

Methodology

This brief offers new state-by-state estimates of racial and ethnic differences in the share of eligible children who participate in Head Start, Early Head Start, and CCDBG. To develop those estimates, we calculated participation rates by comparing the number participating, based on three-year estimates (2011-2013) of Head Start and CCDBG administrative data reported by grantees and state agencies, to the number eligible based on 2011-2013 data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS). We averaged the three years because multi-year averages of the data are necessary to obtain more reliable by-state estimates, especially for the smaller states.

Head Start analysis conducted for this brief was done using 2011-2013 Head Start participation averages from the annual Program Information Report (PIR) data. For each state, we totaled the number of children served in that state through local grantees and through the separate AIAN and Migrant Head Start programs (which are operated nationally, but data on children served is available by state). To estimate eligible children, we calculated the number of children in the relevant age range (three or four for Head Start preschool and birth through age two for Early Head Start) and living below the poverty level in the 2011-2013 ACS.

For the CCDBG analysis, we averaged 2011-2013 state administrative data on children served (reported monthly by states to the federal government) to determine the number of participants. To estimate eligible children, we calculated ACS estimates of the number of children under age 13 at or below 175 percent of poverty with both parents working if in a two-parent family or the only parent working if in a one-parent family. The median eligibility percentage was chosen for many reasons. Federal parameters (85 percent of state median income) far exceed the income eligibility of many states and thus would result in a much larger pool of eligible children, while state parameters are generally low across the board and would provide a pool of eligible children much too small to get at the substantially large pool of vulnerable children who need help.

This brief looks only at Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and AIAN populations. The Head Start and CCDBG administrative data report race and ethnicity separately. This prevented us from identifying White, non-Hispanic/Latino children, thus prohibiting us from conducting a valid analysis of access for White children. Further, due to the small sample size in the ACS, some race categories had too few children to analyze at the state level.

As mentioned above, children whose race was reported as White are not included in this estimate. This is because Head Start and CCDBG do not report data on children with race and ethnicity together. Given the high percentage of White, Hispanic/Latino children, data would be skewed if calculations were done based on race and ethnicity separately for this race category. In order to better analyze this in the future, CLASP has provided comments to the federal Office of Child Care regarding the way data is publicly presented and collected. In the 2015 Head Start Program Information Report, race and ethnicity data on children will be reported together for the first time, which will allow for more accurate understanding of the racial and ethnic makeup of the program.

For most races other than White, this data limitation does not interfere as much. Data analysis for the percentage of children who are Hispanic/Latino and a race other than White is much smaller. For Black children, we have estimated participation rates using both the ACS estimate for all Black children and for Black, non-Hispanic/Latino children; for consistency with the administrative data, we use the rate for all Blacks in the text, but we have footnoted the few states where the difference is substantial.

Additionally, for the races and ethnicities that were included in the analysis, some state-level calculations could not be completed due to small sample size in the ACS. This does not mean that there are no children in this race or ethnicity group in the state, nor does it mean that there are no children who attend child care and early education in this race or ethnicity group. It simply means that the numbers were too low for reliable estimates. The threshold for cutoff was based on having an adequate number of weighted children to ensure stability for analysis within the age and race group for the state.