

STATE OF TEXAS CHILDREN 2016: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We all want a bright future for our children, and we want Texas to be a place that makes that bright future possible. As the state's economy and population grow, the future of Texas depends on the health, education and financial security of all our children—across gender, neighborhood, income, race and ethnicity.

Despite Texas' vast resources, the state is consistently ranked among the worst states for child well-being. **We have to "raise the bar" in child well-being for all kids, because ranking 41st in child well-being simply isn't good enough for Texas.**¹

But we cannot raise the bar for all kids if we don't look specifically at how Texas' children of color are faring. We can often trace racial and ethnic gaps in children's health, education and financial security to historical policies that created barriers for families and current policies that can perpetuate them.

We must "close the gaps" by intentionally breaking down any obstacles to certain groups of children reaching their full potential.

We believe that raising the bar and closing the gaps in child well-being is the way forward for sustainable economic growth and prosperity. By creating abundant opportunities for Texas kids, the state will build on its strengths: its diversity, capacity for growth and enterprising spirit.

DEMOGRAPHICS

FINDINGS:

Texas' child population is growing and changing.

- ★ More than 7 million children live in Texas today, representing nearly 1 in 10 children living in the U.S.²
- ★ Fifty percent of Texas kids are Hispanic/Latino, 33 percent White, 11 percent Black, and 6 percent Asian, multiracial or some other race.³ Due to lower birth and immigration rates among White and Black Texans relative to Hispanic and Asian Texans, in 2050, the child population is projected to be 61 percent Hispanic, 22 percent White, 9 percent Black, and 8 percent Asian, multiracial or some other race.⁴
- ★ One-third of Texas kids (nearly 2.4 million) live with one or more parents who immigrated to the U.S.⁵ However, 96 percent of all Texas kids are U.S. citizens.⁶

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Collect and analyze racial-ethnic data.

- ★ **Collect and analyze data by race and ethnicity whenever possible.** Disaggregated data are critical to identifying disparities in child well-being, understanding the complex factors that contribute to racial and ethnic gaps, and designing more responsive programs, policies and services for Texas kids.
- ★ **Analyze the race and equity impact of policies and practices.** Because of a history that has created unequal circumstances for families, policies and practices that seem neutral sometimes confer benefits or disadvantages to certain racial and ethnic groups. A racial impact analysis can help evaluate and refine policies to advance equity in child well-being. (See page 34 for an example.)

PLACE, RACE & POVERTY

FINDINGS:

Due to policies which created and maintained unequal opportunities for families, disparities in child poverty exist across race, ethnicity and family type.⁷

- ★ One in four Texas children live in poverty, and poverty rates for Latino (33 percent) and Black children (32 percent) are nearly three times higher than they are for White (11 percent) and Asian children (12 percent).⁸
- ★ Nineteen percent of Texas children live in "high-poverty" neighborhoods, and that share is growing. Thirty percent of Latino children, 23 percent of Black children, seven percent of Asian and four percent of White children live in high-poverty neighborhoods.⁹
- ★ Forty-two percent of single-mother families live in poverty; twice the rate of single-father families. Poverty rates are highest for Latina single mothers (51 percent) and lowest for White single mothers (29 percent).¹⁰

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Fight child poverty by creating access to opportunity-rich environments for children, and provide support and pathways out of poverty for parents.

- ★ **Ensure families with children live in "high-opportunity" neighborhoods.** Many strategies can advance this goal, including creating partnerships to invest in neighborhoods, removing barriers for families who want to move to different neighborhoods, and pursuing policies to prevent racial and economic isolation.
- ★ **Promote pathways out of poverty and better support working families.** Effective strategies include partnerships between schools, colleges, workforce development programs and businesses to offer job-based training for youth and parents; investing state funds to support and expand early college high school programs; and coordinating workforce and early childhood programs.

HEALTH

FINDINGS:

The conditions and environments in which children live affect their health and differ by race and ethnicity.

- ★ Food insecurity affects 38 percent of Black children, a rate more than twice as high as White children.¹¹
- ★ Although uninsured rates continue to improve for all children, gaps still remain. Texas has one of the highest uninsured rates for Latino children (15 percent) and for children overall (11 percent). White and Black children are the least likely to be uninsured (7 percent).¹²
- ★ Black children are more likely to be hospitalized for asthma than White and Latino children.¹³

EDUCATION

FINDINGS:

Black and Hispanic students face greater barriers to educational attainment than White or Asian students.

- ★ Texas public school students are 52 percent Latino, 29 percent White, 13 percent Black and 6 percent Asian, multiracial or some other race.¹⁶
- ★ Black and Latino students are underrepresented in Advanced Placement math, science and technology courses.¹⁷
- ★ Under any measure, high school completion rates have improved for all students. However, barriers remain for some students: 95 percent of Asian and 93 percent of White students graduate from high school in four years versus only 86 percent of Hispanic and 84 percent of Black students.¹⁸
- ★ Black students in Texas are more likely to attend schools with high rates of teacher turnover²⁰ and more inexperienced teachers.²¹

WOMEN & GIRLS

FINDINGS:

Like inequities by race or ethnicity, disparities by gender can shape the opportunities children have to reach their full potential.

- ★ Girls are more likely than boys to obtain their high school degree,²³⁷ and Black and Latina women are more likely to have postsecondary education credentials than Black and Latino men.²⁴⁰
- ★ However, there are still persistent earnings gaps in Texas by race and gender.²⁴² Median earnings for Asian women (\$50,103) are nearly twice that of Hispanic women (\$26,406), but still lower than for White men.²⁴⁶
- ★ Girls are underrepresented in some STEM courses and high-paying fields. Only 10 percent of AP Computer Science students in high school are female.²⁴⁹ And women are significantly underrepresented and paid less in STEM fields.²⁴⁸
- ★ Gender matters in poverty too: Single-mother families are twice as likely (42 percent) as single-father families (21 percent) to live in poverty.²³⁷

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Reduce racial and ethnic disparities in food security, and access to health insurance for children and parents.

- ★ **Expand access to school-based child nutrition programs, such as Afterschool Meals, Summer Nutrition and School Breakfast.** Taking advantage of these programs and innovative serving models (e.g., breakfast in the classroom) can extend meals throughout the day and year.¹⁴
- ★ **Increase access to health insurance for underserved families.** Strategies include better partnerships between state agencies, outreach and enrollment organizations and existing community assets, such as schools, faith-based organizations, and philanthropy, to increase participation; and policymakers closing the health care “Coverage Gap” for families.¹⁵

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Expand educational opportunities for every child and make equity a priority in students’ ability to access educational resources and services.

- ★ **Increase state funding and funding equity for districts.** As the student population grows, needs change, and demands for better outcomes increase, legislators should also increase the basic per student funding for all districts.²² The state should also conduct an updated study on what it costs to meet increased educational standards and adjust funding accordingly, especially for low-income students, English language learners and high-poverty districts.
- ★ **Make equity a priority within classrooms, schools and districts.** District and campus administrators should take into account varying needs among and within campuses, and ensure every student has access to high-quality early education, experienced teachers and rigorous coursework.²³

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Focusing on gender equity benefits all kids and families and can help close gaps in child well-being.

- ★ **Make equity a priority within STEM courses.** District and campus administrators should ensure that girls and students of color have access to and support for participating in STEM courses.
- ★ **Provide more supports for working moms.** Women often leave paid work in order to care for family, contributing to reduced earnings potential. Texas should examine job quality provisions, such as family leave and paid time off, to support working families.
- ★ **Businesses should implement pay equity policies.** All else being equal, research shows biases by male and female hiring managers can contribute to women’s lower salaries.²⁵⁶ Businesses should examine how their hiring and compensation procedures impact both gender and racial equity.