



National Survey of Early Care & Education Fact Sheet

October 2014

Household Search for and Perceptions of Early Care and Education

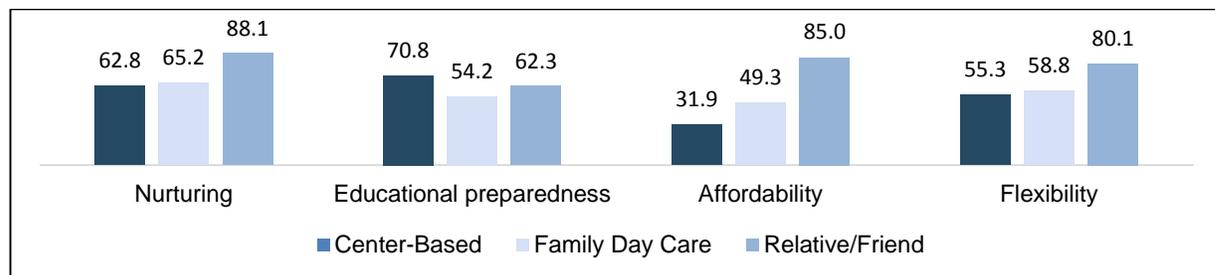
INTRODUCTION

What do families think of different types of early care and education (ECE) such as center-based programs or care by relatives? How do families search for ECE for their young children? This fact sheet reports preliminary findings from the newly available NSECE Household Survey to provide insight into how parents perceive the ECE arrangements available to them, how and why they search for care, and when searches result in a change in arrangement.

PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

Each household rated three types of care—center-based, relative or friend care, and family day care. Households with children under age 60 months rated relative or friend care most highly in terms of a nurturing environment, affordability, and flexibility for parents. They were most likely to rate center-based care high in educational preparedness [see Figure 1].

Figure 1. Percentage of Households that Perceive Different Types of Care to be Excellent or Good for Children Aged Birth to 60 Months



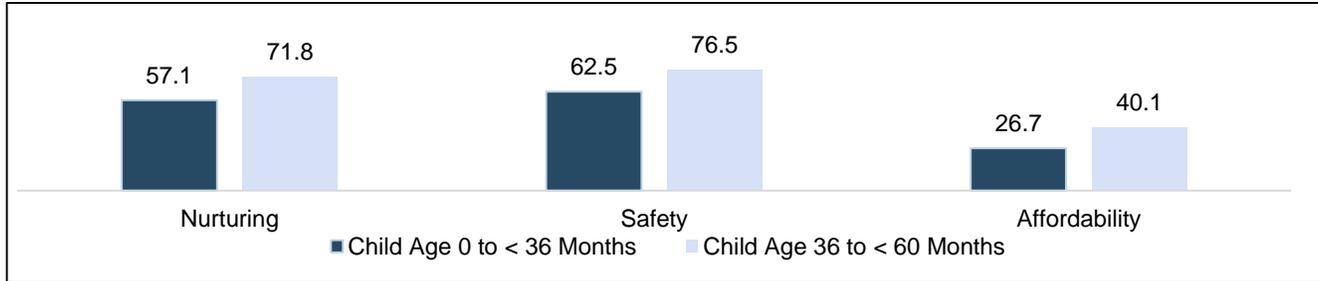
The National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) is a set of four integrated, nationally representative surveys conducted in 2012. These were surveys of: 1) households with children under age 13, 2) home-based providers of ECE, 3) center-based providers of ECE, and 4) the center-based provider workforce. Together they characterize the supply of and demand for ECE in the United States 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.



Households rated center-based care as excellent or good for preschoolers more often than for infants and toddlers. The greatest differences were seen in nurturing, safety, and affordability. While 72 percent of households rated center-based care as good or excellent in nurturing preschoolers, 57 percent said so for nurturing infants or toddlers. Similarly, 77 percent of households rated center-based care as good or excellent in safety for preschoolers, compared to 63 percent for infants or toddlers [see Figure 2].

While 40 percent of households rated center-based care for preschoolers as excellent or good in affordability, just 27 percent did the same for center-based care for younger children.

Figure 2. Percentage of Households that Perceive Center-based Care to be Excellent or Good by Child's Age

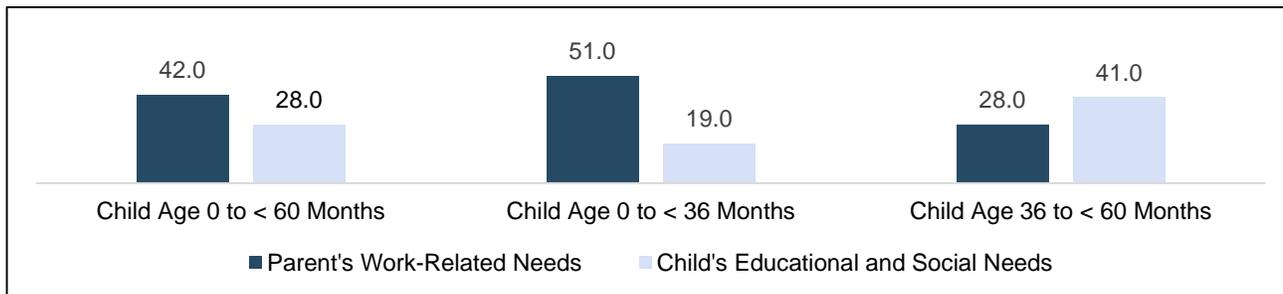


THE SEARCH FOR EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

Why do families search for care?

Among households that had conducted a search for care in the past 24 months, respondents were asked the main reason for initiating the search. Half (51 percent) of parents searching for care for an infant or toddler indicated that a change in their work was the primary reason for initiating a search, compared to just over one-quarter of those with preschool-age children (28 percent). Conversely, 41 percent of parents with preschoolers identified educational and social enrichment as the reason for the search compared to less than one-fifth (19 percent) of parents with infants or toddlers [see Figure 3].

Figure 3. Percentage of Households that Report “Parent’s Work-Related Needs” and “Child’s Educational and Social Needs” as the Main Reason for their Most Recent Search, by Child’s Age



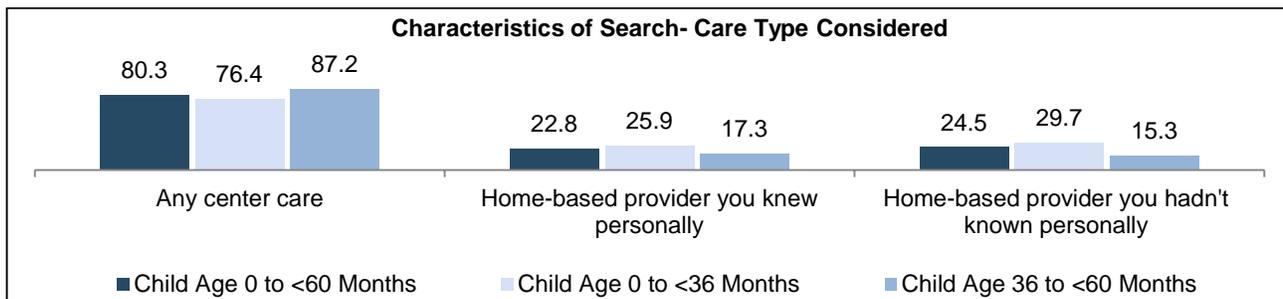
How do families search for care?

Just over one-third (37 percent) of households that searched for ECE considered only one provider in their search.

More than one provider

Of households that considered more than one provider in their search, 80 percent reported at least one center-based care provider among the two most seriously considered. In contrast, only about one-quarter reported a home-based provider with whom they had no prior personal relationship (25 percent), or care with any relative/family/someone familiar (23 percent) [see Figure 4].

Figure 4. Percentage of Households that Considered More than One Provider, by Care Type Considered and Age of Selected Child

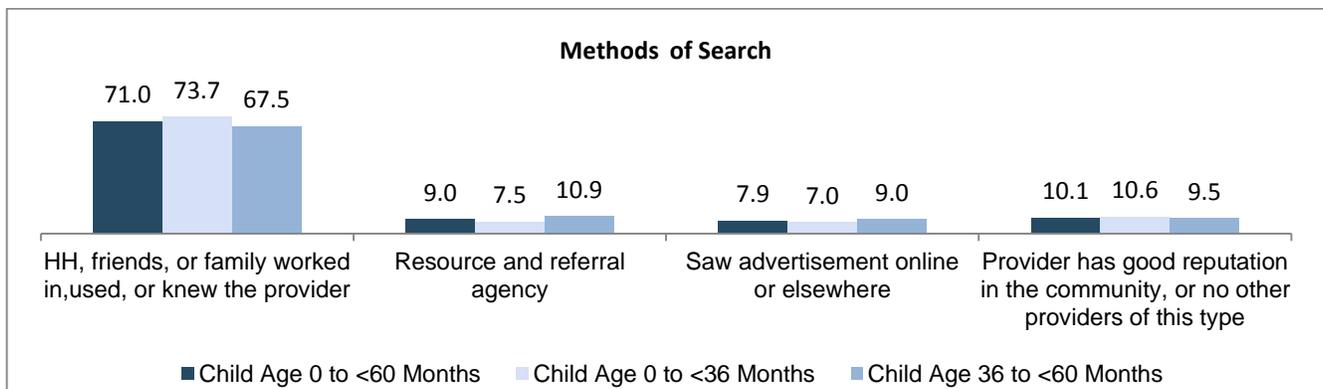


One provider

Seventy-one percent of households considering just one provider reported that they or their friends or family had worked in, used, or otherwise knew this provider. No more than 10 percent of the households fell into any other category [see Figure 5].

Responses varied little for households reporting on older versus younger children, although households with younger children (birth to 36 months) were somewhat more likely than those with older children (36 to 60 months) to report that they had personal knowledge of the provider (74 percent and 68 percent, respectively) [see Figure 5].

Figure 5. Percentage of Households that Conducted a Search and the Method Used, by Child's Age

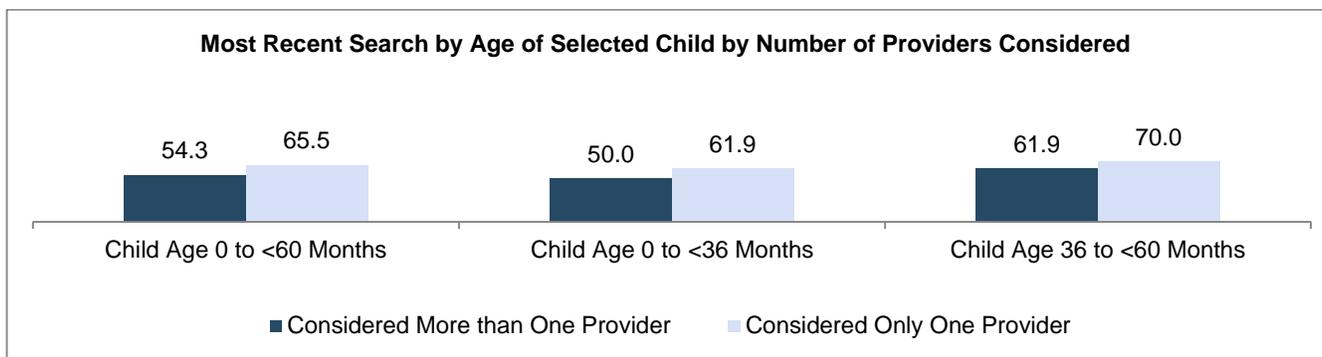


Are families able to find new arrangements?

After describing their reasons for searching, how they searched, and what they considered, households also reported on the result of their search: did they find a new arrangement for their child? Overall, 58 percent of the searches reported did lead to a new ECE arrangement for the child. This means that more than 40 percent did not, maybe because they stayed with the provider they had already been using, they decided that they as parents would be the child's only caregivers, or they gave up the search for another reason. In some cases, families may have considered using non-parental care for the first time, but decided to continue with parental care.

Sixty-six percent of households that only considered one provider made a change; this was more often than households that considered more than one provider. Those households made a change in just 54 percent of their searches. Similarly, preschoolers were more likely to change arrangements after a search (65 percent) than were toddlers (54 percent) [see Figure 6].

Figure 6. Percentage of Searches Leading to a Change in ECE Arrangement



SUGGESTED CITATION

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