



# 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 5<sup>1</sup>.

The number of young children in Colorado is expected to decline slightly, as fewer babies are born each year<sup>2</sup>. In 2025, Colorado is expected have about a thousand fewer children ages 0 to 5 (378,051) compared to 2023<sup>3</sup>.

2. In 2024, the race/ethnic composition of children ages 0 to 4 in Colorado (311,658) was<sup>4</sup>:

- 45% White
- 38% Hispanic or Latino
- 6% Multiracial
- 5% Black
- 5% Asian
- <.5% American Indian or Alaskan Native
- <.5 Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander

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<sup>1</sup> Colorado Children's Campaign. 2025. *KIDS COUNT in Colorado! Data Book 2025*. Denver, CO: Colorado Children's Campaign. Retrieved October 8, 2025 (<https://www.coloradokids.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/KIDS-COUNT-2025-ENG-PDF-LINKS-5.28.25.pdf>).

<sup>2</sup> Colorado State Demography Office. 2025. *2023 Population Summary Report*. Denver, CO. Retrieved October 8, 2025 (<https://demography.dola.colorado.gov/assets/html/coc.html>)

<sup>3</sup> Colorado State Demography Office. 2025 "County Single Year of Age Lookup Tool." Retrieved October 8, 2025 ([https://demography.dola.colorado.gov/assets/lookups/county\\_sya\\_lookup.html](https://demography.dola.colorado.gov/assets/lookups/county_sya_lookup.html)).

<sup>4</sup> Annie E. Casey Foundation. 2024. "Child Population by Race and Ethnicity and Age Group in Colorado." KIDS COUNT Data Center. Retrieved October 8, 2025 (<https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/8446-child-population-by-race-and-ethnicity-and-age-group?loc=1&loct=1#detailed/2/7/false/1096/12,8367,69,67,70,71,66,13|62/17077,17078>).

## Cost of Child Care

1. **Colorado ranks 12<sup>th</sup> in terms of *the least affordable states for center-based infant care and 14<sup>th</sup> in terms of the least affordable family child care*<sup>5</sup>.**

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

See data from the full 2024 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 Services<sup>6</sup>.**

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 toddlers<sup>7</sup>.**

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

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<sup>5</sup> Child Care Aware of America. 2024. "2024 Price of Care: Child Care Affordability Analysis." Retrieved October 8, 2025 ([https://info.childcareaware.org/hubfs/Affordability\\_Analysis\\_2024.pdf](https://info.childcareaware.org/hubfs/Affordability_Analysis_2024.pdf)).

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

<sup>7</sup> 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](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 workforce<sup>8</sup>.**

## Child Care Demand

- 1. Roughly half of children age 3 and under in Colorado are cared for by a parent or family member<sup>9</sup>.**

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%)<sup>7</sup>.**
- 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%)<sup>7</sup>.**

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

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<sup>8</sup> 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>).

<sup>9</sup> Colorado Department of Public 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 October 1, 2025, 19 Colorado counties had implemented a CCCAP freeze, and 4 Colorado counties had implemented a waitlist<sup>10</sup>.**

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 October 1, 2025:**

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

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

Chaffee, Dolores, Huerfano, San Juan, and San Miguel

- 4. As of October 1, 2025, there were a total of 6,817 families with 9,939 children impacted by a CCCAP freeze or waitlist in Colorado.**

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<sup>10</sup> Colorado Department of Early Childhood. 2025. “CCCAP Waitlists of Freezes 2024 – 2025.” Retrieve October 29, 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 care<sup>11</sup>.**

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 year<sup>12</sup>.**

\$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 \$3.78 billion to the state's economy<sup>13</sup>.**

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

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<sup>11</sup> 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>)

<sup>12</sup> 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>).

<sup>13</sup> 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>).

## Industry and Jobs

According to the Colorado State Demography Office<sup>14</sup>:

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](#)<sup>4</sup>.

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

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<sup>14</sup> Colorado State Demography Office. 2023. "SDO Jobs by Sector Analysis, 2023." Retrieved June 3, 2025 ([https://gis.dola.colorado.gov/Jobs\\_by\\_sector\\_chart/](https://gis.dola.colorado.gov/Jobs_by_sector_chart/)).

<sup>15</sup> Colorado State Demography Office. 2023. "Job Sector by County Map." Retrieved June 3, 2025 ([https://gis.dola.colorado.gov/Job\\_Sector\\_County/](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 the 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, including details about the methodology used for their analysis and the sources of 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 2024 and includes state child care cost rankings by children's age group and type of care.

- [2024 Child Care Aware Affordability Analysis](#)

Colorado ranks 12<sup>th</sup> in terms of the *least affordable* states for the cost of center-based infant care, and 14<sup>th</sup> in terms of the *least affordable states* for the cost of family child 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 [2024 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 Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) and were published in 2025. They report on FY 2023-24.

- [CDEC 2023-24 Annual Report on the CCCAP Program](#)

According to the CDEC, 270,799 children were eligible for CCCAP in Colorado in FY 2023-24 based solely on income, and the program served 29,829 of those children during the same time frame (11%).

### **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.