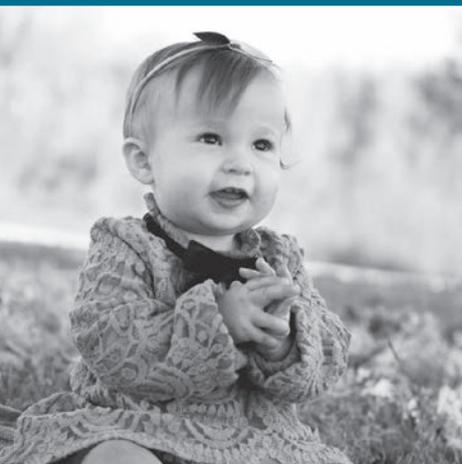




# 2023 Early Childhood Dashboard



# Acknowledgments

Groundwork Ohio is grateful to the families, early childhood professionals, community organizations, state agencies and other experts who contributed their time and expertise to the *2023 Early Childhood Dashboard*. Groundwork also thanks the supporters of the *Dashboard*, including:



Groundwork Ohio contracted with the Health Policy Institute of Ohio (HPIO) to facilitate the development of the *Early Childhood Dashboard*.



## HPIO

### Authors

Carrie Almasi  
Hailey Akah  
Lexi Chirakos  
Brian O'Rourke

### Graphic design/layout

Nick Wiselogel

### Contributors

Amy Bush Stevens  
Lareina La Flair  
Stephen Listisen  
Édith Nkenganyi  
Amy Rohling McGee  
Jacob Santiago  
Kayla Alvis  
Jillian Newman

## Groundwork Ohio

### Contributors

Shannon Jones  
Lynanne Gutierrez  
Beth Hess  
Carol Argiro  
Lindsay Ciavarelli  
Amy Meade  
Erin Ryan  
Becca Thomas  
Lawrence Witherspoon  
Lysette Arnold

### Graphic design

Jen Peters (JP Design)

### Videographers

Ellen Belcher  
Colton Puterbaugh  
Ransome Rowland

## Featured families

Lupe Bright  
Willie Brown  
Christina Hutton  
Lori Jarvis  
Luz Martinez

# A Message from Our Leadership

**“How will we know if every child in Ohio has the opportunity to reach their full potential?”**

We began work on an Early Childhood Dashboard in 2021 that would answer that question and help inform policymakers about the realities facing Ohio families with young children. After two years of extensive research, fact-gathering, and input from children and family experts throughout the state, including families themselves, we are proud to release the completed Early Childhood Dashboard. The Early Childhood Dashboard is a first-of-its kind accounting, incorporating more than 60 metrics across six domains spotlighting the immense challenges and broad inequities faced by the families in our state.

It is undisputed that the first years of life are the most foundational years for a child’s development. Investments in early childhood not only benefit the well-being of children and their families, but they pay dividends to the state and our economy. Our youngest children are our future workforce, parents, caregivers, and leaders. At Groundwork Ohio, we believe we cannot secure a strong future for Ohio without setting up our youngest Ohioans and their families for success.

Together with the Health Policy Institute of Ohio (HPIO), Groundwork Ohio created the Dashboard to provide a comprehensive reporting of data in context through an analysis of trend, Ohio to U.S. comparison, and disaggregation of data to identify disparities and inequities. Prioritizing Ohio’s youngest begins with data. The previously published *Dashboard Preview* was a starting place for measuring what matters. Since that publication, we have engaged statewide stakeholders and passionate advocates to provide our policymakers with the most accurate and thorough recording of the realities facing our families. We’ve also integrated the lived experiences of Ohio families to supplement the data and tell a more comprehensive story alongside the numbers. The data, coupled with the amplification of family voices, is what policymakers need to move forward.

Ultimately, this unique work highlights the necessity for urgent action to ensure Ohio’s youngest have the opportunity to grow and thrive in our Great State. As Groundwork Ohio, we know that our state’s success is largely determined by the success of Ohio’s youngest children, birth-to-five. Investing in our youngest and most precious resources is the most transformative strategy to increase the life-long success of every child and provide economic stability for our state.

**Warm personal regards,**



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Shannon Jones".

**Shannon Jones**  
President & CEO  
Groundwork Ohio

# About Groundwork Ohio

**Groundwork Ohio** focuses on the time when children’s experiences and environments most influence their health, development, and life trajectory: from birth to age 5. We work to ensure that every baby, toddler, and young child in Ohio has the resources and opportunities for a strong start.

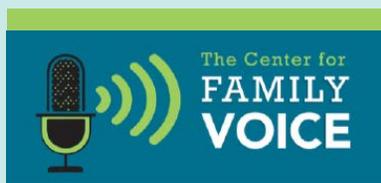
Groundwork advances quality early childhood systems in Ohio by engaging, educating, and mobilizing diverse stakeholders and strategic partners to promote data-driven and evidence-based early childhood policies. We elevate the voices of families and professionals who are impacted by our child-serving systems and seek to advance system-level changes that improve outcomes for Ohio’s youngest children and their families. The Groundwork Ohio vision, shared by a breadth of diverse partners across the state, is to make Ohio the best place to be a young child so that every child can reach their full potential.

## Groundwork Ohio’s Centers of Excellence

Groundwork Ohio has three Centers of Excellence dedicated to capacity building and partnerships that drive systems, programs, and policy changes to improve outcomes for young children and their families across the state.



**The Center for Maternal and Young Child Health** focuses on building and transforming systems that improve maternal and young child health, promote health equity, and prioritize prevention through policy development, research, and collaboration to ensure all Ohio mothers and young children thrive.



**The Center for Family Voice** is dedicated to authentically engaging and elevating the voices of Ohio parents and families with young children to drive positive outcomes for our youngest Ohioans in policy and practice.



**The Center for Early Learning** works to transform policy by removing key barriers to accessing quality early learning opportunities for Ohio’s young children, improving readiness to learn outcomes, strengthening relationships between state and local early learning agencies, and supporting quality leadership across early childhood systems.

# Overview

## What is Groundwork’s Early Childhood Dashboard?

The *2023 Early Childhood Dashboard* is a tool to advance equity and catalyze advocacy and action needed to lay a strong foundation for Ohio kids (prenatal to age 5), families, and communities. It is a first-of-its-kind, comprehensive snapshot of Ohio’s performance on more than 60 key metrics that examine the systems, community conditions, and outcomes required to ensure that young children in Ohio are healthy and ready to learn. The *Dashboard* puts data in context by analyzing trends across years, comparing Ohio to the U.S., and highlighting disparities and inequities.

The *Dashboard* was developed in partnership with early childhood experts, families, community organizations, providers, and other early childhood stakeholders at the local, state, and national levels. It builds upon the *Early Childhood Dashboard Preview* released by Groundwork Ohio in March 2022, providing a more thorough examination of the factors and outcomes required to achieve equity and lay a strong foundation for young children.

## Laying a strong foundation for Ohio’s young children

**Goal** The *Dashboard* advances equity and catalyzes advocacy and action to lay a strong foundation for Ohio kids (prenatal to 5), families, and communities.

**Vision** Ohio is the best place to be a young child, and every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

**Positive outcomes for young children are achieved**

Young children in Ohio are

- ✓ Healthy
- ✓ Ready to learn

### Systems & community conditions

build a strong foundation for young children

- Early learning access and quality
- Healthcare access and quality
- Early childhood adversity and trauma prevention
- Economic stability

## Approach

State policies and investments ensure that every child has a strong foundation while racism and other forms of discrimination are dismantled. The voices of Ohio parents and families are amplified and they are engaged in the policies and practices that impact their children.

## How can the *Early Childhood Dashboard* be used to advance equity and catalyze advocacy?

### Advance equity

by ensuring that every child lives to their full potential

### Catalyze advocacy

by prioritizing action on the issues that support health and readiness to learn for young children

### What can you do?

1. **Increase awareness** by sharing with others how the impacts of racism and other forms of discrimination disconnect some families from opportunities to thrive. Throughout the *Dashboard*, data on disparities in outcomes is highlighted with a .
2. **Target your focus** by allocating funding and other resources to meet the needs of young children who are most at risk for poor outcomes, listed on page 10. We can close gaps in outcomes by tailoring policies and investments to support systematically disadvantaged families and their young children.
3. **Evaluate** how policies, services, and programs are performing for young Ohioans and identify gaps in outcomes. See the data appendix at [GroundworkOhio.org/dashboard](https://GroundworkOhio.org/dashboard) for sources of disaggregated data.

1. **Engage and educate** policymakers and decision-makers. Data included throughout the *Dashboard* illustrates Ohio's strengths and gaps and can be shared to prioritize investment and policy change.
2. **Mobilize public and private partners** to strengthen the systems and community conditions that support young children, listed on page 18. There is a role for everyone to play in making Ohio the best place to be a young child.
3. **Include stories from Ohio families** as experts to inform, influence, and determine the needs of their children. Each section of the *Dashboard* includes insights, perspectives, and stories from Ohio families that can be used to inform the policymaking process.

## Why should we prioritize our youngest Ohioans?

Investments in early childhood not only benefit the well-being of children and their families, but also pay long-term dividends to the state and our economy. Our youngest children are our future workforce, parents, caregivers, and leaders. We can secure a strong future for Ohio by prioritizing the needs of our youngest Ohioans and the families that care for them.

While Ohio has made progress in fostering a landscape that supports young children and their families, there is still significant room for improvement. On the heels of an unprecedented pandemic that has had far-reaching, negative effects on the health and well-being of Ohio's youngest children and their families, it is more critical now than ever to lay a strong foundation for our babies, toddlers, and preschool-age children. Our priorities must be focused on ensuring that young children are healthy and ready to learn. Our future as a thriving state depends on it.

## What is so important about the first few years of life?

A child's environment, experiences, and relationships in the first few years of life can either support or limit their ability to thrive and contribute to society as an adult. In fact, a child's health begins with their parents' health, even before pregnancy.

Developmental and biological disruptions experienced in early childhood are particularly harmful. Challenges in these early years can weaken a child's immune system, alter brain architecture, and negatively affect health, learning, and behavioral outcomes later in life. These disruptions can be caused by adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and exposure to unstable, unsafe, and stressful environments. The good news is that these harms are often preventable and can be addressed by increasing investment in and supports for our youngest children and their families.

## Which young Ohioans are most at risk for experiencing poor outcomes?

Children in some families, particularly young children of color, with special needs, with low incomes, and/or who live in underserved communities, are starting at a disadvantage. These families face historical and structural obstacles, such as systemic racism and multi-generational poverty, which limit their ability to access necessary supports and develop the relationships needed for their children to thrive.

As a result, young children in families experiencing systemic disadvantage are more likely to experience poor health and educational outcomes compared to their peers. We can advance equity (when every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential) and eliminate disparities (gaps in outcomes) through intentional investments and policies tailored to meet the needs of families and their young children.

However, it is impossible to eliminate disparities without the ability to measure them. Investments are needed across public and private data systems to collect and disaggregate, or break out, data by social, economic, and demographic factors (outlined in the data challenges box). Monitoring disaggregated data on the performance of systems, policies, and programs across Ohio is vital to make improvements for babies and young children who face the highest risk of falling behind.

Additionally, it is vitally important that disaggregated data on important indicators of child health and well-being be shared publicly, so that partners across the state can work together to improve outcomes.

### Data challenges

Not all groups that experience poor outcomes are represented in existing and/or publicly available data. Reasons for this include:

- Data on race/ethnicity, income, geography, disability status, and other factors is often not collected or is collected inconsistently across data sources.
- Child survey data can be hindered by small sample sizes.
- Data may be collected or grouped in ways that mask disparities. For example, Asian Americans, as a group, tend to perform well on many indicators; however, existing data on southeast Asians and Bhutanese and Nepali refugees suggest that these communities experience poorer outcomes.

# Are Ohio's Young Children Achieving Positive Outcomes?

Outcomes related to young child health and education are closely linked, and both are vital to securing Ohio's future. Ensuring every young child in Ohio is healthy and ready to learn contributes to a prosperous and productive future and minimizes long-term healthcare, public assistance, and other costs.



## Navigating the data

The following pages will provide data from a variety of sources that measures important indicators of child health and well-being. Ohio's performance on these indicators is displayed in tables, like the one below.

Data from the most-recent year

Ohio's performance		Most recent	Trend	Ohio compared to U.S.
Topic	<b>Maternal health</b>			
Metric description	<b>Maternal mortality.</b> Number of deaths from causes related to pregnancy or its management, per 100,000 live births	23.8 (2019)	N/A	<b>Worse</b>
	<b>Maternal morbidity.</b> Number of severe maternal morbidity events per 10,000 delivery hospitalizations	71.9 (2019)	<b>No change</b>	N/A
	Asian, non-Hispanic mothers	<b>Moderate disparity</b> (most-recent year)		
	Black, non-Hispanic mothers	<b>Moderate disparity</b> (most-recent year)		
	Hispanic mothers	<b>Moderate disparity</b> (most-recent year)		
	<b>Postpartum depression.</b> Percent of women with a live birth who experienced postpartum depression	9.7% (2020)	<b>Worsened</b>	N/A

Levels of trend, or the degree of change over the past three years

Ohio's performance compared to the U.S. overall for the most recent year

Degree of disparity, which measures gaps in outcomes for groups that are systematically disadvantaged and experience worse outcomes compared to groups that most consistently experience the best outcomes