

It's Official: Access to Licensed Child Care Statewide is Really Bad (and Getting Worse)

Published: Thursday, 08 June 2023 15:24

Written by: Jenna Williams



We know that Utah's child care crisis is bad, and is going to get worse. New data helps illustrate exactly how bad the situation is, in each county across the state.

Next week Voices for Utah Children will release a report titled, "Mapping Care for Kids: A County-Level Look at Utah's Crisis in Licensed Child Care." The report includes more detailed county-level analysis and data highlighting the inaccessibility of care and financial challenges faced by families and child care professionals. In addition, the report includes policy recommendations for Utah leaders to help resolve this crisis.

The full report will be available the week of October 23rd, but as a teaser, this blog highlights some key findings from the report.

There is insufficient licensed child care in Utah to meet the needs of working families.



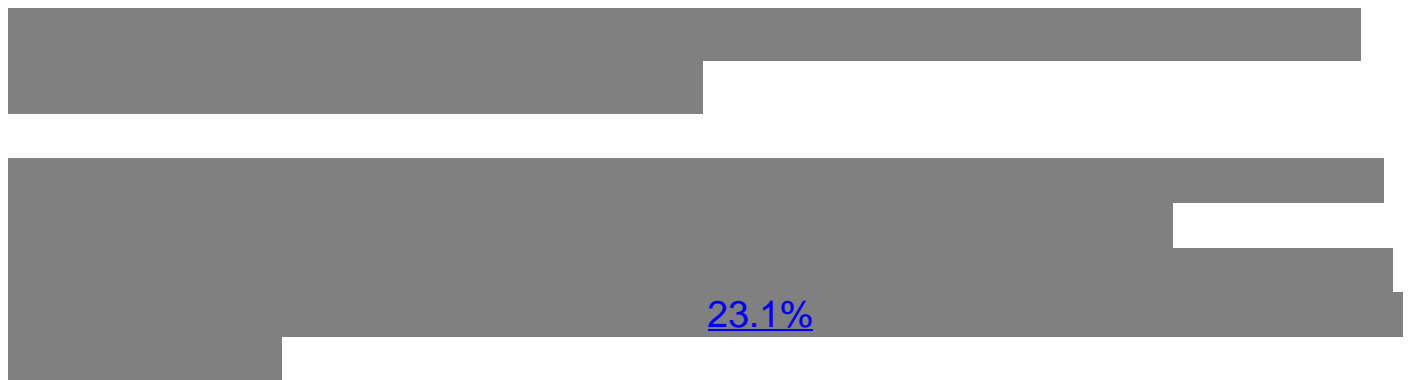
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The high cost of child care makes it even less accessible to low- and middle-income families, and rural families struggle most.

The average annual cost of care for two children under the age of six (one infant/toddler, one preschool-aged child) for a Utah family costs about **17%** of a 4-person family's income. Cost varies little between rural and urban counties, but on average household median incomes are lower in rural areas. In Grand County, with the state's lowest median annual income at \$42,654, the cost of care for a family of four would comprise about **41%** of a family's income.



With substantial public investment, Utah's licensed child care capacity has grown significantly since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thanks to federal funding streams totaling nearly \$600 million, licensed child care capacity in Utah has grown by approximately **31%** since March 2020. This growth is due primarily to child care stabilization grants made directly to licensed child care providers; those grants recently were reduced by 75%. Utah has been identified as one of six states that could see half or more of all licensed child care programs statewide close with the end of the stabilization grants.

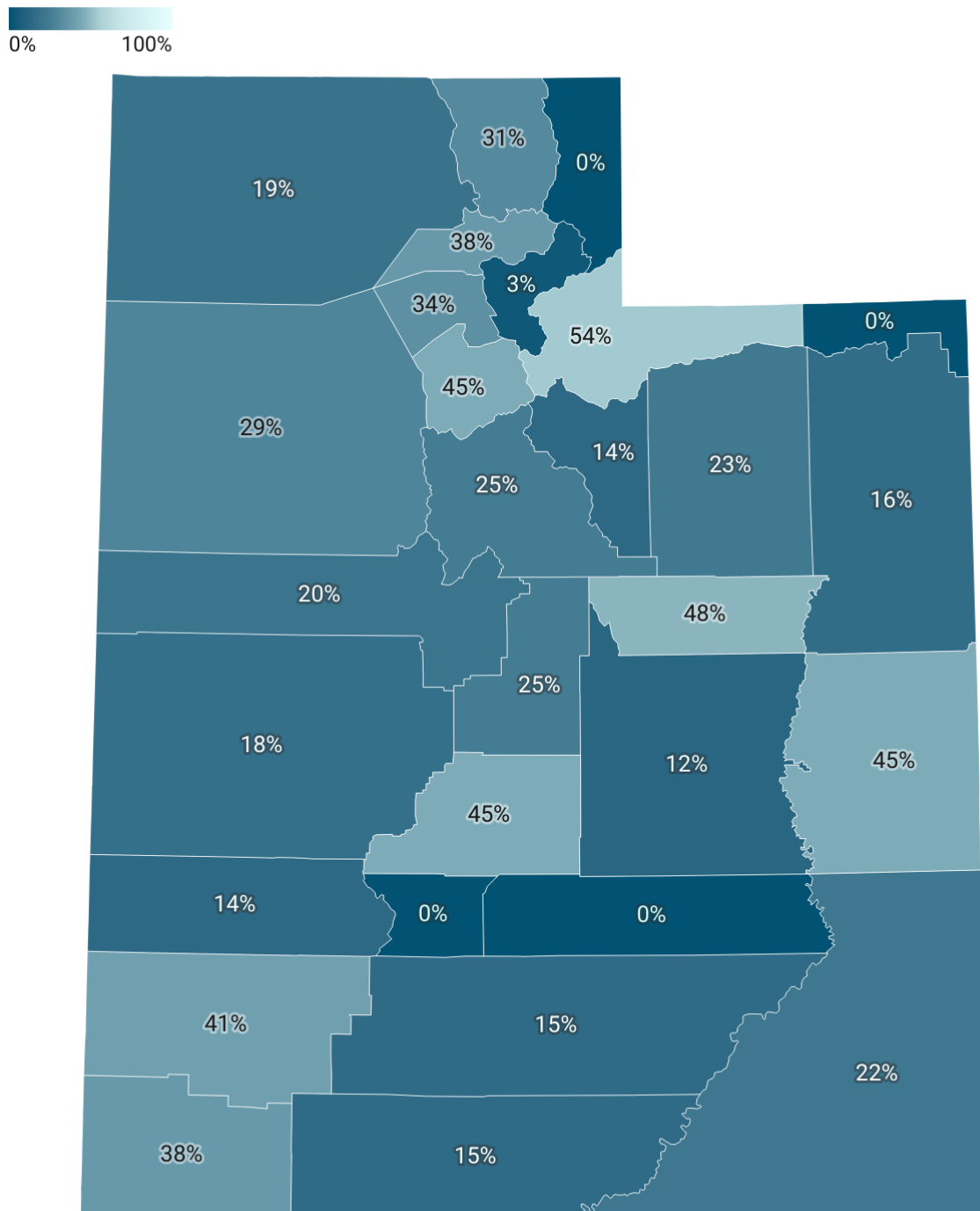
Licensed child care is insufficient in every county in Utah, though the level of unmet need varies from place to place.

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Child Care Need Fulfilled by Licensed Child Care

Percentage of licensed child care slots divided by the number of kids under 6 with all available parents in the workforce



Source: Number of children under 6 with all available parents in the workforce by age group and county provided by the ACS 2021 5-year estimates Table B23008. Licensed child care data provided by the Utah Office of Child Care as of August 2023 and tabulated by Voices for Utah Children. • Created with Datawrapper

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How does child care access and affordability compare in each county?

[Statewide](#)
[Box Elder County](#)
[Carbon County](#)
[Davis County](#)
[Emery County](#)
[Grand County](#)
[Juab County](#)
[Millard County](#)
[Piute County](#)
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[Kane County](#)
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[Rich County](#)
[San Juan County](#)
[Sevier County](#)
[Tooele County](#)
[Utah County](#)
[Washington County](#)
[Weber County](#)

Our full report, “Mapping Care for Kids: A County-Level Look at Utah’s Crisis in Licensed Child Care” will be released the week of October 23rd. For questions about the report, this blog, or sources and methodology, please contact Jenna Williams at jenna@utahchildren.org. For more information on efforts to improve Utah’s child care system or learn about the child care advocacy network, visit utahchildren.org/issues/early-childhood-education and utahcareforkids.org.