

National Database Of Childcare Prices

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## **Summary of Analysis**

This report provides an in-depth analysis of childcare costs across the U.S. over a decade, from 2008 to 2018. The study identifies national trends, regional disparities, and socioeconomic impacts associated with childcare costs. Specifically, the report explores how rising childcare costs have influenced labor force participation, particularly for low- and middle-income families. By leveraging a national dataset that encompasses various aspects of childcare expenses and socioeconomic factors, this report aims to illuminate the growing burden of childcare costs on American families. The findings contribute to a broader understanding of the need for targeted policies that address affordability and accessibility. As a result, the analysis leads to data-driven policy recommendations that encourage government intervention and employer-supported childcare initiatives.

## **Findings**

The analysis revealed several critical findings. First, the national trend indicates that childcare costs have risen by approximately 15% over the last decade, with the most significant increases occurring between 2012 and 2015. This national rise is indicative of a growing financial burden on families. Second, the report highlights notable regional disparities in childcare costs. For instance, the Northeast and West Coast have the highest average costs for toddler care, often exceeding \$15,000 annually.

In contrast, Midwestern and Southern states tend to have lower average costs, ranging between \$8,000 and \$10,000 per year. Third, the study identifies a strong correlation between childcare costs and labor force participation among women. Higher childcare costs are associated with reduced workforce participation, particularly among low- and middle-income households, underscoring the socioeconomic impact of childcare expenses on family and career choices.

### **Assumptions**

Several assumptions were made in conducting this analysis. The first assumption pertains to the constancy of income levels; median household income data was presumed to remain stable over the study period, though fluctuations may impact childcare affordability in reality. Second, the calculation of national averages assumes that data from individual states represents broader regional trends, which may only partially capture intra-state variations. Finally, to address incomplete datasets, some missing values were imputed based on state and regional averages, assuming that these imputations would reflect general patterns in childcare costs.

### **Items that Still Need Clarification**

Some aspects of the analysis require further clarification. For example, certain states offer subsidies or financial assistance programs that may have yet to be fully captured in the dataset, potentially skewing state comparisons. Additionally, while there is a clear correlation between high childcare costs and lower labor force participation, other variables—such as the availability of remote work or flexible work policies—may also influence this relationship. Future analyses

may benefit from incorporating these variables to obtain a more nuanced understanding of the impacts of childcare costs on employment.

### **Direction of Story/Plan of Attack/Message**

The central message of this analysis is that the rising cost of childcare poses a significant burden on American families, particularly in regions with high expenses. The study emphasizes addressing these disparities through targeted subsidies and employer-supported childcare initiatives. Such policies could relieve financial pressures and improve workforce participation rates, especially among women. This report intends to influence policymakers to make childcare more affordable and accessible at a national level.

### **Target Audience**

The target audience for this report includes government analysts, policymakers, and research institutions. These groups can influence public policy, allocate funding, and design strategies to tackle childcare affordability issues. By targeting these audiences, the report aims to encourage the development and implementation data-driven policies to reduce the financial strain on families and support broader economic participation.

### **Mediums Included and Rationale**

The report incorporates three primary mediums to present the analysis: an interactive dashboard, a detailed written report, and a PowerPoint presentation. The interactive dashboard was selected to allow decision-makers to explore the data at national, state, and regional levels,

providing the flexibility to examine specific trends in childcare costs. The written report delivers a comprehensive, data-rich analysis for expert audiences, fully understanding the study's findings, methodology, and recommendations. Lastly, the PowerPoint presentation serves as a visual summary of key findings while presenting critical information to stakeholders in an easily digestible format.

## **Design Decisions**

Careful consideration was given to color choices, layout, and interactivity in designing the visualizations. A consistent color scheme was applied, with a light-to-dark gradient to highlight disparities in childcare costs across regions. Higher costs were represented with darker shades, making it easier for viewers to identify high-cost areas. Each chart was placed to ensure a logical flow, from national trends to regional breakdowns, leading to the final policy recommendations. Additionally, tooltips and interactive elements were incorporated into the dashboard to let users explore the data in-depth, providing context without overwhelming them.

## **Ethical Considerations**

The analysis adhered to ethical standards in data processing and presentation. Missing values were imputed to maintain consistency across the dataset, and all transformations were documented transparently to inform users of any data changes. Legal and regulatory guidelines concerning data protection were strictly followed, particularly concerning state-level data, ensuring no personally identifiable information (PII) was used. Certain outliers in childcare costs

were excluded to avoid skewing national trends; however, these decisions were documented, allowing users to access the complete dataset in the appendices if needed.

### **Data Sourcing and Verification**

The data was sourced from a reputable national database that collects information from state agencies and national surveys. To ensure data credibility, additional verification was conducted by comparing specific state-level data with publicly available reports. The data was ethically sourced from government-authorized sources, and no private or unauthorized data was used. Potential biases introduced through data imputation or outlier exclusion were documented, allowing users to interpret the findings with full awareness of any assumptions made.

### **Lessons Learned**

Reflecting on this project, I learned several key lessons. I aim to obtain more granular, localized data in future studies to enhance understanding of childcare cost variations within states. Additionally, incorporating qualitative data from parent or employer surveys could provide valuable context to support the quantitative findings. The most rewarding aspect of this project was the creation of the interactive dashboard, which enabled me to present the data in an engaging, user-friendly way, helping stakeholders understand complex trends more intuitively.

## References

U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau. (n.d.). *Childcare*. U.S. Department of Labor.

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/wb/topics/featured-childcare>