



JUNE 2013

CHILDREN ARE WASHINGTON STATE'S GREATEST ASSET

Today's kids are the thinkers, artists, parents, entrepreneurs, leaders and workers of tomorrow. When they have the opportunity to reach their full potential in life, all of us benefit.

Our shared destiny with children demands that Washington state have a solid foundation that parents, teachers, and communities can build upon to help kids succeed. Yet every indicator of child well-being suggests that our foundation for children has cracks in it.

In Washington today, more than 620,000 kids live in families that cannot meet their basic needs and get ahead. Nearly 104,000 lack health insurance, and 440,000 live in families that don't have enough food. One in three third-graders cannot meet grade-level reading standards, and one in four doesn't graduate from high school on time. Poor health, inadequate education, poverty and other factors present our children with an opportunity gap obstructing their progress toward a secure and healthy future.

Kids of color, who are more likely to face that opportunity gap, are rapidly becoming the majority of our child population. Our future is ever more firmly tied to theirs. Yet current data sources and categories do not provide enough information about the abundance of resources they bring, and the particular barriers to opportunity they face.

That's a real problem, because we can't do anything about what we don't know enough about.

For this year's KIDS COUNT in Washington report, we asked community leaders, with a focus on communities of color, to help us understand what the data about Washington state's children means to them. Their insights are shared in these pages.

What we learned is that, to identify solutions that close the gap, we need better data — data that reflects the richness and complexity of the kids it seeks to describe.

We also need to listen more. Too often we assign meaning to data without the perspective of the people that it represents. The failure to include these perspectives can make data misleading, or even worse, result in inaction or harm.

This report is just a beginning to what we hope is a more informed conversation about Washington state's children. Please join us. Find hundreds of additional indicators of child well-being online at **www.kidscountwa.org**. Order copies of this publication to share with parents, leaders and community members, bring the report to a meeting with your elected officials, or contact us to tell us more about the real lives behind the numbers. By pairing the data with the wisdom that exists, we can rebuild the foundation of opportunity that all of our children need to thrive.

This research was funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. We thank them for their support but acknowledge that the findings and conclusions presented here are those of the authors alone, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Foundation.





"Overly broad numbers can obscure unresolved issues. We can't get complacent when we hear that test scores are going up if graduation rates aren't also improving for poor and minority children. The gap in achievement among minority children allows as much as one-third of high school and middle school aged kids to miss out on the economic opportunities our state's business climate offers. Losing a substantial percent of your labor potential hurts the economy.

I know how minority-owned businesses face a hard time obtaining and retaining the best talent from within our own communities. And as a mentor, I am troubled to see young people's potential lost. **We must close the achievement and opportunity gaps that face young children of color, assuring that they will be participants in a broadly shared and vital local economy."**

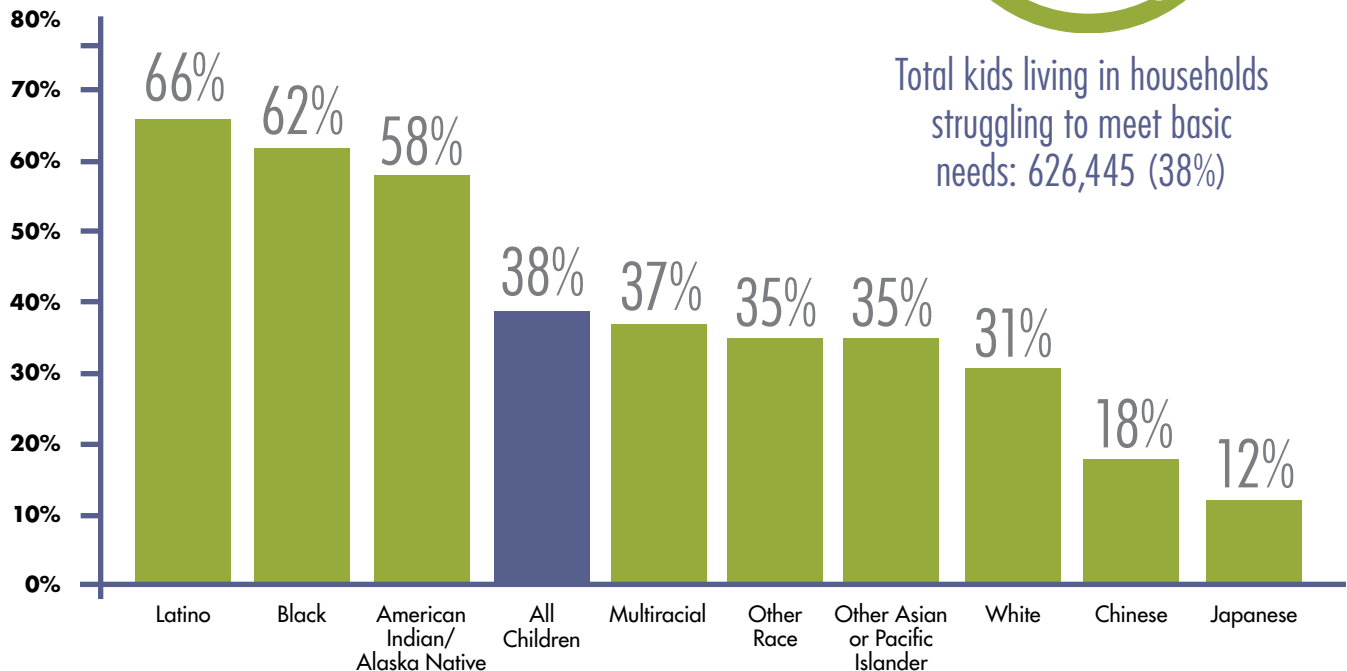
— Kevin C. Washington, education advocate, youth mentor and member of Tabor 100, an association of African-American entrepreneurs and business advocates

BASIC NEEDS

Children do better when their family has enough money for the basics — adequate food, health care, shelter and reliable means of getting to work.



Total kids living in households struggling to meet basic needs: 626,445 (38%)



Children living in households earning less than the basic needs threshold (200% of the federal poverty level), 2011

Source: 2009-2011 American Community Survey (ACS).



"Our state is not only growing more diverse, it's also getting older. By 2030, the number of Washingtonians over 65 will grow to 20 percent — one in five — up dramatically from one in eight. That's why it's so important to overcome the opportunity gaps that Washington's children face.

Our security in old age is tied to the well-being of children today.

Older adults cherish the relationships they have with their children and grandchildren, and are deeply committed to ensuring that children have a bright and healthy future. To succeed in life, kids must have access to quality education, health care and other essentials of a strong future."

— John Barnett, President, AARP Washington



"We fail to appreciate what we don't see."

Commonly used categories of race and ethnicity often do not reflect the reality of who we are.

As diverse new immigrants settle across the state, work hard in the 21st-century economy, and send their children to school in pursuit of opportunity, race and ethnicity categories render their varied—but profoundly American—experiences invisible. East African immigrants and Arab Americans, for example, are often grouped with other populations and categorized as either 'black' or 'white.'

When our immigrant families are not accurately reflected in data, their contributions can't be seen and their children's unique offerings to our state's well-being go unrecognized. This is not only true for immigrant families, but for any person.

It's time for Washington to view all of our children, in all their diversity, as a competitive advantage worth investing in."

– Rich Stolz, Executive Director, OneAmerica

NOTE: In order to allow readers to print this report, its map feature has been scaled down and moved to the next page. For a paper copy of the report with a full-size map, please go to www.kidscountwa.org/real-numbers and enter your mailing address.



WASHINGTON CHILDREN BY RACE AND ETHNICITY

These word clusters are illustrative of the diversity that exists within the Census categories: White, Asian, Pacific Islander, Multiracial, Latino, Black, and American Indian/Alaska Native.

A word cloud shaped like the map of the United States, featuring various ethnic and racial groups. The words are in different colors and sizes, representing the diversity of the population. The word 'White' is the largest, followed by 'Black', 'Hispanic', 'Asian/Pacific Islander', and 'American Indian/Alaska Native'.

Other prominent words include:

- Black & Chinese
- Black & Japanese
- Black & Korean
- Black & Pacific Islander
- Black & Samoan
- Black & Vietnamese
- Black & Filipino
- Black & Asian
- Black & American Indian/Alaska Native
- Black & Mexican
- Black & Cuban
- Black & Dominican
- Black & Puerto Rican
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WHITE (61%) MULTIRACIAL (8%) BLACK (4%)
LATINO (19%) ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER (6%) AMERICAN INDIAN/ (1%)
ALASKA NATIVE

Note: The words printed here are not shown in exact proportion to a particular group's representation within the aggregate race and ethnicity category.



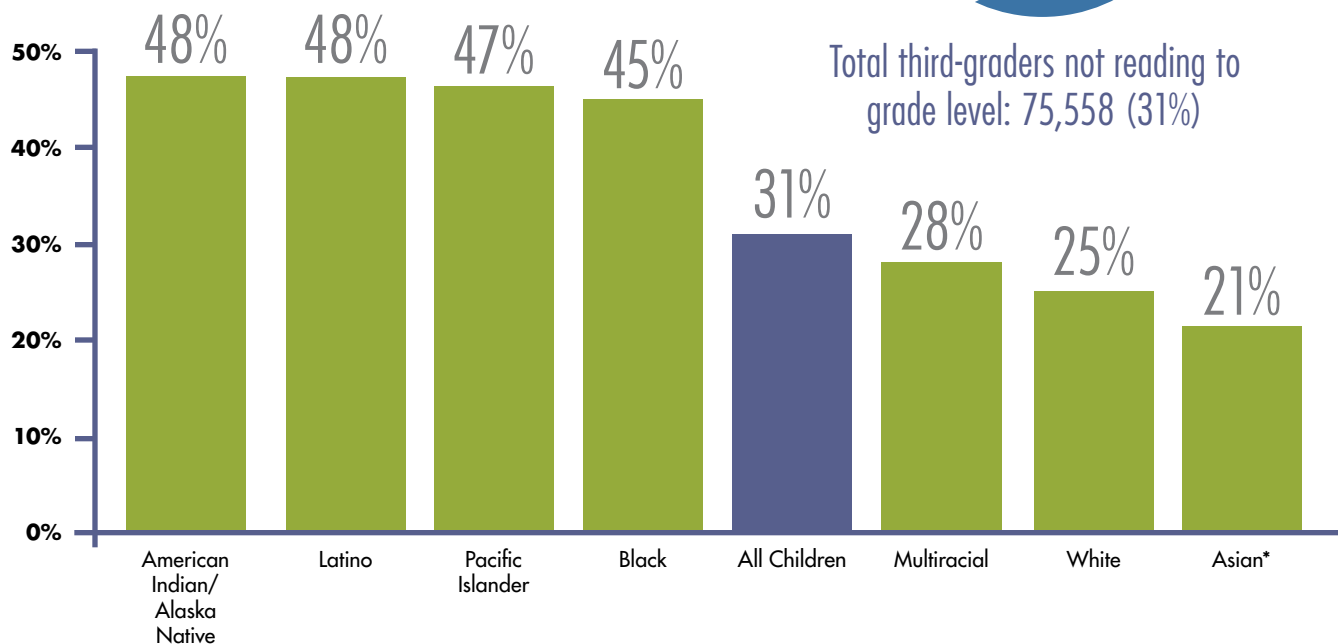
"Washington's children work hard in school, but the current data collected about our children's academic achievement doesn't adequately describe their situation. For example, children learning English in the classroom may be making tremendous strides — but, when it's time to take the standardized test, their progress is not reflected."

We can't let those test scores be the sole representation of our students' success. In order to better help kids cross the opportunity gap, we need culturally specific data that reflects diverse children's real progress in Washington's schools."

– Estela Ortega, Executive Director, El Centro de La Raza

THIRD GRADE READING LEVEL

Being able to read proficiently by the end of third grade improves a child's chances of success in school and beyond.



Children not meeting third-grade reading standards, 2011-2012

*In this and many other instances, data about Pacific Islander Americans is aggregated with data about Asian Americans, who trace their ancestry to more than 20 different countries. Whenever possible, KIDS COUNT is working to disaggregate numbers like these.

Source: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Washington State Report Card, 2011-2012.



"Our state's Asian Pacific Islander communities are extremely diverse in terms of academic achievement, wealth, and poverty. There are many great things we have in common, and a lot of differences. I am a first-generation Vietnamese American, and I can imagine that my experiences would be somewhat similar to and also completely different from that of my peers from other API communities. The relative success of some API groups can mask the real needs of others. **When it hides our communities' struggles at work, in school, and in other areas, data cannot only be misleading — it can be harmful.**"

– Vu Le, Executive Director, Vietnamese Friendship Association; Chair, Southeast Seattle Education Coalition



"American Indian and Alaska Native children are less likely to have health insurance than other children in Washington state. This is unacceptable. Without needed coverage, our children are left to access care only in cases of emergency, sometimes when it is too late. Our children should have access to services that all children need: health screening, immunizations, urgent care and dental care.

Good data is critical to understanding why American Indian and Alaska Native kids have a lower insurance rate and knowing what to do in response. As a former Washington state senator and in my work with tribal government, I have relied on good data to help point the way toward the targeted policies that can eliminate racial inequities. **Good data incorporates what communities know about themselves."**

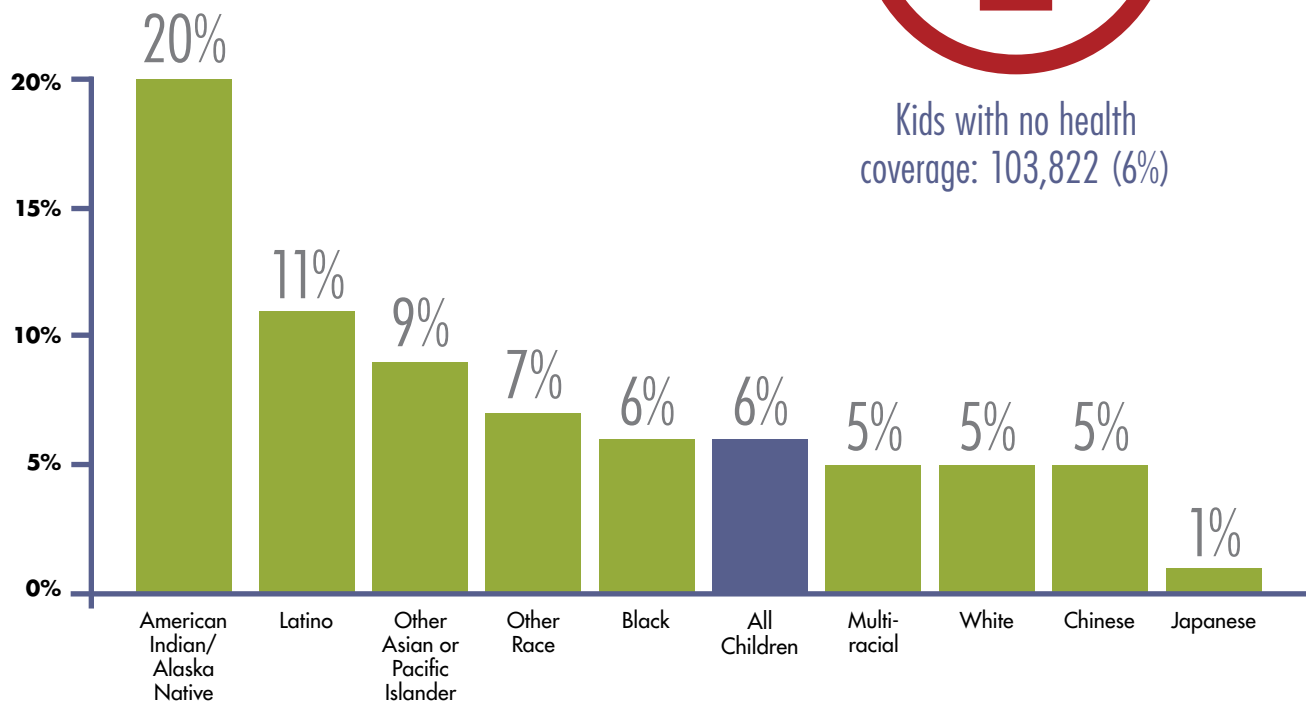
– Claudia Kauffman (Nez Perce), Intergovernmental Affairs Liaison, Muckleshoot Indian Tribe and former Washington State Senator

HEALTH INSURANCE

Health coverage leads to improved child outcomes. All children should have access to behavioral, medical, and oral health care.



Kids with no health coverage: 103,822 (6%)



Children without health coverage, 2011

Number derived from 2011 1-year ACS and rate by race derived from 2009-2011 ACS 3-year pooled data.



"On and off the reservation, native kids suffer the most health disparities and have the least access to care. Yet more than 70 percent of the native population lives off the reservation, and those families have similar but somewhat different experiences than those on the reservation. In Spokane, they're from hundreds of tribes from areas all across the country — often far away from tribal services. Urban Indian women are less likely to get prenatal care, and suffer higher rates of infant mortality than women on reservations within the same state. Critical information like this can get buried in big, aggregate numbers.

When I go back to the historical perspective voiced within my community, I find the solutions we need.

What we know about what's going on with our kids or what works best isn't always heard by policymakers. But if we are to close gaps for American Indian and Alaska Native kids, it's going to have to be."

– Toni Lodge (Turtle Mountain Chippewa), Executive Director, The NATIVE Project, Spokane

WHAT YOU CAN DO

With smart policy solutions, we can close the opportunity gap that stands between our children and their, and our, future. Those solutions spring from an understanding of the richness and complexity of Washington's communities — an understanding that comes not only from better data, but from deeper conversation with the people it represents.

KIDS COUNT in Washington is engaging in this conversation with parents, policy-makers and community leaders across the state. Please join us.

- Order copies of this publication to share with parents, leaders and community members
- Bring the report to a meeting with your elected officials
- Contact us to tell us more about the real lives behind the numbers

When parents, policymakers and community leaders pair the data that exists with the wisdom that exists about children in our diverse communities, we find the answers we need to build a strong future for all.

KIDS COUNT in Washington is a partnership between the Children's Alliance and the Washington State Budget & Policy Center. Get hundreds of additional indicators of child well-being through our website, www.kidscountwa.org.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their time and contributions to this report:

Janeen Comenote
National Urban Indian Family Coalition
Claudia Kaufmann
Muckleshoot Indian Tribe
Vu Le
Vietnamese Friendship Association
Toni Lodge
NATIVE Project
Hilda Magaña, Estela Ortega
El Centro de la Raza
John Barnett, Ingrid McDonald
AARP Washington

Diane Narasaki
Asian Counseling and Referral Service
Roxanna Nourouzi, Rich Stolz,
Ada Williams Prince
OneAmerica
Ed Prince
*Washington State Commission on
African American Affairs*
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