



**INFANT
COHORT**

APRIL
2011



**Growing Up
in Ireland**

National Longitudinal
Study of Children

GROWING UP IN IRELAND

KEY FINDINGS: INFANT COHORT (at 9 months)

NO. 3 CHILDCARE AND PARENTING SUPPORT

INTRODUCTION

This is the third in a series of *Key Findings* from the Infant Cohort in the *Growing Up in Ireland* study. It summarises some of the characteristics of nine-month-olds and their experience of non-parental childcare. The data were collected when the Study Children were nine months of age. Just over 11,100 children and their families were recruited into the project, from the national population of almost 73,700 nine-month-olds.

Non-parental childcare is usually the child's first sustained contact with adults outside of his/her immediate family. Since some children spend a substantial number of hours in the care of someone other than their parents, this has the potential to have a strong influence on the child and his/her development. Childcare is an area of significant policy development in Ireland over the last decade.

Growing Up in Ireland provides a more detailed picture of the non-parental care of infants in Ireland than heretofore available. This includes not only information on the range and take-up of childcare options but also on parents' perceptions of the quality of the care as well as the factors that influence their choice.

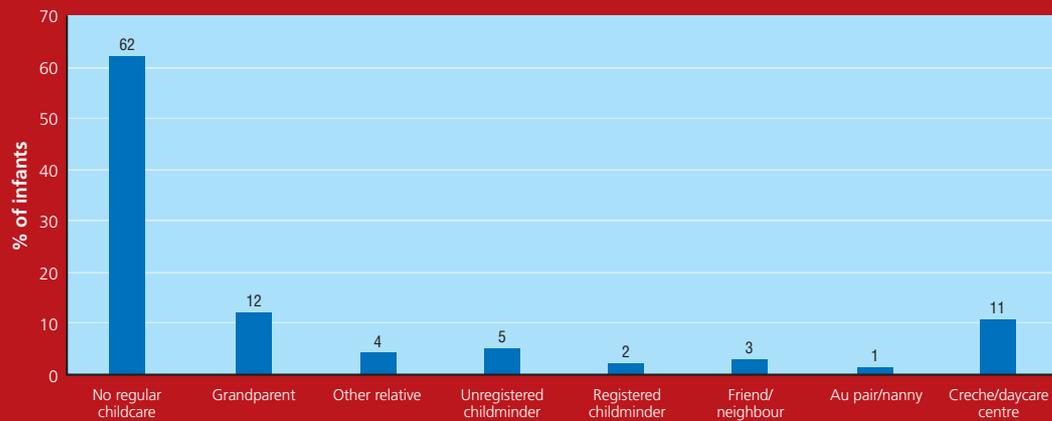
A number of aspects of non-parental childcare are discussed in this *Key Finding*: the type of childcare arrangement used with nine-month-olds; the relationship of carer to the Study Child; the number of hours and cost of the childcare, and the reasons mothers had for choosing their childcare arrangement. This *Key Finding* also examines parents' satisfaction with the type of childcare they were using.

ALMOST FOUR IN 10 NINE-MONTH-OLDS IN SOME FORM OF NON-PARENTAL CHILDCARE

Mothers in the Study were asked to report on whether or not their infant was in some form of non-parental childcare.

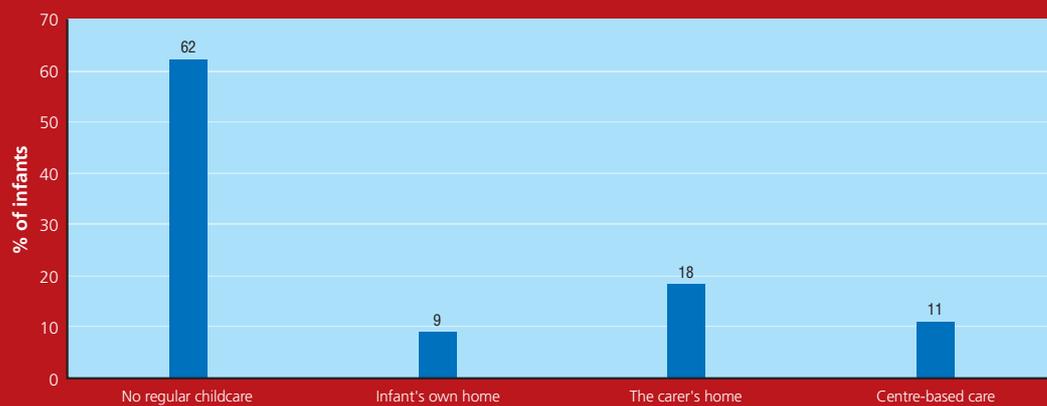
- 38% of nine-month-olds were in some form of non-parental childcare at time of interview (defined as at least eight hours per week on a regular basis).
- Figure 1 shows that grandparents were the most frequent provider of childcare (12%), followed by crèche/daycare centres (11%).

Figure 1: Main type of childcare provider used



- Figure 2 shows that home-based care was more common than centre-based care – a carer's home was the most frequently used location for childcare (18%).

Figure 2: Location of childcare



MOTHERS WORKING OUTSIDE THE HOME AND HIGHER-INCOME FAMILIES ARE MORE LIKELY TO USE REGULAR CHILDCARE

- As might be expected, the use of regular childcare was more frequent in families where the mother was working outside the home and where the mother was working longer hours, as shown in Figure 3. For example, 41% of mothers who worked outside the home for less than 10 hours a week had regular childcare arrangements compared to 80% among those who worked 30 hours or more per week.¹
- Use of non-parental childcare was more common among families in the higher-income groups, as shown in Figure 4. Only 17% of those in the bottom income quintile reported using regular childcare compared to 60% of those in the highest income quintile.
- Couples with one child used childcare more frequently than couples with more children, as shown in Figure 4. Single parents had a higher usage of childcare relative to their income than did couples.

¹ Mothers in Ireland were entitled to 26 weeks' maternity leave at time of data collection.

Figure 4: Use of childcare classified by equivalised family income group and by family type

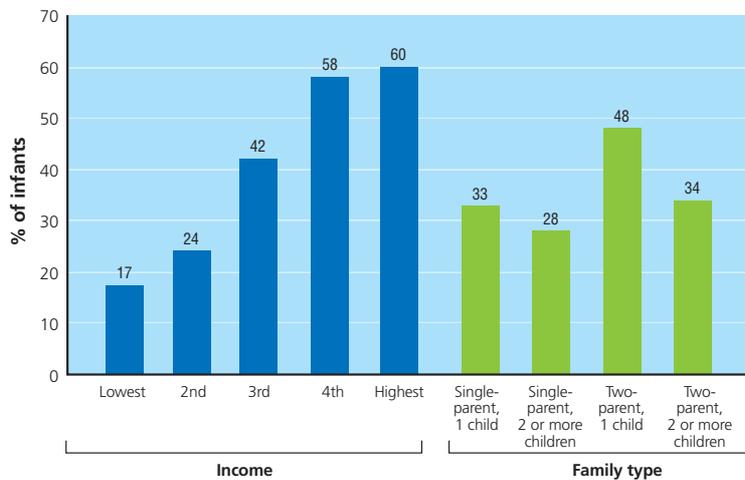


Figure 5: Average hours spent in childcare each week

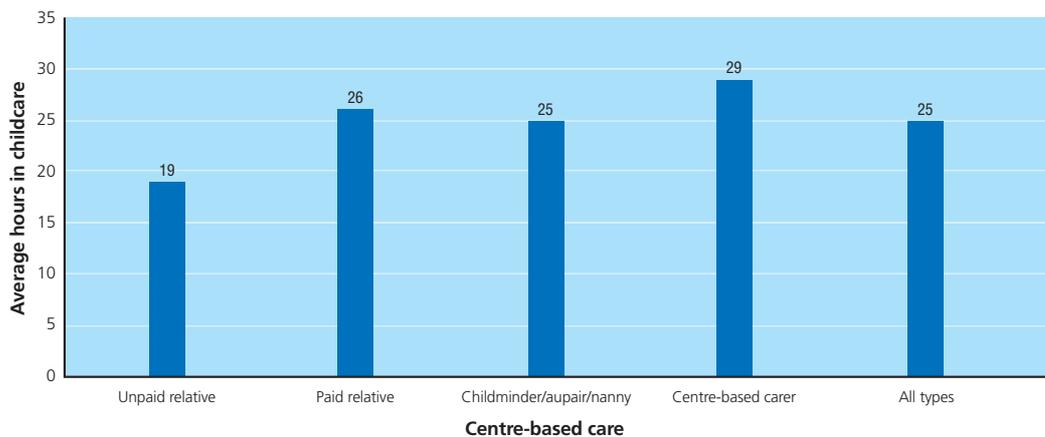
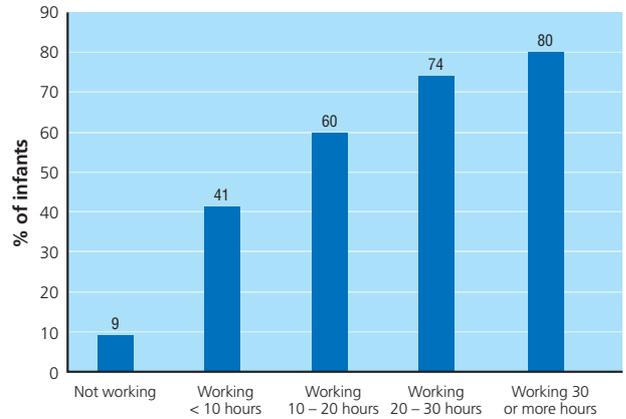


Figure 3: Use of regular childcare and maternal employment classified by number of hours mother worked outside the home



DIFFERENCES IN COST AND PATTERNS OF CARE BETWEEN RELATIVE AND CENTRE-BASED CHILDCARE

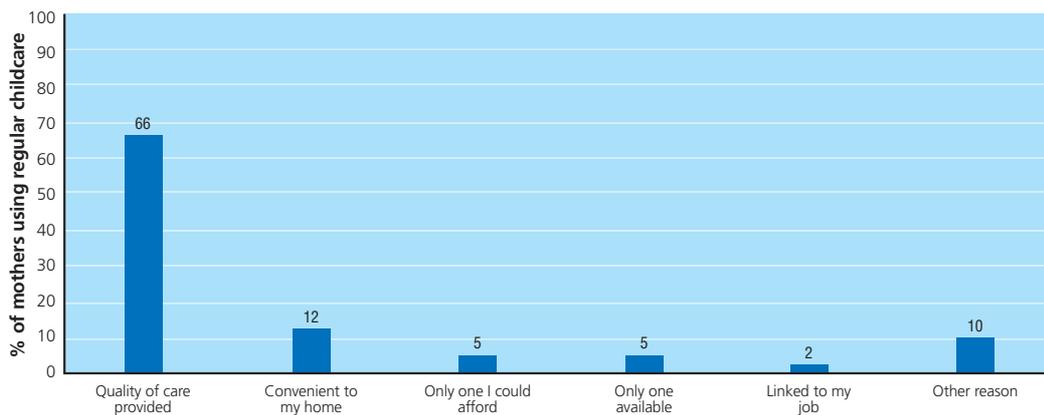
- The 38% of nine-month-olds who were in some form of non-parental care spent an average of 25 hours per week in childcare.
- The average time spent each week in centre-based care was 29 hours – the longest time spent by infants in any of the forms of care arrangements, as shown in Figure 5.
- Mothers spent an average of €5.14 per hour on the main form of childcare for their nine-month-old.
- Average hourly cost varied from one arrangement to another. The hourly cost for childcare with a relative was €4.30, rising to €5.34 per hour with a childminder/aupair/nanny. The average hourly cost of centre-based care was €5.48.
- The average amount that parents were paying per week for centre-based care (29 hours per week) was approximately €160 per child.
- On average, infants were 6½ months of age when they started in non-parental care. Care arrangements with relatives started a little earlier (at 5.8 months) while centre-based care generally started when the child was 6.9 months of age.

QUALITY IS THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN CHOOSING CHILDCARE

The 38% of mothers who were using some form of non-parental care were asked to specify their most important reason for choosing it:

- By far the main consideration was the quality of the childcare – mentioned by 66% of mothers in question, as shown in Figure 6.
- Convenience to home was the next most frequently cited reason (12%).
- 5% of mothers using childcare said their choice had been the only one they could afford. This represents around 1,300 nine-month-old infants in the population as a whole.

Figure 6: Single most important reason for picking chosen type of childcare

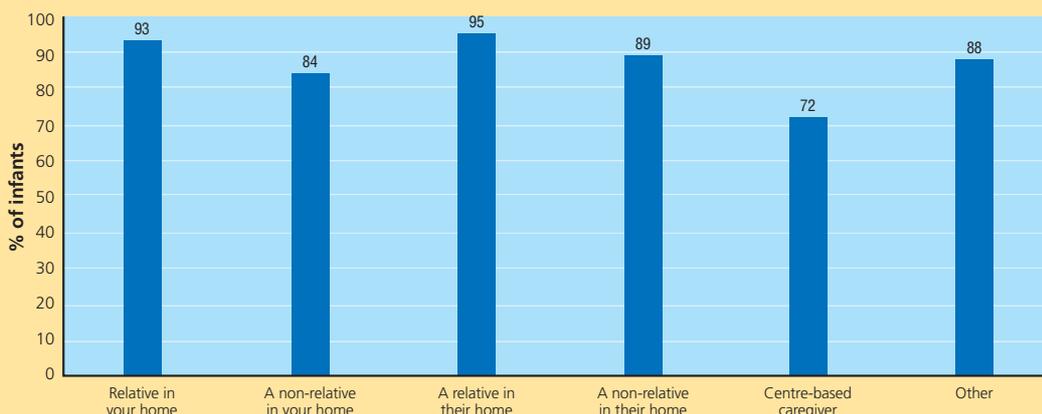


HIGH LEVELS OF SATISFACTION WITH CHILDCARE

In general, mothers expressed high levels of satisfaction with their chosen childcare arrangement.

- 86% reported that they were *very satisfied* while a further 12% said they were *fairly satisfied*.
- Figure 7 shows that satisfaction was higher where the care was provided by a relative (95% and 93% for the relative's home or infant's home respectively) as compared to non-relatives (89% and 84% for the non-relative's home and infant's home respectively).
- Lower levels of satisfaction were recorded in respect of centre-based care: 72% of mothers who used it recorded being *very satisfied* with it.
- The main reasons given for dissatisfaction with childcare arrangements were cost, the mother's preference for minding the child(ren) at home, the service provided and picking up illnesses in the crèche.

Figure 7: Percentage of mothers who reported being *very satisfied* with their current childcare arrangement classified by type of childcare used



MOTHERS WITH MORE CHILDREN LESS LIKELY TO BE GETTING ADEQUATE SUPPORT

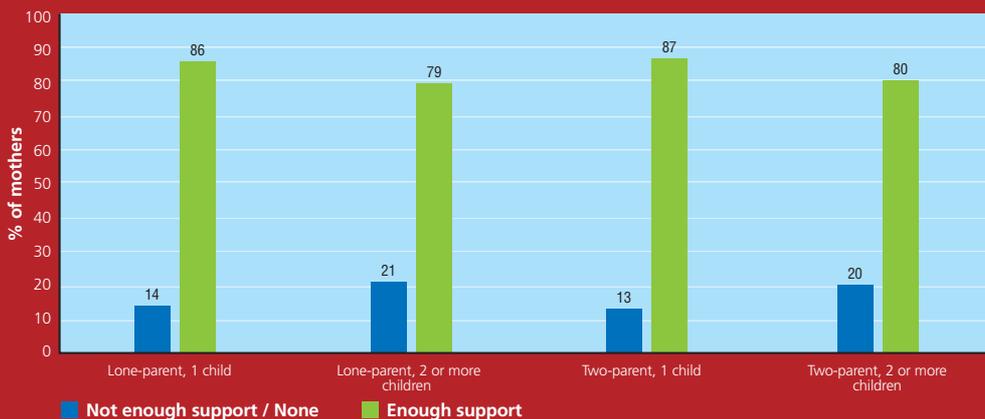
Given the significance of parenting in the child’s development, it is clearly important that parents receive as much support as possible. This is particularly so in the initial transition to parenthood and in early infancy. Mothers were asked how they felt about the amount of support they got from family and friends living outside their home.

- 72% of mothers of nine-month-olds said they *got enough help*.
- 10% of mothers said they *did not get enough help* and 5% said they *got no help at all*. This translates to about 10,500 nine-month-olds in the total population whose mother felt that she got no or inadequate support from family outside her home or from friends.

Perceived levels of support varied significantly according to number of children.

- Mothers with one child were more likely to feel they received enough parenting support than families with more children, as shown in Figure 8. These differences applied to both single mothers and mothers in two-parent families.
- 8% of mothers reported that they had no family living in Ireland on whom they might call for support.

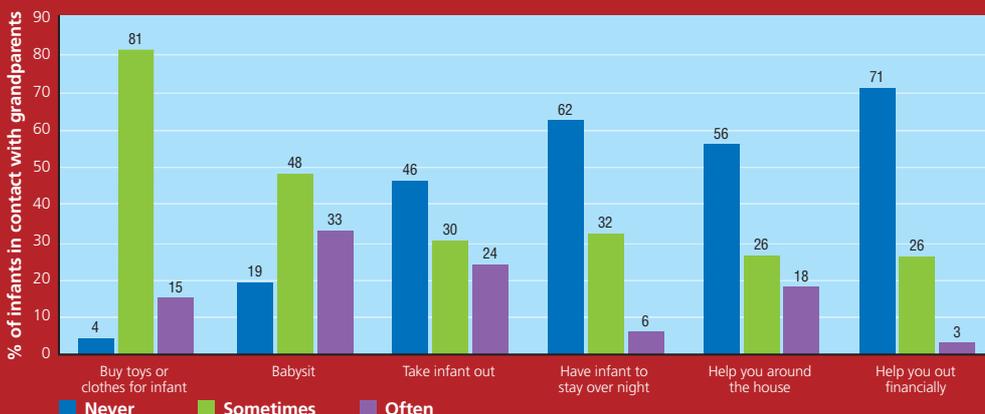
Figure 8: Mothers’ perception of available support classified by family type



Grandparents can provide important support for parents of young children in a number of different ways – from taking the infant out and helping around the house to direct financial support.

- Contact with the grandparents of nine-month-olds was generally high.
- 89% of mothers said they were in *regular contact* with the infant’s grandparents; 2% said they were *not in regular contact*; 8% said the child’s *grandparents lived abroad*, and in 1% of cases all grandparents were reported as having died.
- Grandparents were most likely to *buy toys or clothes* for the infant (96%), *babysit* (81%) and *take the infant out* (54%), as shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Mother’s report of support from grandparents





Growing Up in Ireland is the National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland. This Study aims to track, from infancy through to adolescence, the lives of two representative cohorts of children in Ireland – an Infant Cohort (at 9 months) and a Child Cohort (at 9 years).

The Study is funded by the Department of Health and Children through the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, in association with the Department of Social Protection and the Central Statistics Office. It is being carried out by a consortium of researchers led by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and Trinity College Dublin (TCD).

The first wave of fieldwork with the families of the Infant Cohort (at nine months) included approximately 11,100 nine-month-olds, their parents and carers. It began in September 2008 and was completed in March 2009. This document is one of a series of *Key Findings* from the Infant Cohort which summarises the main results from that round of the project.

More detailed findings on a wide range of issues are available in '***Growing Up in Ireland*** – the lives of 9-month-olds' (2010). An anonymised version of the data will also be available in the Irish Social Science Data Archive (ISSDA)

The success of ***Growing Up in Ireland*** is the result of contributions from a range of individuals, organisations and groups, many of whom helped to recruit the sample and collect the data. We are particularly grateful to the 11,100 families who gave so generously of their time to make this Study possible.



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