

Community and Interpersonal Context: Creating Sustainable Careers for Dual-Earner Families: What is the Role of the Community?



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What do we mean by community?

- Geographical locale where employees reside
- Where most of their children attend school





Community can be described by its resources:

- Caring neighbors
- Good schools
- Libraries
- Well-lit playgrounds
- Sidewalks, bike trails
- Community facilities for teens
- Healthcare services
- Safe and adequate transportation
- Preschool and after-school programs
- Cultural events sponsorship
- Retail business zones
- Elder-care services



Community Resources

- After-school arrangements

- Adequate transportation to and from:
 - Work
 - School
 - After school

- Schools



Resource Availability vs. Resource Accessibility



Resource Accessibility

Community-resource fit:

The degree to which community resources are perceived as meeting the needs of working families.

Demographic Trends of Families

- 59.5% are dual-earner couples.
- 70% of dual-earner couples have children.
- 49% of all women are employed.

Residence/Commuting Trends

- Employees are moving to lower-cost suburbs.
- Workplaces are moving to lower-cost suburbs.



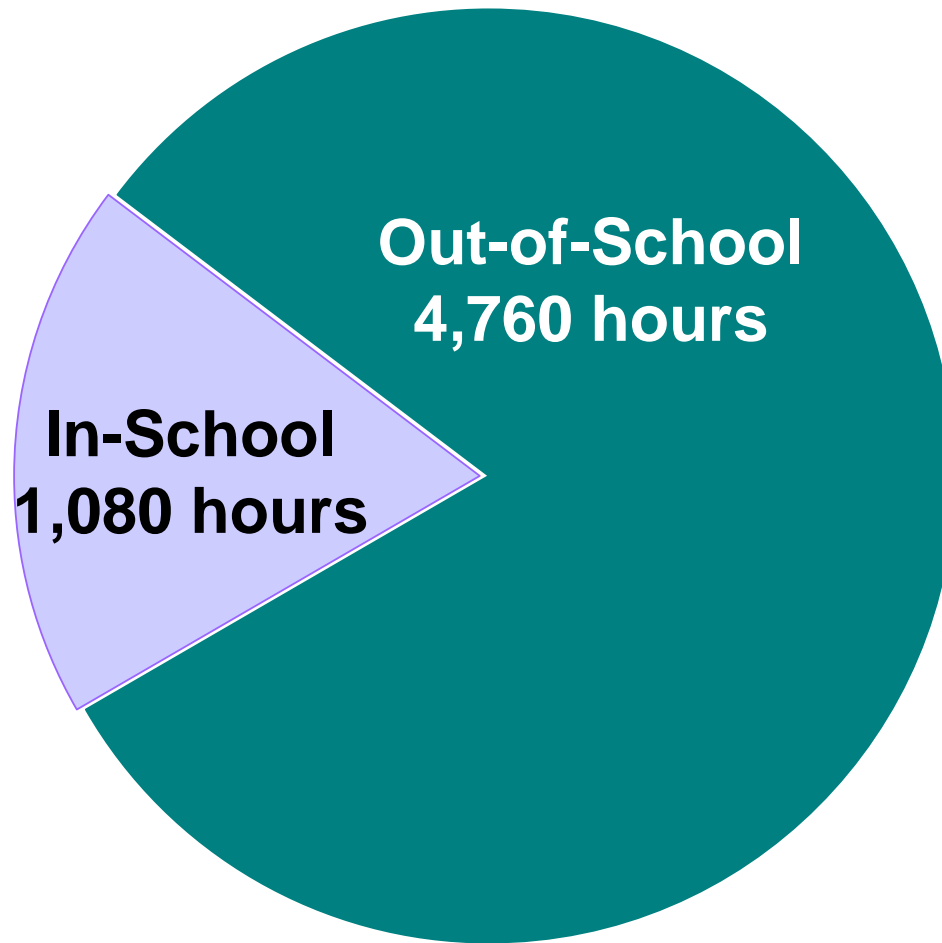
Transportation Needs

Adequate suburb-to-suburb transportation.

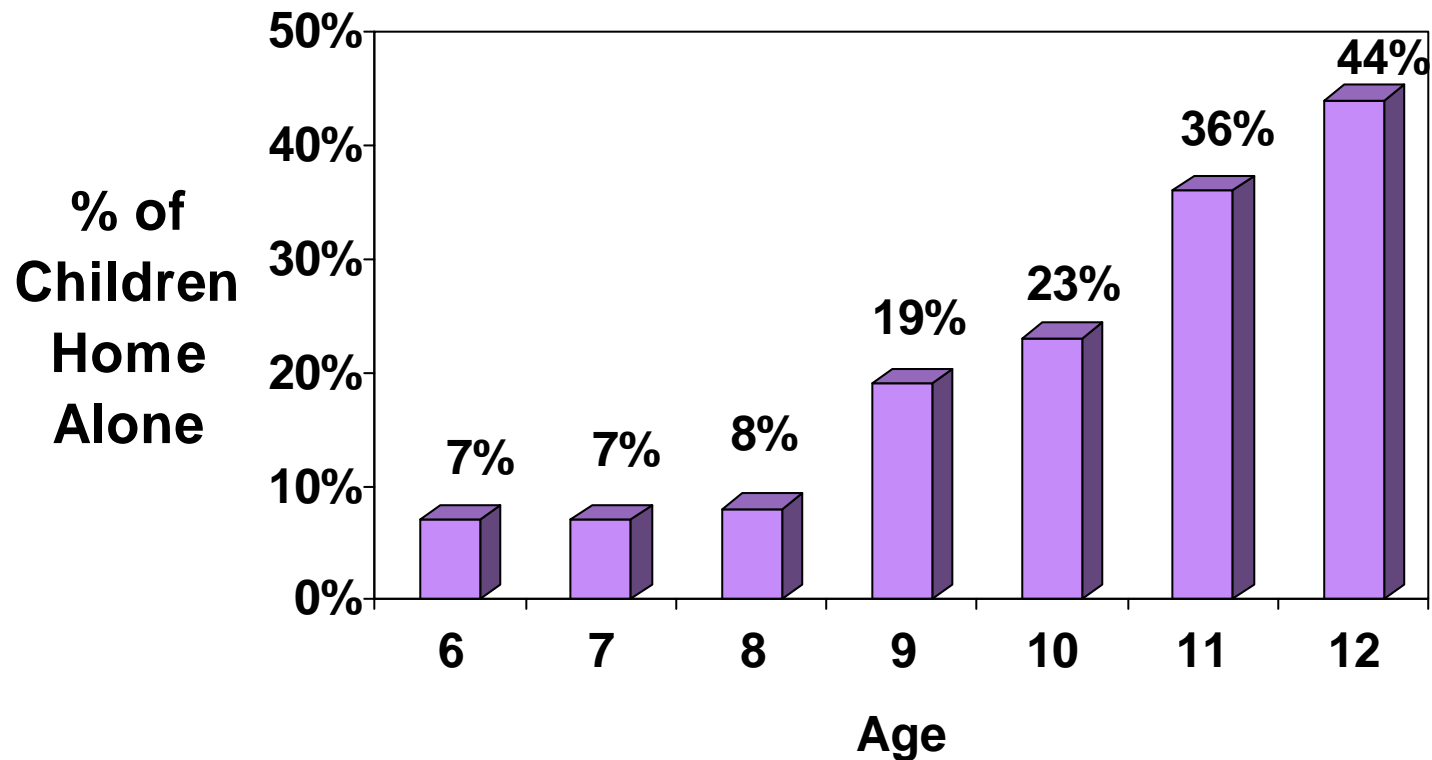
Currently, such transportation is

- Indirect,
- Lengthy, and
- Subject to breakdown.

Out-of-School Hours



Children Home Alone After School



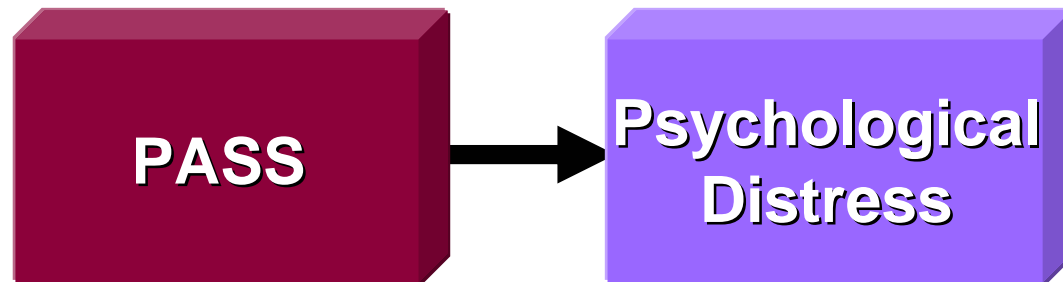
Source: Putnam, R. D., 2000. *Bowling Alone: The collapse and revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster. 2000. *Better Together: Report of the Saguaro Seminar on civic engagement in America*. Cambridge, MA: John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.



“Our findings strongly suggest that community resources are more important than individual or family characteristics – including mother’s employment status, family background, family income, and child’s gender – in determining how children spend their after-school time.”

Current Status of Our Research: PASS Study

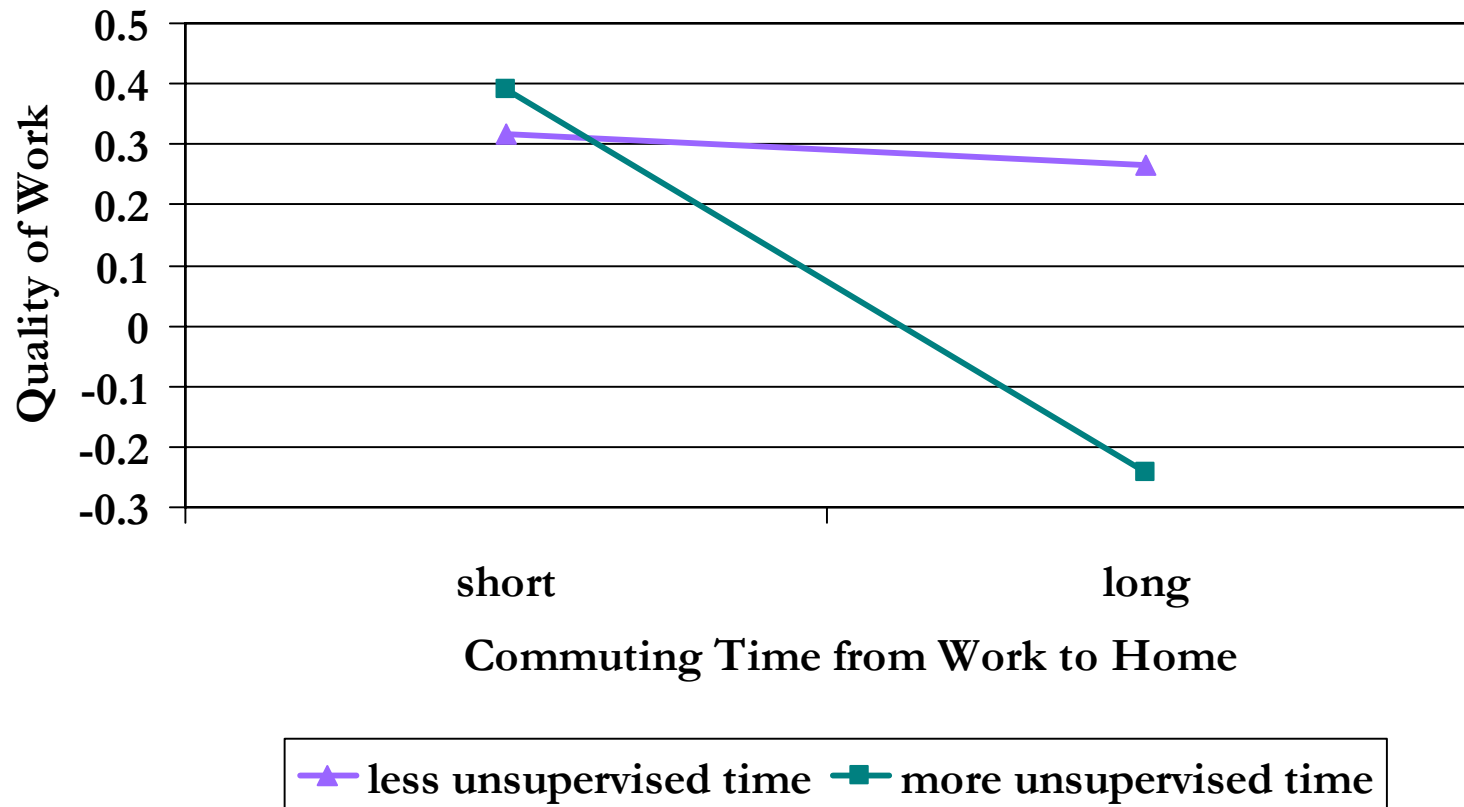
Parental after-school stress
(PASS) is related to
psychological distress.





Parents with lower satisfaction with their child's after-school arrangement report higher PASS; this relationship was extremely strong ($r = .80$).

Effects of Long Commutes



Schedule Mismatches: Transportation Study

Often school start times are not well synchronized with the commuter train schedule. As a result, many parents have to drive to work or take a train that makes them late for work.

The left side of the slide features a vertical stack of four images. From top to bottom: a clock with a blue face and black hands on a red background; a clock with a yellow face and black hands on a blue background; a stack of books with a red cover on a green background; and a stack of books with a blue cover on a purple background.

Schedule Mismatches

Sometimes elementary schools and pre-school programs within the same school building are not coordinated, requiring parents to wait 15 or more minutes to drop off their child at the pre-school class after dropping off their older child.



Policies

- Align bus, train, recreation, and school schedules.
- Schedule public transportation to match nonstandard work schedules.
- Provide adequate parking at train and bus stations.
- Offer reduced-rate transit passes to employees to encourage more ridership.
- Site child-care centers adjacent to public transportation stations.
- Provide sidewalks or safe street crossings for school children.
- Install adequate street lighting.



Current Study of Working Families with School-Age Child(ren)

- Dual-earner
- Two-parent, single-earner
- Single parent
- Grandparent with primary responsibility for a school-age child



Research Goal

To enhance the ability of working families to manage their work and family responsibilities through increased community-resource fit.