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The landscape of childcare time burden in the North Central Region

Ivanna Carrillo-Siller

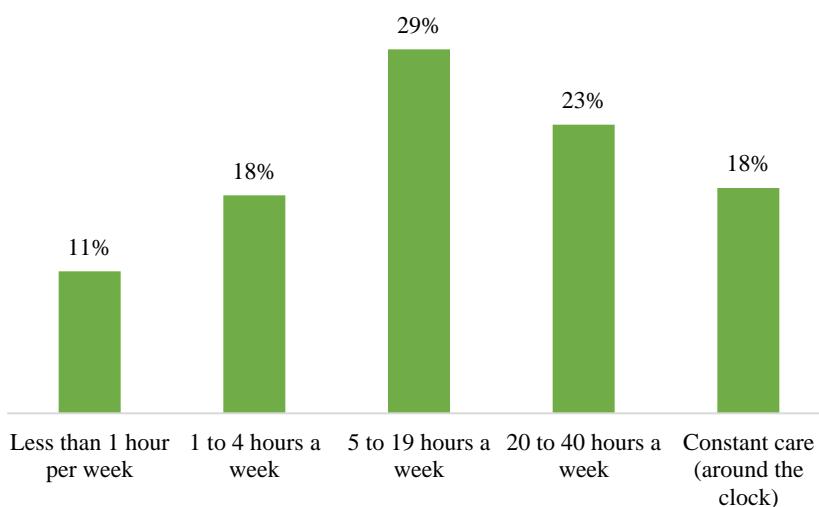
1 Introduction

The importance of childcare in the well-being of families is a key boosting factor of economic prosperity, making it a fundamental public policy issue (Hamm et al., 2019) and the subject of extensive research. However, childcare is unequally distributed across social groups and within family units. Women, low-income households, and minorities disproportionately carry a heavier caregiving responsibility, deeply affecting their employment and income outcomes (Glynn, 2018). In addition, women have been the primary caregivers of children in all types of households and across socioeconomic statuses. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the disproportionate childcare burden on women, especially in low educational attainment and low-income households (Liu & Gan, 2024). To evaluate the distribution of the childcare burden across population groups and the current landscape statistics in the North Central Region (NCR), data from the NCR-Stat: Caregiving Survey (Inwood, et al., 2024) are examined.

2 Childcare burden descriptive analyses

To understand the broader scope of childcare, Figure 1 shows the distribution of respondents' weekly hours spent child caregiving. Nearly one-third of respondents spent 5 to 19 hours a week providing care of a child or children (29%), followed by the group spending 20 to 40 hours a week (23%). Eighteen percent of respondents reported providing constant care. Eleven percent of respondents spent less than one hour per week taking care of a child or children.

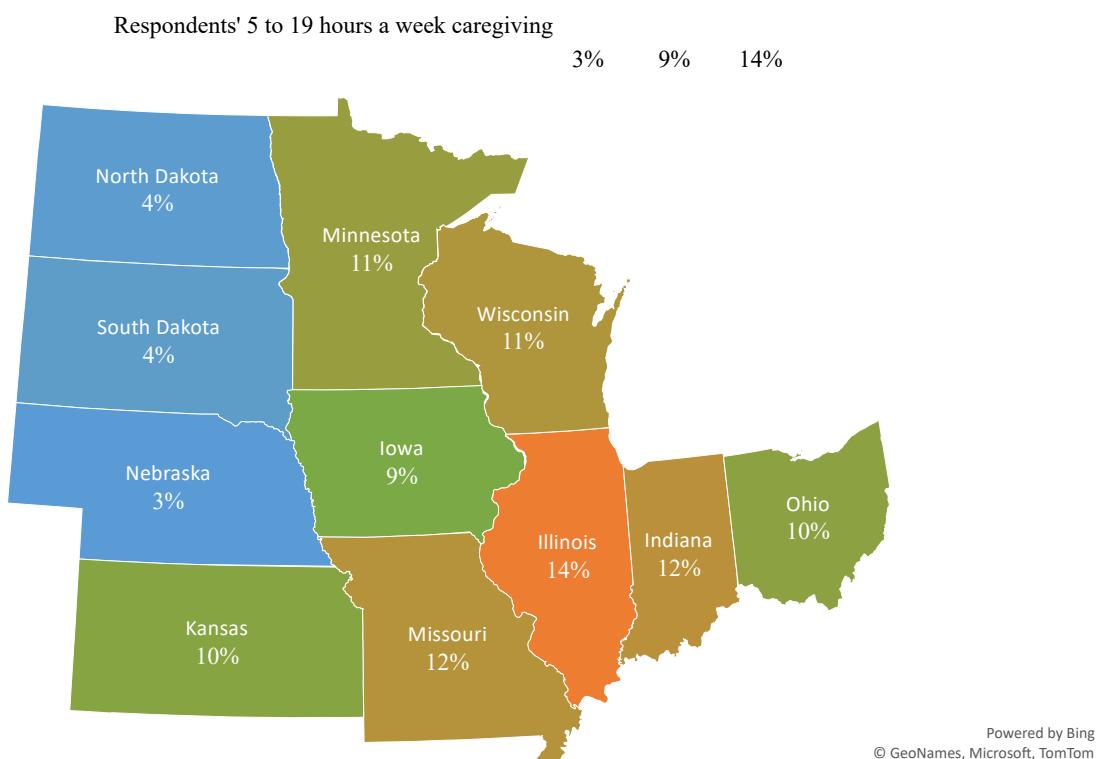
Figure 1. The shares of respondents by weekly time spent caregiving in the NCR (N=1,554)



Source: Inwood et al. (2024).

Figure 2 shows the distribution of respondents by their residential state in the NCR that provided 5 to 19 hours a week of paid or unpaid childcare in the last year - the category with the highest percentage of respondents. The state with the highest number of respondents in this caregiving category is Illinois (14% of total responses), followed by Indiana and Missouri (12%). The lowest number of responses gathered for this weekly hour category belongs to North and South Dakota (4%) and Nebraska (3%).

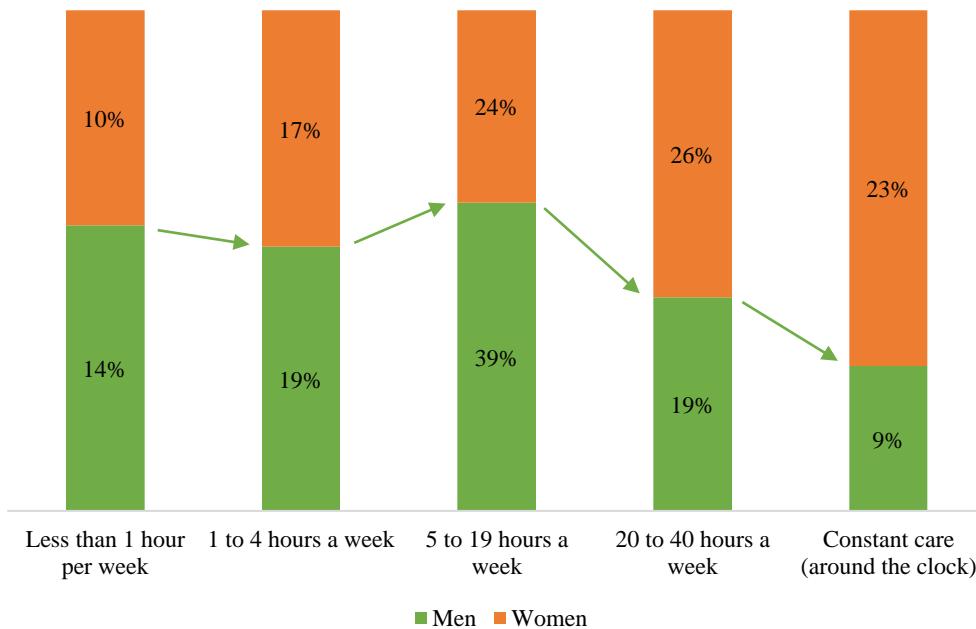
Figure 2. Number of respondents in the category of 5 to 19 hours a week spent caregiving by residential state in the NCR (N=409)



Source: Inwood et al. (2024).

Figure 3 displays the average number of hours the male and female caregivers spent caregiving on a weekly basis. The percentage of female caregivers increases with the number of weekly hours spent caring for a child, except for constant care (from 10% on the less than 1 hour per week to 26% for the 20-40 hours category). Conversely, men mainly provided care for 5 to 19 hours a week (39%) and had an equal percentage distribution for 1 to 4 hours and 20 to 40 hours a week (19%).

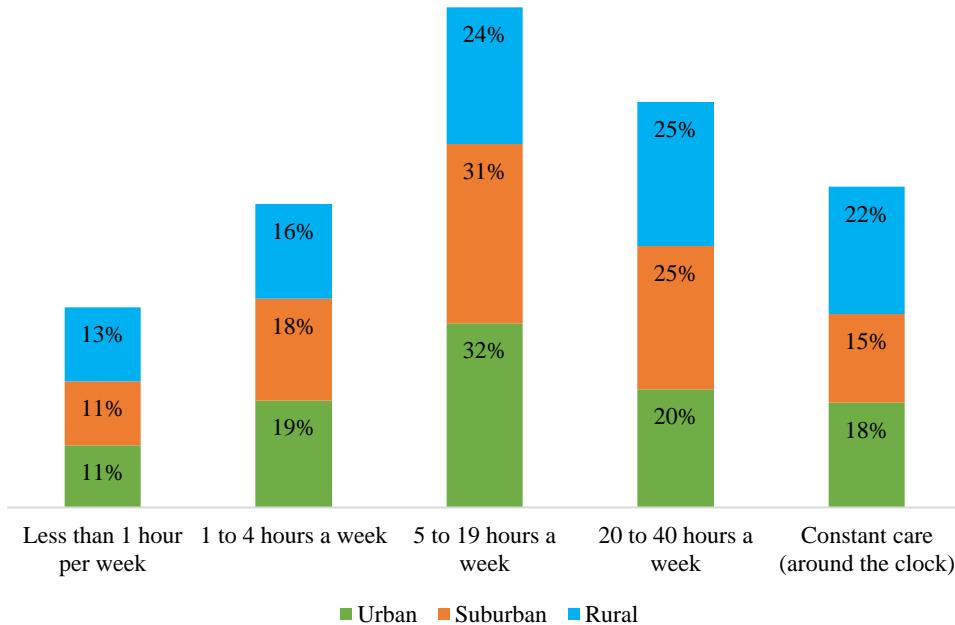
Figure 3. Shares of respondents by gender and their weekly time spent caregiving (N=1,546)



Source: Inwood et al. (2024).

The analysis of caregivers by their residential locations revealed slight differences between urban, suburban, and rural locations. Rural households take the lead in the least number of hours spent caregiving (less than 1 hour per week, 13%) and the highest number of hours spent category (constant care, 22%). On the other hand, both urban and suburban child caregivers follow similar trends in all categories. Only a noticeable difference can be observed in the 20 to 40 hours of weekly caregiving group, with 25% of suburban respondents compared to 20% of urban respondents.

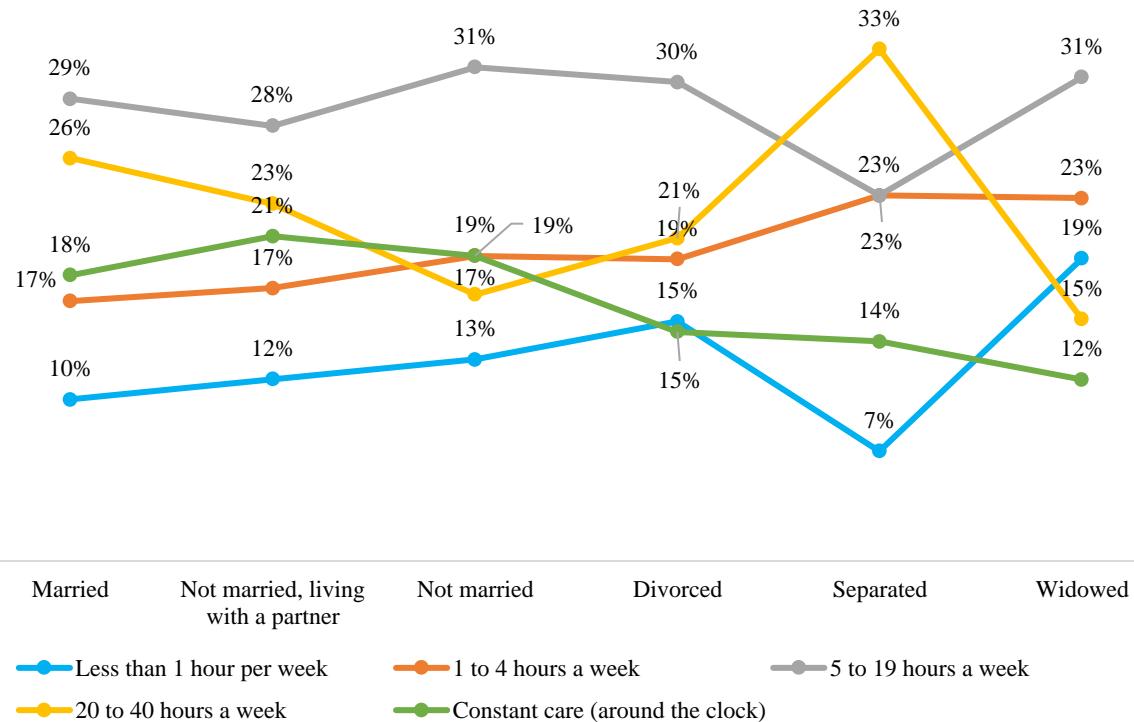
Figure 4. Shares of respondents by current residential location and their weekly time spent caregiving (N=1,554)



Source: Inwood et al. (2024).

Marital status provides an interesting picture of average caregiving time per week. Note that the 5 to 19 hours a week category has the greatest number of respondents in all types of marital status, except for separated individuals, who reported a greater childcare burden of 20 to 40 hours a week (33%). Constant care has the least presence for widowed respondents (12%) and the highest for householders living with a partner (21%).

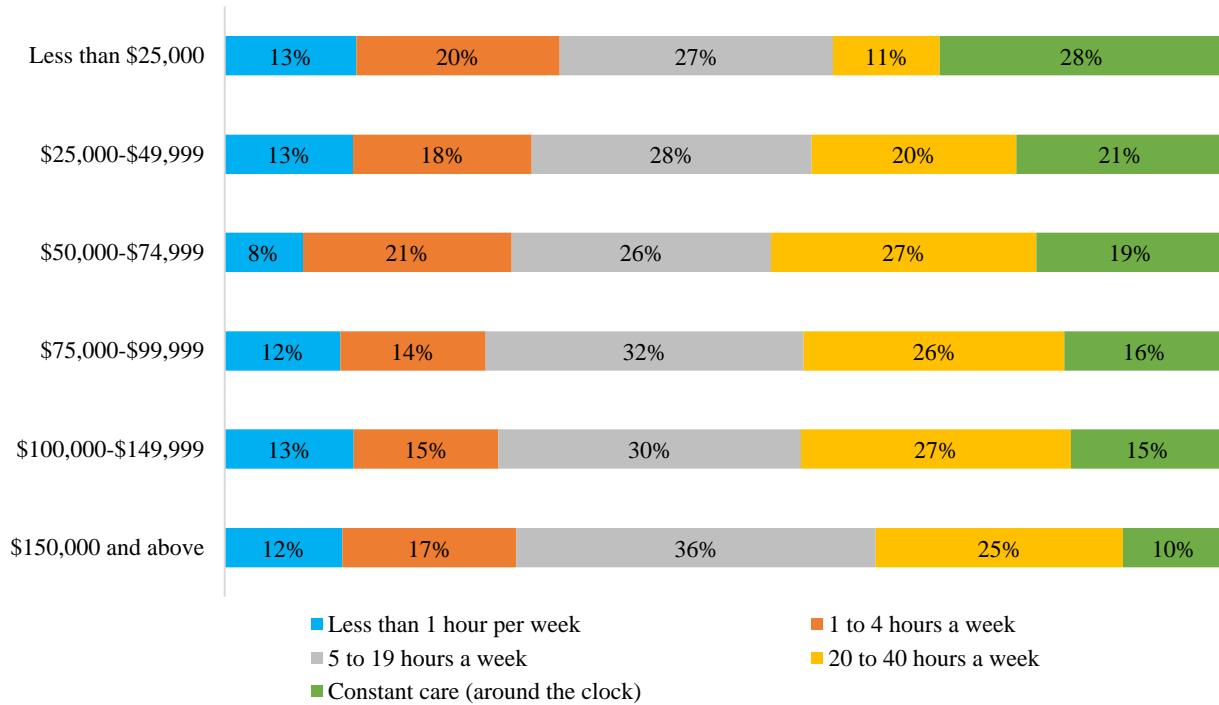
Figure 5. Shares of respondents by marital status and their weekly time spent caregiving (N=1,551)



Source: Inwood et al. (2024).

Household income can be a decisive factor regarding weekly childcare hours since caregiving facilities take a noteworthy percentage of respondents' income. The \$50,000 to \$74,999 household income category has a substantially lower percentage of respondents in the less than 1 hour per week caregiving category and greater proportion in the 1 to 4 hours a week category (21%). Over a third of all respondents in the \$150,000 and above category spent 5 to 19 hours a week child caregiving (36%). The 20 to 40 weekly caregiving hours category is similarly distributed for all income categories except for households with income less than \$50,000. These respondents have the greatest percentage of individuals providing constant care, especially the respondents with an average household income of less than \$25,000 (28% of respondents in this category).

Figure 6. Shares of respondents by household income and their weekly time spent caregiving (N=1,522)



Source: Inwood et al. (2024).

3 Conclusion

The current landscape of the childcare burden across the survey population groups in the NCR shows that a greater number of caregivers spend more than 5 hours a week looking after a child or children. Most of the heavier hourly burdens are taken on by women (over 20 hours a week). Men, on the other hand, usually provide childcare for less than 19 hours a week, which corroborates the literature showing that women generally spend more time than men looking after the child or children per week.

Furthermore, the analysis revealed only small differences between the number of hours spent caregiving in different residential locations across the NCR, although rural residents show a greater representation in the constant care category. Regarding marital status, respondents living with a partner provided the most care, followed by unmarried individuals. Finally, constant care is led by low-income households. The most childcare hours (constant care and 20 to 40 hours a week) is dominated by the \$50,000-\$74,999 income category.

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NCR-Stat: Caregiving Survey is the regional household survey that NCRCRD conducted in collaboration with Ohio State University and the National Farm Medicine Center. All data gathered via the NCR-Stat: Caregiving Survey are available for those who want to use the data as a baseline for further research and extend the portfolio of already existing databases. [NCR-Stat: Caregiving Dataset](https://doi.org/10.4231/Q22G-WE30)