THE STATUS OF DENVER’S CHILDREN:
A COMMUNITY RESOURCE 2019
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Attainment of Adults</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-Parent Families</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crowded Housing</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children Living in Cost Burdened Housing</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in Poverty</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of Poverty to Income Trends</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Poverty by Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas of Concentrated Poverty</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Assistance</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children Enrolled in WIC</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent Crime</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Violence</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed Child Care in Denver</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care Deserts</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care Capacity in Denver</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Denver Preschool Program</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado Preschool Program</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver Public Schools Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado Child Care Assistance Program</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Prenatal Care</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women Who Smoked During Pregnancy</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Births</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Births by Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Birth Weight Births</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Risk-Factor Births</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen Births</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Births to Women with No High School Diploma</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Insurance</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uninsured Children</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicaid</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Health Plan Plus</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible But Not Enrolled in Public Health Insurance</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Insecurity</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Deserts</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overweight and Obese Children</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Abuse and Neglect</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risky Behaviors</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver Public Schools</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Population</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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. 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 these 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; and
- Ensure all children have their basic needs met.

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 2019: 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 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 goals for children.
Consistent patterns of advantage and disadvantage are apparent in the maps provided throughout the 2019 Status of Denver’s Children report.

It is possible to statistically aggregate key indicators to highlight areas of cumulative disadvantage (Figure 1). 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.

Figure 1: 2019 Denver Child Well-Being Index
Setting the Community Context
TOTAL POPULATION

Denver is experiencing significant population growth. In the seven years between 2010 and 2017, the number of people living in Denver increased by more than 100,000, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.¹ 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.

Figure 2: Denver Total Population Trends

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.²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denver</th>
<th>Colorado</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>704,621</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>5,607,154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>210,821</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>1,206,724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
<td>382,735</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>3,822,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic Black</td>
<td>63,110</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>219,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic American Indian</td>
<td>3,470</td>
<td>.5%</td>
<td>32,102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic Asian</td>
<td>26,595</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>176,176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic Pacific Islander</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>.1%</td>
<td>7,137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic Other Race</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>.1%</td>
<td>11,528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic Two or More Races</td>
<td>16,728</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>131,932</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Denver’s population mirrors these national trends. In 2017, the total population of Denver County was estimated at 704,621 people (Figure 2). Hispanics, representing the largest ethnic group in Colorado, comprised 30 percent of the total county population (Table 1).³

Table 1: Population Characteristics for Denver, Colorado and the United States, 2017

The growth in the non-Hispanic white population in Denver has outpaced all other racial and ethnic groups in number. The graph in Figure 3 shows the change in population over time as well as the number of people by race/ethnicity.  

Figure 3: Growth in the Denver's Population by Race/Ethnicity

---

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. ⁵

Figure 4: Map of the Asian Population

In Denver, the Asian population has grown 36 percent since 2007 (Figure 5). ⁶ The map in Figure 4 illustrates the distribution of the Asian population by census tract for Denver and surrounding counties. ⁷

Figure 5: Denver’s Asian Population over Time

---


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 2017, 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 11 percent since 2007 (Figure 6). The map in Figure 7 illustrates the distribution of the black population by census tract for Denver and the surrounding counties.

Figure 6: Denver’s Black Population Over Time

Figure 7: Map of the Black Population

---

DENVER’S HISPANIC POPULATION

Waves of immigrants arriving in the 1970’s to 1990’s added to the long-standing population of Hispanic people in the U.S. and more than tripled their numbers nationwide. The most recent population growth, however is due to natural increase rather than immigration. Denver’s Hispanic population has grown six percent since 2007 (Figure 8).

The map in Figure 9 illustrates the distribution of the Hispanic population by census tract for Denver and the surrounding counties.

---

**Figure 9: Map of the Hispanic Population**

**Figure 8: Denver’s Hispanic Population over Time**

---


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. By 2010, 64 percent of the U.S. population was white. By 2040, whites will become a minority of the total population.\(^{15}\)

Denver’s Non-Hispanic white population has grown 29 percent since 2007 (Figure 11).\(^{16}\)

The map in Figure 10 illustrates the distribution of the non-Hispanic white population by census tract for Denver and the surrounding counties.\(^{17}\)

---


CHILD POPULATION

CHILDREN UNDER AGE FIVE

Single-year estimates by the U.S. Census Bureau illustrate a five percent decline in the number of Denver children under age five over the last five years from 2013 to 2017 (Figure 13). As of 2017, approximately 43,000 children under age five lived in Denver. 18

The percentage of children under age five in Denver and the surrounding counties is illustrated in Figure 12. 19


Denver’s child population is diverse. In Denver, 34 percent of children under age 18 were categorized as non-Hispanic white in 2017. The largest ethnic group in Denver is Hispanic with 47 percent of children reported to be of Hispanic origin of any race. Including the Hispanic ethnicity in any racial category, white children make up 68 percent of Denver’s child population, followed by 10 percent of black children. Asian children make up four percent, and American Indian, one percent (Figure 14).20

Figure 14: Denver’s 2017 Child Population by Race

- White, 68%
- Other, 17%
- Black, 10%
- American Indian, 1%
- Asian, 4%

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 2017, 37 percent (52,000) of Denver’s children were living in immigrant families (Figure 16).  

Figure 15: Map of Children in Immigrant Families

Seventy-four percent of the children in immigrant families in Denver originate from Latin America, three percent from Europe, 11 percent from Asia, and 10 percent from Africa. The majority, or 92 percent, of children in immigrant families are U.S. citizens. Only six percent of their parents have been in the country less than five years.

The distribution of children in immigrant families varies across the region. The map in Figure 15 illustrates the proportion of children in immigrant families by census tract in Denver and surrounding counties.

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 66 percent (92,000) of the total child population in Denver in 2017. Not unlike other urban centers, Denver has a higher proportion of children of color than Colorado and the United States. (Figure 17).  

Figure 17: Children of Color over Time

![Graph showing children of color over time](image)

The map highlights the areas in Denver and the surrounding counties where children of color make up more than half of the child population under the age 18 (Figure 18).

Figure 18: Areas in with less than 50 percent Non-Hispanic White Children

![Map showing areas with less than 50% non-Hispanic white children](image)

---


According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 39,000 children, or 40 percent, under the age of 18 spoke a language other than English at home in 2017 (Figure 19).\(^{28}\) The variation of people over the age of five who speak a language other than English at home in Denver and the surrounding counties is illustrated in the map in Figure 20.\(^{29}\)

---

**Figure 19:** Children Who Speak a Language Other Than English at Home

**Figure 20:** Map of Language Other Than English Spoken in the Home


In recent years, significant improvement has been made to recognize, respect and include all people, independent of gender identity, into the community, workplace, public office, and the media. However, many cultural challenges still exist for people who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or other (LGBTQ). LGBTQ-identified youth have a particularly hard time in families and school, reporting mental health issues and concerns over safety in schools.

In recent years, more research and surveys have been conducted to identify the number of people who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and other identity expressions. In Colorado, approximately 4.6 percent of the total population identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender in a 2017 Gallup Daily tracking survey. Twenty-five percent of these individuals reported raising children.\(^{30}\)

High school students in Denver Public Schools self-reported their choice for gender identity on the Health Kids Colorado Survey. In 2017, nearly 10 percent identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual and one percent transgender (Figure 21).\(^{31}\)

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation and the University of Connecticut conducted a survey of over 12,000 LGBTQ youth aged 13-17 across the United States. They found 77 percent of LGBTQ teenagers experience depression and feelings of hopelessness. Twenty-six percent reported feeling safe in their schools and only five percent felt supported by school staff. The report concludes with recommendations for policy makers and advocates to help support this special population of youth. These recommendations include:

- Enact LGBTQ non-discrimination laws at the national, state and local level;
- Advocate for LGBTQ-inclusive anti-bullying laws and policies in schools;
- Support prohibitions on outdated and harmful practices such as conversion therapy; and
- Promote protections in areas where LGBTQ youth are overrepresented, including youth homelessness services, foster care and the juvenile justice system.\(^{32}\)

\(^{30}\) LGBT Demographic Data Interactive. (January 2019). Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law.


YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

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 program 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 decreased 46 percent from the 2014-2015 school year to the 2017-2018 school year, most likely due to the improving economy and demographic changes after the end of the Great Recession (Figure 22).[33]

Figure 22: Homeless School-Aged Children in Denver

---

YOUTH INVOLVED WITH THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

The Denver Police Department collects data on juveniles that are arrested or cited for various types of offenses. The total of all arrests/citations for youth age 10 through age 17 is 3,036 for 2018. Sixty-seven percent of boys were arrested or cited by Denver police compared to 33 percent of girls. Assaults, drug violations, curfews and warrant violations make up most offenses for youth.

A breakdown by violation type and the race/ethnicity of the youth are illustrated in Figure 23.

Figure 23: 2018 Juvenile Arrests by Race/Ethnicity

---

34 Denver Police Department, 2018.
YOUTH 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.  

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In Denver, approximately 10,499 (11 percent) students were enrolled in special education classes in Denver Public Schools in the 2018-2019 school year. 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.

CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

Children 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.  

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 25. 

The average number of Denver children placed in out-of-home placement through October 2018 was 821.

---


38 Denver Department of Human Services. (2018, October). Number of Youth in Foster Care by Month.
In 2017, the median family (with child) income in Denver was $74,770, which is significantly higher ($7,402 more) than in 2016. As of 2017, Denver’s median family income surpassed the national median family income but still below the state median income of $82,853 (Figure 25). \[39\]

Figure 25: Median Family (With Child) Income

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 in Denver was 3.4 percent in February 2019, with approximately 14,000 people estimated to be unemployed (Figure 26).

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. 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 2017, 25 percent (35,000) of Denver children lived in families where no parent had full-time, year-round employment (Figure 27).  

---


Current national research on economic mobility shows that the exposure to employed adults in the community has an impact on employment rates of all the people that live there. Specifically, Chetty et al, state that “what predicts upward mobility is not proximity to jobs but growing up around people who have jobs”. These data can help policy makers and community members identify and implement holistic policies, programs, and services that support working families in Denver neighborhoods.

Five-year estimates of unemployment rates illustrate the variation in employment by census tract in Denver and surrounding counties (Figure 28).
Educational Attainment of Adults

Research shows that educational attainment is the most important social characteristic for predicting earnings.\(^45\) Figure 31 illustrates the breakdown of educational attainment by degree for Denver adults over time.\(^46\) Since 2010, the level of adults with college degrees has continued to increase as the percentage of adults with less than a high school diploma has decreased.

The median earnings for adults over the age of 25 increased substantially with higher levels of educational attainment. The lowest earnings are $25,847 for adults without a high school diploma. The greatest earnings are reported for adults with the highest levels of education earning an average of $70,657 per year. Over time, the increase in wages was 15 percent for adults with no high school diploma compared to a 34 percent increase since 2008 for those with graduate degrees (Figure 30).\(^47\)

Figure 30: Median Income for Denver Adults by Educational Attainment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduate or professional degree</td>
<td>$55,687</td>
<td>$70,657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>$44,692</td>
<td>$55,687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate's degree</td>
<td>$31,240</td>
<td>$37,367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college, no degree</td>
<td>$25,753</td>
<td>$31,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate (includes equivalency)</td>
<td>$19,228</td>
<td>$25,847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than High School Diploma</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$19,228</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 31: Educational Attainment of Denver Adults


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.⁴⁸

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.⁴⁹ The map in Figure 32 illustrates where there are higher percentages of adults in the community with a bachelor's degree or higher for Denver and surrounding counties.⁵⁰

Figure 32: People Denver Adults with a Bachelor’s Degree or Higher

---


SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES

Single-parent families often struggle to provide basic needs for their families with only one income. In 2017, 45,000 children, or 34 percent, lived in single-parent households in Denver (Figure 33).  

The distribution of children living in single-parent families in Denver and the surrounding region is illustrated on the map in Figure 34.

---

Figure 33: Children Living in Single-Parent Families

Figure 34: Map of Children in Single-Parent Households

---


HOUSING

Housing, and the availability of affordable housing is an important issue facing Denver and many other U.S. cities. Data is available to help policy makers and other community advocates better understand how some housing issues impact children.

CROWDED HOUSING

Research clearly shows that children growing up in crowded housing is an important component of social inequality. Academic achievement, behavior and health are negatively impacted by the experience of living in crowded housing conditions.53

The U.S. Census Bureau defines crowded housing as housing with more than one person per room. According to this source, the number of children living in crowded housing has increased significantly in Denver from 2016 to 2017. In 2017 29,000, or, 21 percent of children were living in crowded housing conditions compared to 12 percent statewide (Figure 35).54

CHILDREN LIVING IN COST BURDENED HOUSING

Families that spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing and related expense are considered to be cost burdened. This is especially concerning for low-income families, where income for all the household expenses is limited. In cost burdened households, money for other necessary expenses, such as food or health care, may not be available. In Denver, 35 percent, or 49,000 children, lived in cost burdened households in 2017 (Figure 36).55

---

CHILDREN IN 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. Consequently, they are 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. 56

Poverty is defined by the federal government as $25,750 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. 57 The federal poverty measure underestimates what it costs to support a family.

According to the Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado 2018 published by the Colorado Center on Law and Policy, it costs approximately $83,940 to meet the basic needs of a family of four in Denver (two adults, an infant and preschooler). 58 In other words, the cost to meet basic needs for a family of this type in Denver is more than three times the federal poverty level.

Since the peak of 33 percent of children living in poverty in 2010, rates continue to decline in Denver. In 2017, 17 percent, or 24,000, of children under age 18 were living in poverty (Figure 37). 59

---


Poverty is not equally distributed throughout Denver's neighborhoods, as illustrated in Figure 38.

Figure 38: Children in poverty in Denver

RATIO OF POVERTY TO INCOME TRENDS

Many working families in Denver struggle to make ends meet. An estimated 55,000 children, or 41 percent, of Denver’s children live in families with incomes below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), or less than $51,500 annual income for a family of four. The percentage of children living in families above 200 percent of poverty has grown to 59 percent in 2017 (Figure 39).

CHILD POVERTY BY RACE/ETHNICITY

Over time in Denver, the proportion of children in poverty has gone down from 28 percent to 23 percent for all children from the 2008-2012 time period to the 2013-2017 time period. Children of color, however, are more often in poverty than non-Hispanic white children according to the U.S. Census Bureau five-year estimates. (Figure 40).

---


AREAS OF CONCENTRATED POVERTY

All children need strong families and supportive communities to realize their full potential. Unfortunately, many Denver children are living in high-poverty areas that have the potential to negatively impact their chances for success. Approximately 13 percent 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 of positive role models, and are more likely to drop out of school. The impacts may be greatest for younger children.63

The highest proportion of people living in areas of concentrated poverty occurred during the period of the Great Recession (December 2007-June 2009).64 By 2013-2017, the number of people living in areas of concentrated poverty dropped significantly. At the latest measure, eight percent of all Denver people lived in these high poverty areas. People of color live in these areas more often than non-Hispanic white people. Living in areas of concentrated poverty is highest for Hispanics, with approximately 13 percent living in high-poverty areas.

During the 2006-2010 period, one-quarter of Denver’s children lived in areas of concentrated poverty. In the 2013-2017 period, 11 percent of Denver children were living in these high-risk areas (Figure 41).65

---

In Denver, 15,000 children under age 18 lived in areas of concentrated poverty (shaded blue on the map) in 2013-2017 (Figure 42).^{66}

Figure 42: Areas of Concentrated Poverty

---

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 30,000 Denver children, or 21 percent, were living in families receiving public assistance benefits in 2017. This is higher than the Colorado rate of 16 percent (Figure 43).67

The percentage of children in households receiving benefits in Denver and surrounding counties is illustrated in Figure 44.68

Figure 44: Map of Children in Households Receiving Public Benefits

![Map of Children in Households Receiving Public Benefits](image)

CHILDREN ENROLLED IN WIC

Federal grants are available to states for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). These funds can be used for food, health care referrals and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five who may be at nutritional risk.69 In Denver, approximately 13,500 (31 percent) children under age five were enrolled in WIC in 2017. This is a 26 percent decrease in the number of children participating in WIC since 2011.70

---


High-crime neighborhoods may expose children to violence, which can cause several 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.\(^{71}\)

In a nationwide 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.\(^{72}\)

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; and
- Increased absenteeism in schools.\(^{73}\)

For children exposed to high rates of crime, mitigating the impact is important to future success in school and life. Overall crime consists of serious offenses that are reported to the police and include homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, auto theft, and arson. The highest rates of overall crime in Denver generally include areas in and around the Central Business District and Denver International Airport (Figure 45).\(^{74}\)

---


\(^{74}\) Denver Police Department. 2018 Neighborhood Crime rates per 1,000 people by Denver neighborhood.
**VIOLENT CRIME**

Violent crimes are offenses to a person which involve force or the threat of force and includes homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. 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.\(^{75}\)

The 2018 overall rate of violent crime for Denver is 8.2 per 1,000 people. The rates of violent crime by neighborhood are illustrated in the map in Figure 46.\(^{76}\)

---


\(^{76}\) Denver Police Department. 2018 Neighborhood Crime rates per 1,000 people by Denver neighborhood.
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Not only are children at risk for witnessing violent crime in their neighborhood, but many experience violence in their own homes. Violence between parents, intimate partners, or other family members is a significant problem nationwide.

Researchers have found that exposure to domestic violence can impact the development of children in numerous ways. Children exposed to physical abuse in the home are more likely to be at increased risk for physical abuse themselves and can exhibit aggression towards others. Long term adverse effects can carry on into adulthood. Children from homes with domestic violence are also reported to display behavioral and emotional problems and are more likely to have issues with substance abuse, violent crime, and adult criminality.

Domestic violence crime is where the victim’s relationship to the suspect includes spouse, common-law spouse, boyfriend/girlfriend, same sex relationship and ex-spouse. The domestic violence rate is 1.8 per 1,000 people in Denver in 2018. Domestic violence rates by neighborhood are illustrated in Figure 47.

---


79 Denver Police Department. 2018 Neighborhood Crime rates per 1,000 people by Denver neighborhood.
Increase Access to High Quality Early Childhood Education
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. Children in high-quality early learning programs demonstrate higher cognitive outcomes as well as non-cognitive skills that are critical for future school success. These 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.

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.
LICENSED CHILD CARE IN DENVER

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates 62 percent of Denver children age five and younger had all available parents in the labor force in 2017. This means that approximately 30,500 young children in Denver needed care during the day while their parents work. There are approximately 23,200 licensed child care slots in day care centers, day care homes, and preschools in Denver. Using a very rough estimate comparing the number of children under age six needing care during the day to licensed child care slots results in 76 percent of the need fulfilled with licensed care in Denver.

According to the Colorado State Office of Early Childhood licensed facilities list, there were 532 licensed child care facilities in the City and County of Denver as of December 2018. These facilities include day care centers, homes, preschools, neighborhood youth organizations, and school-aged child care. Since December 2016, the number of total facilities and slots has declined in Denver. However, disaggregating the data by type of care shows that this is primarily due to a decline in licensed neighborhood youth organizations. There is also a notable decline in the number of licensed family child care homes. The number of licensed child care centers and preschools remained about the same with the ability to serve approximately 22,600 children (Figures 48,49). Where child care is located, as well as the type of child care offered, are important factors for many Denver families. A map illustrating the location licensed child care centers and preschools, along with their capacity, is provided in Figure 50.

Figure 48: Licensed Child Care Facilities in Denver

Figure 49: Licensed Child Care Slots in Denver

---

Figure 50: Licensed Child Care in Centers and Preschools

Licensed Preschools and Child Care Centers
December 2018 Slots
- 0 - 35
- 36 - 70
- 71 - 120
- 121 - 192
- 193 - 293

Number of Children Under 5
2013-2017 Estimate
- 0 - 103
- 104 - 223
- 224 - 418
- 419 - 772
- 773 - 1354

Sources:
The increasing need for all adults in the home to work to make ends meet has grown with the rising costs of housing, health care, food, and other living expenses.

A recent report by the Center for American Progress finds that more than half of the population across the United States live in neighborhoods classified as child care deserts. The graph in Figure 51 illustrates the higher percentage of low-income and people of color living in child care deserts more frequently that white people. In this report, child care deserts are defined as any census tract with more than 50 children under age five that contains either no child care providers, few options, or more than three times as many children as licensed child care slots.

The lack of options for licensed child care unfortunately may force families to choose between unlicensed child care arrangements or change/decline opportunities for work. Furthermore, the locations of nearby quality child care options impact low-income families dramatically if they depend on public transportation, have a disability, are in immigrant families, or have inflexible job schedules.

The census tracts in Denver identified in the study as child care deserts are shadowed in grey in the map in Figure 52.

---

According to the Center for American Progress, a child care desert is any census tract with more than 50 children under age five that contains either no child care providers or so few options that there are more than three times as many children as licensed child care slots.

CHILD CARE CAPACITY IN DENVER

The map in Figure 53 illustrates an estimate of child care capacity by neighborhood. It represents the number of licensed child care slots by neighborhood compared to the population of children under age ten. The darker shaded areas represent the highest capacity per child population and the lightest areas the lowest. The capacity for child care is inequitably distributed across Denver.

Figure 53: Estimated Child Care Capacity

This rough estimate of neighborhood capacity illustrates that in some parts of Denver, choice may be limited based on the availability. Not all families choose child care in their home neighborhood and may choose providers based on other criteria than home location, such as location to work, quality, or types of care. Transportation, affordability, and the time programs are open may also limit access.

There is an increasing need in some neighborhoods to support families, enabling them to work and allowing children the opportunity to attend quality programs that set them up for future success.
Children enrolled in quality preschool programs are less likely to repeat grades, need special education, engage with law enforcement, and are more likely to graduate from high school, earn more money, and own homes as adults.\textsuperscript{84} Quality in programs, however, is an essential factor necessary to achieve the desired outcomes that matter for lasting impacts.

After increasing from 2007 to 2014, the percentage of three- and four-year-old children enrolled in preschool in Denver has declined to 54 percent in 2017 (Figure 54). Fifty-seven percent of those in publicly funded preschool programs and 43 percent are in privately funded (family-pay) programs.\textsuperscript{85}

\textbf{Figure 54: Three- and Four-Year Old Children Enrolled in Preschool}

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 low-income families attend preschool compared to 90 percent of children in more educated, wealthier families across the nation.\textsuperscript{86}

Mirroring these trends, a higher percent of three- and four-year-old children living in higher-income neighborhoods in Denver participated in preschool programs more often than their peers in low-income neighborhoods (Figure 55).\textsuperscript{87}

THE DENVER PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

The Denver Preschool Program (DPP) makes preschool possible for all Denver 4-year-olds—regardless of income or neighborhood—through tuition support and access to information to ensure all Denver children are ready to succeed in kindergarten. During the 2017-2018 school year, DPP distributed more than $13.5 million dollars in tuition support to approximately 60 percent of 4-year-olds in Denver.

While DPP continues to serve a sizable proportion of Denver’s families, there is also a recognition that many of Denver’s families still face barriers due to child care deserts and geographic disparities throughout the city.

Geographically Isolated Child Care Deserts

Child care deserts are neighborhoods where there are more than three times as many children (ages 0 to 5) as there are licensed child care slots 88, creating a limited opportunity to participate in early childhood education (ECE). Put simply, there are pockets of Denver where the need for child care far exceeds the availability. Geographically isolated child care deserts are neighborhoods that not only experience a severe lack of child care availability, but also the inability to access child care in adjacent neighborhoods because of the danger of crossing freeways and major cross streets. Utilizing DPP’s data 89 and publicly available data 90, 91, 92, DPP found that one in five of Denver’s neighborhoods are geographically isolated child care deserts.

As DPP strives to provide access for all Denver four-year-old children, there is at least one high-quality DPP preschool in all but one geographically isolated child care desert. This points to DPP’s commitment to its core value of Intentional Inclusivity, to seek ways to overcome barriers to ensure equitable opportunity for all children to participate in early childhood education. As Denver continues to grow, more planning and coordination and needs to be developed in collaboration with our partners to increase access and provide equitable opportunities for high-quality ECE in these underserved areas.

---

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 2019-2020 school year. The average funding statewide per slot was $4,095 for the 2018-2019 school year.

The at-risk factors include poverty as measured by free or reduced-price meal eligibility, in need of language development, poor social skills, mobility, children in foster care, 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 nearly 78 percent of CPP enrolled children statewide.

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. In the 2018-2019 school year, 5,111 Denver three- and four-year-old children participated in DPS early education programs.

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, monthly income, and amount of care utilized. 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;
- Currently searching for a job: and/or
- Participating in the Colorado Works/TANF program.

94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
97 Denver Department of Human Services (May, 2018).
Increase the Percentage of Children and Youth in Denver Who Are at a Healthy Weight
A child’s health is a key determinant to success in most other aspects of their lives. Access to a medical home and regular dental care are critical services every child needs to perform well in school.

Tracking other indicators such as early prenatal care, birth outcomes, maternal behaviors, access to health care, children with disabilities, food insecurity, overweight and obese children, mental health and drug and alcohol abuse, can tell us a great deal about some of the challenges that children and families may face in Denver.

Identifying the type of health supports children and families need and where they live is a good first step in improving outcomes for all Denver’s children.
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 prenatal care can lead to the diagnosis of many health problems that occur during pregnancy and may result in successful treatment. During these visits, 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 to 83 percent and, as of 2017, is higher than the state percentage of 82 percent of women receiving early care during pregnancy (Figure 56).

Disparities exist, however, between women of different race and ethnicity. Women of color (black, Hispanic, and American Indian), had lower rates of early prenatal care than white and Asian women (Figure 57).

---

101 Ibid.
There is variation by neighborhood. Women living in high-income neighborhoods received early prenatal care more often than women living in low-income neighborhoods (Figure 58).  

Figure 58: Map of Women Receiving Early Prenatal Care

---

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 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.\(^\text{103}\)

In 2017 in Denver, four percent of new mothers reported smoking during pregnancy. This rate is lower than the state rate of six percent.\(^\text{104}\) Despite the lower rate in Denver, there is dramatic variation by race/ethnicity and neighborhood (Figures 59 and 60).\(^\text{105}\) The highest rates are generally in high poverty, low-opportunity neighborhoods, further contributing to the health risks of children living in them.


The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment reported 8,950 births to Denver women in 2017. The number of births has declined 13 percent over the last decade (Figure 61).106

**BIRTHS BY RACE/ETHNICITY**

Birth data from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment describe the diversity in Denver's child population. The number of births to Hispanic women decreased to 26 percent and births to black women held steady at around 11 percent. Births to white women decreased slightly to 49 percent (Figure 62).107

---


107 Ibid.
The Hispanic birth rate is declining dramatically. The rate per 1,000 Hispanic women dropped from 109.8 in 2008 to 53.8 in 2017 (Figure 63). The number of births in 2017 by neighborhood is illustrated in the map in Figure 64.

---


109 Ibid.
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 exposure to 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 risen slightly to ten percent in 2017. Variation exists by race/ethnicity (Figure 65) and neighborhood (Figure 66).110

Figure 65: Low Birth Weight Trends by Race/Ethnicity in Denver

![Graph showing low birth weight trends by race/ethnicity in Denver](image)

Figure 66: Low Birth Weight Babies

![Map showing low birth weight babies by neighborhood](image)

THREE RISK-FACTOR BIRTHS

Babies born to young women under age 25 who are unmarried and without a high school diploma are often at risk for poor education, social, and economic outcomes throughout their lives.

In Denver, three risk-factor births have declined 43 percent since 2012 with 253, or three percent, births to women in this risk category in 2017 (Figure 67).\textsuperscript{111}

The neighborhoods shaded in dark red in the map have a higher proportion of three risk-factor births (Figure 68).\textsuperscript{112}


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 adults.

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, the greatest percent of teen births (per population group) in Denver are to Hispanic women with nine percent.

Figure 69: Births to Denver Teens Ages 15-19 by Race/Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnic Group</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Teen Births</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trends of teen births by race and ethnicity are illustrated in Figure 69. Teen births by Denver neighborhood are illustrated in Figure 70.

Figure 70: Map of Teen Births by Denver Neighborhood

---

Low educational attainment of parents is associated with several risk factors that impact child well-being including a higher risk for living in poverty. In Denver, 14 percent of births were to women with less than a high school diploma or GED in 2017. 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 33 percent of births to women without a high school diploma (Figure 71). There is also significant variation by geography (Figure 72).

---

**Figure 71: Births to Women with less than 12 years Education by Race/Ethnicity**

**Figure 72: Map of Births to Women with less than 12 years Education**

---


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, some children live in families without health insurance due to high costs, limited access to providers, or enrollment barriers.

The U.S. Census Bureau reports approximately five percent of children in Denver were without health insurance in 2017. This is a dramatic increase over the two percent uninsured children reported for 2016.

Denver has a lower percentage of uninsured children than Colorado at four percent (Figure 73). Estimates for the uninsured population are available from the U.S. Census Bureau at the census tract level and differences between places within Denver and surrounding counties are apparent (Figure 74).

---


MEDICAID

Medical Assistance, or Medicaid, is a public health insurance program available for children age 19 and younger in families earning 142 percent of the federal poverty level or less. 69,724 children received medical assistance in October 2018 (Figure 75).119

CHILD HEALTH PLAN PLUS

The Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+) is a low-cost, public health insurance program for children age 18 and younger in families earning between 142 percent and 260 percent of the federal poverty level. As of June 2019, 9,971 Denver children received CHP+ benefits (Figure 76).120

---

ELIGIBLE BUT NOT ENROLLED IN PUBLIC HEALTH INSURANCE

Many children live in families whose annual incomes qualify them to participate in publicly financed health insurance programs such as CHP+ or Medicaid. Despite meeting eligibility requirements, many children are not enrolled. The Colorado Health Institute calculates the number of children eligible for these valuable health insurance programs but not enrolled (EBNE). In Colorado, the rate of EBNE children dropped statewide to 4.9 percent.

Denver has also done a great job of enrolling eligible children in health insurance, with a decrease from 33.3 percent eligible but not enrolled children in 2008 to 5.4 percent in 2017 (Figure 77). 121

Figure 77: Children Eligible but not enrolled in CHP+ or Medicaid

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 $3.02. Due to the higher costs of living in Denver, an average meal costs $3.49. 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.

The Healthy Kids Colorado Survey asks students a variety of questions related to their overall health. According to this survey, the number of high school aged students in Denver who felt hungry due to lack of food at home dropped to 14 percent in 2017 (Figure 78).

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 66 percent of food insecure children are likely income-eligible for federal nutrition assistance (185 percent of the federal poverty line), leaving 34 percent of food insecure children likely not eligible for federal assistance.

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.

---

123 Ibid.
124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
In 2017, approximately 20,740 children, or 15 percent, were counted as food-insecure in Denver. The number of food-insecure children has decreased 42 percent from 2009 to 2017 (Figure 79).  

Figure 80: Office of Children’s Affairs Meal Sites

The City and County of Denver offered summer and snacks and supper meal programs that fed children 186,334 meals in 2018. The map in Figure 80 illustrates the number of meals served by site in 2018 through the Office of Children’s Affairs (OCA) meal program over the Child Well-Being Index. This OCA 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.

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.

According to data from the Denver Department of Human Services, the number of children receiving SNAP benefits over time show a steep increase during the recession and slow decline since 2015. As of October 2018, nearly 37,000 children under the age of 19 were receiving SNAP benefits in Denver (Figure 81).128

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau illustrate the percentage of households with children by census tract receiving SNAP benefits for Denver and the surrounding counties (Figure 82).129

---


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.

The 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 are limited. In addition, food deserts often contain a higher proportion of fast-food restaurants and convenience stores that offer processed foods with high fat and sugar content directly contributing to the obesity problem in Denver.

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 map in Figure 83 was created by the Denver Office of Economic Development and highlights in green the areas of limited food access where the distance to a full-service grocery store is greater than ½ mile, the percentage of residents with no vehicle is greater than 11 percent, and the majority of residents have low to moderate income.

---

OVERWEIGHT AND OBESE CHILDREN

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.

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. These children are at risk for developing serious, long-term health problems such as diabetes and heart disease. Denver Health collects BMI data for children between the ages of two and 17. According to this source, 30 percent of Denver children were measured as overweight or obese (15.9 percent obese and 13.8 percent overweight). The graph in Figure 84 describes overweight and obese students for each school year.  

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.

Mirroring national trends, the number of students in Denver Public Schools who are obese varies by race/ethnicity. Among black and Hispanic students, the percentage of students overweight or obese was higher than their white peers (Figure 85).

---

A map illustrating the percentage of school-aged children who are obese is provided in Figure 86.135.

Figure 86: School-Aged Children and Youth who are Overweight or Obese

---

MENTAL HEALTH

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”. 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.  

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.

The results of the Colorado Child Health Survey show that the prevalence of ADD/ADHD, anxiety, behavioral, and depression disorders has risen for children ages four through 14 in Colorado since 2012.

Anxiety is the most prevalent mental disorder with 10 percent of children in this age group suffering in 2017.

---


137 Ibid.


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.\(^{140}\)

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 87).\(^{141}\)

Individual, family, and community factors contribute to the risk of child abuse and neglect.

**Figure 87: Rate 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;
- Parenting stress, poor parent-child relationships, and negative interactions.

Community risk factors include:
- Community violence; and
- Concentrated neighborhood disadvantage and poor social connections.\(^{142}\)

---


RISKY BEHAVIORS

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. Trends in risky drug and alcohol use behaviors are self-reported through the Health Kids Colorado Survey and summarized for Denver high school students in Figure 88.143

According to these responses, risky behaviors, including drug and alcohol use and sexual intercourse, has remained the same or gone down in all areas surveyed.

Figure 88: Trends in Risky Behaviors for Denver High School Students

---

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. For youth, marijuana use can impact decision making and affect school performance, leading 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.\(^{144}\)

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. In 2018, there were 379 marijuana-related juvenile arrests (Figure 90).\(^{145}\)

The Denver neighborhoods with the greatest number of juvenile arrests for marijuana violations include Lincoln Park, Montbello, Highland, Bear Valley, Harvey Park, and Green Valley Ranch (Figure 89).\(^{146}\)

---


\(^{145}\) Denver Police Department. 2018

\(^{146}\) Ibid.
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 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 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.

DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

STUDENT POPULATION

Figure 91: DPS Student Population

In the 2018-2019 school year, 93,356 students were enrolled in 232 Denver Public Schools (DPS) consisting 98 elementary, 16 K-8, 50 middle, and 60 high schools, 3 future schools, and 6 other schools (Figure 91).147

The Colorado Department of Education publishes data on pupil enrollment over time. According to this source, the proportion of Hispanic students has decreased in Denver Public Schools from 59 percent to 54 percent while the Non-Hispanic white student population has increased from 20 to 25 percent as illustrated in Figure 92. The proportion of students identified as children of color, or any race or ethnicity other than non-Hispanic white, has decreased from 80 percent of total DPS student enrollment to 75 percent (Figure 93).148

Figure 92: Number and proportion of DPS students by Race/Ethnicity Over Time

Figure 93: Students of Color in DPS Over Time

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.\footnote{Denver Public Schools. (2019, June 10). Facts and Figures. Retrieved from Communications Office: https://www.dpsk12.org/about-dps/facts-figures/#1473890287240-c9773974-9f45.}

In the 2018-2019 school year, approximately 30,000 (33 percent) Denver Public School students, including preschool, were English Language Learners.\footnote{Colorado Department of Education (2019). Pupil Membership – District Data: 2018-2019 Pupil Membership by Instructional Program. Colorado Department of Education. http://www.cde.state.co.us/ccdereval/pupilcurrentdistrict.}

The map in Figure 94 illustrates the percentage of English Language Learners by school location.\footnote{Denver Public Schools. (2019), October Count Report: 2018 English Language Learners (ELL). https://doc-08-a0-apps-viewer.googleusercontent.com/viewer/secure/pdf/3mb9bfcc3e2h2k1cmqj0ee9cvc8ole/jiuvesa0n1j2rpgofkks31co88b3cs/3560190875000/drive/*/ACFrQgCQVuDrnhYequNEL2aIY_9KdKPU-ToD1ni00anlito-LKxEW3sa8Ze-WE_JGrQN6V-0n76L-2RM0FEWnVClcyXK4HvYCdZr4BFwJm4R9Dw25udz_y9cwLBY=-?print=true}

\begin{figure}[h!]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{english_language_learners_by_school}
\caption{English Language Learners by School}
\end{figure}
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 $33,475 for a family of four) and reduced-price lunch eligibility is at 185 percent of the federal poverty level (approximately $47,637 for a family of four).  

In Denver, 65 percent, or approximately 60,000, public school students qualified for free or reduced-price lunch in the 2018-2019 school year (Figure 95).  

The proportion of free or reduced-price lunch students by Denver neighborhood is illustrated in Figure 96.

---


Figure 96: Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-price Lunch by home neighborhood
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. 155

No matter the grade or school, students must participate regularly to benefit. The more school time 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. 156 The Attendance Works report also summarizes the current research around chronic absenteeism and lists what we know so far:

- 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; and
- Improving attendance is an essential strategy for reducing achievement gaps. 157

Chronic absenteeism is typically defined as missing ten percent or more of the school year and is tracked by grade and by school. In Denver, nearly 25,000 students, or 27 percent, were chronically absent in the 2017-2018 school year. This means that about one in four Denver students was absent for at least ten percent of the time that they were enrolled and missed out on a significant amount of valuable instruction time. 158 The highest instances of chronic absenteeism occur in the early grades and then again in high school, rising to 48 percent of 11th and 12th graders missing ten percent or more of the school year (Figure 97). 159

Figure 97: Chronically Absent Students by Grade in Denver Public Schools 2017-2018 SY

---

158 Denver Public Schools. Department of Planning and Analysis. 2017-2018 School Year.
159 Ibid.
During the 2017-2018 school year, the percentage of high school students (grades 9-12) chronically absent was 44 percent and varied by race/ethnicity. Students of color including Native American, black/African American, Hispanic, two or more races, and Pacific Islander students were more likely to be chronically absent in high school compared to their Asian and non-Hispanic white peers (Figure 98).160

In ninth grade, 41 percent of students were chronically absent in the 2017-2018 school year. Hispanic and black/African American students are chronically absent most often in Denver (Figure 99).
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.  

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). 

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. In 2018-2019 school year, 100 percent, or 6,776 children, attended full day kindergarten in Denver. 

![Figure 100: Full-Day Kindergarten Enrollment](image)

---


162 Colorado Department of Education. (2019). Pupil Membership-District Data; Pupil Membership by District and Grade Level, from Colorado Department of Education: [http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/pupilcurrentdistrict](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/pupilcurrentdistrict).

163 Ibid.
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.164

---

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.

FALL 2018-SPRING 2019 TEACHING STRATEGIES GOLD

*Teaching Strategies GOLD*® is an assessment system for children from birth through kindergarten and measures the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that are most predictive of school success. *Teaching Strategies GOLD*® (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 graph in Figure 101 illustrates 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 program year demonstrated significant growth across all domains in all categories of students analyzed from fall 2018 through spring 2019.  

---

---

KINDERGARTEN READINESS

School readiness determination depends not only on positive interactions and social skills, but on knowledge, attitudes, and approaches to learning.

In 2008, Colorado passed Senate Bill 08-212. This law, known as CAP4K is Colorado’s Achievement Plan for Kids and called for an alignment of the preschool through postsecondary educational systems. This legislation mandates that the Colorado State Board of Education and school districts define school readiness, assess a students’ level of school readiness, and implement a system of reporting aggregated results.\(^{166}\)

Denver Public Schools has defined a school-readiness measure based on the TS Gold Assessment that allows analysis by neighborhood. The proportion of kindergarten students not meeting or exceeding expectations on at least two of four TS Gold major domains by neighborhood is mapped in Figure 102.\(^{167}\)

---

\(^{166}\) Colorado Department of Education. CAP4K: 2018 Report to the Colorado General Assembly. [https://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolreadiness/ksrdataport](https://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolreadiness/ksrdataport).

\(^{167}\) Denver Public Schools. Department of Planning and Analysis. 2018.
THIRD GRADE READING

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 their development. It is essential that children 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.

Although the percentage of third graders reading at grade level has improved to 39 percent (Figure 103), still too many are not meeting the mark. Sixty-one percent, or 3,358 Denver Public School third graders were not meeting expectations on the English Language Arts (ELA) PARCC assessment in the spring of 2019.\textsuperscript{168}

A significantly greater proportion of children of color (American Indian, black, and Hispanic) were not reading at grade level compared to their non-Hispanic white and Asian peers (Figure 104).\textsuperscript{169}

Disparities also exist by geography. In four Denver neighborhoods (Globeville, DIA, West Colfax, and Kennedy) 85 percent or more of students were not meeting expectations on the ELA (Figure 105).\textsuperscript{170}


\textsuperscript{170} Denver Public Schools. Department of Planning and Analysis. 2017-2018 School Year.
Figure 105: Third Graders Not Proficient in Reading by Neighborhood
PARCC ASSESSMENTS

Starting in 2014-2015, Colorado transitioned to a new state-wide assessment for public school students. The Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics assessments were administered to Colorado students grades three to eight. These summative assessments are intended to measure the level at which Colorado students are making progress towards the Colorado Academic Standards.\textsuperscript{171}

Denver Public Schools students meet or exceed expectations on the ELA assessment less often than students overall in Colorado in all grades assessed except eighth grade, where Denver students outperform Colorado students (Figure 106).\textsuperscript{172}

In 2018, 38,546 DPS students took the CMAS ELA Assessment, which represented a 97.5 percent participation rate. The percentage of Denver Public Schools students meeting or exceeding expectations in ELA improved in most grades from 2017 to 2018 (Figure 107). Across almost all grades, 41.8 percent of DPS youth met or exceeded expectations in ELA, up 2.4 percent from 2017.

\textsuperscript{171} Colorado Department of Education. (2019). Assessment FAQ. https://www.cde.state.co.us/communications/factsheetsandfaqs-assessment

\textsuperscript{172} Colorado Department of Education. (2019). CMAS Data and Results. https://www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/cmas-dataandresults
In 2018, 40,589 DPS students took the CMAS Mathematics assessment, which was a 98.1 percent participation rate. A comparison of DPS students meeting or exceeding expectations on the math assessment to students overall in Colorado is illustrated in Figure 108. Again, Colorado students outperformed DPS students on average, with the exception of 8th grade.\(^{173}\) (Note that there are four advanced mathematics assessments that students were offered, but due to low numbers and the discontinuation of these assessments, they are not included here.)

The percentage of DPS students meeting or exceeding expectations on the PARCC Math Assessment in 2017 and 2018 is shown in Figure 109. Almost all grade levels showed an increase in proficiency rates, and in 2018 the average proficiency rate for DPS was 32 percent, up 2.2 percent from 2017.

\(^{173}\) Colorado Department of Education. (2019). *CMAS Data and Results.* [https://www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/cmas-dataandresults](https://www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/cmas-dataandresults)
Although DPS showed growth on both CMAS assessments from 2017 to 2018, subgroup analysis shows that average proficiency rates varied by gender and race/ethnicity.

Figure 110 shows the percentage of DPS students who met or exceeded the CMAS ELA expectations in 2018. Female students performed, on average, higher than males. In terms of race/ethnicity, a significantly lower percentage of students of color were proficient, compared with the white, multiracial, and Asian peers. Thirty percent of American Indians, 29 percent of Hispanic, 29 percent of black, and 28 percent of Pacific Islanders demonstrated proficiency in ELA in 2018.\(^{174}\)

In terms of CMAS Mathematics, there was no notable gender difference, with both male and female students having an average proficiency rate of 32 percent. However, when broken down by the student’s race/ethnicity, we see that students of color have a lower average proficiency rate compared with their peers (Figure 111).\(^{175}\)

---


\(^{175}\) Ibid.
Increase the Number of Students who have Access to and Complete a Postsecondary Pathway
At the end of the 2017-2018 school year, 70 percent (4,066) of 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 have steadily increased from 52 percent for the 2009-2010 school year (Figure 112).

Graduation rates vary widely based on factors such as race, ethnicity, and gender. Overall, female students graduate more frequently than male students (Figure 113). Students of color graduate less often than their non-Hispanic white and Asian peers (Figure 114). In Denver, 67 percent of students with limited English proficiency graduated and 37 percent of students with disabilities graduated on time.\(^\text{176}\)

\textsuperscript{176} Colorado Department of Education. (2018). \textit{Graduation Data for the Class of 2009-2010 and 2017-2018; Graduates and completers by District, Gender, and Race/Ethnicity and Instruction Type}. Retrieved March 2019, from Colorado Department of Education: \url{http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/gradcurrent}. 

---

\textit{Figure 112: On-Time (Four-Year) Graduation Rates in Denver Public School and Colorado}

\textit{Figure 113: On-Time (Four-Year) High School Graduation Rates by Gender}

\textit{Figure 114: 2017-2018 DPS Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity}
Graduation rates by the neighborhood where students live, not necessarily where they go to school, is illustrated in the map in Figure 115.177

Figure 115: Graduation Rates by Neighborhood

177 Denver Public Schools, 2018 Graduation Rates by Neighborhood
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. The decision to drop out of high school has lifelong personal and societal impacts. A national report highlights the consequences including:

- 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, 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.\(^{178}\)

In Denver, 4.1 percent, or 1,744 students, dropped out of high school before earning a diploma. This is higher than the state rate of 2.2 percent (Figure 116). The number of students dropping out of high school varies by race/ethnicity with more Hispanic children dropping out of school before earning their diploma than any other race/ethnic group (Figure 117).\(^{179}\)

---


In addition to the academic skills (reading, writing, and math) that students will need to obtain employment, the jobs that Denver youth will be applying for will also require soft—or non-cognitive—skills that go beyond industry or technical knowledge. Youth.gov lists the six “Soft Skills that Pay the Bills” as:

- **Communication Skills**: Learning when and how to communicate in a business setting with supervisors, co-workers, and customers and /or clients.
- **Enthusiasm and Attitude**: having a positive attitude in the workplace and displaying and discussing enthusiasm during an interview and on the job.
- **Teamwork**: knowing how and when to lead and follow as well as avoiding conflicts, negotiating and compromising.
- **Networking**: the process or practice of building and maintaining informal relationships or exchanges of information that are supportive of professional or career goals.
- **Problem Solving and Critical Thinking**: the ability to use knowledge, facts, and data to effectively solve workplace problems, as well as knowing how to use these skills.
- **Professionalism**: resume creation, how to dress properly for work, attendance and timeliness, and appropriate use cell phones and computers.

In addition, according to the Colorado Talent Pipeline report, by 2020, 74 percent of jobs will require some type of education beyond high school. Colorado’s existing labor force has a credential attainment rate of only 55 percent. Furthermore, only 43 percent of Colorado 9th graders are enrolling in a two-year or four-year institution after high school graduation. For young men of color, only a fraction of 9th graders enroll in college after graduation (Figures 118 and 119).

Figure 119: Hispanic Male College Pipeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students Enter High School</th>
<th>Graduate in 4 Years</th>
<th>Enroll in College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,644 Hispanic Male</td>
<td>944</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(57.4%)</td>
<td>(22%)</td>
<td>(22%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 118: Black Male College Pipeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students Enter High School</th>
<th>Graduate in 4 Years</th>
<th>Enroll in College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>462 Black Male</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(59.7%)</td>
<td>(31%)</td>
<td>(31%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

181 https://youth.gov/feature-article/soft-skills-pay-bills
YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Of the youth ages 16-19 in the labor force, 15 percent were unemployed in Denver compared to 18 percent for Colorado and 21 percent for the nation in 2017 (Figure 120). \(^{184}\)

Unemployed youth and young adults ages 16-24 are mapped by census tract within Denver neighborhoods and surrounding counties in Figure 121. \(^{185}\)

---


Research shows that the more prepared for college students are, the better their chances for completing a college degree. Beginning in 2017, the SAT college readiness assessment is given to every Colorado 11th grade public school student in the state, and in 2018, 9th and 10th graders took the PSAT (Figures 122, 123). These tests closely align with Colorado public school curriculum and focuses on key skills necessary to be successful in college. The SAT 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. Although the PSAT doesn’t count towards college acceptance, it is considered as preparation for the SAT, and for 10th graders, it can be used to qualify for the National Merit Scholarship. Students who meet or exceed the SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmarks have a 75 percent chance of earning at least a “C” in first-semester, credit-bearing college courses (Figure 124).

Figure 123: PSAT 9 Scores for Colorado and Denver Public Schools in 2018

Figure 122: PSAT 10 Scores for Colorado and Denver Public Schools in 2018

Figure 124: SAT Scores for Colorado and Denver Public Schools in 2018
The overall total mean score ranges from 400-1600 and is a combination of the evidence-based reading and writing and math mean scores. A percentile score compares Colorado and Denver overall mean scores with a national sample of students in 11th and 12th grade. In Colorado, a mean score of 1014 is 50th in the nationally representative sample percentile. This means that 50 percent of sampled test takers scored equal to or below Colorado students. In Denver, a mean score of 975 is about 43rd and means that 43 percent of sampled US test takers scored equal to or below Denver students (Figure 125).\textsuperscript{189}

Differences in average SAT reading and writing and mathematics scores are shown in Figure 126. While there were small differences in averages between genders, American Indian, black, and Hispanic students had lower total mean scores than their Asian, multiracial, and white peers.\textsuperscript{190} This suggests that on average, some groups of students leave high school better prepared for post-secondary academic challenges.


\textsuperscript{190} Colorado Department of Education. (2019). Colorado PSAT Data and Results. https://www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/psatdata
According to the 2017 Health Kids Colorado Survey, 90 percent of Denver high school students thought it was important to go to college. However, only 2,274 Denver high school graduates (50 percent) enrolled in a post-secondary institution in fall after graduating in 2016. This rate is lower than the state rate of 56 percent of graduates going to college (Figure 127).

Of those students who graduate, the percentage enrolling in college by race/ethnicity is indicated on the graph in Figure 128. A higher percentage of Asian and white students enroll in college after high school than American Indian, black, and Hispanic students.

The National Student Clearinghouse reports that 26 percent of DPS students who entered a college program in 2009 completed a degree within six years.

Figure 128: College Enrollment by Race Ethnicity

---

192 Ibid.
REMEDICATION 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. To account for this, many post-secondary institutions require remedial coursework—also known as developmental education courses—for some students to catch up.\(^{195}\)

Of Colorado students who graduated high school in 2017 and enrolled in an in-state, public college or university, approximately 35 percent needed remediation, or additional non-credit bearing courses offering basic skills necessary to succeed in college-level work. Of Denver Public School students, 47 percent needed to attend remedial classes, though this number has decreased from 60 percent since 2009 (Figure 129).\(^{196}\) Students of color require remediation at greater rates than non-Hispanic white, multiracial, and Asian students. For the 2017 graduating class in Colorado, 59 percent of black students, 53 percent of Hispanic students, and 45 percent Native American students required remediation (Figure 130).\(^{197}\)

Figure 130: Remediation Rates for Colorado Students by Race/Ethnicity, 2012-2017

---

\(^{195}\) ACT Research and Policy. (February 2013). Readiness Matters: The Impact of College Readiness on College Persistence and Degree Completion. www.act.org/research: ACT


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. Youth become disconnected for a variety of reasons. These include a criminal record, lack of educational credentials, family care obligations, undocumented status, or limited English proficiency, and are all potential barriers to connection in the community. Disconnected youth have measurable social, economic, and personal costs.

Due to an improved economy since the Great Recession, the number of disconnected youth has gone down in the United States, Colorado, and Denver (Figure 131). According to estimates from Measure of America, approximately 11.6 percent, or 8,000 Denver young adults ages 16 through 24 were not attending school and not working in 2017.198

Despite the improved economy, some youth face significant barriers to connecting to school or work due to poverty, criminal justice involvement, or poor educational preparation.199 Some young adults are more vulnerable to disconnection than others. These subgroups include:

- Young unmarried parents;
- Immigrant youth;
- Homeless youth;
- Incarcerated youth;
- Foster youth/youth transitioning out of public systems; and
- Youth with a disability or special needs.

Figure 131: Youth and Young Adults Ages 16 - 24 Not in School and Not Working

---

Disparities in disconnected youth by race/ethnicity show that despite the improving economy inequity still exists. Nationally, young adults of color are significantly more likely to be disconnected with 26 percent of Native American, 17 percent black, and 14 percent Hispanic or Latino young adults not in school and not working (Figure 132). In all except the black population of youth, the rate of youth disconnection has declined. The black rate of youth disconnection increased from 17 to 18 percent nationwide and boys and young men are more likely to be disconnected than young women.200

Figure 132: Disconnected Young Adults (ages 16-24) in the United States by Race/Ethnicity

Disconnected youth are more than three times as likely to have a disability than their connected peers. Five percent of connected youth have a disability of any type while 16.6 percent of disconnected youth reported having a disability. Disabilities counted in this category by the U.S. Census Bureau include difficulties in self-care, hearing, vision, independent-living, ambulatory, and/or cognitive. Disconnected youth with a disability, according to the Measure of America report, are nearly twice as likely to have three or more types of difficulties.201

In Denver Public Schools (DPS), any student that is eligible for an Individualized Education Program (IEP) is included in the category of students with disabilities. Nearly 12 percent of DPS high school students have an IEP.202

---

The employment and school enrollment status of youth ages 16 to 19 is collected annually by the U.S. Census Bureau. According to these data, about 1,500 youth were counted as disconnected (in red) or were neither in school nor employed in 2017 (Figure 133). These data are useful estimates to help policy makers and community advocates identify the number of youth that need to be connected to services to help them succeed in gainful employment opportunities.

STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING YOUTH IN JOBS

Colorado has enjoyed remarkable economic growth over the last several years. It’s a promising economy for many to find well-paying employment opportunities. However, there are still gaps between the skills needed and the Coloradans with the credentials to obtain those jobs. Some recommendations for programs that can help youth be prepared for the workforce were provided in the Colorado Talent Pipeline report provided by the Colorado Workforce Development Council. These recommendations include:

- Work-Based Learning opportunities;
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act - Title I Programs;
- Innovative Industries Internship (III) Programs;
- WBL Learning Lab;
- Apprenticeships; and
- Career and Technical Education opportunities.

Figure 133: Employment and School Enrollment Status of Denver Youth Ages 16-19

---


Participation in quality afterschool programs addresses youth disconnection by:

- Providing trusted adults who support and care for youth;\textsuperscript{205}
- Creating spaces for peer relationships to develop within positive emotional climates;\textsuperscript{206}
- Helping youth develop career awareness, interests, and aspirations;\textsuperscript{207}
- Developing social, emotional, and academic skills that increase youth’s employability.\textsuperscript{208}

To ensure that all youth experience these benefits, the Office of Children’s Affairs invests in afterschool programming through a competitive grants process. In 2019, a total of $1.6 million was invested in 46 agencies at 95 program sites in Denver (Figure 134). Using the Child Well-Being Index as part of this process directs funds to areas where youth experience multiple obstacles to success. Having access to afterschool programs will positively impact the youth most at-risk for disconnection in Denver.


The Denver Afterschool Alliance (DAA) is a diverse collaboration of stakeholders including the City and County of Denver, Denver Public Schools and many of Denver’s community-based organizations. DAA works in deep partnership with many generous supporters and funders.

DAA helps youth succeed by increasing access to high quality afterschool and summer programs that bolster learning and creative processes. This work leads to substantial academic and personal growth for students, supports working families, and provides professional development for adults in the field. Learn more at denvergov.org/afterschoolalliance

SUPPORTING DENVER’S AFTERSCHOOL NETWORK

Especially true for students most at-risk for disconnection, regular participation (30+ days per year) in afterschool programs can lead to positive outcomes such as greater social emotional learning, stronger relationships, higher learning outcomes, and a lower risk of being chronically absent at school, all of which increase youth’s connection and engagement with school. However, we know that afterschool program quality also plays a role in how those benefits are realized. To ensure that all youth experience quality afterschool environments, the Denver Afterschool Alliance has created three different membership levels so that each provider can participate in a data-driven quality improvement process (Figure 135).

Figure 135: DAA Membership Levels

---


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 136). 211

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. The data illustrate that disadvantages associated with chronic absenteeism disproportionately impact young men of color.

Nearly half of high school-aged young men of color in grades nine through 12 were chronically absent in 2017-2018 in DPS (Figure 137). 212


Of those students that do graduate from high school, only a fraction enrolls in college. The male enrollment rates for Denver Public School (DPS) students enrolling in postsecondary education (in-state and out-of-state institutions) was 47 percent in 2017. The enrollment rate for Hispanic males is significantly below the black, white and Asian rates. Importantly, the largest number of young men in DPS are Hispanic males. The impact of this demographic of young men not enrolling in college is reflected in the total in Figure 138.\textsuperscript{213}

According to the Denver Police Department data for 2018, drug, warrant, assault, and curfew violations are the charges for most of the juvenile citations or arrests for young men of color in Denver (Figure 139).\textsuperscript{214}

\textsuperscript{213} Colorado Department of Higher Education. District at a Glance: Denver County 1. \url{http://highered.colorado.gov/data/districtssummary.aspx}.

\textsuperscript{214} Denver Police Department, 2018.
Male Incarceration Rate

Researchers with Opportunity Insights based at Harvard University have compiled a rich data resource with many indicators estimating economic mobility and outcomes for most Census tracts in the United States. One goal of the project is to help policy makers better understand the neighborhood characteristics that impact the social and economic capital by area.

The map in Figure 140 illustrates the estimated proportion of children who grew up in Denver neighborhoods and were in jail in April 1, 2010. Denver neighborhoods have changed in recent years, but the patterns of higher incarceration rates may be useful in targeting specific interventions to support young men who may be at risk. Chetty et al find that “historical outcome data are substantially better predictors of more recent outcomes than contemporaneous observables such as poverty rates”.

Figure 140: Male Incarceration Rate

---

The White House announced the My Brother’s Keeper (MBK) initiative in February 2014. Through this national initiative, the City and County of Denver shares the vision of the MBK Alliance, which is to make the American Dream available to all boys and young men of color by eliminating gaps in their opportunities and outcomes. The Office of Children’s Affairs is working collaboratively with youth, community members, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, businesses, and other government agencies to identify the issues that most often keep boys and young men of color from achieving success.

The map in Figure 141 is a statistical aggregation of these 12 indicators by neighborhood into one My Brother’s Keeper (MBK) Index Map. This map illustrates the areas in Denver where the My Brother’s Keeper initiative programs, services, and interventions would be most applicable.

The darkest purple shaded neighborhoods are areas where young men of color live and may experience challenges to success. The lighter shaded areas are where more opportunities exist.
For more information on any topic or data included in this document please contact:

Lisa Piscopo, Ph.D.
Deputy Director
The Office of Children’s Affairs
City and County of Denver
Lisa.Piscopo@DenverGov.ORG