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RESEARCH-TO-POLICY
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SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS

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The Research-to-Policy Connections series summarizes current research on key topics in child care and early education and discusses implications for policymakers. The first three briefs in this series focused on early care and education for children under age 3—infants and toddlers—in the United States. This document looks at school-age children, who spend time in a greater array of care arrangements than younger children, who are primarily in center care, relative care, or nonrelative care.

Key findings include:

- ▶ While the majority of children are in parental care before and after school, in the summer a majority of children are in relative care.
- ▶ The most common nonparental care arrangements for school-age children are center- or school-based programs, relative care, and self-care.
- ▶ Younger children are more likely than older children to be in relative care before and after school, and in the summer.
- ▶ Older children are more likely than younger children to be in self-care before and after school and in the summer.
- ▶ During the school year, black children, children from single-parent households, and children whose mothers work full-time are more likely to be in self-care.
- ▶ 90 percent of parents rate reliability as “very important” in selecting after-school arrangements.

Overview

School-age children ages 5 through 12 years spend their out-of-school time in many different types of arrangements. In addition to parental care, these include relative care, nonrelative care (either in their own or another family's home), center- or school-based programs, sports and extracurricular activities, summer activities, and self-care. Care types are not necessarily exclusive; some children spend time in a combination of arrangements or have more than one arrangement within a type. This brief will focus primarily on the range of nonparental arrangements in which school-age children participate regularly, both during the school year and in the summer. This range is greater and more complex for school-age children than for infants and toddlers and preschoolers who are primarily in center care, relative care, or nonrelative care.

Arrangement Types¹

Parental care: Care by parents.

Relative care: Care by grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, or anyone related to the child.

Nonrelative care: Care by someone not related to the child, such as a neighbor, baby-sitter, or family child care provider. This care may be provided in the child's home or at another home.

Center- or school-based programs: Supervised activities offered in a nonresidential setting such as a school or child care center.

Sports and other activities: Activities such as organized sports, music lessons, or scouts that children may attend for enrichment purposes or to cover hours that parents are unable to provide supervision.

Self-care: Child is responsible for himself or herself without adult supervision.

Findings presented in this brief are drawn from the three most current and comprehensive nationally representative surveys documenting the before-, after-school, and summer activities of school-aged children. The 2005 After-School Programs and Activities Survey of the National Household Education Survey (ASPA-NHES: 2005) and the 2001 Before- and After-School Programs and Activities Survey of the National Household Education Survey (ASPA-NHES: 2001) both paint a picture of out-of-school time during the school year. The National Survey of America's Families, 1999, describes summer-time activities.

Additional data from these three nationally representative surveys are presented in Tables 1-3 at the conclusion of the brief. Key findings and other highlights are presented below.

While the data in this brief illustrate where school-age children spend their out-of-school time, they do not examine whether parents make these arrangements by choice or by default due to constraints such as cost, transportation, and work schedules. Additionally, the data do not examine the availability and quality of school-age child care in communities and how that influences arrangements. However, the ASPA-NHES 2005 data does ask parents to rate the factors that are 'very important' in selecting after-school care. This information is included in the brief.

Key Findings

The care arrangements for school-age children are complex and vary greatly according to several demographic factors.

- ▶ While the majority of children are in parental care before and after school, in the summer a majority of children are in relative care.
- ▶ Two-thirds of children are in only one nonparental arrangement before or after school.
- ▶ Children with more than one arrangement spend more time on average in nonparental care than children with only one arrangement.
- ▶ The most common before- and after-school arrangements for school-age children are center- or school-based programs, relative care, and self-care.
- ▶ Younger children (kindergarten through 5th grade) are more likely than older children (6th through 8th grade) to be in relative care before and after school and in the summer.
- ▶ Older children are more likely than younger children to be in self-care before and after school and in the summer.
- ▶ During the school year, black children, children from single-parent households, and children whose mothers work full-time are more likely to be in self-care than their counterparts.
- ▶ While during the school year there is little difference in the percentage of low-income and high-income children in self-care, in the summer, children from higher-income families are more likely to spend time in self-care.
- ▶ Children from higher-income families are less likely to be in summer school than children from lower-income families.
- ▶ Between 2001 and 2005, the percentage of children in parental care increased overall.
- ▶ 90 percent of parents rate reliability as “very important” in selecting after-school arrangements.

School-Age Child Care Arrangements During the School Year

The findings below provide a more detailed look at how children spend their out of school time during the school year, both before and after school, and how these arrangements vary based on demographic factors.

Before- and After-School Arrangements²

How many arrangements do parents organize for their children?

- ▶ 68 percent of children are in one nonparental arrangement before and/or after school.
- ▶ 32 percent of children are in more than one arrangement.³
- ▶ Those in one nonparental arrangement are more likely to be in a center- or school-based program (20 percent), in the care of a relative (18 percent), or in self-care (17 percent) than in nonrelative care (8 percent).

Nationally, how many hours do children spend in different types of arrangements?

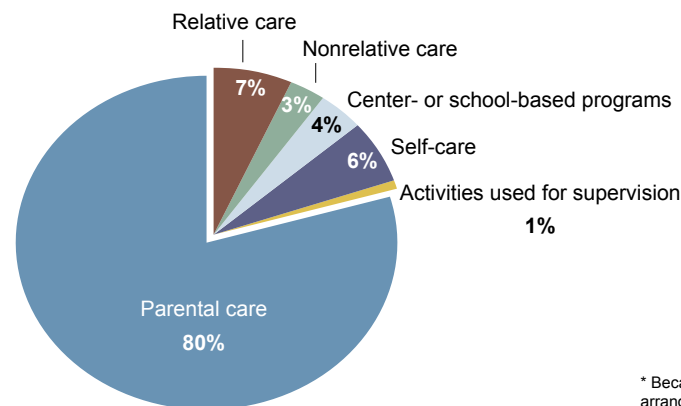
- ▶ Children with regularly scheduled before- and/or after-school nonparental arrangements spend about 10.4 hours per week in these arrangements.
- ▶ Most children in regular nonparental arrangements before and after school spend more hours in nonrelative and relative care than in center-based programs.
- ▶ Children with more than one arrangement spend more time in nonparental care than those with a single arrangement.

Before-School Arrangements

What is the national picture of before-school arrangements during the school year?

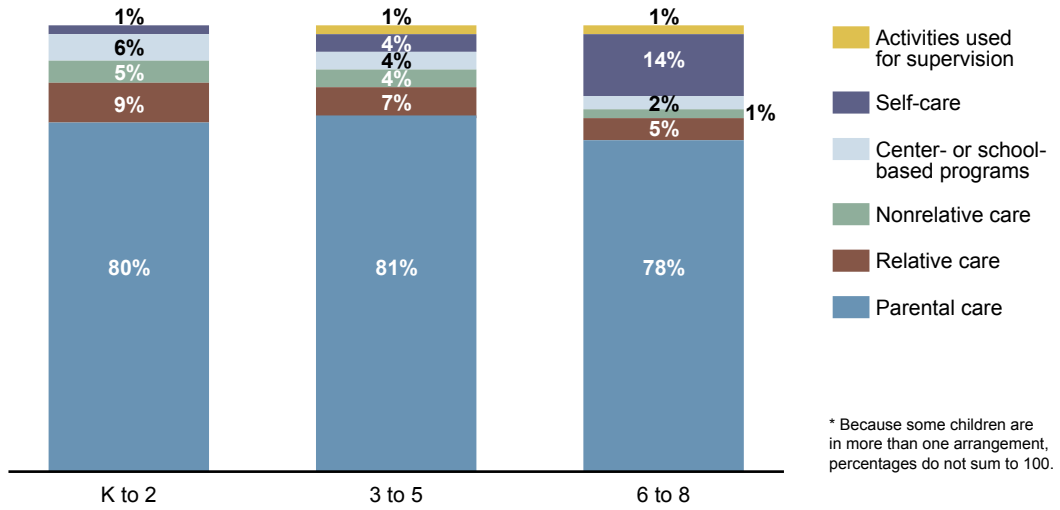
- ▶ 80 percent of children are in parental care before school. (See Figure 1).
- ▶ The most common nonparental arrangements, in order, are relative care and self-care.
- ▶ Black children are more likely to be in relative care than white non-Hispanic, and Hispanic children.
- ▶ Younger children (kindergarten through 5th grade) are more likely to be in relative care, while older children (6th through 8th grade) are more likely to be in self-care. (See Figure 2).
- ▶ Children from low-income families, children from single-parent families, and children whose mothers work full-time are more likely to be in self-care than their counterparts.

Figure 1: Children in before-school arrangements by type



* Because some children are in more than one arrangement, percentages do not sum to 100.

Figure 2: Children in before-school arrangements by grade

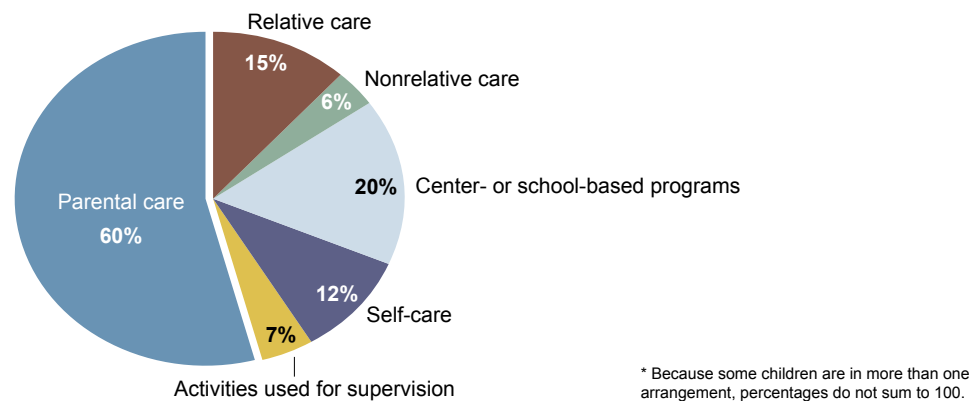


After-School Arrangements⁴

What is the national picture of after-school time during the school year?

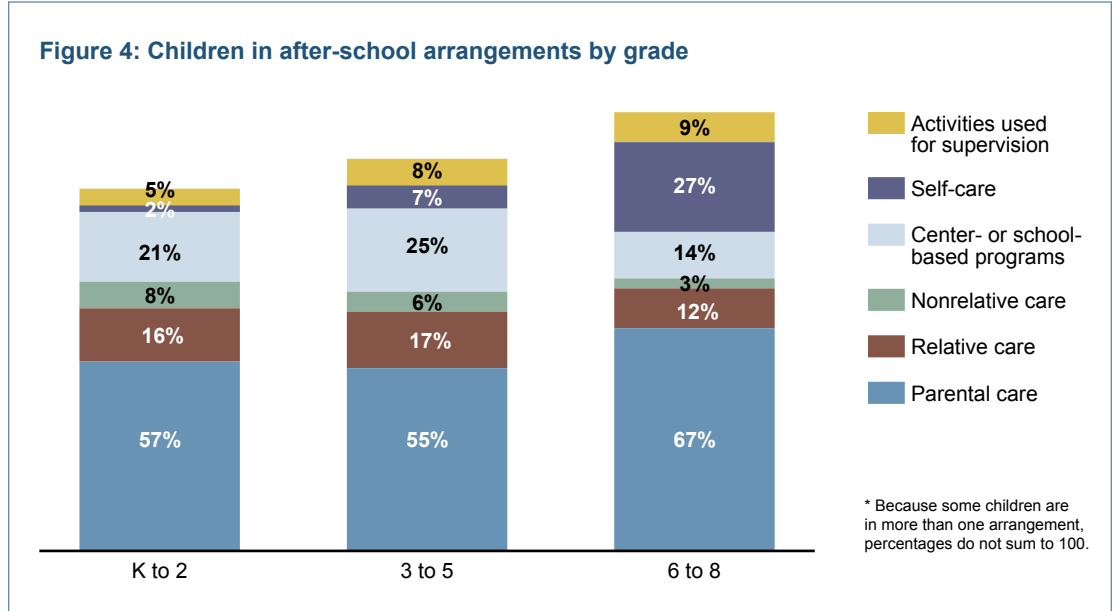
- ▶ 60 percent of children are in parental care after school. (See Figure 3).
- ▶ Overall, those in nonparental arrangements are more likely to be in center- or school-based programs and relative care than in self-care, activities used for supervision, and nonrelative care.
- ▶ The majority of relative care providers are grandmothers.

Figure 3: Children in after-school arrangements by type



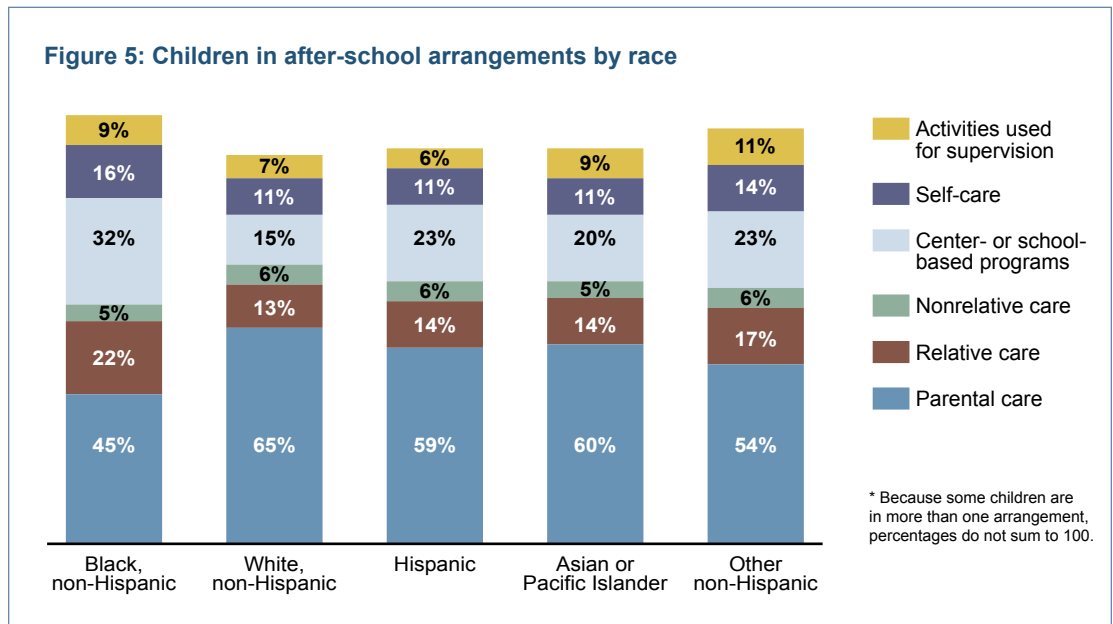
How do after-school arrangements differ by grade?

- ▶ Children in kindergarten through 5th grade are more likely to be in center- or school-based programs and in relative care than children in 6th through 8th grade. (See Figure 4).
- ▶ The majority of children in nonparental arrangements in 6th through 8th grade are in self-care.



How do after-school arrangements differ by race/ethnicity?

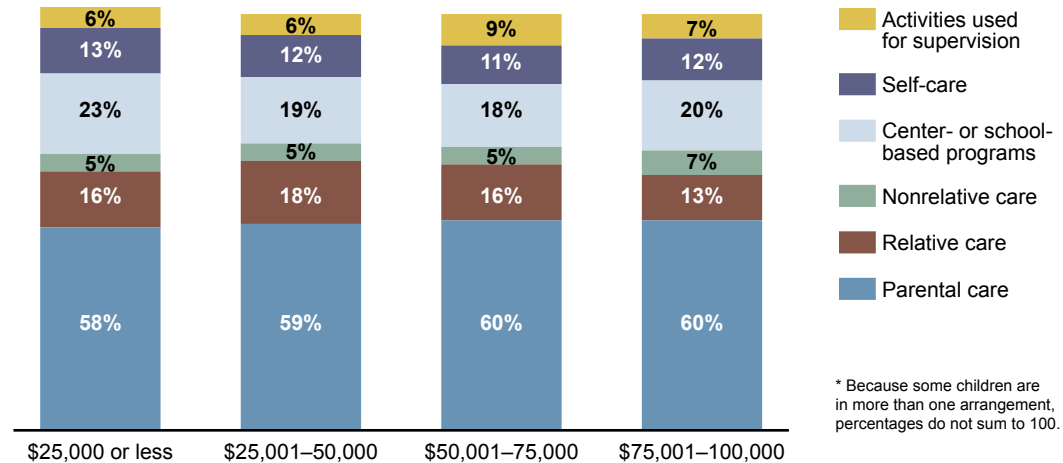
- ▶ Black children are more likely to be in center- or school-based programs, and in relative care than white non-Hispanic, Hispanic, Asian or Pacific Islander, and other non-Hispanic children. (See Figure 5).
- ▶ Black children are also more likely to be in self-care than white non-Hispanic, Hispanic, Asian or Pacific Islander, and other non-Hispanic children.



How do after-school arrangements differ by income level?

- ▶ There is little difference in the percentage of children in parental arrangements and in self-care among low-income and high-income households. (See Figure 6).
- ▶ Children from low-income households are more likely to be in center- or school-based care and relative care than children from high-income households.

Figure 6: Children in after-school arrangements by income level



Of the children served by the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), overseen by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Child Care Bureau, 46 percent are school-age. Fifty-two percent of school-age children (ages 5 through 12) served by CCDF are in center-based programs, 32 percent are in family homes, 12 percent are served in-home, and 4 percent are served by group homes.⁵

How do after-school arrangements differ by family type?

- ▶ Children from single-parent families are more likely to be in nonparental care than children from two-parent families.
- ▶ Children from single-parent families are more likely to be in center- or school-based programs and in relative care than children from two-parent families.
- ▶ Children from single-parent families are also more likely to be in self-care than children from two-parent families.

How does mothers' employment status affect use of care?

- ▶ Children whose mothers work full-time (more than 35 hours per week) are more likely to be in nonparental arrangements after school compared with children whose mothers work

part-time (less than 35 hours per week), are looking for work, or are not in the labor force.

- ▶ Children whose mothers work full-time are more likely to be in center- or school-based programs, relative care, and self-care than children whose mothers work part-time, are looking for work, or are not in the labor force.

What factors do parents rate as “very important” in selecting arrangements?

- ▶ The majority of parents rated reliability as “very important” (90 percent), followed by availability of care provider (81 percent), location (78 percent), learning activities (61 percent), time with other children (55 percent), cost (44 percent), and number of children in care group (37 percent).

Comparing After-School Care Arrangements Between 2001 and 2005

Are there any differences in the percentage of children in after-school arrangements between 2001 and 2005?

- ▶ While there is little difference in the percentage of children in various nonparental arrangements, parental care has increased overall by 10 percent.
- ▶ There was a 20 percent increase in parental care for children in 6th through 8th grade.

School-Age Child Care Arrangements During the Summer

The findings below provide a comprehensive picture of the care arrangements of school-age children during the summer and how these arrangements vary based on the age of the child and family income.

Summer Arrangements⁶

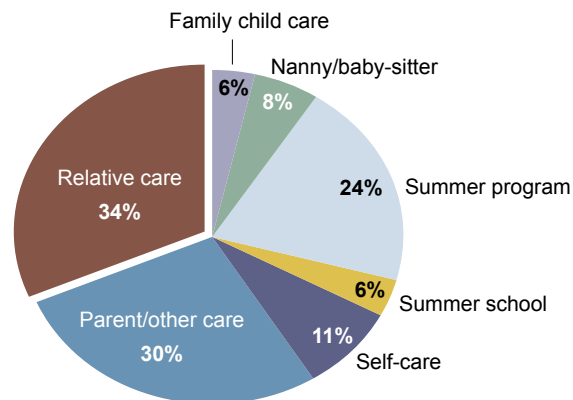
What is the national picture of out-of-school time during the summer?

- ▶ 34 percent of children are in relative care during the summer. (See Figure 7).
- ▶ 30 percent of children are in parent care/activities, lessons, or sports, and 24 percent are in organized summer programs.

How many hours do children spend in various summer arrangements?

- ▶ Children spend on average, 9.5 hours more per week in relative care and other supervised arrangements during the summer compared to the school year.
- ▶ While there is little change in the percentage of children in self-care during the summer compared to the school year, the amount of time that children spend in self-care more than doubles from 4.8 hours to 10.3 hours per week.

Figure 7: Children in summer arrangements by type

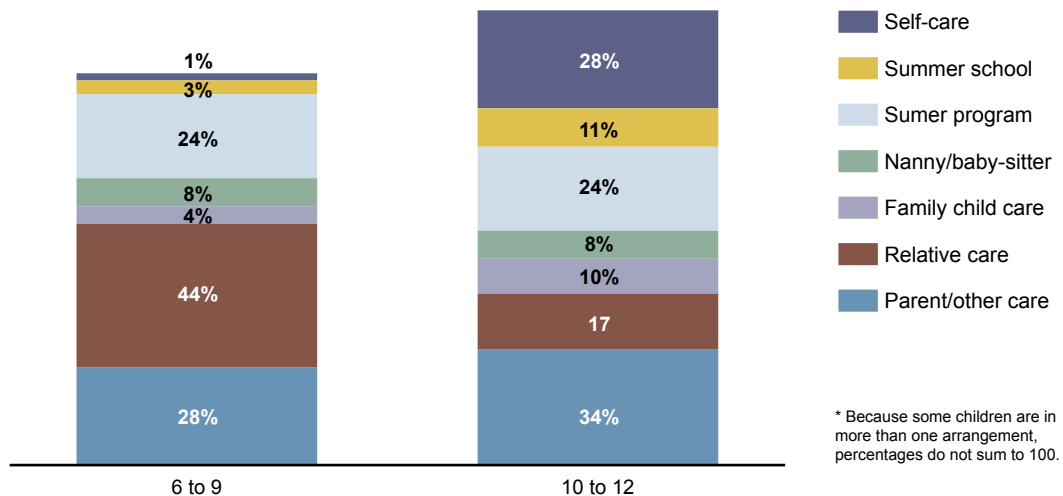


* Because some children are in more than one arrangement, percentages do not sum to 100.

How does summer care differ by children’s ages?

- ▶ Younger children (ages 6 to 9) are more likely to be in relative care than older children (ages 10 to 12). (See Figure 8).
- ▶ Older children are more likely to be in self-care than younger children.
- ▶ Younger and older children are equally likely to be in organized summer programs
- ▶ Older children are more likely to be in summer school than younger children.

Figure 8: Children in summer arrangements by age



* Because some children are in more than one arrangement, percentages do not sum to 100.

How does summer care differ by income level?

- ▶ The majority of children from low-income families are in relative care during the summer.
- ▶ Children from higher-income families are less likely to be in summer school than children from lower-income families.
- ▶ Children from higher-income families are more likely to spend time in self-care than children from lower-income families.

Summary

These findings reveal the complexity of care arrangements for school-age children. The data illustrate the great variability in the type of care arrangements that parents select, both during the school year and in the summer, based on factors such as age of the child, family income, and family structure. Specifically, older children spend a great deal of time in self-care, while younger children are more likely to be in relative care. In addition, black children, children from single-parent households, and children whose mothers work full-time are more likely to spend time in self-care during the school year than their counterparts.

Policy Implications

The wide range of school-age care types and the variation in use by younger and older children and by single-parent and low-income families present important considerations for policymakers. Seasonal differences in the types of care used also warrant attention.

Relative Care

- ▶ Relative care is an important child care option, particularly for younger school-age children, as well as black children, low-income children, and children from single-parent families. Given this extensive use, it is critical to think about how to engage and support relatives to ensure that children in these settings do not miss out on the kinds of opportunities for enrichment available in more formal after-school programs. For low-income children and children from single-parent families who are already at a disadvantage, these linkages are vital. There are many strategies for reaching out to relative caregivers, including providing access to learning opportunities, resources, and peer support groups, as well as facilitating linkages to activities and sports. Offering supports in the summer, when use of relative care increases, is also very important.

Self-Care

- ▶ Self-care can be a serious problem, given the risks associated with this type of arrangement and the consistent use of this arrangement both during the school year and in the summer. Many safety issues are involved with leaving children unsupervised that put them at greater risk for physical injury or emotional harm. For children from single-parent families and families where mothers work full time, the problem may be a lack of alternate options;

thus providing access to high-quality after-school care or programs is critical. In the case of older children from higher-income families, while parents may feel less concerned about neighborhood safety issues, older children may be more prone to engage in other risky behaviors such as smoking, or alcohol or drug use. Therefore, it is important to encourage more engagement in after-school and summer programs for older children. Tailoring these programs to the developmental needs of older children could foster greater participation.⁷

Summer Needs

- ▶ In the summer, parents face a different set of constraints as they seek to fill hours of care usually covered by the school day. The research findings indicate that while there is no increase in the percentage of children in self-care during the summer, the number of hours that children spend in self-care doubles compared to the school year. Among low-income families, the majority of children are in center- or school-based programs during the school year, while in the summer these families rely heavily on relative care. Offering more full-day programming in the summer could provide additional options for families and structured environments for children. School-age child care policies need to take into account and address these seasonal differences.

Table 1: Before-school arrangements, kindergarten through 8th grade

Characteristics	Percent of children in various arrangements					
	Parental care	Relative care	Nonrelative care	Center- or school-based programs	Activities used for supervision	Self-care
Overall	80	7	3	4	1	6
By race						
Black, non-Hispanic	70	12	3	4	1	13
White, non-Hispanic	82	6	3	4	1	5
Hispanic	80	8	3	3	1	7
Other	79	8	2	5	1	7
By grade						
K to 2	80	9	5	6	0	1
3 to 5	81	7	4	4	1	4
6 to 8	78	5	1	2	1	14
By family income						
\$25,000 or less	76	10	3	3	1	9
\$25,001–\$50,000	80	8	3	3	0	7
\$50,001– \$75,000	83	6	3	5	1	4
More than \$75,000	82	5	4	6	1	4
By family type						
One parent	70	13	4	4	1	10
Two parents	84	5	3	4	1	5
By mother’s employment status						
Works 35 or more hours per week	69	12	5	6	1	9
Works less than 35 hours per week	88	3	2	2	1	4
Not employed	91	3	1	1	1	4

Source: 2001 Before- and After-School Programs and Activities Survey of the National Household Education Survey (ASPA-NHES: 2001).

Table 2: After-school arrangements, kindergarten through 8th grade

Characteristics	Percent of children in various arrangements*					
	Parental care	Relative care	Nonrelative care	Center- or school-based programs	After-school activity used for supervision	Self-care
Overall	60	15	6	20	7	12
By race						
Black, non-Hispanic	45	22	5	32	9	16
White, non-Hispanic	65	13	6	15	7	11
Hispanic	59	14	6	23	6	11
Asian or Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic	60	14	5	20	9	11
Other, non-Hispanic	54	17	6	23	11	14
By grade						
K to 2	57	16	8	21	5	2
3 to 5	55	17	6	25	8	7
6 to 8	67	12	3	14	9	27
By family income						
\$25,000 or less	58	16	5	23	6	13
\$25,001–\$50,000	59	18	5	19	6	12
\$50,001– \$75,000	60	16	5	18	9	11
\$75,001–\$100,000	60	13	7	20	7	12
By family type						
One parent	47	24	8	26	8	15
Two parents	65	11	5	18	7	11
By mother's employment status						
Works 35 or more hours per week	43	24	9	27	10	16
Works less than 35 hours per week	68	11	5	15	6	11
Not in the labor force	80	4	1	12	5	7

* Percentages do not sum to 100 since children may have more than one after-school arrangement of the same type or more than one after-school arrangement of different types.

Source: 2005 After-School Programs and Activities Survey of the National Household Education Survey (ASPA-NHES: 2005).

Table 3: Summer care, children aged 6–12 years

Characteristics	Percent of children in various arrangements*							
	Parent/ other care	Relative care	Family child care	Nanny/ baby-sitter	Summer program	Summer school	Before- and/or after- school care	Self-care
Overall	30	34	6	8	24	6	2	11
By age								
6 to 9 years	28	44	4	8	24	3	2	1
10 to 12 years	34	17	10	8	24	11	2	28
By family income								
Below 200 percent of FPL	27	45	5	4	20	14	3	5
At or above 200 percent of FPL	32	27	7	11	26	2	1	15

* Percentages do not sum to 100 as many children are in more than one arrangement.

Source: National Survey of America's Families, 1999.

Endnotes

1. Definitions are based on the categories used in the ASPA-NHES: 2001 and 2005 and the NSAF 1999. In the ASPA-NHES 2001, nonparental care is categorized as relative care, nonrelative care, center- or school-based programs, self-care, and before- and after-school activities (activities within organized settings that children attend outside of school hours and not part of a program). ASPA-NHES uses the same categories of nonparental care except they do not include before-school activities, only after-school. NSAF 1999 combines parental care, sports, and other activities into a category of parent/other care. This category includes parents arranging their work schedules to provide care, working from home, arrangements that are not regular, and placing children in activities such as lessons, clubs, or sports as a child care arrangement.
2. Findings are from ASPA-NHES 2001, which collected data on a nationally representative sample of 9,583 children from kindergarten through 8th grade participating in before- and after-school activities. Parents were asked about their children's participation in various arrangements before- and after-school hours, including relative care, nonrelative care (includes care by family child care providers, neighbors, baby-sitters, and others not related to the child) center- or school-based programs, sports/extracurricular activities, and self-care. Only those arrangements that were regularly scheduled at least once a week or at least once a month were reported. The 2001 data is the most current available on the before-school activities of school-age children. Since the before-school arrangements for children were relatively limited with respect to the amount of time children spent in them before school, these data were not collected for the ASPA-NHES: 2005. Additionally, the 2001 survey includes data on the number of before and/or after-school arrangements and the number of hours that children spent in these arrangements. This information is not available in the 2005 data. See: Kleiner, B., Nolin, M., & Chapman C. (2004). *Before- and after-school care, programs, and activities of children in kindergarten through eighth grade: 2001*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
3. 13 percent of children are in more than one type of arrangement not including self-care, 11 percent are in self-care and some other arrangement, and 8 percent are in more than one arrangement within a type.
4. These findings are from ASPA-NHES: 2005, which collected data on a nationally representative sample of 11,684 students in kindergarten through 8th grade in after-school activities. Participants were surveyed about their children's participation in various after-school arrangements, activities, and programs. Arrangements included care received from a relative, a nonrelative (either in the child's home or in another home), center- or school-based programs, after-school activities with adult supervision, and self-care. See: Carver, P., Iruka, I., & Chapman, C. (2006). *National Household Education Surveys Program of 2005. After-School Programs and Activities: 2005*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
5. The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) provides funding to states to assist low-income families, families receiving temporary public assistance, and those transitioning from public assistance in obtaining child care so they can work or pursue education/training. Data presented here is taken from: *State afterschool profiles/national profile*. (Undated). Washington, DC: The Finance Project and National Governors' Association Center for Best Practices <www.nccic.org/afterschool/statep.html> and Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). (2006). *Report to Congress for FY 2002 and FY 2003*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Child Care Bureau <www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ccb/policy1/congressreport/2002_2003.htm>. Accessed October 19, 2006.
6. Findings are from the National Survey of America's Families, 1999, which collected data on a nationally representative sample of children age 6 through 13 with employed primary caretakers. Parents were asked about child care arrangements at least once a week in the previous month. The categories of care studied were summer care, self-care and parent/other care. Parent/other care includes parents arranging their work schedules to provide care, working from home, arrangements that are not regular, and placing children in activities such as lessons, clubs, or sports as a child care arrangement. Within summer care, the following settings were examined: summer school, before- and/or after-school programs, summer programs, family child care, baby-sitter, or nanny care, and relative care. Self-care was defined as any time spent alone or with a sibling younger than age 13 on a regular basis. See: Capizzano, J., Adelman, A., & Stagner, M. (2002). *What happens when the school year is over? The use and costs of child care for school-age children during the summer months*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
7. Vandivere, S., Tout, K., Zaslow, M., Calkins, J. & Capizzano, J. (2003). *Unsupervised time: Family and child factors associated with self-care*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

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