



Children in the States

ARKANSAS

September 2015

Child Population

707,019 children lived in Arkansas in 2014; 36 percent were children of color.

- 64 percent were White
- 12 percent were Hispanic
- 18 percent were Black
- 2 percent were Asian
- 4 percent were two or more races
- 1 percent were American Indian/Alaska Native
- <1 percent were Pacific Islander

Child Poverty

More than 1 in 4 (26.4 percent) of Arkansas's children were poor in 2014, a total of 183,830 children.¹

- Arkansas ranked 45th in child poverty among states.²
- 1 in 9 children lived in extreme poverty at less than half the poverty level.
- The youngest children were the poorest age group. Nearly 3 in 10 children under age 6 were poor; more than 2 in 5 of the poor children were extremely poor.

Children of color in Arkansas are disproportionately poor.

- Nearly 1 in 2 Black children and nearly 2 in 5 Hispanic children were poor in 2014, compared to nearly 1 in 5 White children.

Child Hunger and Homelessness

Child poverty in Arkansas leads to unacceptable child homelessness and hunger.

- Nearly 11,000 Arkansas public school students were homeless in the 2012-2013 school year.
- In 2014, nearly 2 full-time minimum-wage jobs were necessary to be able to afford a fair market rent two-bedroom apartment in Arkansas and still have enough left over for food, utilities and other necessities.
- More than 28 percent of children lived in households that lacked access to adequate food in 2013. 34 percent of children ages 10-17 were overweight or obese in 2011-2012. Arkansas ranked 49th of 50 states in child food security and 40th in percent of children overweight and obese.
- Nearly 32 percent of Arkansas children relied on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to meet their nutritional needs on an average month in FY2013.
- Nearly 77 percent of Arkansas children receiving a free and reduced-price lunch during the school year did not participate in Summer Nutrition Programs in 2014 – ranking Arkansas 5th of 50 states in ensuring that children have adequate summer nutrition.

Child Health

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

- In FY2013, 93.1 percent of eligible children participated in Arkansas Medicaid or ARKids First, Arkansas's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). In FY2013, a total of 407,121 Arkansas children ages 0-18 were enrolled in Arkansas Medicaid, and an additional 109,301 in ARKids First.

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

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

- More than 39,000 Arkansas children ages 0-17 (5.5 percent) were uninsured in 2013. The state had the 19th lowest rate of uninsured children among states.
- In 2012, 22,000 children ages 0-18 were eligible for Arkansas Medicaid or ARKids First but not enrolled.

Early Childhood and Education

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

- In 2013, the average annual cost of center-based child care for an infant was \$5,933 – only 18 percent less than the average annual in-state tuition and fees at a public four-year college.
- Arkansas had 2,514 children on a waiting list for child care assistance in early 2014.
- On average, 45 percent of Arkansas' 3- and 4-year-olds were enrolled in public or private preschool from 2011-2013. Only 41 percent of children from families with incomes under 200 percent of poverty were enrolled.
- Arkansas's state-funded preschool program met 9 of the 10 quality benchmarks set by the National Institute for Early Education Research in 2013-2014.

Arkansas's schools fail to educate all children, closing off a crucial pathway out of poverty.

- In 2013, 68 percent of Arkansas's fourth grade public school students were unable to read at grade level and 61 percent were unable to compute at grade level.
 - 85 percent of Black fourth graders could not read at grade level and 83 percent could not compute.
 - 76 percent of Hispanic fourth graders could not read at grade level and 69 percent could not compute.
- 78 percent of Arkansas public high school students graduated on time in 2012, placing Arkansas 34th among states. 72 percent of Black students and 80 percent of Hispanic students graduated on time compared to 79 percent of White students.
- Students who are suspended or expelled are more likely to drop out of school. During the 2011-2012 school year, 12 percent of Arkansas public secondary school students received at least one out-of-school suspension, placing Arkansas 35th among states. For Black and Hispanic students, the percentages were 26 percent and 9 percent, respectively.

Children Facing Special Risks

Many vulnerable children need treatment, services and permanent families.

- In Arkansas, 10,370 children were abused or neglected in 2013 – 14.6 out of 1,000 children.
- On the last day of FY2013, there were 3,809 Arkansas children in foster care.

Too many Arkansas children are involved in the juvenile justice system.

- 10,653 children were arrested in Arkansas in 2012 – a rate of 3,368 out of 100,000 children ages 10-17.
- 711 children and youth were in residential placement in 2011. 49 percent of the children in residential placement were Black, 5 percent were Hispanic, and 43 percent were White.
- 14 Arkansas children were in adult jails in 2013.
- Arkansas spent 2.3 times as much per prisoner as per public school student in FY2012.

Arkansas ranked 36th out of 41 states in preventing child and teen gun deaths.

- A total of 35 children and teens were killed by guns in Arkansas in 2013 – a rate of 4.4 out of 100,000 children and teens.

For sources please visit www.childrensdefense.org/cits