



# Who's Minding The Kids?



Child Care Arrangements:  
Fall 1991

**SIIPP**

Survey of Income and Program Participation

by Lynne M. Casper,  
Mary Hawkins, and Martin O'Connell

U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

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# Who's Minding the Kids?

## Child Care Arrangements: Fall 1991

All demographic surveys including the Current Population Survey (CPS) and the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) suffer from undercoverage of the population. This undercoverage results from missed housing units and missed persons within sample households. Compared to the level of the 1980 Decennial Census, overall CPS and SIPP undercoverage is about 7 percent. Undercoverage varies with age, sex, and race. For some groups such as 20- to 24-year-old black males, the undercoverage is as high as about 35 percent. The weighting procedures used by the Census Bureau partially correct for the bias due to undercoverage. However, its final impact on estimates is unknown. For details see appendix C.

### INTRODUCTION

The child care statistics shown in this report are for the estimated 31 million children under the age of 15 who were living with their mothers who themselves were employed during fall 1991 (September to December). How these children were cared for while their mothers were at work, the complexity of these arrangements, and the changes in arrangements that have occurred within the past decade are some of the topics presented in this report.

This report also estimates hourly costs for child care based on payments made for separate arrangements and for those shared by brothers and sisters in the same family. Since many young children now have both parents in the labor force, this report features the child care arrangements used by dual-employed parents according to their work shift. In addition, the availability of low cost child care arrangements is critical to a growing number of families in which the lone (unmarried) parent must be the sole income provider. This report explores the role that other adult household members play in providing child care services while the mother is at work.

Data on child care arrangements have been collected by the Census Bureau in prior supplements to the Current Population Survey (CPS) since 1958<sup>1</sup> and in

supplements to the SIPP since 1984.<sup>2</sup> This report discusses the most recent statistics on child care arrangements in the United States based on data collected in the SIPP for the period September to December 1991. Data from earlier CPS and SIPP supplements on child care also are presented to show a historical perspective on changes that have occurred in the way families with working mothers arrange for the care of their children.

### Population Coverage

Most of the child care data presented in this report profile the arrangements typically used for children (including any adopted or stepchildren) under 15 years of age, during the time their mothers were at work. There were an estimated 56.1 million children under age 15 living in the United States in the fall of 1991 (table A). About 55.4 percent of these children (31.1 million) were living with mothers who were employed; 9.9 million of these children were of preschool age and the remaining 21.2 million were of gradeschool age. Although not specifically discussed in this report, there were another 1.4 million children under 15 years of age whose mothers were unemployed (looking for work) and 1.7 million children whose mothers were enrolled in school.

There were an additional 1.3 million children under 15 years of age who were living with their fathers (and not with their mothers) or with male guardians (table A), but this report does not analyze the child care arrangements for these children. Estimates from the March 1991 CPS indicate that there were 1.7 million children under 15 years of age living only with their fathers or male guardians, an estimate larger than that derived from the current 1991 SIPP.<sup>3</sup> The lower numbers of children in the 1991 SIPP Panel compared with the March 1991 CPS suggest that the 1991 SIPP estimates may not be accurate reflections of the number of children living with their fathers or male guardians.

<sup>1</sup>Marjorie Lueck, Ann Orr, and Martin O'Connell, Current Population Reports, P23-117, Trends in Child Care Arrangements of Working Mothers; Martin O'Connell and Carolyn Rogers, Current Population Reports, P23-129, Child Care Arrangements of Working Mothers: June 1982.

<sup>2</sup>Martin O'Connell and Amara Bachu, Current Population Reports, P70-9, Who's Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements: Winter 1984-85; Martin O'Connell and Amara Bachu, Current Population Reports, P70-20, Who's Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements: 1986-87; Martin O'Connell and Amara Bachu, Current Population Reports, P70-30, Who's Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements: Fall 1988.

<sup>3</sup>Arlene Saluter, Current Population Reports, P20-461, Marital Status and Living Arrangements: 1991, table 4.

**Table A. Population Universe for Child Care Module: Fall 1991**

[In thousands. Numbers represent the average monthly estimate of children or their parents/guardians who are either in the labor force or enrolled in school]

Population	All children	Children under 5 years	Children 5 to 14 years
<b>Number of parents<sup>1</sup></b>			
Mothers living with children .....	30,165	(NA)	(NA)
Employed .....	19,260	7,990	14,911
Unemployed .....	880	370	681
Enrolled in school .....	1,044	594	642
Other statuses .....	8,981	(NA)	(NA)
Fathers living with children .....	1,192	(NA)	(NA)
Employed .....	970	304	728
Unemployed .....	73	32	50
Enrolled in school .....	9	-	9
Other statuses .....	140	(NA)	(NA)
<b>Number of children</b>			
All children <sup>2</sup> .....	56,088	19,458	36,631
Children in child care module <sup>3</sup> .....	35,499	11,344	24,154
Living with mother .....	34,198	11,025	23,172
Mother employed .....	31,074	9,854	21,220
Mother unemployed .....	1,393	439	953
Mother enrolled in school .....	1,731	732	999
Living with father .....	1,301	319	982
Father employed .....	1,201	289	912
Father unemployed .....	91	30	61
Father enrolled in school .....	9	-	9

- Represents zero.

NA Ages for children with parents not in child care module not available.

<sup>1</sup>The total numbers of parents is less than the sum of the two age groups as some parents have children in both age groups.

<sup>2</sup>Total estimated number of children regardless of parent's labor force or enrollment status.

<sup>3</sup>Information collected for only the three youngest children in the household.

## Terms Used in This Report

Children under 15 years of age in this report are divided into two major categories: preschool-age children (under 5 years of age) and gradeschool-age children (5 to 14 years of age). The term "child care arrangement" describes how children are cared for during the time their mothers are working.

Child care arrangements for preschoolers include not only informal arrangements where neighbors, relatives, or older brothers and sisters look after children either in the child's home or in their own homes, but also organized child care facilities such as day or group care centers and nursery schools or preschools. The reader should be cautioned that these distinctions may not always be clear to the respondent and may even be affected by regional differences in terminology or governmental regulations used to categorize child care arrangements.

Also included are responses which indicate that mothers were caring for their children while at work (either at home or outside their home) or that fathers were the care providers for their children at home during the mother's working hours. In cases of blended families which contain stepparents or legal guardians living

with children, the term "mother" or "father" is used to include those stepparents or adults who are related to the children they live with by marriage or legal order although they may not be their natural parents.

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 gradeschool when their parents are at work. While schooling is generally not considered to be a child care arrangement, especially for older children, the fact remains that the school system does provide a type of supervised care for children during the hours their parents are at work. An additional child care arrangement category "school-based activity before or after school" is included. This category consists of school-based supervised activities such as sports, music, and arts and crafts classes that are outside the regular school hours.

In this report, "latchkey kids" are defined as those children who are reported to be in self care for some period of time during their mother's working hours. This type of arrangement may be prevalent for older children, especially after school. It is possible that these reported incidents are underestimated if parents leave their children alone for brief periods of time after school or only in emergencies and forget to report these instances as regular forms of child care.

Some parents may use more than one type of child care arrangement in a typical 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 at work. If other arrangements were used in addition to the primary arrangement, the one used second most frequently was called the secondary arrangement.

For example, if a child was in gradeschool most of the time his or her mother worked and then cared for himself or herself after school, the primary child care arrangement for this child would be "enrolled in gradeschool" and the secondary child care arrangement would be "child cares for self."

Information on child care arrangements used by parents for their children was asked of the wife and not of the husband in the case of married-couple families. As such, the recorded child care arrangement was the one used while the wife, not the husband, was in the labor force or in school. In families where only the mother was present or where the child was cared for by a legal guardian (excluding foster parents), information on child care arrangements was obtained from that parent or guardian.

In cases where the mother was both employed and enrolled in school, questions on child care arrangements pertain only to the time the respondent was at work. If the respondent was enrolled in school and also looking for a job, the responses only refer to the time the respondent was in school. The terms "employed" or "working" mothers are used interchangeably in this report to refer to mothers employed in the paid labor force in the month preceding the interview.

The definitions for day and non-day work shift used in this report are based on Bureau of Labor Statistics guidelines adapted for the work schedule items on the SIPP questionnaire.<sup>4</sup> Day shift in this report is defined as a work schedule where at least one-half of the hours worked were between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. and where the shift was described by the respondent as being a regular daytime schedule. All other schedules having the majority of the hours worked outside the 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. core period are classified as non-day work shifts, including shifts reported as rotating or having irregular hours, regardless of the hours of employment.

## HIGHLIGHTS

The principal findings of the survey are summarized below. (The figures in parentheses denote the 90-percent confidence interval of the estimate.)

<sup>4</sup>See J.N. Hedges and E.S. Sekscenski, "Workers on Late Shifts in a Changing Economy," *Monthly Labor Review*, Vol. 102, No. 9 (September 1979), pp. 14-22.

## Child Care Arrangements and Trends Among Preschoolers

- There were 56.1 million children under age 15 in the fall of 1991. About 55.4 ( $\pm 0.9$ ) percent of these children, 31.1 ( $\pm 0.5$ ) million, had mothers who were employed; of these children 9.9 ( $\pm 0.4$ ) million were under 5 years of age and 21.2 ( $\pm 0.5$ ) million were 5 to 14 years of age.
- Among preschool-age children of employed mothers in fall 1991, 23 ( $\pm 1.9$ ) percent were in organized child care facilities most of the time their mothers were at work, down from 25.8 ( $\pm 1.6$ ) percent in 1988.
- The proportion of preschoolers cared for by family day care providers declined from 23.6 ( $\pm 1.6$ ) percent in 1988 to 17.9 ( $\pm 1.7$ ) percent in 1991. Offsetting the decline in family day care providers, the proportion of preschoolers cared for by their fathers while their mothers were at work increased from 15.1 ( $\pm 1.3$ ) to 20 ( $\pm 1.8$ ) percent.
- Preschoolers whose mothers were married were three times more likely to be cared for by their fathers than were preschoolers whose mothers were lone (unmarried) parents (22.9  $\pm$  2.1 versus 7.1  $\pm$  2.7 percent, respectively). On the other hand, lone mothers' children were more likely to be cared for by their grandparents (24.8  $\pm$  4.6 percent) than were married mothers' children (13.7  $\pm$  1.7 percent).

## Child Care Arrangements of Gradeschool Children

- About 16.2 ( $\pm 0.5$ ) million or 76.4 ( $\pm 1.3$ ) percent of the 21.2 ( $\pm 0.5$ ) million gradeschool age children of employed mothers spent most of their time in school while their mothers were working.
- Less than 1 ( $\pm 0.4$ ) percent of gradeschool children of lone mothers were primarily cared for by their fathers during their mothers' working hours compared with 8.4 ( $\pm 1.0$ ) percent of the children of married mothers.
- Grandparents and other relatives were more likely to be the primary sources of child care for the children of lone mothers (10.2  $\pm$  2.0 percent) than for children of married mothers (3.8  $\pm$  0.7 percent).

## Latchkey Kids

- About 1.6 ( $\pm 0.2$ ) million or 7.6 ( $\pm 0.8$ ) percent of the 21.2 ( $\pm 0.5$ ) million gradeschool-age children of employed mothers were reported to be in self care for some part of the time their mothers were working. About one-third of these latchkey children (554,000  $\pm$  106,000) were 5 to 11 years of age. In general, children were more likely to be latchkey kids with increasing age.

- Children 5 to 11 years of age whose mothers were full-time workers were four times more likely to be latchkey kids than those children whose mothers were part-time workers. No differences by the mother's employment status were found for children 12 to 14 years of age.
- For both younger and older gradeschool-age children, those living in suburban areas were more than twice as likely to be left alone for some time during their mothers workday than were those living in nonmetropolitan areas. The proximity of neighbors and other children in the suburbs may account for this difference. No difference was found in the likelihood of a child being left alone between those living in central cities compared with those living in the suburbs.

### Organized Child Care Arrangements

- Use of organized child care facilities for preschoolers was more likely if the child's mother was working full-time ( $27.8 \pm 2.6$  percent) than if she was working part-time ( $14.9 \pm 2.7$  percent).
- Among children living in families with incomes of at least \$4,500 per month, one-third of preschoolers were primarily cared for by organized child care facilities compared with about 1 out of 5 children in families with lower monthly family incomes.
- Organized child care facilities were used more often for preschoolers residing in the South ( $28.8 \pm 3.7$  percent) than in the Northeast ( $15.9 \pm 3.8$ ) or the Midwest ( $20.0 \pm 3.5$ ), the latter two regions utilizing organized facilities at levels that are not statistically different from each other.

### Parents' Work Schedule and Child Care

- Of the 31.1 ( $\pm 0.5$ ) million children under age 15 in 1991 whose mothers were employed, 19.3 ( $\pm 0.5$ ) million had mothers who worked during the day at their principal job while 11.7 ( $\pm 0.4$ ) million had mothers who worked non-day shifts. Almost two-thirds of these 31.1 million children also had mothers who worked at full-time jobs.
- Child care in the child's own home was more prevalent among preschoolers whose mothers worked non-day shifts ( $47.4 \pm 3.5$  percent) than day shifts ( $27.1 \pm 2.7$  percent). Two-thirds of this in-home care for children whose mothers worked non-day shifts was provided by the father, compared with one-half of children whose mothers worked day shifts.
- Preschool-age children whose mothers worked part-time at their principal job also were cared for more frequently in their own home ( $44.3 \pm 3.5$  percent) than those children whose mothers worked full-time ( $29.9 \pm 2.7$  percent).

- In-home child care arrangements for preschoolers were more prevalent when the children's parents worked split shifts (one day, one non-day schedule) than when both worked during the day at their principal job ( $46.4 \pm 3.9$  and  $20.9 \pm 3.2$  percent, respectively).

### Family Expenditures on Child Care

- Of the 19.2 ( $\pm 0.6$ ) million employed mothers in 1991 with children under 15 years of age, 34.5 ( $\pm 1.5$ ) percent reported that they made a monetary payment for child care services, down from 39.9 ( $\pm 1.2$ ) percent in 1988.
- An estimated \$21.8 billion was spent on child care in 1991. Families paying for child care spent an average of \$63.3 ( $\pm \$3.9$ ) per week, representing 7.1 ( $\pm 0.5$ ) percent of their total family income.
- Women in poverty paid a higher proportion of their monthly family income on child care, 26.6 ( $\pm 4.9$ ) percent, compared with women living in families that were not living in poverty, 6.9 ( $\pm 0.5$ ) percent. Proportionately fewer women in poverty paid for child care services ( $24.1 \pm 4.8$  percent) than did women living above poverty ( $35.5 \pm 1.6$  percent).
- In addition to the greater relative burden that child care costs place on poor families, no significant difference in actual weekly expenditures for child care was found between families below ( $\$59.5 \pm \$16.1$ ) and above ( $\$63.5 \pm \$4.1$ ) the poverty line who actually paid for child care. This suggests that among families having to pay for child care, poor families may have to compete for similar child care services against families with greater economic resources.

### Costs of Individual Child Care Arrangements

- Some families pay for child care on an individual child basis while others pay for care for more than one child sharing the same provider. Of the 6.2 ( $\pm 0.3$ ) million children for whom payments were made on an individual basis, 4.6 ( $\pm 0.3$ ) million of those children were in child care for 10 or more hours a week. Those using 10 or more hours of child care per week paid \$2.07 ( $\pm \$0.13$ ) per hour for each child receiving care.
- The costs for organized child care facilities used for 10 or more hours a week amounted to \$2.15 ( $\pm \$0.13$ ) per hour for each child. When child care was provided by nonrelatives who came into the child's home, the cost per child per hour was \$2.73 ( $\pm \$0.63$ ), about \$0.80 more per hour than when the child was brought to the provider's home ( $\$1.93 \pm \$0.25$ ).

## Costs of Shared Child Care Arrangements

- When two or more children in a family shared the same child care provider for 10 or more hours per week, the cost of child care was \$1.97 ( $\pm$ \$0.39) per hour per child, not different from the amount when payments were made separately for each child (\$2.07  $\pm$  \$0.13 per hour).
- When payments were shared by more than one child in the family, care by relatives cost \$1.09 ( $\pm$ \$0.28) per hour per child compared to \$1.88 ( $\pm$ \$0.39) when payments were made separately for each child in the family. No "discounts" for child care sharing by the same provider were noted when either nonrelatives or organized child care facilities were used.

## PRIMARY CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS FOR PRESCHOOLERS

The choice of child care arrangements for preschool-age children is one of the most important daily decisions parents make. It is an age when children are most dependent on a care provider's supervisory skills and often marks the time when children make their first prolonged social contacts with persons outside the immediate family.

Table B shows the distribution of the primary child care arrangements used in 1991 by parents for children under 5 years of age (preschoolers) during the hours their mothers were working. Thirty-six percent of these

preschoolers were cared for in their own homes, mainly by their fathers, while 31 percent were cared for in another home, usually by someone not related to the child. About 23 percent of preschoolers (2.3 million children) were in organized child care facilities.

An additional 9 percent (855,000) of preschoolers were cared for by their mothers while working. The majority of these children (618,000) were cared for by their mothers who worked at home, thus eliminating potentially expensive commuting and child care costs. Only 2 percent of children (237,000) were cared for by their mothers at their place of work. In 1991, about one out of five preschoolers were cared for by their fathers while their mothers were at work.

Grandparents played an important role in providing care for their grandchildren: about 16 percent of children under 5 years of age were cared for by their grandparents during their mothers working hours. About half of these children were cared for in their grandparent's home. Relatives other than grandparents and fathers played a smaller role in providing child care services, amounting to about 8 percent of all arrangements for preschoolers.

Nonrelatives provided child care services for preschoolers at a level comparable to that of organized child care facilities. About 23 percent of children under 5 were cared for by nonrelatives. Most of the time, the children were sent to the provider's home (18 percent) rather than the providers going into the children's home (5 percent).

**Table B. Primary Child Care Arrangements Used by Employed Mothers for Children Under 5 Years by Age of Child: Fall 1991**

[Numbers in thousands]

Type of arrangement	All children		Less than 1 year		1 and 2 years		3 and 4 years	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	9,854	100.0	1,650	100.0	4,021	100.0	4,183	100.0
Care in child's home	3,522	35.7	668	40.5	1,555	38.7	1,299	31.1
By father	1,974	20.0	356	21.6	853	21.2	765	18.3
By grandparent	708	7.2	144	8.7	323	8.0	241	5.8
By other relative	313	3.2	45	2.7	156	3.9	112	2.7
By nonrelative	527	5.4	123	7.5	223	5.5	181	4.3
Care in another home	3,052	31.0	668	40.5	1,358	33.8	1,025	24.5
By grandparent	846	8.6	237	14.3	346	8.6	263	6.3
By other relative	443	4.5	93	5.6	190	4.7	159	3.8
By nonrelative	1,763	17.9	338	20.5	822	20.4	603	14.4
Organized child care facilities	2,268	23.0	189	11.5	705	17.5	1,375	32.9
Day/group care center	1,553	15.8	161	9.8	612	15.2	780	18.6
Nursery/preschool	716	7.3	28	1.7	93	2.3	595	14.2
School-based activity	52	0.5	-	-	5	0.1	46	1.1
Kindergarten/grade school	105	1.1	-	-	-	-	105	2.5
Child cares for self	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mother cares for child at work <sup>1</sup>	855	8.7	126	7.6	398	9.9	331	7.9

- Represents zero.

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

## Variations in Arrangements by Marital Status of Mother

The use of a particular type of child care is in part dependent on the presence of family members who could be called on to look after children while their mothers are at work. Because the father is living in the same household as the mother, married mothers are much more likely than lone (unmarried) mothers to be able to depend on the child's father as a source of child care. Conversely, it may be that the child's grandparents or other relatives are more willing to help out in families where the father is absent. Table 1 indicates that this is indeed the case. Preschoolers whose mothers were married in 1991 were three times more likely to be cared for by their fathers than preschoolers whose mothers were lone parents (22.9 percent and 7.0 percent, respectively). On the other hand, lone mothers' children were more likely to be cared for by their grandparents (24.8 percent) than were married mothers' children (13.7 percent). They were also more likely to be cared for by other relatives (11.6 percent versus 6.8 percent, respectively).

In contrast, the proportion of children cared for in organized facilities did not differ according to whether or not the child's mother was married. Although the vast majority of organized child care facilities require cash payment and lone parents are often at a financial disadvantage compared with two earner married-couple families, reduced cost or low income child care programs may explain why differences in the usage of organized child care facilities did not emerge by the mother's marital status.

The proportion of children cared for by nonrelatives did not differ by the mother's marital status. About one-fourth of preschoolers were cared for by nonrelatives while their mothers were working, regardless of their mothers' marital status.

## Variations in Arrangements by Age of the Child

As children grow from infancy to school age, employed women make considerable changes in child care arrangements in order to meet the changing demands of their families and of their employers. However, one of the problems that families face in finding child care for young children may be due to minimum age requirements for children admitted to organized child care facilities. Previous Census Bureau surveys have shown sharp increases between 1980 and 1992 in the proportion of women with infants who were participating in the labor force at the time of the survey. Estimates from the June 1992 Current Population Survey (CPS) show that 54 percent of all women who had a birth in the 12-month

period preceding the survey were in the labor force, up from 38 percent in 1980.<sup>5</sup>

Data for fall 1991 indicate that there were 1.7 million children under 1 year of age whose mothers were employed in the labor force (table B). Eighty-one percent of these infants were cared for in either the child's home or another home. Another 12 percent were cared for in organized child care facilities, not statistically different from the 8 percent that were cared for by their mothers while they were working.

Among 1- and 2-year olds, child care either in the child's home or in another home accounted for 73 percent of all arrangements while organized child care facilities made up 18 percent of the primary care for these children. For 3- and 4-year-old children, care in either the child's home or in another home declined to 56 percent of all arrangements while organized child care facilities made up 33 percent of the primary care. For all ages of children shown in table B, the majority of children who were in organized child care facilities were in day care centers.

## Trends in Child Care Arrangements: 1977 to 1991

Table C shows the distributions of the primary child care arrangements used by employed mothers for their children under 5 years old for selected survey years between 1977 and 1991. Between 1977 and 1988, care provided by relatives (excluding fathers) in the child's home declined from 12.6 percent in 1977 to 7.9 percent in 1988. Similarly, care provided by relatives in their own homes also decreased between 1977 and 1988 from 18.3 to 13.2 percent (table C). And, while no further decline occurred in the proportion of children cared for by relatives outside the child's home since 1988, in-home child care by relatives increased by 2 percentage points to 10 percent by 1991.

A noteworthy change in the type of child care arrangements used by preschoolers since 1988 was in the proportion of children cared for by nonrelatives in the providers home (table C). The proportion of children cared for by these providers sharply fell from 24 percent in 1988 to 20 percent in 1990. This marked the first substantial decline in the use of family day care providers since the mid-1980s. Declines in these services since 1988 may reflect the desires of parents to cut down on child care costs in recent years and move to more parental supervision of their children whenever possible or they may indicate more difficulties in securing licensed family day care providers.

In contrast to declines in the usage of family day-care providers, father care, while remaining at about the 15 percent level between 1977 and 1988, sharply increased to 20 percent by fall 1991 (figure 1). In the 1988 to 1991

<sup>5</sup>Amara Bachu, Current Population Reports, P20-470, Fertility of American Women: June 1992, table G.

**Table C. Primary Child Care Arrangements Used by Employed Mothers for Children Under 5 Years: Selected Periods, 1977 to 1991**

[Numbers in thousands]

Type of arrangement	Fall 1991	Fall 1990	Fall 1988	Fall 1987	Fall 1986	Winter 1985	June 1977 <sup>1</sup>
Number of children.....	9,854	9,629	9,483	9,124	8,849	8,168	4,370
Percent.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Care in child's home.....	35.7	29.7	28.2	29.9	28.7	31.0	33.9
By father.....	20.0	16.5	15.1	15.3	14.5	15.7	14.4
By grandparent.....	7.2	5.2	5.7	5.1	5.2	5.7	(NA)
By other relative.....	3.2	2.9	2.2	3.3	3.4	3.7	<sup>2</sup> 12.6
By nonrelative.....	5.4	5.0	5.3	6.2	5.5	5.9	7.0
Care in another home.....	31.0	35.1	36.8	35.6	40.7	37.0	40.7
By grandparent.....	8.6	9.1	8.2	8.7	10.2	10.2	(NA)
By relative.....	4.5	5.9	5.0	4.6	6.5	4.5	18.3
By nonrelative.....	17.9	20.1	23.6	22.3	24.0	22.3	22.4
Organized child care facilities.....	23.0	27.5	25.8	24.4	22.4	23.1	13.0
Day/group care center.....	15.8	20.6	16.6	16.1	14.9	14.0	(NA)
Nursery school/preschool.....	7.3	6.9	9.2	8.3	7.5	9.1	(NA)
School-based activity.....	0.5	0.1	0.2	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
Child cares for self.....	-	0.1	0.1	0.3	-	-	0.4
Mother cares for child at work <sup>3</sup> .....	8.7	6.4	7.6	8.9	7.4	8.1	11.4
Other arrangements <sup>4</sup> .....	1.1	1.1	1.3	1.0	0.8	0.8	0.6

- Represents zero.

NA Not available.

<sup>1</sup>Data only for the two youngest children under 5 years of age.<sup>2</sup>Data for 1977 includes grandparents.<sup>3</sup>Includes mothers working at home or away from home.<sup>4</sup>Includes children in kindergarten/grade school.

Source: Tabulations derived from the June 1977 Current Population Survey; Current Population Reports, Series P70-9, table 1; Series P70-20, table 1, Part A and Part B; Series P70-30, table 1; and table 1 of this report.

period, father-provided child care increased for children whose fathers worked at full-time jobs, even if their fathers worked day shifts. Father care, however, was greatest among children whose fathers experienced long-term joblessness: 56 percent of preschoolers whose fathers were out of work for 4 or more months in 1991 were cared for by dad while mom was at work (table D).

Increases in father-provided child care were also noted for the children of unmarried women since 1988. Between 1977 and 1988, only 1 to 2 percent of preschoolers of unmarried women had their fathers care for them while their mothers were at work. In 1991, 7 percent were being cared for by their fathers.<sup>6</sup>

The proportion of children cared for by their mothers while at work also declined between 1977 and 1988 from 11.4 to 7.6 percent (table C). While no significant difference was noted in the proportion of children being cared for by working mothers between 1988 and 1991, in the short term, mother care was more frequent in 1991 than in 1990.

Although a large increase was noted in the proportion of children cared for in organized child care facilities (day/group care centers or nursery/preschools) between 1977 (13 percent) and the first SIPP survey taken in winter 1985 (23 percent), the proportion of preschoolers

cared for in organized centers was no different in 1991 than it was in the 1985 survey. A short term decline in this type of care was noted between the 1990 and 1991 surveys.

## CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS FOR GRADESCHOOL CHILDREN

### Primary Arrangements

Most gradeschool-age children were in school while their mothers were at work (76 percent, table E). This does not mean that the remaining 24 percent were not enrolled in school; rather it implies that the majority of the hours that these mothers worked did not necessarily coincide with the hours of the day their children were in school (e.g., the mother worked evenings or on weekends when schools are closed).

Of the remaining 5 million gradeschool-age children not in kindergarten/gradeschool while their mothers worked, 2.3 million children were cared for in their own home. Over one-half of the total care in the children's homes was provided by the children's fathers. Another 638,000 children (3 percent) were involved in a school-based activity in 1991, representing a sizeable increase from 1988 when 346,000 children (1.7 percent) were in school-based activities.

<sup>6</sup>Martin O'Connell, Where's Papa? Fathers' Role in Child Care (Washington, D.C.: Population Reference Bureau, 1993), table A1.

Figure 1.  
Preschoolers Using Father Care or Family Day Care  
Providers: 1977 to 1991  
Percent

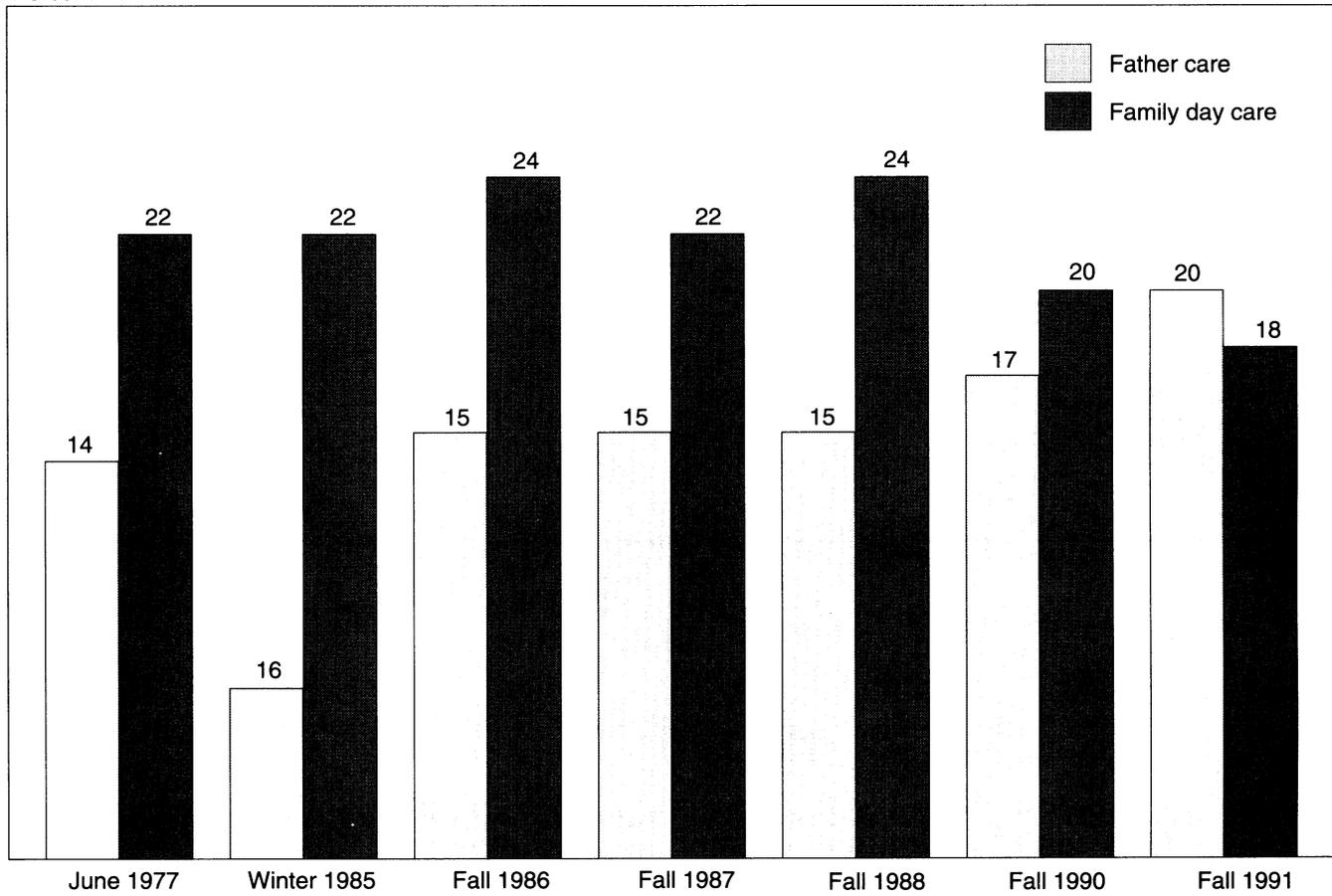


Table E. **Primary Child Care Arrangements Used by Employed Mothers for Children Under 15 Years: Fall 1991**

[Numbers in thousands]

Type of arrangement	All children		Children under 5 years		Children 5 to 14 years	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total.....	31,074	100.0	9,854	100.0	21,220	100.0
Care in child's home.....	5,785	18.6	3,522	35.7	2,263	10.7
By father.....	3,384	10.9	1,974	20.0	1,411	6.6
By grandparent.....	971	3.1	708	7.2	263	1.2
By other relative.....	709	2.3	313	3.2	396	1.9
By nonrelative.....	720	2.3	527	5.4	193	0.9
Care in another home.....	3,809	12.3	3,052	31.0	757	3.6
By grandparent.....	1,095	3.5	846	8.6	249	1.2
By other relative.....	645	2.1	443	4.5	203	1.0
By nonrelative.....	2,069	6.7	1,763	17.9	305	1.4
Organized child care facilities.....	2,673	8.6	2,268	23.0	405	1.9
Day/group care center.....	1,852	6.0	1,553	15.8	299	1.4
Nursery/preschool.....	822	2.6	716	7.3	106	0.5
School-based activity.....	689	2.2	52	0.5	638	3.0
Kindergarten/grade school.....	16,281	52.4	105	1.1	16,176	76.2
Child cares for self.....	566	1.8	-	-	566	2.7
Mother cares for child at work <sup>1</sup> .....	1,271	4.1	855	8.7	416	2.0

- Represents zero.

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

### Variations in Arrangements by Marital Status of the Mother

Regardless of their mother's marital status, about three-fourths of gradeschool-age children were in school during the majority of hours their mothers were working (table 1). As was the case with the younger children, gradeschool children whose fathers live with them were much more likely to have their fathers as the primary source of child care (8.4 percent) than were gradeschoolers whose moms were lone parents (0.3 percent). To compensate for the absence of fathers in families with lone mothers, grandparents and other relatives were more likely to be the primary sources of child care for these children (10.2 percent) than for children of married mothers (3.8 percent), and were utilized at a level comparable to father care (8.4 percent) for children in married-couple families.

Gradeschool children whose mothers were not married were no more likely than children of married mothers to be cared for in organized care facilities. Self care, however, was a more common child care arrangement among children of lone mothers than those of married mothers (5.1 percent versus 2 percent). More limited economic resources and the absence of a husband in the household may present the lone parent with more difficulties in securing child care arrangements during all of her working hours.

### Variations in Arrangements by Age of the Child

Just as the type of child care arrangements change as the child ages from infancy to preschool age, child

care arrangements for gradeschool-age children shift dramatically after age 5 (table 3, upper panel). Although 85 percent of 5-year olds in October 1991 were enrolled in kindergarten or in elementary school, only 43 percent were in school most of the time their mothers were at work. Half-day kindergarten programs often do not cover a mother's working hours and this necessitates other child care arrangements. Among the 3 million 5-year olds enrolled in kindergarten in October 1991, only 42 percent were in school for a full day.<sup>7</sup>

Among older children 6 to 14 years of age, 81 percent were in school during the time their mothers were at work. After age 5, when virtually all children are enrolled in school for a full day, the percentage of children cared for primarily in either their own home or in another home declined sharply. Among 5-year olds, 32 percent were cared for in a home environment (either in the child's home or the provider's home) compared with 14 percent among 6- to 11-year olds and 10 percent among children 12 to 14 years of age. Use of organized child care facilities also rapidly diminished from 16 percent for 5-year olds to less than 1 percent among children 6 years and over. Self-care by children noticeably increased from 1 to 7 percent between younger and older gradeschool-age children.

### After School Arrangements

The first panel of data in table 3 shows that approximately three-fourths (16.2 million) of gradeschool-age

<sup>7</sup>Robert Kominski and Andrea Adams, Current Population Reports, P20-469, School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1991, table 4.

children were in school for most of the time their mothers were at work. From earlier test surveys of this module conducted in Boston in 1983, interviewers reported that respondents frequently did not consider school attendance as a form of child care arrangement, even though many women were at work while their children were in school. In fact, some child care studies deliberately exclude a child's school attendance as a valid response to the question on child care arrangements and instead substitute the secondary form of child care that was mentioned.<sup>8</sup>

In an effort to permit comparisons of SIPP data with other studies that use this convention, the second panel of data in table 3 redistributes the child care arrangements in the first panel by excluding responses of kindergarten/gradeschool attendance and substituting the secondary arrangements used, if any, for these 16.2 million children while their mothers were at work. For example, after the addition of these secondary arrangements, the resulting number of children cared for at home was 4,966,000 (second panel, table 3) compared with the original estimate of 2,263,000 (first panel, table 3). The number of children 5 to 14 years of age who were reported to have cared for themselves while their mothers were working also increased from 566,000 to 1.6 million, reflecting the addition of 996,000 children using this secondary arrangement (table 4).

<sup>8</sup>Sandra L. Hofferth, April Brayfield, Sharon Deich, and Pamela Holcomb, National Child Care Survey, 1990 (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press, 1991).

The second panel in table 3 also reveals that 9.3 million children were reported not to have any additional child care arrangements after school, i.e., no secondary child care arrangements were made (second panel, table 3). Does this mean all of these children cared for themselves after school while their mothers were at work? The following section more closely examines the latchkey kid issue among gradeschool children using the parent's reports of self-care situations experienced by their children.

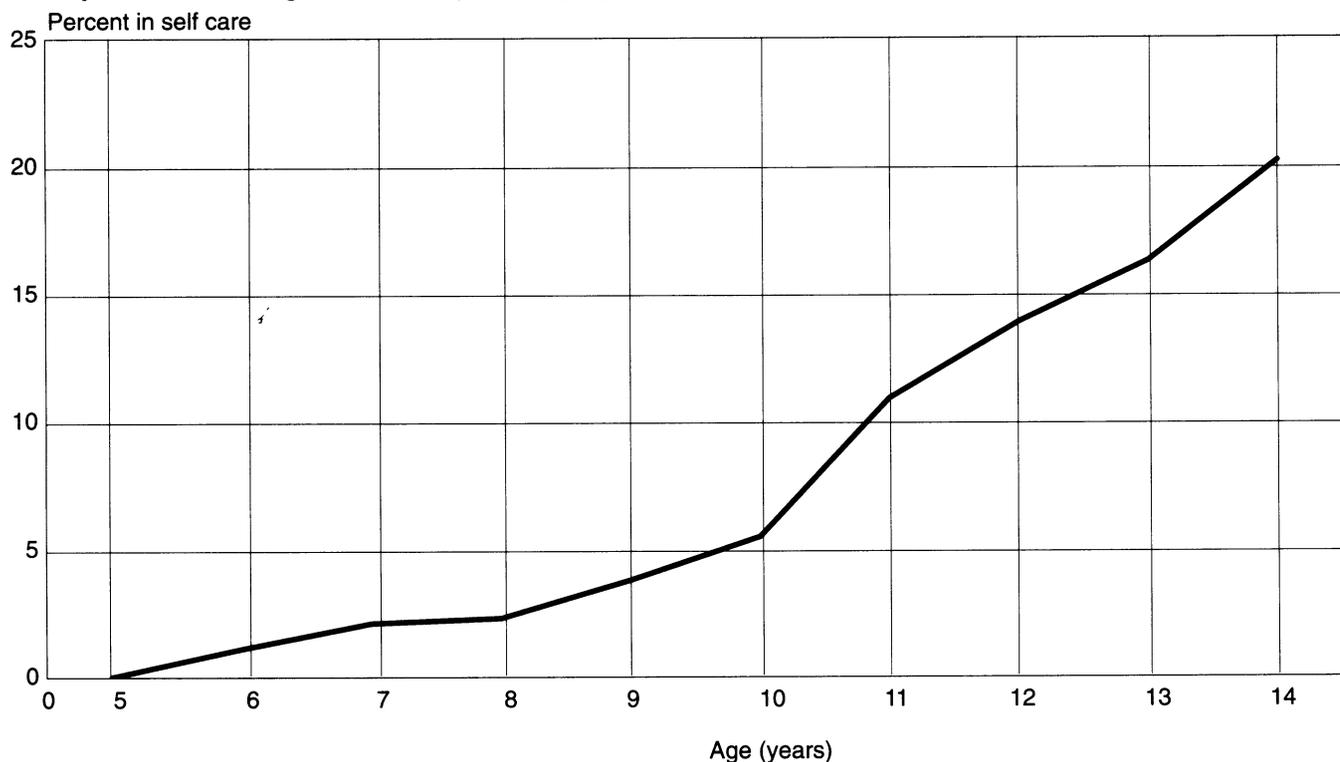
## LATCHKEY KIDS 5 TO 14 YEARS OF AGE

### Definitions

The phrase "latchkey kids" is generally used to describe children who are left alone or unsupervised during the day and return home to an empty house after school. In this survey, latchkey kids are those children aged 5 to 14 whose parents reported "child cares for self" as either the primary or secondary child care arrangement.<sup>9</sup> These estimates should be viewed as conservative for several reasons. First, the estimates do not include the children of women who are not in the labor force and who may spend some part of the day in unsupervised situations. Second, because only primary and secondary arrangements are recorded, it is possible that a child could be left in self care on a regular

<sup>9</sup>The number of latchkey kids under 5 is not estimated because none of the parents reported self care as either a primary or secondary arrangement for their preschool children.

Figure 2.  
Reported Percentage of Latchkey Kids by Age: Fall 1991



basis but that this arrangement is not regarded as the primary or secondary arrangement. Third, unexpected situations may arise making it necessary to leave a child unattended occasionally or on a temporary basis which are not remembered or reported by the respondent.

### Estimates of Latchkey Kids

In 1991, about 7.6 percent (1.6 million) of the 21.2 million children of employed women were reported to be in self care or to be unsupervised by an adult for some part of the time their mothers were working. Disaggregating these estimates by age (figure 2) shows that about 3.7 percent of 5- to 11-year olds and 16.8 percent of 12- to 14-year olds were latchkey kids (table 5). Results from an independent study conducted by the Urban Institute in 1990 yield comparable estimates: self care was reported by 6.4 percent of employed moms as either the primary or secondary arrangement for the youngest child, aged 5 to 12.<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that although these surveys provide some estimates of the number of children who are left unsupervised for some period of time while their mothers are working, the estimates may also be too low for the reasons mentioned above or for other methodological reasons.

### Multivariate Analysis

What types of factors make it more likely that a child will be left unsupervised? Job characteristics determine the number of hours and the time of day during which a mother is unable to care for her kids. Family characteristics identify the other household members who can potentially care for the children. Geographic variables define the physical characteristics of the children's environment, e.g., city versus suburban lifestyles, while children's personal characteristics such as their age may set the limits of acceptability of leaving a child alone. Socioeconomic factors dictate the ability of families to pay for child care and may be related to the acceptability of leaving children unattended when the parents work. All of these factors may be related to the likelihood that a child will be unsupervised.

This section uses multivariate statistical techniques to simultaneously assess the influence these characteristics have on the likelihood that a child is a latchkey kid. The ability of children to care for themselves varies considerably by age; younger children are less likely to have developed the skills necessary to satisfy their basic needs and to protect themselves (table 5). To account for these variations, separate models are estimated for children in the age groups 5 to 11 and 12 to 14, approximately separating elementary- from middle-school-(junior high school)-age children.

**Table F. Odds Ratio of a Child Being Reported in Self Care While the Mother is at Work, by Age of Child: Fall 1991**

Characteristics	Age of child	
	5 to 11 years	12 to 14 years
<b>Job related characteristics:</b>		
Employment (part-time) . . . . .	...	...
Full-time . . . . .	<sup>1</sup> 4.222	0.929
Class of worker (employee) . . . . .	...	...
Self-employed . . . . .	0.406	<sup>1</sup> 0.282
Shift work (non-day shift) . . . . .	...	...
Day shift . . . . .	1.570	<sup>1</sup> 0.352
Employment/shift interaction . . . . .	...	...
Full-time x day shift . . . . .	0.575	<sup>1</sup> 3.577
<b>Family characteristics:</b>		
Marital status (married) . . . . .	...	...
Unmarried . . . . .	1.835	<sup>1</sup> 2.026
Other adult in the household (not present) . . . . .	...	...
Present . . . . .	0.785	0.788
<b>Demographic characteristics:</b>		
Child's age (years) . . . . .	<sup>1</sup> 1.727	<sup>1</sup> 1.326
Child's gender (female) . . . . .	...	...
Male . . . . .	1.583	0.998
Race (other races) . . . . .	...	...
Non-Hispanic White . . . . .	0.715	1.624
Non-Hispanic Black . . . . .	<sup>2</sup> 0.170	0.768
Hispanic . . . . .	0.495	0.872
Region (Midwest) . . . . .	...	...
Northeast . . . . .	<sup>1</sup> 0.168	<sup>1</sup> 0.448
South . . . . .	<sup>1</sup> 0.361	<sup>1</sup> 0.377
West . . . . .	0.619	<sup>1</sup> 0.444
Metropolitan status (nonmetropolitan) . . . . .	...	...
City . . . . .	1.241	<sup>1</sup> 2.334
Suburb . . . . .	<sup>1</sup> 2.407	<sup>1</sup> 2.468
Mother's education (less than high school) . . . . .	...	...
High school . . . . .	2.379	0.755
College, 1 to 3 years . . . . .	<sup>1</sup> 3.560	0.968
College, 4 or more years . . . . .	2.337	1.031
<b>Economic Characteristics:</b>		
Log of income (dollars) . . . . .	0.853	1.195
Poverty status (not in poverty) . . . . .	...	...
In poverty . . . . .	1.733	1.529

Note: Individual categories listed in parentheses following factor headings indicate reference categories in the models.

... Reference category.

<sup>1</sup>Statistically significant at the 95-percent confidence level.

<sup>2</sup>Statistically significant at the 90-percent confidence level.

### Children 5 to 11 Years of Age

Table F shows the relative odds of being a latchkey kid for children aged 5 to 11 and for those 12 to 14 years based on the multivariate analysis in table 6. When the odds ratios shown in the table are greater than 1, this indicates that children with the specified characteristic are more likely to be latchkey kids than the comparison group (the enumerated characteristic in parenthesis). Odds ratios less than 1 indicate that these children are less likely to be latchkey kids.

<sup>10</sup>Hofferth, op cit., tables 2.18 and 2.27.

One of the most important factors is a mother's employment status, even after taking into account all of the other characteristics in the model. The relative odds reported in table F indicate that children of mothers who are employed full-time are about four times more likely to be latchkey kids than are children of mothers who are employed part-time. Other job characteristics (self employment and shift work) in the model are not statistically significant in influencing the likelihood that a child is left unsupervised. This suggests that the number of hours a mother works is more important than the other characteristics of the job in determining if a younger child is left unsupervised.

Among the demographic characteristics listed in table F, a child's age is one of the most important factors. The relative odds indicate that among 5- to 11-year olds, the likelihood of being a latchkey kid increases substantially with each year a child ages.

Children living in the Northeast and the South are less likely than children in the Midwest to be latchkey kids, even when taking into account the other factors in the model. The greater population density in the Northeast translates into more cars, more streets, and more crime. For these reasons, parents in the Northeast may not feel as comfortable leaving their kids alone as do parents in the Midwest.

Suburban children are about twice as likely as children living in nonmetropolitan areas to be latchkey kids. One possible explanation for this finding is that parents may feel more comfortable leaving their children home alone in suburban areas where there are neighbors close by who can informally supervise them or be called in on emergencies. Next door neighbors in nonmetropolitan and rural areas may be too far dispersed to provide similar informal supervision compared to suburban communities.

Among the socioeconomic characteristics in the model, the family's economic status does not appear to make a difference in whether or not a child is left in self care. Norms governing the acceptability of leaving a child alone appear to be similar across socioeconomic classes, once other factors are taken into account.

### **Children 12 to 14 Years of Age**

The second column in table F shows the relative odds of being a latchkey kid for children aged 12 to 14. Children whose mothers are self-employed are only 28 percent as likely as children whose mothers are employees to be latchkey kids. One possible explanation for this finding is that self-employed mothers may have more flexibility than other mothers to arrange their schedules to allow for supervising their children. Previously, it was noted that self-employment status was not associated with self care among children aged 5 to 11. If parents feel obligated to care for younger children,

they will be more likely to arrange for care no matter what kind of jobs they have and regardless of how difficult it is. The finding might also reflect the acceptability on the part of parents in leaving older children unsupervised.

The number of hours worked is only important in conjunction with the mother's work shift: children whose mothers work full-time day shifts are about 3.6 times more likely to be left unattended than are kids whose mothers work part-time (regardless of the shift), or kids whose mothers work full-time non-day shifts. If mothers work a long time period during the day for which their children require supervision, the children are more likely to be latchkey kids.

Older children with moms who work day shifts are less likely to be latchkey kids than those whose moms work non-day shifts. Since schools serve as supervisors during the day, children whose moms work day shifts have built-in care, while children whose moms work non-day shifts do not have school as a supervised care option. Perhaps this association is not found for the younger children because it is more unacceptable to leave younger kids alone, regardless of the mother's job shift.

Most of the demographic characteristics that are important in identifying latchkey kids among 5- to 11-year olds are also important for 12- to 14-year olds. Among 12- to 14-year olds, children are more likely to be reported as latchkey kids with increasing age within this group. The relationships between the likelihood of being a latchkey kid and regional and metropolitan characteristics for children 12 to 14 are similar to those found for children aged 5 to 11 years of age. In addition, older kids living in the West are also less likely to be latchkey kids than are children living in the Midwest, and children living in cities are more than twice as likely to be latchkey kids than are children residing in nonmetropolitan areas.

Children 12 to 14 whose mothers are unmarried are twice as likely as children whose mothers are married (spouse present) to be latchkey kids; however, there was no significant association between marital status and self care for children 5 to 11 years of age, although the direction of the relationship was the same and significant at the 89 percent confidence level for these younger children. In married couple families, the father may be available to care for the children when the mother is working, hence, these kids are less likely to go unsupervised.

### **Alternative Estimates of Latchkey Kids**

Estimates of gradeschool-age latchkey kids derived from other sources range from 2 to 15 million children, with the higher estimates not generally supported by

national level statistical studies.<sup>11</sup> Large differences in estimates may result from the various techniques used to estimate the numbers of latchkey kids. In this study, for example, latchkey kid estimates derived from parental reports are admittedly conservative for various reasons previously mentioned. A different picture emerges when latchkey-kid estimates are indirectly derived using the mother's hours worked per week and the number of hours per week her children were in supervised child care arrangements.

Expecting that inaccuracies in reporting occur, using this alternative approach, only children for whom the average number of hours the mother works exceeds the number of reported hours of child care by 25 or more hours are estimated as latchkey kids. This estimate of latchkey kids also includes children reported to be in self care. The estimates derived in this manner indicate that 21.7 percent (4.6 million) of children aged 5 to 14 are "latchkey kids." The estimated number of latchkey kids aged 5 to 11 is about 3 million compared to the 554,000 children reported by their parents. For 12- to 14- year olds, the estimated number is about 1.6 million compared to a reported 1.1 million children.

Again, the time discrepancies of 25 hours or more used to estimate latchkey kids should not be literally interpreted to mean that a child is actually a latchkey kid for this many hours per week; rather, this measure gives us a very broad estimate of the number of kids who might possibly be unsupervised. In fact, this estimate using 25 hours as the cut-off level is very generous in itself as the average number of hours children 5 to 14 years of age were reported to be in self care by their mothers was 9.9 hours per week ( $\pm 1.1$  hours).

After school activities or travel between home, school and child care arrangements often occur in the presence of other children or adults, but not necessarily on a closely supervised or regular basis that would prompt a parent to interpret these periods as indicative of a child care arrangement. These time gaps may understandably be forgotten by some mothers during the interview or included by others as a part of the stated arrangement. Thus, we have shown that differences in the techniques used to estimate latchkey kids can and do result in very different estimates.

## ORGANIZED CHILD CARE FACILITIES

The term organized child care facilities used in this report refers to day/group care centers and nursery/preschools. A day/group care center must be an incorporated business and licensed to care for children and may be run by a government agency, a business enterprise, or a religious or a free-standing charitable organization. A day care center may also be located in a private home.

If a person not related to the child cares for children in his or her own home but does not claim to be a business enterprise or day care center, this arrangement is categorized as care provided by a "nonrelative in another home." Often, this provider is called a "family day care provider."

Nursery schools or preschools are used to describe formal organizations which provide an educational experience for children before they are old enough to enter kindergarten or grade school. These organizations include instruction as an important and integral phase of their program of child care. Head Start programs are included in this category. Some analysts suggest that the distinctions between day care centers and nursery schools are not very meaningful as day care centers often provide educational enrichment programs.<sup>12</sup> The reader, then, should understand that the distinctive labels used by respondents in this survey to describe child care arrangements may vary considerably depending on their subjective interpretation of the definition of child care. These labels may also differ because of regional differences in state licensing laws.

## Characteristics of Users of Organized Child Care Facilities

In the fall of 1991, 16 percent (1,553,000) of the children under 5 years of age of employed women were in day/group care centers while another 7 percent (716,000) were enrolled in nursery/preschool programs (table B). Three- and four-year-old children constituted the majority (61 percent) of preschoolers using organized child care facilities; 8 percent were under 1 year of age and 31 percent were either 1 or 2 years of age.

Table 2 shows that the use of organized child-care arrangements was higher among women employed full-time (28 percent) than among women employed part-time (15 percent). These differences can partly be accounted for by the greater usage of parents as the primary child care providers among mothers who work part-time. Almost one-half (44 percent) of children whose mothers were working part-time were taken care of by their fathers (29 percent) or mothers (15 percent). In contrast, only about one-fifth (20 percent) of children of full-time working mothers secured parental child care services. Obviously, the longer time periods of child care needed by the children of full-time working mothers may pose more work schedule obstacles for parents wishing to care for their children than those encountered by families where the mother works only a few hours each day.

The economic status of the family is also related to the use of organized child care facilities. Table 2 shows that children of employed mothers whose family income

<sup>11</sup>U.S. Department of Education, Office of Policy and Planning, National Study of Before- and After-School Programs. Final Report to the Office of Policy and Planning, Contract No. LC89051001, 1993.

<sup>12</sup>Jerry West, Elvie Hausken, and Mary Collins, Profile of Preschool Children's Child Care and Early Education Program Participation, NCES 93-133 (National Center for Health Statistics, February, 1993).

exceeded \$4,500 per month (over \$54,000 per year) were more likely to be using organized child care facilities (34 percent) than were children living in those families having lower monthly incomes (about 20 percent each for children in families in the three lower income groups).

Also shown in table 2 is the utilization of organized child care facilities by the poverty level of the children's families (the average monthly poverty threshold for a family of four in 1991 from the March 1992 Current Population Survey was \$1,160). Although the data indicate that children living in families below the poverty level apparently use organized child care facilities to a lesser extent than children living above the poverty level (18 and 24 percent, respectively), this difference is not significant. However, there are significant differences in other types of arrangements used by families below or above the poverty level. Children living in poverty in fall 1991 depended more on care in their own home provided by fathers (27 percent) and other relatives (7 percent) than did children who were not poor (19 percent and 3 percent, respectively). On the other hand, children living in families that were not poor relied more on care by family day care providers (19 percent) than did children living in poverty (11 percent).

Large differences in the use of organized child care facilities are also noted by the mother's educational attainment (table 2). Children whose mothers had completed 4 or more years of college used organized child care facilities twice as often (29 percent) as did children whose mothers failed to complete high school (15 percent). These variations in child care arrangements may at least partly reflect the financial abilities of families in different educational attainment categories to pay for this type of care.

Use of organized child care facilities varies across regions of the country. Children residing in the South were more likely to use organized child care facilities (29 percent) as their primary child care arrangement when compared to children residing in the Midwest or the Northeast, where about one-sixth of the children in these regions used organized child-care facilities. Note also that the use of nursery schools or preschools as a primary care arrangement was a relatively rare occurrence in the Midwest, accounting for only 3 percent of all arrangements.

## CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS BY PARENTS' WORK SCHEDULES

### Overview

The time period for which children are in need of care while their mothers are at work depends on the time of day the mother works and the number of hours she works. Of the 31 million children under 15 years of age of employed women, about 19 million (62 percent) had

mothers who worked a day shift at their principal job (table 7A). Almost two-thirds of these 31 million children (20 million) also had mothers who worked full-time.

In instances where the parent had two or more jobs, shift work status and the categorization of full- and part-time jobs shown in this section of the report pertain only to the principal job of the child's parent (9 percent of employed mothers and employed married fathers with children under 15 years of age held two or more jobs). Categories of shift work in this report were derived from questions in the survey concerning the time- of-day work usually began and ended, and the regularity of the stated time schedule for the 4-month period prior to the survey (appendix F, items 1e, 1f, and 1g). Day shift is defined in this report as a work schedule where at least one-half of the hours worked by the respondent fell between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. on a regular daytime basis. All other work schedules outside the 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. core period, including all evening/night, irregular, rotating, or split day/night shifts, were classified as non-day work shifts.

Using these definitions, 12.1 million mothers were classified as being regular daytime workers (table 8). In addition, table 8 also shows that there were another 1.9 million women who worked at least half of their hours in the 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. period, but described their schedule as not being a regular daytime shift. These women, and their children, were not included in the day-shift categories shown elsewhere in this report. An unknown proportion of these women may comprise women working flex-time schedules which primarily occur during the day but which have no regularly scheduled hours, which in itself, may affect their ability to secure regularly scheduled child care providers.<sup>13</sup>

Mothers' work schedules and work shifts varied by the age of their children. For children under age 5, about 57 percent had mothers who worked day shifts, while for children 5 to 14, about 65 percent had mothers who worked day shifts (percentages derived from table 7A). When examining the employment status of these children's mothers, 60 percent of preschoolers had mothers who worked full-time compared with 67 percent for 5- to 14-year olds. Large differences were noted in the work shifts of mothers by their full-time/part-time employment status. Seventy-six percent of children whose

<sup>13</sup>The estimate of the number of workers in day/non-day shifts derived from the SIPP shown in this report differ from estimates of other analysts based on data from the Current Population Survey (CPS) because of (1) seasonal differences between the two surveys, (2) the reference period that the shift is characterized for (4 months in SIPP v. last week in the CPS), (3) the wording of the questionnaire and editing procedures used to categorize the shift. Classifications based on SIPP data jointly utilize both the time of day and verbal descriptions of the shift to categorize regular day shift employees while data from the CPS are generally analyzed only using the verbal descriptions given by the respondents (Harriet B. Presser, "Can We Make Time for Children? The Economy, Work Schedules, and Child Care," *Demography*, Vol. 26, No. 4, pp. 523-543).

mothers were employed full-time worked a day shift at their principal job compared with only 37 percent of children whose mothers were employed part-time (table 7A).

### **Preschoolers' Arrangements by Mothers' Employment Status**

Major differences are noted in the child care arrangements used by parents according to the time of the day the mother worked and according to the number of hours she worked (table 7A). Among preschoolers whose mothers worked a day shift at their principal job, 34 percent were cared for in another home compared to 27 percent of children whose mothers worked a non-day shift (figure 3).

Use of organized child care facilities was also more prevalent for children of women working day shifts, accounting for 30 percent of all child care arrangements. Since organized child care facilities often may not be available during evenings or on weekends, children of women working non-day shifts used these facilities less frequently, amounting to 14 percent of all child care arrangements.

Working non-day rather than day shifts may offer more opportunities for women with preschoolers to secure care for their children at home, especially by the children's fathers. Overall, 47 percent of the preschool-age children of women working non-day shifts were cared for in their own home compared to 27 percent of the children of women working day shifts. In-home child care of preschoolers by fathers accounted for 31 percent of all arrangements used by women working non-day shifts compared to only 12 percent used by women working day shifts (table 7A). In addition, child care provided for children by their mothers while at work was also more frequently mentioned among women working non-day shifts than day shifts.

The hourly demands for child care services placed upon families with mothers employed full-time cannot normally be met by other household members or relatives who have full-time jobs. Figure 3 shows that preschool children of mothers employed full-time were less likely to be cared for in the child's home (30 percent) than were children of mothers employed part-time (44 percent). On the other hand, full-time working mothers relied more heavily on child care in either someone else's home or in organized child care facilities (64 percent) than did part-time working mothers (41 percent).

Preschool children of part-time working mothers were more likely to be cared for by their mothers while at work (15 percent), than were children of mothers who worked fulltime (4 percent). In addition, child care provided by the father was also more frequent when the mother worked part-time (27 percent) than full-time (15 percent). More preschoolers with mothers who worked part-time had mothers who worked non-day schedules

(66 percent) than did children with mothers who worked full-time (27 percent). This potentially enabled fathers who worked on a "9 to 5" schedule the opportunity to look after their children (table 7A).

### **Preschoolers' Arrangements by Fathers' Employment Status**

Within married-couple families, there is the potential for the father to take care of the children while the mother is at work. However, a father's work schedule and work shift determine his availability for child care duties. Preschoolers whose fathers worked day shifts or full-time were less likely to be taken care of in their own homes than preschoolers whose fathers worked non-day shifts or part-time; however, the former groups were more likely to be cared for in organized facilities (figure 4).

Table D indicates that preschoolers were more likely to be cared for by their fathers while their mothers were at work if their fathers worked part-time or a non-day shift (29.7 percent each) than if they worked full-time (20.3 percent) or a day shift (17.3 percent). Note also that fathers provided one-half of the care for the approximately 400,000 preschoolers living in families where the father was not employed.

### **Gradeschoolers' Arrangements by Mothers' Employment Status**

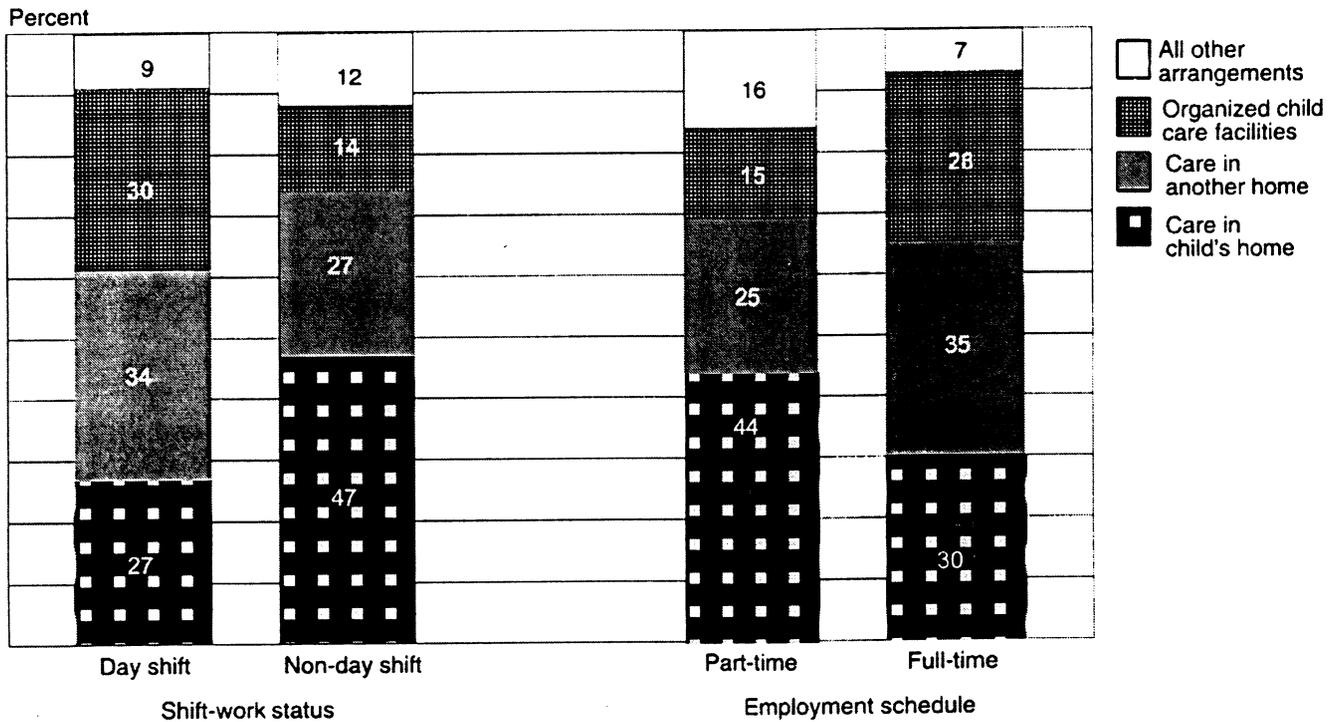
Among women with gradeschool-age children working traditional day shifts, 83 percent of the children were in school most of the time their mothers were working (table 7A). Even among women working non-day shifts, 65 percent of their children were reported to be in school most of the time their mothers were at work. The second most frequently used arrangement for gradeschool-age children of non-day shift workers was care provided in the child's home (20 percent). Two-thirds of the children cared for within the home were cared for by their fathers.

School was the primary source of child care for the majority of gradeschool-age children: 79 percent of children of mothers working full-time and 71 percent of children of mothers working part-time were in school the majority of time their mothers were working. More children of mothers who were employed part-time were cared for in their own homes (16 percent) than were children of mothers who were employed full-time (8 percent). Fathers provided one-half of the in-home care among children of full-time working mothers and about three-fourths of the in-home care among children of part-time working mothers.

### **Gradeschoolers' Arrangements by Fathers' Employment Status**

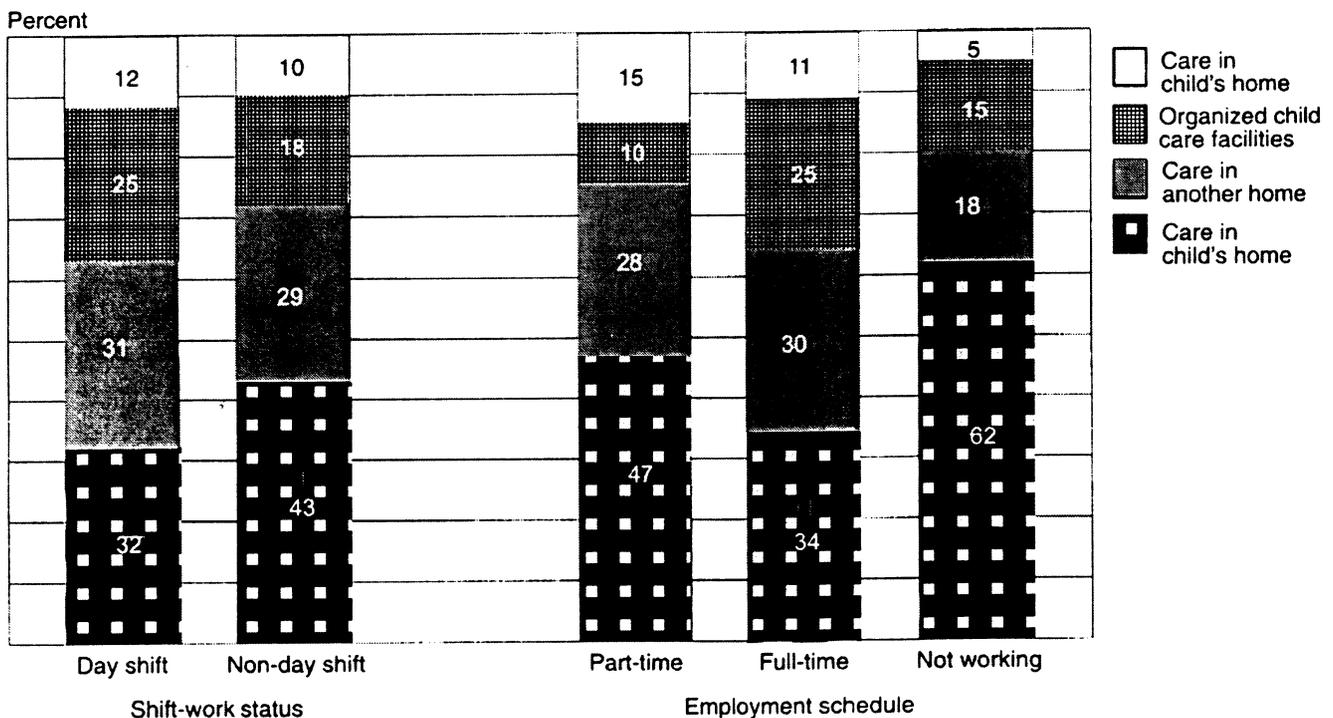
Regardless of their fathers' employment status, about three-fourths of gradeschool-age children were in school for the majority of the time their mothers were at work.

Figure 3.  
Care for Children Under 5 Years, by Employment Status of Mother: Fall 1991



Source: Percentages derived from table 7A.

Figure 4.  
Care for Children Under 5 Years, by Employment Status of Father: Fall 1991



Source: Percentages derived from table 7B.

Employed fathers were the primary source of care for approximately another 8 percent of gradeschool-age children, regardless of the father's work schedule or shift (table 7B). Of the approximately 900,000 gradeschool-age children living in married-couple families with unemployed fathers (data not shown in table 7B), 18 percent had their fathers as their principal care providers during their mothers' working hours compared with 8 percent for the 16 million gradeschoolers living with employed fathers.

### Child Care Arrangements Used by Dual-Employed Married Couples

Families often encounter difficulties in securing child care arrangements for their children if both parents are working the same hours during the day. In the fall of 1991, there were 13.9 million families with children under 15 years of age where both mother and father were employed (table G). Almost one-half (6.5 million) had both the husband and wife working day shifts with the majority of these couples (5 million) working full-time schedules during the day. Overall, 36 percent of all dual-employed married-couple families with children under 15 had both the husband and wife working full-time in day shifts.

How do families who work daytime versus nighttime schedules cope with the problems of securing child care arrangements when both parents are at work? In circumstances where both parents work during the day, only 21 percent of the 3.2 million preschoolers were cared for in their own home (table 9, column 2). In contrast, if both parents worked non-day shifts (column 5), 44 percent of these 1.2 million children were cared for in their own home. Note that parents who both work non-day shifts do not necessarily work the same hours. Among families where the parents work "split-shifts" (i.e., where one parent works a day shift and the other a non-day shift, columns 3 and 4), the proportion of children cared for in their own home (46 percent) is greater than when both parents work a day shift but not different from families where both parents work non-day shifts. It is likely that families working non-traditional hours take advantage of the potential of having one parent at home to provide care for their child while the other is working.

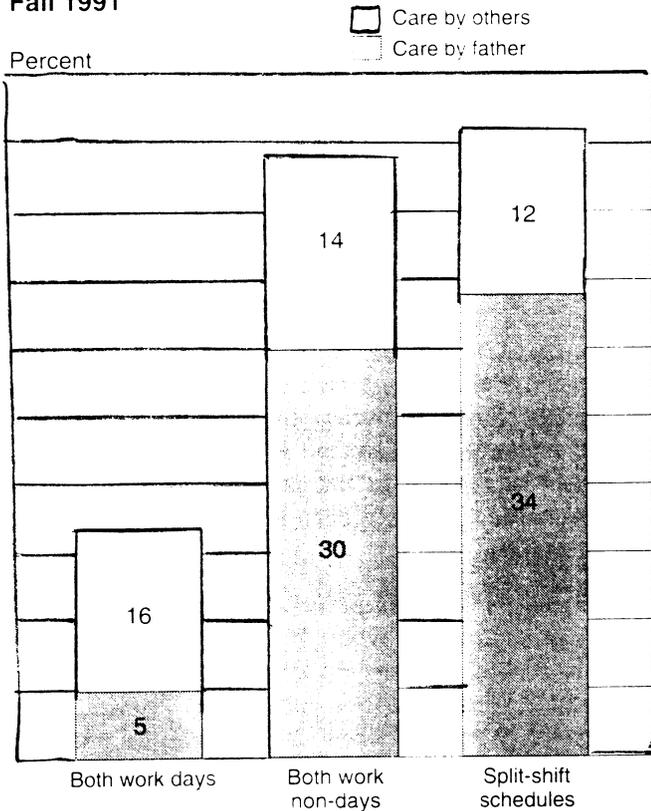
The father is the main provider of the in-home child care for preschoolers when the mother is at work, except when both parents work days (figure 5). A study by Harriet Presser also concluded that "Reliance on spouses for child care when dual-earner couples are

Table G. Number of Dual-Employed Married Couples with Children Under 15 Years, by Type of Work Shift of Principal Job: Fall 1991

[Numbers in thousands]

Type of work shift of mother	Total	Type of work shift of father			
		Employed full-time		Employed part-time	
		Day shift	Not a day shift	Day shift	Not a day shift
<b>All children</b>					
Total .....	13,880	9,709	2,931	212	1,028
Employed full-time .....	8,756	6,301	1,900	119	437
Day shift .....	6,820	5,014	1,400	90	317
Not a day shift .....	1,936	1,287	500	29	120
Employed part-time .....	5,124	3,408	1,031	94	592
Day shift .....	1,956	1,392	391	48	126
Not a day shift .....	3,168	2,016	640	46	466
<b>Youngest child under 5 years</b>					
Total .....	5,990	4,025	1,359	91	515
Employed full-time .....	3,646	2,520	845	64	218
Day shift .....	2,761	1,986	583	51	142
Not a day shift .....	885	534	262	13	76
Employed part-time .....	2,344	1,505	515	27	297
Day shift .....	862	577	218	12	55
Not a day shift .....	1,482	928	297	15	243
<b>Youngest child 5 to 14 years</b>					
Total .....	7,890	5,685	1,572	121	513
Employed full-time .....	5,111	3,782	1,056	55	219
Day shift .....	4,059	3,028	817	39	175
Not a day shift .....	1,052	753	238	16	44
Employed part-time .....	2,779	1,903	516	66	294
Day shift .....	1,094	815	172	36	71
Not a day shift .....	1,685	1,088	344	31	223

Figure 5.  
**Children Under 5 Cared for in Their Own Home, by Parents' Shift-Work Status: Fall 1991**



Source: Table 9.

employed is much higher when respondents work non-days rather than days."<sup>14</sup>

Irrespective of the shift work or employment status (full/part-time) of the children's parents, at least two-thirds of the gradeschool-age children were in school most of the time their mothers were working. In-home care for these older children, however, ranged from 5 to 6 percent when mother worked a day shift to 17 percent and over when the mother worked a non-day shift, regardless of the father's work schedule (table 9).

**Reasons for Choosing Work Shift**

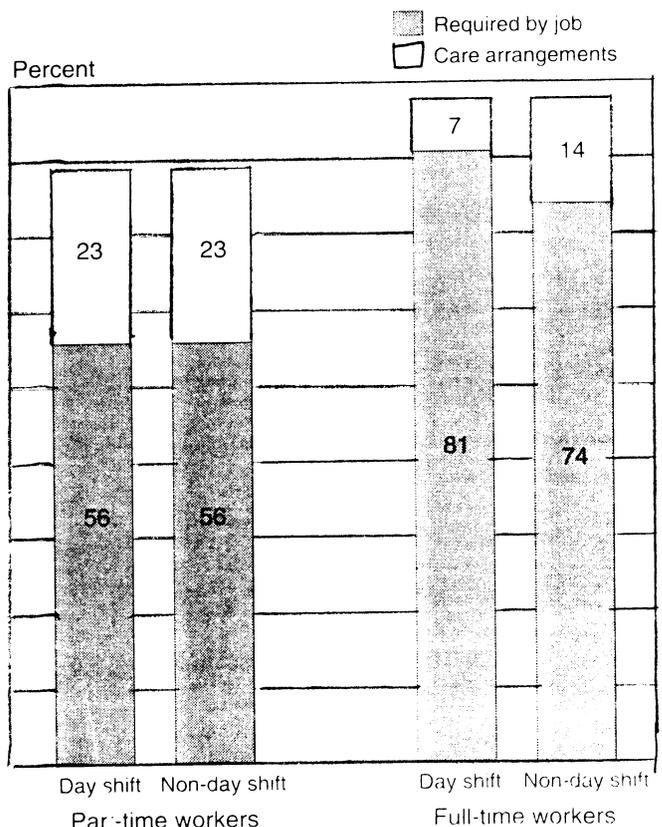
As shown, child care arrangements differ according to the work shifts and schedules of mothers and fathers. But do mothers choose their shifts and schedules in order to make better child care arrangements, or do job requirements more often determine work schedules? Overall, 71 percent of women answered that job requirements determined the type of shift they worked (table H). Another 14 percent mentioned that the main reason for choosing the shift they worked was to secure better

child care arrangements for their children, while 4 percent said that seeking better arrangements for the care of other members of their family was their most important reason for choosing that work shift.

Only 56 percent of women working part-time said that their job requirements determined their work shifts compared with 79 percent of women working full-time. However, child care issues played a more important role in choosing the type of work schedule among part-time workers. Twenty-three percent of women working part-time cited the need for better child care arrangements as the main reason for choosing their work shift compared to 9 percent of women working full-time.

Among part-time workers, reasons for choosing shift work did not differ depending on whether the mother worked a day shift or a non-day shift (figure 6). In contrast, given that a mother was employed full-time, differences were noted in the reasons cited for choosing a particular work shift. For example, among women who worked full-time, day shift workers were more likely to say that there was no flexibility in choosing their work hours (i.e., it was required by the job). On the other hand, non-day shift workers were more likely than day shift workers to cite child care arrangements as the principal reason they chose their particular shift.

Figure 6.  
**Reason Mother Chose Work Shift of Principal Job: Fall 1991**



Source: Table H.

<sup>14</sup>Harriet B. Presser, "Shift Work and Child Care Among Young Dual-Earner American Parents," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 50 (February, 1988) pp. 133-148.

**Table H. Main Reason Given by Employed Mothers with Children Under 15 Years of Age for Choosing Type of Work Shift of Principal Job: Fall 1991**

[Percent distribution. Numbers in thousands]

Employment status, type of shift, and age of youngest child	Number	Reasons for choosing work shift				
		Total	Required by job	Child care arrangements	Other family care arrangements	All other reasons
<b>All children</b>						
Total .....	19,260	100.0	71.3	13.5	4.4	10.9
Employed full-time.....	12,687	100.0	79.3	8.5	3.3	8.9
Day shift .....	9,657	100.0	81.0	6.7	3.3	9.0
Not a day shift .....	3,029	100.0	73.9	14.3	3.2	8.7
Employed part-time.....	6,573	100.0	55.8	23.0	6.4	14.8
Day shift .....	2,429	100.0	55.5	23.4	8.2	13.0
Not a day shift .....	4,144	100.0	55.9	22.9	5.4	15.8
<b>Youngest child under 5 years</b>						
Total .....	7,982	100.0	67.6	18.3	3.4	10.7
Employed full-time.....	4,974	100.0	79.5	10.5	2.5	7.5
Day shift .....	3,653	100.0	82.5	7.9	2.6	7.0
Not a day shift .....	1,321	100.0	71.3	17.6	2.3	8.8
Employed part-time.....	3,008	100.0	48.0	31.1	5.0	16.0
Day shift .....	1,052	100.0	51.2	29.1	5.3	14.4
Not a day shift .....	1,956	100.0	46.3	32.2	4.8	16.8
<b>Youngest child 5 to 14 years</b>						
Total .....	11,278	100.0	73.8	10.1	5.0	11.1
Employed full-time.....	7,713	100.0	79.2	7.2	3.8	9.9
Day shift .....	6,005	100.0	80.0	5.9	3.8	10.2
Not a day shift .....	1,709	100.0	75.7	11.7	3.9	8.6
Employed part-time.....	3,565	100.0	62.3	16.2	7.6	13.8
Day shift .....	1,377	100.0	58.8	19.0	10.3	11.9
Not a day shift .....	2,188	100.0	64.6	14.5	5.9	14.9

The need for better child care arrangements was more important in choosing the type of work shift among women with preschool-age children (18 percent) than among women with gradeschool-age children (10 percent). Women with preschoolers who worked part-time in a non-day shift were particularly concerned with the need for better child care arrangements, as 32 percent cited this as their main reason for choosing their particular type of work shift (table H).

The data indicate that child care arrangements during non-day hours were needed by approximately 7.2 million employed women with children under 15 years of age in the fall of 1991. About 1.4 million of them stated that the need for better child care arrangements was the primary reason for choosing this type of work shift. This analysis suggests that child care issues play a significant role in the choice of daily work schedules of women, particularly among women who work part-time.

## CHANGES IN CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS

This report so far has examined how families care for their children on a daily basis while the mother is at work and the extent to which child care arrangements are a

factor in determining a mother's work schedule. Now we will describe the stability of different child care arrangements and which arrangements change most often.

Two changes occurred between the 1988 and 1991 SIPP survey questions regarding changes in child care arrangements which make any comparisons between the two years problematic. In the 1988 survey, data were analyzed for women with only one child. In 1991, questions regarding changes in child care were asked individually for the three youngest children. In addition, the 1988 survey questions referred to changes in child care arrangements occurring 4 months prior to the survey date. In 1991, this question referred to a period of 12 months before the survey.

## Frequency of Change

Of the 31.1 million children under 15 years of age of employed mothers, 7.1 million, or about 23 percent, had changed their child care arrangements in the 12 months prior to their interview (table I). About one-fourth of the children aged 5 to 14 and 18 percent of the children under age 5 were reported as having changed arrangements at least once during the 12 months prior to their interview.

Table I. **Reasons for Changes in Child Care Arrangements: Fall 1991**

[Numbers in thousands. Data shown are limited to children who experienced a change in arrangement in the last 12 months. Percentages total to more than 100.0 because of multiple answers]

Reasons for changes in child arrangements	Total	Age of children		Mother employed		Type of shift	
		Less than 5 years	5 to 14 years	Full-time	Part-time	Day shift	Not a day shift
Number of children.....	31,074	9,854	21,220	20,088	10,986	19,346	11,729
Number making a change.....	7,062	1,728	5,334	4,939	2,123	4,723	2,339
Percent making a change.....	22.7	17.5	25.1	24.6	19.3	24.4	19.9
Reasons for change (percent) <sup>1</sup>							
Child's school schedule.....	51.4	11.5	64.4	53.6	46.4	55.5	43.3
Mother's work schedule.....	5.9	11.3	4.2	5.3	7.5	4.5	8.8
Mother's school schedule.....	3.5	2.5	3.8	3.6	3.3	3.9	2.6
Cost of care.....	4.5	8.4	3.2	4.3	5.0	4.6	4.2
Availability of provider.....	7.7	15.8	5.1	6.7	10.1	8.0	7.2
Reliability of provider.....	2.4	4.8	1.6	2.9	1.1	2.2	2.7
Quality of care.....	1.7	4.6	0.8	2.1	0.9	1.7	1.9
Location of provider.....	3.4	7.3	2.2	3.2	3.9	3.8	2.7
Better/less expensive/more convenient provider.....	4.7	8.6	3.5	4.3	5.7	4.5	5.2
Never had a regular provider.....	1.3	2.2	1.0	1.0	2.1	1.7	0.6
Child outgrew arrangement.....	2.0	1.1	2.3	2.4	1.2	1.9	2.2
Arrangement no longer available.....	6.4	16.7	3.0	7.0	4.8	4.8	9.5
All other reasons.....	25.0	34.7	21.8	24.8	25.3	23.1	28.7

<sup>1</sup> Percentages based on number reporting a change.

Children of mothers who were employed full-time were more likely to have changed child care arrangements in the 12 months prior to the survey (25 percent) than were children of mothers employed part-time (19 percent). One possible explanation for this finding has to do with the type of child care arrangements women use. Children whose mothers work part-time are more likely to be cared for by relatives in the child's home. Since this arrangement is likely to be more stable than care provided outside the child's home, fewer of these children change arrangements. The higher frequency of changes among children whose mothers work full-time also probably reflects the greater numbers of hours for which care is required.

It should be noted that the frequency of change reported in the survey may be different if the questions were asked only for the school year when disruptions in arrangements due to school closings in the summer would be absent. The retrospective 12-month period in this report which covers the frequency of change questions, however, includes a time span when schools were closed over the summer and then reopened in the fall.

## Reasons for Change

The two main reasons for changing child care arrangements among mothers of preschool children were the availability of the arrangement and the availability of the provider. Together, these two responses accounted for about one-third of the reasons children under five experienced a change in their child care arrangements.

The most frequent response given by mothers of gradeschool-age children who experienced a change was the child's school schedule (64 percent). Changes in either the mother's employment or school schedule accounted for 8 percent of changes in child care arrangements among children 5 to 14 years of age.

Surprisingly, concerns for child care costs were rather low on the list of reasons for changing child care arrangements. Among preschoolers, this reason accounted for about 8 percent of the changes, while for gradeschool-aged kids, it accounted for only 3 percent of the changes.

## FAMILY EXPENDITURES ON CHILD CARE

### Overview

Weekly expenses for child care arrangements shown in this section refer to the overall expenditures on child care that families make for all of their children under 15 years of age.<sup>15</sup> The questions on child-care expenses were asked of parents only if any of their three youngest children under age 15 were cared for by a grandparent, other relative or a nonrelative, or if any children were placed in day/group care centers, nursery/preschools or before/after school-based activities. Excluded were

<sup>15</sup>Child care costs were also asked of women enrolled in school, unemployed women, and male guardians of children. The child care expenditures for these groups were very small relative to the total expenses for child care for families where the mother was employed. Unless otherwise specified, child care costs shown in this report refer only to families where the mother was employed.

women who used only immediate family members (i.e., child's father or siblings) or only kindergartens/gradeschools, or if the child cared for himself or herself. Therefore, cash transfers to immediate family members or payments for usual schooling were not included in child care costs.

In SIPP surveys taken before 1988, only one question was asked to obtain information on the aggregate cost of child care for all children in the household. However, in the 1988 and 1991 surveys, specific questions on child care costs were asked individually for each child regarding both primary and secondary arrangements. Comparisons of 1991 child care costs with cost estimates taken from surveys prior to 1988 should be made with these differences in survey design in mind.

Of the 19.2 million employed women with children under 15 years of age in fall 1991, 35 percent (6.6 million) reported that they made cash (money) payments for child care services for at least one of their children (table J), down from 40 percent in 1988. Average child care costs of \$63 per week per family were paid by the families of employed women who reported such payments, amounting to an estimated annual expenditure of 21.8 billion dollars.<sup>16</sup> The average monthly family income of women who paid for child care services was \$3,838 of which \$1,708 ( $\pm$  \$60) of this amount was their own personal income. Child care

payments represented about 7.1 percent of their total family income, not different from the 1988 estimate of 6.8 percent.

Figure 7 shows weekly child care costs estimated from six SIPP surveys conducted between winter 1985 and fall 1991 in constant 1991 dollars (dollars adjusted for inflation). Child care costs measured in 1991 constant dollars increased from \$52 in the winter of 1985 to \$63 in the fall of 1991. Although family income data for the 1985 survey are not available, data for the 1986-91 period indicate that the proportion of one's family income spent on child care increased from 6.3 to 7.1 percent.

### Poverty and Income

In 1991, about 9 percent of employed women (1.6 million) with children under 15 years of age were living in poverty (table J). Twenty-four percent of women living in poverty reported paying for child care services compared to 36 percent of women living above the poverty level. Women in poverty paid an average of \$60 per week, not significantly different from women who were living in households above poverty level who paid an average of \$64 per week (figure 8). However, among women making child care payments, those in poverty spent a considerably higher proportion of their monthly family income on child care, 27 percent, compared to 7 percent among women living in families that were not in poverty (figure 9). The estimated average monthly family income of the women in the survey who were living in poverty and paying for child care was \$971 per month compared to \$4,021 per month for women living in families above the poverty line (table 10).

**Table J. Weekly Child Care Costs Paid by Families with Employed Mothers: Selected Periods, 1984 to 1991**

[Numbers in thousands. Excludes persons with no report of family income in last 4 months]

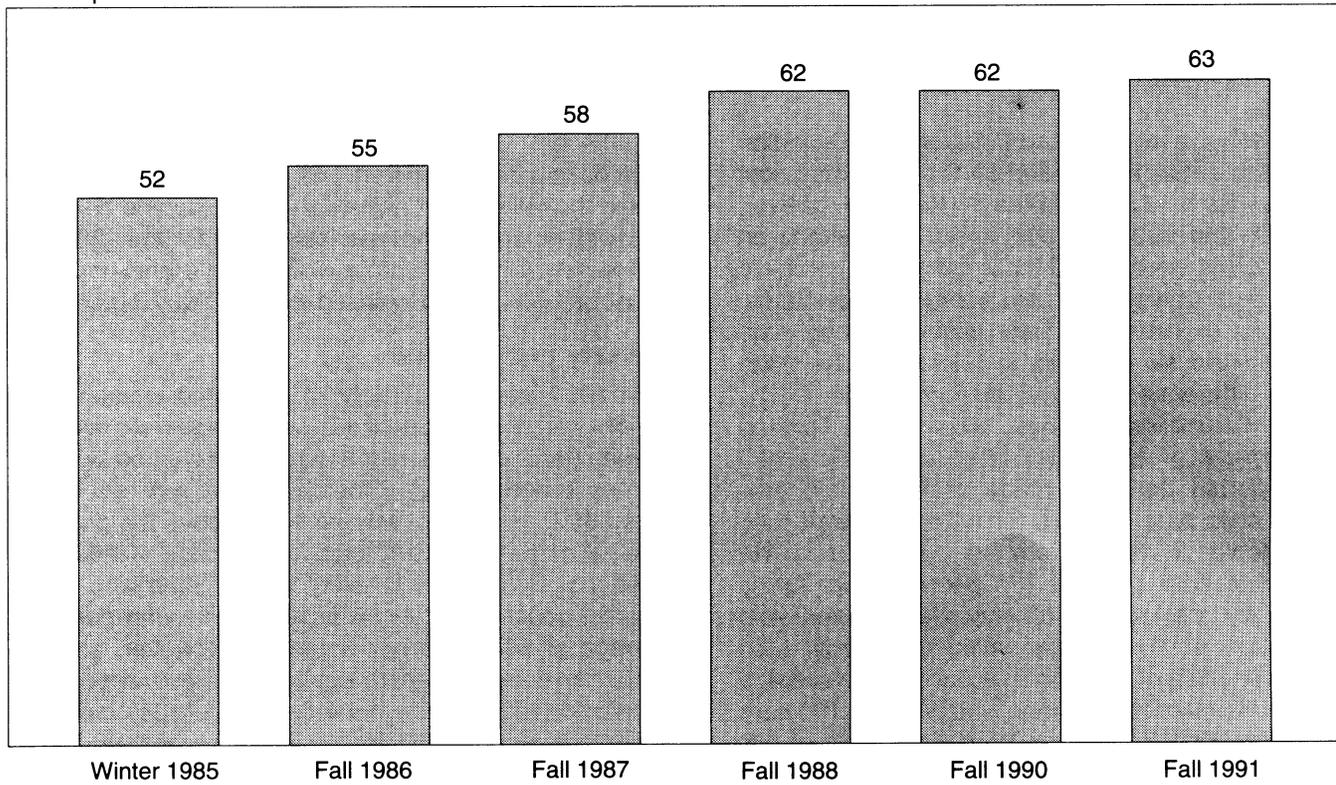
Period	Number of mothers	Making payments		Weekly child care expenses				Income spent on child care per month	
		Number	Percent	Current dollars		Constant dollars		Percent <sup>2</sup>	Standard error
				Mean <sup>1</sup>	Standard error	Mean <sup>1</sup>	Standard error		
Sept. to Dec. 1991 .....	19,180	6,616	34.5	63.3	2.4	63.3	2.4	7.1	0.3
Monthly family income:									
Less than \$1,500 .....	2,914	926	31.8	51.1	4.8	51.1	4.8	21.7	5.2
\$1,500 to \$2,999 .....	5,885	1,871	31.8	57.9	5.5	57.9	5.5	11.0	3.8
\$3,000 to \$4,499 .....	4,994	1,842	36.9	62.2	3.9	62.2	3.9	7.3	1.7
\$4,500 and over .....	5,387	1,977	36.7	75.1	4.5	75.1	4.5	4.8	0.2
Below poverty level .....	1,642	396	24.1	59.5	9.8	59.5	9.8	26.6	3.0
Above poverty level .....	17,537	6,220	35.5	63.5	2.5	63.5	2.5	6.9	0.3
Sept. to Dec. 1990 .....	18,938	7,202	38.0	59.7	1.3	61.5	1.3	6.9	0.2
Sept. to Dec. 1988 .....	18,843	7,520	39.9	54.0	1.2	61.8	1.4	6.8	0.2
Sept. to Nov. 1987 .....	18,501	6,168	33.3	48.5	1.8	57.9	2.1	6.6	0.3
Sept. to Nov. 1986 .....	18,305	5,742	31.4	44.3	1.4	55.2	1.7	6.3	0.3
Dec. 1984 to March 1985 .....	15,706	5,299	33.7	40.3	1.1	52.4	1.4	NA	NA

Note: Constant dollars are in 1991 dollars. NA Not available.

<sup>1</sup>Mean expenditures per week among persons making child care payments.

<sup>2</sup>Percent is ratio of average monthly child care payments (prorated from weekly averages) to the average monthly income. Note: Constant dollars are in 1991 dollars.

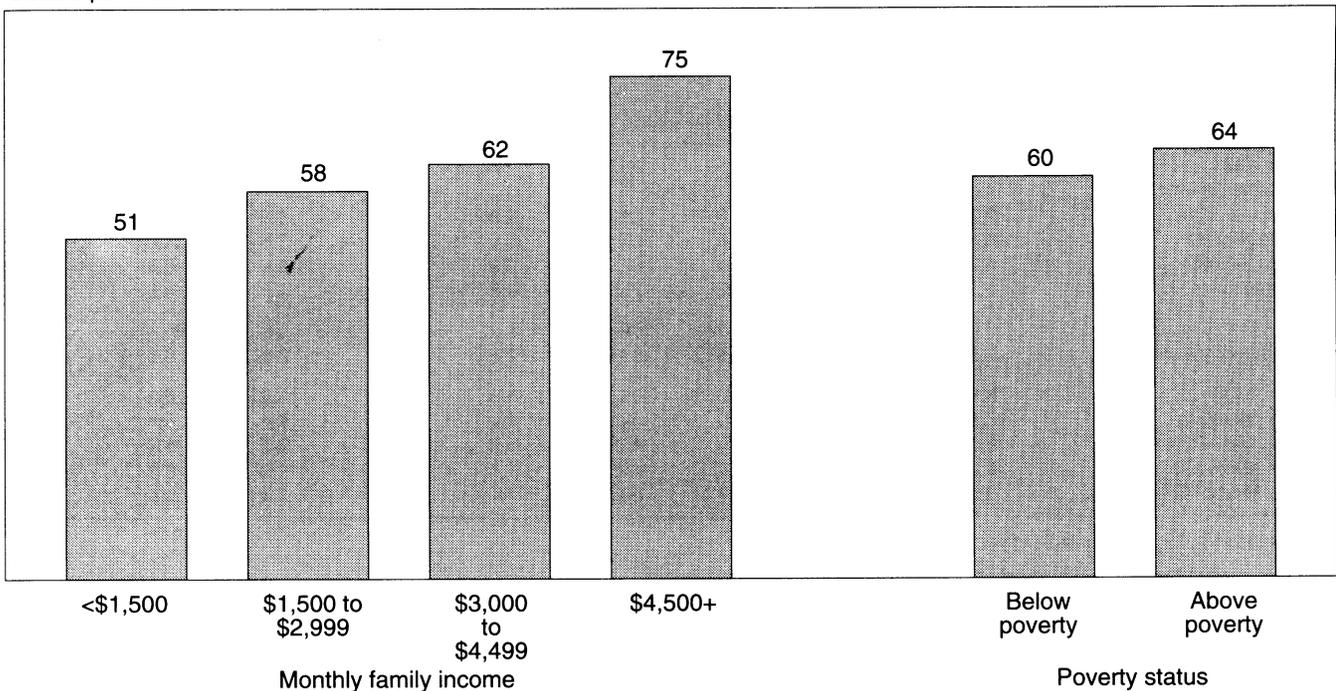
Figure 7.  
**Average Weekly Cost of Child Care for Selected Years: 1985 to 1991**  
 Dollars per week<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup>In constant 1991 dollars.

Source: Table J.

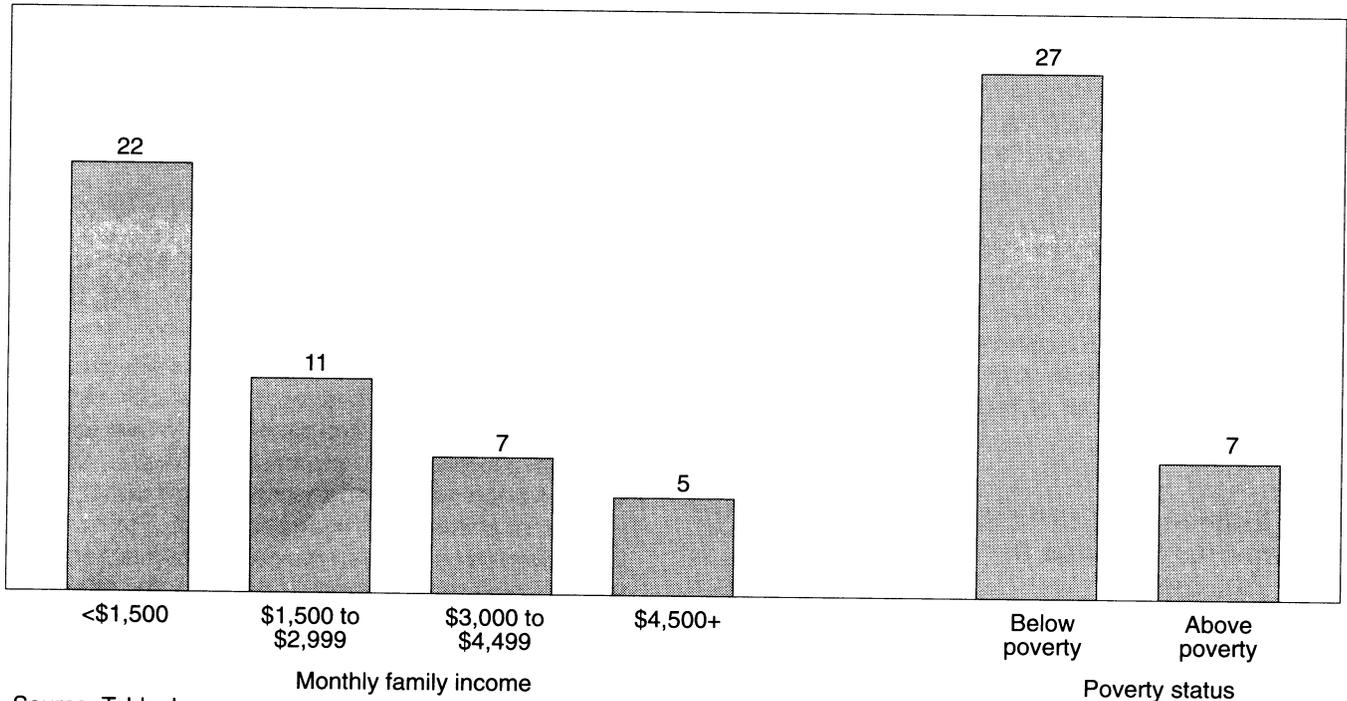
Figure 8.  
**Average Weekly Cost of Child Care: Fall 1991**  
 Dollars per week



Source: Table J.

Figure 9.  
**Percentage of Monthly Family Income Spent on Child Care: Fall 1991**

Percent



Source: Table J.

It is important to note that although no statistical differences were found in child care costs among families below and above the poverty level in 1991, the previous SIPP child care survey in 1988 indicated that child care expenses were about \$13 more per week among families above the poverty level. It would appear that while the majority of poor families must secure cost free child care to a greater extent than families above the poverty line (only 24 percent of poor families pay for care versus 36 percent of families above poverty, table J), those poor families that do pay for child care may compete against more financially able families for child care services, and hence pay competitive prices for these services.

Women living in families with low monthly incomes also spent a major portion of their income on child care. Among women making child care payments, those in families whose monthly income was less than \$1,500 per month spent 22 percent of their income on child care (table J). At the other end of the income scale, families whose income was \$4,500 and over per month spent only 5 percent of their family income on child care services. These disparities in child care expenditures as a percent of family income and poverty status were also noted in a report based on the 1990 National Child Care Survey.<sup>17</sup>

### Age of Children

For employed women in families with preschool-age children, 60 percent made cash payments for the care of their children in fall 1991, compared to only 17 percent for women whose youngest child was 5 years of age and over (table 10). Women with preschoolers also paid more per week (\$72) and spent a higher proportion of their monthly family income on child care (8 percent) than did women whose youngest child was 5 to 14 years old (\$40 per week for child care expenses and 4 percent of family income on child care).

Women who made child care payments and who had three or more children paid an average of \$24 more per week for child care than did women who had only one child. Families with three or more children spent 9 percent of their monthly family income on child care compared with 7 percent for families with only one child in the household. It is likely that larger families had more older children of school age for which child care costs are less; larger families, then, do not necessarily result in higher or even comparable average child care costs per child. Data in table 10 also show that while married women spent more per week on child care (\$66) than did unmarried women (\$55), a smaller proportion of their monthly family income was spent on child care services (7 percent) than that of unmarried women (11 percent) as they are likely to have more than one earner in the family.

<sup>17</sup>Hofferth, et al., op cit.

## Region and Metropolitan Residence

Table 10 shows that child care costs were about \$32 per week higher in the Northeast (\$86) than in the South (\$54). This pattern of regional difference was also found in the 1986, 1987 and 1988 SIPP surveys<sup>18</sup> and in part reflects regional variations in the cost of living. Families in the Northeast reported that their child care expenditures made up about 9 percent of their monthly family income compared with 7 percent for families in the South.

Families in metropolitan areas pay more per week for their child care (\$68) than families in non-metropolitan areas (\$50). However, there is no difference in the percent of family income paid out for child care services. Families in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas devote about 7 percent of their family income to child care.

## SIPP Estimates of Child Care Costs and Internal Revenue Service Child Care Tax Credits

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) in 1991 approved as tax credits child care costs for dependent children under 13 years of age of taxpayers while they were working or looking for work.<sup>19</sup> Qualified expenses include amounts paid for household services and care of the taxpayer's dependent child while he/she was at work or looking for work. Expenditures for child care related services outside of the child's home also qualified for the child care credit.

The maximum amount of these expenses to which the credit could be applied was the lesser of earned income or \$2,400 for one qualifying child and the lesser of earned income or \$4,800 for two or more children. The credit varied between 30 percent of these expenses for taxpayers with an adjusted gross income of \$10,000 or less and 20 percent for taxpayers with an adjusted gross income of \$28,000 or more. There are many more restrictions in claiming child care credits (e.g., exclusion of child care expenses while taxpayer is off from work because of illness or cost of sending child to an overnight camp) which may underestimate the total amount of money actually paid for child care.

The latest available information for tax year 1991 from the IRS indicates that \$2.5 billion of tax credits were filed on 5.9 million individual tax returns.<sup>20</sup> Data from the SIPP for fall 1991 show that 6.6 million

employed women had at least one child under 15 years old and paid an estimated \$21.8 billion for child care arrangements in 1991 (table 10). The point of this comparison is not to show any similarity in the numbers because they are essentially measuring two different things: expenditures versus allowable deductions. Rather, the SIPP data indicate that the current financial burden of child care on American families greatly exceeds the amount of child care tax credits allowable on income tax returns.

## COSTS OF INDIVIDUAL CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS

The data on child care expenditures shown so far in this report have focused on the number of families paying for child care arrangements. When estimating the cost of individual arrangements, however, the unit of analysis becomes the arrangement itself rather than the number of children in the arrangement. For example, a family with three children may use a nursery school for the youngest child and pay a neighbor for after school care for the two older children. In this case there are only two types of paid arrangements (day care center and a neighbor) even though there are three children using the arrangements. In this example, the arrangement used only for the youngest child will be described as a "separate arrangement" while the arrangement used for the two older children by the neighbor will be described as a "shared arrangement."

## Separate and Shared Arrangements

In fall 1991, 31.1 million children under 15 years of age of employed women used 42 million child care arrangements or 1.4 arrangements for each child. Of these 42 million arrangements, 33 million required no cash payments as over one-half of these were composed of kindergarten/grade school arrangements (table 11). Cash payments were required 90 percent of the time when family day care providers or organized child care arrangements were used. Cash payments for arrangements were less frequently made when either grandparents (19 percent) or other relatives (39 percent) were used.

Of the 9.4 million arrangements for which cash payments were made, 6.2 million children were in separate arrangements and another 3.2 million children were in shared arrangements for two or more siblings (table 11). Shared arrangements were more frequently used when care was provided for children in their own home (59 percent) than in another home (33 percent) or in organized child care facilities (26 percent). Shared arrangements were more frequently used when the youngest sibling was of gradeschool age (43 percent) than preschool age (29 percent).

<sup>18</sup>O'Connell and Bachu, Current Population Reports, P70-30, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>19</sup>More stringent provisions in the tax forms were put in force in 1989 which require the claimant to list the child care provider's name, address, and social security or taxpayer identification number.

<sup>20</sup>Internal Revenue Service, "Individual Income Tax Returns, 1991," Statistics of the Income Division of the Internal Revenue Service, Publication No. 1304 (September 1993).

**Table K. Hourly Child Care Costs for Children of Employed Mothers by Hours of Child Care Used Per Week: Fall 1991**

[Numbers of arrangements in thousands]

Age of child and hours used per week	Payments made separately			Payments shared with others		
	Number of arrangements	Cost per hour		Number of arrangements	Cost per hour	
		Mean <sup>1</sup>	Standard error		Mean <sup>1</sup>	Standard error
<b>All children</b>						
Total.....	6,188	\$ 4.17	\$ 0.34	1,443	\$ 2.48	\$ 0.34
Less than 10 hours.....	1,602	10.16	1.15	117	(B)	(B)
10 or more hours.....	4,586	2.07	0.08	1,326	1.97	0.24
<b>Children under 5 years<sup>2</sup></b>						
Total.....	4,153	\$ 4.09	\$ 0.43	989	\$ 2.03	\$ 0.27
Less than 10 hours.....	891	11.53	1.69	50	(B)	(B)
10 or more hours.....	3,262	2.06	0.09	939	1.88	0.22
<b>Children 5 to 14 years<sup>2</sup></b>						
Total.....	2,034	\$ 4.32	\$ 0.54	454	\$ 3.47	\$ 0.89
Less than 10 hours.....	711	8.44	1.44	67	(B)	(B)
10 or more hours.....	1,324	2.11	0.10	387	2.17	0.66

B Base less than 200,000.

<sup>1</sup> Average individual costs per hour per child for each arrangement.<sup>2</sup> For shared arrangements, age refers to age of youngest child in arrangement.

For purposes of computing child care costs, the 3.2 million children in shared arrangements shown in table 11 were further grouped to reflect the 1.4 million actual payments made for these arrangements (table K). On average, 2.2 children shared each paid arrangement. Child care costs per child for the 6.2 million separately paid arrangements were \$4.17 per hour compared with \$2.48 for the 1.4 million arrangement groups where child care services were shared.

### Child Care Costs for Separate Arrangements

Among families making separate payments for child care arrangements (table K), those using 10 or more hours of child care per week made much lower hourly payments (\$2.07) than those using less than 10 hours of child care (\$10.16). On average, families using child care for less than 10 hours a week used these arrangements for little more than one hour per weekday (5.5 hours per week).<sup>21</sup>

Several explanations can account for the unusually high hourly estimate of child care expenses for women who use arrangements for less than 10 hours per week. Women who have a failure in their child care arrangement may need to pay a higher premium for short term

emergency back-up care. In addition, nonrelative child care providers who may be willing to work for only a few hours per week may demand higher pay per hour to meet some minimum expenses or wage requirements on their part. Child care centers may also structure their pricing differently for intermittent users of their facilities as compared to families who contract for long term enrollment of their child. In addition, after school activities and music or dance classes which occur for just a few hours per week and are oftentimes priced as luxury services, are also considered to be a type of child care arrangement. These examples indicate why families who use child care services for less than 10 hours a week pay unusually high hourly child care costs, which are atypical of persons using regular arrangements most of the day throughout the week.

### Child Care Costs for Shared Arrangements

In an attempt to estimate typical child care costs of families who use separate and shared arrangements for more than a couple of hours a day, tables 12 and 13 in this report show the hourly costs of child care for families who used arrangements for at least 10 hours per week. In 1991, these criteria were met by about 4.6 million arrangements for which payments were made separately and for 1.3 million arrangement groups for which payments were shared, down substantially from 5

<sup>21</sup>Data discussed in this section for detailed child care arrangements used less than 10 hours per week are from unpublished tables not shown in this report.

million separate arrangements and 1.9 million shared arrangements reported in 1988 (table K).<sup>22</sup>

Child care costs for all children under 15 using separately paid arrangements were estimated at \$2.07 per hour, not significantly different from hourly costs (\$1.97) when two or more children shared the same provider (table K).<sup>23</sup> For children under 5 years of age, child care costs were \$2.06 an hour when payments were made separately, not significantly different from an estimated payment of \$1.88 an hour when arrangements were shared. A reduction in hourly costs also did not occur among older children when arrangements were shared. Parents of older children who shared the same provider paid \$2.17 per child per hour compared with \$2.11 per hour paid by parents of children not sharing arrangements.

Data in tables 12 and 13 show that reductions in hourly child care costs occurred when the child's relatives provided the care. When payments were made separately, care by relatives cost \$1.88 an hour for each child, compared to \$1.09 per hour when shared payments were made. No reductions in hourly costs were noted when payments were shared for care in organized child care facilities or when nonrelatives were the child care providers.

The hourly costs of child care by a nonrelative, when payments were made separately, were about 80 cents more when the care provider came to the child's home than when the child was brought to the provider's home. This difference may result from the extra transportation

<sup>22</sup>Data for 1988 on separate and shared arrangements are from O'Connell and Bachu, *Current Population Reports*, P70-30, op. cit., table K.

<sup>23</sup>When arrangements were shared, the total amount of time spent by all children was used as the denominator in computing the hourly costs of child care for shared arrangements.

costs and the general inconvenience experienced by the provider. However, this larger payment may also reflect the fact that the provider in the child's home may be asked to do other household chores in addition to baby sitting.

## NOTE ON ESTIMATES

Estimates of primary and secondary child care arrangements used by employed mothers 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 may be interpreted as an 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.

## USER COMMENTS

We are interested in your reaction to the usefulness of the information presented in this report and the content of the subject area covered in the questionnaire (see appendix E for a facsimile of the questionnaire). We welcome your recommendations for improving our survey work and reports. If you have suggestions or comments, please fill out the enclosed Comments Questionnaire at the front of this report and mail it in as indicated. If you prefer, contact the authors of this report at 301-763-5303.