

The State of Early Childhood Education in Texas

Gulf Coast/Houston

October 2025 Texas Tour

children
at Risk



Our Mission



CHILDREN AT RISK serves as a catalyst for change to improve the quality of life for children through strategic research, public policy analysis, education, collaboration, and advocacy.

CHILDREN AT RISK - ECE Team



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Sign up for the [Texas PN-3 Newsletter](#)

Child Care Deserts Data

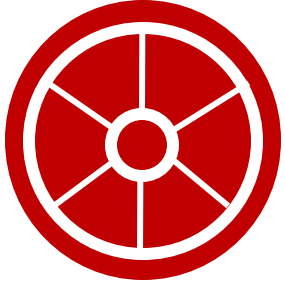
1 in 10 children in
America live in Texas

2.3M children under the
age of 6 live in Texas

1 in 10 children under
6 with low-income,
working parents live
in a child care desert

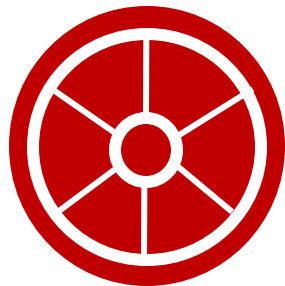


The Texas Early Childhood Ecosystem



ACCESS | 40% of all zip codes in Texas qualify as child care deserts for low-income children, meaning that 3x more children live in the zip code than the number of available child care slots. Children deserve equitable access to safe care that supports their health, learning, and development.

FAMILIES | In Texas, caring for an infant and toddler can cost 10-50% of many working families' annual earnings. According to federal recommendations, child care should cost no more than 7% of a family's income. Families need affordable care in their communities to be able to participate in the workforce.



EDUCATORS | According to the US Department of Treasury, more than half qualify for at least one form of public assistance. Early Childhood Educators deserve a living wage.

What is a Desert?



Child Care Deserts – Zip codes (US Census ZCTAs) with at least 30 children, ages 0-5, where the demand for child care is three times greater or more than the supply of child care.

Subsidized Child Care Deserts – Zip codes with at least 30 low-income children, ages 0-5, where the demand for subsidized child care is three times greater or more than the supply of subsidized child care.



children
atRisk

Texas Rising Star Deserts – Zip codes with at least 30 low-income children(ages 0-5) where the demand for subsidized child care is three times greater or more than the supply of Texas Rising Star-certified child care.

Overall Child Care Deserts

Texas Overall Child Care Deserts

991,039 ↓

Total Number of Seats

420 ↑

Overall Desert Zip Codes*

Gulf Coast LWDB Overall Child Care Deserts

303,763 ↓

Total Number of Seats

49 ↑

Overall Desert Zip Codes

Subsidy Child Care Deserts

Texas Subsidy Child Care Deserts

125,548 ↑

Total Number of Subsidy Seats

778 ↓

Subsidy Desert Zip Codes*

Gulf Coast LWDB Subsidy Child Care Deserts

30,790 ↑

Total Number of Subsidy Seats

153 ↓

Subsidy Desert Zip Codes

TRS Child Care Deserts

Texas TRS Child Care Deserts

84,132 ↑

Total Number of TRS Seats

850 ↓

TRS Desert Zip Codes*

Gulf Coast LWDB TRS Child Care Deserts

20,967 ↑

Total Number of TRS Seats

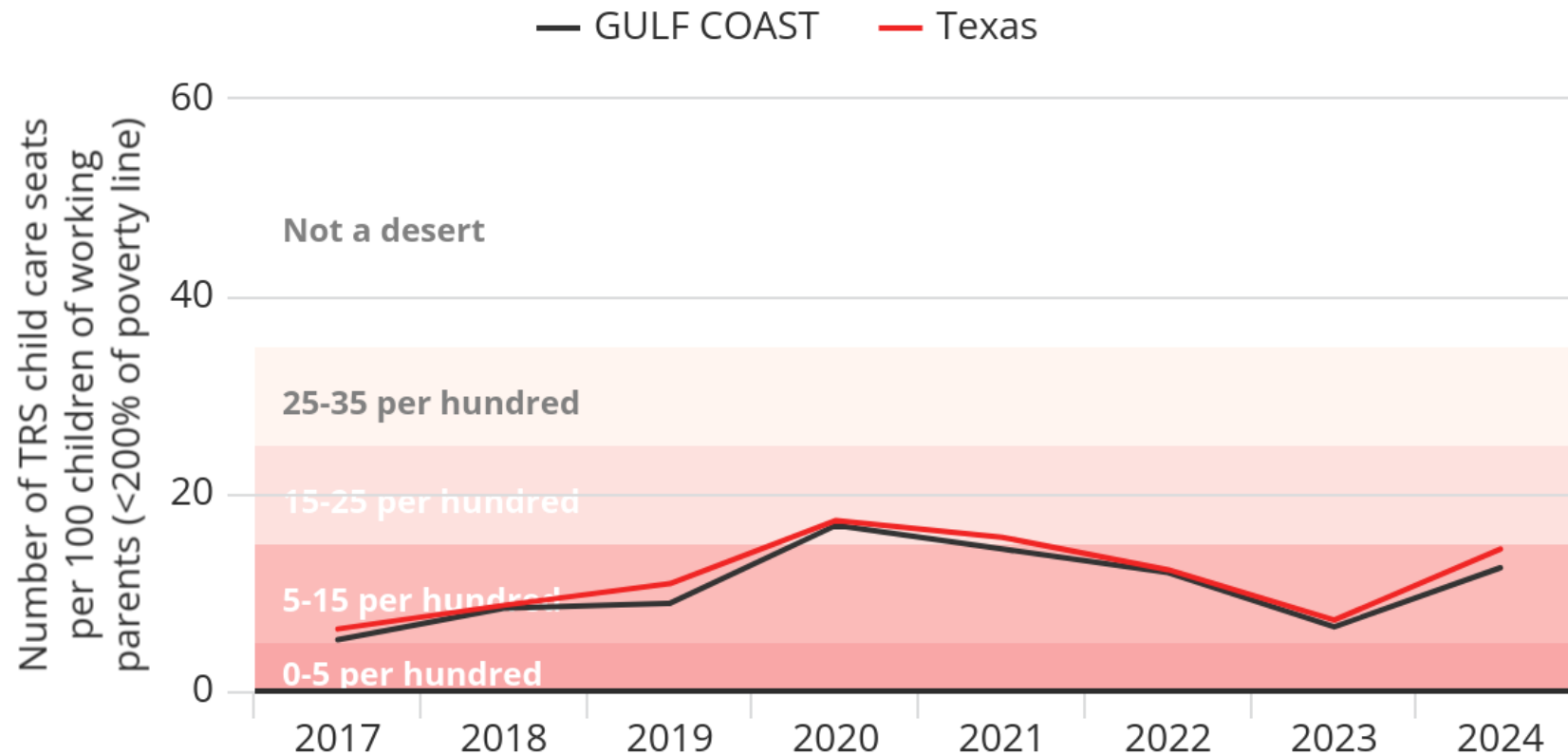
171 ↓

TRS Desert Zip Codes

TRS Child Care Seats

Texas Rising Star 2,3,4 child care only

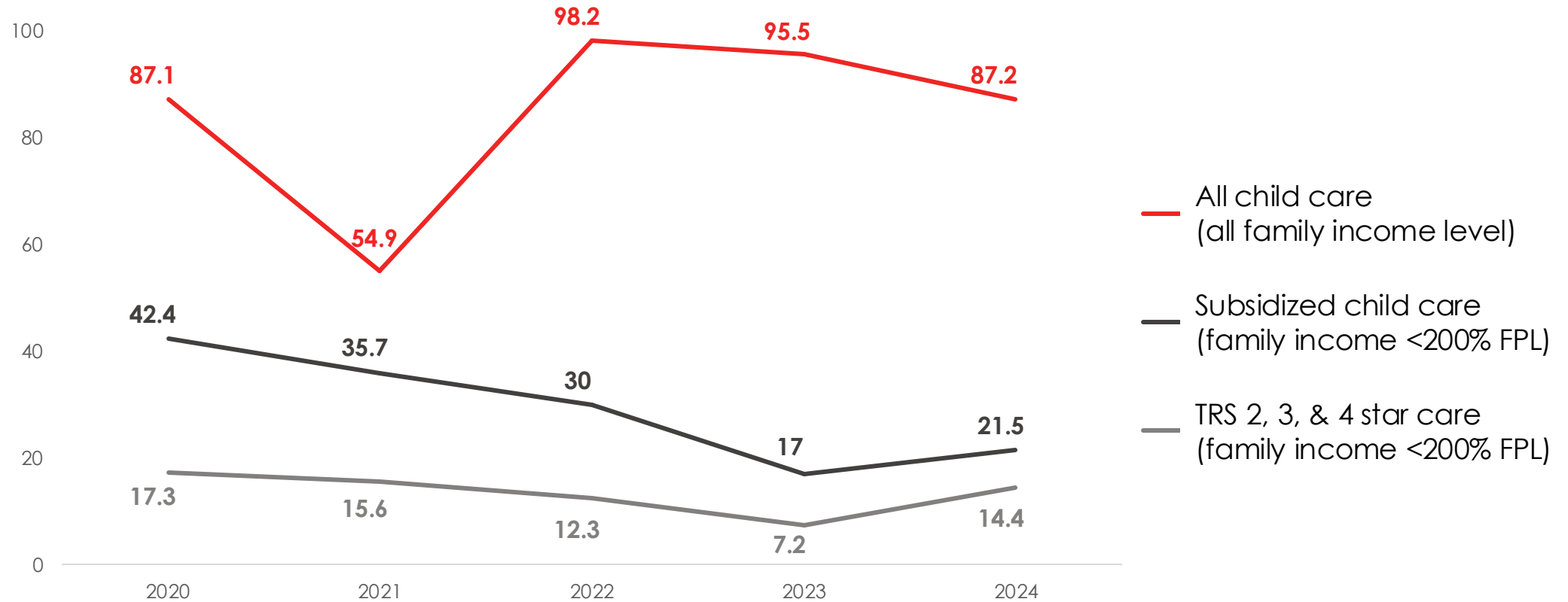
Number of TRS child care seats per 100 children of working parents (<200% of poverty line)



Source: CHILDREN AT RISK Child Care Desert Map

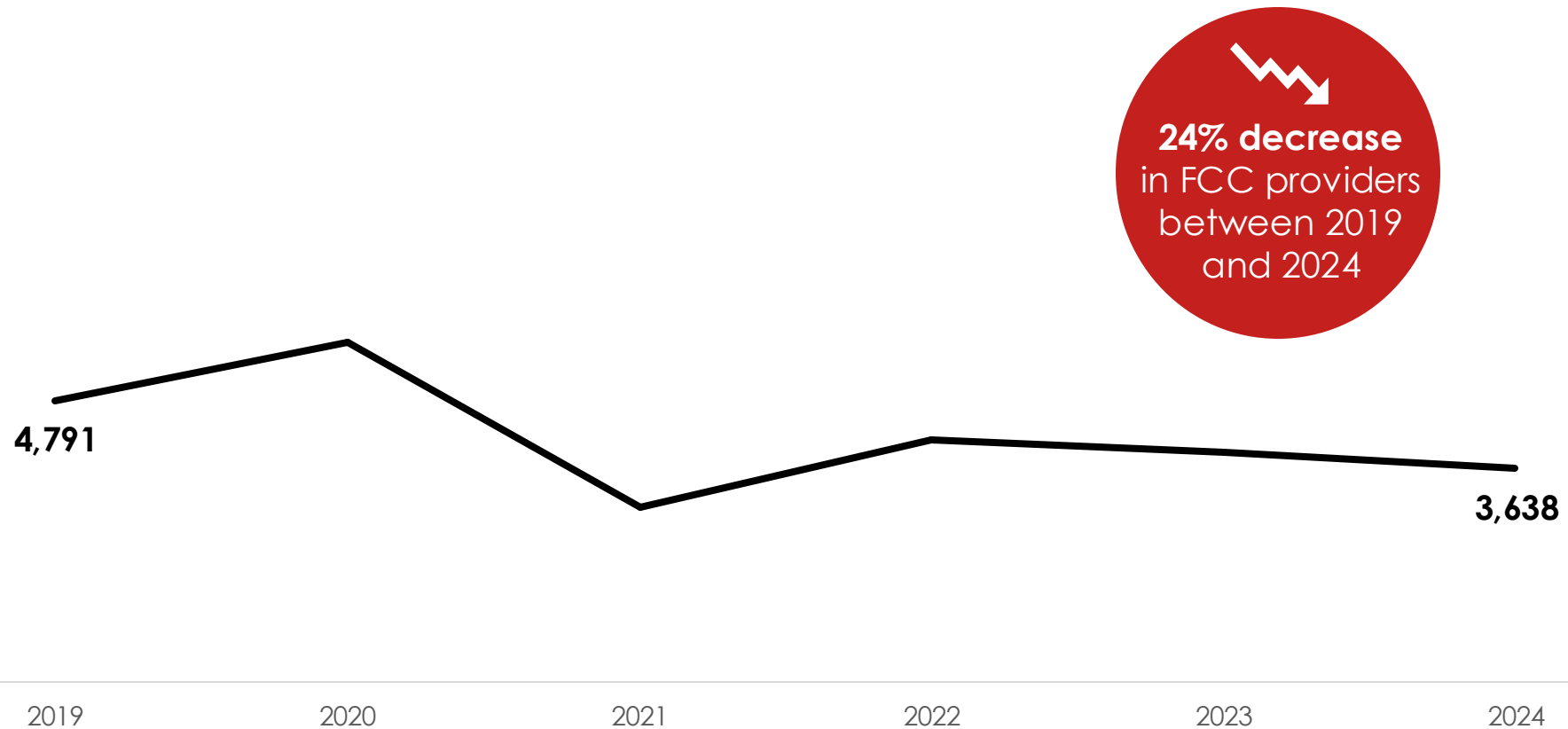
The Last 5 Years of Child Care Seats in Texas

Number of Child Care Seats per 100 Children of Working Families



Family Child Care Homes

Registered and Licensed Family Child Care Homes, 2019-2024



Chronic Child Care Deserts

Gulf Coast Overall Child Care Deserts

49

Overall Desert Zip
Codes

17%

Of Eligible Zip Codes*

Gulf Coast Overall Chronic Child Care Deserts

29

Overall **Chronic** Desert
Zip Codes

10%

Of Eligible Zip Codes*

Chronic Child Care Deserts: Subsidy

Gulf Coast Subsidy Child Care Deserts

153

Subsidy Desert Zip
Codes

53%

Of Eligible Zip Codes*

Gulf Coast Subsidy Chronic Child Care Deserts

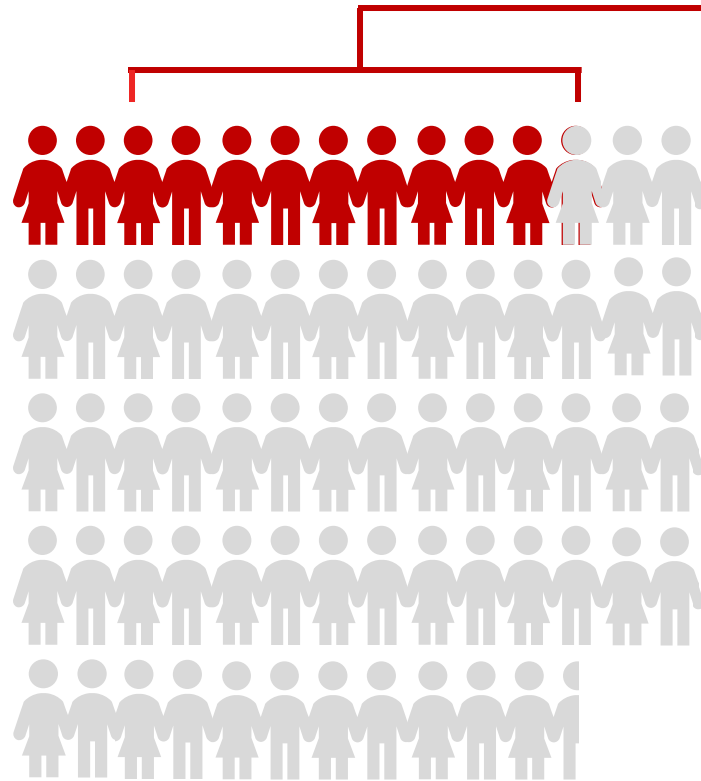
79

Subsidy **Chronic**
Desert Zip Codes

27%

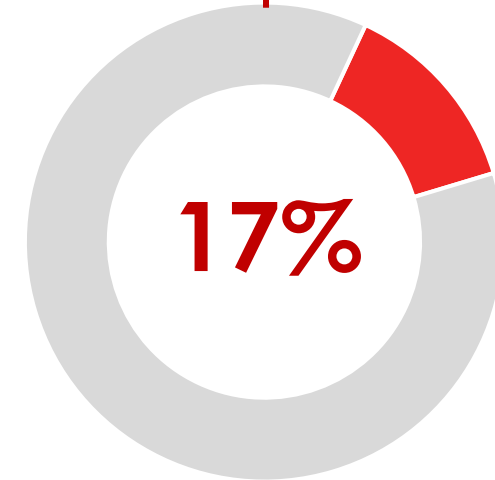
Of Eligible Zip Codes*

NUMBER OF CHILDREN SERVED WITH FUNDING VERSUS NEED



 = 10,000 low-income children
ages 0-5 with working parents

 = children ages 0-5 served by TWC

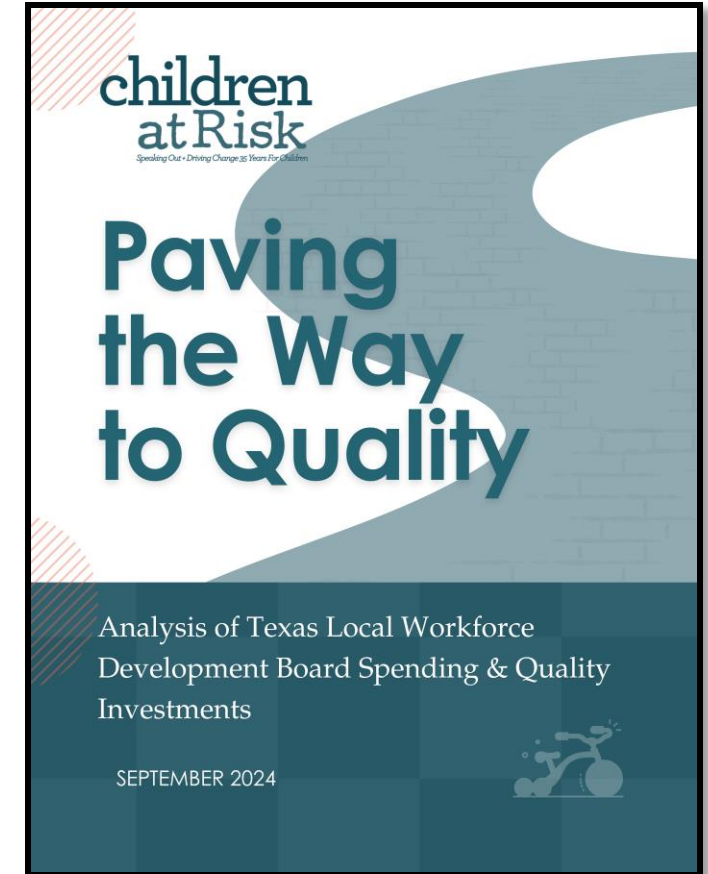


Just over **one in six**
low-income children ages 0-5 with
working parents **receive subsidies**
for child care.

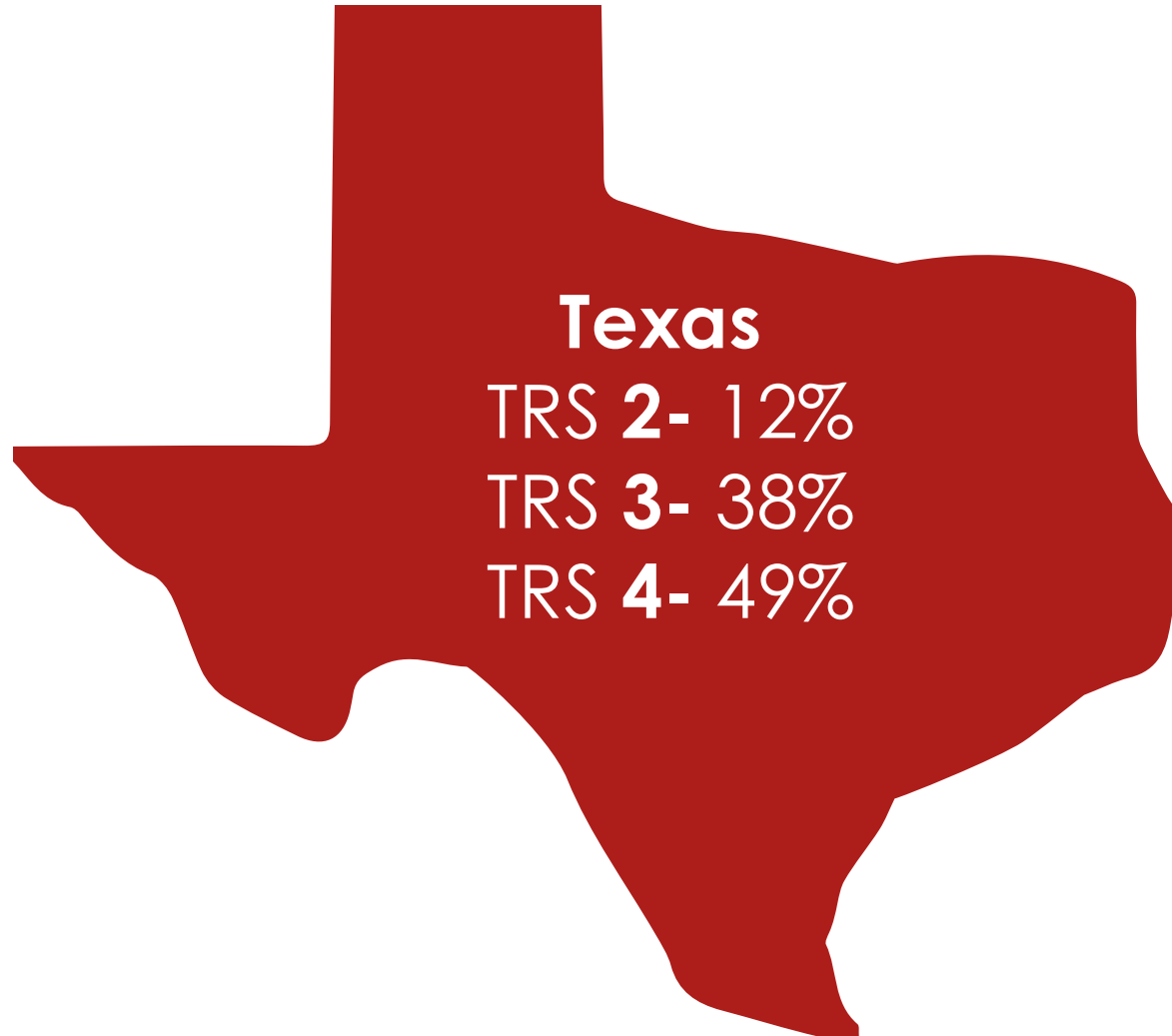
Paving the Way to Quality

CHILDREN AT RISK IS excited to tell you about the **upcoming 2025 report**, *Paving the Way to Quality*. This updated research highlights trends in childcare funding across Texas, including updated data on Child Care Deserts and fiscal strategies by Local Workforce Development Boards.

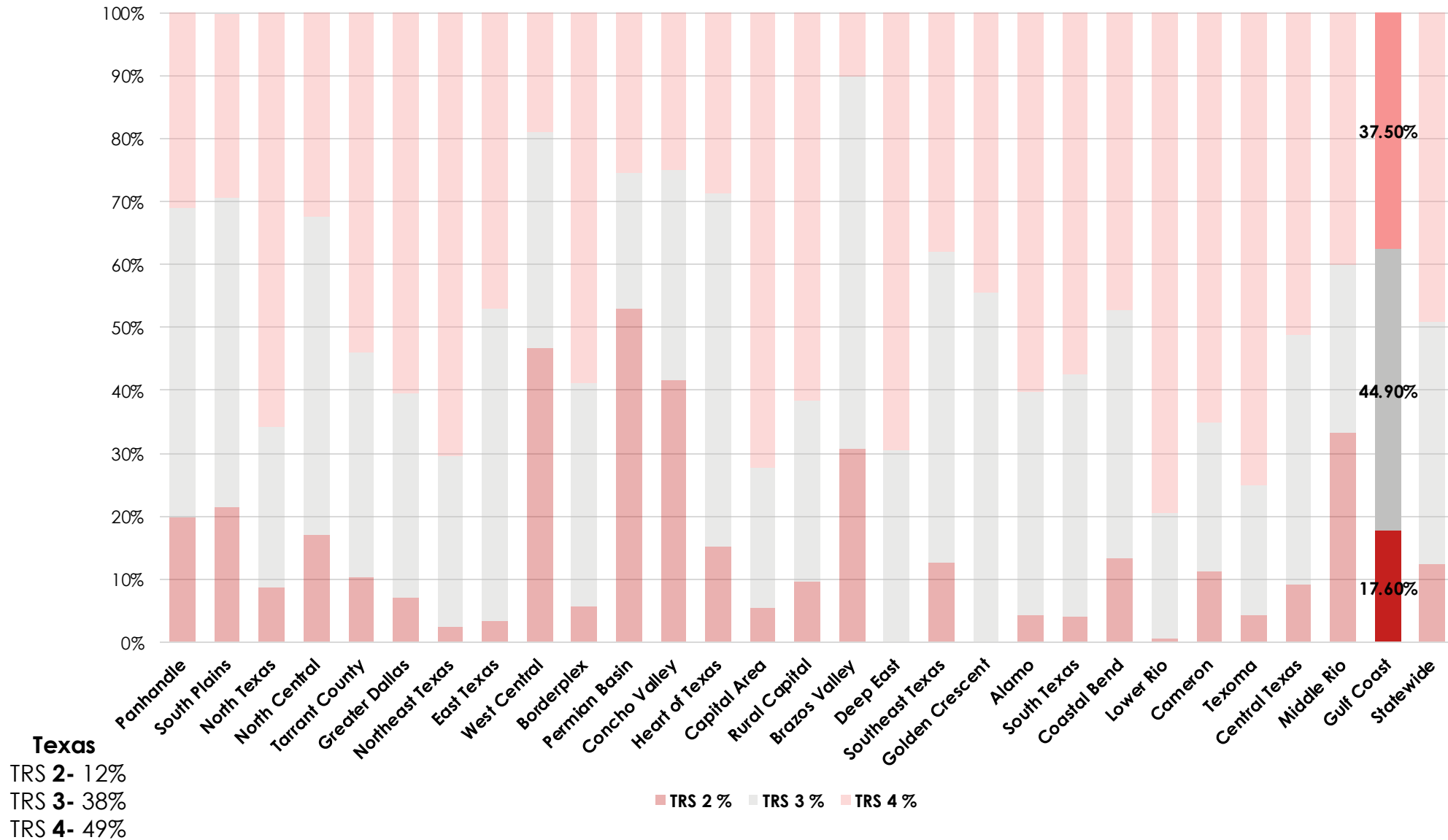
Read last year's report at
childrenatrisk.org/pavingthewaytoquality



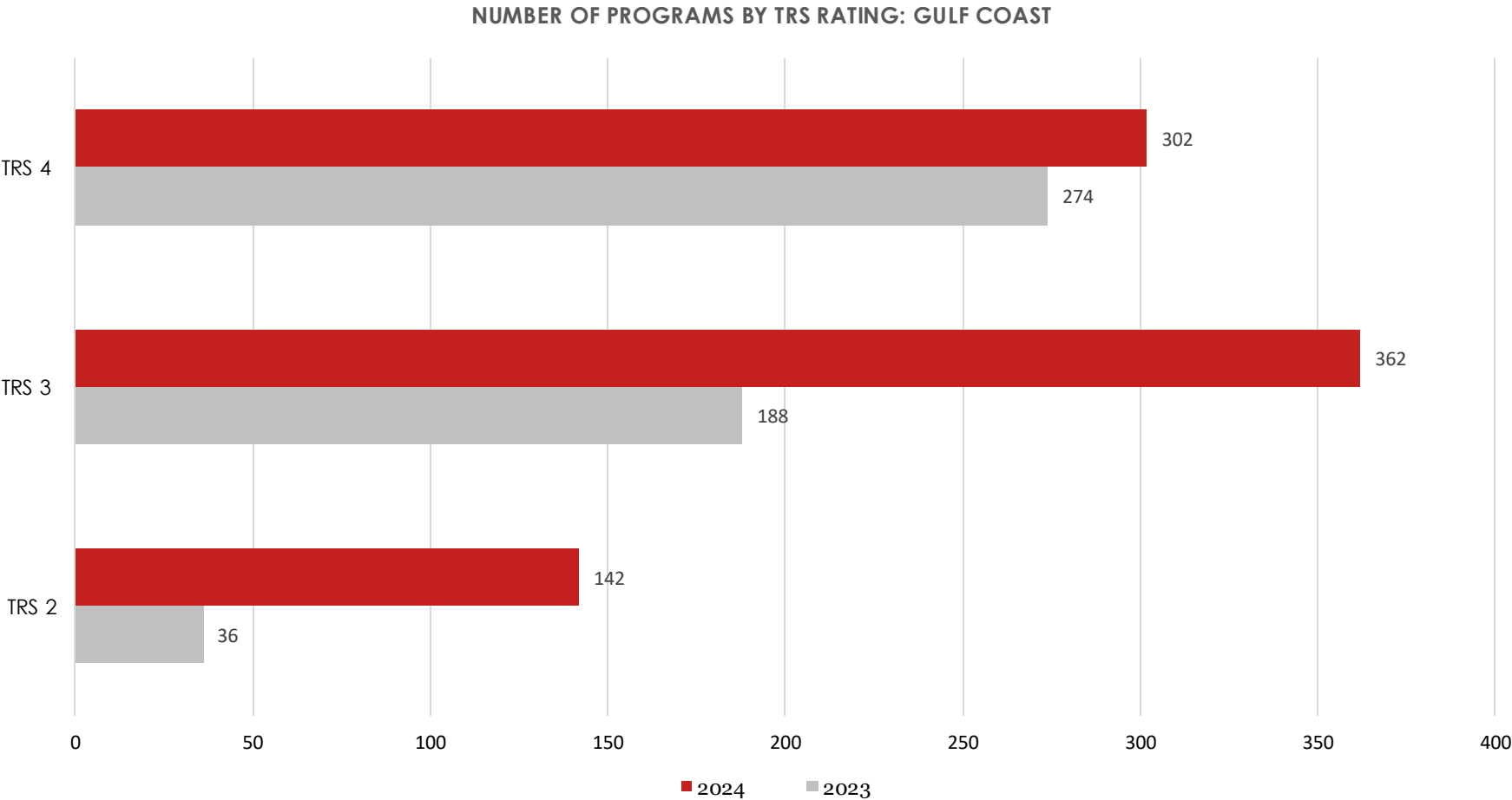
Percent of TRS Subsidy Providers by Star Level



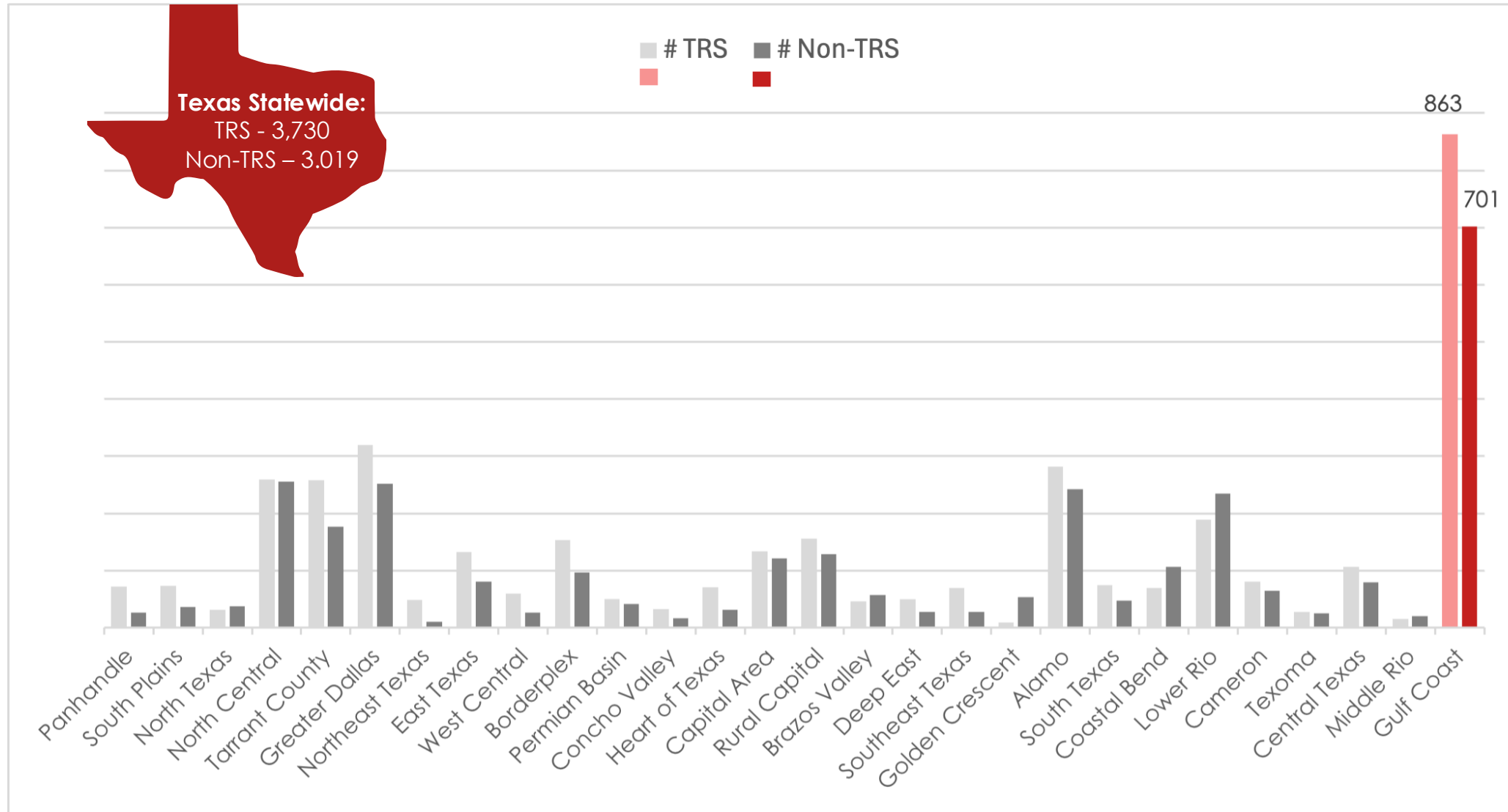
Percent of TRS Subsidy Providers Gulf Coast



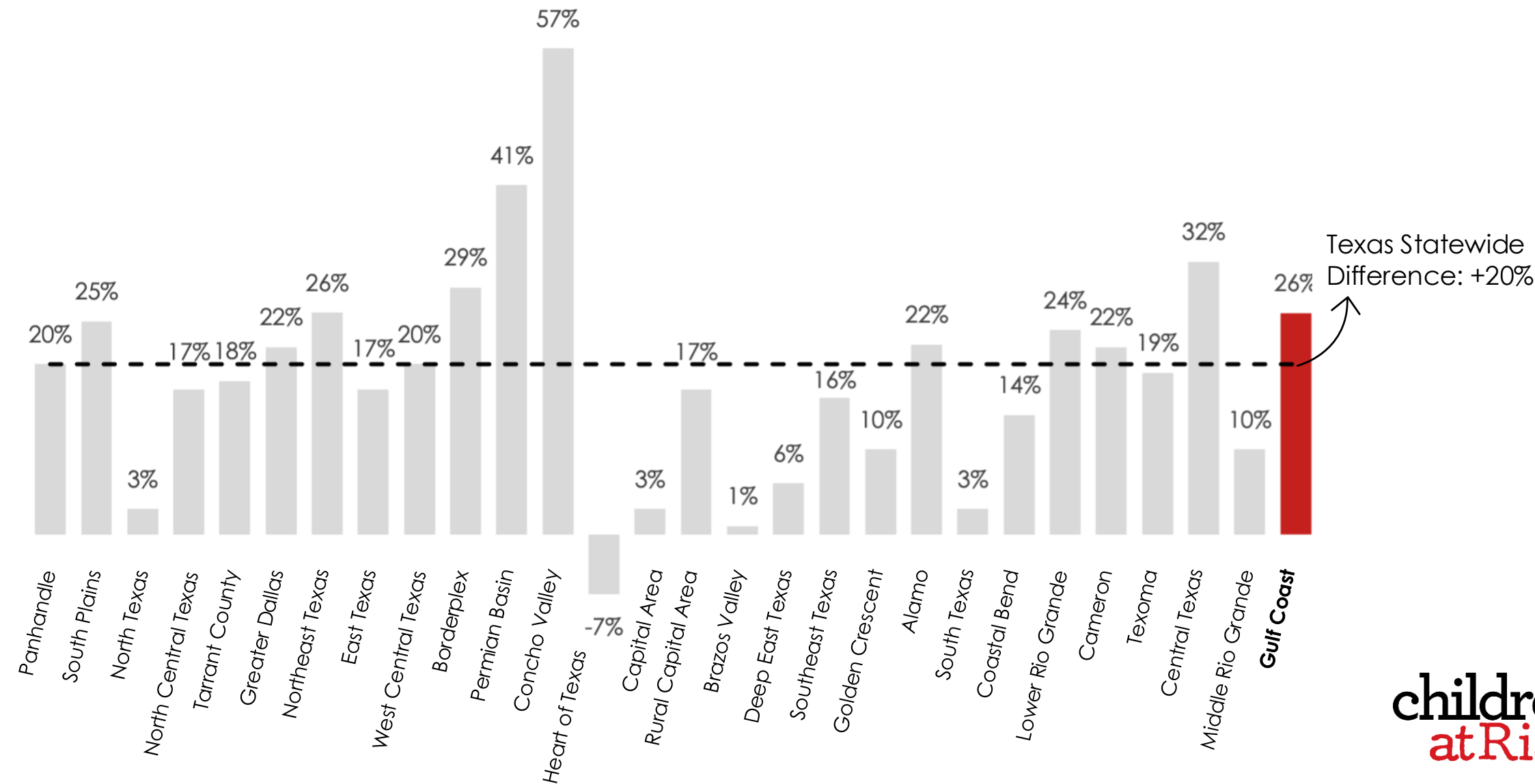
TRS RATINGS GULF COAST



TRS versus Non-TRS Subsidy Providers by LWDB

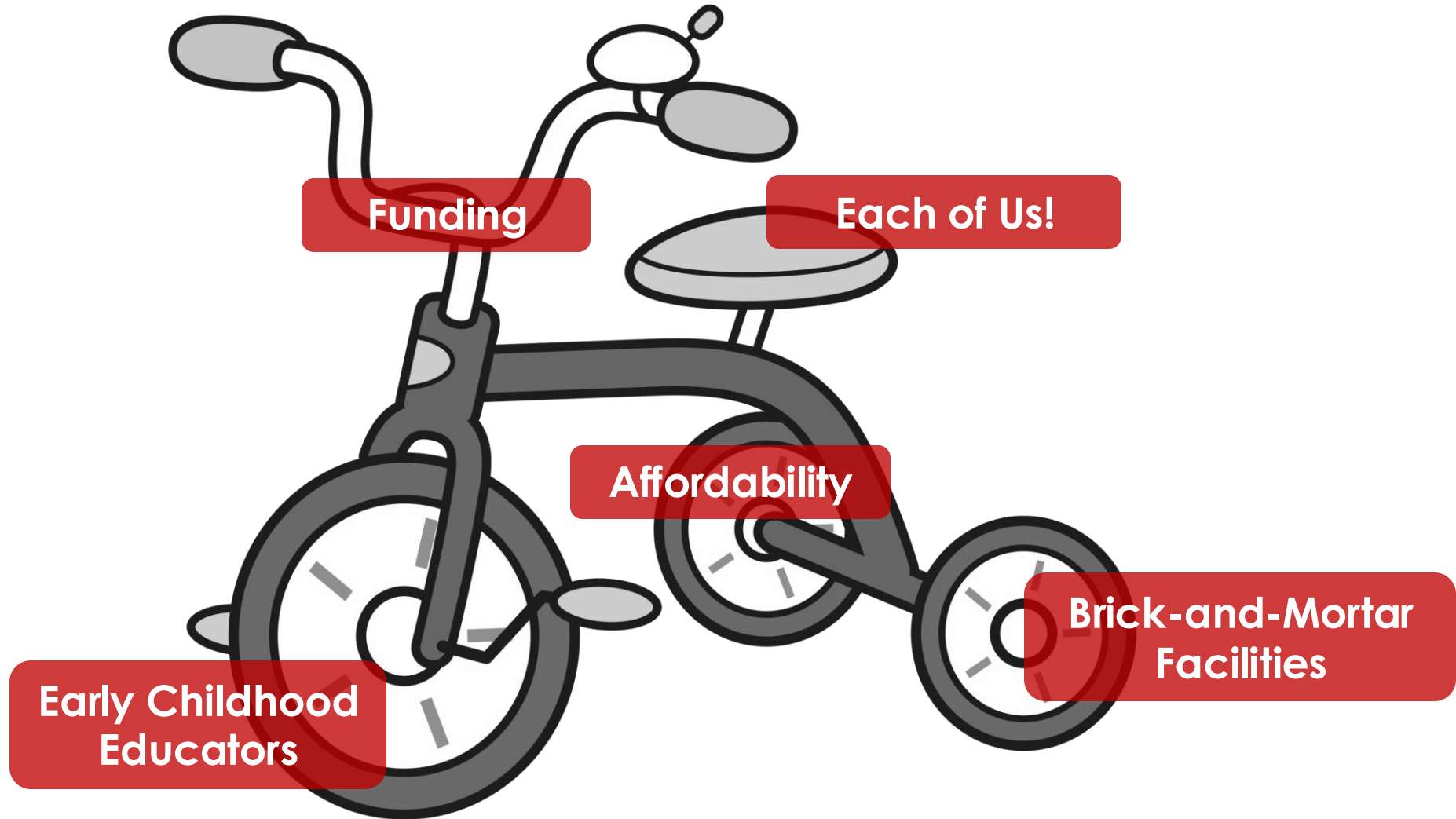


Percent Point Difference in TRS Participation from 2023 to 2024



Using Results in Advocacy Work

The Tricycle for Success



FUNDING FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

SB 1: Child Care

\$100M for Child Care Services
at the Texas Workforce
Commission



HB 2: Pre-K

An additional \$8.5 billion to
public education with increases
the **Early Education Allotment by
\$90M**, prioritizing Pre-K
attendance

CHILD CARE DESERTS

Child Care Deserts

Texas lost nearly 75,000 child care seats from 2023 to 2024. And a 24% drop in family child care providers from 2019 to 2024.

SB 599

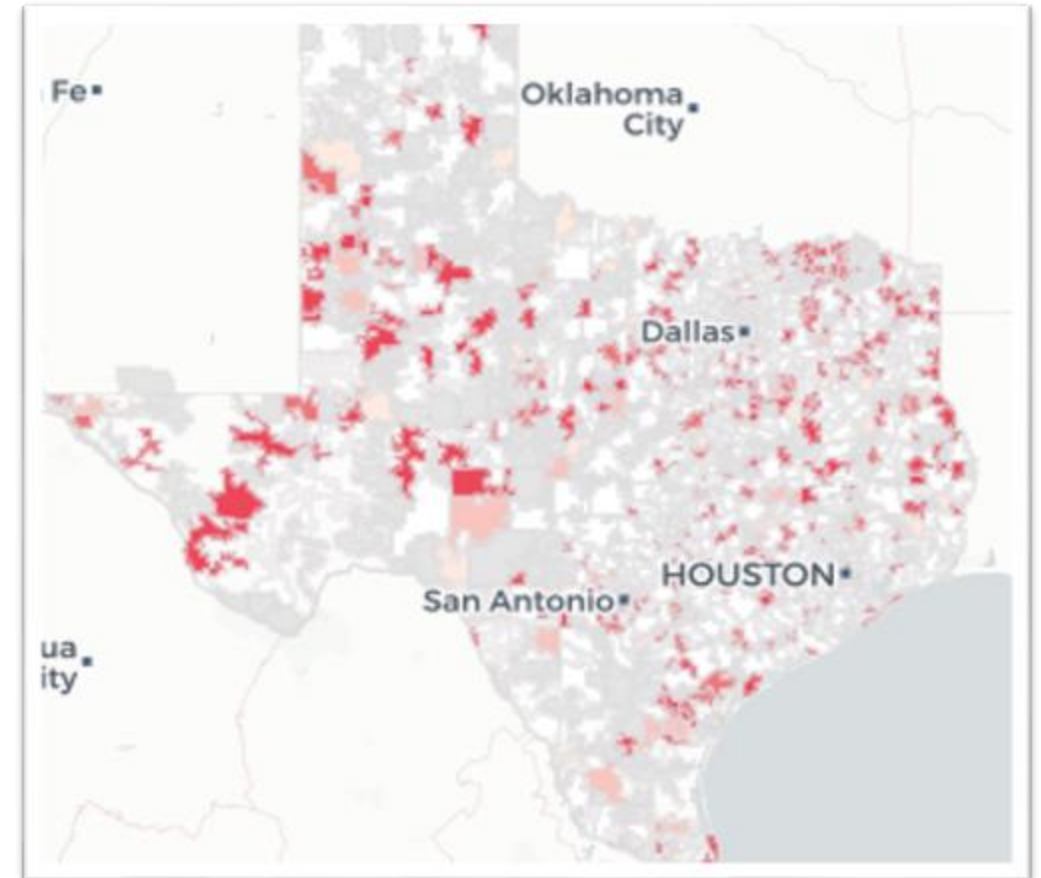
(West & Davis)

Decreases local hurdles for Texans wanting to create more home-based child care and increase access to care for working parents.

HB 2294

(Thompson, K. Bell, & Zaffirini)

Allows Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) to pay the full reimbursement rates for child care providers in the Texas Rising Star Program regardless of the fees they charge parents. This supports access to high-quality, affordable early learning for Texas families.



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



ECE Workforce

S.B. 462 (Kolkhorst & Harris Davila)

Prioritizes subsidized child care to income-eligible child care workers for their own children.

Access

S.B. 1265 (Alvarado & Harris Davila)

Helps employers connect parents to child care options through centralized resources.

Data

H.B. 3963 (Capriglione & Paxton)

Advances the Early Childhood Integrated Data System to enhance collaboration among state agencies, improves early childhood programs, and informs policy decisions, with the Texas Education Agency serving as the lead agency.

GOVERNANCE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

H.B. 117

(Schoolcraft)

Establishes a Governor's Task Force on **the Governance of Early Childhood Education and Care**, a step toward improving coordination, accountability, and outcomes for Texas children.

HB 4903

(Harris Davila & Birdwell)

Establishes a **Quad Agency Child Care Initiative** focused on collaboration, coordinating policies, and reviewing and streamlining regulations among the participating agencies, which would include TWC, HHSC, DFPS, and TEA.

Sunset Review Commission

DFPS, HHSC, DSHS and TWC

are all scheduled for the 2026-2027 Review Cycle, with recommendations reported in the 90th Legislative Session.



STATE OF TEXAS CURRENT GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



Health and Human Services Commission

- Child Care Regulations
- Family Support Services
- 211
- Early Childhood Intervention
- Texas Thriving Families
- Medicaid & CHIP
- SNAP



Texas Workforce Commission

- Child Care Services
- Child Care Subsidies
- Texas Rising Star (QRIS)



Texas Education Agency

- Pre-K
- Special Education Services



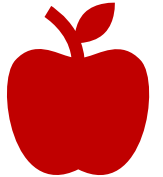
Department of Family & Protective Services

- Child Abuse and Neglect Statewide Intake
- Foster Care
- Kinship Care



Department of State Health Services

- Maternal & Child Health
- Help Me Grow



Department of Agriculture

- CACFP (Child and Adult Care Food Program)

INTERIM ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Sunset Review Advisory Commission

TWC
HHSC
DFPS
DSHS

Quad-Agency Child Care Initiative Commission

TWC
HHSC
TEA
DFPS

Governor's Taskforce on Governance of Early Childhood Education and Care

TWC
HHSC
TEA
DSHS

Regular Interim Charges

TWC
HHSC
TEA
DSHS
DPFS
Dept of Ag



Community Conversations

STATE OF TEXAS CURRENT GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Out of these, identify 2 or 3 you're most familiar with (i.e. if child care provider TWC, HHSC) and then talk about what those agencies do well to serve children and families individually and together and what they need to improve on.

- What they do well individually?
- What they need to improve on individually?
- In what ways can they improve their work together?
- In what ways do they do their work well together?



Health and
Human Services
Commission



Texas
Workforce
Commission



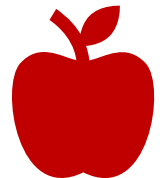
Texas
Education
Agency



Department of
Family &
Protective
Services



Department of
State Health
Services



Department of
Agriculture

Resources at childrenatrisk.org

UPDATED CHILD CARE DESERTS MAP



Learn more at:

childrenatrisk.org/pavingthewaytoquality

JOIN OUR ECE/ IMMIGRATION CROSS COLLABORATIVE



Learn more at:

<https://forms.office.com/r/7kduUT9MLE>

SIGN UP FOR OUR ECE NEWSLETTER



Learn more at:

childrenatrisk.org

Thank You!

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