

*Examining the barriers and opportunities Colorado communities face  
as we work to ensure economic mobility for every Coloradan.*

# **Defining Colorado's Middle Class Analysis**

Highlights from “Colorado Middle Class Families: Characteristics and Cost Pressures”

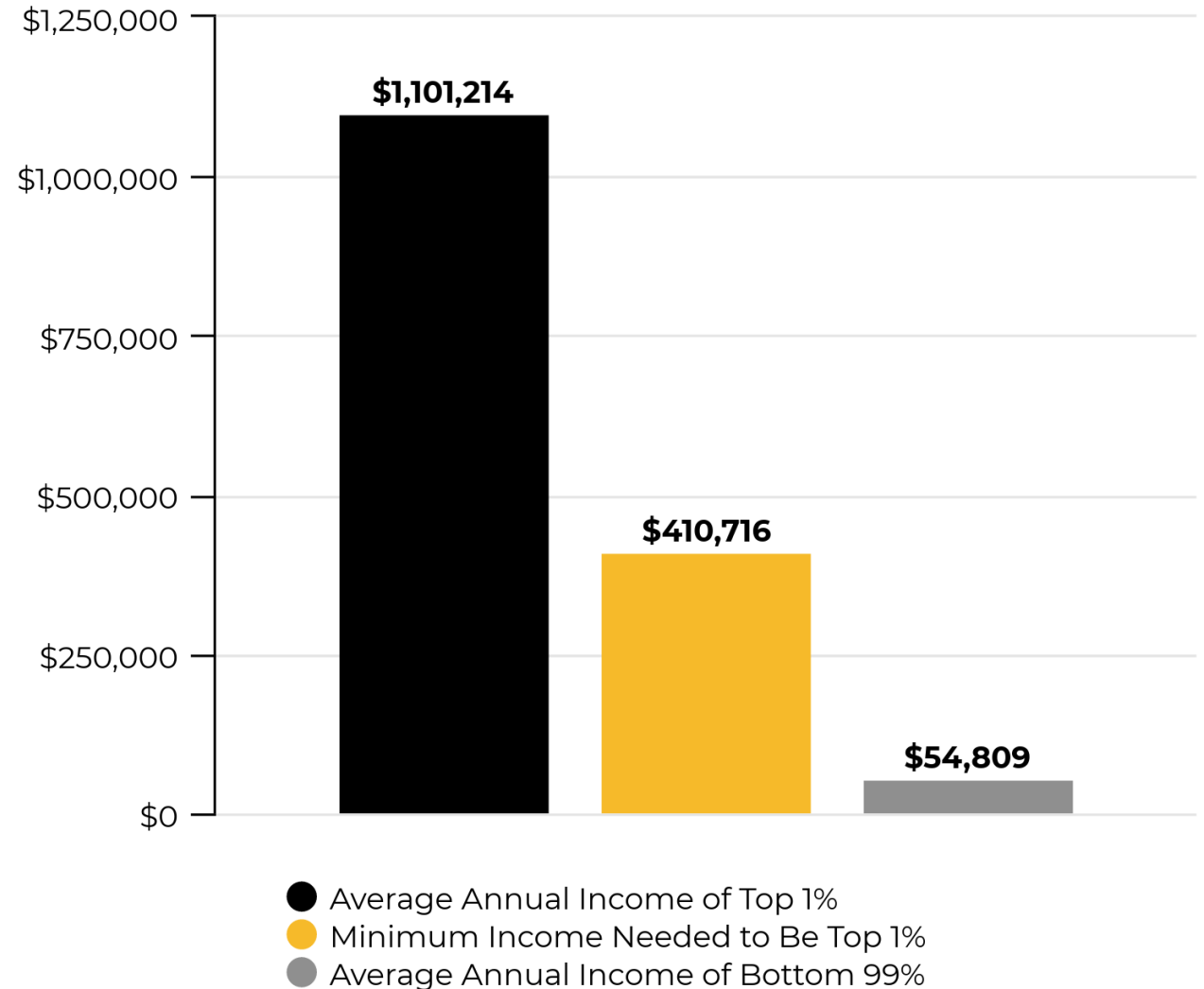
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# Background: Growing Inequality

The divide between Colorado's  
top and bottom is widening

## COMPARING COLORADO'S TOP 1% TO THE BOTTOM 99%





## Background

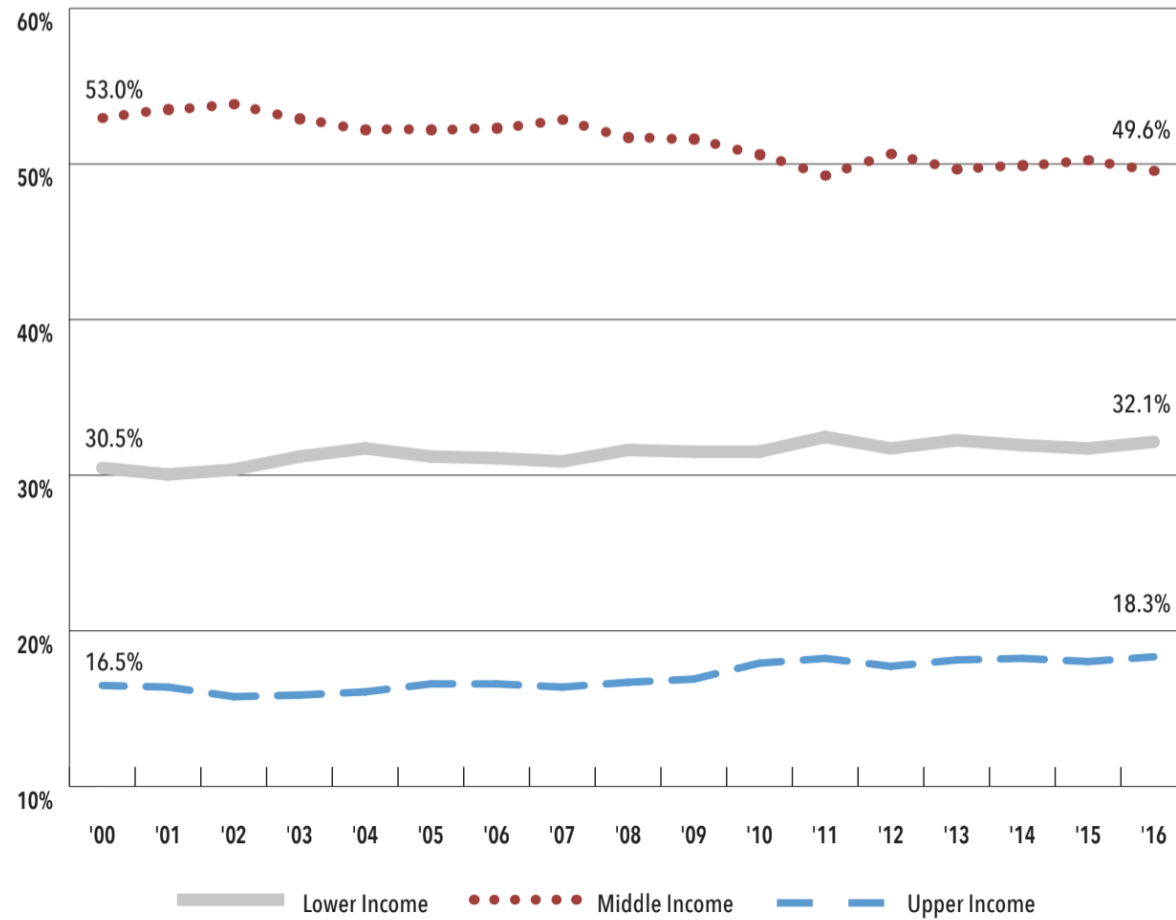
In 2004, **13% of Colorado workers** were employed in jobs paying below 100% FPL.


In 2016, the amount of Coloradans working in low-wage jobs **was up to 22%**.

**27% of Coloradans** live below the “Self Sufficiency Standard.”

Colorado's middle-income families are disappearing

FIGURE 3: PERCENTAGE OF LOWER-, MIDDLE-, AND UPPER-INCOME FAMILIES IN COLORADO, 2000-2016



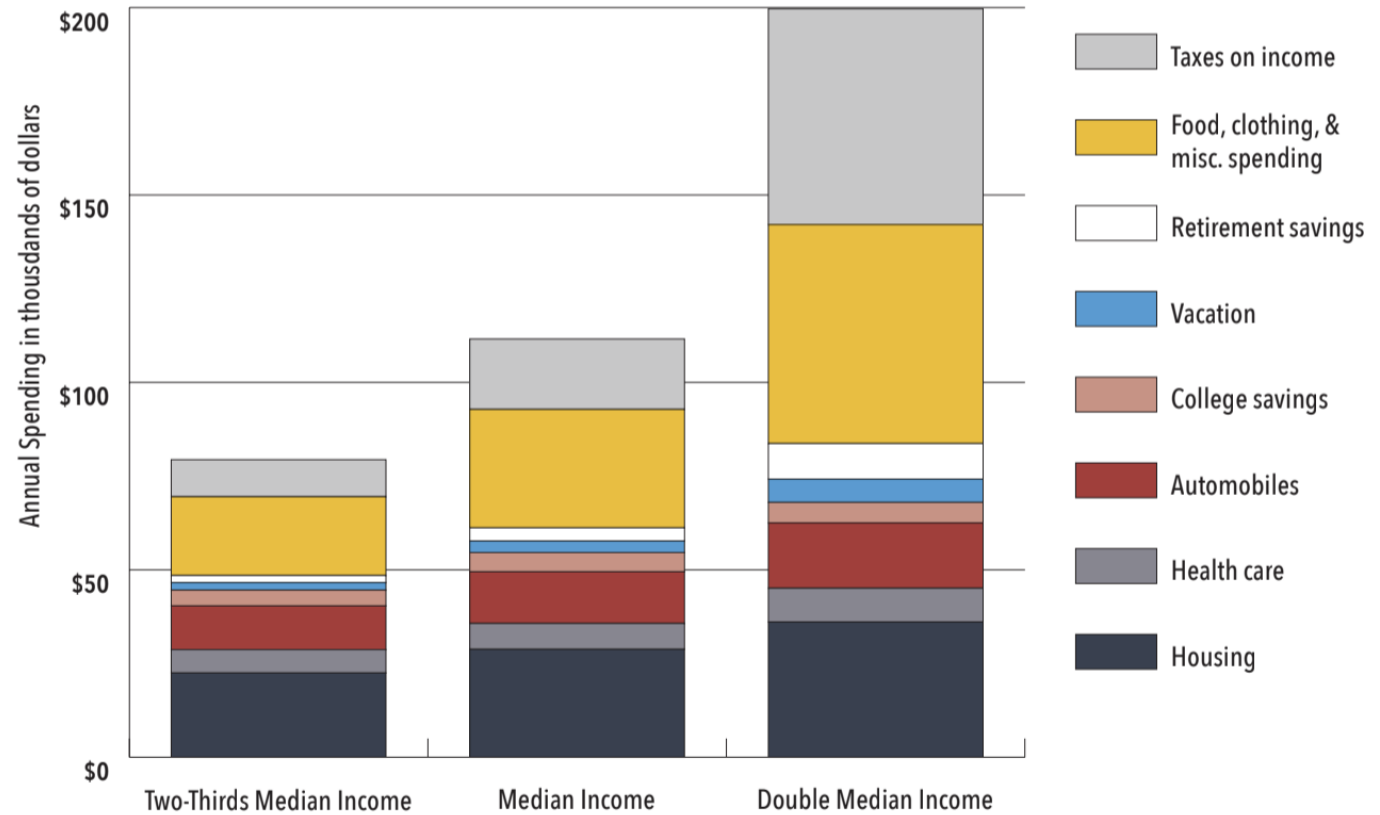


The Bell's look  
at Colorado's  
middle class

- A Middle Class income range has gone up by roughly \$20,000 per year
- Two earners are essential to making the income necessary to afford an aspirational middle class budget
- Child Care, higher education, and housing are the primary hurdles families must overcome. Student debt has gone up dramatically for these families.
- Only  $\frac{1}{4}$  of middle income families have children in the home and families are having children later.

# The Bell's look at Colorado's middle class

**FIGURE 9: EXAMPLE MIDDLE CLASS BUDGET FOR TWO-ADULT, TWO-CHILD FAMILIES IN COLORADO, 2016  
(HOMEOWNERS WITH CHILDREN IN SCHOOL)**



**Two-Thirds Median**

Income: \$68,800  
 Spending: \$82,929  
**Deficit: \$14,129**

**Median**

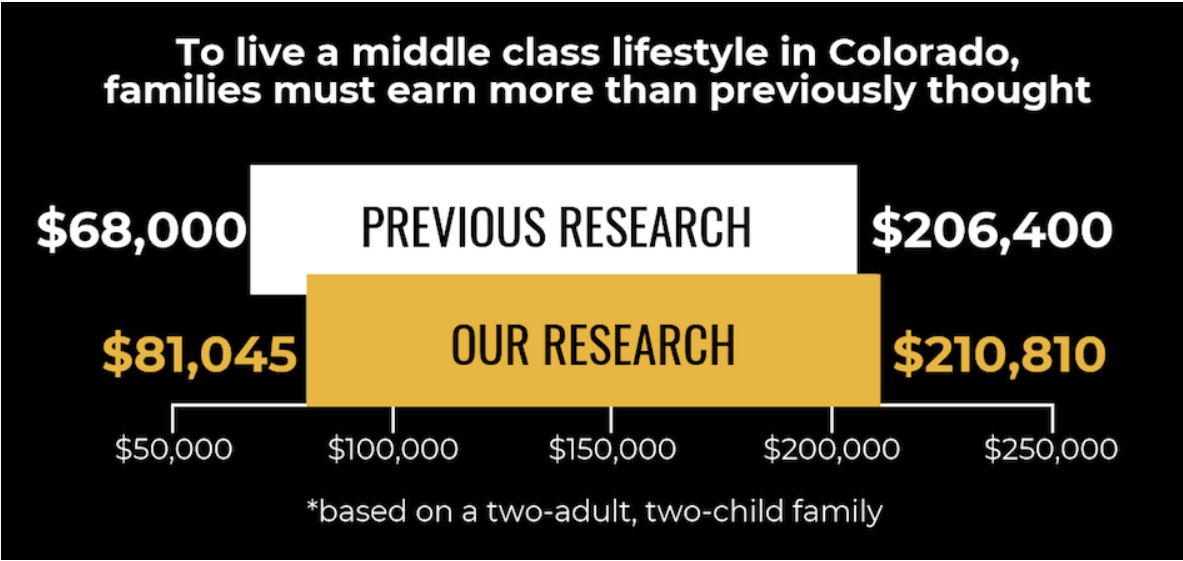
Income: \$103,200  
 Spending: \$115,450  
**Deficit: \$12,250**

**Double Median**

Income: \$206,400  
 Spending: \$203,688  
**Surplus: \$2,712**

The Bell's look at Colorado's middle class

Our income-based definition finds nearly half of all Colorado families are in the middle class



From an aspirational perspective, substantially fewer families have incomes to support a middle class lifestyle in Colorado

*(Exercise is akin to a "self-sufficiency standard" for middle class aspirations)*

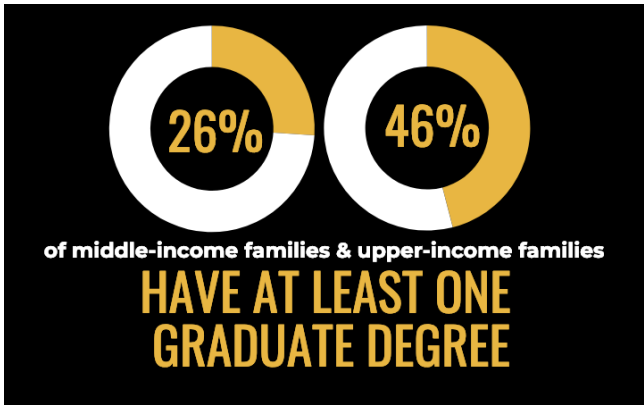
# Colorado occupations rated by likelihood of entering the middle class and moving upward

The Bell's look at Colorado's middle class

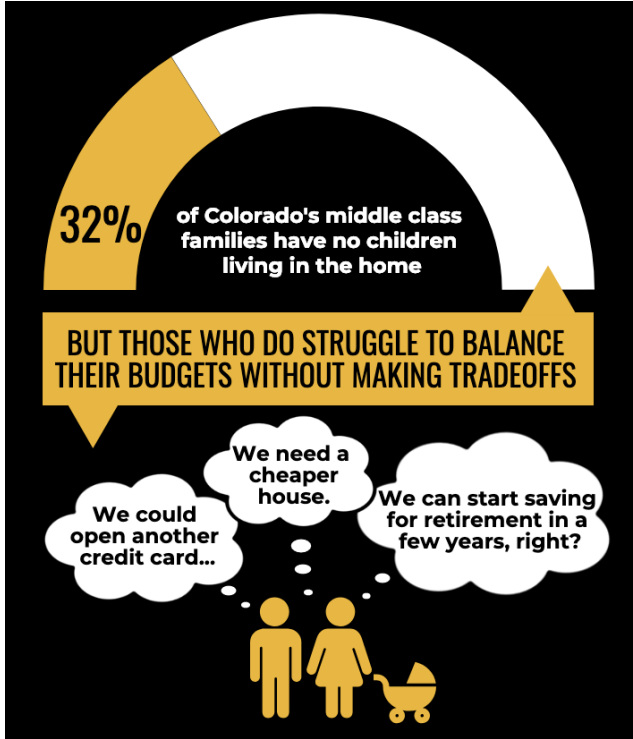
		Likelihood of moving up income classes		
		Low		High
Likelihood of entering the middle class	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations</li> <li>• Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations</li> <li>• Healthcare Support Occupations</li> <li>• Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers</li> <li>• Personal Care and Service Occupations</li> <li>• Cashiers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction and Extraction Occupations, Including Construction Laborers</li> <li>• Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations</li> <li>• Office and Administrative Support Occupations</li> <li>• Protective Service Occupations</li> <li>• Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations</li> <li>• Retail Sales Workers and Supervisors</li> <li>• Production Occupations</li> <li>• Transportation and Material Moving Occupations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations, Excluding Registered Nurses</li> <li>• Education, Training, and Library Occupations</li> <li>• Sales and Related Occupations, Excluding Cashiers, Retail Sales Workers, and Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers</li> </ul>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters</li> <li>• Carpenters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Architecture and Engineering Occupations</li> <li>• Business and Financial Operations Occupations</li> <li>• Computer and Mathematical Occupations</li> <li>• Management Occupations</li> <li>• Registered Nurses</li> </ul>
	High			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal Occupations</li> </ul>



The Bell's look at Colorado's middle class



To maintain a middle class lifestyle, Colorado families need two wage earners. Most have at least one in a **MANAGEMENT OR PROFESSIONAL OCCUPATION**



## The Bell's look at Colorado's middle class

- Our income-based definition finds nearly half of all Colorado families in the middle class
- From an aspirational perspective, substantially fewer families have incomes to support a middle class lifestyle in Colorado
- Exercise is akin to a “self-sufficiency standard” for middle class aspirations

	Middle-Income Family Type		
	Two-Adult, Two-Child	Two-Adult, One- Child	One-Adult, Two- Child
Income-Based Definition	57.1%	57.4%	51.0%
Expense-Based Definition	48.7%	49.4%	37.9%
Difference (in percentage points)	8.4	8.0	13.1