

# ***Men's Health Network***

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## **Census Bureau finds Fathers Preferred as Day Care Providers**

October 1994

A recent Census Bureau, SIPP<sup>1</sup>, study discloses some interesting findings about fathers and the part they play in their children's lives (Who's Minding the Kids?, Child Care Arrangements: Fall 1991, P70-36). The study was conducted in the Fall of 1991 after the beginning of the school year and indicates that fathers are playing a significant in-home role as caretakers for their children. To quote Mary Hawkins, co-author of the report, "We are increasingly finding fathers to be the preferred provider for child care. ..." (Press Release, May 20, 1994) Unfortunately, the data collected also appear to highlight the problems children and fathers face if the father has been displaced from the home or has never lived with the mother.

For purposes of this study, children were divided into two categories: preschool-age (under 5 years of age) and school-age (ages 5 through 14). Older children were not included in the study. Shift work might have a somewhat different definition in this study than that used by many people, with a "day shift" being described as one where at least 1/2 of the hours worked are between 8 am and 4 pm.

Day care costs were also studied, and the findings will be of interest to those studying child support guidelines. This is a very lengthy and complicated study (61 pages) and we suggest that you obtain a copy so that you might better understand the definitions and terms as used in the report. (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. 20233)

Among the findings of the study (based on reports of mothers, fathers were not queried):

There were 56.1 million children under age 15 in the fall of 1991

31.1 million of these children had mothers who were employed either full- or part-time.

Of this group, 9.9 million were under 5 years of age, 21.2 million were 5-14 years of age

1.7 million children under age 15 were living with their fathers (pg. 1, based on CPS data<sup>2</sup>) but were not a part of this study

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<sup>1</sup> Survey of Income and Program Participation

<sup>2</sup> Current Population Survey

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Among preschoolers:

20% were cared for by their fathers while the mothers were at work (pg. 3)

17.9 % were cared for by other family members (pg. 3)

Fathers were the caretaker of choice child for younger children, with care by a nonrelative in another home as 2nd choice:

Children less than 1 year old were more likely to be cared for by father, 21.6%, than by a nonrelative in another home, 20.5%, or at organized child care facilities (day / group care or nursery / preschool), 11.5% (pg. 5)

Children aged 1-2 were more likely to be cared for by father, 21.2%, than by a nonrelative in another home, 20.4%, or at organized child care facilities, 17.5%.  
(pg. 5)

If mother was married, father was more likely to provide care for the child, 22.9% (pg. 3)

If mother was not married, father was less likely to provide care for the child, 7.1% (pg. 3), but this is an increase over the period 1977-88 when 1% - 2% of this care was by father.

If mother was not married, grandparents were more likely to care for the child, 24.8%, than if mother was married, 13.7% (pg. 3)

If mother worked a non-day shift, 47.4% of the children were cared for in the home and father provided 2/3 of that in-home care (pg. 4)

If mother worked a day shift, 27.1% of the children were cared for in the home and father provided 1/2 of that in-home care (pg. 4)

Among grade school children:

76.4% spent most of their time in school while the mothers were working (pg. 3)

If mother was married, father was more likely to care for the child, 8.4% (pp. 3, 9)

If mother was married, father was less likely to care for the child, less than 1% (pp. 3, 9)

If mother was not married, grandparents were more likely to care for the child, 10.2%, than if mother was married, 3.8% (pg. 3)