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Introduction

Since December 2022, Denver became a major destination for migrants arriving through the southern border from South and Central American countries. About 45,000 migrants have arrived in the Denver metro area since December 2022. It is unknown how many of the people receiving services have entered the country legally or illegally. The city estimates roughly half have remained in the metro area.ⁱ

Costs directly to the city budget are a fraction of what officials projected in the spring. However, total taxpayer expenses are twice the amount projected by the city earlier this year. The Common Sense Institute estimates City of Denver along with regional education and healthcare organizations have spent an estimated \$356 million to date on migrant response, or roughly \$7,900 per migrant. This would equate to 8% of the City of Denver's 2025 budget of \$4.4 billion.

Key Findings

- **Daily Arrivals**
 - Daily arrivals of migrants slowed considerably through 2024 from over 5,000 per day in January 2024 to fewer than a dozen per-day in November. As of November 2, 2024, there have been 45,000 total arrivals since December 2022, according to figures supplied by the city.
- **School Districts**
 - Since December 2022, 16,197 migrant students enrolled in Denver metro schools.
 - The total cost to Denver metro schools related to new migrant students is \$228 million annually, which would equate to 1-2% of the total state K-12 education budget for the 2024-25 academic year.
- **Hospitals**
 - In the Denver metro area, hospitals spend about \$2,931 in uncompensated care per migrant patient.
 - Emergency departments in the Denver metro area have delivered an estimated \$49 million in uncompensated care to migrants.
- **City of Denver**
 - The City has spent \$79 million on all support services as of November 15, 2024. These include but are not limited to:
 - Facilities and hotels for temporary shelter
 - Housing assistance up to six months of rent
 - Transportation
 - Food distribution
 - Childcare

Impact on Denver Metro School Districts

Schools in the Denver metro area spend an estimated \$228 million on migrants student. With a \$9.7 billion state budget approved for the 2024-25 academic year, this would equate to 1-2% of state education spending.

In May 2024, records from Denver metro schools showed the numbers of migrant children enrolled since December 2022. In May, that figure was approximately 15,000. Assuming student enrollment grew at the same rate as daily migrant arrivals since May, there are currently an estimated 16,197 migrant children enrolled in Denver metro K-12 schools.

Previous CSI reporting estimated the per student cost of instruction and support in the Denver metro to be \$14,100 per year. Assuming this cost across all recent migrant students totals \$228 million. The migrant population has not only remained in Denver. Of the migrant children enrolled after December 2022, over half are shown to be in districts other than Denver Public Schools.

Healthcare System Costs

As with student absorption, healthcare costs are not limited to Denver alone. Denver Health reported \$10 million of spending on migrants in 2023. UHealth, which does not have a campus in Denver, reported migrant-related uncompensated care delivery to be about \$2,931 per visit per migrant.ⁱⁱ

CSI estimated the number of likely visits to emergency departments based on length of stay and migrant arrival projections.ⁱⁱⁱ This assumes one emergency department visit per year^{iv}. With 16,760 visits to Denver metro emergency departments from December 2022 to the present, providers would have delivered \$49,124,029 of uncompensated care to migrants.

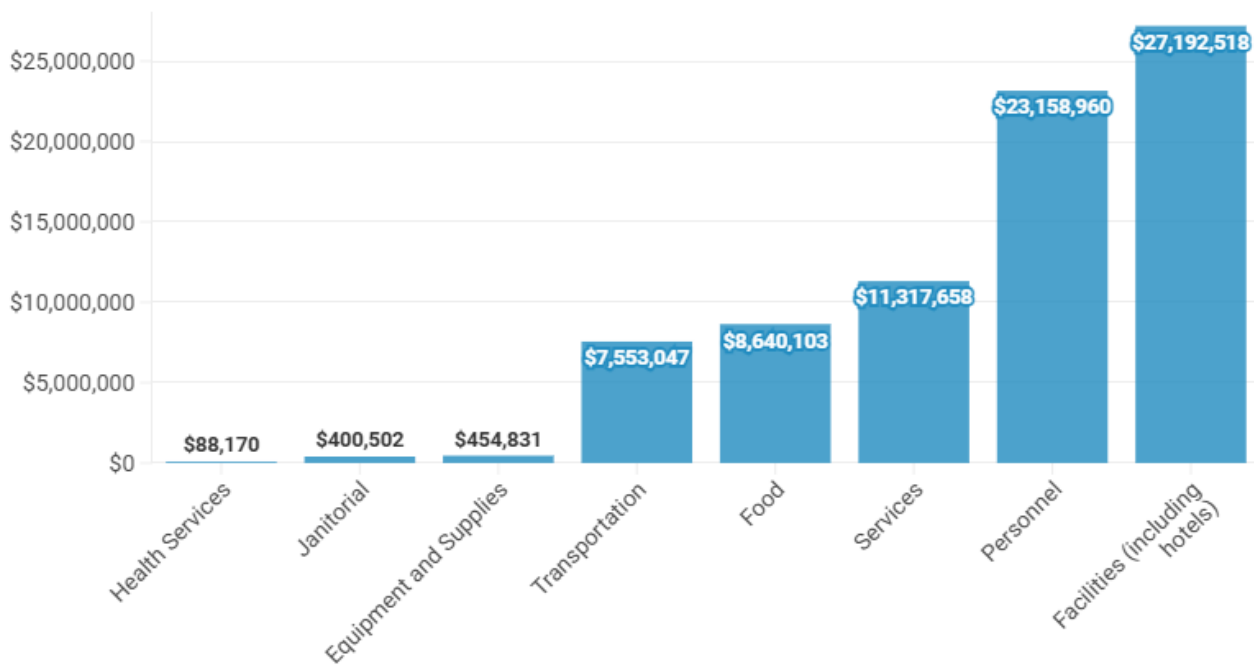
City of Denver Costs

During the height of the migrant influx in January 2024, officials estimated Denver was going to spend \$180 million through 2024. Actual expenditures tracked by the city now show it only spent \$79 million.

Of the total, 34.5% has been spent on facilities including hotels, 29.4% on personnel, 14% on services, and 11% on food.

Denver Migrant Spending By Category

December 2022 - November 15, 2024



Source: City of Denver



Bottom Line

As the national conversation continues around migrants, Denver’s daily arrivals of asylum seekers from the southern border has slowed significantly, but taxpayer costs have continued. From December 1, 2022, to date, the city has counted 45,000 total arrivals, half of which it estimates have remained in the Denver metro area. City spending will total an estimated \$79 million through 2024, after which the services will be reduced to \$12.5 million in 2025. In the meantime, area schools and hospitals will have spent an estimated \$49 million and \$228 million, respectively, on resources, instruction, and care.

ⁱ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/denver-migrants-influx-1.7161780>

ⁱⁱ https://denvergazette.com/news/uhealth-uncompensated-care-for-immigrants-soars/article_b28aa6d2-c6a6-11ee-86a0-2fc25444995e.html

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7733155/>

^{iv} <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7733155/>