

74% of women find Motherhood difficult

NEW STUDY INTO MOTHERHOOD IN IRELAND

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 meal-times, 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.

Participants were asked to list their top three issues of concern - 73% listed health-care as one of their biggest concerns, 60% listed safety while 56% listed education in their top three. Other 'top three' issues causing con-

cern include crime (37%), nutrition and childhood obesity (24%), economic stability (15%), childcare (15%), housing and house prices (12%) and maternity services (3%). 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'.

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.

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. 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.

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.

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.

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.