

## **New Study into Motherhood in Ireland:**

**87% of mothers regard Ireland as a good place to raise children**

**74% find motherhood 'difficult'**

**65% cite children as their greatest source of joy**

**73% consider healthcare a top issue of concern**

**Mums shoulder bulk of domestic responsibilities**

**Comments on Research from psychologist**

**David Coleman and nutritionist Siobhan Julian**

(Offaly, 21 February 2008) It's official. Motherhood is not easy but it is rewarding in Ireland. A new study by family-owned organic dairy Glenisk has found that almost three quarters (74%) of mothers regard motherhood as difficult but nearly two thirds (65%) list their children as their greatest source of joy. It seems that Ireland in 2008 is a good place to be a mum - 87% of mothers describe the country as a good place to raise children.

The research, which was undertaken by Behaviour & Attitudes, involved interviews with mothers of children aged up to 20 years, from all over Ireland. The study examined a number of issues of concern to mothers and explored the challenges of motherhood, views on the environment, attitudes to organic food, family mealtimes, leisure activities and the allocation of domestic responsibilities in the home. The research was commissioned by Glenisk.com to co-incide with the launch of their organic parenting initiative, iMoo (Irish Mothers of Organic). iMoo is an interactive online community that offers advice, support and information on parenting the organic way.

### **Attitudes to being a mother**

74% regard motherhood as difficult with almost one in five (19%) describing it as 'very difficult'. Children are the single greatest source of joy for 65% of mothers surveyed, while the desire to get away from it all was strong amongst a small minority - 2% listed 'being alone' as their greatest source of joy.

91% of respondents believe that motherhood has changed them - with 29% stating that it has changed them completely. 7% believe it has changed them very little while 2% believe they have not changed at all.

### **Issues of Concern**

Participants were asked to list their top three issues of concern – 73% listed healthcare as one of their biggest concerns, 60% listed safety while 56% listed education in their top three. Other 'top three' issues causing concern include crime (37%), nutrition and childhood obesity (24%), economic stability (15%), childcare (15%), housing and house prices (12%) and maternity services (3%).

### **The Environment**

The environment is a growing source of worry to mothers, with 69% of respondents describing themselves as very concerned about water pollution and 59% very concerned about pollution of our amenities including seas, beaches, forests and lakes. Regarding the issue of global warming, 48% of mothers describe themselves as 'very concerned' and a further 45% are 'somewhat concerned'. 38% of mothers are 'very concerned' about the exhaustion of fossil fuels and traditional energy sources and a further 50% are 'somewhat concerned'.

### **Ireland as a place to raise children**

The majority of mothers believe that Ireland is a good or very good place to bring up children with 40% describing it as 'very good' and 47% as 'quite good'. Only 4% of those polled described it as a poor place to raise children.

### **Children's Diet**

On the whole, mothers are satisfied with their children's diet – 89% believe their children consume sufficient dairy produce; 94% believe their children consume enough protein and 80% believe their children eat sufficient fruit and vegetables.

However, almost half (48%) of mothers feel their children eat too many sweets, 42% believe they eat too much chocolate, while 34% maintain they consume too many crisps and 33% feel their children consume too many sugary drinks.

More than a third (37%) are 'very concerned' about animal diseases including avian flu, foot and mouth and BSE.

### **Organic Foods**

In general, two third (67%) of mothers believe that organic foods are better for their family and almost half (46%) consciously try to choose organic foods. 90% agree that organic food is better for the environment, 82% feel it is better for your health and almost two thirds (63%) believe organic food tastes better than conventional food.

However, 95% believe that organic foods are more expensive than conventionally produced food and 48% feel it is difficult to source organic food. 38% believe that organic food is not important to them.

### **Family Mealtimes**

Less than a quarter surveyed (24%) say they eat dinner together as a family each night without TV or other distractions, while 14% say they rarely or never do.

### **Leisure Pursuits:**

Approximately three in four mothers are satisfied that their children spend enough time participating in sports (77%) or playing outdoors (74%). More than one in five (22%) are concerned that their children spend too much time browsing the Internet while 36% believe their children spend too much time playing computer games and 38% feel they spend too much time watching TV. 42% believe their children spend too little time reading books.

Almost four in ten (39%) of respondents stated that they believed they did not spend enough quality time together as a family and would like to participate in more leisure activities together.

### **Domestic Responsibilities**

The survey found that mothers are shouldering the majority of the domestic responsibilities in the home. 94% of mothers say they, rather than their partners or children, are predominantly responsible for laundry; 90% for grocery shopping; 85% for cleaning; 71% for childcare *outside* of traditional working hours; and 67% for managing the household budget and paying household bills on time.

### **Stress Relievers for Mothers**

Mothers use a variety of activities to relieve stress – 56% list reading as a stress reliever, 54% find TV helps them unwind and the same percentage relax by spending time with their partner. 46% of mums relieve stress by shopping, 27% by going to the pub and a significant 42% by catching up on sleep.

### **Analysis of the Research**

Clinical Psychologist and best-selling author, **David Coleman**, is a member of Glenisk's iMoo parenting panel. Commenting on the findings of the research, he said: "It is easy to underestimate the impact of having children but this survey shows just how demanding, yet rewarding this radical change in lifestyle is. There is no doubt that the calmer we feel, the

better able we are to respond to the many pressures of parenting. When parents have a successful way to relieve stress it makes for happier families.”

On the subject of family mealtimes, David adds: “It is a salutary warning for us that family mealtimes are definitely changing. I believe that the reduced contact and social interaction during meals, demonstrated by the survey, is just a reflection for many of us of how hard it is to really achieve the kind of work/life balance that we want. It is really important for children to have times in the day when they can really talk to parents rather than simply passing them by in a whirl of activity or retreating into the isolation of the TV or computer-games. Research shows that children who sit with their family for regular meals are less likely to smoke, take drugs and drink alcohol. They tend to do better in school and have fewer mental health problems and they tend to eat a more balanced and healthy diet.”

**Siobhan Julian**, Glenisk nutritionist and former INDI (Irish Nutrition & Dietetic Institute) president comments: “While it is encouraging to see that mothers are largely happy with their children’s diets, the research would suggest that more work needs to be done in the home and in school educating families and children as to what represents a healthy diet. We know for example that many Irish children are getting only half the recommended intake of fruit and vegetables and when it comes to calcium, 28% of boys and 37% of girls do not get enough in their diets. Dietitians would like to see children adopt a healthy snacking habit which more closely follows the food pyramid guidelines. It’s not necessary to ban foods like chocolate, sweets and crisps but they are being consumed in very high quantities, often at the expense of more nutrient rich foods like wholegrains, fruit and yogurt. Fizzy drinks offer no nutritional benefit and may contribute to dental cavities and are therefore not recommended – the ideal fluid for a child is water or milk.”

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**For further information, photography or to arrange an interview with the iMoo panel, please contact:**

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**Note to Editors:**

**About Glenisk**

Glenisk was established in 1987 by the Cleary family in Killeigh, Co Offaly. Glenisk converted to organic production in 1995 under the leadership of twin brothers Vincent and Brendan Cleary, both of whom combined years of experience gleaned from the European food industry with a recognition of organics' potential in the Irish dairy market. Today, Glenisk is run by six of the Cleary siblings and its workforce will number 50 this year. It continues to operate from Killeigh, where construction of a new €8.5million eco-friendly plant has been completed.

**About iMoo:**

Irish Mothers of Organic was established by Glenisk to offer support and advice to those interested in parenting the organic way. iMoo topics are not limited to organic but instead cover a broad range of parenting issues. Contributors include internationally renowned US paediatrician Dr William Sears; clinical psychologist and presenter of RTE's Families in Trouble, David Coleman; nutritionist Siobhán Julian; childbirth expert and author Tracy Donegan; and iMoo's Eco Daddy, Ben Whelan, director of Cultivate, Ireland's sustainable living and learning centre. As well as monthly live web chats with the expert panel, the site offers discussion forums allowing visitors to exchange views and information, and also features blogs from mothers, organic recipes and profiles of organic farmers. [www.glenisk.com](http://www.glenisk.com) is also home to 'Have a Cow', a fun and educational programme, designed to help children understand where our food comes from. Children can sign up to 'adopt' their own farm animal and receive regular updates about life on a family farm, penned by their own cow or goat.