

## Austin-Area Child Poverty

### Historical and Current Policies Mean Wide Disparities across Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Location

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AUSTIN – Historical and current policies have created and maintained unequal opportunities and large disparities in child outcomes across race, ethnicity and gender, according to [State of Texas Children 2016: Race and Equity in Austin](#). CPPP released the report today as part of the [Dare Texas Summit](#), a biannual gathering of over 300 policy experts, advocates, leaders and concerned Texans.

Because people of color were historically denied access to high-opportunity neighborhoods, for example, certain families consequently experienced poor living conditions, fewer services and less economic mobility. Although no longer in legal practice, similar policies have had cumulative effects in the economic and educational benefits and disadvantages that can be passed on from generation to generation.

These policies and practices may be from Austin's past, but they still have a profound effect on the present. In Travis County, poverty rates for Hispanic (28 percent) and Black children (32 percent) are nearly six times higher than they are for White or Asian children. Today, one of every three Black children and more than one of every four Hispanic children in Travis County lives in poverty. Children of color are much more likely to attend under-resourced schools and have less experienced teachers, following patterns of residential segregation and poverty concentration.

Read the new report [here](#).

"Austin has not arrived here by accident," said Mayor Steve Adler. "Decisions by governments to segregate communities and discriminate against African Americans, Hispanics and other groups created inequities that continue in Austin to this day. To fix these inequities we must face them without fear, and this report helps give us a good road map."

According to the [report](#), finding creative solutions to closing the educational, health and financial gaps between Austin kids from different backgrounds will require intentionally breaking down any obstacles to certain groups of children reaching their full potential and can be a model for the rest of the state.

#### Key findings include:

- Twenty-nine percent of children in Austin live in high-poverty neighborhoods. Neighborhoods of concentrated poverty can isolate residents from resources and opportunities.

- An estimated 24 percent of children (or 61,520 children) in Travis County are food-insecure, meaning they lack consistent access to enough food for a healthy diet. Hungry children have a harder time focusing in school and are more likely to have social and behavioral problems.
- Hispanic and Black students in Travis County are more likely to be enrolled in disproportionately high-poverty school districts. While these districts can and often do perform well for low-income students, these students are also more likely to have fewer school resources, fewer academic opportunities, and more out-of-school challenges like housing instability and food insecurity.
- Nearly one of every four women (279,000+) in Travis County of childbearing age lacks health insurance. The likelihood of being uninsured as a woman between the ages of 15 and 44 is highest for Hispanic women, and can lead to delayed or inconsistent care should a woman become pregnant.

“The data in this important report highlight the daunting task that faces both Austin and our entire country in trying to create pathways of success for our children,” said Lisa Hamilton, vice president, External Affairs, at the Annie E. Casey Foundation. “Too many children of color in the United States start their lives with multiple disadvantages and unequal opportunities that are difficult to overcome. It’s imperative that we as a nation look to the policy changes that have made a difference in the lives on children who live in low-income families and build upon what works and where we should invest to build brighter futures for our next generation.”

Key policy recommendations:

- Collect more data that are broken down by race and ethnicity.
- The Workforce Solutions Capital Area Workforce Board should ensure that its first ever community-wide master plan for workforce development analyzes all data by race and ethnicity. The Board should include strategies in the plan to help close gaps by race and ethnicity in employment, wages and educational attainment.
- Preserve and increase access to affordable health insurance for underserved families and women of reproductive age. Harness the new capacity of the Dell Medical School to build high-quality medical care and innovative delivery models and ensure access for all families and children.
- Build on the great work the Austin Independent School District has done to expand access to school-based child nutrition programs, such as Afterschool Meals, Summer Nutrition and School Breakfast. AISD should embrace the Community Eligibility Provision to feed even more kids through school nutrition programs.

"To see real progress in child well-being, we must raise the bar for all kids while closing the gaps between races and ethnicities," stated Frances Deviney, CPPP's Associate Director. "People in every sector and at every level make decisions that can either move Texas toward greater equity in child well-being, maintain existing inequities, or make them worse. We must engage in thoughtful conversations and decisions that ensure the city's growing prosperity is sustainable and accessible to all communities."

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*The State of Austin Children 2016 report is part of the [State of Texas Children 2016](#) statewide report. Both reports are part of the Kids Count project, a state-by-state effort to track the status of children in the U.S. funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The Foundation is the national home of the Kids Count project. Check out the [Kids Count Data Center](#) for extensive child well-being data for each of Texas' 254 counties and seven largest metropolitan areas. Visit [datacenter.kidscount.org](http://datacenter.kidscount.org).*

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