

Project Milestone 5

Saravanan Janarthanan

DSC640 Data Presentation & Visualization, Bellevue University

Professor: Catherine Williams

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National Database of Childcare Prices

Introduction

This project analyzes the National Database of Childcare Prices to identify stories that highlight rising childcare expenses and explore actionable solutions to address this challenge.

Dataset used for the project

This dataset, spanning 2008-2018, was compiled from various US statistical sources to analyze the impact of childcare costs on employment.

It includes

- Geographic data (state and county),
- Demographic information (unemployment and labor force participation rates by age and gender, median household income by age and gender, total population, racial group percentages including multi-racial identification, total households),
- Employment data (number of households with employed parents, children's ages), and childcare pricing data.
- The pricing data includes median and 75th percentile prices for center-based care, broken down by age group, and flags indicating where data imputation was used.

Imputations were carried out as

Data imputation has been performed to standardize the dataset.

This involved: standardizing age group definitions across states, updating previously reported data to the current year, filling in missing yearly data, and converting median childcare prices to a consistent time unit (e.g., all to monthly).

Following ICF standards were followed to normalize the data

- Infant: 0-11 months (or 0-23 months if no "pretoddler" definition given)
- Pretoddler: 12-23 months (often combined with infant)

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- Toddler: 24-35 months
- Pre-Kindergarten: 36-60 months (and not yet in school)
- School Age

Story Summary

- Would like to present the childcare prices and their impact on employment (one parent working, or 2 parent working).
- Call out or solutions to resolve the issue

1. Summary of Analysis

The analysis focuses on the rising cost of childcare and its profound economic and social impacts on families, employment, and broader economic structures. The increasing expenses associated with childcare place financial pressure on parents, often forcing them to make difficult career and lifestyle decisions. The analysis evaluates the disparities in childcare costs across different age groups, the gendered implications of these costs, and the policy measures that can mitigate these challenges.

Findings

- Childcare costs have risen dramatically, reaching \$17,000 annually for infants and remaining high for other age groups.
- This financial burden forces many parents, especially mothers, to reduce work hours or leave the workforce entirely, resulting in a 13% drop in maternal workforce participation.
- The financial burden of childcare impacts productivity and GDP. Each dollar invested in childcare yields an estimated \$7 return through various economic benefits.
- Policy solutions being considered include expanded childcare subsidies and tax credits. Employers are also exploring flexible work, stipends, and childcare partnerships.

Assumptions

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- The analysis assumes a steady increase in childcare costs over time, making financial pressures on families more severe.
- Workforce participation trends remain consistent, with childcare costs disproportionately impacting women.
- Proposed policy changes and employer childcare support programs are projected to boost workforce participation and economic productivity.
- Investing in childcare yields significant societal benefits, including enhanced childhood development and reduced long-term social welfare expenditures.

Items that still need clarification

- What are the potential barriers, economic and social, to implement proposed subsidies and tax credits at a policy level?
- Are there long-term impacts of flexible work arrangements and employer-supported childcare initiatives on business profitability and employee retention?
- Is the children's early development impact quantifiable due to limited childcare access, to aid the change or reforms?

2. Story Message

- The core message is that rising childcare costs are not just a personal or family-level issue but a broader economic challenge that requires intervention from policymakers, employers, and communities.
- By expanding childcare access and financial support mechanisms, we can enhance workforce participation, promote gender equity, and stimulate economic growth.
- Solutions must be multi-faceted, involving direct subsidies, employer-driven benefits, and community-based initiatives to ensure accessibility and affordability for all families.

3. Target Audience

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Policymakers: Government officials responsible for budget allocations, subsidies, and tax credit initiatives.

Employers: Corporate leaders and HR professionals who can implement childcare support policies.

Community Leaders: Organizations and advocacy groups working to expand childcare networks and provide financial assistance to families.

Parents and Caregivers: Individuals directly impacted by rising childcare costs, advocating for policy changes and employer support.

4. Mediums to present

Blog

- The blog medium helps to for disseminate information widely, the blog platform allows for comments, discussions, and other forms of feedback from readers, enabling audience engagement and providing insights into public perception and experiences. The blog format, encourages readers to spread the message among their personal networks, including friends, family, and colleagues, such as social media, email, and online forums.
- The intended audience for this information includes all responsible members of the community that includes employers, government officials, policy makers and parents. It aims to reach employers and encourage them to consider the needs of working parents in their policies and practices and also help bring the issues to the attention of government officials and policymakers, potentially influencing policy decisions and resource allocation.

PowerPoint presentation

- A presentation is chosen as the medium, as it offers a direct, face-to-face opportunity to communicate. This allows for immediate feedback, questions, and discussion, fostering a more interactive experience and influential in persuading or informing key stakeholders.
- The target audience includes employers, government officials, and policymakers who can address the burdens of rising childcare costs for parents.

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Infographics

The infographics are designed to engage community stakeholders, employers, policymakers and Parents.

It will highlight the escalating costs of childcare and their repercussions for families, employment, and the economy. It will present data on childcare expenses categorized by children's age groups, and quantify the impact on parents, such as those who stay home, accept less desirable jobs, work shifts, quit their jobs, or reduce their work hours to manage childcare costs.

5. Design Decisions

Blog

Visualization:

Visualization Aesthetics: Visual elements will incorporate soft, easy-on-the-eyes colors with a clean and uncluttered design to enhance readability. It will prioritize clear and impactful visuals and effectively convey the core message.

Data Visualization: Charts and infographics illustrate the increasing financial burden of raising children over time, highlighting the challenges parents face in balancing work and family life. These visuals compare childcare expenses to other household costs and average incomes while showcasing the disproportionate impact of childcare responsibilities on women

Headline and section heading: A compelling headline will draw readers in, while bolded section headings and highlighted key points will emphasize the urgent need for community leaders to support working parents.

Presentation

- **Color Themes:**
 - **Red-Shaded Theme for Parents' Challenges:** Emphasizes the urgency of rising childcare costs and financial stress on families.

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- **Grey-Brown Theme for Stakeholder Callouts:** Provides a professional, neutral tone for discussions directed at policymakers and employers.
- ***Bold Capitalized Headings:*** Ensures key points are clearly visible and engaging.
- ***Strategic Placement of Data Points:*** Enhances the flow of the presentation, progressively leading from problem identification to proposed solutions.
- ***Customization of Visuals:*** Each slide's content aligns with its intended audience, using relevant data visualization tools to reinforce the core message.

Info Graphics

- ***Use of Icons:*** Each section includes icons that visually represent the core message of the header or section to enhance clarity and engagement.
- ***Emphasis on Numbers:*** Key figures are bolded to strengthen their impact and reinforce the message.
- ***Color Coding:***
 - **Red:** Highlights rising costs and economic burdens.
 - **Green:** Emphasizes action items and proposed solutions.
 - **Blue:** Serves as the primary color for conveying general information.
- ***Icon Styling:*** Icons are designed in either a single color or multiple colors, depending on the section's context. If an icon represents a singular entity, a uniform color is used for simplicity and coherence.

6. Ethical Considerations

- No Changes were made to the publicly available government dataset.
- Childcare cost and employment metrics were derived from publicly available data, published sources, and reputable news feeds.
- No data was transformed or misrepresented; information is presented as sourced, with only phrasing adjustments for clarity within the chosen medium.
- However, the claim that each dollar invested yields a seven-fold return requires further scrutiny and detailed analysis.

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- Similarly, the long-term economic impact of early childcare investment on GDP requires further, quantifiable study.
- Given the accurate representation and lack of data manipulation, there are no apparent ethical implications.

7. Lessons Learned

- What would you do differently next time?
 - Would shorten long sentences, breaking them down into smaller, more impactful units to improve readability.
 - Would streamline the visuals, removing any that don't directly contribute to the core message.
- What did you enjoy the most?
 - Enjoyed developing the blog and presentation. Creating the infographics was a rewarding challenge, especially fitting a lot of data into a limited space