

Where children are born can affect their chances for a strong start in life. Babies need good health, strong families, and positive early learning experiences to foster their healthy brain development and help them realize their full potential.

This state profile provides a snapshot of how infants, toddlers, and their families are faring in each of these three policy domains. Within each domain, view data for selected child, family, and policy indicators compared to national averages. The profile begins with a demographic description of the state's babies and families to offer the broadest context for exploring what may be very different experiences of the state's youngest children.

Demographics

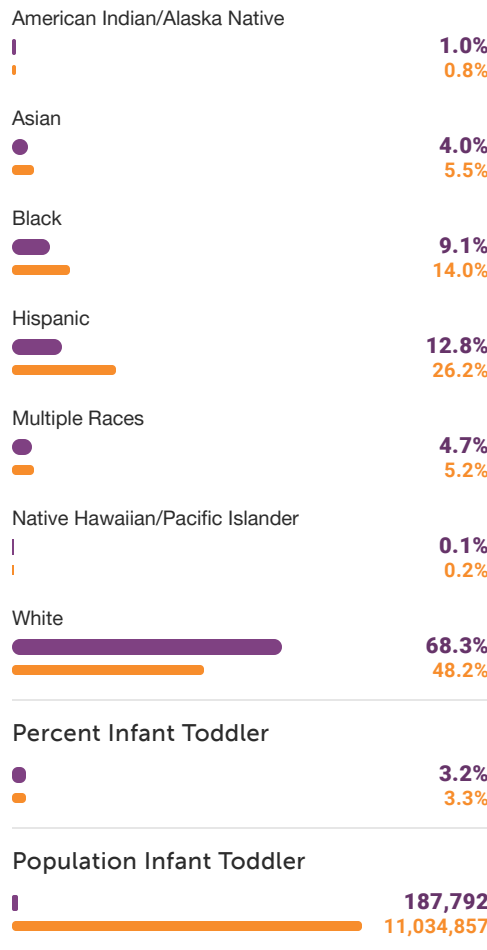
Wisconsin National Average

Infants and toddlers in Wisconsin

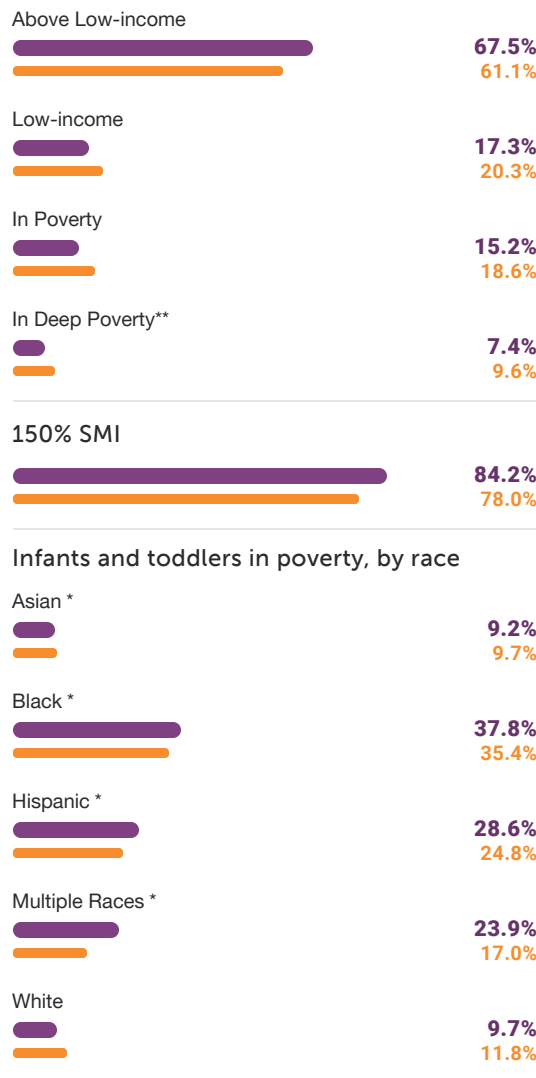
Wisconsin is home to 187,792 babies, representing 3.2 percent of the state's population. As many as 32.5 percent live in households with incomes less than twice the federal poverty line (in 2021, about \$55,000 for a family of four¹), placing them at economic disadvantage. The state's youngest children are diverse and are raised in a variety of family contexts and household structures.

1. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division. Poverty Thresholds by Size of Family and Number of Children. <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-poverty-thresholds.html>

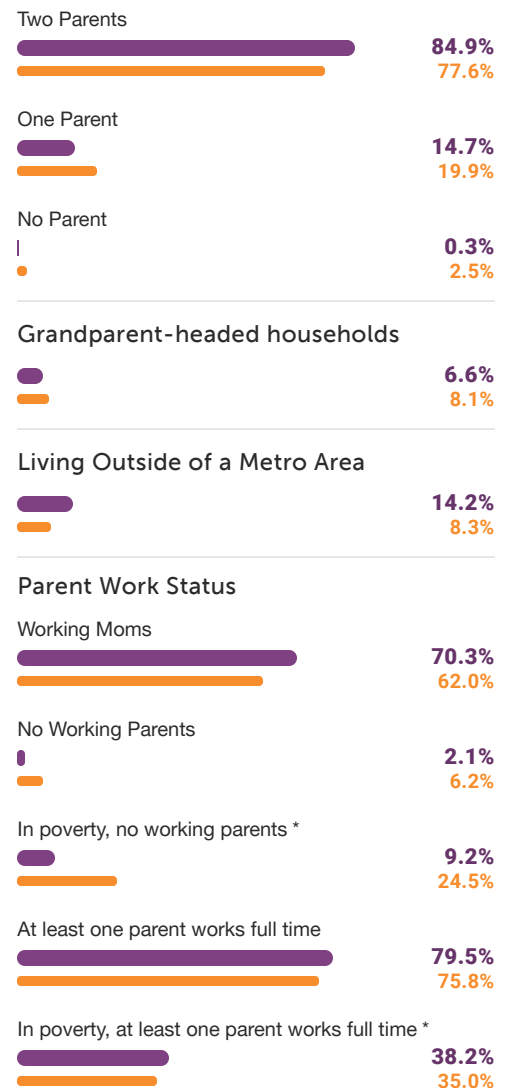
Race/ethnicity of infants and toddlers



Poverty status of infants and toddlers



Family Structure



*Numbers are small; use caution in interpreting.

**Subset of "In Poverty"

Note: N/A indicates Not Available

How are Wisconsin's babies faring in Good Health?

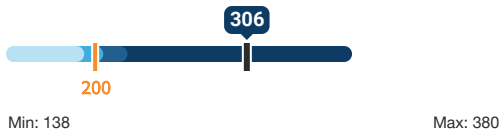
Supporting babies' and mothers' physical and mental health provides the foundation for infants' lifelong physical, cognitive, emotional, and social well-being. Babies' brains grow rapidly in the first years of life, and, in these early years, the brain works with other organs and organ systems to set the stage for subsequent development and health outcomes. Equitable access to good nutrition during the prenatal period and first years of life is key to ensure that babies receive the nourishment and care they need for a strong start in life. Strengthening equitable access to integrated, affordable maternal, pediatric, and family health care is also essential to meeting babies' and families' health and developmental needs.

Wisconsin falls in the Reaching Forward (R) tier for the Good Health domain. A state's ranking is based on indicators of maternal and child health, including health care coverage, prenatal care, birth outcomes, and receipt of recommended preventive care as well as nutrition and mental health. Wisconsin performs better than national averages on key indicators, such as the Medicaid income eligibility level for pregnant women and percentage of women receiving late or no prenatal care. The state is performing worse than national averages on indicators such as the percentage of babies receiving recommended vaccinations and babies receiving preventive dental care.

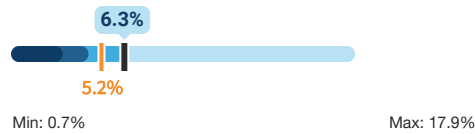
Key Indicators of Good Health

● Wisconsin ● National Avg

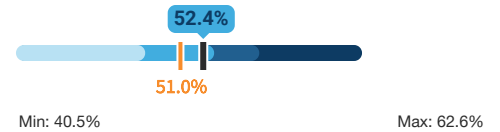
Eligibility limit (% FPL) for pregnant women in Medicaid



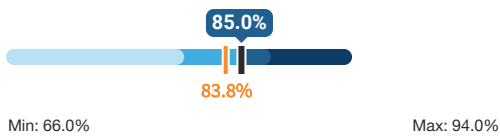
Uninsured low-income infants and toddlers



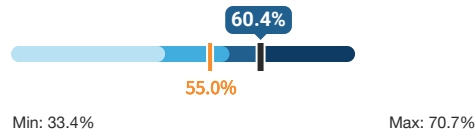
Medical home



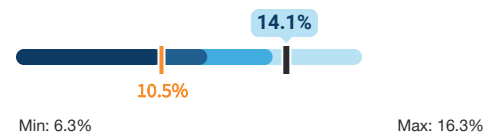
Infants ever breastfed **NR**



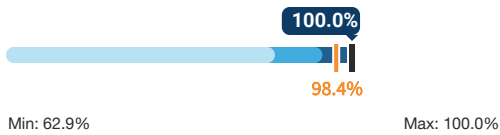
Infants breastfed at 6 months



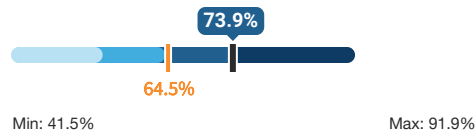
High weight-for-length in WIC **NR**



WIC coverage for infants *



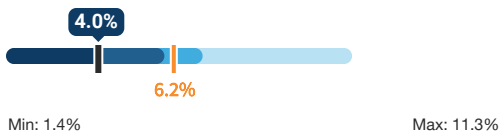
WIC coverage for one-year-olds *



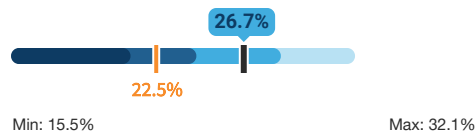
WIC coverage for two-year-olds



Late or no prenatal care received



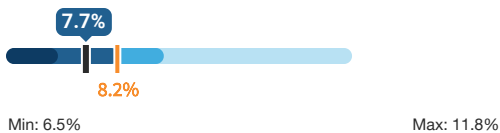
Mothers reporting less than optimal mental health



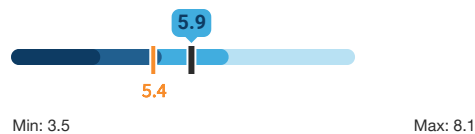
Babies born preterm



Babies with low birthweight



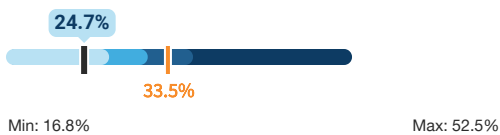
Infant mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births)



Preventive medical care received



Preventive dental care received



Received recommended vaccines



**Numbers are small; use caution in interpreting.*

Good Health Policy in Wisconsin

Medicaid expansion state	No	✗
CHIP maternal coverage for unborn child option	Yes	✓
Postpartum extension of Medicaid coverage	No law beyond mandatory 60 days	
Pregnant workers protection	No protections	
State Medicaid policy for maternal depression screening in well-child visits	Allowed	
Medicaid plan covers social-emotional screening for young children	Yes	✓
Medicaid plan covers IECMH services at home	Yes	✓
Medicaid plan covers IECMH services at pediatric/family medicine practices	Yes	✓
Medicaid plan covers IECMH services in early childhood education settings	Yes	✓

Note: N/A indicates Not Available

All Good Health Indicators for Wisconsin

State IndicatorNational Avg

Health Care Coverage and Affordability

Eligibility limit (% FPL) for pregnant women in Medicaid	306.0 200.0	Uninsured low-income infants and toddlers	6.3% 5.2%
Medical home	52.4% 51.0%		

Nutrition

Infants ever breastfed	NR	Infants breastfed at 6 months	60.4% 55.0%
High weight-for-length in WIC	NR	WIC coverage for infants	100.0% 98.4%
WIC coverage for one-year-olds	73.9% 64.5%	WIC coverage for two-year-olds	44.5% 48.1%

Maternal Health

Late or no prenatal care received	4.0% 6.4%	Maternal mortality rate (deaths per 100,000 live births)	NR 23.8
Mothers reporting less than optimal mental health	25.8% 21.9%		

Children’s Health

Babies born preterm	9.9% 10.1%	Babies with low birthweight	7.7% 8.2%
Infant mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births)	5.9 5.4	Preventive dental care received	24.7% 33.5%
Preventive medical care received	88.0% 89.3%	Received recommended vaccines	68.4% 72.5%

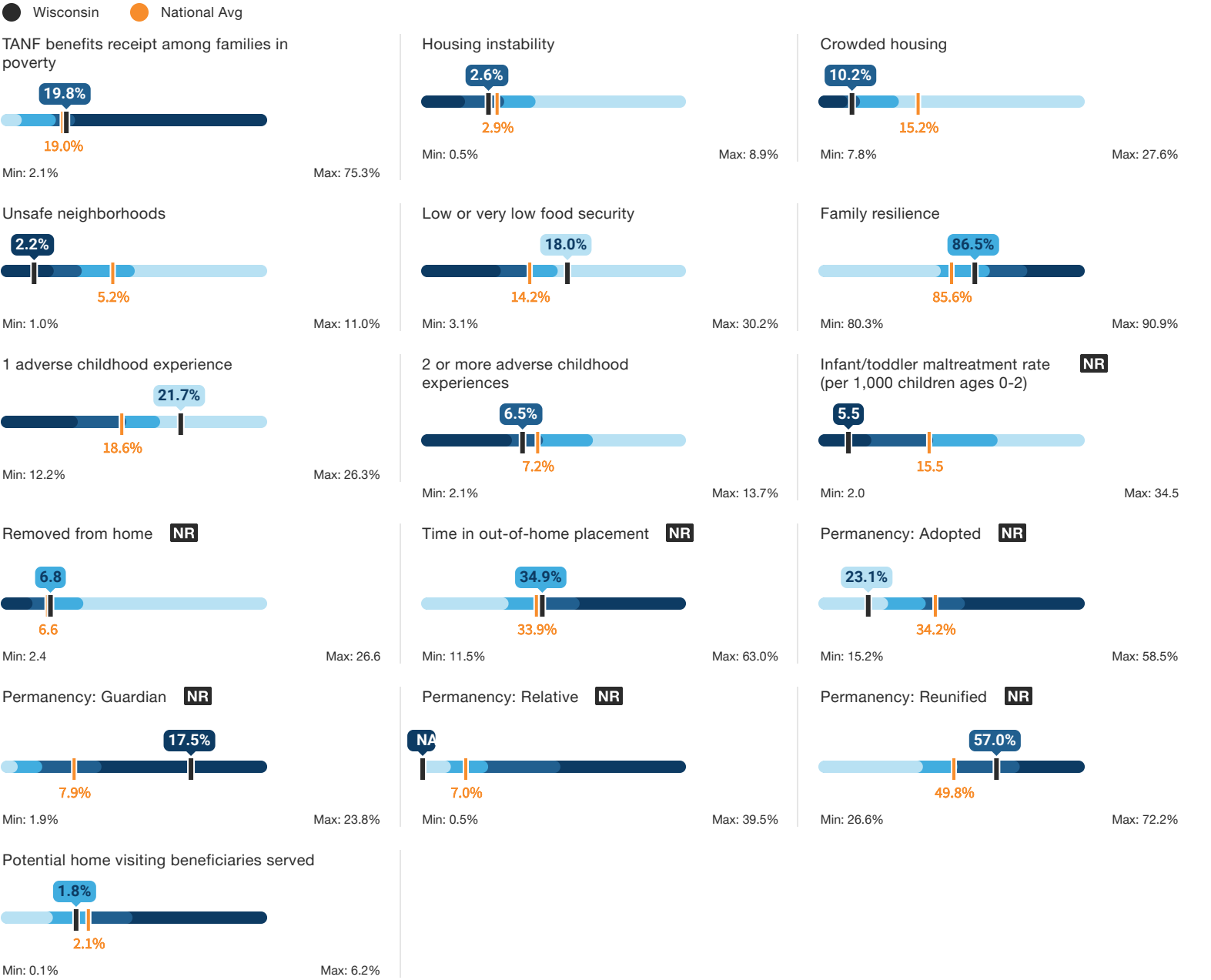
Note: N/A indicates Not Available.

How are Wisconsin's babies faring in Strong Families?

Young children develop in the context of their families, where stability, safety, and supportive relationships nurture their growth. All families may benefit from parenting supports, but families with low income and in historically marginalized communities of color face additional challenges that impact their babies’ immediate and future well-being. Many policies can be designed to address these disparities by race, ethnicity, and income, including the provision of safe and stable housing, home visiting services, family-friendly employer policies, economic support for families with low income, and tax credits that benefit families with young children.

Wisconsin falls in the Reaching Forward (R) tier of states when it comes to indicators of Strong Families. The state’s ranking in this domain reflects indicators on which it is performing better than the national average, such as the percentage of babies living in crowded housing and babies living in unsafe neighborhoods, as reported by parents. Wisconsin is doing worse than the national average on indicators such as the percentage of babies experiencing food insecurity.

Key Indicators of Strong Families



*Numbers are small; use caution in interpreting.

Strong Families Policy in Wisconsin

Paid family leave	No	✗
Paid sick time that covers care for child	No	✗
TANF work exemption	No	✗
State child tax credit	No	✗
State Earned Income Tax Credit	Yes	✓

Note: N/A indicates Not Available

All Strong Families Indicators for Wisconsin

State IndicatorNational Avg

Basic Needs

TANF benefits receipt among families in poverty	19.8% 19.0%	Housing instability	2.6% 2.9%
Crowded housing	10.2% 15.2%	Unsafe neighborhoods	2.1% 5.0%
Low or very low food security	18.0% 14.2%		

Child Well-being and Resilience

Family resilience	86.5% 85.6%	1 adverse childhood experience	NR	21.7% 18.6%
2 or more adverse childhood experiences	6.5% 7.2%	Infant/toddler maltreatment rate (per 1,000 children ages 0-2)	NR	5.5 15.5
Removed from home	NR	Time in out-of-home placement	NR	34.9% 33.9%
Permanency: Adopted	NR	Permanency: Guardian	NR	17.5% 7.9%
Permanency: Relative	NR	Permanency: Reunified	NR	57.0% 49.8%
Potential home visiting beneficiaries served	1.8% 2.1%			

Note: N/A indicates Not Available.

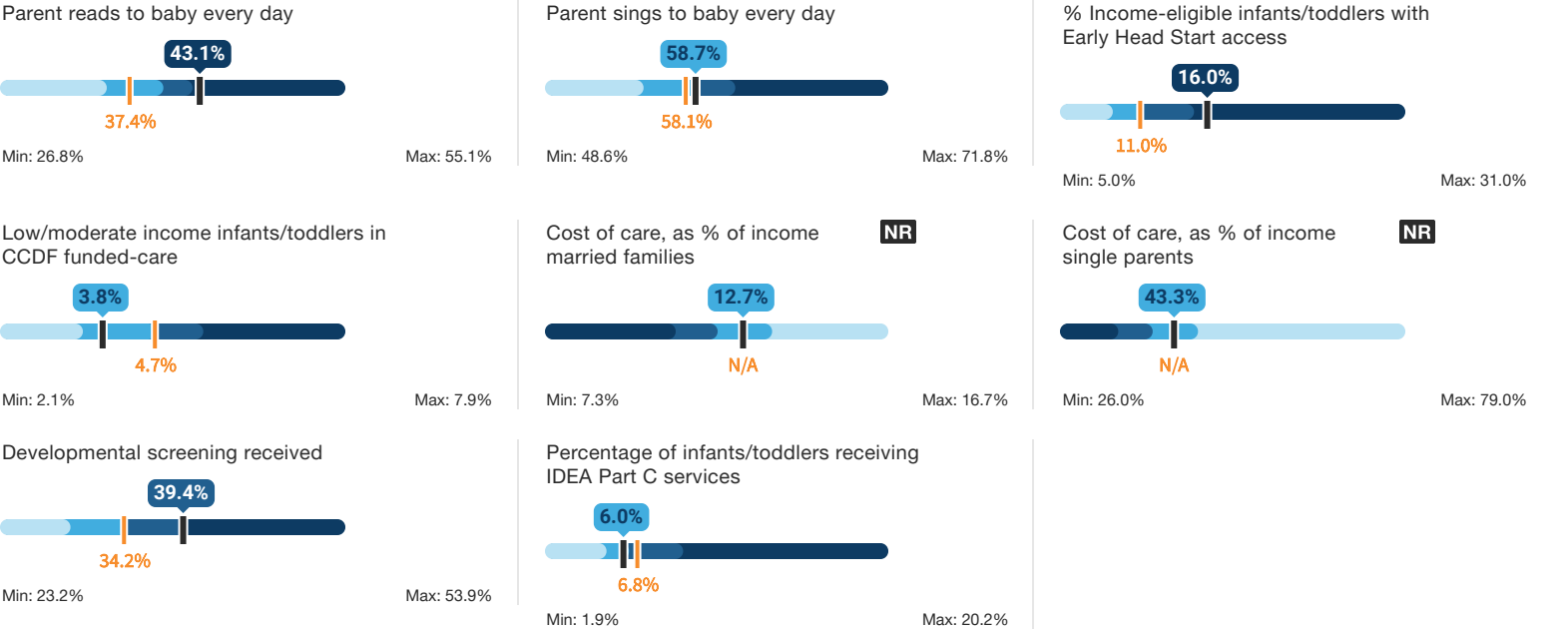
How are Wisconsin's babies faring in Positive Early Learning?

Infants and toddlers learn through interactions with the significant adults in their lives and active exploration of enriching environments. The quality of babies’ early learning experiences at home and in other care settings can impact their cognitive and social-emotional development as well as early literacy. High-quality early childhood care can strengthen parents’ interactions with their children in the home learning environment and support parents’ ability to go to work or attend school. Equitable access to high-quality care across factors like race, ethnicity, and income, ensures all infants and toddlers have the opportunity for optimal development. However, disparities in access to high-quality care remain across many states and communities in the United States.

Wisconsin scores in the Improving Outcomes (O) tier for Positive Early Learning Experiences. The state’s ranking in this domain reflects indicators on which it is performing better than the national average, such as the percentage of parents who read to their babies daily. Wisconsin is doing worse than the national average on indicators such as the percentage of babies in families with incomes equal to or below 150 percent of the state median income who received a child care subsidy. Beginning with the 2022 profile, infant care costs as a percentage of the state’s median income for single and married parents are not factored into the ranking.

Key Indicators of Positive Early Learning Experiences

● Wisconsin ● National Avg



*Numbers are small; use caution in interpreting.

Positive Early Learning Experiences Policy in Wisconsin

Adult/child ratio	EHS standards met for 2 of 3 age groups
Level of teacher qualification required by the state beyond a high school diploma	No credential beyond a high school diploma
Group size	EHS standards met for 2 of 3 age groups
Infant/toddler professional credential	NRYes ✓
Families above 200% of FPL eligible for child care subsidy	No ✗
State reimburses center-based child care	No ✗
At-risk children included in Part C eligibility definition	NRNo ✗

Note: N/A indicates Not Available

All Positive Early Learning Experiences Indicators for Wisconsin

State IndicatorNational Avg

Activities that Support Early Learning

WParent reads to baby every day	43.1% 37.4%	RParent sings to baby every day	58.7% 58.1%
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Access to Early Learning Programs

W% Income-eligible infants/toddlers with Early Head Start access	16.0% 11.0%	RLow/moderate income infants/toddlers in CCDF-funded care	3.8% 4.7%
Cost of care, as % of income married families	NR12.7% NA	Cost of care, as % of income single parents	NR43.3% NA

Early Intervention

ODevelopmental screening received	39.4% 34.2%	RPercentage of infants/toddlers receiving IDEA Part C services	6.0% 6.8%
Timeliness of Part C services	NR99.6% NA		

Note: N/A indicates Not Available.