



**CHILDMINDING IRELAND**

*Supporting Ireland's Childminders; Minding Ireland's Children*

## **Childminding in Ireland Survey 2022**

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## Introduction

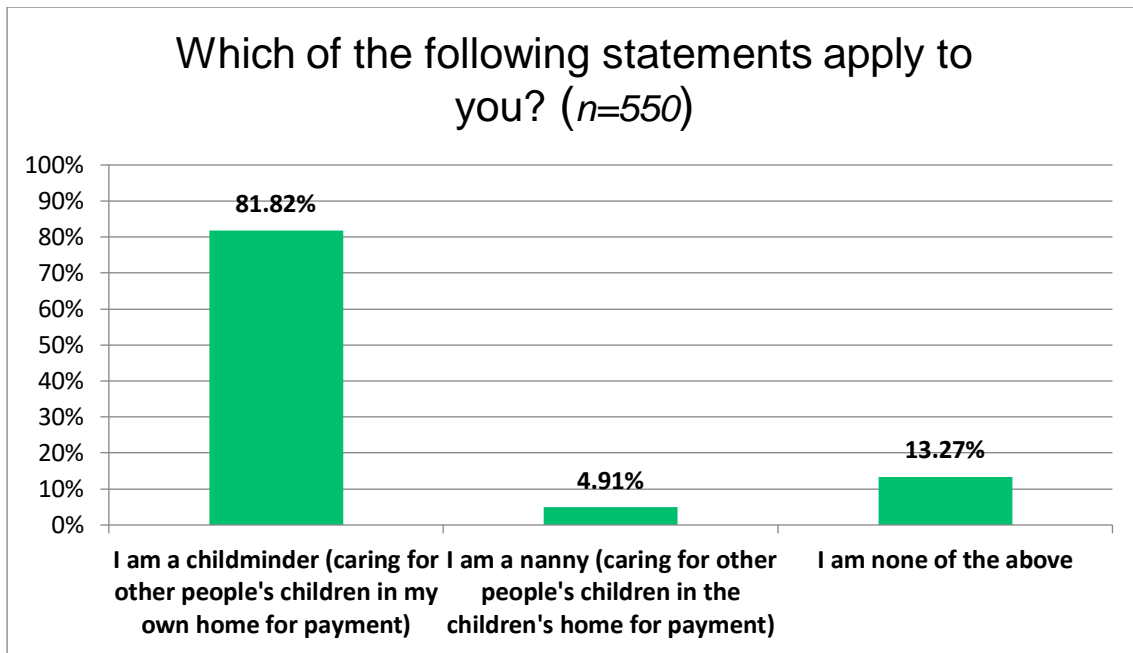
Childminding Ireland is the National Representative Body for Childminding. In order to obtain relevant information about childminders and nannies, a detailed questionnaire was devised. It was not necessary to carry out a pilot study, as similar surveys have been successfully used over many years. However, it was decided to reduce the number of questions in the survey, in order to increase the completion rate. This research was carried out in November 2022 to collect data both on the current working situation for childminders and nannies and to establish their future needs. Given that the vast majority of respondents were childminders it was decided to report on the findings for childminders and nannies separately. This document is solely focused on childminders, and the findings on nannies will be distributed under separate cover.

The questionnaire (**Appendix 1**) was uploaded to the software package Survey Monkey and the link to it was sent to all childminders that are either members or associate members of Childminding Ireland. The link was also available to all childminders on the Childminding Ireland website and was widely advertised on social media. Childminders were encouraged to share this link.

The survey contained both closed and open-ended questions. The data received from the closed questions was exported to Excel and quantitative analysis was carried out on the results using this software package. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise and display this data. The qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis.

The number of people who responded to each question is displayed in the graph as “ $n=$ ” and the results are calculated as a percentage of this number, unless otherwise stated. All quotations used are transcribed exactly as the respondents typed them in the survey. No corrections or amendments were made to them.

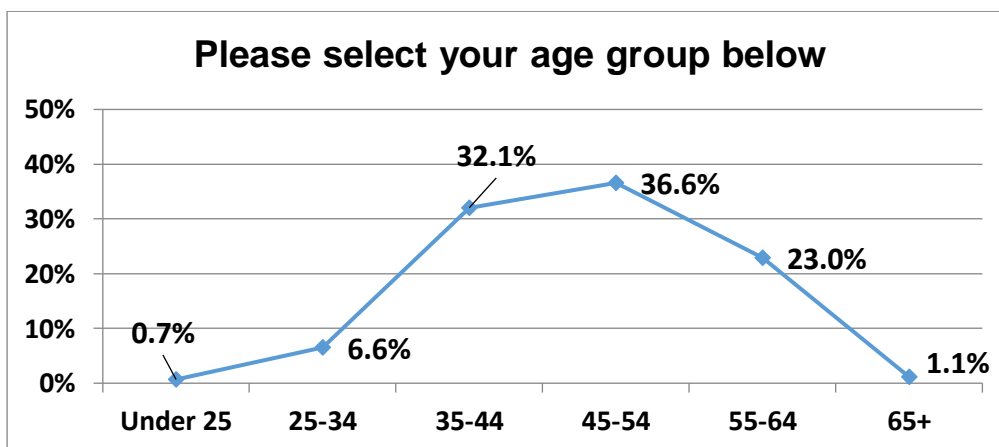
550 people completed the questionnaire in total. Of those who did, 450 stated that they were childminders and 27 said they were nannies. It should be noted, however, that 28 people consistently answered the questions that were relevant to nannies, so it must be presumed that one respondent made an error in the first question and there were 28 nannies who responded. 73 people said they did not fit into any of the above categories. (**Figure 1**)



**Figure 1: Are you a childminder or a nanny?**

## Respondents

The vast majority of childminders were aged between 25 and 54. (**Figure 2**) This is similar to previous surveys. The largest number of Childminders were in the 45-54 age group. This is identical to previous surveys, as far back as 2017. However, there is very little difference between the number of childminders aged between 45-54 and 35-44 years.



**Figure 2: Age Profile of Respondents (%)**

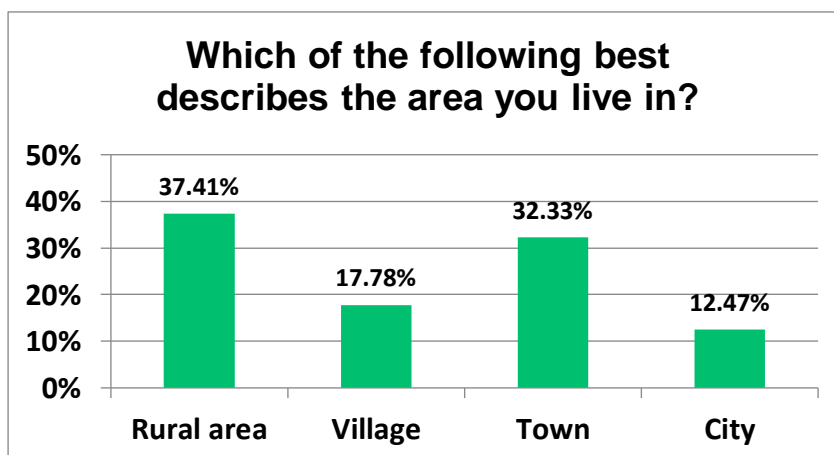
A new question was included in the survey this year, which asked the respondents to state what nationality they are. One respondent did not answer the question, stating that “*there was no reason for this question*”. The vast majority of childminders (371 out of 431) stated that they were Irish. The second largest category for childminders was British, with 17 of the

respondents including themselves in that category. There was one respondent who said they were English, and one said the UK. **Table 1** lists all the nationalities, and the absolute numbers for each, that were reported.

Irish	371	Australian	2	Bulgarian	1	Romania	1
British	17	British/ Irish	2	Canadian	1	Scottish	1
French	5	Filipino	2	Croatian	1	Slovak	1
German	3	Hungarian	2	English	1	South African	1
Brazilian	3	Polish	2	Indian	1	Swedish	1
Italian/ Brazilian	3	Spanish	2	Ireland / Japan	1	UK	1
Italian	2	Austrian	1	Irish/ American	1		

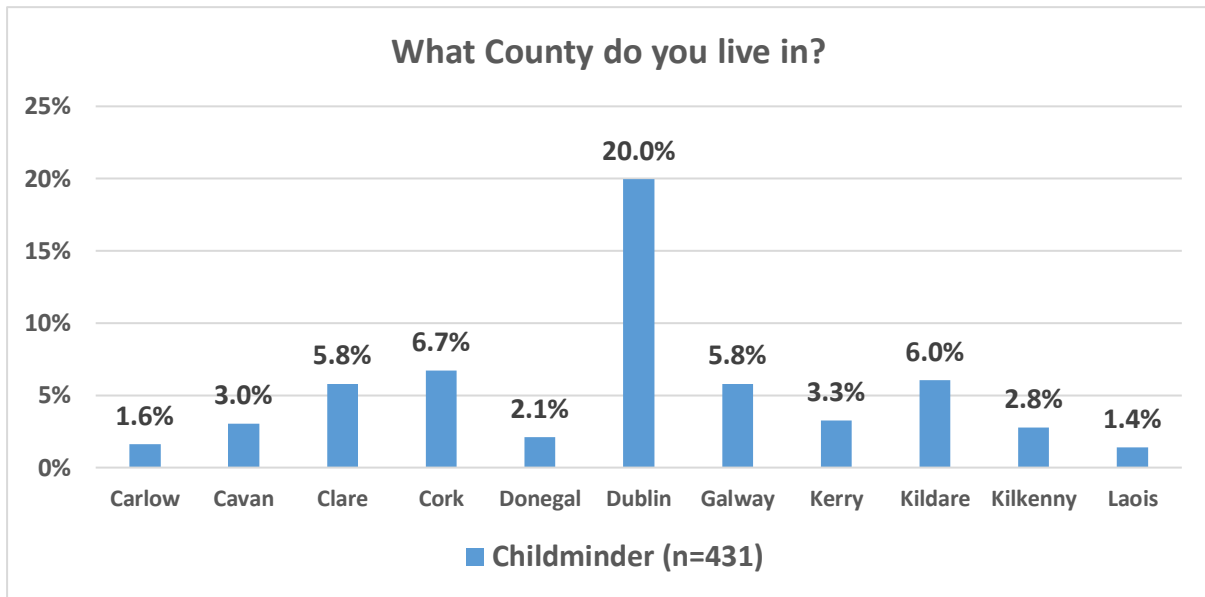
**Table 1: Nationality of childminders**

There were four options (Rural area, Village, Town or City) given for the question about where a person lived. Childminders predominantly lived in a rural area, with the smallest number living in the city. (**Figure 3**) The percentage of childminders living in rural areas, however, shows a slight decline from last year (2021=40.4%).

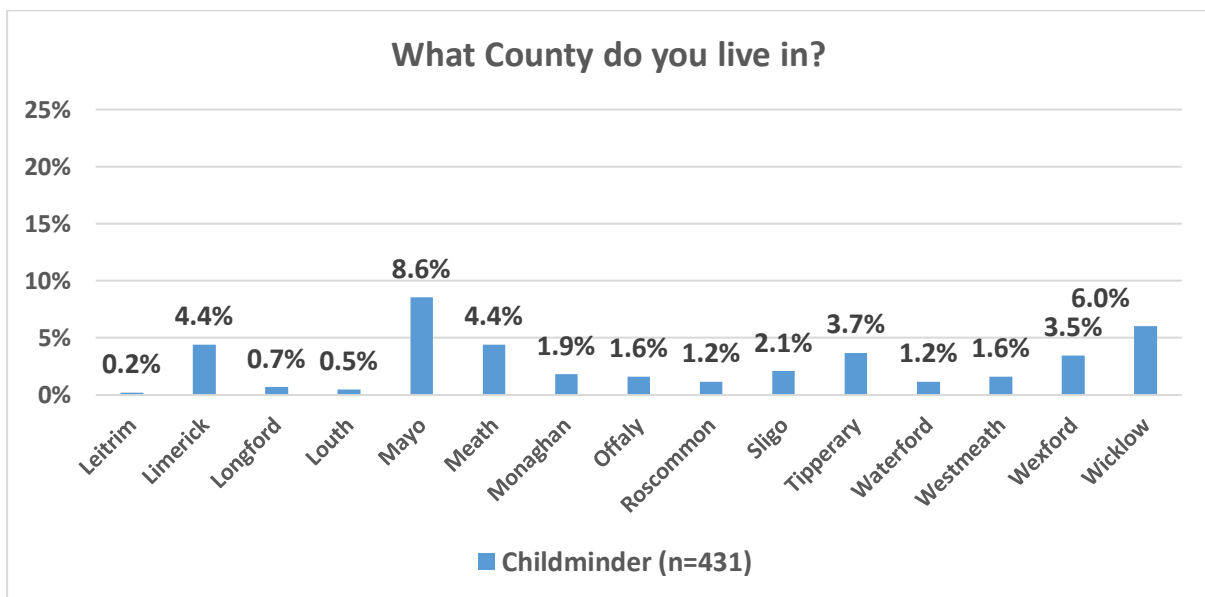


**Figure 3: Where do you currently live/work?**

The next question asked respondents to select which County they live in (**Figures 4a & 4b**).



**Figure 4a: What County do you live in?**



**Figure 4b: What County do you live in?**

The majority of childminders who responded said they live in Dublin, with Cork, Kildare, Mayo and Wicklow also having high numbers. It is worth noting that all 26 counties are represented in this survey.

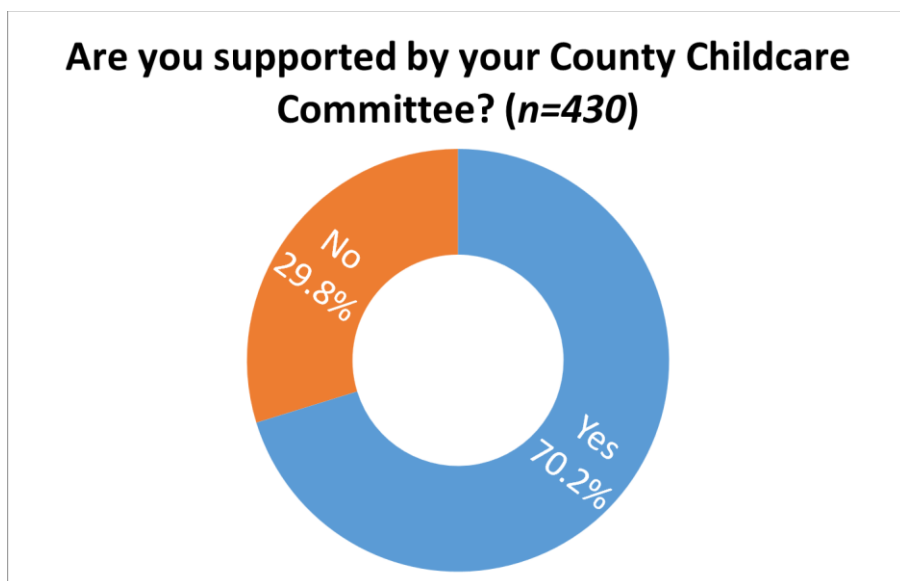


Figure 5: *Are you supported by your County Childcare Committee?*

It is evident from the results displayed in **Figure 5**, that the majority of childminders, over 70%, are supported by their County Childcare Committee.

**Figure 6** indicates that the majority of childminders who replied were members of Childminding Ireland. This shows a similar pattern to the results from last year.

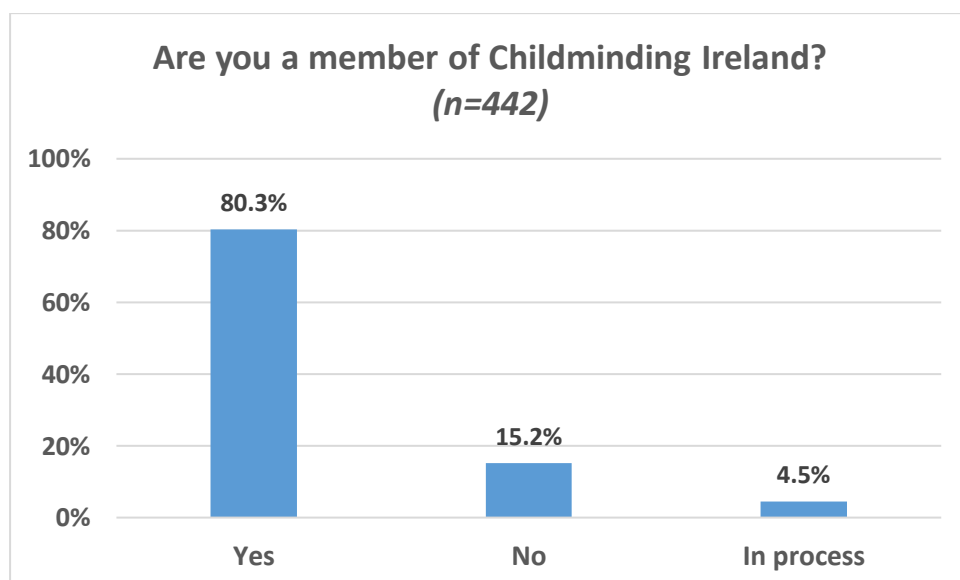


Figure 6: *Membership of Childminding Ireland*

## Childminding Information

The majority of childminders (52.6%) had a friend or family member involved in childminding and that was where they got the idea of pursuing it as a career. **(Figure 7)**

Only 10.5% learned about it through career guidance channels.

Respondents were asked, if they had heard about childminding as a career from different sources than those outlined in the given categories, to include that information. Three main sources emerged from the responses. The first was that some people ended up childminding simply as a favour to friends or family.

*“My sister in law needed someone to look after her baby when she went back to work, so from there my child care started..”*

*“Started as a favour for my friends”*

*“Fell into the job and love it!”*

The second source was that they had already been involved in childcare in some capacity.

*“I’m an experienced Owner Manager of Early Years Service, now providing Childminding Service from home”*

*“I worked in a creche but the hours and pay were very bad so I chose childminding instead”*

*“I worked in a childcare setting for 10 years before”*

*“I worked in my local preschool so knew the demand for childminders in my area”*

The third main reason or source given, was that people saw it as a career when they had children of their own and wanted to be able to stay at home with them.

*“Was a nanny and Montessori teacher before I had children. Decided to do it from home when I became a mum”*

*“While I was rearing my own children, I started minding my friends and neighbours children when they went to work”*

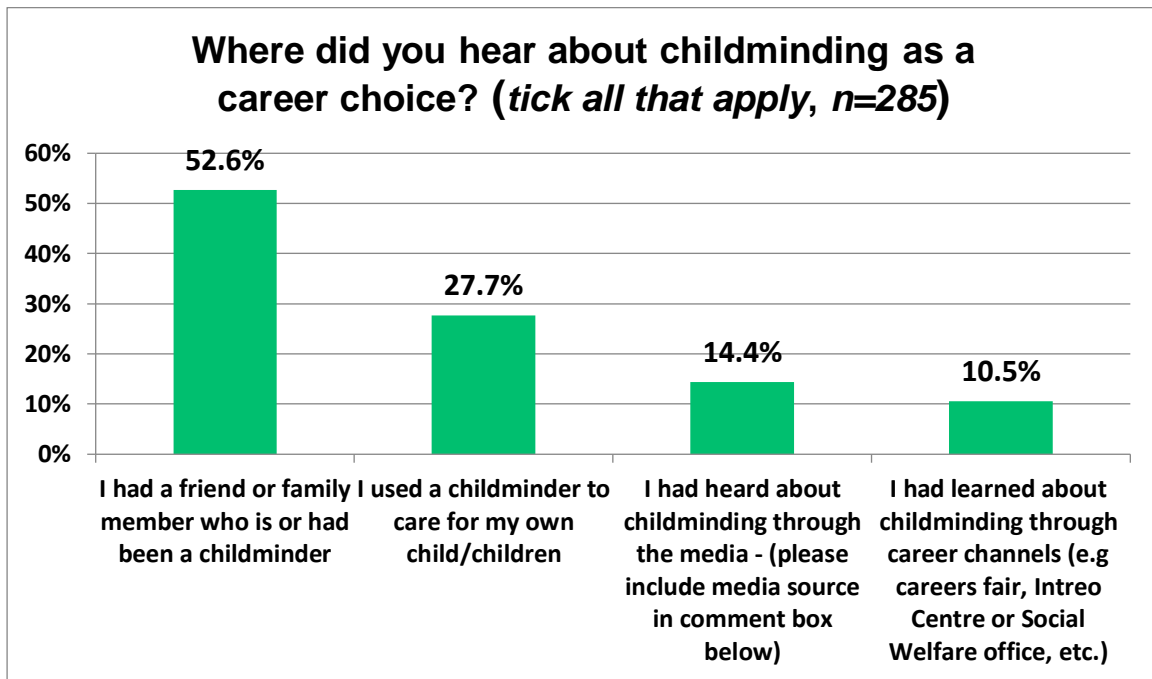
*“I needed to stay at home with my kids as one was ill (long term)but couldn’t afford it”*

*“I had previously worked in purpose-built childcare. When I had my own child I started to work from home”*

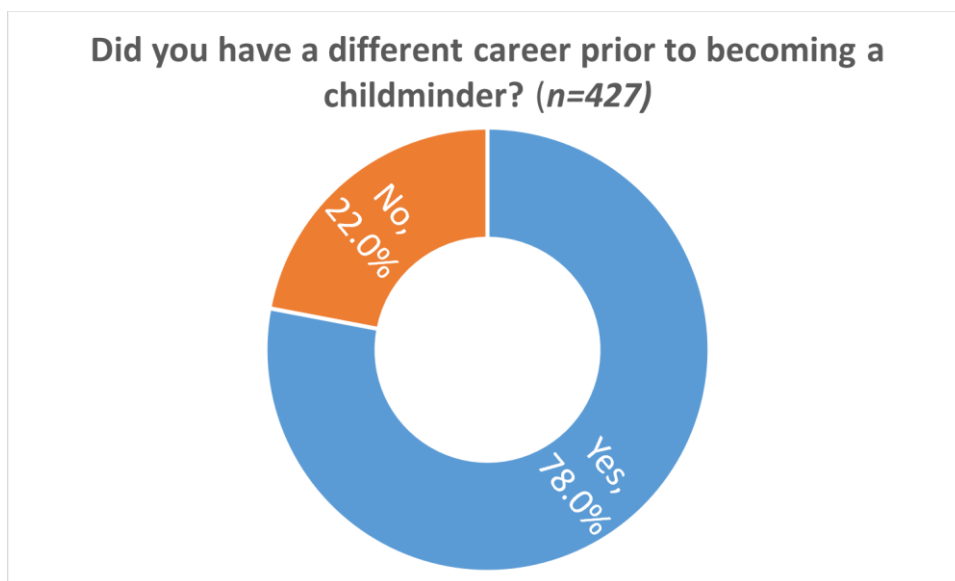
*“only option for me as a mum, I can not afford childcare nor do I want my children growing up in a creche with staff over worked and underpaid”*

Other responses included hearing about it from their County Childcare Committee, “radio”, “google”, “need cash”, “through College”



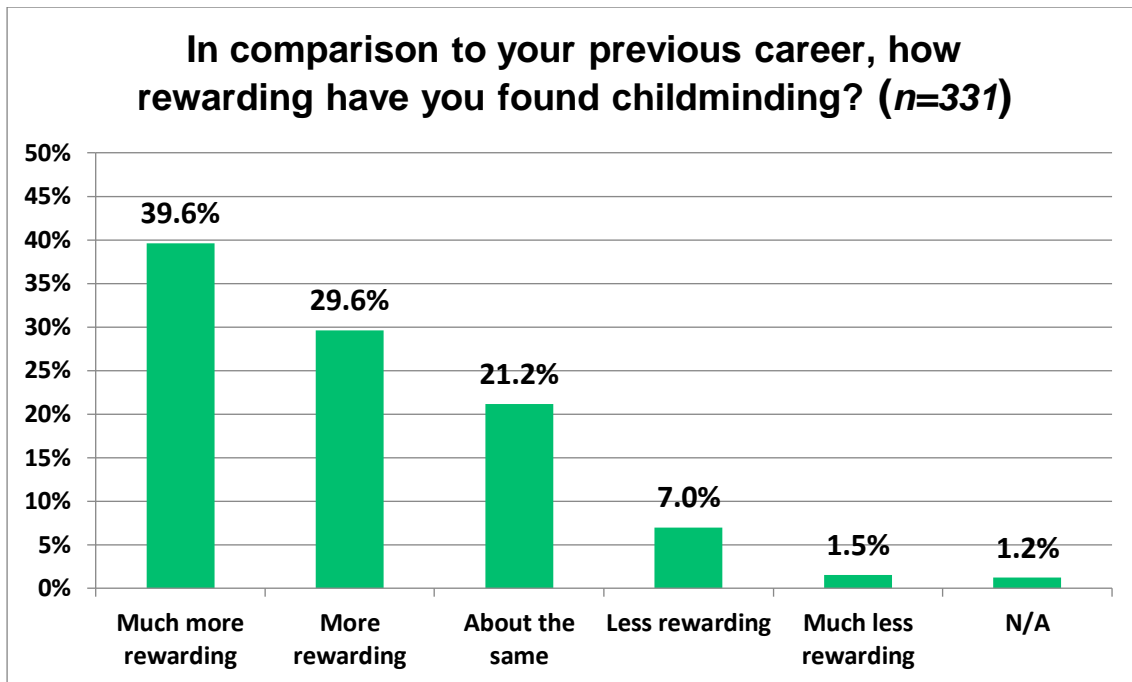


**Figure 7: Where did you hear about childminding as a career choice?**

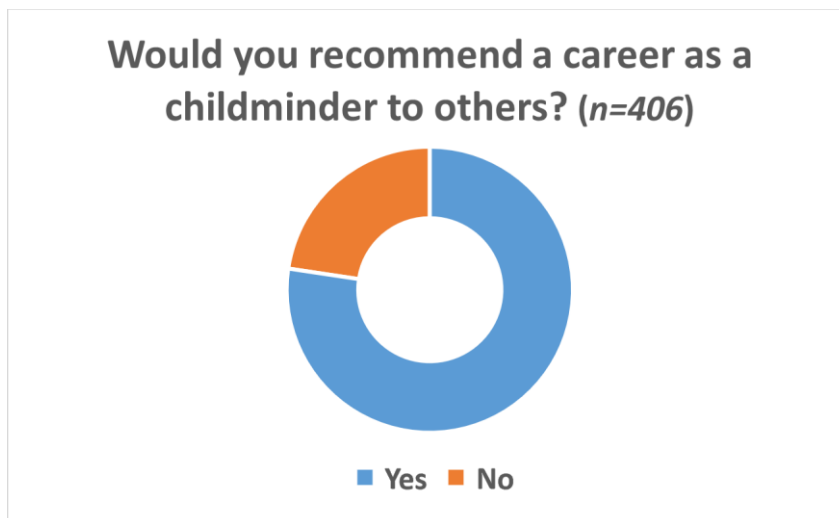


**Figure 8: Did you have a different career prior to becoming a childminder?**

Nearly 80% of the respondents stated that they had a different career prior to their decision to become a childminder (**Figure 8**). These people were directed to a question asking them to compare how rewarding they find childminding relative to their previous career. Nearly 70% said they found childminding either “*much more rewarding*” or “*more rewarding*”. Only 8.5% said that they found it either “*less rewarding*” or “*much less rewarding*”. (**Figure 9**)



**Figure 9:** *In comparison to your previous career, how rewarding have you found childminding?*



**Figure 10:** *Would you recommend a career as a childminder to others?*

The majority of childminders (78.3%) stated that they would recommend childminding as a career. (Figure 10)

Respondents were given the option to add a comment about whether they would recommend childminding as a career to others. While many felt it was a very rewarding career,

*“Its a fabulous job, rewarding and good fun. You work from home and can care for your own children along with other children.”*

*“it is very rewarding & you are your own boss, Patients & above of children is key.”*

a lot of respondents included a caveat saying it is not for everyone and that they felt it was both undervalued and underpaid.

*“Yes, its good to do while your own children are young and at home but its also underpaid and undervalued”*

*“Its very rewarding but hard work”*

*“I find that I really enjoy minding children they are wonderful but it is a tiresome job.. minding from 7.30 in morning to 6.15pm.. with no breaks and it is very hard to charge extra to parents.. also no paid holidays or sick days.. guilty feelings when needing time off for medical appmts”*

*“The pay is low, as a self employed person I get no sick leave/support, parents take you for granted, it’s actually tough physical work, your home is impacted by your work unless you have a separate entrance to your childminding rooms”*

A large number of respondents also stated that they were only doing it currently because it suited them.

*“Suits well when you have your own children”*

*“It allows you to stay at home with your own children while having a small income”*

*“I find you aren’t really appreciated. By the time you feed the kids, get supplies, take them out, you really don’t earn a good wage. It suits me because I get to stay home with my child”*

The introduction of regulations was continually mentioned as a factor in not recommending it as a career.

*“There are pros and cons...the changes coming down the line will make it less appealing for people as it won't feel like home from home care”*

*“It is becoming too complicated, and now with the new regulations being proposed not only will existing childminders leave, people will simply not become childminders”*

*“Currently under Preschool regulations and Govt now are dictating what you can charge,how many weeks you need to open and as NCS comes more into the fore they will have too much control.If there are genuinely separate regulations for childminders (and respect plus acknowledgement for the important job they do .. then maybe I might change my advice... but currently the attitude from DCYA is incredibly condescending”*

*““Because of the over regulation that I believe is on the way. Years ago I did recommend it to a close friend who is currently minding but I don’t think either of us will be minding two years from now unfortunately”*

Some respondents very clearly stated that they would not recommend it as a career to others, the recurring theme again being the issues of low pay and being undervalued.

*“Long hours, low pay, little funding, unrealistic expctions for a family home setting with hse inspection, past experience not taken in to account, not possible for childminders to have level 5, 6, etc, realistic approach to training course and time wise to do needed. Huge*

*demand for childminders for younger age and babies , but too many fetac level this and that required , people everywhere are doing it and not even registered only very few of us .”*

*“Lack of respect from society and government”*

*“Poor pay, thankless job”*

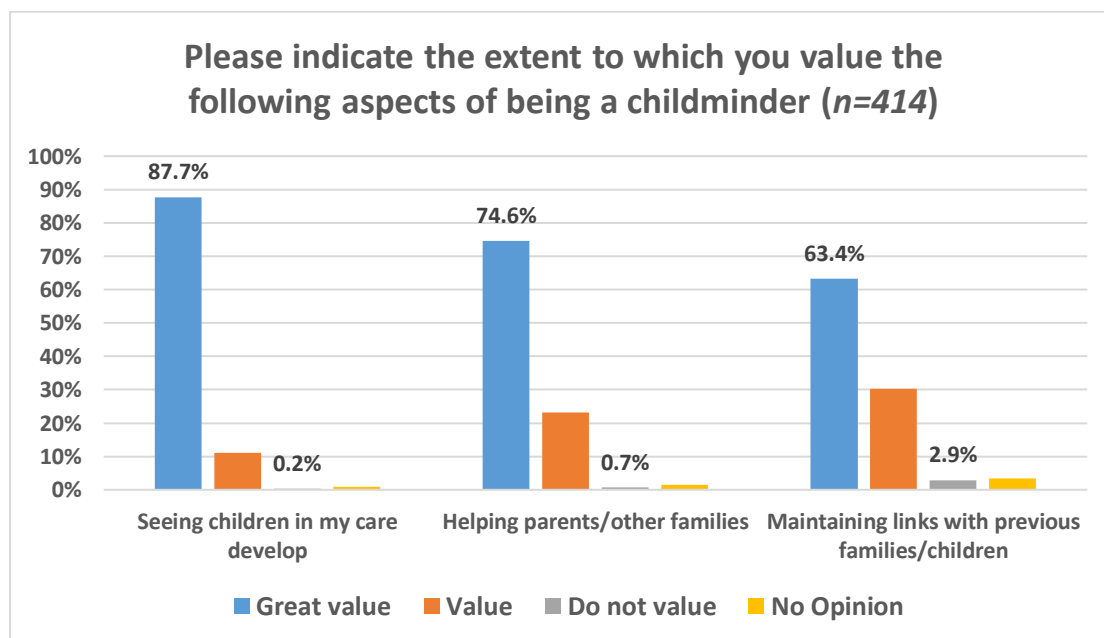
Loneliness and isolation were also referred to as being a disincentive.

*“While it can be a rewarding career, it can be quite a lonely job, the only interaction you have with another adult all day is with a parent.”*

*“It’s very isolating. Your wage is never guaranteed. It impacts on family life/house”*

*“Yes and no to this question. Yes it allows me to be my own boss and create the setting I have always wanted but it can be a lonely job I would love to see more local network groups and hope the napc will bring this. Can bé tricky taking time off also as you always feel like you are letting the families down if you do. Self care is not an easy task in this job everyone else comes first.”*

**Figures 11a and 11b** below show the extent to which childminders value particular aspects of being a childminder. The option of *“seeing children in my care develop”* was the most highly valued, (87.7%) closely followed by the *“ability to combine caring for my family with caring for other children”* (80.1%). Over 70% of respondents also highly valued *“helping parents/other families”* and *“working from home”*. “Flexibility” was the least valued of all the options supplied.



**Figure 11a: The extent to which you value aspects of being a childminder.**

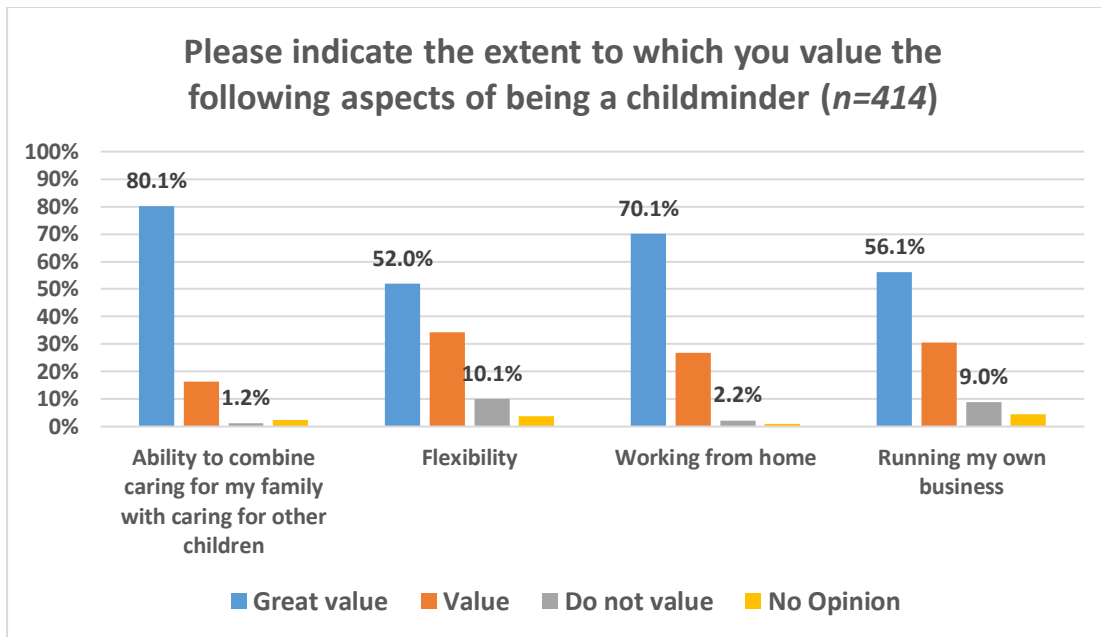


Figure 11b: *The extent to which you value aspects of being a childminder.*

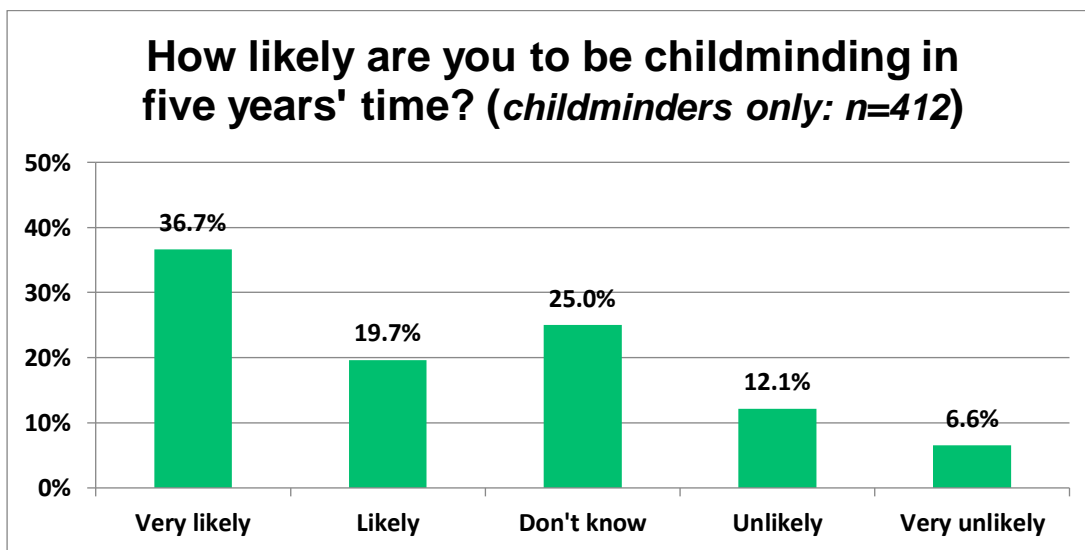


Figure 12: *How likely are you to be childminding in five years' time?*

Respondents were asked how likely was it that they would still be childminding in five years' time (**Figure 12**). Only 36.7% of childminders believed that it was “*very likely*” that they would still be working in this sector in five years' time. 18.7% of childminders said it was “*unlikely*” or “*very unlikely*”, with 25% saying that they “*don't know*”.

Childminders were given the option of explaining why they felt they would not continue working in childminding and some of the main reasons given are outlined below.

## Age

*“My age, I’ve worked as a childminder for 23 years, and now I like a bit of time to myself, I now do breakfast and school runs and love it.”*

*“Reaching retirement age” “When I’m too old” “Too old for such a demanding job”*

## TUSLA / Regulations

Many respondents referred to Tusla and the incoming regulations as a reason why they will not continue with it as a career.

*“To have proper pay and conditions you have to be registered with Tusla. Registration with Tusla requires a ridiculous amount of admin work during registration process and afterwards. Requires the possibility of strangers inspecting your home. Doing the job properly requires insurance, and registration with childminding Ireland, paying an accountant, taxes and with the cost of living so high my wages are continually shrinking. Impossible to make a living wage in my current situation and no sick pay or holiday pay”*

*“If Childminding becomes too regulated in that it changes the way I work in my own home, we are very much a free play, home from home environment “*

*“Fear of the changes coming down the line that I won’t be able to operate I. My own home as I should and focus will be on regulations not the children, I as it is haven’t enough hrs in the day”*

*“Red tape”*

*“Because of being forced to Tusla register my house is a family home not a purpose built setting and I won’t entertain rules and regulations in my family home. Also having to do more mandatory training, I didn’t go back to college for 4 years in the evenings to get my level 5&6 in Childcare to have more training forced upon me.”*

Cost and low pay were also cited as reasons for leaving the sector.

*“It’s getting more costly to operate and payment from parents is getting more difficult especially if there are holidays/ bank holidays involved”*

*“Rates of pay low” “Rate of pay Rising costs”*

*“Low pay , long hours yet huge responsibility. Problems with parents forgetting to pay. No sick pay , no holiday pay .”*

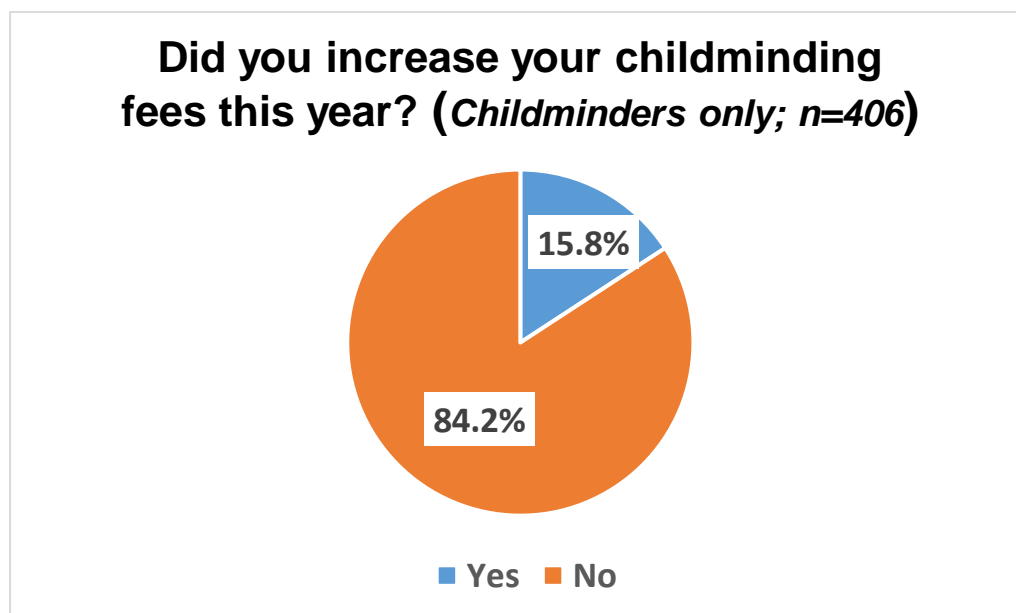
*“low pay. The tax free incentive of €15,000 is way too low for today’s cost of living. It needs to be updated as it’s been that for many years”*

*“Lack of support”*

*“Hard work and not great help besides Childminding Ireland”*

## Working Situation

A minority of respondents (15.8%) said that they had increased their fees this year with 22% saying that they intended to increase them next year (**Figures 13 and 14**) Nearly 50% of childminders said they didn't know if they were going to increase them.



**Figure 13: Did you increase your childminding fees this year?**

Some childminders said that they could not increase their fees due to restrictions imposed on them.

*“Fee freeze for Tusla registered minders” “Applied for core funding so not allowed”*

*“I'm under a price freeze while I'm contracted to pobal”*

*“Fees are fixed at zero by Govt... I do ecce ... struggling to keep going as costs are going up for literally everything and very little profit at end of year and that is taxed to the hilt.. really better off on social welfare... though Govt response would be open all day.. that does not work for my own family”*

Other childminders said that while they did not increase their fees directly, they did change other conditions in their service.

*“No increase but I added in holiday pay for myself which I never had before”*

*“Haven't increases my fee in years, however don't offer discount for siblings now”*

Another theme that emerged in the replies to this question was the difficulty that some childminders felt about asking parents for more money.

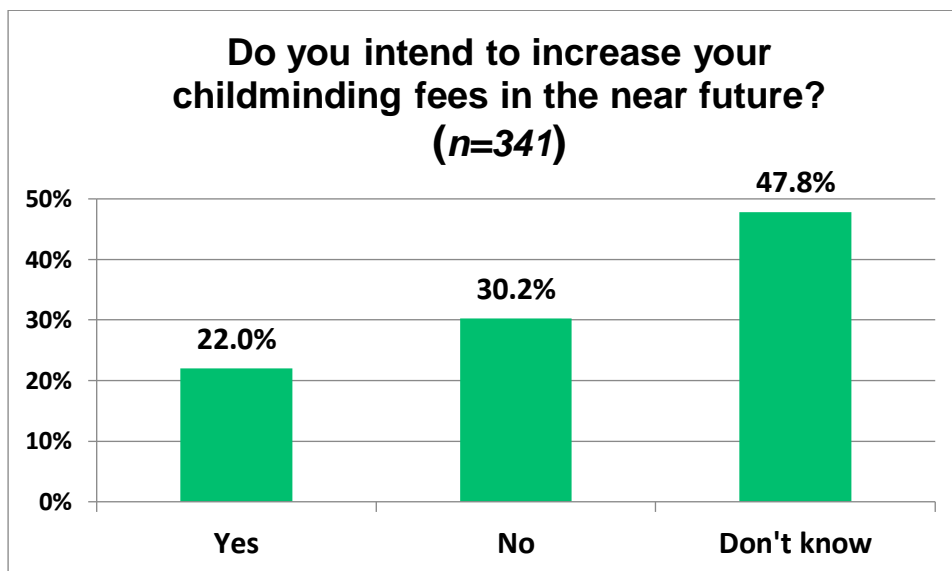
*“I find in a small business when you deal with the same people all the time it’s extremely hard to increase fees as a childminder you get to know the parents personally as well as professionally this makes it extremely hard to increase fees and maintain a professional stance”*

*“The children and parents that are wurh me have been with me for years. It just did not seem appropriate to increase fees”*

*“I found it really hard to increase fees even though from a business perspective I really need to. I find parents can become really defensive when there is a talk about fee increases or changes. its such a personal job its hard to be taken professionally sometimes.”*

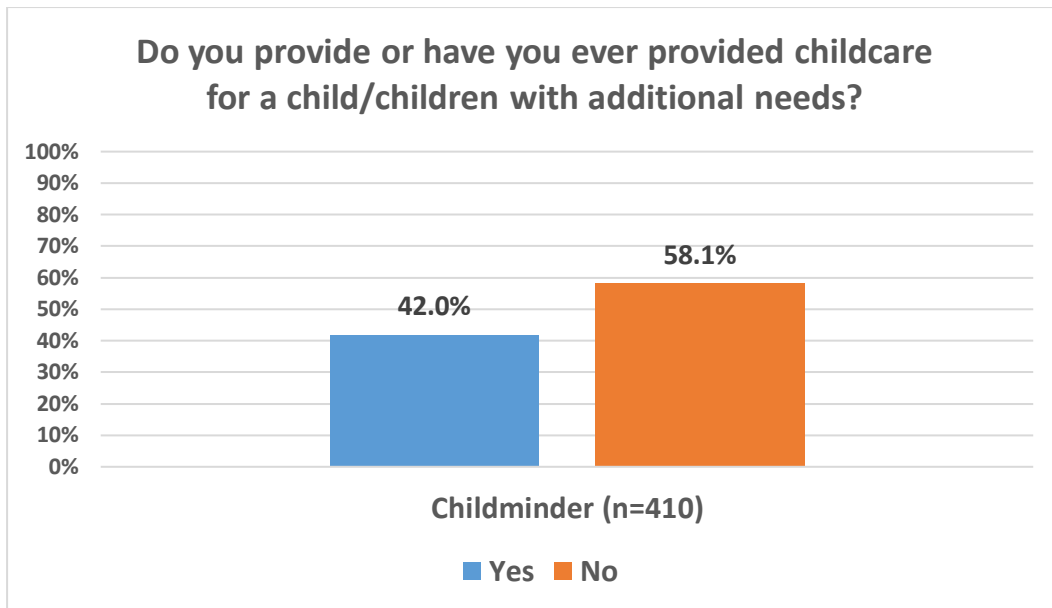
*“I hate the money side of the business and I realise now I should have increased my fees as they have been the same for 14 years.”*

Nearly half of the childminders who had not increased their fees this year, were unsure whether they would increase them next year. Only 22% said that they would definitely increase them, with over 30% saying they definitely would not be increasing them. (**Figure 14**)



**Figure 14:** *Do you intend to increase your childminding fees in the near future?*





**Figure 15: Do you provide, or have you provided childcare for a child / children with additional needs?**

The majority of both childminders are either currently providing childcare for a child/children with additional needs or have provided it in the past (**Figure 15**). A lot of respondents stated that they have never been asked to do so but would be willing to provide childcare if required.

*“This is not by choice but that the opportunity has never arisen”*

*“It has never arisen with the families that I have minded for.”*

*“I would provide childcare for a child with additional needs if needed”*

*“I would, as I'm a qualified SNA, but the need hasn't arisen to date.”*

The majority of childminders who are currently providing care for a child/children with additional needs, or have done so in the past, replied that they provided care for a child / children with autism.

*“Boy with autism iv cared for for 6 years” “I minded twins both diagnosed with Autism”*

*“Quadriplegic child, at least one child with Autism each year, children whom are non verbal so have learnt Lamh and PECS to help them have extra ways to communicate”*

Other responses referred to caring for children with Down Syndrome, dyspraxia, dyslexia, ASD, neurodivergence and visual impairment.

*“Dyslexia, speech delays, adhd, asd, hip dysplasia”*

*“had a child with speech delays. I also briefly worked with a child that had sensory processing issues and found tasks difficult”*

*“Down's Syndrome, Autism, Physical Disability”*

*“Currently minding a baby who is having surgery for a cleft lip and no palate”*

## National Action Plan for Childminding / Childminding Grant

64% of respondents said that no parents had asked them about the National Childcare Scheme Childminders were asked if they had applied for the Childminding Development Grant in 2022. 27.1% of respondents said they had applied, with 72.9% stating they had not. **(Figure 16)**

Reasons given for not applying for the grant included having received it in 2021 (therefore not being eligible to apply in 2022), missing the deadline, or not wishing to commit to childminding in the future.

*“Received the grant in 2021”*

*“It was closed by the time I checked” “Forgot about it and deadline ran out”*

*“Not one of the 70 registered childminders in Ireland” “Black Market cmer, receive wfp.”*

*“no as I am not registered with Tulsa and don't want to go down the road of filling out forms and baisclly begging for money all government controlling”*

*“Says you have to be childming for next 2 years ...I may not”*

*“As I don't Know I will be continuing childminding.” “Didn't know about it until.i joined Childminding.ie”*

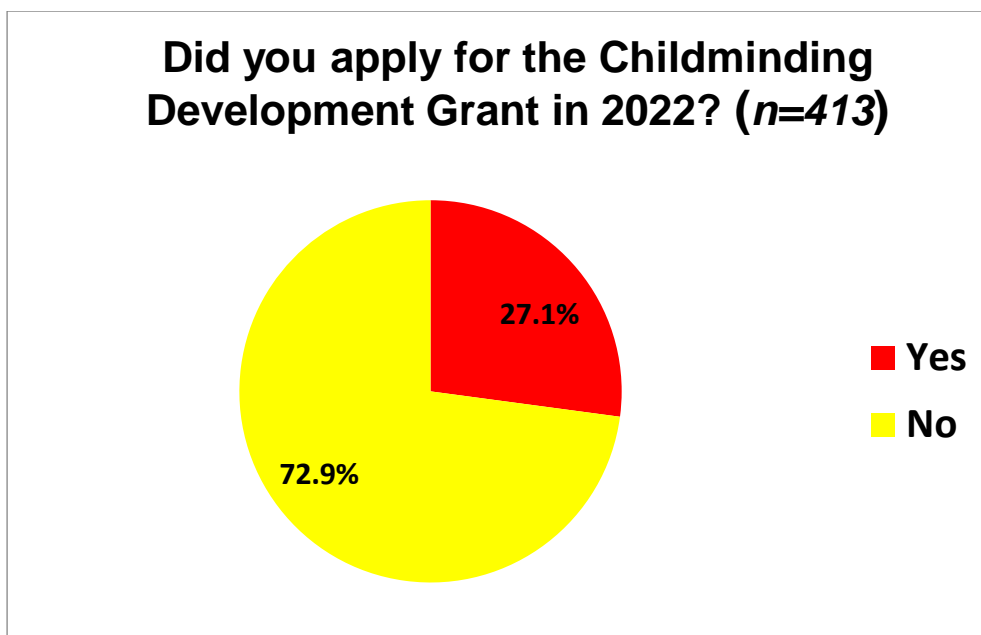
Some respondents felt that the process was too complicated and also raised the issue of having to spend the money first before receiving the grant.

*“The process was too complicated and I didn't have the funds in my account in order to be able to purchase the equipment in advance and wait for reimbursement the application process was too hard having to label everything and put in costings of everything went by the time the grant was approved the items would no longer be available”*

*“the process is too complicated and I didn't have the funds for prior purchase of items. I don't agree with the process”*

*“Because everything has to be bought first and then you are waiting a few months for payment to come through after”*

*“I applied for half in 2021 but didn't have the spare cash to apply again in 2022, esp when the process is so long and your left waiting for your money back for nearly 3 months”*



**Figure 16: Did you apply for the Childminding Development Grant in 2022**

100% of applicants were successful, but two respondents said that they were not able to avail of it, again referring to the difficulty of having to have the money to spend before receiving the grant.

*“But couldn't afford to pay out 1100 euros in October and wait for money to come back”*

*“But couldn't use it as I don't have spare money at this time of year and grant isn't given before buying what is required”*

## General Comments

Respondents were given the option of adding any comments or suggestions that they felt were applicable or to raise issues that they felt had not been addressed in the survey. The majority of the comments reinforced themes that had already emerged throughout the survey. A selection of the comments is included below but the full list of comments can be seen in **Appendix 2**.

*“Childminding is very rewarding and if someone is considering doing it they should”*

*“Regarding cost people don't want to pay they think it is too much. They would not get out of bed in the morning for what some expect Childminders to be paid. The most precious thing in their lives to be minded and they put on the poor mouth. Not acceptable for the Service given and the years of experience.”*

*“Level of administration work required by Tusla registration is a deterrent to registration”*

*“More needs to be done to support voluntary childminders who work from their own home without them being forced to be registered and assessed”*

*“Childminders should be encouraged to register with Tulsa, it's not impossible, and let parents benefit from the money towards their bill every week.”*

*“I have great concerns that Childminders are not valued in their own capacity. Rules are being brought in but our specific needs have not been considered. We should be allowed to work with assistants and cater for the age groups that we enjoy.”*

*“Like other childminders I am concerned about the future of childminders in this country”*

*“I think all things are well covered in this survey. Thank you.”*

*“Thanks for the informative regarding the nation plan. Childminding will not exist if it becomes too regulated.”*

## Summary and Conclusion

For this shortened survey, the response rate remained consistently high throughout the entire survey for all the questions. The number of respondents who took the time to include detailed comments was also very high. There was also an increase in the number of childminders in contact with Childminding Ireland,

From previous surveys that Childminding Ireland has carried out, it has been consistently found that the qualities that parents said they look for in a childminder, and that childminders themselves, regard as most important, remain ones of kindness, caring, home from home setting, etc. What this survey shows, is that there is frustration around the inability to quantify these qualities in terms of monetary value.

We see from the responses to questions the consistent theme that childminders find bureaucracy frustrating and tiresome. They do not seem to see any benefit to the rules and regulations that, in their words, are being imposed on them.

An issue that arises from the results of this survey is the conflict between the childminders’ attachment to the children they mind and the need for seeing it as a business, as was particularly evident in the section on fee increases. Is there a risk of the emotional attachment that childminders have with the children being exploited?

The issues of cost, low pay, lack of support and feeling undervalued remain constant themes throughout this survey. The difficulty for childminders in accessing the grant due to the need to have spent the money before they can apply for it, has caused financial difficulty, as not all childminders are in a position to do this. These issues appear to be making childminding an unattractive career choice for a lot of people. It should be a major source of concern that there is a relatively low number of people who see themselves still being in the childminding sector in five years’ time.

- In answer to the question: ‘How likely are you to be childminding in five years’ time?’ 44% of respondents (n=412) don’t know, are unlikely or very unlikely to be childminding.
- Childminders predominately live in rural/village areas (55.19% of respondents), with least living in cities (12.47% of respondents). N=433
- The vast majority of childminding respondents were aged between 25yrs and 54 years
- 78% of childminding respondents (n=427) had a different career before becoming a childminder.

- When asked *in comparison to your previous career, how rewarding have you found childminding?* 69.2% of respondents (n=331) found childminding more/much more rewarding, with 8.5% finding it less/much less rewarding.
- 42% of respondents (n=410) have provided childcare for a child/children with additional needs.
- When the respondents (n=414) were asked to indicate the extent to which they valued the following aspects of being a childminder:

	<b>Great value</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Do not value</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
Seeing children in my care develop	87.7%	10%	0.2%	2.1%
Ability to care for my own family, with caring for other children	80.1%	16%	1.2%	2.7%
Helping parents/other families	74.6%	22%	0.7%	2.7%
Working from home	70.1%	27%	2.2%	0.7%
Maintaining links with previous families/children	63.4%	30%	2.9%	3.7%
Running my own business	56.1%	30%	9.0%	4.9%
Flexibility	52%	32%	10.1%	5.9%

## Appendix 1



Childminding in Ireland Survey 2022 Questionnaire.pdf

## Appendix 2



Childminding in Ireland Survey 2022 Comments and Concerns.pdf