



National Survey of Early Care & Education

Parent Work Schedules in Minnesota Households with Young Children in 2019

INTRODUCTION

Parents' work schedules influence the use of public and private early care and education (ECE) and non-parental care services, as well as families' work-life balance and well-being. When and how much parents work affects their earnings, their ability to care for their families, and their likelihood of furthering their education or training to help them in the workplace, among other things. The work schedules of parents with young children (under 5 years old) are sensitive to and intertwined with their child care decisions, with non-standard hours of employment and irregular work schedules posing particular challenges for child care.

This research snapshot describes work schedules of parents of young children in Minnesota during a reference week in 2019. This report describes how work schedules differ for households of different income levels; between one-parent and two-parent families; and in households where neither, one, or both parents work. One group of particular focus is "fully-employed" households; these are households where all parents work—a one-parent/one-worker household or a two-parent/two-worker household.

The 2019 National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) is a set of four integrated, nationally representative surveys conducted in 2019. These were surveys of: 1) households with children under 13, 2) home-based providers of ECE, 3) center-based providers of ECE, and 4) the center-based provider workforce. Together, they characterize the supply of and demand for early care and education in America and permit better understanding of how well families' needs and preferences coordinate with providers' offerings and constraints. The study is funded by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This snapshot uses data for children in the 2019 Household Survey in the state of Minnesota to see how parental work impacts the need for child care in different family situations.



Because this report is focused on how children experience their parents' work schedules, this analysis presents child-level estimates describing the parental work schedules of children under 5 years old.¹

A few key findings about the work schedules of parents of young children include:

- Minnesota households with one working parent work on average similar numbers of hours per week whether they are in single-parent households or households with one-working parent and one non-working parent.
- Among two-parent Minnesota households with only one working parent (and one non-working parent), the sole working parent worked more hours per week compared to households with two working parents.
- The number of hours per week that both working parents in fully-employed, two-parent households were simultaneously working per week was fewer than the number of hours worked by the sole working parent in one-parent, fully-employed households.
- Across fully employed, one- and two-parent households in Minnesota, each parent works on average similar numbers of non-standard work hours each week, but two-parent households have fewer non-standard hours when both parents are working.
- Single parents are more likely to need child care during non-standard hours to cover parental work time.

Adults participating in the 2019 National Survey of Early Care and Education reported on their own and their spouse/partner's work schedules during the week prior to their interview.² The data allow researchers to count, for each hour of the week (say, Monday 10–11am), the number of parents in each household who were in work-related activities. This research snapshot reports information from these data about each parent's work schedule in households with young children.

Tables 1 and 2 describe some characteristics, by household income, of the approximately 300,000 Minnesota children under 5 years old³ living with one or two parents in 2019. Household income is classified in a ratio to the 2018 federal poverty level (FPL), which was \$20,780 for a single parent with two children and \$25,100 for two parents with two children.

¹ For example, a parent with three children under 5 is counted three times in these estimates, while a parent is counted once in the estimates if s/he has one child under 5.

² NSECE data on schedules include time spent on work-related activities such as work, schooling, job training, and commuting time between these activities and home. All of these activities are included in work schedules in this analysis; the number of hours spent in school or training is very small and does not affect estimates reported here.

³ The 2019 sample includes children under 5 years of age (0–59 months) as of September 2019, recognizing the most common age for kindergarten enrollment.

- Almost one-fifth (18 percent) of young children in Minnesota lived in single-parent households in 2019.
- The majority of young children in Minnesota (about 76 percent) lived in two-parent households with incomes greater than or equal to 200% the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). (See Table 1.)
- About a third of all children under 5 years old in Minnesota (36 percent) had at least one parent who did not have any work-related activities in the prior week⁴ (see Table 2). These could be children in two-parent households with zero or one working parent or one-parent households with a non-working parent.

Table 1. Children in One- or Two-parent Households, by Household Income

Income	Number of Children with One Parent in the Household	Number of Children with Two Parents in the Household	Percent of Children with One Parent in the Household	Percent of Children with Two Parents in the Household
All Children	52,700	248,000	18.0%	82.0%
< 200 FPL	46,000	19,300	71.0%	29.0%
>=200% FPL	**	228,000	**	**

**Suppression of estimate to protect against disclosure.

Note: Statistics calculated for children under 5 years living in households (HH) with one or two parents. Income levels expressed as ratio to 2018 Federal Poverty Level (FPL). All estimates are child-weighted; a parent with more than one child under 5 years of age is counted once for each child.

Source: 2019 NSECE Household Survey, Minnesota households

Table 2. Percentage of Children Living with at Least One Parent Who Had Zero Hours of Work-related Activities in the Prior Week, by Household Income

Income	Percent of Children
All Children	36.0%
< 200% FPL	86.0%
>=200% FPL	22.0%

Note: Statistics calculated for children under 5 years living in households with one or two parents and show presence of parents within the household having no work-related activities during the prior week. Income levels are expressed as a ratio to 2018 Federal Poverty Levels (FPL).

Source: 2019 NSECE Household Survey, Minnesota households

⁴ Non-working parents had no work-related activities in the reference week. They are generally not employed or in the labor force, but some could have been on leave from a job, searching for a job, or disabled during that week. Students and trainees are counted as having work-related activities and therefore “working” in the reference week.

Table 3 shows the total number of hours all parents in a household spent in work-related activities during the week. Two-parent/two-worker households log on average 85 hours of work-related activity each week. This implies that each of the two parents is working on average 42.5 hours per week. Single-parents who work and the sole working parent in a two-parent household work, on average, a similar 49 and 48 hours per week, respectively. These single working parents and sole working parents in a two-parent household work, on average, more than each working parent in two-parent, fully employed households.

Table 3. Average Total Hours of Parental Work in Prior Week, by Number of Parents and Workers

Number of Parents and Workers	Average Weekly Hours
All children in households with working parents	74
Children with 1 parent, 1 working	49
Children with 2 parents, 1 working	48
Children with 2 parents, 2 working	85

Note: Statistics calculated for children under 5 years living in households (HH) with one or two parents reporting work-related activities in prior week.

Source: 2019 NSECE Household Survey, Minnesota households

Table 4. Average Total Parental Non-Standard Work Hours in Prior Week, by Number of Parents and Number Who Are Working

Number of Parents and Workers	Average Hours
All children in households with working parents	17
Children with 1 parent, 1 working	11
Children with 2 parents, 1 working	9
Children with 2 parents, 2 working	20

Note: Statistics calculated for children under 5 years living in households (HH) with one or two parents reporting work-related activities in prior week.

Source: 2019 NSECE Household Survey, Minnesota households

Table 4 shows the total number of parental non-standard work hours by number of parents and number of workers. Following previous studies, this report defines non-standard hours as times outside of Monday through Friday 8 am through 6 pm—that is, early morning, evenings, nights, and weekends. Workers in fully employed households (such as workers in single-parent households or both working parents in two-parent households) each work, on average, similar numbers of non-standard hours. Single parent workers work an average 11 non-standard hours per week; in two-

worker households, the two parents work a combined average 20 non-standard hours (about twice as much). Tables 3 and 4 together indicate that many parents work a combination of standard and non-standard hours. For example, a parent who works from 10 am to 7 pm on a weekday works 8 standard hours and one non-standard hour that day. Another way to combine standard and non-standard hours of work-related activity would be to work a standard 9-to-5 week and take an evening college course.

Not only do the number of work hours matter, it's also important whether a child experiences a time when all parents in the household are at work. This could suggest that child care may be needed at these times. This is especially true for parents of young children, who usually require non-parental care arrangements when all parents are at work.⁵ Tables 5 through 7 explore features of hours in the prior week that all parents in the household were in work-related activities at the same time.

Table 5. Average Number of Hours per Week All Parents in Household Are Working, by Number of Working Parents and Workers

Number of Parents and Workers	Average Hours
All children in fully employed households	27
Children with 1 parent, 1 working	49
Children with 2 parents, 2 working	26

Note: Statistics calculated for children under 5 years living in fully employed households (HHs where ALL parents in the HH have some work-related activities). Hours pertain to week prior to interview.

Source: 2019 NSECE Household Survey, Minnesota households

In a single-parent, fully-employed household, any time that the parent is in work-related activities is a time when all parents in the household are at work. If a household is not fully employed, there is no time during the week that all parents in the household are at work. The situation is more complex in fully employed, two-parent households. In these households with two working parents, at one extreme, if both parents worked exactly the same schedules, then a workweek with 80 hours of parental work would translate to 40 hours per week when they were both working at the same time. On the other extreme, if the two parents had completely different work schedules, there would be zero hours when they were working at the same time, despite working 40 hours each. Instead, Table 5 shows that, in two-parent, fully employed households, both parents were at work—at the same time—an average 26 hours per week. This indicates that work schedules of working parents from

⁵ In some cases, parents work or attend school at home or in a setting where the child can be with them.

two-parent, fully-employed households were staggered in such a way as to fall between the two possible extremes.

Table 5 documents that two-parent, fully-employed households work staggered schedules so that the time that all parents are at work is much less than for one-parent, fully-employed households. This likely means that one-parent, fully-employed households need more hours of non-parental care on average to support parental-work-related activities than do two-parent, fully-employed households.

Table 6 explores this pattern further by looking at the percent of non-standard hours among all hours when all parents are at work. In single-parent working households, the parent works on average 49 hours per week, of which 17 percent (8 hours) are non-standard. In the average two-working-parent household, the parents have 26 hours when they are both at work, and 11 percent of those (3 hours) are non-standard.

Table 6. Percent of Non-Standard Hours Among All Hours That All Parents in the Household Are in Work-Related Activities, by Number of Working Parents and Workers

Number of Parents and Workers	Percent of Hours
All children in fully employed households	12.0%
Children with 1 parent, 1 working	17.0%
Children with 2 parents, 2 working	11.0%

Note: Statistics calculated for children under 5 years living in one-worker/one-parent or two-worker/two-parent households. Source: 2019 NSECE Household Survey, Minnesota households

One example of staggered schedules is when parents from two parent, fully-employed households both have work-related activities over the course of the week, but at no time are they both at work at the same time. This can happen, for example, if one parent works only nights or weekends, while the other only works standard-hour shifts.

Table 7 focuses only on children in two-parent households, including those with non-working parents. That is, Table 7 includes two-parent, fully-employed households as well as two-parent households where only one parent works. Among these children, 31 percent never had a time in the prior week that both parents were working at the same time. This could be either because one parent does not work *or* because parents in fully employed households stagger their work schedules. However, this varied by income; in households at less than 200% FPL, 86 percent of children never had both parents at work at the same time, whereas 26 percent of children in higher-income households never had both parents work at the same time. The difference seems primarily due to the higher proportion of lower-income families with at least one non-working parent. (See Table 2.)

Table 7. Percent of Children from Households with Two Parents Where Both Parents Were Never at Work at the Same Time (Includes Non-working Parents), by Household Income

Income	Percent of Children
All Children	31.0%
< 200% FPL	86.0%
>=200% FPL	26.0

Note: Statistics calculated for children under 5 years living in households with two working parents, but zero hours when both parents are working. Income levels expressed as ratio to 2018 Federal Poverty Levels (FPL).

Source: 2019 NSECE Household Survey, Minnesota households

CONCLUSION

This snapshot uses detailed work hours data from the 2019 NSECE to compare parental work schedules for a representative sample of young children in Minnesota. Some overall observations include:

- Single parent workers and sole workers in two-parent/one-worker households each work similar numbers of standard hours weekly, while the average parent in a two-parent/two-worker household works fewer hours weekly.
- While all groups in the sample work a similar number of non-standard hours weekly, two-parent workers can stagger schedules to greatly reduce the number of hours that both parents in the household are simultaneously at work.
- Although workers in two-parent, fully-employed households and single-parent, sole worker households work a similar average number of non-standard hours each week, children in two-parent households are less likely to experience non-standard hours when all parents in the household are at work.

The work schedules of fully employed households can provide information about when and who may require non-parental care to support parental employment. Single-parent workers have more hours per week that they need non-parental care to support parental employment than do two-worker households. These tabulations do not indicate how much control these families may have over their work schedules. The need for non-parental care to support parental employment during non-standard hours occurs primarily for single-parent workers.