

The State of Arkansas's Babies

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

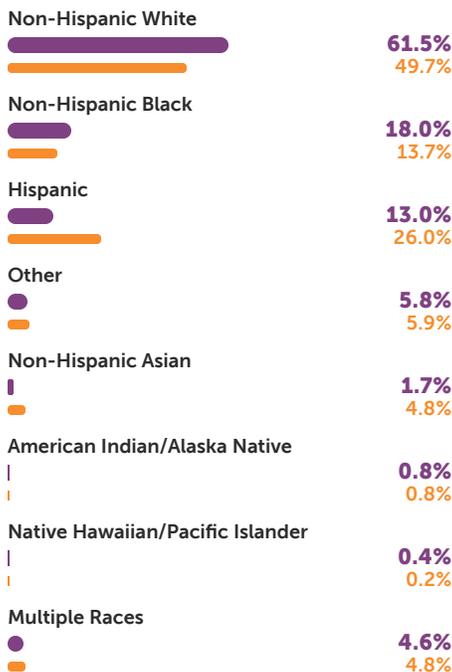
 Arkansas  National Average

Infants and toddlers in Arkansas

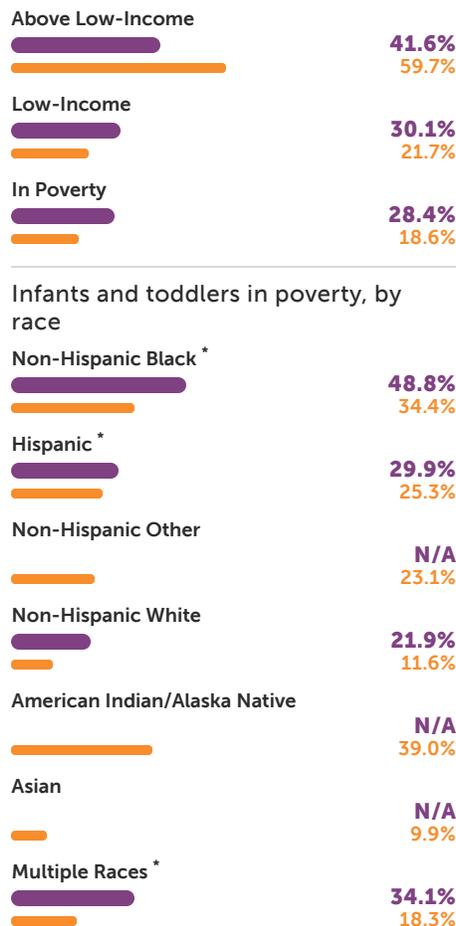
Arkansas is home to 110,933 babies, representing 3.7 percent of the state's population. As many as 58.4 percent live in households with incomes less than twice the federal poverty line (in 2019, about \$51,500 a year for a family of four), placing them at

economic disadvantage. The state's youngest children are diverse and are raised in a variety of family contexts and household structures.

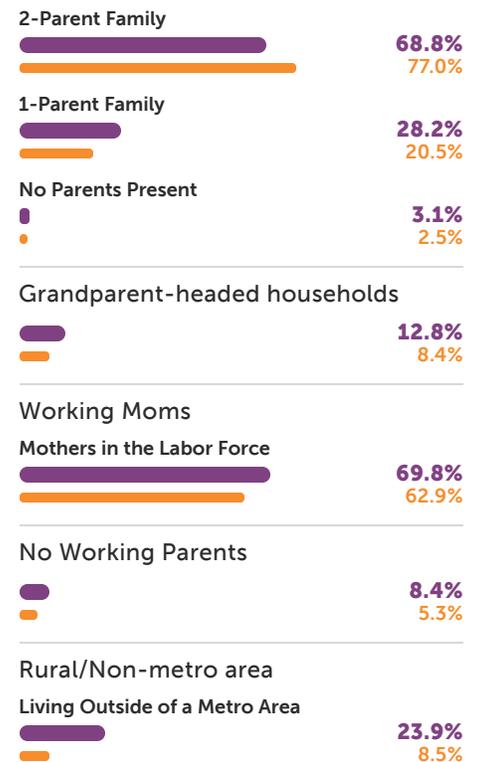
Race/ethnicity of infants and toddlers



Poverty status of infants and toddlers



Family structure



*Numbers are small; use caution in interpreting.
Note: N/A indicates Not Available

How are Arkansas's babies faring in Good Health?

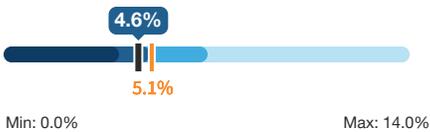
Supporting babies' and mothers' physical and mental health provides the foundation for infants' lifelong physical, cognitive, emotional, and social well-being. Babies' brains grow rapidly in the first years of life, and, in these early years, the brain works with other organs and organ systems to set 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.

Arkansas falls in the Getting Started (G) 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 food security, nutrition, and mental health. Arkansas performs better than national averages on key indicators, such as the percentages of babies receiving preventive medical care and babies experiencing food insecurity. The state is performing worse than national averages on indicators such as the infant mortality rate and the percentage of babies breastfed at 6 months.

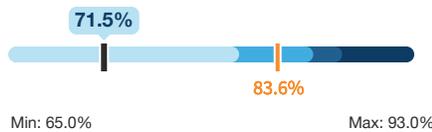
Key Indicators of Good Health

● Arkansas ● National Avg

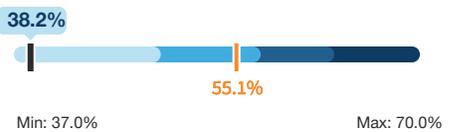
Uninsured low-income infants/toddlers



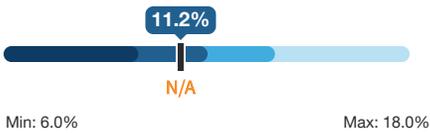
Ever breastfed



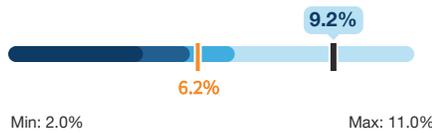
Infants breastfed at 6 months



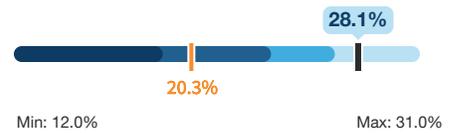
High weight-for-length†



Late or no prenatal care received



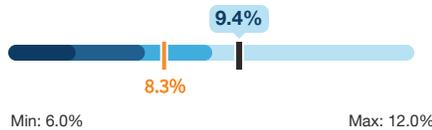
Mothers reporting less than optimal mental health



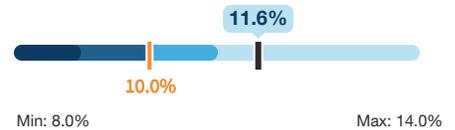
Infant mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births)



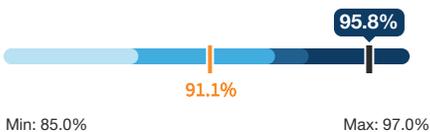
Babies with low birthweight



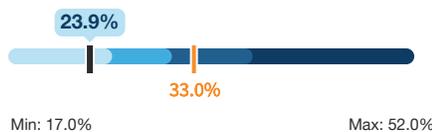
Preterm births†



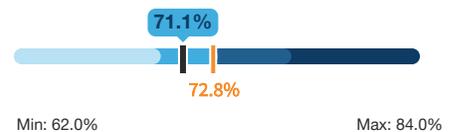
Preventative medical care received



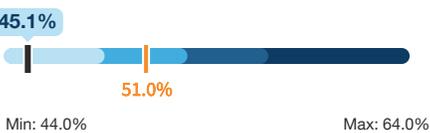
Preventative dental care received



Received recommended vaccines



Medical home†



Good Health Policy in Arkansas

Medicaid expansion state	Yes	✓
State Medicaid policy for maternal depression screening in well-child visits	No Policy	
Medicaid plan covers social-emotional screening for young children	No	✗
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	No	✗
Pregnant workers protection†	No protections	
Postpartum extension of Medicaid coverage†	No law beyond mandatory 60 days	

†This indicator is not factored into the GROW tier rankings.
 Note: N/A indicates Not Applicable

All Good Health Indicators for Arkansas

● State Indicator ● National Avg

O Eligibility limit (% FPL) for pregnant women in Medicaid	214 200	R Uninsured low-income infants/toddlers	4.6% 5.1%
O Low or very low food security	9.5% 13.7%	G Infants ever breastfed	71.5% 83.6%
G Infants breastfed at 6 months	38.2% 55.1%	W WIC coverage†	87.6% 79.3%
O High weight-for-length†	11.2% N/A	G Late or no prenatal care received	9.2% 6.2%
G Mothers reporting less than optimal mental health	28.1% 20.3%	G Infant mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births)†	7.5 5.7
G Babies with low birthweight	9.4% 8.3%	G Preterm births†	11.6% 10.0%
W Preventive medical care received	95.8% 91.1%	G Preventive dental care received	23.9% 33.0%
R Received recommended vaccines	71.1% 72.8%	G Medical home†	45.1% 51.0%
Maternal mortality	N/A 17.4		

†This indicator is not factored into the GROW tier rankings.
 Note: N/A indicates Not Available.

How are Arkansas'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 children and families of color face numerous challenges as a result of racism that impact their everyday life, which are exacerbated even more for children and families living in households with low income. 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.

Arkansas falls in the Getting Started (G) 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 percentages of babies living in crowded housing and families who report being resilient. Arkansas is doing worse than the national average on indicators such as the percentages of babies who have had two or more adverse experiences and babies experiencing housing insecurity (moved 3 or more times).

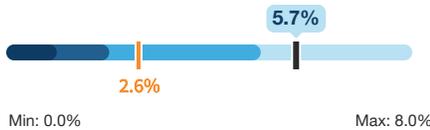
Key Indicators of Strong Families

● Arkansas ● National Avg

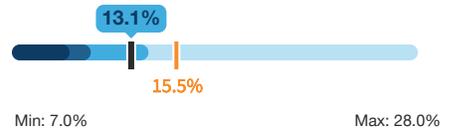
TANF benefits receipt among families in poverty



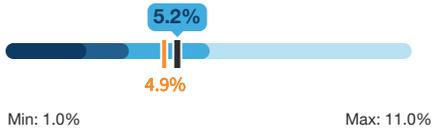
Housing instability



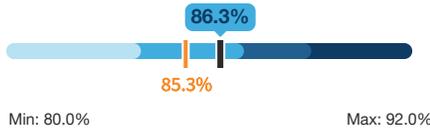
Crowded housing



Unsafe neighborhoods



Family resilience



1 adverse childhood experience



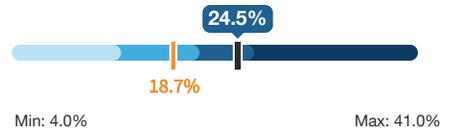
2+ adverse childhood experiences



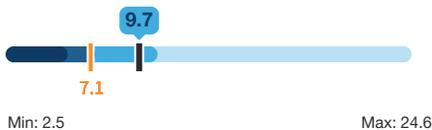
Infant/toddler maltreatment rate[†]



Time in out-of-home placement[†]



Removed from home (per 1,000 infants/toddlers)[†]



Strong Families

Strong Families Policy in Arkansas

Paid family leave	_____	No X
Paid sick time that covers care for child	_____	No X
TANF Work Exemption†	_____	No X
State Child Tax Credit†	_____	No X
State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)†	_____	No X

†This indicator is not factored into the GROW tier rankings.

Note: N/A indicates Not Applicable

All Strong Families Indicators for Arkansas

● State Indicator

● National Avg

G TANF benefits receipt among families in poverty	5.8% 21.7%	G Housing instability	5.7% 2.6%
R Crowded housing	13.1% 15.5%	R Unsafe neighborhoods	5.2% 4.9%
R Family resilience	86.3% 85.3%	R One adverse childhood experience	21.6% 20.7%
G Two or more adverse childhood experiences	12.1% 7.7%	Infant/toddler maltreatment rate†	25.4% 16.4%
O Out of home placements†	24.5% 18.7%	Permanency Achieved: Reunified†	38.5% 48.1%
G Potential home visiting beneficiaries served	1.2% 2.0%	Permanency Achieved: Relative†	21.5% 7.8%
Infants/toddlers exiting foster care to permanency†	99.4% 98.8%	Permanency Achieved: Guardian†	2.3% 8.3%
Removed from home†	9.7% 7.1%	Permanency Achieved: Adoption†	37.1% 34.6%

†This indicator is not factored into the GROW tier rankings.

Positive Early Learning Experiences

How are Arkansas's babies faring in Positive Early Learning Experiences?

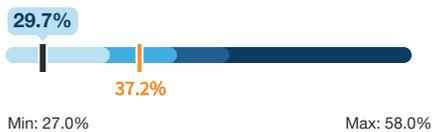
Infants and toddlers learn through interactions with the significant adults in their lives and active exploration of enriching environments. The quality of infant and toddlers' early learning experiences at home and in other care settings can impact their cognitive and social-emotional development, as 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.

Arkansas scores in the Getting Started (G) 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 higher percentage of infants and toddlers below 100 percent of the federal poverty line with access to Early Head Start. Arkansas is doing worse than the national average on indicators such as the lower percentage of parents who read to their babies daily. Infant care costs as a percentage of the state's median income for single and married parents also contribute to the ranking.

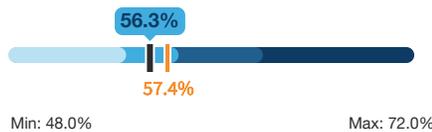
Key Indicators of Positive Early Learning Experiences

● Arkansas ● National Avg

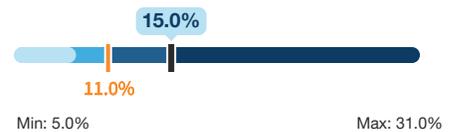
Parent reads to baby every day



Parent sings to baby every day



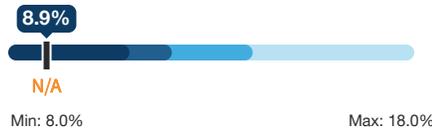
Percentage of income-eligible infants/toddlers with Early Head Start access



Cost of care, as % of income single parents



Cost of care, as % of income married families



Low/moderate income infants/toddlers in CCDF funded-care



Developmental screening received



Percentage of infants/toddlers receiving IDEA Part C services



Positive Early Learning Experiences

Positive Early Learning Experiences Policy in Arkansas

Infant eligibility level for child care subsidy above 200% of FPL	Yes	✓
Allocated CCDBG funds†	Yes	✓
Group size requirements meet or exceed EHS standards†	0 of 3 age groups	
Adult/child ratio requirements meet or exceed EHS standards†	0 of 3 age groups	
Level of teacher qualification required by the state†	No credential beyond a high school diploma	
Infant/toddler credential adopted†	Yes	✓
State reimburses center based child care at/above 75th percentile of market rates†	No	✗
State includes "at-risk" children as eligible for IDEA Part C services or reports that they serve "at-risk" children†	No	✗

†This indicator is not factored into the GROW tier rankings.

Note: N/A indicates Not Applicable

All Positive Early Learning Experiences Indicators for Arkansas

● State Indicator

● National Avg

G Parent reads to baby every day	29.7% 37.2%	R Parent sings to baby every day	56.3% 57.4%
O Percentage of income-eligible infants/toddlers with Early Head Start access	15.0% 11.0%	W Cost of care, as % of income married families	8.9% N/A
W Cost of care, as % of income single parents	29.9% N/A	G Low/moderate income infants/toddlers in CCDF funded-care	2.3% 4.2%
R Developmental screening received	29.8% 32.5%	Infants/toddlers with developmental delay†	2.4% 1.1%
G Percentage of infants/toddlers receiving IDEA Part C services	1.9% 6.8%	G Timeliness of Part C services†	83.1% N/A

†This indicator is not factored into the GROW tier rankings.

Note: N/A indicates Not Available.