



**Growing Up
in Ireland**
National Longitudinal
Study of Children

GROWING UP IN IRELAND



KEY FINDINGS: INFANT COHORT (at 3 years)

NO. 3 ECONOMIC & FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES AMONG FAMILIES OF 3-YEAR-OLDS

INTRODUCTION

This is the third in a series of *Key Findings* from the second round of interviews with the Infant Cohort in *Growing Up in Ireland*. The families of 11,100 children were initially interviewed in 2008/2009 when the Study Child was nine months old. They were re-interviewed between January and August 2011, when the children were three years old. This Key Finding presents summary information on the economic and financial circumstances of three-year-olds and their families.

Children who grow up in adverse economic or financial circumstances face multiple risks and a higher chance of negative outcomes in the immediate and longer term. It is particularly appropriate to consider the economic circumstances of the families of three-year-olds at time of publication, coming as it does after three years of sustained economic recession.

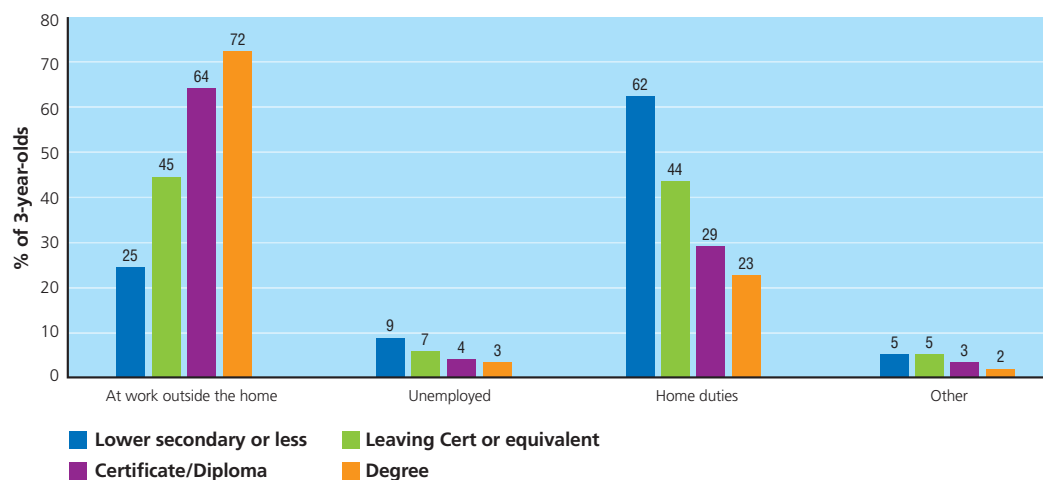


JUST OVER HALF OF THE MOTHERS OF THREE-YEAR-OLDS WORKED OUTSIDE THE HOME

One of the main determinants of the economic well-being of a child's family is the employment status of his/her parents.

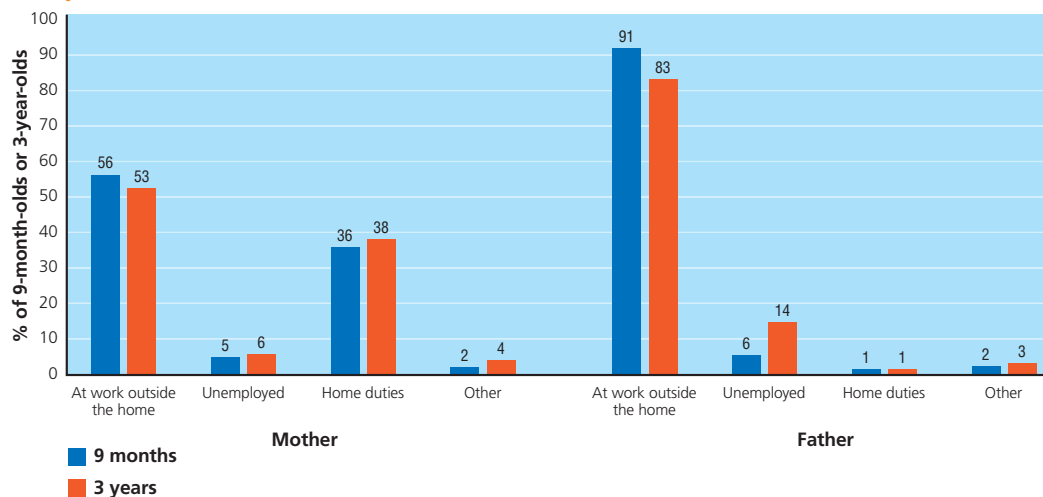
- The mothers of just over 53% of three-year-old children said they were *at work outside the home*; 38% said they were on *home duties*; 6% said they were *unemployed* and 4% gave *other* status.
- Figure 1 shows that employment outside the home was much more common among better-educated mothers – 72% of *degree-level* mothers were *at work outside the home* compared with 25% of those who had left school with *lower secondary education or less*. The percentage *unemployed* fell as level of education increased – almost 9% of mothers who had left school with *lower secondary education or less* were *unemployed* compared with only 3% among *degree-level* mothers.

Figure 1: Mother's work status when the Study Child was three years old, classified by her education



- There was a slight fall between the interviews at nine months and three years in the percentage of mothers who said they were *at work outside the home* – 56% and 53% respectively. The percentage who said they were principally involved in *home duties* increased from 36% to 38% (Figure 2).
- Figure 2 also shows that the biggest change in terms of the work status of three-year-olds' parents was an increase in the percentage of *unemployed* fathers – 6% when the child was nine months rising to almost 14% when s/he was three years of age.

Figure 2: Mother's and father's labour-force status when the Study Child was nine months old and three years old

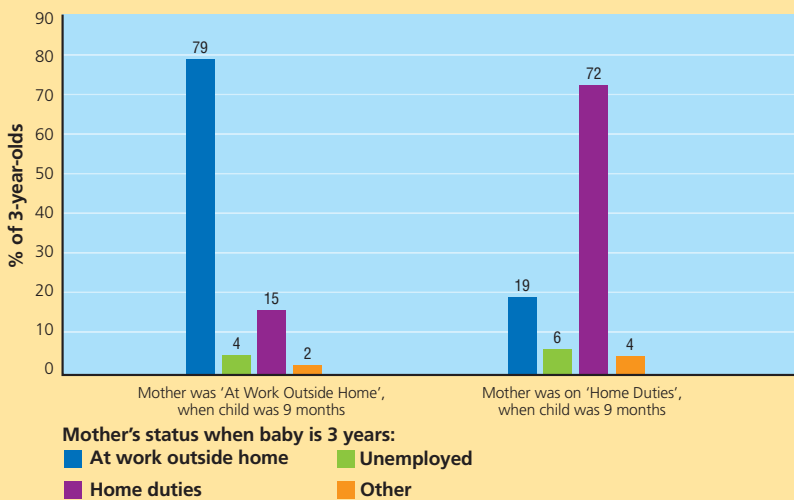


One of the main strengths of the longitudinal study is that it can provide information on how things change for individual children over time. Figure 3 focuses on the 56% of mothers who were *at work outside the home* and the 36% who were on *home duties* when the Study Child was nine months of age. The chart provides information on how these two groups of mothers classified themselves in terms of employment by the time the Study Child was three years old.

- 79% of mothers who described themselves as being *at work outside the home* when the Study Child was nine months were still *at work outside the home* when s/he was three years old.

- 15% of those who were *at work outside the home* when their child was nine months of age recorded themselves as being on *home duties* by the time the child was three years old.
- 72% of mothers who described themselves as being on *home duties* when the child was nine months old continued to record this as their main economic status when the child was three years old, while 19% described themselves at that time as being *at work outside the home*.

Figure 3: Mother's work status when the Study Child was three years of age among those mothers who were either *at work outside the home* or on *home duties* when the child was nine months old

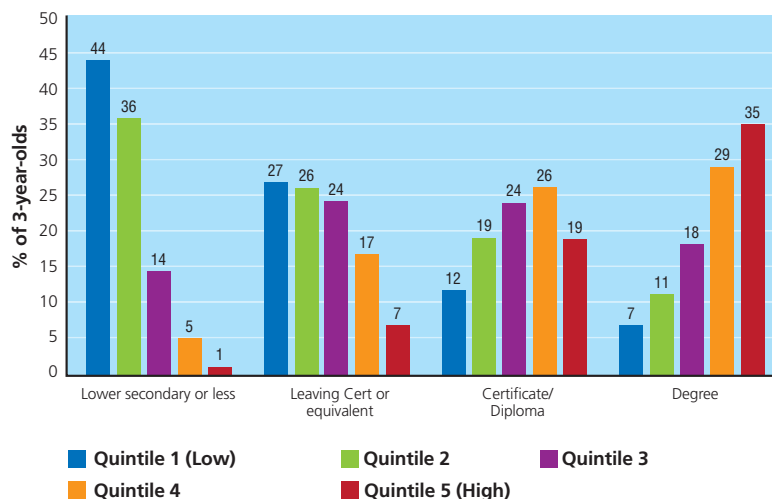


FAMILY INCOME WAS VERY STRONGLY RELATED TO MOTHER'S EDUCATION AND FAMILY TYPE

Figure 4 classifies three-year-olds in terms of their mother's education and level of household income. Income is divided into five equal groups (quintiles), from the bottom 20% to the highest 20%.

- Figure 4 shows that three-year-olds in families where the mother had left school early were disadvantaged in terms of household income: 44% of three-year-olds whose mother had left school at the earliest stage (*lower secondary or less*) were in the lowest income quintile. A further 36% were in the second lowest income quintile. Only 5% were in the fourth income quintile and 1% in the top quintile.
- In contrast, the opposite trend is seen among three-year-olds with a *degree-level* mother. Relatively few of them (7%) were in the lowest income quintile, compared to just over one-third (35%) in the top income group.

Figure 4: Three-year-olds and level of household income¹ – broken down by mother's education



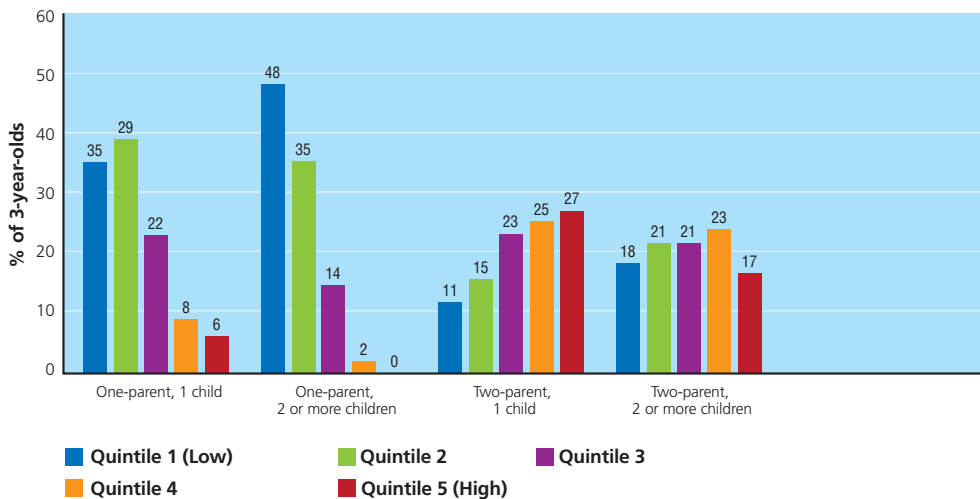
¹ Quintile of net disposable household equivalised income

The relationship between family type and financial well-being is summarised in Figure 5.

- Three-year-olds in one-parent families had a much higher chance of being in low-income households. Over one-third (35%) of one-parent, one-child families and almost half (48%) of one-parent families with two or more children were in the lowest income quintile. This compares with only 11% of children in two-parent, one-child families and 18% of those in two-parent families with two or more children.

- 6% of one-parent, one-child families and only a small proportion² of the one-parent families with two or more children were in the highest income quintile. This compares respectively with 27% and 17% of two-parent families with one and two or more children.

Figure 5: Three-year-olds and level of household income, classified by family type³



² 0.3% of relevant families

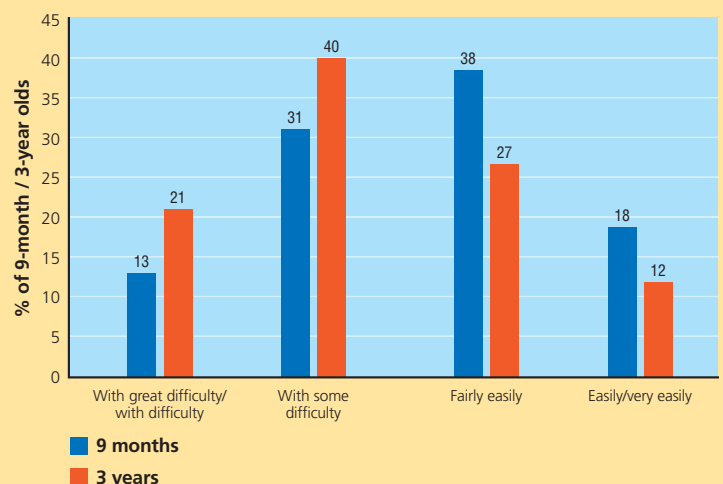
³ Quintile of net disposable household equivalised income

61% OF FAMILIES WITH THREE-YEAR-OLDS REPORTED EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES IN MAKING ENDS MEET

Mothers were asked at both interviews (nine months and three years) to rate how difficult the family was finding it "... to make ends meet", using a six-point rating scale ranging from *with great difficulty* to *very easily*.

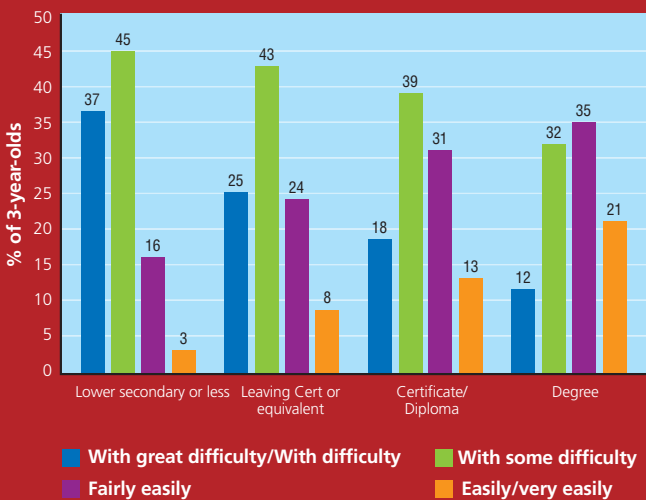
- Figure 6 shows that, overall, 21% of the families of three-year-olds recorded that they could make ends meet only *with great difficulty* or *with difficulty*, while a further 40% were doing so with *some difficulty*. In contrast, 27% were making ends meet *fairly easily*, with the remaining 12% doing so *easily* / *very easily*.
- The chart shows a substantial increase between first and second interviews in the proportion of families who were experiencing difficulties in making ends meet. At the first interview, when the Study Child was nine months of age, 44% of their mothers reported *great difficulty* / *difficulty* in making ends meet. This had risen to 61% by the second interview, when the Study Child was three years of age.

Figure 6: 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



- Figure 7 shows that, in general, more educationally disadvantaged families were experiencing greatest difficulties in making ends meet at the time of the second interview, when the Study Child was three years of age. For example, 37% of those with the lowest levels of education were experiencing *great difficulty / difficulty* compared with 12% at *degree*-level. This pattern was also evident when viewed through other measures of social disadvantage, such as family social class.

Figure 7: Families of three-year-olds classified by mother's perception of difficulty in making ends meet, classified by maternal education

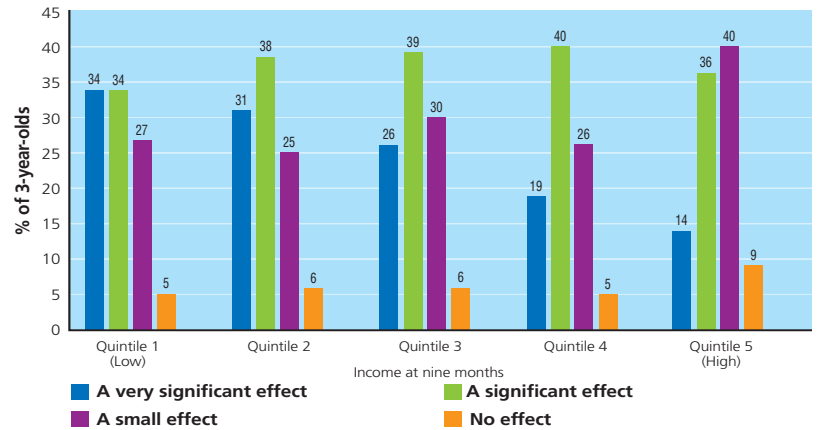


ALMOST TWO-THIRDS OF ALL FAMILIES WITH THREE-YEAR-OLDS REPORTED THAT THE RECESSION HAD HAD A VERY SIGNIFICANT OR SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THEM

When the Study Child was three years of age, the child's mother was asked whether or not the recession had had an effect on their family since their first interview 27 months earlier. A four-point scale was used – *very significant effect*; *significant effect*; *small effect*; *no effect at all*.

- Families who were most disadvantaged in terms of income, social class or education at the time of their first interview were most likely to report at their second interview that the recession had had a *very significant effect* on them. Figure 8, for example, classifies three-year-olds according to their income quintile when they were nine months of age and their mother's perception of the effect of the recession on their family since the first interview. The graph shows that larger percentages among those in the lowest income groups said that the recession had had a *very significant effect* on them (34%) than among those in the top income group (14%).

Figure 8: Reported effect of recession since first interview when Study Child was nine months of age, classified by income at first interview



Mothers who indicated that the recession had had an adverse effect on their family were asked to indicate (from a list of 10 pre-coded items) how it had affected them.

- The most frequently recorded effects were: a *reduction in wages* (63%); *can't afford luxuries* (54%); *social welfare reductions* (53%) and *can't afford / cut back on basics* (32%) – Figure 9.
- Variations in the impact of the recession were apparent across different groups. Higher percentages of more disadvantaged families cited: *unable to afford luxuries*; *can't afford / cut back on basics*; *being behind with rent/mortgage* and *being behind with utility bills*. For example, Figure 10 shows that 48% of three-year-olds in families with lower levels of maternal education recorded having to cut back on basics. The comparable figure among degree-level mothers was 22%. The differences between highest and lowest educated mothers were also very clear in terms of being *behind with rent/mortgage* and *being behind with utility bills*.

Figure 9: Effects of the recession on respondent's family since first interview (from a list of 10 pre-coded categories)

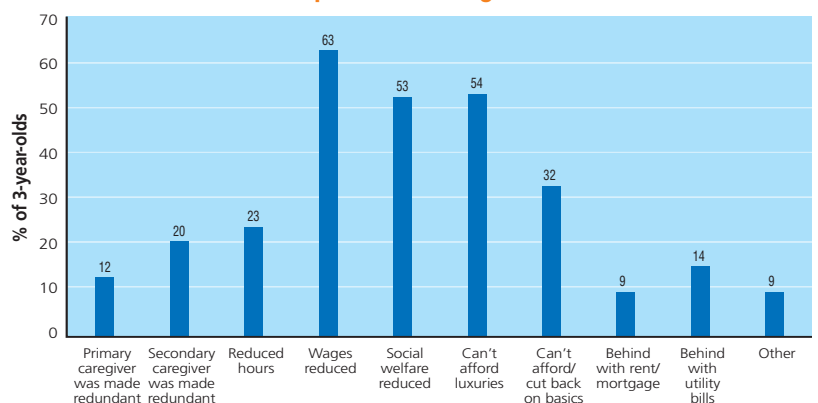
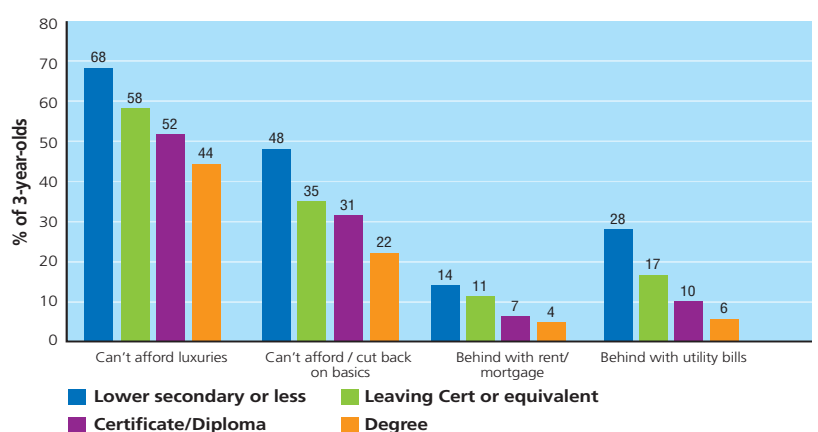


Figure 10: Differences in selected effects of recession, by maternal education





Growing Up in Ireland is the National Longitudinal Study of Children. It tracks the development of two nationally representative cohorts of children: an *Infant Cohort* which was interviewed initially at nine months and subsequently at three years of age; and a *Child Cohort* which was interviewed initially at nine years and subsequently at 13 years of age.

The Study is funded by the Department of 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 included approximately 11,100 nine-month-olds, their parents and carers. Interviews began in September 2008 and were completed in March 2009. Interviews for the second round of interviews with this cohort took place between January and August 2011. A total of 90% of the original sample of nine-month-olds were successfully re-interviewed.

Access to *Growing Up in Ireland* data

An anonymised version of all quantitative and qualitative data collected in ***Growing Up in Ireland*** is being made available through the Irish Social Science Data Archive (ISSDA) (<http://www.ucd.ie/issda/data/growingupinireland/>) and the Irish Qualitative Data Archive (IQDA) (<http://www.iqda.ie/content/growing-ireland/>).

'Thank you' to all participants

The success of ***Growing Up in Ireland*** is the result of contributions from a large range of individuals, organisations and groups, many of whom helped to recruit the sample and collect the data. We are particularly grateful to the thousands of families from every part of the country who gave so very generously of their time on two occasions to make this Study possible. A very big 'thank-you' to the children and their families.

www.growingup.ie



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