



EVERY TEXAN



Methodist
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Ministries

SERVING HUMANITY TO HONOR GOD

2022 TEXAS KIDS COUNT

DATA BOOK

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Dear Friends,

We are pleased to share with you our 2022 Texas Kids Count report. Given the challenges of the last several years, we felt compelled to expand our indicators to include more measures of child health and well-being, making this year’s report our most comprehensive and in-depth look at the overall status of Texas’s children and youth.

Our growing state can – and must – offer children an equitable opportunity to experience a healthy, thriving childhood to prepare them to lead Texas into the future. Short-sighted public policies and inadequate investments in our children have created barriers keeping children from reaching their maximum potential. Texas continues to rank in the bottom five states for overall child well-being, according to the Annie E. Casey Kids Count national rankings.

Data also shows that too many children in Texas continue to face barriers to opportunity based on race and ethnicity, gender identity, and family financial security. Our children deserve to feel safe in their communities and schools, but barriers that persist due to inaction are still getting in the way.

Commonsense policy solutions and investments in the past have demonstrated that state leaders can put all Texas children on a path to better outcomes. We now have an opportunity to invest in positive outcomes for children by investing in programs that keep families out of poverty, such as Medicaid, the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and more.

This report provides data across five different child health and well-being categories, along with policy recommendations for state leaders from across the state to consider if we want to close opportunity gaps and outcomes for Texas children.

Together, we can work towards creating a state where our children will be well-supported and able to prosper because their prosperity is that of all of us.

Warmly,



Marisa Bono

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



ECONOMIC WELL-BEING



KEY FINDINGS:

- In Texas, 20% of children live in poverty, and Black and Latino/Hispanic children have the highest child poverty rates across racial and ethnic groups.¹
- The cost of raising a child takes up a large portion of a parent's income. For example, a parent making the federal minimum wage spends over half of their income on full-day child care.²
- For every 100 families living in poverty in Texas, only four receive TANF cash assistance (compared to the national rate of 21 per 100).³

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Implement policies to ensure sufficient wages and benefits for workers to meet their family's needs.** When parents are paid a living wage, they are able to invest in themselves and their children's futures. Raising the statewide or local minimum wage and increasing access to paid sick leave can improve the economic security of all Texas families.
- **Invest in programs that help keep families out of poverty.** Programs such as Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) can lift families and children out of poverty. Policymakers should review and update the rules and regulations so programs are more accessible and equitable. For example, restrictions on owning cars and other assets to qualify for TANF should be eliminated, and unemployment insurance should be reformed so that benefits are adequate.
- **Fund programs that will increase access to affordable child care.** Increasing access to affordable child care will allow parents to pursue careers that will support their families by enhancing their economic mobility. Policymakers should follow the recommendations laid out in the 2023-2025 Child Care Workforce Strategic Plan (created by House Bill 619, passed in 2021 during the 87th Legislature of Texas), including laws to support child care workers.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

 EDUCATION 

KEY FINDINGS:

- 84% of children in public Pre-K are economically disadvantaged, and over a third (35%) of children in public Pre-K are emergent bilingual or English learners.⁴
- The percentage of economically disadvantaged third grade students that did not meet third grade reading standards was over twice that of economically advantaged students (30% compared to 12%).⁵
- In Texas, 87% of economically disadvantaged high school students in the class of 2021 graduated, compared to 94% of non-economically disadvantaged students.⁶

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Improve funding and access to full-day Pre-K for eligible children statewide, especially economically disadvantaged children.** In 2019, the Texas legislature mandated that every district provide a full day of Pre-K instruction for four-year-old students. However, funding remains at half-day levels. Policymakers should provide support to economically disadvantaged students early by funding full-day, high-quality pre-kindergarten for eligible children.
- **Remodel Texas' school finance system to fund Texas schools at a level that meets the needs of all students.** Public education funding in Texas should not be based on attendance, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the systemic barriers that keep economically disadvantaged students and students of color from attending and completing school. Well-funded schools should be able to fairly pay and hire more teachers and school counselors, commit to smaller classroom sizes, invest in special education and bilingual/English learning programs, and offer a wider variety of courses.
- **Implement targeted support to close educational achievement gaps between groups of students.** For example, in 2022, the percentage of economically disadvantaged third-grade students who did not meet third-grade reading standards was over twice that of non-economically disadvantaged students (30% compared to 12%). In order for students to reach their full potential and be prepared for college or careers, legislators must support school districts with the funding they need to provide targeted support to close economic and race and ethnicity gaps in educational achievement.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



KEY FINDINGS:

- Texas ranks worst in the nation for children’s health insurance,⁷ with 12% of children under 19 uninsured.⁸ Hispanic/Latino children under 19 disproportionately make up Texas’ uninsured child population.⁹
- The infant mortality rate in Texas is 5.3 infant deaths per 1,000 live births.¹⁰ The rate is twice as high for Black mothers, at 10 infant deaths per 1,000 live births.¹¹
- In Texas, over 79% of SNAP participants are in families with children, compared to over 65% nationwide.¹²
- White students (25%) are more than twice as likely to ask for help from someone (such as a doctor, counselor, or hotline) before attempting suicide than Black (10%) or Hispanic/Latino students (11%).¹³

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Implement policy solutions to protect and expand access to affordable health care for all children and families.** Policymakers must ensure every Texas child has health insurance and can afford and access health services. In April 2023, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) will start the enormous task of “unwinding” — re-checking eligibility for all Texans on Medicaid over 12 months following a three-year nationwide pause on disenrollments during the pandemic. The 2023 Session is a critical time for the Legislature to act, to help Texas avoid a huge spike in eligible kids losing coverage in 2023 and 2024.
- **Expand after-school meals, summer nutrition, and school breakfast programs.** Millions of Texas children rely on school lunches to get nutritious meals. Policymakers must recognize that educational attainment hinges on the health and well-being of children. Therefore, policymakers must expand existing school nutrition programs to ensure that all children have access to healthy and nutritious meals at school and during the summer break.
- **Protect Medicaid and CHIP from damaging cuts or policy changes that reduce coverage for Texans or their ability to access care.** Texas can expand Medicaid so that all children and families in Texas can receive the health and mental health care they need. State policymakers can also extend comprehensive Medicaid coverage for postpartum women to 12 months after pregnancy, as recommended by maternal health experts.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Expand access to family planning resources.** Access to prenatal care and support during pregnancy should be expanded through outreach and increased Medicaid access in low-income communities and communities with high maternal mortality rates. Lawmakers can also help reduce unintended teen pregnancies — and high-school dropout rates — by authorizing the Texas Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to cover contraceptives, a benefit covered by 48 other states.
- **Increase the reach of food and nutrition programs.** If Texas were to remove barriers to enrolling in SNAP, Texas families, especially families of color, would be able to access healthy food more easily. Policymakers must consider existing barriers to accessing food and nutrition benefits and implement the necessary modifications to ensure that all those who need the support can access it. This includes ensuring children retain access to SNAP by extending enrollment to a year.

SAFE COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOLS

KEY FINDINGS:

- Children and youth of color are more likely than White youth to have negative experiences with the justice system. For example, Black and Hispanic/Latino youth are more likely to be detained in juvenile detention, correctional, and residential facilities compared to White youth.¹⁴
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and/or questioning (LGBTQ) youth disproportionately experience poor mental health outcomes compared to their straight and cisgender peers.¹⁵
- There are currently over 11,000 children in foster care¹⁶ and 302,000 children in informal kinship homes in Texas.¹⁷
- The rate of children and teens killed by guns has increased by 51% over the past two decades in Texas.¹⁸

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



SAFE COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOLS



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Advocate for policies that protect all Texas children.** Funding mental health staff, creating equitable safety policies, partnering with families and communities, and using risk assessments can help ensure that students *feel* and *are* safe. Policymakers should especially consider funding programs that coordinate trauma supports across schools, child welfare organizations, and health care facilities.
- **Improve the well-being of children in foster and kinship programs by fully funding Child Protective Services and a Kinship Navigator Program.** Many youth that age out of foster care experience homelessness.¹⁹ All children, no matter their family situation, need better support to ensure they are able to thrive during childhood and into adulthood. Policymakers must expand funding to improve the health and well-being of kids in foster and kinship care.
- **Support gun safety.** Policymakers must support gun safety and prevention efforts that establish standards for responsible gun ownership to help lower the rates of preventable gun related deaths, especially for children.



ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH



KEY FINDINGS:

- In 2020, there were over 2,100 inpatient hospital visits from children under 18 years old for asthma in Texas, with non-Hispanic Black children having the highest overall rate of pediatric asthma hospitalizations at 69.5 hospitalizations per 100,000 children, compared to 24.5 per 100,000 for non-Hispanic White children and 22.1 per 100,000 for Hispanic children.²⁰
- Certain populations in Texas, including South Texas border areas, along with clusters in far east and west Texas, rank high on the CDC's Social Vulnerability Index (SVI).
- According to the American Lung Association, four Texas areas (Houston-The Woodlands, El Paso-Las Cruces, Dallas-Fort Worth, and San Antonio-New Braunfels-Pearson) rank in the top 25 cities most polluted by ozone.²¹

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Support programs and policies that will mitigate negative health outcomes.** Environmental factors such as air pollution and exposure to high levels of ozone can contribute to children developing asthma or having asthma attacks. Policymakers must consider safeguards for children who are more vulnerable to environment-related illnesses and exposure to pollution by expanding access to health programs that will provide vulnerable populations with the services and medications they need.
- **Understand how the Texas environment is impacting children’s health.** Intentional data collection and a deeper analysis of communities across the state are needed to better understand how the state of children’s health intersects with our state’s environment. Policymakers must pursue a study to better understand how changes in the environment and air pollutants are impacting children’s health across different parts of the state.
- **Develop a plan for addressing the impact of the environment on children.** Existing vulnerability indices demonstrate that communities across the state will experience the negative effects of a climate or natural disasters differently. The COVID-19 pandemic is a perfect example of such a scenario. Legislators have an opportunity to build a healthier state, by focusing strategic investments in Texas’ most vulnerable children. Policymakers must put forward a bold roadmap of the state’s climate policy to mitigate existing threats to children’s health.

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INTRODUCTION

A TEXAS FOR ALL CHILDREN

All children – regardless of race, class, gender, or national origin – deserve to fulfill their potential and have the opportunity to thrive. Over the last several years, Texas children and youth have faced serious challenges and disruptions to their lives due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Children of color, in particular, were disproportionately impacted by the disease itself and by the economic crisis that ensued. To be clear, the economic impacts exacerbated existing inequities in our systems across racial and ethnic lines.

According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Texas ranks 45th in overall child well-being (based on measures of economic well-being, education, health, and family and community). In 2018, Texas ranked 43rd in overall child well-being, meaning we have worsening conditions for Texas children and youth. Our children are growing into the leaders of tomorrow. It is, therefore, our responsibility to ensure that we provide opportunities for all kids equitably.

Texas can be a state where all children can thrive. This report provides a deeper understanding of child well-being in Texas and identifies opportunities to invest in Texas children. Every Texan has proudly published a state data book for decades. This year, we are proud to include additional metrics to measure the status of child and youth well-being in the state, including data on LGBTQ populations and environmental justice indicators.

WHY CONSIDER RACE AND ETHNICITY?

At Every Texan, we advance equity with an understanding that racism is often a driving force of systemic inequities. We believe in a shared vision of a state where every Texan, regardless of race or ethnicity, can thrive. Racial equity is the condition where someone's racial identity can no longer predict how they fare in society. Disaggregating data by race and ethnicity advances an understanding of how racial and ethnic groups are differently situated in society, helps to uncover the drivers of inequities, and supports communities in developing strategies and actions that eliminate unjust disparities.

When we disaggregate data, we can reveal information about which groups of children have better outcomes than other groups, try to understand why, and figure out how to give all children the best chance to succeed. Every Texan's race-conscious, targeted approach to advancing equity offers the specificity necessary to make the greatest impact while creating processes to address inequities. Our research and data, therefore, reflect this strategic priority by ensuring that data is consistently disaggregated to inform policies, practices, and decision-making that address structural barriers that underpin racial inequities.

INTRODUCTION

It is important to note that racial categories are not rooted biologically in a person's skin color or innate characteristics. Rather, throughout history, social, economic, and political institutions have defined boundaries of racial categories, often creating social, economic, and political hierarchies.²² Separate from the concept of race, ethnicity is broadly understood as similar to ancestry or heritage (e.g., Korean, Mexican, German). However, state and federal data collection and reporting practices commonly use only two ethnic categories, i.e., Hispanic/Latino and non-Hispanic/Latino.

In this report, we have broken out Hispanic/Latino as a separate category combining race/ethnicity. Therefore, unless otherwise referenced, Hispanic/Latino categories are exclusive of the "White" racial category.

This report was authored by the **Every Texan Research and Data team**, as a part of **Texas Kids Count**, a project of Every Texan:

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THE ANNIE E. CASEY
FOUNDATION

CONTACT ELECTED OFFICIALS

TEXAS CAPITOL BUILDING DIRECTORY

GENERAL

Information & Tours	Capitol	1S.2
Capitol Gift Shop	Extension	E1.006
Capitol Grill Cafeteria	Extension	E1.002
Legislative Reference Library	Capitol	2N.3

SHARED MEETING ROOMS

Auditorium	Extension	E1.004
Legislative Conference Center	Extension	E2.002
Supreme Court Room	Capitol	3N.3
Appellate Court Room	Capitol	3N.4

GOVERNOR

Public Reception Room	Capitol	2S.1
Press Conference	Capitol	2S.2
Business Office	Capitol	1S.1
Legislative Division	Capitol	1S.1

SECURITY / EMERGENCY

Capitol Fire Marshal	Extension	E1.213
Capitol Health Services	Extension	E1.214
Department of Public Safety, Capitol Division	Capitol	1S.4

SECRETARY OF STATE

Secretary of State	Capitol	1E.8
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SENATE

Senate Chamber	Capitol	2E.8	Senate Sergeant at Arms	Capitol	2E.10
Senate Gallery	Capitol	3E.5	Lt. Gov.'s Reception Room	Capitol	2E.16
Lieutenant Governor	Capitol	2E.13	Ramsey Reception Room	Capitol	2E.14
Secretary of the Senate	Capitol	2E.22	Betty King Committee Room	Capitol	2E.20

SENATORS OFFICES

Sen. Alvarado, Carol	Capitol	1E.9	Sen. Kolkhorst, Lois W.	Capitol	GE.4
Sen. Bettencourt, Paul	Capitol	3E.16	Sen. LaMantia, Morgan	Extension	E1.712
Sen. Birdwell, Brian	Capitol	1E.3	Sen. Menéndez, José	Extension	E1.610
Sen. Blanco, César	Capitol	GE.7	Sen. Middleton, Mayes	Extension	1.708
Sen. Campbell, Donna	Capitol	3E.18	Sen. Miles, Borris L.	Capitol	3E.12
Sen. Creighton, Brandon	Extension	E1.606	Sen. Nichols, Robert	Extension	E1.704
Sen. Eckhardt, Sarah	Extension	E1.804	Sen. Parker, Tan	Extension	1.608
Sen. Flores, Pete	Extension	E1.808	Sen. Paxton, Angela	Capitol	3E.2
Sen. Gutierrez, Roland	Capitol	3S.3	Sen. Perry, Charles	Extension	E1.806
Sen. Hall, Bob	Capitol	4E.2	Sen. Schwertner, Charles	Capitol	3S.5
Sen. Hancock, Kelly	Capitol	1E.12	Sen. Sparks, Kevin	Extension	E1.810
Sen. Hinojosa, Juan "Chuy"	Capitol	3E.6	Sen. Springer, Drew	Extension	E1.706
Sen. Huffman, Joan	Capitol	1E.15	Sen. West, Royce	Capitol	1E.5
Sen. Hughes, Bryan	Capitol	3E.8	Sen. Whitmire, John	Capitol	1E.13
Sen. Johnson, Nathan	Capitol	3E.10	Sen. Zaffirini, Judith	Capitol	1E.14
Sen. King, Phil	Capitol	GE.5			

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

House Chamber	Capitol	2W.5	House Research	Extension	E2.180
House Gallery	Capitol	3W.2	House Sergeant At Arms	Capitol	2W.7
Speaker of the House	Capitol	2W.13	Speaker's Committee Room	Capitol	2W.6
Chief of Staff	Capitol	2W.27	Speaker's Conference Room	Capitol	2W.15
Chief Clerk	Capitol	2W.29	Center Conference Room	Capitol	3W.9

CONTACT ELECTED OFFICIALS

TEXAS CAPITOL BUILDING DIRECTORY

REPRESENTATIVES OFFICES

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Rep. Anchía, Rafael	Capitol	1N.5	Rep. Harris, Caroline	Extension	E1.312
Rep. Anderson, Charles "Doc"	Capitol	1N.8	Rep. Harris, Cody	Extension	E2.606
Rep. Ashby, Trent	Extension	E2.806	Rep. Harrison, Brian	Extension	E2.704
Rep. Bailes, Ernest	Extension	E2.818	Rep. Hayes, Richard	Extension	E2.302
Rep. Bell, Jr., Cecil	Extension	E2.708	Rep. Hefner, Cole	Extension	E2.718
Rep. Bell, Keith	Extension	E2.410	Rep. Hernandez, Ana	Capitol	1W.11
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Rep. Bhojani, Salman	Extension	E2.314	Rep. Hinojosa, Gina	Extension	E2.214
Rep. Bonnen, Greg	Extension	E2.502	Rep. Holland, Justin	Extension	E2.608
Rep. Bowers, Rhetta Andrews	Extension	E2.906	Rep. Howard, Donna	Capitol	GW.11
Rep. Bryant, John	Capitol	4N.6	Rep. Hull, Lacey	Extension	E1.322
Rep. Buckley, Brad	Extension	E1.324	Rep. Hunter, Todd	Capitol	1W.5
Rep. Bucy III, John H.	Extension	E2.306	Rep. Isaac, Carrie	Extension	E2.702
Rep. Bumgarner, Benjamin	Extension	E1.418	Rep. Jetton, Jacey	Extension	E1.220
Rep. Burns, DeWayne	Extension	E2.604	Rep. Johnson, Ann	Extension	E2.412
Rep. Burrows, Dustin	Extension	E2.610	Rep. Johnson, Jarvis	Extension	E2.904
Rep. Button, Angie Chen	Capitol	GW.7	Rep. Johnson, Julie	Extension	E2.310
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Rep. Davis, Yvonne	Capitol	4N.9	Rep. Leo-Wilson, Terri	Extension	E2.720
Rep. Dean, Jay	Extension	E2.422	Rep. Longoria, Oscar	Capitol	4N.4
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Rep. Dorazio, Mark	Extension	E1.416	Rep. Lopez, Ray	Extension	E1.422
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Rep. Frazier, Frederick	Extension	E1.412	Rep. Martinez, Armando "Mando"	Capitol	1N.10
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Rep. Goldman, Craig	Extension	E2.510	Rep. Morales, Eddie	Extension	E1.212
Rep. González, Jessica	Extension	E2.212	Rep. Morales Shaw, Penny	Extension	E1.406
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Rep. Goodwin, Vikki	Extension	E2.208	Rep. Muñoz, Jr., Sergio	Capitol	1W.3
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TEXAS CAPITOL BUILDING DIRECTORY

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Rep. Noble, Candy	Extension E1.414
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Rep. Rosenthal, Jon E.	Extension E2.210
Rep. Schaefer, Matt	Capitol GN.8
Rep. Schatzline, Nate	Extension E1.410
Rep. Schofield, Mike	Extension E2.418
Rep. Shaheen, Matt	Extension E1.320
Rep. Sherman Sr., Carl O.	Extension E2.508
Rep. Shine, Hugh D.	Capitol GS.2
Rep. Slaton, Bryan	Extension E2.714
Rep. Slawson, Shelby	Extension E2.804
Rep. Smith, Reggie	Extension E1.314
Rep. Smithee, John T.	Capitol 1W.10
Rep. Spiller, David	Extension E1.318
Rep. Stucky, Lynn	Extension E2.822
Rep. Swanson, Valoree	Extension E2.710
Rep. Talarico, James	Extension E2.902
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Rep. Thierry, Shawn	Extension E1.408
Rep. Thimesch, Kronda	Extension E1.216
Rep. Thompson, Ed	Capitol 4S.3
Rep. Thompson, Senfronia	Capitol 3S.6
Rep. Tinderholt, Tony	Extension E1.420
Rep. Toth, Steve	Extension E1.404
Rep. Troxclair, Ellen	Extension E1.208
Rep. Turner, Chris	Capitol 4N.3
Rep. VanDeaver, Gary	Extension E1.304
Rep. Vasut, Cody	Extension E2.712
Rep. Vo, Hubert	Capitol 4N.8
Rep. Walle, Armando	Capitol GW.5
Rep. Wilson, Terry M.	Extension E2.722
Rep. Wu, Gene	Capitol GW.8
Rep. Zwiener, Erin	Extension E2.908

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2022 TEXAS KIDS COUNT DATA BOOK

WHO ARE TEXAS KIDS?

NOTE ON DATA COLLECTION, SURVEY INSTRUMENTS, AND INCLUSION:

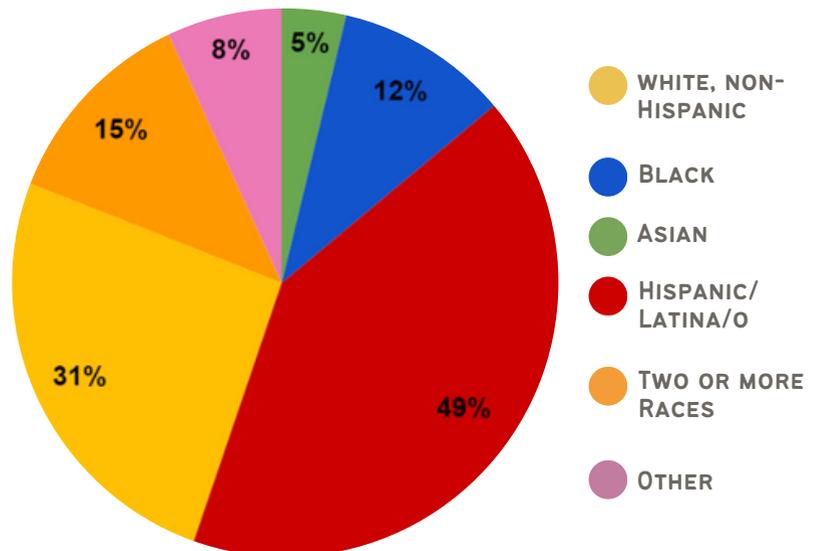
The data collected for this book come from various sources, but primarily from the U.S. Census Bureau. Data collection efforts across many survey instruments have yet to fully address the need to include the diverse identities of Texans. Therefore, the demographic breakdown provided in this book primarily reflects binary, cisgender sex-disaggregation of data. Such binary focus excludes important information about transgender and gender nonconforming populations, in addition to other important measures to best capture Texas' children and communities at various intersections. The way that many primary sources for data collect racial and ethnic data must evolve to be more inclusive and representative of the geographic, social, and cultural dimensions that define the concepts.

WHO ARE TEXAS KIDS?

Texas is home to 10% of all children under 18 living in the U.S.²³ With over 73 million children under 18 living in the U.S., the 7,475,433 children living in Texas reflect the increasing diversity of the nation.²⁴ Children of color in Texas currently make up 70% of the population of children under 18.²⁵ It is projected that by 2060, the number of children in Texas will increase to over 8.5 million.²⁶ As Texas continues to grow its population, state officials and legislators must deeply understand Texas children and their experiences, challenges, and opportunities to support them with common-sense policy.

TEXAS CHILDREN UNDER 18 BY RACE AND ETHNICITY IN 2021²⁷

Source: Every Texan analysis of 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B01001 (B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I). Note: Totals do not sum to 100% because Asian, Black, two or more races, and other are not mutually exclusive from the Hispanic or Latino category. Other includes American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and some other race, not broken out due to low counts.



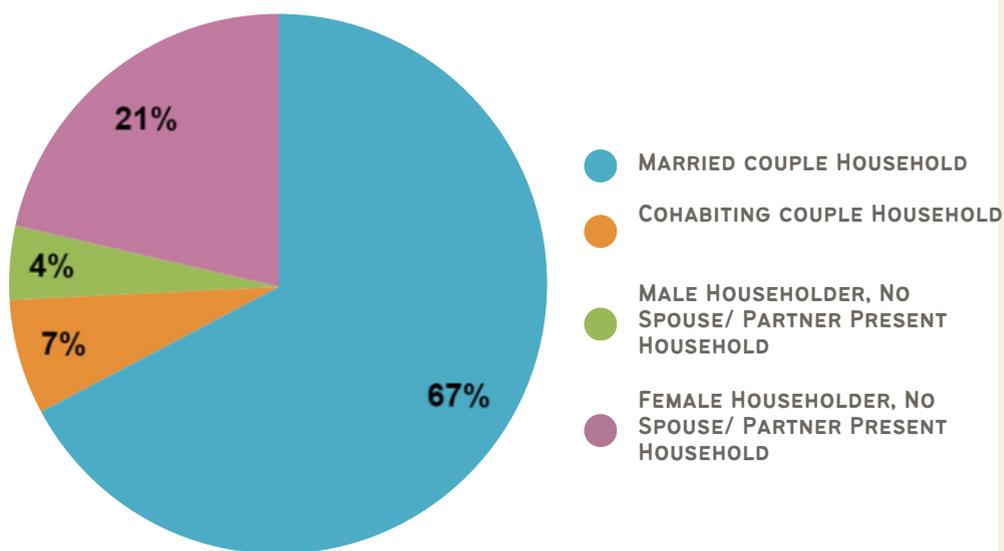
WHO ARE TEXAS KIDS?

TEXAS CHILDREN ARE GROWING UP IN DIVERSE ENVIRONMENTS

Over 1.8 million children aged 5 to 17 years old in Texas speak a language other than English at home (34% of all children), and 29% of all Texas children speak Spanish at home.²⁸ While the majority of Texas children under 18 were born in the U.S. (over 7.1 million children, or 96% of all Texas kids), over 320,000 Texas children (or 4% of all Texas kids) were born in other countries.²⁹ Of children who are born in other countries, 266,331, or 82%, are not U.S. citizens.³⁰ Texas children are growing up in diverse types of households as well – 33% of Texas children under 18 are living in non-married-couple households (households headed by female householders alone, male householders alone, or cohabiting couples).³¹

HOUSEHOLD TYPE FOR CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS IN 2021³²

Source: Every Texan analysis of 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B09005.



The diversity of the households in which Texas children are growing up is also reflected in data on same-sex households. LGBTQ people make up 4% of the Texas population, and 29% of LGBTQ people in Texas are raising children.³³ LGBTQ youth are also reflected in Texas data, as the Williams Institute estimates that 29,800 transgender youth between the ages of 13 to 17 reside in Texas.³⁴ Additionally, according to the 2021 Texas Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 13% of middle and high school students surveyed identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual and an additional 4% were questioning their sexual identity or described their sexual identity some other way than gay, lesbian, or bisexual, or straight.³⁵ Of those that identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, Texas youth of multiple races and those who identified as Black had the highest percentages of gay, lesbian, or bisexual individuals.³⁶

WHO ARE TEXAS KIDS?

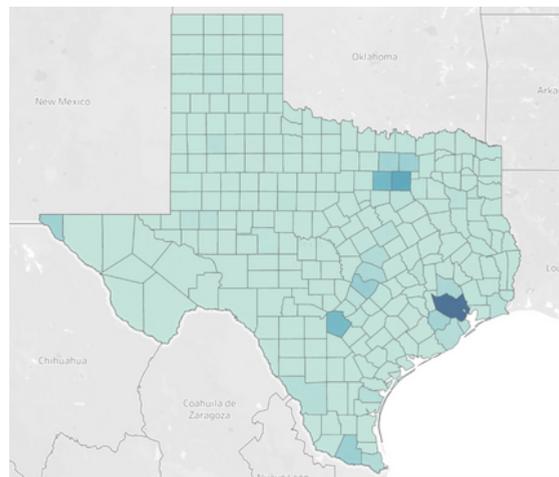
GAY, LESBIAN, OR BISEXUAL TEXAS MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS BY RACE/ETHNICITY IN 2021³⁷



Source: Every Texan analysis of Texas Department of Health and Human Services 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). Note: Asian, Black, White, and multiracial are non-Hispanic.

TEXAS CHILDREN IN RURAL AND URBANIZED AREAS

Many Texas children under the age of five are living in urbanized areas of the state. However, high concentrations of children under the age of five live along the border regions. In El Paso County, there are an estimated 58,959 children under five years old and 22,296 children under five years old living in Webb County along the Texas-Mexico border.³⁸ Over time, the growth across rural and urban areas has remained consistent, with populations of children under five years old remaining high in urbanized areas.³⁹ Children in rural areas will have different challenges when it comes to opportunities than children in urban areas. Both environments should be taken into consideration as policymakers make decisions about the future of our state.



CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS OLD BY COUNTY IN 2021⁴⁰

WHO ARE TEXAS KIDS?

TEXAS CHILDREN AND DISABILITIES

In Texas, 4% of children have a disability.⁴¹ Across the different racial and ethnic categories, Black and American Indian or Alaskan Native (AIAN) children have the highest rates of disabilities as a percentage of their racial group in Texas.⁴² Importantly, children with disabilities under 18 in Texas live below the poverty level at higher rates than children without a disability, at 28% and 19%, respectively.⁴³

CHILDREN UNDER 18 WITH A DISABILITY AS A PERCENTAGE OF RACE/ETHNIC COMPOSITION ⁴⁴

American Indian or Alaskan Native	5.52%
Asian	1.84%
Black	5.39%
Hispanic or Latino	4.43%
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	2.73%
Two or More Races	4.84%
Non-Hispanic White	4.27%
Other	4.27%

COVID-19 AND TEXAS KIDS

The COVID-19 pandemic upended the lives of people across the nation, especially Texans. Texas stood out as one of the states that lost the most caregivers due to the COVID-19 pandemic, where more than 25,600 children were left without at least their mother, father, or caregiver.⁴⁵ Texas legislators will have to work towards ensuring a post-pandemic Texas where all children, including these bereaved children, will be able to recover equitably from the last three years. This will be especially crucial to Texas children, as the pandemic exacerbated many existing inequities that children and families in Texas already had to endure. Three times the number of Hispanic children in Texas lost their caregiver compared to White children, and Black children were also more likely to lose a caregiver compared to White children.⁴⁶ It is not too late to ensure an equitable recovery for children in Texas, but we must especially focus on providing resources for children of color.

WHO ARE TEXAS KIDS?

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Consider the impact of race and ethnicity, along with socioeconomic factors, when crafting policies.** Texas, like the rest of the nation, is still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. Moving forward, all policies must consider the impact such laws will have on different populations. Further, lawmakers should prioritize the needs of children and families of underrepresented groups to ensure they have equitable opportunities to thrive.
- **Ensure all Texas children have access to the resources they need to grow.** Access to basic needs – such as health care, food, education, stable housing, and safe neighborhoods – is essential to children’s growth and stability. Policymakers must especially consider children who have lost one or both caregivers due to the COVID-19 pandemic and work towards supporting programs that will provide the resources children need to live healthy and happy lives.
- **Increase data transparency and collection methodologies.** There is still not enough data available to best understand underrepresented populations across the state, including LGBTQ children and youth in the state. Moreover, data gaps exist across racial and ethnic categories, including American Indian populations and Asian American populations, where data is rarely disaggregated to account for various ethnicities and nationalities within Asia. Legislators must work with state agencies to ensure data is being used to enhance or modify programs designed to increase children’s well-being.

WHO ARE TEXAS KIDS?

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- 27 Every Texan analysis of 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B01001 (B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I).
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2022 TEXAS KIDS COUNT DATA BOOK

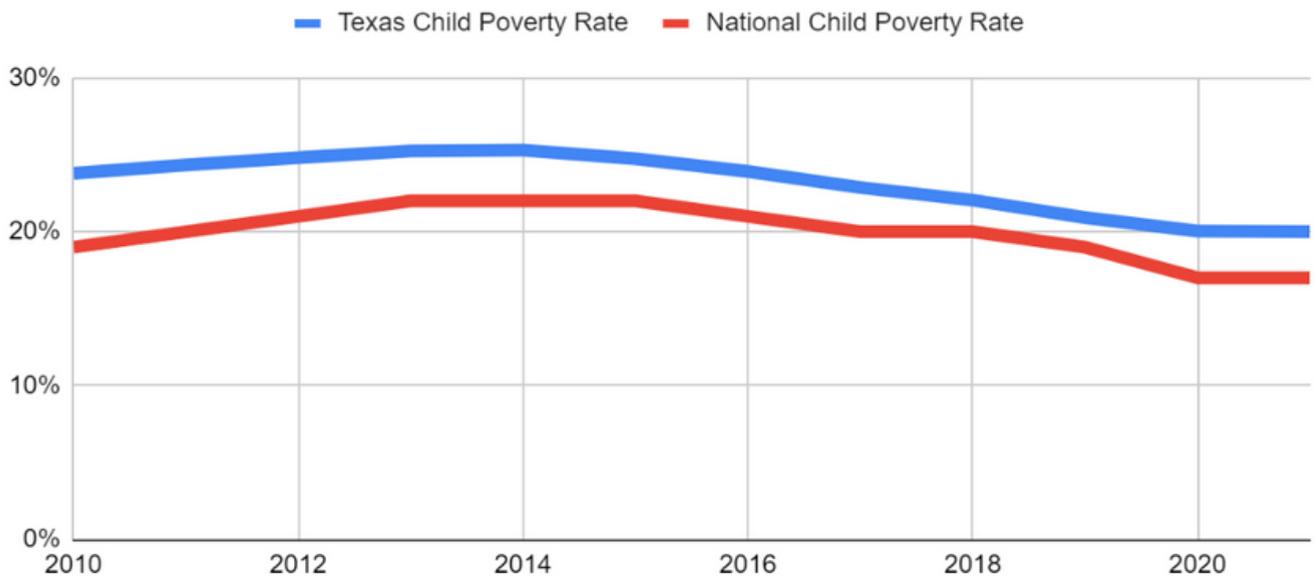
ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

A family's economic security determines whether or not children are able to access quality education, health care, stable housing, and healthy food. However, many Texas children face poverty and lack these basic necessities and more.

Nationally, child poverty declined to a record low in 2021, affirming the importance of the American Rescue Plan Child Tax Credit and economic impact payments for the well-being of families and children.⁴⁷ While child poverty has declined over the last few years, the Texas child poverty rate continues to be above the nationwide average of 17%.⁴⁸ In Texas, 1,442,731 children, or 20% of all Texas kids, live in poverty.⁴⁹

CHILD POVERTY IS DECLINING⁵⁰

Texas and U.S. child poverty rates, 2010-2021



Source: Every Texan analysis of 2010-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B17001

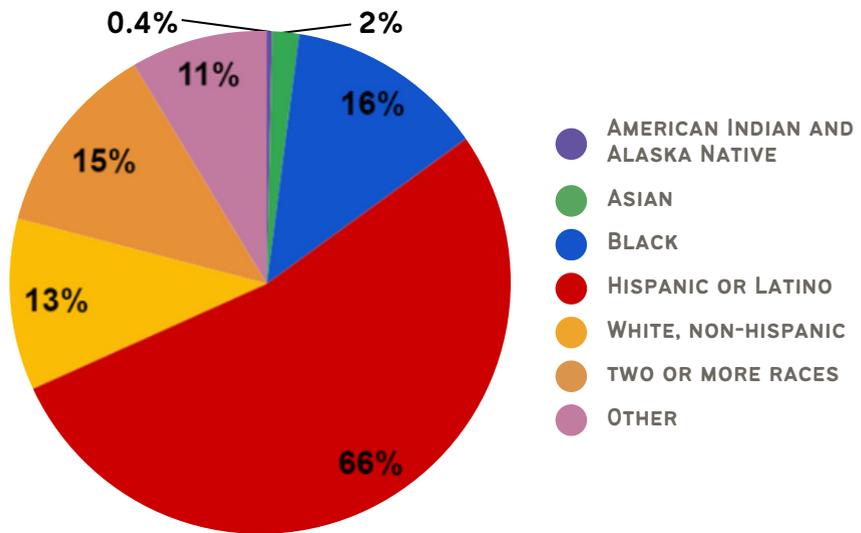
Race and ethnicity play a role in whether or not a child will experience poverty in their lifetime. Hispanic and Latino children make up 66% of all children living in poverty, despite making up just 49% of the child population.⁵¹ Black children also disproportionately experience poverty, with Black children making up 16% of all children living in poverty despite making up just 12% of the total child population.⁵² While non-Hispanic White children make up 31% of all Texas children, they account for 13% of children living in poverty.⁵³

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

CHILDREN OF COLOR DISPROPORTIONATELY LIVE IN POVERTY ⁵⁴

Children under 18 living in poverty by race and ethnicity in 2021

Source: Every Texan analysis of 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B17001 (B, C, D, F, G, H, I). Note: Totals do not sum to 100% because American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Black, two or more races, and other are not mutually exclusive from the Hispanic or Latino category.



Moreover, 9% of Texas children live in extreme poverty (below 50% of the federal poverty line).⁵⁵ Federal poverty thresholds show that a single parent working full-time at the state minimum wage of \$7.25 does not earn enough to keep them and their child out of poverty.

2021 FEDERAL POVERTY THRESHOLDS ⁵⁶

A FAMILY IS IN POVERTY IF	1 ADULT	1 ADULT + 1 CHILD	2 ADULTS + 1 CHILD	2 ADULTS + 2 CHILDREN
The yearly income for the family is at or below	\$14,097	\$18,677	\$21,811	\$27,479
EQUIVALENT TO HOURLY WAGE AT OR BELOW (IF ONE ADULT WORKS FULL-TIME)	\$6.78	\$8.98	\$10.49	\$13.21

While poverty thresholds from the Census Bureau outline the incomes at which families are considered to be living in poverty, these thresholds are limiting and do not paint a complete picture of the Texans who face economic hardships. Many families have annual household incomes just above these poverty thresholds but still do not earn enough to meet their basic needs. These families earn too much to qualify for federal assistance programs, yet still earn less than a living wage. For example, a single parent of one child making \$10/hour would be considered above the poverty threshold, but would still be making much less than what is considered to be a living wage in Texas (\$31.63).⁵⁷ It is estimated that over 2.9 million Texas children live in households that fall within this gap of making more than the poverty wage, but less than a living wage.⁵⁸

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

HOURLY WAGES FOR FAMILIES IN TEXAS ⁵⁹

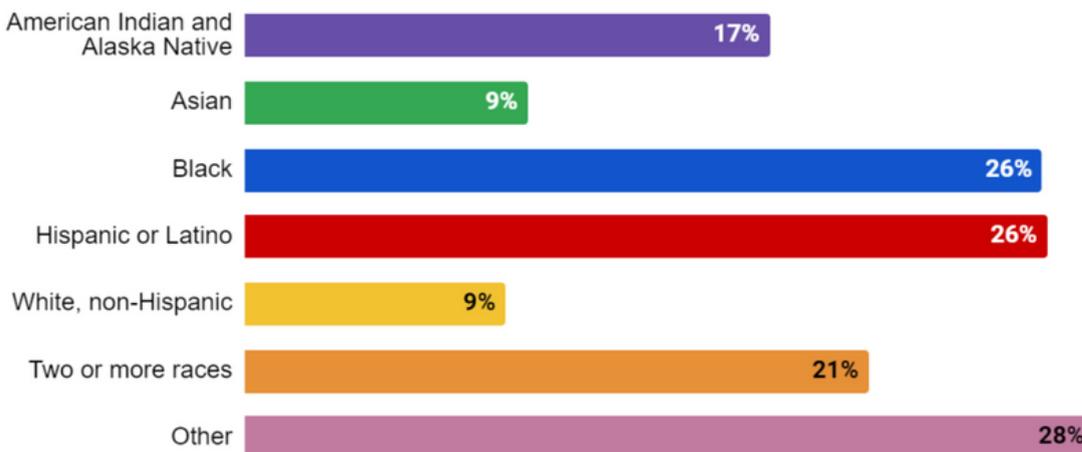
	1 ADULT				2 ADULTS (1 WORKING)				2 ADULTS (BOTH WORKING)			
	0 kids	1 kid	2 kids	3 kids	0 kids	1 kid	2 kids	3 kids	0 kids	1 kid	2 kids	3 kids
Living Wage	\$16.41	\$31.63	\$38.97	\$51.02	\$25.12	\$30.64	\$35.75	\$39.24	\$12.56	\$17.44	\$22.10	\$25.96
Poverty Wage	\$6.19	\$8.38	\$10.56	\$12.74	\$8.38	\$10.56	\$12.74	\$14.92	\$4.19	\$5.28	\$6.37	\$7.46

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES NEED ECONOMIC SUPPORT

Cash assistance can help ensure that all children, no matter their race, ethnicity, or background, are able to access basic needs to live a healthy life. However, cash assistance programs fail to reach most Texans experiencing poverty. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is a federal program meant to provide support to families experiencing economic hardship, but it, unfortunately, has fallen short over the past few years. The average monthly number of child recipients for TANF has decreased over the past decade in Texas by 76% between 2010 and 2021.⁶⁰ For every 100 families living in poverty in Texas, only 4 receive TANF cash assistance (compared to the national rate of 21 per 100).⁶¹ This is a 43-point decrease since the program was created in 1996 and is currently one of the lowest TANF-to-poverty ratios in the nation.⁶² If TANF had the same reach as it did when it was first created, 224,376 more families in Texas would receive TANF.⁶³

BLACK AND HISPANIC/LATINO CHILDREN ARE MOST LIKELY TO LIVE IN POVERTY ⁶⁴

Child poverty rates by race and ethnicity in 2021

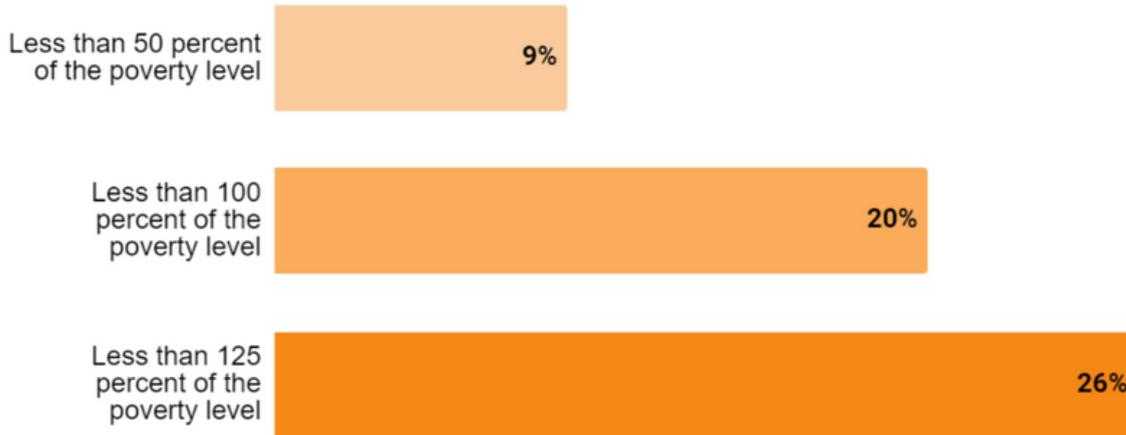


Source: Every Texan analysis of 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B17001 (B, C, D, F, G, H, I). Note: American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Black, two or more races, and other are not mutually exclusive from the Hispanic or Latino category.

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

ABOUT ONE IN FOUR TEXAS CHILDREN LIVE WITHIN LESS THAN 125% OF THE POVERTY LEVEL ⁶⁵

Texas children at specified levels of poverty in the past twelve months, as reported in 2021



Source: Every Texan analysis of 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1703.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME (SSI):**

Supplemental security income (SSI) provides monthly payments to children and adults with disabilities living in households with limited income.⁶⁶ In Texas, one in five (19%) supplemental security income (SSI) recipients are children.⁶⁷

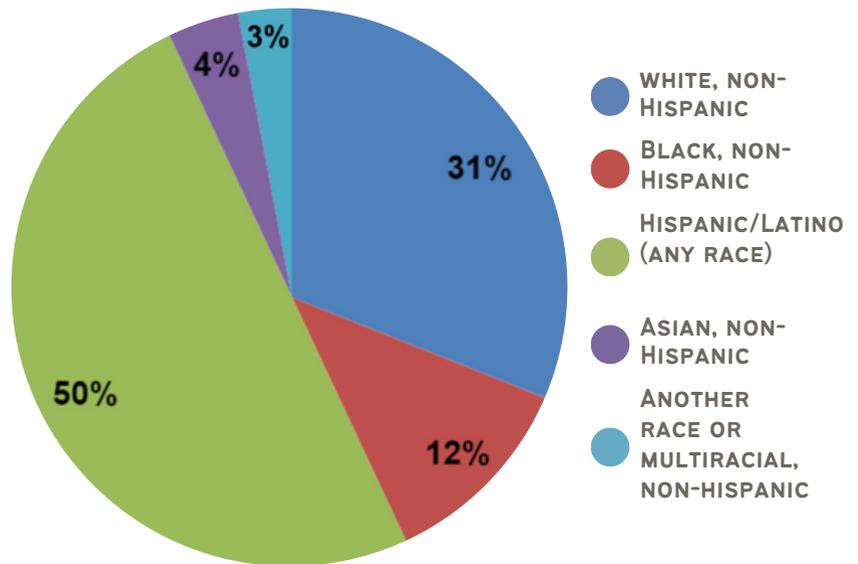
The Child Tax Credit has proven to be a critical payment that provided much-needed support to families during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Texas, 28% of tax filers claimed the non-refundable Child Tax Credit, and 16% claimed the additional (refundable) Child Tax Credit for tax year 2019.⁶⁸ In 2021, Texans received over \$9.6 billion in advance Child Tax Credit payments.⁶⁹ If the Child Tax Credit had been expanded into 2022, an estimated 489,000 Texas children would have been lifted out of poverty, and over 6.6 million children in Texas would have benefited in general, the majority being Latino children.⁷⁰ Overall, estimates suggest that over 7.1 million children under 18 years in Texas are eligible for the Child Tax Credit.⁷¹

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

HALF OF TEXAS CHILDREN ELIGIBLE FOR THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN CHILD TAX CREDIT ARE HISPANIC/LATINO ⁷²

Children in tax units eligible for the American Rescue Plan Child Tax Credit by race/ethnicity (tax year 2021)

Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) Program Participation Dashboard (CBPP analysis of 2017-2019 American Community Survey PUMS, using 2021 tax parameters and incomes adjusted for inflation to 2021 dollars). Note: White, Black, Asian, and another race or multiracial are non-Hispanic. Figures reflect the American Rescue Plan's temporary expansion of the Child Tax Credit (CTC) for tax year 2021. The Rescue Plan made the full credit available to all children except those with the highest incomes, increased the maximum credit amount, and included 17-year-olds. Figures do not include the credit for other dependents (ODC). Due to data limitations, figures do not reflect IRS rules that require children to have a Social Security number to qualify for the CTC.



THE COST OF RAISING A CHILD

In Texas, the cost of raising a child takes up a substantial portion of a parent's income. Families were already struggling to make ends meet before 2020, and the pandemic and inflation have exacerbated these issues.

WHAT DOES IT COST TO RAISE A CHILD IN TEXAS?

- **\$12,000** on average to give birth to a child in Texas.⁷³ The average out-of-pocket spending on childbirth costs for people with insurance is **\$2,300** per birth.⁷⁴
- **\$8,796** for year-round, full-time infant care and **\$6,055** for year-round, part-time child care for school-age children.⁷⁵

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

WHAT DOES IT COST TO RAISE A CHILD IN TEXAS? (CONT.)

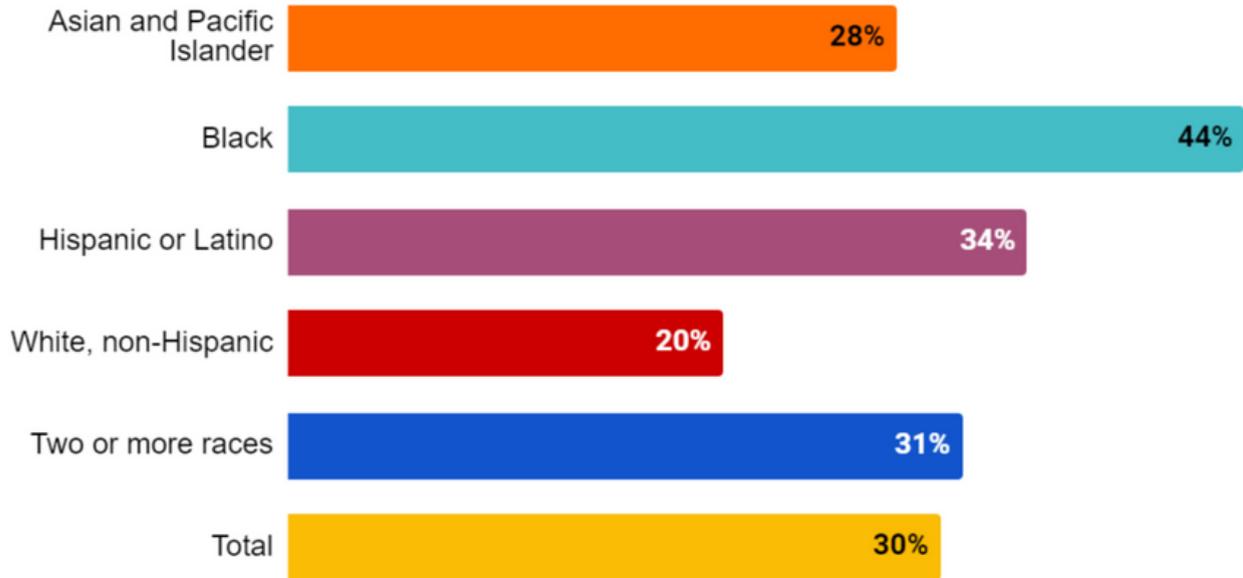
- **\$1,767** (for a 1-year-old) to **\$2,910** (for a child 9-11 years) a year to feed a child on a low-cost meal plan, depending on their age.⁷⁶ It costs **\$11,016** a year to feed a family of two adults (20-50 years) and two children (6-8 and 9-11 years) on a “thrifty” meal plan.⁷⁷
- **\$2,323** extra per year to give a child their own bedroom in an apartment unit.⁷⁸
- **\$7,540** per person for overall annual housing and utility expenses in Texas.⁷⁹
- **\$10,075** for one year of tuition to a public university.⁸⁰

HOUSING TEXAS CHILDREN

Every child in Texas deserves access to safe and sustainable housing within their communities. Unfortunately, many Texas parents do not make a living wage and therefore lack access to affordable housing. A parent’s income significantly impacts whether or not a child will have access to stable housing and living conditions. In Texas, 5% of parents are unemployed,⁸¹ and 6% of Texas children (about 445,000 children) have at least one unemployed parent.⁸²

Households are housing cost-burdened when they spend over 30% of their income on housing. In 2021, over 2.3 million Texas children, or 32% of all Texas children, were housing cost-burdened,⁸³ and 61% of children living in low-income households were housing cost-burdened.⁸⁴ That’s over 1.8 million children living in low-income, housing-cost-burdened households.⁸⁵ Black and Hispanic/Latino children are most likely to live in housing cost-burdened households of any racial group.⁸⁶

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

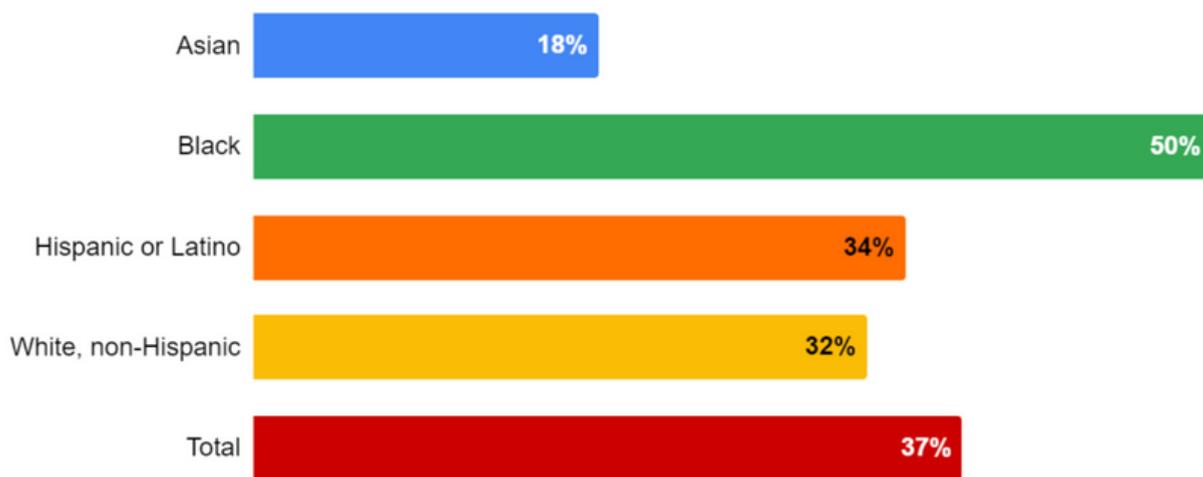
TEXAS CHILDREN LIVING IN HOUSEHOLDS WITH A HIGH HOUSING COST BURDEN BY RACE AND ETHNICITY IN 2019 ⁸⁷

Source: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center.

The pandemic worsened the housing issues families were already facing pre-COVID. In 2021, 37% of Texas households with children that were behind on rent or mortgage payments reported that they were very or extremely likely to have to leave their homes due to eviction or foreclosure.⁸⁸ Of households with children behind on rent or mortgage payments, Black and Hispanic households had the highest rates of being likely to be evicted or foreclosed across all racial groups, at 50% and 34%, respectively.⁸⁹ Although eviction filings have gone down in Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, and Houston since 2022,⁹⁰ Texas families and children still lack adequate housing protection.

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN THAT WERE NOT CAUGHT UP ON RENT OR MORTGAGE AND WERE VERY OR EXTREMELY LIKELY TO HAVE TO LEAVE THE HOME DUE TO EVICTION OR FORECLOSURE IN 2021 ⁹¹



Source: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center. Note: Racial and ethnic groups represented in this table are not mutually exclusive. The White category includes only non-Hispanic White. The categories Asian and Black or African American include both Hispanic and non-Hispanic.

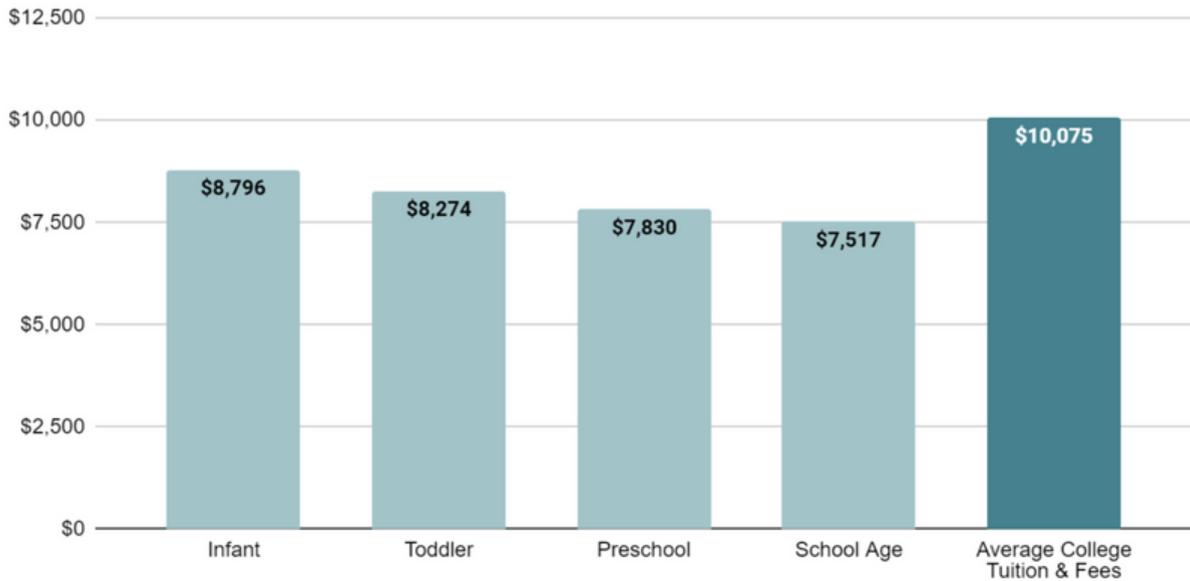
ACCESS TO CHILD CARE

Families must be able to access affordable child care so that parents can pursue and develop their careers. However, the cost of child care has become unmanageable for many, especially parents working minimum-wage jobs. In fact, year-round, full-time infant care costs almost as much as a year's worth of tuition to a public university in Texas.⁹² Moreover, the pandemic forced many childcare facilities to close down permanently, leaving many families with even fewer options. The Texas Labor Code defines a child care desert as an area where the number of children under six years old who have working parents is at least three times the capacity of licensed child care providers in that area.⁹³ In Texas, 48% of the population lives in a child care desert,⁹⁴ and communities of color and low-income neighborhoods have been most affected by child care closures.⁹⁵ An estimated 12% of parents or caretakers of young children (5 years old and under) have had to make career sacrifices due to issues with child care.⁹⁶ When looking at race and ethnicity, 13% of parents or caretakers of young Hispanic children have had to make career sacrifices due to issues with accessing child care, compared to 9% of parents or caretakers of young non-Hispanic White children in Texas.⁹⁷

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

YEAR-ROUND, FULL-TIME INFANT CARE COSTS ALMOST AS MUCH AS A YEAR OF TUITION TO A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY ⁹⁸

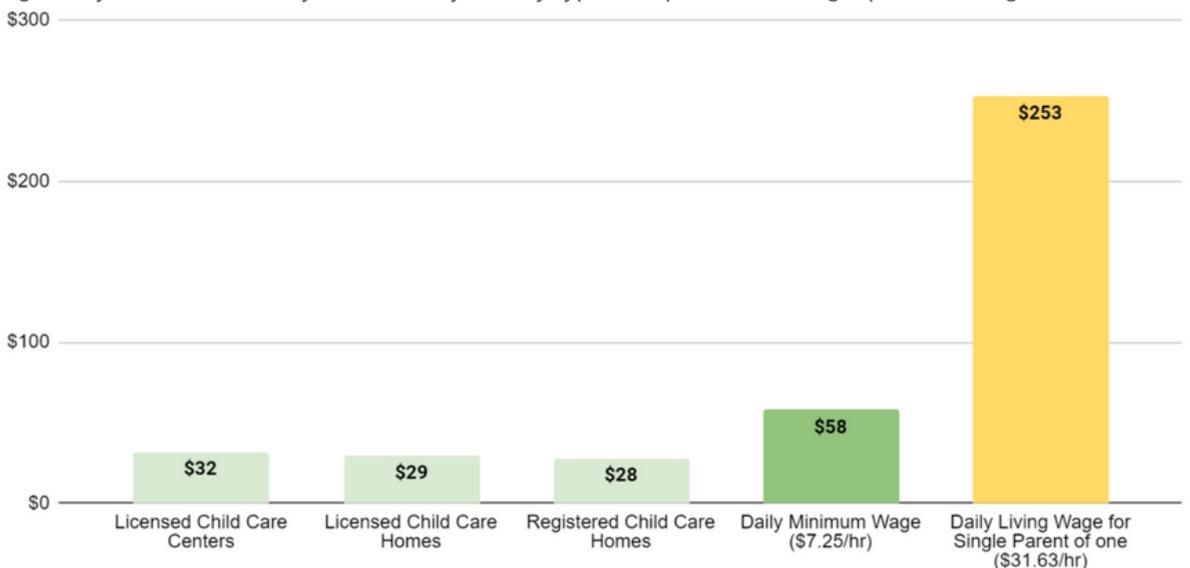
Year-round, full-time childcare costs in Texas compared to the cost of one year of tuition to a public university in 2022



Source: Every Texan analysis based on Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing 2022 Texas child care market rate survey. Average tuition from Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2022).

CHILDCARE TAKES UP HALF OF A MINIMUM WAGE WORKER'S DAILY WAGES ⁹⁹

Average daily costs for full-day childcare by facility type compared to a single parent's wages in 2022



Source: Source: Every Texan analysis based on Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing 2022 Texas child care market rate survey. Average tuition from Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2022).

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Implement policies to ensure sufficient wages and benefits for workers to meet their family's needs.** When parents are paid a living wage, they are able to invest in themselves and their children's futures. Raising the statewide or local minimum wage and increasing access to paid sick leave can improve the economic security of all Texas families.
- **Invest in programs that help keep families out of poverty.** Programs such as Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) can lift families and children out of poverty. Policymakers should review and update the rules and regulations so programs are more accessible and equitable. For example, restrictions on owning cars and other assets to qualify for TANF should be eliminated, and unemployment insurance should be reformed so that benefits are adequate.
- **Fund programs that will increase access to affordable child care.** Increasing access to affordable child care will allow parents to pursue careers that will support their families by enhancing their economic mobility. Policymakers should follow the recommendations laid out in the 2023-2025 Child Care Workforce Strategic Plan (created by House Bill 619, passed in 2021 during the 87th Legislature of Texas), including laws to support child care workers.

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- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Ibid.
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2022 TEXAS KIDS COUNT DATA BOOK

EDUCATION

A child and family's ability to obtain stable and efficient education throughout their scholastic career can have major impacts on various facets of their lives, including job opportunities and living wages in the future. When children are unable to access a reliable and adequate education during their developmental years, they risk falling behind their peers.

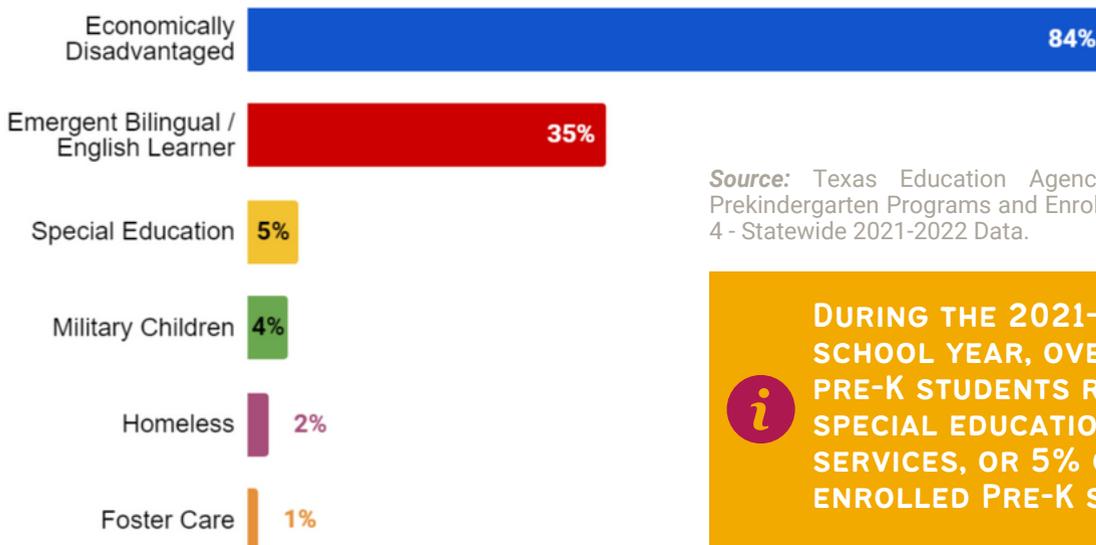
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IS CRUCIAL

Early childhood education and Pre-K are important for children's educational and social development. In 2019, the Texas Legislature mandated that every school district provide a full day of Pre-K instruction for four-year-old students. However, during the 2021-2022 school year, 9% of four-year-olds and 33% of three-year-olds enrolled in public Pre-K were in half-day programs.¹⁰⁰

Most students in public Pre-K come from low-income households and are children of color. In Texas, 84% of children in public Pre-K are economically disadvantaged by Texas Education Agency (TEA) standards, and over a third (35%) are emergent bilingual or English learners.¹⁰¹ Of Texas three- and four-year-olds enrolled in public Pre-K, 61% are Hispanic/Latino, 16% are Black, 15% are White, 4% are Asian, and 3% are multiracial.¹⁰² Inclusive teaching must acknowledge the diversity of the early-learner population, and educators must be well-equipped to meet the diverse needs of all students so they excel in school.

MOST CHILDREN IN PUBLIC PRE-K ARE ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED ¹⁰³

Characteristics of children enrolled in public pre-kindergarten during the 2021-22 school year



Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas Public Prekindergarten Programs and Enrollment Ages 3 and 4 - Statewide 2021-2022 Data.



DURING THE 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR, OVER 11,000 PRE-K STUDENTS RECEIVED SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES, OR 5% OF ALL ENROLLED PRE-K STUDENTS.¹⁰⁴

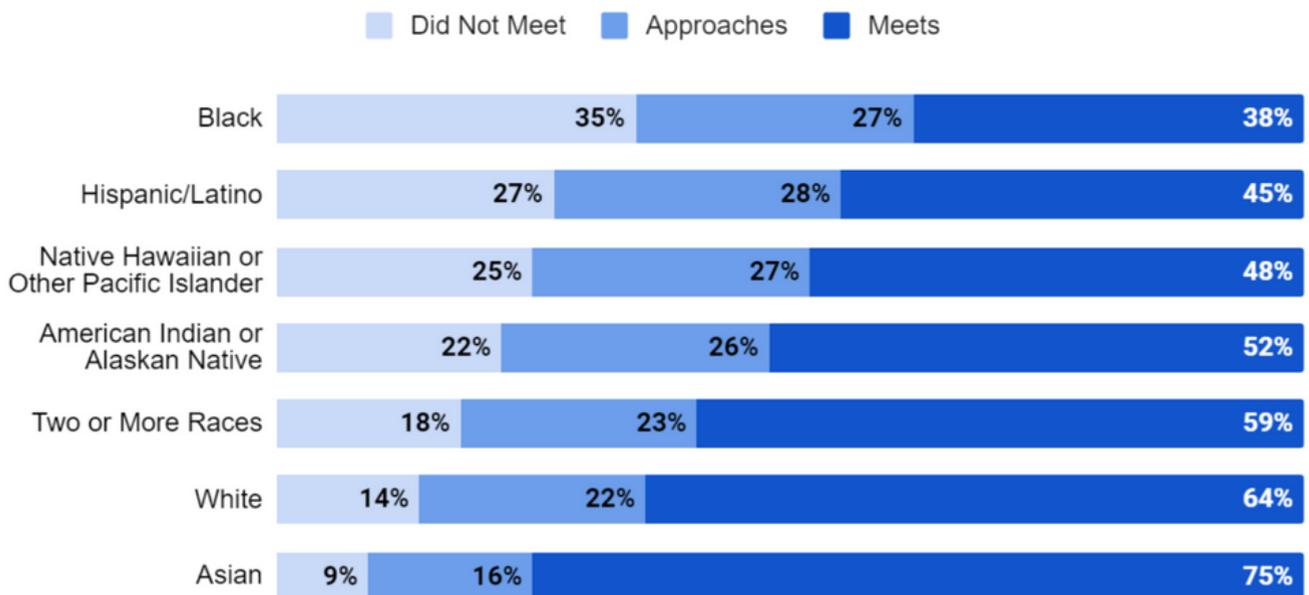
EDUCATION

LOW-INCOME STUDENTS AND STUDENTS OF COLOR NEED EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

A standard of evaluating the educational attainment of grade school students is analyzing their reading attainment levels at the third- and fourth-grade levels. This helps educational leaders, as well as state and local lawmakers, to assess which skills need reviewing and can be especially useful when disaggregated by identifiers such as race and ethnicity, economic standing, and other socio-demographic features. Reading attainment levels are also reliable indicators of the future success of students in their educational careers.

Third-grade reading test scores vary by race, ethnicity, economic status, and language. Black and Hispanic/Latino, economically disadvantaged, and English as a Second Language (ESL) third graders are least likely to meet reading standards due to systemic racism and lack of inclusive resources. In 2022, the percentage of economically disadvantaged third-grade students that did not meet third-grade reading standards was over twice that of non-economically disadvantaged students (30% compared to 12%).¹⁰⁵ ESL students also had a higher rate of not meeting reading standards compared to non-ESL students, at 28% compared to 22%.¹⁰⁶ Of all Texas K-12 students that speak a language other than English, 88% speak Spanish.¹⁰⁷ It is crucial that students have the language resources and accommodations they need in order to do well in school.

THIRD-GRADE READING ATTAINMENT SCORES BY RACE AND ETHNICITY IN 2022¹⁰⁸



Source: Texas Education Agency, STAAR 3-8 Performance Levels Summary Report, Spring 2022, Grade 3.

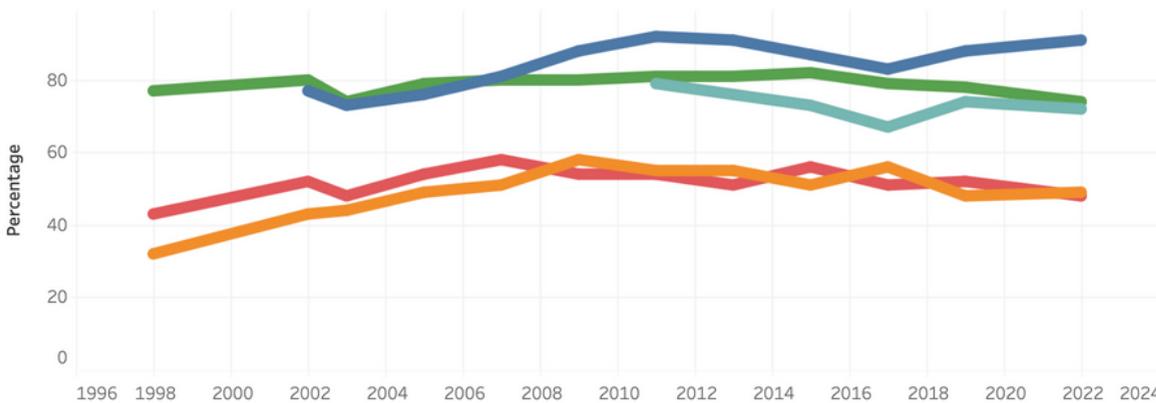
EDUCATION

Overall, achievement levels of fourth graders across the state have been relatively steady. However, the number of students at or above basic scores decreased in the last decade. In 2009, 65% of fourth graders were at or above basic reading achievement levels, and this percentage went down to 58% in 2022, a part of a decreasing trend in the past decade.¹⁰⁹ Struggling students need access to better resources. School boards and community leaders must understand the intersections of different student identities and experiences as they form curricula and programs for upcoming school years to ensure all students are supported in their educational journey.

Reading Level
at or above basic

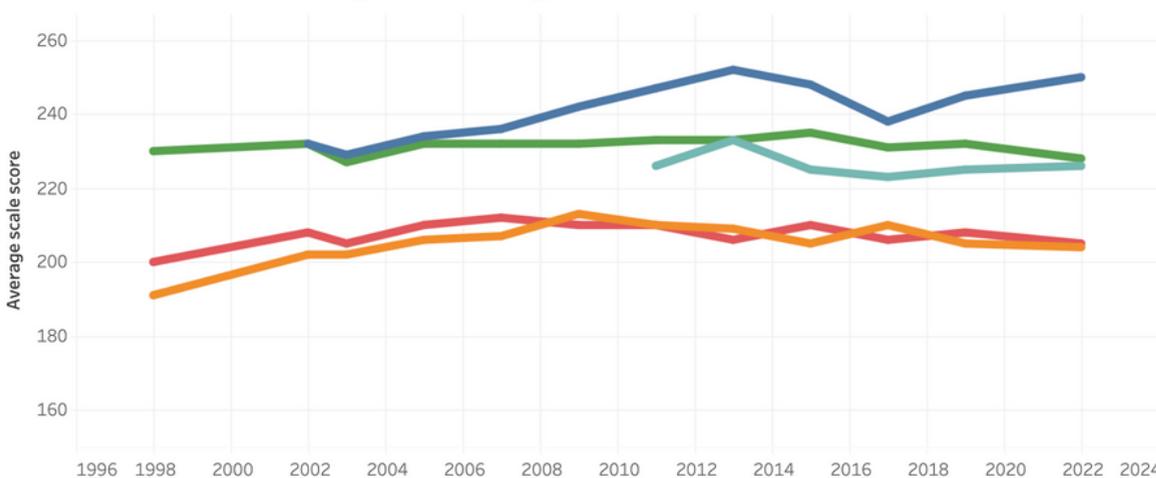
Race/Ethnicity
■ Asian/Pacific Islander
■ Black
■ Hispanic
■ Two or more races
■ White

Fourth Grade Reading Levels in Texas, 1998-2022



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019, and 2022 Reading Assessments. <https://www.nationsreport.org>

Fourth Grade Average Reading Scores in Texas, 1998-2022



Note: Black includes African American, Hispanic includes Latino, and Pacific Islander includes Native Hawaiian. Race categories exclude Hispanic origin. Prior to 2011, students in the "two or more races" category were categorized as "unclassified." Some apparent differences between estimates may not be statistically significant. Values are missing if reporting standards were not met.

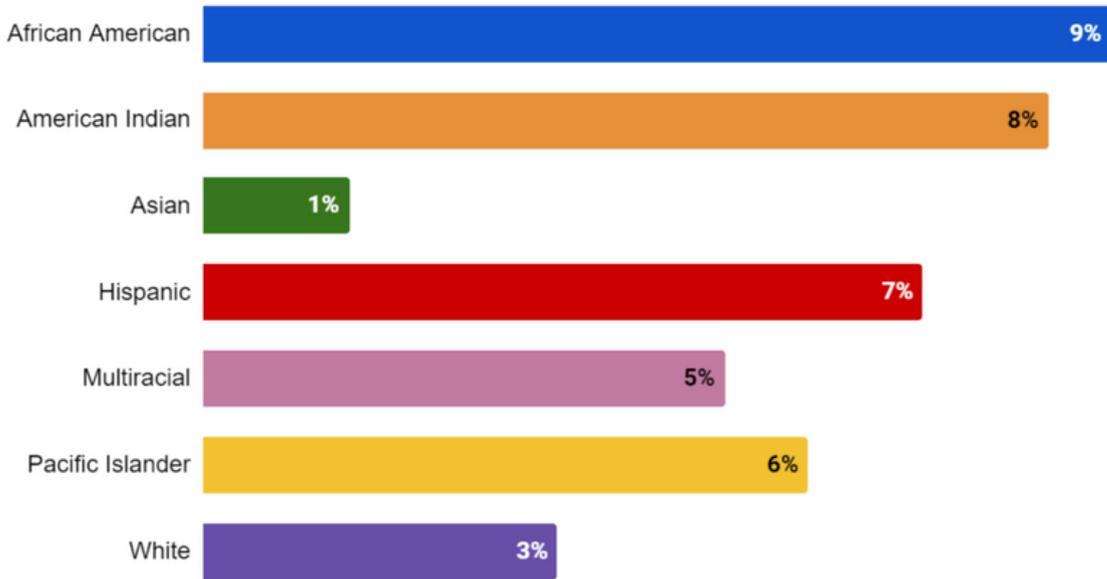
EDUCATION

HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2021

The Texas high school class of 2021 was made up of 388,517 students.¹¹⁰ Of these students, 53% were economically disadvantaged.¹¹¹ When families lack financial stability, children often struggle in school as a result. In Texas, 87% of economically disadvantaged high school students in the class of 2021 graduated, compared to 94% of non-economically disadvantaged students.¹¹²

Many high school students face economic hardship and racism in schools and their communities, which often leads to poor educational outcomes. While Black high school students made up just 13% of the class of 2021, they accounted for 19% of all dropouts.¹¹³ Hispanic/Latino students made up 52% of the class of 2021 but accounted for 61% of dropouts.¹¹⁴ Institutional and systemic inequities play a large part in explaining this disparity.

CLASS OF 2021 HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT RATES BY RACE AND ETHNICITY ¹¹⁵



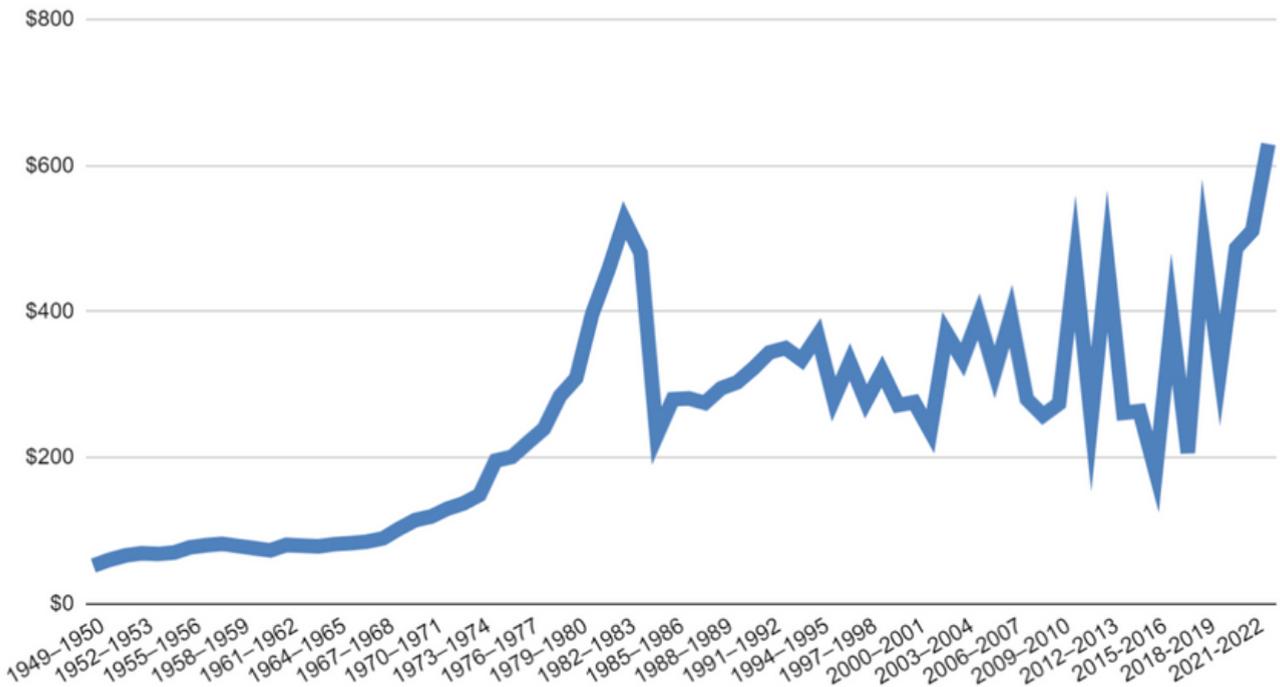
Source: Texas Education Agency, Grade 9 Four-Year Longitudinal Graduation and Dropout Rates, by Race/Ethnicity, Economic Status, and Gender, Texas Public Schools, Class of 2021.

Under the Texas Constitution, Texas school districts and charter schools receive payments from the Available School Fund (ASF) for all enrolled eligible students. The ASF is primarily made up of revenue generated by both the state's fuel tax and the Permanent School Fund. Districts and charter schools receive these "per capita" payments based on prior-year average daily attendance (ADA). The payment rate per ADA (the distribution rate) is adopted each year by the State Board of Education.¹¹⁶

EDUCATION

While there was a steady increase in ASF per capita rates from 1949 to 1983, funding dropped off after 1983 and has been unsteady ever since. The funding per capita rate in 2023 is projected to be \$630, compared to \$469 10 years prior – a \$161 per capita increase.¹¹⁷

AVAILABLE SCHOOL FUND (ASF) PER CAPITA RATES 1949-2023 ¹¹⁸



Source: Texas Education Agency State Funding Per Capita Rates 1949 Through 2023.

STUDENTS FACE A DIGITAL DIVIDE

The phrase “digital divide” refers to the gap between those who have access to the Internet and computer devices compared to those who do not. Race, ethnicity, geography, and many other factors impact whether or not individuals have computer and Internet access.

Of Texas households that make \$75,000 or more a year, only 4% are without an Internet subscription.¹¹⁹ On the flip side, for households with annual earnings of \$20,000 or less, 34% are without an Internet subscription.¹²⁰ While access to computers and the Internet is becoming increasingly important for students, many children still lack access. In Texas, over 171,000 children are in households with no computer, and 6% of Texas children live in households that have a computer but no Internet subscription.¹²¹

EDUCATION

After the COVID-19 pandemic, many industries, occupations, and even schools saw a major shift to teleworking or working virtually and from home. Families and children must have reliable access to computers and the Internet for educational and career purposes.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Improve funding and access to full-day Pre-K for eligible children statewide, especially economically disadvantaged children.** In 2019, the Texas legislature mandated that every district provide a full day of Pre-K instruction for four-year-old students. However, funding remains at half-day levels. Policymakers should provide support to economically disadvantaged students early by funding full-day, high-quality pre-kindergarten for eligible children.
- **Remodel Texas' school finance system to fund Texas schools at a level that meets the needs of all students.** Public education funding in Texas should not be based on attendance, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and due to the systemic barriers that keep economically disadvantaged students and students of color from attending and completing school. Well-funded schools should be able to fairly pay and hire more teachers and school counselors, commit to smaller classroom sizes, invest in special education and bilingual/English learning programs, and offer a wider variety of courses.
- **Implement targeted support to close educational achievement gaps between groups of students.** For example, in 2022, the percentage of economically disadvantaged third-grade students that did not meet third-grade reading standards was over twice that of non-economically disadvantaged students (30% compared to 12%). In order for students to reach their full potential and be prepared for college or careers, legislators must support school districts with the funding they need to provide targeted support to close economic and race and ethnicity gaps in educational achievement.

EDUCATION

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HEALTH

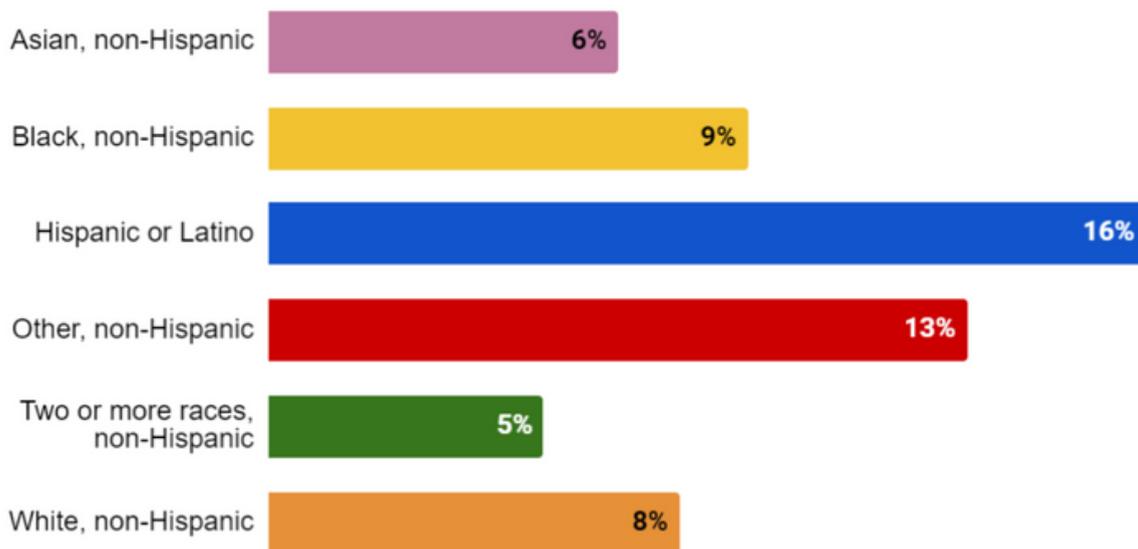
Every Texas child deserves to live a healthy life. However, systemic inequities and other structural failures, such as limited access to health insurance and mental health resources, prevent many children from living healthy lifestyles. The health of Texas children is crucial to maintaining a successful and viable state. Policymakers and leaders must keep in mind our future leaders and trailblazers when considering equitable health policies.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Affordable and accessible health care should be available for all children and families. However, Texas ranks worst in the nation for children's health insurance,¹²² with 12% of children under 19 uninsured.¹²³ Hispanic/Latino children under 19 disproportionately make up Texas' uninsured child population.¹²⁴ Systemic barriers, such as a lack of inclusive language resources and the high cost of health care, contribute to high uninsured rates among children and families of color. Health insurance largely determines whether children and families are able to receive the care they need, so lawmakers must take action to expand access for all children and families.

HISPANIC AND LATINO CHILDREN HAVE THE HIGHEST UNINSURED RATE OF TEXAS CHILDREN ¹²⁵

Uninsured rates for Texas children under 19 years by race and ethnicity in 2021



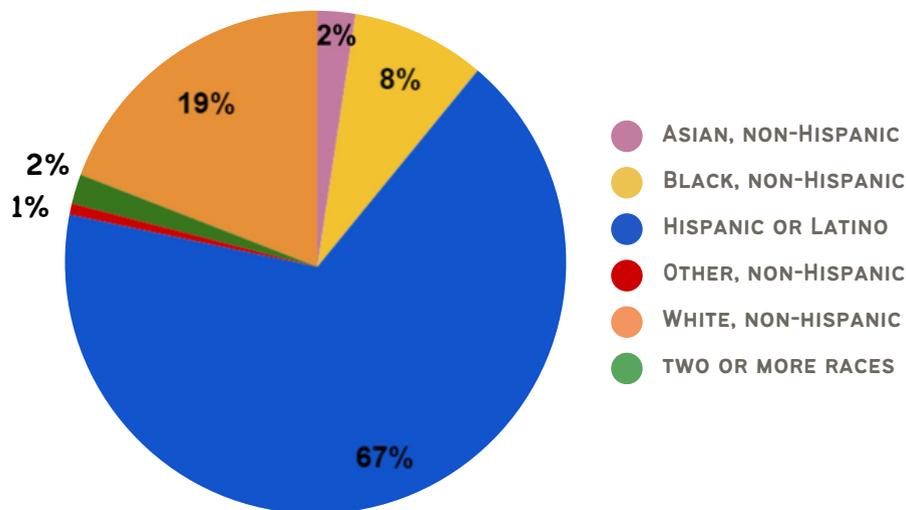
Source: Every Texan analysis of 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates PUMS. Note: Asian, Black, other, two or more races, and White are non-Hispanic.

HEALTH

MOST UNINSURED CHILDREN IN TEXAS ARE HISPANIC ¹²⁶

Uninsured children under 19 years in Texas by race and ethnicity in 2021

Source: Every Texan analysis of 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates PUMS. Note: Asian, Black, other, two or more races, and White are non-Hispanic.



Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) are the main enrollment options for children not covered by private health insurance plans. While children’s Medicaid covers children in low-income families, CHIP provides health insurance for children in families who earn more than Medicaid allows, but less than twice the federal poverty income. In Texas, 63% of Medicaid and CHIP recipients are children under 19 years.¹²⁷ In total, over a third of Texas children under 19 (37%) are covered by Medicaid or CHIP.¹²⁸ In April 2023, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) will start the enormous task of “unwinding” – re-checking eligibility for all Texans on Medicaid over 12 months following a three-year nationwide pause on disenrollments during the pandemic. The 2023 Session is a critical time for the Legislature to act, to help Texas avoid a huge spike in eligible kids losing coverage in 2023 and 2024.

MATERNAL HEALTH IS CRITICAL TO CHILDREN’S HEALTH

Mothers and birthing people must receive the care and support necessary so that they and their babies are healthy. However, in Texas, many barriers still exist for pregnant people trying to access health care, especially for Black mothers. These barriers have real-life impacts on these families and their children. For example:

- The infant mortality rate in Texas is 5.3 infant deaths per 1,000 live births (only slightly lower than the national infant mortality rate of 5.4 infant deaths per 1,000 live births).¹²⁹ However, the rate is twice as high for Black mothers, at 10 infant deaths per 1,000 live births, compared to 5 infant deaths per 1,000 live births for non-Hispanic White mothers in Texas.¹³⁰
- The rate of births to low birth-weight babies in Texas is 8.2% (the same as the national rate).¹³¹ This rate is 13% for Black women, compared to 7% for non-Hispanic White women in Texas.¹³²

HEALTH

- The preterm birth rate in Texas is 11.4%, compared to the national rate of 10.5%.¹³³ In Texas, Black women have a preterm birth rate of 14.8%, which is 41% higher than the rate for all other women and 59% higher than the lowest rate (9.3% for Asian and Pacific Islander women) in Texas.¹³⁴

Black women are also more likely to receive inadequate prenatal care and die due to pregnancy-related complications compared to women of other races.¹³⁵ Non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic/Latina women in Texas disproportionately experience unexpected outcomes in labor and delivery that result in significant consequences to their health.¹³⁶

Traumatic and overly-stressful birthing experiences and prenatal stress have been found to lead to adverse birth outcomes and developmental challenges for children and can impact their ability to live a healthy life in the future.¹³⁷ When mothers are unable to access adequate maternal health care, they are at risk of experiencing adverse health outcomes, which can have generational impacts.

FOOD AND NUTRITION

All families and children deserve access to healthy foods. Nutrition plays a crucial role in a child's ability to live a healthy lifestyle and thrive in other areas of life. However, Texas has one of the worst rates of child food insecurity in the nation.¹³⁸

Nearly 1.4 million children in Texas are food insecure, or 19% of all Texas kids (compared to 16% of children nationwide).¹³⁹ Of Texas children that are food insecure, 74% are eligible for federal nutrition programs.¹⁴⁰ The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the nation's most important anti-hunger program and is meant to support families who need assistance. When parents are food secure, they are able to better support and care for their children. In Texas, over 79% of SNAP participants are in families with children, compared to over 65% nationwide.¹⁴¹ Overall, 19% of Texas households with children under 18 years receive SNAP.¹⁴²

Without proper nutrition and food, children are more likely to struggle in other areas of life. Hunger impacts Black and Hispanic/Latino families disproportionately due to racist, systemic barriers that prevent families from accessing food and nutrition programs, such as inadequate outreach programs that do not reach these populations in need and limited eligibility standards that often leave families unable to receive help. Texas policymakers should reduce barriers to enrolling in nutrition programs such as SNAP so every Texan can access the food they need to stay healthy.

TEXAS CHILDREN NEED MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

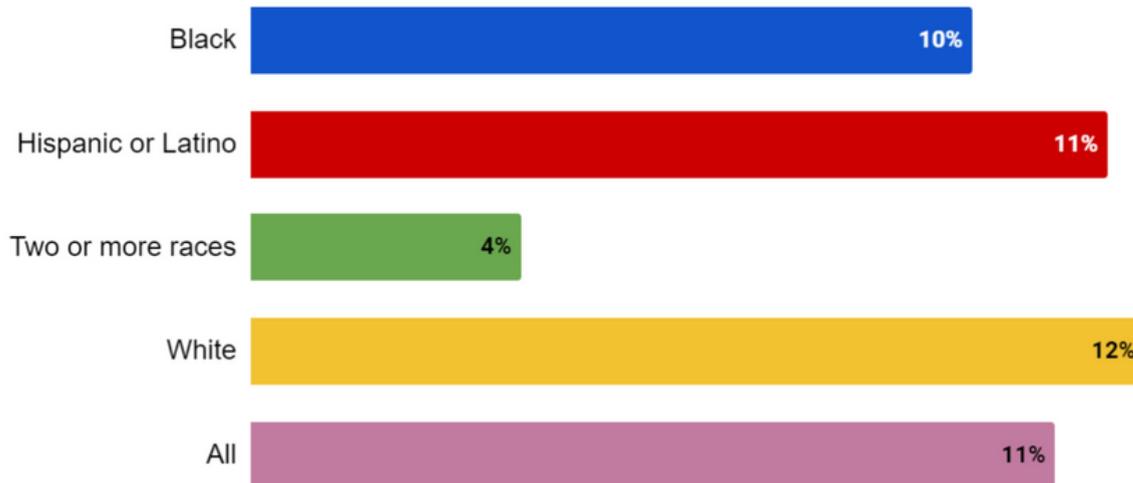
Mental health is an often overlooked issue that is taking a toll on children across the nation, especially in Texas. A child's mental health has a direct impact on their ability to excel in school and on their future success. The following statistics highlight the mental health crisis that children and youth in Texas are experiencing:

HEALTH

- 21% of children ages 3-17 have a mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral condition.¹⁴³
- Over half (56%) of Texas children ages 3-17 with a mental or behavioral condition do not receive treatment or counseling.¹⁴⁴
- Untreated mental illnesses can lead to serious concerns, including suicidal thoughts and actions. In 2020, 197 children (ages 7-17) died by suicide in Texas.¹⁴⁵ For every 100,000 teen deaths (ages 13-17) in Texas, 8.3 are by suicide (compared to the national rate of 7.2).¹⁴⁶ The teen suicide rate in Texas has more than doubled since 2010.¹⁴⁷

ONE IN TEN TEXAS CHILDREN HAVE ANXIETY OR DEPRESSION ¹⁴⁸

Percentage of Texas children (age 3-17) that had anxiety or depression in 2019-2020



Note: Black, two or more races, and White are non-Hispanic.

Source: Child Trends' analysis of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016 and 2020 National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH).

In Texas, 45% of high school students experienced depression in 2021.¹⁴⁹ Additionally, 33% of high school students reported that their mental health was most of the time or always not good during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁵⁰ Data also show that 12% of Texas high school students have attempted suicide, and 22% have seriously considered it.¹⁵¹ Of Texas high school students that attempted suicide, only 13% asked for help from someone before their suicide attempt.¹⁵² White students (25%) are more than twice as likely to ask for help from someone (such as a doctor, counselor, or hotline) before attempting suicide than Black (10%) or Hispanic/Latino students (11%).¹⁵³

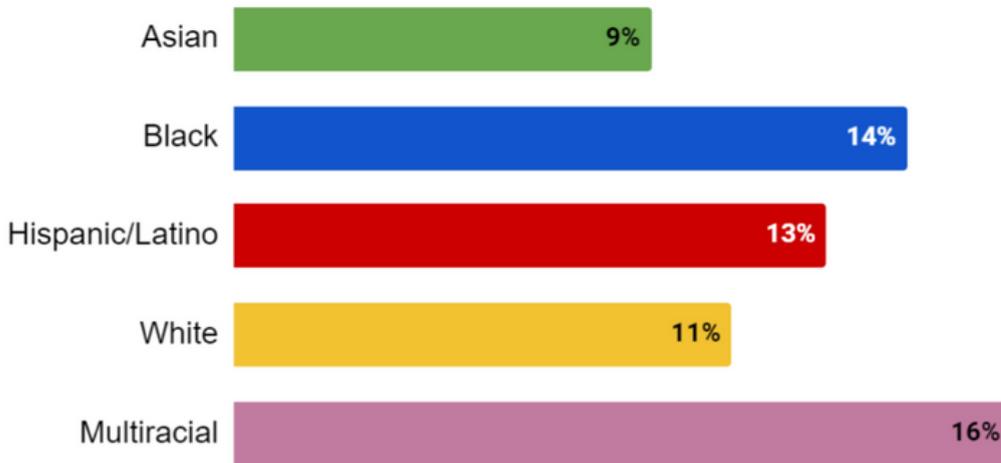
The Texas Department of Health and Human Services 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) collects limited data on sexual identity, including the categories "heterosexual (straight)," "gay or lesbian," "bisexual," "other," "questioning," and "not sure." Data also show that gay, lesbian, or bisexual (GLB)

HEALTH

students, as well as students questioning their sexual identity or who described their sexual identity some other way than GLB or straight, are more likely to consider or attempt suicide than straight students (mental health data for GLB and queer/questioning students can be found in the *Safe Communities and Schools* section of this report).¹⁵⁴

MULTIRACIAL, BLACK, AND HISPANIC/LATINO STUDENTS HAVE THE HIGHEST RATES OF ATTEMPTED SUICIDE¹⁵⁵

Percentage of Texas high school students who attempted suicide in 2021



Note: Asian, Black, White, and multiracial are non-Hispanic.

Source: Every Texan analysis of 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) data.



IF YOU OR A LOVED ONE IS EXPERIENCING SUICIDAL THOUGHTS, PLEASE CALL THE SUICIDE AND CRISIS LIFELINE BY DIALING 988.



**CALL/TEXT:
988**

HEALTH

Texas leaders must prioritize access to health insurance, mental health resources, and food and nutrition programs so that all Texas children can thrive.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Implement policy solutions to protect and expand access to affordable health care for all children and families.** Policymakers must make sure every Texas child has health insurance and can afford and access health services. In April 2023, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) will start the enormous task of “unwinding” – re-checking eligibility for all Texans on Medicaid over 12 months following a 3-year nationwide pause on disenrollments during the pandemic. The 2023 Session is a critical time for the Legislature to act, to help Texas avoid a huge spike in eligible kids losing coverage in 2023 and 2024.
- **Expand after-school meals, summer nutrition, and school breakfast programs.** Millions of Texas children rely on school lunches to get nutritious meals. Policymakers must recognize that educational attainment hinges on the health and well-being of children. Therefore, policymakers must expand existing school nutrition programs to ensure that all children have access to healthy and nutritious meals at school and during the summer break.
- **Protect Medicaid and CHIP from damaging cuts or policy changes that reduce coverage for Texans or their ability to access care.** Texas can expand Medicaid so that all children and families can receive the health care they need. State policymakers can also extend comprehensive Medicaid coverage for postpartum women to 12 months after pregnancy, as recommended by maternal health experts.
- **Expand access to family planning resources.** Access to prenatal care and support during pregnancy should be expanded through outreach and increased Medicaid access in low-income communities and communities with high maternal mortality rates. Lawmakers can help reduce unintended teen pregnancies – and high-school dropout rates – by authorizing the Texas Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to cover contraceptives, a benefit covered by 48 other states. Lawmakers should also remove restrictions to accessing family planning services.
- **Increase the reach of food and nutrition programs.** If Texas were to remove barriers to enrolling in SNAP, Texas families, especially families of color, would be able to access healthy food more easily. Policymakers must consider existing barriers to accessing food and nutrition benefits and implement the necessary modifications to ensure all those who need the support can access it. This includes ensuring children retain access to SNAP by extending enrollment to a year.

HEALTH

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SAFE COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOLS

It is crucial that children feel safe in their schools and communities so they are able to live healthy, happy lives. However, negative police interactions, bullying, child abuse and neglect, and lack of school safety and inclusion policies contribute to adverse child well-being outcomes, especially for children of color and LGBTQ youth.

SAFE COMMUNITIES

Children and youth that experience negative interactions with police — such as being stopped, searched, arrested, subjected to use of force, or incarcerated — often experience negative health and well-being outcomes as a result.¹⁵⁶ The physical and emotional harm that comes from negative police interactions can have long-lasting effects on children and youth.¹⁵⁷

Children and youth of color are more likely to experience negative police interactions than White children and youth. While Black children under 18 account for 12% of all Texas children, Black youth ages 10 to 16 make up 30% of all juvenile arrests in Texas.¹⁵⁸ Overall, there are 126 youth (under age 21) per 100,000 residing in juvenile detention, correctional, or residential facilities in Texas (compared to the national rate of 114 per 100,000).¹⁵⁹ The rates are highest for youth of color due to systemic racism, with 345 per 100,000 Black youth and 116 per 100,000 Hispanic/Latino youth residing in juvenile detention, correctional, or residential facilities in Texas, compared to 74 per 100,000 White youth.¹⁶⁰



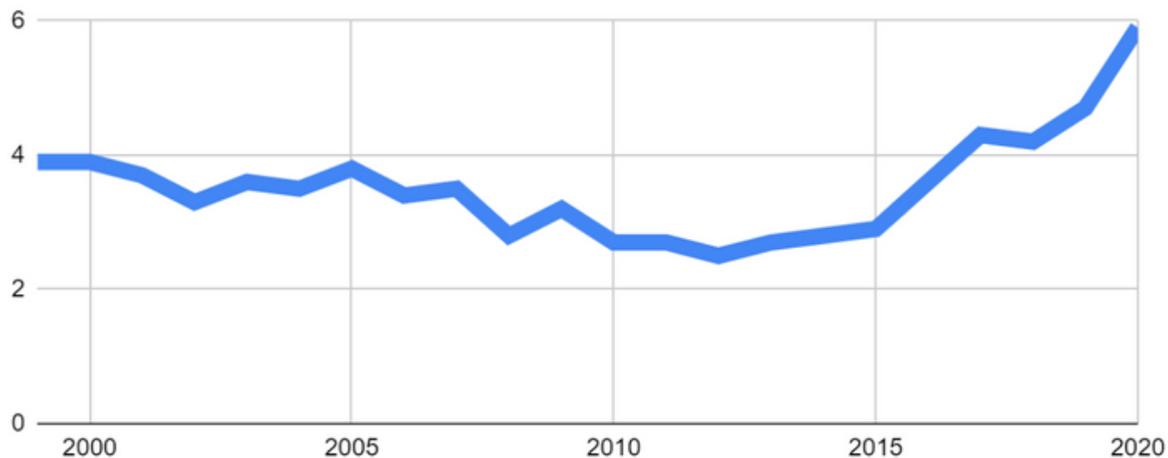
IN 2020, THERE WERE 16 CHILDREN (AGE 17 OR YOUNGER) BEING HELD IN ADULT PRISONS IN TEXAS.¹⁶¹

In Texas, at least 17 children have been shot and killed by police officers in the line of duty since 2015.¹⁶² Since 2017, guns have killed more children and teens (19 years and under) than cancer, pneumonia, influenza, asthma, HIV/AIDs, and opioids combined every year in Texas.¹⁶³ Overall, the rate of children and teens killed by guns has increased by 51% since 1999, from 3.9 deaths per 100,000 to 5.9 deaths per 100,000 children and teens (19 years and under).¹⁶⁴ Non-Hispanic Black children and teens (19 years and under) are more likely to be killed by guns compared to non-Hispanic White children and teens, at 12.1 compared to 5.7 deaths per 100,000 children and teens, respectively.¹⁶⁵ State leaders must implement comprehensive policy solutions to ensure children are safe in their schools and communities.

SAFE COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOLS

THE RATE OF CHILDREN AND TEENS KILLED BY GUNS EACH YEAR IN TEXAS HAS INCREASED SINCE 1999 ¹⁶⁶

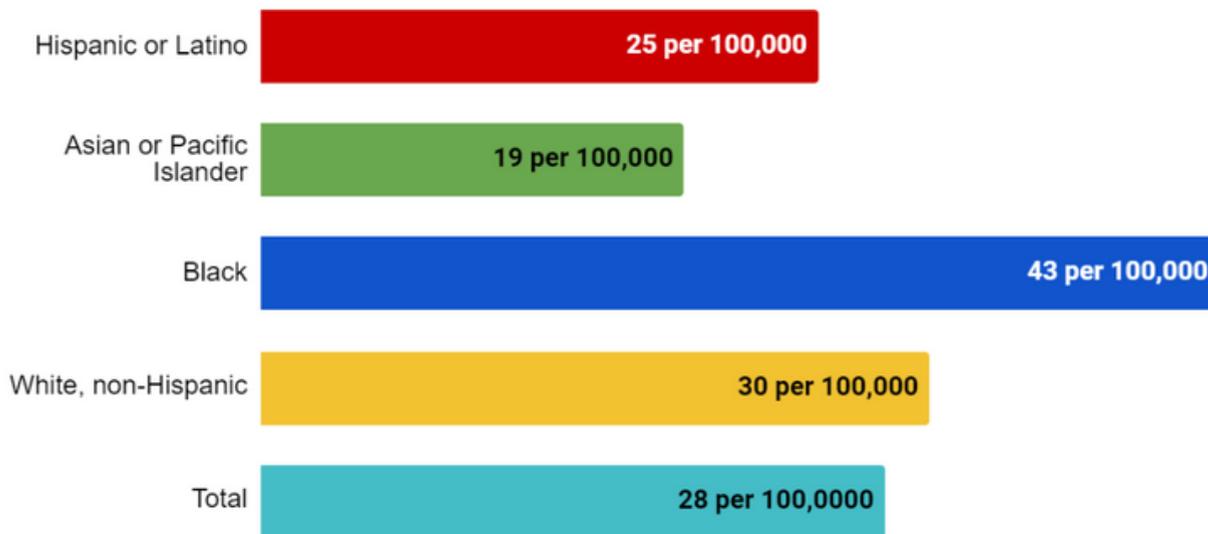
Rate per 100,000 children and teens killed by firearms from 1999-2020 (age 19 and under)



Source: CDC "Underlying Cause of Death, 1999-2020," Detailed Mortality Tables

BLACK CHILDREN AND TEENS HAVE THE HIGHEST DEATH RATE AMONG ALL TEXAS CHILDREN AND TEENS ¹⁶⁷

Deaths per 100,000 children and teens (ages 1-19) by race and ethnicity in 2020

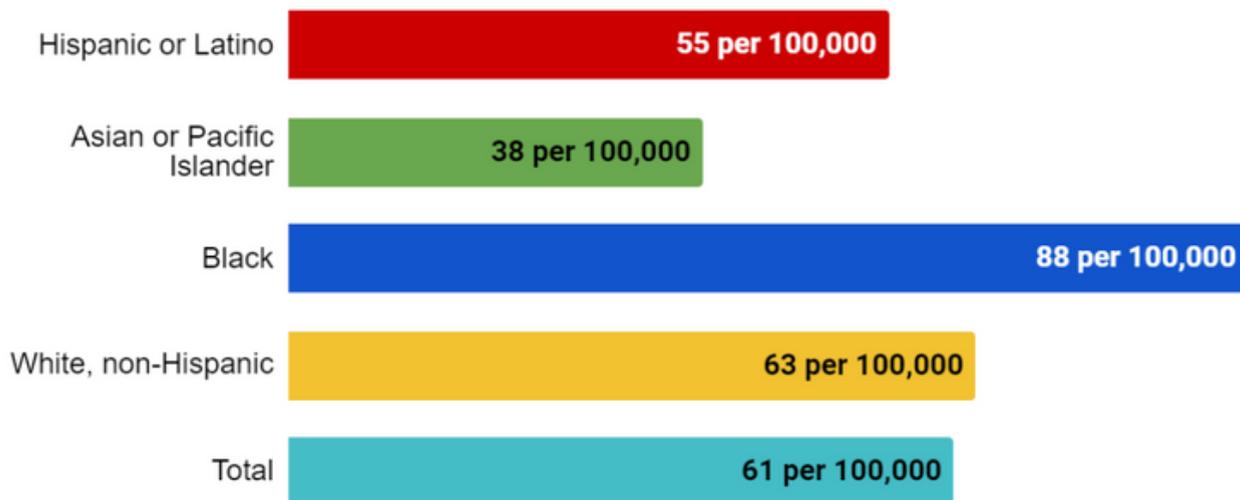


Source: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center. Note: Race/ethnic groups represented in this table are not mutually exclusive. The category of White includes only non-Hispanic White. The categories Black and Asian include both Hispanic and non-Hispanic. Those in the Hispanic or Latino category include those identified as being in one of the non-White racial groups.

SAFE COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOLS

BLACK TEENS HAVE THE HIGHEST DEATH RATE AMONG ALL TEXAS TEENS ¹⁶⁸

Deaths per 100,000 teens (ages 15-19) by race and ethnicity in 2020



Source:The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center. Note: Race/ethnic groups represented in this table are not mutually exclusive. The category of White includes only non-Hispanic White. The categories Black and Asian include both Hispanic and non-Hispanic. Those in the Hispanic or Latino category include those identified as being in one of the non-White racial groups.

The overall death rate for teenagers (aged 15-19) in Texas is 61 deaths per 100,000, compared to the national rate of 59 deaths per 100,000.¹⁶⁹ The rate of teen deaths by accident, homicide, and suicide is 48 deaths per 100,000 in Texas (compared to the national rate of 45 deaths per 100,000).¹⁷⁰ In 2021, multiracial, Black, and Hispanic/Latino high schoolers had the highest reported suicide rates among all Texas high school students.¹⁷¹ Community and school leaders must understand and address the relationship between discrimination and suicide prevention.¹⁷²

SAFE COMMUNITIES

All youth deserve to feel safe and comfortable in their communities and schools, but data show that LGBTQ youth disproportionately experience poor mental health outcomes. Data from the 2021 Youth Risk and Behavior Survey show that:¹⁷³

- **17%** of gay, lesbian, or bisexual (GLB) and **20%** of queer/questioning students skipped school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school (compared to 11% of straight students)
- **26%** of GLB and **25%** of queer/questioning students have been bullied on school property (compared to 10% of straight students).

SAFE COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOLS

- **70%** of GLB and **74%** of queer/questioning students have felt sad or hopeless to the point that they stopped doing some usual activities (compared to 38% of heterosexual students).
- **51%** of GLB and **43%** of queer/questioning students have seriously considered attempting suicide (compared to 15% of straight students).
- **44%** of GLB and **41%** of queer/questioning students have made a plan about how they would attempt suicide (compared to 14% of straight students).
- **25%** of GLB and **27%** of queer/questioning students have attempted suicide (compared to 8% of straight students).
- **60%** of GLB and **58%** of queer/questioning students had poor mental health during the pandemic (compared to 26% of straight students).

Schools have a responsibility to ensure that LGBTQ youth feel safe and welcome in schools. However, only 35% of Texas middle and high schools currently have student-led clubs that aim to create a safe, welcoming, and accepting school environment for all youth, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.¹⁷⁴ Moreover, 27% of Texas middle and high schools do not identify safe spaces (e.g., a counselor's office, designated classroom, or student organization) where LGBTQ youth can receive support from administrators, teachers, or other school staff.¹⁷⁵ Schools and Texas lawmakers must take action to ensure LGBTQ youth are safe, healthy, and supported in their communities.

CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE AND KINSHIP HOMES MUST BE PRIORITIZED

Child Protective Services (CPS), which works within the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), can remove a child from home and assume custody when the child's home environment is determined to be unsafe. CPS then coordinates placing the child in foster care or formal kinship care (when a child is placed in the custody of grandparents or other relatives).¹⁷⁶ There are currently over 11,000 children in foster care in Texas,¹⁷⁷ of which 41% are Hispanic/Latino, 30% are White, 22% are Black, 5% are multiracial, and 2% are of another race or their race was undetermined.¹⁷⁸ There are also 302,000 children in informal kinship homes (meaning they did not go into custody of the state).¹⁷⁹ Informal kinship caregivers save Texas taxpayers millions of dollars every year in foster care costs and lead to better child well-being outcomes.¹⁸⁰ Policymakers and community leaders must prioritize the well-being of children and youth currently in foster and kinship homes, as well as youth that have transitioned out of foster care.

In 2021, there were 68,517 confirmed victims of child abuse in Texas, or 9 victims of child abuse per 1,000 children.¹⁸¹ That same year, 199 children died due to abuse and neglect in Texas.¹⁸² In 2020, 122 Texas mothers were killed by male intimate partners, resulting in 177 children (under the age of 18) losing one or more parents.¹⁸³

SAFE COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOLS

That same year, 23 Texas fathers were killed by an intimate partner, resulting in 37 adults and minor children losing a parent.¹⁸⁴ Preventing intimate partner violence would lead to safer communities and better childhood outcomes.¹⁸⁵ Texas policymakers must approach domestic violence as a public health issue so that children and families can lead safe, healthy lives.

Children and teens should feel safe in their communities. Community leaders must understand and consider the intersections of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and more when creating laws and policies meant to protect Texas youth. Texas lawmakers and community leaders must prioritize the safety and well-being of children and teens.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Advocate for policies that protect all Texas children.** Funding mental health staff, creating equitable safety policies, partnering with families and communities, and using risk assessments can help ensure that students *feel* and *are* safe. Policymakers should especially consider funding programs that coordinate trauma support across schools, child welfare organizations, and health care facilities.
- **Improve the well-being of children in foster and kinship programs by fully funding Child Protective Services and a Kinship Navigator Program.** Many youth that age out of foster care experience homelessness.¹⁸⁶ All children, no matter their family situation, need better support to ensure they are able to thrive during childhood and into adulthood. Policymakers must expand funding to improve the health and well-being of kids in foster and kinship care.
- **Support gun safety.** Policymakers must support gun safety and prevention efforts that establish standards for responsible gun ownership to help lower the rates of preventable gun-related deaths, especially for children.

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ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences describes environmental justice as making sure that everyone has a fair chance of living the healthiest life possible, with respect to the environment.¹⁸⁷ The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) states that environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.¹⁸⁸ Fair treatment, according to the EPA, means that no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, governmental, and commercial operations or policies. In Texas, policymakers must consider what environmental hazards and pollutants may be contributing to unhealthy outcomes for children and which groups of children are being disproportionately harmed. Because we know that the factors impacting our children’s environment have become increasingly important, we have compiled data on some of the most prominent metrics that inform how our state’s environment and climate might be exacerbating health conditions for Texas children.

MEASURING ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH JUSTICE

Existing theoretical models in academia and those operationalized by municipalities highlight important areas to assess environmental justice. Generally, indicators used to measure environmental justice fall within two categories: population characteristics and pollution burdens. For population characteristics, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)’s Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) is used to highlight additional population characteristics that might make Texas children more susceptible to pollution-related health impacts, including socioeconomic status, minority status, household type, and household composition. More detailed data on demographics and socioeconomic well-being are found in the *Demographics* and *Economic Well-Being* sections of this book. Additionally, we are highlighting childhood asthma as a population characteristic that is considered a susceptibility to environment-related illnesses. In terms of pollution burdens, we are highlighting ozone air concentration and averages across Texas metropolitan areas.

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS:

TEXAS KIDS AND ASTHMA

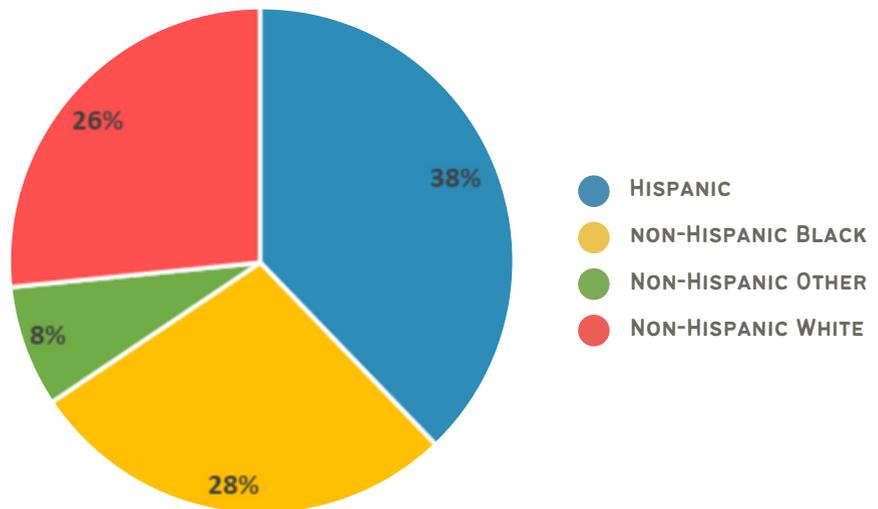
The American Lung Association defines asthma as a chronic lung disease that makes it harder to breathe.¹⁸⁹ Environmental factors such as air pollution and exposure to high ozone levels can contribute to children developing asthma or having asthma attacks.

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The Texas Department of State Health Services estimates that nearly 7% of children in Texas have asthma.¹⁹⁰ In 2020, there were over 2,100 inpatient hospital visits from children under 18 years old for asthma in Texas.¹⁹¹ Non-Hispanic Black children had the highest overall rate of pediatric asthma hospitalizations in 2020 at 69.5 hospitalizations per 100,000 children compared to 24.5 per 100,000 for non-Hispanic White children and 22.1 per 100,000 for Hispanic children.¹⁹² The average hospital stay for these children was approximately two days, and the average total charge for a hospital visit was \$29,783.¹⁹³

NUMBER OF ASTHMA INPATIENT HOSPITALIZATIONS FOR CHILDREN UNDER 18 IN TEXAS, 2020¹⁹⁴

Source: Texas Health Care Information Collection (THCIC), 2020 Inpatient Use Data



THE SOCIAL VULNERABILITY INDEX (SVI) AND THE TEXAS POPULATION

Texas is home to over 7.4 million children under 18, roughly 10% of all children under 18 living in the United States.¹⁹⁵ Certain demographic factors make some children and people more susceptible to the effects of pollution than others. In the *Demographics* section of this report, we have provided that breakdown for Texas children. Other important population characteristics that determine who will experience more environmental injustice include socioeconomic factors such as poverty, citizenship status, language barriers, education, and more.

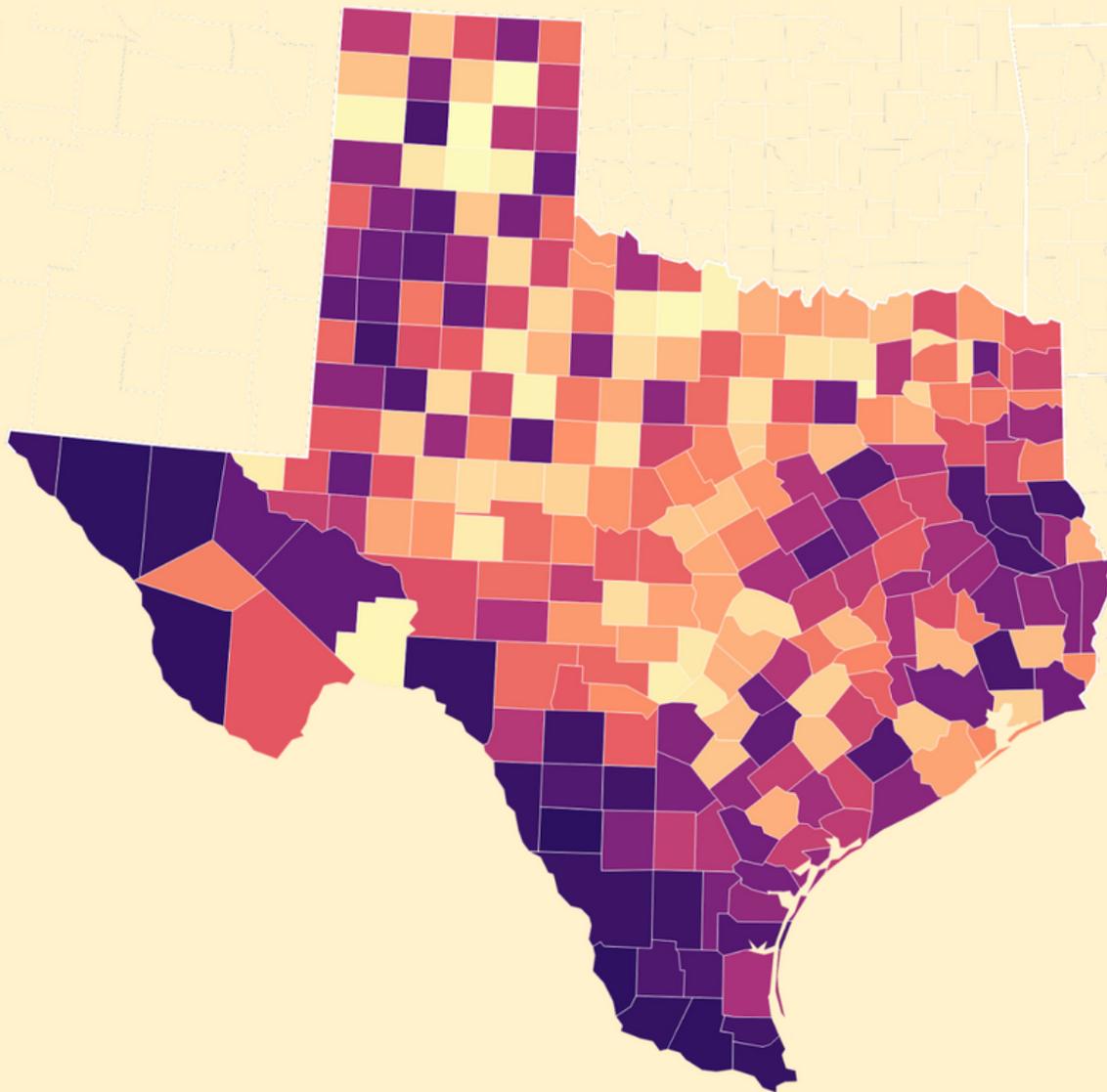
The CDC's Social Vulnerability Index comprises fifteen metrics across four different categories: socioeconomic status, household composition & disability, minority status & language, and housing type & transportation. The index captures the degree to which a community exhibits certain social conditions and how those conditions may affect that community's ability to prevent human suffering and financial loss in the event of disaster. When the index is applied to Texas, at a county level, we can observe that the highest vulnerability concentration exists along South Texas, with clusters observed in far East and West Texas as well. The least vulnerable communities are concentrated in central Texas.

ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

The SVI index, in conjunction with other indicators related to pollution burdens, highlights areas where legislators must invest in programs that will support and grow a community’s resilience to the growing changes in our environment that will disproportionately impact certain children and Texans.

Texas Social Vulnerability Index

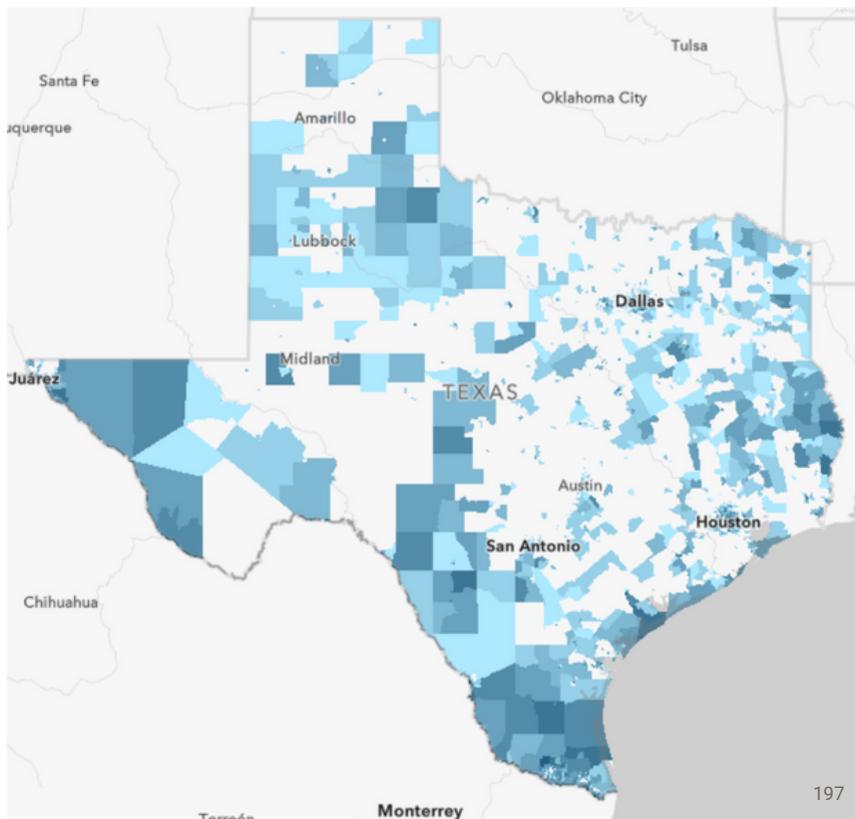
High score of 1 = most vulnerable



JUSTICE40 INDICATORS: DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

In 2021, the Justice40 initiative, created by Executive Order 14008, was introduced. The Justice40 initiative directs certain federal investments – including investments in clean energy and energy efficiency; clean transit; affordable and sustainable housing; training and workforce development; the remediation and reduction of legacy pollution; and the development of clean water infrastructure – to flow to disadvantaged communities (DACs). To identify DACs, the United States Department of Transportation identified six categories to assess the overall level of disadvantage of communities: transportation, health, environment, economy, resilience, and equity. Because of the many data indicators used to identify disadvantaged communities, the Justice40 classification allows us to identify which parts of Texas could benefit from investments that will prompt legislators to build a healthier state, through infrastructure investments for Texas’ children.

Both the social vulnerability and Justice40 indices highlight areas of the state where policymakers might better concentrate investments through health and infrastructure policy that will lead to better well-being outcomes for children in Texas. It will be important for policymakers to observe trends across both measures, notably, that areas across the southern part of the state, along with pockets on the east side of the state, are especially vulnerable and underinvested.



Source: Council on Environmental Quality, most recent American Community Survey (ACS) estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau.

ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

POLLUTION BURDENS

OZONE AIR POLLUTION

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), ground-level ozone is a harmful air pollutant and the main ingredient found in smog.¹⁹⁸ Ozone is created by pollutants emitted by cars, power plants, industrial boilers, refineries, chemical plants, and other sources that chemically react in the presence of sunlight. Hotter temperatures lead to higher levels of ozone. In the last decade, the EPA strengthened the national air quality standards for ground-level ozone to 70 parts per billion (ppb), in consideration of scientific evidence outlining the harmful effects of ozone on populations, but especially for vulnerable populations, including children.

Ozone can cause harmful respiratory conditions in children. In particular, associations between high ozone exposure and asthma have been documented,¹⁹⁹ as well as evidence connecting exposure to ozone and irritation of the upper airways.²⁰⁰ Further, research has also linked asthma-related hospital admissions with increased ozone levels and with sociodemographic characteristics.²⁰¹ High ozone averages by metropolitan area in the state of Texas are available through the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). While an area-to-area comparison cannot be made across the different regions, the available data provide us with important information, based on air quality monitoring in the area, about the quality of air Texas children are breathing. According to the TCEQ averages, Dallas and surrounding areas have had the most days with high ozone levels in the country. According to the American Lung Association, four Texas areas (Houston-The Woodlands, El Paso-Las Cruces, Dallas-Fort Worth, and San Antonio-New Braunfels-Pearson) rank in the top 25 most polluted U.S. cities by ozone.²⁰² Cutting air pollution will be a critical step in ensuring a clean environment for all Texas children.

ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

High Ozone Averages for Texas Metro Areas, 2022 ²⁰³

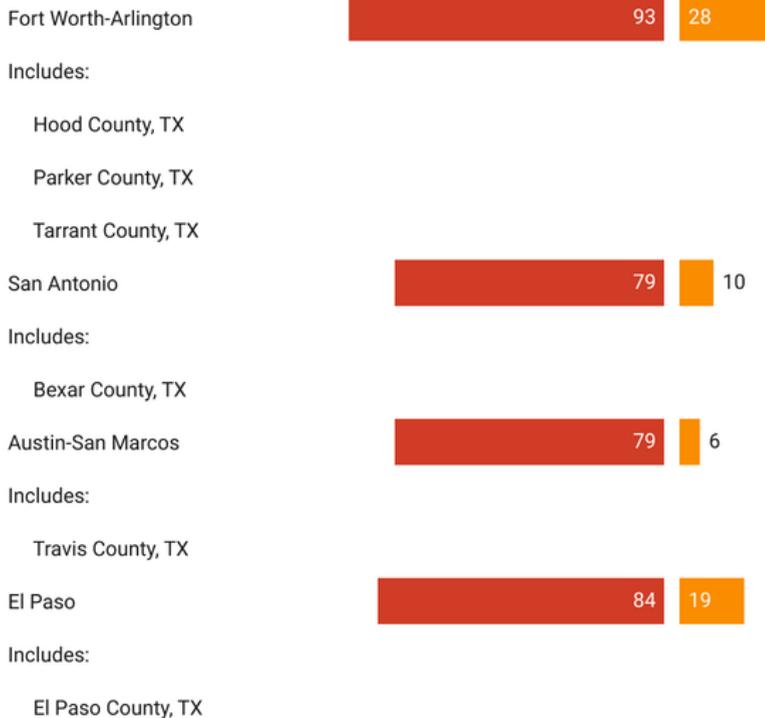
Data reflects 8-hour ozone averages from monitoring sites across Texas.

■ Peak Value ■ High Days



- Includes:
- Collin County, TX
 - Dallas County, TX
 - Denton County, TX
 - Ellis County, TX
 - Hunt County, TX
 - Johnson County, TX
 - Kaufman County, TX
 - Navarro County, TX
 - Rockwall County, TX

Note: Data in this table is based on the number of monitors operating in an area, as well as on the severity of ozone. This data should not be used to perform comparisons between cities or across years without factoring in the number of monitors.



FOR DATA FROM ADDITIONAL TEXAS METRO AREAS, VISIT:

DATAWRAPPER.DWCDN.NET/GVG2H/1

Source: Every Texan analysis of Texas Commission on Environmental Quality 2022 High Ozone Averages.

ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Support programs and policies that will mitigate negative health outcomes.** Environmental factors such as air pollution and exposure to high levels of ozone can contribute to children developing asthma or having asthma attacks. Policymakers must consider safeguards for children who are more vulnerable to environment-related illnesses and exposure to pollution by expanding access to health programs that will provide vulnerable populations with the services and medications they need.
- **Understand how the Texas environment is impacting children’s health.** Intentional data collection and a deeper analysis of communities across the state are needed to better understand how the state of children’s health intersects with our state’s environment. Policymakers must pursue a study to better understand how changes in the environment and air pollutants are impacting children’s health across different parts of the state.
- **Develop a plan for addressing the environment’s impact on children.** Existing vulnerability indices demonstrate that communities across the state will experience the negative effects of a climate or natural disasters differently. The COVID-19 pandemic is a perfect example of such a scenario. Legislators have an opportunity to build a healthier state, by focusing strategic investments in Texas’ most vulnerable children. Policymakers must put forward a bold roadmap of the state’s climate policy to mitigate existing threats to children’s health.

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CONCLUSION

In 2023, Texas legislators have another opportunity to invest in the future of Texas kids. Their choices can help more Texas kids access health insurance and healthy foods. They can make sure all kids feel safe and supported in schools and in their communities. Lawmakers have an opportunity to ensure more kids enter school ready to learn and attend equitably funded schools equipped with all the resources they need. Texas lawmakers have the opportunity to provide children pathways out of poverty by funding and expanding programs proven to uplift working families. The investments Texas makes today will determine the health and well-being of its children for years to come. Therefore, putting children first, especially those most disadvantaged, will help create a Texas that is better for us all.

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EVERY TEXAN

Every Texan believes that social justice requires public policy. Since its founding in 1985, Every Texan (formerly the Center for Public Policy Priorities) has leveraged public policy to expand opportunity and equity for Texans of all backgrounds. Every Texan is a nonprofit organization that researches, analyzes, and advocates for public policies to achieve equitable access to quality health care, food security, education, and good jobs. Our bold, research-driven legislative priorities dare Texas leaders to make Texas the best state for hard-working people and their families. Learn more at everytexan.org.

Methodist Healthcare Ministries broadens the definition of healthcare by providing low-cost clinical care for the uninsured and by supporting community-led efforts that improve living conditions that cause people to be sick in the first place. We use our earnings as co-owners of Methodist Healthcare to ensure that people who are economically disadvantaged and uninsured can live their healthiest lives. We do this by advocating for, investing in and providing access to quality clinical care and addressing factors that affect health—including economic mobility, supportive relationships, food security, broadband access, and safe neighborhoods. Ultimately, we fulfill our mission of “**Serving Humanity to Honor God**” by advancing health equity so that more resilient individuals & families living in the 74 counties we serve can thrive.



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