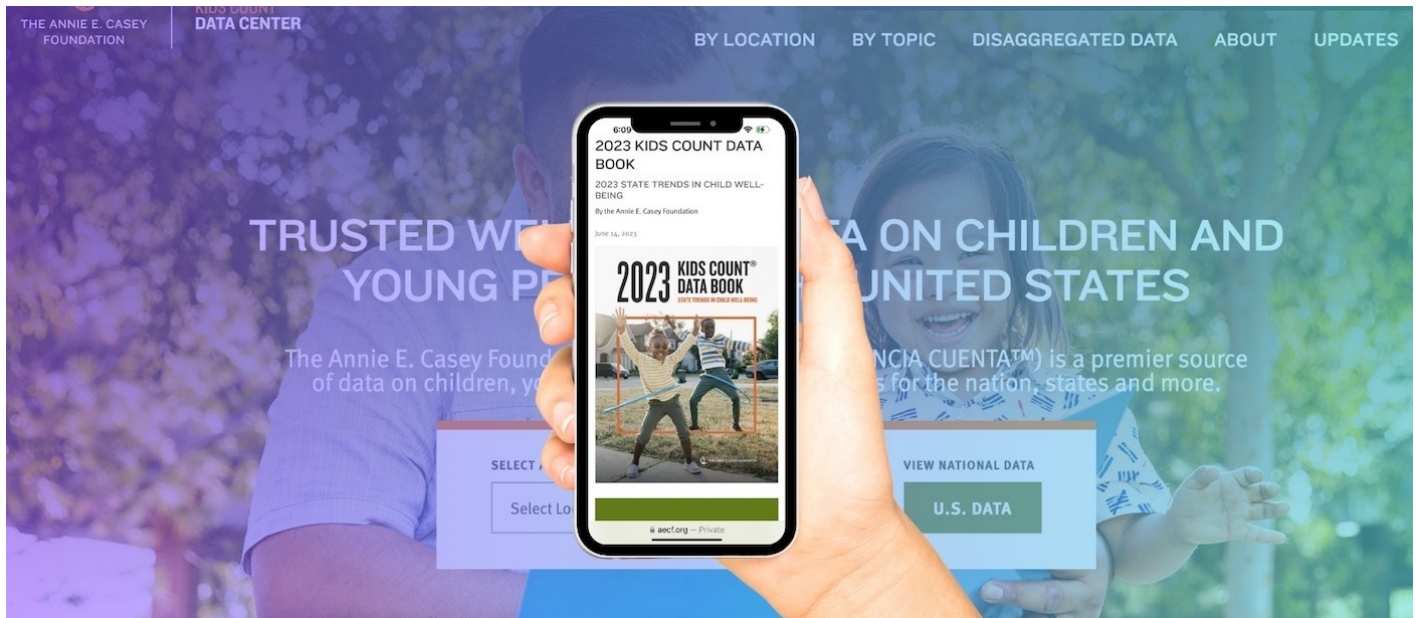


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Written by: Laneta Fitisemanu



Utah Shines in Child Well-Being Rankings, Yet the Strain of Inaccessible, Unaffordable Child Care Pushes Parents to the Breaking Point

Utah made significant strides in overall child well-being, moving up to second place in the country from fourth last year, according to the [2023 KIDS COUNT® Data Book](#), a 50-state report of recent household data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation that analyzes how children and families are faring. However, our country's lack of affordable and accessible child care short-changes children and causes parents in Utah to frequently miss work or even quit their jobs, while those who can find care pay dearly for it. These child care challenges cost the American economy billions of dollars a year and stymie women professionally.

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BEST	BETTER	WORSE	WORST
1. New Hampshire	13. Idaho	26. Oregon	39. Arizona
2. Utah	14. Virginia	27. Wyoming	40. Kentucky
3. Massachusetts	15. Colorado	28. Missouri	41. South Carolina
4. Vermont	16. Washington	29. Ohio	42. West Virginia
5. Minnesota	17. Kansas	30. New York	43. Arkansas
6. Iowa	18. Montana	31. Florida	44. Texas
7. New Jersey	19. Illinois	32. Michigan	45. Alabama
8. Nebraska	20. Rhode Island	33. North Carolina	46. Oklahoma
9. Connecticut	21. Maryland	34. Delaware	47. Nevada
10. Wisconsin	22. Pennsylvania	35. California	48. Mississippi
11. North Dakota	23. South Dakota	36. Tennessee	49. Louisiana
12. Maine	24. Indiana	37. Georgia	50. New Mexico
	25. Hawaii	38. Alaska	

The Data Book reports that too many parents cannot secure child care compatible with work schedules and commutes. In addition, the Data Book reports that in 2020—21, 13% of Utah children birth to age five lived in families in which someone quit, changed, or refused a job because of problems with child care. And women are five to eight times more likely than men to experience negative employment consequences related to caregiving.

Even if parents can find an opening at child care near their home, they often can't pay for it. Utah's average cost of center-based child care for toddlers was \$9,003 per year, 9% of the median income of a married couple and 24% of a single mother's income in the state.

While the cost of care burdens families, child care workers are paid worse than 98% of professions. Median national pay for child care workers was \$28,520 per year or \$13.71 an hour in 2022, less than the wage for retail (\$14.26) and customer service (\$18.16) workers.

According to one study, the failings of the child care market also affect the current and future health of the American economy, costing \$122 billion a year in lost earnings, productivity, and tax revenue. These challenges put parents under

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tremendous stress to meet the dual responsibilities of providing for their families and ensuring their children are safe and nurtured.

Each year, the Data Book ranks the states according to how children are faring, presenting national and state data from 16 indicators in four domains — economic well-being, Utah ranked 2nd, education 6th, health 18th, and family and community factors 1st. Utah's overall rank of second in the country reflects how Utah's decision-makers and community partners have bolstered policies supporting child well-being.

[VIEW 2023 KIDS COUNT BOOK](#)