



RESEARCH REPORT

Who Minds the Kids When Mom Works a Nonstandard Schedule?

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Who Minds the Kids When Mom Works a Nonstandard Schedule?

Growing shares of US workers operate on nonstandard schedules, with the majority of their work hours falling outside the traditional workday. Such workers who also have children have special child care needs because they require nontraditional child care hours. In this brief, we first give a background of what we know about nonstandard workers, their child care, and the associated policy environment. Then, we provide an up-to-date account of the prevalence of nonstandard work and the child care arrangements of low-income parents (those earning below 200 percent of the federal poverty level [FPL]) working nonstandard schedules; for this we use data from the 2008 panel of the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). We seek to inform development of work and child care policies that best fit the needs of these workers and their children in ways that advance child and family well-being.

Our research goes further than previous studies by examining the variety of child care arrangements used by working parents across work schedule, family type, and income. As stated by Adams (2009), “Child care decisions are an extraordinarily complex blend of preferences and constraints, each of which plays out differently for each family depending on their unique circumstances.” By examining working families’ child care use across different work schedules, incomes, and family structures, we seek to develop a greater understanding of how these unique circumstances are related to families’ child care decisions. Information about the number of child care arrangements, the use of care provided by relatives, and how often working mothers use spouses or noncustodial parents for care can inform the design of child care policies, work support policies, and employment policies that are attentive to the well-being of low-income parents and their children.

We find that substantial shares of low-income working parents with children work nonstandard schedules, and that of these, about half work irregular schedules. Nonstandard schedules are more common among low-income parents than high-income parents. In comparison to standard-schedule parents, parents working nonstandard schedules are more likely to rely on multiple types of child care arrangements to fill their child care needs. A working parent often relies on the other parent for care, including when the other parent lives separately. Single parents rely on relatives for child care at high rates.

Background

Workers with nonstandard schedules work most of their hours outside the traditional daytime schedule. Some nonstandard-schedule workers also work weekends; others work irregular schedules that vary from week to week. In 2011, 20 percent of the American workforce operated on nonstandard schedules, working mostly outside the 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. range or on weekends (Enchautegui 2013). Below we describe the characteristics of nonstandard-schedule jobs, the characteristics of workers in nonstandard-schedule jobs, existing evidence on the relationship between work schedules and child care use, and recent policy discussions related to the intersection of parents' work schedules and early education and child care.

Characteristics of Nonstandard Work

Nonstandard-schedule jobs have lower pay and fewer benefits (Acs and Loprest 2008), and their inflexibility is of particular concern for parents of young children. Workers with nonstandard schedules are more likely to work in industries that require direct services and customer contact, such as retail, leisure, or hospitality. They must be available, for example, to meet customer requests, to close the shop at a specified hour, or to clean a given number of rooms by a specified time. Night shifts are staffed sparsely, with no extra workers to pick up the load if someone is late or unable to show up (Enchautegui 2013; Mayshar and Halevy 1997). Consequently, there is little room for employee-driven flexibility (Henly, Shaefer, and Waxman 2006). Many nonstandard-schedule jobs also include irregular schedules that vary daily or weekly. Many workers receive little advance notice about their schedules and are expected to be available at any time, forcing last-minute adjustments of family and child care responsibilities (Henly and Lambert 2014).

Nonstandard-schedule work has come to be called “unsociable work” (Henly and Lambert 2014; Pocock and Clarke 2005; Presser 2005; Strazdins et al. 2006) because of the pressures it puts on family life. It often creates a mismatch in the times that different family members are available for leisure and family activities. Time with school-age children may suffer the most because nonstandard-schedule jobs often require parents to be at work while their children are out of school (Enchautegui 2013). Studies have found that working nonstandard hours has detrimental effects on workers' health and children's well-being (Chung, Wolf, and Shapiro 2009; de Castro et al. 2010; Presser 2005; Strazdins et al. 2006).

Who Works Nonstandard Schedules?

Some workers choose a job with a nonstandard schedule to accommodate their schooling, be with young children during the daytime, or fulfill other personal preferences. Some parents in two-parent families choose nonstandard schedules to “tag-team” child care around the clock (Boushey 2006; Presser 1999). But for the majority of nonstandard-schedule workers, this type of schedule is not chosen but rather accepted as part of the nature of constrained job opportunities (Enchautegui 2013; Danziger and Boots 2008; Kimmel and Powell 2006).

Low-income families bear the brunt of nonstandard work and its consequences. More low-income workers operate on nonstandard schedules than do other workers: 28 percent compared with 20 percent, respectively (Enchautegui 2013). A study of low-income families with working mothers in 25 high-child poverty communities across the United States found that 73 percent of mothers worked nonstandard schedules (Burstein and Layzer 2007).¹ In a nationally representative study of recently hired, low-skilled workers, 30 percent worked evening or night shifts or rotating hours (Acs and Loprest 2008).

How Does Working a Nonstandard Schedule Affect Child Care?

One prominent challenge for low-income parents with nonstandard schedules is arranging child care. Settings that offer care to children during fixed, daytime, weekday hours, particularly center-based child care, do not accommodate families who require evening and weekend care. Several studies document the high use of family, friend, and neighbor care (especially relative care) among parents employed in nonstandard-schedule jobs; such high use is because family, friend, and neighbor care is more often available outside of traditional daytime weekday hours (Presser 1986; Scott, London, and Hurst 2005; Yen Liu 2013). But center care is associated with better outcomes for children, such as development and school readiness (Burstein and Layzer 2007; Camilli et al. 2010; Han 2004; Henly and Lyons 2000; Presser 2005). Qualitative studies and requests to the child care subsidy program in Illinois and Washington State have shown unmet need for care during nontraditional hours (Chaudry, Pedroza, and Sandstrom 2012; Stoll, Alexander, and Sugimura 2006; Thompson 2000). The supply of off-hours licensed or professional child care may be limited because of low demand (Thompson 2000; Yen Liu 2013). Parents with unpredictable schedules, many of whom work nonstandard hours, are at the crux of these problems because of the unpredictability and irregularity of their child care needs (Henly and Lambert 2014; Henly, Shaefer, and Waxman 2006; Presser 2005; Scott, London, and Hurst 2005). Child care providers with fixed costs avoid enrolling children for less than full time. In addition to the problem

of supply of nonstandard-hour care, low-income parents working nonstandard or particularly irregular schedules may also be less likely to seek child care subsidies because such subsidies may require a minimum and consistent number of work hours per week (Ben-Ishai, Matthews, and Levin-Epstein 2014; Burstein and Layzer 2007).

Growing Attention on Nonstandard Child Care Hours

Trends in labor demand suggest more workers may need to look for nonstandard-hour child care in the future. Of the 10 occupations with the highest share of nonstandard-schedule workers, eight are among the top 30 growing occupations according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and three are among the top 4 (Enchautegui 2013). Women, who still do the majority of caregiving (Raley, Bianchi, and Wang 2012), are not staying shy of these jobs. In this study we find that women are more likely than men to work nonstandard hours, especially women with incomes below 200 percent of FPL.

As national policy pays attention to revising the child care subsidy program and increasing families' access to high-quality child care, now is a key moment to ensure that programs are designed to serve parents working nonstandard schedules. The reauthorization of the Child Care Development Block Grant in November 2014 involves an increased focus on child care quality and early learning and development; importantly, it also includes provisions to help families with fluctuating schedules maintain steady access to child care subsidies. And it requires states to build strategies to increase the supply of various types of child care, including care outside of traditional work hours (Ben-Ishai and Matthews 2014).²

Despite the growing need for nonstandard-hours care and growing attention on early education and child care, there is very little recent research on the child care arrangements of low-income families in nonstandard schedules, especially using nationally representative data. The series *Who's Minding the Kids*, published by the US Census Bureau, presents information on child care arrangements by work schedules and by poverty status of the parents separately, but not for low-income, nonstandard-schedule parents. Academic studies find that mothers in nonstandard work schedules use informal care more than standard-schedule mothers, but such studies also do not focus on low-income working families (Kimmel and Connelly 2007; Kimmel and Powell 2006; Presser 1988).

SIPP Data on Working Parents and Child Care Arrangements

In this report, we rely on data from the SIPP 2008 panel. The SIPP is advantageous because it allows the identification of irregular-schedule workers as well as nonstandard-schedule workers. In the following sections, we present information on the prevalence of nonstandard work schedules by income level among working parents. Then we compare the child care arrangements of mothers working nonstandard and standard schedules, paying particular attention to low-income families. Our baseline sample is working parents with at least one child under age 13. Key SIPP questions are included in appendix B.

SIPP 2008 Wave 5 asks employed respondents which of the following best describes their work schedule: regular daytime schedule, regular evening shift, regular night shift, rotating shift, split shift, irregular schedule, or other. This question is asked for up to two jobs. We classify those working anything but a regular daytime schedule in either of the two jobs as nonstandard workers. We classify those working an irregular schedule as irregular-schedule workers. For those who do work a nonstandard schedule, the SIPP also asks the primary reason for working this schedule.

The child care questions are answered by the “designated parent,” who is (1) the mother of the child or children in the household, if she is present; (2) the father, if the mother is not present; or (3) a guardian if neither the mother nor father live in the household. The SIPP also asks designated parents about child care arrangements used regularly for each child from birth to age 14. Regularly used child care arrangements are defined as those used at least once a week during the past month for children up to age 13, and only working designated parents are asked about regularly used child care. An important limitation of our analysis, however, is that although care from the designated parent is only counted if used while that designated parent is working, for all other modes of care, including care provided by the other parent, we do not distinguish whether the care was provided while the designated parent was working or not working. Thus, we present information on child care regardless of when it was used. For example, parents who work evenings but send their children to Head Start during the day are defined as using a child care center. Consequently, we focus on the full range of child care sources that working families use to meet their child care needs, not only on the types of care used during parents’ work hours. The child care choices parents make to cover nonwork hours are as important to understand as those they make to cover work hours. Furthermore, in SIPP data on child care arrangements, care by the child’s “other parent” (nearly always the father) is considered “child care” whether the father resides

with the child or outside the household. We include father care as a type of child care to provide a full picture of all arrangements that working families use to provide care for children.

Table 1 presents the type of families, work schedules, and child care arrangements that we refer to in the following sections, and table 2 defines key terms in this analysis. We focus on two samples: (1) working parents with household income under 200 percent of FPL with at least one child under age 13, and (2) families with at least one child under age 6 in which the mother or single parent works. The sample size of working parents with children from birth to age 12 and family income up to 200 percent of FPL in SIPP Wave 5 was 2,268. The child care arrangement analysis is based on 1,943 working designated parents (one per family) with children from birth to age 5, of which 612 had household incomes up to 200 percent of FPL.

TABLE 1

Family Characteristics Observed in the SIPP

Category	Groupings for analysis	Excluded from sample
Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Less than 200 percent of FPL (low-income) ■ At or above 200 percent of FPL (high-income) 	
Family type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ At least one child age 12 or under <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » At least one child age 5 or under » At least one child age 6–12 ■ Parent living with a partner ■ Single parent 	Families without children under age 13
Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ At least one parent or partner works, among parents living with a partner <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Both work » Mother works only » Father or partner works only ■ Single parent works 	Families in which both parents are self-employed or neither parent works.
Work schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Standard schedule ■ Nonstandard schedule <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Regular nonstandard schedule » Irregular schedule 	
Child care arrangements for children under age 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Parent care (measured only for working parents) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Working parent (respondent; measured only for hours when the respondent is working or in school) » Other-parent care ■ Relative care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Nonparent relative care » Sibling care ■ Nonrelative care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Center or family day care » Other nonrelative care 	Families without children under age 6 and families in which the designated parent is not working

TABLE 2

Definitions of Key Concepts

Concept	Definition
Working family	One or both parents worked one or more jobs in the last month of the four-month reference period.
Single parent	Single parents are not married and neither living with the other parent of their children nor with a partner. A full 90 percent of single parents in our sample are mothers; about 10 percent are fathers.
Standard schedule	A regular daytime schedule in which the majority of hours worked per week are between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday.
Nonstandard schedule	A schedule in which any of a parent's jobs (up to two) involve any work schedule that is not a regular daytime schedule. Nonstandard schedules include regular evening shifts, regular night shifts, rotating shifts, split shifts, irregular schedules, and other deviations from a regular daytime schedule.
Child care arrangements	Child care arrangements are those used regularly, meaning at least once a week during the past month, for at least one child. Care could be provided while the parent is working or not working,
Other-parent care	Care from the child's other parent or stepparent; this does not include care from a parent's partner if the parent is unmarried.
Nonparent relative care	Care from the child's grandparent or other relative; this does not include care from siblings, parents, or stepparents.
Group child care	Care from child care centers, family child care, nursery or preschool programs, and Head Start programs.

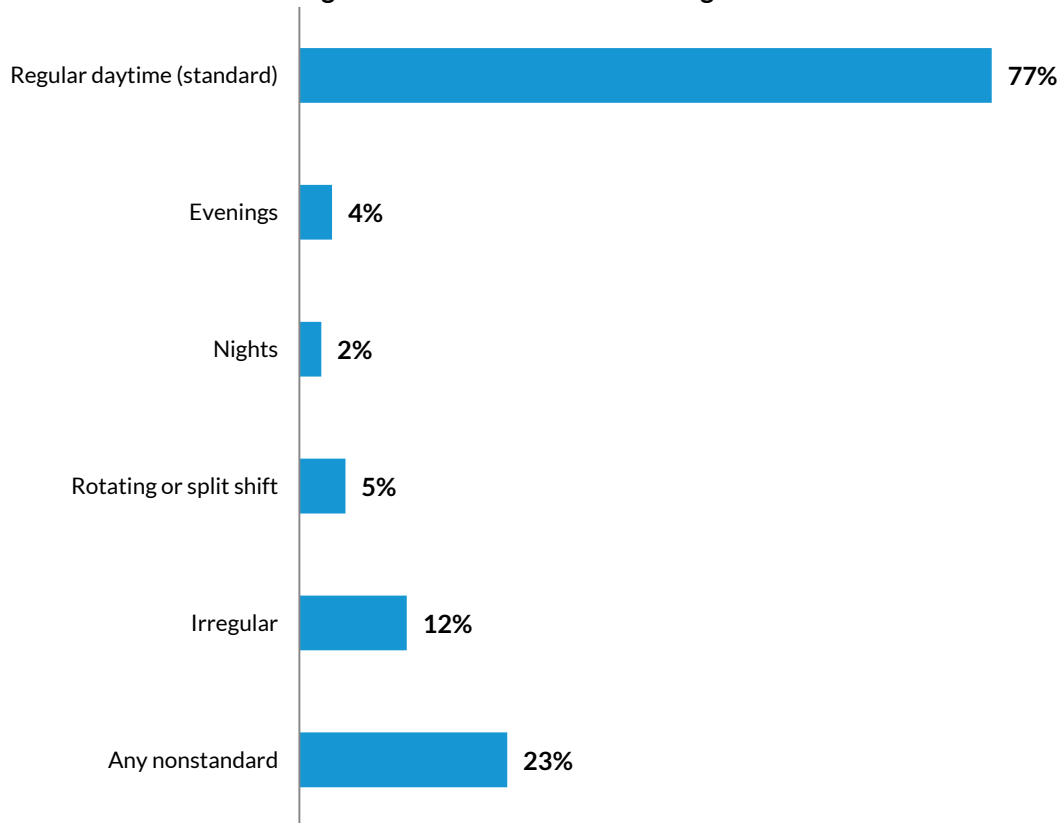
Findings

Who Works Nonstandard Schedules?

Among all working parents with children under age 13, we find that 23 percent, or just below 9 million, worked outside regular daytime schedules in 2010. Eleven percent worked regular shifts outside of normal daytime hours or regular rotating shifts, and another 12 percent worked irregular shifts (see figure 1). For more detail on the characteristics of nonstandard working parents, see table A.2.

FIGURE 1

Work Schedules of Working Parents with Children under Age 13



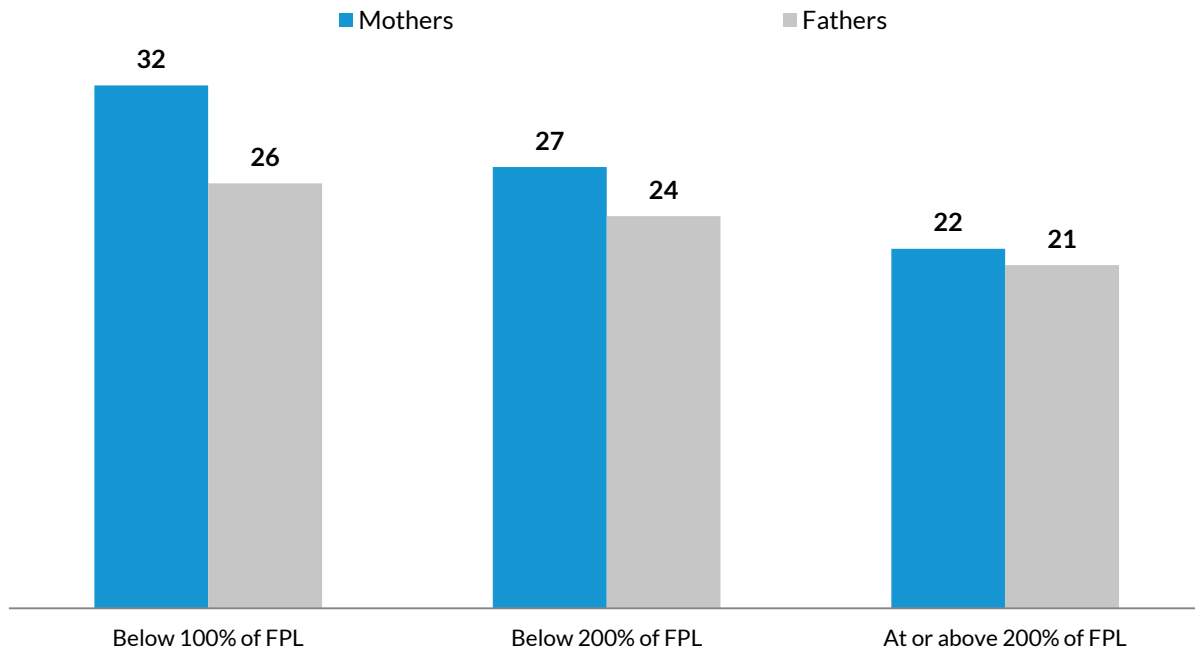
Source: Author tabulations of SIPP 2008 Panel data.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

The likelihood of working a nonstandard schedule varies by income. Among parents with children under age 13, mothers with household incomes under 100 percent of FPL are most likely to work nonstandard schedules, with 32 percent doing so (figure 2). Fathers with incomes above 200 percent of FPL are least likely to work nonstandard schedules. Among the poorest families, mothers are more likely than fathers to work nonstandard hours. For both mothers and fathers, the share working nonstandard schedules shrinks with income, but this relationship is less marked among fathers than among mothers.

FIGURE 2

Percentage of Mothers and Fathers with Children under Age 13 who Work Nonstandard Schedules by Income



Source: Author tabulations of SIPP 2008 Panel data.

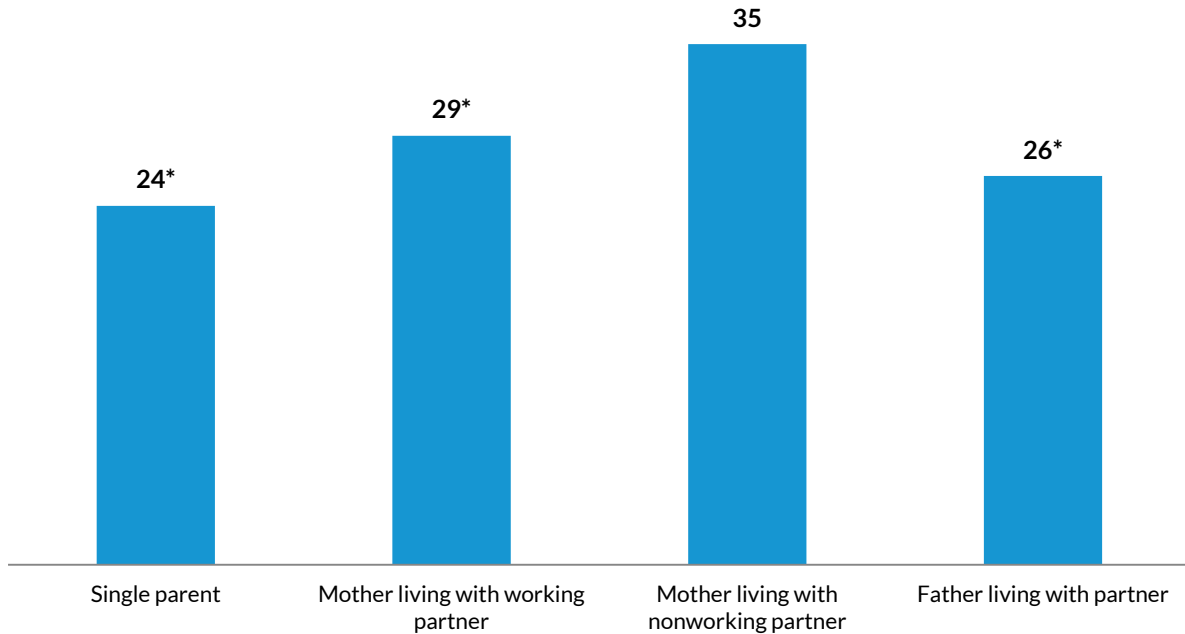
Note: FPL = federal poverty level. We did not test the significance of each difference by sex.

DEMOGRAPHIC AND WORK CHARACTERISTICS

Figure 3 shows that among low-income working mothers, those living with a partner are more likely to work a nonstandard schedule than single parents; this aligns with previous research findings that some married mothers select nonstandard hours to provide care during the day while the father provides care at night (Boushey 2006; Presser 1988, 1994). We do not find significant variation across parents of different racial and ethnic backgrounds (data not shown) nor between immigrants and US-born workers in their likelihood of working nonstandard hours (data not shown). The exception is that foreign-born fathers are less likely to work nonstandard schedules than US-born fathers (21 versus 26 percent, respectively).

FIGURE 3

Percentage of Working Parents with Children under Age 13 and Income below 200 Percent of the Federal Poverty Level Who Work Nonstandard Schedules, by Type of Parent



Source: Author tabulations of SIPP 2008 Panel data.

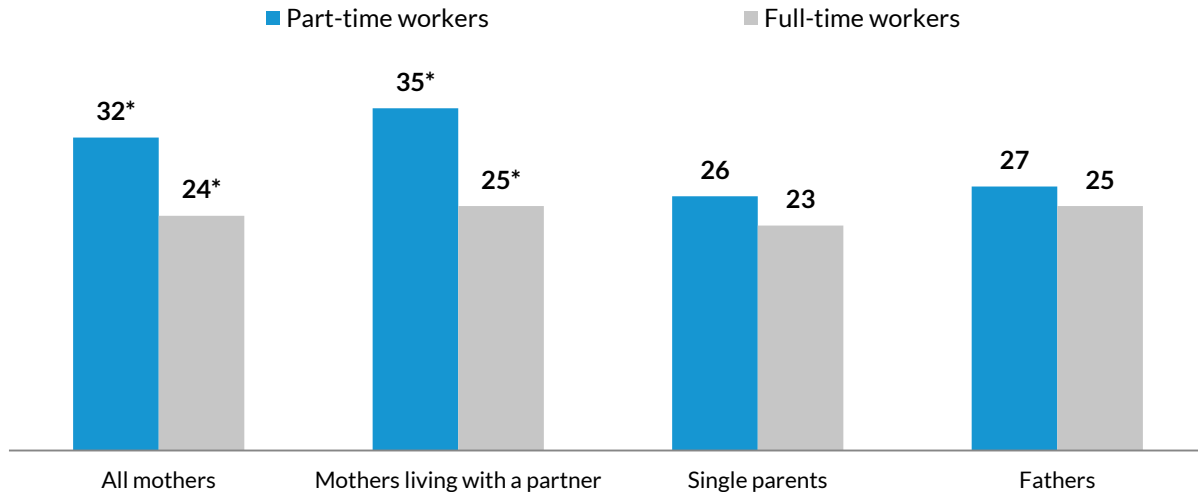
* = $p < 0.05$; ** = $p < 0.01$; *** = $p < 0.001$.

Rates of working nonstandard schedules also vary by the number of hours worked per week. Among low-income parents, part-time workers are more likely to work nonstandard schedules (figure 4).

Nonstandard, part-time hours are more common among married mothers than single parents. Fully 35 percent of low-income married women working part-time are on nonstandard schedules. Among full-time workers, the share of those working nonstandard hours is similar among married mothers, single parents, and fathers.

FIGURE 4

Percentage of Working Parents with Children under Age 13 with Income below 200 Percent of the Federal Poverty Level Who Work Nonstandard Schedules, by Part-Time Status



Source: Author tabulations of SIPP 2008 Panel data.

Note: We did not test the significance of differences by gender.

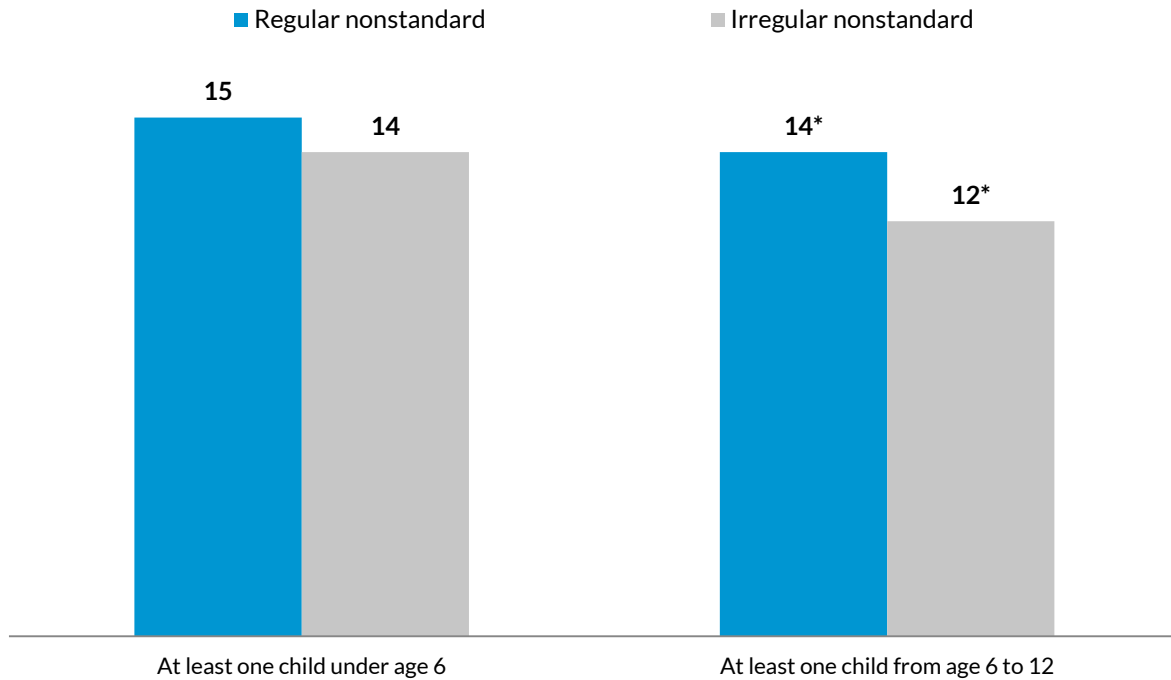
* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$.

Irregularly Scheduled Workers

Irregular-schedule workers have captured the attention of researchers and advocates alike because these workers often do not know their schedule with enough advance notice to plan child care and are expected to be available at any time (Henly and Lambert 2014). Though small sample sizes preclude us from further analyses of irregular-schedule workers, figure 5 shows that about half of all nonstandard workers are on irregular schedules. Among low-income working mothers, between 12 and 14 percent, depending on whether they have a child under age 6, work irregular schedules.

FIGURE 5

Percentage of Working Mothers with Income below 200 Percent of FPL, by Type of Nonstandard Schedule and Age of Children



Source: Author tabulations of SIPP 2008 Panel data.

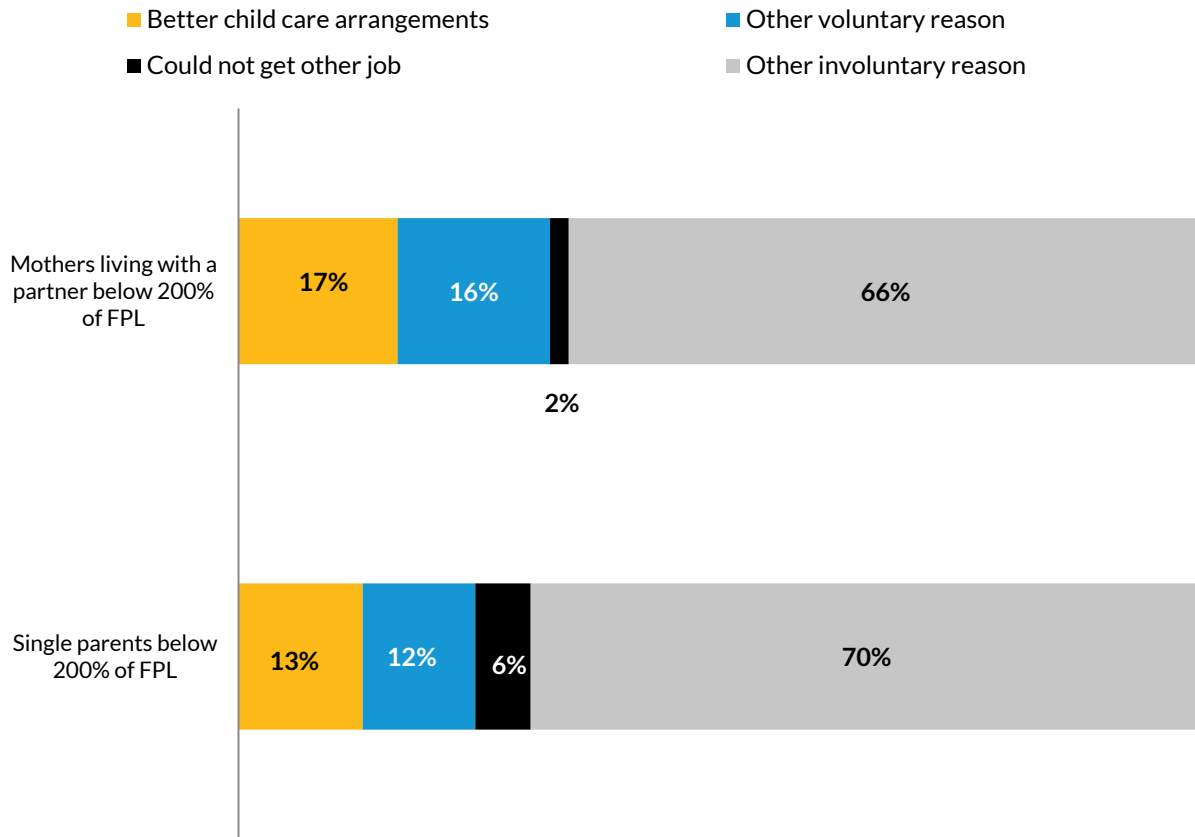
* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$.

Why Work a Nonstandard Schedule?

Child care affects the decision to take a nonstandard job, but most parents working such a schedule report they do so because of a lack of other options. As shown in figure 6, married mothers are more likely to work nonstandard schedules for child care reasons. Seventeen percent of low-income mothers living with a partner say they are working nonstandard hours to achieve better child care, compared with 13 percent of single parents. It appears that having a partner facilitates working nonstandard hours or that married couples choose nonstandard hours to provide parent care around the clock. But the vast majority of workers with these schedules, including married mothers, do so involuntarily, primarily because the nonstandard schedule is a requirement of the job. Among all low-income mothers with nonstandard schedules, 72 percent work this schedule involuntarily.

FIGURE 6

Primary Reason for Working a Nonstandard-Schedule Job, among Working Parents of a Child under Age 13



Source: Author tabulations of SIPP 2008 Panel data.

Note: FPL = federal poverty level. Other voluntary reasons include “better pay,” “care of other family members,” “time for school,” and “other voluntary reasons.” Other involuntary reasons include “requirement of the job” (cited by 69 percent of low-income single parents and 63 percent of low-income mothers living with a partner) and “other involuntary reasons.”

How Are Work Schedules Related to Child Care Use?

In this section we look at child care arrangements for children under age 6 and focus on mothers, who compose the majority of respondents in the child care reports included in the SIPP. Among the single-parent families in the SIPP data, 90 percent include a single mother and just 10 percent include a single father. We first present rates of regular use of any child care and rates of use of multiple types of child care by work schedule and income. We then look at usage rates of specific forms of child care by work schedule and by income. Remember that in presenting child care arrangements, we are describing all

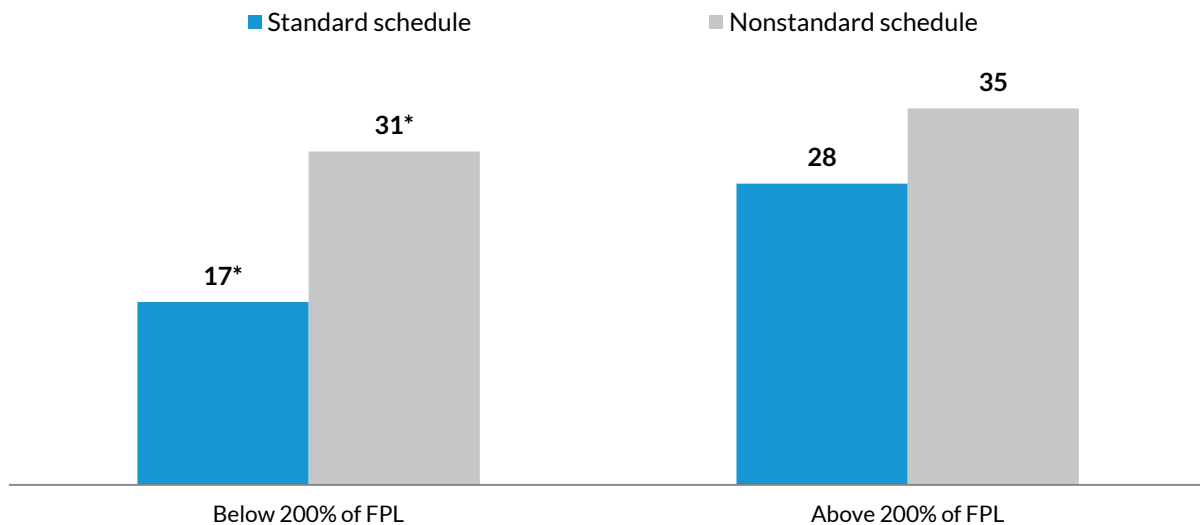
arrangements used by the mother for all children in the family at least one hour a week over the past month, regardless of whether or not the mother was working at that time.

RATES OF USING ANY AND MULTIPLE TYPES OF CHILD CARE

The SIPP asks the designated parent if they have used any type of child care regularly. School, including kindergarten, is not considered a regular form of child care in the SIPP. Nonstandard-schedule workers are more likely than standard-schedule workers to use at least one regular source of child care.

Nonstandard-schedule workers are more likely to use multiple types of child care than standard-schedule workers, and this is true among both low-income and high-income mothers. Figures 7 and 8 show nonstandard-schedule single parents with incomes above 200 percent of the FPL are the most likely to use more than one regular child care arrangement. Over half of high-income single parents regularly use multiple child care arrangements (53 percent). These differences are significant even when accounting for the number of children in each type of working family and may be explained by the higher number of hours worked by these mothers. Ancillary tabulations show that single parents with income above 200 percent of FPL worked six more hours a week than any married mothers.

FIGURE 7
Percentage of Working Mothers Living with a Partner with Children up to Age 5 Who Regularly Use Multiple Child Care Arrangements, by Work Schedule and Income



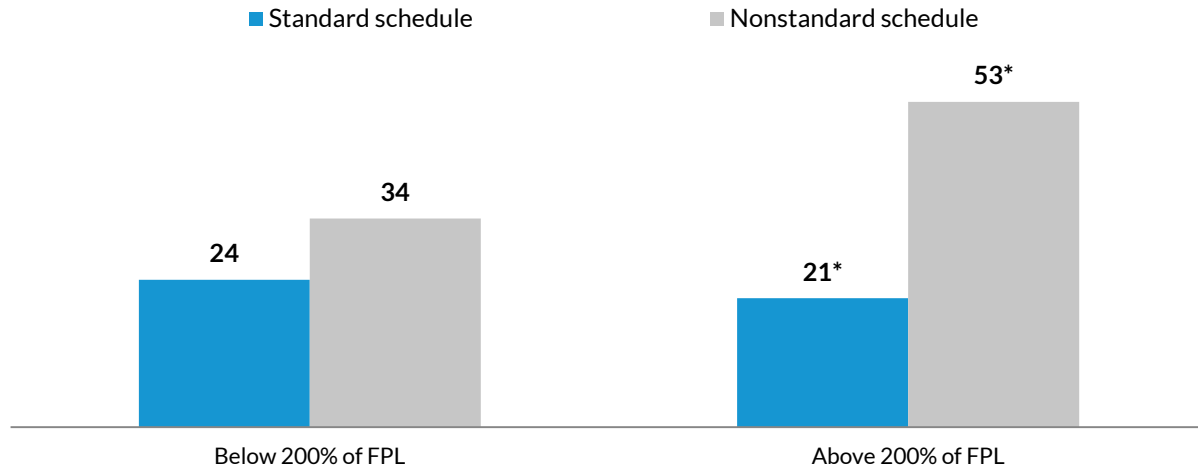
Source: Author tabulations of SIPP 2008 Panel data.

Note: FPL = federal poverty level.

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$.

FIGURE 8

Percentage of Working Single Parents with Children up to Age 5 Who Regularly use Multiple Child Care Arrangements, by Work Schedule and Income



Source: Author tabulations of SIPP 2008 Panel data.

Note: FPL = federal poverty level.

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$.

TYPES OF CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS

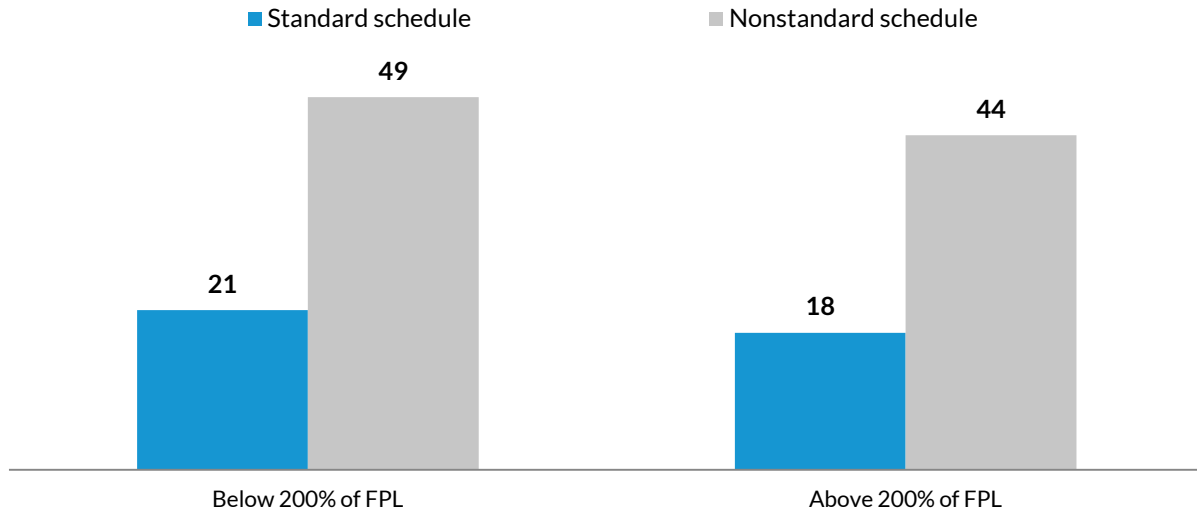
In this section, we describe how rates of use for different child care arrangements vary by work schedule, marital status, and income. We focus on care by the other parent (usually the father); care by a nonparent relative; and group care, which includes both family child care homes and center-based care.

Other-Parent Care

Parents who work nonstandard schedules are more likely than those working standard schedules to use the child's other parent as a source of care. This is especially true among low-income mothers living with a partner, among whom 49 percent use the other parent as a source of child care; only 21 percent of low-income mothers working a standard schedule use the child's other parent as a source of care (figure 9). Though single parenthood limits the extent to which nonstandard-schedule single parents use other-parent care, we find considerable involvement of nonresident parents in the care of children under age 6, especially in low-income households (figure 10).³ One-quarter of single parents regularly use the nonresidential parent as a child caregiver.

FIGURE 9

Percentage of Working Mothers Living with a Partner with Children up to Age 5 Who Regularly Use Other-Parent Care, by Work Schedule and Income

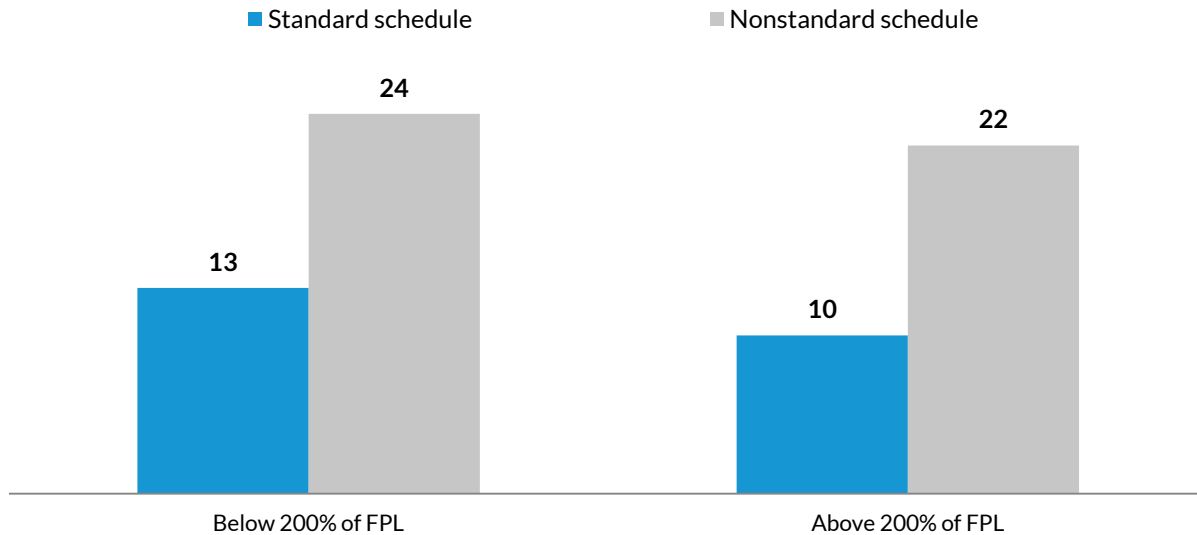


Source: Author tabulations of SIPP 2008 Panel data.

Note: FPL = federal poverty level.

FIGURE 10

Percentage of Working Single Parents with Children up to Age 5 Who Regularly Use Other-Parent Care, by Work Schedule and Income



Source: Author tabulations of SIPP 2008 Panel data.

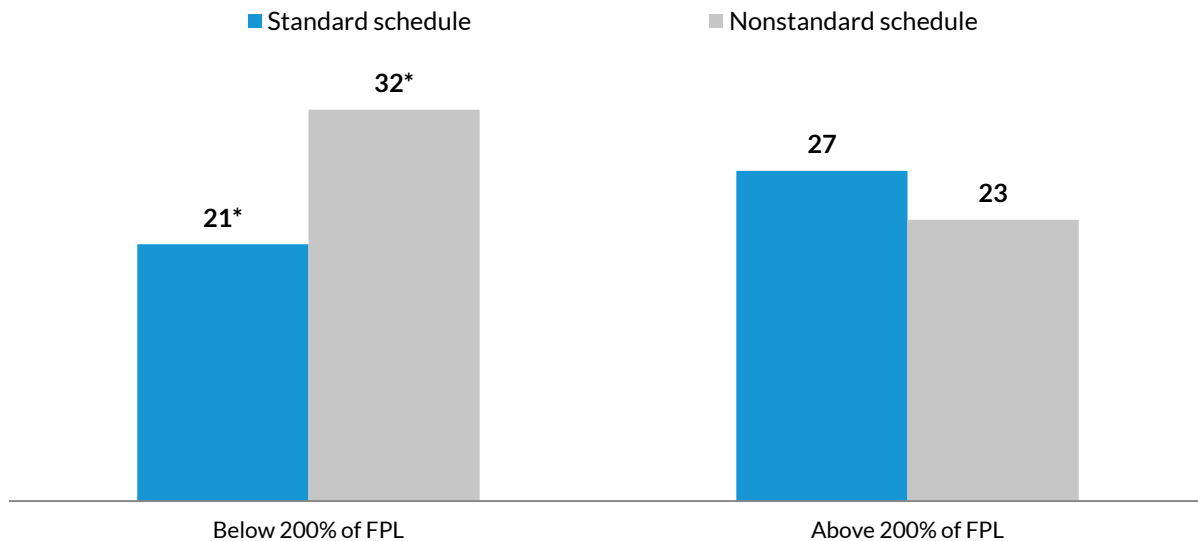
Note: FPL = federal poverty level.

Nonparent Relative Care

Among low-income families, parents who work nonstandard schedules are also more likely to turn to nonparent relatives for child care; this is even more pronounced for single parents. Almost half of low-income single parents working a nonstandard schedule use nonparent relative care, and this is notably the same rate at which mothers living with a partner use other-parent care. This suggests that single parents working nonstandard schedules rely on relatives to provide child care in lieu of a second parent (figures 11 and 12).

FIGURE 11

Percentage of Working Mothers Living with a Partner with Children up to Age 5 Who Regularly Use Nonparent Relative Care, by Work Schedule and Income



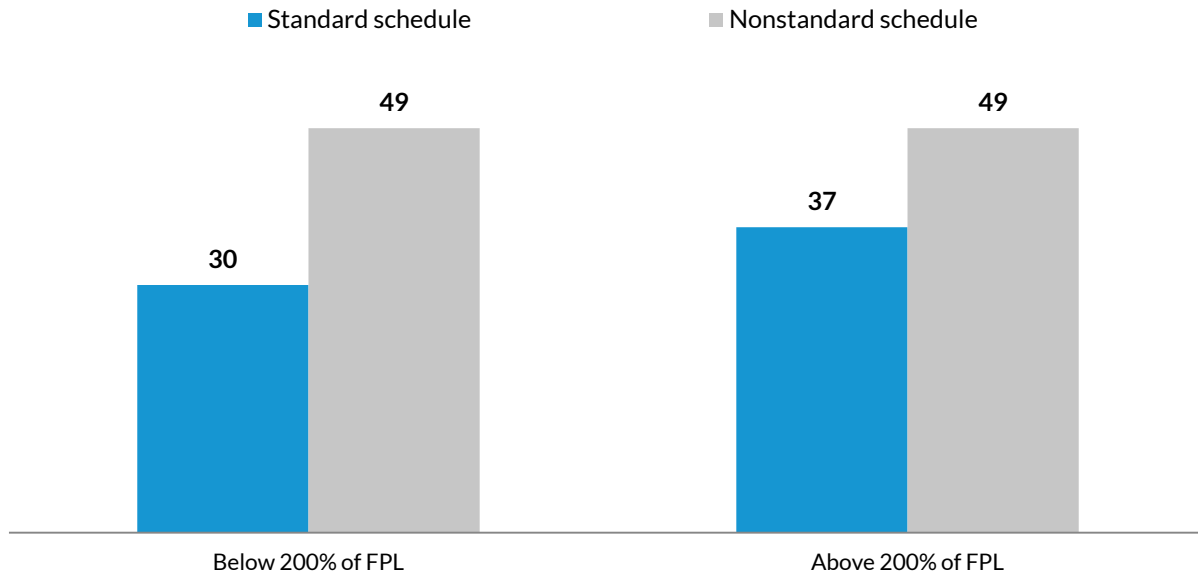
Source: Author tabulations of SIPP 2008 Panel data.

Note: FPL = federal poverty level.

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$.

FIGURE 12

Percentage of Working Single Parents with Children up to Age 5 Who Regularly Use Nonparent Relative Care, by Work Schedule and Income



Source: Author tabulations of SIPP 2008 Panel data.

Note: FPL = federal poverty level.

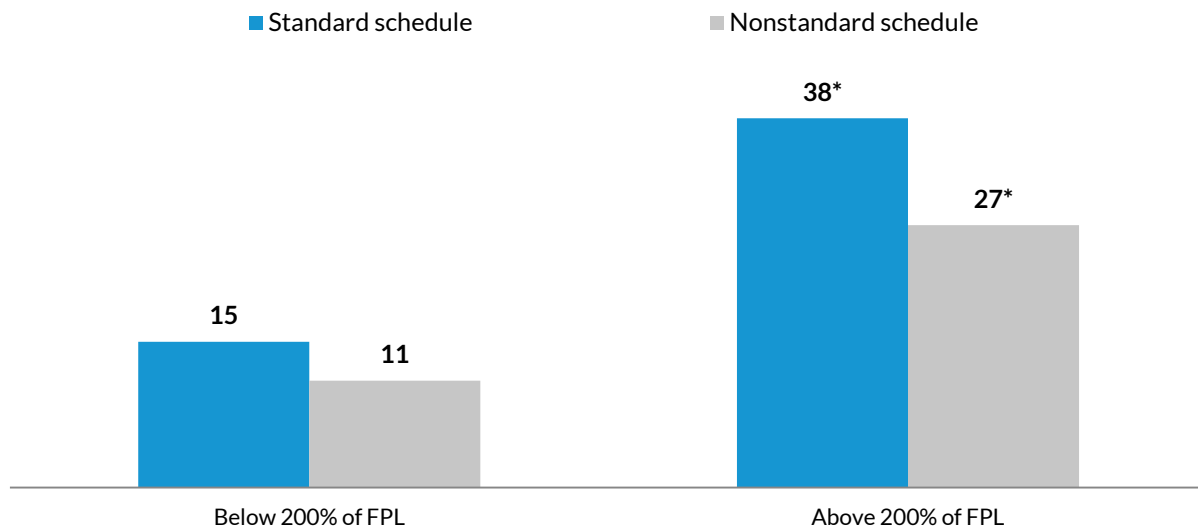
Group Child Care

Finally, we look at rates of group child care use. By group child care we refer to center-based care such as preschool, prekindergarten, or Head Start, as well as family child care. Group child care can be used by itself or in combination with other types of care. Center-based child care is normally available during standard work hours; family child care may be more likely to be offered in the evenings and on weekends.

Low-income mothers and single parents in any type of work schedule use group child care arrangements less than high-income mothers, with no significant difference between standard- and nonstandard-schedule mothers (figures 13 and 14). Group care is generally more expensive, making it difficult for low-income mothers to afford.

FIGURE 13

Percentage of Working Mothers Living with a Partner with Children up to Age 5 Who Regularly Use Group Child Care, by Work Schedule and Income



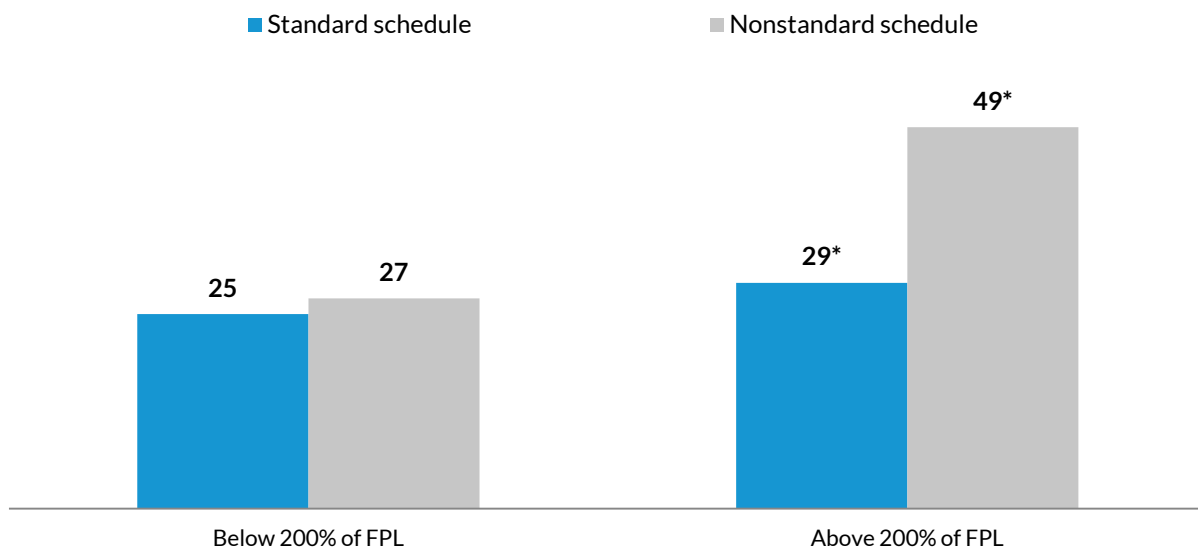
Source: Author tabulations of SIPP 2008 Panel data.

Note: FPL = federal poverty level.

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$.

FIGURE 14

Percentage of Working Single Parents with Children up to Age 5 Who Regularly Use Group Child Care, by Work Schedule and Income



Source: Author tabulations of SIPP 2008 Panel data.

Note: FPL = federal poverty level.

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$.

But those most likely to use group care are single parents with nonstandard schedules and with incomes above 200 percent of FPL. Almost half of all of these parents use group care. As shown in figures 7 and 8, these parents are more likely to use multiple types of care, so group care is likely often used by these parents as one component in a mix of child care arrangements. Indeed, we found in separate analyses that nonstandard-schedule workers were equally or less likely than standard-schedule workers to use group care only. Among mothers living with a partner, those working nonstandard schedules are significantly less likely to use group care only. However, among single parents, nonstandard- and standard-schedule workers show similar rates of using group care only.

Discussion and Conclusions

Over one-fifth of parents with children under age 13 work nonstandard schedules. Among low-income mothers with children under age 13, 30 percent work nonstandard schedules. About half of parents working nonstandard schedules also have irregular work schedules, suggesting instability in daily routines for parents and children alike. Nonstandard schedules are more common for mothers living with a partner than for single parents (most of whom are single mothers). Most parents working nonstandard schedules say they do so because the schedule is a requirement of the job.

Low-income working mothers in nonstandard schedules show greater use of child care of any type and are more likely to use multiple child care arrangements than low-income standard-schedule mothers. Partners are important sources of child care for low-income mothers working nonstandard hours. About half of low-income nonstandard-schedule mothers living with a partner rely on the other parent for child care. We also find that 25 percent of low-income single mothers use the noncustodial parent as a child care provider.

Single working parents rely on other relatives for child care at high rates, with half of nonstandard-schedule low-income single parents regularly relying on relative care. Nonstandard-schedule workers are less likely than standard-schedule workers to use group child care as their only source of care.

Nonstandard-schedule mothers' child care needs are complex. These mothers need child care at a variety of hours, not just evenings and nights. This reflects that about half of all nonstandard workers work irregular schedules, which could include daytime hours. Nonstandard-schedule mothers patch together multiple types of care, including group care, relative care, and other-parent care to meet their child care needs.

Our findings are relevant for policies on child care, fatherhood, and employment. As Child Care Development Fund policy focuses on increasing child care stability, there may be opportunities to address the child care stability of parents who work nonstandard schedules because such families experience a multiplicity of care arrangements. In addition, given the positive effect of group care on children's development (Burstein and Layzer 2007; Camilli et al. 2010; Han 2004; Henly and Lyons 2000; Presser 2005) policymakers may want to consider how subsidy policies, funding streams, licensing requirements for providers, reimbursement rates, and other policies shape low-income nonstandard-schedule parents' access to center-based child care. Simultaneously, policymakers could explore strategies to increase the availability of flexible, convenient child care during the evening and night. Meeting the nonstandard-schedule parents' child care needs will likely involve a focus on meeting parent demand both for center-based care during daytime hours and for convenient, flexible care during evening, night, and weekend hours (Adams and Katz 2015).

The involvement of noncustodial parents in children's care when the custodial parent works nonstandard hours speaks to the need to link discussions of child care with discussions of noncustodial father involvement because this is one way fathers help rear their children.

Assisting nonstandard-schedule working parents with their child care needs helps these parents maintain jobs, reduce the stress of working nonstandard hours, and stabilize their employment, and such assistance is therefore related to policies that support low-income parents' employment. But providing child care solutions to nonstandard-schedule workers can also be an employment-promoting policy because the difficulties of securing child care likely keep some low-income parents from taking jobs with nonstandard hours. As shown by Enchautegui (2013), many job openings for low-wage workers involve nonstandard and irregular schedules.

Another way to address the challenge of matching child care to nonstandard schedules is to improve the working conditions of nonstandard-schedule workers. Policies that require employees to receive advance scheduling notice for irregular-schedule jobs and that allow for employee-driven flexibility in scheduling can significantly improve these families' well-being (Ben-Ishai, Matthews, and Levin-Epstein 2014).

Appendix A. Additional Tables

TABLE A.1

Prevalence of Working a Nonstandard Schedule among Low-Income Parents in the SIPP 2008 Wave 5 (Census Year 2010)

Category	Mothers		Fathers	
	Nonstandard schedule		Nonstandard schedule	
	Any nonstandard (%)	Irregular (%)	Any nonstandard (%)	Irregular (%)
Children's ages				
At least one child age 5 or under	29	14	25	14
At least one child age 6–12	26*	12	25	13
Family structure				
Single-parent working family	25*	13	18	7
<i>Two-parent working family</i>	30	13	26	14
Other working parent	29	14	29	16
Other nonworking parent	35	11	24	13
Race or ethnicity				
Black, non-Hispanic	27	14	35	10**
White, non-Hispanic	29	16	25	17**
Hispanic, any race	24	9*	23	12*
Other (including mixed race)	35	20	37	13
Place of birth				
Foreign-born	25	9*	21**	10
US-born	28	15	26	14
Educational attainment				
Less than high school	29	11	24	12
High school diploma	25	11	27	14
Some college	28	15	26	14
Bachelor's degree	26	17	28	20*
Master's degree or greater	42	34**	29	20
Poverty status				
Below 100% of FPL	32*	18*	26	16
At or above 100% of FPL	25	13	23	12

Note: FPL = federal poverty level. For significance tests, the prevalence of an irregular schedule or any type of nonstandard schedule among working mothers and fathers in each demographic category is compared to the prevalence of that schedule outside the category. For example, the “**” on the prevalence of any nonstandard schedule among working mothers earning below 100 percent of FPL means that there is a significantly different prevalence of this schedule among working mothers earning below 100 percent of FPL compared to working mothers earning at or above 100 percent of FPL. The “*” on the prevalence of irregular

schedules among foreign-born mothers means that there is a significantly different prevalence of this schedule among foreign-born mothers working nonstandard schedules when compared to US-born mothers working nonstandard schedules.

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$.

TABLE A.2

Characteristics of Low-Income parents Who Work Nonstandard Schedules in the SIPP 2008 Wave 5 (Census Year 2010)

Characteristics	Mothers		Fathers	
	Standard schedule	Nonstandard schedule	Standard schedule	Nonstandard schedule
Number of unweighted observations	799	313	850	306
Number of weighted observations (millions)	4.30	1.64	4.64	1.62
Age (mean)	34.06	34.02	36.63	36.77
Children's ages				
At least one child age 0-5	55%	58%	65%	62%
At least one child age 6-12	75%	68%*	73%	71%
Number of children under age 13	1.80	1.77	2.09	2.03
Family structure				
Single-parent family	50%	43%*	5%	3%
<i>Two-parent family</i>	<i>50%</i>	<i>57%</i>	<i>95%</i>	<i>97%</i>
Other parent works	76%	70%	38%	45%
Other parent does not work	24%	30%	62%	55%
Female adult relative in household	18%	16%	13%	12%
Race or ethnicity				
Black, non-Hispanic	22%	22%	8%	13%
White, non-Hispanic	46%	50%	45%	43%
Hispanic, any race	27%	22%	43%	37%
Other (incl. mixed race)	5%	6%	4%	7%
Foreign-born	24%	21%	41%	31%**
Educational attainment				
Less than high school	16%	16%	31%	28%
High school diploma	29%	26%	30%	32%
Some college	43%	44%	28%	29%
Bachelor's degree	10%	10%	8%	8%
Master's degree or greater	2%	4%	3%	4%
Below 100% of FPL	36%	43%*	38%	38%

Note: FPL = federal poverty level. For significance tests, nonstandard schedule workers are compared to those with standard schedules. For example, the proportion of working mothers who earn below 100 percent of FPL is significantly higher among those working nonstandard schedules relative to mothers working standard schedules.

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$.

TABLE A.3

Child Care Arrangements for Children under Age 6 in Low-Income Working Families

	Working mother living with a partner		Working single parent	
	Standard	Nonstandard	Standard	Nonstandard
Working mother	100%	100%	91%	96%
Any child care arrangement	56%	77%****	63%	72%
Number of child care arrangements	0.81	1.29****	0.95	1.33**
Multiple child care arrangements	17%	31%**	24%	34%
Only nonparent care	29%	21%	46%	44%
Parent care				
Any working parent care	7%	13%	3%	7%
Any other parent care	21%	49%****	13%	24%*
Relative care				
Any nonparent relative care	21%	32%**	30%	49%***
Any sibling care	7%	3%	4%	8%
Nonrelative care				
Any center or family child care	15%	11%	25%	27%
Any other nonrelative care	4%	12%**	9%	5%

Source: Author tabulations of SIPP 2008 Panel data.

* $p < 0.1$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.01$ **** $p < 0.001$.

TABLE A.4

Child Care Arrangements for Children under Age 6 in High-Income Working Families

	Working mother living with a partner		Working single parent	
	Standard	Nonstandard	Standard	Nonstandard
Working mother	100%	100%	77%	83%
Any child care arrangement	68%	70%	67%	82%*
Number of child care arrangements	1.12	1.29*	0.97	1.58**
Multiple child care arrangements	28%	35%	21%	53%**
Only nonparent care	47%	23%***	54%	54%
Parent care				
Any working parent care	4%	8%*	3%	7%
Any other parent care	18%	44%***	10%	22%
Relative care				
Any nonparent relative care	27%	23%	37%	49%
Any sibling care	1%	2%	4%	10%

Nonrelative care

Any center or family child care	38%	27%**	29%	49%*
Any other nonrelative care	8%	10%	3%	7%

Source: Author tabulations of SIPP 2008 Panel data.

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$.

Appendix B. Key SIPP Questions

Type of Work Schedule

Which of the following best describes [fill HIS/HER] work schedule at this job?

- (1) Regular daytime schedule
- (2) Regular evening shift
- (3) Regular night shift
- (4) Rotating shift (one that changes regularly from days to evenings or nights)
- (5) Split shift (one consisting of two distinct periods each day)
- (6) Irregular schedule (one that changes from day to day)
- (7) Other (specify)

Reason for Work Schedule

What is the MAIN reason [fill HE/SHE] worked [fill TEMP]?

VOLUNTARY REASONS

- (1) Better child care arrangements
- (2) Better Pay
- (3) Better arrangements for care of other family members
- (4) Allows time for school
- (5) Other voluntary reasons

INVOLUNTARY REASONS

- (6) Could not get any other job
- (7) Requirement of the job
- (8) Other involuntary reasons

Child Care Arrangements

Other parent or stepparent

Parent or guardian

Sibling age 15 or older

Sibling under age 15

Grandparent

Any other relative

Family day care provider
Child or day care center
Nursery or preschool
Head Start program
Nonrelative

Arrangement of...: During a typical week last month, please tell me if ... used this individual or arrangement to look after the youngest child on a regular basis. By regular basis, I mean at least ONCE A WEEK during the PAST MONTH.

U: For cases where the designated parent or guardian is working or going to school and has one or more children between the ages of 0 and 5.

Not in Universe
Yes
No

Arrangement of ...: During a typical week last month, please tell me if ... used this individual or arrangement to look after the youngest child on a regular basis. By regular basis, I mean at least ONCE A WEEK during the PAST MONTH.

U: All designated parents or guardians with one or more children between the ages 0 and 5.

Not in Universe
Yes
No

Notes

1. The study focused on 25 counties with child poverty rates of 13.8 percent or higher and working mothers with incomes below 200 percent of FPL who use some type of nonparental child care.
2. “CCDF Reauthorization,” Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, US Department of Health and Human Services, accessed July 7, 2015, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/ccdf-reauthorization>.
3. Single parents are defined by whether the other parent, a spouse, or a partner is present in the household; “other parents” live outside the single parent’s home.

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