



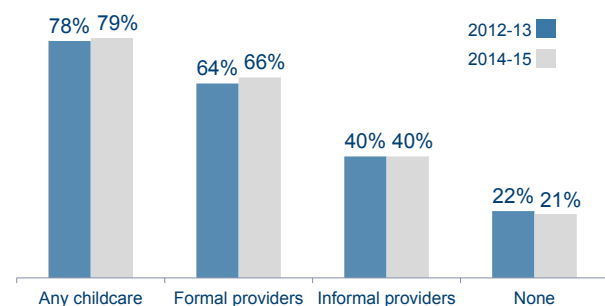
Department  
for Education

## Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents in England, 2014 to 2015

SFR 09/2016, 3 March 2016

### Overall childcare usage remains unchanged since the 2012-13 survey

Percentage of families using childcare providers in most recent term-time week



Base: All families in 2014-15 (6,198), and in 2012-13 (6,393)

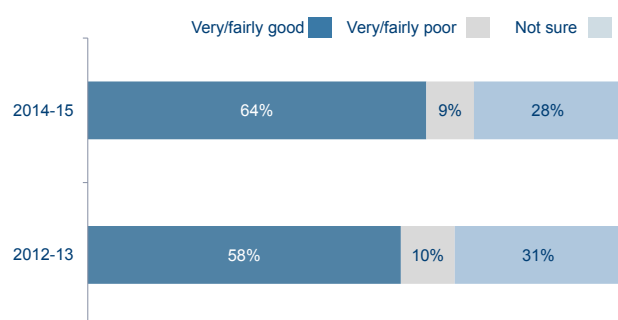
Overall, 79% of families in England with children aged 0 to 14 had used some form of childcare during their most recent term-time week. This equated to 4.3 million families or 6.3 million children.

Two in three families (66%) had used formal childcare and early years provision and 40% had used informal childcare. 28% had used both formal and informal childcare.

This overall pattern of childcare usage has remained unchanged since the last survey in 2012-13.

### The proportion of parents who rate the quality and availability of local childcare as good has risen

Ratings of quality of local childcare provision



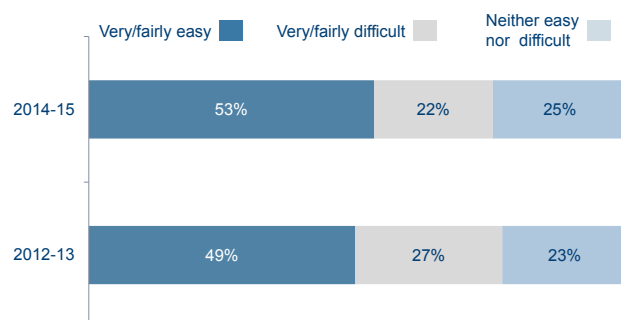
Base: All families in 2014-15 (6,198), and in 2012-13 (6,393)

The majority of parents (64%) rated the overall quality of local childcare provision as very or fairly good. This proportion has increased from 58% in 2012-13.

46% of parents felt the number of local childcare places was 'about right'. This proportion has risen from 42% in 2012-13. 28% reported that 'not enough places' were available in 2014-15 compared to 30% in 2012-13.

### Ease of meeting costs of childcare has improved

Percentage of parents finding it easy or difficult to meet the costs of childcare



Base: All families in 2014-15 (6,198), and in 2012-13 (6,393)

Just over half of parents (53%) said it was fairly or very easy to meet their childcare costs, with 22% of families finding it fairly or very difficult to pay.

These findings show a fall in the proportion of families finding it fairly or very difficult to cover their childcare cost since 2012-13 (from 27% to 22%).

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## About this release

This statistical first release (SFR) provides the main findings of the 2014-2015 survey in the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents series. This includes overall usage of childcare providers, receipt of government funded early years education by 2- to 4-year-olds, parents' perceptions of the quality and availability of childcare provision, and the cost of childcare and perceptions of affordability, as well as factors influencing maternal employment decisions.

The 2014-15 survey reports the findings of face to face interviews with a nationally representative sample of 6,198 parents in England with children age 0-14 between October 2014 and July 2015. The survey ran annually until 2012 and is now run biennially with surveys in 2012-13 and 2014-15. For ease of interpretation, data from the latest survey are usually compared with 2012-13, but longer term trends are shown for key trends in the main report. Only differences between the survey waves which are statistically significant are reported here.

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

This SFR reports key findings from the survey. More detailed findings from the survey can be found in the main report which is published on the [DfE website](#).

## Defining childcare

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

**Formal providers:** include nursery schools, nursery classes, reception classes, special day schools, day nurseries, playgroups, childminders, nannies or au-pairs, baby-sitters, breakfast clubs, after-school clubs and holiday clubs.

**Informal providers:** include grandparents, ex-husband/wife/partners, older brother/sisters, other relatives, friends or neighbours.

## In this publication

As detailed in section 5, Accompanying Tables, the following are published alongside this SFR:

- Main report, providing more detailed findings as well as information on the data sources, their coverage and quality and explains the methodology used in producing the survey data.
- Main Tables
- Additional Tables

## Feedback

We are changing how our releases look and welcome feedback on any aspect of this document at [STATISTICS.EarlyYears@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:STATISTICS.EarlyYears@education.gsi.gov.uk)

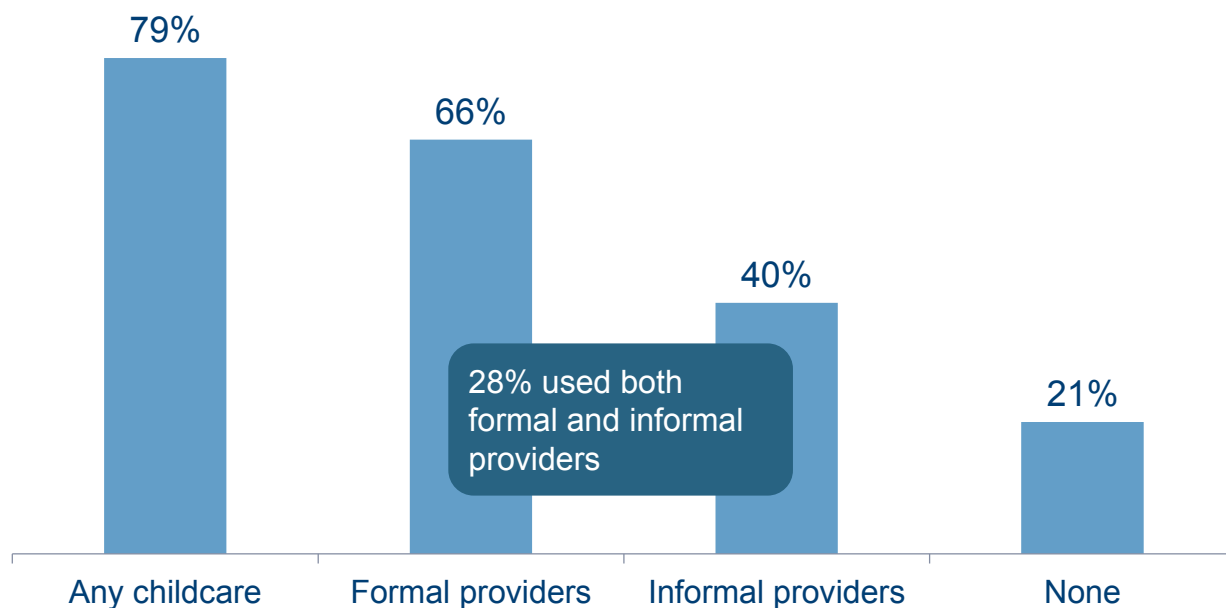
# 1. Use of childcare and early years provision

## Overall use of childcare

Overall, 79% of families in England with children aged 0 to 14 had used some form of childcare during their most recent term-time week.<sup>1</sup> This equated to 4,329,000 families or 6,285,000 children. Two in three families (66%) had used formal childcare and early years provision, whereas 40% had used informal childcare (provided by friends and family). 28% had used both formal and informal childcare. This overall pattern of childcare usage remained unchanged since the last survey in 2012-13.

**Figure 1: Percentage of families using childcare providers**

England, most recent term-time week, 2014-15



Base: All families (6,198)

Note that 28% of families used both formal and informal providers.

The proportion of all children (rather than families, as reported above) receiving formal childcare was 55%. Usage of formal childcare was progressively less widespread as area deprivation levels increased; 65% of children living in the least deprived areas received formal childcare, compared with 49% of children living in the most deprived areas. There have been no changes in uptake of formal childcare by area deprivation level since the last survey in 2012-13.

Characteristics that were independently associated with the use of formal childcare for those aged 0 to 14 included:

- age of child: parents with children aged 3 to 4 were most likely to use formal childcare;
- family annual income: a higher family annual income was associated with a higher likelihood of using formal childcare; and
- family type and work status: children in dual-working couple families, and children in working lone-parent families, were most likely to receive formal childcare.

Just under half (47%) of families with school-aged children (aged 5-14) used childcare during school holidays. Some 62% of parents of school age children who worked during holidays reported that it was fairly or very easy to arrange childcare during the holiday periods, 21% reported that it was difficult or very difficult to arrange.

<sup>1</sup> Parents were asked in detail about their use of childcare during the most recent term-time week before the interview took place.

## Receipt of entitlement to government funded early education

For the first time in the series, the 2014-15 survey measured reported uptake of the entitlement to government funded early education among 2-year-olds, in addition to 3- and 4-year-olds.

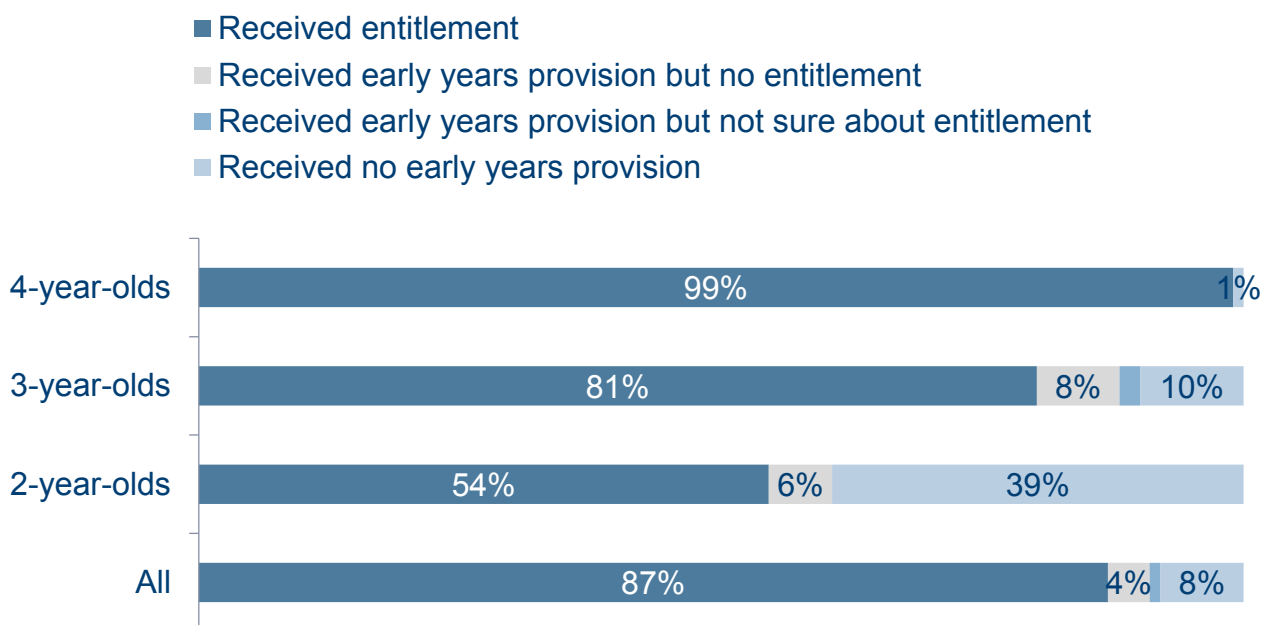
Nine in ten (90%) parents of 3- and 4-year-olds who responded to the survey said they received government funded early education, in line with 2012-13 rates (89%). Take-up among 4-year-olds was 99%, among 3-year-olds was 81%, and among 2-year-olds was 54%.<sup>2</sup> Among eligible 2- to 4-year-olds 87% were in receipt of government funded early education (see Figure 2). Official statistics from the Department for Education Early Years Census and Schools Census<sup>3</sup> show that receipt of government funded early education was 96% among 3- and 4-year-olds in January 2015: 99% of 4-year-olds and 94% of 3-year-olds. Official Department for Education statistics show the number of 2-year-olds in receipt of the free entitlement, which is estimated to be 58% of those eligible in January 2015.<sup>4</sup>

Nine in ten (89%) parents were fairly or very satisfied with the number of government funded hours available and 7% were fairly or very dissatisfied.

Use of the free entitlement rose with income: 80% of families earning below £10,000 per year reported receiving it, rising to 94% among those earning £45,000 or more.

**Figure 2: Percentage of eligible 2- to 4-year-olds reported by parents to be in receipt of entitlement to government funded early education**

England, 2014-15



Base: All eligible 2- to 4-year-olds (2,664)

## Reasons for using childcare provision

Around three in five (62%) pre-school children (aged 0-4) received childcare for economic reasons (e.g. to enable parents to work, look for work, or study), with child-related reasons being almost as common (59%) (e.g. attending for children's educational or social development, or because the child liked attending). A lower proportion of pre-school children (24%) received childcare for parental time-related reasons such as allowing parents to conduct domestic activities, socialise or look after other children.

Parents reported considering a number of factors when choosing a formal childcare provider. The two most common factors, for both pre-school and school-age children, were the provider's reputation and

<sup>2</sup> Figures based on parents' response and not independently verified. See section 6 Technical Information for more details.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/provision-for-children-under-5-years-of-age-january-2015>

<sup>4</sup> Available data cannot be used to identify accurately the total number of eligible 2-year-olds.

convenience. Other important factors included the quality of the care given and the opportunity for the child to mix with other children.

Among parents who had not used any childcare in the past year (neither formal nor informal), the main reasons given related to choice, rather than to constraints. For example two in three parents (65%) not using childcare said they would rather look after their children themselves, while the cost of childcare was cited by 12% of parents.

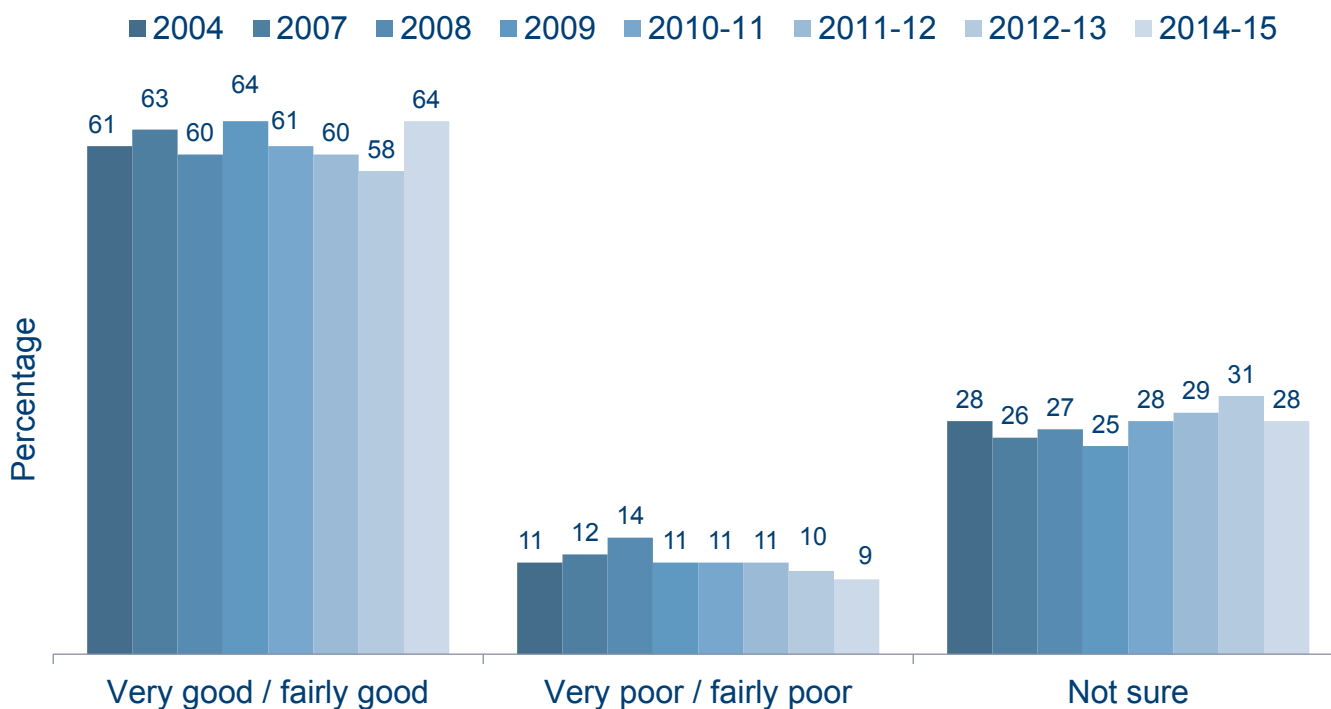
## 2. Perceptions of childcare and early years provision

### Quality and availability

The majority of parents (64%) rated the overall quality of local childcare provision as very or fairly good. The proportion of parents who thought the quality of childcare was very good increased from 19 per cent in 2012-13 to 24 per cent in 2014-15. The proportion of parents who were not sure about the quality of childcare in their local area decreased from 31% in 2012-13 to 28% in 2014-15 (see See Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Perceptions of quality of local childcare places, 2004 – 2014-15**

England, 2004 - 2014-15

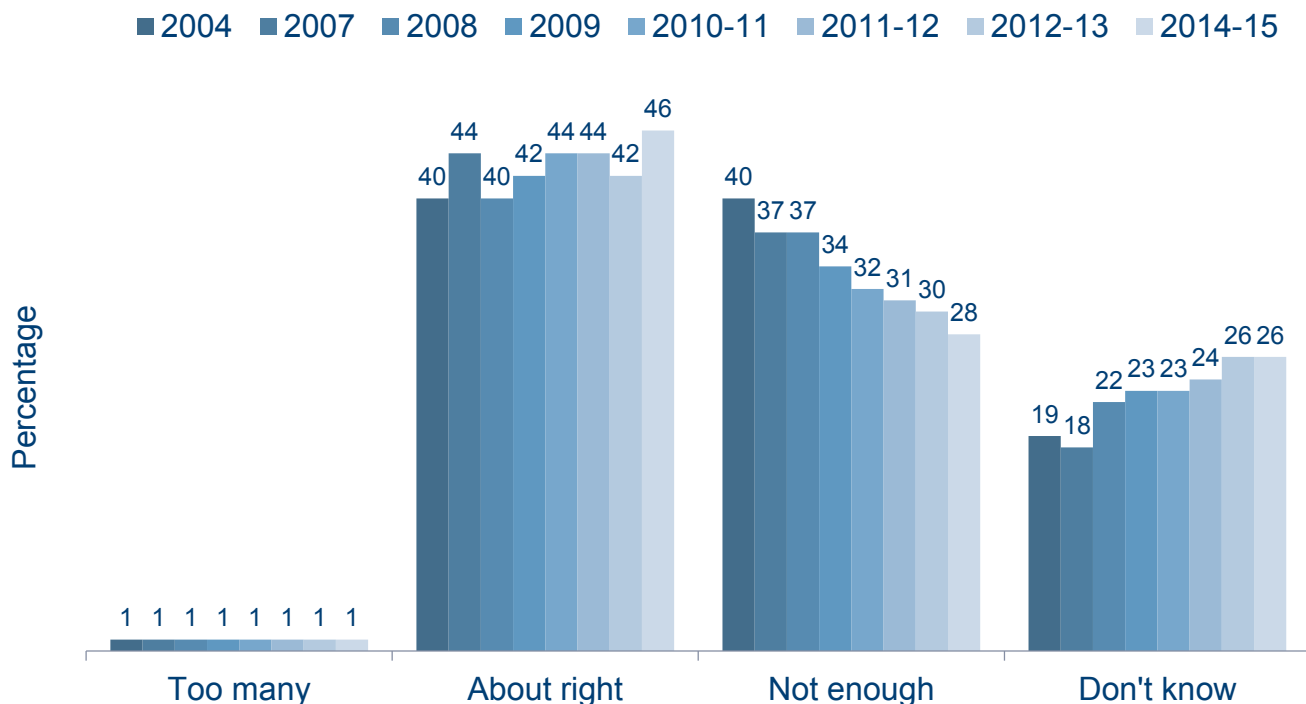


Base: All families (6,198 in 2014-15)

Source: Table C6.16 in Appendix C, main report

**Figure 4: Perceptions of availability of local childcare places, 2004 – 2014-15**

England, 2004 - 2014-15



Base: All families (6,198 in 2014-15)

Source: Table C6.13 in Appendix C, main report

46% of parents felt the number of local childcare places was 'about right'; 28% said there were not enough places (see Figure 4). The proportion of parents who thought that the right number of places were available has increased since 2012-13.

One in five (20%) parents reported problems with finding childcare flexible enough to meet their needs; 44% indicated they did not have problems.

### Information about childcare

Just under half (49%) of parents said the information available to them about childcare in their local area was 'about right'. One in three (32%) thought there was too little information. Another 18% of parents were unsure, while 2% felt there was too much information. Parents were most likely to receive information about childcare via word of mouth, for example from friends or relatives. Three in ten (28%) parents were aware of Family Information Services and 11% of all parents had used the service.

## 3. Paying for childcare

Three in five (59%) families who used a childcare provider in the reference week reported paying for this childcare. Some 65% reported paying for formal providers with 6% reporting they paid for informal providers.

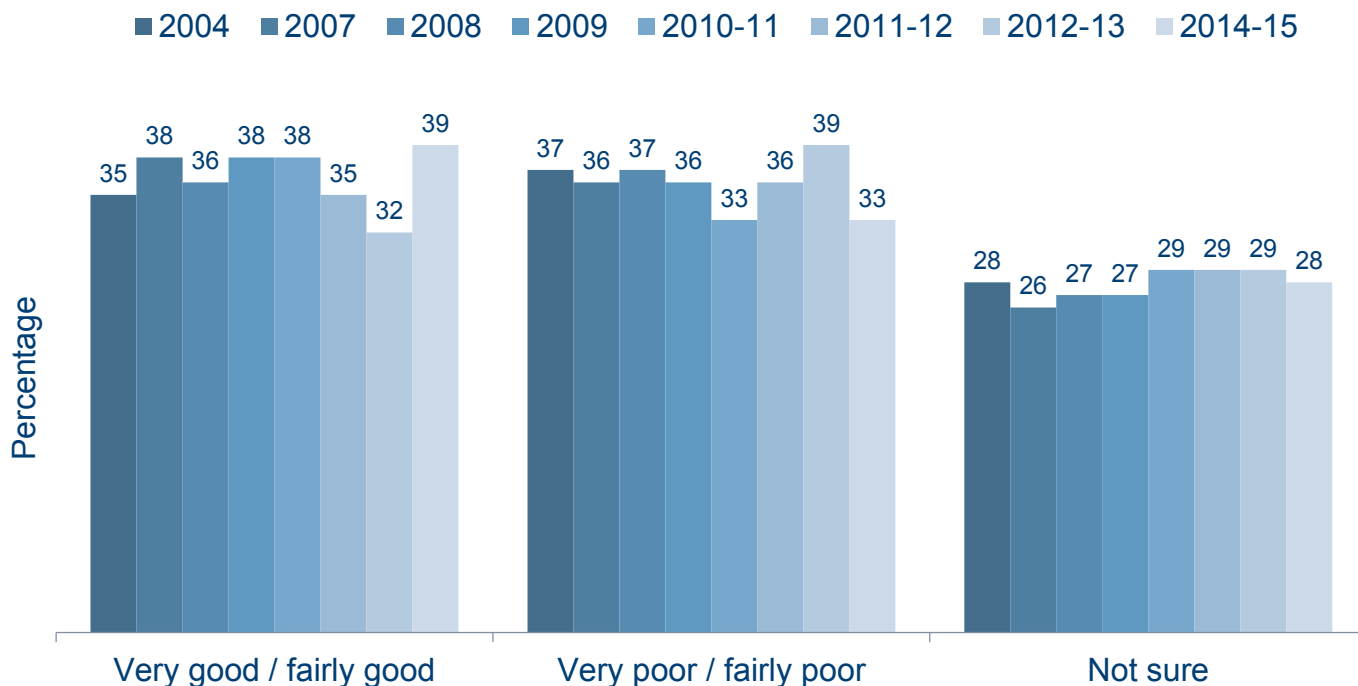
### Weekly cost of childcare

The overall median weekly amount paid by families to childcare providers was £23 and the mean cost was £53. These amounts varied depending on the number of hours and type of provider used. Breakfast clubs were the only provider type to see a change between 2012-13 and 2014-15 in the weekly amount paid by parents (median payments of £9 and £10, respectively). However, this should not be interpreted as a measure of providers' standard fees: costs statistics are subject to a number of caveats, as described in Section 6 below and the main report.

## Perceptions of cost of childcare

Two in five parents (39%) rated the affordability of local childcare as very or fairly good, an increase since 2012-13 when one in three parents (32%) thought affordability was very good or fairly good. A third (33%) said it was very or fairly poor.

**Figure 5: Perceptions of affordability of childcare, 2004 - 2014-15**  
England, 2004 - 2014-15



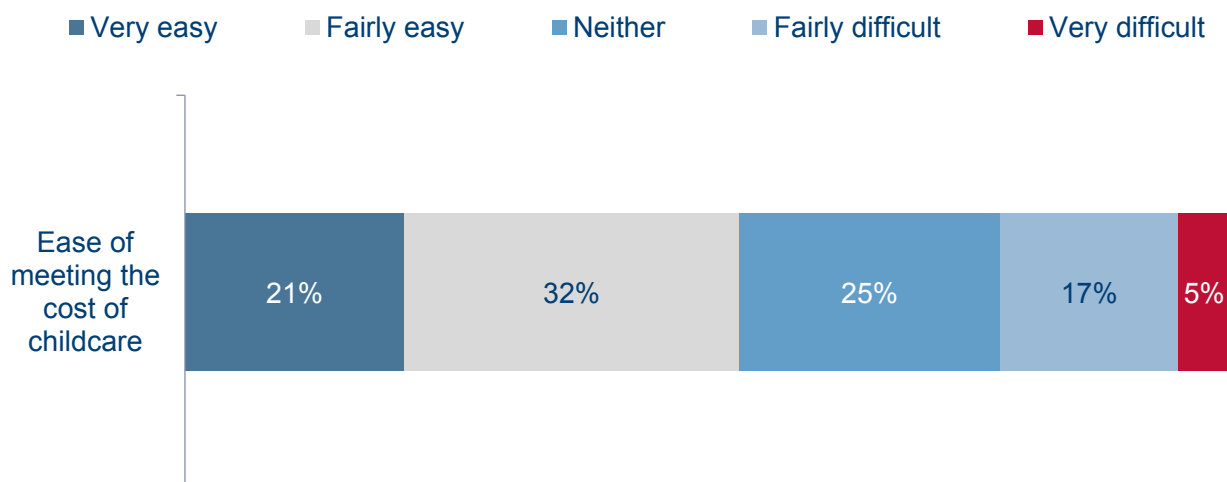
Base: All families (6,198 in 2014-15)

Source: Table C6.19 in Appendix C, main report

Just over half of parents (53%) said it was fairly or very easy to meet their childcare costs, with 22% of families finding it fairly or very difficult to pay (a fall from 27% in 2012-13) (see Figure 6). Specifically, the proportions of dual-working couple families, couple families in which one parent worked, and non-working lone parent families that found it difficult to pay for childcare have fallen.

**Figure 6: Perceptions of the ease of meeting the cost of childcare, 2014-15**

England, 2014-15



Base: all families that paid for childcare in the past week (2,982)

## 4. Mothers, work and childcare

### Levels of work among mothers

Two thirds of mothers (66%) reported they were in employment, in line with the 2012-13 survey (64%). Around half (53%) of non-working mothers agreed that they would prefer to go out to work if they could arrange good quality childcare which was convenient, reliable and affordable.

### Factors influencing return to work

Among mothers who had returned to work in the previous two years, the most commonly reported (30%) factor that had influenced their return to work was finding a job that enabled them to combine work and childcare. Mothers who had transitioned from part-time to full-time work in the previous two years most commonly reported that a job opportunity/promotion (36%) or their financial situation (28%) had influenced them to make the transition.

Almost half of working mothers (46%) said that having reliable childcare helped them to go out to work. Relatives helping with childcare (42%) and children being at school (38%) were also helpful factors for many.



## 5. Accompanying tables

The following tables are available in Excel format on the department's statistics website [Statistics: childcare and early years](#):

Table 2.1	Use of childcare providers, 2012-13 and 2014-15 surveys
Table 2.2	National estimates of use of childcare
Table 2.3	Use of childcare providers, by age of child
Table 2.4	Use of childcare, by child characteristics
Table 2.5	Use of childcare, by family annual income
Table 2.6	Use of childcare, by Region
Table 2.7	Use of childcare, by rurality
Table 2.8	Hours of childcare used per week, by age of child
Table 2.9	Hours of childcare used per week, by provider type
Table 2.10	Receipt of the entitlement to government funded early education, by age of child
Table 2.11	Receipt of the entitlement to government funded early education, by family type and work status
Table 2.12	Proportion of the entitlement to government funded early education received that parents would have paid for were it not available
Table 2.13	Number of days per week over which three- to four-year-olds received their entitlement to government funded early education, by age of child
Table 2.14	Use of childcare providers for two to four yearolds receiving their entitlement to government funded early years provision, by age of child
Table 3.1	Use of childcare packages for pre-school children, by age of child
Table 3.2	Number of providers, by age of child
Table 3.3	Number of providers, by package of childcare
Table 3.4	Patterns of childcare use, by age of child
Table 3.5	Patterns of childcare use, by package of childcare
Table 3.6	Patterns of childcare use by family type and work status
Table 3.7	Patterns of childcare use of nought- to two-year-olds and three- to four-year-olds by family type and work status
Table 3.8	Patterns of childcare use by family annual income and number of children
Table 3.9	Reasons for using childcare providers, by package of childcare
Table 3.10	Patterns of childcare use, by reasons for using childcare providers
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Table 4.2	Number of providers, by age of child
Table 4.3	Number of providers, by package of childcare
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Table 5.3	Weekly payment for childcare, by provider type
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Table 6.4	Reasons why parents would not use a childminder agency
Table 6.5	Whether parents reported main formal provider was registered with a regulator such as Ofsted
Table 6.6	Whether parent knew main formal provider's Ofsted rating when choosing them
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Table 9.11	Influences on mothers' decisions to go out to work, by family type
Table 9.12	Reasons for not working, by family type

## 6. Technical information

The main report document which accompanies this SFR provides further methodological information on the survey design, sample, fieldwork, data analysis, interpretation, weighting and definitions used.

When reviewing the SFR, main report, and accompanying tables please note that:

The survey uses an broad definition of 'childcare'.	Parents were asked to include any time that the child was not with a resident parent or a resident parent's current partner, or at school. In order to remind parents to include all possible people or organisations that may have looked after their children, they were shown a list of childcare providers: nursery schools, nursery classes, reception classes, special day schools, day nurseries, playgroups, childminders, nannies or au-pairs, baby-sitters, breakfast clubs, after-school clubs and holiday clubs, grandparents, ex-husband/wife/partners, older brother/sisters, other relatives, friends or neighbours.
Detailed information about childcare was collected for one 'reference child' in each household.	Because of the constraint of interview length, detailed information on the use and needs of all children in the family could not be collected (unless the child was an only child). Rather, in families where there were two or more children, we obtained a broad picture about the childcare arrangements of all children, before asking more detailed questions about one randomly selected child (referred to as the selected child in relevant sections of the report).
Differences between reported receipt of government funded entitlement and Official Statistics.	As responses were based on parents' own awareness of their child's receipt of government funded provision, and were confined to a specific reference week during which there may have been one-off reasons why the child did not attend (for instance sickness), there may be a degree of under-reporting of uptake of government funded early education – and as a result differences in these figures

	compared to the Official statistics from the Department's Early Years Census and Schools Census.
Detailed information was collected for childcare use during term-time periods.	As childcare arrangements may vary between school term-time and school holidays, most of the questions focused on a reference term-time week (which was the most recent term-time week). A separate set of questions was asked about the use of childcare during the school holidays by parents of school-age children (these questions had been added in 2008).
Parents' classifications of the 'type' of childcare provider have been checked.	Deciding on the correct classification of the 'type' of provider can be complicated for parents. We therefore checked the classifications given by parents with some providers themselves in a separate telephone survey.
Cost estimates are based on self-reported data and are subject to some caveats.	Estimates of childcare costs are based on the amounts families reported paying for the childcare they used for all children, during the reference week. They therefore represent an overall average, and take no account of the number of children in the household or the number of hours used. Respondents were asked about what they paid for 'out of their own pocket'. It is not possible to tell what parents have excluded or included in their calculations (e.g. childcare vouchers, government funded hours, tax credits). Our analysis also takes no account of the fees policies of the relevant providers (because we did not collect this information).

## 7. Further information is available

For a detailed technical note.	Please see Chapter 1 and Appendix B of the main report.
Reports for previous years of the survey are available.	Full reports for each year the survey has been conducted can be found on the <a href="#">DfE website</a> .
For some related publications.	Childcare and early years provider survey, published <a href="#">here</a> .  Provision for children under 5 years of age in England, published <a href="#">here</a> .

## 8. Official Statistics

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

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as Official Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

The Department has a set of [statistical policies](#) in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

## 9. Get in touch

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