



GROWING UP IN SCOTLAND: Sweep 3 Non-resident Parent Report

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GROWING UP IN SCOTLAND: Sweep 3 Non-resident Parent Report

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Introduction

This report uses data from the *Growing Up in Scotland* study (GUS) to explore the prevalence of, and many issues related to, non-resident parenthood in Scotland specifically in relation to young and very young children. Findings in this report are based on data from interviews with the cohort child's main carer across the first three years of GUS.

Growing Up in Scotland does not ascertain the views and experiences of non-resident fathers, which, although of interest, would require a separate study involving a different research design. However, the GUS sample is a particularly rich resource, and, as a population sample, differs from many child contact studies whose samples are drawn from court records, lawyers caseloads, from clients of family support organisations, or clinical samples, which, due to the nature of the sample, may not be representative of all families negotiating contact with a non-resident parent.

The dynamics of non-resident fatherhood

- The overall proportions of children with a non-resident father have remained steady at 21% (birth cohort) and around 26% (child cohort) between sweeps 1 and 3 of GUS.
- For the majority of children, family situations have been relatively stable since birth; just 11% (birth cohort) and 17% (child cohort) had experienced their father leaving or entering the household since birth.
- This was also the case, though to a lesser extent, for children with a non-resident father; 77% having not lived with their father since the study began and 66% having not lived with them since birth (birth cohort).
- 29% (birth cohort) and 34% (child cohort) of children with a non-resident parent at sweep 3, lived with either a step-parent or a relative in addition to their mothers, with 9% and 17%, respectively, living with a step-parent.
- Step-families' household incomes, though higher than that of lone parent families, were lower on average than couple families consisting of both natural parents; 68% of lone parent families were in the lowest income group, in contrast to 36% of step-families and 13% of couple families containing two natural parents.
- For children whose fathers had left the household and who had previously had at least one parent in full-time employment, only 30% remained in that position, with almost half of this group now living in a household with no parent in employment (birth cohort).
- And again, although lone parent families who re-partner fare far better than lone parent families in terms of having at least one adult in either full or part-time employment, they are still more likely to have no parent in employment than those in couple families containing both natural parents.

Patterns of contact

- 65% of non-resident fathers in the birth cohort and 67% in the child cohort have contact with their child at sweep 3, however, this leaves a significant minority who do not have any contact with their non-resident father (35% and 33%, respectively).
- Over three-quarters of children in both cohorts, who have contact, have face-to-face contact with their non-resident father at least once a week and over 90% (both cohorts) of those with contact, see their non-resident father at least once a month.
- Non-resident fathers were less likely to have some form of contact with their child, and have less frequent face-to-face contact, if the mother had repartnered compared to those who are lone parents. If the mother had repartnered only 44% of non-resident fathers have contact with their child, compared with 67% in lone parent families (birth cohort) and 51% compared with 70% in the child cohort.
- Non-resident fathers are more likely to have contact if the mother perceived that the father had been happy about the pregnancy (for both birth and child cohorts) compared with those who perceived him to be unhappy. Children with siblings had more frequent face-to-face contact with their non-resident father than those with no siblings (for both birth and child cohorts).
- Non-resident fathers who pay maintenance are more likely to see their child, and have them to stay overnight at least once a week, compared to those who do not. However, the differences in the proportions having weekly contact between those who do or don't pay maintenance are not great; 84% compared to 75% (birth cohort). However, in relation to staying overnight, there is a much greater difference between those who pay maintenance and those who do not, 40% compared with 27% of children staying overnight at least once a week (birth cohort).
- The child is more likely to stay overnight frequently with the non-resident father the younger the mother was at the birth of the child and if the father has been resident at some point in the past.
- Two-thirds of non-resident fathers who see their child at least once a week, at sweep 3, also contact them weekly by either phone, text, email or letter. However, a third of non-resident fathers, in the birth cohort, who see their child less often than once a month, contact them by phone, text, email or letter at least once a week.
- It is more likely that a non-resident father would take a child on an outing than have contact by phone, text, email or letter. 32% of non-resident fathers (birth cohort) never contact their child by phone, text, email or letter compared with 21% who never take their child on an outing.

Negotiating contact, decision making, and managing conflict over contact

- Socio-demographic factors did not appear to have any influence on conflict between the resident and non-resident parent, with the exception of employment status; those with no-one in the child's household in employment had a higher conflict score than those in households with at least one parent working part-time or full-time.
- Higher conflict parents also showed other negative parenting characteristics. For example, parents who had a higher conflict score were less likely than those with a lower score to have reported the non-resident parent being 'very interested' in the child at sweep one.
- Higher conflict parents were less likely to report the non-resident parent making a regular financial contribution to the child's maintenance at sweep one.
- Interestingly, whether the non-resident parent was in contact at all at sweep 1, and if so, the frequency of that contact, was not significantly related to level of conflict.
- The majority of families had made arrangements for contact informally between the two parents, with just 5% going through the courts. There was a strong relationship between the non-resident parent's lack of interest in the child and the increased likelihood of going to court.
- As may be expected, respondents who had been to court over contact arrangements were far more likely to report having a bad or very bad relationship with the other parent, particularly in the birth cohort.
- For most families, contact arrangements held a large degree of stability over time and for over three-quarters in each cohort arrangements had always been the same.
- 31% of respondents (birth cohort) and 26% (child cohort) said that they always or almost always asked for the non-resident father's views when making major decisions about the child.
- Socio-economic status of the resident parent did not affect the amount of involvement the non-resident parent had in decision making. However, the amount of face-to-face contact the non-resident parent had with the child, frequency of overnight stays, and whether the non-resident parent paid maintenance were all significantly associated with involvement in decision-making.
- Non-resident parents had most influence in the areas of health, education and schooling, and discipline, with less influence in the more routine aspects of life, such as the food the child eats and childcare.



chapter
INTRODUCTION

1

The extent of non-resident fatherhood in Scotland is substantial. In the 2001 Census, 25% of children were living in lone parent families; and an additional number (estimated at about 1 in 8 children) were living in step-families (Morrison *et al.*, 2004), suggesting that at a given time, up to one-third of children are not living with their biological fathers. The proportion of children who will have a non-resident father at some point over the course of their childhoods will be even greater.

Unmarried fatherhood is not coterminous with non-resident fatherhood, since many unmarried fathers live with their children and some married fathers do not. Nevertheless the growth in both demonstrates that the traditional role of father, married to and living with the mother of his child, while still the most common, is not the only model for fatherhood. Recent legislation has recognised these changing patterns of fatherhood. The Family Law (Scotland) Act 2006 has given unmarried fathers who co-register the birth of children on or after 4th May 2006 automatic parental responsibilities and rights. During the passage of that legislation, it became clear that issues surrounding child contact and non-resident parenthood were important and sensitive. Non-legislative measures were brought in at the same time. For example, a *Parenting Agreement for Scotland* was developed by the Scottish Government together with family support organisations. It is an information and advice pack to help parents who are separating to focus on their child's interests and to agree future arrangements.

This report uses data from the *Growing Up in Scotland* study (GUS) to explore the prevalence of, and many issues related to, non-resident parenthood in Scotland specifically in relation to young and very young children. GUS is a nationally representative longitudinal child cohort study funded by the Scottish Government. The study, which was launched in 2005, is following two cohorts of differently aged children through their early lives and beyond. Findings in this report are based on data from interviews with the cohort child's main carer across the first three years of GUS. Although this report uses data from across the three sweeps, most of the detail on contact is taken from sweep 3, at which point data is available on 4193 children in the birth cohort (who were aged about 2 years and 10 months at the time of the interview) and 2332 children in the child cohort (who were aged about 4 years and 10 months at the time of the interview). Interviews for sweeps 1 to 3 were carried out between April 2005 and May 2008.¹ GUS does not ascertain the views and experiences of non-resident fathers, which, although of interest, would require a separate study involving a different research design. However, the GUS sample is a particularly rich resource, and, as a population sample, differs from many child contact studies whose samples are drawn from court records, lawyers caseloads, from clients of family support organisations, or clinical samples, which, due to the nature of the sample, may not be representative of all families negotiating contact with a non-resident parent.

1 For more information about the study design and methodology please visit the website at: www.growingupinScotland.org.uk

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GUS provides a unique opportunity to improve our understanding of the lives of young children and their families where a child lives apart from one of their parents. It allows us to examine the extent of non-resident parenthood in the early years, how much non-resident parenthood is associated with family transitions, what relationships and patterns of contact young children have with their non-resident fathers, how these change over time and how parents negotiate contact and deal with any conflicts that may arise. Following children over a long period of time will enable exploration of how contact, and the relationship, with a child's non-resident parent in the early years of a child's life impacts on later educational, developmental and health outcomes.

This report is divided into three sections that address the following broad questions:

1. What is the nature and extent of non-resident fatherhood and household change in young children's lives? In particular, what are the movements of fathers both out of, and back into, the child's household? How are these dynamics associated with other family and household characteristics and change, such as new parental partnerships, changes in household incomes and the employment status of household members?
2. What patterns of contact do children have with their non-resident parent? How do these differ across cohorts and change over time?
3. How do resident and non-resident parents make contact arrangements, negotiate decisions, and manage any conflict?



THE DYNAMICS OF NON-RESIDENT FATHERHOOD

chapter

2

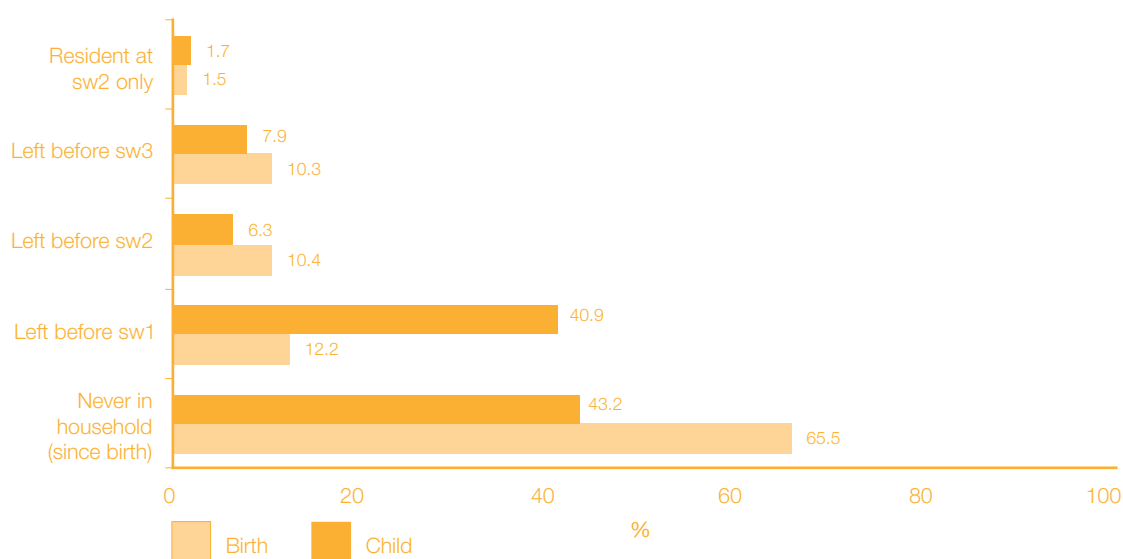
2.1 The stability of family situations

The proportions of children who have a non-resident parent have remained broadly similar across the three sweeps. In the birth cohort the proportion having a non-resident father has remained steady at 21%, while in the child cohort this was higher at around 26%. Taking all three sweeps together, about one-quarter of the children had a non-resident parent for at least one of these sweeps. As would be expected, the number of children with a non-resident mother is very small, at less than 1% in the birth cohort and around 1% in the child cohort at all three sweeps.

Fairly stable family situations could also be seen when data was viewed on an individual basis over the period considered. Seventy-five percent of the whole birth cohort and 72% of the child cohort had their natural father in the household at all three sweeps, while 14% and 11%, respectively, had never lived with their natural father. That left just 11% of the birth cohort and 17% of the child cohort having experienced some change in their situation since birth, that is, either their father left or rejoined the household during that time. Indeed, since the study started the reported rate of parental separation in each cohort is about 2% to 3% per year.

When we explore just those households with a non-resident father at sweep 3, we see that most of the children had never lived with their father. Of this group, 77% in the birth cohort and 84% in the child cohort, had not lived with their father since the study began, including 66% and 43% respectively who had never lived with their father. This shows that non-resident fatherhood does not necessarily imply any family transition *per se* since this maybe the arrangement the child has always had. A small number (2%) of children had a non-resident father who was not present in the household at sweeps 1 and 3, but who had joined the household for sweep 2 only, demonstrating the fluidity of some fathers' movements both into and out of the household (see Figure 2 A). Furthermore, of those children who had a resident father at sweep 3, 4% in the child cohort, and 5% in the birth cohort, had a father who had been absent from the household at some point since their birth.

Figure 2 A Non-resident fathers' (at sweep 3) movement into and out of the household by cohort



Bases: All children with a non-resident father at sweep 3; Weighted – 823, unweighted – 626

2.2 Lone parents but not alone?

For some children with a non-resident father at sweep 3, a transition in family structure took place in a move from a lone parent family to a step family, as Table 2.1 demonstrates. Indeed, 9% of former lone mothers in the birth cohort and 17% in the child cohort had re-partnered between sweeps 1 and 3, and thus now formed couple households with someone other than the child's natural father. In addition, at sweep 3, more than one in ten children who had a non-resident father had a grandparent living in the household, with 7% in the birth cohort and 6% in the child cohort living with another adult extended-family member. Therefore, although these children were not living with their natural father, many had a considerable amount of other adult family support in their home. Twenty-nine percent of children in the birth cohort and 34% of those in the child cohort with a non-resident parent lived with either a step-parent or a relative in addition to their mothers.

Table 2.1 Other adults present in the household at sweep 3 where there is a non-resident father by cohort

Adults other than the mother in the household	% of children	
	Birth	Child
No-one else	70	66
A new partner	9	17
Grandparent	14	11
Other kin	7	6
<i>Bases</i>		
<i>Weighted</i>	892	607
<i>Unweighted</i>	728	504

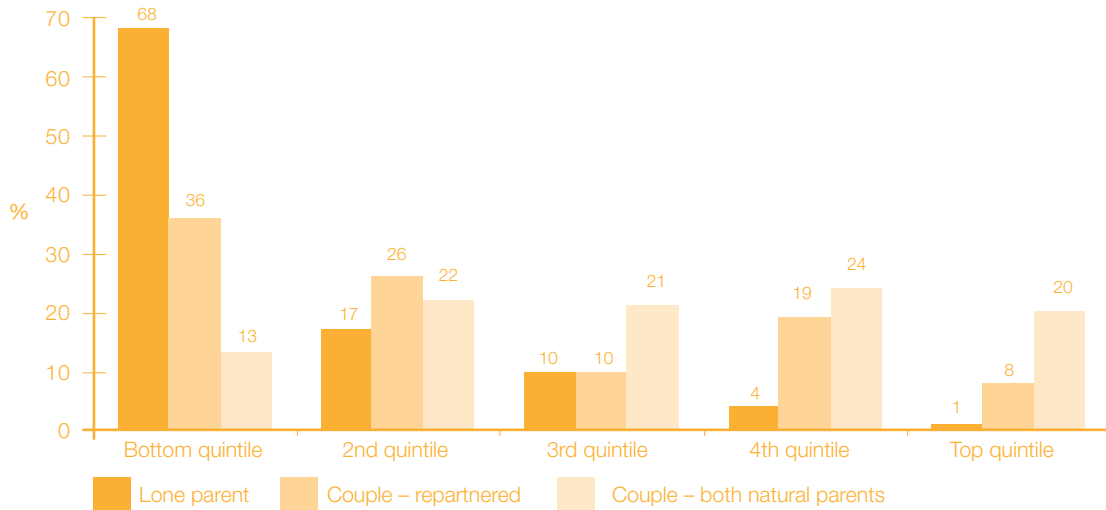
2.3 The economic impact of non-resident fatherhood and re-partnering

Non-resident fatherhood is associated with lower household incomes. Indeed, the risk of being in a lone parent family at some point increases as income decreases. In addition to this, the data indicate that step-families' household incomes, though higher than that of lone parent families, were lower on average than couple families consisting of both natural parents. Figure 2 B indicates that although the proportion of couple households where the mother had re-partnered falling into the lowest income group in the birth cohort were much lower than the proportion of lone parent households in the same group (36% in contrast to 68% of lone parent households), it was still considerably higher than the proportion of households with two natural parents in this group. Similar patterns could be seen in the child cohort. This shows the association between lone parenthood with low household income, which, on average, is only partially recovered by re-partnering.

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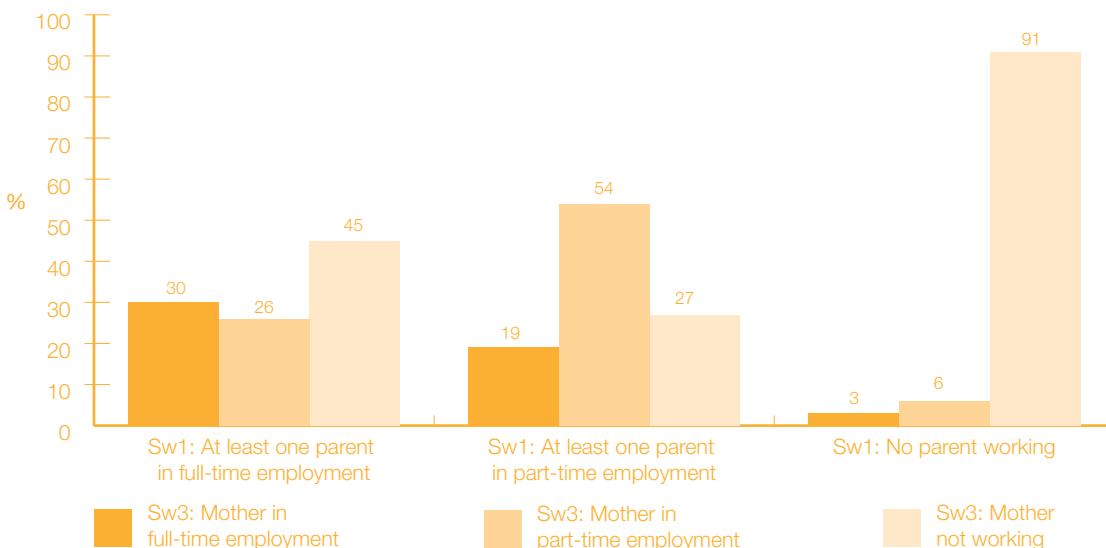
Figure 2 B Household equivalised income at sweep 3 by family type (birth cohort)



Base: Weighted - 3825, unweighted - 3834

Alongside a fall in income when a parent left the household, were the associated changes in employment status. Looking specifically at those children whose fathers' had left since sweep 1 in the birth cohort, for those who had previously had at least one parent in full-time employment, only 30% remained in that position, with almost half of this group now living in a household with no parent in employment (Figure 2 C). The least change, perhaps unsurprisingly, was for those households where both parents had previously been unemployed, and where the resident parent remained unemployed in 91% of cases.

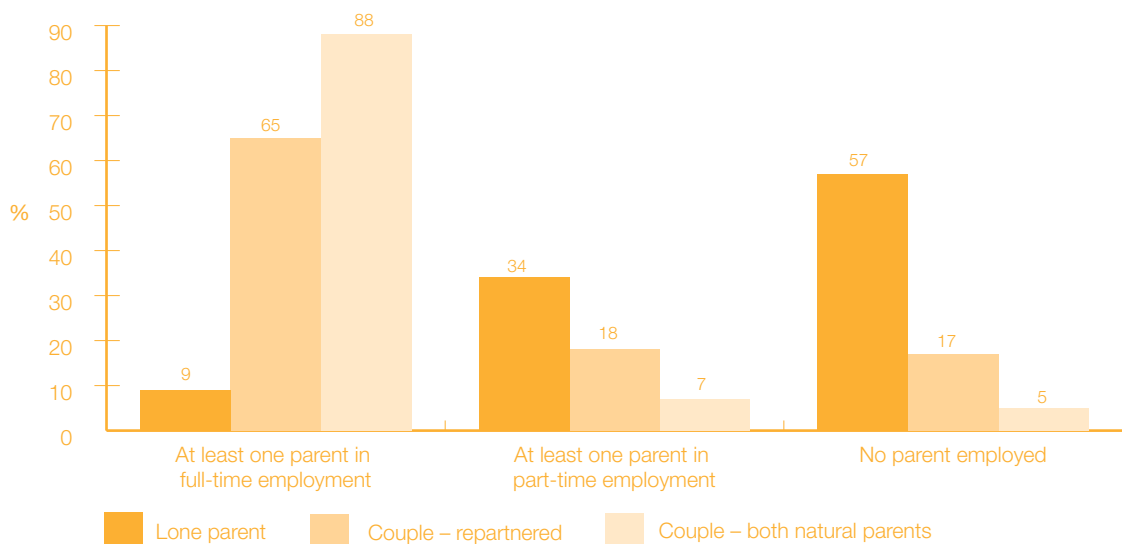
Figure 2 C Changes in household employment status for families where the father left household between sweeps 1 and 3 (birth cohort only)



Base: Households where father had left since sweep 1 in the birth cohort: Weighted - 185, unweighted - 177

As with income data, household employment status data from sweep 3 shows that although lone parent families who re-partner fare far better than lone parent families in terms of having at least one adult in either full or part-time employment, they are still more likely to have no parent in employment than those in couple families containing both natural parents. As Figure 2 D demonstrates, 88% of couple families with two natural parents have at least one parent in full-time employment, in contrast to 65% of step-families and 9% of lone parent families.

Figure 2 D Household employment status at sweep 3 by family type (birth cohort)



Base: Weighted - 4186, unweighted - 4187



chapter
PATTERNS OF CONTACT

3

3.1 Whether the child has any contact with the non-resident father

Section 1 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 states that for all mothers and all fathers married to a child's mother, a parental responsibility of non-resident parenthood is to maintain regular contact with the child. That responsibility was extended by the Family Law (Scotland) Act 2006 to unmarried fathers who co-registered a child's birth on or after 4 May 2006. That responsibility is met by about two-thirds of non-resident fathers of the GUS cohorts: 65% of non-resident fathers of the birth cohort and 67% of the child cohort currently have contact with their child (sweep 3 figures), however, this leaves a significant minority who do not have any contact with their non-resident father (35% and 33%: sweep 3 figures).

However, this level of contact was not uniform and several factors influenced whether the non-resident father had contact with the child. Non-resident fathers who have ever been married to the child's mother were more likely to see their children (78% in both the birth and child cohorts) than were those who were never married (62% in the birth cohort and 63% in the child cohort). Fathers who were not resident at sweep 3, but had been resident at some previous point before sweep 3, were more likely than those who had never been resident to still have contact, 75% compared with 60% for the birth cohort and 80% compared with 50% for the child cohort.

The older the mother was when the child was born, the more likely it is that the child currently has contact with the non-resident father in both the birth and child cohorts. The main difference is seen between those under 20, where 57% have contact with the non-resident father (birth cohort), and those over 20, where 67% of those with mothers aged 20-29 and 71% of those with mothers over 30, have contact.

Table 3.1 Current contact by age of mother at birth of child and cohort

Whether child currently has contact	Age of mother at birth of cohort child (%)			
	Under 20	20 to 29	30 and over	All
Birth				
Yes	57	67	71	65
No	43	33	27	35
<i>Bases</i>				
<i>Weighted</i>	210	436	209	872
<i>Unweighted</i>	139	351	202	707
Child				
Yes	59	69	70	67
No	41	31	30	33
<i>Bases</i>				
<i>Weighted</i>	112	310	152	590
<i>Unweighted</i>	77	249	148	488

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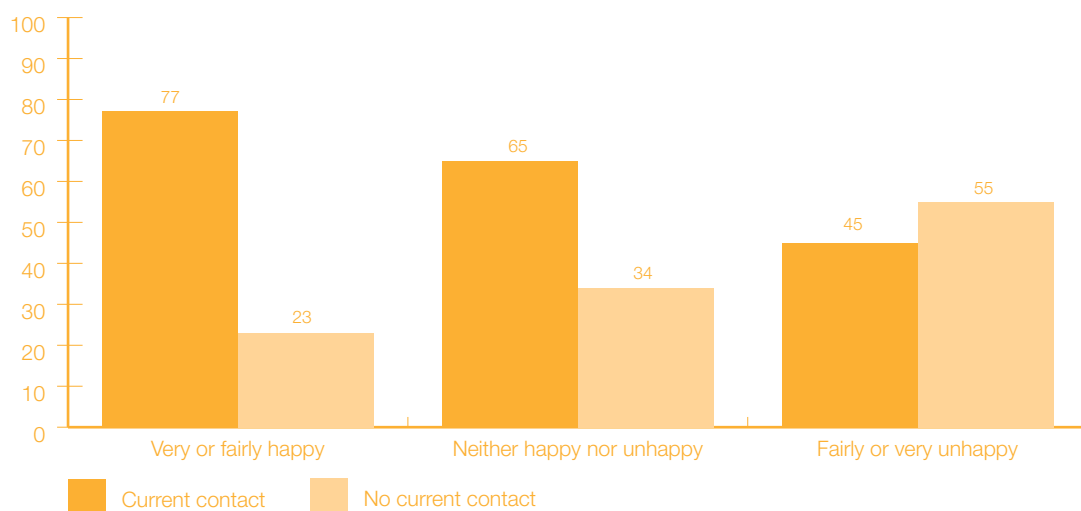
Children who have siblings were also more likely than those who have no siblings to see their non-resident fathers, 69% compared with 61% for the birth cohort. As it is more likely that the child has siblings if the natural parents were ever married this may be related to the finding shown above that non-resident fathers who have been married are more likely to have contact with their child.

Children of first-time mothers are less likely to have any contact with a non-resident father than children of mothers who already had other children, 59% compared with 73% for the birth cohort and 64% compared with 71% for the child cohort. This might be because the father has other children with the mother and therefore relates to the finding above that there is more likely to be contact if the child has siblings. A further explanation might be that mothers are more likely to have been married if they have other children (34% compared with 10% in the birth cohort) which relates to the finding that non-resident parents who have ever been married are more likely to have contact with their child.

Whether the mother is a lone parent or has repartnered is related to whether the non-resident father has contact with his child. If the mother has repartnered the father is less likely to see the child, 44% compared with 67% in lone parent families in the birth cohort and 51% compared with 70% in lone parent families in the child cohort.

The extent to which non-resident fathers have contact with their child appears to be related more to the mother's perception of the father's happiness about the pregnancy than her own happiness about the pregnancy. For mothers who were very or fairly happy about their pregnancy, 67% of non-resident fathers, in the birth cohort, have contact compared with 61% of non-resident fathers where the mother was fairly or very unhappy about the pregnancy. However, where the mother perceived the father to be very or fairly happy about the pregnancy, 77% in the birth cohort see their child compared with 45% who were perceived to be fairly or very unhappy (Figure 3 A).

Figure 3 A Current contact with non-resident father by father's perceived happiness about pregnancy (birth cohort only)



Bases: Children in contact with non-resident father at sweep 3 in birth cohort: Weighted – 857, unweighted – 682

Further statistical analysis² was carried out to explore which of the factors previously mentioned were the most important in explaining whether the non-resident father had contact. This analysis showed that, for both cohorts, whether contact took place at sweep 3 was influenced most by whether the mother had repartnered and the mother's perception of whether the father was happy about the pregnancy. The analysis suggested these factors were more important than household income; age and education of mother; whether they had ever been married or lived together or whether there were siblings.

For the birth cohort, an additional statistically significant factor was if the non-resident father had ever been married to the child's mother; if they had previously been married there was more likely to be contact with the child. Whereas, for the child cohort, an additional factor was whether the non-resident father had ever been resident in the household, with those fathers who had been resident at some point more likely to have contact with their child.

² Logistic Regression was used in this case to predict the probability of contact taking place using independent variables from previous sweeps, such as feelings about the pregnancy and socio-demographic measures.

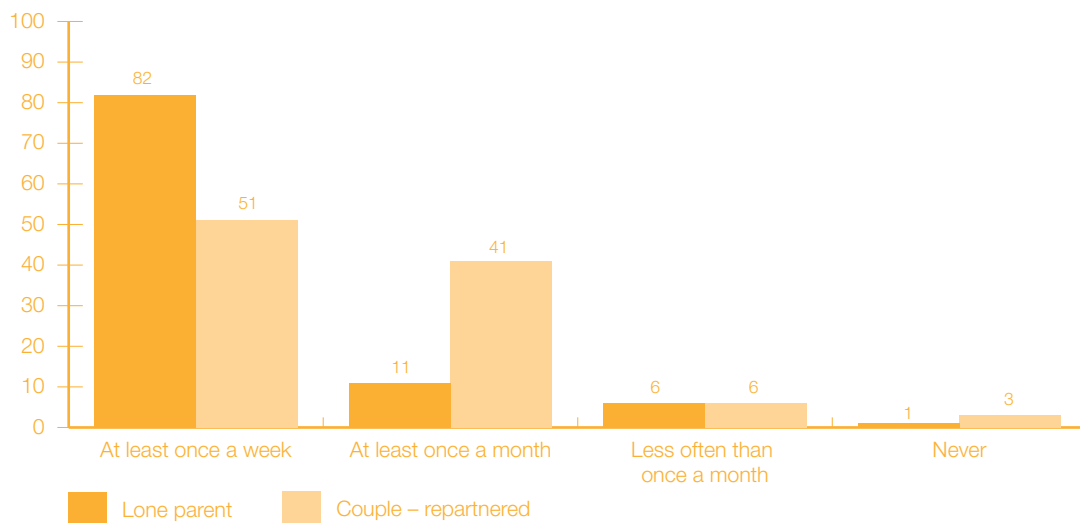
3.2 Frequency of child’s face-to-face contact with non-resident father

The majority of children who are currently having some form of contact with their non-resident father, have frequent face-to-face contact. Face-to-face contact takes place at least once a week for over three-quarters of the children in both cohorts, and at least once a month for over 90%. Eighty percent of children with a non-resident father, in the birth cohort, see their father at least once a week. At 75%, the figure is similarly high in the child cohort. Within these groups, we do not know whether parents have arranged shared residence. Just 6% of the birth cohort and 8% of the child cohort non-resident fathers see their child less than once a month.

The only two factors which appear to influence both the frequency of contact and whether the non-resident father has any form of contact are whether the child of the non-resident father has siblings and whether the mother has re-partnered.

Those children who have siblings are more likely to see their non-resident father at least once a week (in the birth cohort, 83% compared with 77%). The impact of whether the mother has re-partnered since splitting with the natural father seems to be significant in relation to frequency of contact, as well as for whether the non-resident father has any contact, or not. The impact of the mother re-partnering is that only 51% of children see their non-resident father once a week compared to 82% if the mother is a lone parent (birth cohort).

Figure 3 B Frequency of face-to-face contact by whether mother has re-partnered (birth cohort only)



Bases: Children in contact with non-resident father at sweep 3 in birth cohort: Weighted – 564, unweighted – 462

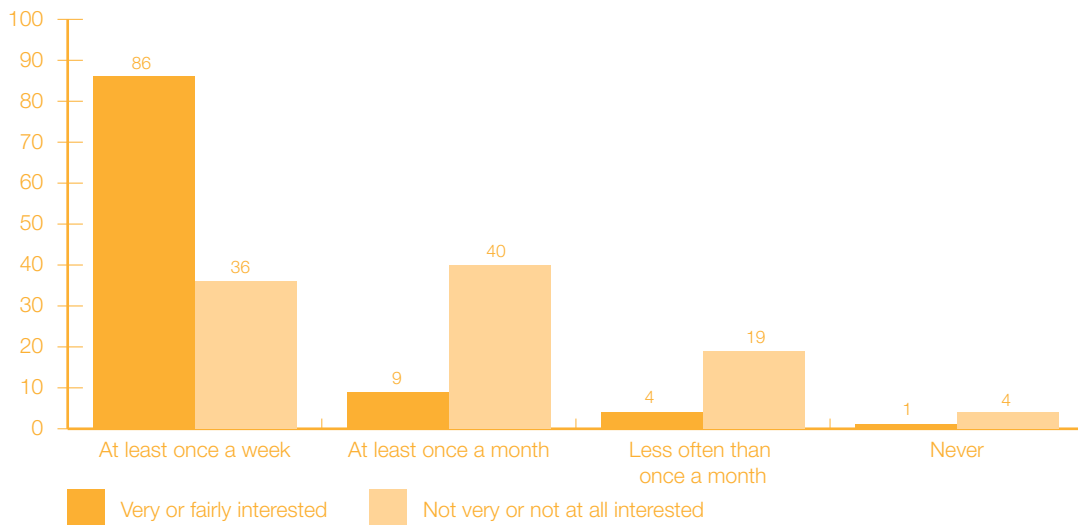
The following are other factors which are significant in relation to the frequency of contact, but which were not significant in relation to whether they had any form of contact at all. Non-resident fathers who live further away from their child are likely to see them less often than fathers who live closer. Over 80% of non-resident fathers who live within 30 minutes of their child see them at least once a week (88% for birth cohort, 87% for child cohort). If they live more than 30 minutes away this reduces to only 53% for the birth cohort, and 40% for the child cohort. This suggests that distance and travel time are important factors affecting contact between children and their non-resident father.

Table 3.2 Frequency of face-to-face contact by travel time to child and cohort

Frequency of face-to-face contact	Time to travel to cohort child (%)			
	10 minutes or less	11 to 30 minutes	31 minutes or more	All
Birth				
At least once a week	88	83	53	80
At least once a month	9	12	23	13
Less often than once a month	3	5	17	6
Never	–	–	7	1
<i>Bases</i>				
<i>Weighted</i>	298	161	99	564
<i>Unweighted</i>	241	135	82	462
Child				
At least once a week	87	83	40	75
At least once a month	8	15	31	16
Less often than once a month	4	2	28	8
Never	1	1	1	1
<i>Bases</i>				
<i>Weighted</i>	169	138	81	395
<i>Unweighted</i>	144	113	69	331

Frequency of contact is also associated with how interested the mother thinks the father is in the child. Those fathers who are described by the mother as not very or not at all interested in the child are far less likely to see their child once a week, 36% for the birth cohort, compared with 86% for those who were very or fairly interested. The subjective nature of this data makes it difficult to disentangle the direction of the association. For example, if the father does not see the child often, the mother may be more likely to perceive him as not interested however, if the father is indeed not interested this may lead to less frequent contact with the child.

Figure 3 C Frequency of face-to-face contact by perceived interest in child by non-resident father (birth cohort only)



Bases: Children in contact with non-resident father at sweep 3 in birth cohort: Weighted – 564 unweighted – 462

The mother’s perception of the quality of the relationship between her and the non-resident father is also clearly related to how frequently the father sees the child. Where the relationship is described as very or fairly good, 94% of non-resident fathers, in the birth cohort, see the child at least once a week compared with only 52% where the relationship is described as fairly or very bad.

However, even in the latter case, where the relationship is fairly or very bad, a majority of children have contact with their non-resident parent. Many research studies have shown that where the post-separation parental relationship is positive, particularly where parents have developed a cooperative parenting style, then contact is beneficial to children and their long-term outcomes are better than for children whose parents have a poor relationship. Indeed, where the parental relationship is a high conflict one, the balance of research suggests that contact may not be beneficial to children (Hunt and Roberts 2004; Wasoff 2007). It is worth noting though that, for the children concerned, around half of the mothers in both cohorts report the relationship as very or fairly good (55% in the birth cohort and 53% in the child cohort).

Table 3.3 Frequency of face-to-face contact by perceived quality of parental relationship and cohort

Frequency of face-to-face contact	Quality of parental relationship (%)			
	Very or fairly good	Neither good nor bad	Fairly or very bad	All
Birth				
At least once a week	94	75	52	80
At least once a month	4	15	32	13
Less often than once a month	2	10	12	6
Never	1	–	4	1
<i>Bases</i>				
<i>Weighted</i>	305	154	94	564
<i>Unweighted</i>	248	129	77	462
Child				
At least once a week	85	71	49	75
At least once a month	9	21	30	16
Less often than once a month	5	8	20	8
Never	0	1	2	1
<i>Bases</i>				
<i>Weighted</i>	203	119	61	395
<i>Unweighted</i>	167	100	54	331

Where the relationship between the parents has been categorised on a conflict scale (see Section 4.2 for details) from low to high, a similar pattern is seen with 92% of non-resident fathers whose relationship is low on the conflict scale seeing their child at least once a week (birth cohort). This reduces to 68% for those whose relationship is deemed to be high on the conflict scale. As above, whether frequent contact in highly conflicted parental relationships is in a child's best interest is debatable at best. As further sweeps take place, it will be interesting to compare child outcomes between those children with positive and negative parental relationships.

Table 3.4 Frequency of face-to-face contact by conflict scale and cohort

Frequency of face-to-face contact	Parental conflict band (%)			
	Low	Medium	High	All
Birth				
At least once a week	92	83	68	80
At least once a month	5	12	20	13
Less often than once a month	3	4	11	6
Never	–	1	2	1
<i>Bases</i>				
<i>Weighted</i>	212	123	145	564
<i>Unweighted</i>	172	103	117	462
Child				
At least once a week	81	78	65	75
At least once a month	12	17	23	16
Less often than once a month	6	6	11	8
Never	1	–	1	1
<i>Bases</i>				
<i>Weighted</i>	156	98	80	395
<i>Unweighted</i>	128	83	68	331

Non-resident fathers who pay maintenance are more likely to see their child at least once a week compared to those who do not. However, the differences in the proportions having weekly contact between those who do or don't pay maintenance are not great; 84% compared to 75% (birth cohort). This suggests that there are other more influential factors, and the much reported association between payment of maintenance and contact may be over-estimated.

Further statistical analysis was carried out to explore which of the factors previously mentioned were the most important in explaining the frequency of contact with non-resident fathers. For both the birth and child cohorts, the two most important factors were the distance that the non-resident father lives from the child and the mother's perception of the interest he shows in the child. As we saw in Table 3.2 those fathers who live further away are less likely to have weekly contact as are those who are described by the resident mother as not very or not at all interested. In addition, for the birth cohort, the better the parental relationship the more likely the non-resident father has weekly contact. For the child cohort, whether the mother has repartnered is an important factor with the child of a mother who has repartnered less likely to see their non-resident father on a weekly basis.

3.3 Frequency of child staying overnight with non-resident father

The frequency that the child stays overnight with the non-resident father changes depending on the age of the mother. The younger the mother, the more likely that the child stays overnight at least once a week with the non-resident father – 44% of the birth cohort whose mothers were under 20 at the child’s birth stay overnight with their father at least once a week, compared with 26% of those whose mothers were over 30 when the child was born. This contrasts with the earlier findings on the likelihood of current contact showing that children with older mothers are more likely to have contact with their fathers.

Table 3.5 Frequency of child staying overnight with non-resident father by age of mother and cohort

Frequency of overnight stays	Age of mother at birth of cohort child (%)			
	Under 20	20 to 29	30 and over	All
Birth				
At least once a week	44	37	26	35
At least once a month	20	12	15	15
Less often than once a month	10	7	7	8
Never	26	43	52	42
<i>Bases</i>				
<i>Weighted</i>	119	290	148	564
<i>Unweighted</i>	78	237	142	462
Child				
At least once a week	53	44	32	42
At least once a month	8	21	22	19
Less often than once a month	4	7	6	6
Never	35	28	39	32
<i>Bases</i>				
<i>Weighted</i>	66	214	107	395
<i>Unweighted</i>	45	174	105	331

Base: All children who have contact with non-resident father

Whether the non-resident father pays maintenance is also related to how often their child stays overnight with them. Forty percent of children whose fathers pay maintenance stay overnight at least once a week, compared with 27% of those who do not pay maintenance (birth cohort), showing a similar relationship to frequency of contact. Over half of those non-resident fathers who do not pay maintenance never have their child to stay overnight (56%) compared with only a third (35%) of those who do pay maintenance.

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Those fathers who are not resident at sweep 3, but have been resident at some point in the past are more likely to have their child stay overnight at least once a week. In the birth cohort, 40% of those with previous residency had the child stay overnight at least once a week compared with 32% who have never lived in the household. In the child cohort, nearly half of fathers (47%) who have never been resident never have their child to stay overnight compared with a quarter of those who have been resident at some point.

3.4 Phone, text, email or letter contact

The relationship between the frequency of phone, text, email or letter contact and the frequency of face-to-face contact between non-resident fathers and the cohort children is shown in Table 3.6. The most frequent contact by phone, text, email or letter is by non-resident fathers who also see their child at least once a week (66% in the birth cohort and 67% in the child cohort). However, 33% of non-resident fathers, in the birth cohort, who see their child less often than once a month contact them by phone, text, email or letter at least once a week.

Table 3.6 Frequency of phone, text, email or letter contact in relation to frequency of contact with non-resident father

Frequency of phone, text, email or letter contact	Frequency of face-to-face contact			
	At least once a week	At least once a month	Less often than once a month or never	All
Birth				
At least once a week	66	25	33	58
At least once a month	3	16	22	6
Less often than once a month or never	31	59	45	35
<i>Bases</i>				
<i>Weighted</i>	451	72	41	564
<i>Unweighted</i>	367	62	33	462
Child				
At least once a week	67	35	28	58
At least once a month	4	21	13	7
Less often than once a month or never	29	44	58	34
<i>Bases</i>				
<i>Weighted</i>	294	64	36	395
<i>Unweighted</i>	242	58	31	331

Base: all children who have contact with non-resident father

The factors which are most likely to affect the frequency of phone, text, email or letter contact are whether the mother has repartnered, the mother's perception of the non-resident father's interest in the child and the quality of the relationship between the two natural parents, as described by the mother.

Where the mother has repartnered the non-resident father is less likely to phone, text, email or write at least once a week, 37% compared to 62% where the mother is a lone parent (child cohort). This is a similar pattern to that shown in relation to frequency of face-to-face contact where non-resident fathers were less likely to see their child at least once a week if the mother has repartnered.

Where the mother has perceived that the non-resident father is not very or not at all interested in the child, only 15% of non-resident fathers, in the birth cohort, will phone, text, email or write at least once a week compared with 64% who are perceived to be very or somewhat interested. Of those non-resident fathers that are perceived to be not very or not at all interested, 62% in the birth cohort never phone, text, email or write.

The quality of the relationship between the natural parents, as perceived by the mother, appears to be associated with the frequency of phone, text, email or letter contact. The better the quality of the relationship the more likely the non-resident father will phone, text, email or write at least once a week, 77% in the birth cohort who have a very or fairly good relationship have contact at least once a week compared with 27% of those with a fairly or very bad relationship.

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Table 3.7 Frequency of phone, text, email or letter contact in relation to perceived quality of the relationship with the non-resident father and cohort

Frequency of contact by phone, text, email or letter	Quality of parental relationship (%)			
	Very or fairly good	Neither good nor bad	Very or fairly bad	All
Birth				
At least once a week	77	44	27	58
At least once a month	3	13	8	6
Less often than once a month	1	3	11	3
Never	19	40	54	32
<i>Bases</i>				
<i>Weighted</i>	305	154	94	564
<i>Unweighted</i>	248	129	77	462
Child				
At least once a week	75	52	16	58
At least once a month	4	12	7	7
Less often than once a month	2	4	10	4
Never	19	31	68	30
<i>Bases</i>				
<i>Weighted</i>	203	119	61	395
<i>Unweighted</i>	167	100	54	331

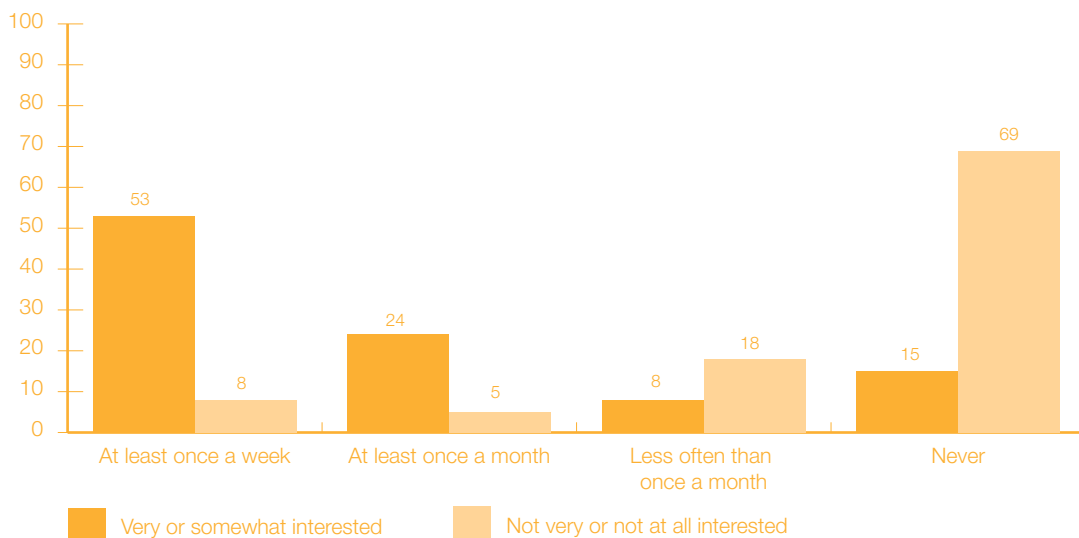
Base: all children who have contact with non-resident father

3.5 Frequency of outings with child

It is more likely that a non-resident father will take a child on an outing than have contact by phone, text, email or letter, although less contact through these latter methods likely reflect the young age of the child. In the birth cohort, 32% of non-resident fathers never contact their child by phone, text, email or letter compared with 21% who never take their child on an outing. Similar findings apply to the child cohort.

The only factor which is significant for both the birth and child cohorts in determining the frequency that the non-resident father takes the child on outings is the perceived level of interest he has in the child. Only 8% of non-resident fathers in the birth cohort who are perceived to be not very or not at all interested, take their child out at least once a week, compared with 53% of those who are perceived to be very or somewhat interested. This is a similar pattern to that shown in relation to phone, text, email or letter contact (see Table 3.7).

Figure 3 D Frequency of outings in relation to perceived interest of the non-resident father in the child and cohort



Bases: Children in contact with non-resident father at sweep 3 in birth cohort: Weighted – 558, unweighted – 457

3.6 Frequency of buying toys, clothing or equipment

Not surprisingly, non-resident fathers buy toys, clothing or equipment for their child less frequently than they have them to stay overnight, have indirect contact with them or take them on outings. Only 23% of non-resident fathers in the birth cohort were said to buy their child an item at least once a week and 28% never buy their child anything, apart from on special occasions.

The quality of the relationship between the natural parents, as perceived by the mother, was shown to be strongly related to the frequency that non-resident fathers buy their child toys, clothing or equipment, for both the birth and child cohorts. Where the relationship was perceived to be very or fairly good, 39% of non-resident fathers in the birth cohort buy items at least once a week, compared with only 3% where the relationship was perceived to be fairly or very bad.

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Table 3.8 Frequency of buying toys, clothing or equipment (apart from on special occasions like birthdays) in relation to perceived quality of the relationship with the non-resident father and cohort

Frequency of buying toys, clothes or equipment	Quality of parental relationship (%)			
	Very or fairly good	Neither good nor bad	Very or fairly bad	All
Birth				
At least once a week	39	6	3	23
At least once a month	41	34	15	35
Less often than once a month	9	18	25	14
Never	12	42	57	28
<i>Bases</i>				
<i>Weighted</i>	304	152	92	556
<i>Unweighted</i>	247	127	75	456
Child				
At least once a week	26	10	3	19
At least once a month	40	27	8	31
Less often than once a month	19	22	27	21
Never	14	41	62	30
<i>Bases</i>				
<i>Weighted</i>	202	118	57	388
<i>Unweighted</i>	166	99	50	325

Base: all children who have contact with non-resident father

3.7 Changes in patterns of contact over time

As the *Growing Up in Scotland* study has now collected data for three years for both the birth and child cohorts, it is possible to conduct longitudinal analysis looking at changes in contact over the three years. For both the birth and child cohorts, nearly 80% of the contact with non-resident fathers remained the same across the three sweeps, however, the cohorts show very different patterns of contact during this time.

Forty-nine percent of non-resident fathers in the birth cohort had contact consistently at all three sweeps compared with only 29% who had no contact at any sweep and 22% who have changed contact arrangements at some point over the three sweeps. In contrast, in the child cohort the non-resident father was just as likely to have had contact at all three sweeps as he was to have had no contact at any of the sweeps (37% compared with 40%), with 33% having changed contact arrangement over the three sweeps.

There have also only been small changes to the frequency of contact across time. For those who had contact at least once a week at sweep 1, the majority still had weekly contact at sweep 3. For example, in the birth cohort 77% maintained weekly contact between sweeps 1 and 3. The most common change in contact, for the birth cohort, was for non-resident fathers to reduce their frequency of contact; 11% changed from having contact at least once a week at sweep 1 to having contact less than once a week at sweep 3. However, 7% increased their contact from less than once a week at sweep 1 to at least once a week at sweep 3. For the child cohort 65% maintained contact at least once a week, 15% maintained contact at less than once a week, 10% increased their contact and a further 10% reduced the frequency of their contact.



NEGOTIATING CONTACT, DECISION MAKING,
AND MANAGING CONFLICT OVER CONTACT

chapter

4

4.1 Parental conflict

To measure levels of conflict between the resident and non-resident parent, a conflict scale was formed using six items in the non-resident parent section of the questionnaire. These were:

- *How would you describe your relationship with [the child's] natural father/mother? (Five-point scale ranging from very good to very bad)*
- *When you have a serious disagreement with ^childname's father, how often do you...*
 - *just keep your opinions to yourself?*
 - *discuss your disagreements calmly?*
 - *argue heatedly or shout at each other?*
 - *reach a compromise?*
 - *criticise each other?*

(Four-point scale – Often, Sometimes, Hardly ever, Never – respondents could also indicate that they 'don't have disagreements' with the child's non-resident parent).

These six items were used to create a measure of conflict between the resident and non-resident parent, ranging between 6 and 30. A higher score indicated greater conflict between parents. Actual scores ranged from 11 to 30, indicating that no parents said they 'did not have disagreements' with the non-resident parent at all. As can be seen in the table below, the mean for both cohorts was just under 19, with a standard deviation of approximately four points.

Table 4.1 Mean conflict scores by cohort

Cohort	Conflict score (6 to 30)		
	Mean	<i>N</i>	Std. Deviation
Birth	18.8	392	3.7
Child	18.5	279	3.6

Analysis was undertaken to explore whether certain parents were more likely to have a highly conflictual relationship than others, and whether circumstances earlier in the child's life were more likely to lead to this situation at sweep 3. Interestingly, there appeared to be no significant difference between most socio-demographic factors and the amount of conflict reported at sweep 3, including whether the respondent had re-partnered (although this may be due to the relatively small numbers). The exception to this was employment status, with respondents in households with no-one in employment having a higher conflict scale than those in households with at least one parent working part-time or full-time.

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As may be expected, higher conflict parents also showed other negative parenting characteristics. Parents who had a higher conflict score were less likely than those with a lower score to have reported the non-resident parent being ‘very interested’ in the child at sweep 1, as can be seen in Table 4.2. Given the subjective nature of these scales this is perhaps not surprising. Higher conflict parents were also less likely to report the non-resident parent making a regular financial contribution to the child’s maintenance at sweep 1. Interestingly, whether the non-resident parent was in contact at all at sweep 1, and if so, the frequency of that contact, was not significantly related to level of conflict.

Table 4.2 Mean conflict scores by interest shown in child at sweep 1 (birth cohort)

Interest non-resident father shows in child (sweep 1)	Conflict score (6 to 30)		
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Very interested	18.5	233	3.7
Somewhat interested	20.0	63	3.6
Not very interested	18.3	16	3.5
Not at all interested	20.1	18	4.5
Total	18.8	329	3.7

Whilst the difference in level of conflict by level of interest at sweep 1 is clear, the difference in scores between those non-resident parents who were reported as being very interested at sweep 3 and those non-resident parents who were reportedly less interested at sweep 3 was more stark. Where the non-resident father was shown to be very interested at sweep 3, the mean conflict score was 17.6, compared with 21.4 for those who were not very interested and 23.7 for those fathers who were not at all interested (notably, however, numbers in this last group are very low).

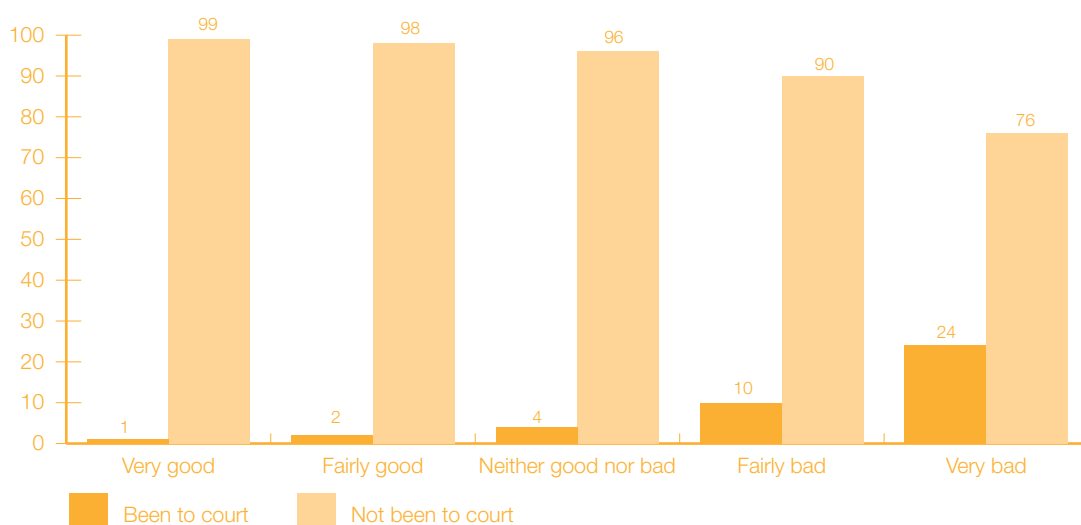
Table 4.3 Mean conflict scores by interest shown in child at sweep 3 (birth cohort)

Interest non-resident father shows in child (sweep 3)	Conflict score (6 to 30)		
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Very interested	17.6	292	3.3
Somewhat interested	20.4	122	3.6
Not very interested	21.4	48	3.6
Not at all interested	23.7	7	2.4
All	18.8	469	3.7

4.2 How arrangements were made

Overall, 5% of families with a non-resident parent in each cohort had been to court at some point in relation to contact between the child and the non-resident parent. This is consistent with many research findings elsewhere which show that the great majority of contact is negotiated informally by the parents, perhaps with some professional help, but without the involvement of the court, and that those cases which do end up in court tend to be concentrated in the high conflict end of the spectrum. There were no significant patterns in the method of agreeing contact arrangements by socio-demographic factors, although there was some suggestion that households in the managerial and professional occupations were less likely to report having gone to court than were other households. As may be expected, those respondents who had been to court over contact arrangements were far more likely to report having a bad or very bad relationship with the other parent, particularly in the birth cohort, as Figure 4 A demonstrates. While the likelihood of using the courts rises sharply as parental relationships become poorer, the great majority even of those with very poor parental relationships did not use the courts. Less than a quarter (24%) of those respondents who had a 'very bad' relationship with the other parent reported going to court, in contrast to just 1% who had a very good relationship.

Figure 4 A Percentage ever been to court over contact between child and non-resident parent by resident parent's perception of their relationship with the non-resident parent (birth cohort only)



Base: Children with a non-resident parent at Sweep 3 in the birth cohort: Weighted – 542, unweighted – 436

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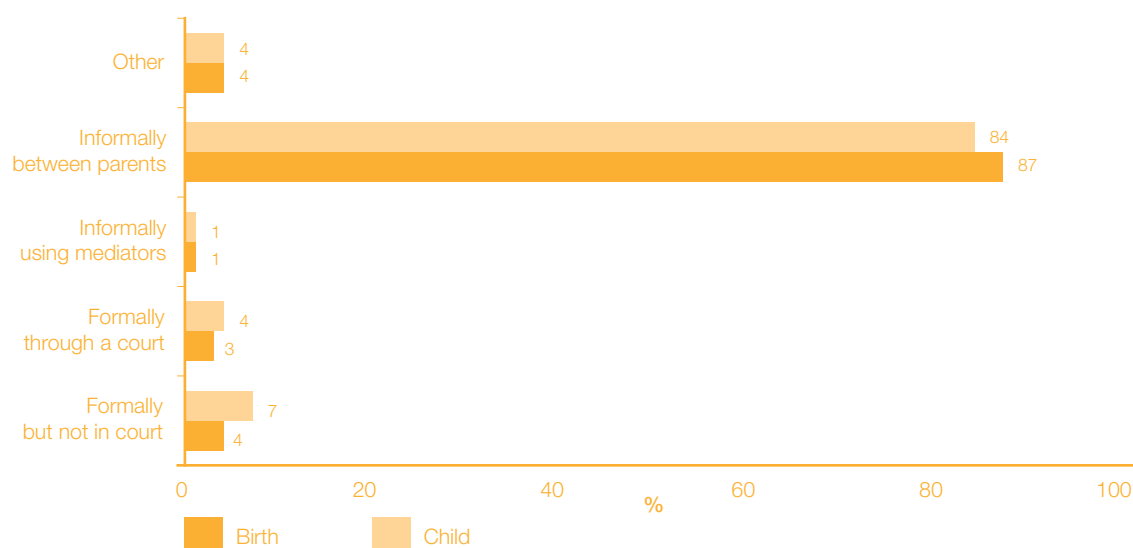
Sweep 3 Non-resident Parent Report

In the birth cohort, there was also a strong correlation between the reported interest shown by the non-resident parent in the child and the likelihood of having gone to court. Almost a quarter of those non-resident parents reported as being ‘not very interested’ or ‘not at all’ interested had been to court in contrast to just 2% of those reported as being ‘somewhat’ or ‘very’ interested. This was seen to be very different in the child cohort, where arrangements were almost equally as likely to have been made through the courts not matter whether the non-resident parent was very interested or not at all interested in the cohort child (Table 4.4). As we have seen above, this measure is subjective – it is the resident parent’s *perception* of the non-resident parent’s interest in the child – and there is a strong correlation between the parental relationship and the perception of the non-resident parent’s interest in the child which is likely to impact here and the direction of which is difficult to ascertain.

Table 4.4 Whether parents have been to court about contact by reported interest non-resident parent shows in child and cohort

Arrangements made through court	Interest in child (%)	
	Very or somewhat interested	Not very or not at all interested
Birth		
Yes	2	23
No	98	77
<i>Bases</i>		
<i>Weighted</i>	447	6
<i>Unweighted</i>	383	53
Child		
Yes	5	4
No	95	96
<i>Bases</i>		
<i>Weighted</i>	320	52
<i>Unweighted</i>	268	44

More specifically, the resident parent was asked about how the current contact arrangements were made. The majority of parents had made current arrangements informally between themselves and the other parent, although 7% in the child cohort and 4% in the birth cohort had made arrangements formally but not through a court. Those who made arrangements formally, using lawyers or mediators but not in court, did so either because previous contact arrangements were causing problems or to avoid any problems or arguments in the future.

Figure 4 B How current contact arrangements were made by cohort

Base: Children with a non-resident parent at sweep 3 in the birth cohort: Weighted – 544, unweighted – 437

For most families, contact arrangements held a large degree of stability over time and for over three-quarters in each cohort arrangements had always been the same. Interestingly, there was no significant difference between the older and younger children here; only around 5% of respondents in each cohort reported that arrangements were ‘always changing’. Any changes in arrangements were usually viewed by the resident parent as being positive for the child (around two-fifths in each cohort) or as making no difference for a further two-fifths. Unsurprisingly, parents who are able to work out arrangements between themselves have a lower average conflict score than parents who resort to formal means.

Table 4.5 Mean conflict scores by way in which current contact arrangements were made (birth cohort)

How contact arrangements were made	Conflict score (6 to 30)		
	Mean	<i>N</i>	Std. Deviation
Formally through a court	21.1	23	4.2
Formally using lawyers or mediators but not in court	20.9	45	3.9
Informally using mediators	19.3	8	1.8
Informally between me and the child's other parent	18.4	577	3.6
Something else	18.6	18	4.0
All	18.6	671	3.7

4.3 Non-resident parent's involvement in decisions

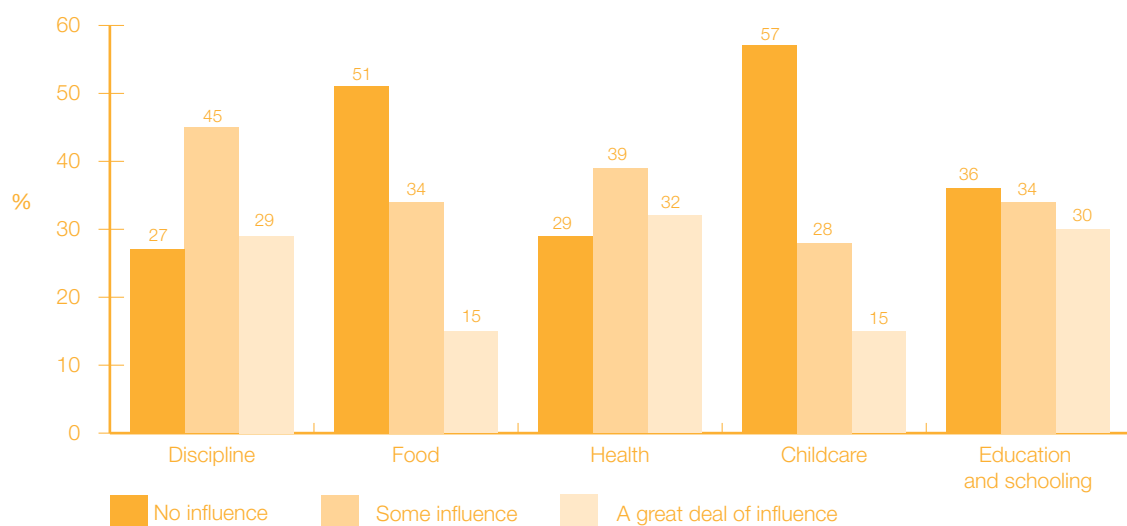
As discussed in sections 1 and 3.2, parental responsibilities, as set out in section 1 of the 1995 Act, include 'to safeguard and promote the child's health, development and welfare;' to provide appropriate direction and guidance to the child, and 'if the child is not living with the parent, to maintain personal relations and direct contact with the child on a regular basis', if that would be in the child's best interests. Thus parental responsibilities requires that a parent, whether living with the child or not, is involved in the key health, developmental, educational and welfare decision-making affecting the child. Until now, little has been known about how much involvement generally non-resident parents with parental responsibilities have in decision making about their child.

At sweep 3, respondents were asked how involved the non-resident parent was in making decisions about the cohort child, both generally, and with regards to specific issues such as food, discipline and education (the latter for the child cohort only). Overall, 31% of respondents in the birth cohort and 26% in the child cohort said that they always or almost always asked for the non-resident father's views when making major decisions about the cohort child, with a further 18% and 12%, respectively, asking for their views often. Once more, the socio-economic status of parents did not affect the amount of involvement the non-resident parent had in decision making. However, the amount of face-to-face contact the non-resident parent had with the child, frequency of overnight stays, and whether the non-resident parent paid maintenance were all significantly associated with involvement in decision-making showing how well these measures demonstrate key parental responsibilities, provide opportunities for meeting parental responsibility and serve as good indicators of other parental responsibilities.

Non-resident parents who had frequent face-to-face contact (at least once a week) were more likely than those with less frequent contact to be always or almost always asked when making major decisions about the cohort child (35% in the birth cohort). Having the child to stay overnight at least once a week also increased the non-resident parent's involvement in decision-making, particularly in the birth cohort, where 40% of parents who had the child to stay over weekly were always or almost always involved in making major decisions about the cohort child. However, never having the child to stay overnight was less important here as long as regular face-to-face contact was maintained.

As Figure 4 C indicates, non-resident parents had most influence in the ‘bigger’ areas of health, education and schooling, and discipline, with less influence in the more routine aspects of life, such as the food the cohort child eats and childcare. As may be expected, those non-resident parents who had regular weekly contact with their child were more likely than those non-resident parents who had less frequent contact to have some influence even in these everyday matters (e.g. 54% of those who see the child at least weekly having some influence on childcare, in contrast to 43% overall in the child cohort), although they were only slightly more likely to have ‘a great deal of influence’ (18% of those who see the child at least once a week having a great deal of influence on childcare compared with 0% of non-resident parents who saw their child less often than once a week in the child cohort). Patterns shown are similar for the birth cohort (although they were not asked about education and schooling). In summary, it appears that whilst fairly large proportions of non-resident parents were having no influence over decisions about their child’s childcare and food consumption (over half having no influence in each case), more importantly many had no influence in more significant decisions about their child’s education, schooling and health.

Figure 4 C Non-resident parent’s amount of influence on decisions on the cohort child (child cohort)



Bases: Children with a non-resident parent at Sweep 3 in the child cohort: Weighted – 256, unweighted – 217

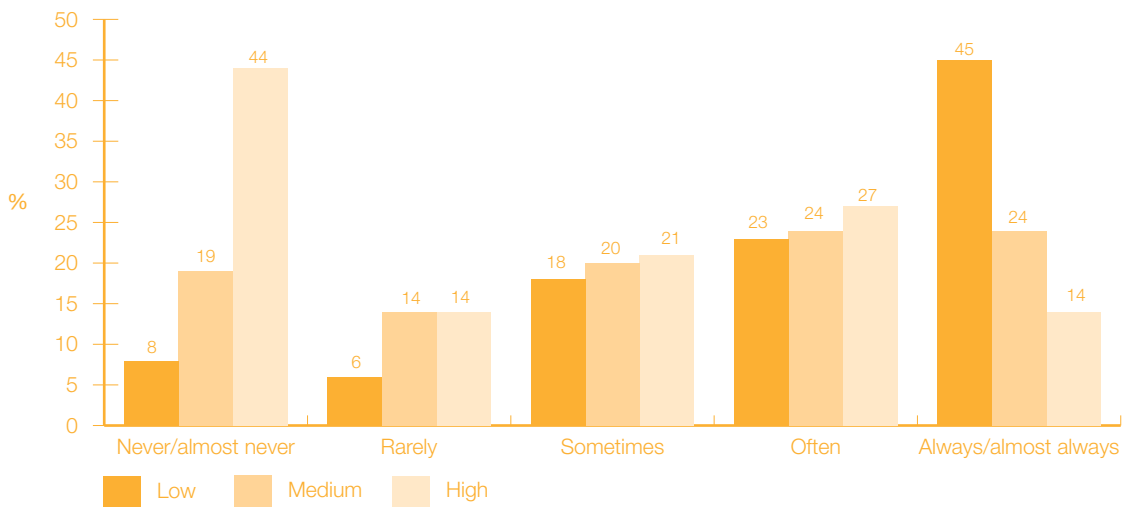
Non-resident parents who contributed financially to the child’s maintenance were more likely to both be asked for their opinion and to exert influence than those who did not. In the birth cohort, 60% of non-resident parents who made regular payments were always, almost always or often asked their opinion on major decisions about the cohort child, compared with 32% of those who made no payments. Notably, those who made regular payments were also reported to have greater influence on decisions about the more routine aspects of the child’s life than were those who paid irregularly.

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Parents who had little conflict in their relationship with the non-resident parent were more likely to always ask for the other parent’s views when making major decisions about the child, and were also more likely to report the non-resident parent having some, or a great deal of influence on a range of topics. As Figure 4 D demonstrates, those parents in the highest conflict band (in the birth cohort) were far more likely to report never or almost never asking for the other parent’s opinion, compared with parents in the lowest conflict band, almost half of whom always, or nearly always asked the other parent’s opinion. However, it is worth noting that even among parents who have a very conflictual relationship, 41% still ask for the non-resident parent’s opinion always, almost always or often. Similar patterns could be seen in the child cohort.

Figure 4 D Frequency of resident parent asking non-resident parent’s opinion when making major decisions about the child by Conflict score (banded) (birth cohort only).



Bases: Children with a non-resident parent at sweep 3 in the birth cohort: Weighted – 468, unweighted – 375

This data shows that positive parental relationships and low levels of conflict are key to understanding the more involved and successful carrying out of parental responsibilities by non-resident parents, and more effective parenting across households where a child’s parents do not live together.

CHAPTER 4

Negotiating contact, decision making, and managing conflict over contact



chapter
CONCLUSION

5

The majority of children in both the birth and child cohorts have lived at all three sweeps with their mothers and biological fathers. However, a significant proportion, about one-fifth of the birth cohort and one-quarter of the child cohort, had a non-resident father at sweep 3. Although non-resident fatherhood is commonly associated with separation and household transitions, this is not the case for the birth or child cohorts, the majority of whom have not experienced parental separation since their non-resident fathers had never lived with them. Most children whose parents live apart (about two-thirds) have current, stable contact with their non-resident parent, whether or not the parents have previously cohabited. Most contact arrangements did not change across sweeps. In light of a non-resident parent's legal parental responsibility to maintain regular contact with their child, an issue of concern about which GUS does not have information is why one-third of children with a non-resident father do *not* have contact.

Where contact takes place, it is generally frequent, with face to face contact taking place at least once a week in the majority of cases. Contact is most common for previously married parents and least common for parents who have never cohabited. Long travel times for the non-resident parent adversely affects the frequency of contact. Other factors that affect the frequency of contact are the age of the mother and how interested the mother thinks the father is in the child. Contact is least frequent for children of teenage mothers and for children with no siblings.

A recurrent message from research is that contact is most beneficial to children if the level of conflict between their parents is low and if their parents can develop a cooperative post-separation parenting relationship. Most mothers report a very good or fairly good relationship with the non-resident father. The quality of this relationship is associated with higher levels of contact, more frequent contact, the father's greater perceived interest in the child, less conflict, more involvement of the non-resident parent in decision making about the child and their greater exercise of parental responsibilities. It is worth bearing in mind that these findings apply to parents of very young children and it will be of interest to know how parents' relationships and their decision making will evolve as children get older and start school. Since GUS has not been able to interview non-resident fathers, we cannot say how similar are their perceptions of the quality of the relationship with the resident parent.

GROWING UP IN SCOTLAND:

Sweep 3 Non-resident Parent Report

The great majority of parents (over 85%) are able to arrange contact informally between themselves with no professional or outside help. A small minority made use of help from lawyers (7% of the child cohort; 4% of the birth cohort), mediators (1%) or other professionals (4%). Only about one in twenty cases where parents live apart involve the courts. That proportion rises to about one in four in cases where the main carer reports that the non-resident parent is not very interested in the child or the parental relationship is very bad. An issue of concern is the high level of contact taking place in the context of high conflict and poor parental relationships, both of which have been associated in the research literature with adverse child outcomes. This merits further examination in subsequent sweeps of this study.

While contact cases that reach the courts are more likely to be at the high conflict end of the spectrum and involving very poor parental relationships, the majority of high conflict cases manage to arrange contact without court involvement. How they achieve this is not known. It is not clear from the data what distinguishes cases that end up involving the courts from those that manage to resolve conflict or disputes without the courts.

The picture of child contact that emerges from sweep 3 for both cohorts, a population sample, differs from many child contact studies whose samples are drawn from court records, lawyers caseloads or from clients of family support organisations, or clinical samples. A high level and frequency of child contact is taking place for a large minority of all children, and the great majority of children whose parents live apart. Most of this across household parenting seems to be negotiated privately by parents without professional support and most parents seem to have adequate parenting relationships, at least as reported by the child's main carer. How these patterns evolve as children get older and as parents' lives may become more complex will continue to be of interest in subsequent sweeps of the *Growing Up in Scotland* study.



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