



Children in the States

NORTH CAROLINA

September 2015

Child Population

2,287,549 children lived in North Carolina in 2014; 46 percent were children of color.

- 54 percent were White
- 15 percent were Hispanic
- 23 percent were Black
- 3 percent were Asian
- 4 percent were two or more races
- 1 percent were American Indian/Alaska Native
- <1 percent were Pacific Islander

Child Poverty

Nearly 1 in 4 (24.3 percent) of North Carolina's children were poor in 2014, a total of 548,542 children.¹

- North Carolina ranked 38th in child poverty among states.²
- More than 1 in 10 children lived in extreme poverty at less than half the poverty level.
- The youngest children were the poorest age group. Nearly 3 in 10 children under age 6 were poor; more than 2 in 5 of the poor children were extremely poor.

Children of color in North Carolina are disproportionately poor.

- Nearly 2 in 5 Black children, more than 2 in 5 Hispanic children, and nearly 2 in 5 American Indian/Alaska Native children were poor in 2014, compared to nearly 1 in 7 White children.

Child Hunger and Homelessness

Child poverty in North Carolina leads to unacceptable child homelessness and hunger.

- More than 27,000 North Carolina public school students were homeless in the 2012-2013 school year.
- In 2014, 2 full-time minimum-wage jobs were necessary to be able to afford a fair market rent two-bedroom apartment in North Carolina and still have enough left over for food, utilities and other necessities.
- More than 26 percent of children lived in households that lacked access to adequate food in 2013. More than 31 percent of children ages 10-17 were overweight or obese in 2011-2012. North Carolina ranked 41st of 50 states in child food security and 29th in percent of children overweight and obese.
- Nearly 33 percent of North Carolina children relied on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to meet their nutritional needs on an average month in FY2013.
- More than 83 percent of North Carolina children receiving a free and reduced-price lunch during the school year did not participate in Summer Nutrition Programs in 2014 – ranking North Carolina 20th of 50 states in ensuring that children have adequate summer nutrition.

Child Health

Although the majority of North Carolina's children have access to health coverage, that does not guarantee enrollment in coverage and access to care, which can jeopardize their education and their future.

- In 2013, 91.6 percent of eligible children participated in Medicaid or Health Choice for Children, North Carolina's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). In FY2013, a total of 1,162,098 North Carolina children ages 0-18 were enrolled in Medicaid, and 260,964 in Health Choice for Children.

¹ A family of four was poor if it was living on less than \$23,834 a year, \$1,986 a month, \$458 a week and \$65 a day, and extremely poor if living on less than \$11,917 a year, \$993 a month, \$229 a week and \$33 a day.

² The state ranked 1st is the best for children for that outcome and the state ranked 50th is the worst for children.

- More than 144,000 North Carolina children ages 0-17 (6.3 percent) were uninsured in 2013. The state had the 20th highest rate of uninsured children among states.
- In 2012, 107,000 uninsured children ages 0-18 were eligible for Medicaid or Health Choice for Children but not enrolled.

Early Childhood and Education

Lack of early childhood investments deprives children of critical supports in the early years and reduces school readiness.

- In 2013, the average annual cost of center-based child care for an infant was \$9,107 – 39.8 percent more than the average annual in-state tuition and fees at a public four-year college in North Carolina.
- North Carolina had 20,162 children on a waiting list for child care assistance in early 2014.
- On average, 42 percent of North Carolina’s 3- and 4-year-olds were enrolled in public or private preschool from 2011-2013. Only 31 percent of children from families with incomes under 200 percent of poverty were enrolled.
- North Carolina’s state-funded preschool program met 10 of the 10 quality benchmarks set by the National Institute for Early Education Research in 2013-2014.

North Carolina’s schools fail to educate all children, closing off a crucial pathway out of poverty.

- In 2013, 65 percent of North Carolina’s fourth grade public school students were unable to read at grade level and 55 percent were unable to compute at grade level.
 - 80 percent of Black fourth graders could not read at grade level and 78 percent could not compute.
 - 77 percent of Hispanic fourth graders could not read at grade level and 65 percent could not compute.
- 79 percent of North Carolina public high school students graduated on time in 2012, placing North Carolina 30th among states. 68 percent of Black students and 78 percent of Hispanic students graduated on time compared to 82 percent of White students.
- Students who are suspended or expelled are more likely to drop out of school. During the 2011-2012 school year, 13 percent of North Carolina public secondary school students received at least one out-of-school suspension, placing North Carolina 37th among 48 ranked states. For Black and Hispanic students, the percentages were 25 percent and 12 percent, respectively.

Children Facing Special Risks

Many vulnerable children need treatment, services and permanent families.

- In North Carolina, 19,873 children were abused or neglected in 2013 – 8.7 out of 1,000 children.
- On the last day of FY2013, there were 8,920 North Carolina children in foster care.

Too many North Carolina children are involved in the juvenile justice system.

- 36,065 children were arrested in North Carolina in 2012 – a rate of 3,523 out of 100,000 children ages 10-17.
- 567 children and youth were in residential placement in 2011. 66 percent of the children in residential placement were Black, 7 percent were Hispanic, and 23 percent were White.
- 68 North Carolina children were in adult jails in 2013.
- North Carolina spent 3.4 times as much per prisoner as per public school student in FY2012.

North Carolina ranked 23rd out of 41 ranked states in preventing child and teen gun deaths.

- A total of 85 children and teens were killed by guns in North Carolina in 2013 – a rate of 3.3 out of 100,000 children and teens.

For sources please visit www.childrensdefense.org/cits