



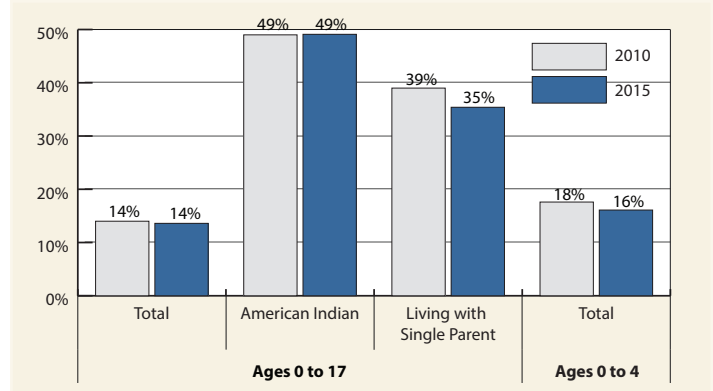
## CHILD POVERTY IN NORTH DAKOTA

A family's economic situation has important implications for the health and well-being of a child. Financially stable families have resources to cover their expenses and save for the future. This stability helps provide their children with a foundation for future success. Unfortunately, nearly 22,000 North Dakota children live in families with incomes below the poverty level<sup>1</sup> (Table 1). Growing up in an impoverished family can create cumulative disadvantages that can powerfully influence the direction of a child's life, especially if those disadvantages are not mitigated by other sources of support.

When children lack opportunities to fulfill their potential, the cost to their communities can be steep. Economists estimate that child poverty costs the United States \$500 billion annually in lost productivity and spending on health care and the criminal justice system<sup>2</sup>. Fortunately, research also suggests that there are effective ways to intervene at all points in the life course and improve child outcomes. The Brookings Institution highlights four key policy areas that play an important role in addressing poverty in America: promoting early childhood education, supporting opportunities for disadvantaged youth, skill development and job creation, and improving safety net and work supports. Efforts in these areas are shown to improve school readiness; social, emotional, and cognitive development; physical health; school achievement; and adult success<sup>3</sup>.

In North Dakota, 14 percent of children live in poverty<sup>1</sup>. When compared with other states, North Dakota has one of the lowest child poverty rates in the nation<sup>1</sup>. Nationally, the child poverty rate was 22 percent in 2015 (15.8 million children)<sup>1</sup>. Contributing to the state's relatively low child poverty rate is that most North Dakotans are working. North Dakota has the highest proportion of adults working in the nation (79% in 2015)<sup>4</sup> and had the lowest annual unemployment rate among states from 2009 through 2015<sup>5</sup>. Thus, most children have working parents. In fact, three-fourths of children ages 0 to 13 live in households where all the parents are in the labor force (75% in 2015)<sup>1</sup>.

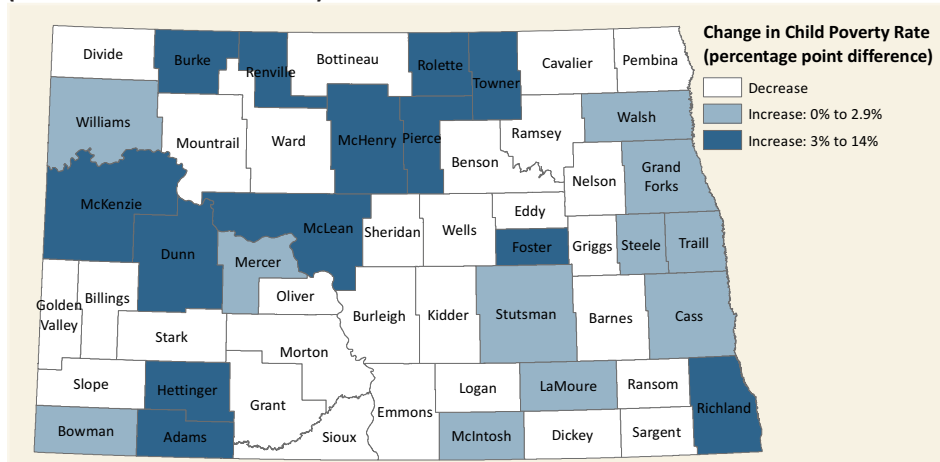
**FIGURE 1. NORTH DAKOTA CHILD POVERTY RATES BY AGE, RACE, AND FAMILY TYPE: 2010 AND 2015<sup>1,7</sup>**



While there is continuing debate about the best approach to measuring poverty in the United States, the official poverty measure uses a set of income thresholds that vary by family size and composition, and are adjusted annually for changes in the cost of living (but are the same across the United States). In 2015, a four-person family in the continental United States earning \$24,257 or less was considered impoverished<sup>6</sup>. Nevertheless, many researchers agree that, on average, families need an income of about twice the federal poverty level to meet their most basic needs<sup>3</sup>. In North Dakota, 31 percent of children live in families with incomes that do not meet this level, i.e., family incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level (49,617 children in 2015). Nationally, 44 percent of children live in families with these lower income levels (32 million children in 2015)<sup>1</sup>.

Figure 2 shows the change in child poverty rates in North Dakota by county. From 2010 to 2015, the child poverty rate decreased in the majority of counties (29 of 53)<sup>1,7</sup>.

**FIGURE 2. CHANGE IN THE CHILD POVERTY RATE FOR NORTH DAKOTA COUNTIES (DIFFERENCE IN PERCENTAGES): 2010-2015<sup>1,7</sup>**



Child poverty differs by age, race, and family type. Within North Dakota, younger children (i.e., ages 0-4) have a higher poverty rate than children overall (16% and 14%, respectively in 2015)<sup>1</sup>. North Dakota children living with a single parent are seven times more likely to live in poverty than children living with married parents (35% compared to 5%, respectively in 2015)<sup>1</sup>. Half of all American Indian children living in North Dakota were impoverished in 2015 (49%), five times the rate for white children in the state (9%)<sup>1</sup>. Similar to the overall trend, there has been relatively little change in these rates since 2010 (Figure 1)<sup>1,7</sup>. Understanding these data is critical to making good public policy and strategic investments that can make a tremendous difference in children's lives.

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Census Bureau. 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, <http://factfinder2.census.gov> and <http://dataferrett.census.gov/>. <sup>2</sup>National Center for Children in Poverty, Ten Important Questions about Child Poverty and Family Economic Hardship, <http://www.nccp.org/faq.html>. <sup>3</sup>The Brookings Institution, The Hamilton Project, Policies to Address Poverty in America, <http://bit.ly/VY7ztz>. <sup>4</sup>North Dakota Compass, Workforce, Proportion of Adults Working, <http://bit.ly/2cQIWxu>. <sup>5</sup>U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, <http://www.bls.gov/lau/tables.htm>. <sup>6</sup>U.S. Census Bureau. Poverty Thresholds for 2015 by Size of Family and Number of Related Children Under 18 Years, <http://bit.ly/2cQ6Ya1>. <sup>7</sup>U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, <http://factfinder2.census.gov>. <sup>8</sup>U.S. Census Bureau. Census 2000 Summary File 3, <http://factfinder2.census.gov>.

**TABLE 1. NUMBER AND PERCENT OF CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY\* IN NORTH DAKOTA BY COUNTY: 2000, 2010, AND 2015<sup>1,7,8</sup>**

	Children Ages 0 through 17 Living in Families with Incomes Below Poverty (i.e., below 100% of the federal poverty level)					
	2000		2010		2015	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
North Dakota	22,163	14.0%	20,713	14.2%	21,716	13.6%
Adams	67	11.1%	31	7.1%	70	16.5%
Barnes	286	11.0%	277	12.6%	175	8.0%
Benson	958	39.2%	1,062	48.3%	1,085	47.8%
Billings	23	11.0%	23	11.9%	13	7.9%
Bottineau	192	12.3%	198	16.5%	132	9.9%
Bowman	77	9.9%	17	2.6%	39	5.1%
Burke	81	17.3%	34	9.4%	97	16.9%
Burleigh	1,547	9.1%	2,060	11.6%	1,984	10.2%
Cass	2,699	9.5%	3,451	11.0%	3,989	11.3%
Cavalier	198	16.8%	102	12.8%	17	2.2%
Dickey	283	21.0%	119	9.3%	97	8.3%
Divide	89	19.5%	129	40.7%	28	7.6%
Dunn	221	22.4%	57	7.5%	138	15.3%
Eddy	75	11.5%	121	21.0%	91	17.4%
Emmons	249	23.4%	170	22.0%	46	6.3%
Foster	107	11.2%	39	5.2%	85	12.3%
Golden Valley	103	21.4%	57	17.7%	52	12.0%
Grand Forks	1,926	12.4%	2,046	15.6%	2,346	17.1%
Grant	194	29.1%	63	18.1%	65	15.6%
Griggs	64	10.3%	53	11.4%	41	9.2%
Hettinger	134	21.2%	43	9.3%	70	12.7%
Kidder	133	20.8%	146	29.1%	40	8.5%
LaMoure	191	17.0%	61	6.8%	75	9.1%
Logan	85	16.2%	33	7.5%	9	2.3%
McHenry	264	18.5%	205	17.1%	280	21.8%
McIntosh	99	15.2%	45	9.7%	52	10.4%
McKenzie	390	22.6%	199	12.8%	560	20.4%
McLean	382	17.5%	213	12.5%	334	17.1%
Mercer	128	5.2%	132	7.2%	145	7.9%
Morton	763	11.4%	674	10.8%	575	8.9%
Mountrail	435	23.6%	431	24.2%	432	18.5%
Nelson	100	12.4%	86	14.0%	35	6.7%
Oliver	134	23.6%	55	13.0%	31	8.4%
Pembina	232	11.0%	155	9.5%	108	7.3%
Pierce	142	12.8%	107	11.2%	218	25.3%
Ramsey	546	18.3%	403	16.7%	356	14.0%
Ransom	159	10.9%	178	13.2%	102	8.2%
Renville	85	14.1%	30	5.9%	57	9.0%
Richland	375	8.6%	323	8.8%	463	13.4%
Rolette	1,948	39.5%	1,861	41.5%	2,313	48.9%
Sargent	102	8.9%	97	10.5%	43	5.5%
Sheridan	90	24.9%	56	31.1%	56	24.5%
Sioux	718	45.2%	866	58.4%	697	44.3%
Slope	34	17.2%	15	9.3%	11	8.3%
Stark	688	12.1%	645	12.9%	330	4.9%
Steele	54	8.9%	32	7.1%	32	9.2%
Stutsman	647	13.3%	625	14.5%	676	16.2%
Towner	70	10.0%	80	17.1%	144	25.6%
Traill	204	9.8%	195	10.9%	230	12.9%
Walsh	384	12.6%	271	10.8%	282	12.0%
Ward	2,011	13.3%	1,771	13.0%	1,476	9.5%
Wells	129	11.3%	101	12.5%	30	6.4%
Williams	868	17.1%	470	9.7%	894	12.6%

Note: \*Poverty status is determined for all persons except institutionalized persons, persons in military group quarters and in college dormitories, and children under 15 years old in non-relative based foster care settings. Established in the 1960s, the official poverty measure is a specific dollar amount that varies by family size but is the same across the continental U.S. It was based on research indicating that families spent about one-third of their incomes on food. The official poverty level was set by multiplying food costs by three. Since then, the same figures have been updated annually for inflation but have otherwise remained unchanged. For more information on how poverty is measured, visit <https://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/about/overview/measure.html>.