

# Is there a continental divide in counting the cost of childcare? [UK] <sup>[1]</sup>

Letters, Yorkshire Post

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## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

Daycare Trust childcare costs survey 2008 <sup>[2]</sup>

EXCERPTS It seems bringing up baby has never been more expensive. According to the latest figures, parents are paying more than £8,000 a year for nursery places, the cost of after school clubs has risen to an average of £43 a week and &em; with many parents missing out on vouchers and tax credits &em; many of those who choose to go back to work often end up waving goodbye to their monthly salary. With every day bringing some new tale of financial woe, from rising energy bills to falls in property prices, the report by the Daycare Trust also claimed the 70 per cent contributed by UK parents to total cost of childcare was more than double the EU average of 30 per cent. So is it time the Government learned a lesson from our European neighbours? UK Birth rate: An average of 1.74 children per woman Maternity payments: Women are entitled to a year's maternity leave &em; the first six weeks at 90 per cent pay, the following 33 weeks at up to £112.75 a week and a further 13 weeks unpaid. Most companies also now offer two weeks' paternity leave. Childcare: The average cost of a full-time nursery place has risen by five per cent since last year to £147 a week. Parents can claim 12.5 hours a week of free early education places for three and four year-olds and those with children under six have the right to ask for more flexible working hours. However, while employers have to consider any application they aren't obliged to agree. France Birth rate: The country heads the European league table with women having an average of two children each. Maternity payments: France prides itself on its family friendly policies, including the introduction of maternity leave on almost full pay, ranging from 20 weeks for the first child, to 40 weeks or more for the third child when grants, allowances and tax breaks also increase substantially. Most employers are also obliged to keep jobs open. Childcare: While it is means tested, the vast majority of childcare is free and the maximum charge is about £370 a month. Nursery school is free for every child from the age of three. Germany Birth rate: Two years ago, German newspapers claimed the native population was in danger of dying out as the birth rate slumped to 1.37. Maternity payments: In wake of the shock headlines, new welfare support which entitles either the mother or father to 67 per cent of their income, up to a maximum of £1,240 a month, for 10 months was introduced. Childcare: With only one in five children under three guaranteed a place in day care, lack of facilities has been a major problem. While there are proposals to abolish kindergarten fees, the majority close at lunch time and with the school day traditionally ending at 1pm many parents find their hands are tied. Spain Birth rate: 1.32 Maternity payments: In 2003, with the country having slipped to second bottom in the European birth rate table, the government introduced a national family policy. The move wasn't entirely popular as the last time proposals were introduced to increase fertility was under Franco's regime and while mothers can take up to 16 weeks fully funded maternity leave and a further unpaid leave of up to three years, only a third of Spanish mothers have taken up the benefits. Child care: While under the national family policy, companies were urged to set up childcare facilities, there is little consistency from region to region. Italy Birth rate: With the birth rate dropping to 1.33, some experts have predicted that there will be 14 million fewer Italians by 2050. Maternity payments: The government invests 3.8 per cent of its GDP on child-related spending, compared with an EU average of eight per cent. Currently, mothers are entitled to full maternity pay for five months, plus a further six months at 30 per cent. A baby bonus of about £750 is also paid to couples who have a second child. Proposals to pay women not to have abortions have been mooted, though not yet introduced. Childcare: The country still has a job for life mentality which means part-time working is almost non-existent. Places at public nurseries are scarce and with 11 per cent of Italians living below the poverty line few have money to spend on private facilities. Ireland Birth rate 1.99 Maternity payments: Mothers are entitled to 26 weeks maternity leave with 75 per cent pay, plus a further 14 weeks unpaid leave. There is no legal entitlement to paternity leave which is left up to the employers' discretion. Childcare: In 2006, a childcare allowance of £750 a year was awarded for every child under six, but with childcare almost completely private, families can spend 20 per cent of their annual income on childcare, which is twice the EU average. Norway Birth rate: 1.8 Maternity payments: Mothers are entitled to 12 months off with 80 per cent pay or 10 months with full pay. Fathers who opt to be stay-at-home dads are entitled to similar benefits and at the very least they are given four weeks paternity leave. The benefits are financed through taxation and since the new policies were introduced in 1993, the birth rate has remained stable and six out of seven women aged between 30 and 39 work. Childcare: While childcare provision has always been good, two years ago the maximum price was fixed to ensure it doesn't exceed £210 a month. - reprinted from the Yorkshire Post

**Related link:** News: Costs of full-time nursery soar to 8,000 pounds a year <sup>[1]</sup>

**Region:** Europe <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** demographics <sup>[4]</sup>

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**Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/08/02/there-continental-divide-counting-cost-childcare-uk>  
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