employed, the proportion still represented two-thirds of this group. Otherwise, there were no significant differences between the hopes for the coming years of those looking for work and those not looking for work.

Figure 6.7 compares these respondents' expectations for the next few years at Wave 2 and when they were interviewed at Wave 1.

Figure 6.7 Respondents' views on what they expect to happen in the next few years in Wave 1 and Wave 2



There was not a statistically significant difference between the proportion of lone parents who expected to enter work between 2010 (Wave 1) and 2012 (Wave 2). The proportion expecting to go to college or study, however, declined dramatically, from 34 per cent in 2010 while they were claiming IS, to 20 per cent in 2012. This may be explained by recent research which showed that many lone parents saw learning as a stepping stone in the path towards work, but the realities of the JSA regime meant that less training was available to them than expected (Haux *et al.*, 2012, pp.89-94).³²

Interestingly, the proportion expecting to stay at home and look after their children was somewhat higher in 2012 than it was in 2010, when respondents were claiming IS. However, those who had received JSA after leaving IS were less likely to expect to stay and home and look after their children: only 16 per cent of those who had claimed JSA expected to do this, compared with 34 per cent of those who had not claimed JSA.

6.3 Perceived barriers to employment of those not in work

In both waves 1 and 2, respondents who were not in work were asked to complete a card sort exercise in which they sorted a 19 statements by whether they perceive them to be a 'big barrier', a

³² See also Section 5.5.

‘smaller factor’, or ‘not a factor’ in their decision to work. In Wave 1, factor analysis was conducted to reduce these 19 separate potential barriers into five broader themes. These were:

- childcare and jobsearch constraints;
- personal constraints;
- ‘parenting as a choice’;
- job concerns;
- peer pressure.

Overall, the most commonly experienced barriers in Wave 2 tended to be issues relating to childcare and jobsearch constraints – see Table 6.2. In particular, 58 per cent of respondents reported that the fact they needed a job where they could take time off at short notice to look after their children was a big barrier, and 57 per cent said the lack of suitable job opportunities in the local area was a big barrier to entering work. On the other hand, the least commonly mentioned barriers related to peer pressure. On average, respondents reported 4.9 big barriers to work, with 40 per cent reporting six or more of the 19 issues as big barriers. Only seven per cent said that they faced none of these barriers to entering work.

Table 6.2 also shows the proportions of these lone parents who reported each of these issues as big barriers to employment when they were asked the same questions in Wave 1. For most of these issues, there were not significantly different proportions of respondents reporting them as big barriers to work in Wave 1 and Wave 2.

However, the significant differences that did exist suggested that negative opinions towards work and concerns about benefits were less likely to be big barriers in Wave 2 than in Wave 1, while practical problems were more likely to be barriers. Therefore, a higher proportion of lone parents reported that a lack of suitable job opportunities in the local area, or their health condition or disability were big barriers to work in Wave 2, compared with Wave 1. Conversely, smaller proportions said needing a job where they could take time off at short notice to look after their child(ren), being concerned about leaving the security of benefits, and not being sure they would be financially better off in work, were big barriers in Wave 2 compared to Wave 1.

Table 6.2 Respondents' perceived barriers to work in Wave 1 and Wave 2

	<i>Column percentages</i>	
	Wave 1	Wave 2
	%	%
Childcare and jobsearch constraints		
There isn't enough suitable, affordable childcare around here	30	34
Employers aren't family friendly	24	24
My family or close friends are not able, or live too far away, to provide childcare	38	33
There are few suitable job opportunities in the local area	45	57
I would need a job where I could take time off at short notice to look after my child(ren)	66	58
I would have problems with transport to and from work	21	21
Personal constraints		
I have personal or family troubles that need to be sorted out	20	21
I have difficulties owing to my health condition or disability	15	21
I care for someone with has a health condition, disability, or learning difficulties	13	14
'Parenting as a choice'		
I want to look after my child(ren) myself or at home	32	28
I am worried I will not have enough time with my child(ren)	34	29
I am not prepared to leave my child(ren) in the care of anyone other than my family or close friends while I work	38	34
My child(ren) wouldn't like me to work	17	13
Job concerns		
I am concerned about leaving the security of benefits	18	12
I haven't got the qualifications or experience to get the kind of job I would want	37	33
My confidence is low at the moment	31	28
I am not sure I would be financially better off in work	41	34
Peer pressure		
My husband/partner/ex-partner wouldn't like it if I worked	1	2
My parent(s) wouldn't like it if I worked	4	2
<i>Base: All LPO respondents not in work, excluding 'don't know'</i>	468	501

The remainder of this section presents analysis of the issues in each of these factors. In addition to reporting results for all those not in work at Wave 2, we also examine whether particular groups of lone parents were more or less likely to find these issues barriers to entering work, with a particular focus on those currently claiming JSA and ESA. Analysis of those claiming ESA is based on fewer than 100 interviews, and, as such, caution should be exercised when interpreting this data.

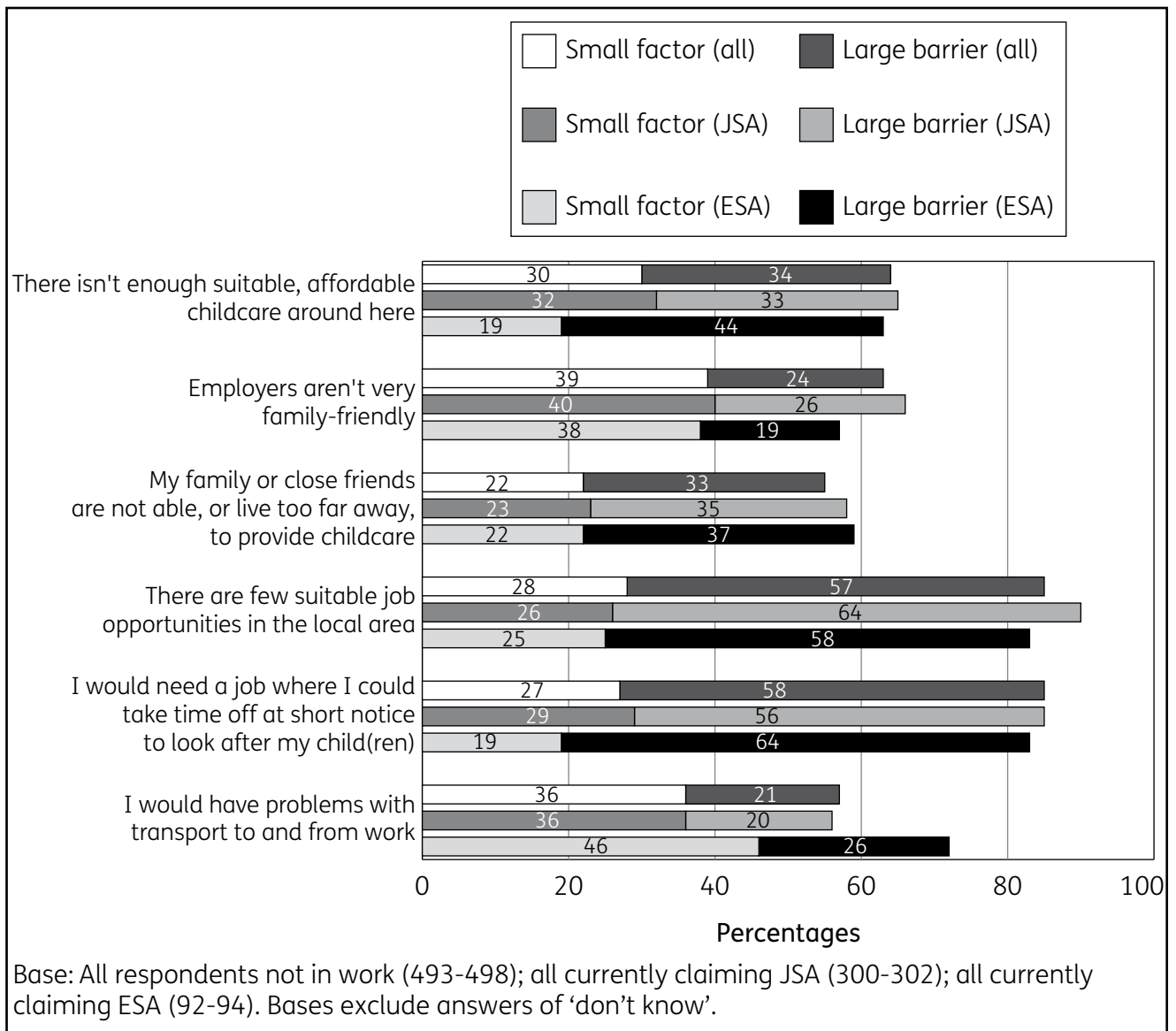
6.3.1 Childcare and jobsearch constraints

The first types of barrier to employment faced by lone parents are childcare and jobsearch constraints. Figure 6.8 shows the proportion of respondents who considered each of the issues related to childcare and jobsearch to be a large barrier or a small factor. The chart also shows the

responses of those who were claiming JSA (in the middle bar) and ESA (in the bottom bar) at the time of the interview.

The issue that was most commonly noted as a big barrier by lone parents was that they would need a job where they could take time off at short notice to look for their children, noted by 58 per cent of respondents. This was closely followed by concerns that there were few suitable job opportunities in the local area, noted by 57 per cent of respondents.

Figure 6.8 Barriers to entering work – childcare and jobsearch constraints



With one exception, there were no significant differences between the answers of those claiming ESA and JSA at the time of interview. The one exception was that those claiming ESA were more likely to cite problems with transport as at least a small factor than those claiming JSA. Nevertheless, there were some significant differences depending on whether the lone parent had a disability which limited the amount or type of work they did (not all of whom were claiming ESA). Those with an LLSI were more likely to report the following as big barriers to work:

- not enough suitable, affordable childcare available locally (44 per cent, compared to 30 per cent of those without an LLSI);

- needing a job where they could take time off at short notice to look after children (66 per cent, compared to 55 per cent of those without an LLSI);
- problems with transport to and from work (31 per cent, compared to 17 per cent of those without an LLSI).

Other variations included lone parents:

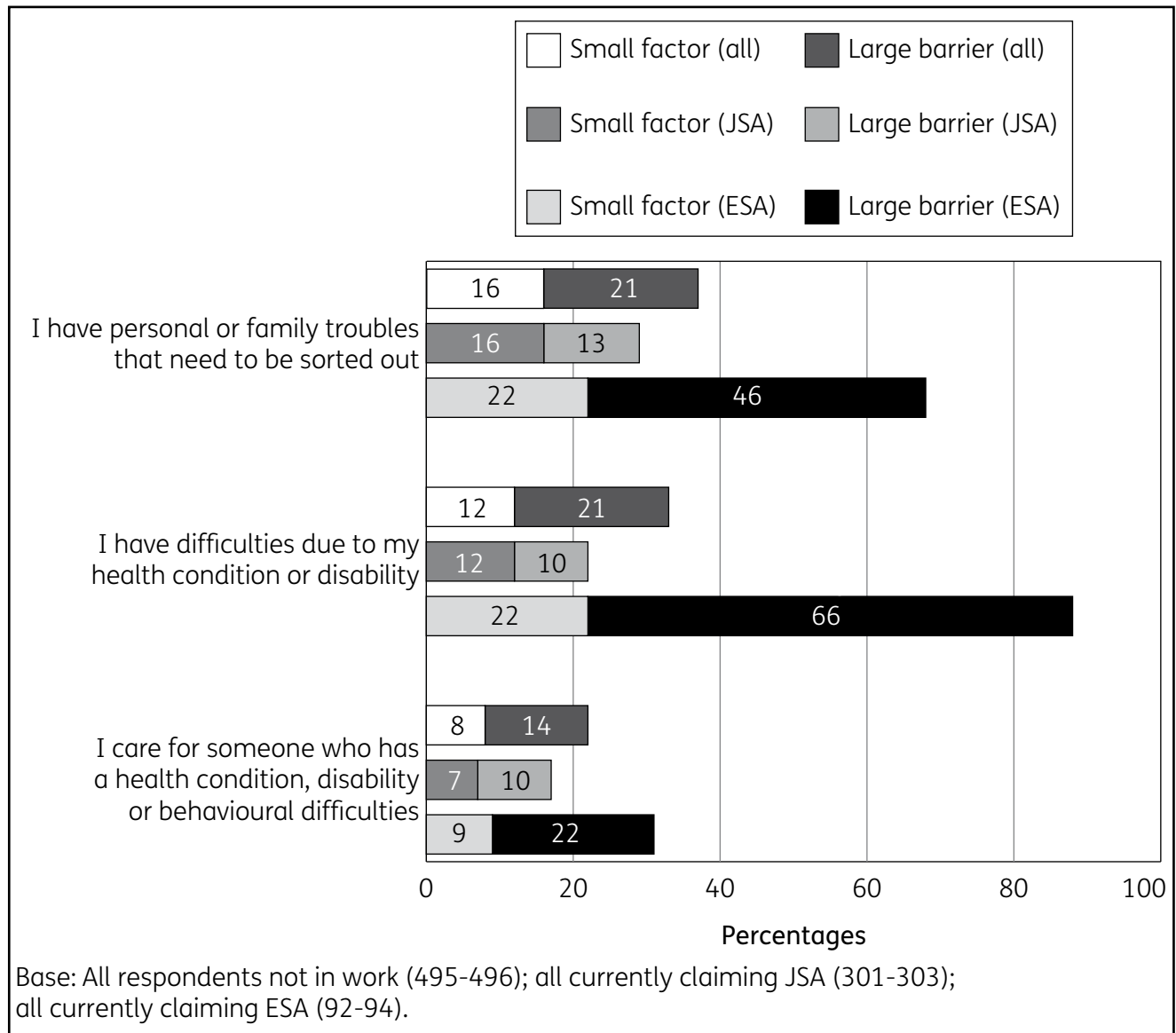
- who were not in work at the time of the interview, but who had worked since the birth of their oldest child, were less likely to report that the fact that they would need a job where they could take time off at short notice to look after children as a big barrier (50 per cent), compared with those with had either not worked since their oldest child was born or who had never worked (65 per cent);
- with no qualifications or qualifications below level 2 were more likely to say the perception that employers were not very family friendly was a big barrier (29 per cent) compared to those with qualifications at or above level 2 (19 per cent);
- with two or more children were more likely to report that it was a big barrier that they did not have friends or close family who were able to provide childcare (38 per cent), compared to those with only one child (25 per cent).

6.3.2 Personal constraints

Personal constraints to employment include other caring responsibilities, health conditions and other personal circumstances which impede work. Figure 6.9 shows the proportion of respondents who considered each of the following personal constraints to be a large or a small barrier. The chart also shows the responses of those who were claiming JSA (in the middle bar) and ESA (in the bottom bar) at the time of the interview.

One in five lone parents (21 per cent) reported that personal or family troubles that needed to be sorted out before they could enter work were a big barrier, with a further 16 per cent reporting this as a small factor. In addition, 21 per cent reported health conditions which inhibited their ability to work as a big barrier, and 14 per cent reported the need to care for someone with a health condition, disability or behavioural difficulties as a big barrier.

Figure 6.9 Barriers to entering work – personal constraints



Those claiming ESA were more likely to cite all of these barriers than those claiming JSA. This included nearly half of all those claiming ESA who reported that family or personal trouble that needed to be sorted out was a big barrier to employment, compared to 13 per cent of those claiming JSA. Chapter 2 on destinations reported that these barriers were the ones that were most strongly correlated with moving into work; in other words, these can be considered the most fundamental barriers to work. This is consistent with the lower proportion of lone parents with an LLSI who entered work.

Those not looking for work were more likely than those looking for work to say their health condition or disability was a big barrier (45 per cent compared to nine per cent), that the fact that they had to care for someone with a health condition, disability or behavioural difficulty was a big barrier (21 per cent, compared to 11 per cent), or that they had personal or family troubles that needed to be sorted out (32 per cent, compared to 15 per cent). This is linked to the fact that those claiming ESA were less likely to be looking for work than those claiming JSA.

Certain other groups of lone parents were more likely to say some issues were big barriers than others:

- lone parents with two or more children were more likely to say that they had to care for someone with a health condition, disability or behavioural difficulty (17 per cent, compared to ten per cent of those with only one child). Moreover, these lone parents were more likely to report having personal or family troubles that needed to be sorted out (24 per cent, compared to 16 per cent of those with only one child);
- lone parents whose highest qualification was below level 2 or who had no qualifications were more likely to cite having personal or family trouble that needed to be sorted out as a big barrier compared to those with level 2 or higher qualifications (25 per cent compared to 16 per cent);
- those living in socially rented accommodation (that is, renting from a local authority or housing association) were more likely than those living in other forms of housing to report that health conditions or a disability were a big barrier to entering work (25 per cent, compared to 14 per cent). Those living in privately rented accommodation tended to be better qualified and have fewer children than those living in socially rented housing.

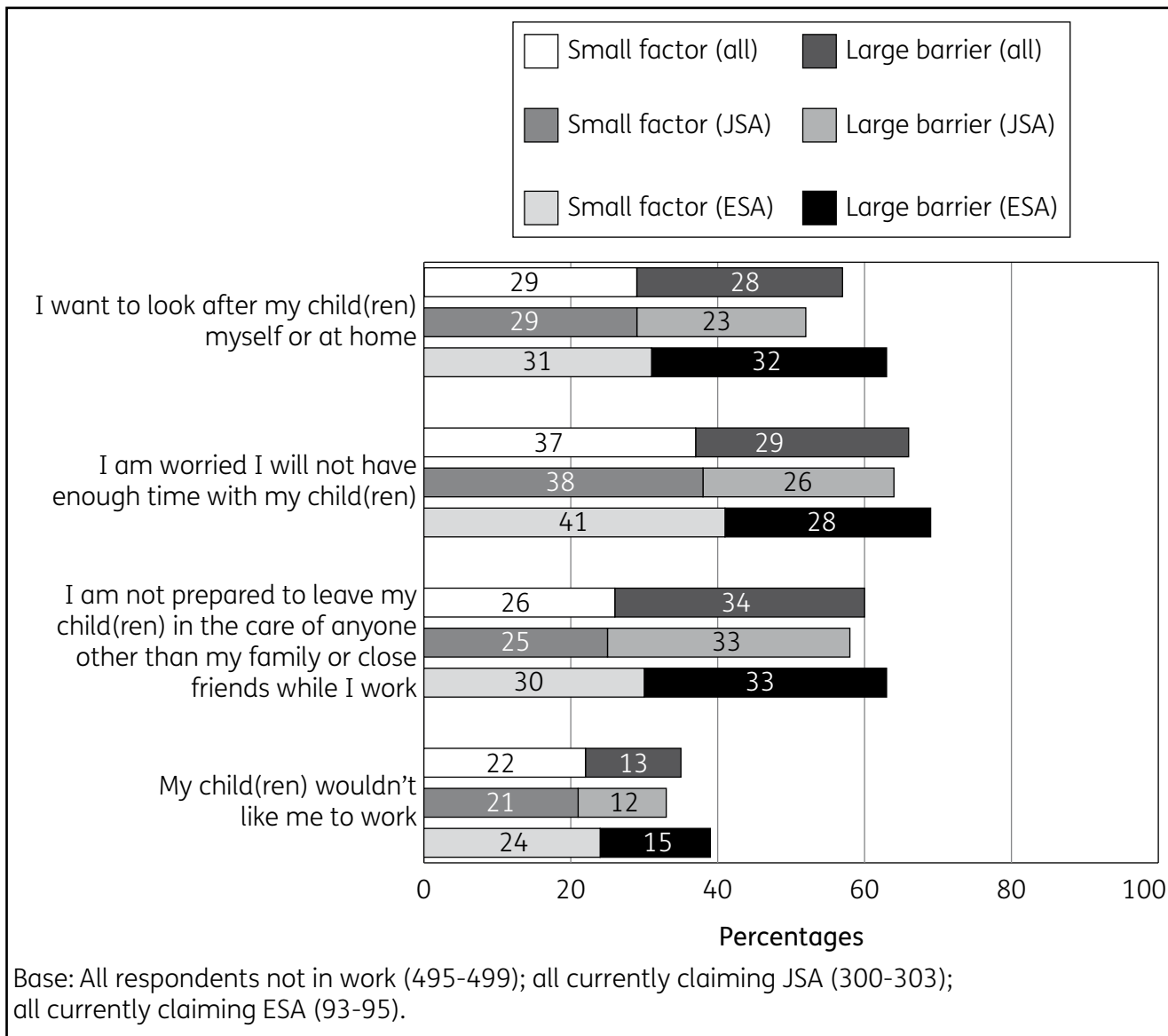
6.3.3 'Parenting as a choice'

Previous research has shown that there are a group of lone parents for whom parenting is a choice that is preferable to work. Moreover, as we have seen, Tomaszewski *et al.* found that '*prolonged labour market inactivity ... strengthens a set of attitudes that appeared to discourage lone mothers from seeking employment, such as those where parenting is treated as a job*' (Tomaszewski *et al.*, 2010, p.29).

Around three in ten respondents to this survey reported that the fact that they wanted to look after their child(ren) themselves at home, were worried that they would not have enough time with their children if they entered work, or were not comfortable with using formal childcare were big barriers to work (see Figure 6.10).

As one would expect, lone parents who were looking for work at the time of the Wave 2 interview were less likely to cite these barriers than those who were not looking for work. Moreover, those with a disability that limited the amount or type of work they could do were more likely to say it was a big barrier that they wanted to look after their children at home than those who did not have one (40 per cent compared to 23 per cent). Nevertheless, there were not significant differences depending on whether respondents were claiming JSA or ESA at the time of the interview.

Figure 6.10 Barriers to entering work – parenting as a choice



6.3.4 Job concerns

Many lone parents reported that concerns about their employability or the benefits of being in work were barriers to their moving into work. In particular, one-third of respondents reported that the fact that they thought they had not got the right qualifications or experience to get the kind of job they wanted, and/or that they were not sure they would be better off in work, were big barriers to employment. However, only 12 per cent of respondents said concern about leaving the security of benefits was a big barrier to work.

In total, nearly three-quarters of respondents said that their uncertainty about whether they would be better off in work was at least a smaller barrier. Nevertheless, other research has suggested that this is less of a factor for lone parents. For example, one recent report found that ‘among the parents interviewed, many needed little additional incentive to leave benefits. Indeed, financial motives were rarely the only or the most important reason for doing so. Some parents chose to enter work even though they were little better off than they were on benefits’ (Griffiths, 2011; p.4).

Figure 6.11 Barriers to entering work – job concerns



Respondents claiming ESA were more likely to cite low confidence as a big barrier to entering employment than those claiming JSA. Similarly, those with an LLSI were more likely to cite low confidence as a big barrier to work than those without one – 43 per cent compared to 21 per cent. However, there were no other significant differences between the barriers reported by those claiming JSA and ESA.

Lone parents with less recent work experience (those who had not worked since the birth of their oldest child or who had never worked) were more likely to report the following as big barriers to work:

- having low confidence (32 per cent, compared to 21 per cent of those who had worked since the birth of their eldest child);
- not having the qualifications or experience to get the kind of job they would like (42 per cent, compared to 24 per cent);
- not being sure they would be better off in work (38 per cent, compared to 29 per cent).

In addition, those with low level qualifications (below level 2) or with no qualifications were more likely than those with level 2 or higher qualifications to cite the following as big barriers to work:

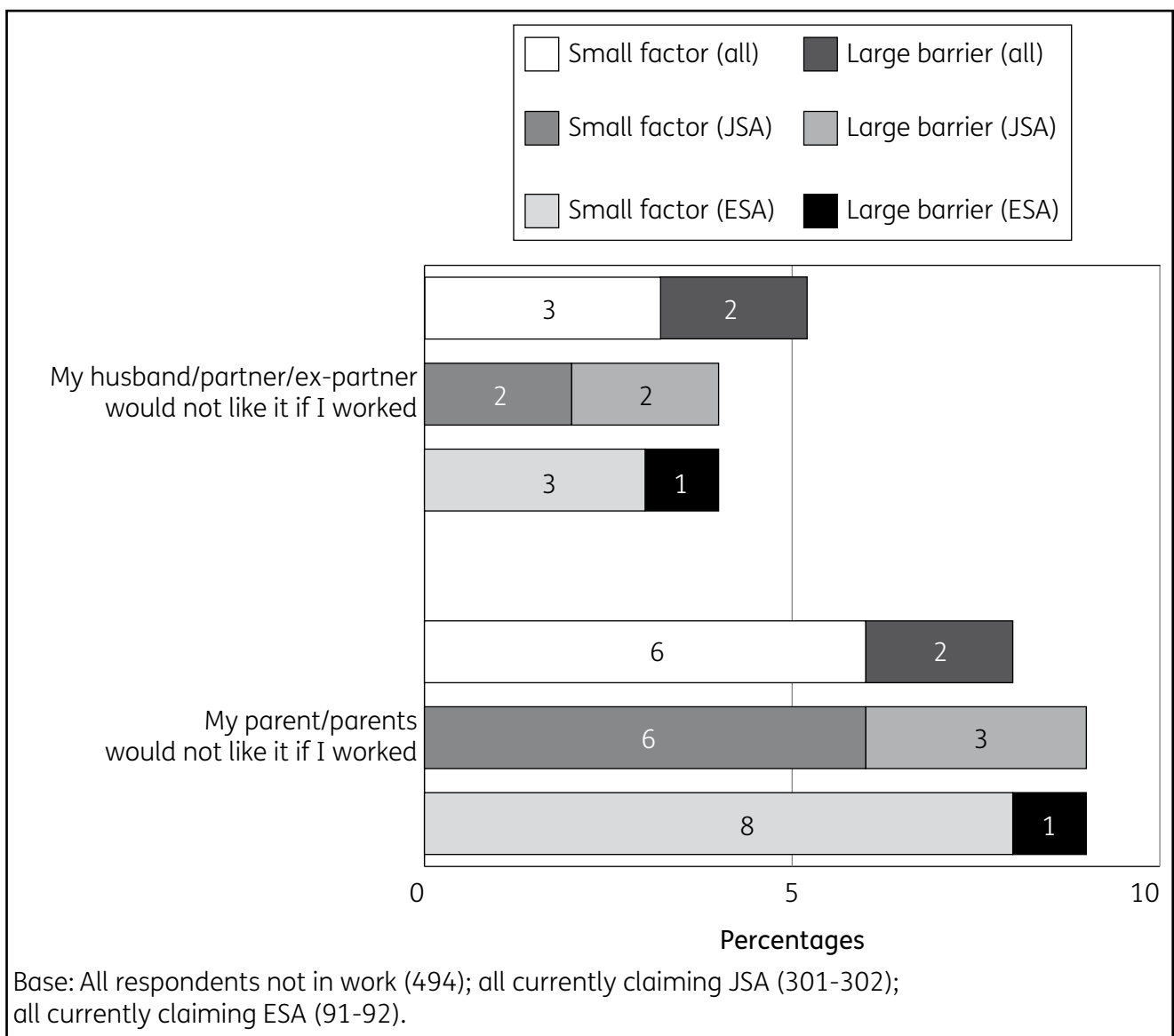
- having low confidence (37 per cent compared to 19 per cent);
- not having the qualifications or experience to get the kind of job they want (48 per cent compared to 20 per cent);
- not being sure they would be better off in work (39 per cent compared to 29 per cent).

These variations are consistent with Wave 1 findings.

6.3.5 Peer pressure

Only a very small number of respondents considered peer pressure to be a big barrier to their entering work. Only two per cent reported that their husband, partner or ex-partner would not like them working, with the same proportion saying their parents would not like it.

Figure 6.12 Barriers to entering work – peer pressure



6.4 Perceived barriers to staying in work

Previous research has found that being in work can present lone parents with a range of problems. For example, Bell *et al.* note that *'for lone parents, the co-ordination and management of work, education, childcare and travel is anything but a mundane or straightforward aspect of family life. [Balancing different commitments] is a highly skilled activity where events and resources have to be brought together in a particular time frame to make key events happen and arrangements run smoothly'* (Bell *et al.*, 2005, p.103).

To look into this in detail, respondents who were in work at the time of interview completed a card sort exercise in which they sorted a series of statements by whether they perceived them to be a 'big barrier', a 'smaller factor' or not a factor in their being able to stay in work.

The largest barrier to staying in work respondents reported was not being sure they were financially better off in work (with 27 per cent citing this as a big barrier), followed by there not being enough suitable, affordable childcare (cited by 25 per cent).

Nevertheless, no other barriers were mentioned by more than a quarter of respondents, and respondents each cited relatively few barriers to staying in work. Nearly one-third of respondents (32 per cent) said there were no big barriers to staying in work, and on average respondents noted 2.3 big barriers (compared to 4.9 big barriers to entering work cited by those out work, see Section 6.3). Just one-quarter of respondents (25 per cent) cited four or more big barriers. In this context, it is worth noting the findings reported in Section 3.4.11: the majority of working respondents said that it was very or fairly easy for them to stay in their job.

Factor analysis was conducted to reduce the 18 individual barriers to staying in employment into a smaller number of factors (see Appendix A for further details of how the factor analysis was carried out). The results revealed that the barriers could be summarised in the following six categories:

- parental concerns;
- money concerns;
- childcare concerns;
- employer concerns;
- not enjoying work/struggling to cope with work; and
- peer pressure/travel.

6.4.1 Parental concerns

Parental concerns, which centred around spending time with children and combining work and family life, were the most common barriers to staying in work. Nearly three in five lone parents found that the stress of combining work and family life was at least a small barrier to staying in work, and over half were concerned about not spending enough time with their children.

Table 6.3 Barriers to staying in work – parental concerns

	<i>Row percentages</i>			
	Big barrier	Small barrier	Not a barrier	<i>Base: All respondents not in work¹</i>
My children don't like me working	19	23	59	398
I find it stressful combining work and family life	20	37	43	398
I am worried I do not have enough time with my children	23	29	48	398

¹ Bases are all respondents in work, excluding those who did not answer or answered 'don't know'.

Lone parents working longer hours were more likely to note the latter two of these statements as at least small barriers to staying in work than those working shorter hours. This confirms the findings reported in Section 3.4.9, that there is a strong link between working hours and pressure on parental childcare.

6.4.2 Money concerns

Money concerns were also among the more often mentioned barriers to staying in work. Over half of respondents said the fact that they hadn't anticipated all the extra costs they would have in work was at least a small barrier. Similarly, 52 per cent said they were not sure they were financially better off in work and that this was at least a small barrier to staying in work. The link between work and income, and deprivation is discussed in the next chapter.

Table 6.4 Barriers to staying in work – money concerns

	<i>Row percentages</i>			
	Big barrier	Small barrier	Not a barrier	<i>Base: All respondents not in work¹</i>
I hadn't anticipated all the extra things I would need to spend money on now that I'm in work	23	34	43	397
I am not sure I am better off financially in work	27	26	48	398
I am finding it difficult to adjust to having money coming in every month rather than every week	10	17	73	397

¹ Bases are all respondents in work, excluding those who did not answer or answered 'don't know'.

Those working fewer hours were more likely to note the second and third of the statements in Table 6.4 as big barriers compared to those working more hours. Similarly, those with lower weekly incomes were more likely to cite these barriers. As noted in Section 3.4.8, lone parents were often working in poorly paid, unskilled jobs, and this was particularly likely to be the case when they were working fewer hours (e.g. fewer than 16 hours per week).

6.4.3 Childcare concerns

Respondents were considerably more likely to report the lack of suitable, affordable childcare as a barrier than to report concerns about the quality of childcare itself. This is likely to be linked to the high and rising costs of childcare in the UK (Daycare Trust, 2012).

Table 6.5 Barriers to staying in work – childcare concerns

	<i>Row percentages</i>			
	Big barrier	Small barrier	Not a barrier	<i>Base: All respondents not in work¹</i>
There isn't enough suitable, affordable childcare around here	25	19	56	396
My children are not happy in childcare while I'm at work	13	12	74	395
I'm not confident my childcare arrangements will continue	12	13	75	396

¹ Bases are all respondents in work, excluding those who did not answer or answered 'don't know'.

Those not using formal childcare were less likely than those who were using it to say that there was not enough affordable, suitable childcare in their area and that this was a big or small barrier to staying in work (39 per cent compared to 56 per cent of those using formal childcare).

6.4.4 Employer concerns

In total, 13 per cent of respondents said pressure to work longer hours, stay late or do overtime was a big barrier to staying in work, and nine per cent reported that the fact that their employer was not very family friendly was a big barrier.

Table 6.6 Barriers to staying in work – employer concerns

	<i>Row percentages</i>			
	Big barrier	Small barrier	Not a barrier	<i>Base: All respondents not in work¹</i>
There is a lot of pressure in my present job to work longer hours, stay late, or do overtime	13	13	74	396
My employer is not very family friendly	9	7	85	396

¹ Bases are all respondents in work, excluding those who did not answer or answered 'don't know'.

Those working a greater number of hours were more likely to report pressure in their job to work longer hours, stay late, or do overtime, compared with those working fewer hours.

6.4.5 Not enjoying work/struggling to cope with work

Very few respondents reported issues relating to not enjoying work, or struggling to cope with work as barriers to staying in work. However, a slightly higher proportion of respondents, 12 per cent, reported that they could not see their job going anywhere and that there were no promotion prospects.

Table 6.7 Barriers to staying in work – not enjoying work/struggling to cope with work

	<i>Row percentages</i>			
	Big barrier	Small barrier	Not a barrier	<i>Base: All respondents not in work¹</i>
My confidence has taken a knock since I entered work	3	7	90	397
I am not enjoying working as much as I thought I would	5	14	81	397
I have difficulties working owing to my health condition or disability	5	6	89	397
I can't see this job going anywhere, there are no promotion prospects	12	19	69	397

¹ Bases are all respondents in work, excluding those who did not answer or answered 'don't know'.

Those working fewer hours were more likely than those working more hours to say they couldn't see their job going anywhere and that there were no promotion prospects, and also more likely to say their confidence had taken a knock since they started working.

6.4.6 Peer pressure/travel

Very few respondents reported peer pressure, either from their parents or from husbands/partners or ex-partners, being a barrier to stop working. A slightly higher proportion, 18 per cent, reported that they had problems with transport to and from work, and that this was either a big or a small barrier to staying in work.

Table 6.8 Barriers to staying in work – peer pressure/travel

	<i>Row percentages</i>			
	Big barrier	Small barrier	Not a barrier	<i>Base: All respondents not in work¹</i>
My parents don't like me working	2	5	93	397
My husband/partner/ex-partner does not like me working	2	2	96	397
I have problems with transport to and from work	6	11	82	395

¹ Bases are all respondents in work, excluding those who did not answer or answered 'don't know'.

Those living in socially rented accommodation were more likely to cite these barriers than those living in other forms of accommodation. Moreover, those without access to a vehicle were more likely to cite problems with transport as a big barrier, compared with those with access (ten per cent, compared to three per cent).

6.5 Summary

- Lone parents expressed a strong work focus in their attitudes, alongside a strong focus on parental childcare.
- In broad terms, attitudes towards work, parenting and childcare remained similar between Wave 1 (when on IS) and Wave 2 (after the move off IS on to other destinations). However, at Wave 2, respondents were less likely to agree with some parental childcare focused statements (such as ‘children do best if their mum stays at home to look after them’), and were more likely to agree with employment focused statements (such as ‘having almost any job is better than being unemployed’).
- Lone parents who were in work were more likely to agree than those claiming JSA or ESA with employment focused statements and statements suggesting motivation to combine work and childcare (such as ‘working mothers have the best of both worlds’). However, there were less strong differences in opinion in relation to attitudes towards ‘parental childcare’ (such as ‘children under five are happiest being looked after by their parents’) and the social stigma of benefits (such as ‘stay-at-home mums are not valued by society’).
- When respondents out of work were asked about their barriers to work, the most commonly mentioned barriers related to jobsearch constraints, such as there not being enough suitable job opportunities in the local area, or needing a job where they could take time off at short notice to look after children. The least commonly mentioned barriers to work related to peer pressure. On average, respondents noted 4.9 big barriers to entering employment (out of a possible 19). Those claiming ESA were more likely than those claiming JSA to cite ‘personal’ barriers to entering employment, such as having a health condition, or having personal troubles that needed to be sorted out. ESA claimants were also more likely to cite low confidence as a barrier to work.
- When compared to responses in Wave 1, there was not a large shift in the frequencies of different types of barrier. Nevertheless, there was a small shift in that barriers to work were less likely to be because of negative opinions about work but slightly more likely to reflect practical problems. Therefore, a higher proportion of lone parents reported that a lack of suitable job opportunities in the local area, or their health condition or disability were big barriers to work in Wave 2 compared to Wave 1. Conversely, smaller proportions said needing a job where they could take time off at short notice to look after their child(ren), being concerned about leaving the security of benefits, and not being sure they would be financially better off in work were big barriers in Wave 2 compared to Wave 1.
- Respondents in work were less likely to perceive barriers to staying in work, than those out of work perceived to entering work. In total, only two (out of 18) big barriers to staying in work were mentioned by one-quarter of respondents or more. These were: not being sure about being financially better off in work (mentioned by 27 per cent) and a lack of suitable, affordable childcare (mentioned by 25 per cent of respondents). In total, respondents mentioned only 2.3 big barriers to staying in work on average.

7 Wellbeing and deprivation

There is a large body of evidence demonstrating the financial problems and levels of deprivation among lone parents and their children. While, on average 21 per cent of all families are in poverty in any month, a higher proportion of lone mothers (41 per cent) and lone fathers (33 per cent) faced poverty than parents living as couples (13 per cent) (Browne and Paull, 2010). Moreover, analysis of the British Household Panel Survey found that 68 per cent of lone parent families experienced poverty at least once during the four-wave period of research, compared with 34 per cent of the whole population. In addition, 19 per cent were in poverty across all four waves, compared to only seven per cent of the whole population (quoted in Smith and Middleton, 2007).

This chapter aims to examine the income levels and prevalence of material deprivation among lone parents. In particular, there is a focus on if and how far material deprivation and financial problems are alleviated if a lone parent enters work. To examine these issues, data from both the Wave 1 and Wave 2 surveys have been analysed. After a brief consideration of the income levels of lone parents, and the extent to which they face financial difficulties after entering work, the chapter gives consideration to material deprivation experienced by lone parents. This analysis is based on a suite of questions developed as part of the Family Resources Survey, and examines data for the entire Wave 1 cohort (interviews while still on Income Support (IS)), as well as for those who had entered work or increased the number of hours they worked when interviewed in Wave 2.

7.1 Income and financial problems

7.1.1 Household income

Respondents were asked to place the total income of their whole household (before deductions for income tax, National Insurance, etc.) into one of 12 bands. Figures were, therefore, self-reported by respondents, and were not verified. Table 7.1 shows the figures for total household income by current work status. The table also shows the income distribution reported by the same lone parents when they were interviewed at Wave 1.

In total, 52 per cent of lone parents had a weekly income of less than £200, including 17 per cent with less than £100 per week. On the other hand, 18 per cent had a weekly income of £300 or more. As one would expect, those in work typically had higher weekly incomes than those out of work; for instance, those in work were three times as likely as those out of work to have an income of £300 or more.

Table 7.1 Total household income, by current work status

	<i>Column percentages</i>			
	Not currently in work	Wave 2 Currently in work	Total Wave 2	Wave 1
	%	%	%	%
Under £100/week	21	12	17	16
£100–199	42	26	35	48
£200–299	22	28	25	23
£300+	10	30	18	6
Don't know/refused	5	5	5	7
<i>Base: All respondents</i>	566	406	972	972

When these respondents' income is compared to their income at Wave 1, we see that, on average, weekly incomes were higher in 2012 than they were in 2010. While only six per cent of lone parents had a weekly income of £300 or more at Wave 1, this had risen to 18 per cent in Wave 2. This change is linked with the proportion of respondents in work which, as discussed in Chapter 2, was much higher at Wave 2 than at Wave 1.

Moreover, those in work in Wave 2 had higher incomes on average than those who had been in work at Wave 1. Only 12 per cent of respondents in Wave 1 who were in work had a weekly income of £300 or more, significantly lower than the 30 per cent of respondents in work at Wave 2. The growth in income for those in work is in part because those in work in Wave 2 tended to be in work of 16 hours or more, while those in work in Wave 1 were more likely to be in work for fewer than 16 hours (often while still claiming IS). The Wave 1 report found that the household income of those working for fewer than 16 hours work per week was not significantly higher than those not in work.

While there was not a statistically significant difference between the household incomes of those with and without a limiting long-standing illness, disability or infirmity (LLSI), those lone parents with mental-health problems tended to have lower weekly incomes; for example, 24 per cent had a weekly income of less than £100 compared to 16 per cent of those without mental-health problems. This is in line with findings in Chapter 2 that those with mental-health problems were less likely than those without to have entered employment. Moreover, in line with other findings that couple families were less likely to be in poverty than lone parent families, quoted above, those respondents who lived in a household with another adult were less likely to have a household income of less than £200 per week than those who did not share their household with another adult. In addition, respondents with more children were more likely to have a higher income than those with fewer children; this is likely to in part be because those with more children will receive more Child Benefit and Child Tax Credits.

Data from the Childcare and Early Years survey 2009, quoted in the Wave 1 report (Coleman and Lanceley, 2011, p.35), showed that 25 per cent of all lone parents in the population (i.e. not just lone parents affected by Lone Parent Obligations (LPO)) had a household income of less than £10,000 per year, or approximately £200 per week. Given that over half of LPO lone parents had a household income of less than £200 per week, this suggests that, although LPO lone parents are on average earning more at Wave 2 than they were at Wave 1, they are still significantly worse off than lone parents as a whole.

7.1.2 Financial problems

Respondents who had worked in the past two years were also asked a series of questions about whether they felt their income was sufficient, and about any debt problems that they might have. The results are presented in Table 7.2.

At Wave 2, just over one-quarter of respondents reported that they found it quite or very difficult to manage financially, nearly three in ten never had money left over at the end of the week, and just over one in six (16 per cent) had trouble with debts almost all of the time. Seven per cent of respondents reported experiencing all three of these financial problems.

Nevertheless, a smaller proportion of respondents experienced financial problems at Wave 2 (in 2012) than when they were interviewed in 2010, with the decrease particularly large for those who were in work when interviewed at Wave 2; only five per cent of those in work at the time of the Wave 2 interview reported that they experienced all three financial problems. Again, this shows the positive financial impact for lone parents of moving into work.

Nevertheless, significant minorities of those in work when interviewed at Wave 2 were experiencing the individual financial problems; over one-quarter never had any money left over at the end of the week, and over one-fifth found it quite or very difficult to manage financially.³³

Table 7.2 Perception of financial problems, but current work status

	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	Currently in work	Total Wave 2	Wave 1
	%	%	%
Find it quite or very difficult to manage financially	22	26	40
Never have money left over at the end of the week	26	29	47
Trouble with debts almost all of the time	13	16	23
All of the above	5	7	13
<i>Base: All respondents</i>	406	476	476

When compared with all lone parents in the population (i.e., not just those who had gone through LPO) measured in the Families and Childrens Study (FACS), lone parents who had gone through LPO were equally as likely as all lone parents to have debts almost all the time (13 per cent of all lone parents in FACS – not significantly different from the 16 per cent of LPO lone parents). However, they were actually slightly more likely to have some money left over at the end of the week than all lone parents in the population. While 29 per cent of LPO lone parents reported they never had money left over at the end of the week, 34 per cent of all lone parents said this (FACS 2008 data, quoted in Coleman and Lanceley, 2011, p.35).

7.2 Material deprivation and low income at Wave 1

As noted above, lone parents and their children are a great deal more likely to be living in poverty than couple families. Previous research has shown that families living in poverty ‘were often doing without everyday necessities like food, clothing, fuel and social activities. Parents, especially mothers, also often went without so that they could try and ensure their children’s needs were met.’

‘For many families even vigilance and strict budgeting could not make their money go far enough, and the everyday demands of sustaining family life coupled with the sudden appearance of extra needs could result in severe financial problems and debt.’

(Ridge, 2009)

This section examines levels of material deprivation and low income experienced by lone parents when they were first interviewed in early 2010.³⁴ The analysis is based on a suite of questions, first used in the Family Resources Survey, which look to measure material deprivation based on whether households can afford to buy a range of common goods and services. Respondents were asked if

³³ Bases of those in mini-jobs, and full-time work were not large enough to determine whether money problems were more or less acute for those doing mini-jobs compared to part or full-time work. However, comparisons were made between those working for 16 hours or fewer and those working 17 hours or more, and there were no significant differences.

³⁴ The data is being analysed now, and was not analysed in the wave 1 report. This is because the ‘prevalence weights’ required to run analysis from 2010/11 had not been released when the wave 1 report was written.

they had, wanted but could not afford, or did not want/need all of these items. These items can be split into those relating to adults/households and those specifically relating to children. The proportions of respondents that wanted each of these things but could not afford them at the time of the interview are reported in Figures 7.1 and 7.2. These findings are compared against the proportion of children in the population who live in households which lack but want each of these goods and services.

In general, lone parent households in the survey were more likely to lack goods and services relating to adults or the household than they were for goods or services relating to children, supporting Ridge's analysis that parents in families in poverty would often go without to ensure their children's needs were met. Between 33 per cent and 80 per cent of households lacked each of the adult/household goods and services, but only one item relating to children was lacked by more than one-third of households (having a family holiday away from home for at least one week a year).

Figure 7.1 Lone parents wanting but unable to afford a range of adult/household material deprivation items at Wave 1

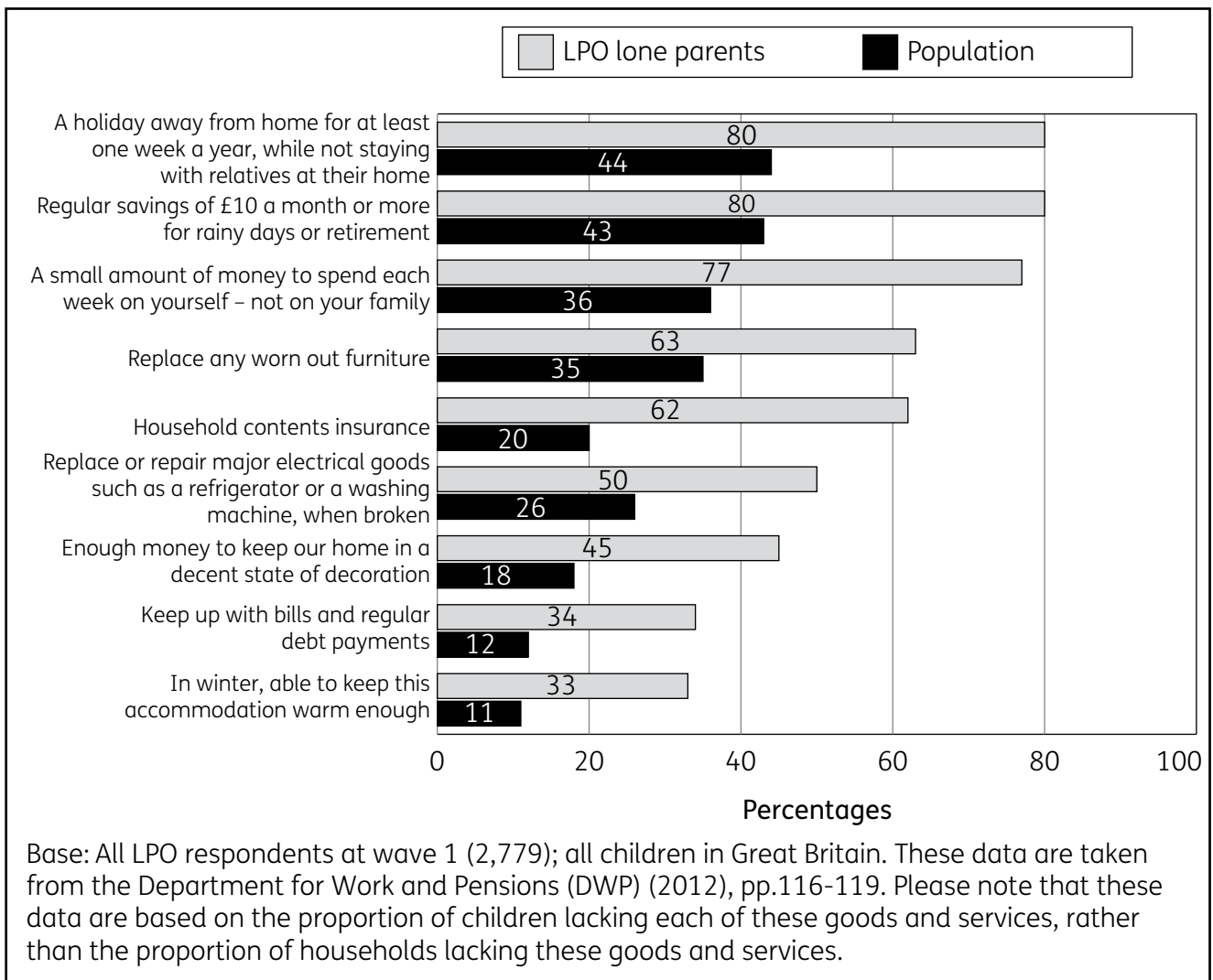
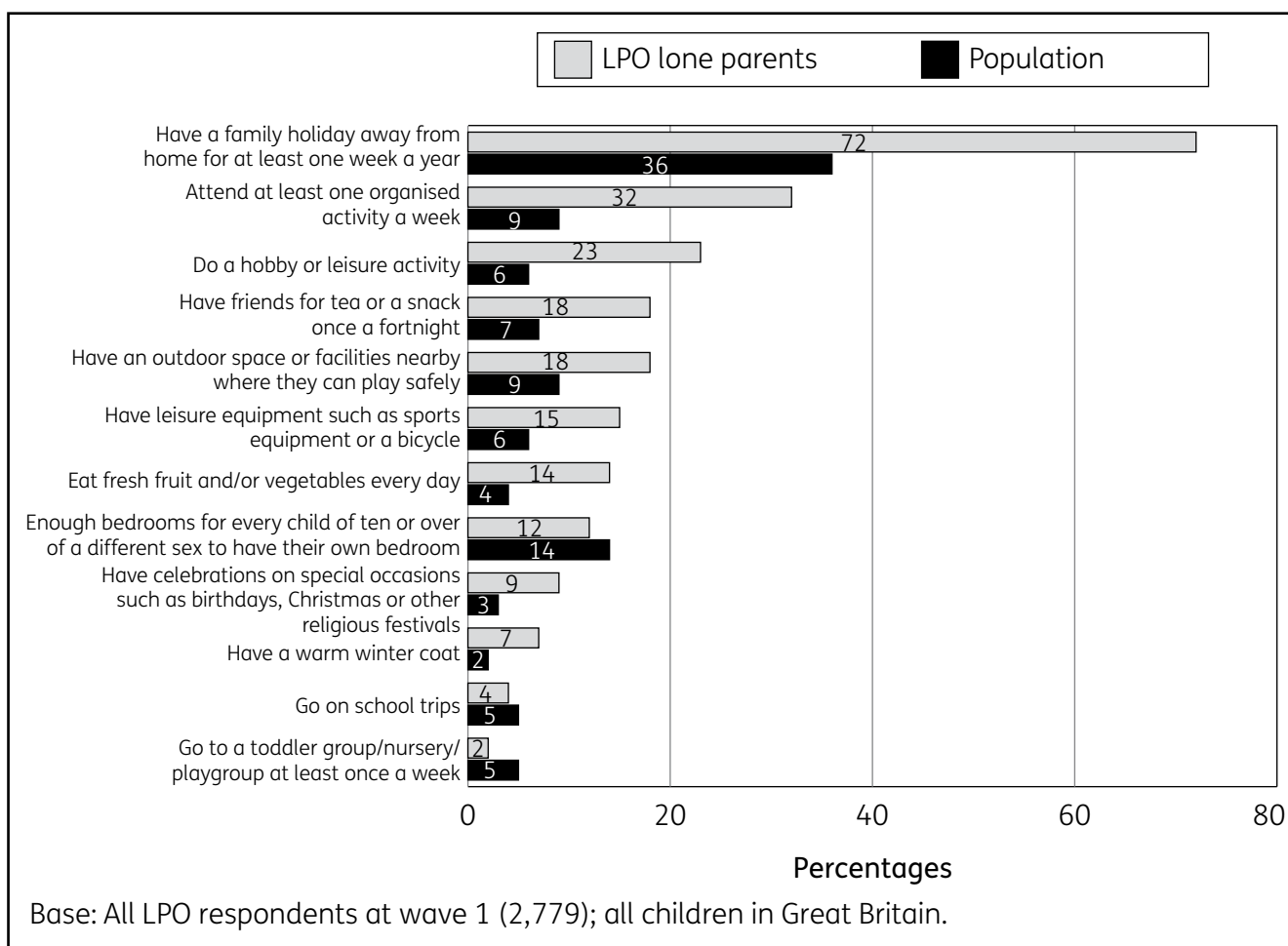


Figure 7.2 Lone parents wanting but unable to afford a range of child material deprivation items at Wave 1



As might be expected, lone parent households in this survey were more likely to want but not afford most goods and services than the population as a whole. The largest percentage point differences were for the proportion with household contents insurance (42 percentage point difference), and the proportion where the parent had a small amount of money to spend each week on themselves, not their family (41 percentage point difference). Moreover, children in lone parent households were nearly four times less likely to do a hobby or leisure activity, or have a winter coat than all children, and were nearly three times less likely to be able to attend at least one organised activity a week.

Results from these questions can be combined to give each respondent a 'deprivation score'. These scores range from 0 (if a household lacks none of the items) to 100 (if they lack them all). If an item is more commonly held by households in the population as a whole it is given a higher score, and if the item is less commonly held it has a lower score.³⁵ Therefore, if a family cannot provide a winter coat for a child it would receive a higher score than if they cannot afford to go on holiday, as holidays are less common within the population than owning a winter coat. If a household has a deprivation score of greater than 22, it can be said to be experiencing material deprivation. If that family experiences a deprivation score of greater than 22 and has a household income less than 70 per cent of the median household income before housing costs, it can be said to be in material

³⁵ This is achieved using a set of prevalence weights. Prevalence weights are released every year, so that the analysis reflects how common each good or service was in that particular year, given this might change over time.

deprivation and have low income.³⁶ Results, comparing respondents in work and those not in work, are presented in Table 7.3.

In total, two-thirds of respondents (67 per cent) were in material deprivation and had low income. This is significantly higher than for all lone parents in the population, as reported in the Department for Work and Pensions' 2010/11 HBAI report³⁷ This suggests that 28 per cent of children living in lone parent households were living in material deprivation and with low income. As noted in the Wave 1 report, the lone parents taking part in this study were more disadvantaged than lone parents as a whole, not all of whom will have claimed IS.

As shown in Table 7.3, LPO lone parents in work were less likely to be in material deprivation and have low income than those not in work. The HBAI population figures, however, show a much greater drop in material deprivation and low income levels for lone parents in work: while 48 per cent of children in workless lone parent households were in material deprivation and had low income, this figure dropped to seven per cent of those in full-time work, and 12 per cent of those in part-time work.³⁸ The smaller difference in the LPO survey is likely to be linked to the fact that most lone parents were working fewer than 16 hours before LPO.³⁹ In total, 54 per cent of those in mini-jobs of fewer than 16 hours were in material deprivation and had low income, compared with 40 per cent of those working (primarily) part-time or full-time.

Table 7.3 Material deprivation and low income by whether in work

	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	In work	Not in work	All
	%	%	%
Material deprivation	54	74	72
Material deprivation and low income	49	69	67
<i>Base: All respondents, excluding those who answered 'Don't know' to any question</i>	280	2,305	2,585

Some groups of lone parents were more likely to be in material deprivation and low income than others. Binary logistic regression analysis was carried out, in order to identify the sub-groups where there was an independently significant difference:

³⁶ For more details about how material deprivation is calculated, please see Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 of Department for Work and Pensions (2012).

³⁷ It should be noted that material deprivation in the HBAI report is based on a similar, but slightly different set of questions than is used in the LPO surveys (17 of the 21 items are the same, with four being different). The items asked about in HBAI were slightly more commonly held than the questions used in the LPO survey, therefore, in order to ensure they remain comparable, material deprivation and low income are defined by a deprivation score higher than 25 (not 22 as in the LPO survey) and household income of less than 70 per cent of median income, before housing costs. This difference in the threshold is in accordance with Department for Work and Pensions analysis found in Appendix 3 of the HBAI 2010/11 report.

³⁸ Full-time and part-time work in this analysis did not relate to a set number of hours, but were based on the lone parent's perception.

³⁹ See Section 3.4.3 of Coleman and Lanceley (2011).

- Lone parents with lower qualification levels were more likely to be in material deprivation and low income than those with higher level qualifications. While 73 per cent of lone parents with no formal qualifications were in material deprivation and had a low income, 62 per cent of those with qualifications at level 4 and above were.
- Barnes *et al.* (2008b) found that lacking access to a car was associated with an increased likelihood of persistent, rather than temporary, poverty. This study also found that lone parents without access to a car were more likely to be in material deprivation and have a low income than those who had access (71 per cent compared to 58 per cent).
- Lone parents with fewer dependent children were more likely to be in material deprivation and have a low income than those with more. In total, 69 per cent of lone parents with one dependent child were in material deprivation and had a low income, compared to 60 per cent of those with four or more.

Unsurprisingly, lone parents who considered themselves to have financial problems⁴⁰ were more likely to be in material deprivation than those who did not. Nevertheless, more than six in ten respondents (62 per cent) who did not consider that they had financial problems were living in material deprivation and low income, suggesting that material deprivation had become normalised in many lone parent families.

7.3 In-work material deprivation and low income in 2012

Browne and Paull (2010) note that *'moving into work is an important factor in lifting families out of poverty'*, and that during the first three years following work entry, the poverty rate falls from 37 per cent to 17 per cent for lone mothers and 22 per cent to 16 per cent for lone fathers. LPO encourages lone parents to enter work, and, as shown in Chapter 2, many more lone parents were in employment in Wave 2 compared to Wave 1. Nevertheless, in-work poverty is a growing problem. While in the mid-1990s 45 per cent of children living in poverty had working parents, the figure in 2010/11 was 61 per cent (Goulden, 2012).

This section examines the levels of material deprivation experienced in households in which the lone parent had moved into employment since Wave 1, or who had increased their working hours since the first survey, to see what impact entering work had on levels of material deprivation. It will also make comparisons to the levels of material deprivation experienced by these respondents when they were interviewed in 2010.⁴¹

Respondents were asked the same set of questions about whether they had, wanted but could not afford, or did not want/need a range of common goods and services to measure their material deprivation. Again, these goods and services can be split into those relating to adults/households and those specifically relating to children. The proportions of respondents who wanted each of these things, but could not afford them at the time of the interview, are reported in Figures 7.3 and 7.4.

Looking first at the Wave 2 findings in their own right, the results demonstrate much higher levels of want for adult/household material deprivation items in households than the child material deprivation items. In Wave 2 only one child deprivation item was experienced by more than one in five respondents (having a family holiday), while all the adult/household items were experienced

⁴⁰ That is finding it quite or very difficult to manage financially, not having money left over at the end of the week, and have trouble with debts almost all of the time.

⁴¹ The previous section examined material deprivation for all lone parents surveyed in the first wave of research, in early 2010.

by more than 20 per cent. The items that were most commonly desirable but unaffordable were holidays, saving at least £10 a month for rainy days or retirement, lone parents spending a small amount of money each week on themselves and not their family, and replacing worn out furniture.

Nevertheless, there were statistically significant decreases in the proportions of these lone parents experiencing the majority of material deprivation items between waves 1 and 2. The largest absolute falls were:

- having a small amount of money to spend each week on yourself – not on your family (19 percentage point decrease);
- being able to make regular savings of £10 a month or more for rainy days or retirement (13 percentage point decrease).

While the absolute (percentage point) decrease in the proportions of households wanting but not being able to afford adult/household items was higher than for child items, the average proportional decrease was higher for child items (an average 30 per cent decrease) compared to adult/household items (an average 21 per cent decrease).

Figure 7.3 Lone parents wanting but unable to afford a range of adult/household material deprivation items at Wave 1 and Wave 2

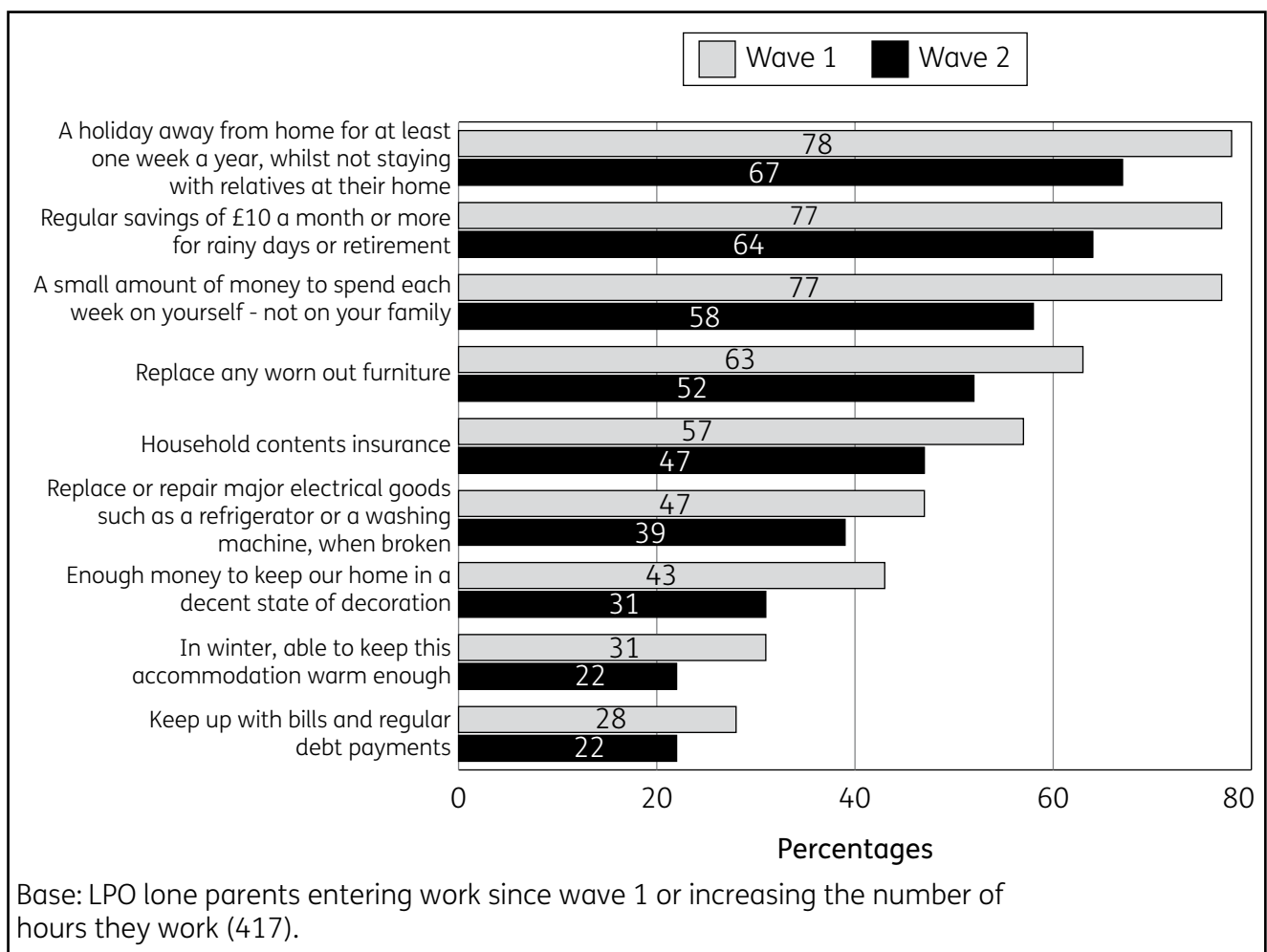
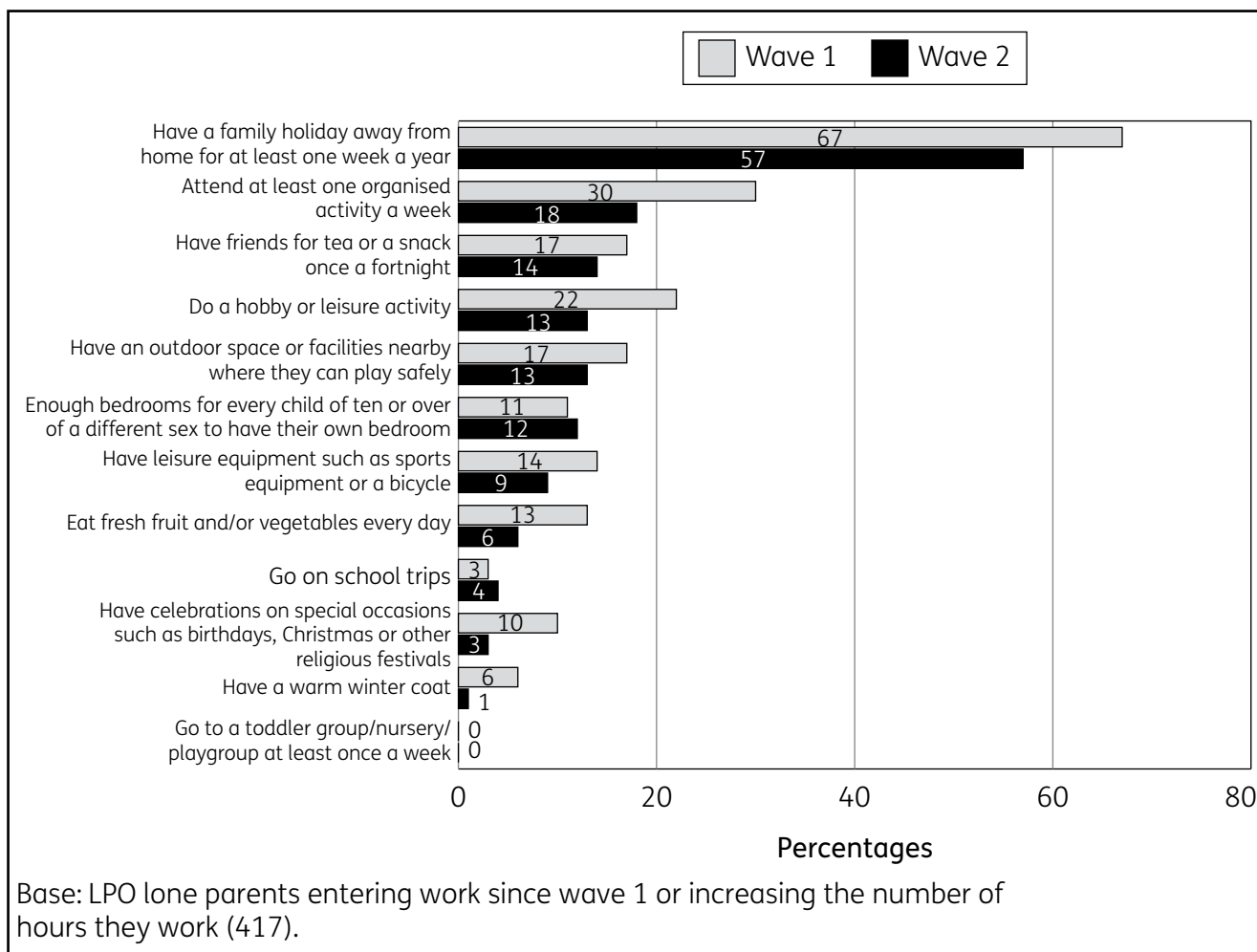


Figure 7.4 Lone parents wanting but unable to afford a range of child material deprivation items at Wave 1 and Wave 2



As in the previous section, results from these questions can be combined to give each respondent a deprivation score – see Section 7.2 for details. Table 7.4 shows the proportion of respondents in material deprivation and with a low income, and compares their situations before and after the LPO changes.

Levels of material deprivation and low income were significantly higher in Wave 1 when compared to Wave 2, at which point respondents had either started work when they were not working before, or were working more hours. The decreases in material deprivation in wave two were in part because the majority of those working at Wave 1 were working fewer than 16 hours, and, as we have seen the household income of those working for fewer than 16 hours work per week was not significantly higher than those not in any work.

Nevertheless, two in five households in which a lone parent had entered work were still living in material deprivation and with a low income in Wave 2, suggesting that in-work poverty still remains a problem for these lone parents. As expected, those working fewer hours were more likely to be in material deprivation and low income than those working more hours (48 per cent of those working 16 hours or fewer per week, compared with 27 per cent of those working more than 16 hours per week). As noted in Section 3.4.8, many lone parents were working for very low pay, and these findings indicate that these pay levels were often not sufficient to move them out of material deprivation.

Table 7.4 Material deprivation and low income by whether entered a job or working more hours

	<i>Column percentages</i>					
	Newly entered work since Wave 1		Currently working more hours than Wave 1		Either new work or more hours	
	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 1	Wave 2
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Material deprivation ¹	72	51	60	33	70	48
Material deprivation and low income ²	67	41	55	25	65	39
<i>Base: resps. doing more work</i>	326		68 ³		394	

¹ This is defined as a deprivation score of more than 22.

² This is defined as a deprivation score of more than 22 and a household income of less than 70 per cent of the median household income, before housing costs

³ This analysis is based on fewer than 100 interviews, and, as such, caution should be exercised when interpreting this data.

7.4 Summary

- The average total household income of respondents at Wave 2 was higher than for the same lone parents at Wave 1. While six per cent of respondents at Wave 1 had a total household income of £300 or more, this had risen to 18 per cent at Wave 2.
- Respondents who had worked since Wave 1 were less likely to experience a range of financial problems. Twenty-six per cent found it quite or very hard to manage financially (down from 40 per cent when the same lone parents were interviewed in Wave 1), 29 per cent never had money left over at the end of the week (down from 47 per cent), and 16 per cent had trouble with debt almost all of the time (down from 23 per cent).
- When asked about whether respondents would like but could not afford a range of goods and services, households were more likely to lack adult or household items, such as replacing worn out furniture and electrical goods, rather than items for children, such as having friends over for tea or a snack, or having leisure equipment, such as sports equipment or a bike.
- Levels of material deprivation and low income among the cohort of all lone parents interviewed at Wave 1 were very high. In total, 67 per cent were in material deprivation and low income. This compares to 28 of all lone parent families in the UK, as reported in the Department for Work and Pensions's HBAI series. Material deprivation was particularly high among lone parents with lower qualification levels, those without access to a vehicle, and those with fewer children.
- Lone parents who had entered work or increased their hours between Wave 1 and Wave 2 were less likely to be in material deprivation. While 65 per cent had been in material deprivation and low income at Wave 1, this had fallen to 39 per cent by wave two. Nevertheless, this means that two in five households in which a lone parent had entered work were still living in material deprivation and low income, suggesting that in work poverty still remains a problem for these lone parents.

8 Experience of Jobseeker's Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance

This chapter looks at lone parents' experiences of Jobcentre Plus while claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) or Employment Support Allowance (ESA), in the period of around one year since their eligibility for Income Support (IS) ended. Where appropriate, findings are compared with respondents' experiences when they were on IS, as measured by the Wave 1 survey; this took place around six to eight months before their scheduled IS end date.

The chapter covers the types of support received; awareness and experience of conditions and sanctions; the level of personalised support; and overall perceptions of the service provided by Jobcentre Plus. These findings can help to identify aspects of the service that lone parents feel could be improved, as well as assessing the groups of customers who are more or less receptive to the type of support offered by the JSA and ESA regimes.

Throughout the chapter, results are shown separately for those who claimed JSA and ESA. Where appropriate, results are also shown for those that had claimed both JSA and ESA since leaving IS. Questions in this section were not asked of ESA claimants who were in the Support Group, since the questions on work-related advice and support were not appropriate. However, as well as people who were in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG), the sample of ESA claimants includes those who had not yet had a Work Capability Assessment (WCA), whose claim had been stopped or who were awaiting the decision of the WCA or of a tribunal. It is, therefore, important to note that the ESA sample includes a group of respondents who might have had little experience of the ESA regime.

8.1 Advice and support

8.1.1 Types of support provided

Table 8.1 shows the types of advice or support which lone parents said they had received from Jobcentre Plus in the previous 12 months. Findings are shown separately for respondents who had been on JSA in the previous 12 months (and not ESA); those who had been on ESA (and not JSA); and those who had been on both JSA and ESA.

Lone parents who had been on JSA said they had received a range of different types of advice and support, as had those that had received both JSA and ESA. Respondents who had claimed ESA but not JSA were much less likely to have had work-related advice (e.g. looking at job vacancies or looking at the sort of work they might do). As is the case throughout this chapter, the findings for this last group should be treated with caution, owing to the small number of respondents who had claimed ESA but not JSA (72).

Within the JSA sample, those who said they were actively looking for work were more likely to have had work-related advice. For example, 68 per cent of those actively looking for work said they had looked at job vacancies, compared with 46 per cent who were not actively looking for work. Respondents who had been on the Work Programme (most of whom had gone via JSA) were very similar in their responses to JSA claimants as a whole.

Table 8.1 Types of advice or support received in the previous 12 months

	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	Benefit		
	JSA	ESA	Both JSA and ESA
	%	%	%
Making a benefits claim	22	28	39
Making a tax credits claim	11	7	4
Looking at job vacancies	60	7	56
Applying for a job, for example, help with CV, job application or preparation for interview	42	7	45
Looking at the sort of work you might do	45	13	47
Looking or applying for an education course	16	7	19
Looking for voluntary work	10	6	12
Any of the above	79	43	86
<i>Base: All who have claimed JSA or ESA since Wave 1</i>	540	72	121

8.1.2 Advice and support as part of the Jobcentre Plus Offer

The Jobcentre Plus Offer for claimants was introduced across Great Britain in April 2011. Because lone parents in this cohort were scheduled to leave IS between January and April 2011, their experiences of JSA and ESA will almost exclusively have been since the Jobcentre Plus Offer was introduced. In this section, we, therefore, examine the support that lone parents had received as part of the Jobcentre Plus Offer.

Lone parents who had claimed JSA or ESA were asked whether they had received various types of advice and support that are available under the Jobcentre Plus Offer. Firstly, they were asked whether Jobcentre Plus advisers had talked to them about various types of support. They were then asked what they had actually done or had help with (see Table 8.2).

The majority of respondents who had been on JSA said that they had discussed having regular one-to-one meetings with an adviser to help prepare for work (61 per cent of those that had been on JSA only and 69 per cent of those that had also been on ESA). Around a third of JSA claimants had discussed training courses with an adviser, while around one in six discussed other types of support: a skills assessment, work experience placements and access to careers advice. Discussion of setting up as self-employed was lower (five per cent). JSA claimants who were said they were actively looking for work were more likely to have discussed the various types of support. Discussion of some support was lower in rural areas: work experience placements and training courses.

ESA claimants who had not also claimed JSA were consistently less likely to have discussed the various types of support. The evaluation of the Jobcentre Plus Offer has also observed much less discussion of support options with ESA customers than JSA customers, even when ESA customers are looking for work (Coulter *et al.*, 2012).

The right-hand side of Table 8.2 shows the proportion of lone parents who had actually been on various activities. Again, figures were consistently higher for JSA claimants than ESA claimants. Around half of JSA claimants had actually attended regular one-to-one meetings with an adviser, while participation in support options ranged from three per cent for self-employment to around one

in five for training courses (24 per cent who had been on JSA only and 12 per cent who had been on both JSA and ESA).

Lone parents who had been on the Work Programme were more likely than other respondents to say they had received a skills assessment (24 per cent) and had been on a training course (35 per cent). It is not clear from the analysis whether these activities took place while they were actually on the Work Programme or while they were receiving support from Jobcentre Plus.

Table 8.2 Whether talked about or done/had help with types of support

	<i>Column percentages</i>					
	Talked about			Done/had helped with		
	JSA %	ESA %	Both JSA and ESA %	JSA %	ESA %	Both JSA and ESA %
Attending regular one-to-one meetings with a Jobcentre Plus adviser to help prepare for work	61	32	69	55	17	38
Skills assessment to help make decisions about the sort of work you might do	17	4	21	14	3	10
Work experience placements	15	4	14	8	0	6
Access to careers advice and seeing a Careers Adviser	16	4	12	14	1	4
Training courses – e.g. to improve skills for work or help look for work	35	14	31	24	1	12
Setting up your own business	5	0	2	3	0	0
Talked about any of the above	76	38	79			
<i>Base: All who have claimed JSA or ESA since Wave 1</i>	<i>540</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>121</i>	<i>540</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>121</i>

Around two in five respondents (42 per cent) who had taken up at least one of the types of support said that they were referred to an organisation outside Jobcentre Plus for at least some of this support. As expected, this was higher among respondents who had been on the Work Programme (74 per cent) than those who had not been on the Work Programme (33 per cent).

The majority of respondents who had taken up the various support options said that they found them helpful (see Table 8.3 – note that there are small sample sizes for some of the types of support).

Table 8.3 Helpfulness of support

Types of support	<i>Row percentages</i>		
	Very/fairly helpful	Not very/not at all helpful	
	%	%	<i>(Base)</i>
Attending regular one-to-one meetings with a Jobcentre Plus adviser to help prepare for work	71	29	(359)
Skills assessment to help make decisions about the sort of work you might do	66	32	(86)
Work experience placements	66	26	(49)
Access to careers advice and seeing a Careers Adviser	81	17	(78)
Training courses – e.g. to improve skills for work or help look for work	79	19	(144)

Base: All who had taken up each type of support

Note: base size too small to analyse setting up own business.

Respondents who said they had not talked about any of the types of support were asked whether they would be interested in any of them. Interest was highest in relation to training courses: 42 per cent of those that had not talked about any of the types of support said they would be interested in training courses.

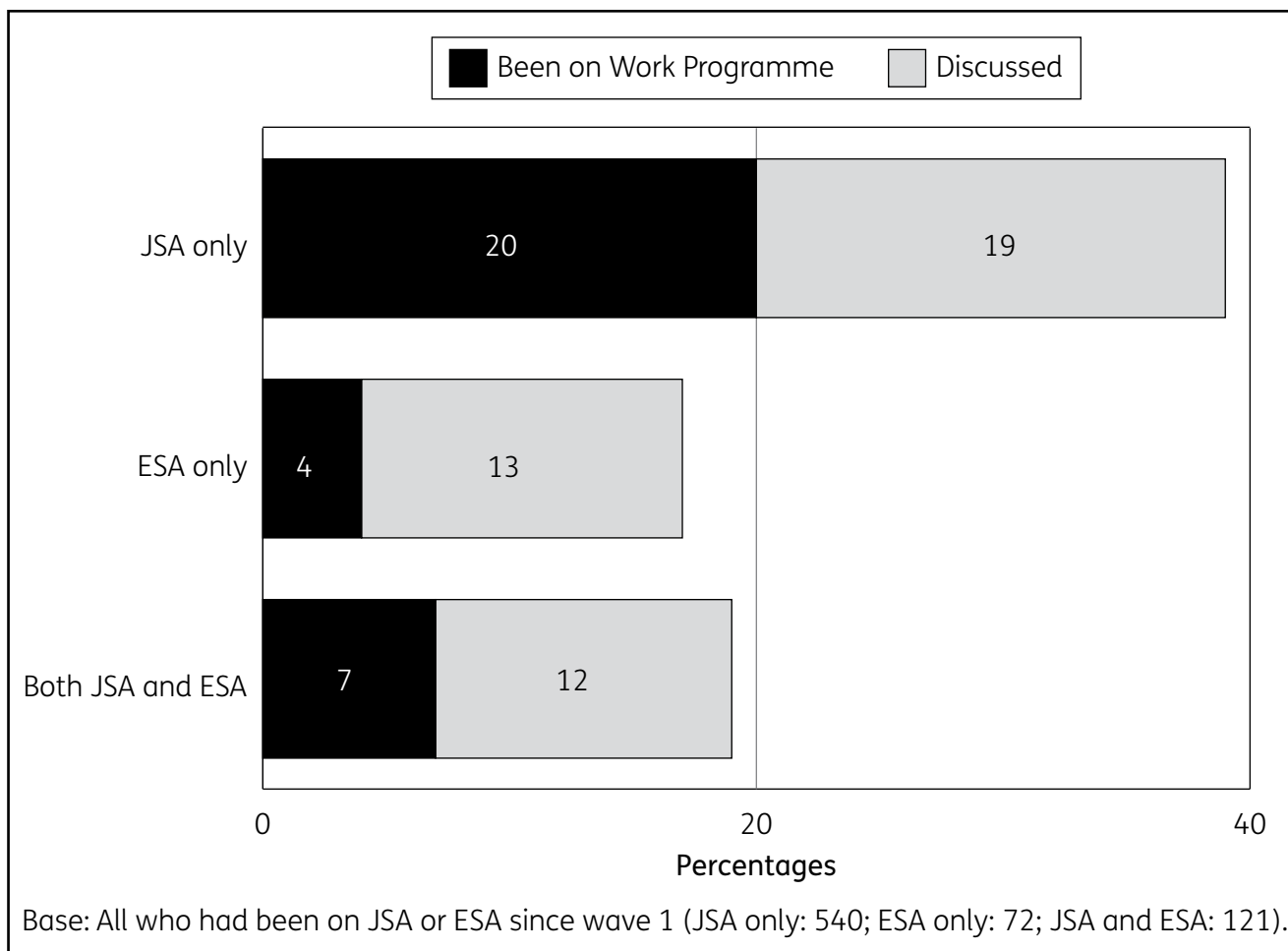
8.1.3 Financial help

Respondents were asked whether they had received any financial help from Jobcentre Plus towards expenses, such as childcare, travel and training costs. Around one in seven lone parents who had been on JSA said they had received financial help (15 per cent who had only been on JSA and ten per cent who had been on both JSA and ESA). The proportion was lower for those that had been on ESA but not JSA (six per cent).

Most respondents who had received financial help said that it was for travel costs (in 72 per cent of cases), while 19 per cent said it was for training costs, 13 per cent for childcare and four per cent for work clothes.

8.1.4 Work Programme

As noted in Chapter 2, 12 per cent of respondents said that they had been on the Work Programme, and a further 17 per cent said that an adviser had spoken to them about it during their time on JSA or ESA. Figure 8.1 breaks this down by benefit type.

Figure 8.1 Discussion of and attendance on the Work Programme

8.1.5 In-work support

Previous research has found that lone parents continue to need support after starting work. This can be to help with practical issues in the transition to work, for example paperwork and issues related to finances, the workplace, or childcare (Hosain and Breen, 2007), or to find alternative jobs that were more suitable, less stressful jobs or more family-friendly (Casebourne and Britton, 2004). The Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) evaluation found that in Jobcentre Plus offices that provided more support to participants while working, there were also more positive impacts on employment (Hendra *et al.*, 2011).

Those who had started work since the previous wave, or had increased their hours, were asked whether they had been in contact with Jobcentre Plus staff while they were working. In total, 27 per cent said that they had been in contact, and this was higher for those that had received JSA at some point (35 per cent). A further 13 per cent said that, although they did not have any contact, Jobcentre Plus staff had offered to stay in contact with them.

There were mixed views on the usefulness of this contact. Over half (56 per cent) of those with contact with Jobcentre Plus while in work said that the advice they received was very or fairly useful, while 39 per cent said it was not very or not at all useful; five per cent said they had not had any advice as such. Around one-quarter (28 per cent) said the advice had helped them to stay in work (a lot or a fair amount), while 21 per cent said that it had helped a little and 51 per cent that it had not helped at all. It is worth noting that much of the contact that customers had with Jobcentre Plus while they were in work was on administrative matters. The evaluation of the Jobcentre Plus Offer found that most of the in-work support that customers had involved help with benefits or financial

arrangements or assisting with paperwork (Coulter *et al.*, 2012). It is, therefore, not surprising that many respondents did not think the support had directly helped them to stay in work.

Those who had been in work were also asked if they had received any financial support from Jobcentre Plus during their time in work, as an in-work emergency payment. Ten per cent said they had, and most of these respondents said that it had helped them (more detailed analysis is not possible owing to the small number of respondents concerned).

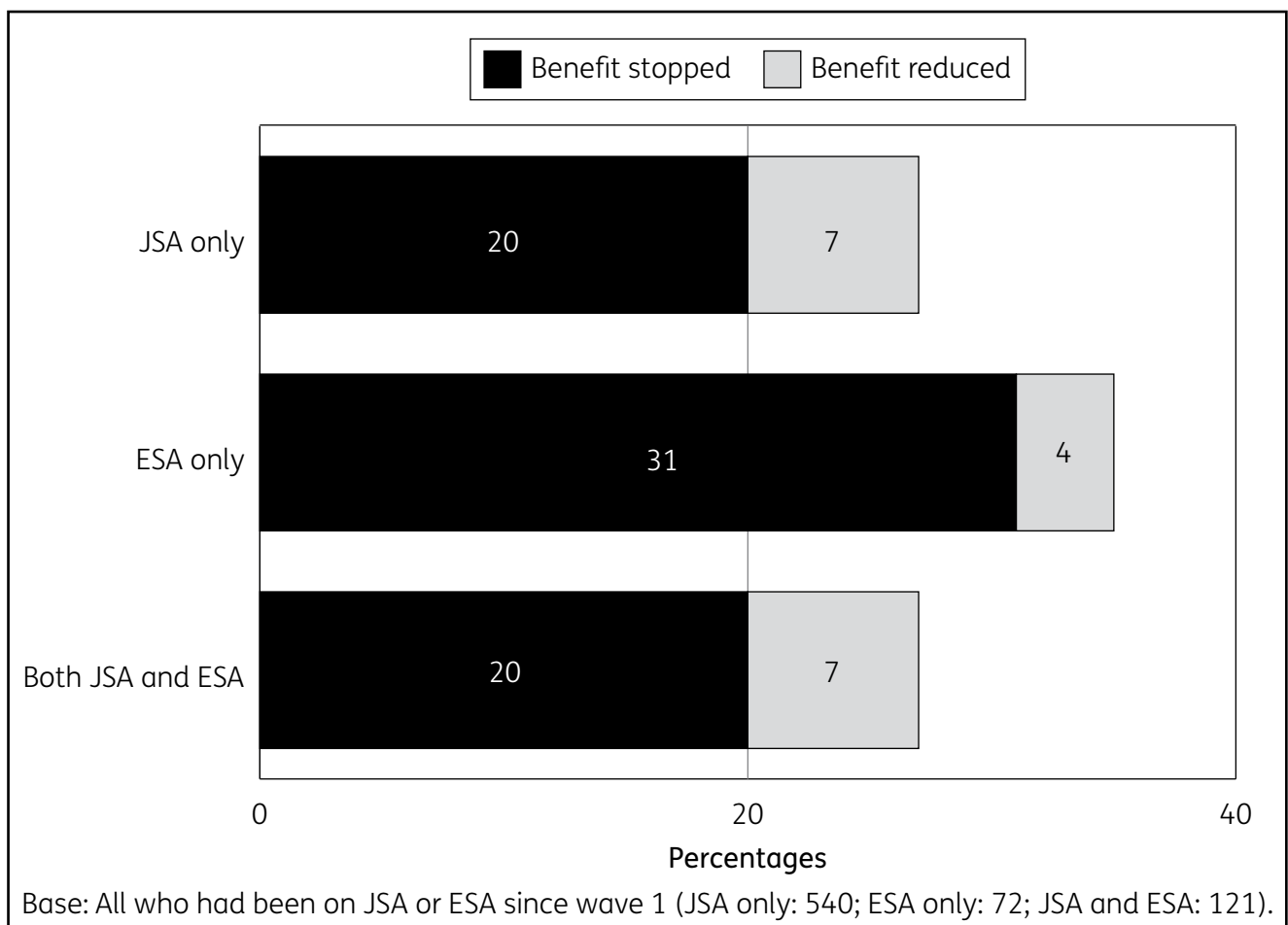
8.2 Conditions and sanctions

Current JSA claimants were asked how well advisers had explained the conditions of claiming JSA. The majority said that they had explained this very well (26 per cent) or quite well (48 per cent), while around one in four felt that this had not been explained very well (14 per cent) or at all well (ten per cent). Nearly all current JSA claimants said that they had been told by an adviser that their benefit might be stopped or reduced if they did not agree to certain conditions or do certain things (87 per cent).

In the qualitative research, staff and customers also demonstrated a good understanding of the JSA regime for lone parents, and lone parents also generally reported understanding what they had to do and finding it easy to meet the requirements of their Jobseeker’s Agreement (JSAg) (Lane *et al.*, 2011).

Around one in four lone parents (28 per cent) who had been on JSA or ESA said that their benefits had been reduced (seven per cent) or stopped (21 per cent) for some reason by Jobcentre Plus since they started their claim. This is broken down by benefit type in Figure 8.2.

Figure 8.2 Experience of benefit being stopped or reduced



112 Experience of Jobseeker's Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance

A number of groups were more likely to say that their benefit had been stopped: those with a limiting longstanding illness, disability or infirmity (LLSI) (33 per cent), those with a dependent child with a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity (LSI) (29 per cent) and those without any formal qualifications (28 per cent). In general, previous evidence from several countries, including the United States, suggests that sanctions are experienced disproportionately by more disadvantaged lone parents (Finn and Gloster, 2010).

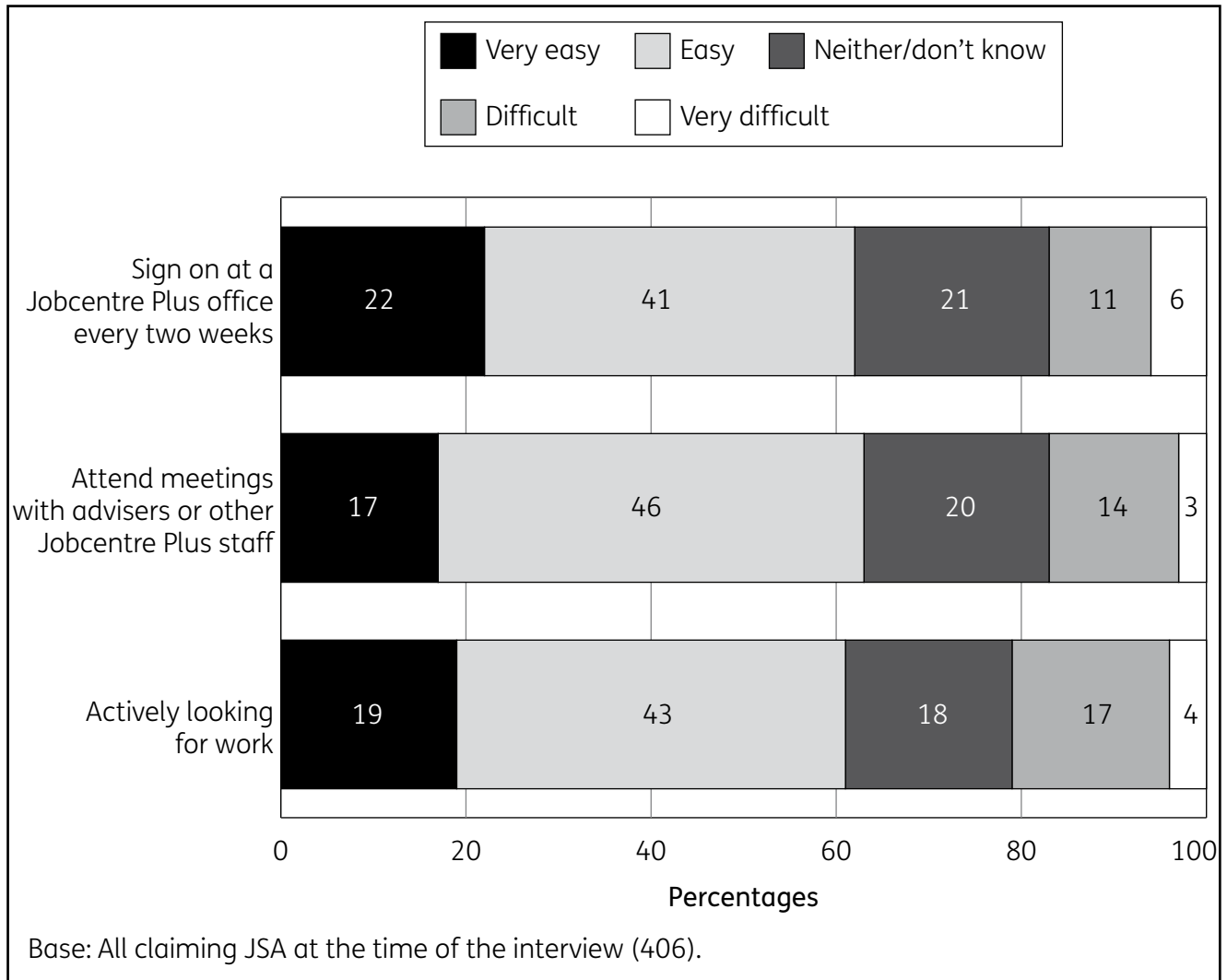
The most common reason for lone parents benefit stopping or being reduced was missing a signing on appointment (25 per cent), while 13 per cent said that they missed an appointment at Jobcentre Plus that they were told they had to attend. It is possible that respondents have also included delays or problems in receiving benefit payments, e.g. in the transition to JSA or ESA or as part of the process for claiming ESA. The answers given by respondents are, therefore, likely to over-estimate the proportion who have actually experienced sanctions, and this is confirmed by the administrative data, which record only a small proportion of these respondents having had a sanction applied to them. The qualitative research noted that some lone parents described having gaps in their payment of ESA (e.g. if they did not realise that they had to continue sending in sick notes as a condition of receiving benefit) (Casebourne *et al.*, 2010).

Of the respondents who said their benefit had been stopped or reduced, 18 per cent said they were told about 'hardship payments', and five per cent said they had actually received one.

The questionnaire also covered lone parents' ability to comply with the conditions for claiming JSA. As shown in Figure 8.3, most respondents who were claiming JSA said that they found it at least fairly easy to sign on every two weeks, to attend meetings and to look for work actively. However, a proportion (between 17 per cent and 21 per cent) said that they found these things difficult. This was higher among respondents with an LSI; for example 32 per cent said that it was difficult for them to look for work actively.

It is also worth noting that 20 per cent of JSA claimants who described themselves as 'looking for work' also said that it was difficult for them to look for work actively. This indicates that active jobseeking on JSA can be difficult for some lone parents, and also that while lone parents may see themselves as 'looking for work' in line with their status on JSA, actual jobsearch behaviour may be limited.

Figure 8.3 Ability to comply with JSA conditions



8.3 Jobseeker’s Allowance flexibilities

Lone parents on the JSA regime are subject to the same legal regulations as other jobseekers, including being required to complete a JSAG, actively to look for work and to attend a Jobcentre Plus office regularly to confirm that they have been available for, and actively seeking work. While many lone parents will be able to meet existing JSA requirements, it is recognised that the circumstances of lone parents are varied. Therefore, ‘parent flexibilities’ have been inserted into the JSA regulations for lone parents,⁴² to recognise their responsibility to care for a dependent child.

Respondents who had claimed JSA since Wave 1 were asked whether they had been told about any flexibilities.⁴³ Around one-third (35 per cent) said they had been told there were things they were

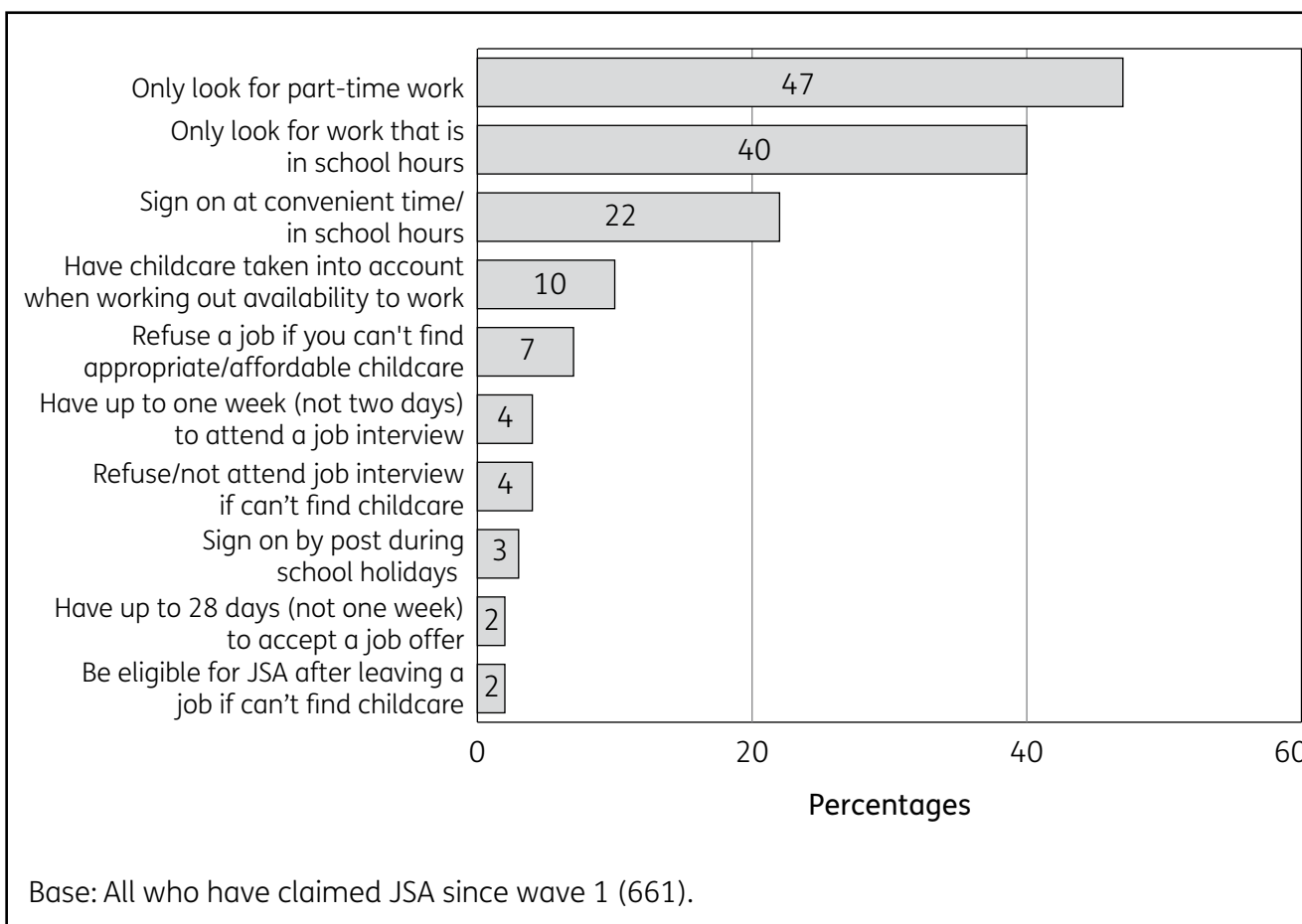
⁴² Some flexibilities also apply to dependent partners of main claimants who are parents.

⁴³ Respondents were asked whether Jobcentre Plus had ‘told them about any things that you are allowed to do, or do not have to do, because you are lone parent, for example only having to look for or accept certain types of work.’

allowed to do or did not have to do. This was higher among respondents who had been on the Work Programme (44 per cent), but lower among those with an LSI (24 per cent).⁴⁴

When asked whether any of a list of flexibilities applied to them during their time on JSA, 64 per cent said that at least one applied to them, most commonly only having to look for part-time work (47 per cent) or only having to look for work that was during school hours (40 per cent).

Figure 8.4 Whether flexibilities apply to lone parents



These findings suggest that Jobcentre Plus staff are making JSA customers aware of specific flexibilities, at least in some cases. However, it is worth noting that in the qualitative research, Jobcentre Plus staff reported that they apply the flexibilities where appropriate but do not typically inform lone parent customers about them. This was confirmed by lone parents themselves in the qualitative research, who in some cases were not aware that flexibilities were being applied to them, even though (on further discussion) it was clear that flexibilities were in fact being applied (Lane et al., 2011).

8.4 Personalised support

All respondents who had claimed JSA or ESA since Wave 1 were asked whether they felt the advice they had received had taken their individual circumstances into account. As shown in Table 8.4,

⁴⁴ The flexibility to only look for work during school hours applies during term-time only, and only to lone parents whose youngest child is aged under 13.

there is an even split between those that thought that their circumstances had been taken into account, and those that did not. These findings were very similar by benefit type.

Those with an LSI were less likely to feel their circumstances were taken into account (39 per cent across all benefit types); this was also the case at Wave 1 in relation to support on IS.

In the qualitative research, some staff felt that support was not always being sufficiently tailored to lone parents’ needs, and that this was happening either when non-specialist staff were working with lone parents on JSA and/or where lone parent customers were not identified as such (Casebourne *et al.*, 2010).

Table 8.4 Whether individual circumstances were taken into account by Jobcentre Plus staff

	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	Benefit		
	JSA %	ESA %	Both JSA and ESA %
Yes	45	45	41
No	46	41	46
Hard to say	7	6	9
Had not had any help or advice	2	9	4
<i>Base: All who have claimed JSA or ESA since Wave 1</i>	<i>540</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>121</i>

One in four respondents (24 per cent) said they would have liked more time with Jobcentre Plus staff or advisers. This figure was not significantly different by benefit type, but was higher among those who had never worked (35 per cent).

We can compare these findings with those from Wave 1, when respondents were asked the same questions about their time on IS. The proportion who would have liked more time with staff was very similar at Wave 1 (22 per cent). However, respondents were more likely to say that their individual circumstances were taken into account when they were on IS (62 per cent) than on JSA or ESA (between 41 and 45 per cent, as shown in Table 8.4).

8.5 Overall attitudes to Jobcentre Plus support

Respondents who had claimed JSA or ESA since Wave 1 of the survey were asked how helpful they had found the advice they had received overall. Strikingly, over one-third of JSA claimants and over half of ESA claimants felt that they had not had any help or advice. This confirms the findings from the LPO qualitative research, in relation to JSA. This found that when lone parents moved on to JSA, ‘*signing-on appointments were felt by customers to be of little use to them in their jobsearch, and of more use to the Jobcentre to check they had been looking for work*’ (Gloster *et al.*, 2010). The later phase of qualitative research found that these views depended very much on whether respondents were seeing staff who were specifically trained in lone parent issues. Where lone parents were not seeing such staff, it was common for them to feel that they were not receiving any support at all while on JSA. In general, seeing staff trained in lone parent issues (or not) was a key influencer of the level and quality of support that lone parents felt they had received while on the JSA regime, and their attitudes to Jobcentre Plus staff (Lane *et al.*, 2011).

It is important to note that these findings reflect lone parents' **perceptions** of whether they had help or advice. The findings earlier in this chapter show that the majority of lone parents confirmed that they had received advice about benefits or jobsearch (see Table 8.1) or Jobcentre Plus Offer activities (see Table 8.2).

Where lone parents did feel that they had received help or support, they were likely to say that the support was helpful rather than unhelpful. Details are shown in Table 8.5. The views of respondents who had been on the Work Programme were similar to the wider sample of JSA claimants.

Table 8.5 Overall helpfulness of advice and support from Jobcentre Plus staff

	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	Benefit		
	JSA %	ESA %	Both JSA and ESA %
Very helpful	15	11	12
Quite helpful	34	10	27
Not very helpful	9	3	15
Not at all helpful	4	3	2
Had not had any help or advice	37	74	44
<i>Base: All who have claimed JSA or ESA since Wave 1</i>	<i>540</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>121</i>

A comparison with Wave 1 shows that lone parents were more positive towards the helpfulness of the IS regime: 64 per cent said it was helpful and 11 per cent unhelpful, while 25 per cent said that they had not had any advice.

The ways in which advice had helped lone parents are shown in Table 8.6. Lone parents who had been on JSA were more likely to say they had been helped in various ways than those who had been on ESA. This applies in particular to being made more aware of job opportunities. As noted above, many respondents did not feel that they had received help or advice.

It is possible to analyse these findings in relation to the types of advice or support that respondents had received. Although it is difficult to be conclusive with this analysis (as some of the sample sizes are small), it is clear that those who had either received a skills assessment, had advice on training or had attended training were particularly likely to say they had improved their skills and had their confidence increased.

Table 8.6 How Jobcentre Plus advice has helped in previous 12 months

	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	Benefit		
	JSA %	ESA %	Both JSA and ESA %
Made more aware of job opportunities	41	12	37
Increased confidence	22	14	16
Improved skills	17	4	11
Not had any help or advice/not applicable	36	72	43
Hard to say/don't know	17	11	15
<i>Base: All who have claimed JSA or ESA since Wave 1</i>	<i>540</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>121</i>

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with four aspects of the JSA and ESA benefit regimes. In general, lone parents expressed negative attitudes towards JSA and ESA.

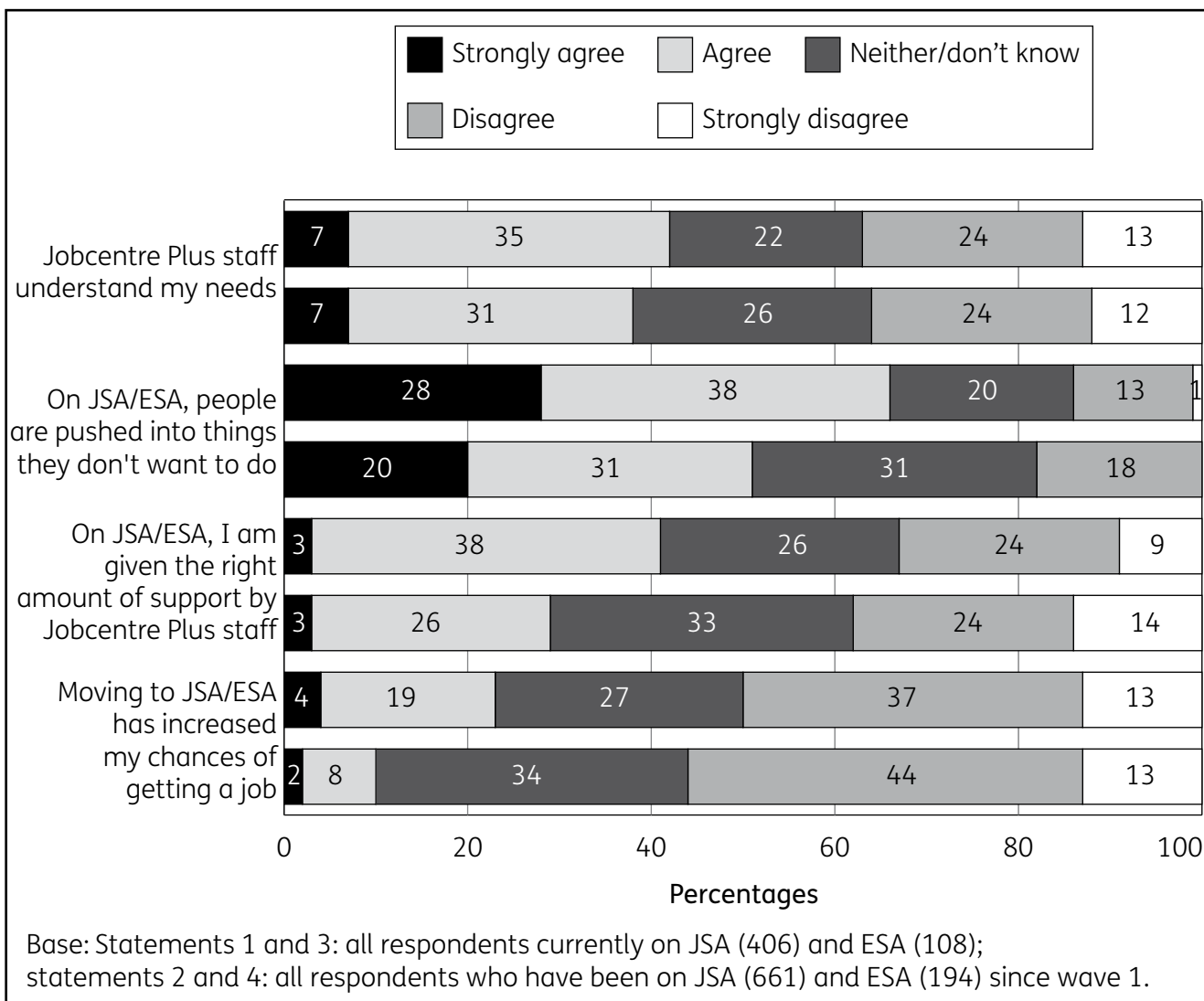
As shown in Figure 8.5, respondents were approximately equally likely to agree as disagree that Jobcentre Plus understood their needs; views were similar for JSA and ESA. However, respondents were more likely to agree than disagree that on JSA/ESA, people were pushed into things they did not want to do, and this was higher for JSA (66 per cent agreed) than ESA (51 per cent).

Respondents were less positive about ESA than JSA, in terms of whether they are given the right amount of support by Jobcentre Plus staff (41 per cent agreed in relation to JSA, 29 per cent for ESA). Lone parents were more likely to disagree than agree that moving to JSA or ESA had increased their chances of getting a job (50 per cent for JSA, 57 per cent for ESA).

Within the JSA sample, respondents with an LLSI were more negative than other respondents. For example, 79 per cent agreed that on JSA people were pushed into things they did not want to do, and 40 per cent disagreed that they were given the right amount of support. In addition, those with stronger parental childcare-focused attitudes (for example those who agreed that their job was to look after the home and family) were more likely to feel that on JSA people are pushed into things they did not want to do. These findings suggest that those who were further from the labour market were more likely to feel that they were pushed into things they did not want to do.

The qualitative research also found that, across the different groups of lone parents on JSA, there was a strong dislike of claiming JSA, both under the Jobcentre Plus Offer regime and the previous Jobseeker's Regime and Flexible New Deal (JRFND) regime (Lane *et al.*, 2011). Interviews with staff highlighted that the early stages of the previous JRFND regime in particular were not designed for JSA claimants who had been out of work for some time, and therefore might have been less suitable for lone parents moving from IS (the lone parents examined in this survey) rather than new or repeat JSA claimants (Casebourne *et al.*, 2010).

Figure 8.5 Attitudes to JSA and ESA regimes



The views of lone parents were more negative about JSA and ESA than they had been about IS when they were interviewed at Wave 1. While on IS, respondents tended to agree rather than disagree that Jobcentre Plus staff understood their needs (54 per cent agreed and 19 per cent disagreed), and that they were given the right amount of support (52 per cent agreed and 20 per cent disagreed).

8.6 Summary

- Lone parents who had been on JSA were much more likely than those who had been on ESA to have received various types of advice and support, such as looking at job vacancies or looking at the sort of work they might do.
- The same pattern applied to the support options available under the Jobcentre Plus Offer. Three in four JSA claimants (76 per cent JSA only and 79 per cent who had been on both JSA and ESA) had discussed support options such as regular adviser meetings or training courses, compared with 38 per cent of those that had been on ESA (but not JSA). Actual attendance on these support options was also higher among JSA claimants.

- The majority of respondents who had taken the various support options said that they had been helpful (ranging from 66 per cent to 81 per cent for the various activities).
- Around one in seven lone parents who had been on JSA said they had received financial help from Jobcentre Plus towards expenses, most commonly travel costs. The proportion who had received financial help while on ESA was lower (six per cent).
- In total, 12 per cent of respondents had been on the Work Programme and a further 17 per cent had discussed it with an adviser while on JSA or ESA.
- Around one-quarter (27 per cent) of those who had started work since Wave 1, or had increased their hours, said they had been in contact with Jobcentre Plus staff while they were working. An additional 13 per cent said they were offered this support.
- Most JSA claimants (74 per cent) said that advisers had explained the conditions of claiming JSA very or quite well, and nearly all (87 per cent) said that they had been told that their benefit might be stopped or reduced if they did not agree to certain conditions.
- Around one in four said that their benefit had been stopped (21 per cent) or reduced (seven per cent) for some reason while on JSA or ESA.
- Most JSA claimants said they found it at least fairly easy to comply with the conditions for claiming JSA: signing on every two weeks (63 per cent), attending meetings (63 per cent) and actively looking for work (62 per cent). However, between 17 per cent and 21 per cent found each of these things difficult.
- One in three (35 per cent) said that they were told there were things they were allowed to do or did not have to do, as part of the parent flexibilities on JSA. Two in three (64 per cent) said that at least one of the flexibilities applied to them, most frequently only having to look for part-time work (47 per cent) or only having to look for work that was during school hours (40 per cent).
- Less than half of respondents said that they felt their individual circumstances were taken into account (45 per cent who had been on JSA only, 45 per cent on ESA only and 41 per cent on both JSA and ESA). One in four (24 per cent) would have liked more time with Jobcentre Plus staff.
- There were negative attitudes to the JSA and ESA regimes, and these were more negative than corresponding attitudes to the IS regime as expressed at Wave 1. Many respondents did not think that they had received help or advice while on JSA (37 per cent) or ESA (74 per cent), and respondents were more likely to agree than disagree that on JSA/ESA people are pushed into things they don't want to do. There were also mixed views on whether lone parents' needs were taken into account on JSA/ESA and whether they were given the right amount of support. However, in the JSA sample, some respondents did feel that JSA had made them more aware of job opportunities (41 per cent).

9 Conclusions and policy implications

The overall aim of the evaluation is to explore how lone parent employment interventions provide an effective incentive to look for paid employment, alongside an effective package of support for workless lone parents to enable them to find, enter and sustain paid employment. This report has focused on:

- the destinations of lone parents affected by Lone Parent Obligations (LPO) (Chapter 2);
- attitudes, values and beliefs in relation to work and family life, and choices and constraints in relation to work (Chapter 6);
- behaviour in relation to work, either being in work (Chapter 3) or looking for work (Chapter 5), and childcare arrangements (Chapter 4);
- wellbeing and deprivation (Chapter 7);
- lone parents' experience of and attitudes towards the Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and Employment and Support allowance (ESA) regimes (Chapter 8).

The survey has examined a cohort of lone parents on their journey through LPO, and as a result we are able to provide a detailed insight into the relationships between destinations, behaviour and attitudes. However, the survey is not able to quantify the impact of LPO on this group of lone parents, in terms of movement into employment or other outcomes.

There are a number of key implications from this research for the future; specifically, in relation to lone parents' movement into, or closer towards, work; the implications for support for these lone parents from Jobcentre Plus and on the Work Programme; the extension of LPO to those with a youngest child aged five; and the introduction of Universal Credit. This section of the report draws together the findings to consider these implications.

9.1 Destinations

The analysis in this report excludes lone parents who remained on Income Support (IS), and focuses on the destinations of those who became ineligible for IS. Immediately after leaving IS, over half of lone parents moved on to JSA (55 per cent), while 12 per cent claimed ESA, and 24 per cent got a job.

Longer-term destinations (in the year or so after IS eligibility ended) showed that 45 per cent of lone parents had worked at some point since their IS claim ended. A further 31 per cent had long spells on JSA (these respondents had only claimed JSA since leaving IS – they had not worked at all or claimed another benefit during this time).

Around one in four (23 per cent) had claimed ESA since leaving IS, including 12 per cent who had claimed both JSA and ESA. There was a range of outcomes on ESA, including equal proportions who were in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG), the Support Group and found fit for work. In addition, some respondents who had made a claim for ESA had not yet had a Work Capability Assessment (WCA) or were awaiting a decision or the outcome of a tribunal. These findings indicate that many lone parents who claimed ESA had a complex journey and may not have had a smooth transition from IS to ESA.

Five per cent of lone parents had neither worked nor claimed a benefit at all since they left IS, and at the time of the Wave 2 interview nine per cent were neither working nor claiming a benefit; many of these respondents (48 per cent) had re-partnered.

In broad terms, it is possible to identify three groups of lone parents from the destinations data and other survey findings: those that had been in work, those who were actively looking for work (usually on JSA), but who had not moved into work; and those who were not actively looking for work, including those with a limiting long-standing illness or disability (LLSI) or other barriers.

The survey findings indicated that a number of groups were more or less likely to have worked since they moved off IS. Lone parents were more likely to have worked if they had recent work experience or were actively looking for work while on IS. Movement into work was also more likely among lone parents with higher qualifications, those with access to a vehicle and those who lived in a rural area. It was also more likely among those who used informal childcare before they started work (see below).

Lone parents with an LLSI, especially those with mental-health problems, were less likely to move into work. There were also differences in terms of attitudes to work: those who were more family-focused in their attitudes and less concerned about the stigma of being on benefits were less likely than other respondents to have worked at all.

As a whole, these findings confirm that a wide range of factors affect the likelihood of lone parents moving into work, including characteristics and circumstances, working history, access to childcare and attitudes to work. This is of relevance to efforts by Jobcentre Plus and Work Programme providers to assess customers' level of employability or 'work readiness', for example through the Customer Assessment Tool. The survey findings confirm previous research which indicates that any assessment needs to be thorough and broad-ranging, in order to identify the various factors that may affect customers' ability to move into work.

Of particular interest are lone parents with an LLSI, who made up 21 per cent of the sample. As well as being less likely to have moved into work, these respondents were also less likely to sustain work when they did move into employment. As noted above, these lone parents could also have complex benefit journeys, including claims for both JSA and ESA, and varied outcomes from claiming ESA. This confirms the findings from the qualitative research, which found that those with an LLSI can have '*disparate journeys*' as part of LPO, and that these customers could experience difficulties in negotiating this type of process. These findings suggest that the difficulties that these lone parents have in moving into and sustaining work may be compounded by complexities in their LPO journey after leaving IS. Furthermore, the support available to these lone parents on JSA or ESA may not always be appropriate, as discussed below.

9.2 Attitudes, values and beliefs

Overall, the survey confirms the balance of work and family as a key concern for lone parents affected by LPO. At both waves of the survey, lone parents expressed a strong work focus alongside a strong focus on parental childcare.

The survey assessed the extent to which LPO had changed attitudes, as well as jobsearch behaviour. The Wave 2 findings indicate a slight increase in work-focused attitudes since Wave 1, and a lessening of some barriers to work. At the same time, respondents maintained a strong focus on parental childcare in their attitudes, and this applied equally to lone parents in different destination groups (in work, on JSA and on ESA). This suggests that while it may be possible to reinforce positive messages about work and increase lone parents' commitment to work, it is unlikely that advisers or the benefits regime as a whole will change their attitudes towards parental childcare. As a result,

elements such as the parent flexibilities, available to lone parents on JSA, are important and should not be compromised.

At the same time, the survey showed that lone parents' preferences regarding working hours were less fixed than might be expected. Many lone parents expressed a desire to work around 16 hours per week and to work only in school hours or school holidays. However, when comparing these preferences at Wave 1 with actual jobs at Wave 2, some respondents worked outside these hours when they actually moved into a job. This suggests that advisers may be able to persuade lone parents to consider greater flexibility in the working hours they are considering, while at the same time acknowledging their strong attitudes towards parental childcare.

9.3 Experience of work

Reflecting previous evidence, the jobs carried out by lone parents since leaving IS were concentrated in low skilled occupations (40 per cent worked in elementary occupations and 23 per cent in personal service occupations). The survey also found that many lone parents reported being on a very low wage: around one in three of those in work (33 per cent) said that they were paid less than £6 per hour (the National Minimum Wage at the time of the survey was £6.08 per hour).

The survey examined the extent to which mini-jobs (jobs of fewer than 16 hours per week) could act as a stepping stone to increased hours. Respondents who were working fewer than 16 hours per week had often increased their hours by the time of the Wave 2 interview, although it should be noted that the increase could be small (e.g. to 16 hours per week). Moreover, nine in ten of those working in mini-jobs in Wave 2 noted a preference to work for 16 hours or more. At the same time, there was a group of respondents who were originally working fewer than 16 hours per week while on IS, who continued to work these hours while moving on to JSA.

In considering the role of mini-jobs, it is also worth noting that these jobs were particularly likely to be poorly paid jobs in unskilled or elementary occupations; and also that some respondents wanted to increase their hours but had not been able to do so (either in their current job or in a new job). Those working fewer hours were also more likely to say that they could not see their job going anywhere. Therefore, although mini-jobs can potentially be useful in giving lone parents a taste of working life, and can sometimes allow them to then increase their hours, it is important to note that a large number of mini-jobs are poor quality jobs which do not necessarily lead to work involving more hours or provide scope for advancement.

As at Wave 1, the Wave 2 findings showed that the balance between work and family was a crucial issue for lone parents, and that this balance was strongly associated with hours worked. The proportion who said that their job prevented them from giving the time they wanted to their children at least 'sometimes' was much higher among those working over 16 hours per week.

Another important issue for working lone parents is the availability of flexible working arrangements. The majority (61 per cent) of those looking for or intending to work said that this was very important, and 42 per cent said that the lack of flexible working arrangements would stop them from taking a job. In general, the survey indicated that employers are somewhat patchy in offering flexible and family-friendly arrangements. There was evidence of some employers offering flexible working arrangements, such as flexi-time. However, some of the respondents in work said that their employer was not family-friendly and that this was a large barrier to their staying in work (nine per cent), while 13 per cent said that the pressure to work longer hours or do overtime was a large barrier. More generally, the largest barrier to staying in work was the stress of combining work and family life. This suggests that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), and Jobcentre Plus need to continue to work with other Government Departments and local employers to promote family-friendly workplaces, and also to try to encourage the availability of better quality part-time jobs.

9.4 Looking for work

The survey suggests that lone parents had moved closer to the labour market following their move off IS. The majority of respondents at Wave 2 were either in work or looking for work – just 19 per cent were not looking for work, whereas at Wave 1, 41 per cent were neither working nor looking for work.

In addition, where lone parents were looking for work, they were more intensive in their jobsearch than was the case on IS. At Wave 2, around half (54 per cent) of those who had applied for jobs had made more than ten applications in the previous 12 months, compared with a corresponding figure of 20 per cent at Wave 1. The Wave 1 report noted the low jobsearch intensity among lone parents who were looking for work while on IS, and identified this as an issue which may be slowing their movement into work. The Wave 2 findings showed that this issue had been addressed to a large extent through the JSA regime, which had increased lone parents' jobsearch intensity.

At the same time, a substantial proportion of respondents had prolonged spells on JSA without moving into work (31 per cent of the Wave 2 sample), in some cases lasting the year or so after they left IS. To some extent this is not surprising, given the length of time that many lone parents had previously spent on IS without working. Equally, this confirms the challenge in moving lone parents off benefits and into work. Longer spells on JSA were more common among lone parents without qualifications and whose first language was not English. This suggests that an emphasis on skills and training may be appropriate to reduce the number of lone parents with long spells on JSA, and to help them move into work. Although a substantial proportion of respondents in the survey (41 per cent) had been on a training course since Wave 1, this was not significantly higher for JSA claimants, unless they had also been on the Work Programme.

9.4.1 Childcare

Overall, the findings confirmed a reliance on informal childcare, with grandparents providing the bulk of informal childcare.

The survey confirmed the importance of informal networks of family, friends and neighbours in providing informal childcare. Firstly, the analysis of destinations showed that those who had used informal childcare while they were not working were more likely to have moved into work. This suggests that having informal childcare networks in place can help with the transition into work. Secondly, there was a high prevalence of reciprocal arrangements – looking after children in return and other non-financial arrangements – as part of informal childcare. Both of these findings indicate that it is important for advisers to explore these issues and discuss informal childcare networks with lone parents.

Breakfast or after-school clubs on school sites were by far the most commonly used type of formal childcare. This reflects the age profile of children covered by the survey – predominantly primary school age children, with very few pre-school children. Respondents also expressed a strong interest in using after-school or holiday clubs in the future, suggesting that there may be scope for encouraging more lone parents to use this type of childcare, particularly if awareness can be increased. This applies in particular to holiday clubs, as only 23 per cent of non-users were aware of holiday clubs. This suggests that advisers may be able to do more to increase awareness and to encourage lone parents to use these facilities.

As working hours increased, the main change in childcare patterns was a greater use of both formal and informal childcare. These findings indicate that work of more than 16 hours per week often requires a package of different types of childcare. This suggests that advisers need to discuss options for formal and informal childcare as part of a package. In doing so, it may be possible to re-assure

lone parents that using formal childcare does not necessitate a major change – that it is usually a case of using school-based childcare alongside informal networks.

9.4.2 Wellbeing and deprivation

Levels of material deprivation and low income among the cohort of lone parents interviewed at Wave 1 were very high. In total, 67 per cent were in material deprivation and low income. This compares to 28 per cent of all lone parent families in the UK, as reported in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) *Households Below Average Income* series.

Detailed analysis shows that households were more likely to lack adult or household items, such as replacing worn out furniture and electrical goods, rather than items for children, such as having friends over for tea or a snack, or having leisure equipment, such as sports equipment or a bike.

The findings on material deprivation can also inform the extent to which lone parents were better off in work. Lone parents who had entered work or increased their hours between Wave 1 and Wave 2 were less likely to be in material deprivation. While 65 per cent of these lone parents had been in material deprivation and low income at Wave 1, this had fallen to 39 per cent by wave two. Nevertheless, this means that two in five households in which a lone parent had entered work were still living in material deprivation and had a low income. This confirms that many of the jobs that lone parents move into – with low pay and a small number of hours – are not sufficient to enable an improvement in moving people out of material deprivation.

9.4.3 Experience of the Jobseeker's Allowance, and Employment and Support Allowance regimes

Between the first interviews lone parents undertook, in 2010, and the second interview, in 2012, the JSA regime changed from the more prescriptive Jobseeker's Regime and Flexible New Deal to the more flexible Jobcentre Plus Offer regime. The survey as a whole has highlighted the diverse and complex needs and barriers of this group of lone parents, confirming the need for personalised support.

Nevertheless, the Wave 2 findings suggest that lone parents in the survey were not always getting a high level of individualised support from the JSA or ESA regimes. Less than half of lone parents on JSA and ESA felt that the advice they had received had taken their individual circumstances into account. Moreover, over one-third of JSA claimants and over half of ESA claimants did not feel that they had had any help or advice as such. The qualitative research also found that support was not always being sufficiently tailored to lone parents' needs, and that this was often linked with whether or not they saw a specialist lone parent adviser.

The qualitative work also found that, although JSA could be *'a demanding and sometimes uncomfortable experience'* for lone parents, in comparison with claiming IS, this was helping to give them *'a push towards work'* (Casebourne *et al.*, 2010).

The evaluation findings as a whole suggest that JSA is providing a push towards work, and by increasing lone parents' jobsearch intensity is often moving them closer to job entry. However, lone parents suggest that the JSA regime does not offer personalised support or (as noted above) 'support' at all for a group of JSA customers.

In addition, the survey findings indicate that customers with an LLSI did not necessarily feel that the support they received on JSA or ESA reflected – or was appropriate to – their needs. The views of these respondents to JSA were even more negative than other lone parents. Within the JSA sample, respondents with an LLSI were more negative than other respondents. For example, 79 per

cent agreed that on JSA people were pushed into things they do not want to do, and 40 per cent disagreed that they were given the right amount of support.

Lone parents who claimed ESA were less likely than those on JSA to say that they had received any meaningful support. Discussion of and participation in support activities was also very low on ESA. As noted above, experiences of claiming ESA could also be complex, with various outcomes from the WCA, and many respondents claiming both JSA and ESA. Moreover, it is possible that delays to lone parents' WCA in some cases have meant that they were not yet at the stage to receive support from Jobcentre Plus.

Overall, this suggests that the LPO changes and current benefit regime have struggled to accommodate lone parents with an LLSI, and do not currently provide the necessary support that will help move them closer to the labour market, and to be able to sustain work.

9.5 Implications for the extension of Lone Parent Obligations to lone parents with a youngest child aged five or over

In 2012, the LPO changes were extended to include those with a youngest child aged five or over. This survey was restricted to the cohort whose youngest child was aged seven or eight when their eligibility for IS ended, but the findings have broader relevance for those with children aged five or six.

One conclusion from this survey is that the move into work was often a slow process for lone parents. Many lone parents had moved into work by the time of the Wave 2 survey, but this was around a year after their IS eligibility had ended, and the other lone parents in the survey had not entered work, despite in some cases having prolonged spells on JSA and/or time on the Work Programme. To some extent, this slow pace of change confirms the premise that lone parents should be eligible for the LPO changes at an earlier stage. By starting the move off IS when their youngest child is aged five, this (sometimes) slow journey into the labour market can potentially be accelerated at an earlier stage.

Overall, however, the research suggests that the issues faced by lone parents in this survey (with youngest child aged seven or eight) are not very different from those with younger children (aged five or six). Firstly, movement into work did not appear to be affected by the ages of respondents' children (e.g. the age of their other children in addition to their youngest child). It was certainly the case that other issues – health and disability, and other barriers – were more important. The qualitative research also highlighted the importance of critical life events (e.g. worsening of a health condition, homelessness) in lone parents' ability to move into work (Lane *et al.*, 2011).

9.6 Implications for Universal Credit

In an effort to simplify the benefit system and improve work incentives, Universal Credit will replace the present benefit structure in 2013. Universal Credit will simplify the benefits system by bringing together a range of working-age benefits into a single streamlined payment.

A key aim of Universal Credit will be to '*ensure that work always pays and is seen to pay*' (DWP, 2010). This would directly address one of the main perceived barriers to work among lone parents in this survey, namely the perception that 'I am not sure I would be financially better off in work'. One in three (34 per cent) of those not in work described this as a big barrier to employment, and this was also one of the larger barriers to staying in work among working lone parents. If Universal Credit is able to ensure that lone parents are always better off in work (whatever hours they work), and can make this clear to them, this will undoubtedly help in removing this barrier.

The questions on material deprivation indicate that the move into work can move lone parents out of material deprivation; however, two in five lone parents remained in material deprivation despite moving into work. Because of the low pay and small number of hours in many of the jobs lone parents were doing, a move into work will not automatically bring a significant improvement in financial circumstances.

The survey also provides a warning that the comparison between the cost of being in work and being on benefits is not always clear. One of the main barriers among those in work to staying in work was seen as the fact that respondents 'hadn't anticipated all the extra things I would need to spend money on now that I'm in work'.

In addition, it may not just be the incentives in the benefit system that are preventing lone parents from working more than 16 hours per week (rather than around 16). Given the importance of balancing work and family, this suggests that lone parents will often need encouragement and support, to start work of more than 16 hours per week, and to stay in that work.

The survey also found that a substantial proportion of lone parents had tried unsuccessfully to increase their hours, or were working fewer hours than they previously had indicated they would prefer or be prepared to work. It is clear from the survey that jobs involving a small number of hours (e.g. fewer than 16 hours per week) are generally unskilled and low paid. Increasing hours, therefore, offers lone parents the potential to move to better quality work as well as an increase in pay. However, the survey findings suggest that it can be difficult for lone parents to increase their hours. This ties in with the rise of under-employment, which includes part-time workers unable to find a full-time job (standing at 1.4 million in the latest figures) (ONS, 2012) and which, according to recent analysis by the TUC, is concentrated in elementary occupations.

In this context, it is also worth noting that increases in hours (actual or intended) are often small in scale. For example, a move from 16 hours to 22 hours is more likely than a move from 16 hours to 30 hours. The survey suggests that there may be insufficient flexibility in the labour market to allow this type of change – either in employers allowing changes in hours, or in the availability of new jobs with a range of working hours.

9.7 Conclusions from the evaluation to date

There have been a number of reports from the LPO evaluation to date: three reports from the qualitative research for the evaluation (Gloster *et al.*, 2010; Casebourne *et al.*, 2010 and Lane *et al.*, 2011), the first report from the LPO survey (Coleman and Lanceley, 2011) and this follow-up report from the survey. A report quantifying the impact of LPO on lone parents, in terms of movement off benefit and into work, is due to be published in 2013. The evaluation to date has, therefore, given us a good insight into the effect of LPO and there are a number of common themes emerging from across the different strands of the research.

There has been greater movement towards and into work amongst lone parents as a result of LPO. The evaluation has found that lone parents are generally positive about work for a range of financial and non-financial reasons, and because of this many lone parents will already have been motivated to move into work, which LPO has supported. For other lone parents, LPO has very often given them an extra 'push' to move towards or into work. For lone parents on JSA, the more active conditionality regime for receiving this benefit has encouraged greater jobsearch and an increased focus on moving into work.

However, there has also been found to be a general dislike of claiming JSA. For lone parents not in work and claiming benefit, there are mixed feelings about the support they receive through Jobcentre Plus. Many do not feel that they receive appropriate help and advice while on benefit, and those with experience of IS very often compare their experiences on JSA or ESA unfavourably with the support they received whilst on IS.

The types of jobs lone parents moved into reflect the need to balance work alongside their family commitments. Lone parents mainly worked part-time, but much of this work is low-skilled and poorly paid. Therefore, a move into work did not always bring a move out of material deprivation for lone parents. Moving to longer hours work, which many were keen to do, may help them find better quality work with higher pay. As such, for many of these lone parents, the operation of the new Universal Credit will be crucial in ensuring that they are better off in work.

Appendix A

Factor analysis methodology and results

Factor analysis is used to uncover factors underlying a set of variables and can be used for a number of purposes. In this research it was used to reduce a larger number of variables into a smaller number of factors. These variables derive from the Choices and Constraints question set which has been used in a number of surveys, including Families and Children's Study (FACS). The questionnaire module purposely uses several questions to measure similar issues, such as attitudes to parenting, work and childcare, and therefore is best explored by reducing the questions down into several salient factors.

Respondents who were in work at the time of the interview were presented with a series of cards each inscribed with statements about barriers to staying in work in the future. Each respondent who was out of work was asked to sort the 18 cards into three groups; those that were not a factor, smaller factors and big factors. From these responses a three point scale for each of the 18 factors was created. Only respondents who gave an opinion to each of the attitude statements were included in the factor analysis. Respondents who answered 'don't know' or 'don't want to answer' to any of the statements were excluded from this analysis.

The method of factor analysis used and reported here was Principle Components Analysis (PCA). It was assumed that the underlying factors could be correlated, and therefore, the rotation method used was an oblique rotation (direct oblimin) with Kaiser Normalisation, as this allowed the extracted factors to be correlated (Field 2009 p.644). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, $KMO = 0.82$. Bartlett's test of sphericity $X^2(153) = 1435.9$, $p < .001$, indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA. An initial analysis was run to obtain eigenvalues for each component in the data. Six components had eigenvalues over Kaiser's criterion of one and in combination explained 60 per cent of the total variance found in these 18 barriers. Having interpreted the findings and re-run the analysis to produce different numbers of factors, it was decided to keep a final model of six factors, as the results seemed sensible, meaningful and useful for analysis in this research.

Table A.1 shows the final factor loadings after rotation. The items that cluster on the same components suggest that component 1 represents parental concerns, component 2 represents peer pressure and travel concerns, 3 represents money concerns, 4 represents childcare concerns, 5 represents employer concerns, and 6 represents not enjoying work or struggling to cope with work. The descriptions applied to the factors deliberately simplify more complex information. In order to fully understand the underlying factors all items associated with a particular factor must be examined.

Table A.1 Summary of factor analysis results

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
Parental concerns						
I am worried I do not have enough time with my child/children	.776	.037	.042	.024	.195	.032
I find it stressful combining work and family life	.756	-.035	.064	.164	-.005	.017
My child/children don't like me working	.664	.007	.046	.076	.100	-.072
Peer pressure/travel concerns						
My husband/partner/ex-partner does not like me working	-.094	.778	.030	-.041	.072	-.047
My parent/parents don't like me working	.298	.555	.088	-.039	-.106	-.215
I have problems with transport to and from work	-.079	.477	.115	.141	.348	-.060
Money concerns						
I am not sure that I am better off financially in work	.120	-.088	.810	-.117	-.006	-.103
I hadn't anticipated all the extra things I would need to spend money on now that I'm in work	.185	.049	.694	.016	-.006	.053
I am finding it difficult to adjust to having money coming in every month rather than every week	-.196	.130	.634	.152	-.026	.070
Childcare concerns						
I'm not confident my childcare arrangements will continue	.137	.065	-.077	.756	.031	.051
There isn't enough suitable, affordable childcare around here	-.107	-.060	.127	.755	.027	.066
My child/children are not happy in childcare while I'm at work	.133	-.054	-.050	.704	-.060	-.216
Employer concerns						
My employer is not very family-friendly	.030	-.019	-.021	.002	.864	-.068
There is a lot of pressure in my present job to work longer hours, stay late or do overtime	.288	.099	-.035	.031	.688	.054
Not enjoying work/struggling to cope with work						
My confidence has taken a knock since I started work	-.166	.145	-.058	.030	.109	-.710
I have difficulties working owing to my health condition or disability	.137	.230	-.024	.029	-.177	-.660
I am not enjoying working as much as I thought I would	.259	-.117	.075	.082	.073	-.591
I can't see this job going anywhere, there are no promotion prospects	-.117	-.375	.256	.007	.225	-.469
Per cent of variance explained	24.6	8.5	8.2	6.4	6.1	5.8

- 1 This table presents the extracted factor loadings (regression coefficients) of each variable and factor as displayed in the pattern matrix generated using SPSS. The closer a factor loading is to one, the stronger the relationship between the attitude statement and the factor. Similar factor loadings were present in the structure matrix.
- 2 The four factors extracted account for 60 per cent of variance in the attitude statements.

Reliability

Before subgroup analysis was carried out using these four factors, the reliability was tested by calculating the reliability coefficients of each factor (Cronbach’s Alphas):

- Factor 1 parental concerns: .76.
- Factor 2 peer pressure/travel concerns: .42.
- Factor 3 money concerns: .58.
- Factor 4 childcare concerns: .64.
- Factor 5 employer concerns: .48.
- Factor 6 not enjoying work/struggling to cope with work: .53.

The overall reliability was good, and higher for factors relating to parental concerns and childcare concerns.

Relationships between factors

Most factors were correlated with all other factors meaning that these barriers to staying the work are related. However, levels of correlation were relatively low, with all correlations being lower than 0.3. The strongest correlations were between:

- childcare concerns and parental concerns;
- childcare concerns and money concerns;
- childcare concerns and employer concerns.

Table A.2 Correlations between factors underlying perceived barriers to staying in employment

	Parental concerns	Peer pressure/ travel concerns	Money concerns	Childcare concerns	Employer concerns	Not enjoying work/ struggling to cope
Parental concerns	1	.11	.11	.27	.17	.20
Peer pressure/travel concerns	.11	1	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant	.14
Money concerns	.11	Not significant	1	.26	.21	.21
Childcare concerns	.27	Not significant	.26	1	.25	.16
Employer concerns	.17	Not significant	.21	.25	1	.20
Not enjoying work/ struggling to cope	.20	.14	.21	.16	.20	1

Note: the correlation coefficients presented here are based on the factor scores. Given that there are negative factor loadings in factor 6, the correlation of factor scores presented above has involved taking the inverse of the factor for factor 6.

Appendix B

Technical report on Wave 2 survey

Sample design and selection procedures

The sample frame for the second wave of the Lone Parent Obligations (LPO) Survey was those respondents who participated in the Wave 1 Survey.

Before selecting the sample for Wave 2 the following cases were removed:

- those who did not agree to be recontacted at Wave 1;
- those who were still receiving Income Support (IS);
- those whose youngest child at Wave 1 was aged 5 or under.

Of the remaining sample of 2,779 cases 1,452⁴⁵ were randomly selected for Wave 2.

The sample addresses were checked and updated using Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) administration information.

Pilot

A pilot of the Wave 2 survey questionnaire was conducted in December 2011. Sixty cases were selected for the pilot and 36 interviews were achieved. Fieldwork took place in four areas: South East London, Somerset, Portsmouth and Glasgow. All cases in the sample had been interviewed in the Wave 1 pilot in March 2010.

The aims of the pilot were to test the Wave 2 questionnaire in the field and provide an estimate of the interview length for the mainstage. It also was a chance to test the use of feed-forward data from Wave 1 in the Wave 2 questionnaire.

Four interviewers took part in the pilot. All were briefed and debriefed face-to-face. Interviewers were asked to provide feedback on the questionnaire and other general survey issues, such as gaining participation, using a pilot evaluation form.

Following the pilot some minor adjustments were made to the questionnaire, including the addition of new questions, changes to question wording and question routing changes.

CAPI testing

The mainstage questionnaire was thoroughly tested using Blaise, the programming language used for computer assisted interviewing, to ensure that it performed well. In particular, the following aspects of the questionnaire were tested:

⁴⁵ The target number of achieved interviews at wave 2 was 1,000; therefore, the number of cases selected was based on the assumption of a 69 per cent response.

- the accuracy and sense of questionnaire wording and response options;
- the accuracy of show card references;
- appropriate instructions to interviewers were included, where required, in the standard format (i.e. in block capitals) or in help screens;
- the accuracy of range and consistency checks and the identification of additional checks to be programmed;
- that the questionnaire coped with different scenarios correctly, that is to say that any routing, range or consistency checks were appropriate for all foreseeable circumstances.

Briefing and interviewer numbers

A series of eight briefing sessions was held between 15 and 23 February 2012. NatCen researchers conducted the briefings.

Two of the briefings were held in London and the rest took place in Brentwood, Bristol, Derby, Glasgow, Leeds and Liverpool. In total, 115 interviewers were briefed and worked on the study. All were trained members of NatCen's interviewing panel.

Re-issuing of cases

As the target number of interviews were achieved within this time period there was no reissuing of unproductive cases.

Fieldwork quality control procedures

As with all surveys conducted by NatCen, a programme of back-checking of interviewer work was undertaken.

Periodically throughout fieldwork, random subsets of respondents were telephoned to check that the interviews were conducted correctly. If they could not be contacted by telephone, they were sent a postal questionnaire. The total number selected amounted to ten per cent of those interviewed. Each respondent selected was thanked for their co-operation and invited to comment on the survey and the way it was carried out.

In total, 212 respondents were selected for telephone contact and 113 of these were contacted. A further 13 respondents were sent a postal questionnaire and five returned it. In total, 11 per cent of those interviewed were successfully checked and in all cases respondents confirmed that the interview had been conducted correctly.

Response

In total, 1,452 Wave 1 cases were issued to interviewers for the Wave 2 survey. 1,088 interviews were achieved (75 per cent).

A summary of the response is shown in the table below.

Table B.1 LPO Wave 2 summary response

	n	%
Total issued	1,452	
Ineligible cases		
Respondent deceased	0	0.0
Follow-up address outside GB or an institution	1	0.0
Other ineligible	2	0.0
Total ineligible	3	0.0
Eligible cases (=covered-ineligible)	1,449	
Productive cases		
Full interview with main respondent	1,087	75.0
Partial interview with main respondent	1	0.1
Total productives	1,088	75.1
Unproductive cases		
Refusal to Head Office	8	0.6
Refusal to interviewer	207	14.3
Non-contact	85	5.9
Untraced movers	44	3.0
Other unproductive	15	1.0
Eligibility unconfirmed	2	0.1
Total unproductives	361	24.9

Weighting

A model-based weighting technique was used to develop the Wave 2 non-response weights, where response behaviour is modelled using data from the sampling frame. Ineligible households (deadwood) were not included in the non-response modelling.⁴⁶

A bivariate analysis was used to identify variables on the sampling frame that were significantly related to response.⁴⁷ The significant variables were then used to develop a non-response model. Response behaviour was modelled using logistic regression. A logistic regression models the relationship between an outcome variable (in this case response to the wave two LPO interview) and a set of predictor variables. The predictor variables were a set of socio-demographic respondent and household characteristics using information collected at the wave one interview. The variables used to model non-response were: the lone parent's age, ethnicity, gender, highest qualification, duration

⁴⁶ There were five individuals with ineligible outcome codes; these individuals were dropped from the weighting. Ineligible outcome codes include households where the individual was deceased, had moved outside Great Britain or the eligibility of the respondent had not been confirmed.

⁴⁷ Significance was tested using cross tabs and a chi square test.

for which they had been claiming benefit, whether or not they had a disability, age of the youngest child, whether any dependent child has a disability, whether they had claimed any previous benefits, whether they have claimed any subsequent benefits, whether the lone parent had a partner living with them, number of months the lone parent had been in current job, region, urban/rural indicator and the total number of children in the household. The data were weighted by the Wave 1 weights during modelling to ensure that only differences in response at Wave 2 were adjusted for. The only predictive variables in the model were region, lone parent age group and lone parent disability status. None of the other variables was significantly related to outcome.

The model generated a predicted probability for each respondent. This is the probability the respondent would take part in the Wave 2 interview, given the characteristics of the respondent and the household. Respondents with characteristics associated with non-response (such as living in London) were under-represented in the sample and received a low predicted probability. The non-response weights were then generated as the inverse of the predicted probabilities; hence respondents who had a low predicted probability got a larger weight, increasing their representation in the sample.

Coding and editing

Checks on the LPO data were conducted at two separate stages in its collection and production. Some data validation was carried out in the first stage by interviewers using the CAPI program in the field. Secondly, more complex checks, which may have proved time consuming and detrimental to the successful completion of the interview, were carried out in the office.

Interviewer checks in the CAPI program allowed interviewers to clarify and query any data discrepancies directly with the respondent. The CAPI program applied range and consistency error checks extensively throughout the questionnaire. Where a check was triggered, the interviewer often opened and recorded a note explaining the respondent's situation.

For each productive interview a 'fact sheet' was produced for editors and the research team to use. This provided a concise summary of the respondent and key data from the interview to alert editors to possible errors or inconsistencies that needed to be dealt with at a later stage. A typical fact sheet contained a listing of the respondent's details, key data items, open and 'other specify' responses, interviewer comments and results to pre-defined edit checks (i.e. whether they had passed or failed the check).

Editing and coding the questionnaire

An experienced data processing team carried out coding and editing of questionnaires at NatCen's Brentwood offices. Researchers at NatCen were continuously involved in all complex editing decisions.

If the editor could not provide a solution to the check, they would flag the check for further consideration by the research team. These more complex checks required 'in office' editing and coding using a modified version of the CAPI program. The majority of these checks were consistency checks where responses in different parts of the questionnaire were unlikely to occur (for example, extreme values of amounts) or were not logically possible according to some pre-defined rule.

Researchers attempted to validate the extreme value or inconsistency by examining other characteristics of the case to see whether the keyed response could be valid. For example, if long weekly working hours were identified, an attempt was made to examine whether this was because the claimant was self-employed or in a profession where long working hours were not unusual.

If a respondent was in work, the information given about their job and workplace were coded to the standard occupational and standard industrial classifications – SOC (2000) and SIC (2007). SIC was classified to a two-digit level and SOC to a three-digit level.

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Lone Parent Obligations (LPO) were introduced in November 2008. Since then, based on the age of their youngest child, lone parents have lost entitlement to Income Support (IS) solely on the grounds of being a lone parent. From May 2012, the age of the youngest child was lowered to five and over.

This report presents findings from the second and final wave of a longitudinal survey of lone parents. The survey covers lone parents affected by LPO, specifically those with a youngest child of seven or eight when they left IS. The first wave of the survey was conducted in 2010 while lone parents were still on IS. The second wave took place in 2012, around a year after lone parents' eligibility for IS had ended, and tracks lone parents' destinations and experiences over time. At Wave 2, 1,088 interviews were conducted face-to-face with lone parents, between February and April 2012.

The survey aims to understand lone parents' decision-making around returning to work, and the relationship between decision-making and characteristics, attitudes, values and beliefs; destinations and behaviours; and progress through, and experience of, the LPO 'journey'.

The research was carried out by the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (Inclusion) and the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen).

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