



National Survey for Wales, 2016-17 Childcare

30 January 2018
SB 3/2018

The National Survey for Wales asked parents various questions relating to the use of formal and informal childcare. Further questions were also asked on the affordability, availability and satisfaction with formal childcare. The questions were included to provide evidence to support childcare policy development.

Key findings

- 47% of parents with a child aged 0-14 needed childcare so that they could work, study or go on training.

Of these parents:

- 76% used unpaid family or friends to care for their children; 26% combined this with more formal childcare.
- 19% of parents using childcare used formal childcare and 7% paid for their family and friends to look after their child.
- 43% found it difficult to afford childcare (17% very difficult).
- 29% found it difficult to get childcare that fits in with working hours.
- 43% could access Welsh language childcare if they wanted to, 22% said they wouldn't be able to, and 36% didn't know if it was available.
- 93% of parents were satisfied with the quality of formal childcare (72% very satisfied, 21% fairly satisfied).



About this bulletin

This bulletin provides more detailed analysis of 2016-17 results for the questions on **childcare**.

The full questionnaire is available on the [National Survey web pages](#).

Additional tables can be accessed via the [Results viewer](#)

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Introduction

Early Years is one of the Welsh Government's five priority themes under [Prosperity for All: the National Strategy](#). The aim is to ensure that children from all backgrounds have the best start in life and that everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential. There is substantial evidence that delivering the right support for all children is the best means of breaking the poverty cycle, and raising the aspiration and attainment for everyone. Attending a high-quality childcare setting or early year's education provider has a significant influence on a child's development, especially for those children who come from a disadvantaged background. Affordable, flexible and accessible childcare also enables parents to work or access training.

The National Survey questions on childcare were introduced to provide further evidence to help inform the progress of these policy areas. The questions asked will help determine whether factors such as the lack of childcare or its cost or inaccessibility may influence a parent's decision not to work, or to work fewer hours. This is particularly important in relation to the work on the [Childcare Offer](#), which is intended to support working families. Views on the quality of childcare and the availability of Welsh-medium childcare provision are also of particular interest to the Welsh Government.

[Social Care Wales](#) which is the sector skills council for childcare in Wales is working to support growth in the sector and to develop a new suite of qualifications, promote career pathways, and support Welsh language skills within the childcare workforce.

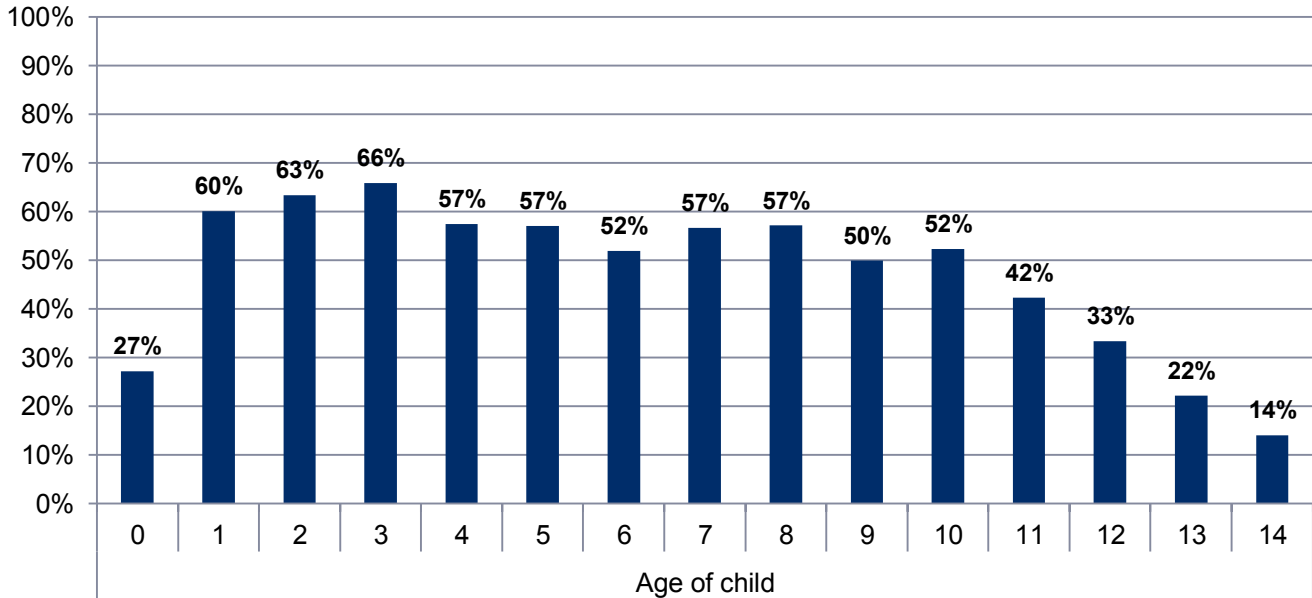
The Welsh Government's [10 year workforce plan](#) for childcare, play and early years will be published over the coming months and the results from the National Survey will be used to inform both the plan and the Welsh Government's childcare offer.

Questions on childcare were first asked in the 2014-15 National Survey for Wales. Many of the same questions were asked again in 2016-17 and this bulletin presents the latest findings and discusses changes over time where they are significant.

Use of childcare

47% of parents with a child aged 0-14 said that they needed to arrange for their child to be looked after so that they could work, study or go on training. Depending on the age of the child, the need for childcare varied, as shown in Chart 1.

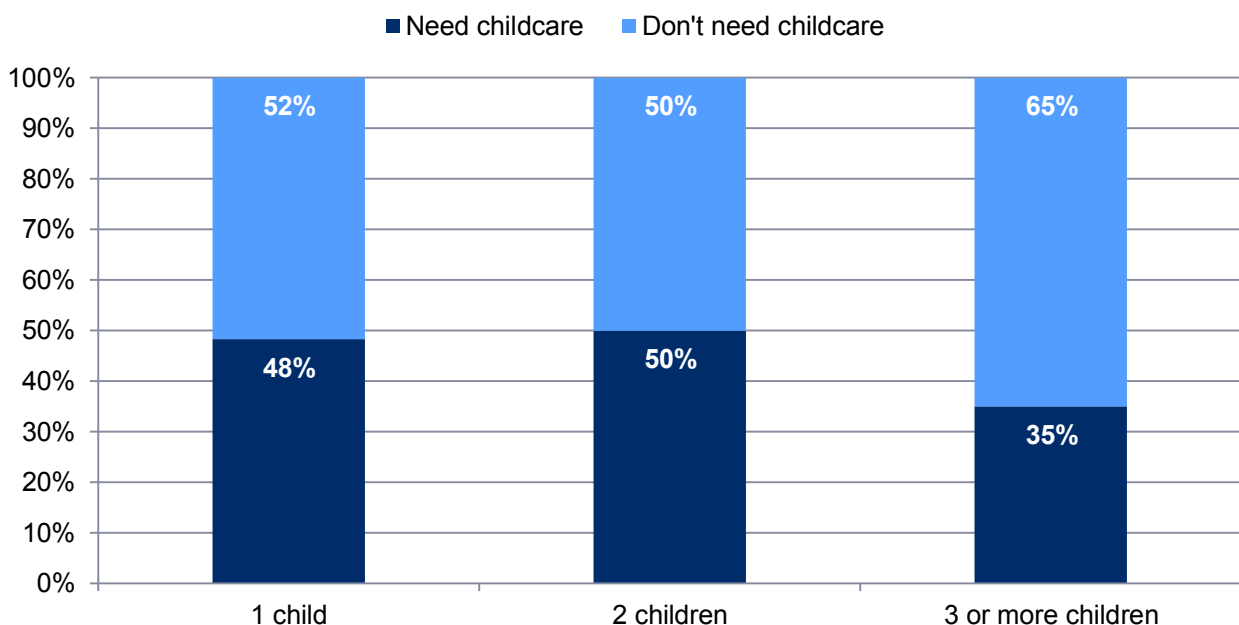
Chart 1: Need to arrange childcare, by age of the child



In 2016-17, 27% of parents with a child under a year old arranged childcare compared with 60% of people with a child aged one. This low proportion at the start is likely explained by parental leave covering some or all of a child's first year. Requirement for childcare is highest between the ages of 1 and 3. From the ages of 4 to 10 over 50% of parents arrange childcare for their child, this proportion then falls as child age increases. This pattern of need was also true in 2014-15.

Chart 2 shows how the presence of other children in the household may affect the need to arrange for childcare whilst the parent works, studies or goes on training.

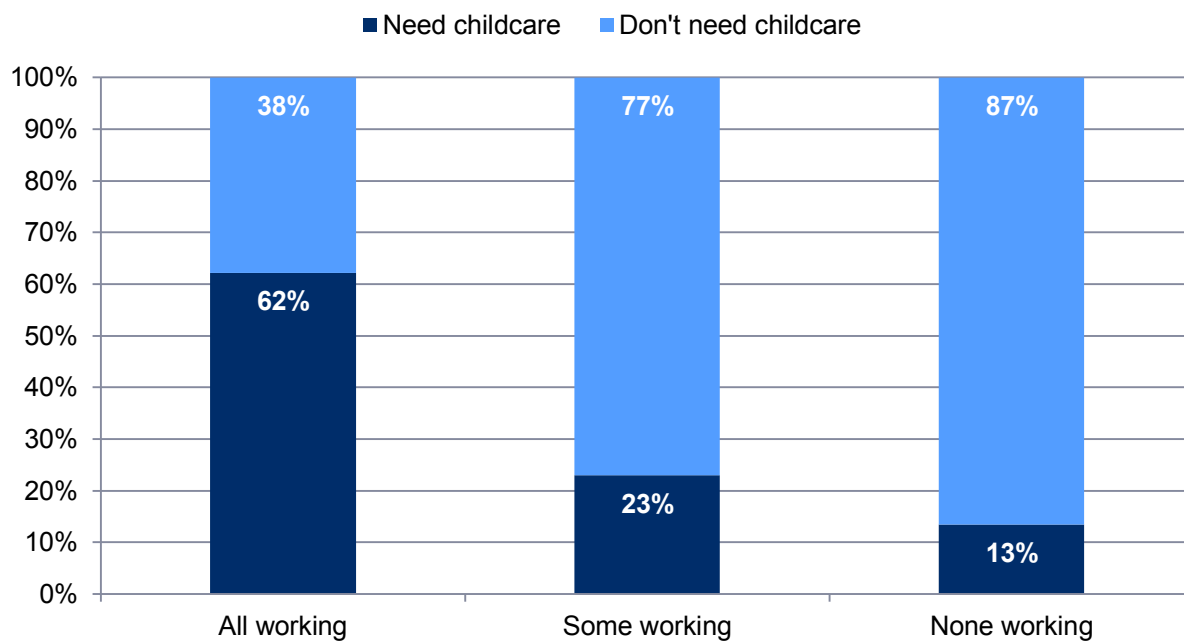
Chart 2: Need to arrange childcare, by number of children in the household



The presence of other children in the household also appears to influence whether childcare is required. Chart 2 shows that households with either one or two children have similar childcare needs (approximately 50% require childcare and 50% don't). However, where a household has three or more children 65% of people said they did not need to arrange childcare so that they could work, study or go on training. This result suggests that for the majority of larger families either one parent remains at home to provide childcare or there is an older child in the household taking on this role. These results are very similar to those in 2014-15.

Economic status of the household influenced whether childcare was needed. When all the adults in the household were working, they need to arrange for childcare significantly more than households where some of the adults were working or none of the adults were working. This can be seen below in Chart 3.

Chart 3: Need to arrange childcare, by employment status of the household



13% of people in households where no-one was working required childcare, this is likely to be in order to study or train. 38% of households with children where all adults (one or more) are working said they did not need to arrange childcare, this may be explained by: the child being of school age, flexible parental work patterns and older children in the household.

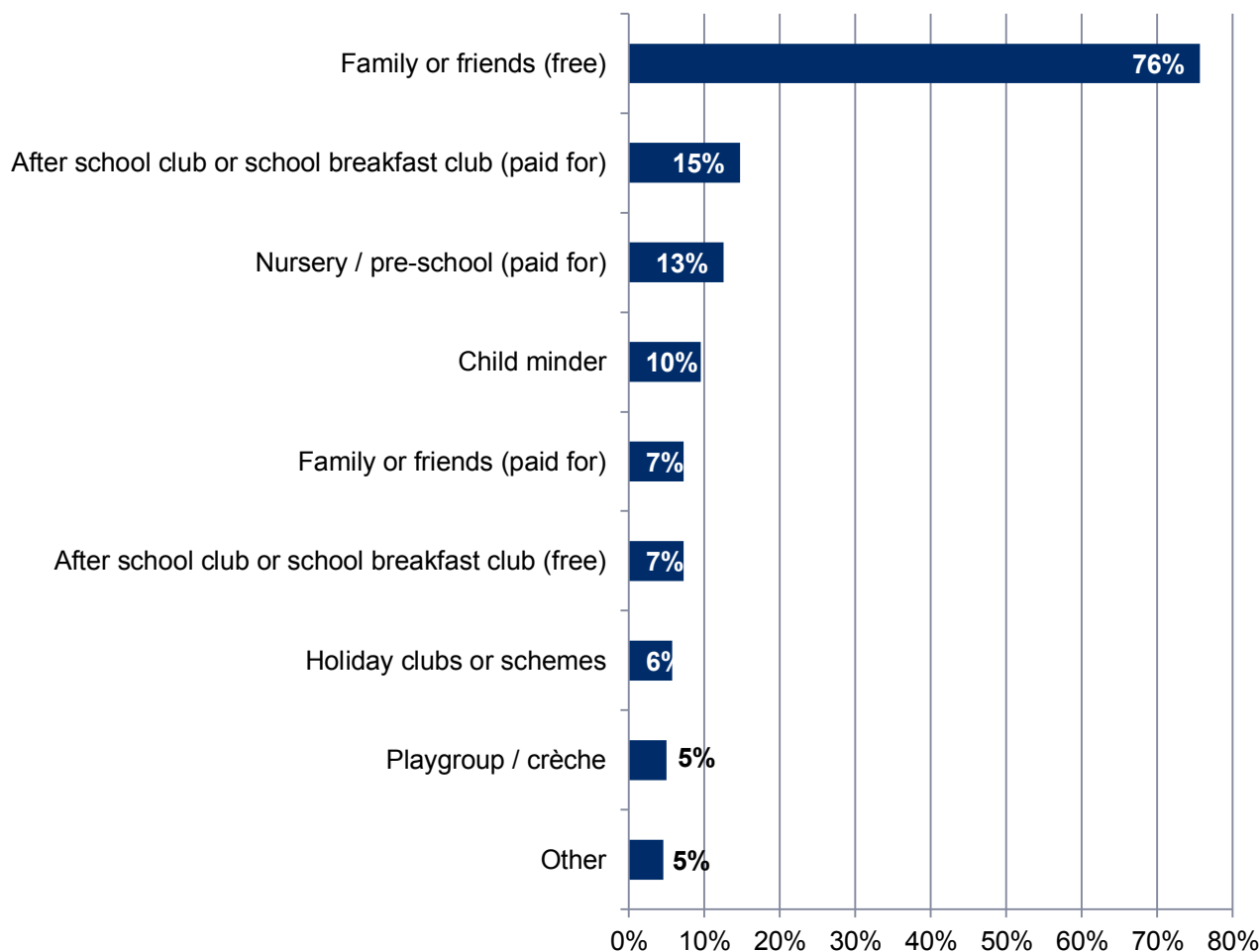
57% of individuals in employment needed to arrange for childcare compared with 20% of those who were unemployed and 16% of those who were economically inactive¹.

¹ For information about economic status, see [Terms and Definitions](#)

Types of childcare

Parents were asked to select as many types of childcare as they had used from a list of options.

Chart 4: Type of childcare used



The category 'other' includes those who selected 'Nursery/ pre-school (free)', 'Nanny or au pair', 'Babysitter who comes to your house' and 'any other type of formal childcare'

Chart 4 shows that free childcare given by family or friends was the most popular choice (76%). A further 7% of people paid family and friends for childcare. Both of these results were similar to those in 2014-15. 15% of people used 'after school or school breakfast clubs' this was a 4 percentage point increase on the 2014-15 results. 26% of people who chose free childcare from family and friends also used other methods of childcare.

If parents used unpaid family and friends as a source of childcare, they were then asked how many hours a week their children were looked after for free, while they were working or had other commitments. 10% of parents needed their family and friends to look after their children for less than one hour a week, 51% of parents used childcare provided by family and friends for at least 1 hour but less than 10 hours a week, 32% of parents used it for between 10 hours but less than 30 hours a week and 7% needed this type of childcare for at least 30 hours a week.

More in-depth analysis² was carried out to find who was most likely to need unpaid family and friends to look after their child for at least 10 hours a week. A number of factors were considered

² Logistic regression – for details see [Key Quality Information](#)

as possible predictors, including parental age, parental gender, child age, hours a week the parent worked, number of children in the family, household type, whether the parent had a limiting long term illness and whether the parent felt that most people could be trusted.

When all these factors were held constant, only the following had a significant influence on those who needed childcare for at least 10 hours a week.

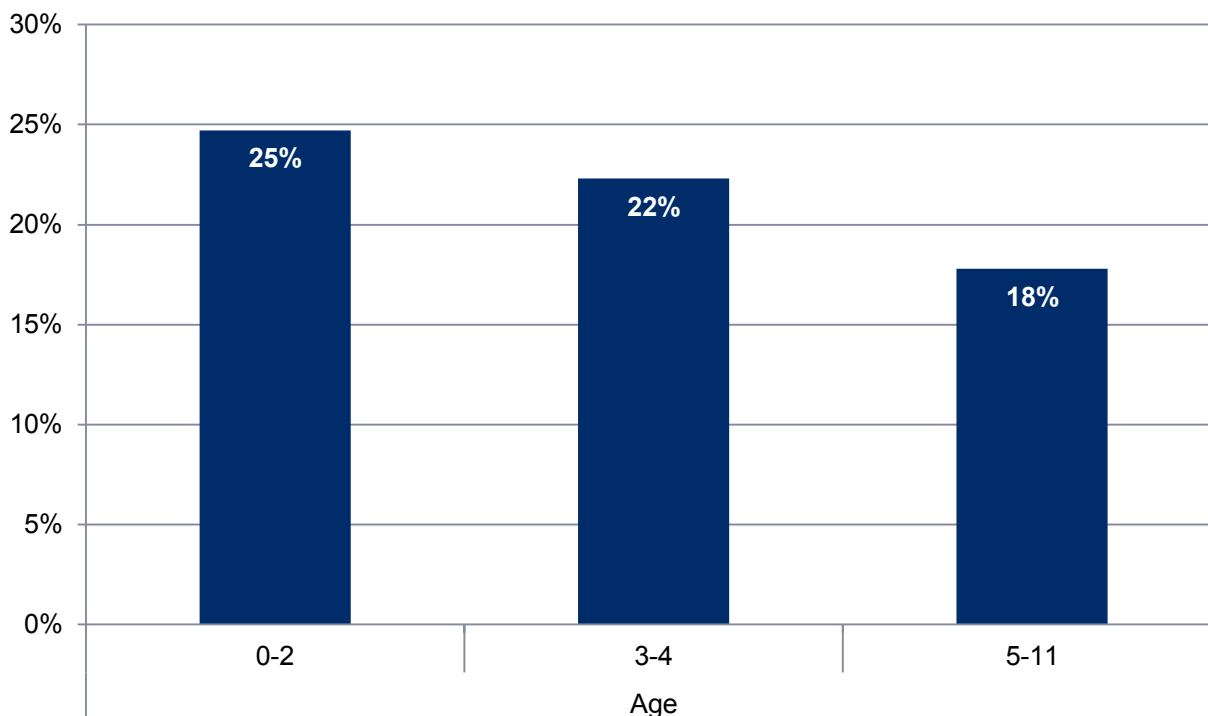
- **Parents age** - Parents aged 16-24 had a higher likelihood of needing their family and friends to look after their child for at least 10 hours a week than any other age groups.
- **Child's age** - Parents with 0-2 year old children were most likely to use informal childcare for at least 10 hours a week, the likelihood reduced as child age increased.

Formal childcare

Parents who used formal types of childcare (that is, any childcare which wasn't provided by family or friends) were then asked a series of questions relating to their satisfaction with different elements of the provision. 19% of people had used formal childcare.

Chart 5 shows that parents with children aged 0-2 years old were more likely to arrange formal childcare (25%) than those with 5-11 year old children (18%), which is probably associated with the child starting school.

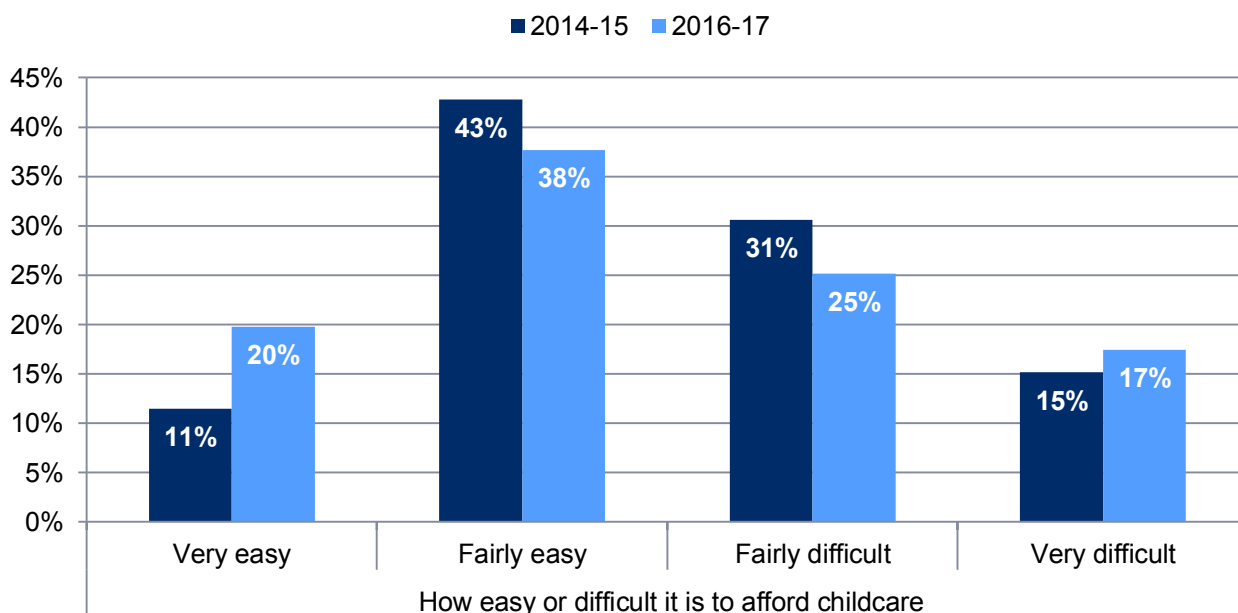
Chart 5: Using formal childcare, by age of child



Affordability of formal childcare

Parents were asked how easy or difficult they found it to afford formal childcare for their child. 57% of parents found it easy to afford childcare, 20% finding it very easy. In the 2014-15 results, 11% found it very easy to afford childcare, which was less than the 2016-17 results. Chart 6 shows the ease and difficulty of affording childcare across both years.

Chart 6: Ability to afford childcare, by year



Affordability of childcare also changes as the age of the child varies. For children aged 0-2, parents found it more difficult to afford childcare (55%) than those with children aged 3-4 and 5-14 (34% and 38% respectively). This is likely to be associated with a reduced need for paid childcare once a child reaches nursery/school age.

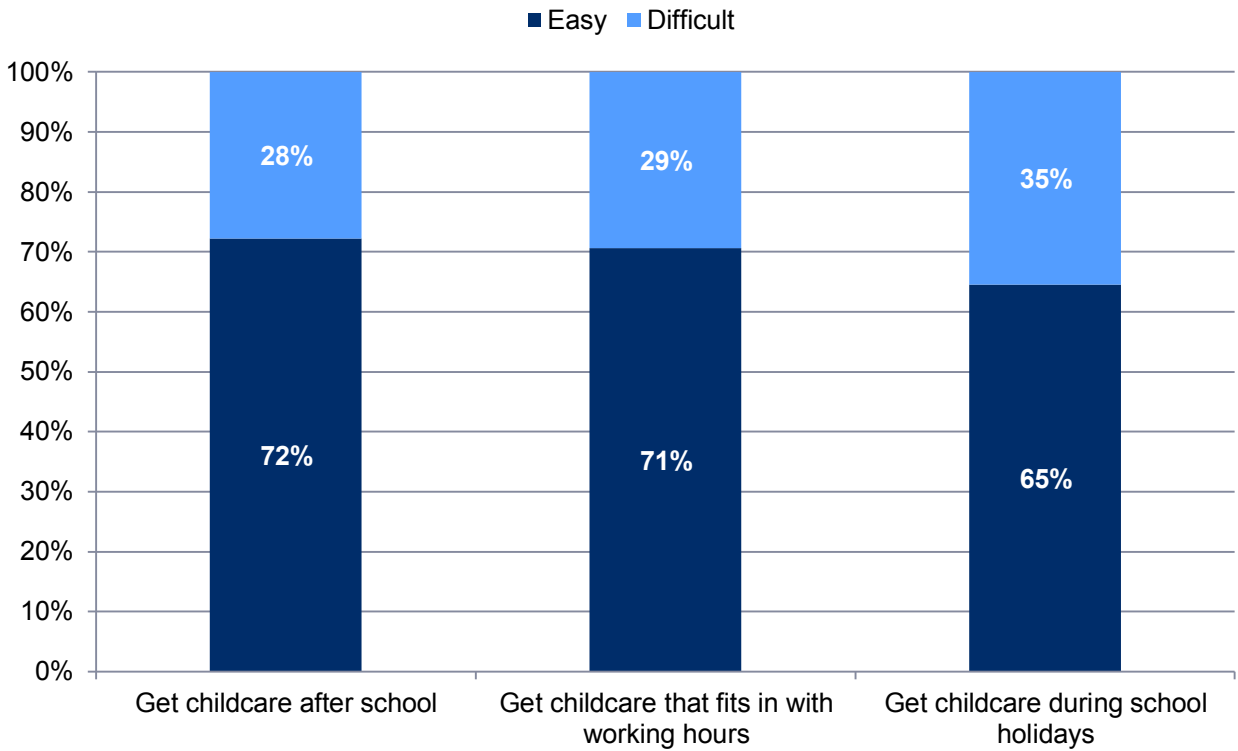
72% of those in material deprivation³ found it difficult to afford formal childcare compared with 37% of households not in material deprivation who found it difficult. As might be expected the affordability of formal childcare is associated with the ability to keep up with bills. 31% of those with no difficulties keeping up with bills and commitments found it difficult to afford childcare compared with 51% who struggled from time to time with keeping up with bills.

Availability of childcare

A further three questions were asked on how easy or difficult parents found it to get childcare that fits in with working hours, during school holidays and after school. Chart 7 shows the how easy/difficult parents found it to get childcare to cover these different periods.

³ For information about material deprivation, see [Terms and Definitions](#)

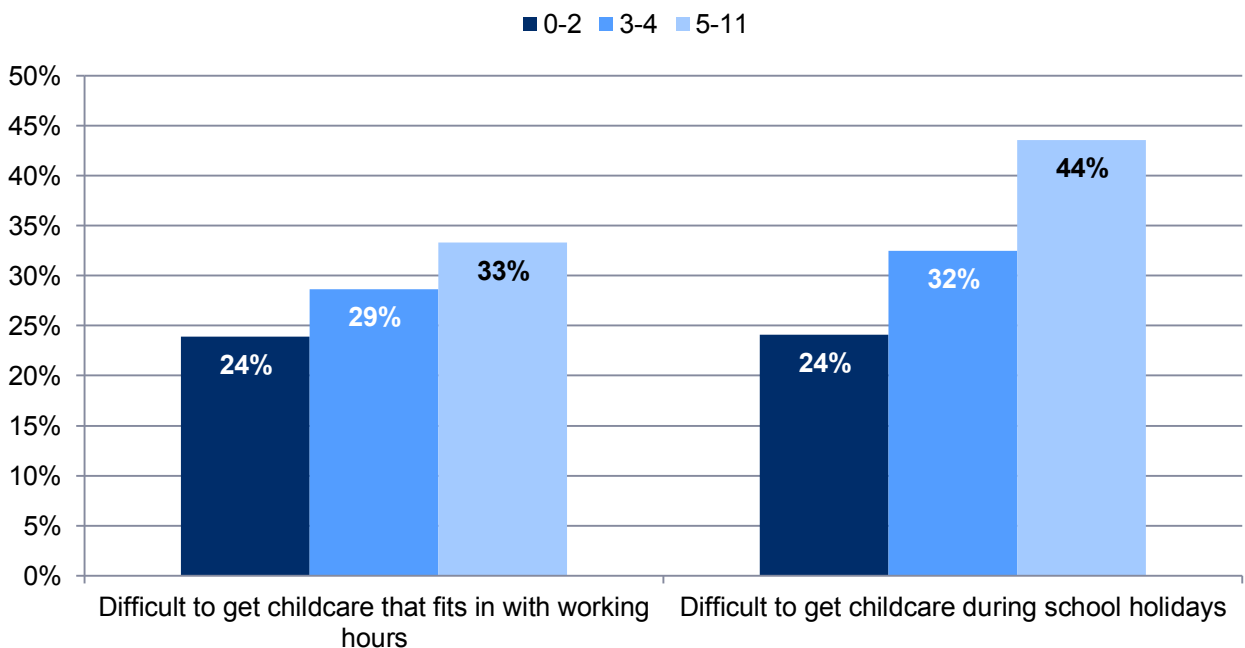
Chart 7: Ease/difficulty of getting childcare for different periods



Household type could also be a factor that affects the difficulty of getting childcare that fits in with working hours. Two adult households with children were less likely to find it difficult to get childcare that fits in with working hours (28%) than single parent households who found it more difficult (45%).

Chart 8 shows how difficulty getting childcare that fits in with working hours and during school holidays changes with age. As the age of the child increases, the difficulty also increases in both periods. This could be due to younger children having year-round care arrangements where school holidays have less importance.

Chart 8: Difficulty of getting childcare during working hours and school holidays, by age of child

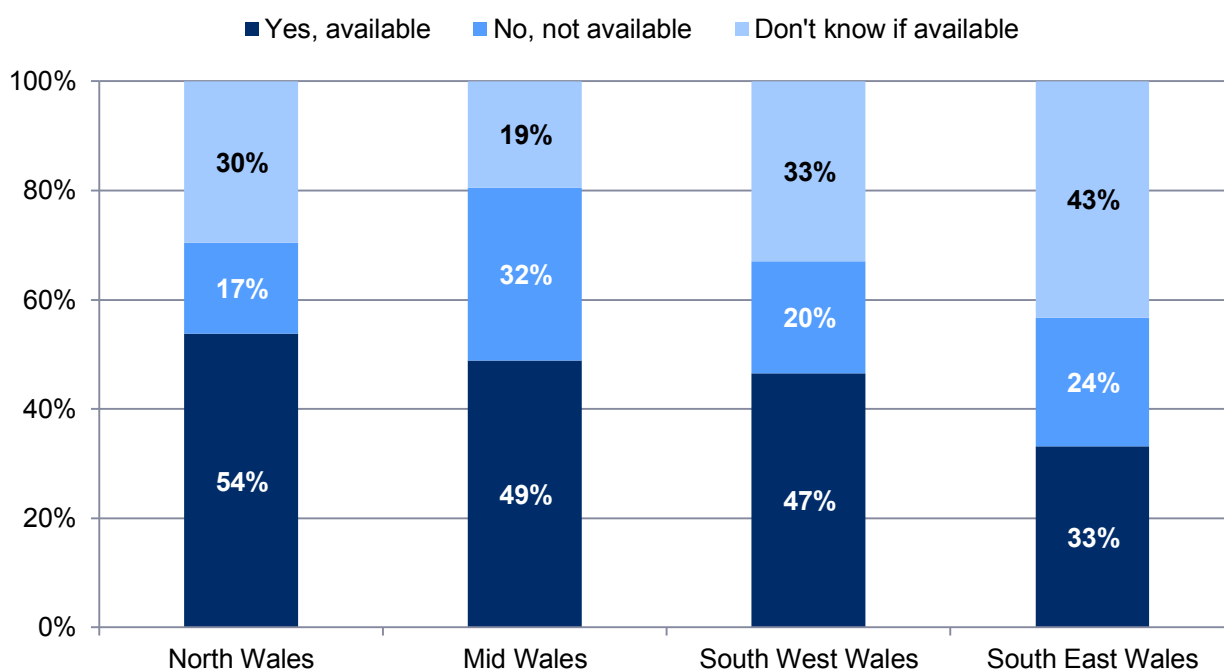


Welsh language childcare

The survey asked parents about the availability of Welsh language formal childcare and whether they could access this type of provision if they wanted to. This question was asked of all parents who said they used some form of formal childcare and of these 36% said that they didn't know whether Welsh language childcare was available. This is a particularly high proportion of 'don't know' answers and for this reason they have been included as a valid response when analysing this question. In addition to the 36% of 'don't knows', 43% of parents said that they did, or would be able to, access Welsh language childcare and 22% said they wouldn't be able to. 73% of parents who used Welsh in everyday life⁴ accessed (or thought they would be able to access) formal childcare in Welsh, compared with 34% of parents who did not use Welsh every day. 43% of this non-Welsh speaking group said they didn't know if Welsh language childcare was available.

Areas where parents live may affect access to and availability of Welsh language childcare. Chart 9 shows that in North Wales, where a higher proportion of people speak Welsh, 54% of parents agreed that suitable Welsh language childcare was available for them if they wanted it. In South-East Wales, where the proportion of Welsh speakers is lower, 33% said it was available but a larger proportion (43%) said they didn't know whether Welsh language childcare was available or not.

Chart 9: Parental views on access to Welsh language childcare, by area



⁴ Welsh in everyday life – [National indicator](#)

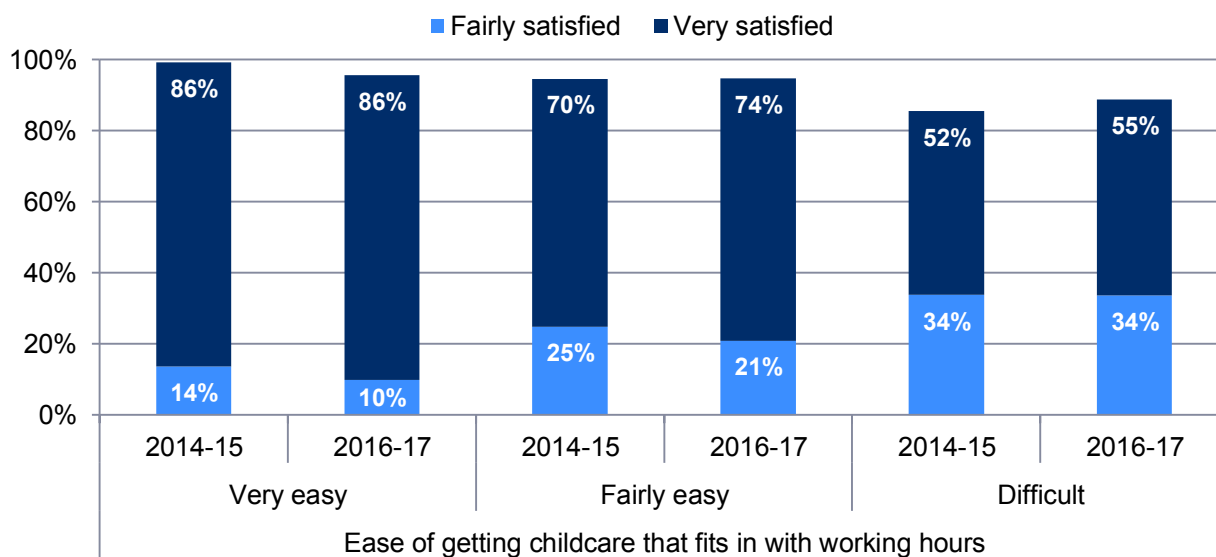
Satisfaction with the quality of childcare

The National Survey also asked parents whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the quality of the formal childcare they used. 93% of parents were satisfied (72% very satisfied, 21% fairly satisfied). This was the same percentage as in 2014-15.

83% of parents of a child aged 0 to 2 were very satisfied with the quality of the formal childcare they used compared with 63% of parents with a child aged 5 to 11.

In 2016-17, 96% of parents who found it very easy to get childcare that fitted with their working hours were satisfied with the quality of their childcare (86% very satisfied and 10% fairly satisfied). This compares with 89% of those who found it difficult to get childcare to suit their working hours (55% very satisfied and 34% fairly satisfied). These percentages have not changed significantly since 2014-15 as shown in chart 10.

Chart 10: Satisfaction with the quality of childcare, by the ease of finding childcare that fits in with working hours, by year



Cross-analysis indicates that various factors such as age of child, parental age, whether working and general health may be connected with an individual's satisfaction with the childcare used.

To get a clearer understanding of the effect of each particular factor we have controlled for other factors⁵. By using this approach, we found that the following were linked with being **very** satisfied with the quality of childcare:

- finding it easy to get childcare that fits in with working hours;
- finding it easy to access childcare during school holidays; and
- living in a rural area.

Although simple cross-analysis found that different age groups of the child had different levels of satisfaction, this further analysis showed that this apparent difference disappeared once other factors were controlled for.

⁵ This method is known as logistic [regression](#). Information about the method used can be found in this [technical report](#).

Terms and definitions

Economic status

Respondents were classified into the following three economic statuses according to how they described what they were doing in the previous 7 days.

In employment	Unemployed	Economically inactive
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In any paid employment or self-employment (or away temporarily)• On a government sponsored training scheme• Doing unpaid work for a business that you or a relative owns• Waiting to take up paid work already obtained	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unemployed and looking for work• Intending to look for work but prevented by temporary sickness or injury (28 days or less)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full-time student (including on holiday)• Unable to work because of long-term sickness or disability• Retired• Looking after home or family• Doing something else

Material deprivation

Material deprivation is a measure which is designed to capture the consequences of long-term poverty on households, rather than short-term financial strain.

Non-pensioner adults were asked whether they had things like ‘a holiday away from home for at least a week a year’, ‘enough money to keep their home in a decent state of decoration’, or could ‘make regular savings of £10 a month or more’. The questions for adults focussed on whether they could afford these items. These items are really for their ‘household’ as opposed to them personally which is why they were previously called ‘household material deprivation’.

Pensioners were asked slightly different questions such as whether their ‘home was kept adequately warm’, whether they had ‘access to a car or taxi, when needed’ or whether they had their hair done or cut regularly’. These also asked whether they could afford them, but also focussed on not being able to have these items for other reasons, such as poor health, or no one to help them etc. these questions were less based on the household and more about the individual.

Those who did not have these items were given a score, such that if they didn’t have any item on the list, they would have a score of 100, and if they had all items, they had a score of 0. Non-pensioners with a score of 25 or more were classed as deprived and pensioners with a score of 20 or more were classed as deprived.

Parents of children were also asked a set of questions about what they could afford for their children.

In this bulletin the non-pensioner and pensioner measures of deprivation are combined to provide an ‘adult’ deprivation variable. The terms ‘adult’ and ‘household’ deprivation may be used interchangeably depending on context.

Key quality information

Background

The National Survey for Wales is carried out by The Office for National Statistics on behalf of the Welsh Government. The results reported in this bulletin are based on interviews completed in 2016-17 (30 March 2016 – 31 March 2017).

The sample was drawn from the Royal Mail Small Users Postcode Address File (PAF), whereby all residential addresses and types of dwellings were included in the sample selection process as long as they were listed as individual addresses. If included as individual addresses on the PAF, residential park homes and other dwellings were included in the sampling frame but community establishments such as care homes and army barracks are not on the PAF and therefore were not included.

The National Survey sample in 2016-17 comprised 21,666 addresses chosen randomly from the PAF. Interviewers visited each address, randomly selected one adult (aged 16+) in the household, and carried out a 45-minute face-to-face interview with them, which asked for their opinions on a wide range of issues affecting them and their local area. A total of 10,493 interviews were achieved.

Interpreting the results

Percentages quoted in this bulletin are based on only those respondents who provided an answer to the relevant question. Some topics in the survey were only asked of a sub-sample of respondents and other questions were not asked where the question is not applicable to the respondent. Missing answers can also occur for several reasons, including refusal or an inability to answer a particular question.

Where a relationship has been found between two factors, this does not mean it is a causal relationship. More detailed analysis is required to identify whether one factor causes change in another.

The results are weighted to ensure that the results reflect the age and sex distribution of the Welsh population.

Sampling variability

Estimates from the National Survey are subject to a margin of uncertainty. Part of the uncertainty comes from the fact that any randomly-selected sample of the population will give slightly different results from the results that would be obtained if the whole population was surveyed. This is known as sampling error. Confidence intervals can be used as a guide to the size of the sampling error. These intervals are calculated around a survey estimate and give a range within which the true value is likely to fall. In 95% of survey samples, the 95% confidence interval will contain the 'true' figure for the whole population (that is, the figure we would get if the survey covered the entire population). In general, the smaller the sample size the wider the confidence interval. Confidence intervals are included in the tables of survey results published on StatsWales.

As with any survey, the National Survey is also subject to a range of other sources of error: for example, due to non-response; because respondents may not interpret the questions as intended or may not answer accurately; and because errors may be introduced as the survey data is processed. These kinds of error are known as non-sampling error, and are discussed further in the quality report for the survey.

Significant differences

Where the text of this release notes a difference between two National Survey results (in the same year), we have checked to ensure that the confidence intervals for the two results do not overlap. This suggests that the difference is statistically significant (but as noted above, is not as rigorous as carrying out a formal statistical test), i.e. that there is less than a 5% (1 in 20) chance of obtaining these results if there is no difference between the same two groups in the wider population.

Checking to see whether two confidence intervals overlap is less likely than a formal statistical test to lead to conclusions that there are real differences between groups. That is, it is more likely to lead to "false negatives": incorrect conclusions that there is no real difference when in fact there is a difference. It is also less likely to lead to "false positives": incorrect conclusions that there is a difference when there is in fact none. Carrying out many comparisons increases the chance of finding false positives. Therefore, when many comparisons are made the conservative nature of the test is an advantage because it reduces (but does not eliminate) this chance.

Where National Survey results are compared with results from other sources, we have not checked that confidence intervals do not overlap.

Regression analysis

After considering the survey results, factors we considered likely to have an influence on who needs unpaid childcare from family and friends for at least 10 hours a week and who was most likely to be very satisfied with the quality of childcare were incorporated in the regression model. The final model consisted of those factors that remained significant even after holding the other factors constant. These significant factors are those that have been discussed in this bulletin

More details on the methodology used in the regression analysis are available in Technical Report: Approach to regression analysis and models produced.

Technical report

More detailed information on the survey methodology is set out in the technical report for the survey.

Quality report

A summary Quality Report is available, containing more detailed information on the quality of the survey as well as a summary of the methods used to compile the results.

National Statistics status

The [United Kingdom Statistics Authority](#) has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#).

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is Welsh Government's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act puts in place seven well-being goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators ("national indicators") that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the Well-being goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before the National Assembly. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016 and this release includes 1 of the national indicators namely 36.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the well-being goals and associated technical information is available in the [Well-being of Wales report](#).

As a national indicator under the Act they must be referred to in the analyses of local well-being produced by public services boards when they are analysing the state of economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in their areas.

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local well-being assessments and local well-being plans.

Further details

The document is available at: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/national-survey/?lang=en>

Next update

Not a regular output

We want your feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to surveys@gov.wales.

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