

Annual Childcare Report

January 2015



Businesses must treat mums and dads the same

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As a parent of two, and founder of Findababysitter.com, I'm keen to see how childcare policies in 2015 unravel - a topical and emotive subject that has constantly been bandied around by major political parties over the last 12 months.

Last year was great - we saw the continued uprising of the 'mumpreneur' and employment figures dropped to the lowest point in six years, which are all great indicators that childcare in the UK is affordable, and accessible. That said, our Annual Childcare Report gets the opinions from the parents on the front line, and they tell us that although government policies are improving, they still have a long way to go to make a real difference.

This year we want to see more businesses offering better flexible working hours, and treating mums and dads equally when it comes to childcare – it's a joint responsibility, and that should be reflected in the workplace, especially as the pay gap between males and females continues to reduce - The gender pay gap for all employees, full-time and part-time, in 2014 was the lowest on record at 19.1 percent, down from 19.8 percent in 2013.

We're in year three of the Annual Childcare Report now, and the tracking data gives the industry supportive insights into the needs and concerns of parents, which do change over time. Our industry report is now eagerly anticipated by the major political parties each year, and media alike, which is reassuring as we know that it is helping to make a difference, just as Findababysitter.com does to hundreds of thousands of families each year.

Tom Harrow
CEO, Findababysitter.com

METHODOLOGY

- Omnibus survey of 1000 parents in the UK with at least one child aged 10 or younger.
- The survey was carried out between the 3rd - 7th November 2014.
- 277 responses from Findababysitter.com parent users (technology section).
- 841 responses from childcare professionals registered on Findababysitter.com (technology section).
- The childcare cost section has been removed from the Annual Childcare Report as they do not reflect nursery and other formal childcare costs.

Pressure on the system



While more mothers are choosing to work than at any other time in history, we're also seeing many more that are being forced back into employment to meet their family's financial needs.

Combine this with the ongoing baby boom and you have the perfect storm to force up the already worryingly high price of childcare.

The tremendous pressure on the childcare system means costs are now at an all-time high, creating a barrier for some parents who desperately want to return to work.

With childcare costs affecting over 6.7 million* people in the UK, it will be foremost in parents minds when they go to the polls in 2015. While each party has different ideas on how to help, whoever is handed the keys to Downing Street in the forthcoming general election will struggle to find a suitable solution.

Distressingly, it's 25 to 34 year olds who are feeling the biggest squeeze as they have to support their families on often comparatively low wages. Official figures show childcare costs have risen 27 percent since 2009**, so we face the possibility that tens of thousands of talented young workers are being priced out of the job market, holding the economy and country back.

I set up Netmums in 2000 as a series of local sites for parents, and it's grown to become the UK's biggest parenting site with more than 1.8 million members and 2 million mums and dads using us each week. Netmums offers advice on everything parenting from returning to work, moving house and local clubs and services. Often our members share their struggle with finding flexible and affordable childcare on our open forum which is why I am happy to support Findababysitter.com's Annual Childcare Report, designed to raise awareness of the need for supportive services and highlight the issue that so many families in the UK face day to day.

Siobhan Freegard

Founder of Britain's biggest parenting site Netmums



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Government childcare policies

Is the government doing enough?

Over the last 12 months government childcare policies aimed at reducing childcare costs and helping parents return to work have helped to improve parents' trust in the government.



Parents in the UK continue to warm to the UK government when it comes to childcare support – within the last 24 months parents' trust in the government has increased by 9 percent (18% in 2013 / 25% in 2014 / 27% in 2015). The government still has a lot of convincing to do as 49 percent of all parents still say they're not doing enough.

The age bracket least impressed with the government's efforts is 25-34 year olds with over half (53%) saying that they are not doing enough.



The top five regions where parents think the government should be doing more when it comes to childcare are:

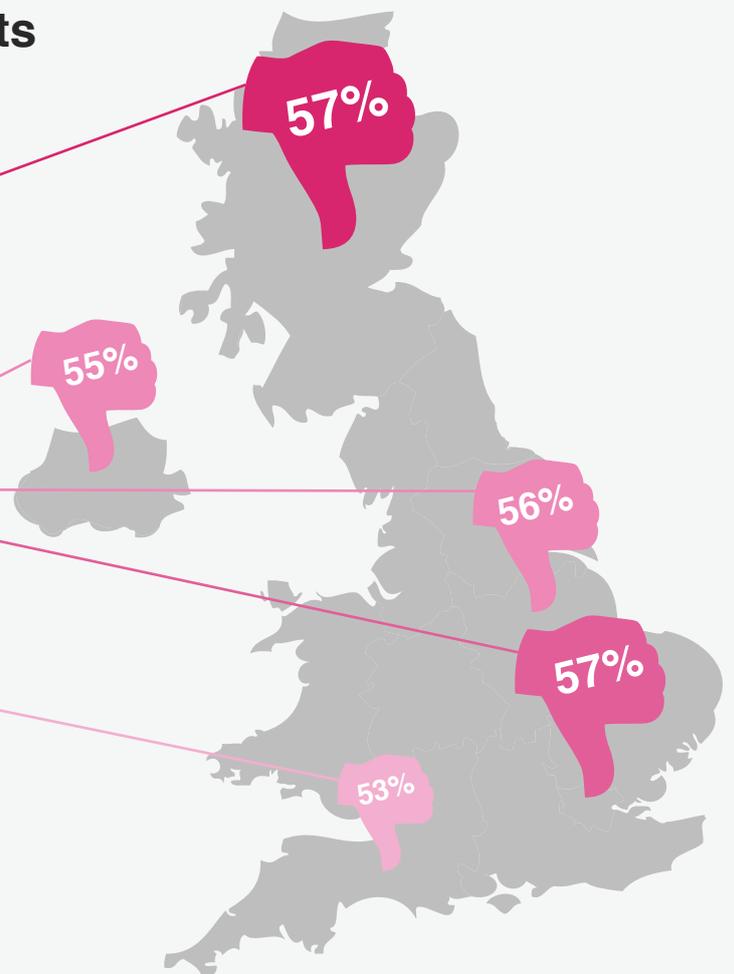
SCOTLAND 57%

LONDON 57%

EAST MIDLANDS 56%

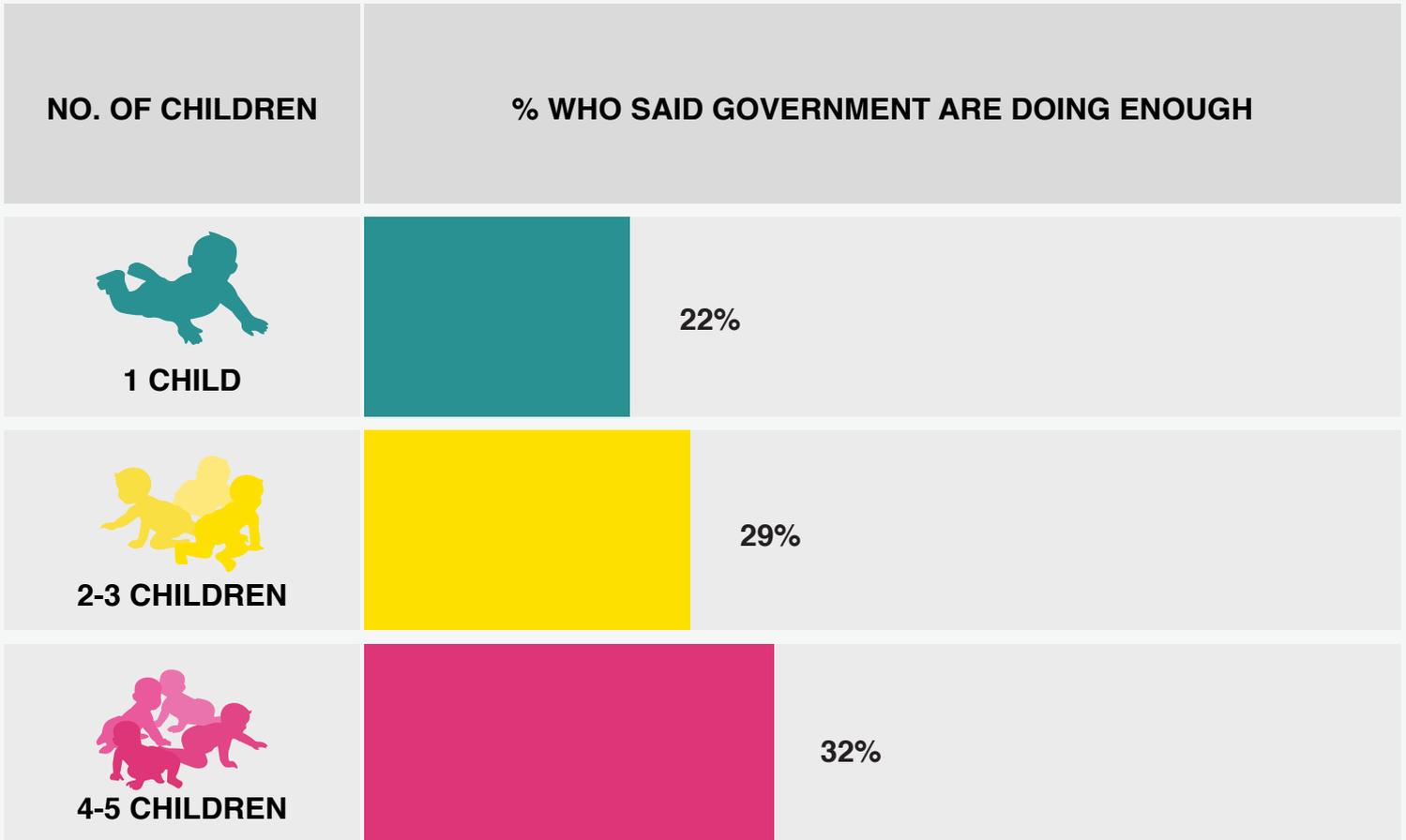
NORTHERN IRELAND 55%

SOUTH WEST 53%



Who are childcare policies helping or hindering?

On par with last year's findings - the more children parents have, the more supportive they are of the government's policies around childcare:



Only 15 percent of stay-at-home parents think the government is doing enough to support childcare requirements. This figure is doubled by working parents (31%).



"After my second child I found that it was quite challenging working in a traditional full-time job because of the inconvenient pick-up times and other restrictions such as high cost that came with formal childcare.

"Although part-time work might have been an option, I wanted to maintain a certain level of income and career progression in order to support my family. After a couple of years I decided to start an HR consultancy business from home and hire informal childcare to help balance my work/home life, which has brought down costs and is much more convenient."

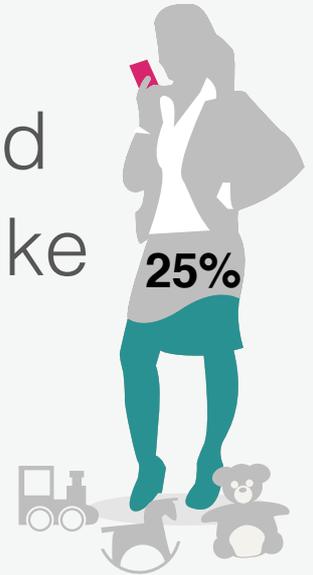
Charlotte Johns, Employment Law and Human Resources specialist, working mum of two - Essex

Parents and the UK workforce



Since 2013 there has been a 3 percent rise in parents who are employed part-time or full-time (77% in 2013 / 77% in 2014 / 80% in 2015).

A quarter (25%) of all unemployed mums in the UK say they would like to work, but childcare costs are stopping them



Younger parents need the most help returning to work. 26 percent of all unemployed parents aged 25-34 say they would like to work, but can't afford the childcare, affecting approximately 118,777 parents.

This is followed closely by 23 percent of 18-24 year olds, a further 183,965 parents affected*

*Based on the amount of parents with dependent children in England and Wales, Census 2011

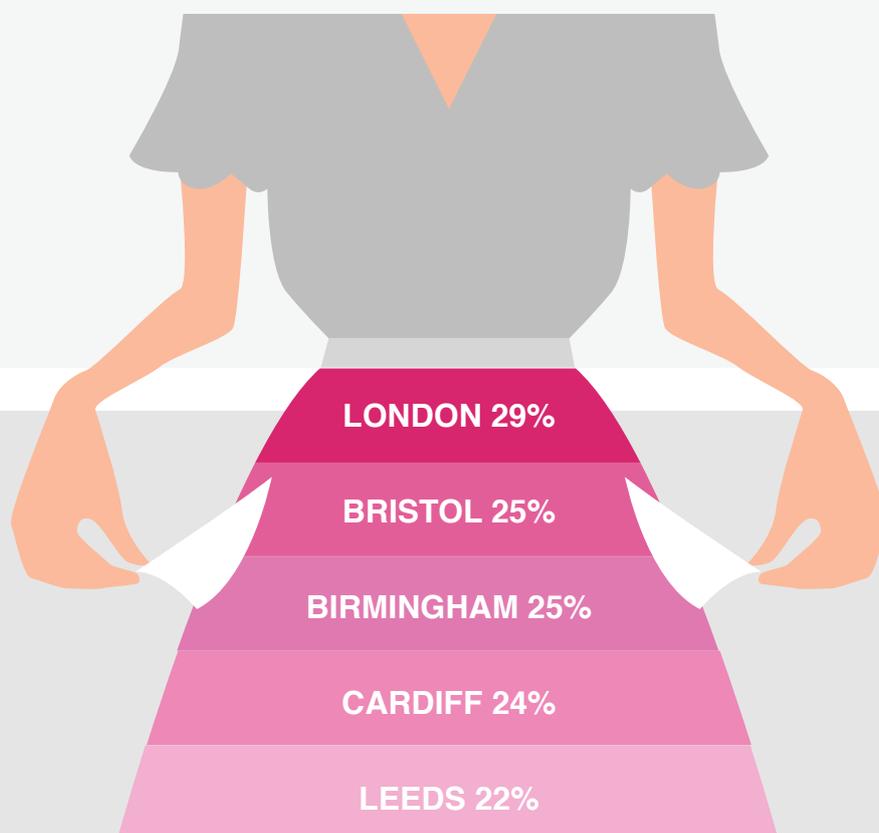


"My husband and I work full-time and despite our five year-old child now being at school we still have to pay for childcare. Although it is cheaper than nursery fees, it still costs money to put him in a breakfast and after-school club.

When Bailey was younger, our supposedly 'subsidised' nursery fees were extortionate and took a massive chunk out of our salaries. With a new baby coming soon, we are expecting the childcare costs to be even higher, and we'll have to readjust our working hours – I can't see myself as a stay-at-home parent, so flexible hours would be the best option for me."

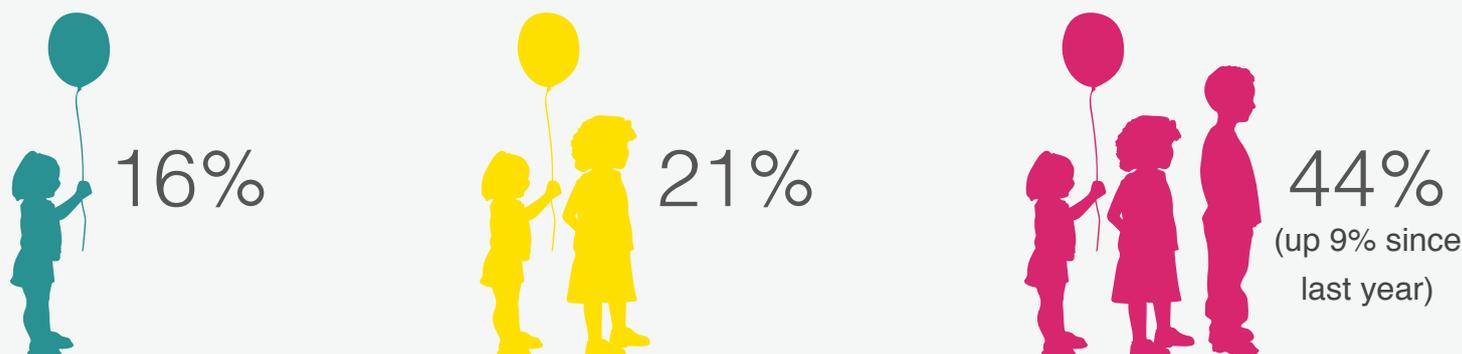
Dorinda Kemp, Accountant, wife, and mum of one expecting another in April – Surrey

The five cities where unemployed parents would like to work but can't afford the childcare costs are:



London has the highest number of unemployed parents (39%) compared to Northern Ireland which has the most employed parents (86%)

The more children an unemployed parent has, the less likely they are to work, due to childcare costs:



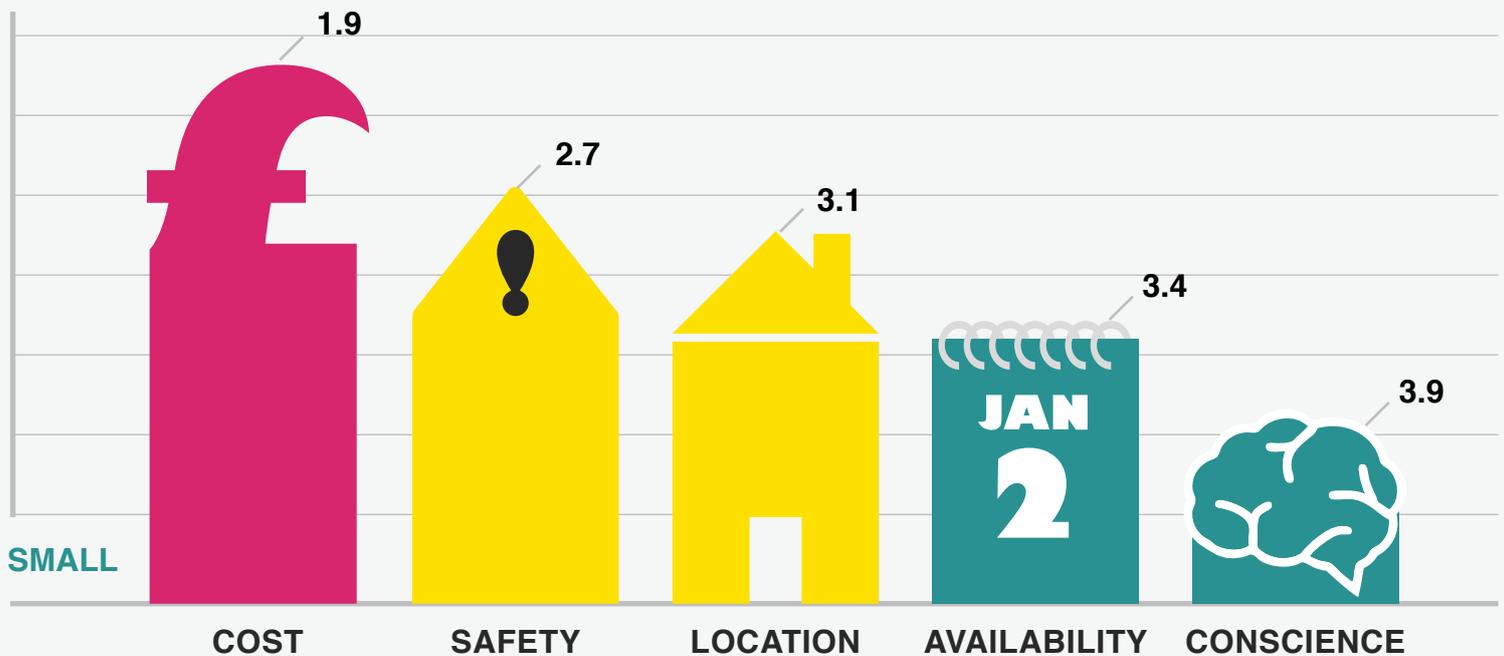
The above shows the no. of children parents have, with the percentage that would like to work, but can't.

Barriers to childcare

When it comes to childcare issues, cost and safety are still the biggest concerns for parents.

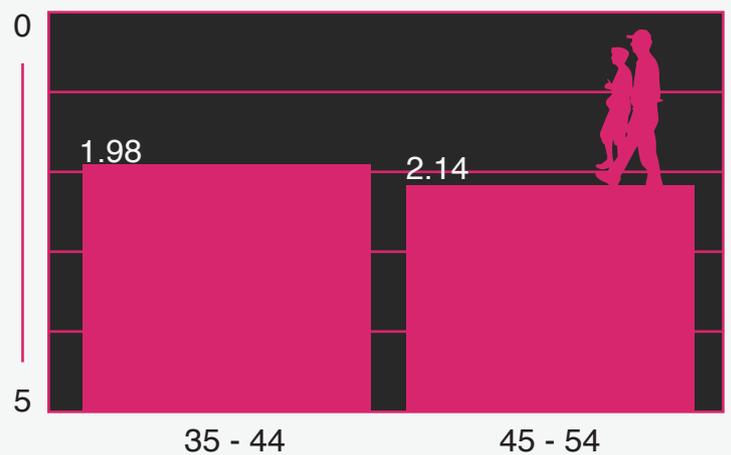
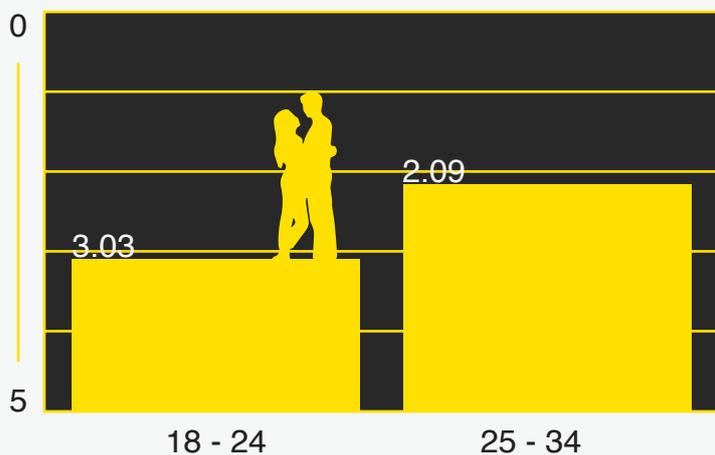
We asked UK parents to rank their childcare concerns (1 being the biggest – 5 being the smallest).

BIG



SMALL

Younger parents are more concerned with safety, while older parents are more concerned with cost.



“Life as a Dad is incomparable, when I consider how happy it makes me, but that happiness comes with a huge price tag.

“As a Dad of one, my wife and I are both employed and work four days a week, during which time our two year old daughter attends a childminder. We couldn’t stretch to afford a nursery, but we find that a childminder is much more flexible for busy parents like us.

“The government childcare policies seem to boil down to very little support – compared with how often they talk about childcare, they do very little to make a difference to our lives.”

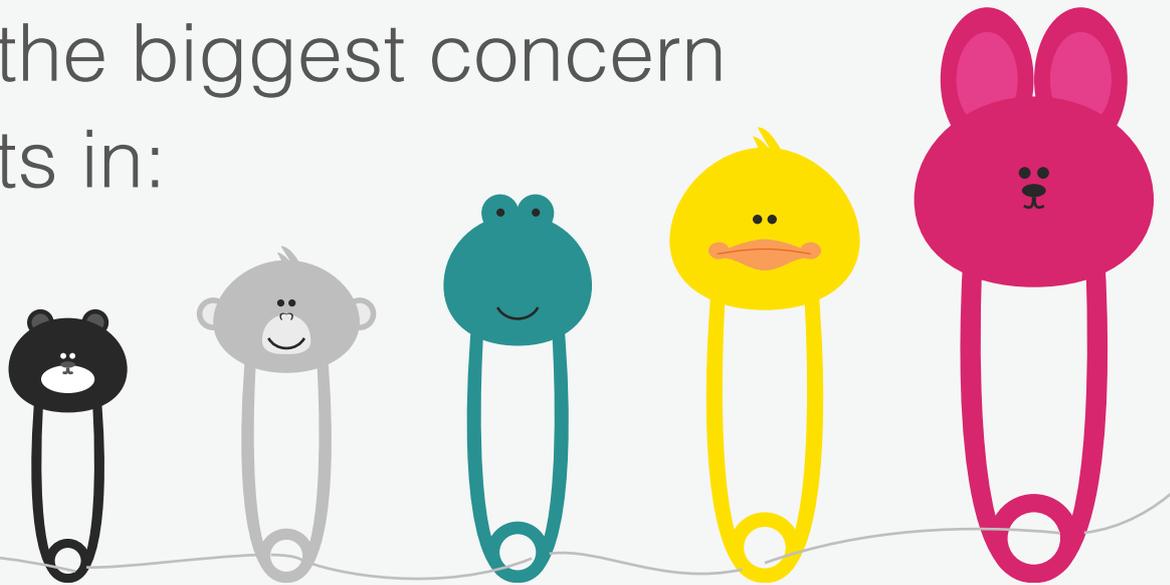
Stuart Greaves, Designer fashion retailer, husband and working dad of one - Surrey

With cost being the biggest barrier to childcare, parents in the following cities are finding it hardest



Safety is the biggest concern for parents in:

- LEICESTER 26%**
- OXFORD 25%**
- BIRMINGHAM 22%**
- CARDIFF 22%**
- BRISTOL 21%**



“Childcare is one of the top barriers for people returning to work after having children, along with, having the confidence to be work ready and having access to readily available career advice.”

We have started to see a trend that parents are becoming self-employed purely to manage their childcare and allow themselves flexible working hours. In response to this, safe, cost effective and flexible childcare is in demand. On the other hand, parents who do not have the confidence to go out on their own may be forced to give up work completely due to the childcare barrier. The UK economy could be missing out on the critical skills these parents have to offer.

In order to see more successful working mums there needs to be a shift from the belief that ‘mums are responsible for childcare’. With the introduction of paternity leave some employers are beginning to step up to the plate, however, there is still a lot for employers to do to help mums get back to work.”

Jane Knight, Founder of Successful Mums and mum of two

Year on year results

Since the first Annual Childcare Report in 2013 the Government has slowly gained the confidence of parents across the UK. The number of parents who believe the government is doing enough has risen by 9 percent.



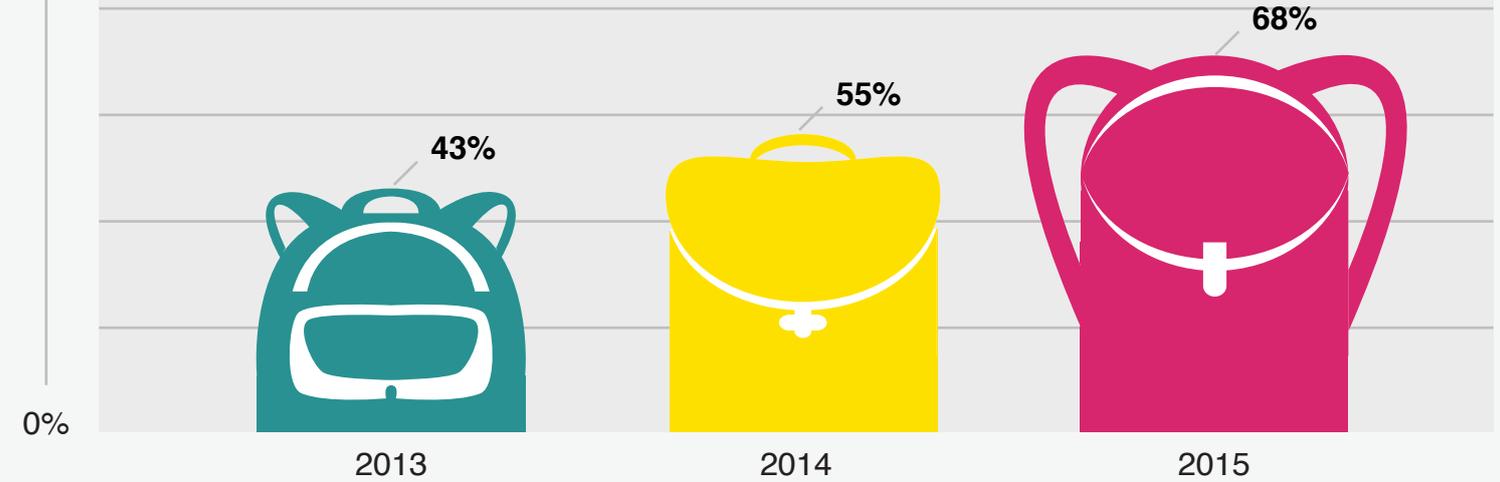
THE BIGGEST INCREASE IN CONFIDENCE COMES FROM THE AGE BRACKET 18-24, RISING BY 11 PERCENT, DESPITE THE FACT THAT THESE PARENTS ARE THE PARENTS THAT REQUIRE THE MOST HELP TO RETURN TO WORK (23%)

Tracking childcare issues

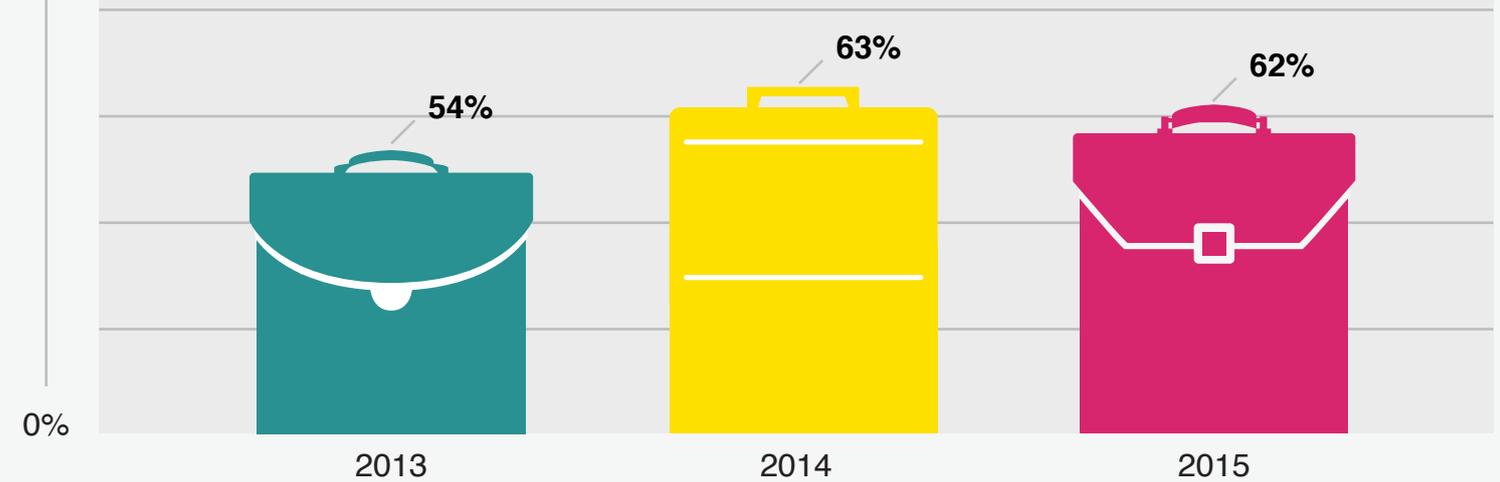
Despite the rise in the amount of parents agreeing that the government is doing enough, the amount of parents that are not even aware of the government policies remains at almost a quarter (24%)



100% The number of employed parents in the 18-24 age bracket has increased by 25 percent in the past 24 months.



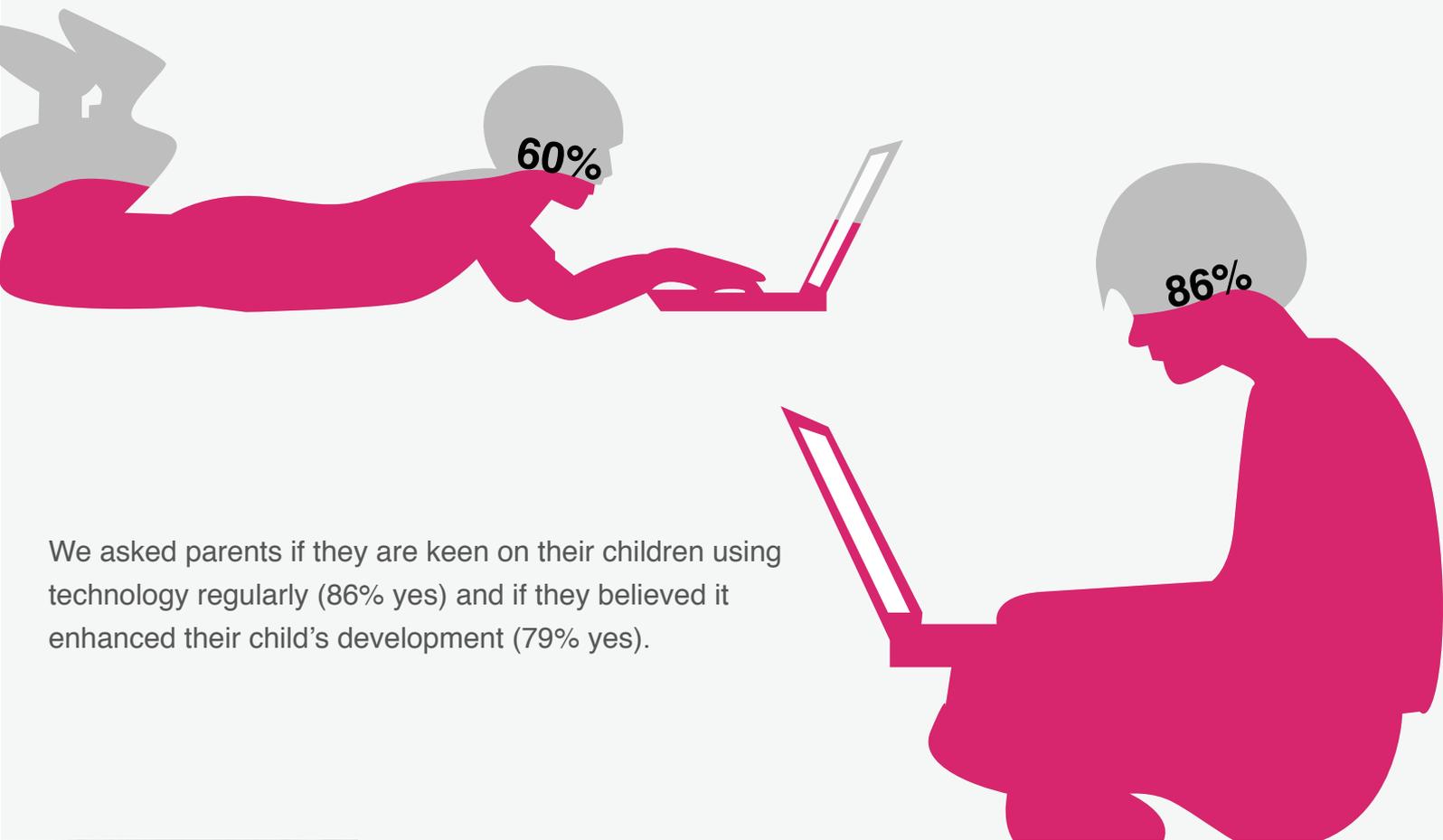
100% Parents aged 25-34 saw a 9 percent increase in 2014 but a 1 percent decrease in the amount of employed parents in 2015



Children & digital technology

With more than 44,000 apps available and aimed at children on iTunes never has a generation been so exposed to technology.

Childcare professionals use digital technology less often with the child they care for, compared to the amount of time child's own parents do. Only 60 percent of carers feel comfortable allowing the children they are responsible for to use digital technology.



We asked parents if they are keen on their children using technology regularly (86% yes) and if they believed it enhanced their child's development (79% yes).



“Digital technology has been playing a larger role in the development of the millennial generation both at home and in schools, especially now, as computers are introduced into the national curriculum at a lower age. Digital toys and apps can offer beneficial learnings for children, however should never replace the act of playing with traditional games and books.

As a mum myself, I ensure that I use digital technology in conjunction with traditional toys, games and educational resources that help develop vocabulary, social development, literacy and communication skills. At Gibsons we work closely with a leading play specialist Amanda Gummer, who suggests that a world without play can have damaging implications for children's health and happiness. Many digital technology games and apps isolate children, and will not help with important communication skills that interactive games will develop.

It is encouraging to see that childcare professionals are less likely to place a child in front of a screen to keep them entertained, as they will be aware of the effects this may have on the child. It is important for parents to ensure they stay informed about the implications that too many hours in front of a screen could have on their child's development and to find a good balance between digital and traditional toys.”

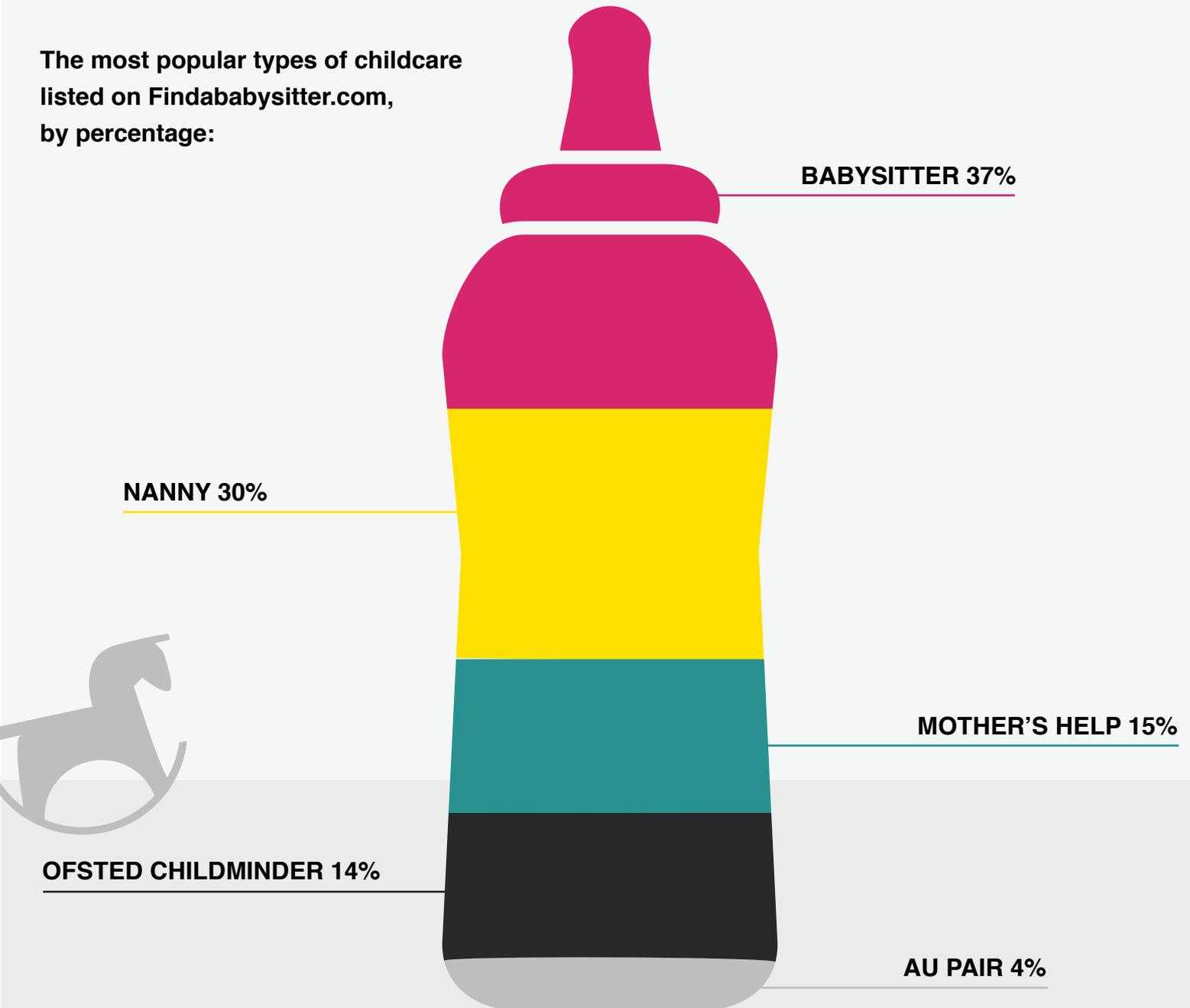
Childcare availability in the UK

Gone are the days when the local nursery is the only option for formal childcare. The internet has opened up a wide variety of flexible, but formal childcare options available to parents today.

Modern childcare solutions range from the full-time support of a nanny to the convenience of part-time or flexible hours of an au pair or babysitter. As more parents return to work, the demands on childcare providers are changing - and will continue to change in the coming years, as businesses see the benefits of flexible working for families.

In the last 12 months, we have seen a large increase in the amount of babysitters being employed through the website – from 21 percent last year to 37 percent this year – a sign that more people are enjoying flexible childcare that they can rely on as and when they need it.

The most popular types of childcare listed on Findababysitter.com, by percentage:



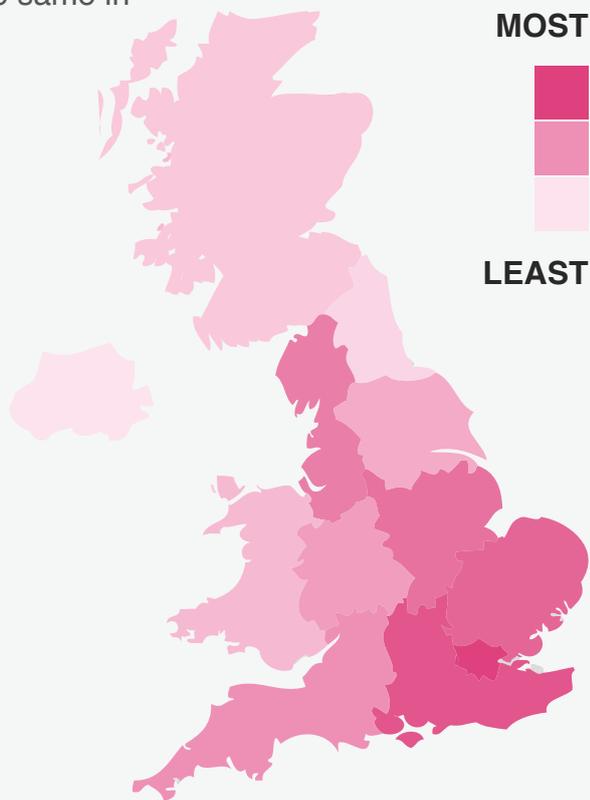
Availability of Childcare Professionals in the UK

The increased demand for babysitters in 2014 was a national trend, with figures rising in each region. The mix of different childcare options has become very similar across all regions during 2014, compared to 2013 when the North West had a huge amount of nannies, but very few babysitters being employed – the demand for different types of childcare is now very much the same in each region. The breakdown below is based on registered childcare professionals available on Findababysitter.com.

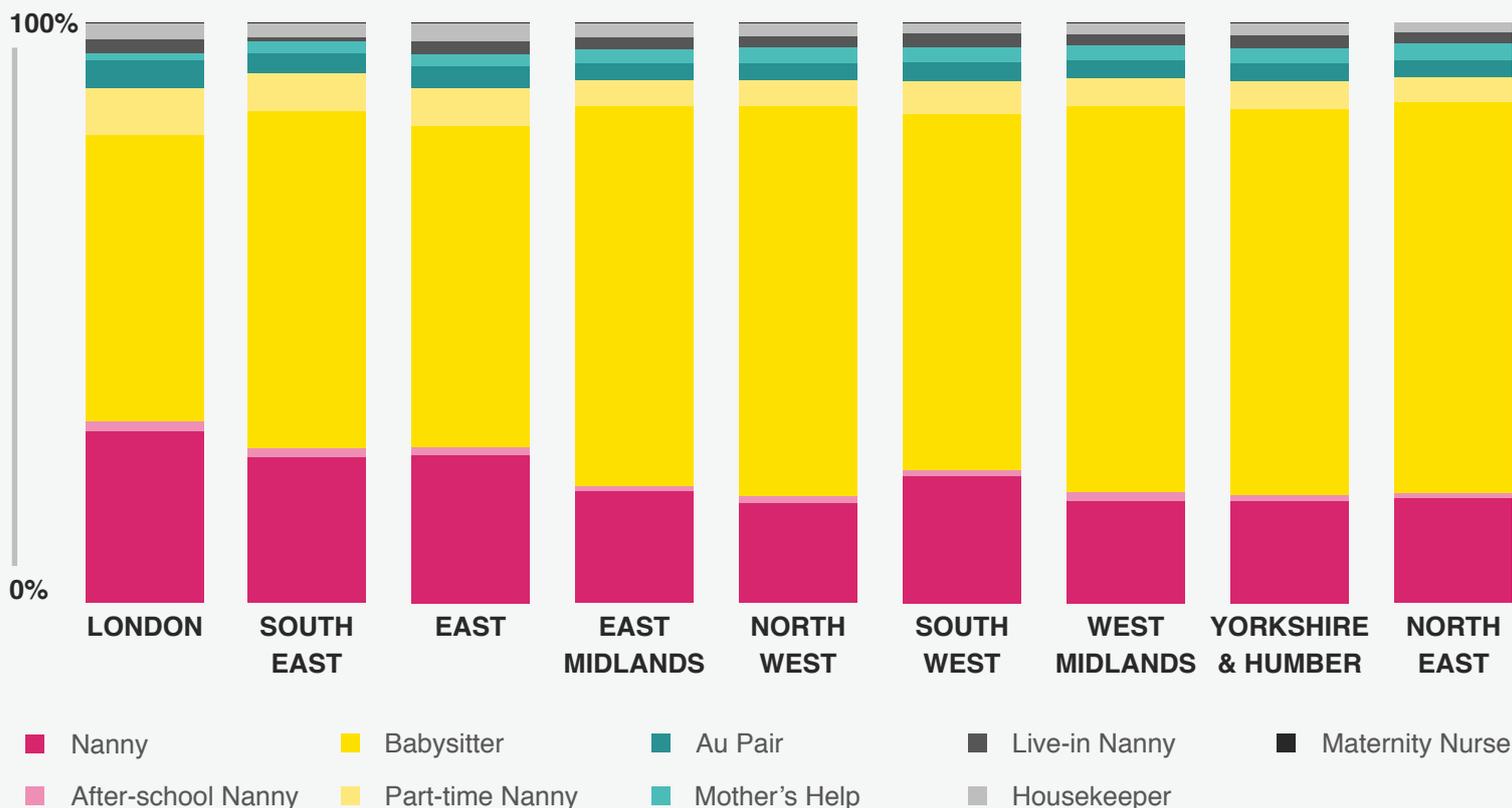


“I have been working as a nanny for the same family for three and a half years. I completed a nanny apprenticeship at Kingston College and immediately after I qualified, I was employed by my first family, who I am still with today. That just demonstrates the demand for trained and qualified nannies in the UK.”

Daniela Loureiro, full-time nanny for two children - London



Childcare availability by area



Thank you to our fantastic contributors

Siobhan Freegard, Founder, Netmums

Jane Knight, Founder, Successful Mums

Kate Armitage, Marketing Director, Gibsons

And all of our wonderful case studies.

For more information, images or to arrange an interview, please contact Lisa Malyon or Alana Caldwell at Sense Communications & PR at lisa@sensecommunications.co.uk or alana@sensecommunications.co.uk or call 0203 551 3954.

ABOUT FINDABABYSITTER.COM

Findababysitter.com is a leading UK online search site that brings parents and Childcare Professionals together to create cost-effective, flexible solutions quickly, and easily – putting an end to unnecessarily high childcare search costs.

