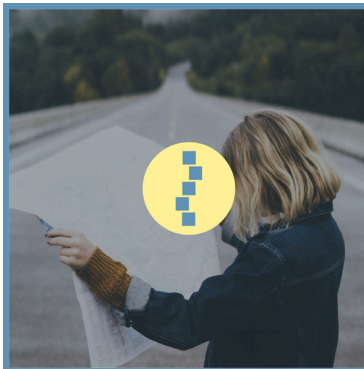




My Journey Back to Work

Show Notes

Series 01 Episode 04

Part Four: Time to Go Back

Originally published: Friday, June 5th 2026 at 02:15pm BST

EPISODE SYNOPSIS:

Our first day back is here.

It's time to make our first morning commute as a parent and we find ourselves back at work.

Or maybe we don't.

Maybe our circumstances have changed.

Maybe we make a different choice.

Whatever decisions we make, all the layers of experiences of the last however-many-months - visible and not - are coming with us.

Is this part of the reason why many parents say 'I wish we talked about this more, and more honestly'?

At least 100,000s UK parents return to work after parental leave each year. It's a lot of first days back...

What happens when we share our experiences of them?

QUOTES:

- "Suddenly to be back in the workplace, just felt... .."
- "It was the first time I stopped to think about work..."
- "What happens if we ask parents what it's like for them...?"

THEMES:

- Unique to each parent or echoes between the stories?
- Why do parents say "I wish we talked about it more"?
- Reflections and re-calibrations: how does this path shape what comes next?

CREDITS:

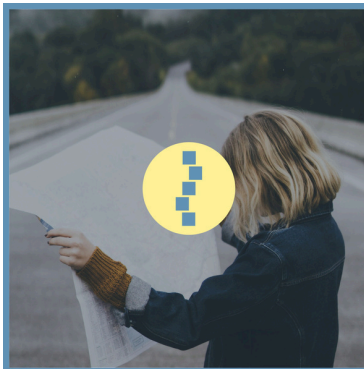
www.freesound.org is an incredible resource and the majority of SFX and Music tracks can be found there or are the producer's own.

Specific links can be found in the EP04 Credits PDF File: MJBTW-S01-E04-0-V0.credits.pdf

A special shout out to [seth_makes_sounds](#) whose music perfectly captured the different atmospheres across the series. More of their work can also be found on www.freesound.org

FURTHER LINKS & RESOURCES:

"100,000s UK parents return to work after parental leave each year?" explainer - please see the following pages for further details...



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FURTHER LINKS & RESOURCES NOTES:

100,000s UK parents each year?

Several studies in the UK collect data surrounding employment patterns and career trajectories after having a child or children, for example:

- [Gov.UK](#) Research and analysis

Main report

Published 22 October 2019

[Main report - GOV.UK](#)

This is connected to the next link, using some of the same data.

- Understanding Society Longitudinal Study (ongoing)

[The UK Household Longitudinal Study](#)

Here is data collected on the subject of women's career trajectories after having a child:

[How women's employment changes after having a child - Understanding Society](#)

- Women and the UK economy

Research Briefing By Brigid Francis-Devine, Khadijah Zaidi, Annalise Murray 25 February 2026

[Women and the UK economy](#)

However, as of the date of publishing Episode 4 of the podcast (5th June 2026), there doesn't appear to be a study in the UK that collects data to specifically answer the question: 'how many parents in the UK return to work after parental leave each year?' directly. If there is, please send details to hello@myjourneybacktowork.com.

Without direct data, a rough, simplified estimate of the potential number of UK parents that might negotiate the connected issues around returning to work after parental leave can be derived through using:

- 1. the annual total of live births;
- 2. the employment rate for men and women living in households with dependent children
- 3. and by making the assumption of 2 parents per child

The figures below are compiled from two different data sets from the ONS (the Office of National Statistics in the UK), using the most recent iterations publicly available on the ONS website at the time of episode release:

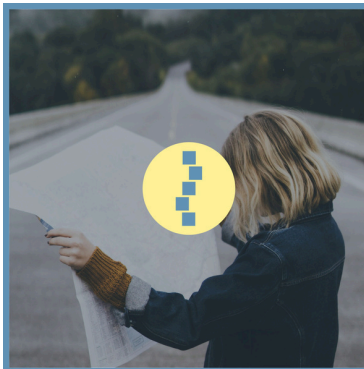
1. According to this report,

[Births in England and Wales: birth registrations - Office for National Statistics](#)

the number of live births registered in the UK according to the ONS covering the time period of the year 2025, published 27 May 2026 = **585,396**

2. This report provides '[Employment rates for men and women living with and without dependent children in the UK: Table Q](#)' (latest release 3rd June 2026. It covers the period Jan-March 2026)

Rates as follows:



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FURTHER LINKS & RESOURCES NOTES cont:

The employment rate for households living with dependent children is given as:

92.7% for men

77.9% for women

Using the assumption of 2 parents per child, we can find an idea of how many parents might be or might have been negotiating 'return to work' questions, as follows:

92.7% of the 2025 birth total (585,396) for fathers = **542,662 fathers**

77.9% of the 2025 birth total (585,396) for mothers = **456,023 mothers**

Total: potentially in the region of 998,685 parents each year.

These are very simplified calculations but they give a sense of the scale of the numbers of people navigating the questions the series raises.

It is unclear exactly how many parents return to work after parental leave in a one-year period. And details such as whether the parent leaves the workplace soon afterwards, or makes changes to arrangements or circumstances after their return, aren't accounted for here.

> And so we arrive at "at least 100,000s parents in the UK return to work after parental leave each year" in some form.

And if taking into consideration the ongoing impacts that this process could continue to have in shaping our working and personal circumstances in the years following, the numbers of parents who have encountered elements of this experience at some point is likely to be higher than this.

*NB The ONS does not collect specific detailed data around mothers/parents returning to work or data that covers employment history, i.e. as already mentioned, those who leave work soon after returning, or who change working arrangements in the following years.

This is explained in the following link: an ONS response to a Freedom of Information request - MJBTW did not make this FOI request but the ONS's response demonstrates the challenges in calculating accurate numbers across different studies and data sets, where time periods don't line up or where data is either not collected or not directly comparable.

[Women returning to work after maternity leave - Office for National Statistics](#)

Organisations mentioned in Episode 04:

A small sample of organisations that support/have supported UK working families and working parents, as follows:



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FURTHER LINKS & RESOURCES NOTES cont:

- [Family Action](#) (founded 1869)
- [Working Families](#)
- [Family Friendly Workplaces](#)

WHAT NEXT?

Add your story at www.myjourneybacktowork.com

Share with parents you know who might appreciate finding out more about the project.

Thank you!