

Economic Security



ES 3.1 Parental Labor Force Participation: Percentage of Children with Both Parents or Only Resident Parent in the Labor Force

Over the last three decades, the proportion of single-parent families has increased, as has the proportion of mothers who work regardless of marital status.¹⁵ These factors have reduced the percentage of children who have a parent at home full-time. Figure ES 3.1.A presents data on the percentage of children who have at least one parent in the labor force by family structure, while Figure ES 3.1.B shows the percentage of children with no resident parent in the labor force.

Parents in the Labor Force by Family Structure. Between 1985 and 1998, the percentage of children who have both parents or only the resident parent in the labor force increased from 59 percent to 68 percent (see Table ES 3.1.A). Between 1990 and 1996, this percentage was similar for both married-couple families and single-mother families; however, the rate for single-mother families increased sharply from 66 percent in 1996 to 74 percent in 1998, while the rate for married-couple families was nearly unchanged (64 percent in 1996 and 65 percent in 1998). The rate for children in single-father families was much higher, at 91 percent in 1998. Between 1994 and 1998, there was a large and statistically significant decline in the proportion of children living in families in which no resident parent was attached to the labor force, as shown in Table ES 3.1.B.

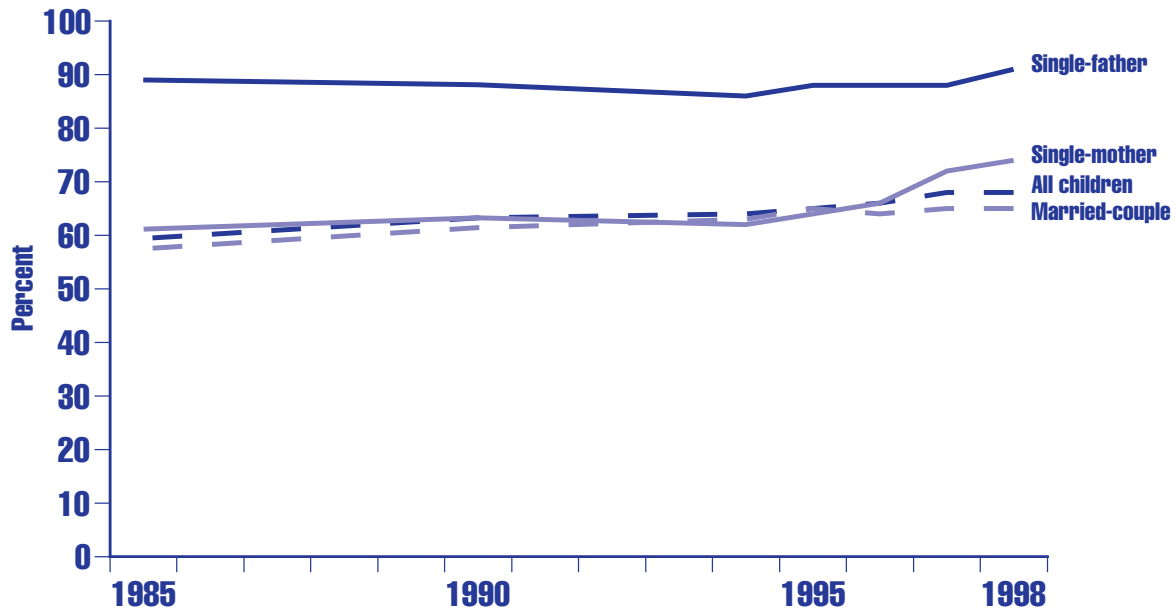
Parents in the Labor Force by Age of Child. Children under age 6 have been less likely than older children to have both parents or only the resident parent in the labor force (see Table ES 3.1.A). In 1998, 62 percent of children under age 6 had both parents or only the resident parent in the labor force, compared with 71 percent for older children.

Parents in the Labor Force by Race and Hispanic Origin. Between 1985 and 1990, white children, black children, and Hispanic children all became more likely to have both parents or only the resident parent in the labor force (see Table ES 3.1.A). Between 1990 and 1996, the rates stayed virtually the same for blacks and Hispanics and increased modestly for whites. However, the rate for all three groups increased between 1996 and 1998, with especially large increases for blacks and Hispanics. Between 1996 and 1998, the rate for black children of all ages increased from 64 percent to 73 percent, and the rate for black children under age 6 increased from 58 percent to 71 percent. Between 1996 and 1998, the rate for Hispanic children of all ages increased from 50 percent to 58 percent. By 1998, 68 percent of white children, 73 percent of black children, and 58 percent of Hispanic children lived in families in which all resident parents were working.

¹⁵ Bianchi, S.M. 1995. Changing Economic Roles of Women and Men. In *State of the Union: America in the 1990s*, Volume 1 (Reynolds Farley, ed.). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Figure ES 3.1.A

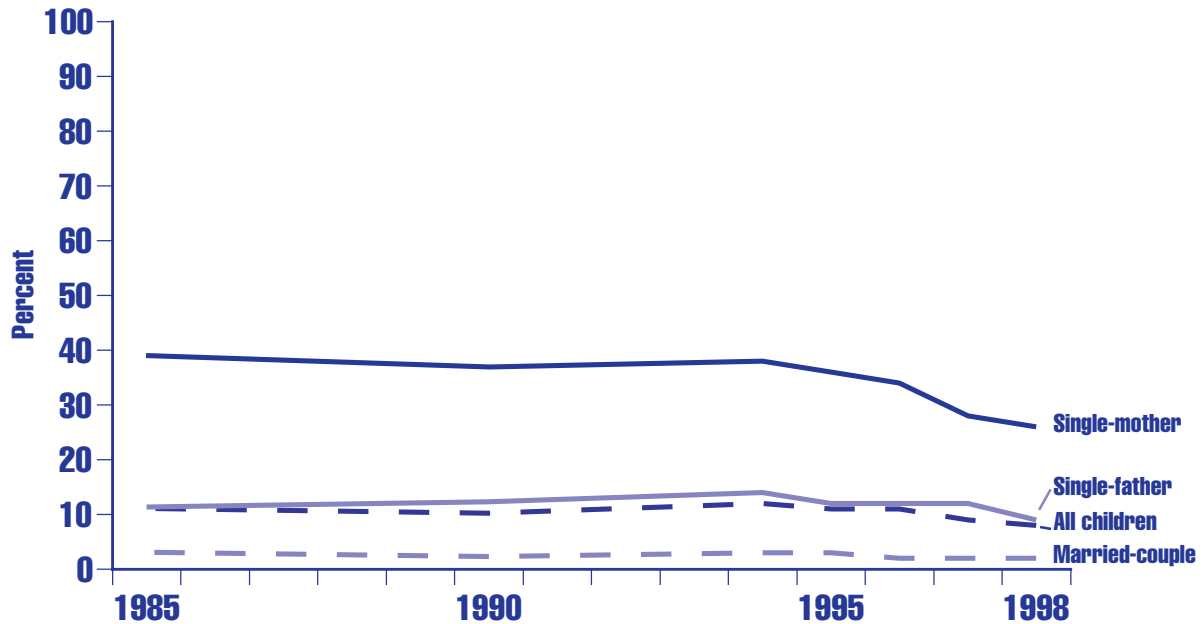
Percentage of children under age 18 in the United States with both parents or only resident parent in the labor force, by family structure: Selected years, 1985-1998



Sources: 1985, 1990, 1994, and 1995 statistics calculated by Child Trends based on the March 1985, 1990, 1994, and 1995 Current Population Surveys; 1996, 1997, and 1998 statistics calculated by the U.S. Bureau of the Census based on the 1996, 1997, and 1998 Current Population Surveys.

Figure ES 3.1.B

Percentage of children under age 18 in the United States with no resident parent in the labor force, by family structure: Selected years, 1985-1998



Sources: 1985, 1990, 1994, and 1995 statistics calculated by Child Trends based on analyses of the March 1985, 1990, 1994, and 1995 Current Population Surveys; 1996, 1997, and 1998 statistics calculated by U.S. Bureau of the Census based on the March 1996, 1997, and 1998 Current Population Surveys.

Table ES 3.1.A

Percentage of children in the United States with both parents or only resident parent in the labor force, by age, family structure, and race and Hispanic origin:^a Selected years, 1985-1998

	1985	1990	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
All children	59	63	64	65	66	68	68
Under age 6	51	55	56	59	58	61	62
Ages 6-17	63	67	68	69	70	71	71
Family structure							
Married-couple	57	61	63	65	64	65	65
Under age 6	51	54	57	59	58	58	58
Ages 6-17	61	65	67	68	67	69	68
Single-mother	61	63	62	64	66	72	74
Under age 6	49	51	52	54	56	65	67
Ages 6-17	67	70	68	69	72	76	77
Single-father	89	88	86	88	88	88	91
Under age 6	90	90	85	86	86	89	94
Ages 6-17	89	88	86	88	89	88	90
Race and Hispanic origin^a							
White	59	63	64	66	66	68	68
Under age 6	51	55	57	59	58	61	61
Ages 6-17	63	67	68	70	70	71	71
Black	60	63	62	64	64	71	73
Under age 6	54	55	56	57	58	68	71
Ages 6-17	63	67	66	67	68	73	75
Hispanic	45	50	49	50	50	54	58
Under age 6	40	44	41	44	43	49	52
Ages 6-17	48	54	54	54	55	57	62

^a Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race. Estimates for whites and blacks include persons of Hispanic origin.

Sources: 1985, 1990, 1994, and 1995 statistics calculated by Child Trends based on the March 1985, 1990, 1994, and 1995 Current Population Surveys; 1996, 1997, and 1998 statistics calculated by the U.S. Bureau of the Census based on the 1996, 1997, and 1998 Current Population Surveys.

Table ES 3.1.B

Percentage of children in the United States with no resident parent in the labor force, by age, family structure, and race and Hispanic origin:^a Selected years, 1985-1998

	1985	1990	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
All children	11	10	12	11	11	9	8
Under age 6	12	13	14	14	13	10	9
Ages 6-17	10	9	11	10	9	8	8
Family structure							
Married-couple	3	2	3	3	2	2	2
Under age 6	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Ages 6-17	3	3	3	3	3	2	2
Single-mother	39	37	38	36	34	28	26
Under age 6	51	49	48	46	44	35	33
Ages 6-17	33	30	32	31	28	24	23
Single-father	11	12	14	12	12	12	9
Under age 6	10	10	15	14	14	11	6
Ages 6-17	11	12	14	12	11	12	10
Race and Hispanic origin^a							
White	8	7	9	8	7	7	7
Under age 6	8	9	11	10	9	7	7
Ages 6-17	7	6	8	7	7	6	6
Black	27	26	27	27	25	20	17
Under age 6	33	34	33	33	32	23	20
Ages 6-17	24	21	24	23	21	18	15
Hispanic	19	17	19	19	17	14	13
Under age 6	20	19	22	21	20	15	14
Ages 6-17	19	16	18	17	15	13	13

^a Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race. Estimates for whites and blacks include persons of Hispanic origin.

Sources: 1985, 1990, 1994, and 1995 statistics calculated by Child Trends based on analyses of the March 1985, 1990, 1994, and 1995 Current Population Surveys; 1996, 1997, and 1998 statistics calculated by U.S. Bureau of the Census based on the March 1996, 1997, and 1998 Current Population Surveys.

ES 3.2 Maternal Employment: Percentage of Mothers with Children Under Age 18 Who Are Employed, Full-Time and Part-Time

Over the last several decades, the increasing proportion of mothers moving into employment has had substantial consequences for the everyday lives of families with children. Maternal employment adds to the financial resources available to families and is often the only source of income for families headed by single mothers—although if child-care services are purchased and unsubsidized, they may offset a substantial percentage of low-wage mothers' earnings.

Maternal employment rates for all mothers with children under age 18 increased steadily from 53 percent to 63 percent between 1980 and 1990 (see Figure ES 3.2). From 1990 to 1997, rates increased at a slower pace from 63 percent to 68 percent. This pattern of increasing maternal employment was evident for all mothers, regardless of the age of their children.

Differences by Age of Child. The percentage of mothers who are employed increases with the age of the youngest child for all time periods presented in Table ES 3.2. In 1997, 57 percent of mothers with children under age 3 were employed, compared with 64 percent and 74 percent for mothers with youngest children ages 3-5 and 6-17, respectively.

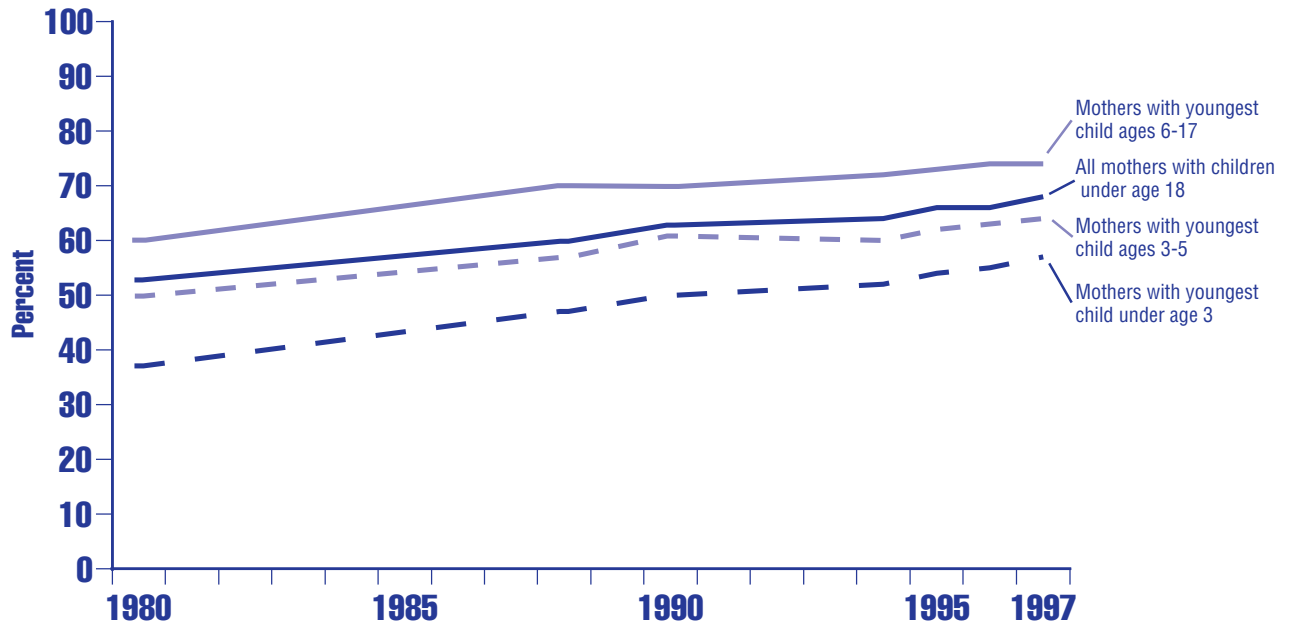
Differences by Marital Status. Throughout the period between 1980 and 1997, divorced mothers had higher rates of employment than never-married or currently married mothers (see Table ES 3.2). However, the gap narrowed over the period as employment increased from 62 percent to 69 percent for married mothers and from 40 percent to 57 percent for never-married mothers. In contrast, there was only a slight increase from 75 percent to 77 percent for divorced mothers.

Differences by Race and Hispanic Origin. In 1997, 69 percent of white mothers, 65 percent of black mothers, and 53 percent of Hispanic mothers were employed (see Table ES 3.2). Black mothers were the most likely to be employed full-time (55 percent). All three groups substantially increased their rates of employment between 1980 and 1990 and have continued to increase their rates of employment during the 1990s.

Full-Time Versus Part-Time Employment. Among all employed mothers, 50 percent were working full-time in 1997 (see Table ES 3.2). Employed mothers with older children were more likely to work full-time than those with young children, with rates ranging from 57 percent for mothers with children under age 3, to 74 percent for mothers with a youngest child between the ages of 6 and 17. Divorced mothers were more likely to work full-time (77 percent) than never-married mothers (57 percent) and married mothers (69 percent). Black mothers who were employed were more likely to work full-time (55 percent) than white mothers (48 percent) or Hispanic mothers (41 percent).

Figure ES 3.2

Percentage of mothers in the United States with children under age 18 who were employed, by age of youngest child: Selected years, 1980-1997



Source: Unpublished tables, Bureau of Labor Statistics, based on analyses of March Current Population Surveys for 1980, 1988, 1990, and 1994-1996.

Table ES 3.2

Percentage of mothers in the United States with children under age 18 who were employed, full-time and part-time,^a by age of youngest child, marital status, and race and Hispanic origin:^b Selected years, 1980-1997

	1980	1988	1990	1994	1995	1996	1997
Total employed	53	60	63	64	66	66	68
Working full-time	—	44	46	45	46	47	50
Working part-time	—	16	17	19	19	19	18
Age of youngest child							
Under age 3	37	47	50	52	54	55	57
Working full-time	—	32	34	34	35	36	38
Working part-time	—	15	16	18	19	19	19
Ages 3-5	50	57	61	60	62	63	64
Working full-time	—	40	43	41	42	43	47
Working part-time	—	17	18	19	20	20	17
Ages 6-17	60	70	70	72	73	74	74
Working full-time	—	53	53	53	53	55	56
Working part-time	—	17	17	19	19	19	18
Marital status							
Married, spouse present	62	63	66	67	67	68	69
Working full-time	—	43	44	45	45	46	48
Working part-time	—	19	19	21	22	21	20
Never married	40	45	46	48	48	49	57
Working full-time	—	32	36	34	35	35	42
Working part-time	—	8	9	12	13	14	14
Divorced	75	75	74	77	77	79	77
Working full-time	—	66	66	63	64	66	65
Working part-time	—	9	9	11	13	13	12
Race and Hispanic origin							
White	52	62	63	65	67	67	69
Working full-time	—	44	44	45	46	47	48
Working part-time	—	18	19	20	21	21	20
Black	54	56	61	58	62	63	65
Working full-time	—	48	53	47	50	52	55
Working part-time	—	8	8	11	11	10	10
Hispanic	42	49	50	48	49	49	53
Working full-time	—	38	39	36	37	37	41
Working part-time	—	11	11	12	12	12	12

^a Percentages for 1980 are not presented separately by marital status and full-time versus part-time due to incompatibilities with definitions used in later years. Sums may not add to totals due to rounding.

^b Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race. Estimates for whites and blacks include persons of Hispanic origin.

Source: Unpublished tables, Bureau of Labor Statistics, based on analyses of March Current Population Surveys for 1980, 1988, 1990, and 1994-1997.



ES 3.3 Child Care

The child care needs of American families have been increasing over the past several decades as mothers have moved into the labor force in ever greater numbers. Child care that is reliable and of high quality is especially important for infants and preschoolers because they are dependent on caregivers for their basic needs and safety.

Child-Care Centers and Preschools. Working mothers with preschool children have increasingly chosen care provided in day care centers and preschools. In 1965, only 8 percent of mothers working full-time chose day care centers and preschools for child care (see Table ES 3.3.A). By 1994, 34 percent did so. Similarly, for children whose mothers worked part-time, use of child care centers and preschools increased from 3 percent in 1965 to 22 percent in 1994.

Child Care in a Nonrelative's Home. For children of full-time working mothers, care in a nonrelative's home ranged from 25 to 27 percent between 1977 and 1988, then declined to 18 percent by 1994. Similarly, for children whose mothers worked part-time, care in a nonrelative's home peaked at 21 percent in 1986 and has since declined to 10 percent.

Child Care at Home. The fraction of children of full-time working mothers cared for at their home by either relatives or nonrelatives was 26 percent in 1994, compared with 21 percent in 1988 and 47 percent in 1965. The fraction of children of part-time working mothers cared for at home was 45 percent in 1994, compared with 42 percent in 1984-1985 and 47 percent in 1965 (see Table ES 3.3.A).

Child Care Arrangements by Various Child and Family Characteristics. Table ES 3.3.B presents 1994 estimates of the distribution of child-care types used by all working mothers (regardless of hours worked) by child's race and Hispanic origin and age, mother's marital status and educational attainment, poverty status, monthly income, and AFDC program participation status. The information in this table indicates the following:

- Relatives usually care for employed mothers' children before their first birthday. In 1994, 56 percent of infants were cared for by relatives either inside or outside the child's home (see Figure ES 3.3). Among toddlers (ages 1-2), about half (51 percent) were cared for by relatives, while the other half were split about evenly between day care centers and preschools (26 percent) and nonrelatives (22 percent). Among children of preschool age (ages 3-4), 44 percent were cared for by relatives, another 37 percent in day care centers and preschools, and 16 percent by nonrelatives.
- Hispanic families were less likely than white and black non-Hispanics to use day care centers and preschools. In 1994, 19 percent of Hispanic children of working mothers were cared for in day care centers and preschools, compared with 31 percent of non-Hispanic white children and 34 percent of non-Hispanic black children.
- Children of employed mothers with higher socioeconomic status were the most likely to be receiving care from a day care center or preschool. For example, 22 percent of poor children under age 5 received care from such sources, compared with 30 percent of nonpoor children.

Table ES 3.3.A

Percentage distribution of child care arrangements of children under age 5 in the United States with employed mothers, by mother's employment status: Selected years, 1965-1994

	1965 ^{a,b}	1977 ^b	1982 ^b	1984-85	1986	1987	1988	1991	1993	1994
Mother employed full-time										
Day care center or preschool	8	15	20	30	26	28	31	28	34	34
Nonrelative care in provider's home	20	27	25	27	26	25	27	21	18	18
Grandparent/other relative in relative's home	18	21	21	16	18	14	14	14	17	17
Father in child's home	10	11	11	10	11	10	8	15	11	13
Other care in child's home ^c	37	18	16	13	15	15	13	15	15	13
Other care outside child's home ^d	7	8	7	4	5	8	7	7	5	5
Mother employed part-time										
Day care center or preschool	3	9	8	17	16	18	17	15	23	22
Nonrelative care in provider's home	8	16	19	14	21	18	17	13	14	10
Grandparent/other relative in relative's home	9	13	16	16	14	13	11	11	13	13
Father in child's home	23	23	21	22	21	25	27	29	25	28
Other care in child's home ^c	24	20	20	18	14	15	14	17	15	17
Other care outside child's home ^d	33	19	26	13	13	13	14	15	10	10

^a Data for 1965 are for children under 6 years old.

^b Data for 1982 and earlier are based on survey questions that asked about care arrangements for the youngest child in the family. Percentages for 1982 and earlier have been recalculated after removal of cases in "don't know" category.

^c Includes care by relatives and nonrelatives.

^d Includes children who are cared for by their mother at work or in kindergarten or school-based activities.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-23, 117, Table A; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-70, 9, 20, 30, 36, and 53 (Table 1 in each); Casper, 1997; *Current Population Reports*, PPL 81 (Tables B and 2).

Table ES 3.3.B

Percentage distribution of child care arrangements of children under age 5 in the United States with employed mothers, by selected characteristics: 1994

	Day Care Center/Preschool ^a	Father in Child's Home	Other Relative in Child's Home	Nonrelative in Child's Home	Relative in Another Home	Nonrelative in Another Home	Mother Cares for Child ^b	Other Care Arrangements ^c
All preschoolers	29	18	9	5	16	15	5	1
Race and Hispanic origin								
White, non-Hispanic	31	20	7	6	14	16	7	1
Black, non-Hispanic	34	11	13	2	23	13	3	2
Hispanic ^d	19	17	15	6	24	15	2	2
Other	21	22	19	6	12	15	3	2
Age of child								
Under 1 year	18	21	11	7	17	19	7	0
Ages 1-2	26	19	10	5	18	17	4	0
Ages 3-4	37	17	8	4	13	12	6	2
Marital status								
Married, husband present	29	22	6	6	14	16	6	1
All other marital statuses ^e	31	5	21	3	22	15	3	1
Educational attainment								
Less than high school	20	24	15	4	20	12	5	1
High school, 4 years	26	17	11	3	19	16	5	1
College, 1-3 years	32	21	7	4	14	14	6	1
College, 4+ years	35	15	6	9	11	17	5	1
Poverty status^f								
Below poverty	22	18	15	4	20	11	10	1
Above poverty	30	19	9	5	15	16	5	1
Monthly family income^f								
Less than \$1,200	24	17	11	4	22	15	6	1
\$1,200 to \$2,999	26	22	10	3	19	13	6	1
\$3,000 to \$4,499	27	19	10	4	15	18	6	2
\$4,500 and over	36	15	7	9	12	16	5	1
Program participation								
AFDC recipient	27	15	17	3	18	11	6	2
AFDC nonrecipient	29	19	9	5	16	16	5	1

^a Includes day care centers, nursery schools, and preschools.

^b Includes mothers working at home or away from home.

^c Includes preschoolers in kindergarten and school-based activities.

^d Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

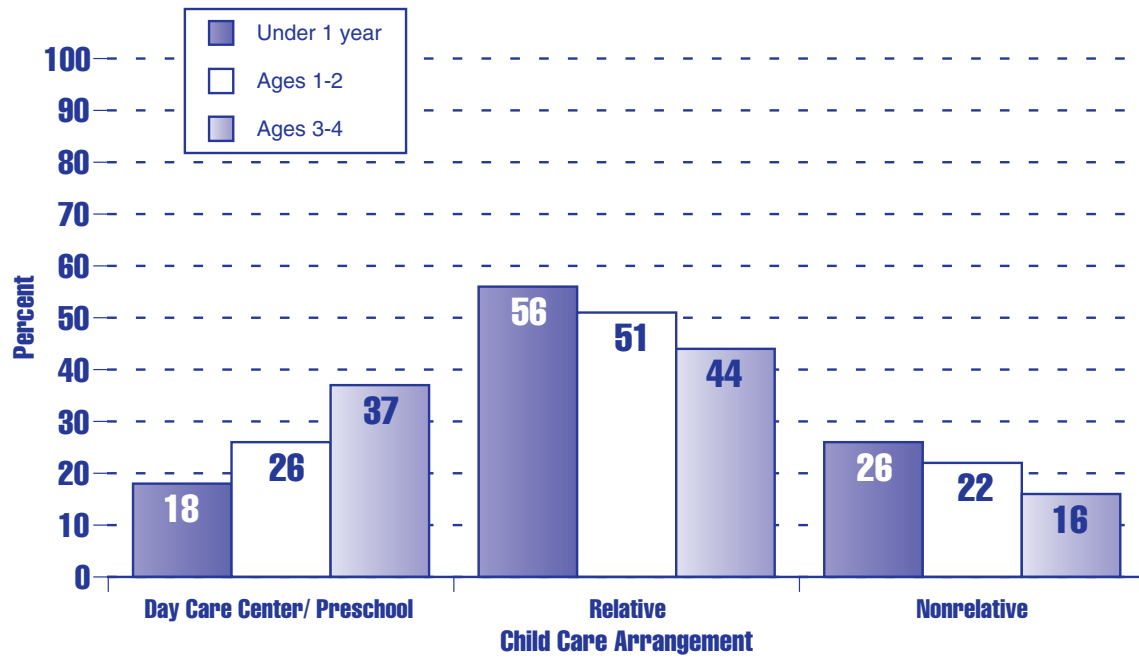
^e Includes married, spouse absent, widowed, separated, divorced, and never married.

^f Omits preschoolers whose families did not report income.

Source: Casper, 1997, Tables B, 1, and 2.

Figure ES 3.3

Percentage distribution of child care arrangements of children under age 5 in the United States with employed mothers, by age of child: 1994



Source: Casper, 1997, Tables B and 2.