**Child Poverty Rate**

Understanding the child poverty rate is crucial for several reasons. First, children are more likely than adults to be affected by poverty, which can have long-term effects on their physical, emotional, and mental development (Duncan & Magnuson, 2013). Second, child poverty is often a sign of bigger problems in society, like income inequality and not enough people having access to education and health care. The child poverty rate can help state and federal governments make policy decisions and decide how to spend money.

In North Carolina, the child poverty rate is 20%, according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's 2021 Kids Count Data Book (North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, 2021). This means that one in five children in the state lives below the poverty line, which is defined as an annual income of $26,500 for a family of four. The child poverty rate in North Carolina is slightly higher than the national average of 18%. One important characteristic of North Carolina's poverty rates is their regional variation. In urban areas like Charlotte and Raleigh, poverty rates are generally lower than in more rural areas of the state, where access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities may be limited. Additionally, poverty rates are higher among communities of color, particularly Black and Hispanic/Latinx populations.

One contributing factor to child poverty in North Carolina is the lack of affordable housing. High housing costs can force families to spend a significant portion of their income on rent or mortgage payments, leaving little left over for other necessities like food, healthcare, and education (Rosenberg et al., 2018). This is compounded by a shortage of affordable housing units and a lack of investment in public housing programs. The child poverty rate in North Carolina highlights the need for targeted social welfare policies and investments in education, healthcare, and affordable housing. When policymakers and social workers know what causes child poverty, they can work together to come up with effective solutions that meet the needs of vulnerable families and make things better for children.

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