

2026

NEEDS AND ASSETS REPORT



 **FIRST THINGS FIRST**

White Mountain Apache Tribe Region

White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council 2026 Needs and Assets Report

Funded by the

First Things First White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council

Prepared by the

Community Research, Evaluation & Development (CRED) Team

Norton School of Human Ecology

College of Agricultural, Life & Environmental Sciences

The University of Arizona

P.O. Box 210078

Tucson, AZ 85721-0078

<https://norton.arizona.edu/research/community-research-evaluation-and-development-cred>

INTRODUCTION

Ninety percent of a child's brain growth occurs before kindergarten, and the quality of a child's early experiences impacts whether their brain will develop in positive ways that promote learning. Arizonans created First Things First (FTF) to help ensure that Arizona children have the opportunity to start kindergarten prepared to be successful. Understanding the critical role the early years play in a child's future success is crucial to our ability to foster each child's optimal development and in turn, impact all aspects of well-being in our communities and our state. This Needs and Assets Report for the FTF White Mountain Apache Tribe Region helps us in understanding the needs of young children, the resources available to meet those needs and gaps that may exist in those resources.

The 2026 report has been redesigned in response to stakeholder feedback. The revised structure now consists of two parts: the primary report and supplementary sub-regional fact sheets.

The main report is structured around four domains relevant to young children, their families, and the professionals who support them in the region:

- Child, Family & Community Characteristics
- Early Education
- Education & Workforce
- Child Health & Development

This main report uses an infographic and figure-based approach to analyze regional-level data trends, as well as how these regional trends compare to statewide trends. Community-level data, illustrating similarities and differences within the sub-regions of the FTF White Mountain Apache Tribe Region, is detailed separately in the Fact Sheets. The FTF White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council recognizes the importance of investing in young children and ensuring that families and caregivers have options in supporting the healthy development and education of young children in their care. It is our sincere hope that this information will help guide community conversations about how we can best support school readiness for all children in the FTF White Mountain Apache Tribe Region. To that end, this information may be useful to local stakeholders as they work to enhance the resources available to young children and their families and as they make decisions about how best to support children birth to age 5 in communities throughout the region.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The FTF White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council wishes to thank all of the federal, state and local partners whose contributions of data, ongoing support and partnership with FTF made this report possible. These partners included the Arizona Departments of Administration (Employment and Population Statistics), Child Safety, Economic Security, Education and Health Services; Child Care Resource and Referral; Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System; and the U.S. Census Bureau. We also want to thank parents and caregivers, local departments and service providers and members of the public who provided local data, attended regional council meetings and voiced their opinions, as well as all the organizations working to transform the vision of the regional council into concrete programs and services for children and families in the FTF White Mountain Apache Tribe Region. Lastly, we want to acknowledge the current and past members of the FTF White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council whose vision, dedication and passion have been instrumental in improving outcomes for young children and families within the region. As we build upon those successes, we move ever closer to our ultimate goal of creating a comprehensive early childhood system that ensures children throughout Arizona are ready for school and set for life.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The experiences in the first few years of a child's life lay the foundation for their future. Safe and healthy neighborhood environments, accessible educational opportunities, economically stable families and nurturing social contexts for young children have long-term, positive impacts.¹ This Needs and Assets Report examines the current conditions for young children and their families—including social and economic contexts, early learning systems, education and workforce indicators, health outcomes and supports for children with special needs—in the First Things First (FTF) White Mountain Apache Tribe Region.

Sources and Data: The data in this report come from a variety of sources including federal and state agencies and local agencies or service providers. Federal government sources include publicly available data from the 2020 Census and American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates (primarily 2019-2023). Data in this report from the ACS summarize the responses from samples of residents taken between 2019 and 2023. Because these estimates are based on samples rather than the entire population, ACS data should not be considered exact. Estimates for smaller geographies, such as regions or sub-regions, are less accurate than estimates for larger geographies, such as the state, because they are based on smaller sample sizes.

Data were provided to FTF by state, federal and Tribal agencies including the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES), the Indian Health

Service (IHS) and the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona (ITCA). FTF strategy data related to quality early education, professional development and home visiting were also provided. FTF partnered with the Arizona State University Center for Health Information and Research (CHiR) to create custom tabulations of claims data for young children from the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS). In most cases, the data in this report were calculated specifically for the Needs and Assets process and are more detailed than the data that are published by these agencies for the general public. Whenever possible, this report will use data tailored to the region, but in some cases, there are only county-level or statewide data available to report. This report also includes publicly available data for the county and state, including from state agencies such as the Arizona Department of Commerce's Office of Economic Opportunity, Arizona Department of Education (ADE), and the Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) semi-annual child welfare reports.

Local data were also requested from multiple White Mountain Apache Tribe Departments and programs for inclusion in this report including: White Mountain Apache Tribe Office of Vital Records, White Mountain Apache Tribe Social Service Department, Alchesay Beginnings Child Development Center, Chaghache Day Care Center, Dishchii'bikoh Community School and White Mountain Apache Tribe Head Start. When more recent data from public, state agency or Tribal datasets were not available, this report cites data from past Regional Needs and Assets Reports for the region.

The data in this report are as complete as possible, but there are cases when data for specific years were unavailable or unable to be reported. State agencies have varying policies about reporting small values. Labels such as <10, <6 or "DS" indicate that a count has been suppressed to protect privacy. When data were not available for a given year or geography, the label "N/A" is used.

Color-coding: This report uses color-coding to indicate the relevant geography for each number or percentage discussed in the text as follows: **White Mountain Apache Tribe Region**, **all reservation lands located within Arizona**, **Navajo and Gila Counties**, **Arizona**, and the **U.S.** Additional important numbers in the text that do not correspond to one of these geographies have been **bolded**.

Data Interpretation Session: The data compiled in this report reflect one way of knowing about the status of young children and their families, but local perspectives on what works well and what needs improvement from community experts who live, work and care for children in the region provide another vital source of information about the needs and assets in the region. First Things First Regional Partnership Council members and other key community experts participated in a facilitated data discussion in the beginning of 2026 to review the data included in this report. During this session, participants shared local knowledge and perspectives to help interpret the

data and add additional context about the region. These insights are included throughout the report, attributed to “local key informants” and “local community experts.”

Limitations: It is important to note the limitations of this style of report for Tribal contexts given the kinds of data that are readily available to include. Many indicators of health, educational and economic wellbeing used in the U.S. are grounded in white Western perspectives and normative baselines that do not reflect Indigenous realities, worldviews or values which are often more holistic and tied to land, culture, language and community. As a result, these indicators may overlook strengths, resilience, and locally defined priorities while emphasizing deficit-based comparisons to non-Indigenous populations.² For example, considerable disparities in which communities reach Healthy People Objectives indicates the need to examine the validity of measures like this for low-income, racially/ethnically diverse and immigrant populations as well as to interpret findings from a sociocultural perspective.³ Wherever possible in this report, locally collected data are included along with publicly available and state agency data, and community interpretation is sought to understand what the data mean within the local context.

Additionally, this report was compiled in the fall of 2025 and spring of 2026 during a time of rapid changes in federal funding and policy. The data presented here reflect a particular moment in time. Where possible, potential impacts of currently known policy decisions grounded in high-quality research have been included, but the full extent of the impact of policies implemented in 2025 and 2026 on early childhood well-being will not be fully clear for years to come.

Throughout this report, state-level data is included to help understand how the region is doing in comparison to Arizona overall. For a more comprehensive discussion of needs and assets at the state level, please see the First Things First 2025 Statewide Needs and Assets Report – Building Bright Futures.^a

Analysis of data and reporting of findings contained in this report were completed by Kara Haberstock Tanoue, Rachel Leih, Madeleine deBlois, Deirdre Avery, Vicki Brown, Terrace Ewinghill, Rachel Gildersleeve, Anvi Bhakta, Beatriz Reyna, Deshawna Yazzie, April Horne, Lauren Moxley, Dora Valencia, Claudia Vega and Felicia Zhang from the Community Research, Evaluation & Development (CRED) team in the John and Doris Norton School of Human Ecology at the University of Arizona.

^a The full report can be found at <https://www.firstthingsfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/2025-State-Needs-and-Assets-Report.pdf>

THE WHITE MOUNTAIN APACHE TRIBE REGION

The First Things First regional boundaries were initially established in 2007, creating 31 regions which were designed to (a) reflect the view of families in terms of where they access services, (b) coincide with existing boundaries or service areas of organizations providing early childhood services, (c) maximize the ability to collaborate with service systems and local governments and facilitate the ability to convene a Regional Partnership Council, and (d) allow for the collection of demographic and indicator data.

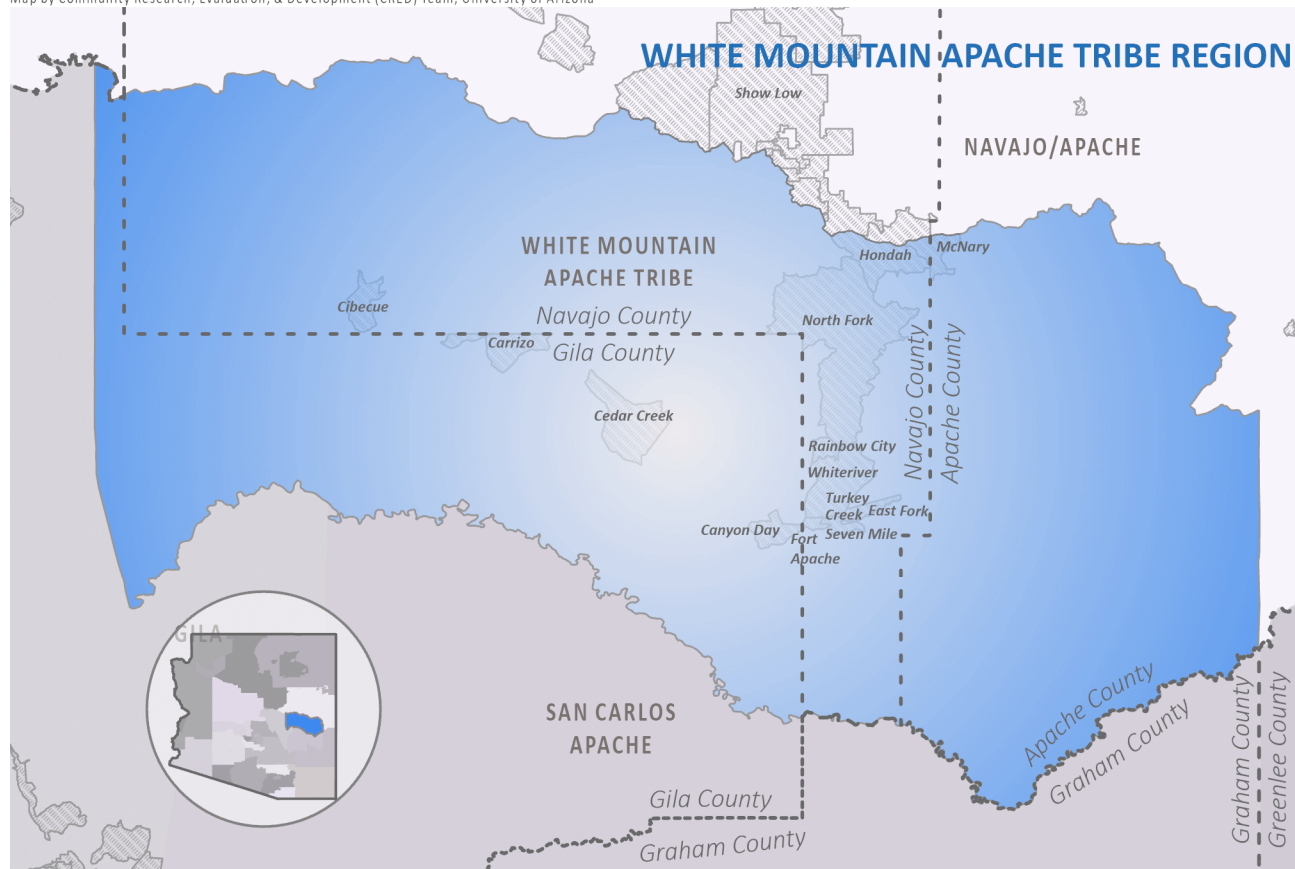
When First Things First was established by the passage of Proposition 203 in November 2006, the government-to-government relationship with federally recognized Tribes was acknowledged. Each Tribe with Tribal lands located in Arizona was given the opportunity to participate within a First Things First designated region or elect to be designated as a separate region. The White Mountain Apache Tribe was one of 10 Tribes that chose to be designated as its own region. This decision must be ratified every two years, and the White Mountain Apache Tribe has opted to continue to be designated as its own region.

The boundaries of the First Things First White Mountain Apache Tribe Region are the same as the White Mountain Apache Reservation (sometimes called Fort Apache). The region covers more than 2,500 square miles in Apache, Gila, and Navajo counties. There are twelve reservation communities identified by the U.S. Census: Canyon Day, Carrizo, Cedar Creek, Cibecue, East Fork, Fort Apache, Hondah-McNary, North Fork, Rainbow City, Seven Mile, Turkey Creek and Whiteriver. Whiteriver, the largest of these communities, serves as the capital. Please note that U.S. Census communities are defined differently from Tribal council districts.

Figure 1 shows the geographical area covered by the First Things First White Mountain Apache Tribe Region. Additional information is available at the end of this report, including a map and table of the region's zip codes and a map of Arizona public school districts in the region in the *Maps & Methods* Appendix.

The First Things First White Mountain Apache Tribe Region

Map by Community Research, Evaluation, & Development (CRED) Team, University of Arizona



Source: 2020 TIGER/Line Shapefiles prepared by the U.S. Census. Map produced by CRED.

FAMILY, CHILD & COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

Young children in the region

While young children make up a small proportion of the overall population, their well-being has wide-reaching impacts on families, social service systems and the state's future population. Continued investment in children's well-being and the well-being of their families has been deemed by the National Academy of Sciences as "the most efficient strategy" for strengthening the future workforce and supporting a thriving community.^{4, 5} According to the 2020 Census, the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region was home to about **1,563** young children birth to age 5. Based on the number of births with home addresses in the region,^b **1,316** children were born between 2018 and 2023. During these years births generally declined, from a high of **261** births in 2018 to a low of **187** in 2023. Statewide, births were also generally on a downward trend.

Tribal enrollment data provide a vital source of information about the population as well as eligibility for certain resources. According to the White Mountain Apache Tribe Enrollment Office, there were **17,374** enrolled White Mountain Apache Tribe members in 2024.^c This included **13,430** members residing on reservation lands, **703** of whom were young children (birth to age 5). This means that a little less than half of young children in the region are enrolled as members of the White Mountain Apache Tribe (45% based on the 2020 Census population estimate), with the number of enrolled children increasing at each age from birth to age five. Access to programs and certain financial assistance provided by the Tribe can be incentives for parents to enroll their young children. Local key informants have indicated that recent Tribal enrollment processing delays and the general decline in birth rates in the region may have impacted Tribal enrollment numbers.

^b Note that births are assigned to the region based on the address that parents list on the birth certificate form. This means that babies born to families residing in the region should be counted in regional birth numbers regardless of the location of the hospital where they were born.

^c Based on previous data received from the White Mountain Apache Tribe Enrollment Office, total Tribal enrollment has been increasing from **16,962** in 2018, **17,044** in 2019 and **17,062** in 2020.

Figure 1.

Young children in the region

The White Mountain Apache Tribe Region is home to

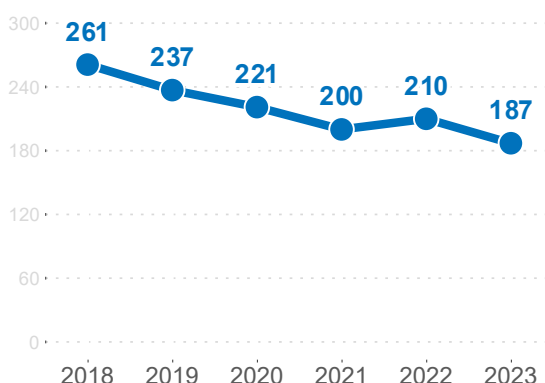
1,563

children birth to age 5 (2020)¹

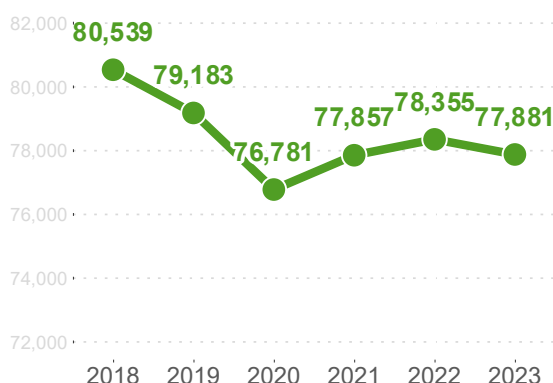


Number of births per calendar year²

White Mountain Apache Tribe Region



Arizona



White Mountain Apache Tribal Enrollment (2024)³

	On-reservation	Off-reservation	Total
Children birth to age 5	703	126	829
Birth to age 2	143	28	171
Age 3	112	18	130
Age 4	124	26	150
Age 5	150	23	173
School-age (ages 6-17)	3,054	610	3,664
Total Enrollment	13,430	3,944	17,374

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2020 Decennial Census, Demographic and Housing Characteristics (DHC).

² Arizona Department of Health Services. (2024). [Vital Statistic dataset].

³ White Mountain Apache Tribe Office of Vital Records. (2025). [Enrollment dataset].

Characteristics of young children and the population

According to the 2020 Census, the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region had a total population of **14,340** people in **3,473** households.^d Almost one in three (**28%**) households in the region included a young child birth to age 5, higher than the portion across all reservation lands located within Arizona (**20%**), Arizona (**13%**) and throughout the U.S. (**13%**). This can mean that services for young children are important to more families in the region.

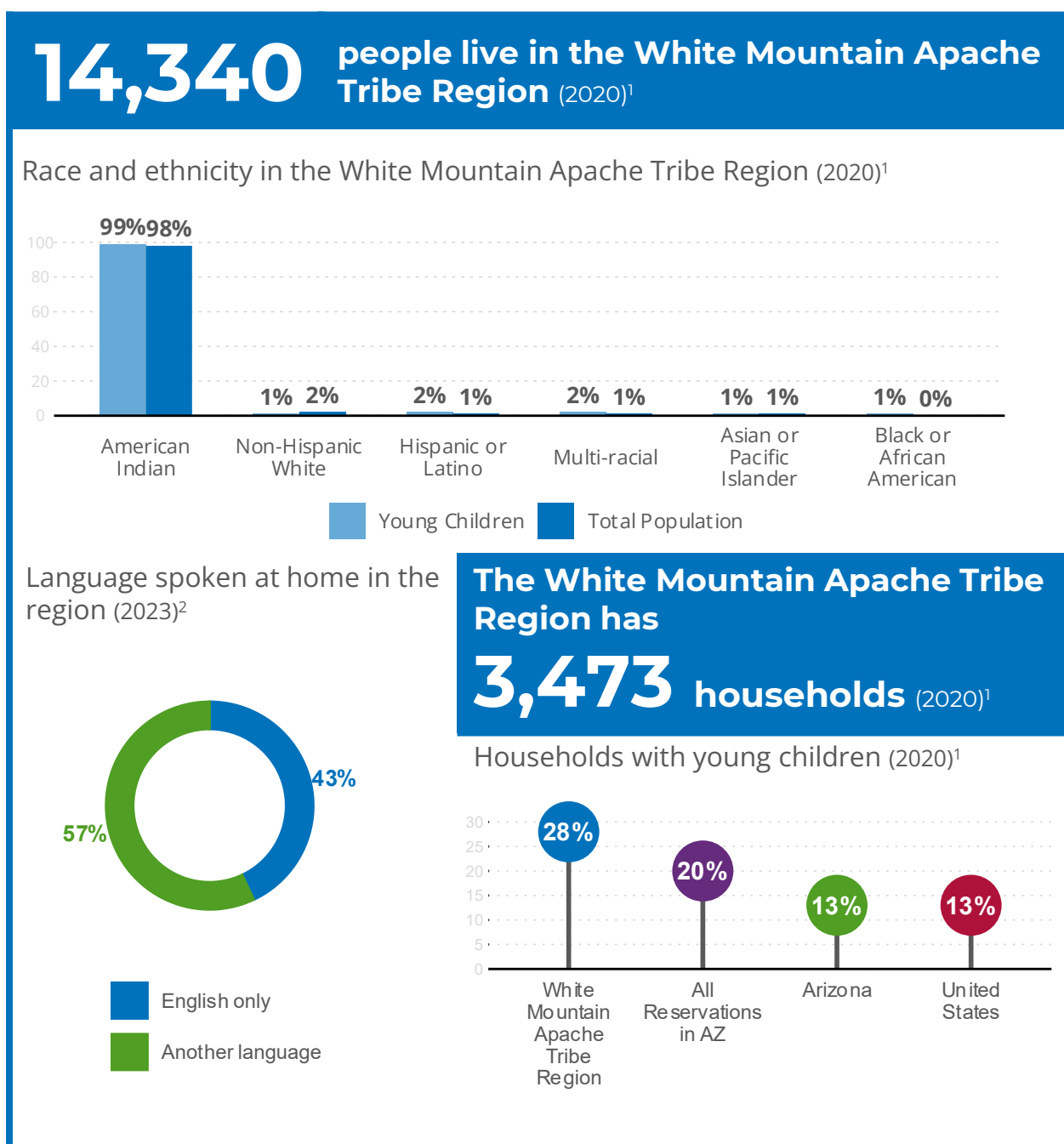
Understanding the racial-ethnic composition of communities can inform efforts to increase the cultural relevance and language accessibility of services and resources. According to the 2020 Census, almost all White Mountain Apache Tribe Region residents identified as American Indian (**98%** of the total population, **99%** of young children birth to age 4).

Native languages provide an important connection to family, community and culture. Language preservation and revitalization are crucial for safeguarding traditional knowledge and promoting Indigenous self-determination, social unity and educational equity.^{6, 7} More than half (**57%**) of individuals ages 5 and older in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region reported primarily speaking “another language”, most likely Ndee Biyati’i (Apache language) at home, with the remaining **43%** primarily speaking English at home. There are a number of ongoing language revitalization efforts in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region, including many hosted within the educational system. Apache language is taught in public schools in the Whiteriver School District.⁸ The federal Johnson O’Malley (JOM) Program additionally provides services to Indian children in public schools, including cultural identity and language preservation programs for students. The JOM program also supervises the White Mountain Apache Tribal Youth Council, which seeks to meet the needs of White Mountain Apache youth and promote youth leadership development, higher education, cultural awareness, and good citizenship and service. Dishchii’bikoh Community School offers both an Apache Language Program for students to learn to read and write in Apache, and an Apache Club for students to learn traditional song and dance.⁹ In the early care and education setting, language instruction through vocabulary, arts, singing and dancing is provided at White Mountain Apache Head Start centers¹⁰ and the Family and Child Education (FACE) program at Dishchii’bikoh Community School.¹¹ The White Mountain Apache Tribe also hosts an annual culture pageant for various categories including: WMAT Queen, WMAT Princess, WMAT Toddler Girl of the Year, WMAT Baby Boy of the Year, WMAT Rodeo Lil Bit, WMAT Rodeo Princess and WMAT Rodeo Queen.¹² As ambassadors, Tribal royalty serve as Tribal community

^d Comparing this number to Tribal enrollment suggests that about 94% of people of all ages living on the reservation are enrolled as members of the White Mountain Apache Tribe.

Figure 2.

Characteristics of young children and the population



¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2020 Decennial Census, Demographic and Housing Characteristics (DHC).

² U.S. Census Bureau. (2024). 2023 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2019-2023.

Notes: Race and ethnicity data are non-exclusive, meaning that individuals are counted in each category in which they identify. Language data are for the population ages 5 and older. The American Community Survey (ACS) no longer specifies the proportion of the population who speak Native North American languages for geographies smaller than the state. In Arizona, Navajo and other Native American languages (including Apache, Hopi, and O'odham) are the most commonly spoken (2%), following English (73%) and Spanish (20%).

leaders and share Apache culture, knowledge and education with local, state and nationwide audiences.¹³

Caregivers for young children

According to the 2023 American Community Survey (ACS), **35%** of children birth to age 5 in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region lived with two married parents, a larger proportion than in all reservation lands across Arizona (**27%**).¹⁴ Over half of young children in the region were estimated to reside with one unmarried parent^e (**57%**) compared with **63%** of children across all reservation lands in the state. Young children were slightly less likely to live with non-parental relatives (e.g., grandparents, aunts or uncles) (**8%**) as children across all reservation lands in Arizona (**9%**).

Though varying from one community to another, multigenerational households and kinship care are common in Native communities.^{15, 16, 17, 18} Local key informants shared that grandparents stepping in to help with child care and with household finances can make a big difference in family and child well-being. Grandparents can be central to multigenerational households and vital caregivers for children, in many cases sharing and strengthening Native language, history and culture.^{19, 20, 21} Half of young children (**50%**) in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region lived in a grandparent's household^f as of the 2020 Census, and there were **903** grandparents who reported that they were responsible for one or more grandchildren birth to age 17 in the 2023 ACS.

Participation in the labor force can impact families in ways that affect children's health and well-being. For example, unemployment can limit access to resources that support children's physical and mental health.²² An estimated **62%** of young children birth to age 5 in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region lived in families with at least one parent in the labor force. Half of young children in the region (**50%**) lived with all parents in the labor force, making it likely that these families need some form of child care. Local key informants felt that families are also grappling with the "benefits cliff," where finding a job that pays more may cause the loss of eligibility to critical programs such as food assistance or child care subsidies. This trade-off can influence parents' decision-making about whether to pursue work opportunities.

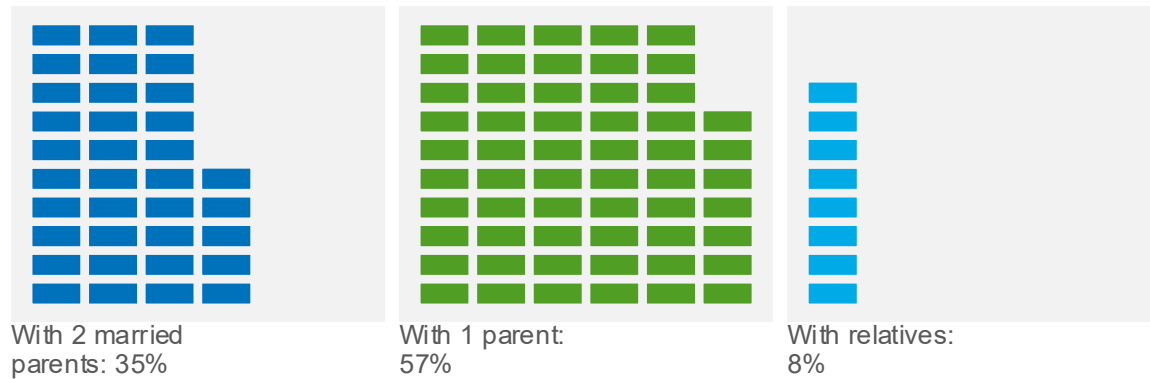
^e The term "parent" includes stepparents. Please note that due to the way the ACS asks about family relationships, children living with two unmarried, cohabitating parents are not counted as living with two parents (these children are counted in the 'one parent' category).

^f Note that in most of these cases, a parent is also present in the household. These data reflect the prevalence of multigenerational households.

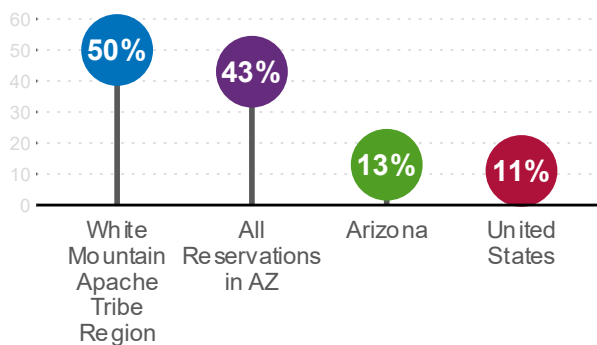
Figure 3.

Caregivers for young children

Living arrangements for children birth to age 5 in the region (2023)¹

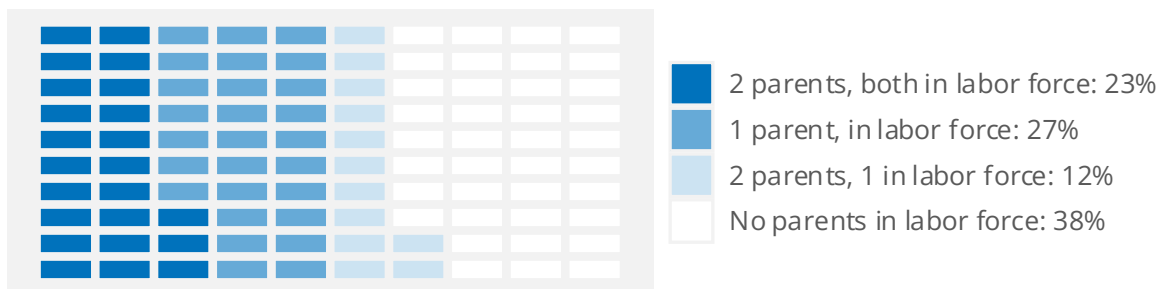


Grandchildren birth to age 5 living in a grandparent's household (2020)²



903
grandparents in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region are responsible for a grandchild (birth to age 17) (2023)¹

Children birth to age 5 by their parent's employment status in the region (2023)¹



¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2024). 2023 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2019-2023.

² U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2020 Decennial Census, Demographic and Housing Characteristics (DHC).

Notes: The 4 percentages for living arrangements and employment status should sum to 100% but may not because of rounding. The term "parent" here includes stepparents. Due to the way the ACS asks about family relationships, children living with two unmarried, cohabitating parents are not counted as living with two parents (these children are counted in the 'one unmarried parent' category).

Income and poverty among families with children

Poverty is associated with reduced access to nutrition, green space and health care and greater exposure to psychosocial stress and environmental toxins; together, these factors may have implications for children's growth and brain development.^{23, 24, 25} Economic circumstances in Tribal communities have been shaped by a long history of inequitable policies and federal disinvestment.^{26, 27} The resulting economic disparity between Native and non-Native communities affects rates of employment, poverty, food security and housing stability. In 2025, a family of two adults and two children was considered to be in poverty if their income fell below \$32,150, while for a single parent with one child it was \$21,150.²⁸ According to 5-year poverty averages from the 2023 American Community Survey (ACS), more than half (**51%**) of children birth to age 5 in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region lived in poverty, decreasing 1% from 2014-2018 (**52%**). Young child poverty rates decreased more steeply statewide (**25% to 18%**) and throughout the U.S. (**21% to 17%**) during this time, a phenomenon largely attributed to pandemic relief funding and policies.²⁹ The young child poverty rate in the region was 7% higher than across all reservation lands in Arizona in 2023 (**44%**) and more than double the statewide rate (**18%**).

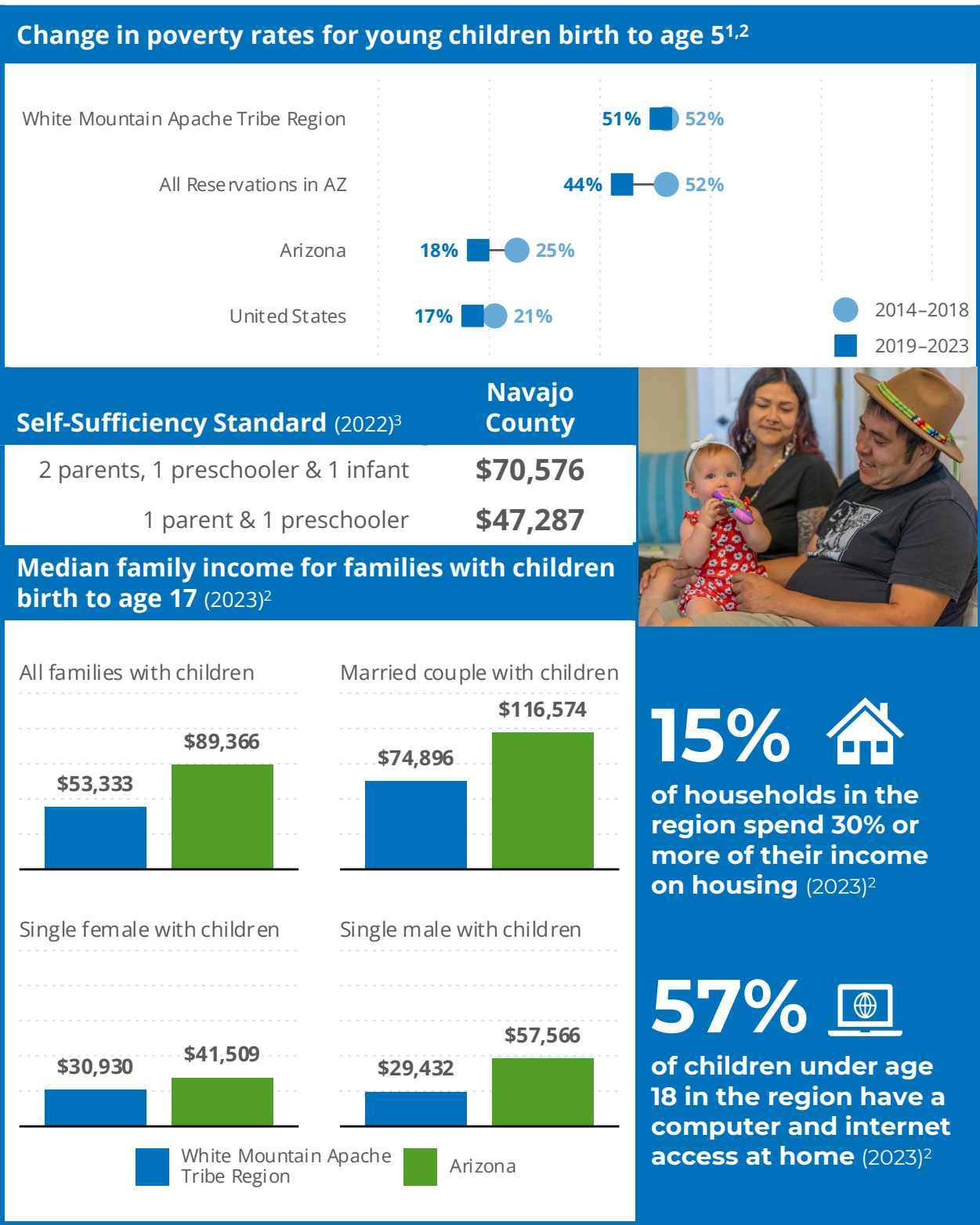
Consistent with these young child poverty trends, median family incomes in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region (**\$53,333**) were about 60% of the state's (**\$89,366**). Married couples with children in the region have higher median family incomes in both the region (**\$74,896**) and the state (**\$116,574**). Single-parent families had the lowest median family incomes at **\$30,930** for single females with children and **\$29,432** for single males with children (compared with **\$41,509** and **\$57,566** statewide).

While median family income is a measure of how much families earn, the self-sufficiency standard attempts to estimate how much families actually need to earn to fully support themselves.⁸ These standards vary by family type and differences in costs of housing, transportation, child care and other budget items across counties and states.^{30, 31} The Arizona self-sufficiency standards were updated in 2025 and reflect a significant increase in the cost of basic needs across Arizona since they were first published in 2002.³² In 2025, the self-sufficiency standard for two parents, one preschooler and one infant in Navajo County was **\$70,576**, increasing by more than 40% between in the past two decades.³³ The self-sufficiency standard for one parent and one preschooler in Navajo County was lower at **\$47,287**. The median family income for married couple families with children in the region was higher than the self-sufficiency standard for the county, indicating that more than half of these families are potentially earning enough income to be considered self-

⁸ For more information on the Arizona 2022 Self-sufficiency standard, please see https://womensgiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/AZ2022_SSS_Web.pdf

Figure 4.

Income and poverty among families with children



¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2014-2018.

² U.S. Census Bureau. (2024). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2019-2023.

³ Kucklick, A., Manzer, L., and Mast, A.. (2022). [The Arizona 2022 Self-Sufficiency Standard].

sufficient. However, median incomes for single-parent families with children were well below self-sufficiency standards, pointing to a group that may face particular challenges supporting their families' basic needs. When thinking about the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region, it is important to remember that monetary income is one way that families meet their basic needs. In Native communities, subsistence-based activities such as hunting, gathering, farming and ranching are important cultural practices that can also meet families' basic needs.³⁴

When housing costs consume a large percentage of family income, this can result in limited funds for basic needs, such as food and utilities, and can negatively affect young children's development.^{35, 36, 37} Traditionally, housing has been deemed affordable for families if it costs less than 30% of annual household income. According to the 2023 ACS, **15%** of households in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region were estimated to be housing cost-burdened. This is slightly higher than the proportion across all reservation lands in Arizona (**14%**).

Internet access can be a vital utility in homes. Reliable broadband enables access to education, employment, telehealth and social connection, highlighting its importance as a "super determinant" of health.³⁸ In the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region, only **57%** of households with children under age 18 had access to a computer^h and internet at home. This is 10% lower than the proportion across all reservation lands in Arizona (**67%**).

Food security among young children and families

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants and Children, known as WIC, provides food assistance, breastfeeding support, nutrition education and referral to other health and community services for women and children, starting in pregnancy until children turn age 5.ⁱ WIC, along with other programs like free and reduced-price school meals, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), can be a resource to help low-income families access affordable, nutritious food that promotes well-being. Families in Arizona are financially eligible for WIC if their income is at or below 185% of the federal poverty level.^{j, 39} In the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region there were **963** children birth to age 5 living in households with qualifying incomes for WIC according to the 2023 American Community Survey (ACS). This equates to **69%** of young children in the region, the same estimate as across all reservation lands in Arizona (**69%**) but much higher compared to the state (**38%**).

^h 'Computer' includes tablets and smartphones.

ⁱ For more information see <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic>

^j In 2026, the 185% FPL threshold was \$61,050 for a family of four and \$40,034 for a family of two. For more information, see <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/b1bfa16b20ae9b89d525bc35de7c1643/detailed-guidelines-2026.pdf>

The White Mountain Apache Tribe WIC program is administered by the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona. The number of young children (birth to age 4) enrolled in this WIC program declined slightly from **936** in 2021 and **965** in 2022 to **900** in 2023 and **909** in 2024. However this still accounts for nearly all children estimated to be eligible for WIC. Between 2021 and 2024, nearly all children enrolled in WIC were actively participating in the program through attending appointments and receiving benefits (**99.1% - 99.4%**).

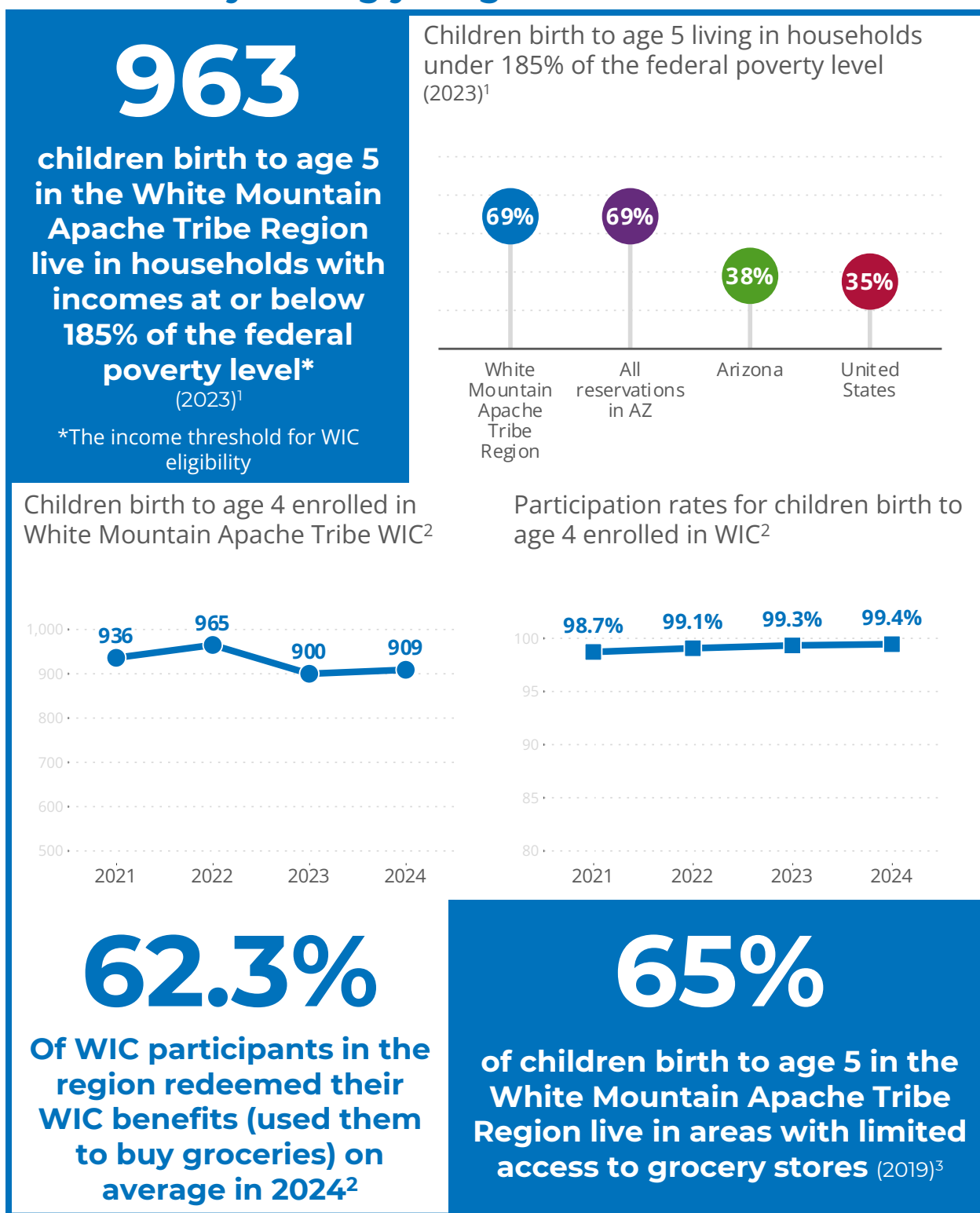
Families' neighborhood environments also influence their access to affordable, nutritious food. Low-income, low-access areas, also known as "food deserts," are geographic areas with limited access to supermarkets with fresh food options, a challenge often compounded by limited access to adequate transportation. The U.S. Department of Agriculture most recently mapped these areas in 2019, and based on these maps, **65%** of young children in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region lived in areas with limited access to a grocery store. Given high rates of poverty and low access for families with children in the region, additional support accessing food may be vital to many families.

Other programs supporting food access include the Food Distribution on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) program operated by White Mountain Apache Tribe Food Distribution. In this program, eligible families choosing not to participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) may receive a monthly package of USDA foods.⁴⁰ United Food Bank is another supporter of food security in the region, with local pantries in East Fork, Canyon Day, Whiteriver and a mobile pantry in Cibecue, as well as neighboring out-of-region distribution sites in Show Low and Pinetop-Lakeside.⁴¹ Additionally, the White Mountain Apache Children Food Security Committee - Chagháshé Bidáń Siiné hosts regular food distributions for children and families in the region through partnerships with the Arizona Food Bank Network, Local First Arizona, First Things First, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension and the United Food Bank.

The region is also home to several cultural food sovereignty initiatives. Ndée Bikiyaa, The Peoples' Farm, is located in Canyon Day. Ndée Bikiyaa promotes Indigenous food sovereignty efforts for the White Mountain Apache Tribal community. The farm consists of 120 acres of hay fields, a 2-acre garden, a community educational center, 2 hoop houses and a greenhouse.⁴² The affiliated storefront, Ndée Bikiyaa Marketplace, is a source of traditional foods, produce and plants. The Peoples' Farm has also hosted the annual Harvest Festival for the past 13 years. The White Mountain Apache Tribe Rainbow Treatment Center (RTC) also runs an Indigenous kitchen, Café Gozhóó, envisioned and operated by Executive Chef, Nephi Craig (White Mountain Apache and Diné) which promotes Indigenous foodways and nutrition; and supports vocational training for Tribal community members in recovery and participating in the Working 2 Wellness and RTC Scholarship Programs.⁴³ When available, produce is sourced seasonally from Ndée Bikiyaa.

Figure 5.

Food security among young children and families



¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2024). 2023 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2019-2023.

² Inter Tribal Council of Arizona. (2025). [WIC dataset].

³ Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2022). Food Access Research Atlas.

Note: WIC participation rates reflect the percent of children already enrolled in WIC who attend visits and receive benefits. These do not reflect the share of potentially-eligible children enrolled in WIC.

Child maltreatment response and family support

Traumatic or stressful life events experienced in childhood, referred to as Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACEs,^k can have lasting impacts on health and life trajectory beyond childhood, with risk increasing as an individual's number of adverse childhood experiences increases.⁴⁴ In situations where the harm in remaining with their family is determined to be too great to a child, they may be removed from their home, either temporarily or permanently. In accordance with the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (ICWA), nearly all Tribal governments set their own child welfare laws and manage their own child welfare systems.⁴⁵ Child welfare services in the region are overseen by the White Mountain Apache Tribe Department of Family and Child Services. Services supporting children in the child welfare system are also available through the Tribally-operated Our Children's Shelter, a group home that can house up to 18 children aged birth through 18 years.⁴⁶ The number of cases of substantiated abuse and neglect and children ages birth to 17 removed by DFS decreased from 2019 to 2020 (by **-78** and **-55**, respectively) before increasing substantially from 2023 to 2024 (by **+138** and **+184**, respectively). In 2024, there were **341** substantiated cases of abuse and neglect, **363** children removed by DFS, and **13** in ICWA placements. Placements for children ages birth to 17 also varied substantially between 2023 and 2024, with more than half of children remaining with their family in 2023 (**54%**) compared with **11%** in 2024. Placement with other relatives increased from **43%** to **78%**, and placements in group homes or residential facilities increased from **3%** to **11%** from 2023 to 2024. In 2023, the White Mountain Apache Tribal Council appointed a new Juvenile Court Judge to support juvenile court caseloads, which may inform a new precedent for how cases are handled.⁴⁷

Parenting education and home visitation programs can provide important sources of support for young children and their caregivers. Head Start is a federally funded, locally-managed program that delivers a framework for quality early child care and education services, with programming to assist family members in helping their child reach developmental milestones.⁴⁸ Within Head Start, parenting education programs that include family engagement plans help boost confidence and parenting skills (e.g., promoting regular attendance, literacy and positive parent-child relationships), which in turn positively impact child development.⁴⁹ In federal fiscal year 2024, **73** families received research-based parenting education through White Mountain Apache Tribe Head Start. With a new Head Start facility opening soon in the region, local key informants expected more families to begin accessing services like this.

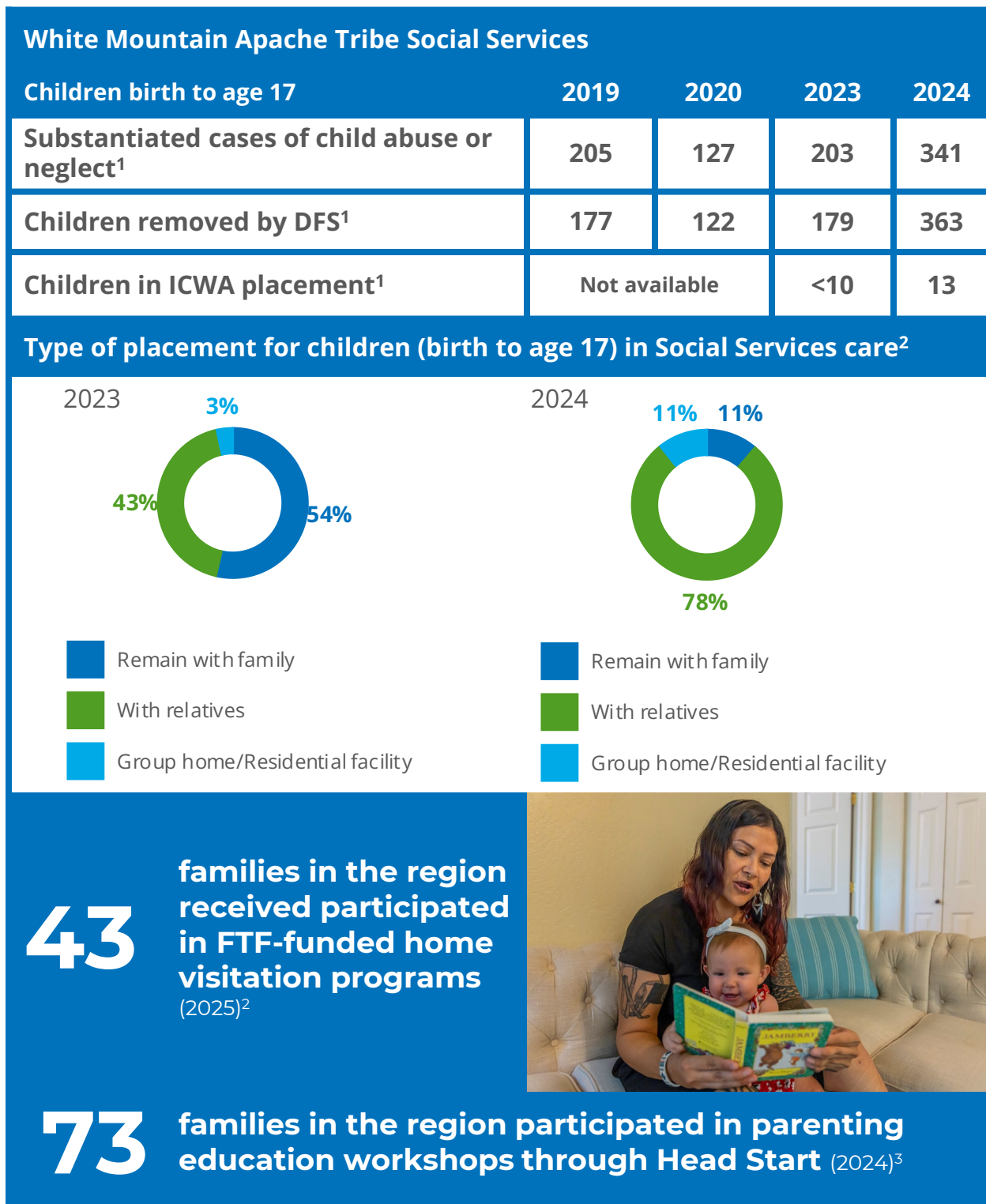
^k Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) include eight categories of traumatic or stressful life events experienced before the age of 18 years. The eight ACE categories are sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, household adult mental illness, household substance abuse, domestic violence in the household, incarceration of a household member, and parental divorce or separation.

Home visitation programs are a proven strategy for equipping families with needed resources and referrals to promote healthy child development, reduce parental stress and prevent future child maltreatment.^{50, 51, 52, 53} In state fiscal year 2025, **43** families in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region participated in home visitation programs, most frequently the Healthy Families Arizona program, as well as the Family Spirit, Health Start and High Risk Perinatal Program.¹

¹ Healthy Families Arizona is offered by Northland Therapy Services in Navajo and Gila Counties, while Health Start and the High Risk Perinatal Program are offered through county health departments. For more information on these programs, visit <https://strongfamiliesaz.com/programs/>

Figure 6.

Child maltreatment response and family support



¹ White Mountain Apache Tribe Social Service Department. (2025). [Child welfare dataset].

² First Things First. (2025). [Home Visitation & Screenings Reach datasets].

³ Office of Head Start. (2025). [2022-2024 Program Information Report].

Note: Home visitation program data reflects families in the Health Start, Healthy Families AZ, High-Risk Perinatal Program and Family Spirit programs. Families may participate in more than one program (and be counted more than once).

EARLY LEARNING

Availability of quality early care and education

Participating in quality preschool programs can result in between one-third to a full year of additional early learning gains in language, reading and math skills, increasing the academic readiness of children when they enter kindergarten.⁵⁴ In 2024 and 2025, **369** young children (birth to age 5) were enrolled in early care and education centers in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region, including **77** children birth to age 2 and **292** children ages 3 to 5. This equates to about 30% of the total estimated young child population enrolled in an early care and education program and jumps to 45% of the children ages 3 to 5.^{m, n}

White Mountain Apache Tribe Head Start had the highest enrollment at **185** children ages 3 to 5. For children birth to age 2, highest enrollment was at Alchesay Beginnings Child Development Center (**49**), followed by Chaghache Day Care Center (**20**). Both of these centers also had children ages 3 to 5 enrolled (**22** and **20**, respectively). Dishchii'bikoh Community School had **22** children ages 3 to 5 in the center-based component of the Family and Child Education (FACE) program across one mixed-age and one pre-kindergarten classroom. Overall Dishchii'bikoh Community School FACE program enrolled **fewer than 10^o** children birth to age 2 and **37** children ages 3 to 5 across both the home-based and center-based components of the program.^p Finally, the Whiteriver Unified School District Early Childhood Education program, serving children with developmental concerns, enrolled **21** preschool-age children in 2025.

An area is labeled a child care desert if there are three times as many children as there are available child care slots (a ratio of **3.0** or more).⁵⁵ Many communities in both urban and rural areas of Arizona face a gap between the number of young children and licensed child care slots.^{56, 57, 58} In the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region, there were **4.2** children birth to age 5 per available slot, qualifying it as a child care desert. When focusing on the youngest children in the region, the ratio jumps to **9.6** children birth to age 2 per available slot, while care for preschool-aged children was more available (**2.8** children ages 3 to 5 per slot). Local key informants shared that difficulty increasing staffing is one barrier to expanding enrollment in the region, including

^m Based on an estimated 1,316 children birth to age 5 and 658 3-5-year-olds in the region from ADHS birth certificate data.

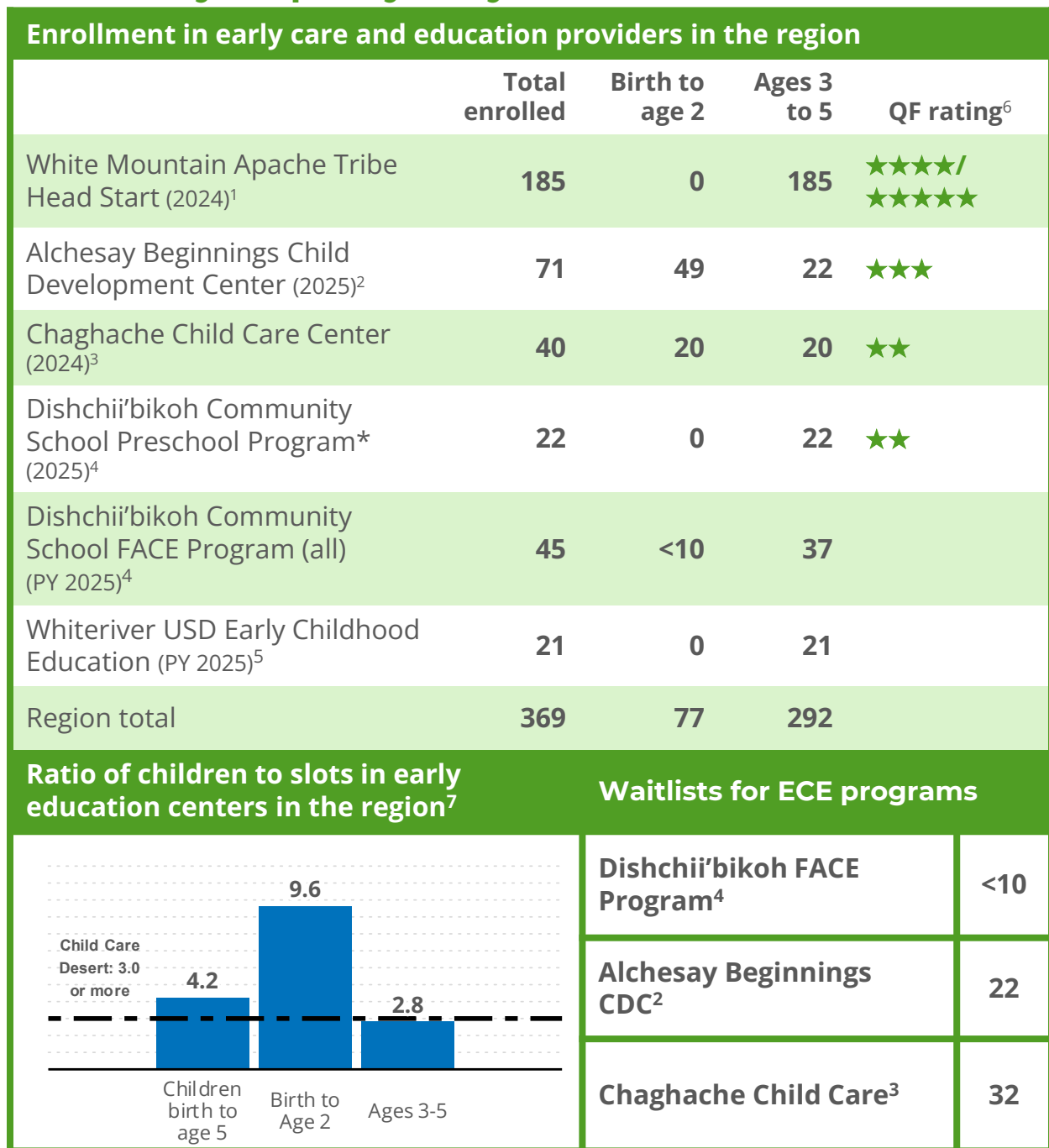
ⁿ Please note that this table may double count some children who are enrolled in multiple programs, particularly with the inclusion of the Dishchii'bikoh FACE program.

^o Counts of fewer than 10 students cannot be shown to protect student privacy.

^p The FACE program opened at Dishchii'bikoh Community School in the 2024-25 school year. As of fall 2025, there were some families (fewer than 10) on the waitlist for the program as well.

Figure 7.

Availability of quality early care and education



¹ Office of Head Start. (2025). [2022-2024 Program Information Report].

² Alchesay Beginning Child Development Center. (2025). [Child care dataset].

³ Chaghache Child Care Center. (2025). [Child care dataset].

⁴ Dishchii'bikoh Community School. (2025) [Preschool & FACE dataset].

⁵ Arizona Department of Education. (2025). [October 1 Enrollment].

⁶ First Things First. (2025). [Quality First dataset].

⁷ Arizona Department of Health Services. (2025). [Child Care Licensing dataset].

Note: Data from Head Start reflect federal fiscal years, while data from schools such as Whiteriver USD and Dishchii'bikoh reflect the 2024-25 school year. *Please note that the children in the preschool program are a subset of all children enrolled in the Dishchii'bikoh FACE program; these are 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in the center-based component. Counts of fewer than 10 students cannot be shown to protect student privacy.

the cost of background checks for new child staff.

One way that the quality of early child care and education is measured in Arizona is through the Quality First (QF) program.⁵⁹ The QF program rates child care providers and preschools on a scale from one to five stars, with “high quality” providers receiving a 3-star rating or higher.⁶⁰ As of June 2025, **5** providers in the region were participating in the QF program. Both White Mountain Apache Tribe Head Start programs were considered high-quality (with one 4- and one 5-star rating). Alchesay Beginnings Child Development Center was also rated as high quality with a 3-star rating. Chaghache Day Care Center and Dishchii'bikoh Community School Preschool Program each received 2-star ratings. Based on their combined enrollment, about two-thirds of young children in early care and education centers in the region were attending QF quality-rated programs (**64%**).^q

Early literacy initiatives can support a child’s reading skills and motivation to learn when entering elementary school and impact reading practices between caregivers and young children at home.^{61, 62, 63, 64} Within the region, the Reach Out and Read program partners with pediatric clinicians at Whiteriver Indian Hospital to distribute age-appropriate books to encourage families to read together.⁶⁵ The program translated informational pamphlets into Apache and created graphics with positive imagery of children engaging in preventive health care activities.⁶⁶

Cost of early care and education

The cost of formal early care and education can be a determining factor in whether families access care for their children. The White Mountain Apache Tribe Head Start is free for eligible families, with participation remaining stable between 2022 and 2024 (**185** to **190**). Additionally, Chaghache Day Care Center offers needs-based child care assistance, with children enrolled in the program receiving assistance increasing from **44%** in 2022, to **75%** in 2023 and **85%** in 2024 (out of total enrollment between **40** and **71** during these years). Children with special needs enrolled in the Whiteriver Unified School District Early Childhood Education program also receive services for free.

The Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) also provides child care assistance to financially eligible families, including specific funding for families involved with the Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS).⁶⁷ Across Arizona, DES child care assistance among non-DCS-involved families recently reached record highs due to recent statewide investments.^{68, 69} In the region, the number of children birth to age 5 receiving assistance increased substantially from **21** in 2022 to **74** in 2024. Unfortunately, due to insufficient funding the DES child care assistance waitlist was reinstituted statewide in August 2024, which may limit availability of assistance in the

^q This accounts for about 16% of the 2020 Census population estimate for young children in the region.

future.^r The proportion of eligible children actually receiving subsidies was between **90%** and **100%** in these years. Conversely, the number of children receiving Quality First Scholarships in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region decreased from **58** in 2023 to **41** in 2024 and **42** in 2025.

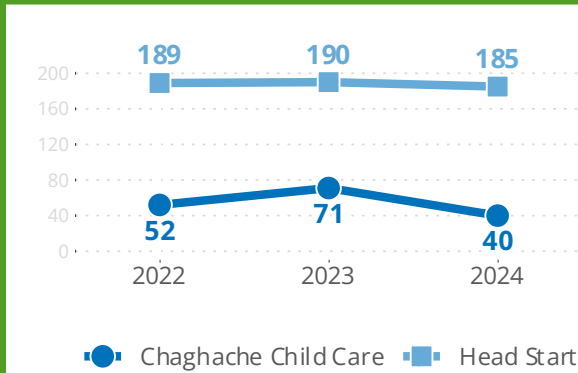
At Alchesay Beginnings Child Development Center in 2025-26, families paid **\$30** daily for an infant, **\$28** for a toddler and **\$26** for a preschooler. This equates to **\$520-\$600** monthly, or **12%** of the median family income in the region. Most families with children enrolled in this program were noted to receive child care assistance through the DES or Quality First Scholarships. The availability of subsidized and no-cost child care and early education programs for qualifying families is a major strength of the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region.

^r As of May 1, 2026, there were more than 12,000 children waitlisted statewide. For more information, see <https://des.az.gov/services/child-and-family/child-care/how-apply-for-child-care-assistance>

Figure 8.

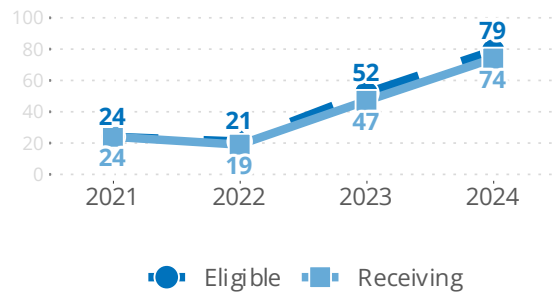
Cost of early care and education

Enrollment trends in Head Start & Chaghache Child Care Center^{1,2}



Children receiving child care assistance or scholarships

DES child care assistance³



Daily Cost of Care at Alchesay Beginnings Child Development Center⁵

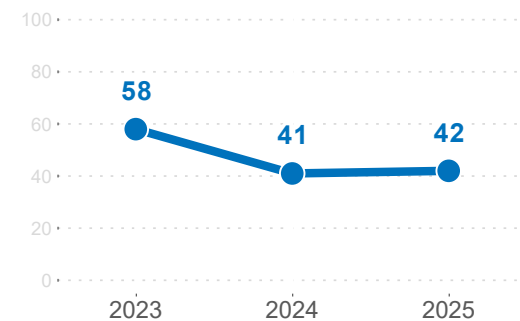
Infant	\$30
Toddler	\$28
Preschooler	\$26

12%

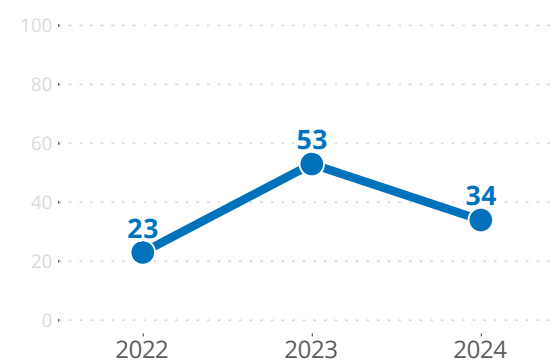
estimated annual cost of care at Alchesay Beginnings Child Development Center as a percent of median family income* (2024)^{5,6}

*Most children enrolled in 2024 received DES child care assistance or scholarships

Quality First Scholarships⁴



Chaghache Child Care Assistance²



¹ Office of Head Start. (2025). [2022-2024 Program Information Report].

² Chaghache Child Care Center. (2025). [Child care dataset].

³ Arizona Department of Economic Security. (2024). [Child Care Assistance dataset].

⁴ First Things First. (2025). [Quality First dataset].

⁵ Alchesay Beginning Child Development Center. (2025). [Child care dataset].

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau. (2024). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2019-2023.

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE

K-12 education attendance and achievement

In addition to a quality early childhood education system, a community's K-12 education system can support positive outcomes for children, families and the overall well-being of the community. Individuals who have higher levels of education tend to live longer and healthier lives, and graduating from high school, in particular, is associated with better health, financial stability and socio-emotional outcomes.^{70, 71}

While federal funding makes up a small portion of most U.S. school budgets, school districts on reservation lands rely on additional federal funds to make up for lost local tax revenue, fulfill the U.S. government's obligation to provide Native students with a quality education and close the achievement gap for minority and disadvantaged students.^{72, 73, 74} Despite federal trust responsibility, Tribal education systems have been chronically underfunded compared to non-Tribal schools, resulting in inadequate and poorly maintained infrastructure, un-competitive teacher compensation, an inability to modernize and poorer student outcomes.^{75, 76} The COVID-19 pandemic response substantially increased funding distributed to Native Nations and their school systems, however current federal policies have cut or delayed the delivery of federal funds for the 2025-26 school year.^{77, 78, 79} For Native Nations in Arizona, this has already resulted in cutting after-school programs, halting needed construction projects and considering letting staff go or borrowing money to pay salaries.⁸⁰

For elementary students in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region, there are 3 public schools in the Whiteriver Unified School District (Whiteriver Elementary, Seven Mile School and Cradleboard School) and 1 public school in the McNary Elementary School District (McNary Elementary School). Students in the Hondah, Apache Dawn and McNary communities may also attend schools in the Blue Ridge Unified School District, directly adjacent to Tribal lands, which currently operates a bus line for students in the region. In addition to public schools, students may enroll in Dishchii'bikoh Community School, Theodore Roosevelt School or John F. Kennedy Day School operated by the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). Dishchii'bikoh Community School is a preschool-12 Title I grant school that focuses on preserving Apache language and culture. Theodore Roosevelt School is a boarding school that also serves local students in 3rd through 8th grade, and John F. Kennedy Day School enrolls students in kindergarten through 8th grade. There is a private religious school in the region, East Fork Lutheran School, which serves students in kindergarten through 8th grade.

Enrollment in kindergarten through 3rd grade in Whiteriver Unified School District elementary schools declined from **807** in 2019-20 and 2020-21 to a low of **705** in 2021-22 but increased again to **743** in 2024-25. Kindergarten through 3rd grade enrollment at McNary Elementary School

increased steadily from **25** in 2019-20 to **75** in 2024-25. The number of kindergarten through 3rd graders also increased at Dishchii'bikoh Community School, from **172** in 2022-23 to **204** in 2024-25. For 2022-23, total enrollment numbers were available for the BIE schools in the region. This included **623** students at Dishchii'bikoh Community School, **137** at John F. Kennedy Day School and **197** at Theodore Roosevelt School, for a total of **957** students in preschool through 12th grade.

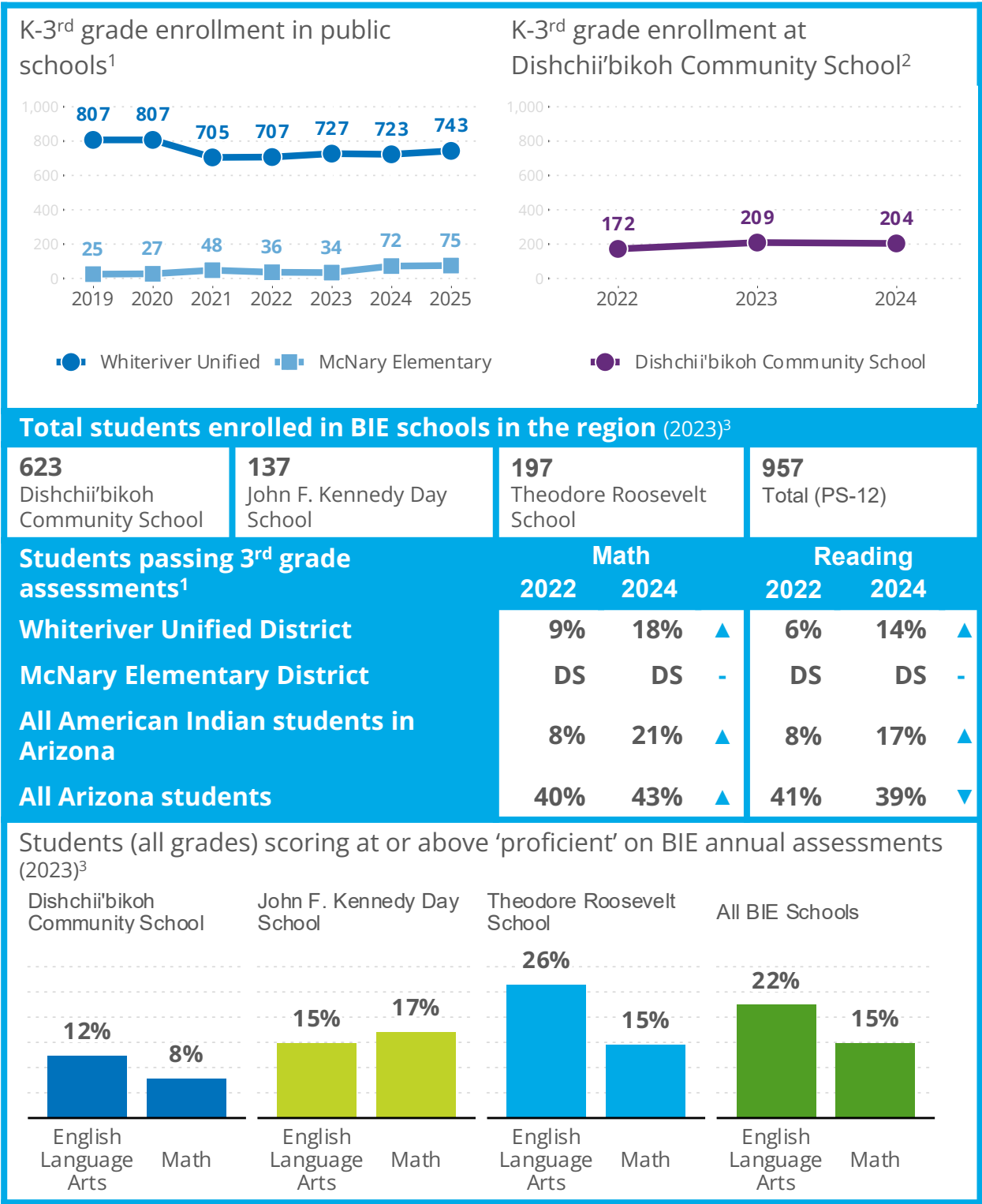
Children's 3rd grade reading comprehension and proficiency skills can predict their future academic success, such as their likelihood of graduating high school and attending college.⁸¹ It is important to note that standardized tests have been found to have lower cultural relevancy to non-White students, which has contributed to a disparity in achievement on standardized tests across racial and ethnic groups.⁸² Although they remain very low, 3rd grade math assessment passing rates for students in Whiteriver USD doubled from **9%** in 2021-22 to **18%** in 2023-24. In 2023-24, this math assessment passing rate was 3% lower than for American Indian students across Arizona (**21%**) and 25% lower than for all Arizona students (**43%**). Reading assessment passing rates were slightly lower in Whiteriver USD, but they more than doubled from **6%** of 3rd graders in 2021-22 to **14%** in 2023-24. In 2023-24, this was also 3% lower than for all American Indian students in Arizona (**17%**) and 25% lower than for all Arizona students (**39%**). Passing rates for McNary Elementary District are not available due to small number of students tested each year.

Overall passing rates for BIE annual assessments across all grades (**22%** for English Language Arts and **15%** for math) were slightly higher than for district schools; however assessment in BIE schools are different than those taken by students in Arizona public schools. Passing rates were highest at Theodore Roosevelt school (**26%** for English Language Arts and **15%** for math), followed by John F. Kennedy Day School (**15%** for English Language Arts and **17%** for math) and Dishchii'bikoh Community School (**12%** for English Language Arts and **8%** for math).

School attendance, particularly in the early grades, is another important factor in predicting academic performance, school engagement and connectedness. Chronic absenteeism, defined as missing 10% of school days in a school year, can result in a student experiencing academic difficulties and even dropping out of school entirely.⁸³ Elementary school absenteeism among Native youth may be influenced by a number of factors including a historically-rooted distrust of educational institutions, low use of culturally-relevant teaching methods and curricula as well as infrastructure-related issues (e.g., road conditions, bus availability and distances to schools).^{84, 85, 86} In Whiteriver USD, chronic absence rates peaked in 2020-21 and 2021-22 at over half of kindergarteners (**60%** and **59%**, respectively) and around half of 3rd graders (**47%** and **50%**, respectively). They then declined markedly to **28%** of kindergarteners in 2022-23 and **30%** of 3rd graders in 2023-24. Statewide, the kindergarten chronic absence rate was **25.5%** and the 3rd grade chronic absence rate was **23.8%** in the 2022-23 school year.⁸⁷ At Dishchii'bikoh Community

Figure 9.

K-12 education enrollment and achievement



¹ Arizona Department of Education. (2025). [October 1 Enrollment, Graduation Rates, Dropout Rates, State Assessment dataset].

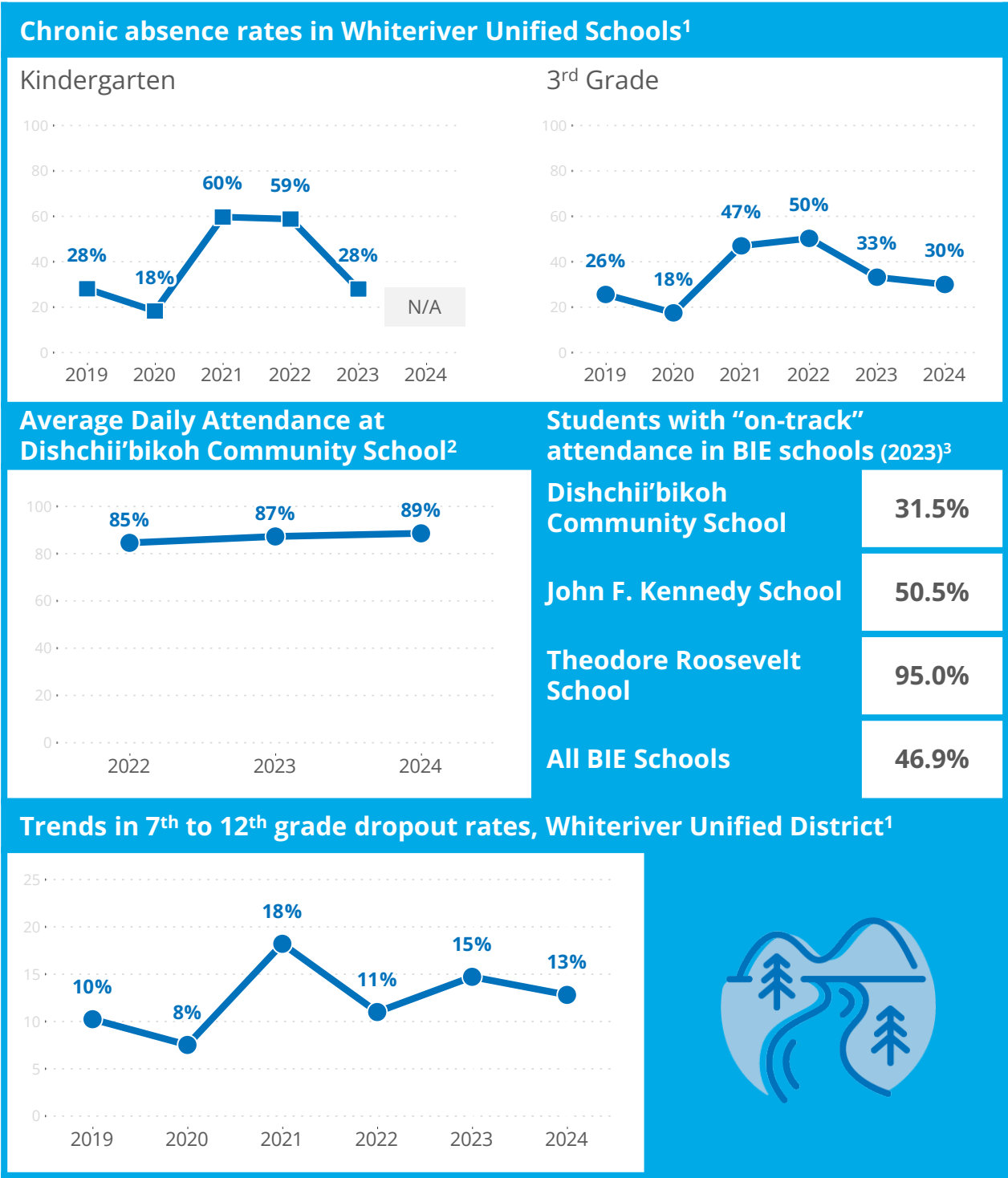
² Dishchii'bikoh Community School. (2025). [Enrollment dataset].

³ Bureau of Indian Education. (2024). [Local Education Agency Report Cards].

Note: DS indicates data suppressed– Arizona Department of Education does not report data when there are fewer than 11 students to protect student privacy. School data reflect school years (e.g., 2024 = the 2023-24 school year).

Figure 10.

K-12 education attendance and dropout rates



¹ Maricopa Association of Governments. (2026). [ReadOn Arizona MapLIT dashboard reports: enrollment, chronic absences, assessments].

² Dishchii'bikoh Community School. (2025). [Enrollment data].

³ Bureau of Indian Education. (2024). [Local Education Agency Report Cards].

Notes: Chronic absences are defined as children missing 10% or more school days. "Dropouts are defined as students who are enrolled in school at any time during the school year, but are not enrolled at the end of the school year and did not transfer, graduate or die" [State of Arizona Department of Education Graduation, Dropout & Persistence Rate Technical Manual].

School, average daily attendance rates for all students increased from **85%** in 2021-22 to **89%** in 2023-24. Across BIE schools in 2022-23, almost all students at Theodore Roosevelt School (a boarding school) were on-track for attendance (**95%**), contrasting with **50.1%** of students at John F. Kennedy Day School and only **31.5%** at Dishchii'bikoh Community School. Local key informant shared that there have been concerted efforts to address student truancy in Cibecue, with the potential for improved attendance over time.

Graduation and adult educational attainment

Understanding current high school graduation and dropout rates provides insight into the assets and challenges faced by a community and its future workforce. In contrast to adults who dropped out of high school and even those that received a high school equivalency (HSE) diploma, adults who graduated from high school have higher rates of employment, higher incomes and better overall health.⁸⁸ In the Whiteriver Unified School District (USD), the five-year graduation rate remained fairly steadily from 2018-19 (**70%**) to 2023-24 (**73%**), while four-year graduation rates dipped down to **59%** in 2020-21 before increasing to **70%** in 2023-24. For both four- and five-year graduation rates, this was 8% lower than for students across Arizona (**78%** and **81%**, respectively). In 2022-23, four-year graduation rates at Dishchii'bikoh Community School (**80.6%**) were 13% higher than across all BIE schools throughout the U.S. (**67.4%**).

In comparison to the U.S. as a whole, Arizona has a larger proportion of disconnected youth, defined as teenagers ages 16 to 19 who are neither attending school nor employed,⁵ which has been linked to negative physical and mental health outcomes and higher rates of unemployment.⁸⁹ Native youth, both nationally and in Arizona, are disproportionately disconnected and therefore particularly vulnerable to negative outcomes and may need additional outreach and supports.⁹⁰ Dropout rates for 7th to 12th grade students in Whiteriver USD fluctuated between 2018-19 and 2023-24, with a high of **18%** in 2010-21 and low of **8%** of students in 2019-20. In 2023-24, 7th to 12th grade dropout rates in Whiteriver USD were more than twice as high as for students across Arizona (**13%** compared to **5.3%**).^{87, 91}

Education is a key mechanism for upward economic mobility. As educational attainment in a population increases, wages increase and rates of unemployment decrease.⁹² Of U.S. adults working full time in 2021, median earnings for those with a bachelor's degree were \$29,000 higher than those with a high school degree.⁹³ Of adults ages 25 and older in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region, **72%** have at least a high school education which is slightly lower than the statewide rate of **89%**.⁸⁷ Within the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region, **11%** of adults have either an

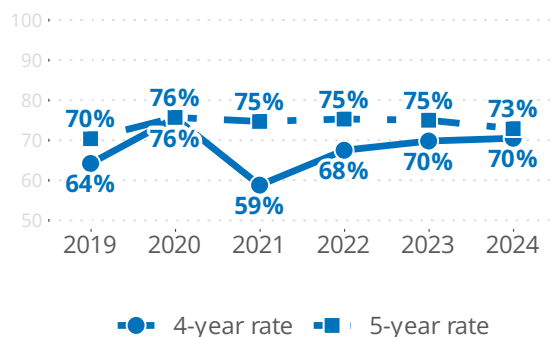
⁵ Age ranges used for 'disconnected youth' vary by source, with some estimates including both teenagers ages 16-19 and young adults ages 20-24 and others focusing on only teenagers or young adults.

Figure 11.

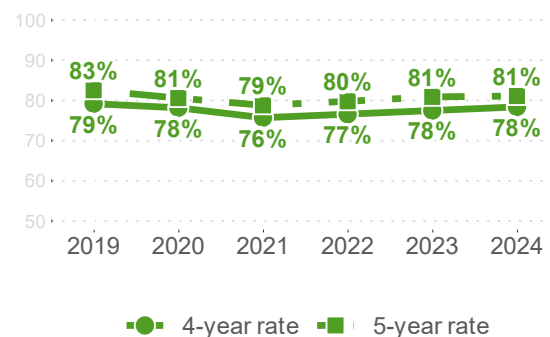
Graduation and adult educational attainment

Trends in 4-year and 5-year graduation rates¹

Whiteriver Unified District



Arizona



4-yr graduation rates for BIE Schools (2023)²

Dishchii'bikoh
Community School

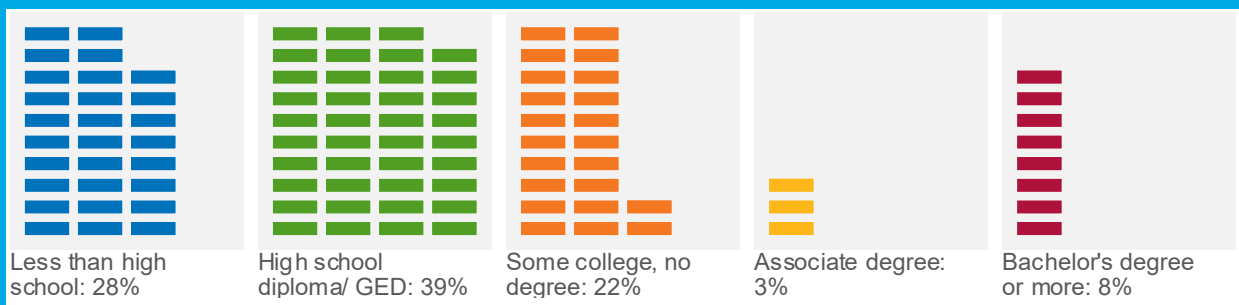
80.6%

All BIE Schools

67.4%



Level of education of adults in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region (2023)³



¹ Arizona Department of Education. (2025). [October 1 Enrollment, Graduation Rates, Dropout Rates, State Assessment dataset].

² Bureau of Indian Education. (2024). [Local Education Agency Report Cards].

³ U.S. Census Bureau. (2024). 2023 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2019-2023.

Notes: Graduation rates are calculated as the percentage of students in a cohort (typically those who enter ninth grade together) who graduate within 4 or 5 years. [State of Arizona Department of Education Graduation, Dropout & Persistence Rate Technical Manual].

associate's degree (3%) or a bachelor's degree or more (8%), one-third the rate of Arizona adults with a higher education degree (33%).⁹⁴ Please note that adults with post-secondary certificates and credentials, such as Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Certificates of Proficiency in early childhood, and other certificate programs that can be completed in less than two years, are counted in the "some college, no degree" category by the American Community Survey. This means that many of the 22% of adults with some college, no degree in the region may hold post-secondary credentials. There are a number of barriers to Native American students completing higher education degrees, including academic under-preparation, poor financial assistance options, cultural isolation and invalidation, few Native American staff or faculty to act as mentors and familial conflicts about staying in their home community versus leaving for school and career needs.⁹⁵ Local key informants mentioned that students at Alchesay High School are able to enroll in dual-enrollment credits through Northland Pioneer College, which could help them work towards certificates and higher degrees.

Adult employment

The labor force participation rate includes all people who are working (employed) or looking for work (unemployed). People not in the labor force are largely students, stay-at-home parents, retirees and people who are institutionalized. According to 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates, 43% of the population ages 16 and older was participating in the labor force in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region, which was 2% higher than across all reservation lands in Arizona (45%) but 19% lower than Arizona as a whole (61%). Almost one in four young children in the region (62%) were estimated to be living in households with no parents in the labor force. It is important to note that certain home-based enterprises including farming, food vending, traditional crafts and artistry which are common in reservation economies may not be included in traditional employment metrics.⁹⁶ Local key informants additionally mentioned that seasonal workers such as wildland firefighters in the Fort Apache Interagency Hotshot Crew^t could be missed depending on the time of year the survey is administered.

Unemployment and underemployment^u can impact families in ways that affect children's health and well-being.⁹⁷ Unemployment can limit access to resources that support children's physical and mental health, like health insurance, and can also contribute to family stress, conflict, homelessness and child abuse.^{98, 99} Children with parents who have lost their jobs may also

^t For more information about the Fort Apache Interagency Hotshot Crew, see <https://www.bia.gov/service/wildfire-response/fort-apache-ihc>

^u Underemployment means that someone works fewer hours than they would like or is in a job that does not require the skills or training that they have.

experience poorer school performance and behavioral issues, resulting in grade repetition, suspension or expulsion.¹⁰⁰ The 2023 ACS estimated that the unemployment rate in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region (**8%**) was between the unemployment rate on all reservations in Arizona (**13%**) and the state (**5%**).

According to the White Mountain Apache Tribe, Tribal enterprises in the region are the Sunrise Ski Resort, Hon-Dah Resort Casino & Conference Center, White Mountain Apache Timber Co., White Mountain Apache Community Development Corp. and White Mountain Apache Tribe Game & Fish. An assessment performed by the National Center for American Indian Development indicates that federal actions taken in 2025 will negatively impact economic development and growth on Tribal Nations. Impacts include eliminating, decreasing or deprioritizing programs that support small and Indian Country businesses, increasing operational costs related to tariffs and reducing access to jobs in the clean energy, research and public sectors, among others.¹⁰¹

Quality early care and education programs rely on a strong workforce, but factors like low pay make it difficult to recruit and retain these educators. Early care and education is also a field with notable pay disparities, with those working as a home care provider, in a Head Start program or a public pre-K program getting paid varying amounts despite performing similar work.^v For example, the average kindergarten teacher's salary in Arizona is about twice that of an early childhood educator.¹⁰² In the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region, there were more than **29** early education professionals working in the region at Dishchii'bikoh Community School, Head Start, Alchesay Beginnings Child Development Center, and Chaghache Child Care.^w The majority of these early education professionals in the region had some level of training specific to education and child development, including at least **20** with a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or Certificate of Proficiency (COP) and at least **7** with associate, bachelor's or advanced degrees related to early childhood education. Pay ranges for staff varied by program, but were largely similar to those for early education professionals statewide. In Arizona, there were **13,260** early education professionals active in the Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Registry^x in November 2025. The median wage for registered early education professionals in the state was **\$17/hour**,

^v Programs such as Head Start and public pre-K programs receive federal funding supports that often allow for better wages and compensation in these settings compared to child care settings that don't receive these funds.

^w Data were not available on the number of early education professionals working in Whiteriver Unified School District or other public or private schools in the region.

^x The Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Registry is Arizona's online hub for early childhood educators to track their employment, formal education, and professional development opportunities throughout their career. Early childhood educators access the registry to explore a directory of training, conferences, and other learning opportunities to support career development; fulfill state regulatory training requirements; apply for scholarships to pursue credentials, certificates, and degrees in early childhood education; and to establish career and professional development goals.

ranging from **\$21.91/hour** for directors to **\$16/hour** for assistant teachers. Notably, all of these median wages fell below the 2025 self-sufficiency standards for one adult and one infant in Navajo County (**\$26.09/hour**), pointing to the reality that single parents working in early care in the region are likely to struggle to meet their basic needs.¹⁰³

Figure 12.

Adult employment

Labor force participation (LFP) & unemployment (UE) rates (2023) ¹			Tribal Enterprises ²
	LFP	UE	
White Mountain Apache Tribe Region	43%	8%	Sunrise Ski Resort Hon-Dah Resort, Casino & Conference Center White Mountain Apache Timber Co. White Mountain Apache Community Development Corp. White Mountain Apache Tribe Game & Fish
All reservation in AZ	45%	13%	
Arizona	61%	5%	
			# Credentials
Dishchii'bikoh Community School ³	Teachers	3	Masters degree, Bachelor's degree, Associate degree, Child Development Associate (CDA) credential
	Assistants	2	
Head Start ⁴	Teachers	3	Bachelor's degree, Associate degree, Certificate of Proficiency (COP) credential
	Assistants	3	
Alchesay Beginnings CDC ⁵	Teachers	5	CDA credentials, COP credentials
	Assistants	5	
Chaghache Child Care ⁶	Teachers	4	Bachelor's degree, Associate degree, CDA credentials
	Assistants	4	

¹ Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity. (2025). [Local Area Unemployment Statistics & Industry Employment datasets].

² White Mountain Apache Tribe. (2025). Tribal Enterprises webpage.

³ Dishchii'bikoh Community School. (2025). [Preschool & FACE data].

⁴ Office of Head Start. (2025). [2022-2024 Program Information Report].

⁵ Alchesay Beginning Child Development Center. (2025). [Child care dataset].

⁶ Chaghache Child Care Center. (2025). [Child care dataset].

Notes: The "labor force" is all persons who are working (employed) or looking for work (unemployed). The "labor force participation rate" is the fraction of the population who are in the labor force, whether employed or unemployed. Persons not in the labor force are mostly students, stay-at-home parents, retirees, and institutionalized people. The "unemployment rate" is the fraction of the civilian labor force who are unemployed.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT & HEALTH

Maternal and infant health

Access to quality health care can promote positive health outcomes for mothers and infants.¹⁰⁴ Prenatal care is associated with reduced complications during pregnancy and birth, while also providing expectant parents with an opportunity to engage with health professionals.^{105, 106} In rural Tribal communities, challenges such as hospital and specialist access, staff shortages and transportation may present barriers to receiving timely prenatal care.¹⁰⁷ In the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region, Tribal members can seek prenatal care services and deliver at Whiteriver Indian Hospital. Since 2014, Whiteriver Indian Hospital Birthing Center has had a “baby friendly hospital” designation for its best practices and policies and policies to support maternal and infant health in the post-partum period.¹⁰⁸ Depending on geographic location or complexity of care, Tribal members can also be referred to contract care outside the region at Summit Healthcare in Show Low, Arizona.

Between 2019 and 2023, the rate of prenatal care initiated in the first trimester remained stable in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region, with a low of **54.0%** in 2019 and high of **56.7%** in 2022. Statewide, rates of timely prenatal care improved very slightly in this time period (ranging from **68.9%** to **71.7%**) and was 16.9% higher than the region in 2023. Rates of adequate prenatal care in the White Mountain Apache Tribe fluctuated between 2019 and 2023, with births to mothers with 1 to 4 prenatal visits peaking at **16.7%** and births to mothers with no prenatal visits peaking at **8.1%** in 2022. Both rates decreased again (to **13.9%** and **3.7%**, respectively) in 2023.

Outside of access to adequate prenatal care, other risk factors like low birth weight and preterm birth can impact child health outcomes.¹⁰⁹ Low birth weight births (weighing less than 5 pounds and 8 ounces or 2,500 grams) and preterm births (those delivered before 37 weeks of pregnancy) can result in cognitive, respiratory and gastrointestinal issues as well as increased risk of diabetes and are one of the largest drivers of infant mortality in the U.S.¹¹⁰ Between 2019 and 2023, the proportion of low birthweight births in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region was higher than for Arizona as a whole in 3 out of the 5 years, fluctuating between a high of **13.5%** in 2019 and low of **7.2%** in 2020. Rates of preterm births increased steadily from **11.4%** in 2019 to **17.6%** in 2022 before decreasing steeply to **11.8%** in 2023 (still 1.9% above Arizona’s rate, **9.9%**). Even with this decrease in 2023, the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region did not meet the Healthy People 2030^y target for preterm births (no more than **9.4%**). There is growing evidence that disparities in birth

^y Healthy People identifies science-based targets to guide national health promotion and disease prevention efforts. For more information see https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/healthy_people/index.htm

outcomes can be linked to social, structural, and environmental inequities in Indigenous communities, with disparities growing after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic specifically.^{111, 112}

Teenage parents often experience increased stress and hardship in comparison to older parents and other non-parent teenagers. They are less likely to complete high school or college and more likely to maintain a lower socioeconomic status and require public assistance to make ends meet.^{113, 114, 115, 116, 117} In the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region, births to teenaged mothers decreased slightly from 2020-2021 (**12.4%**) to 2022-2023 (**11.8%**),^z remaining above the statewide trend in the same time period (**4.9%** to **4.5%**). This is consistent with a recent Health Profile of American Indian and Alaska Native population, which shows that births to teenaged mothers are more common among American Indian/Alaska Native populations in Arizona than in the overall population.¹¹⁸

Access to care and service navigation

In the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region, health care services are available through the Indian Health Service (IHS)-operated Whiteriver Indian Hospital and Cibecue Health Center.^{aa} The IHS plans to replace the current Whiteriver Indian Hospital building and expand available services.^{bb} In 2024, Whiteriver Service Unit served **1,430** children birth to age 5 and provided **1,510** well-care visits for children and adolescents ages 3 to 21. Besides the Whiteriver Indian Hospital and Cibecue Health Center, White Mountain Apache Tribe members can access contract care at Phoenix Indian Medical Center or Summit Healthcare, a private, not-for-profit healthcare provider with several locations close to the region.

Health insurance coverage is an important indicator of whether families can access, afford and utilize medical care. This includes access to well-child visits and developmental screenings at a lower cost. Members of federally-recognized Tribes can access health care services provided through the Indian Health Service (IHS) and/or Tribally-administered health care facilities without needing insurance. However these services are estimated to be underfunded in relation to the per capita need— higher rates of Medicaid enrollment can help supplement funding through services reimbursement and provide members with more care options.¹¹⁹ Arizona's Medicaid program, the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) is a major source of health insurance in

^z Please note that the total number of births in the region each year is small (between 49 and 69 from 2018-2023), so percentages may appear to vary more from year to year.

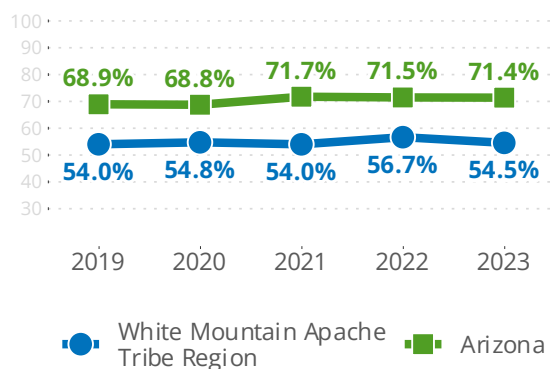
^{aa} For more information about the services available at Whiteriver Indian Hospital and Cibecue Health Center, see <https://www.ihs.gov/Phoenix/healthcarefacilities/whiteriver/>

^{bb} For more information about this project and planned services expansion, see <https://sam.gov/opp/d83fbaf6cae84552924cac22220098a/view>

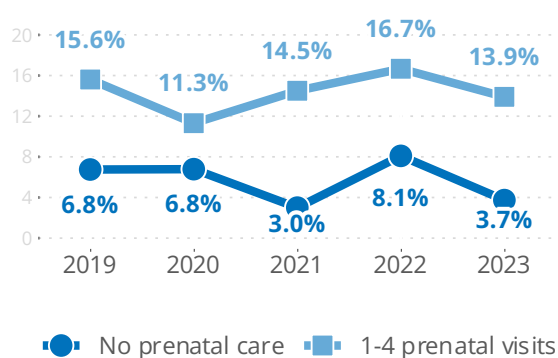
Figure 13.

Maternal and infant health

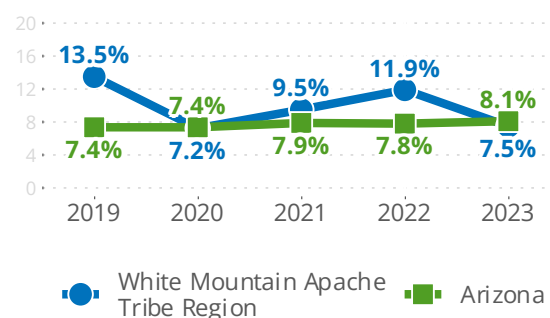
Births to mothers who began prenatal care in the first trimester¹



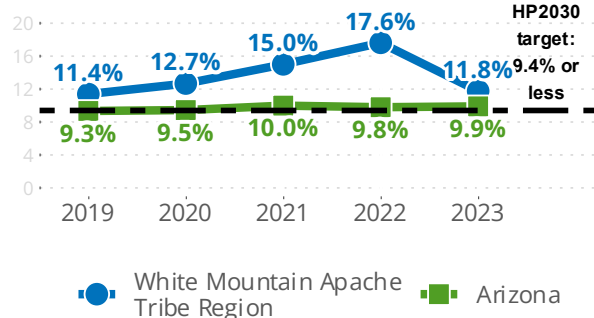
Births to mothers with inadequate prenatal care¹



Low birth weight births (less than 2,500 grams)¹



Preterm births (less than 37 weeks gestation)^{1,2}



Births to teenaged mothers¹ (ages 19 and younger)

	2020-2021	2022-2023	
White Mountain Apache Tribe Region	12.4%	11.8%	▼
Arizona	4.9%	4.5%	▼

¹ Arizona Department of Health Services. (2025). [Vital Statistic dataset].

² Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2025). [Healthy People 2030 Objectives: MICH-02, MICH-07].

the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region. In 2023, the majority of births (**84.9%**) in the region were paid for by the AHCCCS.¹²⁰ The number of children birth to age 5 enrolled with primary care visits billed to AHCCCS in the visits has steadily declined from a high of **1,520** in 2019 to low of **1,116** in 2024. Statewide, the number of children birth to 5 enrolled in AHCCCS also declined over this period, falling by more than 50,000 children between 2022 and 2024. This suggests that changes in AHCCCS enrollment are part of a statewide trend, likely linked to post-pandemic requirements that all AHCCCS members re-verify their enrollment starting in April 2023.¹²¹

Well-child visits provide scheduled opportunities for pediatricians to monitor growth and development, administer immunizations, observe familial dynamics and provide guidance to caregivers on essential topics and emerging milestones.^{122, 123, 124} In the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region, only **9%** (n = **103**) of young children birth to age 5 with AHCCCS insurance coverage had a claim for a comprehensive well-child visit^{cc} in 2024. However, **44** children (n = **487**) had at least one appointment with a primary care provider (PCP) billed to AHCCCS. The number of children with PCP visits has declined in the region from a high of **783** in 2019, mirroring declines in the overall number of children with AHCCCS insurance coverage over the past few years.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that providers ask parents about developmental concerns at all infant and well-child visits and have parents complete a standardized developmental screen at the 9-, 18- and 30-month appointments.¹²⁵ Developmental challenges are more frequently undiagnosed and untreated among American Indian and Alaska Native children, partly due to the lack of screening tools that incorporate cultural, economic and geographic context.¹²⁶ In the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region, **192** young children were provided developmental screenings through a Head Start program in program year 2024, and **14** children enrolled in AHCCCS in the region had developmental screening claims in 2024. The White Mountain Apache Tribe Child Find program also provides developmental screenings for children identified through referrals from other agencies and door-to-door surveys.¹²⁷

Oral health is a fundamental component of overall health, well-being and self-confidence. Children with dental pain and lower oral health-related quality of life have more school absences and worse academic performance.^{128, 129, 130} Preventative dental care services, such as the application of topical fluoride and dental sealants, are recommended for children to prevent tooth decay.^{131, 132} As required for federal agencies, the IHS sets target performance indicators related to oral health, which are aligned with Healthy People 2030 oral health conditions targets.¹³³ The White Mountain Apache Tribe Region was not meeting IHS targets for topical fluorides (at least **21.1%**) and dental

^{cc} AHCCCS data reflect children birth to age 5 with approved insurance claims– these data may not reflect all care provided in the region. The large difference between the number of children with primary care visit claims and well-child visit claims may be more reflective of billing practices by health care providers in the region than lack of access to care.

Figure 14.

Access to care and service navigation

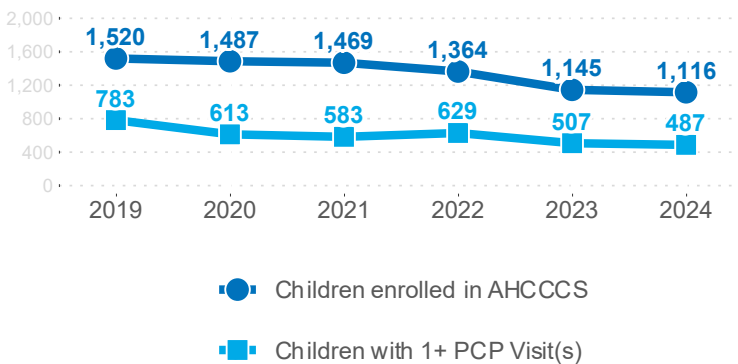
1,430

children birth to age 5 were seen at IHS facilities in the Whiteriver Service Unit (2024)¹

1,510

well-care visits for children and adolescents in the Whiteriver Service Unit (2024)¹

AHCCCS-enrolled children birth to 5 and children with primary care provider visits billed to AHCCCS²

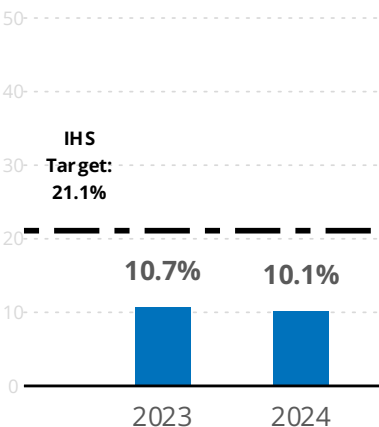


9%

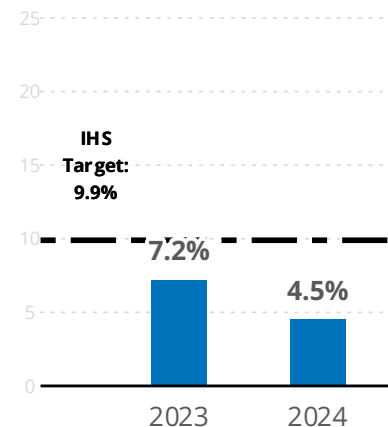
of children birth to age 5 enrolled in AHCCCS in the region had at least one well-child visit (claims data, 2024)²

Oral health services provided at IHS facilities (2023 & 2024)¹

Topical Fluorides (ages 1-5)



Dental sealants (ages 2-5)



Developmental screenings for children birth to age 5 completed in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region

Head Start (2024) ³	192
AHCCCS (claims data, 2024) ²	14

¹ Indian Health Service. (2025). [Maternal and Child Health Dataset].

² ASU CHiR. (2025). [AHCCCS claims dataset].

³ Office of Head Start. (2025). [2022-2024 Program Information Report].

Note: AHCCCS data reflect children birth to age 5 with approved insurance claims– these data may not reflect all care provided in the region.

sealants (at least **9.9%**) in 2023 and 2024, with 1 out of 10 children receiving topical fluorides (**10.7%** and **10.1%**) and less than 1 out of 10 children receiving dental sealants (**7.2%** and **4.5%**) at IHS facilities.

Immunization and child mortality

Immunization serves as the best method to prevent communicable childhood diseases in children and their communities. When enough children are immunized, the protection even extends to those who are unable or who choose not to be vaccinated.¹³⁴ In fiscal year (FY) 2023 and FY 2024, the proportion of children ages 19-35 months seen in the Whiteriver Service Unit with all recommended immunizations (**63%** to **64.1%**) was nearly 20% higher than those seen Phoenix Area IHS facilities (**43.3%** to **47.2%**). A slightly higher percent (**67%**) of children ages 3-5 who were enrolled in White Mountain Apache Tribe Head Start were reported to be fully up-to-date on all required immunizations in federal fiscal year (FFY) 2024, with an additional **19%** having received all possible immunizations^{dd} (for a total of 86%).

In Arizona, one of the required immunizations to enroll in preschool and kindergarten is measles, mumps and rubella (MMR).¹³⁵ Nearly all kindergarteners in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region had received the MMR immunization in the 2022-23 (**95.2%**) and 2023-24 (**96%**) school years, but immunization rates fell to **90.6%** in the 2024-25 school year. These rates were higher than rates across Arizona (**89.9%** in 2022-23 to **88.7%** in 2024-25). However the threshold for herd immunity and Healthy People 2030 target for MMR immunizations are both **95%** or higher,¹³⁶ which was not met in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region or the state in the 2024-25 school year, which is concerning as Arizona has been experiencing an active measles outbreak.^{ee, 137}

Healthy People 2030 set a target of no more than **5.0** infant deaths per 1,000 live births. In 2021 to 2023 combined, the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region experienced an infant death rate 3 times as high as this target (**15.1**). In the same time period, young child mortality was markedly higher in Navajo County (**65.2** deaths per 100,000 children ages 1-4) compared to the state (**29.8**), while Gila County had no young child deaths (**0.0**).^{ff}

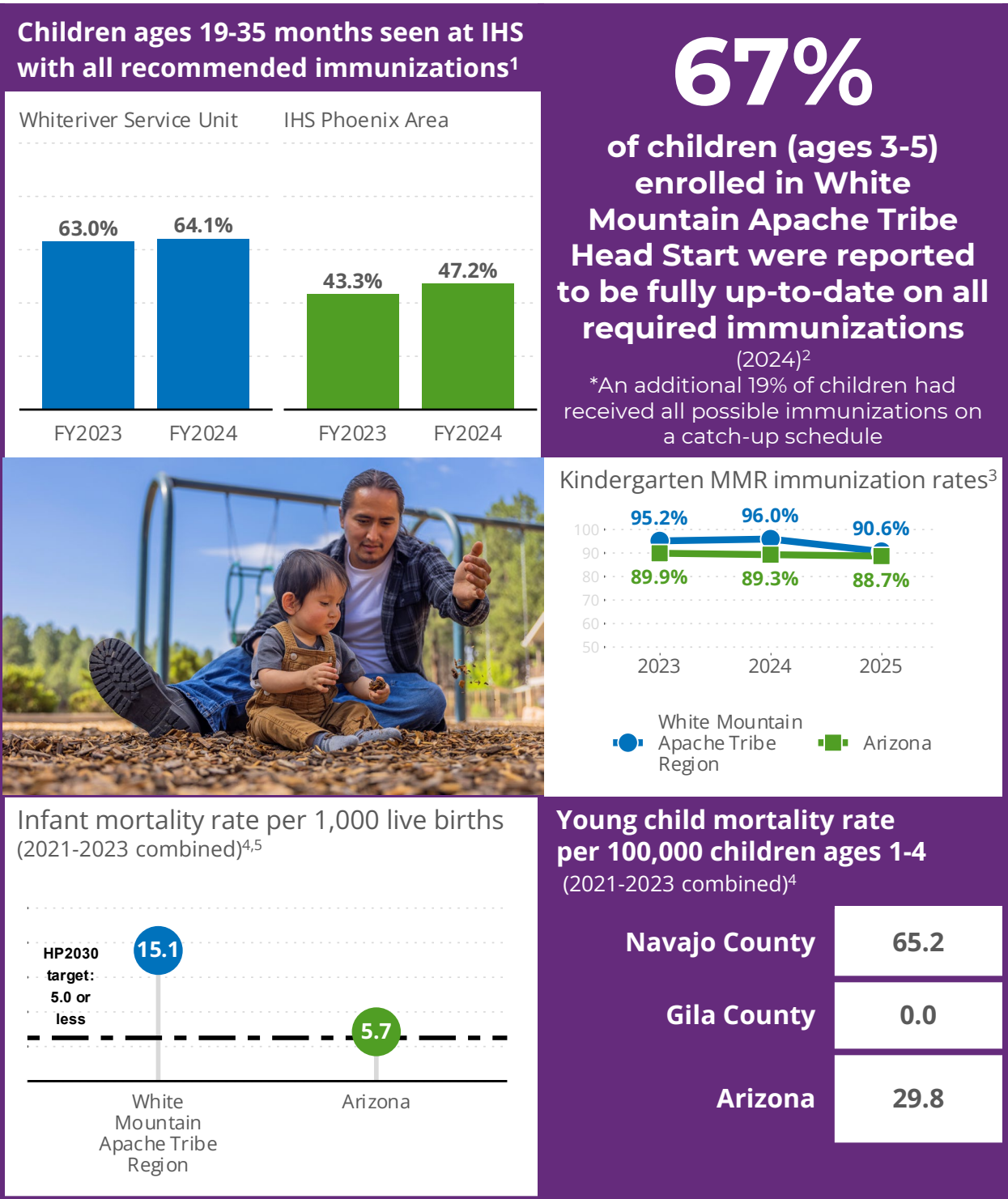
^{dd} Many immunizations require a minimum amount of time between doses to ensure their effectiveness in protecting against illness. This means that when children start their immunizations late it may take additional time for them to get caught up to the recommended immunizations for their age. For more information see <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/imz-schedules/child-adolescent-catch-up.html>

^{ee} Navajo County had **4** cases of measles and Gila County had **0** cases as of June 4, 2026. For more up-to-date case counts see <https://www.azdhs.gov/preparedness/epidemiology-disease-control/measles/index.php>

^{ff} Young child mortality rates were not available at the region-level due to small numbers.

Figure 15.

Immunization and child mortality



¹ Indian Health Service. (2025). [Maternal and Child Health dataset].

² Office of Head Start. (2025). [2022-2024 Program Information Report].

³ Arizona Department of Health Services. (2025). [Child Care & Kindergarten Immunizations datasets].

⁴ Arizona Department of Health Services. (2025). [Vital Statistic dataset].

⁵ Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2025). [Healthy People 2030 Objectives: MICH-02, MICH-07].

Young children with special needs

Timely connection with early intervention services— such as speech, physical, occupational and behavioral therapy— can shape school readiness and the developmental path of young children with medical conditions, developmental delays and even certain risk factors for delays.¹³⁸ In Arizona, the Department of Economic Security's (DES) Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzEIP), the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) and the Arizona Department of Education's (ADE) Early Childhood Special Education Program each play a role in providing services to families with children who have special needs. AzEIP^{gg} provides early intervention and a variety of supportive services to families of children birth to age 2 with developmental delays or disabilities.¹³⁹ Children who receive a diagnosis of autism, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, cognitive or intellectual disability or down syndrome may also become eligible for services through DDD.^{hh} In SFY 2023 and 2024 combined, **41** children birth to age 5 were served by AzEIP and/or DDD in the region.

In state fiscal year 2024 (SFY 2024), children birth to age 2 in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region were most frequently referred to AzEIP by a physician office (**62%**), with much smaller proportions referred by a hospital or health facility (**18%**), a health or service agency (**11%**), a parent or family member (**5%**) or other sourcesⁱⁱ (**4%**). Just over one-third (**37%**) of referred children were found eligible or received services, while **16%** were assessed and found not eligible (**13%**) or screened out (**3%**). Almost half (**45%**) of referred families either could not be reached (**25%**) or were not interested in services when offered (**20%**). Recent research on developmental screenings systems in Native communities emphasizes the importance of ensuring parents understand the goals and screening process, building trust between parents and screening providers and ensuring clear communication and cultural competency throughout the screening and referral process.¹⁴⁰

Overall, in SFY 2024 **11%** of young children birth to age 2 in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region were estimated to receive early intervention services from AzEIP. This is a much larger proportion than that seen across the state (**2.5%**) and surpasses national trends (**4.3%**),¹⁴¹ though national research suggests that closer to 15% of young children would benefit from early intervention.^{142, 143} The total number of children served by AzEIP increased back to pre-pandemic levels in SFY 2023 and 2024 (**35** in both years) after declining to an all-time low of **16** in 2022. This

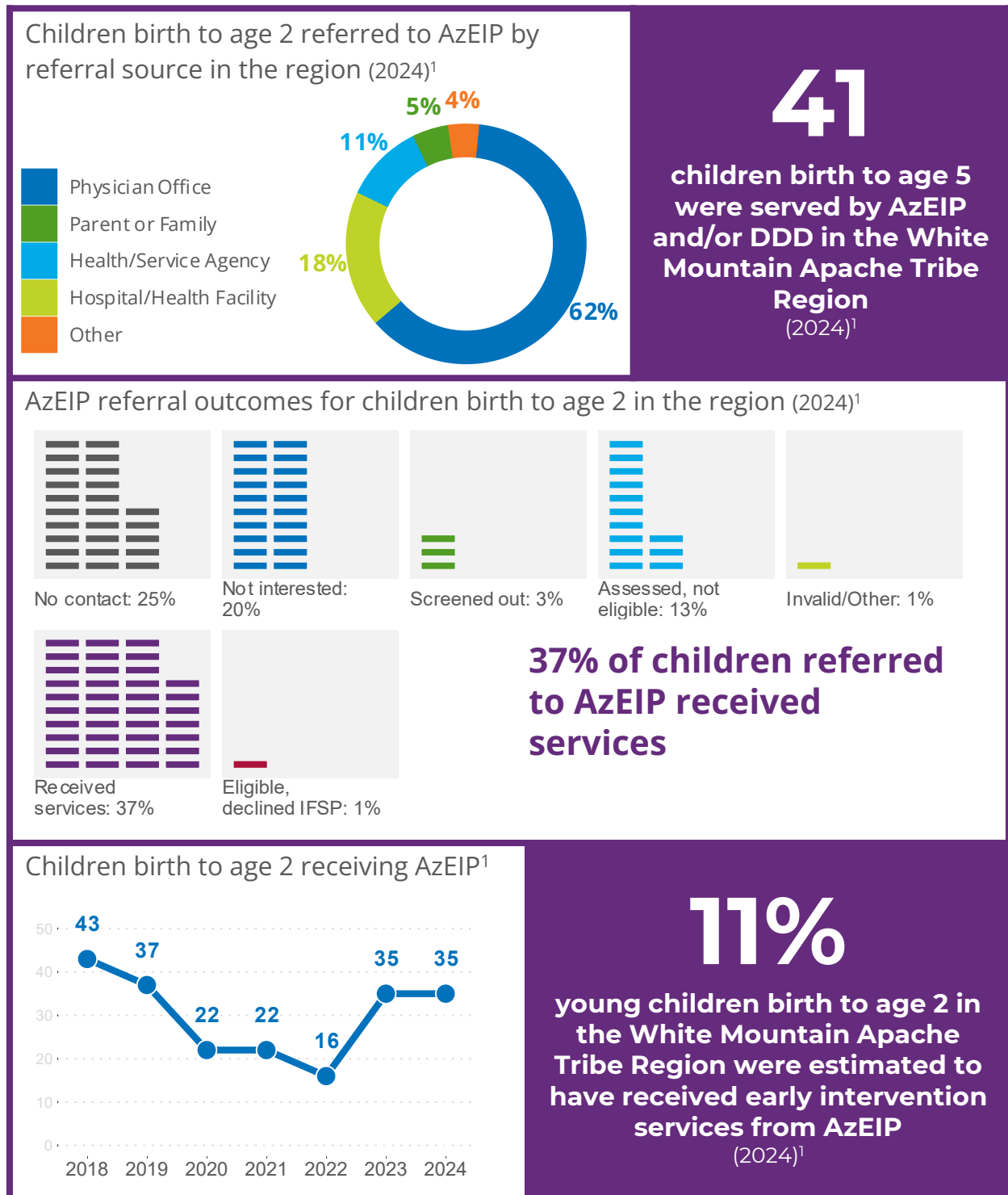
^{gg} For more information on AzEIP (which is a division of the Department of Economic Security), visit <https://www.azdes.gov/azeip/>

^{hh} For more information on DDD (which is a division of the Department of Economic Security), visit <https://des.az.gov/services/disabilities/developmental-disabilities>

ⁱⁱ In the White Mountain Apache Tribe, other referral sources included the Department of Child Safety and child care or early learning programs.

Figure 16.

Young children with special needs



¹ Arizona Department of Economic Security. (2024). [Arizona Early Intervention Program & Division of Developmental Disabilities datasets].

Note: Data on young children receiving services reflect the Oct 1 snapshot of AzEIP services, not a cumulative total throughout the year.

high rate of early intervention services may indicate both a need and a strength. Children may have more severe delays in the region than elsewhere in the state, leading more children to qualify for service. However, there is also a strength of relationships and trust in local service providers such as the local AzEIP Provider, Northland Therapy Services and White Mountain Apache Tribe Child Find to ensure that children who qualify for supports are able to access it.

Preschool to 3rd grade students with special needs

As a child with special needs approaches age 3, they can be transferred from AzEIP to the Early Childhood Special Education Program to receive services through their local education agency (LEA).^{jj} Between the 2017-18 and 2021-22 school years, the number of preschool students enrolled in special education in the Whiteriver and McNary Unified School Districts (USD) decreased from **23** to **fewer than 11** students from school years 2017-18 to 2020-21, but then increased again to **20** in 2021-22.^{kk} Special education enrollment in kindergarten through 3rd grades steadily decreased during this time, from **90** students in 2017-18 to **71** students in 2021-22.^{ll}

Of the preschoolers (ages 3-5) with disabilities enrolled during the 2021-22 school year, **70%** were diagnosed with a speech or language impairment (SLI), **20%** with developmental delay (DD) and **10%** with preschool severe delay (PSD).^{mmm} Among kindergarten through 3rd grade students receiving special education services in 2021-22, nearly even portions had a diagnosis of speech or language impairment (**41%**) and developmental delay (**38%**), with smaller portions having “other” (**11%**), specific learning disability (**8%**) or autism (**1%**) diagnoses.

The Head Start program offers a broad range of individualized services in the areas of education and child development, special education, health services, nutrition and parent/family development. When new preschool age students enroll in White Mountain Apache Tribe Head Start, they receive a developmental screening using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire, a widely used and validated screening tool for young children.¹⁴⁴ Students identified through this process can be further assessed and enrolled in an individualized education program (IEP) to provide specialized developmental and education supports to help them thrive. In federal fiscal year (FFY) 2024, **12 (6%)** newly enrolled students were referred for evaluation, **fewer than 10 (3%)** were

^{jj} For more information on ADE's Early Childhood Special Education program, visit <https://www.azed.gov/specialeducation/early-childhood-special-education> and <https://www.azed.gov/specialeducation/early-childhood-special-education-child-find>

^{kk} In the 2021-22 school year, this represented 75% of the total enrolled preschoolers at Blake Primary School.

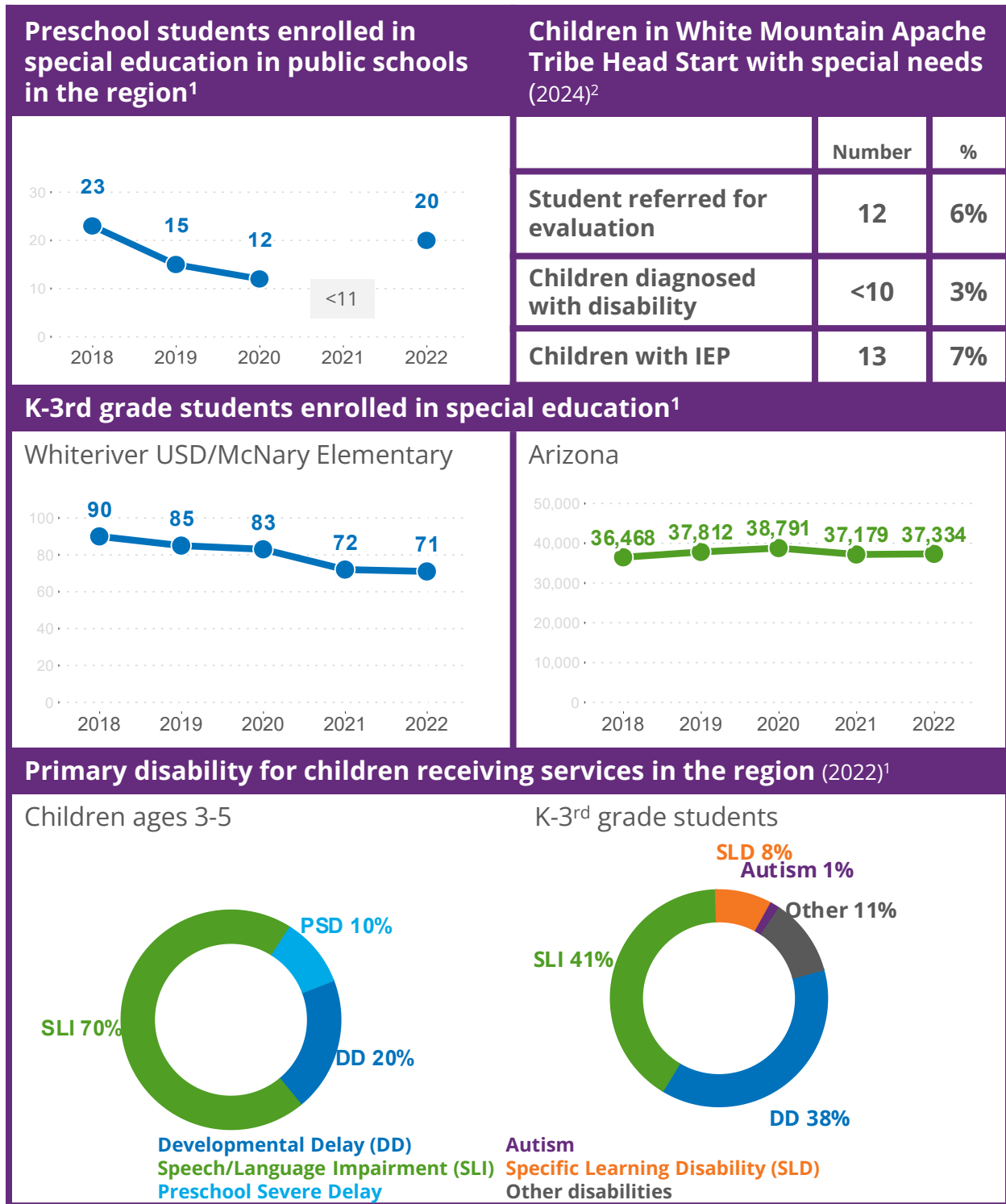
^{ll} In 2021-22, this represented 10% of the total enrolled kindergarten through 3rd graders in public schools in the region.

^{mmm} Across Arizona in 2021-22, 43% of preschoolers with disabilities were diagnosed with developmental delay, 30% with speech or language impairment and 24% with preschool severe delay (up from 20% in 2019-20).

diagnosed with a disability, and **13 (7%)** students overall were enrolled in White Mountain Apache Tribe Head Start with an IEP. It is important to note that many children with disabilities in the region enroll in Whiteriver Unified School District Early Childhood Education. According to data from the Arizona Department of Education, there were **21** preschool-age children enrolled in that program in the 2024-25 school year.¹⁴⁵

Figure 17.

Preschool to 3rd grade students with special needs



¹ Arizona Department of Education. (2023). [Exceptional Student Services dataset].

² Office of Head Start. (2025). [2022-2024 Program Information Report].

Note: The "Other disabilities" category includes children with hearing impairment, visual impairment, or deaf-blindness for preschool and chronic medical conditions, intellectual disabilities, or multiple disabilities for children in K-12 settings.

MAPS & METHODS

Methods

U.S. Census and American Community Survey Data. The U.S. Censusⁿⁿ is an enumeration of the population of the United States conducted every ten years, and includes information about housing, race, and ethnicity. The 2020 U.S. Census data are available by census block. There are about 108,000 inhabited blocks in Arizona, each with an average population of 66 people. The 2020 U.S. Census data for the region presented in this report were drawn from the Census Geography for the Fort Apache Reservation and trust land.

The American Community Survey (ACS)^{oo} is a survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau each month by mail, telephone and face-to-face interviews. It covers many different topics, including income, language, education, employment and housing. ACS data are available by census tract. Arizona is divided into approximately 1,750 census tracts, each with an average population of 3,900 people. ACS data for the region were drawn from the Census Geography for the Fort Apache Reservation and trust land. The most recent and most reliable ACS data are averaged over the past five years; those are the data included in this report. They are based on surveys conducted from 2019 to 2023. In general, the reliability of ACS estimates is greater for more populated areas. Statewide estimates, for example, are more reliable than county-level estimates.

First Things First (FTF) strategy data. Data related to FTF-funded strategies were provided for this report by FTF staff. These data included regional estimates of oral health indicators and hearing, vision, socio-emotional and developmental screening reach, zip code-level service data for home visitation programs, statewide workforce registry wage data and provider-level Quality First participation and enrollment data. The vendor used an apportioning file provided by FTF to create regional estimates of home visitation services from the zip-code level file.

Early education and service data from the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES). Data related to child care assistance, Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzEIP) referrals, outcomes and services, and Division of Developmental Disabilities services were provided by DES. These data were geocoded to regions and sub-regions by staff at DES using a custom shapefile provided by the vendor.

Health data from the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS). Data related to births, infant and maternal health, immunization rates at child care and school facilities, infant and child mortality and enrollment and participation in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for

ⁿⁿ For more information, see <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census.html>

^{oo} For more information, see <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs.html>

Women, Infants and Children (WIC) were provided by ADHS. All data apart from immunization data were geocoded to regions and sub-regions by staff at ADHS using a custom shapefile provided by the vendor. The vendor geocoded child care and school facilities to regions using addresses or coordinates provided in the immunization datasets to create custom immunization coverage estimates.

Health data from the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS). FTF partnered with the Arizona State University Center for Health Information and Research (CHiR) to create custom tabulations of health claims data for young children birth to age 5 enrolled in AHCCCS health care plans. These estimates, at the state, county, regional and sub-regional levels, were provided to the vendor for inclusion in this report.

Health data from the Indian Health Service (IHS). Data related to active users of IHS services and performance on select Government Performance and Results Act indicators related to child health were provided by the Indian Health Service Phoenix Area Office. Data for each region reflect the population seeking services in specific service units, clinics and service areas; these data do not reflect affiliation or membership with a particular Tribe (e.g., any individual identified as American Indian or Alaska Native descent and belonging to the community served by IHS seen within the last three years at a specific health facility or a facility within a specific service area or service unit was counted as an active user).

Service data from the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona. Data related to enrollment and participation in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) were provided by the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona for each local WIC program. These data were sent to local WIC program directors, who then shared the data with the vendor.

Education data from the Arizona Department of Education (ADE). For past FTF Regional Needs and Assets reports, regional estimates for education data were obtained through a custom tabulation of unredacted data files provided by ADE. Access to unredacted data files was not available for this report. Instead, publicly-available data files published by ADE^{pp} were used to examine trends in enrollment, assessment results, graduation and dropout rates, and data on chronic absenteeism were obtained via the Maricopa Association of Governments and ReadOn Arizona MAPLit data tool.^{qq} Due to the frequency of data suppression in these files to protect student privacy, data could not be reliably aggregated across schools or districts to create regional estimates. Data on services for students with disabilities by grade are not publicly available for

^{pp} For more information, see <https://www.azed.gov/accountability-research/data>

^{qq} For more information, see <https://geo.azmag.gov/maps/readonaz/>

geographies smaller than the state, so custom regional estimates from the 2024 Regional Needs and Assets reports were used in this report.

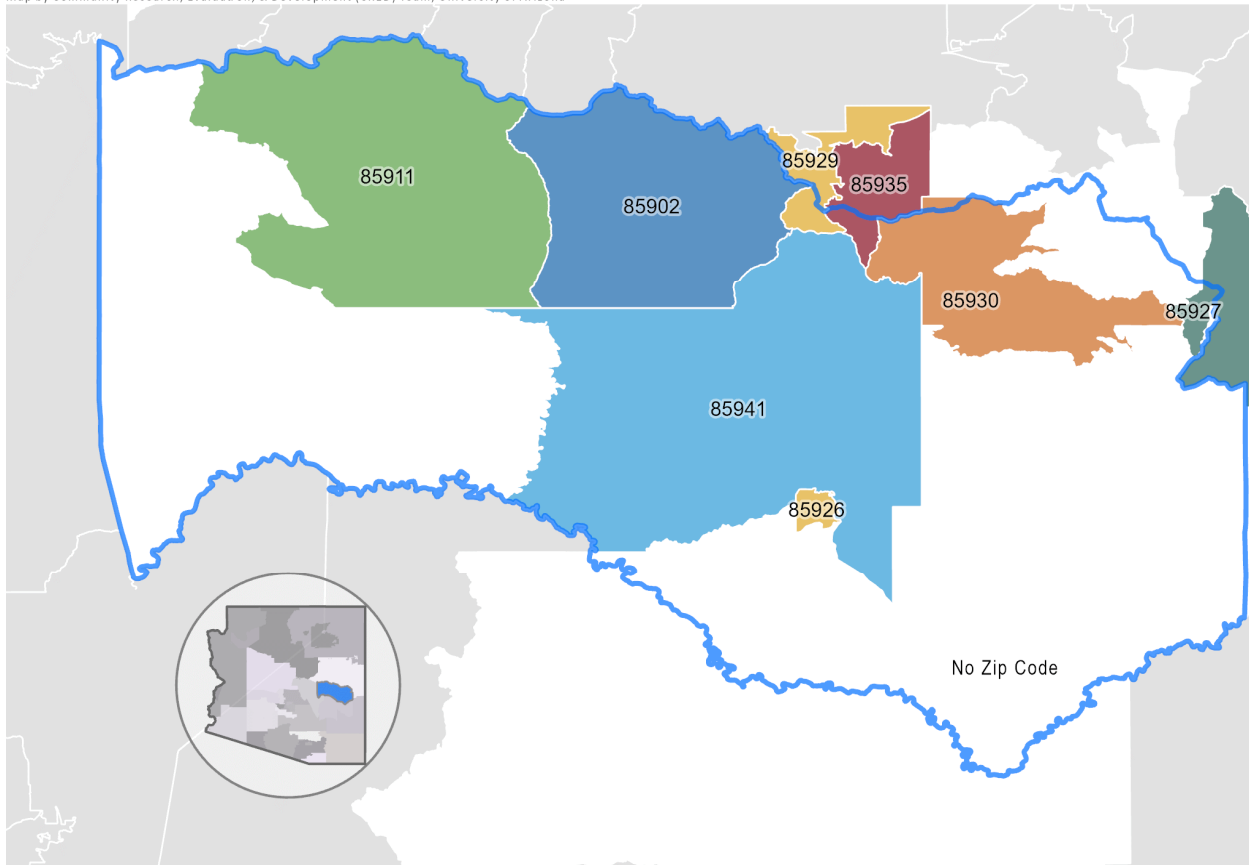
Change calculations. Unless otherwise specified, changes in counts of data over time (i.e., percent increase or decrease) are calculated by subtracting the earlier number (e.g., a 2010 count) from the later number (e.g. the 2020 count) and dividing the result by the earlier number (e.g. the 2010 count). This calculation provides the percent change between the most recent count and the prior count, relative to the prior count.

Data availability. State agency data in this report were provided to FTF by agency staff through a data request process initiated in February 2025 and extending to March 2026. Wherever possible, data were requested for multiple years to allow for the visualization of trends as well as for the most recent year available. However, due to both the constraints of agency staff and agency-maintained datasets as well as the timing of requests, not all data were available on the same time and geographic scales. This report attempts to include the most recent and complete data available, with notes indicating where data were not available for particular time periods or geographies.

Data suppression. To protect the confidentiality of program participants, the FTF Data Dissemination and Suppression Guidelines preclude reporting of social service and early education programming data if the count is less than 10 and data related to health or developmental delay if the count is less than 6. In addition, some data received from state agencies are suppressed according to their own guidelines. ADHS does not report counts between 1 and 5; DES does not report counts between 1 and 9; ADE does not report counts less than 11. Additionally, ADE requires suppression of the second-smallest value or the denominator in tables where a reader might be able to use the numbers provided to calculate a suppressed value. Throughout this report, information which is not available because of suppression guidelines is indicated by entries of "<6" or "<10" or "<11" for counts, or "DS" (data suppressed) for percentages. Data are sometimes not available for particular regions, either because a program did not operate in the region or because data are only available at the county level. Cases where data are not available will be indicated by an entry of "N/A", "NA" or a note that states "data not available."

Map of Zip Codes in the Region

Map by Community Research, Evaluation, & Development (CRED) Team, University of Arizona



Source: Custom map by the Community Research, Evaluation, & Development (CRED) Team using shapefiles obtained from First Things First and the U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line Shapefiles (<https://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/geo/shapefiles/index.php>)

Zip Code Tabulation Areas (ZCTAs) in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region

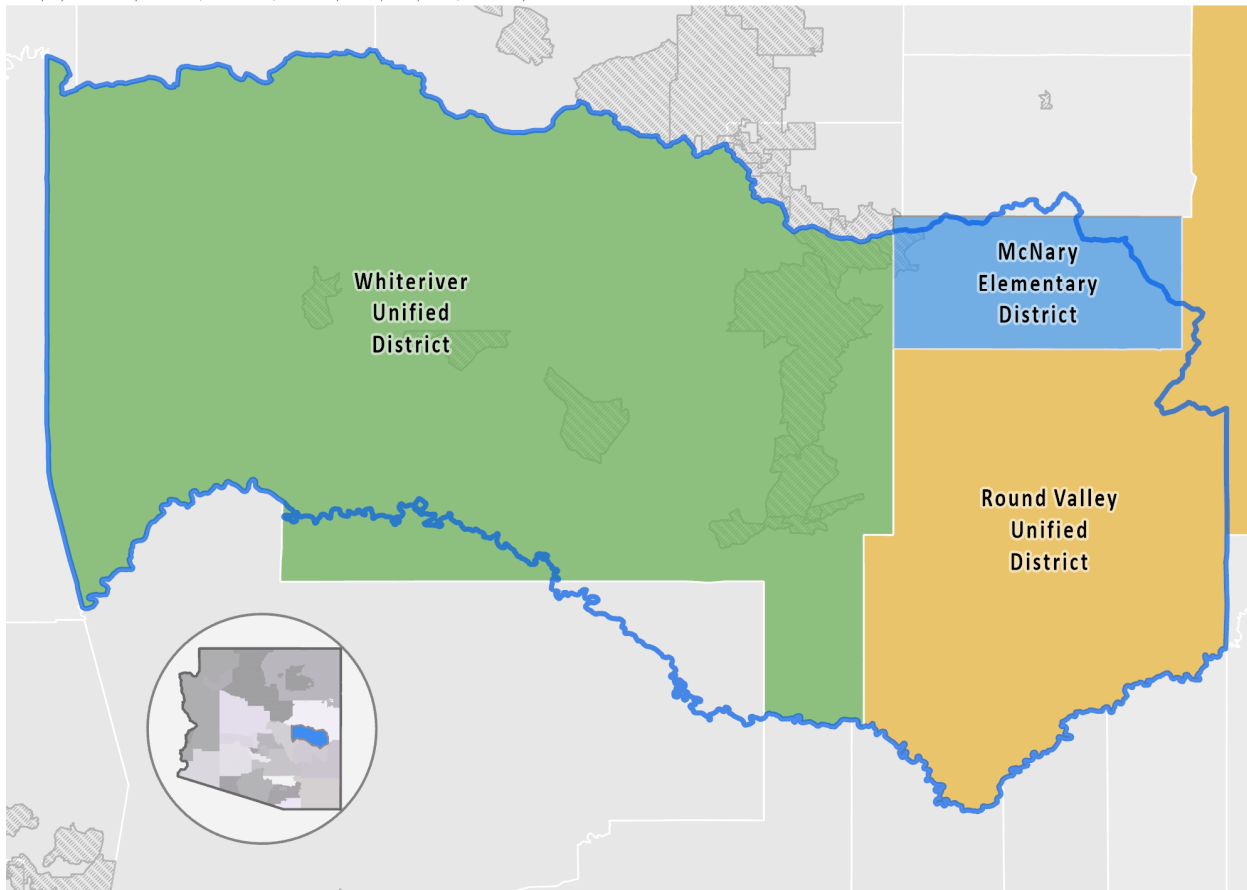
Zip Code Tabulation Area (ZCTA)	Population (all ages)	Percent of this ZCTA's total population living in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region	This ZCTA is shared with
White Mountain Apache Region	14,340		
85902	16	100%	
85911	1,915	100%	
85926	435	100%	
85927	4	2%	Navajo/Apache Region
85929	9	0.1%	Navajo/Apache Region
85930	1,122	100%	
85935	259	7%	Navajo/Apache Region
85941	10,575	100%	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2023). 2020 Decennial Census, Demographic and Housing Characteristics, Table P1.

Note: With the implementation of differential privacy in the 2020 Census, small area estimates now have injected 'noise' (error) to prevent accidental disclosure of Census responses. Geographies that are not primary census geographies, like ZCTAs, have noisier (or less accurate) estimates than primary geographies, like tracts.

Map of School Districts in the Region

Map by Community Research, Evaluation, & Development (CRED) Team, University of Arizona



Source: Custom map by the Community Research, Evaluation, & Development (CRED) Team using shapefiles obtained from First Things First and the U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line Shapefiles (<https://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/geo/shapefiles/index.php>)

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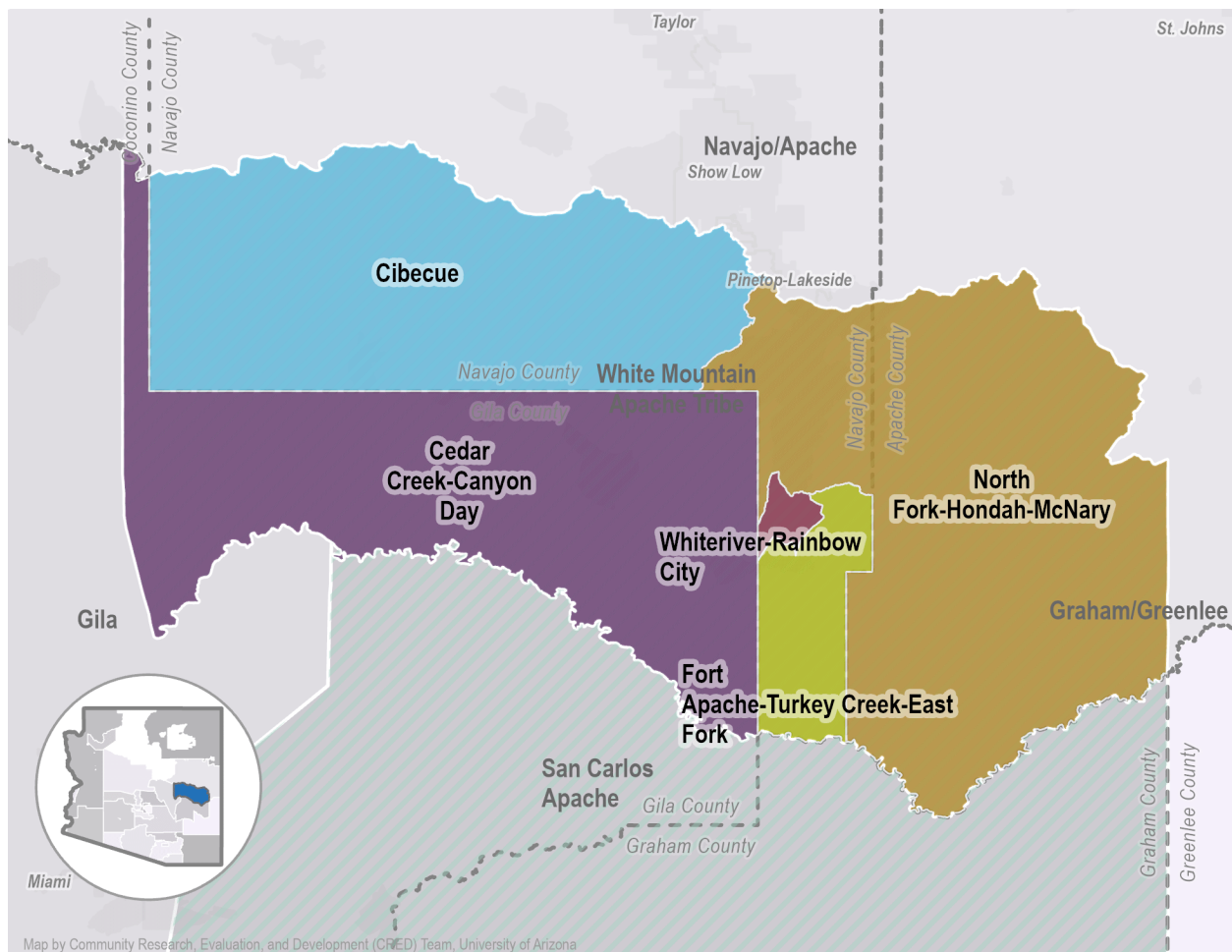
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SUB-REGIONAL FACTSHEETS

Communities vary in terms of needs and assets, even within the same First Things First (FTF) Region. In recognition of this, the following factsheets present a selection of indicators from this Regional Needs and Assets report at the sub-regional level. Examining differences within the region can help Regional Partnership Councils and local stakeholders focus their strategies and efforts to use resources effectively.

Sub-regions in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region



The factsheets that follow provide information about five sub-regions within the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region.

The **Cedar Creek-Canyon Day** sub-region is defined as one census tract (9402) and contains the portion of the Fort Apache Reservation within Gila County. It contains the communities of Cedar Creek, Carrizo and Canyon Day.

The **Cibecue** sub-region is defined as one block group (9401 block group 2) and contains the southwestern portion of Navajo County surrounding the community of Cibecue.

The **North Fork-Hondah-McNary** sub-region is defined as two census tracts (9401 & 9705.02) and contains the communities of Hondah, McNary, North Fork and Hawley Lake.

The **Fort Apache-Turkey Creek-East Fork** sub-region is defined as one block group (9403 block group 2) and contains the southernmost portion of Navajo County south of Whiteriver, including the communities of Fort Apache, Turkey Creek, Seven Mile and East Fork.

The **Whiteriver-Rainbow City** sub-region is defined as two block groups (9403 block groups 1 & 3) and contains the communities of Whiteriver and Rainbow City.

A guide to the factsheets

Each factsheet contains data for a selection of indicators at the state, region and sub-regional level. Where possible, two timepoints are shown for each indicator with an arrow to indicate the direction of the trend (increase, decrease, no change) in the sub-region. In some cases, data were not available for a specific sub-region, indicated with **NA**. Additionally, some data were suppressed to protect individual data privacy in accordance with the FTF Data Policy, indicated with **DS**. The data in these factsheets were obtained through custom tabulations of publicly available data from the U.S. Census Bureau and through FTF requests to state agencies, specifically the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) and the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) via a partnership with the Arizona State University Center for Health Information & Research (CHiR). More details on how these tabulations and requests were made can be found in the *Maps & Methods Appendix* of this report.

The indicators included in each tabular factsheet are defined as follows:

Indicator	Description	Source
Total population	Overall population of all ages	2020 U.S. Census
Population of children (0-5)	Population of children birth to age 5	
Population living in poverty	Percent of the overall population living in households with incomes at or below the federal poverty threshold	2014-2018 & 2019-2023 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates
Children (0-5) living in poverty	Percent of children birth to age 5 living in households with incomes at or below the federal poverty threshold	
Low-income children (0-5) (<185% federal poverty level)	Number of children birth to age 5 living in households with incomes at or below 185% of the federal poverty level (the income eligibility threshold for WIC)	

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Indicator	Description	Source
Housing costs 30% or more of household income	Percent of households spending 30% or more of their household income on housing costs (i.e., considered “housing cost-burdened”)	
Children (0-5) with all present parents in the labor force	Percent of children birth to age 5 who live in households with all present parents who work or are looking for work (i.e., live with one parent who works or live with two parents, both of whom work)	
Language other than English spoken at home	Percent of households that speak Spanish or another language (other than English or Spanish). The most common languages spoken in the “Another” language category in Arizona are Native North American languages.	
Children (0-5) receiving child care assistance	Number of children birth to age 5 receiving DES child care assistance (not including those involved in the child welfare system)	2023 & 2024 DES
Educational attainment (ages 25 and older)	Percent of adults with at least a high school education (i.e., a high school diploma, some college, an associate, Bachelor’s or advanced degree) or a Bachelor’s degree or more (i.e., a Bachelor’s or advanced degree)	2014-2018 & 2019-2023 ACS estimates
Unemployment rate for the adult population (ages 16 and older)	Percent of adults who self-reported that they were unemployed	
Total births	Total number of births in the area, based on address provided on the birth certificate	2020-2021 & 2022-2023 ADHS Vital Statistics dataset
Maternal age 19 or younger	Percent of births to mothers age 19 or younger	
Low birth weight (<2500 grams)	Percent of babies born weighing 2,500 grams or less	
Preterm births (<37 weeks)	Percent of babies born at 37 weeks of gestation or earlier. The Healthy People 2030 target is 9.4% or less.	
Prenatal care (5+ prenatal visits)	Percent of births to mothers who had at least five prenatal visits	
Number of children (0-5) with AHCCCS	Number of children birth to age 5 enrolled in an insurance plan through the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS)	2022 & 2024 AHCCCS claims data processed by ASU CHiR
AHCCCS-enrolled children (0-5) with at least 1 primary care provider visit	Percent of children birth to age 5 enrolled in AHCCCS who had a claim for at least one primary care visit	
Children (0-5) receiving AzEIP, DDD or both services	Number of children birth to age 5 who received AzEIP, DDD or both services	SFY 2023 & 2024 DES

Cedar Creek-Canyon Day	Years	Arizona	White Mountain Apache Tribe Region	Cedar Creek-Canyon Day	Change over time
Child, Family & Community Characteristics					
Total population ¹	Census 2020	7,151,502	14,340	1,825	
Population of children (0-5) ¹	Census 2020	480,744	1,563	173	
Population living in poverty ^{2,3}	2014-2018	16.1%	43.2%	52.1%	↓
	2019-2023	12.8%	41.3%	48.3%	
Children (0-5) living in poverty ^{2,3}	2014-2018	24.9%	51.8%	56.6%	↓
	2019-2023	17.9%	50.9%	49.3%	
Low-income children (0-5) (<185% federal poverty level) ^{2,3}	2014-2018	47.2%	78.9%	83.6%	↓
	2019-2023	38.1%	68.8%	77.5%	
Housing costs 30% or more of household income ^{2,3}	2014-2018	30.4%	24.6%	10.7%	↑
	2019-2023	29.4%	14.6%	20.0%	
Children (0-5) with all present parents in the labor force ^{2,3}	2014-2018	61.1%	55.0%	60.2%	↓
	2019-2023	64.4%	50.6%	28.7%	
Language other than English spoken at home (2019-2023) ³	Spanish	19.2%	0.4%	0.0%	
	Another	6.4%	56.1%	54.5%	
Early Education					
Children (0-5) receiving child care assistance ⁴	2023	35,375	47	DS	
	2024	35,153	74	DS	
Education & Workforce					
Educational Attainment (ages 25 and older) ^{2,3}					
At least a high school education	2014-2018	86.8%	70.4%	68.8%	↑
	2019-2023	89.1%	71.9%	71.4%	
Bachelor's degree or more	2014-2018	28.9%	5.9%	3.6%	↑
	2019-2023	32.6%	7.5%	7.1%	
Unemployment rate for the adult population (ages 16 and older) ^{2,3}	2014-2018	6.4%	34.0%	30.6%	↓
	2019-2023	5.1%	8.4%	6.6%	
Child Health & Development					
Total births ⁵	2020-2021	154,638	421	DS	
	2022-2023	156,236	397	43	
Characteristics of births ⁵					
Maternal age 19 or younger	2020-2021	4.9%	12.4%	DS	
	2022-2023	4.5%	11.8%	18.6%	
Low birthweight (<2500 grams)	2020-2021	7.6%	8.3%	DS	
	2022-2023	7.9%	9.8%	DS	
Preterm birth (<37 weeks)	2020-2021	9.7%	13.8%	DS	
	2022-2023	9.8%	14.9%	DS	
Prenatal care (5+ prenatal visits)	2020-2021	91.0%	81.2%	DS	
	2022-2023	91.7%	77.8%	88.4%	
Number of children (0-5) with AHCCCS ⁶	2022	277,455	1,364	120	↓
	2024	223,506	1,116	105	
AHCCCS-enrolled children (0-5) with 1+ PCP visit ⁶	2022	83.0%	46.1%	44.2%	↑
	2024	86.0%	43.6%	52.4%	
Children (0-5) receiving AzEIP, DDD, or both services ⁴	SFY 2023	9,991	33	DS	
	SFY 2024	10,706	41	DS	

SOURCES: (1) US Census 2020; (2) American Community Survey 2014-2018; (3) American Community Survey 2019-2023; (4) Arizona Department of Economic Security; (5) Arizona Department of Health Services; (6) Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System data provided by ASU ChiR

NOTES:

DS: Data has been suppressed to protect privacy.

NA: Not available.

SUBREGION DEFINITION: The Cedar Creek-Canyon Day sub-region is defined as one census tract (9402) and contains the portion of the Fort Apache Reservation within Gila County. It contains the communities of Cedar Creek, Carrizo and Canyon Day.

Cibecue	Years	Arizona	White Mountain Apache Tribe Region	Cibecue	Change over time
Child, Family & Community Characteristics					
Total population ¹	Census 2020	7,151,502	14,340	1,933	
Population of children (0-5) ¹	Census 2020	480,744	1,563	250	
Population living in poverty ^{2,3}	2014-2018	16.1%	43.2%	42.6%	↓
	2019-2023	12.8%	41.3%	30.1%	
Children (0-5) living in poverty ^{2,3}	2014-2018	24.9%	51.8%	48.3%	↓
	2019-2023	17.9%	50.9%	43.0%	
Low-income children (0-5) (<185% federal poverty level) ^{2,3}	2014-2018	47.2%	78.9%	69.0%	↓
	2019-2023	38.1%	68.8%	54.9%	
Housing costs 30% or more of household income ^{2,3}	2014-2018	30.4%	24.6%	14.5%	↓
	2019-2023	29.4%	14.6%	13.4%	
Children (0-5) with all present parents in the labor force ^{2,3}	2014-2018	61.1%	55.0%	60.3%	↑
	2019-2023	64.4%	50.6%	64.5%	
Language other than English spoken at home (2019-2023) ³	Spanish	19.2%	0.4%	0.2%	
	Another	6.4%	56.1%	62.0%	
Early Education					
Children (0-5) receiving child care assistance ⁴	2023	35,375	47	0	
	2024	35,153	74	DS	
Education & Workforce					
Educational Attainment (ages 25 and older) ^{2,3}					
At least a high school education	2014-2018	86.8%	70.4%	76.9%	↑
	2019-2023	89.1%	71.9%	81.1%	
Bachelor's degree or more	2014-2018	28.9%	5.9%	8.9%	↑
	2019-2023	32.6%	7.5%	12.0%	
Unemployment rate for the adult population (ages 16 and older) ^{2,3}	2014-2018	6.4%	34.0%	30.5%	↓
	2019-2023	5.1%	8.4%	6.1%	
Child Health & Development					
Total births ⁵	2020-2021	154,638	421	63	↓
	2022-2023	156,236	397	52	
Characteristics of births ⁵					
Maternal age 19 or younger	2020-2021	4.9%	12.4%	DS	
	2022-2023	4.5%	11.8%	13.5%	
Low birthweight (<2500 grams)	2020-2021	7.6%	8.3%	11.1%	
	2022-2023	7.9%	9.8%	DS	
Preterm birth (<37 weeks)	2020-2021	9.7%	13.8%	15.9%	↓
	2022-2023	9.8%	14.9%	15.4%	
Prenatal care (5+ prenatal visits)	2020-2021	91.0%	81.2%	76.2%	↓
	2022-2023	91.7%	77.8%	65.4%	
Number of children (0-5) with AHCCCS ⁶	2022	277,455	1,364	215	↓
	2024	223,506	1,116	170	
AHCCCS-enrolled children (0-5) with 1+ PCP visit ⁶	2022	83.0%	46.1%	48.8%	↓
	2024	86.0%	43.6%	44.1%	
Children (0-5) receiving AzEIP, DDD, or both services ⁴	SFY 2023	9,991	33	DS	
	SFY 2024	10,706	41	DS	

SOURCES: (1) US Census 2020; (2) American Community Survey 2014-2018; (3) American Community Survey 2019-2023; (4) Arizona Department of Economic Security; (5) Arizona Department of Health Services; (6) Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System data provided by ASU ChiR

NOTES:

DS: Data has been suppressed to protect privacy.

NA: Not available.

SUBREGION DEFINITION: The Cibecue sub-region is defined as one block group (9401 block group 2) and contains the southwestern portion of Navajo County surrounding the community of Cibecue.

Fort Apache-Turkey Creek-East Fork	Years	Arizona	White Mountain Apache Tribe Region	Fort Apache-Turkey Creek-East Fork	Change over time
Child, Family & Community Characteristics					
Total population ¹	Census 2020	7,151,502	14,340	2,206	
Population of children (0-5) ¹	Census 2020	480,744	1,563	249	
Population living in poverty ^{2,3}	2014-2018	16.1%	43.2%	39.8%	↑
	2019-2023	12.8%	41.3%	49.2%	
Children (0-5) living in poverty ^{2,3}	2014-2018	24.9%	51.8%	48.0%	↑
	2019-2023	17.9%	50.9%	56.1%	
Low-income children (0-5) (<185% federal poverty level) ^{2,3}	2014-2018	47.2%	78.9%	89.2%	↓
	2019-2023	38.1%	68.8%	63.6%	
Housing costs 30% or more of household income ^{2,3}	2014-2018	30.4%	24.6%	7.3%	↑
	2019-2023	29.4%	14.6%	15.0%	
Children (0-5) with all present parents in the labor force ^{2,3}	2014-2018	61.1%	55.0%	56.9%	↓
	2019-2023	64.4%	50.6%	52.1%	
Language other than English spoken at home (2019-2023) ³	Spanish	19.2%	0.4%	0.0%	
	Another	6.4%	56.1%	56.8%	
Early Education					
Children (0-5) receiving child care assistance ⁴	2023	35,375	47	12	↑
	2024	35,153	74	15	
Education & Workforce					
Educational Attainment (ages 25 and older) ^{2,3}					
At least a high school education	2014-2018	86.8%	70.4%	67.4%	↓
	2019-2023	89.1%	71.9%	56.7%	
Bachelor's degree or more	2014-2018	28.9%	5.9%	7.0%	↓
	2019-2023	32.6%	7.5%	6.3%	
Unemployment rate for the adult population (ages 16 and older) ^{2,3}	2014-2018	6.4%	34.0%	35.4%	↓
	2019-2023	5.1%	8.4%	12.4%	
Child Health & Development					
Total births ⁵	2020-2021	154,638	421	74	↓
	2022-2023	156,236	397	62	
Characteristics of births ⁵					
Maternal age 19 or younger	2020-2021	4.9%	12.4%	13.5%	
	2022-2023	4.5%	11.8%	DS	
Low birthweight (<2500 grams)	2020-2021	7.6%	8.3%	DS	
	2022-2023	7.9%	9.8%	12.9%	
Preterm birth (<37 weeks)	2020-2021	9.7%	13.8%	9.5%	↑
	2022-2023	9.8%	14.9%	16.1%	
Prenatal care (5+ prenatal visits)	2020-2021	91.0%	81.2%	77.0%	↑
	2022-2023	91.7%	77.8%	83.9%	
Number of children (0-5) with AHCCCS ⁶	2022	277,455	1,364	213	↓
	2024	223,506	1,116	171	
AHCCCS-enrolled children (0-5) with 1+ PCP visit ⁶	2022	83.0%	46.1%	49.3%	↓
	2024	86.0%	43.6%	35.1%	
Children (0-5) receiving AzEIP, DDD, or both services ⁴	SFY 2023	9,991	33	10	↓
	SFY 2024	10,706	41	DS	

SOURCES: (1) US Census 2020; (2) American Community Survey 2014-2018; (3) American Community Survey 2019-2023; (4) Arizona Department of Economic Security; (5) Arizona Department of Health Services; (6) Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System data provided by ASU ChiR

NOTES:

DS: Data has been suppressed to protect privacy.

NA: Not available.

SUBREGION DEFINITION: The Fort Apache-Turkey Creek-East Fork sub-region is defined as one block group (9403 block group 2) and contains the southernmost portion of Navajo County south of Whiteriver, including the communities of Fort Apache, Turkey Creek, Seven Mile and East Fork.

North Fork-Hondah-McNary	Years	Arizona	White Mountain Apache Tribe Region	North Fork-Hondah-McNary	Change over time
Child, Family & Community Characteristics					
Total population ¹	Census 2020	7,151,502	14,340	2,869	
Population of children (0-5) ¹	Census 2020	480,744	1,563	274	
Population living in poverty ^{2,3}	2014-2018	16.1%	43.2%	38.1%	↓
	2019-2023	12.8%	41.3%	28.3%	
Children (0-5) living in poverty ^{2,3}	2014-2018	24.9%	51.8%	42.4%	↑
	2019-2023	17.9%	50.9%	46.5%	
Low-income children (0-5) (<185% federal poverty level) ^{2,3}	2014-2018	47.2%	78.9%	63.6%	↓
	2019-2023	38.1%	68.8%	60.4%	
Housing costs 30% or more of household income ^{2,3}	2014-2018	30.4%	24.6%	13.9%	↑
	2019-2023	29.4%	14.6%	14.6%	
Children (0-5) with all present parents in the labor force ^{2,3}	2014-2018	61.1%	55.0%	58.9%	↓
	2019-2023	64.4%	50.6%	50.1%	
Language other than English spoken at home (2019-2023) ³	Spanish	19.2%	0.4%	1.1%	
	Another	6.4%	56.1%	54.0%	
Early Education					
Children (0-5) receiving child care assistance ⁴	2023	35,375	47	DS	
	2024	35,153	74	DS	
Education & Workforce					
Educational Attainment (ages 25 and older) ^{2,3}					
At least a high school education	2014-2018	86.8%	70.4%	80.0%	↑
	2019-2023	89.1%	71.9%	83.7%	
Bachelor's degree or more	2014-2018	28.9%	5.9%	11.9%	↑
	2019-2023	32.6%	7.5%	15.0%	
Unemployment rate for the adult population (ages 16 and older) ^{2,3}	2014-2018	6.4%	34.0%	26.8%	↓
	2019-2023	5.1%	8.4%	6.0%	
Child Health & Development					
Total births ⁵	2020-2021	154,638	421	35	↑
	2022-2023	156,236	397	69	
Characteristics of births ⁵					
Maternal age 19 or younger	2020-2021	4.9%	12.4%	DS	
	2022-2023	4.5%	11.8%	DS	
Low birthweight (<2500 grams)	2020-2021	7.6%	8.3%	DS	
	2022-2023	7.9%	9.8%	13.0%	
Preterm birth (<37 weeks)	2020-2021	9.7%	13.8%	DS	
	2022-2023	9.8%	14.9%	11.6%	
Prenatal care (5+ prenatal visits)	2020-2021	91.0%	81.2%	94.3%	↓
	2022-2023	91.7%	77.8%	78.3%	
Number of children (0-5) with AHCCCS ⁶	2022	277,455	1,364	165	↑
	2024	223,506	1,116	172	
AHCCCS-enrolled children (0-5) with 1+ PCP visit ⁶	2022	83.0%	46.1%	54.5%	↓
	2024	86.0%	43.6%	50.0%	
Children (0-5) receiving AzEIP, DDD, or both services ⁴	SFY 2023	9,991	33	DS	
	SFY 2024	10,706	41	DS	

SOURCES: (1) US Census 2020; (2) American Community Survey 2014-2018; (3) American Community Survey 2019-2023; (4) Arizona Department of Economic Security; (5) Arizona Department of Health Services; (6) Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System data provided by ASU ChiR

NOTES:

DS: Data has been suppressed to protect privacy.

NA: Not available.

SUBREGION DEFINITION: The Hondah-McNary sub-region is defined as two census tracts (9401 & 9705.02) and contains the communities of Hondah, McNary, North Fork and Hawley Lake.

Whiteriver-Rainbow City	Years	Arizona	White Mountain Apache Tribe Region	Whiteriver-Rainbow City	Change over time
Child, Family & Community Characteristics					
Total population ¹	Census 2020	7,151,502	14,340	5,507	
Population of children (0-5) ¹	Census 2020	480,744	1,563	617	
Population living in poverty ^{2,3}	2014-2018	16.1%	43.2%	42.2%	↑
	2019-2023	12.8%	41.3%	46.5%	
Children (0-5) living in poverty ^{2,3}	2014-2018	24.9%	51.8%	56.2%	↑
	2019-2023	17.9%	50.9%	57.3%	
Low-income children (0-5) (<185% federal poverty level) ^{2,3}	2014-2018	47.2%	78.9%	88.5%	↓
	2019-2023	38.1%	68.8%	77.0%	
Housing costs 30% or more of household income ^{2,3}	2014-2018	30.4%	24.6%	11.4%	↑
	2019-2023	29.4%	14.6%	14.0%	
Children (0-5) with all present parents in the labor force ^{2,3}	2014-2018	61.1%	55.0%	43.9%	↑
	2019-2023	64.4%	50.6%	52.0%	
Language other than English spoken at home (2019-2023) ³	Spanish	19.2%	0.4%	0.5%	
	Another	6.4%	56.1%	55.3%	
Early Education					
Children (0-5) receiving child care assistance ⁴	2023	35,375	47	20	↑
	2024	35,153	74	40	
Education & Workforce					
Educational Attainment (ages 25 and older) ^{2,3}					
At least a high school education	2014-2018	86.8%	70.4%	64.9%	↑
	2019-2023	89.1%	71.9%	68.0%	
Bachelor's degree or more	2014-2018	28.9%	5.9%	3.6%	↑
	2019-2023	32.6%	7.5%	3.9%	
Unemployment rate for the adult population (ages 16 and older) ^{2,3}	2014-2018	6.4%	34.0%	40.9%	↓
	2019-2023	5.1%	8.4%	10.0%	
Child Health & Development					
Total births ⁵	2020-2021	154,638	421	249	↓
	2022-2023	156,236	397	171	
Characteristics of births ⁵					
Maternal age 19 or younger	2020-2021	4.9%	12.4%	14.1%	↔
	2022-2023	4.5%	11.8%	14.0%	
Low birthweight (<2500 grams)	2020-2021	7.6%	8.3%	9.2%	↓
	2022-2023	7.9%	9.8%	8.8%	
Preterm birth (<37 weeks)	2020-2021	9.7%	13.8%	15.3%	↑
	2022-2023	9.8%	14.9%	16.4%	
Prenatal care (5+ prenatal visits)	2020-2021	91.0%	81.2%	81.9%	↓
	2022-2023	91.7%	77.8%	76.6%	
Number of children (0-5) with AHCCCS ⁶	2022	277,455	1,364	651	↓
	2024	223,506	1,116	498	
AHCCCS-enrolled children (0-5) with 1+ PCP visit ⁶	2022	83.0%	46.1%	42.4%	↓
	2024	86.0%	43.6%	42.4%	
Children (0-5) receiving AzEIP, DDD, or both services ⁴	SFY 2023	9,991	33	17	↑
	SFY 2024	10,706	41	21	

SOURCES: (1) US Census 2020; (2) American Community Survey 2014-2018; (3) American Community Survey 2019-2023; (4) Arizona Department of Economic Security; (5) Arizona Department of Health Services; (6) Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System data provided by ASU ChiR

NOTES:

DS: Data has been suppressed to protect privacy.

NA: Not available.

SUBREGION DEFINITION: The Whiteriver-Rainbow City sub-region is defined as two block groups (9403 block groups 1 & 3) and contains the communities of Whiteriver and Rainbow City.