



Growing Up in Ireland

National Longitudinal
Study of Children

Growing Up In Ireland Research Conference 2009



9-Year-Olds and Their Families



Introduction

- **Structure of the presentation:**
 1. **What is Growing Up in Ireland?**
 2. **Nine-year-olds and their families**
 3. **Family relationships**
 4. **Parenting Style**
 5. **Approaches to discipline in the home**
 6. **Contact with non-resident parents**
 7. **Conclusions/Summary**

Growing Up in Ireland

- ***Growing Up in Ireland* is the national longitudinal study of children.**
- **Funded by the Department of Health & Children through the Office for the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in association with the Department of Social and Family Affairs 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.**



Growing Up in Ireland

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 included – nine-year-olds and nine-month olds**
- **Child Cohort: 8,500 nine-year-old children interviewed at 9-years and 13-years.**
- **Infant Cohort: families of 11,000 nine-month old infants interviewed at 9-months and 3-years.**
- **120 households from both cohorts for in-depth qualitative interview**
- **Summary findings previously launched from 9-year-old cohort. Today the Minister launched first comprehensive report**
- **All data (quantitative and qualitative) will be deposited in data archives as a national resource – all anonymised.**

Longitudinal Design

- Record information from the *same* individuals at *different* points in time – very different from the more usual design of repeated cross-sectional surveys.
- Children from older cohort re-interviewed (with their families) when 13 years of age.
- Many advantages to a longitudinal design.
- Not least, allows identification of causal relationships and developmental trajectories. Very important for policy makers.
- Current report (by definition) cross-sectional – only first wave of data.
- Full potential of the study realised only when longitudinal data become available.

Who were the respondents?

- **Sample was generated through the Primary school system – 910 schools participated.**
- **Children were recruited through the schools**
- **In the school:**
 - **Principal interviewed**
 - **Teacher interviewed – about him/herself + child**
 - **Academic assessment tests in vocabulary and maths (Drumcondra tests)**
 - **Piers-Harris self-concept scale**
- **In the home:**
 - **Child**
 - **Primary and Secondary Caregivers - Parent(s) / guardian(s)**
- ***By post:***
 - **Other regular care giver (8 hours+ per week)**
 - **Non resident parent**
- **Height, weight of child and parent(s) / guardian(s)**

Contents of Report

- **Report covers a comprehensive range of topics on the lives of 9-year-olds**
 - Family structures
 - Parenting
 - Health – status and healthcare utilisation
 - Social emotional and behavioural wellbeing
 - Education – school and home settings
 - Peer relationships
 - Activities
 - Neighbourhoods and communities
- **Illustrates important associations between child outcomes, gender and some key family variables (income, family composition, maternal education etc).**
- **Today's report is descriptive and only scratches the surface of information recorded. More analytic report in preparation.**

9-year-olds and their families

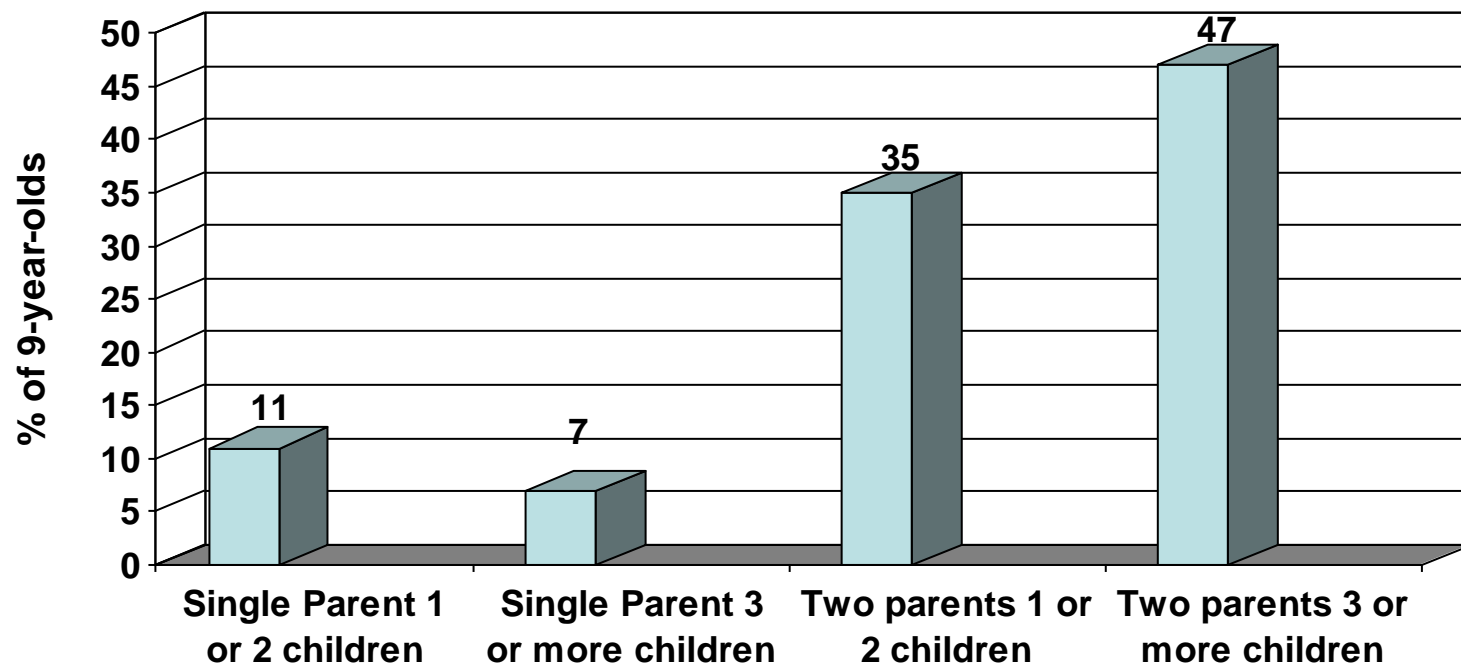
- **56,497 9-year-olds in Ireland**
- **51% male**
- **Primary and Secondary Caregivers – usually mother or father of the child**
- **Primary – person who provides most care to the child and is most knowledgeable about him/her.**
- **Secondary – spouse/partner of Primary Caregiver**

Primary and Secondary Caregivers

	Primary Caregiver	Secondary Caregiver
Male	2.2%	99.1%
Female	97.8%	0.9%
Average age (yrs)	39.4%	42.0%
<i>Relationship to 9-year-old</i>		
Parent	98.2%	96.0%
Foster Parent	0.7%	0.6%
Step-Parent/Partner of Primary Caregiver	0.1%	2.9%
Grandparent	0.8%	0.3%
Other Relative	0.2%	0.1%
Total	100%	100%

9-year-olds and their families

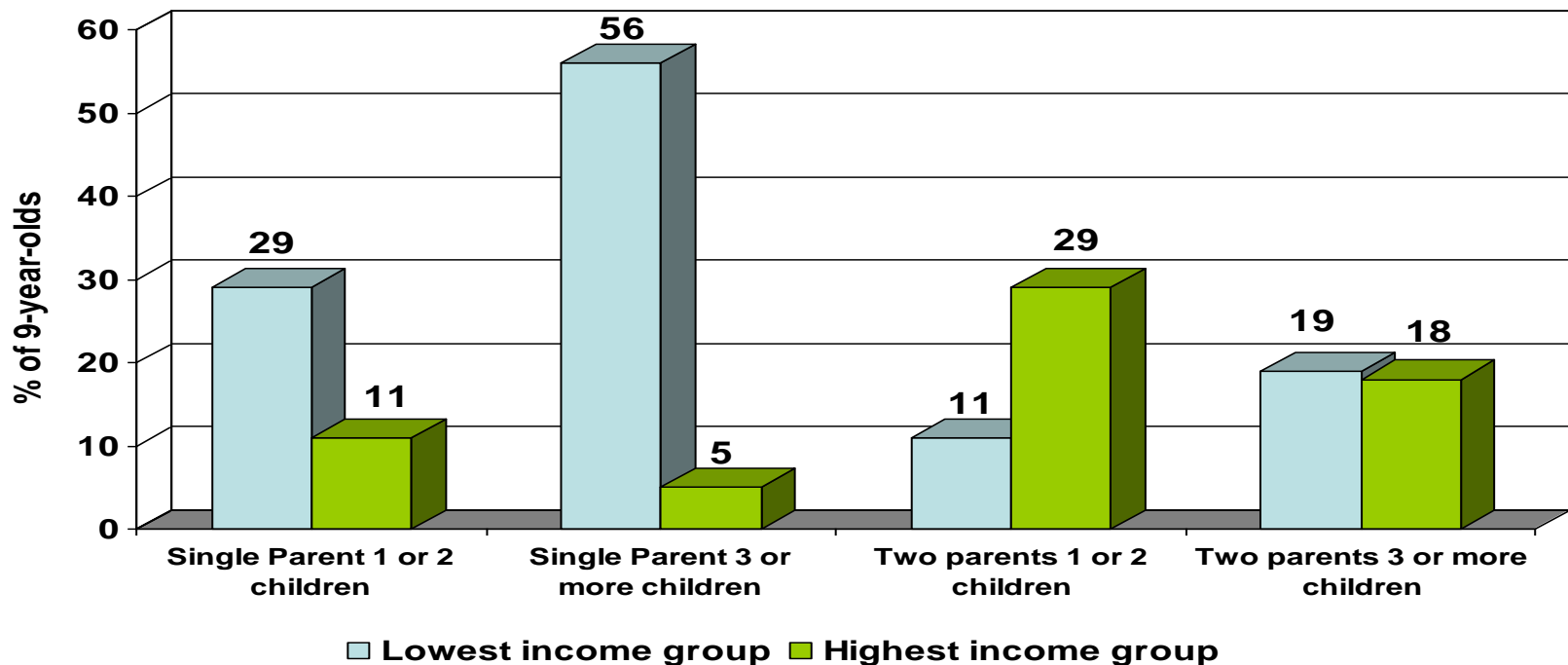
- **82% in two-parent families; 18% in single-parent families**



Family Type and Family Income

- Family income adjusted for composition of household
- Single parent families more likely to be in the lowest income groups

Percentage of children within each family type in lowest and highest income groups



Family Relationships

- Large majority of 9-year-olds report that they got on *very well* with their mother and father (86% and 83%) – less than 1% said they *did not* get on with their mother or father.
- One-third *always* get on well with their siblings and 64% say they *sometimes* get on with them. Only 2% said they *never* got on with them.

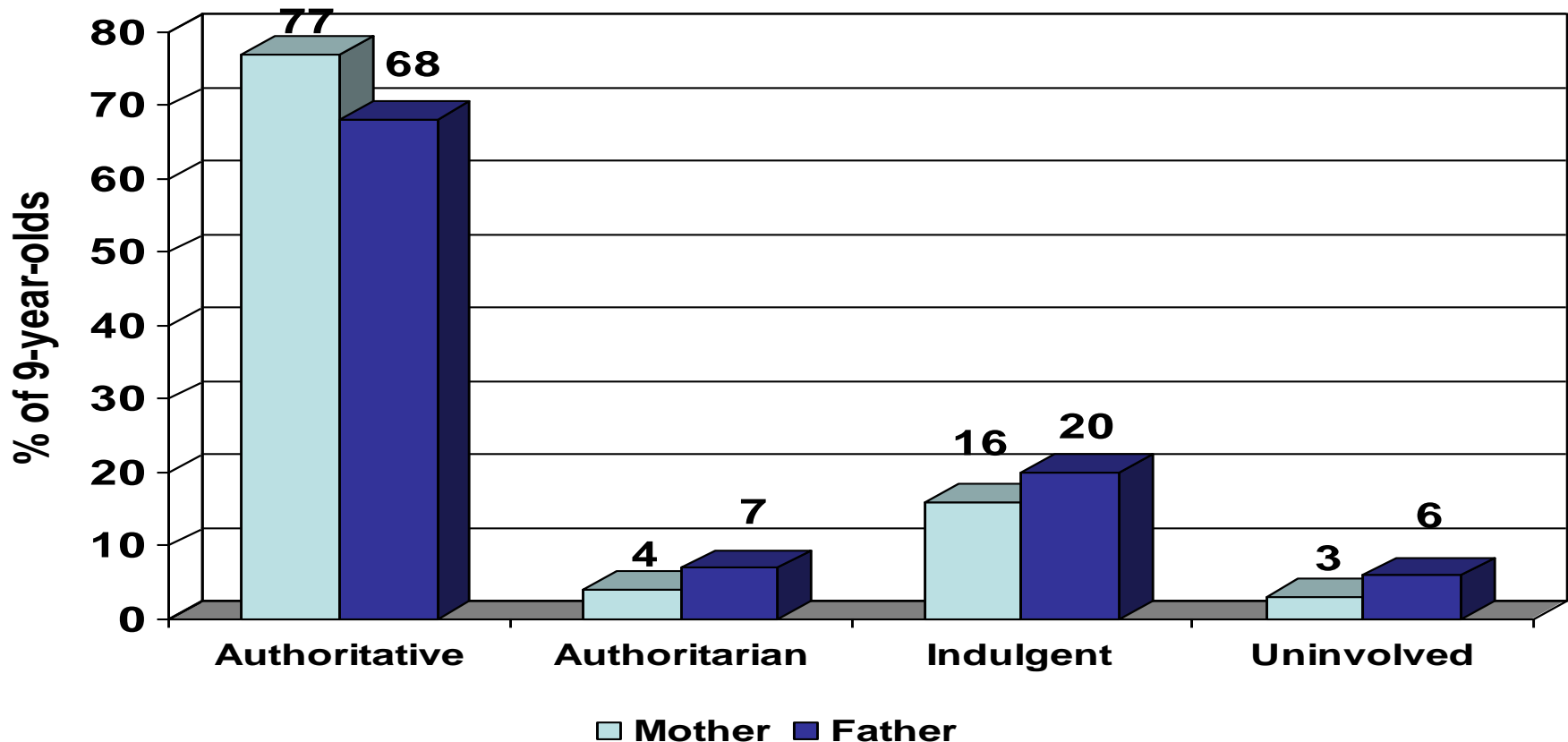


Parenting Style

- Internationally validated Parenting Style Inventory completed by the children – set of 12 age-appropriate questions
 - Authoritative - **high** control; **high** responsiveness/support
 - Authoritarian - **high** control; **low** responsiveness/support
 - Indulgent (permissive) - **low** control; **high** responsiveness/support
 - Uninvolved (neglectful) - **low** control; **low** responsiveness/support
- Authoritative - control with responsiveness/support, usually considered optimal

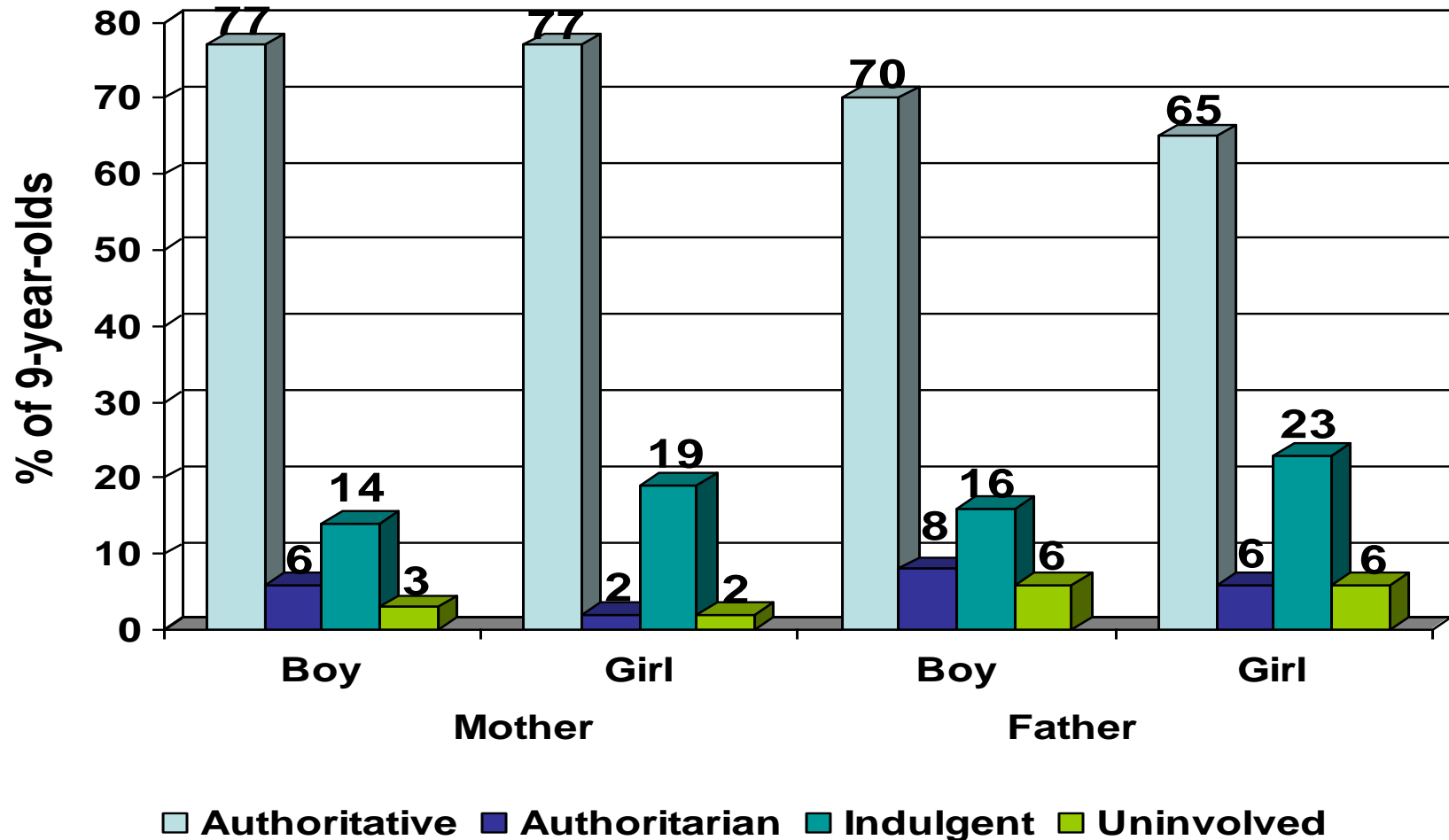
Parenting Style

- Majority of both mothers and fathers adopt authoritative parenting style – 77% mothers and 68% fathers



Parenting Style

Percentage of boys and girls in each parenting type by parent



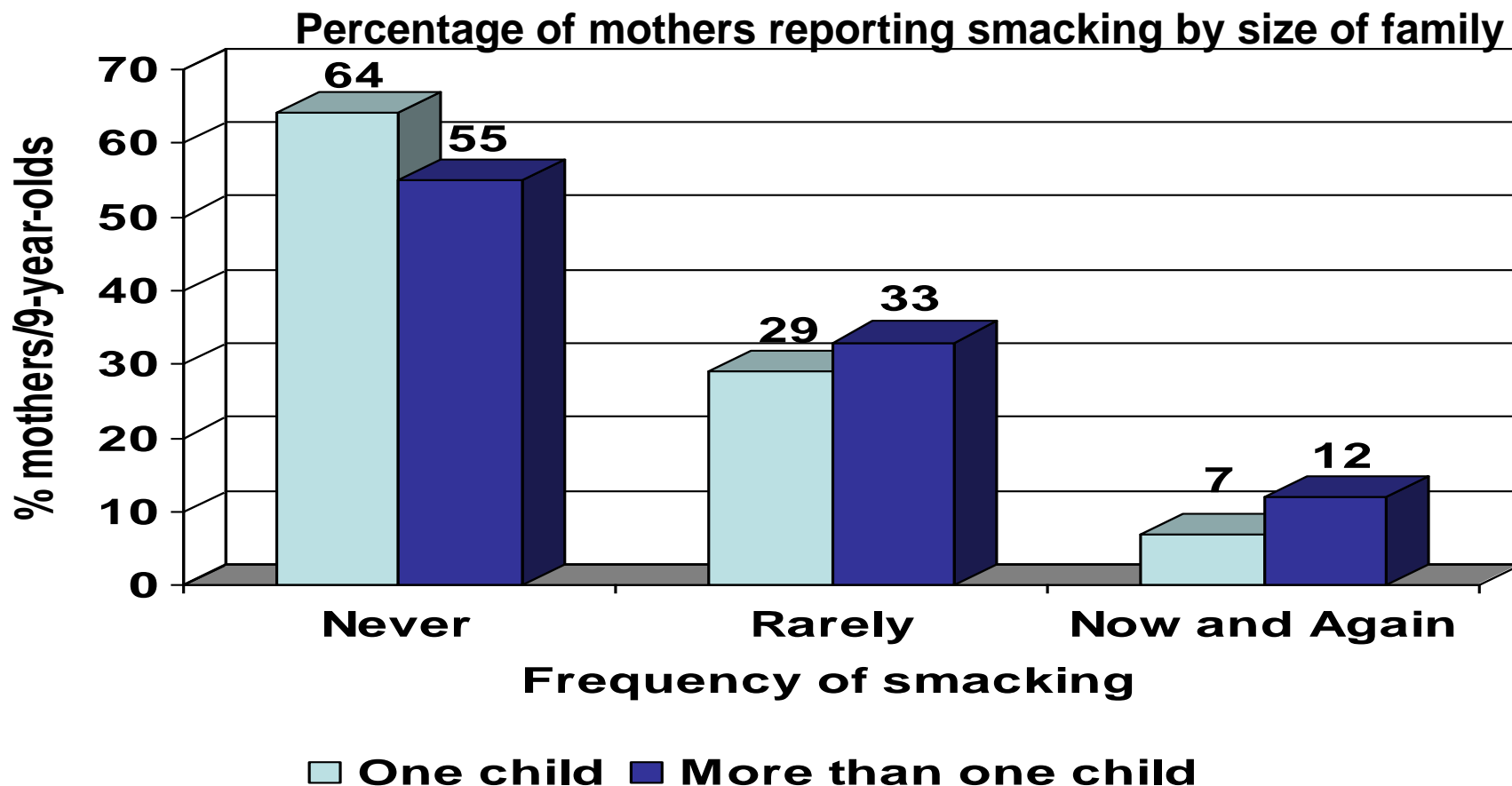
Discipline Strategies Within the Home (Mother's report)

- Mother's self-reported use of discipline strategies (percentages)

Discipline Strategy	Never	Rarely	Now & again	Regularly	Always
	<i>Per cent using each discipline strategy</i>				
Discuss/explain why behaviour wrong	1	2	10	28	60
Ignore child	58	19	20	3	0
Smack child	57	32	11	0	0
Shout / yell at child	7	21	52	17	3
Send child out of room /to bedroom	19	23	40	14	4
Take away treats/pocket money	32	20	32	12	4
Tell child off	5	9	41	30	15
Bribe child	71	14	12	2	0
Ground child	43	20	26	8	3

Discipline Strategies – smacking (Mother's report)

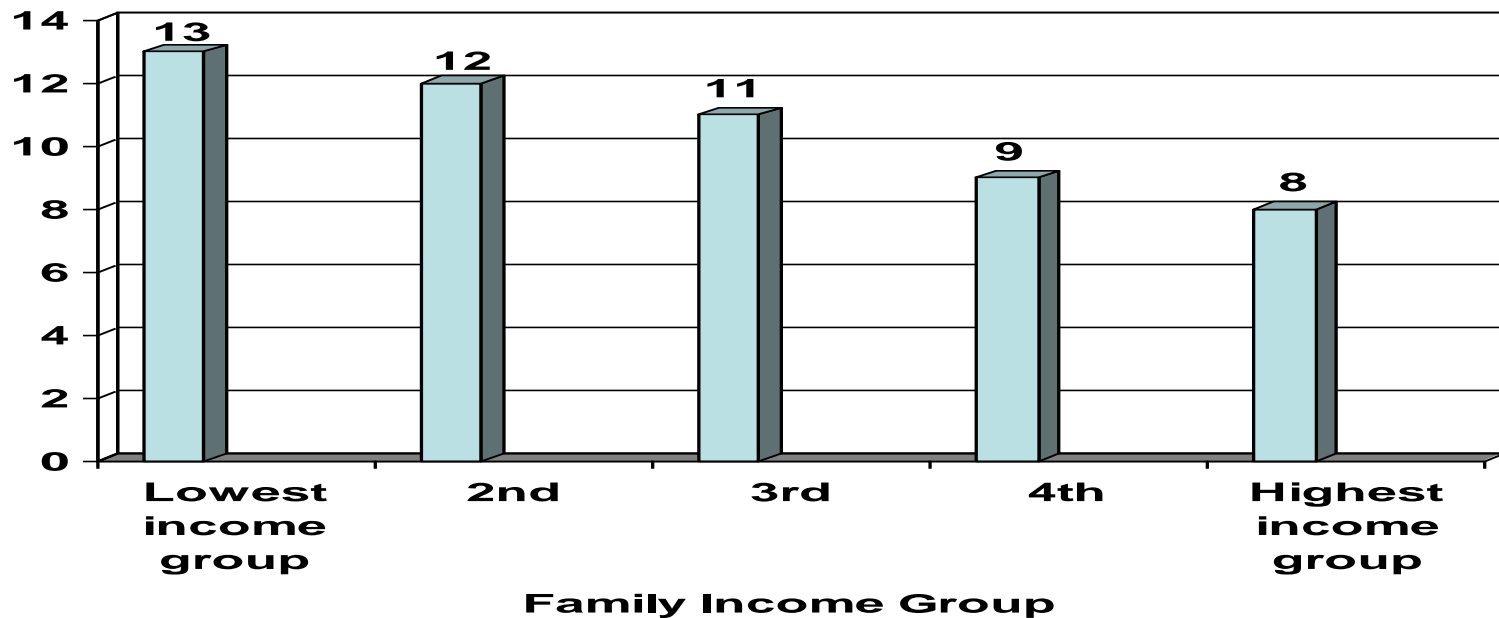
- Size of family associated with prevalence of smacking – possibly stress-related



Discipline Strategies – smacking (Mother's report)

- Social gradients and prevalence of smacking
- Percentage of mothers who record that they use smacking *now and again*. Same general pattern apparent in terms of social class and level of mothers educational attainment

Percentage of mothers reporting smacking now and again by family type

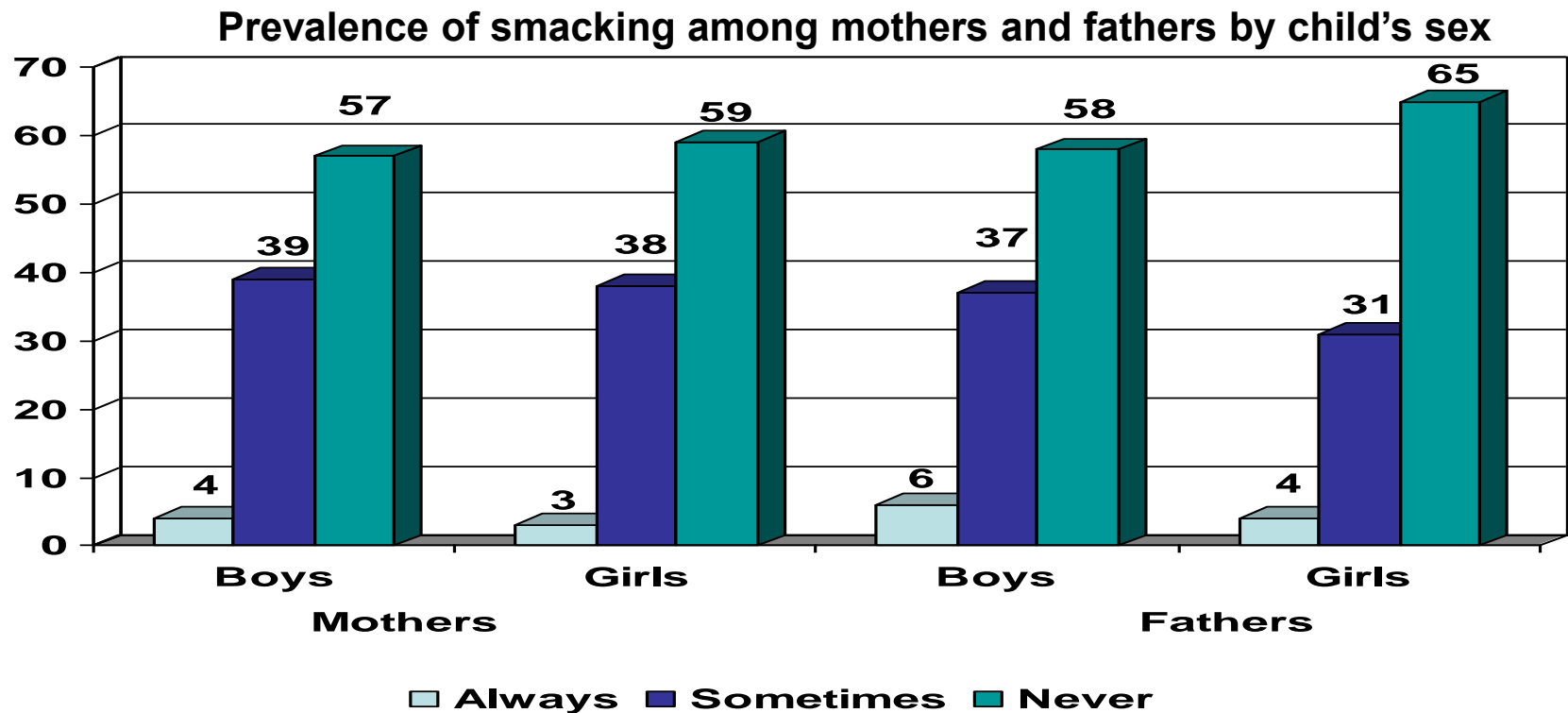


Comparison of mother and child report on smacking

	<i>Always</i>	<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Now & Again</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
Mother	0.1%	0.4%	10.7%	31.9%	56.9%
Child	<i>Always</i> 3.8%		<i>Sometimes</i> 38.5%		<i>Never</i> 57.6%

- ***Broad* similarity in prevalence between reports from mother and child – but child reports more frequent smacking.**

Differences in mother's and father's use of smacking (child's report)



- Boys and girls don't differ in their report of being smacked by their mother.
- Fathers seem to behave differently with sons and daughters in terms of 'smacking'

Non resident parents – relationship with mother on becoming pregnant

- Resident mothers in lone parent families recorded some details on the non-resident father of the nine-year-old (18% of Study Children were in lone-parent families)
- Majority of mothers recorded having been married to (36%) or living with (34%) the child's father at some time.
- When she became pregnant 59% of current lone parents were married to or living with the child's father.

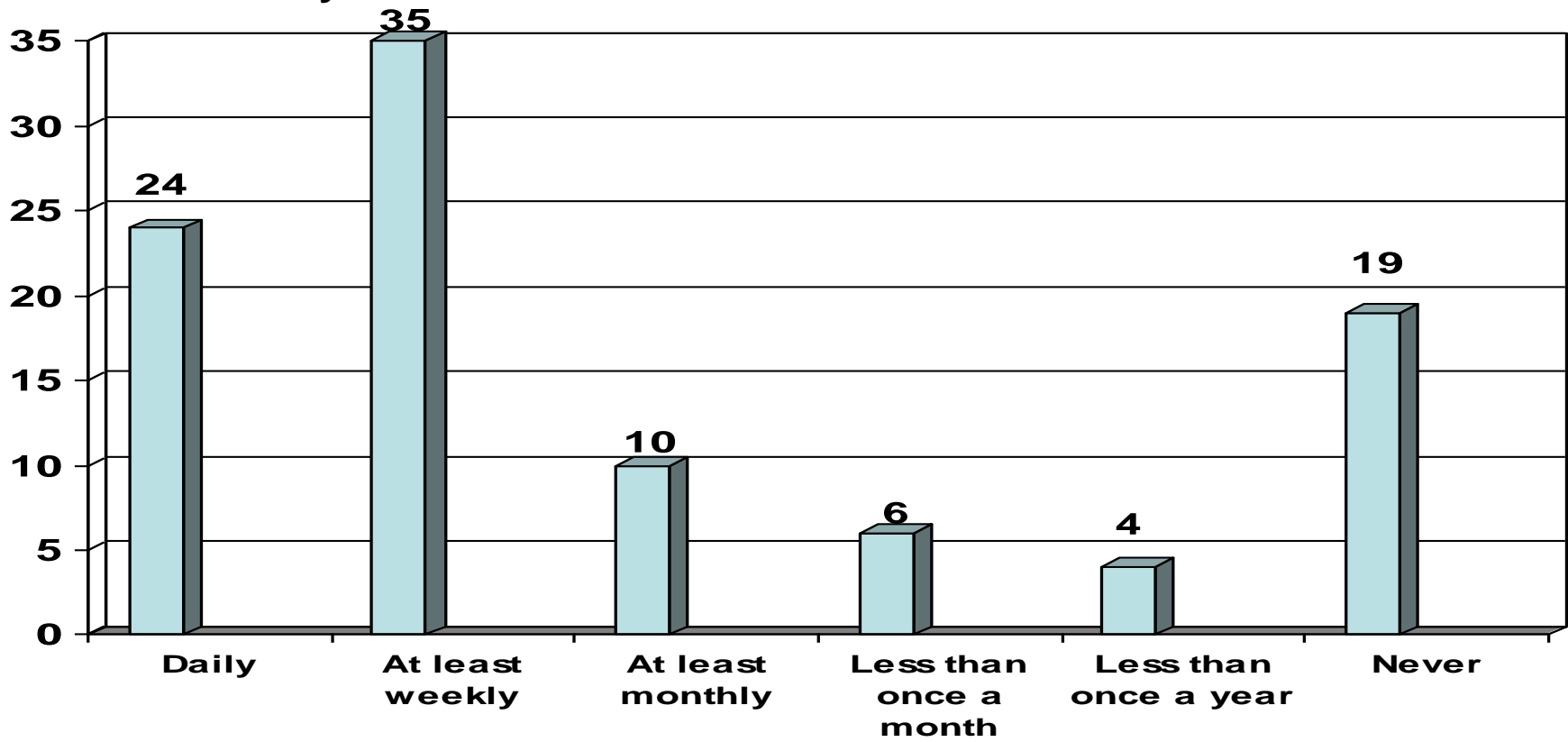
Non-resident parents – nature of current relationship with child's father

- **Considerable variation in nature of mother's current relationship with child's father.**
- **24% mothers said *very negative* relationship; 21% said *positive* and 9% *very positive*.**
- **32% Mothers *never* spoke to child's father about the Study Child, 13% spoke *several times a week* and 8% spoke to him about the child on a *daily* basis.**

Non-resident parents – contact with the father

- 'Contact' can take any form – face-to-face, 'phone, email texting etc.)
- 24% nine-year-olds in lone parent families had daily contact with their father. 35% weekly and 23% had practically no contact

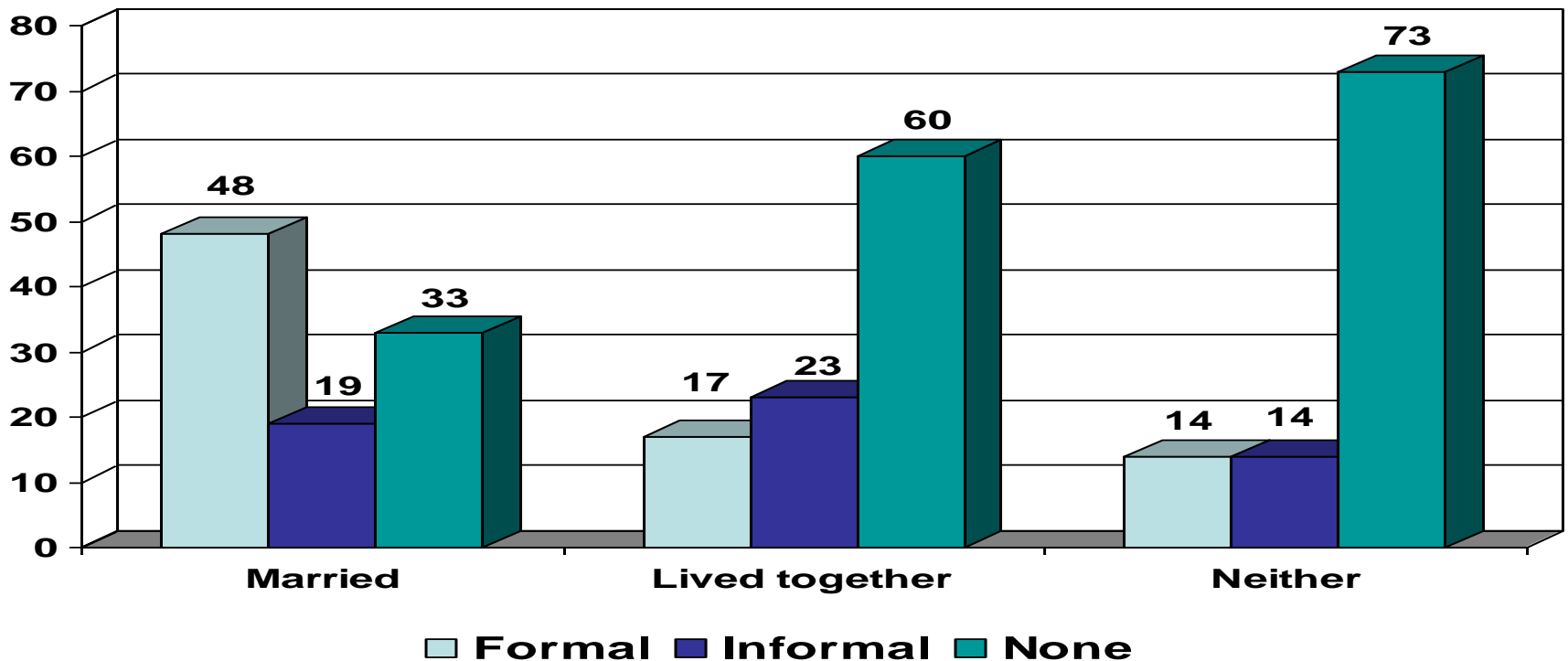
9-year-old's contact with non-resident fathers.



Custody Arrangements

- 55% of mothers reported no particular custody arrangement
- 27% of mothers reported a formal custody arrangement
- 18% of mothers reported an informal custody arrangement

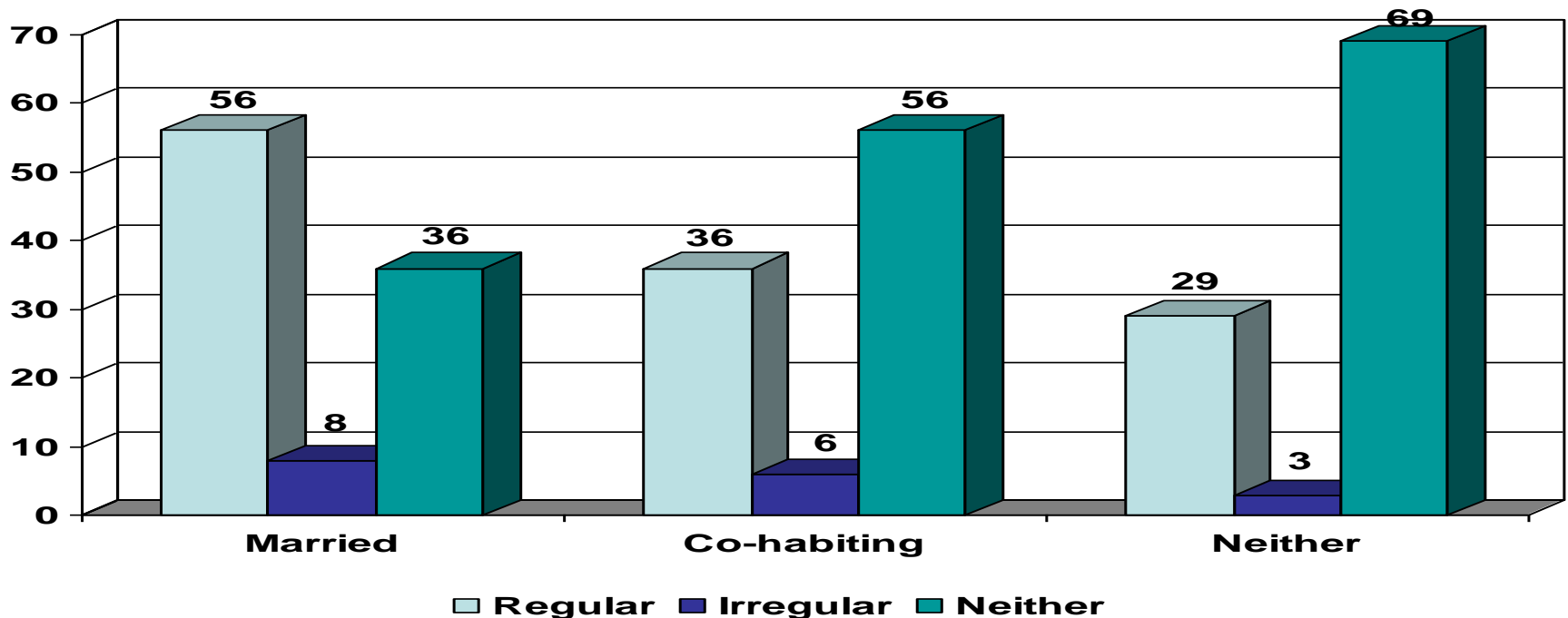
Custody arrangements by previous marital status.



Maintenance Payments

- 51% of mothers reported father never made any financial contribution.
- 43% reported receiving regular payments.
- 6% reported irregular contributions as required.

Maintenance payments by previous marital status



Summary

- In broad terms the story told about the children's families is a positive one – though there are a few areas of concern.
- Majority of nine-year-olds (82%) in two-parent families
- Income, social class and mother's education strongly associated with family type
- Single-parent families more likely to be in lowest income group (adjusting for family composition).
- In general, children record getting on well with their parents – 86% said they got on *very well* with their mother and 83% *very well* with their father.
- The majority of both mothers and fathers (77% and 68%) adopt an authoritative parenting style. This combines high control with high support - usually associated with optimal outcomes for children.

Summary

- **Very large percentages of mothers report adopting a domestic discipline policy which is based on discussing and explaining why a child's behaviour is wrong – 88% recorded that they did this *regularly or always*.**
- **More punitive discipline strategies also used – smacking used by 11% of mothers *now and again*. This is related to social class, income and maternal education.**
- **70% of mothers at some time lived with (married or partner) non-resident parent.**
- **Almost one third of mothers never speak to the non-resident father about the nine-year-old.**
- **55% of formal custody arrangement**
- **51% no maintenance payments**

Thank You

As co-directors of the project we would like to extend thanks to:

- **Minister, Dept. of Health & Children and OMCYA**
- **National and international assessors of the project**
- **Guest speakers today**
- **Chairs of the conference**
- **Staff of the project and colleagues in both ESRI and TCD**
- **The Research Ethics Committee (REC)**
- **Scientific & Policy Advisory Committee (SPAC)**
- **Panels of Expert Advisors**
- **Stakeholders and interested parties whom we consulted with**
- **Teacher, principals, administrative staff in schools**
- **84 children on the Children's Advisory Forum**
- **Biggest thanks to the 8,570 9-year-olds, their parents / guardians, carers.**



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