



# Children in their own care

## *Fundamental facts from the Minnesota child care survey*

**Many 12- to 14-year-olds are regularly on their own for at least a few hours per week.**

### **Age 12 is the time when Minnesota parents generally feel it is safe, in their neighborhood, to leave children on their own sometimes.**

- 66% feel that a 12-year-old can care for himself or herself regularly.
- 32% feel it is safe at age 11.
- Only 19% of parents feel it is safe for a 10-year-old to be left alone.

### **Few Minnesota children younger than 10 are left alone, but many 10- to 14-year-olds care for themselves regularly.**

In general, the older the child, the more time they care for themselves.

- 4% of children age 6-9 care for themselves during a typical week, for an average of 3.2 hours (not necessarily all at the same time).
- 19% of 10-year-olds care for themselves, for an average of 9.6 hours per week.
- 25% of 11-year-olds care for themselves, for an average of 6.3 hours per week.
- 29% of 12-year-olds care for themselves, for an average of 12.8 hours per week.
- 36% of children age 13-14 care for themselves, for an average of 13.9 hours per week.

### **Children who care for themselves are more likely to:**

- Be an only child (63% vs. 37% of all other children).
- Live with only one parent (26% vs. 16% of all other children).
- Have three or more different care arrangements in a given week (71% vs. 40% of all other children).
- Have mainly informal types of child care – family, friends, neighbors, etc. (85% vs. 41% of other children).
- Spend slightly more time in care in a given week (18.4 hours vs. 15.5 hours for other children).
- Have parents who say they always or usually had to take whatever child care arrangement they could get (11% vs. 7% for other children).

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### **Children who spend time in their own care are less likely to:**

- Have a stay-at-home parent (5% vs. 26% of all other children).
- Receive a child care subsidy (3% vs. 9% of all other children).
- Have total family out-of-pocket child care costs (for all children in the family) of \$100 a week or more (5% vs. 19% for all other children).

### **Self-care appears unrelated to these factors:**

- Household income
- Education level of parents
- Living in the Twin Cities area or Greater Minnesota
- Any special needs of the child
- Race/ethnicity (Children in self care are slightly more likely to be white, but the difference is not statistically significant.)

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](http://www.wilder.org/research). Printed copies of the research report can be purchased from Minnesota's Bookstore, 800-657-3757, [www.commedia.state.mn.us/bookstore](http://www.commedia.state.mn.us/bookstore).

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