



EVERY TEXAN

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Texas ranks 44th in overall child well-being and inaccessible, unaffordable childcare pushes parents to the breaking point

50-state data report shows national economy loses \$122 billion a year and Texas loses \$11.4 billion yearly as childcare challenges cause parents to miss, quit, or scale back work

AUSTIN, TEXAS — Texas continues to rank among the worst in child well-being, according to the **2023 KIDS COUNT® Data Book** – a 50-state report of recent household data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation to analyze how children and families are faring. Among other challenges, our country's lack of affordable and accessible childcare short-changes children and causes parents in Texas to frequently miss work or even quit their jobs, while those who can find care are paying dearly for it. These childcare challenges cost the American and Texas economies billions of dollars a year and stymie women professionally.

Compared to other states, the Texas economy stands to take the second-highest loss across all 50 states from the infant and toddler childcare crisis, losing \$11.4 billion dollars annually.

Rather than making adequate investments to prepare our children to lead Texas into the future, state leaders have prioritized short-sighted public policies that benefit wealthy corporations at the expense of our kids," **said Marisa Bono, CEO of Every Texan, Texas' member of the KIDS COUNT network.** "With a historic budget surplus this legislative session, our state can afford to make long-term investments to ensure we offer every Texas child an equitable opportunity to experience a healthy, thriving childhood.

The *Data Book* reports too many parents cannot secure child care that is compatible with work schedules and commutes. In addition, the *Data Book* reports that, in 2020-21, 12% of Texas children under age five lived in families in which someone quit, changed, or refused a job because of problems with child care, which is close to the national rate of 13%. Adding to the challenge is the lack of centers in Texas offering care during non-traditional hours, which is especially challenging for hourly workers. In 2022, only 0.1% of licensed centers in the state offered care on Saturday and Sunday, according to a [study](#) by the University of Texas at Austin.

Even if parents can find an opening at child care near their home, they often can't pay for it. Texas' average cost of center-based child care for a toddler in 2021 was \$8,718, 9% of the median income of a married couple and 28% of a single parent's income in the state. In Texas, year-round, full-time infant care costs almost as much as a year of tuition at a public university.

While the cost of care burdens families, childcare workers are paid worse than 98% of professions. The national median hourly wage for childcare workers was \$13.71 an hour in 2022, less than the wage for retail (\$14.26) and customer service (\$18.16) workers. In Texas, the median hourly wage in 2022 for childcare workers was \$11.31 per hour, much lower than the national rate. Texas leads the country as the state with the highest employment levels in childcare workers, who are disproportionately women of color. They have one of the most important jobs in our society and should be paid family-supporting wages.

The failings of the childcare market also affect the current and future health of the American economy, costing \$122 billion a year in lost earnings, productivity, and tax revenue, according to one study. All of these challenges put parents under 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* presents national and state data from 16 indicators in four domains — economic well-being, education, health, and family and community factors — and ranks the states



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according to how children are faring overall. Declining further in recent years, Texas' 44th-place ranking underscores worsening conditions for Texas children and youth.

"We have solid data demonstrating the economic impact of a weak infrastructure of care. All Texans stand to benefit from improving access to child care and paying childcare workers better wages," **said Coda Rayo-Garza, Director of Research and Data at Every Texan.**

Transitioning from a faltering childcare system to a flourishing one will take new thinking and investing at the local, state, and national levels. An executive order issued by President Biden in April is aimed at expanding access, lowering costs, and raising wages. It could prove to be a helpful framework, but more is needed:

- Federal, state, and local governments should invest more in child care. State and local governments should maximize remaining pandemic recovery act dollars to fund needed child care services and capacity. While many bills were filed in the 2023 legislative session related to improving access and quality of child care, the state has committed no significant investment.
- Public and private leaders should work together to improve the infrastructure for home-based child care, beginning by lowering the barriers to entry for potential providers by increasing access to start-up and expansion capital.
- To help young parents, Congress should expand the federal Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program, which serves student parents.

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RELEASE INFORMATION

The *2023 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at www.aecf.org/databook. Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs and rankings in stories about the *Data Book* can use the KIDS COUNT Data Center at datacenter.aecf.org or access Every Texan's Kids Count Data Book and Dashboard at everytexan.org/kids-count-2022.

About Every Texan

Every Texan believes that social justice requires public policy. Since its founding in 1985, Every Texan (formerly the Center for Public Policy Priorities) has leveraged public policy to expand opportunity and equity for Texans of all backgrounds. Every Texan is an independent nonprofit organization that researches, analyzes, and advocates for public policies to achieve equitable access to quality health care, food security, education, and good jobs. Our bold, research-driven legislative priorities dare Texas leaders to make Texas the best state for hard-working people and their families. Learn more at everytexan.org.

ABOUT THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation's young people by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit www.aecf.org. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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