The State of New York’s Children

DATA BOOK
JANUARY 2021

Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy

Shaping New York State public policy for people in need since 1872

www.scaany.org
INTRODUCTION

The state of New York children as we enter 2021 is sobering. More than 36,000 New Yorkers have perished from COVID-19, many leaving children or grandchildren behind. Nearly 3.9 million more New Yorkers filed for unemployment this year than last; 1.5 million New Yorkers reported in late November their households “sometimes or often” did not have enough food to go around; hundreds of thousands of New York households are behind on rent or mortgage payments.

Due to long-standing structural racism and inequity, New Yorkers of color and immigrants have borne the brunt of the pandemic, disproportionately falling gravely ill and succumbing to the virus, while also facing job loss, hunger, and housing instability in disproportionate numbers.

At the same time, 2020 brought to New York – and the nation – a reckoning with, and uprising against – racist violence. The convergence was no coincidence, given that COVID-19 has both illuminated and exacerbated the racial and economic inequality that persists in our state and nation.

While data can never fully capture how children are faring, it is exponentially so this year both because data about COVID-19’s impacts are still emerging, and because many of the challenges our children have faced over these long months are intangible, hard to measure, and may be lasting. How do we measure birthdays, graduations, funerals, holidays with loved ones missed? And what about the emotional toll of being cut off from trusted teachers, grandparents and caregivers, from friends and activities; the stress of food and housing insecurity; of months marked by uncertainty?

For all these reasons, we begin 2021 with heavy hearts. But we also carry hope for a fresh start, and new beginnings. Every day, more New Yorkers are getting vaccinated, putting the end of the pandemic in view. The federal government, in early 2021, sent stimulus funds to the states which, while insufficient to pull New York out of its financial crisis, can jump-start recovery.

What New York children need in 2021 is a just, forward-thinking recovery, one that centers on our children; prioritizes those communities hit hardest by the pandemic, and the essential workers who saw us through; and uses this moment of rebuilding as an opportunity to build back the systems upon which children and families and all New Yorkers rely to be aligned, coordinated, well-resourced and anti-racist.

Now, more than ever, New York State must lead boldly, with a sense of shared responsibility, and raise, borrow, and shift resources to ensure our children receive the supports they need to thrive. And it is not just one thing. Every child needs a family, quality health care, early education, financial security – not one, but all of these.
New York children are rich in their diversity. More than one third are in immigrant families, and more than half are Black or brown.

NEW YORK STATE OVERVIEW

4,028,299
NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER AGE 18, 2019

21%
CHILDREN AS A PERCENTAGE OF NEW YORK’S POPULATION, 2019

1,127,001
NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER AGE 5, 2019

36%
[1,474,000]
CHILDREN IN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES, 2018

CHILDREN UNDER 18 IN NYS BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 2019

- Non-Hispanic American Indian and Alaskan Native alone [<0.5%]
- Non-Hispanic Asian alone [8%]
- Non-Hispanic Black alone [15%]
- Hispanic or Latino [25%]
- Non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone [<0.5%]
- Non-Hispanic White alone [48%]
- Non-Hispanic Two or More Race Groups [4%]

Sources: www.scaany.org/state-of-new-york-children/
The COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped lives and livelihoods.

New York has been buffeted by the COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020, impacting all New Yorkers, but none so sharply as those from low-income and Black and brown communities. This is the context in which we discuss the state of New York children. While we try here, and within the body of this data book, to include data that reveal some of the concrete ways the pandemic has touched New York children, the data is still emerging, and incomplete. Given the staggering numbers of lives lost; the millions facing unemployment, eviction, and food insecurity; and the countless New Yorkers struggling with mental health needs exacerbated by months of isolation and uncertainty, it is likely the negative impacts will be profound and lasting.

- As of December 21, 2020, 36,202 New Yorkers had died due to COVID-19.
- As of July 2020, 4,200 New York children had lost a parent to COVID-19.
- As of July 2020, an estimated 325,000 New York children were pushed into poverty, or near poverty, by COVID-19’s economic downturn.
- While data suggest that children may have less severe illness from COVID-19, and enrollment in Medicaid and CHIP increased during the COVID-19 public health emergency, service use among children declined. Compared to the same time period in the previous year (March through May 2019), national 2020 data show 22% fewer vaccinations for beneficiaries up to age 2, 44% fewer child screening services, 44% fewer outpatient mental health services even after accounting for increased telehealth services, and 69% fewer dental services.
- 3.9 million more New Yorkers filed initial unemployment claims during the period March 14 – December 12, 2020 than during the same period in 2019. This represents a 650% over-the-year change in initial claims.
- 12% (more than 1.5 million) of New York adults reported there was “sometimes” or “often” not enough to eat in their household in the last 7 days (11/25/20–12/7/20).
- The COVID-19 crisis brought intense financial insecurity to many New York families with infants and toddlers. An April 2020 Raising New York survey found many parents skipping or reducing their family’s meals. Over a third of parents (34%) said they had skipped or reduced the size of their own meals as a result of the coronavirus crisis and 11% of parents skipped or reduced the size of the meals they provide for their children.
- New York child care providers – who struggle to cover costs when operating at 100% capacity – have been averaging 40% capacity since last March. As a result, more than 60% are losing money each month, with the same percent reporting they have taken on personal debt or dipped into personal savings to cover shortfalls. Without significant financial relief soon, many providers may close their doors.
- Since COVID-19 put the state on pause, access to the internet and devices has become an essential lifeline for participating in on-line school; attending appointments with doctors and social workers; and working remotely. Yet, 23% of New York households do not have home internet and 10% (314,656) of students have no device or use a shared device.
More than 700,000 New York children were living in poverty at the start of the pandemic; without government action, that number is expected to skyrocket.

How poverty affects children:
- Poverty affects the social, emotional, and cognitive well-being of developing children and babies.
- Poverty creates and widens achievement gaps.
- Poverty increases the likelihood of child welfare involvement.

The youngest New Yorkers continue to experience poverty at the highest rates, at just the moment in their development when they stand to be most harmed by poverty’s impacts.


Even in the midst of a strong pre-pandemic economy, 332,000 (8%) of New York children lived in extreme poverty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children under 18 living in poverty, 2019</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>712,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children 0 to 5 living in poverty, 2019</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>245,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infants &amp; toddlers living in poverty, 2018</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>138,975</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

37% Children under 18 living below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, 2019

8% Children under 18 in extreme poverty, below 50% of the Federal Poverty Level, 2019

Sources: www.scaany.org/state-of-new-york-children/
While child poverty rates in New York declined slightly prior to the pandemic, systemic, historical, and ongoing racism cause children of color to experience poverty at persistently higher rates than white children.

New York State has long led the nation in income inequality which, like poverty, contributes to negative outcomes for children. All indicators suggest that the pandemic – which has disproportionately caused high unemployment among low-wage workers, while sending stocks soaring for higher income earners – has widened income inequality.
New York children suffer when their mothers, grandmothers, or other female caregivers are paid unfairly because of their gender. These pay gaps are more extreme for Black, Latina and Native American women. Gender, race and ethnic pay disparities particularly harm children in single-parent households.

For every $1 paid to white non-Hispanic working fathers, working mothers are paid (2018):

- Asian and Pacific Islander mothers: $0.78, Annual: $16,848
- Black mothers: $0.55, Annual: $34,953
- Latina mothers: $0.46, Annual: $41,848
- Native American mothers: $0.47, Annual: $40,576
- White, non-Hispanic mothers: $0.74, Annual: $19,766

National labor statistics show women are disproportionately being forced to reduce work hours or drop out of the workforce to care for children who cannot attend in-person school, afterschool programs, or child care due to the pandemic. Without effective government intervention, the impacts of the pandemic are projected to undermine the economic security of women and their children for years to come.

35% of children live in single-parent households, 2019

80% of U.S. workers who left the labor force during the pandemic were women, September 2020

TOTAL U.S. (OVER 1.1 MILLION)
- WOMEN (U.S.) 865,000
- Latina Women (U.S.) 324,000
- Black Women (U.S.) 58,000

Sources: www.scaany.org/state-of-new-york-children/
High numbers of New York children experienced housing instability and homelessness prior to COVID-19.

143,533 Students identified as homeless 2019-2020

1,066,000 Children reside in low-income households with a high housing cost burden, 2018 (>30% monthly income on housing)

1 in 5 Children living in crowded housing (more than 1 persons per room) in 2018

Many New York families have had to stay home because of COVID-19; crowded housing makes remote learning and work even more difficult.

New York City’s youngest children (5 and under) are most likely to experience homelessness (2019-20)

![Bar chart showing children under 21 in New York City shelters (July 2019-March 2020)]

- Age 0-5: 10,514
- Age 6-13: 9,758
- Age 14-17: 3,026
- Age 18-20: 1,286

The pandemic’s massive, disparate impact on family employment and income have deepened housing insecurity.

29% of surveyed NYS households with children, that pay rent, reported being behind on rental payments (October 2020).

11% of surveyed NYS households with children, that pay mortgages, reported being behind on mortgage payments (October 2020).
State and federal income and food supports, and an April 2020 pandemic stimulus payment, have protected hundreds of thousands of New York children from some of the harshest impacts of poverty, although too many immigrant children were excluded from these essential supports.

Children in families receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI), cash public assistance income or SNAP [965,000], 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average monthly benefit for SNAP households with children in New York, 2018</td>
<td>$382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average federal monthly SSI benefit per New York child, December 2019</td>
<td>$703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated monthly TANF benefit for a family of three, 2020</td>
<td>$648-$836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum April 2020 pandemic stimulus payment for a family of three (one adult, two children) ($1,200 for an adult; $500 for each child)</td>
<td>$2,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average monthly SNAP, SSI, TANF, and April pandemic stimulus payment for undocumented immigrants in New York</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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New York’s refundable tax credits – among the most effective strategies for enabling New Yorkers to achieve economic security – exclude some of the very New Yorkers most likely to live in poverty.

**Empire State Child Credit, 2018**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of families receiving credit</td>
<td>1,394,144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average claim amount</td>
<td>$444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children under 4 years of age</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), 2018**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of EITC claims</td>
<td>1,487,292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average credit for family with 2 children</td>
<td>$1,078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excluded: young childless adults 18 through 24 and many otherwise eligible immigrant New Yorkers</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When public health systems meet children’s needs, opportunity awaits.

A leader in covering children, New York saw a decline in the number of uninsured children from 2016 to 2019 (pre-COVID-19). New York’s uninsured rate for Latino children, who can be of any race, was 2.3% in 2019 – four times lower than the national Latino child uninsured rate of 9.2%.

Health coverage is an important component of family economic security. The Affordable Care Act’s coverage expansion reduced income inequality.
Prevention and screening are designed to keep children healthy and enable families to increase control over their own health.

Often overlooked, oral and mental health are critical to healthy development, but it can be difficult for families to overcome financial and structural barriers to get care.

Developmental screening takes a close look at how a child is developing and, if needed, helps connect the family to services. Identifying delays or disabilities early helps children receive appropriate services to prevent falling behind and suffering long-term disadvantages.

National data shows COVID-related shut-downs caused children to miss critical vaccinations, primary, and preventive services. Catching up on missed care and eliminating structural barriers that already keep children from getting care must be prioritized.
Health

For the **22.7%** of children ages 3-17 who have a mental, emotional, developmental or behavioral problem, getting needed care can be difficult.

Timely prenatal care reduces risks for mothers and infants. While the percentage of women receiving prenatal care early in pregnancy has increased, disparities persist.

### Births with early (1st trimester) prenatal care by race and ethnicity, 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Non-Hispanic) Black</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Non-Hispanic) Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>76.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Non-Hispanic) White</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Low birthweight births by race and ethnicity (<5.5 lbs), 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Non-Hispanic) Black</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Non-Hispanic) Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Non-Hispanic) White</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The pandemic has underscored what we already know: all children and youth need strong birth, kin, and foster families.

Over decades, New York steadily reduced the number of children in foster care, thanks in part, to substantial investment in preventive services. A similar level of investment and attention to family-based services is needed to continue this trend and help families navigate unexpected hardships of the pandemic.

The Family Assessment Response (FAR) track can be a helpful resource for parents in need. FAR, a preventive approach, provides a solution-focused option for families to partner with Child Protective Services (CPS) to keep their children safely at home. At a time when families urgently need to be connected with supportive services, FAR remains underused.

Most CPS reports are unfounded. The investigation process can be traumatizing for children and families.

6%  
Percentage of CPS reports assigned to FAR, 2019

21 out of 62, including NYC  
Number of counties reporting using FAR, 2019

69.9% 30.1%  
CPS reports indicated  
CPS reports unfounded  
2019

Sources: www.scaany.org/state-of-new-york-children/
Black children are nearly twice as likely as white children to be in reports to the State Central Register (SCR); more than twice as likely to be in indicated reports; and five times more likely to be in foster care. New York State has recognized the significant racial bias and disparity in the system and is taking steps to address it.

Disparity Index: Rate of Black, Hispanic, Native American children in child welfare reports and placement relative to comparable rate for white children

- Over 3.5 indicates extreme disparity
- Over 2.5 indicates high disparity
- Over 1.5 indicates moderate disparity
- Over 1 indicates disparity

| Children in SCR reports relative to comparable rate for white children |
| Children in indicated SCR reports relative to comparable rate for white children |
| Children in foster care relative to comparable rate for white children |

Black children continue to be disproportionately represented throughout New York’s foster care system.
Child welfare preventive services, including home visiting, housing assistance, child care, parent training, clinical services, transportation, job training, education, and emergency services (i.e. cash grants), are designed to help families provide an environment where children can thrive. Yet, many children are removed from their homes before a family has received services.

When children are placed with kin, they experience less trauma and are more likely to stay in their communities of origin and with siblings, resulting in better mental and behavioral health. Prioritizing finding and supporting kin may also reduce the time that New York children spend in foster care, which exceeds the national average.

Children experience better health, safety, and well-being outcomes when they are cared for by supportive families.
The Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGAP) is an adoption alternative for relatives or close family friends to provide a permanent home for children unable to return safely to their families of origin. It is a strategy that can help New York reduce the amount of time children wait in foster care, which exceeds the national average. The 2019 increase in KinGAP placements is good news.

### Trends in number of children discharged from approved relative foster homes to KinGAP, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total NYS (including NYC)</th>
<th>NYC only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Children in foster care waiting for adoption by amount of time waiting, 2018

- **NYS**:  
  - <12 months: 4%  
  - 12 to 23 months: 13%  
  - 24 to 35 months: 22%  
  - 3 to 4 years: 30%  
  - 5 or more years: 25%

- **National**:  
  - <12 months: 9%  
  - 12 to 23 months: 19%  
  - 24 to 35 months: 25%  
  - 3 to 4 years: 20%  
  - 5 or more years: 25%
High-quality early childhood experiences can improve school readiness and reduce inequalities, but due to decades of under-investment, many families cannot access them. Without swift, robust government investment, it is expected the impacts of the pandemic will cause widespread closures of child care and other early childhood programs, reducing access even further.

The high cost of child care creates economic hardship, pulls parents out of the workforce, and deprives children of access to quality early education experiences.

Child care is the largest monthly bill for many New York families, costing on average $2,047 per month ($24,564 per year) for two children in a child care center. Yet, fewer than 20% of families with income below 200% of poverty receive subsidies (200% poverty guidelines for a family of four: $52,400).

Child care expenses for nearly all New York families with young children greatly exceed federal guidance pegging affordability at no more than 7% of family income.

Applying the 7% of income federal affordability rule, to afford the average annual cost of center-based child care for two children ($24,564), a family must earn a minimum of $350,914.

COMPARE:
• State Median Income/Family of 4 $100,377
• Family income, two adults earning NYC’s minimum wage of $15/hr $62,400
• Family income, one adult earning NYC’s minimum wage of $15/hr $31,200

Sources: www.scaany.org/state-of-new-york-children/ | 17
Counties, which administer child care subsidies in New York, cope with inadequate child care funding in a number of ways, including denying subsidies to low-income parent(s) engaged in job search/job training; low-income parent(s) that are physically or mentally incapacitated; parents receiving domestic violence services; homeless families; raising family co-pays; and lowering eligibility limits. These exclusions and barriers have led to arbitrary variations in access based solely on county of residence, and underscore the urgent need for universal access to high-quality child care.

Even if a low-income working family can access a child care subsidy, co-pays in some counties are so high many families cannot afford to accept the subsidy.

Inadequate public funding has left child care providers facing dire fiscal challenges keeping up with rising costs; the challenges have grown exponentially with the pandemic.

Prior to the pandemic, 27% of New York family child care providers and 17% of center child care providers surveyed reported running a deficit (2019).

In July 2020, 70% of U.S. child care centers surveyed reported incurring substantial additional costs to remain viable during the COVID-19 pandemic: 72% staff; 92% cleaning supplies; 81% personal protective equipment (PPE).
Even if a family can afford quality child care, it was difficult to find an opening in a licensed facility prior to the pandemic; experts predict the pandemic may result in child care capacity being cut in half without immediate and robust investment.

New York is home to a variety of home visiting programs, but most families are not able to participate due to limited availability.

At the current rate of investment, it would take decades to make pre-K universal. Multilingual learners, children with special needs, and homeless children are left behind despite being entitled by law to quality education.

Nearly 77,000 four-year-olds outside of NYC are still denied the opportunity to attend full-day pre-K.

Sources: www.scaany.org/state-of-new-york-children/