Annual Provider Counts (Updated May 2025)

# Estimation of Licensed Child Care Slots and Providers

This map approximates the relationship between Michigan’s licensed child care supply and estimated child care demand throughout the years. Data was collected at four different points in time: September 2022, September 2023, September 2024, and today. A provider’s license number, capacity per age served, and estimated number of slots are determined each time and compared. Licensed providers are classified as opening (if a new license is granted), closed (if a license closed), and open (if its license status has not changed) since September 2022 to today. Open providers are further classified as increasing, decreasing, or having no change in their estimated licensed slots, as determined by comparing their licensed capacity and ages served from September 2022 and today. New providers or open providers with increased estimated slots positively impact child care availability, while closed providers or open providers with decreased estimated slots hurt regional child care access.

Because data on actual enrollment is unavailable, licensed child care slots are estimated using providers’ licensed capacity, proportionally distributed across the age range they serve. For example, if a provider is licensed to care for six children across a six-year span (ages 0-5), it is assumed that the capacity is evenly allocated—approximately one child per age group (e.g., one each for ages 0, 1, 2, etc.). Data on licensed child care providers are updated daily through the [**Great Start to Quality database**](https://greatstarttoquality.org), which integrates licensing information from [**Michigan’s Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs**](https://www.michigan.gov/mileap/early-childhood-education/cclb).

To assess how child care accessibility may differ by provider type, data were grouped according to providers’ licensing description:

* **Centers** (which operate outside of residential homes)
* **Family homes** (which operate within residential homes and may serve up to 6 children)
* **Group homes** (which operate within residential homes and may serve up to 12 children).

If a site has multiple licenses attached to its address, it will be marked with multiple dots. Similarly, if a licensed provider is closed and a provider with a new license number is registered within the same site, the site will show one closed and one new provider.

# Child Opportunity Index and Economic Opportunity Level

To show how child care accessibility interacts with community resources, the map shows the number of licensed providers each zip code’s Child Opportunity Index score. [**The Child Opportunity Index**](https://www.diversitydatakids.org/child-opportunity-index?_ga=2.124683146.1664613981.1746188155-72067457.1716986317) is an estimate of the local resources available for positive child development in an area (diversitydatakids.org, 2024). Additionally, the Child Opportunity Index has a subdomain (“Economic Opportunity”) that estimates the level of sustainable, quality employment (diversitydatakids.org, 2024). Both variables range from "very low" to "very high" (diversitydatakids.org, 2024). The Child Opportunity Index was created by diversitydatakids.org and is housed at Boston University’s School of Social Work and the Institute for Equity and Child Opportunity and Healthy Development.

# Geographic Type

Additionally, the data were analyzed by geographic types—urban, suburban, and rural/town—based on classifications from the [**National Center for Education Statistics**](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/edge/geographic/schoollocations). Due to a small sample size for “town” areas, rural and town categories were combined.

# Michigan’s Economic Development Organizations

Michigan’s [**economic development organizations**](https://www.michiganbusiness.org/4adf07/globalassets/documents/reports/maps/edc-map.pdf) are coalitions representing each of the state’s ten regions, which aim to support regional economic development. Filtering the map or chart by economic development organizations demonstrates regional differences in child care access.

# Assumptions

Due to data availability, the following assumptions were made to provide estimations:

* It is assumed that all families with children counted in the American Community Survey are seeking licensed child care and such search only within their zip code or county. As a result, this approach likely overstates the actual demand.
* For licensed providers serving multiple age groups, it is assumed that they operate at full capacity and that available slots are evenly distributed across all age groups. This may result in an overestimation of availability, especially for younger children who typically require more resources and space.
* All licensed providers are assumed to operate year-round, without accounting for part-time schedules or temporary closures, which leads to an overestimation of overall licensed child care availability.
* The map compares four data points: September 1, 2022, September 1, 2023, September 3, 2024, and today. It is assumed that the providers licensed on these days generally approximates providers operating throughout the year. Further, it is assumed that the percentage of providers opening and closing between the snapshots is mirrors the overall opening and closings of licensed providers year round.

# Limitations

Because of limited data and necessary assumptions, the numbers are estimates—not exact counts—which leads to several limitations:

* Only providers licensed to serve children ages 0 to 13 are included in the current work. Unlicensed, license-exempt, and informal providers—which also contribute to the child care ecosystem—are excluded due to data unavailability.
* The dual assumptions of universal demand and providers operating at full capacity may have led to an overestimation of both child care demand and supply.
* The data is nuanced and cumulative, showing only how static data snapshots compare to one another for one day out of the whole year. Licensed providers opening between the annual September snapshots are not included.
* Given that the methodology relies on available licensing data and American Community Survey, estimates may not fully capture local nuances—such as temporary closures, changes in provider schedules, uneven distribution of slots across age groups, or undercounted populations.
* Because the most recent data from [**Child Opportunity Index**](https://www.diversitydatakids.org/child-opportunity-index?_ga=2.124683146.1664613981.1746188155-72067457.1716986317) and [**National Center for Education Statistics**](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/edge/geographic/schoollocations) are only available for 2021, current child care providers are mapped to 2021 Zip Code Tabulation Areas (ZCTA) and county boundaries. This limits the ability to capture more current community conditions and opportunities.

# References

diversitydatakids.org. (2024). *Child Opportunity Index 3.0 Database, 2021 Zip Codes* [Dataset]. Boston University’s School of Social Work and the Institute for Equity and Child Opportunity and Healthy Development. <https://www.diversitydatakids.org/child-opportunity-index>

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OpenAI[[1]](#footnote-2). (2025). *ChatGPT* (May 2025 version) [Large language model]. <https://chat.openai.com/>

# Recommended Citation

Community Evaluation Programs. (n.d.). *Comparing Annual Licensed Provider Counts* [Map]. Michigan State University. <https://cep.msu.edu/projects/child-care-mapping-project/maps-and-charts/child-care-desert-map>

1. The technical report and map were created using assistance from ChatGPT (OpenAI, 2025) and reviewed and approved by the map’s authors. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)