

Children in the States

NEW JERSEY

September 2015



Child Population

2,012,081 children lived in New Jersey in 2014; 51 percent were children of color.

- 49 percent were White
- 25 percent were Hispanic
- 14 percent were Black
- 9 percent were Asian
- 3 percent were two or more races
- <1 percent were American Indian/Alaska Native
- <1 percent were Pacific Islander

Child Poverty

Nearly 1 in 6 (15.9 percent) of New Jersey's children were poor in 2014, a total of 315,563 children.¹

- New Jersey ranked 15th in child poverty among states.²
- Nearly 1 in 14 children lived in extreme poverty at less than half the poverty level.
- The youngest children were the poorest age group. More than 1 in 6 children under age 6 were poor; nearly half of the poor children were extremely poor.

Children of color in New Jersey are disproportionately poor.

- Nearly 3 in 10 Black children, nearly 3 in 10 Hispanic children, and nearly 1 in 2 American Indian/Native Alaskan children were poor in 2014, compared to nearly 1 in 13 White children.

Child Hunger and Homelessness

Child poverty in New Jersey leads to unacceptable child homelessness and hunger.

- Nearly 9,000 New Jersey public school students were homeless in the 2012-2013 school year.
- In 2014, 3 full-time minimum-wage jobs were necessary to be able to afford a fair market rent two-bedroom apartment in New Jersey and still have enough left over for food, utilities and other necessities.
- More than 18 percent of children lived in households that lacked access to adequate food in 2013. Nearly 25 percent of children ages 10-17 were overweight or obese in 2011-2012. New Jersey ranked 6th of 50 states in child food security and 4th in percent of children overweight and obese.
- 20 percent of New Jersey children relied on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to meet their nutritional needs on an average month in FY2013.
- Nearly 81 percent of New Jersey children receiving a free and reduced-price lunch during the school year did not participate in Summer Nutrition Programs in 2014 – ranking New Jersey 13th of 50 states in ensuring that children have adequate summer nutrition.

Child Health

Although the majority of New Jersey's children have access to health coverage, that does not guarantee enrollment in coverage, which can jeopardize their education and their future.

- In 2013, 89.2 percent of eligible children participated in NJ FamilyCare or FamilyCare, New Jersey's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). In FY2013, a total of 662,198 New Jersey children ages 0-18 were enrolled in NJ FamilyCare, and 206,761 in FamilyCare.
- More than 112,000 New Jersey children ages 0-17 (5.6 percent) were uninsured in 2013. The state had the 21st lowest rate of uninsured children among states.

¹ A family of four was poor if it was living on less than \$23,834 a year, \$1,986 a month, \$458 a week and \$65 a day, and extremely poor if living on less than \$11,917 a year, \$993 a month, \$229 a week and \$33 a day.

² The state ranked 1st is the best for children for that outcome and the state ranked 50th is the worst for children.

- In 2012, 78,000 uninsured children ages 0-18 were eligible for NJ FamilyCare or FamilyCare but not enrolled.

Early Childhood and Education

Lack of early childhood investments deprives children of critical supports in the early years and reduces school readiness.

- In 2013, the average annual cost of center-based child care for an infant was \$11,534 – only 9 percent less than the average annual in-state tuition and fees at a public four-year college.
- New Jersey did not have a waiting list for child care assistance in early 2014.
- On average, 61 percent of New Jersey's 3- and 4-year-olds were enrolled in public or private preschool from 2011-2013. Only 53 percent of children from families with incomes under 200 percent of poverty were enrolled.
- New Jersey's state-funded preschool programs met an average of 8.8 of the 10 quality benchmarks set by the National Institute for Early Education Research in 2013-2014.

New Jersey's schools fail to educate all children, closing off a crucial pathway out of poverty.

- In 2013, 58 percent of New Jersey's fourth grade public school students were unable to read at grade level and 51 percent were unable to compute at grade level.
 - 78 percent of Black fourth graders could not read at grade level and 76 percent could not compute.
 - 79 percent of Hispanic fourth graders could not read at grade level and 70 percent could not compute.
- 87 percent of New Jersey public high school students graduated on time in 2012, placing New Jersey 9th among states. 74 percent of Black students and 78 percent of Hispanic students graduated on time compared to 91 percent of White students.
- Students who are suspended or expelled are more likely to drop out of school. During the 2011-2012 school year, 8 percent of New Jersey public secondary school students received at least one out-of-school suspension, placing New Jersey 14th among 48 ranked states. For Black and Hispanic students, the percentages were 18 percent and 11 percent, respectively.

Children Facing Special Risks

Many vulnerable children need treatment, services and permanent families.

- In New Jersey, 9,490 children were abused or neglected in 2013 – 4.7 out of 1,000 children.
- On the last day of FY2013, there were 7,025 New Jersey children in foster care.

Too many New Jersey children are involved in the juvenile justice system.

- 29,932 children were arrested in New Jersey in 2012 – a rate of 3,191 out of 100,000 children ages 10-17.
- 1,005 children and youth were in residential placement in 2011. 60 percent of the children in residential placement were Black, 20 percent were Hispanic, and 17 percent were White.
- 8 New Jersey children were in adult jails in 2013.
- New Jersey spent 2.4 times as much per prisoner as per public school student in FY2012.

New Jersey ranked 6th out of 41 ranked states in child and teen gun deaths.

- A total of 46 children and teens were killed by guns in New Jersey in 2013 – a rate of 2.0 out of 100,000 children and teens.

For sources please visit www.childrensdefense.org/cits