



Minnesota Department of Human Services

The statewide survey about child care will help inform, develop and assess Minnesota's child care policies and programs, with particular attention to child care use among households with low incomes. Similar surveys were completed in 1999 and 2004. The newest report is available for download at Wilder Research at www.wilderresearch.org or at the Minnesota Department of Human Services at www.dhs.state.mn.us.

Facts about child care use in Minnesota

Highlights from the 2009 Statewide Household Child Care Survey



Summary findings from the survey are organized along these seven themes:

- [Key trends](#)
- [Child care hours and types of care](#)
- [Child care choices, quality and cost](#)
- [Child care for families with low incomes](#)
- [Family, friend and neighbor \(FFN\) child care](#)
- [Child care for children with special needs](#)
- [Children and working parents](#)

A telephone survey was conducted by Wilder Research for the Minnesota Department of Human Services between April 2009 and March 2010 with a statistically valid random sample of 1,209 Minnesota households with children ages 12 and younger that use child care. Minnesota has an estimated 908,000 children ages 12 and younger, according to the U.S. Census intercensal estimate of 2009. Of the nearly 500,000 households with one or more of these children, about 375,000 households use some type of child care arrangement and about 140,000 have annual incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level (about \$44,000 for a family of four).

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Minnesota Department of Human Services

Key trends

Highlights from the 2009 Statewide Household Child Care Survey



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This fact sheet compares results from household child care surveys conducted by Wilder Research for the Minnesota Department of Human Services in 1999, 2004, and 2009.

About three-quarters of households with children ages 12 and younger use child care, similar to 2004.

- 24 percent reported no regular use of any child care (non-parental, non-school care).
- In 2004, 26 percent reported no regular child care use.
- In 1999, 18 percent reported no regular child care use (but that survey included parents of children up to age 14).

Fewer households are using family, friend and neighbor (FFN) care during early mornings and weekends, but FFN is still the most common type of arrangement.

- Of households that use child care, 70 percent use some form of FFN care on a regular basis; 20 percent use FFN care exclusively, statistically similar to 24 percent in 2004.
- During the school year, FFN care is the most common type of child care during all non-standard times. FFN providers care for 50 percent of children during the early morning hours before 7 a.m., fewer than in 2004 when 65 percent were in FFN care at those times. On weekends during the school year, 70 percent (down from 77 percent in 2004) of children are cared for by FFN caregivers.
- Overall, 43 percent use FFN care as their primary arrangement: in their own home (29 percent) or in

someone else's home (14 percent), similar to 2004.

- Households with low incomes without a child care subsidy are more likely than those with a subsidy to use FFN care as their primary arrangement (60 percent versus 31 percent, compared with 37 percent for households with higher incomes).

Some parents still lack child care choices.

- 29 percent of all parents and 35 percent of parents with low incomes report taking whatever child care they could get, similar to the percentages in 2004.
- 30 percent of parents receiving Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) support and 29 percent of parents not receiving CCAP say they take whatever child care they can get; in 2004 39 using CCAP and 29 percent not using CCAP reported said they had little choice.

Parents consider quality important and want information on it.

- Location, cost, quality and trust are the most common reasons cited by parents for choosing a primary care arrangement.
- From a list of important considerations in choosing child care, "a caregiver rated high quality" is a top "very important" reason.
- 88 percent (similar to 2004) say they would find it helpful if their community had a child care quality rating system that would give them information they could use for selecting the highest quality care.

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Child care problems interfere with employment for some parents.

- 12 percent say child care problems have interfered with getting or keeping a job in the past year, down from 20 percent in 2004.
- Child care problems more commonly affect employment for parents of color (25 percent), parents who have a child with a special need (21 percent) and parents with low incomes (20 percent) than other parents by about 2 to 1. This was also the case in 2004.

Fewer families are using center-based care for their preschoolers than in 2004.

- 52 percent of children ages 3 to 5 who use child care use center-based care as their primary arrangement and most common arrangement during the school year, which is down from 60 percent in 2004, but still up from 41 percent in 1999.

Fewer children ages 10 to 12 are taking care of themselves during the summer, but self care has not decreased during the school year.

- During the school year, 44 percent of children ages 10 to 12 are in self care, compared with 41 percent in 2004 and 26 percent in 1999.
- During the summer, 36 percent of children ages 10 to 12 take care of themselves, down from 42 percent in 2004 but still higher than in 1999 (20 percent).
- On average, children ages 10 to 12 are in self care 4-5 hours per week, compared with 10 hours in 2004.

Child care is still unaffordable for low-income households.

- In households with the lowest annual incomes (below \$20,000), 29 percent of their income goes for child care expenses, similar to 2004.
- In households with low incomes (200 percent of poverty and below), 20 percent of their income goes for child care expenses.

- For higher-income families (above 200 percent of poverty or above about \$44,000 for a family of four), 9 percent of their income goes for child care expenses.
- For all families, 12 percent of income goes for child care expenses, similar to 10 percent reported in 2004.

Among low-income households, awareness of CCAP has increased, but many are not receiving it.

- In both 2009 and 2004, 72 percent are aware of state subsidies to help pay for child care, up from 57 percent in 1999.
- 14 percent reported receiving CCAP, statistically similar to the 19 percent reported in 2004.

Child care assistance helps families with low incomes gain access to center-based care.

- In 2009, 46 percent of households with low incomes receiving CCAP use center-based care as their primary arrangement. That compares with 22 percent of households with low incomes without CCAP and 33 percent for higher income households. These percentages are similar to those reported in 2004.



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Child care hours and types of care

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Most households with children age 12 and younger use some type of child care.

- Of the households with children ages 12 and younger identified for this survey, 76 percent report using some type of child care (non-parental, non-school care) regularly during the summer or school year.
- Of the children age 12 and younger in the households identified for this survey, 65 percent are in some type of child care arrangement regularly.
- Children ages 3 to 5 are the most likely to be in some type of child care arrangement regularly (82 percent), followed by children ages 0 to 2 (69 percent), children ages 6 to 9 (60 percent) and children ages 10 to 12 (50 percent).

Children average almost 24 hours per week in child care.

- On average, children are in child care almost 31 hours per week in the summer and 23 hours per week during the school year.
- Of all children regularly in child care, 25 percent attend child care full time (35 hours or more per week) and 75 percent attend child care part time.
- Children age 5 and younger, on average, spend about 27-31 hours per week in child care during the school year, compared with 15-16 hours for children ages 6 to 9.

Family, friend and neighbor (FFN) care is the most commonly used child care.

- 43 percent of households use FFN care as their primary arrangement.
- Of households that use child care, 70 percent select some form of FFN

care on a regular basis; 20 percent use FFN exclusively; and 22 percent use FFN as their primary arrangement but also use some other types of care.

- FFN care is the most common primary arrangement for children ages 0 to 2 (48 percent, during the school year).
- FFN care is provided by grandparents (37 percent), followed by friends or neighbors (23 percent), other relatives (15 percent), and older siblings (14 percent).
- For children under age 6, the FFN care is more commonly provided by grandparents. For children ages 6 to 12, the FFN care is more often provided by older siblings.
- Families using FFN care prefer care by a family member or someone they trust. They also like the convenience and cost of FFN care.

Center-based child care is the type of primary care arrangement for about one-third of households.

- 31 percent of households use center-based care as their primary arrangement, including child care centers, preschools, Head Start and before-school and after-school programs.
- Compared to five years ago, fewer preschoolers are in center-based care (52 percent during the school year, down from 60 percent in 2004, but up from 41 percent in 1999).
- Families using center-based care like the convenience and location, the structured activities, and the quality of care provided.

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Licensed family child care is the primary arrangement for one in 10 families who use child care.

- Licensed family child care is a more common primary arrangement for infants and toddlers than for older age groups.
- Families using family child care commonly like having care provide by someone they trust. They also like the convenience, location, cost, and quality of care provided.
- Licensed family child care homes have children for more hours per week during both the summer and school year (average of 28 hours) than any other type of child care.

During the school year, most children under age 3 are cared for by their parents or FFN; while most children age 3 to 5 are in licensed care during some part of the week.*

- Of the households with children ages 12 and younger in this survey, 24 percent report not using any type of child care (non-parental, non-school care) regularly, and 35 percent of children in surveyed households are not in child care regularly.
- Of the estimated 221,000 children in Minnesota birth through age 2, 31 percent do not use child care; 36 percent use FFN as their only or primary arrangement, and 39 percent use center-based or licensed family child care as a primary or secondary arrangement.
- Of the estimated 215,000 children in Minnesota age 3-5, 18 percent do not use child care; 25 percent use FFN as their only or primary arrangement, and 61 percent use center-based or licensed family child care as their primary or secondary arrangement.
- Children age 5 and younger in licensed or center-based care during the school year tend to be in care more hours per week, on average, than those in FFN care (about 23 hours versus about 11 hours).

* These data do not account for the time of day or night when care is provided or the number of hours per week in child care. They add to more than 100 percent because children can use FFN as a primary arrangement and use some type of licensed child care as a secondary arrangement.

Fewer children ages 10 to 12 are taking care of themselves during the summer, but self care has not decreased during the school year.

- 44 percent are in self care during the school year (as one of the types regularly used), similar to 41 percent five years ago, and 26 percent in 1999.
- 36 percent are in self care during the summer (as one of the types regularly used), down from 42 percent five year ago, but up from 20 percent in 1999.

Family schedules require child care during nonstandard work hours.

- In addition to standard weekday hours during the school year, 43 percent of children are regularly in child care weekday evenings (6 p.m. to 10 p.m.), and 33 percent are regularly in child care on weekends. Family, friends and neighbors are the usual caregivers during these times.



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Child care choices, quality and cost

Highlights from the 2009 Statewide Household Child Care Survey



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Parents want information about quality child care.

- 88 percent say they would find it helpful if their community had a child care quality rating system that would give them information they could use for selecting a care provider.
- 10 percent are aware of the child care rating system called “Parent Aware,” which is now only available as a pilot in Saint Paul, Minneapolis, the Wayzata school district and Blue Earth and Nicollet Counties. Households in Minneapolis and St. Paul (17 percent) and the Southwest Region (15 percent) are more aware of Parent Aware.

Parents consider a number of factors in choosing child care, but location, cost, quality, and trust are the most common.

- Overall, parents choose their primary care arrangement based on the convenient location (33 percent), cost (25 percent), quality of care (21 percent) and trusting the provider (20 percent).
- Parents using family, friend and neighbor care prefer care by a family member or someone whom they trust (61 percent).
- Families using center-based care like the convenience and location, the structured activities, and the quality of care provided.
- 79 percent of parents of preschoolers say “a caregiver that is rated high quality” is “very important” in choosing child care. Cost is “very important” to 69 percent of these parents.

Reasonable cost is a “very important” factor in choosing child care.

- When considering the role of cost in choosing child care, almost all parents say that reasonable cost is “very important” (71 percent) or “somewhat important” (26 percent). Only 2 percent say cost is “not important” in choosing child care.
- 84 percent of households with low incomes say cost is “very important,” a higher percentage than households with higher incomes (66 percent).
- 33 percent of households receiving other help paying for child care (besides child care assistance) would not be able to maintain their current arrangement without that help.

Some parents lack child care choices.

- 29 percent of parents report taking whatever child care arrangement they could get, similar to 2004, but up from 21 percent in 1999.
- Lack of choice is higher (ranging from 35 to 48 percent) for parents with low incomes, parents of color, those with a child who has a special need, and those whose primary language is not English.

Most families are aware of child care resource and referral.

- 67 percent of parents with children ages 12 and younger know about child care resource and referral services that help parents identify and select child care in their communities.

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- Awareness of these services is higher among low-income households with child care subsidies (92 percent) and in Greater Minnesota (73 percent).
- Awareness of these services is lower among households of color (56 percent).

Seventy percent of families who use child care pay for it.

- 69 percent of families with children under age 13 pay at least some out-of-pocket costs for child care during a typical week. This is similar to the 70 percent who reported paying in 2004, but up from 59 percent in 1999.
- 31 percent of all families and 40 percent of families with low incomes (200% of poverty and below or about \$44,000 for a family of four) who use child care do not pay for it. They may receive free FFN care, self-care, or receive CCAP and do not have a co-pay.

The average weekly child care costs go down as the age of the child goes up.

- Ages 5 and younger: \$154 per week, about \$8,008 per year.
- Ages 6 to 9: \$122 per week, about \$6,344 per year.
- For perspective, state college (two-year colleges) tuition is about \$4,600 per year, and state university tuition is about \$6,400 per year. (See www.mnscu.edu for 2009-2010 tuition.)

For those who pay for child care, child care expenses take a bigger share of gross income for families with low incomes.

- For households with the lowest annual incomes (below \$20,000), 29 percent of income goes for child care expenses.

- For households with low incomes (200 percent of poverty and below), 20 percent of income goes for child care expenses. (Child care is considered affordable at 10 percent or less of a family's income.)
- For higher-income families (above 200 percent of poverty), 9 percent of income goes for child care expenses.



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Child care for families with low incomes

Highlights from the 2009 Statewide Household Child Care Survey



About one in three families with children using child care are families with low incomes.

- Low income is defined as at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guideline for a household of their size or about \$44,000 for a family of four.
- About 31 percent of families in this survey are considered low-income, up from 22 percent in 2004.
- About 10 percent of families in this survey have annual incomes below \$20,000.

Families with low incomes have fewer child care choices than families with higher incomes.

- 35 percent of families with low incomes report they had to “take whatever child care arrangement they could get,” compared with 26 percent of parents with higher incomes.
- 30 percent of families with low incomes use family, friend and neighbor (FFN) care exclusively. (The overall rate is 20 percent.)

Families with low incomes have more child care challenges and problems than families with higher incomes.

- 26 percent of parents with low incomes have a child with special needs requiring extra effort, compared with 17 percent for families with higher incomes, an increase from 2004.
- 20 percent of parents with low incomes report that child care problems have prevented them from accepting or keeping the kind of job they wanted in the past 12 months, compared with 9 percent of other parents.

- 61 percent of parents with low incomes say a quality rating system would be very helpful, higher than for parents with higher incomes (45 percent).
- Households with low incomes are more likely to report transportation prevents them from using the type of care they prefer (23 percent versus 12 percent of higher income families).

Child care is unaffordable for families with low incomes.

- 60 percent of families with low-incomes have out-of-pocket child care expenses, compared with 73 percent of higher income families.
- 20 percent of low-income families’ income is spent on child care, compared with 9 percent for families with higher incomes.
- 14 percent of families with low incomes receive child care assistance, compared with a statistically similar 19 percent in 2004.

Most households with low incomes do not receive child care assistance.

- 14 percent of households with low incomes report currently receiving a child care subsidy, compared with a statistically similar 19 percent 5 years ago.

Most households with low incomes are aware of child care assistance.

- 72 percent of households with low incomes are aware of state subsidies to help pay for child care, similar to five years ago and up from 57 ten years ago.

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Child care assistance helps families with low incomes gain access to center-based care.

- 46 percent of households with low incomes receiving a child care subsidy use center-based care as their primary arrangement.
- 22 percent of households with low incomes without a subsidy and 33 percent of households with incomes above 200 percent of poverty (about \$44,100 for family of four) use center-based care.
- Among families with low incomes surveyed, 31 percent of those participating in CCAP use FFN care as their primary child care arrangement, compared with 60 percent for those without a child care subsidy and 37 percent for families with higher incomes.

Child care assistance helps families with low incomes gain access to quality child care.

Families with low incomes and child care subsidies, compared to families with low incomes but lacking child care subsidies:

- Are more likely to rate the quality of their child care arrangements higher with respect to how often their child care providers use a curriculum, track their children's learning, prepare their children for school and have enough education or training to work with young children.
- More often report selecting a caregiver with special training in caring for young children was an important consideration in choosing child care (92 percent).



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Family, friend and neighbor (FFN) child care

Highlights from the 2009 Statewide Household Child Care Survey



Relatives provide most of the FFN care

- FFN care is provided by grandparents (52 percent), followed by friends or neighbors (32 percent), other relatives (22 percent), and older siblings (20 percent).
- For children under age 6, the FFN care is more commonly provided by grandparents. For children ages 6 to 12, the FFN care is more often provided by older siblings.

Most households use FFN care part-time, during weekends and evenings.

- On average, children are in FFN care 13 hours per week during the summer and 10 hours per week during the school year.
- Children under six are in FFN care more hours per week, on average, than children ages 6-12.
- 76 percent of care provided after 6 p.m. and 72 percent of weekend care is provided by FFN caregivers.
- During the school year, children ages 5 and younger are in FFN care, on average, 11 hours per week, compared with 23 hours in centers or licensed family child care.

FFN care is the most common type of child care.

- Altogether, 70 percent of households that use child care regularly use some form of FFN care.
- Of all households using child care, 20 percent use FFN exclusively, and 22 percent use FFN as their primary arrangement but also use other types of care. FFN care is the secondary arrangement for an additional 29 percent. Thirty percent of households have no FFN use.

- Exclusive use of FFN care is highest for children age 2 and younger (38 percent).
- FFN care is a positive choice for many families, especially those with children ages 2 and younger, families of color, low-income households, and families who prefer care by a family member, a caregiver they know and trust, and a caregiver that is more affordable.

FFN care meets the needs of families.

- FFN care is frequently used while parents work evenings and weekends.
- Exclusive use of FFN care is higher for families with low incomes (30 percent) and families of color (31 percent).
- Families choose FFN care for the familiarity, trust, flexibility and cost.
- Families wanting more structured activities for their children or needing more hours of care per week are more likely to use child care centers or licensed family care settings than FFN care.

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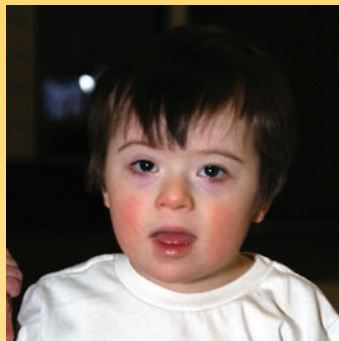
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Child care for children with special needs

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One in five Minnesota children ages 12 and younger has a special need that affects their child care, as reported by their parents.

- Special needs requiring extra attention include health care, physical or developmental disabilities, emotional or behavioral problems or learning disabilities.
- 12 percent of children have more than one of these special needs.
- About 1 in 10 children under age 3 have at least one special need, compared with over 1 in 5 children ages 3 to 12.
- Among all households, children ages 3 to 12 are more likely than children under 5 to have special needs (22 percent versus 11 percent).
- For children of all ages, households with low incomes are more likely than households with higher incomes to have a child with at least one special need (26 percent versus 17 percent).

Parents of children with special needs have fewer child care options.

- 38 percent of parents who have a child with a special need report that they “had to take whatever child care arrangement they could get,” compared with 26 percent of parents whose children do not have any special needs.
- Parents of children with special needs are more likely to know about child care subsidies than other parents (64 percent versus 54 percent).

Family, friend and neighbor (FFN) care is a vital resource for families who have children with special needs.

- Regular FFN use is more likely among households with children with special needs (75 percent).

Parents of children with special needs have more trouble balancing child care and work.

- About a fifth of parents whose children have special needs report that child care problems interfered with accepting or keeping a job in the past year, double the percentage of parents whose children do not have special needs (10 percent).

Most parents who use child care report no problems that interfere with work.

- Child care problems have not kept most parents (88 percent) from taking or keeping a job in the past six months.
- 65 percent have not lost time or income in the past six months because of child care problems (not including when a child has been sick).

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Children and working parents

Highlights from the 2009 Statewide Household Child Care Survey



Some families lose work time or income because of child care problems.

- More than one in three (35 percent) families say they lost work time or income in the past six months because of a problem with a child care arrangement (not including when a child is sick).
- Parents using licensed family child care and center-based care most commonly lose work time due to scheduled closings (29 percent).
- Parents using informal arrangements (FFN) most commonly lose work time due to illness of the caregiver or unspecified reasons the caregiver is not available (32 percent).
- 11 percent of parents report it is “always” or “usually” difficult to deal with a child care problem that arises during work hours.

Child care problems reduce participation in the workforce for some parents.

- 12 percent of parents say that child care problems in the past year kept them from taking or keeping a job, down from 20 percent in 2004.
- Child care problems that interfere with employment more commonly affect parents of color (25 percent), parents who have a child with a special need (21 percent), and parents with low incomes (20 percent) than other parents by about 2 to 1. This was also the case in 2004.

Family schedules commonly require child care before and after standard work hours (7 a.m. to 6 p.m.) and on weekends.

- During the school year, 43 percent of children are regularly in non-parental care during weekday evenings (6 p.m. to 10 p.m.), and on weekends 33 percent are regularly in nonparental care.
- 24 percent of working parents have work schedules that vary from week to week.
- Family, friend and neighbor (FFN) care is the most common type of nonstandard hour care.

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