



Child care by relatives, friends, and neighbors

Fundamental facts from the Minnesota child care survey

Trust, cost, and flexibility are key advantages, but 37 percent of Minnesota families don't have the option of a relative, friend, or neighbor.

Nearly one-third of families rely on relatives for care in any given week.

- 29% of children are cared for by relatives as their most common child care arrangement.
- Parents most commonly use relative care for infants under age 1 and for school-age children age 6 to 12.
- On average, relatives care for preschoolers (age 0 to 5) about 23 hours per week during the school year and 25 hours per week during the summer.
- On average, relatives care for school-age children (age 6 to 14) about 14 hours per week during the school year and more than twice as much – 30 hours per week – during the summer.

As the child grows, the kind of relative providing the most care changes.

- Preschoolers are cared for more by grandparents than by other kinds of relatives during the school year.
- School-age children age 6 to 12 are most often cared for by older siblings.
- By age 13 to 14, self care is more common than sibling care.

Friends and neighbors provide care for 16% of families, serving as the most common arrangement for 11% of children.

- On average, preschoolers spend about 21 hours per week in care provided by friends and neighbors during the school year and 26 hours per week during the summer.
- On average, school-age children spend about 15 hours per week in care provided by friends and neighbors during the school year and nearly twice as much – 29 hours per week – during the summer.

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Relatives, friends, and neighbors provide the majority of child care during non-standard hours.

In the summer:

- 53% of child care before 7 a.m.
- 77% of child care between 6 and 10 p.m.
- 80% of child care after 10 p.m.
- 87% of child care on the weekends.

In the school year:

- 43% of child care before 7 a.m.
- 65% of child care between 6 and 10 p.m.
- 80% of child care after 10 p.m.
- 64% of child care on the weekends.

About half of the parents (44%) who turn to relatives, friends, or neighbors for child care pay for that care.

- Payment is most likely for preschool children (58%), less likely for children age 6-12 (33%), and very unusual for 13- and 14-year-olds (7%).
- On average, parents pay about \$2.10 per hour for care by relatives and \$3.70 per hour for care by friends and neighbors.

Preference for care by a relative is the main reason parents choose that type of care. Trusting and knowing the caregiver are the main reasons parents choose care from friends and neighbors.

- Convenient location (25%), cost (25%), and trust (24%) are also main reasons for care from a relative.

- Other main reasons parents choose care from friends and neighbors include child and provider interaction (24%), convenient location (23%), and quality of care (17%).

Reasonable cost is a greater factor in choosing relative care than in choosing care by friends and neighbors.

- Over 75% of parents using relative care acknowledge that reasonable cost is a “very important” consideration.
- For parents using care from friends and neighbors, reasonable cost is “very important” for about two-thirds – which is about the same proportion as for all parents who use any type of child care.

Parents who turn to relatives, friends, or neighbors notice some distinct advantages and disadvantages.

- Compared to other parents, they are *more* likely to say that:
 - The children watch too much TV.
 - My caregiver or provider feels that my child's needs are too demanding.
 - I rely on my caregiver or provider to be flexible about my hours.
 - My child gets a lot of individual attention.
- Compared to other parents, they are *less* likely to say that:
 - There are lots of creative activities going on.
 - There has been too much turnover in my child's care arrangement.
 - The caregiver or provider needs more help with the children.

These results come from a survey of 2,450 parents throughout Minnesota, sponsored by the Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning and conducted by Wilder Research Center. “Child care” in this survey includes anything other than the direct care of a parent or the regular K-12 school day. The survey covers the arrangements for the youngest child in each family (infants through age 14). The survey was conducted from June 1999 through March 2000, so it includes both summer and school-year patterns of care. Any difference between groups that is mentioned here has been tested and found to be statistically significant, unless specifically noted otherwise. The overall margin of error is about plus or minus 2 percentage points.

Other fact sheets in this series, as well as the full research report *Child care use in Minnesota*, are available for free download at www.wilder.org/research. Printed copies of the research report can be purchased from Minnesota's Bookstore, 800-657-3757, www.comm.media.state.mn.us/bookstore.

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