

How Do Parents with and without Nontraditional-Hour Schedules Rate Different Types of Care?

Findings from an Analysis of the 2019 National Survey of Early Care and Education

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KEY FINDINGS

Compared with young children in traditional-hour care only, **higher shares of those in NTH care** had parents who **rated friend and relative care as excellent on safety and affordability**.

Fewer young children in NTH care had parents who **rated center-based care as excellent overall** (13 percent) **compared with** those in **traditional-hour care only** (18 percent).

The parents of both children in NTH care and children in only traditional-hour care were **more likely to rate center-based care than friend and neighbor care as excellent in preparing children to learn in school**.

Understanding the child care needs of parents who work nontraditional-hour (NTH) schedules has become a growing concern for policymakers seeking to support families, strengthen the economy, and address issues of racial equity. Recent reports have examined the potential demand for NTH child care—care offered before 7:00 a.m. or after 6:00 p.m. on weekdays or anytime on weekends.

Previous research that analyzed data from the American Community Survey (ACS) suggested **sizeable shares** of children younger than age 6 live in families with working parents who have NTH schedules. Such arrangements are more common among **families of color**. This group of children includes as many as 40 to 50 percent of Black and Latino/a children, whose families have historically faced structural barriers to good jobs and education.

Recent research reveals that many parents who work NTH prefer care offered by friends or relatives during those hours. However, more analysis is needed to help policymakers decide how to best support these families.

This snapshot fills that gap. We analyzed 2019 National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) household survey data to explore perceptions of different care types among parents with children younger than age 6 in nonparental care but not yet in kindergarten.¹ We use the term “young children” to refer to this group.

¹ We examined the share of respondents rating different aspects of care types as excellent out of all survey respondents, including those indicating a rating of excellent, good, fair, and poor as well as those who reported they had no opinion or a response of “I don’t know” or refused to respond. Respondents were asked to rate each aspect of care for the type of care for a randomly selected child in their household. The overall rating for each care type was calculated by taking the weighted average of their ratings across different aspects of care for that care type. Their rating of each aspect of care was weighted by how important it was when considering providers in their most recent care search for the randomly selected child. Respondents who had not conducted a recent care search for the child had all aspects equally weighted, while those who reported a response of “no opinion” or “don’t know/refused” on the importance of an

HOW DO PARENTS WITH NTH VERSUS TRADITIONAL-HOUR SCHEDULES RATE FRIEND AND NEIGHBOR CARE?

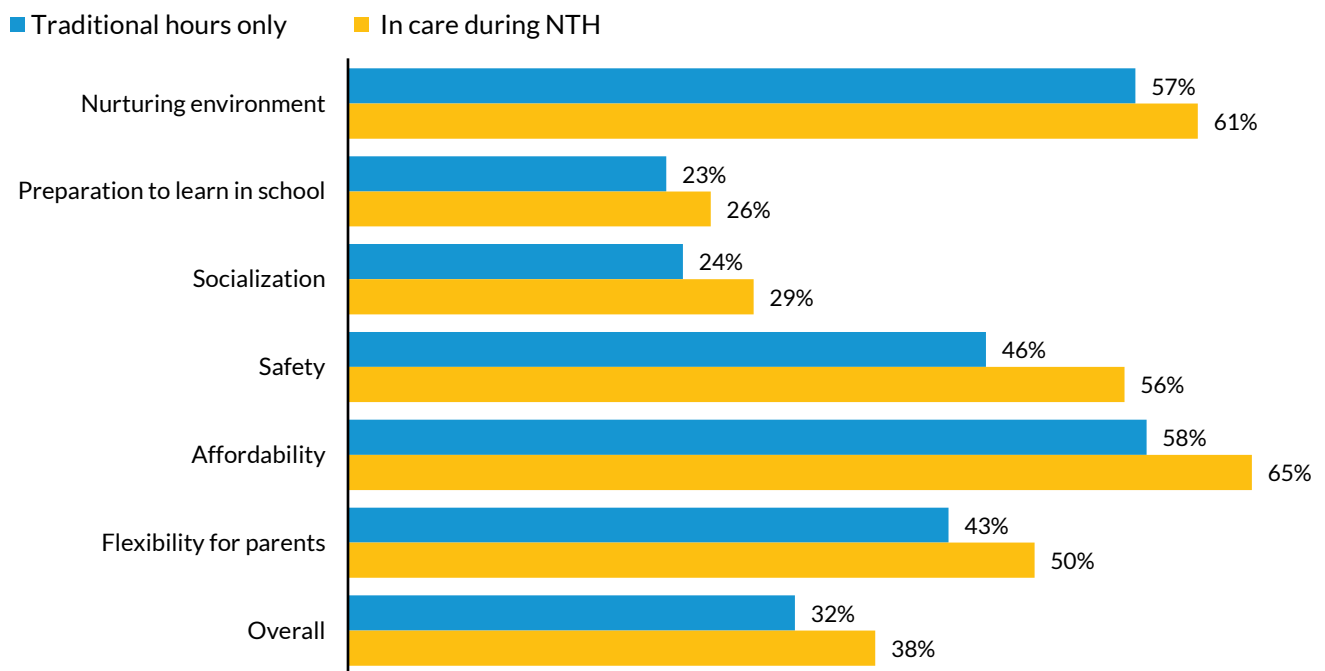
Higher shares of young children in any type of NTH care had parents who rated friend and neighbor care as excellent in terms of safety and affordability than children in any type of care during traditional hours only. Children in any type of NTH care were also more likely to have parents who rated other aspects of friend and neighbor care as excellent compared with children in traditional-hour care only, but these differences were not statistically significant (figure 1). Overall, children in care during NTH were **more likely** to be in family, friend, or neighbor care anytime during the week (57 percent) than those in traditional-hour care only (27 percent).

- Sixty-one percent of young children in NTH care had parents who rated friend or neighbor care as excellent for nurturing, compared with 57 percent of those in traditional-hour care only.
- Fifty-six percent of young children in NTH care had parents who rated friend or neighbor care as excellent for safety, compared with 46 percent of those in traditional-hour care only.
- Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of young children in NTH care had parents who rated friend or neighbor care as excellent for affordability, compared with 58 percent of those in traditional-hour care only.

FIGURE 1

Parents of Children in NTH Care Rated Friend and Neighbor Care Slightly Higher on Safety and Affordability Than Parents of Children in Traditional-Hour Care Only

Excellent ratings of friend and neighbor care by families of children younger than age 6 in nonparental care but not yet in kindergarten, by child NTH care participation



Source: Urban Institute analysis of National Survey of Early Care and Education 2019 household survey data.

Notes: Figures are estimates, frequencies are rounded to the nearest 10, and percentages are rounded to the closest 1 percent. The share rating each aspect of this care type as excellent is out of all survey respondents, including those indicating a rating of excellent, good, fair, and poor as well as those who reported they had no opinion or a response of “I don’t know” or refused to respond.

aspect had that aspect weighted at the lowest level (1, or not important, out of 3). Because respondents were not asked about the importance of the “safety” aspect, it was weighted as very important for all respondents in the analysis.

HOW DO PARENTS WITH NTH VERSUS TRADITIONAL-HOUR SCHEDULES RATE CENTER-BASED CARE?

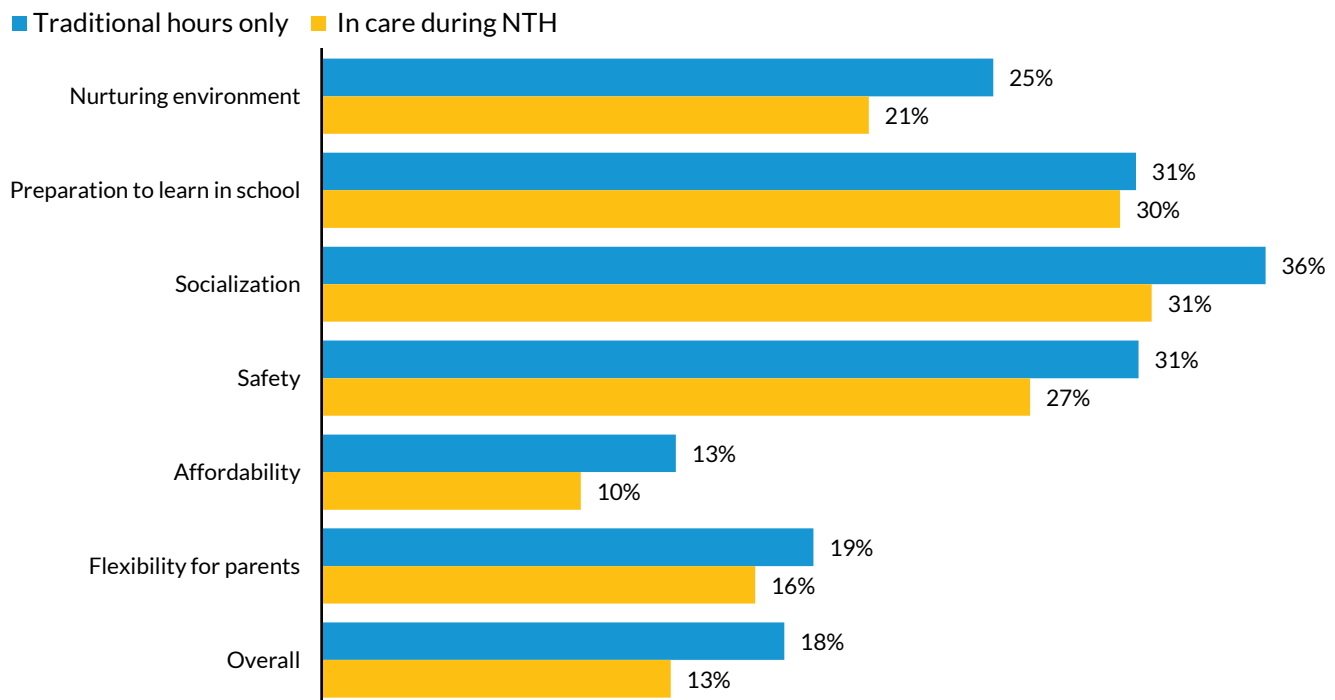
Young children in any type of NTH care were less likely to have parents who rated center care as excellent both in terms of affordability and overall than children in care of any care type during traditional-hour only. Children in NTH care were also less likely to have parents who rated other aspects of center care as excellent than children in traditional-hour care only, but these differences were not statistically significant (figure 2). Overall, children in care during NTH were **less likely** to be in center care anytime during the week (37 percent) than those in traditional-hour care only (56 percent).

- Twenty-one percent of young children in NTH care had parents who rated center-based care as excellent for nurturing, compared with 25 percent in traditional-hour care only.
- Thirty-one percent of young children in NTH care had parents who rated center-based care as excellent for supporting socialization, compared with 36 percent in traditional-hour care only.
- Twenty-seven percent of young children in NTH care had parents who rated center-based care as excellent for safety, compared with 31 percent in traditional-hour care only.
- However, nearly a third of both young children in NTH care and those in traditional-hour care only had parents who rated center-based care as excellent for preparing for school.

FIGURE 2

Parents of Children in NTH Care Rated Center-Based Care Slightly Lower Overall Than Parents of Children in Traditional-Hour Care Only

Excellent ratings of center-based care by families of children younger than age 6 in nonparental care but not yet in kindergarten, by child NTH care participation



Source: Urban Institute analysis of National Survey of Early Care and Education 2019 household survey data.

Notes: Figures are estimates, frequencies are rounded to the nearest 10, and percentages are rounded to the closest 1 percent. The share rating each aspect of this care type as excellent is out of all survey respondents, including those indicating a rating of excellent, good, fair, and poor as well as those who reported they had no opinion or a response of "I don't know" or refused to respond.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND RESEARCH

Many children younger than age 6 live in families with parents working NTH. Parents whose children are in any type of NTH care rate care settings differently than those whose children are in any type of nonparental care only during traditional hours. Higher shares of parents with NTH work schedules are Black and Latino/a. So it is important for research to examine both the child care preferences and use of parents with NTH schedules and those of parents who are Black and Latino/a.

- Federal and state policymakers who want to support child care equitably could consider how parents of children in NTH care rate the care quality of different types of care settings. If the goal is to increase access to child care for all families, policies should reflect that a high share of parents rate friend and neighbor care as excellent in providing a nurturing environment.
- Research is needed to explore whether parents accessing child care during NTH are using the types of care they believe are excellent. More research is also required to understand whether a mismatch exists between care preferences and actual use and whether differences are reported for families of different races and ethnicities. For example, differences in perceptions around the affordability of center-based and friend and neighbor care may point toward subsidy policies as one area to examine more closely.
- Regardless of schedule type, parents are more likely to rate center-based care as excellent in supporting children's school readiness than care provided by friends or relatives. More research is needed to understand how parents prioritize their children's needs when receiving care from friends and family and during NTH to ensure this care supports school readiness.
- To ensure policies support equitable access to the types of child care families want and need, policymakers could account for how parents with NTH schedules rate different types of care.

ADDITIONAL READING

Informing Policy Decisions about Nontraditional-Hour Child Care <https://urbn.is/3zVU04a>