

REPORT: 21ST CENTURY GRANDPARENTING

A report on the role of grandparents in childcare

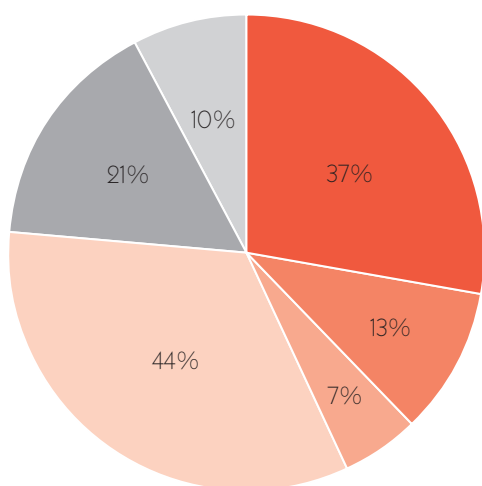
INTRODUCTION

Raising a child is an expensive business. In tough economic times, parents are having to return to work sooner and struggling to foot the bill for expensive childcare. Indeed, childcare costs have risen at least 6% in the last 12 monthsⁱ and for many, a childminder or nursery school is an expensive luxury. In this report we have looked at extent of the role that grandparents play in alleviating the financial burden faced by today's pressured parents.

BRITAIN'S BABY-BOOMERS HOLDING THE BABY?

Grandparents are stepping in on the childcare front, contributing significant amounts of both time and financial aid to their loved ones. One in seven (14%) of the grandparents surveyed who regularly spent time with grandchildren said this amount of time had increased over the last year.

Reasons for grandparents' increased childcare responsibilities over last 12 months



- My son (in-law)/daughter (in-law) has had to return to work because of the economic climate
- My grandchildren's nursery/childminder has become too expensive
- My son (in-law)/daughter (in-law) employer has put pressure on them to return to work
- I want to spend more time with my grandchild
- Looking after my grandchild makes me feel younger
- I can't afford to financially contribute towards my grandchildren so I look after them instead

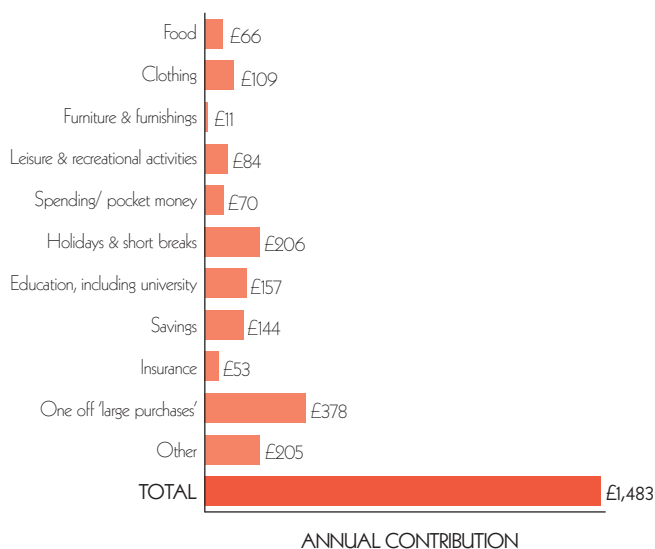
GENEROUS WITH LOVE AND LOLLY

Nearly 6.1 million grandparents look after their children on a weekly basis for free. On average they spend over five hours a week doing so, saving up to £860 a year on childcare costs. This could be saving the UK's working parents over £5 billion a year in free childcare. The duties they're relied upon to do cover everything from picking up children from school and helping them with their homework to taking them to appointments and looking after them for a whole day if they're off school or their parent is unwell.

They're not just giving up their time, around a third (33%) of grandparents regularly contribute financially towards their grandchildren, with an average monthly bill of £123 – around 11% of their monthly income.ⁱⁱ

If grandparents maintained this contribution until the child reached 18 the total could reach almost £26,000 – or £500 billion for every child in the UK.

The most popular items and grandparents' contribution



i. The Daycare Trust 2009

ii. Average weekly income for someone over 50 in UK is £294 a week or £1,176 a month according to the CEBR, 2009

RIAS commissioned the research, which was carried out between 27th – 30th October 2009. Total sample size was 1290 UK based grandparents aged 50 years or above, with at least one grandchild.

For further information on this report, please contact:

Jo Carr or Alex Kennedy at Seventy Seven PR on 020 74920904 or email rias@77pr.co.uk

There are some interesting differences throughout the UK.

Grandparents of each region and their financial contribution

| | London | Midlands | East Anglia | Wales | South West | South | North West | North East | Yorkshire | Central Scotland | North Scotland | Borders | Northern Ireland |
|---|---------|----------|-------------|--------|------------|--------|------------|------------|-----------|------------------|----------------|---------|------------------|
| Yes, I regularly contribute financially to all of my grandchildren | 32% | 36% | 28% | 34% | 28% | 23% | 33% | 37% | 38% | 35% | 40% | 43% | 50% |
| Yes, I regularly contribute financially to some of my grandchildren | 4% | 10% | 10% | 13% | 6% | 13% | 13% | 13% | 6% | 5% | 5% | – | 15% |
| Average per month | £226.20 | £182.30 | £96.20 | £94.70 | £93.40 | £68.20 | £112.50 | £67.30 | £57.30 | £100.60 | £161.20 | £207.80 | £74.70 |

Grandparents of each region and how much free childcare they provide

| | London | Midlands | East Anglia | Wales | South West | South | North West | North East | Yorkshire | Central Scotland | North Scotland | Borders | Northern Ireland |
|-----------------------|--------|----------|-------------|-------|------------|-------|------------|------------|-----------|------------------|----------------|---------|------------------|
| Less than 1 hr per wk | 10% | 14% | 10% | 9% | 13% | 14% | 14% | 4% | 11% | 11% | 5% | – | 10% |
| 1 to 5 hrs per wk | 10% | 17% | 24% | 16% | 13% | 13% | 13% | 20% | 14% | 11% | 20% | 7% | 25% |
| 6 to 10 hrs per wk | 11% | 9% | 9% | 9% | 10% | 14% | 16% | 13% | 14% | 8% | 10% | 7% | 5% |
| 11 to 15 hrs per wk | 4% | 3% | 4% | 5% | 2% | 6% | 3% | 4% | 3% | 3% | 10% | – | – |
| 16 to 20 hrs per wk | 3% | 7% | 1% | 5% | 4% | 4% | 4% | 4% | 6% | 4% | 5% | – | 15% |
| 21 to 25 hrs per wk | 1% | 1% | 2% | 1% | 4% | 1% | 2% | 2% | 3% | 4% | – | – | – |
| 26 to 30 hrs per wk | 1% | 2% | 3% | 2% | – | 2% | 1% | 4% | 3% | 5% | – | – | – |
| 31 to 35 hrs per wk | 1% | – | – | – | – | – | 2% | 2% | – | 3% | – | – | – |
| 36 or more | 4% | 3% | 2% | 1% | 1% | 2% | 2% | 4% | 3% | 4% | – | 7% | – |
| Average hrs per wk | 6.20 | 5.00 | 4.20 | 4.20 | 4.10 | 5.10 | 6.00 | 7.30 | 7.00 | 8.30 | 4.00 | 5.00 | 4.20 |

Grandparents in different regions are also likely to have different reasons for ramping up their childcare duties.

- Welsh grandparents are the most likely to say it's because the parents have had to go back to work early because of the recession (50% versus a national average of 37%).
- The Scots are most likely of all the regions to cite expensive childcare costs as the reason (20% versus national average of 13%). They're also the keenest to spend time with their grandchildren (53% versus average of 44%).
- Those in the South are the most likely of all the regions to say that they can't contribute financially therefore they give childcare as an alternative (15% versus 10% average). Interestingly, Londoners are least likely to say this (5%).

GOOD NEWS FOR ALL?

It's very good news for parents – it saves them substantial sums of money and gives them peace of mind that their child is being cared for by someone they know and trust.

Grandparents love spending time with their grandchildren and at least one in five (21%) think they have more fun with their grandchildren than do with their parents – they also believe spending time with them makes them feel younger.

However, the arrangement is not completely to mutual benefit – 20% of grandparents who regularly care for their grandchildren have had to put a holiday or leisure activities on hold due to their childcare duties. On top of the percentage of their income they contribute to their grandchildren, this substantial offering could adversely affect their lifestyle.

Currently there is very little formal acknowledgement of the contribution they make to society. This needs to be taken seriously and more formally recognised.

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