

Getting Ready for

**SCHOOL**

**CHILDREN**  **FAMILIES**

**SCHOOLS**  **COMMUNITIES**

Arkansas

**2015**



**PREPARED BY:**

University of Arkansas at Little Rock,  
College of Business, Institute for Economic Advancement

**FOR:**

Arkansas Department of Human Services,  
Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education





# Getting Ready for School

**CHILDREN**  **FAMILIES**  **SCHOOLS**  **COMMUNITIES**

Arkansas 2016



INSTITUTE FOR  
ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT

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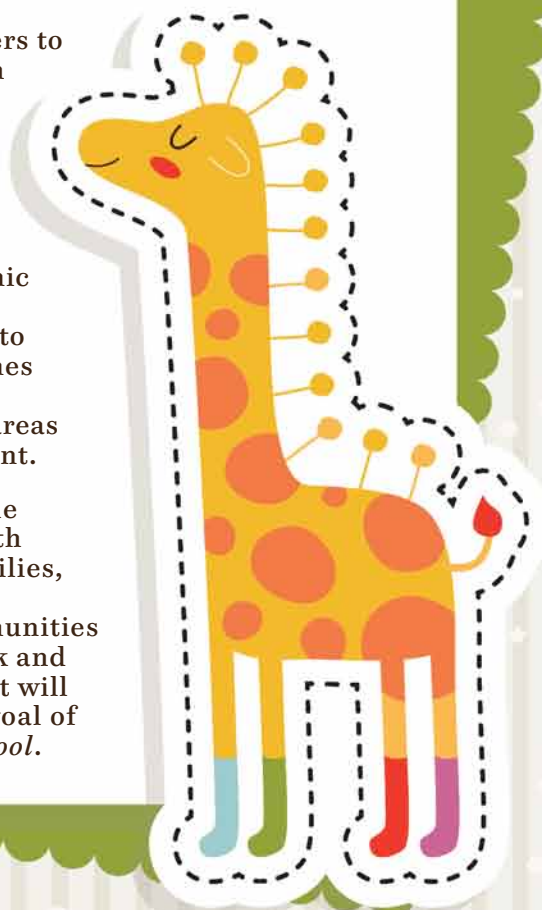
# Preface

With the increased awareness that children need to start school ready to learn, we continue to track the School Readiness Indicators that were developed in 2003 by the Arkansas School Readiness Initiative Team. As part of a 17 state initiative, these indicators were identified in order to change policies so we may have ready children, families, schools, and communities. The National School Readiness Indicators Initiative was sponsored by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, and the Ford Foundation.

Arkansas' School Readiness Indicators are continually collected and updated. The regular tracking of these indicators enables policymakers

and community leaders to identify areas most in need of intervention, track the results of investments, and monitor trends over time. These indicators are presented as a dynamic and ever-improving set of measurements to monitor child outcomes and tell the story of successes as well as areas that need improvement.

These data provide reliable measures with which the state's families, legislative leaders, educators, and communities may continue to track and pursue strategies that will move us toward the goal of *Getting Ready for School*.



Getting Ready for School



# READY



# Children

A healthy child is ready to learn. Even before birth, opportunities exist to ensure the health of the child and the mother. To thrive, a child needs a healthy start in life with someone providing the necessary elements to ensure the future. A child needs the proper care provided by the family. However, a child can also benefit from the experiences provided through high quality early childhood programs and services.

The age at which adults become parents is a contributing factor in child well-being. In Arkansas, birth to teens, age 11-17, continues to decline from 1,906 in 2007 to 1,087 in 2013. The rate per 1,000 females also declined, from 14.3 in 2007 to 8.0 in 2013.

The ARKids First program is a state sponsored insurance program to assist families in providing children with access to comprehensive health and preventative care. The ARKids First program increased its enrollment by 50.7 percent between 2003 and 2013 to a

total of 358,916. According to the Census Bureau's *American Community Survey*, 55.1 percent of the children under 19 in Arkansas were at or below 200 percent of poverty in 2013. Of those children, 93.3 percent have health insurance compared to 89.6 percent for the U.S. This is an indication of the effectiveness of this program.

The Child Care Voucher program is a federal program which assists low-income working families with the cost of child care. Arkansas' Child Care Voucher program serving Low-Income Working Families had a 36.4 percent decrease in families served and a 41.6 percent decrease in children served in those families from 2003 to 2013. The Transitional Employment Assistance program also saw declines in both families and children served since 2003.

The capacity of Child Care Licensed Facilities has grown for all types, especially in centers licensed for school-age children, where capacity increased 102.5 percent since

2003. Also, more licensees are meeting state early childhood accreditation/quality approval standards. These standards ensure quality programs for young children. The capacity meeting these standards was 68,542 in 2013, or 38.0 percent of the total licensed capacity. This is an increase of 151.7 percent since 2003.

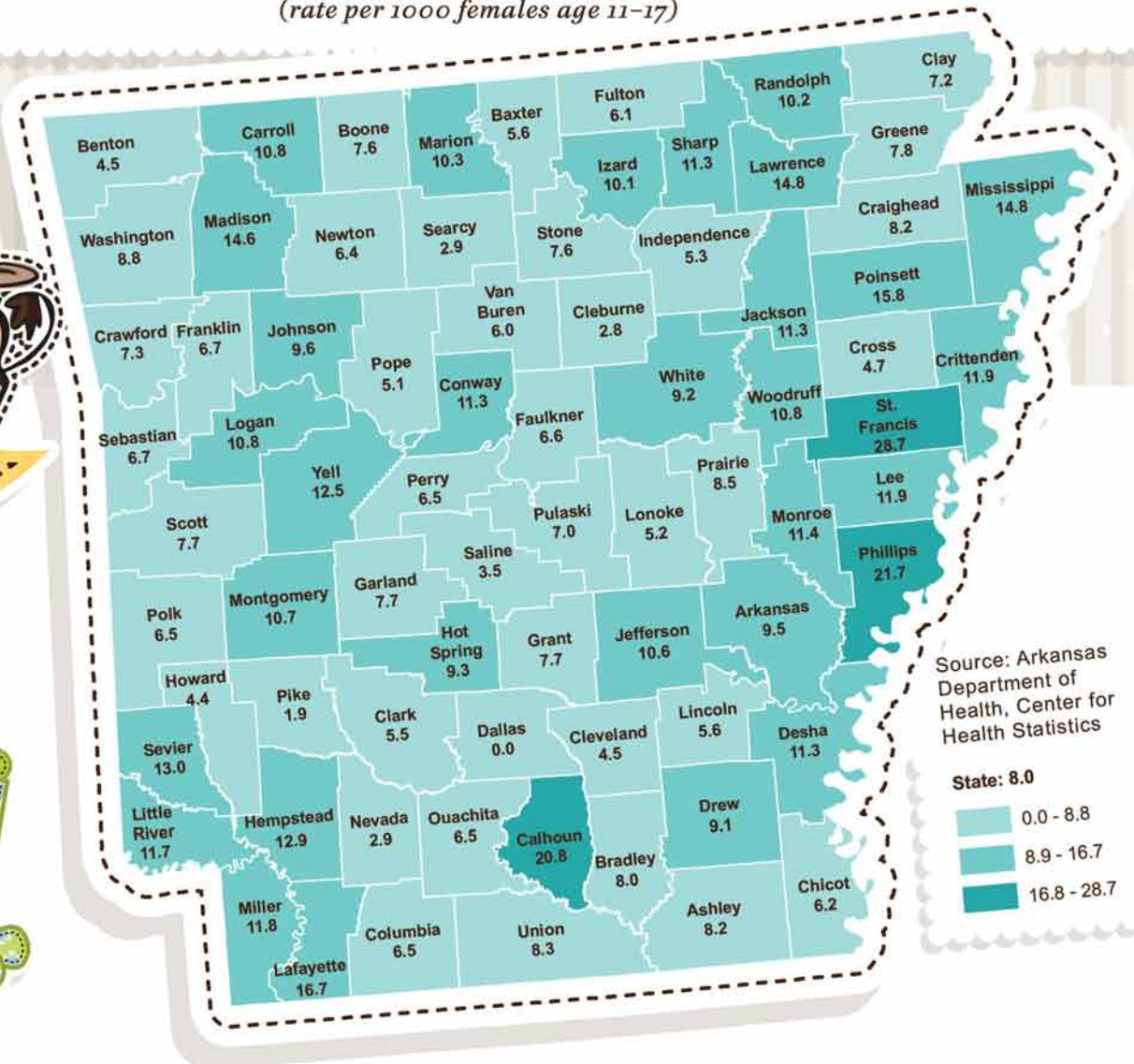
The Arkansas Better Chance program was initiated in 1991 to offer high quality early education services to children 0-5 years of age exhibiting developmental and socioeconomic risk factors. In 2003 the Arkansas General Assembly funded an expansion of the ABC program, titled Arkansas Better Chance for School Success (ABCSS), over several years to serve low-income three- and four-year old children in areas at high risk for academic failure. The first installment of ABCSS funding occurred during 2004-2005. As a result, the number of children served grew at a rate of 2.1 percent per year over a seven-year period to a total of 25,536 enrolled in 2013-2014.





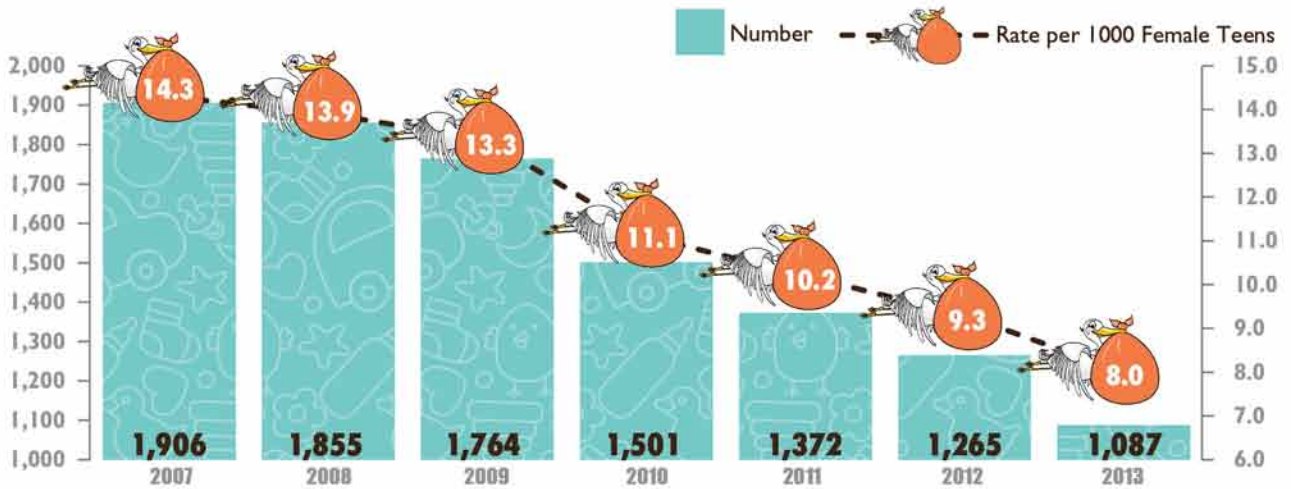
# Birth to Teens, Age 11-17, by County: 2013

(rate per 1000 females age 11-17)



Source: Arkansas Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics

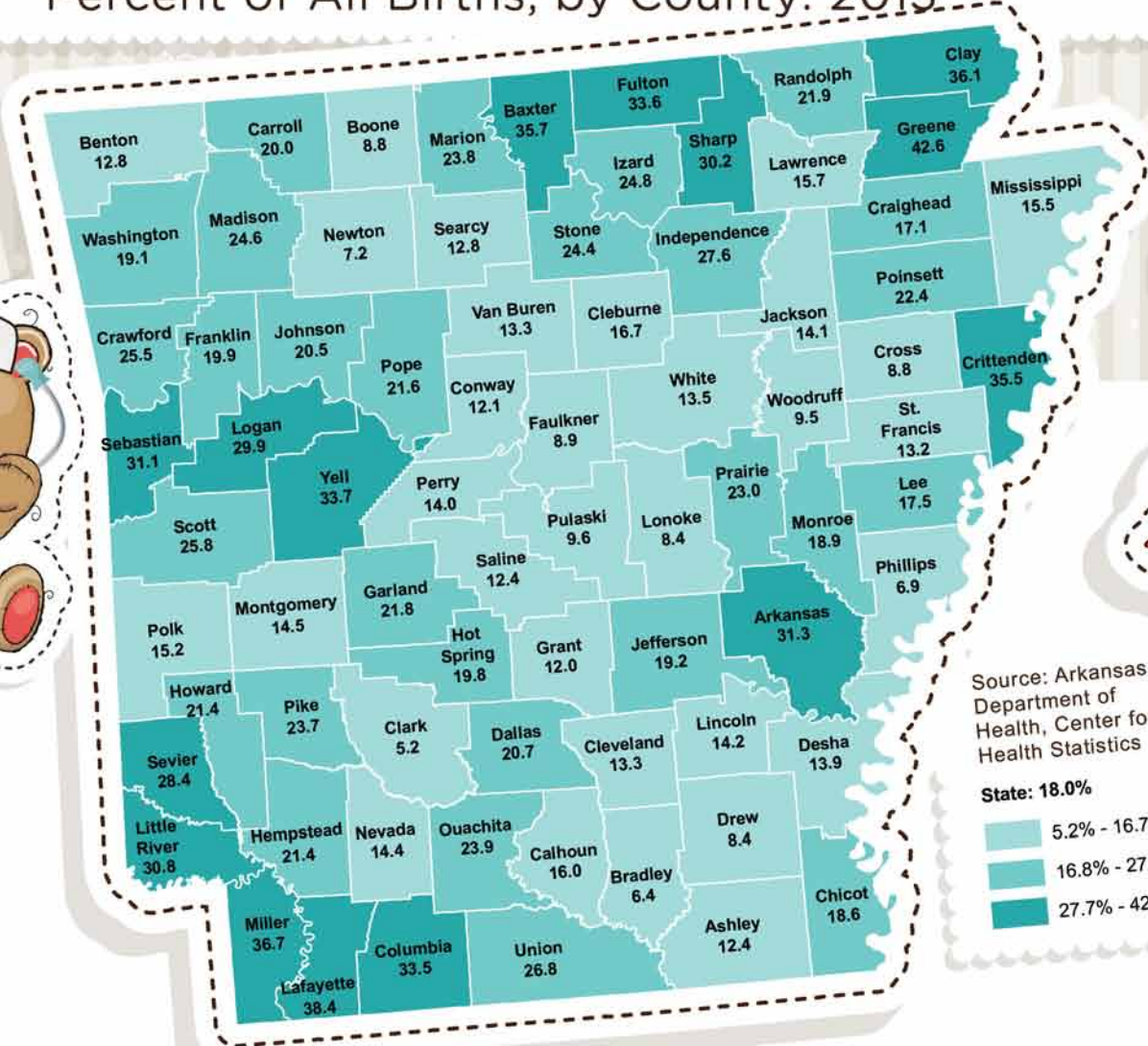
State: 8.0



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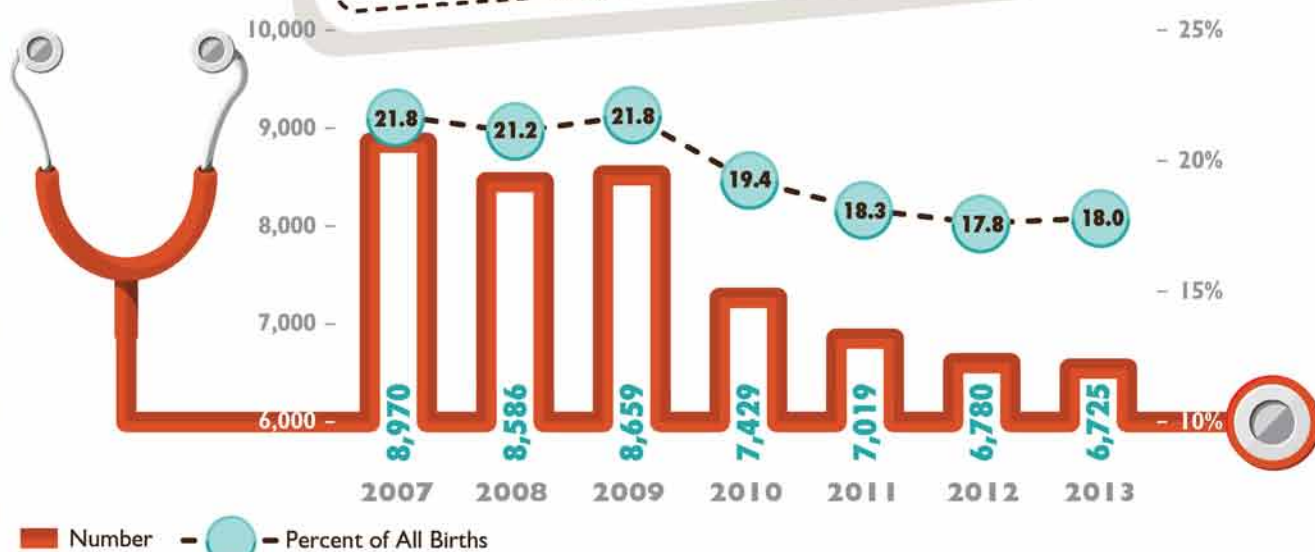


# No Prenatal Care During First Pregnancy Trimester, Percent of All Births, by County: 2013



Source: Arkansas Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics

State: 18.0%

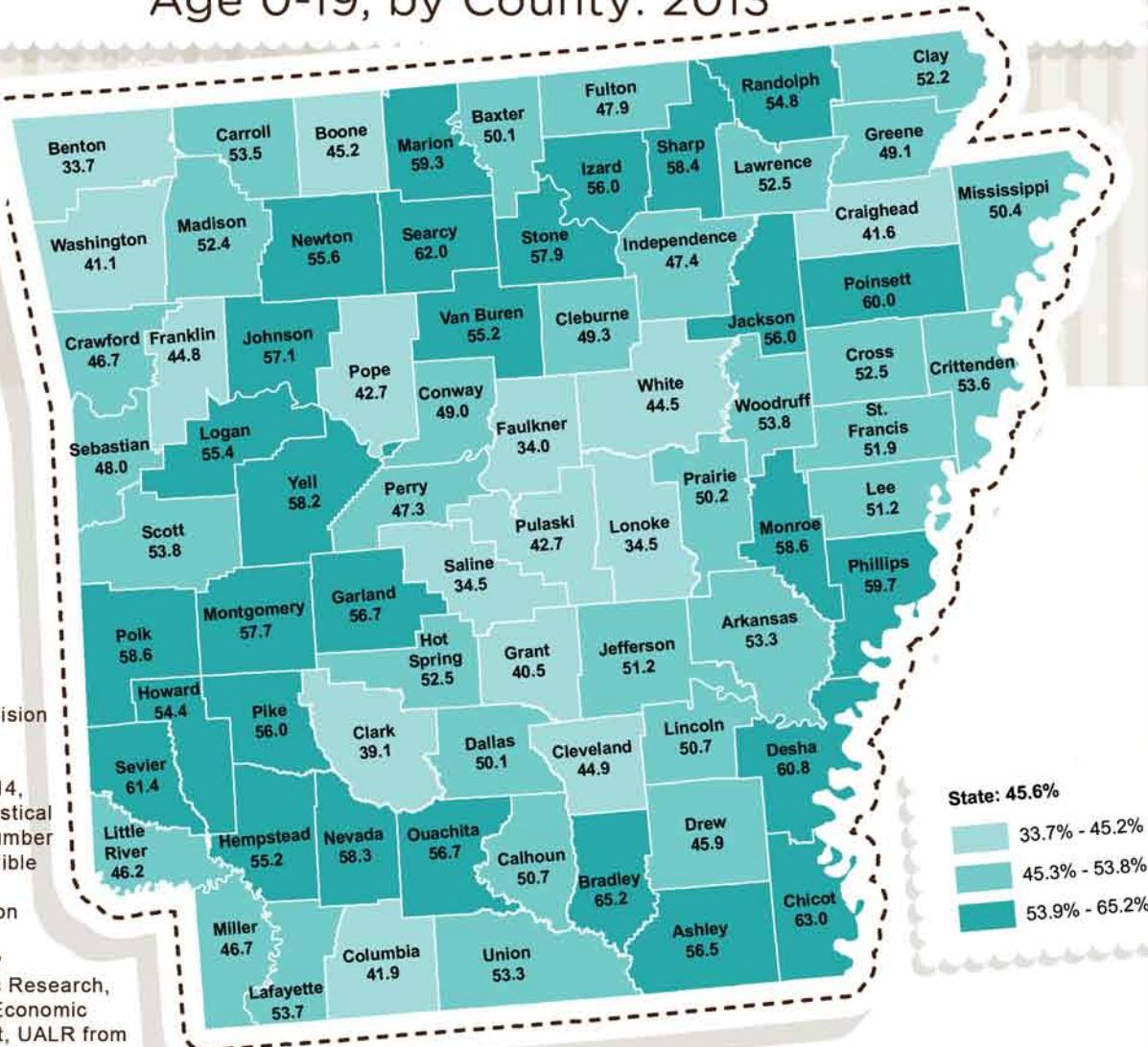




# ARKids First Enrollment as a Percent of Population, Age 0-19, by County: 2013



Sources:  
Arkansas  
Department  
of Human  
Services, Division  
of County  
Operations,  
Report IM2414,  
Monthly Statistical  
Report on Number  
of Cases Eligible  
for Medicaid;  
and Population  
Estimates  
processed by  
Demographic Research,  
Institute for Economic  
Advancement, UALR from  
U.S. Census Bureau,  
Population Estimates  
Program, Vintage 2013



State: 45.6%

- 33.7% - 45.2%
- 45.3% - 53.8%
- 53.9% - 65.2%



	June 2009	June 2010	June 2011	June 2012	June 2013
ARKids A	265,967	271,882	276,384	278,813	283,452
ARKids B	67,933	73,564	75,664	76,395	75,464
Total ARKids	333,900	345,446	352,048	355,208	358,916

ARKids A  
(full medical coverage)

ARKids B  
(reduced medical coverage)

Total ARKids

265,967 | 271,882 | 276,384 | 278,813 | 283,452

67,933 | 73,564 | 75,664 | 76,395 | 75,464

333,900 | 345,446 | 352,048 | 355,208 | 358,916

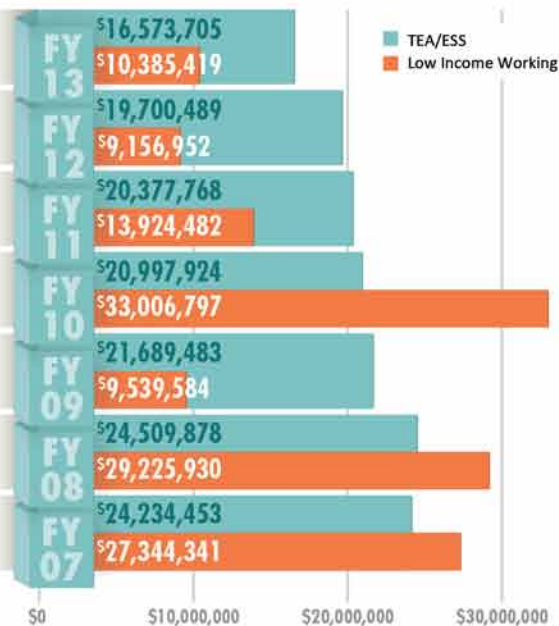


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## Child Care Voucher Program, State Fiscal Year 2013

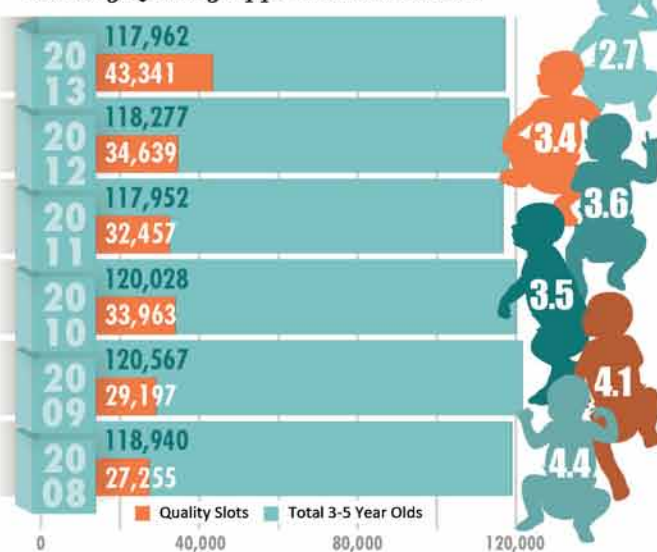
	Children	Families	Amount
TEA/ESS	5,850	10,230	\$16,573,705
Low-Income Working	5,604	3,451	\$10,385,419
Foster Care	1354	3107	\$4,610,633
Protective Services	341	581	\$683,570



## Child Care Licenses, 2013

	Licensed Capacity	Capacity Meeting Quality Standards	
Preschool Centers	87,930	43,341	49.3%
Infant/Toddler Centers	33,865	12,215	36.1%
School Age Centers	52,357	12,153	23.2%
Day Care Family Homes	6,308	833	13.2%
<b>Total Licenses</b>	<b>180,460</b>	<b>68,542</b>	<b>38.0%</b>
Children per Licensed Slot	Age 0-13	<b>3.1</b>	
Children per Quality Slot	Age 0-13	<b>8.1</b>	
	Age 0-4	<b>3.4</b>	
	Age 5-13	<b>29.5</b>	

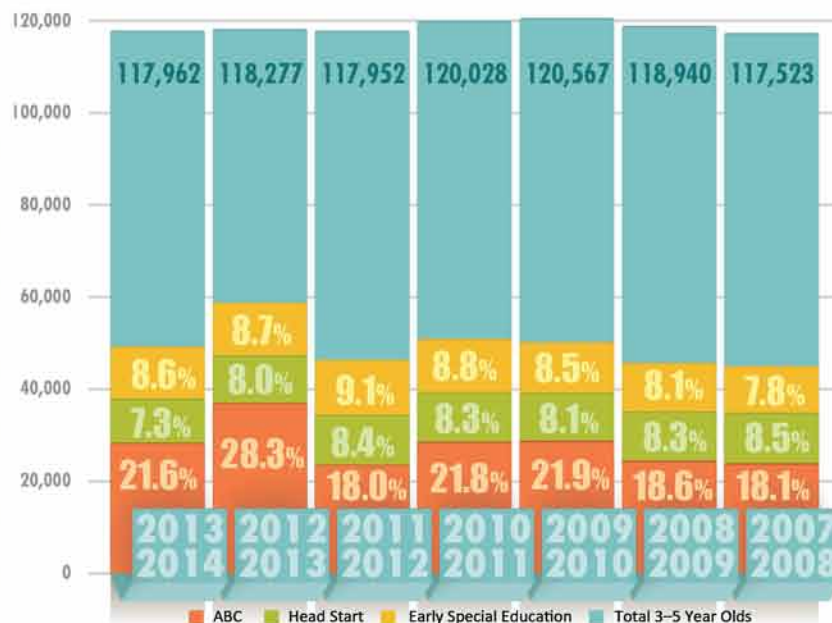
### Preschool Licensed Child Care Facilities Meeting Quality Approved Standards





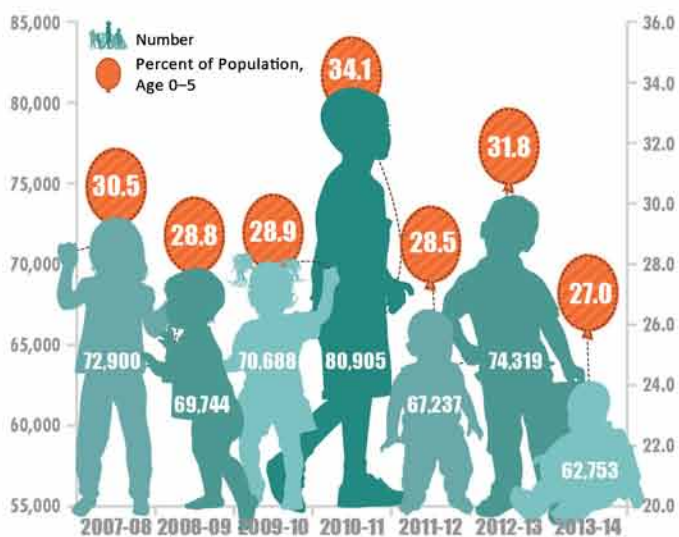
## Number of Children Served at Any Time During Program Year (not full-time equivalent)

	ABC	Head Start
2007-08	21,321	9,950
2008-09	22,067	9,833
2009-10	26,385	9,709
2010-11	26,134	10,011
2011-12	21,217	9,854
2012-13	33,440	9,452
2013-14	25,536	8,665



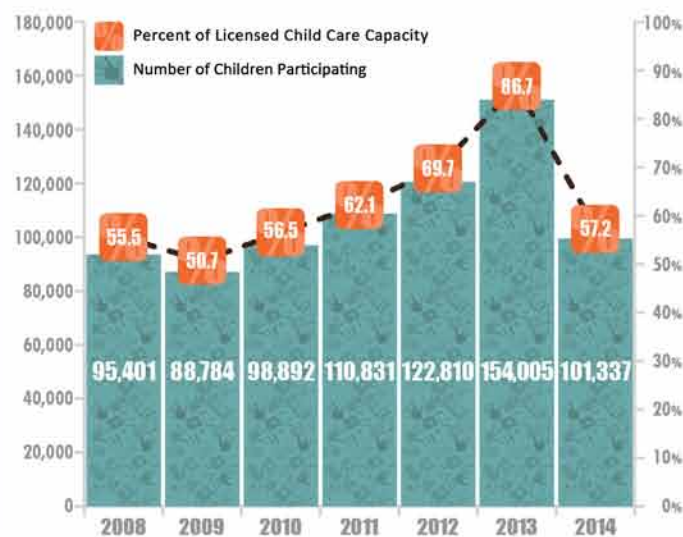
## Number of Children Served by State and Federally Funded Programs During Program Year

(Early Head Start, Early Intervention Special Education,  
ABC, Head Start, Early Special Education, CCDF)



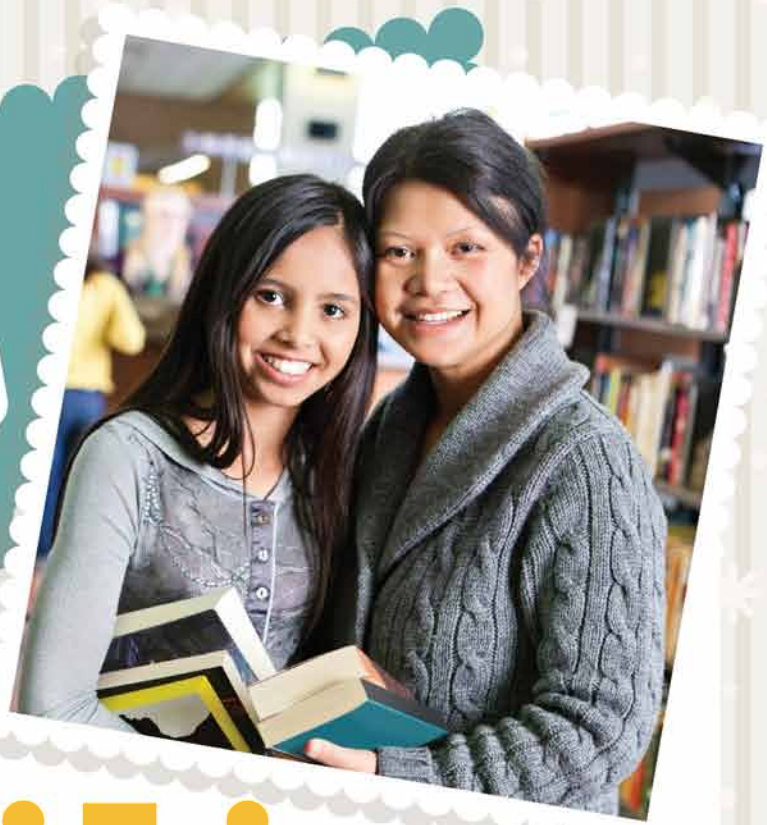
## USDA Child and Adult Food Care Program

(Special Nutrition Program for Child Care)



Getting Ready for School





**READY**

# Families

Parents are a child's first and most important teachers, and almost everything that children learn in the first years of their lives comes from their families. The relationship between early home experiences and later school readiness and their success

is significant and establishes habits that can influence the student's progress in school.

The best predictor of how well a child will succeed is the economic status of the family as measured by the poverty level. The 2013 poverty threshold for a family of four with two

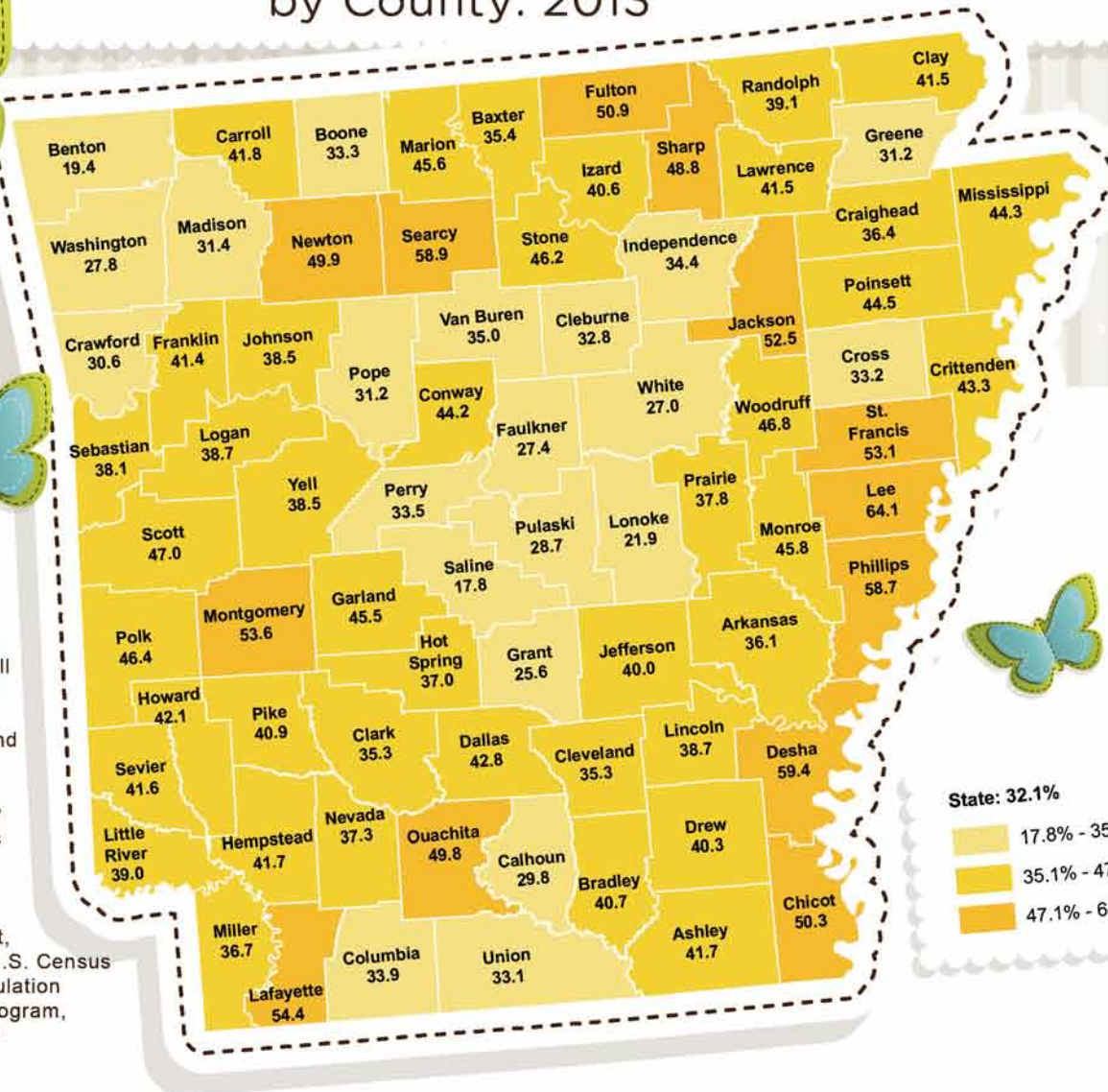
adults and two children was an income of \$23,624. The percentage of children, age 0-4, in poverty has increased from 29.1 percent in 2007 to 32.1 percent in 2013 affecting 60,285 children in Arkansas. The poverty rate for children under age 18 in Arkansas was 28.3 percent in 2013, up from 25.3 percent in 2007.





## Percent of Children in Poverty Age 0-4, by County: 2013

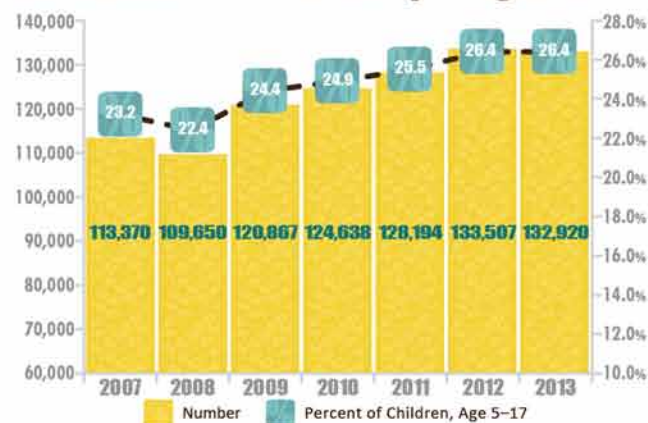
Sources:  
U.S. Census  
Bureau, Small  
Area Income  
and Poverty  
Estimates; and  
Population  
Estimates  
processed by  
Demographic  
Research,  
Institute for  
Economic  
Advancement,  
UALR from U.S. Census  
Bureau, Population  
Estimates Program,  
Vintage 2013



### Children in Poverty, Age 0-4



### Children in Poverty, Age 5-17





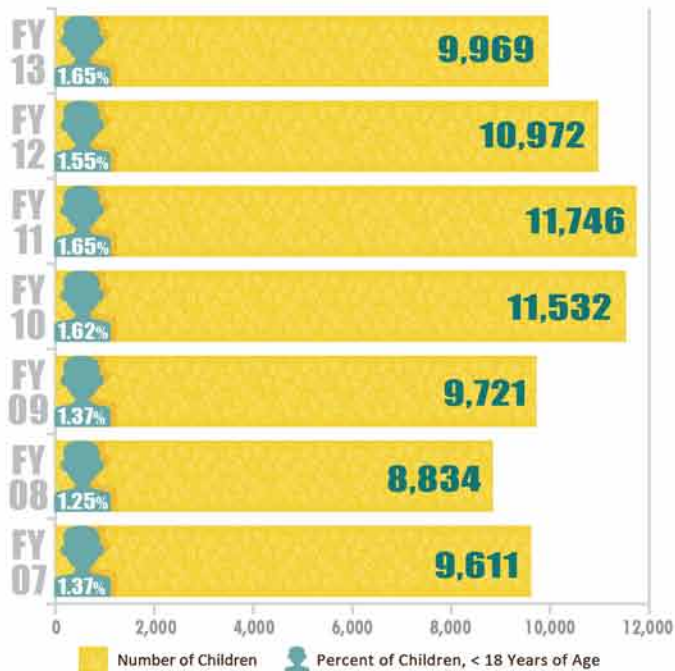


## Federal Poverty Level Income Thresholds for 2013

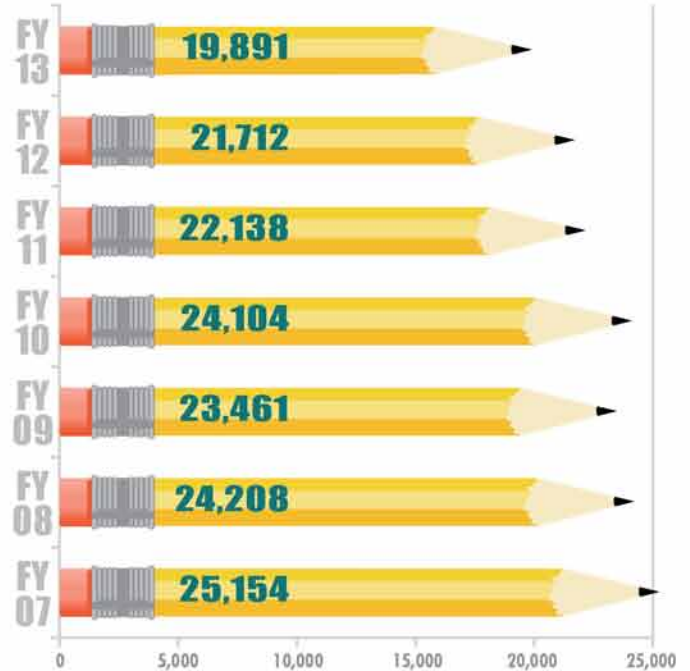
(Size of family and number of related children under 18 years)

Size of Family	Number of Children							
	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven	Eight or More
Two People								
Householder < 65 Years	\$15,996							
Three People	\$18,751	\$18,769						
Four People	\$24,421	\$23,624	\$23,707					
Five People	\$29,398	\$28,498	\$27,801	\$27,376				
Six People	\$33,461	\$32,771	\$32,110	\$31,128	\$30,545			
Seven People	\$38,588	\$37,763	\$37,187	\$36,115	\$34,865	\$33,493		
Eight People	\$43,269	\$42,490	\$41,807	\$40,839	\$39,610	\$38,331	\$38,006	
Nine People or More	\$51,844	\$51,154	\$50,575	\$49,625	\$48,317	\$47,134	\$46,842	\$45,037

### Victims of Child Maltreatment



### Transitional Employment Assistance Children







**READY**

# Schools

Research shows that the transition from preschool to kindergarten is one of the most difficult that a child faces throughout their education. Schools must be ready and responsive to the diverse cultural, physical, emotional, and developmental needs of children, especially children in poverty, children for whom English is not their first language, and children with disabilities.

Public School enrollment grew at a rate of 0.5 percent per year over the past 10 years.

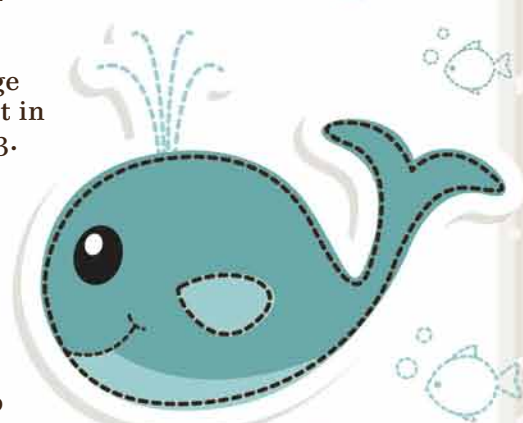
The number of students eligible for reduced and free lunches increased from 258,816 in 2007 to 289,215 in 2013, which is an increase of 11.7 percent.

School age children living in poverty continues to be a problem in many parts of the state. In 2013, poverty rates ranged from a low of 10.1 percent in Valley View School District

in Craighead County to a high of 53.1 percent in the Helena-West Helena School District in Phillips County. Statewide, the poverty rate for children 5-17 years of age increased from 23.2 percent in 2007 to 26.4 percent in 2013.

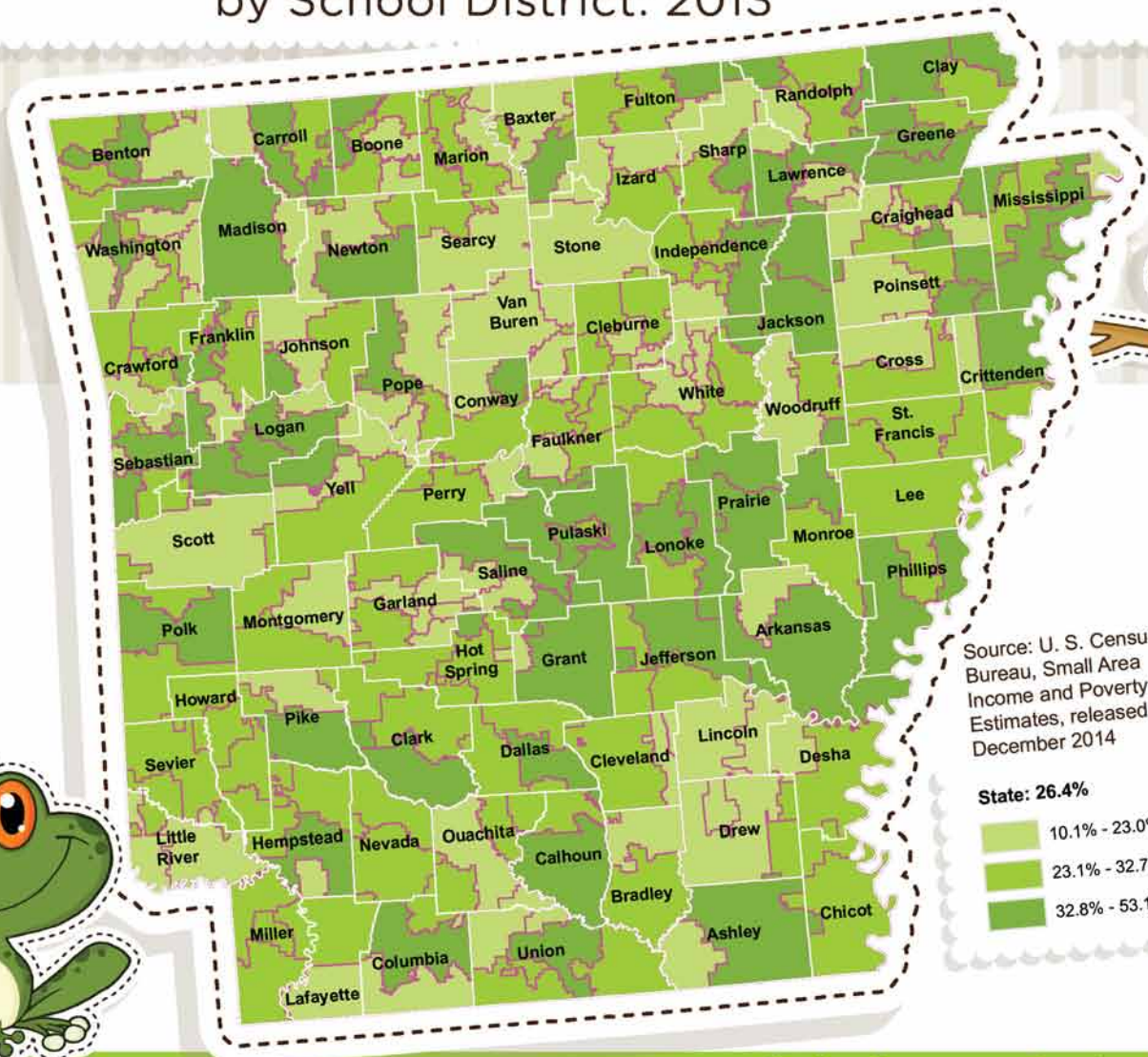
Tracking the Body Mass Index (BMI) of public school students is seen as one way of identifying the health of students now as well a predictor of future health problems. The percentage of students who are overweight or obese was 38.8 percent in 2013-2014. Over a five year period, the percentage of students who are overweight or obese has increased by 1.2 percent.

The percentage of students in Grade 4 who met or exceeded proficiency on the Criterion Referenced Test, Benchmark Exam in 2014 decreased six percentage points in math and one percentage point in literacy from 2013.





# Children in Poverty, 5-17 Years of Age, by School District: 2013



County	School District	Number of Children in Poverty	Poverty Rate
<b>Lowest Poverty Rates</b>			
Craighead	Valley View School District	249	10.1%
Benton	Bentonville Public Schools	1,662	10.2%
Benton	Pea Ridge School District	236	12.1%
Saline	Bryant Public Schools	1,238	13.0%
Faulkner	Greenbrier School District	443	13.0%
<b>Highest Poverty Rates</b>			
Phillips	Helena-West Helena School District	1,424	53.1%
Phillips	Marvell School District	355	51.4%
St. Francis	Hughes School District	266	51.2%
St. Francis	Forrest City School District	1,725	47.2%
Lee	Lee County School District	679	45.6%

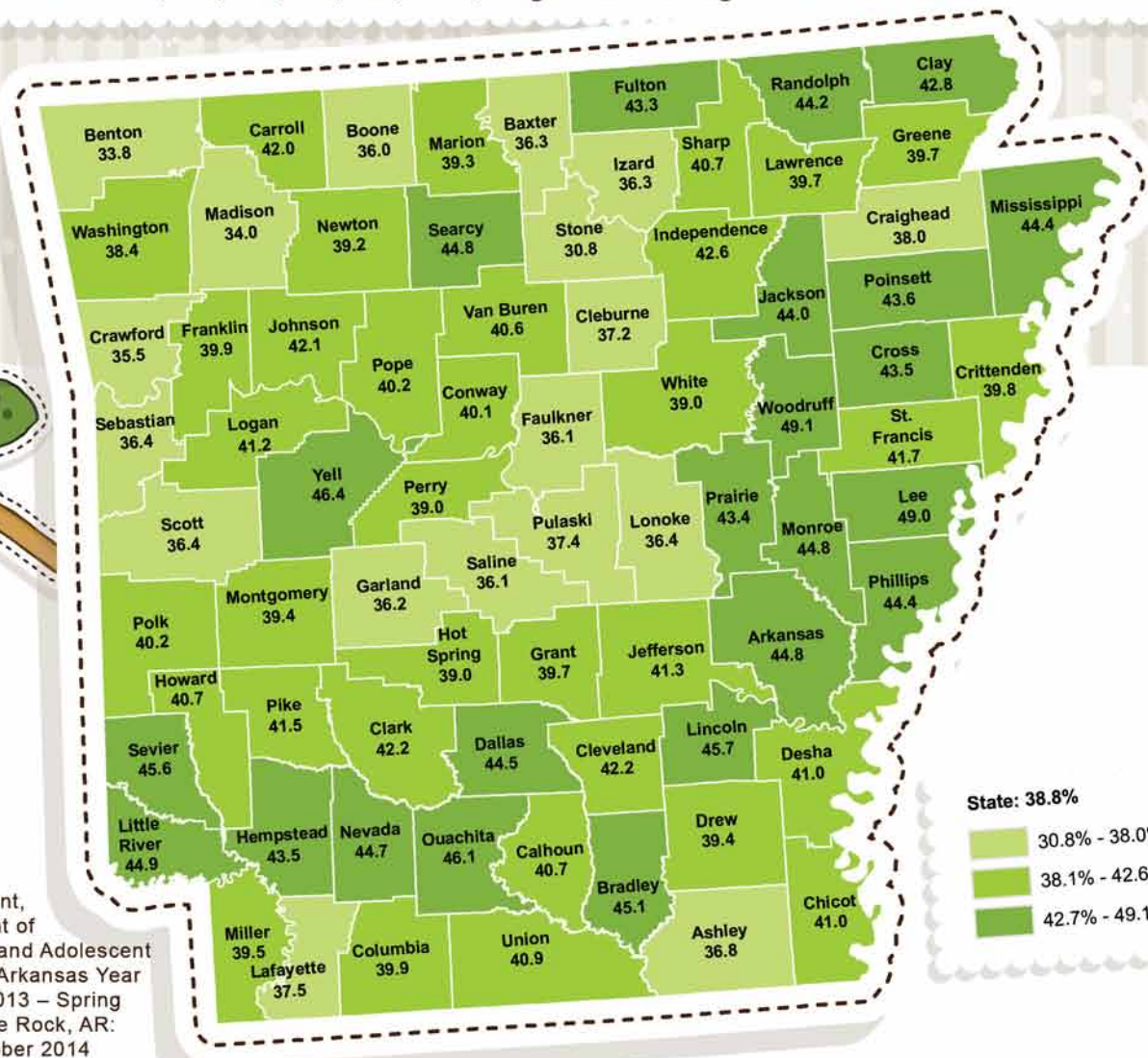




# Percent of Overweight or Obese Students, Grades K, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, by County: 2013-2014



Source:  
Arkansas  
Center  
for Health  
Improvement,  
Assessment of  
Childhood and Adolescent  
Obesity in Arkansas Year  
Ten (Fall 2013 – Spring  
2014), Little Rock, AR:  
ACHI, October 2014



## Change in Percentage of Overweight or Obese Students from 2008-2009 to 2013-2014

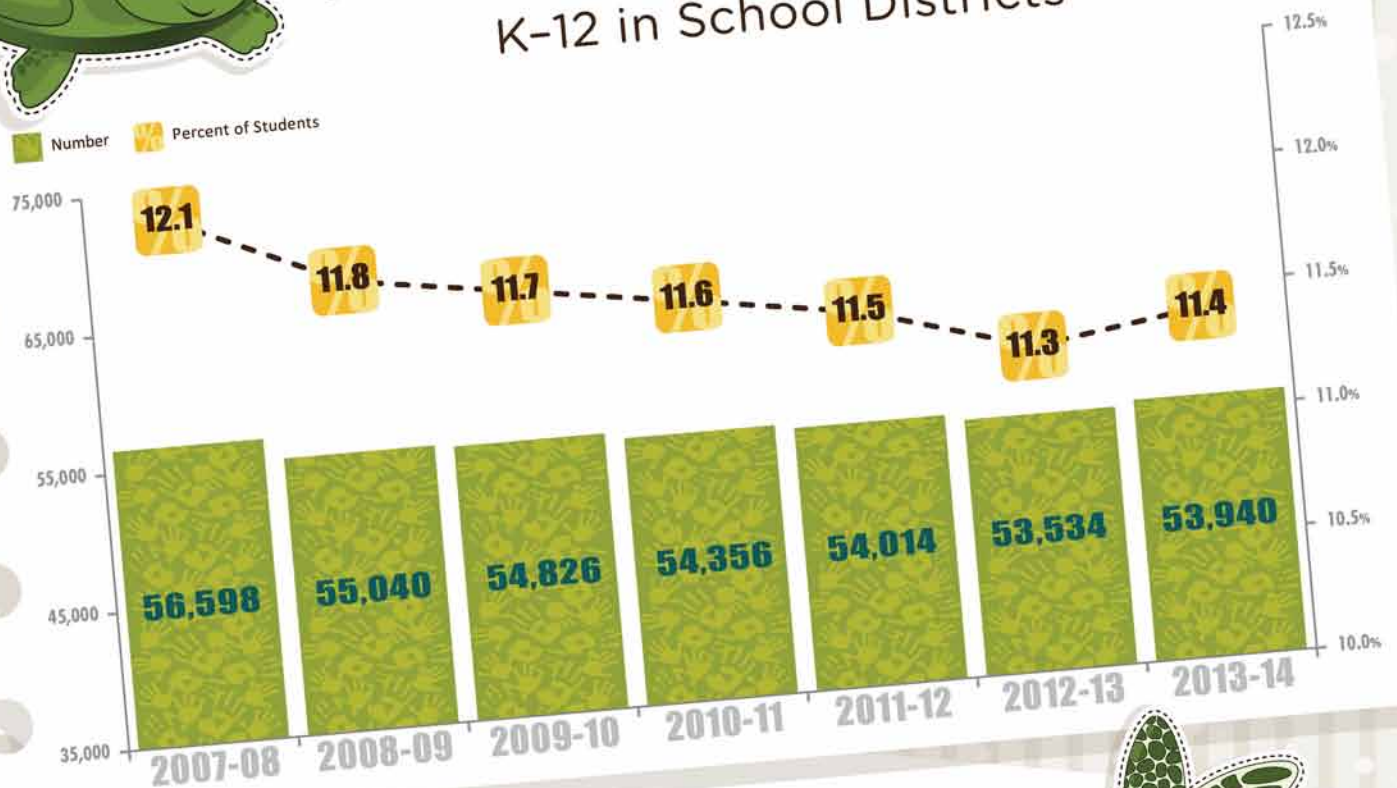
Largest Decrease (fewer overweight)		Largest Increase (more overweight)	
Stone	-6.3%	Pike	7.0%
Lawrence	-5.5%	Yell	6.2%
Conway	-5.2%	Logan	6.1%
Izard	-3.4%	Van Buren	5.5%
Calhoun	-3.3%	Polk	5.3%
		State	1.2%



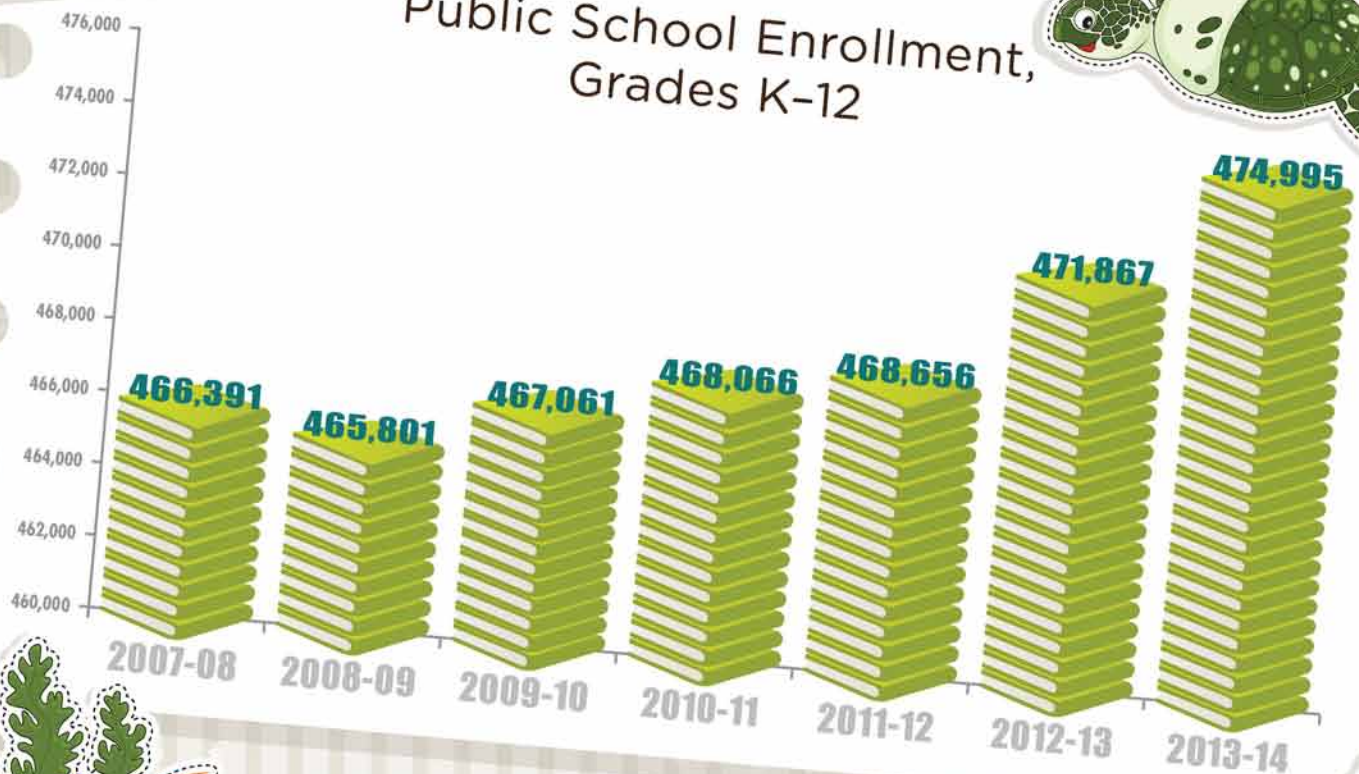




## Children Receiving Special Education K-12 in School Districts



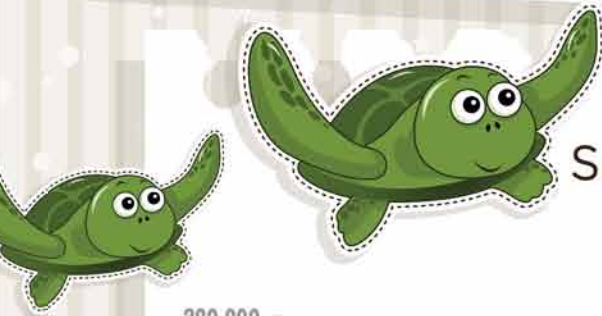
## Public School Enrollment, Grades K-12





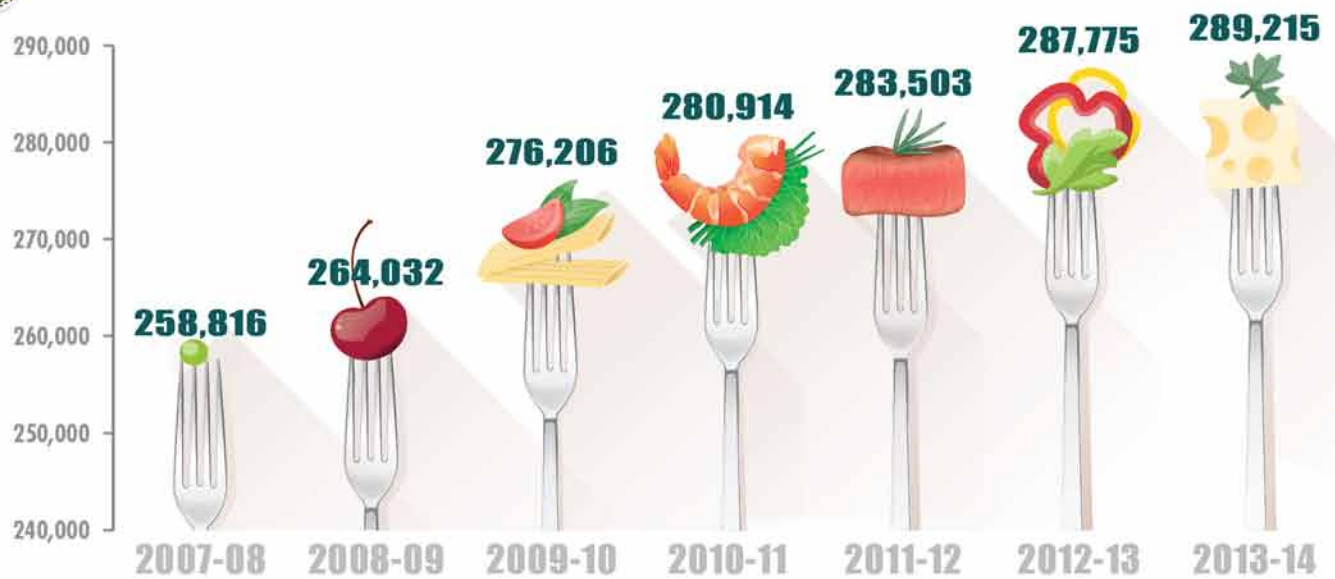
## Suspensions and Expulsions

2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2013-2014	% Change
131,152	124,334	123,390	115,113	119,696	121,549	134,902	-2.9%



## School Lunch Program

(Students Eligible)



## Grade 4 Test Scores on ACTAAP

(Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment, and Accountability Program)

	Below Basic	At Basic	Proficient	Advanced	2014	Meeting or Exceeding Proficiency			
						2013	2012	2011	2010
<b>Math</b>									
Number	3,196	5,326	11,718	15,269	26,987	29,030	29,458	29,736	28,748
Percent	9	15	33	43	76	82	82	82	80
<b>Literacy</b>									
Number	1,065	4,971	12,783	17,044	29,828	30,093	30,535	29,736	27,670
Percent	3	14	36	48	84	85	85	82	77



Getting Ready for School







# READY

# Communities

The economic state of the community is critically important for the success of families and schools since all the elements are interdependent. Stable populations, low crime rates, affordable housing, plentiful jobs with adequate wages, and access to health care are some of the characteristics that make a community a viable and supportive place to live.

Per capita personal income for the state was \$36,698 in 2013. This was

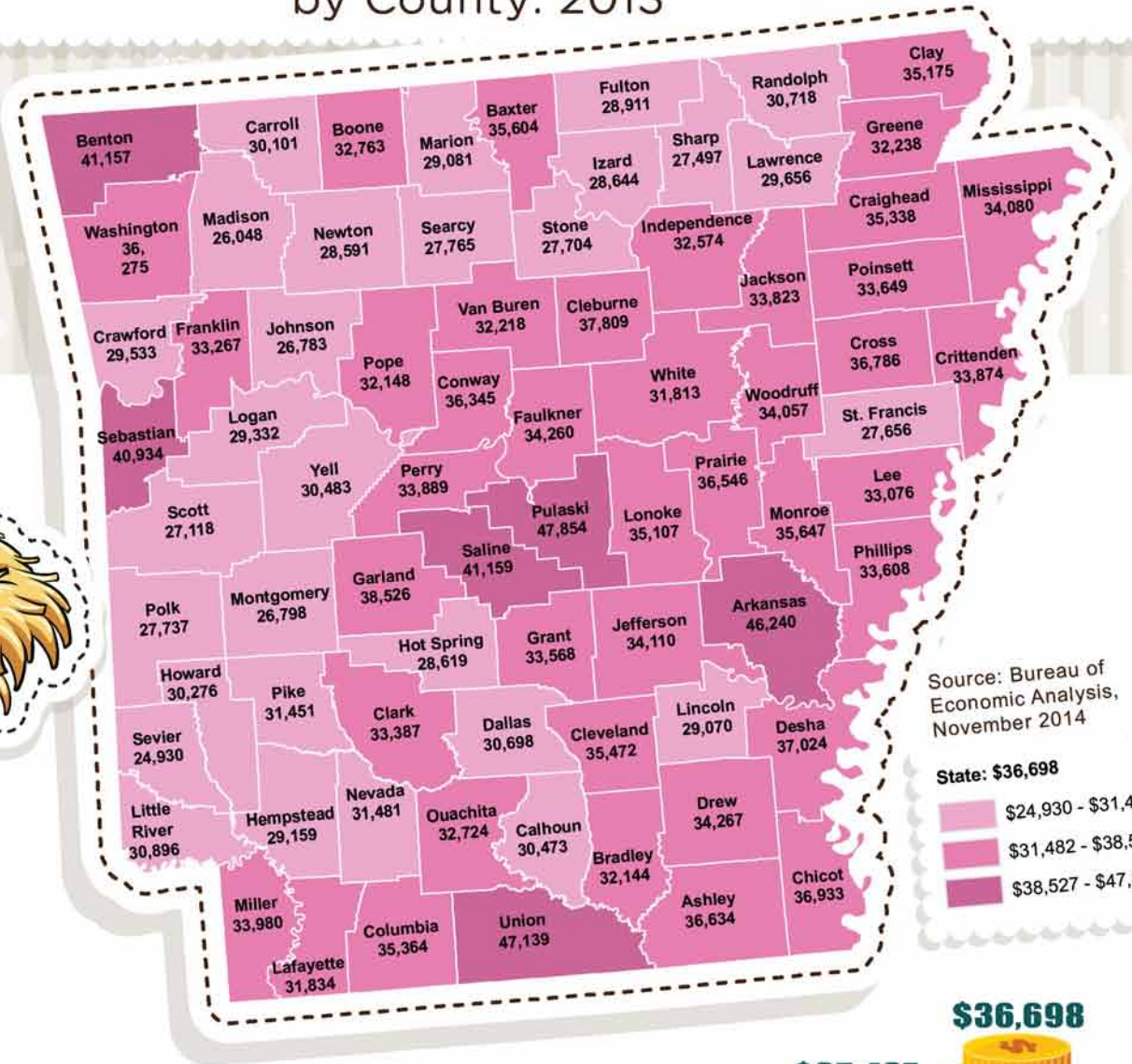
82.0 percent of the U.S. per capita personal income. This is an improvement since 2003, when Arkansas' per capita personal income was only 78.0 percent of the U.S.

While the state's median household income increased 6.2 percent from 2007 to 2013, the nation's median household income grew at a slower rate (3.0%). As a percentage of the U.S., the state increased from 75.4 percent of the U.S. median household income in 2007 to 77.7 percent in 2013.





# Per Capita Personal Income, by County: 2013





## .18







## Health Professionals, 2013

Total Physicians	6,219
Primary Care Physicians	3,269
Total Dentists	1,268
Total Optometrists	390
Total Social Workers	2,742
Total Nurses	48,537
Licensed Practical Nurses	14,274
Registered Nurses	31,690





# Definitions and Sources

**Births to Teens:** The number of births in which the woman was less than 18 years of age. Arkansas Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics, *Vital Statistics*, Calendar year

**No Prenatal Care During First Trimester:** The number of all births in which the mother did not begin prenatal care during the first three months of pregnancy. Arkansas Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics, Calendar year

**ARKids First Enrollment:** The number of children enrolled in ARKids First, an insurance program provided by the state of Arkansas for children who come from working poor families without insurance. The ARKids First waiver program and SOBRA Medicaid, the largest category of children's Medicaid, were combined under the ARKids umbrella. SOBRA became ARKids A and the waiver program became ARKids B. Arkansas Department of Human Services, Report IM-2414, June of current year

**Child Care Voucher Program:** The number of children receiving child care through the voucher program which provides subsidized child care to low income working families. The voucher program is a federal program which assists families who meet eligibility criteria with the cost of child care. Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, State fiscal year

**Child Care Licenses:** The number of child care licenses issued and the capacity by type of facility. Children per slot: The total number of children by age groups divided by the total capacity of licensed centers or the total capacity of those meeting the state early childhood accreditation/quality approval standards. These standards ensure quality programs for young children. Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education

## **Number of Children Served at Any time During Program Year:**

**Arkansas Better Chance Program:** The number of children served at any time during the program year in the Arkansas Better Chance Program (ABC) and Arkansas Better Chance for School Success (ABC/SS). The ABC program is intended to serve educationally deprived children, birth to five years of age, while the ABC/SS serves children ages three and four from families up to 200% of federal poverty level. The Arkansas Better Chance Data Center and Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education

**Head Start:** Each Head Start program is funded to provide services to a designated number of children and exists to provide and to promote a high quality, developmentally appropriate child development program for economically deprived children 3–5 and/or 0–3 years of age, thus reducing the potential for school failure. Arkansas Head Start Association-State Collaboration Project

**Children Served Compared to 3–5 Year Old Population:** A comparison of the number of ABC, Head Start slots, and Early Special Education with the 3–5 year old population. Number of slots does not include migrants. The Arkansas Better Chance Data Center and Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, Arkansas Head Start Association-State Collaboration Project, the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education, IDEA Data and Research partnership with UALR College of Education, and the U.S. Census Bureau

**Number of Children Served by State and Federally Funded Programs:** The number of children served in various early childhood programs during the program year divided by the population 0–5 years of age.

*The ABC and Head Start programs have been defined above.*

**Early Childhood Special Education:** Early Childhood Special Education services are defined as “special education and related services provided to eligible children with disabilities age 3–5, inclusive” in the federal law Individual Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Arkansas Department of Education is designated as the agency for administering and providing general supervision of education programs statewide for children with disabilities ages 3–5. The federal law “Individuals with Disabilities Education Act” (IDEA) defines **Early Intervention Services** as services designed to meet the developmental needs of each child birth to three with disabilities and the needs of the family related to enhancing the child’s development. The Lead Agency in Arkansas for Early Intervention is DHS/Developmental Disabilities Services. Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education

**Child Care and Development Fund:** The number of children served at any time during the program year in the Child Care and Development Fund, which assists low-income families and those transitioning off welfare to obtain child care so that they can work or attend training or education. Eligible children are those under age 13 (or up to age 19, if disabled). The state currently serves families at 60 percent of the state median income. Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, State fiscal year

**Early Head Start:** Head Start programs for age 0–3.

**USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program:** The number of children served by the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), which is a federal program providing healthy meals and snacks to children and adults receiving day care. Facilities serving children include child care centers, Head Start programs, after school care programs, and family day care homes. Arkansas Department of Human Services, Special Nutrition Program, State fiscal year





# Definitions and Sources

**Federal Poverty Level Income Thresholds:** Poverty status is determined from income data. Poverty thresholds are arranged in a two dimensional matrix based on family size and number of children in the family. The total income of the family was tested against the appropriate threshold to determine the poverty status of the family. If the family income is less than the corresponding cut off, the family is classified as *below poverty level*. The number of children below poverty is the sum of all children in families below the poverty level. The percent of children in poverty is the sum of children below the poverty level divided by the total number of all children in families. U.S. Census Bureau, Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division, Poverty Thresholds, 2011, Calendar year

**Percent of Children in Poverty, Age 0–4:** See above for definitions of poverty. The percent of children 0–4 years of age in poverty is the sum of children below the poverty level divided by the total number of all children 0–4 years of age in families. U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, Calendar year

**Children in Poverty, Age 5–17:** See above for definitions of poverty. The percent of children 5–17 years of age in poverty is the sum of children below the poverty level divided by the total number of all children 5–17 years of age in families. U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, Calendar year

**Victims of Child Maltreatment:** The number of children for whom an allegation of maltreatment has been founded. This number is divided by the population that is less than 18 years of age to calculate the percent. Arkansas Department of Human Services, State fiscal year

**Transitional Employment Assistance Children:** The number of children who receive Aid to Families with Dependent Children/Transitional Employment Assistance. AFDC was a cash assistance program designed to meet the basic needs of children under age 18 who are deprived of the care or support of one or both parents. Arkansas implemented the Transitional Employment Assistance program on July 1, 1998, a result of the national welfare reform movement. Arkansas Department of Human Services, *Annual Statistical Report*, State fiscal year

**Public School Enrollment Grades K–12:** The enrollment in grades K–12, for all districts. Arkansas Department of Education, Office of Data Administration, Statewide Information System

**School Lunch Program, Students Eligible:** The number of students eligible for free/reduced price lunches in the public schools, grades K–12. Students are eligible based on income and family size guidelines established for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Arkansas Department of Education, Statewide Information System

## **Children in Poverty, 5 to 17 Years of Age, by School**

**District:** See above for definitions of poverty. Estimates of poverty levels for school age children will be made biennially by the U.S. Census Bureau to comply with Title 1 requirements. U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, Calendar year

**Overweight or Obese Students:** The number of overweight or obese students as shown in the annual body mass index (BMI) screening of Arkansas public school students. This number is divided by the total number of students in grades K, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10. Arkansas Center for Health Improvement, *Assessment of Childhood and Adolescent Obesity in Arkansas Year Eleven*

## **Children Receiving Special Education K–12 in School**

**Districts:** The number of students counted under the P.L. 94-142 grant for all districts combined for each school year. Students in special education placements are those who have been identified as disabled according to criteria set forth in state and federal regulations, and who are receiving special education and related services as necessary. The percent is determined by dividing the enrollment in special education by the total enrollment. Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education, IDEA Data and Research partnership with UALR College of Education

**Suspensions and Expulsions:** School disciplinary actions taken, including in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, expelled, expelled for weapons, expelled for drugs, and expelled for dangerousness. Arkansas Department of Education, Office of Data Administration, Statewide Information System

**Grade 4 Test Scores on ACTAAP:** Number and percent of Students in Grade 4 meeting or exceeding proficiency in math and literacy on the Criterion Referenced Test, Augmented Benchmark Examination, Combined Population. Arkansas Department of Education

**Per Capita Personal Income:** Total personal income of the residents of a given area divided by the resident population of the area. U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Calendar year

**Median Household Income:** Median household income divides the income distribution into two equal parts, one having incomes above the median and the other having incomes below the median. U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, Calendar year

**Health Professionals:** Total physicians (all medical doctors licensed to practice in the state of Arkansas), primary care physicians (medical doctors participating in family practice, general practice, obstetrics/gynecology, pediatrics or internal medicine), dentists, optometrists, social workers, and nurses. Arkansas Department of Health, Health Statistics Branch, *Arkansas Health Professions Manpower Statistics 2013*, Calendar year







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