

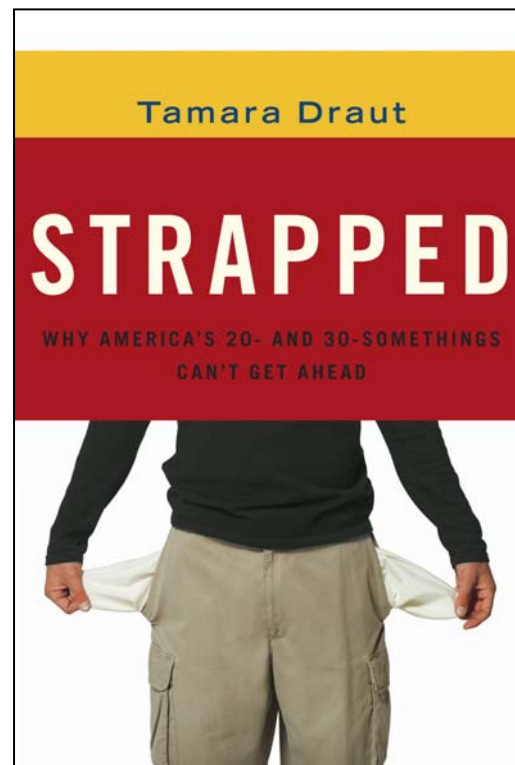
STRAPPED BRIEFS: **What Young Adults Are Facing in Denver and Colorado**

Higher Education

Jobs and Income

Housing

Childcare



HIGHER EDUCATION

The ability for young adults to access and afford the level of college education they need is critical to their future economic success. How does Colorado perform compared to the nation as a whole? Overall, young adult Coloradans have about the same college access and graduation rates as the national average. For young adults of color in Colorado, however, the picture is bleaker. Colorado has one of the worst racial disparities in degree attainment in the country, with whites twice as likely as minorities to have a bachelor's degree.¹ One reason behind Colorado's low performance in minority enrollment may be due to the state's low investment in need-based financial aid. Although Colorado has increased state investment in need-based financial aid over the past ten years, its commitment lags far behind that of top performing states.

Quick Facts:

- Percentage of High School Graduates Going Directly to College in 2002:²
Colorado: 57.3%
National Average: 56.6%

- State Grant Aid Targeted to Low-Income Families as a Percent of Federal Pell Grant Aid:^{3,4}
 - Colorado: 41% in 2004
 - Top States: 89% in 2004
 - National Average: 40.1% in 2003
- Average Student Loan Amount (Federal Stafford and PLUS Loans) in 2003:⁵
 - Colorado: \$3,495
 - National Average: \$3,344
- Share of Income Poorest Families (40% of the population with the lowest income in Colorado in 2004, earning an average family income of \$22,588 per year) Need to Pay For:⁶
 - Community Colleges: 33% (net cost of \$7,346)
 - Public 4-year Colleges and Universities: 36% (net cost of \$8,165)
 - Private 4-year Colleges and Universities: 92% (net cost \$20,720)
- Percentage of first-time, full-time students completing a bachelor's degree within 6 years in 2004:^{7,8}
 - Colorado: 53%
 - Top States: 64%
 - National Average (2003): 54.3%

JOBS AND INCOME

Denver was ranked the 10th best city in the US for job growth in 2004,⁹ although the city's median income was slightly lower than the national average. However, Colorado's high participation in New Economy industries has led to a high increase in total personal income as a result of the percentage of the population holding a bachelor's degree.¹⁰ Those with the least education struggle the most in Colorado, especially since the state has not set its minimum wage above the national level.¹¹

Quick Facts:

- Median Household Income in 2004:¹²
 - Denver: \$43,777
 - Colorado: \$48,198
 - National Average: \$44,684
- Per Capita Income in 2004:¹³
 - Denver: \$27,676
 - Colorado: \$25,945

- In 2002, Colorado scored 84 on the New Economy Index, compared to a nationwide score of 60. The New Economy Index, developed by the Progressive Policy Institute, measures the extent to which states are participating in knowledge-based industries.¹⁴
- In 2004, 17.6% of workers between 18 to 64 in Colorado did not have health coverage (17th Worst in the Nation).¹⁵

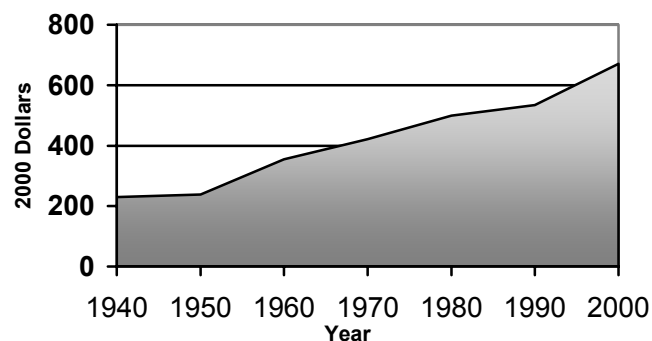
HOUSING

Many young, college-educated singles have moved to Denver in the recent decade due largely to the region's employment growth without a major increase in housing costs. In fact, Denver was ranked the top city for singles by Forbes Magazine in 2004.¹⁶ Even though Denver has, on average, lower rents than many major cities, an extremely high percentage of residents spend 30 percent or more of their income on housing expenses, the threshold for affordability used by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. Renters, who tend to be younger, are much more likely to experience these cost burdens.

Quick Facts:

- Between 1995 and 2000, 53,795 Gen Xers moved to Denver (4th highest immigration in the U.S.).¹⁷
- Denver has a higher percentage of renters, 40.5 percent of occupied housing units in Denver are renter occupied, compared to a national average of 33 percent.¹⁸
- Median Monthly Rents in 2004:¹⁹
 - Denver: \$718
 - Colorado: \$724
 - National Average: \$694
- 2005 Fair Market Rent for Denver MSA:²⁰
 - 1 BR: \$716
 - 2 BR: \$907

Colorado Median Gross Rents Over Time



Source: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/housing/census/historic/grossrents.html>

- In 2004, 53 percent of renters in Denver spent 30 percent or more of their income on housing.²¹
- More than 4 out of 5 low-income families in Colorado spent more than one third of their income on housing (Only 7 other states have a higher percentage).²²

CHILDCARE

Most parents (two-thirds) with children under the age of six are in their late twenties or early thirties—making the issue of affordable and quality child care a core concern for young families. Compared to the national average, young families face higher costs on average in Colorado, resulting in a larger share of household income devoted to child care. This problem is exacerbated for lower income families by the fact that the state’s investment is too low for it to receive federal matching funds aimed at subsidizing the cost for lower income households.²³

Quick Facts:

- Average weekly cost of child care in Denver:²⁴
 - Children aged 0-12 months: \$192
 - Children aged 2-5 years: \$147
- In 2001, the national average that a working mother paid for formal daycare was \$92.30 per week per child.²⁵
- Parent Co-payment for a Family of Three Earning 150 Percent of the Poverty Level with One Child in Child Care in Colorado in 2005: 13% of income²⁶

NOTES

¹ Measuring Up 2004: The State Report Card on Higher Education - Colorado. Available at <http://measuringup.highereducation.org/stateprofilenet.cfm?myyear=2004&stateName=Colorado>.

² The NCHEMS Information Center for State Higher Education Policymaking and Analysis. Available at www.higheredinfo.org

³ See Measuring Up 2004, *endnote 1*

⁴ See NCHEMS Information Center, *endnote 2*

⁵ IBID.

⁶ See Measuring Up 2004, *endnote 1*

⁷ IBID.

⁸ See NCHEMS Information Center, *endnote 2*

⁹ Forbes Magazine, *Best Cities for Singles (2004)*. Available at http://www.forbes.com/singles2004/growth.html?passListId=3&passYear=2004&passListType=Misc&searchParameter1=unset&searchParameter2=unset&resultsStart=1&resultsHowMany=25&resultsSortProperties=%252Bnumberfield5%252C%252Bnumberfield1&resultsSortCategoryName=job_growth_rank&category1=category&category2=category&passKeyword

¹⁰ See Measuring Up 2004, *endnote 1*

¹¹ The Bell, *Opportunity Lost: When Hard Work Isn't Enough for Colorado's Families*. Available at <http://www.thebell.org/pdf/OpLost.pdf>.

¹² 2004 American Community Survey. Available at <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>

¹³ IBID.

¹⁴ See Measuring Up 2004, *endnote 1*

¹⁵ See Opportunity Lost, *endnote 11*

¹⁶ See Best Cities for Singles, *endnote 9*

¹⁷ William H. Frey, "Generational Pull: A weather eye on Gen X gains and losses indicates hot "post-cool" areas," *American Demographics*, May 2004, pp. 18-19.

¹⁸ See 2004 American Community Survey, *endnote 12*

¹⁹ IBID.

²⁰ Fair Market Rents 2005 for Existing Housing. Available at http://www.huduser.org/Datasets/FMR/FMR2005F/Final_FY2005_SCHEDULEB2.pdf.

²¹ See 2004 American Community Survey, *endnote 12*

²² See Opportunity Lost, *endnote 11*

²³ IBID.

²⁴ Colorado Division of Childcare, *2005 Market Rate Survey of Child Care Providers*. Available at http://www.cdhs.state.co.us/childcare/co_state_plan.htm

²⁵ Center For Economic and Policy Research, *Working Moms and Child Care*. Available at <http://www.cepr.net/publications/Childcare2004.htm>

²⁶ National Women's Law Center, *Child Care Assistance Policies 2005: States Fail to Make Up Lost Ground, Families Continue to Lack Critical Supports*. Available at http://www.nwlc.org/pdf/ChildCareSubsidyReport_September2005.pdf.