

Experiences of Babies in Families with Low-Income in Massachusetts

Families with young children in America are more likely to have low household income or live in poverty than other families.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, as many as 40 percent of infants and toddlers lived in families that earned less than 200 percent of the FPL (\$51,500 a year for a family of four in 2019) and faced the challenges of not have the financial resources to make ends meet during the critical first 3 years of their children’s lives. And although infants and toddlers represent only 3.5 percent of the nation’s population, they account for 6 percent of those in poverty.

Several of the State of Babies Yearbook indicators can be examined for differences in the experiences of babies and their families according to their household income level. Applying an income lens to the Yearbook’s findings offers a more in-depth view of the many areas in which lack of economic security can create early barriers to the ability of babies in families with low income to thrive (e.g., limited access to quality health care services, stable housing, reliable income and employment, and quality child care).

How does living with low income or in poverty affect the lives of Massachusetts’s babies and families?

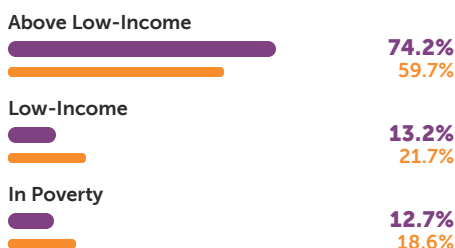
The selected set of State of Babies indicators below provides a pre-pandemic snapshot of families’ economic status, the specific areas in which they are likely to experience challenges meeting their babies’ physical, social-emotional, and developmental needs; the extent to which they have access to and are reached

by existing policies; and offers a view of where your state’s policies currently address or can be expanded to further assist families in supporting their babies’ well-being. To deepen your understanding of how families’ experiences vary, select the + icon where it appears with an indicator to view the data by income.

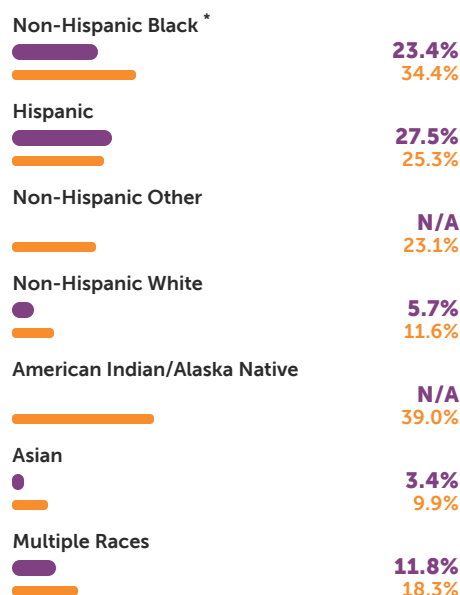
Demographics

Nationally, nearly 1 in 5 (18.6 percent) of the nation’s 11.5 million babies were living in poverty. Nearly 1 in 5 (18.6 percent) are in families that live below the poverty level that face even greater challenges meeting their basic needs. These 2021 Yearbook findings reflect what had been a slight downward trend from previous years, but still represent a very concerning proportion of young children in families that experience economic insecurity.

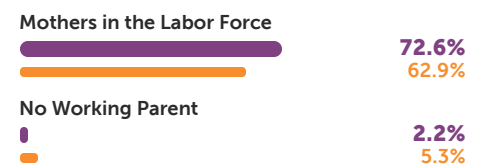
Poverty status of infants and toddlers



Infants and toddlers in poverty, by race



Workforce Participation



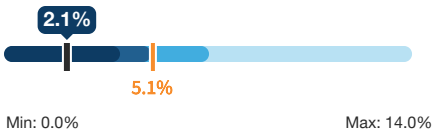
*Numbers are small; use caution in interpreting.
Note: N/A indicates Not Available

Good Health

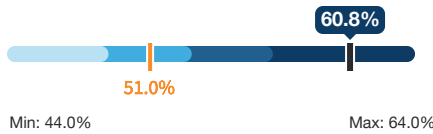
Supporting babies' and mothers' physical and mental health provides the foundation for infants' lifelong physical, cognitive, emotional, and social well-being. Babies' brains grow rapidly in the first years of life, and, in these early years, the brain works with other organs and organ systems to set the stage for subsequent development and health outcomes. The following indicators, related to coverage and access to health care, food insecurity and nutrition support, and babies and mothers' health, highlight areas of need and, income-related differences, where possible.

Health Care Access/Affordability

Uninsured low-income infants/toddlers

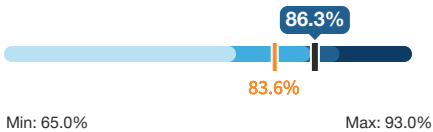


Medical home[†]

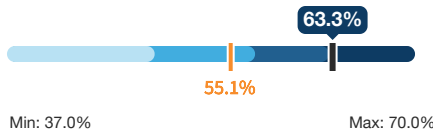


Food & Nutrition

Ever breastfed



Infants breastfed at 6 months



W Low or very low food security

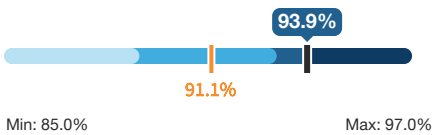
4.3%
13.7%

R WIC coverage[†]

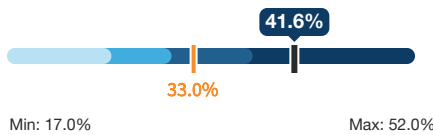
74.8%
79.3%

Child Health

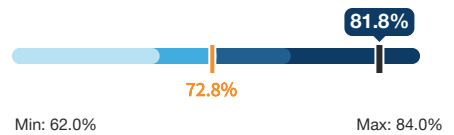
Preventative medical care received



Preventative dental care received

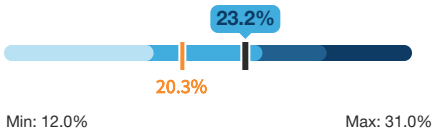


Received recommended vaccines



Social-emotional Health

Mothers reporting less than optimal mental health



O Eligibility limit (% FPL) for pregnant women in Medicaid

205
200

Medicaid expansion state _____ Yes ✓

Postpartum extension of Medicaid coverage[†] _____ No law beyond mandatory 60 days

State Medicaid policy for maternal depression screening in well-child visits _____ Recommended ✓

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	No	✗

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

Strong Families

Young children develop in the context of their families, where stability, safety, and supportive relationships nurture their growth. The indicators in this domain examine this family context, including well-being, economic resources, and physical environment, as well as the experience of infants and toddlers in the child welfare system. The following indicators, related to access to basic needs, family resilience, and young children's exposure to adverse early life experiences, highlight areas of need, and income-related differences, where possible.

Families Ability to Meet Basic Need

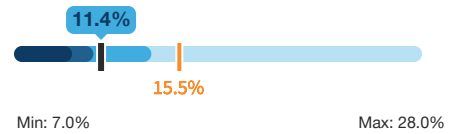
TANF benefits receipt among families in poverty



Housing instability

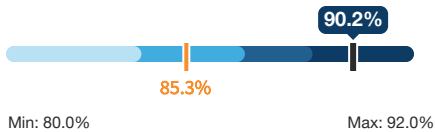


Crowded housing

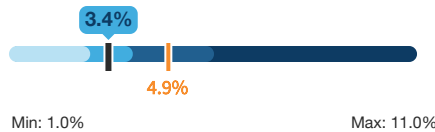


Resilience & Risks to Well-being

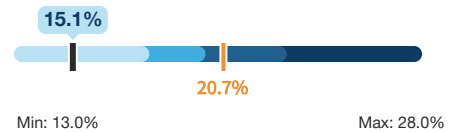
Family resilience



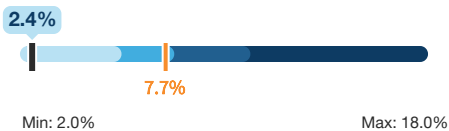
Unsafe neighborhoods



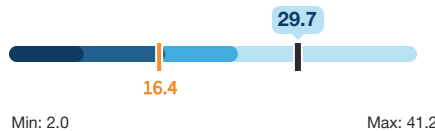
1 adverse childhood experience



2+ adverse childhood experiences



Infant/toddler maltreatment rate†



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

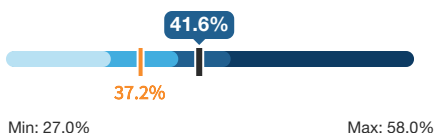
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Positive Early Learning Experiences

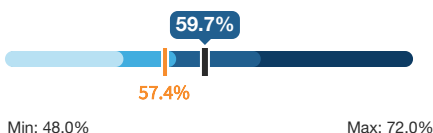
Infants and toddlers learn through interactions with the significant adults in their lives and active exploration of enriching environments. The quality of infants' and toddlers' early learning experiences at home and in other care settings can impact their cognitive and social-emotional development, as well as early literacy. The following indicators, related to cost and access to child care, home learning opportunities, and access to early prevention services, highlight areas of need and income-related differences, where possible.

Early Care and Education Opportunities

Parent reads to baby every day



Parent sings to baby every day



G Cost of care, as % of income single parents

69.1%
N/A

G Cost of care, as % of income married families

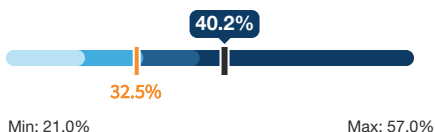
16.4%
N/A

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

4.7%
4.2%

Early Intervention and Prevention Services

Developmental screening received



- State reimburses center based child care at/above 75th percentile of market rates[†] No **✗**
- Infant eligibility level for child care subsidy above 200% of FPL No **✗**
- Allocated CCDBG funds[†] No **✗**
- Group size requirements meet or exceed EHS standards[†] 0 of 3 age groups
- Adult/child ratio requirements meet or exceed EHS standards[†] 2 of 3 age groups
- Level of teacher qualification required by the state[†] No credential beyond a high school diploma
- Infant/toddler credential adopted[†] Yes **✓**

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