

Millennium Cohort Study

EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION



Taken from Chapter 9 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. It lays the foundation for a major new research resource.

For the first survey, conducted in 2001-2002, we interviewed the families of nearly 19,000 children aged nine months. 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 populations¹. This survey looked at the circumstances of pregnancy and birth, as well as the social and economic background of the families into which these children were born.

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 developing at the age of three. For the first time, researchers have been 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 results from the second survey.

Introduction

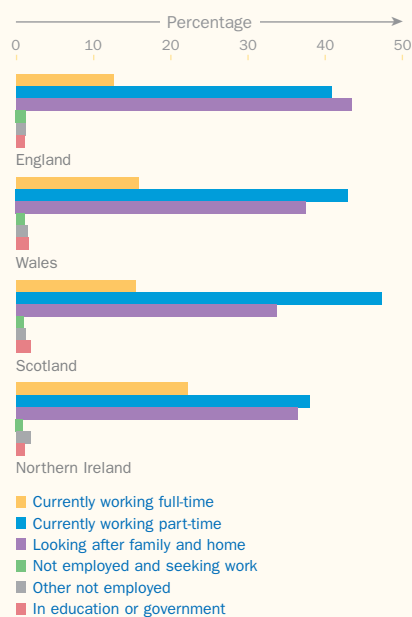
The economic activity and employment of parents is one vitally important element of the context in which the cohort child is growing up. It influences the time available to spend with the child, the income level and household resources. The well-documented increases in women's employment have been largely due to mothers with young children, such as the Millennium Cohort, taking paid jobs.

From nine months to age three

This is a relatively short period but a time when children are changing very quickly, and just over one in four mothers had another baby. Half of all mothers had been employed at the first survey, and the overall rate increased by around 3 percentage points, with some movement, out of employment as well as into it.

- The majority of mothers (72 per cent) remained in their previous employment status.
- Just over one-third of mothers (37 per cent) were not employed at either point.
- Of fathers who were employed full-time when the cohort child was nine months old, 94 per cent were still employed full-time when the child was aged three.
- Only 55 per cent of couples who were both full-time earners when the cohort child was nine months still had two full-time jobs at the second survey.

Mothers' economic activity by country at age 3



Mothers' economic activity at age three

Over half of all mothers were employed (54 per cent altogether; 13 per cent full-time, 41 per cent part-time) and 42 per cent were looking after the family and home at the time of the second survey. The rest were not employed for other reasons.

- Mothers in Northern Ireland were the most likely to be employed full-time (22 per cent) and mothers in Scotland were most likely to report working part-time (47 per cent).
- Pakistani and Bangladeshi mothers were the least likely to be employed

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

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(approximately 14 per cent each).

The most likely to be employed were Indian (63 per cent), Black Caribbean (60 per cent) and White mothers (57 per cent).

- Mothers' employment varied by the number of children in the family: 67 per cent among mothers with only one child compared to 40 per cent among mothers of three or more. Lone mothers also had lower employment rates than mothers in couples.
- Employment rates were higher for more educated mothers: 71 per cent of mothers with degree-level qualifications were employed, compared to 23 per cent of those with no qualifications.
- Nearly 40 per cent of all employed mothers in the UK and 44 per cent of employed fathers were in managerial/professional jobs when the child was three years old.

Fathers' economic activity

- Nearly all resident fathers were employed when the child was three years old; 74 per cent were employees and 18 per cent were self-employed.
- Approximately one-quarter of fathers who had no academic or vocational qualifications were not employed.
- Full-time work was common amongst employed fathers in most ethnic groups: White (95 per cent), Indian (93 per cent), Black African (92 per cent) and Black Caribbean (91 per cent) fathers, but less so among Pakistani (78 per cent) and Bangladeshi fathers (57 per cent).

Parents' employment status

- One in ten families had two parents in full-time jobs. Sixteen per cent of families had no earner; 11 per cent were lone parents and the other 5 per cent were no-earner couples.
- The most common family situation was a '1.5' earner couple with the father employed full-time and the mother employed part-time (34 per cent).
- Twenty-nine per cent of the families had two parents with only the father earning.

- The majority of Pakistani mothers (59 per cent) and half the Bangladeshi mothers (50 per cent) were living in families where only the father was employed.
- Only 55 per cent of couples who were both full-time earners when the cohort child was nine months old still had two full-time jobs at the second survey. In 24 per cent of these families, the mother had moved into part-time work; and in a further 12 per cent she had stopped work, leaving only the father employed.
- Workless couples at the first survey divided between 43 per cent who remained workless, 35 per cent where at least one parent got a job, and 22 per cent where the couple had split up (and the cohort parent was still mainly workless). Twenty per cent of workless lone parents at the first survey acquired a partner (14 per cent with at least one job between them), 13 per cent gained employment but no partner, and just over two-thirds (69 per cent) gained neither.

Employed mothers' atypical working patterns

- Mothers' reports of working atypical hours, such as evenings, nights or weekends varied only slightly by country. Of all UK mothers, 35 per cent worked after 6 pm, 11 per cent reported working nights, 14 per cent reported working on a Saturday and 8 per cent on a Sunday.

Employee mothers' use of flexible working arrangements

- The arrangements that were most commonly used by employee mothers were part-time working (64 per cent), flexible working hours (30 per cent), changing from full to part-time working (23 per cent) and special shifts (17 per cent).
- A relatively low proportion of employee mothers reported having made use of financial help from their employer with childcare (9 per cent) or access to a workplace nursery or crèche (5 per cent).

Non-employed mothers' reasons for not working

- Of non-employed mothers who were neither students nor seeking work at the time of the second survey, 58 per cent said that they preferred to look after their children themselves and 11 per cent that they were unable to earn enough to meet childcare costs.

Lifelong education

- 17 per cent of mothers and 20 per cent of fathers reported that they had acquired new educational qualifications since the previous interviews. In both cases this was more likely where the parent already had qualifications.

Conclusion

There were modest changes in mothers' economic activity status between the two MCS sweeps, reflecting movements in and out of employment. While mothers' propensity to be employed increased, this mainly involved part-time rather than full-time work. Lone mothers were still less likely than those in couples to be employed, and there was a high persistence of worklessness in some families, whether they started out with one or two parents.

The fact that a significant minority of parents gained new academic or vocational qualifications in this relatively short period was surprising and suggests that having young children does not prevent mothers and fathers from participating in formal learning.

Millennium Cohort Study Second Survey: A User's Guide to Initial Findings is available at www.cls.ioe.ac.uk

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