

# Use of childcare growing <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS:

Hamilton childcare experts say it is no surprise a third of Kiwi babies are regularly in non-parental care, but they warn these arrangements should be judged on a case-by-case basis.

The finding, released today, was from *Now We Are Born*, the second report from Auckland University's Growing Up in New Zealand study.

Growing Up in New Zealand follows 7000 children, about 2000 of whom are from the greater Waikato, from before they were born until they turn 21.

*Now We Are Born* reflected life when the children were nine months old.

At that age, 35 per cent of the children were in regular, non-parental childcare for an average of 23 hours per week.

In 87 per cent of the cases the mothers said their study or work commitments were the main reason for the care arrangement.

The researchers gathered extra information from the 1732 families where the child was in care for eight or more hours per week, and found the average duration of care for that group jumped to 28 hours per week.

Daycare centres were the care provider of choice for 36 per cent of families, followed closely by grandparents at 32 per cent.

New Zealand European mothers were more likely to use daycare centres than their Maori, Pacific Island and Asian counterparts, with the order reversed when grandparents were the main carer.

Hamilton-based associate director of the study Polly Atatoa Carr said that the findings would help shape national policies over time.

Early childhood care was a "really important variable" as it would affect everything from the children's cultural identities to their health, she said.

Cathy Holland, chief executive of Parentline, a Hamilton child advocacy agency that works with at-risk children, said the rate of non-parental care was not surprising, given the economic environment.

Ms Holland said her grandson went to daycare to allow his parents to work, and the experience had been positive.

"I would have a different opinion if I saw [daycare was] not for his benefit."

Professor Margaret Carr of Waikato University's Wilf Malcolm Institute of Educational Research said many studies were being carried out on the impact of non-parental childcare.

She said it was increasingly common for babies to be in non-parental care and child/carer ratios and space were important when choosing a carer.

Craig Merritt and Laurene Williams, whose son Cadell is part of the Leading Light pilot group, said Cadell's Steiner daycare was like "a second home" for him.

Ms Williams said they chose the Steiner daycare for Cadell because her good friend was running it.

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**Related link:** *Now we are born: Second report of the Growing Up in New Zealand longitudinal study* <sup>[2]</sup>

**Region:** Australia and New Zealand <sup>[3]</sup>

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