

# The State of North Carolina'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

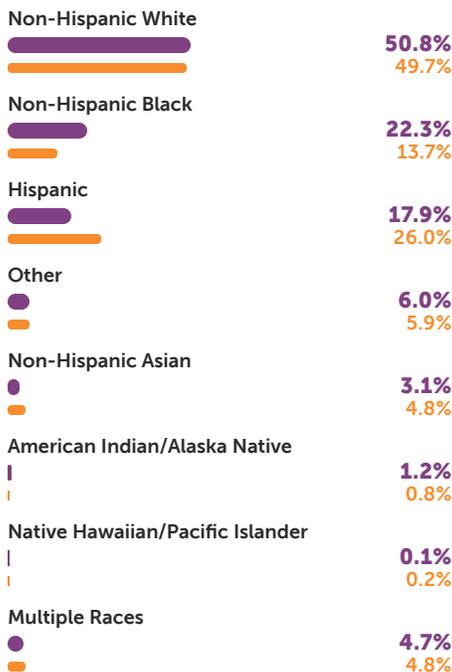
● North Carolina ● National Average

### Infants and toddlers in North Carolina

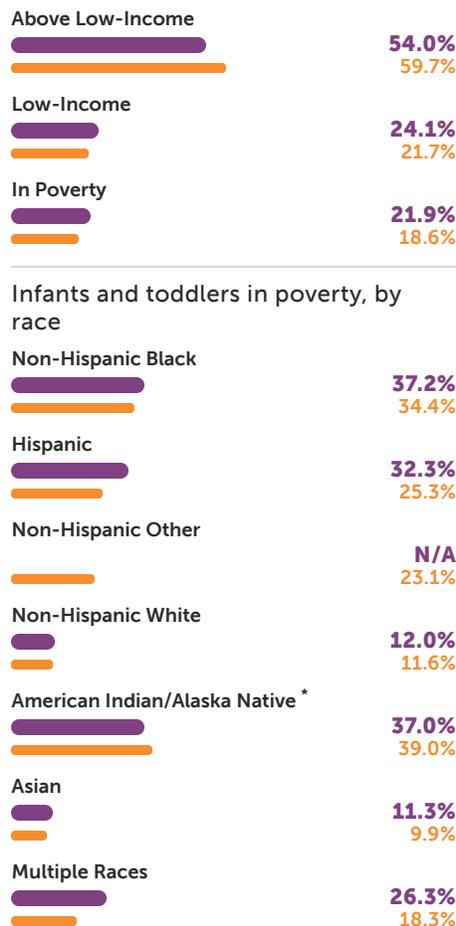
North Carolina is home to 361,132 babies, representing 3.4 percent of the state's population. As many as 46.0 percent live in households with incomes less than twice the federal poverty line (in 2019, about \$51,500 a year for a family of four), placing them

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

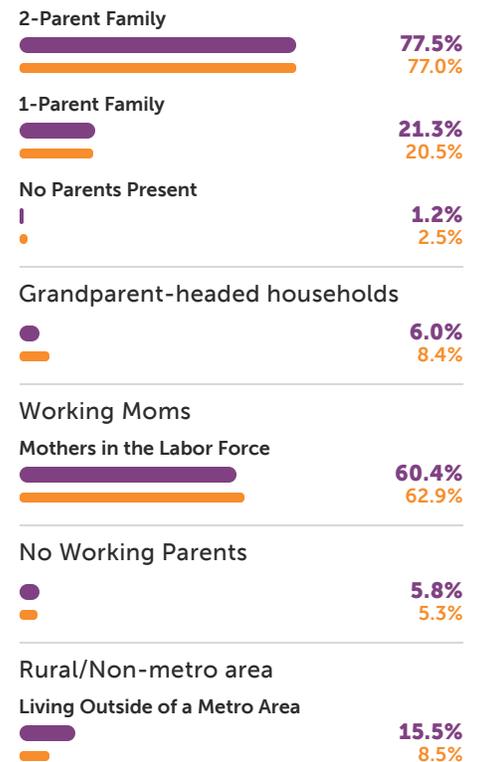
#### Race/ethnicity of infants and toddlers



#### Poverty status of infants and toddlers



#### Family structure



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

## How are North Carolina's babies faring in Good Health?

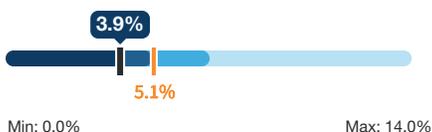
Supporting babies' and mothers' physical and mental health provides the foundation for infants' lifelong physical, cognitive, emotional, and social well-being. Babies' brains grow rapidly in the first years of life, and, in these early years, the brain works with other organs and organ systems to set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

North Carolina falls in the Improving Outcomes (O) 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. North Carolina performs better than national averages on key indicators, such as the percentages of babies receiving recommended vaccinations and babies receiving preventive dental care. The state is performing worse than national averages on indicators such as the infant mortality rate and the percentage of babies experiencing food insecurity.

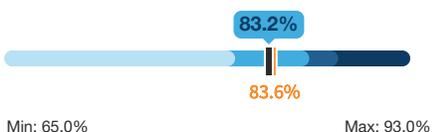
### Key Indicators of Good Health

● North Carolina ● National Avg

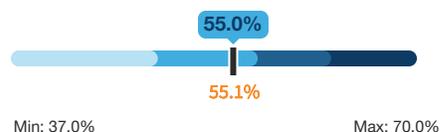
Uninsured low-income infants/toddlers



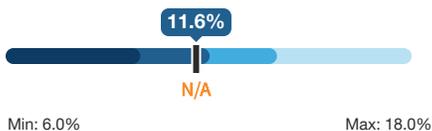
Ever breastfed



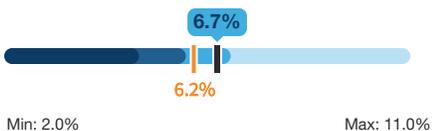
Infants breastfed at 6 months



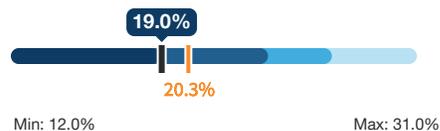
High weight-for-length<sup>†</sup>



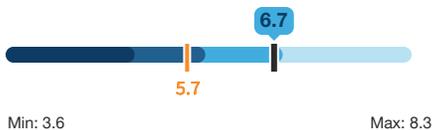
Late or no prenatal care received



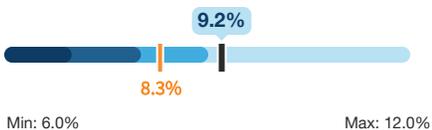
Mothers reporting less than optimal mental health



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



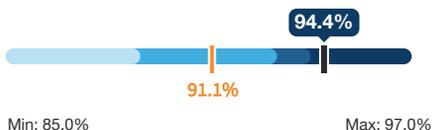
Babies with low birthweight



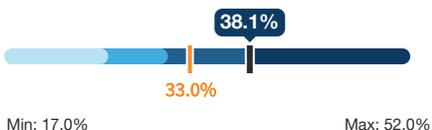
Preterm births<sup>†</sup>



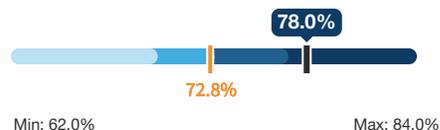
Preventative medical care received



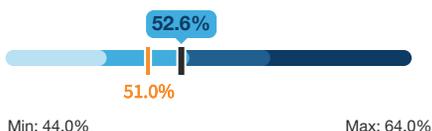
Preventative dental care received



Received recommended vaccines



Medical home<sup>†</sup>



## Good Health Policy in North Carolina

|  |       |                                 |
|--|-------|---------------------------------|
| Medicaid expansion state   | _____ | No <b>✗</b>                     |
| State Medicaid policy for maternal depression screening in well-child visits | _____ | Recommended                     |
| Medicaid plan covers social-emotional screening for young children           | _____ | Yes <b>✓</b>                    |
| Medicaid plan covers IECMH services at home                                  | _____ | Yes <b>✓</b>                    |
| Medicaid plan covers IECMH services at pediatric/family medicine practices   | _____ | Yes <b>✓</b>                    |
| Medicaid plan covers IECMH services in early childhood education settings    | _____ | Yes <b>✓</b>                    |
| Pregnant workers protection <sup>†</sup>                                     | _____ | State employees only            |
| Postpartum extension of Medicaid coverage <sup>†</sup>                       | _____ | No law beyond mandatory 60 days |

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

## All Good Health Indicators for North Carolina

● State Indicator      ● National Avg

|   |                       |  |                       |
|---|-----------------------|--|-----------------------|
| <b>O</b> Eligibility limit (% FPL) for pregnant women in Medicaid | <b>201</b><br>200     | <b>O</b> Uninsured low-income infants/toddlers                             | <b>3.9%</b><br>5.1%   |
| <b>G</b> Low or very low food security                            | <b>26.2%</b><br>13.7% | <b>R</b> Infants ever breastfed  | <b>83.2%</b><br>83.6% |
| <b>R</b> Infants breastfed at 6 months                            | <b>55.0%</b><br>55.1% | <b>O</b> WIC coverage <sup>†</sup>   | <b>81.6%</b><br>79.3% |
| <b>O</b> High weight-for-length <sup>†</sup>                      | <b>11.6%</b><br>N/A   | <b>R</b> Late or no prenatal care received                                 | <b>6.7%</b><br>6.2%   |
| <b>O</b> Mothers reporting less than optimal mental health        | <b>19.0%</b><br>20.3% | <b>R</b> Infant mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births) <sup>†</sup> | <b>6.7</b><br>5.7     |
| <b>G</b> Babies with low birthweight                              | <b>9.2%</b><br>8.3%   | <b>R</b> Preterm births <sup>†</sup>                                       | <b>10.4%</b><br>10.0% |
| <b>O</b> Preventive medical care received                         | <b>94.4%</b><br>91.1% | <b>O</b> Preventive dental care received                                   | <b>38.1%</b><br>33.0% |
| <b>W</b> Received recommended vaccines                            | <b>78.0%</b><br>72.8% | <b>R</b> Medical home <sup>†</sup>   | <b>52.6%</b><br>51.0% |
| Maternal mortality  | <b>N/A</b><br>17.4    |  |                       |

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

## How are North Carolina'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.

North Carolina falls in the Improving Outcomes (O) 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 parents who report living in unsafe neighborhoods. North Carolina is doing worse than the national average on indicators such as the percentages of babies who have had one or two or more adverse experiences.

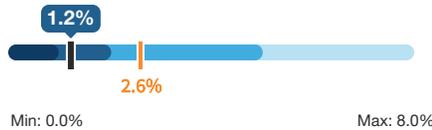
### Key Indicators of Strong Families

● North Carolina ● National Avg

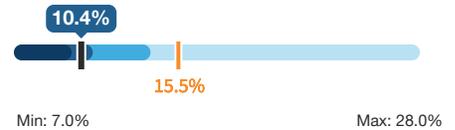
TANF benefits receipt among families in poverty



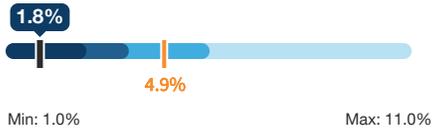
Housing instability



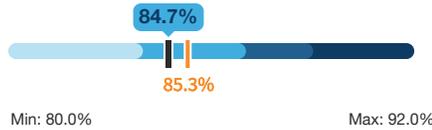
Crowded housing



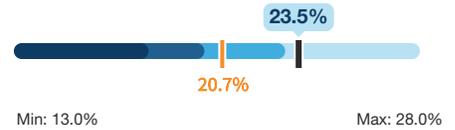
Unsafe neighborhoods



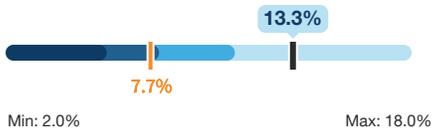
Family resilience



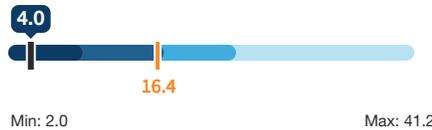
1 adverse childhood experience



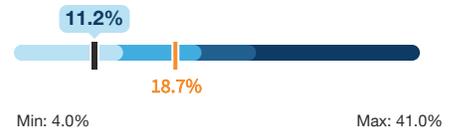
2+ adverse childhood experiences



Infant/toddler maltreatment rate<sup>†</sup>



Time in out-of-home placement<sup>†</sup>



Removed from home (per 1,000 infants/toddlers)<sup>†</sup>



# Strong Families

## Strong Families Policy in North Carolina

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

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

Note: N/A indicates Not Applicable

## All Strong Families Indicators for North Carolina

● State Indicator      ● National Avg

|  |                       |   |                       |
|--|-----------------------|---|-----------------------|
| <b>G</b> TANF benefits receipt among families in poverty | <b>4.7%</b><br>21.7%  | <b>O</b> Housing instability              | <b>1.2%</b><br>2.6%   |
| <b>O</b> Crowded housing                                 | <b>10.4%</b><br>15.5% | <b>W</b> Unsafe neighborhoods             | <b>1.8%</b><br>4.9%   |
| <b>R</b> Family resilience                               | <b>84.7%</b><br>85.3% | <b>G</b> One adverse childhood experience | <b>23.5%</b><br>20.7% |
| <b>G</b> Two or more adverse childhood experiences       | <b>13.3%</b><br>7.7%  | Infant/toddler maltreatment rate†         | <b>4</b><br>16.4      |
| <b>G</b> Out of home placements†                         | <b>11.2%</b><br>18.7% | Permanency Achieved: Reunified†           | <b>37.7%</b><br>48.1% |
| <b>O</b> Potential home visiting beneficiaries served    | <b>2.5%</b><br>2.0%   | Permanency Achieved: Relative†            | <b>4.7%</b><br>7.8%   |
| Infants/toddlers exiting foster care to permanency†      | <b>99.1%</b><br>98.8% | Permanency Achieved: Guardian†            | <b>22.3%</b><br>8.3%  |
| Removed from home†                                       | <b>5.2</b><br>7.1     | Permanency Achieved: Adoption†            | <b>34.4%</b><br>34.6% |

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

# Positive Early Learning Experiences

## How are North Carolina'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.

North Carolina 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 higher percentage of parents who read to their child every day. North Carolina is doing worse than the national average on indicators such as the lower percentage of infants and toddlers below 100 percent of the federal poverty line with access to Early Head Start. Infant care costs as a percentage of the state's median income for single and married parents also contribute to the ranking.

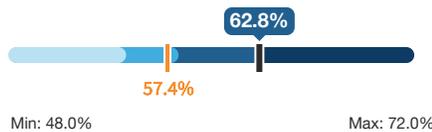
## Key Indicators of Positive Early Learning Experiences

● North Carolina ● National Avg

Parent reads to baby every day



Parent sings to baby every day



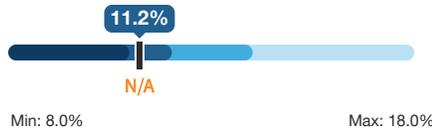
Percentage of income-eligible infants/toddlers with Early Head Start access



Cost of care, as % of income single parents



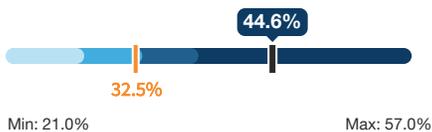
Cost of care, as % of income married families



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 North Carolina



|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| Infant eligibility level for child care subsidy above 200% of FPL   | Yes  | ✓ |
| 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†  | 1 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†                                    | Yes  | ✓ |
| 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 North Carolina

● State Indicator      ● National Avg

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>O</b> Parent reads to baby every day <span style="float: right;"><b>44.2%</b><br/>37.2%</span></li> <li><b>G</b> Percentage of income-eligible infants/toddlers with Early Head Start access <span style="float: right;"><b>6.0%</b><br/>11.0%</span></li> <li><b>O</b> Cost of care, as % of income single parents <span style="float: right;"><b>38.4%</b><br/>N/A</span></li> <li><b>W</b> Developmental screening received <span style="float: right;"><b>44.6%</b><br/>32.5%</span></li> <li><b>R</b> Percentage of infants/toddlers receiving IDEA Part C services <span style="float: right;"><b>5.7%</b><br/>6.8%</span></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>O</b> Parent sings to baby every day <span style="float: right;"><b>62.8%</b><br/>57.4%</span></li> <li><b>O</b> Cost of care, as % of income married families <span style="float: right;"><b>11.2%</b><br/>N/A</span></li> <li><b>G</b> Low/moderate income infants/toddlers in CCDF funded-care <span style="float: right;"><b>3.4%</b><br/>4.2%</span></li> <li><b>W</b> Infants/toddlers with developmental delay† <span style="float: right;"><b>0.5%</b><br/>1.1%</span></li> <li><b>W</b> Timeliness of Part C services† <span style="float: right;"><b>100.0%</b><br/>N/A</span></li> </ul> |
|---|---|

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