

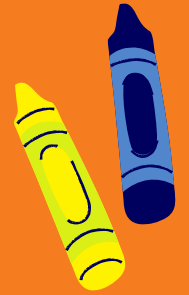
ALDI Ireland

mamia*



Mammies & Daddies report

What it means to be a parent in Ireland today



Welcome

Welcome to parenting, they say, the one role that comes without a manual, a training guide – and not even a job description.

For those lucky enough to experience it, being a Mum or a Dad or both means you are everything to your child. You are carer, chef, coach, chauffeur, friend, protector.

Parenting is an ever-changing journey that shapes individuals, families, and society. It's a profound experience that goes beyond cultural traditions and societal expectations. Recently we have witnessed a significant shift in parenting roles, moving towards a more balanced and equitable partnership in raising children.

In this report, we present the results of a thorough survey carried out by Coyne Research on behalf of ALDI Ireland, which captures insights into what it means to be a parent in Ireland today. It looks at issues such as the distribution of childcare roles, the challenges faced by parents outside of school term, time allocation in an average week, and the impact of parenthood across various facets of life. These findings showcase the diverse nature of parenting today, illustrating the complex relationship between personal aspirations, family commitments, and societal demands.

The data provides a unique look into the intricacies of parenthood, shedding light on how individuals manage childcare responsibilities, strive for a work-life balance, and handle the various impacts of raising children. This exploration delves into the evolving landscape of parenthood, highlighting both the successes and challenges of raising the next generation.

As a leading retailer and employer in Ireland, we at ALDI know the important roles that parents play in our society. Families make up a huge part of our customer, supplier and employee bases. Many thousands of Irish families choose ALDI every week for their household needs. We already know a lot about what matters to them when it comes to the weekly shop.

But we also want to be part of a broader understanding of what it means to be a parent in Ireland in 2024 – what the challenges are, how parents are coping with them, and what it means for children and families across the country.

As well as the profound rewards that can come from being a parent, there are challenges, changes and pressures that it can bring – whether they be finance, personal, health or relationship-related.

There will never be a parenting training manual, but hopefully this report can help shed some new light on the reality of parenting in Ireland.

I hope you enjoy reading ALDI's Mammies and Daddies report.



We want to be part of a broader understanding of what it means to be a parent in Ireland in 2024 – what the challenges are, how parents are coping with them, and what it means for children and families across the country.

Niall O'Connor, Group
Managing Director, ALDI Ireland



Foreword

I think a lot of parents will, as I did, read this report, while nodding along - frantically perhaps even in some places - to the statistics it shares around the reality of being a parent in contemporary Ireland.

And yet there is comfort in seeing that many of the things we as parents may find challenging as we rear our children are the exact same things that other parents are struggling with too. A comfort in knowing that we are not alone in finding certain aspects of parenthood an uphill struggle, whether that be the financial pressures, the societal pressures or maybe even the individual pressures to maintain our own identity alongside being mum or dad.

For mothers it will likely come as no surprise to see themselves identified as the main caregiver in the parenting dynamic. Nor will it largely be a shock to see to see the motherhood penalty, as it's sometimes described, in play when it comes to impact of motherhood on careers. But seeing it written down in this report by ALDI, gives us the chance to address it yet again, as part of the important conversations that need to be had about parenting in 2024.

It's great to have dads involved in this conversation too. Too often we default to the mother's perspective only, in the discussions around rearing children. And with dads more actively involved in child rearing these days, and as we aspire to more equally shared roles within parenthood, hearing from dads about how fatherhood impacts them, paves the way for discussion, comparison and a recognition that we are all just muddling through in our own way.

So onwards and upwards, armed with the information that as much as we adore our children, parenthood is the ultimate rollercoaster, and trying to strike the perfect balance is hard. And we are not alone in feeling this. We just need to find some ways support each other through it. Because mummies and daddies matter too.



We are not alone in finding certain aspects of parenthood an uphill struggle, whether that be financial pressures, the societal or personal pressures to maintain our own identity alongside being a mum or dad.

Jen Hogan, Irish Times Journalist and ALDI 'Mamia & Me' Podcast Host



Balancing parenting, work, life

Insights into parental roles & managing time

Navigating modern parenthood involves delicately balancing the responsibilities of nurturing a family, pursuing professional goals, and maintaining personal well-being. In the past, mothers might have been expected, or even required, to sacrifice their careers in order to be a parent. Today mothers are empowered to pursue professional fulfilment alongside parenthood. However, juggling both is no mean feat, and comes with its own challenges and sacrifices as any mother, father and parent can attest to.

Here, we explore what exactly those challenges are, and how modern parents manage them. From the evolving landscape of managing childcare outside of school terms, the desire for enhanced support structures, and the allocation of time across various activities, it aims to unveil the choices, sacrifices, and aspirations that collectively form the complex tapestry of what it means to be a parent, while juggling work outside the home.

Parenthood and the division of parenting roles

While the results are revealing, they may not come as a surprise to most parents. 52% of co-parents describe themselves as their children's primary care giver - and of those 84% are female, with the remaining 16% male.

13% of co-parents said their partner is the primary child carer - 89% of that number were male, again reinforcing the fact in a co-parenting situation, that much of the parenting responsibilities tend to be picked up by females, a fact that is recognised by both men and women.

That being said, the majority would appear to be content with this arrangement - when asked if parenting roles were divided fairly in the home, 63% of parents agreed that it was. Of the 28% of those surveyed who felt it wasn't, 78% of those were women.

Of course, this data covers co-parents, who represented 91% of those parents surveyed. For the 9% in the survey who are single parents of course, the situation is more complex, with those single parents having to take on all of those roles in the home themselves.



63%



of parents spend **less than 10%** of their time alone with their **partners** each week

What would make life easier as a parent?

In our research, we asked mums and dads what would make their life as a parent easier. The survey found that half (50%) of parents surveyed said that **greater state childcare support** would help.

A similar number (47%) said a more **flexible working day** would make the role of a parent easier. This figure has particular significance when considering that 49% of parents said they or their partner mind their child while not taking any time off work.

As most of us can attest to, the move to hybrid and “work from home” arrangements offer considerably more flexibility than the traditional 9-5 office arrangements. At a national level, and looking to the future, the Workplace Relations Commission is currently working on a Code of Practice on the Right to Request Remote Working, which will set out practical guidance for both employers and employees as to the steps that may be taken to request flexible or remote working arrangements.

What respondents say would help make their lives easier as a parent

	♂ ♀	♂	♀
More flexible working day	47%	48%	52%
More help in the home	27%	42%	58%
Greater State childcare support	50%	41%	59%
Equal distribution of household tasks	30%	38%	62%
Other	1%	42%	58%

What would make life easier as a parent?

We also asked parents how they distribute their time across an average week. The results uncovered a number of trends, with many parents sacrificing the time spent on hobbies, and socialising in order to meet the demands of parenting:

- 82% of parents spend less than 10% on their hobbies per week.
- Almost one quarter (24%) of parents say they spend none of their time socialising with friends.
- Of these, more women (27%) than men (20%) feel this impact each week. This fact is particularly salient, given that our research also shows that mums tend to take up more of the parenting workload than dads. Mums should be able to continue to nurture their friendship circles, not only as a source of support, but also for guidance and advice, rather than sacrificing this time.
- While overall the percentage of time spent at work each week is gender balanced, 16% of parents say they spend none of their time per week at work, with the majority of these being female (91%).
- 63% of parents spend less than 10% alone time with just their partners each week.

49%

of parents mind their children while **not taking time off work**



50%

of parents said that **greater state childcare support** would help make life easier



Managing childcare outside of school term

Arranging childcare outside of school term can be difficult, comes with significant cost, and often is a source of much stress and pressure on parents. More than a quarter (27%) said they relied on family to help with childcare on school holidays and 23% of parents surveyed said they or their partner were forced to take time off work. Given the extra expense, only 11% of parents surveyed said they rely on school camps to assist in the juggle of being a parent and work outside of school term.

So what's next? What does this mean?

Parents are grappling with the challenge of striking a balance between their professional commitments and personal lives. Amidst these commitments, parents are also trying to allocate meaningful time to nurture their relationships with partners, while also ensuring they have time for their personal pursuits and hobbies. This juggling act hinges on achieving a fair division of responsibilities within the household, particularly in sharing the parenting burden.

So, what can help? Reaching out to family and community for support beyond the confines of the school term now becomes crucial. While our research shows that many parents are forced to sacrifice their relationships with friends and social groups, these very connections could offer a source of support, even if as small as a reassuring word of advice from a friend over a cup of tea.

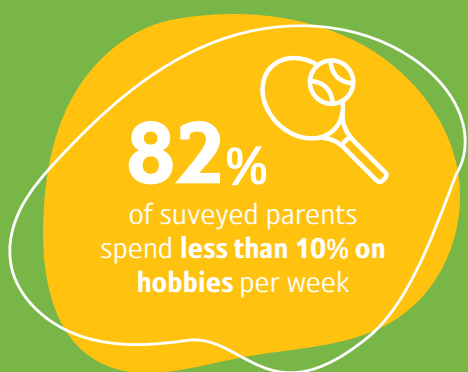
Moreover, many feel the state should be doing more to support parents, who believe an increase in childcare support would significantly contribute to easing the pressure they are under to secure childcare, particularly outside of school term. Recognising the pivotal role of a balanced work-life dynamic, employers also play a vital part in alleviating this burden. Modern employers can (and are beginning to) recognise the need to provide for a work environment that caters to a variety of needs.

Finding arrangements, and compromises, that work for both employer and parent, has never been more achievable since the shift to work from home arrangements became the new norm.



Our research shows that many parents are forced to sacrifice their relationships with friends and social groups.

These connections could offer a source of support, even if it is as small as a reassuring word of advice from a friend over a cup of tea.



Health and wellbeing

Finding time to look after our health and wellbeing can be a challenge at the best of times, let alone when one considers all the additional demands and responsibilities that come with being a parent. We all want to look after our physical and mental health - but for many Irish parents finding the time to do so is tough. As with many of the findings of our research, in many cases this challenge is more acute for female parents than their male counterparts.

Physical and mental health changes since becoming a parent

Unfortunately, parents are finding that the time they have to dedicate towards both their physical and mental health is being drastically cut once becoming a parent. More than half of parents surveyed (55%) said that since becoming a parent their physical health has gotten worse. Strikingly, of this figure 65% are women, again reiterating the disproportionate toll that parenthood takes on mums. Just 15% said their physical health has improved.

The same story appears to play out when we look at mental health trends, with almost half (47%) saying theirs has disimproved, and once again more women than men report a disimprovement in their mental health. However, almost one quarter of all parents (22%) reported that their mental health had actually improved since becoming a parent, a reminder that ultimately, amidst all the stress and school runs and sleepless nights, becoming a parent is one of the most joyous, fulfilling and rewarding things a person can do.

What's behind it?

By its very nature, the demands of having a child mean that parents often don't have enough "me time", which would allow them to focus on their mental and physical wellbeing. While a third (30%) of parents surveyed said that they get enough "me time", the large majority (70%) - said they don't.

Three quarters (75%) of those parents who say they don't have enough "me time" say this is due to the amount of household work to be done. While many of these household tasks are well acknowledged chores such as cleaning, washing and grocery shopping, parenting can come with a whole new set of tasks, which both take time to do, and in some cases, to learn. As any mum and dad to a newborn will know, a simple task such as changing nappies can be far more time consuming than many appreciate, although with tips and tricks from friends and family, many find themselves a dab hand at the task, and



70%



of parents surveyed say they **do not have enough "me time"**

would be confident to do it with their eyes closed. However, as with most of parenting, it can take months of practice, patience and trial and error to get to this stage.

Spending time on household activities

When we look at the specific responsibilities parents have, the survey found that:

- 40% of the surveyed parents spend over 3 hours per day with their children. There is a significant gender gap here – 53% of mums do so, compared to 22% of dads.
- One in three (33%) of parents spend 1-2 hours per day playing with, talking to, and reading to their children; while 23% spend between 2-3 hours per day doing so and 19% spend more than 3 hours per day. Women are more likely than men (81% to 68%) to do so.
- 31% of parents spend 1-2 hours per day on getting children ready for school, lunchboxes, uniforms, school bags, homework, with overall mums tending to spend more time on these activities than dads.

Making more 'me time'?

A small, lucky minority of parents (12%) manage to


free up time at home by employing a childminder or/and professional domestic help. However, most parents need to look elsewhere and mums and dads largely responded similarly on this topic.


Almost half (42%) of parents said that they do try to make time for themselves every week, while 46% of parents say that the single most important factor that allows them to have enough me time is equally distributing childcare and housework.

While employing childminders might not be realistic for all households, by working together to better allocate your time, resources (and each other) parents might be surprised with the time that they free up for each other. This might be dad offering to make the school lunches in the morning while mum grabs an extra 30 minutes to herself. Ultimately, each set of parents will know what works and what doesn't, and with most things, communication is key.

The early stages of parenting, particularly in the first 100 days can be overwhelming, isolating and all consuming, where you grapple with this enormous change in your life, not only as an individual but also as a couple. Finding moments, albeit sometimes brief to focus on oneself but also as a couple, if only to reassure each other that you are doing a good job, is vital.



55% 
say their **physical health** has gotten **worse** since becoming a parent

47% 
of parents' **mental health** has disimproved since becoming a parent

What are the factors that limit your amount of “me time”

	♂ ♀	♂	♀
There is always more household work to be done	75%	69%	80%
Societal pressure to be seen as an active parent with my children in my down time	24%	24%	23%
My children need greater supervision	36%	38%	35%
I do not have enough support at home	25%	22%	32%
I am under pressure to meet expectations of work/career	35%	51%	25%
Other	1%	1%	0%

22%



of surveyed parents reported that their **mental health had improved** since becoming a parent



So what's next? What does this mean?

Unfortunately, there's no one size fits all solution for managing the complexities and demands of being a parent. Every family is different, and so are their needs and requirements. However, our research does indicate that mums tend to bear the brunt of the parenting responsibilities, task and chores, and as a result, also tend to suffer the negative consequences of having less time to spend on themselves.

While recognising that all families have a different split of roles and responsibilities, our research suggests that dads have a responsibility to ensure that they are pulling their weight when it comes to household task and chores. By evenly sharing the workloads, parents can ensure that one parent does not experience unnecessary stress, negatively affecting their physical and mental health.



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Navigating existing relationships as a parent

Becoming a parent is no mean feat. It is a deep, life-long connection with your child, over which you will see them grow and develop as a person, playing your part as they do. It is one of the greatest, and most demanding, responsibilities that a person can take on. This new relationship, and relationships, with your child can be positive, rewarding and life-affirming. However, it can also mean that existing relationships we have built up can suffer, or at the very least, change.

It's a transformational journey that affects connections with partners, family, friends, mental health, work, finances, and self-worth. The impact isn't uniform across these facets; it's a mosaic of positives and negatives, intricately woven into the fabric of parenthood.

Family relationships

Unsurprisingly, the majority of parents (56%) experience a positive shift in their family dynamics after becoming parents. We all know the important role that grandparents, aunts and uncles play in wider families, and both men and women report that relationships with their wider families have improved since becoming parents. Interestingly, however almost one in eight (12%) do say their family relationships have worsened.

55%



say becoming a parent has **improved** their **relationship with their family**

Friendships

Parenthood often strains friendships. While a significant portion (41%) feels that it negatively affects their bonds with friends, a smaller fraction finds that it positively impacts these relationships. For many friendship groups, members of those groups can often begin their parenting journeys around the same time in their lives. It is noticeable that the impact seems similar across genders.

Navigating friendships post-parenthood involves complexities. A significant number of parents occasionally avoid friends or friend groups due to negative thoughts or guilt about their parenting style. Females appear to encounter this more often, potentially due to societal pressures and the expectations surrounding parenting roles.

41%



say **friendships** have been **negatively impacted** by becoming a parent

Relationship with your partner

Parenthood has a significant, albeit mixed, impact on partnerships. Nearly half of parents find that it enhances their bond, fostering a sense of shared purpose. However, for about a quarter, it introduces strains, possibly due to the added responsibilities and changes in priorities. 30% of mums say becoming a parent has had a negative impact (including 8% who say a very negative one), which is slightly ahead of 23% of men (including 3% very negative).

Self-worth

The relationship with oneself is something that is rarely considered in the context of parenthood. As our research finds, for many, parenthood elevates their sense of self-worth, offering fulfilment and purpose. Interestingly, males often note a more significant boost in self-worth compared to females. 53% of men say becoming a parent has had a positive impact on their self-worth, while one in three females (33%) say becoming a parent has negatively impacted their sense of self-worth.

Work relationships / careers

Parenthood frequently disrupts professional trajectories, with a notable negative impact reported by a considerable percentage of parents. Females, in particular, face more challenges in this aspect, possibly due to societal expectations regarding caregiving roles. Almost half (49%) of women surveyed says becoming a parent has negatively impacted their career, compared to just 17% who say it has had a positive impact.



35%  of women say becoming a mum has had a **negative impact** on their feeling of **self-worth**

What impact, if any, did becoming a parent have on your relationship with your partner?

	♂ ♀	♂	♀
Very positive impact	75%	69%	80%
Positive impact	24%	24%	23%
No impact	36%	38%	35%
Negative impact	36%	38%	35%
Very negative impact	36%	38%	35%

So what's next? What does this mean?

Parenthood, an enriching yet demanding journey, brings a kaleidoscope of changes to relationships and personal well-being. While it strengthens some bonds, it strains others. The impact on mental health, career, finances, and friendships varies, with females often facing unique challenges.

Navigating these changes demands resilience, open communication, and a supportive network to thrive amidst the evolving dynamics of parenthood. For family and friends, who may also be parents themselves, it can mean showing a little more understanding of those challenges to help keep those relationships alive.

For employers and wider society, it's clear that despite the improvements made in recent decades, that a lot of women still feel parenthood has a negative impact on their career trajectory, and that more needs to be done.



While parenthood strengthens some bonds, it strains others. The impact on mental health, career, finances, and friendships varies, with females often facing unique challenges.

Financial strains and parental sacrifices

Finances often take centre stage in the narrative of parenthood, dictating the choices parents make for themselves and their children. Of course, economics are only one factor when it comes to starting a family, and there are many positive impacts that parents report from having children. Nonetheless, faced with the challenges of managing household budgets that becoming parents brings, families have to make decisions.

What does becoming a parent mean for household finances?

Almost two-thirds of mums and dads in Ireland (65%) feel that becoming a parent has had a negative or negative impact on their finances. This is perhaps not surprising – after all, it is another mouth to feed, person to clothe, as well as all the additional costs of new equipment needed in the home. Both mums and dads feel this to more or less the same degree.

Interestingly, almost one in six (15%) actually believe that becoming a parent has improved their household finances – with men feeling this marginally more than women.

What choices are mums and dads making?

83% of parents admit to sacrificing personal indulgences during their weekly shopping due to financial constraints. There is a noticeable difference here too, with more females (87%) than males (77%) tending to cut back on these luxuries, perhaps reflecting distinct spending priorities or coping mechanisms.

A notable 17% of parents—more commonly males (23%) than females (13%)—resist compromising these little luxuries despite financial pressures. This hints at varied approaches to managing finances or potentially differing financial situations among parents of different genders.

65%



say their **finances** have been **negatively impacted** by becoming a parent

Do you sacrifice little luxuries for yourself in the weekly shop because of the financial pressures associated with household expenses?

83%



of parents have to sacrifice small luxuries for themselves in the weekly shop

	♂ ♀	♂	♀
Yes, I often have to sacrifice little luxuries	83%	77%	87%
No, I don't need to sacrifice little luxuries	17%	23%	13%

54%



find it difficult to provide for children without compromising their own financial stability

A financial balancing act

A majority (54%) of parents find themselves struggling to meet their children's needs without jeopardising their financial stability. This applies to almost three in five females (59%) and almost half of men (48%).

Less than one in eight parents find it easy to provide for their children without compromising their financial stability. Almost no parents feel at ease by providing their child's needs without compromising their own financial stability.

So what's next? What does this mean?

The financial strains faced by parents echo a narrative of sacrifices and struggles, where the majority grapples with cutting back on personal indulgences and balancing the fine line between providing for their child's needs and maintaining financial stability.

The data underlines gender disparities, with more females feeling the weight of these pressures, while a minority, especially males, navigate these challenges with relative ease.

These contrasting perspectives hint at diverse financial circumstances and coping strategies among parents, showcasing the complex web of financial dynamics in parenthood.



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Navigating parenting roles amid societal expectations

Parenting is a journey embedded with societal expectations, with outside pressures often influencing how parents perceive their own roles within the family unit, and the broader community. The data provides insights into how a couple's perception of their own parenting can be influenced by societal standards of "good" parenting.

Societal perceptions and parenting challenges

Revealingly, a very small percentage (4%) of parents find it very easy to align with societal perceptions, with slightly more males (5%) than females (2%) falling into this category. The majority, comprising 53% of parents, find it not easy to meet these expectations.

Notably, more females (61%) than males (42%) find it challenging to meet societal standards of good parenting, perhaps reflecting higher perceived societal pressures or expectations on mothers. The data highlights varying degrees of difficulty, with a substantial portion finding it challenging or very challenging to align with societal perceptions of good parenting.

The pressure to be active

We saw earlier how so few parents have enough "me time". Apart from the obvious demands that parenting brings, there are pressures and expectations that parents feel from society around them that impacts their ability to have some down time.

More than one in three (35%) parents feel under pressure to meet society's expectations of them in relation to their career. This is one pressure felt much more acutely by men (51%) than women (25%).

One in four parents - men and women - feel under pressure from society to be seen as active parent during their down time. This can mean that where parents might have otherwise had some "me time", it is sometimes not the demands of parenting itself, but what others expect them to do, that can cause stress and pressure for parents.

53%

of those surveyed find it difficult to meet society's expectations of them as parents



Do you ever avoid friends or friend groups as they make you think negatively or guilty about your parenting style?

	♂ ♀	♂	♀
Never	42%	49%	36%
Hardly ever	22%	17%	25%
Sometimes	29%	24%	32%
Frequently	5%	6%	5%
All the time	3%	4%	2%

Synthesis of parental roles and societal expectations

Parenthood is a one of the most complicated roles a person can have, and relationships one has - with their family, friends and children - are constantly shifting, often being defined by how we “think” these relationships should look, rather than how we would actually like them to be.


While most parents report positive impacts on relationships post-parenthood, challenges persist in meeting societal expectations of good parenting. Again, the trend of gender disparities resurfaces, and reveal that despite the many changes in society in recent decades, some of the parenting pressures arise from traditional views of parenting roles. Mums in general report much higher perceived levels of societal pressure to be a “good parent”, while dads feel greater pressure to meet the needs of their career.


So what's next? What does this mean?

Navigating parenting roles necessitates negotiating complex relationship dynamics—certain relationships might be strengthened (familial), whereas others may suffer (friendships). This can be a difficult and challenging process in itself, let alone when one considers the pressures society is clearly placing on parents to conform. Together, we must have an open and frank discussion as to the sometimes-unnecessary pressures we are placing on parents.

Not every parent has the time, energy or even know-how to juggle breastfeeding, prepping fresh meals seven days a week and bringing children to sport or drama classes, all the while spending the same amount of time with our friends and family as we did before kids. And that's ok.



61% 
of females (compared with 42% of males) find it **challenging to meet societal standards** of good parenting

51% 
of **dads** surveyed for this report feel under pressure to meet **career expectations**

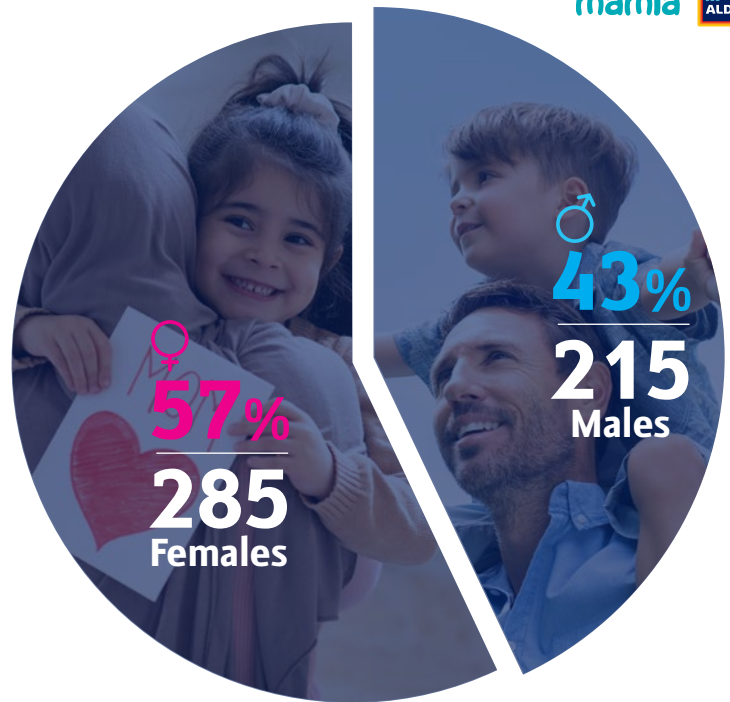


Mums in general report much higher perceived levels of societal pressure to be a “good parent”, while dads feel greater pressure to meet the needs of their career.

Profile of respondents

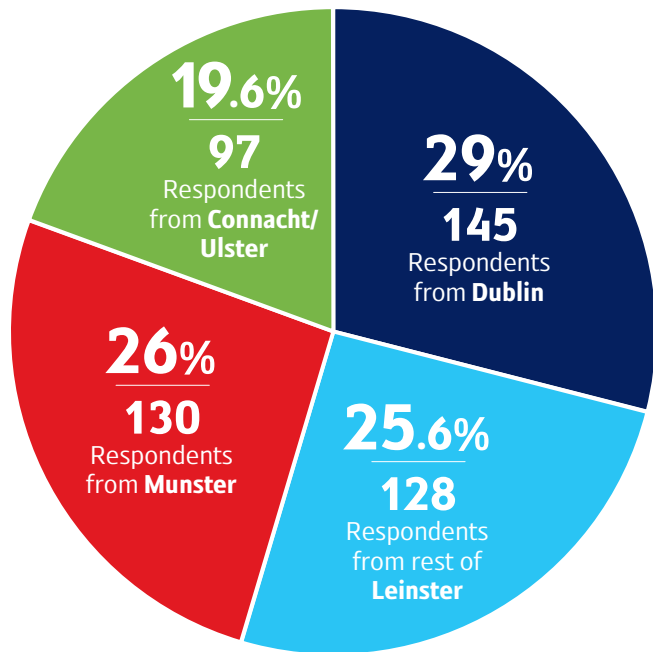
This section describes the respondents' gender profile, geographical location, and age of children at home, as well as the overall survey methodology.

The Parenting Research Survey was carried out by Coyne Research in September/October 2023. The survey was completed by 500 respondents, including 215 men and 285 women. 9% of those parents surveyed were single parents, and 91% were co-parenting.

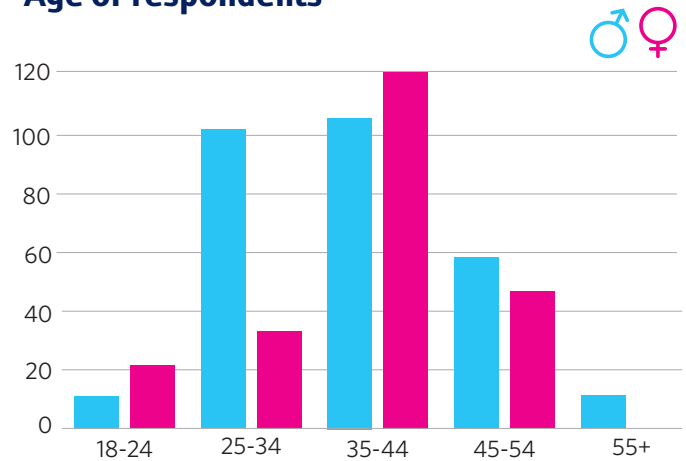


Respondents by geographical area

The response to the survey was nationwide, and regionally representative. The highest number of respondents in any region was Dublin (145) followed by Munster (130) and the Rest of Leinster (128).



Age of respondents



Age of respondents' children

