



## FAMILIES' EMPLOYMENT AND CHILDCARE ARRANGEMENTS

Valerie N. Podmore

*New Zealand Council for Educational Research*

### Abstract

*This study investigated parents' experiences and their views on labour force participation, child care arrangements, and parental leave policies. Participants were 60 families with five-year-old children, selected randomly from 14 schools in the greater Wellington region. This paper focuses on parents' employment experiences, with some reference to parental leave. Many mothers had participated in part-time paid work, and the percentage in full-time paid work increased to 19% by the year the children were four to five years of age. Each year from the child's birth up until school entry, over a third of the fathers were working 50 hours or more per week. A high incidence of participation in the early childhood education and care services was evident. There was a relatively low uptake of parental leave among mother and fathers who were in the paid workforce the year the children were born. Some of the main themes addressed in this paper are: diversity and change, the need for flexibility in workplaces, the impact of long hours of paid work on families, financial constraints, and gender roles.*

The European Commission Childcare Network (1990) has proposed that both the provision of childcare services and the sharing of childcare responsibilities between parents are important strategies to 'increase equality in the labour market' (p.1). Research reports from the Families and Work Institute in the U.S. also support the importance of the interface between the early childhood care and education services, families, and the labour market. Ellen Galinsky and Dana Friedman (1993) reported that high quality, flexible childcare arrangements are associated with lower absenteeism rates and less stress among parents who are employed.

In New Zealand, the Ministry of Women's Affairs (1993) reported the needs and recommendations of 1043 employees and 106 employers on family and employment issues. Respondents spontaneously responded to a national phone-in, or completed a written questionnaire as part of a more structured survey. Two themes evident in the respondents' comments were the need for more flexibility of employers and employees, and for mutual trust. The Ministry of Women's Affairs also held work/family seminars, and reported a follow-up survey which showed that work force participation depends on the availability of 'affordable, accessible, high quality childcare', and that developing 'family friendly work practices' is in its infancy here, the key barriers being time and money (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1994:10).

The present study was designed to investigate New Zealand parents' experiences and their views on labour force

participation, childcare arrangements, and parental leave policies. This paper focuses mainly on parents' employment experiences, with some reference to parental leave and childcare arrangements. (For the full report on this research, see Podmore, 1994.)

Some of the main themes found were: diversity and change in families' work and childcare arrangements, access to early childhood education and care, the need for flexibility in workplaces, the impact of long hours of paid work on families, financial constraints on taking up parental leave, and gender roles.

This paper begins by introducing the sampling method and the interviews about the families' histories of employment and childcare. This is followed by the main findings on parents' occupations and their experiences and perceptions of paid work, and a summary of their experiences of education courses and voluntary. Further discussion of the relationship between paid work and childcare then focuses on childcare arrangements and parental leave experiences.

### Method

Participants were 60 families with 5-year-old children, selected randomly from 14 schools. The schools were chosen systematically from throughout the greater Wellington region, using a stratified random sampling procedure to ensure that rural and urban areas were represented in proportion to junior school roll sizes. Fourteen of 19

schools approached agreed to participate (74%). Within the 14 schools, samples of families were drawn proportional to roll size, and 82% of the families contacted by the researchers agreed to participate.

In total, 101 people (59 women and 42 men) were interviewed. The families included: 41 families with two parents, where both the mother and the father were interviewed; seven mother-only families and one father-only family; one family where the grandmother was the sole caregiver; and 10 families with two parents where only the mother was available for an interview.

An in-depth interview about past and present employment, childcare arrangements, and parental leave experiences was conducted with each consenting parent.

### Parents' occupations

Occupational data were coded using the New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations 1990 (Department of Statistics, 1992a). The occupational profiles for the participating women and men are presented in table 1, which shows the occupations current at the time of the interviews when the participants had a five-year-old child. This table also shows national profiles from the 1991 census data, excluding people aged over 59 years to improve the comparability.

Compared with the national profile, men in the present sample show higher percentages for these occupational

groups: legislators, administrators, managers; and technicians and associate professionals. The latter percentage appears partly attributable to the relatively large number of men employed as computer consultants in the Wellington sample. The women in the present sample include a higher percentage of service and sales workers, which seems consistent with a trend among some of the mothers of five-year-old children to seek casual part-time work, often in the service area.

In total, 39 (67%) of the mothers and 41 (98%) of the fathers had spent some time in the paid work force during their child's first five years of life. We asked the parents about their occupations and hours worked on a year-by-year basis. In this paper, fulltime work is defined as 30 or more hours per week, and part-time work as less than 30 hours per week, in accordance with current conventions in official statistics in New Zealand (Department of Statistics, 1992b:20).

When the children were aged under one year, 18 (31%) of their mothers were in paid work. Most of these women worked part-time with their hours averaging from 1 to 25 per week. Only six women (10% of the women interviewed) worked fulltime during their child's first year. Of these, one worked 31 hours, and the hours for the remaining five ranged from 37 to 40 hours per week. The women were engaged in a range of types of occupations, the most prevalent being clerks (6) and service and sales workers (4).

**Table 1. Occupational profile of the participating families, compared with profile from the 1991 census**

	Occupational group		Participating Families	
	% males	% females	% males	% females
Legislators, administrators, managers	19.0	3.4	10.1	4.9
Professionals	4.8	3.4	7.1	8.4
Technicians and associate professionals	28.5	8.5	8.2	5.9
Clerks	2.4	11.9	3.3	15.5
Service and sales workers	9.5	18.6	6.3	10.5
Agriculture and fisheries	9.5	3.4	8.3	3.6
Trades workers	9.5	0.0	13.2	0.9
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	2.4	1.7	9.6	2.9
Elementary occupations	4.8	5.0	6.1	3.2
Not adequately defined	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.8
Unemployed and seeking work	4.8	6.8	8.7	7.0
Not in labour force	4.8	37.3	18.1	36.4

Note:

Participating families: males N = 42; females N = 59.

1991 census data: males N = 1,262,082; females N = 1,328,202 (N.Z. residents aged 15-59 years).

In contrast, most of the men were in paid employment during the children's first year, and their hours were clearly somewhat longer. When the children were aged under one year, at least 38 (90%) of their fathers were in paid work. Only one of the men was not in paid work, and another one was seeking work. Most of the men worked fulltime with hours that ranged up to 75 per week. There were 15 men (36%) who remembered working an average of over 50 hours per week when they had a child aged under one year. Only one father worked part-time, for 20 hours per week. On the whole, the types of occupations in which the men were engaged showed a similar pattern to their occupations when their children were aged five years (see table 1).

During the year the children were aged one to two years, there was a very slight increase in the number of women working, and a more marked increase in the number of hours they spent in paid work. At this stage, 23 (40%) of the women participated in the paid work force. Another 34 (58%) were not in the paid work force, and one was seeking work. Many of the women still worked part-time, with their hours now ranging from six to 24 per week. Eight women (14% of those interviewed) worked fulltime when their child was aged one to two years and their hours ranged from 30 up to 55 hours per week. Among the female participants who were in paid work at this point, the types of occupations showed a profile similar to the pattern presented in table 1.

The children in this study were born in 1988, and were aged one to two years between 1989 and 1990. In the year they were aged one to two years, three of the men were not involved in any paid work, and another two were seeking work. These cases are consistent with the trend in New Zealand in the late 1980s and early 1990s towards higher unemployment rates. Although men aged 25 to 54 years had higher participation rates in the labour force than older and younger men, by 1991 'labour force participation had declined to a post war low of 88.6 percent' for this group of men (Krishnan, Hunter, & Goodger, 1992:7). Most of the other fathers still worked fulltime when their children were aged one to two years, and their hours ranged up to 75 per week. There were 16 men (38%) who worked, on average, over 50 hours per week. Again just 1 father worked part-time.

When the children were aged two to three years, 26 (44%) of their mothers were in paid work, 32 (54%) were not in paid work, and 1 was seeking employment. The range of part-time hours worked remained the same at 6 to 24 per week. Nine (15%) of the women worked fulltime. Only two women worked over 50 hours per week. Among those who worked, the types of work remained relatively unchanged.

During this period when the children were aged two to three years, the men's patterns of work were relatively unchanged. The main difference for that year was that the number of fathers working over 50 hours per week in-

creased to 19 (45% of those interviewed). Furthermore, there were five fathers (12%) working 70 hours or more a week, and two of these worked 80 hours per week.

The patterns of paid work for mothers of children aged three to four years remained relatively stable, with 25 (42%) in paid work, 33 (56%) not in paid work, and one seeking employment. Individual cases showed that some women had moved into the work force that year, but others had left work to have another child. The number of part-time hours worked ranged from six to 20 hours per week. There were seven women (12%) working fulltime, and their hours ranged from 35 to 50 hours per week. Only one mother worked 50 hours per week.

The fathers' patterns of work also remained relatively stable during this period, with two men not in the work force and one seeking paid work. There were two men working part-time. Among those working fulltime, one worked 32 hours, one worked 35 hours, and the hours per week for the others ranged for 38 to 70 hours. The number of fathers working over 50 hours per week dropped to 14 (33%) of those interviewed.

By the time the children were aged four to five years, a few more of the women had moved into the paid work force. There were 28 (47%) of the women in paid work, 30 (51%) not in paid work, and one seeking work. A wide range of part-time hours was reported at this stage, varying from one to 25 hours per week. The number of mothers working fulltime had risen to 11 (19% of the women interviewed) with hours ranging up to 65 hours per week. There were two mothers working an average of more than 50 hours weekly.

Most of the fathers we interviewed were still working fulltime when their children were aged four to five years. There were two who were not in the paid work force, and another two who were seeking work. Only one father, who was a fulltime student, worked part-time and his hours of paid work averaged four per week. The majority of the men were therefore in fulltime paid work, with their hours ranging up to 70 weekly. There were still 14 (33%) of the fathers working 50 or more hours per week.

When their children were aged five years and attending school, that is, at the time of the interviews, there was an increase in the mothers' participation in the paid work force. By this stage, 33 (56%) of the women were in paid work, 22 (37%) were not in paid work, and four were seeking work. Among the women, there was a range of part-time hours worked per week (from one to 25 hours). There were still 11 (19%) of the mothers working fulltime, and their hours ranged from 32 to 65 hours per week. Just two mothers continued to work more than 50 hours weekly. The pattern for the fathers remained fairly similar to the previous year, with two not in the work force, and two seeking work. However, five fathers were now working part-time, from four to 20 hours per week. The hours of those in fulltime paid work ranged from 30 to 70, and the

number of men working over 50 hours per week increased to 16 (38%). Two fathers and one mother were fulltime students.

Eleven of the fathers and three of the mothers of the five-year-old children were self-employed. Seven women worked night shift to fit in with caring for the family, and five men were on shift work.

In summary, 67% of the women and 98% of the men we interviewed had participated in paid work at some stage during the child's first five years of life. The percentage of mothers working fulltime rose from 10% when the children were aged under one year to 19% by the year the children were aged four to five years. Each year from the child's birth up until school entry, at least a third of the fathers were working over 50 hours per week.

### Experiences and perceptions of paid work

Comments from two of the fathers seeking work suggested that it was difficult for them to seek and retain work, either because the positions offered were short term with recurring redundancies, or because English language fluency was a problem. Among the four mothers looking for paid work, finding appropriate hours was difficult, and two mothers found that lack of qualifications or experience was also problematic. One of the mothers applying for work said it was off-putting not hearing back from employers about the outcome of job applications.

Clearly, from the patterns described, some parents worked relatively long hours during their children's first five years and after the children started school. This trend was pronounced for about a third of the fathers throughout the first five years, and for a few mothers after their children had reached one year of age. When asked how satisfied they were about their hours of work, most of the mothers in paid employment were reasonably satisfied: 20 (35%) were satisfied, eight (14%) said their hours were all right or inevitable, but seven (12%) were not satisfied. The remainder were unsure or not working. There was more dissatisfaction among the fathers about their hours: 13 (31%) were satisfied, 11 (26%) thought the hours were all right, but 14 (34%) were not satisfied, and the remaining four (9%) were not in paid work. In addition, 17 (41%) of the fathers said that their family or whanau were dissatisfied with their hours. In several cases this reflected the long hours some fathers were working. Nine fathers and one mother commented that they spent too long at work and not enough time with the family. Conversely, a few parents were concerned that because their hours were too short, they were bringing in insufficient income to support the family.

On the whole, most parents were satisfied with the type of work they were doing, although three fathers and four mothers were not satisfied. Similarly, most were satisfied with their working conditions, but five fathers and two mothers were dissatisfied. The difficulties mentioned in

regard to working conditions included thermal discomfort, other physical discomfort, and dissatisfaction with work-related travel.

Some parents on shift work found the experience very tiring, especially the mothers who worked at night and catered for the families' needs by day. Other parents described their hours as well suited to fitting in with the family, for example a father who worked a 40-hour week with early shifts starting at 4 a.m. said: "I get to spend a lot of time with my kids. I'm very lucky in that a lot of my friends in nine to five jobs don't. I do."

Where workplaces within the public and private sectors had been restructured, some parents reported working longer hours and bringing more work home. This was a source of dissatisfaction for themselves, their partners, and their children. The interviewers also reported a possible link between some fathers' long hours and their greater difficulty with recalling their children's first five years of early childhood experiences.

Parents identified one of the main benefits of "being in paid work and having a young child" as having an income. In total 53 parents, 27 (64%) of the fathers and 26 (45%) of the mothers, talked about financial benefits which included being able to pay the bills. Although 20 of the mothers talked about interest in the work as a benefit, only one of the fathers mentioned this. Other good things identified were: the child benefits from having breaks from the parent (eight mothers, one father); self-esteem and self-confidence (five mothers, two fathers); the parent's sanity or wellbeing, having breaks from the child (two mothers; four fathers); and being self-employed and having flexibility (two mothers; four fathers).

A few benefits were mentioned only by women. These were: having contact with adults; receiving helpful support from their partners; and the child's having time to spend with the other parent. The benefits discussed only by fathers were: being able to relate to workmates with children; and the child's experiencing overseas travel resulting from the parent's work. Two fathers said that there were few problems for working fathers (unlike working mothers).

Time pressures, and missing out on time with their children, were difficulties for the parents who had worked during the child's first five years. Fathers more frequently said that missing out on time with their children was a difficulty, and that missing out on the child's school activities was unfortunate. Mothers more often mentioned that time pressures were a difficulty. Mothers were also more likely to encounter these difficulties: fitting in the household tasks; guilt or worry about not being home with the child; finding appropriate childcare; getting organised and out of the house; and taking time off for sick children.

Financial difficulties and not having enough income were mentioned by 7 fathers and 3 mothers. Some fathers said

that having insufficient time to support their partner's activities was a difficulty; or that there were no difficulties for working fathers.

There was a very wide range of views on mothers of young children being in paid work. Some parents were very positive, some were fairly neutral, some sympathised, and some were opposed. Seven (12%) of the women and 10 (24%) of the men made strongly supportive statements. Another 10 mothers (17%) and 11 fathers (26%) it was all right for mothers of young children to be working. Some parents said their approval depended on the number of hours worked, and recommended part-time paid work. Others commented that childcare was important. They were supportive of mothers working provided that good quality childcare arrangements were accessible. Unqualified or definite disapproval was expressed by four fathers and two mothers. Their comments included: "No I don't like it", "they're crazy ... I feel sorry for the kids".

One theme was clearly prevalent. Concern about financial circumstances was expressed by more than 50% of the parents, who said that working was a financial necessity. Mothers whose partners were unable to find paid employment commented regretfully that they had to take on paid work to meet their families' basic needs in the short term. Other mothers, who also said that it was necessary for them to be in the paid work force for financial reasons, spoke regretfully about longer term planning for their children's education and their own retirement. The economic context was clearly a predominant factor influencing parents' views on mothers of young children working.

Views on fathers' participation in paid work also showed considerable diversity. Some thought it was an obligation, others talked about options, and a few said it was difficult to get jobs. Over all, the parents' views on fathers working showed that almost 20% were emphatic that fathers should be in paid work, 27% mentioned the obligation to work, 35% recommended more flexible arrangements, and 13% pointed out inadequacies in the traditional role of fathers.

Concern about unemployment was evident. Four mothers talked about the stress they experienced because the father of the household was unemployed.

### Education courses

There were 47 parents (16 fathers and 31 mothers) who had studied at some stage during the child's first five years. University degree or diploma courses, and courses at polytechnics, were the types of courses most frequently mentioned. Parents' participation in study courses increased between the year the children were born and the year the children turned five years of age. This trend was more evident among mothers.

Benefits experienced by parents who were studying included stimulation, interest, and satisfaction; developing marketable skills; and gaining more knowledge about

childrearing. The main difficulties encountered by parents who were studying when they had young children were tiredness or exhaustion, interruptions, time pressures, and financial needs.

### Voluntary work

Relatively large percentages of women and men were involved in voluntary work during the child's first five years. In total, 44 (76%) of the mothers and 26 (62%) of the fathers did some regular voluntary work during this period.

Various types of voluntary work were undertaken by parents during the first five years of their child's life. These included: work with early childhood organisations and centres or schools, helping neighbours and friends or caring for other children, church work, sports coaching or work for a sports club, and involvement in local support groups and community work. For the women voluntary work tended to focus on early childhood centres and schools, whereas among the men sports-related volunteering was most common.

### Childcare arrangements

Caring for the children before they started school appeared to be primarily the responsibility of the mothers. In just a few of the families, the father had been the person with most responsibility for the child's care during the first five years. In addition, five couples thought they had shared the care equally, and five of the women said that the child's grandparents had been the main caregivers. Informal care arrangements most often involved grandparents or other members of the extended family/whanau.

From birth to one year of age, 23 (38%) of the children participated in organised early childhood education and care arrangements. Playgroups were mentioned most frequently when the children were aged under one year, playcentre and childcare centres began to be used more often when the children were aged over one or two years, and among four-year-olds, kindergartens were the type of service most frequently used. By the age of four years, 59 (98%) of the children experienced one or more of the early childhood education and care services. The number of families concurrently using more than one early childhood education and care service also increased each year.

Parents described several benefits of early childhood education and care for themselves and their children, including socialising and socialisation, and learning experiences. Other benefits for children were creative activities, preparation for school, and cultural and language maintenance. Difficulties sometimes mentioned concerned aspects of socialising, travel or transport to the early childhood centre, and fees or financial considerations.

Mothers were often responsible for caring for their children when they were sick, before school, after school, and

in the holidays. In some two-parent families, parents took on these responsibilities jointly, and just a few fathers were solely responsible. Grandparents and members of the extended family were sometimes involved, and they were more frequently mentioned in the plans for school holiday care.

Throughout the first five years of the children's lives, there were no set patterns of work and use of the early childhood services which differentiated mothers who were and were not in paid employment. The five mothers who were in fulltime paid employment when the child was aged from one to five years all used different types or combinations of services which changed over time. Six of the 11 mothers who had not participated in either paid work or study from the five-year-old child's birth up until the time of the interview similarly used a range of combinations of early childhood care and education. These diverse and changing trends will be illustrated further in the second stage of the research.

### Parental leave

The children in this study were born in 1988, close to the passing of the Parental Leave and Employment Protection Act 1987 (New Zealand Government, 1988). Drawing on their own experiences, the parents made recommendations about parental leave policies and related workplace practices.

In total, 34 (59%) of the mothers and 39 (93%) of the fathers were in the paid work force during the year before their child was born, and 11 (26%) of the fathers and 11 (19%) of the mothers said that they had taken parental leave. Only eight of the mothers took more than one month of leave, and only three of these mothers remembered having any paid leave. The fathers tended to take from two days' up to two weeks' leave around the time of the birth. Only one father took more than two weeks of parental leave, only a few fathers remembered having paid parental leave, and nine said they used their annual leave. Although some women were satisfied, there was overall dissatisfaction among the women about the amount of parental leave they had experienced around the time of the birth. For some parents in the work force parental leave was not offered, and the parental leave legislation was sometimes not enforced.

Parents varied in their views and recommendations on leave provisions both for mothers and for fathers. It was frequently expected that mothers should be entitled to one year of leave, or 'the law as it is'. The most prevalent request for fathers was to have a few weeks of paid leave readily available to support the mother around the time of the birth. Some informants emphasised the importance of maintaining contact with the workplace while on parental leave.

Parents were concerned about the need for flexibility of employers and in the workplace, and about having domes-

tic leave available for parents when their children are ill. Some parents recommended that double standards for employers and employees should be eliminated. However, a few parents were concerned about employers' needs, and several pointed out that it is difficult for employers in small businesses to implement parental leave policies.

### Conclusions

The main themes addressed in this paper are: diversity and change in families' work and childcare arrangements, the need for flexibility in workplaces, the impact of long hours of paid work on families, financial constraints, and gender roles.

The research design, and more specifically the random sampling procedure, led to the participation of a wide range of families in this study. There was considerable diversity across the sample in the joint experience of child care and employment. The most 'typical' pattern during the five years was one of mothers moving out of and into the paid work force sometimes several times, influenced by factors such as: the birth of a subsequent child or children; the casual, temporary, or part-time nature of their employment; redundancies or changing hours and pressures in the workplace for themselves or their partners; changes of residence, usually within New Zealand; fluctuations in financial circumstances; the completion of educational courses; and changes in marital status/partnership circumstances.

Similarly, many families reported changes in the early childhood services they used from one year to the next, and a few reported several changes within a single year. It appears possible that no single early childhood service can at present meet all of the needs within families over time, and that more than one early childhood service may be needed when one or both parents are moving in and out of the paid work force. The experiences and views of the participating parents who were employers and employees demonstrate a wide range of positions on gender equity in the labour market. On the whole, flexibility was a consistent theme. The emphasis of the majority of parents on the need for flexible employers and workplaces supports the findings of the Ministry of Women's Affairs (1993) phone-in survey.

The difficulties of combining work and childrearing that were most often mentioned by mothers have implications for workplaces. These difficulties included time pressures, feeling guilty, and finding appropriate childcare. These concerns are important in view of the findings from the U.S. that children, parents, workplaces, and society all benefit from workplace flexibility and from high quality childcare (Galinsky & Friedman, 1993).

There are further implications regarding the appropriateness of workplace practices for families. Family-oriented workplace practices seem relevant given that 67% of the

women and 98% of the men we interviewed participated in paid work during the child's first five years of life. Clearly, there were difficulties with the long hours of work expected in some workplaces, and performed by many fathers and a few mothers. With at least a third of the fathers working 50 hours or more per week right through from the year the children were born until they were at school. Not surprisingly some fathers were dissatisfied with the hours spent they spent in paid work. Fathers also said that one of their main difficulties with being in paid work was missing out on having time with their children. This raises questions about the extent to which families' needs are catered for in workplaces, and about society's valuing of children.

For some families, financial concerns and constraints were a recurring theme throughout the interviews. These findings are consistent with the concern about child poverty in the New Zealand research literature (Robertson, 1992; St John, 1991; Waldegrave, 1991). In the present study, more than half of the participants saw financial and economic need as a major influence on their experiences of mothers of young children working.

The relatively low uptake of parental leave among the families in this study, and the experiences of parents who found that parental leave was relatively inaccessible to them, suggest some further implications. Clearly, financial issues were a problem for some families, suggesting that unpaid leave, or payment of a lump sum on return to the workplace, is impractical for some families. The inequitable position of casual or temporary workers was a problem for parents and families. These findings suggest a need for policy makers to develop parental leave provisions that take into account women's life circumstances, and child and family poverty.

Access to education was also an issue. Even in the present study with the high rates of participation, families' access to early childhood care and education services was sometimes impeded by difficulties with travel and a lack of transport, and by financial constraints. The experiences of many of these New Zealand families support the importance of having high quality early childhood education and care services which are both affordable and geographically accessible to all families. Parents who were studying also mentioned financial needs as a barrier.

The data presented in this study on responsibility within families for the care of young children show that women were primarily responsible for most aspects of the day-to-day care. However, there were exceptions and just a few fathers and grandfathers assumed these responsibilities.

Diverse opinions and experiences related to gender roles were evident throughout the report. For example, many participants believed fathers of young children were obliged to be in fulltime paid work in the responsible "breadwinner" role within families, but over a third of the parents wanted more flexible arrangements within families.

Case studies from this project are being written to illustrate the complexities of families' employment patterns, use of the early childhood education and care services, and parental leave experiences. These case studies are investigating the experiences within different families, and the related implications. A comprehensive literature review is also in progress on: emerging issues of employee-driven labour market flexibility, related early childhood care and education provisions, the philosophies behind the statutory provision of parental leave, and how these issues link to families bringing up young children (Podmore, Callister, & Galtry, in progress - see Callister, 1995).

## Future research

Replications of this research could be carried out to provide information on trends and changes in paid and unpaid work and childcare arrangements. The children in this study were born within the year after the Parental Leave and Employment Protection Act 1987 was passed. Further investigations on parental leave policies on families could focus on different cohorts of children born during the 1990s.

On a larger scale, there is also scope for related research using alternative designs, for example, a longitudinal study tracking changes in families' employment and childcare experiences from the child's birth. This would complement the retrospective interview research by providing data on families' anticipated arrangements, their ongoing employment and childcare experiences, and aspects of the children's development.

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## **Author**

Valerie Podmore is a Senior Research Officer at the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, PO Box 3237, Wellington.