

# **Who Cares? Family-related Leave in Irish Organisations**

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# Outline of Presentation

- ◆ EU Directives and Irish leave provision:
  - Maternity
  - Parental
  - Paternity
- ◆ Results of Survey /Focus Groups in 6 Irish organisations



# EU Directives: Maternity

- ◆ Pregnant Workers Directive 1992
  - 14 weeks paid or allowance
  - Health and safety
  - No guarantee of right to return to job or equivalent
  - No cover for women on short term or temporary contracts
- ◆ The current EU Proposal is to extend the minimum period from 14 to 18 weeks



# Irish Maternity Leave

Maternity Protection of Employees Acts (1981, 1991, 1994 and 2004)

– Maternity leave now extends to ALL female employees:

- 26 weeks paid maternity benefit subject to PRSI contributions
- 16 weeks unpaid maternity leave
- Right to return to same job
- Maternity leave counts as service



# EU Parental Leave Directive:

- ◆ On policy agenda since 1982: “crucial instrument for minimizing the career gap of working mothers and encouraging fathers to accept family responsibilities”
- ◆ Irish and British resistance blocked its adoption until 1996
  - 3 months for each child aged under 8 years
  - Open to ALL employment contracts
  - Right to return



# Issues re. Parental Leave

- ◆ Minimum common denominator
- ◆ Allowed member states to determine cost
  - Paid or unpaid
- ◆ Did not prohibit transfer of individual entitlement to leave to mothers
- ◆ “The Directive was not a breakthrough after many years of stagnation, but rather more significant for the fact that it has been concluded, than for its content”



# Irish Parental Leave

Parental Leave Act 1998 and (Amendment) 2006

- ◆ Unpaid
- ◆ 14 weeks per child up to age 8 years
- May be taken in one continuous period or in 2 separate blocks of a minimum of 6 weeks
- Both parents have an equal and separate entitlement
- If working for same employer, and the employer agrees, parents may transfer parental leave entitlement



# Irish Paternity Leave

- ◆ Not recognised in Irish employment law
- ◆ Employers not obliged to grant paid or unpaid paternity leave
- ◆ Some provide a period of special (paternal) leave of days with pay (e.g. the Civil Service 3 days; Epsilon International 2 weeks paid)





# Lessons from EU Partners

- ◆ Infant care is now government [EU] led
- ◆ Fathers' leave is more successful when “added-on” to mothers' e.g. Norway
- ◆ Payment at 60-80% reimbursement optimal
- ◆ Individual entitlements (non-transferable) and explicit father targeting important



# Issues for Family-related Leaves Survey

- ◆ Would fathers avail of paternity leave?
- ◆ Would mothers support this?
- ◆ If so, on what terms?
  - Duration/timing
  - Paid/unpaid and by whom?
- ◆ Aim of Study:
  - Address the information deficit
  - Gauge the level of demand for Paternity Leave by men
  - Men's and women's attitudes towards fathers having the right to take leave



# Methodology

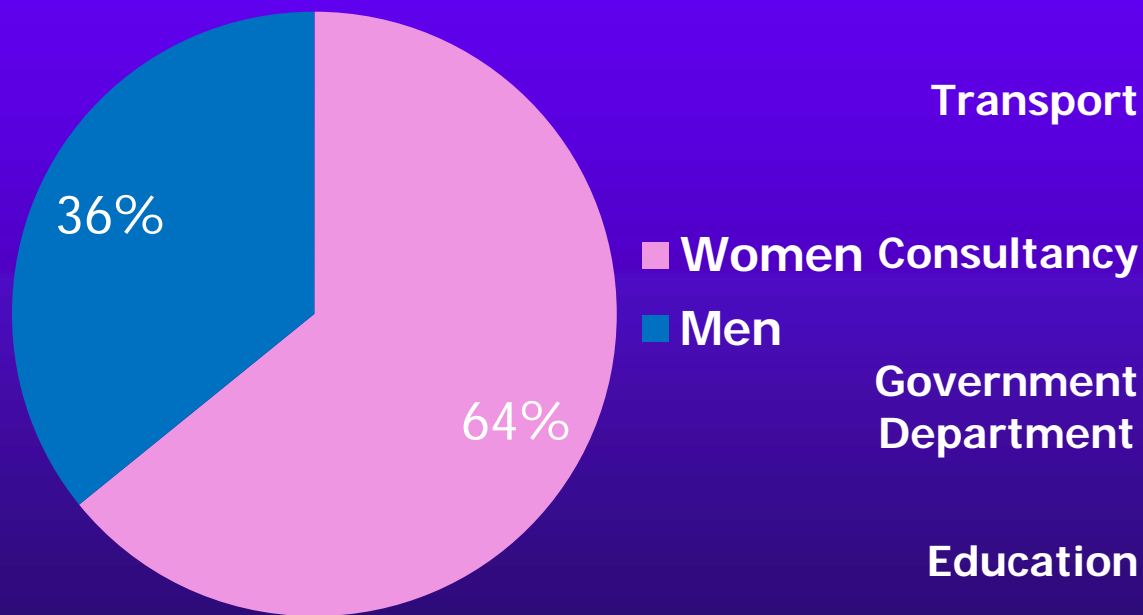
## ❖ Questionnaire Survey

- Online completion
- 6 Organisations
- 1067 Complete Responses
- 15% Response rate

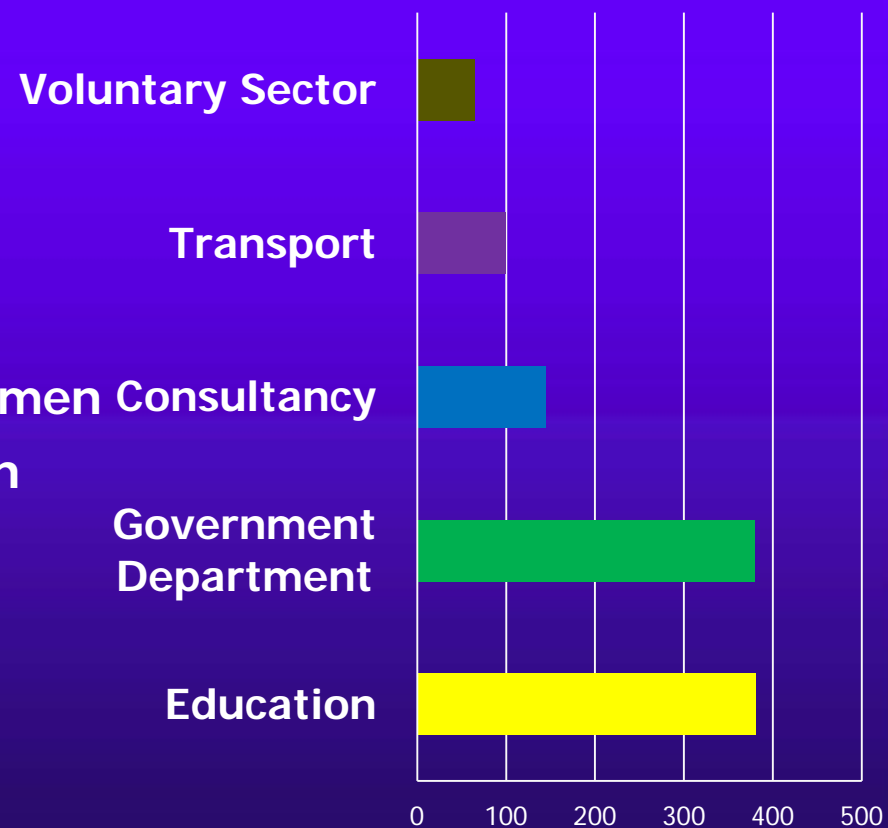
## ❖ Focus Groups

# Respondents' Profile (n = 1067)

## Gender



## Sector





# Leave Take-up

## ◆ Maternity Leave

- 80% of 390 mothers were eligible
- 92% of whom availed

## ◆ Paternity Leave

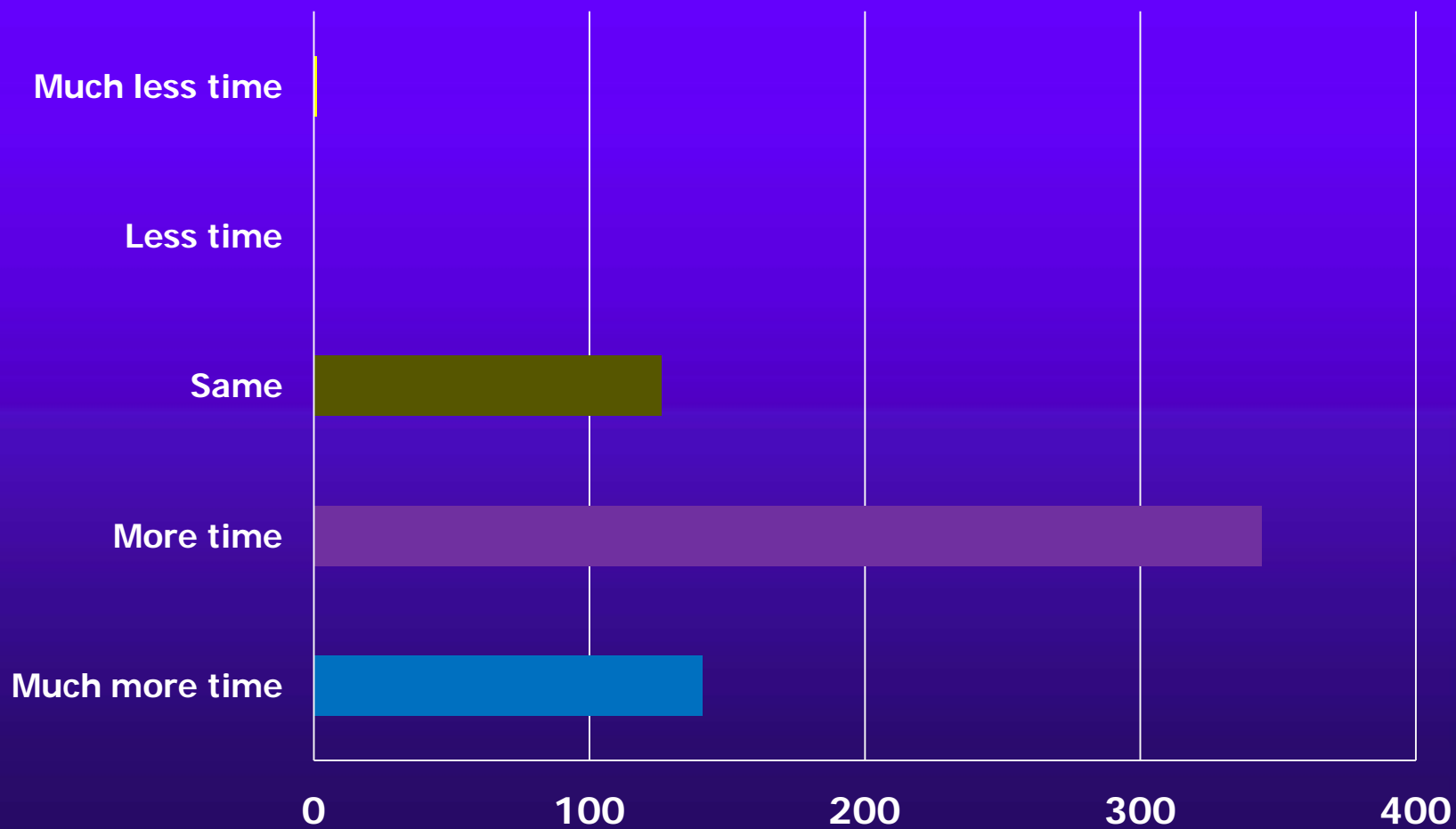
- 51% of fathers had availed

## ◆ Parental Leave

- 35% of parents
- 41% of mothers
- 28% of fathers

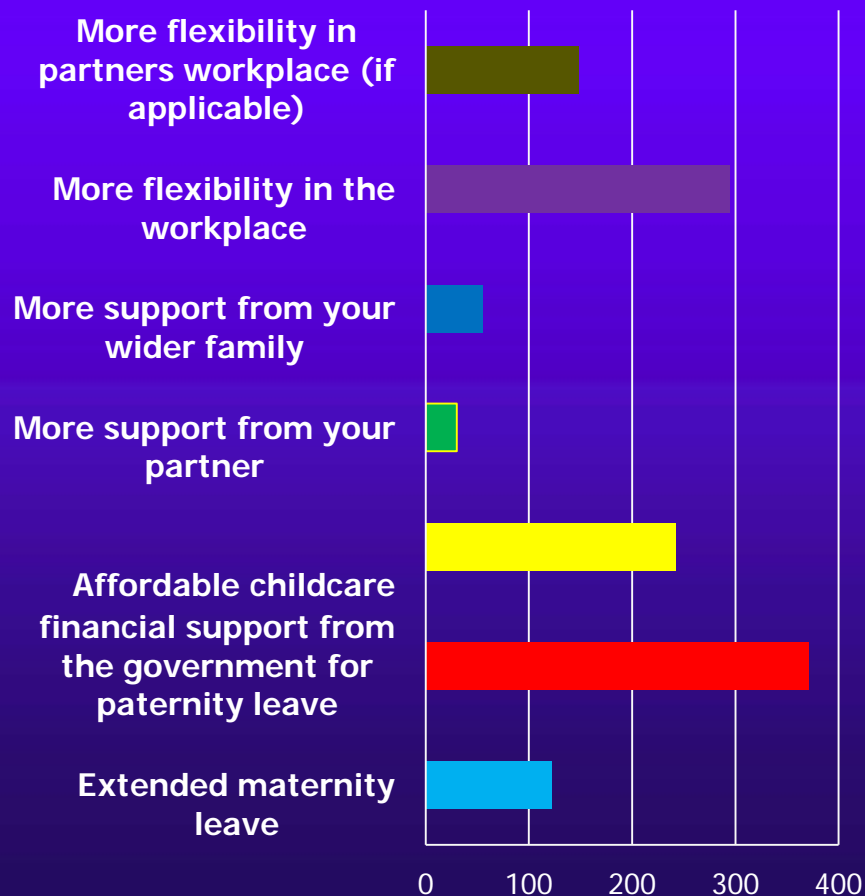


# Parents' Desired time with Family (n = 612)



# Contributors to Work/Life Balance

Factors to help achieve a better work-life balance



“Extended parental leave arrangements - currently only available until child aged 8”

“Extended paid paternity leave - 2 weeks at birth and another 2 weeks before kid turns 1”

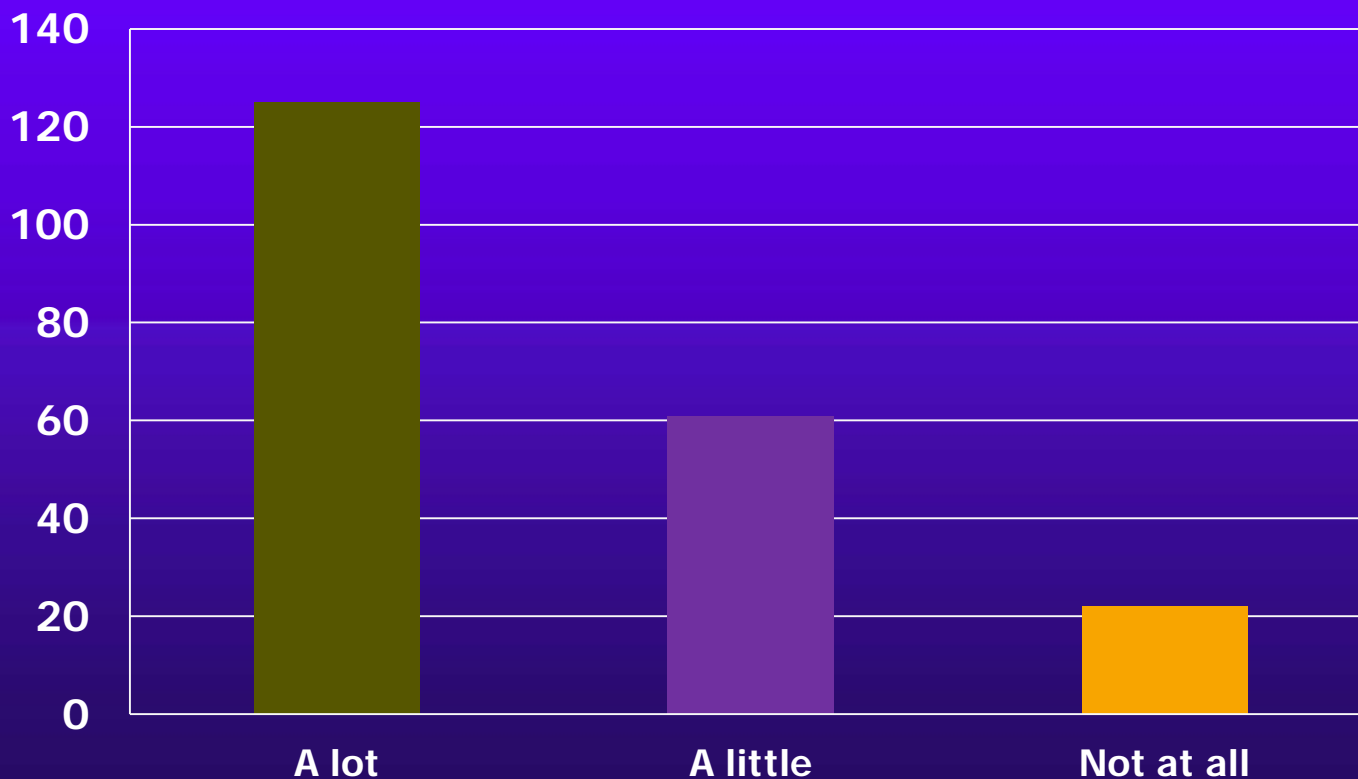
“allow parents to split ‘maternity’ leave as they choose”

“Paid prental leave for children 8 years and over”



# Mothers' Views on Fathers' Desire for Paternity Leave

The extent to which fathers would have liked to have taken paternity leave (n = 208)







# Mothers' Views on Paternity Leave (n = 87)

"3 days paternity leave  
changed nothing"

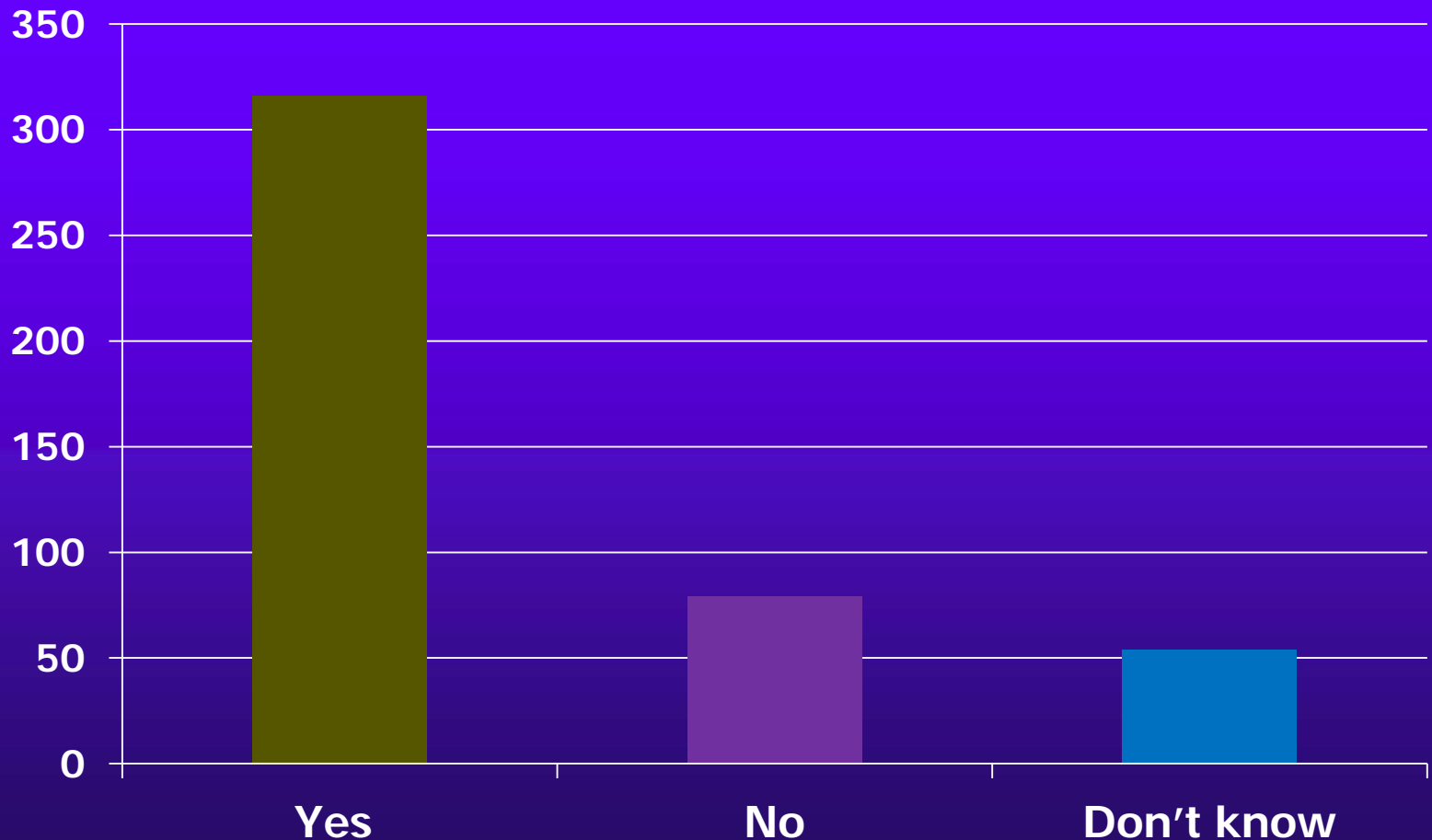
"Terrific help in the early days"

"But three days in that first  
week of life is not enough!"

"Better bond with baby and  
more support for me and  
older child but a financial  
strain"



# Paternity Leave Availability (n = 449)





# Adequacy of Paternity Leave

“2 days paid is not acceptable, additional days require taking leave time”

“Simply cannot afford to take any more time off as it is unpaid leave”

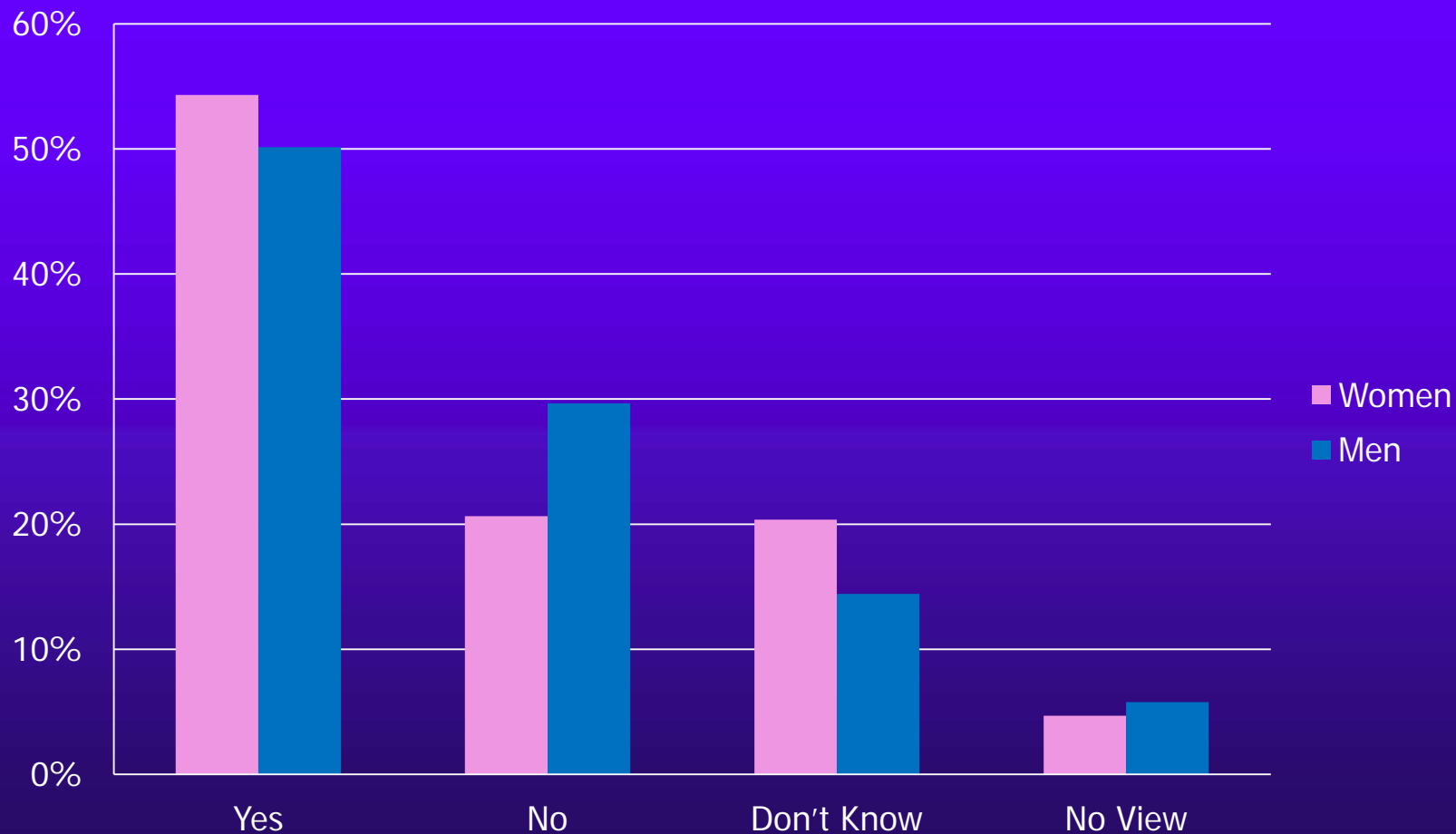
“I couldn't afford not to work. If extended paternity leave was paid, then I would have liked/availed of this”

“The more time out of work then the longer it takes to catch up”



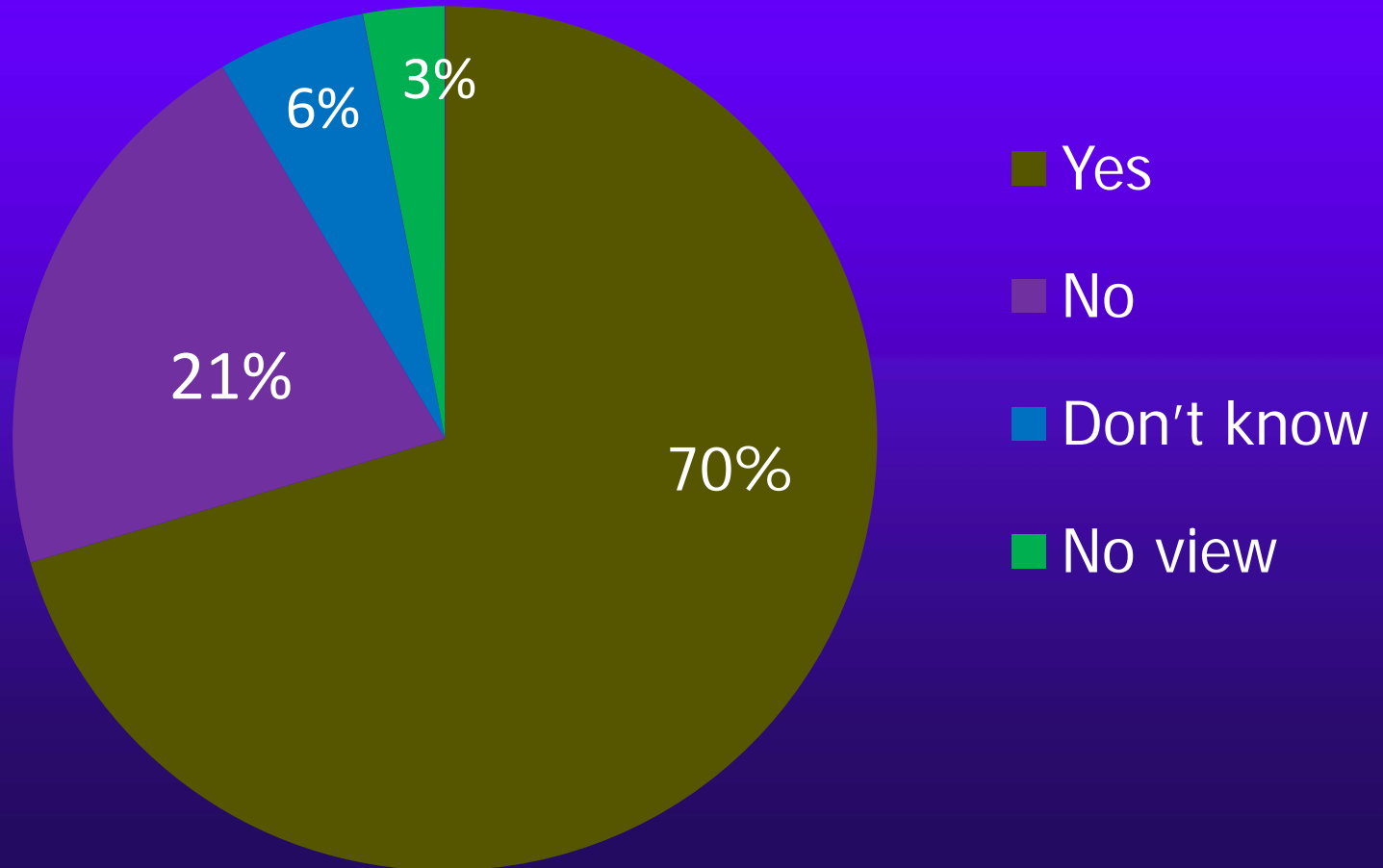
# Impact of Parental Leave

Encourage parents to be more involved? (n= 1064)



# Sharing of Maternity Leave?

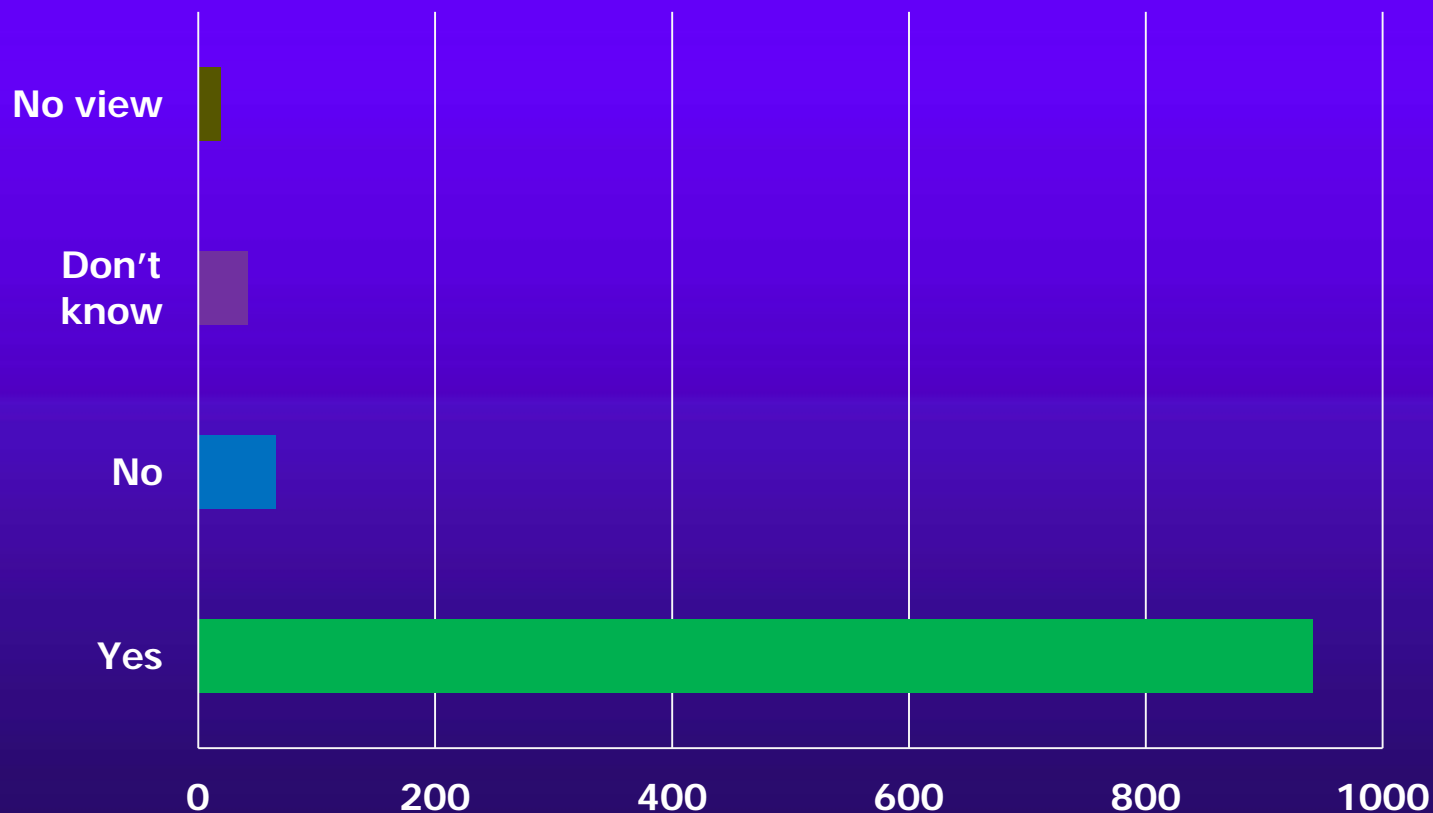
Maternity leave transferable to the father? (n = 1067)





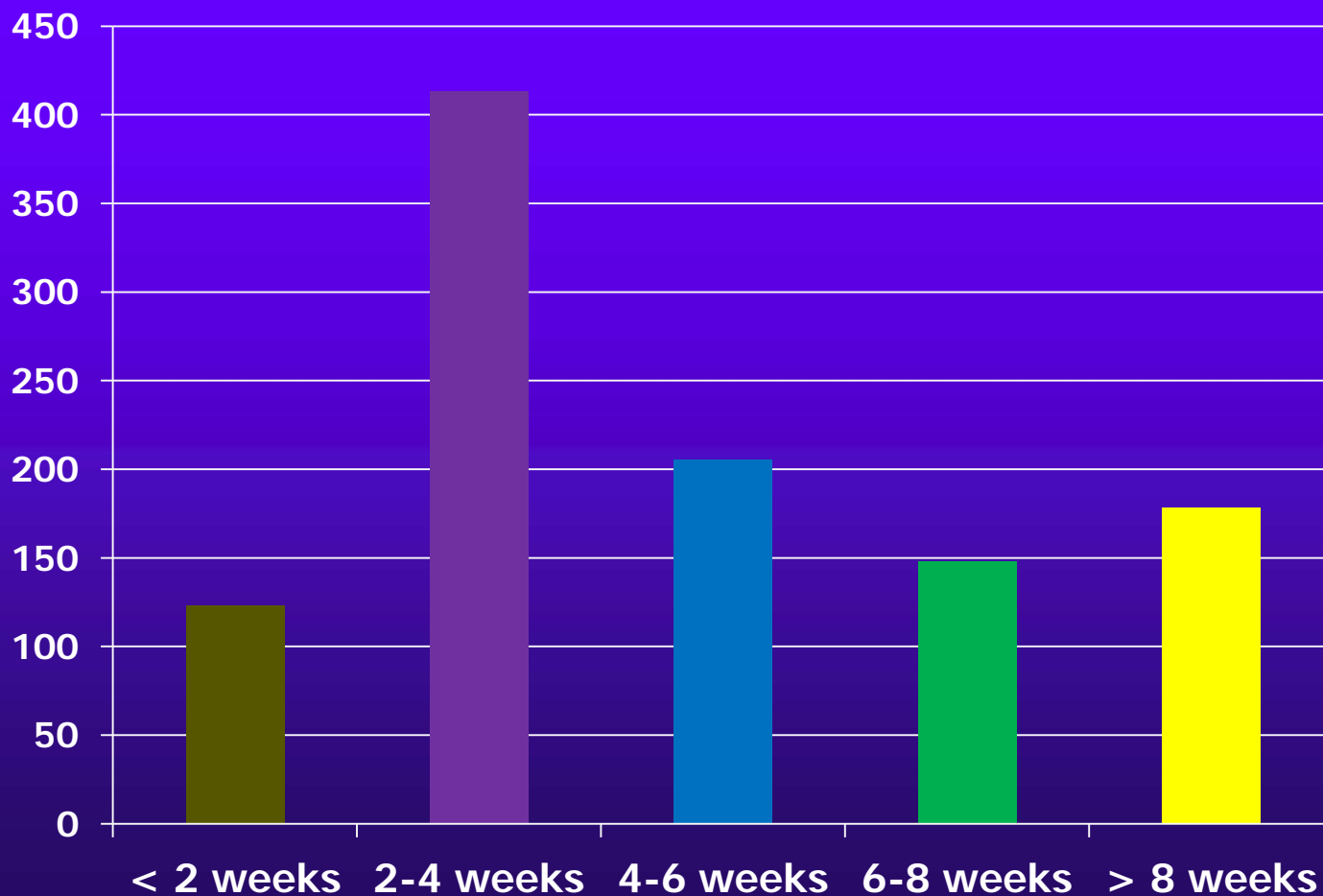
# Fathers' Rights to Paternity Leave

Should the Government introduce an entitlement to statutory Paternity Leave? (n = 1067)





# Preferred Duration of Paternity Leave Fathers (n = 1067)





# Why Paternity Leave is Needed?

“Equality. Better society if father figure role has more day to day contact and responsibility”

“For the same reason there is maternity leave - not just for equal rights, but for the rights of the child”

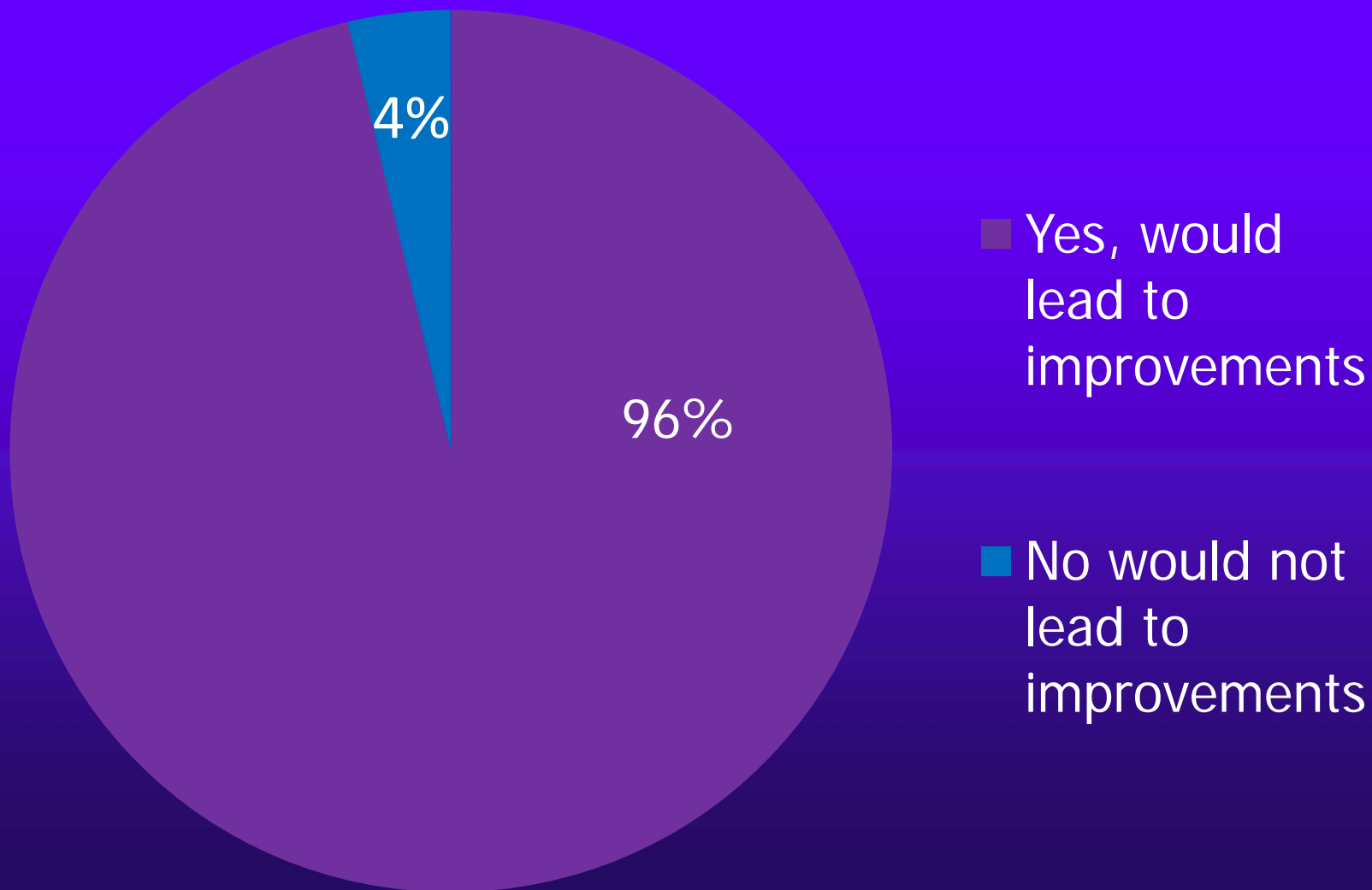
“Fathers seem to have no rights in this country. Three days' paternity leave is laughable!”

“Public can't afford to fund other peoples children”





# Potential Impact of Paternity Leave (n = 1067)





# Conclusions

- ◆ Unequivocal demand for Statutory Paternity Leave and for Paternity and Parental Leave to be paid – by fathers, mothers and non-parents
- ◆ Fathers need ‘overlapping’ Paternity leave in addition to Parental Leave
- ◆ The issue of Parenting Leave cannot be examined in isolation from :
  - Childcare (ECEC)
  - Flexible working arrangements



Thank you

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