New Englanders’ Use of Child Care Varies by Income, Even Among Working Households

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Data from the U.S. Census Bureau collected between January and May 2023 show that access to child care remains uneven. Among New England households with a child under age five, 71.1 percent had used at least some child care, paid or unpaid, in the past seven days. However, use varied with income: 88.1 percent of households with young children and incomes over $200,000 used child care, compared with 57.2 percent of those with incomes under $50,000 (Figure 1). Although low-income households where the survey respondent is employed more often used child care than low-income households overall, employment status does not fully close the income gap in use. That is, lower-income working households are 18.6 percentage points less likely to use care than their higher-income counterparts. These findings suggest that in low-income New England households, access to early care opportunities—as a learning environment for kids and a work support for parents—is falling short.

FIGURE 1. PERCENT OF NEW ENGLAND HOUSEHOLDS WITH A CHILD UNDER AGE FIVE WHO USED CHILD CARE IN THE PAST SEVEN DAYS

Note: Estimates are calculated using household-level replicate weights. Child care use includes both paid and unpaid nonparental care, including child care center, relative, non-relative, home-based provider, or a combination of any.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey, Phases 3.7–3.8 (partial), Weeks 53–57