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## **Australian Social Trends 2007**

### **Article: Before and/or after school care**

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# Article: Before and/or after school care

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## SYMBOLS AND USAGES

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| billion | 1,000 million   |
| kg      | kilogram  |
| m       | metre   |
| n.a.    | not available   |
| n.e.c   | not elsewhere classified  |
| n.p.    | not published   |
| n.y.a.  | not yet available   |
| no.     | number  |
| '000    | thousand  |
| '000m   | thousand million  |
| \$      | dollar  |
| \$m     | million dollars   |
| \$b     | billion dollars   |
| \$US    | American dollar   |
| %       | per cent  |
| *       | estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution                        |
| **      | estimate has a relative standard error of greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use |
| ..      | not applicable  |
| —       | nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)   |

Where figures have been rounded, discrepancies may occur between the sums of the component items and totals.

# Before and/or after school care

The proportion of school children (aged 5–11 years) receiving before and/or after school care in the survey reference week has doubled, from 6% in 1996 to 12% in 2005.

Paid work provides social and economic benefits to parents and families. It contributes to parents' sense of self esteem and identity and it is also a means through which parents secure the economic resources needed for day-to-day living. Child care can help parents negotiate the often competing demands of paid work and family. Child care has become an important service for an increasing number of families with the increase in women's labour force participation over recent years (see *Australian Social Trends* 2006, Trends in women's employment, pp. 121–125).

Families may use a combination of different types of care depending upon their own needs. This article focuses on before and/or after school care (B/ASC). B/ASC is the main type of formal care received by school children (aged 5–12 years). It enables parents of school children to work a wider time band than might otherwise be possible.

B/ASC services aim to foster children's physical, emotional, intellectual and social development in a safe setting. They provide programs whereby school children can participate in a range of activities as well as having time for homework, rest and interaction with their friends.

## Data sources and definitions

The data in this article are mainly from the ABS 2005 Child Care Survey. This survey collected data about children aged 0–12 years and was conducted during the school term. Prior to 2005, data were collected about children aged 0–11 years. Data are also included from the 2002 and 2004 Australian Government Census of Child Care Services conducted by the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

In this article, *child care* refers to arrangements other than care by resident parents, made for the care of children. Unless otherwise specified, it refers to care received in the week prior to interview.

*Formal child care* is regulated care away from the child's home. *Before and/or after school care (B/ASC)* is a type of formal care provided for school children before and/or after school during the school term. The services are generally school-based but some are located in community halls or recreation centres. Care can be provided on a regular or casual basis and fees are charged.

*Informal child care* is non-regulated care arranged by a child's parent/guardian either in the child's home or elsewhere. It includes care by relatives such as siblings and grandparents, and other unrelated people such as nannies, babysitters, friends and neighbours.

For the purpose of this article, unless otherwise stated, *school children* are those aged 5–12 years who attended school.

School children(a) who received B/ASC



(a) Time series available for children aged 5–11 years.

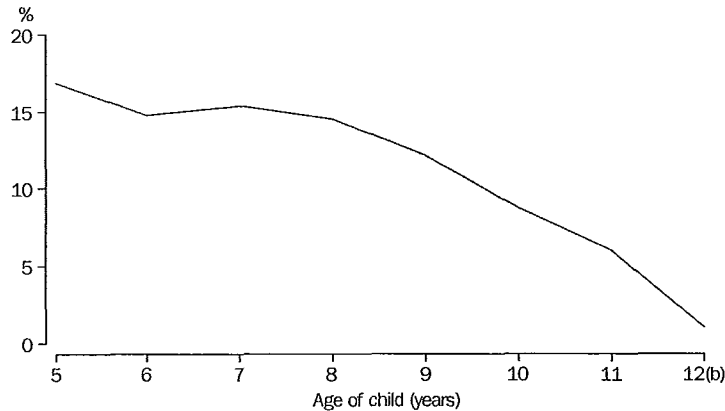
Source: ABS 2005 Child Care Survey.

## Trends in the use of care by school children

In 2005, of the 2.1 million school children in Australia, 771,000 (or 37%) received some type of child care in the survey reference week. A greater number of children would have received some type of child care at any time during the year.

Of those school children receiving care, 227,000 (or 29%) received B/ASC in the survey reference week. There were 299,000 (or 39%) school children cared for by their grandparents and 55,000 (or 7%) by their brothers or sisters (see *Australian Social Trends* 2005, Informal child care provided by grandparents pp. 47–51). A further 157,000 (or 20%) school children were cared for by other relatives (i.e. relatives other than grandparents and brothers/sisters) and 133,000 (or 17%) were cared for by other persons.

### School children(a) who received B/ASC: age of child — 2005



(a) Aged 5–12 years.  
 (b) Care should be taken in interpreting data for 12 year olds as many attend high school and do not have the same access to B/ASC as primary school students.

Source: ABS 2005 Child Care Survey.

From 1996 to 2005, the proportion of school children (aged 5–11 years) using B/ASC doubled from 6% to 12%. This may in part reflect the increase in the proportion of school children with employed mothers, which increased from 53% in 1996 to 59% in 2005.

### Age of children receiving before and/or after school care

The proportion of school children receiving child care decreases as children mature and as their independence grows. In 2005, 38% of school children aged 5–8 years received B/ASC and/or other types of child care on weekdays, compared with 28% of school children aged 9–12 years.

This decreasing use of child care as school children get older is reflected in the decreasing use of B/ASC with children's increasing age. In 2005, 15% of 5–8 year old school children received B/ASC in the reference week, over twice that of the rate for 9–12 year olds (7%).

### Characteristics of before and/or after school care use

#### ...days of care

B/ASC services operate on weekdays during the school year. In 2005, of the school children receiving B/ASC 27% received care for one day, 25% for five days per week and 20% received it for two weekdays.

### Before and/or after school care services

According to the Census of Child Care Services, 2,400 B/ASC services were operating in Australia in 2004, an increase of 44 services since 2002. In 2004, Victoria had the most B/ASC services (745), followed by New South Wales (630) and Queensland (478).

Within these B/ASC centres in 2004, there were an average of 67 children enrolled in care during the reference week, up from 55 in 1999. Throughout Australia, there were 13,000 paid staff working in B/ASC centres, accounting for 16% of staff in all child care services. Some 40% of the B/ASC staff had formal qualifications relevant to child care.

Changes made in the 2006 Federal Budget to the number of Child Care Benefit approved places for B/ASC are aimed to result in an extra 25,000 places in new or existing programs over the next four years.<sup>1</sup>

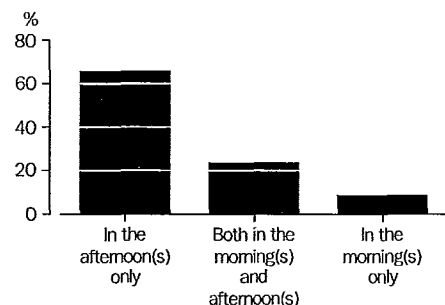
#### ...hours of care

In 2005, school children receiving B/ASC attended for an average of six hours per week. This ranged from an average of two hours for school children using one weekday of B/ASC, to ten hours for those using B/ASC for five weekdays. This care may have taken place before or after school, or both.

In 2005, almost two-thirds of school children (66% or 150,000 children) receiving B/ASC attended only after school hours, nearly one-quarter (24% or 55,000) attended both before and after school and 9% (19,000) attended before school only.

In 2004, the majority (59%) of centres operating before school care offered between two and three hours care per morning, and of those operating after school, three-quarters (75%) offered between three and four hours of care in the afternoon.<sup>2</sup>

### School children(a) who received B/ASC: time of attendance(b) — 2005



(a) Aged 5–11 years.  
 (b) Data not collected for children aged 12 years.

Source: ABS 2005 Child Care Survey.

### ... reasons care used

Particular types of child care may be used by parents for different reasons. Parents may use child care so they can attend medical or other appointments, participate in paid or voluntary work or engage in a social activity. In 2005, most parents used B/ASC for their school children for 'work-related' reasons (84%) (which included work-related study and training).

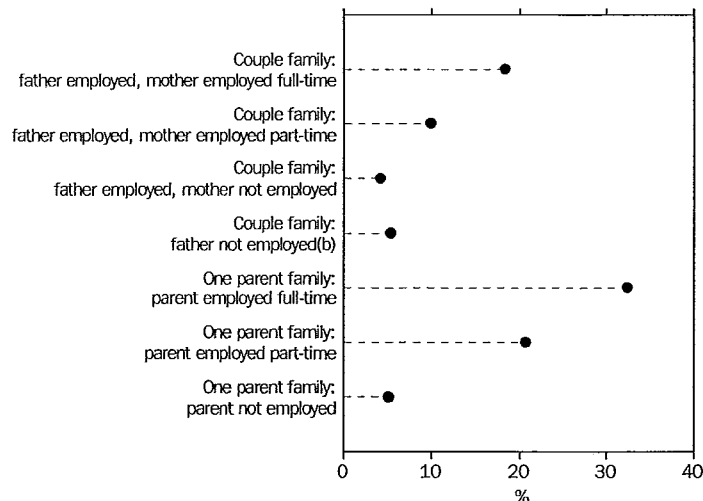
### ...cost of care

The cost of child care to families varies according to the type of care, the number of hours used and parents' access to government assistance. The cost may affect parents' working arrangements and their ability to participate in activities such as voluntary work, study or training. The cost of child care may also influence parents' decisions about the type and amount of care used.<sup>3</sup>

Separate fees are charged for care before and for care after school. According to the 2004 Census of Child Care Services, the longer after school sessions typically cost more (\$10 per session) than the shorter before school sessions (\$7 per session).

In 2005, the average weekly cost of B/ASC (after the Child Care Benefit was taken into account) was \$26. This ranged from \$9 for school children using B/ASC one weekday, to \$41 for those using B/ASC five weekdays per week.

**School children(a) who used B/ASC: family type by parents' employment status — 2005**



(a) Aged 5–12 years.

(b) Irrespective of mother's employment status.

Source: ABS 2005 Child Care Survey.

### Child Care Benefit

The Child Care Benefit (CCB) is an Australian Government funded payment to assist families with the use of approved or registered child care.

In 2005, parents of around three-quarters (76% or 173,000) of school children using B/ASC claimed the CCB for the cost of this care. Parents of 39,000 school children who received B/ASC did not claim the CCB. The main reasons parents provided for not claiming the CCB were that the parental income was too high (32%), they were not aware of the benefit (22%) and that it was not worth the effort (20%).

### Vacation care

Vacation care is a service provided to school children during the school holidays.

In 2005, over 250,000 (14%) school children aged 5–11 years attended a vacation care program in the 12 months prior to the interview.

Of those school children in couple families, 13% attended vacation care compared with 19% of those school children in one-parent families.

A higher proportion of school children in one-parent families with an employed parent attended vacation care (26%) than in couple families with one or both parents employed (7% and 16% respectively).

### Families balancing work and care

Families often need to balance paid work and the care of their school children. It is typically women who adjust their participation in the labour force to fit around the care of their children (see *Australian Social Trends 2003*, Balancing family and work, pp. 40–44). Some women in paid work may take on part-time hours or use another flexible work arrangement. Child care such as B/ASC may also be used to assist with achieving this balance.

In 2005, school children of full-time working mothers were more likely to receive B/ASC in the survey reference week than children of part-time working mothers. In couple families, almost one in five school children aged 5–12 years (18%) with full-time working mothers received B/ASC, compared with one in ten (10%) with part-time working mothers. This difference between full and part-time working mothers may reflect the greater capacity of part-time mothers to structure their time at work around school hours.

In 2005, 32% of school children aged 5–12 years in one-parent families with a parent employed full-time, and 21% with a parent employed part-time, received B/ASC. It is perhaps not surprising that children in one-parent families with an employed parent

(either full or part-time) were more likely to attend B/ASC than children in couple families with one parent working. In one-parent families, the absence of a resident partner may increase reliance on child care so that the parent can participate in paid employment and other activities.

School children with a parent not employed were less likely to use B/ASC, perhaps because at least one of their parents was more likely to be home out of school hours. Around 20,000 school children (or 4%) aged 5–12 years in couple families with a father employed and mother not employed, and around 8,000 with a father not employed (or 5%), used B/ASC. Similarly in one-parent families, just under 10,000 school children with a parent not employed used B/ASC (or 5%).

### **Need for before and/or after school care**

In the Child Care Survey parents of children not using formal child care were asked whether there had been any time in the previous four weeks when they wanted to use any formal child care services but did not. Parents who had wanted to use some formal child care services were then asked which type they had most wanted to use. Parents of children already using formal care (whether it was B/ASC or an another type of formal care) were asked a similar question, namely whether at any time in the previous four weeks they had wanted to use any more formal care and, if so, which type they had most wanted to use. Along with questions about the number of days on which the services had been required, these questions give some information about families' needs for additional B/ASC services.

In June 2005, there were 64,000 school children (3% of all school children aged 5–12 years) for whom some formal care, or some additional formal care, had been required in the previous 4 weeks and for whom B/ASC was the main type of care required.

Most of these children (90% or 58,000) had not used any formal care in the previous week. Overall, parents required an average of four days of B/ASC over a four week period. Over two-thirds of parents of school children (69%) reported that work was the main reason B/ASC was required.

### **Endnotes**

- 1 Australian Government 2006-07 Budget, *Child Support Reforms*, viewed 7 February 2007, <[http://www.budget.gov.au/2006-07/bp2/html/bp2\\_expense-08.htm](http://www.budget.gov.au/2006-07/bp2/html/bp2_expense-08.htm)>.
- 2 Department of Family and Community Services 2005, *2004 Census of Child Care Services*, FaCS, viewed 27 February 2007, <[http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/VIA/cc\\_census\\_04/\\$File/cc04main1.pdf](http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/VIA/cc_census_04/$File/cc04main1.pdf)>.
- 3 Cobb-Clark, D, Liu, A and Mitchel, D 1999, *Reassessing the role of child care costs in the work and care decisions of Australian families*, Discussion Paper No. 409, Australian National University Centre for Economic Policy Research, Canberra.

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