

Parental Preferences for Work and Childcare

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Les données provenant de l'enquête sur la garde des enfants sont utilisées pour comparer le travail souhaité et réel ainsi que les caractéristiques de garde d'enfants des familles ayant des enfants âgés de moins de six ans. Non seulement les parents gèrent le travail et la garde des enfants de façons différentes, de plus les préférences différentes grandement selon leurs expériences journalières. Une variété de modèles sont en opération où certains préfèrent des maternelles publiques, d'autres préfèrent travailler à temps partiel ou encore d'autres arrangements qui permettent aux parents de surveiller leurs enfants eux-même. Ceci suggère que cette politique devrait être flexible en supportant trois systèmes de garde d'enfants: la famille immédiate, le secteur formel et le secteur informel.

Data from the 1988 Child Care Survey are used to compare the actual and preferred work and childcare patterns in families with children under six years of age. Not only do parents manage work and childcare in a variety of ways, but preferences differ considerably from daily experiences. A variety of models are operating, with some preferring more public childcare situations while others prefer part-time work or other arrangements that permit parents to look after children themselves. This suggests that policy should be flexible in supporting three types of childcare: by the immediate family, by the formal sector, and by the informal sector.

Childcare arrangements involve considerable diversity across families and across the life course of children. Just as there are no typical families, so also do childcare arrangements vary extensively. The diversity includes the extent of parental work, the extent to which care involves parents and non-parental situations, and the type of non-parental care that children receive.

Policy orientations toward childcare are equally diverse and ambivalent. The context has changed considerably since the immediate postwar period

when childcare was only provided in cases of severe neglect or abuse. However, a significant tension remains, in both policy and public opinion, regarding the extent of state involvement in childcare and family matters more broadly. This involvement has been controversial, both welcomed and contested (Leira 1992, p. 2). For instance, the postwar legacy of childcare "only for special needs" was embodied in the Canada Assistance Plan. Parental leaves have been incorporated in Employment Insurance, providing a cumbersome basis for family policy. Heitlinger observes that the Canadian

government spent most of the 1980s drafting plans for new childcare programs (1991, p. 297). Since the 1995 demise of the Canada Assistance Plan, the federal government has made several proposals and received an equivalent number of counterproposals from the provinces.

Using Ontario as a further example, the NDP Government promoted a non-profit approach to childcare and pay equity for childcare workers. The subsequent Conservative Government has been more interested in private approaches and in providing money to parents in need rather than to childcare workers. A 1994 Royal Commission on Education argued for bringing three-year-old children into the school system, and a year later the provincial education funding for four-year-old children was eliminated.

The inconsistency and ambivalence of state policy is also reflected in public opinion. Using media excerpts as an example, Tougas (1993) observes that more than two-thirds of women with children at home are participating in the paid labour force, and consequently there is a clear need for a national childcare program. On the other hand, Wentz (1994) argues for a variety of policies following on the diversity of families and their associated childcare needs.

The results from public opinion polls seem to be strongly affected by the formulation of the question. Two-thirds of respondents to a 1991 Health and Welfare poll said that the best place for preschool children was in the home: 16 percent said daycare centres (Vienneau 1991, as reported in Heitlinger 1991). In contrast, a 1993 poll for the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care found that 30 percent were “strongly in favour” and 34 percent were “somewhat in favour” of a “national childcare program, including various kinds of regulated childcare services, planned at the local level and supported through a combination of parent fees and government funds” (Insight Canada Research 1993). Both of these polls are rather limited. The “best place for children” does

not allow the respondent to consider possible constraints that would prompt a second choice. In the 1993 poll, some respondents may have been focusing on local-level planning or the sharing of costs by government and users, rather than on a preference for the daycare facilities themselves.

Daycare was found to be one of the most contentious issues in a qualitative survey of orientations to marriage and family questions (Beaujot 1992). While there was much agreement among respondents on central life questions such as marriage, children, and state support of families through health and education, open questions on daycare provided a diversity of responses. Over half of respondents were in favour of government subsidies for daycare, but a significant minority were opposed either on grounds of costs or because it was an inappropriate environment for children. It appears that opposing models of state intervention in families are most manifest on the question of formal childcare. Some want more state support for daycare as a basic means of family support, and more specifically as a means of enhancing the labour market participation of mothers. Others would want the state to support parents looking after their own children, or they may be open to daycare only as a means of enabling one-parent families to be more self-supporting.

In *Welfare States and Working Mothers*, Leira (1992) elaborates some of the broader complexities that underlie the ambivalence in both public opinion and public policy. She starts with the basic idea that both economic activity (or production in a wider sense) and childcare (or social reproduction more broadly) are essential to society. Consequently, providing and nurturing, or work and care, must be analyzed within a common conceptual framework (see also Hofferth and Brayfield 1991). The relationships between caring and earning roles vary across a variety of situations ranging from breadwinner to two-earner arrangements. These relationships exhibit considerable complexity at both individual and collective levels. At the collective level, there is on the one hand the encouragement of

women's labour force participation and the provision of childcare facilities, but on the other hand the services may be too expensive or insufficient to permit the full and equal participation of mothers in the labour market. At the individual level, the everyday coping strategies for approaching childcare and economic provision typically consist of joining together components of family-based care, formal and/or informal services. This implies that the dual-earner family is actually dependent on the conservation of more traditional family forms where informal childcare services are obtained at a cheaper price.

This provides a basis for analyzing the actual and preferred work and childcare strategies of parents of preschool children. Some social changes are permitting families to take more responsibility for childcare. In particular, low fertility means there are fewer children needing care, while low mortality means that very few young children have deceased parents and the vast majority have surviving grandparents. Other changes reduce the potential of families to look after their own children. In particular, 13 percent of children age 12 and under in 1988 were living in a one-parent family. Also, for 60 percent of children, the parent most responsible for childcare was employed.

Thus it is important to assess the extent of need for childcare, the ways in which families fulfill this need, along with their preferences and constraints in terms of work and childcare. Given the changes occurring in families, it is important to analyze preferences on these key questions of work and childcare. To be effective, policy in areas that touch so closely on people's private lives needs to consider carefully the expressed preferences of the people for whom the policy is designed.

Clearly, we are focusing here only on one of several bases for childcare policy. As Heitlinger (1991, 1993) observes, there are many aspects to these policy questions. The relevant considerations include the proper division of private and public costs of reproduction; also involved are questions

of labour market requirements, the employment needs of parents, and the status of childcare providers themselves. At another level, there are issues like the developmental needs of children, questions of care versus education, and state intervention in the family. Obviously, matters of gender equality are also at stake. For instance, using survey data from the Detroit area, Mason and Kuhlthau (1992) conclude that difficulties in finding childcare has more influence on employment of mothers than on childbearing.

DATA SOURCE

Data used here are from the 1988 National Child Care Survey. This survey was based on households with children under 13 years of age (Statistics Canada 1991; Crompton 1991). The sample included 24,155 households and 42,131 children. In each household, a "designated adult" was chosen as respondent. This designated adult was the person who was most responsible for childcare. In cases where two people were equally responsible, the mother was chosen. In total, 95.5 percent of respondents were women.

Childcare is defined broadly in the survey to include all care except that provided by the designated adult when he or she is not working or studying. Specifically, childcare by the spouse of the designated adult is counted as childcare as long as the designated adult is working or studying at the time the care is provided. In the *Introductory Report*, the authors point out that childcare is conceptualized not only as a service that enables mothers to participate in the labour force but also as a form of support to families (Statistics Canada 1991).

This paper will largely focus on children under six years of age and it will largely use children as the unit of analysis. While childcare needs clearly do not end once children enter school full-time, the situation is rather different since it needs to surround the school day. Other than before and after school

programs, and programs designated for breaks in the school year, there is less concern about the childcare situation of children after age six. It might be noted that 47 percent of children aged 6-12 receive some supplemental care beyond that provided in school and by their parents, including 18 percent in paid childcare arrangements (Goelman *et al.* 1993, pp. 35, 37).

ACTUAL AND PREFERRED PARENTAL WORK PATTERNS

Given the interaction of earning and caring roles, the need for childcare is often seen as a consequence of the work patterns of mothers. Among children aged 0-5, a quarter are in families where either both parents, or the lone parent, are working or studying 30 or more hours in the reference week (table not shown). If 30 hours is considered full-time, then the other three-quarters of children under age six had access to parental time when a parent was not fully occupied with work or study.

Since the preference question was asked in terms of employment, Table 1 presents the data on children under six by work patterns of parents. Childcare is clearly dependent on the presence of parents and their work status. For children under six, 11.0 percent are living with one parent. In these one-parent families, the dominant case (60.7 percent) is where the parent is not employed; this rises to 77.8 percent at children's ages 0-17 months. For a third (31.7 percent) of children in single-parent families, that parent is employed full-time. The children in two-parent families also have access to much of their childcare through one parent working part-time (18.3 percent) or not being employed (48.8 percent). Considering all these children together, half (50.1 percent) are living with a parent who is not employed, and another 17.1 percent are with at least one parent who is working part-time. That leaves a third (32.7 percent) who are with parent(s) working full-time. In other words, two-thirds have access to parental time associated with a parent not working, or working less than full-time.

TABLE 1
Work Status of Respondent (and Spouse/Partner) by Age of Children, for Children 0-5 Years

	<i>Age of Children</i>			
	<i>0-17 months</i>	<i>18-35 months</i>	<i>3-5 years</i>	<i>0-5 years</i>
	<i>In Thousands (Percent)</i>			
Two-parent families	509.5 (100.0)	476.6 (100.0)	939.9 (100.0)	1926.0 (100.0)
Both full-time	172.1 (33.8)	150.8 (31.6)	310.3 (33.0)	633.2 (32.9)
One part-time	79.2 (15.5)	85.3 (17.9)	187.6 (20.0)	352.1 (18.3)
One not employed	258.1 (50.7)	240.5 (50.5)	441.9 (47.0)	940.5 (48.8)
One-parent families	49.6 (100.0)	55.3 (100.0)	133.9 (100.0)	238.8 (100.0)
Full-time	7.9 (15.9)	18.3 (33.1)	49.4 (36.9)	75.6 (31.7)
Part-time	3.1 (6.3)	4.4 (8.0)	10.8 (8.1)	18.8 (7.7)
Not employed	38.6 (77.8)	32.6 (59.0)	73.7 (55.0)	144.9 (60.7)

Source: Special tabulations from 1988 National Child Care Survey, Statistics Canada. The sample has been weighted to the corresponding population sizes.

The labour force participation of women has clearly increased to the point that the majority of mothers are now employed. At children's ages 0-2, the proportion of mothers in the labour force increased from 32 percent in 1976 to 62 percent in 1991. At ages 3-5, this increase is from 41 percent to 68 percent (Lero *et al.* 1993). However, part-time work and other interruptions in work patterns of one of the parents involves a considerable amount of parental time for childcare.

In order to determine the extent to which parents would like to be working, respondents who were employed and who had someone other than themselves or their spouse look after any of their children while working were asked: "When considering your own needs and those of your family, would you most prefer to work full-time, to work part-time,

or not work at a job or business?" Those eligible to answer this question involved 55.4 percent of the sample or 92.3 percent of employed respondents.

For all persons with children aged 0-5 years who answered this question, 25.0 percent answered "work full-time," 50.8 percent said "work part-time" and 13.0 percent said "not work" (Table 2). Clearly, those desiring to work part-time outnumber those working part-time. Part-time work represents 28.4 percent of the actual work status of these employed respondents, but 50.8 percent of the desired work status. It is also significant that 13.0 percent of employed respondents said they would prefer not to work. Lero *et al.* state that "the majority of employed parents with primary childcare responsibilities expressed a clear preference that differs considerably from their daily experience" (1993, pp. 47-49).

TABLE 2
Preferred Work Status, by Current Work Status and Family Status, for Employed Respondents with Children Aged 0-5 Years

	Preference				Total	Population (1000s)
	Work Full-time	Work Part-time	Not Work	Not Stated		
Current work and family status of DA						
Total	25.0	50.8	13.0	11.3	100.0	671.5
Employed part-time	7.4	69.0	11.8	11.9	100.0	190.5
Employed full-time	32.0	43.6	13.4	11.0	100.0	481.0
Two-parent						
Employed part-time	5.8	70.3	11.7	12.2	100.0	177.4
Employed full-time	29.5	45.5	13.6	11.4	100.0	420.1
Single-parent						
Employed part-time	28.9	51.0	12.4	7.7	100.0	13.0
Employed full-time	48.8	30.4	12.0	8.8	100.0	61.0

Notes:

1. DA: designated adult most responsible for childcare.
2. This question was asked only of respondents who used childcare beyond that provided by spouse.

Source: Special tabulations from the 1988 National Child Care Survey, Statistics Canada. The sample has been weighted to the corresponding sample sizes.

In surveys of life satisfaction, people tend to say that they are satisfied (Atkinson 1980, p. 284). However, these responses on work preferences indicate considerable preferences for alternative arrangements. Among respondents working full-time, only 32.0 percent would prefer to work full-time, 43.6 percent prefer part-time, and an additional 13.4 percent say that they would prefer not to work. The responses for male respondents were rather different, showing five times as much preference for full-time as for part-time work (table not shown). Single parents are also more likely to prefer to work full-time.

This difference between current activity and preferences is not at all as common for those working part-time. For every person in this category who would prefer to work full-time, there are over nine who prefer part-time. Those preferring not to work are more numerous than those preferring to work full-time, among these people working part-time. Once again, the category most likely to desire to work full-time are the single parents. It should be noted that this question was specifically stated in terms of the family context: "when considering your own needs and those of your family."

After the question on preference to change the amount of work they do, employed respondents who depended on someone other than the spouse to look after children while working were asked if they would prefer to change the schedule of hours they are currently working. Over a third expressed an interest in changing their work schedule (data not shown). The most common specific response was "to work only during school hours," amounting to 9.6 percent of all employed respondents (13.2 percent for single parents). That is, among persons employed, especially among those working full-time, there is a considerable preference to either work part-time or to change the work schedule to accommodate children. In effect, only a third of dual-earner couples involved persons who both worked a standard week (Lero *et al.* 1992, p. 78).

Since the determinants of work patterns have been analyzed elsewhere, we will dispense with further tabulations based on data from the Child Care Survey. Nonetheless, it is useful to summarize some of the main conclusions of this literature. The discussion here is largely placed in a family context, as a question of earning and caring roles. For instance, in considering part-time work in contrast to full-time work and housework, Duffy *et al.* (1989, p. 73) refer primarily to the circumstances of family life that effectively limit women's choice. The prevailing conditions that may limit the choice include lack of good childcare alternatives, lack of flexibility in work schedules, and limited opportunities for paid work. Other factors that may push or pull women into or out of paid employment include the need for a second income, the extent of domestic responsibilities, the husband's support for paid employment, and the understanding of maternal roles. The interplay of earning and caring roles can also be seen in the determinants of work interruptions (Cook and Beaujot 1996; Beaujot 1995). In particular, being married and having young children increases the likelihood of interruptions for women and decreases this likelihood for men.

In effect, the Child Care Survey found that in 31.4 percent of cases, the main reason for working fewer than 30 hours per week was "family or personal responsibilities," with another 41.7 percent stating that they did not want full-time work (Lero *et al.* 1992, p. 46). Based on the 1991 Survey of Work Arrangements, Marshall (1994) confirms that, for dual-earner couples, almost a third of mothers of preschool children work part-time in order to "balance work and family responsibilities."

Part-time work is therefore a common outcome of these joint considerations of employment and childcare. The disadvantages of part-time employment may be balanced by the advantages of providing childcare within the family (Folk and Beller 1993; Hofferth and Brayfield 1991). In discussing the "part-time paradox," Duffy and Pupo (1992) also

focus on family considerations, including the childcare alternatives in the absence of affordable and accessible daycare.

Besides these structural considerations, predominant cultural values also play a role. Reflecting on results from an American survey of childcare choices, Folk and Beller speak of the “the continuing strength of traditional values emphasizing the importance of care of young children by family members or close relatives” (1993, p. 156). Duffy and Pupo speak of part-time employment as partly a function of mothers who “reject day care as an unacceptable option,” or of mothers who seek “to be there” for other family members, or “to preserve the home front” (1992, p. 120). At least a quarter of respondents to a 1988 Canadian National Election Study responded that “everyone would be better off if more women were satisfied to stay home and have families,” compared to 40 percent who “were encouraged to have careers of their own” (Lenton 1992, p. 91). Clearly, these attitudes are themselves affected by structural considerations, including questions of the organization of work and the availability of childcare facilities.

CHILDCARE SITUATION OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Having discussed the work patterns of parents of children aged 0-5 years, let us turn to their childcare situations. The 1988 Child Care Survey determined for each child the main form of childcare, other than the designated adult when not working or studying. This is also called the primary supplemental care arrangement, that is supplemental to the designated adult’s care. Given the variety of care situations, Table 3 also presents three sub-totals: group care, care by non-relatives, and care by relatives (child’s other parent, sibling, other relatives, and care by designated adult while working). The two other categories involve “child in school” and “no arrangement beyond the designated adult.” Thus all children 0-5 are included in this table, regardless of the employment

status of parents. The largest category involves “no arrangement beyond the designated adult” at ages 0-17 months, “care by relatives” for children 18-35 months, and “group care” for children 3-5 years.

For all the children 0-5, group care (that is daycare, nursery school, kindergarten, school, and before- and after-school programs) represent 25.6 percent of main care arrangements. Another 20.5 percent of care involves other non-relatives, 29.8 percent involves relatives, and 24.1 percent involves no care arrangement beyond the designated adult.

When considering only employed respondents, care by relatives remains the largest category at each age group (data not shown). Group care is highest at ages 3-5 years, where it involves 29.8 percent of children of employed respondents.

It is clear from a number of sources that group care and other forms of licensed care involve a relatively small proportion of children. For Ontario in 1988, Park (1991, p. 53-54) estimates that 9 percent of children aged ten and under are enrolled either full-time or part-time in some form of licensed childcare. The proportion rises from 2 percent at ages 0-18 months to 24 percent at ages 5-6 years. Considering the numbers of working mothers, Park estimates “that the current system is meeting more than 10 percent but less than 18 percent of the need.” The data from the National Child Care Survey gives somewhat higher figures: 23.5 percent of children 0-5 are in group care or licensed care (Table 3). Burke and Crompton (1991) estimate that 4 percent of children with mothers working were in licensed spaces in 1981, and 18 percent in 1990.

TABLE 3
Main Care by Age of Children, for Children Aged 0-5 Years

	<i>Age of Children</i>							
	<i>0-17 months</i>		<i>18-35 months</i>		<i>3-5 years</i>		<i>0-5 years</i>	
	<i>In Thousands (Percent)</i>							
Total	559.0	(100.0)	531.9	(100.0)	1073.9	(100.0)	2164.8	(100.0)
Group care	19.2	(3.4)	58.3	(11.0)	410.1	(38.2)	487.6	(22.5)
Daycare	15.0	(2.7)	42.7	(8.0)	95.1	(8.9)	152.8	(7.1)
Nursery/K	4.2	(0.8)	15.6	(2.9)	310.1	(28.9)	329.9	(15.2)
B-A school	0.0	(0.0)	0.0	(0.0)	4.9	(0.5)	4.9	(0.2)
Non-relative	123.1	(22.0)	138.5	(26.0)	182.6	(17.0)	444.2	(20.5)
Child's home	41.9	(7.5)	46.5	(8.7)	58.3	(5.4)	146.7	(6.8)
Not licensed	76.0	(13.6)	84.3	(15.8)	115.2	(10.7)	275.5	(12.7)
Licensed	5.2	(0.9)	7.7	(1.4)	9.1	(0.8)	22.0	(1.0)
Relative	197.8	(35.4)	178.4	(33.5)	268.1	(25.0)	644.3	(29.8)
Spouse	43.9	(7.8)	41.8	(7.9)	79.1	(7.4)	164.8	(7.6)
Sibling	0.3	(0.1)	0.8	(0.2)	1.5	(0.1)	2.6	(0.1)
Other relative	134.4	(24.0)	109.0	(20.5)	139.0	(12.9)	382.4	(17.7)
DA at work	19.2	(3.4)	26.9	(5.0)	48.4	(4.5)	94.5	(4.4)
Child in school	0.0	(0.0)	0.0	(0.0)	66.8	(6.2)	66.8	(3.1)
No arrangement	218.9	(39.2)	156.6	(29.4)	146.2	(13.6)	521.7	(24.1)

Notes:

K: kindergarten

B-A: before- and after-school program

DA: designated adult most responsible for child care

Source: Special tabulations from 1988 National Child Care Survey, Statistics Canada. The sample has been weighted to the corresponding population sizes.

Preferred Childcare Arrangements

For one "target child" in each family, it is possible to compare the main method of childcare to the preferred care. Respondents were asked, "Given your current work schedule and your present income, which type of arrangement would you most prefer to use for [child] while you are working?" This question was asked only of employed respondents and it

was not asked if the child was at school during all the hours the respondent was working.

As with work status, there are substantial differences between actual and preferred circumstances (Table 4). Although five percent gave more than one preference, the cases along the diagonal where actual and preferred care match involve only 60 percent

TABLE 4
Preferred Care by Main Care for Children of Employed Respondents, for Children Aged 0-5 Years
(Thousands of Children)

Main Care	Preferred Care								
	Group		Non-Relative		Relative		DA	Total	%
	Day-Care	Nursery School	Child's Home	Other's Home	Spouse	Other			
Group care									
Daycare	91.8	6.0	13.3	7.5	3.0	4.8	1.5	121.3	12.2
Nursery school	6.3	13.6	4.7	3.4	2.2	3.2	3.1	37.7	3.8
Non-relative									
Child's home	9.2	2.7	67.5	9.1	6.0	4.1	0.6	93.9	9.5
Other's home	49.3	10.9	51.3	129.0	13.1	16.2	4.4	264.2	26.7
Relative									
Spouse	20.8	4.2	15.1	17.9	103.8	14.3	2.6	165.6	16.7
Other	33.9	7.8	15.0	14.9	13.8	118.3	3.7	201.0	20.3
DA	10.8	3.6	8.2	6.4	6.1	10.1	71.0	107.5	10.8
Total	222.2	49.5	175.6	188.4	148.5	171.1	88.0	991.3	100.0
%	22.4	5.0	17.7	19.0	15.0	17.3	8.9	100.0	

Notes:

1. Data based on "target child" of employed respondents, and exclude cases where the child is at school during all the hours the respondent is working. Five percent of respondents gave more than one preferred choice.
2. DA: the designated adult or respondent of the survey, who is the person most responsible for childcare in the family.
3. Nursery school includes before- and after-school programs.
4. Non-relatives other than in the child's home includes licensed and non-licensed care.
5. Other relatives includes siblings.

Source: Special tabulations from 1988 National Child Care Survey, Statistics Canada. The sample has been weighted to the corresponding population sizes.

of the sample. For instance, among the 12.2 percent of children for whom daycare was the main care, 75.7 percent prefer daycare, but another 11.0 percent would prefer care by a non-relative in the child's home (i.e., within rows). Across the seven categories that can be matched, two involve 70 percent or more preferring their actual main care: daycare, non-relative in the child's home. Three categories involve some 60 to 65 percent preferring their actual care: designated adult while working, spouse, and other

relative. The other two categories involve less than half preferring their actual main care: non-relatives who are not in the child's home and nursery school.

It is also useful to consider actual care within categories of preferences (i.e., within columns). When the preference is group care, or care by a non-relative in the child's home, more than half are using other forms of care. However, when the preference is care by non-relatives outside of the child's home

or care by relatives, some 70 percent are in fact using this care. The most frequent reasons offered for not using a preferred care was that it was not available, followed by questions of cost or other circumstances (table not shown).

At specific ages, the largest difference is with regard to daycare at 0-17 months where 3.8 percent of children of employed designated adults are using this care, but 14.1 percent would prefer to have their children in daycare (Beaujot and Beaujot 1991, pp. 39, 42, 43). Preference for group care is higher at ages 3-5 years, for children of parents working full-time (32.7 percent), and especially for single parents who are employed full-time (47.0 percent).

The marginals of Table 4 show that preferences exceed actual care in the categories of daycare, care by non-relatives in the child's home, and nursery school. In all other categories, preferences are less common than actual main care. It is also significant that 40 percent of preferred care would be by relatives or the designated adult him/herself, 35 percent by non-relatives, and 25 percent by group care.

Another way to appreciate parental preferences is through the question "what one child-related benefit would you like your employer to provide" and "... your spouse's employer to provide." The pre-coded answers were as follows: workplace daycare, paid maternity/paternity leave, flexible work hours, option of working part-time, other, and none. It is interesting that 22 percent of employed respondents with children 0-5 years indicated that they did not desire any further child-related benefit from their employer (Table 5). The most frequent response involved "workplace day care" which was suggested by some 32 percent of respondents. This is followed by "flexible work hours," "paid parental leave," and "option of working part-time," which together amounted to 35 percent of employed respondents. With regard to the spouse's employer, the most frequent response was "none," followed by "workplace day care," "flexible work hours," and "paid parental leave."

For both the respondent's and the spouse's employer, there is clearly interest in workplace daycare, but an equivalent interest in benefits that would allow parents more flexibility, especially in work hours, parental leave, and the opportunity to work part-time. Lero *et al.* conclude that parents "manage work, childcare and family responsibilities in a variety of ways" (1992, pp. 100-102). This includes, in the case of dual-earner couples, 40 percent of partners providing care at least part of the time while the designated adult was working. At the same time, 32 percent of children under six are in families of the breadwinner-homemaker type (Lero *et al.* 1993, p. 17).

In interpreting these results, it is also important to note that, for all employed designated adults, over half worked for employers who had benefits like extended leave or part-time work, with a quarter to a third having opportunities for flextime or paid family leave, and 6 percent had workplace childcare facilities. On the latter, the proportion using the facilities was considerably lower for reasons of the age of children, affordability, preference, and available spaces (Lero *et al.* 1993, p. 32).

Other results confirm the tensions between work and family. A survey by the Conference Board of Canada found that 66 percent of employees reported at least some difficulty balancing work and their family lives (MacBride-King and Paris 1989). In effect, the National Child Care Survey found that, for children 0-5 years, about a third of respondents indicated "severe tension" and another quarter indicated "moderate tension" on such questions as being tired or overloaded because of the job, or difficulty maintaining the balance between work demands and family responsibilities (Lero *et al.* 1993, p. 44).

TABLE 5
Family-Supportive Work Arrangements Available to Employed Respondents, Arrangements Preferred from Employer, and from Spouse's Employer, for Parents of Children Aged 0-5 Years

	<i>Arrangement Available to DA¹</i>	<i>Arrangement Preferred by DA⁴</i>	<i>Arrangement Preferred for Spouse⁵</i>
	<i>Percent</i>		
Reduced hours			
Part-time work	52.9	10.0	2.1
Job-sharing	23.2	—	—
Flexible work hours	31.1	14.8	16.9
Paid leave for family reasons ²	23.3	6.1	—
Maternity/paternity leave			
UI top-up	15.0	10.5	16.0
Extended leave ³	57.7	—	—
Workplace childcare	5.8	32.1	20.3
Can bring child to work	3.4	—	—
Other	—	4.2	10.1
None	—	22.3	34.7
Population (1000s)	729.8	701.0	1041.7

— value not available

1. Designated adult with primary responsibility for childcare.
2. Short-term leaves when children are sick.
3. Includes both paid and unpaid leaves.
4. One response was sought.
5. One response was sought and blanks were excluded from the total.

Sources: Lero *et al.* (1993, pp. 34, 52) and special tabulations from the 1988 National Child Care Survey, Statistics Canada. The sample has been weighted to the corresponding population sizes.

DISCUSSION

The balance of earning and caring roles clearly involves a variety of situations. Part of this variety surrounds the extent to which parents are in the labour force, and especially the extent to which one parent works part-time. For children under six years of age, the 1988 National Child Care Survey shows that 50.1 percent are living with at least one parent

who is not employed. Besides, 17.1 percent have at least one parent who is employed part-time. Thus one-third (32.7 percent) have either both parents working full-time or are with a lone parent working full-time. Clearly, these work patterns allow considerable care by parents with some additional outside assistance. There are also significant numbers who prefer not to be working full-time. In “considering your own needs and those of your family” the

majority of employed respondents of children 0-5 would prefer either to work part-time (50.8 percent) or not to be employed (13.0 percent). At the same time, there is an important minority (32.7 percent) of children where the parent(s) is(are) working full-time, and 25.0 percent of employed respondents express a preference to work full-time.

Consequently, the majority of care provided to children 0-5 is by the immediate family, typically followed by the extended family of grandparents and other relatives. Not only in terms of actual care, but also in terms of preferences, the broad category of care by relatives of the child, including the spouse of the parent principally responsible for childcare, comprises the largest category. Care by non-relatives in the child's home or in another home typically follows, then group care. Group care becomes a higher proportion of total care in single-parent families, in families where both are working full-time, and especially for children aged 3-5 years. The forms of childcare are most complex when children are aged 3-5 years, where 65 percent of employed respondents use two or more arrangements, and 28 percent use three or more arrangements.

While families look after most childcare needs themselves, respondents also express preferences for more assistance in meeting these needs. For instance, only 43 percent of persons who prefer daycare or nursery school are using such care, mostly for lack of availability and cost. Nonetheless, the preferences relating to children under six years of age imply that 40 percent of preferred arrangements for employed respondents involve care by relatives including the parents of the child, another 35 percent involve care by non-relatives, and the remaining 25 percent involve group care. When the preferences are for care by relatives, over 70 percent are in fact using their preferred care. The responses to questions on child-related benefits also show preferences for those benefits that would give more time for parents to be with their children. Over a third of respondents suggest either paid parental leave, flexible work hours, or the option of working part-time.

Preferences are clearly divided, with some preferring to work less and be more available for their children, while others desire a greater availability of formal care services. There is certainly a desire for more formal care. For employed respondents, daycare is preferred for 22.4 percent of children 0-5, compared to the 12.2 percent of children who are currently in daycare as their main form of care. Nonetheless, in 30 percent of cases, care by the immediate and broader family is both the actual and preferred choice. In addition, care by non-relatives either in the child's home or in another home is typically more common than care in daycare centres, both in terms of preferences and in terms of actual use of care.

This diversity underlies the complexity of childcare and parental benefits as areas of public policy. Leira (1992) discusses these policy questions in terms of the integration of caring and earning in state benefit and entitlement systems. Both earning and caring, or production and social reproduction, are essential to society. However, primacy has been given to wage work over other forms of work. That is, welfare states have attached more benefits to formal employment than to informal caring. There are more employment-related than caring-related benefits and entitlements. While there are parental leaves and family benefits, these are weak in comparison to the unemployment, disability, and pension benefits that are related to employment.

A related question is the extent to which childcare is seen as a private responsibility. Both policy and public opinion are divided on this issue. In a book called *Children First*, Leach (1994) argues for long parental leaves or part-time work as a means of having parents look after their own children. In contrast, Friendly (1994) argues that childcare policy should involve largely publicly available care. Heitlinger (1993) argues for a combination of measures to fund both services and parents.

Childcare policy can support formal childcare systems, care by the parents themselves, and/or in-

formal care including relatives and non-relatives. It can be argued that the diversity of childcare situations across families, and the diversity of preferences for work and childcare arrangements, call for a diversity of approaches. There is a need to enhance the subsidization of childcare services, but also to subsidize the ability of parents to look after their own children, or to use the various informal means that they consider appropriate for childcare support.

It is also useful to recall that other questions should also enter into policy discussions regarding work and childcare. Preferences are clearly important in a policy area that touches so closely on the private side of life. However, other considerations that have not been analyzed here include children's development needs, matters of gender equality, reproduction, and other aspects of family welfare.

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