

# Study: Parents' use of child care services and differences in use by mothers' employment status

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The study "[Parents' use of child care services and differences in use by mothers' employment status](#)" is now available as part of [Insights on Canadian Society](#).

This study uses data from the 2017 General Social Survey on Families to examine child care use by Canadian parents, types of child care arrangements, and cost, along with the connection between mothers' employment characteristics and the use of child care.

While rates of child care use were predictably higher among employed mothers (74%) than unemployed mothers (30%), key differences in child care use emerged even among working mothers. Just over a quarter (26%) of employed mothers said that they did not use child care in the 12 months preceding the survey. This was particularly the case for moms of older school-aged children (aged 10 to 12), many of whom typically require less supervision before and after school.

Besides the age of the child, the type of employment played an important role in whether a mother used child care services. Working rotating shifts such as alternating days, evenings or nights, split shifts, and irregular schedules decreased the likelihood of using child care services. Just over two-thirds (68%) of these mothers reported using child care, compared with 76% of mothers who had a regular schedule. A recent [Statistics Canada survey](#) on the provision of child care services found that flexible child care options in Canada are not common.

In addition, part-time work corresponded with a lower likelihood of child care use: 65% of mothers working part-time used child care versus 78% of mothers working full-time. It is possible that part-time employment was based on personal preference or a necessity to accommodate the availability of child care services.

## Parents' use of child care services highest just before children start school

The use of child care was closely linked to a child's age. Parents of infants under the age of 1 were the least likely to use child care (15%), which could be explained by the availability of maternity and parental leave. After the child's first birthday, parents' use of child care services consistently increased, peaking among parents of 4- and 5-year-olds (76%). Once children reached school age, the reliance on child care services decreased, eventually falling to 42% among parents of 10- to 12-year-olds.

## Immigrant parents less likely to use child care services

Parental characteristics also play a role in the decision to use child care services. Lone parents were more likely than partnered parents to report using some form of child care arrangement in the last year (70% versus 64%).

Also, Canadian-born parents tended to declare higher child care usage (69%) than immigrant parents (53%) and parents who were non-permanent residents (54%). It is possible that immigrant parents were less likely to use child care because of lower levels of employment and a higher likelihood of living in multigenerational households with possible built-in supports for child care.

The study found no significant differences in the use of child care between Indigenous parents living off reserve and non-Indigenous parents. It was not possible to analyze variations in the use of child care services by other racialized groups due to the small sample size and related data quality issues.

It will be important to monitor patterns in parents' use of child care, in light of possible short- and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the investment in a new Canada-wide early learning and child care plan recently announced in the 2021 federal budget.



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### Note to readers

This release summarizes findings of the article released today, [Parents' use of child care services and differences in use by mothers' employment status](#). The article is based on data from the 2017 General Social Survey – Families.

**Child care arrangement:** The main measure of interest for this study was the use of child care. Parents were asked to report whether they had made child care arrangements in the past 12 months—either paid or unpaid—for each child 12 years and younger in their household, because of work or any other reason. Since the use of child care for children under the age of 1 was low (15%), most of the analyses focused on children aged 1 to 12 years.

**Available tables:** [42-10-0001-01](#), [42-10-0005-01](#), [42-10-0008-01](#) and [42-10-0009-01](#).

**Definitions, data sources and methods:** survey number [4501](#).

The article "[Parents' use of child care services and differences in use by mothers' employment status](#)" is now available in *Insights on Canadian Society* (Catalogue number [75-006-X](#)).

The infographic "[Use of child care services in Canada and mothers' employment](#)" is now available in the series *Statistics Canada - Infographics* (Catalogue number [11-627-M](#)).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; [STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca)) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; [STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca)).