

Researchers attach dollar figure to the stress cost of a new baby

February 23 2015, by Laura Soderlind



Research from the University of Melbourne has put a dollar figure of \$85,000 on the time pressure and stress experienced by mothers in the first year of a baby's life.

This research, undertaken by the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, is the first of its kind to propose a [dollar value](#) equivalent to the increase in [time pressure](#) and stress for new mothers.

"The largest immediate effect of the birth of a baby is the time stress felt by new mothers," said Dr Hielke Buddelmeyer, lead researcher of the paper.

"The \$85,000 figure reflects the extra earnings the mother would have to receive to reduce her financial stress by as much as the birth increases her time stress."

"The cost of a baby goes well beyond nappies and baby clothes," said Dr Buddelmeyer. "This research set out to quantify some of the invisible costs – in this case, the increase in feeling pressed for time."

In addition, the research found that women are three times more time stressed than men in the first year of a baby's life.

While both partners experience some financial stress immediately following the birth of a baby, the mother's financial stress following the birth of a baby is larger than the father's.

"In tracking the time stress of a mother at different stages of her child's life we found that when the child is at primary school the perceived [financial stress](#) reduces, but then increases when the child is a teenager."

When a child moves out of home this reduces the parents' time stress, but by less than a new baby increases it.

"While the significant additional stress experienced by new mothers is a challenge, the positive effects of having a [child](#) must outweigh the negatives or else people wouldn't continue to choose to have babies," said Dr Buddelmeyer.

The report is based on findings collected through the extensive Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey, managed by the Melbourne Institute.

The survey includes responses from over 20,000 Australians over a period of 12 years from 2001 to 2012.

Provided by University of Melbourne

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