



USD 470
Head Start

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT 2026

USD 470 Head Start

Mission

USD 470 Head Start will provide a child focused, family-centered environment that prepares each child and family for a lifetime of learning.

Vision

USD 470 Head Start will build a greater community by preparing children to succeed in school while strengthening families.

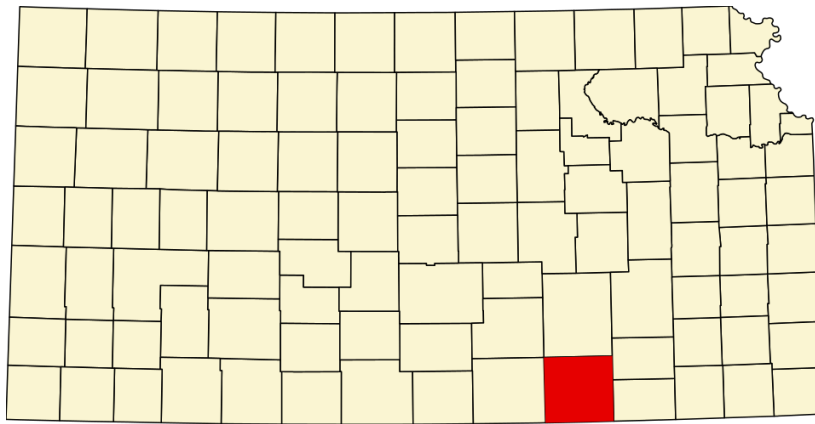
Table of Contents

State of the Grantee.....	3
Methodology.....	5
Demographic Data.....	6
General Demographics.....	7
Economic Demographics.....	9
Social Demographics.....	10
Community Health & Family Wellness Data.....	12
Community Resources and Strengths.....	19
Executive Summary.....	22

State of the Grantee

USD 470 Head Start operates within the Arkansas City Public School District in Cowley County, Kansas, serving 147 children and their families through center-based preschool classrooms located in Arkansas City and Winfield. The program provides comprehensive early childhood services that include education, health, nutrition, family engagement, and services for children with disabilities in accordance with the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS).

Service/Recruitment Area: Cowley County, Kansas



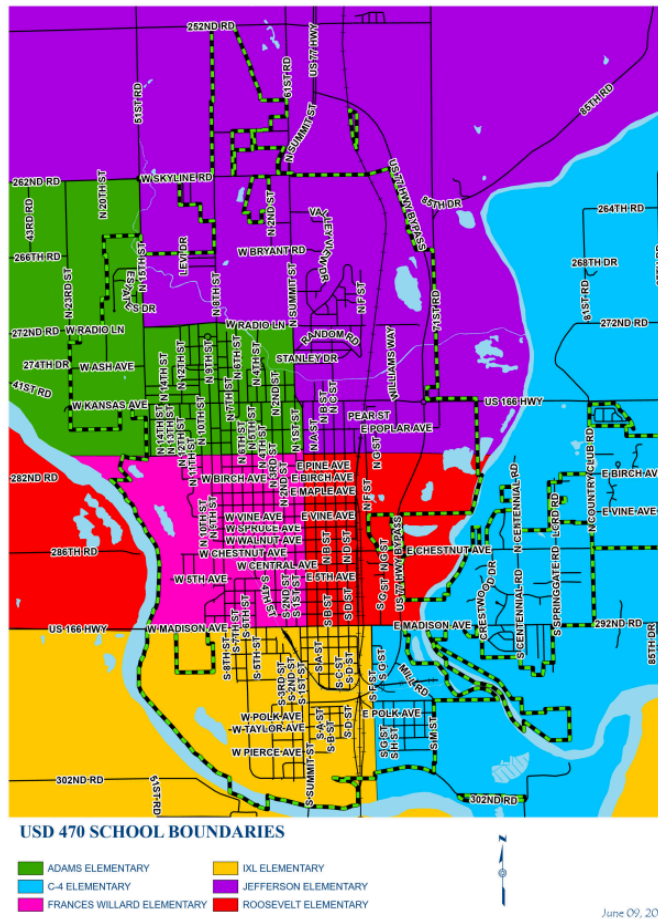
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Cowley_Co,_Ks,_USA.png

Head Start classrooms are integrated into district elementary school settings and early learning centers, providing access to district resources such as transportation, food services, and specialized support staff. The program partners closely with local agencies, early intervention providers, and health departments to promote child well-being and school readiness.

Program Locations:

Arkansas City, KS:

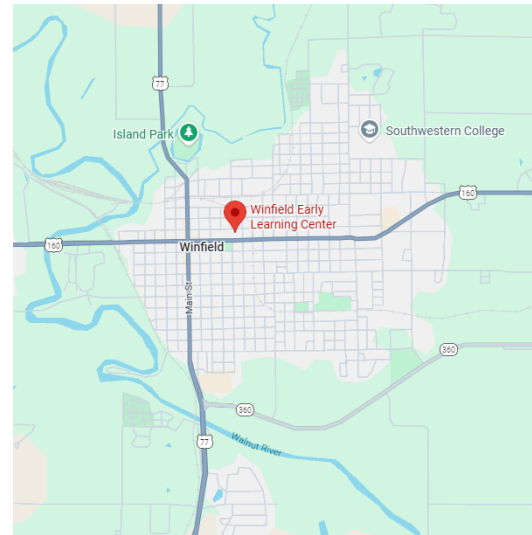
Adams Elementary, C-4 Elementary,
Frances Willard Elementary, IXL Elementary,
Jefferson Elementary, Roosevelt Elementary



Source: www.usd470.com

Winfield, KS:

Winfield Early Learning Center



Source: Google Maps

Methodology

The purpose of the community assessment is to gather, analyze, and interpret data about the conditions, strengths, and barriers of children and families in Cowley County, Kansas. This information informs the program's strategic planning, service delivery, and continuous improvement efforts and ensures that USD 470 Head Start remains responsive to the evolving needs of the community.

The program leadership team reviews assessment findings annually to update strategic plans, while key updates are shared with the Policy Council, Governing Board, and community stakeholders for collaborative decision-making.

Demographic Data

Understanding the demographic makeup of a community is a critical first step in assessing its strengths, needs, and opportunities.

Demographic information—such as population size, age distribution, cultural and ethnic diversity, household composition, income levels, and educational attainment—provides valuable insights into the characteristics of the people who live within the community. This data not only paints a picture of who the community members are but also highlights trends, disparities, and areas where additional support or resources may be needed. By analyzing demographic information, decision-makers, service providers, and stakeholders can more effectively plan programs, allocate resources, and develop strategies that reflect the unique needs and priorities of the community.

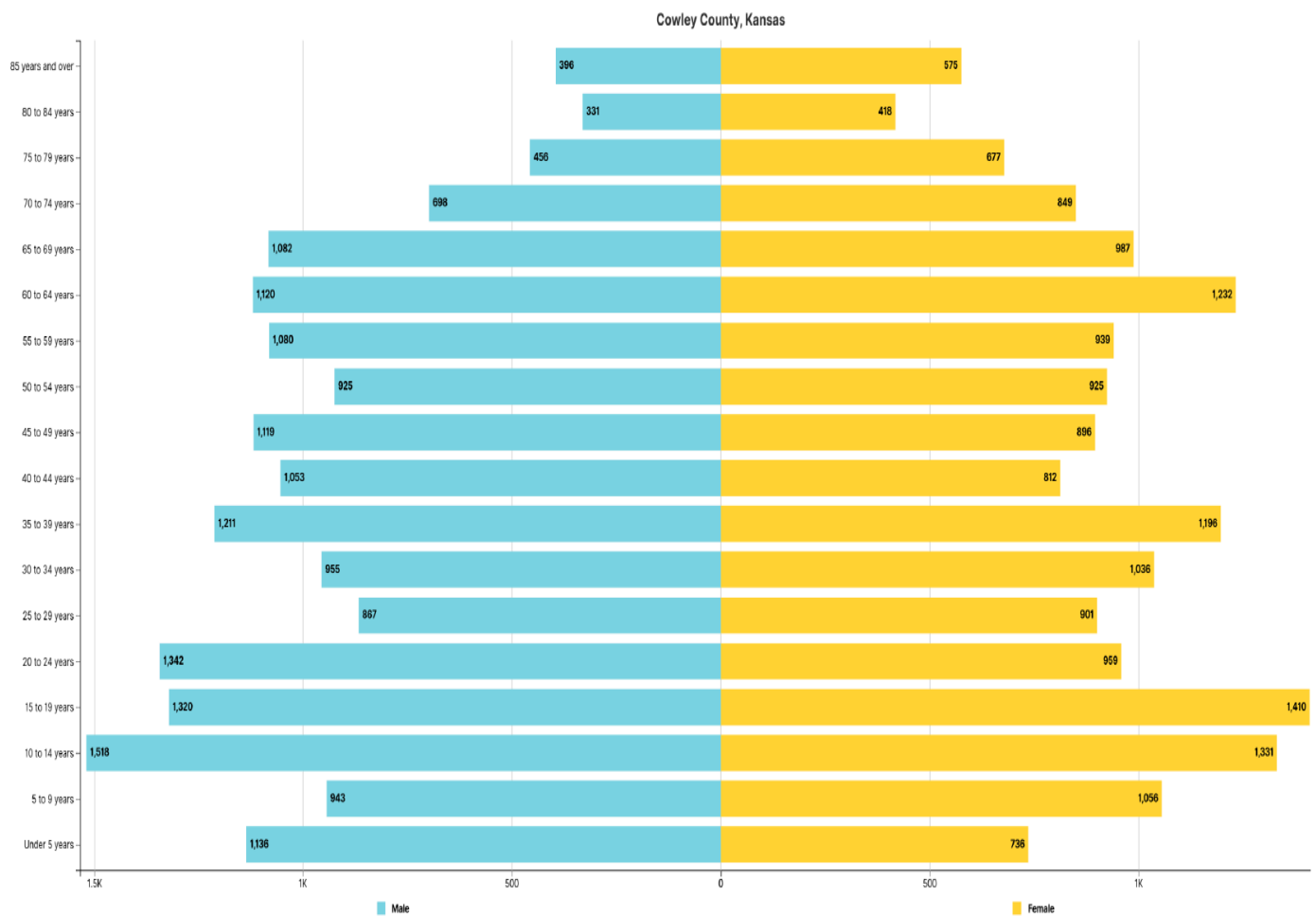
Cowley County, located in south-central Kansas, is a largely rural community with a mix of small towns, agricultural areas, and manufacturing employers. The Head Start program in Cowley County plays a critical role in supporting families by providing high-quality early childhood education, health screenings, nutrition services, and family engagement opportunities in blended classrooms in Arkansas City and Winfield. This assessment provides a snapshot of community strengths, challenges, and emerging trends that affect young children and families.

General Demographics

According to the most recent census data, Cowley County, Kansas has 1,125.7 square miles of land area with a total population of 34,549. The 2023 live birth rate was 414.

Population Distribution by Age and Sex:

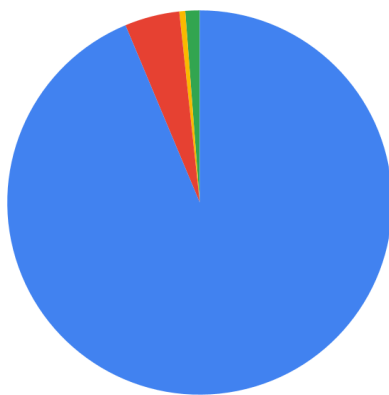
Population Pyramid: Population by Age and Sex in Cowley County, Kansas



○ Margin of Error
S0101 | 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables

Source: data.census.gov

Languages Spoken at Home



English only: 93.6%

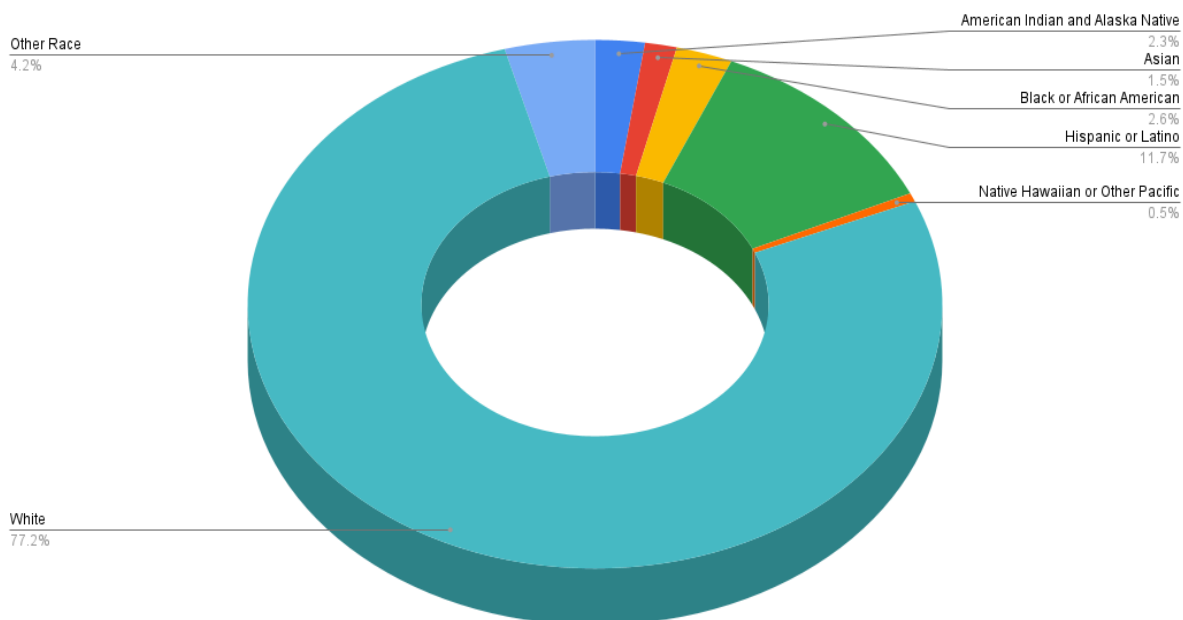
Spanish: 4.6%

Other Indo-European languages: 0.5%

Asian and Pacific Islander languages: 1.2%

English is the dominant language, but the proportion of dual-language learners, particularly Spanish-speaking children, continues to increase.

Race and Ethnicity:

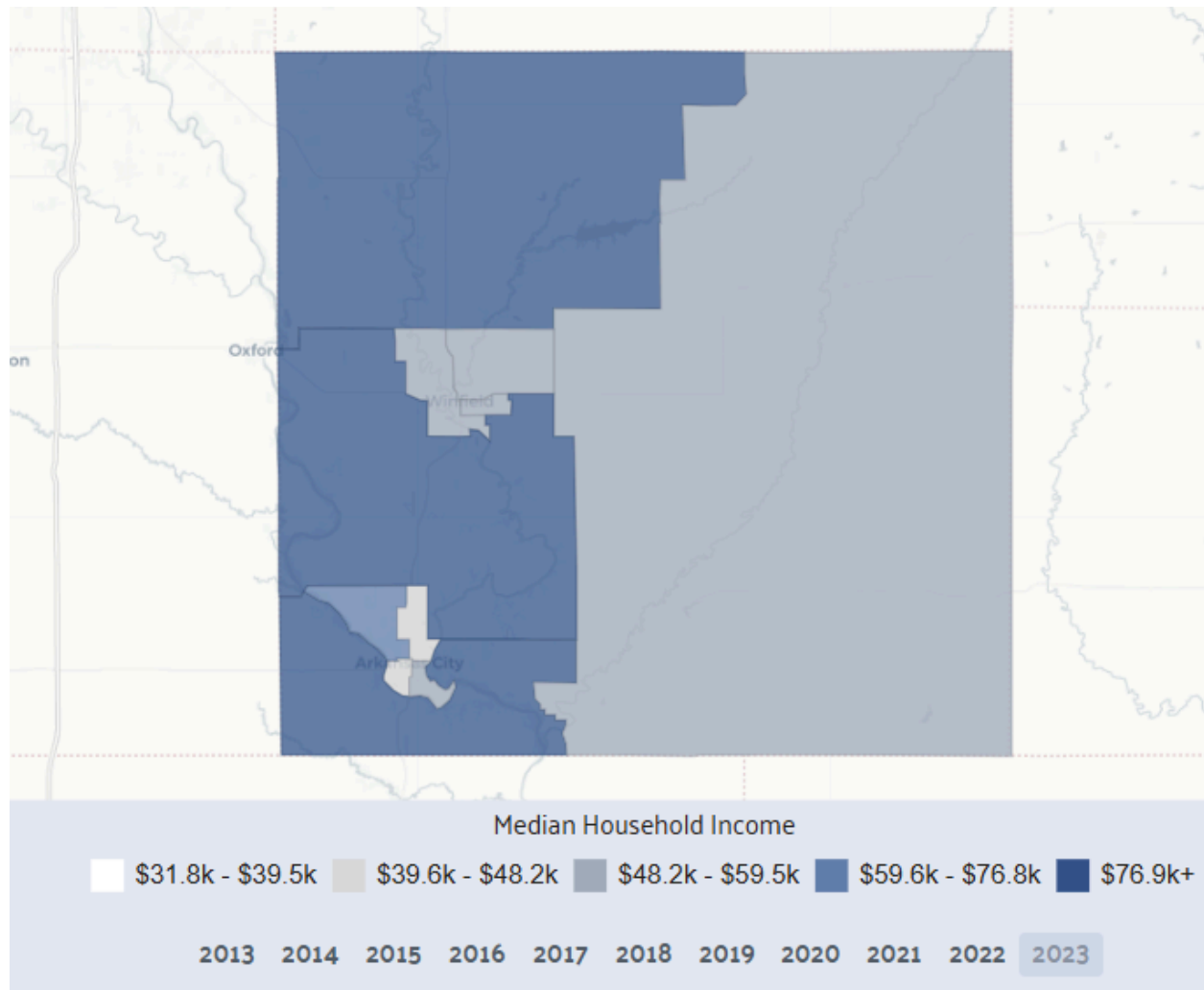


Source: data.census.gov

The population is predominantly White, with a growing Hispanic/Latino community and small but notable Pacific Islander, Native American, and African American populations.

Economic Demographics

According to the most recent census, the Median Household Income in Cowley County, KS is \$58,263. Residents living in poverty account for 13.9% of the total population. Approximately 17% of children in Cowley County are living in poverty.



Source: <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/cowley-county-ks#housing>

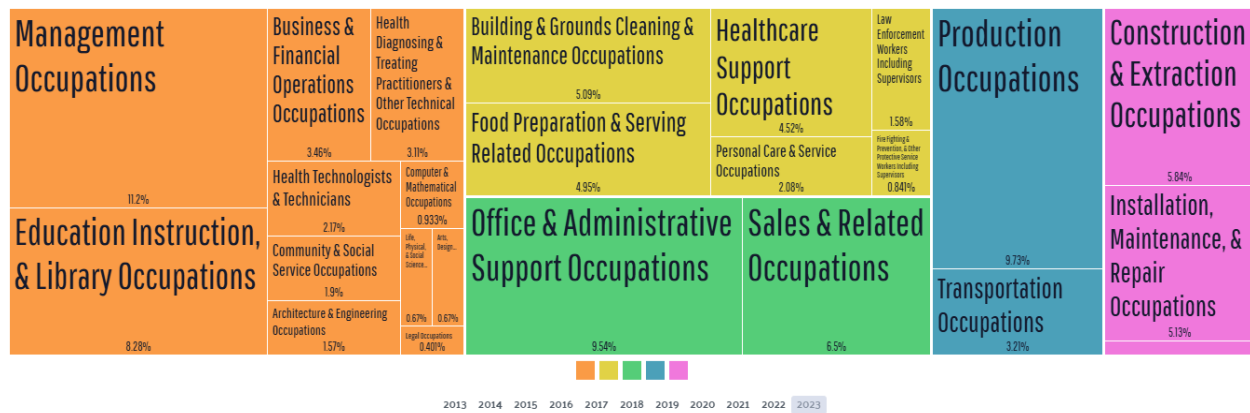
According to the census report, there are neighborhoods in Arkansas City that are ranked more disadvantaged than 99% of all census tracts in the United States.

Employment:

According to Data USA, between 2022 and 2023, employment in Cowley County, KS declined at a rate of -0.308% , from 15.3k employees to 15.2k employees.

The most common job groups, by number of people living in Cowley County, KS, are Management Occupations (1,705 people), Production Occupations (1,481 people), and Office & Administrative Support Occupations (1,453 people). This chart illustrates the share breakdown of the primary jobs held by residents of Cowley County, KS.

Data from the Census Bureau ACS 5-year Estimate.



Source: <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/cowley-county-ks#economy>

Manufacturing, agriculture, health care, and education are key industries, but low wages and limited job stability affect many families.

Social Demographics

Education & Disabilities:

Individuals Receiving Services for Disabilities:

Age	Number of Individuals
0-3	182
3-5	182
5-21	1,156

www.kansashealthmatters.org

High School Graduation
County: Cowley81.9%
(2023)

Compared to:



Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation

Cowley County's 2023 high school graduation rate is 81.9%. This is lower than the Kansas statewide rate, lower than the previous year's value, and falls short of the Healthy People 2030 target. This indicates a downward trend and highlights an area for improvement compared to state benchmarks and national goals.

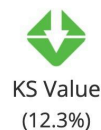
Housing:

According to Data USA, in 2025, 11.9% of the population was living with severe housing problems in Cowley County, KS. From 2014 to 2025, the indicator declined 0.652%. Homeless children accounted for 6% of children enrolled in Arkansas City PreK programs in the 2025-2026 school year.

www.kansashealthmatters.org

Severe Housing Problems
County: Cowley11.9%
(2017-2021)

Compared to:



Source: County Health Rankings

Community Health & Family Wellness Data

Access to health care is a cornerstone of a thriving community.

When individuals can obtain timely, affordable, and high-quality medical services, the entire community benefits from improved well-being, reduced health disparities, and a stronger sense of security. Health care access not only addresses immediate medical needs but also supports prevention, early detection, and long-term management of chronic conditions. Communities with reliable health care resources are better equipped to promote healthy lifestyles, reduce the burden of disease, and foster economic stability through a healthier workforce. Ensuring equitable access to health care is therefore not just a matter of individual health—it is essential for building resilient, connected, and sustainable communities.

Supporting family wellness is vital to the strength and resilience of any community.

Families thrive when they have access to essential resources such as nutritious food, mental health services, and quality child care. Nutrition ensures children grow healthy and ready to learn, while mental health support helps parents and caregivers manage stress, build strong relationships, and maintain stability. Reliable child care provides safe, nurturing environments for young children and allows parents to pursue education or employment with peace of mind. When these supports are accessible, families are better equipped to meet challenges, children have greater opportunities to succeed, and communities as a whole become healthier, more equitable, and more sustainable.

Overall Health & Wellness Conditions:



Cowley County Population Health and Well-being - 2025

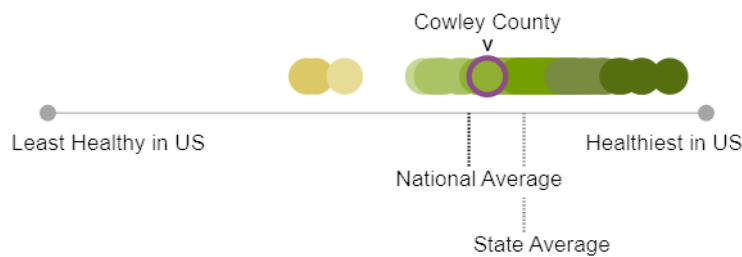


Diagram summarizes data released on 03/19/2025

Cowley County is faring slightly worse than the average county in Kansas for Population Health and Well-being, and slightly better than the average county in the nation.

† Data updated 09/24/2025

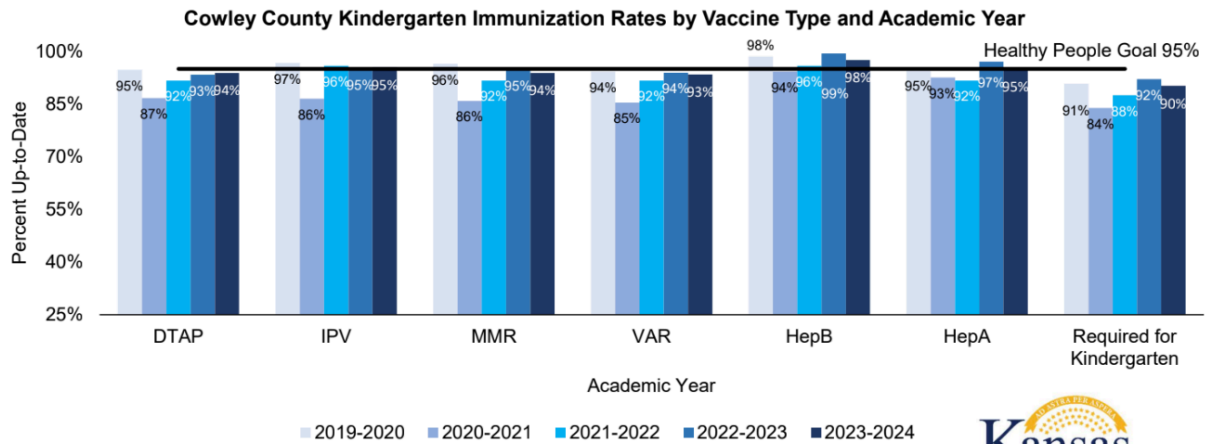
‡ Data updated 11/04/2025

Community Conditions					
Health infrastructure		Cowley County	Kansas	United States	
Flu Vaccinations		48%	49%	48%	▼
Access to Exercise Opportunities		72%	80%	84%	▼
Food Environment Index		7.3	6.8	7.4	▼
Primary Care Physicians		2,300:1 †	1,270:1 †	1,310:1 †	▼
Mental Health Providers		630:1 †	380:1 †	290:1 †	▼
Dentists		1,900:1 †	1,560:1 †	1,340:1 †	▼
Preventable Hospital Stays		2,148	2,529	2,666	▼
Mammography Screening		43%	49%	44%	▼
Uninsured		10%	10%	10%	▼

Both adult and child mental health needs are growing, with limited access to local providers trained in early childhood. Local Primary Care Physicians have a high patient caseload, leading to a lack of availability for routine and urgent care appointments.

Health Care:

Upon kindergarten entry, K.S.A 72-6262 requires documentation of vaccinations required for school entry.



Up-to-date coverage is assessed on the 60th day of school.

Source: KDHE

Quality of life	Cowley County	Kansas	United States
Poor Physical Health Days	4.1	3.7	3.9
Low Birth Weight	7%	7%	8%
Poor Mental Health Days	5.4	5.2	5.1
Poor or Fair Health	18%	15%	17%

Source: <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/health-data/kansas/cowley?year=2025#population-health>

www.kansashealthmatters.org

Kansas Medical Assistance Programs - Children per 1000 Population, 0-19 Age-Group County: Cowley

610.1

Per 1,000 population
(2022)

Compared to:



KS Value
(465.1)



Prior Value
(285.4)



Trend

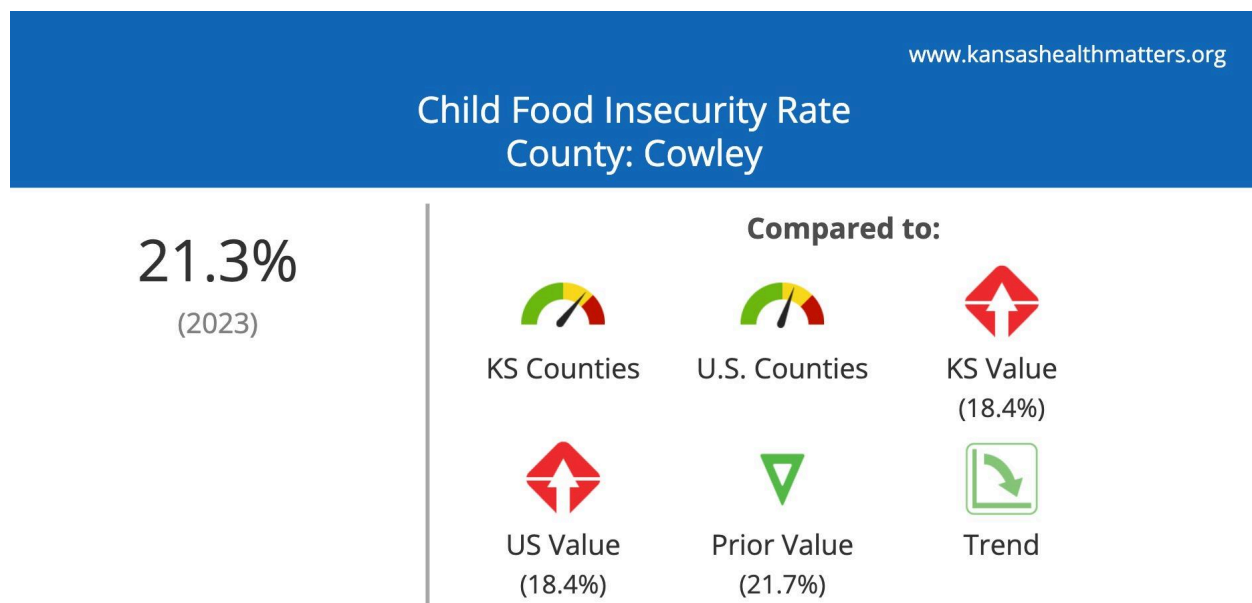
Source: Kansas Department of Health and Environment

Public Health Concern:

The county's public health website warns that a large share of homes in Cowley County consist of older housing — many built prior to 1960 — when lead-based paints and plumbing were common. As a result, "all individuals in Cowley County are at a greater risk of lead exposure and lead poisoning."

Children enrolled in blended early childhood programs associated with school districts in Cowley County are routinely tested for lead levels upon enrollment. In the 2024-2025 school year, 31 children tested with high levels of lead, this number decreased to 29 in the 2025-2026 school year. Since starting tracking during the 2023-2024 school year, follow ups and case closures for treating high lead levels have increased 400%.

Nutrition:



Source: Feeding America

www.kansashealthmatters.org

Households Receiving SNAP with Children County: Cowley

41.1%
(2019-2023)

Compared to:



KS Value
(49.5%)



US Value
(47.2%)



Trend

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year

www.kansashealthmatters.org

Average Monthly WIC Participation per 1,000 population County: Cowley

29.5
Average cases per 1,000
population
(2024)

Compared to:



KS Value
(16.4)



US Value
(22.4 in 2017)



Prior Value
(26.7)

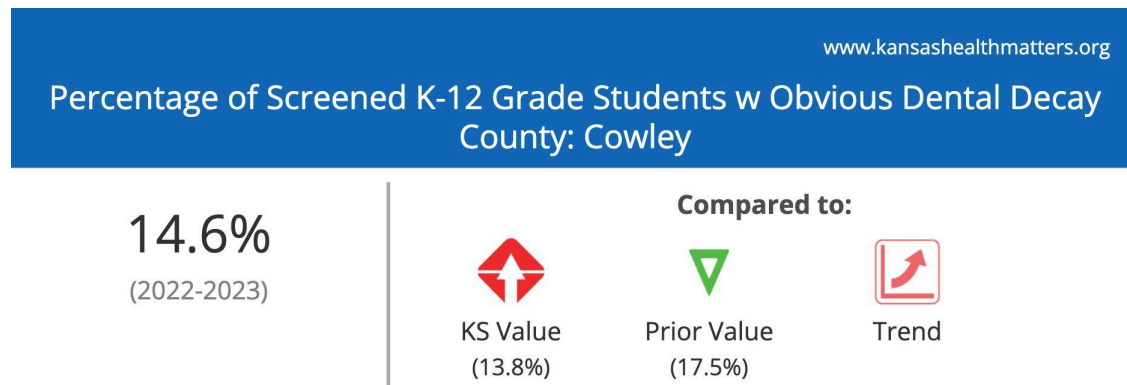


Trend

Source: Kansas Department of Health and Environment

Cowley County faces notable challenges related to child and family nutrition. With 21.3% of children experiencing food insecurity and 41.1% of households with children relying on SNAP benefits, many families depend on assistance to meet basic needs. Additionally, an average of 29.5 WIC participants per 1,000 residents reflects a substantial demand for supplemental nutrition support. Together, these indicators suggest that a significant portion of local families continue to face economic hardship and rely on safety-net programs to ensure adequate access to healthy food.

Dental Care:



Source: Kansas Department of Health and Environment

According to the Community Health Needs Assessment, 2025, historical community health assessments described dental care in Cowley County as “limited and expensive,” especially for low-income families or those on Medicaid. They noted that many dental offices in the county do not see Medicaid patients or have limited capacity for them. Additionally, the 2024 Cowley County Community Health Needs Assessment noted, Cowley County has fewer dentists per capita than many places: about one dentist per 1,810 residents, which is lower access compared with statewide and national benchmarks.

Child Care:



COWLEY County Point-In-Time Child Care Data

Generated on 12/2/2025

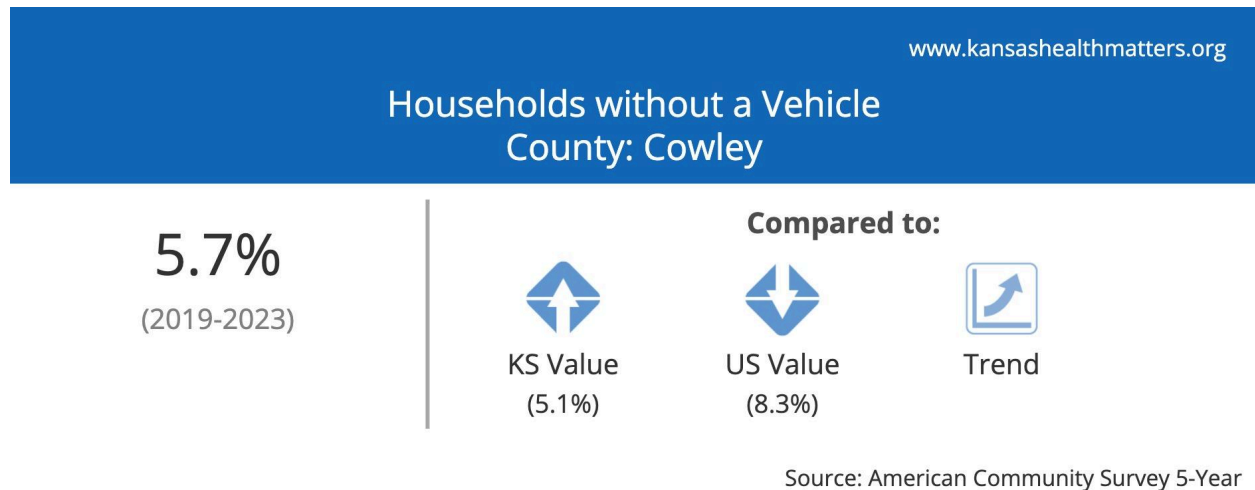
Census Data	
Total Number of Residents under 6 years ¹	2,075
Children under 6 years with all parents in family in labor force ¹	1,621
2025 (Current): Extent Desired Capacity Meets Potential Demand	43%
Potential Number of Child Care Slots Needed	922

Please note: The Extent Desired Capacity Meets Potential Demand % includes full-time, full-year Family Child Care Homes and Child Care Centers. Part-time, part-year programs, Licensed Head Start Programs, Preschools and School Age programs are excluded. Potential Number of Child Care Slots Needed is calculated by subtracting the desired capacity from the number of children under 6 with all parents in the family in the labor force.

Demand for affordable, high-quality child care exceeds availability, especially for infants and toddlers.

Transportation:

The county's 2025–2028 Community Health Improvement Plan highlights reducing transportation barriers as a key strategy to improve access to care and other supports. Without reliable transportation, people may delay or skip checkups, treatments, or preventive care (like regular doctor visits, screenings, or managing chronic illness).



Community Resources and Strengths

Providing families with resources such as transportation, literacy support, wellness services, and education is essential to fostering strong and healthy communities.

Access to these resources removes barriers that can limit opportunity and helps families meet their daily needs while also building pathways for long-term growth. Reliable transportation connects families to jobs, schools, and health care. Literacy and education open doors to lifelong learning and economic stability. Wellness services support physical, mental, and emotional health, ensuring families have the tools to manage challenges and build resilience. Together, these supports empower families to thrive, strengthen community bonds, and create more equitable opportunities for all.

Community Resources:

Type of Resource:	Community Agency:
Digital Resource Directory	RISE Cowley: A local coalition focused on improving overall healthy living in Cowley County. This directory connects residents to local resources, service agencies, and non-profits.
Library	Winfield Public Library Arkansas City Public Library Udall Public Library Dexter Public Library
English Literacy & Language	Cowley County Community College
Recreation	Winfield Recreation Commission Arkansas City Recreation Commission

Thrift Stores	Angel's in the Attic, Arkansas City Goodwill Industries, Winfield Eagle Nest, Inc., Winfield Joseph's Storehouse, Burden Rooted Women's Ministry, Arkansas City The Love Store, Winfield Shelia's Giving Closet, Winfield
Family Supports	RISE Cowley Family Life Services
Family Preservation	DCCCA
Crisis Services	Four County Mental Health Community Health Center of Cowley County
Employment Services	Arnold Group Mid-Kansas Community Action Program Cowley County Economic Development Partnership Senior Community Service Program Kansas Department of Children and Families Services Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas
Transportation Services	General Public Transportation
Parent Education	Four County Mental Health Parent Engagement Program Parents as Teachers

Community Strengths:

The county has community organizations, social service agencies, school districts, and nonprofits already working together in various domains (economic development, health, child services).

Local Interagency Coordinating Councils, or LICCs, are community members with a vested interest in an interagency system of service provision for children aged birth to five and their families. LICCs are responsible for many things, from child find activities, to communication and collaboration among community partners on issues pertinent to the population they represent. LICCs can help with activities such as public awareness and professional development, in addition to advising the lead agency with matters of policy, resource development, and much more. The state of Kansas Administration Regulation 28-4-565 states that “Each community shall have a local interagency coordinating council (LICC) that has as one of its purposes, the coordination of early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families”.

Highlights:

- Strong collaboration between school districts, early childhood programs, health care, and social service agencies.
- Active local nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and food banks provide family support.
- Community colleges and workforce development programs create opportunities for parents to pursue education and training.
- Cowley County's small-town atmosphere fosters close-knit relationships, where many families feel supported by neighbors and extended family networks.

Executive Summary

The summary of findings provides an overview of the key insights gathered through the community assessment.

This section highlights patterns, strengths, challenges, and opportunities identified across various areas such as health, education, housing, employment, and social services. By distilling the most important information, the summary offers a clear picture of the community's current conditions and needs. These findings serve as a foundation for informed decision-making, strategic planning, and the development of programs and initiatives aimed at enhancing the well-being and quality of life for all community members.

Cowley County, home to approximately 34,487 residents (2023), faces persistent challenges related to poverty, child care access, health care, and housing. At the same time, strong community collaboration and a commitment to supporting children provide a foundation for growth. Head Start remains a vital resource for ensuring that children are ready for school and families are supported in achieving self-sufficiency. Continued investment and adaptation of services to meet emerging needs will be essential for the well-being of young children and families in Cowley County.

This review of local and state data that impact children and families suggest both need and opportunity:

- Given the above-average poverty rate and a sizable share of children under 18, early childhood services such as Head Start play an important role in supporting families and school readiness.
- Economic constraints (income, housing, child-care cost burden) mean that many families may benefit from comprehensive services (education, health/nutrition, family engagement) as offered by Head Start.

- The limited licensed care capacity and the cost burden on families point to gaps in the local early childhood ecosystem that Head Start helps address through collaboration.
- The high home-ownership rate and strong community roots suggest stable family settings in many cases, which is a strength: programming can build on that stability, engage families, and develop long-term support.

Identifying recommendations and priorities helps focus resources and actions on the areas of greatest need, ensuring that program efforts are coordinated, strategic, and effective in improving outcomes for children and families.

Based on the data collected and the analysis of community strengths and barriers, we've identified key recommendations and priorities focused on strengthening services and supports for young children and their families. The following priorities are designed to address identified gaps, build on existing resources, and enhance collaboration among community partners. By focusing efforts on these targeted areas, the community can more effectively support the well-being, education, and development of children and families. These recommendations serve as a roadmap for strategic decision-making, resource allocation, and continued improvement in service delivery.

Our program planning will emphasize:

- Family Engagement
- Partnerships with community resources
- Supporting health and family well being
- Data collection and continuous improvement to ensure school readiness through quality programming