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# WHO'S MINDING THE KIDS?



Child Care Arrangements:  
Winter 1984-85

Data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation

U.S. Department of Commerce  
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

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**U.S. Department of Commerce**  
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# Who's Minding the Kids?

Child Care Arrangements: Winter 1984-85

## INTRODUCTION

The child care statistics shown in this report cover an estimated 26.5 million children under the age of 15 whose mothers were employed in the labor force during the winter of 1984-85; 16.8 million of these children had mothers who were working full time. How these children were cared for while their mothers were at work, the complexity of these arrangements and the accompanying daily disruptions in the mother's work schedule, and the financial costs attributable to child care services are some of the topics presented in this report. This information was collected in a supplement to the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) and refers to the period December 1984 through March 1985.<sup>1</sup> It is anticipated that subsequent supplements to this survey will be collected on a periodic basis in an effort to establish an ongoing data base of child care statistics that currently is lacking at the national level.<sup>2</sup>

Previous child care surveys conducted by the Census Bureau were limited to preschool-age children or to only the youngest child of working women in the household, while other surveys focused on child care arrangements used by school-age children after school hours, regardless of the employment status of the children's parents.<sup>3</sup> Data on child care arrangements from SIPP include information for the three youngest children under age 15 of working women<sup>4</sup> and refer to the usual weekly child care arrangements for their children. Thus, the data in this report present a more comprehensive view of child care services utilized by American families than presented in prior Census Bureau reports. Data from previous Current Population Surveys on child care will also be presented in this report in order to present an historical perspective on recent changes that have occurred in the way working women care for their children while at work.

The term "child care arrangements" used in this report describes how the children of working women are cared for during the time their mothers are at work. Child care arrangements include not only informal arrangements where neighbors, relatives, or family members look after the women's children either in the child's home or their own homes but also organized child care facilities such as day or group care centers or nursery schools or preschools. Also included are responses which indicate if women are able to take care of their own children while at work (either while working at home or outside their home) and if the children are left to care for themselves. Since school-age children are included in the survey, child care, in its broadest sense, also includes the time children are enrolled in kindergarten or grade school during the time their mothers are at work.

Some women may use more than one type of child care arrangement in the course of a typical work week; therefore, two categories of arrangements are shown in this report: primary and secondary. The primary child care arrangement refers to what the child was usually doing or the way the child was usually cared for during most of the hours the child's mother was working. The secondary child care arrangement refers to which arrangement was used second most frequently while the child's mother was working. For example, if a school-age child was in school most of the time his or her mother worked and then was left to care for himself or herself after school, the primary child care arrangement for this child would be "enrolled in grade school" and the secondary child care arrangement would be "child cares for self."

No distinction was made in the survey as to the licensing status of the child care facilities or private homes where the children were cared for, nor of the specific educational content of any nursery or preschool. The respondent was left to determine how to categorize the child care arrangement she used for her children.

Wherever possible, comparisons are made between child care data from SIPP and from other sources in order to identify developing trends and to substantiate observed patterns in a newly emerging field of statistical indicators.

The principal findings of the survey are summarized below:

- Of the 8.2 million preschool age children (0 to 4 years old) of working women, 1.9 million (23 percent) were attending day care centers or preschools most of the time their mothers were at work. The remainder were primarily in supervised care in their own home (31 percent) or in

<sup>1</sup>The reference period for the SIPP child care module was for the month that preceded the interview month. The actual interviews were conducted in January 1985 through April 1985. As a result, the data presented in this report are an average of the usual child care arrangements used by women from December 1984 through March 1985. This period will be referred to as "winter 1984-85."

<sup>2</sup>An absence of a national data base on child care statistics has been previously noted by many researchers and governmental committees. See Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families, U.S. House of Representatives, "Families and Child Care: Improving the Options." U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington, D.C., September 1984, p. vii.

<sup>3</sup>See Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 129, *Child Care Arrangements of Working Mothers: June 1982*; and Series P-23, No. 149, *After School Care of School Age Children: December 1984* for a discussion of these Census Bureau child care studies.

<sup>4</sup>Population estimates from SIPP indicate that there were 29.3 million children under 15 years old with working mothers. Information in this report is shown only for the three youngest children, representing about 90 percent of the children in this age group. Because of the relatively small sample size of this study, data are not generally shown by race and Hispanic origin.

someone else's home (37 percent) or cared for by the mother herself while at work (8 percent).

- About 75 percent of the 18.3 million grade school age children (5 to 14 years old) were in school most of the hours their mothers were at work.
- The percentage of preschoolers cared for primarily by their fathers while their mothers worked was 19 percent for children of married women, compared with only 2 percent for the children of unmarried women (women widowed, divorced, separated, married with spouse absent, or never married). Unmarried women depended more on their children's grandparents for care in the child's home (16 percent) than did their married counterparts (3 percent).
- The use of day/group care centers or nursery/preschools among employed women 18 to 44 years old for their youngest child under 5 years increased from 16 percent in 1982 to 25 percent in 1984-85.
- Full-time working mothers with preschool-age children relied more heavily on child care arrangements outside the child's home than did mothers working part time. They also relied more heavily on organized child care facilities.
- Almost 7 million children under 15 years old of working mothers reported using a secondary child care arrangement; 32 percent of children 5 to 14 years old used a secondary arrangement, compared with only 13 percent of children under 5 years old.
- Of the 7.7 million women who depended on relatives, nonrelatives, or organized child care facilities for either primary or secondary child care arrangements, 5.9 percent reported losing time from work in the last month as a result of a failure in their arrangement.
- One million children of employed mothers during winter 1984-85 cared for themselves after school while their mothers were working.
- The median weekly child care expenditure for the 5.3 million women who reported paying for child care services during winter 1984-85 was \$38. Estimated annual child care expenditures made by working women for their children are about \$11 billion.<sup>5</sup>

## POPULATION COVERAGE

The child care data presented in this report attempt to profile the arrangements typically used by women during their working hours. Data were obtained for the three youngest children under 15 years old (including any adopted or step-

<sup>5</sup>This figure is based on the aggregate weekly amount of cash expenditures (214 million dollars) reported by the estimated 5.3 million working women in the survey multiplied by 52 weeks, resulting in 11.1 billion dollars annually. If the responses of the estimated 188,000 men who reported paying cash for child care arrangements were included in this estimate, the annual child care expenditures paid by all parents would increase to 11.5 billion dollars.

children in their care) in the household. This represents approximately 90 percent of all children under 15 years old of working women in this age group. All of these 26.5 million children were assigned a specific primary child care arrangement depending on how they spent most of their time while their mothers were at work. For analytical reasons, "going to school" or "child cares for self" were also considered as types of child care arrangements since these activities describe how the child spent his time during the mother's working hours.

A majority of these children (16.8 million) had mothers who were employed at full-time jobs (35 hours or more per week). Even among the 8.2 million children under 5 years old of working women, a majority (5.1 million) had full-time working mothers. Table A also shows that 6.9 million children were also in need of another child care arrangement during their mother's work week, especially children of full-time workers. Thirty-three percent (5.6 million) of the children of full-time working mothers and 13 percent (1.3 million) of the children of part-time working mothers were provided with more than one type of child care arrangement during a typical week. The magnitude and anticipated growth of the number of children needing child care during their mothers' working hours implies that these issues will affect the lifestyles and daily schedules of most families with children in the future.

**Table A. Children Under 15 of Employed Mothers, by Selected Characteristics Related to Child Care Arrangements**

(Winter 1984-85. Numbers in thousands)

Subject	Children under 15	Children under 5	Children 5 to 14
All children <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	26,455	8,168	18,287
Mother employed full time . . . . .	16,812	5,060	11,752
Mothers employed part time . . . . .	9,643	3,108	6,535
Children using secondary care <sup>2</sup> . . . . .	6,867	1,073	5,794
Mothers employed full time . . . . .	5,575	726	4,850
Mothers employed part time . . . . .	1,292	347	944

<sup>1</sup>Data on child care arrangements were collected for the three youngest children of employed women. These children (26.5 million) represent 90 percent of all children of employed women (29.3 million) under 15 years old.

<sup>2</sup>Number of children who use more than one type of child care arrangement during the hours their mothers are at work. If a child is cared for after school by someone else or is left unsupervised, this constitutes use of a secondary arrangement.

## PRIMARY CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS

Table B shows the distribution of the primary child care arrangements provided for preschoolers (children under 5 years old) and grade-school-age children (5 to 14 years old) during winter 1984-85. Of the 18.3 million grade-school-age children of working mothers, about 75 percent (13.8 million children) were in either kindergarten or grade school most of the hours their mothers were at work, regardless of the mothers' marital status (table 1). This does not mean that the remaining 25 percent of these children were not enrolled in school; rather it implies that the majority of the hours that

**Table B. Primary Child Care Arrangements for Children Under 15, by Age**

(Winter 1984-85. Numbers in thousands)

Type of child care arrangement	Total		Under 5 years		5 to 14 years	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Number of children . . . . .	26,455	100.0	8,168	100.0	18,287	100.0
Care in child's home . . . . .	4,699	17.8	2,535	31.0	2,164	11.8
By father . . . . .	2,496	9.4	1,282	15.7	1,214	6.6
By grandparent . . . . .	712	2.7	468	5.7	244	1.3
By other relative . . . . .	804	3.0	306	3.7	498	2.7
By nonrelative . . . . .	687	2.6	479	5.9	208	1.1
Care in another home . . . . .	3,801	14.4	3,019	37.0	782	4.3
By grandparent . . . . .	1,138	4.3	833	10.2	305	1.7
By other relative . . . . .	467	1.8	367	4.5	100	0.5
By nonrelative . . . . .	2,196	8.3	1,819	22.3	377	2.1
Organized child care facilities . . . . .	2,411	9.1	1,888	23.1	523	2.8
Day/group care center . . . . .	1,440	5.4	1,142	14.0	298	1.6
Nursery school/preschool . . . . .	971	3.7	746	9.1	225	1.2
Kindergarten/grade school . . . . .	13,815	52.2	62	0.8	13,753	75.2
Child cares for self . . . . .	488	1.8	-	-	488	2.7
Parent cares for child <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	1,245	4.7	664	8.1	581	3.2

<sup>1</sup>Includes mothers working at home or away from home.

the mothers worked did not necessarily coincide with their children's school day. (A subsequent section in this report will examine the child care arrangements provided for school-age children while not attending school.)

Of the remaining 4.5 million grade-school-age children not in school most of the time while their mothers worked, about 2.2 million were cared for in their own home, principally by their father, while another one-half million children were left unsupervised most of the time their mothers were at work.

#### **Child care arrangements for children under 5 years old.**

Working women with preschool age children use a wider variety of child care arrangements for their children than do working women with older children who spend most of their daytime hours in school. Thirty-one percent of preschoolers were cared for in their own homes, principally by the children's father, while 37 percent were cared for in another home, usually by someone not related to the child (table B). The use of organized child care facilities (23 percent) was substantial for the care of these younger children, and provided the primary child care services for approximately 1.9 million children under 5 years old. In addition, another 8 percent of these children were cared for by their mother while she was working either at home or away from home, thus eliminating potentially costly commuting and child care expenses. The types of jobs these women held also affected their ability to care for their children while working; for example, 47 percent of the mothers of preschool-age children who cared for their child while working were either employed as private household workers or as child care workers.

Considerably different patterns of child care usage are noted among women according to their weekly work schedule. The hourly demands for child care services placed upon families with full-time working mothers cannot normally be met by other household members or relatives who have job and career

commitments requiring them to work full-time themselves. As a result, the location of child care activities for full-time working mothers tends to be outside of the child's home and with nonrelatives rather than with family members or relatives in the child's home.

Preschoolers of full-time working mothers in winter 1984-85 were less likely to be cared for at home (24 percent) than were children of part-time working mothers (42 percent). Child care provided by the father was less frequently used by women who worked full time; 11 percent of the children of mothers who worked full time were cared for by their fathers compared with 24 percent of children of part-time working mothers. Part-time working mothers may have their work hours in the evenings or on weekends so "9 to 5" working fathers can babysit. In addition, 13 percent of the children of part-time workers were cared for by their mothers while at work, compared with only 5 percent of the children of women working full time (table 1). Offsetting this less frequent use of parental care by full-time working mothers was their greater reliance on child care in the home of someone unrelated to the child and on organized child care facilities.

**Child care arrangements used by unmarried parents.** The principal difference between the child care arrangements used by married women and unmarried women with preschool-age children rests in the availability of the child's father to provide child care services. The percentage of preschoolers cared for by their father while their mother worked was 19 percent for children of married women but only 2 percent for the children of unmarried women (table 1). Despite the loss of the father as a potential child care provider, about 3 out of every 10 children of unmarried women were still cared for in the child's home, a proportion not different from that reported by married women. Unmarried women largely depended on their children's grandparents for child care services in the child's home; this arrangement accounted for 16 percent of all

primary child care used by unmarried mothers, compared with only 3 percent for children of married women.

Although the SIPP questionnaire on child care was designed primarily to collect data on the child care arrangements of working women, there were some men identified in the questionnaire as the designated guardian of the child, even in the case of married-couple families.<sup>6</sup> Table C shows the primary child care arrangements used by unmarried parents for their children under age 15 while at work. About 900,000 children under 15 years of age were cared for by unmarried men.<sup>7</sup> Sixty-seven percent of these children spent most of their time in grade school during their father's working hours, while 55 percent of the children of unmarried women attended grade school while their mothers worked. Unmarried men tend to be guardians of older children: 85 percent of the children under age 15 of unmarried men were of school age (5 to 14 years old), compared with 73 percent for unmarried women. About 78 percent of children 5 to 14 years old of unmarried working fathers were in school while their fathers were at work, a figure not different from the 76 percent reported for children of unmarried working mothers.

**Child care arrangements for infants and preschoolers.** The previous sections have indicated that the type of child care arrangements used by working parents varies considerably

<sup>6</sup>In the case of married-couple families, interviewers were instructed to ask the child care questions of the wife. However, an estimated 578,000 married men were reported as the guardians of children, perhaps reflecting a step-mother/step-child situation where the husband was thought to be the appropriate reference person. In some instances, married men may be the legal guardians of children who are living with them, even though they are not the natural fathers of the children (e.g., grandfathers or uncles).

<sup>7</sup>SIPP estimates for unmarried men appear to be substantiated by other survey results. Data collected in the March 1985 Current Population Survey indicated that there were 671,000 children under age 12 and 528,000 children 12 to 17 years old living with unmarried fathers who were employed at the survey date (Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 410, *Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1985*, table 9).

by the age of the child. Estimates from the June 1985 Current Population Survey (CPS) show that almost one-half of all women 18 to 44 years old who had a birth in the 12-month period preceding the survey were in the labor force either looking for work or on layoff (0.3 million) or currently employed (1.4 million) at the time of the survey.<sup>8</sup> Problems in finding child care arrangements for young children are often encountered by working adults since organized child care facilities usually exclude the admission of infants and very young children.<sup>9</sup>

Table D presents the primary child care arrangements used by women with preschoolers by the age of the child as collected in the SIPP child care module. SIPP data, similar to estimates derived from the June 1985 CPS, indicate that about 1.4 million children under 1 year of age in winter 1984-85 required child care services while their mothers were at work. Seventy-eight percent of infants were cared for in either the child's home or in another home. Another 14 percent were cared for in organized child care facilities, a substantial increase over the 5 percent estimated for infants from the June 1982 CPS.<sup>10</sup>

Among 3- and 4-year-olds, child care in the child's home and in another home accounted for only 58 percent of all arrangements while organized child care facilities and kindergarten enrollment made up 34 percent of the primary care for these older children. It is apparent that for the first few years of a child's life, the children of working women may experience considerable changes in the type of child care as the children grow from infancy to school age.

**Work disruptions caused by failures in child care arrangements.** Some of the principal factors which affect a family's choice of child care arrangements include the quality and costs

<sup>8</sup>Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 406, *Fertility of American Women: June 1985*, table 4.

<sup>9</sup>Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>10</sup>Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 129, op. cit., table 2.

**Table C. Primary Child Care Arrangements Used by Unmarried Parents for Their Children Under 15, by Sex**

(Winter 1984-85. Numbers in thousands)

Type of child care arrangement	Total		Female		Male	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Number of children . . . . .	6,522	100.0	5,616	100.0	906	100.0
Care in child's home . . . . .	950	14.6	806	14.4	144	15.9
By father . . . . .	74	1.1	52	0.9	22	2.4
By grandparent . . . . .	379	5.8	321	5.7	58	6.4
By other relative . . . . .	373	5.7	341	6.1	32	3.5
By nonrelative . . . . .	124	1.9	92	1.6	32	3.5
Care in another home . . . . .	955	14.6	872	15.5	83	9.2
By grandparent . . . . .	307	4.7	253	4.5	54	6.0
By other relative . . . . .	139	2.1	139	2.5	0	0.0
By nonrelative . . . . .	509	7.8	480	8.5	29	3.2
Organized child care facilities . . . . .	592	9.1	539	9.6	53	5.8
Day/group care center . . . . .	408	6.3	371	6.6	37	4.1
Nursery school/preschool . . . . .	184	2.8	168	3.0	16	1.8
Kindergarten/grade school . . . . .	3,701	56.7	3,095	55.1	606	66.9
Child cares for self . . . . .	168	2.6	156	2.8	12	1.3
Parent cares for child <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	160	2.5	149	2.7	11	1.2

<sup>1</sup>Includes mothers working at home or away from home.

**Table D. Primary Child Care Arrangements Used by Employed Mothers for Their Children Under 5, by Age**

(Winter 1984-85. Numbers in thousands)

Type of child care arrangement	Age of child							
	Total		Under 1 year		1 and 2 years		3 and 4 years	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Number of children . . . . .	8,168	100.0	1,385	100.0	3,267	100.0	3,516	100.0
Care in child's home . . . . .	2,534	31.0	516	37.3	1,068	32.7	950	27.0
By father . . . . .	1,282	15.7	252	18.2	528	16.2	502	14.3
By grandparent . . . . .	467	5.7	102	7.4	208	6.4	157	4.5
By other relative . . . . .	306	3.7	44	3.2	147	4.5	115	3.3
By nonrelative . . . . .	479	5.9	118	8.5	185	5.7	176	5.0
Care in another home . . . . .	3,020	37.0	563	40.6	1,368	41.9	1,089	31.0
By grandparent . . . . .	833	10.2	174	12.6	361	11.0	298	8.5
By other relative . . . . .	368	4.5	70	5.1	130	4.0	167	4.7
By nonrelative . . . . .	1,819	22.3	319	23.0	877	26.8	624	17.7
Organized child care facilities . . . . .	1,888	23.1	195	14.1	563	17.2	1,131	32.2
Day/group care center . . . . .	1,142	14.0	116	8.4	401	12.3	625	17.8
Nursery school/preschool . . . . .	746	9.1	79	5.7	162	5.0	506	14.4
Kindergarten/grade school . . . . .	61	0.7	-	-	-	-	61	1.7
Parent cares for child <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	663	8.1	112	8.1	267	8.2	285	8.1

<sup>1</sup>Includes mothers working at home or away from home.

of the arrangement, proximity to work, and confidence in the ability and availability of the child care provider during the mothers' working hours. The last factor is of primary concern to the employer since it directly affects the rates of absenteeism and tardiness resulting from a failure in a child care arrangement.

For the first time in a Census Bureau survey, an attempt was made to estimate the incidence of child care-related disruptions in the daily work schedule among women. Working women were asked if any time was lost during the reference month by either the women themselves or their husbands because the person who usually cared for the child (or children) was not available. (It should be noted that the estimates of time lost reflect work disruptions experienced during the more inclement winter months: similar questions asked during the spring or summer months, for example, may yield different estimates of work disruptions.)<sup>11</sup>

The question was asked of women if any of their three youngest children under 15 years old were cared for by a grandparent or other relative (excluding their child's parents or siblings), or a nonrelative, or if the child was attending a day/group care center or nursery/preschool. Excluded were women who only used kindergartens or grade school or if the child cared for himself. Of the 7.7 million women in this specified group, 5.9 percent reported losing some time from work in the last month as a result of a failure in a child care arrangement.

<sup>11</sup>Data from the May 1985 Current Population Survey indicate that among women with children under 18 years old who were employed as full time wage and salary workers, about 4.6 percent were absent from their jobs for reasons other than illness or injury (Bruce W. Klein, "Missed Work and Lost Hours, May 1985," *Monthly Labor Review*, Vol. 109, No. 11, November 1986, pp. 26-30).

Estimates of child care related work disruptions for women who have only one child and who use only one type of child care arrangement while at work are shown in table E. Work disruptions resulting from failures in child care arrangements affected 5.5 percent of these 2.6 million working women. Most of the percentages in table E are based on sample sizes too small to ascertain statistically significant differences in work disruptions among the different population groups

**Table E. Employed Mothers Losing Time from Work During the Last Month Because of Failures in Child Care Arrangements**

(Winter 1984-85. Numbers in thousands. Limited to women with only one child under age 15 using only one type of child care)

Characteristic	Number	Percent
Number of women . . . . .	2,602	5.5
Marital status:		
Married, husband present . . . . .	1,762	6.0
All other marital statuses <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	840	4.4
Employment status:		
Full time . . . . .	1,907	5.4
Part time . . . . .	695	5.7
Age of child:		
Less than 5 years old . . . . .	2,185	6.1
5 years old and over . . . . .	418	2.4
Place of primary care:		
In child's home . . . . .	443	5.4
In another home . . . . .	1,256	7.8
Organized child care facilities . . . . .	903	2.3
Day/group care center . . . . .	605	1.4
Nursery school/preschool . . . . .	298	4.3

<sup>1</sup>Includes married, husband absent (including separated), widowed, divorced, and never married.

shown in the table. However, women who use day/group care centers experience a smaller incidence of work disruptions (1.4 percent) than do women who place their children in someone else's home while at work (7.8 percent). Child care in someone else's home may be more susceptible to personal emergencies or weather-related disruptions that result in higher rates of failures in child care arrangements than when using organized child care facilities where more staff are available on a daily basis.

### CHANGES IN CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS: JUNE 1982 AND WINTER 1984-85

As previously noted, SIPP child care data were collected for an expanded age group of children and for more children in a household than in previous Census Bureau child care surveys. The more encompassing SIPP data base offers the opportunity to draw comparisons with prior child care surveys for selected groups of women.

Earlier Census Bureau Current Population Surveys conducted in June 1977 and June 1982 gathered information about the child care arrangements used by employed women 18 to 44 years old for their youngest child under 5 years old. Data from these surveys indicated that the only significant change in the utilization of child care services that occurred between 1977 and 1982 was an increase in the percentage of women using organized child care facilities for their children from 13 percent in 1977 to 16 percent in 1982.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, between June 1982 and winter 1984-85, another increase was noted in the use of day/group care centers or nursery schools or preschools (table 3). In 1984-85, 25 percent of the 6.7 million working women who had a child under 5 used some type of organized child care facility for their youngest child most of the time while they were at work, compared with 16 percent in 1982 (figure 1). Fifteen percent of children under 5 years old were in day or group care centers in 1984-85, up from 10 percent in 1982. In addition, 10 percent of the children under 5 years old were enrolled in nursery or preschools in 1984-85, compared with only 6 percent in 1982. (Comparisons between 1982 and 1984-85 are not adjusted for possible seasonality in types of child care arrangements throughout the year.)<sup>13</sup>

The increased utilization of organized child care facilities among working women should be viewed in a broader context of increasing enrollment among preschool-age children since the 1970's, both among working women and those not in the labor force.<sup>14</sup> Enrollment of children in programs pro-

viding educational enrichment appears to be growing among women, regardless of their labor force status. The consensus among researchers is that structured preschool programs are beneficial for a child's educational and social development, particularly in the case of children from economically disadvantaged households.<sup>15</sup>

### ORGANIZED CHILD CARE FACILITIES

Day and group care services and nursery/preschool based arrangements constitute the organized child care arrangements used by employed women with children under 5 years old (table 1). In winter 1984-85, 14 percent (1,142,000) of children under 5 years old of employed women were in day and group care centers while another 9 percent (746,000) were enrolled in nursery or preschool programs. The majority of these young children were 3 and 4 years old (table D). The use of day/group care arrangements was higher among women employed full-time (17 percent) than among women employed part-time (10 percent) as was nursery/preschool usage (12 and 5 percent, respectively). About one-quarter of the primary child care provided for the children of part-time working women was by the child's father which partly accounts for the low usage of day and group services among these women.

In addition to the mother's employment status, the age of the child is another important factor related to the use of organized child care facilities as the primary child care arrangement. The percent distribution of primary care arrangements used by the women for their children under 5 years by the child's age are shown in figure 2. The use of day/group care centers increased from 8 percent for children under one year to 18 percent for children 3 and 4 years old. The increase in labor force participation among women with infants (from 44 percent in 1982 to 48 percent in 1985) is paralleled by a corresponding rise in the use of day care centers for infants from 3.6 percent in June 1982<sup>16</sup> to 8.4 percent in 1984-85. These figures suggest that an increasing proportion of women with infants are using day care centers as a primary child care arrangement to enable them to participate in the labor force.

In addition to the child's age, other social and demographic factors of the child's mother appear to be related to the use of organized child care facilities as the primary child care arrangement. Figure 3 shows that better educated mothers make greater use of organized child care facilities for their preschool-age children. Thirty-one percent of the children of employed mothers who completed 4 or more years of college used either day/group care centers or nursery/preschools in winter 1984-85 as their primary child care arrangement, compared with 15 percent for the children of employed mothers who did not complete high school.

Very low usage of organized group care facilities for preschoolers is noted for women employed in service occupations (11 percent), compared with usage of these arrangements by women in either managerial or professional occupations (30 percent). Women in service occupations tend

<sup>12</sup>In this section of the report, kindergarten enrollment is included in the nursery school/preschool category in order to make comparable estimates with the 1977 and 1982 CPS data sets. Data for 1977 and 1982 (excluding reports of "don't know/no answer") were derived from table A in Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 129, op. cit. Percentages were adjusted after the removal of don't know/no answer response.

<sup>13</sup>Differences in child care arrangements between 1982 and 1984-85 may partly result from seasonal variation in the availability of child care facilities. It is possible that more child care centers or school based centers are open in the winter months than in June. No attempt has been made to estimate any seasonal variation in child care arrangements.

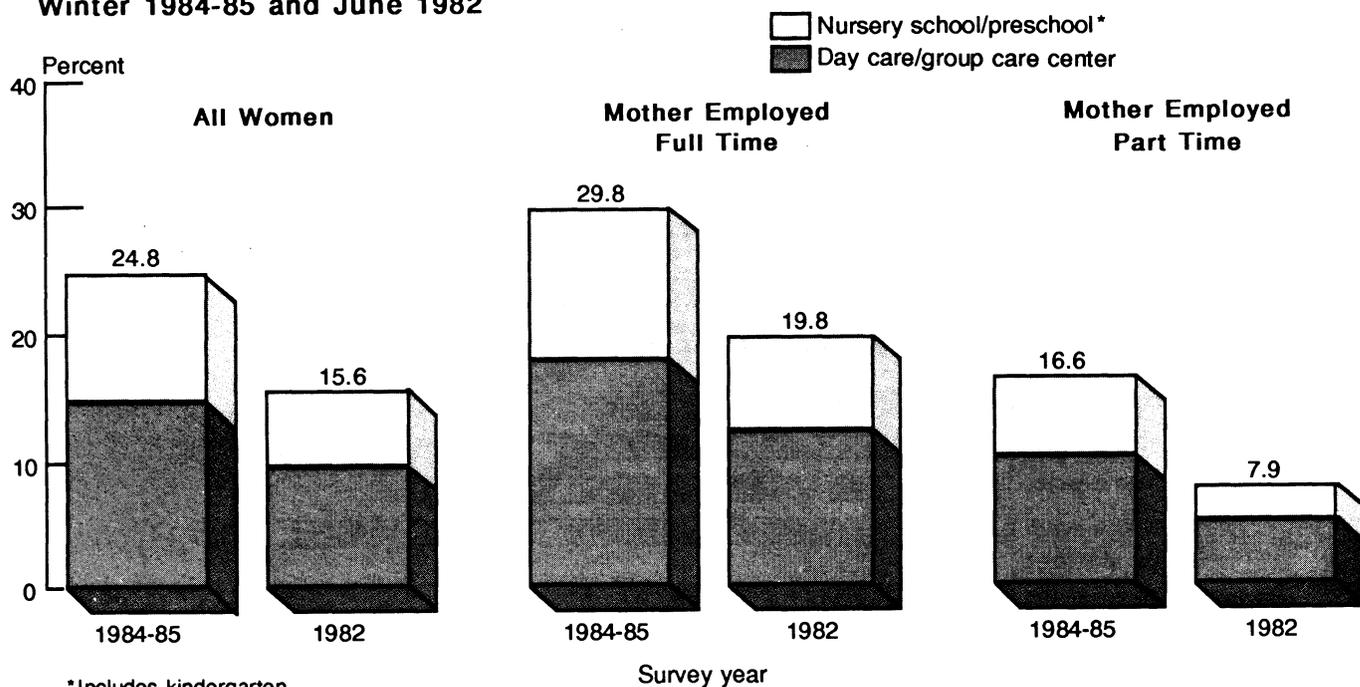
<sup>14</sup>For nursery school enrollment trends from 1972 to 1982, see Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 408, *School Enrollment-Social Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1982*, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup>Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>16</sup>Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 129, op. cit., table 2.

Figure 1.

**Employed Mothers Using Organized Child Care Facilities as  
the Primary Arrangement for Their Youngest Child Under 5:  
Winter 1984-85 and June 1982**



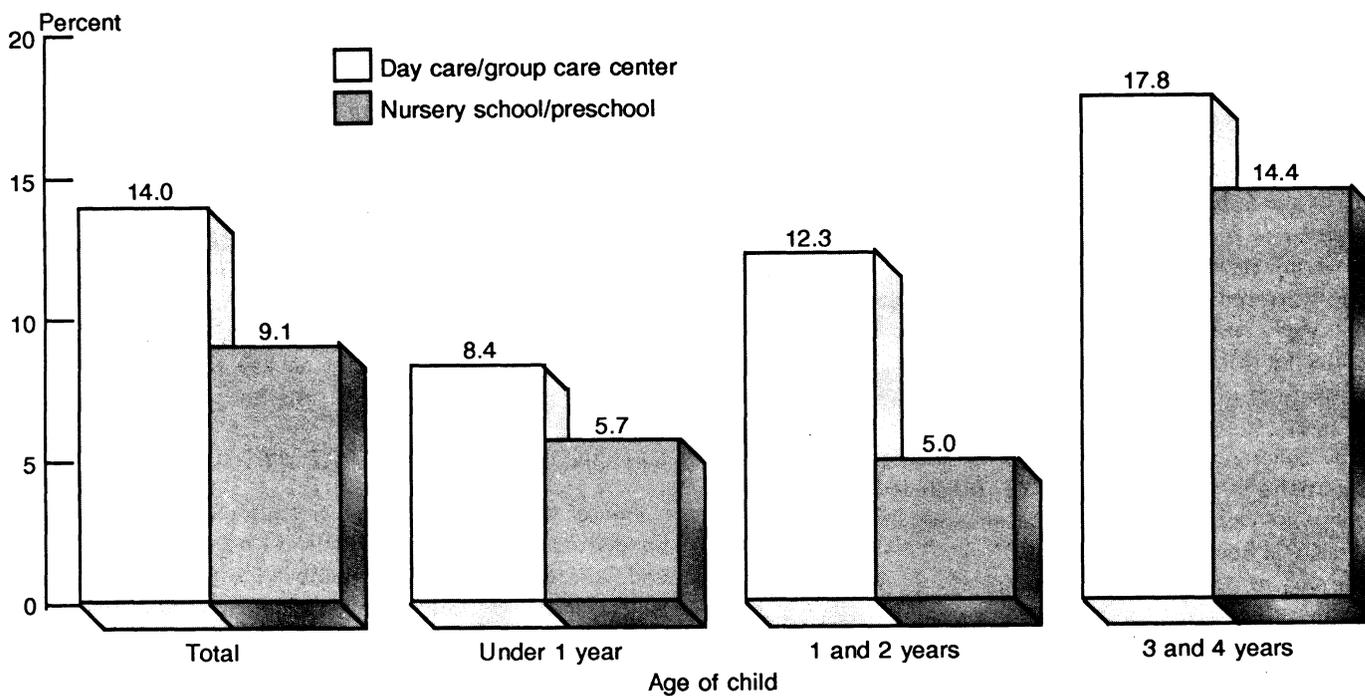
\*Includes kindergarten.

Source: table 3.

Note: 1984-85 data are from SIPP; 1982 data are from CPS.

Figure 2.

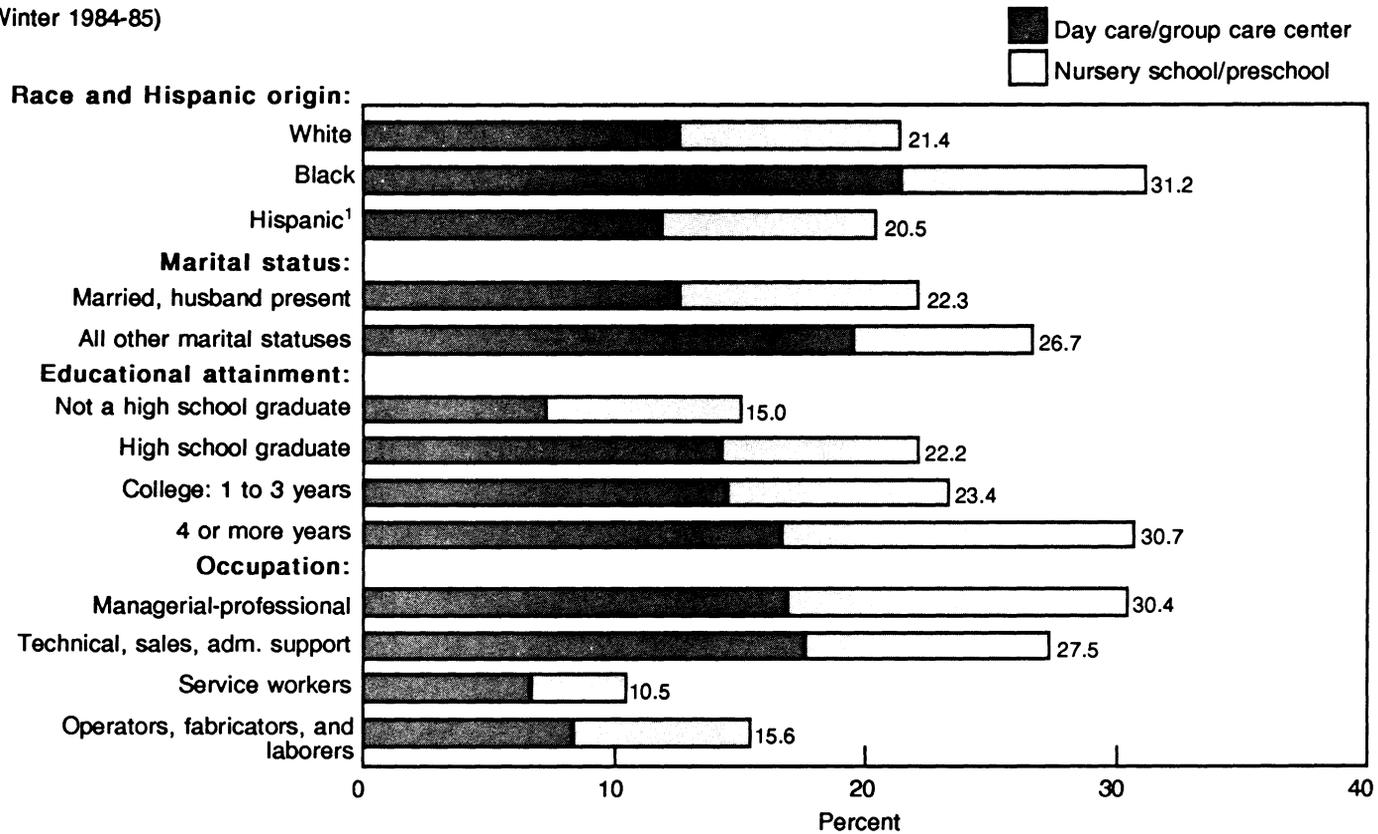
**Children Under 5 in Organized  
Child Care Facilities  
(Winter 1984-85)**



Source: table D

Figure 3.

**Children Under 5 in Organized Child Care Facilities, by Selected Characteristics of Their Mothers**  
(Winter 1984-85)



<sup>1</sup> Hispanics may be of any race.  
Source: table 4B

to depend more heavily on parental child care, either by the women themselves or their spouses, than do women in managerial or professional occupations (table 4B). Data from the May 1985 Current Population Survey indicate that women who are service workers are more likely to work non-day shifts (31 percent) than women in professional specialty (10 percent) or managerial (7 percent) occupations. Thus, they may be more able to use their husbands as child care providers in the evenings while at work.<sup>17</sup> They may also be less likely to use organized child care facilities, such as day care centers and nursery schools, which typically operate during the daytime hours rather than at night. In addition, the lower annual earnings of women in service occupations may affect their ability to pay for organized child care services. For example, the mean annual earnings of women in service occupations in 1979 were \$5,129, much lower than the earnings of women in managerial occupation (\$12,145) or professional occupations (\$11,199).<sup>18</sup>

The use of day/group care centers by the preschool-age children of Black women (21 percent) is significantly higher

than that for children of either White women or Hispanic women (13 and 12 percent, respectively).<sup>19</sup> Data in table 4B show that children of married women were also less likely to be in day/group care centers (13 percent) than were children of unmarried women (20 percent). The high use of day care centers and low percentage of care provided by father at home among Black children is associated with the mother's marital status. Only 46 percent of the Black women with children under 15 years were married and living with their husbands, compared with 81 percent for White women. Thus, a high percentage of Black women may be compelled to depend on day/group care centers for child care to compensate for the absence of the child's father in the household.

## SECONDARY CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS

One of the principal issues discussed at recent hearings conducted by the Select Committee on Children, and Youth, and Families, U.S. House of Representatives, concerned the lack of data on child care arrangements of school-aged children<sup>20</sup>. Unlike the two earlier child care surveys conducted

<sup>17</sup>U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, unpublished tabulations from the May 1985 Current Population Survey.

<sup>18</sup>U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, Volume 2, PC80-2-8B, Subject Reports, Earnings by Occupation and Education.

<sup>19</sup>No significant difference is found between White women and Hispanic women in day/group care utilization.

<sup>20</sup>Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families, op. cit., p. 27.

by the Census Bureau in 1977 and 1982, the present SIPP study covers the after school arrangements of the children of working mothers. The number and percentage of children using secondary child care arrangements are presented in table 7. (As defined earlier, the secondary child care arrangement refers to the arrangement used second most frequently during a typical work week.)

Almost 7 million children (26 percent of all children under 15) of working mothers use a secondary child care arrangement. Secondary child care arrangements are used by 32 percent of school-age children 5 to 14 years old but by only 13 percent of children under 5 years. The usage of secondary child care arrangements by school-age children of mothers employed full time is about three times (41 percent) that of children whose mothers are employed part-time (14 percent). It is possible that many women who work part time do so to the extent that they can return from work in time to care for their children after school.

The types of secondary child care arrangements used by older children who are in school most of the time their mothers are at work are shown in table F and figure 4. The most frequently mentioned secondary care arrangement provided for older children whose mothers are employed full-time is care in the child's own home (42 percent). Another 24 percent are

cared for in someone else's home, while about 321,000 children (7 percent) attend day/group care centers after school.

Altogether, 1 million children of employed mothers (including those working part time) cared for themselves after school while their mothers were working.<sup>21</sup> Data on child care arrangements used by women with school-age children are probably different during the summer months when school is out and parents are forced to seek alternative arrangements during daytime hours while they are at work.

## COST OF CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS

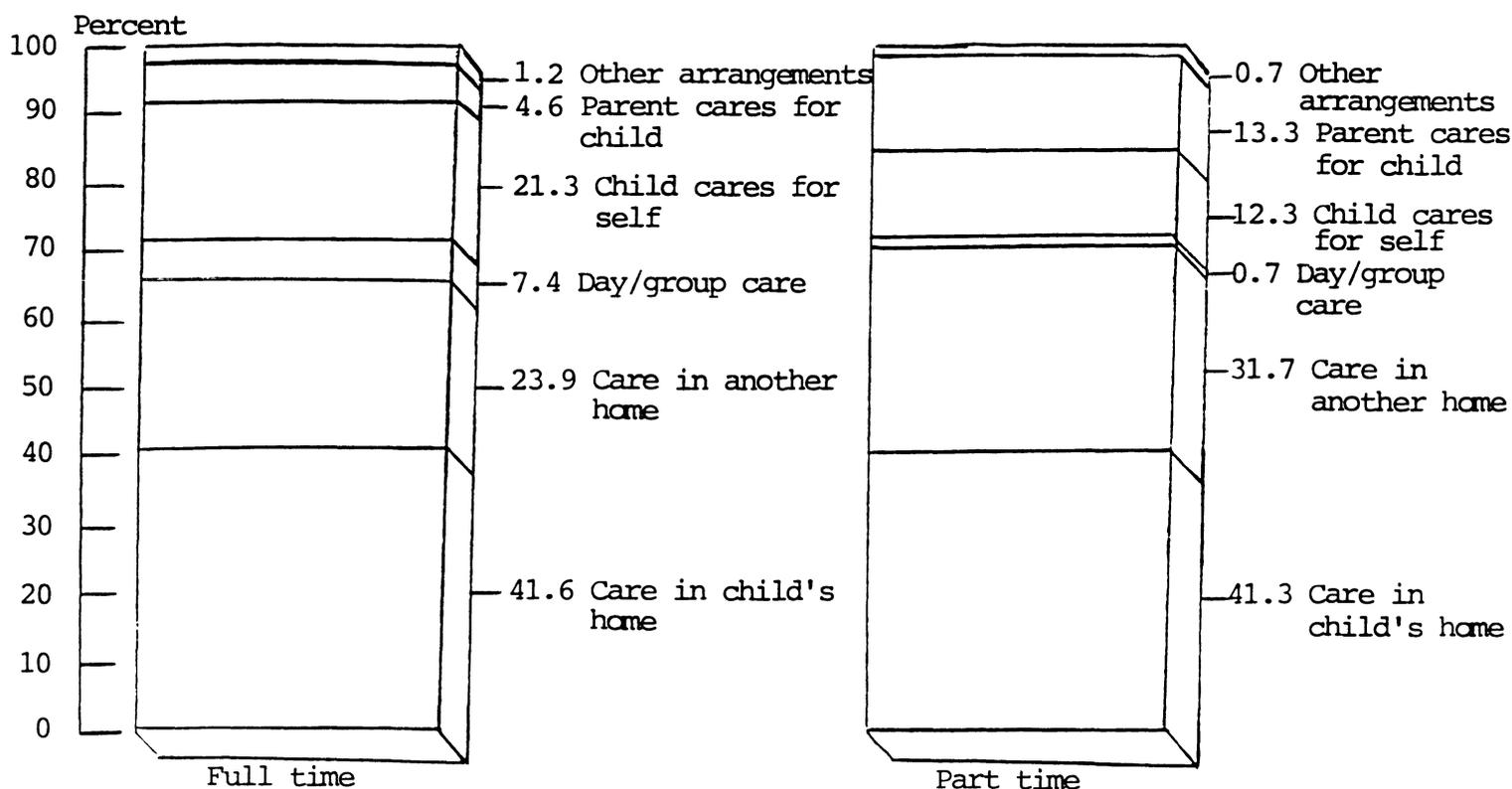
Weekly expenses for child care were collected in SIPP for all of the women's children under 15 years of age living in the household. The question was asked of women if any of

<sup>21</sup>A recent estimate from the December 1984 Current Population Survey placed the number of children 5 to 13 years old of full-time working mothers who were left unsupervised after school hours at 1.4 million. (See Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 149, op. cit.) Data shown in table F, indicate only the secondary arrangements used by children who are in school most of the time their mothers are at work. Table 7 shows that 354,000 5-to-14-year-old children of full-time working mothers and 134,000 5-to-14-year-old children of part-time working mothers were in their own care while the mother worked as the primary type of child care arrangement. Undoubtedly, most of these children also went to school but may not have been in school most of the time while their mothers were at work (e.g., the mother worked in the evenings or on weekends).

Figure 4.

### Secondary Care Arrangements of Grade School Children, by Employment Status of Mother

(Winter 1984-85)



Source: table F

**Table F. Secondary Child Care Arrangements for Children 5 to 14 Who are in School Most of the Time While Their Mothers are at Work**

(Winter 1984-85. Numbers in thousands)

Type of child care arrangement	Total		Employed full time		Employed part time	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Number of children . . . . .	5,037	100.0	4,320	100.0	716	100.0
Care in child's home . . . . .	2,094	41.6	1,797	41.6	296	41.3
By father . . . . .	809	16.1	664	15.4	145	20.3
By grandparent . . . . .	264	5.2	235	5.4	28	3.9
By other relative . . . . .	832	16.5	748	17.3	84	11.7
By nonrelative . . . . .	189	3.8	150	3.5	39	5.4
Care in another home . . . . .	1,258	25.0	1,033	23.9	227	31.7
By grandparent . . . . .	404	8.0	338	7.8	66	9.2
By other relative . . . . .	209	4.1	155	3.6	55	7.7
By nonrelative . . . . .	645	12.8	540	12.5	106	14.8
Organized child care facilities . . . . .	344	6.8	334	7.7	9	1.3
Day/group care center . . . . .	327	6.5	321	7.4	5	0.7
Nursery school/preschool . . . . .	17	0.3	13	0.3	4	0.6
Kindergarten/grade school . . . . .	38	0.8	38	0.9	0	0.0
Child cares for self . . . . .	1,006	20.0	918	21.3	88	12.3
Parent cares for child <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	294	5.8	199	4.6	95	13.3

<sup>1</sup>Includes mothers working at home or away from home.

their three youngest children under age 15 were cared for by a grandparent or other relative, a nonrelative, or if any children were placed in day/group care centers or in a nursery/preschool. Excluded were women who used only family members (i.e., the child's father or siblings) or used only kindergartens/grade schools or if the child cared for himself or herself. Therefore, cash transfers to family members or payments for schooling were not included in child care costs. Of the 7.7 million women in this specified group, 69 percent (5.3 million) responded that some cash payment was made for receiving child care services for at least one of their children (table 8).

Seventy-two percent of mothers employed full time paid for child care services, compared with 60 percent of mothers employed part time. Payments for child care were also made more frequently by married women than by unmarried women (72 and 61 percent, respectively). Among women whose youngest child was under 5 years old, 72 percent paid for child care services; data from the June 1982 CPS also showed that 77 percent made some cash payment for their youngest child under 5 years old.<sup>22</sup> Altogether, for the 5.3 million women paying cash for child care services the median child care expenditure was \$38 per week. Twenty-nine percent of these women paid \$50 or more per week for their child care arrangements.

Because of analytical complexities in properly attributing child care costs to specific types of arrangements (see discussion in appendix D), the child care expenditures shown in table G are limited to women with only one child who also used only one type of child care arrangement. The median child care expenditures paid by this group of women was \$39 per week. Twenty-seven percent of these women paid more than \$50 per week per child for child care arrangements. The

cost of child care is less expensive when provided by relatives than by nonrelatives or organized child care facilities. Only 1 in 10 women paid over \$50 per week for care by relatives, compared with 1 in 3 for child care services provided by nonrelatives or by organized child care facilities. Other estimates suggest that child care costs average \$45 to \$75 per week for preschoolers and over \$100 per week for care in day care centers or for housekeepers performing child care duties in the child's home.<sup>23</sup>

The Federal Government currently approves child care costs as work related expenses for dependent children under 15 years old when both spouses work full time or when one spouse works full-time and the other works part time or is a student. Divorced or separated parents who have custody of children and single parents may also claim a tax credit for these expenses. Tax laws permit between 20 and 30 percent of annual child care expenditures (on a base of up to \$2,400 for the first child and \$4,800 for two or more children) to be used as a tax credit. For the tax year 1984, 2.6 billion dollars of tax credits were filed on 7.5 million individual income tax returns.<sup>24</sup>

Data from SIPP for winter 1984-85 show that 5.3 million women who were employed at this time and who had at least one child under 15 years old paid cash for child care arrangements (table 8). This estimate is smaller than the preceding IRS estimate of 7.5 million for several reasons, principally because the SIPP estimate in this table includes only women who were working during the survey reference period. The IRS estimate, however, is based on claims by

<sup>23</sup>Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families, op. cit., pp. 17-18, and Martin O'Connell and David E. Bloom, "Juggling Jobs and Babies: America's Child Care Challenge," *Population Trends and Public Policy*, No. 12 (Washington, D.C.: Population Reference Bureau, 1987).

<sup>24</sup>Internal Revenue Service, "Individual Income Tax Returns 1984," Statistics of the Income Division of the Internal Revenue Service, Publication No. 1304 (Revision of November 1986), tables 1.3 and 1.4.

<sup>22</sup>Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 129, op. cit., table 5.

**Table G. Percent Distribution of Weekly Cash Payments Made by Employed Mothers With One Child, by Selected Characteristics**

(Numbers in thousands. Limited to mothers using only one child care arrangement)

Characteristic	Total	Not paying cash	Number	Total	Paying cash								Median over (dollars)
					Under \$10	\$10 to \$19	\$20 to \$29	\$30 to \$39	\$40 to \$49	\$50 to \$59	\$60 to \$69	\$70 and over	
Number of women . . . . .	2,602	893	1,709	100.0	3.2	5.9	20.7	21.7	21.3	15.5	5.9	5.8	39.3
Type of arrangement:													
Care by relatives . . . . .	943	580	363	100.0	4.9	10.6	41.0	23.5	10.3	6.1	2.5	1.2	28.4
Care by nonrelatives . . . . .	757	99	658	100.0	2.8	5.9	18.7	20.5	19.0	17.2	6.7	9.2	41.1
Organized child care facilities . . . . .	903	215	688	100.0	2.7	3.4	11.9	22.0	29.5	18.9	6.9	4.8	43.5
Age of child:													
Less than 1 year old . . . . .	475	212	263	100.0	2.9	10.4	13.7	21.2	16.4	15.5	3.4	16.5	41.1
1 and 2 years old . . . . .	970	304	666	100.0	2.8	4.1	27.2	19.1	18.0	14.2	9.1	5.5	38.4
3 and 4 years old . . . . .	739	189	550	100.0	5.1	5.3	15.9	25.4	24.5	17.1	3.8	2.9	39.4
5 and 14 years old . . . . .	417	188	229	100.0	-	7.4	21.4	21.1	29.3	15.5	4.2	1.0	40.1
Employment status:													
Full time . . . . .	1,908	565	1,343	100.0	0.9	2.4	16.7	23.2	24.8	19.0	7.1	6.0	42.7
Part time . . . . .	695	329	366	100.0	11.5	18.8	35.5	16.2	8.8	2.9	1.3	5.1	25.5
Marital status:													
Married, husband present . . . . .	1,762	541	1,221	100.0	3.5	4.5	20.4	20.4	20.9	17.6	6.3	6.3	40.6
All other marital statuses <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	841	353	488	100.0	2.3	9.5	21.4	25.0	22.4	10.3	4.7	4.3	36.8

<sup>1</sup>Includes married, husband absent (including separated), widowed, divorced, and never married women.

Note: Median cash payments derived from more detailed distribution of dollar amounts.

parents with dependent children who may have worked at any time during the calendar year. (The SIPP data in table 8 also exclude men with dependent children and unemployed women who were students and paid cash for child care arrangements.)

If the weekly estimates of child care expenditures derived from SIPP for winter 1984-85 were assumed to be representative of costs over the entire year, child care arrangements

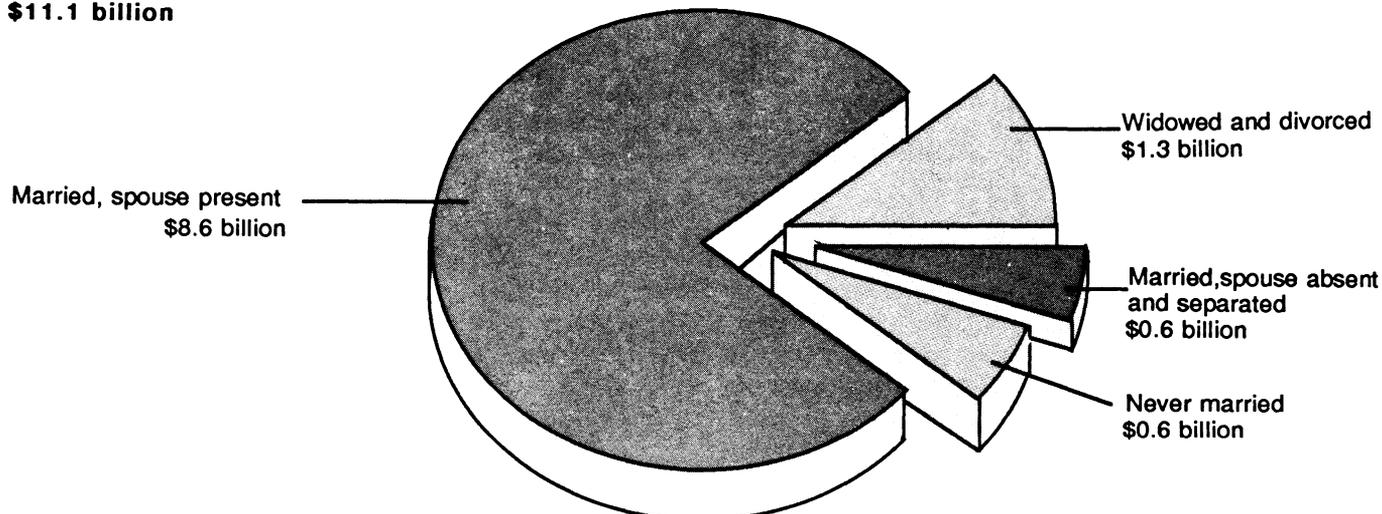
made by working women over the course of a year could exceed 11 billion dollars (figure 5). The actual child care expenditures made by families may differ from this estimate because of seasonality in employment conditions, variations in the number of hours worked per week, and changes in child care arrangements used by women during the year (especially when schools are closed).

Figure 5.

### Amount Spent Annually on Child Care Arrangements, by Marital Status of Working Women

#### Total Annual Expenditures

**\$11.1 billion**



A recent Supreme Court decision in *California Federal Savings and Loan Association v. Guerra*, has upheld a California law requiring employers to grant up to four months leave to women medically disabled by pregnancy or childbirth. This ruling, by preserving job retention, may encourage women to return to work shortly after childbirth knowing that a job is still waiting for them without any penalty for taking a leave of absence. This may potentially increase the demand for child care services for women with infants, thus making child care costs a more integral component of the family budget in the future.

#### **NOTE ON ESTIMATES**

Estimates of primary and secondary child care arrangements shown in this report are based on respondents'

answers to the question of what their child was usually doing during the time that they were at work. The estimates of the number of children being left unsupervised by an adult during this period may be underestimated by those respondents who perceive that leaving the child unattended while at work may be interpreted as a socially undesirable response. In some cases, parents—out of concern for their child's safety—may be unwilling to reveal their child's whereabouts when asked about this subject. The misreporting of any specific child care arrangement may affect the overall distribution of child care arrangements shown in this report. In all cases, the interviewer accepted the respondent's answers and did not question the validity of the response.