



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 fact sheet provides a snapshot of how infants, toddlers, and their families are faring with respect to these three developmental domains. For each domain, selected child or family indicators and policy indicators are highlighted and compared to national averages. Important demographic information is also included. A summary table of all indicators is provided on the last page, for reference.



Demographics

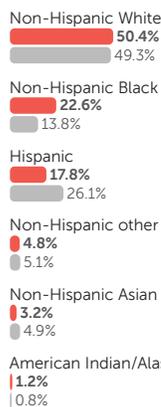
Infants and toddlers in North Carolina

Overview

North Carolina is home to 365,273 infants and toddlers, representing 3.6 percent of the state's population. As many as 51 percent live in households with incomes less than twice the federal poverty line (in 2017, about \$50,000 a year for a family of four), placing them at economic disadvantage. America's youngest children are diverse and are raised in a variety of family contexts. A broad array of policies and services are required to ensure that all of them have an equitable start in life.

■ NORTH CAROLINA ■ NATIONAL AVERAGE

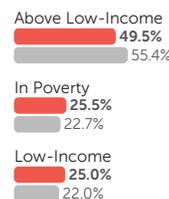
Race/ethnicity of infants and toddlers



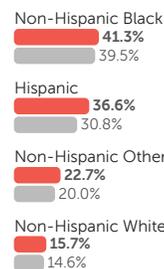
Working moms



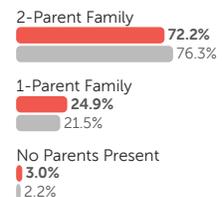
Poverty status of infants and toddlers



Infants and toddlers in poverty, by race



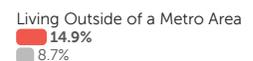
Family structure



Grandparent-headed households



Rural/Non-metro area





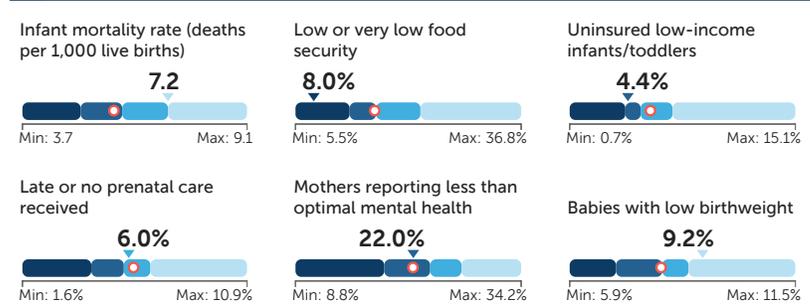
What is Good Health?

Good physical and mental health provide the foundation for babies to develop physically, cognitively, emotionally, and socially. The rate of brain growth is faster in the first 3 years than at any other stage of life, and this growth sets the stage for subsequent development. Access to good nutrition and affordable maternal, pediatric, and family health care are essential to ensure that babies receive the nourishment and care they need for a strong start in life.

North Carolina falls in the Improving Outcomes (O) tier of states when it comes to the overall health of infants and toddlers. The state's high ranking in the Good Health domain primarily reflects the many indicators in the Improving Outcomes (O) tier, including the majority of food security and nutrition indicators. However, some maternal health indicators, such as the percentage of women receiving late or no prenatal care, are in the Reaching Forward (R) tier.

Six Key Indicators of Good Health

KEY ← Range of all state values → ▼ North Carolina ○ National average
G Getting Started **R** Reaching Forward **O** Improving Outcomes **W** Working Effectively



Good Health Policy in North Carolina

Medicaid expansion state	No ❌
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 at ECE programs	Yes ✅



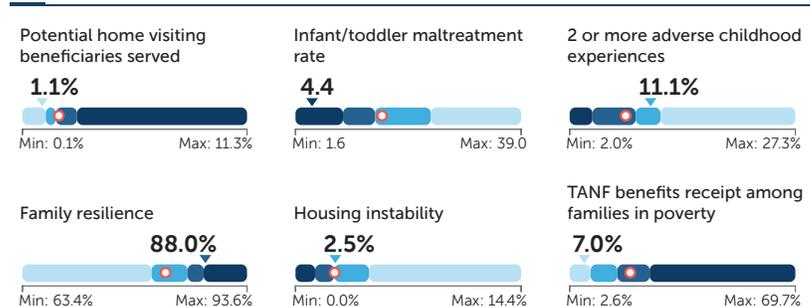
What Defines Strong Families?

Young children develop in the context of their families, where stability and supportive relationships nurture their growth. All families of infants and toddlers benefit from support with parenting, and many—particularly those challenged by economic instability—need access to resources that help them meet their children's daily and developmental needs. Important supports include home visiting services, child welfare systems that are responsive to young children's needs, and family-friendly employer policies that provide paid sick and family leave.

North Carolina falls in the Reaching Forward (R) tier of states when it comes to indicators of Strong Families. The state's low ranking in this domain primarily reflects indicators related to access to basic needs and supports, such as TANF benefits for families living in poverty. However, North Carolina is in the Working Effectively (W) tier when it comes to the child welfare indicators of neighborhood safety and the infant/toddler maltreatment rate.

Six Key Indicators of Strong Families

KEY ← Range of all state values → ▼ North Carolina ○ National average
G Getting Started **R** Reaching Forward **O** Improving Outcomes **W** Working Effectively



Strong Families Policy in North Carolina

Paid sick time that covers care for child	No ❌
Paid family leave	No ❌



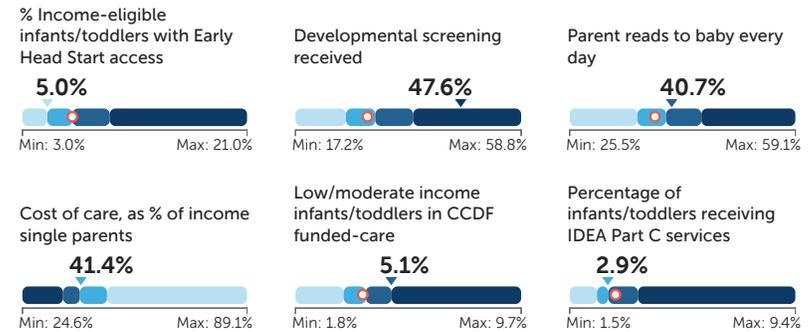
What Defines Positive Early Learning Experiences?

Infants and toddlers learn through play, active exploration of their environment, and, most importantly, through interactions with the significant adults in their lives. The quality of babies' early learning experiences at home and in other care settings has a lasting impact on their preparedness for life-long learning and success. Parents who require child care while they work or attend school need access to affordable, high-quality care options that promote positive development.

North Carolina scores in the Improving Outcomes (O) tier of states when considering key indicators related to early care and education and early intervention for infants and toddlers. The state's high ranking in the Positive Early Learning Experiences domain primarily reflects several indicators in the Improving Outcomes (O) tier, such as the percentage of parents reading to and singing songs to their babies every day. However, the state is in the Getting Started (G) tier for Early Head Start access among income-eligible infants and toddlers.

Six Key Indicators of Positive Early Learning Experiences

KEY ← Range of all state values → ▼ North Carolina ○ National average
G Getting Started **R** Reaching Forward **O** Improving Outcomes **W** Working Effectively



Positive Early Learning Experiences Policy in North Carolina

Families above 200% of FPL eligible for child care subsidy No

All indicators for North Carolina

G Getting Started **R** Reaching Forward **O** Improving Outcomes **W** Working Effectively

Good Health

O Eligibility limit (% FPL) for pregnant women in Medicaid	201.0	National average: 200.0	O Uninsured low-income infants/toddlers	4.4%	National average: 5.8%
W Low or very low food security	8.0%	National average: 16.5%	O Infants ever breastfed	84.9%	National average: 83.2%
O Infants breastfed at 6 months	58.8%	National average: 57.6%	R Late or no prenatal care received	6.0%	National average: 6.2%
O Mothers reporting less than optimal mental health	22.0%	National average: 22.0%	R Preventive medical care received	91.3%	National average: 90.7%
O Preventive dental care received	36.1%	National average: 30.0%	G Babies with low birthweight	9.2%	National average: 8.2%
G Infant mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births)	7.2	National average: 5.9	W Received recommended vaccines	77.8%	National average: 70.7%

Strong Families

R Housing instability	2.5% <i>National average: 2.5%</i>	R Crowded housing	11.1% <i>National average: 15.6%</i>
G TANF benefits receipt among families in poverty	7.0% <i>National average: 20.6%</i>	W Infant/toddler maltreatment rate	4.4 <i>National average: 16.0</i>
W Unsafe neighborhoods	1.2% <i>National average: 6.3%</i>	O Family resilience	88.0% <i>National average: 82.6%</i>
G 1 adverse childhood experience	28.8% <i>National average: 21.9%</i>	R 2 or more adverse childhood experiences	11.1% <i>National average: 8.3%</i>
R Infants/toddlers exiting foster care to permanency	97.8% <i>National average: 98.4%</i>	G Potential home visiting beneficiaries served	1.1% <i>National average: 1.9%</i>

Positive Early Learning Experiences

O Parent reads to baby every day	40.7% <i>National average: 38.2%</i>	O Parent sings to baby every day	60.3% <i>National average: 56.4%</i>
G % Income-eligible infants/toddlers with Early Head Start access	5.0% <i>National average: 7.0%</i>	O Cost of care, as % of income married families	11.9% <i>National average: N/A</i>
R Cost of care, as % of income single parents	41.4% <i>National average: N/A</i>	O Low/moderate income infants/toddlers in CCDF funded-care	5.1% <i>National average: 4.2%</i>
W Developmental screening received	47.6% <i>National average: 30.4%</i>	O Infants/toddlers with developmental delay	0.0% <i>National average: 1.1%</i>
R Percentage of infants/toddlers receiving IDEA Part C services	2.9% <i>National average: 3.1%</i>		