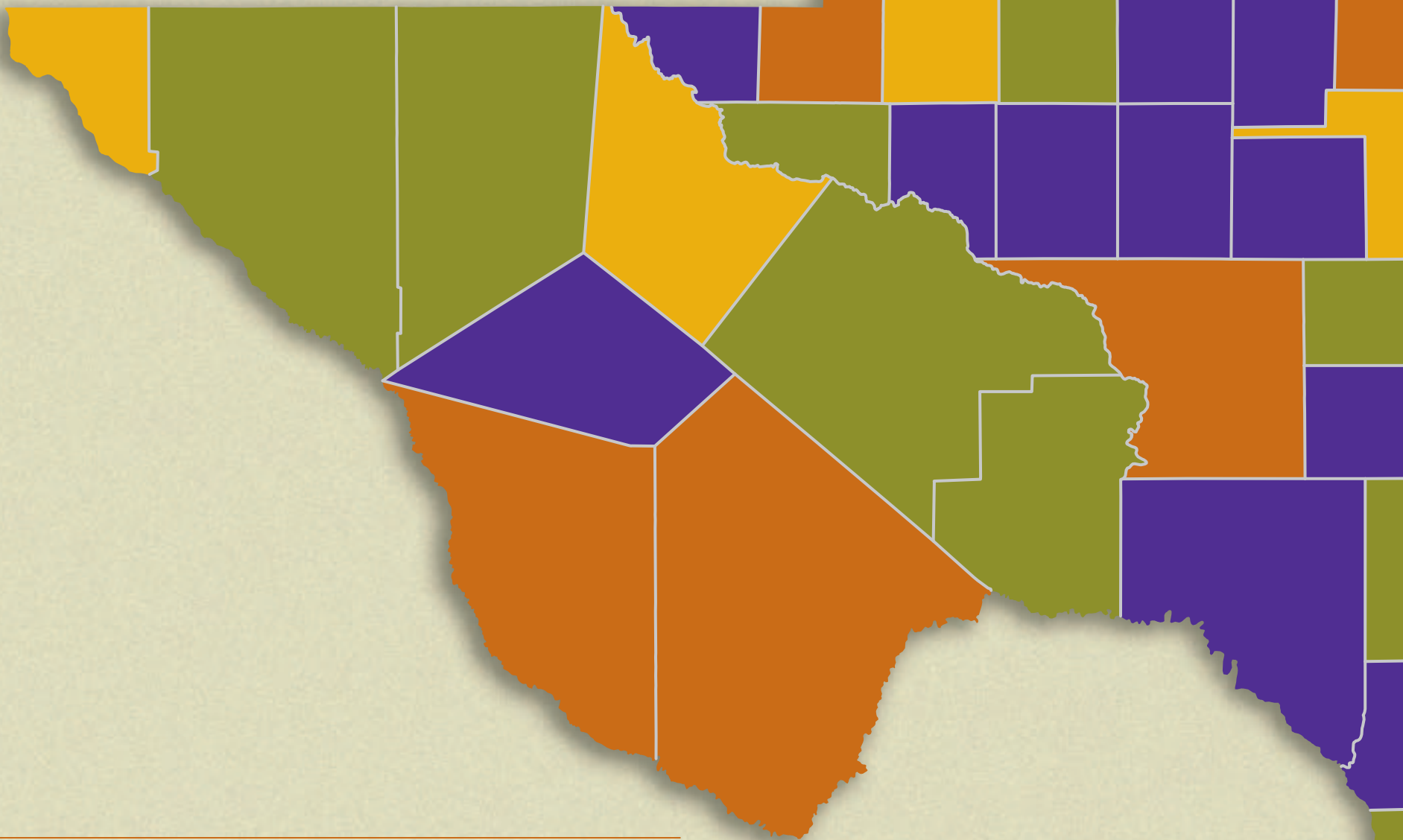


*the* **State of**  
**Texas Children**  
**2004**



# Acknowledgments

## THE CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

The Center for Public Policy Priorities is a 501(c)3 non-partisan, non-profit policy and research organization committed to improving public policies and private practices that influence the economic and social prospects and conditions of individuals, families, and communities.

### MANAGEMENT & ADMINISTRATION

F. Scott McCown  
*Executive Director*

Patrick Bresette  
*Associate Director*

## TEXAS KIDS COUNT

In more than a decade since it began, Texas KIDS COUNT has secured a unique and invaluable role, supporting individuals and organizations in their need for objective, reliable, relevant, and timely data on the circumstances of children and youth throughout the state. It has played an important role in helping policymakers, researchers, journalists, and service providers to better recognize where Texas has made progress for children and where more work remains to be done.

TEXAS KIDS COUNT gratefully acknowledges the generous financial and organizational support of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The Foundation sponsors KIDS COUNT as a national and state-by-state effort to provide policymakers and citizens with sound and reliable benchmarks of child well-being across key topics of significance to children and youth, enriching local, state, and national discussions of effective ways to secure better futures for all children.

### TEXAS KIDS COUNT STAFF

Dayna Finet, Ph.D.  
*Director, Texas KIDS COUNT*

#### Interns

Lisa Fahrenthold  
Vickie Vasquez-Casteneda

#### Volunteers

Anne Peticolas  
Emily Melick

### CPPP STAFF

Valerie Davidson  
*Manager of Finance & Administration*

Chris Pieper  
*Communications Director*

Janet Hutchison  
*Development Director*

### EXTERNAL SUPPORT

Greg Hammond  
*Database Consulting*

Arturo Castellanos  
*Computing & Web Technology*

Shoehorn Design, Inc.  
*Design & Production*

## CONTACT US

Texas KIDS COUNT  
Center for Public Policy Priorities  
900 Lydia Street  
Austin, Texas 78702

Phone: 512.320.0222  
Fax: 512.320.0227  
Email: [finet@cphp.org](mailto:finet@cphp.org)  
On the web: [www.cphp.org/kidscount](http://www.cphp.org/kidscount)

## STAY INFORMED

Sign up for instant policy analysis and updates through *The Policy Page*, our email alert service, where you can receive timely information on Texas children's issues as well as the range of other topics that the CPPP monitors. Send an email message to [cphp@cphp.org](mailto:cphp@cphp.org) and type "subscribe" in the subject field.

## SUPPORT OUR WORK

If this report, and other information from the CPPP, has been useful to you, please consider making a tax-deductible donation to help us continue and extend this work. You can give online at [www.cphp.org](http://www.cphp.org), or contact Janet Hutchison at [hutchison@cphp.org](mailto:hutchison@cphp.org) to find out how you can support our efforts on behalf of low- and moderate-income individuals and families in communities throughout the state.

the State of  
Texas Children 2004

# From the Executive Director

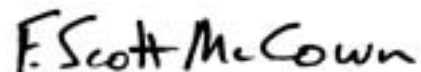
The Center for Public Policy Priorities is pleased to present *The State of Texas Children 2004*.

This year we depart from the formats used in prior years. In our 2004 report, we display a key set of measures on child well-being through a series of maps that show how each county compares with others and with the state as a whole. Through text we provide commentary on the data, explain how the reader can access additional data from our comprehensive website, and discuss how the reader can use the data to inform debate and guide decisions about public policy.

The data book is also a wall calendar. We encourage you to display it so that you are reminded daily of the work that must be done for our children and as a conversation starter about the needs of our children.

The maps on these pages reflect the patterns we are weaving through the loom of public policy. The days on these pages divide time but do not slow its passage. By drawing these maps and marking these days, we hope to increase your sense of urgency about improving the state of Texas children.

Sincerely,



F. Scott McCown  
*Executive Director*  
*Center for Public Policy Priorities*

We sleep, but the loom of life never stops, and the pattern which was weaving when the sun went down is weaving when it comes up in the morning.

Henry Ward Beecher  
*Clergy and Abolitionist*  
1813 – 1887

# Foreword

Understandably, one might consider the United States today as just about the best place ever to be a kid.

Never in history have children thrived on so much affluence as in our contemporary society.

Nowhere have so many children been able to anticipate long lives of unprecedented opportunity and choice.

At no other time has a society owned the means to support complex and sophisticated systems (health, education, to name some) that might fulfill every child's birthright to grow into healthy, productive, and satisfying adulthood. Ironically, though, the economic abundance enjoyed by American children remains a blessing unavailable to all, and the gap between rich American kids and poor ones gets bigger each year.

Contrary to myth, the random circumstances of birth, family, and community predict an American child's future prospects every bit as much as simple talent and hard work do. The "high cost of being poor" in America is real—a stubborn structural obstacle that fastens millions of hard-working families to persistent economic deprivation and chokes their dreams of future economic security.

And in the most abundant society ever, we still accept that millions of our children go through each day and to bed each night without the satisfaction of basic needs—safe and clean shelter, enough nutritious food, appropriate child care, access to a doctor or dentist. Today poverty, homelessness, hunger, neglect, and preventable childhood illness are worse in America than in much of the developed world.

These conditions are not natural, inevitable, or irreversible. They can change, if we choose.

To begin, we need good information.

More than a decade ago, Texas KIDS COUNT began with similar intent. Recognizing the necessity of quality information for sound public policy-making, we have since gone on to assemble the most comprehensive and rigorous data available across the range of topics relevant to the status of Texas children and youth. Equally important, Texas KIDS COUNT has leveraged that data to persuade decision-makers and the public that child well-being represents a necessary measure of our state's accomplishments and prospects.

In the beginning, Texas KIDS COUNT published a roughly biennial *Fact Book*—about the size and weight of a metropolitan phone book—with profiles on a limited set of child well-being indicators for each county in the state. With no other source of this information as readily available, the project quickly became indispensable to decision-makers, service providers, and child and family advocates in communities throughout Texas.

About five years later, Texas KIDS COUNT launched one of the nation's first interactive, web-based retrieval systems for child and family data. The limitations of print necessarily restrict the amount of information that we can provide to our users through that medium. By contrast, the interactive database at Texas KIDS COUNT Online permits access to every indicator that we maintain, for every

year and every county. It also allows users interested in a specific topic to obtain data more selectively, according to their individual needs.

Last year we introduced a wholly revamped annual publication, *The State of Texas Children 2003*. In this report, we completely reorganized the more than 30 Texas KIDS COUNT indicators into eight thematic categories, relevant to the economic, educational, physical, emotional, and social well-being of Texas children from infancy through adolescence, and represented by core sections in each of our print and electronic products. We also moved county profiles to *Texas KIDS COUNT Online*, for the first time making it possible to present every Texas KIDS COUNT indicator within each of the profiles. Some of these indicators represent outcomes, such as infant mortality, child poverty, and teen pregnancy, actually experienced by children and their families in the state. Another set of Texas KIDS COUNT indicators documents the use of social services, such as Food Stamps or CHIP, that provide a critical safety net for Texas children and families in need. A third group of indicators, mostly demographic measures such as total population and child population counts, offers insight into the contextual factors that influence the circumstances and prospects of our children, families, and communities.

## Texas KIDS COUNT Data Categories

**Family & Community Population**  
**Economic Resources, Security & Opportunity**  
**Early Care & Education**  
**School Success**  
**Teens At Risk**  
**Physical, Social & Emotional Health**  
**Hunger & Nutrition**  
**Safety & Personal Security**



## An "Atlas of Texas Children"

In planning each year's *State of Texas Children* publication, we deliberately ask ourselves how we can improve its utility for readers and, frankly, how we can make it livelier than the usual quasi-academic, technically loaded, wonkish policy writing that appears often enough already. For *The State of Texas Children 2004*, we settled on a decidedly distinctive approach.

Why maps?

Basically, the availability of county-level data online frees the annual print publication to go beyond the data itself, to elaborate on its meaning and significance in the context of ongoing policy discussions about the status of Texas children and families. Last year we focused on child and family trends in the state's six largest urban counties, where more than 80% of its population resides. This year we believed that maps could offer a compelling device for exploring what's important now. In the future we'll continue to develop the themes and formats that we think best illuminate critical issues and developments affecting Texas children and youth.

More than 250 diverse counties and an exceptionally large array of KIDS COUNT indicators make Texas an unwieldy state for the purposes of presenting and interpreting county-level data. Maps help to cut through the sheer volume of information and demonstrate the patterns of meaning that the data represents.

Finally, these maps emphasize complex regional and cultural dynamics that will direct the emerging future of Texas and its people. Most significantly, these include the state's pronounced mix of urban and rural influence and the international impact on its economy and society.

The greatest challenge of the day is—how to bring about a revolution of the heart.

Dorothy Day

*Journalist, Social Activist, and Founder, The Catholic Worker*  
1897 – 1980

Each of the following core sections displays at least one map showing county-level variation on a Texas KIDS COUNT indicator of historical interest and concern. Most sections map one indicator, but a few present two or more, where additional content helps to articulate what's really going on. The accompanying narrative discussion interprets the patterns observed in each map. We also planned *The State of Texas Children 2004* as a resource. For readers who want to explore a core theme in more depth, we provide references for sources that we think are especially helpful. Like last year, each core section also alerts readers to an emerging topic—such as special education, teen suicide, or children's environmental health—that we view as important, but for which no methodologically sound county-level data yet exists.

Since many users really don't need detailed methodological background but do want basic data definitions and sources, this year's report streamlines technical documentation. Users who want more can find it at *Texas KIDS COUNT Online*.

All... are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

*Civil Rights Leader and Baptist Minister*

1929 – 1968

## Expanded County-Level Data on the Web

Throughout the refinements of recent years, the core purpose of Texas KIDS COUNT—to supply quality county-level data across a range of child and family themes—has remained constant. *Texas KIDS COUNT Online* gives users a choice of options for finding this data, tailored to their specific needs.

## For an overview of child well-being by county *State of Texas Children County Profiles*

Each year these updated profiles accompany the release of *The State of Texas Children* report. Unlike profiles published in print before 2003, these include every indicator maintained by the Texas KIDS COUNT project. County profiles display values, ranks, change over time, and statewide comparisons, and give users a single-year snapshot of child and youth well-being in each of Texas' 254 counties.

## To customize data for specific indicators, counties, and years *Texas KIDS COUNT Interactive*

For questions about a specific indicator, county, or year, the interactive database allows more targeted data queries. Users follow a sequence of clearly outlined steps to select one or more indicators and one or more counties. At this time, the database can generate reports for the most current year of data, or for all years of data, and can display comparable results for the state of Texas as a whole. Output can be printed or downloaded.

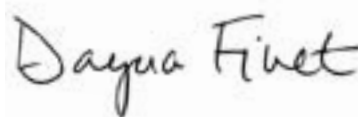
## To see how all Texas counties compare on specific indicators and years *Texas KIDS COUNT County Rankings*

County rankings put data in context. They show the relative status of each Texas county in comparison to the rest, and over time, they illustrate how counties have changed, not only in absolute terms, but also in relationship to the dynamics of other counties in the state. Before this year, we could offer rankings—in print versions of our KIDS COUNT reports—for fewer than ten of the 35 indicators that we maintain. By moving rankings to Texas KIDS COUNT Online, we now can make this information available for each indicator, each year. Ranking tables display values for all Texas counties.

As always, some people will want to dismiss the urgency of the challenges our children face. Some always will refuse to acknowledge the potentially catastrophic consequences if we fail our children now. This is dangerous delusion.

Children depend on adults for everything they need to grow up well. Adults—from parents and educators to businesspeople and officeholders—are obligated to do everything within their means to provide the resources and support that all children require to achieve their human potential.

We present *The State of Texas Children 2004* as a reminder, and if our intentions are realized, as a support for planning, accountability, and advocacy that will ensure the birthright of every Texas child—equal opportunity for a fair start toward a promising future.



Dayna Finet, Ph.D.

Director, Texas KIDS COUNT

We do not exist for ourselves.

Thomas Merton

*Essayist, Memoirist, Poet, and Trappist Monk*

1915 – 1968



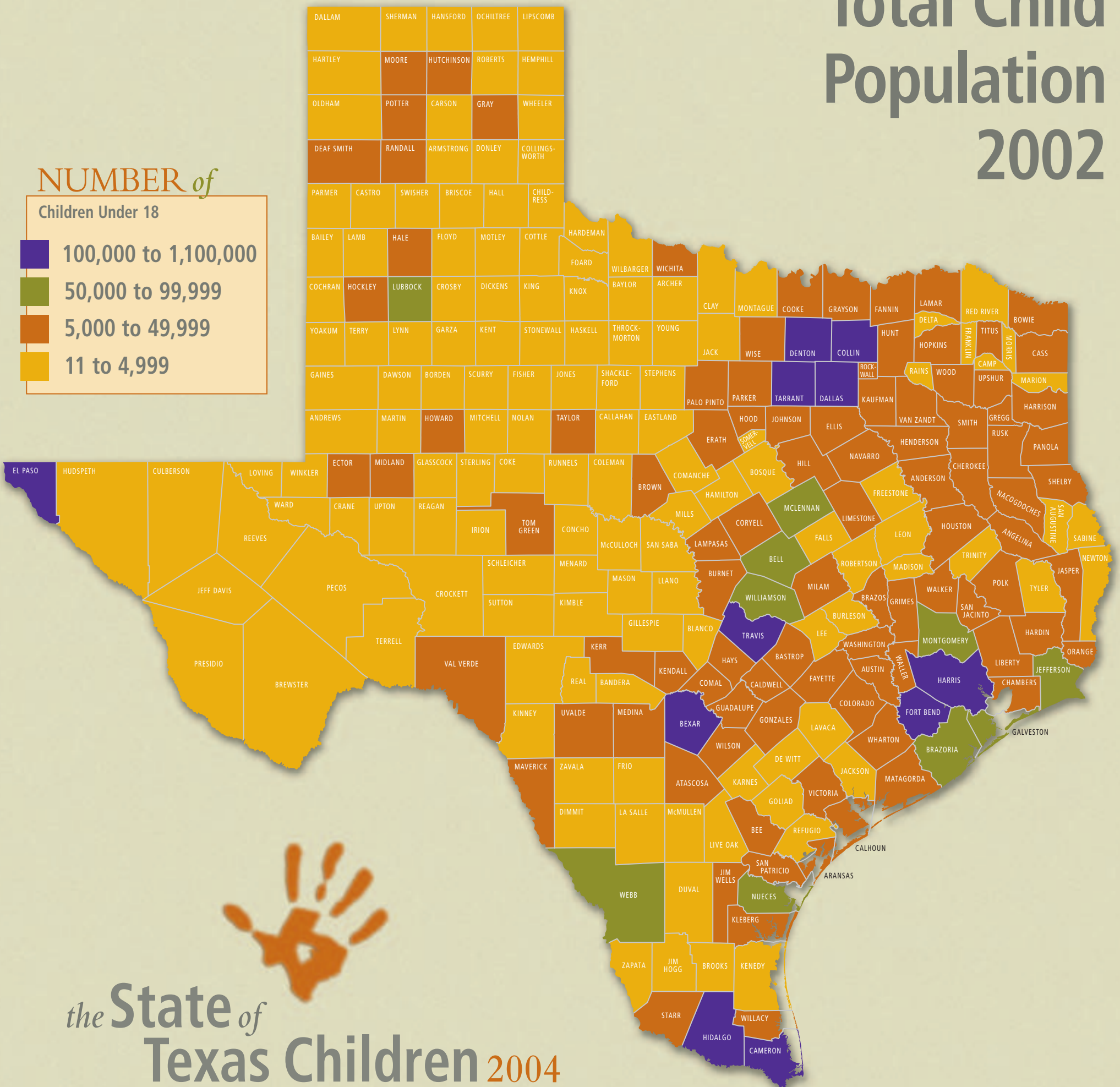


# Total Child Population 2002

## NUMBER of

Children Under 18

- 100,000 to 1,100,000
- 50,000 to 99,999
- 5,000 to 49,999
- 11 to 4,999



the State of Texas Children 2004



# Family & Community Population



Historically, Texas always has experienced comparatively rapid population growth. Although not always the single fastest-growing state, we have exceeded the rate of increase for the nation as a whole in every year since joining the United States in 1845.

Between 1990 and 2000, the Texas population increased by 22.8%, compared to a 13.2% rate of growth nationwide. During that time, population gained size in every one of Texas' 27 official metropolitan areas. In 2000, three of the nation's largest cities—Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio—were Texan.

Children play a central role in Texas' demographic dynamics. Numbered at about 4.8 million by the 1990 U.S. Census, the Texas child population rose to about 5.9 million by 2000. Like the state's population overall, Texas' child population increased substantially more—a 21.7% rate of increase—than the population of children in the nation as a whole, which grew 13.7%. Since then, the Census Bureau's 2003 population estimates have shown Texas leading all other states in the magnitude of growth in its child population, which now stands officially at more than 6.2 million.

In terms of its populace, Texas is a young state, with a median age of 32.8 years compared to 35.9 years nationwide. Children between the ages of 6 and 11 years old, and under 6 years old, represent the largest groups, respectively, within the state's child and youth population.

Texas KIDS COUNT supplies two primary types of basic population statistics. Collected once every 10 years, data from the U.S. Census represents an actual count of children and adults in each of the nation's households. Between Census years, we publish population estimates calculated by the Texas State Data Center, based at the University of Texas at San Antonio. This map uses 2002 age-group estimates from the TXSDC.

Not surprisingly, this map of Texas shows that the state's largest concentrations of children correspond to its most populated areas overall—the six counties where its largest cities are located—Harris County (Houston), Dallas County (Dallas), Tarrant County (Fort Worth), Bexar County (San Antonio), El Paso County (El Paso), and Travis County (Austin). Yet even among these highly populated urban counties, distinctions do appear. In only one county—Harris—does the child population exceed 1 million. Among the state's major urban counties, the smallest population of children—just under 200,000—resides in Travis County. Though

regionally diverse, three suburban counties—Collin (north of Dallas), Denton (north of Fort Worth), and Fort Bend (west of Houston)—have child populations comparable in size to urban Travis County, as does one other county—Cameron—on the Texas border with Mexico.

Along with the concentration of Texas' child population in its major urban counties, this map highlights the Interstate 35 corridor between Austin and the region around Dallas and Fort Worth. Several counties in this area—including Williamson (north suburban Austin), Bell (Temple), and McLennan (Waco)—have substantial numbers of resident children.

The overall child population in west Texas and the remaining border counties is very sparse. Here, only Lubbock County and Webb County report more than 50,000 residents under age 18. Although a number of counties surrounding Lubbock and Amarillo cluster within the group that includes counties with child populations of about this size, they each actually report child populations of 10,000 or less. ■

By the start of the twentieth century, the United States had become the world's predominant destination for immigrants, both legally admitted and undocumented. Between 1991 and 2000, more than 900,000 people came to the United States from other nations each year. As fertility and mortality in this country remain relatively stable, immigration has emerged as the major influence on the dynamics of its population. Because immigrants are more likely to arrive during their prime working and taxpaying years and be of childbearing age, the National Research Council estimates that they have a positive long-term fiscal impact on the American economy, and add at least \$10 billion each year to the U.S. economy.

## RESOURCES

American Fact Finder

<http://factfinder.census.gov/>

Population Reference Bureau

<http://www.prb.org/>

## INDICATORS

- Total Child Population
- Child Population by Age Group
- Families with Children
- Children in Foster Care

TO GET MORE DATA ON EACH OF THESE INDICATORS FOR YOUR COUNTY, GO TO:

[factbook.cppp.org](http://factbook.cppp.org)

JULY 2004

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# Family & Community Population



In recent decades, racial and ethnic diversification of the country has dominated population change. Texas has experienced this trend even more profoundly—a pattern largely related to the state’s relative youth. Younger Texans, like younger Americans in general but even more so, tend to belong to non-White racial and ethnic groups, and in particular identify as Hispanic or Latino. A larger proportion of children in its overall population necessarily makes Texas a more ethnically and racially balanced state. Between 1990 and 2000, the proportion of White children in Texas declined from 51% to 43%. Over the same period, the percentage of Hispanic children in Texas increased from 34% to 41%. As a result, White children no longer represented a majority of Texans under 18 in the 2000 Census. By 2002, the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) showed a bare majority—51%—of the state population overall as non-Hispanic White. Over the next 40 years, demographers predict that more than 90% of Texas population growth will take place among non-White, primarily Hispanic, persons. This means that the state’s future economic and social potential is linked to the developmental experiences of its non-White child population today.

Although the Texas KIDS COUNT project does not routinely publish an indicator measuring children as a percentage of the state’s population, this map provides an informative adjunct to the map of Texas’ child population count. Like the map of the state’s total child population, this one is based on 2002 estimates from the Texas State Data Center.

Generally the pattern of Texas’ total child population mirrors the state’s population distribution as a whole. The most populated counties overall also display the largest number of resident children. This map looks noticeably different.

Only two of Texas’ large urban counties—Harris and El Paso—count among those with both the highest number and the highest percentage of children in their populations. According to this map, Travis County—among those with the largest absolute number of children—here shows up among counties with the lowest percentage of population that are children.

Some suburban counties also look different on this map. Five counties surrounding Dallas County—Collin, Rockwall, Kaufman, Ellis, and Johnson—and one just outside Travis County—Williamson—show a higher percentage of children in their populations

than their urban counterparts. Suburban Houston Montgomery County and Fort Bend County also number among those with the largest percentage of children in the state.

In border counties with relatively small child population numbers, children represent a much more pronounced segment of county population overall. Two—Hidalgo County and Cameron County—are among those with both the largest number and the highest percentage of children in their populations. However, other border counties with lower absolute numbers of children appear among those in the state with large-percentage child populations. Starr County has the highest proportion of children in the state, over 37%. Other border counties with child population percentages above 30% include Maverick (36.4%), Webb (35.4%), Hidalgo (34.8%), Cameron (33.2%), Hudspeth (32.7%), Zapata (32.4%), Dimmit (32.2%), Presidio (32.0%), Val Verde (31.8%), and El Paso (31.1%).

Finally, this map shows comparatively large child population percentages even in the sparsely populated rural west Texas counties surrounding Lubbock and Amarillo. ■

In Spanish, the term *colonia* means “community” or “neighborhood.” In Texas, it most commonly refers to the unincorporated and underdeveloped areas that line the state’s border with Mexico. Substandard housing, inadequate plumbing, open sewage, and unpaved roads combine to make daily life in the *colonias* akin to that of the developing world. Although *colonias* exist in each of the states that border Mexico, Texas is home to the greatest number—more than 1,400 settlements—with the greatest population—more than 140,000 people. With a majority of their residents native-born Americans, the *colonias* counties bordering Mexico have been growing at a rate nearly double the rest of Texas.

## RESOURCES

Texas State Data Center  
<http://txsdc.utsa.edu/>  
National Survey of American Families  
<http://www.urban.org/Content/Research/NewFederalism/NSAF/>

## INDICATORS

- Total Child Population
- Child Population by Age Group
- Families with Children
- Children in Foster Care

TO GET MORE DATA ON EACH OF THESE INDICATORS FOR YOUR COUNTY, GO TO:

[factbook.cppp.org](http://factbook.cppp.org)

AUGUST 2004

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# Family & Community Population



As demographic trends go, a sizeable increase in single-parent families has represented one of recent decades' most profound transformations. In 1950, single parents headed fewer than 10% of American households. By 2000, single-parent families had increased by almost 300%, representing between one-quarter and one-third of all households with children.

Fifty years ago, single parenthood almost inevitably resulted from divorce. Beginning in the 1980s, a dramatic increase in the share of births to single women and a decline in the rate of births to married women combined with divorce to produce a rapid gain in the proportion of American families headed by a single parent. Families headed by single mothers still vastly outnumber single-father families. But the percentage growth in single-father families has outpaced the increase in homes headed by a single mother, not only in recent decades, but also between 1950 and 2000.

Although single parenting has received blame for an array of unhappy child outcomes, children raised in loving and supportive single-parent families do thrive. Especially when one parent suffers from severe problems such as physical or emotional aggression, substance abuse, or untreated mental illness, children do better with one stable parent alone. Single parents do face more restricted economic, social, emotional, and practical resources than do adults in functional two-parent families. All other things equal, though, research has shown that single parents can be good parents, and certainly can nurture healthy, productive, fulfilled kids.

**B**ased on data from the 2000 U.S. Census, this indicator reports the number and percentage of children living in homes with only one parent present.

Contrast between the state's major urban and suburban counties dominates this map. In four out of six of Texas' largest urban counties, more than one-quarter of children grow up in homes headed by single parents. Bexar County leads this group, with 28.6% of children living in single-parent families, followed by Dallas County (27.4%), Travis County (25.3%), and El Paso County (25.3%). In comparison, the suburban counties that surround these major urban areas cluster, overall, within the group of Texas counties with the lowest proportion of children in single-parent homes. This group includes Collin County (suburban Dallas, at 13%, with the lowest percentage of children in single-parent families among counties in the state), Williamson County (suburban Austin, at 15.3%), Denton County (north of Fort Worth, 16.4%),

and in the Houston suburbs, Montgomery County (16.4%) and Fort Bend County (16.9%).

The map also shows the areas around two smaller Texas cities—Lubbock (Lubbock County) and Amarillo (Potter County)—with more than 25% of children living in single-parent households.

Although single-parent households generally are associated with relatively high rates of overall poverty and child poverty, the very poorest region of Texas—near the state's border with Mexico—does not display an unusually large proportion of children in single parent homes. Although none of the border counties cluster within the group of counties with the very lowest percentages of children in single-parent homes, only one—El Paso County—has more than 25% of its children growing up in families headed by a single parent. The concentration of single-parent families toward the eastern part of the state also contradicts the pattern of association between single parent households and poverty, which appears more pronounced in the south and west of Texas. ■

Tragically, children sometimes must face separation from their parents due to serious problems like mental illness, substance abuse, incarceration, or domestic violence. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of American children raised by relatives other than their parents grew by about 30%. Of the 6 million children in these families, 4.5 million were being raised by grandparents, both within and outside the formal foster care system. The Urban Institute reports that households headed by a grandparent as caregiver experience more economic and health problems, but fewer difficulties with housing and child care, than those headed by other relatives. Food insecurity is about the same for each.

## RESOURCES

American Community Survey  
<http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>  
AARP Grandparenting  
<http://www.aarp.org/life/grandparents/>

## INDICATORS

- Total Child Population
- Child Population by Age Group
- Families with Children
- Children in Foster Care

TO GET MORE DATA ON EACH OF THESE INDICATORS FOR YOUR COUNTY, GO TO:

[factbook.cppp.org](http://factbook.cppp.org)

SEPTEMBER 2004

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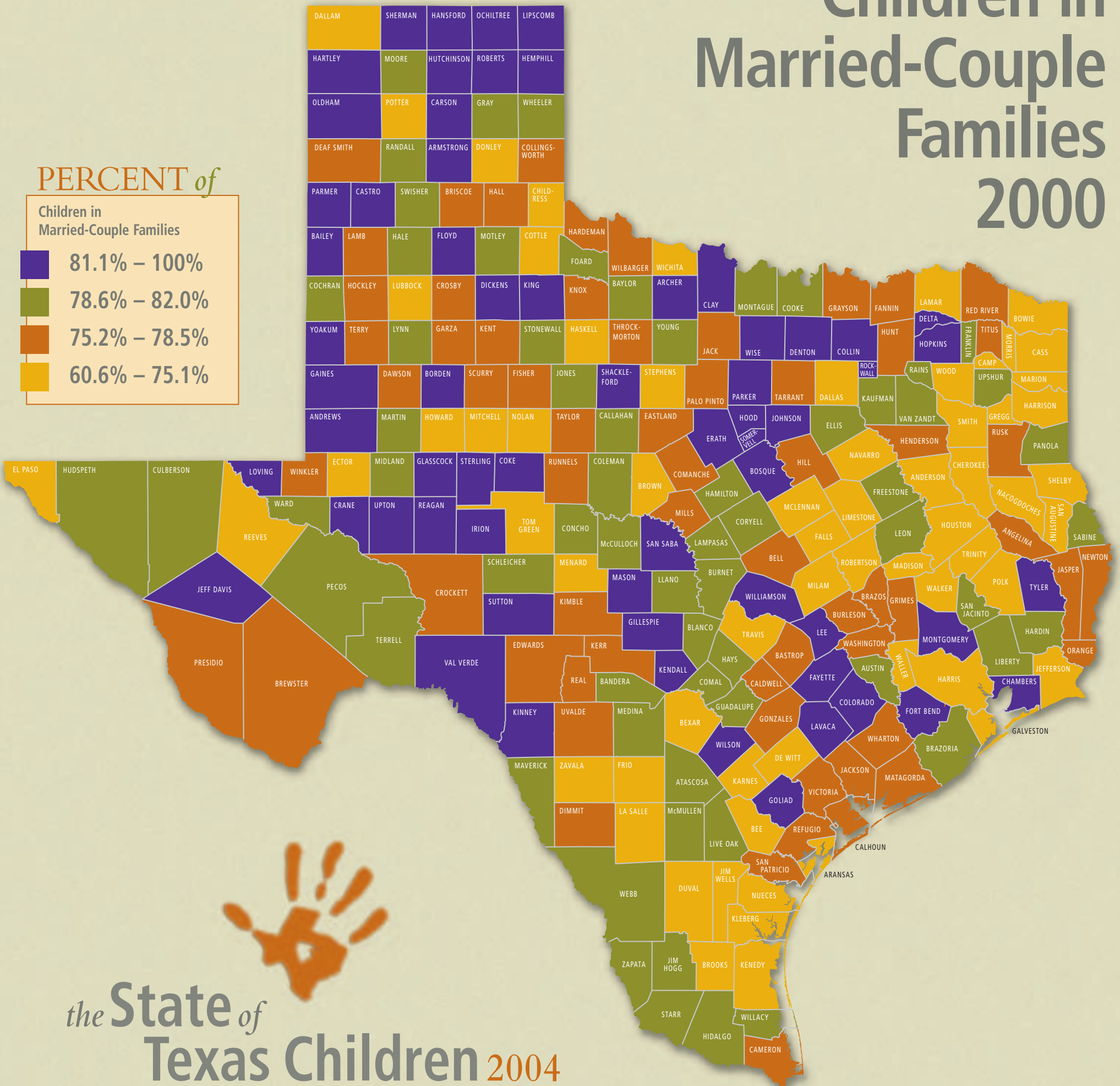


# Children in Married-Couple Families 2000

## PERCENT of

Children in Married-Couple Families

- 81.1% – 100%
- 78.6% – 82.0%
- 75.2% – 78.5%
- 60.6% – 75.1%



# Family & Community Population



American families are changing so fast and in so many ways that social researchers can barely keep up. People may debate whether it deserves the label “traditional,” but opinion research does tell us that attitudes preferring a single family model—the working father, stay-at-home mother, and their own biological children—have undergone a profound shift. These opinions articulate real empirical change, as a shrinking number of families actually fit this description. Because people marry later, divorce, remarry, share homes without marriage, and raise children without partners—and because the majority of mothers now work for pay outside the home—the National Opinion Research Center predicts that in the next century, a majority of families with children will not include the children’s two original parents.

Paradoxically, Americans seem to favor more diverse family structures and processes without necessarily supporting public policies that would give all families equal opportunity to thrive. For example, Americans are less likely than the residents of other developed nations to approve of such public supports for working families as child care assistance. Given the realities of family transformation in our society, it makes sense to focus public policy on investments that will foster the best interests of children and discriminate against no-one—whether married couples with children, or the myriad of other family formations just as deserving, and (with the right resources) just as capable of contributing value to their communities.

**R**eporting data from the 2000 U.S. Census, this Texas KIDS COUNT indicator reflects the number and percentage of children living in homes with two parents present.

This map shows that a majority of Texas children do live in two-parent homes. Beyond that, a few regional patterns clearly emerge.

Most noticeable are contrasting bands of counties—those with the state’s highest levels of children in two-parent homes and those with the least. West Texas counties reporting some of the highest percentages of children in married-couple households include Roberts (96.6%), Reagan (91.8%), Glasscock (91.2%), and Hartley (90.3%), a group representing two-thirds of the entire state’s counties (six in all) with more than 90% of resident children living in families with two parents present. Very sparsely populated King and Loving counties show 100% of children living in two-parent homes. On the other hand, counties in east Texas reflect a consistently lower level of children in families with both parents. Although the state’s lowest rate, 60.6%, occurs in

south Texas’ Brooks County, in the eastern part of the state Bee County (65.4%), Bowie County (65.7%), and Robertson County (66.4%) count among those in the state with the lowest percentage of children in two-parent homes.

The map also highlights distinctions between Texas’ major urban counties and the suburban ones that surround them. With the exception of Tarrant County, each of the state’s large urban counties clusters within the group reporting the lowest rates of children in married-couple homes. The lowest proportion of urban children in married-couple households, 71.5%, occurs in Bexar County. Among urban counties, Tarrant County displays the highest proportion, at 76.4%.

Five suburban counties number among those with the highest percentage of children in two-parent families—Collin County, Denton County, Williamson County, Fort Bend County, and Montgomery County. Among these, the highest proportion, 87.0%, reside in Collin County, north of Dallas. ■

Among an increasingly diverse array of American family forms, young, low-income, never-married parents and their children may offer an especially promising route to nurture family stability where it is urgently needed. Research shows that the young, unmarried fathers in fragile families remain involved with their partners and children—60% see their children every day, and 80% see them every week. These fathers believe that they have a significant influence on their children’s upbringing. These young fathers’ employability remains the most significant barrier to marriage. Personal obstacles—poor relationship skills, domestic violence, mental health, and substance issues—also must be addressed to help these families endure.

## RESOURCES

Families and Work Institute  
<http://www.familiesandwork.org>  
Texas Fragile Families Initiative  
<http://www.cppp.org/tff/>

## INDICATORS

- Total Child Population
- Child Population by Age Group
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OCTOBER 2004

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# Economic Resources, Security & Opportunity

Prevailing social views discount the responsibility of government to help alleviate suffering caused by poverty and persistent economic insecurity. But in the early 1960s, the U.S. government—then committed to a “war” on poverty in America—created the measure now commonly referred to as the “poverty line.” Based on this definition, the percentage of poor people in Texas continues to exceed the poverty rate for the nation as a whole. A higher proportion of Texas children, compared to both the state’s overall population and to children nationwide, are officially poor. Currently, Texans in poverty make up almost one-tenth of the entire nation’s poor population. Poverty concentrates especially along Texas’ border with Mexico, where the United States’ very poorest people reside.

Although poverty rates in Texas and the nation declined in the late 1990s, since 2001 the percentage of poor people at both levels has begun to increase. Meanwhile, mounting evidence suggests enduring economic hardship even among families with incomes above the official poverty line, as the rising cost of necessities continues to outpace comparatively stagnant improvements in wages and employee benefits. More realistic measures of economic hardship specify the gap between household incomes of the working poor and the amount they have to pay to provide their basic needs.

**O**ur indicator of child poverty represents the percentage of children under age 18 living in families with incomes below the official poverty threshold. During Census years, we report the actual number of children in poverty. For other years, we give official estimates of child poverty provided by the federal government.

This map depicts pervasive child poverty in the state. For 2000—the latest year of available data—the U.S. Census Bureau estimated child poverty for the state of Texas at 20.7%. That year, 75 Texas counties were determined to have child poverty rates lower than the state estimate. In the remaining 175 counties, child poverty estimates exceeded the level for the state as a whole.

Not surprisingly, counties directly adjacent to Texas’ border with Mexico display the highest levels of child poverty in the state. At equivalent rates, it extends north and east, almost to San Antonio. Two counties in this region display child poverty rates higher than 50%—Starr (54.0%) and Zavala (50.6%)—and lead the state. Nine other border and

near-border counties report more than 40% of their children living at or below the poverty line.

By contrast, a rough triangle of urban and suburban counties to the east and north reflects the lowest levels of child poverty in Texas. At 13.6%, Travis County reports the smallest proportion of children in poverty among large urban counties. Tarrant County (14.6%), Dallas County (17.8%), and Harris County (19.1%) also show percentages of child poverty below the level for the state as a whole. Urban child poverty increases with movement toward the border—22.7% in Bexar County and 33.9% in El Paso County, both above the state rate.

Seven out of ten counties with the state’s lowest levels of child poverty cluster around these urban areas. In Collin County, north of Dallas, 5.8% of children live in homes with incomes below the poverty line—the lowest in the state. Ten percent or fewer of children are poor in suburban Williamson County (6.5%), Denton County (7.3%), Rockwall County (7.4%), and Fort Bend County (10.0%). ■

Poor and economically insecure families do not live in isolation. Increasingly, researchers and policy analysts have come to recognize the important cumulative consequences for children growing up in economically distressed neighborhoods. Here, not just individual families, but entire communities struggle to cope with the compound effects of high poverty rates, a high percentage of female-headed households, low high school graduation rates, and a low proportion of working adult males. Though individual poverty rates declined somewhat in the last decade, during that same time the number of children living in economically distressed neighborhoods grew by almost one-fifth.

## RESOURCES

National Center for Children in Poverty  
<http://www.nccp.org>  
The Family Economic Success Initiative  
<http://www.aecf.org/initiatives/fes/>

## INDICATORS

- Poverty for Total Population
- Child Poverty
- Median Household Income
- Unemployment
- Children Receiving TANF and AFDC

TO GET MORE DATA ON EACH OF THESE INDICATORS FOR YOUR COUNTY, GO TO:

[factbook.cppp.org](http://factbook.cppp.org)

NOVEMBER 2004

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# Early Care & Education

Early childhood is marked by great developmental complexity, a time when children's experiences can either nurture promise and success or impose persistent vulnerability. Even as we have learned more about the crucial opportunities and risks of early childhood, contemporary social, economic, and political developments have complicated the responsibility, shared by families and communities, of providing our youngest children with the support and resources they need to prepare for later academic and occupational achievement.

As in other parts of the United States, both the quality and availability of appropriate early care and education services in Texas can be widely problematic. Estimates suggest that one-fifth of child care settings in this country fail to meet even minimal standards, and other serious deficiencies—inadequate training and compensation for child care workers, excessive turnover among child care staff, nonstimulating and uninspiring curricula—are common. Child care is expensive, on an annual basis costing more than the price of public college tuition. And as parents of young children know, the waiting lists for both subsidized and nonsubsidized child care typically are very long. Many early care and education programs offer only partial-day services. Though especially important to many low-income working families with service industry jobs, child care during nonstandard business hours and drop-in child care services also remain rare.

According to guidelines from the Texas Education Agency, 3- and 4-year-old children qualify for public pre-kindergarten if they cannot speak or understand English, if they qualify as economically disadvantaged, or if they are homeless. Other children may attend after all eligible children in a school district have been served. Texas KIDS COUNT reports both the total public pre-kindergarten enrollment by county and enrollment as a percentage of each county's population of 3- and 4-year-olds.

This map displays a somewhat spotty pattern of public pre-kindergarten enrollment, not obvious to interpret. A dozen counties report no pre-kindergarten enrollment at all, which probably reflects the very low population of children resident in them. Only one of these dozen counties—Hudspeth—numbers among those with comparatively high levels of child poverty, which also could help to explain enrollment counts. At the other extreme, two counties—King and Kenedy—report a 100% pre-kindergarten enrollment rate. Again, this result almost certainly reflects inevitable error in the estimation of the number of three- and four-year-olds in these very sparsely populated counties.

Given the qualifications for public pre-kindergarten, one could expect a higher percentage of enrollment in the pervasively poor counties throughout the border and approaching San Antonio. Yet none of the 10 counties with the highest enrollment rates comes from this group. Among counties directly on the border, Presidio shows the highest percentage of pre-kindergarten enrollment, at 45.8%. Hidalgo County reports the greatest number of enrollees, more than 9,600.

Comparatively low public pre-kindergarten enrollment in most large urban counties probably corresponds to relatively lower percentages of children in poverty there. Availability of other care options for young children may also contribute. Among those, the highest number of public pre-kindergarten students shows up in Harris County (almost 31,000). El Paso County has the highest proportional public pre-kindergarten enrollment, at 28.4%, and Tarrant County the lowest, at 16.3%.

For similar reasons of comparative affluence and availability of child care options—and perhaps also with higher proportions of children in married-couple families where only one parent may work—suburban counties display some of the lowest rates of public pre-kindergarten participation in the state. ■

It is well known that child care costs can represent a significant expense for working families. Too often overlooked is the important contribution that child care services make to the economy overall. More people work as licensed child care providers than as public secondary school teachers. Every dollar spent on child care translates into more than \$15 in parental earnings. Long-term economic benefits of early childhood care include lower special education costs, lower dropout rates, and greater long-term earning power for children who have enjoyed access to quality early care programs.

## RESOURCES

Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition  
<http://www.tecec.org>  
National Association for the Education of Young Children  
<http://www.naeyc.org>

## INDICATORS

- Children on State-Subsidized Child Care
- Children in Public Pre-Kindergarten
- Children in Head Start Program

TO GET MORE DATA ON EACH OF THESE INDICATORS FOR YOUR COUNTY GO TO:

[factbook.cppp.org](http://factbook.cppp.org)

DECEMBER 2004

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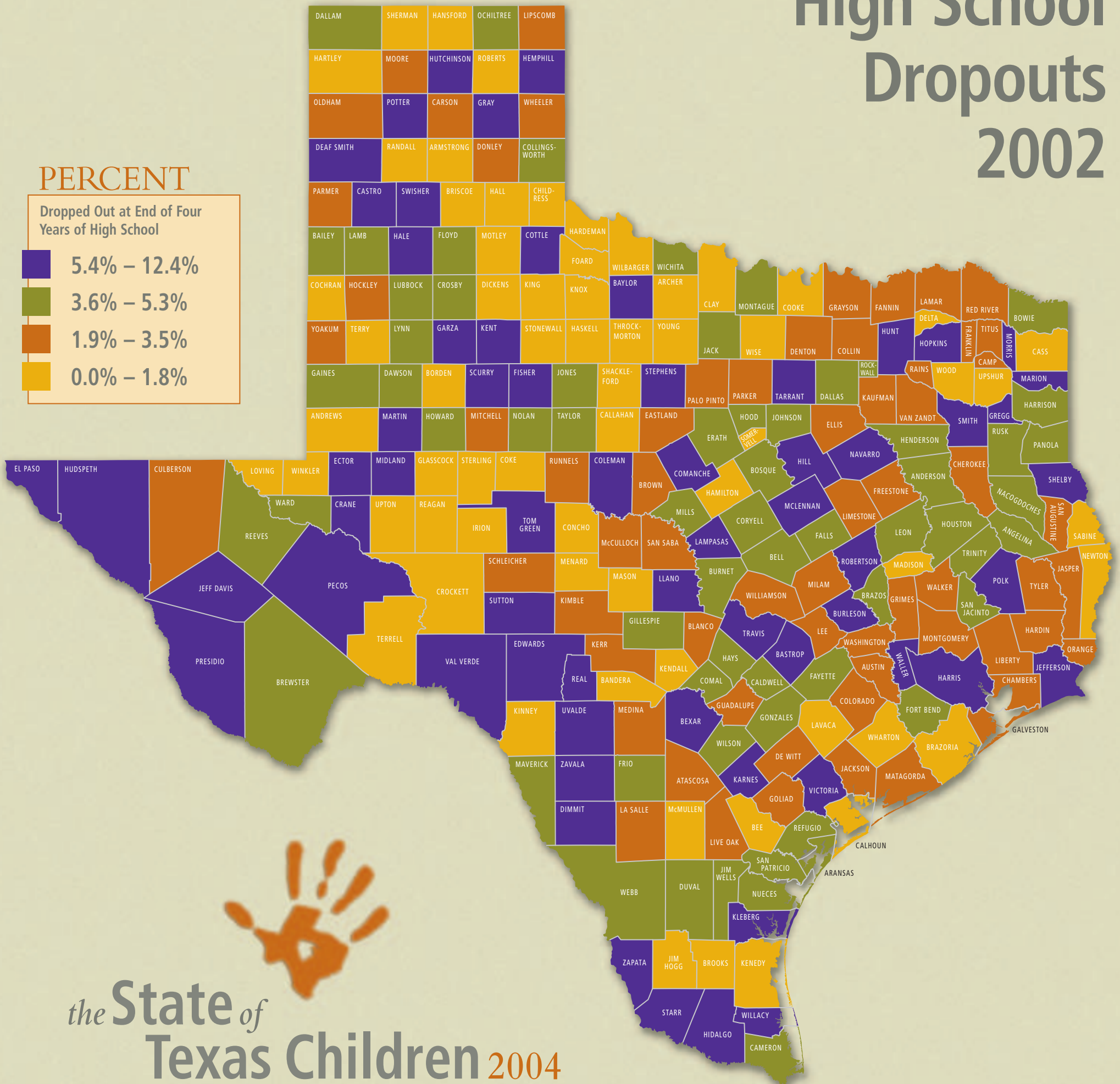


# High School Dropouts 2002

## PERCENT

Dropped Out at End of Four Years of High School

- 5.4% – 12.4%
- 3.6% – 5.3%
- 1.9% – 3.5%
- 0.0% – 1.8%



the State of  
Texas Children 2004

# School Success

Public education, and the way Texas provides for it, has become an increasingly urgent public policy issue. Since 1999, average daily attendance at Texas public schools has grown by more than 10 percent, and this enrollment growth represents a huge factor in the rising cost of the state's public education system. Yet, according to most credible sources, the state of Texas invests less than the national average in public education. In recent years, the state's share of support for Texas public schools has declined by nearly eight percent, while local funding per student has increased by about one-third. Controversial in other states, the accountability mandates imposed by the federal No Child Left Behind law will have as-yet-unknown consequences for public school funding in Texas.

Quality public education offers benefits to both individuals and communities. Most tangibly, educational achievement is consistently associated with higher occupational and socioeconomic status. The link between educational attainment and income has sobering implications for Texas, where nearly one-quarter of the population over 25 have not completed high school or a high school equivalent education. Projected demographic change over the next several decades will make the problem worse, unless Texas can narrow existing educational disparities among its main racial and ethnic groups.

In order to obtain county-level data, Texas KIDS COUNT uses dropout statistics compiled by the Texas Education Agency. These data report graduation status for each county's ninth-grade cohort at the time the class graduates four years later.

High school dropout measurement is controversial. The U.S. Census indicates that more one-quarter of Texans 25 and older have less than a twelfth-grade education. Based on these figures, the state of Texas methodology for obtaining dropout data very likely understates the actual number of students who leave high school without graduating.

According to this map, counties with comparatively significant proportions of students dropping out of high school are dispersed throughout the state. But of the seven Texas counties with a high school dropout rate of more than 10%, four—Starr County (12.4% of students dropped out), Presidio (12.2%), Jeff Davis (11.8%), and Val Verde (10.7%)—are located on the state's border with Mexico.

With one exception—Dallas County—the state's large urban areas also number among those with the

highest percentages of students dropping out of school. With a rate of 7.3%, Travis County displays the largest proportion—but also the smallest absolute number, 509—of dropouts among large urban counties. Three urban counties—Dallas, Tarrant, and Bexar—show more than 1,000 high school dropouts in 2002, and Harris County reports more than 2150.

Thirty-four counties give a dropout rate of zero. In such cases, this result probably occurs due to extremely small cohorts of high school students—twelfth-graders who had begun ninth grade four years earlier. Among these 34 counties with zero dropout rates, Loving and Kenedy report only one student each in their graduating cohorts (with no dropouts), and Lavaca County reports the largest class of high school graduates, 167 (again, with no students dropping out of school). Among those with cohorts of more than 1,000 high school students, Brazoria County (1.2% dropout rate), Collin County (2.1%), Denton County (2.3%), and Williamson County (2.5%) show the lowest dropout rates in the state. ■

Federal law protects the educational rights of special needs students through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA exists to support the most basic entitlement of all American children—regardless of disability—to a free and appropriate public education. According to the National PTA, about 6 million American schoolchildren receive special education services through IDEA, for physical, learning, and mental health disabilities that impair their ability to perform in the regular public school setting. Although it recognizes that IDEA mandates impose significant cost burden on local schools, the federal government has never fully funded its portion of the additional outlay needed to adequately educate special needs students.

## RESOURCES

National Center for Educational Statistics  
<http://www.nces.ed.gov>  
National PTA  
<http://www.pta.org>

## INDICATORS

- High School Dropout and Completion
- Students Passing TAKS Reading
- Students Passing TAKS Math
- Students Passing TAKS Writing
- Special Education Students
- Students in Bilingual/ESL Programs

TO GET MORE DATA ON EACH OF THESE INDICATORS FOR YOUR COUNTY, GO TO:

[factbook.cphp.org](http://factbook.cphp.org)

JANUARY 2005

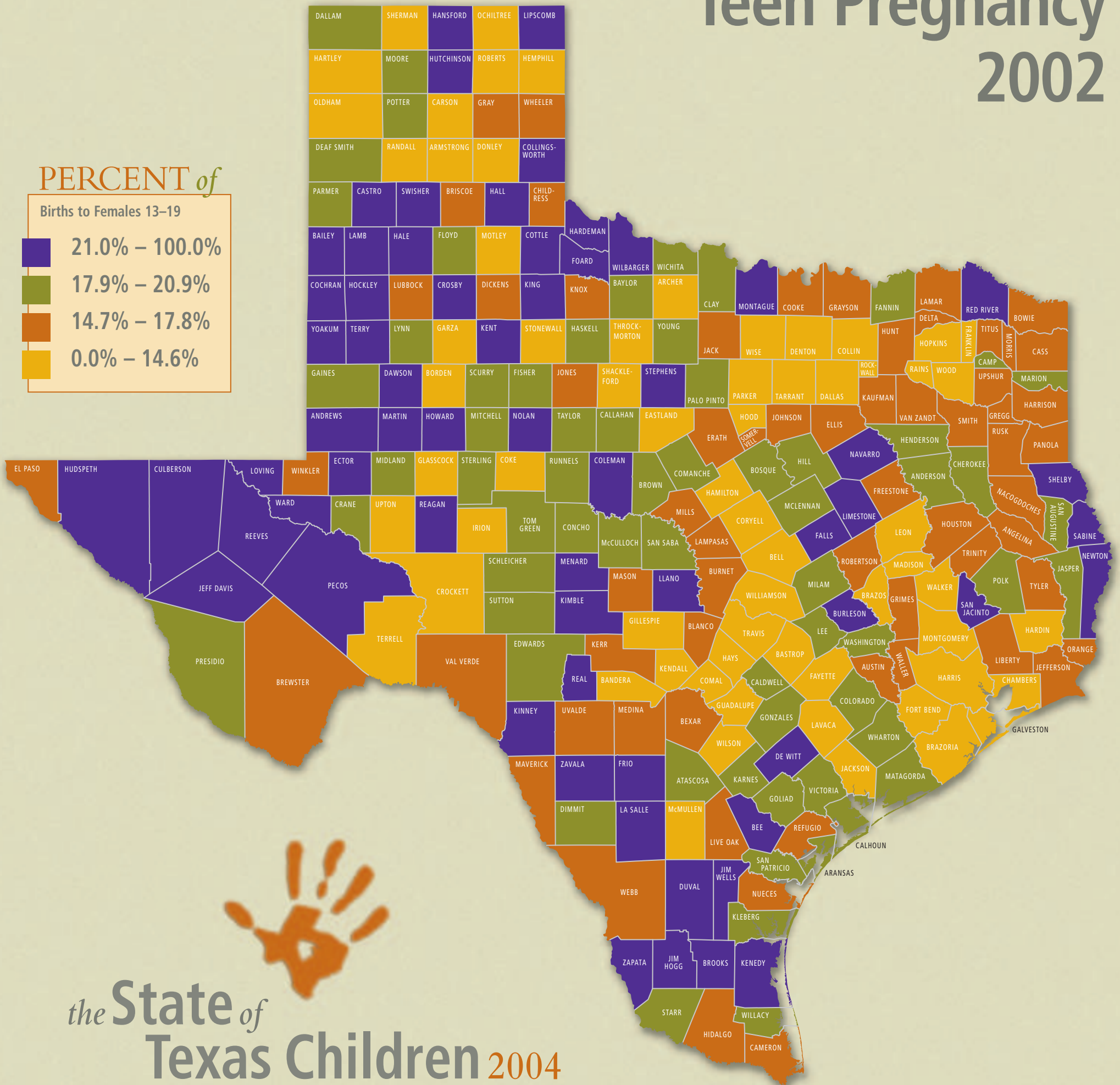
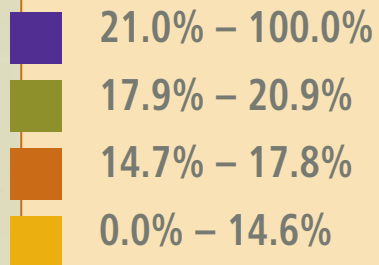
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# Teen Pregnancy 2002

## PERCENT of

Births to Females 13-19



# Teens At Risk

In some ways, circumstances have improved for teenagers today, in the country overall as well as in the state of Texas. Youth violence—involvement in crimes such as murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault—peaked in the mid-1990s and has declined since. Births to teens also have dropped (although Texas continues to experience one of the highest rates of teen pregnancy in the country, ranking 49th among states for the past three years). Still, our youth confront an unprecedented field of risks that jeopardize their future potential and threaten their immediate well-being. In addition to violence and sexual activity, other important risk factors for teens include substance use and mental health issues. Research on teens has explored protective factors that may offer them support, such as the availability of mentors and teens' own participation in community institutions outside school.

Emerging independence is emblematic of the teen years. Paradoxically, the adolescent demand for autonomy can obscure teens' real and continued need for the consistent involvement of knowledgeable and caring adults. Services for youth do not come close to approaching the need for them. The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation reports that only two percent of middle-school-aged youth use out-of-school services that could provide them with needed resources and support.

Our data on teen pregnancy comes from the Texas Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics. In this map, it depicts births to females between 13 and 19 years old as a percentage of all live births.

Here, none of Texas' large urban counties appear within the group of counties with the highest rates of births to teens. At 16.8%, El Paso County reflects the largest urban county percentage of teen births, and at 3,882, Bexar County reports the greatest frequency of births to teen mothers. Among Texas' major urban areas, the lowest percentage of teen pregnancy occurs in Travis County, at 10.4% almost as low as in some of the suburban counties that show the lowest rate of teen births in the state.

This map clearly displays low rates of teen pregnancy that extend deep into the suburbs of Texas' largest cities. Five suburban counties report a teen birth rate of less than 10%—Collin (north of Dallas, 4.6%), Denton (north of Fort Worth, 6.2%), Williamson (north of Austin, 7.4%), Fort Bend (southwest of Houston, 8.0%), and Rockwall (east of Dallas, 8.8%). Of these, the smallest number of teen

births occur in Rockwall County, with 66 babies born to mothers in their teens. Though teen birth rates are not quite so small in a number of other suburban counties, they still cluster with the group of those with the lowest rates of teen pregnancy—in particular, Hays County and Bastrop County near Austin, and Chambers County, Montgomery County, and Brazoria County near Houston.

This map also reflects higher rates of teen pregnancy that cluster in west Texas. (A teen birth rate of 100% in Loving county reflects a statistical anomaly, with one birth reported, and that birth to a teenager.) Although smaller populations in this region mean that absolute numbers of teen births are lower than in suburban counties, the rates of teen pregnancy appear much higher here. A number of counties in west Texas display teen birth rates between 20% and 25%, and in four counties in this region, more than one-fourth of all births occur to teenaged mothers—Cochran County (29.8%), Swisher County (29.6%), Yoakum County (25.6%), and Lamb County (25.6%). ■

In the last 50 years, preventable adolescent deaths from suicide have increased more than 300%. Summarizing findings from the National Youth Risk Behavior Survey, the American Academy of Pediatrics reports that nearly one-quarter of high-schoolers have considered suicide, almost one-fifth have made a specific plan, and nearly one in 10 have actually attempted to end their lives. Young women more commonly attempt suicide, but teenaged males are four times more likely to actually succeed at killing themselves. Alcohol use has been associated with half of teen suicides, and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered teens may be at least three times more likely to attempt suicide compared to teens overall.

## RESOURCES

National Youth Risk Behavior Survey  
<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/yrbs/>  
Child Trends  
<http://www.childtrends.org>

## INDICATORS

- Juvenile Violent Crime Arrests
- Teen Pregnancy
- Single-Teen Pregnancy

TO GET MORE DATA ON EACH OF THESE INDICATORS FOR YOUR COUNTY, GO TO:

[factbook.cppp.org](http://factbook.cppp.org)

FEBRUARY 2005

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# Physical, Social, & Emotional Health



Few current public policy matters can claim such urgency as the question of health care access and cost. Employers, and families with employer-sponsored or other private health insurance, have continued to endure accelerating premium and out-of-pocket costs several times the overall rate of inflation throughout recent years. For low-income families and those living just above the threshold of poverty, a more crucial problem involves the paucity of resources for obtaining health insurance at all. For years, Texas has led the nation in the proportion of its children who remain uninsured, posing a fundamental threat to child well-being in the state. Health insurance gaps as severe as ours also destabilize the entire health care system, as the cost burden of medical treatment shifts from more efficient health maintenance and prevention to notoriously expensive alternatives like emergency care.

In Texas not just cost, but also availability of health care resources remains an ongoing problem. The federal government identifies those areas of the United States that are underserved by medical practitioners. In August 2003, 127 Texas counties—half the state's total—were designated to have a shortage of health care providers overall, with 77 of the state's counties short of dental health providers and 179 lacking adequate mental health services.

**B**ased on information supplied by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, we report the number of children enrolled in the Medicaid program, and enrollment as a percentage of each county's population through age 18.

Most noticeably, this map of Medicaid enrollment by county underscores the link between children's poverty status and the crucial support that Medicaid can represent in safeguarding poor kids' health. Though by no means an exact duplicate, the pattern displayed on this map closely resembles the map of child poverty, and—with some exceptions—counties with the highest child poverty rates also show some of the highest proportions of their children enrolled in Medicaid.

Like child poverty, here the deepest areas of penetration appear in counties near the Texas border with Mexico, and those directly to their north and east in the Rio Grande valley where counties with the state's highest proportion of Medicaid-enrolled children are located. In three of these, more than

half of children are enrolled in Medicaid—Brooks (53.3% of children enrolled), Willacy (53.2%), and Zavala (51.8%). By contrast, a few border counties that number among those with the states' highest child poverty rates display some of the states' lowest levels of Medicaid participation by children. With only 2.4% of children and 5.1% of children enrolled, McMullen County and Kenedy County reflect this divergence most distinctly.

Two major urban counties present slightly higher enrollments in children's Medicaid than their child poverty rates would predict. In Harris County, 20.3% of children are enrolled in Medicaid, whereas 19.1% are poor. With a child poverty rate of 17.8%, Dallas County reports child Medicaid enrollment at 19.1%.

Suburban counties near Austin, Fort Worth, Dallas, and the distant suburbs or Houston group together in distinct regional clusters with extremely low enrollments in children's Medicaid—not surprising, given low child poverty rates in these parts of the state. ■

Since the mid-1970s, obesity has doubled among children aged 6 through 11 and tripled for adolescents between 12 and 19. Roughly 15% of American children and youth now meet the American Obesity Association's criteria for obesity, and 30% can be classified as overweight. Multiple factors have contributed, and include physical education cutbacks in schools, limited safe and accessible recreation facilities, increased use of sedentary media such as television and video games, and poor eating habits. Socioeconomic hardship also appears to play a role. Obesity in children and youth has serious negative consequences, ranging from high cholesterol and blood pressure to sleep apnea and asthma to damaged self-esteem and social relationships.

## RESOURCES

Families USA

<http://www.familiesusa.org>

Kaiser Family Foundation

<http://www.kff.org>

## INDICATORS

- Infant Mortality
- Low Birth-Weight Babies
- Mothers Receiving Little or No Prenatal Care
- Children Enrolled in Medicaid
- Children Enrolled in CHIP
- Children Receiving SSI

TO GET MORE DATA ON EACH OF THESE INDICATORS FOR YOUR COUNTY, GO TO:

[factbook.cppp.org](http://factbook.cppp.org)

MARCH 2005

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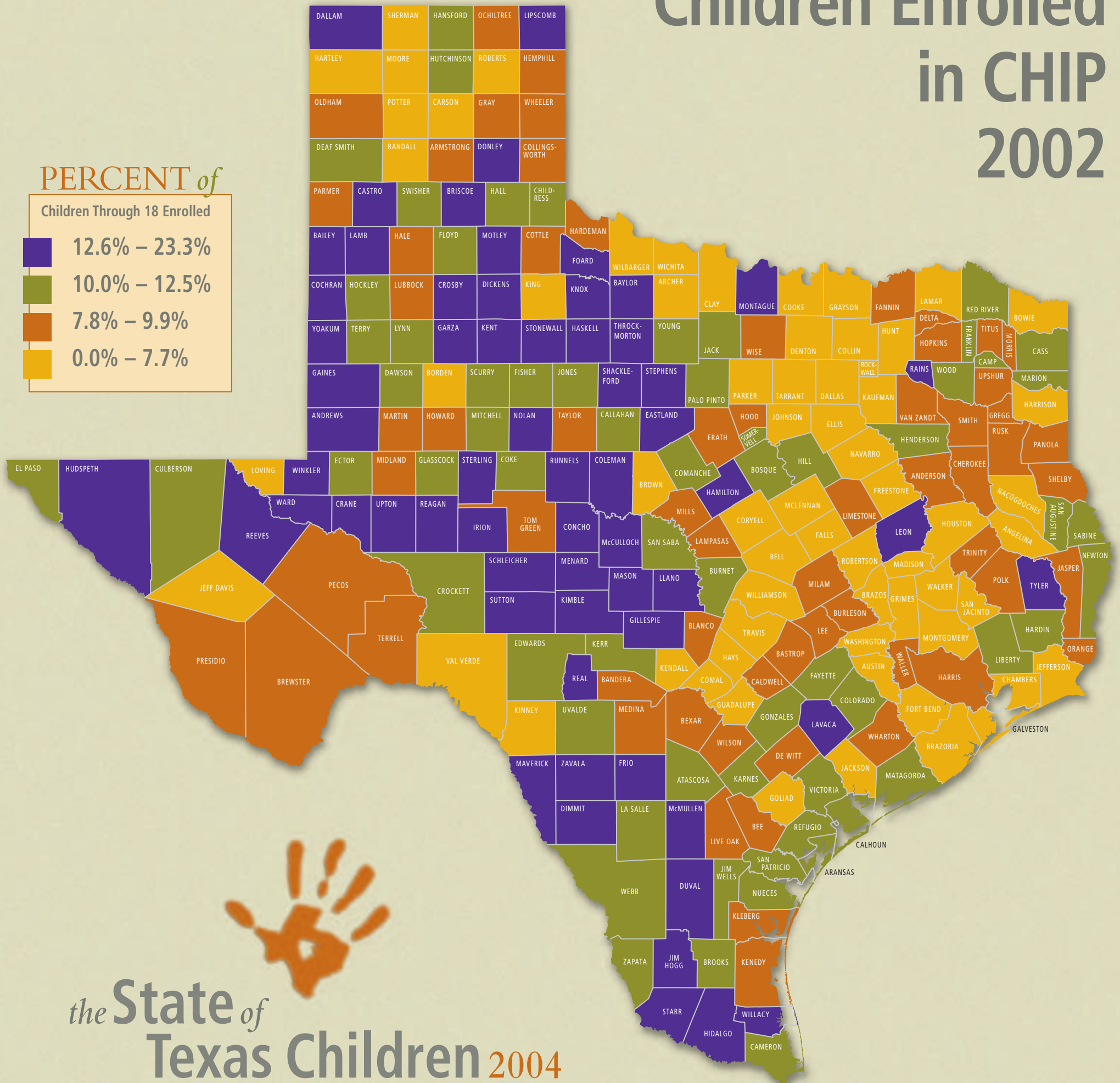


# Children Enrolled in CHIP 2002

## PERCENT of

Children Through 18 Enrolled

-  12.6% – 23.3%
-  10.0% – 12.5%
-  7.8% – 9.9%
-  0.0% – 7.7%





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# Physical, Social, & Emotional Health



Although various sources give different estimates, it appears that as many as one-third of Americans may go without health insurance coverage at some point during any given year. A jointly funded federal and state program, Texas Medicaid provides medical coverage to poor children and adults who meet certain income and asset requirements. State CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program) provides insurance to families with low or moderate incomes above the level to qualify for Medicaid. Medicaid supplies no-cost health insurance to the poorest children and families. Depending on income and assets, families do pay some amount for health care coverage through CHIP, including the costs of premiums, office co-payments, prescriptions, and emergency room care.

The federal government provides matching funds for state dollars spent on Medicaid and CHIP, so both programs make excellent investments in both public health and fiscal terms. Until 2003, several years of programmatic changes permitted by the Texas Legislature had helped give more qualifying children access to health insurance through either Medicaid or CHIP. That year, the 78th Legislature approved new modifications to Medicaid and CHIP that had the effect of removing thousands of poor and near-poor children from health insurance coverage through these programs, and making the problem of uninsured kids here even worse.

Obtained from the state's Health and Human Services Commission by Texas KIDS COUNT, CHIP enrollment data indicate the proportion of each county's child population that participates in the program.

Throughout the state, a smaller percentage of children enroll in CHIP than in Medicaid. For example, in Texas' largest urban counties, CHIP enrollments range from a low of 5.8% of child population in Travis County to a high of 10.7% in El Paso. In other words, a maximum of only about one in 10 children in the state's most populous counties participates in the CHIP program. By contrast, children's Medicaid enrollments range from 15.1% in Tarrant County to 35.2% in El Paso County—about three times the size of participation in CHIP. Whereas the largest county percentages of children enrolled in Medicaid exceed 50%, only three counties report more than 20% of children enrolled in CHIP—Reagan County (with 23.3% of its children enrolled), Concho County (21.6%), and Gaines County (20.1%).

At a glance, the map of children's Medicaid enrollment closely mirrors patterns of child poverty in Texas. As this map indicates, the pattern of CHIP participation is partially, but not completely, consistent with Medicaid results.

Participation in children's Medicaid appears to peak in counties with the highest levels of child poverty, and these cluster just on or near Texas' border with Mexico. But border counties show much lower levels of CHIP participation compared to Medicaid. Whereas nine out of 10 counties with the highest levels of Medicaid participation are situated on the Mexican border, none of the top 20 counties for CHIP enrollment are located there.

Maps of Medicaid and CHIP enrollment do resemble each other in their representation of suburban participation rates. Extremely low rates of CHIP participation, similar to low Medicaid enrollments, consistently appear in the suburban areas surrounding Travis, Tarrant, Dallas, and Harris counties. ■

Over the past quarter-century, an alarming rise in diseases such as asthma and cancer among children has spurred researchers and policy-makers to investigate the threat of environmental factors to our children's health. The Children's Environmental Health Network reports that the United States currently permits the manufacture and use of more than 70,000 chemical substances, with little knowledge of their effects on children's metabolic, circulatory, respiratory, nervous, immune, and reproductive systems. The effects of environmental health risk disproportionately afflict children in poor families, who more typically may suffer the fallout from substandard housing, poor nutrition, inadequate healthcare, and location nearer to hazardous environmental waste sites.

## RESOURCES

TexCare Partnership

<http://www.texcarepartnership.com>

Children's Defense Fund

<http://www.childrensdefense.org/>

## INDICATORS

- Infant Mortality
- Low Birth-Weight Babies
- Mothers Receiving Little or No Prenatal Care
- Children Enrolled in Medicaid
- Children Enrolled in CHIP
- Children Receiving SSI

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APRIL 2005

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# Hunger & Nutrition

In the United States, hunger doesn't result from a shortage of food. Here, children and families go hungry, or worry excessively about hunger, because they have limited economic resources to buy food. With total poverty and childhood poverty above national levels, Texas experiences more food insecurity—limited or uncertain access to sufficient food—and outright hunger—the uneasy or painful sensation caused by lack of food—than do other states. Research suggests that more than half of Texas children in working poor families may suffer food insecurity. Since 2001, emergency food sites in Texas have reported increased demand for food assistance, from families at higher income levels.

Chief among strategies to help alleviate hunger and food insecurity, the Food Stamp program offers food assistance to the neediest households in the community. Households with children account for almost nine in 10 of those receiving this benefit. While the state pays some administrative expenses for the Food Stamp program, the federal government provides 100% of the actual cost of benefits themselves. Close to two million Texas children also receive food assistance through the National School Lunch Program. The Women's, Infants', and Children's (WIC) program supplements the diets of pregnant and lactating women and children under the age of 5 to enhance their nutritional status.

Children in Texas qualify for free or reduced-price school meals if they live in families with incomes at or below 185% of the federal poverty level. Texas KIDS COUNT reports the number and percentage of the state's schoolchildren who have been certified to meet the criteria for free or reduced-price meal services.

For the 2002–2003 academic year, only five counties in the state show less than one-fifth of students qualifying for free or reduced-price school lunch. Among counties with the lowest percentages of eligible enrolled students, Jeff Davis reports only 67 qualified students, or 16.5% of the county's 407 total school enrollment. With an overall enrollment of 169, Borden County reports 32 children, or 18.9%, who qualify for subsidized school meals. At 14.9% of enrollment, suburban Collin County northeast of Dallas has the state's lowest proportion of enrolled students eligible to receive subsidized school meals—though this percentage is not trivial, representing nearly 16,000 of the county's schoolchildren.

In just over a dozen Texas counties, more than 70% of students meet the criteria to receive subsidized meals at school. The state's highest

percentage occurs in Hudspeth County, just east of El Paso, where 91.8% of schoolchildren qualify for free or reduced-price school meals. Perhaps surprising for a region characterized by extreme rates of child poverty, some border counties display lower-than-expected percentages of students who meet school lunch eligibility rules. In Hidalgo County, 40.6% of schoolchildren qualify to receive free or reduced-price meals and in Dimmit County, 41.5% do. Cameron County reports less than one-third (31.1%) of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Just over half of students in Starr County (54.3%), Brewster County (54.9%), and Zapata County (55.8%) qualify for subsidized school meals. Because child poverty is so pervasive in this region, this data may indicate that many families who meet criteria may not be applying for the school meal program.

Among large urban counties, El Paso (at 64.5%) has the highest proportion of schoolchildren who qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Dallas County (54.3%) and Harris County (52.7%) also show more than half of students eligible for subsidized school meals. ■

In December 2003, the U.S. Conference of Mayors reported a continuing increase in the volume of requests for emergency food assistance in the nation's major cities. As need increased, 56% of cities reported turning families away because of limited emergency food resources. Among cities surveyed, 91% predicted that requests for emergency food aid by families with children would continue to rise in 2004. Texas reports the nation's second-highest rate of food insecurity, with 14.8% of families at risk for hunger due to limited resources. It is estimated that almost one-fourth of Texas children—more than 1.4 million—live in food-insecure households.

## RESOURCES

Food Research and Action Center  
<http://www.frac.org>  
Share Our Strength  
<http://www.strength.org>

## INDICATORS

- Children Receiving Food Stamps
- Children Receiving Free or Reduced-Price Lunch
- Children Receiving WIC

TO GET MORE DATA ON EACH OF THESE INDICATORS FOR YOUR COUNTY, GO TO:

[factbook.cppp.org](http://factbook.cppp.org)

MAY 2005

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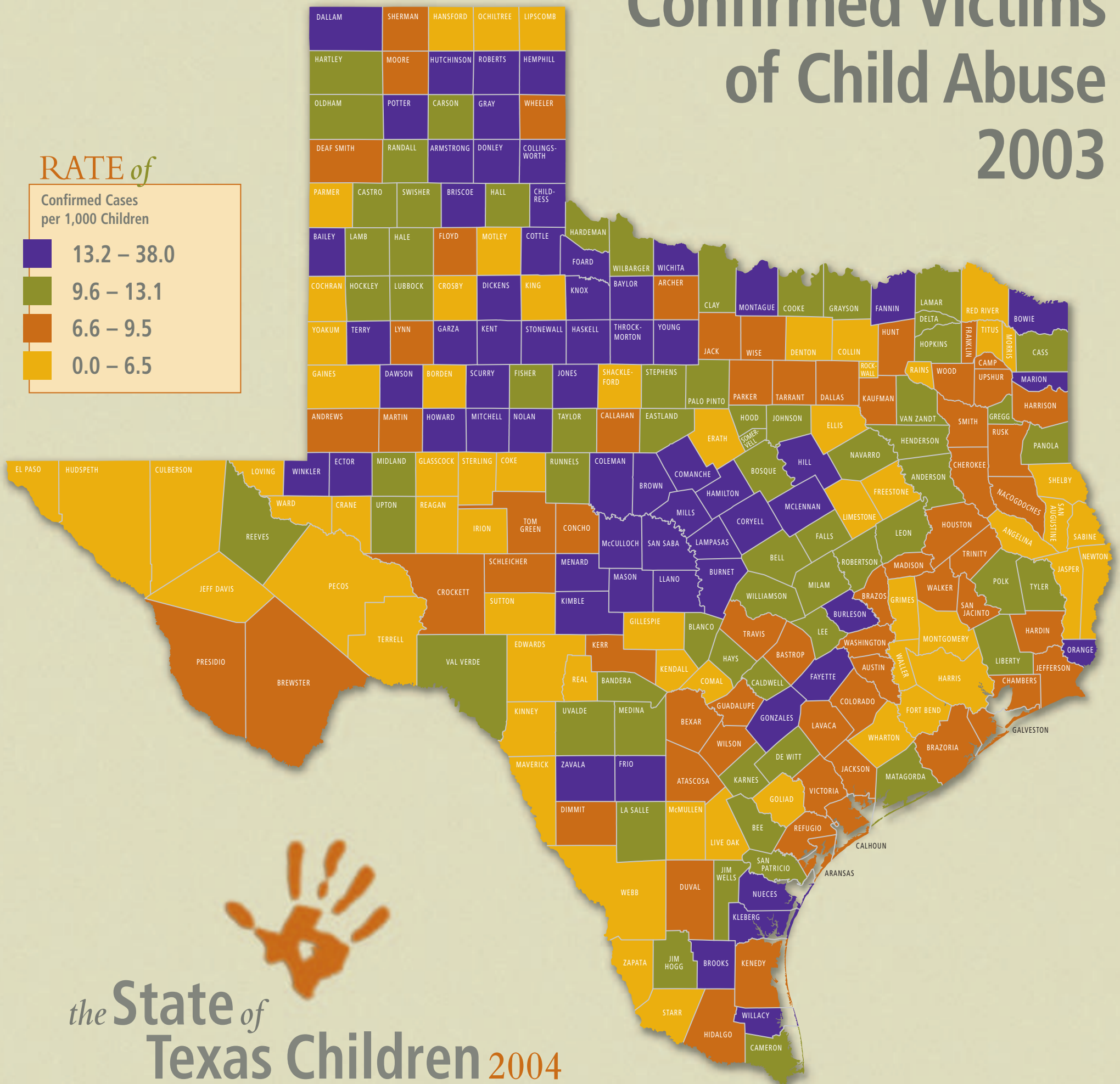


# Confirmed Victims of Child Abuse 2003

## RATE of

Confirmed Cases per 1,000 Children

- 13.2 – 38.0
- 9.6 – 13.1
- 6.6 – 9.5
- 0.0 – 6.5



the State of Texas Children 2004

# Safety & Personal Security

A little over four decades ago, the medical profession first officially recognized the problem of child abuse, then described as “battered child syndrome.” But adult mistreatment of children involves more than just physical attack. Emotional abuse and sheer neglect also constitute adult abuse of children. The sexual assault of children by adults represents a separate, recognized category of child abuse. Maltreatment of children has horrific consequences, both immediate and lasting. Serious physical effects can range from broken bones to brain injury to sexually transmitted disease. Lingering antisocial, aggressive, and self-destructive behaviors, along with enduring academic problems, are common outcomes. Texas law requires that any person suspecting child abuse or neglect must report these concerns to the state’s Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-252-5400) or contact local law enforcement.

Awareness of the prevalence of child abuse has improved, and we take the consequences more seriously. But we can do more to protect potentially vulnerable children and to help heal victims. Most urgently, the entire child welfare system—federal, state, and community—requires comprehensive reform. This would entail an integrated system of shared financing, to begin with. It also would recommend a more holistic approach to services, linking prevention, intervention, home support, residential, post-adoption, and reunification assistance.

**B**ased on data provided by the state’s Department of Family Protective Services, Texas KIDS COUNT reports both the actual count and the rate per 1,000 children of confirmed cases of child abuse.

Seven counties in the state reported no confirmations of child abuse during 2002. Although reasons for this aren’t completely obvious, it may simply reflect these counties’ extremely small child populations. Some of the lowest rates of confirmed abuse show up in counties along the Texas border with Mexico, including Kinney County (1.23 cases per 1,000 children), Zapata County (4.14 cases), and Maverick County (4.28 cases). By contrast, confirmed abuse rates appear much higher in several neighboring south Texas counties, chiefly Brooks County (23.88 confirmations per 1,000 children), Frio County (15.21 cases), and Zavala County (14.30 cases).

The map displays several other clusters of counties with comparatively high rates of confirmed child abuse. One of these county groups is located in the heart of the state, northwest of Austin, with rates of confirmed abuse highest in Lampasas County

(28.82 cases per 1,000 children), Llano County (28.00 cases), and San Saba County (27.74 cases). The state’s absolute highest rates of abuse appear in west Texas. Outside Lubbock, Kent County (37.97 cases per 1,000 children) and Nolan County (34.22 cases) lead the state in confirmed child abuse.

The map reveals much lower levels of confirmed child abuse in Texas’ major urban counties. At 5.37 cases per 1,000 children, El Paso County reports the lowest rate among large urban counties. Harris County (6.31 cases per 1,000 children) also belongs to the group of counties with the lowest confirmed abuse rates. None of Texas’ other major urban counties report more than 10 confirmed cases of abuse for each 1,000 children in their populations.

Consistently low rates of confirmed child abuse show up in the suburban counties that surround Texas’ largest cities. Among suburban counties, confirmed child abuse is lowest in suburban Houston’s Fort Bend County (3.08 cases per 1,000 children). North of Fort Worth, Denton County also reflects a comparatively low confirmed abuse rate (4.50 cases). ■

At its best, the American tradition of progressive social reform has demanded that our society honor children’s entitlement to basic protection and support. In the years since ratification of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations cites major achievements in children’s economic, social, cultural, and even civic and political rights. The most universally accepted human rights statement in history, the Convention reflects growing global consensus and was adopted into international law by the U.N. General Assembly in 1989. Only two U.N. member states have yet to ratify the Convention. One is Somalia, the other is the United States.

## RESOURCES

Child Welfare League of America  
<http://www.cwla.org/>  
National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect  
<http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/index.cfm>

## INDICATORS

- Confirmed Victims of Child Abuse
- Child Deaths
- Teen Violent Deaths
- Children in Family Violence Shelters

TO GET MORE DATA ON EACH OF THESE INDICATORS FOR YOUR COUNTY, GO TO:

[factbook.cppp.org](http://factbook.cppp.org)

JUNE 2005

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# Definitions and Data Sources

## FAMILY & COMMUNITY POPULATION

### Total Population

**DEFINITION:** For 1990 and 2000, the actual count of the total population of Texas. For all other years, estimates of the total Texas population.

**DATA SOURCE:** U.S. Census Bureau (1990, 2000). Texas State Data Center, State Population Estimates Program, University of Texas at San Antonio (intercensal years).

### Total Child Population

**DEFINITION:** For 1990 and 2000, the actual count of the Texas population under 18 years of age. For all other years, estimates of the state population under 18.

**DATA SOURCE:** U.S. Census Bureau (1990, 2000). Texas State Data Center, State Population Estimates Program, University of Texas at San Antonio (intercensal years).

### Child Population by Age Group

**DEFINITION:** For 1990 and 2000, actual counts of the number of children within each age group. For all other years, estimates of the number of children within each range of ages.

**DATA SOURCE:** U.S. Census Bureau (1990, 2000). Texas State Data Center, State Population Estimates Program, University of Texas at San Antonio (intercensal years).

### Families with Children

**DEFINITION:** Number and percentage of all children living in families with both parents present in the home, and number and percentage of all children living in families headed by a parent without a spouse present in the home.

**DATA SOURCE:** U.S. Census Bureau.

### Children in Foster Care

**DEFINITION:** Actual number, and rate per 1,000 children, of children in foster care.

**DATA SOURCE:** Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, annual Legislative Data Book.

## ECONOMIC RESOURCES, SECURITY & OPPORTUNITY

### Poverty for Total Population

**DEFINITION:** For 1989 and 1999, actual count and percentage of the total Texas population in households with incomes below the official federal poverty threshold. For all other years, estimates of the number and percentage of the total Texas population living in households with incomes below the official federal poverty threshold.

**DATA SOURCE:** U.S. Census Bureau (1989, 1999). U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates Program (all other years).

### Child Poverty

**DEFINITION:** For 1989 and 1999, actual count and percentage of related children under the age of 18 living in families with incomes below the official federal poverty threshold. For all other years, estimates of the number and percentage of children living in families with incomes below the official federal poverty threshold.

**DATA SOURCE:** U.S. Census Bureau (1989, 1999). U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates Program (all other years).

### Median Household Income

**DEFINITION:** The point at which one-half of all households have higher incomes and one-half of all households have lower incomes.

**DATA SOURCE:** U.S. Census Bureau (1989, 1999). U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates Program (all other years).

### Unemployment

**DEFINITION:** Percentage of the civilian labor force not working, looking for work, or available to accept a job.

**DATA SOURCE:** Texas Workforce Commission.

### Children Receiving TANF and AFDC

**DEFINITION:** Number and percentage of children under 18 years of age receiving cash assistance through the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program (1997 and after) and the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program (prior to 1997).

**DATA SOURCE:** Texas Department of Human Services.

## EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

### Children on State-Subsidized Child Care

**DEFINITION:** Number of children receiving child care subsidy as a percentage of the population of children under 14 years of age.

**DATA SOURCE:** Texas Workforce Commission.

### Children in Public Pre-Kindergarten

**DEFINITION:** Number and percentage of children ages 3 and 4 enrolled in public school pre-kindergarten programs.

**DATA SOURCE:** Texas Education Agency.

### Children in Head Start Program

**DEFINITION:** Number and percentage of the children ages 3 and 4 enrolled in the Head Start program.

**DATA SOURCE:** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

## SCHOOL SUCCESS

### High School Dropout and Completion

**DEFINITION:** Graduation status for entire cohort of ninth-grade students at the time the class graduates.

**DATA SOURCE:** Texas Education Agency.

### Students Passing TAKS Reading

**DEFINITION:** Number and percentage of fourth- and tenth-grade students passing the reading component of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills examination (prior to 2002-2003, Texas Assessment of Academic Skills).

**DATA SOURCE:** Texas Education Agency.

### Students Passing TAKS Math

**DEFINITION:** Number and percentage of fourth- and tenth-grade students passing the mathematics component of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills examination (prior to 2002-2003, Texas Assessment of Academic Skills).

**DATA SOURCE:** Texas Education Agency.

### Students Passing TAKS Writing

**DEFINITION:** Number and percentage of fourth- and tenth-grade students passing the writing component of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills examination (prior to 2002-2003, Texas Assessment of Academic Skills).

**DATA SOURCE:** Texas Education Agency.

### Special Education Students

**DEFINITION:** Number and percentage of students in all grades receiving special education services.

**DATA SOURCE:** Texas Education Agency.

### Students in Bilingual/ESL Programs

**DEFINITION:** Number and percentage of students in all grades receiving bilingual or English as Second Language instruction.

**DATA SOURCE:** Texas Education Agency.

## TEENS AT RISK

### Juvenile Violent Crime Arrests

**DEFINITION:** Number of arrests, and rate per 100,000 children aged 10 to 17, for the offenses of murder, manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

**DATA SOURCE:** Texas Department of Public Safety.

### Teen Pregnancy

**DEFINITION:** Number of births, and percentage of all live births, to females aged 13 through 19, by race and ethnic group, regardless of marital status.

**DATA SOURCE:** Texas Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics.

### Single-Teen Pregnancy

**DEFINITION:** Number of births, and percentage of all live births, to unmarried females aged 13 through 19, by race and ethnic group.

**DATA SOURCE:** Texas Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics.

## PHYSICAL, SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL HEALTH

### Infant Mortality

**DEFINITION:** Number of deaths, and rate per 1,000 live births, of children under one year of age, by race and ethnic group.

**DATA SOURCE:** Texas Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics.

### Low Birth-Weight Babies

**DEFINITION:** Number and percentage of live births of infants weighing under 5.5 pounds, or 2,500 grams, by race and ethnic group.

**DATA SOURCE:** Texas Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics.

### Mothers Receiving Little or No Prenatal Care

**DEFINITION:** Number and percentage of live-birth mothers who began prenatal care in the third trimester of pregnancy or received no prenatal care, by race and ethnic group.

**DATA SOURCE:** Texas Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics.

### Children Enrolled in Medicaid

**DEFINITION:** Number and percentage of children through age 18 enrolled in the Texas Medicaid program.

**DATA SOURCE:** Texas Health and Human Services Commission.

### Children Enrolled in CHIP

**DEFINITION:** Number and percentage of children through age 18 enrolled in the Texas Children's Health Insurance Program.

**DATA SOURCE:** Texas Health and Human Services Commission.

### Children Receiving SSI

**DEFINITION:** Number, and rate per 1,000 children, under 18 years of age receiving Supplemental Security Income.

**DATA SOURCE:** U.S. Social Security Administration.

## HUNGER & NUTRITION

### Children Receiving Food Stamps

**DEFINITION:** Number and percentage of children under 18 enrolled in the Food Stamp program.

**DATA SOURCE:** Texas Department of Human Services.

### Children Receiving Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

**DEFINITION:** Number and percentage of total school enrollment receiving either free or reduced-priced school lunch.

**DATA SOURCE:** Texas Education Agency.

### Children Receiving WIC

**DEFINITION:** Number of infants, number of non-infant children 1 through 4 years of age, and infants and children combined as a percentage of the total child population under the age of five years, receiving assistance through the Women's, Infants, and Children's food program.

**DATA SOURCE:** Texas Department of Health.

## SAFETY & PERSONAL SECURITY

### Confirmed Victims of Child Abuse

**DEFINITION:** Actual number, and rate per 1,000 children, of children confirmed as victims of child abuse.

**DATA SOURCE:** Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, annual Legislative Data Book.

### Child Deaths

**DEFINITION:** Number of deaths, and rate per 100,000, of children ages 1 through 14 from all causes.

**DATA SOURCE:** Texas Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics.

### Teen Violent Deaths

**DEFINITION:** Number of deaths, and rate per 100,000, of teens ages 15 through 19 by homicide, suicide, and accident.

**DATA SOURCE:** Texas Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics.

### Children in Family Violence Shelters

**DEFINITION:** Actual number, and rate per 1,000 children under 18, of children living in family violence shelters.

**DATA SOURCE:** Texas Department of Human Services.



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