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Statistical Brief

From the Bureau of the Census
 Survey of Income and Program Participation

Who's Minding the Kids?

More than 29 million children under age 15 had mothers who worked; almost 19 million of these children had mothers who worked full time.

Demand for child care is growing as more women with young children work. This brief provides the latest data on the child care arrangements of working mothers. The data on children who care for themselves are from the Current Population Survey (CPS), conducted in December 1984. All other data were collected in the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) for December 1984 through March 1985 and cover the three youngest children using child care in each household. This group represents about 90 percent of all children whose mothers worked.

The majority of preschool-age children were cared for in their own or other homes while their mothers worked.

Among the 8.2 million children under 5 years old whose mothers work, 31 percent were cared for in their own homes (principally by their fathers), 37 percent were cared for in another home (usually by someone not related to the child), and 23 percent were in organized child care facilities which include day/group care centers or nursery or preschools. Another 8 percent were cared for by their mother while she was working either at home or away from home. The use of organized child care has grown substantially. In

1984-85, 1 in 4 working women with a child under 5 used some type of organized child care facility for their youngest child, up from 16 percent in 1982.

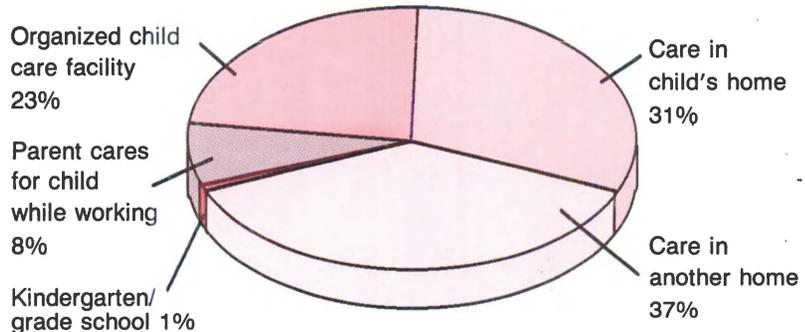
Preschoolers of full-time working mothers were less likely to be cared for at home (24 percent) than were children of mothers who worked part time (42 percent). For many part-time working mothers, the opportunity to work evenings or weekends makes it possible for "9 to 5" working fathers to babysit. Child care provided by the father was less frequently used in families where the mother worked full time; 11 percent of the children of these mothers were cared for by their fathers, compared with 24 percent of children of part-time working mothers. Full-time workers placed greater reliance on child care in the

home of someone unrelated to the child and on organized child care facilities.

For almost 14 million school-age children, school is the primary source of child care.

Another 4.5 million children were not in school most of the time their mothers were working, and almost half of them were cared for in their own homes, principally by their fathers. Of the 14 million children for whom school was the primary child care facility, 5 million had a second child care arrangement. 2.1 million children were cared for in their own homes and another 1.3 million children were cared for in someone else's home. About 344,000 attended group care centers after school.

Primary Child Care Arrangements of Preschool Children (8 million children)



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Weekly Cash Payments for Child Care Made by Employed Mothers with One Child: 1984-85

	Percent not paying cash	Percent paying cash	Median (dollars)
Care by relatives	62	38	28
Care by nonrelatives	13	87	41
Organized child care	24	76	44



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Whether through parental preference or lack of good alternatives, some children cared for themselves or stayed with another child under 14 while their mothers worked.

According to the CPS, 2.1 million children 5 to 13 years old regularly spent some period of time without adult supervision after school. About two-thirds of these children had mothers who worked full time. Older children were much more likely to be left alone: 22 percent of 12- and 13-year-olds, 16 percent of 9-to-11-year-olds, and 6 percent of 5-to-8-year-olds whose mothers worked full-time had no adult supervision for some period of time after school. Children left alone or with another child under 14 were on their own for relatively short periods of time: about 3 in 10 children were left alone for less than an hour. However, 1 in 10 were left alone for 3 hours or more.*

The possibility of a breakdown in child care arrangements is a constant concern, yet relatively few working parents reported that they lost work time because of failures in these arrangements.

Of the 7.7 million working women who relied on others (excluding kindergarten or grade school) for child care services for any of their children under age 15, an average of

6 percent lost time from work each month as a result of a failure in child care arrangements. For women with one child using one arrangement only, those who use organized child care programs have fewer work disruptions (1 percent) than those who place their children in someone else's home (8 percent). Work disruptions refer to time lost by either the woman or her husband and may be higher than usual because the survey was conducted during the more inclement winter months.

The cost of child care represents a sizeable expense for most working parents.

For women with one child using one child care arrangement only, the median amount paid for child care services in 1984-85 was \$39 per week. About one-fourth of working mothers paid \$50 or more per week, while only 2 percent paid more than \$100 per week. The cost of child care is relatively less expensive when provided by relatives than when provided by nonrelatives or organized child care services. Relatives are also less likely to receive any cash payment at all: about 60 percent of mothers whose child was cared for by a relative made no payment at all.

As the demand for child care services has grown, the annual expenditure for child care of all types has reached an estimated 11 billion dollars.

*The estimates related to children left unsupervised may be underestimated. For discussion, see the following reports.

For Further Information

See: Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 149, *After-School Care of School-Age Children: December 1984*; and Current Population Reports, Series P-70, No. 9, *Who's Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements: Winter 1984-85*.

(For sale by Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.)

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This is one of a series of occasional reports providing timely data on specific policy-related issues. The Bureau of the Census conducts various demographic surveys of the U.S. population; this Brief presents data from one or more such surveys. The data are subject to various errors such as undercoverage of the population, processing errors, and respondent reporting errors. Certain measures, such as quality control programs, are implemented to reduce these errors. In addition, if each of the surveys was repeated with different samples of respondents, the results would vary from sample to sample. The results in this brief have been tested to conform to the Bureau's statistical standards. Caution should be used when comparing these data to other data sets.

Child Care Arrangements of School-Age Children

NOTE: Primary is the arrangement used most of the hours the mother is working; secondary is the arrangement used when additional care is necessary during the mother's working hours.

