

Financial pressures facing Lone Parents

Summary of Ipsos Scottish Parents Omnibus research findings

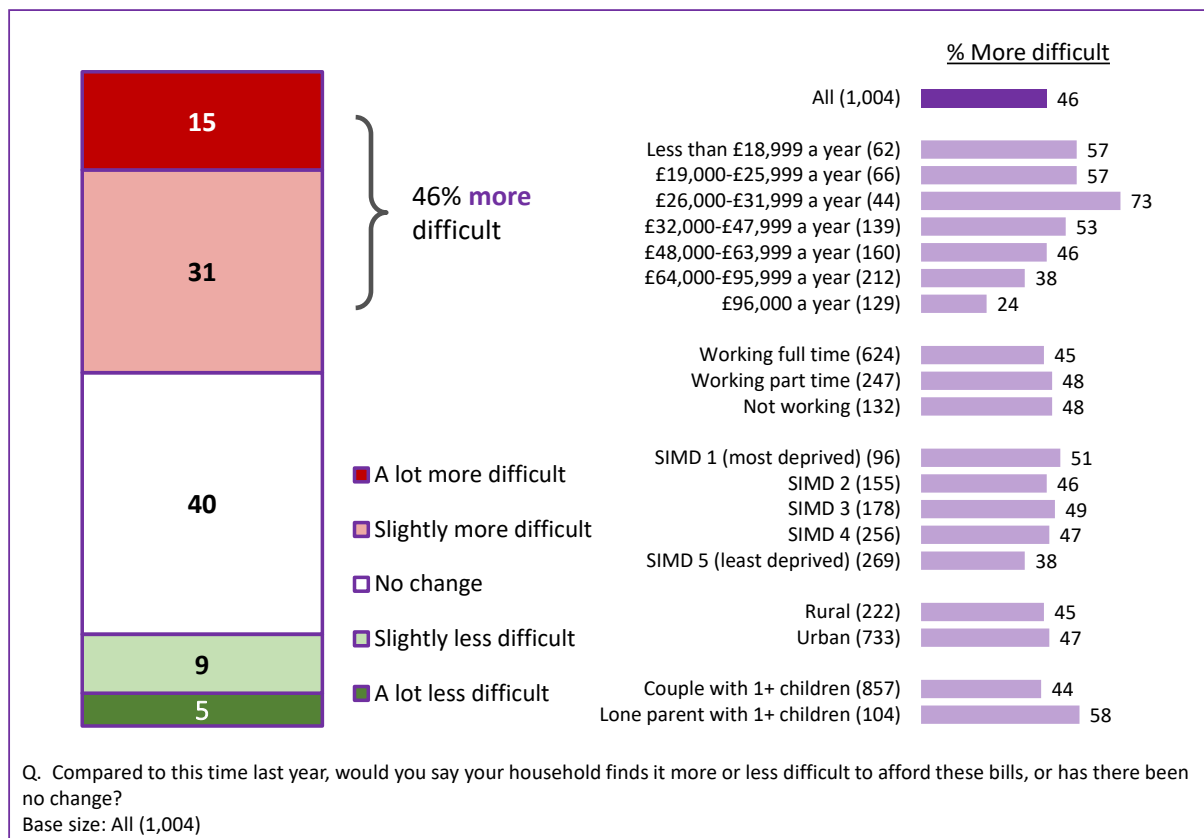
Methodology

This paper provides an analysis of Lone Parents' responses to three questions on the Ipsos Scotland Omnibus of Scottish Parents. The survey was conducted by telephone between 1st November and 2nd December 2021 and was completed by a representative sample of 1,004 parents of children aged 0-18, based in Scotland. Findings from this research have been summarised for **One Parent Families Scotland** by independent researcher Ruth Stevenson.

Key findings

Difficulty in affording bills

The parents were asked to consider the bills that their household has to pay, and to indicate whether their household finds it more or less difficult to afford these bills as compared to this time last year. The findings are summarised in the chart below:



Almost half of parents in Scotland (46%) are currently finding it more difficult to afford their household bills, as compared to this time last year. Four in ten (40%) have experienced no change in circumstances in this respect, and 14% are currently finding it less difficult to afford their household bills.

Lone Parents with one or more children were particularly likely to be finding it more difficult to afford their household bills this year (58%) than couples with one or more children (44%).

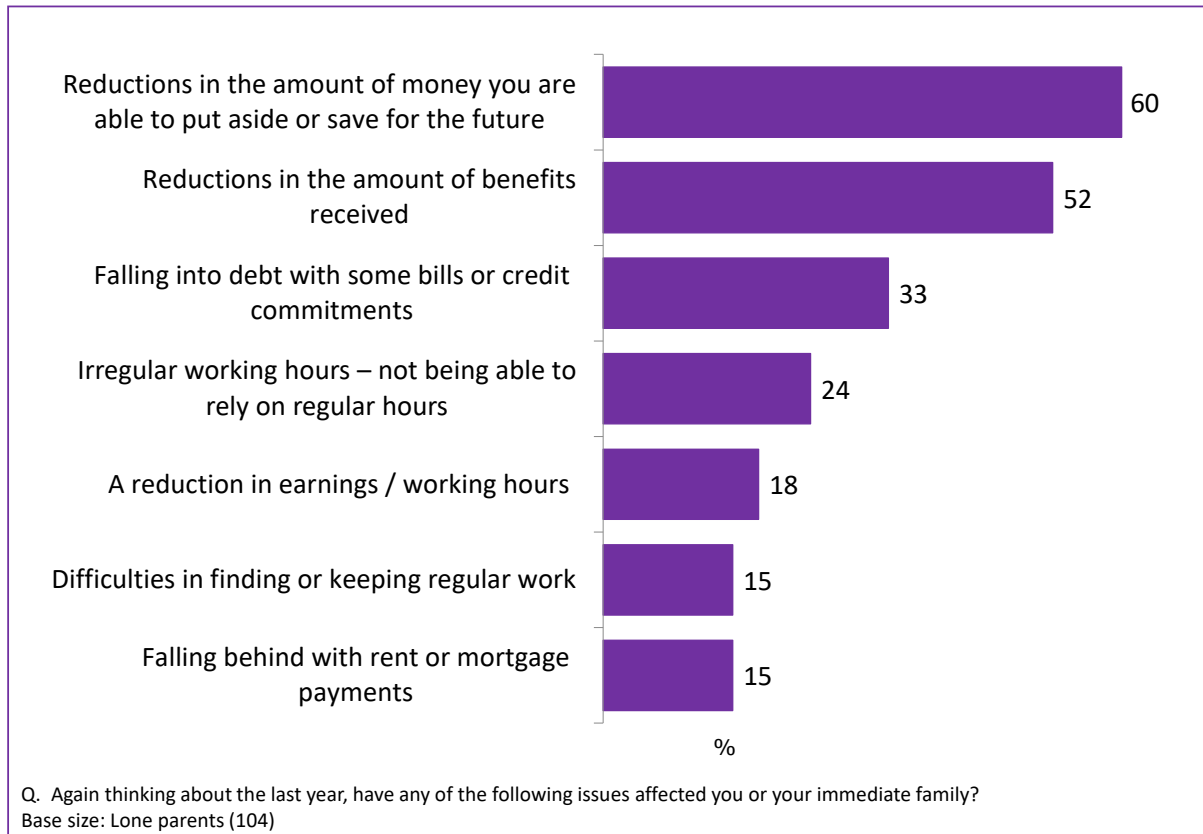
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Financial challenges affecting families

The parents were presented with several financial challenges and asked to indicate whether any had affected them or their immediate family in the last year.

Findings for **Lone Parents** are summarised in the chart below:



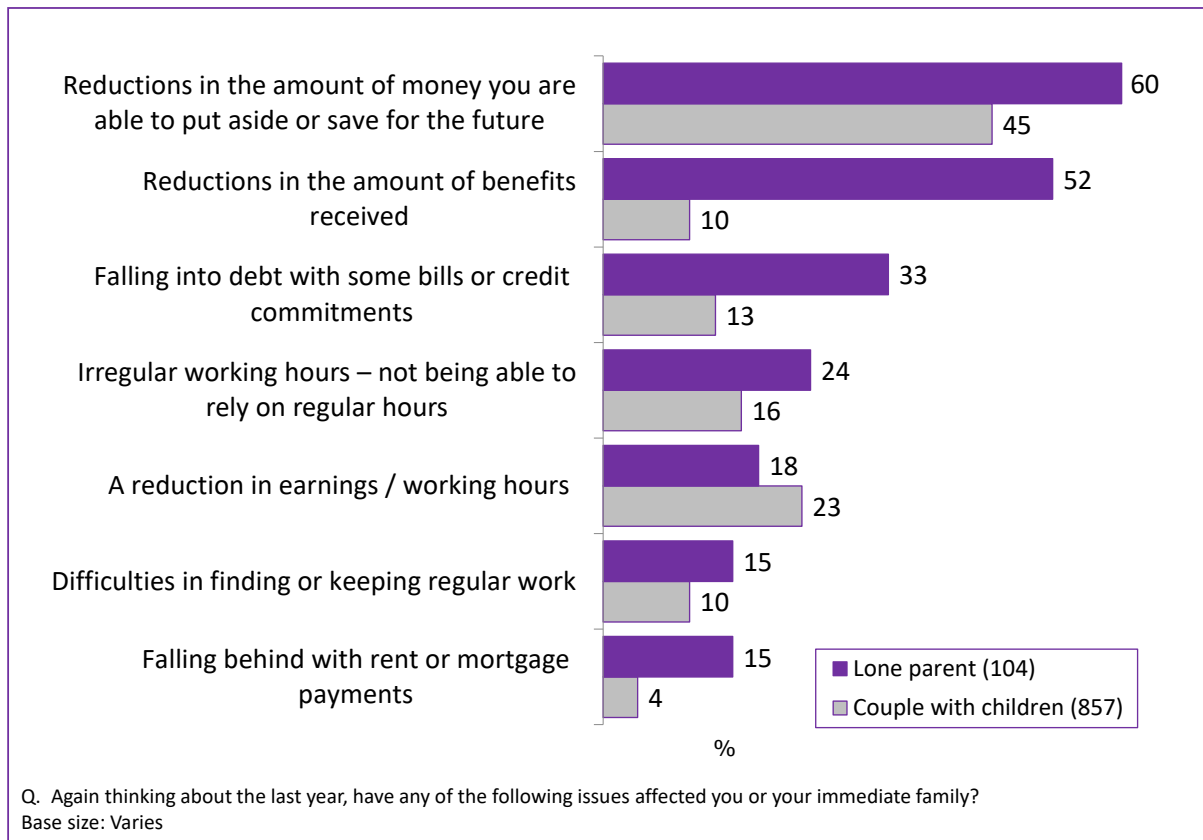
Of the financial challenges presented, Lone Parents were most likely to have been recently affected by *reductions in the amount of money you are able to put aside or save for the future* (60%) and *reductions in the amount of benefits received* (52%).

Each of these challenges had been experienced by at least one in seven Lone Parents, indicating a substantial minority of Lone Parents had faced serious financial hardship in the last year.

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Comparing the priorities of Lone Parents to Couples with children:



On the whole, the Lone Parents experienced the financial challenges in much greater proportions than Couples with children.

Reductions in the amount of money you are able to put aside or save for the future was the issue most often experienced by both Lone Parents (60%) and Couples with children (45%).

In stark contrast, only 10% of Couples with children had experienced *reductions in the amount of benefits received* (compared to 52% of Lone parents), only 13% of Couples with children had experienced *falling into debt with some bills or credit commitments* (compared to 33% of Lone Parents), and only 4% of Couples with children had experienced *falling behind with rent or mortgage payments* (compared to 15% of Lone Parents).

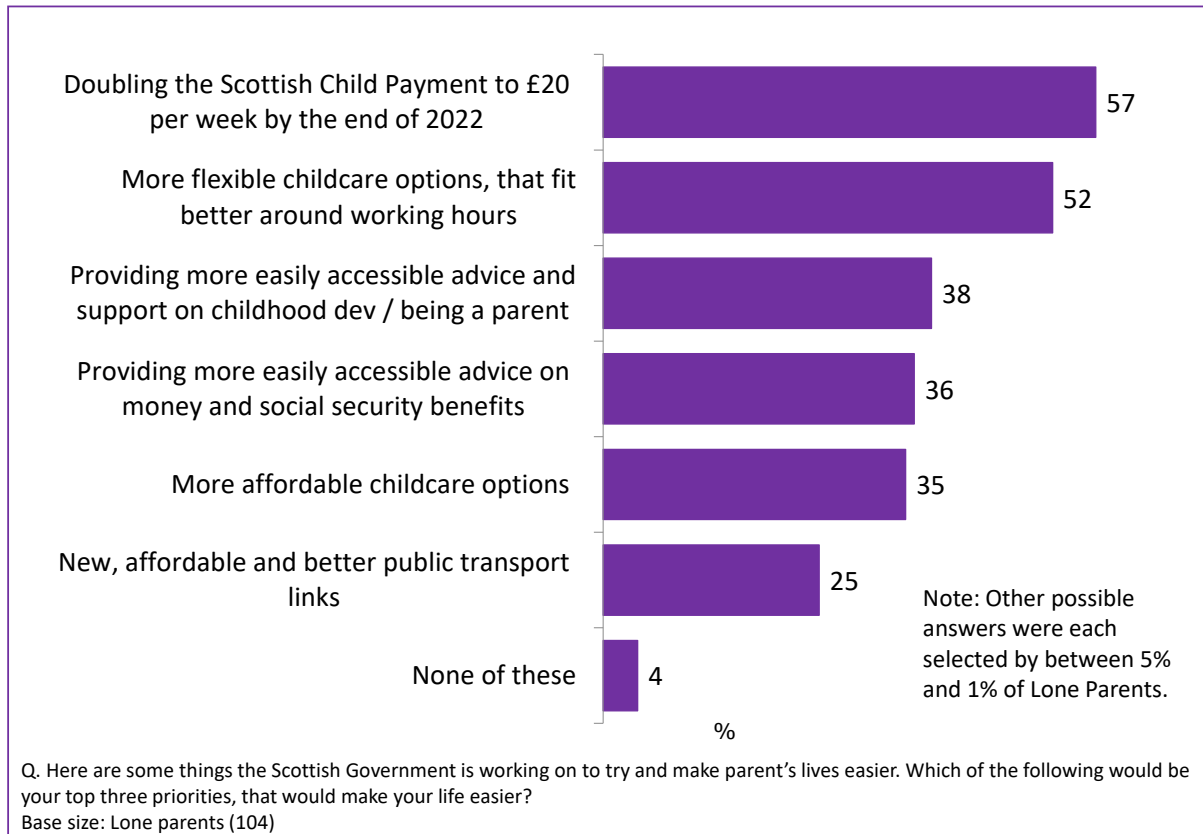
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Priorities for parenting policy

The parents were provided with a list of things that the Scottish Government is working on to try and make parent's lives easier, and asked to indicate their top three priorities that they feel would make their own lives easier.

The priorities most selected by **Lone Parents** are summarised in the chart below:



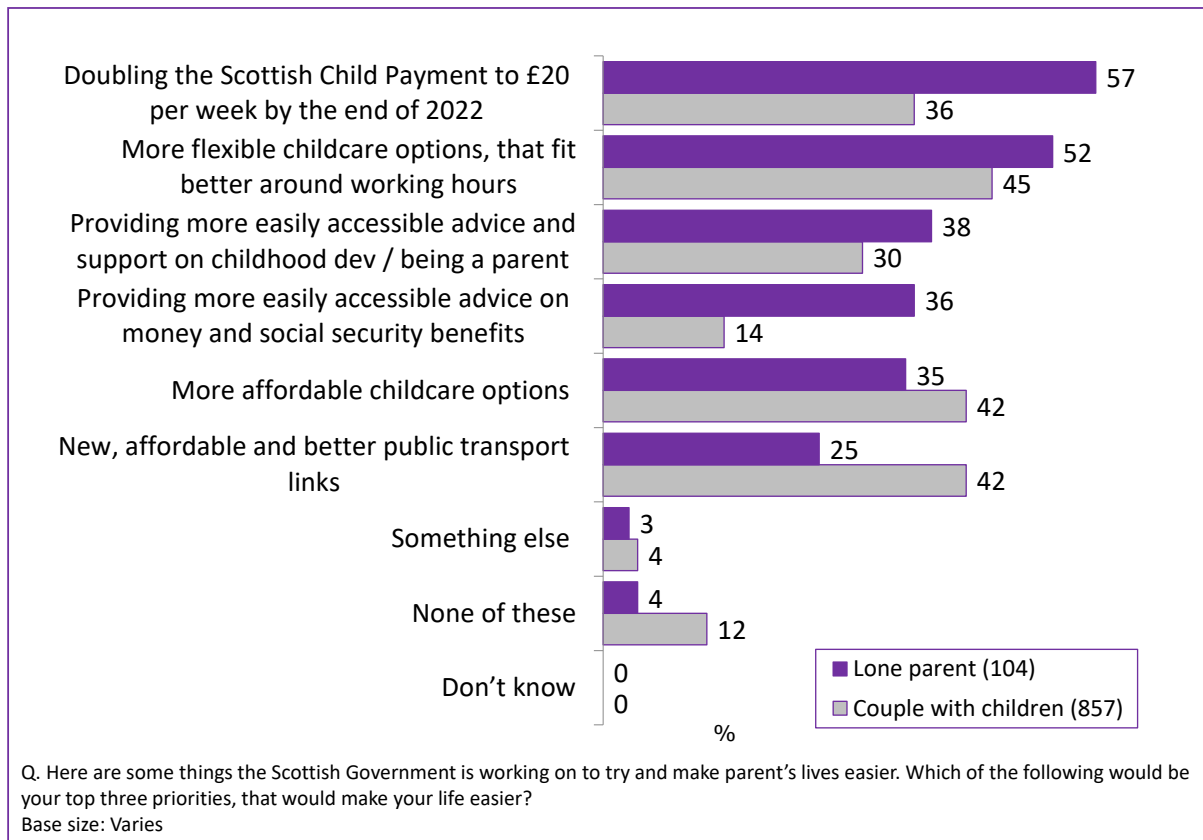
The policy priorities most often selected by Lone Parents were *doubling the Scottish Child Payment to £20 per week by the end of 2022* (selected as a priority by 57% of Lone parents) and *more flexible childcare options, that fit better around working hours* (selected as a priority by 52% of Lone Parents). *Accessible advice and support on child development / being a parent* was seen as a priority by over a third of single parents (38%) as was *providing more easily accessible advice on money and social security benefits* (36%) and *more affordable childcare options* (35%). The other policy priorities were also very relevant to Lone Parents as each was selected by at least a quarter of Lone Parents.

Other potential policy priorities listed by Lone Parents were *access to healthcare / mental health support* (5%), *better access to financial help / more financial help* (4%), *better support for children with disability / special needs* (1%), *larger choice of childcare [breakfast / afterschool clubs etc.]* (1%), *better support for working parent* (1%) and *flexible working hours* (1%).

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Comparing the top priorities of Lone Parents to Couples with children:



Footnote: Other possible answers were each selected by between 5% and 1% of parents

More flexible childcare options, that fit better around working hours was one of the most often selected policy priorities for both Lone Parents and Couples with children.

Policy priorities were different for Lone Parents and Couples with children but even so over a third of both said *more affordable childcare options* (selected by 42% of Couples with children and 35% of Lone Parents) were a priority

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In summary

This has been a financially challenging time, and families across all demographic groups in Scotland have experienced new financial challenges.

However, the findings show that Lone Parents have experienced financial hardship in greater proportions than Couples with children.

More than half of Lone Parents in Scotland have found it more difficult to afford their bills in the last year (58%) and have experienced *reductions in the amount of money they are able to put aside or save for the future (60%) and reductions in the amount of benefits received (52%)*.

When the Lone Parents were asked to indicate policy priorities that would make their lives easier, the most often selected priorities by some margin were *doubling the Scottish Child Payment to £20 per week by the end of 2022* (selected by 57% of Lone Parents) and *more flexible childcare options, that fit better around working hours* (selected by 52% of Lone Parents).

Among other priorities *accessible advice and support on child development / being a parent* was also seen as a priority by a sizable percentage of Lone parents (38%). However, at least a quarter of Lone Parents selected each of the other listed policy priorities indicating that all were of substantial relevance to this group.

Technical Note

- Ipsos interviewed a representative sample of 1,004 parents across Scotland.
- Interviews were conducted by telephone 1 November – 2 December 2021.
- Data are weighted on age of parent, working status, Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and age of child, to match the known population of parents in Scotland (based on Scottish Household Survey data)
- Where results do not sum to 100%, this may be due to computer rounding, multiple responses, or the exclusion of “don’t know” categories.