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Child care participation and maternal employment trends in Australia

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Contents

Abstract	vii
Acknowledgements	ix
Executive summary	xi
1. Introduction	1
2. Background	3
2.1 Child care in Australia	3
2.2 Choice of child care arrangements	5
2.3 Maternal employment and child care	6
2.4 This study	7
3. Child Care Survey data	9
4. Results	11
4.1 Overall trends in child care	11
4.2 Maternal employment status and child care	13
4.3 Child care for children of employed mothers	15
4.4 Time children spend in child care	21
4.5 Managing employment without child care	24
5. Discussion and conclusions	27
References	31
Appendices	35

List of tables

Table 1:	Child care arrangements of children aged 0–2 years with employed mothers, selected years 1984–2011	16
Table 2:	Child care/ECE arrangements of children aged 3–5 years with employed mothers, selected years 1984–2011	18
Table 3:	Child care arrangements of children aged 6–11 with employed mothers, selected years 1984–2011	20
Table 4:	Mean weekly hours of child care (or early childhood education) for children with employed mothers, by age group, selected years 1984–2011	22
Table 5:	Working arrangements and child care, children with employed mothers, 2011	25
Table A1:	Sample characteristics, selected years 1984–2011	35
Table A2:	Distribution of employed mothers' weekly working hours, selected years 1984–2011	36
Table B1:	Main reason for using formal or informal care for children aged less than 12 with employed mothers, by child age group, 2005 and 2011	37
Table B2:	Main reason for using informal care for children aged 3–5 years, by mothers' employment status, selected years 1984–2011	38
Table B3:	Child care arrangements of children aged 0–2 years, by maternal work hours, selected years 1984–2011	38
Table B4:	Child care/ECE arrangements of children aged 3–5 years, by maternal work hours, selected years 1984–2011	39
Table B5:	Child care arrangements of children aged 6–11 years, by maternal work hours, selected years 1984–2011	40
Table B6:	Working arrangements and child care, children with employed mothers, 2005	41

List of figures

Figure 1:	Estimated population of children, by age, 1980–2011	4
Figure 2:	Maternal employment, total, full-time and part-time, by age of youngest child, 1981–2011	6
Figure 3:	Estimated number of children using any child care and formal or informal child care, by age of child, 1984–2011	11
Figure 4:	Percentage of children using any child care and formal or informal child care, by age of child, 1984–2011	12
Figure 5:	Percentage of children using child care, by type of child care and age of child, 1984–2011	12
Figure 6:	Percentage of children using any child care, by mothers' employment status, selected years 1984–2011	14
Figure 7:	Percentage of children using formal or informal child care, by age of child and mothers' employment status, selected years 1984–2011	14
Figure 8:	Percentage of 0–2 year old children using any child care, formal or informal child care, by maternal weekly work hours, selected years 1984–2011	17
Figure 9:	Percentage of 3–5 year old children using any child care, formal or informal child care, by maternal weekly work hours, selected years 1984–2011	19
Figure 10:	Percentage of 3–5 year old children using preschool or long day care, by maternal weekly work hours, selected years 1984–2011	19
Figure 11:	Percentage of 6–11 years using any child care, formal or informal child care, by maternal weekly work hours, selected years 1984–2011	21
Figure 12:	Mean weekly hours of child care (or early childhood education) for children who used some child care, by age and mothers' employment status, selected years 1984–2011	21
Figure 13:	Children's weekly hours in care, by age group, broad care groups and maternal weekly work hours, 2011	23
Figure 14:	Percentage of children using no child care (parent-only care), by age of child and mothers' employment status, selected years 1984–2011	24

Abstract

Many industrialised countries, Australia included, have experienced significant growth in maternal employment over recent decades, even among mothers of very young children. This has meant that many families have found different ways of managing child care responsibilities, and as such, formal child care provision has become a key strategy and government priority in addressing work–family reconciliation. Despite this, trends in child care use have rarely been analysed specifically in relation to maternal employment. This paper explores trends in types of child care for children aged under 12 years old with employed mothers in Australia, from the 1980s through to 2011, to examine how the roles of different forms of care provision have changed in this environment of increasing maternal employment. The paper demonstrates that maternal employment is not always associated with extensive use of formal child care, with much of the child care for maternal employment being provided informally by family members. Nevertheless, there has been much more use of formal child care (especially long day care centres for younger children and outside-school-hours care for school-aged children) for children of employed mothers over this time. This care has not, however, displaced informal care, with formal child care often being combined with informal child care. Also, there continues to be a portion of the population who manage without non-parental child care, and this is to some extent related to some mothers (and to a much lesser extent, fathers) working short hours, being self-employed, working from home or working flexible hours.

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This paper uses unit record data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Child Care Surveys, more recently named the Childhood Education and Care Surveys.

The findings and views reported in this paper are those of the author and should not be attributed to AIFS, the ANU or the ABS.

Executive summary

Many industrialised countries, Australia included, have experienced significant growth in maternal employment over recent decades, even among mothers of very young children. For example, in Australia in 1981, 42% of mothers with children aged under 15 years were employed, compared to 66% in 2011. For mothers with children aged under 5 years, employment rates increased from 30% to 56% over this time.

This growth in maternal employment has meant that many families have found different ways of managing child care responsibilities, and consequently, formal child care provision has become a key strategy and government priority in addressing work–family reconciliation. In the 1980s in Australia, when this analysis of trends commences, there was very little formal child care for children under school age, except in the form of state-run preschool systems and community-based and non-profit initiatives. There was also little formal child care for children of school age; some before- and after-school-hours care existed, largely through parent-based or locally organised centres. Since this time there has been a very significant expansion of child care, especially in long day care and outside-school-hours care. Family day care has also been available to families over this time. Formal care options have therefore become more accessible to families.

But also, even when both parents are employed, many minimise their use of non-parental child care by working shorter or flexible hours. Others rely on informal providers of care (especially grandparents).

This paper provides insights on the relationship between maternal employment and children's use of child care, to examine how the roles of different care providers have changed in this environment of increasing maternal employment.

The analyses presented in this report are based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Child Care Surveys (more recently named the Childhood Education and Care Surveys), with links between maternal employment and child care analysed using the confidentialised unit record files for these surveys. These data are used to explore the proportions of children in different types of care, and the average hours of child care used, with a focus on families with employed mothers. The links between child care and maternal employment are analysed at different points in time between the early 1980s and 2011, and are explored separately for children aged 0–2 years, 3–5 years and 6–11 years. In each of these age groups there are distinctive patterns of care, and for the 3–5 year old children, early childhood education in the form of preschool is important to consider. In these analyses preschool attendance is examined separately from long day care.

The paper demonstrates that maternal employment is not always associated with extensive use of formal child care, with much of the child care that supports maternal employment being provided by family members. Nevertheless, there has been much more use of formal child care for children of employed mothers (especially long day care for younger children and outside-school-hours care for school-aged children) over the period from the early 1980s to 2011.

Growth in formal care has not, however, displaced informal care. Although there has been some decline in the percentage of children in informal care since the 1990s, and especially between the 2008 and 2011 ABS surveys, a substantial proportion of families still use informal child care—some using a mix of informal and formal care, others relying only on informal care.

It is only at preschool age (3–5 years) that the proportion of children in *only* informal care has become quite small, because of the now widespread use of long day care or preschool at this age.

From the 1980s to 2011 there has been some shift in who provides informal child care, with a decline in the proportion of children cared for by non-relatives, such as friends and neighbours. The proportion of children cared for by adult relatives, who are most often grandparents, has remained high for all ages of children, although declining somewhat in 2011.

Among children who are in some form of child care, those with employed mothers spend longer in child care, on average, compared to those with mothers who are not employed. These differences are most apparent for children under school age, as the average time children spend in child care once they are in school is relatively low for all children regardless of their mothers' employment status. This has remained true across all the survey years examined. Increases in average time spent in child care by children under school age have been apparent over the survey years, although not for the youngest children.

Within families with employed mothers, the average time children spend in child care, among those who are in some child care, is slightly lower than the average time mothers are in paid work. This is particularly apparent when mothers work full-time. Families may manage with a lower amount of child care by using various work arrangements, such as working from home, or through the father taking on increased responsibility for the care of children.

These analyses show that while children with employed mothers are more likely to be in some form of child care than are children with mothers who are not employed, even when mothers are employed, a significant proportion of families manage without child care. This is particularly true in the case of the youngest children, with one-third of children under one year old with employed mothers being in only parental care. This percentage has remained virtually unchanged from the 1980s to 2011.

From the 1980s, maternal employment has increased primarily in terms of part-time work. These analyses show that children are less likely to be in child care when mothers work part-time hours, especially shorter part-time hours. For children aged 3–5 years, associations between mothers' work hours and the type of formal care or early childhood education reveal that in each year examined, children were less likely to be attending preschool, and more likely to be in long day care when mothers worked longer hours.

While reduced maternal work hours allows for less child care, some parents use other job characteristics to facilitate their caring responsibilities around their working responsibilities. In particular, when children of employed parents were in only parental care, mothers were more likely to report working flexible hours and working from home when compared to those children in some child care. The links between child care use and parents' job characteristics were much stronger for mothers' employment than for fathers' employment.

Overall, this report demonstrates that maternal employment is not always associated with extensive use of formal child care, with much of the child care for maternal employment being provided by family members. Nevertheless, there has been much more use of formal child care for children of employed mothers (especially long day care for younger children and outside-school-hours care for school-aged children) over the period from the early 1980s to 2011. This care has not, however, displaced informal care, with formal child care often being combined with informal child care. Also, there continues to be a portion of the population who manage without non-parental child care, and this is to some extent related to some mothers (and to a much lesser extent, fathers) working shorter and/or flexible hours.

1

Introduction

Many industrialised countries, Australia included, have experienced significant growth in maternal employment over recent decades, even among mothers of very young children. This has meant that many families have found different ways of managing child care responsibilities, and as such, formal child care provision has become a key strategy and government priority in addressing work–family reconciliation. Despite this, the association between trends in child care use and maternal employment have rarely been analysed. Rather, trends in non-parental child care are assumed to reflect trends in maternal employment. These trends, however, may not be so closely related, since even when both parents are employed, many families minimise their use of non-parental child care or make use of informal child care, and many children are in child care for reasons other than parental employment.

This paper explores trends in types of child care used for children aged under 12 years with employed mothers in Australia, from the 1980s through to 2011, to examine how the roles of different care providers have changed in this environment of increasing maternal employment. These analyses help to illustrate how families manage at different life stages, and highlight the continuing role of parental care and informal child care for families with employed mothers, despite formal child care use becoming more widespread. The paper demonstrates that maternal employment is not always associated with extensive use of formal child care; much of the child care that supports maternal employment is provided by family members.

Data from the 1980s through to 2011 are used to explore these changes, looking at the proportions of children in different types of care, and the average amounts of child care used. This period of time was selected for examination because the availability of national datasets at different points within this timeframe permits analysis of how maternal employment and associated child care use has changed. The period of time is also of interest because of the substantial changes in maternal employment and formal child care provision that occurred over this time. The analyses are based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Child Care Surveys (more recently named the Childhood Education and Care Surveys), with links between maternal employment and child care analysed using the confidentialised unit record files from these surveys.

2.1 Child care in Australia

It is generally accepted that in the 1980s, when this analysis of trends commences, there was very little formal child care for children under school age in Australia, except in the form of state-run preschool systems and community-based and non-profit initiatives. There was little formal child care for children of school age; some before- and after-school-hours care existed, largely through parent-based or locally organised centres (Brennan, 1998; Moyle, Meyer, & Evans, 1996).

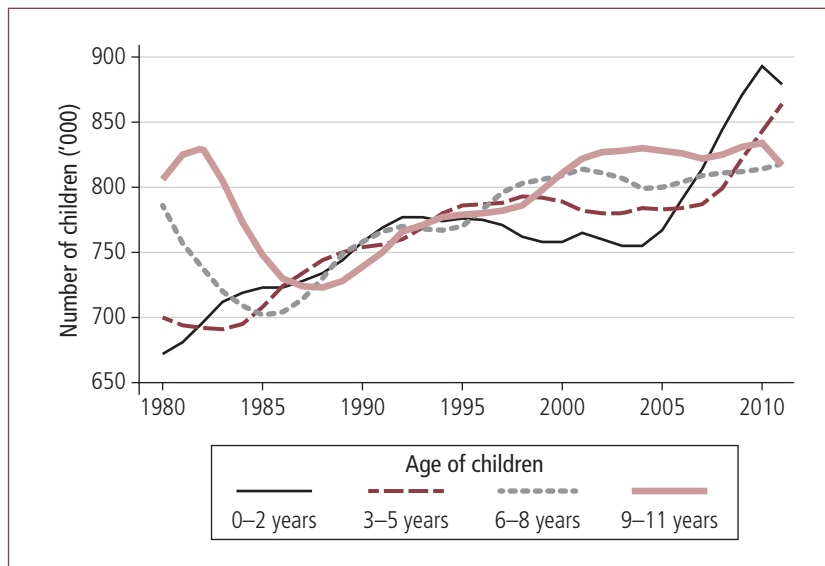
The 1980s and beyond has seen very significant changes and growth in the provision of formal child care in Australia. The amount of funding allocated to child care, and the way in which funding has been distributed has changed considerably, as outlined comprehensively by Brennan (1998, 2004, 2007). These changes are not reviewed here, but it is important to highlight that there has been considerable growth in the number of child care places. (See, for example, Boyd, 2012; Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2010; and Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009 for more background on the provision of child care and early childhood education [ECE] in Australia.)

Estimates of the total number of child care places in the early 1980s are not precise, as available statistics only present the number of Commonwealth-sponsored places. As private providers of care generally did not receive Commonwealth subsidies prior to 1991, these numbers are likely to underestimate the total number of available child care places. In 1982 there were around 41,600 Commonwealth-sponsored child care places, including 18,600 in long day care centres, 15,100 in family day care and 7,900 in school-age care (Brennan, 1998). Demonstrating the likely underestimation, in the 1984 Child Care Survey (ABS, 1984), 69,600 families reported using a child care centre and 27,400 family day care in the previous week for at least one of their children—estimates that are considerably higher than the number of Commonwealth-sponsored places, even taking into account the slightly different timeframe and considering that some children will have taken a part-time rather than full-time child care place.

By 1991, the number of formal places was substantially higher than in the previous decade, at a total of 168,300 places (76,300 long day care, 42,500 family day care, 44,400 school-age care and 5,100 other types of care). Continuing expansions through the 1990s meant that by 1996 the numbers were higher again at 306,600 (168,100 long day care, 60,100 family day care, 71,800 school-age care and 6,600 other care) (Brennan, 1998). By 2001, the reporting methodology had changed for school-age care, so calculating a total is problematic, but some increases were evident in the number of places in long day care centres (193,800) and family day care (70,800). School-age care numbers, now including vacation care places, were 230,500 (AIHW, 2003).

Between 2001 and 2008 the increase in long day care centre places and school-age care places continued, with around 303,700 long day care centre places and around 318,700 school-aged care places available in 2008 (DEEWR, 2009). More recently, the supply of child care has been presented as the number of services available, and so data are not directly comparable. However, estimates of the number of children using care at September 2011 are consistent with there continuing to be increases in child care places in both long day care and outside-school-hours care (DEEWR, 2012).

The increases in the number of child care places to some extent reflect increased demand for child care, which has partly been because of growth in the population of children of eligible ages, and partly because of the growth in maternal employment (discussed further below). Reflecting the variation in the population structure and fertility rates over time, the number of children in different age groups has varied considerably over the period 1980 through to 2011. There has been a notable increase in the number of 0–2 year old children in recent years, which is now beginning to be reflected in the growth in the number of 3–5 year olds (Figure 1).



Source: ABS (2012)

Figure 1: Estimated population of children, by age, 1980–2011

Although the overall number of child care places has increased, the local area supply of child care may be quite variable, even in recent years (DEEWR, 2009; Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009). Further, some families may feel constrained in their options regarding child care because of the cost involved. Government assistance, through rebates and benefits, aims to minimise the costs of child care for families, but according to some research, costs have nevertheless risen over the period covered in this report (Kalb, 2009). Indeed, Buckingham (2008) found that this increase was at a greater rate than the overall cost of living, even after taking account of the different forms of assistance available from the 1990s through to 2007, when the Child Care Cash Rebate was converted to a cash payment.

Informal carers play a very significant role in providing work-related child care. Informal care is unregulated child care, often provided by family, friends or neighbours, in the carers' or children's homes. Grandparents make up a large proportion of these carers. Many families have a preference for informal care, in part because it means their children can be cared for by someone they already know, and in a home setting (Greenblat & Ochilree, 1993; Hand, 2005). Despite this, informal child care is an understudied area of research in Australia (Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009).

Another attraction of informal care is that it often is cheaper than formal care, or even free, when provided by family members. When provided by neighbours or friends, instead of paying for such care, this may be part of a reciprocal arrangement to care for each others' children at different times. Some exceptions, notably the use of nannies, are not necessarily free or low cost. Overall, though, the majority of those using informal care do so at no cost (e.g., in 1993, for 83% of children in only informal care no cost was involved, [ABS, 1994]).

In the one or two years before full-time school, children often spend some time in early childhood education, or preschool. As the age of school commencement varies across states in Australia, and also within states across this time period, it is not possible to be exact about the

age at which children attend early childhood education or school (Edwards, Taylor, & Fiorini, 2011). Generally, though, children will start school in the year they turn 5 years old, or the year after.

While preschool has a specific focus on early childhood education, the lines between preschool and child care as provided in long day care centres can be blurred, as preschool programs are often offered through child care, and some preschools offer child care before and after the formal preschool time. When preschools are “standalone”—rather than through or with a long day care centre—like school, their hours of operation tend to be within school hours, but children do not usually attend every day of the week (Dowling & O’Malley, 2009). The current approach to early childhood education involves ensuring that all children have access to 15 hours of preschool education per week in the year before full-time school (Baxter & Hand, 2013). As such, these hours may not be sufficient to enable the employment of mothers (Corbett, 1993), although some mothers may take the opportunity to undertake paid work at those times a child is in preschool.

Preschool is reported as a type of formal child care in this paper, largely because of the blurring of lines between preschool and child care. However, we will refer to child care for 3–5 year old children as child care/ECE. Preschool is also separately identified from long day care in order to examine the extent to which different forms of child care/ECE are used by children of employed mothers.

At older ages, school could be said to provide a form of universal child care, although it is not reported here as such. For school-aged children, however, outside-school-hours care is important (Hand & Baxter, 2013; Cassells & Miranti, 2012). For employed mothers, this care is expected to be important as the timing of the school day is unlikely to suit the working hours of many, particularly those working full-time.

Parents may seek to minimise their use of non-parental child care, even when both parents are in paid employment. This may be due to a belief that parental care is superior to that provided by others, or it may be to avoid the costs of child care. Some families manage parental employment entirely without the use of child care—formal or informal (Ehrle, Adams, & Tout, 2001; Gray, Baxter, & Alexander, 2008; Hofferth, Brayfield, Deich, & Holcomb, 1991; VandenHeuvel, 1993). When parents’ work schedules include some non-overlapping time, parents may take turns in caring for children and thus avoid the use of non-parental child care (La Valle, Arthur, Millward, Scott, & Clayden, 2002; Presser, 2003). Or parents (usually the mother) may care for children while working (Hofferth et al., 1991; VandenHeuvel, 1993). When children are school-aged, non-parental care may not be needed if parents’ hours of employment allow them to be available for children outside of school hours (Hand & Baxter, 2013). To a lesser extent (given it is for fewer hours) this may also be true when children are in preschool. In these situations, in school holidays or when children are sick, parents are likely to need to adjust their work or child care arrangements.

2.2 Choice of child care arrangements

The primary factor affecting which child care arrangement children are in is their age, in part because of the role of early childhood education and school as children get older, but also because of changing needs for child care as mothers return to work, and because of beliefs regarding which forms of care are appropriate for children of different ages. While there is a growing acceptance of the use of child care for very young children, many Australians prefer that such children not be in formal child care settings (Evans & Kelley, 2002; Hand, 2005). In Australia, the majority of babies are, in fact, not in regular non-parental care. Of those who are, informal care is most commonly used, often provided by a grandparent (Gray, Misson, & Hayes, 2005; Harrison & Ungerer, 2005; Harrison, Ungerer, Smith, Zubrick, & Wise, 2010).

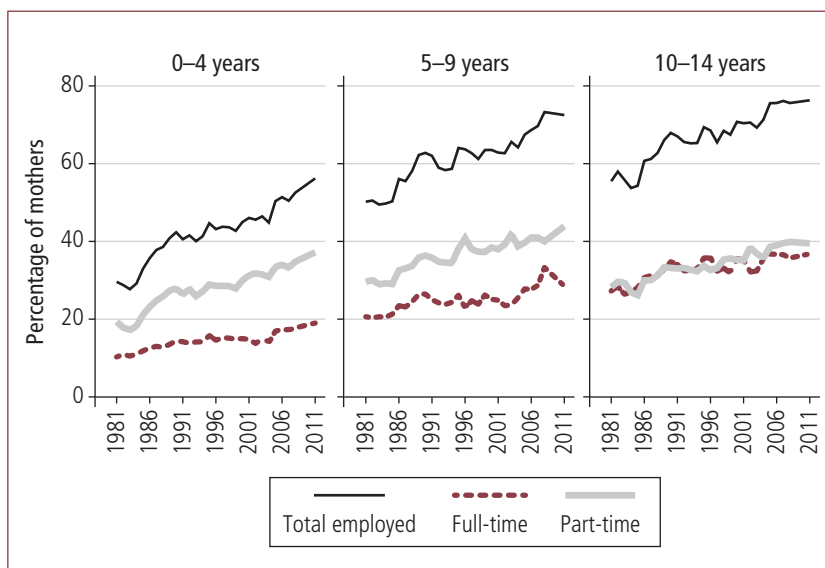
Child care use is likely to vary with a range of parental job characteristics (e.g., see Davis & Connelly, 2005; Harrison et al., 2010; Laughlin, 2010). Mothers’ job characteristics are expected to be more pertinent to child care decisions than are those of fathers, given that mothers spend more time than fathers on child care, even when both parents are employed (Craig, 2006). The number of hours worked by the mother is likely to be particularly important in explaining variation in child care use (Baxter, Gray, Alexander, Strazdins, & Bittman, 2007; Connelly &

Kimmel, 2003; Folk & Beller, 1993; Lehrer & Kawasaki, 1985; Peyton, Jacobs, O'Brien, & Roy, 2001; Pungello & Kurtz-Costes, 1999). In Australia, part-time work is often cited by mothers as a work arrangement used to allow them to care for children (ABS, 2005). As such, families in which mothers work part-time are likely to have less need for non-parental child care. This is evident when looking at how patterns of child care use vary by mothers' working hours (Baxter et al., 2007; Harrison et al., 2010; VandenHeuvel, 1996). Other maternal employment arrangements—including the use of flexible work hours, the scheduling of hours, self-employment, and the ability to work from home—may also be relevant to child care options (Baxter et al., 2007; Laughlin, 2010; VandenHeuvel, 1996). This paper analyses child care patterns by mothers' working hours, and briefly examines the use of other working arrangements in relation to child care.

Some fathers may reduce or alter their labour force participation in order to care for children or, if out of employment, may take on some child care responsibilities (Averett, Gennetian, & Peters, 2000; Baxter & Smart, 2010; Casper & O'Connell, 1998). While this paper focuses largely on maternal employment and child care, some variation in child care arrangements may occur due to paternal employment and this is examined briefly in this study.

2.3 Maternal employment and child care

Figure 2 shows that the percentage of mothers employed in Australia increased significantly over the period covered in this paper. In 1981, 42% of mothers with children aged under 15 years were employed, compared to 66% in 2011. The employment rates have remained lowest for mothers of the youngest children (aged under 5 years), although these still increased over this time from 30% to 56%. This compares to increases from 50% to 73% for mothers with a youngest child aged 5–9 years, and from 55% to 76% for mothers with a youngest child aged 10–14 years. A substantial proportion of mothers work part-time; in fact, mothers with a youngest child aged 0–4 years or 5–9 years are more likely to be employed part-time than full-time. Mothers of children aged 10–14 years also have high rates of part-time work, but as seen in Figure 2, rates of full-time and part-time work are quite similar for this group.



Notes: Part-time workers are those who worked fewer than 35 hours in the reference week, and usually work these hours. Percentages are calculated over all mothers with valid labour force data.

Source: ABS historical labour force publications and Supercross tables, as at June each year

Figure 2: Maternal employment, total, full-time and part-time, by age of youngest child, 1981–2011

2.4 This study

The paper examines changes in the use of formal child care, including long day care centres, as well as informal child care, such as grandparents, other relatives, and parental care only. The analyses consider the patterns of care across different child ages, given the very different circumstances of children once they reach the ages of early childhood education and school.

The main contribution of this paper is to explore these trends specifically in relation to maternal employment, in order to understand how families manage their work and family responsibilities when mothers are employed, and to better understand what has facilitated the increased rates of maternal employment over the past three decades. The paper includes analyses of the percentage of children in different care arrangements, as well as the average numbers of hours they are in child care.¹

As the care needs of mothers working longer hours are likely to be greater than those working fewer hours, child care use is also analysed by mothers' paid work hours.

¹ Note that this paper *does not* aim to explain whether increases in maternal employment have come about because of changes in formal child care provision. This is an important question given that one of the key reasons for the government to prioritise expenditure on child care is to address issues of work–family reconciliation and to provide opportunities for women to take up paid employment when they have young children. Several articles have been published on this topic—for Australia (Cobb-Clark, Liu, & Mitchell, 1999; Corbett, 1993; Doiron & Kalb, 2002; Goward, 1998; Gregory, 1999; Rammohan, Whelan, & Wales, 2007; Teal, 1992), as well as other developed countries (Baum, 2002; Bettio & Plantenga, 2004; Blau & Robins, 1991; Connelly & Kimmel, 2003; Gauthier, 2001; Han & Waldfogel, 2001; Mason & Kuhlthau, 1992; Powell, 1998; Stolzenberg & Waite, 1984).

3

Child Care Survey data

The ABS has conducted a survey of child care use approximately every three years since 1969. The survey is conducted in conjunction with the monthly Labour Force Survey, which is a multi-stage area sample of private and non-private dwellings across Australia. Information is collected from one person in the family within selected households, with information most often reported by mothers. This report uses child care survey data from 1984 onwards, given the introduction of a new child care classification in that year. Originally called the Child Care Survey, it was renamed in 2008 as the Childhood Education and Care Survey (CEaCS) along with having an increased focus on early learning activities. For simplicity, throughout this report, the data are referred to as having been sourced from the Child Care Survey, including those from the 2008 and 2011 CEaCS.

Data reported here relate to child care use in the week prior to the interview. From 2008, the published survey reports focused on usual care arrangements, rather than arrangements for the previous week. Unit record data were used in this analysis to gain information for 2008 and 2011 on care arrangements in the previous week, to maintain consistency with previous surveys.²

Aggregate data from each survey are reported in analyses of overall trends in child care use, largely sourced from the Child Care Survey publications, but supplemented with data derived from the confidentialised unit record files (CURFs) if the publications did not include the required information. The CURFs were used for analyses of maternal employment and child care. For more detailed analyses, the CURFs from 1984, 1993, 2005 and 2011 were used, to capture changes across roughly three decades.³

The Child Care Surveys were conducted in different months of the year prior to 1999, and this has implications for estimating the percentages of children in care, especially for children around the age of school commencement. This is discussed in Appendix A.

While child care use is presented across single ages of children for the more detailed analyses, in some analyses the ages were collapsed to examine arrangements for the youngest children (aged 0–2 years), those around preschool age (3–5 years) and those of school age (6–11 years).

² The ABS cautions that the 2011 survey asked about “usual” use of each type of care *before* asking about “last week”, while the 2008 and earlier surveys asked these questions in the opposite order (ABS, 2011). This one-off change, to improve the quality of responses, may have affected the way in which parents reported their use of care. The smaller percentage reporting to have used informal care in the previous week was the most noticeable change. A possibility is that with respondents being asked about usual arrangements first, they may have interpreted the “last week” questions as referring to arrangements in that week that differed from usual arrangements. The percentage of people who reported that they usually use informal care increased between 2008 and 2011, which could mean that without a reference period of “last week” having been first mentioned, parents may have a broader time frame in mind when reporting on what their usual care arrangements are. Usual care arrangements have not been analysed in this paper, but the fact that the percentage reporting to usually use informal care increased means that caution should be used in interpreting the decline in the percentage who used informal care in the previous week. The percentage in formal care did not appear to be affected by the change in question wording, which may reflect that “usual” and “last week” formal arrangements are likely to align more, given their formal nature, while informal care may be used as the need arises, and so varies more depending on whether “usual” or “last week” is the reference period. There may have been other changes to the questionnaire over the years that have not been identified here.

³ The 1999 and 2008 CURFs were used in some analyses, but for ease of presentation they were not included in much of the report, as the overall patterns and trends were evident with the more limited range of data.

Children aged 12 years were excluded from all analyses, as they were only included in the surveys from 2005 onwards.

These analyses use child-level data, relating children's child care use to the employment characteristics of the mother. The specific types of child care reported on differed somewhat across surveys, but could be aggregated into comparable categories of care. The specific categories or types of child care have been classified as formal care or informal care throughout this report.

Formal care includes long day care centres, family day care, outside-school-hours care and other formal care, including occasional care. Preschool (that is, early childhood education before full-time school) is also included in these analyses as a type of formal care. For the age group for which this is most relevant (the 3–5 year olds), when presenting findings for child care, we refer to child care/ECE.⁴ Informal care includes adult relatives (predominantly grandparents, but also including care by other relatives and non-resident parents), siblings or other non-relative adults (which include nannies). Children in neither formal nor informal care are classified here as being in parental care only. Percentages of children in different types of care are presented throughout the analyses. Further, the average number of hours spent in child care are presented, along with separate estimates of average time spent in formal and informal child care.⁵

When relating child care patterns to maternal employment status, the category “not employed” includes unemployed and not in the labour force. This category also includes those mothers who are employed but working zero hours, that is, on leave or otherwise temporarily absent from work. In 1996, those working zero hours could not be separately identified and so are included with employed mothers for that year. Appendix Table A1 (on page 35) shows that the percentage of children with employed mothers increased from 37% in 1984, to 46% in 1993, 52% in 2005 and 54% in 2011. When child care patterns were examined by mothers' work hours, the analyses were further restricted to 1984, 2005 and 2011. The 1993 data were not used because in that year maternal work hours were provided in categories that could not be matched to the other years. The distribution of hours worked by employed mothers is shown in Appendix Table A2 (on page 36).

For all estimates of proportions using care and hours of care, relative standard errors (RSE) were calculated, to identify estimates with RSEs of greater than 25%. Where this applied, estimates have been notated (or excluded from figures). For 2005, 2008 and 2011, calculations made use of the replicate weights and survey procedures. For earlier years, in which these details were not available, calculations were based on weighted data. Child weights were used—given the data presented in this report refer to the child-level data on use of care—according to their mothers' working arrangements.

In addition to the trend analyses, some analyses of specific CURFs was undertaken to more closely examine the links between mothers' and fathers' job characteristics and child care use.

Further details about the use of these data in this report are described in Appendix A.

⁴ The ABS no longer includes preschool as a type of formal care, and so for more recent years in this analysis, the CURFs were used to reclassify children's use of care to include preschool with other types of formal care.

⁵ For calculations of hours in care, children were excluded if they were reported to spend more than 50 hours per week in care. Many of these exclusions were children reported to be with grandparents or non-resident parents for much of the week (some for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week).

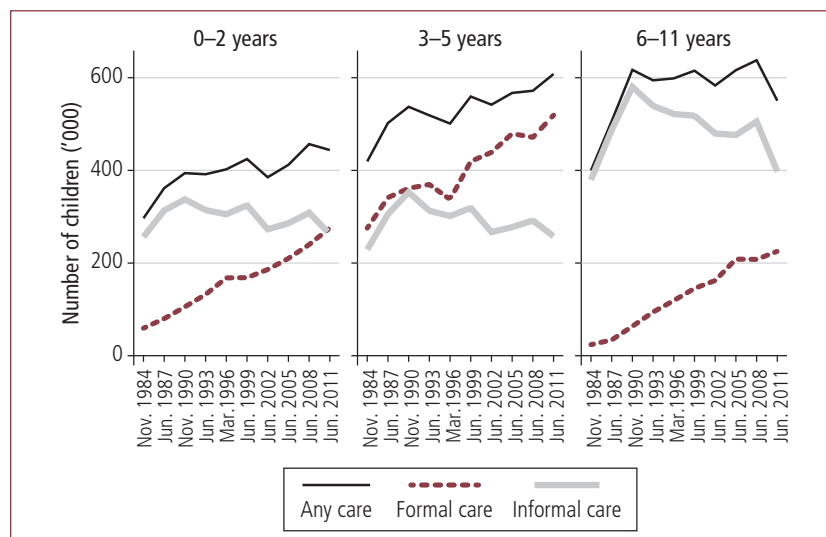
4

Results

This section presents the results; first, for background, presenting the overall trends in child care, then presenting some overall data by maternal employment status, then more specific detail for children of employed mothers. Time spent in child care is then analysed by maternal employment status, and further analyses is presented to explore how families manage with only parental care when mothers are employed.

4.1 Overall trends in child care

Throughout this report, the focus is on the percentages of children using child care, and so the trends are not necessarily consistent with the statistics on numbers of children using care, given that there have been significant changes in the population base over this period (as seen in Figure 1 on page 4). However, Figure 3 puts the child care data into context, showing the number of children in formal and informal care over the period 1984 to 2011. The number of children in care, particularly formal child care, has increased quite considerably over this time, which in part reflects trends in the number of children in each age group, but also reflects the growth in child care services (as discussed in the introduction) and the take-up of those places.

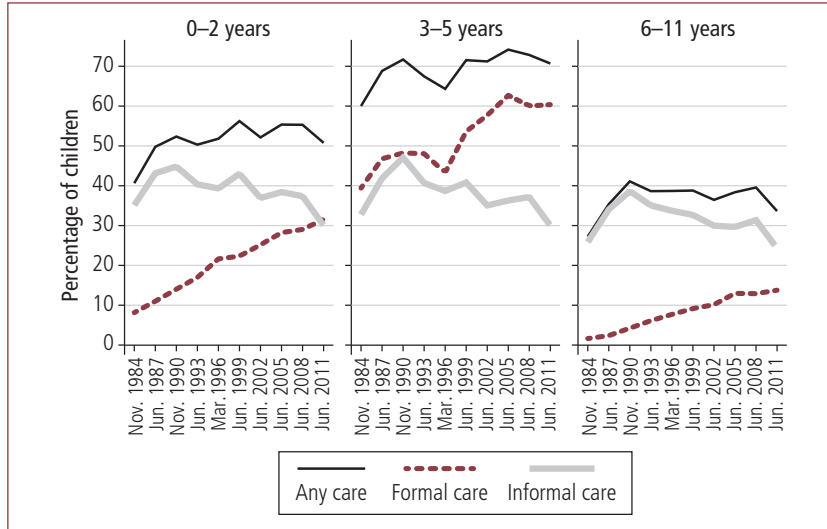


Note: Children could be counted as being in both formal and informal care. Formal care includes preschool for 3–5 year olds.
Source: Author's calculations using ABS Child Care Survey publications and CURFs

Figure 3: Estimated number of children using any child care and formal or informal child care, by age of child, 1984–2011

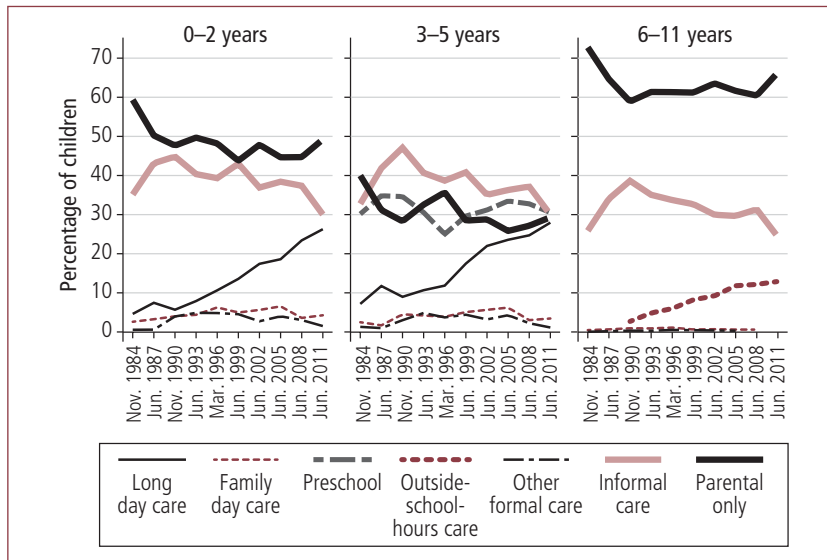
The overall trends in the percentage in child care from 1984 to 2011 are shown in Figure 4 (on page 12), by ages of children. Across these age groups, overall, the 3–5 year olds were the most likely to be in some child care, which includes preschool, while the least likely to be in

care were the young school-aged children, noting that child care does not include attendance at school. For all age groups, the proportion using child care was lower in 1984 than in later years, with a large increase in the proportion using child care between 1984 and 1987, and another increase between 1987 and 1990. In the 1990s and beyond the trends have been less consistent overall, although across this whole period the percentage in formal care increased within each age group.⁶ Figure 5 expands upon these data to show the specific types of care used.



Note: Children could be counted as being in both formal and informal care. Formal care includes preschool for 3–5 year olds.
 Source: Author’s calculations using ABS Child Care Survey publications and CURFs

Figure 4: Percentage of children using any child care and formal or informal child care, by age of child, 1984–2011



Notes: Very small numbers of children in specific care types, by age, are not shown: children aged 0–2 and 6–11 years in preschool; children aged 3–5 years in outside-school-hours care; and children aged 6–11 years in child care centres (especially in 1984 and 1987 when outside-school-hours care was not captured). Estimates for outside-school-hours care are only available from 1990. Children can be in more than one type of care. Child care data refer to usage in the reference week.
 Source: Author’s calculations using ABS Child Care publications and CURFs

Figure 5: Percentage of children using child care, by type of child care and age of child, 1984–2011

⁶ Note also there is some “noise” in these data, due to surveys having been conducted in different months of the year prior to 1999. See Appendix A.

To describe the trends more fully, each age group is considered separately. Firstly, for the children aged 0–2 years, around half the children were in some form of child care, with the proportion in child care being lowest in 1984 and higher in more recent years. When disaggregated into formal and informal care, there were clearly very large increases in the use of formal child care for this age group, up from less than 10% in formal care in 1984, to 30% in 2011. Over the whole period, informal care use has fluctuated, with average percentages using informal care at around 40%, although trending downwards since 1990, with a noticeable decline to 30% in 2011 (discussed further in the more detailed descriptions below). For this age group, the increased use of formal child care was not reflected to the same degree in the increased use of child care overall. This means some of the increase in formal care use was related to families being more likely to use formal care instead of informal care, or supplementing informal with formal care arrangements.

For children aged 0–2 years, increases in formal child care largely represented increases in use of long day care (Figure 5 on page 12). From the 1980s to the 1990s, small increases in family day care and other formal care also contributed to the overall increase in formal child care, although increases in these forms of care have not been apparent beyond this time.

Turning to the next age group, the 3–5 year olds, Figure 4 (on page 12) shows that around 70% of these children were in some form of non-parental care (including preschool), with the percentage lowest in 1984, at 60%. There was a sizable increase in formal care for this age group from 1984 to 2011, increasing from around 40% in 1984 to 60% in 2011. In particular, the proportion was considerably higher from 1999 than in earlier years. Informal care for this age group fluctuated over the years, although after a peak of 47% in 1990, the overall trend has been downward, with the proportion dropping to 30% in 2011.

As with the younger children, the increased use of formal child care/ECE by 3–5 year olds represented increased use of long day care, from less than 10% of children in 1984 to 28% in 2011 (Figure 5). Use of preschool remained at around 30% of children, although this varied across the years.

It appears that some of the increase in formal care for this age group translated into increases in the overall proportion using care, but there is also evidence that formal care use replaced or supplemented some informal care, since the increase in formal care/ECE did not result in an equivalent increase in the proportion using any care.

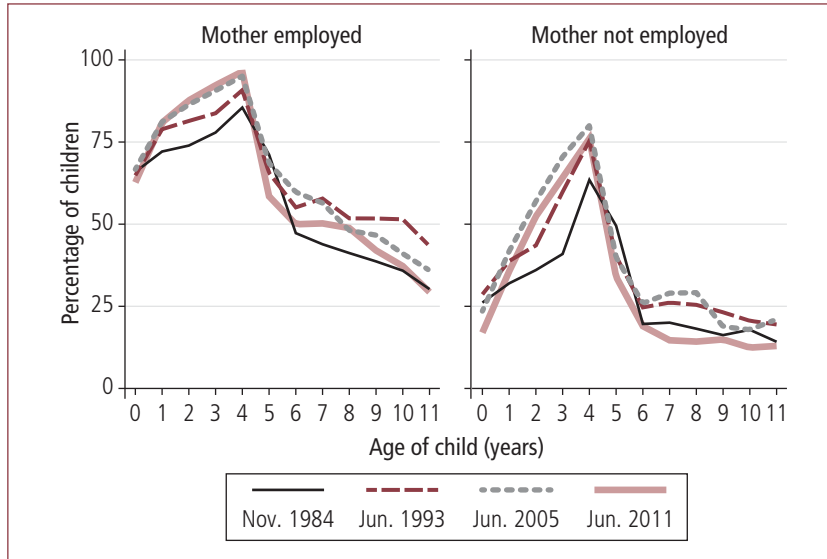
For school-aged children, Figure 4 shows there was a large increase in the proportion using any child care between 1984 and 1990, up from 28% to 40% of children, then remaining at just below this level until 2008, with a decline to 34% in 2011. For this age group, the initial increase reflected use of informal child care, but over the years use of formal care has grown steadily. Since 1990, the proportion using informal care has declined, with the overall drop in the proportion in child care for 2011 reflecting a larger drop in informal child care use than in previous years. For school-aged children, formal care is largely outside-school-hours care, which was reported on from 1990. Figure 5 shows fairly steady growth in the proportions of children in this type of care over the years reported.

These data, for all ages of children, clearly show increased use of formal child care, especially long day care for children under school age, and outside-school-hours care for school-aged children. However, this does not necessarily mean all this increase was associated with higher rates of maternal employment, since child care may be used for other reasons. The remaining sections explore these data in more detail, to incorporate information on mothers' employment status.

4.2 Maternal employment status and child care

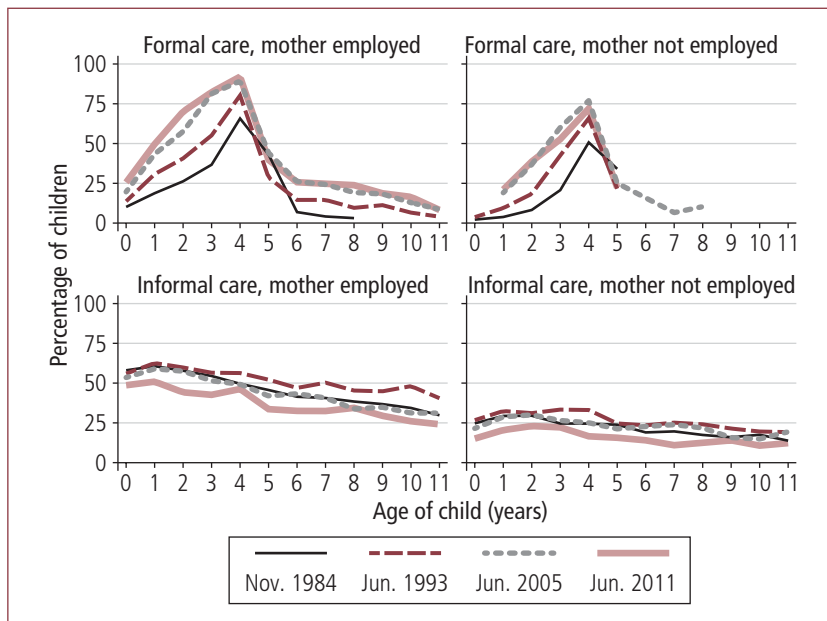
This section focuses on associations between maternal employment and child care use, examining these data separately according to the ages of children. As discussed in section 3, these analyses focus on 1984, 1993, 2005 and 2011. The 1993 data were not used in the analyses of working hours, since the classification of work hours was not reported in a way that could be made consistent with the other years' data.

Figure 6 shows, for each survey year, the percentage of children in any child care (informal or formal, including preschool but not school) according to whether mothers were employed. Figure 7 then examines the percentage of children in care by maternal employment status, disaggregated into formal and informal care. In any year, and for each child age group, higher proportions of children were in child care when mothers were employed. The age-related patterns that are observed in Figure 6 very much reflect age-related patterns in the use of formal care, with participation in informal care varying relatively little across ages of children, whether or not mothers were employed (Figure 7).



Notes: Child care and employment data refer to that of the reference week. Child care includes preschool for 3–5 year olds.
 Source: Author’s calculations using ABS Child Care CURFs

Figure 6: Percentage of children using any child care, by mothers’ employment status, selected years 1984–2011



Notes: Child care and employment data refer to that of the reference week. Data points have been omitted if estimates have RSE > 25%. Formal care includes preschool for 3–5 year olds.
 Source: Author’s calculations using ABS Child Care CURFs

Figure 7: Percentage of children using formal or informal child care, by age of child and mothers’ employment status, selected years 1984–2011

For children aged less than one year with employed mothers, there was no discernible change in the percentage in some child care from 1984 through to 2011 (Figure 6 on page 14). Similarly, for children aged one year, there was no increase from 1993 through to 2011, although the percentage who were in some care was higher in these years than in 1984. At ages 2, 3 and 4 years, increasingly higher proportions of children with employed mothers were in some child care over the period from 1984 through to 2011. The apparently different pattern for 5-year-olds (with higher rates in child care in 1984) is related to the timing of the survey, with higher proportions of 5-year-olds not yet in school in 1984 than in other years (see Appendix A). For older ages of children, while participation in child care was least likely in 1984 compared to other years, the participation rates were relatively low in 2011 compared to 1993 and 2005. Figure 7 (on page 14) shows this relates to much lower informal care participation rather than lower formal care.

Even among children of not-employed mothers, a high proportion aged around 3–5 years were in some child care/ECE. These ages coincide with the approximate ages of early childhood education, and higher rates of attendance at these ages reflect that as children grow out of infancy, parents increasingly believe the experience of child care is good for children's development (McDonald, 2001). This is apparent in Figure 7, which shows that it is formal care participation that peaks at these ages. Attendance at preschool or other early childhood education is encouraged for children in the year before full-time school, to help with children's school readiness, and so is not necessarily related to parents' employment participation. Whether children at this age attend a standalone preschool or attend long day care is likely to depend on the nature of parents' employment participation (Baxter & Hand, 2013).

Use of formal care by children of not-employed mothers may reflect that some not-employed mothers may only be temporarily out of the workforce and may wish to retain their child's place in child care—for the good of the child, to alleviate their caring responsibilities at home, or to ensure their child care place is not lost for the future.⁷

4.3 Child care for children of employed mothers

Although there are sometimes striking differences in care use across the single years of age (especially for the younger children), broader age groups of 0–2, 3–5 and 6–11 years are used here to allow more detailed analyses of care types and links with maternal work hours.

Children aged 0–2 years with employed mothers

According to Figure 6, among children aged 0–2 years with employed mothers, the proportion using some child care increased between 1984 and 2011 (although this increase was most apparent for the 2-year-olds, and not apparent for children aged less than 1 year).

Table 1 (on page 16) shows that for these children, the percentage in any child care increased from 71% to 80% over this period. Higher increases in child care use occurred in formal than informal child care, with increases in the proportion of children using only formal care as well as using both formal and informal care. Conversely, the percentages in informal care only and parental care only declined. Increases between 1984 and 2011 in formal child care largely represented increases in long day care attendance (up from 12% of children in 1984 to 30% in 2005, then to 47% in 2011). Family day care was also used for this group (11% in 2005, but declining to 6% in 2011).

⁷ Appendix Table B1 and B2 (on pages 37 and 38) show the main reasons for using formal or informal child care. Child-related reasons (e.g., “for the good of the child”, and “prepare child for school”) are predominant in families with not-employed mothers of children of preschool age. Among not-employed mothers, a reasonable proportion referred to parents' work or study. Reference specifically to work-related reasons may reflect that some mothers are temporarily away from work since mothers with a job who were away from work were classified as not employed in this paper.

Table 1: Child care arrangements of children aged 0–2 years with employed mothers, selected years 1984–2011

	Nov. 1984	Jun. 1993	Jun. 2005	Jun. 2011
Percentage				
Any child care	71.3	76.0	80.2	80.3
Formal care only	12.3	16.2	22.9	32.6
Informal care only	51.8	46.3	36.3	26.7
Formal and informal care	7.1	13.5	21.0	21.0
Parental care only	28.7	24.0	19.8	19.7
Formal care	19.5	29.7	43.9	53.6
Long day care	11.8	15.8	29.5	47.4
Family day care	7.3	9.6	11.1	5.5
Other formal care	0.9 #	4.9	5.0	1.4
Informal care	58.9	59.8	57.3	47.7
Adult relative	40.6	43.8	49.5	43.7
Grandparent	–	–	44.8	39.2
Non-resident parent	–	–	1.0	1.7
Non-relative	19.4	19.3	9.4	5.9
Number of children				
Sample size	1,033	1,157	895	802

Notes: # Estimates with RSE > 25%. Informal care also includes sibling care, which has not been shown separately because of high RSEs. Information specifically on grandparent and non-resident parent care was not available in 1984 and 1993.

Source: Author's calculations using ABS Child Care CURFs

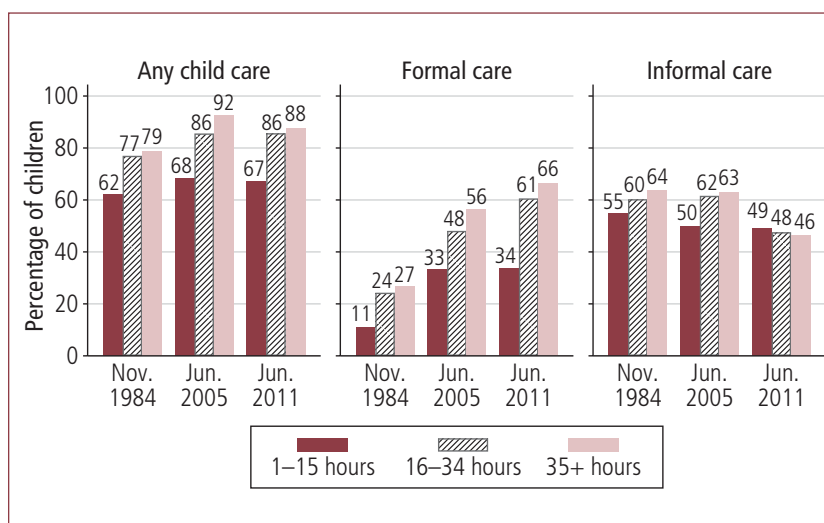
Informal child care was very often used by 0–2 year old children with employed mothers (used by just less than 60%, across all years until 2005, then dropping to 48% in 2011). As noted above, informal care was increasingly combined with formal care over the years. Within the category of informal care, there has been more use of adult relative care (primarily grandparent care) in recent years, and a shift away from non-relatives as providers of care. The decline from 2005 to 2011 included a decline in the percentage in grandparent care as well as care by non-relatives.

A factor that is likely to be important in explaining the amount of child care used is the number of maternal work hours. In relating child care to maternal work hours, only data from 1984, 2005 and 2011 are used here. This does not allow statements about trends to be made, especially given the uneven spread of these times; however, they provide an overall picture of past and contemporary associations between employment and child care. For children aged 0–2 years, the majority had mothers who worked part-time hours (less than 35 hours per week), with 25% working 35 hours or more in 1984 and 2011, and 20% working these hours in 2005. In 1984 it was more common for 0–2 year-olds' mothers to be working short part-time hours (42% worked 1–15 hours per week) than long part-time hours (33% worked 16–34 hours per week). In 2011, this was reversed, with 32% working 1–15 hours per week and 44% working 16–34 hours per week. The distribution of part-time hours of mothers in 2005 was in between these distributions (Appendix Table A2 on page 36).

Figure 8 (on page 17) shows that in each of the periods examined, a higher percentage of 0–2 year old children was in child care when their mothers worked longer hours. The rate was noticeably lower for those whose mothers worked short part-time hours, with far less difference when long part-time hours and full-time hours were compared. Use of formal child care was associated with greater hours of maternal employment (35+), again with differences being most apparent for short part-time hours versus other hours. These relationships were evident in each of the years examined, but with increasing percentages of children in formal care, especially if mothers worked 15 hours or more, from 1984 to 2005 to 2011.

Higher percentages were in informal care when mothers worked longer hours in 1984 and 2005. However, there was a change in 2011, with rates of informal care use practically invariant

to maternal work hours. For example, while 63–64% of 0–2 year old children with full-time employed mothers had been in informal care in 1984 and 2005, this fell to 46% in 2011.⁸



Notes: Details of types of care are shown in Appendix Table B3 (on page 38).

Source: Author's calculations using ABS Child Care CURFs.

Figure 8: Percentage of 0–2 year old children using any child care, formal or informal child care, by maternal weekly work hours, selected years 1984–2011

Children aged 3–5 years (preschool age) with employed mothers

Compared to other ages of children, child care/ECE participation rates are highest in the 3–5 years age group, which is especially related to the relevance and take-up of early childhood education (preschool) at this age. Overall trends for this age group showed an increase in child care/ECE participation between 1984 and 2011, which was strongly related to increased use of long day care, along with the sustained attendance at preschool (see Figures 4 and 5 on page 12). Many children in this age group were in informal care, although there was some decline in participation in informal care after 1990.

For preschool-aged children with employed mothers, there was some variation in trends depending on the age of the child. Increased percentages in child care/ECE were greatest for 3-year-olds, and were also apparent for 4-year olds, although for neither was there an increase between 2005 and 2011 (see Figures 6 and 7 on page 14). The increases in child care/ECE participation for 3- and 4-year-olds were related to large increases in formal care/ECE. Trends were less consistent for 5-year-olds, but the figures for this age group are most likely to be affected by the changes to survey timing (see Appendix A).

Looking at the broad age group of preschool-aged children (Table 2 on page 18), the increased percentage in child care/ECE is evident in the increased percentage in formal care only as well as in both formal and informal care. There were declines over time in the percentage in informal care only and parental care only.

The analyses of types of care for preschool-aged children with employed mothers (Table 2) confirm that the increases in percentages in formal care largely reflect greater use of long day care. Note that for this age group of children, long day care will often include a preschool program (Baxter & Hand, 2013). In contrast, the percentage in preschools did not change a great deal over these time periods. However, in all years to 2005, 3–5 year old children with employed mothers were more likely to be in preschool than they were to be in long day care.

⁸ Note though that it not possible to rule out that the different question ordering in 2011 affected the estimates in some way. See footnote 2.

In 1984 the proportion in preschool was three times that of the proportion in long day care. By 2005, because of the increase in the proportion in long day care, the percentages in long day care and preschool were much more similar. In 2011, the percentage in long day care was greater than the percentage in preschool.

	Nov. 1984	Jun. 1993	Jun. 2005	Jun. 2011
Percentage				
Any child care	78.1	80.2	84.5	81.8
Formal care only	28.4	25.2	37.1	41.1
Informal care only	29.3	25.1	13.4	11.2
Formal and informal care	20.4	29.9	34.0	29.5
Parental care only	21.9	19.8	15.5	18.2
Formal care	48.8	55.0	71.1	70.7
Preschool	33.6	30.6	35.8	31.4
Long day care	10.5	15.7	28.4	36.3
Family day care	5.9	7.3	8.6	4.6
Other formal care	1.8	6.9	11.9	9.0
Informal care	49.7	55.0	47.3	40.7
Adult relative	28.2	33.6	39.5	33.5
Grandparent	–	–	32.2	26.9
Non-resident parent	–	–	3.0	4.7
Sibling	1.7	3.6	0.9 #	1.4 #
Non-relative	23.3	22.0	8.6	7.5
In preschool				
Only preschool	15.1	10.0	10.3	12.1
Preschool and some other child care	18.5	20.5	25.6	19.3
Number of children				
Sample size	1,402	1,419	1,174	1,084

Notes: # Estimates with RSE > 25%. Information specifically on grandparent and non-resident parent care was not available in 1984 and 1993. "Other formal care" includes outside-school-hours care in 2005 and 2011.

Source: Author's calculations using ABS Child Care CURFs

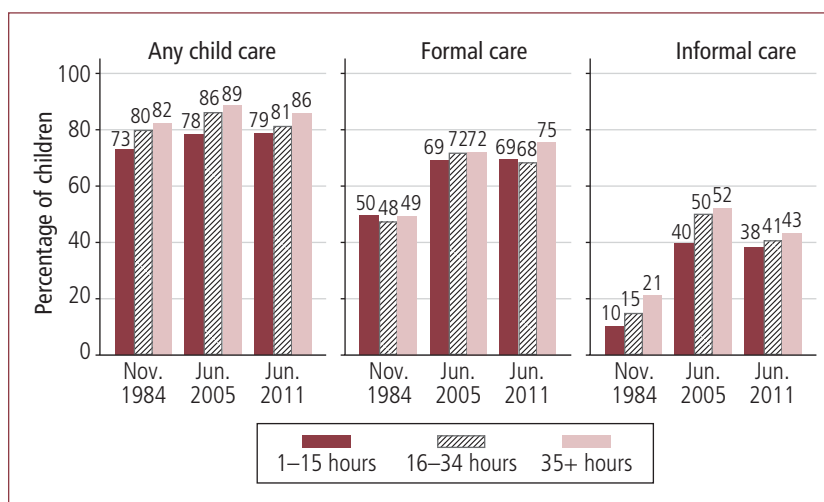
Up to 2005, around half of the preschool-aged children with employed mothers were in some informal child care, and this did not change a great deal over the years considered here (somewhat more were in informal care in 1993). The percentage in informal care fell in 2011, to 40% of children. Also, as was reported for the youngest children, the informal care arrangements changed over the years, with a shift away from non-relative carers to that of adult relative carers (usually grandparents).

Figure 9 (on page 19) examines child care/ECE participation in 1984, 2005 and 2011 by maternal work hours. As with mothers of younger children, these mothers were more likely to work part-time hours (up to 34 hours per week) rather than full-time hours (35 hours or more per week), and this did not change over the years 1984, 2005 and 2011. However, mothers became somewhat less likely to work the shortest hours of 1–15 hours per week over this period (see Appendix Table A2 on page 36).

Participation rates in child care were higher, in all years, when mothers worked longer hours. While rates of informal care participation were relatively low for this age group (when mothers were employed), those rates increased with maternal work hours. There was only slight variation in formal care/ECE participation rates according to working hours in 1984 and 2005, but in 2011 formal care/ECE participation rates were higher for mothers working full-time hours.

The relatively weak relationship between maternal work hours and formal care/ECE reflects that working hours have a different association with attendance in preschool compared to long

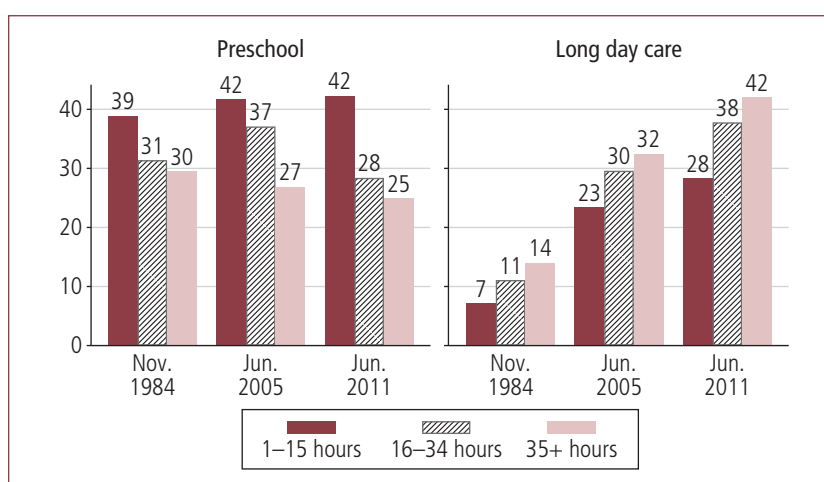
day care (Figure 10). In all years, higher participation rates in long day care were apparent when mothers worked longer hours. But the rate of participation in preschool declined with longer working hours. This is likely to reflect that the sessional nature of preschool—for shorter hours and often only on specific days of the week—is not so compatible with longer working hours. As noted above though, children in long day care will often receive a preschool program as part of the care.



Notes: Details of other types of care are shown in Appendix Table B4 (on page 39). Preschool is included in formal care.

Source: Author's calculations using ABS Child Care CURFs

Figure 9: Percentage of 3–5 year old children using any child care, formal or informal child care, by maternal weekly work hours, selected years 1984–2011



Notes: Details of other types of care are shown in Appendix Table B4 (on page 39). Preschool is included in formal care.

Source: Author's calculations using ABS Child Care CURFs

Figure 10: Percentage of 3–5 year old children using preschool or long day care, by maternal weekly work hours, selected years 1984–2011

Children aged 6–11 years (young school age) with employed mothers

The overall trend for this age group was of considerable growth in the use of child care—largely informal care—between 1984 and 1993, and slower but steady growth in formal child care over the period 1984 to 2005. Between 2005 and 2011 the proportion of children in some child care declined, reflecting a decline in the proportion in informal child care (Figure 4 on page 12).

For young school-aged children with employed mothers most of the overall change occurred between 1984 and 1993 (Figure 6 on page 14). Formal child care use grew considerably over 1984 to 1993 and again 1993 to 2005 where it has remained fairly constant (Figure 7 on page 14 and Table 3). Formal care for these children is usually outside school hours care. By age of child, formal care use was greatest for the younger of these children, declining as children grew, no doubt as children became more able to care for themselves before or after school (Figure 7).

Table 3: Child care arrangements of children aged 6–11 with employed mothers, selected years 1984–2011

	Nov. 1984	Jun. 1993	Jun. 2005	Jun. 2011
Percentage				
Any child care	38.9	51.6	47.5	42.5
Formal care only	2.4	5.8	12.0	12.9
Informal care only	36.1	41.8	29.5	23.2
Formal and informal care	0.4	4.1	5.9	6.4
Parental care only	61.1	48.4	52.5	57.5
Formal care	2.8	9.9	17.9	19.3
Outside-school-hours care	–	8.1	16.2	18.1
Family day care	0.9	1.3	0.9	0.6 #
Other formal care	1.9	0.7	1.1 #	0.8 #
Informal care	36.5	45.9	35.4	29.6
Adult relative	18.6	21.4	24.5	22.4
Grandparent	–	–	18.1	16.4
Non-resident parent	–	–	3.9	5.1
Sibling	6.9	11.9	3.7	2.7
Non-relative	13.4	17.1	8.8	5.9
Number of children				
Sample size	4,103	3,629	2,788	2,493

Notes: # Estimates with RSE > 25%. Information specifically on grandparent and non-resident parent care was not available in 1984 and 1993. In 1984, outside-school-hours care was not reported on separately, and so "other formal care" includes outside-school-hours care.

Source: Author's calculations using ABS Child Care CURFs

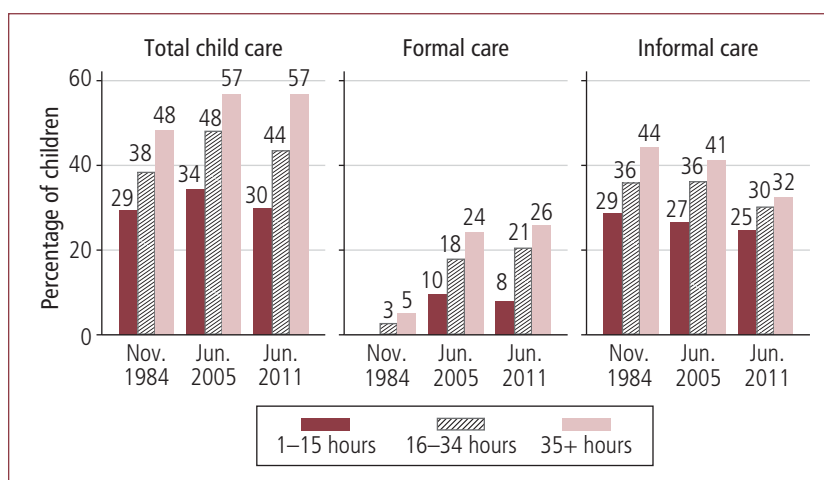
The percentage in informal care for this age group was actually highest in 1993, with the proportion of children in informal care being similar for 1984 and 2005 and lowest in 2011. The providers of care differed over this time, with children being more likely to be cared for by adult relatives and less likely to be cared for by non-relatives in later years. In particular, in 2011, relatively small percentages of children were reported to be cared for by either siblings or non-relatives (Table 3).

Mothers of school-aged children were a little more likely to work 35 hours or more per week, compared to those with younger children, but still the majority worked part-time hours. The main change in work hours over these years, as was apparent for mothers of younger children, was the decline in the percentage working 1–15 hours per week, with some increase in the percentage working 16–34 hours per week (see Appendix Table A2 on page 36).

We again see that participation in child care—overall, formal and informal—increased with maternal work hours in each of the years (Figure 11 on page 21). As with the aggregate figures, the percentage in informal care declined across 1984, 2005 and 2011 for each of the maternal work hours categories.

4.4 Time children spend in child care

The participation data presented in the previous section show that use of formal care has increased substantially among children with employed mothers, but informal care has not followed this upward trend. This section takes this a step further to consider whether the



Notes: Details of other types of care are shown in Appendix Table B5 (on page 40).

Source: Author's calculations using ABS Child Care CURFs

Figure 11: Percentage of 6–11 years using any child care, formal or informal child care, by maternal weekly work hours, selected years 1984–2011



Notes: Child care and employment data refer to that of the reference week. Hours were averaged for children who spent some time in child care, but excluding those with more than 50 hours of care, which was largely children in full-time grandparent or non-resident parent care.

Source: Author's calculations using ABS Child Care CURFs

Figure 12: Mean weekly hours of child care (or early childhood education) for children who used some child care, by age and mothers' employment status, selected years 1984–2011

amount of time children spend in child care—formal or informal—has changed at all over the period in question.

The mean weekly hours spent in child care is shown in Figure 12, calculated for those children who were in some child care, according to their mothers' employment status.

Looking first at differences by mothers' employment status, at the younger ages, children spent considerably fewer hours in child care, on average, when mothers were not employed, compared to when mothers were employed. The difference between children of employed and not-employed mothers reduced—although was still apparent—during the ages that children typically attend early childhood education. At school age, the average hours of care varied little by maternal employment status. Of course, at school age fewer hours of care are needed for children, even those with employed parents, because of the hours children are in school.

For children under school age with not-employed mothers, from 1984 to 2011, there were some increases in the mean hours of care/ECE used by children. This may reflect the greater availability of child care (and preschool), or changes in attitudes toward child care and preschool across this time. It may also indicate that not-employed mothers have been more attached to the labour force in recent years, compared to 1984, such that they anticipate a return to work and so make use of child care even when they have a period of time out of employment.

Increases in time spent in child care/ECE were evident for children of employed mothers from 1984 to 2011 at certain ages. Specifically, these increases are apparent for children around the ages of 2–4 years. Changes in time spent in some care for children with employed mothers are shown by type of care and age group in Table 4.

Table 4: Mean weekly hours of child care (or early childhood education) for children with employed mothers, by age group, selected years 1984–2011				
Age of children	Nov. 1984	Jun. 1993	Jun. 2005	Jun. 2011
0–2 years				
Total of any care, if used	20.0	21.0	20.5	22.6
Formal care, if used	20.9	21.6	19.7	22.0
Informal care, if used	17.7	16.1	14.7	14.3
3–5 years				
Total of any care, if used	18.5	18.5	23.0	21.2
Formal care, if used	15.0	16.0	18.1	19.2
Informal care, if used	14.9	11.5	13.9	12.3
Preschool, if used	11.5	11.0	12.6	13.6
Long day care, if used	19.9	20.8	21.3	21.2
6–11 years				
Total of any care, if used	8.8	8.4	11.6	10.1
Formal care, if used	8.3	7.6	6.8	6.4
Informal care, if used	8.7	7.8	12.1	11.1

Note: Sample sizes are shown in Tables 1–3. Hours of any care refers to that of the reference week. Hours were averaged for children who spent some time in child care, excluding those with more than 50 hours of care, which was largely children in full-time grandparent or non-resident parent care.

Source: Author's calculations using ABS Child Care CURFs

Among 0–2 year old children in some child care with employed mothers, the average amount of time spent in child care changed a small amount from 1984 to 2011, from an average of 20 hours per week to 23 hours per week. In 2011, the average hours worked by mothers in families of 0–2 year olds who were in some care was 25 hours per week (shown in Table 5 on page 25), and so the average time children were in some child care was just below this. Of course, this time in child care may be entirely formal care, entirely informal care, or a mix. Overall, the average amount of formal care fluctuated between 20 and 22 hours per week from 1984 to 2011, while the average amount of informal care declined, so the slight overall increase can largely be attributed to formal care patterns, and an increase in combining formal and informal care.

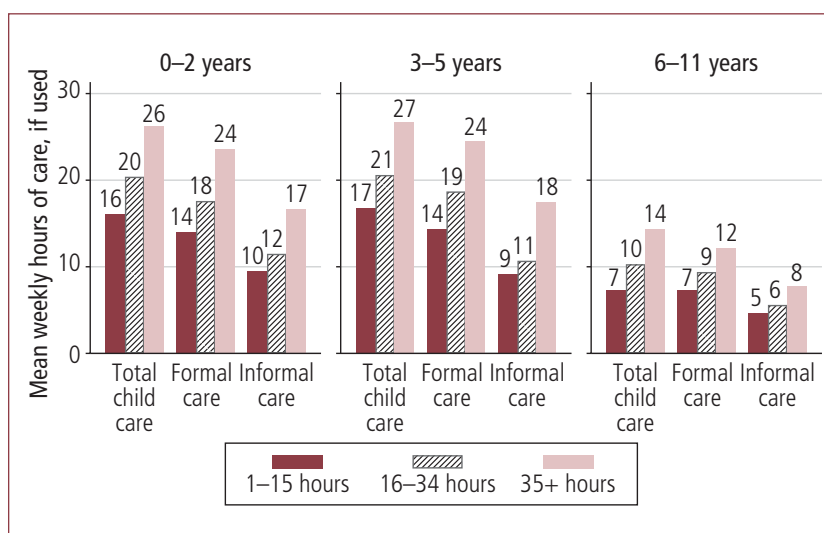
For 3–5 year old children with employed mothers, the average time spent in child care/ECE remained constant at 19 hours in 1984 and 1993, but was higher in 2005 and 2011 at 23 hours and 21 hours per week respectively. In comparisons, mothers with 3–5 year olds in some child care/ECE in 2011 on average worked 25 hours per week (see Table 5). The increase across these years appears to be mostly related to an increase in the time spent in formal child care/ECE, which rose from an average of 15 hours per week in 1985, to 16 in 1993, 18 in 2005 and 19 in 2011. Increases in time in long day care as well as time in preschool were apparent for these children.

For children aged 6–11 years in some child care with employed mothers, the average amount of time in care fluctuated between 8 and 12 hours per week. These averages are considerably lower than the average weekly working hours of mothers of children in this age group, which

was 29 in 2011 (see Table 5 on page 25). Of course this is because much of these children's days is spent in school, minimising the time children need to be in additional non-parental care. Time in informal care fluctuated over these years, with average time in informal care being similar to average time in formal care in 1984 and 1993, but considerably higher in 2005 and 2011. The average time in formal care declined from 8 hours per week to 6 hours per week from 1984 to 2011.

In each of the age groups, for 2011, the average time children were in child care was lower than the average maternal working hours, even when restricted to families in which children were in some child care. To some extent this may reflect that some mothers will have employment that can be done while caring for children (see, for example, the findings for working at home in Table 5). Of course, in some families, children will also be cared for by fathers for some of the time.

For each of the child age groups, the time spent in child care was also examined by mothers' working hours. Not surprisingly, longer maternal work hours was associated with longer time in child care, including both formal and informal care. For simplicity, we have shown this just for the most recent year (2011) in Figure 13.



Notes: Child care and employment data refer to that of the reference week. Hours were averaged for children who spent some time in child care, but excluding those with more than 50 hours of care, which was largely children in full-time grandparent or non-resident parent care.

Source: Author's calculations using ABS Child Care CURFs

Figure 13: Children's weekly hours in care, by age group, broad care groups and maternal weekly work hours, 2011

Just looking at the "total child care" estimates, it is interesting to observe that for children aged 0-2 years and 3-5 years, the average time children were in some child care (16 hours and 17 hours respectively) was somewhat higher than mothers' work hours when they worked 1-15 hours per week. This may indicate that some care was being used for purposes other than mothers' employment. When mothers worked 16-34 hours per week, the average time children were in some child care (20-21 hours per week for 0-2 year olds and 3-5 year olds) was within the range of mothers' work hours. When mothers worked 35 hours or more per week, children's time in child care is quite a bit lower than mothers' likely work hours, at 26-27 hours per week for 0-2 year olds and 3-5 year olds. This may indicate that in these families, other work arrangements (such as working at home) facilitated the care of children, or that in these families fathers were more involved in the care of children.

4.5 Managing employment without child care

Throughout the analyses in this report, at each age of children, a sizable proportion were in parent-only care, even in families with employed mothers. To summarise, Figure 14 shows the percentage of children in parent-only care, by age and mothers' employment status. In each year, around one-third of children aged under 1 year old with an employed mother was not in any form of child care. Looking at differences by age, children of employed as well as not-employed mothers were least likely to be in parent-only care through the ages of early education. Once children were school-aged, the percentage in parent-only care was higher again, which is not surprising since some maternal employment may occur within school times, such that child care can be minimised or avoided. Also, older children would increasingly be likely to be able to care for themselves.



Note: Children in no child care are those who were recorded as using no formal care and no informal care.

Source: Author's calculations using ABS Child Care CURFs

Figure 14: Percentage of children using no child care (parent-only care), by age of child and mothers' employment status, selected years 1984–2011

Working part-time hours, especially short part-time hours, is one way in which mothers can undertake employment while minimising the use of non-parental care of their children, as we have seen throughout these analyses (with data shown in the appendix tables). Other employment characteristics may also help to explain how families manage without child care. To explore this, questions asked of parents about the working arrangements they used to care for children are examined according to whether children were in some child care or in parent-only care.⁹ These analyses are based on the 2011 survey, which included information about any working arrangements mothers and fathers used to care for children. Table 5 (on page 25) shows these data for families with employed mothers. (The same data were collected in earlier surveys, and the 2005 data are shown in Appendix Table B6 on page 41.)

The first point is that managing with parent-only care is more strongly related to mothers' job characteristics than to fathers' job characteristics. For example, fathers' average work hours were the same, regardless of whether non-parental care was used. However, the percentage of families with not-employed fathers was higher among families of children who did not use child care, which may reflect that not-employed fathers took on the care of the children in some of these families.

⁹ The child-level data are also used for these analyses, such that Table 5 shows the percentage of children with mothers (fathers) who reported using the work arrangements listed. Parents' use of working arrangements was attributed to all children in the household for whom we have child care information, even though those working arrangements may have only been used in respect of specific children.

The second key finding is that when parent-only care was used, mothers were more likely to work from home, when children were aged 0–2 years, and to a lesser extent 6–11 years. Also, when parent-only care was used, mothers worked shorter hours, on average, than when non-parental care was used, consistent with the associations between work hours and child care reported elsewhere in this report. Interestingly, permanent part-time work by mothers was less likely when children were parent-only care. This is likely to be because the permanent nature of this work means that families can or need to have some care arrangement in place.

Working arrangements used to care for children	0–2 years		3–5 years		6–11 years	
	Parental care only	Child care	Parental care only	Child care/ECE	Parental care only	Child care
Percentage						
Mothers						
Flexible working hours	45.1	43.2	45.3	39.5	44.3	49.6
Permanent part-time work	35.6	51.6 ***	43.3	46.2	40.6	45.4
Shift work	9.5	7.1	10.5	6.7 *	7.3	6.4
Working at home	36.4	20.4 ***	18.2	22.4	20.0	16.0 *
Job-sharing	2.8	2.4	2.0	3.0	2.1	2.9
Any other arrangement	0.0	2.0	1.7	1.2	2.1	1.3 *
None of these	18.0	22.1	24.1	24.3	22.2	22.8
Fathers						
Not applicable—single mother	0.7	7.1 **	8.4	13.7	9.9	23.8 ***
Father not employed	10.2	2.5 ***	9.3	3.1 **	6.8	2.6 ***
Flexible working hours	36.6	32.0	36.8	31.8	32.6	33.2
Permanent part-time work	7.4	5.1	5.1	5.0	6.7	5.0
Shift work	7.9	6.1	11.0	6.8	7.1	5.8
Working at home	14.3	11.9	10.5	15.6	14.8	16.4
Any other arrangement	1.5	0.7	0.5	0.9	2.1	3.0
None of these	49.4	58.7	47.6	57.7 *	53.9	53.2
Mean hours						
Mothers' paid work per week	18.8	25.1 ***	23.0	25.2 *	25.0	29.0 ***
Fathers' paid work per week	44.7	42.2	42.5	42.8	43.3	43.9
Number of children						
Sample size	126	598	155	746	1,189	805

Notes: Significance tests were used to compare the findings for those who did and did not use child care within each age group. If no asterisks are shown, the difference was not statistically significant. Parent's mean hours in paid work is likely to be an underestimate, as parents' work hours of more than 60 hours were entered in the calculations as 60 hours. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Source: Author's calculations using 2011 ABS Child Care CURF

How child care use varies with the socio-demographic characteristics of families has not been considered in this report, but one difference is apparent in this table, in that children in parent-only care were less likely to be living in single mother families, especially among the older children. An important point that is especially relevant to single-mother families, however, is that if children spend some time with a father who lives elsewhere, then this may be counted as a form of care, if mothers report children's time with the other parent in this way. We have seen, though, that quite small percentages of children in any of the age groups were reported to be cared for by a non-resident parent.

5

Discussion and conclusions

In Australia, the significant growth in maternal employment that has occurred over recent decades has meant that the provision of child care has become a key strategy and government priority for facilitating mothers' employment. In the 1980s, the point at which this analysis of trends commenced, there was little formal child care available, except in the form of state-run preschool systems and community-based and non-profit initiatives, and some parent-based or locally organised outside-school-hours care. Since this time there has been a considerable expansion of child care, especially in long day care and outside-school-hours care.

The increased availability of child care is apparent when considering the growth in the number of places available in different types of child care services, and the growth in the number of children attending services. For all ages of children, this research clearly shows increased use of formal child care, especially long day care for children under school age, and outside-school-hours care for school-aged children. This could reflect the growth in the number of children in the population, as well as greater demand for services because of increases in maternal employment and greater emphasis on the value of early childhood education. While increases in maternal employment are very likely to mean a greater use of child care, this has actually not previously been examined through empirical work. Gaining a better understanding of how trends in maternal employment participation and trends in children's use of child care are interlinked allows greater insights into the ways in which families are negotiating their work and care responsibilities. This report examined changes in child care use, taking account of mothers' employment status over a period of more the 20 years.

To fully explore the links between child care and maternal employment it is important to examine the range of care options that families use for their children. While formal care options have increasingly become available, informal care continues to be used by families. Further, some families manage employment with only parental care. Also, in the year or two before starting full-time school, many children attend early childhood education, although the hours available may not fit well with hours of employment (Baxter & Hand, 2013). These different options were explored in this paper.

These analyses examined the percentage of children in different care arrangements, and also the average number of hours children are in child care, with a focus on families with employed mothers, but also comparing those with employed and not-employed mothers.

The consistent finding, regardless of age of children, is that there has been significant growth in children's use of formal child care from the 1980s through to 2011. For children under school age, this has been apparent in the proportion in formal care, for those with employed mothers as well as those with mothers who are not employed. For children of school age, there has been growth in the proportion in formal care among those with employed mothers. Growth in formal care for children of all ages largely reflects increased proportions of children in long day care and outside-school-hours care. This is consistent with figures on the growth of these services (Brennan, 2004; DEEWR, 2012).

For children aged around the years of early childhood education, there has been growth in the use of long day care, while the proportion in preschool remained fairly consistent from the 1980s through to 2011. This is apparent across all children, and also the subset of children with employed mothers.

As is evident throughout this analysis, use of informal child care has been, and continues to be, an integral part of child care in families with employed as well as not-employed mothers. Although there has been some decline in the percentage of children in informal care since the 1990s, especially between the 2008 and 2011 surveys, a significant proportion of families still use informal child care—some using a mix of informal and formal care, others relying only on informal care. The growth in use of formal care by children has not meant a very significant shift away from informal care altogether. It is only at preschool age (3–5 years) that the proportion of children who are only in informal care has become quite small, because of the widespread use of long day care or preschool at this age. The use of informal child care is quite understudied in Australia, and deserves more attention in research on how families manage their work and care responsibilities (Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009).

From the 1980s to 2011 there has been some shift in who provides informal child care, with a decline in the proportion of children cared for by non-relatives, such as friends and neighbours. It may be that the role of non-relatives as carers is to some extent being taken over by the provision of formal care. Also, non-relative carers may have become less available in more recent years, as these friends and neighbours are more likely themselves to be in employment. The proportion of children cared for by adult relatives, who are most often grandparents, has remained high for all ages of children, although declining somewhat in 2011. Understanding more about the care provided by grandparents would be of great value in the context of work and family.¹⁰ It is possible that the provision of child care by grandparents may diminish in the future if grandparents (especially grandmothers) increasingly maintain involvement in paid work to an older age. It is too soon to say whether the decline observed in 2011 is an indication of this, especially since there were some questionnaire changes in 2011 that may have affected the estimates.

Among children in some child care, those with employed mothers spend longer in child care, on average, compared to those with mothers who are not employed. These differences are most apparent for children under school age, as the average time children spend in child care once they are in school is relatively low for all children regardless of their mothers' employment status. This has remained true across all the survey years examined. Increases in average time spent in child care by children under school age have been apparent over the survey years, although not for the youngest children.

Within families with mothers who were employed for more than 15 hours per week, the average time children spend in child care, among those who are in some child care, is slightly lower than the average time mothers are in paid work. This is particularly apparent when mothers work full-time. Families may manage with a lower amount of child care by using various work arrangements, such as working from home, or through the father taking on increased responsibility for the care of children.

Consideration of the possible effects of maternal employment on children and families is based on assumptions that maternal employment means parental care of children is substituted with centre-based care, or at least some form of care that might be inferior to parental care. In fact, families often substitute parental care with grandparent care, or manage their work arrangements to avoid non-parental care altogether. These analyses show that while children with employed mothers are more likely to be in some form of child care than are children with mothers who are not employed, a substantial proportion of these families manage without child care. This is particularly true in the case of the youngest children, with one-third of children under 1 year old with employed mothers being in parent only care. This percentage has remained virtually unchanged from the 1980s to 2011, despite the increased availability of formal care options. This suggests that despite quite significant changes in maternal employment and in child care availability over this period, there might be a persistent view, or preference, among many mothers of the youngest children to minimise the use of non-parental care.

From the 1980s, increases in maternal employment have been particularly characterised by employment in part-time work. These analyses show that children are less likely to be in child care when mothers work part-time hours, especially shorter part-time hours. No doubt some

¹⁰ Australian research on care provided by grandparents is quite limited, but include Gray, Misson, and Hayes (2005), Ochiltree (2006), Horsfall and Dempsey (2011) and Goodfellow and Laverly (2003).

mothers are only prepared to be employed in work that allows them to minimise or avoid the use of non-parental child care, and this is likely to have remained true over the period of time examined here. Longer work hours by mothers, especially full-time hours, are associated with a greater likelihood of using informal and formal child care. There was one exception to these findings, for 0–2 year olds in 2011: for these children there was no apparent association between mothers' work hours and their likelihood of using informal care. It will be interesting to examine this again in future surveys to determine whether this lack of association persists.

For children aged 3–5 years, associations between mothers' work hours and the type of formal care/ECE reveal that in each year children were less likely to be attending preschool when mothers worked longer hours; instead being more likely to be in long day care.

While reduced maternal work hours allows for less child care, some parents use other job characteristics to facilitate their caring responsibilities around their working responsibilities. In particular, when children of employed parents are in only parental care, mothers are more likely to report working flexible hours and working from home when compared to those children in some child care.

This research was particularly focused on maternal employment, with only a small mention of fathers' employment. The analyses of fathers' employment that is presented confirm that child care use is more closely aligned with characteristics of mothers' jobs than fathers' jobs, and also that mothers are more likely than fathers to report using working arrangements to care for children. When fathers do use working arrangements to care for children, they are most likely to use flexible working hours.

With regard to fathers, it is also important to note the role of fathers in separated families. Here, when children are with a non-resident parent, this can be reported to be a form of (informal) child care. While this form of care is arguably very different to other forms of care, it still may provide opportunities for mothers to engage in paid work. Nevertheless, when included in the statistics on the number or proportion of children who are in child care, it provides a somewhat inflated figure if this figure is interpreted as non-parental child care. The percentage of children reported to be cared for by a non-resident parent is, however, quite small.

Although this report has explored participation in child care in the context of maternal employment, it does not attempt to provide a complete study of the link between employment and child care, which would require the addition of information about costs of child care, and also information about local area supply of different care options. Some Australian research has focused on some of these links already (Breunig, Gong, & King, 2012; Breunig, Weiss, Yamauchi, Gong, & Mercante, 2011; Cobb-Clark et al., 1999; Doiron & Kalb, 2002; Rammohan & Whelan, 2007; Teal, 1992). Also, this research has not attempted to explain how children's care varies with parental and family characteristics, and this is one direction this research could be taken in the future.

Understanding how families manage their work and care responsibilities is of continuing policy interest, in the context of understanding how mothers (or families) may be supported to facilitate maternal employment. This paper certainly highlights how, increasingly, families are relying on formal child care options, demonstrating the importance of the availability of this form of care, and the need for such care to be available to mothers who may be seeking to combine employment with their family responsibilities. Also, there may be policy implications that could flow from considering the significant role that informal carers play in some families. With much of this informal care provided by grandparents, there may be long-term implications for the availability of this care, in an environment in which grandparents may be unavailable to provide this care if they are spending more years in paid work themselves. The other area of policy that is informed by this research relates to the availability of part-time work and family-friendly work arrangements. Clearly, many families manage their care of children by working shorter hours and/or in flexible jobs that allow care to be fit around employment. Here this is most apparent for mothers' employment.

Overall, this report demonstrates that maternal employment is not always associated with extensive use of formal child care, with much of the child care for maternal employment provided by family members. Nevertheless, there has been much more use of formal child care (especially long day care for younger children and outside-school-hours care for school-aged

children) for children of employed mothers over the period from the early 1980s to 2011. This care has not, however, displaced informal care, with formal child care often combined with informal child care. Also, there continues to be a portion of the population who manage without non-parental child care, and this is to some extent related to some mothers (and to a much lesser extent, fathers) working shorter and/or flexible hours.

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Appendix A: Further data information

This paper uses Child Care Survey (or Childhood Education and Care Survey) data from 1984 onwards. The 2005, 2008 and 2011 data were accessed via the Remote Access Data Laboratory (RADL) and earlier data via CD-ROM.

For the analyses of maternal employment and child care, the CURFs from 1984, 1993, 2005 and 2011 were used. The sample sizes used in the analyses are shown in Table A1. From the total sample in the unit record data, a very small number of child records was excluded because children of school age were reported to be not attending school. When child care patterns were examined by mothers' work hours, the analyses were further restricted to 1984, 2005 and 2011. The distribution of hours and sample counts are shown in Table A2 (on page 36).

Table A1: Sample characteristics, selected years 1984–2011				
	Nov. 1984	Jun. 1993	Jun. 2005	Jun. 2011
Number of children				
Total sample analysed from CURF	17,849	13,354	9,095	7,823
Total sample, mother employed	6,538	6,205	4,850	4,369
Children aged 0–2 years	1,033	1,157	895	802
Children aged 3–5 years	1,402	1,419	1,174	1,084
Children aged 6–11 years	4,103	3,629	2,781	2,483
Percentage of children with employed mothers (weighted)				
Children aged 0–11 years	36.6	45.8	52.2	53.8
Children aged 0–2 years	23.8	34.9	39.3	38.3
Children aged 3–5 years	33.2	41.9	50.8	50.5
Children aged 6–11 years	44.7	53.4	58.9	64.2

Source: Author's calculations using ABS Child Care CURFs

Table A2: Distribution of employed mothers' weekly working hours, selected years 1984–2011

Weekly work hours	Number of children			Distribution (weighted)		
	Nov. 1984	Jun. 2005	Jun. 2011	Nov. 1984	Jun. 2005	Jun. 2011
Children aged 0–2 years						
1–15 hours	449	357	245	42.4	39.5	31.6
16–34 hours	342	358	365	32.9	40.2	43.7
35 hours or more	242	180	192	24.7	20.3	24.8
Total	1,033	895	802	100.0	100.0	100.0
Children aged 3–5 years						
1–15 hours	538	355	302	37.9	31.4	28.7
16–34 hours	477	516	478	35.0	42.0	43.3
35 hours or more	387	303	304	27.1	26.6	28.0
Total	1,402	1,174	1,084	100.0	100.0	100.0
Children aged 6–11 years						
1–15 hours	1,266	679	547	30.3	25.2	23.3
16–34 hours	1,551	1,201	1,126	39.9	42.6	44.8
35 hours or more	1,286	901	820	29.8	32.2	31.9
Total	4,103	2,781	2,493	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Author's calculations using ABS Child Care CURFs

The Child Care Surveys were conducted in different months of the year prior to 1999. The timing of the survey has implications for estimates of the percentages of children in care, especially for children around the age of school commencement. For example, looking at child care or early childhood education arrangements of 5-year-olds in Figure 5 (on page 12), in those surveys conducted earlier in the year, more 5-year-old children were in school rather than preschool or child care, as many children who turn 5 years by the beginning of a year will start school that year. This compares to those surveys conducted later in the year, in which 5-year-old children included those who turned 5 during the calendar year, and therefore may have not met the age cut-offs to start school that year, or may have been held back to start school at a slightly older age. In March 1996, 95% of 5-year-olds were in school, compared with 54% in November 1984, 76% in June 1993, 87% in June 1999, 78% in June 2005 and 82% in June 2011 (calculated from the CURFs). There would be similar effects on the proportions of 4-year-old children in preschool, and therefore care was taken in interpreting the trends in child care use for children around the ages of school commencement.

Within respondent households, child care details were collected in respect of children aged under 12 years old.^a These analyses are done using these child-level data, relating child care use to the employment characteristics of the mother. Child weights have been applied in the calculations of percentages and totals.

The actual types of care reported on differed across surveys, but could be aggregated into comparable groups. Separate reporting of outside-school-hours care was only possible from 1990, and so in earlier years outside-school-hours care may be captured in child care or other formal care. Care by grandparents or a non-resident parent could be separately identified from 1999, and in earlier years was reported as care by a relative.

For all estimates of percentages and hours of child care, relative standard errors were calculated to identify estimates with RSEs of greater than 25%. For 2005, 2008 and 2011 the replicate weights and survey procedures were used for these calculations. For earlier years, in which these details were not available, calculations were based on weighted data.

^a In 2005, 2008 and 2011, details were also collected from 12-year-olds, but data presented in this paper refer only to those under 12 years old. From 1999 onwards, child care details were collected for no more than two children in a family. Within larger families, these two children were randomly selected from all children aged less than 12 years old, but the application of weights ensures their representativeness of all children.

Appendix B: Supplementary tables

Table B1: Main reason for using formal or informal care for children aged less than 12 with employed mothers, by child age group, 2005 and 2011

Main reason for child care	Formal care			Informal care		
	0–2 years	3–5 years	6–11 years	0–2 years	3–5 years	6–11 years
Percentage						
Employed mothers, 2005						
Work and/or study	83.7	60.1	95.7	76.7	69.9	64.5
Child-related	8.9	34.7	1.8	4.0	3.7	7.6
For child to spend time with non-resident/non-custodial parent				0.1	3.7	7.1
Parents' personal or other reasons	7.4	5.2	2.5	19.2	22.8	20.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Sample size	416	822	514	510	556	992
Not-employed mothers, 2005						
Work and/or study	22.8	11.0	45.2	8.8	10.0	12.9
Child-related	32.9	74.8	21.8	5.4	12.7	15.8
For child to spend time with non-resident/non-custodial parent				5.6	12.7	14.6
Parents' personal or other reasons	44.3	14.2	33.0	80.2	63.8	56.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Sample size	252	575	105	377	277	367
Employed mothers, 2011						
Work and/or study	90.2	57.6	94.1	77.9	73.7	66.1
Child-related	7.7	9.8	2.6	7.1	5.8	5.6
For child to spend time with non-resident/non-custodial parent				1.6	7.9	10.3
Parents' personal or other reasons	2.2	2.5	3.3	13.3	12.6	18.1
Not asked (preschool only)		30.2				
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Sample size	438	772	490	395	449	753
Not-employed mothers, 2011						
Work and/or study	27.7	11.7	43.7	11.8	13.7	13.8
Child-related	41.3	24.1	29.2	14.0	22.2	23.7
For child to spend time with non-resident/non-custodial parent				9.5	13.9	22.8
Parents' personal or other reasons	30.9	12.6	25.0	64.8	50.2	39.7
Not asked (preschool only)		51.6				
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Sample size	205	485	45	241	175	165

Notes: "Work and/or study" includes work, looking for work or work-related study or training or other study/training; "child-related" includes "good for child", "prepare child for school" and "other child-related reason"; "parents' personal or other reasons" includes sport, shopping, entertainment/social occasion, give parents a break/time alone, voluntary/community activity, caring for relatives, ill/in hospital/visited doctor/dentist, other parent-related reasons. In 2011, if children were only in preschool, reasons for formal care was not asked.

Source: Author's calculations using ABS Child Care CURFs

Table B2: Main reason for using informal care for children aged 3–5 years, by mothers' employment status, selected years 1984–2011

Main reason for child care	1984	1993	2005	2011
	Percentage			
Mother employed				
Work and/or study	74.5	71.3	69.9	73.7
Child-related	3.7	5.3	3.7	5.8
For child to spend time with non-resident/ non-custodial parent	–	–	3.7	7.9
Parents' personal or other reasons	21.8	23.5	22.8	12.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Sample size	630	745	556	449
Mother not employed				
Work and/or study	14.0	8.6	10.0	13.7
Child-related	9.2	10.8	12.7	22.2
For child to spend time with non-resident/ non-custodial parent	–	–	12.7	13.9
Parents' personal or other reasons	76.8	80.6	63.8	50.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Sample size	765	622	277	175

Notes: "Work and/or study" includes work, looking for work or work-related study or training or other study/training; "child-related" includes "good for child", "prepare child for school" and "other child-related reason"; "parents' personal or other reasons" includes sport, shopping, entertainment/social occasion, give parents a break/time alone, voluntary/community activity, caring for relatives, ill/in hospital/visited doctor/dentist, other parent-related reasons. "For child to spend time with non-resident/non-custodial parent" was not available as a response category in 1984 and 1993.

Source: Author's calculations using ABS Child Care CURFs

Table B3: Child care arrangements of children aged 0–2 years, by maternal work hours, selected years 1984–2011

Child care	1–15 hours per week			16–34 hours per week			35 hours or more per week		
	Nov. 1984	Jun. 2005	Jun. 2011	Nov. 1984	Jun. 2005	Jun. 2011	Nov. 1984	Jun. 2005	Jun. 2011
Percentage									
Any child care	62.0	68.5	67.1	77.0	85.6	85.7	78.9	92.4	87.7
Formal care only	7.1	18.4	18.2	16.6	24.0	38.1	15.1	29.4	41.1
Informal care only	50.8	35.2	33.3	52.6	37.5	25.0	52.2	35.8	21.2
Formal and informal care	4.0	14.8	15.7	7.7	24.0	22.6	11.5	27.2	25.1
Parental care only	38.0	31.5	32.9	23.0	14.4	14.3	21.1	7.6 #	12.3
Formal care	11.1	33.3	33.8	24.3	48.1	60.6	26.6	56.5	66.5
Long day care	6.7	19.4	29.2	14.1	34.7	55.7	17.1	38.8	56.1
Family day care	4.6	8.3	3.2	9.4	12.1	4.7	9.1	14.8	9.7
Informal care	54.8	50.0	49.0	60.3	61.6	47.6	63.7	63.0	46.3
Adult relative	39.2	42.2	44.2	41.4	54.4	42.5	41.8	53.8	45.1
Grandparent	–	40.6	39.7	–	48.1	37.3	–	46.3	41.8
Non-relative	15.0	8.4	5.3	21.4	8.6	7.3	24.1	12.7	4.1
Number of children									
Sample size	449	357	245	342	242	365	242	180	192

Notes: # Estimates with RSE > 25%. Estimates for care by "non-resident parent", "siblings" and "other formal care" have not been shown due to high RSEs.

Source: Author's calculations using ABS Child Care CURFs

Table B4: Child care/ECE arrangements of children aged 3–5 years, by maternal work hours, selected years 1984–2011									
Child care	1–15 hours per week			16–34 hours per week			35 hours or more per week		
	Nov. 1984	Jun. 2005	Jun. 2011	Nov. 1984	Jun. 2005	Jun. 2011	Nov. 1984	Jun. 2005	Jun. 2011
Percentage									
Any child care	73.1	78.4	78.6	80.0	86.3	81.4	82.4	88.7	85.8
Formal care only	27.3	39.0	40.5	28.2	36.1	40.7	30.1	36.6	42.6
Informal care only	23.5	9.2	9.3	32.5	14.4	12.9	33.0	16.7	10.5
Formal and informal care	22.3	30.2	28.9	19.2	35.8	27.8	19.3	35.4	32.8
Parental care only	26.9	21.6	21.4	20.0	13.7	18.6	17.6	11.3	14.2
Formal care	49.6	69.2	69.3	47.5	71.9	68.5	49.4	72.1	75.4
Preschool	38.9	41.7	42.3	31.4	37.1	28.4	29.5	26.9	24.9
Long day care	7.2	23.4	28.3	11.1	29.6	37.8	14.0	32.5	42.0
Family day care	3.0	7.0	3.6	7.0	9.6	4.7	8.5	8.9	5.4
Informal care	45.8	39.5	38.1	51.7	50.2	40.8	52.3	52.1	43.2
Adult relative	26.7	33.0	32.5	28.4	43.3	34.0	29.8	41.3	33.6
Grandparent	–	28.0	26.7	–	36.5	29.0	–	30.1	24.0
Non-relative	21.9	6.6 #	4.9	24.3	8.2	7.2	23.9	11.8	10.8
In preschool									
Only preschool	18.9	14.1	17.9	12.6	10.5	11.1	13.2	5.4 #	7.6
Preschool and some other child care	20.0	27.6	24.4	18.7	26.6	17.3	16.3	21.6	17.2
Number of children									
Sample size	538	355	302	477	516	478	387	303	304

Note: # Estimates with RSE > 25%. Estimates have not been shown for care by “non-resident parents”, “siblings” and “other formal care”, because of high RSEs.

Source: Author’s calculations using ABS Child Care CURFs

Table B5: Child care arrangements of children aged 6–11 years, by maternal work hours, selected years 1984–2011

Child care	1–15 hours per week			16–34 hours per week			35 hours or more per week		
	Nov. 1984	Jun. 2005	Jun. 2011	Nov. 1984	Jun. 2005	June. 2011	Nov. 1984	Jun. 2005	Jun. 2011
Percentage									
Any child care	29.3	34.3	29.9	38.5	48.1	43.6	48.4	56.5	50.3
Formal care only	0.6 #	7.7	5.2	2.4	11.8	13.4	4.2	15.2	17.7
Informal care only	28.8	24.7	22.0	35.7	30.2	23.0	43.4	32.6	24.5
Formal and informal care	–	2.0 #	2.6	0.4 #	6.1	7.2	0.8 #	8.8	8.1
Parental care only	70.7	65.7	70.1	61.5	51.9	56.5	51.6	43.5	49.7
Formal care	0.6 #	9.7	7.9	2.8	17.9	20.6	5.0	24.0	25.8
Outside-school-hours care	–	7.8	7.3	–	16.5	19.4	–	22.5	24.3
Informal care	28.8	26.6	24.6	36.0	36.3	30.2	44.2	41.3	32.5
Adult relative	15.6	19.3	17.4	17.8	25.5	22.9	22.6	27.3	25.7
Grandparent	–	14.0	11.9	–	19.4	17.2	–	19.7	18.8
Non-resident parent	–	2.7	3.4	–	3.6	5.1	–	5.4	6.5
Sibling	4.1	1.7 #	3.1 #	7.4	3.5	2.0	8.9	5.5	3.4
Non-relative	11.1	6.4	4.3	13.8	9.3	7.3	15.0	10.0	5.2
Number of children									
Sample size	1,266	680	545	1,551	1204	1,122	1,286	904	816

Notes: # Estimates with RSE > 25%. Estimates for “family day care” and “other formal care” have not been shown because of high RSEs.

Source: Author’s calculations using ABS Child Care CURFs

Table B6: Working arrangements and child care, children with employed mothers, 2005						
Working arrangements used to care for children	0–2 years		3–5 years		6–11 years	
	Parental care only	Child care	Parental care only	Child care/ECE	Parental care only	Child care
Percentage						
Mothers						
Flexible working hours	43.3	47.0	48.2	45.6	45.8	42.7
Permanent part-time work	24.6	41.4 ***	27.6	37.7	33.4	34.9
Shift work	10.3	6.7	4.6	8.7	6.4	9.8 *
Working at home	42.0	18.2 ***	25.5	15.8 *	17.1	13.8 *
Job-sharing	0.5	8.2 ***	1.2	3.8	2.9	3.0
Any other arrangement	2.2	1.5	2.0	3.2	2.9	3.2
None of these	16.4	20.8	25.6	24.9	25.9	29.3
Fathers						
Not applicable—single mother	2.8	7.1	7.8	16.5 *	9.1	23.4 ***
Father not employed	5.8	1.6 *	7.7	4.9	5.3	3.7 **
Flexible working hours	27.7	30.0	25.5	27.3	29.7	32.8
Permanent part-time work	5.4	3.6	1.7	2.8	2.7	3.6
Shift work	11.9	6.2 *	10.5	7.6	7.5	5.7 **
Working at home	10.0	10.0	11.7	10.1	11.0	11.6
Job-sharing	0.0	1.6	1.0	0.9	1.2	0.8
Any other arrangement	0.0	1.3	1.9	1.5	2.0	2.4
None of these	52.4	62.4	61.7	61.9	59.6	58.3
Mean hours						
Mothers' paid work per week	14.5	23.1 ***	19.8	24.5 **	24.1	28.7 ***
Fathers' paid work per week	43.6	43.3	39.5	43.3	43.4	43.4
Number of children						
Sample size	167	728	185	989	1,443	1,345

Notes: Significance tests were used to compare the findings for those who did and did not use child care within each age group. If no asterisks are shown, the difference was not statistically significant. Parent's mean hours in paid work is likely to be an underestimate, as parents' work hours of more than 60 hours were entered in the calculations as 60 hours. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Source: Author's calculations using 2005 ABS Child Care CURF

