

The State of Montana'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.

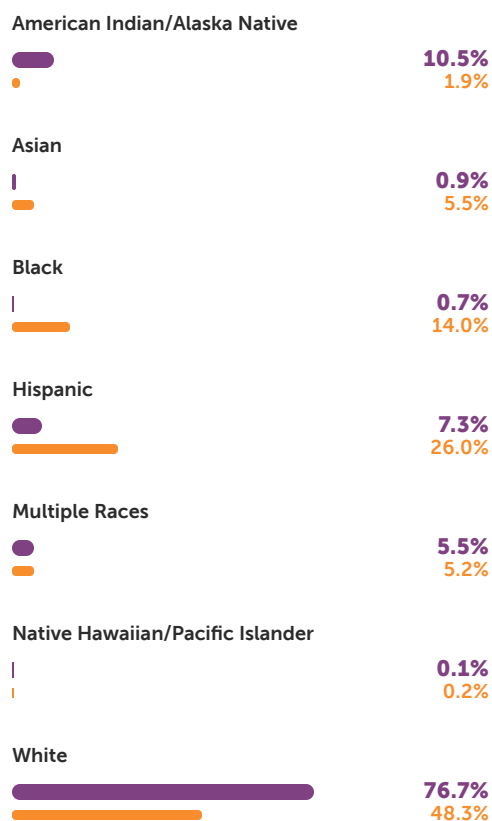
Demographics

Montana National Average

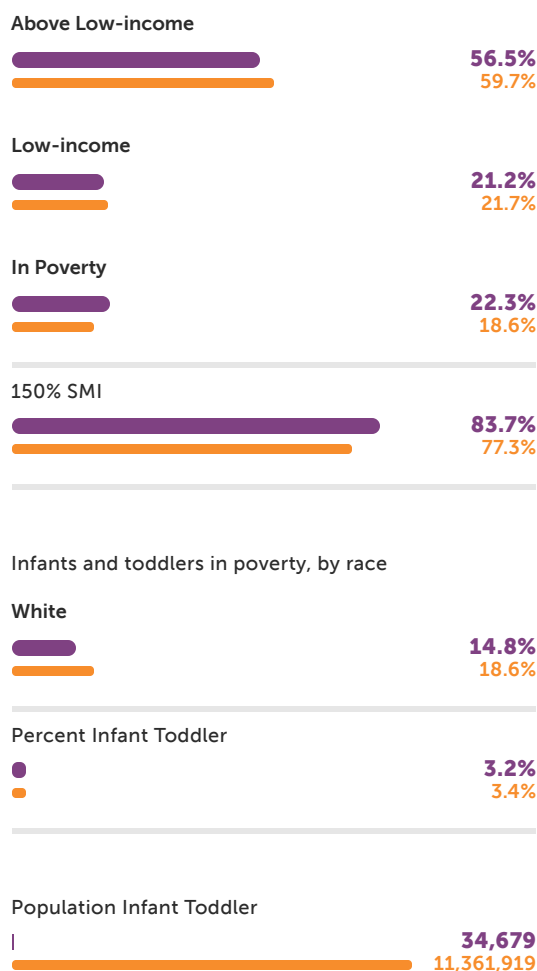
Infants and toddlers in Montana

Montana is home to 34,679 babies, representing 3.2 percent of the state's population. As many as 43.5 percent live in households with incomes less than twice the federal poverty line (in 2020, about \$52,400 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.

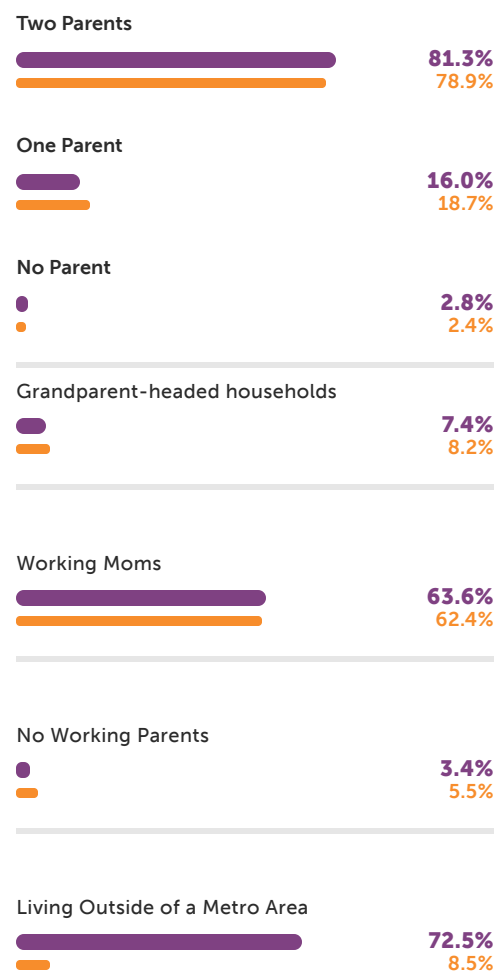
Race/ethnicity of infants and toddlers



Poverty status of infants and toddlers



Family Structure



*Numbers are small; use caution in interpreting.

Note: N/A indicates Not Available

How are Montana'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.

Montana 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 nutrition and mental health. Montana performs better than national averages on key indicators, such as the percentages of babies receiving preventive medical care and dental care. The state is performing worse than national averages on indicators such as the percentages of eligible babies participating in WIC and mothers reporting less than favorable mental health.

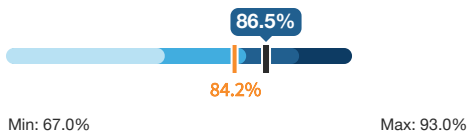
Key Indicators of Good Health

● Montana ● National Avg

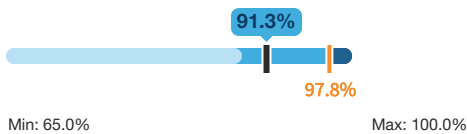
Eligibility limit (% FPL) for pregnant women in Medicaid



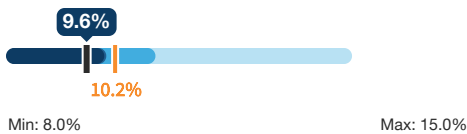
Infants ever breastfed **NR**



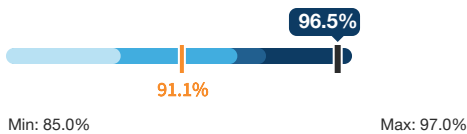
WIC Coverage



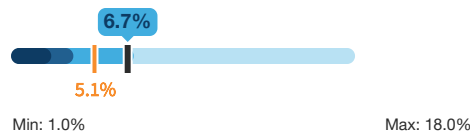
Babies born preterm



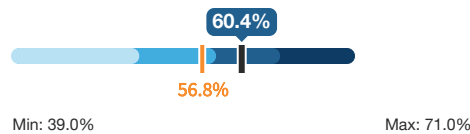
Preventive medical care received



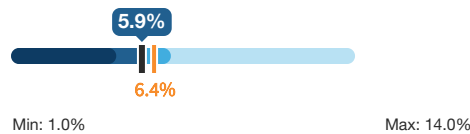
Uninsured low-income infants and toddlers



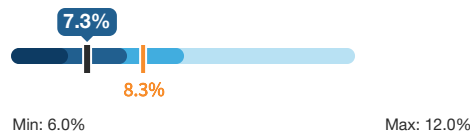
Infants breastfed at 6 months **NR**



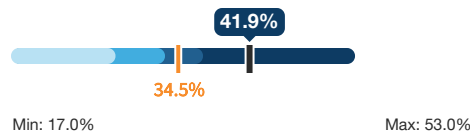
Late or no prenatal care received



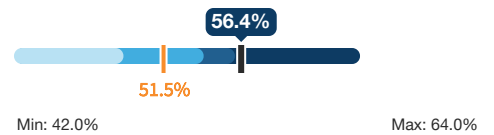
Babies with low birthweight



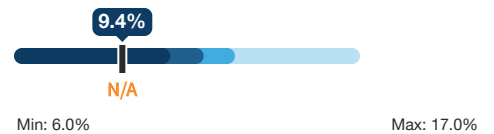
Preventive dental care received



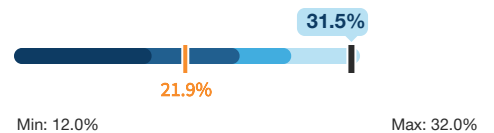
Medical home



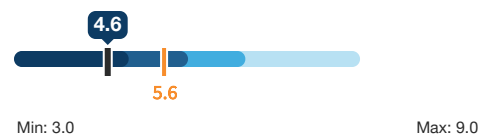
High weight-for-length **NR**



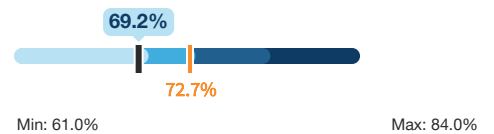
Mothers reporting less than optimal mental health



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



Received recommended vaccines



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

Good Health Policy in Montana

Medicaid expansion state		Yes	✓
CHIP maternal coverage for unborn child option	NR	No	✗
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		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		Yes	✓

Note: N/A indicates Not Available

All Good Health Indicators for Montana

State IndicatorNational Avg

Health Care Coverage and Affordability

Eligibility limit (% FPL) for pregnant women in Medicaid	162.0 200.0	Uninsured low-income infants and toddlers	6.7% 5.1%
Medical home	56.4% 51.5%		

Nutrition

Infants ever breastfed	NR	Infants breastfed at 6 months	60.4% 56.8%
High weight-for-length	NR	WIC coverage	91.3% 97.8%

Maternal Health

Late or no prenatal care received	5.9% 6.4%	Maternal mortality rate (deaths per 100,000 live births)	NR NA 20.1
Mothers reporting less than optimal mental health	31.5% 21.9%		

Children’s Health

Babies born preterm	9.6% 10.2%	Babies with low birthweight	7.3% 8.3%
Infant mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births)	4.6 5.6	Preventive dental care received	41.9% 34.5%
Preventive medical care received	96.5% 91.1%	Received recommended vaccines	69.2% 72.7%

Note: N/A indicates Not Available.

How are Montana'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.

Montana 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 percentages of families in poverty with babies who receive TANF and babies who live in crowded housing. Montana is doing worse than the national average on indicators such as the infant/toddler maltreatment rate and the percentage of babies removed from home.

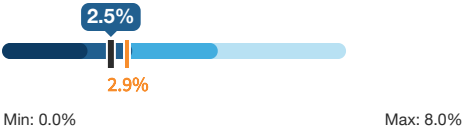
Key Indicators of Strong Families

● Montana ● National Avg

TANF benefits receipt among families in poverty



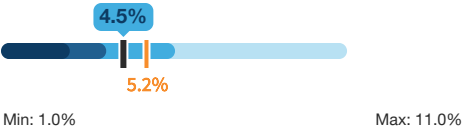
Housing instability



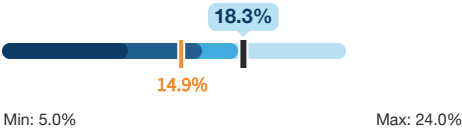
Crowded housing



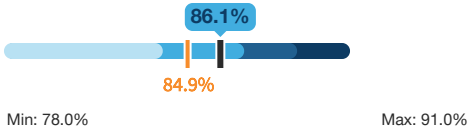
Unsafe neighborhoods



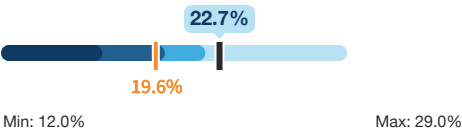
Low or very low food security



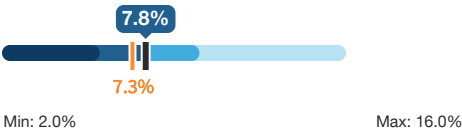
Family resilience



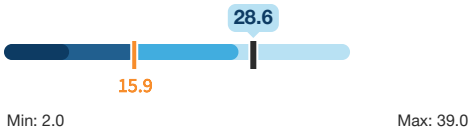
1 adverse childhood experience



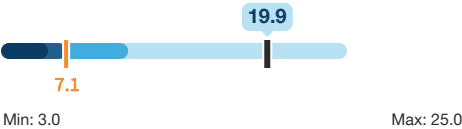
2 or more adverse childhood experiences



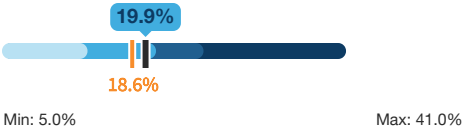
Infant/toddler maltreatment rate (per 1,000 children ages 0-2) **NR**



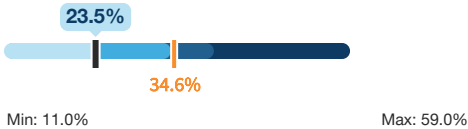
Removed from home **NR**



Time in out-of-home placement



Permanency: Adopted **NR**



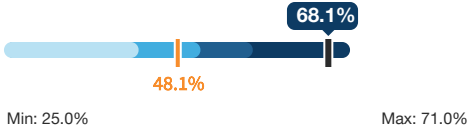
Permanency: Guardian **NR**



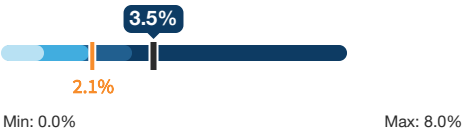
Permanency: Relative **NR**



Permanency: Reunified **NR**



Potential home visiting beneficiaries served



*Numbers are small; use caution in interpreting.

Strong Families Policy in Montana

Paid family leave	No	✗
Paid sick time that covers care for child	Yes	✓
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 Montana

State IndicatorNational Avg

Basic Needs

TANF benefits receipt among families in poverty	23.6% 18.5%	Housing instability	2.5% 2.9%
Crowded housing	11.0% 15.4%	Unsafe neighborhoods	4.5% 5.2%
Low or very low food security	18.3% 14.9%		

Child Well-being and Resilience

Family resilience	86.1% 84.9%	1 adverse childhood experience	NR	22.7% 19.6%
2 or more adverse childhood experiences	7.8% 7.3%	Infant/toddler maltreatment rate (per 1,000 children ages 0-2)	NR	28.6 15.9
Removed from home	NR	Time in out-of-home placement	NR	0.2% %
Permanency: Adopted	NR	Permanency: Guardian	NR	4.9% 8.3%
Permanency: Relative	NR	Permanency: Reunified	NR	68.1% 48.1%
Potential home visiting beneficiaries served	3.5% 2.1%			

Note: N/A indicates Not Available.

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

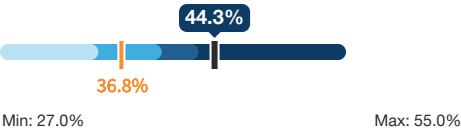
Infants and toddlers learn through interactions with the significant adults in their lives and active exploration of enriching environments. The quality of babies’ early learning experiences at home and in other care settings can impact their cognitive and social-emotional development as well as early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

Montana 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 babies in families below 100 percent of the federal poverty line with access to Early Head Start. Montana is doing worse than the national average on indicators such as the lower percentage of infants and toddlers who received Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C services.

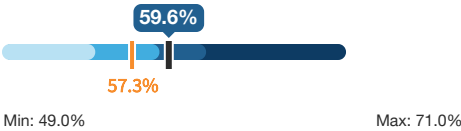
Key Indicators of Positive Early Learning Experiences

● Montana ● National Avg

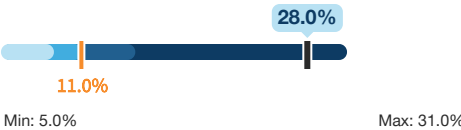
Parent reads to baby every day



Parent sings to baby every day



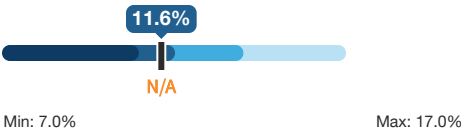
% Income-eligible infants/toddlers with Early Head Start access



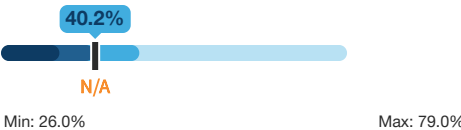
Low/moderate income infants/toddlers in CCDF funded-care



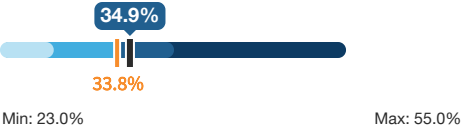
Cost of care, as % of income married families



Cost of care, as % of income single parents



Developmental screening received



Percentage of infants/toddlers receiving IDEA Part C services



*Numbers are small; use caution in interpreting.

Positive Early Learning Experiences Policy in Montana

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 ❌
Group size		EHS Standards met for 0 of 3 age groups
Infant/toddler professional credential	NR	Yes ✔️
Families above 200% of FPL eligible for child care subsidy		No ❌
Allocated CCDBG funds		No ❌
State reimburses center-based child care		No ❌
At-risk children included in Part C eligibility definition	NR	No ❌

Note: N/A indicates Not Available

All Positive Early Learning Experiences Indicators for Montana

State IndicatorNational Avg

Activities that Support Early Learning

Parent reads to baby every day	44.3% 36.8%	Parent sings to baby every day	59.6% 57.3%
--------------------------------	----------------	--------------------------------	----------------

Access to Early Learning Programs

% Income-eligible infants/toddlers with Early Head Start access	28.0% 11.0%	Low/moderate income infants/toddlers in CCDF-funded care	4.0% 4.6%
Cost of care, as % of income married families	NR	Cost of care, as % of income single parents	NR
	11.6% NA		40.2% NA

Early Intervention

Developmental screening received	34.9% 33.8%	Percentage of infants/toddlers receiving IDEA Part C services	3.1% 7.2%
Timeliness of Part C services	NR		
	100.0% NA		

Note: N/A indicates Not Available.