

7 Child support arrangements

Over the years, many countries have endorsed the principle that both separated parents should continue to provide for their children's basic financial needs. Responding to concerns that this principle was being inadequately adhered to in Australia, the Child Support Scheme, established in two stages in 1988 and 1989, reflected a major shift in policy. Prior to the scheme, only a minority of "non-resident" parents were paying anything towards their children's support, whether or not they were ordered to do so by the courts. In addition, even when payments were made, they were mostly set at very low rates, regardless of parental income. This meant that many families headed by un-partnered mothers were experiencing significant financial hardship following parental separation,¹ while at the same time, Australia's social security budget was escalating as a result of increasing welfare payments being made to this growing category of families (see Cabinet Sub-Committee on Maintenance, 1986).

The Child Support Scheme was designed to ensure that "non-resident" parents regularly contributed to the financial support of their children, according to their capacity to pay. Furthermore, based on earlier Australian and overseas evidence that "non-resident" parents who supported their children financially were more likely than other "non-resident" parents to maintain contact with their children,² it was argued (e.g., by the Family Law Council, 1992) that the scheme might also lead to an increase in the number of parents being actively involved in the parenting of their children after separation.³

An AIFS national telephone survey in 2005 of attitudes towards child support suggested that most non-resident fathers were critical of the original scheme (Smyth & Weston, 2005). For example, over 60% of non-resident fathers claimed that it was not working well, and three-quarters saw it as unfair. About half the resident mothers also had difficulties with both these aspects of the scheme. This research was taken into account by the Ministerial Taskforce on Child Support, which was established to provide advice to the government on possible changes to the scheme.

The most significant changes to the scheme were introduced via the *Child Support Amendment Act 2006* (Cth), developed in the light of the Ministerial Taskforce's recommendations. The changes, which were introduced in three stages between 2006 and 2008, included treating the incomes of both parents in the same way; reducing the amount payable by high-income earners; taking greater account of the contemporary costs of children, along with the costs incurred by parents when they look after them on a regular basis for at least 14% of the time; and treating children of first and second families more equally (see Smyth & Henman, 2010). Consistent with the earlier espoused argument that a Child Support Scheme may foster the sharing of parenting after separation, the Ministerial Taskforce also maintained that ensuring payment of child support could be an important factor in encouraging the involvement of both parents in their children's upbringing (Commonwealth of Australia, 2005).

¹ This phenomenon has been referred to by a number of commentators as "the feminisation of poverty".

² Succinctly summarised by Fehlberg and Smyth (2000) as an example of "where the money goes, the heart goes".

³ Interestingly, the initial scheme was introduced around the time that the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (in 1989) and just before the CRC was ratified by Australia (in December 1990). Children's rights to financial support and to post-separation parental involvement after separation (where this does not jeopardise their wellbeing) are enshrined in the CRC. The following articles are of particular relevance: "Children have a right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and mental needs. Governments should help families and guardians who cannot afford to provide this, particularly with regard to food, clothing and housing" (Article 27); and "Children whose parents do not live together have the right to stay in contact with both parents, unless this may hurt them" (part of Article 9).

The present chapter is divided into three broad sections, covering payment liability, compliance with liability and parents' views about child support payments.

The first of these matters (payment liability) identifies the four main groups of parents who form the basis of comparison for the remainder of the chapter: fathers and mothers who were required to pay child support (here called "payers") and those who were eligible to receive child support (here called "payees"). The patterns of answers of these four groups—in particular the two largest groups (father payers and mother payees)—are compared on all other issues examined. This includes the two additional matters in the section of payment liability: the amount of child support that was due to be paid and the mode of payment transfer.

The second section examines compliance behaviour, and the extent to which compliance behaviour varies according to care-time arrangements and according to reports of experiences of violence/abuse.

The third section focuses on parents' overall sense of fairness about child support payments and their views regarding whether payments are affordable and whether the payer begrudges paying.

Attention in each of the above three sections is first given to the results emerging from the information provided by all participants in the three survey waves, taken separately. The number of participants differs across the survey waves and includes the top-up sample in Wave 3. This is followed by analyses of the extent and nature of changes apparent in the continuing sample; that is, the parents who participated in all three waves.

7.1 Payment liability

In each survey wave, parents were asked to indicate whether they were required to pay or were entitled to receive child support,⁴ the total amount of child support that was to be transferred, the number of children the payments were meant to cover, how the payments were to be transferred, and the amount actually paid or received. Comparisons between these two payment amounts were subsequently used to identify whether, according to the participants' reports, payers were meeting their obligations in terms of the amount paid, an issue examined in the next main section of this chapter.

The four key groups: Father and mother payers and payees

Trends based on all participants

Table 7.1 (on page 119) summarises the patterns of answers of fathers and mothers in each survey wave regarding whether they were required to pay or were entitled to receive child support. These results are based on all parents who participated in any survey wave.

Table 7.1 reveals that close to four in five parents in each survey wave (taken separately) reported that the father was required to pay, though mothers were slightly more likely than fathers to state this in Waves 2 and 3 (86% vs 79% and 85% vs 78% respectively). Fewer than 10% of parents in each wave attributed payment liability to the mother. For example, 8% of fathers and 5% of mothers in Wave 3 reported that the mother was required to pay. Even though the sample of parents was derived from cases registered with DHS CSP, 13–

⁴ The questions asked were: (All): Can I just check, are you currently SUPPOSED to PAY any child support to or RECEIVE any child support from (FOCUS PARENT)? (Pay): How much money are you currently supposed to pay to (FOCUS PARENT) for each payment (including payments through the Child Support Agency)? (Receive): How much money are you currently supposed to receive from (FOCUS PARENT) for each payment (including payments through the Child Support Agency)?

15% of fathers and 9–17% of mothers across three waves indicated that there was no child support requirement.⁵

Table 7.1: Child support liability status of parents with study children under 18 years, by wave and gender

	Wave 1		Wave 2		Wave 3	
	Fathers (%)	Mothers *** (%)	Fathers (%)	Mothers *** (%)	Fathers (%)	Mothers *** (%)
Required to pay	80.0	3.7	79.3	4.9	78.0	4.6
Entitled to receive	4.8	79.7	8.0	85.7	8.2	84.6
Neither pays nor receives	15.3	16.6	12.7	9.3	13.8	10.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
No. of participants	4,905	4,939	3,112	3,320	4,126	3,948

Notes: Data have been weighted. Excludes a small number of parents who did not know or refused to answer (1–3% across all 3 waves). Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. *** $p < .001$; statistically significant relationship emerged between liability to pay/receive child support and parent gender.

This general pattern of results is similar to that observed by De Maio et al. (2013). Based on the SRSP 2012, 82–85% of parents said that the father was required to pay child support; 6–8% said the mother was required to pay, and 9–11% reported that no payment requirement existed. As noted earlier, parents in the SRSP 2012 had been separated for an average of 12 months. In terms of duration of separation, the sample is therefore more comparable to the Wave 1 LSSF sample than to the Waves 2 and 3 samples.

Extent of change in payer/payee status apparent in continuing sample

Table 7.2 shows the proportions of all fathers and mothers who indicated that their status as payee, payer or neither remained the same in all three survey waves, and the proportions whose statuses had changed by Wave 3.

Table 7.2: Proportions whose child support status remained the same or changed across all three waves, all parents of study children < 18 years, continuing sample

Child support status	Fathers (%)	Mothers (%) ***
Pay all waves	66.8	1.5
Receive all waves	3.5	71.8
Neither pay nor receive all waves	3.8	1.6
Changed to pay by Wave 3	10.4	2.6
Changed to receive by Wave 3	5.2	13.7
Changed to neither pay nor receive by Wave 3	10.3	8.9
Total	100.0	100.0
No. of participants	1,830	2,040

Notes: Data have been weighted. Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding. *** $p < .001$; statistically significant relationship emerged between variance in child support over waves and gender.

⁵ This may occur for a number of reasons. For instance, regular child support payments may be replaced with in-kind financial support (e.g., paying for educational expenses), or in certain circumstances, such as some family violence cases, parents may seek an exemption from taking maintenance action (e.g., seeking child support) to qualify for more than the minimum payment available under Family Tax Benefit A.

Table 7.2 shows that most fathers retained their status as payers and most mothers were payees in all three waves.⁶ Where change occurred, it mostly represented a move towards these traditional gendered statuses (i.e., father as a payer and mother as payee) or an ending of child support transfer arrangements. More particularly, two-thirds of all fathers and nearly three-quarters of all mothers were payers and payees respectively across all three waves. Fewer than 4% of fathers consistently stated that they were payees in all three waves and fewer than 2% of mothers were payers in all three waves. Few fathers and mothers (less than 4%) said that they were neither required to pay nor eligible to receive child support.

Around one-quarter of all fathers and mothers experienced a change in status by Wave 3, the most common being:

- mothers becoming payees (14%);
- fathers becoming payers (10%); and
- fathers and mothers becoming neither a payer nor payee (9–10%).

While Table 7.2 outlines the extent to which fathers and mothers had retained or changed their liability status, Table 7.3 shows their liability status in Wave 3 according to their liability status in Wave 1. Table 7.3 reveals that around nine in ten father payers and mother payees in Wave 1 indicated that they retained the same liability status in Wave 3. Half of mother payers and two-thirds of father payees in Wave 1 had the same liability status by Wave 3. Mother payers and fathers payees were less likely than father payers and mother payees to retain the same liability status. The same proportions of mother payers in Wave 1 either had no liability or became payees in Wave 3. For father payers in Wave 1, 4% became payees and 9% had no liability by Wave 3.

Wave 3 status	Wave 1 status					
	Father payers (%)	Mother payees (%)	Mother payers (%)	Father payees (%)	Fathers—neither (%)	Mothers—neither (%)
Pay	87.2	1.8	49.6	14.4	43.0	5.9
Receive	3.6	91.2	25.2	66.6	15.9	67.6
Neither pay nor receive	9.2	7.0	25.2	19.0	41.0	26.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
No. of participants	1,798	2,004	122	144	321	366

Notes: Data have been weighted. Percentages may not total 100.0% due to rounding.

Parents who had no liability in Wave 1 (41% of fathers and 27% of mothers) still had this status of no liability in Wave 3. Two-thirds of mothers with no liability in Wave 1 became payees by Wave 3, while 43% of fathers with no liability in Wave 1 became payers by Wave 3. Much smaller proportions of these fathers and mothers with no liability in Wave 1 became father payees and mother payers.

⁶ The status of some of these parents may have alternated between survey waves, but the general picture would be unlikely to differ from that apparent in the table. The same issue applies to other trends reported for the continuing sample.

Size of liability per child

Table 7.4 summarises the data on the average amounts that Wave 3 payers claimed to be paying and payees claimed to be receiving. The total average that father payers claimed to be paying was \$131 per week, whereas the total average mother payees claimed to be receiving was somewhat less: \$111 per week. The total average that mother payers claimed to be paying was \$78 per week, whereas the total average father payees claimed to be receiving was \$61 per week. Regardless of number of children, the average liability amount reported by payers was higher than that reported by payees.

	Father payers	Mothers payees	Mother payers	Father payees
Mean	\$131	\$111	\$78	\$61
One child	\$96	\$78	\$57	\$48
Two children	\$160	\$135	\$110	\$74
Three or more children	\$197	\$169	\$104	\$79

Notes: Data have been weighted. Sample sizes of three groups by number of children—father payers: 1,294, 1,138, 407; mother payees: 1,325, 1,139, 402; mother payers: 127, 67, 31; father payees: 171, 129, 43.

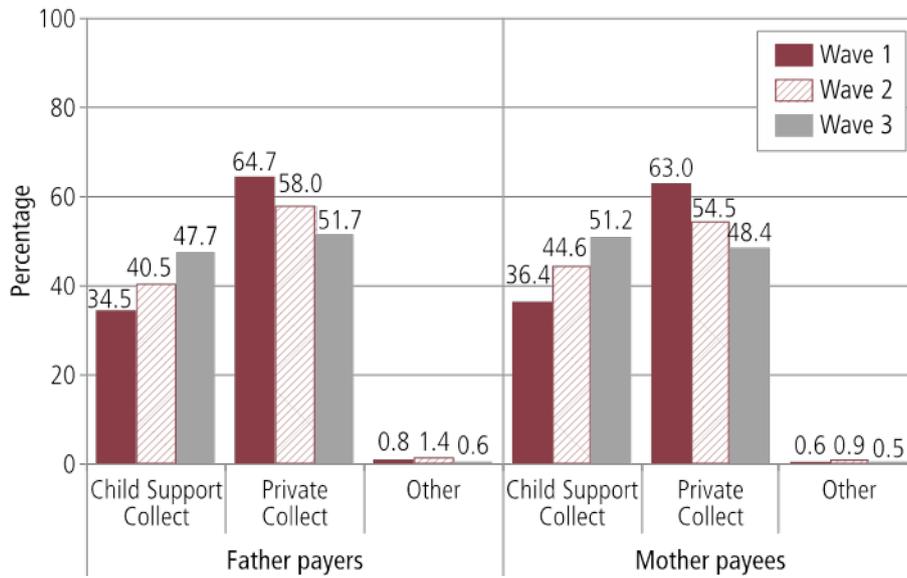
Mode of payment transfer

Parents can make decisions between themselves about the amount of child support to be paid or they can request that the DHS CSP assess this for them.⁷ Regardless of which of these two avenues are followed, child support payments can be collected and transferred privately (called “Private Collect”) or via DHS CSP (called “Child Support Collect”). DHS encourages its child support customers to opt for Private Collect (DHS, 2012, Chapter 6), but where the child support liability is not being met, payees can transfer from Private Collect to Child Support Collect. Payees can only request arrears of unpaid child support for a period of three months, though in some circumstances, this period may extend to nine months (DSS, 2013, section 3.1.5.50). Methods of transferring child support payments reported by payers and payees are summarised in Figures 7.1 and 7.2.

Figure 7.1 points to a consistency of responses with respect to father payers and mother payees. Both suggest that rates of Child Support Collect increased progressively across the survey waves, while Private Collect arrangements decreased. More specifically, just over one-third of the father payers and mother payees in Wave 1 indicated that payments were transferred via Child Support Collect, while nearly two-thirds said that payments were transferred privately. On the other hand, the proportions of Wave 3 father payers and mother payees reporting these two modes were roughly even. Only 1% of father payers and mother payees represented in the various survey waves referred to other arrangements.⁸

⁷ In Wave 1, this was managed by the Child Support Agency (CSA). Since that time, this role has been assumed by DHS CSP.

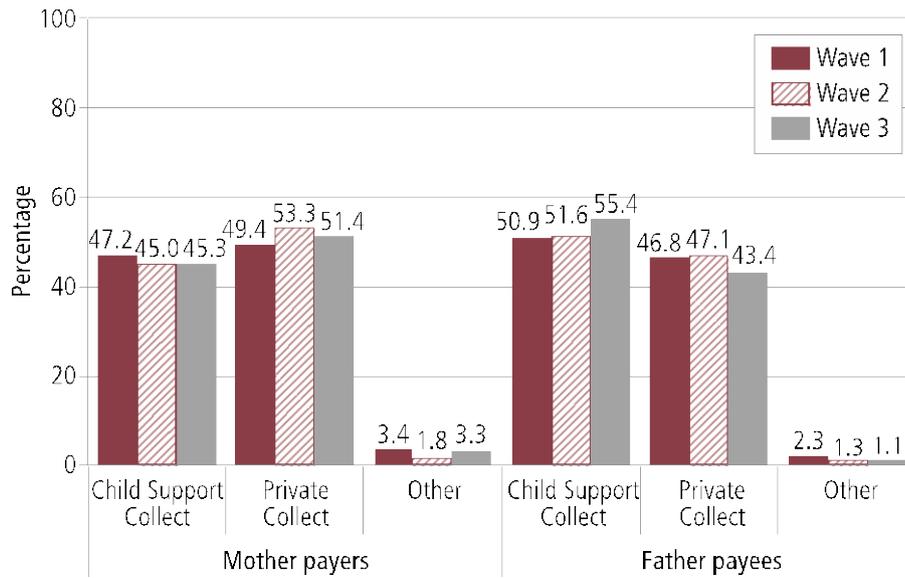
⁸ This assumes that differences in responses of those represented in the various waves can be taken to reflect “change”. There were two main methods of payment classified as “other”: where child support liability payments were made to someone else (primarily the children) or paid as in-kind payments (such as making mortgage re-payments or paying school fees). In-kind payments made up around half to two-thirds of the responses classified as “other”;—sometimes being described as part of the child support liability agreement and other times mentioned as informal payments (e.g. “No, transfers are not made. I make these payments for what I provide for focus child in clothes, and holidays are three times the amount anyway”).



Notes: Data have been weighted. "Other" methods of transferring include in-kind payments (such as paying school fees, etc.) and payments made directly to someone else (such as the focus child directly). Responses from parents whose focus child was 18 years or older by Wave 3 have been excluded from this analysis. Father payers: Wave 1, $n = 3,310$; Wave 2, $n = 2,101$; Wave 3, $n = 2,899$. Mother payees: Wave 1, $n = 3,408$; Wave 2, $n = 2,417$; Wave 3, $n = 2,914$.

Figure 7.1: Method of transferring child support liability, father payers and mother payees with study children < 18 years, by wave

Figure 7.2 suggests that a different picture emerged where mothers were the payers and fathers the payees. Firstly, modes of payments reported did not vary much across the survey waves. Secondly, while a marginally higher proportion of mother payers indicated that payments were made privately rather than through Child Support Collect (49–53% vs 45–47%), the opposite was the case for father payees. That is, a marginally lower proportion of father payees indicated that payments were made privately rather than transferred by Child Support Collect (43–47% vs 51–55%). Across the survey waves, 1–3% of mother payers and father payees referred to other methods of collection.



Notes: Data have been weighted. "Other" methods of transferring include in-kind payments (such as paying school fees, etc.) and payments made directly to someone else (usually the focus child). Responses from parents whose focus child was 18 years or older by Wave 3 have been excluded from this analysis. Sample sizes vary across waves—father payees: $n = 275$ to 344 ; mother payers: $n = 180$ to 228 .

Figure 7.2: Method of transferring child support liability, mother payers and father payees with study children < 18 years, by wave

The figures also reveal that in Wave 1, Private Collect arrangements were reported by higher proportions of parents where the father was liable to pay than where the mother was liable to pay (63–65% vs 47–49%), but in Wave 3, these arrangements were reported by much the same proportions of father payers, father payees and mother payees (48–52%), with a slightly lower proportion of mother payers stating this (43%).

The results based on the reports of father payers and mother payees in Wave 1 are consistent with those based on the SRSP 2012 (De Maio et al., 2013), but the same cannot be said of the results derived for mother payers and father payees: both these groups in the SRSP 2012 (especially mother payers) were more likely to report that payments occurred privately rather than through Child Support. This difference may well be a function of the success of DHS CSP in encouraging Private Collect arrangements, for the SRSP cohort of parents had separated more recently than those in LSSF (July 2010–December 2011 vs July 2006–September 2008).

Further analysis based on the fathers who were payers in all three waves suggest that the extent to which payment was collected privately declined. Specifically, the proportion of these continuing father payers who made payments privately fell from 65% in Wave 1 to 52% in Wave 3 while the proportion of those who made payment through DHS CSP rose from 35% in Wave 1 to 48% in Wave 3. Of the continuing mother payees, the proportion of those who received payments privately declined from 63% in Wave 1 to 48% in Wave 3.

7.2 Payment compliance

The first two waves of LSSF (Kapsiew et al., 2009; Qu & Weston, 2010), as well as other research (De Maio et al., 2013; Vnuk, 2010), have suggested that of parents who are required to pay child support, mothers are less likely to comply with this obligation than

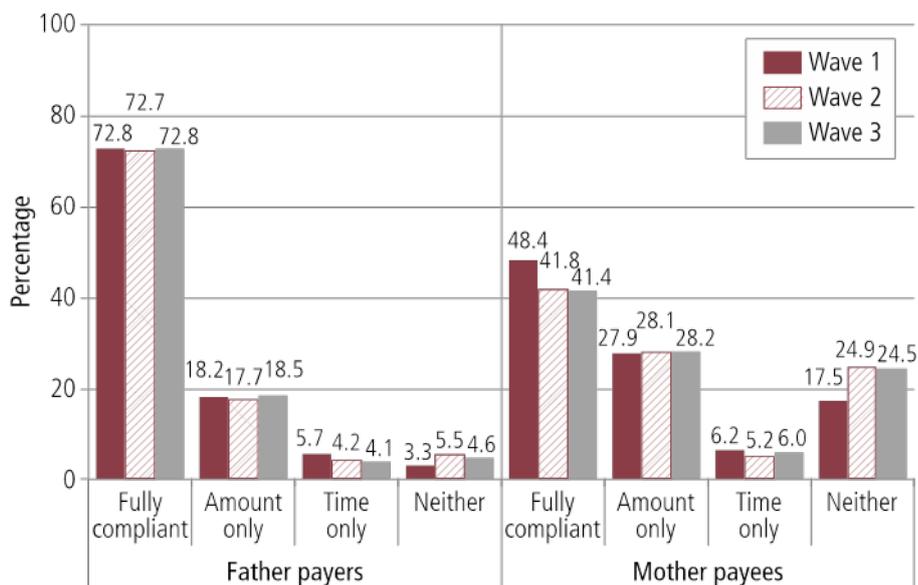
fathers. Parents' views about whether the payers' child support obligation was fully met in terms of the amount required to be paid and its timing were also ascertained in Wave 3.

In each survey wave, compliance regarding the amount paid was based on a comparison of the amount of child support that parents said they were supposed to pay or receive and the amount actually paid or received. To assess compliance with timing, parents were asked whether payments were made: "always on time", "mostly on time", "sometimes on time" or "never on time". Compliance in relation to timing was considered to occur where parents said that payments were made always on time.

This section examines the proportions of mother and father payers and payees who reported that payments were made in full and on time, in full only, on time only, or neither in full nor on time. (Payments in full included reports where the actual amount exceeded the required amount.) The strength of any relationship between father payers' compliance behaviour and care-time arrangements, as reported by the fathers and by mother payees, is then examined. This is followed by an assessment of the extent to which compliance behaviour varied according to experiences of violence/abuse.

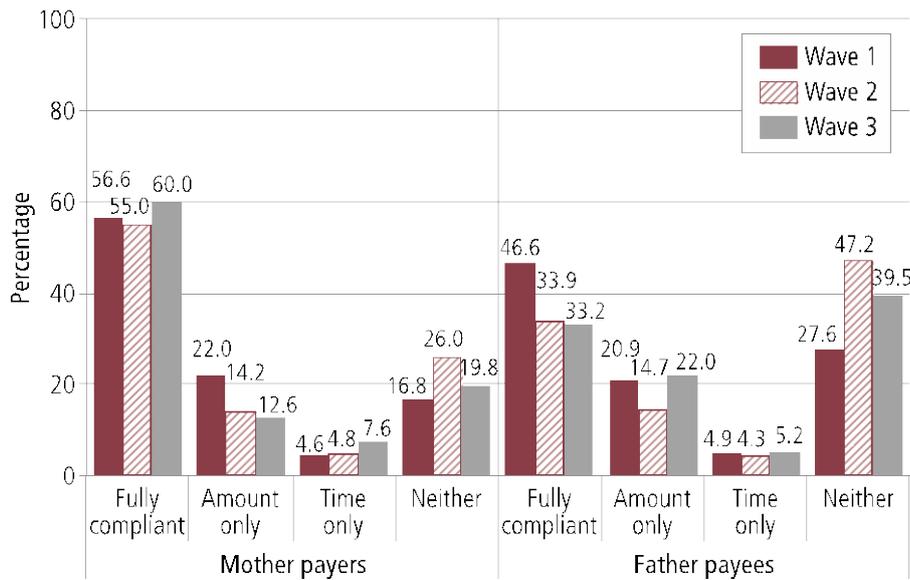
Compliance regarding payment amount and timing

Figures 7.3 and 7.4 (on page 120) depict the patterns of answers provided across the waves by father payers and mother payees (Figure 7.3) and by mother payers and father payees (Figure 7.4). These two figures need to be considered together to identify gender differences in both payers' and payees' reports.



Notes: Data have been weighted. Includes parents who reported actual payment varied and actual payments which varied are considered as that amount of child support was not applied. Sample sizes for father payers: Wave 1, $n = 3,132$; Wave 2, $n = 2,038$; Wave 3, $n = 2,772$; mother payees: Wave 1, $n = 3,092$; Wave 2, $n = 2,272$; Wave 3, $n = 2,744$.

Figure 7.3: Compliance with child support, father payers and mother payees with study children < 18 years, by wave



Notes: Data have been weighted. Includes parents who reported actual payment varied and actual payments which varied are considered as that amount of child support was not applied. Sample sizes for father payees: Wave 1, $n = 255$; Wave 2, $n = 245$; Wave 3, $n = 308$; mother payers: Wave 1, $n = 196$; Wave 2, $n = 167$; Wave 3, $n = 211$.

Figure 7.4: Compliance with child support, mother payers and father payees with study children < 18 years, by wave

Overall trends

According to all parent groups, payments were most often made in full and on time. This was followed by payments being made in full but not on time and then by payments being made neither in full nor always on time. Only 3–8% indicated that payments were made on time but not in full.

Full compliance

Most payers in all survey waves reported full compliance, with father payers being more likely to report this than mother payers (73% vs 55–60%).

Payees were less likely than payers to report full compliance, and unlike payers, the proportions reporting full compliance were lower in Waves 2 and 3 than in Wave 1, suggesting that full compliance rates fell.⁹ This apparent fall was slightly greater where the child support obligation rested with the mother.

In Wave 1, just under half the mother and father payees reported that payments were made in full and on time, while in subsequent waves, full compliance was reported by around two in five mother payees and one in three father payees.

Compliance restricted to payment amount

Across all survey waves, the second most common answer from father payers and mother payees was that payments to them were made in full but not always on time (reported by just under 20% of father payers and nearly 30% of mother payees).

⁹ It needs to be kept in mind, however, that the samples in the three survey waves differ somewhat.

However, where payment liability rested with mothers, the proportion reporting that compliance was restricted to the amount to be paid varied across the survey waves (reported by 13–22% of mother payers and 15–22% of father payees).

Non-compliance in amount and timing of payment

Only 3–6% of father payers indicated that they neither paid in full nor always on time. However this was reported by substantial proportions of parents in other groups (especially father payees). It was also considerably more likely to be reported in Waves 2 and 3 than in Wave 1. In Wave 1, this form of non-compliance was reported by 17% of mother payers, 18% of mother payees and 28% of father payees. In subsequent waves, it was reported by 20–26% of mother payers, 25% of mother payees and 40–47% of father payees.

The general pattern of results for mother and father payees in Wave 1 is consistent with that observed by De Maio et al. (2013), based on the SRSP 2012. As noted earlier, the SRSP 2012 was conducted when the parents had been separated for an average of 12 months, whereas parents in Wave 1 of LSSF have been separated for an average of 15 months. In the SRSP 2012, questions on compliance were asked of payees only. De Maio et al. found that 40% of father payees and 49% of mother payees reported that payments were fully complied with, 20–24% said that the paying parent paid the full amount though not always on time, 2–7% paid on time but not always in full, and 39% of father payees and 20% of mother payees reported that payments were neither made in full nor on time.

In summary, reports on compliance varied according to gender of parent and payer/payee status and, with the exception of father payers, reports varied according to survey wave. While in all survey waves, most payers (especially fathers) indicated that they fully complied with their obligations, those who were entitled to receive child support were less likely to report this, especially in Waves 2 and 3, with a higher proportion of father than mother payees indicating such an apparent fall. Finally, according to the reports of payees (especially fathers), compliance with respect to both amount and timing was better some 15 months after separation than subsequently.

Father payers' compliance according to care-time

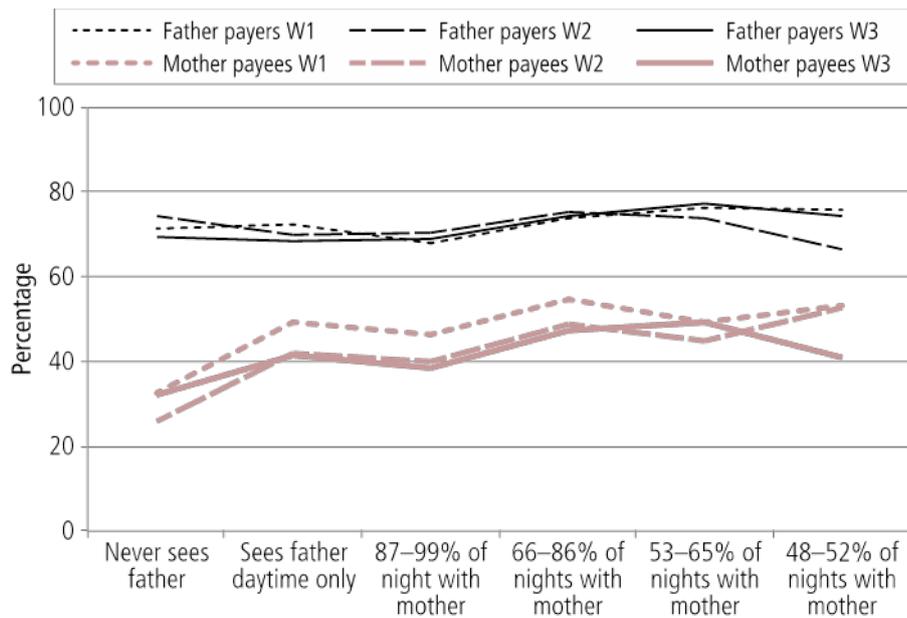
This section focuses on the apparent compliance behaviour of father payers with different care-time arrangements. Attention is first directed to the proportion of father payers and mother payees in the various survey waves who indicated that the father fully complied with his obligations according to care-time arrangements. The same approach is then adopted to compare the proportion reporting that the father paid his liability neither in full nor on time.¹⁰ While the analysis focuses on all participants, it should be noted that a substantial proportion of parents in the continuing sample had changed their care-time arrangements. Any wave-by-wave differences in apparent of compliance behaviour for a particular care-time arrangement could therefore be possibly explained by systematic differences between the sub-samples with this arrangement in each wave, and/or changes associated with the passage of time since separation.

Reports of full compliance

Figure 7.5 illustrates the proportions of father payers and mother payees who reported that the father fully complied with his obligations, according to the child's care-time arrangement and the survey wave. The parents are classified into six care-time arrangements—ranging from the child never seeing his or her father to the child spending

¹⁰ There were too few cases where the mother was liable to pay child support to derive reliable estimates according to care-time arrangements.

equal time with each parent. The figure reveals that across all care-time arrangements and survey waves, father payers were more likely than the mother payees to report that payments were made in full and on time (reported by 66–77% of father payers and 26–55% of mother payees represented in the various survey waves). With one exception, the proportion of fathers reporting full compliance varied little according to care-time arrangements. The exception related to equal care time, where a slightly lower proportion of fathers in Wave 2 than in other care-time arrangements maintained that they were fully complying with their liability.



Notes: Data have been weighted. Includes parents who reported actual payment varied and actual payments which varied are considered as that amount of child support was not applied. Statistically significant relationship emerged between child support compliance and care-time arrangement for mother payees for each of waves ($p < .001$).

Figure 7.5: Child support payments made in full and on time, father payers and mother payees with study children < 18 years, by care-time arrangement and wave

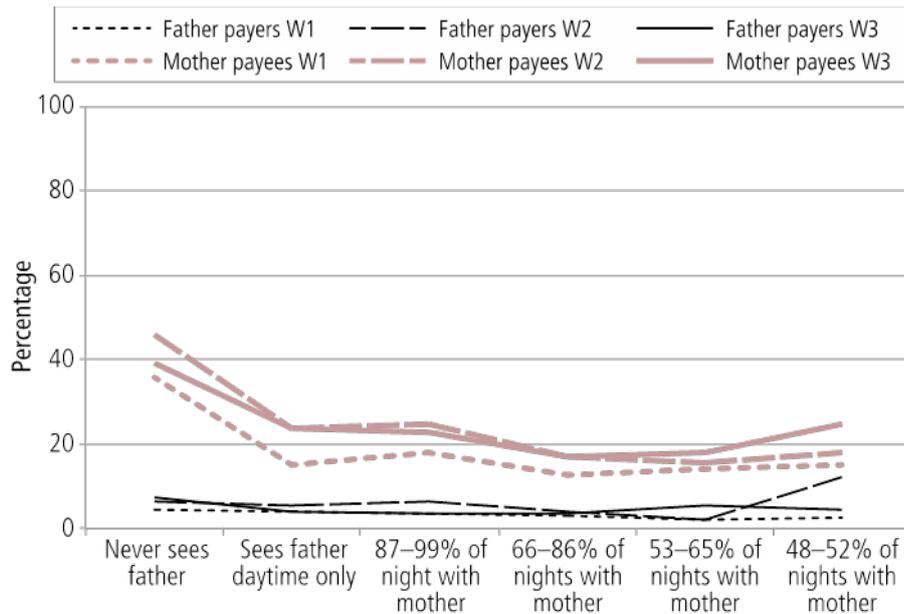
The reports of mother payees, on the other hand, suggest that fathers who never saw their child were considerably less likely than other fathers to fully comply with their liability. While each group of mothers in Wave 2 was somewhat less likely than their counterparts in Wave 1 to indicate that payments were fully complied with, the addition of Wave 3 data was not consistent with the notion that, regardless of care-time arrangements, full compliance with liability tends to fall as duration of separation increased. Nevertheless, mothers' reports suggested that some care-time arrangements were associated with higher rates of full compliance in Wave 1 than Wave 3.

For mother payees, the largest difference between Wave 1 and Wave 3 in reports of full compliance emerged where care time was equal (reported by 53% in Wave 1 vs 41% in Wave 3). On the other hand, no such differences between Waves 1 and 3 in payment compliance, from mother payees' reports, were apparent for the other two arrangements (where the child never saw the father (32–34%) or spent 53–65% of nights with the mother (49–50%). Some differences between Wave 1 and Wave 3 were also observed for

care-time arrangements where mothers cared for their child for 66–99% of nights and where the child saw his or her father during the daytime only.

Reports of non-compliance in both amount and timing

Figure 7.6 depicts the proportions of father payers and mother payees who reported non-compliance in both the payment amount and timing, according to care-time arrangements and survey wave. Once again, it is important to keep in mind that the composition of parents in a particular care-time arrangement varies across the waves.



Notes: Data have been weighted. Includes parents who reported actual payment varied and actual payments which varied are considered as that amount of child support was not applied. Statistically significant relationship emerged between child support compliance and care-time arrangement for father payers in Wave 2 ($p < .05$) and mother payees in each wave ($p < .001$).

Figure 7.6: Child support payments made neither in full nor on time, father payers and mother payees with study children < 18 years, by care-time arrangement and wave

Across all survey waves, a higher proportion of mother payees than father payers in each care-time arrangement indicated that the father neither paid in full nor on time. The largest gender differences emerged where the father never saw his child (mother payees: 36% in Wave 1, 46% in Wave 2 and 39% in Wave 3). Fewer than 10% of father payers with this arrangement in the various survey waves said that the father paid neither in full nor always on time. The smallest gender difference emerged for equal care time in Wave 2, where 18% of mother payees and 12% of father payers reported non-compliance.

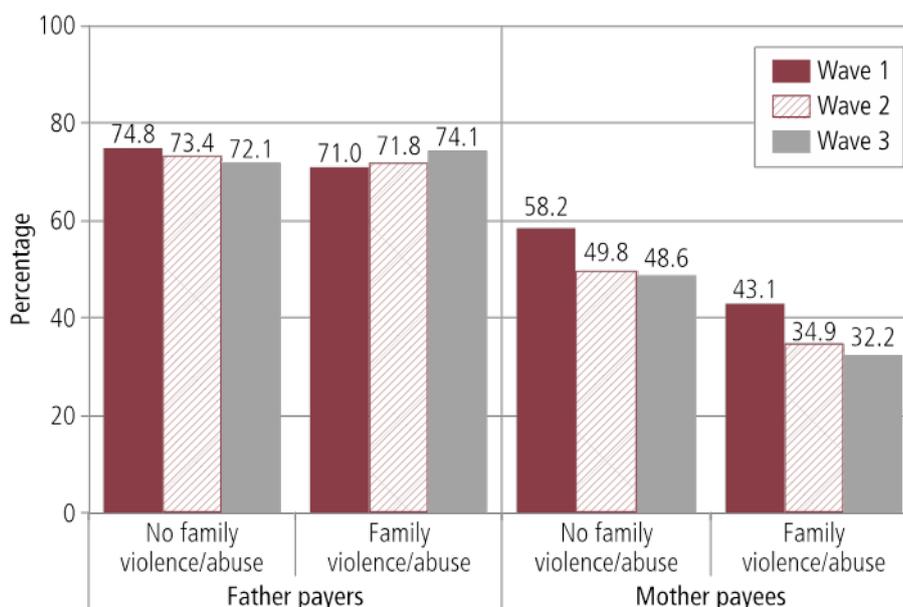
Fathers' reports varied little according to care-time arrangement. The largest difference emerged for Wave 2, where non-compliance was reported by 12% of fathers with equal care time and 2–7% of fathers with the other four arrangements.

Non-compliance in both amount and timing was reported by a considerably greater proportion of mothers whose child never saw the father than other mothers.

Compliance behaviour according to violence/abuse experiences

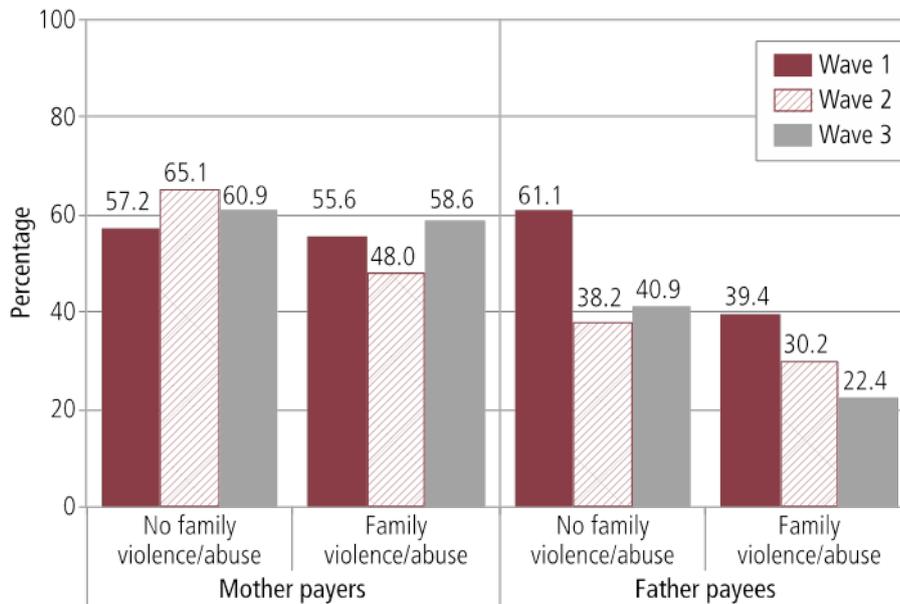
Parents who received more than the minimum rate of Family Tax Benefit Part A for a child are typically required to apply for a child support assessment, but can seek an exemption from this if they are at risk of experiencing family violence/abuse. As the ALRC (2012) noted, experiences of family violence/abuse may lead a parent to avoid any interaction with the other parent. This includes any contact regarding child support payments, given that such contact may expose the parent to continuing controlling behaviours. More practically speaking, the victim may decide against seeking child support at the outset, may accept insufficient payments, change collection methods, or choose to end the arrangement.

Figures 7.7 and 7.8 (on page 127) depict the percentage of cases in which child support obligations are fully complied with, by whether violence/abuse had been experienced. Figure 7.7 compares mother payees who indicated that they had or had not experienced violence/abuse during the period investigated in each survey wave. Two groups of father payers are included for comparative purposes. Figure 7.8 provides the same information for mother payers and father payees.



Notes: Data have been weighted. Statistically significant relationship emerged between compliance with child support liability and experiences of family violence/abuse for mother payees in each of three waves ($p < .001$).

Figure 7.7: Full child support compliance by experiences of violence/abuse, father payers and mother payees with study children < 18 years, by wave



Notes: Data have been weighted. Sample sizes from Waves 1 to 3, mother payers without experience of violence/abuse: 47, 67 & 104; mother payers with experience of violence/abuse: 153, 100 & 105; father payees without experience of violence/abuse: 91, 116 & 174; father payees with experience of violence/abuse: 176, 127 & 128. Relationship between compliance with child support liability and experiences of family violence/abuse is statistically significant for: father payees in Wave 1 and Wave 3 ($p < .01$), mother payers in Wave 2 ($p < .05$).

Figure 7.8: Full child support compliance by experiences of violence/abuse, mother payers and father payees with study children < 18 years, by wave

The figures reveal that for each survey wave, mother and father payees who experienced violence/abuse were less likely than those who had been free from such experiences to report that they received child support both in full and on time. More specifically, in Wave 1, full compliance was reported by 43% of mother payees who said they experienced violence/abuse before or during the separation, compared with 58% of other mother payees, and by 39% of father payees with such violence/abuse experiences, compared with 61% of other father payees.¹¹

With one exception, payment compliance reported by payers did not vary significantly according to whether they had experienced violence/abuse. The exception was in Wave 2 for mother payers who experienced violence/abuse in the 12 months prior to their interview. These mothers were less likely than other mother payees to report that they fully complied with their arrangements.

¹¹ Of father payees in Wave 3, only 22% who experienced violence/abuse in the 12 months prior to this survey said that their child's mother fully complied with her child support liability. It should be noted, however, that this percentage is based on only 128 fathers. Further research needs to be undertaken to assess the reliability of this result derived after some five years of separation.