

The child care crisis is keeping women out of the workforce ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

Excerpts from Introduction and summary

In March 2019, a group of mothers working for Amazon—known as “Momazonians”—organized an information-gathering and advocacy campaign that urged the company to provide a backup child care benefit. The group of nearly 2,000 Amazon employees with young children argues that a lack of affordable child care has prevented talented women from progressing in their careers. These mothers are “tired of seeing colleagues quit because they can’t find childcare.” The Momazonians are calling on Amazon to subsidize a backup child care option for when their primary child care arrangement falls through, similar to the benefits offered by its peers such as Apple, Microsoft, and Google. This employee-led effort demonstrates the clear connection between access to affordable, quality child care and labor force participation—especially for mothers. However, employers cannot solve the nation’s child care crisis alone, and a few days of backup child care do not meet the needs of parents who must coordinate and pay for full-time year-round care.

Today, many families with young children must make a choice between spending a significant portion of their income on child care, finding a cheaper, but potentially lower-quality care option, or leaving the workforce altogether to become a full-time caregiver. Whether due to high cost, limited availability, or inconvenient program hours, child care challenges are driving parents out of the workforce at an alarming rate. In fact, in 2016 alone, an estimated 2 million parents made career sacrifices due to problems with child care.

Child care challenges have become a barrier to work, especially for mothers, who disproportionately take on unpaid caregiving responsibilities when their family cannot find or afford child care. In a 2018 survey conducted by the Center for American Progress, mothers were 40 percent more likely than fathers to report that they had personally felt the negative impact of child care issues on their careers. Too often, mothers must make job decisions based on child care considerations rather than in the interest of their financial situation or career goals.

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