



Methodology

Child care costs are reported at the county-level for infant child care and child care for 4-year-olds where available across the state. To determine the affordability of child care costs by county, we compared the average cost of center-based child care to household median income by county. Affordability was calculated by dividing the average cost of care in that county by the county's median income as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey.

Findings

In Massachusetts, county-level costs for center-based infant care were at least, if not more than, twice what is considered affordable for married couples. Center-based infant care is least affordable in *Suffolk County*, where the city of Boston is located. In *Suffolk County*, the average percentage of median income for a married couple to cover infant child care costs is nearly three times the affordability recommendation.

Other counties ranked least affordable in the state were similarly unaffordable, based on the median income for

area residents. *Essex* and *Middlesex* counties, located in the northeast region of the state, may experience high child care costs relative to resident median income due to those counties' proximity to *Suffolk County* and the city of Boston.

Nantucket and *Dukes* counties were the least affordable counties for family child care. Because this area is home to Martha's Vineyard, where many residents are seasonal and particularly wealthy, the affordability measures may be skewed lower than year-round residents may expect.



Table 1: Least Affordable Counties for Infant Child Care Costs by Type of Care

Rank	County	Average annual cost of infant care*	Percent median income	Difference between county-level and statewide affordability**
Center-Based (17.2%)				
1	Suffolk County	\$19,722	20.8%	-3.6%
2	Franklin County	\$14,360	16.6%	0.6%
3	Hampden County	\$15,381	16.5%	0.7%
4	Essex County	\$19,039	16.4%	0.8%
5	Middlesex County	\$22,232	16.4%	0.8%
Family Child Care (10.8%)				
1	Nantucket County	\$15,891	13.9%	-3.1%
2	Dukes County	\$13,074	13.6%	-2.8%
3	Suffolk County	\$11,464	12.1%	-1.3%
4	Franklin County	\$10,214	11.8%	-1.0%
5	Barnstable County	\$11,359	11.2%	-0.4%

Note: NR = Not Reported (meaning that data is unavailable for a given county); NA = Not Applicable

*Source: Child Care Circuit

** Affordability, or Percentage Median Income, is a comparison of average cost against county median income

Table 2: County-Level Costs by Age and Type

County	Infant Care			4-Year-Old		
	Cost*	Percentage median income**	Difference to state average	Cost*	Percentage median income**	Difference to state average
	Center-Based Care					
Barnstable County	\$16,307	16.1%	1.1%	\$12,338	12.2%	0.0%
Berkshire County	\$14,168	16.3%	0.9%	\$9,613	11.0%	1.2%
Bristol County	\$14,326	13.9%	3.3%	\$10,479	10.2%	2.0%
Dukes County	\$14,820	15.4%	1.8%	\$13,572	14.1%	-1.9%
Essex County	\$19,039	16.4%	0.8%	\$13,801	11.9%	0.3%
Franklin County	\$14,360	16.6%	0.6%	\$11,138	12.9%	-0.7%
Hampden County	\$15,381	16.5%	0.7%	\$11,338	12.1%	0.1%
Hampshire County	\$15,304	14.5%	2.7%	\$12,258	11.6%	0.6%
Middlesex County	\$22,232	16.4%	0.8%	\$16,541	12.2%	0.0%
Nantucket County	\$15,600	13.7%	3.5%	\$14,248	12.5%	-0.3%
Norfolk County	\$20,908	14.9%	2.3%	\$16,108	11.5%	0.7%
Plymouth County	\$16,817	14.4%	2.8%	\$12,675	10.9%	1.3%
Suffolk County	\$19,722	20.8%	-3.6%	\$13,565	14.3%	-2.1%
Worcester County	\$16,495	15.1%	2.1%	\$12,351	11.3%	0.9%
County	Family Child Care					
Barnstable County	\$11,359	11.2%	-0.4%	\$11,039	10.9%	-0.8%
Berkshire County	\$9,337	10.7%	0.1%	\$8,851	10.2%	-0.1%
Bristol County	\$10,459	10.2%	0.6%	\$9,916	9.7%	0.4%
Dukes County	\$13,074	13.6%	-2.8%	\$13,070	13.6%	-3.5%
Essex County	\$10,539	9.1%	1.7%	\$9,730	8.4%	1.7%
Franklin County	\$10,214	11.8%	-1.0%	\$10,079	11.6%	-1.5%
Hampden County	\$9,776	10.5%	0.3%	\$9,214	9.9%	0.2%
Hampshire County	\$11,679	11.1%	-0.3%	\$11,388	10.8%	-0.7%
Middlesex County	\$13,732	10.1%	0.7%	\$13,028	9.6%	0.5%
Nantucket County	\$15,891	13.9%	-3.1%	\$14,445	12.7%	-2.6%
Norfolk County	\$14,227	10.1%	0.7%	\$13,738	9.8%	0.3%
Plymouth County	\$12,122	10.4%	0.4%	\$11,370	9.7%	0.4%
Suffolk County	\$11,464	12.1%	-1.3%	\$9,931	10.5%	-0.4%
Worcester County	\$10,668	9.8%	1.0%	\$9,966	9.1%	1.0%

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