



# # FIRST THINGS FIRST

2015

## THE BIG PICTURE FOR ARIZONA'S LITTLE KIDS

A child's early years hold the key to their success – and our state's. Children who are healthy and prepared when they enter kindergarten do better in school and are more likely to graduate and enroll in college. Well-educated adults are more prepared for the job opportunities of a global marketplace and to contribute to the strength of their communities.

Many of Arizona's babies, toddlers and preschoolers face significant challenges when it comes to stable, nurturing environments and high-quality early learning experiences that will put them on a trajectory for success in kindergarten and beyond.

What follows are state-national comparisons in three key areas –

- **STRONG FAMILIES**
- **HEALTHY KIDS**
- **EDUCATED YOUNG STUDENTS**

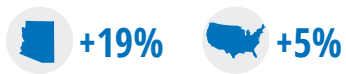
– and how First Thing First, as a critical partner in Arizona's early childhood system, is doing its part to expand opportunities in each of those three areas for children to develop the tools they need to be ready for school and set for life. Along with other community data, this information can be used as a starting point for discussions with early childhood stakeholders – including educators, service providers, community leaders and families – on how to maximize the resources in their area and yield the most positive outcomes for Arizona's youngest children.

For more information visit [azftf.gov/big-picture](http://azftf.gov/big-picture)

# STRONG FAMILIES

Family stability can affect the resources a child has that either support or restrict their optimal development. Poverty and its effects – including unreliable access to food, housing and child care – can impact a child’s physical and emotional development.

The number of young children in Arizona grew much faster between 2000 and 2010 than in the nation as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

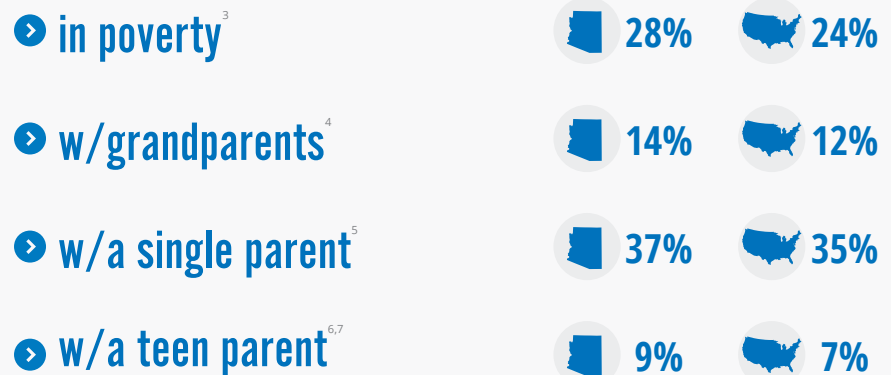


The percentage of households with young children in Arizona is about the same as in the U.S.<sup>2</sup>



Arizona’s young children are more likely than their peers nationally to be born into challenging situations like poverty and being raised by single parents, teenage parents or grandparents. They also are less likely to receive the supports that can help mitigate the effects of poverty on their overall well-being. Compared to the U.S. as a whole:

## MORE YOUNG CHILDREN IN AZ LIVE



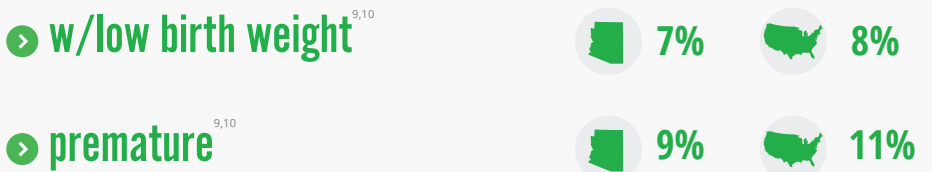
First Things First helps strengthen families by giving parents options when it comes to fulfilling their role as their child’s first teachers, including kits for families of newborns with resources to support their child’s health and learning, community-based parenting education, voluntary home-based coaching for families with multiple challenges, support for families of children with special needs, and referrals to existing programs that meet the family’s specific challenges.

Children's health encompasses not only their physical health, but also their mental, intellectual, social and emotional well-being. Factors such as a mother's prenatal care, access to health care and health insurance, and receipt of preventive care such as immunizations and oral health care all influence a child's current health and also their long-term development and success.



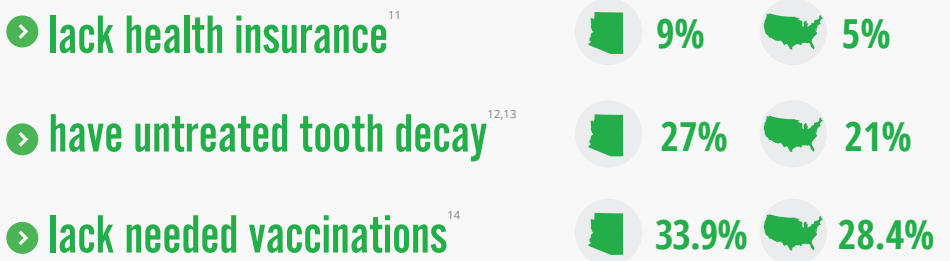
Arizona's babies are born healthier than their peers nationally, which is encouraging.

## FEWER AZ BABIES ARE BORN



Yet, too many children lack the necessary immunizations before they enter school, and many lack access to care to prevent dental problems – a key cause of school absenteeism later on.

## MORE YOUNG CHILDREN IN AZ



First Things First supports healthier kids by supporting pregnant mothers; giving parents tools to promote good nutrition and healthy weight; expanding access to oral health screenings and preventive fluoride varnishes; building awareness of health insurance options available for families with children; helping early educators meet the social-emotional needs of kids in their care; and, improving health practices in home- and center-based child care settings.

# EDUCATED YOUNG STUDENTS

The quality of a child's early experiences impacts whether their brain will develop in ways that promote optimal learning. Research has demonstrated that children with access to quality early learning environments are more prepared for kindergarten: they have increased vocabulary, better language, math and social skills, have more positive relationships with classmates, and score higher on school-readiness assessments. They are less likely to need special education services or be held back a grade, and are more likely to graduate and go on to college.



Compared to the U.S. as a whole:

## Far fewer of AZ's 3- and 4-year-olds attend preschool.<sup>15</sup>



Healthy development is important for school readiness. Early identification of developmental delays – through regular screenings starting at birth – is a critical first step to ensuring that children receive the intervention and support that can mitigate the impact of delays on future learning.

## Fewer of AZ's young children received developmental or sensory screenings.<sup>16</sup>



First Things First promotes early learning by: completing more than 31,000 screenings to detect developmental or sensory issues that can become learning problems later on; working with almost 1,000 child care and preschool providers statewide to enhance the quality of early learning programs for more than 50,000 young children; funding scholarships that helped more than 16,600 children access early learning in the past year; working with relatives and friends who provide child care to increase their knowledge of brain development and how young children learn; and helping early educators expand their skills working with infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

1. Population Change for Population Ages 0-5, 2000-2010. US Census Bureau (2010). 2010 Decennial Census, Summary File 1, Table P14.
2. US Census Bureau (2010). 2010 Decennial Census, Summary File 1, Tables P1, P14, P20.
3. US Census Bureau (2014). 2008-2014 American Community Survey Single Year Estimates, Table B17001. \*Note: These are single-year estimates, which may differ from the five-year estimates presented elsewhere. Single-year estimates of county-level data are not sufficiently reliable.
4. Children ages 0-5 living in a Grandparent's Household, 2010. US Census Bureau (2010). 2010 Decennial Census, Summary File 1, Table P41.
5. Living arrangements for children birth to 5 in Arizona. US Census Bureau (2014). 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Tables B05009, B09001, B17006.
6. Teen Pregnancy Rate. Arizona Department of Health Services (2015). [Maternal and infant health dataset]. Unpublished raw data received from First Things First State Agency Data Request.
7. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2013). National Center for Health Statistics. Teen Births.
8. Children Ages 0-17 Receiving TANF 2012-2014. US Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Office of Family Assistance (2015). TANF Caseload Data 2014. \*Estimates based on 2010 Census population of children ages 0-17.
9. Infant Birthweight and Premature Birth Rate Arizona Department of Health Services (2015). [Maternal and infant health dataset]. Unpublished raw data received from First Things First State Agency Data Request.
10. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2013). National Center for Health Statistics. Births and Natality.
11. US Census Bureau (2014) American Community Survey Single Year Estimates, Table B27001.
12. Arizona Department of Health Services and First Things First (2015). The Oral Health of Arizona's Kindergarten: Healthy Smile Healthy Bodies Survey 2015, ADHS Office of Oral Health. Unpublished data.
13. National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), 2005-2010.
14. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015). National, State, and Selected Local Area Vaccination Coverage Among Children Aged 19-35 Months – US, 2014.
15. 3- and 4- year olds enrolled in some form of early education as a proportion of the population. US Census Bureau (2014). 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, Table B14003.
16. Children Ages 10 months-5 Years Who Received Developmental Screenings during a Health Care Visit, 2011/2012. National Survey of Children's Health. NSCH 2011/12. Data query from the Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative, Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health website.