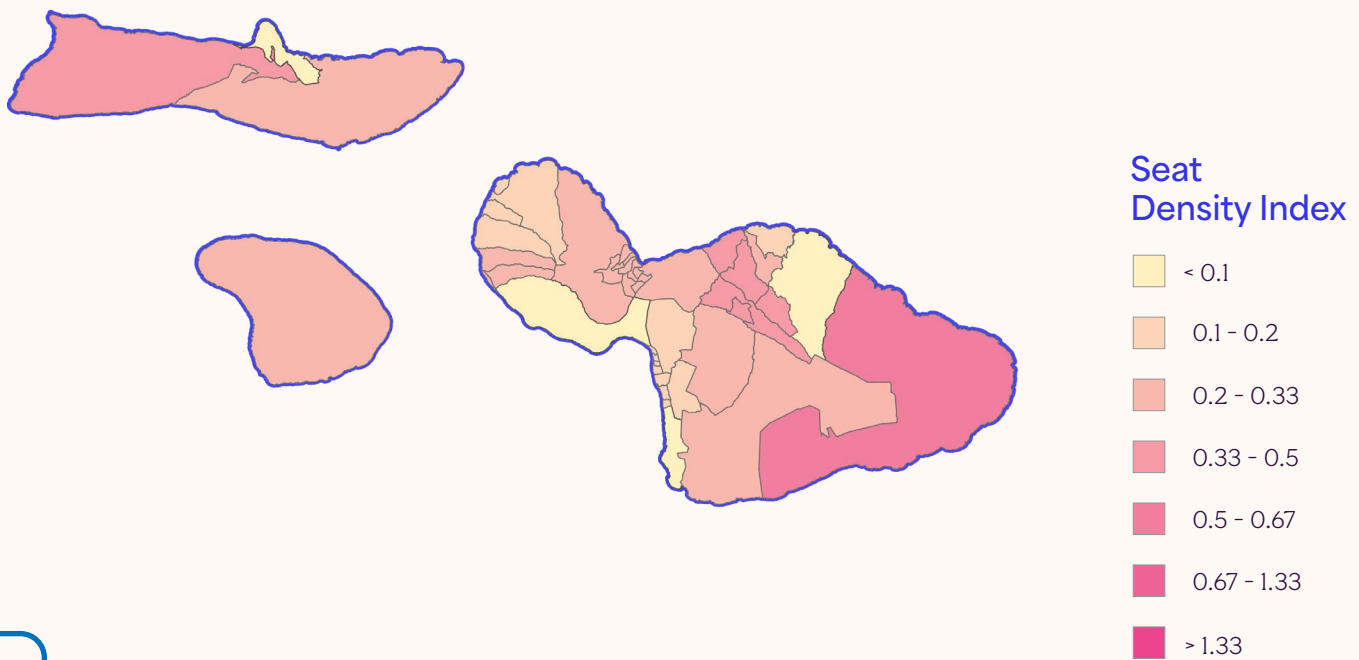


Access to Early Childhood Care and Education:

Maui County



Introduction

Access to affordable, conveniently located, and high-quality early care and education (ECE) supports the well-being of Hawai‘i’s youngest keiki and helps their families and our local communities thrive. High-quality ECE programs set the stage for lifelong learning, health, and well-being.¹ ECE is also essential to working parents and promotes women’s workforce participation, pay equity, and career advancement.² Additionally, economists estimate that the benefits realized for workforce productivity, family self-sufficiency, and long-term child outcomes make ECE one of the best-known returns on the public dollar.³

Hawai‘i’s current ECE supply is insufficient—especially for infants and toddlers—and expensive, with access depending on where a family lives.⁴ Fortunately, the state is taking steps to expand affordable, high-quality ECE. However, as Hawai‘i moves toward universal access for 3- and 4-year-olds by 2032,⁵ the needs of children under age 3 must also be addressed.

The equitable allocation of ECE resources requires data on which communities and populations are underserved. With this need in mind, the [Access to Early Childhood Education and Care in Hawai‘i](#) web tool was created to inform Hawai‘i’s expansion planning. The interactive maps posted there show (a) the supply of nearby ECE seats, (b) the average cost as a percentage of family income, and (c) whether these seats are high quality. Using data from the web tool, this snapshot provides a profile of how Maui County fares on these measures of ECE access. We highlight two communities with high needs, one with low ECE access and another with more favorable access. We also offer recommendations for improving equitable access in Maui County.

Note that the ECE data included in this snapshot were collected July–October 2022, before the August 2023 historic wildfires that devastated the town of Lahaina in West Maui and uprooted the lives of thousands of Maui residents, including families with young children. At the time of the writing of this snapshot, recovery remains ongoing and too many families are still displaced. While we acknowledge that the impact of the disaster on ECE access is not reflected in the data included here, we present this profile as a baseline for setting goals and measuring future progress.

ECE Access Indexes

This project provides a new method for measuring the availability, affordability, and quality of ECE within a set distance of each home in the state. For every house, condominium, and apartment building, we took into account the number and characteristics of ECE seats as well as the number of young children living nearby. The resulting indexes provide a highly localized measure of the ECE resources available to families within their neighborhoods.

The **seat density** index represents the number of ECE seats per child within a five-mile radius of a family’s home. It indicates whether capacity is sufficient to serve the number of children who live nearby. Scores lower than .33 (i.e., more than three children per seat) are often considered to indicate a shortage of ECE seats.

The **cost burden** index expresses the average cost of a nearby seat as a percentage of that area’s median family income. The federal government defines affordable costs as no more than 7% of family income and has set this level as the copayment cap for families receiving child care subsidies.⁶

The **quality** index measures the likelihood that a nearby seat is in a center with a national ECE accreditation (NAEYC, NECPA, NAFCC), a public pre-K classroom, or a Head Start/Early Head Start program.⁷ Because these programs meet standards beyond those required for state licensing, they are likely to provide developmentally appropriate, responsive, and thoughtfully planned care; this does not mean that other programs cannot also be of high quality. High-quality ECE is associated with better child outcomes and is especially important for children facing challenges such as poverty, homelessness, or developmental delays.

Maui County ECE Access Profile

An estimated 9,800 children under the age of 5 live in Maui County, about 11% of the state's population of young children. The median family income is \$92,627, a little less than the state average of \$97,813. One-quarter of the county's children under age 18 are from poor or low-income households.⁸

Maui County has a total of 2,775 ECE seats (see Table 1). The majority of seats (79.1%) are in licensed child care centers serving preschool-age children. Another 12.9% of seats are in family or group child care homes, 5.2% are in licensed infant-toddler centers, and 2.8% are in public pre-K classrooms. Just over one in 10 seats are in Early Head Start or Head Start centers and one-quarter are in an accredited program. The average cost of ECE is \$865, lower than the state average of \$1,063.

Table 1: ECE Program Characteristics and Cost⁹

Variable	Maui County		State	
<i>Seats by Provider Type</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>%</i>
Family or Group Child Care Home	359	12.9	1,622	6.6
Licensed Infant-Toddler Center	143	5.2	1,528	6.3
Licensed Preschool Center	2,194	79.1	20,538	84.1
Public Pre-K*	79	2.8	742	3.0
Total	2,775	100.0	24,430	100.0
<i>Seats by Other Provider Characteristics</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>%</i>
Early Head Start or Head Start	319	11.5	2,411	9.9
Accredited Private Providers	711	25.6	9,313	38.1
<i>Cost</i>				
All Providers**	\$865	---	\$1,063	---
Fee-based Providers	\$1,002	---	\$1,215	---

*Includes Executive Office on Early Learning and Public Charter School classrooms

**Includes public pre-K, Head Start, and Early Head Start at \$0 tuition

Maui County ECE Access Profile

While the affordability of ECE seats in Maui County is a relative bright spot, the supply and quality of nearby seats (those within a five-mile drive from a family's home) is lower than the state average (see Table 2). Maui County has .28 nearby seats per child age 0-4 years, slightly lower than the state average of .31 seats. As is the case for the state as a whole, Maui County has a clearly insufficient supply of seats for infants and toddlers (.07 seats per child age 0-2) compared to preschoolers (.53 seats per child age 3-4). A nearby seat costs 11.5% of the median area family income, with little variation in cost burden by age group (11.4% vs. 10.1% of median family income for 3 to 4-year-olds and infants and toddlers, respectively). Overall, four in 10 ECE seats are in programs likely to be of high quality (i.e., accredited programs, public pre-K, Head Start, or Early Head Start). However, quality access varies by age group; 44.8% of nearby seats for preschool-age children are high quality, compared to only 22.8% of infant-toddler seats.

Table 2: ECE Access Within 5 Miles¹⁰

ECE Access Index	Maui County	State
Seat Density (overall)	.28	.31
Seat Density (ages 0-2)	.07	.09
Seat Density (ages 3-4)	.53	.63
Cost Burden (overall)	11.5	13.6
Cost Burden (ages 0-2)	10.1	14.9
Cost Burden (ages 3-4)	11.5	13.2
Quality (overall)	40.2	51.1
Quality (ages 0-2)	22.8	46.3
Quality (ages 3-4)	44.8	51.2

A Closer Look: Kulanihako'i and East Moloka'i

Below we highlight two Maui communities that differ on ECE access.

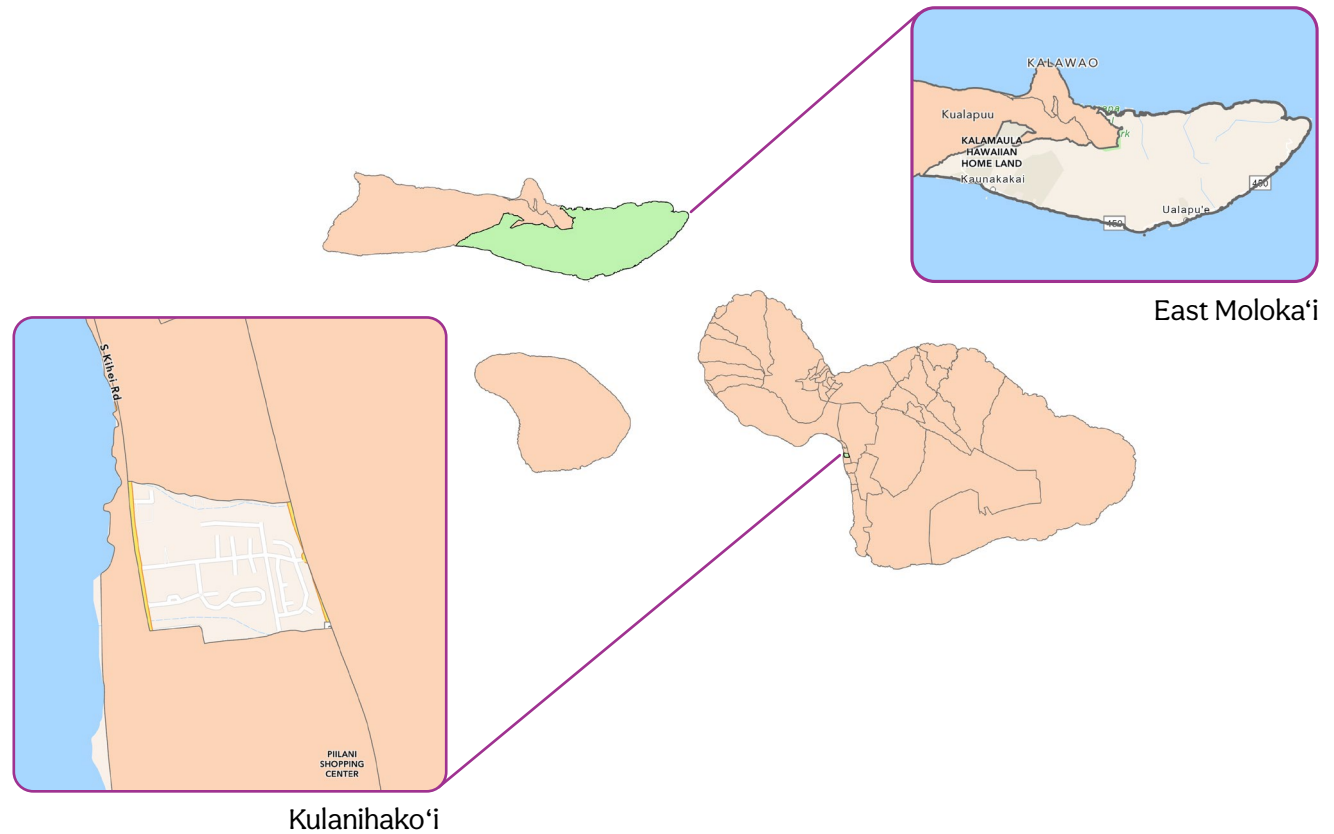


Table 3: Community Profiles¹¹

Indicator	Kulanihako'i	East Moloka'i
Children under age 5	201	307
Median family income	\$61,909	\$64,688
% of low-income children	30.3	21.1
% of children in poverty	7.4	18.4
Seat density ages 0-4	.20	.27
Cost burden ages 0-4	18.4	13.5
Quality ages 0-4	43.1	99.8

A Closer Look: Continued

Kulanihako'i

The Kulanihako'i Street area between South Kihei Road and Pi'ilani Highway (census tract 15009030712) is a community in the top 30% of Maui County for economic need and the bottom 20% for overall ECE access (see Table 3). With an estimated 201 young children, the area's median family income is \$61,909, and 37.7% of its children are from poor or low-income households. The supply of ECE seats, .20 per child, is below average for Maui County and at 18.4% of the median neighborhood family income, costs are high. On the bright side, due to the presence of Head Start and accredited providers, 43.1% of seats are in high-quality programs.

This community is changing in the aftermath of the Maui fires. Since the data reported here were collected, in-migration has likely increased demand for ECE services in this already under-resourced area where providers serve families from the entire Kihei coast. Fortunately, Kihei Elementary will offer public pre-K in the fall of 2024 and there are plans to build new community housing with onsite child care. In addition to increasing ECE seats, taking steps to improve affordability and ensure access to infant-toddler care will support the resilience and strength of the Kulanihako'i community.

East Moloka'i

The eastern half of Moloka'i island, from 'Umipa'a through Kaunakakai to Halawa (census tract 15009031700) is an example of a high-needs community with good ECE access (see Table 3). This area is in the top 20% in Maui County for economic risk but also the top 20% for overall ECE access, with quality being especially strong. An estimated 307 young children live in East Moloka'i. The median family income is \$64,688, and 39.5% of its children are from poor or low-income households. The community has a high share of residents who are Native Hawaiian or part Hawaiian (59.2%). East Moloka'i has .27 nearby seats per young child, close to the county average. A nearby seat costs 13.5% of the median family income, and almost all ECE seats within a five-mile drive (99.8%) are in high-quality programs. The presence of public pre-K, Head Start, and accredited private providers explains this exceptional level of quality.

Recommendations for Maui County

For the foreseeable future, recovery from the 2023 fires will be the highest priority for Maui County; this includes providing ECE access for children who may experience multiple housing moves. In addition, the provisions of Act 46 require planning for the rapid and equitable expansion of public and private preschool access, increased support for providers to attain accreditation and demonstrate high-quality care, and constraining out-of-pocket costs to families. While working towards these goals, the need for infant-toddler care cannot be overlooked, along with the challenges of staffing and inflation. Suggestions to inform ECE expansion efforts in Maui County are given below.

- Identify children who have relocated on-island and, to the extent possible, offer priority enrollment, tuition assistance, and transportation. By offering stable, emotionally-responsive caretaking and open communication with families, ECE providers have an important role to play in supporting child and family resilience.
- With a preschool seat density index of .53 seats per child, the ECE supply is sufficient to serve a little more than half of Maui County's 3- and 4-year-olds. However, this still falls short of the goal of having enough seats to serve 80% of the preschool population that was set for the Lieutenant Governor's Ready Keiki initiative.¹² The ECE access web tool along with site location data on recently planned or opened public pre-K sites can identify underserved, low-income communities to prioritize, followed by middle-income, then high-income areas.
- With an infant-toddler seat density of .07, only 7% of very young children can be served in nearby infant-toddler centers or family child care homes. Develop a strategic plan to increase infant-toddler seats and address the issues of pay equity, the shortage of qualified infant-toddler staff, and the very high cost to providers of serving our youngest keiki.
- Quality should also be prioritized, especially for infant-toddler care. Offer supports such as coaching, technical assistance, and financial incentives to raise overall quality, and encourage more private providers to seek accreditation.
- As policies to reduce family copayments are enacted, monitor progress to ensure widespread awareness and enrollment of eligible children in subsidy programs.
- Collect data on the needs and preferences of commuting parents and those working nontraditional schedules to address the availability of ECE options close to employment centers and providers offering evening and weekend care.

For ECE access data in other parts of the state or specific communities within Maui County, please visit [Access to Early Childhood Care and Education in Hawai'i](#).

Endnotes

- ¹ National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2007). *The timing and quality of early experiences combine to shape brain architecture: Working paper No. 5*. https://developingchild.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2007/05/Timing_Quality_Early_Experiences-1.pdf; Phillips, D., Lipsey, M., Dodge, K. A., Haskins, R., Bassok, D., Burchinal, M., & Weiland, C. (2017). *The current state of scientific knowledge on pre-kindergarten effects*. New York: Brookings Institution and Duke Center for Child and Family Policy; Yoshikawa, H., Weiland, C., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2016). When does preschool matter? *The Future of Children*, 26(2), 21–35.
- ² Malik, R. (2018). *The effects of universal preschool in Washington, DC: Children's learning and mothers' earnings*. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress; Morrissey, T. W. (2017). Child care and parent labor force participation: A review of the research literature. *Review of Economics of the Household*, 15, 1–24; OECD (2019). *Education at a glance 2019: OECD Indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- ³ Council of Economic Advisors (2015). *The economics of early childhood investments*. Washington, DC: Author. <https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-d&q=Council+of+Economic+Advisors+%282015%29,+The+economics+of+early+childhood+investments>; Karoly, L.A. (2016). The economic returns to early childhood education. *The Future of Children*, 26(2), 37–56.
- ⁴ DeBaryshe, B., Stern, I., Nguyen, M., Azuma, J., & Chen, Q. (2023). *Hawaii's critical shortage of infant-toddler care*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Center on the Family. <https://uhfamily.hawaii.edu/publications>; Center on the Family (2024). *Access to early childhood education and care in Hawai'i*. [Website] <https://ecemaps.uhfamily.hawaii.edu>
- ⁵ Relating to access to learning, Act 46 (2020). <https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/sessions/session2020/bills/GM1151.PDF>.
- ⁶ Improving child care access, affordability, and stability in the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) (Final rule). *Federal Register*, 89:42 (March 1, 2024) pp 15366–15415. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/03/01/2024-04139/improving-child-care-access-affordability-and-stability-in-the-child-care-and-development-fund-ccdf>
- ⁷ National Association for the Education of Young Children, National Early Childhood Program Accreditation, National Association for Family Child Care.
- ⁸ U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). *2016–2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, Table B01001: Sex by age*; U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). *2016–2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, Table B19125: Median family income in the past 12 months by presence of own children under 18 years*; U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). *2016–2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, Table B17024: Age by ratio of income to poverty level in the past 12 months*.
- ⁹ Data sources: State of Hawai'i Executive Office on Early Learning, People Attentive to Children (PATCH), Hawai'i State Public Charter School Commission, State of Hawai'i Department of Human Services Child Care Office.
- ¹⁰ Data source: Center on the Family (2024). *Access to early childhood care and education in Hawai'i*. [Website] <https://ecemaps.uhfamily.hawaii.edu>. For age-specific indexes, seat counts were based on license type and reported enrollment of children 0–2 vs. 3–4
- ¹¹ Data sources: Center on the Family (2024). *Access to early childhood care and education in Hawai'i*. [Website] <https://ecemaps.uhfamily.hawaii.edu>; U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). *2016–2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, Table B01001: Sex by age*; U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). *2016–2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, Table B19125: Median family income in the past 12 months by presence of own children under 18 years*; U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). *2016–2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, Table B17024: Age by ratio of income to poverty level in the past 12 months*;
- ¹² Office of the Lieutenant Governor (2023). *Ready Keiki*. [Website] <https://www.readykeiki.org/>

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