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Stability and change in post separation relationships, parenting arrangements and pathways.

Some implications for practice

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Plan of discussion

- A brief description of 2 waves of the LSSF
- Inter-parental relationships
- Care-time arrangements
- Development of parenting arrangements and pathways
- Possible implications for service delivery



Longitudinal Study of Separated Families (LSSF)

- Wave 1:
 - 10,002 separated parents who had registered their case in Child Support Agency in 2007 and where separation took place after July 2006.
 - Telephone interviews between August & December 2008
 - One child was selected if more than one child was involved in the separation
- Wave 2:
 - 7,031 parents had a follow-up interview one year later (between September & October 2009)



Key characteristics of parents and children

- Wave 1
 - ◆ 4,983 fathers & 5,019 mothers
 - 1,885 were former couples
 - ◆ Mean duration of separation (15 months)
 - ◆ Children's age:
 - 0–4 years: 58%
 - 5–11 years: 30%
 - 12–17 years: 12%



Key characteristics of parents and children

Wave 2:

- ◆ Analysis based on 3,412 fathers & 3,619 mothers (including 1,070 former couples)
 - An additional 254 parents had reconciled &
 - 49 were negotiating this (most questions were skipped for these parents)
- ◆ Children's age:
 - Under 5 years: 37%
 - 5–11 years: 41%
 - 12+ years: 12%



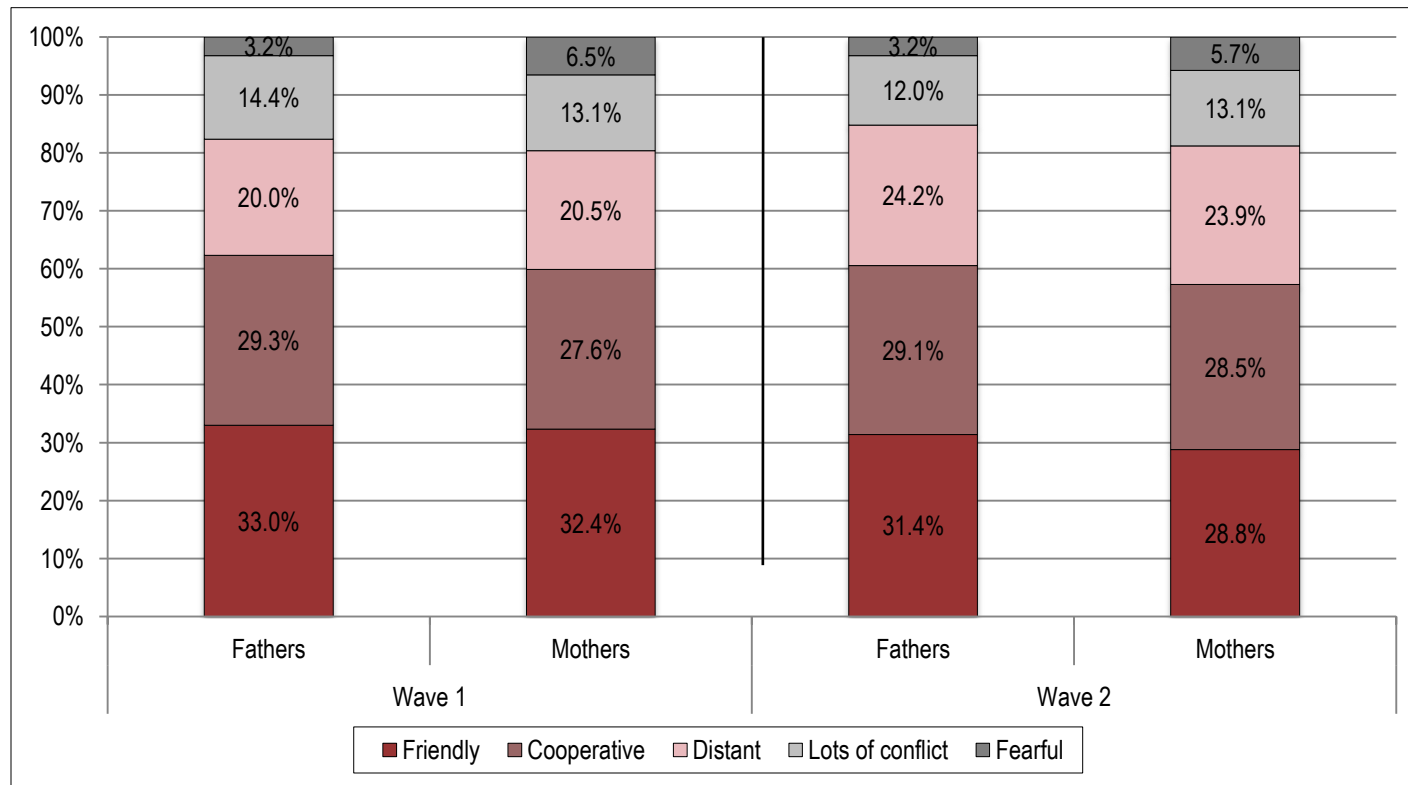
Inter-parental relationships



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Inter-parental relationships



Note: data have been weighted



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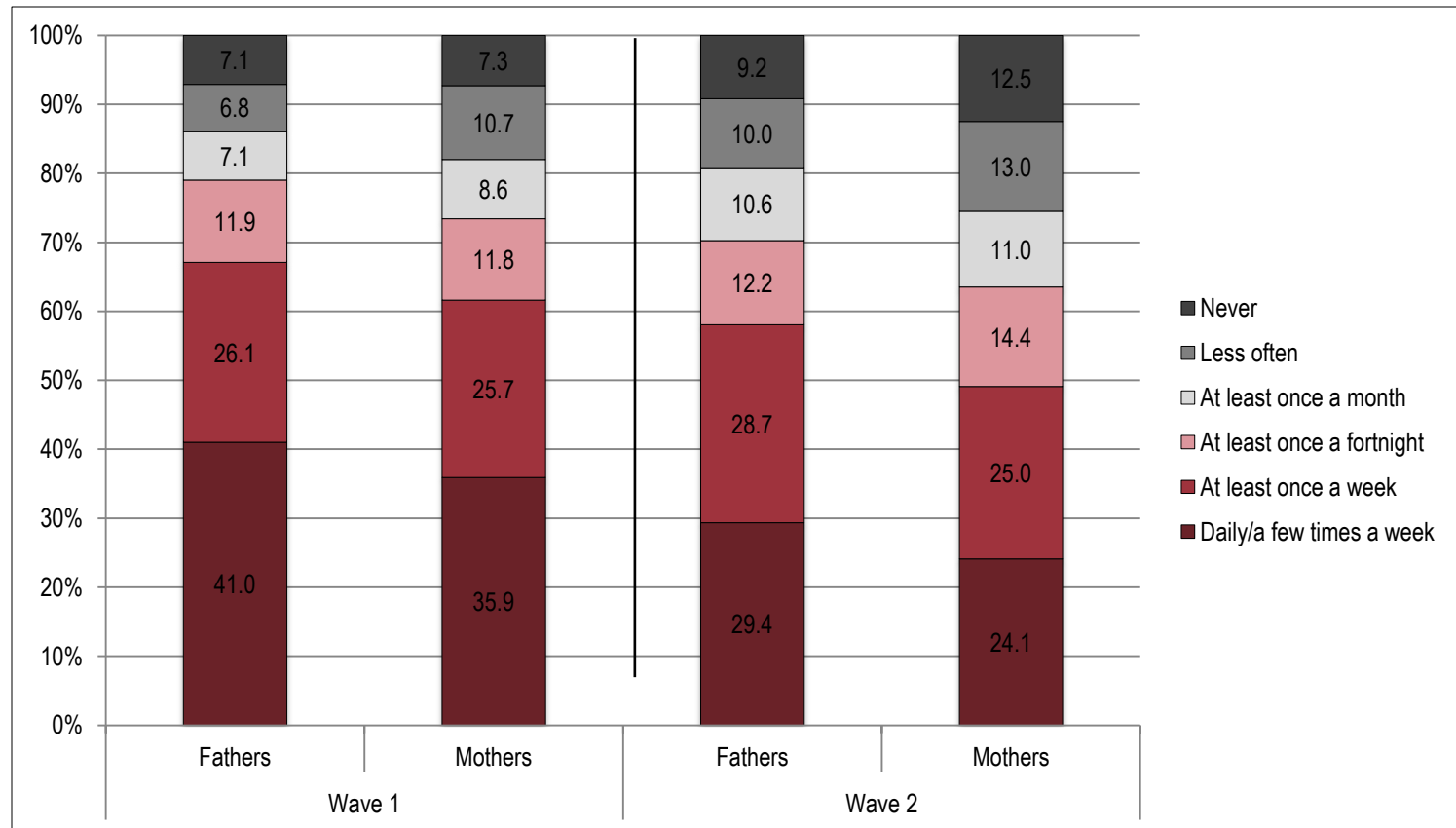
Change in inter-parental relationships

- **49% Friendly/cooperative both times**
- 13% Friendly/cooperative → distant or clearly negative
- **10% Distant both times**
- 7% Distant → friendly/cooperative
- 4% Distant → clearly negative
- **10% Clearly negative both times**
- 9% Clearly negative → distant or friendly/cooperative

[Clearly negative = “lots of conflict” / “fearful”]



Communication between parents about their child



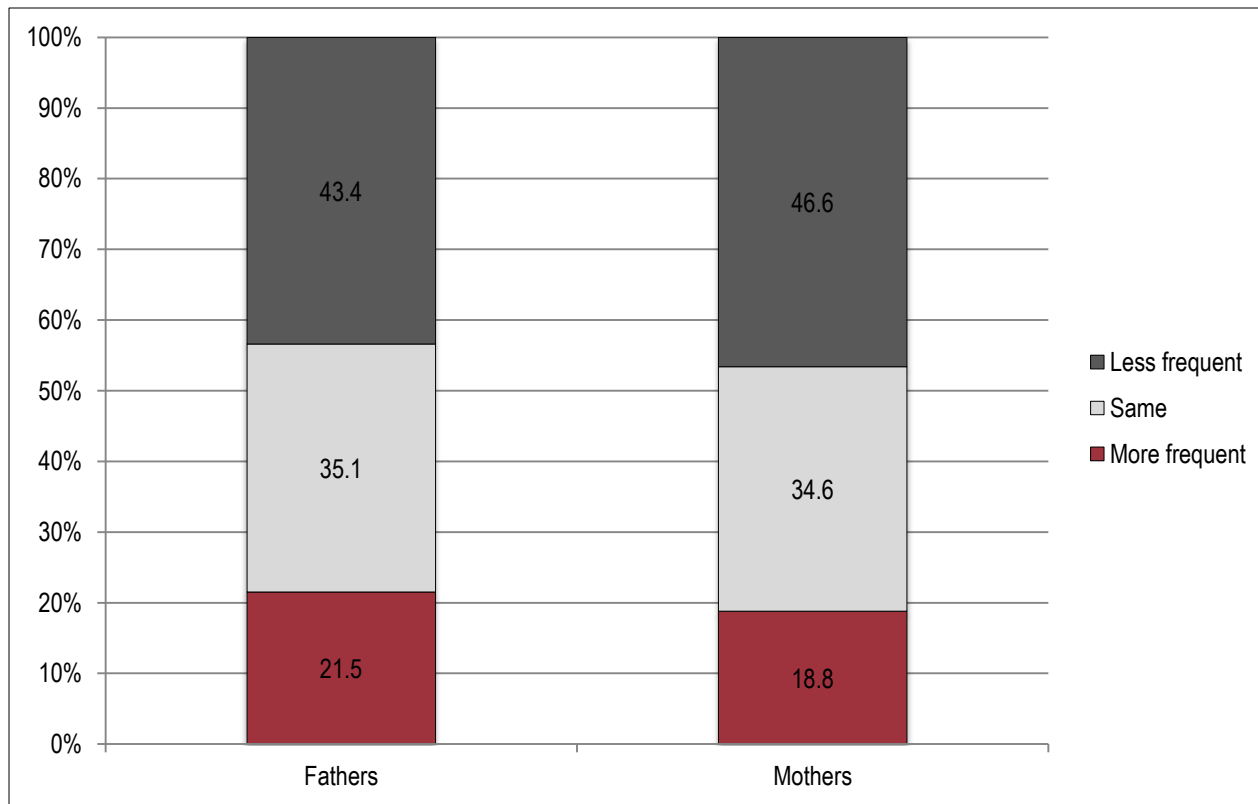
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Change in communication between 2 waves



Note: data have been weighted



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Questions on physical hurt & emotional abuse

- W1

- ◆ **At any time before or during the separation, did (OTHER PARENT) ever:**

1. Try to prevent you from contacting family or friends
2. Try to prevent you from using the telephone or car
3. Try to prevent knowledge of or access to family money
4. Insult you with the intent to shame, belittle or humiliate
5. Threaten to harm the (child/children)
6. Threaten to harm other family/friends
7. Threaten to harm you
8. Damage or destroy property
9. Threaten to harm or harm pets
10. Threaten to harm themselves
11. (None of these)

- ◆ **Before you separated, were you ever physically hurt by (FOCUS PARENT) in any way?**

- Yes
- No

Was any abuse or violence ever seen or heard by the children?

- ◆ Yes , witnessed by children
- ◆ No, not witnessed by children
- ◆ Don't know if witnessed by children



Questions on physical hurt & emotional abuse

- W2

- ◆ **Thinking about the last 12 months**, did (OTHER PARENT) ever:

1. (Try to prevent you from contacting family or friends) (if separated parents were still under same roof)
2. (Try to prevent you from using the telephone or car) (if separated parents were still under same roof)
3. (Try to prevent knowledge of or access to family money) (if separated parents were still under same roof)
4. Insult you with the intent to shame, belittle or humiliate
5. Threaten to harm the (child/children)
6. Threaten to harm other family/friends
7. Threaten to harm you
8. Damage or destroy property
9. Threaten to harm or harm pets
10. Threaten to harm themselves
11. (None of these)

- ◆ **Thinking about the last 12 months**, were you ever physically hurt by (OTHER PARENT) in any way during that time?

- Yes
- No

And in the last 12 months, was any abuse or violence seen or heard by the children?

- ◆ Yes , witnessed by children
- ◆ No, not witnessed by children
- ◆ Don't know if witnessed by children



Experience of physical hurt & emotional abuse

	Wave 1 (re before or during separation)			Wave 2 (re between survey waves)		
	Fathers %	Mothers %	All %	Fathers %	Mothers %	All %
Physical hurt	17.3	26.1	21.7	3.8	4.7	4.3
Emotional abuse alone	34.2	37.9	36.1	41.8	48.7	45.3
Neither	48.5	36.0	42.3	54.3	46.6	50.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of respondents	3189	3376	6565	3189	3376	6565

Note: Reports of the small number of parents who did not respond to the questions in one or both waves were omitted. Data have been weighted.



Safety concerns

- W1 & W2
 - ◆ Do you have any concerns about (child)'s safety or your own safety as a result of ongoing contact with (the other parent)?
 - Yes, concerned about both of us
 - Yes, concerned about myself
 - Yes, concerned about (the child)
 - No



Safety concerns

	Wave 1			Wave 2		
	Fathers	Mothers	All	Fathers	Mothers	All
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<i>Had safety concerns</i>	<i>16.8</i>	<i>21.9</i>	<i>19.3</i>	<i>14.6</i>	<i>19.6</i>	<i>17.1</i>
~ concerned for both focus child and self	2.8	8.5	5.6	2.9	8.1	5.5
~ for self	1.6	3.4	2.5	1.7	2.6	2.2
~for focus child	12.5	10.0	11.2	10.0	9.0	9.5
<i>Of those who reporting safety concerns:</i>						
Attempted to limit child's contact with other parent	23.2	49.2	37.9	33.7	61.1	49.4



Change in safety concerns

	Fathers	Mothers	All
	%	%	%
No safety concerns at both W1 & W2	77.0	70.0	73.5
Had safety concerns at W1 only	8.5	10.5	9.5
Had safety concerns at W2 only	6.2	8.2	7.2
Had safety concerns at both W1 & W2	8.3	11.3	9.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

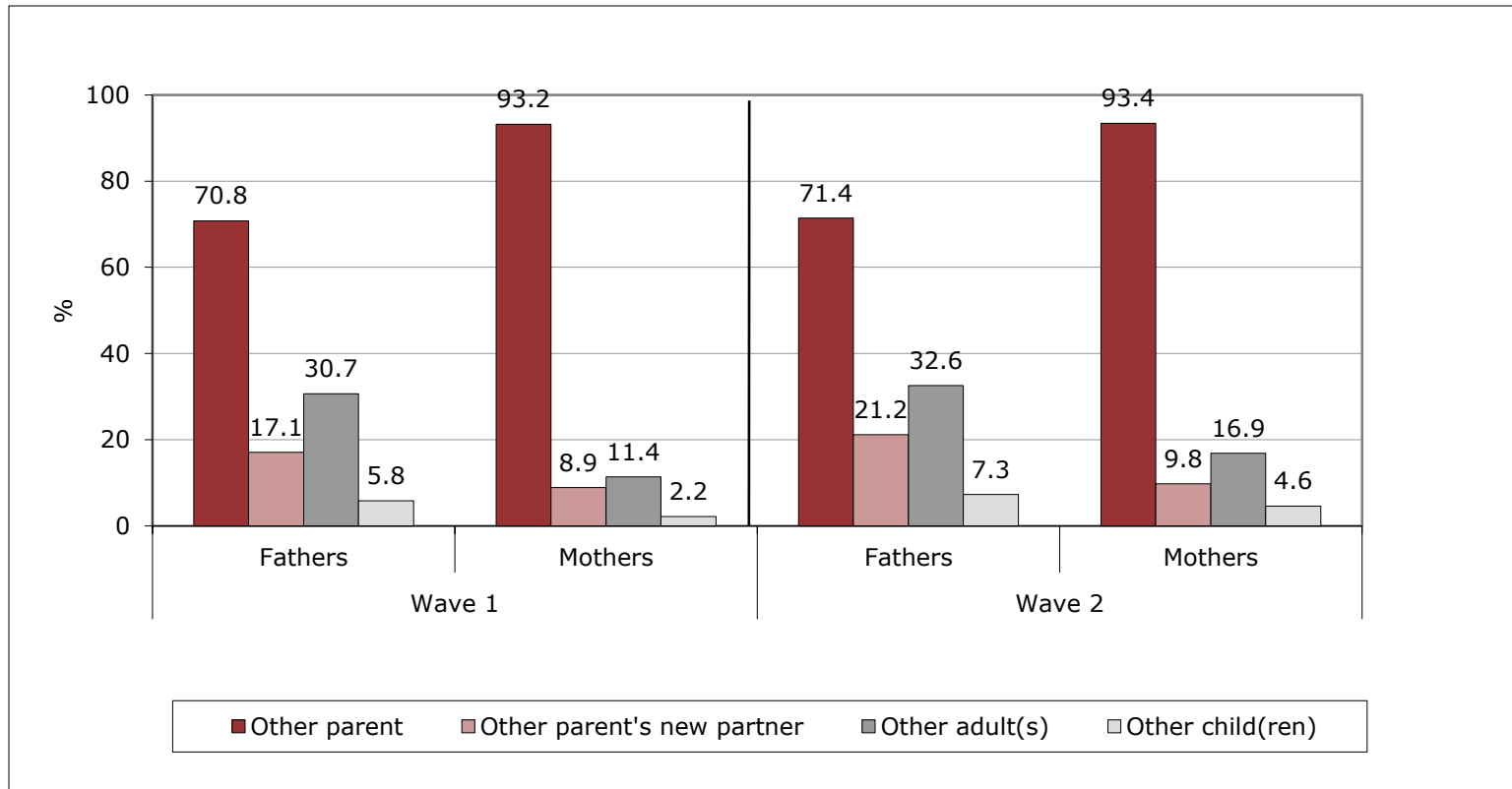
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Person(s) seen as responsible for safety concerns, Wave 2



Key points

- Inter-parental relationships:
 - ◆ Most commonly favourable both times (i.e., friendly or cooperative)
 - ◆ Some became distant
 - ◆ Highly conflictual or fearful relationships applied to one in six parents in wave 2
- Experience of physical hurt & emotional abuse
 - ◆ physical hurt:
 - diminished substantially
 - ◆ emotional abuse:
 - lower between waves than before/during separation, but still very common



Key points

- Safety concerns
 - ◆ Nearly as prevalent in wave 2 as in wave 1
 - ◆ Concerns tended to be directed to the other parent
 - Though applying to a minority, fathers were more likely than mothers to hold concerns relating to other parent's new partner
 - ◆ Safety concerns linked with experience of physical hurt/emotional abuse



Care-time arrangements



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Care-time arrangements

Proportion of nights per year with each parent	Wave 1	Wave 2
	%	%
5 categories of care-time arrangements		
100% nights with mother	32.8	28.1
Most nights with mother (i.e., 66–99% of nights)	45.3	48.3
Shared care time (35–65% of nights)	17.1	18.3
Most nights with father (i.e., 66–99% of nights)	2.7	3.3
100% of nights with father	2.2	2.0
Total	100	100
Father or mother never sees the child	12.4	13.7

Note: Continuing sample. Data have been weighted. Where both parents participated in the survey, the information provided by one parent was randomly omitted. Data for a small number of parents whose care-time arrangements were known for one wave only have been omitted.



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Care-time arrangements (detailed)

Proportion of nights per year with each parent	Wave 1 %	Wave 2 %
11 categories of care-time arrangements		
Father never sees child	11.5	12.8
Father sees in daytime only	21.3	15.3
87-99% with mother (1-13 % father)	13.9	15.0
66-86% with mother (14-34% father)	31.4	33.3
53-65% with mother (35-47% father)	8.1	8.8
48-52% with each parent (i.e., equal care time)	7.8	8.3
35-47% with mother (53-65% with father)	1.2	1.3
14-34% with mother (66-86% father)	1.7	2.1
1-13% with mother (87-99% with father)	1.0	1.2
Mother sees child in daytime only	1.2	1.0
Mother never sees child	0.9	0.9
Total	100.0	100.0

Note: Continuing sample. Data have been weighted. Where both parents participated in the survey, the information provided by one parent was randomly omitted. Data for a small number of parents whose care-time arrangements were known for one wave only have been omitted.



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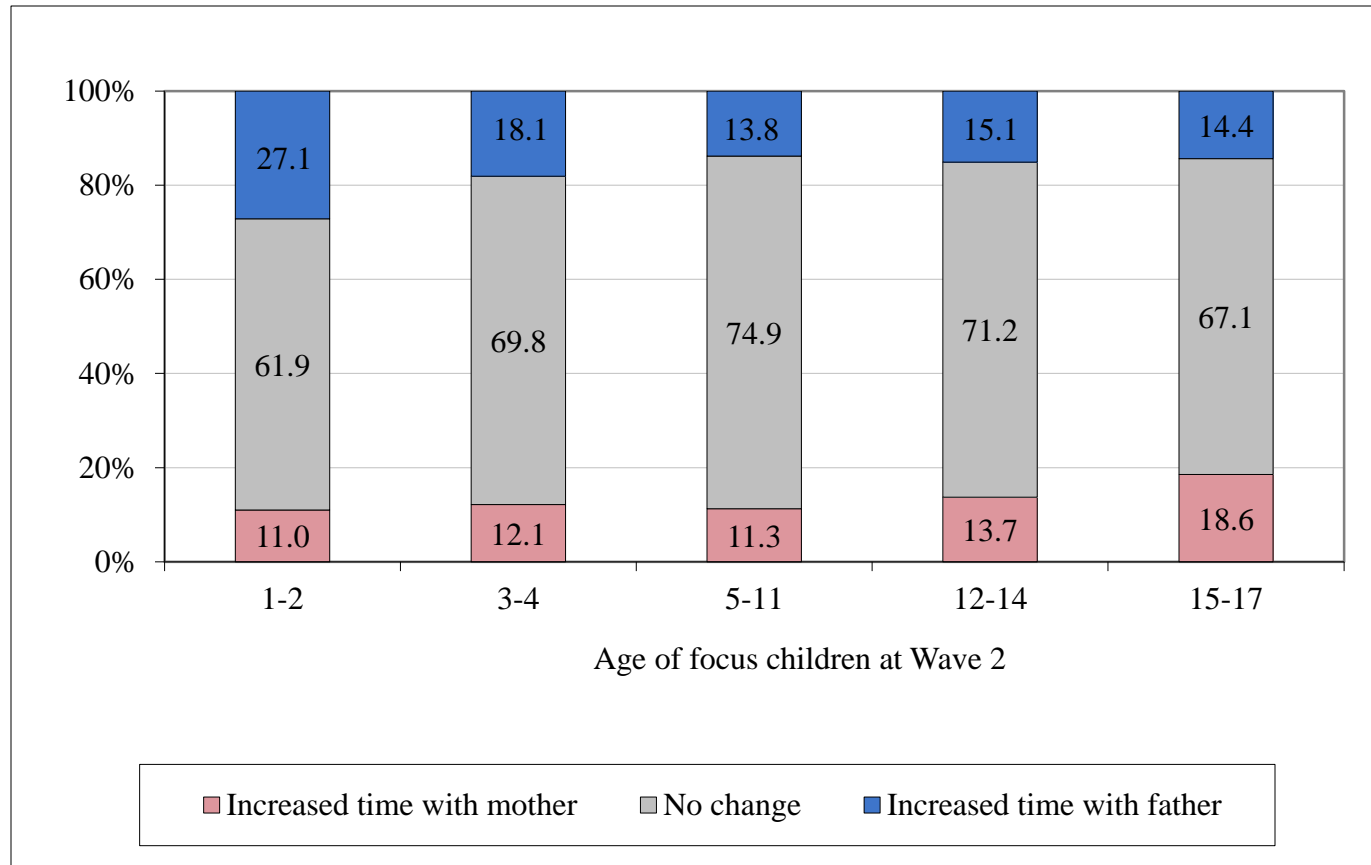
Change in care-time arrangements

- No change: 70%
- Increased time with father: 18%
- Increased time with mother: 12%

- Change usually to an adjacent category (i.e., small)
- Expect further adjustments as children grow older



Change in care-time arrangements by children's age



Key points

- Even within 12 months:
 - ◆ 30% had changed arrangements
- Considerable switch from being with father in daytime only to spending nights with him
- Equal care time was the most stable of arrangements
- Direction of change varied with child's age
 - ◆ Youngest 2 groups – increased time with father
 - ◆ Oldest group – increased time with mother



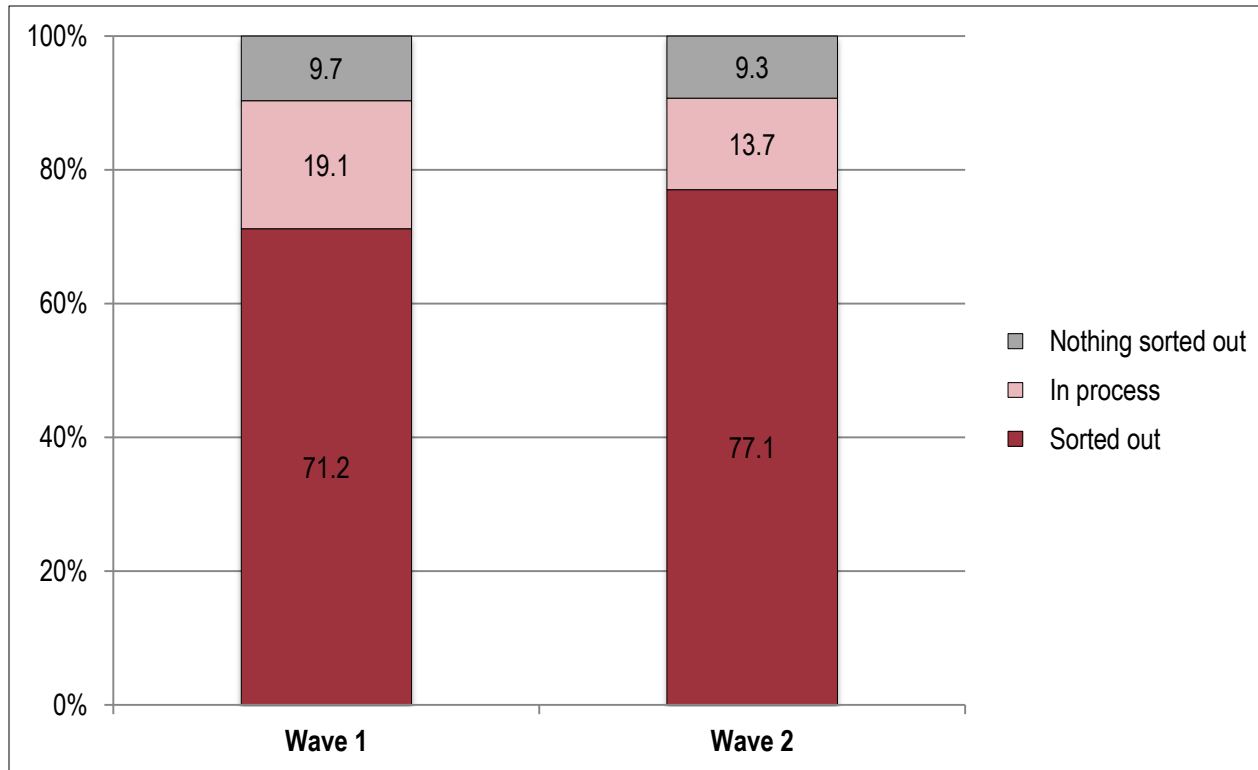
Development of parenting arrangements and pathways



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Sorting out parenting arrangements



Stage in sorting out parenting arrangements Wave 1 vs Wave 2

Wave 2	Wave 1		
	Sorted out	In the process	Nothing sorted out
Sorted out	86.5	57.7	45.5
<i>Sorted out & no change</i>	45.5		
<i>Sorted out new arrangements</i>	41.0		
In process	8.5	29.2	20.9
Nothing sorted out	4.9	13.1	33.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of observations	4669	1254	587



Key points

- Considerable instability in parenting arrangements over the 12 months
- Nearly half of those who believed they had sorted out their arrangements in Wave 1, had revised them or were in process of doing so
- The more protracted the development/re-development of parenting arrangements:
 - ◆ the more likely were parents to use family law system services, &
 - ◆ the less favourable were their assessments of the process



Summary



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Summary

Inter-parental relationship and child wellbeing

- A generally positive picture some 2–3 yrs after separation
- Most parents appeared to maintain harmonious inter-parental relationships & children mostly appeared to be progressing well
 - ◆ Nevertheless, substantial minorities experienced problematic inter-parental relationships or safety concerns
 - ◆ 7% experienced newly arising safety concerns – sometimes linked with other parent re-partnering



Summary (continued)

Sorting out parenting arrangements

- A commonly protracted process entailing revisions
 - ◆ Revisions/protracted negotiations were linked with greater use of family law system



General reflections

- A dynamic picture, despite only 12 months between survey waves
- Trends influenced by duration of separation and associated age profile of children
- Parents' pathways: Re-partnering? Further arrangement renegotiations?
 - ◆ relationship dynamics may be affected
 - ◆ may result in overall increase in % who use family law system
 - ◆ separation opens way for re-partnering, which opens way for separation ...
- Impact on the children?

Longitudinal studies important for understanding pathways and outcomes



Reflections re service delivery

- Need for *early* recognition of physical violence via child-sensitive service delivery which is
 - ◆ Timely
 - ◆ Collaborative
 - ◆ Supportive of clear pathways to early decision making by courts
- Recognise that changing parenting arrangements are to be expected
- Need for greater focus on dispute *management* (rather than dispute resolution), especially in difficult cases
- Preventative and educational services may decrease drift to increasing service use and increasing use of courts



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