



Three-year-olds and their families- preliminary results from the second wave of the Infant Cohort

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Introduction

- ***Growing Up in Ireland*** is the national longitudinal study of children
- Funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in association with the Department of Social Protection and the Central Statistics Office
- Carried out by a consortium of researchers led by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and Trinity College Dublin



Objectives

Objectives are:

- To study the lives of children in Ireland
- To establish what is typical and normal as well as what is atypical and problematic
- To identify the key factors that most help or hinder children's development
- To establish the effects of early child experiences on later life
- To obtain children's views and opinions on their lives
- Policy focus – to provide evidence base for the creation of effective and responsive policies and services for children and families



Growing Up in Ireland

Two cohorts of children:

- **Infant Cohort:** families of 11,100 9-month-old infants. First interviewed in 2008/2009.
90% successfully re-interviewed at 3 years of age, between January – August 2011. **New results today!**
- **Child Cohort:** 8,500 9-year-olds and their families. First interviewed in 2007/2008.
Currently being re-interviewed (September 2011 – February 2012).
- 120 households from both cohorts for in-depth qualitative interviews



Release of Preliminary Findings

- Minister today releases preliminary findings in three key areas of the child's life at 3 years of age:
 - Health
 - Family
 - Economic and Financial Circumstances

The Health of 3-year-olds

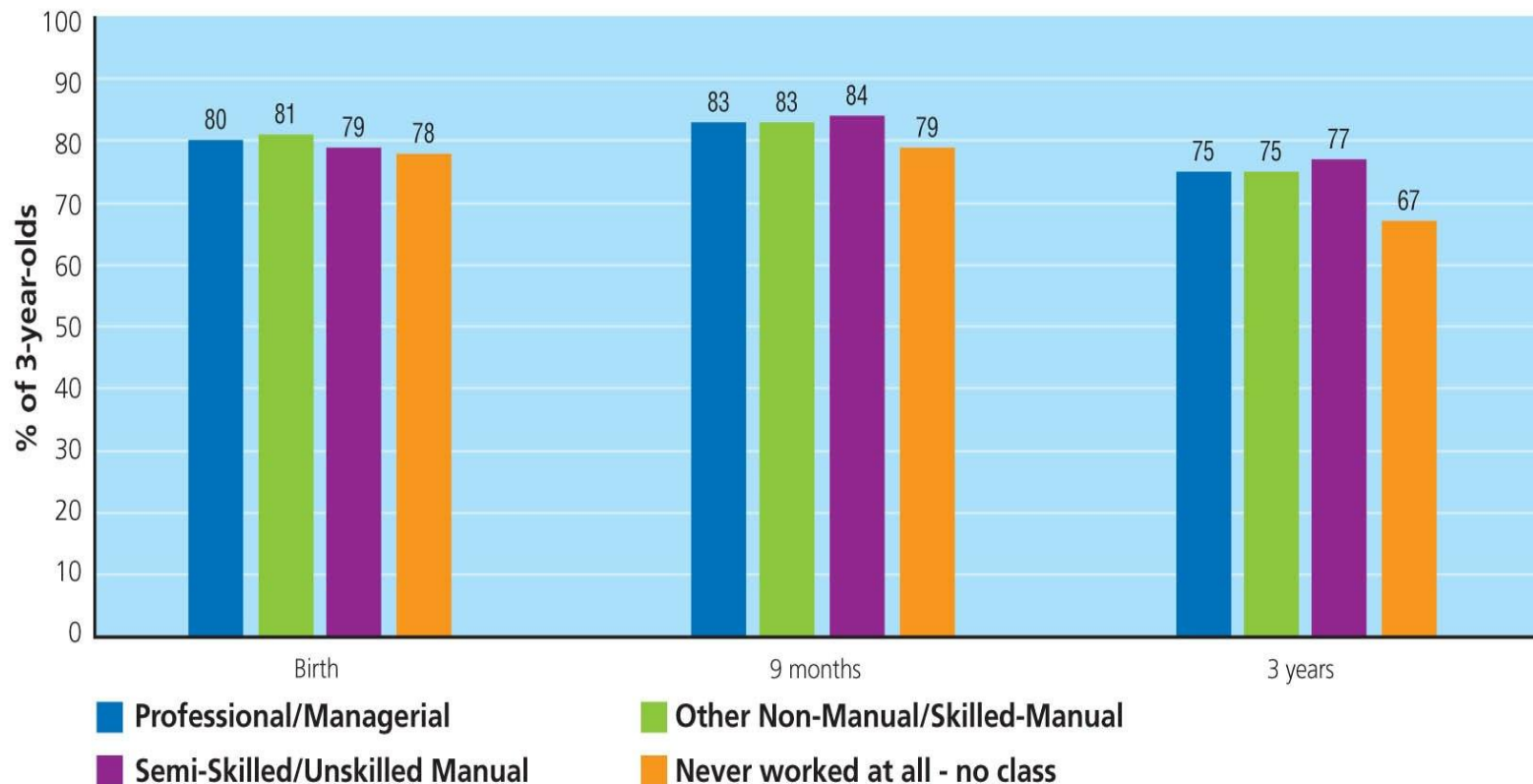
The Health of 3-year-olds

- Substantial majority of 3-year-olds in good health (according to their mother)
 - 75% *very healthy*
 - 23% *healthy, but a few minor problems*
 - 2% *sometimes quite ill*
 - 0.3% *almost always unwell*
- Girls more likely to be reported as *very healthy* (78%) than boys (72%)

The Health of 3-year-olds

- Gap in child health across social class groups seems to be widening

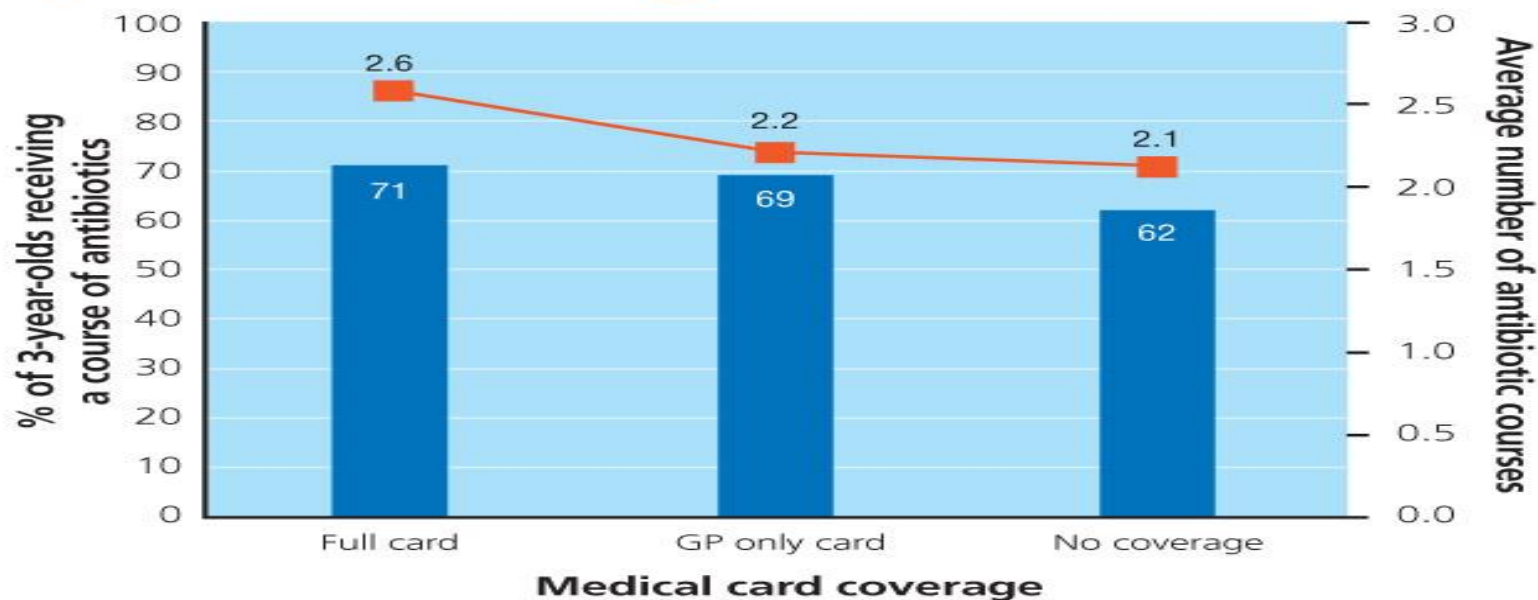
Percentage of three-year-olds rated as 'very healthy' by household social class from birth through to three years of age



The Health of 3-year-olds

- Two-thirds of 3-year-olds had received antibiotics in previous year
 - Children with full medical card or GP only card were more likely to have received antibiotics
 - Higher average number of courses for children with full card (2.6) compared to with no card (2.1). Relationship held even after accounting for overall health status

Percentage of three-year-olds who had received a course of antibiotics and average number of courses received, by medical card coverage





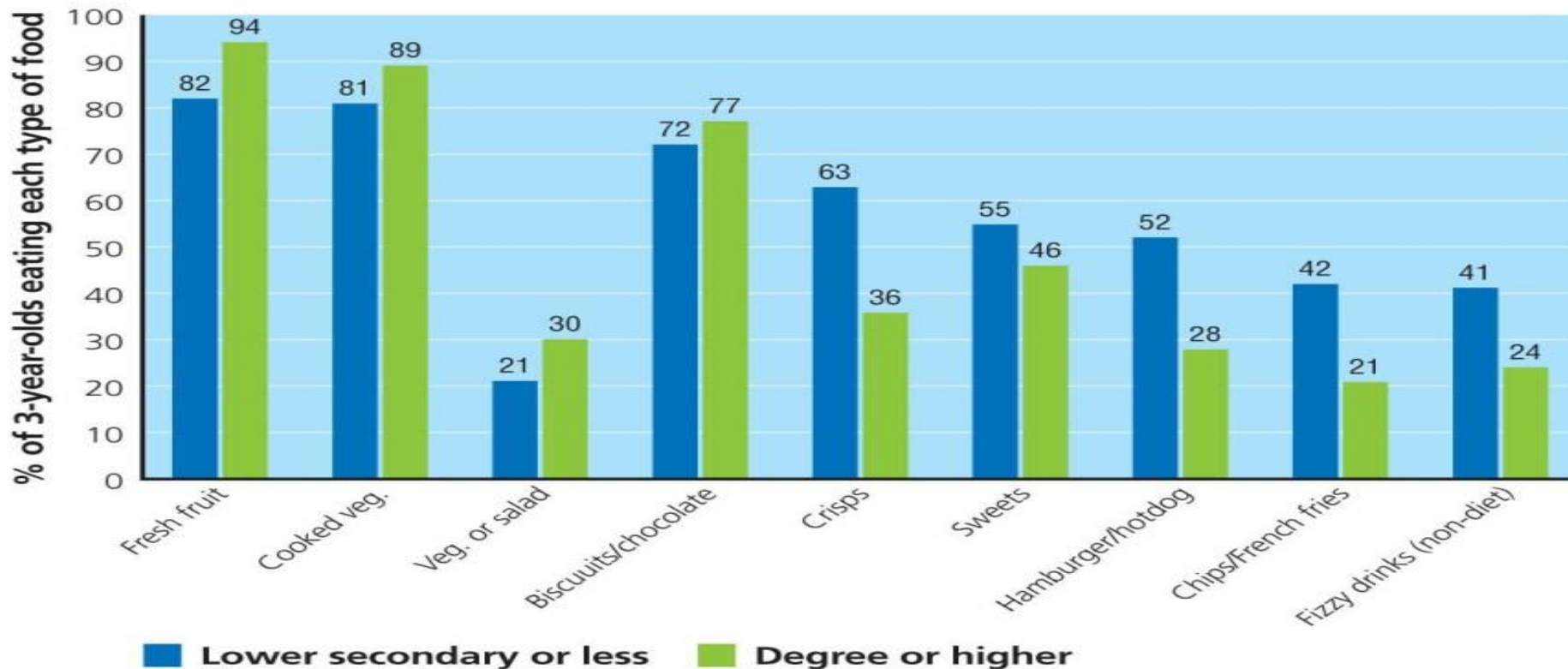
The Health of 3-year-olds

- Overweight and obesity levels are high, even among 3-year-olds
 - 19% of 3-year-olds were overweight
 - 6% of 3-year-olds were obese
- Evidence that obesity levels related to family social class,
 - 5% among most socially advantaged (professional category) vs.
 - 9% among those for whom social class cannot be defined

The Health of 3-year-olds

- Dietary quality associated with social disadvantage including maternal education.

Percentage of three-year-olds consuming at least one portion of various foods by mother's highest level of educational attainment

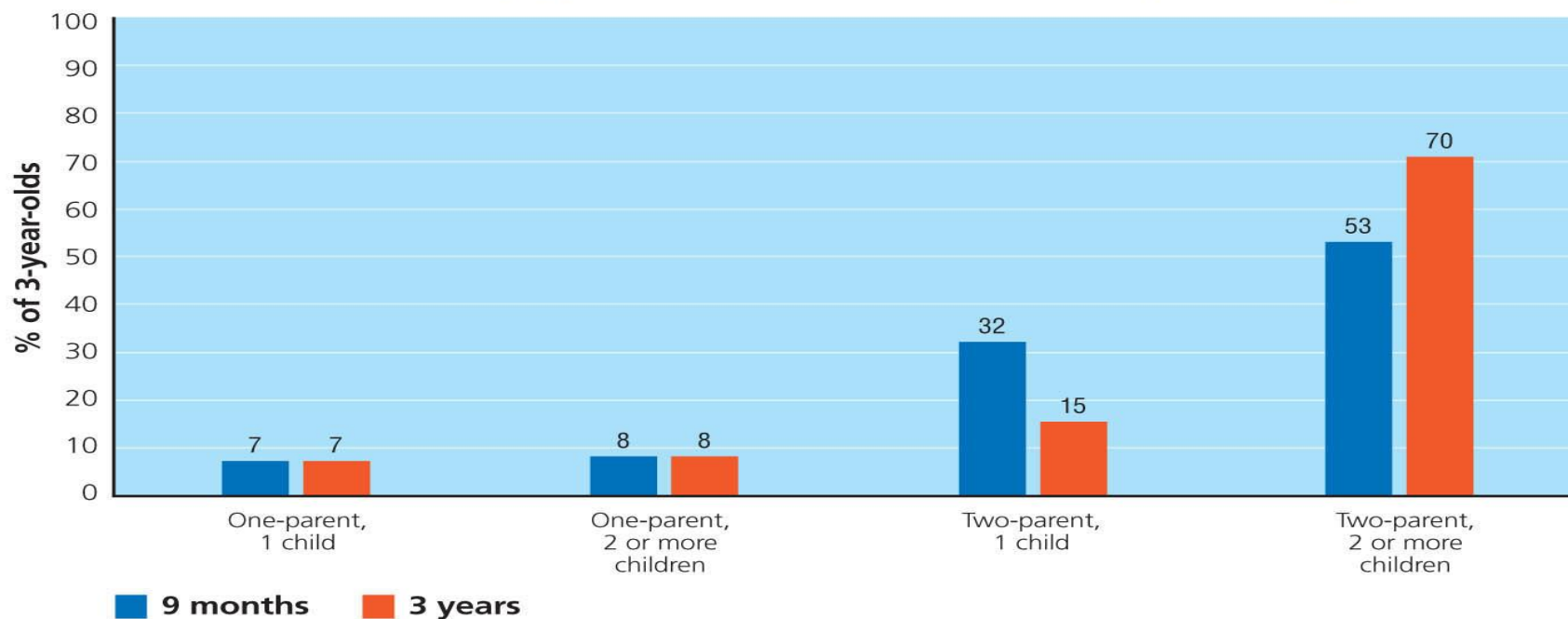


The Families of 3-year-olds

Families of 3-year-olds

- Overall family structure similar at 9-months and 3-years

Distribution of family types at nine months and three years of age

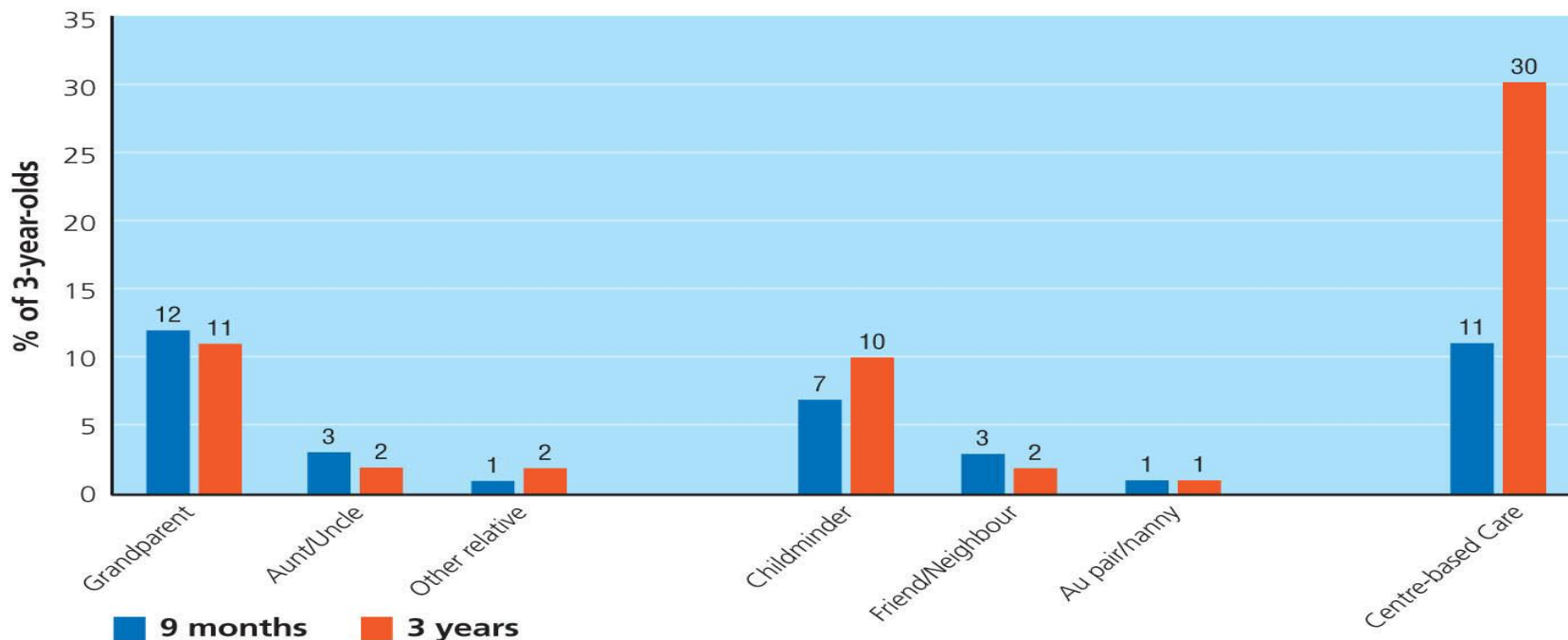


- 15% one-parent and 85% two-parent. Changes between surveys:
- 2-3% going from one-to-two-parent and also two-to-one-parent families

Families of 3-year-olds

- Half of 3-year-olds in regular non-parental childcare
- 11% cared for by grandparents; 30% in centre-based care
- Biggest change in care types used between 9-months and 3-years was in centre-based carers – 11% at 9 months to 30% at 3 years

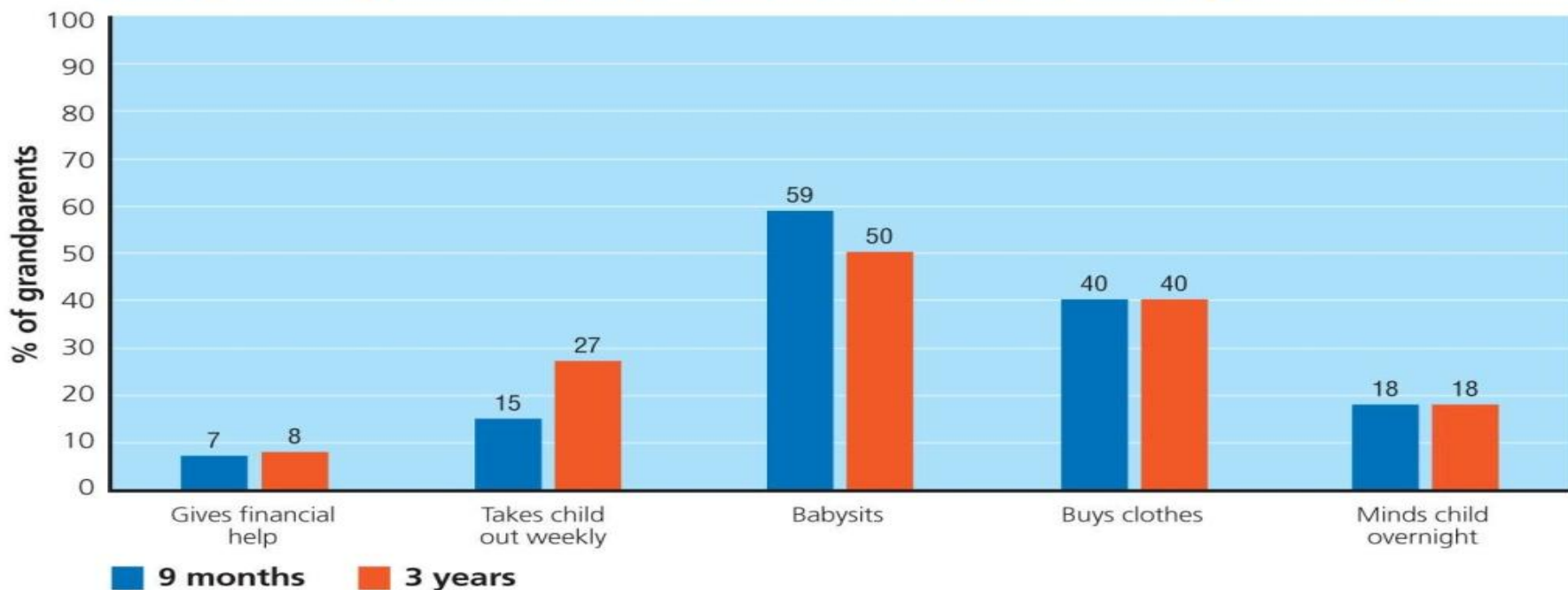
Percentage of children who were cared for by each type of childcare provider at age nine months and at age three years



Families of 3-year-olds

- Grandparents are a very important source of practical and financial support for large proportion of infants
 - 2% 3-year-olds had a grandparent living with them. 1% had two grandparents living with them
 - Types of support from grandparents varied substantially

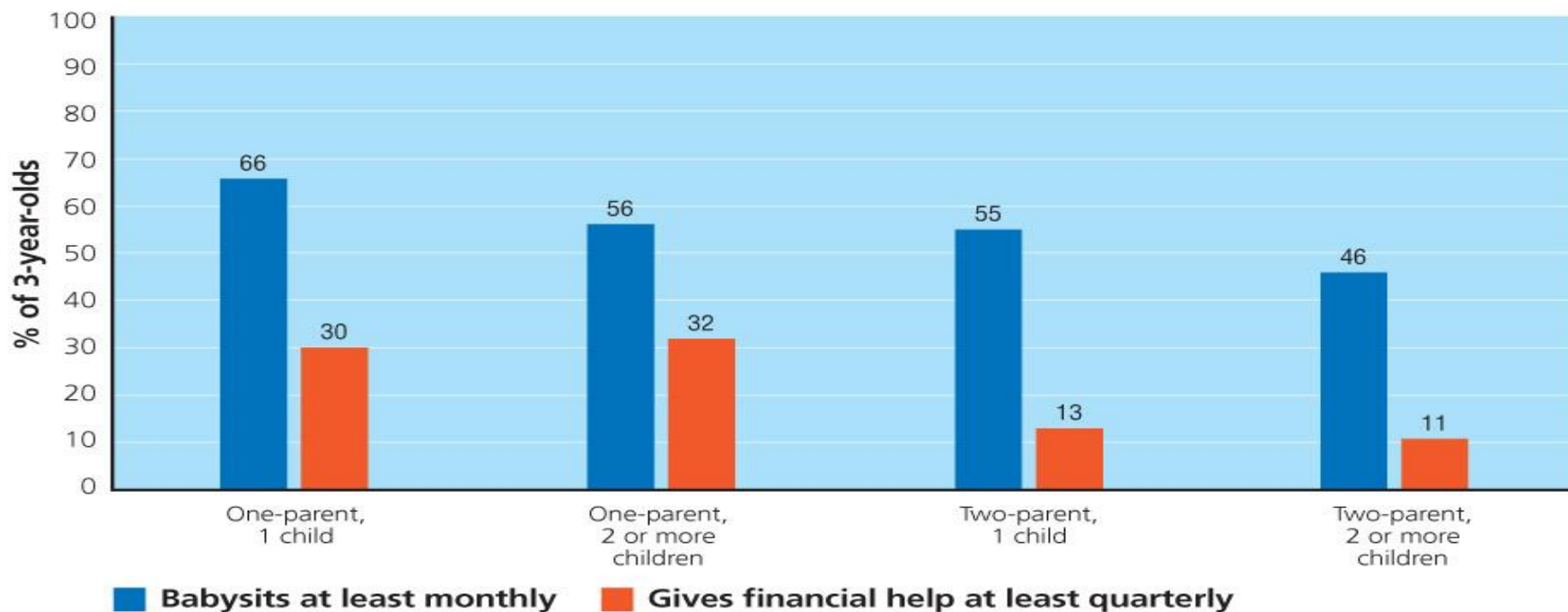
Percentage of grandparents providing each kind of support at least monthly (except taking child out) at nine months of age and three years of age



Families of 3-year-olds

- Financial support from grandparents particularly important for one-parent families

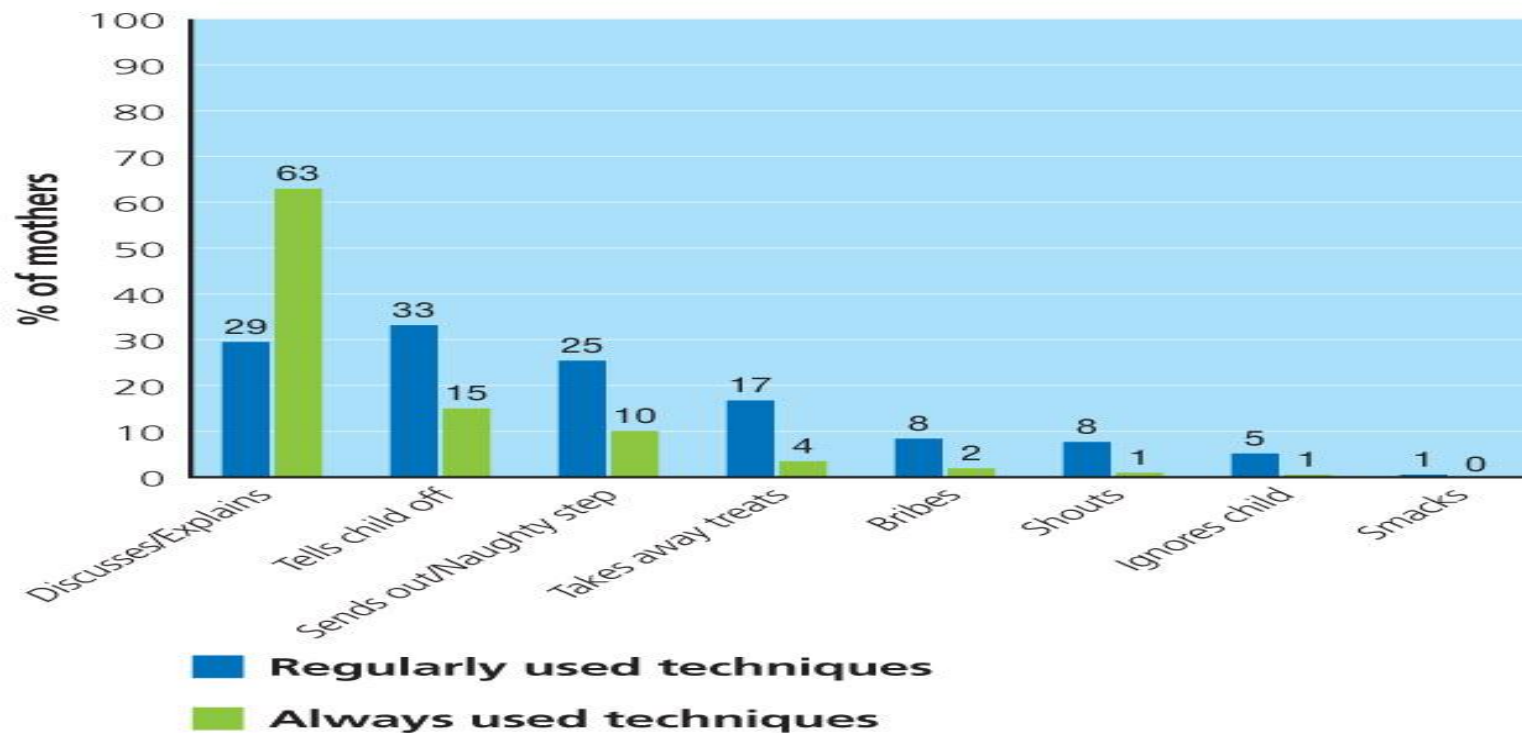
The percentage of three-year-olds whose grandparents provided support in the form of babysitting (at least monthly) and/or financial support (at least quarterly) by family type



Families of 3-year-olds

- Talking through bad behaviour with their children most commonly used discipline technique

Percentage of mothers who reported using each discipline technique either regularly or always



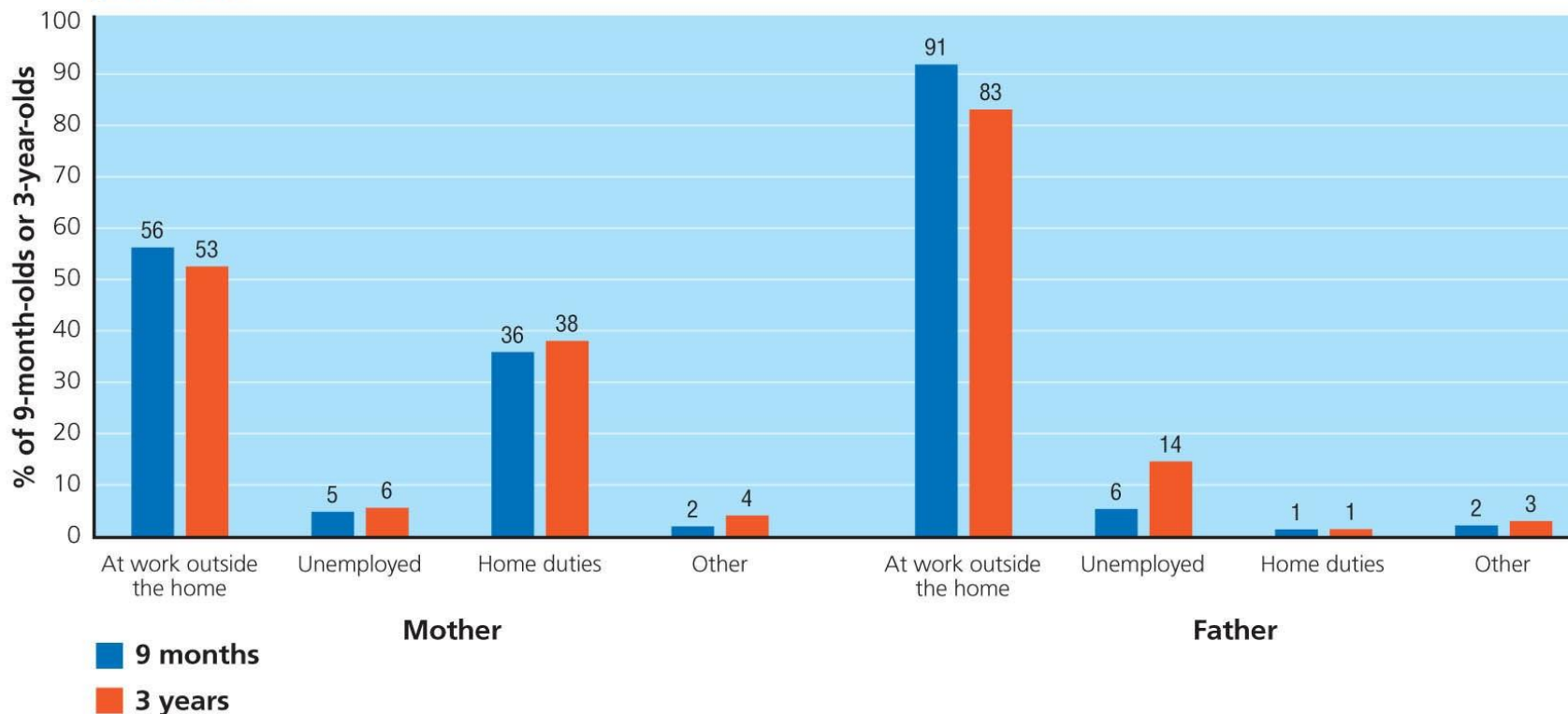
- As well as the 1% of mothers who reported using smacking *regularly* or *always*, a further 12% used it *now and again*. Over half *never* used it.

Economic and Financial Circumstances of 3-year-olds

Economic and Financial Circumstances of 3-year-olds

- Just over half (53%) of mothers of 3-year-olds worked outside the home
- Work status of mothers relatively unchanged between 9 months and 3 years
- Biggest change in percentage of 3-year-old's fathers who were unemployed – 6 per cent in 2008/2009 and 14 per cent in 2011

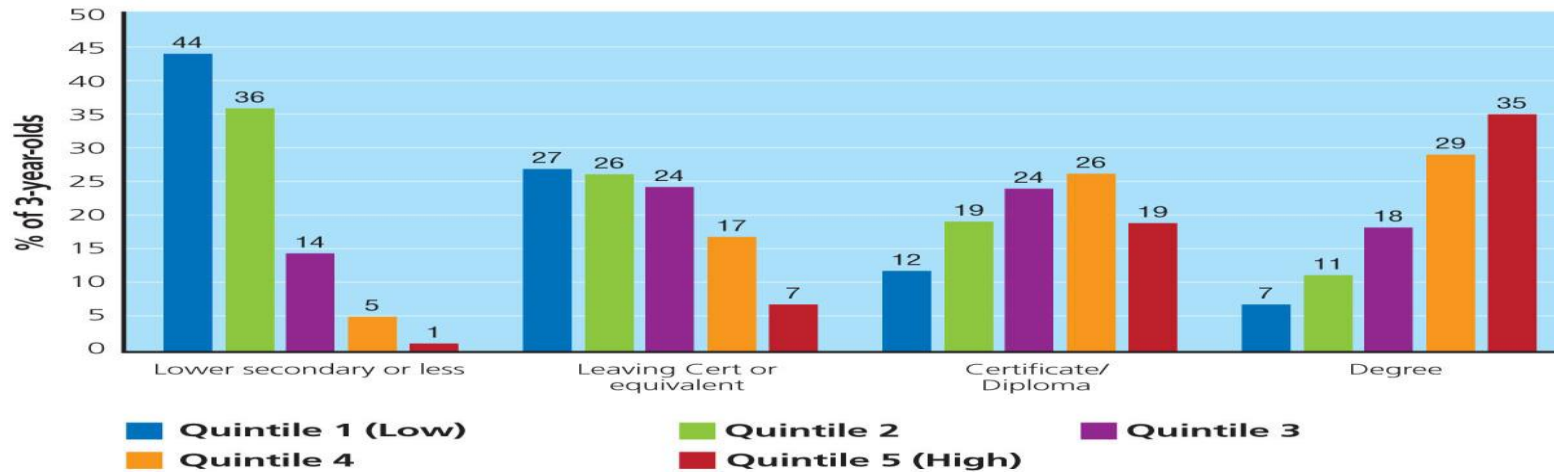
Mother's and father's labour-force status when the Study Child was nine months old and three years old



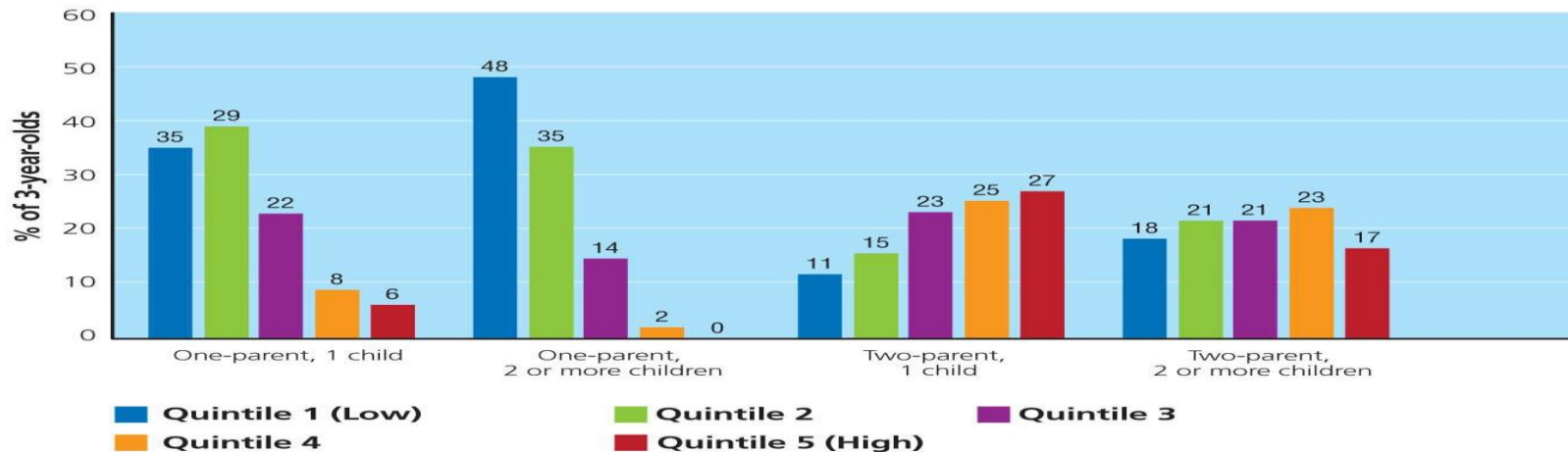
Economic and Financial Circumstances of 3-year-olds

- Family income strongly related to mother's education and family type

Three-year-olds and level of household income¹ – broken down by mother's education



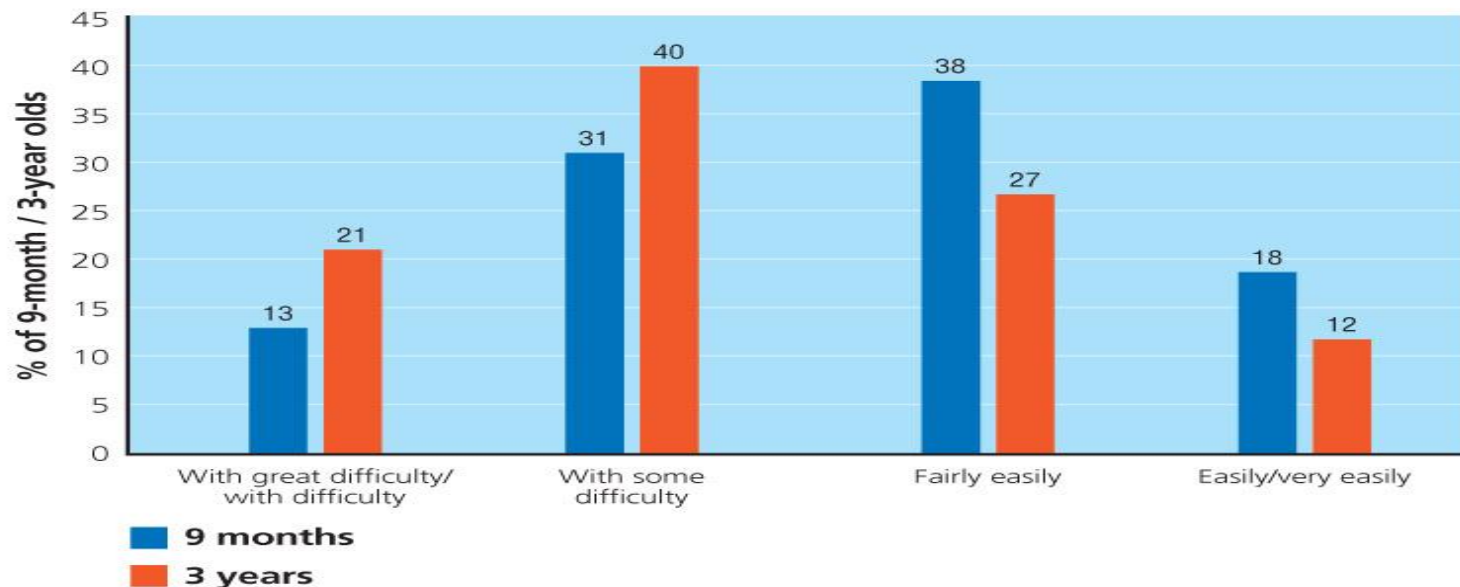
Three-year-olds and level of household income, classified by family type³



Economic and Financial Circumstances of 3-year-olds

- 61% of the families of 3-year-olds reported experiencing 'difficulties in making ends meet'

Breakdown of Study Children's families at nine months and three years, classified according to mother's perception of family's difficulty in making ends meet

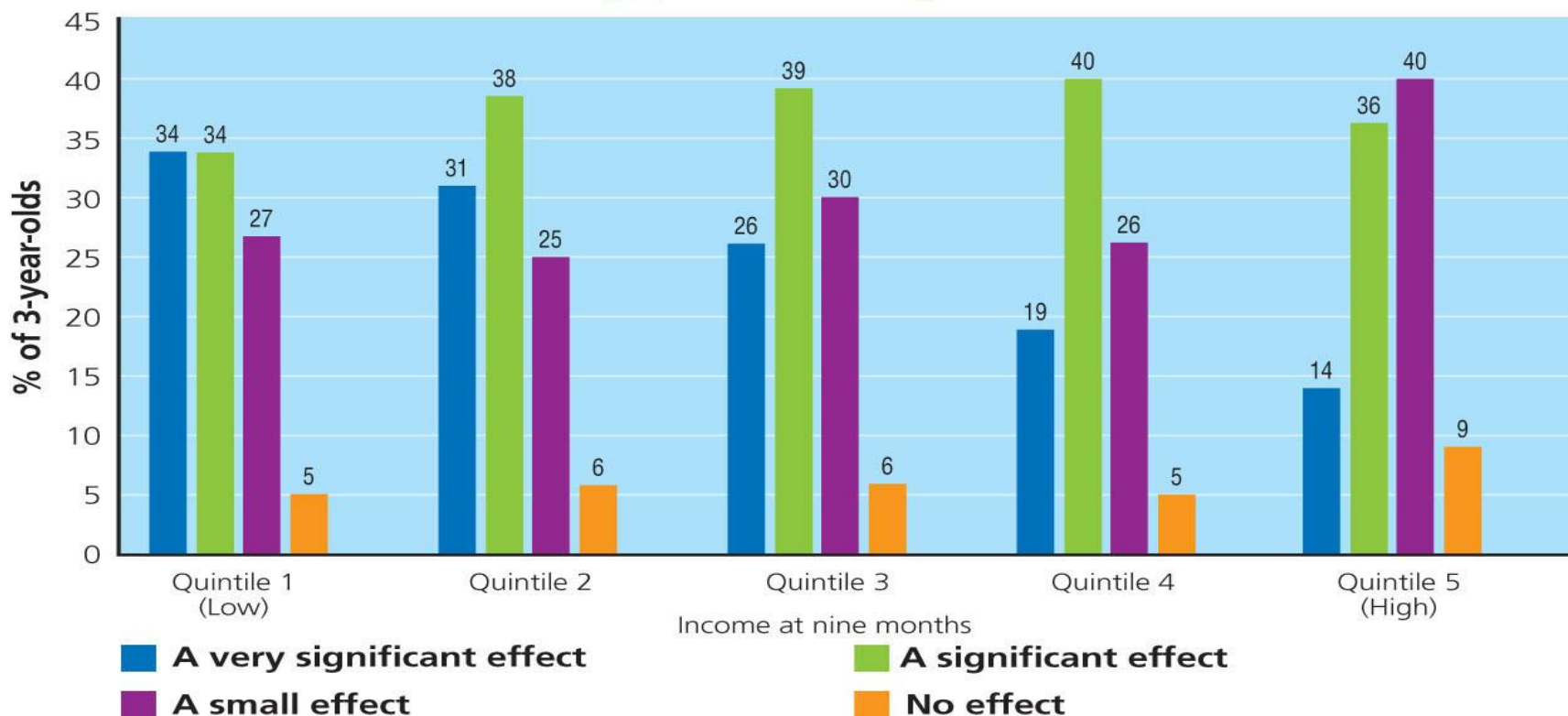


- Substantial increase in percentage reporting 'difficulties in making ends meet' between 9 months and 3 years – 44% vs. 61% respectively

Economic and Financial Circumstances of 3-year-olds

- Almost two-thirds of all families reported that recession had had a *very significant* or *significant* effect on them between interviews
- Effect felt across all sectors but most disadvantaged most likely to have reported *very significant* effect

Reported effect of recession since first interview when Study Child was nine months of age, classified by income at first interview

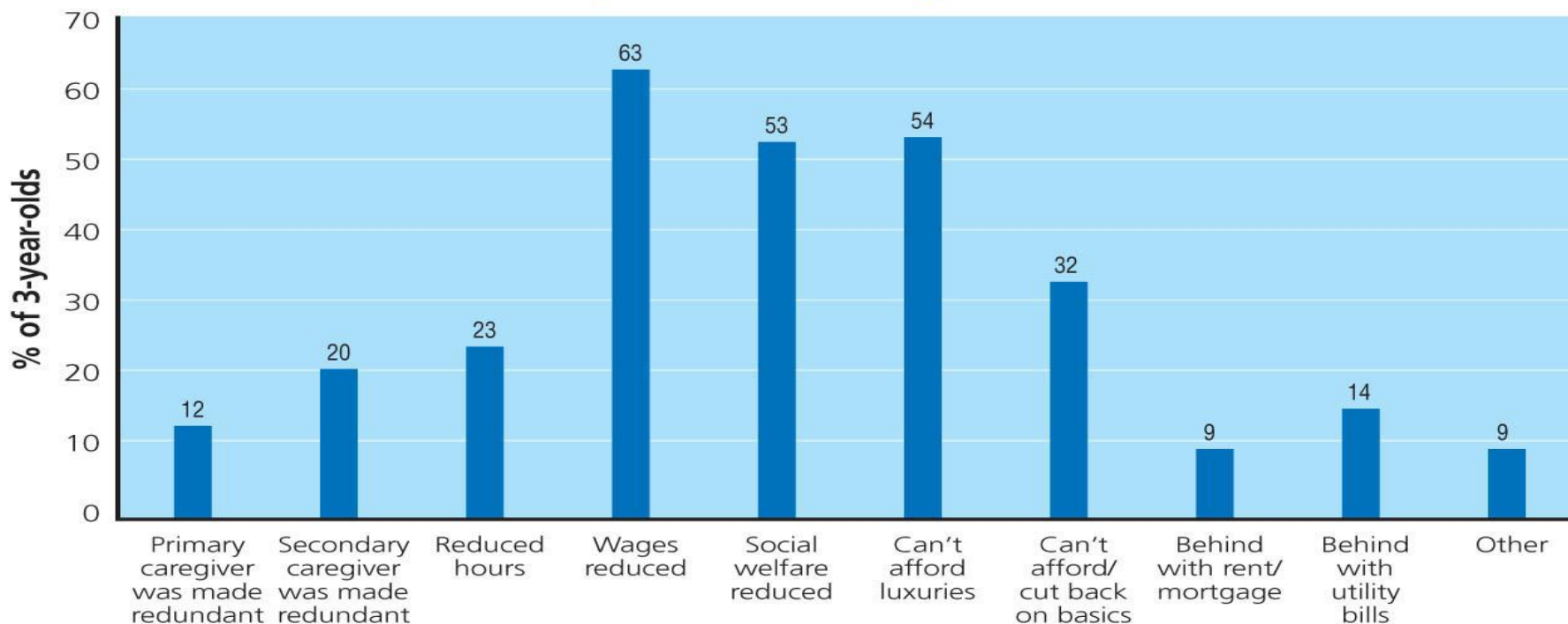




Economic and Financial Circumstances of 3-year-olds

- Nature of effects
 - Mothers who indicated recession had had adverse effect asked to record nature of effect, from a list of 10 pre-coded items

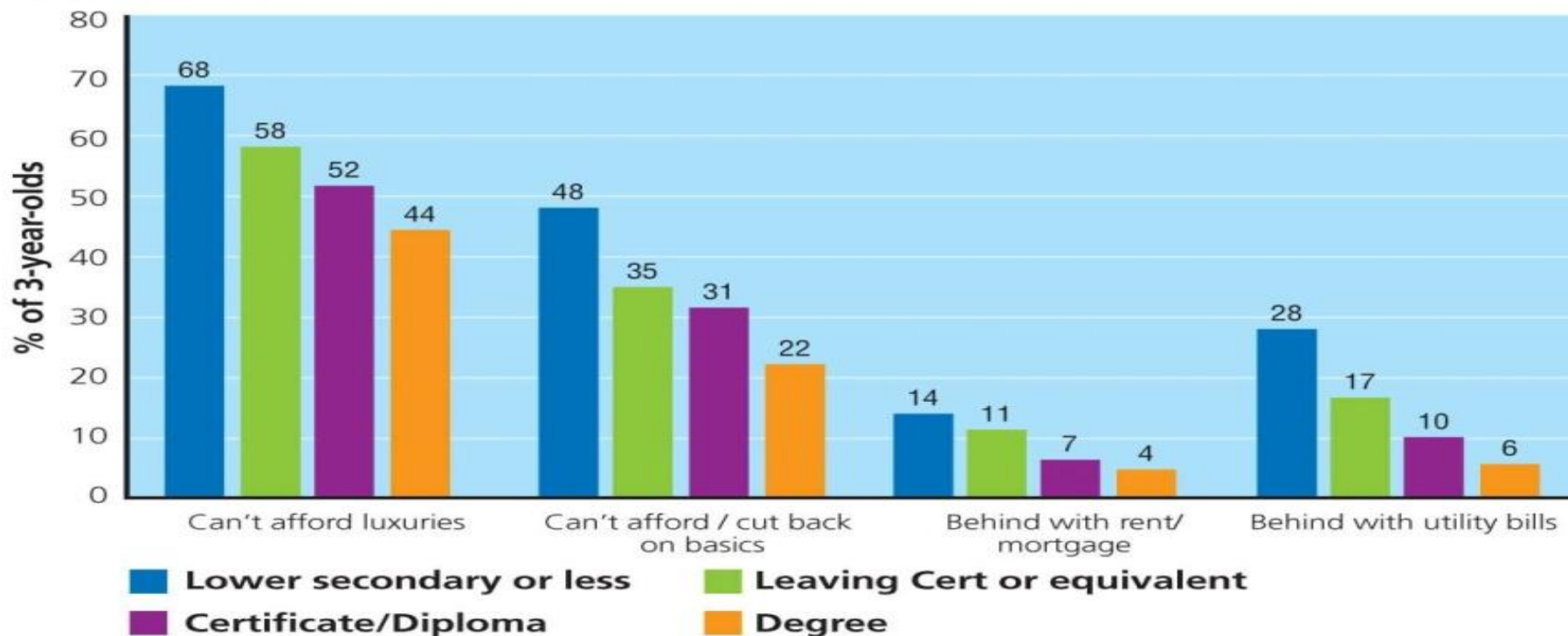
Effects of the recession on respondent's family since first interview (from a list of 10 pre-coded categories)



Economic and Financial Circumstances of 3-year-olds

- Differences in perceived effects of recession by maternal education level

Differences in selected effects of recession, by maternal education





Summary

Health

- Overall, health of 3-year-olds is good
- ...though some evidence to suggest an opening of health gap across social groups
- ...and overweight and obesity levels a concern

Family Structures

- In general, family structures similar at 9 months and 3 years – 2-3% changing from one-to-two-parent and vice versa
- Half of 3-year-olds in non-parental care
- ...grandparents an important aspect of non-parental childcare
- ...and in the other forms of support given to families. Financial support important, especially for one-parent families

Economic and Financial Stress

- 53% mothers of 3-year-olds working outside the home
- ...substantial increase in unemployment among resident fathers
- Strong relationship between family income, mother's education and family type
- Big increase in proportion finding it 'difficult to make ends meet' between 9 months and 3 years
- Two-thirds families said recession had *very significant* or *significant* effect on their families between interviews
- All families affected by recession, though evidence suggests most disadvantaged have been affected more
- Nature of effects different for different groups



Thank You

I would like to extend thanks to:

- Minister Fitzgerald for launching the Key Findings today
- Mary Doyle, DG of the DCYA, Dr Sinead Hanafin, Ms Anne-Marie Brooks and Mr Tim Heneghan
- The CSO, Padraig Dalton and Marion McCann
- Professor Ted Melhuish, Keynote speaker
- National and international assessors for detailed comments
- Chairs for the conference today
- The Research Ethics Committee (REC)
- Scientific & Policy Advisory Committee (SPAC)



Thank You

- Panels of Expert Advisors
- Stakeholders and interested parties whom we consulted with
- The children on the Children's Advisory Forum
- The users of the data from 9-years and 9-month cohorts
- GUI team and the field interviewers
- Biggest thanks to the 11,100 infants, their parents / guardians, carers



Data available from:

- <http://www.ucd.ie/issda/data/growingupinireland>
- <http://www.iqda.ie/content/growing-ireland>
- www.growingup.ie