

# What mothers want: Exploring the policies mothers say would help after the birth of a child

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# Background

- **Types of policies that might help**
- **Current policies in Australia**
- **Polarity of needs across families**
- **How policy preferences are formed/shaped**



# Parental Leave in Australia Survey (PLAS)

- **Conducted in 2005**
- **Nested survey**
  - ◆ Growing up in Australia (LSAC) wave 1.5
  - ◆ Infants aged 15-29 months
- **3573 respondents**
- **Mother responses only**
- **ARC Grant : Whitehouse, Baird, Diamond + industry partners**



# Survey Question

**“Which of the following would have improved things for you most in the period since <the study child> was born?”**

- A. More, or some paid maternity leave**
- B. More or some paid paternity/parental leave**
- C. Longer unpaid maternity leave**
- D. Longer unpaid paternity/parental leave**
- E. Better access to part-time hours on return to work**
- F. More family leave options on return to work**
- G. Better, or some breastfeeding facilities at work**
- H. Higher, or some maternity payment from government**
- I. More accessible child care**
- J. More affordable child care**
- K. Better quality child care**
- L. None of the above**



# Survey Question

**“Which of the following would have improved things for you most in the period since <the study child> was born?”**

- A.**
- B.**
- C.**
- D.**
- E. Better access to part-time hours on return to work**
- F. More family leave options on return to work**
- G. Better, or some breastfeeding facilities at work**
- H.**
- I. More accessible child care**
- J. More affordable child care**
- K. Better quality child care**
- L.**



# Comparison/control variables

## All

- ◆ Employment during pregnancy (permanent, casual, fixed-term, self-employed)
- ◆ Whether returned to work and if full-time or part-time
- ◆ Mother's education
- ◆ Family structure and partner's income & employment

## Part-time work & family leave options

- ◆ Types of flexible work or leave options used

## Breastfeeding facilities

- ◆ Whether breastfed and whether stopped before returning to work

## Childcare

- ◆ Whether had used formal care, informal care, both or neither

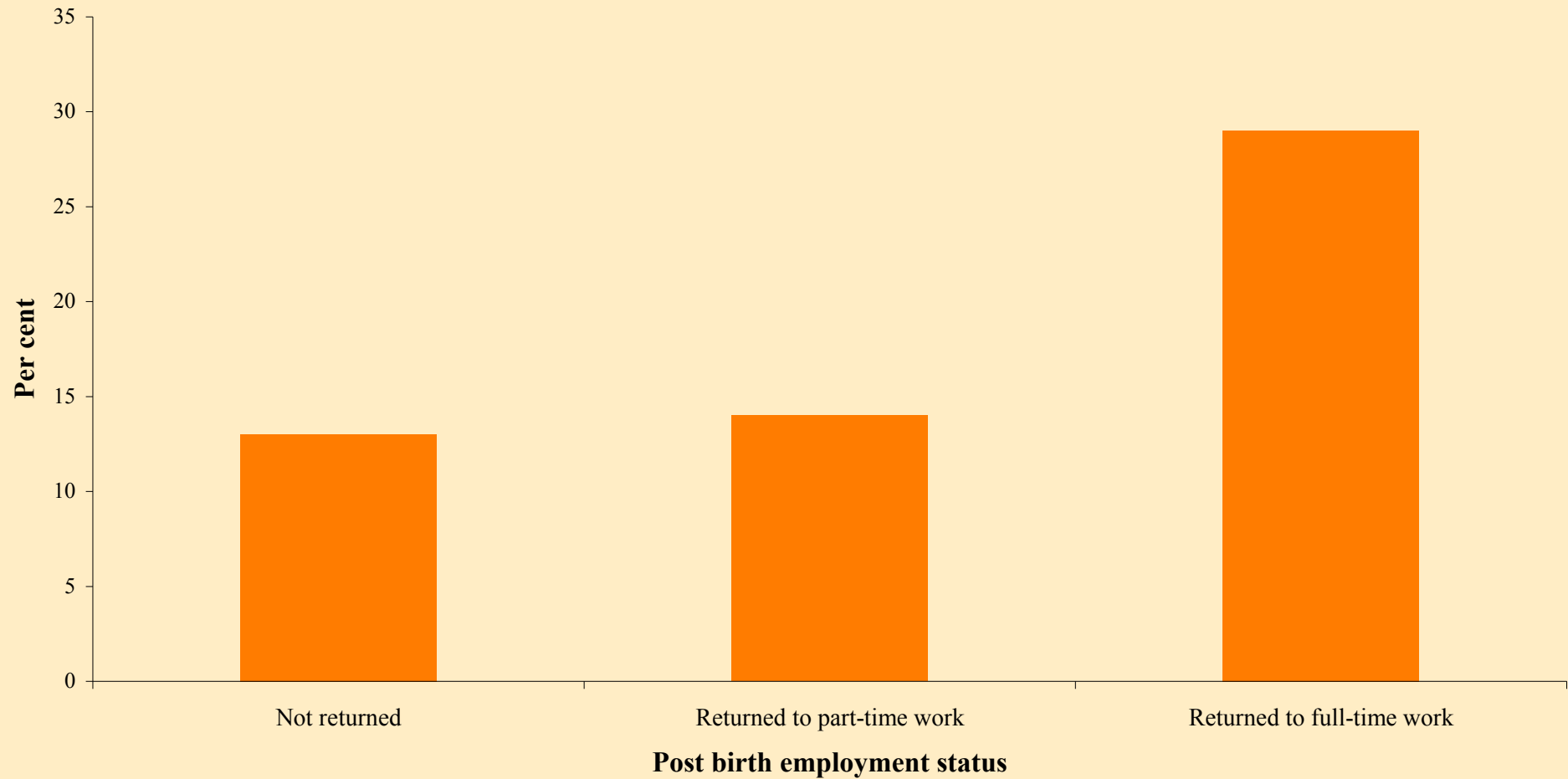


# Results: all mothers

	%
A. More, or some paid maternity leave	37
B. More or some paid paternity/parental leave	24
C. Longer unpaid maternity leave	6
D. Longer unpaid paternity/parental leave	3
E. Better access to part-time hours on return to work	15
F. More family leave options on return to work	12
G. Better, or some breastfeeding facilities at work	6
H. Higher, or some maternity payment from government	35
I. More accessible child care	22
J. More affordable child care	40
K. Better quality child care	15
L. None of the above	25



## Access to part-time work would have helped, by post-birth employment status



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# Part-time work – mothers' views

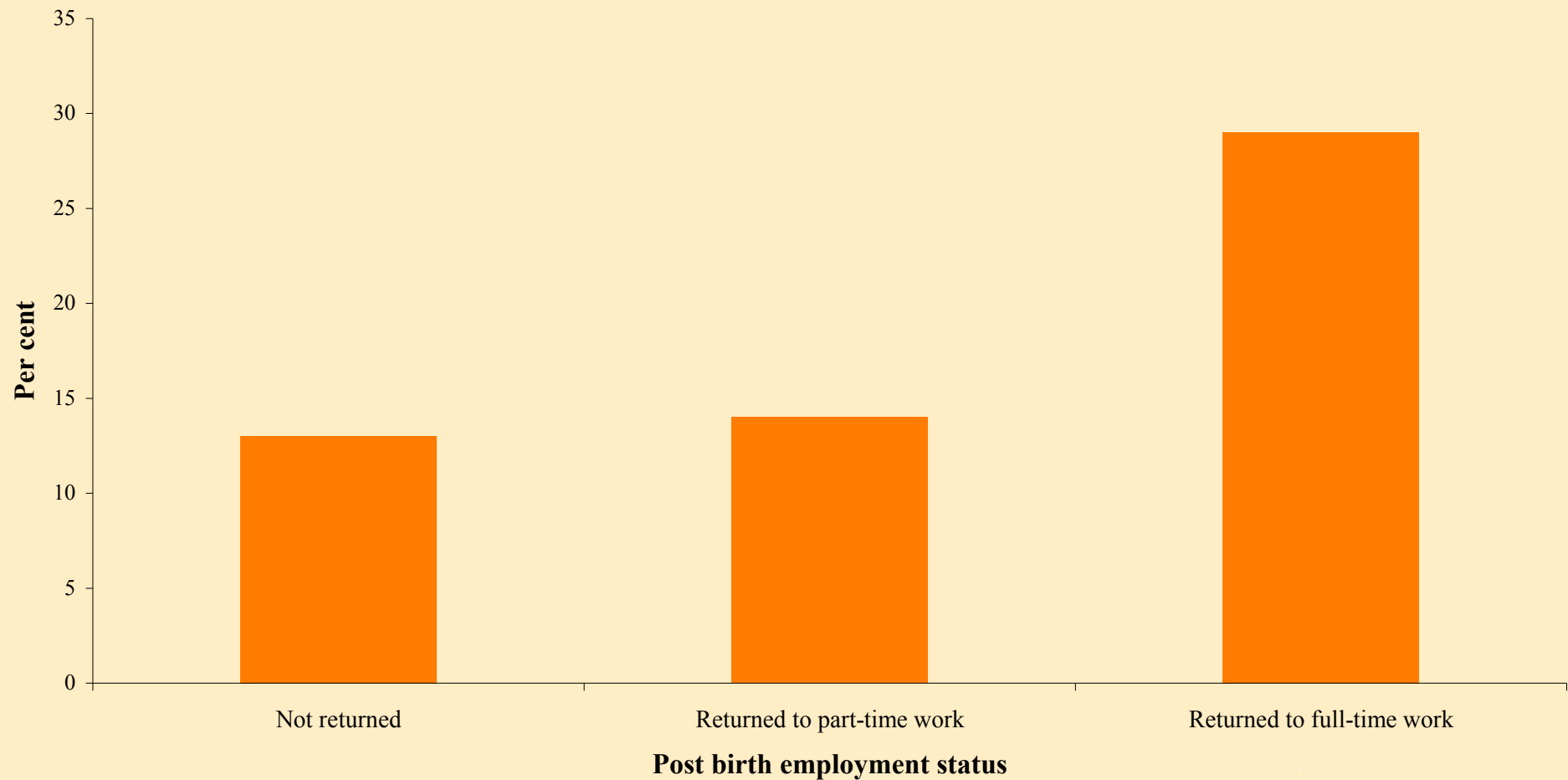
*“I was required to work full-time shortly after returning from maternity leave or asked to leave my position. I left.”*



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## Access to part-time work would have helped, by post-birth employment status



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# Part-time work – mothers' views

*“For a mother returning to work particularly part time work it feels like you are second rate or not a priority”*



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# Part-time work – regression results

**Increased likelihood of saying part-time work would help if:**

- + Contract employed
- + Returned to full-time work

**Reduced likelihood of saying part-time work would help if:**

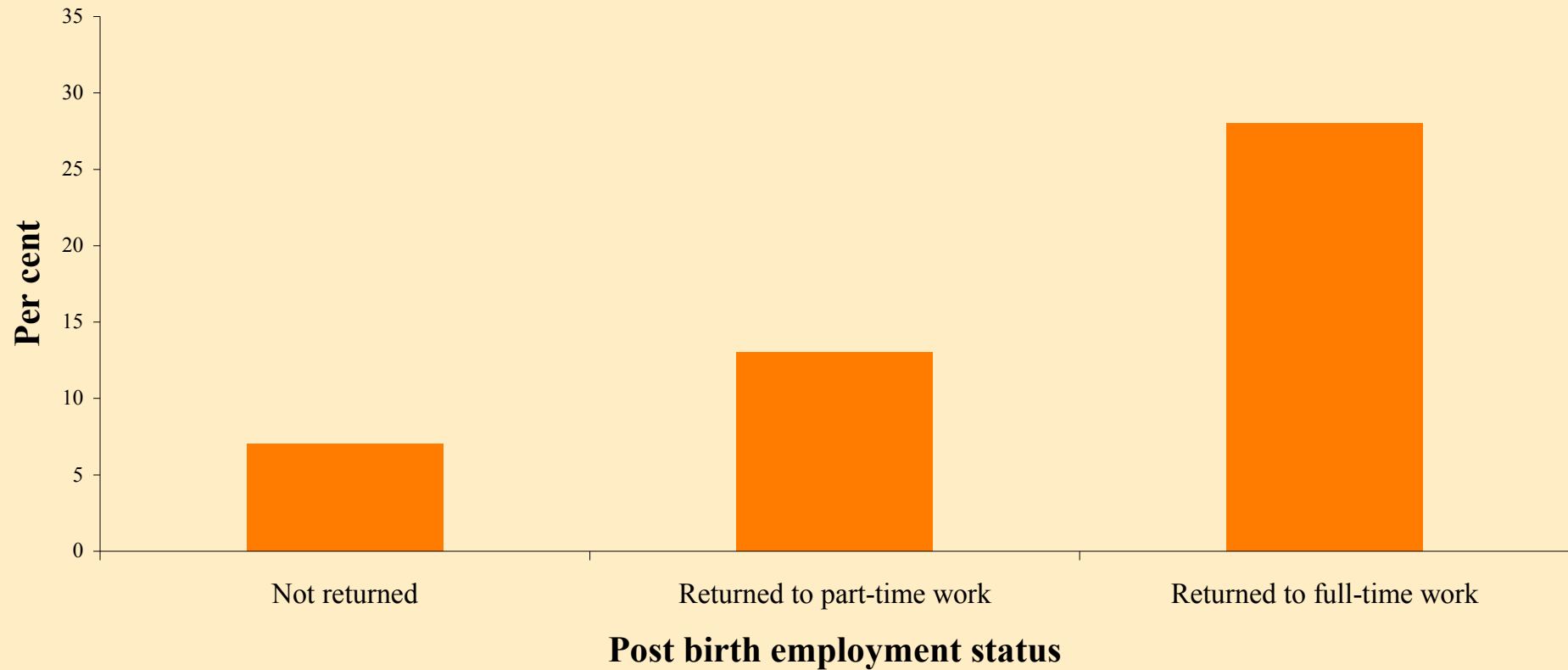
- Self-employed or not employed
- Made use of flexible hours provisions since returning to work



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## Access to family leave options would have helped, post-birth employment status



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# Family leave options – regression results

## **Increased likelihood of saying family leave options would help if:**

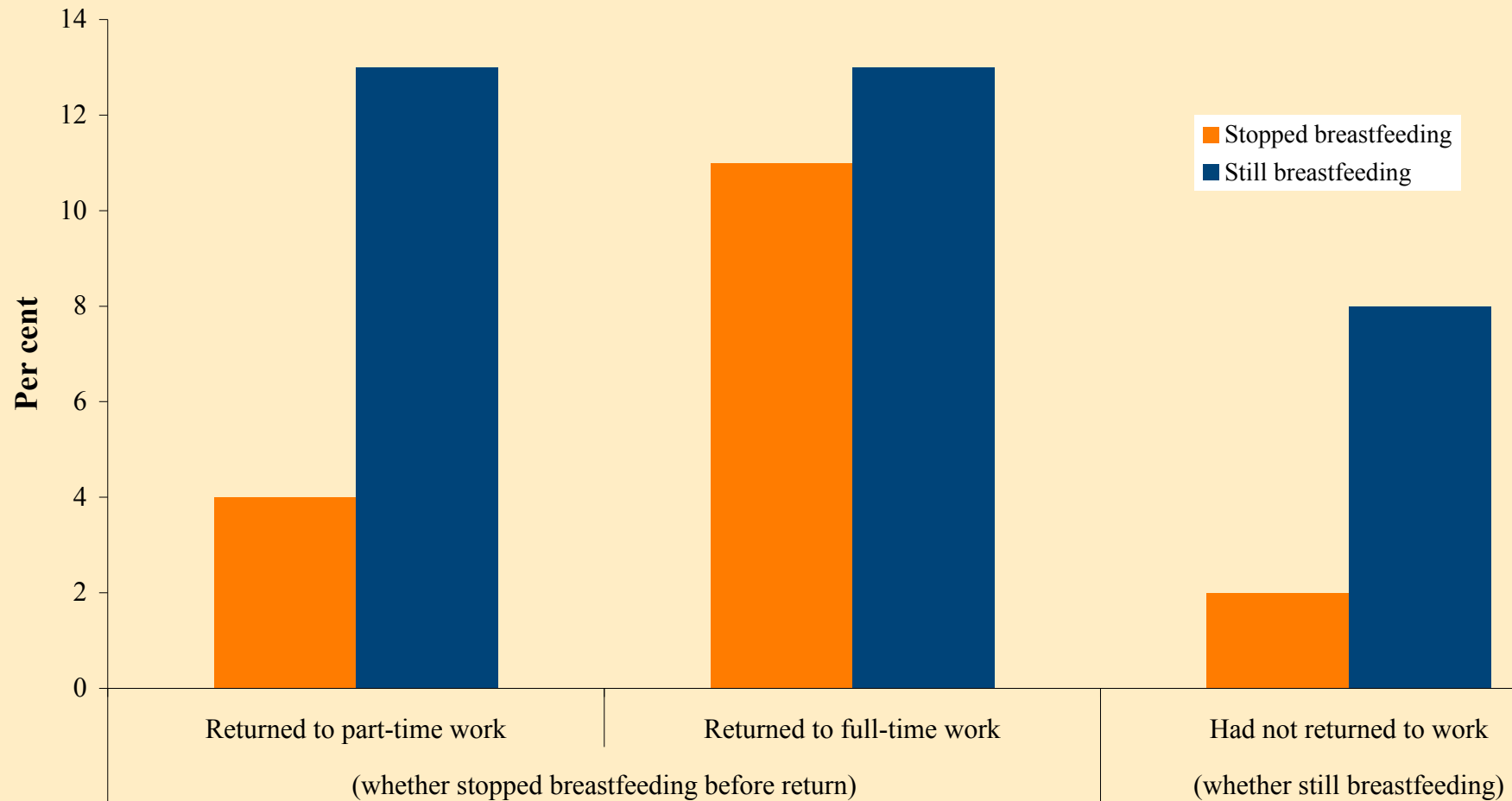
- + Returned to full-time work
- + Made use of short hours for an agreed period and/or used own sick leave to care for child(ren) since return to work

## **Reduced likelihood of saying family leave options would help if:**

- Employed casually or self-employed



## Breastfeeding facilities would have helped by mothers' breastfeeding and employment status



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# Breastfeeding Facilities

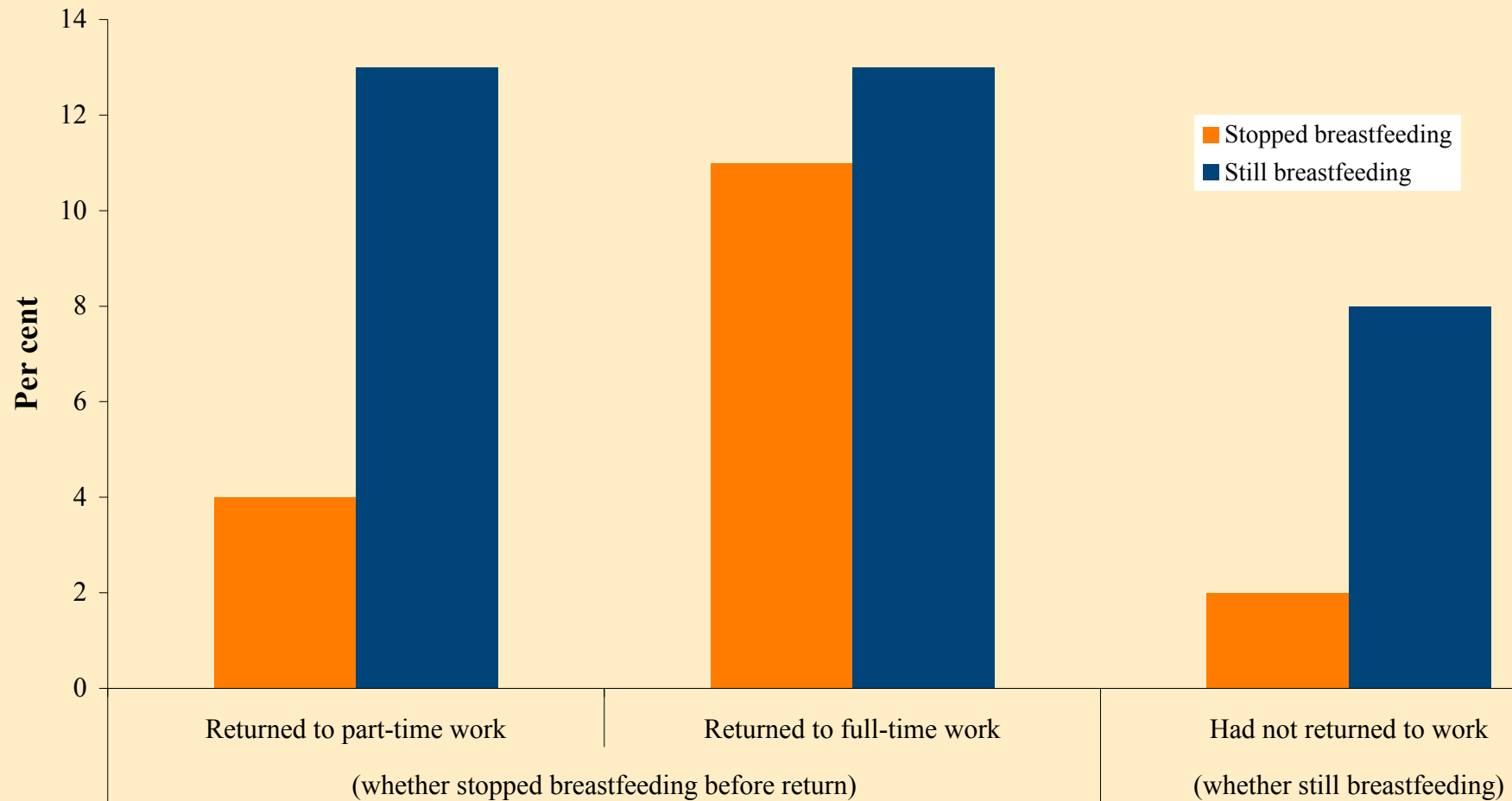
*“I was given no facilities for breastfeeding/pumping, and was told I could not return to my actual job until I was prepared to stop breastfeeding and taking breaks to do so.”*



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## Breastfeeding facilities would have helped by mothers' breastfeeding and employment status



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# Breastfeeding Facilities

*“I had to resign from my nursing position ... because I wanted to continue breastfeeding after 12 months.”*



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# Breastfeeding Facilities

## **Increased likelihood of saying breastfeeding facilities would help if:**

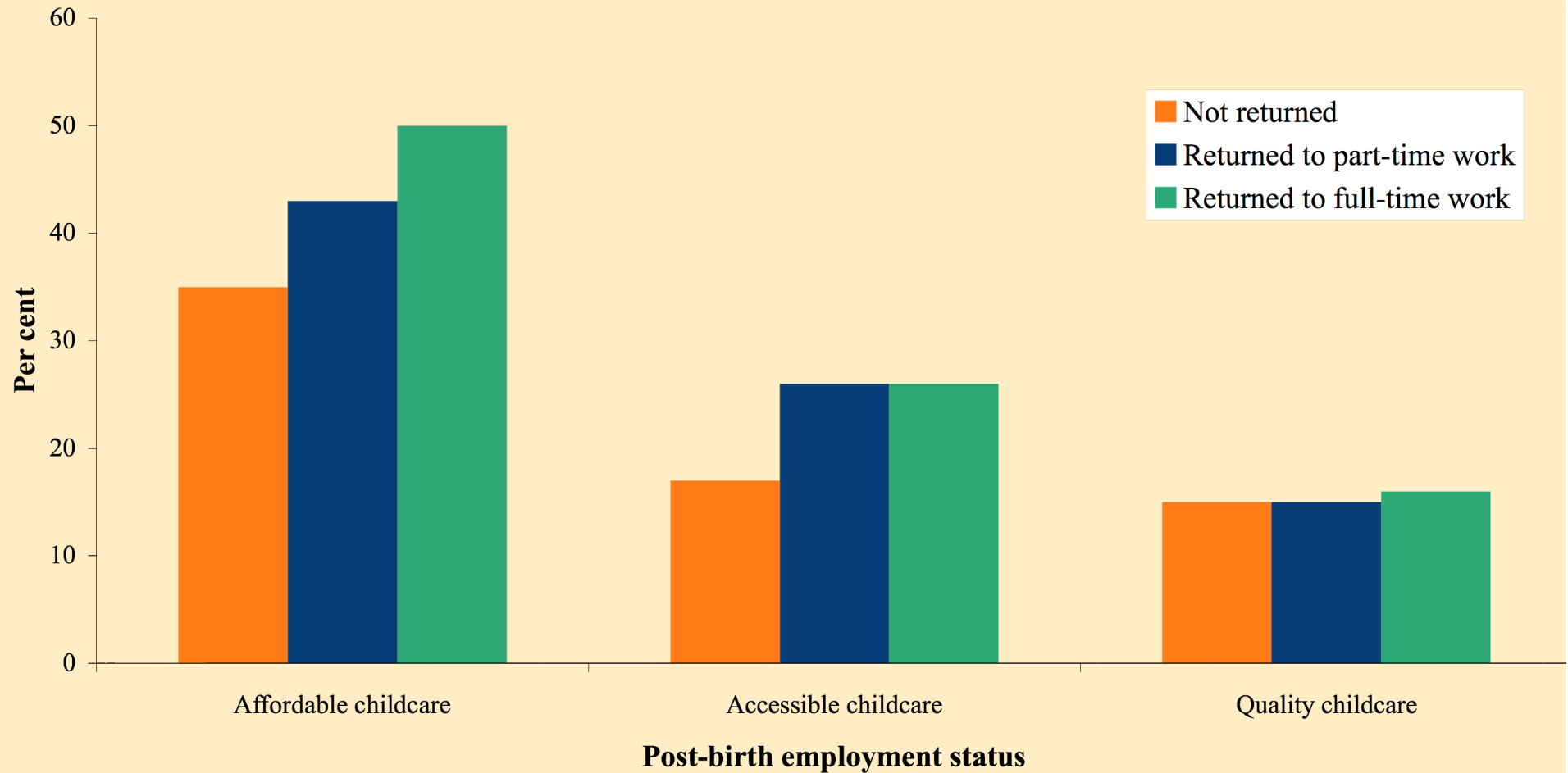
- + Still breastfeeding (regardless whether returned to full-time, part-time or not returned to work)
- + Stopped breastfeeding before return to full-time work
- + Completed Bachelor degree or higher
- + Contract employed

## **Reduced likelihood of saying breastfeeding facilities would help if:**

- Self-employed or not employed



## Childcare would have helped, by post-birth employment statuswork status



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# Childcare

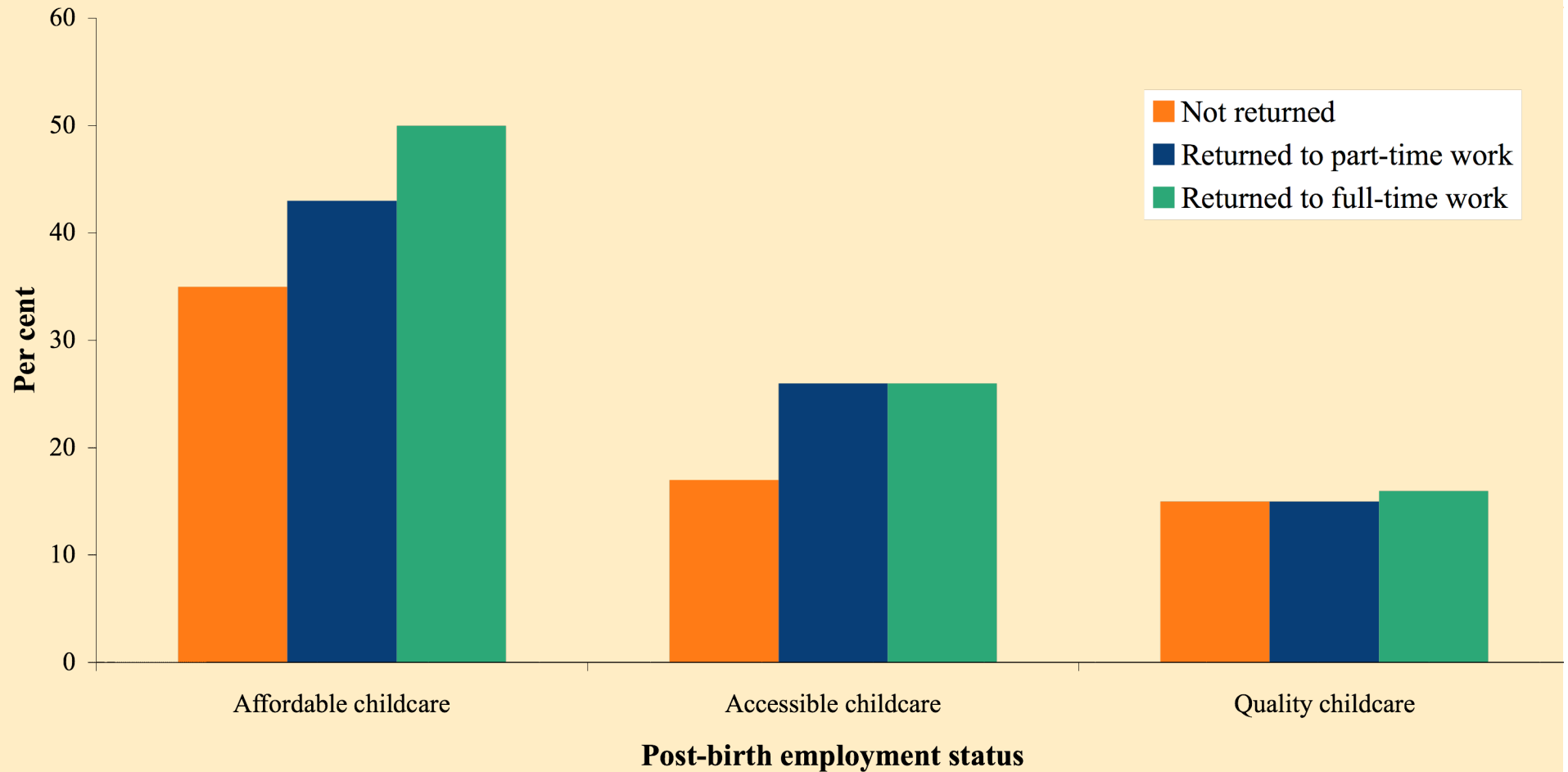
*“I may have gone back to work if it would have been worth it for me. With the cost of childcare I would have been no better off than I am now not working.”*



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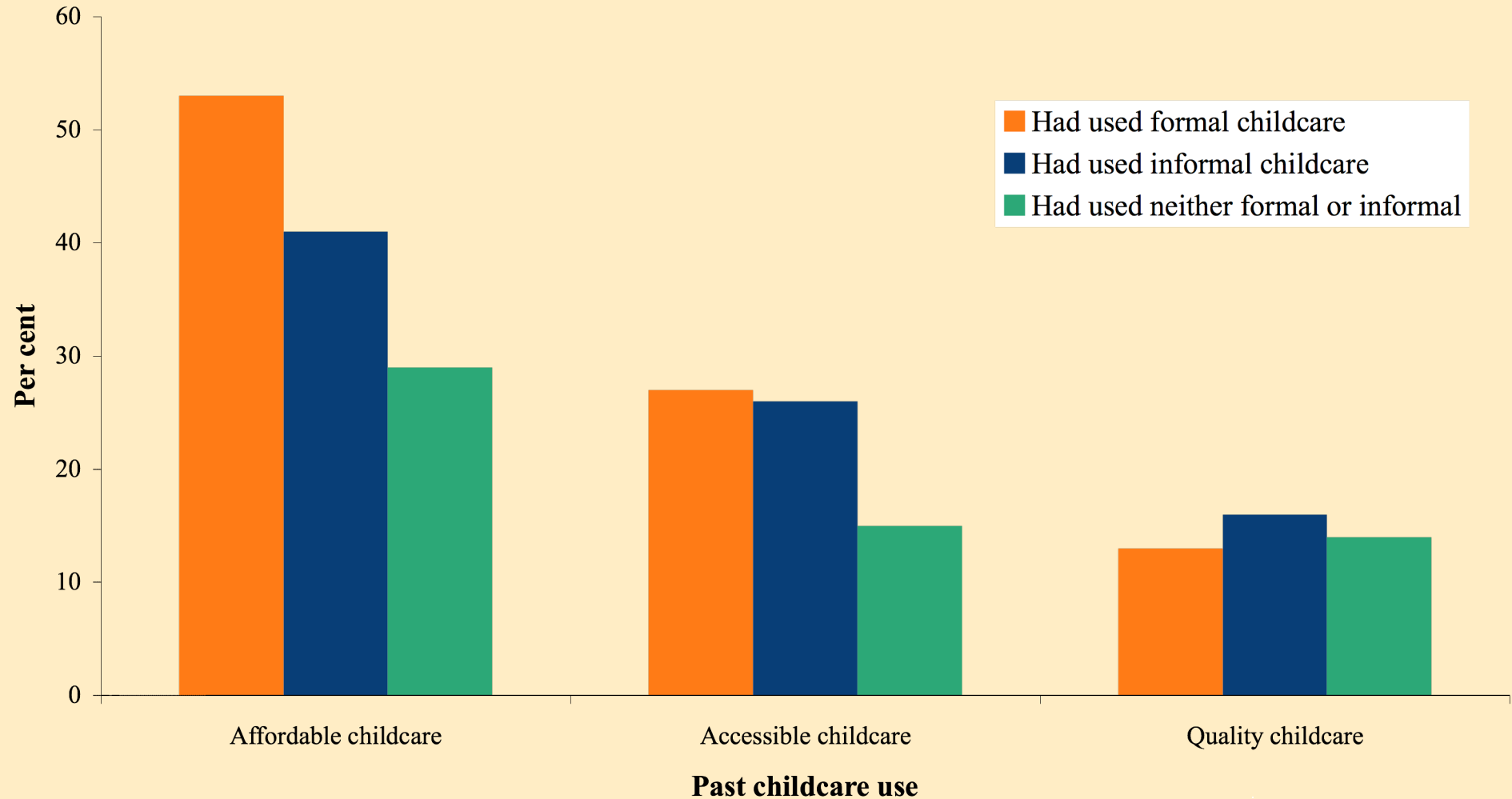
## Childcare would have helped, by post-birth employment statuswork status



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## Childcare would have helped, by past use of childcare



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# Childcare

**Increased likelihood of saying affordable childcare would help if:**

- + Used formal childcare

**Reduced likelihood of saying affordable childcare would help if:**

- Not employed during pregnancy

**Increased likelihood of saying accessible childcare would help if:**

- + Used formal childcare
- + Completed Bachelor degree or higher

**Reduced likelihood of saying accessible childcare would help if:**

- Not employed during pregnancy



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# Childcare

## **Increased likelihood of saying quality childcare would help if:**

- + Completed certificate or diploma or bachelor degree or higher
- + Single

## **Reduced likelihood of saying quality childcare would help if:**

- Used formal childcare



# No policy would have helped

*“The government do enough. It was our choice to have the kids and we knew we would go backwards financially for a while until the children were older.”*



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# In summary...

- **Diversity of needs amongst mothers**
- **Complex finding package of policies to support all mothers**
- **Need to explore how policies fit together**

