

Immunization in Colorado

State of the State 2025

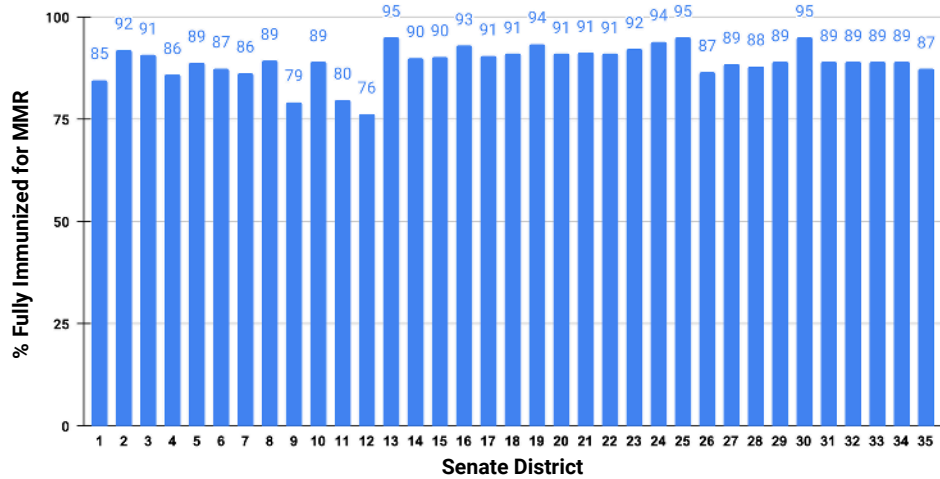


Overview

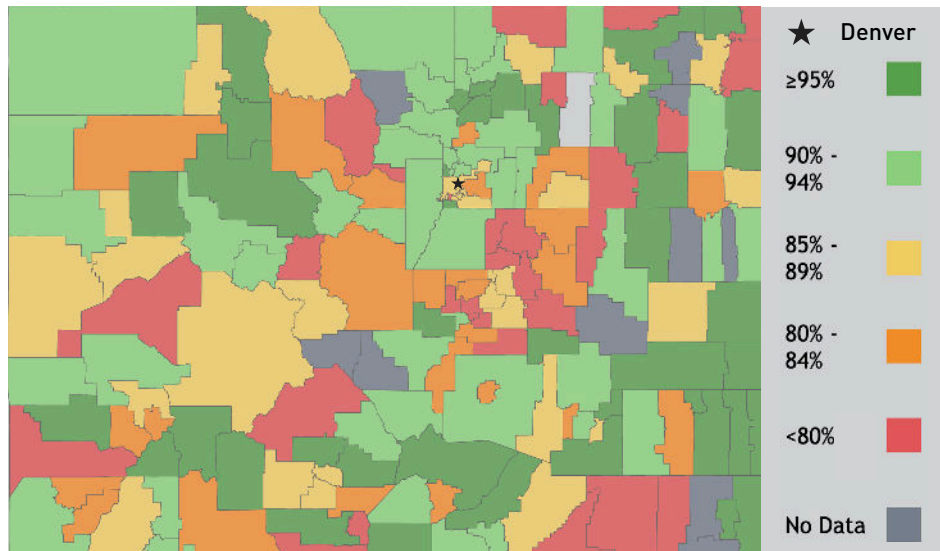
In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and other outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases, vaccines have never been more important around the world and in the state of Colorado. Vaccines are safe, effective and considered one of the most successful and cost-effective public health interventions of all time.

The majority of Colorado parents vaccinate their children according to the recommended vaccine schedule; however, vaccination rates vary widely across and within counties and school districts. Branson School District in Las Animas County reports the lowest compliance rate in Colorado at 44%, while other districts achieve 100% compliance. In Colorado, 63% (545,216) of students attend a school that is not fully protected against all vaccine-preventable diseases, where 92-95% coverage is considered fully protected. Since 2019, measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine rates for all students (K-12) fell from 95% in the 2019-2020 school year to 93.6% in the 2023-2024 school year - a concerning downward trend. For kindergartners alone, the rates fell from 91% to 88% in that period. This is far below the 95% threshold needed to prevent an outbreak, which is especially concerning as measles outbreaks are occurring across the country. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment is working to increase awareness, access, and uptake of kindergarten vaccines. On average, only 50.5% of the U.S. population receives the flu vaccine every year, far below the Healthy People 2030 goal of 70%.

Avg. % Fully Immunized for MMR (Kindergarten) for School Districts within a Senate District



2023/24 School District Fully Immunized MMR Kindergarten Immunization Data



Colorado Quick Facts

- 25% of children (K-12) in Colorado are still missing school-required vaccines.
- Colorado ranks 34th among all states for children who have completed the recommended childhood vaccine series.
- In 2023, vaccine-preventable diseases resulted in 28,000 hospitalizations and emergency department visits, totaling over \$407 million in healthcare charges for children alone.
- In 2023, the total charge for Colorado adults older than 20 visiting the hospital and using the emergency department for a vaccine preventable disease was \$3,932,938,688.
- Only 63% of first-year students who attended a Colorado university were considered fully immunized for the 2022-2023 school year.

Vaccine Exemptions in Colorado

- Colorado is 1 of only 17 states that allow personal belief exemptions for all school-required vaccines
- Non-medical exemption levels are consistently among the highest in the U.S. at 7.9% for some vaccines
- Exemption rates are higher in private schools than in public schools
- Exemption rates vary widely at the school and child care level, ranging from 0% to as high as 28% for vaccines that prevent measles, polio, chickenpox, hepatitis B, and pertussis

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Recent Colorado and national cases and outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases highlight the importance of ensuring children are adequately immunized so that they, and the entire community around them, are protected from serious illness.

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Colorado and the rest of the world endured one of the deadliest pandemics in history caused by a coronavirus (COVID-19). In Colorado alone, 1,769,981 cases of COVID-19 were reported, with a death toll of 14,522 (as of July 2023). Since then, local health departments and CDPHE have mobilized vaccine efforts with the help of community and public health workers, launching a successful mobile vaccine program that brings COVID-19 and other vital vaccines directly to communities.

Avian Flu

As of May of 2024, 10 cases of the avian influenza (H5N1) had been reported to the state health department. Six of the cases originated from one poultry operation, another three at an additional poultry operation, and one case at a dairy farm. The CDC reported 70 cases in humans between April 2024 and February 2025.

Dengue Fever

In 2024, 3,462 cases of travel associated dengue were recorded in all 50 states and territories, except in North Dakota, with 55 of those cases coming from Colorado. This is coming off of the 1,890 recorded cases in 2023.

Measles

In December of 2023, an international traveler tested positive for measles in the state of Colorado. In 2024, the CDC confirmed 285 cases of measles nationwide, with 42% under the age of 5 and 31% ages 5 to 19. As of February 26, 2025, 124 measles cases have been identified in an outbreak in Texas and New Mexico. This outbreak led to the first measles death in the U.S. since 2015.

Additional Cases & Outbreaks

Colorado also confirmed 467 cases of pertussis (whooping cough) in October 2023, with a majority occurring in young children and 109 new cases of mpox in 2024.

Take Action!



ENSURE you and your family members are vaccinated with the recommended vaccines across the lifespan from birth to old age, including during pregnancy.



BE FAMILIAR with school, child care and community vaccination rates and what those rates mean for the level of protection against preventable diseases.



ENGAGE with school and community leaders to support and advocate for strengthened vaccine policy and public health infrastructure.

Immunization Resources

COVax4Kids.org

Find out where to access low- or no-cost vaccines

COVaxRates.org

View and compare school and child care vaccination rates

COSchoolIZ.org

View customized school district immunization fact sheets

VacunalosPorSuBien.com

Spanish-specific resources/ recursos en español

SpreadTheVaxFacts.com,

ImmunizeForGood.com, CDC.gov