Examining critical issues for North Dakota children and families
While remaining predominately white, North Dakota's child population is becoming more diverse.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division

Demographics

Children
According to the 2010 Census, there were 672,591 North Dakota residents, with children ages 0 to 17 comprising 22 percent of the total population. From 2000 to 2010, North Dakota's child population (i.e., ages 0 to 17) decreased by 7 percent from 160,849 to 149,871; however, the child population increased from 143,971 in 2009. While only two counties showed an overall increase in the child population from 2000 to 2010 (i.e., Cass and Burleigh), the majority of North Dakota counties (44 of 53) had an increase in their child population from 2009 to 2010.

This growth in the number of children throughout the state is due to a consistent increase in births over the past decade. The number of children ages 0 to 5 in North Dakota has grown each year since 2003; 41 North Dakota counties had an increase in the number of children ages 0 to 5 from 2003 to 2010. This increase is explained in part by the effects of the baby boom. The large cohort of people born from 1946 to 1964 is now having grandchildren (often referred to as the echo of the echo of the baby boom). In addition, energy developing counties are experiencing an in-migration of workers who, in some cases, are bringing their families.

Total Births
A historical analysis of the number of births in North Dakota indicates a steady decline throughout the 1980s and 1990s, reaching a low of 7,635 in 1999. However, beginning in 2002, the number began to increase. In 2010, the North Dakota Department of Health reported 9,088 births, a level last seen in 1990.

Teen Births
The number of births to North Dakota teens totaled 668 in 2010, which is 7 percent of all births statewide. While this proportion has remained relatively unchanged since 2003, the teen birth rate (i.e., teen births per 1,000 girls ages 15 to 19) rose from 25.6 in 2004 to 29.2 in 2010.

Race and Ethnicity
Though white children comprised the majority of children ages 0 to 18 statewide in 2010 (87 percent), their numbers declined 8 percent from 2000 to 2010 (150,812 to 138,150). During the same time, the number of American Indian children, North Dakota's largest minority group, grew 14 percent (13,522 to 15,437).

The state's smallest minority groups saw much larger percentage gains. From 2000 to 2010, the number of Hispanic children (of any race) increased 68 percent (3,377 to 5,673), the number of African American children increased 104 percent (2,108 to 4,306), and the number of Asian children increased 44 percent (1,264 to 1,823).

SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

Children
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Living Arrangements
While the vast majority of all North Dakota children ages 0 to 17 live with their parents, the composition of families is changing.

The proportion of North Dakota children who live with both parents is decreasing. In 1990, 82 percent of all North Dakota children lived with both parents. This proportion decreased to 76 percent in 2000. Current 2010 data indicate that 69 percent of North Dakota children live with both parents. Conversely, the proportion of children living with a single parent is growing. In 1990, 14 percent of North Dakota children lived with a single parent. This proportion increased to 19 percent in 2000 and to 24 percent in 2010.

Other family arrangements include children living with their grandparents. In 2010, 4 percent of North Dakota children lived in a grandparent-headed household (5,816 children), up from 2 percent in 1990 (2,628 children).

The number of North Dakota children receiving foster care services totaled 1,764 in 2011 (i.e., 1 percent of all children statewide). The majority of North Dakota children receiving foster care services in 2011 were in a family home (75 percent). Nearly one in four children in foster care was in a group home or institution (24 percent).

Working Mothers
Most North Dakota children live with their mothers (whether she is married or single), and most North Dakota mothers work. In 2010, 86 percent of all North Dakota children lived with both parents or with a single mother, the fourth largest proportion in the nation (behind Minnesota, Massachussetts, and Utah). In addition, the proportion of North Dakota mothers (with children ages 0 to 17) who are in the labor force was 82 percent in 2010, the second highest proportion nationwide (behind South Dakota). Nationally, 73 percent of mothers with children ages 0 to 17 were in the labor force in 2010.

The proportion of North Dakota mothers with young children ages 0 to 5 who are in the labor force was 77 percent in 2010, compared to 87 percent for mothers with only older children (ages 6 to 17 only).

Unmarried Mothers
One-third of all North Dakota births in 2010 were to unmarried women (33 percent). The proportion of births to unmarried women was 23 percent in 1994 and grew an average of 3 percent per year through 2005 where it remained relatively unchanged at 33 percent through 2010. Most of the births to unmarried women in 2010 were to women ages 20 or older (80 percent); 20 percent were to teenagers. Births to unmarried teens ages 12 to 19 totaled 587 in 2010, or 7 percent of all births statewide.
In 2010, nearly one in four North Dakota children were poor or near-poor. Research indicates that fewer than half of poor children are ready for school at age five.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and the Brookings Institution

**ECONOMIC WELL-BEING**

**SUMMARY AND FINDINGS**

**Income and Poverty**

Research indicates that fewer than half (48 percent) of poor children are ready for school at age five, compared to 75 percent of children from families with moderate and higher incomes, a 27 percentage point gap (Brookings Institution, http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2012/03/19-school-disadvantage-isaacs). In North Dakota, currently 14 percent of children were considered poor (20,713 children). An additional 10 percent (14,130 children) were living in situations considered to be low income and just above the poverty line (i.e., near poor).

Geographically, reservation counties tend to have the highest child poverty rates in the state. In 2010, one in two children in Sioux County (which includes part of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation) was impoverished (58 percent). Outside of reservation areas, Divide County had the highest rate of child poverty in the state at 41 percent. Younger children (i.e., ages 0 to 4) in North Dakota had a higher poverty rate than older children (i.e., ages 5 to 17) in 2010 (18 percent compared to 13 percent, respectively). In seven of North Dakota's 53 counties, at least one in three young children ages 0 to 4 were living in poverty in 2010.

Poverty refers to a condition in which one is unable to afford basic human needs, such as clean water, nutrition, health care, education, clothing, and shelter. Income thresholds used to determine poverty are updated annually by the Census Bureau. In 2010, a four-person family earning $22,314 or less was considered impoverished.

**Public Assistance**

Public benefit programs are available to help low-income families and children in North Dakota. The federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP (formerly called the Food Stamp Program) helped provide food to 38,789 North Dakota children ages 0 to 18 in 2011 (24 percent of children statewide). The free or reduced price lunch program served 35,624 North Dakota school children in 2011 (34 percent of total school enrollment). In six of North Dakota's 53 counties, at least half of students received free or reduced price lunches in 2011.

The Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program (TANF), designed to help families in need achieve self-sufficiency, provided assistance to 6,969 North Dakota children ages 0 to 19 in 2011, down 11 percent from 2010.

In an effort to allow parents to work or attain the education necessary to become employed and self-sufficient, 7,340 North Dakota children received child care benefits in 2011 (6 percent of all children ages 0 to 13 statewide).
SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

School Enrollment and Costs
North Dakota's public schools averaged 96,987 students daily during the 2010-11 academic year. After several years of continued decreases in enrollments, North Dakota's average daily membership in public schools rose 0.4 percent in 2009-10 and 1.5 percent in 2010-11.

McKenzie, Dunn, and Williams counties, all located within western energy development areas, had some of the fastest growth in average daily membership in 2010-2011 (18 percent, 11 percent, and 8 percent, respectively). These remarkable growth rates follow years of declines (i.e., 3 percent per year, on average, for the three-county area from 1996-97 to 2007-08). Overall, 27 of North Dakota's 53 counties reported a loss in average daily membership in 2010-11. Average expenditures for each student were $9,677 statewide in 2010-11, a 1.4 percent decrease from 2009-10.

Test Scores
North Dakota has historically ranked above national averages with respect to ACT scores of high school graduates. However, the 2011 North Dakota public high school graduates taking the ACT averaged 20.7 out of a possible 36, dropping North Dakota below the national average for the first time in the past decade. One potential reason for the drop in scores is the 2009 legislative mandate requiring North Dakota juniors to take the ACT or the WorkKeys assessment (i.e., a job skills assessment system measuring "real-world" skills that employers believe are critical to job success). The first test after the mandate was in April 2010, which affected the 2011 scores.

Beyond the overall composite score, ACT, Inc. has developed benchmarks in the areas of English, math, reading, and science to measure what it takes to be successful in standard first-year college courses. Based on these benchmarks, 63 percent of the 2011 ACT-tested North Dakota high school graduates were ready for college English, 43 percent were ready for college math, 48 percent were ready for reading, and 26 percent were ready for college science. Only one in five (21 percent) were ready for all four courses.

High School Dropouts
According to the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, the number of high school students who were enrolled in school and then dropped out in 2011 totaled 670 (2 percent of high school enrollment).

Special Education
In 2011, 13,123 North Dakota children were enrolled in special education (14 percent of total public school enrollment). Statewide, 31 percent of students enrolled in special education had a specific learning disability, 25 percent had a speech impairment, 6 percent were emotionally disturbed, 6 percent had an intellectual disability, and 6 percent had autism.

Following decades of decline in North Dakota public school enrollments, average daily membership rose 0.4 percent in 2009-10 and 1.5 percent in 2010-11.

Source: North Dakota Department of Public Instruction
Child Care
Child care indicators presented in this publication focus on legally recognized child care providers, i.e., licensed, self-certified, in-home providers, approved relatives, and registered tribal providers. Legally recognized child care providers in North Dakota numbered 2,770 in February 2012 and had the combined capacity to care for 40,163 children (i.e., 35 percent of all children ages 0 to 13). While not all children are in need of a child care program, current estimates suggest that approximately 78 percent of children ages 0 to 13 may require care (i.e., children with all available parents in the labor force).

Informal networks of relatives, friends, and neighbors provide care for many North Dakota children. These situations are difficult to track and the number of providers and quality of care are not monitored.

Licensed Child Care
Licensed child care in North Dakota is state-approved and reviewed yearly, with licenses being granted by county social services. As of February 2012, North Dakota reported 1,587 licensed child care programs.

As of February 2012, licensed child care providers in North Dakota had the capacity to care for 36,054 children. This capacity represents slightly less than one-third of children ages 0 to 13 in the state (31 percent).

In the northwestern corner of the state (i.e., Planning Region 1 composed of Divide, Williams, and McKenzie counties), licensed care has the capacity to serve only 14 percent of children ages 0 to 13. This is the smallest proportion among all eight planning regions by about 8 percentage points. Licensed care in Region V can serve 41 percent of children, which is the largest proportion among all regions.

Unlicensed Child Care
Legally recognized yet unlicensed child care providers in the state included 499 self-certified and in-home providers, 93 registered tribal child care providers, and 591 approved relatives in February 2012.

Child Care Cost and Assistance
Child care has become part of the daily routine for thousands of North Dakota families, many of whom are struggling financially. According to 2012 North Dakota Child Care Resource & Referral data, care for one infant in a licensed center averages $8,066 annually.

As mentioned in the Economic Well-Being component of this report, the Child Care Assistance Program helped low-income families in North Dakota pay child care bills for 7,340 children ages 0 to 13 in 2011, or 6 percent of all children ages 0 to 13 statewide.
Vital Records
A healthy mother is vital to the health of her child. Prenatal care can improve birth outcomes and is more likely to be effective if begun early in pregnancy. Of the 9,088 North Dakota births in 2010, 433 (5 percent) were to mothers receiving inadequate prenatal care.

Throughout North Dakota, 605 babies were born weighing less than 5.5 pounds (or 2,500 grams) in 2010. These low birth weight babies comprised 7 percent of all births in 2010. North Dakota consistently ranks among states with the lowest percentage of low birth weight births in the nation (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, Vital Stats, http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/vitalstats.htm).

In 2010, 60 North Dakota babies died within one year of life (0.7 percent of all births). Of all North Dakota deaths in 2010, 54 were youth ages 1 to 19 (1 percent of all deaths).

Hearing Impaired
Hearing loss can affect a child's ability to develop communication, language, and social skills. The earlier children with a hearing impairment get services, the more likely they are to reach their full potential. In 2011, nearly every newborn in North Dakota was screened for hearing loss (99 percent); of those screened, 9 percent did not pass the initial screening and were referred for further testing.

Assistance
The supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children (WIC) provides nutritious foods, nutrition counseling, and health and social service referrals to eligible participants at no charge. The number of North Dakota WIC participants totaled 23,479 in 2011.

To assist North Dakota children needing health care, 51,480 children ages 0 to 20 received health care assistance through Medicaid (28 percent of persons ages 0 to 20 statewide) in 2011.

To help those children from working families that earn too much to qualify for full Medicaid coverage, but not enough to afford private insurance, the state's Healthy Steps Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) provided premium-free health coverage to 3,892 enrollees in January 2012.

Uninsured Children
While most children ages 0 to 18 in North Dakota are covered by some form of health insurance, 8,756 children were uninsured in 2009, which is 6 percent of all children statewide. The majority of the uninsured children live in families with low to moderate incomes. In 2009, 5,186 uninsured North Dakota children ages 0 to 18 were living below 200 percent of poverty, which is 59 percent of all uninsured children and 3 percent of all children statewide.
Juvenile Court Referrals
A total of 5,010 North Dakota juveniles ages 10 to 17 were referred to court a total of 8,499 times in 2011. Each time a juvenile is referred to court, he or she may be charged with multiple offenses. In 2011, North Dakota juveniles were charged with a total of 10,958 offenses.

While each juvenile court referral may have several charges for multiple offenses, an offense description is available for the major offense only. The major offenses associated with the 8,499 juvenile court referrals in 2011 were distributed into five categories: unruly behavior (23 percent), offenses against property (23 percent), alcohol offenses (14 percent), offenses against person (8 percent), and other offenses not included in the previously mentioned categories (e.g., disorderly conduct, controlled substance, traffic) (32 percent).

North Dakota juveniles referred to court as a proportion of all youth ages 10 to 17 has remained relatively unchanged over the past several years. In 2011, 8 percent of all children ages 10 to 17 (5,010 juveniles) were referred to court for various offenses.

Child Abuse, Neglect, and Domestic Violence
In 2011, there were 6,900 children suspected of being abused or neglected in North Dakota, which is an 8 percent increase (501 children) in one year. Eleven of North Dakota's 53 counties reported increases of at least 20 percent from 2010 to 2011.

When a suspected case of abuse or neglect is investigated by the North Dakota Child Protection Services Program, it is determined if services are required, if services are recommended, or if no services are required or recommended. Following assessments of the 2011 cases by Child Protection Services social workers, it was determined that 1,323 children (19 percent of all suspected victims) were in high-risk situations requiring immediate services. In eight North Dakota counties, at least one in three reported victims required immediate services for abuse and neglect.

Children are also affected by domestic violence. In 2010, the number of children directly impacted by incidents of domestic violence reported to crisis intervention centers in North Dakota totaled 4,180. The North Dakota Council on Abused Women's Services indicates that 4,739 children were impacted in 2011 (2011 data are not available by county).

Idle Teens
North Dakota youth who were not in school, not high school graduates, and not in the labor force (referred to as idle teens) comprised 2 percent of all children ages 16 to 19 in 2010. Nationally, 3 percent of teens were considered idle in 2010.