

# 2024

## KIDS COUNT IN NEBRASKA REPORT





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Cover photos featuring  
Nebraska children

*Kids Count in Nebraska* is a children's data and policy project of Voices for Children in Nebraska. Key indicators measure the well-being of children in five areas: health, education, economic stability, child welfare, and juvenile justice.

This research is funded in part by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, as well as by generous sponsorships from Mutual of Omaha, Heider Family Foundation, Weitz Family Foundation, First Presbyterian Church of the Cross, Kate and Roger Weitz, Tom Tonniges Family Trust, and Don Perry. We thank them for their support and acknowledge that the findings and conclusions presented in this report are those of the author(s) alone, and do not reflect the opinions of these organizations.

An important component of this project is the Technical Team of Advisors, members of which provide data and expertise on child well-being in our state. The *Kids Count* Technical Team, comprising representatives from numerous agencies and organizations in Nebraska and other research experts, provides invaluable information for this project each year. Without their interest, support, and partnership, *Kids Count* would be impossible to produce.

*Kids Count in Nebraska Reports* from 2008 to 2024 are available for download at [www.voicesforchildren.com/data-research/kids-count](http://www.voicesforchildren.com/data-research/kids-count).

Additional copies of the *Kids Count in Nebraska 2024 Report*, are available from:

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Dear Kids Count Reader,

Welcome to the 32nd annual edition of the Kids Count in Nebraska Report!

At Voices for Children, our mission is to advocate for equitable opportunity for all children in Nebraska, and we believe that good data is a necessary starting point. You cannot know where you need to go without having a clear picture of where you are. But data alone cannot tell the full story of where systemic barriers lie for children and families, nor can it, by itself, propose solutions to crises of child health and well-being. This year's commentary focuses on a pressing issue affecting families across our state: the struggle to find affordable housing. This is a nuanced policy conversation that impacts not only family budgets, but the very fabric of our communities. As always, we share relevant data points and a set of recommendations highlighting the various policy levers that can be pulled. In doing so, we hope to highlight the opportunities we have as a state to ensure that every child has a safe and stable home as they grow.

This year's book comes to you through the support of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Edward and Sally Malashock Family Foundation, Mutual of Omaha, and other generous sponsors listed on page 2. As always, we couldn't bring you this product without the gracious assistance of our technical team of advisors and data providers throughout our state agencies, whose names you will find on the final pages. We are grateful for these partnerships, which allow us to continue to share the best data available.

We hope that this report will continue to inspire meaningful conversations. We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who has contributed to Kids Count in Nebraska over the years, and to all the partners involved in this edition.

Thank you for your dedication to the children of Nebraska.

Sincerely,

**JULIET SUMMERS, JD**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**JOSH SHIRK, PHD**  
RESEARCH COORDINATOR

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# ABOUT VOICES FOR CHILDREN

Founded in 1987, Voices for Children in Nebraska has a 38-year track record of improving the lives of Nebraska’s children and youth. As the independent, nonpartisan voice for children, we are not funded by state, federal, city, or county dollars. Our independence allows us to speak loud and clear and to shine the spotlight on the needs of children in our state.

## MISSION:

At Voices for Children in Nebraska, we advocate for equitable opportunity for all children in Nebraska through research, policy, and community engagement.

## VISION:

We envision a Nebraska with strong communities where every child has all they need to lead a healthy, secure, and fulfilling life.

## VALUES:

We keep children at the heart of everything we do and follow a core set of values that serve as a guide for our words and actions.

### Integrity.

We serve as an independent and non-partisan voice to drive systems change.

### Information.

We use research, data, and community input to inform our direction and guide our actions.

### Equity.

We intentionally center diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in all we do.

### Courage.

We fight against the status quo when necessary to amplify youth’s voices and transform systems.

### Collaboration.

We listen and partner in order to support children and families according to their needs.

## VOICES FOR CHILDREN IN NEBRASKA’S 2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

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Kate Noble Weitz



## CHILDREN ARE OUR STATE'S GREATEST RESOURCE, AND THE DECISIONS OUR LEADERS MAKE ABOUT THEM IMPACT OUR COLLECTIVE FUTURE.

Voices for Children in Nebraska has developed the following Pro-Kid Policy Plan, focusing on the issues of health, economic stability, child welfare, and juvenile justice. Our policy priorities are guided by research, data, and proven best practices that improve child

well-being. We pay close attention to the impact of race, socioeconomic status, and geography, and seek to remove barriers to opportunity within these areas. This plan represents our vision for a Nebraska where strong communities allow all children to thrive.

### VOICES FOR CHILDREN WORKS TO ENSURE THAT:

#### HEALTH



Children and families have access to affordable, quality physical and behavioral health care. Consistent and preventive health care gives children the best start to grow up to be healthy and productive adults.

#### ECONOMIC STABILITY



Families are able to achieve financial security, and children's basic needs are met. State economic policies support families in trying to build a better future and balance work and family life.

#### CHILD WELFARE



Children grow up in safe, permanent, and loving homes. An effective child welfare system strengthens families and minimizes trauma through timely and appropriate action.

#### JUVENILE JUSTICE



Youth are held accountable for their actions in developmentally appropriate ways that promote community safety and allow them to grow into responsible citizens.

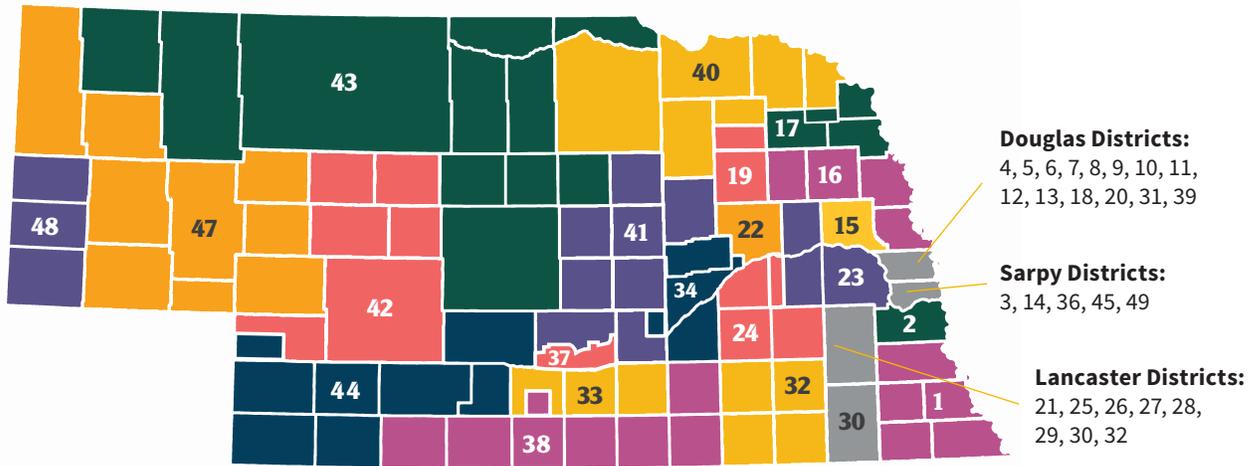


# CONTACTING ELECTED OFFICIALS

## HOW TO USE YOUR VOICE ON BEHALF OF CHILDREN

Do you have something to share with elected officials about children’s issues? It’s easy to contact policymakers using these tools—a legislative map, contact information for your representatives, and a wealth of information and data at your fingertips.

### 1 FIND YOUR DISTRICT



### 2 IDENTIFY YOUR ELECTED OFFICIAL OR OFFICIALS

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Nebraska Secretary of State: <b>Bob Evnen</b>	(402) 471-2554	www.sos.ne.gov
Nebraska Attorney General: <b>Mike Hilgers</b>	(402) 471-2683	www.ago.nebraska.gov
Nebraska State Treasurer: <b>Tom Briese</b>	(402) 471-2455	www.treasurer.nebraska.gov
U.S. Senator: <b>Deb Fischer</b>	(202) 224-6551	www.fischer.senate.gov
U.S. Senator: <b>Pete Ricketts</b>	(202) 224-4224	www.ricketts.senate.gov
U.S. Representative-1st District: <b>Mike Flood</b>	(202) 225-4806	www.flood.house.gov
U.S. Representative-2nd District: <b>Don Bacon</b>	(202) 225-4155	www.bacon.house.gov
U.S. Representative-3rd District: <b>Adrian Smith</b>	(202) 225-6435	www.adriansmith.house.gov

## 3 KNOW YOUR ISSUES, SHARE YOUR DATA

[www.voicesforchildren.com](http://www.voicesforchildren.com) contains a wealth of information including:

- Legislative Priority bills
- AdvoKid Newsletter
- *Kids Count* interactive data tool
- Electronic version of the *Kids Count in Nebraska Report*

To stay current on children's legislative issues, sign up for our free **AdvoKid email alerts** on our website to help you respond to the issues affecting children in the unicameral.

To access Kids Count Nebraska data on the go, visit [www.kidscountnebraska.com](http://www.kidscountnebraska.com) for our interactive state data tool.

To use the KIDS COUNT Data Center – the interactive home of national, state, and county level data, visit [www.datacenter.kidscount.org](http://www.datacenter.kidscount.org).

To view the legislative calendar, read bills, listen live, and more, visit [www.nebraskalegislature.gov](http://www.nebraskalegislature.gov).

# Commentary



A large, stylized graphic of a house in shades of yellow and orange, positioned on the left side of the page. The house has a simple, rounded design with a chimney on the left side and a roofline that tapers to the right. The background is a light yellow color with a large, dark yellow curved shape on the left side.

# **Nebraska Families and the Affordable Housing Crisis:**

What the Data say  
and Solutions  
to Consider



A quality and affordable place to call home is perhaps the most important need for families. As a lived-in value, a home is a private place where families share meals, play, pursue hobbies, cuddle up for movie night, get ready for and unwind from a busy day. The home, in other words, provides value as a stable space to be vulnerable and to care for and support the growth of each household member. For children, a safe home is where foundational memories are made and security is most deeply felt. By contrast, as an investment value, housing is primarily viewed as a property asset with the potential to increase in market value and generate monetary wealth.

Unfortunately, for homeowners and renters alike, what we are seeing play out right now is a conflict between the lived-in value and investment value of a home. Families are less able to maintain stable housing at affordable rates. As the following sections show, securing stable and affordable housing has become increasingly difficult over the past 40 to 50 years as both rents and the price of owning a home have outpaced income gains. Among the reasons for the rise in rents include increased construction costs, local zoning and land-use regulations on multi-family units, a general shift by apartment developers to upgrade existing units for renters with higher incomes, and by the growing presence of institutional investors in the market.<sup>1</sup>

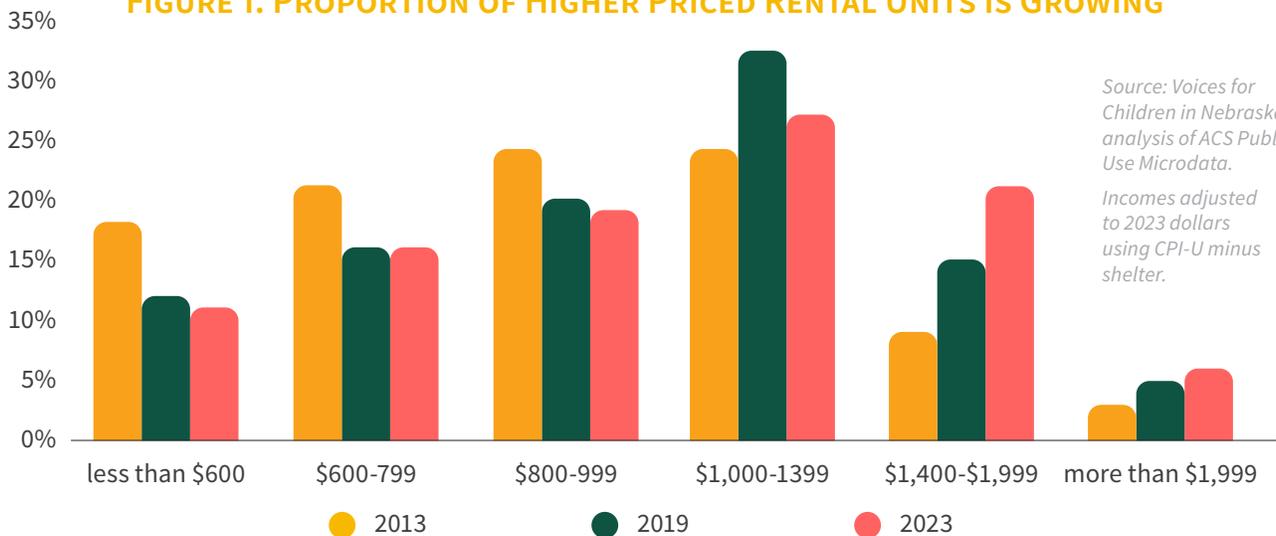
Children deserve our efforts to ensure their basic needs are met, and their families' ability to provide a safe and stable home is high among them. Solving today's affordable housing challenges will require rethinking existing regulations, increasing wages for workers, and systemic commitment to balancing the conflict between a home as a lived-in value and an investment value: ensuring every child has a home to grow up in.

## RISING RENTS

As of 2023, 28% of Nebraska families with children are renters. In the rental market, renters value the rental unit as a space to live, while the landlord sees the space as an investment value by which to obtain passive income. For this reason, rises in rents impact renters and landlords differently. As the data below shows, the balance between these two conflicting values has shifted to the side of landlords as rents are increasing for families and absorbing a larger portion of the family budget.

For instance, **Figure 1** breaks down the percentage of rental units in Nebraska into six different price ranges. Longitudinal data show that rental units in the three lowest price ranges are making up a smaller portion of the rental market. In 2013, units with contract rents under \$1,000 made up 63% of the market, compared to just 46% by 2023 (all prices adjusted for inflation). Meanwhile the proportion of units renting at the two highest ranges saw dramatic increases. Units with monthly rents between \$1,400 to \$1,999 increased by 118%, and there was a 97% increase in units charging \$2,000 or more.

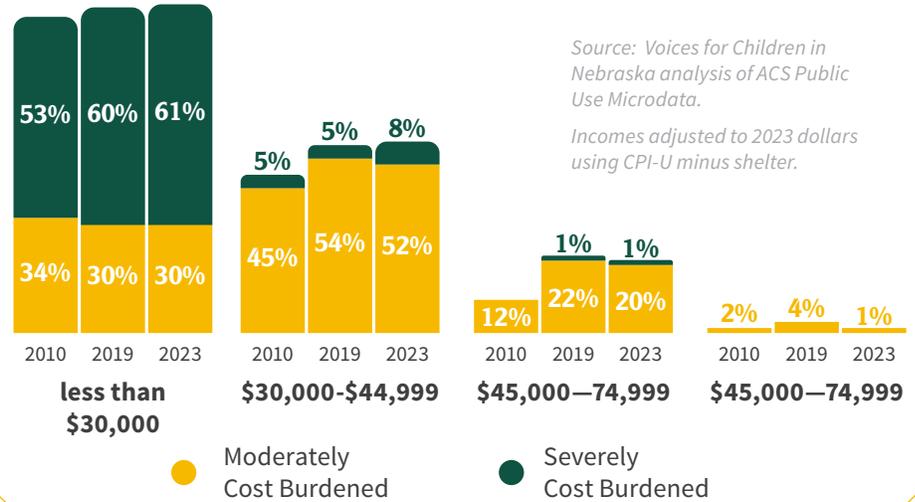
### FIGURE 1. PROPORTION OF HIGHER PRICED RENTAL UNITS IS GROWING





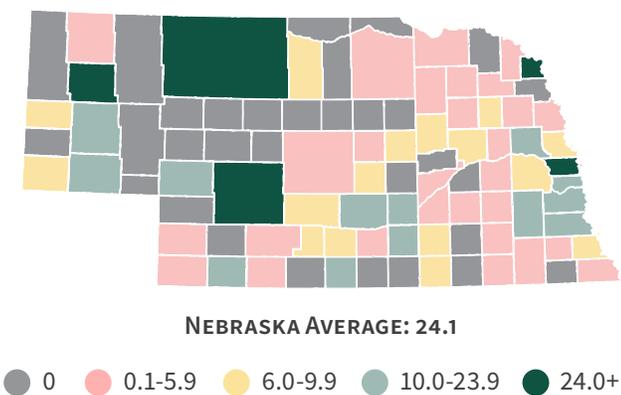
Unfortunately, the increased presence of high rental prices does not necessarily mean more Nebraskans are earning high incomes and can therefore afford these rents. The National Low Income Housing Coalition estimates that Nebraska has a shortage of 45,275 affordable and available units for renters at or below the poverty line.<sup>ii</sup> In fact, as **Figure 2** shows, rising rents are leading to more cost-burdened families, meaning more families spend 30% or more of their income on rent. Among households with children making less than \$30,000, 91% were cost-burdened in 2023, compared to 87% in 2010. Even worse, this rise among the lowest income group is due to the jump in families spending more than half their income on rent--from 53% in 2010 to 61% in 2023. Cost burden among families making between \$30,000 and \$44,999 jumped from 50% in 2010 to 59% in 2023. Meanwhile, from 2010 to 2023, an 84% increase in the total cost burdened families occurred. Only families making \$75,000 or more experienced a drop in housing burden.

**FIGURE 2. INCOME AND HOUSEHOLD BURDEN**



With rents and cost burdens rising, Nebraska’s renters face the threat of eviction and even homelessness. In 2023, Nebraska’s statewide eviction rate stood at 24.1 per 1,000 renters. Evictions rates, however, vary greatly by county. As shown in **Figure 3**, Nebraska’s three most populous counties have higher eviction rates. Douglas County, the most populous county in Nebraska, had the highest eviction rate (43.4), while Lancaster (20.0) ranked 9<sup>th</sup> and Sarpy (16.9) ranked 11<sup>th</sup> overall. However, renters in more rural counties are not immune to eviction. Along with Douglas, Cherry (39.0), Lincoln (25.6), Dakota (24.4), and Box Butte (24.3) have the five highest evictions rates among the 93 total counties in Nebraska.

**FIGURE 3. EVICTION RATES BY COUNTY (2023)**  
EVICTIONS PER 1,000 RENTERS.



Source: Administrative Office of Courts & Probation, Eviction Proceedings Bi-Annual Data Reports; U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, Table B25003.

Evictions threaten the livelihood of renters and can lead to homelessness, which is particularly detrimental to child development. In 2023, there were 4,629 homeless individuals in Nebraska, including 987 youth under the age of 19.<sup>iii</sup> Families and children are greatly impacted by evictions even if it doesn’t lead to homelessness. Most landlords disqualify potential renters if they have an eviction record. This in turn causes children to switch schools, families to lose their possessions, jobs, and to relocate to neighborhoods with higher levels of crime and poverty. Evictions also have pronounced effects on health. Studies have shown that adverse birth outcomes are more likely among babies born to a mother who experienced an eviction during pregnancy.<sup>iv</sup>



## THE RISING COST OF HOME OWNERSHIP

In contrast to the rental market, a family homeowner values their home as both a place to live and an investment asset. However, this does not resolve the conflict between the two values, but instead pushes it onto young families attempting to enter the market. Homes have become valuable assets that bring significant return on investment for their owners. This is generally thought of as a good thing and policies over the past 40 to 50 years have encouraged the appreciation of housing assets. The inflation of home prices, however, has occurred while incomes for many households have stagnated. As a result, young families today must increasingly rely on intergenerational wealth transfers that have often, at least in part, been formed through the gains their parents and grandparents made on housing assets.<sup>v</sup>

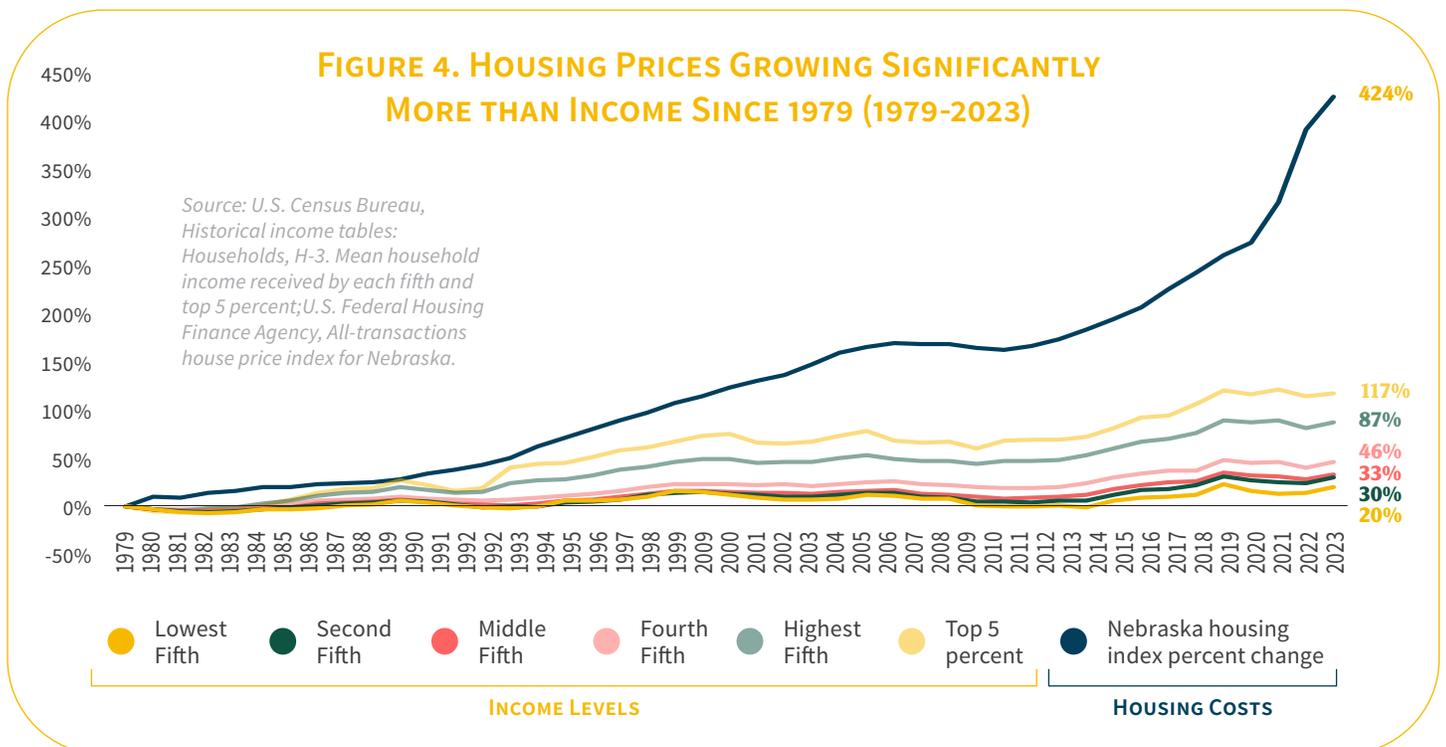
To understand this dynamic, compare the percentage change in U.S. mean household income to the percentage change in the Nebraska Housing Index.<sup>vi</sup> As shown in **Figure 4**, from 1979 to 2023, the Nebraska Housing Index rose 424%. Meanwhile, the household earnings for each fifth and the top 5% of state earners were modest by comparison.

Adjusted for inflation, from 1979 to 2023:

- the bottom fifth of household earners increased earnings by 20%
- the second fifth by 30%
- the middle fifth by 33%
- the fourth fifth by 46%
- the highest fifth by 87%
- the top 5% by 117%

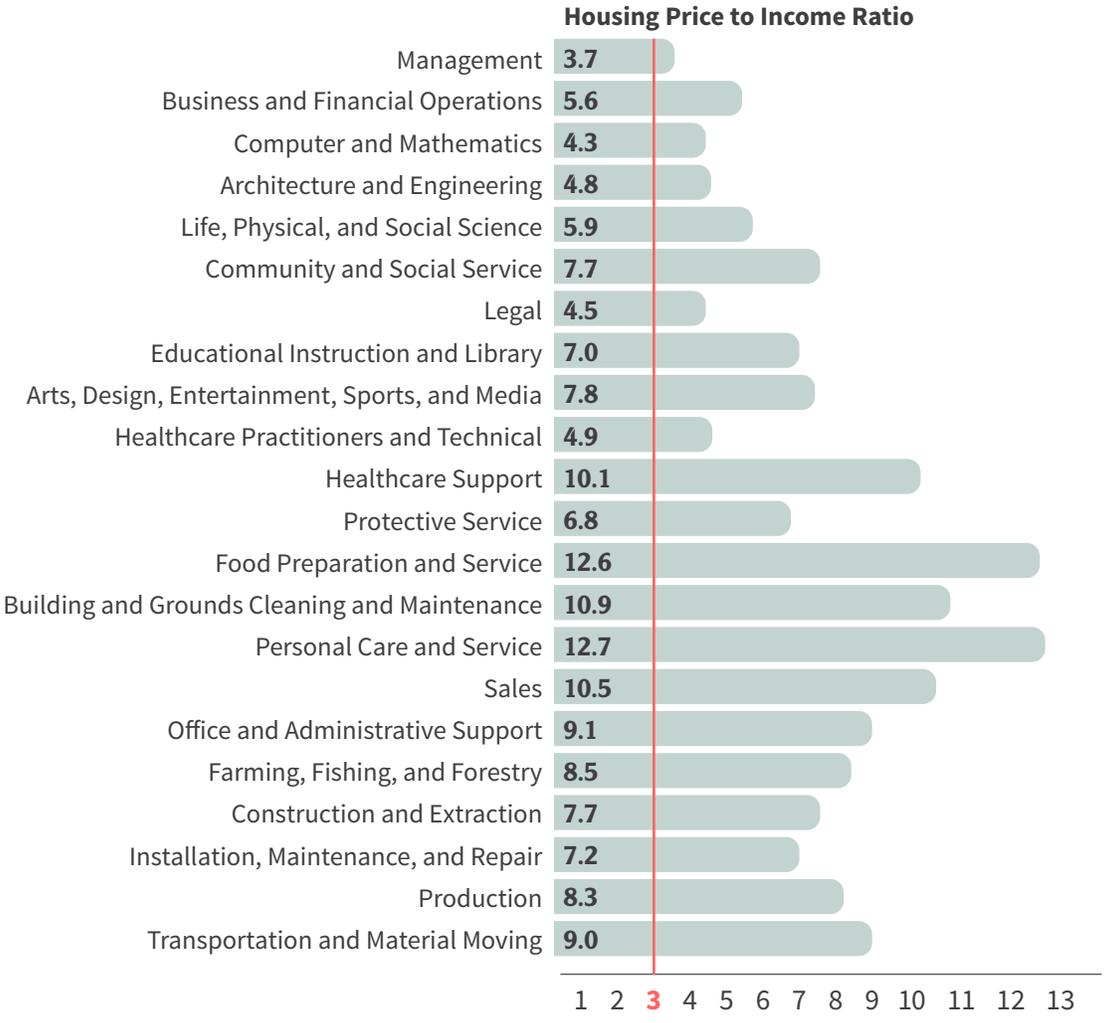
Another way of thinking about this is to imagine if household earnings since 1979 had increased by 424%, just as the housing index did. Under such a scenario, the bottom fifth of households in 2023 would have earned \$77,238, which is only a couple thousand dollars lower than what the middle fifth actually earned. Furthermore, a 424% increase in household earnings would put the second fifth of household earners at \$192,127 a year. Meanwhile, the middle fifth, who actually earned \$80,730 in 2023, would have made \$316,704.

The home price to income ratio is another good way of illustrating this imbalance. In May of 2023, the median listing price for a home in Nebraska was \$371,600. For buyers on the market, it is recommended that the home price to income ratio not exceed 3.0; that is, that the value of a home is not more than three times the buyer's annual income earnings.





**FIGURE 5. HOME PRICE TO INCOME RATIO:**  
**ANNUAL MEDIAN WAGES FOR ALL OCCUPATIONS GROUPINGS FALL SHORT**  
**OF RECOMMENDED RATIO OF 3.0 (2023)**



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; Realtor.com, Housing Inventory: Median Listing Price in Nebraska [MEDLISPRINE], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/MEDLISPRINE>.

**Figure 5** provides this ratio using the median listing price for homes in Nebraska and the median annual income for 22 major occupation groupings in May of 2023. It shows that none of the occupation groupings earn enough to meet the recommended ratio of 3.0. Management occupations, with an annual median

income of \$100,710, come closest with a ratio of 3.7. Computer and math (4.3), legal (4.5), architecture and engineering (4.8), and healthcare practitioner and technician (4.9) are the only other occupation groupings with a ratio under 5.



## ADDRESSING AFFORDABLE HOUSING CRISIS

Every child deserves a stable, quality, and affordable place to call home. But, as the data show, it is becoming more and more difficult for Nebraskan families to find affordable housing. Solving the affordable housing crisis requires addressing problems of supply and stagnating income.

### ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM 1: ZONING AND LAND-USE REGULATIONS

While demand for housing varies by locality (i.e. the level of population growth and income levels of new residents), it is nonetheless a demand we all share and must meet. The challenge, then, is to supply the right type of housing, at the right locations, and at the right price points.

Regulations do certainly add costs to builders which are then passed on to consumers. For instance, a 2022 survey conducted by the University of Nebraska at Omaha asked single-family homebuilders in the Omaha area about the costs of government regulation. It estimates that regulations account for 32.8% of total construction costs in Omaha, compared to a national average of 21.5%. Building codes and architectural design standards beyond the ordinary were cited as the mostly costly types of regulations. Of course, regulations are implemented for a reason, often to ensure that housing is structurally safe and meeting certain standards of quality. Nonetheless, as Bartle and Song point out regarding their survey findings, “if costs can be reduced while still achieving regulatory goals, governments should consider reform”.<sup>vii</sup>

In addition, zoning and land-use regulations often hinder the supply of multi-family housing options—from duplexes to large apartment buildings—as well as affordable manufactured and modular housing options. Even when such housing developments get initial approval, residents often fight the development.<sup>viii</sup> These concerns can range from the preservation of historic buildings, increased traffic, or possible forced evictions that will occur.<sup>ix</sup> Among homeowners, there is also a fear that the investment value of their nearby single-family

home will fall.<sup>x</sup> In this regard, local officials play a pivotal role in balancing the competing interests of developers and existing homeowners with the need to supply affordable housing options for all income levels. Nebraska can also promote manufactured and modular homes working with other states to develop uniform building codes. Manufactured homes are built entirely off-site in factories and then placed on a permanent trailer chassis. Similarly, modular homes are constructed in sets off-site and then attached together on a permanent foundation at the construction site. The move from craft production to industrial production has lowered cost and increased the output for a wide range of products. But housing construction still largely follows a model in which various craftworkers arrive on site and each complete their section of the house. By contrast, manufactured and modular companies accelerate the homebuilding process through the industrialization of the work process, helping to reduce the costs and time of construction. Advances in production have also increased the quality of these homes, making them secure and affordable options for families. Standardizing codes among states can lead to even more streamlined production processes, therein reducing costs even more.

Nebraska can also consider developing grants and programs for builders and buyers alike to encourage manufactured and modular building. Doing so can help builders raise more capital, allowing them to invest in and implement new technologies in the factory.

### ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM 2: INSTITUTIONAL INVESTORS

The housing market is also impacted by the growing presence of institutional investors. Institutional investors pool money and invest millions--even billions--of dollars into purchasing real estate properties. Traditionally, institutional investment was confined to office buildings, but by the 1990s, these firms entered the housing rental market by purchasing apartment buildings. Eventually, when a growing number of people defaulted on their mortgage during the housing market crash of 2008, institutional investors saw a buy low, sell high opportunity in the single-family residential market.<sup>xi</sup>



As a result, potential single-family residential home buyers have increasingly found themselves not only competing against each other, but against institutional investors willing to provide an all-cash offer for a property in “as is” condition. According to a report by the National Association of Realtors, institutional investors convert 42% of their purchased homes to rentals, while 45% are sold back on the market. As of 2022, institutional investors owned 5% of single-family rental homes, up from 1% in 2012, and, according to an analysis by one institutional investor, may control 40% of U.S. single-family rental homes by 2030.<sup>xii</sup>

These investors tend to target lower cost homes in urban areas experiencing population growth, thus reducing the supply of homes for families in these localities. Investors also tend to cluster their purchases in particular neighborhoods and, by doing so, achieve the economies of scale necessary to drive up rents.<sup>xiii</sup> At the same time, these new corporate landlords have been criticized for providing fewer necessary repairs and for evicting residents at a higher rate than small landlords.<sup>xiv</sup>

Institutional investors are contributing to unaffordable housing around the world.<sup>xv</sup> Although their presence is not as prominent in Nebraska as other places, particularly the U.S. Sunbelt, institutional investors are establishing a growing presence in the state and attempts should be made to curb the power of institutional investors.<sup>xvi</sup>

Some localities are attempting to impose waiting periods on foreclosed houses that an investment firm bids on. The idea is to allow non-profits or tenants an opportunity to buy the property by outbidding the initial sale. Other places, like Atlanta, where institutional investors are particularly active, are attempting to limit the number of properties purchased by a single business firm. The prime minister of Spain is taking a more drastic step by placing a 100% tax on property purchases made by foreign institutional.<sup>xvii</sup> Finally, the governor of New York is proposing a 75-day waiting period before institutional investors can make an offer on one- or two-family homes, while also limiting tax benefits to the investors.<sup>xviii</sup> Nebraska need not wait for more institutional housing investment growth before taking similar action to ensure affordable housing for individuals and families.

### ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM 3: EVICTIONS AND PROTECTIONS FOR RENTERS

As noted above, evictions lead to job losses, poorer health outcomes, worsening community life, and school disruption for families with children. Evictions are not simply the result of poverty among renters but a cause of poverty due to these disruptions.<sup>xix</sup> Nebraska can increase housing and community stability for families in multiple ways.

Approximately 11,000 Nebraskans rely on housing vouchers to help cover the cost of rising rents. But housing vouchers are not accepted by all landlords, resulting in renters moving further from jobs, family supports, or schools. Banning housing discrimination based on source of income would give renters more choice of where they live.

Nebraska can also place caps on application and other fees charged by landlords, including late payment fees. Colorado, for instance, caps late fees at \$50 or 5%, whichever is greater.<sup>xx</sup>

To prevent evictions from occurring, 23 states currently offer tax credits for renters. For example, Iowa offers up to \$1,000 in tax reimbursements for renters. Michigan offers a \$1,700 tax credit, while Minnesota offers up to \$2,640 in tax credits for eligible renters.

If an eviction does occur, renters need adequate time to gather their belongings and find new housing. To help renters in this time of crisis, Nebraska can institute rules to ensure tenants have at least 10 days to move following an eviction judgement. Further, having an eviction on record, including an eviction hearing that the renter wins, often limits an individual when trying to rent in the future. Nebraska can help renters by removing evictions records that resulted in a dismissal and allowing an eviction judgement to be sealed after three years.

### ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM 4: INCREASE WAGES AND PROTECTIONS FOR WORKERS

At the same time, housing affordability will only occur if will simultaneously seek solutions to stagnating household incomes. In the postwar era economic boom, wages rose in-step with workplace productivity



## COMMENTARY

gains. That began to change around 1973, when, although productivity continued to rise, wages began to stagnate.<sup>xxi</sup> To reverse this trend, Nebraska can take steps to strengthen union rights, raise the minimum wage, provide benefits like paid sick leave, and prevent the misclassification of workers as independent contractors.

Unions strengthen the power of workers by bargaining collectively for better wages and work conditions. Unionized workers earn higher wages than non-unionized workers. Lower-wage workers, workers of color, and workers with lower levels of education benefit the most from unions.<sup>xxii</sup>

Nebraska's status as a Right-to-Work state hinders unionization efforts, primarily by making the collection of union fees more difficult. While many blame the offshoring of industrial jobs to countries with cheaper labor and fewer labor protections, business firms already utilize this strategy within the U.S. by moving production to one of the now 26 Right-to-Work states.<sup>xxiii</sup> Studies show that Right-to-Work states lead to declines in wages and increases inequality, creating a race to the bottom effect within the country.<sup>xxiv</sup> Nebraska can lead the way in reversing the decline in unionization by ending its status as a Right-to-Work state.

While unionization is often associated with industrial labor and the public workforce, a growing proportion of jobs today provide support services and care oriented work. These jobs are typically low paying, offer limited benefits such as paid sick leave, and are subject to irregular scheduling. Increasing unionization among this growing class of service workers can help address these shortcomings.

Nebraska can also help these workers by continuing to raise the minimum wage, providing and promoting paid sick leave, and addressing the misclassification of workers. Nebraskans already voted for the former two policies through ballot measures. Many Nebraskans voted for these measures based on their own experiences of trying to pay for housing, food, and transportation on inadequate wages. Nebraskan families also know from experience that illness can strike any family member at any time. Parents, then, need time off to care for themselves and their family. Again, families know from experience that, at these moments, the stability of their housing and financial security should not be threatened by an illness in the family.

### MOVING FORWARD

There is not enough time and space here to address all the complex reasons for and solutions to the current housing crisis. However, the data herein clearly shows the cost of renting and owning a home is rising in ways that are challenging family security. To ensure Nebraska children reap the benefits of a safe and secure home, we must address the contradiction between what we have called the lived-in value and the investment value of a home. For families, owning a home once offered a way to earn back the money they paid into it, while perhaps earning a modest return on the investment. By contrast, beginning in the 1980s, owning a housing asset has offered a substantial return on investment for those able to enter the market. Unfortunately, stagnating household incomes have made it more difficult for a new generation of family to become homeowners or find affordable rental units.

To truly address the unaffordable housing crisis, we must ask how the majority of Nebraskans should be generating wealth—through the income they earn from working or through the ownership of assets like housing. And it will also require honest discussion about how we balance the value of a home as a place to live and the value of the home as an investment. It's a conversation Nebraska needs to have, because every child deserves a place to call home.



## END NOTES

- i. Mark Keightley & Lida Weinstock, “High home prices: Contributing factors and policy considerations,” Congressional Research Service, February 18, 2022; U.S. Government accountability office, “Rental housing: Information on institutional investment in single-family homes,” May 2024. Christophers, 2023; Sassen, 2014.
- ii. National Low Income Housing Coalition
- iii. Nebraska Center on Children, Families, and the Law
- iv. Matthew Desmond, “‘The rent eats first’: How renters and communities are impacted by today’s housing market,” Eviction Lab, Princeton University, August 2, 2022.
- v. Lisa Adkins, Melinda Cooper & Martijn Konings, “The asset economy: Property ownership and the new logic of inequality,” Polity, 2020.
- vi. The Nebraska Housing Index is a broad measure of the movement of single-family house prices. a weighted, repeat-sales index, meaning that it measures average price changes in repeat sales or refinancings on the same properties (Federal Housing Finance Agency).
- vii. John Bartle & Xiaowei Song, “Costs of government regulation on the construction of single-families homes in the Omaha metropolitan area,” University of Nebraska Omaha, College of public affairs and community service.
- viii. John Chapman, “Omaha neighborhood residents concerned with new apartment complex development,” WOWT Omaha, July 11, 2022.
- ix. Hannah McIlree, “Multiple homes demolished in Blackstone for new apartment complex,” KETV Omaha, November 15, 2024; Alexandra Stone, “Residents concerned about scale of Dundee apartments,” July 20, 2016.
- x. A deep dive into city development issues as Omaha residents continue to say ‘not in my backyard,’ KETV news Omaha, December 5, 2022.
- xi. Daniel Geiger & Danielle Walker, “You’re struggling to buy a home right now. Wall street is buying and building entire neighborhoods—and getting rich. What gives?” Business insider, July 8, 2021; William Pattison, Reginald Ross, & Michael Steinberg, “The future of housing: Our outlook for single and multi-family investments,” Metlife investment management, December 6, 2021; Bret Christophers, “How and why US single-family housing became an investor asset class,” Journal of urban history, 49 (2023): 430-449.
- xii. National association of realtors, “Impact of institutional buyers on home sales and single-family rentals,” May 12, 2022; Carlos Waters, “Wall street has purchased hundreds of thousands of single-family homes since the great recession. Here’s what that means for rental prices,” CNBC, February 21, 2023.
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- xiv. Elora Raymond, Richard Duckworth, Ben Miller, Michael Lucas, & Shiraj Pokharel, “Corporate landlords, institutional investors, and displacement: Eviction rates in single-family rentals,” Federal reserve bank of Atlanta, December 2016; Katya Schwenk, “Wall street is buying up entire neighborhoods,” Jacobin, May 15, 2024; Kavahn Mansouri, “VineBrook, in debt, is ditching Midwest rental properties and facing angry tenants,” Flatwater free press, April 18, 2024.
- xv. Brett Christophers, “Our lives in their portfolios: Why asset managers own the world,” Verso, 2024.
- xvi. Aatalia Alamdari, Matthew Hansen, Matt Wynn, & Alexandra Stone, “Today, an Ohio company is one of Omaha’s biggest landlords,” Flatwater free press, May 22, 2022; Kavahn Mansouri, “VineBrook, in debt, is ditching Midwest rental properties and facing angry tenants,” Flatwater free press, April 18, 2024.



## COMMENTARY

- xvii. Katie Fallon, Owen Noble, & Kathryn Reynolds, “Institutional owners in single-family rental properties: A review of the federal and local regulation and policy landscape,” Urban institute, research to action lab, August 2023; Liz Alderman, “Spain seeks to curb foreign buyers amid growing housing crisis,” New York Times, January 23, 2025.
- xviii. Katie Fallon, Owen Noble, & Kathryn Reynolds, “Institutional owners in single-family rental properties: A review of the federal and local regulation and policy landscape,” Urban institute, research to action lab, August 2023; Liz Alderman, “Spain seeks to curb foreign buyers amid growing housing crisis,” New York Times, January 23, 2025; Rachel Dobkin, “NY governor Hochul seeks to limit hedge funds from buying up homes,” Newsweek, January 9, 2025.
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- xxiv. Tom VanHeuvelen, “The right to work and American inequality,” American sociological review, 88, 2023.

# Population

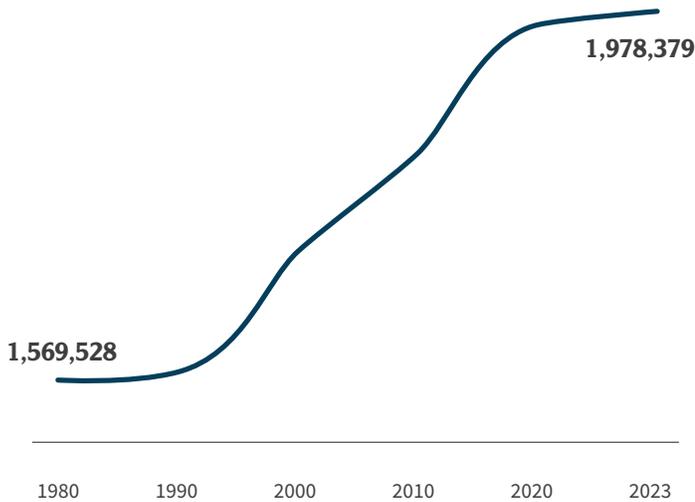
The premise of Kids Count is and has always been that good data can help drive good decisions. Without knowing where children, families, and our communities stand now, we cannot know where the most effective solutions lie. The U.S. Census, taken every 10 years, and the American Community Survey, taken every year, are two of the most important tools for learning how communities are faring. Utilizing these tools, the following section provides a demographic snapshot of Nebraska.



# POPULATION



## NEBRASKA TOTAL RESIDENT POPULATION (1980 - 2023)<sup>1</sup>



**1,978,379**

people lived in Nebraska in 2023.<sup>1</sup>

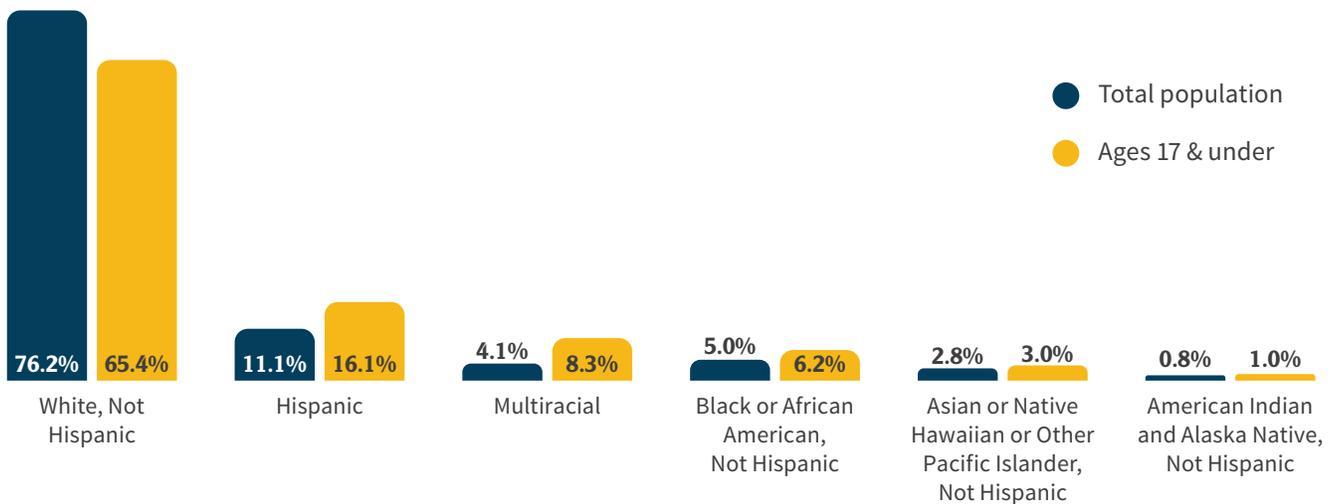
**480,998**

children under age 18 lived in Nebraska in 2023.<sup>2</sup>

**24.5%**

of Nebraskans were of color in 2023.<sup>3</sup>  
This is expected to increase to **38% by 2050.**<sup>4</sup>

## NEBRASKA POPULATION BY RACE/ETHNICITY (2023)<sup>3</sup>

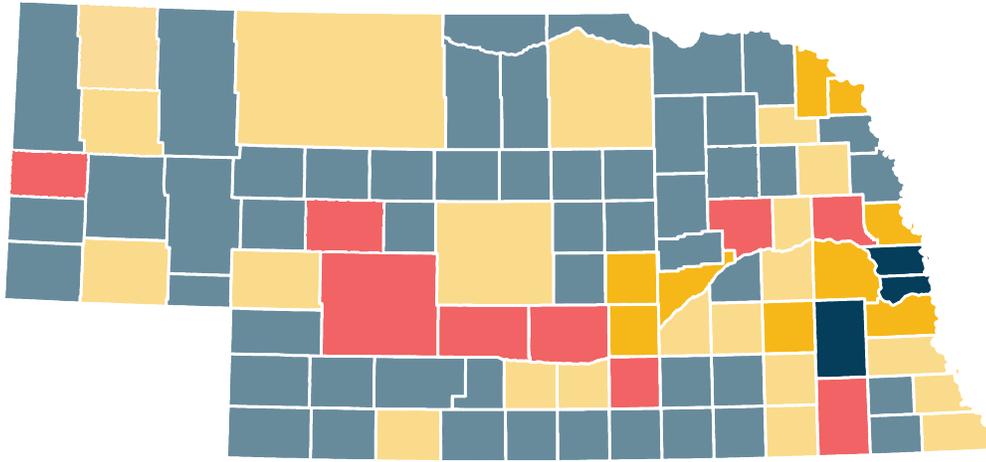


1. U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, Annual Population Estimates.  
 2. U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Single Year of Age and Sex for Nebraska: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2023.  
 3. U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin for Nebraska: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2023.  
 4. Center for Public Affairs Research (CPAR) and Office of Latino/Latin American Studies (OLLAS), UNO, Nebraska Population Projections to 2050 and Implications.



# POPULATION

## NEBRASKA RURALITY CLASSIFICATION (2023)<sup>1</sup>

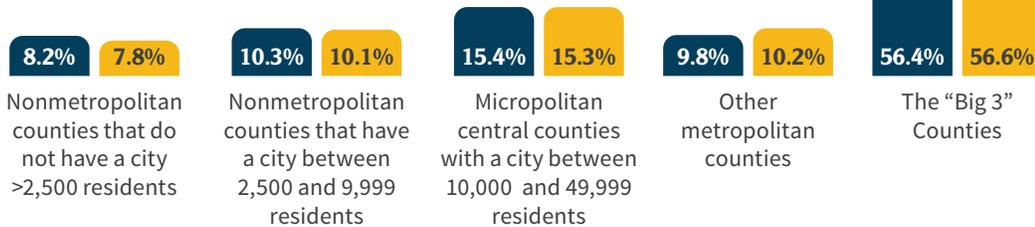


Based on the current population distribution of Nebraska, counties are split into five categories:

- The Big 3 Counties
- Other metropolitan counties
- Micropolitan counties with a city between 10,000 and 49,999 residents
- Nonmetropolitan counties that have a city between 2,500 and 9,999 residents
- Nonmetropolitan counties that do not have a city >2,500 residents

## NEBRASKA POPULATION BY RURALITY CLASSIFICATION (2023)<sup>1</sup>

- Total population
- Ages 17 & under



**56.4%**  
of Nebraska children lived in the "Big 3" counties in 2023.<sup>1</sup>

**17.2%**  
of Nebraskans were **65 or older** in 2023.<sup>2</sup> This is expected to increase to **21.0% by 2050.**<sup>2</sup>

## NEBRASKA POPULATION BY AGE (2023)<sup>3</sup>



1. U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for Incorporated Places in Nebraska: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2023.

2. Center for Public Affairs Research, UNO, Nebraska County Population Projections: 2010 to 2050.

3. U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Single Year of Age and Sex for Nebraska: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2023.

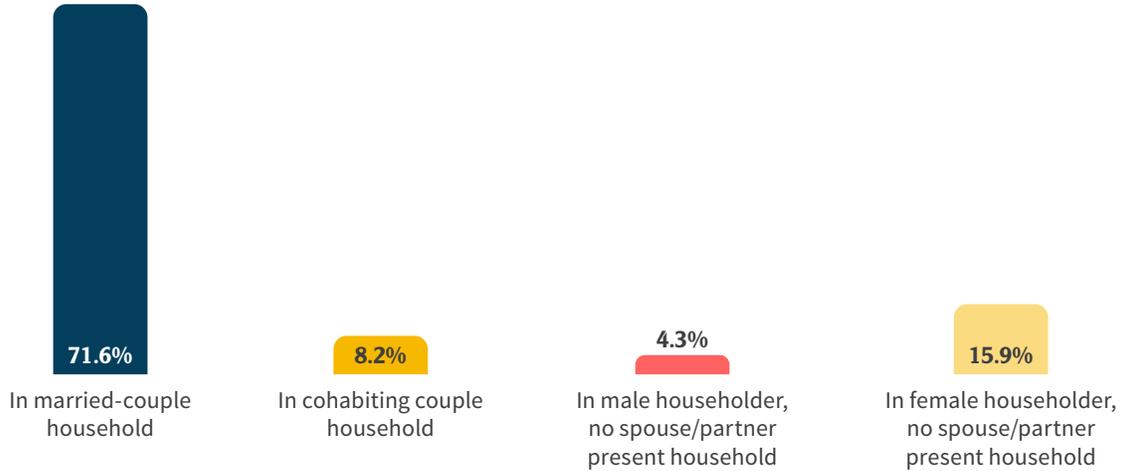


## NEBRASKA CHILDREN BY AGE (2023)



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Single Year of Age and Sex for Nebraska: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2023.

## NEBRASKA HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN BY HOUSEHOLD TYPE (2023)



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table B09005.

**903**

children lived in group quarters in 2023.<sup>1</sup>

**3,878**

children lived with their grandparent(s) without a parent present in 2023.<sup>2</sup>

**3,833**

children lived in non-family households in 2023.<sup>3</sup>

**28.4%**

of Nebraska children lived with an unmarried or single parent in 2023.<sup>4</sup>

1. U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table B09001.  
 2. U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table B10002.  
 3. U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table B09010.  
 4. U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table B09005.



# RACE & OPPORTUNITY INDEX



## HEALTH

- Children with health insurance coverage
- Babies born at normal birth rate (5.5 pounds or more)



## EDUCATION

- 3 to 5 year-olds enrolled in school
- 3rd graders proficient in English Language Arts
- Young Adults Ages 19 to 26 who are in school or working



## ECONOMIC STABILITY

- Children living above the Federal Poverty Level
- Median family income
- Children living in households with no housing cost burden



## CHILD WELFARE

- Children not involved in the child welfare system
- State Wards receiving in-home services
- Children with three or fewer out-of-home placements



## JUVENILE JUSTICE

- Successfully completed diversion
- Youth not in juvenile detention facilities

Nebraska was founded under values of opportunity and equality for all, but when looking at the data on Nebraska's children and families, a harsher reality is uncovered - one of disparity and lack of equitable chance of future success and opportunity for children of color. In response to this, the *Index of Race & Opportunity for Nebraska Children* was created. A composite score of 13 indicators of child well-being was calculated to highlight disparities in opportunity and measure progress toward race equity and inclusion.

### OVERALL INDEX SCORES OUT OF A POSSIBLE 100 (2023)

American Indian | 23

Asian/Pacific Islander | 73

Black/African American | 13

Hispanic | 52

Multiracial | 54

White, non-Hispanic | 90

Source: In-house analysis.

### 7 KEY STEPS

Used to help advance and embed race equity and inclusion at all levels of policy creation

**STEP 1** Establish an understanding of race equity and inclusion principles.

**STEP 2** Engage affected populations and stakeholders.

**STEP 3** Gather and analyze disaggregated data.

**STEP 4** Conduct systems analysis of root causes of inequities.

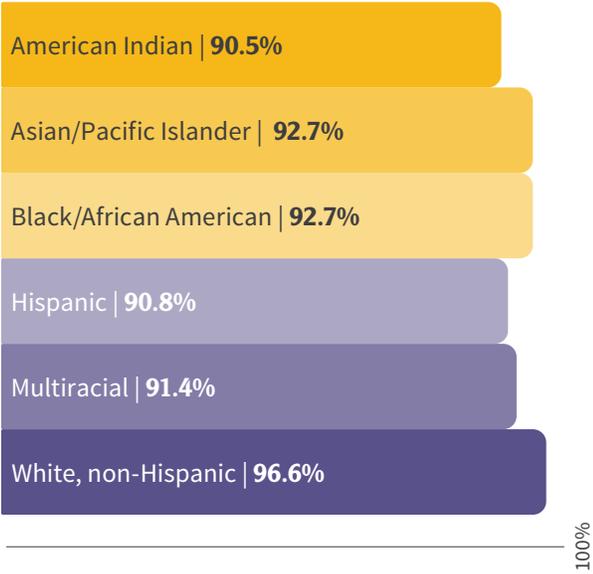
**STEP 5** Identify strategies and target resources to address root causes of inequities.

**STEP 6** Conduct race equity impact assessment for all policies and decision making.

**STEP 7** Continuously evaluate effectiveness and adapt strategies.

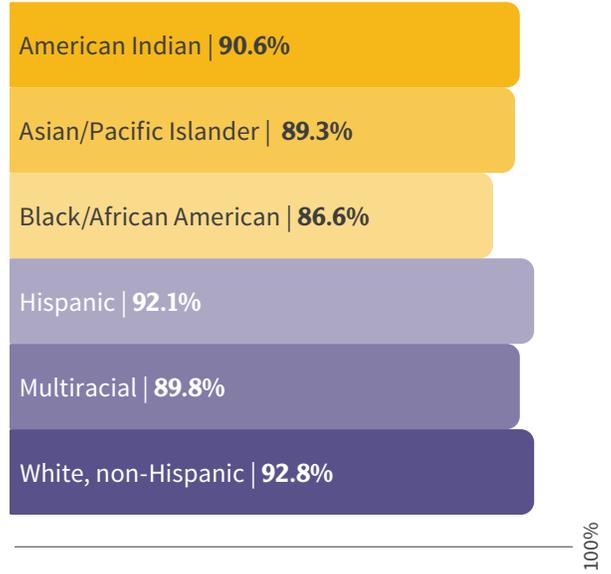


## CHILDREN WITH HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE (2023)



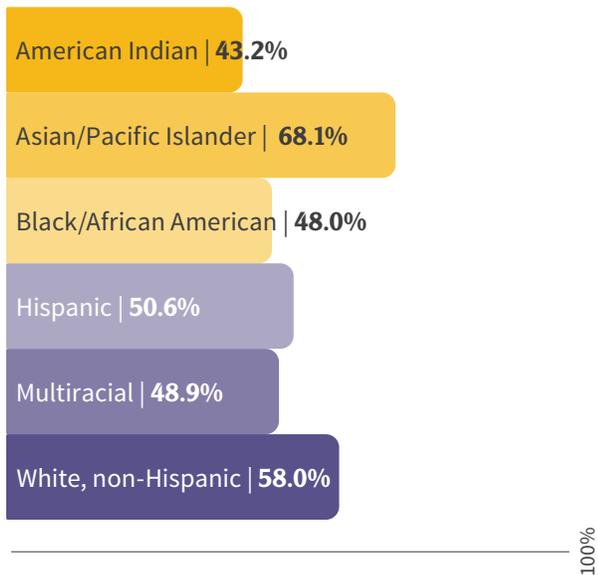
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table C27001B-1.

## BABIES BORN AT NORMAL BIRTH RATE (5.5 POUNDS OR MORE) (2023)



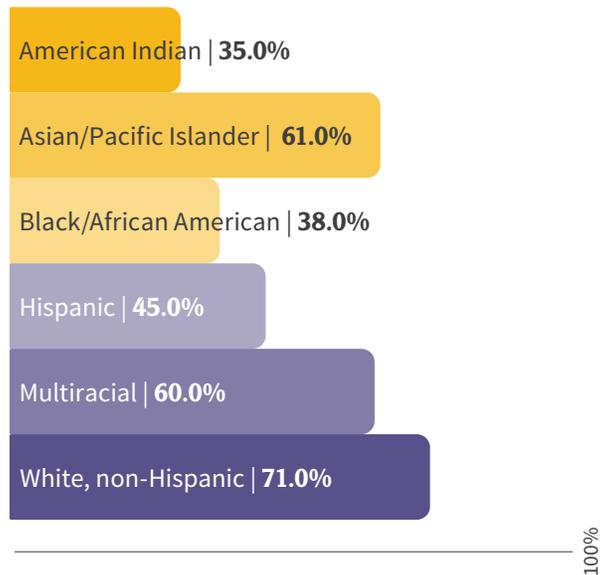
Source: National Center for Health Statistics, final natality data.

## 3 TO 5-YEAR OLDS ENROLLED IN SCHOOL (2023)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Public Use Microdata Samples.

## 3RD GRADERS PROFICIENT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (2022-23)

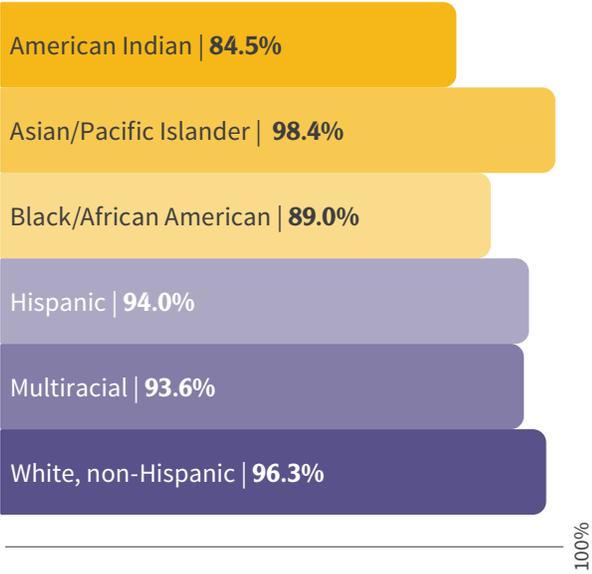


Source: Nebraska Department of Education.



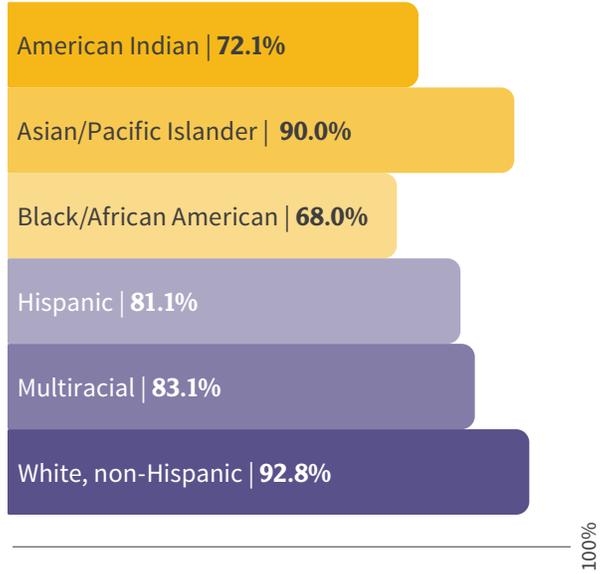
# RACE & OPPORTUNITY INDEX

## YOUNG ADULTS AGES 16 TO 24 WHO ARE IN SCHOOL OR WORKING (2023)



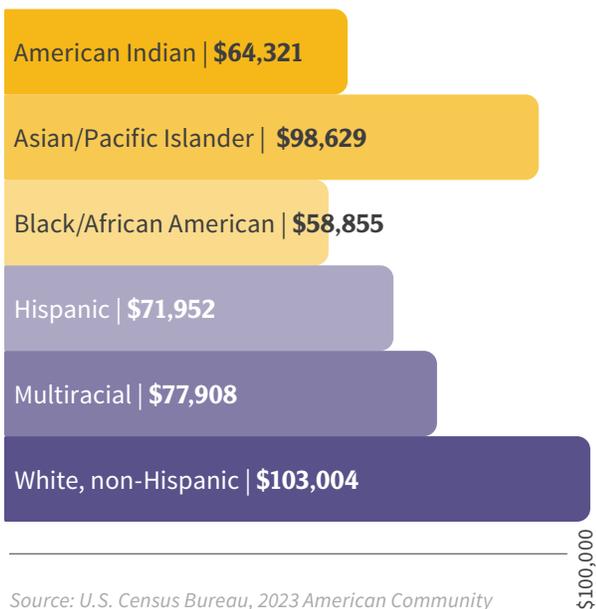
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Public Use Microdata Samples.

## CHILDREN LIVING ABOVE THE FEDERAL POVERTY LINE (2023)



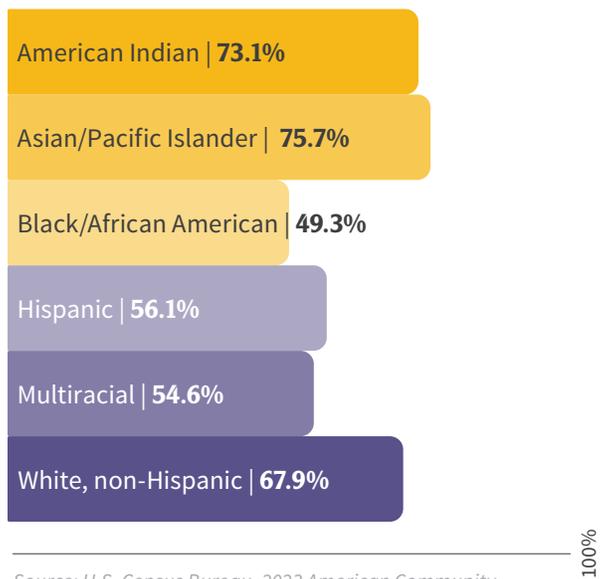
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table B17001B-1.

## MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME (2023)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table B19113B-1.

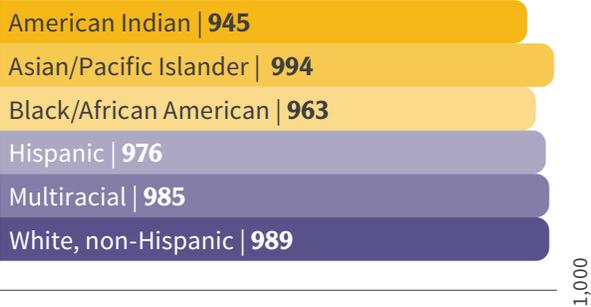
## CHILDREN LIVING IN HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT HOUSING COST BURDENS\* (2023)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Public Use Microdata Samples. \*Cost-burdened households spend 30% or more of income on housing

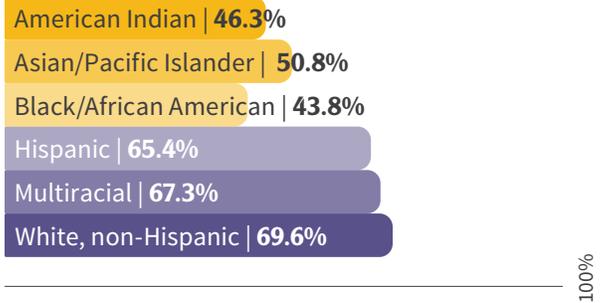


## CHILDREN NOT INVOLVED IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM [RATE/1000] (2022)



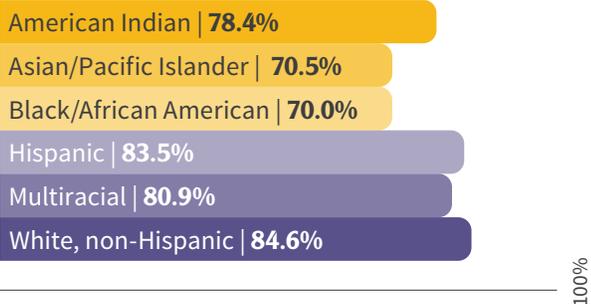
Source: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

## STATE WARDS RECEIVING IN-HOME SERVICES (2022)



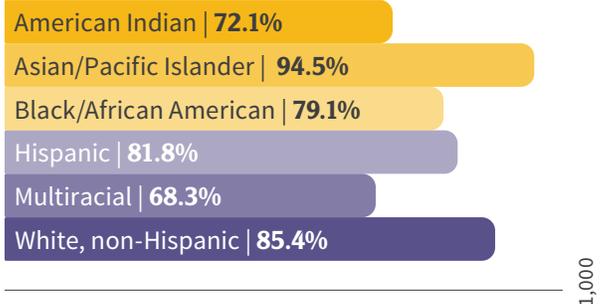
Source: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

## CHILDREN WITH THREE OR FEWER OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENTS (2022)



Source: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

## SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED DIVERSION (2023)



Source: Nebraska Administrative Office of Courts & Probation.

## YOUTH NOT IN JUVENILE DETENTION FACILITIES [RATE/1000] (2023)



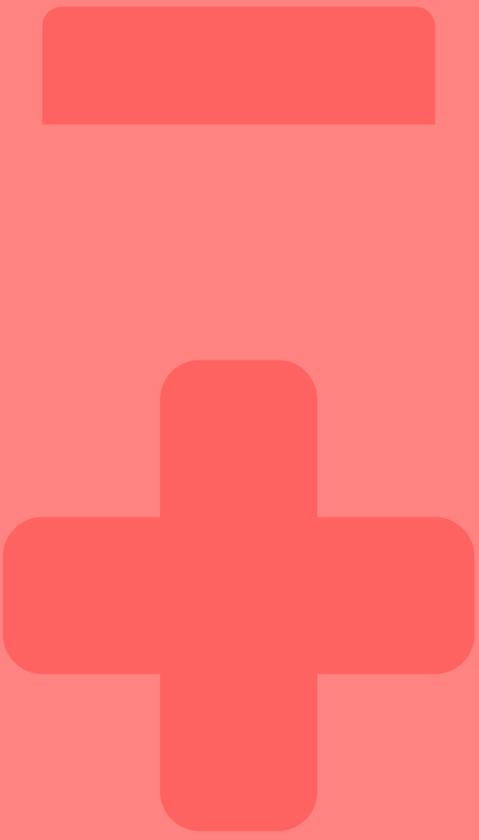
Source: Douglas County Youth Center; Patrick J. Thomas Juvenile Justice Center; Lancaster County Detention Center; Northeast Nebraska Juvenile Services.

# Health

Every child and family deserves access to affordable, quality physical and behavioral health care.

Quality and consistent preventive health care, beginning even before birth, gives children the best chance to grow up to be healthy and productive adults.

Children and families must be able to access and maintain affordable health insurance, and policies should maximize availability and robust investment in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program. Our health care systems and policies should prioritize preventive services including immunization, developmental screenings, early intervention, and home visiting. Policies should promote timely and equitable access to a complete range of health care services within a healthy home and community-based environments for children and families across the lifespan.



# Section Contents

- 30** Births
- 31** Pre/post-natal health
- 32** Teen births & sexual behavior
- 33** Infant & child deaths
- 34** Health insurance
- 35** Health services
- 36** Behavioral health
- 37** Health risks
- 39** Adverse childhood experiences



# BIRTHS

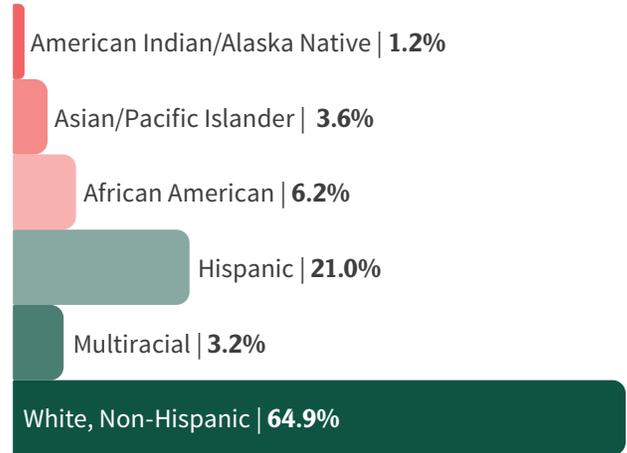
## 24,193

babies were born in 2023.<sup>1</sup>

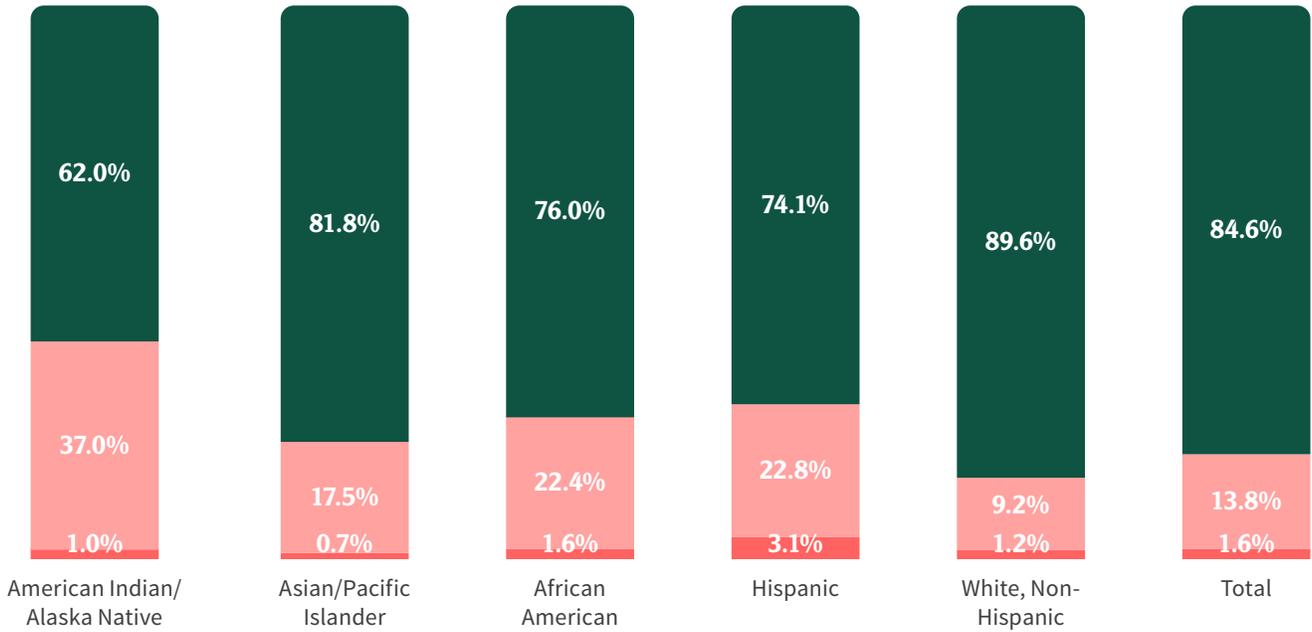
### TRIMESTER PRENATAL CARE BEGAN (2023)<sup>2</sup>

First trimester	79.2%
Second trimester	15.2%
Third trimester	3.3%
None	0.9%
Unknown	1.4%

### BIRTHS BY RACE/ETHNICITY (2023)<sup>2</sup>



### ADEQUACY OF PRENATAL CARE BY RACE/ETHNICITY (2023)<sup>2</sup>



● No Prenatal Care

● Inadequate/intermediate - received < 80% of expected visits

● Adequate/Adequate Plus - received 80%+ of expected visits



## TOBACCO USE (2023)<sup>1</sup>

did not use tobacco during most recent pregnancy | **95.9%**

used tobacco during most recent pregnancy | **4.1%**

## LOW BIRTH WEIGHT (2023)<sup>1</sup>

Very low birth weight (<1,500g) | **1.2%**

Moderately low birth weight (1,500-2,499g) | **6.8%**

Not low birth weight (2,500+g) | **91.9%**

## PREGNANCY INTENDEDNESS (2022)<sup>2</sup>

Pregnancy was unintended | **23.9%**

Pregnancy was intended | **61.1%**

Ambivalent intention | **15.0%**

## FOLIC ACID USE PRIOR TO PREGNANCY (2022)<sup>2</sup>

3 or fewer times/week before pregnancy | **51.7%**

4 or more times/week before pregnancy | **48.3%**

## BREASTFEEDING (2022)<sup>2</sup>

Mothers who breastfed at any time | **91.7%**

Mothers who exclusively breastfed at 4 weeks | **48.3%**

**12.0%**

of new mothers in 2022 experienced **postpartum depression symptoms** related to their most recent pregnancy.<sup>2</sup>

**3.3%**

of women in 2022 had a **home visitor** during pregnancy to help prepare for the new baby.<sup>2</sup>

1. National Center for Health Statistics. National Vital Statistics System.  
2. Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.



# TEEN BIRTHS & SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

## TEEN BIRTHS (2023)<sup>1</sup>

Teen births continue to decline.

**887**

babies were born to teen mothers

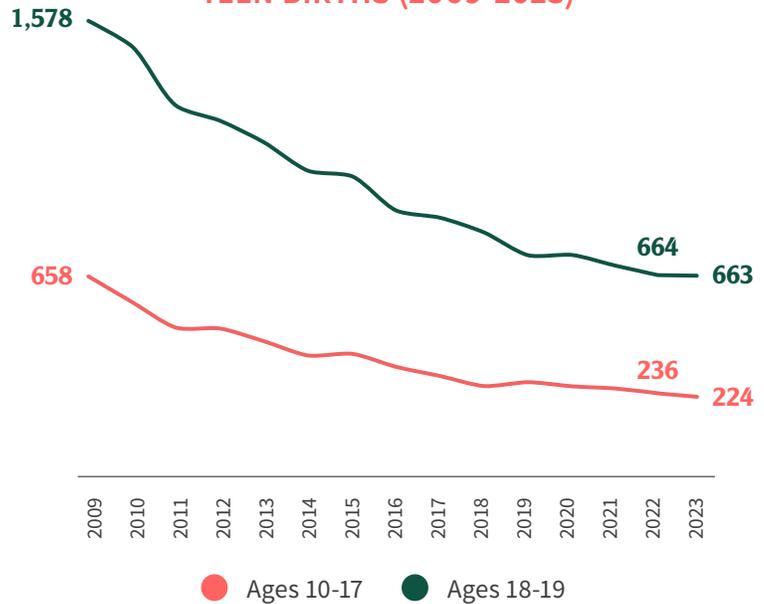
**224**

mothers were 10-17 years old

**663**

mothers were 18 or 19 years old

## TEEN BIRTHS (2009-2023)<sup>1</sup>



## TEEN BIRTHS BY AGE (2023)<sup>1</sup>



## TEEN SEXUAL BEHAVIOR (2021)<sup>2</sup>

Ever had sexual intercourse	34.5%
Had sexual intercourse before age 13	2.5%
Had sexual intercourse with four or more people	10.4%
Had sexual intercourse in the past three months	26.8%
Drank alcohol or used drugs before last sexual intercourse	20.4%
Did not use condoms during last sexual intercourse	49.0%
Did not use any method to prevent pregnancy during last sexual intercourse	5.4%

## HIV/AIDS (2023)<sup>1</sup>

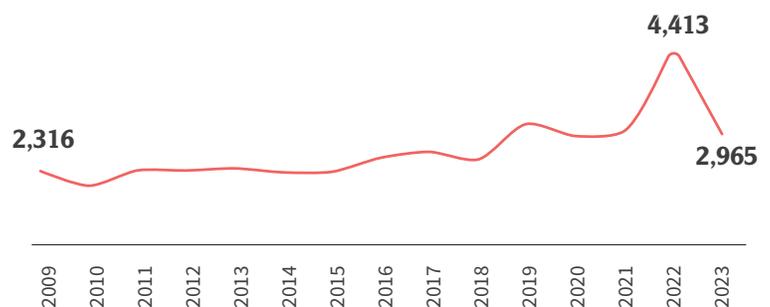
\* children under 11 years old had HIV/AIDS.

**13** children ages 12-19 had HIV/AIDS.

\* children with diagnosis of HIV or AIDS who have died from the disease.

\* Data Suppressed

## NUMBER OF SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs) AMONG THOSE 19 AND UNDER (2009-2023)<sup>1</sup>



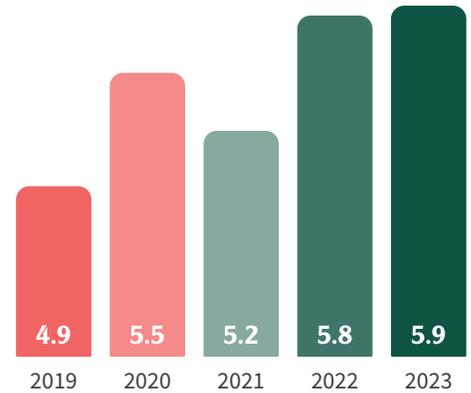
# INFANT & CHILD DEATHS



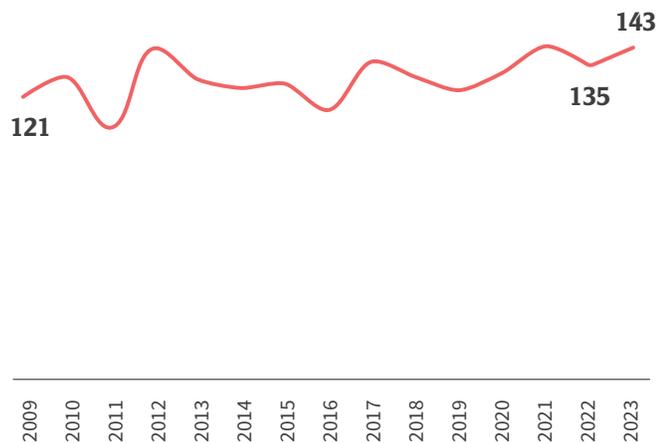
## CAUSE OF INFANT DEATHS (2023)

	#	%
Maternal and perinatal	64	44.8%
Birth defects	37	25.9%
SIDS/SUDI	17	13.3%
Heart/Cardiovascular and Respiratory	4	2.8%
Accident or Violent Cause	2	1.4%
Prematurity	0	0%
Infection	11	7.7%
Other	6	4.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>143</b>	

## INFANT MORTALITY PER 1,000 BIRTHS



## CHILD DEATHS, AGES 1-19 (2009-2023)



## CAUSES OF CHILD DEATHS (2023)

	#	%
Accidents	37	27.8%
Suicide	24	18.0%
Cancer	21	15.8%
Birth defects	3	2.3%
Homicide	9	6.8%
Other	39	29.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	

**8 WOMEN**

died due to a cause related to or aggravated by pregnancy or its management in 2022.

**34.2**

Maternal death rate per 100,000 population in 2022.



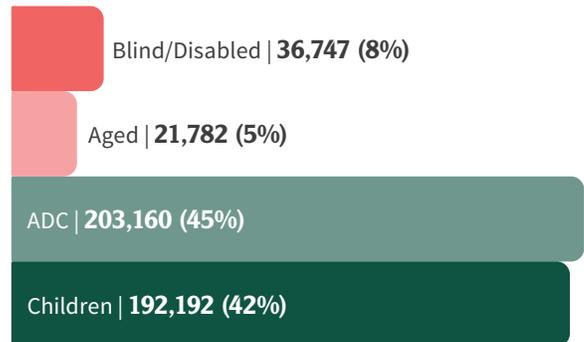
# HEALTH INSURANCE

## HEALTH COVERAGE FOR KIDS 18 & UNDER BY TYPE (2023)

	#	%
Any	487,087	95.1%
Public	137,205	26.8%
Employer-based	281,021	54.8%
Direct-purchase	32,270	6.3%
More than one type	36,591	7.1%
None	25,277	4.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, Table B27010.

## MEDICAID/CHIP ELIGIBILITY BY CATEGORY SFY 2023 (MONTHLY AVERAGE)<sup>1</sup>



**192,192** children were enrolled in Medicaid/CHIP (SFY 2023, Monthly Average).<sup>1</sup>

**42.3%** of people eligible for Medicaid/CHIP were children (SFY 2023, Monthly Average).<sup>1</sup>

**17.8%** of Medicaid costs were made up by children (SFY 2023, Monthly Average).<sup>1</sup>

## MEDICAID/CHIP EXPENSES BY CATEGORY (SFY 2023)<sup>1</sup>



## UNINSURED CHILDREN BY RACE/ETHNICITY (2023)

	#	%
American Indian	643	9.1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	727	5.7%
African American	2,147	7.3%
Hispanic	9,031	9.2%
Multiracial/Other	8,218	8.6%
White, Non-Hispanic	11,410	3.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table C27001B-1.

## MEDICAID/CHIP ENROLLMENT (JULY 2023)



Source: State Medicaid and CHIP Applications, Eligibility Determinations, and Enrollment Data.



## NUMBER OF MEDICAL PROVIDER SHORTAGES (AS OF SEPT. 30, 2022)

	# of shortages
Primary	94
Mental	85
Dental	81

Source: Health Resources & Services Administration, Health Professional Shortage Areas.

Health professional shortage areas are designations that indicate a shortage of health care providers in the areas of primary care, mental health care, or dental health care. Shortages fall into 3 categories:<sup>1</sup>

- 1. Geographic areas** - a shortage of providers for the entire population within an area
- 2. Population groups** - a shortage of providers within an area for a specific high-need population
- 3. Facilities** - health care facilities within an area have a shortage of health professionals to meet their needs

## MEDICAID/CHIP (FY2022)

# 221

children received **developmental services** through Medicaid/CHIP.

# 30,090

children received **behavioral services** through Medicaid/CHIP.

# 1,340

**providers** served children through Medicaid/CHIP.

Sources: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

## IMMUNIZATIONS (2023)

# 88.4%

of teens were immunized against meningitis caused by types A, C, W, and Y.

# 67.9%

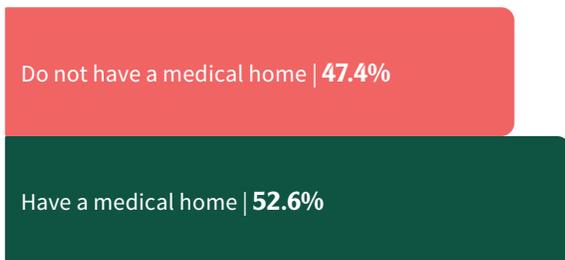
of teen **girls** completed their HPV vaccine series.

# 66.9%

of teens **boys** completed their HPV vaccine series.

Sources: National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases.

## CHILDREN WITH A MEDICAL HOME (2023)



Sources: 2022-23 National Survey of Children's Health, Health Care Access and Quality, Indicator 4.12.

# 80.4%

of children had a **preventative dental visit** in the past year in 2023.

# 93.3%

of children are in **very good to excellent health** in 2023.

# 37.8%

of children had one or more **current health conditions** in 2023.

# 78.3%

of children who had a **preventative medical visit** in the past year in 2023.

Sources: 2022-23 National Survey of Children's Health.



# BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Many children in Nebraska deal with behavioral health problems that may affect their ability to participate in normal childhood activities.

The National Survey of Children’s Health estimates the amount of Nebraska children facing the following disorders:

## NUMBER OF CHILDREN FACING DISORDERS (2023)<sup>1</sup>

Anxiety	37,156
ADD/ADHD	42,265
Depression	17,536
Autism Spectrum Disorder	9,389

# 96,235

children with a mental, emotional, developmental or behavioral problem in 2023.<sup>1</sup>

# 47.6%

of children needing mental health counseling actually received it in 2022.<sup>2</sup>

## CHILDREN RECEIVING COMMUNITY-BASED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES THROUGH DHHS (2023)<sup>3</sup>

Mental Health	2,552
Substance Use	67

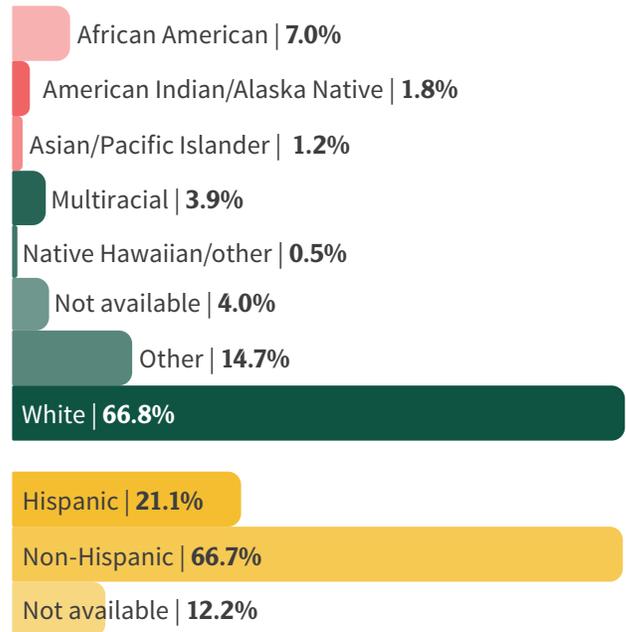
## SUICIDES IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS (2021)<sup>4</sup>

Seriously considered suicide	19.2%
Made a suicide plan	14.3%
Attempted suicide	10.1%

## REGIONAL CENTERS (2023)<sup>3</sup>

**38** received services from **Lincoln Regional YOUTH Center** at the Whitehall Campus.

## CHILDREN RECEIVING COMMUNITY-BASED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES BY RACE/ETHNICITY (2023)<sup>3</sup>



# 83.0%

of children 6 months to 5 years who met all four measures of flourishing in 2023.<sup>1</sup>

# 36.4%

of teens who felt sad or hopeless everyday for 2+ weeks so that activity was stopped in 2021.<sup>4</sup>

1. 2022-23 National Survey of Children’s Health.

2. 2022 National Survey of Children’s Health.

3. Department of Health and Human Services.

4. Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2021.



## 54.6%

of high schoolers rarely or never wore a seat belt in 2021.<sup>1</sup>

### MOTOR VEHICLE CRASHES AND SEAT BELT USE (2021)<sup>1</sup>

In the past 30 days, rode in a vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol | **14.8%**

In the past 30 days, drove a vehicle after drinking alcohol | **4.5%**

Texted or emailed while driving a car or other vehicle in the last 30 days | **51.4%**

### INJURIES AND VIOLENCE (2021)<sup>1</sup>

**19.9%** of children were in a physical fight in the past 12 months.

**7.6%** of children, in the past 12 months, were physically hurt on purpose by someone they were dating.

**7.7%** of children were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property.

**20.7%** of children were bullied in school.

**17.1%** of children were electronically bullied.

**15.8%** of children experienced sexual dating violence.

### BLOOD LEAD LEVEL TESTING (SFY 2023)

Exposure to lead may harm a child's brain and central nervous system. Even low blood lead concentrations can cause irreversible damage such as:

- impaired physical and cognitive development,
- delayed development,
- behavioral problems,
- hearing loss, and
- malnutrition.

The Centers for Disease Control uses a reference level of five micrograms per deciliter to identify children as having an elevated blood lead level.

## 684

children had elevated blood lead levels.

## 35,508

children had a confirmed blood lead level test.

## 1.9%

of tested children had elevated blood lead levels.

*Source: Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.*



# HEALTH RISKS

## TEEN ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG USE (2021)

In the past 30 days had at least one drink of alcohol	18.9%
In the past 30 days had 5 or more drinks in a row within a couple of hours	9.1%
Ever used marijuana	18.7%
Ever used inhalants to get high	7.3%
Ever took prescription pain medicine without a doctor's prescription or differently than how a doctor told them to use it	7.1%
In the past 12 months offered, sold, or given illegal drugs by someone on school property	10.4%

Source: Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2021.

## TEEN TOBACCO USE (2021)

Currently smokes cigarettes, cigars, smokeless tobacco, or electronic vapor products	14.9%
Currently smokes cigarettes	3.6%
Currently uses smokeless tobacco	2.9%
Currently uses an electronic vapor product	14.7%

Source: Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2021.

### 20

community-based  
Nebraska's Network of  
Domestic Violence/Sexual  
Assault Programs in 2023.<sup>1</sup>

### 4

Nebraska Tribal  
Coalition Ending  
Family Violence  
programs in 2023.<sup>1</sup>

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE/SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES (2023)<sup>1</sup>

Number of people served	11,563
Percentage of those served who were children	17.0%

# ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES



## ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

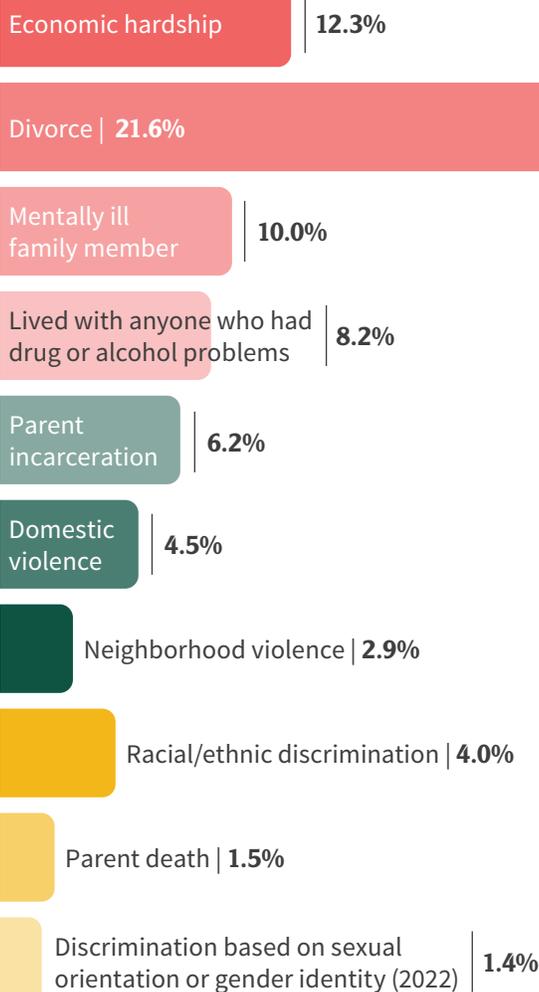
Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are **potentially traumatic events that can have negative, lasting effects on health and well-being**. Experiencing multiple ACEs results in compounding effects, and there is growing evidence that it is the general experience of multiple ACEs, rather than the specific individual impact of any one experience, that matters. The experience of ACEs extends beyond the child and can cause consequences for the whole family and community.

## NUMBER OF ACEs CHILDREN EXPERIENCE (2023)

0 ACEs	70.8%
1 ACEs	16.9%
2+ ACEs	12.3%

Source: 2022-23 National Survey of Children's Health.

## TYPES OF ACE (2023)



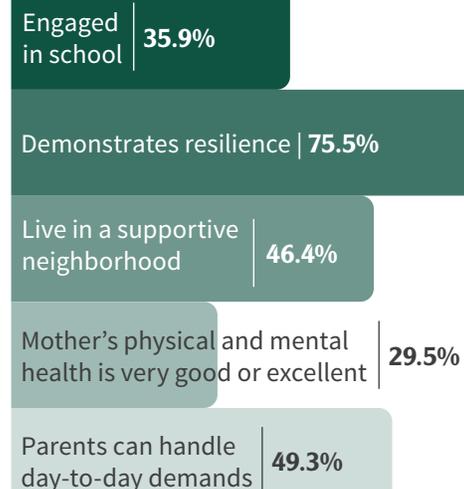
Source: 2022-23 National Survey of Children's Health.

## AMONG CHILDREN WITH 1 OR MORE ACE, THE FOLLOWING WERE DISPLAYED (2022)

### CHALLENGING FACTORS WERE DISPLAYED



### SUPPORTIVE FACTORS WERE DISPLAYED



Source: 2021-22 National Survey of Children's Health, Family Health and Activities.

# Education

Education is the surest way to build a pathway to lifelong success, and the early years of a child's life are imperative to laying a solid foundation for success. Establishing the conditions that promote educational achievement for children is critical. With a strong and healthy early beginning, children can more easily stay on track to remain in school, graduate on time, pursue postsecondary education and training and enjoy a successful transition into adulthood. Closing gaps in educational access and quality is key to ensuring the future workforce can compete and build or continue the cycle of success and independence.



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- 51 Graduation & educational savings



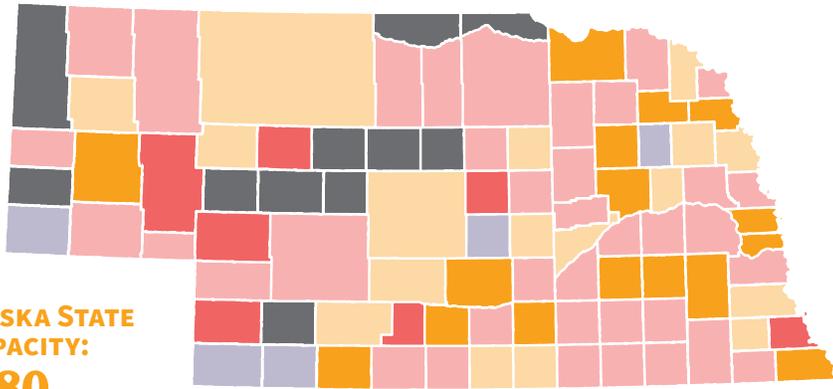
# CHILD CARE

## CAPACITY OF LICENSED CHILD CARE FACILITY PER 100 CHILDREN UNDER 6 WITH ALL AVAILABLE PARENTS WORKING BY COUNTY (2023) <sup>1</sup>

Note: Does not include School-Age-Only Child Care Centers.

- No Facilities
- 1-24
- 25-49
- 50-74
- 75-99
- 100+

**NEBRASKA STATE CAPACITY: 80**



**2,459**  
total licensed child care facilities in 2023. <sup>1</sup>

**110,877**  
children under 6 needed child care in 2023. <sup>2</sup>

**8.6%**  
**(12,912)**

of Nebraska parents of children 0-5 quit, did not take, or greatly changed their job because of child care problems in 2022.

Source: 2022 National Survey of Children's Health.

## CHILD CARE SUBSIDY (2023) <sup>1</sup>

**21,165**

children received child care subsidy.

**585**

children were in the care of license-exempt providers.

### AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN WHO RECEIVED A SUBSIDY EACH MONTH (2023) <sup>1</sup>

Living below 100% FPL	<b>14,937</b>
Between 100% and 130% FPL	<b>11,742</b>
Between 130% and 185% FPL	<b>1,615</b>

Below school-age	<b>12,098</b>
School-age	<b>6,626</b>
All	<b>17,711</b>

## ANNUAL CHILD CARE COSTS (2023)

<b>CENTER-BASED CARE</b>	Infant	<b>\$9,805</b>
	4-year-old	<b>\$11,357</b>

<b>HOME-BASED CARE</b>	Infant	<b>\$7,744</b>
	4-year-old	<b>\$7,442</b>

Source: Buffett Early Childhood Institute..

## FUNDS SPENT ON THE CHILD CARE SUBSIDY PROGRAM (2023) <sup>1</sup>

State	<b>\$50,843,473</b>
Federal	<b>\$149,219,494</b>

1. Department of Health and Human Services.

2. U.S. Census 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, Table B23008.





# EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

## 19,308

children were enrolled in public school-based preschool in 2022-23. <sup>1</sup>

The **Early Development Network (EDN)** serves families with children born with disabilities.

## 2,373

infants and toddlers had an Individualized Family Service Plan through EDN in 2022-23.

*Source: U.S. Department of Education, Nebraska State Performance Plan Annual Performance Report, FFY 2022.*

### CHILDREN (BIRTH-AGE 3) (2022-23) <sup>1</sup>

# of children

With developmental delay	2,320
With speech language impairment	79
With hearing impairment	53
With autism	77
With some other disability	98

## 19

Head Start Programs in 2023

## 20

Early Head Start Programs in 2023

## 5,493

children served in Early Head Start/Head Start Programs

## 9.3%

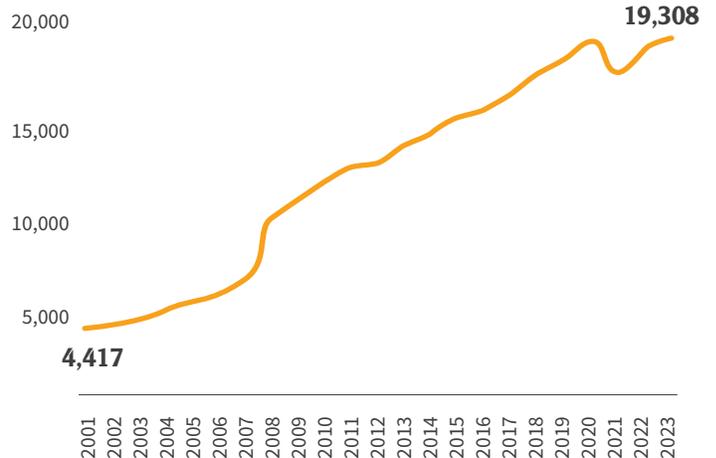
of families with children served in Early Head Start/Head Start programs experienced homelessness

## 130

pregnant women served in Early Head Start program

*Source: 2023 Office of Head Start Program Information Reports.*

### PUBLIC PRESCHOOL ENROLLMENT <sup>1</sup>



**Sixpence** serves children birth to age 3 who are at risk of failure in school and is funded through public and private dollars.

## 51

Sixpence Programs as of 2023-24

## 1,082

families served by Sixpence Programs

## 107

pregnant moms served by Sixpence Programs

## 1,254

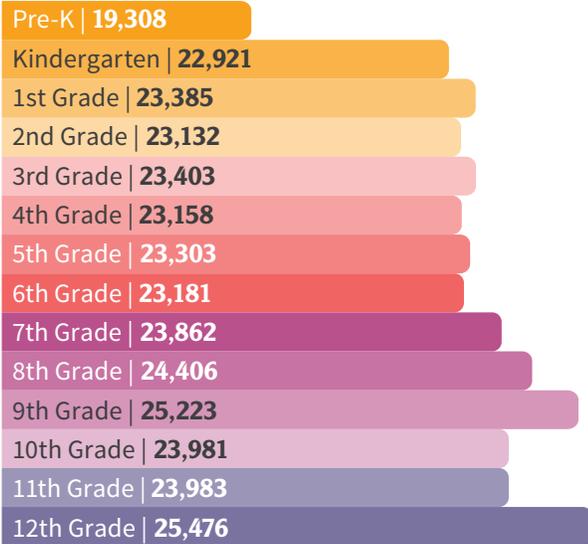
children served by Sixpence Programs

*Source: Sixpence Early Learning Fund 2023-24 Annual Report.*

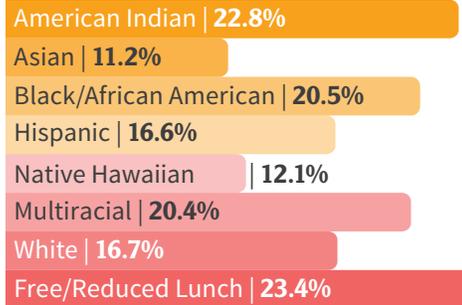
# K-12 STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS



## SCHOOL MEMBERSHIP BY GRADE (2022-23)



## SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSIFICATION (2021-22)



# 328,722

children were enrolled in public school in 2022-23.

## 3.9%

of Nebraska school students were **highly mobile**, meaning they enrolled in two or more public schools during the 2022/23 school year. Higher school mobility is correlated with lower achievement.

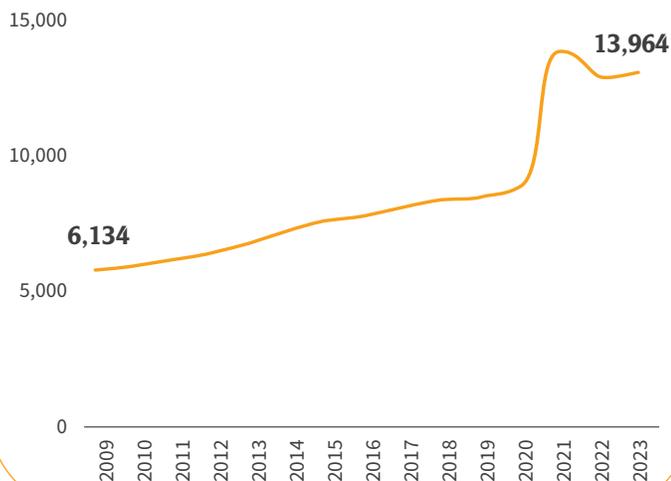
## 16.5%

of students were classified as **Special Education**. (2022-23)

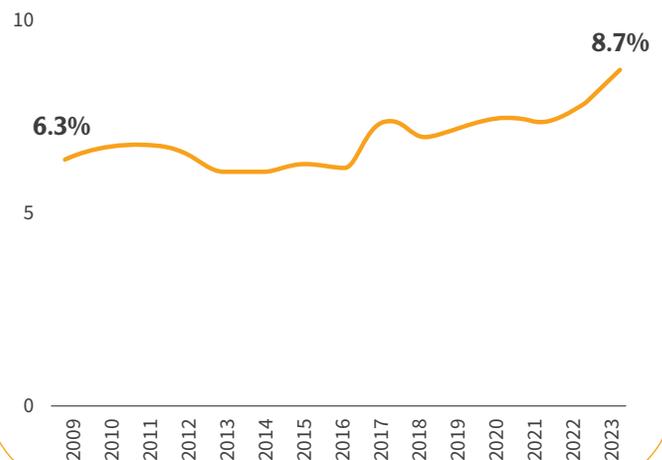
## 12.8%

of students were classified as **High Ability Learners**. (2022-23)

## NUMBER OF HOME SCHOOL STUDENTS (EXEMPT SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS)



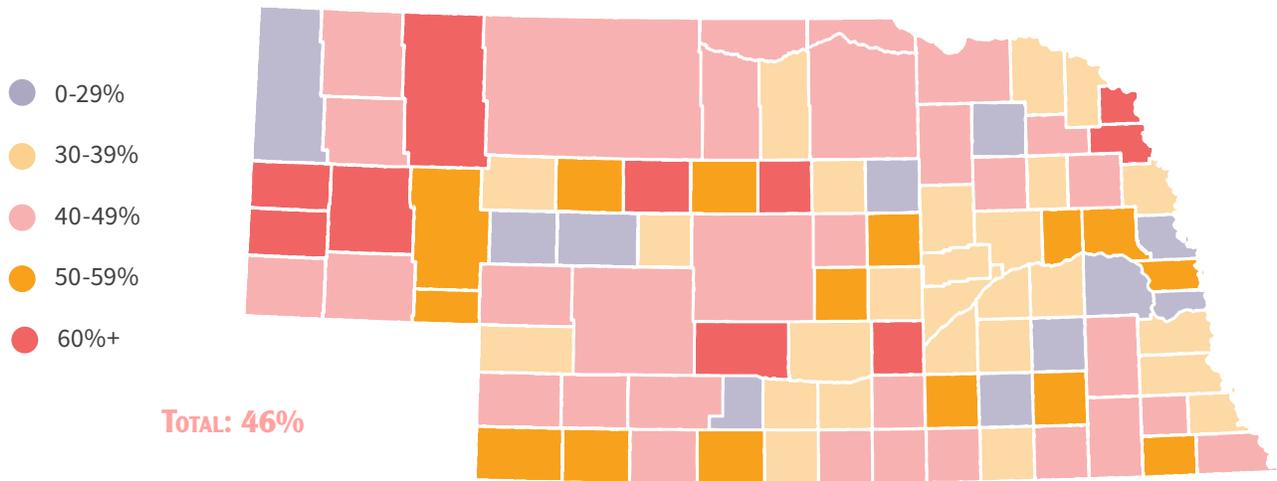
## PERCENT OF STUDENTS WHO WERE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS





# FREE-REDUCED MEALS

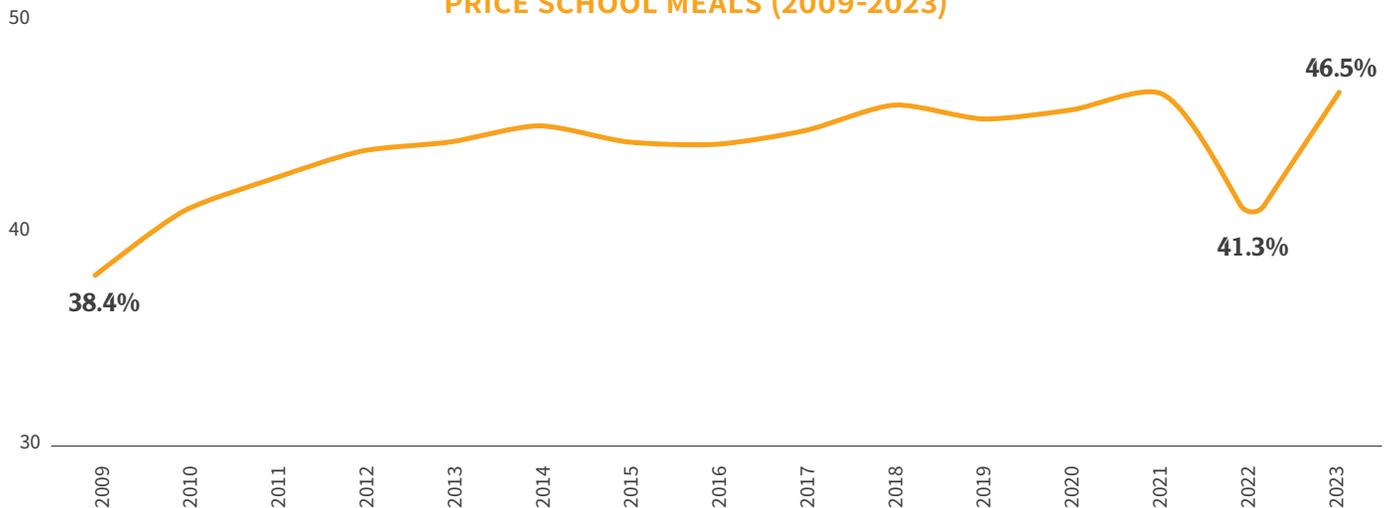
### PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN CLASSIFIED ELIGIBLE FOR FREE AND REDUCED MEALS BY COUNTY (2023)



### COMMUNITY ELIGIBILITY (2022-23)

	Served
<b>SITES</b>	<b>181</b>
<b>CHILDREN</b>	<b>67,557</b>

### PERCENT OF CHILDREN ELIGIBLE FOR FREE AND REDUCED PRICE SCHOOL MEALS (2009-2023)



# ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS PROFICIENCY



Reading is a fundamental skill that affects learning experiences and school performance of children and teens. The ability to read proficiently translates to a greater likelihood of performing well in other subjects.

Children with lower reading achievement are less likely to be engaged in the classroom, graduate high school, and attend college.

Source: Child Trends, Reading Proficiency.

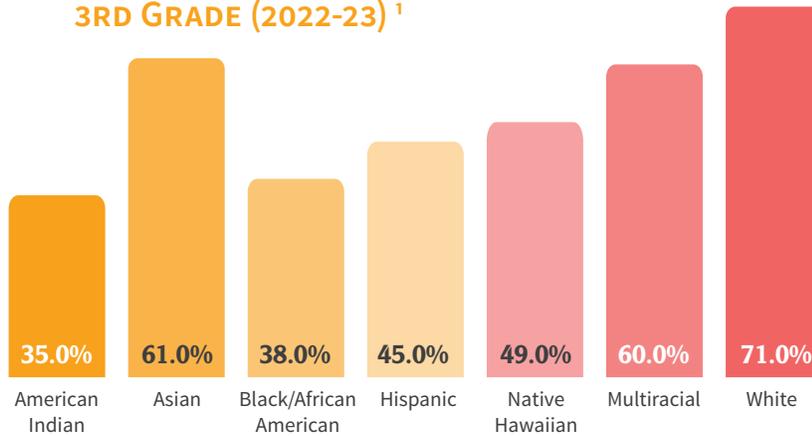
## 3RD GRADE (2022-23) <sup>1</sup>

**62.0%**

of children overall proficient in English Language Arts

**48.0%**

of low-income children overall proficient in English Language Arts



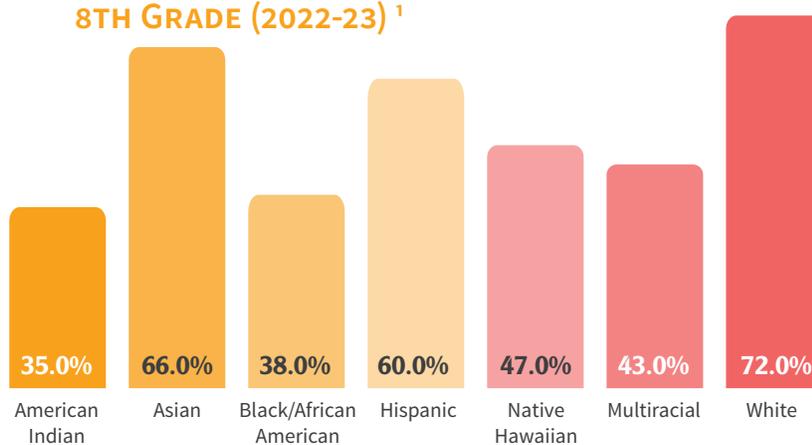
## 8TH GRADE (2022-23) <sup>1</sup>

**63.0%**

of children overall proficient in English Language Arts

**48.0%**

of low-income children overall proficient in English Language Arts



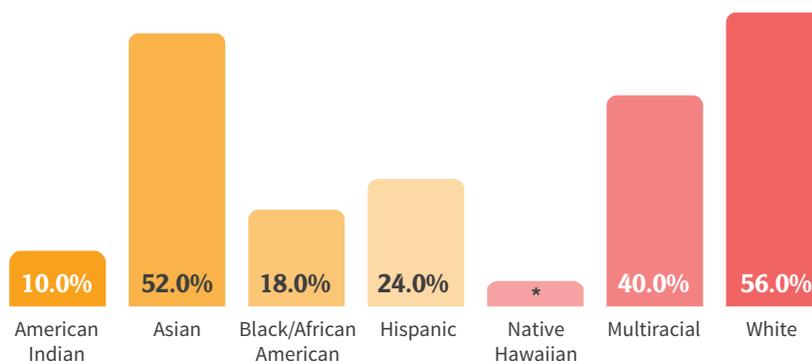
## 11TH GRADE (2022-23) <sup>1</sup>

**46.0%**

of children overall proficient in English Language Arts

**28.0%**

of low-income children overall proficient in English Language Arts





# MATH PROFICIENCY

Math skills are essential for functioning in everyday life, as well as for future success in our increasingly technical workplace. Students who take higher courses in mathematics are more likely to attend and complete

college. Those with limited math skills are more likely to find it difficult to function in everyday society and have lower levels of employability.

Source: Child Trends, Mathematics Proficiency.

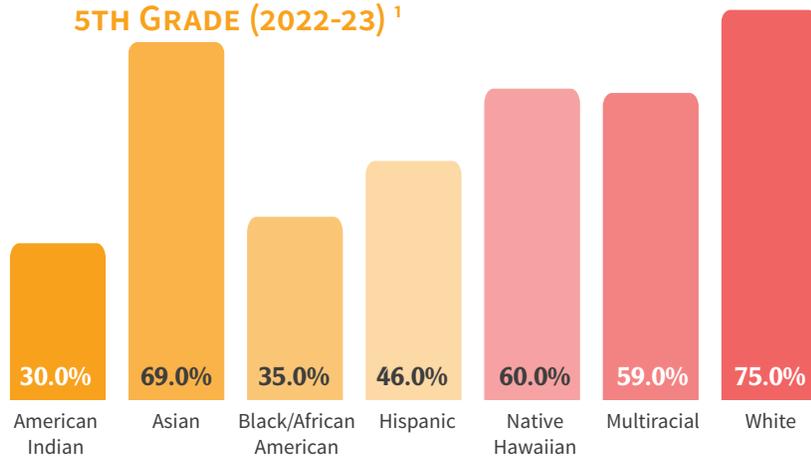
## 5TH GRADE (2022-23) <sup>1</sup>

**65.0%**

of children overall proficient in math

**49.0%**

of low-income children overall proficient in math



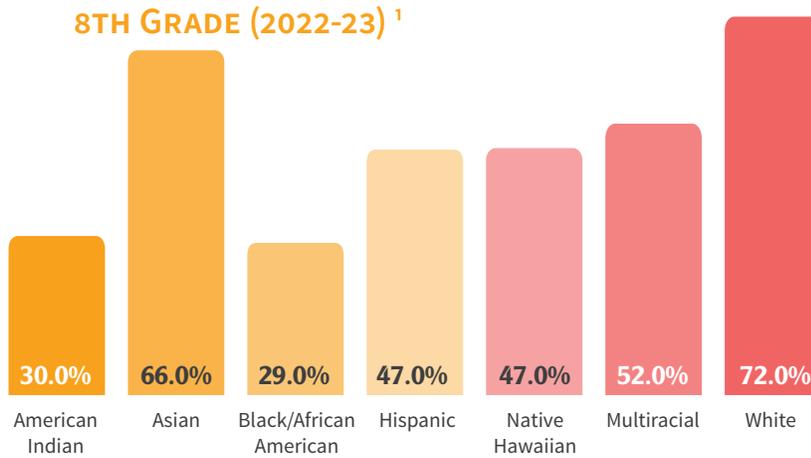
## 8TH GRADE (2022-23) <sup>1</sup>

**61.0%**

of children overall proficient in math

**44.0%**

of low-income children overall proficient in math



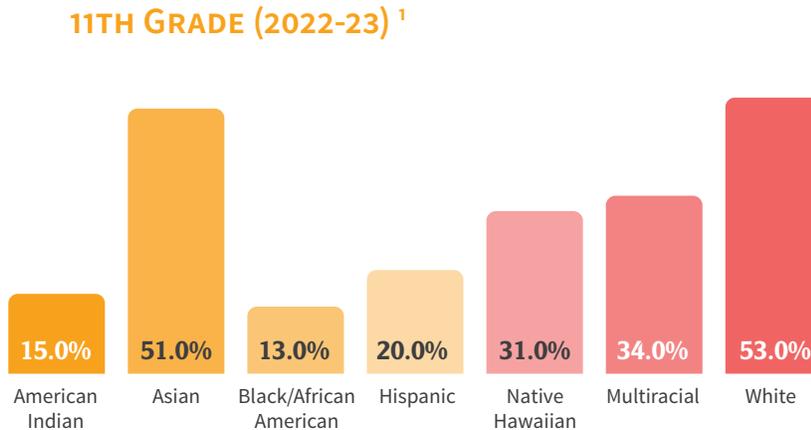
## 11TH GRADE (2022-23) <sup>1</sup>

**42.0%**

of children overall proficient in math

**24.0%**

of low-income children overall proficient in math



# SCIENCE PROFICIENCY



Proficiency in science helps prepare students to go on to highly skilled professions. Having a strong foundation in the sciences allows students to work in today's high-demand fields. Students with a greater understanding of

sciences learn how to better protect the environment and increase the health and security of people throughout the world.

Source: Child Trends, Science Proficiency.

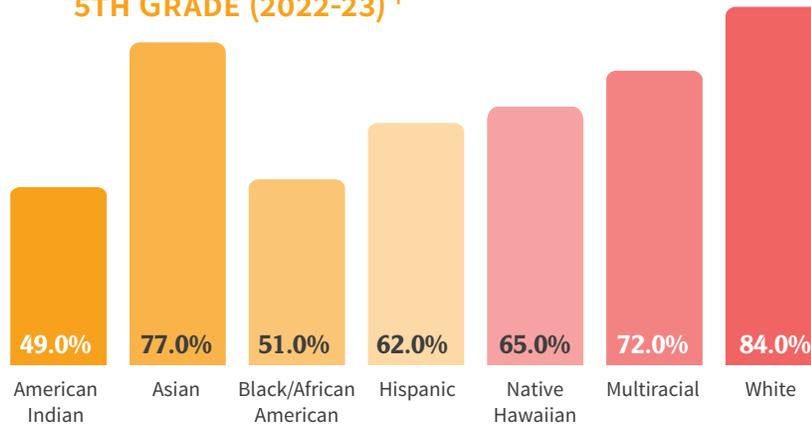
## 5TH GRADE (2022-23) <sup>1</sup>

**76.0%**

of children overall proficient in science

**65.0%**

of low-income children overall proficient in science



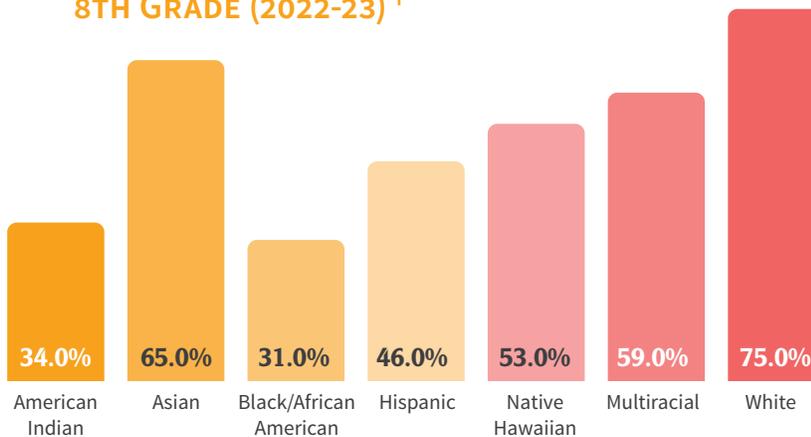
## 8TH GRADE (2022-23) <sup>1</sup>

**64.0%**

of children overall proficient in science

**49.0%**

of low-income children overall proficient in science



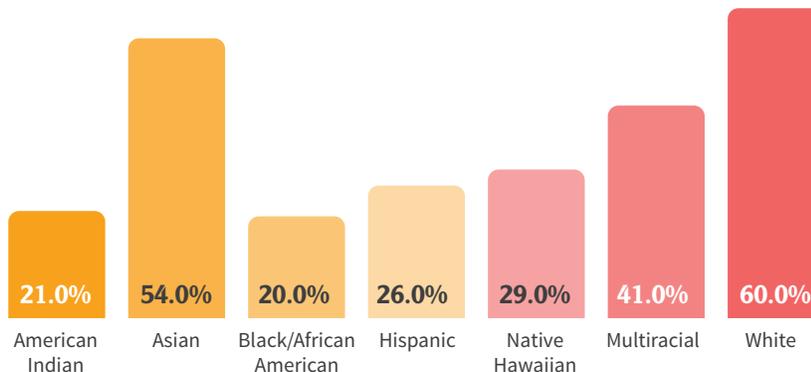
## 11TH GRADE (2022-23) <sup>1</sup>

**49.0%**

of children overall proficient in science

**31.0%**

of low-income children overall proficient in science





# ABSENCES & CAREER READINESS

## AMOUNT OF STUDENTS EXPELLED AND SUSPENDED (2022-23) <sup>2</sup>

Note: Includes public and nonpublic schools.

	# of students	% of students
Expelled	841	<1%
Suspended	57,491	16.3%

## STUDENTS ABSENT (2022-23) <sup>2</sup>

Note: Includes public and nonpublic schools.

	# of students	% of students
10-19 Days	90,537	25.8%
20-29 Days	25,142	7.1%
30+ Days	23,134	6.6%

## CAREER READINESS (2023)

### 64.9%

of 2022-23 public high school student graduates enrolled in college by April 2023. <sup>1</sup>

### 44.6%

of students who enrolled in a 2-year public college in Fall 2017 completed in 6 years. <sup>1</sup>

### 69.6%

of students who enrolled in a 4-year public college in Fall 2017 completed within six years. <sup>1</sup>

### 2,585

students who enrolled in a career academy. <sup>2</sup>

### 19,784

students who were enrolled in dual credit courses. <sup>2</sup>

### 50% (96,000)

of young people age 18-24 enrolled or have completed college in 2022. <sup>3</sup>

### 23,376

students who took the ACT. <sup>2</sup>

### 18.7

was the average ACT composite score. <sup>2</sup>

### 4% (5,000)

teens 16-19 were not in school and not working. <sup>1</sup>

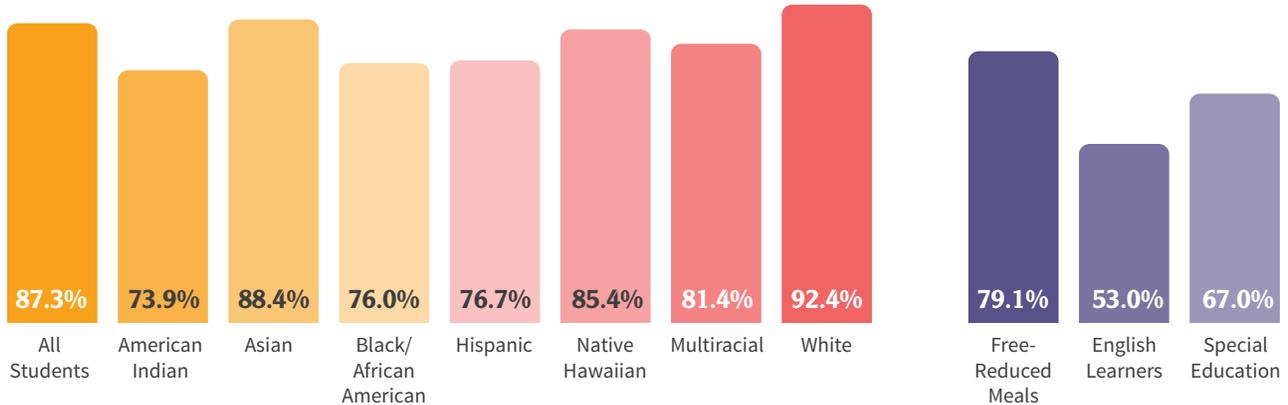
### 7% (13,000)

of people 18 to 24 years old were not attending school, not working, and had no degree beyond high school in 2022. <sup>1</sup>

# GRADUATION & EDUCATIONAL SAVINGS



## 4-YEAR COHORT GRADUATION RATE (2022-23)



Source: Nebraska Department of Education.

**21,232**

students completed high school in four years.

**89.6**

2021 extended 5-year graduation rate\*

**268**

16-21 year olds took the GED in 2022-23

**85%**

of 16-21 year olds successfully completed the GED

Source: Nebraska Department of Education.

\*Extended 5th year graduation rate is the percent of students who graduated within five years rather than the standard four.

## NEBRASKA EDUCATION SAVINGS PLAN TRUST (NEST) (AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2023)

In the 2019 Legislative Session, lawmakers approved the Meadowlark Act, which creates a college savings account with an initial seed deposit for every baby born in Nebraska on or after January 1, 2020, in addition to an incentive match payment for college

savings contributions made by low-income families. Research shows that similar early investments in educational savings result in improved long-term educational outcomes, particularly for children in lower-income families.

**20.6%**

of children (under 18) have an Educational Savings Account

**99,961**

NEST Education Savings Accounts

**69,890**

NEST accounts funded through the Meadowlark Act

Source: Nebraska State Treasurer's Office.

# Economic Stability

Our children, communities, and state are stronger when all of Nebraska's families are able to participate fully in the workforce and establish financial security. We must ensure that families are able to meet their children's basic needs and achieve financial security. A robust system of supports should help families make ends meet as they work toward financial independence.

Hardworking families should have a fair share in the success of our state's economy. When families need assistance in meeting the basic needs of their children, public benefit programs should work efficiently and be easy for families to use. Parents should not have to choose between the job they need and the family they love. All families should have the opportunity to invest in their children's future and be able to access community resources that are well-funded by fair tax policies.

A decorative graphic on the left side of the page. It features a light purple rounded rectangle containing a dark purple line graph with an upward-pointing arrow and two vertical bars. The background is a gradient of purple and pink.

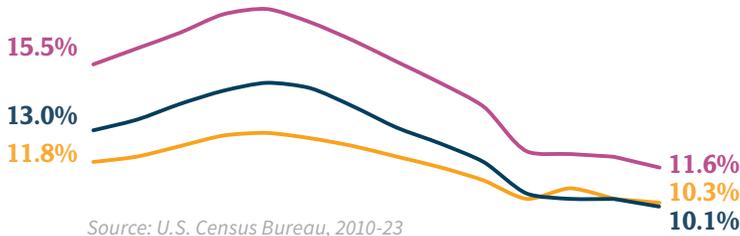
# Section Contents

- 54** Poverty
- 55** Making ends meet
- 56** Housing & homelessness
- 57** Hunger
- 58** SNAP & WIC
- 59** Custody
- 60** Employment, income, & assets
- 61** Transportation & taxes



# POVERTY

## NEBRASKA POVERTY (2010-2023)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-23 American Community Survey 5-year estimate, Table B17001, Table S1702.

2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023

- Poverty rate for children
- Poverty rate for families with children
- Poverty rate for all persons

## FAMILY STRUCTURE AND POVERTY (2023)<sup>1</sup>

**32.5%**

of children were living in **single-mother** households and are in poverty.

**13.3%**

of children were living in **single-father** households and are in poverty.

**5.0%**

of children were living in **married-couple** households and are in poverty.

**17.6%**

of children were living **with a grandparent** and are in poverty.

**55,299**

children were living in poverty in 2023.<sup>2</sup>

**23,948**

children were living in extreme poverty (<50% of the Federal Poverty Line) in 2023.<sup>3</sup>

## NEBRASKA POVERTY RATES BY RACE AND ETHNICITY (2023)<sup>2</sup>

	Child poverty rate (17 and under)	Overall poverty rate
American Indian	27.9%	23.1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	10.0%	9.8%
Black/African American	32.0%	24.1%
Hispanic	18.9%	15.8%
Multiracial/Other	16.9%	14.7%
White, Not Hispanic	7.2%	8.3%

## 2023 FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL (FPL) GUIDELINES<sup>4</sup>

	Federal Poverty Line	Free School Meals	Medicaid Expansion	SNAP	WIC, Reduced Priced Meals, Transitional Child Care Subsidy	Kids Connection (CHIP)	ACA Exchange Tax Credits
# of Persons	100%	130%	138%	165%	185%	213%	300%
1	\$14,580	\$18,954	\$20,120	\$24,057	\$26,973	\$31,055	\$58,320
2	\$19,720	\$25,636	\$27,214	\$32,538	\$36,482	\$42,004	\$78,880
3	\$24,860	\$32,318	\$34,307	\$41,019	\$45,991	\$52,952	\$99,440
4	\$30,000	\$39,000	\$41,400	\$49,500	\$55,500	\$63,900	\$120,000
5	\$35,140	\$45,682	\$48,493	\$57,981	\$65,009	\$74,848	\$140,560
6	\$40,280	\$52,364	\$55,586	\$66,462	\$74,518	\$85,796	\$161,120
7	\$45,420	\$59,046	\$62,680	\$74,943	\$84,027	\$96,745	\$181,680
8	\$50,560	\$65,728	\$69,773	\$83,424	\$93,536	\$107,693	\$202,240

1. U.S. Census, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table B17006, S1001.

2. U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table B17001.

3. U.S. Census, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table B17024.

4. HH Poverty Guidelines for 2023; Nebraska Women, Infants, and Children Program; Nebraska Department of Education, Free and Reduced Meals; Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Medicaid Expansion, Medicaid, Child Care; Nebraska Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; HealthCare.Gov, Premium Tax Credit.



## MAKING ENDS MEET

Nebraskans pride themselves on being hard-working people. In 2023, **78.1% of children in our state had all available parents in the workforce.**<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, having high labor force participation doesn't always translate into family economic stability.

The chart at right illustrates the gap between low-wage earnings and the amount needed to provide for a two-adult family with two children. It assumes that both adults work full-time (40 hours a week), year-round (52 weeks per year). That means no vacation, no sick time, just work.

The federal poverty level doesn't describe what it takes for working families to make ends meet. For that, we turn to the Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Standard (FESS). The FESS uses average costs, like fair median rent and the average price of a basic menu of food, to calculate what a family needs to earn to meet its basic needs without any form of private or public assistance. It does not include luxuries like dining out or saving for the future.

### INCOME PER ADULT FOR FAMILY OF 2 ADULTS AND 2 CHILDREN (2023)

#### MINIMUM WAGE<sup>2</sup>

Annual | **\$43,680**

Monthly | **\$3,640**

Hourly | **\$10.50**

#### 100% FEDERAL POVERTY LINE<sup>3</sup>

Annual | **\$30,000**

Monthly | **\$2,500**

Hourly | **\$7.21**

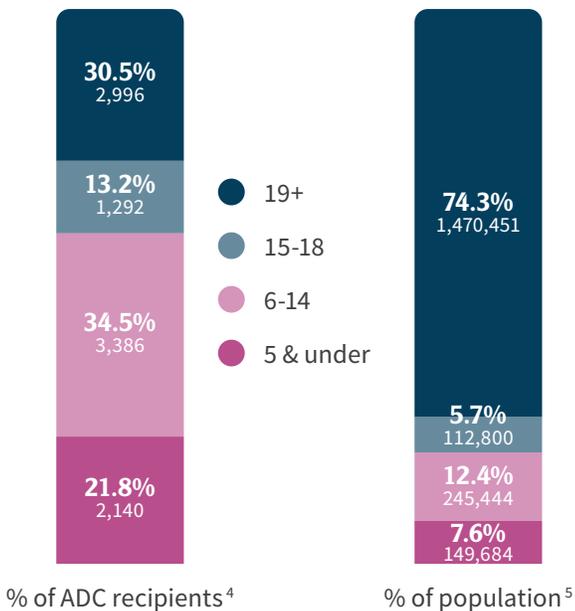
#### 200% FEDERAL POVERTY LINE<sup>3</sup>

Annual | **\$60,000**

Monthly | **\$5,000**

Hourly | **\$14.42**

### ADC RECIPIENTS BY AGE (2023)



### AID TO DEPENDENT CHILDREN (ADC) (2023)<sup>5</sup>

**6,191** Average monthly number of **children receiving ADC**

**2,963** Average monthly number of **families receiving ADC**

**\$509** Average monthly ADC **payment per family**

**26** Number of cases reaching **60-month eligibility limit**

**2.1** Average number of **children per ADC family**

**\$18,117,354** **Total ADC payments** (Includes both state and federal funds)

1. U.S. Census, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table B23008

2. U.S. Department of Labor.

3. HH Poverty Guidelines for 2022.

4. Financial Services, Operations, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

5. U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Single Year of Age and Sex: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2023.



# HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

## HOMELESSNESS

The Nebraska Homeless Assistance Program (NHAP) and the Housing and Urban Development Program (HUD) serve individuals who are experiencing homelessness or near-homeless. Not all people experiencing homelessness receive services.

### IN 2023, HUD/NHAP SERVED:

**4,629** homeless individuals

**987** homeless children ages 18 and under

**431** homeless families with children

**81** unaccompanied homeless children

**5,339** individuals at risk of homelessness

**2,545** children at risk of homelessness

**1,038** families with children at risk of homelessness

**165** unaccompanied children at risk of homelessness

Source: Nebraska Center On Children, Families and the Law.

**11,022**

Nebraska Public Housing vouchers as on 12/31/2023<sup>3</sup>

## HOMEOWNERSHIP

Homeownership provides a sense of stability for children and communities.

**71.8%**

of families with children owned their home in 2023.<sup>1</sup>

**22.3%**

of Households were **moderately-burdened** (30-50% income on rent) by housing costs in 2023.<sup>2</sup>

**21.7%**

of Households were **severely-burdened** (>50% income on rent) by housing costs in 2023.<sup>2</sup>

**40,000** (8%) children lived in crowded housing with more than one person/room in 2022.

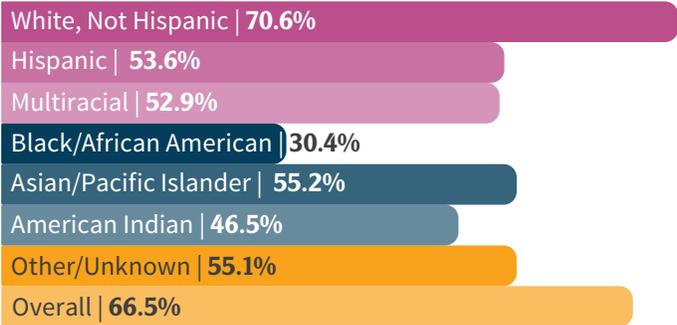
**16,000** (3%) children lived in areas of concentrated poverty in 2022.

**105,000** (22%) children lived in households with a high housing burden cost in 2022.

**82,000** (55%) children in low-income households had a high housing cost burden in 2022.

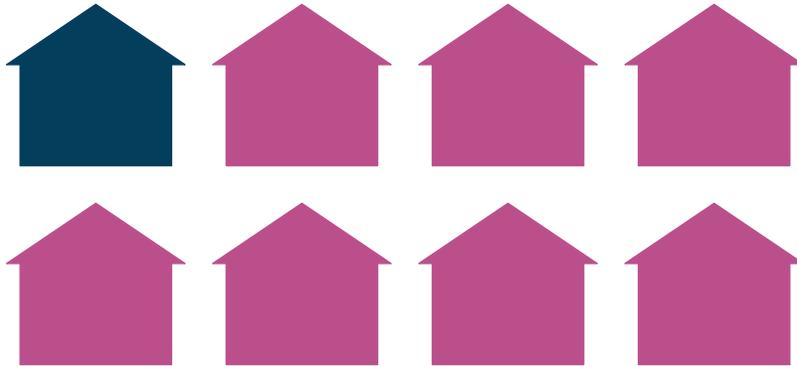
Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center.

## HOMEOWNERSHIP RATE (2023)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table B25003B-1.

1. U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table B25115.  
2. U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 1-year Estimates, Table B25070.  
3. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

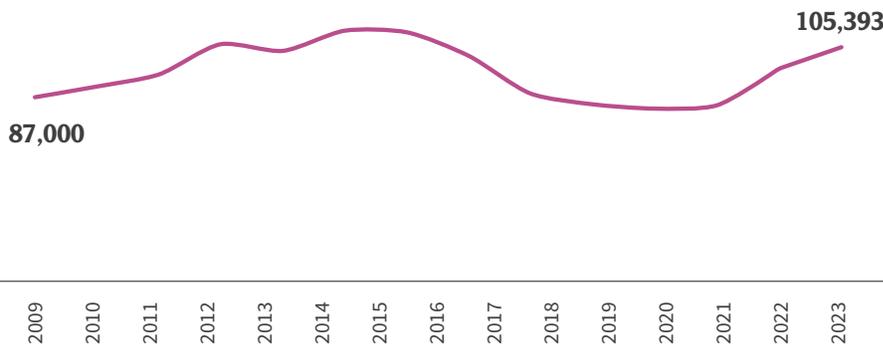


## 1 IN 8

households don't know where their next meal is coming from in 2023.

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Household Food Security in the United States in 2023.

### NUMBER OF FOOD-INSECURE HOUSEHOLDS IN NEBRASKA (2009-2023)



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Household Food Security in the United States in 2023.

Approximately **105,393** households in Nebraska were food-insecure in 2023. Food-insecure means that someone in the household has disrupted their eating patterns or reduced their intake of food because there was not enough food in the house to eat.

## 19.2%

of children **experienced food insecurity** in 2022.

## 60%

**increase** in the number of food-insecure children since 2021.

## 60%

of food-insecure children were **income-eligible for Federal Nutrition Assistance** in 2022.

Source: Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap, Child Food Insecurity in Nebraska, 2022.



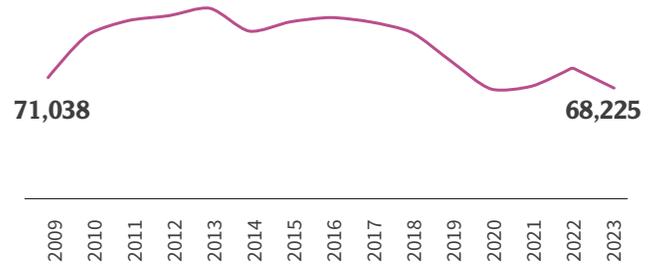
# SNAP & WIC

## SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is one of the most effective anti-poverty programs in the United States. It provides nutrition assistance to low-income individuals and families through benefits that can be used to purchase food at grocery stores, farmers markets, and other places where groceries are sold.

Source: Characteristics of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households.

## AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN ENROLLED IN SNAP (2009-2023)



Source: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

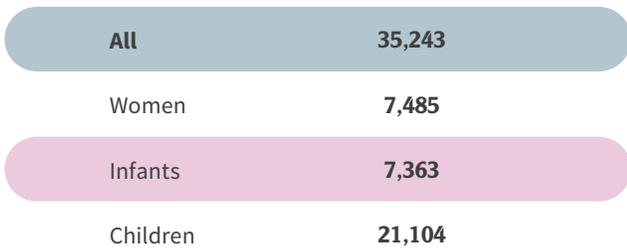
## PERCENT OF SNAP CHILD PARTICIPANTS (2023)



Source: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children—known as WIC—aims to improve the health of low-income pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to age five who are at nutritional risk. The program provides nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating, breastfeeding promotion and support, and referrals to healthcare.

## MONTHLY AVERAGE NUMBER OF WIC PARTICIPANTS (SFY 2023)



Source: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

# 97

clinics provide WIC in SFY 2023

# 75

counties serve WIC in SFY 2023

# \$46.51

Average **monthly cost** per WIC participant in SFY 2023

Source: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.



## MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE (2023)

**10,500** **5,089**

married couples

divorced couples

**4,560**

children experienced their parents divorcing.

**1,571**

children in divorce cases were put under their **mother's custody.**

**223**

children in divorce cases were put under their **father's custody.**

**2,724**

children in divorce cases were put under **both parent's custody.**

**42**

children in divorce cases were given a **different arrangement.**

Source: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

## INFORMAL KINSHIP CARE

Children are considered to be in informal kinship care if they are not living with a parent or foster parent and are not living independently.

**11,000** children were living in kinship care in 2023.<sup>1</sup>  
(2%)

**8,075** grandparent householders were responsible for their own grandchildren under 18 years in 2023.<sup>2</sup>  
(3.4%)

## CHILD SUPPORT (SFY 2023)

Custodial parents who do not receive child support payments they are owed by non-custodial parents may seek assistance from the Department of Health and Human Services. Assistance is provided by Child Support Enforcement (CSE).

**89,881**

child support cases that received Child Support Enforcement (CSE) support.

**72.2%**

of current (any case where obligation is still running) child support cases collected through CSE.

**93,799**

non-ADC child support cases\*

**3,918**

ADC child support cases\*

**\$205,999,869**

of child support was disbursed through CSE.

**15,235**

cases received services through CSE, but payments were not being made.

**1,466**

families receiving public benefits which are eligible for and are receiving child support payments.

**932**

families receiving public benefits which are eligible for child support, but it is not being paid.

**3,850**

child support cases where non-custodial parent is incarcerated.

**\$118.21**

monthly child support payment per child

\* If the custodial parent is receiving ADC, the state may collect child support from the non-custodial parent as reimbursement.

Source: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.



# EMPLOYMENT, INCOME, & ASSETS

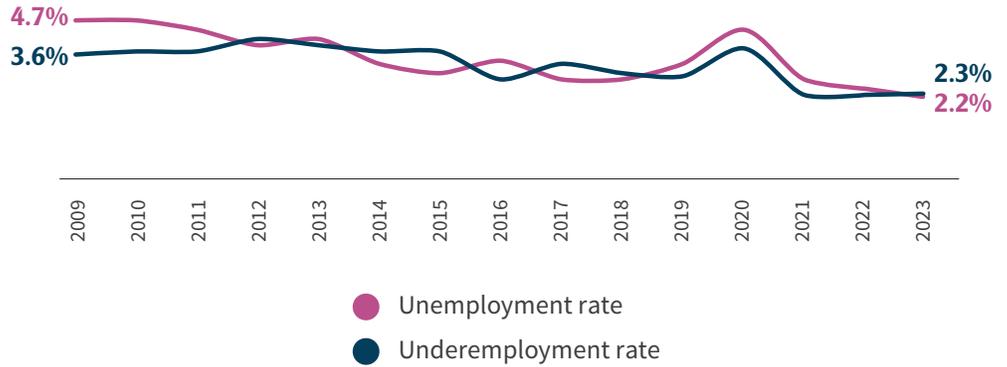
## 78.1%

of **children under 18** with all available parents in the workforce in 2023.<sup>1</sup>

## 74.6%

of **children under 6** that had all available parents in the workforce in 2023.<sup>1</sup>

### NEBRASKA UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNDEREMPLOYMENT RATE (2009-2023)



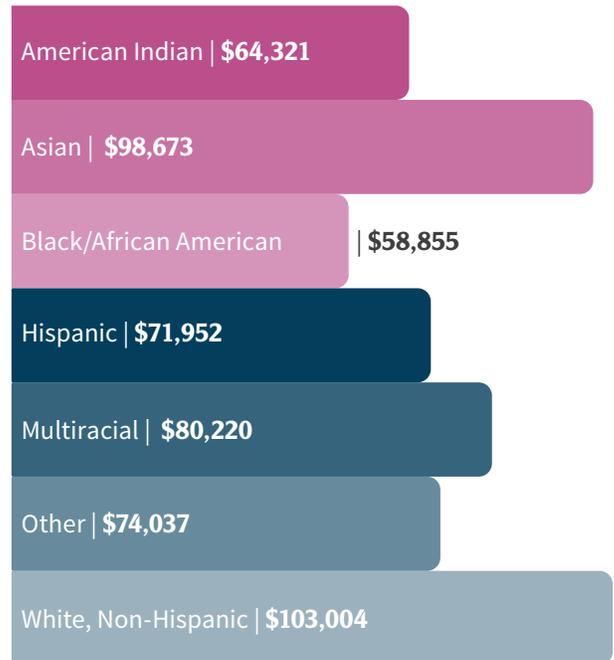
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Alternative Measures of Labor Underutilization for States, Annual Averages, U-3, U-6.

### MEDIAN INCOME FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN (2023)

All families	\$96,902
Married couple	\$121,462
Male householder (no spouse)	\$60,064
Female householder (no spouse)	\$40,698

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table B19126.

### MEDIAN INCOME FOR FAMILIES BY RACE & ETHNICITY (2023)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table B19113B-1.

# 7,000

workers earned federal minimum wage or below in 2023.<sup>2</sup>



## FEDERAL TAX CREDITS (2022)

**105,525**

tax returns claimed

**\$256,723,744**

in **federal** Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC).

**227,356**

families claimed

**\$588,400,313**

in **federal** Child Tax Credits.

**47,215**

families claimed

**\$28,380,758**

in **federal** Child and Dependent Care Credits.

**86,905**

families claimed

**\$170,153,010**

in **additional** Child Tax Credit.

Source: Nebraska Department of Revenue.

## STATE TAX CREDITS (2023)

**109,905**

tax returns claimed

**\$27,960,291**

in **state** Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC).

**47,565**

families claimed

**\$8,403,213**

in **state** Child and Dependent Care Credits.

Source: Nebraska Department of Revenue.

**128,784**  
(14.4%)

workers that used transportation other than a personal automobile or carpool to get to work in 2023.<sup>1</sup>

**21,497**  
(2.1%)

households that had no vehicle available in 2023.<sup>2</sup>

1. U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 1-year Estimates, Table C08141.  
2. U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 1-year Estimates, Table B08201.

# Child Welfare

Keeping our children and youth safe is essential to their healthy development. Children deserve to grow up in safe, permanent, and loving homes. An effective child welfare system works to strengthen families and minimize trauma through timely and appropriate action. Families should be connected to resources in their community that strengthen their abilities to care for their children through a robust network of evidence-based services focusing on child abuse and neglect prevention that are able to meet families where they are. When children do enter the child welfare system, they are entitled to retain ties to their family, culture, and community.

The administration and staff of agencies should reflect the diversity of the populations they serve and work in a way that honors children's unique heritage and cultural protective factors. Services must be trauma-informed, individualized, timely, and ongoing to maintain safety, well-being, and permanency.



# Section Contents

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- 68 Race & ethnicity in child welfare
- 69 Placements and staff cases
- 70 Out-of-home placements
- 71 Placement stability
- 72 Permanency
- 73 Aging out



# CHILD MALTREATMENT

Federal law defines child maltreatment, otherwise known as abuse and neglect, as “any act or failure to act that results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation, or any act or failure to act that represents an imminent risk of serious harm.”

In Nebraska, the vast majority (85%) of maltreatment is physical neglect, which is a failure to meet a child’s basic needs like food, shelter, and clothing. This is, in many cases, an economic issue.

## WHY SHOULD WE BE CONCERNED?

Exposure to childhood abuse and neglect hinders children’s healthy social, emotional, and cognitive development. If untreated, toxic stress makes it more likely that children will adopt risky behaviors which negatively impact their future health and success. Given the impacts, we need to strengthen families to prevent abuse and neglect whenever possible, and take swift, thoughtful action to ensure that all children grow up in loving homes.

## CHILD ABUSE AND NEGELCT REPORTS (2023)

# 43,136

child abuse & neglect reports

# 16,115

calls were assessed by DHHS and/or law enforcement.

# 1,820

reports were **substantiated.**

# 8,180

reports were **unfounded.**

# 4,447

reports were **referred** to Alternative Response.

*Source: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.*

## SAFETY ASSESSMENTS (2023)

# 18,753

safety assessments conducted on children

# 936

children were **determined unsafe.**

# 782

children determined unsafe and **referred to court.**

# 32

children determined unsafe and **referred to voluntary services.**

# 122

children determined unsafe and **non-court involved** and family **did not elect to participate in voluntary services.**

*Source: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.*

# CHILD MALTREATMENT



## TYPES OF SUBSTANTIATED MALTREATMENT (2023)<sup>1</sup>

Physical abuse | 1,247

Emotional abuse | 247

Sexual abuse | 500

Physical neglect | 3,776

Emotional neglect | 38

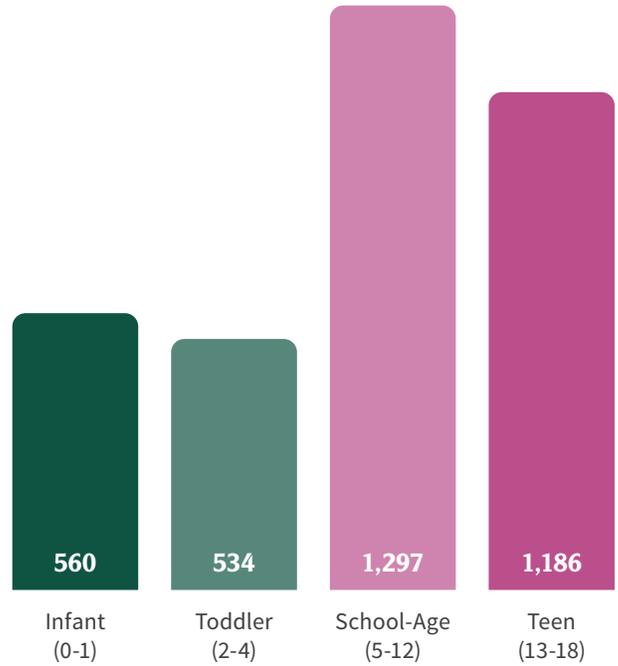
Sex Trafficking | 14

Medical Neglect | 2

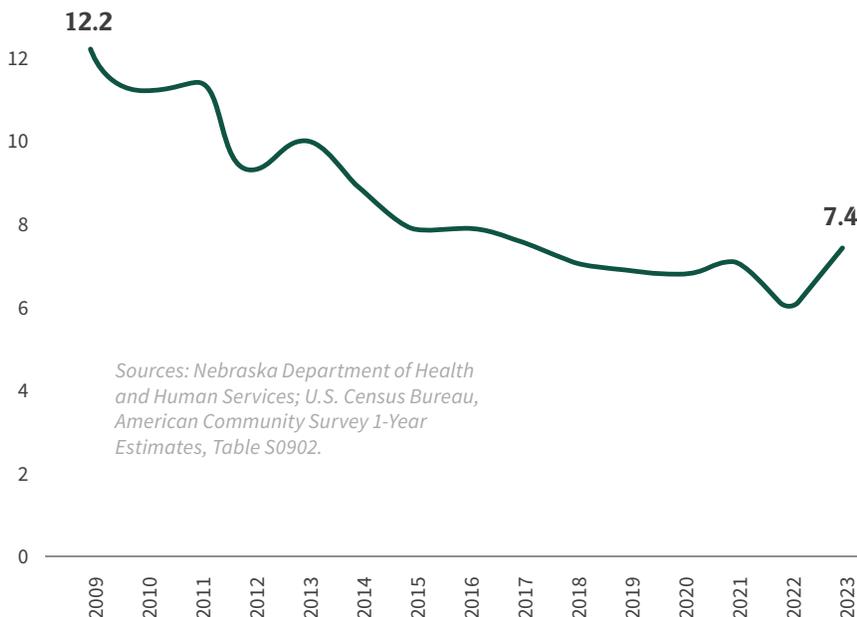
*Some children experienced more than one type of maltreatment. The numbers here will be higher than the total number of children who experienced maltreatment.*

*It is important to note that only maltreatment cases that were reported are included in this report. The actual incidence of maltreatment may be higher than what is reported here.*

## CHILD MALTREATMENT BY AGE (2023)<sup>1</sup>



## NUMBER OF CHILD MALTREATMENT VICTIMS PER 1,000 CHILDREN (2009-2023)



*Sources: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table S0902.*

# 3,577

children experienced maltreatment in 2023.<sup>1</sup>

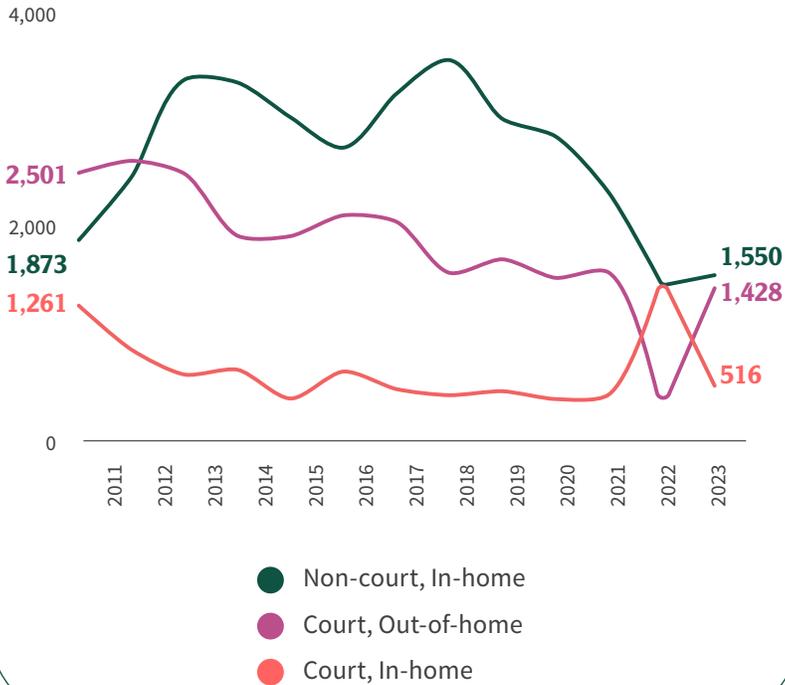
Do you know a child who is being maltreated?

Call the Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline at **1-800-652-1999**.



# ENTRIES & INVOLVEMENT

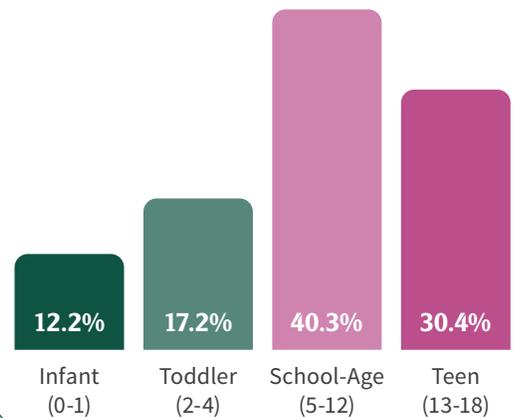
## HOW DO CHILDREN ENTER OUR CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM? (2011-2023)



# 1,062

children entering care in 2023 had **previous involvement** in the child welfare system.

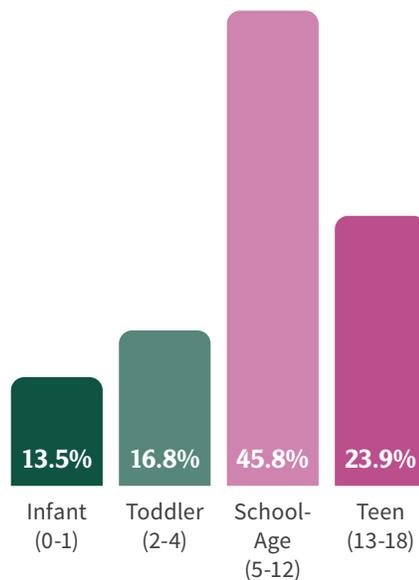
## CHILDREN WHO HAVE ANY INVOLVEMENT IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM BY AGE (2023)



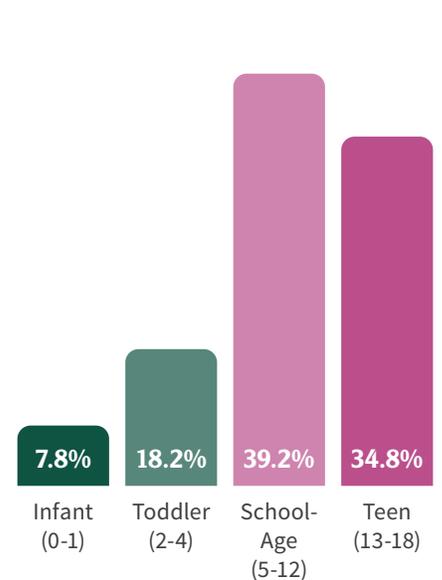
# 7,874

children were involved in the child welfare system in 2023.

## NON-COURT ENTRIES BY AGE (2023)



## COURT ENTRIES BY AGE (2023)



# 3,988

families were involved in the child welfare system in 2023.

# ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE & TRIBAL YOUTH



The Omaha Tribe, the Santee Sioux Nation, and the Winnebago Tribe have agreements with the State of Nebraska's Department of Children and Family Services to provide child welfare services to tribal members within the boundaries of their reservations.

These cases are under the jurisdiction of Tribal Courts and fully managed by the tribes' child welfare departments. The Tribal Youth data contained on this page are from DHHS and represent the services provided under those agreements.

## NUMBER OF TRIBAL YOUTH (2023)

Involved	602
Entered	138
Placed in out-of-home care	498
Exited	171

## TRIBAL CHILDREN RECEIVING OUT-OF-HOME SERVICES BY PLACEMENT TYPE (2023)

Adoptive home	0
Developmental disability facility	9
Detention	8
Emergency shelter	22
Group home	11
Hospital/Medical facility	7
Independent living	1-5*
Kinship foster home	45
Missing youth	21
Non-relative foster home	89
Psychiatric residential treatment facility	1-5*
Relative foster home	286
Therapeutic group home	1-5*
Youth rehabilitation and treatment center	1-5*
<b>Duplicated total</b>	<b>502-518</b>

## ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE

# 5,049

families were served by Alternative Response in 2023.

## 4,654

families were successfully discharged by Alternative Response.

## 48 DAYS

on average to successful discharge.

The majority of children who come into Nebraska's child welfare system are identified because their family is unable to meet their basic needs, which is often related to symptoms of poverty. Alternative Response brings more flexibility to our state response to child maltreatment in certain low- or moderate-risk cases by allowing caseworkers to focus on harnessing the strengths of each family and building parental capacity through intensive supports and services.

## 402

families changed track from Alternative Response to Traditional Response.

## 21 DAYS

on average of involvement before changing track.

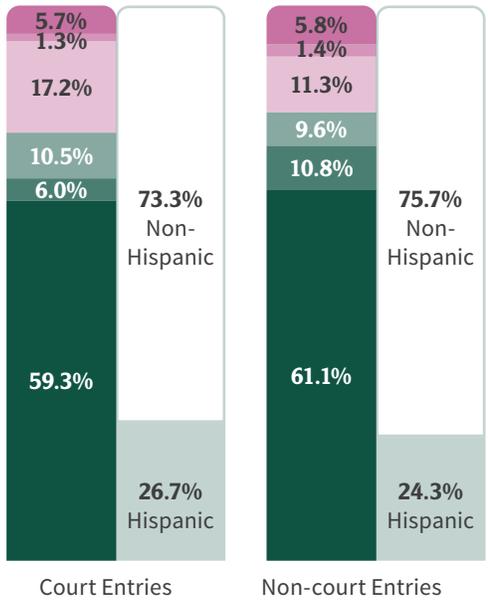
*\*Exact counts suppressed by Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services due to privacy concerns.*



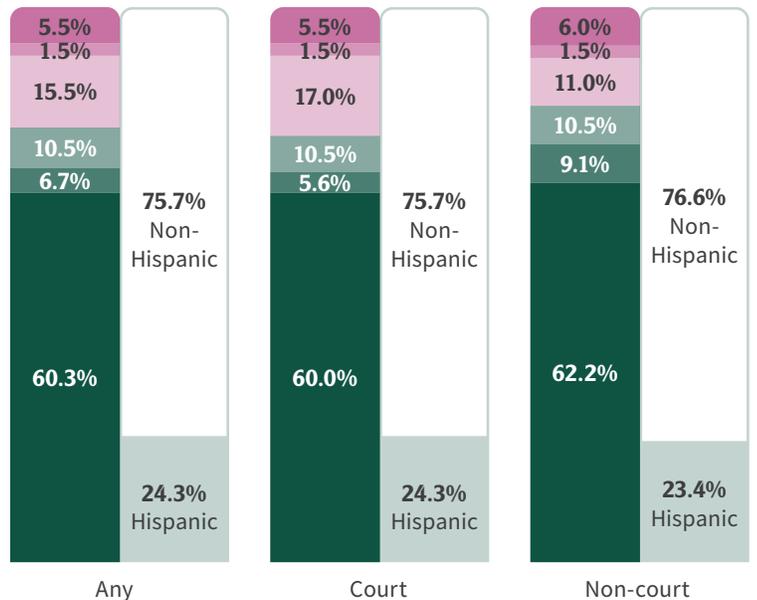
# RACE & ETHNICITY IN CHILD WELFARE

- American Indian/Alaska Native
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Black/African American
- Hispanic
- Multiracial
- Unknown/Other/Declined
- White
- White, Non-Hispanic

### ENTRIES TO THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM (2023)<sup>1</sup>



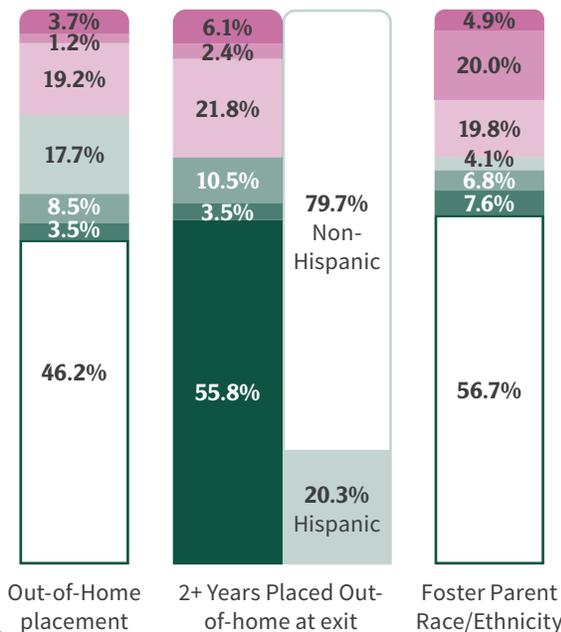
### CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM INVOLVEMENT (2023)<sup>1</sup>



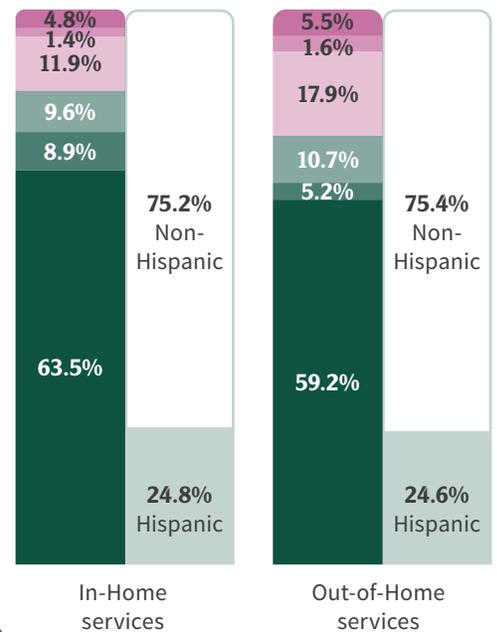
### TOTAL CHILD POPULATION (2023)<sup>2</sup>



### OUT-OF-HOME CARE (2023)<sup>1</sup>



### IN-HOME AND OUT-OF-HOME SERVICES (2023)<sup>1</sup>



1. Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.  
 2. U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin for Nebraska: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2023.

# PLACEMENTS & STAFF CASES



## REMOVAL REASONS OF CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE (2023)

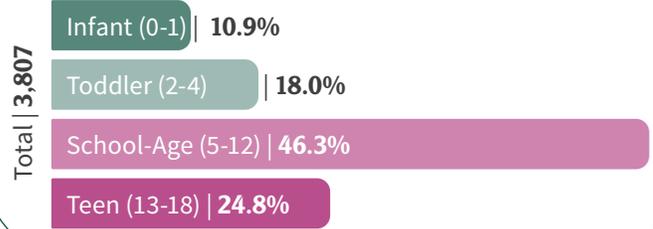
Neglect (Alleged/Reported)	3169
Drug Abuse (Parent/Caretaker)	1452
Physical Abuse (Alleged/Reported)	880
Inadequate Housing	694
Domestic Violence	687
Alcohol Abuse (Parent/Caretaker)	511
Incarceration of Parent(s)/Caretaker(s)	447
Sexual Abuse (Alleged/Reported)	343
Child's Behavior Problems	332
Abandonment	293
Parent's/Caretaker's Inability to Cope Due to Illness/Other	135
Homelessness	130
Education Neglect	78
Medical Neglect	76
Psychological and Emotional Abuse	74
Prenatal Drug Exposure	72
Death of Parent(s)/Caretaker(s)	66
Parent's/Caretaker's Significant Impairment Physical/Emotional	53
Mentally Ill and Dangerous (Child)	51
Inadequate Access to Mental Health Services	26
Drug Abuse (Child)	25
Parent's/Caretaker's Significant Impairment Cognitive	22
Whereabouts Unknown	20
Court Determined that Reasonable Efforts are not Required.	18
Runaway	16
Diagnosed Child's Disability	14
Alcohol Abuse (Child)	13
Inadequate Access to Medical Health Services	13
Human Trafficking	11
Voluntary Relinquishment for Adoption	10
Child/Young Adult Requests Placement	7
Failure to Return	*
Prenatal Alcohol Exposure	*
Safe Haven	*
Conflict Related to Child's Sexual Orientation or Gender ID	*
Parental Immigration Detainment or Deportation	*
Sex Trafficking	*

Note: Children may have more than one reason for removal.  
\*Number is suppressed due to privacy protection

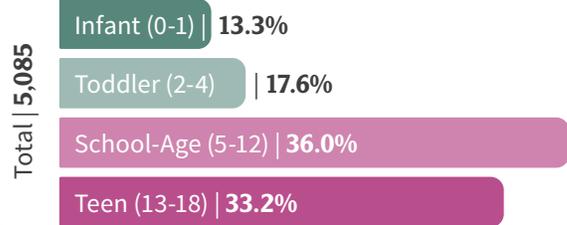
# 5,452

children received out-of-home services in 2023 and had a 3(A) petition.

## CHILDREN RECEIVING IN-HOME SERVICES BY AGE (2023)



## CHILDREN RECEIVING OUT-OF-HOME SERVICES BY AGE (2023)



## TOTAL STAFF CASELOADS IN COMPLIANCE (12/31/2023)

Service Area	Total Staff	Staff with caseloads in compliance	Percent caseloads in compliance
Central	62	57	91.9%
Eastern	163	112	68.7%
Northern	71	63	88.7%
Southeast	98	77	78.6%
Western	55	46	83.6%
State	449	355	79.1%

Compliance as reported by DHHS and determined by the Child Welfare League of America. There are multiple factors influencing caseload including urban or rural, initial assessment, in-home or out-of-home, and court or non-court involvement.

Source: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.



# OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENTS

## FOSTER HOME PLACEMENT BEDS (12/31/2023)

	# of beds available	# of homes available
Foster homes	4,854	2,399
Approved foster homes	1,530	943
Licensed foster homes	3,324	1,456

**1,861**  
(54.2%)

children in foster care were placed with relatives or kin.

**2,365**

kids in out-of-home care also had a sibling in out-of-home care.

**56.2%**

of children were placed in out-of-home care with **all siblings**.

**78.7%**

of children were placed in out-of-home care with **at least one sibling**.

When children must be removed from their homes, it is important to ensure that their placement reduces the trauma of removal and promotes the well-being of the child. Congregate care, which places children in an institutional setting such as a group home or detention center, should be used minimally for out-of-home placements.

Research shows that placement in a family-like setting provides children with improved long-term outcomes in physical and emotional health. Although congregate care may be necessary for some children, for many others, it does not allow children to maintain the strong relationships with trusted adults that are essential for successful development.

## THERE ARE THREE TYPES OF FOSTER PARENTS IN NEBRASKA:

**Relative foster homes:** Foster parents who are related to the child or children whom they care for by blood, marriage, or adoption.

**Kinship foster homes:** Foster parents who have a significant pre-existing relationship with the child or children for whom they care. (Ex: former teacher, coach, or neighbor.)

**Licensed foster homes:** Foster parents who live at the licensed residence and care for a child or children who they have not previously known.

## WHERE ARE THE KIDS IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE? (12/31/2023)

	#	%
Adoptive home	75	2.4%
Relative home	1,146	36.0%
Kinship care	471	14.8%
Non-Relative Foster Home	1,014	31.8%
Group home	25	0.8%
Developmental disability facility	228	7.2%
Detention facility	25	0.8%
Emergency Shelter Center	7	0.2%
Psychiatric residential treatment facility	23	0.7%
Independent Living	60	1.9%
Hospital	8	0.3%
Missing youth	27	0.8%
Therapeutic group home	*	0.1%
Youth rehabilitation and treatment center	73	2.3%

\*data suppressed

# PLACEMENT STABILITY



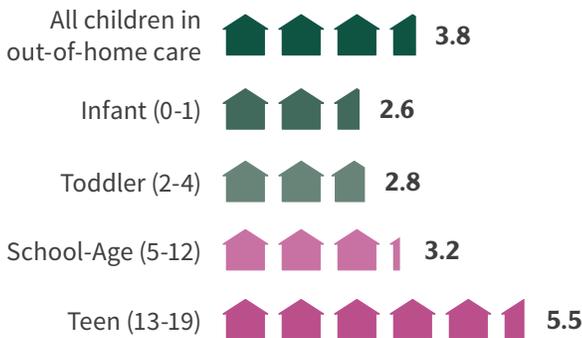
## MULTIPLE PLACEMENTS

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services counts placement changes when a child moves from one foster care setting to another. Children in stable homes are reported to receive more attention, acceptance, affection, and better care from their foster parents. Children who are in

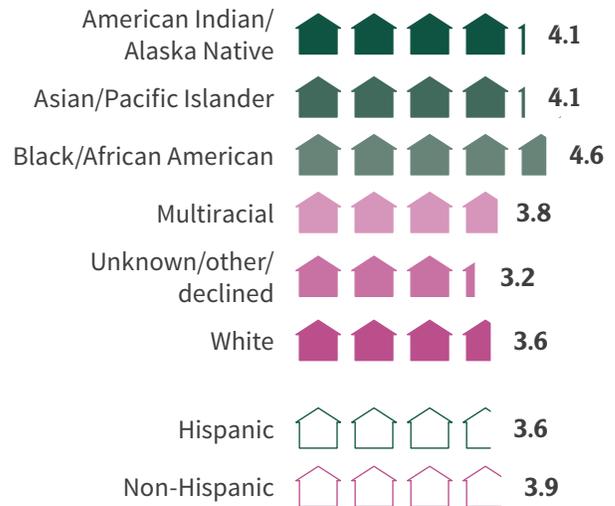
stabilized homes are more likely to receive therapy, are less delinquent and oppositional/aggressive, and are more likely to be placed with competent and caring foster parents.

Source: University of Illinois, Child and Family Research Center, Placement Stability Study, 1999.

### AVERAGE NUMBER OF OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENTS BY AGE (2023)



### AVERAGE NUMBER OF OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENTS BY RACE/ETHNICITY (2023)



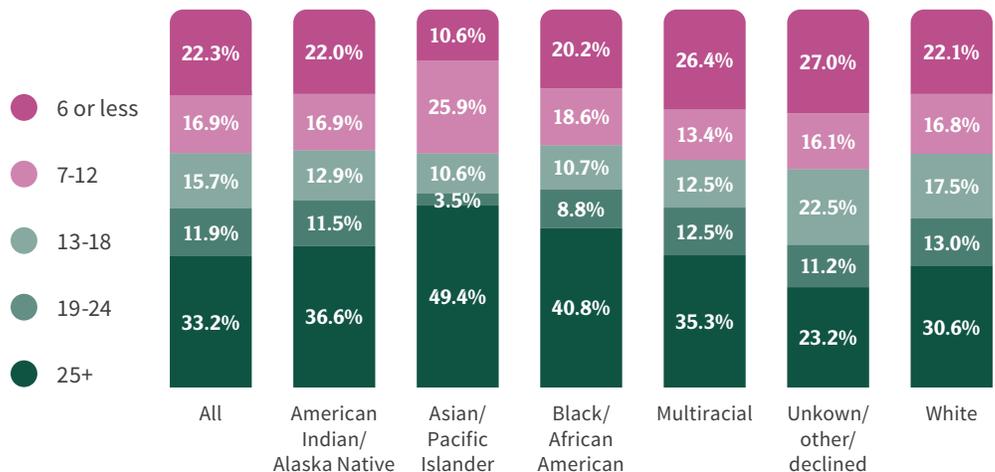
**1,525**

children **exited** out-of-home care in 2023.

**25.6 MONTHS**

is the mean length of time **away from home** for children in out-of-home placement in 2023.

### LENGTH OF TIME IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE (MONTHS)(2023)



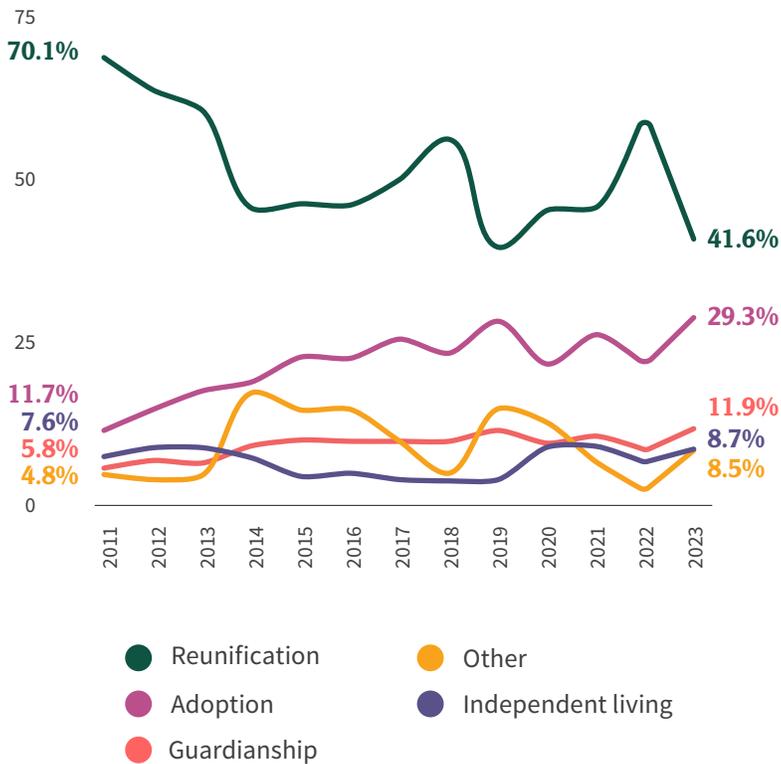


# PERMANENCY

## EXITING THE SYSTEM

Once in the child welfare system, children should be on a track toward achieving permanency in a safe, loving environment. Most of the time, that means they will be reunified with their family and return home. Other times, permanency may be achieved through adoption or guardianship.

### EXITS FROM OUT-OF-HOME CARE (2011-2023)



# 1,341

non-court-involved children exited the system in 2023.

# 2,238

court-involved children exited the system in 2023.

# 184

children exited into guardianships in 2023.

# 167

children exited into guardianships which were subsidized in 2023.

**448**  
**CHILDREN**  
were adopted in 2023.

**445**  
**ADOPTIONS**  
were subsidized in 2023.

**25.9**  
**MONTHS**  
is the mean length of time from termination of parental rights until adoption in 2023.

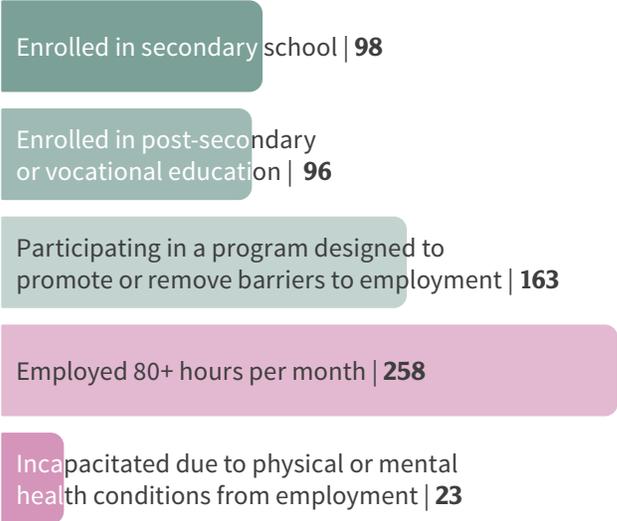


Family support is key to any successful transition into adulthood, especially for youth who may have been exposed to trauma. Learning to be self-reliant in seeking employment and housing, managing finances, or seeking healthcare can be daunting without family connections. For youth who have been in foster care who do not exit the system to a family, ensuring a strong system of support in this transition is key. The Bridge to Independence (B2i) program works to address this issue. B2i serves youth who must be either working, seeking work, or are in school. In return, they receive Medicaid coverage, a monthly stipend to use for living expenses, and an assigned caseworker on call 24/7 to help them navigate the transition to adulthood.

### YOUTH WHO WERE IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE WHEN THEY REACHED THEIR 19TH BIRTHDAY (2023)

<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>
Who were DHHS wards	<b>126</b>
Who were OJS wards (youth placed at YRTC)	*
Who were in (both)	*

### REASONS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE BRIDGE TO INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM (2023)



# 84

Young adults in the Bridge to Independence Program were **parenting or pregnant** in 2023.

### BRIDGE TO INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM (2023)

**359**  
young adults participated in the program.

**166**  
young adults entered the program.

**173**  
young adults left the program.

**\***  
young adults chose to leave the voluntary services program.

**62**  
young adults left the program due to lack of cooperation with the voluntary program.

**8**  
young adults left the program because housing could not be approved.

**90**  
young adults successfully completed the B2i Program.

Source: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.  
\*Data suppressed due to privacy protection.

# Juvenile Justice

Keeping our children and youth safe is essential to their healthy development. Youth should be held accountable for their actions in developmentally appropriate ways that promote community safety and allow them to grow into responsible citizens.

When youth act out, they should be held accountable primarily by families, schools, and communities, avoiding contact with the juvenile justice system if at all possible. Youth entering and already in the juvenile justice system are entitled to be safe, and their rights must be respected. Retaining strong connections to family, community, and culture help youth thrive within the system. The juvenile justice system should be rehabilitative in nature and designed specifically for youth.



# Section Contents

- 76** Arrests
- 77** Disproportionate minority contact
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- 81** Probation
- 82** Youth in out-of-home care
- 83** Detention
- 84** YRTC & room confinement
- 85** Youth treated as adults



# ARRESTS

## YOUTH ARRESTS (2023)<sup>1</sup>

Type	Male	Female	Total	% of Total
Curfew	35	14	49	0.7%
Alcohol	270	200	470	7.1%
Drug-related	475	252	727	11.1%
Violent	115	30	145	2.2%
Person	1,068	786	1,854	28.2%
Property	1,253	674	1,927	29.3%
Public order	200	110	310	4.7%
Weapon	83	4	87	1.3%
Other	652	285	937	14.2%
DUI	53	18	71	1.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,204</b>	<b>2,373</b>	<b>6,577</b>	

Note: Youth Arrests by offense data is provided by the Nebraska Crime Commission and does not include a full year of data from the Omaha Police Department.

# 7,864

youths were **arrested** in 2023.<sup>2</sup>

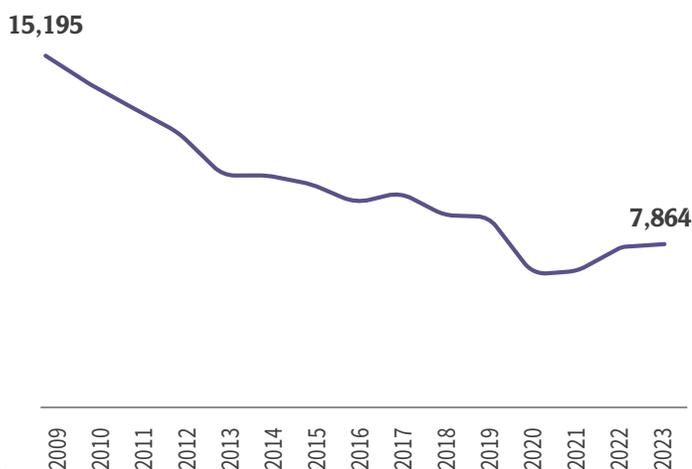
# 29.3%

**property crimes** were the most common.<sup>1</sup>

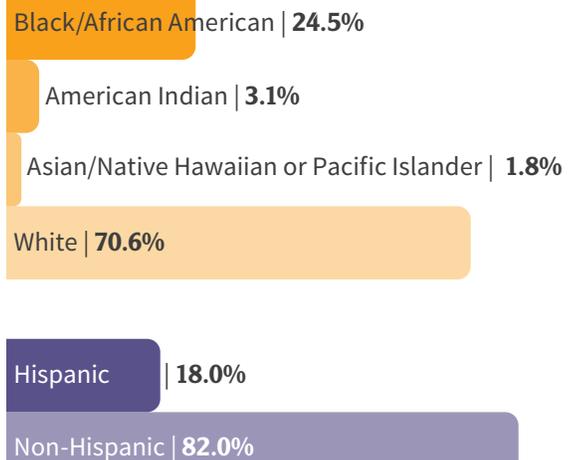
## STATUS OFFENSES

“Status offenses” are non-criminal behaviors, like skipping school, that could not be charged but for the “status” of being a minor.

## NUMBER OF YOUTH ARRESTS (2009-2023)<sup>2</sup>



## YOUTH ARRESTS BY RACE/ETHNICITY (2023)<sup>2</sup>



1. Nebraska Crime Commission.  
2. Nebraska Crime Commission; Douglas County Juvenile Justice Initiative.

# DISPROPORTIONATE MINORITY CONTACT

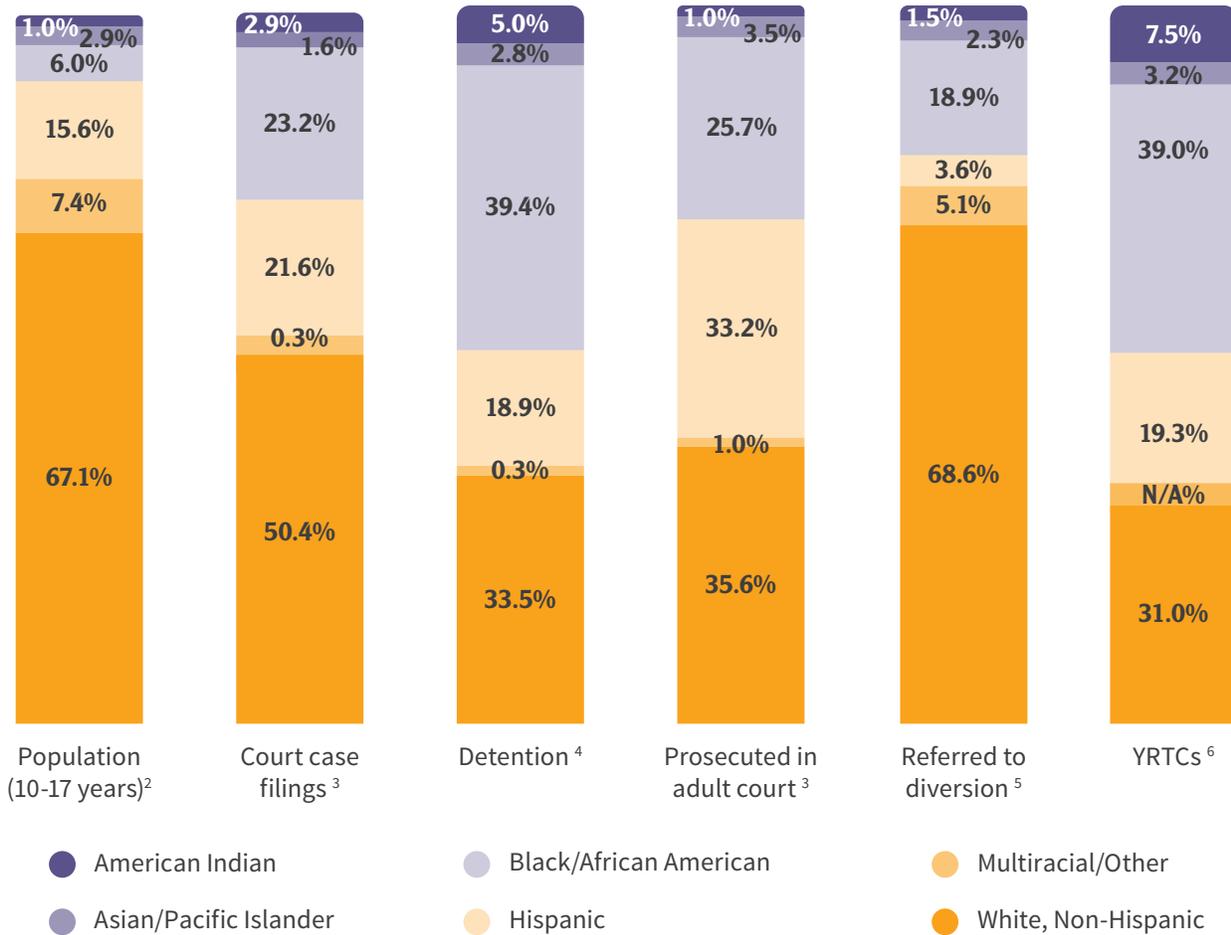


## DISPROPORTIONATE MINORITY CONTACT (DMC)

Despite the promise of equal protection under the law, national research shows that youth of color are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system. This overrepresentation often is a product of decisions made at early points of contact with the juvenile justice system. Where racial differences are found to exist, they tend to accumulate as youth are processed deeper into the system.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, our juvenile justice system lacks uniform ways of collecting data on race and ethnicity. Although disparities exist across system points, different agencies have different ways of counting Hispanic youth in particular. Additional information on the race and ethnicity of youth arrested, on probation, and in adult prison are available elsewhere in this section.

### YOUTH INTERACTION WITH THE JUSTICE SYSTEM BY RACE/ETHNICITY (2023)



1. "And Justice for Some: Differential Treatment of Youth of Color in the Juvenile Justice System," National Council on Crime and Delinquency, (January 2007).  
 2. U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, Annual State Resident Population Estimates for 6 Race Groups (5 Race Alone Groups and Two or More Races) by Age, Sex, and Hispanic Origin: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2023.  
 3. Nebraska Juvenile Justice System, Statistical Annual Report 2023.  
 4. Analysis based on data from individual facilities including Lancaster County Detention Center, Northeast Nebraska Juvenile Services, Douglas County Youth Center, and The Patrick J. Thomas Juvenile Justice Center.  
 5. Nebraska Crime Commission, Juvenile Diversion in Nebraska 2023 Annual Report.  
 6. Department of Health and Human Services.



# PRE-TRIAL DIVERSION

## JUVENILE DIVERSION PROGRAM

Pretrial diversion programs are based on the belief that many juvenile cases are better handled outside of the courthouse doors. These voluntary programs are designed to provide eligible youth an opportunity to demonstrate rehabilitation and make things right with the community, while reducing the cost and burden to taxpayers and

courts that come with formal charges being filed. By successfully completing his or her diversion plan, a minor has the opportunity to avoid formal charges in the court and get all record of the matter sealed. By diverting these cases from the court system, counties save significant dollars, making successful diversion programs a win-win.

**3,939**

youths were **referred** to the diversion program in 2023.<sup>1</sup>

**2,658**

youths **successfully completed** diversion in 2023.<sup>1</sup>

**88**

**counties participated** in the diversion program in 2023.<sup>1</sup>

**1**

**tribe participated** in the diversion program in 2023.<sup>1</sup>

**474**

of those referred **did not participate** in 2023.<sup>1</sup>

**538**

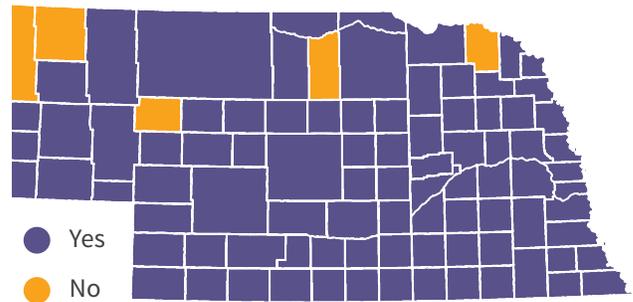
youths **did not complete** diversion successfully and were discharged for failing to comply or for a new law violation in 2023.<sup>1</sup>

### MOST COMMON LAW VIOLATIONS REFERRED TO DIVERSION (2023)<sup>1</sup>

# of children

Assault	604
Alcohol offenses	592
Drug offenses	556
Shoplifting	496
Truancy	404
Traffic offenses	415
Criminal mischief	227
Other theft	116
Trespassing	165
Disorderly conduct	168
Disturbing the peace	138
Tobacco use by minor	232
Ungovernable	114
Other	747

### COUNTIES OFFERING A JUVENILE DIVERSION PROGRAM (2023)<sup>1</sup>



### YOUTH PARTICIPATING IN A JUVENILE DIVERSION PROGRAM (2023)<sup>1</sup>

	Referred	Successful	Unsuccessful	Success Rate
10 & Under	17	11	1	92%
11-12	310	221	37	86%
13-14	1,062	710	150	83%
15-16	1,656	1,069	248	81%
17-18	894	647	102	86%

### COMMUNITY-BASED JUVENILE SERVICES AID PROGRAM (SFY 2023)<sup>2</sup>

**173**

programs

**81**

counties

**0**

tribes

were funded through the Community-Based Juvenile Services Aid Program.

**16**

prevention/  
promotion event  
programs

**146**

direct  
intervention  
programs

**6**

direct  
service  
programs

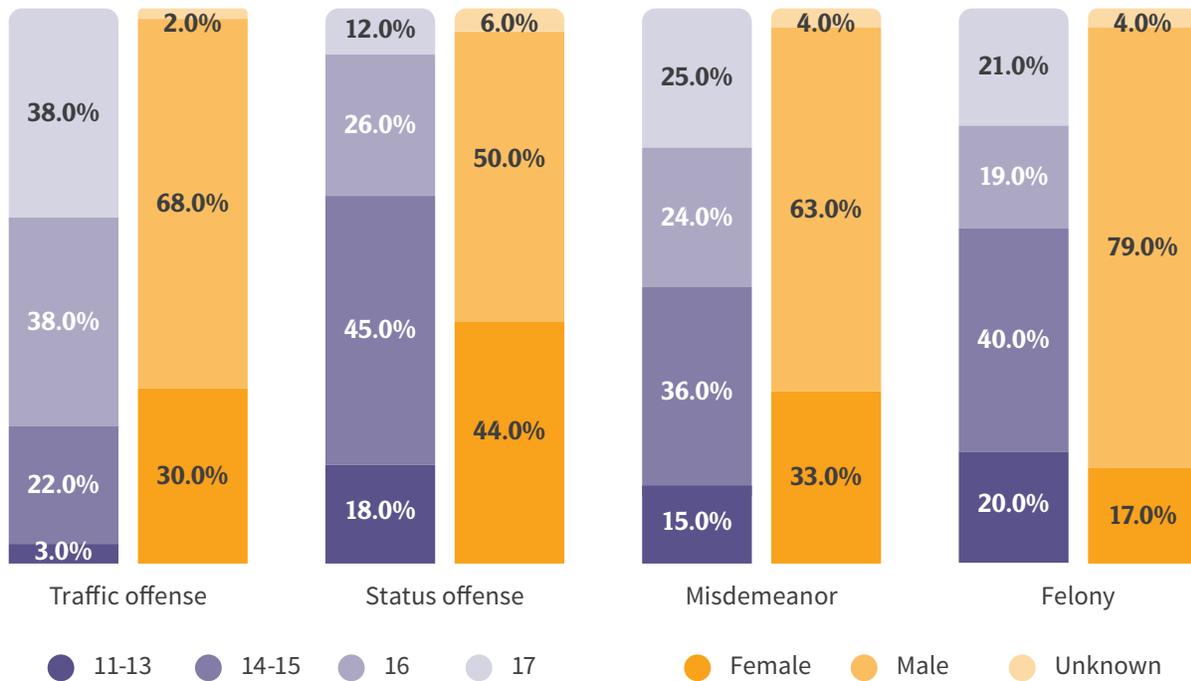
**21**

system  
improvement  
programs

# JUVENILE COURT CASES



## PERCENT OF NEW COURT FILINGS BY AGE AND GENDER (2023)



## NUMBER OF NEW JUVENILE COURT FILINGS BY RACE/ETHNICITY (2023)

	Traffic Offense		Status Offense		Misdemeanor		Felony	
American Indian	1	0.9%	19	2.8%	57	2.0%	16	2.4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	0.9%	7	1.0%	24	0.8%	19	2.8%
Black/African American	7	6.6%	71	10.5%	482	16.8%	173	25.7%
Hispanic	28	26.4%	129	19.1%	441	15.4%	84	12.5%
White	58	54.7%	247	36.6%	1,095	38.2%	193	28.7%
Other	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	8	0.3%	1	0.1%
Unknown	11	10.4%	201	29.8%	757	26.4%	186	27.7%
<b>Total adjudicated as "admit"*</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>80.2%</b>	<b>674</b>	<b>60.7%</b>	<b>2,864</b>	<b>68.0%</b>	<b>672</b>	<b>72.0%</b>

\*Note: The data provider recording a case being adjudicated as "admit" means that it has been accepted to be true.



# ACCESS TO COUNSEL

## JUVENILE ACCESS TO COUNSEL

Having an attorney present during proceedings in the juvenile justice system is not only important for youth but a guaranteed constitutional right. The right to counsel is also enshrined in Nebraska statute 43-272(1). The law is meant to protect children at every stage of legal proceedings and requires the court to advise youth, along with their parents, of their right to an attorney and that legal counsel can be provided at no cost if they are unable to afford it.

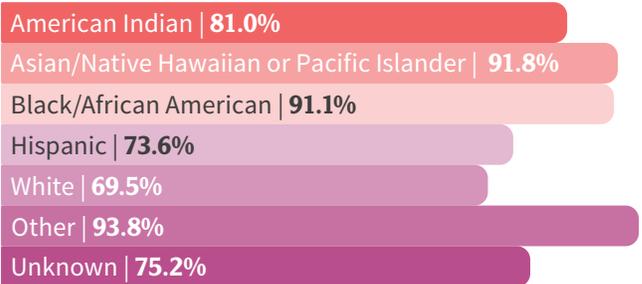
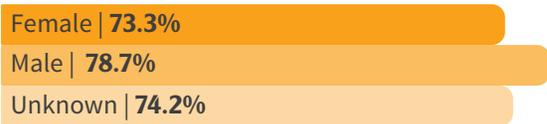
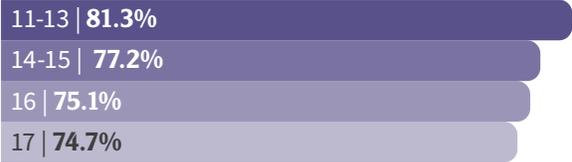
**45.6%**

of children in **adult criminal court** had an attorney in 2023.

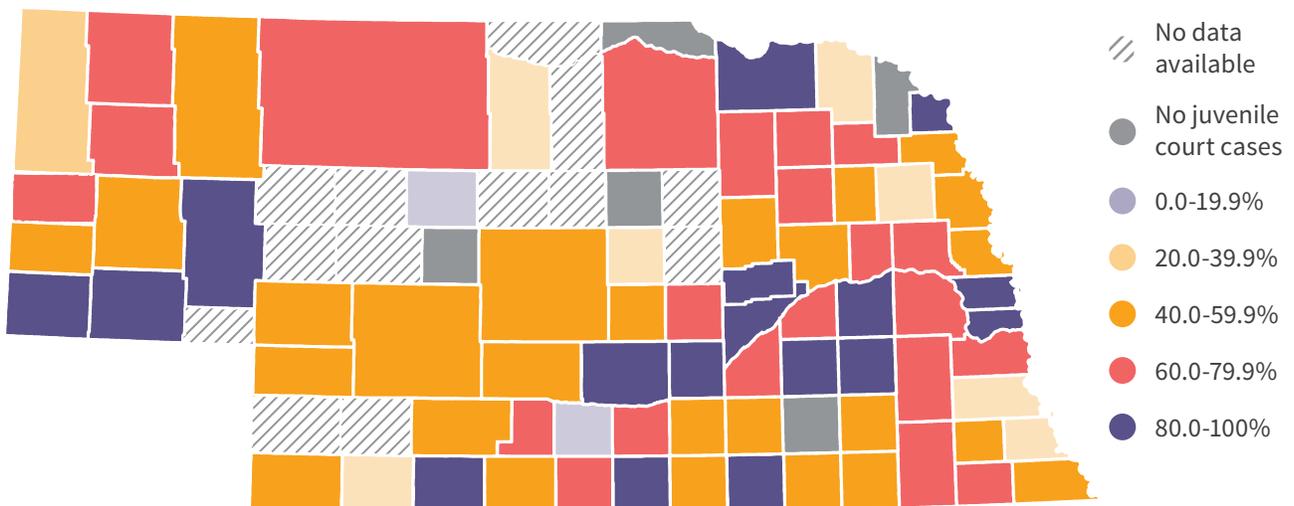
**76.8%**

of children in **juvenile court** had an attorney in 2023.

## YOUTH IN JUVENILE COURT WITH ACCESS TO COUNSEL BY AGE, GENDER, AND RACE/ETHNICITY (2023)

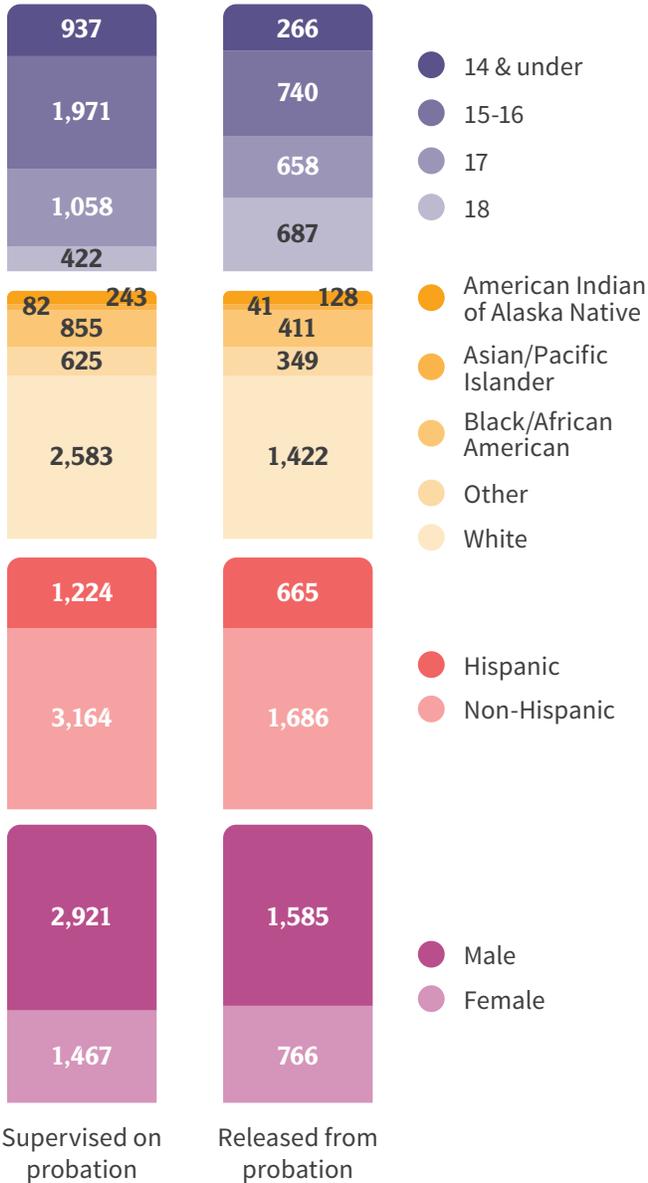


## PERCENT OF YOUTH IN JUVENILE COURT WHO HAD ACCESS TO COUNSEL BY COUNTY (2023)





## YOUTH SUPERVISED ON PROBATION BY AGE, GENDER, AND RACE/ETHNICITY (2023)



# 4,388

youth were supervised on probation in 2023.

## 677

had felony offenses

## 2,888

had misdemeanor, infraction, traffic or city ordinance offenses

## 823

had status offenses

## 2,351

were discharged

## AVERAGE CASELOAD OF JUVENILE PROBATION OFFICER (2023)

	Urban	Rural
High-risk/high-need intervention	15	16
Low-risk/low-need intervention	24	23

## COST OF SERVICES FUNDED BY PROBATION (2023)

	Monthly average per Youth
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,261.54</b>
In-home services	\$355.21
Out-of-home services	\$2,398.42

## MEAN LENGTH OF TIME ON PROBATION (2023)

# 9.5 MONTHS

for status offenses

# 16.1 MONTHS

for felonies

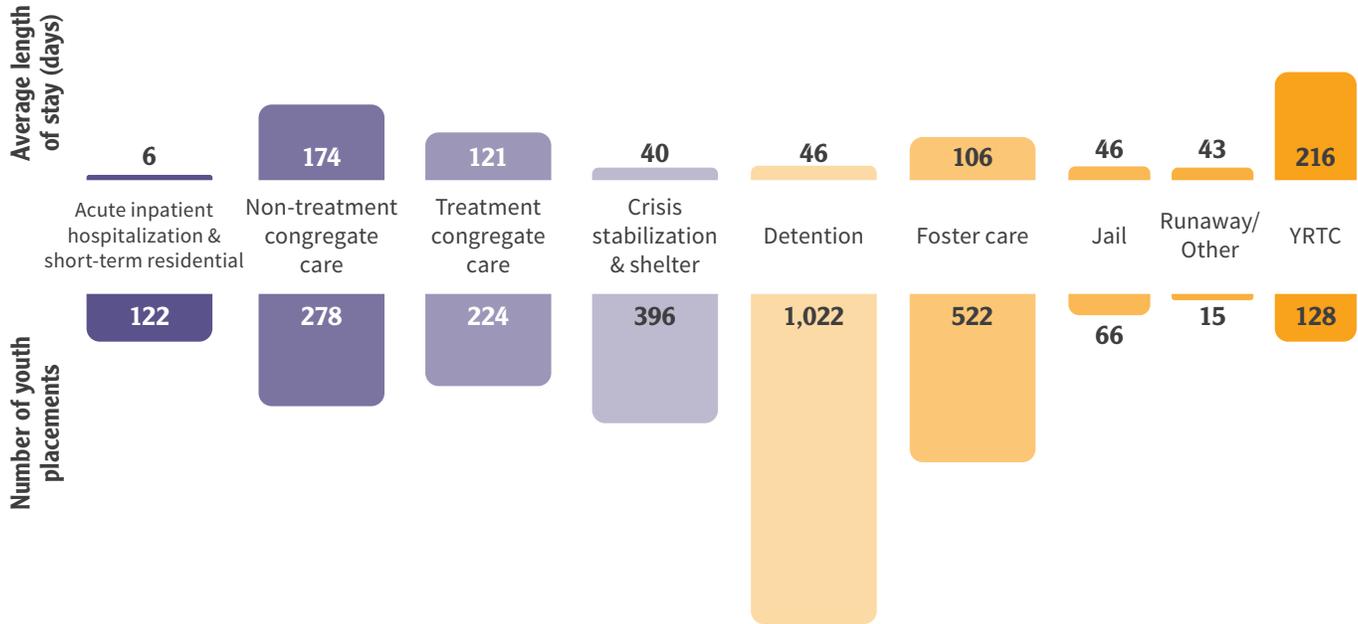
# 10.1 MONTHS

for misdemeanors/infractions



# YOUTH IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE

## OUT-OF-HOME CARE OF PROBATION YOUTH BY PLACEMENT TYPE AND AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY (2023)



## YOUTH ON PROBATION IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE (2023)

	#	%
American Indian	105	7.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	30	2.0%
Black/African American	421	28.0%
Other	195	13.0%
White	751	50.0%
Hispanic	366	24.0%
Non-Hispanic	1,136	76.0%
Male	1,064	71.0%
Female	438	29.0%
Status offenses*	96	6.0%
Felonies*	663	44.0%
Misdemeanors/infractions/city ordinance offenses*	751	50.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,502</b>	

**1,502**

youth were supervised on probation who were placed in out-of-home care in 2023.

\*If a youth had an offense in more than one adjudication type, they will be counted by the youth's highest or most serious offense.

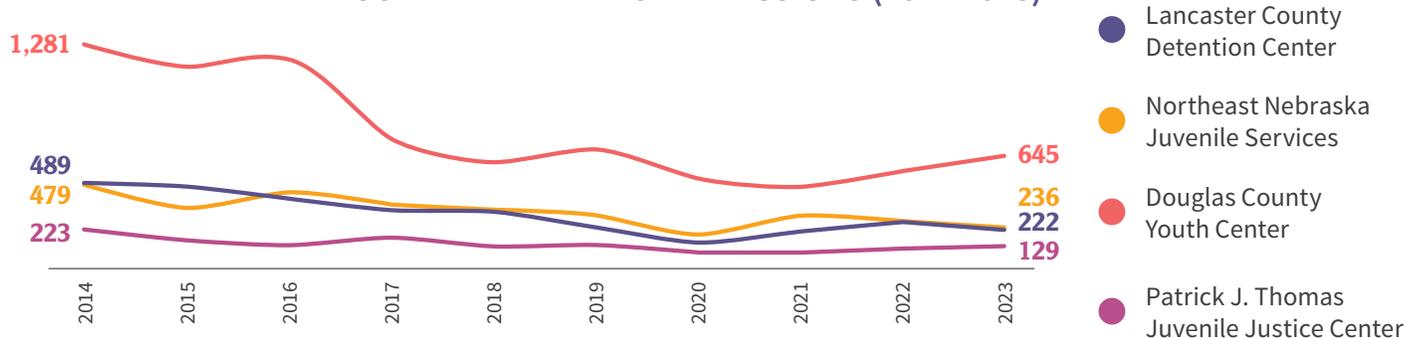
Source: Nebraska Administrative Office of the Courts & Probation.



## NUMBER OF YOUTH HELD IN JUVENILE DETENTION FACILITIES (2023)

	Lancaster County Detention Center (Lancaster County)		Northeast Nebraska Juvenile Services (Madison County)		Douglas County Youth Center (Douglas County)		Patrick J. Thomas Juvenile Justice Center (Sarpy County)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<b>Age</b>								
12 & under	0	0%	0	0%	17	2.6%	1	0.8%
13-14	51	23.0%	44	18.6%	141	21.9%	30	23.3%
15-16	105	47.3%	124	52.5%	306	47.4%	64	49.6%
17+	66	29.7%	68	28.8%	181	28.1%	34	26.4%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>								
American Indian/ Alaska Native	11	5.0%	27	11.4%	17	2.6%	7	6.1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	0.5%	2	0.8%	30	4.7%	1	0.9%
Black/African American	87	39.2%	26	11.0%	346	53.6%	27	23.7%
Other	2	0%	0	0%	2	0.3%	0	0%
White Non-Hispanic	87	39.2%	113	47.9%	150	23.3%	63	55.3%
Hispanic	34	15.3%	68	28.8%	100	15.5%	31	27.2%
<b>Gender</b>								
Male	151	68.0%	172	72.9%	516	80.0%	93	72.1%
Female	71	32.0%	64	27.1%	129	20.0%	36	27.9%
<b>Times Detained</b>								
1	121	75.2%	183	77.5%	488	75.7%	115	89.1%
2	25	15.5%	39	16.5%	112	17.4%	7	5.4%
3+	15	9.3%	14	5.9%	45	7.0%	7	5.4%
<b>Total count</b>	<b>222</b>		<b>236</b>		<b>645</b>		<b>129</b>	
<b>Secure Admissions</b>	<b>222</b>		<b>122</b>		<b>645</b>		<b>0</b>	
<b>Staff Secure Admissions</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>114</b>		<b>0</b>		<b>129</b>	
<b>Average Days Detained</b>	<b>35.1 Days</b>		<b>29.0 Days</b>		<b>34.9 Days</b>		<b>27.0 Days</b>	

## JUVENILE DETENTION ADMISSIONS (2014-2023)





# YRTC & ROOM CONFINEMENT

## YOUTH REHABILITATION AND TREATMENT CENTERS (YRTCs) SFY 2023

	Hastings	Lincoln	Kearney
Number admitted for treatment	<b>31 youth</b>	<b>3 admissions, 9 transfers</b>	<b>77 youth</b>
Average daily population	<b>13 youth</b>	<b>8 youth</b>	<b>52 youth</b>
Average length of stay	<b>214 days</b>	<b>244 days</b>	<b>288 days</b>
Average age at admission	<b>16 years</b>	<b>17 years</b>	<b>17 years</b>
Average per diem cost per youth	<b>\$2,564</b>	<b>\$1,981</b>	<b>\$1,326</b>
% return to facility in 12 months	<b>6.0%</b>	<b>9.0%</b>	<b>12.0%</b>

Source: Office of Juvenile Services Annual Report December 2023.

## YRTC ADMISSIONS (2009-2022)



Source: Office of Juvenile Services, Annual Legislative Report SFY 2022.

## ROOM CONFINEMENT (SFY 2022-23)

	Total incidents	Total youth involved	Median duration of room confinement incidents (hours)	Percent of incidents ending in 4 hours or less	Percent of incidents lasting between 4 and 8 hours	Percent of incidents lasting more than 8 hours	Most common reason for room confinement
Nebraska Corrections Youth Facility	<b>38</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>68.0</b>	<b>16.0%</b>	<b>2.6%</b>	<b>81.6%</b>	<b>Danger to other youth (37%)</b>
YRTC - Kearney	<b>506</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>17.8</b>	<b>39.9%</b>	<b>10.5%</b>	<b>49.6%</b>	<b>Danger to other youth (30%)</b>
YRTC - Lincoln	<b>178</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>25.2</b>	<b>34.3%</b>	<b>11.8%</b>	<b>53.9%</b>	<b>Danger to other youth (29%)</b>
YRTC - Hastings	<b>107</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>39.3%</b>	<b>13.1%</b>	<b>47.7%</b>	<b>Danger to staff (25%)</b>
Douglas County Youth Center	<b>332</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>102.5</b>	<b>9.6%</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>89.5%</b>	<b>Fighting (60%)</b>
Lancaster County Youth Services Center	<b>1,642</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>77.6%</b>	<b>11.3%</b>	<b>11.1%</b>	<b>Danger to other youth (22%)</b>
Northeast Nebraska Juvenile Services	<b>19</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>42.1%</b>	<b>15.8%</b>	<b>42.1%</b>	<b>Danger to Staff (63%)</b>
Patrick J. Thomas Juvenile Justice Center	<b>96</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>86.5%</b>	<b>11.5%</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>Danger to Other youth (9%)</b>

Source: Juvenile Room Confinement in Nebraska, 2022-23 Annual Report, Inspector General of Child Welfare.

Research associates room confinement with serious consequences for mental and physical health including: - "Increased risk of self-harm and suicidal ideation; - Greater anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, paranoia, and aggression; Exacerbation of the on-set of pre-existing mental illness and trauma symptoms; and, Increased risk of cardiovascular-related health problems."<sup>1</sup> Regulations, policies, and practices on when, how, and why juvenile room confinement is used differ among types of facilities.

Room confinement should be used as the absolute last resort and only in cases of threats of safety to the individual or other residents and only after other interventions have failed. Room confinement should be time-limited; the youth should be released as soon as they are safely able and should never last longer than 24 hours. During confinement, the youth should be closely monitored and seen by mental health professionals. All instances of room confinement should be recorded and reviewed.<sup>1</sup>

# YOUTH TREATED AS ADULTS



# 225

youth were prosecuted in adult courts in 2023. <sup>1</sup>

This is down from

# 2,019

in 2014. <sup>1</sup>

## YOUTH PROSECUTED IN ADULT CRIMINAL COURTS BY CASE TYPE (2023) <sup>1</sup>

Total Youth	225
Traffic	23.1%
Misdemeanor	36.9%
Felony	40.0%

A motion to transfer from juvenile court to adult court in 2023 was:

Requested in

# 54 CASES <sup>1</sup>

Granted in

# 2 CASES <sup>1</sup>

A motion to transfer from adult court to juvenile court in 2023 was:

Requested in

# 101 CASES <sup>1</sup>

Granted in

# 72 CASES <sup>1</sup>

## YOUTH CASES TRIED IN ADULT COURT (2023) <sup>1</sup>

	Youth cases prosecuted in adult court		Youth sentenced to probation		Youth sentenced to jail		Youth sentenced to prison	
<b>Age</b>								
11-13	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
14-15	19	8.4%	13	8.8%	0	0%	6	10.5%
16	76	33.8%	54	36.5%	8	23.5%	17	29.8%
17	130	57.8%	81	54.7%	26	76.5%	34	59.6%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>								
American Indian	2	0.9%	0	0%	1	2.9%	1	1.8%
Asian/Pacific Islander	7	3.1%	5	3.4%	1	2.9%	1	1.8%
Black/African American	52	23.1%	21	14.2%	6	17.6%	26	45.6%
Hispanic	67	29.8%	47	31.8%	8	23.5%	16	28.1%
Other/Unknown	25	11.1%	16	10.8%	6	17.6%	5	8.8%
White, Non-Hispanic	72	32.0%	59	39.9%	12	35.3%	8	14.0%
<b>Gender</b>								
Male	167	74.2%	99	66.9%	26	76.5%	53	93.0%
Female	45	20.0%	40	27.0%	5	14.7%	2	3.5%
Unknown	13	5.8%	9	6.1%	3	8.8%	2	3.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>225</b>		<b>148</b>		<b>34</b>		<b>57</b>	

## AN AGE-APPROPRIATE RESPONSE

Research consistently indicates that treating children as adults neither acts as a deterrent, nor does it prevent crime or reduce violence. Instead, prosecution in adult court exposes youth to more risks and delays or prevents treatment and can burden them with permanent records which may act as barriers to future education and employment opportunities. Nebraska law requires that all children age 17 or younger charged with a misdemeanor or low-level felony must have their cases originate in juvenile court. This means that many more children are now receiving the benefit of speedy access to treatment services, a developmentally-appropriate court process aimed at rehabilitation, and the potential to have their records sealed to set them up for a brighter future.

## YOUTH IN ADULT PRISONS AND JAILS (2023) <sup>2</sup>

76 Male | 0 Female

# 5

youth (18 and under) were held in a Nebraska correctional facility for safekeeping reasons or waiting assessment.

# 71

youth were sentenced to a Nebraska prison.

## YOUTH INCARCERATED IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES BY RACE/ETHNICITY (2023) <sup>2</sup>

American Indian | 7

Asian | 0

Black/African American | 33

Hispanic | 26

Other/Unknown | 0

White, Non-Hispanic | 10

1. Nebraska Judicial Branch, Juvenile Justice System Statistical Annual Report 2023.

2. Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.



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Any opinions, views, or policy positions expressed in this Kids Count in Nebraska Report can only be attributed to Voices for Children in Nebraska. These opinions do not

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