

What childcare crisis? Irish mothers entering the labour force ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

- Full report in pdf ^[2]

Excerpts from the report:

The available evidence suggests that in fact Irish women are going out to work in ever greater numbers, despite the 'childcare crisis'. In other words, the link between the provision of formal childcare and women's labour force participation is much weaker than is normally assumed.

The first part of the report uses available statistics to document that it is in fact precisely Irish mothers of young children who are increasingly going out to work. The second part of the report, based partly on interview material from ERC research projects on women in employment, explores how women are entering the workforce even though they have young children. The final part reviews childcare policy and suggests that the linkage of childcare and labour force participation is not just bad social science, it is perhaps rather dangerous politically, at least for women (and men) who care about proper childcare.

Amongst Irish women's organizations and Irish feminists generally it has been axiomatic that Irish women's low labour force participation can be partly explained by the low level of childcare. Almost uniquely in Europe, Ireland has virtually no stated provision of pre-school childcare and no tax credits for childcare expenses. For over a decade, the achievement of equal opportunities has therefore been linked to improvement in childcare.

An alternative position would see childcare as an issue of rights. Rights for parent's, rights for children and rights are not matters of economic convenience. At the moment in Ireland women (and some men) are juggling work and children in the most complex manner ^[3] often at incredible cost to themselves and probably not to the benefit of children either. Adequate childcare provision is not about economic growth at all costs, it is rather a way of spreading the caring burden in an enlightened and democratic manner.

Region: Europe ^[3]

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gender ^[5]

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