

Mum's the word when it comes to Christmas shopping

By [Mintel Oxygen reports](#)

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LONDON, UK: Christmas is coming and yes, it looks like another job for mum as new research from Mintel reveals that this year, Britain's mums (26%) will be more than twice as likely as dads (12%) to buy gifts for the kids. What is more, mums' work will not be stopping here, as it looks like she'll be shouldering the bulk of the remaining parental duties too.



Indeed, research from Mintel finds more than a quarter (26%) of Britain's mums (amounting to 2.2 million) get the job of buying presents (birthday and Christmas) for the children, compared to just 12% of the nation's dads (amounting to 0.8 million). Meanwhile 50% of mums and dads (7.6 million) share gift-buying responsibilities.

Alexandra Richmond senior consumer and lifestyles analyst at Mintel, said: "Gift shopping is a struggle for many men, so it is no surprise that Britain's mums are the most likely to land the job of the Christmas shop. Shopping for the family's gifts can be quite a time consuming job, adding to mums' already ram packed schedule. Although mum is more likely to be topping up presents from Santa for the children, it's a safe bet that she'll also be getting presents for the other relatives too."

Age of equality? Not really

When it comes to other parental responsibilities, even by their own admission, modern-day fathers are less proactive than their partners. Childcare responsibilities that would be traditionally female roles, such as buying clothes for the children (41%), cooking the children's meals (38%), tidying up after the children (27%), together with getting the children to school (32%)... these still largely fall into the partner's realm. While almost half (48%) of dads share many of the parental responsibilities, unlike their partners, very few men take sole charge of parental responsibilities.

"We're supposed to be living in an age of equality, but Mintel's new research finds that this isn't so. In many of today's homes, Britain's mums are still left holding the baby and shouldering the bulk of parental responsibility, and in many cases, juggling their careers as well," says Richmond.

During a typical working day, just 12% of Britain's dads take care of their kids. Instead, it is the wives and partners of modern fathers who shoulder the bulk of childcare responsibilities, with as many as 30% of partners caring for their children during the working week. However, it is all change by the weekend, when work is not a priority. Mintel's research

shows that the nation's dads can spend more time with their children Saturdays and Sundays as almost half (47%) of all dads claim to look after their children during the weekend.

Stay-at-home dads

"Fathers typically leave their children in the care of others during the working week, reserving the weekends as their opportunity to spend time with the children and their partner. There has been much talk in the newspapers of the rise in stay-at-home dads; this latest research finds that these fathers are very much in the minority. Despite huge progress in sexual equality over the last couple of generations, men still retain their role as the main breadwinner in the household, whilst mums' role is to still look after the children and the home."

When it comes to discipline, around one in seven dads (15%) do not discipline their children. In most households, ensuring the rules are followed is a joint undertaking between both parents (62%), although if it does fall to one or the other parent, it is most likely to be the father that plays the tough guy to ensure that the children follow the rules of the household. Indeed, around one in seven (15%) dads say that disciplining the children is only or mainly down to them. This compares to fewer than one in ten (8%) who leave their partners or someone else to lay down the ground rules with their children. Following the theme of discipline, dads from the Midlands, the North and Scotland (48%) show a slightly higher than average (46%) propensity to ensure that their children get their homework done.

Fathers still more socially active than mothers

Moreover, it seems that socialising disappears when baby arrives, with 26% of dads saying that they don't go out at all any more. Nonetheless, dads still lead a far more active social life than mums (43% of mums admitting to not going out any more) and they are more likely to leave their partner at home with the baby: one in five dads (20%) who go out three or more times per month leave their partner to baby-sit. Half (50%) of fathers socialise more than once in a typical month, compared to a third (32%) of mums.

An estimated 2.5 million fathers see their partners return to work within the first year of the child's life. A higher cost of living and higher childcare fees push London mums back to work sooner, with more than four in ten returning to work before their child's first birthday. Although secondary to financial matters (55% of dads say mum returns to work because they need extra money), the mother's wellbeing is also a factor taken into consideration when deciding when mums should go back to work. Keeping her mind active (43%), her career on track (38%) and having adult company (30%) are reasons cited by the nation's dads for mum's return to work. Younger fathers are more tuned into careers needs of their wives or girlfriends and are far more likely than older ones to cite the mother's wellbeing as a reason for their partner's return to work. Indeed, more than four in ten (43%) fathers who see their partners return to work in order to keep her mind active are under the age of 35 compared to around one in six (16%) dads aged 45 or over.

"This highlights a generational divide between older and younger fathers and also offers some insight into how the roles of mothers have now shifted to incorporate more than just home-making and domestic affairs." concludes Richmond.

Finally, when asked how today's fathers would like to spend their average day, family and work take almost equal priority. In an ideal 16-hour waking day, dads would prefer to work less than 4 and a half hours (4 hrs 18 mins) considerably fewer hours than they currently do which would then free them up to spend an equivalent amount of time (4 hours) with their family. The remainder of the day would be divided between their partner (2 hours 24 mins) looking after their children (2 hours 24 minutes) being by themselves (2 hour 6 minutes) and with their friends (1 hour).