

# Millennium Cohort Study

## HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY



Taken from Chapter 2 of *Millennium Cohort Study Second Survey: A User's Guide to Initial Findings*

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### The Survey

The Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) offers groundbreaking large-scale information about children born into the new century and the families who are bringing them up in all four countries of the United Kingdom. The first survey in 2001-2002 questioned the parents of nearly 19,000 children aged nine months, looking at the diverse circumstances of their families. A disproportionate number of these children came from families living in areas of high child poverty, and, in England, from areas with relatively high minority-ethnic populations<sup>1</sup>.

The second survey marks the beginning of a series of follow-up surveys. Conducted in 2003-2005, it records how nearly 16,000 cohort children are faring at the age of three. For the first time, researchers are able to chart the changing circumstances of families and relate children's outcomes at age three to earlier circumstances and experiences. This summary reveals some of the statistically significant results from the second survey on the places where the children were living at the age of three and the families that had moved since the first survey. The percentages quoted in this briefing are adjusted for the disproportionate sampling in areas of high child poverty and relatively high minority-ethnic settlement.

### Introduction

The Millennium Cohort Study was set up to examine children's lives in their neighbourhood as well as family context. Many social policies are targeted at areas. The longitudinal survey can produce the evidence on the extent to which families move around. Families can move home for many reasons – dissatisfaction with their accommodation or their local area, a change of employment, or the location of other family members. Often, mobility will bring benefits to both parents and children but it can also result in a loss of contact with services, or a supportive network of neighbours, and entail more difficult travel arrangements. Here we look at the association of mobility with some socio-economic and socio-demographic factors, and respondents' views about their local area.

### Mobility

Who moved home between the first two surveys and why?

- 38 per cent of sweep 1 families changed address before sweep 2. Scots families had the highest moving rate (41 per cent) and the Northern Irish had the lowest (33 per cent). The figures for England and Wales were 38 and 35 per cent respectively.
- Mobility also varied by ethnic group. The least mobile were Indians and Pakistanis (31 per cent) and Bangladeshis (33 per cent). Parents

of mixed background were the most mobile at 42 per cent.

- Lower-income families were more likely to change addresses between the two sweeps than high-income families; 47 per cent of families with an annual income below £10,400 at sweep 1 moved home, compared with 38 per cent of families whose income was over £52,000. Those with medium incomes were slightly less likely than average to move.
- Families where both main and partner respondents had been in paid work were less likely to move home than families where both respondents were not in work (33 and 45 per cent respectively).
- The most popular reason for moving given by movers interviewed at sweep 2 was 'wanted a larger home' (47 per cent); followed by 'wanted to move to a better area' (23 per cent).

### Area

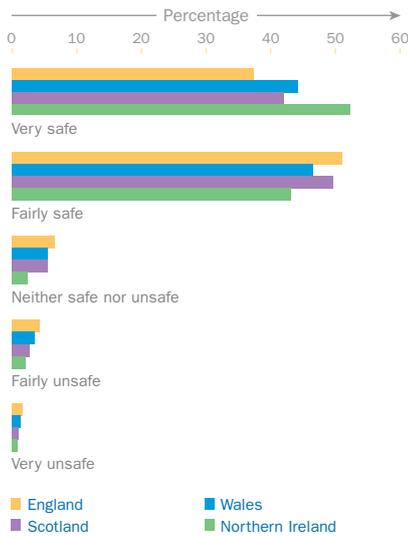
There was little change in satisfaction with area between sweeps 1 and 2 for those families who stayed put. However, 53 per cent of families who moved were very satisfied at sweep 2, compared with just 36 per cent at sweep 1.

- Few respondents reported their areas as poor, or very poor, places to bring up children (8 per cent), or fairly or very unsafe (5 per cent).
- Parents in Northern Ireland were most likely to say that they felt safe in their local area and that it was a

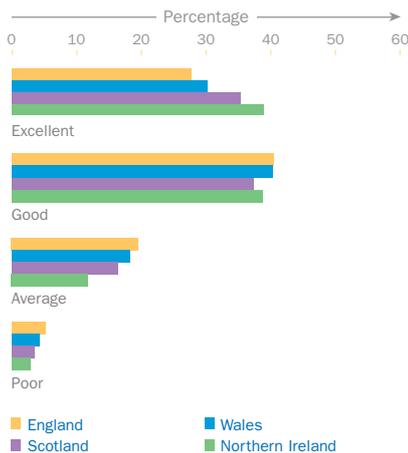
<sup>1</sup> Percentages reported here have been re-weighted to represent the population as a whole.

# HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY

UK country of interview by 'How safe you feel in area'



UK country of interview by 'Good area to bring up children'



good place to bring up children. See graphs (left and right) for country variations in perceptions of how good the local area is to bring up children and how safe the respondents felt.

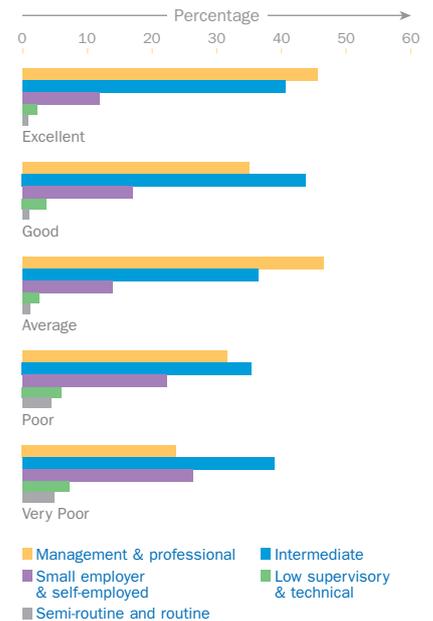
- Families of White (35 per cent) and Indian children (32 per cent) were more likely to perceive their area as excellent for bringing up children. Families of Black children were most likely to think their area was 'very poor' in this respect (7 per cent) and least likely to describe it as very safe (30 per cent).
- Mothers in higher occupational groups tended to perceive their area as 'excellent' for bringing up children and 'very safe'.
- However, even in the least advantaged occupational class, only a minority reported their neighbourhood was a poor/very poor (12 per cent) or unsafe (9 per cent) area in which to bring up children.

## Home atmosphere

Mothers were asked questions (which have proved predictive of child development in other surveys) about the atmosphere of the home ('disorganised', 'hearing yourself think' or 'calm', each with five ordered categories. The answers form a scale which varies between zero ('hectic') and 12 ('calm').

- Homes in Northern Ireland were the most calm, with an average score of

Main respondent's occupational class by 'Good area to bring up children'



8.2, while those in Wales were the least calm (average 7.9).

- Minority-ethnic main respondents, notably those from an Indian background, lived in homes that were reported to be calmer (average 9.3) than White homes (average 7.9).
- Where both parents were in work, the home was reported to be calmer than if neither was working (averages ranged from 8.2 to 7.1).
- Where there were two parents the home was rated as marginally calmer than if there was only one (with averages of 8.0 versus 7.8).

## Conclusion

Moving home features in the lives of many young children; over one-third of the families in sweep 1 had a new address at sweep 2, 27 or so months later. On the other hand, few families moved very far. Mobility is socially and geographically patterned; more common in Scotland than in Northern Ireland; less common in families with a South Asian background; and more

common in the lower-income, flat-dwelling and renting groups at sweep 1. Moving is associated with a more positive attitude about the new area.

As moves are associated with improvements in residential and other circumstances families may be taking themselves out of the target category for social interventions. However, the

extent to which they move out of areas on which policies are targeted without a commensurate improvement in their own circumstances needs to be investigated.

**Millennium Cohort Study Second Survey: A User's Guide to Initial Findings is available at [www.cls.ioe.ac.uk](http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk)**