

Early Child Care in Single-Parent and Two-Parent Families: 2019

DATA POINT

March 2021

NCES 2021-005
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Publication of the National Center for Education Statistics at IES

This Data Point uses data from the 2019 Early Childhood Program Participation (ECPP) survey. The ECPP survey asks about young children’s participation in weekly child care. The survey includes three types of care: care from a family member other than a parent (relative care), care from someone who is not a relative (nonrelative care), and care in a child care or early education center (center-based care). This report compares child care for children from birth through age 5, in single-parent families and two-parent families.¹

Do care arrangements differ for single-parent and two-parent families?

In 2019, a higher percentage of children in single-parent families than in two-parent families were in weekly child care (65 versus 58 percent) (**FIGURE 1**).

Among children receiving care, those in single-parent families spent more hours in child care than those in two-parent families (34 versus 30 hours per week, not shown in figures).

Also, a higher percentage of children in single-parent families had multiple types of child care (for example, relative care and center-based care) (26 versus 17 percent).

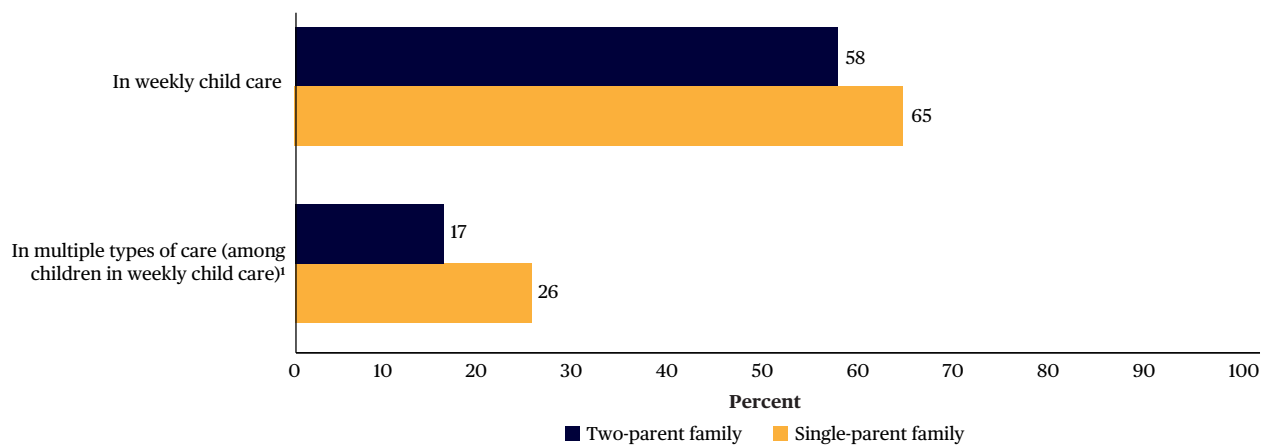
Does the experience of searching for and finding child care differ for single-parent and two-parent families?

The ECPP asked parents if they felt that they had good choices for child care. No measurable differences were found on this question.

Overall, parents of 55 percent of children in single-parent families and parents of 57 percent of children in two-parent families reported that they had good choices (not shown in figures).

The survey also asked parents if they had ever searched for child care. Overall, 44 percent of single-parent families and 45 percent of two-parent families said they had searched for care (not shown in figures).

FIGURE 1. Child care in 2019: Percentage of children in at least one type of weekly child care, and among those in care, percentage in multiple types of weekly child care, by family structure



¹ “Multiple types of care” refers to children who are in more than one type of weekly child care (relative care, nonrelative care, or center-based care).
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Early Childhood Program Participation Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program (ECPP-NHES), 2019.

Early Child Care in Single-Parent and Two-Parent Families: 2019

Parents who had searched for care were asked if they had difficulty finding care and the main problem causing their difficulty. There was no measurable difference between the two family types in the percentage who reported having any difficulty finding care (79 percent for single-parent families who had searched for care, 75 percent for two-parent families). But the problems they faced were not always the same.

Cost was the most often reported main problem for both single-parent and two-parent families who had any

difficulty finding care (**FIGURE 2**). There was no measurable difference in the percentage of single-parent families and two-parent families reporting cost as the main problem (39 and 37 percent). There was also no measurable difference in the percentage of single-parent and two-parent families reporting location as the main problem (10 and 7 percent).

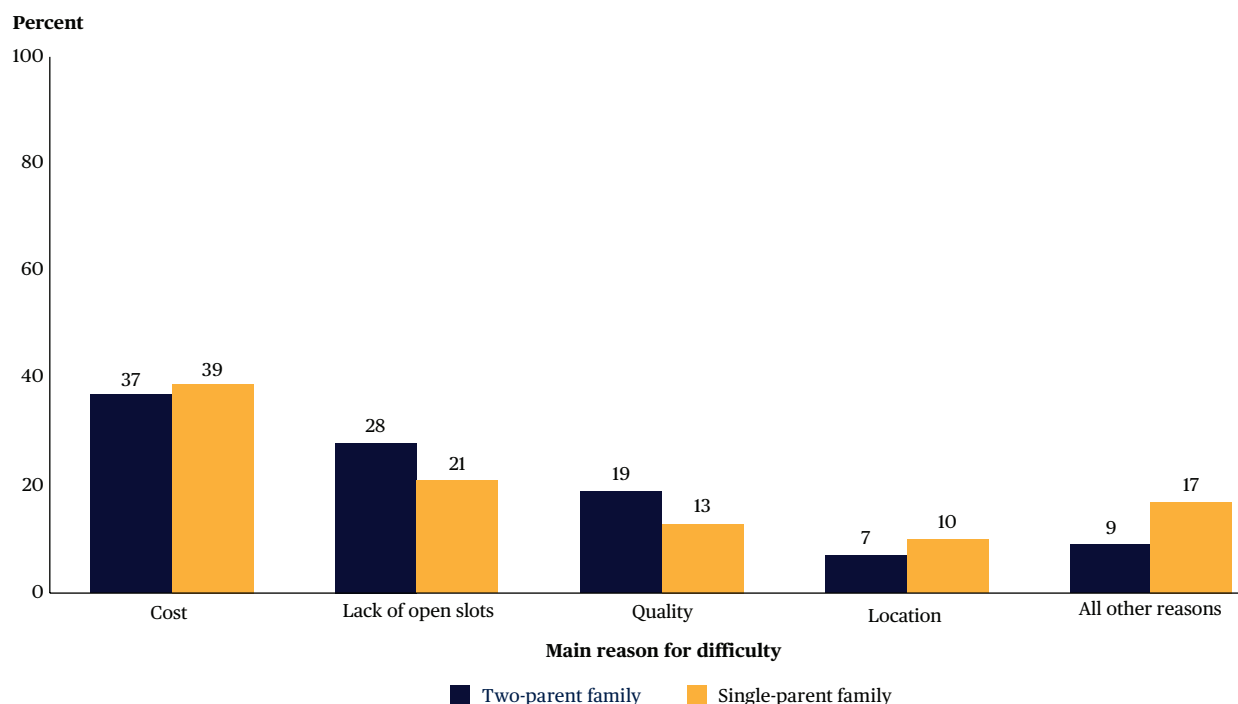
A higher percentage of two-parent families than single-parent families reported a lack of open slots for new children and the quality of the care

as their main problem (28 versus 21 percent and 19 versus 13 percent, respectively). In contrast, a higher percentage of single-parent families, compared to two-parent families, reported a problem other than those listed in figure 2 as their main problem (17 versus 9 percent).

Endnotes

¹The survey counts guardians as parents. For example, a grandmother raising her grandchild counts as a single-parent family, and a couple raising a foster child counts as a two-parent family.

FIGURE 2. Main problem finding child care in 2019: Among families who had any difficulty finding child care, percentage of children whose parents reported each problem as the main reason they had difficulty finding child care, by family structure



NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Early Childhood Program Participation Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program (ECPP-NHES), 2019.