



## Families and Children Study

### Some more interesting findings

- Almost seven out of ten (69 per cent) families either owned their property outright or were buying it with a mortgage.
- Just over two-fifths (42 per cent) of all families with children saved regularly.
- Around eight out of ten (84 per cent) families had at least one parent working 16 or more hours per week.
- Around nine out of ten (93 per cent) families contained at least one parent with some form of academic or vocational qualification.
- The average family had 1.8 children; however, 16 per cent of families contained three or more dependent children.
- Forty-two per cent of all families had a youngest child aged five years or under.
- Six per cent of mothers care for someone outside their household, most care for a parent.
- Nine per cent of mothers were from an ethnic minority group—two percent were Black, four per cent were Asian and a further three per cent were from another ethnic group.

### Do you want more information?

If, after reading this newsletter, you want to find out more and read some of the reports that have been written please visit <http://www.natcen.ac.uk/facs> or the DWP website at <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/facs> where all the reports are available. If you have any questions about the Study please contact Clare Tait at the National Centre for Social Research on 020 7549 9592. Alternatively if you want to know more about the findings please call Daniel Sweiry at the Department for Work and Pensions on 020 7712 2327.

# The Families and Children Study 2007

In the national Families and Children Study we ask a select group of families with children about their circumstances. We return to the same families each year to see how things have changed. You are one of those families. We are extremely grateful for the information you have provided, and want to express our thanks to you. This newsletter provides some feedback on how all this information is used.

### Who is involved?

As part of the Study we interview a broad cross-section of families in Britain. They live across Britain, from the North of Scotland, through the North of England and the Midlands and Wales, down to London, Kent and Cornwall. Families are drawn from big cities such as Glasgow and Liverpool, as well as smaller towns and in more rural locations. We need to speak to a wide range of people to ensure that we get a true picture of the different experiences that families have. The numbers of families interviewed in each part of Britain are shown on the map.

While some families have had their first interview last year, and others have already had a seventh or eighth interview, each family taking part in the Study is irreplaceable. Whether or not your circumstances have changed since completing the first study, your continued involvement is crucial to the success of this project. It is by collecting information over time that we are able to determine the long-term situation of families with children, and how their experiences change with the introduction of new Government policies – such as Sure Start, New Deal and Tax Credits.

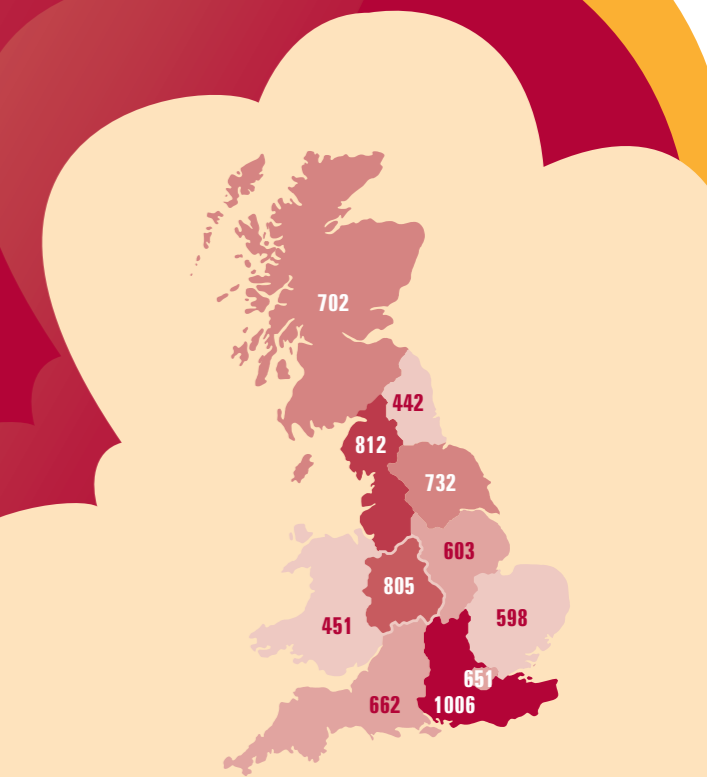
### What we do

The Families and Children Study brings together researchers from Government, the academic sector and the National Centre for Social Research. All have extensive experience and knowledge of family issues. They create the questionnaire that covers a wide range of issues relating to families and children, and analyse the information you provide. The information is also being used by a range of Universities, research institutes and widely across Government.

These results are all available for people to read, but in each case they protect the confidentiality of respondents and never identify who has taken part in the Study.

### About the study

The Department for Work and Pensions (which used to be the DSS, and before that the DHSS) sponsors the study, along with other Government Departments such as the Department for Children Schools and Families (formerly the Department for Education and Skills) and the Department for Transport.



The main aim of the Study is to see how Government policies and changes in society affect families – how they change incomes, health, children’s well-being and other areas of family life. The Study asks about local services, as well as national policies.

The results from the Study help Departments across the Government:

- To be aware of the important issues facing families today;
- To develop policies which will work to address these issues; and
- To check that policies are working well and, if not, how they can be changed for the better.

Essentially, there is little point in the Government working on new initiatives without reliable data to show that these ideas are needed and to see if they are working.

Results from the Families and Children Study have been vital in helping the government make decisions on how to help people out of poverty and in to work. Key decisions on childcare policy, and helping lone parents and people with disabilities into employment have been based on findings from the Families and Children Study.

### How is the Study Used?

Families continue to change over time and one of the aims of the Families and Children Study is to track those changes.

The Department for Work and Pensions has set itself a number of key goals and through the Families and Children Study (and with your help) we can help to ensure that these goals are achieved. In the following section we list some of these goals, and explain how this Study is used to shed light on these goals and the issues around them.

**Eradicating child poverty in a generation, halving it in ten years** – The Families and Children Study gives us data on how well we are doing towards this goal and gives us information on the causes of child poverty and where the main problems are.

**Full employment, so that everybody who wants to work has the opportunity to do so** – Every year the Families and Children Study tells us how people’s employment status has changed. For example, over the 2001–2003 period, the work status of mothers whose partnership status did not change remained fairly stable over this period. However, more mothers were moving into work or increasing their working hours, than mothers stopping work or decreasing their working hours.

**Providing security for those who are unable to work** – The Families and Children Study tells us how people out of work are getting along so that we can take action to prevent vulnerable people falling into poverty.

**Targeting help to the areas facing the greatest problems, so we can tackle the root causes of poverty and exclusion** – People’s well-being can depend on the area in which they live. The Families and Children Study gives us reliable data on where support is most needed. The Sure Start initiative – which is designed to help children get the best start in life – uses FACS data to look at types of areas which are in most need of improved local services.

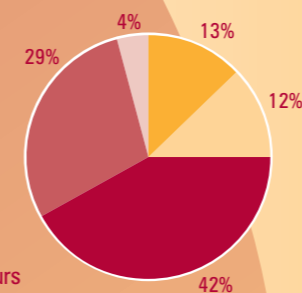
### Family Unit Work Status

#### Lone parents

- working 16+ hours
- not working 16+ hours

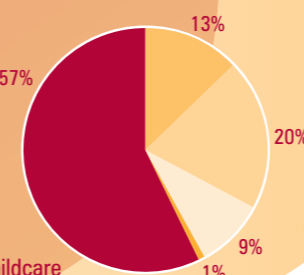
#### Couples

- both working 16+ hours
- one working 16+ hours
- neither working 16+ hours

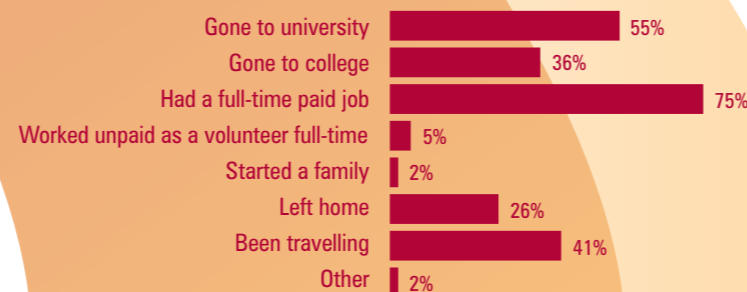


### Types of Childcare Used

- formal
- informal
- formal and informal childcare
- other
- circumstances not requiring childcare



### Parent’s Aspirations for Child by mid-20’s



### Childcare

Families were asked about both formal childcare such as a childminder and after school clubs, and informal childcare such as care provided by relatives and friends.

- Over half (52 per cent) of working mothers used childcare; a third (31 per cent) of mothers not in work also used childcare.
- The most common arrangement was for the ‘child’s grandparent’ to provide childcare.
- Formal types of childcare were mostly used for younger, especially pre-school age, children.
- Over two-thirds (67 per cent) of mothers with children aged between zero and four years old rated the quality of the childcare they received as ‘very’ or ‘fairly good’.
- Less than one-third (30 per cent) of families said that there was ‘not enough’ childcare in their local area.
- Also, less than one-quarter (24 per cent) of mothers reported that childcare was ‘not at all affordable’.

## Families and Children Study Report

This year, so far, we have published a report based on the findings from the Families and Children Study 2005. This tells us about different types of families and their circumstances. It focuses on parents’ and their children’s lives.

### Findings from the 2005 Families and Children Study

#### Children’s health, activities and leisure time

- Almost nine out of ten (86 per cent) of all children were described as having ‘good’ health.
- Fourteen per cent of children have a limiting long-term illness or disability. For two-fifths (38 per cent) of these children, this affects their ability to attend school regularly.
- Over half (54 per cent) of children were reported to do at least three or more hours per week of physical activity, whilst just six per cent were reported to do nothing.
- Younger children were more active than older children – three-fifths (60 per cent) of 11 year olds were active for three or more hours a week, compared with less than half (46 per cent) of 15 year olds.
- Two-thirds (65 per cent) of children had used a local park or playground in the month before interview while five in ten (49 per cent) had used a local swimming pool/leisure centre and four in ten (38 per cent) had visited a local library.

#### Schooling

- Over half (51 per cent) of children lived within a mile of their school. Forty-five per cent of children walked to school.
- Almost all five, six and seven year old children (96 per cent, 94 per cent and 88 per cent, respectively) are accompanied to school, while half of 10 year olds (49 per cent) are accompanied to school.
- For maths and science the proportion of girls and boys thought to have performed well was similar, however girls were more likely to have thought to have done well in English compared to boys.
- Almost seven out of ten (69 per cent) children aged 11 to 16 years were thought by their parents to complete ‘all or almost all’ of their homework.
- Ten per cent of children were reported to have a Special Educational Need (SEN). The most frequent types of need identified were ‘physical disabilities’ and ‘dyslexia’ (both three per cent of all children).

#### Mothers’ aspirations for their children

- Just over 82 per cent of parents wanted their children (aged 14 to 15 years old) to continue in full-time education when they reach 16.
- Fifty-five per cent of parents wanted their children (aged 14 to 16 years old) to have gone to university, whilst just two per cent would have wanted them to have started a family by their mid-twenties.

#### Health, lifestyles and participation

- Nine out of ten mothers described their health over the last 12 months as either ‘good’ or ‘fairly good’.
- Less than one-fifth (17 per cent) of families reported that vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles was a ‘big problem’ in their neighbourhood.
- Two-fifths of mothers reported giving unpaid help to groups, clubs and organisations in the last 12 months; seventeen per cent of mothers took part in raising or handling money/sponsored events.

