

UNH Research Finds Child Care Costs 'Burden' More Than 25 Percent of Families

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DURHAM, N.H. – One in four families with young children spend more than 10 percent of their family income on child care costs, according to new research from the Carsey School of Public Policy at the University of New Hampshire.

The researchers found that the average share of income spent on child care among families with young children is 8.8 percent.

Nationwide, almost 27 percent of these families, or 1.4 million, spend more than 10 percent of their income on child care. On average, poor families spend 20 percent of their income on child care, more than double the national average.

The data also revealed that more than half, 52 percent, of poor families with young children are cost burdened by child care compared to 39 percent of low income families (income between one and two times the poverty threshold) and 13 percent of families at or above five times the poverty threshold.

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“The burden of child care costs is common among American families,” the researchers said. “Nearly one in three families with young children has some child care costs, spending an average of more than \$6,500 annually. For 27 percent of those families the spending amounts to more than 10 percent of their income. This suggests a need for policies to address the affordability of child care for very low income families.”

The research was conducted by Beth Mattingly, director of research on vulnerable families at the Carsey School and a research assistant professor of sociology; Andrew Schaefer, a vulnerable families research scientist at the Carsey School and a doctoral candidate in sociology; and Jessica Carson, a vulnerable families research scientist at the Carsey School. Their full report can be found here: <https://carsey.unh.edu/publication/child-care-costs>.

The Carsey School of Public Policy conducts research, leadership development, and engaged scholarship relevant to public policy. They address pressing challenges, striving for innovative, responsive, and equitable solutions at all levels of government and in the for-profit and nonprofit sectors.

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