

## **Summer Child Care Arrangements**

With the end of the school year fast approaching, millions of working parents are considering their summer child care alternatives. What options are parents choosing? Are children spending more time home alone? How much are parents spending on their summer child care? How do the choices parents make and the amount they spend vary by income? By the age of their child?

The Urban Institute's National Survey of America's Families provides the only national survey data capable of shedding light on these issues. During the summer of 1999, the survey asked parents about the child care arrangements they used at least once a week for the preceding month. Child care patterns may look different from month to month in the summer. Therefore, these estimates represent the combined patterns of each summer month.

### **What Options Are Parents Choosing?**

Overall, about 1/3 of school-age children (6-12-years old) with working moms are in an organized program or school during the summer.

- 24 percent of children regularly spend time in summer programs (day camps or recreation programs)
- 6 percent regularly spend time in summer school

1/3 of school-age children are regularly in the care of relatives

- 34 percent of children are in the care of relatives

Smaller percentages of children are in other child care arrangements

- 6 percent are in family child care (care by a non-relative provided in the non-relative's home)
- 8 percent are regularly with nannies, and baby-sitters

### **Are Children Spending More Time Home Alone?**

Over one in ten children regularly spend time in self-care (either alone or with a sibling younger than 13) during the summer.\*

- 11 percent of 6- to 12- year-olds are regularly in self-care during the summer – about the same proportion as during the school year
- Children in self-care tend to spend more hours on their own in the summer than during the school year (10.3 hours compared with 4.8 hours respectively)

### **How Do Parents' Choices Vary by Income?**

Low-income children with working moms are more likely to be in summer school and relative care

- 14 percent of low-income children attend summer school compared with two percent of higher-income children
- 45 percent of low-income children are in the care of relatives during the summer compared with 27 percent of higher-income children

Higher-income children are more likely to care for themselves in the summer than low-income children\*.

- 15 percent of higher-income children are in self-care during the summer, three times more than low-income children (5 percent). This is not significantly different than the proportion of either income group reported to be in self care during the school year

Higher-income families pay more for child care in the summer compared to the school year; low-income families pay less

- Higher-income families paying for child care spend an average of \$377 per month in the summer compared to \$282 per month during the school year

- Low-income families paying for child care spend an average of \$170 per month in the summer compared to \$224 per month during the school year

#### **How Do Parents' Choices Vary by the Age of the Child?**

Younger children with working moms are much more likely to stay with relatives than older children

- Relatives take care of 44 percent of 6- 9-year-olds during the summer compared to 17 percent of 10- to 12-year-olds

Older children are much more likely to care for themselves during the summer than younger children\*.

- 28 percent of 10- to 12-year-olds are in self-care during the summer compared to 1 percent of 6- to 9-year-olds

\*These data are based on parental self-reports and respondents may underreport behaviors that they feel are socially undesirable. This tendency may be relevant for our estimates of the percentage of children in self-care because respondents may be reluctant to acknowledge that they regularly leave their children alone or with a sibling younger than 13.

All data from *What Happens When the School Year Is Over? The Use and Costs of Child Care for School-Age Children during the Summer Months*, Jeffrey Capizzano, Sarah Adelman, Matthew Stagner, Occasional Paper 58, The Urban Institute, June 2002.