

EDI Staff Census 2020/21

Caring and Supporting Families in the Workplace Results

Purpose

This report summarises the responses from staff to the caring section of the Maynooth University *Equality & Diversity Staff Census 2020*, which was circulated to staff on 11th December 2020 and closed in January 2021.

Response rate

Each question provides the MU Overall response as a comparison. There were 305 responses to the EDI Census overall, representing an overall response rate of approximately 24.5%.

Of the MU overall responses, 71% of respondents identified as female, 25% as male, 1% as non-binary, and 3% preferred not to say.

Presentation of data

The quantitative data in the Summary is presented by % respondents within a gender category (for example, the % of female respondents who choose 'Agree' in response to a question).

Anonymity

The Survey data in raw form is available only to the EDI Office.¹

The data presented here has been aggregated to preserve the anonymity of respondents. For example, where a detailed cross-tabular analysis including gender is presented, gender minorities have not been included for anonymity reasons. Similarly, percentages rather than numbers per category may have been included in some sets of responses for anonymity.

¹ Office of the Vice President for Equality and Diversity (EDI Office), www.maynoothuniversity.ie/edi contact us at equality@mu.ie.

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Key Findings

- 63% of female respondents (n=134) had caring responsibilities in contrast to 49% of men (n=37). 59% of all respondents had caring responsibilities (n=179).
- One hundred twenty-three respondents had childcare responsibilities, 67% of those with caring responsibilities.
- In relation to childcare, men with children under 12 were more likely than women to use a creche (23% M, 13% F) or afterschool activities (29% M, 17% F), or indicate that a partner provided the primary source of childcare (23% M, 9%F). On the other hand, women with children under 12 were more likely to avail of family support (16% F, 9% M).
- 26% of female respondents had taken maternity leave as an employee of MU, and 7% of male respondents had taken paternity leave. In addition, 5% of female respondents had taken adoptive leave.
- 71% F, 61% M agree/strongly agree with the statement, “I work in a family-friendly department, based on my experience of having taken leave.
- 38% F and 14% M agree/strongly agree with the statement, “The period of maternity/paternity/adoptive leave I have taken has had a negative impact on my career”.
- 31% F and 30% M agree/strongly agree with the statement, “The periods of leave I have taken (for example, parental leave, carer’s leave, career break) have negatively impacted my career.
- 76% of women were replaced while on leave.
- 19% of women had special arrangements put in place to facilitate their re-engagement with work and/or research on return from leave.
- Of women who required breastfeeding facilities, 6% were happy with the breastfeeding facilities on campus, 36% were unhappy, and 58% were unaware of breastfeeding facilities.

Responses

Caring

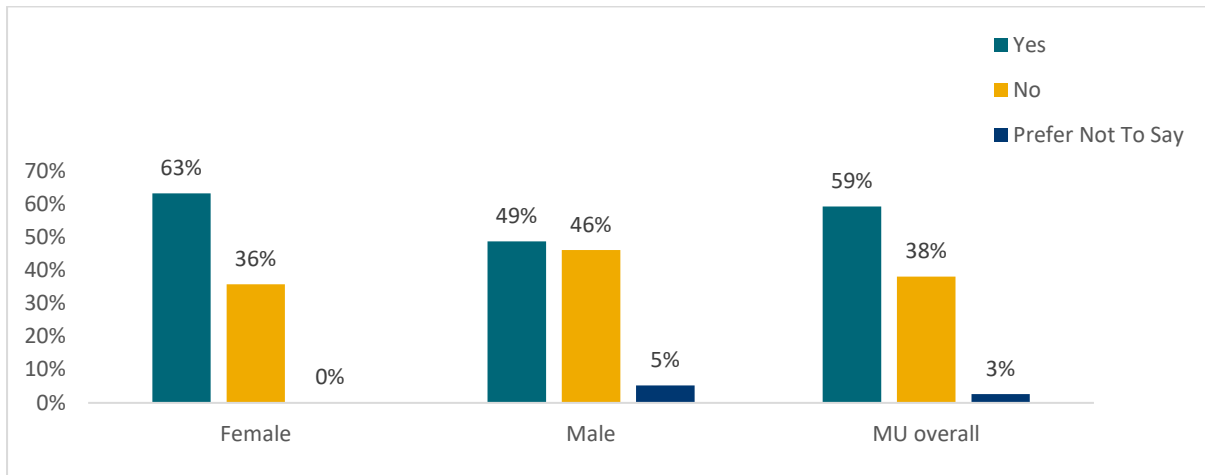


Figure 1. Respondents with or without caring responsibilities, disaggregated by gender (n=302).

Those who responded yes to having caring responsibilities (n=179) or prefer not to say (n=8) were then presented with the following questions:

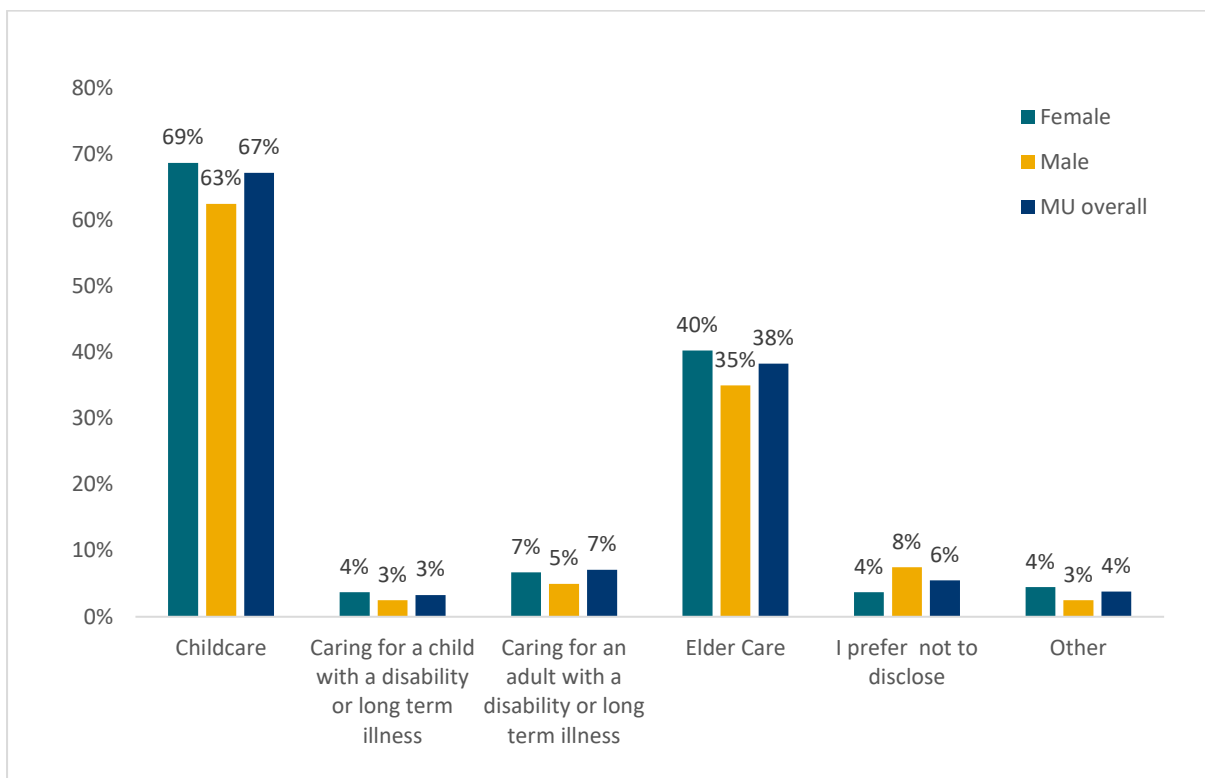


Figure 2. Respondents by type of caring responsibility, disaggregated by gender (n=183). Respondents could select multiple options.

'Others' included aiding family members with mental health and addiction issues, older children and elaborating on the nature of caring.

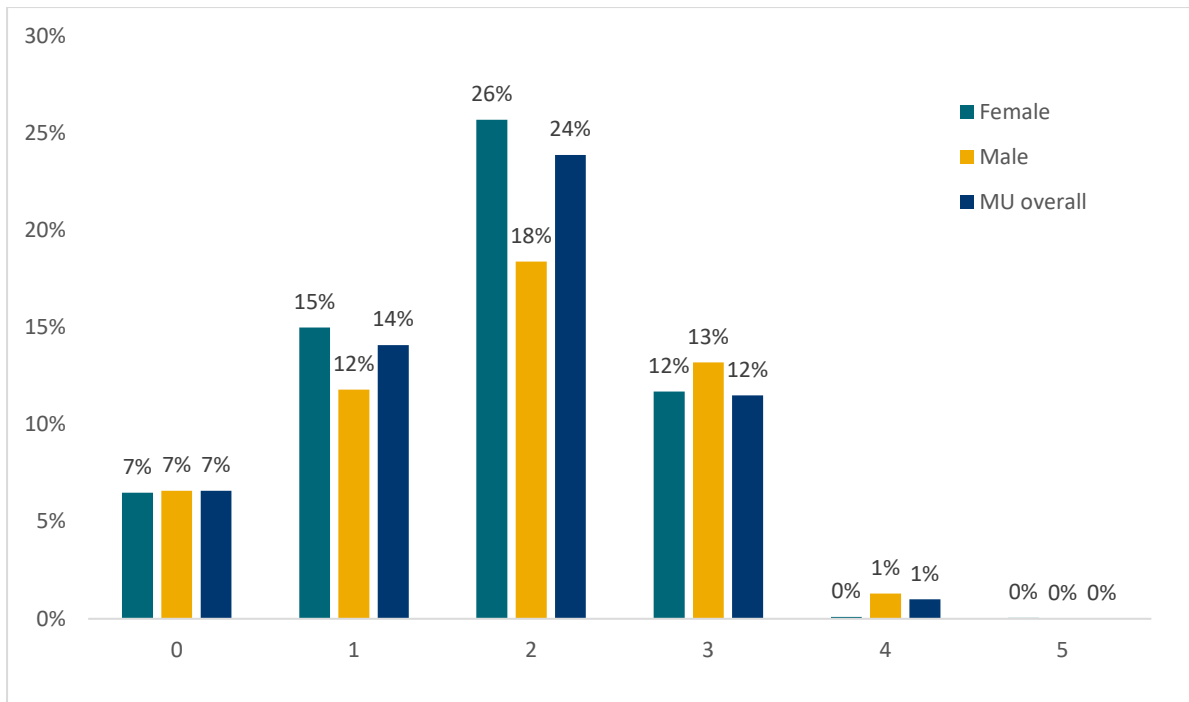


Figure 3. Respondents by number of dependents, disaggregated by gender (n=175).

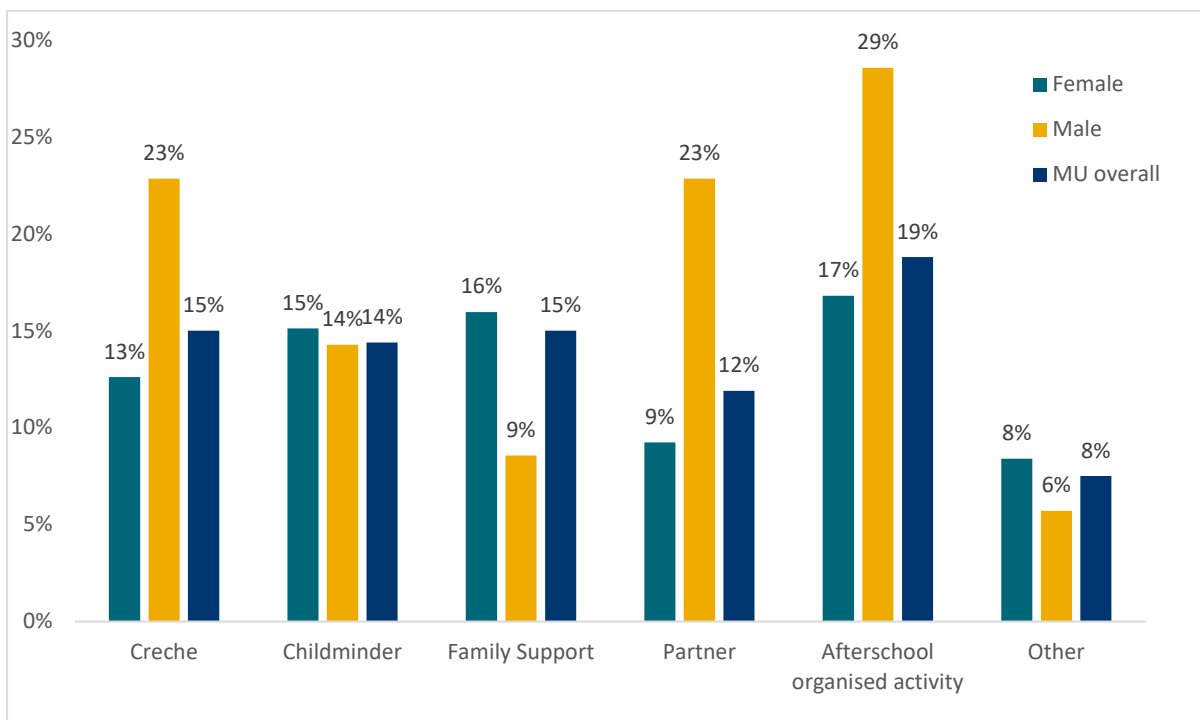


Figure 4. Respondents with children under 12, disaggregated by gender and by the childcare they primarily avail of (n=160).

'Other' included Au Pair, reduction in working hours, parental leave

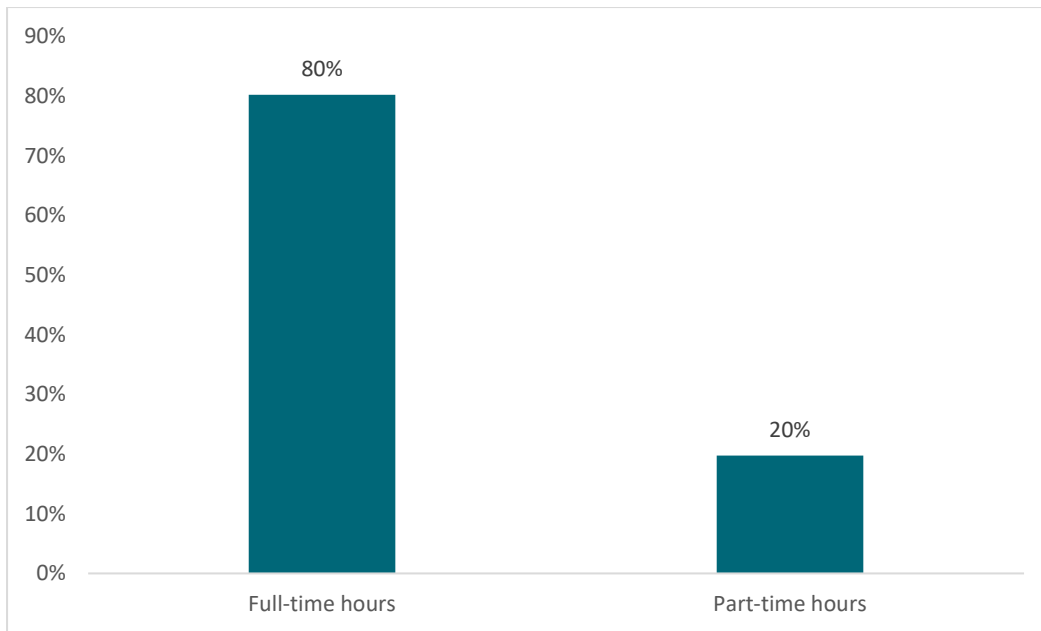


Figure 5. Respondents with caring responsibilities by whether they work full-time or part-time hours at Maynooth University (n= 177).

Supporting Families in the Workplace

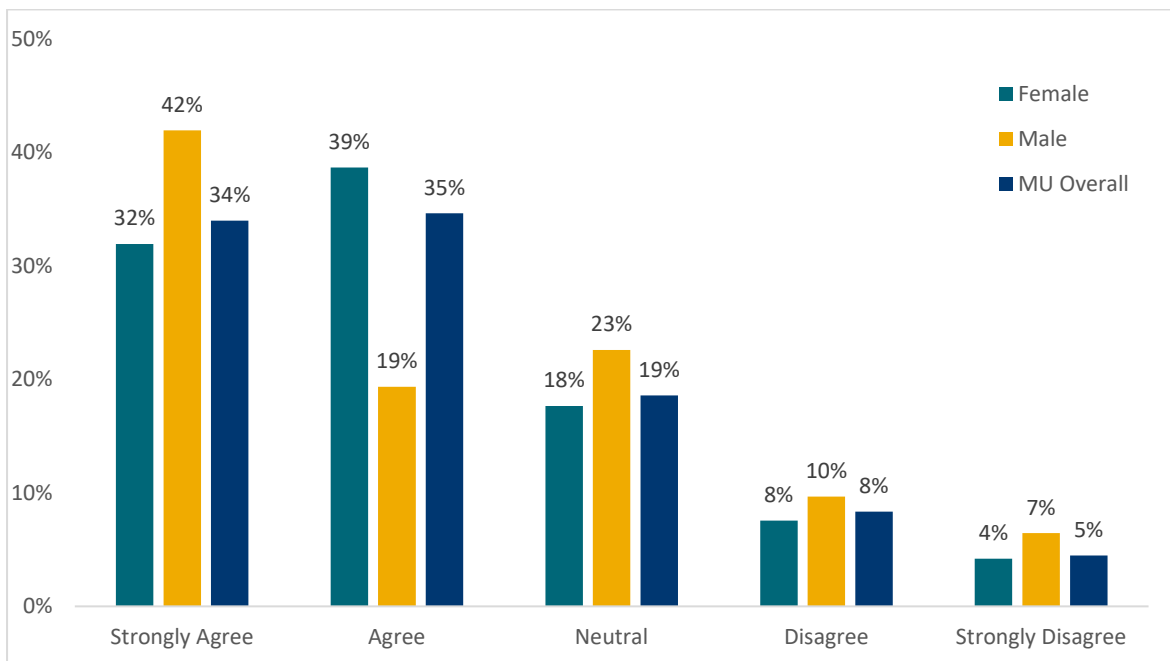


Figure 6. Respondents who agree/disagree that they work in a family-friendly department, based on their experience of having taken leave, disaggregated by gender (n=156).

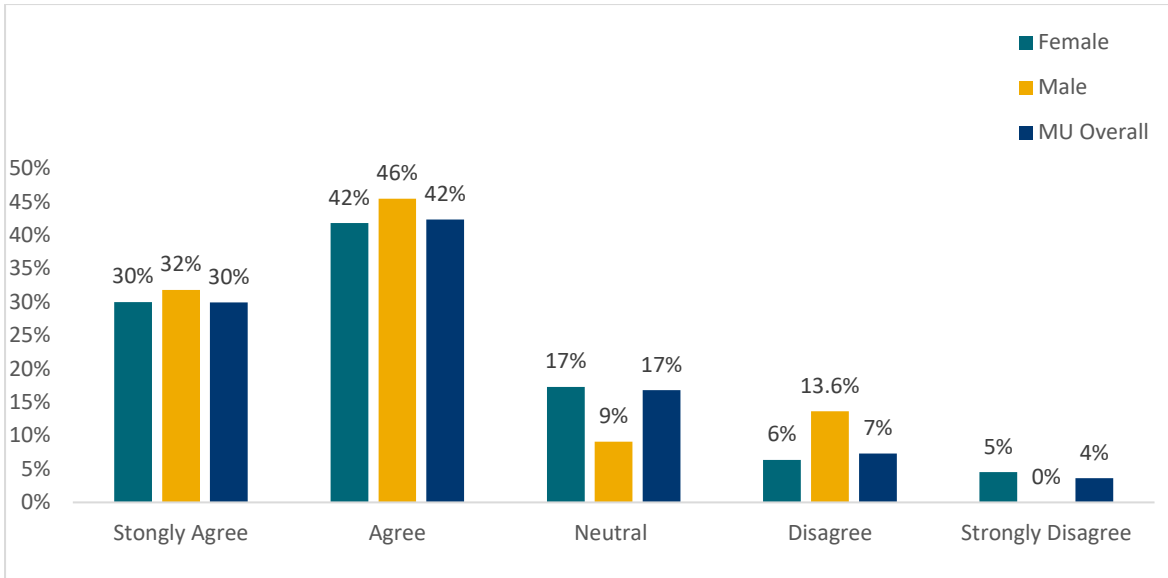


Figure 7. Respondents who agree/disagree that the University dealt with their leave requirements satisfactorily, disaggregated by gender (n=137).

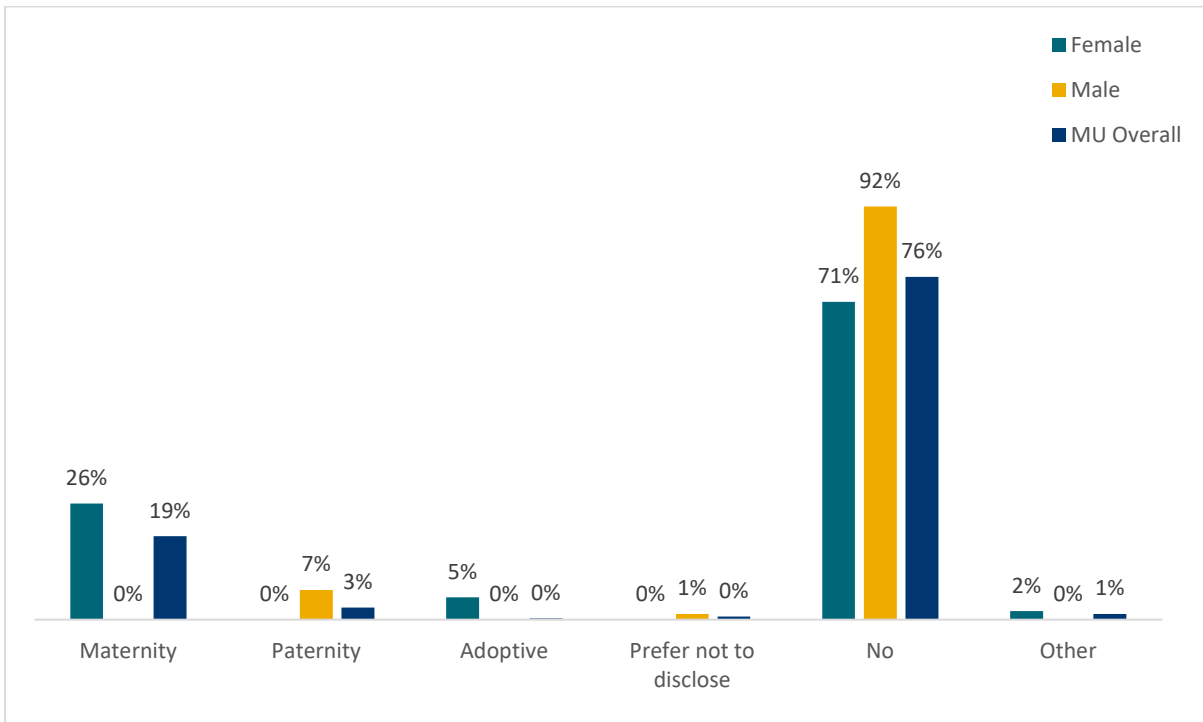


Figure 8. Respondents by periods of Maternity/Paternity/Adoptive Leave taken as an employee of MU, disaggregated by gender (n=301).

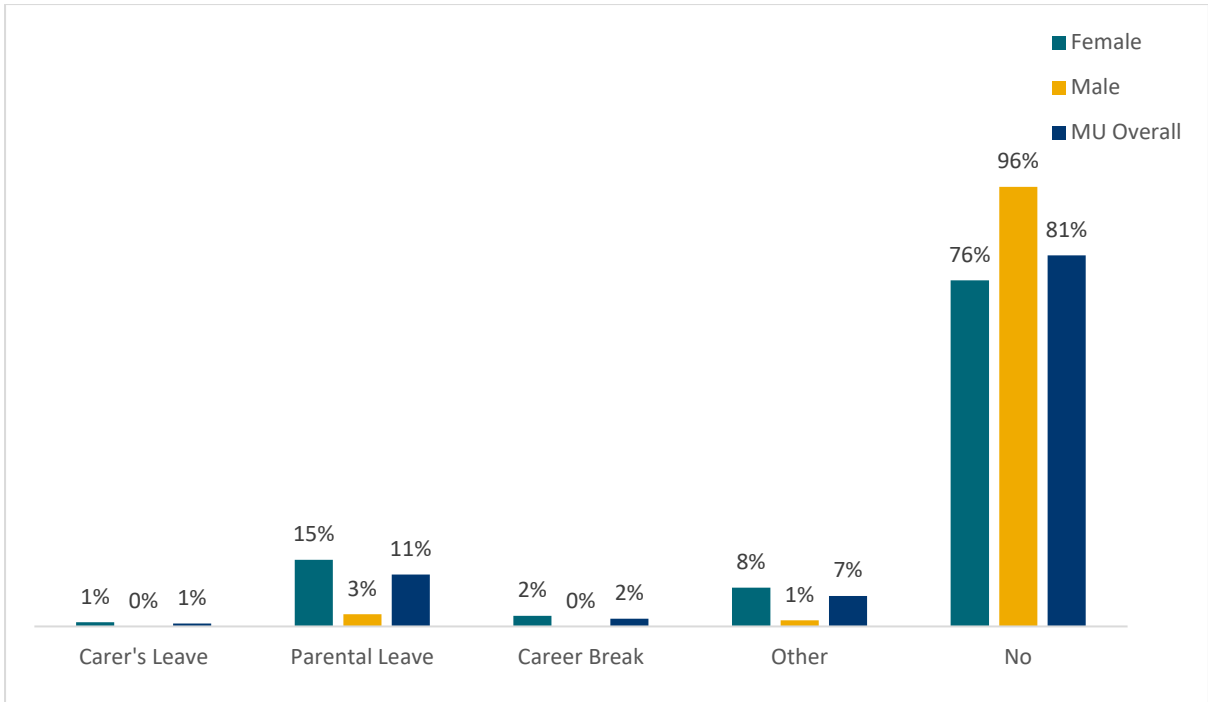


Figure 9. Respondents by periods of leave taken as an employee of Maynooth University, disaggregated by gender (n=304).

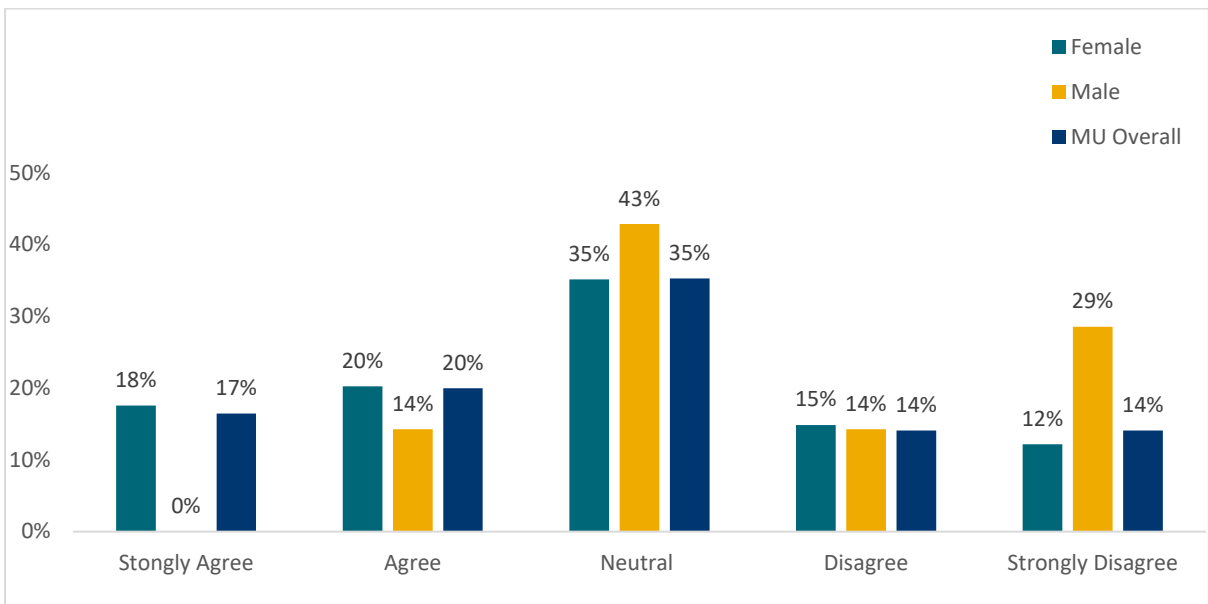


Figure 10. Respondents who agree/disagree that the period of Maternity/Paternity/Adoptive Leave they have taken has had a negative impact on their career, disaggregated by gender (n=85).

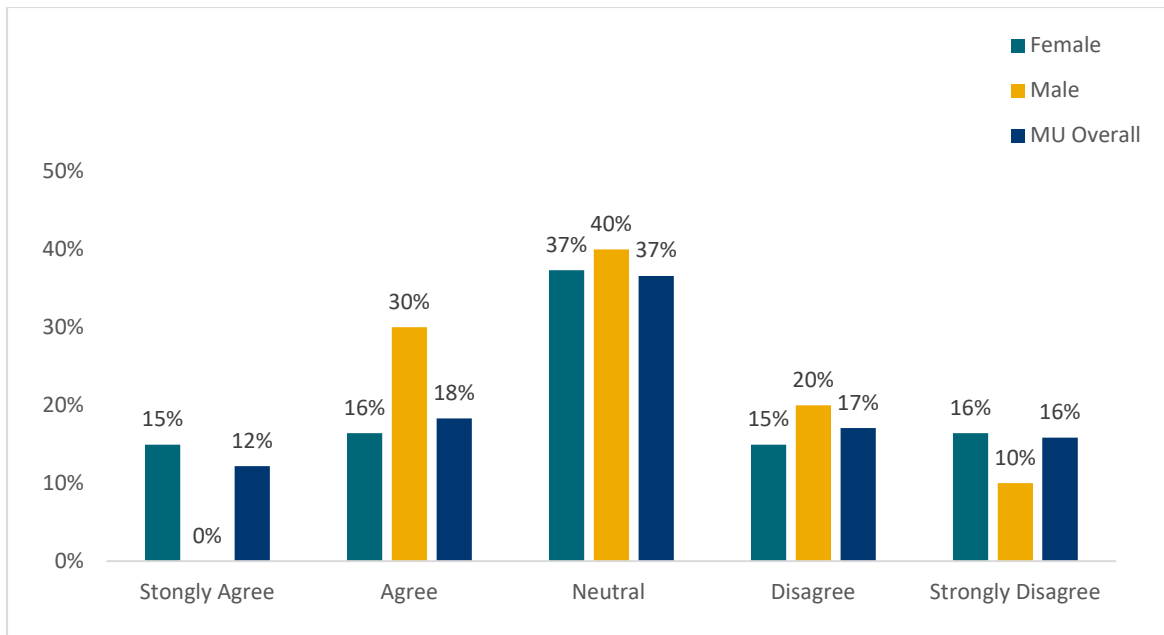


Figure 11. Respondents who agree/disagree that the period of leave they have taken (for example, Parental Leave, Career Break) have negatively impacted their career, disaggregated by gender (n=82).

Those who responded yes to having taken periods of leave (Fig. 3) were presented with the following questions:

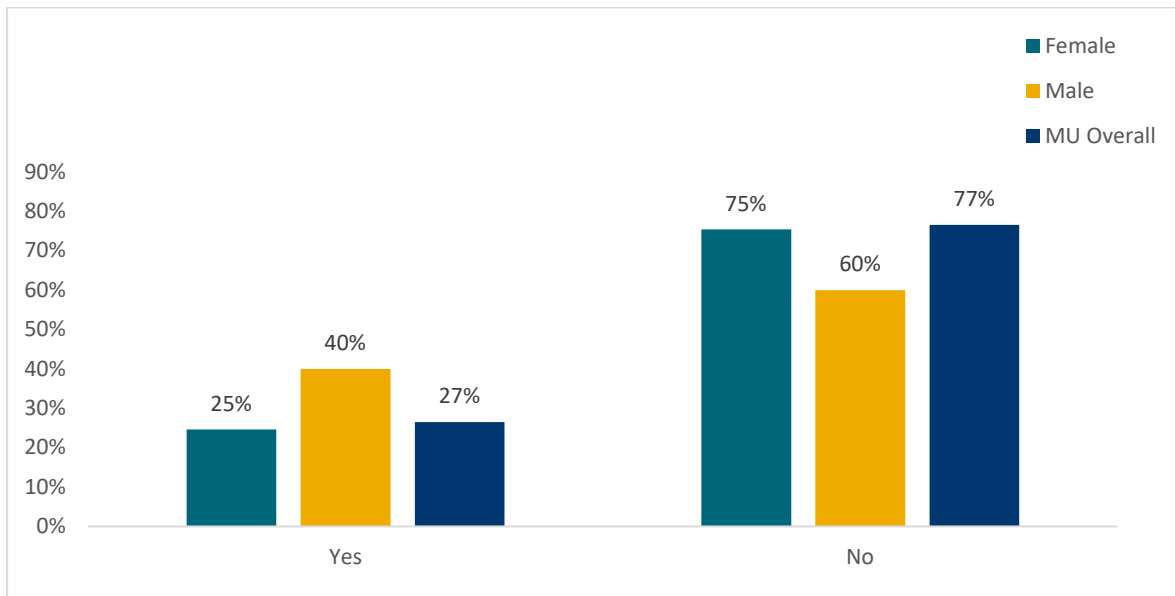


Figure 12. Respondents who did or did not continue to work while taking Maternity/Paternity/Adoptive Leave, disaggregated by gender (n=68).

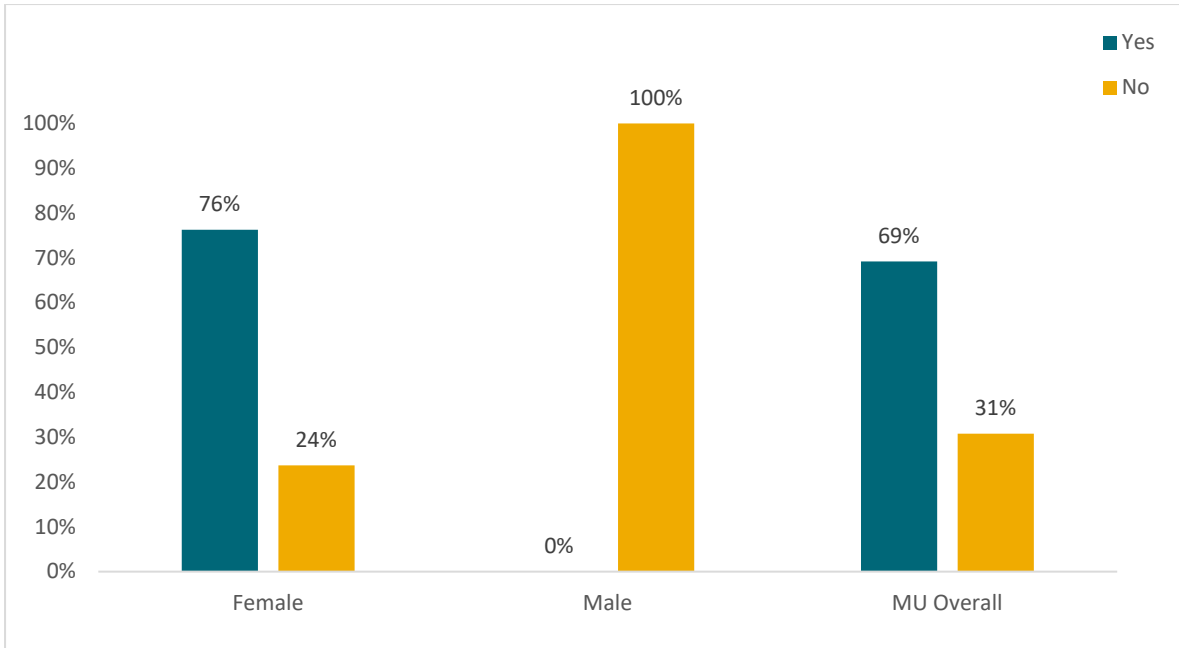


Figure 13. Respondents by whether or not they were replaced while on leave, disaggregated by gender (n=65).

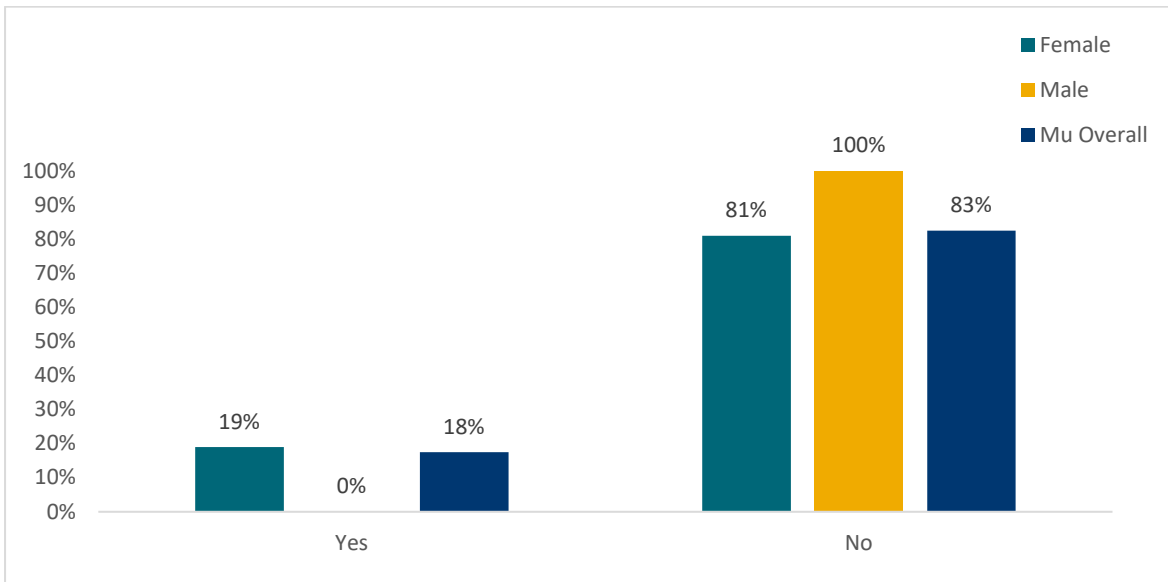


Figure 14. Respondents by whether or not any arrangements were put in place to facilitate their re-engagement with work and/or research on returning from leave, disaggregated by gender (n=63).

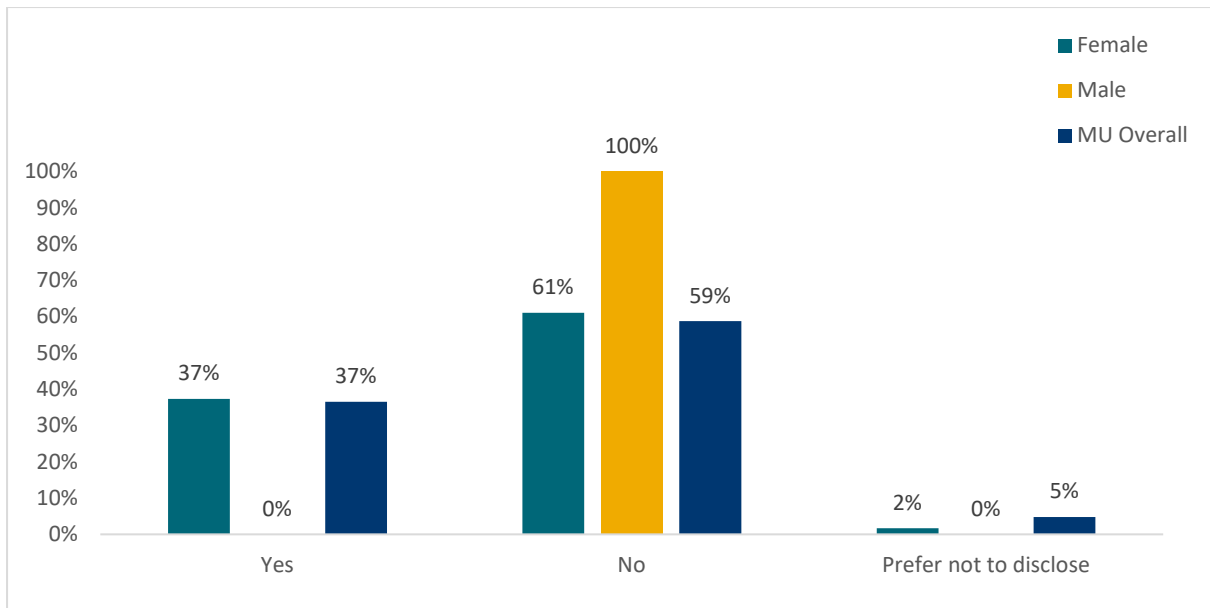


Figure 15. Respondents by whether or not they breastfed and/or expressed milk on their return to work, disaggregated by gender (n=63).

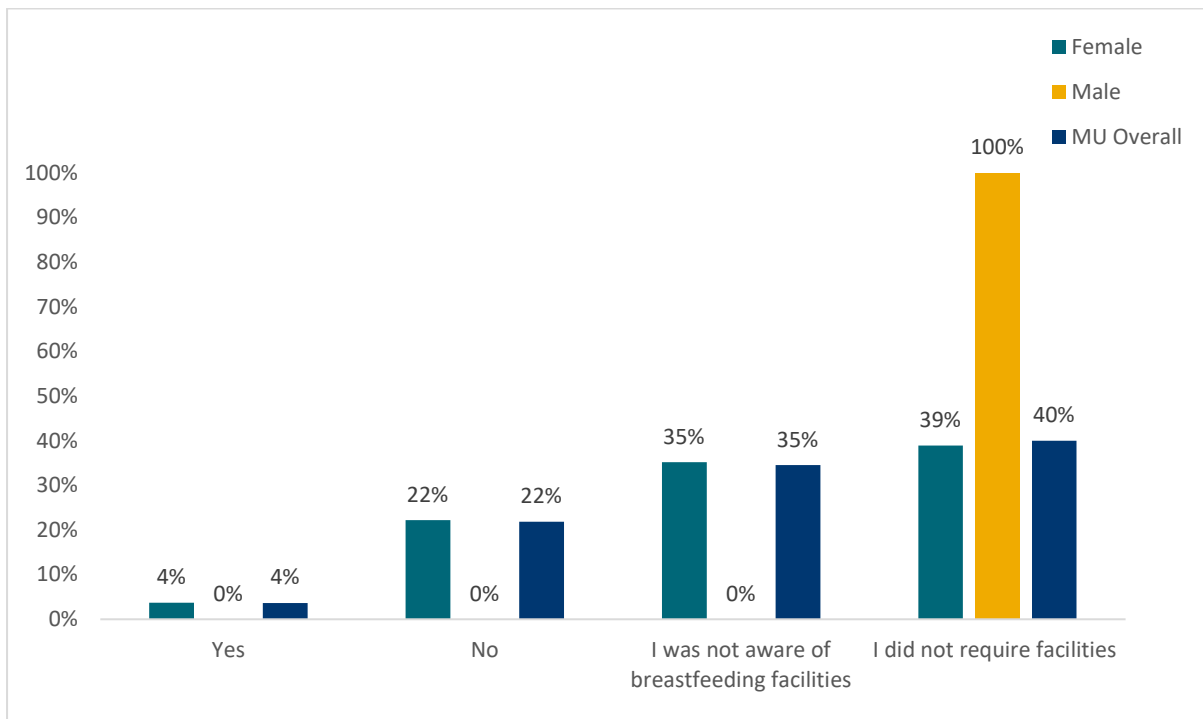


Figure 16. Respondents by whether or not they are happy with the breastfeeding facilities on campus, disaggregated by gender (n=55).

Appendix 1 - Caring Digest

Respondents indicated a range of caring responsibilities in the qualitative feedback, including toddlers, pre-school age children and children over the age of 12. Some respondents indicated adult children attending third level education and living at home or providing care to adult children with mental health issues. Eldercare within the respondents' homes or to elderly relatives living elsewhere was noted. Other respondents commented on assisting adult children with childcare as a grandparent. Some staff indicated that their dependents lived with them, but it is important to underline that this is not the case for all staff providing care to others.

Respondents with caring responsibilities noted a number of caring arrangements that they avail of, including creche and early years childcare (both the MU Creche and other providers), ECCE scheme, afterschool care provided by schools, childminders, and au pairs. Respondents indicated caring responsibilities being taken on by partners/spouses who work from home or work flexibly and older children who could collect younger siblings from school. It was noted that respondents who rely on grandparents for childcare could not avail of this during Covid-19 and that many childcare facilities were closed during this period also. It was noted that the school holidays are a challenging time of the year concerning childcare, particularly during Covid-19. Some respondents who did not avail of a creche noted the high fees and lack of options or did not wish to have their child in a creche during Covid-19. Some respondents availed of the MU creche for younger children, while others noted that MU student parents are prioritised. Challenges accessing creche and childcare places were noted, both in the MU Creche and other providers. Some parents have children attending different creches, which can be logistically challenging. Respondents would like MU to provide more childcare places, more flexible creche opening times, and increased subsidies for creche places and afterschool activities on campus.

Regarding working arrangements, respondents noted availing of Parental Leave, part-time working, or working reduced hours in relation to childcare. Several respondents indicated working part-time while their children are of school age. Respondents noted that both Parental Leave and Paternity Leave are not of sufficient duration. Respondents noted that promise of flexibility within their working day (which is not always granted) is not equivalent to formalised flexi-time arrangements. Staff with caring responsibilities noted a lack of awareness among colleagues and that meeting times often do not accommodate parents managing drop-offs/pick-ups. A lack of flexibility in working hours creates difficulty for some respondents in organising afterschool activities. It was noted that neither the promotions process nor the workload allocation reflects the impact of caring responsibilities on staff, particularly female staff.

Appendix 2 – Supporting Families in the Workplace Digest

Respondents felt there needed to be more support for those returning to work from different types of leave. Currently, there are some informal meetings with HODs, or others are not yet aware of what the return to work will be like as they are still availing of leave.

One academic staff member felt that the teaching free period did not benefit them as they returned from maternity leave during the summer break and were not permitted to take up the option in September for the new academic term. They felt this caused increased pressure and stress on their return and left no time for research as their workload increased in September with new modules introduced.

Breastfeeding facilities on campus were said to be “practically non-existent”. The only options appeared to be own office spaces or toilets. While there are facilities on the north campus, it was noted that people might not know they exist. Therefore, facilities are needed on both the north and south campus.

There is a feeling that the culture is that flexible working is not encouraged.

If parental leave is taken, for example, the workload is not reduced, and work is being done outside of the normal working hours to facilitate the taking of parental leave. Therefore, managing someone’s workload while taking types of leave should be considered.

Having caring commitments may appear as not being interested in career progression due to not being in a position to apply for specific roles and at certain times due to the caring needs of family members at a given time. The lack of child-minding spaces can cause problems regarding the parent/guardian progressing in their career. Some staff felt that having caring responsibilities and managing them depended on the department they worked in and the support from HODs, which can impact career and progression within departments.

It was felt that the University expected participation in events outside of the working week when there is no childcare available. The need for the University to support families centrally was noted. Instead, there seems just to be local arrangements within departments. This causes experiences with leave to vary greatly depending on the HOD within departments.

One respondent noted that while they had not availed of any leave, they had seen colleagues being supported.

One respondent noted that being family friendly is not just about granting leave but everything from being able to take a personal call to being able to pick up a sick child if necessary.

There is a need for more flexible working arrangements and more care leave options with consideration for those that cannot afford to take certain types of unpaid leave.

There needs to be a policy on the right to disconnect as one respondent commented that they had been contacted while on annual leave and parental leave with non-urgent matters.

Several respondents felt the University was a supportive place for those in caring roles. It was also noted that the increased supports for those with caring needs should not come at a cost to those who do not have caring needs or single status staff members. I.e., the emphasis should not be specifically on those who are parents receiving the supports. The flexibility that COVID-19 has created has been welcomed by many.

More communication in departments on the family friendly policies in Maynooth University was noted as something that would benefit staff.

One single parent respondent noted that while the culture does appear to be changing, when they had significant childcare responsibilities, there was little supports and there was an expectation to be present at meetings and events regardless of childcare difficulties. They felt there was an 'uneven expectation' on single parents as those with partners can share the childcare load. They noted that male colleagues could leave meetings due to their partners not being available for childcare. The single parent felt they could not leave such meetings for childcare responsibility reasons.

One respondent noted that as a mother of young children they do not feel like they belong at the University due to unresolved issues and exclusion from opportunities regardless of the amount of work put in.

One respondent spoke of how few professors in the University have children and the gulf between those with and without caring responsibilities, or those whose partners are the primary carers, reducing the feeling of belonging.