

# How are the lives of families with young children changing?

The changing face of early childhood

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# The Nuffield Foundation 'Changing face of early childhood' series

- publish a series of robust and accessible summaries of research on early childhood;
- explore controversies in the field and draw out policy and practice implications of the research;
- engage and interact with key stakeholders on-line and through seminars and events;
- identify gaps to inform future Nuffield Foundation grant programmes and other funders



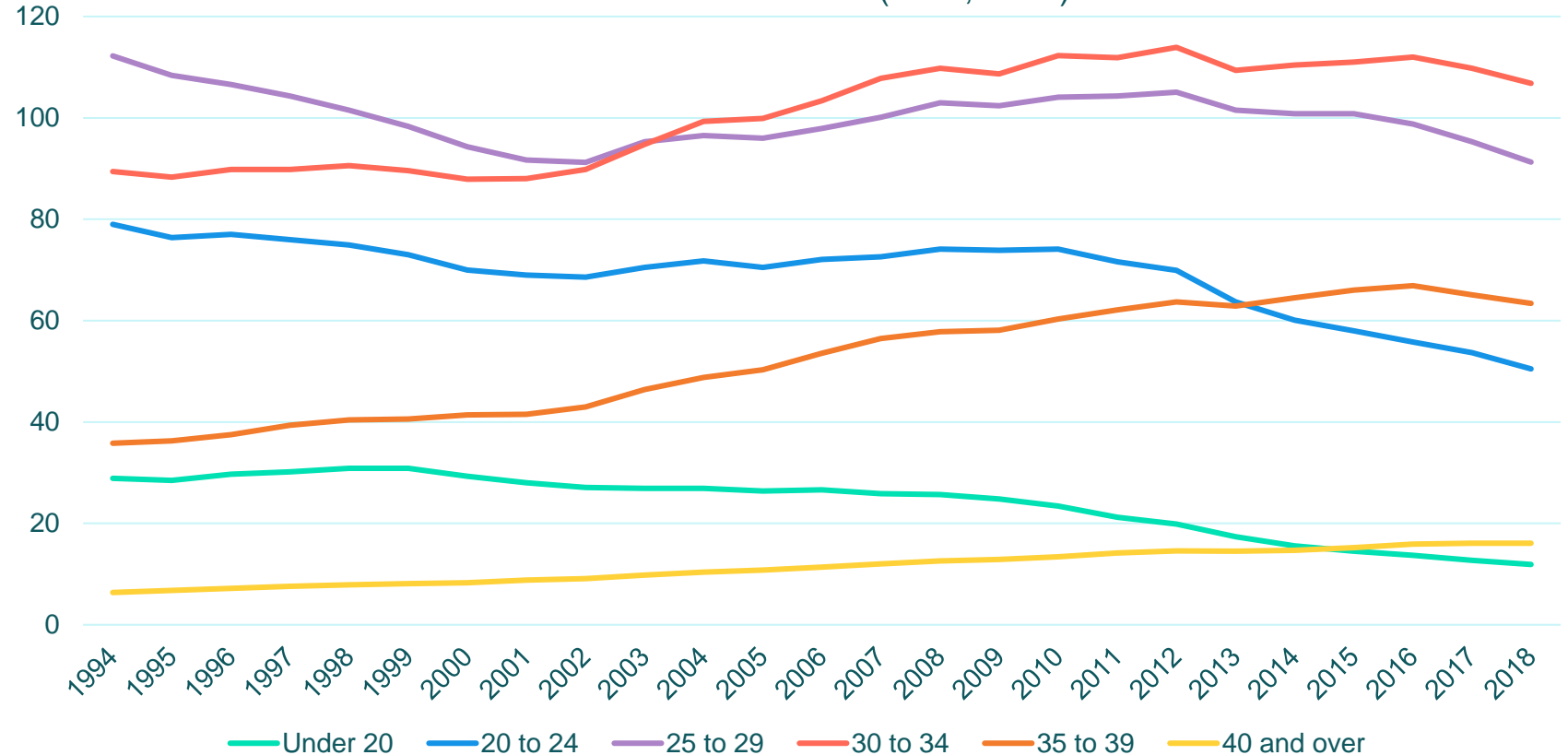
## Key issues

- Striking changes in the lives of young children over the last 20 years
- Changing family contexts
- Inequalities by income, education, ethnicity, place
- Focus is on i) how families have changed and ii) how parents combine work and care and what both mean for young children's experiences and outcomes

# 1. Older mothers and smaller families on average

- These trends are shaped by socio-economic context and maternal education levels.
- Implications for child outcomes
- Polarisation in the experience between older & teenage parents
- Implications of growth one-child families?

Live births per 1,000 women by age group in the UK, 1994–2018  
(ONS, 2019)

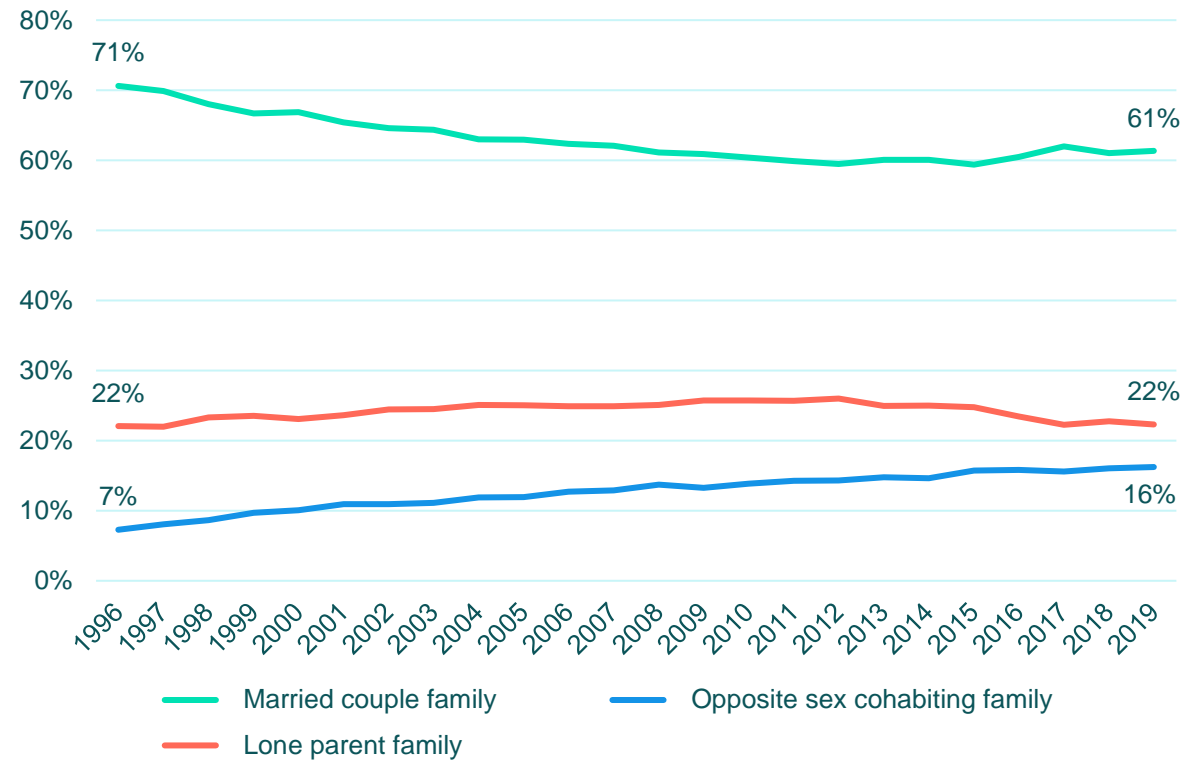


## 2. Changing family context

### What has changed?

- We have witnessed a growing variation in family living arrangements in the UK.
- Differences by ethnic group & place
- Data gaps on separation, blended families, non-resident parents, fathers

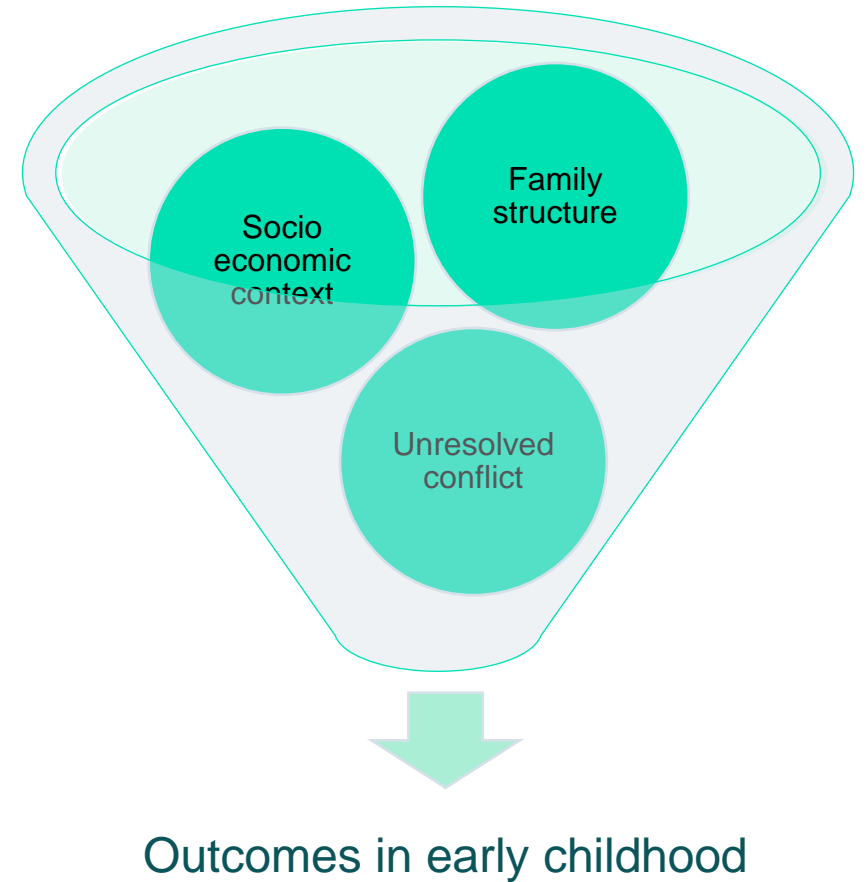
Dependent children in families by family type in the UK, 1996–2019  
(ONS, 2020)



## 2. Changing family context

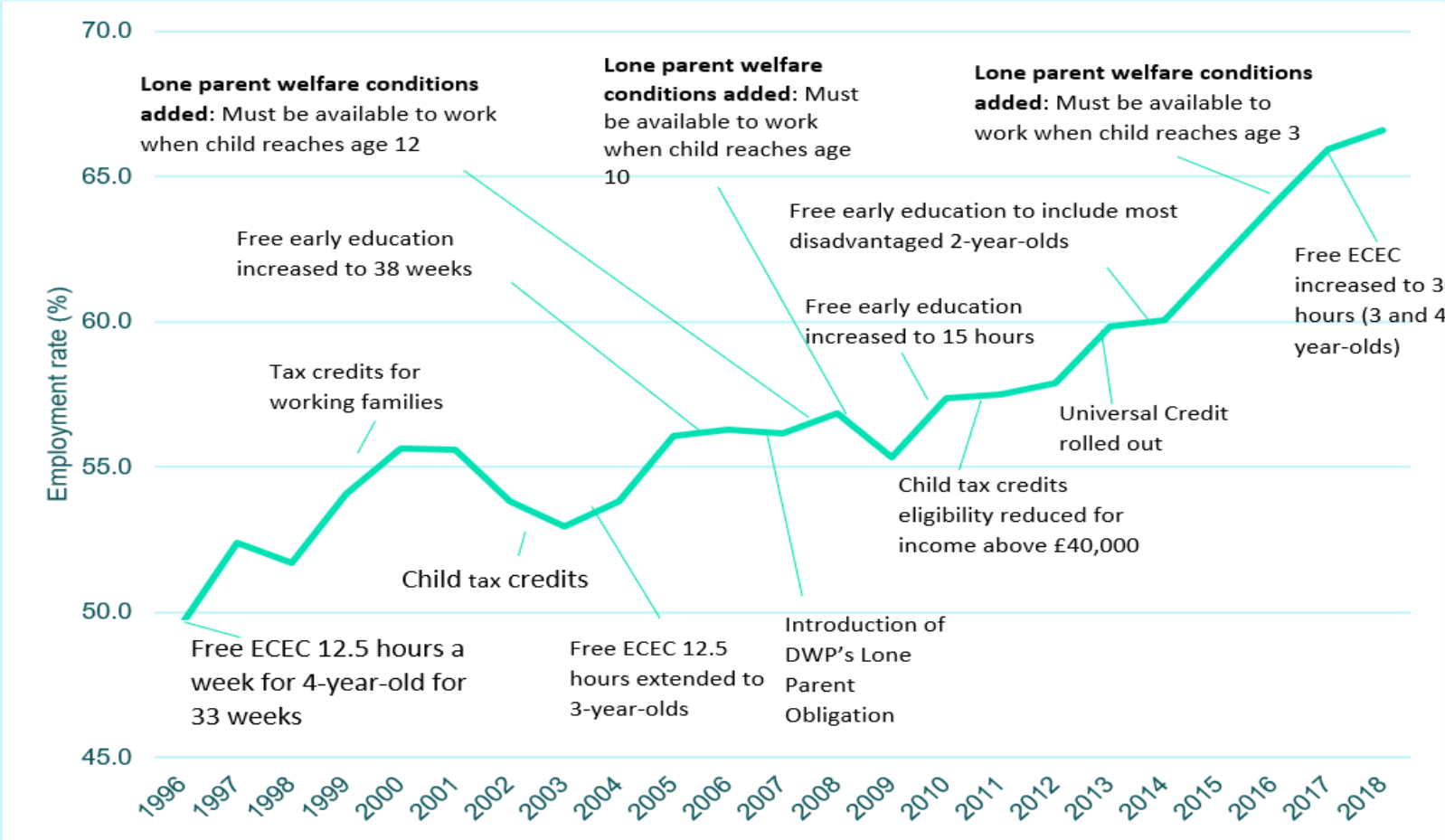
### Impact of family structure and separation on child outcomes

- **Complex relationship between family structure, socio-economic factors and unresolved conflict**
- **Research on the impact of separation is mixed.**
- **Considerable data gaps**



# 3. Increasing rates of employment for mothers of young children

Employment rates of mothers of young children, England, (aged 0 – 4).

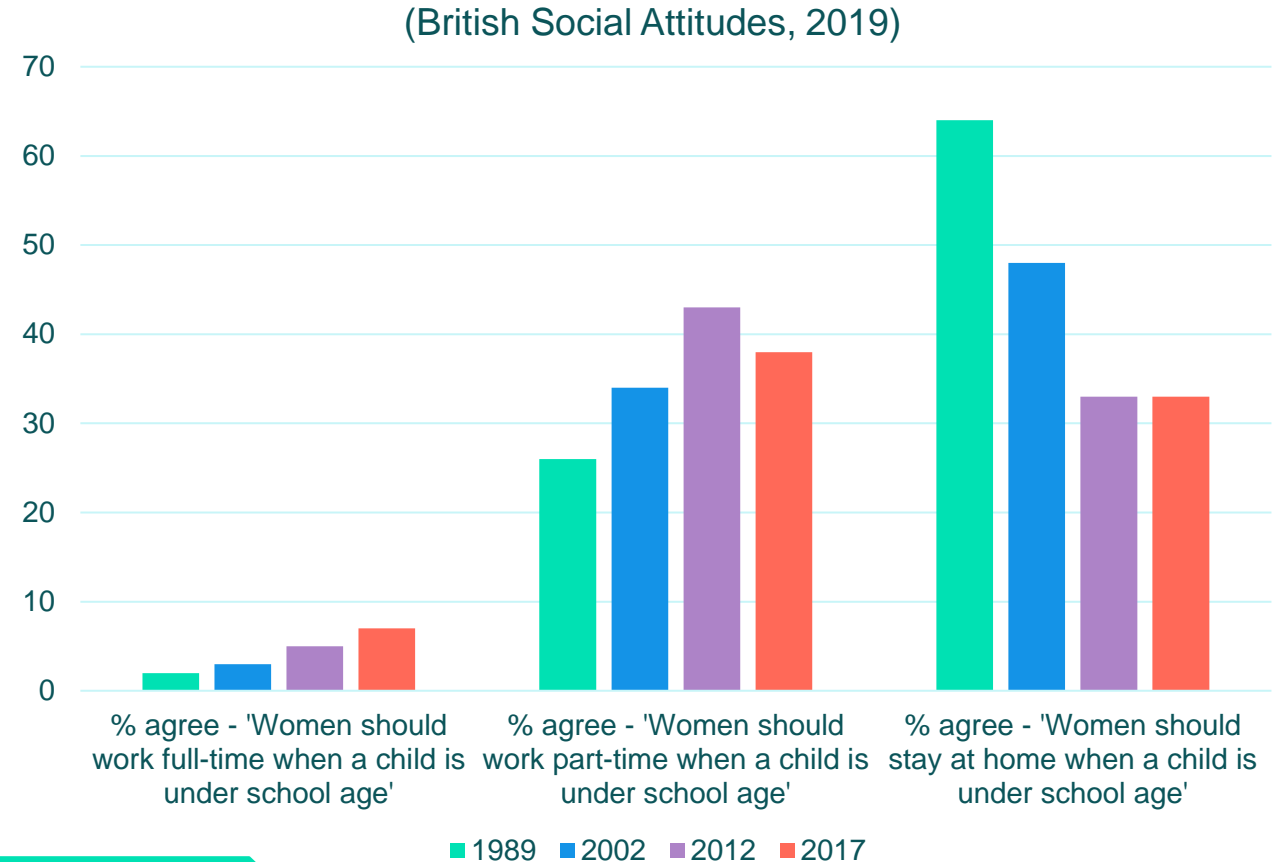


# 3. Changing attitudes towards early maternal employment

## What has changed?

- **Change in attitudes towards mothers employment.**
- **The majority still believe a mother should not work full time when a child is under school age.**

Attitudes to mothers' employment in different circumstances, 1989–2017





## 4. The impact of covid-19

We are beginning to understand the immediate impact of COVID-19 for the youngest children and their families:

- rising unemployment and poverty
- changing patterns of care at home
- the partial closure of nurseries and reception classes
- the fragility of the early years education and childcare sector.

# Points for reflection

1. Does family structure matter for young children's well-being and outcomes?
2. What are the implications of the changing patterns of work and care for parents and for young children's well-being, experiences and life-chances?
3. Is inequality the most significant factor in determining early childhood experience?
4. Is family policy still a key government priority?

