



# NTH Child Care: Perspectives from Parents, Providers, Policymakers, and Employers in the Context of National Findings

**Diane Schilder (based on studies with: Gina Adams, Cary Lou, Dawn Dow, Justin Doromal, Eve Mefferd, Jonah Norwitt, Peter Willenborg, and Heather Sandstrom)**

# Overview

- Research questions
- Methods
- Findings

# Research Questions

## Parent questions:

1. What types of care do families use during nontraditional-hours?
2. What are family perspectives about different types of care during nontraditional hour time periods?
3. What do parents say about quality of care during nontraditional hours?

## Employer, community leader, and policymaker questions:

4. What are employers', community leaders' and policymakers' perspectives about NTH child care?

## Provider questions:

5. What do providers think about NTH child care?

# Methods

Since 2018, Urban researchers have led four large studies exploring nontraditional hour child care. Combined methods include:

- Analysis of data from 2019 **National Survey of Early Care and Education** public use files (Cary Lou) as well as data from the **American Community Survey** and the **Survey of Income and Program Participation** (Cary Lou, Peter Willenborg, and Schilder)
- **Interviews and focus groups** with over 100 people
  - Policymakers, providers, employers and parents
  - From Connecticut, Oklahoma, Texas, and Washington, DC (Sandstrom, et. al., 2018; Schilder, et al., 2023 and 2022; Adams, et., al., 2021 and 2022; Dow, et. al. 2023)
- **Survey of parents** (translated into Spanish) in Austin, Texas (Dow, et. al., 2023; Schilder, et., al., 2023)

# Definitions

- **Nontraditional hours (NTH):** 6:00 pm-6:59 am weekdays and anytime Saturday or Sunday; key informants, employers and parents also pointed to the need for intermittent, ad hoc, holiday, and seasonal care.
- **Potential NTH demand/need:** Focus on children below age 6 with [all parents working](#) or commuting during at least one hour during a weekday NTH time period or any time on weekends. In 2 parent families, both parents had to work the same weekday NTH or during the weekend for a child to be counted as having parents working during NTH.
- **Parent ratings and preferences:** NSECE asked parents to rate different types of care. Our team asked parents what type of care they would recommend to other parents needing care at different specific NTH time periods.

# Parent Findings

# Parent's Perspectives: Who Participated in Our Studies?

- Obtained survey, focus group, and survey data from nearly 100 parents working nontraditional hours
- Varied locations: rural southeastern Oklahoma, urban Washington, DC, suburban and urban areas around New Haven, Connecticut, Austin, Texas
- Racially and ethnically diverse – African-American/Black, Asian-American, Latina, Native American, and White
- Wide variety of nontraditional hour jobs, such as in restaurants, grocery stores, drug stores, health care, medical billing, veterinary services, hair care, and retail stores
- Wide variety of work schedules
  - evenings, overnight, weekends, and in the early mornings and many during traditional hours
  - some had a set, stable schedule while others had a schedule that changed frequently

# What Types of NTH Care Did Parents Report Using

## ■ **Combination of care used by most parents**

- Many used a **combination** of types of care for different time periods.
  - About **two-thirds had traditional hour care needs** and needs for NTH care and used licensed care during traditional hours (in Texas sample only where we probed for this).
  - Most who used licensed care for traditional hours told us they **relied on family, friend and neighbor care** or other unlicensed, more informal care for late hours, overnight, or very early in the morning.
- For parents with **late evening, overnight and very early morning** child care needs:
  - Most rely on family, friends or neighbors;
  - Some use family child care; and
  - Only a handful use center-based care during these periods consistent with analyses of NSECE and supply data in selected locations

## ■ **Some only used only one type of care**

- Mostly care provided by family during any time period or only family child care.



# Parents' NTH Needs and Priorities

## Parents' needs and priorities varied by time period

- Desire for extending care by a couple hours when children were also in traditional-hour care
- Nearly all reported care in home-based settings is best when children are sleeping
  - Prioritize sleeping in own bed
  - Sleeping in bed in another's home is second priority
  - Important for children to have non-interrupted sleep
- Requires trusted caregiver for late night, overnight and very early morning care

# Parents' Perspectives about NTH Quality

- **Parents perspectives about quality child care varies based on time period. Parents described quality NTH care is defined as...**
  - Safe, uninterrupted sleep in child's own bed
    - “Quality is different if the care is overnight”
  - Supports child development and routines
  - Reliable and consistent with variation in ratings of reliability based on type of care
    - “[A licensed child care center] would be reliable.”
- Some told us they prefer care during the day that focuses on growth and early learning.
- **Trust, safety, respect, and cultural competency especially important for NTH care**
  - Many parents participating in the Austin study told us cultural competence especially important for NTH care but also many noted limited supply of licensed NTH care

## Parent perspectives on care varies by time period

*"[I...] want stable licensed child care from 6am-7pm/8pm and then overnight would prefer a relative caregiver or someone who they have a close personal trust (child sleeping in own bed)"*

# Equity Consideration

- Workers with lower incomes told us they have less control over their schedules and are juggling multiple responsibilities
- Many are working, in school and need care for non-work related reasons
- Lack of available culturally competent and congruent care reported by most parents who participated in Austin study.
- Lack of reliable NTH care limits economic opportunities and mobility
  - Disproportionate impact on the economic wellbeing of low-income, Black, Latinx/Hispanic, and immigrant families who are more likely to work NTH as a result of ongoing and historical structural barriers to economic and educational opportunities
- Pre-pandemic study in Washington, DC led by Sandstrom also found inadequate supply of licensed care and since pandemic many providers across locations told us they are reducing hours

# Parents' Recommendations

- **Care in the child's home** by a relative or friend first choice, for most NTH time periods especially when the child was sleeping, for early morning or evening meals and bedtime routines.
- If young children are in a licensed family child care home or center during the day, **extending the hours slightly right before or after traditional hours** benefits the child and family.
- The child care arrangements parents preferred for **weekends care depends** on what the child was doing during the week
  - Many told us home-based care is better on the weekends for children in licensed child care during the week
  - Conversely, many said care involving stimulating activities on weekends better for children who were at home during the week

# Parent's Perspectives: What They Recommended...

Across racial and ethnic groups, and across locations:

- Most parents **recommend care that supports child development and offers stability and security**
- A majority told us caregivers they don't know well should have some training in topics like CPR, first aid, or child development. However, many told us training is necessary for family or friends.

# Parent's Perspectives

- Consistent, reliable child care is necessary for parents to reliably work or go to school.
- The cost of child care as an important issue:
  - NTH costs range widely
  - None of the parents in our studies told us they use subsidies for NTH
  - About two-thirds told us they use subsidies or free or low-cost care such as Head Start or state-provided prekindergarten for the care during traditional hours
- Need for multiple arrangements and patching together less than ideal child care reported by many parents

## Parent perspective on nontraditional-hour care

*“I want to make sure that while I’m working late and stressed as I may be, I know that my stress is not about: Are my kids taken care of properly? Are they doing what I want them to do?”*



## Parent perspective on work and NTH child care

*“ Sometimes it feels like I'm choosing between my kid and my career. I don't really want to work as a [low-paid job in a caring profession at night], but it's one of the only things that works with my daughter's schedule. ”*

# Community Leader, Employer and Policymaker Findings

# Community Leader, Policymaker, and Employer Perspectives

- Community leaders, policymakers and employers (who participated in a few studies) told us:
  - Lack of available nontraditional-hour child care has adverse effects in terms of employee ability to work during NTH hours
  - Lack of NTH child care limits the pool of people who can reliably work during nontraditional hours.

# Employer Perspectives

- Employers from Austin, Texas told us they believe employers can play a key role in addressing the NTH child care by. . .
  - partnering with child care providers and supporting shared services alliances
  - creating work schedules with parents' caregiving needs in mind
  - working with local leaders to support policies that provide public policies and funding for nontraditional-hour child care

## Community leader perspective about NTH child care

*“I do work with a quite a few families who are unable to pursue other job opportunities or continue with schooling because they don't have the [NTH child care] support that they need for their child”  
- director of a community-based organization*

# Employer perspective about NTH child care

*“Some staff have kids in [child] care, but the **cost of [NTH child] care is prohibitive**. You can’t have two kids in [child] care with [a salary of] \$18/hour. Some staff drive kids 30 minutes in the opposite direction to take a kid to their parent’s house because they can’t afford to take the kid to [child] care in the area.” – Restaurant owner*

# Provider Findings

# Provider Perspectives

The cost of expanding hours of care usually outweighs the financial benefits.

- Several center directors told us they tend to have less flexibility in expanding schedules compared with home-based providers because fixed operating costs are high.
- Home-based providers who operate alone or with only one assistant, told us they face challenges extending hours because of overtaxed staff and extremely tight budgets.

**Unregulated and home-based providers told us they face challenges:**

- A lack of information, stringent requirements, and historical and ongoing economic inequalities make it harder for unregulated family members, friends, and smaller home-based providers to access public funding for nontraditional-hour child care.
- Many are not aware of how to access subsidies for FFN care.



# Provider Perspectives

The cost of expanding hours of care usually outweighs the financial benefits.

- Several center directors told us they tend to have less flexibility in expanding schedules compared with home-based providers because fixed operating costs are high
- Home-based providers who operate alone or with only one assistant, told us they face challenges extending hours because of overtaxed staff and extremely tight budgets
- Many told us they have reduced hours since the start of the pandemic because of work shortages and challenges with full enrollment for the entire time they are operating

# Provider Perspectives

*Many child care providers reported an interest in expanding hours on either side of the traditional workday and said this would be more feasible for them than operating late into the evening and overnight. – Austin study*

# Context

# Context

Previous analyses of NSECE, ACS and SIPP addressed the following questions:

1. What are the characteristics of families who use NTH care?
2. What is the potential demand for NTH child care?
3. When do families need NTH child care and how much time do families with NTH child care needs use care?

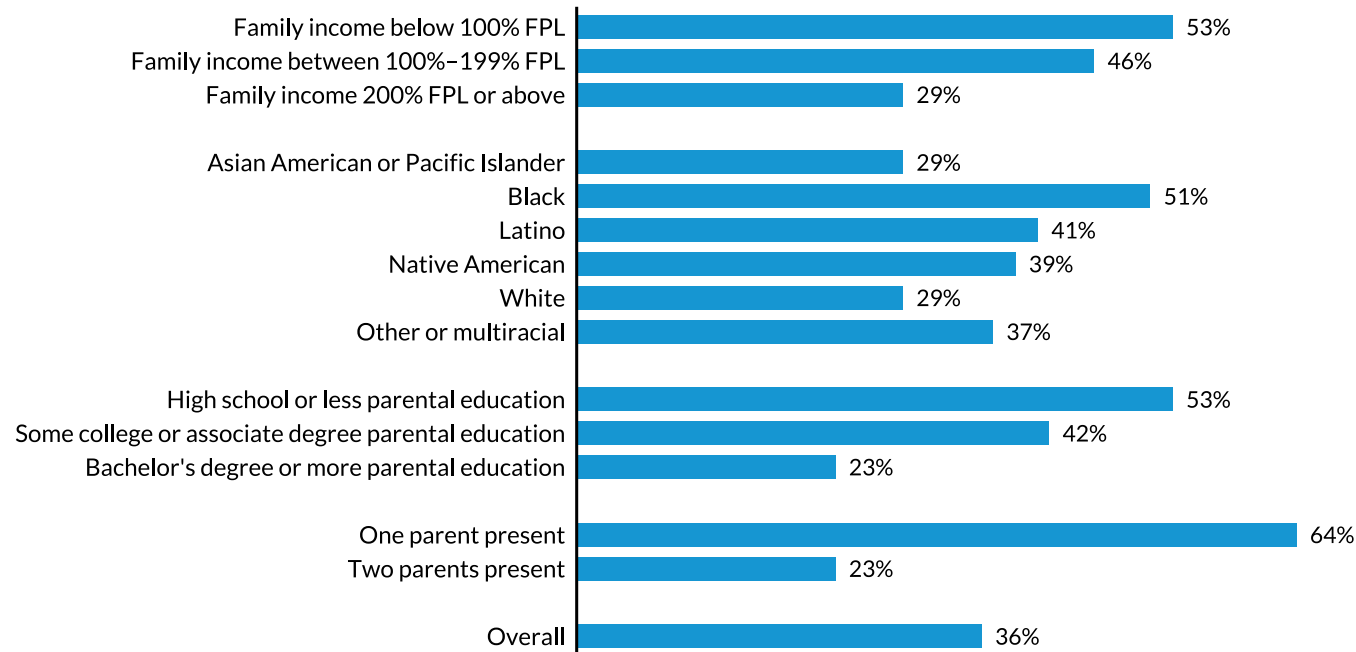
# Methods

Research teams have analyzed data from:

- The American Community Survey
- The Survey of Income and Program Participation
- 2019 National Survey of Early Care and Education public use files

# Families Facing Structural Barriers to Opportunity Most Likely to Need NTH Care

Share of United States Children Younger than Age 6 in Working Families that have NTH-Working Parents, by Selected Personal and Family Characteristics



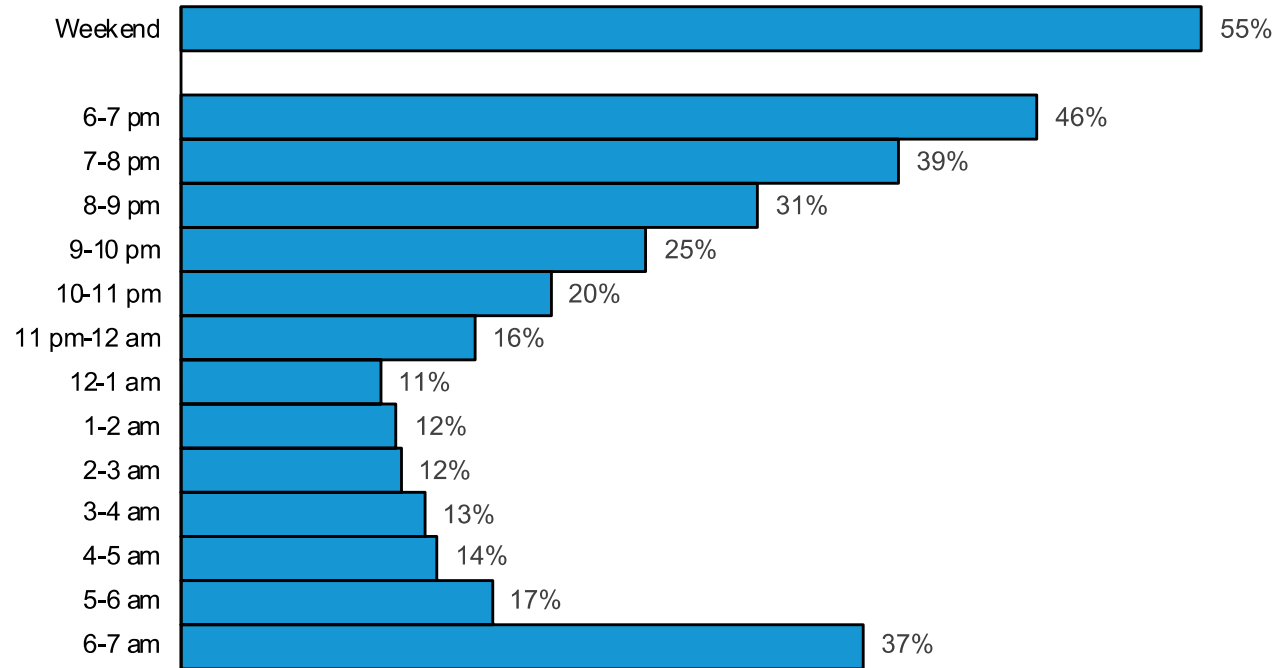
**Sources:** Urban Institute analysis of Census Bureau microdata from the 2015–19 American Community Survey downloaded from IPUMS-USA and the 2016 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

**Notes:** FPL = federal poverty level (poverty thresholds). For family income, a small group of children living with unrelated household members or in group quarters falls into a not applicable category. Poverty status is not calculated (and not shown here) for these children. The other or multiracial group includes children identified as another race outside these categories or more than one race. Parental education level reflects the highest level of attainment between both parents for children living with two parents. A small group of children not living with their parents falls into a no parents category (not shown here).

# Potential Demand for NTH Care Varies by Time

**Young Children in NTH Care Are Most Often in Care Immediately before and after Traditional Weekday Hours and on Weekends**

*NTH period (weekend and weekday hours)*

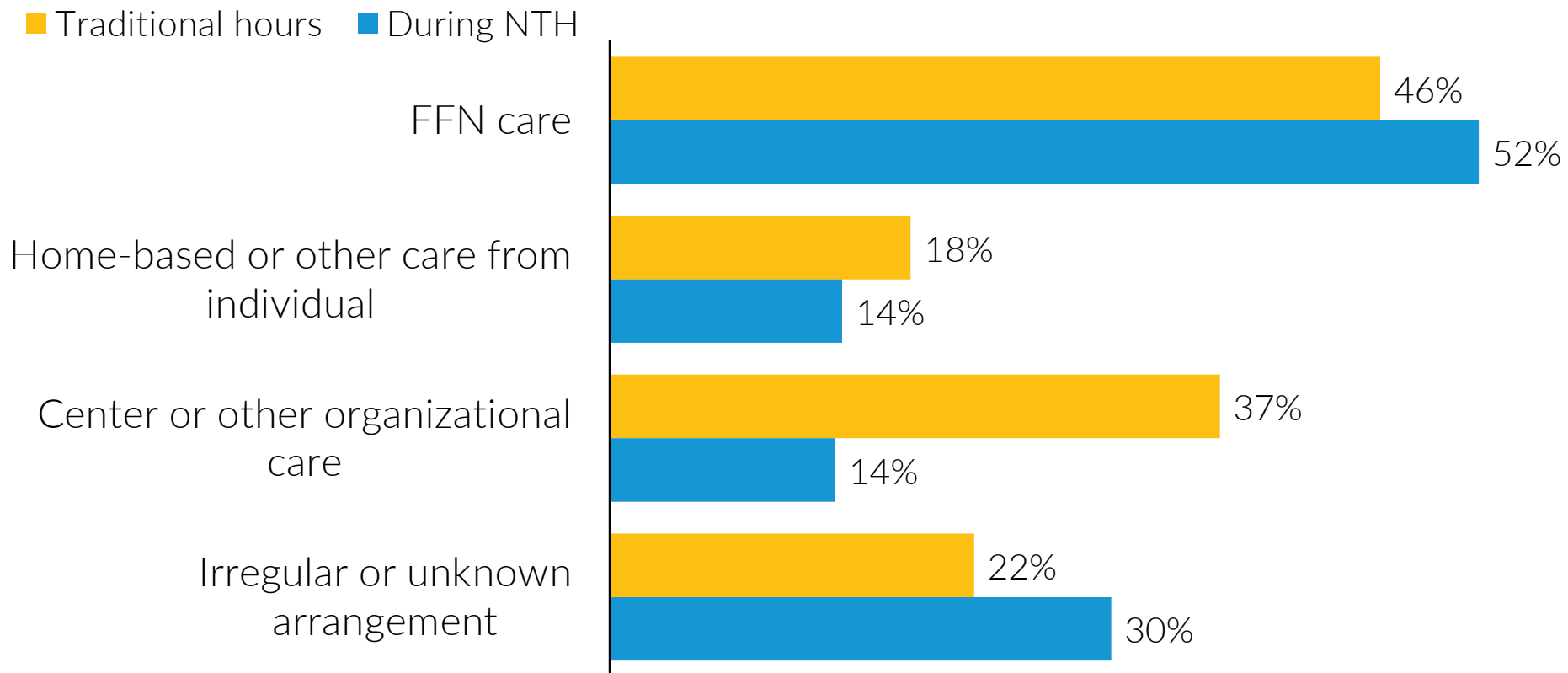


*Share of children in NTH care in care during hour*

**Source:** Urban Institute analysis of National Survey of Early Care and Education 2019 household survey data.

**Notes:** Figures are estimates, and percentages are rounded to the closest 1 percent. Children can be in NTH care during multiple periods, so the categories sum up to more than 100 percent.

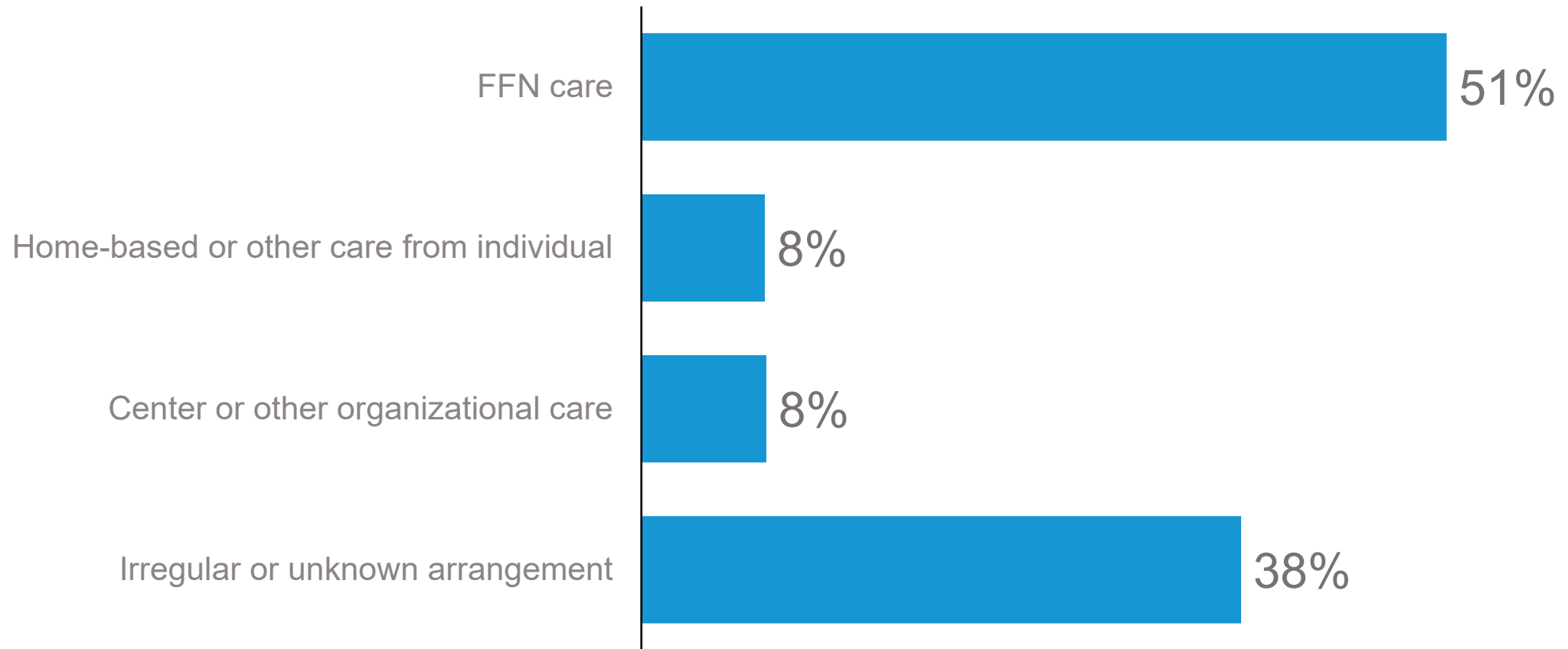
# Children with NTH Working Parents Are Most Likely in Family Friend and Neighbor Care During all Time Periods





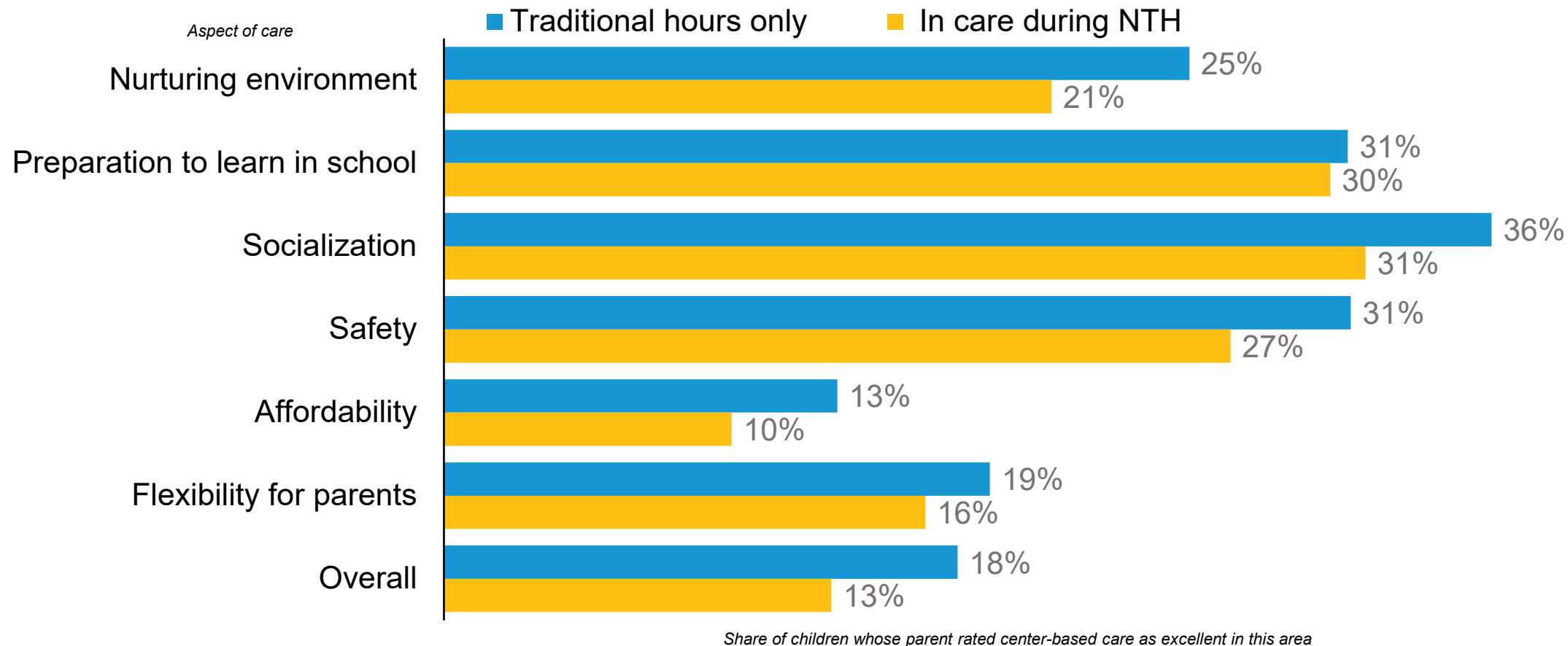
# Children in Care During the Weekend Most Often in FFN and Irregular/Unclassified Care Arrangements

Type of care arrangement

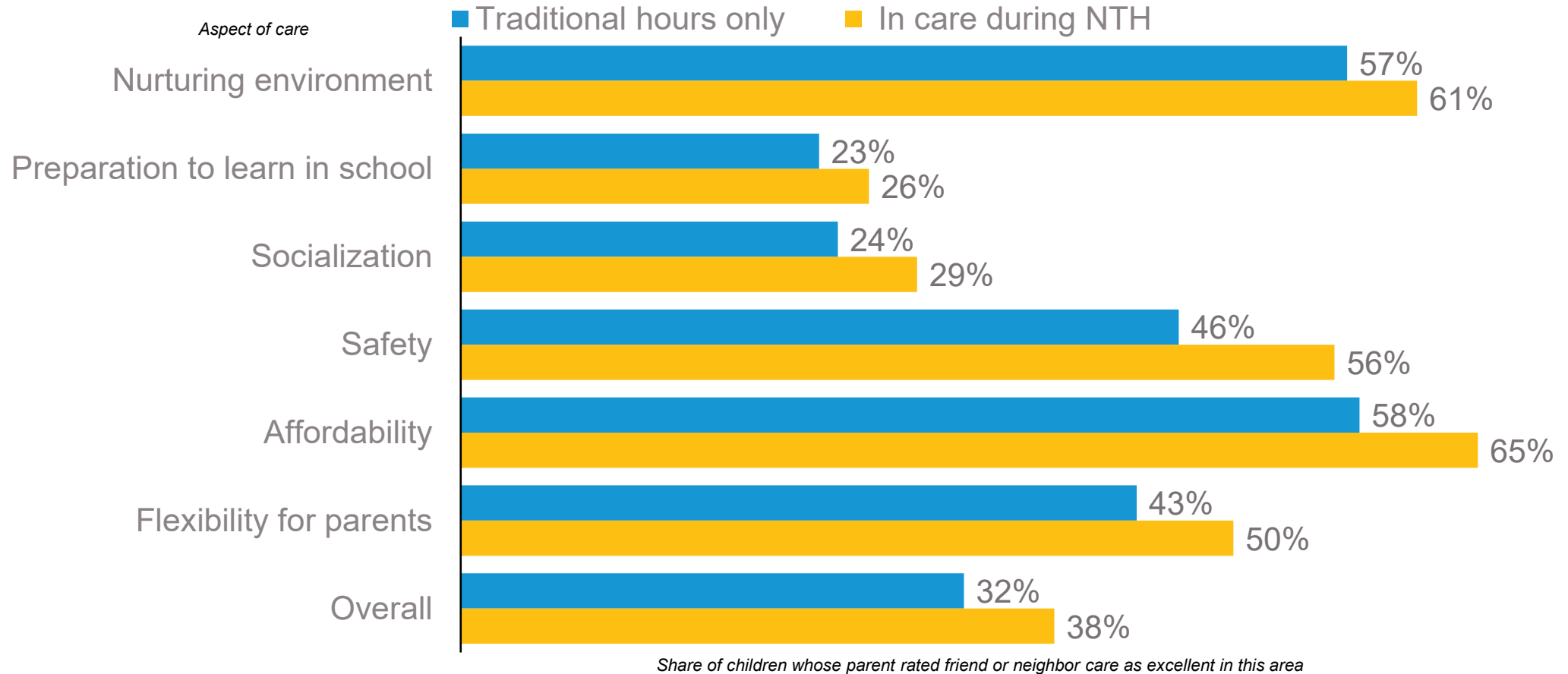


Share of children in weekend care in care type

# Parents of Children in NTH Care Rated Center-Based Care Slightly Lower Overall Than Parents of Children in Traditional Hour Care Only



# Parents of Children in NTH Care Rated Friend and Neighbor Care Slightly Higher on Safety and Affordability Than Those of Children in Traditional Hours Care Only



# For Children in Any NTH Care, Ratings of Care and Care Use Varies for Families with Differing Characteristics

## Significant relationships exist for the following:

- **Ratings of care:** Parents' use of care is strongly related to positive ratings of that type of care
  - Parents who use center-based care prefer this type of care
  - Parents who use FFN care, prefer this type of care
- But, parents with and without NTH child care needs rate center-based care similarly when it comes to preparing children for school

# For Children in Any NTH Care, Ratings of Care and Care Use Varies for Families with Differing Characteristics

## Factors Associated with Types of Care Used

- **Disability status:** Children with disabilities more likely to use any center-based care
- **Child's Age:** Preschool-aged children more likely to be in any center-based care (compared with infants)
- **Home Ownership:** Children with parents who rent (as opposed to owning their homes), least likely to use any center care

# Key Resources

# Selected Products: Informing Policy Decisions about Nontraditional-Hour Child Care

## Nontraditional-Hour Child Care in Austin/Travis County

- [Nontraditional-Hour Child Care in Austin/Travis County: Insights from Interviews, Focus Groups, and Analyses of Supply and Demand](#) (report)
- [Executive Summary: Nontraditional-Hour Child Care in Austin/Travis County Insights from Interviews, Focus Groups, and Analyses of Supply and Demand](#) (brief)

## Analyses of NSECE 2019

- [State Snapshots of Potential Demand for and Policies to Support Nontraditional-Hour Child Care](#)
- [Child Care Use for Young Children during Nontraditional Hours](#)

## Exploring Potential Demand and Parental Preferences for Nontraditional-Hour Child Care in Three Sites

- [Executive Summary: What Child Care Arrangements Do Parents Want during Nontraditional Hours?](#)
- [What Child Care Arrangements Do Parents Want during Nontraditional Hours?](#)

# Thank you!!!

- Many thanks to funders
  - United Way for Greater Austin and is supported, in whole or in part, by federal award number OMB 1505-0271 awarded to the City of Austin by the US Department of the Treasury.
  - Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the United States (US) Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award (Grant Number 90YE0241) totaling \$105,000 with 100 percent funded by ACF/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, ACF/HHS or the US government.
  - Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
  - The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) through the grant provided to DC Child Care Connections, the District's child care resource and referral agency managed by Kids Comprehensive Services, LLC.
- Many thanks to study participants including:

Parents

Business leaders

Policymakers

Policymakers

Child care providers

Community leaders

Policymakers