

Who's Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements: Spring 1997

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INTRODUCTION

Interest in child care issues has grown in the past decades as more women with children have entered the labor force and sought to balance both family and work.

Changes in welfare laws have encouraged recipients, who are often unmarried mothers, to seek work. This report shows the number and characteristics of children in different child care arrangements. The data come from the fourth interview of the 1996 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) panel conducted between April and July 1997 and refer to child care arrangements used in the month prior to the interview. These data continue a series that dates back to 1985. New information presented in this report shows the number of families that receive help in paying for child care.

The report contrasts child care arrangements for preschool- and grade-school-age children. These two age groups differ in their needs and activities. While the primary focus of child care for infants and preschoolers is on meeting their basic needs, for older children, structured enrichment activities and the incidence of children in self-care situations are of increased importance.

CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS OLD

After describing the patterns and use of child care arrangements for preschoolers, this section shows how the arrangements varied by family characteristics and the time children spent in various arrangements during a typical week in the month preceding the interview date. The section concludes by summarizing historical trends since the first SIPP child care survey in 1985.

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Child Care Arrangements of Preschoolers

In Spring 1997, 12.4 million (63 percent) of the 19.6 million children under 5 years of age were in some form of regular child care arrangement during a typical week (see Table 1).¹ Preschoolers — children under 5 years old — were more likely to be cared for by a relative (41 percent) than by a nonrelative (35 percent), although 12 percent were regularly cared for by both. Twenty-one percent of preschoolers were regularly cared for by their grandparent, and 17 percent by their father. Care by other relatives (9 percent), or by siblings, or the mother while she worked was less frequent (about 4 percent, each).

About one-fifth of preschoolers were cared for in organized facilities, with day care centers (12 percent) being more commonly used than nursery schools or preschools (6 percent). Overall, other nonrelatives provided home-based care to 17 percent of preschoolers, with 7 percent being cared for by family day care providers.

Over one-third of preschoolers (7.2 million) had no regular child care arrangement during the month preceding the interview.² Table 2 shows that this statistic varies by

¹ Since some children are in more than one type of arrangement, the total number of arrangements exceeds the actual number of children. The estimates in this report are based on responses from a sample of the population. As with all surveys, estimates may vary from the actual (population) values because of sampling variation, or other factors. All statements have undergone statistical testing and meet Census Bureau standards for statistical accuracy.

² The majority of children with no regular arrangement (6.4 million) live with a designated parent who is not employed and are most likely under the supervision of their parent during the day. For those preschoolers with an employed designated parent, not having a regular child care arrangement during work hours may indicate instability in child care arrangements or difficulty in identifying what is used regularly. It does not necessarily indicate that no one looked after the child.

CHILD CARE DEFINITIONS

The universe of respondents in the SIPP child care module consists of adults who are the parents of children under 15 years old. A designated parent is selected in households where both parents are present to report child care arrangements for each child. In married-couple families, the mother is the designated parent. If the mother is not available for an interview, proxy responses are accepted from the father or husband. In single-parent families, the resident parent is the designated parent. If neither parent is in the household, the guardian is the designated parent. Designated parents include biological, step- and adoptive parents, or other relatives/nonrelatives acting as a guardian in the absence of parents. In this report, unless otherwise noted, the term parent is used to refer to the designated parent.

Child care providers can be broadly classified as being relatives or nonrelatives of children. Relatives include mothers, fathers, siblings, grandparents, and other relatives such as aunts, uncles, and cousins. Nonrelatives include in-home babysitters, neighbors, friends, and other nonrelatives providing care either in the child's or the provider's home, in addition to family day care providers who are nonrelatives who care for one or more unrelated children in the provider's home. An organized child care facility is a day care center, nursery school, or preschool. To present a comprehensive view of the regular weekly experiences of children under 15 years old, this report also shows the incidence of children enrolled in school and enrichment activities (such as sports, lessons, clubs, and after- and before-school programs), and the time children are in self-care situations.

the employment status of the mother — more preschoolers of nonemployed mothers than those of employed mothers were not cared for in a regular child care arrangement and were presumably in parental care (71 percent and 7 percent, respectively).³

Very few preschoolers lived only with their unmarried father (2 percent); the remainder lived with both their mother and father or with an

³ Results from multivariate logistic regression predicting the odds of a preschooler of an employed mother not having a regular child care arrangement show that the odds of not having a regular arrangement were higher for preschoolers living with married mothers compared with those living with never-married mothers. The odds of not having a regular arrangement were also higher for preschoolers whose mother worked fewer hours; for those whose mother worked a nonday shift; and for infants compared with older preschoolers. The analysis controlled for other characteristics shown in Table 2.

unmarried mother. Mothers remain involved as care providers for their preschoolers even when they do not live with them. Table 2 shows that 30 percent of preschoolers living with their father without their mother in the household were regularly cared for by their mother at some time while their father was working or attending school. Grandparents too, were an important source of child care providing 26 percent of child care arrangements for children living with single fathers.

The child care arrangements of preschoolers living with mothers varies by the employment status of the mother. Among employed mothers, the child's father and grandparent(s) played a prominent role in the care of preschoolers, with approximately 30 percent of preschoolers in each of these types

Table 1.
Preschoolers in Different Types of Child Care Arrangements: Spring 1997

(Numbers in thousands)

Arrangement type	Number of children	Percent in arrangement	90-percent confidence interval	
			Lower bound	Upper bound
Total children under 5 years	19,611	100.0	(NA)	(NA)
IN A REGULAR ARRANGEMENT	12,419	63.3	62.1	64.5
Relative Care	8,090	41.3	40.1	42.5
Mother ¹	702	3.6	3.1	4.1
Father ¹	3,304	16.8	15.9	17.7
Sibling	680	3.5	3.0	0.5
Grandparent	4,116	21.0	20.9	21.1
Other relative	1,819	9.3	8.6	10.0
Nonrelative Care	6,937	35.4	34.2	36.6
Organized care facility	3,933	20.1	19.1	21.1
Day care center	2,273	11.6	10.8	12.4
Nursery or preschool	1,108	5.7	5.0	6.2
Head Start	171	0.9	0.7	1.1
School	582	3.0	2.6	3.4
Other nonrelative care	3,413	17.4	16.4	18.4
In child's home	831	4.2	3.7	4.7
In provider's home	2,614	13.3	12.4	14.2
Family day care	1,426	7.3	6.6	8.0
Other care arrangement	1,250	6.4	5.8	7.0
Self Care	57	0.3	0.2	0.4
NO REGULAR ARRANGEMENT	7,192	36.7	35.5	37.9

NA Not applicable.

¹Only asked for the time the designated parent was working or in school.

Note: Numbers of children in specified arrangements and percentages may exceed the total or 100.0 because of multiple arrangements.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), 1996 Panel Wave 4.

of arrangements. Other relatives, including siblings, cared for about 15 percent of preschoolers of employed mothers. Some preschoolers were cared for by their mother while she worked (5 percent).

Organized child care facilities also were important sources of child care arrangements for employed mothers with preschool-age children.⁴ Employed mothers relied on day care centers (19 percent) more than nursery or preschools (7 percent) or Head Start programs or school (4 percent). Children under 5 years old were also cared for by family day care providers (13 percent),

⁴ Organized facilities include day care centers, nursery or preschools, or federal Head Start programs. For these younger children, the small proportion of children enrolled in kindergarten and grade school also is included in this overall category.

other nonrelatives in the provider's home (10 percent),⁵ and nonrelatives in the child's home (6 percent), such as babysitters, housekeepers providing child care services, nannies, and au pairs.

In contrast to the overwhelming use of regular child care arrangements among preschoolers of employed mothers, use of regular child care tends to be less common among preschoolers of nonemployed mothers. In Spring 1997, 29 percent of the 9.1 million preschoolers of nonemployed mothers had at least one regular child care arrangement.⁶ Grandparents were an important

⁵ This likely includes friends or neighbors of the family who were not officially licensed as family day care providers.

⁶ Information on child care by the mother or father is not asked for the time that the designated parent is not working nor attending school.

care provider, with 11 percent of children being cared for in this type of arrangement. Similar percentages of preschoolers of nonemployed mothers were cared for in day care centers, nursery or preschools, or Head Start programs, or school — about 4 percent each. Although not as prevalent as with employed mothers, some nonemployed mothers are clearly using formal child care settings for enrichment purposes, educational development, or early childhood socialization.

Despite the relatively high prevalence of child care use among preschoolers with a nonemployed mother, use of multiple child care arrangements (two or more arrangements) was very uncommon (7 percent). In comparison, many more preschoolers of employed mothers

Table 2.
Preschoolers in Different Types of Child Care Arrangements by Employment Status of Mother and Selected Characteristics: Spring 1997

(Percent of children)

Characteristic	Number of children (in thousands)	Relative				Organized care facility			Other nonrelative			Other	
		Mother ¹	Father ¹	Grand-parent	Sibling/ other relative	Day care center	Nursery/ pre-school	Head Start/ school ²	In child's home	In provider's home		No regular arrangement ³	In multiple arrangements ⁴
										Family day care	Other		
Total children under 5 years	19,611	3.6	16.8	21.0	12.2	11.6	5.7	3.8	4.2	7.3	6.4	36.7	19.0
Living with father ⁵	417	29.5	1.1	25.9	14.0	12.1	1.9	2.8	1.7	6.3	7.5	23.4	18.4
Living with mother ⁶	19,195	3.0	17.2	20.9	12.2	11.6	5.7	3.8	4.3	7.3	6.3	37.0	19.0
MOTHER EMPLOYED													
Number of children	10,116	5.1	30.6	29.6	14.8	18.9	7.0	4.2	5.5	13.0	9.8	6.6	30.2
Race and Hispanic Origin													
White	8,154	6.0	32.8	28.8	13.7	18.6	7.2	3.4	5.9	13.9	10.1	7.0	31.7
Non-Hispanic	6,999	6.6	34.2	28.4	12.8	20.0	7.7	2.7	5.9	15.0	9.8	7.3	33.8
Black	1,525	1.1	16.8	32.2	20.3	21.1	6.0	8.7	4.0	7.3	7.1	5.9	20.7
Asian and Pacific Islander	365	2.0	39.3	34.2	17.2	14.7	7.4	4.3	4.5	16.1	13.8	2.1	34.8
Hispanic (of any race)	1,224	2.1	24.6	30.8	19.0	10.6	4.1	7.0	6.0	7.6	13.1	5.1	19.4
Marital Status													
Married ⁷	7,659	5.9	36.1	26.4	12.9	18.0	7.7	3.4	5.7	14.3	9.5	7.2	31.7
Separated, divorced, widowed	897	3.8	13.9	33.5	21.1	25.5	5.6	7.2	5.2	10.1	12.1	5.1	26.5
Never married	1,560	2.1	13.5	43.0	20.9	19.2	4.3	6.5	4.9	8.3	9.9	4.6	25.2
Poverty Status⁸													
In poverty	1,199	6.0	27.9	34.5	22.4	14.4	0.8	6.7	4.5	6.8	8.1	7.1	26.4
Not in poverty	8,835	5.0	31.2	29.0	13.8	19.5	7.8	3.8	5.7	13.9	9.9	6.6	30.8
Child's Age													
Less than 1 year	1,773	5.4	33.4	32.2	15.0	14.7	0.2	—	4.3	10.9	11.5	9.3	27.7
1 to 2 years	4,101	5.0	32.0	32.0	14.3	18.5	3.2	0.8	5.8	14.6	9.7	6.1	30.3
3 to 4 years	4,241	5.1	28.1	26.2	15.3	20.9	13.5	9.2	5.8	12.3	9.1	6.1	31.3
Employment Schedule													
Employed full time	6,470	2.4	27.0	28.8	15.1	23.1	7.4	4.5	5.5	15.1	10.2	5.6	29.8
Employed part time	3,646	10.0	37.1	31.1	14.4	11.3	6.4	3.7	5.6	9.2	9.0	8.5	31.1
Shift Work Status													
Worked day shift	6,415	4.3	26.1	28.8	13.9	22.4	7.4	4.4	4.8	15.1	10.5	5.4	28.4
Worked nonday shift	3,700	6.5	38.5	31.1	16.5	12.8	6.3	3.9	6.9	9.3	8.6	8.8	33.5
MOTHER NOT EMPLOYED⁹													
Number of children	9,079	(NI)	(NI)	11.1	9.3	3.5	4.3	3.4	2.9	1.0	2.5	70.7	6.5
Race and Hispanic Origin													
White	7,375	(NI)	(NI)	10.6	8.1	3.4	4.7	3.0	3.0	1.0	2.4	72.0	6.4
Non-Hispanic	5,629	(NI)	(NI)	11.4	8.4	3.8	5.6	2.7	3.6	1.2	2.6	70.2	7.4
Black	1,247	(NI)	(NI)	16.5	16.9	4.9	2.4	5.5	2.5	0.8	3.6	60.5	8.5
Asian and Pacific Islander	325	(NI)	(NI)	6.4	5.1	0.6	2.8	5.4	1.1	—	0.7	83.6	2.6
Hispanic (of any race)	1,901	(NI)	(NI)	7.4	7.2	2.0	1.8	4.0	1.0	0.3	1.5	78.3	3.2
Marital Status													
Married ⁷	6,631	(NI)	(NI)	8.5	7.0	3.1	4.8	2.9	3.2	0.8	2.0	74.8	5.7
Separated, divorced, widowed	707	(NI)	(NI)	17.2	16.1	3.4	4.3	7.1	3.5	2.4	3.7	61.0	10.8
Never married	1,741	(NI)	(NI)	18.8	14.9	5.0	2.5	3.9	1.6	0.9	3.9	59.2	7.5
Poverty Status⁸													
In poverty	2,966	(NI)	(NI)	11.2	10.4	3.1	2.8	5.2	2.7	0.8	2.8	70.4	5.9
Not in poverty	5,803	(NI)	(NI)	11.2	8.8	3.6	5.3	2.5	3.1	1.1	2.2	70.9	7.1
Child's Age													
Less than 1 year	1,866	(NI)	(NI)	11.4	8.2	1.7	0.6	—	2.3	0.2	2.9	77.1	6.5
1 to 2 years	3,681	(NI)	(NI)	12.4	9.4	3.4	1.1	—	3.3	0.8	2.3	71.9	5.8
3 to 4 years	3,532	(NI)	(NI)	9.7	9.7	4.4	9.7	8.9	2.8	1.5	2.5	66.2	7.1

— Represents or rounds to zero. NI Not included because those looking for work or not employed were not asked the questions on parental arrangements.

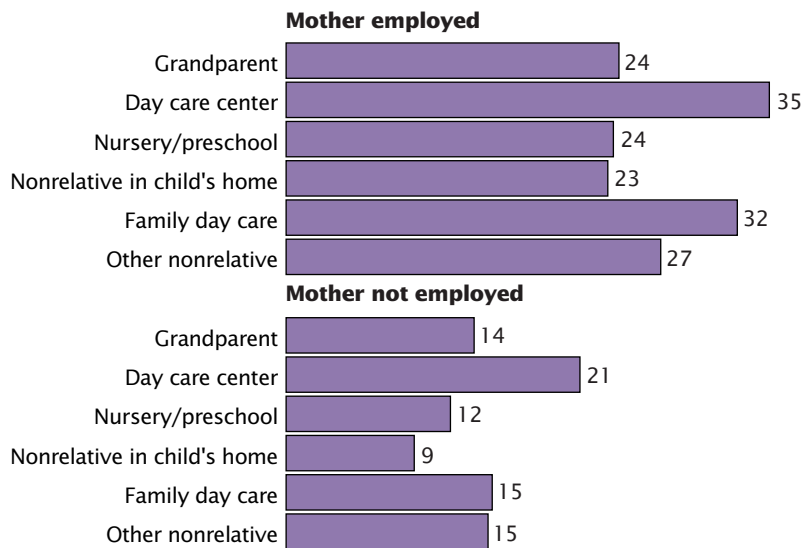
¹Only asked for the time the designated parent was working or in school. ²Includes children in a federal Head Start program and in kindergarten or grade school. ³For employed mothers, not having a regular child care arrangement during work hours may indicate instability in child care arrangements or difficulty in identifying what is regularly used. It does not necessarily indicate that no one looked after the child. ⁴Multiple arrangements include being cared for by two or more child care arrangements, excluding school and self care. ⁵Mother not present in the household, thus the father is the designated parent. Child care arrangement types are not shown by father's employment status because of small sample size. ⁶Includes children living with both mother and father if both parents are present, thus the mother is the designated parent. ⁷Includes married spouse present and spouse absent (excluding separated). ⁸Excludes those with missing income data. ⁹Includes those mothers who are in school (746,000), or other mothers looking for work (553,000), or other mothers not in the labor force (7,780,000).

Note: Numbers of children in specified arrangements may exceed the total because of multiple arrangements. Data not shown for 57,000 children who are reported to be in self care.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), 1996 Panel Wave 4.

Figure 1.
Average Time Preschoolers Spent in Selected Care Arrangements by Employment Status of Mother: Spring 1997

(Average hours per week among children in specified care arrangement)



Note: Not employed includes mothers who are in school, or other mothers looking for work, or other mothers out of the labor force.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), 1996 Panel Wave 4.

were in multiple arrangements (30 percent).

Number of Hours Spent in Child Care

The number of hours children spend in different arrangements can shed light on how and with whom children are spending significant periods of the day. In Spring 1997, preschoolers spent on average 37 hours per week in child care⁷ — those with employed mothers spent more time overall in child care than those with nonemployed mothers (37 hours per week and 25 hours per week, respectively).⁸ For children of employed mothers, the total

⁷ Overall average hours are based on those who report using at least one child care arrangement and are for all arrangements combined. Average hours for each specific arrangement type are based on those who report using that specific arrangement.

⁸ Based on tabulations not shown in the figure.

hours spent in child care includes the time spent in mother and father care while the mother was working. If time in parental care is excluded, preschoolers of employed mothers spent, on average, 30 hours per week in nonparental child care.

Figure 1 shows the average time preschoolers spent in selected child care arrangements by the employment status of the mother. Preschoolers of employed mothers spent, on average, consistently more hours per week in child care for each specified arrangement compared with preschoolers of nonemployed mothers. Preschoolers of employed mothers who were cared for by a grandparent spent 24 hours per week in grandparent care, not significantly different than the time preschoolers spent in nursery or preschools, or in nonrelative care in the child's home. For both

employed and nonemployed mothers, those preschoolers who were cared for in day care centers spent a substantial number of hours per week in that arrangement.

Family Characteristics

This section shows variations in child care use by family characteristics such as race and Hispanic origin, marital status, family income, child's age, and employment characteristics.

Race and Hispanic origin

Table 2 shows that across all race and ethnic groups, employed mothers relied on relatives as child care providers. In Spring 1997, White non-Hispanic preschoolers were more likely to be cared for by their father (34 percent) than their grandparent (28 percent), but both were prominent sources of child care.⁹ Asian and Pacific Islander preschoolers also relied heavily on their fathers (39 percent) and their grandparents (34 percent) as care providers although these percentages were not different from each other. However, Black preschoolers were more likely to be cared for by their grandparent (32 percent) than their father (17 percent). No statistical differences were found in the proportion of Hispanic children cared for by their grandparent (31 percent) or their father (25 percent).

Among children of employed mothers, day care centers were used by about 20 percent of Black children and White non-Hispanic children, while another 6 to 8 percent also

⁹ Categories are not exclusive. Hispanics may be of any race. Data for the American Indian and Alaska Native population are not shown in this report because of their small sample size in the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) in the 1996 panel. Based on the 1996 SIPP Panel, Wave 4 child care data, 5 percent of the Black population and 6 percent of the Asian and Pacific Islander population are also of Hispanic origin.

used nursery or preschools. Hispanic children used day care centers less frequently (11 percent). About one-third of White non-Hispanic children and Asian and Pacific Islander children used multiple child care compared with about 1 out of 5 Black or Hispanic children.

For preschoolers of nonemployed mothers, a higher percentage of children of Black women than of children in the other race and ethnic groups were in child care arrangements (40 percent compared with 30 percent for White non-Hispanic, 16 percent for Asian and Pacific Islander, and 22 percent for Hispanics). Grandparents and siblings/other relatives were important sources of child care for Black, White non-Hispanic, and Hispanic nonemployed mothers.

Marital status

Preschoolers of married employed mothers were more likely to rely on fathers as care providers (36 percent), compared with children of never-married employed mothers (14 percent). Instead, children of never-married mothers relied on grandparents and other relatives to a greater extent. This finding underscores the importance of living arrangements in determining father involvement in the care of their children.

Children under 5 years old of previously-married¹⁰ employed mothers were cared for in day care centers (26 percent) more than were preschoolers of married mothers (18 percent) or never-married mothers (19 percent). Previously-married employed mothers, despite the marital disruption they experienced, still utilized the child's father as a provider for 14 percent of their children.

¹⁰ Previously-married includes those who are separated, divorced, or widowed.

Poverty status

Families in poverty with an employed mother relied to a greater extent on grandparents (35 percent), fathers (28 percent), and other relatives (22 percent) than on day care centers (14 percent), or family day care providers (7 percent), for their preschoolers while the mother was working. For families not in poverty, children were equally likely to be cared for by their father and grandparent (about 30 percent each).

Higher proportions of nonpoor preschoolers were cared for in day care centers and nursery or preschools than of poor preschoolers, probably due to the higher cost for these types of arrangements. On the other hand, poor preschoolers (7 percent) were more likely to be enrolled in Head Start or school programs than nonpoor preschoolers (4 percent).

Child's age

Use of day care centers among preschoolers of employed mothers increased by age from 15 percent among children less than 1 year old to about 20 percent for children 1 to 2 years old and 3 to 4 years old. This increase suggests that as children age, school readiness may weigh in as an important factor in the choice of child care, thus explaining the high proportion of children 3 to 4 years old in organized facilities.

Care by grandparents is important for infants, making up 32 percent of arrangements for children under 1 year among employed mothers. Fathers too, play a large role in the care of infants of employed mothers (33 percent).

Employment characteristics

Overall, preschoolers of mothers who worked full time in Spring

1997 were more likely to be in non-relative care arrangements, such as in day care centers (23 percent) and in family day care providers (15 percent) than were preschoolers of mothers who worked part time (11 percent and 9 percent, respectively). On the other hand, preschoolers of mothers who work part time were more likely to be cared for by their father (37 percent) than those of mothers who work full time (27 percent).¹¹ This suggests that mothers are either arranging their work schedules to foster father care or fathers are pitching in when mothers are working.

Mothers who worked a nonday shift mentioned the father as being a care provider more frequently than did mothers who worked day shifts (39 percent and 26 percent, respectively).¹² Mothers who worked day shifts, on the other hand, relied on day care centers or family day care providers more than those mothers who worked nonday shifts. These child care patterns are probably due to both the high prevalence of both fathers and mothers who work daytime shifts and the difficulty of securing organized care arrangements or other family day care during evenings and weekends.

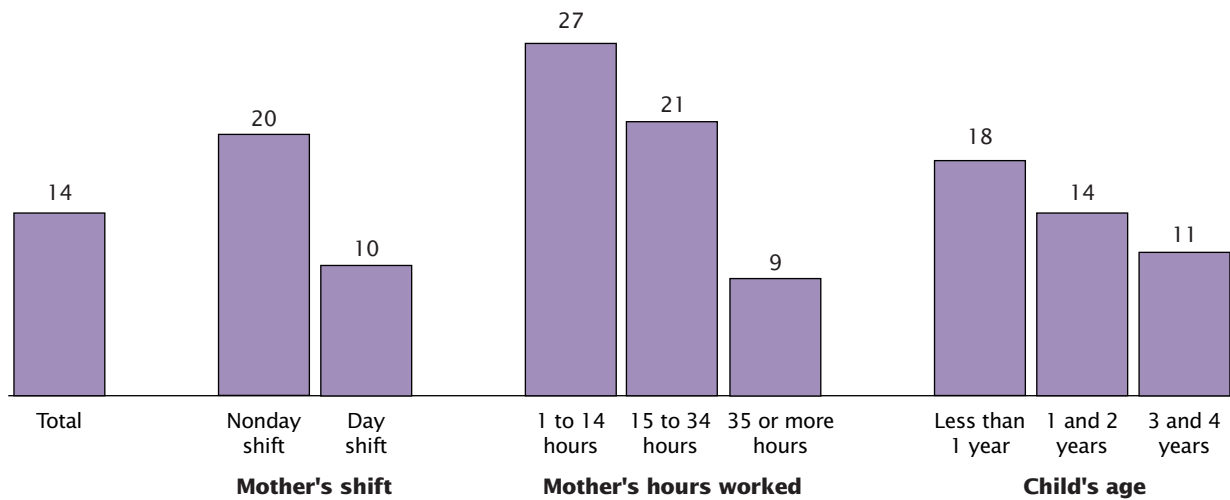
A higher proportion of preschoolers of mothers who worked a nonday shift were in multiple arrangements than those of mothers who worked a regular daytime shift (34 percent compared with 28 percent, respectively). However, a substantial proportion of children of mothers who worked nonday shifts reported no regular arrangement at all (9 percent). This suggests that mothers working nonday shifts may have

¹¹ Full-time work is defined as working 35 or more hours per week in the month preceding the interview.

¹² Day shift is defined as usually working the majority of one's hours between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Other work schedules are defined as nonday shifts.

Figure 2.

Percent of Preschoolers Cared for Only by Their Parents, by Employed Mother's Work Shift and Hours Worked, and Child's Age: Spring 1997



Note: Includes preschoolers of employed mothers only.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), 1996 Panel Wave 4.

COMPARABILITY OF THE SPRING 1997 DATA TO PREVIOUS SIPP CHILD CARE DATA

There are several important points to consider when comparing the Spring 1997 SIPP child care data to previous SIPP child care data. For the first time, child care data were collected using a computer assisted personal interview (CAPI) system/instrument rather than using a paper questionnaire instrument. In addition, two important changes were made to the questionnaire to improve data collection.

First, the number of child care categories were expanded, and respondents were allowed to answer that no regular arrangement was used. Second, instead of collecting data only on the primary and secondary arrangements, the questions solicited responses on all arrangements used, emphasizing those that were used on a regular basis for both preschoolers of employed and nonemployed parents. The primary arrangement in this report is derived from answers on the number of hours each arrangement is used each week, rather than from a direct question asking for the primary arrangement as was used in past surveys.

Finally, due to the survey implementation schedule, the child care questions were asked in spring rather than fall. Thus, child care changes observed between 1997 and previous years may reflect seasonal differences in child care use and availability of providers, such as closing of preschools and seasonal variations in school activities or sports for grade-school-age children. For these reasons, caution should be used when comparing the Spring 1997 data to prior survey years.

more difficulty securing regular arrangements and when they do, may have to juggle arrangements. The latter may be the case especially among women working nonday shifts who have rotating or irregular schedules.

How common is it for families with an employed mother to arrange their work schedules such that they do not need to rely on anyone other than the child's parents to provide care? Figure 2 shows that overall, 14 percent of preschoolers of employed mothers were in parental care only (i.e., they were cared for by their mother and/or father and not by any other arrangements). While 10 percent of preschoolers of employed mothers who worked a day shift were cared for only by their parents, the proportion was twice as high for those whose mother worked a nonday shift (20 percent). Likewise, preschoolers of mothers who worked fewer hours per week were more likely to be cared for by parents only. In contrast, those

Table 3.
Primary Child Care Arrangements Used by Employed Mothers of Preschoolers: 1985 to 1997

(Numbers in thousands)

Type of arrangement	Winter 1985	Fall 1988	Fall 1990	Fall 1991	Fall 1993	Fall 1995	Spring 1997
Total children under 5 years	8,168	9,483	9,629	9,854	9,937	10,047	10,116
PERCENT DISTRIBUTION							
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Parents	23.8	22.7	22.9	28.7	22.1	22.0	22.3
Mother while working	8.1	7.6	6.4	8.7	6.2	5.4	3.3
Father	15.7	15.1	16.5	20.0	15.9	16.6	19.0
Relatives	24.1	21.1	23.1	23.5	26.0	21.4	25.8
Grandparent	15.9	13.9	14.3	15.8	17.0	15.9	18.4
Sibling and other relative	8.2	7.2	8.8	7.7	9.0	5.5	7.4
Organized facility	23.1	25.8	27.5	23.1	29.9	25.1	21.7
Day care center	14.0	16.6	20.6	15.8	18.3	17.7	16.6
Nursery/preschool	9.1	9.2	6.9	7.3	11.6	5.9	4.2
Federal Head Start program	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	1.5	0.9
Other nonrelative care	28.2	28.9	25.1	23.3	21.6	28.4	22.1
In child's home	5.9	5.3	5.0	5.4	5.0	4.9	4.0
In provider's home	22.3	23.6	20.1	17.9	16.6	23.5	18.1
Family day care	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	15.7	10.7
Other nonrelative	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	7.8	7.4
Other	0.8	1.6	1.3	1.6	1.1	2.9	8.1
Self care	-	0.1	0.1	-	-	0.1	0.1
Other arrangement ¹	0.8	1.5	1.2	1.6	1.1	0.6	2.0
No regular arrangement	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	2.2	6.0

- Represents or rounds to zero. NA Not available.

¹Includes children in kindergarten/grade school or in a school-based activity.

Note: To make the 1995 and 1997 data consistent with prior surveys, their distributions were proportionately redistributed to account for tied responses for the primary arrangement (including responses of no regular arrangement) to make the percentages total to 100 percent.

Source: Tabulations derived from Current Population Reports, Series P70-9 Table 1; P70-30 Table 1; P70-36 Table 1; P70-53 Table 2; P70-70 Table 1; and this report P70-86, U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), 1996 Panel Wave 4.

whose mothers worked 35 or more hours per week were least likely to be cared for by parents only (9 percent). Clearly, employed mothers are arranging their work schedules — either by working nonday shifts or reduced hours — to balance work and family responsibilities, encourage father involvement in the care of children, and/or reduce the cost of child care.

The SIPP data show that 18 percent of children less than 1 year old of employed mothers were cared for by their parents only. This proportion decreases with children's age, such that 11 percent of 3 to 4 year olds of employed mothers were cared for only by their parents. This decline by age may result both from the concerns by parents to provide close family-based care for

infants and also to provide socializing experiences to the children once they grow older.

Historical Trends in the Primary Child Care Arrangement of Employed Mothers

Table 3 presents data on historical distributions of primary child care arrangements for preschoolers of employed mothers since the first SIPP child care survey was conducted in 1985.¹³ The primary child care arrangement is defined as the arrangement used the most hours per week during the time the

¹³ Before 1995, data are shown only for the primary arrangements. Data for 1995 and 1997 distribute the "tied" responses proportionally for the primary arrangement to make the distributions comparable to prior survey years. In addition, the option for reporting that no regular arrangement was used was not available before 1995.

mother was at work. In Spring 1997, 10.1 million preschoolers lived with employed mothers, up from 8.2 million in 1985. Almost half (48 percent) were cared for by either a parent (including the mother herself) or by some other relative in 1997. Organized child care facilities and other types of nonrelatives made up less than half (44 percent) of all primary arrangements in Spring 1997. Six percent mentioned that they did not have a regular arrangement at all.

Changes in the survey design over the period make comparisons difficult for recent years. In 1995, the number of child care response categories was expanded, and in 1997, the data collection procedure was changed from a paper questionnaire to a computer-based instrument. In

addition, differences in work schedules, or the availability of other family members, organized child care facilities or family day care providers during the months of May and June may affect the comparability of the Spring 1997 data with prior data collected in the fall of each year. Therefore, comparisons of 1997 data with earlier years should be treated with caution.

The use of nonrelatives has had an erratic trend over the period from 1985 to 1997. In the late 1980s, the proportion of preschoolers who were in home-based, nonrelative care (either in the child's home or in the provider's home) was about 28 percent. By Spring 1997, only 22 percent were cared for in a home-based arrangement by a nonrelative of the child. Care by nonrelatives in the child's home remained steady at approximately 5 percent from 1985 to 1995, and decreased to 4 percent in 1997.

During the same 12-year period, the use of organized facilities for preschoolers fluctuated. From 1985 to 1990, the proportion of preschoolers cared for in organized facilities rose from 23 percent to 28 percent, but then dropped down again to 23 percent in 1991. However, this proportion rose to 30 percent in 1993, but then decreased to 22 percent in 1997.

Rates of family and relative care also have varied during this 12-year period. Care by fathers, while remaining around 15 percent between 1985 and 1988, increased sharply to 20 percent by 1991. However, this proportion dropped down to 17 percent in 1995, but then increased to 19 percent in 1997. The overall declining trend in care by mothers while working was interrupted in 1991 as well, when it reached a level similar to the 1985 level. The rate then

continued to decrease to an all-time low of 3 percent in 1997. The lack of a uniformly consistent trend since 1985 in the use of specific child care arrangements makes it difficult to make projections of the overall mix of arrangements needed in the future.

CHILDREN 5 TO 14 YEARS OLD

This section shows the patterns and use of child care arrangements for grade-school-age children. The child care experiences of grade-school-age children differ from those of preschool-age children primarily in that older children experience a wider array of daily activities. Two important types of daily activities are also discussed in more detail — use of enrichment activities and the proportion of children who regularly spend time in self care.

Child Care Arrangements for Grade-School-Age Children

Grade-school-age children — children 5 to 14 years old — experience a wider array of daily activities than do preschoolers. They may have extended peer groups of friends at school and participate in various after-school or enrichment programs that are not available to younger children. To capture these activities, the child care arrangements shown in the tables for grade-school-age children differ from those shown for younger children. Although not generally considered a child care arrangement, school attendance is also shown in this report because the intention is to show children's various activities during the day and because school activities figure prominently in the daily lives of grade-school-age children.

Relatives are important contributors to the overall care of grade-school-age children (see Table 4). In Spring 1997, grade-school-age children

received care from other relatives, including siblings (17 percent), from their father (16 percent), or from a grandparent (15 percent).

Grade-school-age children were less likely to be cared for by nonrelatives, such as organized care facilities or other nonrelatives in the child's home or the provider's home, than by relatives. Only 6 percent of children 5 to 14 years old were cared for in organized facilities, 4 percent in the child's home and 7 percent in the provider's home. This relatively low use of nonrelatives reflects the high rate of school enrollment for these children as well as their involvement in other structured activities. A very high proportion of grade-school-age children (84 percent) were in school and many (17 percent) participated in enrichment activities such as sports, lessons, clubs, and before- or after-school programs.¹⁴ In addition, 19 percent (7.3 million) of grade-school-age children cared for themselves on a regular basis without any adult supervision.

In general, employed mothers were more likely to use care arrangements than nonemployed mothers, primarily because many care for their children themselves if they are not working. In Spring 1997, there were 23.4 million grade-school-age children whose mother was employed, making up 62 percent of all grade-school-age children living with their mother.

Comparing the use of enrichment activities and self care by the mother's employment status reveals some important findings. Enrichment

¹⁴ These lower than expected school rates are reflective of the survey implementation dates (April, May, June, and July of 1997) in reference to child care, school, and other activities occurring in the preceding month. Respondents surveyed in July may have provided answers for activities during the first full month of summer break.

Table 4.
Grade-School-Age Children in Different Types of Arrangements by Employment Status of Mother and Selected Characteristics: Spring 1997

(Percent of children)

Characteristic	Number of children (in thousands)	Relative				Nonrelative			Other				
		Mother ¹	Father ¹	Grandparent	Sibling/other relative	Organized care facility ²	Nonrelative in child's home	Nonrelative in provider's home ³	School ⁴	Enrichment activity ⁵	Self care	No regular arrangement ⁶	In multiple arrangements ⁷
Total children 5 to 14 years.	39,486	3.6	16.1	15.0	17.3	6.1	3.7	7.0	83.6	17.2	18.5	44.8	18.2
Living with father ⁸	1,461	17.9	2.8	22.8	18.8	6.9	8.1	7.9	87.6	14.7	23.0	33.4	20.7
Living with mother ⁹	38,025	3.1	16.6	14.7	17.2	6.1	3.5	7.0	83.4	17.3	18.4	45.2	18.1
MOTHER EMPLOYED													
Number of children	23,423	4.9	26.2	19.3	21.0	8.5	4.6	10.0	84.7	20.9	22.7	27.2	25.7
Race and Hispanic Origin													
White	18,623	5.2	27.5	18.7	19.9	8.3	4.5	10.6	84.1	22.8	23.4	28.0	26.8
Non-Hispanic	15,925	5.4	28.4	18.9	19.0	9.0	4.9	10.5	83.9	24.4	24.9	27.7	27.9
Black	3,638	3.2	17.1	20.6	26.2	8.8	5.5	8.3	86.9	12.7	18.8	24.4	19.5
Asian and Pacific Islander	823	5.6	34.3	23.4	20.6	11.0	3.9	8.0	88.2	13.9	16.1	20.2	27.1
Hispanic (of any race)	2,854	3.6	22.6	18.5	24.6	5.1	2.2	11.1	85.4	13.9	15.3	29.2	20.9
Marital Status													
Married ¹⁰	17,136	5.0	31.8	17.2	19.4	8.0	4.0	9.1	84.6	22.2	22.3	28.6	26.4
Separated, divorced, widowed	4,364	3.9	11.1	22.2	26.0	9.2	6.1	12.5	84.6	19.9	27.2	25.9	24.9
Never married	1,923	6.2	10.5	32.0	23.5	11.3	6.3	12.4	85.2	11.1	15.4	17.7	21.9
Poverty Status¹¹													
In poverty	2,777	6.2	21.5	20.8	2,703.0	4.6	4.5	6.9	84.9	9.1	14.7	26.2	19.4
Not in poverty	20,439	4.7	27.0	19.1	20.1	9.0	4.5	10.5	84.7	22.5	23.7	27.2	26.6
Child's Age													
5 to 8 years	9,275	5.5	30.0	24.0	18.8	16.6	5.3	14.9	77.5	15.8	4.3	16.3	30.3
9 to 11 years	7,055	5.3	26.9	19.9	25.0	5.4	5.1	10.1	88.8	25.3	21.1	25.8	27.9
12 to 14 years	7,094	3.6	20.5	12.6	19.8	1.0	3.1	3.6	89.9	23.0	48.2	42.8	17.6
Employment Schedule													
Employed full time	16,161	3.9	25.1	20.8	22.5	9.7	4.7	11.4	83.9	21.4	24.3	23.8	26.5
Employed part time	7,262	7.1	28.6	16.1	17.5	5.8	4.2	7.1	86.4	19.5	18.9	34.6	24.1
Shift Work Status													
Worked day shift	15,748	4.5	23.1	19.3	20.6	9.9	4.5	10.7	84.5	22.2	23.9	26.8	25.0
Worked nonday shift	7,675	5.6	32.5	19.3	21.7	5.6	4.7	8.6	84.9	18.1	20.0	27.9	27.2
MOTHER NOT EMPLOYED¹²													
Number of children	14,601	(NI)	(NI)	7.3	11.3	2.3	1.9	2.1	81.4	11.6	11.5	74.1	5.8
Race and Hispanic Origin													
White	11,605	(NI)	(NI)	6.5	10.9	2.2	1.9	1.9	81.2	13.2	12.3	74.3	5.6
Non-Hispanic	8,885	(NI)	(NI)	6.9	10.7	2.6	2.4	1.8	80.2	15.6	14.0	73.0	6.5
Black	2,219	(NI)	(NI)	11.8	12.8	2.3	1.6	3.2	81.2	5.0	6.8	72.1	6.6
Asian and Pacific Islander	591	(NI)	(NI)	4.3	11.7	1.2	0.4	0.5	87.7	7.9	9.7	81.6	5.0
Hispanic (of any race)	3,005	(NI)	(NI)	5.7	10.8	0.8	0.3	2.5	84.3	4.9	6.7	78.9	2.8
Marital Status													
Married ¹⁰	11,039	(NI)	(NI)	5.6	10.4	2.1	1.5	1.4	81.5	12.7	11.8	76.1	5.1
Separated, divorced, widowed	2,067	(NI)	(NI)	11.7	14.4	2.1	2.4	3.6	82.0	11.6	13.7	68.8	7.8
Never married	1,496	(NI)	(NI)	13.5	13.7	3.7	4.0	4.8	79.7	3.9	6.1	66.8	8.1
Poverty Status¹¹													
In poverty	4,957	(NI)	(NI)	8.3	13.3	2.1	2.2	3.2	80.9	6.7	9.7	73.4	5.8
Not in poverty	9,213	(NI)	(NI)	6.9	10.2	2.4	1.6	1.4	81.5	14.6	12.5	74.4	5.9
Child's Age													
5 to 8 years	6,526	(NI)	(NI)	8.9	10.0	4.7	2.2	2.6	74.3	9.2	2.6	72.5	5.8
9 to 11 years	4,315	(NI)	(NI)	7.3	12.8	0.4	1.8	2.1	86.0	14.2	10.6	73.9	7.0
12 to 14 years	3,760	(NI)	(NI)	4.5	11.7	0.3	1.5	1.2	88.5	12.8	28.1	76.9	4.5

NI Not included because those looking for work or not employed were not asked the questions on parental arrangements.

¹Only asked for the time the designated parent was working or in school. ²Organized facility includes children in day care centers, nursery or preschools, or federal Head Start programs. ³Includes care by a family care provider and other nonrelatives in the provider's home. ⁴These lower than expected school enrollment rates reflect the responses of those who were surveyed in July in reference to June, the first month of summer break. ⁵This category consists of organized sports, lessons (such as music, art, dance, language, and computer), clubs, and before- or after-school programs located either at school or other places. ⁶For employed mothers, not having a regular child care arrangement during work hours may indicate instability in child care arrangements or difficulty in identifying what is regularly used. It does not necessarily indicate that no one looked after the child. ⁷Multiple arrangements include being cared for by two or more child care arrangements, excluding school and self care. ⁸Mother not present in the household, thus the father is the designated parent. Child care arrangement types are not shown by father's employment status because of small sample size. ⁹Includes children living with both mother and father if both parents are present, thus the mother is the designated parent. ¹⁰Includes married spouse present and spouse absent (excluding separated). ¹¹Excludes those with missing income data. ¹²Includes those mothers who are in school (880,000), or other mothers looking for work (1,142,000), or other mothers not in the labor force (12,580,000).

Note: Numbers of children in specified arrangements may exceed the total because of multiple arrangements.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), 1996 Panel Wave 4.

Table 5.
Participation in Enrichment Activities as a Child Care Arrangement Among Children 6 to 14 Years Old: Spring 1997

Characteristic	Number of children	Participation in enrichment activities as child care arrangement									
		Total ¹		Sports		Lessons		Clubs		Before/after-school program	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Children 6 to 14 years ²	35,338	6,797	19.2	3,553	10.1	2,265	6.4	2,291	6.5	1,470	4.2
Child's Age											
6 to 8 years	12,130	2,111	17.4	907	7.5	595	4.9	644	5.3	703	5.8
9 to 11 years	11,842	2,475	20.9	1,266	10.7	901	7.6	921	7.8	526	4.4
12 to 14 years	11,365	2,210	19.4	1,379	12.1	770	6.8	726	6.4	241	2.1
Poverty Status³											
Less than 100 percent of poverty	7,096	601	8.5	227	3.2	166	2.3	251	3.5	152	2.1
100 to 199 percent of poverty	8,905	1,283	14.4	612	6.9	334	3.8	410	4.6	277	3.1
200 percent and above poverty	18,700	4,849	25.9	2,683	14.3	1,737	9.3	1,628	8.7	1,026	5.5
Employment Schedule of Designated Parent											
Not employed	13,190	1,750	13.3	962	7.3	660	5.0	713	5.4	158	1.2
Employed	22,148	5,047	22.8	2,591	11.7	1,605	7.2	1,579	7.1	1,311	5.9
Full time	15,504	3,626	23.4	1,800	11.6	1,085	7.0	1,037	6.7	1,056	6.8
Part time	6,644	1,420	21.4	791	11.9	520	7.8	542	8.2	255	3.8

¹This category consists of organized sports, lessons (such as music, art, dance, language, computer), clubs, and before- or after-school programs located either at school or other places. Children may participate in more than one type of activity.

²Enrichment activity questions were asked only of children 6 to 14 years old.

³Excludes those with missing income data.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), 1996 Panel Wave 4.

activities include participation in organized sports, lessons (such as music, art, language, and computer lessons), clubs (for example, scouts), and before- or after-school programs located either at school or other places. Twenty-one percent of children of employed mothers participated regularly in at least one enrichment activity on a weekly basis, while only 12 percent of those of nonemployed mothers did so. Among children of employed mothers, 23 percent regularly spent time in self care. This figure is almost twice the proportion for grade-school-age children of nonemployed mothers (12 percent).

Enrichment Activities

Because there is interest in a comprehensive view of the regular weekly experiences of children, greater detail is provided on enrichment

activities. For some parents, enrichment activities may be considered a form of child care. In Spring 1997, 6.8 million children ages of 6 to 14 (19 percent) participated in at least one enrichment activity considered by the parent to be a child care arrangement during the week (see Table 5).¹⁵ The most frequently mentioned enrichment activity for grade-school-age children was sports (10 percent). Similar proportions of grade-school-age children participated in lessons and clubs (6 percent), and a smaller proportion participated in before- or after-school programs (4 percent).

Participation in sports activities is more common among children 9 to 11 and 12 to 14 than among children 6 to 8 years old. Table 5 also

¹⁵ The questions regarding participation in enrichment activities were asked for children 6 to 14 years old.

shows that younger children were less likely to participate in lessons and clubs than older children. However, children 6 to 8 participated in before- and after-school programs slightly more frequently than older children.

Enrichment activities may be costly in terms of money and time to transport children to and from the site. Table 5 shows that participation in enrichment activities increases as financial resources to the family increases. For example, while only 3 percent of children living in poor families participated in organized sports, 7 percent of those living just above the poverty level and 14 percent of those living at 200 percent and above poverty did. Overall, children living in families at 200 percent of poverty level or more were about three times as likely to participate in any type of

Table 6.
Prevalence of Self Care Among Grade-School-Age Children: Spring 1997

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Age		
	Total	5 to 11	12 to 14
Total children 5 to 14 years	39,486	28,120	11,365
Number in self care	7,324	2,603	4,721
PERCENT OF CHILDREN IN SELF CARE BY CHARACTERISTIC AND AGE OF CHILD			
Total	18.5	9.3	41.5
Type of Arrangement¹			
Percent using self care as:			
Primary arrangement	1.2	0.3	4.1
Secondary arrangement	17.3	16.2	21.3
Tertiary arrangement	8.4	7.2	13.9
Marital Status of Designated Parent			
Married ²	18.2	9.3	40.5
Separated, divorced, widowed	23.4	11.0	47.5
Never married	11.3	6.2	32.6
Employment Schedule of Designated Parent			
Not employed	11.7	5.9	28.2
Employed	22.7	11.4	48.5
Full time	24.4	11.6	51.9
Part time	18.9	11.0	39.4
Worked day shift	24.0	12.0	50.1
Worked nonday shift	20.1	10.2	44.9
Poverty Status³			
Less than 100 percent of poverty	11.7	5.4	28.9
100 to 199 percent of poverty	15.3	8.2	34.4
200 percent and above poverty	22.8	11.2	49.6
Race and Hispanic Origin			
White	19.4	9.4	44.2
Non-Hispanic	21.2	10.4	46.7
Black	14.2	7.9	30.3
Asian and Pacific Islander	13.4	7.4	26.3
Hispanic (of any race)	11.0	5.0	29.6
Enrichment Activities			
Participated in an activity	31.1	17.4	59.7
Did not participate in an activity	15.9	7.7	37.2
HOURS PER WEEK IN SELF CARE AMONG CHILDREN IN SELF CARE			
Average hours per week	8.2	6.4	9.2
Number of Hours per Week (percent distribution)			
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Less than 2 hours	13.3	17.8	10.8
2 to 4 hours	26.6	31.7	23.7
5 to 9 hours	30.3	30.3	30.4
10 or more hours	29.8	20.3	35.1

¹Primary includes children with one or more arrangements; secondary includes children with two or more arrangements; tertiary includes children with three or more arrangements.

²Includes married spouse present and spouse absent (excluding separated).

³Excludes those with missing income data.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), 1996 Panel Wave 4.

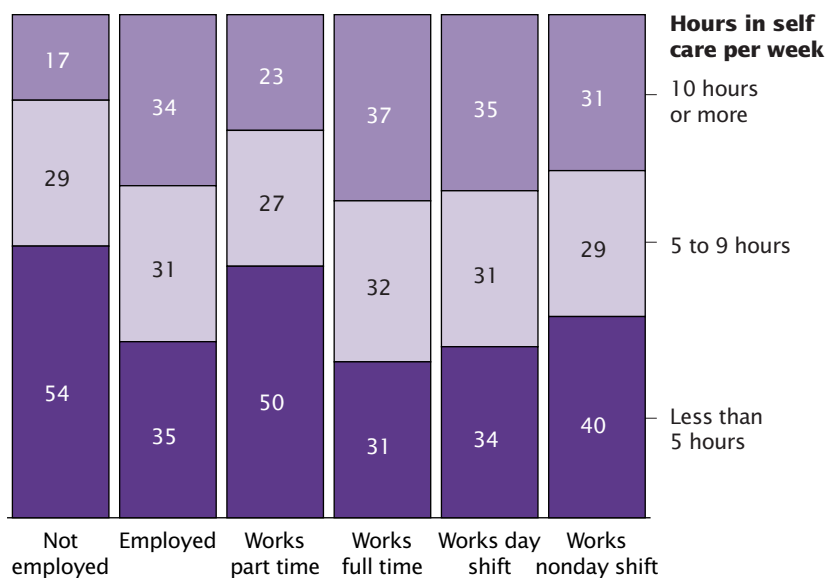
enrichment activity (26 percent) than were children living below the poverty level (9 percent).

Grade-school-age children of employed parents were more likely to participate in enrichment activities

than those whose designated parent was not employed, but grade-school-age children participated at similar rates regardless of whether their parent worked full- or part-time. Participation in sports and lessons did not vary significantly depending

on whether the parent was employed full- or part-time. However, participation in clubs and in before- or after-school programs did vary by the full- or part-time employment status of the parent.

Figure 3.
**Percent Distribution of Time Spent in Self Care
 Among Grade-School-Age Children by Labor Force
 Characteristics of Designated Parent: 1997**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), 1996 Panel Wave 4.

Self Care

Grade-school-age children often spend time in self care. They do so sometimes because parents experience difficulty in securing supervised arrangements. However, among older children, self care can be an important part of the natural process of independence, allowing children structured opportunities for successful transitions to adulthood. While some children may encounter self care in a safe environment, with neighbors and parents checking in periodically, other children may experience self care in a less structured and less safe environment. Parents base their decisions to allow their children to care for themselves on a number of factors including the age and maturity of the child, the environment in which the child will be in self care, the financial resources and parental time available to provide alternative care arrangements, and the perceived risks associated with self care.

Estimates of self care

In Spring 1997, 7.3 million (19 percent) of the 39.5 million children 5 to 14 years old were reported by their parent to care for themselves on a regular basis during a typical week in the month preceding the interview¹⁶ (see Table 6). The majority of the children in self care were of middle-school age, 12 to 14 years old (65 percent). The use of self care ranges from 1 percent among 5 year olds to 47 percent among 14 year olds. Grade-school-age children are shown in Table 6 for two age groups that generally represent age cut-offs for elementary and middle school (5 to 11 years old and 12 to 14 years old). Nine percent of children 5 to 11 years old and

¹⁶ After all child care information (arrangement types used, hours spent per week, and costs paid per week) was collected, a separate question regarding whether the child usually cared for himself or herself and the hours spent in self care per week was asked.

42 percent of children 12 to 14 years old were in self care.

Children 5 to 14 years old spent an average of 8 hours per week in self care among those who were reported to regularly be in self care situations. Sixty percent spent 5 or more hours per week in self care, and 30 percent spent 10 or more hours per week in self care. Children 12 to 14 years old spent an average of 9 hours per week in self care compared with 6 hours per week for children 5 to 11 years old. The older group was more likely than the younger group of children to spend 10 or more hours per week in self care (35 percent and 20 percent, respectively).

Parental time

Research indicates that the prevalence of self care is associated with the amount of parental time available to care for children, which in turn, depends on family structure and labor force participation.¹⁷ In Spring 1997, grade-school-age children living with a previously-married parent were more likely to be in self care (23 percent) than were those living with a married parent (18 percent) or a never-married parent (11 percent). This pattern is also seen for children 12 to 14 years old.

Patterns of self care vary also by the labor force participation of the parent. Grade-school-age children of employed parents were more likely than those whose parent was not employed to care for themselves, and children whose parent

¹⁷ Virginia Cain and Sandra Hofferth. "Parental Choice of Self-care for School-age Children." *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 51(1994):65-77; Harriet Presser. "Can We Make Time for Children? The Economy, Work Schedules, and Child Care." *Demography*. 26(1998):523-543. Kristin Smith and Lynne Casper. "Home Alone: Reasons Parents Leave Their Children Unsupervised." Paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the Population Association of America. New York, NY, March 1999.

worked full time were more likely to be in self care than those whose parent worked part time (24 percent compared with 19 percent). Children of parents who worked a day shift were also more likely to be in self care at some point during the week compared with children whose parent worked a nonday shift, which suggests that some parents may work evening or week-end schedules to avoid leaving their child unsupervised.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of time spent in self care by labor force characteristics of the designated parent. Grade-school-age children of a nonemployed parent spent less time in self care — 54 percent spent less than 5 hours in self care per week, while only 35 percent of those of employed parents did so. Also, working part time or a nonday shift reduces the amount of time children spent unsupervised each week, presumably because parents arrange their work schedule to coincide with the majority of time their child is at school.

FAMILY EXPENDITURES ON CHILD CARE FOR ALL CHILDREN UNDER 15 YEARS OLD

Weekly Child Care Expenditures

Child care costs represent an important component of family income, especially for low income families. This section examines child care costs for different types of arrangements for preschool and grade-school-age children and then examines overall family expenditures for child care costs by selected socioeconomic characteristics, as well as their percentage of monthly family income. Finally, new data on the percentage of families receiving help to pay for child care is analyzed. The Spring 1997 data were collected during the period April – July referencing payments made in

the month prior to the interview. These months include time periods when children may have been off from school or other arrangements may have been used, for example relatives or older children available in the household because they were off from school. For prior surveys, data were collected for the fall months of September-December. Seasonal differences in arrangements, which can effect child care costs, may affect the comparability of the 1997 data with prior surveys.

Children under 5 years old

In Spring 1997, child care payments were made for 6.2 million (51 percent) of the 12.1 million preschoolers living with mothers who had a regular child care arrangement (see Table 7). On average, \$67 per week was paid per preschooler. Preschoolers of employed mothers were more likely to be in a paid child care arrangement than those with a nonemployed mother (57 percent compared with 32 percent), and on average were in more costly arrangements (\$70 per week and \$50 per week, respectively). The average price per hour, however, was higher for preschoolers of nonemployed mothers than those of employed mothers (\$3.34 and \$2.22, respectively), indicating that the cost of child care is greater per hour if fewer hours in care are required.

Relatively few grandparents were paid for caring for their grandchildren of preschool-age (15 percent), and when paid, they received on average \$40 per week. Other relatives were more likely to receive a payment for child care services (28 percent) than grandparents, and they also received a higher payment per hour (\$2.49 per hour compared with \$1.50 per hour, respectively).

In contrast, nonrelatives are by far more likely than relatives to be paid for child care. For example,

91 percent of preschoolers cared for by a family day care provider and 86 percent of those in a day care center were in a paid arrangement. The most expensive form of nonrelative care was use of day care centers (\$83 per week). Family day care was the second most costly, averaging \$68 per week.

Among preschoolers of employed mothers, hourly payments to day care centers (\$3.51 per hour) were higher than those paid to nursery and preschools, nonrelatives in the child's home (for example, nannies and babysitters), to family day care centers, and care by other relatives (all about \$2.60 per hour). The care of preschoolers of nonemployed mothers cost more per hour than the care of preschoolers of employed mothers when care was in a nursery or preschool or by a nonrelative in the child's home.

Overall, preschoolers with arrangements were most likely to be cared for by their grandparent, an arrangement that is most likely to be unpaid, and when paid, grandparents received the lowest price per hour compared with other arrangement types. This suggests that when available, parents rely on grandparents presumably because they are a low cost option, are trustworthy, and are family. While grandparents were the least expensive arrangement for preschoolers of employed mothers, day care centers were the most expensive.

Children 5 to 14 years old

Grade-school-age children were less likely to be in a paid arrangement than preschoolers (40 percent compared with 51 percent), and when they were, the average cost per week was lower but the price per hour was higher.

Similar to the situation of preschoolers, a higher percentage

Table 7.
Child Care Expenditures for Children Living With Their Mother and in a Regular Child Care Arrangement: Spring 1997

(Numbers in thousands. Costs in dollars and cents)

Weekly child care expenditures	All children	Relative		Organized care facility		Other nonrelative			
		Grandparent	Other relative	Day care center	Nursery/preschool	Non-relative in child's home	Family day care	Other non-relative ¹	Enrichment activities ²
CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS ...	12,100	4,008	1,772	2,222	1,100	823	1,399	1,219	(X)
Making payments	6,169	582	502	1,913	875	572	1,277	898	(X)
Average cost per week ³	67.40	40.44	45.29	83.28	51.88	53.99	67.70	51.26	(X)
(standard error)	(1.26)	(2.39)	(2.84)	(2.67)	(2.73)	(4.29)	(2.12)	(2.54)	(X)
Average cost per hour ³	2.37	1.50	2.49	3.52	3.23	3.29	2.62	2.27	(X)
(standard error)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.33)	(0.22)	(0.17)	(0.22)	(0.12)	(0.14)	(X)
Mother Employed	9,443	2,996	1,205	1,907	708	561	1,313	992	(X)
Making payments	5,332	536	443	1,717	573	428	1,227	774	(X)
Average cost per week ³	70.13	40.30	49.18	86.44	56.19	56.95	68.62	51.38	(X)
(standard error)	(1.36)	(2.51)	(3.07)	(2.88)	(3.31)	(5.12)	(2.19)	(2.43)	(X)
Average cost per hour ³	2.22	1.42	2.61	3.51	2.63	2.64	2.56	2.03	(X)
(standard error)	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.38)	(0.25)	(0.13)	(0.22)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(X)
Mother Not Employed	2,657	1,012	567	315	392	262	87	227	(X)
Making payments	838	46	58	196	301	144	50	123	(X)
Average cost per week ³	49.99	(B)	(B)	55.63	43.70	45.17	(B)	(B)	(X)
(standard error)	(3.24)	(B)	(B)	(5.57)	(4.73)	(7.70)	(B)	(B)	(X)
Average cost per hour ³	3.34	(B)	(B)	3.65	4.38	5.22	(B)	(B)	(X)
(standard error)	(0.18)	(B)	(B)	(0.34)	(0.40)	(0.47)	(B)	(B)	(X)
CHILDREN 5 TO 14 YEARS	20,842	5,590	2,594	1,819	471	1,346	1,000	1,759	6581
Making payments	8,232	534	492	1,610	357	709	907	870	4270
Average cost per week ³	40.77	32.28	31.47	53.95	46.33	45.80	48.76	35.95	22.56
(standard error)	(1.00)	(2.10)	(3.34)	(2.02)	(3.64)	(3.96)	(3.41)	(2.61)	(1.05)
Average cost per hour ³	3.13	2.40	3.62	4.07	2.90	3.68	4.35	3.95	4.54
(standard error)	(0.19)	(0.25)	(0.43)	(0.44)	(0.20)	(0.26)	(0.53)	(0.71)	(0.41)
Mother Employed	17,058	4,528	1,866	1,688	307	1,069	938	1,515	4884
Making payments	7,019	486	455	1,527	225	614	858	793	3187
Average cost per week ³	42.03	33.68	32.34	54.44	48.13	50.89	42.83	34.42	23.98
(standard error)	(1.01)	(2.24)	(3.56)	(2.07)	(3.97)	(4.48)	(1.89)	(2.09)	(1.23)
Average cost per hour ³	2.82	2.46	3.60	3.69	2.28	3.80	4.21	4.09	4.52
(standard error)	(0.10)	(0.27)	(0.44)	(0.23)	(0.17)	(0.30)	(0.56)	(0.78)	(0.31)
Mother Not Employed	3,785	1,063	727	131	163	277	62	244	1697
Making payments	1,213	48	36	83	132	96	49	76	1082
Average cost per week ³	33.47	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	18.37
(standard error)	(3.36)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(1.98)
Average cost per hour ³	4.95	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	4.58
(standard error)	(1.17)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(1.34)

B Base less than 200,000 is too small to show derived statistic. X Category not asked for children under 6 years old.

¹Includes care in the provider's home.

²This category consists of organized sports, lessons (such as music, art, dance, language, and computer), clubs, and before- or after-school programs located either at school or other places. These questions were asked in reference to children 6 to 14 years old.

³Average expenditures in dollars and cents per week among people making child care payments.

Note: Only includes children with a regular child care arrangement. Expenditure questions were not asked for care by the mother, father, or siblings. Standard errors are in parentheses. Numbers of arrangements may exceed numbers of children because of multiple arrangements.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), 1996 Panel Wave 4.

of grade-school-age children of employed mothers were in a paid arrangement than those of nonemployed mothers. This is true for most arrangement types, with the exception being enrichment

activities where parents of both groups of children were as likely to pay (both about 65 percent). Use of enrichment activities as a form of child care was more costly than care by grandparents and other

relatives, with the price per hour paid for enrichment activities being much higher than that paid for grandparents (\$4.54 per hour compared with \$2.40 per hour). Interestingly, the price per hour

paid to grandparents was higher when they cared for grade-school-age children than when they cared for preschoolers, suggesting that parents negotiate a set amount to pay the grandparent rather than a price based on the number of hours in grandparent care. Among those in grandparent care, grandparents cared for preschoolers for more hours per week than they cared for grade-school-age children (an average of 21 hours and 15 hours per week, respectively).¹⁸

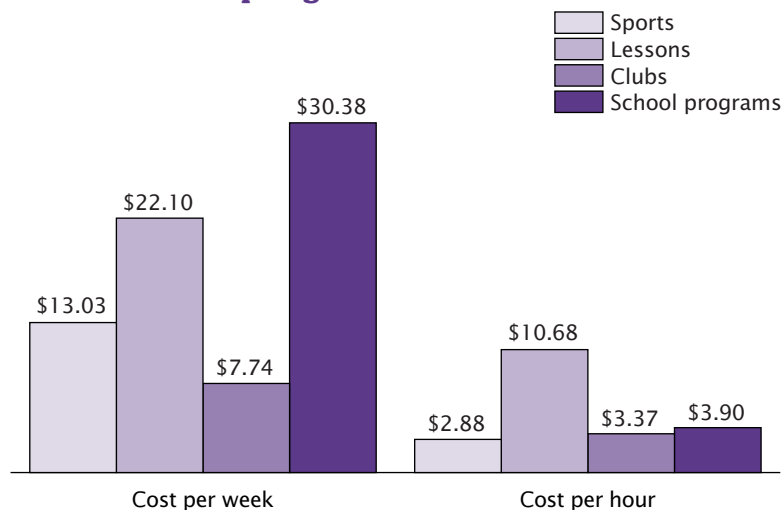
Variations in amount paid exist by the type of enrichment activity. Figure 4 shows that parents paid the most per week for their grade-school-age child to participate in before- or after-school programs (\$31 per week) and the least for clubs (\$8 per week). However, when considering the cost per hour, lessons emerge as the most costly (\$10.68 per hour) and sports, clubs, and school programs are considerably less. It is possible that lessons are provided by private individuals rather than by schools or other non-profit or volunteer institutions, and hence, are more costly per hour.

Family Payments for Child Care

In Spring 1997, there were 32.6 million mothers who lived with at least one of their children under age 15 (see Table 8). Thirty-three percent reported they made a cash payment for child care for at least one of their children. Those who paid for child care paid an average of \$71 per week. Roughly one-third of all mothers were not employed, and they were less likely to make a payment for child care than were employed mothers (14 percent and 43 percent, respectively). Nonemployed mothers paid less per week (\$49) than employed mothers (\$75) for child care.

¹⁸ Based on tabulations not shown in the table.

Figure 4.
Average Amount Paid for Enrichment Activities as a Child Care Arrangement for Children 6 to 14 Years: Spring 1997



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), 1996 Panel Wave 4.

Of the 21.5 million employed mothers, 43 percent (9.3 million) reported they made a cash payment for child care for at least one of their children. More mothers working full time paid for child care (47 percent) than mothers who worked part time (36 percent). Mothers with two or three or more children were more likely to make a child care payment than mothers with only one child. Similar proportions of mothers who lived in metropolitan areas and non-metropolitan areas made child care payments (approximately 43 percent for both). Poor families were less likely to make a child care payment (30 percent) than nonpoor families (45 percent).

In Spring 1997, families with an employed mother paid an average of \$75 per week for child care. Mothers working full time paid on average \$19 per week more for child care than did mothers working part time. On average, mothers with one child paid \$61 per week while those with two or more children paid around \$86 per week. Clearly,

mothers with more children pay more for child care per week, but not double the amount paid for one child. This may be due to facilities reducing the cost of care for second or more children, or that families with two or more children are likely to have children of both preschool and grade-school-age, who have different child care needs and costs. However, families with a working mother and the youngest child less than 5 years old were more likely to pay for child care than those where the youngest child was 5 to 14 years old (57 percent and 34 percent, respectively). Among families who paid for child care, those where the youngest child was a preschooler paid a higher weekly payment and a larger proportion of their income was spent on child care than in families where the youngest child was of grade-school-age.

Although the likelihood of paying for child care does not differ by metropolitan/nonmetropolitan residence, the amount paid does. On

Table 8.
Weekly Child Care Payments by Families With Mothers: Spring 1997

(Numbers in thousands. Excludes families with no report of income in the last 4 months)

Family characteristic	Number of mothers	Making payments		Weekly child care payments (In dollars)		Income spent on child care per month	
		Number	Percent	Average ¹	Standard error	Percent ²	Standard error
Families with mothers and children	32,576	10,812	33.2	71.3	1.3	6.6	0.3
Mother not employed	11,097	1,534	13.8	48.9	3.6	4.6	0.2
Mother employed	21,478	9,278	43.2	75.0	1.4	6.9	0.3
Employment Schedule							
Full time ³	14,764	6,906	46.8	80.0	1.7	7.3	0.3
Part time	6,714	2,372	35.3	60.6	2.4	5.7	0.2
Number of Children							
One child	10,716	4,241	39.6	60.5	1.7	5.7	0.2
Two children	7,731	3,721	48.1	87.8	2.5	7.7	0.3
Three or more children	3,031	1,315	43.4	85.6	4.4	8.1	0.7
Age of Youngest Child							
Under 5 years	8,728	4,974	57.0	91.7	2.0	8.9	0.4
5 to 14 years	12,750	4,304	33.8	55.7	1.9	4.8	0.2
Type of Residence							
Metropolitan	17,175	7,475	43.5	79.5	1.7	7.0	0.3
Central cities	5,942	2,440	41.1	73.8	2.6	7.5	0.5
Outside central cities	11,233	5,035	44.8	82.3	2.2	6.8	0.4
Nonmetropolitan	4,303	1,803	41.9	56.4	2.2	6.3	0.3
Monthly Family Income							
Less than \$1,500	3,357	1,062	31.6	51.7	2.7	22.8	7.3
\$1,500 to \$2,999	5,470	2,098	38.4	65.5	2.6	12.6	4.1
\$3,000 to \$4,499	4,893	2,059	42.1	70.0	2.6	8.2	2.6
\$4,500 and over	7,758	4,059	52.3	88.6	2.5	5.1	0.2
Poverty Status							
Below poverty level	2,440	726	29.7	52.1	3.4	20.0	1.7
Above poverty level	19,038	8,552	44.9	77.0	1.5	6.6	0.3
100 to 199 percent of poverty	4,899	1,702	34.7	65.4	2.8	14.5	3.2
200 percent and above poverty	14,139	6,850	48.4	79.9	1.8	6.0	0.3

¹Average expenditures per week among people making child care payments.

²Percent is a ratio of average monthly child care payments (prorated from weekly averages) to average monthly income.

³Those who work 35 or more hours per week are considered working full time.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), 1996 Panel Wave 4.

average, mothers living in metropolitan areas paid \$80 per week on child care, while mothers living in nonmetropolitan areas paid only \$56 per week. Interestingly, the percent of income spent on child care does not vary significantly by metropolitan residence, thus implying that those living in metropolitan areas also have a higher income.

Large variations exist in the cost of child care by income level and poverty status, with the amount paid for child care increasing with income. For example, poor families in which the mother was employed, paid an average of \$52 per week,

while nonpoor families paid \$77 per week. However, poor families who paid for child care spent roughly three times more of their budget than nonpoor families on child care (20 percent compared with 7 percent). This large gap in the proportion of income paid for child care by poverty status has persisted over the period 1987 to 1997.¹⁹

¹⁹ See Smith, Kristin. *Who's Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements: Spring 1995*. Current Population Reports, P70-70. U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 2000 for a more detailed explanation of this issue.

Receipt of Help to Pay for Child Care

New questions regarding whether the family received any help to pay for child care were asked on the SIPP in Spring 1997. The resulting data provide insight into characteristics of families that are more likely to shoulder all the costs of child care compared to those who receive some assistance.

Of the 34.2 million children under 15 years old who were reported to be in a regular child care arrangement, 1.6 million (5 percent) had parents who received help paying for child care from either the

Table 9.
Receipt of Help to Pay for Child Care From Selected Sources for Children Under 15 Years: Spring 1997

(Numbers in thousands. Limited to children with a regular child care arrangement)

Characteristic	Number of children	Type of help received to pay for child care					
		From any source ¹		From government ²		From other parent	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	34,234	1,626	4.7	812	2.4	533	1.6
Children under 5 years	12,419	864	7.0	466	3.8	225	1.8
Race and Hispanic Origin							
White	9,893	616	6.2	280	2.8	172	1.7
Non-Hispanic	8,339	540	6.5	247	3.0	136	1.6
Black	1,995	228	11.4	177	8.9	44	2.2
Asian and Pacific Islander	417	13	3.2	3	0.8	10	2.4
Hispanic (of any race)	1,652	84	5.1	38	2.3	38	2.3
Marital Status							
Married ³	8,885	346	3.9	144	1.6	113	1.3
Separated, divorced, widowed	1,214	158	13.0	100	8.2	35	2.9
Never married	2,320	359	15.5	222	9.6	77	3.3
Poverty Status⁴							
Less than 100 percent of poverty	2,053	255	12.4	191	9.3	29	1.4
100 to 199 percent of poverty	2,821	245	8.7	147	5.2	66	2.3
200 percent and above poverty	7,357	339	4.6	105	1.4	130	1.8
Child's Age							
Less than 1 year	2,106	150	7.1	81	3.9	43	2.1
1 to 2 years	5,000	349	7.0	191	3.8	104	2.1
3 to 4 years	5,313	365	6.9	194	3.6	78	1.5
Employment Status							
Employed	9,707	677	7.0	330	3.4	204	2.1
Not employed	2,713	187	6.9	137	5.0	21	0.8
In school	663	104	15.7	81	12.2	15	2.2
Looking for work	363	22	6.1	19	5.1	—	—
Out of labor force	1,687	61	3.6	37	2.2	6	0.4
Receipt of Assistance							
Receipt of TANF ⁵	918	159	17.3	142	15.4	3	0.3
No receipt of TANF ⁵	11,501	705	6.1	325	2.8	223	1.9
Receipt of Medicaid	2,492	427	17.1	348	14.0	28	1.1
No receipt of Medicaid	9,928	437	4.4	118	1.2	198	2.0
Children 5 to 14 years ⁶	21,815	762	3.5	346	1.6	308	1.4

— Represents or rounds to zero.

¹Includes help from the government, the other parent, an employer (88,000), and other sources (219,000).

²Includes help from a federal, state, or local government agency, or a welfare office.

³Includes married spouse present and spouse absent.

⁴Excludes those with missing income data.

⁵TANF stands for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

⁶Receipt of help to pay for child care is not broken down by characteristics for children 5 to 14 years old due to small proportions of children in this age group receiving help to pay for child care.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), 1996 Panel Wave 4.

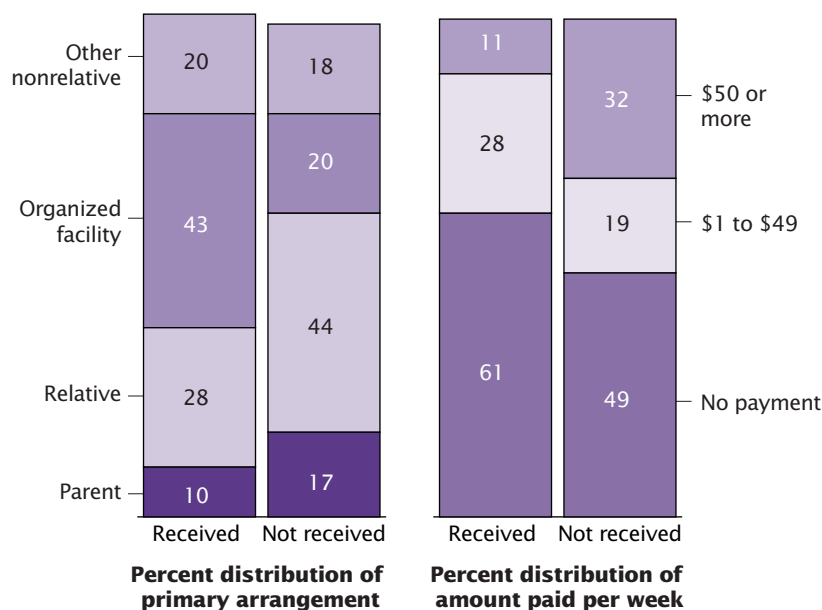
government, their other parent, from their parent's employer, or another source (see Table 9). A higher proportion of preschoolers received help to pay for child care than did grade-school-age children (7 percent compared with 4 percent).

In Spring 1997, 812,000 children under 15 years old received help

from the government to pay for child care. Receipt of assistance to help pay for child care is related to one's economic status. Preschoolers living in poverty were more likely to receive help from the government to pay for child care (9 percent) than those living just above the poverty line (5 percent) and those living at 200 percent or more of the poverty line (1 percent). Receipt of

government support for child care was related to receipt of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), as 15 percent of preschoolers who received TANF also received help from the government to pay for child care. This finding suggests that families receiving government help for child care payments may be better connected into networks of assistance or more

Figure 5.
Primary Arrangement Used and Amount Paid per Week for Child Care by Receipt of Government Help, for Children Under 5 Years: Spring 1997



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), 1996 Panel Wave 4.

aware of government programs available to low-income families.

Overall, preschoolers of nonemployed mothers were as likely to receive help from any source in making child care payments as those of employed mothers (7 percent for both), but preschoolers of mothers who were in school were more than twice as likely to receive assistance (16 percent) as those of employed mothers. This suggests that poor mothers are using child care assistance as they attend school and other training which may lead to securing a job in the future.

Black children were more likely than children of other race or ethnic groups to receive government help to pay for child care. Likewise, preschoolers of unmarried mothers were more likely than married mothers to receive government help

to pay for child care. This reflects the high prevalence of poverty among Black mothers and unmarried mothers.

Many assume that government support for child care will enable mothers to secure employment by lowering the cost of child care and thus removing one of the barriers to maintaining a job. Figure 5 shows that among preschoolers receiving government help to pay for child care, a large proportion were cared for primarily in an organized facility and made no payment for child care. While 43 percent of preschoolers who received government help to pay for child care were cared for primarily in organized facilities, only 20 percent of those who do not receive help were in this type of arrangement. Rather, those who do not receive government help to pay for child care were cared for primarily by relatives.

Furthermore, those receiving government help to pay for child care were more likely not to pay for child care at all (61 percent) than were those who did not receive help (49 percent), even though recipients were more likely to use more expensive care arrangements, such as organized child care facilities. Only 11 percent of those who received government help to pay for child care paid \$50 or more per week, compared with 32 percent of those who did not receive help. Clearly, government support for child care payments is related to reduced child care costs.

Another source of help to pay for child care comes from the child's other parent, although this is not common (2 percent of preschoolers). Preschoolers of never married mothers were more likely to have some portion of their child care paid for by their other parent (3 percent) than those of married parents (1 percent). In addition, the child's other parent was more likely to help out with child care costs if the designated parent was not receiving government assistance such as TANF or Medicaid.

SOURCE OF THE DATA

The estimates in this report come from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), collected in Spring 1997 by the U.S. Census Bureau. The data highlighted in this report come primarily from the child care topical module in the fourth interview (wave) of the 1996 SIPP panel. The SIPP is a nationally representative longitudinal survey conducted at 4-month intervals by the Census Bureau. Although the main focus of the SIPP is information on labor force participation, jobs, income, and participation in federal assistance programs, information on other topics, such as child care, is also collected in topical modules on a rotating basis.

ACCURACY OF THE ESTIMATES

Statistics from sample surveys are subject to sampling and nonsampling error. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and meet the U.S. Census Bureau's standards for statistical significance.

Nonsampling errors in surveys may be attributed to a variety of sources, such as how the survey was designed, how respondents interpret questions, how able and willing respondents are to provide correct answers, and how accurately answers are coded and classified. The Census Bureau employs quality control procedures throughout the production process — including the overall design of surveys, testing the wording of questions, review of the work of interviewers and coders, and statistical review of reports.

The SIPP employs ratio estimation, whereby sample estimates are adjusted to independent estimates of the national population by age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin. This weighting partially corrects for bias due to undercoverage, but how it

affects different variables in the survey is not precisely known. Moreover, biases may also be present when people who are missed in the survey differ from those interviewed in ways other than the categories used in weighting (age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin). All of these considerations affect comparisons across different surveys or data sources.

For further information on statistical standards and the computation and use of standard errors, contact Earl Letourneau, Demographic Statistical Methods Division, at 301-457-4228 or on the Internet at Earl.J.Letourneau@census.gov.

MORE INFORMATION

The report is available on the Internet (www.census.gov); search for children's data by clicking on the "Subjects A-Z" button and selecting "child care data" under "C." A detailed table package presenting more in-depth child care information for both preschool- and grade-school-age children is also on the Internet, as well as more information on child care. Future child care reports will focus on fathers as care providers.

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USER COMMENTS

The Census Bureau welcomes the comments and advice of users of its data and reports. If you have any suggestions or comments, please write to:

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