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Data

The most complete census of the United States population is conducted once every 10 years. The data collected from Census 2010 provides the best count of the population currently available for the country, states, and counties. The American Community Survey provides estimates of yearly population changes along with additional social, demographic, and economic data. These data sets, however, are estimates based on a sample of the population and are not as robust as the basic population data collected during the decennial census.

Census tracts are statistical areas defined by the U.S. Census Bureau and generally have a population between 1,200 and 8,000 people with the optimal size of 4,000 people. They are continuous areas that vary in size based on population density. Census tracts are frequently used throughout this document as the statistical unit from which demographic data are aggregated and displayed within Denver neighborhoods. Census tract data are only available in five-year estimates from the U.S. Census and are significantly less accurate than estimates for larger population areas.

Neighborhood data (aggregated from census tracts) are available using five-year averages of the data and contain errors. Caution should be used when interpreting the results in any detail. The data and maps provided in this document are intended to give a general impression of variation by neighborhood and not exact counts of people.

The data used in this report are the most current from the best available sources and include the U.S. Census Bureau, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, and other reliable publications and resources. Data describing the same phenomena may differ due to the source, method of collection, time period, aggregations, or margin of error. All sources used in the document are clearly cited.
Introduction

The Office of Children’s Affairs uses data to help understand who Denver’s children are and where they live. These data help policy makers, advocates, and community partners form a common understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by Denver’s children and youth. In order to improve outcomes for all our children, it is necessary to appreciate the environmental contexts that shape how they experience the world.

Many factors influence a child’s chances for success. Differences in school quality, the presence of positive adult role models, neighborhood safety, access to healthy foods, health insurance, a medical home, and quality early care and education experiences all have varying impacts on child outcomes. It is easier for some children to overcome obstacles throughout their development when those obstacles are not cumulative and persistent. Children who live in low-income or chronically disadvantaged neighborhoods often experience significantly lower outcomes in health, early childhood education, K-12 education, and post-secondary success than their more affluent peers.

To mitigate the impact of disadvantage on children, the City of Denver has established five goals to ensure all Denver’s children are prepared to succeed. These include:

- Increasing the number of children who have access to high quality early childhood experiences
- Increasing the number of Denver third grade students who can read at grade level
- Decreasing the number of disconnected youth
- Increasing the number of students who have access to and complete a post-secondary pathway and obtain a job
- Increasing the percentage of children who are at a healthy weight

Together, these goals address important childhood issues throughout all stages of a child’s development. To understand the complexity and distribution of factors related to the outcome of these goals, a foundational set of data indicators at the neighborhood level are provided in this document. The Status of Denver’s Children 2016; A Community Resource provides in-depth information on how Denver kids and their families are faring using a variety of indicators – looking at the actual numbers as well as the places with high or low concentrations of particular factors. This resource is intended to be used to inform programs, services, and investments in children and youth as they relate to the city’s five goals for children.

Due to the size constraints of the document, neighborhood and street labels are not included on all the maps.

The map in Figure 1 is to be used as a neighborhood reference map to supplement the maps throughout the document.
Figure 1: Denver Neighborhood Reference Map
2016 Child Well-Being Index

Using the poverty measure alone to determine advantage and disadvantage by place is inadequate. Rather, it is the culmination of factors together that present significant challenges to children and families. Two children, both from low-income families, may have very different opportunities for success depending on a variety of other factors they also experience. One child may have two parents who graduated high school and are employed, live in a mixed income neighborhood, attend school regularly and have access to healthy foods and a medical home. The other child may live in a home with a single-parent who has not graduated high school and is unemployed. This child also may lack adequate and dependable health care, live in an area of concentrated poverty and a food desert, with high rates of violent crime. The child with fewer obstacles to overcome in everyday experiences is likely to have more opportunities for both academic and life success.

Consistent patterns of advantage and disadvantage are apparent in the maps provided throughout the 2016 Status of Denver’s Children: A Community Resource document. It is possible to statistically aggregate key indicators to highlight areas of cumulative disadvantage. These areas can then be used to identify and focus on societal and systemic problems that limit opportunity for children in Denver. Unpacking the complex barriers that our children face will ultimately lead to solutions for meaningful change to improve outcomes for all Denver’s children.

Eleven indicators that measure differences in education, health, and community opportunities were statistically aggregated to provide a snapshot of opportunity for Denver children by neighborhood (Figure 2). Each of these indicators and maps are discussed fully and cited in the 2016 Status of Denver’s Children: A Community Resource document. These indicators include:

**Births to Women without a High School Diploma**
Low educational attainment of parents is associated with a number of risk factors that impact child well-being including a higher risk for living in poverty.

Full discussion on page 51.

**Teen Births**
Teen pregnancy can compromise the well-being of both teen mothers and their children. Teen mothers are less likely than older mothers to receive adequate, timely prenatal care, putting them at risk for pregnancy complications. Children born to teen mothers are more likely to drop out of school, become teen parents themselves, or be incarcerated as an adult.

Full discussion on page 50.
Overweight or Obese Children
A child’s health is a key determinant to success in most other aspects of their lives. One of the challenges currently facing Denver is the number of children who are at an unhealthy weight. Childhood obesity is less about how much a child weighs and more about the long term impact of obesity on a child’s overall health in addition to its social impact on the broader community.
Full discussion on page 43.

Kindergarteners NOT Ready for Reading
To ensure that all Denver children will be successful in school and life, they must develop the skills necessary at each stage in the life-cycle. Children need to enter school ready to learn. There is a clear geographic distribution by Denver neighborhood of children not prepared for reading success by the end of Kindergarten.
Full discussion on page 88.

Third Graders NOT Reading at Grade Level
The ability to read at grade level by the end of third grade is an important benchmark for future academic success. Research shows that third grade students who are not reading at grade level may struggle throughout their academic careers and are at risk for dropping out or graduating high school not college or career ready.
Full discussion on page 77.

Ninth Graders Chronically Absent
No matter the grade or school, students must participate regularly to benefit. The more school time that is missed by children, the harder it is to keep up with the coursework. According to the report by Attendance Works, students’ test scores on the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) who missed more school than their peers who attended regularly were consistently lower. This is true for every age and every racial or ethnic category analyzed.
Full discussion on page 81.
Adults without a High School Diploma
Adults with a high school diploma generally report better life outcomes for themselves and their children. In addition to earning more money, high school graduates tend to live longer and are less likely to fall into poverty and rely on public assistance. Positive role models and a strong network of caring, informed adults are important assets in a community.
Full discussion on page 38.

Children in Single-Parent Families
Single-parent families often struggle to provide basic needs for their families with only one income. The number of children living in single-parent homes in Denver has decreased ten percent since 2013 but some neighborhoods have higher proportions of children living in vulnerable single-parent families than other neighborhoods.
Full discussion on page 35.

Child Poverty
Children living in poverty often experience the negative conditions of substandard housing, homelessness, inadequate nutrition, food insecurity, inadequate child care, lack of access to health care, unsafe neighborhoods, and under-resourced schools. They are also at-risk for negative outcomes such as low academic achievement, dropping out of high school, abuse and neglect, behavioral and physical health problems, and developmental delays.
Full discussion on page 28.

Violent Crime
Children who are living in high-crime neighborhoods and exposed to violence have the potential to suffer lasting physical, mental and emotional harm. They are also at risk for juvenile delinquency, further victimization, and involvement with the child welfare system.
Full discussion on page 40.
Unemployment

In many ways, the labor market and job stability determine the resources that parents have available to spend on care for their children. In addition, job related stress, job loss, and financial insecurity can negatively impact the entire household. These external factors related to the labor force may affect children’s development.

Full discussion on page 26.
Setting the Community Context
Setting the Community Context

In order to formulate solutions to some of the complex challenges facing Denver’s children and understand where opportunity is abundant in Denver, it’s necessary to supply basic demographic information on children and their families. Factors by neighborhood, such as family income, race or ethnicity, age of children, the number and location of children in immigrant families, unemployment rates, family composition, areas of concentrated poverty, and homelessness, provide valuable information useful in understanding need and opportunity in Denver. Data in this section include total population statistics, data on family economics, educational attainment of the adults, and crime as well as the distribution of people by race and ethnicity. Describing the context of the communities in which children live goes a long way to establishing effective and efficient policies and recommendations to ensure that every Denver child has the best opportunity to succeed.
Total Population

Denver is experiencing significant population growth. Since 2010, the number of people living in Denver has increased by nearly 60,000, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The demographic composition of the people moving into Denver will dramatically impact the income distribution, the housing market, and the ethnic and racial composition and characteristics of Denver neighborhoods. These demographic changes necessitate thoughtful changes to the policies, programs, and services the City controls for all Denver residents to have the best opportunity to thrive.

Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau data show that the United States is undergoing a dramatic shift in the racial and ethnic composition of the population. There has been rapid growth of new minority groups composed of Hispanics, Asians, and multiracial populations. William Frey, a demographer with the Brookings Institution, states that over the next 40 years each of these minority groups is expected to double in size. Denver’s population mirrors these national trends. In 2014, the total population of Denver County was estimated at 664,000 people (Figure 3). Hispanics, representing the largest ethnic group in Colorado, comprised 31 percent of the total county population (Table 1).

Table 1: Population Characteristics for Denver, Colorado and the United States, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denver</th>
<th>Colorado</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>663,862</td>
<td>5,355,866</td>
<td>318,857,056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>204,375</td>
<td>1,135,107</td>
<td>55,279,452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
<td>353,627</td>
<td>3,686,726</td>
<td>197,409,353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic Black</td>
<td>61,627</td>
<td>205,894</td>
<td>39,267,149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic American Indian</td>
<td>3,483</td>
<td>30,777</td>
<td>2,103,422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic Asian</td>
<td>24,351</td>
<td>155,985</td>
<td>16,513,652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic Pacific Islander</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>6,092</td>
<td>507,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic Other Race</td>
<td>1,139</td>
<td>7,508</td>
<td>679,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic Two or More Races</td>
<td>15,203</td>
<td>127,777</td>
<td>7,097,378</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Denver’s Asian Population

Nationwide, the largest growth in the Asian population took place after 1965 and was primarily due to changes in U.S. immigration policies. As of 2010, eighty-five percent of U.S. Asians were first- or second-generation Americans.\(^4\)

In Denver, the Asian population has grown 57 percent since 2005 (Figure 4).\(^5\)

The maps in Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of the Asian population by census tract and Denver neighborhood over time.\(^6\)

---


Denver’s Black Population

For most of U.S. history, blacks represented the largest minority group in the nation. As of the 2000 Census, Hispanics represented the largest minority. In 2014, the U.S. Census estimated nine percent of Denver’s population to be black. This is lower than 12 percent nationally. In Denver, the black population grew 15 percent since 2005 (Figure 6).

The map in Figure 7 illustrates the distribution of the black population by census tract and Denver neighborhood over two time periods.

---


Denver’s Hispanic Population

Adding to the long-standing population of Hispanic people in the U.S., waves of immigration in the 1970’s through the 1990’s more than tripled their numbers nationwide. The most recent population growth, however, is due to natural increase rather than immigration.\textsuperscript{11} Denver’s Hispanic population has grown seven percent since 2005 (Figure 8).\textsuperscript{12}

The map in Figure 9 illustrates the distribution of the Hispanic population by census tract and Denver neighborhood over time.\textsuperscript{13}


Denver’s Non-Hispanic White Population

Nationwide, the white population is the largest racial group. However, white growth has slowed due to low immigration and fertility rates. The white population is moving within the country from large metropolitan coastal areas into areas in the South and West. In 2010, 64 percent of the U.S. population was white. By 2040, whites will become a minority of the total population. Denver’s non-Hispanic white population has grown 30 percent since 2005 (Figure 10).

The map in Figure 11 illustrates the distribution of the non-Hispanic white population by census tract and Denver neighborhood over time.

---


Child Population

The number of children under age 18 living in Denver increased two percent since 2005. After a significant drop in 2010, the number of children in Denver is again increasing (Figure 12). In 2014, approximately 138,000 children were estimated to be living in Denver.¹⁷

Figure 12: Denver Children under Age 18 Trends

Figure 13: Map of Denver Children under Age 18

Five-year estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau provide the data for census tract and neighborhood-level analysis. In 2005-2009, an average of 132,500 children under 18 were living in Denver. In the 2010-2014 time period, 133,500 children under 18 were estimated to be living in Denver neighborhoods (Figure 13).¹⁸


Children under Age Five

Single-year estimates for the U.S. Census Bureau illustrate a 12 percent decline in the number of Denver children under age five from 2007 to 2014 (Figure 14).19

According to the five-year estimates from the American Community Survey, in the 2005-2009 period, an average of 50,000 children under age five were living in Denver neighborhoods.

By the 2010-2014 period, there were 44,000 children under age five estimated to be living in Denver (Figure 15).20

---


Child Population by Race/Ethnicity

Denver’s population is diverse. In Denver, 33 percent of children under age 18 were categorized as non-Hispanic white in 2014. The largest ethnic group in Denver is Hispanic with 48 percent of children reported to be of Hispanic origin of any race. Including the Hispanic ethnicity in any racial category, white children make up 74 percent of Denver’s child population, followed by 11 percent of black or other categories. Asian children make up four percent, and American Indian, two percent (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Denver’s Child Population by Race 2014

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Children of Color

Denver is made up of a majority of children who reported to be of a race/ethnicity other than non-Hispanic white. In other words, children of color, mixed race/ethnicity, and others made up 67 percent (92,600) of the total child population in Denver in 2014 (Figure 17). The map highlights the areas in Denver neighborhoods where children of color make up the majority of the child population over two time periods (Figure 18).

Figure 17: Proportion of Children of Color in Denver over Time

Figure 18: Neighborhoods with less than 50 percent Non-Hispanic White Children over Time

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2009 and 2014 Five-Year Estimates

Children in Immigrant Families

Children in immigrant families are defined as children under age 18 who are either foreign-born or who have at least one foreign-born parent, regardless of citizenship status or year of arrival in the United States. In 2014, 40 percent (55,000) of Denver’s children were living in immigrant families (Figure 19). Seventy-two percent of the children in immigrant families in Denver originate from Latin America. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau indicate the majority, or 90 percent, of children in immigrant families are U.S. citizens and only three percent of their parents have been in the country less than five years.

The distribution of children in immigrant families varies across Denver neighborhoods. The maps in Figure 20 illustrate the proportion of children in immigrant families over two time periods.

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Language

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 42,000 children, or 44 percent, under the age of 18 spoke a language other than English at home in 2014 (Figure 21). The variation of non-English speakers over time is illustrated in the maps in Figure 22.

Figure 22: People Who Speak a Language Other Than English at Home

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2010 and 2014 Five-Year Estimates

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Youth in Foster Care

The children that are in foster care represent a high-risk population whose negative life circumstances necessitated their placement into the child welfare system. Some of the challenges they face that may impact their chances for success in school include:

- Low birth weight;
- Abusive homes;
- Increased hunger and poor nutrition;
- Frequently changing schools;
- Exposure to environmental hazards such as drugs, alcohol, and violence;
- Lack of home support in reading and language development;
- Single-parent homes; and
- Less involved home-school connections.\(^{31}\)

Consequently, children and youth in foster care are more likely than their peers to have lower test scores, repeat grades, require special education services, exhibit behavior problems, have lower attendance, and drop out of school.

The number of out-of-home placements (foster care, kinship/relative care, congregate care) by month for children birth through age 18 is illustrated in Figure 23.\(^{32}\) The average number of children placed in 2015 was 815.

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\(^{32}\) Denver Department of Human Services. (2016, February 22). *Number of Youth in Foster Care as of 1-31-2016.*
Family Economics

Income

In 2014, the median family (with child) income in Denver was $60,937, which is $10,400 more than in 2013. Denver’s median family income is approaching the national figure but still below the state median income of $71,982 (Figure 24).  

Unemployment

In many ways, the labor market and job stability determine the resources that parents have available to spend on care for their children. In addition, job related stress, job loss, and financial insecurity can negatively impact the entire household. These external factors related to the labor force may affect children’s development. In Denver the unemployment rate has dropped significantly since 2010.

The unemployment rate was 3.1 percent in December, 2015, with approximately 11,500 people estimated to be unemployed (Figure 25).

The number of children under age six with no parent in the labor force has decreased from 6,000 in 2013 to 5,000 in 2014.\textsuperscript{36} This is another good sign for children in Denver’s improving economy.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation uses the percentage of children living in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment as one measure of family economic security.\textsuperscript{37} Many families piece together part-time employment to make ends meet. Furthermore, without a good education and relevant job skills, it is difficult for parents to earn a living wage to support their families.

In 2014, 31 percent (43,000) of Denver children lived in families where no parent had full-time, year round employment (Figure 26).

Five-year estimates of unemployment rates illustrate the variation in employment by neighborhood (Figure 27).\textsuperscript{38}


Poverty

Children living in poverty often experience the negative conditions of substandard housing, homelessness, inadequate nutrition, food insecurity, inadequate child care, lack of access to health care, unsafe neighborhoods, and under-resourced schools. They are also at-risk for negative outcomes such as low academic achievement, dropping out of high school, abuse and neglect, behavioral and physical health problems, and developmental delays.\(^{39}\)

Poverty is defined by the federal government as $24,250 annual income for a family of four and does not consider variations in the cost of living by place or necessary expenses such as housing, health care, child care, or transportation.\(^{40}\) Consequently, the federal poverty measure underestimates what it actually costs to support a family.

According to the Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado 2015 by the Colorado Center on Law and Policy, it costs approximately $73,749 to meet the basic needs of a family of four in Denver (two adults, an infant and preschooler).\(^{41}\) In other words, the cost to meet basic needs for a family of this type in Denver is approximately three times the federal poverty level.\(^{42}\)

The most recent data available for the number of children under age 18 in poverty in Denver showed a significant drop in poverty from 2013 to 2014. Child poverty decreased from 30 percent (40,000 children) to 22 percent. Approximately 30,500 children were living in poverty in 2014 (Figure 28).\(^{43}\)


A county-by-county analysis of child poverty over time provides more information to better understand the significant drop in child poverty in Denver. While Denver has experienced a significant drop in child poverty, the trend was not replicated in neighboring counties (Table 2).

Of the 25 cities in the United States with population estimates between 500,000 and 1,000,000 residents (2012 estimates), San Jose had the lowest percentage of child poverty at 10 percent. Detroit had the highest rate of 57 percent. Denver’s child poverty rate of 22 percent matches the national average for 2014 and is the fourth lowest in the nation among these comparably sized cities (Figure 29). Over the last five years, Denver had the greatest reduction in child poverty, 11 percentage points, of any of these cities.

Table 2: Change in County Child Poverty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>Change in the percent of children in poverty over the last 5 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adams</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arapahoe</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boulder</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>-0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
<td>-10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglas</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>-3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>-1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larimer</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>-1.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 29: City Ranking of Child Poverty 2013, 2014

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44 Change in poverty number differs in this table from the city-by-city comparison table due to rounding.
46 2012 population estimates-city population as of July1, 2012 as estimated by the United States Census Bureau.
Poverty is not equally distributed throughout Denver’s neighborhoods, as illustrated in Figure 30.48

Figure 30: Children in poverty in Denver

Ratio of Poverty to Income Trends

Many working families in Denver struggle to make ends meet. An estimated 62,000 children, or 47 percent, of Denver’s children live in families with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL), or less than $48,500 annual income for a family of four.\(^49\) The percentage of children living in families above 200% of poverty has grown to 53% in 2014 (Figure 31).

Figure 31: Children Living Families by Ratio to Poverty

Child Poverty by Race/Ethnicity

Children of color are more often in poverty than non-Hispanic white and Asian children and children of two or more races according to the U.S. Census Bureau, five-year estimates. Over time in Denver, the proportion of children in poverty has risen for every category of children except non-Hispanic white and those reporting being two or more races (Figure 32).\(^50\)

Figure 32: Child Poverty by Race/Ethnicity

---


Areas of Concentrated Poverty

All children need strong families and supportive communities to realize their full potential. Unfortunately, too many Denver children are living in high-poverty areas that have the potential to negatively impact their chances for success. Approximately one quarter of Denver’s children live in areas of concentrated poverty, defined as census tracts with a poverty rate of 30 percent and higher. Critical resources for their family’s healthy growth and development are often out of reach.

Children living in areas of concentrated poverty are more likely to experience stress, have unmet basic needs, lower test scores, be exposed to violence, struggle with a lack positive role models, and are more likely to drop out of school. The impacts may be greatest for younger children.51

The growth of children living in areas of concentrated poverty since 2000 is dramatic and consistent across all people, children and racial and ethnic groups in Denver. Children, however, are more likely to live in areas of concentrated poverty than poor adults, and people of color, live in these areas more often than non-Hispanic white people. Concentration of poverty is highest for Hispanics, with one-third living in high-poverty areas (Figure 33).52

Figure 33: People Living in Areas of Concentrated Poverty by Race/Ethnicity and Age Group

More neighborhoods are experiencing concentrated poverty since the 2005-2009 period, with more children living in those areas. In Denver, approximately 25 percent, or 34,000 children under age 18 lived in areas of concentrated poverty in 2010-2014. (Figure 34).\textsuperscript{53}

Figure 34: Areas of Concentrated Poverty


Young Children in Poverty in Denver

Children are most sensitive to the negative impacts of living in poverty when they are young and their brains are developing. Research shows that when young children are raised in poverty the negative impact can extend well into adulthood.54

According to latest U.S. Census Bureau estimates, approximately 8,700, or 19 percent, of Denver children under age five were living in poverty in 2014. The number of young children living in poverty declined dramatically in Denver from 29 percent in 2013. Despite this decrease, the poverty rate for Denver children under the age of five is still higher than the state average of 16 percent (Figure 35).55

Figure 35: Children under age Five in Poverty

---


Single-Parent Families

Single-parent families often struggle to provide basic needs for their families with only one income. In 2014, 47,000 children, or 35 percent of children under age 18, lived in single-parent households in Denver (Figure 36). The number of children living in single-parent homes in Denver has decreased 10 percent since 2013. The distribution of children living in single-parent families from 2005-2009 and 2010-2014 is illustrated on the maps in Figure 37.

Figure 36: Children Living in Single-Parent Families

Figure 37: Children in Single-Parent Families

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2008 and 2014 Five-Year Estimates


Public Assistance

The number of children under age 18 living in families receiving public benefits in the form of Supplemental Security Income (SSI), cash public assistance income, or Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, has declined in Denver since 2013. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that approximately 40,000 Denver children, or 29 percent, were living in families receiving public assistance benefits in 2014. This is higher than the Colorado rate of 21 percent (Figure 38).58 The comparison of children in households receiving benefits from 2006-2010 and 2010-2014 is illustrated in Figure 39.59


Students in Homeless Families

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education program objectives are to increase access to education and provide stability and opportunity for educational success for children and youth experiencing homelessness. The overall intent of the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth grant is to remove all educational barriers facing homeless children and youth with emphasis on educational enrollment, attendance, and success.

In Denver, the number of homeless students increased 41 percent from the 2013-2014 school year to the 2014-2015 school year. This is a substantial increase of more than 900 homeless children attending Denver Public Schools (Figure 40).60

Figure 40: Homeless School-Aged Children in Denver

![Graph showing the number of homeless children in Denver from 2006-2007 to 2014-2015](image)

Educational Attainment of Adults

Research shows that educational attainment is the most important social characteristic for predicting earnings.\(^{61}\) According to the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, on average nationally, workers without a high school diploma earned $493 per week compared to $678 with a high school diploma, $738 with some college, $798 with an Associate’s degree, and $1,137 with a Bachelor’s degree in 2015.\(^{62}\) Figure 41 illustrates the breakdown of educational attainment by degree for Denver and Colorado.\(^{63}\)

Figure 42: Adults in the Community without a High School Diploma Trends

In Denver, the percent of adults in the community that did not have a high school diploma has decreased since 2005 (Figure 42). Up by one percentage point since 2013, fifteen percent of adults did not have a high school diploma in 2014.\(^{64}\)

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Adults with a high school diploma generally report better life outcomes for themselves and their children. In addition to earning more money, high school graduates tend to live longer and are less likely to fall into poverty and rely on public assistance. Positive role models and a strong network of caring, informed adults are important assets in a community. There is evidence that the educational outcomes of children are impacted by the absence of educated, affluent adults in their communities. The maps in Figure 43 illustrate where in our city there are higher percentages of adults in the community without a high school diploma over two time periods.

Figure 43: Map of Adults in the Community without a High School Diploma

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Crime

Unsafe, high-crime neighborhoods may expose children to violence which can cause a number of problems. According to the National Survey of Children’s Exposure to Violence, children who are living in high-crime neighborhoods and exposed to violence have the potential to suffer lasting physical, mental and emotional harm. They are also at risk for juvenile delinquency, further victimization, and involvement with the child welfare system.68

In a nation-wide study of 300 metropolitan areas, data show that higher income neighborhoods have lower violent crime rates than do high-poverty areas. One theory of why crime is higher in low-income areas compared to high-income areas is that people choose to participate in criminal activities when the expected return of the crime outweighs the risk of arrest. In neighborhoods where the residents are more likely to intervene to stop crime, participate in neighborhood associations, and pick up trash and clean graffiti, the perceived risk of being caught is higher and therefore the crime rates are lower.69

Several factors contributing to poor student achievement in schools in high crime neighborhoods have been identified and include:

- Higher mobility rate of low-income children and families;
- Disruptive behavior of classmates;
- Provide an alternative pathway to hard work at school;
- Make it more difficult to recruit high-quality teachers; and
- Increase absenteeism in schools.70

For children exposed to high rates of crime (Figures 44, 45) and domestic violence (Figure 46), mitigating the impact is important to future success in school and life. The highest rates of crime in Denver include areas in and around the central business district.71

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71 Denver Police Department. 2015 Neighborhood Crime rates per 1,000 people by Denver neighborhood.
Research shows that violent crime in the community around elementary and middle schools is a barrier to overall child well-being. Exposure to violent crime doubles the likelihood that a child will perpetuate violence. Additionally, children exposed to violent crime can suffer post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression. The mental health consequences of exposure to violent crime can hinder cognitive development and educational attainment.\textsuperscript{72}

GOAL 1

Increase the Percentage of Children and Youth in Denver Who Are at a Healthy Weight
GOAL 1: Increase the Percentage of Children Who are at a Healthy Weight

A child’s health is a key determinant to success in most other aspects of their lives. One of the challenges currently facing Denver is the number of children who are overweight or obese. Childhood obesity is less about how much a child weighs and more about the long term impact of obesity on a child’s overall health in addition to its social impact on the broader community. Other indicators related to child health also track closely with overweight and obesity rates. These indicators include prenatal care, poverty, food insecurity, birth outcomes, teen births, and access to health insurance. Examining a variety of available sources of health data for communities is useful in better understanding the complex nature of the environments in which children live and how health outcomes are related to other factors such as income and educational attainment.

Childhood obesity is the result of consuming too many calories and not getting enough physical activity. Overweight children are those whose body mass index (BMI) falls between the 85th - 94th percentile of normal weight for height. Obese children are those whose BMI is at or above the 95th percentile of normal weight for height or higher. All of these children are at risk for developing serious, long-term health problems such as diabetes and heart disease. Denver Public Schools together with Denver Health collects BMI data for Denver Public School students between the ages of three and 18. According to this source, 31 percent of Denver children were measured as overweight or obese (16 percent obese and 15 percent overweight).73

The graph in Figure 47 describes overweight and obese students for each school year. The percentage of students at an unhealthy weight status remained flat for the last five school years. However, due to the annual growth of Denver Public School enrollment, the number of children at an unhealthy weight is most likely increasing.

![Figure 47: DPS Students at an Unhealthy Weight by Age](image)

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Typically, Colorado communities with high rates of obesity face limited access to healthy and affordable foods, recreational facilities, safe neighborhoods, and preventive health care. Children living in poverty or in low-income families are more likely to be overweight or obese than their more affluent peers.74

Mirroring national trends, the number of students in Denver Public Schools with an excessive weight varies by race/ethnicity. Among black and Hispanic students, the percentage of students overweight or obese was higher than their white peers (Figure 49).75 Maternal poverty, consumption of sugar, and stress were identified as prenatal risk-factors leading to higher rates of obesity in Hispanic children in a study published in the Journal of Community Health.76

A map illustrating the percentage of children ages two through 20 who are overweight or obese is provided in Figure 48.77

Figure 49: Students Overweight or Obese by Race/Ethnicity 2013-2014 School Year

![Overweight vs Obese by Race/Ethnicity](image)

Figure 48: Students at an Excessive Weight

![Map of Children's Overweight or Obese by Census Tract](image)


Early Prenatal Care

Prenatal care is the first step to keeping women and their newborns healthy. Babies of mothers who do not get prenatal care are three times more likely to have a low birth weight and five times more likely to die than those born to mothers who do get care. Early diagnosis of many health problems that occur during pregnancy can lead to successful treatment. Doctors can also educate mothers on what they can do to ensure that their baby has a healthy start to life. Exposure to maternal stress and toxic substances such as tobacco, drugs, and alcohol can affect development before a child is born, impacting the child’s academic, social, and physical outcomes throughout their life.

The percentage of women receiving early prenatal care in Denver has improved over time. As of 2014, 81 percent of women received prenatal care compared to the state with 80 percent. However, disparities exist between women of different race and ethnicity (Figure 51). As with other indicators, there is variation by neighborhood. More women living in the higher-income neighborhoods receive early prenatal care than those women living in low-income neighborhoods (Figure 50).

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Women Who Smoked During Pregnancy

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention research has shown that smoking during pregnancy causes health problems for both mothers and babies. Problems can arise, such as complications during pregnancy, premature births, low-birth-weight infants, stillbirths, or Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). In addition to reducing the babies’ lung functions, nicotine may reduce the amount of blood in the fetal cardiovascular system and is further transferred to nursing infants through the smoking mother’s breast milk.82

In 2014 in Denver, five percent of new mothers reported smoking during pregnancy. This rate is significantly lower than the state rate of seven percent.83 Despite the lower rate in Denver, there is dramatic variation by race/ethnicity and neighborhood (Figures 52 and 53). The highest rates are generally in high-poverty, low-opportunity neighborhoods, further contributing to the health risks of children living in them.

Figure 53: Denver Women Who Smoked During Pregnancy

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Births

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment reported 9,330 births to Denver women in 2014 (Figure 54). The number of births has declined three percent since 2010.\textsuperscript{84}

Births by Race/Ethnicity

2014 birth data from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment describe the diversity in Denver’s child population. Less than half of all children born in Denver in 2014 were non-Hispanic white, 29 percent were Hispanic. Eleven percent of births were black, five percent were Asian, and one percent was American Indian.\textsuperscript{85}

Over the last five years, Hispanic births have \textit{declined} by 25 percent, black by three percent and American Indian by five percent. Asian births have \textit{increased} by 20 percent and births to non-Hispanic white mothers by seven percent. The number of births that are categorized as “unknown” has grown 120 percent with more than 600 births in 2014 not included in any racial or ethnic category (Figure 55).\textsuperscript{86}

Figure 55: Proportion of Denver Births by Race/Ethnicity 2007-2014

\textsuperscript{84} Health Statistics Section. (2014). \textit{Live Births}. Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

\textsuperscript{85} Health Statistics Section. (2014). \textit{Live Births with 1st Trimester Prenatal Care by Race/Ethnicity and Neighborhood of Residence}. Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

\textsuperscript{86} Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. (2007-2014). \textit{General Fertility Rate for All Ages - Total Live Births per 1,000 Women Ages 15-44}. Denver: Health Statistics Section.
The Hispanic birth rate is declining dramatically. The rate per 1,000 Hispanic women dropped from 74 in 2013 to 64.9 in 2014 (Figure 56).\(^8\)

The number of births by Denver neighborhood is illustrated in the map in Figure 57.\(^9\)

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\(^8\) Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. (2007-2014). *General Fertility Rate for All Ages - Total Live Births per 1,000 Women Ages 15-44*. Denver: Health Statistics Section.

\(^9\) Health Statistics Section. (2014). *Live Births by Neighborhood of Residence*. Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. General fertility rate for all ages is total live births per 1,000 women age 15-44.
Low Birth Weight Births

Babies born at a low birth weight have a high probability of experiencing developmental problems. Poverty, poor prenatal nutrition, smoking, stress, infections and violence can increase the risk of a baby being born with low birth weight. The number of children born at low birth weight in Denver has remained around nine percent over the last five years (Figure 59). Variation exists by race/ethnicity and neighborhood (Figure 58).\(^8^9\)

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Teen Births

Teen pregnancy can compromise the well-being of both teen mothers and their children. Teen mothers are less likely than older mothers to receive adequate and timely prenatal care, putting them at risk for pregnancy complications. Children born to teen mothers are more likely to drop out of school, become teen parents themselves or be incarcerated as an adult. The teen birth rate in Denver has been on the decline over the last two decades. In 2014, the Denver rate of births to women between the ages of 15 and 19 was 30 per 1,000.90

In Denver, approximately five percent of all births are to teens between the ages of 15 and 19. The proportion of these teen births varies by race and ethnicity. According to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, 62 percent of all teen births in Denver are to Hispanic women. Trends of teen births by race and ethnicity are illustrated in Figure 61.91 Teen births by Denver neighborhood are illustrated in the map in Figure 60.92

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90 Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. (2010-2014). General Fertility Rate for All Ages - Total Live Births per 1,000 Women Ages 15-44. Denver: Health Statistics Section.


Births to Women Without a High School Diploma

Low educational attainment of parents is associated with a number of risk factors that impact child well-being including a higher risk for living in poverty. In Denver, 15 percent of births were to women with less than a high school diploma or GED in 2014. Although this rate is decreasing in Denver, there is significant variation by race/ethnicity. The highest rate by race/ethnicity is among Hispanic women, with 38 percent of births to women without a high school diploma (Figure 62). There is also significant variation by geography (Figure 63).[^93]

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Family and School-Based Health Care Centers

Access to primary care in a nearby clinic is essential for all families to maintain healthy living. Providers can monitor health, manage chronic conditions and assist patients with diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions. These services are available to all Denver residents through the network of family health centers across the Denver. These centers are conveniently located in our neighborhoods of highest need where access might otherwise be difficult due to transportation or cost.

School-Based Health Centers are located in Denver Public Schools and provide a convenient option for care for Denver students. Services available include primary care, mental health, reproductive health education and insurance enrollment assistance (Figure 64).  

Figure 64: Family and School-Based Health Care Centers

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Health Insurance

Uninsured Children

The ability for all children to see a health care provider for routine exams, screenings, immunizations, and care when sick is essential for healthy growth and development. Unfortunately, too many children live in families without health insurance due to high costs, limited access to providers, or enrollment barriers.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately six percent of children in Colorado and Denver were without health insurance in 2014 (Figure 66). Differences between neighborhoods in uninsured rates are apparent in the map in Figure 65.

Figure 66: Uninsured Children

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Immunizations

Vaccines protect children from potentially deadly diseases. Due to the high number of children vaccinated, many diseases, such as polio, measles, rubella, mumps, and Pertussis, which were once a widespread threat, are now rare in the United States. Failure to vaccinate children results in the risk of contracting and spreading preventable diseases. The Center for Disease Control lists three important reasons to vaccinate children:

1. Weaker child immune systems may not be strong enough to fight the disease resulting in severe illness at times resulting in death.
2. Children under age one are vulnerable to disease when their prenatal protection from their mother expires.
3. Immunizing children helps to protect the health of the broader community by protecting others that cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons.97

Colorado law requires that any child attending a child care center or school be up to date with required vaccines. In addition to required immunization, optional vaccines such as the influenza and Pertussis (DTaP) vaccine help prevent illness that often can be transmitted in child care settings where children engage in close contact with other children and staff.

Under current Colorado law, parents can sign an exempt form opting out of the required vaccines for religious or personal beliefs or medical reasons. Because of this option, some schools in Denver have a high proportion of students without up-to-date immunizations. Schools with a high percentage of exemptions are more likely to experience an outbreak of a vaccine prevented disease, such as measles. Depending on the disease, the immunization rate necessary to protect the general public varies. Generally, research shows that a minimum of 90 percent of the population needs to be vaccinated in order to have a lower risk for outbreak. Because of the highly infectious nature of Pertussis and measles, 94 percent of the population should be vaccinated to protect the community.98

Schools in the higher-income neighborhoods generally have higher rates of immunization exemptions (Figure 67).

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Children with Disabilities

Under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) school-aged children and youth ages three through 21 are provided special education and related services through the school system. To qualify for these services, an evaluation is performed to see if the child has a disability defined in the IDEA legislation and to identify what special education and related services the child needs.

IDEA lists categories under which children may be eligible for services. These categories include:

- Autism;
- Deaf-blindness;
- Deafness;
- Hearing impairment;
- Intellectual disability;
- Multiple disabilities;
- Orthopedic impairment;
- Specific learning disability;
- Speech or language impairment;
- Traumatic brain injury; or
- Visual impairment.99

Special Education in Denver Public Schools

In Denver, more than 9,500 (11 percent) students were enrolled in special education classes in Denver Public Schools in 2015.100 Special education programs are designed for children with disabilities and special needs and support services are offered through the public school system at no cost to families.

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Food Insecurity

Children in food-insecure households, or households that struggle to afford food for their families, are at an increased risk for numerous health problems and added emotional and physical stress that may affect a child’s ability to succeed in school. Feeding America reports that the national average for a meal costs $2.89. Due to the higher costs of living in Denver, an average meal costs $3.11.\(^1\) For a household struggling to afford housing, utilities, child care, and other necessary expenses, the additional burden of expensive food can have a significant impact on a family’s budget.

Although food-insecurity is linked to poverty, measuring need from poverty alone is insufficient. Many food-insecure children live in households with incomes above the federal poverty level and above the eligibility for federal nutrition programs such as SNAP and the Free and Reduced-Price Lunch program. In Denver, approximately 73 percent of food insecure children are likely income-eligible for federal nutrition assistance (185 percent of the federal poverty line), leaving 27 percent of food insecure children likely not eligible for federal assistance.\(^2\)

In order to improve the estimate of food-insecure children, Feeding America has published a model estimate of food-insecurity for children. The following indicators were used to calculate estimates of child food-insecurity at the county, congressional district and state levels:

- Unemployment rates;
- Child-poverty rates;
- Median income for families with children;
- Homeownership rates for families with children;
- African American children; and
- Hispanic children.\(^3\)

In 2014, approximately 26,000 children were counted as food-insecure in Denver. The number of food-insecure children has decreased 27 percent from 2009 to 2014 (Figure 68). In Colorado, the number decreased seventeen percent.\(^4\)

The City and County of Denver offered summer and snacks and supper meal programs that fed children 149,423 meals in 2015.\(^5\) This program, along with other community partner programs, including Food Bank of the Rockies and Denver Public Schools, help ensure that no child need suffer hunger in Denver.

\(^2\) Ibid.
\(^3\) Ibid.
\(^4\) Ibid.
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly the Federal Food Stamp Program, helps mitigate the negative impacts of food insecurity on children and adults. This federally funded program provides eligible households with coupons or cards that can be used to purchase food at participating local grocery stores or markets. In Denver the program is administered by Denver Human Services.

As of October 2015, nearly 41,000 children under the age of 19 were receiving SNAP benefits in Denver (Figure 69).\textsuperscript{106}

The Denver Department of Human Services reports the average number of children ages birth through age 18 receiving SNAP benefits within Denver neighborhoods at the end of 2015 (Figure 70).\textsuperscript{107}


\textsuperscript{107} Denver Department of Human Services. (2016). \textit{Average number of children receiving SNAP benefits, October, November, and December 2015}.
Food Deserts

Increases in diet-related diseases and obesity are major public health problems in cities across America. Limited access to supermarkets, grocery stores, and other sources of healthy and affordable food may make it harder for some Denver residents to eat a balanced diet.

A definition of a food desert is provided in the 2008 Farm Bill as an “area in the United States with limited access to affordable and nutritious food, particularly such an area composed of predominately lower-income neighborhoods and communities.” In other words, food deserts are geographic areas where access to affordable, healthy food options is limited. In addition, food deserts often contain a higher proportion of fast-food restaurants and convenience stores with an insufficient selection of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Cities across the nation, including Denver, are combating food deserts through community planning projects such as farmer’s markets, community gardens, local food promotion, youth agriculture, culinary training programs and improved nutritional guidelines in schools.

The Denver Office of Economic Development created a map of Denver areas where low to moderate income families with no vehicle live more than 1/2 miles from a full service grocery store. These underserved grocery areas are highlighted in green in the map in Figure 71.

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Mental Health

In order for children to have the best chance for success in life and school, they need to be healthy. Mental health is an important component of overall health. Children who are mentally healthy have “a positive quality of life and can function well at home, in school, and in their communities.”\(^{111}\) Children’s mental disorders can affect children of all ages, gender, and ethnic and racial backgrounds. Mental health disorders in children include:

- Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD);
- Behavior disorders;
- Mood and anxiety disorders;
- Substance abuse disorders; and
- Tourette syndrome.\(^{112}\)

Several factors can contribute to the development of mental disorders in children including family history, biological factors, toxic stress, and adverse childhood experiences, such as exposure to violence or substance abuse.\(^{113}\)

According to the Colorado Child Health Survey for 2013, anxiety was the most prevalent mental disorder for children surveyed, ages four through 14, in Colorado (Figure 72).\(^{114}\)

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\(^{112}\) Ibid.


\(^{114}\) Ibid.
Drug and Alcohol Abuse

The use of drugs and alcohol by youth have serious consequences to their growth and development and lead to increased risk of addiction, involvement with the criminal justice system, poor school performance, and dropping out of school. A total number of 250 incidents involving alcohol and 269 incidents involving drugs were reported by Denver Public Schools during the 2014-2015 school year.  

Drug and alcohol use according to Denver Public School high school students:

- 23 percent have ever smoked a cigarette;
- 15 percent have smoked tobacco or used tobacco products in the past 30 days;
- 61 percent had at least one drink of alcohol;
- 20 percent binge drank on one or more occasion in the past 30 days;
- 49 percent used marijuana one or more times;
- 7 percent used some form of cocaine;
- 3 percent used heroine;
- 3.5 percent used methamphetamines;
- 7.6 percent used ecstasy; and
- 11 percent used prescription drugs without a doctor’s prescription. 

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116 2013 Health Kids Colorado Survey Results: Region 20 Middle and High School Summary Tables, Weighted Data. 
Marijuana

Research shows that marijuana use by youth negatively impacts their brain development which impacts their performance in school. According to a report by the Colorado Department of Education, long-term use of marijuana before age 18 can cause permanent damage to the brain’s structure and functioning. And for youth, marijuana use can impact decision making and affect school performance which can lead to a higher risk of dropping out of school. The report also states that marijuana use is rising, the perception of marijuana’s harmfulness is decreasing, fewer students disapprove of marijuana use, and marijuana is easier to get.\(^{117}\)

In addition to the impact on the health of youth, involvement in the criminal justice system is another risk for Denver’s children involved with marijuana. The Denver Police Department reported a decrease in marijuana arrests for 10- through 17-year-old youth in Denver last year. In 2015, there were 395 marijuana related juvenile arrests (Figure 74).\(^{118}\)

The Denver neighborhoods with the greatest number of juvenile arrests for marijuana violations include the central business district, Washington Park, Capitol Hill, Lincoln Park, Highland, and Montbello (Figure 73).\(^{119}\)

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\(^{118}\) Denver Police Department. Data Analysis Unit. 2015 Marijuana Juvenile Arrests in Denver.

\(^{119}\) Ibid.
Child Abuse and Neglect

Safe, stable and nurturing relationships and environments are best for children to grow and develop to their full potential. Unfortunately, some children suffer physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect. Child abuse and neglect can have severe effects on children’s cognitive, social-emotional, language, mental health, and behavioral development that can last well into adulthood. Adults who were neglected or abused as children are at greater risk for substance abuse, eating disorders, mental health issues and chronic disease.120

Young children under the age of four are at greatest risk for the most severe consequences of abuse and neglect. These negative outcomes include disrupted brain development, improper development of the nervous system, serious physical injury or death.121 Individual, family, and community factors contribute to the risk of child abuse and neglect. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lists these risk factors by group.

Individual Risk Factors include:

- Parents’ lack of understanding of children’s needs, child development and parenting skills;
  - Parents’ history of child maltreatment;
  - Substance abuse or mental health issues;
  - Young age of parents, low educational attainment, single-parenthood, low-income; and
  - Non-biological, transient caregivers in the home.

Family Risk Factors include:

- Social isolation;
- Family disorganization, dissolution, and violence; and
- Parenting stress, poor parent-child relationships, and negative interactions.

Community Risk Factors include:

- Community violence; and
- Concentrated neighborhood disadvantage and poor social connections.122

Data available from the Division of Child Welfare Services with the Colorado Department of Human Services tracks the rate of substantiated incidences of maltreatment per 1,000 children for Denver and Colorado over time (Figure 75).123

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121 Ibid.
GOAL 2

Increase Access to High Quality Early Childhood Education
GOAL 2: Increase Access to High Quality Early Childhood Education

Research shows that the most critical period in a child’s development occurs within the first five years of life. The quality of learning experiences at home and school during this period often has a life-long impact on later school success, behavior, and health. Data show that children in high-quality early learning programs demonstrate higher cognitive outcomes as well as non-cognitive skills that are critical for school success. The benefits of high-quality early learning programs are evident in children from all socio-economic backgrounds but are particularly strong for children in low-income families.124

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates 67 percent of Denver children age five and younger have all available parents in the labor force. This means that approximately 34,500 young children need some kind of care during the day while their parents work.125

Ensuring that quality child care and preschool is affordable and accessible for all families and children who need it is essential to preparing Denver children for kindergarten and future success.

Quality Child Care in Denver

In general, the higher the quality rating, the more the program is committed to providing a high quality early learning experience for children. This effort may include:

- Highly trained and educated teaching staff;
- Strong and knowledgeable leadership;
- Strong foundational business administration practices;
- Highly interactive and valued partnerships with families;
- Quality learning environment for children that incorporates curriculum, informed instruction, lower teacher/child ratios, and consistent health and safety practices; and
- Incorporation of resources and opportunities for collaboration related to child health.\textsuperscript{126}

The levels of quality represent the following characteristics and are mapped by center location in Figure 76:

Level 1: Providers are in compliance with licensing standards.

Level 2: Providers show they have completed quality activities to promote positive experiences for children.

Levels 3, 4, and 5: Providers have demonstrated various quality investments and have earned cumulative points.\textsuperscript{127}


Family, Friend, and Neighbor Child Care

Family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) child care is the most common form of non-parental child care in the United States. Because this type of care is not monitored or licensed, the quality of care children are receiving is unknown.

These early learning years are critical to preparing children to enter school ready to learn. The need to support FFN providers in order to improve child outcomes is a recognized strategy both nationally and locally. However, identifying FFN providers that need or want support is difficult.

Drawing from current research around FFN care in the United States, several indicators were identified as key to understanding which factors often characterize FFN providers and which factors measure a child’s readiness for school. Indicators can be combined to highlight geographic areas in Denver where FFN providers are likely prevalent and may need additional support to improve outcomes for the children for whom they care (Figure 77).

The key indicators include:

- Children with all available parents in the labor force;
- People in poverty;
- Three- and four-year-old children not in preschool;
- Adults without a high school diploma;
- Hispanic or Latino origin;
- Kindergarteners not ready for reading; and
- Children living in immigrant families.

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Preschool

Children enrolled in quality preschool programs are less likely to repeat grades, need special education, or get in future trouble with the law, and are more likely to graduate from high school, earn more money, and own homes as adults. Quality in programs, however, is an essential factor necessary to achieve the desired outcomes that matter for lasting impacts.

Up from 56 percent in 2013, 65 percent of three- and four-year-olds were enrolled in preschool in Denver in 2014 (Figure 78). Sixty-five percent of those in publicly funded preschool programs and 35 percent are in privately funded (family-pay) programs.

Of the cities with populations between 500,000 and 1,000,000, Denver ranks third highest in the percentage of three- and four-year-old children attending preschool (Figure 79). This increase in participation may be due, in part, to Denver voters who have made access to preschool more affordable through the Denver Preschool Program.

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132 Ibid.
Research shows that high quality early learning programs benefit all children and better prepare at-risk children for kindergarten. Unfortunately, 65 percent of children in poor families attend preschool compared to 90 percent of children in more educated, wealthier families across the nation.\textsuperscript{133}

Mirroring these trends, a higher percent of three-and four-year-olds living in higher-income neighborhoods in Denver participated in preschool programs more often than their peers in low-income neighborhoods (Figure 80).\textsuperscript{134}

Figure 80: Denver Three- and Four-Year-Old Children in Preschool


Denver Preschool Program

The Denver Preschool Program (DPP) provides Denver families with tuition support to help pay for high quality preschool for their four-year-old children attending preschool the year before kindergarten. According to DPP, 4,356 children received tuition support from the program during the 2014-2015 school year. Since 2007, Denver Preschool Program has distributed $67.7 million in tuition credits to 36,174 children. There are more than 250 preschools that participate in the program with 86 percent earning a high quality level in DPP’s Classroom Rating (a combination of the Qualistar Rating™ and the CLASS® Observation to provide a comprehensive view of quality) during the 2014-2015 school year; 89 percent of DPP children were enrolled in these top rated schools.  

Colorado Preschool Program

The state funded Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) provides high-quality early childhood education programs to at-risk three- and four-year-old children across Colorado. Denver Public Schools received funding for 4,024 preschool slots for the 2014-2015 school year. The at-risk factors include poverty as measured by free or reduced-price meal eligibility, parents without a high school degree, teen parents, homelessness, parental substance abuse, and abusive home environments. Poverty is the most prevalent risk factor accounting for more than 80 percent of CPP enrolled children statewide.  

Colorado Child Care Assistance Program

The Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) provides child care support to eligible parents with newborns to children through age 12 and youth with special needs up to age 18. Denver CCAP is administered by the Denver Department of Human Services and is funded by a mix of federal, state, and county dollars.  

The income eligibility for Denver’s CCAP program is currently 225 percent of the federal poverty level. The amount CCAP pays towards care is set up on a sliding scale based on a family’s size and monthly income. Participating families are responsible for a portion of the cost. Denver CCAP currently serves parents in income eligible families who are:

- Employed or self-employed and earn at least minimum wage;  
- Attending high school or working towards a GED or participating in ESL, college for a first bachelor’s degree or a vocational program; and/or  
- Currently searching for a job.  

Denver reimburses participating local child care providers according to a tiered reimbursement structure. The program is also supported with funding through the passage of Measure 2A.
Denver Public Schools Early Childhood Education

The number of children participating in early childhood education programs through Denver Public Schools (DPS) has more than doubled since 2000 (Figure 81). In the 2015-2016 school year, approximately 6,180 Denver four-year-old children are expected to participate in DPS early education programs. DPS early childhood programs are provided in schools across the City of Denver (Figure 82).^139

Figure 82: DPS Preschool Enrollment by School 2015-2016

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Head Start

Early Head Start and Head Start are federally funded programs. In Denver there are three Early Head Start grantees that serve children birth through age two and two Head Start grantees, the Rocky Mountain Service Employment and Redevelopment (RMSER) and Denver Great Kids Head Start (DGKHS) that serve children ages three through five. During the 2014-2015 school year, 2,221 children were served across all Early Head Start and Head Start programs in Denver with combined enrollment totals for Early Head Start (384 children), DGKHS (1,153 children), and RMSER (684 children). RMSER serves 15 neighborhoods in Denver's northwest region, while DGKHS serves the 63 remaining neighborhoods.140

Due to the dramatic drop in the number of children ages four and younger in poverty in Denver, the five Early Head Start and Head Start grantees collectively served 26 percent of the eligible population in 2014 (Figure 83).141 Although the gap is closing, the need for service is far greater than Head Start resources alone can meet. Other programs that help serve these and other eligible children include the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program, the Colorado Preschool Program, the Denver Preschool Program, and Denver Public Schools early childhood programs.

Figure 83: Early Head Start and Head Start Program Enrollment vs. Estimated Need in Denver

Achievement gaps begin long before they are measured by standardized tests in the third grade. Disparities in academic skills are apparent in preschool and kindergarten, but begin even earlier in a child’s life. Studies show that these disparities are associated with family income, parental education, family structure, neighborhood conditions and exposure to language and other educational experiences. Factors including a child’s health, nutrition, and exposure to emotional stress and violence are also known to impact a child’s early cognitive and social development.\footnote{Barnett, S., & Lamy, C. (2013). Achievement Gaps Start Early. In P. Carter, & K. Welner, \textit{Closing the Opportunity Gap: What America Must Do to Give Every Child an Even Chance} (pp. 98-110). Oxford: Oxford University Press}

Head Start programs primarily serve the most vulnerable children in Denver. When the children enter the program, they are given an assessment that measures their competency in several important domains. These assessments are used to measure progress towards school readiness throughout the academic year and show that Head Start program participation clearly begins to close the achievement gaps for these disadvantaged children.

\textit{Teaching Strategies GOLD}\textsuperscript{®} is an assessment system for children from birth through kindergarten and measures the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that are most predictive of school success. \textit{Teaching Strategies GOLD}\textsuperscript{®} (TS Gold) blends ongoing, authentic, observational assessment across all areas of development and learning with intentional, focused, performance-assessment tasks for selected literacy and numeracy objectives.

Head Start program administrators can use TS Gold reports to:
- Collect and gather child outcome data as one part of a larger accountability system;
- Guide program planning and professional development opportunities; and
- Inform strategic investments to close learning gaps.

Head Start preschool providers can use the TS Gold reports to:
- Observe and document children’s development and learning over time;
- Plan instruction to support children’s needs;
- Identify children who might benefit from additional support, screening, or further evaluation; and
- Report and communicate progress with family members and others.
The following graphs illustrate the percentage of three-, four-, and five-year-old children in Denver Great Kids Head Start (DGKHS) programs who meet or exceed social, physical, and academic expectations for their age as defined by TS Gold’s “Widely Held Expectations.” Overall, those students who participated in the DGKHS program for a full year demonstrated significant growth across all domains in all categories of students analyzed from fall 2014 through spring 2015 (Figure 84).\textsuperscript{143}

![Figure 84: DGKHS All Children in ALL Checkpoint Periods 2014-2015](image)

Children with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) consistently exhibit remarkable growth in all domains from fall to spring. Although fewer students with an IEP are meeting or exceeding Widely Held Expectations than their peers without an IEP, their growth dramatically reduces the significant gaps apparent at the start of the program year (Figure 85).\textsuperscript{144}

![Figure 85: DGKHS Children with an IEP in ANY Checkpoint 2014-2015](image)

\textsuperscript{143} Denver Great Kids Head Start. (June 2015). TS Gold Analysis: Fall 2014-Spring 2015. TS Gold Data provided by the Colorado Department of Education.

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.
A slightly higher percentage of girls were meeting or exceeding Widely Held Expectations in all domains except the physical domain by end of the program year. Both boys and girls showed significant growth in all domains from fall to spring (Figures 86 and 87).

Figure 86: DGKHS Female Children in ALL Checkpoint Periods 2014-2015

Figure 87: DGKHS Male Children in ALL Checkpoint Periods 2014-2015

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GOAL 3

Increase the Number of Students who can Read at Grade Level by the end of Their Third Grade Year
GOAL 3: Increase the Number of Students Who Can Read At Grade Level by the End of Their Third Grade Year

Examining a variety of education indicators provides a holistic view of achievement in Denver. Student population data, languages spoken in schools, English language learners, full-day kindergarten enrollment and those students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch are included in this section. Student achievement data as measured by proficiency on the state standardized tests by income, race/ethnicity, and subject, illustrate persistent gaps in achievement resulting from opportunity gaps impacting the success of students at various points in their development. Utilizing all of these important indicators to craft effective policies, programs, services, and interventions are necessary to reduce achievement gaps and ensure opportunity for all of Denver’s children.

To ensure that all Denver children have what they need to be successful in school and life, they need the tools that will enable success at each stage in the life-cycle. Children need to enter school ready to learn and the ability to read at grade level by the end of third grade is an important marker for future academic success. Beginning in fourth grade, children transition from learning how to read to reading to learn.

Unfortunately, 69 percent, or more than 1,800 Denver Public School third graders were not meeting expectations on the English Language Arts (ELA) PARCC assessment in the spring of 2015. In seven Denver neighborhoods, 90 percent or more of students were not meeting expectations on the ELA.

Disparities in third grade reading proficiency exist by geography (Figure 88).146

Figure 88: Third Graders Not Proficient in Reading

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146 Denver Public Schools. Department of Planning and Analysis. 2014-2015 School Year.
Denver Public Schools

Student Population

In the 2015-2016 school year, 91,429 students were enrolled in 199 Denver Public Schools consisting of three Early Childhood Education schools, 93 elementary, 18 ECE-8, four ECE-12, 28 middle, 14 grades 6-12, and 39 high schools (Figure 89). The largest proportion, or 56 percent, of Denver Public School students was Hispanic or Latino compared to 23 percent classified as non-Hispanic white in the 2015-2016 school year. Black students made up 14 percent of the school population (Table 3).

![Figure 89: Student Enrollment](image)

![Table 3: DPS Student Population by Race/ethnicity](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DPS Student Profile</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
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<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>2,981</td>
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<td>Black</td>
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<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More</td>
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<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>91,429</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


English Language Learners

Over 120 languages are spoken in Denver Public Schools. The languages, other than English, spoken by the most students in DPS include Spanish, Vietnamese, Arabic, Somali, Amharic, French, Nepali, and Russian.\textsuperscript{149}

In the 2015-2016 school year, approximately 33,650 (37 percent) Denver Public School students, including early childhood children, were English Language Learners (Figure 90).\textsuperscript{150}


Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Eligibility

The Colorado Department of Education provides annual district-level data on those children eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Free lunch eligibility is set at 130 percent of the federal poverty level (approximately $31,500 for a family of four) and reduced-price lunch eligibility is at 185 percent of the federal poverty level (approximately $44,800 for a family of four).\textsuperscript{151}

In Denver, 68 percent of public school students qualified for free or reduced-price lunch in the 2015-2016 school year (Figure 91).\textsuperscript{152} The proportion of free or reduced-price lunch students by Denver neighborhood is illustrated in Figure 92.\textsuperscript{153}


\textsuperscript{152} Colorado Department of Education. (2016, January). \textit{2015-2016 PK-Free and Reduced Lunch Eligibility by County and District}. Retrieved from Colorado Department of Education: \url{https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/pupilcurrentdistrict}.

\textsuperscript{153} Denver Public Schools. Department of Planning and Analysis. 2014-2015 School Year.
Chronic Absenteeism

One well-supported strategy to improve outcomes for children and contribute to the overall well-being of Denver neighborhoods is to ensure that students attend school every day. The benefits of consistent school attendance include improved academic achievement, increased graduation rates, reduced juvenile justice costs, and decreased poverty.\(^{154}\)

No matter the grade or school, students must participate regularly to benefit. The more school time that is missed by children, the harder it is to keep up with the coursework. Children miss school throughout the school year for a variety of reasons. These may include chronic illness, involvement with the juvenile justice system, housing issues, family responsibilities, bullying, unsafe conditions, or lack information on the importance of attending school. According to the report by Attendance Works, students' test scores on the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) who missed more school than their peers who attended regularly were consistently lower. This is true for every age and every racial or ethnic category analyzed.\(^{155}\)

The Attendance Works report also summarizes the current research around chronic absenteeism and lists what we know so far:

- Poor attendance in the first month of school can predict chronic absence for the entire year;
- Absenteeism in kindergarten can affect whether a child develops the grit and perseverance needed to succeed in school;
- Absenteeism in preschool and kindergarten can influence whether a child will be held back in third grade;
- Absenteeism in middle and high school can predict dropout rates;
- Absenteeism influences not just chances for graduating but also for completing college;
- Improving attendance is an essential strategy for reducing achievement gaps;
- When students reduce absences, they can make academic gains; and
- Research points to effective strategies for improving attendance.\(^{156}\)

Chronic absenteeism is typically defined as missing ten percent or more of the school year and is tracked by grade and school. In Denver more than 24,000 students, or 26 percent, were chronically absent in the 2014-2015 school year. This means that about one in four Denver students were absent for at least ten percent of the time that they were enrolled and missed out on a significant amount of valuable instruction time.\(^{157}\)

Some schools have higher proportions of children who are chronically absent. In DPS, approximately 24 percent of elementary schools, 46 percent of middle schools, and 82 percent of high schools had a quarter or more of their students chronically absent in 2014-2015. High schools had the worst rates of chronic absenteeism, with 23 schools with half of their students chronically absent.\(^{158}\)

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\(^{157}\) Denver Public Schools. Department of Planning and Analysis. 2014-2015 School Year.

\(^{158}\) Denver Public Schools. Department of Planning and Analysis. 2014-2015 School Year.
During the 2014-2015 school year, the percentage of students chronically absent varied by race/ethnicity. Children of color, American Indian, black, and Hispanic were more likely to be chronically absent in high school compared to their Asian and non-Hispanic white peers. Black and Hispanic female students were chronically absent more than their male counterparts with about half missing ten percent or more of the school year (Figure 93).  

Figure 93: Chronically Absent High School Students in Denver by Race/Ethnicity

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159 Denver Public Schools. Department of Planning and Analysis. 2014-2015 School Year.
Denver Public Schools track attendance data by grade and race/ethnicity. In sixth grade, American Indian students were chronically absent most, distantly followed by Hispanic and black males (Figure 94). When mapped by where chronically absent students live, some neighborhoods have much higher rates than others (Figure 95).\footnote{Denver Public Schools. Department of Planning and Analysis. 2014-2015 School Year.}
In ninth grade, chronic absenteeism increases for all categories of students by race/ethnicity. American Indian students are chronically absent most often with Hispanic and black females next highest, followed by Hispanic and black young men (Figure 96).

The map in Figure 97 illustrates the percentage of ninth grade students in Denver Public School programs that are chronically absent by the neighborhood in which they live.¹⁶¹

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¹⁶¹ Denver Public Schools. Department of Planning and Analysis. 2014-2015 School Year.
Student Mobility

Families move for many reasons, including job change, housing type, affordability and size, eviction, domestic problems, neighborhood characteristics, or school choice. No matter the cause, changing schools can have an impact on student success, often negatively impacting student achievement. Students who change schools frequently often face challenges including:

- Lower academic achievement;
- Behavior problems;
- Difficulty making friends; and
- Dropping out.\textsuperscript{162}

High incidence of student mobility not only impacts the mobile students, but the entire school community. Research shows that in schools and classrooms with high student mobility, teachers often have to review materials and spend time on remedial education instead of progressing to new content to catch new students up with the work. In Florida, researchers found that instruction and content was one year behind in highly mobile schools compared to students in more stable schools.\textsuperscript{163}

Students who change schools during the school year for a reason other than normal grade progression are considered mobile. The student mobility rate, as defined by the Colorado Department of Education, is the unduplicated count of students who move schools at least one time during the school year. The mobility incidence rate is the duplicated count. Each time a student moves schools during the school year, they will be counted as mobile. During the 2014-2015 school year, the mobility incidence rate for DPS students was 21 percent. More than 20,000 DPS students moved schools during the school year (Figure 98).\textsuperscript{164}

\begin{figure}[h]
  \centering
  \includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{mobility-incidence-rate.png}
  \caption{Mobility Incidence Rate for 2014-2015}
\end{figure}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
\hline
Denver & 16% & 19% & 19% \\
Colorado & 19% & 19% & 21% \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Mobility Incidence Rate by School Year}
\end{table}


\textsuperscript{163} Research Services. (March 2007). \textit{Information Capsule: Student Mobility Vol. 0609}. Miami: Miami-Dade County Public Schools. \url{http://drs.dadeschools.net}.


85 | Page
Research shows that economically disadvantaged children have the highest mobility rates of any group. Children and youth in foster care, homeless children and children from migrant and military families are also highly mobile. Children of color are more mobile than non-Hispanic white children and children who did not expect to attend college were 70 percent more likely to change high schools than their peers who did expect to attend college.\textsuperscript{165}

Male students had a higher incidence rate than female students. American Indian, black, and Pacific Islander children had significantly higher than average mobility incidence rates (Figure 99).\textsuperscript{166}

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\textsuperscript{165} Research Services. (March 2007). \textit{Information Capsule: Student Mobility Vol. 0609}. Miami: Miami-Dade County Public Schools. \url{http://drs.dadeschools.net}.

Full-Day Kindergarten

The skills learned in quality full-day kindergarten programs provide children the time and support they need to master the academic and social skills necessary for future achievement and life success.

Full-day kindergarten programs benefit children in the following ways:

- Contributes to increased school readiness;
- Leads to higher academic achievement;
- Improves student attendance;
- Supports literacy and language development;
- Benefits children socially and emotionally; and
- Decreases costs by reducing retention and remediation rates.167

As the benefits of participation in full-day kindergarten programs were more recognized, the number of children attending full-day kindergarten in Colorado and in Denver has increased. Denver’s participation rate has consistently been higher than the participation rate for Colorado over time. (Figure 100).168

Denver Public Schools offers full-day kindergarten programs to children and their families. The half-day kindergarten program is free to all families and the full-day option is free to those eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. For families earning more than 185 percent of the federal poverty level, tuition payments are determined based on a sliding scale.

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Student Assessment Program Results
Children Reading at Grade Level at the End of Kindergarten

The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA2 for English and EDL2 for Spanish students) is an assessment given in Denver Public Schools (DPS) to measure phonemic awareness, letter/word recognition, and phonics. All kindergarten students are evaluated using the word analysis task component of the DRA2/EDL2 assessment in the fall of the school year and a complete assessment of reading levels at the end of the school year.

Seventy-one percent of all DPS kindergarteners tested were reading at or above grade level, as measured by the DRA2 assessment for the 2014-2015 school year. The map in Figure 101 illustrates the variability of kindergarten students who are not proficient on this assessment at the end of kindergarten by the neighborhoods in which they live.170

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170 Denver Public Schools. (2015). Percent of DPS kindergarteners who were reading at or above grade level by the end of kindergarten in 2015.
PARCC Assessments

In the 2014-2015 school year, Colorado transitioned to a new state-wide assessment for public school students. The Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) PARCC assessments were administered to Colorado students and are intended to measure the level at which Colorado students meet the Colorado Academic Standards and the Common Core State Standards. The new CMAS PARCC assessments are not comparable to prior TCAP or CSAP assessments.

The percentage of Denver Public School students meeting or exceeding expectations is consistently lower than the state average (Figures 102 and 103). Only one-third (33 percent) of Denver Public School Students in grades three through 11 were meeting or exceeding expectations in English Language Arts in 2014-2015. In Math, only one-quarter, or 25 percent, of Denver Public School students were meeting or exceeding expectations for their level of coursework.171

Figure 102: Students Meeting or Exceeding Expectations on the PARCC ELA Assessment

Figure 103: Students Meeting or Exceeding Expectations on the PARCC Math Assessment

Achievement gaps exist between children of color and non-Hispanic white students, evident in Figure 104. In Denver, the gaps are wider than the state as a whole with only 25 percent of students of color meeting or exceeding expectations compared to 66 percent non-Hispanic white students. Native American, black and Hispanic students all have lower average scores than do Asian or non-Hispanic white students in English Language Arts. Female students are typically meeting or exceeding expectations more often than males (Figure 105).\textsuperscript{172}

Figure 104: Students Meeting or Exceeding Expectations on the ELA Assessment for 2015 by Race/Ethnicity

![Bar chart showing percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations by race/ethnicity.]

Figure 105: Students Meeting or Exceeding Expectations on the ELA Assessment for 2015 by Gender

![Bar chart showing percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations by gender.]

\textsuperscript{172} Denver Public Schools. Department of Planning and Analysis. 2014-2015 School Year.
As with the English Language Arts assessment, students of color are far less likely to meet or exceed expectations on the PARCC math assessment. Seventeen percent of students of color were meeting or exceeding expectations compared to 56 percent non-Hispanic white students. These disparities are further broken down by race/ethnicity in Figure 106. In math, there is little difference in the percentage of children meeting and exceeding expectations between males and females, with the percentage of females slightly higher than males in Denver Public Schools (Figure 107).

Figure 106: Students Meeting or Exceeding Expectations on the Math Assessment for 2015 by Race/Ethnicity

Figure 107: Students Meeting or Exceeding Expectations on the Math Assessment for 2015 by Gender
GOAL 4

Increase the Number of Students who have Access to and Complete a Post-Secondary Pathway
GOAL 4: Increase the Number of Students Who Have Access to and Complete a Post-Secondary Pathway

Graduation Rates

At the end of the 2014-2015 school year, 65 percent (3,257) Denver Public School students graduated from high school on time, or in four years. Although the on-time graduation rate for DPS is significantly lower than the state average, graduation rates are steadily increasing from 52 percent for the 2009-2010 school year (Figure 108).

Graduation rates vary widely based on factors like race, ethnicity, and gender. American Indian, black, and Hispanic students graduate less often than their peers from other racial and ethnic backgrounds. Overall, male students were less likely to graduate than their female peers (Figure 109). In Denver, 59 percent of students with limited English proficiency graduated and 37 percent of students with disabilities graduated on time.173

Challenges for Denver’s Young Men of Color

In Denver and across the nation, young men of color face significant challenges. These challenges include living in high-poverty areas with high crime rates and low performing schools. Also impacting achievement are high rates of chronic absenteeism, lack of positive role models, and living in single-parent families.

If not overcome, the impacts of these challenges result in persistent gaps in achievement and graduation rates. Asian and non-Hispanic white male students typically graduate high school in four years at significantly higher rates than black, Hispanic or Native American young men (Figure 110).

Chronically absent students, or students missing ten percent of the school year or more, compound community challenges faced by these young men. If students are not in school, they have a very difficult time succeeding in coursework and meeting the criteria necessary to graduate on time. Again, the data illustrates that disadvantages associated with chronic absenteeism disproportionally impact young men of color. Nearly half of high school-aged young men of color in grades nine through 12 were chronically absent in 2014-2015 in DPS (Figure 111).\textsuperscript{174}

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\textsuperscript{174} Denver Public Schools. Department of Planning and Analysis. 2014-2015 School Year.
Dropout Rates

One of the most urgent problems facing the nation is the high number of students dropping out of school before they earn a high school diploma. A report from National Public Radio illustrates that often the decision to dropout has lifelong personal and societal impacts. The report states:

- The unemployment rate for people without a high school diploma is nearly twice that of the general population;
- Over a lifetime, a high school dropout will earn $200,000 less than a high school graduate and almost $1 million less than a college graduate;
- Dropouts are more likely to commit crimes, abuse drugs and alcohol, become teenage parents, live in poverty, and commit suicide; and
- Dropouts cost federal and state governments hundreds of billions of dollars in lost earnings, welfare and medical costs, and billions more for dropouts who end up in prison.\(^{175}\)

Despite that 98 percent of Denver Public School high school students reported they thought it was important to finish high school,\(^{176}\) approximately 1,800 students (4.6 percent) dropped out of school before graduation (Figure 112). Dropout rates vary by gender, race, and ethnicity (Figure 113).\(^{177}\)

Figure 112: Colorado and DPS Dropout Rates

![Dropout Rates Chart](image)

Figure 113: DPS Dropout Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Gender 2014-2015

![Dropout Rates Chart](image)


Post-Secondary Education

College Enrollment

According to the 2013 Health Kids Colorado Survey, 91 percent of Denver high school students thought it was important to go to college.\(^{178}\) However, only 1,857 Denver high school graduates (48 percent) enrolled in a post-secondary institution in fall after graduating in 2014.\(^{179}\) This rate is lower than the state rate of 56 percent of graduates going to college (Figure 114).\(^{180}\)

Of those students who graduate, the percentage enrolling in college by race/ethnicity is indicated in the graph in Figure 115. A higher percentage of Asian and white students enroll in college after high school than American Indian, black, and Hispanic students.\(^{181}\)

The National Student Clearinghouse reports that only 25 percent of DPS students who entered a college program in 2009 completed a degree within six years.\(^{182}\)

Figure 114: Post-secondary Enrollment

![Figure 114: Post-secondary Enrollment](image)

Figure 115: College Enrollment by Race Ethnicity

![Figure 115: College Enrollment by Race Ethnicity](image)

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College Readiness

Research shows that the more prepared for college students are, the better their chances for completing a college degree. Adequate college preparation reduces gaps in persistence and degree completion among low-income and students of color. The ACT college readiness assessment is given to every Colorado 11th grade public school student in the state. The test measures what students have learned throughout high school and identifies gaps in skills necessary to be successful in college. The ACT is accepted by all four-year colleges and universities in the United States and provides higher education institutions with standardized scores from which to compare, recruit and enroll future students. ACT overall tests are reported on a scale from 1 to 36. ACT College Readiness Benchmarks and Denver Public School District averages for each overall test are as listed in Table 4.

Table 4: ACT Benchmarks with DPS District ACT Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall ACT Test</th>
<th>ACT College Readiness Benchmark</th>
<th>2015 Denver Public Schools ACT District Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18.3</td>
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<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although there are differences between the reports that provide the following comparison in ACT success in Figure 116, it is apparent that Denver Public School students consistently score below the state average with a composite score of 18 in 2015.

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183 ACT Research and Policy. (February 2013). Readiness Matters: The Impact of College Readiness on College Persistence and Degree Completion. www.act.org/research: ACT.


186 The Colorado ACT Profile Report reflects the results of a school’s spring state testing population. Per State Statute Colorado is required to test every 11th grade public school student in the state. In contrast, the Graduating Class Report reflects the results of only the most recent test date for each member of the most recent graduating class who listed a Colorado high school (both private and public) at the time of testing. http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/documents/assessment/documents/coact/data/difcoactprofilereport_gradclassreport.pdf.

College Readiness by Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Instructional Type

According to reports by ACT, students who meet the recommended ACT benchmarks by subject area (English composition, mathematics, reading, and science) have a much better chance of obtaining a grade “C” or higher in freshman level college courses. The benchmarks for each subject, as well as the average scores for Denver Public Schools students by race/ethnicity, gender, free and reduced-price lunch status, English language learners, and special education students are provided in Figures 118 through 121.

Figure 117 illustrates the ACT composite scores by student group compared to Colorado as a whole. The data show that non-Hispanic white, English speaking students from higher income families are most prepared for college according to these measures. The disparities apparent here help explain the limited college enrollment and degree attainment rate for our low-income students and students of color in Denver.

In addition, factors other than academic success can impede progress towards college enrollment and degree completion. These factors include the ever increasing cost of attending college, family support and encouragement, and the need to work while in college or care for dependents.

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188 ACT Research and Policy. (February 2013). Readiness Matters: The Impact of College Readiness on College Persistence and Degree Completion. www.act.org/research: ACT.
Figure 118: ACT English Scores for DPS Students

Figure 119: ACT Reading Scores for DPS Students
Figure 120: ACT Math Scores for DPS Students

ACT Math Score

Math Benchmark is 22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>ACT Math Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
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<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
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<td>FRPL</td>
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Figure 121: ACT Science Scores for DPS Students

ACT Science Score

Science Benchmark is 23

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<th>Group</th>
<th>ACT Science Score</th>
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<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-SPED</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Remediation Rates

One of the reasons many students do not successfully complete a post-secondary program and earn a degree is because they are not academically prepared for college and require remedial coursework to catch up.\textsuperscript{180}

Of Colorado students who graduated high school in 2014 and enrolled in a state public college or university, approximately 34 percent needed remediation, or additional non-credit bearing courses offering basic skills necessary to succeed in college-level work.\textsuperscript{191} Although improving, nearly half of DPS students enrolled in a state public college (47 percent) needed to attend remedial classes in state public colleges (Figure 122).\textsuperscript{192}

Students of color require remediation more often than non-Hispanic white students in Colorado and in Denver. For the 2013 graduating class in Colorado, 59 percent of black students and 48 percent of Hispanic students, and 53 percent Native American students required remediation (Figure 123). Fifty-one percent of Colorado students required remediation in math, 31 percent in writing, and 18 percent in reading.\textsuperscript{193}

\textsuperscript{180} ACT Research and Policy. (February 2013). Readiness Matters: The Impact of College Readiness on College Persistence and Degree Completion. www.act.org/research: ACT.
\textsuperscript{192} Colorado Department of Higher Education. March 2016.
GOAL 5

Decrease the Number of Disconnected Youth
GOAL 5: Decrease the Number of Disconnected Youth

The economic health and quality of life in Denver depend on educated and engaged community members. The transition of youth, particularly as they move into adulthood, can be challenging for any young person, but is even more challenging for disconnected youth. Disconnected youth are young people who are not in school and who do not have a job. As the label implies, disconnected youth are cut off from the systems and institutions that support young adults’ transition into adulthood. Essential skills and experiences that enable growth and knowledge required to live as productive adults are often inaccessible.

Nationally, young adults of color are significantly more likely to be disconnected with 28 percent of Native American, 22 percent black, and 16 percent Hispanic or Latino young adults not in school and not working (Figure 124).194

Disconnected youth have measurable social, economic, and personal costs. According to The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth, disconnected youth ages 16 through 24 cost taxpayers $93 billion annually in lost revenue and increased social services.195

Subgroups of disconnected youth include:
- Young unmarried parents
- Immigrant youth
- Homeless youth
- Incarcerated youth
- Foster youth/youth transitioning out of public systems
- Youth with a disability or special needs
- High school drop outs

According to estimates from Opportunity Nation, approximately 13 percent, or 9,500 Denver young adults ages 16 through 24 were not attending school and not working (Figure 125).196

The areas in Denver where the characteristics associated with youth disconnection are greatest are indicated on the map in Figure 126.197

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Figure 126: Key Indicators for Youth Disconnection

Risk Areas for Youth Disconnection

Least Likely Environment for Youth Disconnection

Most Likely Environment for Youth Disconnection

Denver Neighborhoods

Data not Included

Key Indicators for Youth Disconnection:
- Adult Unemployment
- Adults with less than a Bachelor's Degree
- Poverty Rate
- Youth Unemployment (16-24)
- Not Enrolled in School (15-24)

Based on the key well-being indicators used in the Halve the Gap by 2020: Youth Disconnection in America's Cities by Measure of America of the Social Science Research Council, 2013.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2014 Five-Year Estimates
Youth Unemployment

Of the youth ages 16-24 in the labor force, ten percent were unemployed in 2014 in Denver compared to 12 percent for Colorado and 15 percent for the nation (Figure 127).\(^{198}\)

Unemployed youth and young adults ages 16-24 are mapped by Denver neighborhood in Figure 128.\(^ {199} \)

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Figure 127: Youth in the Labor Force who are Unemployed (ages 16-24)

![Graph showing youth unemployment rates by year across United States, Colorado, and Denver.]

Figure 128: Map of Youth (in the Labor Force) who are Unemployed (Ages 16-24)

![Map of Denver neighborhoods showing youth unemployment rates by age group.]

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The Status of Denver's Children: A Community Resource 2016 can be downloaded from the Office of Children’s Affairs website: www.denvergov.org/childrensaffairs

For more information on any topic or data included in this document please contact:
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