

Executive Summary

Information pertaining to children's early childhood experiences has been gathered as part of the National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES) for over a decade. A primary purpose of NHES's early childhood surveys is to obtain information about the time young children spend outside the care of their parents. NHES's Early Childhood Program Participation Survey (ECP) asks parents and guardians about any nonparental care and education arrangements their children may have. Information is collected on various characteristics of these arrangements, including who provides the care, the location of the care, and how much families pay for it.

Parents are asked about the care and education their children receive in a variety of settings. Home-based arrangements include care that takes place in a child's own home or in the home of someone else. This care may be provided by a relative (other than the child's parents) or a nonrelative. Nonrelative care includes care provided by babysitters, nannies, and family day care providers. In the NHES survey, as well as this report, such care arrangements in home-based settings are referred to as relative care and nonrelative care. Center-based care is that which provides children with care and education in a nonresidential setting. These arrangements include day care centers, nursery schools, prekindergartens, and other types of early childhood education programs such as Head Start.

Each of these settings includes elements of care and education, although the reasons children are in care and the educational nature of the care can vary within and across arrangement types. The NHES does not distinguish between participation for educational enrichment and participation resulting from parents' need for child care. Also, in the NHES, center-based arrangements that occur in more strictly educational settings (i.e., prekindergartens) and those that occur in day care centers are not distinguished from one another. For ease of presentation, the report often refers to these arrangements as nonparental care rather than nonparental care and education. However, the reader should keep in mind that the degree to which education is a central feature of the arrangement, as well as the reasons why children participate in such arrangements, can vary.

This report is the latest in a series of NCES reports on young children's nonparental care and education arrangements. It presents the most recent data available for children under the age of 6, taken from the 2001 administration of the ECP. Interviews were conducted with parents or guardians of 6,741 children under age 6 who were not yet enrolled in kindergarten.¹ The overall

¹ Interviews were also conducted with parents of eight 6-year-olds who were not yet enrolled in kindergarten. Due to their small number, these 6-year-olds are excluded from these analyses.

response rate for the ECPP parent interview was 59.9 percent.² When weighted to reflect national totals, these data represent the child care and early educational experiences of approximately 20.3 million children under the age of 6 who are not yet enrolled in kindergarten or higher grades.

As in previous NHES reports on this topic, variations in participation rates by characteristics of children (age and race/ethnicity) and their families (household income and mother's education and employment status) are examined. Unique to this report is its consideration of variations in participation rates by poverty status and geographic region. In addition, it provides a more in-depth examination of differences among children of different age groups than previous reports.

All differences cited in this report are significant at the .05 level using Student's *t* statistic. Trend tests, or bivariate regressions, are used to examine the general relationships between the various characteristics of child care and both household income and mother's education level. Additionally, the discussion is limited to differences of at least 5 percentage points when percentage estimates are compared. When mean estimates are compared, the discussion is limited to differences where the effect size, as calculated using Cohen's *d* statistic (Cohen 1988), is .2 or larger.

During the spring of 2001, 60 percent of children under the age of 6 who had yet to enter kindergarten were receiving some type of care or education, or both, on a weekly basis from persons other than their parents (table 1). This translates to about 12.2 million infants (children under the age of 1), toddlers (1- and 2-year-olds), and preschoolers (3- to 5-year-olds) who had at least one weekly nonparental care arrangement.

Overall, children's participation in nonparental care and education increases with child's age and mother's education (table 2). There is a relationship between income and participation, such that children living in households with incomes over \$50,000 are more likely to receive nonparental care than children in homes with lower incomes (65-72 percent compared to 53-57 percent). With a participation rate of 72 percent, children in homes with incomes greater than \$75,000 are most likely to receive this care, compared to children in lower-income households. Also, children whose mothers work outside the home, either part time or full time, are more likely than children whose mothers are not in the labor force to receive nonparental care (70 and 85 percent vs. 31 percent). Among Black, White, and Hispanic children, Black children are most likely to be cared for by someone other than their parents on a weekly basis and Hispanic children are least likely (73, 60, and 48 percent for Black, White, and Hispanic children, respectively). This report expands on previous NHES studies to show that children living below

² This overall response rate for the ECPP parent interview is the product of a Screener response rate and the ECPP unit response rate. The NHES includes a Screener survey in which information about household composition is collected and then used to sample children within households. In 2001, the response rate for the Screener was 69.2 percent. The unit response rate for the ECPP Survey, based on the percentage of children who were sampled and had parents who completed the survey, was 86.6 percent. Analysis of nonresponse bias conducted for the 1999 NHES, which is similar to the 2001 NHES in terms of its target populations and contact procedures, showed no evidence of bias in estimates produced from the 1999 NHES data. Also, weights assigned to each case and used in analyses are designed to reduce potential bias due to nonresponse. Additional information regarding nonresponse bias and weighting procedures in the NHES can be found in the technical notes section of this report.

the poverty threshold and children living in the West are less likely than their counterparts to be cared for by someone other than their parents on a weekly basis.

Many of the same characteristics associated with participation in nonparental care and education arrangements for the overall population of children under the age of 6 and not yet enrolled in kindergarten are also associated with participation rates for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers when examined as separate age groups (tables 2-A, 2-B, and 2-C). For example, Black infants, toddlers, and preschoolers are all more likely than their White and Hispanic counterparts to receive nonparental care. Also, the general trend for children in each age group is for participation rates in nonparental care to increase as mothers' education level increases. However, while income and poverty status are related to participation for toddlers and preschoolers, such relationships are not detected among infants.

This report also looks at the characteristics associated with participation in the three specific types of nonparental care described above: relative, nonrelative, and center-based care (table 2). A larger percentage of children overall receive nonparental care in centers than from relatives or nonrelatives (33 percent compared to 22 and 16 percent, respectively). However, some children are more likely than others to receive certain types of care. For example, older children are more likely than younger children to be in center-based care; 73 percent of 5-year-olds have center-based arrangements, compared to 8 percent of infants. Children living at or above the poverty threshold are more likely than those living below the poverty threshold to receive nonrelative (17 vs. 9 percent) or center-based care (35 vs. 27 percent), while they are less likely to receive care from relatives (21 vs. 26 percent). Also, patterns of participation related to income and mothers' education for relative care arrangements differ from the patterns of participation related to these characteristics for nonrelative and center-based arrangements.

Some variations in the overall relationships between the examined characteristics and type of care emerge when children within particular age groups are compared to one another. Twenty one percent of infants are cared for by a relative on a weekly basis, compared to 14 percent who are cared for by a nonrelative and 8 percent who are cared for in a center. There are no detectable differences in the participation rates of toddlers, as a group, in the different types of care. Preschoolers are more likely to receive care in center-based arrangements than in either relative or nonrelative arrangements (56 percent vs. 21 and 13 percent, respectively).

When infants, toddlers, and preschoolers are considered separately, participation rates in different types of care vary by geographic region as well. For example, 4 percent of infants living in the West participate in center-based care arrangements, compared to 10 percent of infants living in the South and 9 percent of infants living in Midwest. Preschoolers living in the West are less likely than preschoolers living in any other area of the country to receive center-based care (47 percent vs. 55-63 percent). Among toddlers, participation in center-based care is highest for those living in the South (26 percent vs. 17-20 percent).

Focusing on the location of care, the NHES data show that children receiving nonparental care in a home-based setting are more likely to be cared for in someone else's home than in their own, regardless of whether the care is provided by a relative or a nonrelative (figure 4). Those children who are cared for in a center-based setting are most likely to receive that care in a center

located in its own building,³ compared to other locations, such as a school, community center, or library (table 4). Among children in center-based care, care provided in public or private schools is more common when children come from homes with lower incomes, when they are poor, when they belong to a racial or ethnic minority group, and when their mothers have lower levels of education. Also among children in center-based care, the participation rate in care located in a church, synagogue, or other place of worship is highest for White children, and increases with household income and mothers' education.

Children receiving nonparental care on a weekly basis spend 31 hours, on average, in the care of someone other than their parents (table 5). Additionally, children with nonrelative care arrangements spend more time in them than children in center-based care do (about 28 hours per week compared to about 25 hours per week). The children who spend the most time in nonparental care arrangements tend to be Black, come from families with lower household incomes, have mothers with lower levels of education or who work, and live in the South. A consistent relationship between child age and time spent in nonparental care emerged only for center-based arrangements; younger children spend more time than older children being cared for in a center (ranging from a high of about 32 hours per week for infants and 1-year-olds compared to a low of about 21 hours per week for 5-year-olds). A somewhat similar, though not as consistent, pattern was found for nonrelative care arrangements; toddlers spend more time in nonrelative care arrangements than 4- and 5-year-olds (about 30 hours per week compared to 25 and 24 hours per week, respectively).

The report also examines the out-of-pocket expenses for nonparental care paid by families of children who had care arrangements and whose parents reported that they paid something for care.⁴ These out-of-pocket expenses vary by type of care arrangement, as well as by child, family, and community characteristics. On average, families spend \$69 a week and \$3 an hour for care for their children (tables 6-A and 6-B).⁵ Relative care is the least costly, both weekly (about \$48 per week) and hourly (\$1.93 per hour), for families of children under the age of 6. Among those who do report having out-of-pocket expenses for care: families with younger children pay more on a weekly basis than do families with older children; higher-income families pay more than do lower-income families (and families who do not live in poverty pay more than do families living in poverty); families in which mothers are better-educated pay more on a weekly basis than do families with less educated mothers; families in which mothers work full-

³ The survey question specifically asked parents whether the center their children attended was located in "its own building." This category excludes private homes, place of worships, schools, colleges, universities, community centers, libraries, etc. Location refers strictly to the place where the care was provided and not the type of care provider or sponsorship. For example, if a religious group provided care in a building that was not a place of worship, the care would be considered as having been provided in a center located its own building, rather than in a place of worship. Alternatively, care located in a place of worship was not necessarily provided by the religious group to whom the place of worship belonged.

⁴ The NHES only ascertains the amount families pay for care themselves, apart from any financial assistance they may receive from others. Therefore, the data presented here may not represent the total cost of care.

⁵ There are different ways in which child care costs can be measured, including cost per week and cost per hour. The former measure may be largely a function of time spent in care. Therefore, the latter measure may be a more accurate indicator of which type of care is more costly and for whom, independent of care hours. Both cost estimates for the sample of children whose families pay for child care are discussed in this report.

time pay more than do families in which mothers do not work full-time; and families living in the Northeast and West pay more on a weekly basis than do families living in the Midwest and South.

In sum, findings from this report using the most recent data available from the NHES support previous research showing that children's participation in nonparental care and education arrangements is related to a variety of factors. Children of different ages and racial or ethnic backgrounds, in different economic situations, with mothers of varying educational levels and employment statuses, and who live in different areas of the country exhibit differences with respect to whether or not they have any weekly child care arrangements. Their families also report differences in the location and providers of child care. Additionally, the time children spend in nonparental care, and the amount their families pay for it, are related to many of the same factors associated with participation in nonparental care and education, including those which are unique to this report, poverty status and geographic region.