

NEW FEDERALISM

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Policy Research and Resources

Letter from the Director

As welfare caseloads continue to fall, studying welfare becomes more complex. Earlier research from the Assessing the New Federalism project showed that families leaving welfare are working and earning at rates comparable to other low-income families. The challenges these families face are similar whether or not there was a time in their past when they received cash assistance.

In this issue, we summarize recent research on two issues of importance to all working families — child care and health care. We report new data on the types of child care arrangements families use, the number of different child care arrangements they rely upon, and how many hours children spend in care. Based on the National Survey of America's Families, this research provides the first state Snapshots of child care.

Two stories deal with different aspects of providing health insurance to working families. One article shows that many welfare leavers lost the health insurance that was guaranteed to them while they were on welfare. A second story reveals that most uninsured children are in families that participate in other government programs.

The issues of securing child care and health insurance are important for all families, not just those on welfare or those who have recently left. For that reason, the ANF project will continue to analyze these complex issues — documenting the role they play in the lives of working families and studying the public policies designed to assist families in meeting these basic needs.

Sincerely,
Alan Weil

Snapshots of Child Care for Working Moms

According to three new policy briefs based on the 1997 National Survey of America's Families, three-quarters of all preschool children of employed mothers are in nonparental child care arrangements while their mothers work. Two out of five are in child care full-time (more than 35 hours a week), and nearly as many rely weekly on more than one nonparental caregiver.

But the type of care, hours in care, and number of different arrangements each week vary greatly among states, according to Urban Institute researchers Gina Adams, Jeffrey Capizzano, and Freya Sonenstein. In virtually every case at least one state differs from the national pattern.

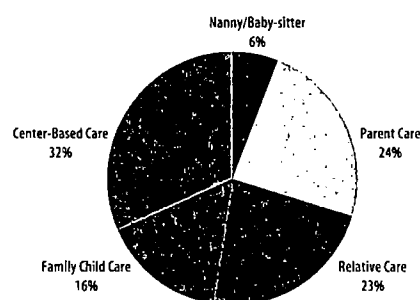
CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS

Child Care Arrangements for Children under Five: Variation across States analyzes five child care arrangements — center-based child care, family child care (care by a nonrelated person in his or her home), baby-sitter or nanny, relative care, and parent care.

Over 75 percent (figure 1) of preschool children with employed mothers are regularly cared for by someone other than their parents. Thirty-two percent of children are in center-based child care arrangements, while 16 percent are in family child care. Only 6 percent are cared for by a baby-sitter or nanny in the child's home. By contrast, 23 percent of preschool children have a relative as the primary child care provider.

This national pattern masks significant state variations. For example, almost 40 percent of preschool children are in center-based care in Alabama,

The Primary Child Care Arrangements of Children under Five with Employed Mothers (1997)



Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

Figure 1

Minnesota, and Mississippi (39, 38, and 38 percent, respectively). These percentages are twice as large as the percentage of California children in center-based care (19 percent).

HOURS IN CARE

The Hours That Children under Five Spend in Child Care: Variation across States reveals that 41 percent of children with working moms are in care full-time or 35 or more hours per week (figure 2); another 25 percent are in nonparental child care arrangements 15 to 34 hours per week; while 16 percent are in care for 1 to 14 hours weekly.

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States vary greatly. For instance, Mississippi and Alabama have the highest percentages of children in full-time care, with over half of preschool children with employed mothers in care 35 or more hours (59 and 56 percent, respectively). In contrast, California, Massachusetts, and Washington have the lowest percentages of children in full-time care (29, 29, and 33 percent, respectively).

NUMBER OF DIFFERENT ARRANGEMENTS

The Number of Child Care Arrangements Used by Children under Five: Variation across States finds that nearly 40 percent of children under age five are in two or more nonparental child care arrangements each week (figure 3).

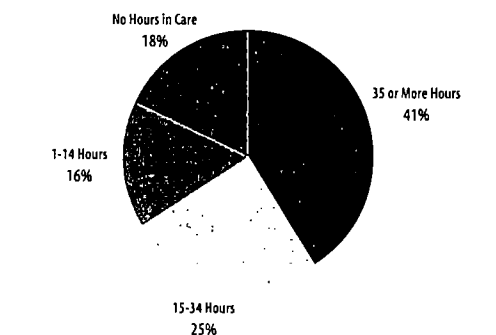
Across the states, there is little variation. Minnesota, Michigan, and Wisconsin have the largest percentage of children regularly in multiple arrangements (46, 45, and 45 percent, respectively), while California has the smallest percentage of children (35 percent).

Two-thirds of children under age five who are in multiple arrangements are placed in some combination of "formal" (center-based or family child care) and "informal" (relative care or baby-sitter) care.

Each of the policy briefs also looks at how child care arrangements, the number of hours spent in child care, and the number of these children in more than one child care arrangement each week differ for preschool children of different ages and for preschool children from low- and higher-income families.

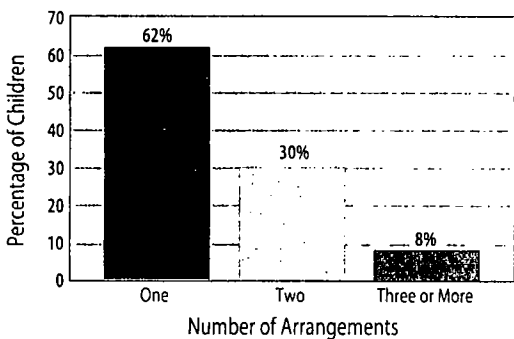
Access the three policy briefs on our Web site at http://newfederalism.urban.org/html/series_b/html.

National Estimates of the Hours Spent in Nonparental Care by Children under Five with Employed Mothers (1997)



Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.
Figure 2

National Estimates of the Number of Nonparental Child Care Arrangements among Children under Five with Employed Mothers (1997)



Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families. Percentages are for children in nonparental child care only. A sizable percentage of children with employed parents are not placed in nonparental child care.
Figure 3

New Report on Racial Inequality

A new policy brief, "Racial and Ethnic Disparities: Key Findings from the National Survey of America's Families," by Sarah Staveteig and Alyssa Wigton, suggests that differences in income do not fully explain the inequities in well-being across racial and ethnic groups in the United States.

According to the report, over 25 percent of low-income blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans experience housing hardship and over 50 percent experience food hardship. Even at higher incomes, blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans are nearly twice as likely to experience food hardship as whites.

White and Asian children are more likely to have health insurance than black, Native American, and Hispanic children. More than one in three Hispanic and Native American adults is uninsured, a rate twice as high as that for whites and Asians.

The brief also found differences in family structure among racial and ethnic groups. Blacks and Native Americans have the highest proportion of children living without either parent — three and four times as high, respectively, as whites, Asians and Hispanics.

Access the entire study on our Web site at http://newfederalism.urban.org/html/series_b/b5.html.

ANF Announces New Web Site Program

There's something new on the Assessing the New Federalism Web site!

The NSAF Tabulator provides easy access to data collected in the 1997 National Survey of America's Families (NSAF). With the NSAF Tabulator, you can design and generate your own custom queries. You do not need to have knowledge of a statistical software package to use the Tabulator — the Tabulator allows you to just point-and-click.

WHAT IS THE NSAF TABULATOR?

The NSAF Tabulator contains data on over 33,000 children and their families and includes information on demographics, living arrangements, income, health, education, activities, child behavior, parenting, and attitudes of primary caregivers. The Tabulator generates state-specific data for Alabama, California, Colorado, Florida, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin, as well as national numbers.

WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH THE TABULATOR?

The Tabulator allows Windows-based users to create cross-tabulations of any two variables included in the NSAF child data set. You can also choose to filter the data by a third variable. For example, you can create a table depicting family income of children by age, and then add a filter to look only at children of a specific race/ethnicity or from a specific state.

HOW CAN YOU ACCESS THE TABULATOR?

After filling out a short registration form, you can access the Tabulator — free of charge — on the Assessing the New Federalism Web site at <http://newfederalism.urban.org/nsaf/cpuf/index.htm>. You can then download the program to a Windows 95/98 or NT operating system.

Locating Uninsured Children

Three-quarters of low-income children and 60 percent of all children without health insurance live in families that participate in government programs serving low-income families, reports *Most Uninsured Children Are in Families Served by Government Programs*.

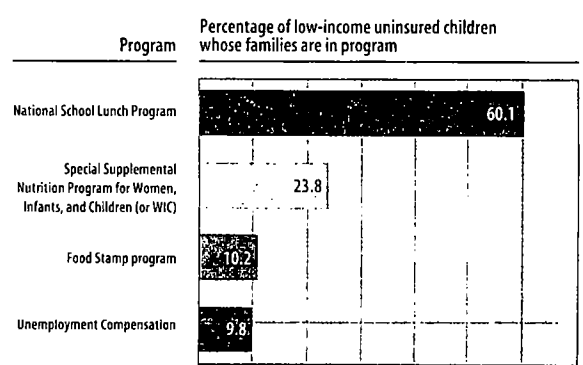
The authors, Genevieve Kenney, Jennifer Haley, and Frank Ullman, used data from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families to show that 4.7 million more uninsured children could be enrolled in Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) by coordinating coverage with four other federal programs—the National School Lunch Program; the Food Stamp program; the Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); and the Unemployment Compensation program. But the authors also note that formidable confidentiality and other barriers must be overcome to use these programs to reach uninsured children.

The National School Lunch Program has the potential to reach 3.9 million low-income uninsured children — 60 percent of all low-income uninsured children and almost half of all uninsured children — many of whom are eligible for Medicaid or CHIP.

The WIC program has the potential to reach 1.5 million low-income uninsured children, while both the Food Stamp program and the Unemployment Compensation program each have the potential to reach over 600,000 low-income uninsured children.

According to the report, the National School Lunch Program has the potential to reach the largest number of uninsured school-age children. Three-quarters of low-income uninsured children ages 6 to 11 and 65 percent of low-income uninsured children ages 12 to 17 live in families participating in the National School Lunch Program.

Medicaid and CHIP Could Enroll 4.7 Million Currently Uninsured Children by Coordinating with Other Programs



Source: Urban Institute, 1999.

The WIC program offers greater potential for reaching low-income, uninsured preschool children (children under age 6). Nearly 50 percent of these children are in families enrolled in WIC.

The authors identify obstacles to using these programs to reach uninsured children. Among the most challenging are existing legal provisions that protect the privacy of lunch program applicant families and the fact that Medicaid and CHIP program applications require different information than these other federal programs collect. Other barriers to enrolling uninsured eligible children include confusion about eligibility rules; the complexity of Medicaid and CHIP enrollment processes; the perceived stigma of receiving a benefit that has been historically tied to the welfare program; and concerns that participation in Medicaid could jeopardize the immigration status of noncitizens.

Access the entire study on our Web site at http://newfederalism.urban.org/html/series_b/b4/anf_b4.html.



New Research

OCCASIONAL PAPERS

Supporting the Rural Health Care Safety Net; Occasional Paper Number 36; March 2000; Barbara A. Ormond, Susan Wallin, and Susan M. Goldenson.

This paper analyzes the ability of rural communities to maintain health care services in a more competitive market. Several factors influence the well-being of the rural health care safety net — rural communities are older and poorer than urban areas, and rural residents are less likely to have health insurance coverage. The safety net in rural areas generally includes almost all providers. As a result, maintaining the safety net in rural communities strengthens the entire health care infrastructure. The study also describes the health care safety net in 11 counties in five states (AL, MN, MS, TX, and WA). Access paper at <http://newfederalism.urban.org/html/op36/occa36.html>.

The Social Safety Net at the Beginning of Federal Welfare Reform: Organization of and Access to Social Services for Low-Income Families; Occasional Paper 34; January 2000; Martha R. Burt, Nancy Pindus, and Jeffrey Capizzano.

This paper reviews data from 13 states to assess the ability of welfare and working low-income families to access AFDC, general assistance, food stamps, the child support system, Medicaid, JOBS, and other employment and training programs on the eve of welfare reform. The authors find much diversity in the organization and delivery of social programs in the 13 states. Cash assistance is the entry point with the most well-defined links to other services and programs. To improve the system, the authors recommend more investment in building local capacity to deliver services and making it easier for working poor families to obtain services. Access paper at <http://newfederalism.urban.org/html/occa34.html>.

DISCUSSION PAPERS

To What Extent Do Children Benefit from Child Support? Discussion Paper 99-19, Elaine Sorensen and Chava Zibman.

Child support provides a significant source of income for poor families. Child support also reduces the number of poor children by a half million and lessens income inequality among children eligible for it. Unfortunately, about 70 percent of poor children eligible for child support were not getting it in 1996. In addition, it will probably be more difficult to obtain child support for these children because their parents are, on average, more disadvantaged than parents of poor children who already receive child support. The report is based on the 1997 National Survey of America's Families. Access paper at <http://newfederalism.urban.org/html/discussion99-19.html>.

Poverty among Children Born outside of Marriage: Preliminary Findings from the National Survey of America's Families, Discussion Paper 99-16, Ariel Halpern.

Among children living with single mothers, those born outside of marriage are 1.7 times more likely to be poor than are those born to married parents, even after controlling for differences in such factors as mother's education and work status. As such, a continued policy focus on children born to unmarried mothers is warranted. Access paper at <http://newfederalism.urban.org/html/discussion99-16.html>.

From Welfare to Work: Women Lose Insurance Coverage

Women who leave welfare are more likely to be without health insurance the longer it has been since they received cash welfare payments — increasing from 34 percent uninsured in the first six months after leaving welfare to 49 percent uninsured for those who left welfare between one and two years ago, according to “Health Insurance Coverage after Welfare,” by Urban Institute researchers Bowen Garrett and John Holahan.

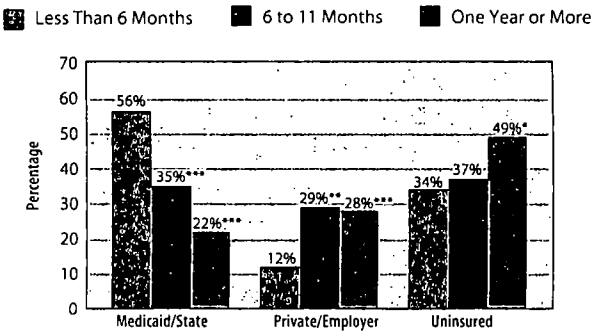
The study also reveals that the number of women receiving Medicaid coverage drops steadily with time off welfare — from 56 percent for those who have been off welfare less than six months to 22 percent of those who have been off more than a year.

The number of women obtaining private health coverage does rise from 12 percent for those who left the welfare system in the last six months to 28 percent for those off more than one year. But the increase in employer-based coverage does not fully offset the declining rate of Medicaid participation.

“Finding work does not guarantee that a former welfare recipient will also obtain health care coverage,” said Bowen Garrett, a research associate in the Urban Institute’s Health Policy Center. “Although the majority of women who left welfare found employment, only a third of these women were able to obtain health coverage through their jobs.” He added that “they were just as likely to be uninsured.”

The authors note that women with higher incomes were more likely to have private health insurance. When incomes exceed 200 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL), private coverage begins to offset declines in Medicaid

Health Insurance of Former Welfare Recipients, by Number of Months since Leaving Welfare (Women) (1997)



*p < .10 **p < .05 ***p < .01
Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America’s Families.

coverage, according to the study. Still, 20 percent of women with incomes over 200 percent of the FPL remain uninsured.

The researchers offer several reasons why former welfare recipients may not retain Medicaid coverage — welfare reform made Medicaid eligibility rules harder to understand for caseworkers and former welfare recipients; state administrative requirements require former welfare recipients to complete new, more complex application forms; and stigma may prevent some from applying for Medicaid coverage.

Access the entire study on our Web site at http://newfederalism.urban.org/html/series_b/b13.html.

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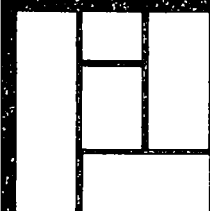
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For more information about the Assessing the New Federalism project, contact the communications staff at anfp@urban.org, or visit the Urban Institute's Web site at <http://www.urban.org>.

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THE HOURS THAT CHILDREN UNDER FIVE SPEND IN CHILD CARE: VARIATION ACROSS STATES

Jeffrey Capizzano and Gina Adams

A large majority of preschool children with employed mothers currently spend at least some time each week in the care of individuals who are not their parents. Fueled by increases in workforce participation among women, work requirements for single mothers receiving public assistance, and parental concerns over the "school-readiness" of preschoolers, the number of children under five in child care has increased significantly over the past three decades. In fact, in 1997, 77 percent of preschool children with employed mothers were cared for in child care centers, in family child care homes, by relatives, or by nannies for at least some time each week (Capizzano, Adams, and Sonenstein 2000). Largely because of this growing reliance on nonparental care, the topic of early childhood care and education has emerged both as an issue of public concern and a major component of U.S. social policy.

Examining Child Care at the State Level

While federal child care policy has received national attention in recent years, states and localities have historically been at the center of child care policymaking. States, for example, establish many of the child care subsidy policies—such as reimbursement rates for child care providers and copayment rates for recipients of child care assistance—and also regulate child care quality. In 1996, changes to federal child care policy outlined in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) brought increased attention to the role of states in

child care policymaking. For example, PRWORA enhanced the role of state policymakers by ending the child care entitlement for welfare recipients, combining a number of diverse child care funding streams into a single block grant, and increasing child care funding to states.

In light of these changes to federal policy, understanding state-level patterns of child care use has taken on added significance. Yet relatively little is known about child care patterns in individual states or how they vary across states because most of what we know about the use of child care is gathered from nationally representative surveys that are not designed to capture state-level child care patterns. The significant variation that exists in child care usage across states is most likely due to such differences

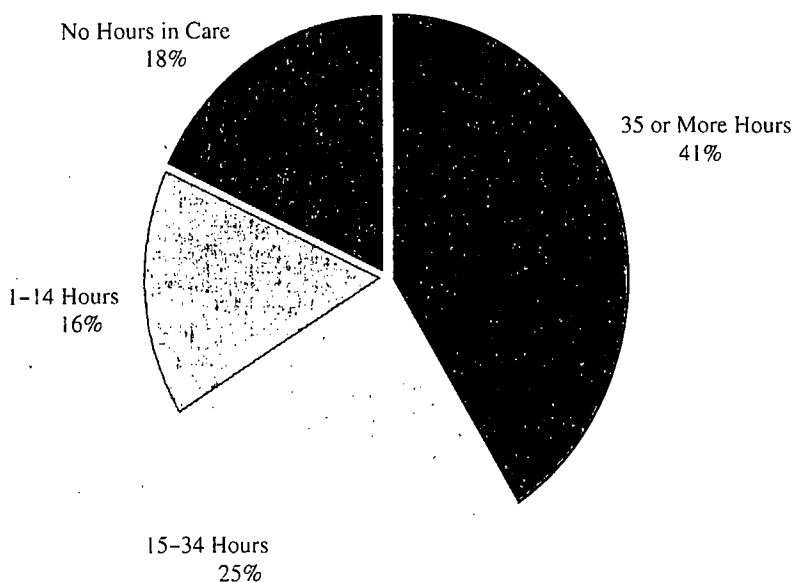
Across states, a sizable proportion of preschool children with employed mothers are in full-time child care.

as labor force patterns, child care costs and supply, and child care policies. A better understanding of state-level patterns of care will provide state policymakers with additional information when forming child care policy and will assist them in identifying the likely impact of policy changes.

The focus here is on an aspect of child care that is important to state policymakers: the number of hours that children spend in care each week. Research has found that the hours spent in care, especially when combined with such factors as family characteristics and the quality of care used, can affect a child's social and cognitive development (NICHD Early Childhood Research Network 1998).¹

This brief examines the number of hours that preschool children with employed mothers spent in child care in 1997, how the number of hours spent in care varied across selected states, and

Figure 1
National Estimates of the Hours Spent in Nonparental Care by
Children under Five with Employed Mothers (1997)



Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

how the amount of time in care differed across states for children of different age and income groups. We begin by looking at national and state estimates of the hours that children under five with employed mothers spent in care, and we then proceed to focus specifically on how these patterns vary for children whose mothers are employed full-time, children of different ages (infants and toddlers contrasted with three- and four-year-olds), and children from higher- and low-income families.

The National Survey of America's Families

Data from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families (NSAF)² are used to determine the hours that preschool children spend in care each week. The NSAF oversampled households with income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) and collected child care information on a nationally representative sample of children as well as on representative samples of children in 12 states.³ For randomly selected children in the sample households, interviews were conducted with the person most knowledgeable about each child. From

these interviews, data were collected about the types of care used and the number of hours that the child spent in each form of care.⁴ Since the mother was most often the most knowledgeable adult, the term "mother" is used here to refer to this respondent.⁵ For this analysis we focus only on children under five whose mothers were interviewed during the nonsummer months.⁶ We also restrict our analysis to preschool children whose mothers were employed.

For this analysis, the hours that each child spent in care across all reported nonparental arrangements were totaled and the child was then placed in one of four categories: "full-time care" (35 or more hours per week), "part-time care" (15 to 34 hours per week), "minimal care" (1 to 14 hours per week), and "no hours in child care" (no regular hours in a nonparental child care arrangement).⁷

How Many Hours per Week Are Children in Child Care?

The National Picture

In the United States overall, a significant proportion of preschool

children with employed mothers (41 percent) are in care for 35 or more hours per week (figure 1). Another 25 percent of preschool children are in care 15 to 34 hours per week, while 16 percent are in care for 1 to 14 hours and 18 percent of children spend no hours in care (see note 7).

State Patterns

These percentages, however, vary substantially across the states (figure 2). The focus below is on the states with the greatest differences in the percentage of preschool children in the hours categories.⁸ Specifically, findings show that:

- Two of the southern states—Mississippi and Alabama—have the highest percentages of children in full-time care, with over half of preschool children with employed mothers in full-time care (59 and 56 percent, respectively). Texas also has a high number of preschool children in full-time care (46 percent).
- Conversely, California, Massachusetts, and Washington have the lowest percentages of children in full-time care, with less than one in three children in care for 35 hours or more per week (29, 29, and 33 percent, respectively).
- California and Washington have the highest proportions of children who spend no hours in child care and are two of the states with the lowest use of full-time care (table 1). Each has at least one-quarter of preschool children who spend no regular hours in care (30 and 26 percent, respectively). In contrast, Michigan has the lowest percentage of children with no hours in child care (13 percent).

While these findings focus on full-time care and no reported hours in care, the extent of state variation continues beyond these categories. Across all of the hours categories, even those states that look similar in one category may differ in others. For example, both California and Massachusetts have small percentages of children in full-time care (29 percent each), but the percentages of children

in the other hours categories are very different (table 1). Such patterns highlight the diversity of child care utilization across states and point to the unique child care challenges that state policymakers and administrators face in making decisions about their states.

Hours That Preschool Children with Full-Time Employed Mothers Spend in Child Care

The amount of time that children spend in care is likely to be related to the hours that their mothers work.

Therefore, it is important to distinguish the differences in child care hours across states that result from employment patterns versus other potential factors. We begin by looking only at the hours in care for those children whose mothers are employed full-time.

Table 1
Children under Five with Employed Mothers in Different Hours of Nonparental Care, by Selected Characteristics and State

	US (%)	AL (%)	CA (%)	FL (%)	MA (%)	MI (%)	MN (%)	MS (%)	NJ (%)	NY (%)	TX (%)	WA (%)	WI (%)
All Children													
No Hours in Care	18	14	30	20	22	13	17	14	24	17	15	26	17
1 to 14 Hours	16	12	18	13	22	19	16	10	14	19	15	16	18
15 to 34 Hours	25	19	23	23	27	28	27	17	25	20	23	25	26
35 or More Hours	41	56	29	44	29	40	39	59	38	44	46	33	39
Sample Size ^a	(4,823)	(286)	(288)	(317)	(339)	(320)	(378)	(277)	(341)	(305)	(309)	(304)	(656)
Mothers Working Full-Time													
No Hours in Care	17	12	27	20	21	14	20	13	23	19	14	33	13
1 to 14 Hours	12	10	17	6	14	15	10	10	12	10	13	9	17
15 to 34 Hours	18	14	19	18	24	19	17	12	20	14	22	17	22
35 or More Hours	52	64	38	55	40	52	52	65	45	57	52	41	49
Sample Size ^a	(3,399)	(229)	(210)	(228)	(198)	(197)	(258)	(227)	(240)	(197)	(247)	(206)	(451)
Child's Age													
Younger Than Three Years													
No Hours in Care	21+	21+	35	28+	30+	15	21+	17	32+	24+	15	27	21
1 to 14 Hours	17	11	20	12	15+	21	18	10	12	22	14	15	20
15 to 34 Hours	23+	19	19	21	29	26	26	19	25	16+	25	26	23
35 or More Hours	39	49+	26	38+	27	38	35	54+	31+	39+	45	32	36
Sample Size ^a	(2,572)	(148)	(150)	(168)	(179)	(168)	(205)	(143)	(186)	(158)	(160)	(173)	(353)
Three to Four Years													
No Hours in Care	13	4+	23	8+	12+	11	11+	9	11+	9+	16	25	13
1 to 14 Hours	14	12	16	14	32+	15	14	9	17	15	16	18	15
15 to 34 Hours	28	19	28	27	25	30	29	15	24	26+	21	22	30
35 or More Hours	44	64+	33	52+	31	43	45	67+	47+	50+	47	35	42
Sample Size ^a	(2,251)	(138)	(138)	(149)	(160)	(152)	(173)	(134)	(155)	(147)	(149)	(131)	(303)
Income As a Percentage of the FPL													
200 Percent and Below													
No Hours in Care	23+	17	33	25	18	21+	22	13	27	20	28+	33	24+
1 to 14 Hours	16	17	15	11	17	21	17	13	11	20	11	19	15
15 to 34 Hours	21+	23	20	16+	18+	25	28	25+	21	20	18	13+	26
35 or More Hours	40	43+	32	48	47+	34	34	49+	41	40	44	35	36
Sample Size ^a	(2,290)	(148)	(161)	(168)	(114)	(143)	(169)	(152)	(121)	(144)	(179)	(133)	(314)
Above 200 Percent													
No Hours in Care	16+	12	27	16	23	10+	15	15	22	15	6+	23	15+
1 to 14 Hours	15	8	21	14	23	18	16	7	15	18	18	15	19
15 to 34 Hours	27+	16	25	29+	29+	29	27	10+	26	20	28	30+	26
35 or More Hours	42	64+	27	41	24+	43	41	68+	37	46	48	32	40
Sample Size ^a	(2,533)	(138)	(127)	(149)	(225)	(177)	(209)	(125)	(220)	(161)	(130)	(171)	(342)

Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

Notes: Actual percentages may vary on average +/- 3 percentage points from national estimates, +/- 5 percentage points from overall state estimates, and +/- 7 percentage points from state estimates for children of different ages and income levels. Percentages do not sum to 100 as a result of rounding. The NSAF's questions focused on nonparental arrangements and did not include questions about care provided by another parent, care for the child while the parent was at work, or care for the child at home by a self-employed parent. Those respondents not reporting a child care arrangement are assumed to be in one of these forms of care and are coded as having no hours in nonparental care.

a. Sample sizes in parentheses. **Bold** type indicates that the estimate is significantly different from the national average at the .05 level. Plus (+) indicates a significant difference between the categories within age and income in a state at the .05 level (i.e., younger children are different from older children).

The Nation Overall

Nationwide, while 41 percent of all preschool children with employed mothers are in full-time care, the proportion increases to 52 percent for those children whose mothers are employed full-time (table 1). Another 18 percent of children under five with mothers employed full-time are in part-time care (15 to 34 hours), while 12 percent are in care for 1 to 14 hours, and 17 percent spend no hours in nonparental care.

Variation across the States

By looking only at the children of mothers employed full-time, we can determine whether differences in the time that children spend in care can be explained simply by state variations in the proportion of mothers who work full-time. Data show that the variation across states persists even when only children with mothers employed full-time are analyzed. For example, Mississippi and Alabama still have the highest percentages of children in full-time care (65 and 64 percent respectively). At the opposite end of the range, California, Massachusetts, and Washington (38, 40, and 41 percent, respectively) have the lowest proportions of these children in full-time care. Additionally, Washington and California still

have the largest percentages of children who spend no regular hours in care (33 and 27 percent, respectively).

It appears that one of the possible reasons for differences in the number of hours that children are in care across states—the proportion of mothers working full-time—does not explain state variation. Other factors, some of which are discussed later in the brief, must explain these differences in the hours that children spend in care.

Hours That Children of Different Ages Spend in Child Care

Parents make child care choices for their infants and toddlers that often differ from choices they make about care for their three- and four-year-olds. Preschool children of different ages have different needs, which may be reflected in the hours that parents place them in care. Therefore, it is important to look separately at the hours spent in care by children under three and by three- and four-year-olds.

National Patterns

Generally, three- and four-year-olds are somewhat more likely to be in

care for more hours than are children under three (see table 1). In the United States as a whole, three- and four-year-olds are slightly more likely to be in full-time care (44 percent compared with 39 percent) and more likely to be in part-time care (28 percent compared with 23 percent). Additionally, only 13 percent of three- and four-year-olds spend no hours in care, while 21 percent of children under three are in this category.

Across the States

Individual states, however, vary considerably in the distribution of child care hours for both younger and older preschool children (figure 3).

Infants and Toddlers. Among infants and toddlers, data show that:

- In Mississippi, Alabama, and Texas, about half of children under three with employed mothers are in care for 35 or more hours a week (54, 49, and 45 percent, respectively). Conversely, in California and Massachusetts, only about one in four children under three is in care for 35 hours or more per week (26 and 27 percent, respectively).
- California has the highest percentage of very young children who spend no regular hours in child care (35 percent), while Michigan, Texas, and Mississippi have the lowest percentage of very young children in this category (15, 15, and 17 percent, respectively) (table 1).

Three- and Four-Year-Olds. Similarly, among three- and four-year-old children:

- Mississippi and Alabama have the highest percentages of three- and four-year-olds in full-time care (67 and 64 percent, respectively). These percentages are twice as large as those for California, Massachusetts, and Washington (33, 31, and 35 percent, respectively).
- Across most states, there are few three- and four-year-olds with employed mothers who spend no hours in nonparental care. Alabama has the lowest percentage in this category—only 4 percent.

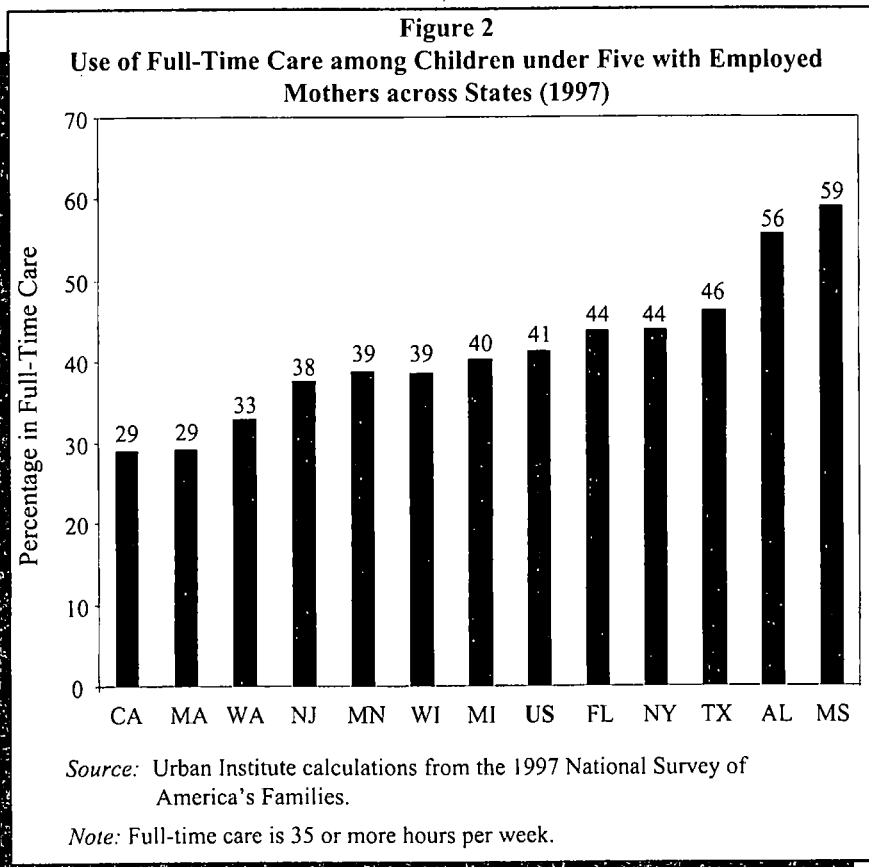
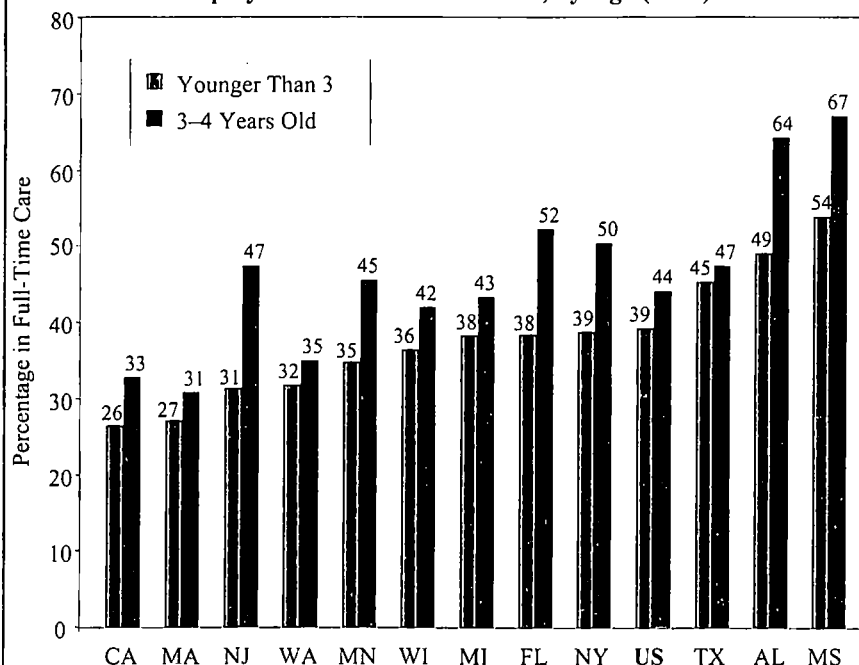


Figure 3
Use of Full-Time Care among Children under Five with
Employed Mothers across States, by Age (1997)



Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

Note: Full-time care is 35 or more hours per week.

Additionally, less than 1 in 10 children have no reported hours in care in Florida, Mississippi, and New York (8, 9, and 9 percent, respectively).

- However, a few states do have a sizable share of three- and four-year-olds with no regular hours in child care. California and Washington have by far the largest percentages in this category, with 23 and 25 percent of children. This is about six times the proportion found in Alabama (4 percent).

Within the States

There are also differences within states with regard to the time that each age group spends in care. Interestingly, in some states there are large differences in the number of hours that three- and four-year-old children and children under three are in care, while in others the two age groups spend similar amounts of time in care. For example:

- New Jersey, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, and New York each have much larger percentages (at least 10 percentage points greater) of three- and four-year-

old children in full-time care than children under three (figure 3).

- Conversely, there are states where older and younger children spend about the same amount of time in child care. For example, in Texas and Washington the percentages across all hours categories are very similar for both older and younger preschool children (table 1).

Time That Children in Families with Different Incomes Spend in Child Care

With changes to welfare policy geared toward moving welfare recipients into work, child care use among low-income families has been an important focus of policymakers. Within this context, it is useful to understand how much time children with employed mothers in low-income families⁹ spend in care, how the length of time varies by state, and how the hours that low-income children spend in care compare with children in higher-income families (family

income above 200 percent of the FPL).

Nationally

In general, children in higher-income families spend slightly more time in care than low-income children, though the difference is smaller than might be expected given the link between hours of work and income earned. Nationally, the percentages of preschool children in care for 35 or more hours per week are similar for higher- and low-income children (42 and 40 percent, respectively), while children from higher-income families are more likely to be in part-time care (27 and 21 percent, respectively). Similar percentages of higher- and low-income children spend 1 to 14 hours in care per week (15 and 16 percent, respectively), while higher-income children are less likely than low-income children to spend no hours in non-parental care (16 percent and 23 percent, respectively).

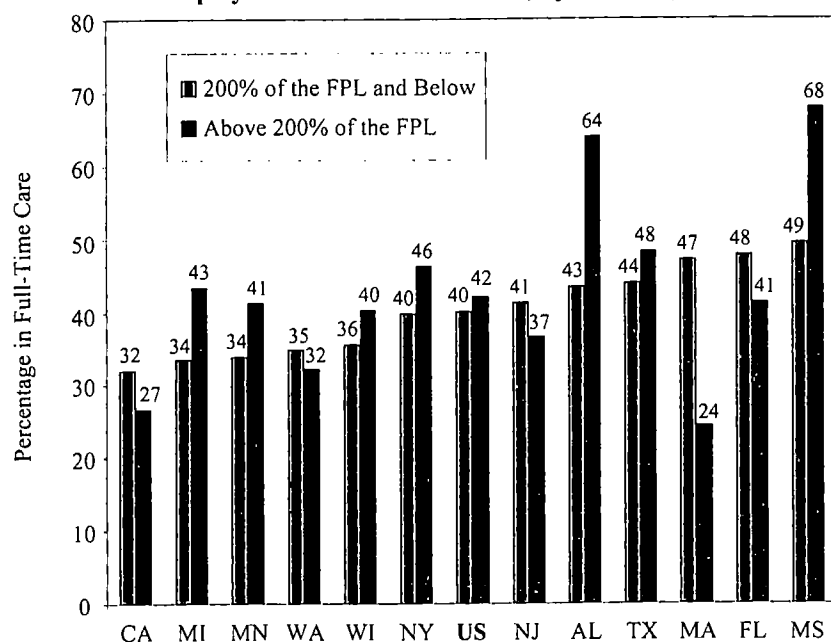
Across the States

There are two ways to examine the differences in the hours of care between children in higher- and low-income families across states. Looking first at the variation across states *within each income group*, the following patterns become evident.

Low-Income Families. Among low-income families:

- There is variation across states in the hours that low-income preschoolers with employed mothers spend in full-time care. For example, almost 50 percent of low-income children are in full-time care in Mississippi (49 percent) and Florida (48 percent) (figure 4). However, only one in three low-income children in California, Michigan, and Minnesota are in full-time care (32, 34, and 34 percent, respectively).
- There is similar variation in other hours categories. For example, 33 percent of low-income children spend no hours in care in California and Washington, while as few as 13 percent of children from low-income families in Mississippi have zero hours in child care (table 1).

Figure 4
Use of Full-Time Care among Children under Five with
Employed Mothers across States, by Income (1997)



Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

Note: Full-time care is 35 or more hours per week.

Higher-Income Families. Among higher-income families:

- Even more variation exists across states in the time that children from higher-income families spend in care. For example, there are nearly three times as many higher-income children in full-time care in Mississippi and Alabama (68 and 64 percent, respectively) as in Massachusetts and California (24 and 27 percent, respectively) (figure 4).
- Variation also exists in the proportion of higher-income children in the no-hours-in-care category across states. As many as 27 percent of children are in the no-hours category in California, while as few as 6 percent of children are in this category in Texas (table 1).

Comparisons within States

Another way to examine the patterns of hours spent in care is to examine the differences between income groups *within individual states*. Generally, the percentage of low- and higher-income children in full-time care is similar across many of the states. However, combining the full-time and 15- to 34-hour categories shows that most states have a larger percentage of

higher-income children in 15 or more hours of care. In addition:

- Alabama and Mississippi have the largest differences in the percentage of higher- and low-income children in full-time care (21 and 19 percentage points greater, respectively) (figure 4).
- There are some states where low-income children are *more* likely to be in full-time care than higher-income children. However, Massachusetts, with a difference of 23 percentage points, is the only state with a statistically significant difference (47 percent of low-income compared with 24 percent of higher-income children) (figure 4).

Conclusions

Two findings emerge from this review of state-level child care data on the hours that children spend in child care. First, child care plays an important role in the lives of many of America's families. Despite enormous variation across the 12 states examined here, a sizable proportion of preschool children with employed mothers are in care for a significant number of hours each week, regardless of

state of residence, age, or family income. Given that recent research has found that very early life activities of children affect brain development and that quality preschool programs assist children in preparing for school, the increasing use of child care reinforces the need for state policymakers to pay close attention to the experiences of children while they are in child care.

Second, while national patterns generally hold across most states, it is clear that policymakers cannot rely on national child care data to accurately capture patterns of child care utilization existing in individual states. Indeed, every national pattern observed was contradicted by at least one state. For example, while older children are in care longer hours than younger children nationally, in Washington or Texas this difference is negligible. Similarly, while higher-income children nationally are in care for longer hours, this is clearly not evident in Massachusetts.

Simply documenting differences that exist in the hours that children spend in care is only the first step to better understanding state-level patterns of child care. The next step is to uncover the factors associated with these differences. The states analyzed here differ across a host of demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural variables, as well as in state child care policies and in child care costs and supply. Initial examination of these data show that no single factor—such as differences in the labor force patterns of mothers—can explain these variations. Consequently, it appears that a combination of factors are likely to explain differences in the amount of time that children spend in care across states. Additional research using multivariate analysis is necessary to illuminate how these forces are associated with state differences and to further assist state policymakers in making decisions about child care policy.

The findings that do emerge from this brief, however, reveal that many children are in care for long hours each week and that the amount of time a child spends in care varies by state. These findings reinforce the importance of continuing to explore state differences in child care through state-specific data, such as the NSAF, and emphasize the challenges facing policymakers across the country as they work to develop policies to support the

child care choices of families within their states.

Notes

The authors thank James Barsimantov for his excellent research assistance as well as Alan Weil, Stefanie Schmidt, Linda Giannarelli, Joan Lombardi, Sandy Hofferth, and Lynne Casper for helpful comments on earlier versions of the brief.

1. In other briefs, we examine the child care arrangement where the child spends the most number of hours each week and the number of arrangements used to cover the hours that the child is in care. Brief B-7 in this series examines the primary care arrangements of children under five nationally and across selected states. Brief B-12 examines the use of multiple child care arrangements by these children.

2. The NSAF is a national survey of over 44,000 households and is representative of the noninstitutionalized, civilian population of persons under age 65 in the nation as a whole and in 13 focal states. The survey focuses primarily on health care, income support, job training, and social services, including child care.

3. The states are Alabama, California, Florida, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin. These states were chosen because they capture regional differences and differences in state fiscal capacity and because they contain over 50 percent of the U.S. population. Colorado is also a focal state in the *Assessing the New Federalism* (ANF) project but is not included in these analyses. Due to the late addition of Colorado to the ANF project, responses to the child care questions from a large number of Colorado respondents were received during the summer months and did not provide information on nonsummer child care arrangements, which are the focus of this analysis. Because of the small size of the nonsummer sample from Colorado, it is excluded from the analysis.

4. For more information on NSAF survey methods, including the "most knowledgeable adult," see Dean Brick et al. (1999).

5. The mother of the child was the "most knowledgeable adult" for 83 percent of the children in the sample.

6. Because child care arrangements and the hours spent in care can vary widely from the school year to the summer, the observations with data on child care relating to the summer months (June 12 to September 26) were not included in this analysis. The observations that are included are weighted to provide representative data on child care during the school year. Our data set contains a total of 4,853 children under five with employed mothers, and each state sample contains at least 275 children.

7. The NSAF's questions focused on regular nonparental arrangements, which include Head Start, center-based care (nurseries, preschools, prekindergarten), and before- and after-school programs, as well as care in and out of the child's home by relatives and non-relatives. The survey did not include questions about parental care, which could include care provided by the other parent, the mother caring for the child while she worked, or care for the child at home by a self-employed mother. If the respondent did not report an arrangement, the child is assumed to be in one of these "parental care" categories. We are confident that this measure captures parental arrangements because the share of children of employed parents with "parental arrangements" as the primary arrangement in the NSAF (24 percent) is identical to the share (24 percent) of preschool children in the 1994 Survey of Income and Program Participation who were cared for primarily by their mother or their father while their mother was working (Casper 1997). Because these forms of care are not "nonparental" arrangements, the NSAF did not obtain specific data on them and they are grouped into the "no hours in care" category.

8. The states that have the highest and lowest percentages of children

in a given hours category are presented here. The states presented here with the highest and lowest percentages of children in each hours category are statistically different from each other at the .05 level. Differences among other states not presented in the text may or may not be statistically significant. In addition, one should be cautious in interpreting the actual point estimates because of the sizes of the state samples. Confidence levels around the national point estimates averaged ± 3 percentage points, and the confidence levels around subpopulation point estimates within states were larger (± 7 percentage points for our state estimates of age and income subpopulations).

9. A low-income family is a family with an income equal to or below 200 percent of the FPL—i.e., \$25,258 for a family of two adults and one child in 1997.

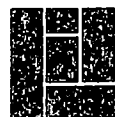
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This series presents findings from the National Survey of America's Families (NSAF). First administered in 1997, the NSAF is a survey of 44,461 households with and without telephones that are representative of the nation as a whole and of 13 selected states (Alabama, California, Colorado, Florida, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin). As in all surveys, the data are subject to sampling variability and other sources of error. Additional information about the survey is available at the Urban Institute Web site: <http://www.urban.org>.

The NSAF is part of *Assessing the New Federalism*, a multiyear project to monitor and assess the devolution of social programs from the federal to the state and local levels. Alan Weil is the project director. The project analyzes changes in income support, social services, and health programs. In collaboration with Child Trends, the project studies child and family well-being.

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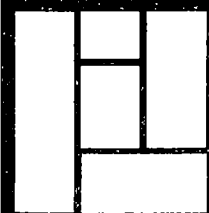
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THE NUMBER OF CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS USED BY CHILDREN UNDER FIVE: VARIATION ACROSS STATES

Jeffrey Capizzano and Gina Adams

Balancing employment and child rearing can be a complex endeavor for parents with preschool children. With roughly 76 percent of children under five with employed parents in some form of nonparental care each week, often for many hours, parents must sometimes use more than one child care arrangement. For example, parents may primarily use a center-based child care arrangement or family child care home, but also may rely on a relative for some hours each week. Relatively little is known about the reasons behind the use of multiple child care arrangements; parents may desire to expose children to a number of different environments, or they may need more than one arrangement to cover all of the hours of their employment. Factors such as the availability of certain types of child care, the costs of care, the ability of parents to pay for care, and the differences between work schedules and the hours of child care programs may also play a role in parents' use of more than one child care arrangement.

This brief investigates the number of child care arrangements that children under five with employed mothers use each week nationally and across selected states. State patterns in the use of multiple child care arrangements are examined because it is likely that great diversity exists across states, due in part to differences in the costs and supply of child care as well as variations in labor force patterns and child care policies. It is important to note that the consistent weekly use of multiple child care arrangements is being investigated here, *not* the stability of child care arrangements over time (i.e., the number of different sequential arrangements that a child may experience over a certain time period). This analysis of the use of multiple child care arrangements is important because such practices represent an important dimension of the child care experiences of America's families.

We begin by examining national and state estimates of the number of arrangements used by children under five with employed mothers. We focus on how these patterns vary for children of different ages (infants and toddlers contrasted with three- and four-year-olds) and for children in low- and higher-income families. Finally, we analyze the types of child care arrangements that are combined when parents use multiple arrangements for their children.

For those preschool children in child care, being in more than one child care arrangement each week is a fairly common experience.

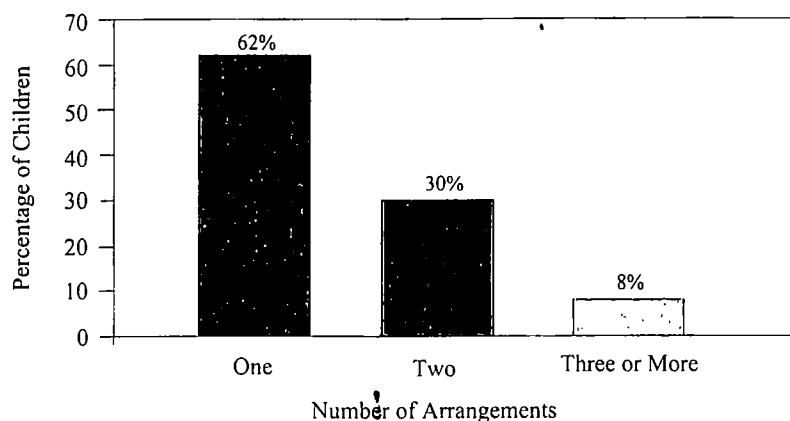
The National Survey of America's Families

Data from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families (NSAF)¹ are used to examine the use of multiple child care arrangements. The NSAF oversampled households with income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) and collected child care

information on a nationally representative sample of children, as well as on representative samples of children in 12 states.² For randomly selected children in the sample households, interviews were conducted with the person most knowledgeable about each child. Since the mother was most often the most knowledgeable adult, the term "mother" is used here to refer to this respondent.³ The interviewers asked the mother about the categories of care used by her child and about the number of hours that the child spent in each category of care.⁴ Our estimates may undercount slightly the actual number of arrangements used by families, as the survey did not always capture multiple arrangements if they fell within the same category of care.⁵

This analysis focuses only on children under five whose mothers were interviewed during the nonsummer months.⁶ The analysis is also restricted to preschool children whose mothers are employed and to those children who have a nonparental child care arrangement. Nonparental arrangements include a

Figure 1
National Estimates of the Number of Nonparental Child Care Arrangements among Children under Five with Employed Mothers (1997)



Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families. Percentages are for children in nonparental child care only. A sizable percentage of children with employed parents are not placed in nonparental child care. See, for example, brief B-7 in this series.

child care center, nursery, or preschool program; a before- or after-school program; a Head Start program; a family child care home; a baby-sitter or nanny; a relative in the child's home; and a relative in the relative's home. We sum the number of arrangement types that each preschool child is in each week on a regular basis and examine the proportion of children in one, two, or three or more child care arrangements.

How Many Arrangements Are Preschool Children in Each Week?

The National Picture

Nationwide, a large minority of children under five with employed mothers is in two or more nonparental child care arrangements each week. Almost two out of five (38 percent) children in nonparental care have more than one regular child care arrangement each week (figure 1). Most of these children are in two arrangements—30 percent—while 8 percent have three or more. The remaining 62 percent have only a single child care arrangement.

State Patterns

While the percentage of children in multiple arrangements varies somewhat by state, there is relatively little variation from the national average (figure 2). The focus below is on the states with the highest and lowest shares of children under five in multiple arrangements are highlighted.⁷

Across the individual states, findings show that:

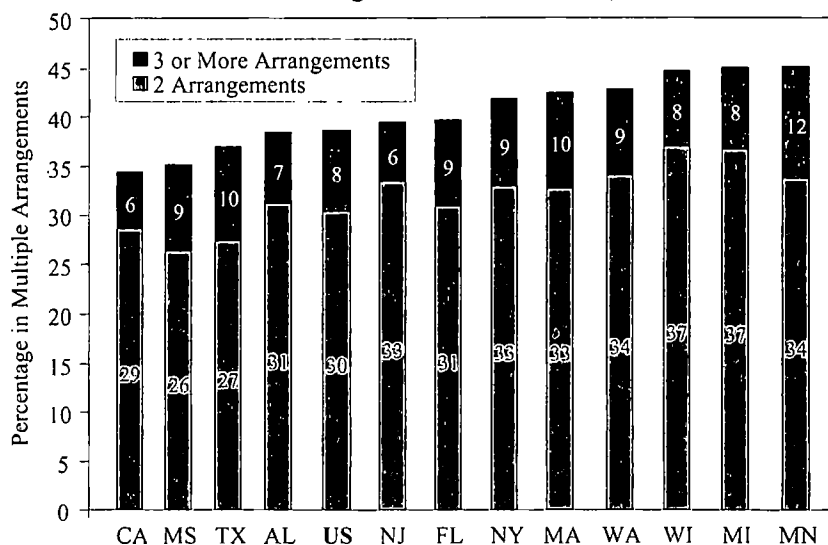
- In each state, at least one in three children using nonparental care is regularly placed in more than one child care arrangement each week. Minnesota, Michigan, and Wisconsin have the largest percentage of children regularly in multiple arrangements (46, 45, and 45 percent of children, respectively), while California has the smallest percentage of children in more than one arrangement each week (35 percent).

- While most states have relatively small proportions of children in nonparental care using *three or more* arrangements per week, Minnesota, Massachusetts, and Texas have at least 10 percent of children under five in this many arrangements (12, 10, and 10 percent, respectively).

Multiple Child Care Arrangements among Children of Different Ages

When examining the use of multiple child care arrangements, it is important to look separately at preschool children of different ages because parents tend to make different choices for the care of their infants and toddlers versus their three- and four-year-olds. These differences across the two age groups may be a result of different preferences for the care of infants and toddlers versus three- and four-year-olds or may be because parents have different forms of care more readily available to them. For example, three- and four-year-olds are more likely to have access to part-day preschool programs, such as Head Start and state prekindergarten programs, which may result in a greater use of multiple arrangements among this group. Therefore, it is useful to examine the number of child care arrangements used by children under three in contrast to the number used by three- and four-year-olds.

Figure 2
Children under Five with Employed Mothers in Multiple Nonparental Child Care Arrangements across States (1997)*



Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

*Children in nonparental care only.

Table 1
Nonparental Arrangements: Children under Five with Employed Mothers, by Selected Characteristics and State

	US (%)	AL (%)	CA (%)	FL (%)	MA (%)	MI (%)	MN (%)	MS (%)	NJ (%)	NY (%)	TX (%)	WA (%)	WI (%)
All Children													
One Arrangement	61	62	66	60	57	55	55	65	61	58	63	57	55
Two Arrangements	30	31	29	31	33	37	34	26	33	33	27	34	37
Three or More Arrangements	8	7	6	9	10	8	12	9	6	9	10	9	8
Sample Size ^a	(3,974)	(244)	(214)	(255)	(280)	(273)	(318)	(247)	(271)	(256)	(257)	(230)	(538)
Child's Age													
Younger Than Three Years													
One Arrangement	65	65	66	65	64	60	63+	73+	65	67+	70+	65+	60
Two Arrangements	30	33	29	27	31	35	32	21	32	33	24	28	35
Three or More Arrangements	4	2+	5	8	5+	6	5+	6	3	0+	5+	6	4+
Sample Size ^a	(2,009)	(116)	(105)	(122)	(134)	(139)	(160)	(125)	(136)	(124)	(136)	(129)	(273)
Ages Three to Four Years													
One Arrangement	56	58	65	55	50	48	45+	53+	56	48+	54+	44+	50
Two Arrangements	31	30	28	36	34	39	36	34	35	33	31	43	39
Three or More Arrangements	13	13+	7	9	16+	12	19+	13	9	19+	15+	13	12+
Sample Size ^a	(1,965)	(128)	(109)	(133)	(146)	(134)	(158)	(122)	(135)	(132)	(121)	(101)	(265)
Income as a Percent of the FPL													
200 Percent and Below													
One Arrangement	63	64	64	57	52	65+	58	69	69	61	64	64	57
Two Arrangements	30	32	30	31	32	33	29	22	26	31	26	29	38
Three or More Arrangements	7	4	6	11	16	2+	13	9	6	8	10	7	5
Sample Size ^a	(1,812)	(121)	(115)	(130)	(92)	(114)	(134)	(137)	(93)	(118)	(135)	(95)	(245)
Above 200 Percent													
One Arrangement	60	60	67	62	59	51+	54	61	58	56	63	55	55
Two Arrangements	31	31	28	31	33	38	35	31	36	34	28	36	37
Three or More Arrangements	9	9	6	7	8	11+	11	9	6	10	9	10	9
Sample Size ^a	(2,162)	(123)	(99)	(125)	(188)	(159)	(184)	(110)	(178)	(138)	(122)	(135)	(293)

Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

Notes: These percentages are of children in nonparental child care only. A sizable percentage of children with employed parents, however, are not placed in nonparental child care. See, for example, brief B-7 in this series. Actual percentages may vary on average ± 3 percentage points from national estimates, ± 6 percentage points from overall state estimates, and ± 8 percentage points from state estimates for children of different ages and income levels. Percentages do not sum to 100 as a result of rounding.

a. Sample sizes in parentheses. **Bold** type indicates that the estimate is different from the national average. Plus (+) indicates a significant difference between the categories within age and income in a state.

The Nation Overall

Among preschool children in nonparental care with employed mothers nationwide, infants and toddlers are less often in multiple child care arrangements than three- and four-year-olds. Specifically, 34 percent of children under three are regularly in multiple child care arrangements, compared with 44 percent of three- and four-year-olds (table 1). This difference in the use of multiple child care arrangements is driven almost entirely by the greater use of three or more arrangements by three- and four-year-old children. While children under three are equally as likely as three- and four-year-olds to be in two arrangements per week (30 percent and 31 percent, respectively), three- and four-

year-olds are much more likely to be in three or more arrangements (13 percent, compared with 4 percent).

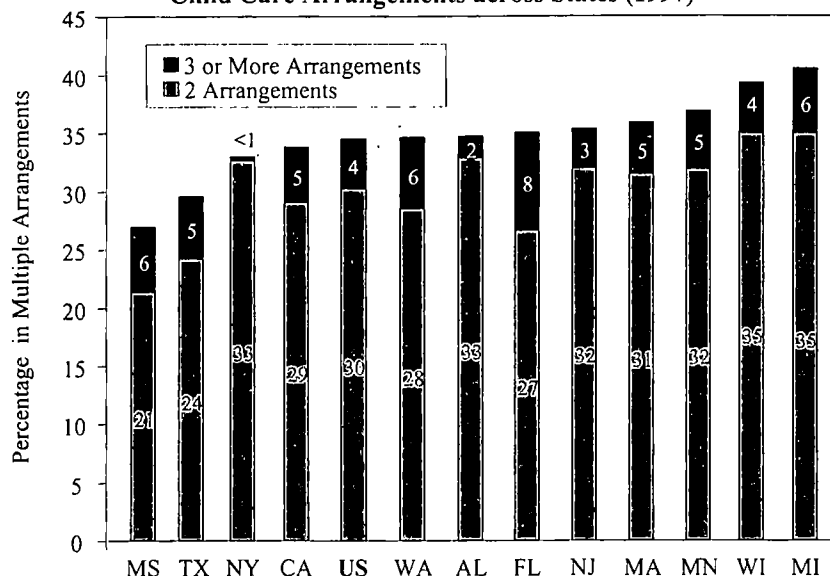
Variation across the States

For both age groups across states, there is a good deal of variation in the percentage of children in multiple child care arrangements each week.

Infants and Toddlers. Among infants and toddlers in nonparental care, every state examined has a sizable portion—at least one quarter—in multiple child care arrangements, although some states have significantly higher proportions (figure 3). The use of three or more arrangements for infants and toddlers, however, is not common across the focal states. Specifically:

- In Michigan, 41 percent of children under three are in more than one child care arrangement; in contrast, only 27 percent in Mississippi are in multiple arrangements.
- Florida has the largest percentage of infants and toddlers in *three or more* arrangements (8 percent). New York has the smallest proportion of infants and toddlers in three or more arrangements, less than 1 percent.
- **Three- and Four-Year-Olds.** A substantial number of three- and four-year-olds are in two or more nonparental arrangements per week in many of our focal states, but the percentages vary widely (figure 4):
 - Over 50 percent of these children have multiple child care arrange-

Figure 3
Children* under Three with Employed Mothers in Multiple Nonparental Child Care Arrangements across States (1997)



Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

*Children in nonparental care only.

ments in Washington, Minnesota, Michigan, and New York (56, 55, 51, and 52 percent, respectively), while only 35 percent of three- and four-year-olds are in multiple arrangements in California.

- Minnesota and New York have nearly one in five three- and four-year-old children in *three or more* arrangements per week (each with 19 percent); California has the smallest percentage (7 percent).

Variation within each State

Large differences also exist in the number of arrangements for children of different ages *within* each state. Comparing infants and toddlers with three- and four-year-olds shows that within almost all states, older preschool children are more likely to be in multiple arrangements per week than are infants and toddlers. Specifically:

- The largest differences between the number of arrangements used by these two age groups occur in Washington, Mississippi, and New York (table 1). In these states, the percentage of three- and four-year-olds using multiple arrangements is close to 20 percentage points greater than for infants and toddlers. In California, however, there is virtually no difference in the use of multiple child care arrangements between older and younger pre-school children.
- As is true nationally, in many states the large differences in the use of

multiple child care arrangements can be attributed to the greater use of *three or more* arrangements by three- and four-year-olds. In New York, for example, 19 percent of three- and four-year olds are in three or more arrangements each week, compared with less than 1 percent of infants and toddlers (table 1). California and Florida are exceptions, as each of these states has a similar proportion of infants and toddlers

and three- and four-year-olds in three or more arrangements.

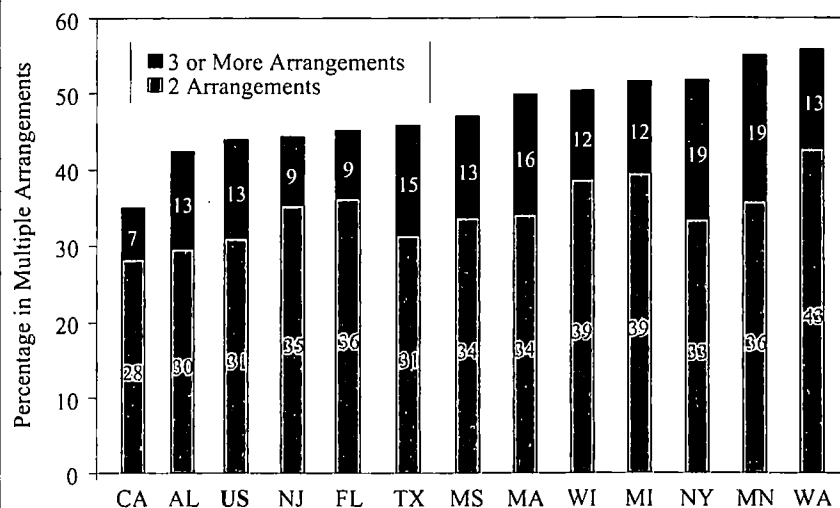
Multiple Child Care Arrangements for Families of Different Incomes

A common hypothesis is that the use of multiple child care arrangements is greater among low-income families than higher-income families. Parents from low-income families are more likely to work odd-hour jobs, have access to a smaller range of child care options, and have a family composition different from higher-income families. These differences may make it more difficult for low-income parents to find one arrangement to cover all of their child care needs, potentially leading to a higher use of multiple arrangements. In addition, many part-day preschool programs (such as Head Start and state prekindergarten programs) are targeted toward low-income children. Therefore, it is important to examine separately the use of multiple arrangements among the low-income population and higher-income families.⁸

Nationally

Contrary to this hypothesis, findings show that low-income children are no more likely to be in multiple nonparental child care arrangements than are higher-income children. Across the nation, 37 percent of chil-

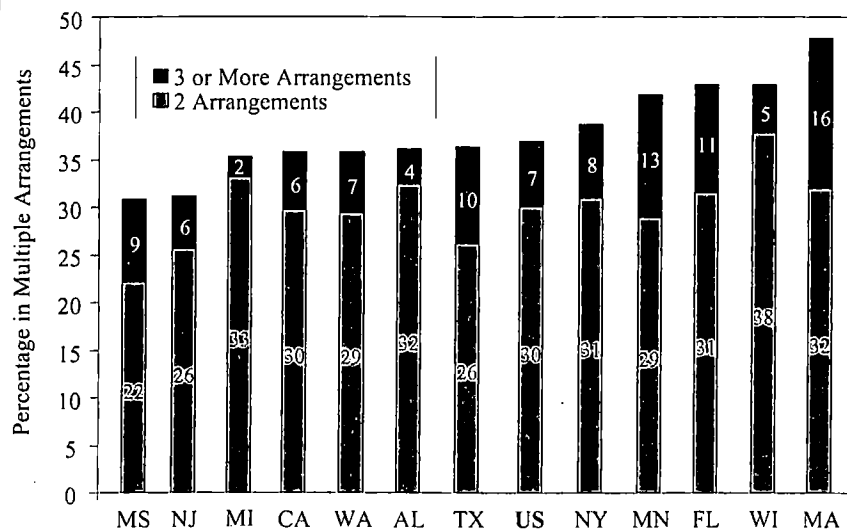
Figure 4
Children* Ages Three and Four with Employed Mothers in Multiple Nonparental Child Care Arrangements across States (1997)



Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

*Children in nonparental care only.

Figure 5
Children* in Low-Income Families with Employed Mothers in Multiple Nonparental Child Care Arrangements across States (1997)



Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

*Children under five in nonparental care only.

dren from low-income families are regularly in multiple child care arrangements, compared with 40 percent of higher-income children (table 1). Children from low-income families are also no more likely to be placed in three or more arrangements each week: 7 percent of low-income children are regularly in three or more arrangements, compared with 9 percent of higher-income children.

Across the States

Examining children from different income groups across states reveals a good deal of state variation in the percentage of children in each income group in multiple child care arrangements.

Low-Income Families. Every state has less than half of low-income preschool children with employed parents in multiple child care arrangements, though there is some variation (figure 5). Specifically:

- Massachusetts has the largest percentage of low-income children in multiple arrangements (48 percent), while New Jersey and Mississippi have the smallest percentages (32 and 31 percent, respectively).
- Massachusetts and Minnesota have 16 and 13 percent of low-income children in three or more nonparental arrangements, respectively; Michigan has only 2 percent.

Higher-Income Families. Variation also exists across states in the use of

multiple child care arrangements among children from higher-income families (figure 6):

- Michigan has the largest percentage of higher-income children in multiple child care arrangements (49 percent); California has the smallest percentage (34 percent).

Comparisons within States

Looking at income differences within states shows that most states mimic the national pattern, with the

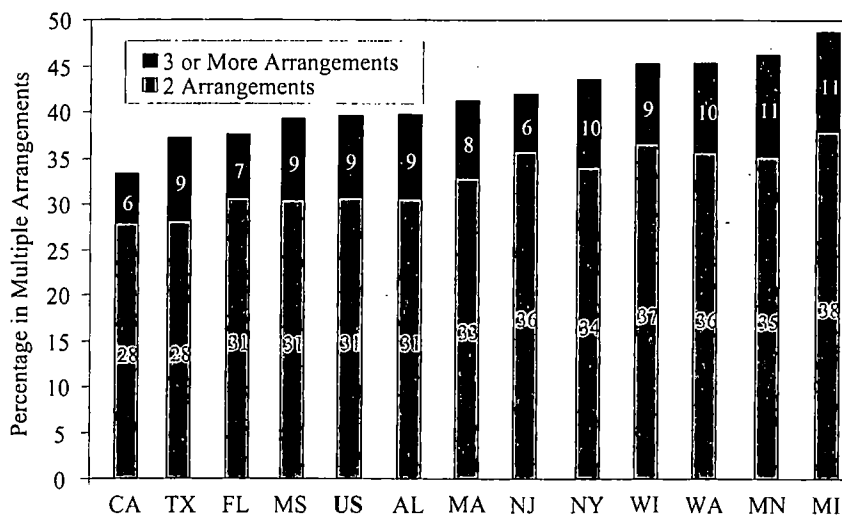
proportion of children in multiple arrangements being similar for the low- and higher-income populations. Specifically, data show that:

- In 7 of the 12 focal states, the difference in the share of each income group using multiple arrangements is 5 percentage points or less (table 1). In Texas, for example, there is virtually no difference between the proportion of low- and higher-income children in multiple arrangements (36 percent and 37 percent, respectively). In contrast, however, the percentage of higher-income children in multiple arrangements in Michigan is 14 points higher than that of low-income children (49 percent, compared with 35 percent).

What Types of Child Care Arrangements Are Combined?

With close to 40 percent of preschool children in multiple nonparental child care arrangements nationally, and as many as 46 percent in such arrangements in some states, the question arises as to what types of multiple arrangements families are using. While this question cannot be examined here for individual states, nationally, most of those children that are placed in multiple child care arrangements (65 percent) are placed in some combination of "formal" (such as center-based and family

Figure 6
Children* in Higher-Income Families with Employed Mothers in Multiple Nonparental Child Care Arrangements across States (1997)



Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

*Children under five in nonparental care only.

child care) and "informal" (such as relatives and nannies or baby-sitters)⁹ arrangements (table 2). For example, among those children in multiple arrangements each week, 24 percent are placed in a center-based arrangement and with a relative each week, 9 percent are placed in a center-based arrangement and with a nanny/baby-sitter, and 7 percent are placed in a family child care home and with a relative.

A much smaller percentage of those children using multiple arrangements are placed exclusively in combinations of formal arrangements (20 percent).¹⁰ Finally, 15 percent of those children with two or more arrangements are in a combination of different informal care arrangements—13 percent are with two relatives and the remaining 2 percent are with a relative and a nanny/baby-sitter.

Variation by Age

The age of the preschool child affects the types of care that are combined (table 2). Infants and toddlers using multiple child care arrangements are more likely to be in two informal arrangements than are three- and four-year-olds. Twenty-four percent of infants and toddlers with multiple

arrangements use combinations of informal arrangements, compared with 7 percent of three- and four-year-olds. Conversely, three- and four-year-olds using multiple arrangements are more likely to use two formal arrangements than are younger children: 25 percent of older preschool children are in all formal arrangements, compared with 15 percent of infants and toddlers. Both of these age groups, however, are still most likely to have some combination of formal and informal child care. Seventy percent of three- and four-year-olds and 61 percent of infants and toddlers in multiple arrangements use a mixture of formal and informal arrangements.

Variation by Income

Low- and higher-income families, however, do not differ in the extent to which they use combinations of formal and informal care. Children from low- and higher-income families are equally likely to combine two formal arrangements (21 percent of higher-income children, compared with 19 percent of low-income children) and be in combinations of informal arrangements (14 percent of higher-income children and 17 percent of low-income children). Likewise, children from both

income groups are equally likely to have some combination of formal and informal care each week (64 percent of low-income children and 63 percent of higher-income children).

Conclusions

In this analysis of the use of multiple child care arrangements, a number of findings emerge. First, for those preschool children who are in nonparental care, placement in more than one child care arrangement is a fairly common experience—nationally and across individual states. Indeed, nationwide, nearly two out of five preschool children (38 percent) in nonparental care are in multiple child care arrangements each week, with individual states not varying considerably from this average. Further, multiple arrangements are common among both infants and toddlers and three- and four-year-olds (34 and 44 percent, respectively). Three- and four-year-olds, however, are three times as likely as younger preschool children to be in three or more arrangements nationally, with even larger differences evidenced in certain states. Finally, low- and higher-income parents are equally likely to use multiple arrangements, but there seems to be greater variation among the low-income

Table 2
Combinations of Nonparental Arrangements: Children under Five with Employed Mothers, by Child's Age and Income

Combinations	Age			Income	
	All Children (%)	0-2 Years (%)	3-4 Years (%)	Low (%)	Higher (%)
Formal Arrangements Only					
Center-Based + Center-Based	4	0	8	5	4
Center-Based + Family Child Care	13	15	12	12	14
Three Formal Arrangements	3	0	5	1	3
<i>Total</i>	20	15	25	19	21
Combination of Formal and Informal					
Center-Based + Relative	24	22	27	26	23
Center-Based + Nanny/Baby-sitter	9	7	11	3	11
Family Child Care + Relative	7	11	4	10	6
Family Child Care + Nanny/Baby-sitter	6	9	3	8	5
Center + Two Relatives	6	4	8	8	5
Center + Family Child Care + Nanny/Baby-sitter	5	4	6	4	5
Center + Family Child Care + Relative	2	1	4	1	3
Other Combinations of Three Arrangements	5	3	7	4	5
<i>Total</i>	65	61	70	64	63
Informal Arrangements Only					
Relative in Child's Home + Nanny/Baby-sitter	2	4	1	1	3
Relative in Home + Relative out of Home	13	20	6	16	11
<i>Total</i>	15	24	7	17	14
Sample Size	(1,620)	(708)	(912)	(694)	(926)

Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families.

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 as a result of rounding.

population than among higher-income families in the use of multiple arrangements across states.

In addition, it was expected that low-income children would be more likely to be in multiple nonparental child care arrangements; this turns out not to be the case. Nationally and across most states, children from low-income families are no more likely to be in multiple arrangements than higher-income children. In fact, in the only state where a statistically significant difference between the two populations was found—Michigan—higher-income children were more likely to be in multiple arrangements than children from low-income families.

Finally, most children who have multiple child care arrangements nationally are in a combination of formal and informal care, regardless of age or income. Older children, however, are slightly more likely than infants and toddlers to be in combinations of all formal arrangements (such as a center and family child care home), while children under three are more likely to be in two "informal" child care arrangements. There are no differences between children from families of different incomes in the extent to which they rely on combinations of formal and informal arrangements.

It is also important to note that while the use of multiple arrangements is widespread, it is not clear whether it has a detrimental impact on parents or children. Coordinating multiple arrangements may add to the complexity and stress of balancing employment and child rearing, but it may also provide greater reliability of care because of the presence of alternative child care arrangements should one form of care be unavailable (Folk and Yi 1994). While research has found that unstable and disrupted arrangements over time are detrimental to children, little research has been conducted on the impact of multiple stable arrangements. Future research should investigate the relationship between multiple child care arrangements, parental stress, and the development of children. What is clear, however, is that parents commonly use multiple child care arrangements for their preschool children, making it an issue for many American families that must balance work and raising children.

Notes

The authors thank James Barsimantov for his excellent research assistance as well

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1. The NSAF is a national survey of over 44,000 households and is representative of the noninstitutionalized, civilian population of persons under age 65 in the nation as a whole and in 13 focal states.

2. The states are Alabama, California, Florida, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin. Colorado is also a focal state in the *Assessing the New Federalism* (ANF) project but is not included in these analyses. Due to the late addition of Colorado to the ANF project, responses to the child care questions from a large number of Colorado respondents were received during the summer months and did not provide information on nonsummer child care arrangements, which are the focus of this analysis. Because of the small size of the nonsummer sample from Colorado, it is excluded from the analysis.

3. The mother of the child was the "most knowledgeable adult" for 78.5 percent of the children in the sample.

4. For more on NSAF survey methods, including the "most knowledgeable adult," see Dean Brick et al. (1999).

5. To capture child care arrangements, mothers were asked if the child attended any of three separate categories of center-based care: Head Start; a group or day care center, nursery, preschool, or prekindergarten program; or a before- or after-school program. Mothers were also asked about baby-sitting in the home by someone other than them or their spouse and questioned about "child care or baby-sitting in someone else's home." A child can be cared for in two center-based arrangements within the same category (two nursery schools, for example), two different baby-sitters in the child's home, or two different individuals outside the child's home. In these cases, the NSAF captures only one of the arrangements and therefore undercounts the number of arrangements used by that parent. These undercounts, however, are small. For example, NSAF's percentage of children in two center-based arrangements is 5 percentage points lower than National Childhood Education Survey (NCES) estimates, another nationally representative data source. This is also true of NSAF data about the percentage of children regularly cared for by two different relatives, which is 4 percentage points lower than the NCES.

6. Because child care arrangements and the hours spent in care can vary widely from the school year to the summer, the

observations with data on child care relating to the summer months (June 12 to September 26) were not included in this analysis. The observations that are included in the analysis are weighted to provide representative data on child care during the school year. Our data set contains a total of 3,974 children under five with employed mothers, and each state sample contains at least 214 children.

7. The states that have the highest and lowest percentages of children in multiple arrangements are presented here; they are statistically different from each other at the .05 level. Differences among other states not presented in the text may or may not be statistically significant. In addition, one should be cautious in interpreting the actual point estimates. Confidence intervals around the national point estimates averaged ± 3 percentage points, while intervals around subpopulation point estimates within states were larger (± 8 percentage points for our state estimates of age and income subpopulations).

8. Here we define low-income families as families with incomes at or below 200 percent of the FPL—i.e., \$25,258 for a family of two adults and one child in 1997. Higher-income families are defined as those above 200 percent of the poverty level.

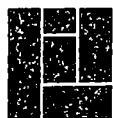
9. While there is no common definition of "formal" and "informal" child care, "formal" child care arrangements refer to child care settings that are more likely to be regulated by state licensing systems. These include most center-based arrangements and, depending on the state, the majority of family child care homes. "Informal" arrangements refer to care settings that are seldom regulated by state licensing agencies, including relative care and baby-sitters or nannies in the child's home.

10. These figures may be slightly underestimated (see note 5). Given the small size of the underestimation, however, it is unlikely that these percentages were significantly influenced by the undercount.

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This series presents findings from the National Survey of America's Families (NSAF). First administered in 1997, the NSAF is a survey of 44,461 households with and without telephones that are representative of the nation as a whole and of 13 selected states (Alabama, California, Colorado, Florida, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin). As in all surveys, the data are subject to sampling variability and other sources of error. Additional information about the survey is available at the Urban Institute Web site: <http://www.urban.org>.

The NSAF is part of *Assessing the New Federalism*, a multiyear project to monitor and assess the devolution of social programs from the federal to the state and local levels. Alan Weil is the project director. The project analyzes changes in income support, social services, and health programs. In collaboration with Child Trends, the project studies child and family well-being.

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