

The State of New York's Children



DATA BOOK JANUARY 2023

SCHUYLER CENTER FOR ANALYSIS AND ADVOCACY



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Lessons from the Pandemic: The Policies That Work, and the Data to Prove It

One of the key learnings of the last three years is that government policy can make a real and immediate difference in the lives of children and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Three years after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we now have the data to show that thoughtful policies, with adequate funding for implementation, can be powerful tools to build a stronger and more equitable state and country.

The temporary expansion of the federal child tax credit contributed to a 46% decline in child poverty, while it was in effect. Pandemic EBT, which provided nutrition assistance to children who lost access to school breakfast and lunch due to school closures, reduced food insufficiency among SNAP households by 28%. Emergency child care stabilization funds helped shore-up a crumbling child care infrastructure and allowed programs to remain open, though child care has yet to recover from the pandemic.

As we enter 2023, New York State is at a pivotal moment: armed with compelling data about the policies that meaningfully improved the well-being of New York's children, what actions will our state leaders take?

On the following pages, we lay out the data and offer recommendations for improving the health and well-being of New York State's children and families. Healthy children and supported families are the foundation of a thriving society—these are the investments that pay off for everyone, now and for generations to come. Our recommendations are rooted in the data found within the pages of this report.

Policy Recommendations for Child and Family Well-Being:

- **Goal 1: Move toward achieving New York's codified commitment of cutting child poverty by 50% in a decade, with attention to reducing racial inequities.**

By any measure, New York children are more likely to experience poverty than children in the U.S. as a whole. Children in Black, Hispanic/Latino, and multi-racial families experience poverty at much higher rates than non-Hispanic white children—results of longstanding racial inequities.

- **Goal 2: Continue to make substantial and concrete progress toward achieving high-quality, culturally-responsive, universal child care.**

Last year's increase in income eligibility for child care assistance has made more than 265,000 New York children newly eligible. However, high-quality child care is getting even harder to find: statewide, licensed child care capacity has sharply declined since 2019, particularly in the home-based sector which serves a proportionately high percentage of families receiving child care assistance.

- **Goal 3: Transform the Child Welfare System by investing in family strengthening in ways that prevent the system from touching children and families: economic security, child care, kin and family supports, and transparency and accountability of the system.**

Most children who are separated from their families by the child welfare system are removed from their homes without the family having received preventive services.

- **Goal 4: Expand and increase investment in child and family health.**

New York children are more likely to have health coverage than children in the rest of the country and NYS Medicaid and CHP cover 78% of low-income children. New York should implement continuous Medicaid coverage for young children to minimize family stress; improve access to health, mental, and dental care; and generate the best possible short- and long-term outcomes.

After several years of burdens placed on the shoulders of families, this is the year New York State can—and must—make child and family well-being a priority. As you'll see within this report, the data is clear: our children and families, especially those impacted by poverty, need policy solutions that open the door to opportunity. We know what works, now it's time to act.

Our children are a beautiful example of New York State's diversity.



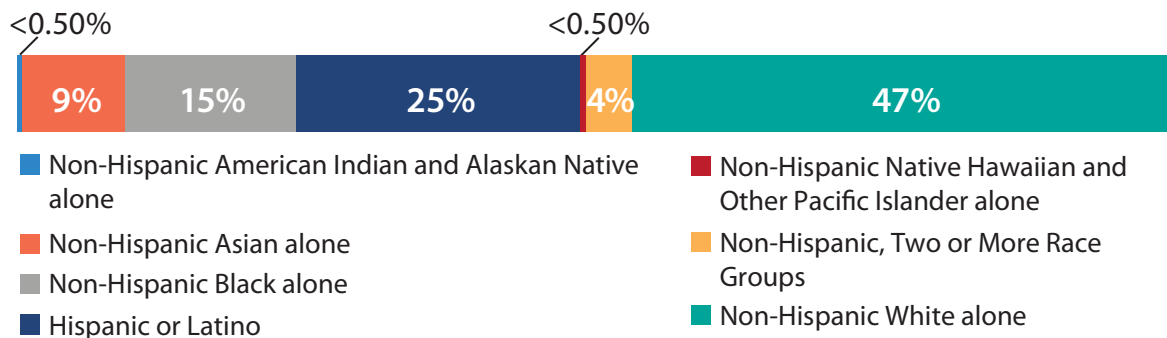
NEW YORK STATE'S CHILDREN

There are more than **4.1 million children** under the age of 18 residing in New York State, representing **21%** of the total state population. **Twenty-seven percent** of children (**1.1 million**) are under the age of 5.

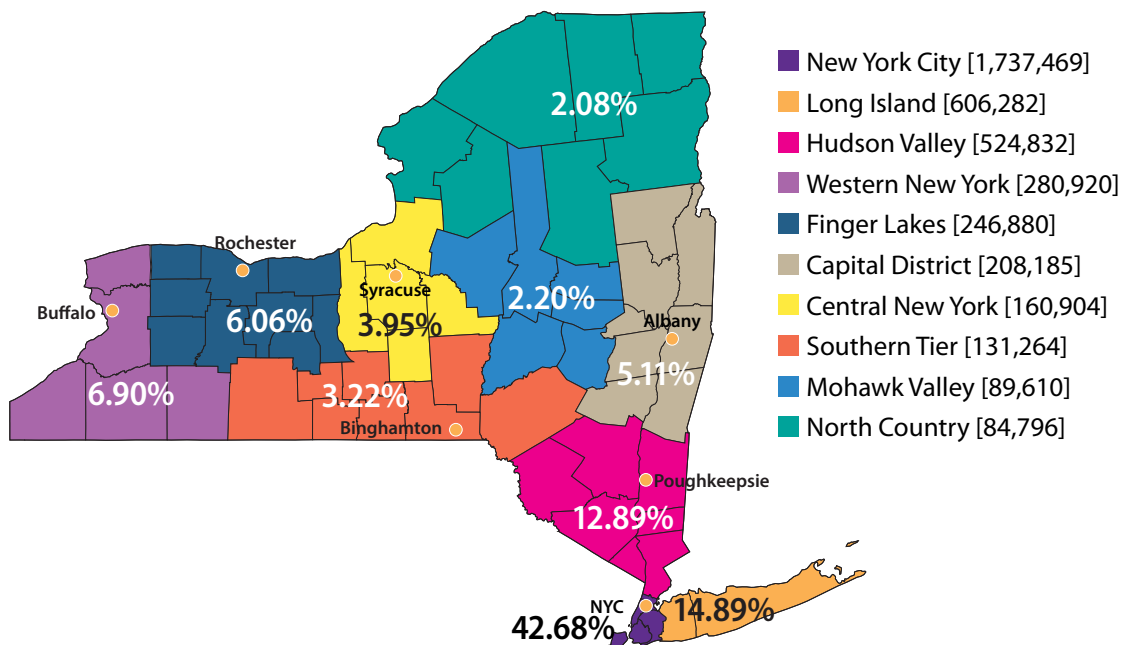
- More than one-third live in immigrant families;
- One-quarter are Hispanic;
- 15% are Black; and
- Almost a third speak a second language at home.

Public policies must advance the well-being of all children, with an intentional focus on those who have been harmed by systemic racism and other inequities.

Children Under 18 in NYS by Race/Ethnicity, 2021



Children Under 18 by Region, as Percentage of Total NYS Child Population, 2020



Child Poverty

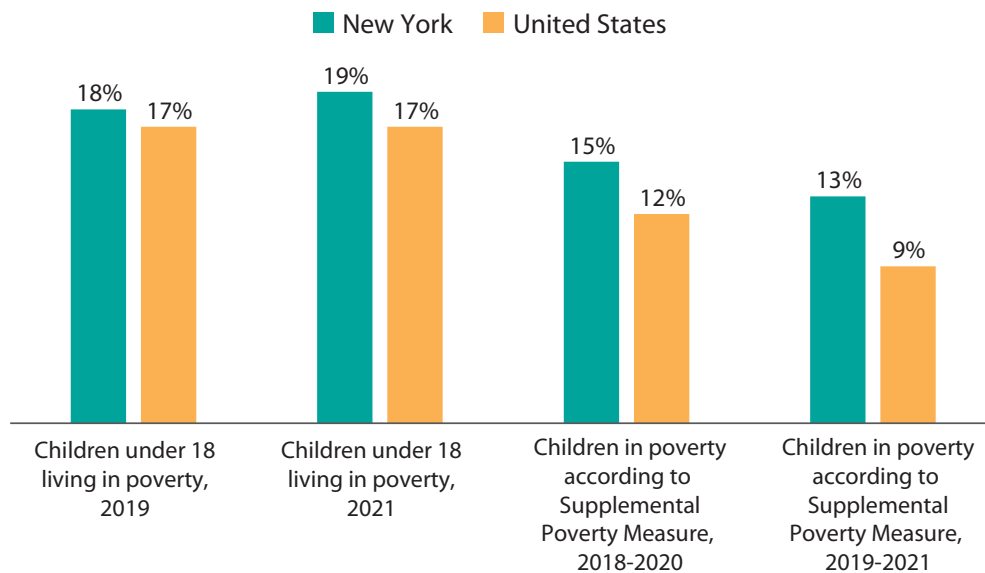


Among the lessons learned from the pandemic: government has the capacity to quickly and sharply reduce the number of children experiencing poverty.

New York has repeatedly, over time made the policy choice to allow hundreds of thousands of children to experience poverty. This matters because evidence shows a lack of economic resources for families compromises children's ability to grow and achieve adult success, hurting them and society.

Child poverty in New York State exceeds the national rate, as it has for more than a decade. In 2021, approximately 747,000 children, nearly 20%, experienced poverty. Children in Black and Hispanic families experience poverty at much higher rates due to structural, historic, and ongoing racism in housing, employment, education, policing, and other systems. Robust pandemic-era relief helped reduce and mitigate poverty and food insecurity. **The temporary expanded federal child tax credit, by itself, cut child poverty nationally by 43%.**

Over time and by any measure, New York children are more likely to experience poverty than children in the U.S. as a whole



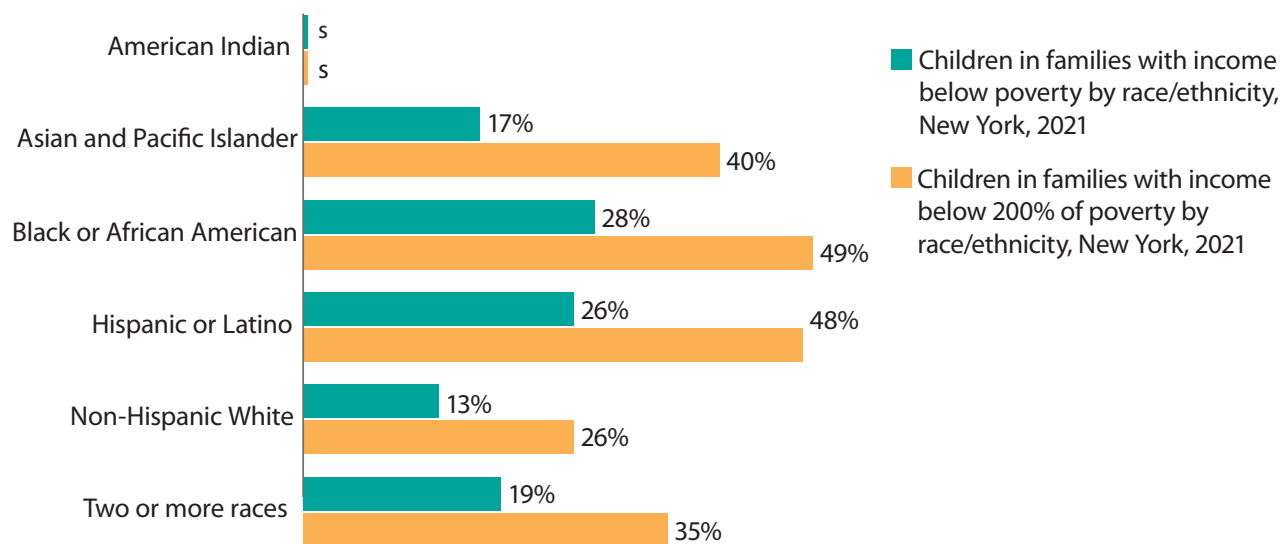
*Children under 18 living in poverty, NY and US (Federal Poverty Level) 2019, and 2021;
Children under 18 living in poverty, NY and US (Supplemental Poverty Measure) 2018-2020
and 2019-2021.*

The **supplemental poverty measure (SPM)** is considered by many experts to be a more accurate and comprehensive measure of poverty than the official poverty measure (Federal Poverty Level, or FPL) because it takes into account family resources and expenses not included in the official measure, geographic variation, and the value of in-kind benefits like nutritional assistance (SNAP), subsidized housing, home energy assistance, refundable tax credits. It then subtracts necessary expenses including income taxes, Social Security payroll taxes, child care and other work-related expenses, child support payments to another household, and medical care costs. In contrast, the FPL looks solely at income, without regard to other incoming resources. The FPL thresholds are calculated based on "three times the cost of a minimum food diet in 1963."

Child Poverty and Systemic Racism

The impact of systemic, historic, and ongoing racism embedded in housing, education, employment, and other systems shaping the lives of children and families, is reflected in the relative rates at which children in New York and across the nation experience poverty based on their race. The racial disparities in child poverty existed long before the pandemic overwhelmed New York and the nation, and persist now as the pandemic wanes. Public policy solutions must be shaped with intention to address the causes of the disparities and bring an end to poverty for all children.

Children in Black, Hispanic/Latino, and multi-racial families experience poverty at much higher rates than non-Hispanic white children—results of longstanding racial inequities



Children under 18 in families experiencing poverty and below 200% of poverty (FPL), by race/ ethnicity, NYS 2021



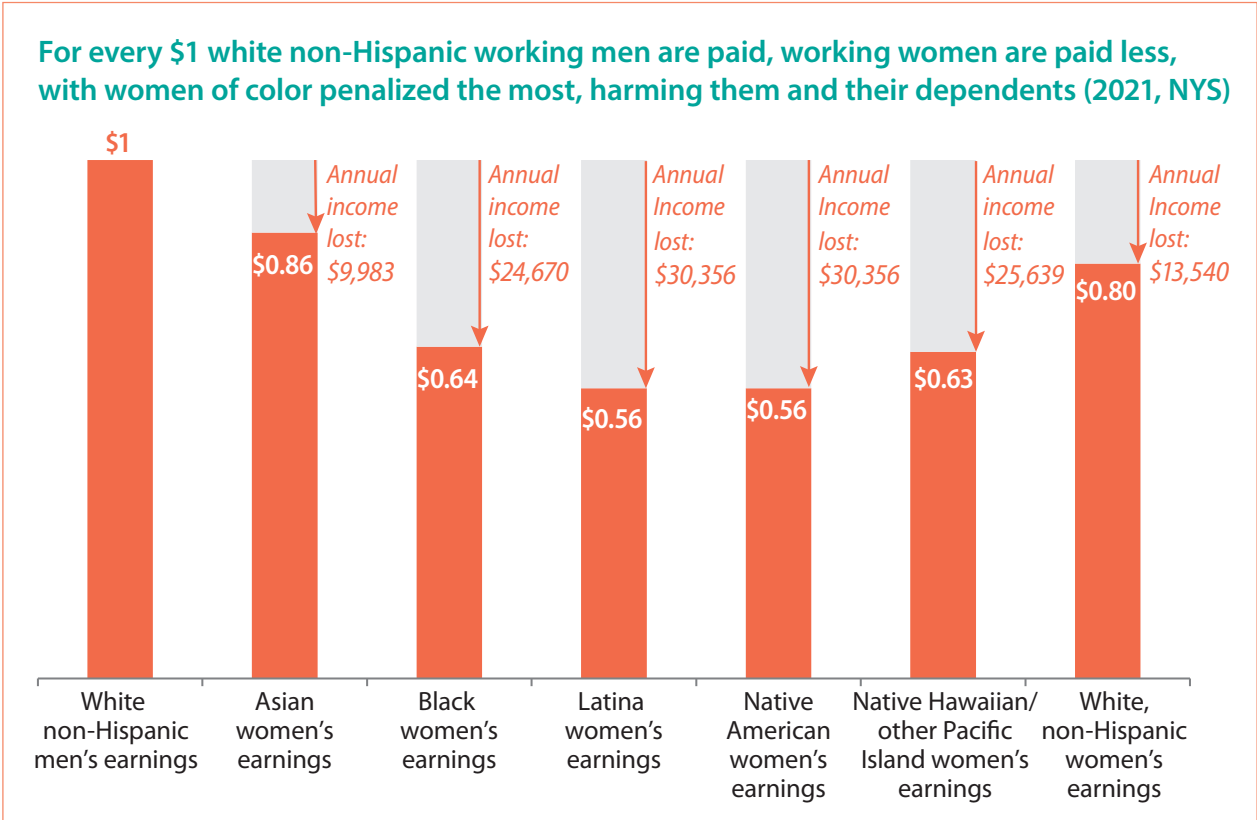
The **federal poverty threshold** in 2021 for a family of four people with two adults and two children is an annual income of **\$27,479**. A family of four people with two adults and two children experiencing poverty at **200% of the federal poverty threshold** in 2021 would have income below **\$54,958**.

Policy Recommendation: New York should swiftly and robustly implement the Child Poverty Reduction Act, including budget action that measurably reduces child poverty and inequity.

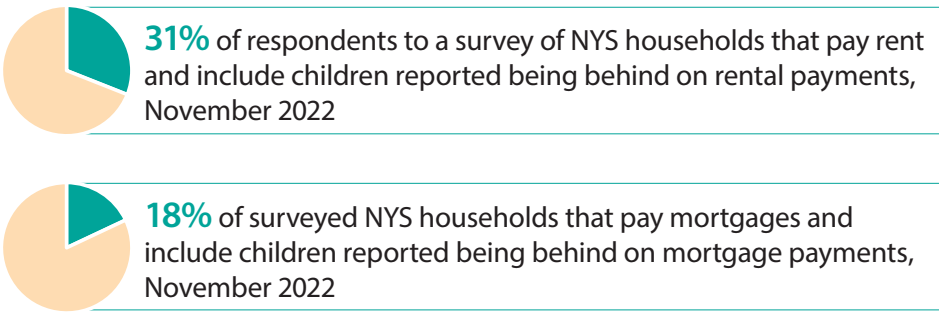
Child Poverty

Child Poverty, Wages, and Housing

Children suffer when their mothers, grandmothers, or other female caregivers are **paid less** because of their gender, particularly the children who live in the one-quarter of households headed by a female single parent. Systemic racism and sexism must be addressed to achieve pay equity and reduce child poverty.



Housing in New York State costs 2.3 times the national average and housing instability and homelessness among New York households with children are severe. Hundreds of thousands of New York State families with children report being behind on rent or mortgage, and a growing number of New York City families with children are sleeping in shelters.



The number of New York City children residing in a shelter on any given day increased by over **6,000 children** during 2022. On December 29, 2021, **14,612 children** lived in a shelter; on December 1, 2022, **20,920 children** lived in a shelter. Amidst this dramatic increase in family homelessness in New York City, pandemic-era relief is ending.

Government has the tools to quickly and sharply reduce the number of children experiencing poverty.

State and federal income and food supports have long protected hundreds of thousands of New York children from experiencing the sharpest impacts of poverty— especially during the pandemic, when federal supports were dramatically expanded. However, as confirmed by New York’s high child poverty (SPM) rate as compared to the national rate, the benefits available to New York families and children are inadequate to meet the costs of basic necessities. With pandemic-enhanced supports ending, the number of children experiencing poverty and economic hardship is on the rise.



Children in families receiving SSI, cash public assistance income, or SNAP (NYS, 2021) 28%

| | | |
|--|---|-------------|
| | Average monthly SNAP benefit for households with children, NYS, 2019 | \$377 |
| | Average federal monthly SSI benefit per New York child, October 2022 | \$740 |
| | Estimated monthly TANF benefit for a family of three, NYS, 2021 | \$648-\$836 |
| | Average monthly SNAP, SSI, and TANF benefit for many immigrants in New York | \$0 |

Federal Child Tax Credit (NY filers), 2020



2,228,910

Total number of families receiving credit



\$2,769

Average credit per family



\$0

Excluded: families living in extreme poverty and many otherwise eligible immigrant New Yorkers

Federal Earned Income Tax Credit (NY filers), 2020



1.5 million

Total number of EITC claims



\$3,531

Average credit for family with 2 children



\$0

Excluded: young childless adults 18 through 24, New Yorkers living in extreme poverty, and many otherwise eligible immigrant New Yorkers

Empire State Child Credit, 2020



1,358,226

Total number of families receiving credit



\$440

Average credit per family



\$0

Excluded: children under age 4 and those living in extreme poverty

State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), 2020



1,240,500

Total number of EITC claims



\$964

Average credit for family with 2 children



\$0

Excluded: young childless adults 18 through 24, New Yorkers living in extreme poverty, and many otherwise eligible immigrant New Yorkers

Policy Recommendation: New York should strengthen and expand its refundable tax credits, including the Empire State Child Credit in much the same way as the federal CTC was enhanced during the pandemic by (1) including a robust credit for children under age four (a group currently excluded from New York’s credit); (2) restructuring the credit so the highest credit goes to the lowest-income families, by ending regressive minimum income requirement and phase-in; (3) increasing the credit amount to provide families meaningful support; (4) continuing to ensure the credit is available to as many immigrant families as possible; and (5) paying out the credit monthly or quarterly to smooth out income and help families keep up with bills.

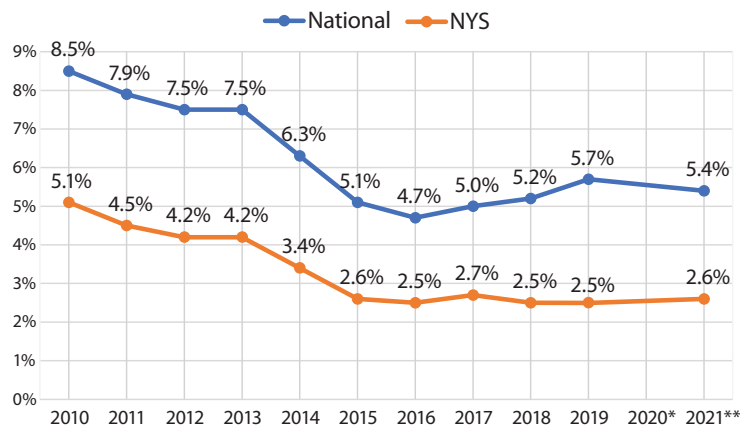


Health is critical to overall well-being. Children's health is affected by their caregivers' health and well-being, stress, family income, nutrition, housing, health care, and coverage. New York has long been a leader in covering children; children here are more likely to have coverage than in most other states.

National data show the number of uninsured children declined during the pandemic, while enrollment in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program increased. The national public health emergency (PHE) invoked special rules to protect Medicaid enrollees from losing health coverage and the PHE has been extended into 2023. To prevent children from becoming uninsured when the public health emergency ends, the State can invest in clear communication with families, resources for community partners, and streamlined verification. In addition, the State can seek to secure continuous Medicaid coverage for young children from birth to age six.

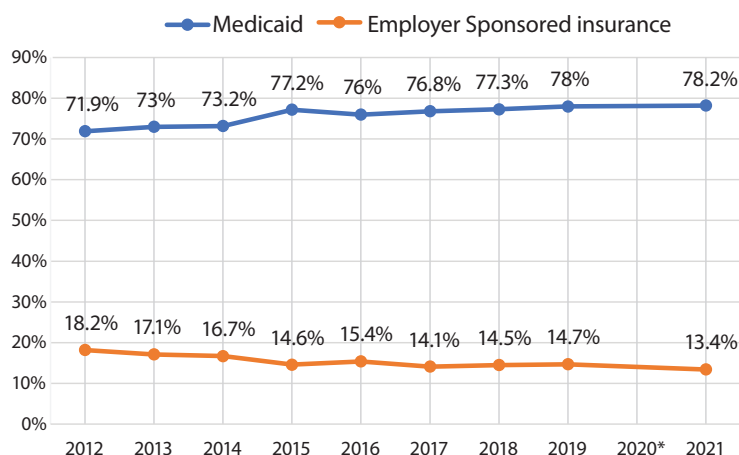
New York children are uninsured at a far lower rate than the national average

Percentage of children 0-18 without health insurance coverage by year, 2010-2021



Most New York children in low-income families are covered by Medicaid & CHIP. This trend increased over the past decade and employer sponsored coverage decreased

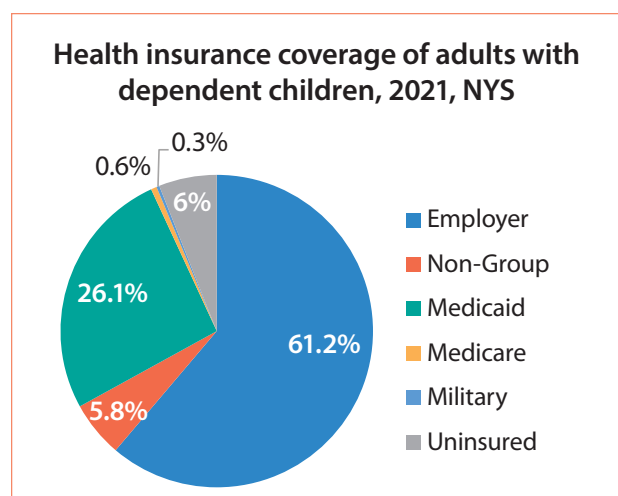
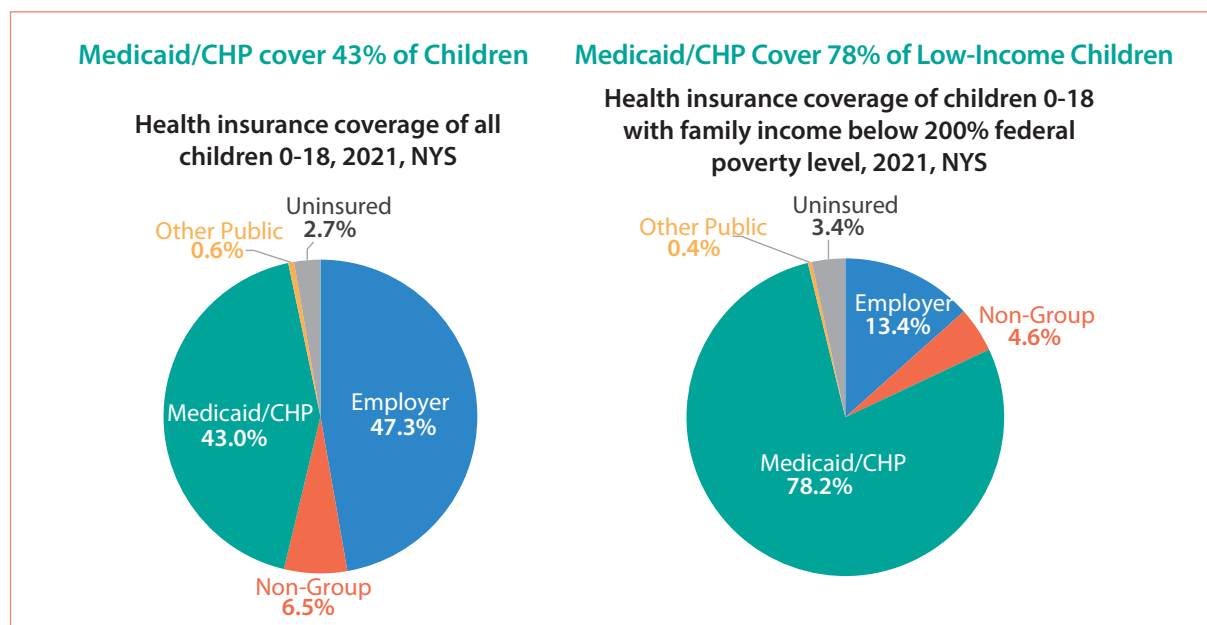
Medicaid/CHIP and employer sponsored health insurance coverage of children 0-18 living under 200% FPL, 2012-2021, NYS



*The American Community Survey did not release the 1-year estimates for 2020 due to significant disruptions to data collection brought on by the coronavirus pandemic.

**The increase is not statistically significant. American Community Survey data historically undercounts Medicaid/CHIP coverage, and that undercount may have been exacerbated by events in the past few years.

Medicaid and Child Health Plus (CHP) cover nearly half of New York children and, as such, Medicaid policy and payment can drive how, where, and how well care is delivered.



People who have health coverage are more likely to get care; have better health outcomes and sense of their own health and well-being; and experience less financial strain. Studies have found that Medicaid in childhood is associated with better health in adulthood, higher levels of educational attainment, higher tax payments, and greater financial security. Medicaid coverage of children and pregnant women is associated with improved health and lower rates of disability in adulthood. Some studies find that Black children particularly benefit. Medicaid produces financial benefits for society and a strong return on government investment.

The pandemic has taken a tremendous toll on the mental health of children and caregivers and mental health needs often go unmet. More than 100,000 New York youth with major depression did not get treatment and an estimated 78,000 New York children have private insurance that does not cover mental or emotional problems.

16% of youth (age 12-17) reported suffering from at least one major depressive episode in the past year

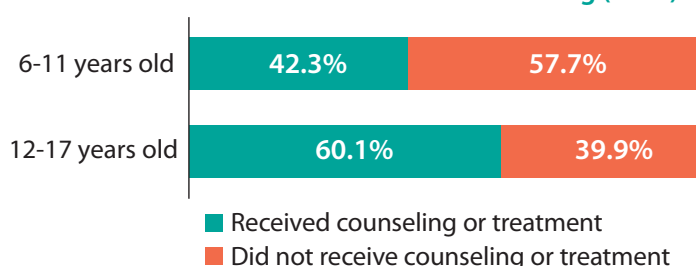


16.39%
National

16.03%
New York State

NOTE: Data used in the report was gathered through 2020. It is the most current data reported by the states and available to the public and provide a useful snapshot of the needs and systems that were in place in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many New York children who have a mental/behavioral health condition do not receive treatment or counseling (2020)



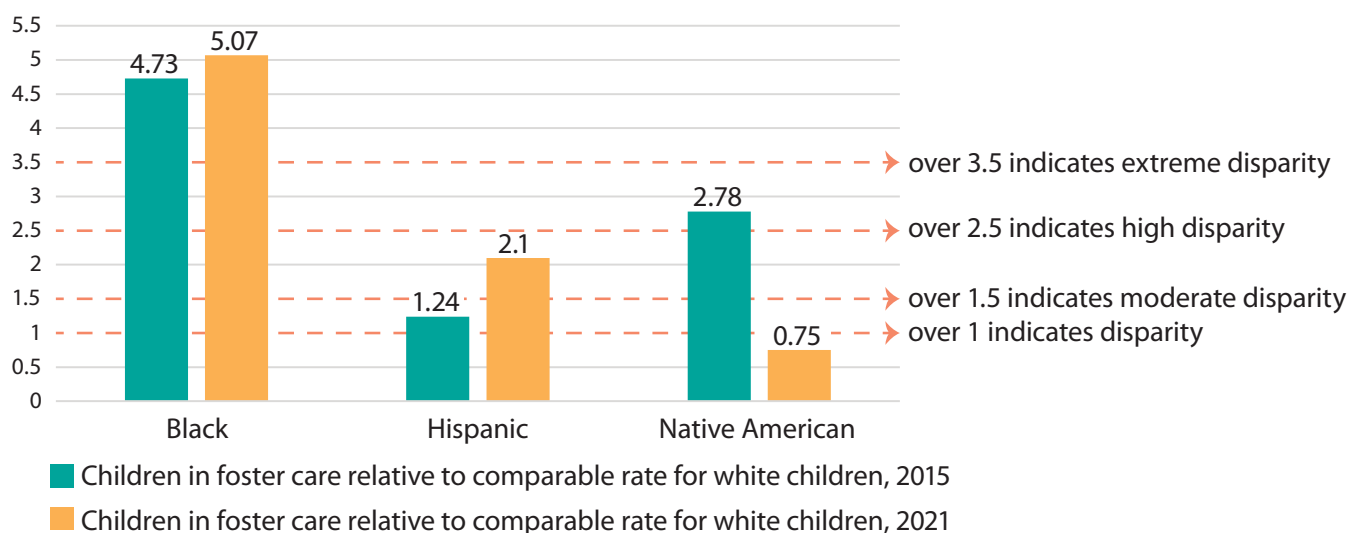
Child Welfare



True child welfare is achieved when New York's children and families can easily access resources and supports of their own choosing provided by and for their community.

New York's child welfare system currently operates in ways that disproportionately involve, investigate, and separate Black and Latino children and families. Specifically, Black children are nearly twice as likely as white children to be reported to the State Central Register (SCR); more than twice as likely to be in indicated reports; and over five times more likely to be in child welfare placement. This is a similar rate to previous years; more needs to be done to combat the factors driving these disparities, including bias, discrimination, and poverty.

Black children in NYS are over five times more likely to be in child welfare placement as white children; Hispanic children are twice as likely



New York Disparity Index: Rate of Black, Hispanic, Native American children in child welfare placement relative to comparable rate for white children, 2015, 2021

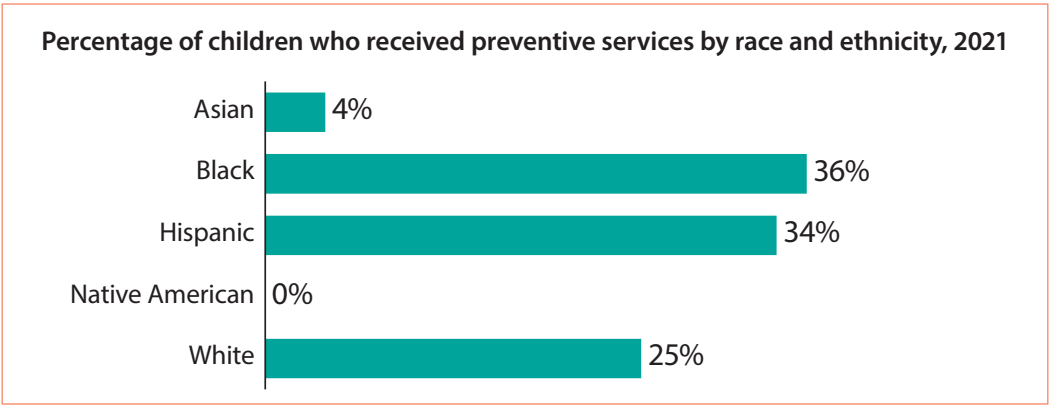
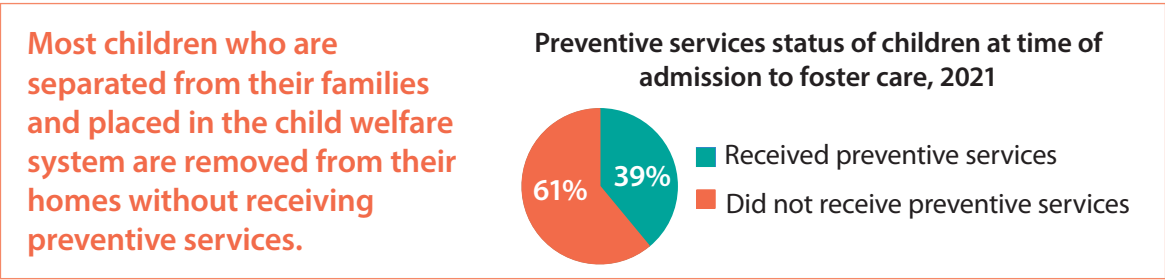
It is well understood that placing children removed from their homes in institutional settings, like group homes, is associated with poor outcomes. New York has long placed a greater percentage of its children involved in the child welfare system in congregate settings than the national average and 26 other states. In 2021, New York State began implementing a new federal law, Family First, which limits federal funding for institutional settings to the first two weeks, unless the child has a demonstrated therapeutic need to be treated in such a setting. One year in, New York's percentage of children in institutional placements has barely budged, decreasing only three tenths of a percentage point (from 13.9% in June 2021 to 13.6% in October 2022) and a slight decrease from 15.7% two years earlier. Reducing New York's overreliance on institutional placements will take a coordinated effort across multiple agencies.

Child Welfare

Tens of thousands of New York parents and caregivers—disproportionately Black and brown—are reported to child protective services each year and subject to a child welfare investigation. For many families, this experience is deeply traumatic.

- In 2021, child protective services:**
 - Received **145,684** reports
 - Investigated **129,512** reports
- As of December 31, 2021:**
 - **14,358** children were in foster care
 - **75,088** children and **37,516** families received preventive services

Child welfare preventive services—like home visiting, housing assistance, child care, transportation, job training, and cash grants—are designed to prevent the profound trauma of separation. These services have been credited with reducing the number of New York children placed in institutions and foster care over the past twenty years. Notwithstanding the historical improvements these services have secured, most New York children who are separated from their families and placed in foster or institutional settings are removed from their homes before their family has received preventive services. This fact highlights the need for New York to ensure that families investigated by child protective services are provided preventive services first, before any other action. It also points out the need for more primary prevention services, which are completely voluntary supports and services available to families outside of the child welfare system.



Home visiting is a primary prevention strategy proven to strengthen families and help them thrive. Home visitors provide information and support during pregnancy and early childhood, including helping families access community resources and services, educating families on child development, connecting families with medical providers, and assessing children for developmental delays. New York is home to a variety of home visiting programs, but the vast majority of low-income New York families are not able to participate due to inadequate availability.



17,509
Home Visiting capacity in New York State, 2019




244,000
Children 0 to 5 living in poverty, 2021



Child Care and Pre-K

High-quality, affordable child care, pre-K, and afterschool programs strengthen families and communities in myriad ways, including by boosting women’s workforce participation; cutting child poverty; reducing racial inequities in academic achievement; and preventing child welfare involvement.

Without assistance, child care and afterschool program costs are financially far out of reach for most New York families.



Child care is the largest monthly bill for many New York families with children costing an average of

- \$2,829 per month** for an infant and a 4-year-old in a child care center (\$33,945 per year)
- \$1,313 per month** for an infant in family-based child care (\$15,766 per year)
- \$1,686 per month** for two school-age children in family-based afterschool care (\$20,240 per year)

Last year, New York dramatically expanded access to child care assistance, raising the income eligibility cap for child care assistance from 200 to 300% of FPL (or from \$55,500 to \$83,250 for a family of four; from \$36,620 to \$54,930 for a family of two). If fully and equitably implemented, accompanied by increased capacity to meet need, and removal of the unnecessary administrative barriers preventing many families from accessing assistance, this expansion could be life-changing for the more than **265,000 New York children** newly eligible for child care assistance.

New York’s recent increase in income eligibility for child care assistance stands to sharply reduce child care costs for tens of thousands of newly eligible families

Income: **\$62,400**
Subsidy cut-off: **\$53,000**
(ineligible)

54%

Income: **\$62,400**
Subsidy cut-off: **\$83,250**
(eligible)

5.8%

Monthly child care expenses: **\$2,829** → **\$299**
July 2022 January 2023

*New York family with one infant and a 4-year-old in center (price \$33,945) – family of 4, two adults earning \$15/hr:
child care expenses before August 2022 and after*

Even with eligibility increase, child care expenses are still out of reach for many New York families just above the income cut-off


Income: **\$74,313**
Subsidy cut-off: **\$69,090**
(ineligible)

27%

Monthly child care expenses: **\$1,687**
2023

*New York family with two school-aged children in family-based afterschool program (price \$20,240) – family of 3 at NYS Median Household Income:
child care expenses January 2023*

7%



**FEDERAL CHILD CARE AFFORDABILITY STANDARD:
NO MORE THAN 7% OF INCOME**

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Child Care and Pre-K

Even if a family can afford quality child care—with or without state assistance—families struggle to find an opening in a licensed facility. Prior to the pandemic, 64% of New York families lived in communities with few, if any, child care providers. The problem of insufficient child care capacity has grown due to pandemic-triggered program closures and downsizing, particularly in the family-based sector which has proportionately experienced the greatest loss of capacity.

Licensed child care capacity in New York State has sharply declined since 2019, particularly in the home-based sector which serves a proportionately high percentage of families receiving child care assistance.

| Licensed Child Care Capacity in New York State by Modality: 2019 and 2021 | | | | |
|---|----------------|----------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | 2019 | 2021 | Change in capacity (number) | Change in capacity (percentage) |
| Center-Based Child Care | 313,951 | 314,327 | + 376 | + 0.1% |
| Family Child Care (include school age) | 26,340 | 22,081 | – 4,259 | – 16.2% |
| Group Family Child Care (include school age) | 123,034 | 114,323 | – 8,711 | – 7.1% |
| Center-Based School-Age Child Care | 327,578 | 325,290 | – 2,288 | – 0.7% |
| Total | 790,903 | 776,021 | –14,881 | – 1.9% |

Demand for child care remains high

 **41%** of New York parents reported that issues with child care have affected their ability to attend work, school, or other commitments. October 2022

A unique strength of New York's child care sector relative to other parts of the country is the diversity of settings available to families. In 2021, 17.6% of New York's licensed child care capacity was in family-based programs. Families receiving child care assistance rely heavily on family-based programs, with 42% of NYS children receiving subsidized child care enrolled in family or group family programs, and another 20% receiving care in legally-exempt family or group family programs (often neighbors or relatives). Diverse settings benefit children and families and improve quality. Family-based providers often have similar racial and ethnic backgrounds as the families in their neighborhoods. Many can offer an environment that mirrors the language and culture of parents seeking care for their children. Family-based providers are also more likely to offer flexible schedules to care for children for extended days and to accommodate the schedules of parents who work outside 9:00 – 5:00 hours.


One reason New York is experiencing a loss of child care capacity: the child care workforce remains significantly smaller than it was pre-pandemic.



In New York State, the number of jobs in child-care services are still lower than pre-pandemic numbers, **down by 5,400** in October 2022 compared to October 2019, an **8% decline** from pre-pandemic levels. Nationally, in the same month, child-care services industry was **down 64,800** workers, a **6% decline** from pre-pandemic levels.

New York's early childhood educators, 96% of whom are women and 56% who identify as people of color, are paid such low wages they live in poverty at more than twice the rate of New York workers in general. Many cannot afford to remain in the field.

The average wage for a child care worker in New York, May 2021

 **\$33,060** annual / **\$15.89** an hour

New York has continued its slow, but steady expansion of pre-K outside of New York City, with a new investment of \$125 million last year, and another increase of \$125 million just proposed in the Governor's 2023 State of the State address.



The total number of 4-year-old seats statewide increased from **94,600** in the 2018 school year to **102,360** in 2019. Yet, more than **75,000** 4-year-olds outside of NYC, or **78%**, were still denied the opportunity to attend full-day public pre-K.

Notes

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