

Child Care and Children's Obesity in the Preschool Year

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Why Important?

- 81% of children spend some time in non-parental care
- 12% of children considered obese at the start of kindergarten
- Parent and family influences lessen; other environmental influences become more predominant
- Child care has received little attention



This Research

- Addresses the question of the association between child care participation and obesity
- Based on a large, nationally representative sample
- Focuses on a critical age
- Includes direct assessments of child height and weight
- Makes distinctions between types of child care consistent with early care and education literature

Data and Sample



- Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—
Kindergarten Cohort
- 15,726 first-time kindergartners

Outcome Measure



Child's obesity status:

- CDC Standard: at or above 95th percentile
- Time-fixed
- Same terminology and standard as used for adults

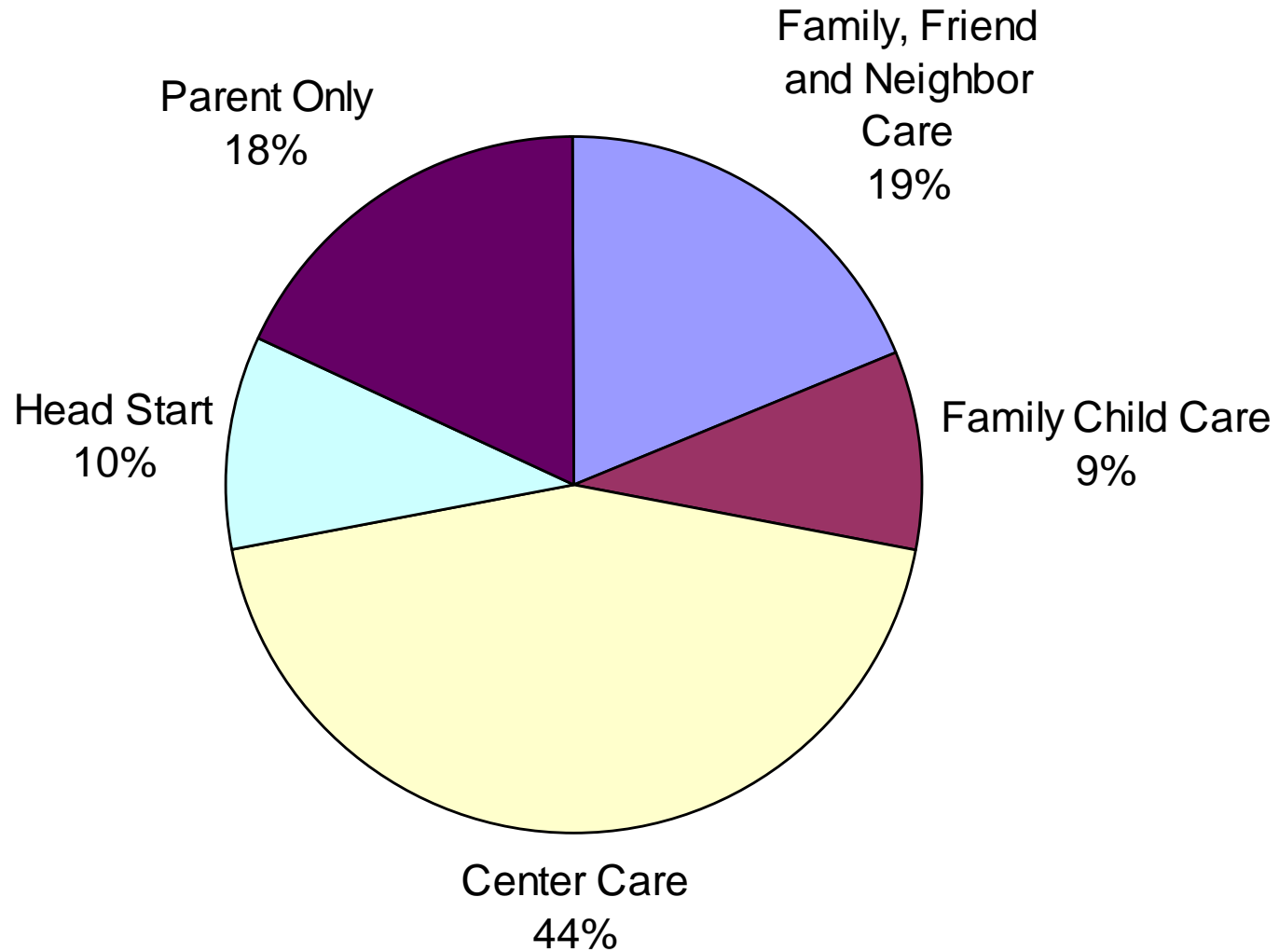
Child Care Measure



Primary Child Care Arrangement:

- Regular non-parental child care arrangement used most often
- Takes into account duration and hours per week
- Four types
 - Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN)
 - Family Child Care (FCC)
 - Head Start
 - Center
- Compared to parent only

Percent of Children with Each Type of Primary Care in the Year Prior to Kindergarten



Other Variables

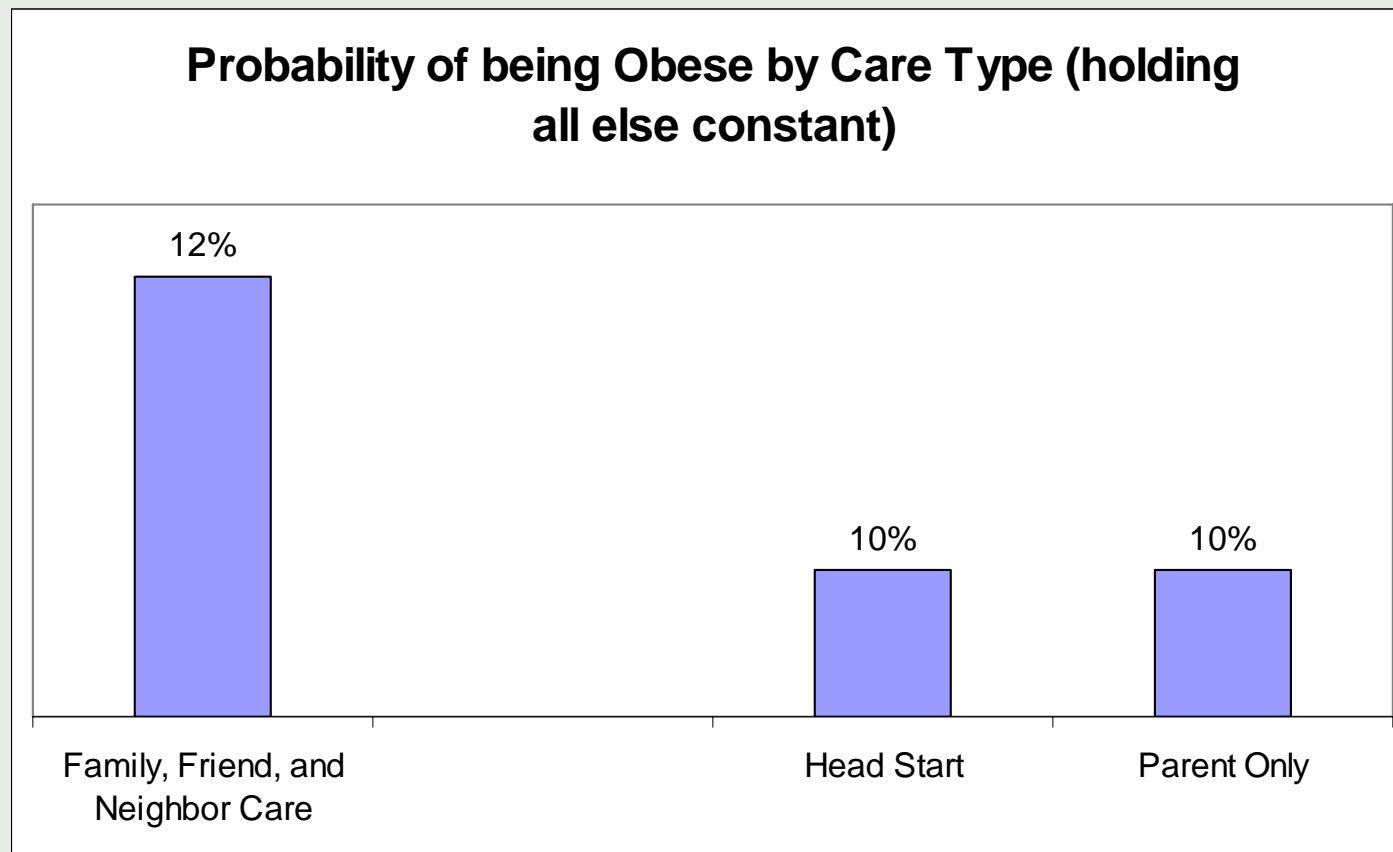


Necessary to take into account other characteristics associated with obesity and choice of child care:

- Parent
- Child
- Family
- Regional

Findings

Children in a family, friend, and neighbor care significantly more likely to be obese than children in parent only and center care.

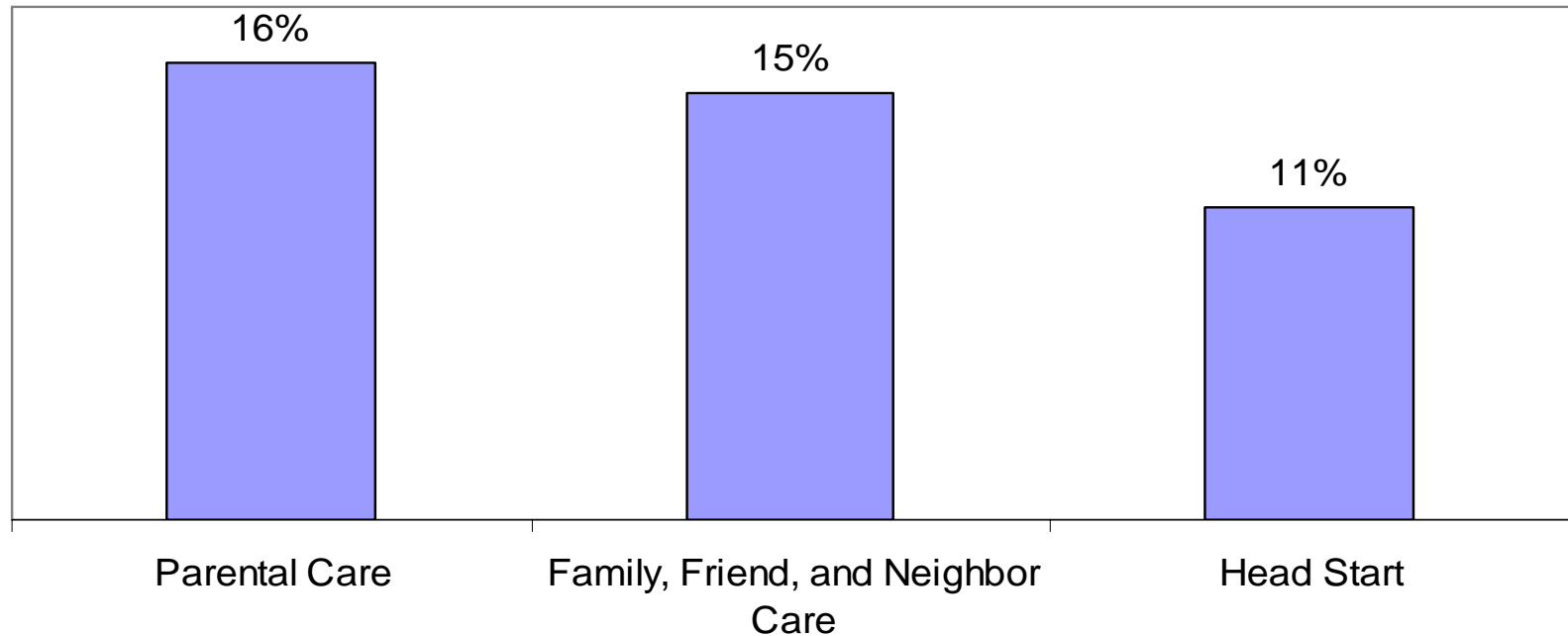


Findings

Some types of child care may provide a protective effect for Hispanic children.



Probability of Hispanic Children Being Obese by Care Type (holding all else constant)





Limitations...

- The 'why' is missing
- Results at a broad level of generality
- Causation cannot be established
- Lack of precision in care categories
- Policy implications limited by lack of information



Research and Policy Implications

- Need a better understanding of FFN environments to target outreach and education.
- Need a better understanding of the social, cultural, and economic influences of home and child care environments for Hispanic children
- Need to look at points of engagement:
 - Child care providers
 - Medical practitioners
 - Food programs
 - Public awareness campaigns