Department for Education

Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents 2021

Technical Report
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Ipsos
Tom Huskinson, Fiona Tudor, and Kevin Pickering

Contents

1 Survey background and history

1.1 Aims of the study

This Technical Report describes the methodology of the 2021 survey in the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents (CEYSP) series.

The survey was funded by the Department for Education (DfE) and carried out by Ipsos. The study has two key objectives. The first is to provide salient, up-to-date information on parents' use of childcare and early years provision, and their views and experiences. The second is to continue the time series statistics – which have now been running for over ten years – on issues covered throughout the survey series. With respect to both of these objectives, the study aims to provide information to help monitor effectively the progress of policies in the area of childcare and early years education.

1.2 Time series of the Childcare and early years survey of parents

The current study is the 13th in the CEYSP series, which began in 2004. The time series in fact stretches back further than 2004, as the current series is the merger of two survey series that preceded it: i) the Survey of Parents of Three and Four Year Old Children and Their Use of Early Years Services, of which there were six waves between 1997 and 2004, and ii) the Parents' Demand For Childcare Survey, of which there were two waves, the first in 1999 and the second in 2001.

Previous waves of the CEYSP were conducted in 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13, 2014-15, 2017, and 2018, 2019, and 2020. Fieldwork for the 2020 wave started in January 2020, but was forced to end in March 2020, after only around 1,300 interviews had been conducted, due to restrictions on face-to-face interviewing arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. To safeguard the 2021 survey against such restrictions, remote interviewing modes were employed in addition to face-to-face interviewing, namely: telephone interviewing, and interviewing via Microsoft Teams.

Changes to the questionnaire over time mean that in many instances it is not possible to provide direct comparisons that extend to the beginning of the time series. Questions for which trend data does extend to the beginning of the time series include the use of childcare by families and children, and parents' perceptions of local childcare (the level of information about local childcare, the availability of local childcare, the quality of local childcare, and the affordability of local childcare).

2 Pilot survey

2.1 Overview

Restrictions on face-to-face interviewing arising from the COVID-19 pandemic meant that the 2021 survey wave could not launch in field in January 2021, as would ordinarily have been the case. In early 2021, it was not clear how long restrictions on face-to-face interviewing would persist, so it was decided that the 2021 wave should be remodelled and launched as a "COVID-secure" survey, making use of remote interviewing modes which avoided the need for interviewers to enter parents' homes.

Specifically, the 2021 survey wave permitted three different modes of completion, as preferred by the respondent:

- Face-to-face interviewing (where Government guidance permitted);
- Telephone interviewing (with the respondent using single-use showcards, or viewing the showcards online); and
- Microsoft Teams interviewing (with the respondent viewing the interviewer's survey script on their own computer, tablet, or other device, and choosing response codes from the screen for questions that would ordinarily use a showcard).

A pilot survey was undertaken to test these new procedures before the start of the mainstage fieldwork.

2.2 Aims

The aims of the pilot survey were to:

- Test response rate assumptions. The pilot survey was designed to deliver at least 150 achieved interviews over a four-week fieldwork period. While the sample size was not large enough, nor the fieldwork period long enough, to derive a precise estimate of the response rate to the mainstage survey, this was sufficient to provide a good enough sense of what the lower response rate bound might be.

- Gauge parents' preferences for the remote fieldwork modes offered.

- Test that all aspects of survey technology were working as intended.

- Test the questionnaire length.

- Gather feedback from interviewers on all aspects of the survey.

- Gauge whether parents had any concerns about the survey.

2.3 Sampling

Survey population

The survey population was children aged 0 to 14 living in private residential accommodation[1] in England.

Although the sampling units were children, the interview for each selected child was conducted with an appropriate adult (defined as an adult within the child's household with 'main or shared responsibility for making decisions about the child's childcare').

Selection of the sample

Ipsos selected 14 postcode sectors across England, chosen to cover a range of areas in terms of region, rurality, and levels of deprivation. For each of these postcode sectors, HMRC selected a random sample of 40 children from the Child Benefit Register (CBR), from among those children who would be aged 0 to 14 on 05 July 2021 (the date after which all Pilot interviewing was expected to be completed) and for whom a Child Benefit claim had been made. This delivered a total sample of 560 children to be issued to field.

There were no boosts, such that all children were given an equal chance of selection. The pilot sample was drawn from the August 2020 extract of the Child Benefit database.

The specific sampling procedures for selecting children followed those of the mainstage survey, as described in section 3.1, and are not repeated here.

2.4 Fieldwork

Briefing

All interviewers working on the pilot survey had worked on one or more previous waves of the Children and Early Years Survey of Parents, and so were familiar with the survey. These interviewers were chosen so that reliable comparisons could be drawn between the operation of the pilot survey, and the operation of the survey in previous years, helping us to benefit from their prior experiences when considering what changes may be necessary.

The briefing reminded interviewers of the survey's background, aims, and objectives, focused on the administration of the survey using the new remote (i.e. non-face-to-face) interviewing modes, and provided the opportunity for interviewers to ask questions.

Contact procedures

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[1] Children living in communal establishments such as children's homes are excluded.

The specific procedures for contacting parents followed those of the mainstage survey, as described in section 6.2, and are not repeated here.

Interviewing

The specific procedures for conducting the interviews followed those of the mainstage survey, as described in section 6.3, and are not repeated here.

Response

A total of 153 interviews were achieved between 26 April and 23 May 2021; 149 by telephone, and 4 by Microsoft Teams. This represented an unadjusted response rate of 27 per cent.

This response rate was considered to be the lower bound for what might be expected for the mainstage survey. It was considered the lower bound because i) the pilot survey lasted for only around four weeks, far shorter than the time available for the mainstage survey, and ii) at the time of the pilot survey no face-to-face interviewing was permitted, even outside, whereas it was expected that face-to-face interviewing would be permitted for at least some of the mainstage survey fieldwork period.

The pilot interviews lasted for a mean of 46 minutes, and a median of 45 minutes.

2.5 Preparation for mainstage survey

The pilot survey demonstrated that it was feasible to conduct an adapted CEYSP survey wave using remote interviewing modes, and preparations were therefore made to launch the mainstage survey, using the protocols developed for the pilot survey. A small number of changes to the survey protocols were made for the mainstage, including requiring all interviewers to carry out a 'dummy' Microsoft Teams interview before starting work to ensure full familiarity with this mode; and encouraging interviewers to send a text message reminder for telephone and Microsoft Teams appointments, prior to the interview itself.

3 Mainstage survey: overview of the study design

3.1 The sample

A total of 5,955 parents with children aged 0 to 14 in England were interviewed face-to-face between July 2021 and April 2022.

A probability sample of children aged 0 to 14 in England was drawn from the Child Benefit Register (CBR) maintained by Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC) which, given its high take-up, provides very high coverage of dependent children in England.

Interviews were sought with parents of these children. If the sampled child was no longer living at the address, an interview was sought with the current occupiers if they had a child aged 0 to 14, otherwise the address was deemed ineligible[2].

A small additional sample of parents in England was drawn from respondents to the Family Resources Survey (FRS) commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions, who had consented to be re-contacted for future research[3].

3.2 The interviews

Interviews were conducted by one of three modes: face-to-face in parents' homes or gardens; by telephone, or by Microsoft Teams. Interviews lasted a mean of 46 minutes, and a median of 42 minutes. The main respondent was a parent or guardian of the sampled child with main or shared responsibility for making childcare decisions, and in most cases (83%) was the child's mother.

The study used an inclusive definition of childcare and early years provision. The respondent was asked to include any time their child was not with them (or their current or ex-spouse or partner), or at school. Ex-husbands/wives/partners were counted as a type of informal provider prior to the 2019 survey, but following the survey's user consultation in 2018 were excluded from the definition of childcare from the 2019 survey wave onwards, for consistency with other national and international surveys about childcare.

The definition of childcare covered both informal childcare (for instance grandparents, an older sibling, or a friend or neighbour) and formal childcare (for instance nursery schools and classes, childminders, and before- and after-school clubs). Further detail about this definition is provided in section 3.3.

In families with two or more children, broad questions were asked about the childcare arrangements of all children, before more detailed questions were asked about the randomly sampled child (henceforth referred to as 'the selected child').

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[2] Prior to the 2019 survey, the sampling unit was the child (rather than the address), and in cases where the sampled child had moved from the sampled address, the child was still considered eligible, and the interviewer attempted to trace the child to his or her new address to conduct an interview there. The sampling unit was changed, from the child to the address, due to the increasing proportion of children that were found to have moved address during fieldwork (from 13% in 2010, to 22% in 2018).

[3] This was necessary because the eligibility criteria for Child Benefit changed in 2013 so that higher-income households (those where one or both partners earn £60,000 or more per year) ceased to gain financially from Child Benefit, resulting in them becoming disproportionately likely to be missing from the CBR. To avoid bias to survey estimates, higher-income households missing from the CBR were sampled from the FRS. For further details see Department for Education (2017) *Childcare and early years survey of parents: Sampling frames investigation* https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childcare-and-early-years-survey-of-parents-sampling-frames

Because childcare arrangements vary between school term-time and school holidays, most of the questions focused on the most recent term-time week (the 'reference week'). Separate questions were asked about the use of childcare during times of the year when school children are on holiday.

The interview covered the following topic areas:

- **For all families:**

  o use of childcare and early years provision in the reference term-time week, school holidays periods (if applicable) and last year;

  o payments made for childcare and early years provision (for providers used in the last week), the use of free hours of childcare, the use of Tax-Free Childcare, and the use of tax credits and subsidies;

  o sources of information about, and attitudes towards, childcare and early years provision in the local area; and

  o if applicable, reasons for not using childcare.

- **For one randomly selected child:**

  o a detailed record of child attendance in the reference week;

  o reasons for using and views of the main formal provider; and

  o the home learning environment.

- **Classification details:**

  o household composition;

  o parents' education and work details; and

  o provider details.

Across all addresses eligible for interview – that is, all addresses containing a child aged 0 to 14 – an interview was achieved at 38 per cent. For further details on response see Chapter 7.

3.3 Defining childcare

The study uses an inclusive definition of childcare and early years provision. Parents were asked to include any time that the child was not with a resident parent or a resident parent's current or ex-partner, or at school.

This definition was consistent with the 2019 and 2020 survey waves, but deviated from that used in earlier waves of the survey by excluding ex-partners. Prior to the 2019 wave, the definition of childcare and early years provision was "any time that the child was not

with a resident parent or a resident parent's current partner, or at school". This change brought the definition of childcare in line with other research about childcare.

In order to remind parents to include all possible people or organisations that may have looked after their children, they were shown the following list:

Formal providers

- nursery school
- nursery class attached to a primary or infants' school
- reception class at a primary or infants' school
- special day school or nursery or unit for children with special educational needs
- day nursery
- playgroup or pre-school
- childminder
- nanny or au pair
- baby-sitter who came to home
- breakfast club
- after-school clubs and activities
- holiday club/scheme

Informal providers[4]

- the child's grandparent(s)
- the child's older brother/sister
- another relative
- a friend or neighbour

Other

- other nursery education provider
- other childcare provider

Definitions of main formal providers for pre-school children

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[4] Prior to the 2019 wave, the list of informal providers included "my ex-husband/wife/partner/the child's other parent who does not live in this household".

A short definition for each of the main formal providers for pre-school children is included below. The definitions were not provided to parents in the survey but these are included here to help the reader differentiate between the most common categories.

- nursery school – this is a school in its own right, with most children aged 3 to 5. Sessions normally run for 2 ½ to 3 hours in the morning and/or afternoon;

- nursery class attached to a primary or infants' school - often a separate unit within the school, with those in the nursery class aged 3 or 4. Sessions normally run for 2½ to 3 hours in the morning and/or afternoon;

- reception class at a primary or infants' school - this usually provides full-time education during normal school hours, and most children in the reception class are aged 4 or 5;

- special day school/nursery or unit for children with special educational needs - a nursery, school or unit for children with special educational needs;

- day nursery - this runs for the whole working day and may be closed for a few weeks in summer, if at all. This may be run by employers, private companies, community/voluntary group or the Local Authority, and can take children who are a few months to 5-years-old; and

- playgroup or pre-school - the term 'pre-school' is commonly used to describe many types of nursery education. For the purposes of this survey, pre-school is used to describe a type of playgroup. This service is often run by a community/voluntary group, parents themselves, or privately. Sessions last up to 4 hours.

Providers were classified according to the service for which they were being used by parents, for example daycare or early years education. Thus, providers were classified and referred to in analysis according to terminology such as 'nursery schools' and 'day nurseries', rather than as forms of integrated provision such as Children's Centres. Reception classes were only included as childcare if it was not compulsory schooling, that is the child was aged under 5 (or had turned 5 during the current school term).

This inclusive definition of childcare means that parents will have included time when their child was visiting friends or family, at a sport or leisure activity, and so on. The term early years provision covers both 'care' for young children and 'early years education'.

Deciding on the correct classification of the 'type' of provider can be complicated for parents. The classifications given by parents were therefore checked with the providers themselves in a separate telephone survey, and edited where necessary. Detail about the provider edits can be found in section 8.3.

3.4 Interpreting the data in the Official Statistics Report and Tables

The majority of findings in the Official Statistics Report and Tables relate to one of two levels of analysis:

- the family level (e.g. proportions of families paying for childcare, parents' perceptions of childcare provision in their local areas); and

- the (selected) child level (e.g. parents' views on the provision received by the selected child from their main childcare provider).

However, for most of the analyses carried out for the data tables contained in Chapters 9 and 10 the data was restructured so that 'all children' in the household were the base of analysis. This was done to increase the sample size and enable the exploration of packages of childcare received by children in more detail. This approach is not used for other analyses because much more data was collected on the selected child compared with all children in the household.

Weights

A 'family-level' weight is applied to family-level analyses. This ensures the findings are representative of families in England with a child aged 0 to 14 in receipt of Child Benefit.

A 'child-level' weight is applied to analyses carried out at the (selected) child-level. This weight combines the family-level weight with an adjustment for the probability of the child being randomly selected for the more detailed questions.

Bases

The data tables show the total number of cases that were analysed (e.g. different types of families, income groups). The total base figures include all the eligible cases (in other words all respondents, or all respondents who were asked the question where it was not asked of all) but, usually, exclude cases with missing data (codes for 'don't know' or 'not answered'). Thus, while the base description may be the same across several data tables, the base sizes may differ slightly due to the exclusion of cases with missing data.

Unweighted bases are presented throughout. This is the actual number of parents that responded to a given question for family-level questions, and the actual number of children about whom a response was provided by parents for child-level questions.

In some tables, the column or row bases do not add up to the total base size. This is because some categories might not be included in the table, either because the corresponding numbers are too small to be of interest or the categories are otherwise not useful for the purposes of analysis.

Where a base size contains fewer than 50 respondents, particular care must be taken, as confidence intervals around these estimates will be very wide, and hence the results should be treated with some caution. In tables with bases sizes below 50, these figures are denoted by squared brackets [ ].

Percentages

Due to rounding, percentage figures may not add up to 100 per cent. This also applies to questions where more than one answer can be given ('multi-coded' questions).

Continuous data

Some Official Statistics Tables summarise parents' responses to questions eliciting continuous data; for instance, the number of hours of childcare used per week (see Table 1.11 in the Official Statistics Tables) and the amount paid for childcare per week (see Table 4.5 in the Official Statistics Tables). For these data, both median and mean values are included in the data tables, but median values are reported in the Report as they are less influenced by extreme values and are therefore considered a more appropriate measure of central tendency. It should be noted that 'outlier' values, those identified as being either impossible or suspect responses, were removed from the dataset prior to data analysis. As such, the extreme values which remain can be considered as valid responses which lie at the far ends of their respective distributions.

Where significance testing has been conducted on continuous data, this has been carried out using mean values rather than medians. This is because the continuous data is subject to 'rounding' by respondents, for instance where payments are rounded to the nearest ten pounds, or where times are rounded to the nearest half hour; this rounding can result in similar median values where the underlying distributions are quite different, and testing for differences between means is more appropriate in these instances as it takes the entire distribution into account. It should be noted however that although mean values are more influenced than median values by extreme values, significance testing on mean values accounts for extreme values by widening the standard error of the mean, which is used in the calculation of the test statistic, thereby reducing the likelihood of finding a significant result. As such, it is not the case that a significant change will be reported between years or between sub-groups simply due to a small number of respondents reporting an extreme value on a continuous variable.

Statistical significance

Where reported survey results have differed by sub-group, or by survey year, the difference has been tested for significance using the complex samples module in SPSS 24.0, and found to be statistically significant at the 95 per cent confidence level or above. This means that the chance that the difference is due to sampling error, rather than reflecting a real difference between the sub-groups or survey years, is 1 in 20 or less. The complex samples module allows us to take into account sample stratification, clustering, and weighting to correct for non-response bias when conducting significance

testing. This means that 'false positive' results to significance tests (in other words interpreting a difference as real when it is not) is far less likely than if the standard formulae were used.

Symbols in tables

The symbols below have been used in the tables and they denote the following:

n/a   this category does not apply (given the base of the table)

[ ]   percentage based on fewer than 50 respondents (unweighted)

*   percentage value of less than 0.5 but greater than zero[5]

0   percentage value of zero

4 Questionnaire development

4.1 Changes to the questionnaire

A number of changes were made to the 2021 Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents questionnaire (from the 2020 survey wave) to reflect changes in policy, and to improve the quality of data captured.

The questionnaire changes are described in the bullet points that follow, in which question names are provided in brackets.

New questions

Question about interview mode

- (Int_Mode3) This question was for the interviewer to code how the interview was being carried out: face-to-face with the participant present (in-home or outdoors), remotely by telephone, or remotely by Microsoft Teams.

Questions about the frequency of home working

- (WfHome, WfHomeSp) These questions measured how often working parents and their partner (if applicable) worked from home during the reference week.

Question about when selected children would be entering Reception

- (RecStrt) This question asked parents of selected children who were not at Reception in the reference week, and who were born between 01 September

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[5] Where a cell in a table contains only an asterisk, this denotes a percentage value of less than 0.5 but greater than zero. Asterisks are also shown immediately to the left of certain figures in tables that present the results of logistic regression models. In these cases, asterisks denote the level of significance of the odds ratios in the table as follows: $*p<0.05$, $**p<0.01$, $***p<0.001$.

2016 and 31 August 2017 and so would ordinarily enter Reception in September 2021, when they expected their child to enter Reception.

Questions about males in the early years workforce

- (CCMales1) Males are significantly under-represented in the early years workforce, with evidence from the Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers Survey 2018[6] showing that three per cent of the workforce are male. To help DfE understand parental attitudes towards men in the workforce, this question asked parents the extent to which they supported or opposed male staff caring for children at formal childcare providers. This question was asked in the 2019 wave, but rotated out of the questionnaire in the 2020 wave.

Question about parents' perceptions of the impact of COVID-19 on their children's social and educational development

- (CVTotImp) This question measured the extent to which parents thought the overall disruption to schools and childcare settings caused by the Coronavirus pandemic had harmed their child's social and educational development.

Deleted questions

Questions about ease of finding appropriate holiday childcare for school-age children

- (Hol3, Hol4) These questions asked parents about their ease of being able to find childcare that they could afford during the school holidays or that fitted in with their working hours.

Questions about Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit

A series of questions about Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit were removed.

- (AwardB) This question asked parents receiving Working Tax Credit and/or Child Tax Credit if they had a recent HMRC Tax Credits Award Notice that they could use when answering further questions.

- (PyNTC, Ben2N, Ben2aN, Ben2W, Ben2a, Ben2CT, Ben2b, TCPay) These questions asked parents who received Working Tax Credit and/or Child Tax Credit whether they received these payments separately or as one amount, how much WTC and CTC they received and over what period, and if they used any of the Tax Credit money to help pay for childcare.

Question about information given to parents by their main formal childcare provider

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[6] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/provider-finances-evidence-from-early-years-providers

- (ProvInf) This question asked parents if the main formal provider they used gave them information about the activities that their child had been taking part in (e.g., through photographs or examples of children's work) and how often that occurred.

Question about parents' ability to incorporate learning and play activities with their child into their daily routine

- (HLBarOpp) This question asked parents of children aged 0 to 5 if they felt they often struggled to fit learning and play activities with their child into their daily routine.

Questions about the partner's economic activity

- (PtnrQ, ThankP) These questions introduced and closed the section about the respondent's partner's economic activity and classification. Parents with partners were asked if their partner was present and would be willing to answer some questions. If the partner was not present, the parent was asked if they would answer some questions about their partner's work situation by proxy.

Amended questions

To accommodate the inclusion of Microsoft Teams interviews, the survey script was amended at questions which used a showcard. Specifically, for face-to-face and telephone interviews the script displayed 'don't know' and 'refused' response options on screen, but only the interviewer could see these options; they were not included on the showcards. However, for Microsoft Teams interviews the script did not display the 'don't know' and 'refused' options on screen, as parents viewed the screen during the interview. These options could still be selected, but only appeared if the interviewer pressed 'Next' without having selected any codes. This approach ensured that what parents saw on screen during a Microsoft Teams interview mirrored what they would have seen on the equivalent showcard, reducing the risk of mode-specific measurement bias.

There were some sections of the questionnaire that had more substantive amendments, as detailed below.

Questions collecting the contact details of early years providers, for use in the provider checks survey

- If the parent used early years childcare, they were asked to provide the contact details of the provider(s) so they could be contacted by phone to obtain more information about the services they provide. The answers were used to derive the final provider classifications; for details, see section 8.3. Reception classes at primary or infants' schools, and day nurseries, were removed from the scope of the provider checks survey given the high accuracy of parents' classification seen in previous waves. Consequently, contact details for these provider types were not collected.

Questions about the economic activity of partners

- In previous survey waves, detailed information about the partner's economic activity was sought via an interview with the partner themselves, on completion of the respondent's interview. If the partner was unavailable or unwilling to be interviewed, these questions could be answered by the respondent acting as a proxy. Due to the methodological changes for the 2021 survey, it was decided that the questions about the economic activity of partners would be collected purely by proxy (i.e. provided by the respondent). Respondents were able to refuse to answer the questions in this section.

4.2 Questionnaire content

The questionnaire was structured as follows:

- Household composition, and identification of the selected child.

- Household's use of childcare in the reference week, and the past year.

- Household's awareness and use of the 15 and 30 hours offers.

- Household's childcare costs, for providers used in the reference week.

- Household's receipt of Tax Credits, awareness of Universal Credit, and awareness and use of Tax-Free Childcare.

- The impact of support received on employment and family finances.

- Selected child's attendance record (the day-by-day 'diary' of childcare use in the reference week).

- Selected child's experiences at their main provider, reasons for choosing the main provider, and reasons for the patterns of provision used.

- Selected child's use of childcare during school holiday periods.

- Selected child's home learning environment

- Respondent's attitudes towards childcare in the local area.

- Respondent's and child(ren)'s demographic characteristics.

- Respondent's employment history.

- Consent to data linkage; consent for follow-up research; contact details for pre-school providers.

- Partner's employment status and details.

5 Mainstage survey: Sampling

5.1 Survey population

The survey population was children aged 0 to 14 living in private residential accommodation[7] in England.

This survey population mirrors previous survey waves, with the exception of the 2019 wave, for which the survey population was children aged 0 to 4, in order to allow more in-depth analyses of the childcare-related experiences of pre-school children. Future waves may shift the focus back to children aged 0 to 4, dependant on analytical and policy requirements.

Although the sampling units were children, the interview for each selected child was conducted with an appropriate adult (defined as an adult within the child's household with 'main or shared responsibility for making decisions about the child's childcare').

5.2 Sample frames

Up until the 2014-15 wave of the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents, children were sampled exclusively from the Child Benefit Register (CBR). This was a highly efficient approach given the near universal take-up of Child Benefit among parents of children aged 0 to 14 in England, and hence the near total coverage of the sample population by the sample frame. In 2013 this coverage was damaged by the introduction of the High Income Child Benefit Charge (HICBC), the effect of which has been to decrease the likelihood that children born since 2013 to higher income parents (those where one or both partners earn £60,000 or more per year) are listed on the CBR.

DfE commissioned Ipsos to write a report investigating the potential impact of this change, and to explore potential solutions.[8] The report found that persisting with the CBR as the sole sampling frame would introduce non-coverage bias that would reduce both the accuracy of survey estimates, and the ability to compare changes in estimates over time. The report recommended that a sample of children should be drawn from the CBR, as per previous survey waves, but should be supplemented with a sample of respondents to the Family Resources Survey (FRS) who had agreed to be recontacted for the purposes of future research. The FRS respondents were those with a child (or children) who had not made a claim for Child Benefit, or who had made a claim for Child Benefit but had subsequently opted-out of receiving Child Benefit due to having a high

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[7] Children living in communal establishments such as children's homes are excluded.
[8] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childcare-and-early-years-survey-of-parents-sampling-frames

income. These families would have little or no chance of being selected in the CBR sample.

Since the 2017 wave, the survey has used a dual-frame approach, sampling from both the CBR and the FRS.

Selection of the CBR sample

The sample of children from the CBR was selected by HMRC from all children in England that would be aged 0 to 14 on the first day of fieldwork (05 July 2021) for whom a Child Benefit claim had been made.

A small number of children were excluded from the sampling frame before selection took place. The exclusions were made according to HMRC procedures and reasons included: death of a child, cases where the child has been taken into care or put up for adoption, cases where the child does not live at the same address as the claimant and cases where there has been any correspondence by the recipient with the Child Benefit Centre (because the reason for correspondence cannot be ascertained and may be sensitive).

The sample of children was selected in two stages: selection of Primary Sample Units (PSUs) and selection of individual children within each PSU. Ipsos randomly selected 620 PSUs, plus an additional 620 PSUs that could be used as a reserve sample if needed. The PSUs were based on postcode sectors. HMRC provided a full list of postcode sectors in England with counts for each of the number of children on Child Benefit records aged 0 to 14 to the nearest five. In order to reduce clustering, postcode sectors containing fewer than 250 children were grouped with neighbouring postcode sectors. The list of grouped postcode sectors was stratified by Region, population density, proportion of households in managerial professional and intermediate occupations, and, proportion of the population that were unemployed. A size measure was calculated for each PSU based on the population of children, and sample points were selected with probability proportionate to this size measure.

At the second stage, prior to the start of fieldwork, 35 children per PSU were selected by HMRC from the selected PSUs (both the 620 main PSUs and 620 reserve PSUs). A list of all eligible children aged 0 to 14 in the PSU was created and was sorted by postcode and child benefit number to help to avoid children from the same household being selected.

The main sample of 620 PSUs x 35 children meant that a sample of 21,700 addresses were available from which to achieve the target of 6,000. Given the uncertainty around response rates arising from the Coronavirus pandemic, and the move from a purely face-to-face methodology to a methodology which included telephone and Microsoft Teams interviewing, this assumed that the unadjusted response rate could fall as low as 28 per cent while still delivering the target number of interviews. Sample was issued in three separate 'tranches' across the fieldwork period. For Tranche 3, as response was higher

than this baseline assumption of 28 per cent, a random subset of 110 PSUs were issued, such that 524 (rather than 620) PSUs were issued in total.

Each sampled child was the 'selected child' about whom detailed child-specific questions in the interview was asked. In certain instances, the questionnaire script re-selected this child, from among all children in the household, at the start of the interview. This occurred in the following instances:

i. Where the selected child was no longer living at the sampled address (for instance, where the family had moved address without informing HMRC, meaning that their address listed on the CBR was out of date). In these instances, as long as there was a child aged 0 to 14 living at the address at the point that the interviewer made contact, the interviewer sought an interview with one of the parents of this child (or children), with the questionnaire script randomly choosing one child aged 0 to 14 in the household to become the selected child (where there was more than one). This occurred at 206 households. Prior to the 2019 wave, the interviewer was instead required to attempt to trace the selected child to his or her new address and conduct the interview there.

ii. Where the selected child was living at the address, and a child had been born into the household between the date that the sample was drawn and the date of the interview. As there was approximately a gap of five months between the sample being drawn and the start of fieldwork, children that were born during this time were not represented in the sample of children drawn from Child Benefit records. To account for this, in households where a child had been born since the sample was drawn, the questionnaire script re-selected the child that was to be the focus of the child-specific questions from all children (including the newborn child) in the household. This re-selection occurred at 395 households.

iii. Where the selected child was living at the address, and where the number of children in the household (excluding children born since the sample was drawn) was found to be greater than the number of children living in the household according to Child Benefit records, and where Child Benefit was received by some but not all children in the household. In these instances, there was a (non-newborn) child in the household that did not have a chance of selection at the sampling stage, as said child was not on the Child Benefit database. Such instances may reflect a child in the household for whom the parents had decided not to claim, an error on the Child Benefit database, or a family event such as adoption. In these households, the questionnaire script re-selected the child that was to be the focus of the child-specific questions from all children in the household. This re-selection occurred at 49 households.

Selection of the FRS sample

The sample of FRS respondents (n = 204) was selected by DWP from households who had taken part in the 2019/20 FRS survey, who had consented to be re-contacted for the purposes of further research at the time of their FRS interview, and who had a child (or children) born since 7th January 2013 (the date that the High Income Child Benefit Charge was introduced) for whom they either:

- had not made a claim for Child Benefit, or

- had opted out of receiving Child Benefit payments due to having a high income.

Those opting out were included to ensure that all children in FRS households that could not be covered via the CBR were captured. Specifically, while families opting out of receiving Child Benefit remain listed on the CBR and are therefore available to be sampled, their contact details are more likely to be out of date as these families have little reason to inform HMRC of a change of address if they move, and as a result, they are likely to be under-represented in the CBR achieved sample. The FRS sample therefore boosts the sample of households that have opted-out of Child Benefit as they would otherwise be under-represented in a sample selected from the CBR alone.

6 Mainstage survey: Fieldwork

6.1 Briefings

Prior to the start of fieldwork, all interviewers received a full briefing by watching video modules recorded by the research team. These modules were available online, and interviewers could complete them in their own time. After each module, interviewers had to answer a series of 'quiz' questions, to ensure they understood the content. After the briefings had been completed, a series of online "Q&A" drop-in sessions were hosted, in which interviewers could ask questions of the field and research teams.

The briefings covered: an introduction to the study and its aims (including the importance of the survey, along with examples of how the survey data has been used to develop and understand the impact of childcare and early years policies); an explanation of the samples and procedures for contacting sampled parents, and receiving contact from sampled parents; detailed descriptions of the survey materials; full definitions of formal and informal childcare; a segment on how interviewers should determine the appropriate survey mode (i.e. telephone, Microsoft Teams or face-to-face) and schedule the interview; and a comprehensive section on the survey questionnaire (including differences in administration between the survey modes). The briefing sessions covered all salient points on conducting research with parents and how best to secure participation, as well as potential sensitivities within the survey, and practical information for interviewers.

6.2 Contact procedures

Letters and leaflet

An 'opt-out' letter introducing the survey was mailed prior to the start of fieldwork, in June 2021, addressed to (for the CBR sample) the named benefit recipient of the child sampled from the CBR, and (for the FRS sample) the adult who had taken part in the FRS survey and had consented to be recontacted for further research.

The opt-out letter described the survey and the remote interviewing modes available, including how each mode would work in practice. It contained information about Coronavirus protocols followed in the survey, including that the interviewer would not attempt to complete an interview in-home unless government advice allowed it.

The letter provided details about how the household could opt-out of the survey, should they not wish to participate. Opt-out methods included an online 'participant portal' through which parents could either opt-out of the survey or request a specific (remote) mode of interview. Parents who requested a mode of interview via the portal were asked to provide their telephone number (in the case of a telephone interview) as well as their email address (in the case of a Microsoft Teams interview). All households, except those opting out, were issued for interview.

Interviewers sent a separate 'advance letter' to each household in their assignment shortly before making their calls. This letter let parents know they should shortly expect a visit from an interviewer. Enclosed with the advance letter was a 'survey leaflet', which provided further details about the study.

Interviewer visits

For the CBR sample, interviewers were provided with the selected child's name, address, and the name of the person in the household listed as the recipient of Child Benefit for that child. An interview could be conducted with an adult with 'main or shared responsibility for making decisions about childcare for the selected child'. This adult did not have to be the Child Benefit recipient.

In cases where the selected child had moved from the sampled address, interviewers sought to determine whether a child aged 0 to 14 currently lived at the address. If so, the address was deemed to be eligible, and the interviewer introduced the survey to the current residents, who would not have received any advance communications about the survey. Interviewers then sought to conduct an interview with a parent of the child (or children) aged 0 to 14 at the address. If the interviewer was unable to identify whether a child aged 0 to 14 lived at the address (for instance, where the current residents refused to provide this information), the address was deemed to be of unknown eligibility, and no

interview was sought. If the interviewer determined that no child aged 0 to 14 lived at the address, the address was deemed to be ineligible, and no interview was sought[9].

For the FRS sample, interviewers were provided with the FRS respondent's name, address, and telephone number (if available). An interview could be conducted with an adult with 'main or shared responsibility for making decisions about childcare for the child or children aged 0 to 8 (born since 7th January 2013) in the household'.

For both the CBR and FRS sample a 'knock-to-nudge' approach was used, which involved interviewers calling on previously written-to households and encouraging them to participate in the survey. If a parent had requested a telephone or Microsoft Teams interview via the participant portal, the interviewer would make contact by telephone first to arrange the interview. However, if a parent had *not* been in touch via the participant portal, the interviewer visited the sampled address to try and arrange an interview and collect the relevant contact information from the parent to do this.

Interviewers were provided with an 'Impact Card' to use, at their discretion, to maximise co-operation across all issued addresses. This Impact Card laid out some of the ways in which the data from the survey series has been used to improve the services the Government provides to parents.

For both the CBR and FRS samples, an interview only took place where the responsible adult consented to be interviewed.

6.3 Interviewing

Interviews were conducted via three different modes, from which parents could choose. All three modes were conducted by Ipsos's face-to-face interviewer panel:

- Face-to-face interviewing (where Government guidance permitted);
- Telephone interviewing (with the respondent using single-use showcards, or viewing the showcards online); and
- Microsoft Teams interviewing (with the respondent viewing the interviewer's survey script on their own computer, tablet, or other device, and choosing response codes from the screen for questions that would ordinarily use a showcard).

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[9] These procedures mark a deviation from those followed prior to 2019, when, if the selected child had moved from the sampled address, the interviewer attempted to trace the child's new address and conduct an interview there. Due to the rising proportion of children found to have moved from the address listed on the CBR (from 13% of addresses issued to interviewers in the 2010 survey wave, to 22% in the 2018 survey wave), combined with the difficulties of tracing new addresses in the field, from the 2019 wave onwards, the sampling unit became the address, rather than the child.

Face-to-face interviewing was only carried out where Government guidance permitted. Initially, this meant that interviews were conducted in person on the doorstep, or in the respondent's garden, but they could be carried out in-home once Coronavirus restrictions eased. The return to in-home data collection involved strict protocols and conditions. These included interviewers wearing a facemask throughout in-home interviews, and considerations such as interviewers only entering properties once an initial risk assessment had been undertaken (such as availability of suitable room/space, ventilation) and then undertaking a continuous agile risk assessment once in-home.

Telephone interviewing took place with the respondent using either single-use paper showcards or looking at showcards online. For the telephone single-use showcards mode, interviewers left the parent with a set of the single-use showcards, and then telephoned to do the interview while directing them as to which showcard to look at for each question. For the telephone online showcards mode, interviewers provided parents with the online address, or URL, where the showcards were in advance of the appointment. At the start of the telephone interview the interviewer directed the parent to bring the showcards up on a screen, for instance a PC, laptop, tablet, or even a smartphone, and to look at them on screen during the interview.

For Microsoft Teams interviewing, the parent needed to have internet access and the interviewer sent them an email invitation link to join the interview at the scheduled time. If the parent did not have a Microsoft Teams account, they could join as a 'guest'. After initially showing themselves to the respondent at the start of the interview, the interviewer then deactivated the camera so the parent was not visible during the interview. The interviewer shared their computer screen with the parent over Microsoft Teams, so the respondent could see the possible answer options at relevant questions and choose the appropriate response.

In situations where respondents could not speak English well enough to complete the interview, interviewers were able to use another household member to assist as an interpreter, or another interviewer in the area who was able to speak their language was asked to conduct the interview. If translation was not possible, the interview was not carried out.

The interviews lasted for a mean of 46, and a median of 42 minutes. The length of the interview varied by survey mode, as follows:

- Face-to-face in-home (where Government guidance permitted): mean of 41 minutes, median of 37 minutes;
- Face-to-face outdoors (e.g. in gardens, where Government guidance permitted): mean of 36 minutes, median of 32 minutes;
- Telephone: mean of 51 minutes, median of 48 minutes;
- Microsoft Teams: mean of 46 minutes, median of 42 minutes.

7 Mainstage survey: Response

7.1 Outcomes and response for CBR sample

There were 18,340 children sampled from the Child Benefit Register (CBR) – 35 for each of 524 Primary Sampling Units (PSUs). Opt-out letters were sent to these addresses, leading to opt outs from 823 addresses. These addresses were removed from the sample, and a total of 17,517 addresses were issued to interviewers, who sent advance letters before starting their calls.

The overall response rate for the CBR sample was 38 per cent (shown in Table A.2). This figure reflects the proportion of productive interviews across all eligible addresses. The full fieldwork outcomes are shown in Table A.1. Table A.2 then presents various response metrics for the CBR sample, showing trend data since the 2009 survey.

The overall response rate fell from 62 per cent in 2019, to 38 per cent in 2021. A decline of this general order was expected and is attributable to the restrictions on face-to-face interviewing, arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated the use of remote interviewing modes (telephone and Microsoft Teams) for many of the interviews. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic meant that it was not appropriate to reissue 'soft refusals' – that is, addresses at which a parent declined to participate when the interviewer visited, but did not indicate explicitly that they should not be re-invited to take part at a later date.

Table A.1 Survey response figures, Child Benefit Register sample

Detailed outcomes	N	Outcome category	Of sampled %	Of issued %
PSUs sampled	**524**			
Addresses sampled per PSU	35			
Total addresses sampled, of which…	**18,340**	TS	**100%**	
Opting out	823	R	4%	
Addresses issued, of which…	**17,517**		**96%**	**100%**
Contact with responsible adult, of which…	**12,820**		**70%**	**73%**
Child at address, of which…	**11,034**		**60%**	**63%**
Refusal	4,446	R	24%	25%
Other unproductive	696	O	4%	4%
Interview – lone parent	1,564	I	9%	9%
Interview – partner interview in person		I	0%	0%
Interview – partner interview by proxy	3,157	I	17%	18%
Interview – unproductive partner	1,171	I	6%	7%
No child at address	1,563	NE	9%	9%
Unknown if child at address	223	UE	1%	1%
No contact with responsible adult, of which…	**3,954**		**22%**	**23%**
Child at address	327	NC	2%	2%
Unknown if child at address	3,627	UE	20%	21%

Deadwood (address vacant, demolished, derelict, non-residential, or holiday home)	743	NE	4%	4%
		Calculation	Of sampled	Of issued
Summary of outcomes	**N**		**%**	**%**
Total sample (TS)	18,340	TS	100%	
Eligible sample (ES)	16,034	TS-NE	87%	92%
Interview (I)	5,892	I	32%	34%
Non-contact (NC)	327	NC	2%	2%
Refusal (R)	5,269	R	29%	25%
Other non-response (O)	696	O	4%	4%
Unknown eligibility (UE)	3,850	UE	21%	22%
Not eligible (NE)	2,306	NE	13%	13%

Note: *For the 2019 survey, the sampling unit for the CBR sample was the address. In cases where the selected child had moved from the sampled address, interviewers determined whether a child aged 0 to 4 currently lived at the address. If so, the address was considered eligible, and an interview was sought with a parent of the child (or children) aged 0 to 4 at the address; if not, the addresses was deemed ineligible. Prior to the 2019 survey, the sampling unit was the child. In cases where the selected child had moved from the sampled address, the child was still considered eligible, and the interviewer attempted to trace the child to his or her new address and conduct an interview there.*

Table A.2 Survey response metrics, Child Benefit Register sample

Response metric	Calculation	Survey year								
		2009	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2014-15	2017	2018	2019	2021
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Overall response rate	I / (I+R+NC+O+(eu*UE))	**52**	**57**	**58**	**59**	**57**	**52**	**51**	**62**	**38**
Eligibility rate (eu)	I+NC+R+O / I+NC+R+O+NE	98	97	98	97	97	97	97	79	84
Unadj. response rate	I / TS	51	55	57	57	55	50	49	49	32
Co-operation rate	I / (I+R+O)	67	76	72	73	70	68	71	73	53
Contact rate	I+R+O / (I+R+NC+O+(eu*UE))	77	77	80	80	80	75	72	90	77
Refusal rate	R / (I+R+NC+O+(eu*UE))	24	18	22	21	23	24	22	23	37

Notes:
The response categories used in the calculations of the response metrics are as follows: Total sample (TS); Interview (I); Non-contact (NC); Refusal (R); Other non-response (O); Unknown eligibility (UE); Not eligible (NE); Eligibility rate (eu). Details of the specific fieldwork outcomes contained within these response categories can be found in Table A.1.

For the 2019 survey, the sampling unit for the CBR sample was the address. In cases where the selected child had moved from the sampled address, interviewers determined whether a child aged 0 to 4 currently lived at the address. If so, the address was considered eligible, and an interview was sought with a parent of the child (or children) aged 0 to 4 at the address; if not, the addresses was deemed ineligible. Prior to the 2019 survey, the sampling unit was the child. In cases where the selected child had moved from the sampled address, the child was still considered eligible, and the interviewer attempted to trace the child to his or her new address and conduct an interview there.

7.2 Outcomes and response for FRS sample

There were 203 valid addresses sampled from the Family Resources Survey (FRS). Opt-out letters were sent to these addresses, leading to opt outs from 16 addresses. These addresses were removed from the sample, and a total of 187 addresses were issued to interviewers, who sent advance letters before starting their calls.

The overall response rate for the FRS sample was 35 per cent (Table A.4). This figure reflects the proportion of productive interviews across all eligible addresses. The full fieldwork outcomes are shown in Table A.3. Table A.4 then presents various response metrics for the FRS sample, showing trend data since the 2017 survey.

Table A.3 Survey response figures, Family Resources Survey sample

		Outcome category	Of sampled	Of issued
Detailed outcomes	**N**		**%**	**%**
Total addresses sampled, of which…	**203**	TS	100%	
Opting out	16	**R**	8%	
Total addresses issued, of which…	**187**		**92%**	**100%**
No child at address	17	NE	8%	9%
Respondent moved	18	NC	9%	10%
Contact made, but not with sampled parent	4	NC	2%	2%
Refusal	31	R	15%	17%
Other unproductive	12	**O**	6%	6%
Unknown eligibility	42	UE	21%	22%
Interview – lone parent	2	I	1%	1%
Interview – partner interview in person		I	0%	0%
Interview – partner interview by proxy	46	I	23%	25%
Interview – unproductive partner	15	I	7%	8%
		Calculation	Of sampled	Of issued
Summary of outcomes	**N**		**%**	**%**
Total sample (TS)	203	TS	100%	
Eligible sample (ES)	186	TS-NE	92%	99%
Interview (I)	63	I	31%	34%
Non-contact (NC)	22	NC	11%	12%
Refusal (R)	47	R	23%	17%
Other non-response (O)	12	O	6%	6%
Unknown eligibility (UE)	42	UE	21%	22%
Not eligible (NE)	17	NE	8%	9%

Table A.4 Survey response metrics, Family Resources Survey sample

Response metric	Calculation	Survey year			
		2017	**2018**	**2019**	**2021**
		%	%	%	%
Overall response rate	I / (I+R+NC+O+(eu*UE))	**39**	**52**	**52**	**35**
Eligibility rate (eu)	I+NC+R+O / I+NC+R+O+NE	100	100	95	89
Unadjusted response rate	I / TS	39	52	50	31
Co-operation rate	I / (I+R+O)	55	66	75	52
Contact rate	I+R+O / (I+R+NC+O+(eu*UE))	69	78	69	67
Refusal rate	R / (I+R+NC+O+(eu*UE))	31	23	14	26

Notes:
The response categories used in the calculations of the response metrics are as follows: Total sample (TS); Interview (I); Non-contact (NC); Refusal (R); Other non-response (O); Unknown eligibility (UE); Not eligible (NE); Eligibility rate (eu). Details of the specific fieldwork outcomes contained within these response categories can be found in Table A.1.

7.3 Analyses relating to the change of survey mode

Introduction

As described in section 6.3, due to restrictions on face-to-face interviewing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted via three different modes, from which parents could choose: face-to-face interviewing (where Government guidance permitted); telephone interviewing (with the respondent using single-use showcards, or viewing the showcards online); and Microsoft Teams interviewing (with the respondent viewing the interviewer's survey script on their own computer, tablet, or other device, and choosing response codes from the screen for questions that would ordinarily use a showcard).

A 'knock-to-nudge' approach was used, whereby interviewers visited sampled addresses and invited parents to take part in the interview via one of these three modes. This design differs from previous waves in the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents series, for which interviews have been conducted wholly face-to-face.

The distribution of interviews by survey mode is shown in Table 7.1. Most interviews (57%) were conducted by telephone, 39 per cent were conducted face-to-face (whether in-home, or outside in gardens), with very few (3%) conducted by Microsoft Teams.

Table 7.1 Achieved interviews, by mode of interview

Mode of interview	%
Base: All families with child(ren) aged 0 to 14	*5,955*
Face-to-face	39
Telephone	57
Microsoft Teams	3

One consequence of the change of survey design for 2021 is that the overall response rate to the survey fell from 51 per cent in 2018, and 62 per cent in 2019, to 38 per cent in 2021, with the unadjusted response rate falling from 49 per cent in both 2018 and 2019, to 32 per cent in 2021 (for further details on the calculation of the survey response rates, see section 7.1).

This decline means that there is greater scope for non-response bias to affect survey estimates in 2021, compared to 2019 and earlier survey years. Non-response bias refers to biases that arise when those participating in a survey differ from those who do not participate in ways that are associated with the survey measures. It should be noted, however, that recent research has found only a weak association between response rates and levels of non-response bias, and that weighting can address (but not eliminate) non-response bias[10].

A second consequence of this change of design is that the survey modes themselves may influence the answers that parents provide. Such 'mode effects' can also introduce bias into survey estimates. Past research has shown that mode effects are most pronounced between interviewer administered versus non-interviewer administered modes; for attitudinal rather than factual questions; and for questions of a sensitive nature[11].

It is not possible to provide direct assessments of either the extent of non-response bias, or the influence of mode effects, for the 2021 survey wave. A direct assessment of non-response bias would have required a wholly face-to-face survey to be run in parallel with the 2021 wave, with survey estimates compared between the two surveys. While survey estimates from 2021 can be compared with earlier survey waves, it is possible that changes observed will reflect 'real' changes among the population, whether due to gradual change over time, or due to acute change in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A direct assessment of the influence of mode effects in the 2021 wave would have required an experimental design, with each address randomly assigned to one of the three survey modes. In the absence of such a design, mode effects cannot be disentangled from selection effects, whereby those choosing one survey mode differ from those choosing another survey mode in ways that are associated with the survey measures.

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[10] See e.g.: Patrick Sturgis et al., 'Fieldwork Effort, Response Rate, and the Distribution of Survey Outcomes', Public Opinion Quarterly 81, no. 2 (2017): 523–42, https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfw055; Teitler, J. O., Reichman, N. E., & Sprachman, S. (2003). Costs and benefits of improving response rates for a hard-to-reach population. Public Opinion Quarterly, 67(1), 126–138. https://doi.org/10.1086/346011
[11] See e.g.: Roger Tourangeau, 'Mixing Modes: Tradeoffs Among Coverage, Nonresponse, and Measurement Error', in Total Survey Error in Practice, ed. Paul P. Biemer et al. (Hoboken, NJ, USA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2017), 115–32, https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119041702.ch6.

In this section, we instead look for indirect evidence to understand the extent to which the 2021 wave may be subject to these biases.

Analyses of the sample profile

An indirect assessment of the scope for non-response bias can be obtained by comparing the profile of the issued sample with that of the achieved sample, for geo-demographic measures known to be related to key survey estimates. These geo-demographic measures must be available for the whole issued sample – that is, including those addresses at which interviews were not obtained – to enable the comparisons to be made.

Table 7.2 shows, for both the 2018 and 2021 survey waves, the profiles of the issued and (unweighted) achieved CBR samples for region, area deprivation, and rurality. The 2018 wave is used as the comparator as it is the most recent comparable wave to the 2021 wave in terms of the survey population (children aged 0 to 14).

The relative bias - defined as the percentage point difference between the issued and achieved sample for a given subcategory – is also shown. The relative bias describes the extent to which certain regions and area types are over- or under-represented in the achieved samples compared to the issued samples. The 'absolute relative bias' has also been computed for each of the three variables. The absolute relative bias is the sum of the absolute values of the relative bias and provides a measure of the overall discrepancy between the issued and achieved samples.

The data in Table 7.2 demonstrate a high degree of consistency between the 2018 and 2021 survey waves. For region, the relative biases range between -2.8 and 1.9 percentage points for 2018, and between -1.9 and 1.8 percentage points for 2021, with the absolute relative biases being 9.8 and 9.2 percentage points for 2018 and 2021 respectively. For area deprivation, the relative biases range between -1.1 and 1.0 percentage points for 2018 wave, and between -1.6 and 0.9 percentage points for 2021, with the absolute relative biases being 3.3 and 3.5 percentage points for 2018 and 2021 respectively. And for rurality, the relative biases are -0.4 and 0.4 percentage points for 2018, and -0.1 and 0.1 percentage points for 2021, with the absolute relative biases being 0.8 and 0.2 percentage points for 2018 and 2021 respectively.

Whilst there are some differences between the 2018 and 2021 response profiles they are not large and do not provide sufficient evidence that the 2021 wave is subject to greater levels of non-response bias than the 2018 wave. It is of course possible that the 2021 wave is subject to greater levels of bias on variables other than region, area deprivation, and rurality, but the absence of such variables for the full issued samples means that these comparisons cannot be made.

Table 7.2 Issued and achieved CBR sample profiles for region, area deprivation, and rurality, 2018 and 2021

	2018			2021		
	Issued sample	Achieved sample	Relative bias	Issued sample	Achieved sample	Relative bias
	%	%	ppts	%	%	ppts
Base: All families with child(ren) aged 0 to 14	*11,539*	*5,877*	*n/a*	*18,340*	*5,892*	*n/a*
Region						
North East	4.6	4.8	0.2	4.6	4.0	-0.6
North West	13.5	14.6	1.0	13.7	14.6	0.9
Yorkshire and the Humber	10.0	11.9	1.9	10.1	9.6	-0.5
East Midlands	8.5	7.8	-0.7	8.6	7.7	-0.9
West Midlands	11.0	11.4	0.4	11.3	9.3	-1.9
East of England	11.2	12.5	1.4	11.2	13.0	1.8
London	16.1	13.3	-2.8	15.7	17.3	1.6
South East	15.8	14.6	-1.2	15.5	14.8	-0.6
South West	9.2	9.1	-0.1	9.3	9.6	0.3
ABSOLUTE RELATIVE BIAS			9.8			9.2
Area deprivation						
1st quintile – most deprived	28.0	29.0	1.0	15.7	16.6	0.9
2nd quintile	20.0	20.3	0.3	17.6	18.0	0.4
3rd quintile	18.0	16.9	-1.1	18.2	18.7	0.5
4th quintile	17.9	17.4	-0.5	20.8	20.6	-0.2
5th quintile – least deprived	16.1	16.5	0.4	27.7	26.1	-1.6
ABSOLUTE RELATIVE BIAS			3.3			3.5
Rurality						
Rural	13.7	14.1	0.4	13.9	14.0	0.1
Urban	86.3	85.9	-0.4	86.1	86.0	-0.1
ABSOLUTE RELATIVE BIAS			0.8			0.2

Analyses of survey estimates

A separate approach for assessing potential biases arising from either (or both) non-response and mode effects is to compare weighted survey estimates between the 2018 and 2021 waves for measures we would expect to change very little, if at all, over time. Tables 7.3 through 7.7 show these comparisons for a range of demographic variables:

marital status, the parent's highest qualification, family type and work status[12], tenure status, and the ethnicity of the selected child.

These data show very little change between 2018 and 2021. Significance tests were carried out between the two survey years as follows:

- For marital status, all subcategories were tested. No significant changes were identified between the survey years.

- For highest qualification, the proportion of parents with a degree or higher, and the proportion of parents with no qualifications were tested. The proportion of parents with an honours degree or higher rose from 34 per cent to 41 per cent in 2021. The proportion of parents with no qualifications fell from 12 per cent in 2018 to 10 per cent in 2021.

- For family type and work status, all subcategories were tested, as was the proportion of couple families, and the proportion of working families (i.e. couple families in which one or both parents worked, and working lone parent families). The only subcategory that differed between the survey years was the proportion of working lone parents, which rose from 14 per cent in 2018 to 18 per cent in 2021. The proportion of working families was unchanged (87% in both 2018 and 2021). The proportion of couple families fell from 76 per cent in 2018 to 72 per cent in 2021.

- For tenure status, all subcategories were tested, as was the proportion of owner occupiers (i.e. those buying with the help of a mortgage or loan, and those owning their home outright). The only subcategory that differed between the survey years was the proportion paying part rent and part mortgage (which rose from less than half of one per cent in 2018, to 1% in 2021). The proportion of owner occupiers in 2018 was 58 per cent, in line with 56 per cent in 2021.

- For the ethnicity of the selected child, the proportion of children from any White background was tested, as was the proportion of children from a White British background. Each of these categories was identical between the survey years: 76 per cent of selected children were from any White background in both 2018 and 2021, and 68 per cent were White British in both 2018 and 2021.

Taken together, these data do not provide evidence of concerning levels of non-response bias in 2021, compared with earlier survey years. While there have been shifts in certain demographics between the survey years – in particular, a rise in the proportion of parents

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[12] One might expect family work status to have changed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to the suspension of many business activities across the economy. However, it should be noted that the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme enabled employees to stay in their roles 'on furlough'. The survey question which collects data on employment status asked parents who were on furlough at the time of their interview to code their usual working status.

with an honours degree or higher, and a slight fall in the proportion of couple families – the demographic comparisons shown here are typified by their consistency across the survey years, and the changes identified may be, in whole or in part, due to 'real' changes across the survey population.

Table 7.3 Marital status, 2018 and 2021

	2018	2021
Marital status	**%**	**%**
Base: All families with child(ren) aged 0 to 14	*5,750*	*5,955*
Married and living with husband/wife	70	68
Single (never married)	21	21
Divorced	5	6
Married and separated from husband/wife	4	4
Widowed	*	1

Table 7.4 Highest qualification, 2018 and 2021

	2018	2021
Qualifications	**%**	**%**
Base: All families with child(ren) aged 0 to 14	*5,750*	*5,714*
GCSE grade D-G/CSE grade 2-5/SCE O Grades (D-E)/SCE	7	8
GCSE grade A-C/GCE O-level passes/CSE grade 1/SCE O	17	14
GCE A-level/SCE Higher Grades (A-C)	16	15
Certificate of Higher Education	9	8
Foundation degree	4	6
Honours degree (e.g. BSc, BA, BEd)	22	25
Masters degree (e.g. MA, PGDip)	11	13
Doctorate (e.g. PhD)	1	2
Other academic qualifications	1	1
None	12	10

Table 7.5 Family work status, 2018 and 2021

	2018	2021
Family work status	**%**	**%**
Base: All families with child(ren) aged 0 to 14	*5,922*	*5,955*
Couple – both working	52	50
Couple – one working	20	19
Couple – neither working	4	3
Lone parent working	14	18
Lone parent not working	10	10

Table 7.5 Tenure status, 2018 and 2021

	2018	2021
Tenure status	**%**	**%**
Base: All families with child(ren) aged 0 to 14	*5,911*	*5,889*
Buying it with the help of a mortgage or loan	49	48
Rent it	41	41
Own it outright	9	8
Live rent-free (in relative's/friend's property)	1	1
Pay part rent and part mortgage (shared ownership)	*	1

Table 7.7 Ethnicity of selected child, 2018 and 2021

	2018	2021
Ethnicity of selected child	**%**	**%**
Base: All child(ren) aged 0 to 14	*5,913*	*5,919*
White		
White British	68	68
White Irish	*	*
Other White	7	7
Mixed		
White and Caribbean	2	2
White and Black African	1	1
White and Asian	2	2
Other mixed	1	1
Asian or Asian British		
Indian	3	3
Pakistani	4	4
Bangladeshi	2	2
Other Asian	2	1
Black or Black British		
Caribbean	1	1
African	4	4
Other Black	*	*
Chinese	1	*
Arab	1	1
Other	1	1

8 Mainstage survey: Data processing

8.1 Coding and editing of the data

The survey script ensured that the correct routing was followed throughout the questionnaire and applied range checks, which prevented invalid values from being entered. It also included consistency checks, which prompted interviewers to check answers that were inconsistent with information provided earlier in the interview. These checks allowed interviewers to clarify and query any data discrepancies directly with the respondent and were used extensively throughout the questionnaire.

The data collected during interviews was coded and edited. The main task was the back-coding of 'other' answers. This was carried out when over 10 per cent of respondents at a particular question provided an alternative answer to those that were pre-coded; this answer was recorded verbatim during the interview and was coded during the coding stage using the original list of pre-coded responses and sometimes additional codes available to coders only.

Coding was completed by a team of Ipsos coders who were briefed on the survey. If the coder could not resolve a query, this was referred to the research team.

After the dataset was cleaned, the analysis file of question-based and derived variables was set up in SPSS and all questions and answer codes labelled.

8.2 Analysis and significance testing

Data tables showing survey results were created. These were generated in SPSS, and significance testing was undertaken using SPSS version 24. The complex samples module in SPSS was used to take into account the impact of stratification, clustering and non-response on the survey estimates. This means that 'false positive' results to significance tests (in other words interpreting a difference as real when it is not) is far less likely than if the standard formulae were used.

8.3 Provider edits

Checks were carried out on respondents' classifications of the pre-school childcare providers they used in order to improve the accuracy of the classifications. During the main survey, parents were asked to classify the childcare providers they used for their children into types (for example nursery school, playgroup and so on). Given that some parents may have misclassified the pre-school providers they used, Ipsos contacted providers by telephone, where possible, and asked them to classify the type of provision they offered to children of different ages. Telephone interviews with providers were

carried out in two separate batches, the first two during fieldwork period, and the second immediately after fieldwork had finished.

The following provider types (as classified by parents) were contacted:

- nursery school

- nursery class attached to a primary or infants' school

- special day school or nursery or unit for children with special educational needs

- playgroup or pre-school

In previous survey waves reception classes at primary or infants' schools, and day nurseries, were also contacted. These provider types were removed from the scope of the provider checks in 2021 to help to reduce the length of the survey given the move to the remote interviewing modes. This was deemed appropriate given that parents are correct in their categorisations of these provider types in the great majority of instances (e.g. a 92% accuracy rate for each of these provider types in the 2019 wave).

The process of checking providers started by extracting data from the survey data regarding the providers used and the parents' classification of them. This was only done in cases where parents had agreed to Ipsos contacting their providers. Each provider remained linked to the parent interview so that they could be compared and later merged to the parent interview data.

Ipsos received information on 920 providers from the interview data. Because different parents may have used the same provider, the contact information for that provider was potentially repeated. As such, Ipsos de-duplicated the list of providers, which was done both manually and automatically. 68 providers were duplicates and were therefore removed from the checks.

A full list of 852 providers was generated, and telephone interviewers were briefed. Interviews with providers were approximately six minutes long, and covered the services provided and the age range of the children who attended each service. Interviews were achieved with 631 providers, which constitutes a response rate of 74 per cent.

The classification of pre-school providers was compared between the parent face-to-face interviews and the provider checks telephone interviews, and final classifications were derived by following pre-agreed editing rules. Table A.5 compares parents' classification of providers with the final classification of providers after the edits had been carried out.

Table A.5 Summary classification of providers before and after provider checks

	Parents' classification	Final classification after all checks
	%	%
Base: All formal institutional providers identified by parents for whom contact details were provided by parents	*920*	*920*
Nursery school	51	31
Nursery class attached to a primary or infants' school	29	28
Reception class	n/a	2
Special day school or nursery or unit for children with SEN	2	2
Day nursery	n/a	23
Playgroup or pre-school	18	15

While these data illustrate the net change in provider classifications before and after the provider edits, they do not show the gross changes; that is, how exactly each provider as classified by parents is ultimately reclassified after the provider edits are complete. This is shown for those provider mentions which were subjected to the provider edits (i.e. where provider contact details were provided and an interview with the provider was sought) in Table A.6.

This table shows that parents were most accurate when categorising special day schools or nurseries or units for children with special educational needs (93% accuracy), followed by nursery classes (79% accuracy). Parents were least accurate where they classified a provider as a nursery school – this proved accurate in 50 per cent of cases, with 39 per cent of these classifications ultimately proving to be a day nursery, and eight per cent a nursery class.

Table A.6 Detailed classification of providers before and after provider checks. Parents' classifications (bold) and final classifications (not bold)

		Per provider	Of total
	N	**%**	**%**
Nursery school	**467**	**100**	**51**
Nursery school	234	50	25
Nursery Class	36	8	4
Reception Class	3	1	*
Special day school/nursery	1	*	*
Day Nursery	180	39	20
Playgroup or pre-school	13	3	1
Nursery Class	**269**	**100**	**29**
Nursery school	25	9	3
Nursery Class	213	79	23
Reception Class	10	4	1
Special day school/nursery	0	0	0
Day Nursery	14	5	2
Playgroup or pre-school	7	3	1
Special day school/nursery	**14**	**100**	**2**
Nursery school	0	0	0
Nursery Class	0	0	0
Reception Class	0	0	0
Special day school/nursery	13	93	1
Day Nursery	1	7	*
Playgroup or pre-school	0	0	0
Playgroup or pre-school	**170**	**100**	**18**
Nursery school	22	13	2
Nursery Class	5	3	1
Reception Class	1	1	*
Special day school/nursery	0	0	0
Day Nursery	20	12	2
Playgroup or pre-school	122	72	13
GRAND TOTAL	**920**		**100**

8.4 Mainstage survey: Weighting

Summary of the weighting

The sample was selected from two sources: the main component was sampled from the Child Benefit Register (CBR) as per previous years of the survey, with an additional sample from respondents to the Family Resources Survey (FRS) that were identified as not receiving Child Benefit because of the introduction of the High Income Benefit Charge. These two components of the survey were weighted separately.

The sample is analysed at both the family and child-level, and hence there are two final weights; a family weight for family-level analyses, and a child weight for analyses of data collected about the selected child.

Child Benefit sample: Family weights

Family selection weight

The Child Benefit sample was designed to be representative of the population of children (aged 14 or younger) of parents receiving Child Benefit, rather than the population of parents or families themselves. This design feature means that larger families are over-represented in the sample[13]. In addition, the sampling was designed so that the sample of children aged 0 to 4 was boosted by a factor of 2.4.

The first stage of the weighting for the family weights corrects for these design features by calculating the appropriate selection weights; these selection weights corrected for families for which the number of children in the sample frame differed from the number of children found in the family at interview.

The family selection weight is the inverse of the family's selection probability, so larger households are weighted down:

$W1 = 1/Pr(F)$; where

$Pr(F)$ = (# children not aged 0 to 4) + 2.4 x (# children aged 0 to 4)

The counts of the children were based on the sampling frame information but were adjusted up (or down) if more (or fewer) children were found in the family at interview – this adjustment was trimmed to reduce the variance of the final child weights.

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[13] This follows from children in England having an equal chance of selection, meaning that a family with two children has twice the chance of having a child selected as a family with one child, a family with four children has four times the chance of having a child selected as a family with one child, and so on.

Family calibration weight

The next stage of the weighting adjusted the sample using calibration weighting, so that the weighted distribution for region and the number of children in the household at the family level matched the family-level Child Benefit counts, and the weighted distribution for age groups at the child level matched child-level Child Benefit counts (Table A.7). HMRC provided Ipsos with a breakdown of the sampling frame (before exclusions) for different variables at family and child level (see Tables A.7 and A.8).

The family selection weights (W1) were used as the starting weights for the calibration weighting stage.

Table A.7 Control totals for the family calibration weights

	Population	Population	Selection weight (W1)	Final weight (W2)
	N	%	%	%
Region (families)				
North East	257,588	4.6	4.0	4.6
North West	743,500	13.4	14.3	13.4
Yorkshire and the Humber	553,279	10.0	9.0	10.0
East Midlands	477,658	8.6	7.4	8.6
West Midlands	603,203	10.9	9.2	10.9
East of England	621,013	11.2	13.1	11.2
London	896,568	16.2	17.9	16.2
South East	882,121	15.9	15.5	15.9
South West	514,767	9.3	9.5	9.3
TOTAL	5,549,697			
Children's age (children)				
0-1	748,415	8.2	7.6	8.2
2-4	1,758,047	19.4	19.9	19.4
5-7	1,906,545	21.0	20.0	21.0
8-11	2,724,495	30.0	30.2	30.0
12-14	1,937,908	21.4	22.3	21.4
TOTAL	9,075,410			
Number of children aged 0 to 14 in household (families)				
1	2,897,122	52.2	47.0	52.2
2	1,985,991	35.8	40.5	35.8
3	510,391	9.2	9.7	9.2
4+	156,193	2.8	2.8	2.8
TOTAL	5,549,697			

The weights after the calibration stage were the Child Benefit family weights (W2).

Child Benefit sample: Child weights

Child selection weight

At each sampled address from the Child Benefit sample, a single child aged 0 to 14 was selected at random to be the focus of the detailed childcare section of the questionnaire. Children aged 0 to 4 were given a higher chance of selection (by a factor of 2.4) in order to boost the sample in that age range.

The child selection weight (W3) is the inverse of the child selection probabilities applied within each household:

W3 = 1/Pr(C); where

Pr(C) = 2.4 / [(# children not aged 0 to 4) + 2.4 x (# children aged 0 to 4)] if the child was not aged 0 to 4

Child calibration weight

The next stage was to produce calibration weights that adjusted the sample of selected children so that the weighted distributions for age/sex groups, region and number of children in the household matched child-level Child Benefit counts (Table A.8). The starting weights for the calibration stage (W4) were obtained by combining the family weight (W2) with the child selection weights (W3): W4 = W2 x W3.

Table A.8 Control totals for the child calibration weights

	Population	Population	Pre-calibration weight (W4)	Final weight (W4)
	N	%	%	%
Region (children)				
North East	417,108	4.6	4.7	4.6
North West	1,227,229	13.5	14.0	13.5
Yorkshire and the Humber	917,849	10.1	10.6	10.1
East Midlands	779,209	8.6	8.9	8.6
West Midlands	1,015,583	11.2	11.2	11.2
East of England	1,006,912	11.1	11.0	11.1
London	1,451,611	16.0	15.4	16.0
South East	1,420,857	15.7	14.5	15.7
South West	839,052	9.2	9.6	9.2
TOTAL	9,075,410			
Selected child's gender / age (children)				
Males: 0-1	383,639	4.2	3.8	4.2
Males: 2-4	900,863	9.9	9.6	9.9
Males: 5-7	976,289	10.8	12.4	10.8
Males: 8-11	1,394,601	15.4	16.0	15.4
Males: 12-14	991,301	10.9	11.0	10.9

Females: 0-1	364,776	4.0	3.8	4.0
Females: 2-4	857,184	9.4	9.1	9.4
Females: 5-7	930,256	10.3	10.6	10.3
Females: 8-11	1,329,894	14.7	13.6	14.7
Females: 12-14	946,607	10.4	10.1	10.4
TOTAL	9,075,410			
Number of children in household (children)				
1	2,896,890	31.9	31.5	31.9
2	3,971,663	43.8	44.0	43.8
3	1,531,050	16.9	17.0	16.9
4+	675,808	7.4	7.6	7.4
TOTAL	9,075,411			

FRS Sample: Family and child weights

Because the number of interviews carried out with the sample selected from the Family Resources Survey was relatively small (63), a complex weighting strategy was not appropriate. Instead, the child and family weights for the FRS sample were both set to be three times the corresponding mean value for the Child Benefit sample weights.

The weights for the two sample components were combined and re-scaled to have mean of 1, so the weights sum to the sample size.

Effective sample size

Disproportionate sampling and sample clustering usually result in a loss of precision for survey estimates. All else being equal, the more variable the weights, the greater the loss in precision.

The effect of the sample design on the precision of survey estimates is indicated by the effective sample size. The effective sample size measures the size of an (unweighted) simple random sample that would have provided the same precision as the design being implemented. The efficiency of a sample is given by the ratio of the effective sample size to the actual sample size.

The estimated 'average' effective sample size and sample efficiency were calculated for both weights (Table A.9). Note that this calculation includes only effects of the weighting; it does not include clustering effects, which will be question-specific. In addition, this is an 'average' effect for the weighting – the true effect will vary from question to question. These figures provide a guide to the average level of precision of child-level and family-level survey estimates.

Table A.9 Effective sample size and weighting efficiency

	All
Base: All cases	*5,955*
Child weight	
Effective sample size	4,607
Sample efficiency	77.36%
Family weight	
Effective sample size	4,050
Sample efficiency	68.01%

Confidence intervals

Confidence intervals (at the 95% level) for key estimates in the survey are shown in Table A.4. The confidence intervals have been generated using standard errors calculated using complex samples formulae.

Table A.10 Confidence intervals (95%) for key estimates

	Estimate	Standard error	Lower	Upper	Unweighted base
Use of any childcare by family	69.11%	0.01	67.04%	71.19%	*5,955*
Use of formal childcare by family	55.18%	0.01	53.11%	57.24%	*5,955*
Use of informal childcare by family	27.92%	0.01	26.13%	29.72%	*5,955*
Hours of childcare used (pre-school children) (mean)	25.52	0.40	24.74	26.31	*1,706*
Hours of childcare used (school-age children) (mean)	10.42	0.36	9.71	11.13	*1,699*
Weekly amount (£) paid for childcare (mean)	63.71	2.16	59.47	67.95	*2,155*
Use of holiday childcare (when main provider closed)	39.35%	0.01	37.00%	41.71%	*3,792*

Appendix: Socio-demographic profile (Mainstage survey)

Respondent characteristics

Gender of responding parent

As in previous surveys in the series, the majority of parents who responded to the survey were female (86%).

Age

The mean age of respondents was 39.6. Table B.1 shows the age bands of respondents by family type. It shows that respondents in couple families tended to be slightly older than lone parent respondents.

Table B.1 Age of respondent, by family type

	Family type		
	Couples	**Lone parents**	**All**
Age of respondent	**%**	**%**	**%**
Base: All families with child(ren) aged 0 to 14	*4,387*	*1,568*	*5,955*
20 and under	*	1	*
21 to 30	9	17	11
31 to 40	45	43	45
41 to 50	38	32	36
51+	8	7	8
Mean	40.0	38.4	39.6

Marital status

The majority of respondents (68%) were married and living with their husband/wife. Around one in five (21%) were single and never married (including persons who were cohabiting) (Table B.2).

Table B.2 Marital status

	All
Marital status	**%**
Base: All families with child(ren) aged 0 to 14	*5,955*
Married and living with husband/wife	68
Single (never married)	21
Divorced	6
Married and separated from husband/wife	4
Widowed	1

Qualifications

Respondents in lone parent families tended to have lower qualifications than respondents in couple families (Table B.3). Lone parents were less likely to hold Honours and Masters degrees as their highest qualification than were respondents in couple families, and were more likely not to hold any academic qualifications.

Table B.3 Highest qualification, by family type

	Family type		
	Couples	**Lone parents**	**All**
Qualifications	**%**	**%**	**%**
Base: All families with child(ren) aged 0 to 14	*4,213*	*1,501*	*5,714*
GCSE grade D-G/CSE grade 2-5/SCE O Grades (D-E)/SCE	6	12	8
GCSE grade A-C/GCE O-level passes/CSE grade 1/SCE O	12	17	14
GCE A-level/SCE Higher Grades (A-C)	14	17	15
Certificate of Higher Education	7	8	8
Foundation degree	6	6	6
Honours degree (e.g. BSc, BA, BEd)	28	19	25
Masters degree (e.g. MA, PGDip)	15	7	13
Doctorate (e.g. PhD)	2	1	2
Other academic qualifications	1	*	1
None	8	14	10

Family characteristics

Size of the family

The median family size was four people. The smallest families comprised two people (i.e. one parent and one child), and the largest comprised 12 people.

Number of children aged 0 to 14 in the family

Half (50%) of families had one child aged 0 to 14, 37 per cent had two children, and 12 per cent had three or more children (Table B.4). Lone parents tended to have fewer children than couple families.

Table B.4 Number of children in the family, by family type

	Family type		
	Couples	**Lone parents**	**All**
Number of children	**%**	**%**	**%**
Base: All families with child(ren) aged 0 to 14	*4,387*	*1,568*	*5,955*
1	46	63	50
2	41	27	37
3+	13	11	12

Around one in five (19%) of families had only pre-school children, the same proportion had both pre-school and school-age children, and 62 per cent had only school-age children (Table B.5).

Table B.5 Number of pre-school and school-age children in the family, by family type

	Family type		
	Couples	**Lone parents**	**All**
Age of children in family	**%**	**%**	**%**
Base: All families with child(ren) aged 0 to 14	*4,387*	*1,568*	*5,955*
Only pre-school children (0 to 4 years)	20	16	19
Both pre-school and school-age children	21	14	19
Only school-age children (5 to 14 years)	59	70	62

Family annual income

Table B.6 shows the family annual income (before tax). Lone parents tended to have lower family annual incomes than did couple families.

Table B.6 Annual family income, by family type

	Family type		
	Couples	**Lone parents**	**All**
Family annual income	**%**	**%**	**%**
Base: All families with child(ren) aged 0 to 14	*3,796*	*1,330*	*5,126*
Up to £9,999	2	12	5
£10,000 - £19,999	8	40	17
£20,000 - £29,999	12	25	16
£30,000 - £44,999	19	14	18
£45,000 - £64,999	25	6	20
£65,000 or more	35	3	26

Family type and work status

Table B.7 shows family type and work status. Half of respondents were from couple families where both parents worked (50%), and a further 19 per cent were in couple families where one parent worked. In 13 per cent of families no-one was working (10% were non-working lone parent families and 3% were couple families where neither parent was in work).

Table B.7 Family work status

	All
Family work status	**%**
Base: All families with child(ren) aged 0 to 14	*5,955*
Couple – both working	50
Couple – one working	19
Couple – neither working	3
Lone parent working	18

Lone parent not working	10

Tenure

The tenure of respondents' families is shown in Table B.8. Families were most likely to be renting the property (41%) or buying it with the help of a mortgage or loan (48%). Most couple families were in the process of buying their home with the help of a mortgage or loan (59%), while most lone parents were renting (73%).

Table B.8 Tenure status, by family type

	Family type		
	Couples	**Lone parents**	**All**
Tenure status	**%**	**%**	**%**
Base: All families with child(ren) aged 0 to 14	*4,337*	*1,552*	*5,889*
Buying it with the help of a mortgage or loan	59	19	48
Rent it	29	73	41
Own it outright	9	5	8
Live rent-free (in relative's/friend's property)	1	3	1
Pay part rent and part mortgage (shared ownership)	1	1	1

Selected child characteristics

Gender of selected child

Just over half of selected children were boys (53%), and just under half were girls (47%).

Age of selected child

The age of the selected child was spread across all age categories (Table B.9).

Table B.9 Age of selected child, by family type

	Family type		
	Couples	**Lone parents**	**All**
Age of selected child	**%**	**%**	**%**
Base: All child(ren) aged 0 to 14	*4,387*	*1,568*	*5,955*
0 to 2	16	11	15
3 to 4	15	12	14
5 to 7	22	20	22
8 to 11	28	34	29
12 to 14	20	23	21

Ethnic group of selected child

The majority of selected children in the survey were White British (68%) (Table B.10).

Table B.10 Ethnicity of selected child, by family type

	Family type		
	Couples	**Lone parents**	**All**
Ethnicity of selected child	**%**	**%**	**%**
Base: All child(ren) aged 0 to 14	*4,362*	*1,557*	*5,919*
White			
White British	69	67	68
White Irish	*	*	*
Other White	8	6	7
Mixed			
White and Caribbean	1	3	2
White and Black African	1	2	1
White and Asian	2	2	2
Other mixed	1	2	1
Asian or Asian British			
Indian	4	1	3
Pakistani	4	2	4
Bangladeshi	2	1	2
Other Asian	1	1	1
Black or Black British			
Caribbean	1	4	1
African	3	7	4
Other Black	*	*	*
Chinese	*	1	*
Arab	1	1	1
Other	1	1	1

Special education needs and disabilities of selected child

Eleven per cent of selected children had a special educational need[14] , and seven per cent had a long-standing physical or mental impairment, illness or disability (Table B.11).

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[14] The selected child was categorised as having a special educational need (or not) during the interview via the parent's response to the question "*Does [child's name] have any special educational needs or other special needs? [yes/no/don't know/refused]*"

Table B.11 Special educational needs or disabilities of selected child, by family type

	Family type		
	Couples	**Lone parents**	**All**
Special educational needs or disabilities of selected child	**%**	**%**	**%**
Base: All child(ren) aged 0 to 14	*4,387*	*1,568*	*5,955*
Child has SEN	10	13	11
Child has long-standing physical or mental impairment, illness or disability	6	10	7

Among children with a special educational need, 41 per cent had an Education, Health and Care plan or a Statement of special educational needs, and 24 per cent received SEN support (Table B.12). A further nine per cent received one of these (an Education, Health and Care plan/Statement of special educational needs, or SEN support) but the parent did not know which.

Table B.12 Support received by selected child with special educational needs, by family type

	Family type		
	Couples	**Lone parents**	**All**
Special educational needs	**%**	**%**	**%**
Base: All child(ren) with a special educational need or other special needs	*370*	*186*	*556*
Child has Education, Health and Care plan or Statement of special educational needs	41	42	41
Child receives SEN support	24	22	24
Child receives one of the above but parent does not know which	8	11	9
Child does not receive any of these	26	25	26

Region, area deprivation and rurality

Table B.13 shows the geographical spread of the surveyed families according to region.

Table B.13 Region

	All
Region	**%**
Base: All families with child(ren) aged 0 to 14	*5,955*
North East	5
North West	13
Yorkshire and the Humber	10
East Midlands	8
West Midlands	11
East of England	12
London	16
South East	16

South West	9

Interviewed families lived in a broad range of areas in terms of deprivation levels, as defined by the Index of Multiple Deprivation in England (Table B.14).

Table B.14 Area deprivation according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation

	All
Area deprivation	**%**
Base: All families with child(ren) aged 0 to 14	*5,955*
1st quintile – least deprived	19
2nd quintile	19
3rd quintile	19
4th quintile	20
5th quintile – most deprived	24

Table B.15 shows that 85 per cent of families lived in urban areas, with the remaining 15 per cent living in rural areas.

Table B.15 Rurality

	All
Rurality	**%**
Base: All families with child(ren) aged 0 to 14	*5,955*
Rural	15
Urban	85
Urban - major conurbation	42
Urban - minor conurbation	3
Urban - city and town	40
Rural - town and fringe	7
Rural - town and fringe in a sparse setting	*
Rural - village and dispersed	8
Rural - village and dispersed in a sparse setting	*

About this publication:

Enquiries: Early Years Analysis and Research, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.
Tel: 0207 654 6001 Email: EY.ANALYSISANDRESEARCH@education.gov.uk

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