

People say they're not having kids because it's insanely expensive ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Have you ever thought to yourself, "Boy, I'd love to have a kid and fulfill my sole biological purpose on this planet, I just don't have literally hundreds of thousands of dollars to spend raising and caring for a child?" You're far from alone! The New York Times' Upshot on Thursday released the results of a poll, conducted by Morning Consult, about why fewer Americans are having children, and the results are still more evidence that the rising cost of everything is fucking us all over.

Of those who responded to say they've had or expect to have fewer kids than they consider ideal, 64% of those cited childcare being too expensive as one reason. Of the respondents, 36% said they struggle with work-life balance. In fact, of the top eight reasons people offered, six were related to finances—arguably seven, since not having enough time for the kids you have likely comes as a result of having to work too much.

[Bar graph available online, 'Why Young Adults Are Having Fewer Children Than Their Ideal Number']

Among those who said they don't want children at all, 31% cited child care costs, and 24% said they couldn't afford a house. The number one reason was not having leisure time, at 36%.

These results shouldn't be all that surprising. Child care costs more than college tuition and more than rent; in most of the country it's desperately out of reach for minimum wage workers. In DC, the average cost of childcare is 102% of a full-time minimum wage salary. Four states' average child care costs exceed the median rent, NPR reported in 2016, and in DC, "the average cost of full-time day care is more than 90% of median rent." So, if you're a childless sack of shit like me, imagine how your bank account would look if you had to double your biggest non-negotiable expense every month, on top of paying more for food and clothes and everything else. Mine would look, uh, bad. Really bad.

While unemployment is low and the economy is growing, wages are stagnant (for regular people, at least) and the cost of everything keeps going up. It shouldn't be prohibitively expensive to reproduce. And yet, like so many other things in our shitty world, having children is becoming something that only the well-off can comfortably afford. Except unlike taking an Uber or going on vacation, having children remains fundamental for most humans: Most people still have kids, and most people will keep having kids, however expensive it is, because the biological urge to do so is so strong. That means most people are increasingly forced to struggle and fight just to stay alive and provide a decent living for their children. And many Americans who struggle and fight still aren't able to earn enough: 21% of children in the US live in poverty.

In any society—but especially in a society as obscenely wealthy as the United States—people shouldn't fear having kids because they can't afford it. And when they do have children, they should be able to feed them, clothe them, take them to Disneyland; they should be able to buy them books, buy them toys, buy them ice cream, buy them birthday presents. Parents, too, should have time to be just...people, time to read things and relax, not spend all their time either working or parenting. Children should grow up in a world of sweet wonder and endless summers, not wondering when their mom is going to come home from her second job or whether they'll have enough to eat.

Region: United States ^[3]

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