

How Much Did Households in the United States Pay for Child Care in 2012?

An Examination of Differences by Child Age

Key Findings

- In 2012, 50 percent of infants and toddlers and 63 percent of 3-to-5-year-olds were in regular nonparental care. An additional 10 percent of 3-to-5-year-olds were already in kindergarten.
- Within every income level, 3-to-5-year-olds were more likely than infants and toddlers to be in regular nonparental care.
- Among children in regular nonparental care, infants and toddlers were more likely than 3-to-5-year-olds to only use care provided by an individual, such as a family member, friend, or family child care home.
- Among children using regular nonparental care, 3-to-5-year-olds were more likely than infants and toddlers to be in center-based care only.
- Among children using regular nonparental care, about half of infants and toddlers and one-third of 3-to-5-year-olds had no out-of-pocket costs associated with their care. Free care was much more common among households with lower incomes than households with higher incomes. Still, 27 percent of infants and toddlers from higher-income households had no out-of-pocket costs associated with their care.
- Considering only children whose care had out-of-pocket costs, the median weekly cost of care was about \$100 for an infant or toddler, and about \$80 for a 3-to-5-year-old.

Data and Methods

This Snapshot is based on information collected by the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE), a nationally representative study of American households and early care and education providers conducted in 2012. The information in this Snapshot is based on a report on nonparental care usage and costs from the NSECE household survey (NSECE Project Team, 2016) as well as supplemental analyses conducted by the NSECE Project Team for this Snapshot.

This Snapshot focuses on care for children under age 6.¹ Costs are calculated based on how much parents pay, in total, for a child's regular nonparental care arrangements.² Regular nonparental care arrangements are those that a child attended for at least 5 hours per week, not including K-8 schooling. In the case of children with multiple regular care arrangements, this includes the cost of all regular care arrangements combined. In cases where there is subsidized care, cost calculations include only the out-of-pocket costs to parents. Because these costs are calculated at the child level, households with more than one child may have higher total out-of-pocket expenses.

Though comparisons by child age are discussed throughout this Snapshot, tests to identify statistically significant differences were not conducted.

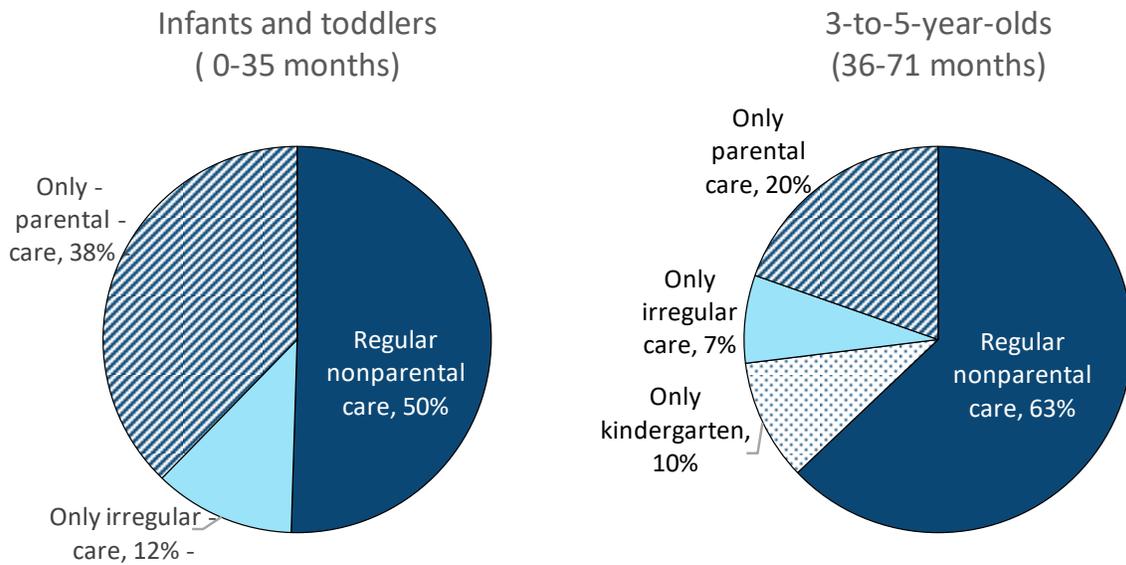
¹ Other Snapshots in this series focus on costs of care at the household level, summing across the costs for all children under age 13 (Forry, Madill, & Halle, 2018; Madill, Forry, & Halle, 2018).

² Each *child-provider pair* is a different arrangement. For example, a child may have one arrangement in a Head Start program and a second arrangement with a neighbor.

How many children under age 6 were in some form of regular nonparental care arrangement in 2012?

Figure 1 shows that fifty percent of infants and toddlers (ages 0-35 months) were in regular nonparental care in 2012. Regular nonparental care was more common for 3-to-5-year-olds: Sixty-three percent of 3-to-5-year-olds attended regular nonparental care, and another 10 percent attended kindergarten but had no regular nonparental care.

Figure 1. Share of Children in Various Care Arrangements, by Child Age.



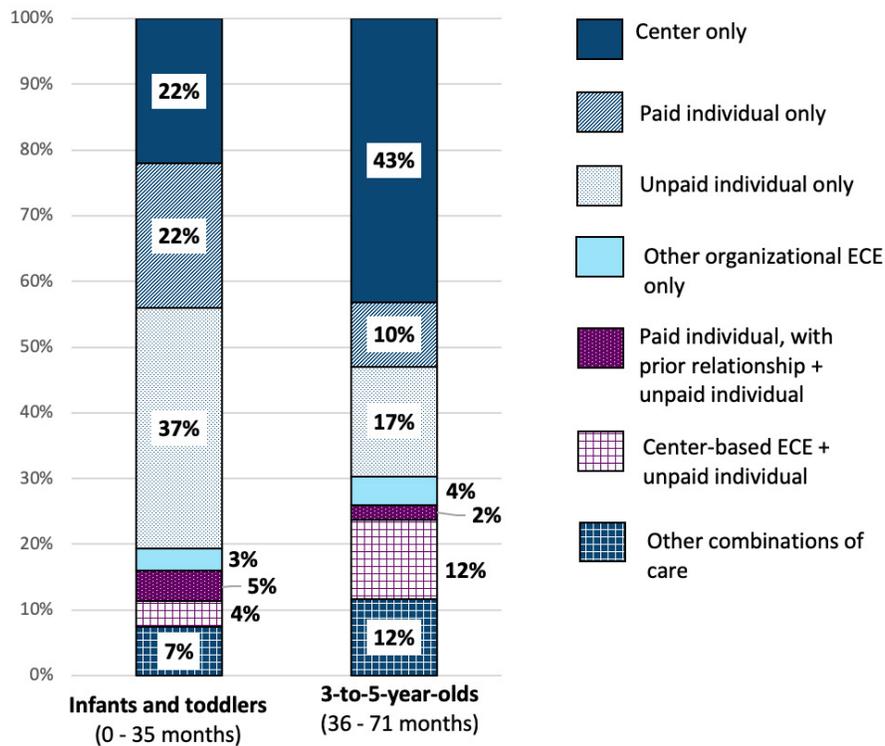
Source: NSECE Project Team, 2016. Table 13.1.1 (Common Combinations of Care, Child-Level Estimates, Age 0 through 35 months, by Household Poverty Ratio) and Table 13.2.1 (Common Combinations of Care, Child-Level Estimates, Age 36 through 71 months, by Household Poverty Ratio).

Note: Regular nonparental care arrangements are those that a child attended for at least 5 hours per week, not including K-8 schooling. Irregular care was used fewer than 5 hours per week. Due to the inclusion of 5-year-olds in kindergarten in these data, "only kindergarten" is included in this figure, and both "only irregular care" and "regular nonparental care" include care used by children in kindergarten, such as before-school and after-school care. Due to rounding, cumulative percentages may not equal 100 percent.

What types of regular nonparental care did children under age 6 use in 2012?

Compared to 3-to-5-year-olds, infants and toddlers in nonparental care were more likely to rely on care provided by a paid individual only, such as a family child care home. Infants and toddlers were also more likely than 3-to-5-year-olds to rely on care from an unpaid individual only, such as a family member or friend. In contrast, 3-to-5-year-olds were more likely than infants and toddlers to be in center-based early care and education (ECE) only. Three-to-five-year-olds were also more likely than infants and toddlers to be in combinations of care, such as center-based ECE and unpaid individual-based care. See Figure 2.

Figure 2. Share of Children in Each Type of Care, Among Children with at least One Regular Nonparental Care Arrangement, by Child Age



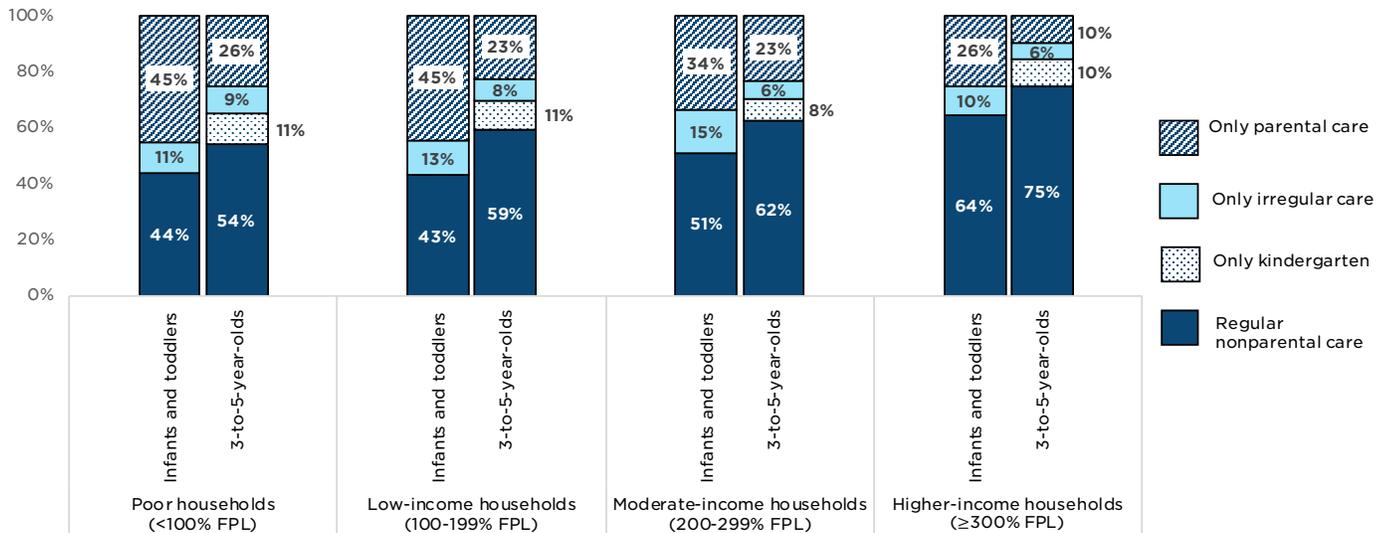
Source: NSECE Project Team, 2016. Table 13.1.1 (Common Combinations of Care, Child-Level Estimates, Age 0 through 35 months, by Household Poverty Ratio) and Table 13.2.1 (Common Combinations of Care, Child-Level Estimates, Age 36 through 71 months, by Household Poverty Ratio).

Note: Regular nonparental care arrangements are those that a child attended for at least 5 hours per week, not including K-8 schooling. The sample is limited to children who were enrolled in at least one regular nonparental care arrangement. The sample excludes children attending kindergarten who did not have a regular nonparental care arrangement. Due to the inclusion of 5-year-olds in kindergarten in these data, regular nonparental care includes care used by children who were in kindergarten, such as before-school and after-school care. For “paid individual” and “unpaid individual” arrangements, the child may or may not have had a prior personal relationship with the provider. For “paid individual, with prior relationship” arrangements, the child had a prior personal relationship with the provider. “Other organizational ECE only” refers to drop-in or single activity care or lessons, church child care during services, and recreational activities. Due to rounding, cumulative percentages may not equal 100 percent; however, the graphic is based on unrounded estimates.

Did age differences in the use of nonparental care vary by household income?

Regular nonparental care was much more common in higher-income households compared to lower-income households. Infants and toddlers in the two lowest income levels were more likely to be cared for only by parents, compared to their peers in the two highest income levels. Within every income level, however, 3-to-5-year-olds were more likely than infants and toddlers to use regular nonparental care. See Figure 3.³

Figure 3. Share of Children Using Various Care Arrangements, by Age and Household Income



Source: NSECE Project Team, 2016. Table 13.1.1 (Common Combinations of Care, Child-Level Estimates, Age 0 through 35 months, by Household Poverty Ratio) and Table 13.2.1 (Common Combinations of Care, Child-Level Estimates, Age 36 through 71 months, by Household Poverty Ratio).

Note: Infants and toddlers include children age 0–35 months. Three-to-five-year-olds include children age 36–71 months. Regular nonparental care arrangements are those that a child attended for at least 5 hours per week, not including K-8 schooling. Irregular care was used fewer than 5 hours per week. Due to the inclusion of 5-year-olds in kindergarten in these data, “only kindergarten” is included in this figure, and both “only irregular care” and “regular nonparental care” include care used by children in kindergarten, such as before-school and after-school care. Due to rounding, cumulative percentages may not equal 100 percent; however, the graphic is based on unrounded estimates. FPL = federal poverty level.

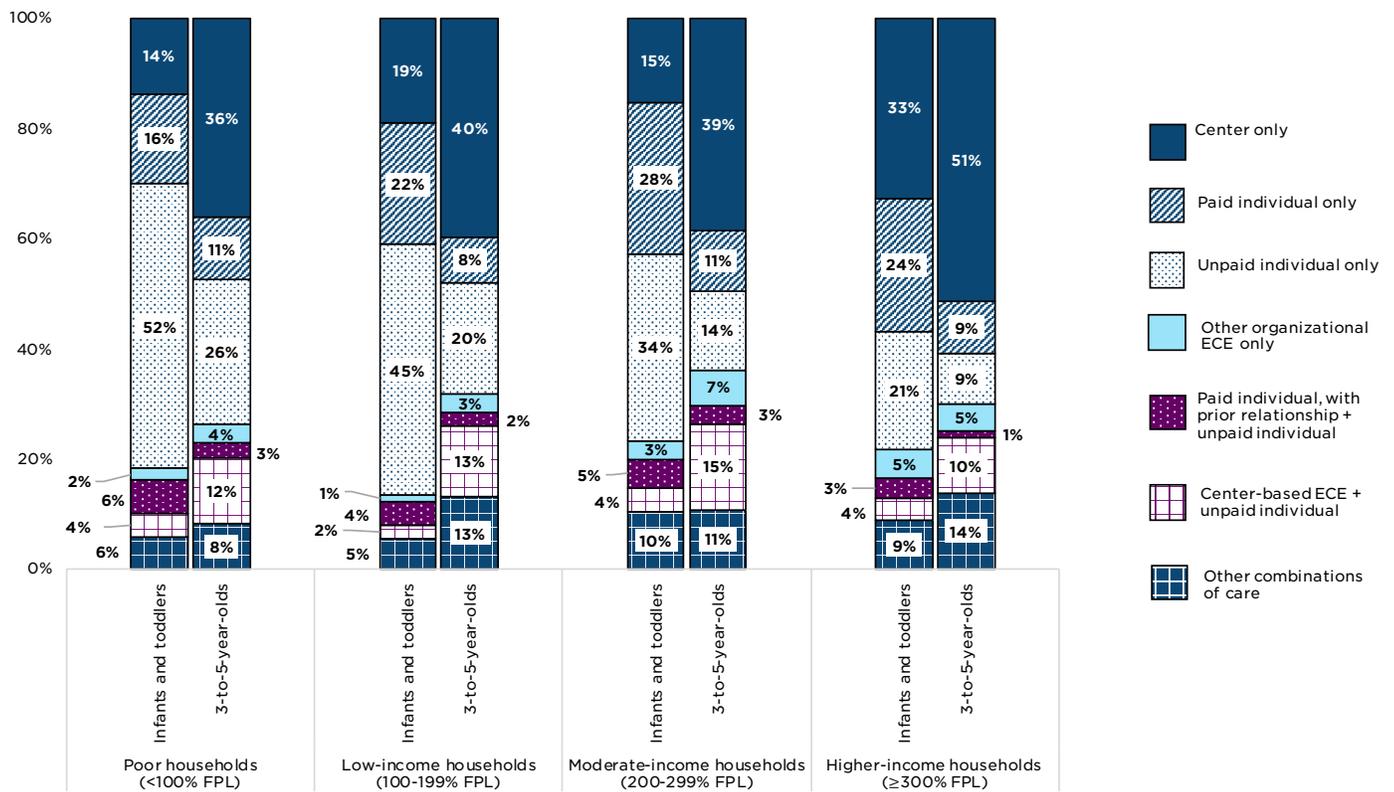
³ These data are also presented in a complementary resource in this series (Forry, Madill, & Halle, 2018).

Did the types of care used for different age children vary by household income?

Among children under age 6 using some form of regular nonparental care, 3-to-5-year-olds, as well as all children in higher-income households, were most likely to use center-based care as their only care type. See Figure 4.⁴

Across all income levels, using only individual-based care for infants and toddlers was quite common. Whether these arrangements were paid or unpaid varied by household income. Among poor and low-income households with infants and toddlers in regular nonparental care, most individual-based arrangements were unpaid. Among higher-income households with infants and toddlers in nonparental care, however, those relying on a single care type used paid and unpaid individual-based arrangements at about equal rates.

Figure 4. Share of Children Using Each Type of Regular Nonparental Care, by Child Age and Household Income



Source: NSECE Project Team, 2016. Table 13.1.1 (Common Combinations of Care, Child-Level Estimates, Age 0 through 35 months, by Household Poverty Ratio) and Table 13.2.1 (Common Combinations of Care, Child-Level Estimates, Age 36 through 71 months, by Household Poverty Ratio).

Note. Infants and toddlers include children age 0-35 months. Three-to-five-year-olds include children age 36-71 months. Regular nonparental care arrangements are those that a child attended for at least 5 hours per week, not including K-8 schooling. The sample is limited to children who were enrolled in at least one regular nonparental care arrangement. The sample excludes children attending kindergarten who did not have a regular nonparental care arrangement. Due to the inclusion of 5-year-olds in kindergarten in these data, regular nonparental care includes before-school and after-school care that was used at least 5 hours per week. For “paid individual” and “unpaid individual” arrangements, the child may or may not have had a prior personal relationship with the provider. For “paid individual, with prior relationship” arrangements, the child had a prior personal relationship with the provider. “Other organizational ECE only” refers to drop-in or single activity care or lessons, church child care during services, and recreational activities. Due to rounding, cumulative percentages may not equal 100 percent; however, the graphic is based on unrounded estimates. FPL = federal poverty level.

⁴ These data are also presented in a complementary resource in this series (Forry, Madill, & Halle, 2018).

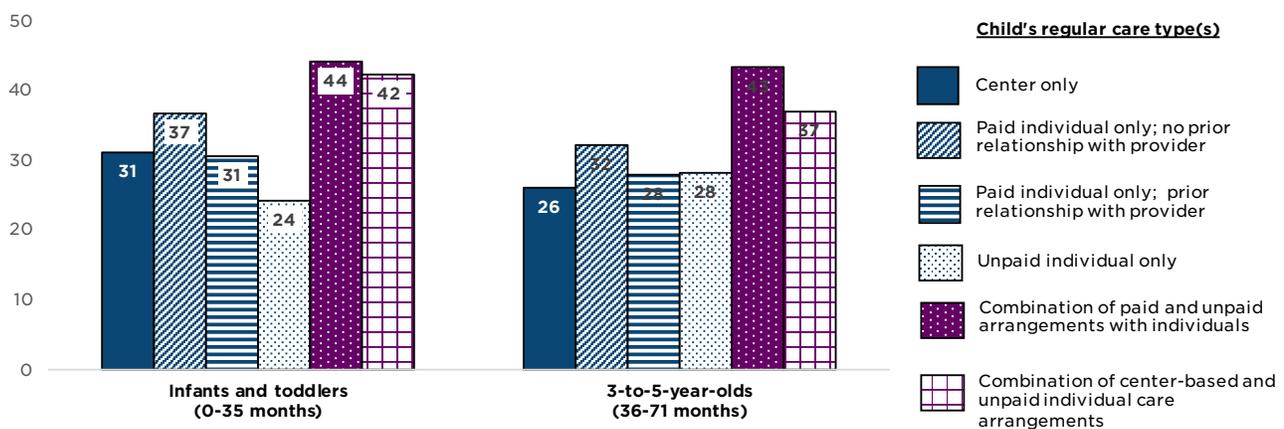
How much time did children spend in care?

Figure 5 shows that, among children who used a single type of paid care, such as center-based ECE, infants and toddlers spent more time in care, on average, than did 3-to-5-year-olds. For example, infants and toddlers using only center-based ECE spent about 31 hours per week in care. In contrast, 3-to-5-year-olds using only center-based ECE spent about 26 hours per week in care.

Parents of infants and toddlers appeared to use unpaid individual-based care when they needed care for a relatively short period of time. The average amount of time in unpaid individual-based care was 24 hours for infants and toddlers, compared to 31 hours in center-based care.

For both infants/toddlers and 3-to-5-year-olds, children in combinations of care spent more time in care overall, compared to children using just one type of care.

Figure 5. Average Weekly Hours Spent in Regular Nonparental Care, by Child's Age and Regular Care Type(s)



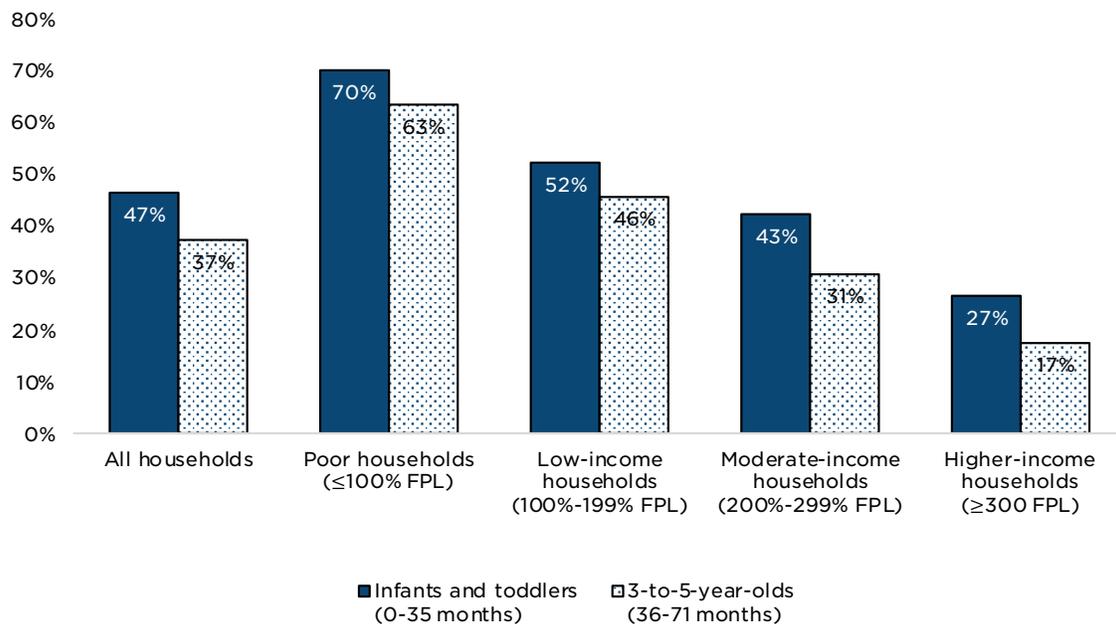
Source: NSECE Project Team, 2016. Table 16.1 (Hours in Type of Care in Reference Week, by Most Common Combinations of Care Used, Child-level Estimates, Age 0 through 35 Months) and Table 16.2 (Hours in Type of Care in Reference Week, by Most Common Combinations of Care Used, Child-level Estimates, Age 35 through 71 Months).

Note: Regular nonparental care arrangements are those that a child attended for at least 5 hours per week, not including K-8 schooling. Hours in irregular care arrangements (i.e., care used fewer than 5 hours per week) are not included in the total number of hours. Due to the inclusion of 5-year-olds in kindergarten in these data, regular nonparental care includes before-school and after-school care that was used by kindergartners at least 5 hours per week. Hours in kindergarten are not included in the total number of hours. Values are rounded.

Did the cost of children’s care vary by age?

As shown in Figure 6, among children in regular nonparental care, about half of parents of infants and toddlers and one-third of 3-to-5-year-olds had no out-of-pocket costs associated with their care. Free care was much more common among households with lower incomes than households with higher incomes. Still, 27 percent of infants and toddlers from higher-income households had no out-of-pocket costs associated with their care. This is expected, as Figure 4 showed that 21 percent of infants and toddlers in higher-income households rely on unpaid care from an individual, such as a grandmother.

Figure 6. Free Care: Percentage of Children for whom Parents had Zero Out-of-pocket Costs, among Children with Regular Nonparental care, by Child Age and Household Income

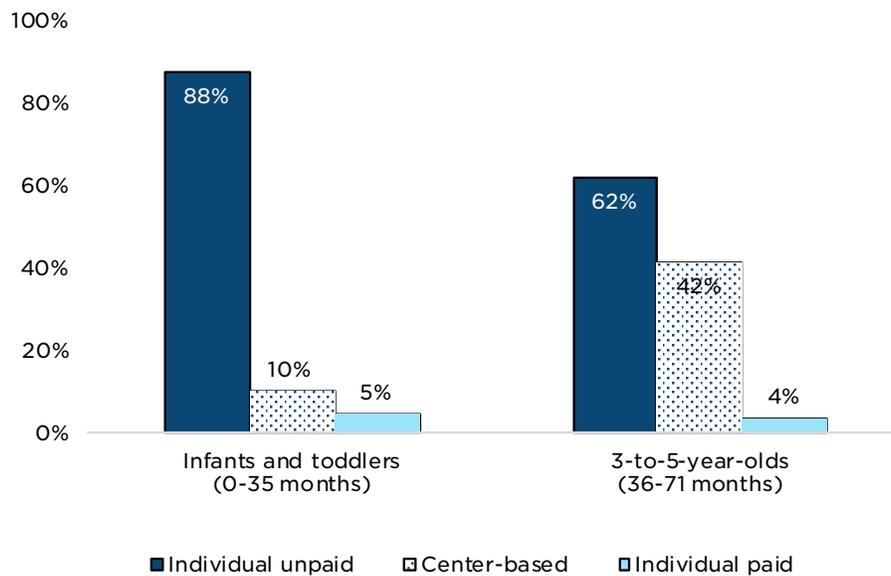


Source: NSECE Project Team, 2016. Table 28 (Child-Level Estimates of Weekly Cost) and Tables 29.1-29.4 (Child-Level Estimates of Weekly Cost, by Household Poverty Ratio).

Note: The sample is limited to children who were enrolled in at least one regular nonparental care arrangement. Regular nonparental care arrangements are those that a child attended for at least 5 hours per week, not including kindergarten. The sample excludes children attending kindergarten who did not have a regular nonparental care arrangement. Due to the inclusion of 5-year-olds in kindergarten in these data, regular nonparental care includes care used by children who were in kindergarten, such as before-school and after-school care. “Free care” includes unpaid individual-based care (e.g., unpaid grandparents who care for children), center-based programs with no fee (e.g., Head Start and public pre-K), and any arrangements that are fully subsidized through public or private programs (e.g., fully-subsidized care in a family child care home or ECE center). Values are rounded. FPL = federal poverty level.

Figure 7 shows that, among children with no out-of-pocket expenses for their regular care, the most common care type was unpaid individual-based care (used for 88 percent of infants/toddlers and 62 percent of 3-to-5-year-olds). Center-based arrangements were less common. Among children with no out-of-pocket expenses for their regular care arrangements, 3-to-5-year-olds were much more likely than infants and toddlers to be in center-based care (42 percent of 3-to-5-year-olds compared to 10 percent of infants and toddlers). A small percentage of children with no out-of-pocket costs received care from an individual who was paid, such as a family child care home, because someone other than the parent paid these costs (e.g., a child care subsidy).

Figure 7. Percentage of Children in Each Care Type, among Children in Regular Care with no Out-of-pocket Costs, by Child Age

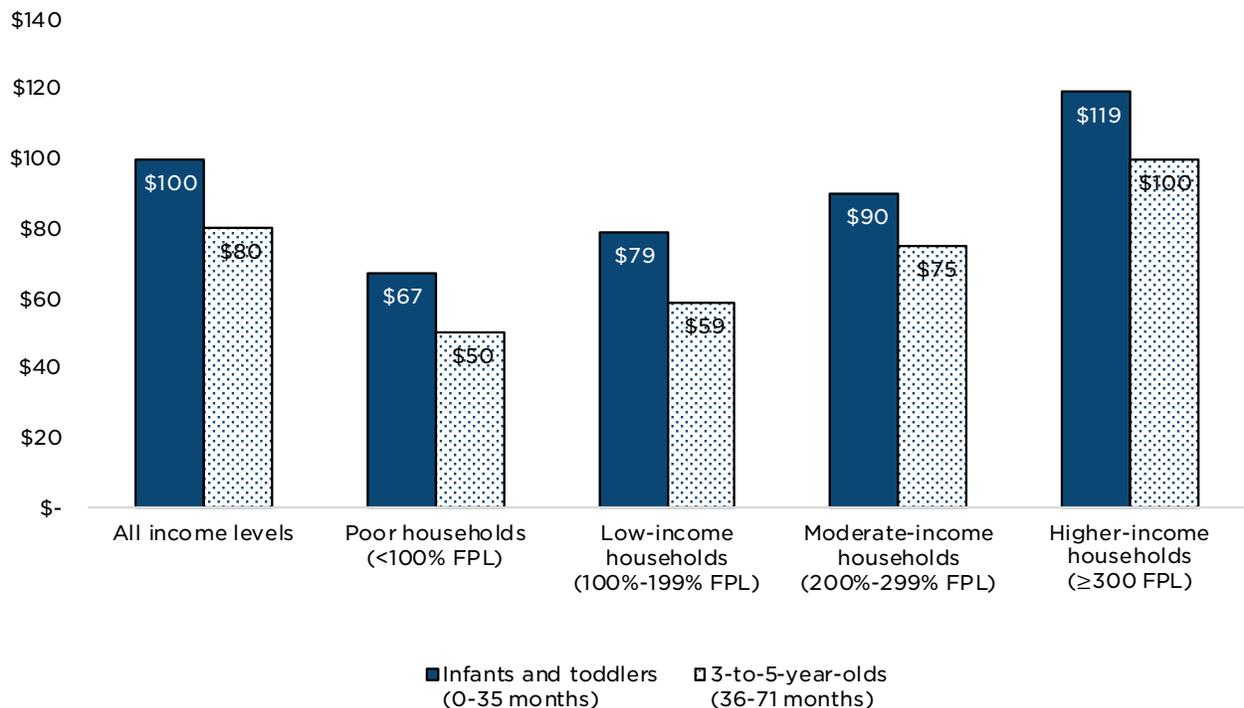


Source: Original analyses of the NSECE Household Survey conducted by the authors of the NSECE Household Survey data.
 Note: Regular nonparental care arrangements are those that a child attended for at least 5 hours per week, not including kindergarten. The sample was restricted to children with at least one regular nonparental care arrangement whose parents had no out-of-pocket costs for the child's care. Due to the inclusion of 5-year-olds in kindergarten in these data, regular nonparental care includes care used by children who were in kindergarten, such as before-school and after-school care. "Individual paid" and "center-based" arrangements can be free to parents if they are fully subsidized; for example, the federal child care subsidy program or a private child care subsidy from an employer may cover all costs. "Center-based" arrangements are also free to parents when they are provided through a program that does not charge parents, such as Early Head Start, Head Start, public pre-K, or a school-sponsored program. Values are rounded. Because one child could be using more than one care type, percentages are not intended to add up to 100 percent.

Considering only children whose care had out-of-pocket costs, parents spent more money on care for infants and toddlers than care for 3-to-5-year-olds. As shown in Figure 8, parents spent about \$100 per week on care for an infant/toddler and about \$80 per week for a 3-to-5-year-old.

As household income increased, so too did the amount that parents spent on care for infants and toddlers, as well as for 3-to-5-year-olds.

Figure 8. Median Weekly Cost per Child for Regular Nonparental Care, by Child Age and Household Income



Source: NSECE Project Team, 2016. Table 28 (Child-Level Estimates of Weekly Cost) and Tables 29.1-29.4 (Child-Level Estimates of Weekly Cost, by Household Poverty Ratio).

Note: Regular nonparental care arrangements are those that a child attended for at least 5 hours per week, not including K-8 schooling. The sample was restricted to children with at least one regular nonparental care arrangement and any out-of-pocket costs for regular nonparental care. Costs for irregular care (i.e., care used fewer than 5 hours per week) are not included in the weekly cost of care. Due to the inclusion of 5-year-olds in kindergarten in these data, regular nonparental care includes care used by children who were in kindergarten, such as before-school and after-school care. Costs for K-8 schooling are not included in the weekly cost of care. Values are rounded. FPL = federal poverty level.

Reference

NSECE [National Survey of Early Care and Education] Project Team. (2016). *Early Care and Education Usage and Households' Out-of-Pocket Costs: Tabulations from the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE)*. OPRE Report #2016-09. Washington DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/early-care-education-usage-households-out-of-pocket-costs-tabulations-nsece>

Other Snapshots in this Series

Forry, N., Madill, R., & Halle, T. (2018). *Snapshots from the NSECE: How Much did Households in the United States Pay for Child Care in 2012? An Examination of Differences by Household Income*. OPRE Report #2018-112. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Madill, R., Forry, N., & Halle, T. (2018). *Snapshots from the NSECE: How Much Did Households in the United States Pay for Child Care in 2012? An Examination of Differences by Community Urbanicity*. OPRE Report #2018-111. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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How Much Did Households in the United States Pay for Child Care in 2012?

An Examination of Differences by Household Income

Key Findings

- Using some form of nonparental care for children under age 6 was most common in higher-income families.
- In households with incomes of less than 300 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL), the most common regular, nonparental care type for infants and toddlers was unpaid individual care. In higher-income households, it was center-based care.
- Three-to-five-year-olds in regular nonparental care were most likely to be using only center-based care, compared to all other care types; however, using only center-based care for 3-to-5-year-olds was more common in higher-income households than in lower-income households.
- In 2012, households with children under age 6 that paid for at least one regular nonparental care arrangement for any of their children (through age 13) spent, on average, 20 percent of their household income on care. In comparison, households with only older children (only children 6-to-13 years old) spent, on average, 10 percent of their household income on care.
- Among households with children under age 13 that paid for at least one regular nonparental care arrangement, poor households (income of less than 100 percent of the FPL) spent 33 percent of their income on care, whereas higher-income (at or above 300 percent of the FPL) households spent 11 percent of their income on care.¹
- Among households with children under age 13 that paid for at least one regular nonparental care arrangement, the actual dollar amount spent on care increased with household income: Poor households spent the least (average of \$97.30/week) and higher-income households spent the most (average of \$143.70/week).

¹ To learn more about the FPL, see <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/poverty-measures.html>.

Data and Methods

This Snapshot is based on information collected by the National Survey of Early Care and Education, a nationally representative study of American households and early care and education providers conducted in 2012. The information in this Snapshot is based on a report on nonparental care usage and costs from the NSECE household survey (NSECE Project Team, 2016).

This Snapshot focuses on care for children under age 13. Household costs are calculated based on how much a household paid, in total, for children's regular nonparental care arrangements.² Regular nonparental care arrangements are those that a child attended for at least 5 hours per week, not including K-8 schooling. Households may use only free care arrangements, a combination of free and paid care, or only paid care arrangements. Only households that had out-of-pocket costs for care are included in the average cost estimates.

For households with multiple children, household costs include the costs for all children in care (age 0-13). In the case of children with multiple care arrangements, this includes the cost of all regular care arrangements combined. In cases where there is subsidized care, cost calculations include only the out-of-pocket costs to parents. Using these methods allows for an accurate and comprehensive estimate of regular child care costs at the household level.

Though comparisons by household income are presented throughout this Snapshot, tests to identify statistically significant differences were not conducted.

To better understand how much households with different financial means were spending on care, households with at least one child under age 13 are grouped into four categories:

- Poor households—income of less than 100 percent of the federal poverty level, or FPL; approximately 7,640,000 households³
- Low-income households—income of 100 to 199 percent of the FPL; approximately 6,510,000 households
- Moderate-income households—income of 200 to 299 percent of the FPL; approximately 4,430,000 households
- Higher-income households—income of 300 percent or more of the FPL; approximately 10,900,000 households

How much did households pay for nonparental care in 2012?

Households with children under age six who paid for regular nonparental care spent, on average, approximately 20 percent of their household income on care for all of their children in 2012.^{4,5} In contrast, households that only had children age 6 or older and paid for regular nonparental care spent, on average, 10 percent of their household income on care.⁶ Care costs can vary widely, depending upon factors such as the number and ages of children in the family, type(s) of care arrangements used, whether care arrangements are free or subsidized, and other characteristics of the arrangement, such as quality. Households that used only free care, such as unpaid care from family members or friends,

² Each *child-provider pair* is a different arrangement. For example, a child may have one arrangement in a Head Start program and a second arrangement with a neighbor.

³ Estimated number of households are based on weighted estimates from the National Survey of Early Care and Education.

⁴ This information is taken from Tables 24.1–24.2 of the report *Early Care and Education Usage and Households' Out-of-Pocket Costs: Tabulations from the National Survey of Early Care and Education* (NSECE Project Team, 2016).

⁵ Expenses are at the level of the household. Thus, expenses reflect any payments for care for 3-to-5-year-olds as well as their older siblings (under 13 years).

⁶ This information is taken from Table 24.3 of the report *Early Care and Education Usage and Households' Out-of-Pocket Costs: Tabulations from the National Survey of Early Care and Education* (NSECE Project Team, 2016).

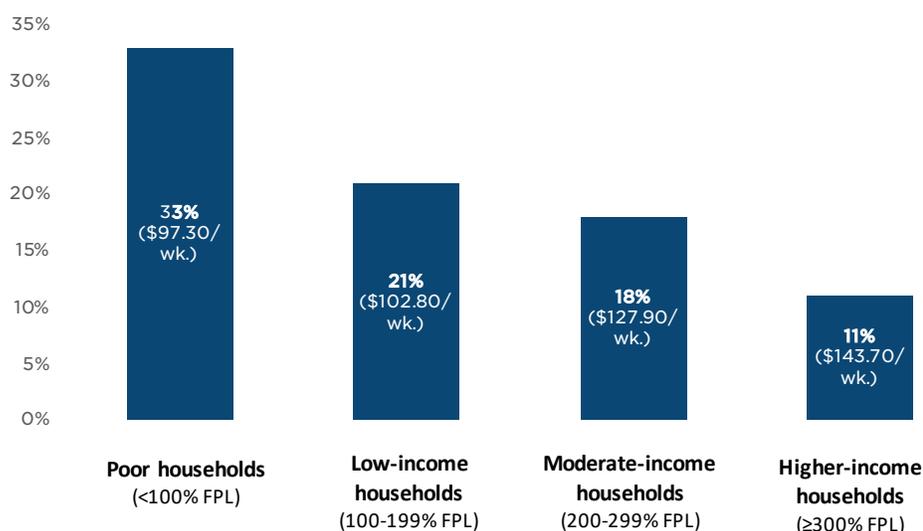
publicly funded programs (e.g., Head Start, public pre-K), or fully subsidized care, are not included in the average cost estimate.

Did child care expenses vary by household income?

Households with fewer financial resources spent a greater proportion of their income on care than households with more financial resources, as shown in Figure 1. Notably, among households with children under age 13 that paid for at least one regular nonparental care arrangement, poor households (with incomes less than 100 percent of the FPL) spent 33 percent of their income on care, whereas higher-income households (with incomes equal to or greater than 300 percent of the FPL) spent 11 percent of their income on care.

The actual dollar amount spent on care by households with children under age 13 that paid for at least one regular nonparental care arrangement increased with household income: Poor households spent the least (average of \$97.30/week) and higher-income households spent the most (average of \$143.70/week). Whereas higher-income households spent a lower proportion of their income on care, they spent more money for fewer hours of care.⁷

Figure 1. Proportion of Weekly Household Income Spent on Regular Nonparental Care for all Children Under Age 13, by Household Income Level



Among households with children under age 13 that paid for regular nonparental care, poor households spent a larger percentage of their income on care, compared to higher-income households.

Source: NSECE Project Team, 2016. Tables 21.1-21.4 (Household-Level Estimates of Weekly Cost and Cost Burden for Regular ECE, by Household Poverty Ratio).

Note: Dollar amounts in parentheses represent the average household-level cost of care in each income level. The sample was restricted to households with at least one regular nonparental care arrangement and any out-of-pocket costs for regular nonparental care. Regular nonparental care arrangements are those that a child attended for at least 5 hours per week, not including K-8 schooling. Costs for K-8 schooling are not included in the weekly cost of care. For information on federal poverty levels (FPL) the year of data collection (2012), see <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-poverty-thresholds.html>.

The households depicted in Figure 1 are those that had out-of-pocket costs for nonparental care. Households' costs can vary greatly based on their specific arrangements, such as whether they used a combination of free and paid care, or used only paid care. Some households may have paid for just 5 hours of care per week for one child, whereas other households may have paid for 50 hours per week (or more) for multiple children. For example, a household may have used a free center-based program for the three-year-old and paid a neighbor to watch an eight-year-old for an hour after school each

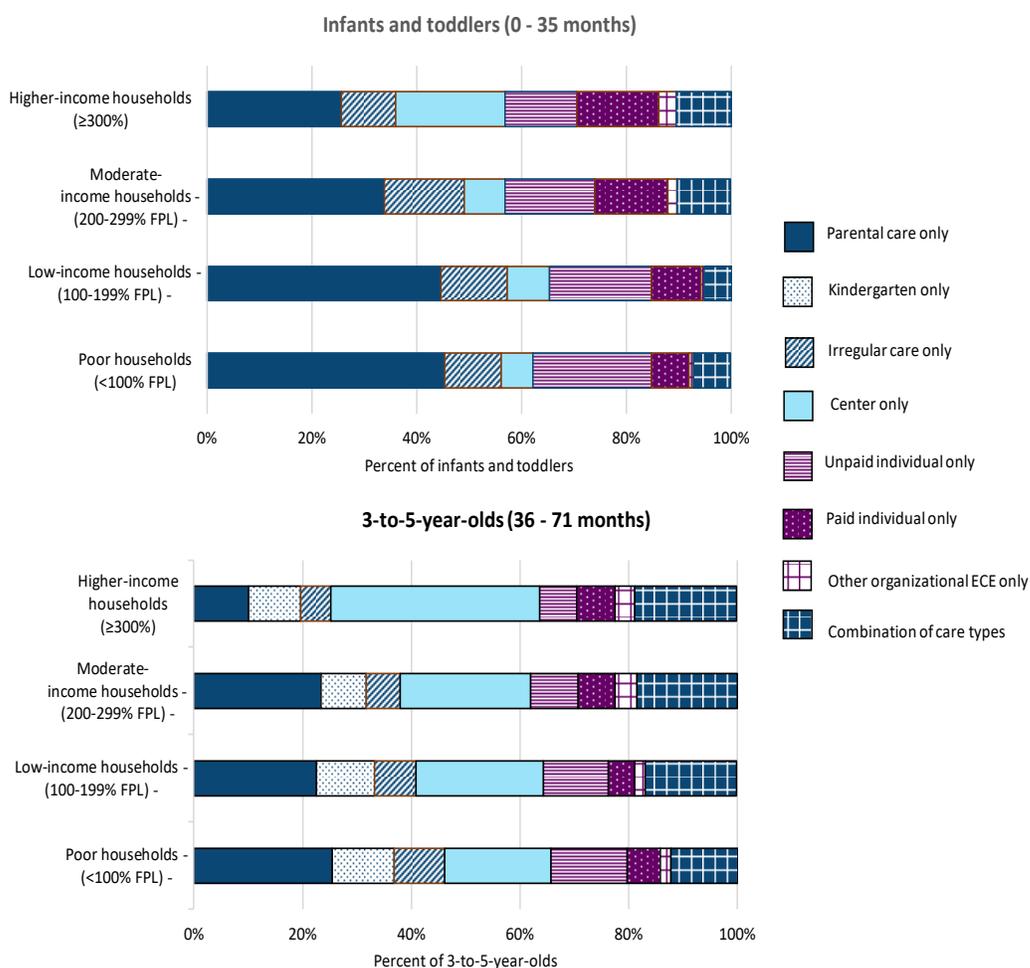
⁷ To learn more about the number of hours children were in care by household income, see Tables 6.1 and 21.1-21.4 of the report *Early Care and Education Usage and Households' Out-of-Pocket Costs: Tabulations from the National Survey of Early Care and Education* (NSECE Project Team, 2016).

day. Alternatively, a household may have used a paid center-based program for their three-year-old and paid for an after-school program for their eight-year-old for three hours each day.

What types of care arrangements did households use for their children under age 6 in 2012?

Families used various types of care for their children. These included individual providers, center-based early care and education (ECE), and other ECE programs (e.g., those that provide after-school care, drop-in care, care during church activities, or specific recreational activities). Some families used combinations of care for one or more of their children. These combinations typically included a paid and an unpaid provider. The proportion of children cared for in each arrangement type varied by child age and household income, as shown in Figures 2 and 3.⁸

Figure 2. Share of Infants/Toddlers and 3-5-Year-Olds Using Various Care Types, by Household Income and Child Age



Source: NSECE Project Team, 2016. Tables 13.1.1–13.1.2 (Common Combinations of Care, Child-Level Estimates, Age 0 through 35 months, by Household Poverty Ratio) and Tables 13.2.1–13.2.2 (Common Combinations of Care, Child-Level Estimates, Age 36 through 71 months, by Household Poverty Ratio).

Note: Irregular care is care that was used fewer than 5 hours per week. Due to the inclusion of five-year-olds in kindergarten in these data, “only kindergarten” is included in this figure, and all nonparental care types may include care used by children who were in kindergarten, such as before-school and after-school care. “Other organizational ECE only” refers to drop-in or single activity care or lessons, church child care during services, and recreational activities. Combinations of care types include regular (at least 5 hours per week) care from multiple types of providers.

⁸ These data are also presented in a complementary resource in this series, Snapshots from the NSECE: How much did households in the United States pay for child care in 2012? An examination of differences by child age (Forry, Madill, & Halle, 2018)

For infants and toddlers in 2012:

- **Using some form of nonparental care for infants and toddlers was most common in higher-income families.** Forty-five percent of infants and toddlers in poor households were in parental care only. In contrast, only 26 percent of infants and toddlers in higher-income households were in parental care only.
- **Among infants and toddlers in nonparental care, the most commonly used care type varied by household income.** In households with incomes of less than 300 percent of the FPL, the most common, regular, nonparental care type for infants and toddlers was unpaid individual care. In higher-income households, it was center-based care.
- **Higher-income households were more likely to use multiple types of care for infants and toddlers than lower-income households.** In poor and low-income households, 7 and 5 percent of children, respectively, were in multiple types of care. In moderate- and higher-income households, 10 and 11 percent of children, respectively, were in multiple types of care. Children may also be in multiple arrangements of the same type (e.g., unpaid care provided by an aunt and another provided by a grandmother). This type of care combination is not reflected in the “combination of care types” category.

For 3-to-5-year-olds in 2012:

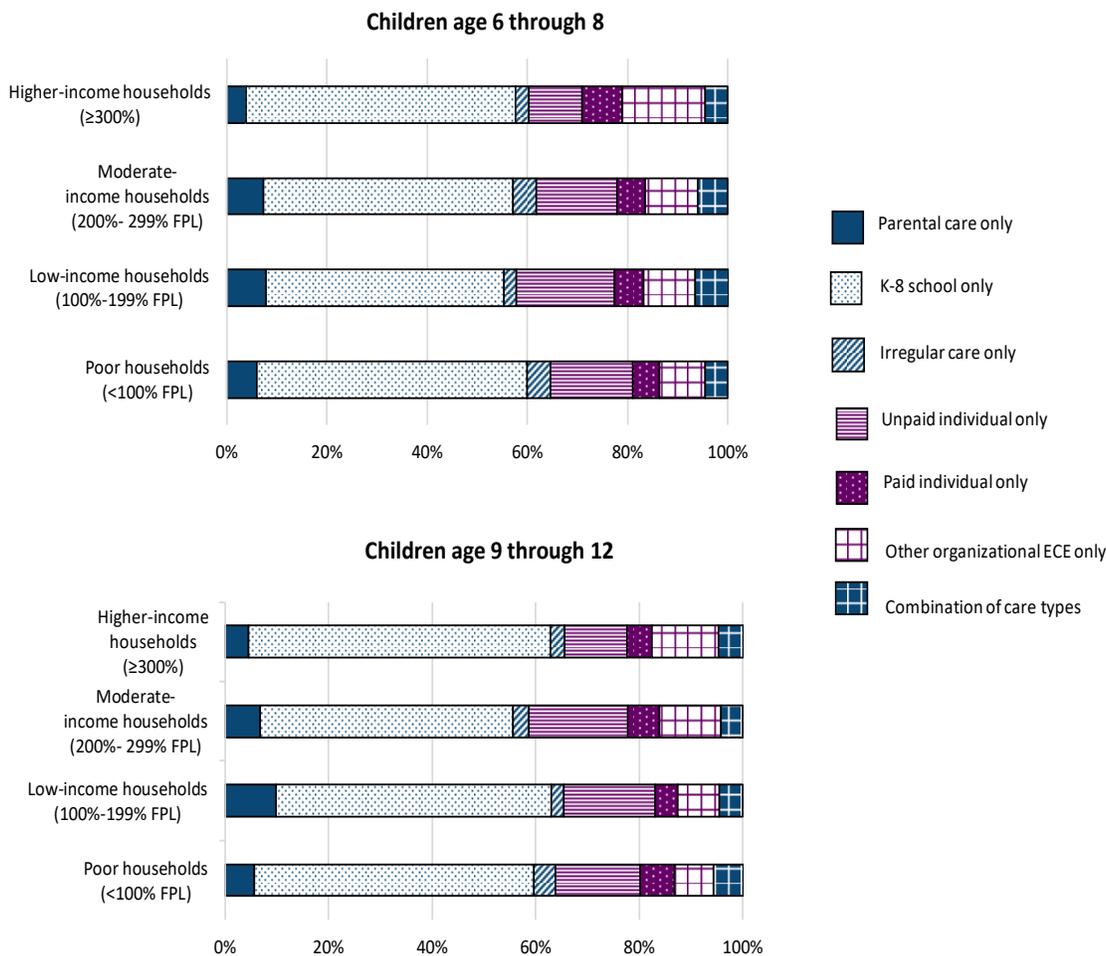
- **Using some form of nonparental care for 3-to-5-year-olds was most common in higher-income families.** Among poor households, 26 percent of 3-to-5-year-olds were in parental care only. In contrast, in higher-income households, only 10 percent of 3-to-5-year-olds were in parental care only.
- **Among 3-to-5-year-olds in nonparental care, the most commonly used care type was center care only.** Using center care only was most common in higher-income households. Twenty percent of 3-to-5-year-olds in poor households were in center care only, compared to 39 percent of 3-to-5-year-olds in higher-income households. In contrast, a higher proportion of 3-to-5-year-olds in poor households used only unpaid care provided by an individual, compared to 3-to-5-year-olds in higher-income households (14 percent vs. 7 percent, respectively).
- **A greater proportion of 3-to-5-year-olds in higher-income households were cared for in multiple types of care, compared to those in lower-income households.** Twelve percent of 3-to-5-year-olds in poor households used multiple types of care, compared to 19 percent of 3-to-5-year-olds in higher-income households. For all 3-to-5-year-olds in households with income less than 300 percent of the FPL, the most common combination of care types was center care plus an unpaid individual provider. For higher-income families, combinations including more than one type of paid care were more common.^{9,10} As with infants and toddlers, 3-to-5-year-olds may also be in multiple care arrangements within one type of care. This type of care combination is not reflected in the “combination of care types” category.

⁹ These calculations were based on information from Tables 17.2.1.1-17.2.1.4 of the report *Early Care and Education Usage and Households' Out-of-Pocket Costs: Tabulations from the National Survey of Early Care and Education* (NSECE Project Team, 2016).

¹⁰ To learn more about the combinations of care used for children age 36-71 months, see Table 16.2 of the report *Early Care and Education Usage and Households' Out-of-Pocket Costs: Tabulations from the National Survey of Early Care and Education* (NSECE Project Team, 2016).

What types of care arrangements did households use for their school-age children in 2012?

Figure 3. Share of School-age Children Using Various Combinations of Care, by Household Income and Child Age



Source: NSECE Project Team, 2016. Tables 13.3.1-13.3.2 (Common Combinations of Care, Child-Level Estimates, Age 72 through 107 months, by Household Poverty Ratio) and Tables 13.4.1-13.4.2 (Common Combinations of Care, Child-Level Estimates, Age 108 months and up, by Household Poverty Ratio).

Note: All nonparental care types may include care used by children in K-8 school, such care used before and after school. Irregular care is care that was used fewer than 5 hours per week. "Other organizational ECE only" refers to before- or after-school care provided by an organization, drop-in or single activity care or lessons, church child care during services, and recreational activities. The category of "center only" is not included because the NSECE's center-based care category was restricted to care used by children younger than 72 months of age; school-age children who used child care centers for before- or after-school care were classified as using "other organizational ECE." Combinations of arrangements include regular (at least 5 hours per week) care by multiple types of providers.

For school-age children (ages 6 through 12) in 2012:

- Relying on "other organizational ECE only" (e.g., before- and after-school care provided by an organization, drop-in or single activity care or lessons, church child care during services, and recreational activities) was especially common among school-age children in higher-income households. "Other organizational ECE only" was the most common nonparental care type for school-age children in higher-income households. In contrast, the most common nonparental care type for school-age children in households with incomes of less than 300 percent of the FPL was "unpaid individual only."

Reference

NSECE [National Survey of Early Care and Education] Project Team. (2016). *Early Care and Education Usage and Households' Out-of-pocket Costs: Tabulations from the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE)*. OPRE Report #2016-09. Washington DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/early-care-education-usage-households-out-of-pocket-costs-tabulations-nsece>

Other Snapshots in this Series

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How Much Did Households in the United States Pay for Child Care in 2012?

An Examination of Differences by Community Urbanicity

Key Findings

- Among households with children under age 13 that paid for nonparental care in 2012, households in rural areas spent the largest percentage of their income on care.
- In high-density urban areas, 13 percent of child care arrangements with a paid individual, such as a family child care home, were partially or fully subsidized. In contrast, just 2 percent and 6 percent of these arrangements were subsidized in rural and moderate-density urban areas, respectively.
- Across all communities, about one-fourth of children's center-based arrangements were free. Center-based arrangements were less likely to be free in moderately-urban areas, compared to urban areas and rural areas.

Data and Methods

This Snapshot is based on information collected by the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE), a nationally representative study of American households and early care and education providers conducted in 2012. The information in this Snapshot is based on a report on nonparental care usage and costs from the NSECE household survey (NSECE Project Team, 2016).

This Snapshot focuses on care for children under age 13. Household costs are calculated based on how much a household paid, in total, for children's regular nonparental care arrangements.¹ Regular nonparental care arrangements are those that a child attended for at least 5 hours per week, not including K-8 schooling. Households may use only free care arrangements, a combination of free and paid care, or only paid care arrangements. Only households that had out-of-pocket costs for care are included in the average cost estimates.

For households with multiple children, household costs include the costs for all children in care (ages 0-13). In the case of children with multiple care arrangements, this includes the cost of all regular care arrangements combined. In cases where there is subsidized care, cost calculations include only the out-of-pocket costs to parents. Using these methods allows for an accurate and comprehensive estimate of regular child care costs at the household level.

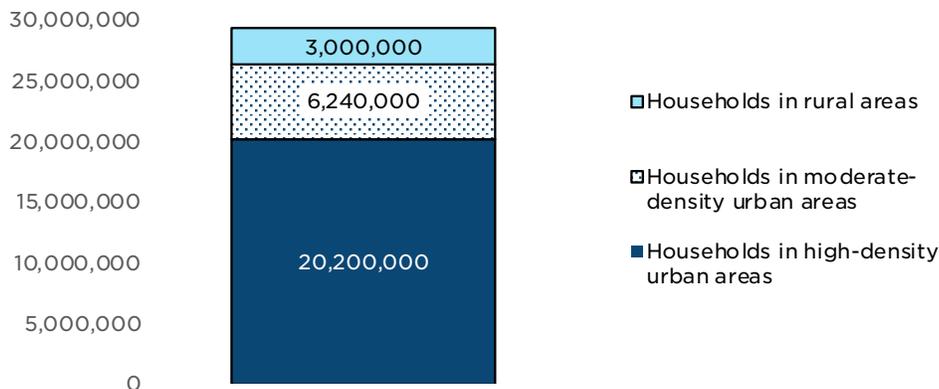
Though comparisons by urbanicity are discussed throughout this Snapshot, tests to identify statistically significant differences were not conducted. Differences are discussed in the text if there was at least a 5 percentage-point difference in scores.

¹ Each *child-provider pair* is a different arrangement. For example, a child may have one arrangement in a Head Start program and a second arrangement with a neighbor.

Where did households with children under age 13 live in 2012?

The NSECE designated each community as a **high-density urban area** (85 percent or more of the total population is urban), a **moderate-density urban area** (at least 30 percent but less than 85 percent of the total population is urban), or a **rural area** (less than 30 percent of the total population is urban).² Figure 1 shows that most households with children lived in high-density urban areas.

Figure 1. Number of U. S. Households with Children Under Age 13, by Community Urbanicity



Most households with children under age 13 lived in high-density urban areas.

Source: NSECE Project Team, 2016. Tables 23.1-23.3 (Household-Level Estimates of Weekly Cost and Cost Burden for Regular ECE, by Community Urbanicity).

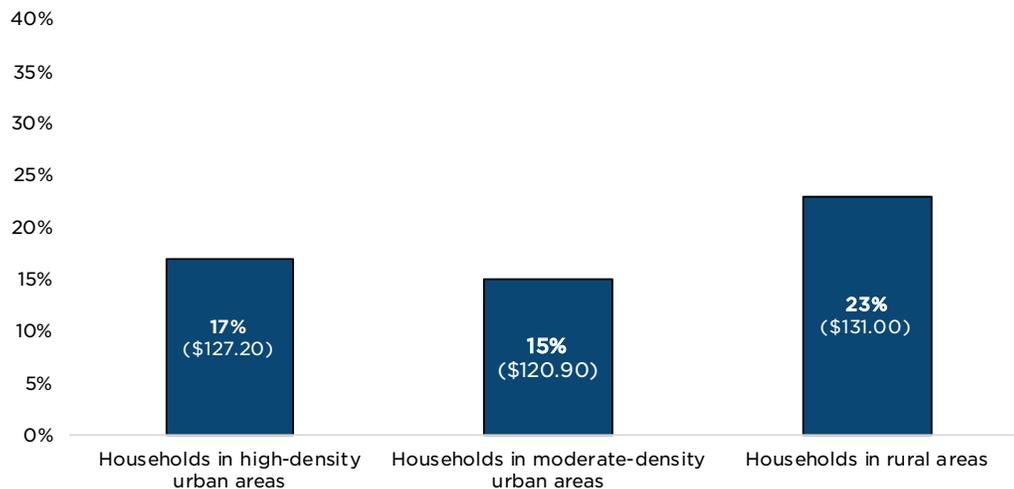
Note: Values are rounded.

² "A community is a cluster of neighboring census tracts. Urban population counts are adjusted for proximity to the geographic center of the community and for census tract population under age 18." (NSECE Project Team, 2016, p. 3)

Did households' child care expenses vary by urbanicity?

Figure 2 shows the extent to which households' child care expenses varied by the households' urbanicity.

Figure 2. Proportion of Weekly Household Income Spent on Regular Nonparental Care for All Children Under Age 13, by Community Urbanicity



Among households with children under age 13 that paid for nonparental care, households in rural areas spent the largest percentage of their income on care.

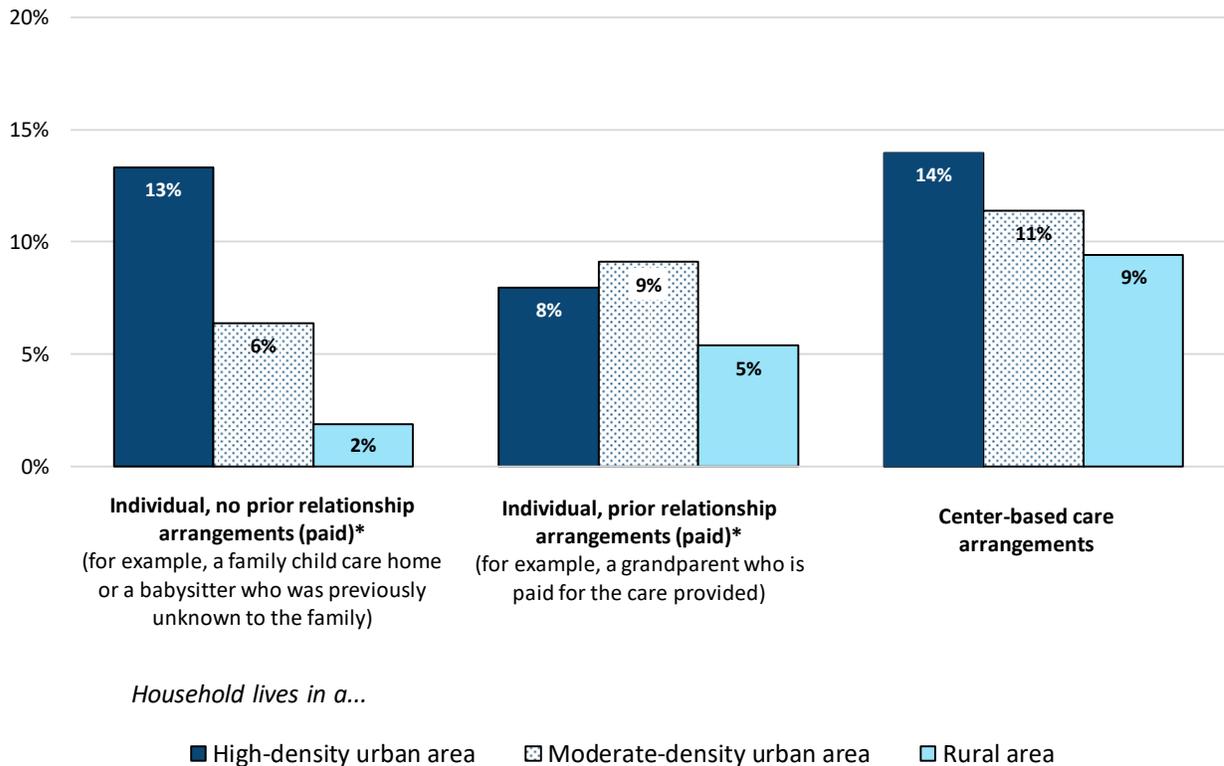
Source: NSECE Project Team, 2016. Tables 23.1–23.3 (Household-Level Estimates of Weekly Cost and Cost Burden for Regular ECE, by Community Urbanicity).

Note: Dollar amounts in parentheses represent the average household-level cost of care in each type of community. The sample was restricted to households with at least one regular nonparental care arrangement and any out-of-pocket costs for regular nonparental care. Regular nonparental care arrangements are those that a child attended for at least 5 hours per week, not including K-8 schooling. Costs for K-8 schooling are not included in the weekly cost of care.

Did the use of subsidized nonparental care vary by urbanicity and type of care?

Figure 3 shows the share of care arrangements that had a public or private subsidy, by care type and urbanicity. Public and private subsidies help families pay for nonparental care in various settings, including child care centers, family child care homes, and care with an individual provider such as a grandparent. Subsidies may cover part of the cost, or the full cost of the arrangement. The federal subsidy program funded by the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is the most widely used subsidy program; still, about 90 percent of children who meet federal eligibility requirements for CCDF subsidies do not receive a subsidy (Government Accountability Office, 2016). Subsidies also come from other sources, such as state programs, employers, or religious organizations.

Figure 3. Percentage of Regular Nonparental Care Arrangements for Children Under Age 13 that had a Public or Private Subsidy, by Type of Care and Community Urbanicity



Compared to the nonparental care arrangements used by rural households, the arrangements used by urban households were more likely to be paid—in part or in full—by a public or private subsidy

Source: NSECE Project Team, 2016. Tables 12.1-12.3 (Arrangement-Level Estimates of Cost of Care by Type of Care, Children Age 0 through 156 Months, by Community Urbanicity).

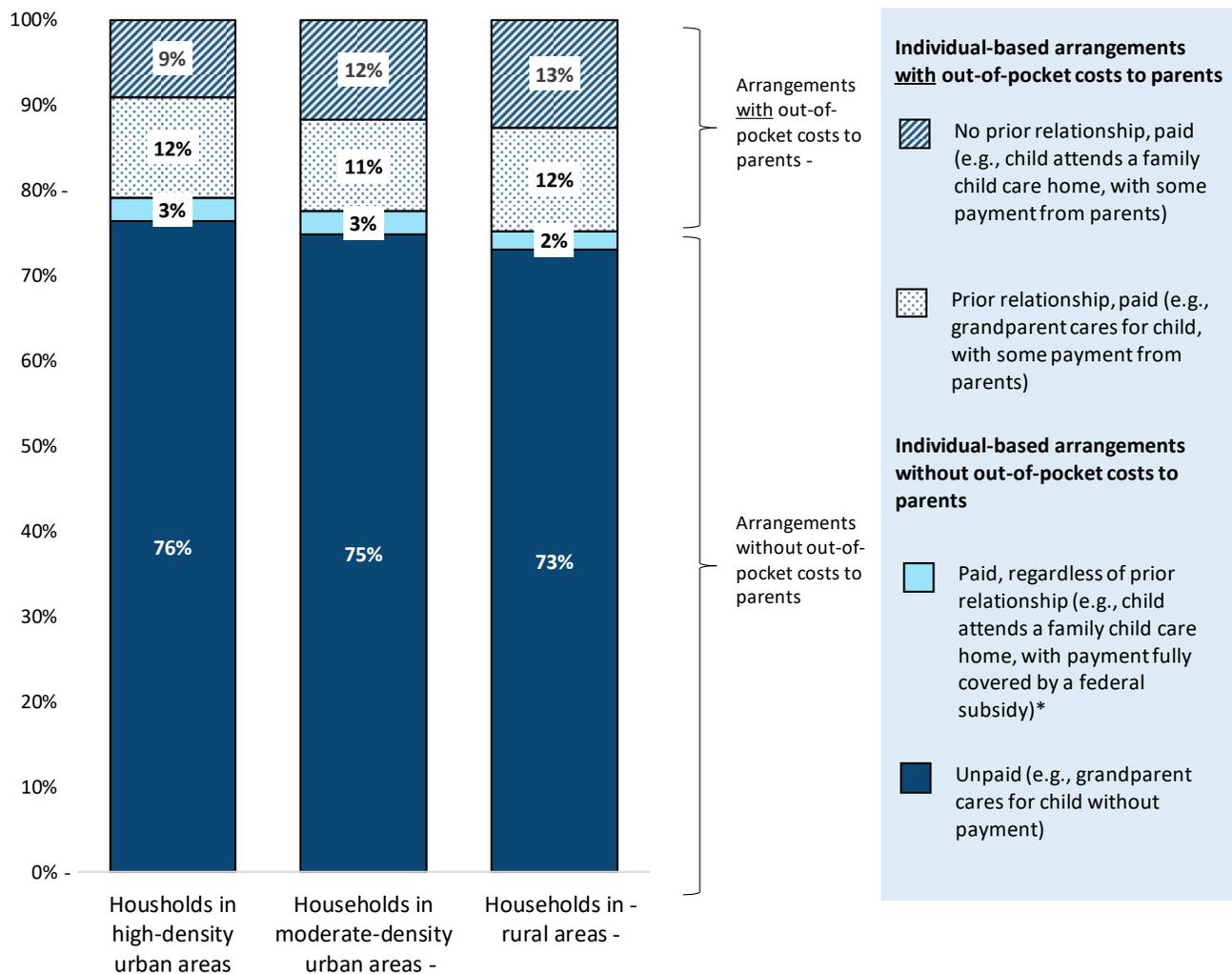
Note: Regular nonparental care arrangements are those that a child attended for at least 5 hours per week, not including K-8 schooling. Arrangements marked with an asterisk (*) have a fee for care, but someone other than the parents may pay the fee in part or full (e.g., a child care subsidy or a family member). Arrangements with individuals who provide unpaid care, such as grandparents who provide free care, are not included in this figure.

- Regarding center-based arrangements, those in rural areas were least likely to be subsidized. In rural areas, just 9 percent of center-based arrangements were subsidized. Eleven percent of center-based arrangements were subsidized in moderately-urban areas, and 14 percent were subsidized in high-density urban areas.
- Regarding paid arrangements with an individual with whom the family had a prior relationship (e.g., a paid grandparent or friend), differences by community urbanicity were small—fewer than 5 percentage points.
- Regarding paid arrangements with an individual with whom the family had no prior relationship (e.g., a family child care home), just 2 percent and 6 percent of these arrangements were subsidized in rural and moderate-density urban areas, respectively. In contrast, 13 percent were subsidized in high-density urban areas.

Did the use of free nonparental care vary by urbanicity and type of care?

Free nonparental care arrangements could include public pre-K and Head Start, which are free to eligible children; care offered free of charge by an individual, such as a friend, family member, or neighbor; and care that is fully subsidized through CCDF or other programs. Figure 4 shows the different payment scenarios for individual-based arrangements, such as care from a grandparent or in a family child care home. Most individual-based arrangements—about three-quarters—were unpaid, regardless of urbanicity.

Figure 4. Regular Individual-based Nonparental Care Arrangements for Children Under Age 13: Percentage with and without Out-of-pocket Costs to Parents, by Community Urbanicity

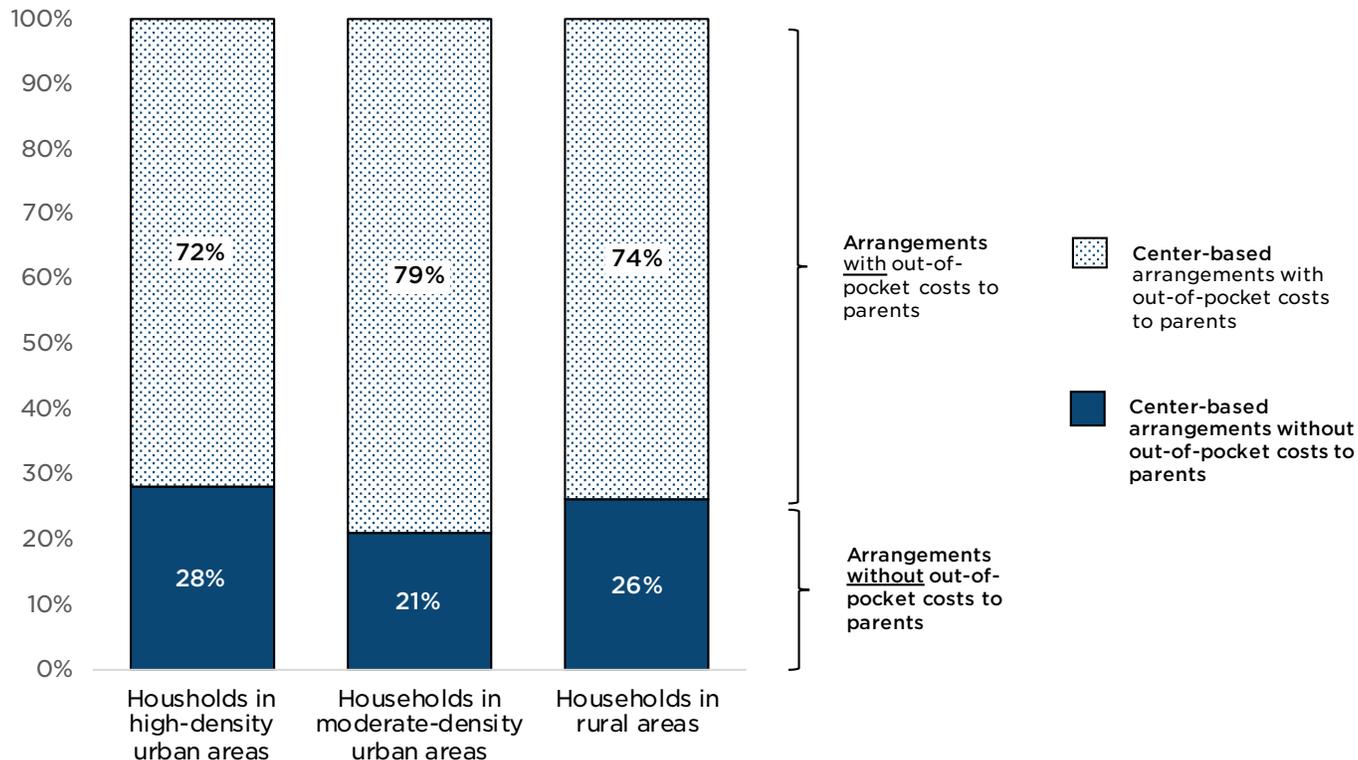


Source: NSECE Project Team, 2016. Tables 12.1-12.3 (Arrangement-Level Estimates of Cost of Care by Type of Care, Children Age 0 through 156 Months, by Community Urbanicity).

Note: Regular nonparental care arrangements are those that a child attended for at least 5 hours per week, not including K-8 schooling. Arrangements marked with an asterisk (*) have a fee for care, but someone other than the parents may pay the fee in part or full (e.g., a child care subsidy or a family member). Due to rounding, cumulative percentages may not equal 100 percent; however, the graphic is based on unrounded estimates.

Figure 5 shows the different payment scenarios for center-based arrangements. Center-based arrangements were slightly less likely to be free in moderately-urban areas than in urban and rural areas.

Figure 5. Regular Center-based Nonparental Care Arrangements for Children Under Age 13: Percentage with and without Out-of-pocket Costs to Parents, by Urbanicity



Source: NSECE Project Team, 2016. Tables 12.1-12.3 (Arrangement-Level Estimates of Cost of Care by Type of Care, Children Age 0 through 156 Months, by Community Urbanicity).

Note: Regular nonparental care arrangements are those that a child attended for at least 5 hours per week, not including K-8 schooling. Arrangements with no out-of-pocket costs are completely free to the family, regardless of where the money came from. Examples include Head Start, public pre-K, and fully subsidized arrangements in child care centers. Due to rounding, cumulative percentages may not equal 100 percent; however, the graphic is based on unrounded estimates.

References

Government Accountability Office. (2016). *Child Care: Access to Subsidies and Strategies to Manage Demand Vary across States*. GAO Report #17-60. Washington DC: U.S. Government Accountability Office. Retrieved from <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-60>

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