

Study Shows Minority Children in Utah at a Big Disadvantage

by [Curtis Haring](#) • April 3, 2014



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A new study released by the Anne E. Casey Foundation on Tuesday says there is a wide disparity between minorities and Caucasian families within the Beehive State.

The study, "[Race for Results: Building a Path of Opportunity for All Children](#)" found that children of Asian, Pacific Islander, and in particular, Hispanic heritage fair far worse compared to national averages and among Caucasian and African-Americans.

The study examined over 200 data points, including test performance, graduation rates, household incomes below the poverty line, access to healthcare, infant mortality rate, and birth weight, before then assigning a final "score" to each race. If a population had perfect scores in all categories (meaning that the children were likely to succeed in every way), they would

receive a score of 1000. Conversely, if a population failed at every category (meaning the children have almost zero chance of success), that population would receive a score of 0.

In Utah, children of Caucasian (White) heritage received a score of 712, above the national average of 704. African American and Native American children scored 511 and 400, respectively. The children of Asian and Pacific Island heritage scored 627, well below the national average of 776. And children with Hispanic heritage—the largest minority population in Utah—scored only 370, far below the national average of 404.

The stark disparity between the racial groups both locally and nationally is a grim reminder that minority populations are still more likely to be at the lower end of the socioeconomic ladder compared to their White counterparts. Accordingly, they will be more likely to depend on public programs such as food stamps to survive.

In recent years, lawmakers have attempted to investigate the root causes of poverty. In 2012, Senator Stewart Reid (Republican – Ogden) successfully passed the Intergenerational Poverty Act, which tasked the Department of Workforce Services to monitor at-risk children and track poverty trends. From this, [the state discovered](#) that if a person receives public assistance as a child, they are more likely to receive assistance as an adult. Nearly 36,000 children who received public assistance as children between 1989 and 2008 are still receiving some similar service, and these now-adults have an expected 50,000 children enrolled in some sort of public assistance of their own.

Lawmakers from both sides of the aisle have debated how to end this cycle and provide more opportunities to close the achievement gap between children of different races. Republicans have tended to favor ideas such as mandatory drug testing in order to receive welfare benefits, while Democrats have argued that greater education opportunities are the key.

During the recently completed 2014 general session, Senator Reid successfully passed [SB 43](#), which is an expansion of the Intergenerational Poverty Act. That law will provide grants to schools that serve low-income households in an attempt to combat poverty and study what programs work best.

The \$5 million program is a small amount compared to the more than \$800 million the state spends on public assistance annually.