

Trends in Child Well-Being

Presentation to the Early Childhood School Readiness
Commission

August 10, 2021



COLORADO CHILDREN'S CAMPAIGN
Every Chance for Every Child

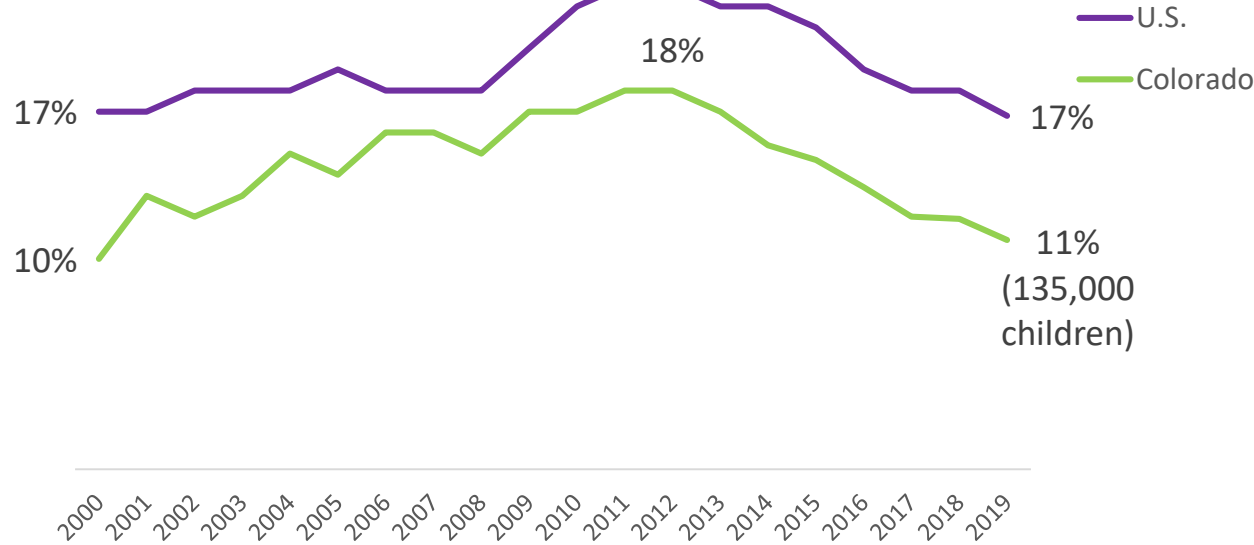
Pre-Pandemic Context



Prior to the pandemic, Colorado's child poverty rate had fallen to its lowest level since 2000.



Child Poverty, 2000 to 2019

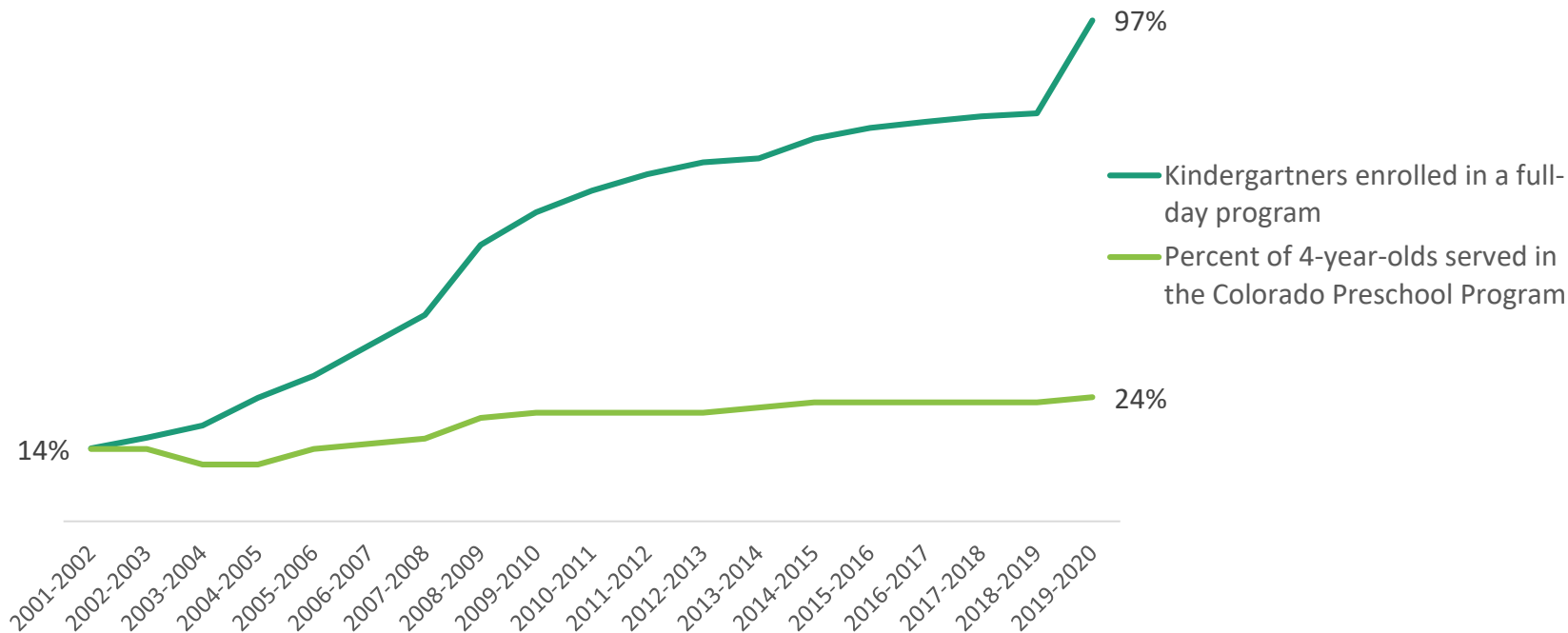


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

Recent years saw Colorado make remarkable progress on improving access to full-day kindergarten, but preschool access plateaued.



Full-Day Kindergarten Participation in Colorado vs.
Access to the Colorado Preschool Program Among 4-Year-Olds

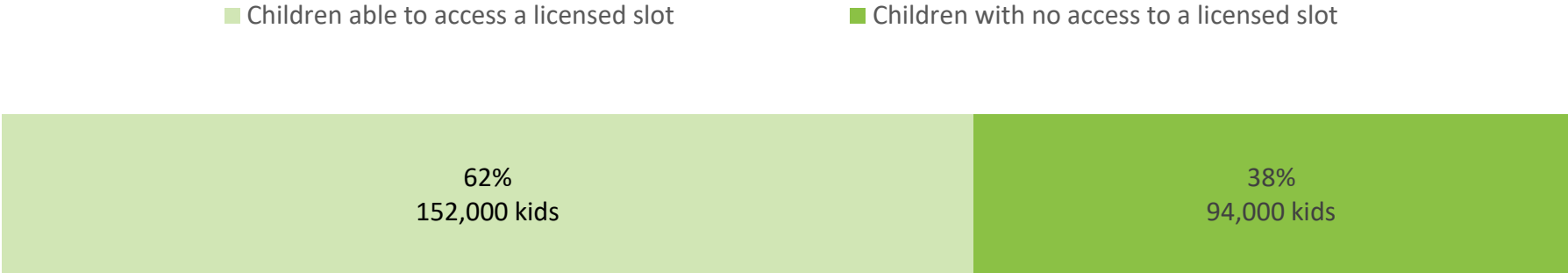


Source: Colorado Department of Education and the National Institute for Early Education Research.

Even prior to the pandemic, capacity in Colorado’s licensed child care settings was insufficient to meet the needs of all families who likely needed care.



Licensed Capacity in Child Care Settings as a Percent of Colorado Children Under 6 with All Parents in the Workforce, 2019

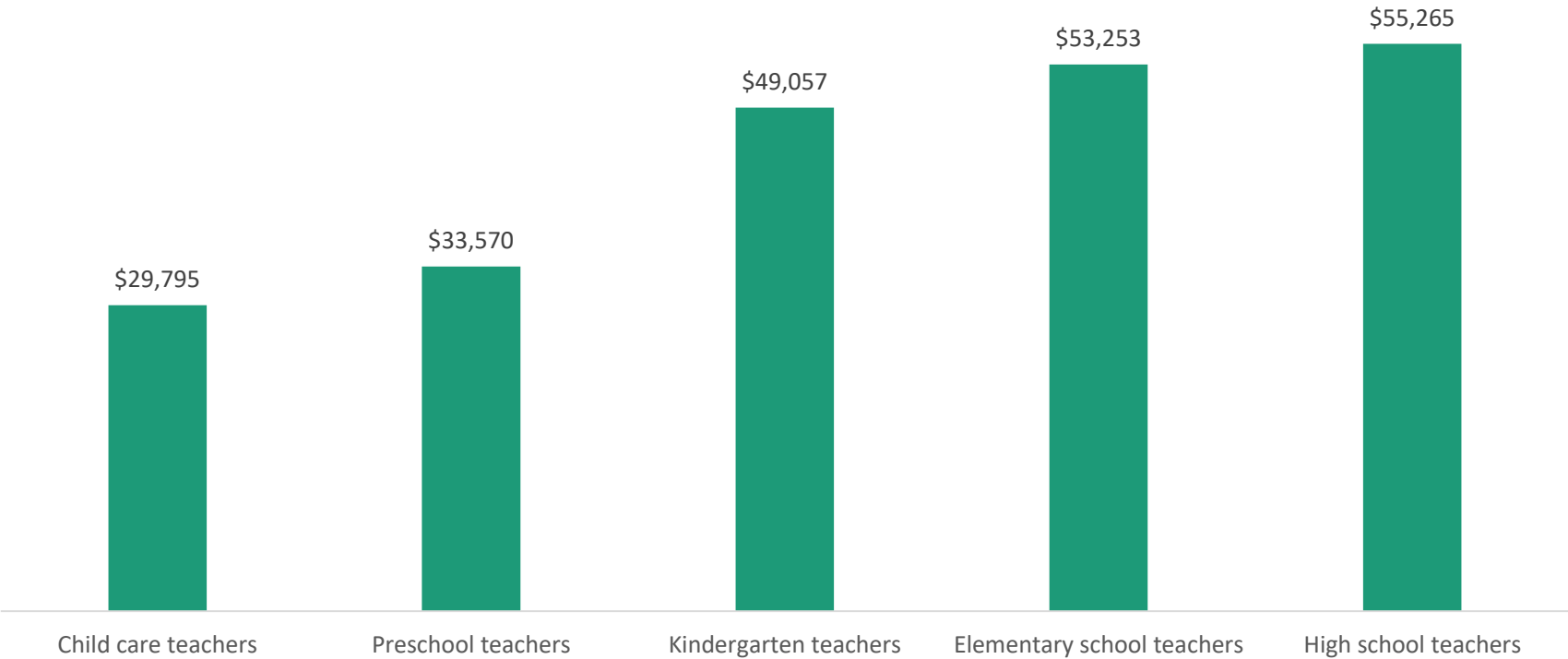


Source: Colorado Children’s Campaign analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey and the Colorado Office of Early Childhood.

Colorado faced longstanding child care workforce challenges before COVID, largely due to low wages.



Median Wages in Colorado for Select Education Occupations, 2020

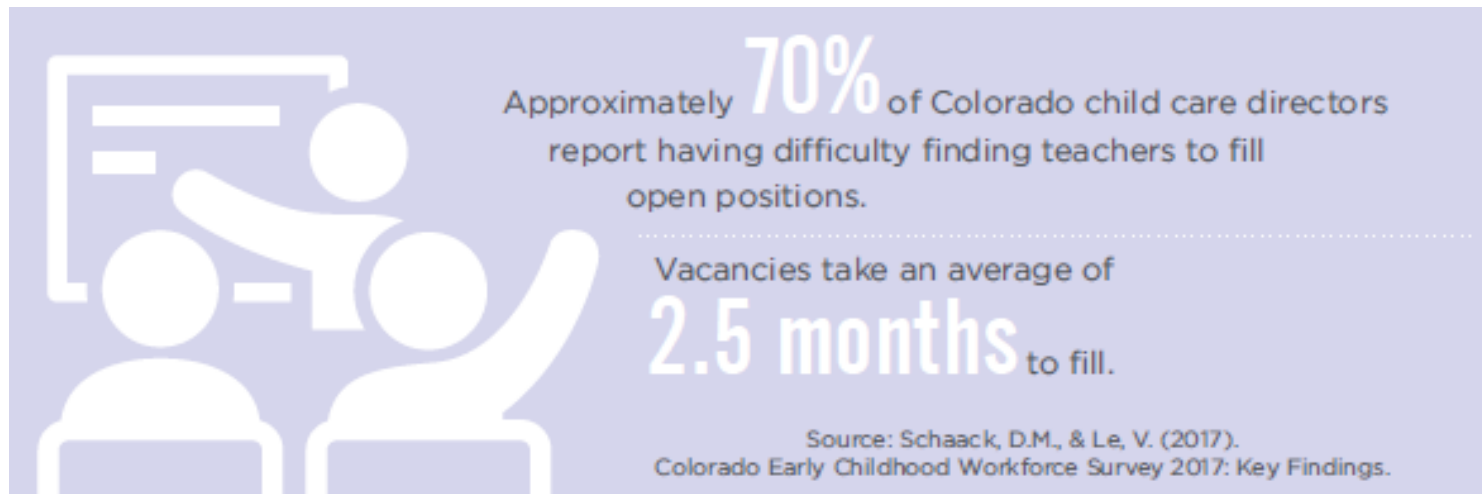


Source: Colorado Department of Labor and Employment.

Colorado faced longstanding child care workforce challenges before COVID, largely due to low wages.



Pre-pandemic...



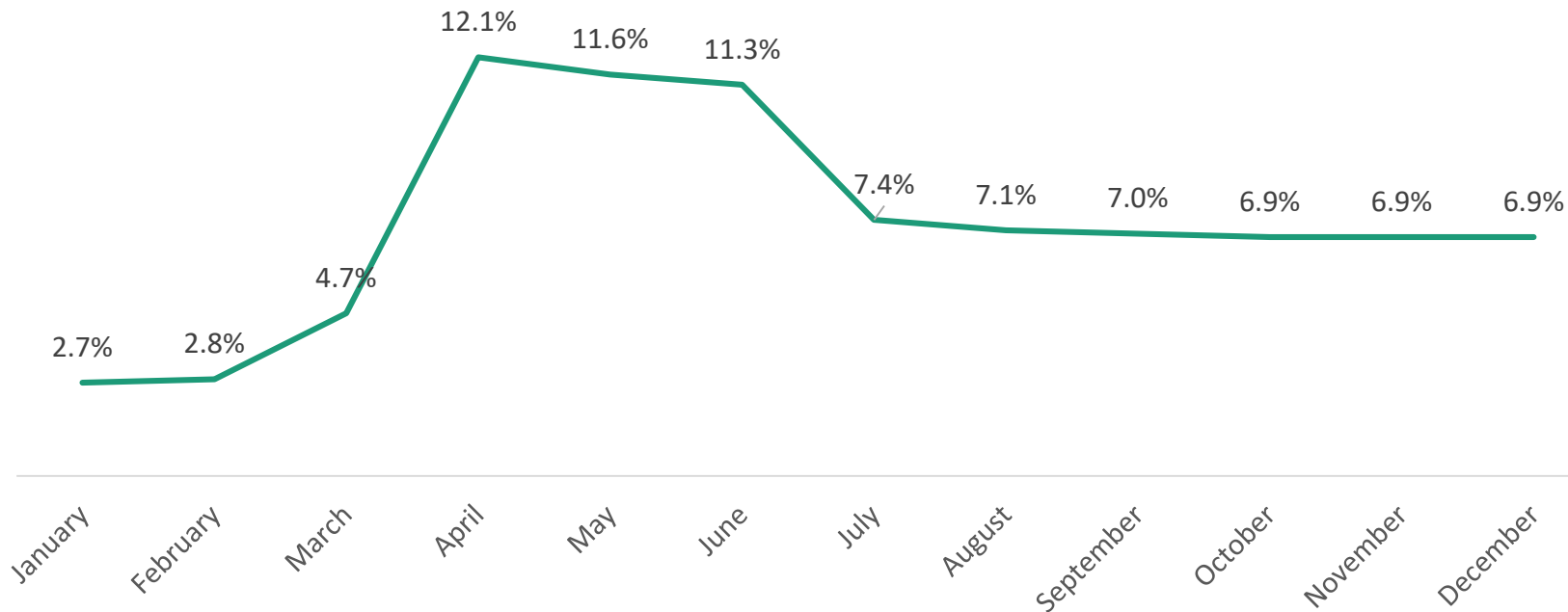
Early Impacts of COVID-19



Child poverty data for 2020 are not yet available, but other indicators point to widespread economic struggles among families during the pandemic



Unemployment Rate in Colorado By Month in 2020, Seasonally Adjusted

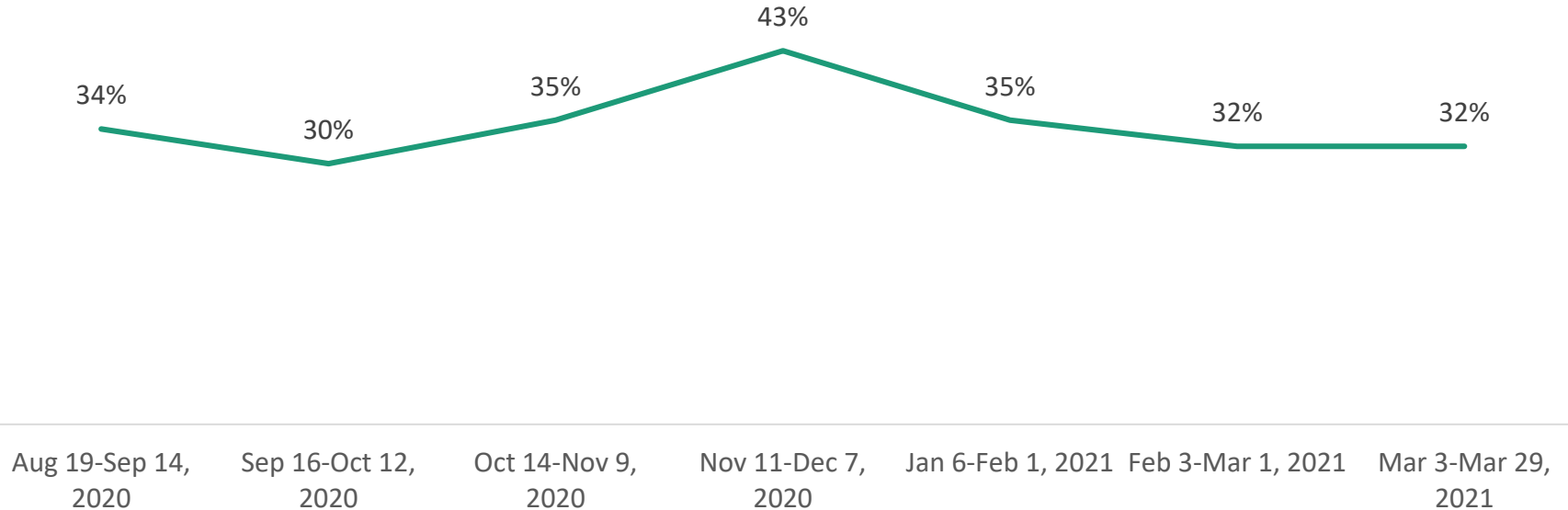


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Throughout the pandemic, about one third of Colorado households with children have reported difficulty paying for usual household expenses



Colorado Households with Children Reporting **Difficulty Paying for Usual Household Expenses** in Past Week

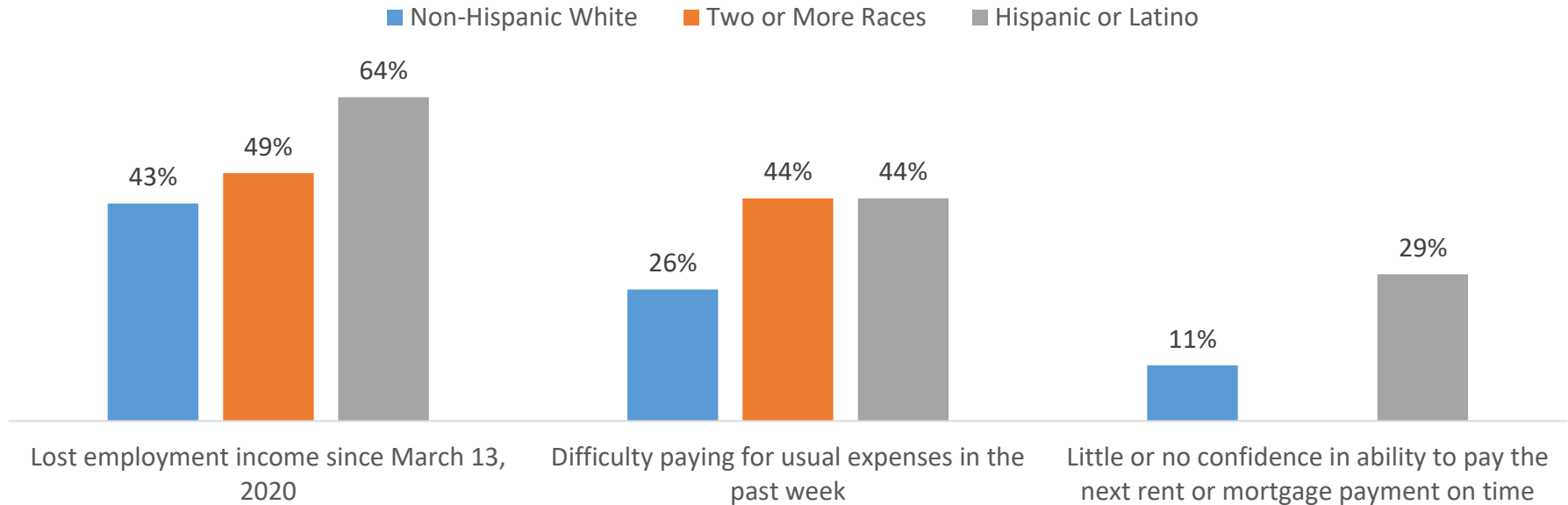


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey.

Families of color were disproportionately harmed by the pandemic's economic fallout due to longstanding racial inequities in the economy



Economic Struggles Among Colorado Households with Children, By Race/Ethnicity*: March 3-March 29, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey.

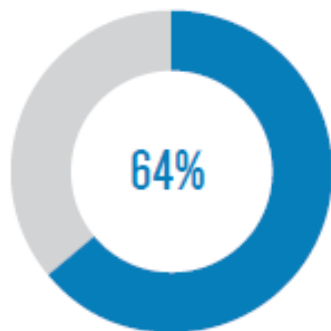
*Data for racial groups other than those listed here were suppressed due to large margins of error.

The pandemic exacerbated child care challenges for families and providers across Colorado

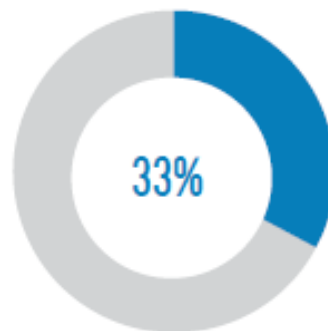


Nearly **1 in 10** Colorado child care providers closed during the pandemic, and total enrollment dropped by **more than half** (Early Milestones Colorado, 2020)

ACCORDING TO RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY EARLY MILESTONES COLORADO,



of Colorado families surveyed reported having to alter their child care arrangements due to the pandemic.



reported not having the child care they needed when surveyed in late summer 2020.

Source: Early Milestones Colorado. Measuring the Impact of COVID-19 on Colorado's Early Care and Learning Sector.

The pandemic exacerbated child care challenges facing the early care and education workforce as well



A July 2021 survey of early childhood programs found that the struggles created by the pandemic persist, but the strategies to support the sector have been a crucial lifeline, but challenges persist:

Positive impacts of relief efforts

- A majority of minority-owned businesses indicated their program would have closed without help
- ~40% of child care providers have been able to reduce debt they took on during the pandemic by using relief funds.
- 63% of respondents received some increase in compensation through bonuses or an increase in baseline pay
- 80% of respondents whose programs received more funds from increased subsidy payment rates reported that educators had received increased compensation

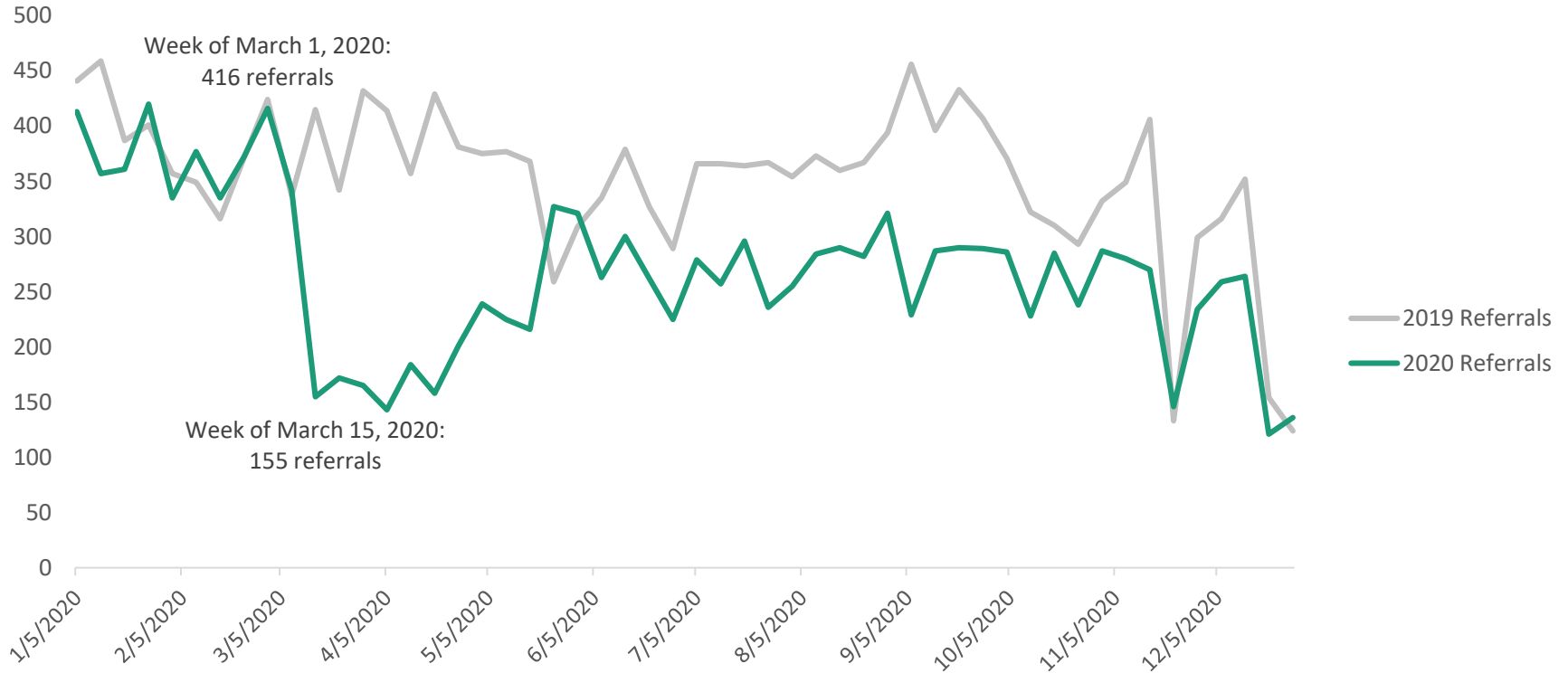
Ongoing challenges

- 80% of centers are experiencing a staffing shortage and 78% identify wages as why recruitment & retention remain a challenge
- 50% are serving fewer children
- 33% cannot open new classrooms
- 25% have reduced operating hours
- More than 1/3rd are considering leaving the field or shutting down their child care programs this year and that percentage is higher for minority-owned programs

During the first two weeks of March 2020, referrals to Early Intervention fell by 63 percent. Weekly referrals remained below their 2019 levels for nearly all of 2020.



Weekly Referrals to Early Intervention in Colorado, 2019 and 2020

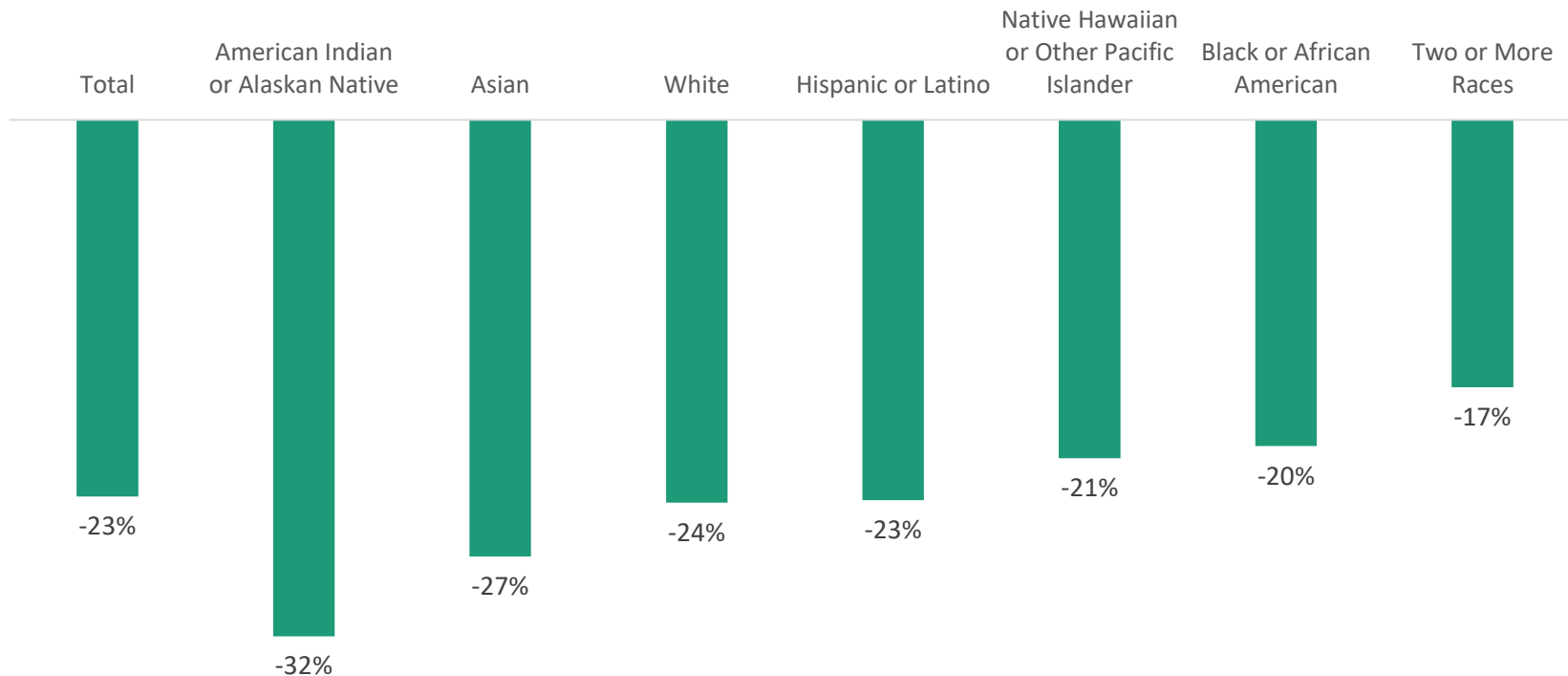


Source: Colorado Children's Campaign analysis of data from the Colorado Department of Human Services.

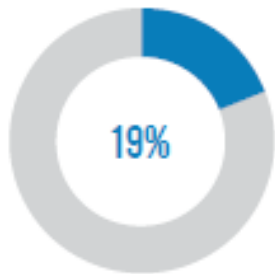
Enrollment in school district preschool programs was down 23 percent in fall of 2020 in comparison to fall of 2019, with even larger declines for some racial and ethnic groups.



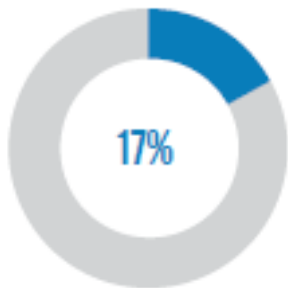
Percent Change in CDE's Pre-K Pupil Counts, Fall 2019 to Fall 2020



Many of Colorado's youngest kids missed well child visits or routine immunizations due to the COVID crisis



of Colorado moms with a child between birth and age 3 reported **delaying or skipping well visits** for their child during the pandemic.



of Colorado moms with a child between birth and age 3 reported **delaying or skipping routine vaccinations** for their child during the pandemic

In conclusion...



Understanding the pandemic's full impact on Colorado's kids and families will take years of additional data...

...but initial data from the early months of the pandemic clearly show widespread disruption to families' economic security, child and family health, child care and other services that support the well-being of our youngest kids.

Policy strategies for the Commission to consider



- Sustainable, long-term public investments in children's early learning & development are more important than ever
- Increase support for programs that support working families' economic opportunity while advancing children's early development such as high-quality child care and preschool
- Target funds toward areas where challenges existed before (and have been exacerbated by) the pandemic: early childhood workforce compensation, infant and toddler child care, child care affordability
- Ensure support for critical services like Early Intervention that saw disruptions, but make a tremendous impact on child development
- Recognize the vital backbone role our early childhood workforce plays in supporting children and families and make long-term, sustained investments in adequate salaries for early childhood professionals
- Invest in early elementary supports, including ensuring educators have the resources and capacity to respond to a wide range of levels of school readiness, early literacy and math skills, and levels of childhood trauma.
- Support trauma-informed approaches across early childhood settings through strategies such as expanded early childhood mental health consultation.
- Support families' economic security with investments in income supports for families to overcome the disproportionate impact of poverty on young children.

Questions?

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