



EARLY MILESTONES
COLORADO

Child Care in Colorado: Data Essentials

QUICK FACTS AT A GLANCE

Young Children's Demographics

1. In 2023, Colorado was home to 379,117 children ages 0 to 5¹.

The number of young children in Colorado is expected to decline slightly, as fewer babies are born each year². In 2025, Colorado is expected have about a thousand fewer children ages 0 to 5 (378,051) compared to 2023³.

2. In 2023, the race/ethnic composition of children ages 0 to 4 in Colorado (308,959) was⁴:

- 48% White
- 37% Hispanic or Latino
- 6% Multiracial
- 5% Black
- 5% Asian
- <.5% American Indian or Alaskan Native

¹ Colorado Children's Campaign. 2025. *KIDS COUNT in Colorado! Data Book 2025*. Denver, CO: Colorado Children's Campaign. Retrieved June 3, 2025 (<https://www.coloradokids.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/KIDS-COUNT-2025-ENG-PDF-LINKS-5.28.25.pdf>).

² Colorado State Demography Office. 2025. *2023 Population Summary Report*. Denver, CO. Retrieved June 3, 2025 (<https://demography.dola.colorado.gov/assets/html/coc.html>).

³ Colorado State Demography Office. 2025 "County Single Year of Age Lookup Tool." Retrieved June 3, 2025 (https://demography.dola.colorado.gov/assets/lookups/county_sya_lookup.html).

⁴ Annie E. Casey Foundation. 2023. "Child Population by Race and Ethnicity and Age Group in Colorado." KIDS COUNT Data Center. Retrieved June 3, 2025 (<https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/8446-child-population-by-race-and-ethnicity-and-age-group?loc=1&loct=1>).

Cost of Child Care

1. Colorado ranks 6th in terms of *the least affordable states* for child care⁵.

This ranking is based on the overall average cost across the state for home- and center-based care for children of all ages.

See data from the full 2023 Child Care Aware Affordability analysis [here](#).

2. In Colorado, the average price of child care in *any setting*, for a young child (under 6) within *any age group*, is higher than the 7% of median family income that is considered affordable by the US Department of Health and Human Services⁶.

This is based on the average price of child care by child's age and child care setting compared to the median income for single- and married-parent families in Colorado.

Read the 2024 Child Care Aware Colorado fact sheet [here](#).

3. In Colorado, the average price of child care is:

- **\$13,666** per year for an **infant** in **family child care**
- **\$13,666** per year for a **toddler** in **family child care**
- **\$20,978** per year for an **infant** in **center-based care**
- **\$17,479** per year for a **toddler** in **center-based care**

Read the 2024 Child Care Aware Colorado fact sheet [here](#).

Child Care Supply

1. Colorado only has licensed child care spots for roughly 20% of its infants and toddlers⁷.

Colorado is experiencing a shortage of licensed child care availability, especially for the state's youngest children (ages 0 to 3). In 2024, 4 out of 5 infants and toddlers in Colorado lacked a licensed child care spot. As a result, most infants and toddlers in

⁵ Child Care Aware of America. 2023. "Child Care at a Standstill: 2023 Affordability Analysis." Retrieved June 2, 2025 (https://info.childcareaware.org/hubfs/2023_Affordability_Analysis.pdf).

⁶ Child Care Aware of America. 2024. "Child Care in America: 2024 Price & Supply." Retrieved June 2, 2025 (<https://www.childcareaware.org/price-landscape24/>).

⁷ Freeman Cenegy, Laura. 2024. "The Colorado Child Care Challenge: Capacity for Infants and Toddlers." Denver: Early Milestones Colorado. Retrieved June 2, 2025 ([EM-009-Child-Care-Capacity_OneSheet_r2.pdf](#)).

Colorado need to be cared for by a parent or guardian, FFN caregiver, or unlicensed provider.

Read Early Milestones Colorado's 2024 research brief [here](#).

- 2. Colorado only has licensed child care spots for roughly two-thirds of children ages 0 to 5 in households with all parents in the workforce⁸.**

Child Care Demand

- 1. Roughly half of children age 3 and under in Colorado are cared for by a parent or family member⁹.**

This is based on representative, longitudinal data from the Health eMoms survey (now Baby & You). This survey followed Colorado families with children born between 2018 and 2020. When children were 1 year old, 54% of families reported staying home with their child. When children were 3 years old, slightly fewer (49%) families reported staying home with their child.

- 2. Almost half of parents who stay home with their young children prefer to do so (45%)⁷.**
- 3. About a third of parents who stay home with their young children are doing so because the cost of child care is too high (35%)⁷.**

Read the full report from CDPHE on findings from the Baby & You survey (formerly Health eMoms) [here](#).

⁸ Colorado Children's Campaign. 2025. "2025 KIDS COUNT in Colorado! Data Book." Retrieved June 10, 2025 (<https://www.coloradokids.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/KIDS-COUNT-2025-ENG-PDF-LINKS-5.28.25.pdf>).

⁹ Colorado Department of Health and Environment. 2024. "Child Care Access in Colorado." Retrieved June 3, 2025 (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/11PpoF5DK5YaYKMDgm44yoFeNT0JxnvIj/view>)

CCCAP

- 1. As of June 1, 2025, 20 Colorado counties had implemented a CCCAP freeze, and 4 Colorado counties had implemented a waitlist¹⁰.**

What does this mean for families?

Families who are already enrolled in CCCAP are NOT impacted by a CCCAP freeze or waitlist in their county. These families are not affected *unless* they miss their redetermination deadline. If a family in a county with a CCCAP freeze or waitlist misses their redetermination deadline, they will lose access to CCCAP and be placed on the “freeze list” or waitlist.

In counties that have implemented a CCCAP waitlist, families who apply for CCCAP are placed on a waitlist and are enrolled as spots open. In these counties, CCCAP enrollment is slowed.

In counties that have implemented a CCCAP freeze, enrollment stops entirely. Families in these counties have the option to complete a full or abbreviated CCCAP application to be placed on the “freeze” list. When a county shifts from a CCCAP freeze to a waitlist, families on the “freeze list” will then be moved to the “waitlist” and start being enrolled as spots open.

- 2. Counties with a CCCAP freeze as of June 1, 2025:**

Adams, Alamosa, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, El Paso, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Huerfano, Jefferson, Larimer, Mesa, Mineral, Montrose, Pueblo, Rio Grande, Summit, and Weld

- 3. Counties with CCCAP waitlist as of June 1, 2025**

Chaffee, Dolores, San Juan, and San Miguel

- 4. As of June 1, 2025, there were a total of 4,577 families with 6,628 children impacted by a CCCAP freeze or waitlist in Colorado.**

¹⁰ Colorado Department of Early Childhood. 2025. “CCCAP Waitlists of Freezes 2024 – 2025”

Economic Impacts

1. **About a third of parents with infants in Colorado (34%) report losing out on a job or education opportunity due to insufficient child care¹¹.**

This is based on representative, longitudinal data from the Baby & You survey (formerly Health eMoms). This survey follows Colorado families with children born in 2023. This estimate comes from data collected from families in 2024 when their children were 12 months old.

2. **In Colorado, the lack of affordable and accessible child care for infants and toddlers results in an estimated \$2.7 billion loss to the state economy each year¹².**

\$2.7 billion is the estimated total amount parents lose in earnings, and businesses and taxpayers lose in revenue each year due to insufficient child care for infants and toddlers among working families.

Read the 2024 Council for a Strong America report [here](#).

3. **The Common Sense Institute estimates that there 10,200 mothers in Colorado with children under age 6 who are not participating in the labor force. If all of these mothers were able to work, they would earn roughly \$770 million in wages and add roughly \$3.7 billion to the state's economy¹³.**

Read the 2024 Common Sense Institute report [here](#).

Industry and Jobs

¹¹ Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. 2025. "Baby & You Survey Program: 2023 Birth Cohort, Survey 2; Table: [2023 birth cohort survey 2 estimates - overall](https://cdphe.colorado.gov/center-for-health-and-environmental-data/baby-you-2023-birth-cohort-survey-data)." Retrieved June 8, 2025 (<https://cdphe.colorado.gov/center-for-health-and-environmental-data/baby-you-2023-birth-cohort-survey-data>)

¹² Council for a Strong America. 2024. "\$2.7 Billion: The Growing, Annual Cost of the Infant-Toddler Child Care Crisis in Colorado." Retrieved June 2, 2025 (<https://strongnation.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/1787/83b11101-f7ae-4b7a-9baf-5baca6090754.pdf?1709517158&inline>).

¹³ Common Sense Institute. 2024. "Unlocking Work: Impacts of Improving Access to Affordable Child Care." Retrieved June 3, 2025 (<https://www.common senseinstituteus.org/colorado/research/education/unlocking-work-impacts-of-improving-access-to-affordable-child-care>).

According to the Colorado State Demography Office¹⁴:

1. **There are an estimated 3.67 million total jobs in Colorado.**
2. **The average annual wage in Colorado is \$77,114.**
3. **The employment share by wage is:**
 - **42%** of all jobs in Colorado are considered **low wage jobs** (less than \$61,691)
 - **35%** of all jobs in Colorado are considered **mid wage jobs** (\$61,961 to \$92,537)
 - **24%** of all jobs in Colorado are **high wage jobs** (more than \$92,537)
4. **The top five job sectors that employ the most people in Colorado are:**

#1: Professional Science and Technical Services

In 2023, this sector employed **387,376 people** in mostly **high wage jobs**.

#2: Health Services

In 2023, this sector employed **364,511 people** in mostly **mid wage jobs**.

#3: Retail Trade

In 2023, this sector employed **318,742 people** in mostly **low wage jobs**.

#4: Accommodation and Food Services

In 2023, this sector employed **301,907 people** in mostly **low wage jobs**.

#5: Local Government

In 2023, this sector employed **288,749 people** in mostly **low wage jobs**.

See the full breakdown of Colorado **jobs by sector statewide** [here](#)⁴.

See the full breakdown of Colorado **jobs by sector for each county** [here](#)¹⁵.

¹⁴ Colorado State Demography Office. 2023. "SDO Jobs by Sector Analysis, 2023." Retrieved June 3, 2025 (https://gis.dola.colorado.gov/Jobs_by_sector_chart/).

¹⁵ Colorado State Demography Office. 2023. "Job Sector by County Map." Retrieved June 3, 2025 (https://gis.dola.colorado.gov/Job_Sector_County/).

Appendix A

BACKGROUND & DATA CONTEXT

Cost of Child Care

States that receive federal dollars from the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) for child care subsidies are required to collect data on the prices that child care providers charge to privately paying families. This information is used to set subsidy rates for low-income families who use child care subsidies to ensure that subsidized families can access child care services at prices comparable to those paid by private-paying families. States must conduct either a child care market rate survey every three years or use an alternative methodology to inform subsidy payment rates.

Most states in the US continue to use the traditional Market Rate Survey to estimate child care costs within their states. Colorado, however, along with a handful of other states, recently opted to use an [alternative cost estimation methodology](#) to calculate child care costs. As a result, it is difficult to compare Colorado's child care costs with those in other states. The last Market Rate Survey for Colorado was conducted in 2022, and the results are basis for the most recent national level comparisons of child care costs across states.

Additional Information and Helpful Links:

1. [2022 CO Market Rate Survey Report - FINAL.pdf - Google Drive](#)

These are the results of the final Market Rate Survey Colorado fielded before shifting to the alternative approach. This report contains county-level estimates of child care prices by children's age groups.

2. [CDEC Alternative Rate Setting Methodology Final Report v6.9.24 \(1\).pdf - Google Drive](#)

These are the first results using the new alternative methodology. Colorado made this change to assess the actual costs associated with providing quality child care. These results are not directly comparable across other US states or to the most recent Market Rate Survey. These results include county-level estimates of child care costs by children's age groups.

3. [Affordabilityof-Care.pdf](#)

This 2023 report from the Bell Policy Center includes detailed comparisons of Colorado child care market prices relative to the costs of providing care by children's ages in various counties.

This report was produced before the alternative methodology was officially implemented, and instead uses the [Bell ECE Cost Calculator](#) methodology to estimate child care costs.

National Ranking

The best data comes from Child Care Aware. Child Care Aware is a trusted national organization. They publish these rankings regularly and include details about the methodology for their analysis and the source for their data. These data are considered credible and are widely cited, including in the most recent Colorado Kids Count 2024 report.

The most recent report is from 2023 and includes state child care cost rankings by children's age group and type of care.

- [2023 Child Care Aware Affordability Analysis](#)

Colorado ranks 6th in terms of the *least affordable* states for the overall average cost of both center- and home-based child care.

Colorado ranks 4th in terms of the *least affordable* states for the cost of center-based infant care.

Costs by Children's Ages

The best, most recent state-level data comes from Child Care Aware. All estimates listed below come from the [2023 Child Care Aware Affordability Analysis](#).

The Bell Policy Center used the same 2022 Colorado Market Rate Survey data to generate child care [affordability graphs by county](#).

CCCAP

Eligible Children Enrolled in CCCAP

The best, most recent data on the number of children eligible for CCCAP in Colorado come from the Department of Health and Human Services were published in 2024 and report on FY 2021. These data are compared to data reported by Annie E. Casey from the Colorado Department of Early Childhood on the number of children enrolled in CCCAP by fiscal year.

- [Estimates of Child Care Subsidy Eligibility & Receipt for Fiscal Year 2021](#)

According to federal eligibility rules, there were an estimated 195,690 children eligible for CCCAP in Colorado in FY 2021.

According to state eligibility rules, there were an estimated 107,470 children eligible for CCCAP in Colorado in FY 2021.

- [CCCAP Child Care Subsidy Services, by County | KIDS COUNT Data Center](#)

There were 24,648 children enrolled in CCCAP in FY 2021.

Early Milestones Colorado's calculations of these data:

- Based on state eligibility rules, 23% of eligible children in Colorado were enrolled in CCCAP in FY 2021.
- Based on federal eligibility rules, 13% of eligible children in Colorado were enrolled in CCCAP in FY 2021.

Additional Information:

The Bell Policy Center published a report in 2023 that includes a figure of the number of eligible children compared those utilizing CCCAP, but these data only go through 2019 and do not include specific percentages.

- [In-The-Know-Childcare-CCCAP-09-2023.pdf](#)

Background and Related Data

The Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP), which subsidizes child care for low-income families, is primarily funded by the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). These funds are distributed by the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) to counties, which administer CCCAP locally.

The First Five Years Fund (FFYF) published state fact sheets in 2024 that reports on how many children receive CCDBG funds in Colorado.

- [2024-Colorado-CCDBG-State-Fact-Sheet.pdf](#)

11% of children eligible for CCDBG funds receive them in Colorado.