

State of Texas Children 2019

★ Child Well-Being in Webb County ★

Located on the U.S.-Mexico border, Webb County is an international trading center, bursting with culture and opportunities. But the county's future success depends on whether every Webb County child has access to opportunities that help them reach their full potential. Ensuring the well-being of all Webb County's children—across neighborhood, income, immigration status, race and ethnicity—is essential for each child's well-being and that of the community.

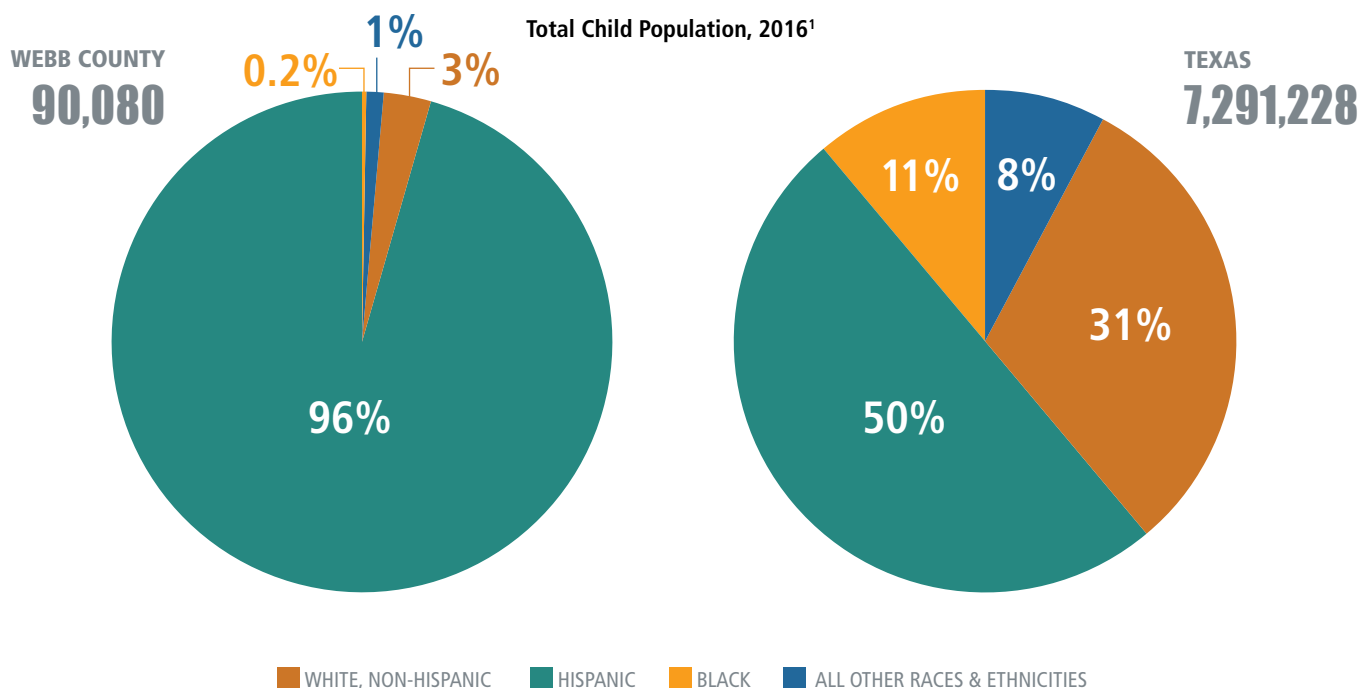
Unfortunately, Webb County is not doing as well as Texas overall on many indicators of children's health, education and financial security—revealing a pattern of underinvestment in children's futures. To provide a bright future for all children in Webb County, we must address the gaps in opportunities and outcomes for children.

This Webb County report is part of a larger series of reports in the Texas Kids Count project that focuses on equity in child well-being across Texas and in several of its major metro areas. See more at CPPP.org/kidscount.

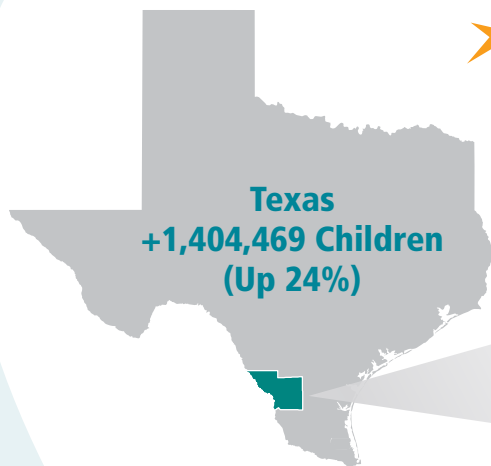
DEMOGRAPHICS

More than 90,000 children live in Webb County. Of those children, 96 percent are Hispanic, three percent are White, non-Hispanic, and the rest are another race or ethnicity. In comparison, 50 percent of children statewide are Hispanic. Of the remaining Texas children 31 percent are White, 11 percent are Black, and eight percent are another race and ethnicity.* Given that Hispanic children make up almost twice the child population in Webb County than they do statewide, analysis of racial and ethnic disparities may be difficult within the county given the small sizes of the non-Hispanic populations. As a result, we will examine outcomes comparing the county to the rest of the state, rather than looking at racial/ethnic equity within Webb County.

THE PRESENT: Hispanic children represent the future workforce and leaders of Webb County and of Texas.



** Note in this report, "White," "Black," and "All other Races & Ethnicities" are non-Hispanic*

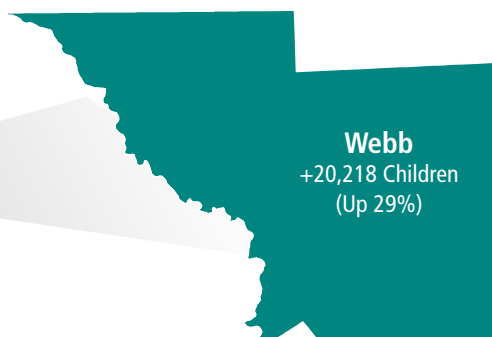


Texas
+1,404,469 Children
(Up 24%)



THE PAST: Webb County's child population has grown faster than Texas overall.

Change in Child Population, 2000-2016²



Webb
+20,218 Children
(Up 29%)



THE FUTURE: In 2050, more than 72,000 children are expected to live in Webb County, a 14% decline in child population.

Child Population Projections, 2015-2050³

Based on the most recent population projections from the Texas Demographic Center, Webb County is projected to see a 14 percent decline in child population by 2050. In this projection scenario, the Texas Demographic Center assumes migration trends from 2010-2015, which suggest a slower rate of growth in the Hispanic population. Given that Webb County is majority Hispanic, this slower rate of migration is likely to affect the child population projection. With the decline in children in Webb County's future, it will be important to invest in children growing up in Webb now to ensure the county can grow economically in the future.

11,415 fewer children
(14% decline) by 2050



WEBB COUNTY KIDS COUNT IN THE 2020 CENSUS

Webb County kids need to be counted in the 2020 Census.

Young children were nearly 3X as likely to be undercounted in Webb County as in Texas overall in the last Census.

Every 10 years, the U.S. Census Bureau carries out a constitutionally mandated count, or Census, of the nation's residents. And the stakes are high. Data from the 2020 Census will be used to determine the number of representatives Texans have in Congress and how much federal money Texas receives annually (typically in the billions of dollars) to support quality of life services like education, housing, transportation, and health care.⁴



OUR VOICE

The Census shows how many people live in an area, which determines the number of representatives Texans have in Congress and the number of electoral votes Texas has in presidential elections.



OUR QUALITY OF LIFE

Much of our federal tax money that we send to Washington comes back to Texas in accordance with Census calculations, and supports housing, transportation and other services we use.



OUR BUSINESS

Companies use population and demographic data from the Census to determine where to set up shop and expand, creating jobs and generating opportunities for Texans.

Unfortunately, the 2020 Census faces barriers to a fair and accurate count, including the underfunding of the Census Bureau by Congress in the lead up to the Census, the rollout of a brand new online reporting system, and the chilling effect from the failed attempt to add a citizenship question to the census.⁵ As in past Censuses, cities and counties across Texas are forming Complete Count Committees at the state and local levels to help ensure an accurate count.⁶ If Texas residents are undercounted by even one percent, Texas could lose at least \$300 million per year over the next decade.⁷ In 2010, undercounts occurred in areas across Texas including communities along the Texas/Mexico border and among children under the age of five.⁸

In the 2010 Census, 5.0 percent of children under the age of five in Texas were undercounted.⁹ In Webb County, the undercount rate was almost 3 times larger, 14.3 percent of children under the age of five were undercounted in the 2010 Census.¹⁰

Young children are one of the most likely groups to be missed in the Census. Undercounting Webb County kids could mean fewer federal dollars for the community for education, school lunches, Head Start, Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as "food stamps"), and the Children's Health Insurance Program.¹²

2020 Census

In Texas, 30 percent of children under the age of five (about 582,000 children) live in hard-to-count communities¹ and are at especially high risk of being missed in the 2020 Census.¹¹



¹ Hard-to-count communities are ones in which the self-response mail-in rate in the 2010 census was 73% or less.

Making sure to count Webb County kids growing up in immigrant families.

In today's political climate, heated rhetoric about race, ethnicity, immigration and citizenship is often used to harm and is not based on fact. The addition of the citizenship question has been described as a scare tactic for immigrant undocumented families, including families that include citizens and non-citizens alike (this includes residents with authorization to work and live in the United States). Although a full analysis of the well-being of children in immigrant families is beyond the scope of this report, we provide the following information for Webb County children to help reinforce data-based civil discourse and refocus the conversation on child well-being to make sure kids in immigrant families are counted in the 2020 Census.

1

Race, ethnicity and immigration status are both distinct and overlapping.

In Webb County, 96.4 percent of the more than 90,000 children are of Hispanic ethnicity. Of the children of Hispanic ethnicity¹³ who live in Webb County, 98.5 percent identify their race as White and 1.5 percent as some other race.¹⁴



Children of Hispanic Ethnicity in Webb County by Race, 2017¹⁷

98.5% WHITE
1.5% SOME OTHER RACE

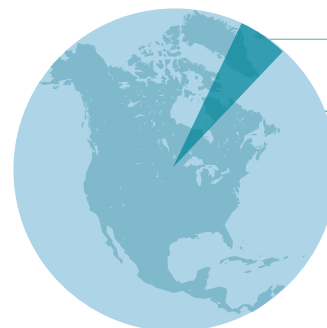
2

Ninety-six percent of Hispanic children in Webb County are U.S. citizens.¹⁵

Today, about 74 percent of Hispanic children in Webb County have at least one parent who is a U.S. citizen at birth.¹⁶ Only four percent of Hispanic children in Webb County are not U.S. citizens, and an even smaller subset are undocumented.

The vast majority of Hispanic children in Webb County are U.S. citizens.¹⁸

Citizenship Status of Hispanic Children in Webb County, 2017¹⁹



4% NOT U.S. CITIZENS
96% U.S. CITIZENS (85,388 children)

**The "Not U.S. Citizens" category includes both documented and undocumented children.*

3

More than half of Webb County kids (nearly 46,000) live with one or more parents who is an immigrant.²⁰

Of all Texas children with immigrant parents, almost half live with at least one parent who is not a U.S. citizen (this includes parents who are documented).²¹ Statewide, researchers estimate that around 13 percent of children in Texas live with one or more undocumented parents.²²

Thousands of Webb County kids live in immigrant families.²³



Out of nearly 90,000 kids in Webb County, more than half live with one or more parents who is an immigrant.

2020 Census: Ways to Count Kids in Webb County²⁴

Develop Local Support

- Connect to Texas's Regional Census Bureau Partnership Specialist Ana Leonard (ana.leonard@2020census.gov).
- Visit CPPP at our 2020 Census webpage (<http://bettertexasblog.org/2020-census-tx/>) for materials.
- Identify and meet with city or county officials like mayors, council members, or the county judge who can set the 2020 Census as a priority for local communities.

Develop a Plan

- Identify barriers to a complete count by holding public meetings or focus groups with community-based organizations to understand potential challenges and solutions.
- Identify trusted messengers from your community, including local leaders, community-based organizations, service providers, and faith leaders to be a part of the planning process.

Develop a Local Complete Count Committee (CCC)

A local CCC plays a key role in achieving a complete count because each Texas community is unique. Webb County can develop a robust plan to educate Texans in their communities on the 2020 Census and increase the response rate. Time is of the essence; get Webb County committed to the 2020 Census. To view two-pager to share in Webb County visit (<https://bit.ly/2Oj9l4Q>).

- Establish a Local CCC to increase awareness and motivate residents to respond to the 2020 Census.
- CCC subcommittees could include government, education, business, faith-based, media, community-based organizations, and business—each recruiting trusted messengers in those sectors to do direct outreach.
- If possible, local governments should commit resources such as full-time staff and city or county funding to help implement outreach efforts.
- Connect with local chambers of commerce, businesses, and philanthropy or foundations serving Webb County, and ask them to help fund your community's 2020 Census plan.



PLACE, RACE & POVERTY

Since Laredo's founding in 1755, the Webb County area, specifically Laredo, has held a unique role in the Texas economy by serving as a central point for international trade and tourism.²⁵ The county is mostly rural except along the border, where Laredo is located. The community is majority Hispanic—mainly Mexican-American—and has close ties to its sister city directly across the border, Nuevo Laredo.

Even though Webb County may have a prosperous trading center in Laredo, not all residents benefit from the thriving economy. In 2015, Laredo was found to be one of the most wealth-segregated communities in the country, where wealthy households (defined as households with annual incomes of \$200,000 or more) are most segregated from other income groups.²⁶ The north side of the city is more affluent, while south and west Laredo are more impoverished. In the rural areas of Webb County, there are a number of colonias (see page 7 to learn more).

The policies and practices that shaped Texas in the past have a profound effect on communities today. Barriers in housing, historical segregation of neighborhoods, employment, and education contribute to far too many children living in poverty and experiencing other troubling disparities across both race

and ethnicity. Today, nearly 38 percent of Hispanic children in Webb County live in poverty (e.g. a family of 4 living on less than \$24,600 per year²⁷), compared to 29 percent of Hispanic children statewide.²⁸

Research shows that the “neighborhood effects” of living in high-poverty areas influence not just children in low-income families, but all children who live in the area, including children who do not live in poverty themselves.²⁹ Neighborhoods of concentrated poverty can isolate residents from resources and opportunities.

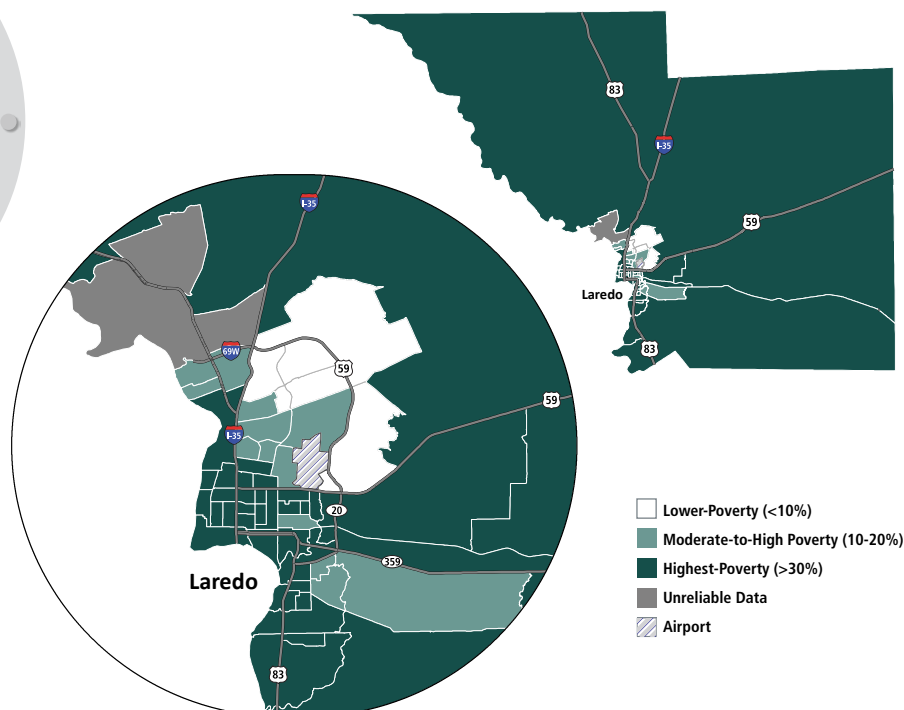
Seventy percent of children in Webb County live in high-poverty neighborhoods,³⁰ compared to 17 percent of children statewide.³¹

Children's opportunities for success can be measured by economic mobility, the degree to which a child's family background predicts the child's future outcomes.³² Both racial and income segregation are strongly connected to lower rates of economic mobility for all. Children who live in more segregated areas have less economic mobility than children who live in less segregated areas.³³



70% of Webb County's children live in high-poverty areas.

Total Poverty Rate by Neighborhood,² 2012-2016³⁴



² Neighborhoods are defined as census tracts, which are small statistical subdivisions of a county used by the Census Bureau.



Children growing up in colonias in Webb County face unique challenges. Colonias are residential communities along the U.S.-Mexico border that often lack the basic necessities for living (potable water, sewer systems, electricity, paved roads, safe housing, etc.).³⁵ Colonias are created when people live in unincorporated subdivisions on land that can't be used for farming. The developers then sell the land to low-income people searching for affordable housing. The developers and the local governments provide little to no infrastructure, and those who buy property in the colonias often construct their homes in phases as they can afford materials.³⁶

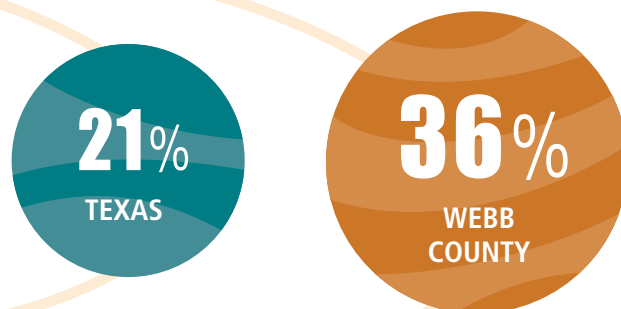
In 2014, Webb County was home to 62 colonias. This made it one of the top six counties with colonias in Texas.³⁷ On average, children living in colonias are more likely to experience poverty and receive public assistance. In Webb County, the poverty rate in colonias is 51.3 percent, and 39 percent of households received public assistance.³⁸ Over half (35) of the colonias in Webb County were found to lack platting (process of legally subdividing land), potable water, or adequate wastewater disposal. The Texas Secretary of State classified these 35 colonias as red under the colonias health-risk classification system, meaning colonias with these characteristics potentially pose the greatest public health risk.³⁹ Serious diseases occur at much higher rates in colonias than in Texas as a whole, and health problems often go untreated. Children growing up in poverty in colonias face barriers in housing, education, and health, which can lead to slowed growth and low educational development rates.⁴⁰

As colonias have grown, governments and other groups have worked to improve the conditions faced by residents, but limited resources restrict the impact of programs. Statewide reporting and funding on colonias has evaporated. Webb County is home to over 15,000 colonia residents. Addressing the needs of colonia residents and their children is critical to the region's future success.⁴¹



The rate of child poverty in Webb County is nearly twice as high as the statewide child poverty rate.

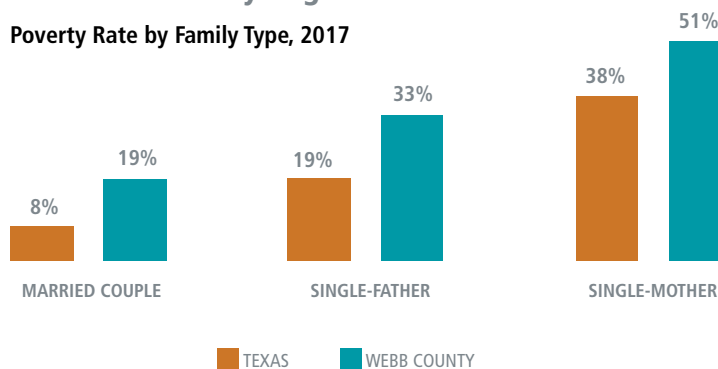
Child Poverty Rates, 2017⁴²



Factors like family structure and gender also influence the likelihood of living in poverty. Single-parent families in Webb County are more likely to live in poverty than married-couple families. Poverty rates for single parents also differ by gender, with single-mother families in Webb County being more likely to live in poverty than single-father families.⁴⁴ These gaps are likely fueled by the persistent earnings gap by gender in Texas, which stems from low pay in jobs with high concentrations of women and reduced earnings potential from taking time off work for caregiving responsibilities.⁴⁵

Poverty is most likely to affect children in families headed by single mothers.⁴³

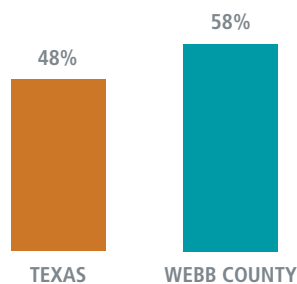
Poverty Rate by Family Type, 2017



For working parents and single-parent households, child care is essential. Forty-eight percent of Texans live in a child care desert. A child care desert is defined as "any Census tract with more than 50 children under age five that contains either no child care providers or so few options that there are more than three times as many children as licensed child care slots." Hispanic Texans are disproportionately affected with over half (54 percent) living in a child care desert. In Webb County, 58 percent of the Census tracts are child care deserts, meaning that working families have less access to child care.⁴⁶

Over half of Webb County is a child care desert.

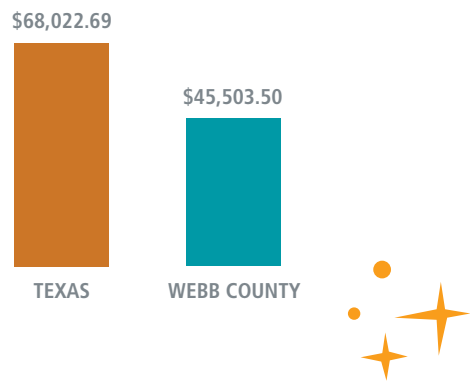
Child Care Deserts, 2017



Webb County has lower levels of unemployment than Texas overall, which is a good thing. Webb County residents with less education also are more likely to be employed than Webb County residents with some college or an associate's degree.⁴⁸ This may sound good, but the lower unemployment rates for Webb County residents with less education indicate that Webb County's jobs are more likely to be low-skill. Given the median household income for families is nearly \$23,000 below the Texas average, the jobs are also more likely to be low wage.⁴⁹ Since household income defines poverty, ensuring that parents have well-paying jobs and economic security is critical to fighting child poverty. Similarly, providing children with access to higher education or 'on-the-job' learning can also promote pathways out of poverty.

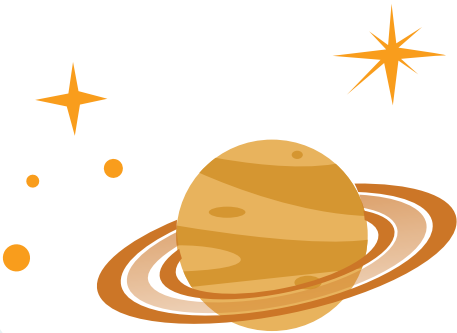
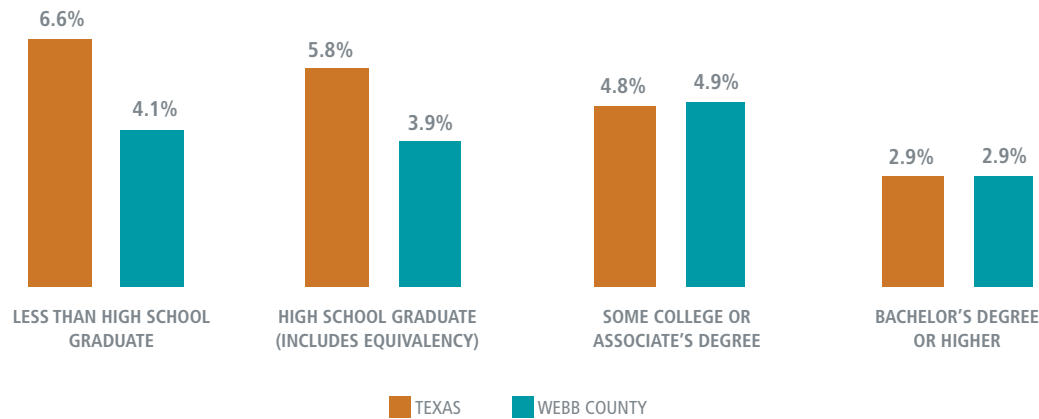
Households with children in Webb County generally have lower incomes than in Texas overall.

Median Income of Households with Children, 2017⁴⁷



Webb County residents with lower levels of education are less likely to be unemployed than in other places in Texas.

Unemployment Rate by Education Level (ages 25+)⁵⁰



HEALTH

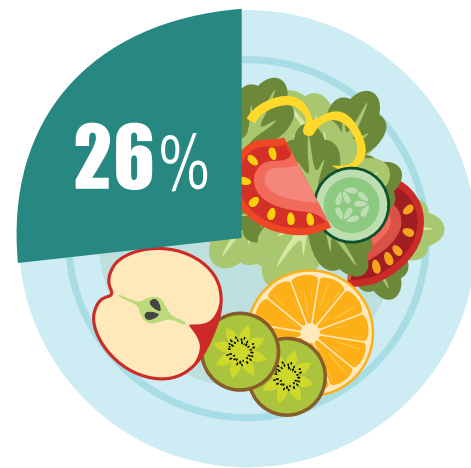
Place and poverty also affect children's health. Raising healthy children is about more than just encouraging kids to eat vegetables and exercise. Health is also about making sure all kids across race, ethnicity, language, or family income can access healthy meals regularly, live in safe environments, receive preventive health care, and see a doctor when they need to.

Food Insecurity

Twenty-six percent (23,500) of children in Webb County are food insecure, meaning they lack consistent access to enough food for a healthy diet. Statewide, 23 percent of children are food insecure, a symptom of economic instability.⁵¹ When families struggle financially, too often little money is left for food, increasing the chance that kids go hungry. When growing children lack essential nutrients, they can experience delays in physical, intellectual, and emotional growth.⁵² Hungry children have a harder time focusing in school and are more likely to have social and behavioral problems.⁵³ Higher obesity rates have been found among food insecure people, in part because low-income neighborhoods often lack access to high-quality, healthy foods.⁵⁴

Around 26 percent of children in Webb County lack consistent access to adequate food.

Child Food Insecurity Rate, 2016⁵⁵

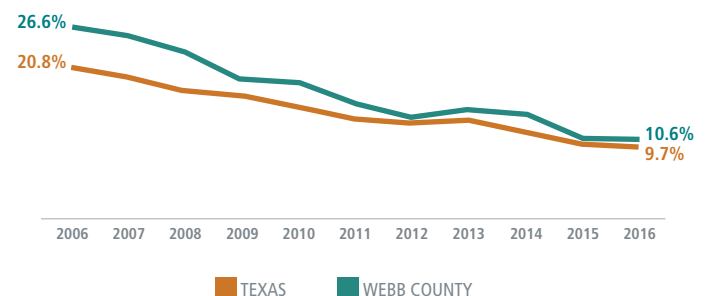


Access to Health Care

Consistent access to health care begins with adequate health insurance coverage. Webb County has higher child uninsured rates than the state. Hispanic children are the most likely to be uninsured, both in Webb County and in the state. One barrier is jobs that do not offer affordable insurance to families. Hispanic children are the least likely to be covered through their parents' employers, even though their parents have employment rates similar to, or even higher than, other racial/ethnic groups.⁵⁶ Hispanic families are also less likely to be aware of the subsidies available to help pay for insurance.⁵⁷ Research shows that expanding coverage to low income parents could improve child uninsured rates even more. Furthermore, non-citizens are more likely to face worries about immigration-related consequences even if their eligible family member is a citizen or lawful resident.⁵⁸ These deterrents to health care access for mixed-status families can be exacerbated by the lack of a pathway to citizenship for parents and anti-immigrant legislation, and ultimately can lead to worse health outcomes for children.⁵⁹

Uninsured rates have improved to close coverage gaps, but children in Webb County are still uninsured at a higher rate than the rest of Texas.⁶⁰

Child Uninsured Rates, 2006-2016

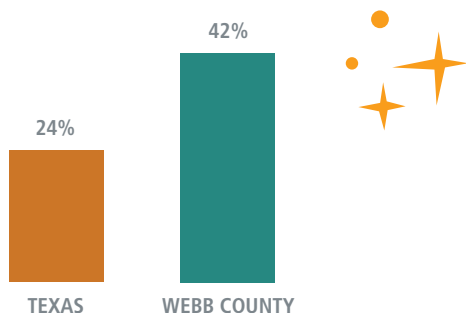


Maternal and Infant Health

Overall health and health care access for women before, during, and after pregnancy is critical to babies' health. Forty-two percent of women between the ages of 15 and 44 in Webb County lack health insurance, compared to 24 percent statewide.⁶¹ Being uninsured as a woman of childbearing age can lead to delayed or inconsistent care should she become pregnant.⁶²

Women of childbearing age are nearly twice as likely to be uninsured in Webb County than in the rest of Texas.⁶³

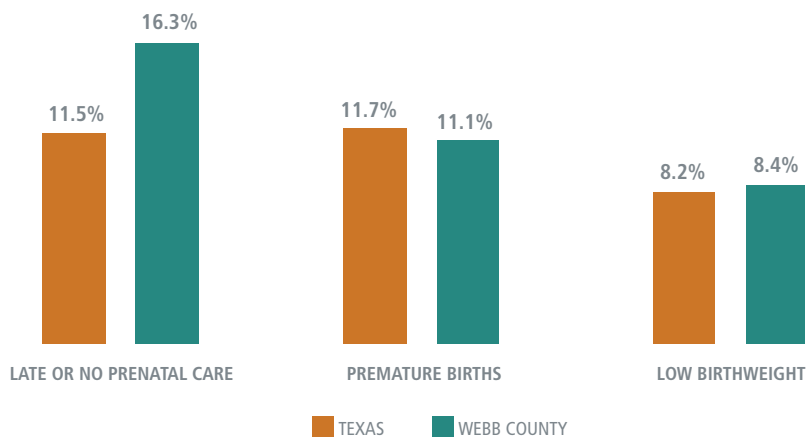
Uninsured Rate for Women of Childbearing Age (Ages 15-44), 2017



The most common barriers reported by Texas mothers with late or no prenatal care are being uninsured, not having enough money for the appointment, and not being able to book an appointment.⁶⁴ Black and Hispanic mothers are most likely to have late access to prenatal care.⁶⁵ Research also shows that mothers' chronic stress increases the risk of low birthweight and preterm births.⁶⁶ In Webb County, premature birthweights are slightly higher on average than in Texas.⁶⁷ The rate of mothers receiving late or no prenatal care in Webb County is nearly five percent higher than across Texas.⁶⁸ Prematurity and low birthweight can increase the risk of both physical and cognitive developmental delays.⁶⁹

Mothers in Webb County are at higher risk of receiving late or no prenatal care.⁷⁰

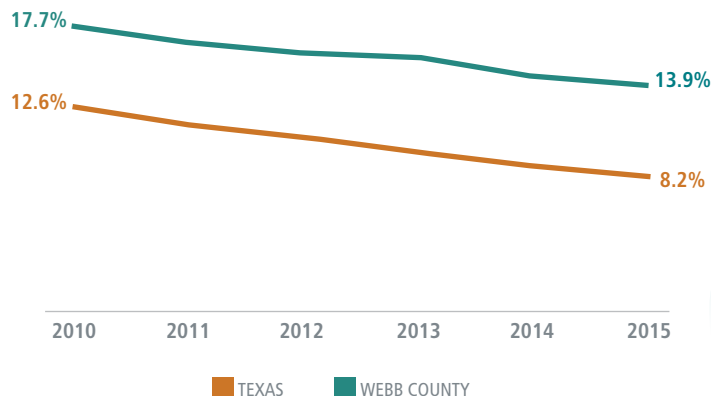
Infant Health Indicators, 2015



Maternal mortality is higher in Webb County than in Texas.

In 2014, the maternal mortality rate for Webb County women was slightly higher than Texas women (four deaths per 10,000 live births in Webb County versus three deaths per 10,000 live births in Texas).⁷¹ Pre-natal care starting in the second or third trimester is associated with a higher risk of maternal death.⁷² Hispanic women have lower rates of maternal mortality than White, non-Hispanic or Black, non-Hispanic women statewide.⁷³ Black women have the greatest risk of maternal death, and this risk exists regardless of income, education, marital status and other health factors.⁷⁴

The percentage of babies born to teens has declined but remains higher in Webb County than in Texas overall.⁷⁵



Birth rates for teens have decreased over the past decade but remain higher in Webb County, where 13.9 percent of all births are to teenagers ages 19 and younger, a rate consistently higher than the state.⁷⁶ Families with children born to teen mothers face more barriers, including being more likely to live in poverty, and teenage mothers are more likely to drop out of school.⁷⁷



EDUCATION

Every kid in Webb County deserves access to a quality education that helps them reach their full potential. And we know that different students need different resources and supports to be successful. However, today our education system often struggles to provide equitable opportunities for all children, and our school finance system must ensure their future and Webb County's economic security.

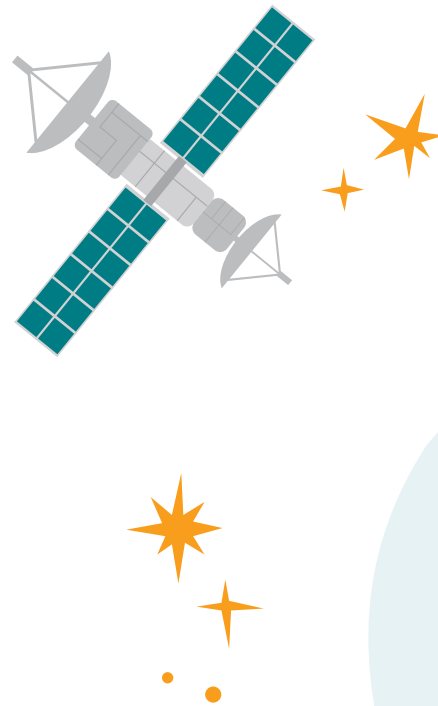
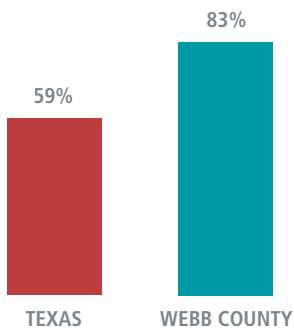
Low-income students in Webb County

Webb County has higher rates of economically disadvantaged students (students who are eligible for free or reduced-priced meals) than Texas overall.⁷⁸ Since most children attend schools they live near, patterns of residential segregation and poverty concentration are reflected in the racial, ethnic and economic makeup of schools and districts.

Research shows that, in general, students in high-poverty schools (in which more than 75 percent of students qualify for free or reduced lunch) have less access to effective teachers than students in low-poverty schools.⁷⁹ High-poverty schools also serve students who are more likely to face out-of-school challenges that are connected to academic readiness, test performance and educational achievement. These challenges include housing instability,⁸⁰ food insecurity⁸¹ and lack of access to health care.⁸²

Students in Webb County are more likely to be economically disadvantaged than students across Texas.⁸³

Percent of Students that are Economically Disadvantaged, 2017-2018

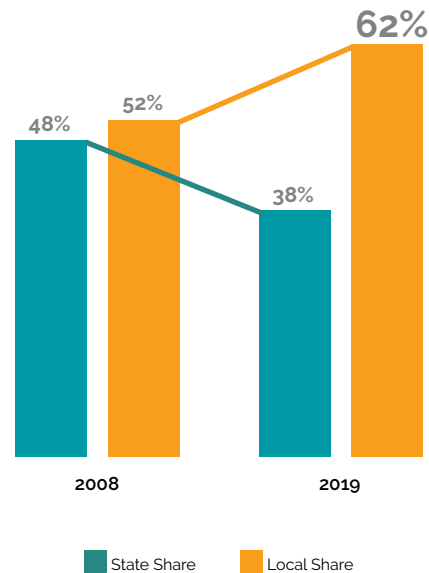


School funding matters for kids in Webb County.

Money matters in education, and the Texas school finance system does not adequately fund public education. Most school funding comes from local property taxes that are generated based on the property wealth within school districts. Property wealth, as well as school funding, varies throughout Texas. School districts that include homes or businesses with high property values can generate more tax money than school districts that include homes or businesses with lower property values. More financial resources in property wealthy districts mean better compensation, development, and support of teachers and staff, and better access to materials and equipment like books, science labs, art, music and technology.⁸⁴ The state provides funding in order to increase equity across districts. Unfortunately, the state reduced its investment over the last decade, leaving local property taxes to cover public-school costs, resulting in increased inequity.⁸⁵ School finance reform legislation passed in the 86th legislative session (2019) and contributed an additional \$11.6 billion dollars into public education through a combination of investments in education and property tax rate reductions. While these changes will increase the state's share of educational funding, this is achieved in large part through property tax rate reductions, some of which threaten tax equity between school districts.

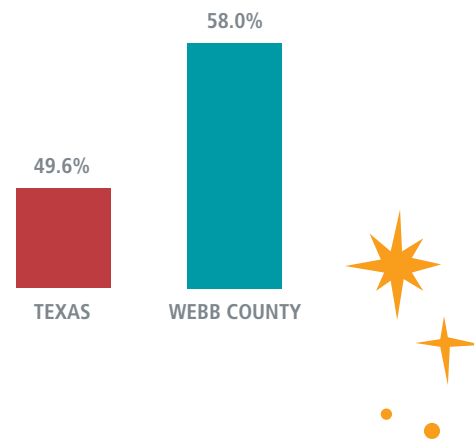
In addition to adequate funding for public schools, there is a need for an increased investment in prekindergarten, which is shown to improve school readiness, better develop social and behavioral skills, reduce grade retention, and improve standardized test scores.⁸⁷ In Webb County, there are 48 schools (out of 50 elementary schools) across the three school districts with Pre-K programs, only half of which are full-day programs with a handful more that have a mix of full/half day Pre-K.⁸⁸ Historically, the state has only paid for half-day Pre-K programs, leaving schools in Webb County to cover the extra costs to run full-day Pre-K. And even though Pre-K enrollment rate is higher than the state, thousands of children in Webb County are not accessing this valuable stage in education.⁸⁹ Also Included in the school finance reform legislation from the 86th legislative session is funding for a new Early Education Allotment. This provides 10 percent additional funding over base levels for every student in grades K – 3rd that is low-income or an English language learner (students who are both receive 20 percent additional funding). While Pre-K students continue to be funded at half-day level, districts are able to use the Early Education Allotment to cover the second half of the Pre-K day or invest in other strategies to improve educational outcomes for students in the early grades.

Share of state and local funding for Texas public schools, 2008 & 2019⁸⁶



Pre-K enrollment for four-year-olds is higher in Webb County than in Texas.

Pre-K Enrollment for Children Age 4, 2016-2017⁹⁰

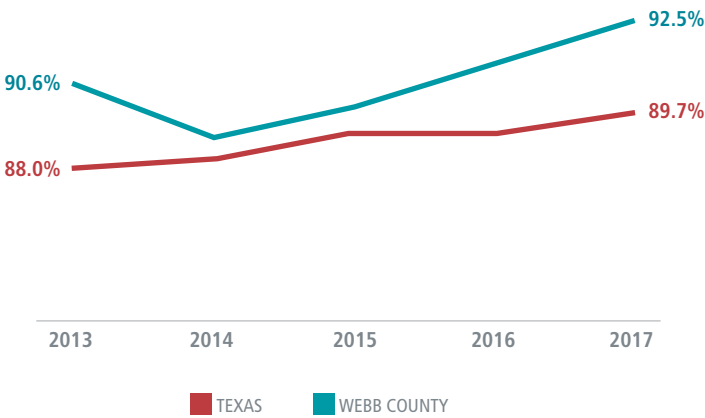


Public education is essential to building Webb County’s future workforce. The Texas Constitution guarantees the right of education to all Texas kids, regardless of citizenship status or primary language.⁹¹ Unfortunately, disparities exist in educational outcomes by place, citizenship status, and English as a second language.

Although external factors like poverty and health greatly affect students’ learning, the most important in-school influence on education is the quality of teaching.⁹² The school finance reform bill that passed in the 86th legislative session directs school districts to use a portion of the additional funding received to increase salaries for teachers and other school personnel. Research shows that increased investments in low-income districts lead to short-term outcomes like narrowing of SAT score gaps⁹³ and long-term benefits like an increased likelihood of completing high school.⁹⁴ Without a high school degree or credential, the chances of living in poverty are far higher. Fortunately, students in Webb County are graduating high school in four years at a slightly higher rate than students across the state.⁹⁵ Investment in students to complete high school can also lead to an increased likelihood of enrolling in college and earning a postsecondary degree,⁹⁶ and increased income in adulthood.⁹⁷

High school graduation rates in Webb County have improved and are higher than the Texas average.

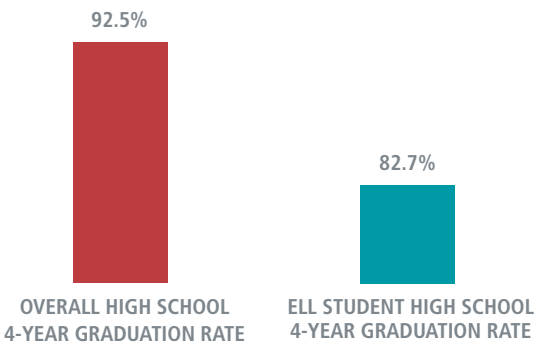
High School 4-Year Graduation Rates, 2013-2017⁹⁸



Webb County’s two largest school districts have higher rates of students in English Language Learner (ELL) programs than the state overall.⁹⁹ These students may need more support to achieve academic success, and additional resources are a worthwhile investment. Research shows that college graduates who speak a second language make higher wages than those who only speak English.¹⁰⁰ Currently, the ELL students in Webb County have four year graduation rates that lag behind Webb County’s overall four year graduation rates. Of all ELL students in Webb County, only 82.7 percent complete high school in four years.

Webb County ELL students have lower high school 4-Year Graduation rates.

High School 4-Year Graduation Rate, by ELL Student 2017¹⁰¹



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION

Webb County is a phenomenal place. It can be more of a place where every child has access to the basic building blocks—health, education, and financial security—to reach his or her full potential. Accomplishing this depends on enacting common-sense public policies and practices that develop all kids' capabilities.

For full citations please visit
<http://cphp.org/kidscount>

Policy Recommendations:

- Promote a fair and accurate 2020 Census. Leaders should form Complete Count Committees throughout Texas cities or counties and at the statewide level to ensure that everyone in Texas is counted.
- Implement policies to ensure sufficient wages and benefits for workers to meet their family's needs. Texas workers need access to family-sustaining wages and quality job benefits to build a strong future for their children. Raising the statewide or local minimum wage and increasing access to paid sick leave can improve the economic security of Texas families.
- Protect and expand comprehensive and affordable health insurance coverage. Expanding access to health insurance coverage to all Texans can improve maternal health, enhance financial security for families, and ensure health care access for the whole family.
- Protect Medicaid and CHIP from damaging cuts or policy changes that reduce coverage for Texans or their ability to access care.
- Maintain and improve access to family planning services by expanding access to prenatal care, support during pregnancy and postpartum care through more robust outreach and extended Medicaid maternity coverage.
- Ensure the Texas school finance system funds Texas schools at a level that meets the needs of all students. Texas' school finance system should mitigate inequities created by vast differences in property wealth between school districts. A provision in the new school finance reform law allows school districts to reduce individual tax rates. It is a departure from the long held principle that all districts should have access to similar revenue at similar tax rates. This provision should be repealed in order to preserve equity.
- Provide access to full-day Pre-K for eligible children statewide. Policymakers should provide support to economically disadvantaged students early by funding full-day, high quality pre-kindergarten for currently eligible children. High-quality Pre-K programs lead to savings for the state through improved academic performance and lower school dropout rates. To maintain the gains made in Pre-K, we must ensure students transition into a high-quality early education environment for grades K - 3rd. The legislature should provide full-day Pre-K funding and allow districts to use the new Early Education Allotment to exclusively improve the quality of grades K - 3rd.

Conclusion:

Equity in child well-being—by neighborhood, income, immigration status, race and ethnicity—should be a value reflected by our public policies. Webb County can continue to build on its community by not only creating strong, equity-focused policies at the local level, but also using its experience and influence to ensure that state lawmakers support their efforts.

Investments in child well-being across place, income, immigration status, race and ethnicity in Webb County can capitalize on the strengths of its child population and provide greater opportunity for all children to reach their potential.

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