Key Facts

- In 2016, 5.2 million children under age six were regularly in nonparental relative care and 2.8 million were regularly in nonrelative home-based care (including some children who were in both types of care).
- In 2016, 31 percent of Black, non-Hispanic children under age six, 25 percent of Hispanic children under age six, 23 percent of Asian or Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic children under age six, and 23 percent of white, non-Hispanic children under age six were regularly in relative care.
- There were 3.77 million home-based providers caring for over 7 million children under age six on a regular basis in 2012. Nearly three-quarters of these home-based providers were unlisted (not on any state or national list, such as a list of regulated providers) and unpaid.
- Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of unlisted home-based providers did not charge parents for care for children under age one. Among providers caring for children under age one and charging some amount for care, the average price was $3.80 per hour for unlisted home-based providers, $4.70 per hour for listed home-based providers, and $7.80 per hour for center-based providers.
- More than four-fifths (82 percent) of unlisted unpaid home-based providers and nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of unlisted paid home-based providers caring for children under age six offered some care during nonstandard hours (evenings, overnight, and/or weekends), compared to 34 percent of listed home-based providers and just 8 percent of center-based providers.
Many Families Rely on Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care

- **Millions of young children are in relative or home-based child care.** In 2016, 60 percent (12.8 million) of the 21.4 million children under age six were in some type of regular child care arrangement in a typical week. (Some children were regularly in more than one child care arrangement.) Of children under age six:
  - 24 percent (5.2 million) were regularly in relative care (care by a relative other than a parent).
  - 13 percent (2.8 million) were regularly in nonrelative home-based care (care in a private home by someone not related to the child).
  - 35 percent (7.5 million) were regularly in center care.

- **Relative caregivers are most typically grandparents.** Of the 5.2 million children under age six who were regularly in relative care:
  - 79 percent (4.1 million) had a grandparent as their primary relative caregiver.
  - 13 percent (680,000) had an aunt or uncle as their primary relative caregiver.
  - 9 percent (470,000) had another relative as their primary relative caregiver.

### Primary Relative Care Provider for Children Under Age Six Regularly in Relative Care, 2016

![Pie chart showing the distribution of primary relative care providers: Grandparent 79%, Aunt/Uncle 13%, Another Relative 9%]


Notes: Data are for children birth through age five not yet in kindergarten. Relative care is care provided by a relative other than a parent. Total may not add to 100% due to rounding.
• Young children of all races and ethnicities are in relative and home-based child care. In 2016:
  • 62 percent of white, non-Hispanic children under age six were in some type of regular child care arrangement, including:
    • 23 percent who were regularly in relative care;
    • 16 percent who were regularly in nonrelative home-based care; and
    • 38 percent who were regularly in center care.
  • 68 percent of Black, non-Hispanic children under age six were in some type of regular child care arrangement, including:
    • 31 percent who were regularly in relative care;
    • 13 percent who were regularly in nonrelative home-based care; and
    • 38 percent who were regularly in center care.
  • 51 percent of Hispanic children under age six were in some type of regular child care arrangement, including:
    • 25 percent who were regularly in relative care;
    • 9 percent who were regularly in nonrelative home-based care; and
    • 28 percent who were regularly in center care.
  • 57 percent of Asian or Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic children under age six were in some type of regular child care arrangement, including:
    • 23 percent who were regularly in relative care;
    • 9 percent who were regularly in nonrelative home-based care; and
    • 36 percent who were regularly in center care.

Percent of Children Under Age Six in Regular Relative or Nonrelative Home-Based Care by Race/Ethnicity, 2016

Source: National Women’s Law Center calculations based on data from U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, Early Childhood Program Participation, Results from the National Household Education Surveys Program of 2016. Notes: Data are for children birth through age five not yet in kindergarten. Relative care is care provided by a relative other than a parent. Children may be in more than one regular arrangement.
• **Young children in families of all income levels are in relative and home-based child care.** In 2016:

  • 48 percent of children under age six in households with incomes of $20,000 or less were in some type of regular child care arrangement, including:
    • 23 percent who were regularly in relative care;
    • 10 percent who were regularly in nonrelative home-based care; and
    • 29 percent who were regularly in center care.

  • 50 percent of children under age six in households with incomes of $20,001 to $50,000 were in some type of regular child care arrangement, including:
    • 25 percent who were regularly in relative care;
    • 8 percent who were regularly in nonrelative home-based care; and
    • 26 percent who were regularly in center care.

  • 56 percent of children under age six in households with incomes of $50,001 to $75,000 were in some type of regular child care arrangement, including:
    • 27 percent who were regularly in relative care;
    • 14 percent who were regularly in nonrelative home-based care; and
    • 27 percent who were regularly in center care.

  • 66 percent of children under age six in households with incomes of $75,001 to $100,000 were in some type of regular child care arrangement, including:
    • 28 percent who were regularly in relative care;
    • 14 percent who were regularly in nonrelative home-based care; and
    • 37 percent who were regularly in center care.

  • 75 percent of children under age six in households with incomes of $100,001 or more were in some type of regular child care arrangement, including:
    • 21 percent who were regularly in relative care;
    • 19 percent who were regularly in nonrelative home-based care; and
    • 52 percent who were regularly in center care.7

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**Percent of Children Under Age Six in Regular Relative or Nonrelative Home-Based Care by Household Income, 2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Income</th>
<th>Regular Relative Care</th>
<th>Regular Nonrelative Home-Based Care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$0-$20,000</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,001-$50,000</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,001-$75,000</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,001-$100,000</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,001+</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Women’s Law Center calculations based on data from U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, Early Childhood Program Participation, Results from the National Household Education Surveys Program of 2016.

Notes: Data are for children birth through age five not yet in kindergarten. Relative care is care provided by a relative other than a parent. Children may be in more than one regular arrangement.
• **Infants are more likely to be in relative or home-based care than center care.** In 2016, 47 percent (2.2 million) of the 4.7 million children under age one were in some type of regular child care arrangement, including:
  - 28 percent (1.3 million) who were regularly in relative care;
  - 14 percent (650,000) who were regularly in nonrelative home-based care; and
  - 12 percent (580,000) who were regularly in center care.8

• **Millions of school-age children are regularly in relative or home-based child care.** In 2011, among the 40.5 million children ages five to 14:
  - 14 percent (5.6 million) were regularly cared for by a grandparent.
  - 13 percent (5.1 million) were regularly cared for by a sibling or other relative.
  - 3 percent (1.3 million) were regularly cared for by a nonrelative in the provider’s home.
  - 2 percent (over 900,000) were regularly cared for by a nonrelative in the child’s home.9

• **Two-fifths of children of working mothers are in relative or home-based child care as their primary arrangement.** Among children under age five with employed mothers in 2011:
  - 27 percent were in relative care as their primary arrangement.
  - 13 percent were in nonrelative home-based care as their primary arrangement.
  - 25 percent were in center care as their primary arrangement.
  - 22 percent were cared for by a parent as their primary arrangement.
  - 13 percent were in some other primary arrangement or had no regular arrangement.10

• **One out of 10 children receiving child care assistance are in legally exempt home-based care.** Among children whose families received helping paying for child care through the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) in 2015:
  - 10 percent were in home-based care operating legally without regulation, including 6 percent in relative care and 4 percent in nonrelative care.
  - 11 percent were in regulated family child care.
  - 6 percent were in regulated group child care.
  - 70 percent were in regulated center care.
  - 3 percent were in center care operating legally without regulation.11
Family, Friend, and Neighbor Providers Are an Integral Part of the Child Care System

• **Home-based providers outnumber center-based providers.** There were 3.77 million home-based providers caring for approximately 7.15 million children under age six on a regular basis in 2012. In comparison, there were approximately 1 million providers employed by 129,000 center-based programs serving 6.98 million children under age six.

• **Home-based providers may be regulated or exempt from regulation, and may be paid or unpaid.** The 3.77 home-based providers regularly caring for children in 2012 included:
  
  • **Listed providers:** Providers that appear on state or national lists of licensed, regulated, or registered providers as well as license-exempt providers if on a list, such as a state list of providers serving families receiving child care assistance. There were 118,000 listed providers caring for 751,000 children.

  • **Unlisted paid providers:** Providers that do not appear on any state or national lists, and that are paid for providing child care. There were 919,000 unlisted paid providers caring for 2.34 million children.

  • **Unlisted unpaid providers:** Providers that do not appear on any state or national lists, and that are not paid for providing child care. There were 2.73 million unlisted unpaid providers caring for over 4 million children.

### Types of Home-Based Providers Caring for Children Under Age Six, 2012

![Pie chart showing the distribution of home-based providers: Listed Paid Providers (3%), Unlisted Paid Providers (24%), Unlisted Unpaid Providers (73%).](chart.png)

Source: National Women’s Law Center calculations based on data from National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team, Characteristics of Home-based Early Care and Education Providers: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education.
• **Most unlisted home-based providers have a prior relationship to the children in their care.** Nearly all (98 percent) of the children cared for by an unlisted unpaid home-based provider and nearly three-quarters (74 percent) of the children cared for by an unlisted paid home-based provider had a prior personal relationship with that provider. Only one-quarter (25 percent) of children cared for by a listed home-based provider had a prior relationship with that provider.

• **Unlisted home-based providers often provide child care to help the children’s parents.** Over three-quarters (77 percent) of unlisted unpaid home-based providers and nearly half (45 percent) of unlisted paid home-based providers reported that their primary reason for caring for children was helping the children’s parents, while only 8 percent of listed home-based providers reported this as their primary reason. Nearly half of listed home-based providers (47 percent) reported that their primary reason for caring for children was a personal career or calling, while just 18 percent of unlisted paid home-based providers and 9 percent of unlisted unpaid home-based providers reported this as their primary reason for caring for children.

• **Home-based providers spend many hours each week providing care.** Listed home-based providers caring for children under age six provided an average of 56.5 hours of care per week, unlisted paid home-based providers provided an average of 40.9 hours of care per week, and unlisted unpaid home-based providers provided an average of 34.1 hours of care per week.

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Average Weekly Hours Spent Providing Care to Children Under Age Six by Type of Home-Based Provider, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider Type</th>
<th>Average Weekly Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listed Paid Providers</td>
<td>56.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlisted Paid Providers</td>
<td>40.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlisted Unpaid Providers</td>
<td>34.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team, Characteristics of Home-based Early Care and Education Providers: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education.

• **Home-based providers, particularly unlisted providers, each care for a small number of children.** Unlisted unpaid home-based providers cared for an average of 2.1 children birth to age 13 during the course of a week, unlisted paid home-based providers cared for an average of 3.9 children, and listed home-based providers cared for an average of 8.3 children.

• **Providers earn limited income from child care.** Listed home-based providers earned an average of $29,377 per year from providing child care, and unlisted paid home-based providers earned an average of $7,420 per year from providing child care.
Family, Friend, and Neighbor Providers Are a Diverse Group

• Home-based providers vary in age. Approximately one-third (33 percent) of unlisted unpaid home-based providers were age 60 or older, while 52 percent were between 30 and 60 years of age. In comparison, just 14 percent of listed home-based providers were age 60 or older, and 74 percent were between 30 and 60 years of age. Only 14 percent of unlisted paid home-based providers were age 60 or older, and 63 percent were between 30 and 60 years of age.22

• Home-based providers often have some college education. Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of listed home-based providers, 54 percent of unlisted unpaid home-based providers, and 48 percent of unlisted paid home-based providers had some college or higher levels of education.23

• Participation in early care and education training varies among home-based providers. Three-quarters (75 percent) of listed home-based providers had participated in a workshop on early care and education in the last 12 months while less than a quarter (23 percent) of unlisted paid home-based providers had done so.24

• Home-based providers’ median household income is below the nationwide median household income. In 2011, median household income was $44,870 for listed home-based providers, $39,395 for unlisted unpaid home-based providers, and $24,581 for unlisted paid home-based providers25—compared to the U.S. median household income of $50,054.26

Families Have Important Reasons for Choosing Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care

• Parents cite several key factors in choosing relative and home-based child care. Parents using relative care or nonrelative home-based care as their only regular arrangement for their children under age six reported that very important factors in choosing this care included:
  • Reliability of the care (very important for parents of 85 percent of children only in relative care and 89 percent of children only in nonrelative home-based care);
  • Availability (very important for parents of 78 percent of children only in relative care and 80 percent of children only in nonrelative home-based care);
  • Learning activities (very important for parents of 73 percent of children only in relative care and 58 percent of children only in nonrelative home-based care);
  • Location (very important for parents of 65 percent of children only in relative care and 65 percent of children only in nonrelative home-based care); and
  • Cost (very important for parents of 63 percent of children only in relative care and 58 percent of children only in nonrelative home-based care).27
Families often choose FFN care because it is more affordable than other options. For example, in 2012:

- For children under age one, 73 percent of unlisted home-based providers did not charge parents for care, while only 6 percent of listed home-based providers and 9 percent of center-based providers did not charge for care.

- For children age four, 80 percent of unlisted home-based providers did not charge parents for care, while only 5 percent of listed home-based providers and 29 percent of center-based providers did not charge for care.

- Among providers caring for children under age one and charging some amount for care, the average price was $3.80 per hour ($8,550 per year if care was provided 9 hours per day, 5 days per week, 50 weeks per year) for unlisted home-based providers and $4.70 per hour ($10,575 per year) for listed home-based providers, compared to $7.80 per hour ($17,550 per year) for center-based providers.

- Among providers caring for children age four and charging some amount for care, the average price was $4.70 per hour ($10,575 per year) for unlisted home-based providers and $4.50 per hour ($10,125 per year) for listed home-based providers, compared to $6.10 per hour ($13,725 per year) for center-based providers.\(^{28}\)

**Average Hourly Price for Care for Children Under Age One by Type of Provider, 2012**

Source: National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team, Prices Charged in Early Care and Education: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education.

Notes: Average prices are calculated for those providers charging some amount for child care.
• **Families needing child care during nontraditional hours often rely on FFN care.** Many parents working nonstandard or irregular hours choose FFN care because it is often the only option flexible enough to accommodate their work schedules.

  • A national study found that 82 percent of unlisted unpaid home-based providers and 63 percent of unlisted paid home-based providers caring for children under age six offered some care during nonstandard hours (evenings, overnight, and/or weekends), compared to 34 percent of listed home-based providers and just 8 percent of center-based providers.  

  • A five-state study found that 54 percent of children using FFN care were in this care during evenings and weekends. In comparison, 26 percent of children in family child care and 9 percent of children in center care were in care during evenings and weekends.  

  • One study found that, among low-income working mothers with children up to age five and living with a partner, 32 percent of those with a nonstandard schedule regularly used relative care, compared to 21 percent of those with a standard schedule. Among single low-income working mothers with children up to age five, 49 percent of those with a nonstandard schedule regularly used relative care, compared to 30 percent of those with a standard schedule.  

![](percent_of_providers_offering_nonstandard-hour_care.png)

Source: National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team, Fact Sheet: Provision of Early Care and Education During Non-Standard Hours.

Notes: Data are for providers caring for children birth through age five not yet in kindergarten.

• **Many families who have children with special needs depend on FFN care.** Families with children who have disabilities or other special needs are more likely to use FFN care, and less likely to use family child care or center care, than families with typically developing children. These families often turn to FFN care because it allows their children to receive the one-on-one attention they require in a familiar setting, or because licensed care that meets their children’s needs is simply unavailable.

• **Families often prefer a familiar FFN provider:** Studies indicate that many families choose FFN care because they are most comfortable having their children cared for by someone they know and trust. Some families decide to use FFN care because the provider shares their language and culture.
Definitions of family, friend, and neighbor care vary. The National Women’s Law Center typically defines FFN care as legally exempt home-based care. However, most studies of child care arrangements do not collect data using this particular definition. As a result, this fact sheet reports data using the categories of child care arrangements as defined in each study cited.

In this fact sheet, “children under age six” refers to children birth through age five not yet in kindergarten.


National Women’s Law Center calculations based on data from Corcoran and Steineley. 6 and 10. Center care may be a child care center, prekindergarten, or preschool.

National Women’s Law Center calculations based on data from Corcoran and Steineley.

National Women’s Law Center calculations based on data from Corcoran and Steineley. 7 and 11.

National Women’s Law Center calculations based on data from Corcoran and Steineley. 6 and 10.

National Women’s Law Center calculations based on data from Lynda Laughlin, Who’s Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements: Spring 2011, Current Population Reports (P70-135) (Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013), 10, available at https://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/p70-135.pdf. Some children were regularly in more than one arrangement, and some children were in arrangements other than the types identified here.

Laughlin, 9.

10  Definitions of family, friend, and neighbor care vary. The National Women’s Law Center typically defines FFN care as legally exempt home-based care. However, most studies of child care arrangements do not collect data using this particular definition. As a result, this fact sheet reports data using the categories of child care arrangements as defined in each study cited.


Characteristics of Home-based Early Care and Education Providers: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education, 16.

Characteristics of Home-based Early Care and Education Providers: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education, 18.

Characteristics of Home-based Early Care and Education Providers: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education, 14-15.

Characteristics of Home-based Early Care and Education Providers: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education, 19.

Characteristics of Home-based Early Care and Education Providers: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education, 22.

Characteristics of Home-based Early Care and Education Providers: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education, 10-11.

Characteristics of Home-based Early Care and Education Providers: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education, 11.

Characteristics of Home-based Early Care and Education Providers: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education, 8.


Corcoran and Steineley, 16.


Richard Brandon, Enhancing Family Friend and Neighbor Caregiving Quality: The Research Case for Public Engagement (University of Washington, Human Services Policy Center, 2010), 10 and 15 (2005), available at http://www.ibrarian.net/navon/paper/Enhancing_Family_Friend_and_Neighbor_Caregiving_Q.pdf?paperid=5029702. The study defined family, friend, and neighbor care as nonparental relative care, paid nonrelative care inside the child’s home, and nonrelative unpaid care outside the child’s home, and defined family child care as paid nonrelative care in the provider’s home; it did not differentiate between regulated and unregulated care.

Mary E. Enchautegui, Martha Johnson, and Julia Galett, Who Minds the Kids When Mom Works a Nonstandard Schedule? (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2015), 18-19, available at https://www.urban.org/research/publication/who-minds-kids-when-mom-works-nonstandard-schedule. Low-income families are defined in this study as those with incomes below 200 percent of poverty.


