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Visual Essay

Time use of working parents: a visual essay

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Excerpt from the visual essay:

Working parents have many constraints on their time as they try to balance paid work, childcare, household activities, shopping, and leisure activities. Data from the American Time Use Survey (ATUS) are a rich source of information about how people spend their time doing various activities.¹ This visual essay highlights how working parents spend their time on an average day. Using ATUS data, one can examine what activities parents do and how long they do them.

The ATUS enables analysts to measure how Americans spend their time in *primary* activities—their main activities, in other words. This includes the measurement of time all working parents spend providing *primary childcare*, which consists of physical care of children; playing, reading, or talking with children; travel related to childcare; and other childcare activities. For those parents with children aged 12 or younger, it is also possible to measure the amount of time spent in more passive *secondary childcare*—that is, the amount of time that they have at least one child of that age group in their care while doing activities other than primary childcare. Focusing on both primary and secondary childcare gives a more complete picture of parents' time spent providing childcare.

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Footnotes

¹ The American Time Use Survey is sponsored by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. ATUS is the first federally administered survey on time use in the United States. It provides estimates of how, where, and with whom Americans spend their time. More information is available on the Internet at www.bls.gov/tus (visited June 12, 2008).

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