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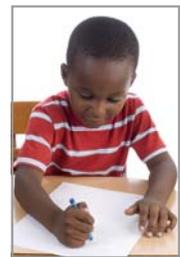
TEACHERS COLLEGE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

*Child Care Preferences and Satisfaction:  
An Examination of New York City Subsidy Recipients*

January 2010

**Introduction**

Most research on low-income families and child care has focused on the types of child care arrangement used and the quality of care provided. Less attention has been paid to what parents think are the most important features of a child care arrangement, and how satisfied parents are with their arrangement. Such information may shed light on how low-income parents balance work and child care. This brief presents survey data on parents' child care preferences and satisfaction based on a sample of child care subsidy recipients in New York City. New York City has the nation's largest publicly-funded child care system. Additionally, it administers child care subsidies through a mix of contracts and vouchers, allowing for a comparison of preferences and satisfaction across the two types of subsidy mechanisms.



**Data and Methods**

These analyses combine survey data with administrative data from New York City's Administration for Children's Services. A stratified random sample of approximately 2,000 families was drawn from all families who received a child care subsidy in New York City in February 2008. A telephone survey was conducted by the National Center for Children and Families, Teachers College, from mid-2008 to mid-2009 to gather information on child care preferences and satisfaction. Child care arrangement (child care center, family child care home, or informal care) and subsidy type (contract or voucher) were drawn from administrative data; all other information came from the survey. Sample weights were applied to enable generalizations to all families with a child aged 6 or under who received a subsidy in New York City and could be reached by telephone ( $N=47,312$ ).

Study Population (weighted  $N = 47,312$ ):

- The mean child age was 3 years, 8 months (range: 13 months to 6 years)
- 47% of children were girls; 53% were boys
- 49% of parents used vouchers; 51% used contracts
- 49% of children were in a child care center; 31% were in a family child care home; and 20% were in an informal care arrangement
- 55% of parents were US-born; 45% were foreign-born

**AUTHORS**

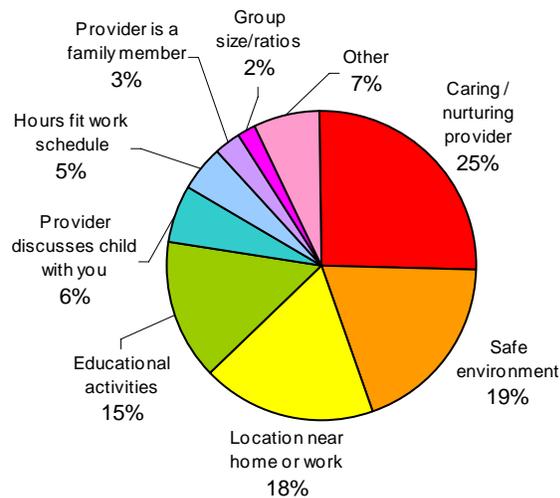
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The most common reason why parents selected their child care arrangement was a caring and nurturing provider.

## Findings: Child care subsidy recipients' primary reason for selecting their child care arrangement

- Parents were asked about the most important reason they selected their current child care arrangement. *See figure 1.*
- The most commonly reported reason was a caring and nurturing provider (25%), followed by a safe environment (19%), location near home or work (18%), and presence of educational activities (15%).

Figure 1. Most important reason parents chose child care arrangement



- Parents' most important reason for selecting their child care arrangement was significantly associated with the type of care arrangement they used. *See left panel of table 1.*
  - The parents of children in center-based care were significantly more likely than other parents to name educational activities or a convenient location.
  - The parents of children in family child care or informal care were significantly more likely than other parents to name a caring/nurturing provider.
- Child care subsidy type was also significantly associated with parents' most important reason for selecting their child care arrangement. *See right panel of table 1.*
  - Parents using contracted care were more likely to name a convenient location near home or work.
  - Parents using vouchers were more likely to name using care by a family member.
  - Both parents using contracted care and parents using vouchers named a caring/nurturing provider as their most important reason for selecting an arrangement.

Table 1. Most Important Reason for Selecting Child Care Arrangement by Arrangement and Subsidy Type

	By Child Care Arrangement			By Subsidy Type	
	Center	Family	Informal	Contract	Voucher
Caring/Nurturing provider <sup>a</sup>	19%	33%	31%	23%	28%
Safe environment	19%	20%	18%	18%	20%
Convenient location <sup>a, b</sup>	22%	17%	9%	21%	15%
Educational activities <sup>a</sup>	19%	12%	9%	16%	13%
Provider discusses child	6%	6%	7%	7%	6%
Hours fit work schedule	6%	5%	3%	5%	5%
Family member <sup>a, b</sup>	<1%	<1%	12%	<1%	5%
Group size/ratios	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%

<sup>a</sup> Significantly associated with child care arrangement at  $p < .05$

<sup>b</sup> Significantly associated with subsidy type at  $p < .05$

Family = Family child care home

Significance tests were adjusted with Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons

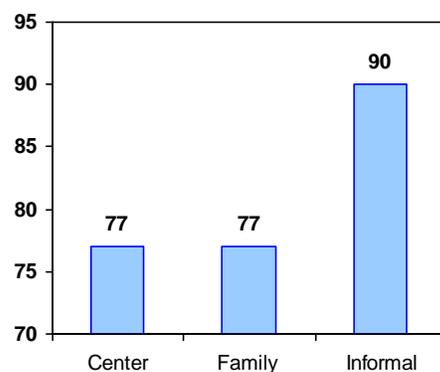


Parents using contracted care were more likely than those using vouchers to name a convenient location as the most important reason they selected their child care arrangement.

### Findings: Child care subsidy recipients' satisfaction with their child care arrangement

- 80% of parents reported being very satisfied with their current child care arrangement (as opposed to somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied).
- The parents of children in informal care were significantly more likely to report being very satisfied than the parents of children in center-based and family child care. See figure 2.

Figure 2. Percent of parents very satisfied, by child care arrangement



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