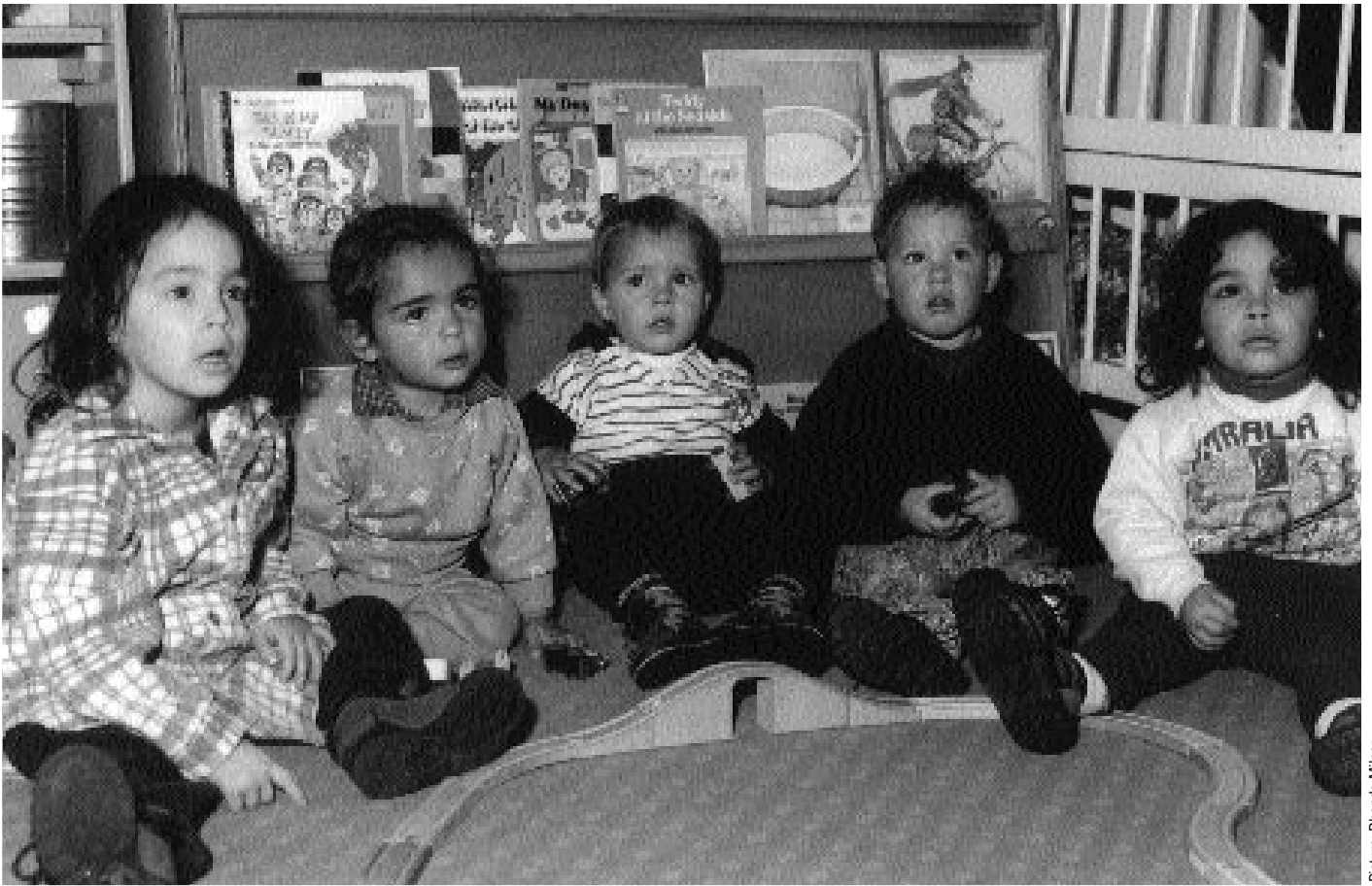


Explaining Urban



Picture: Rhonda Milner

CHRISTINE MILLWARD examines the extent to which demographic, economic, geographic and social situations influence the decisions parents living in urban areas make about the type of child care they use for their young children.

Child care has been a social and political issue of growing importance in Australia. This has largely been due to the increase in dual income families, with rising numbers of mothers entering the labour force. Between 1971 and 1991 the labour force participation rate of all women aged 15 years and older increased from 37 per cent to 52 per cent, and by 1991 about 60 per cent of couple families with dependent children had both parents in the labour force (ABS 1993a). In 1993 nearly half of all Australian mothers with children aged 0-4

years were in the labour force (ABS 1993b), the majority on a part-time basis.

The demand for child care services has thus increased to the extent that between 1984 and 1993 the proportion of children in Australia who used either informal, formal or both types of child care rose from 39 per cent to 49 per cent (ABS 1994). Of significance has been the increase in use of formal types of care (community based or privately run child care centres, pre-school centres, family day care, and centres at parents' workplace). In fact, the proportion of children under 12

years who receive some formal care rose from 12 per cent to 19 per cent between 1984 and 1993 (ABS 1994).

Over the last few years there has been considerable debate about the suitability of formal care for very young children, and about the appropriate distribution and provision of formal care places (Ochiltree 1994; Ochiltree and Edgar 1995; Wangmann 1995). A variety of child care facilities are now funded by the Commonwealth, including long day care centres, family day care, occasional care, and outside school hours care.

Patterns of Child Care

Recent policy changes have included the introduction of federal accreditation of child care centres. The current policy agenda includes consideration of extension of the accreditation process to other forms of care, as well as expansion in the numbers of places available in all types of formal child care. Through the extension of the Child Care Assistance scheme to private child care centres, and the expansion of the number of subsidised child care places, the Commonwealth has already extended its subsidy program to cover most forms of formal care available in Australia. There is now also a non-means-tested cash rebate available for care by registered carers.

However, despite this growing commitment, formal care still accounts for only a minority of the care provided to Australian children: apart from care within the child's own household, informal care involving relatives, friends and neighbours is the most commonly used form of child care for pre-schoolers in Australia (Ochiltree 1994; Millward and Matches 1995; Wangmann 1995).

The purpose of this article is to identify some factors that affect the type of work-related child care used by families for children under school age. The data are drawn from the Australian Living Standards Study (ALSS) described in the introductory article on pages 6–7 of this issue. Because the sample was large and socio-demographically broad, it was possible to identify the sorts of factors influencing the type of work-related child care used by families.

The analysis focuses on children of employed parents because of the priority given by government to child care places for work-related purposes. In this context, 'work-related child care' is defined as care for children while parents are engaged in paid employment (either full- or part-time) – both parents in the case of two-parent families, and one parent in the case of single-parent families.

The analysis focuses on urban families living in nine local government areas in three types of settings – inner urban, middle urban and outer urban. The inner urban areas (Melbourne and South Sydney) comprised two long established inner city local government areas, each containing areas of industry and commerce as well as residential

areas housing families in a wide range of socio-economic situations. The middle urban areas comprised two well established residential local government areas (Box Hill and Ryde), about 15 kilometres from the city centre, in which housing and other development was largely complete. The outer urban areas comprised five local government areas (Berwick, Werribee, Elizabeth/Munno Para, Penrith, and Campbelltown). Located on the metropolitan fringes, at least 30 kilometres from the city centre, these areas were largely still undergoing population growth and urban development, and their populations contained many young families.

Supply of Formal Child Care Places

According to the 1991 Census, the proportions of children of pre-school age (0–4 years) in the population differed within these three types of urban locality (Table 1). The largest proportions of 0–4-year-olds were in the outer urban areas, with a considerably smaller proportion in the middle urban areas, and a smaller proportion again in the inner urban areas. The range of formal child care places available also varied

Table 1 Effective full time child care places* available and 0–4-year-old populations# by ALSS locality types

	Inner Urban	Middle Urban	Outer Urban
Children 0–4 as average percentage of population	5.3 %	6.4 %	10.2 %
Aggregated numbers of 0–4 year old children	7299	8677	49905
Aggregated numbers of effective full-time places:			
– Govt/Community centres	1913	266	1937
– Private centres	434	1041	2231
– Family day care	155	431	1515
Ratio: average places per 100 children aged 0–4 years	34	20	11
<i>Sources:</i>			
* Department of Human Services and Health (March 1994)			
# 1991 Census			

Table 2 Type of care used by type of residential location of children

Type of Care	Inner Urban %	Middle Urban %	Outer Urban %
Someone within the household	14.5	25	23.5
Informal care			
Grandparents	16	19.6	24
Other relatives	0.5	2.4	6
Friend or neighbour	2.7	4.0	8
Babysitter	7.5	10.4	11
Formal Care			
Family day care	5.9	10.4	9
Govt. or community centre	40.6	12.4	10
Private centre	10.2	13.6	10
Parent's workplace	1	2.4	1
Number of children	(187)	(250)	(440)

Source: Australian Living Standards Study (ALSS) 1991–92, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.

by locality. Inner urban areas had the largest proportion of government or community centre places, while middle urban areas had the largest proportion of private centre places, and outer urban areas had the most even mixture of types of formal care places.

Most importantly, as Table 1 shows, the number of formal child care places available per 100 children aged 0–4 years also differed according to locality. The most apparent difference was that the inner city areas had the highest ratio of child care places to children aged 0–4 years, with the potential to accommodate more than one-third of children in day care places within their own residential area. In turn, the middle suburbs with 20 places per 100 children had a better supply of places than outer urban areas generally, where only 11 in every 100 children could be accommodated within their own residential areas.

Types of Child Care Used

Using ALSS data, the analysis was based on 877 children not yet at school whose parents were in paid employment. Children were classified according to the main type (or longest period) of care used weekly.

The categories of care used in analysis were formal, informal, and within household

care. Formal care included family day care, government subsidised long day care centres, privately operated long day care centres, and parental workplace child care. Informal care included care by relatives, friends, neighbours or paid baby-sitters. Within household care was care provided by people living in the child's own household – parents, siblings, grandparents, other relatives, boarders or friends who actually resided with the family.

Three main locational patterns of work-related child care usage were found (Table 2). First, about one-quarter of families living in middle or outer urban suburbs cared for children within their own households, but this occurred less among families living in inner urban areas. Second, families in the outer urban localities were more likely to have their children looked after by relatives, friends or neighbours (38 per cent) than those in middle urban (26 per cent) or inner urban localities (19 per cent). Third, children living in the inner urban localities used less family day care and much more government or community centre based care than those in the other two locality types.

Explaining Type of Care Used

There is a difference between, on the one hand, asking parents for subjective opinions about choice of care *after* arrangements are in place (see Table A in the accompanying boxed inset) and, on the other hand, using objective information about family circumstances to identify which parents would use particular types of care.

The following analysis focuses only on objective factors to explain type of care. The goal is to examine the extent to which different demographic, economic, geographic and social situations affect families' use of child care. To that end, four sets of factors

were introduced as possible influences on determining type of child care used.

Parental background

First, parental backgrounds and family characteristics were considered because such cultural and demographic factors may influence decisions about major daily living arrangements such as care for children while parents are out at work. Several personal and family characteristics might influence choice of care; some may apply because choice may conform to class or cultural norms; others may apply because choice may be constrained by practical circumstances. Parental and family factors tested were education, occupation and English-speaking background of parent(s), age of youngest child, number of children in the family, and family type (headed by a couple or by a single parent).

Proximity factors

Second, potential access of the family unit to public and private child care resources in and around their residential localities was considered, since choice of child care could well be constrained either by lack of availability of one or another source of help or by lack of mobility. So closely was the supply of long day care places linked to type of residential locality (see ratios in Table 1) that the latter was used as a proxy for formal care supply in explaining type of care used by families. Other access factors tested were proximity of maternal and/or paternal mothers (grandmothers) or siblings (aunts or uncles), and number of cars owned by the family.

Employment commitments

Third were the employment commitments and conditions of parents. It is increasingly apparent that many two-parent families need two incomes. Although it is more common for mothers with children of pre-school age to work part-time rather than full-time (Ochiltree 1994; Wolcott and Glezer 1995), their financial contribution to the family can be vital. Also, single-parent families fare much better when the parent (usually mother) is in employment than when she is a social security recipient (Funder 1993). Furthermore, single mothers would prefer to work full-time rather than part-time (Funder and Millward 1993) because of the trade-offs between financial benefits of paid employment and cost of care for children. The question arises of how job characteristics of parents, particularly mothers, impact on the use of child care. Therefore, employment factors tested were parents' working conditions, work location, travel time, shift work involvement and weekly hours of work.

Family income and expenditure

Fourth, the economic or material basis for family living standards was considered. This goes beyond parental working situations to parental and family income on the one hand and family expenses on the other. Child care is a direct cost to parents of earning the family income. Therefore, the level of possible financial assistance from government agencies in meeting that cost is also a factor

in considering access and equity issues for modern families. Although costs of child care and entitlements to government Child Care Assistance may influence choice, these were not considered as additional, independent factors because they are so highly related to family income levels. Therefore the main question of interest was what difference net family income level makes to type of care used.

In preliminary analysis, all of the above factors were examined separately to see if they were related to type of child care used for pre-school-aged children. Several factors bore no relationship so they are not included in the final explanatory model. These were father's employment location and conditions, proximity of children's aunts or uncles, and number of cars owned. In other words, the probability of children being in formal care was not affected by how far away or how many hours per week their father worked, or by having an aunt or uncle living nearby, or by having two cars in the family.

Several further factors were excluded from the final analysis. These were father's occupational level (closely related to mother's), parent's educational attainment (closely related to occupation), and father's English-speaking status (closely related to mother's). In each case, mothers' characteristics were more closely linked to child care arrangements.

Families were compared on their income relative to the Henderson Poverty Line (see Whiteford 1985) rather than on raw dollars. Families with moderate-to-high incomes were compared with those who had moderate-to-low incomes.

The remaining factors, shown in Figure 1, were used to determine their relative importance in explaining the type of child care used by 508 families. The data were aggregated across all the urban localities to allow locality type (that is, levels of formal child care supply) to be used as a factor in explaining

Figure 1 Factors examined in explaining main type of pre-school child care used by families.

Preference: parental or family characteristics

- Mother's occupational group: upper occupational level or lower
- Mother's non-English or English-speaking background
- Couple- or sole parent-family structure
- Other children in family or only one pre-school child
- Age of the youngest child in the family

Access issues

- Availability of a grandmother (within a half hour drive)
- Access to formal care (local supply of formal places)
- Urban grouping (outer, middle or inner urban areas)

Parents' employment characteristics

- Mother's work location (inside or outside residential location)
- Mother's weekly working hours (more or less than 30 hours)

Affordability

- Net family income relative to the Henderson Poverty Line (income is 200% or more versus less than 200% of Poverty Line)

Source: Australian Living Standards Study (ALSS) 1991–92, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.

Table 3 Relative odds of using pre-school formal child care by employed parents (all locality types combined)

Final Explanatory Factors	Odds of formal care
Preference	
Mother having an upper level occupation	*
Mother's English-speaking background	1.40
Being a single mother-headed family	1.60
Not having other children in the family	*
Not having a child under 3 years of age	*
Access	
No grandmother within half hour's drive	1.31
Living in an inner urban locality	1.90
Living in a middle urban locality	1.48
Employment	
Mother not working in residential locality	*
Mother working 30 plus hours per week	1.63
Affordability	
Family income 200% plus of Poverty Line	1.37
Total Number of Families	508

* No significant contribution

Source: Australian Living Standards Study (ALSS) 1991–92, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.

type of care used. Tables 1 and 2 were based on information about individual children. However, the following analysis examines the main type of care used by the family as a unit. This was possible because in almost all cases the same type of care was used for all children of pre-school age in the same family.

Why Formal Care?

The analysis probes the relative importance of factors in determining the use of formal care rather than other forms of care. Table 3 shows the relative odds of using formal care when the stated conditions apply: the larger the odds, the stronger the contribution made by that factor in determining type of care used.

When all factors were considered simultaneously, the most important predictor of formal care was the local supply of long day formal care places: holding constant the effects of the other factors, families living in the inner urban area were nearly twice (1.9) as likely to use formal care as families in outer urban areas. The second most important

predictor was the weekly hours mother worked: if she worked 30 hours or more per week, the family was 1.6 times as likely to use formal care as families where mother worked fewer hours. The third most important predictor was being a single-parent family, who were 1.6 times as likely as couple families to use formal care.

Other significant, but weaker, predictors were: living in a middle urban area (nearly 1.5 times as likely to use formal care as those living in an outer urban area); mother having an English-speaking background (1.4 times as likely to use formal care); having a family income at least 200 per cent of the poverty line (nearly 1.4 times as likely to use formal care); not having a maternal or paternal grandmother living in the same town or suburb, or within a half hour's drive (1.3 times as likely to use formal care).

As can be seen, mother's occupational level, age of youngest child, having other children in the family and proximity of mother's employment were not significant determinants of the use of formal child care rather than informal or within household care.

Why Informal Care?

Use of informal care was also examined, and the strongest determinants of type of care were again local supply of long formal care places and the weekly hours mothers worked. As expected, these operated in the reverse direction from that found in explaining use of formal care: if the family lived in an outer urban locality, it was more than twice (2.15) as likely to use informal carers; if in a middle urban locality, informal care was 1.6 times as likely, and if mother worked less than 30 hours per week the family was also 1.6 times more likely to use informal care.

The only other significant influence on use of informal care also had an inverse effect to that operating for formal care. If a maternal or paternal grandmother lived in the same town or suburb, or within a half hour's drive, informal care was 1.4 times as likely as when there was no 'nearby' grandmother. This is not surprising since around a quarter of all outer urban children not yet at school were minded by grandparents while parents worked.



Satisfaction with Preschool Work-related Child Care

Table A and the following discussion are based on data collected from ALSS families living in inner, middle and outer urban localities.

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As Table A shows, parents were highly satisfied with a wide range of aspects of both informal and formal child care for their preschool-aged children. Parents were particularly satisfied with the carers, the child's happiness and activities, and the respect they received from carers.

Parents using informal care were also extremely satisfied with hours of care available, while those using formal care were extremely satisfied with the training of staff, what children learn, and the extent to which they mix with other children.

Table A also shows that the only notable areas of dissatisfaction concerned the costs of formal care and the arrangements made for sick children for families whose children were in formal care.

Socio-demographic differences

Both for informal and formal types of child care, the outer urban parents were more satisfied with costs, arrangements when children were sick, and available hours of care.

On further investigation, income level made no difference to satisfaction with costs for those using informal care. However, for families using formal care, those with the highest incomes (more than 200 per cent of Henderson Poverty Line) were the least satisfied with costs of care. Levels of Child Care Assistance decrease as income increases. Therefore parents in the highest income brackets may pay the full costs of care which can be quite substantial, especially if two or three children are in formal care.

For users of both informal or formal types of care, satisfaction with arrangements when children were sick, and satisfaction with available hours of care, did not appear to be affected by parents' employment commitments. That is, whether mothers were in part-time or full-time employment made no significant difference to their satisfaction either with arrangements made when children were sick or with the hours of care available to them.

Table A Percentage of parents satisfied with the following aspects of main type of care used by their children, by type of residential locality (based on families).

	Locality Type			Total
	Inner Urban	Middle Urban	Outer Urban	
Informal Care¹	%	%	%	%
Costs	74	72	84	80
The carer(s)	92	94	95	94
Training of staff#	92	90	85	88
Child's activities	85	90	92	90
Arrangements when child sick	75	86	89	86
Child's happiness	100	97	95	96
What the child learns#	87	91	82	85
Mixing with other children#	77	78	81	80
Hours of care available	85	87	96	92
Location of care	86	84	84	84
The respect you receive	97	96	97	97
Understanding of your culture#	100	93	97	97
Number of Families	(36)	(63)	(173)	(272)
Formal Care²	%	%	%	%
Costs	44	44	58	49*
The carer(s)	94	95	95	95
Training of staff	92	88	97	92
Child's activities	89	89	95	91
Arrangements when child sick	52	58	73	61*
Child's happiness	94	90	94	93
What the child learns	88	90	96	92
Mixing with other children	98	93	100	97
Hours of care available	85	84	92	87
Location of care	84	81	87	84
The respect you receive	94	94	98	95
Understanding of your culture#	94	69	90	85
Number of Families	(91)	(73)	(88)	(252)

Notes

1 Informal Care includes: grandparents, other relatives, friends, neighbours or babysitters.

2 Formal Care includes: family day care, government/community-based or private long day care centres or centres at parents' workplaces.

* Notable levels of dissatisfaction.

Very few parents felt these questions were applicable.

Source: Australian Living Standards Study (ALSS) 1991-92, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.

Why Household Care?

Consideration was also given to the determinants of within household care. If the family had an income less than 200 per cent of the poverty line, or if the mother had a non-English-speaking background, they were more than 1.5 times as likely to use within household care as other forms of care for children not yet at school. If the mother worked fewer than 30 hours per week, or worked from or near home, the family was also around 1.5 times as likely to care for children at home than if the mother spent longer hours in paid employment or worked outside her residential locality.

In essence then, mothers working part-time or casual hours, working from or near home, or having a non-English-speaking background, and families with the lowest family incomes (and, consequentially, the highest entitlement to Child Care Assistance) were the most likely to have 'no cost' care provided by someone within their own household – in many cases the working parents themselves.

Discussion

More than anything else, access to formal care places appears to determine the type of child care families use. Therefore, where people lived was very important. Next in importance were the mother's work commitments as indicated by weekly hours of paid employment. Family income and the highly associated educational and occupational characteristics of parents also contributed to decisions about type of care, as did local availability of grandmothers. The age of children and family composition were of less importance.

In large part, parents used available local care outside their home: depending on the specific locality, two-thirds to three-quarters of children were cared for within their own residential localities; in addition many children attended care in adjoining suburbs just outside their local government areas (Millward and Matches 1995).

Such local usage suggests that employed parents of young children who live in outer regions might use more formal child care if it was accessible. While it is true that families with higher incomes used formal care more than informal care, and there was less satisfaction with the cost of formal care (Table A in the accompanying boxed inset), cost itself did not seem much of an inhibitor; about half the families using informal care had weekly costs of around the same amounts as many using formal care (Millward and Matches 1995). Also, many more outer urban families qualified for higher levels of government Child Care Assistance than their inner or middle urban dwelling counterparts, which would facilitate the use of local centre based care if it was readily available.

An increase in the number of subsidised child care places in fringe suburbs could be particularly beneficial to single mothers, whom some studies have shown to need either full-time work or a full pension (with all the accompanying entitlements) because part-time work is not financially viable for them (Funder 1993; Funder and Millward 1993; Millward and Funder 1993).

The analysis has shown that families where mothers worked fewer hours, had less access to local formal care places, and had a mother or mother-in-law reasonably close at hand tended to use informal rather than formal care. The extent to which mothers may have worked part-time because of the lack of local formal care places was not a question directly addressed by this analysis. However, using ALSS data, Brownlee (1995) associated the care demands of young children with 'lower employment population ratios' for mothers and found that having children under school age restricted access to paid employment for women, especially in some of the outer urban areas surveyed. In earlier ALSS reports, McDonald (1993a,b) found that about 15 per cent of middle and outer urban mothers who were not in paid work or who were only working part-time said this was due to 'problems with child care'. However, it is evident that many mothers with preschool-aged children prefer to work part-time (Wolcott and Glezer 1995).

The importance of extended family support should not be overlooked regarding child care. Families in the outer urban areas had more relatives living nearby and so perhaps had more opportunity to receive informal care for their children (Millward 1995). However, informal care was certainly linked to part-time and not full-time employment for mothers.

Nevertheless, the findings suggest that a range of alternatives in work-related care for children under school age is generally desirable. For example, families in middle urban localities had slightly fewer sources of informal care by way of relatives than outer urban families, yet middle urban residents tended to use a greater variety of care types (including formal centres) than their outer urban counterparts. Inner urban families tended to have the fewest extended family members available, but also used child care provided by friends and neighbours the least.

Conclusions

The conclusions are presented as a general guide to understanding the factors associated with type of child care used by urban working parents, with a view to assisting future needs-directed planning of children's services.

Australia wide, the use of, and demand for, work-related child care has steadily increased over the past few decades, largely attributable to the increase in the proportion of women in paid employment. For families to manage financially, mothers' paid employment is becoming increasingly important. While mothers in couple-headed families might have more flexibility regarding working hours and sharing child care with their partners, it is the case that single mothers need to work essentially full-time hours to improve their financial position. Women in full-time employment were more likely than those working part-time to use formal child care, and their children, on average, spent more weekly hours in care.

In the present social climate, the attainment of permanent employment positions

with security, entitlements and superannuation provisions is likely to be sought by many mothers. Financial security is essential for the ever increasing number of single mothers, who are often principal family breadwinners. Therefore, more flexible child care facilities could benefit the economic position of many families, but especially of mothers and their children living in poorly supplied outer urban communities.

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Reasons for Using Formal or Informal Preschool Work-Related Care

Table B and the following discussion are based on data collected from ALSS families living in inner, middle and outer urban localities.

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Informal Care Users

Table B shows that parents agreed most with the following reasons for using informal care (outside the household): the present carer offered to look after the child; they did not want the child looked after by people they did not know; a familiar place was best for this child. Nearly two-thirds who agreed that a familiar place was best were referring to a child who was two years of age or younger, and in 40 per cent of these cases the child was aged one year or younger.

Parents could select as many items as they liked, but it should be noted that their reasons for type of care used are subjective opinions and pertain to the circumstances of the care itself. This differs from the explanatory factors presented in the main article (Figure 1) which measure the objective circumstances of families as they relate to type of care used.

Table B also shows that few parents agreed that their choice of informal care was influenced by formal care being of poor quality or not existing in the area. However, over one-third agreed that formal care was too inflexible, while a quarter agreed that it was too hard to organise.

Socio-demographic differences

Outer urban parents were the most likely to agree that the present carer offered to look after the child (two-thirds). They were also most likely to agree that they would not be able to afford other (formal) types of care (more than one-third). Where the child came from a low income family (120–149% of the Henderson Poverty Line) parents were also most likely to agree that they could not afford formal care; here it is noted that families in outer urban areas had, on average, lower household incomes than those in middle and inner urban areas.

On the other hand, middle urban parents were most likely

to agree that they did not want their child looked after by people they did not know, or that they did not know much about other (formal) types of care. Middle urban parents were also most likely to agree that formal care was too hard to organise. Again, employment commitments did not seem to affect opinions, with mothers in part-time or in full-time employment, and using informal child care, being equally likely to agree that formal care was too hard to organise.

Formal Care Users

Table B also shows that parents were most likely to agree with the following reasons for use of formal care: the hours and location were convenient; the family could afford it; formal care prepared the child for school; it was flexible about times; there was no friend or relative available to provide informal care. For half of the children, parents agreed that the formal care used was close to their workplace. About half the parents agreed that there was little choice of care at the time. In only 30 per cent of cases did eligibility for government subsidies influence use of formal care.

It is interesting to note the factors that were not important in the decision to use formal care. Few parents acknowledged that the child-specific issues of child's age, being with their friends, or going to school with the same children had influenced their decision.

Socio-demographic differences

Inner urban parents were the most likely to agree that the formal care used was recommended by someone. On the other hand, outer urban parents were the most likely to agree that formal care prepared the child for school. This is interesting to note since, on further investigation, parents with the lowest educational level (Year 10 or less) were also the most likely to agree with this.

Outer urban parents were also the most likely to agree that being able to afford formal care and receive a government subsidy influenced their use of formal rather than informal child care. While income level did not affect judgements about formal care affordability, it did affect judgements about ability to gain subsidies. On further investigation, low and middle income families were likely to agree that subsidisa-

tion of costs was a factor in choosing formal care, while the highest income group (more than 200% of Henderson Poverty Line) did not.

Finally, outer urban parents were the most likely to agree that the flexibility of formal care was a factor in choosing it. Again, mother's employment commitments (whether full-time or part-time) appeared to have no systematic effect upon this issue.

Table B Percentage of parental agreement with the following reasons for using informal or formal care for their child, by type of residential locality (based upon children)

	Locality Type			Total
	Inner Urban	Middle Urban	Outer Urban	
Why Use Informal Care?	%	%	%	%
No formal care in the area	5	0	11	8
Someone in household could do it	31	29	22	25
Don't want children looked after by strangers	33	53	44	44
Poor quality care in centres available	7	3	10	8
Present carer offered to do it	50	59	66	62
Can't afford other types of care	26	16	37	31
Don't know much about other types of care	14	23	15	17
Familiar place is best for children of this age	56	63	61	61
Formal care too inflexible about times and days	40	31	38	37
Formal care too hard to organise	21	30	18	21
Number of Children	(42)	(70)	(210)	(322)
Why Use Formal Care?	%	%	%	%
No relative or friend available	60	70	58	62
Prepares child for school	60	55	77	65
We can afford it	69	67	80	72
We can get government subsidy	24	22	43	30
Convenient hours of care	83	86	89	86
Convenient location	86	83	83	84
Flexible about times	53	56	74	62
Recommended by someone	44	27	31	34
Little other choice at the time	51	47	50	50
Child's age was a problem with other places	24	18	20	21
Close to parent's work place	54	48	52	52
Child is with her/his friends	38	46	43	42
Child will go to school with the same children	25	16	21	21
Number of Children	(105)	(90)	(109)	(304)

* Parents could agree or disagree with as many items from these lists as they liked.

Source: Australian Living Standards Study (ALSS) 1991–92, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.