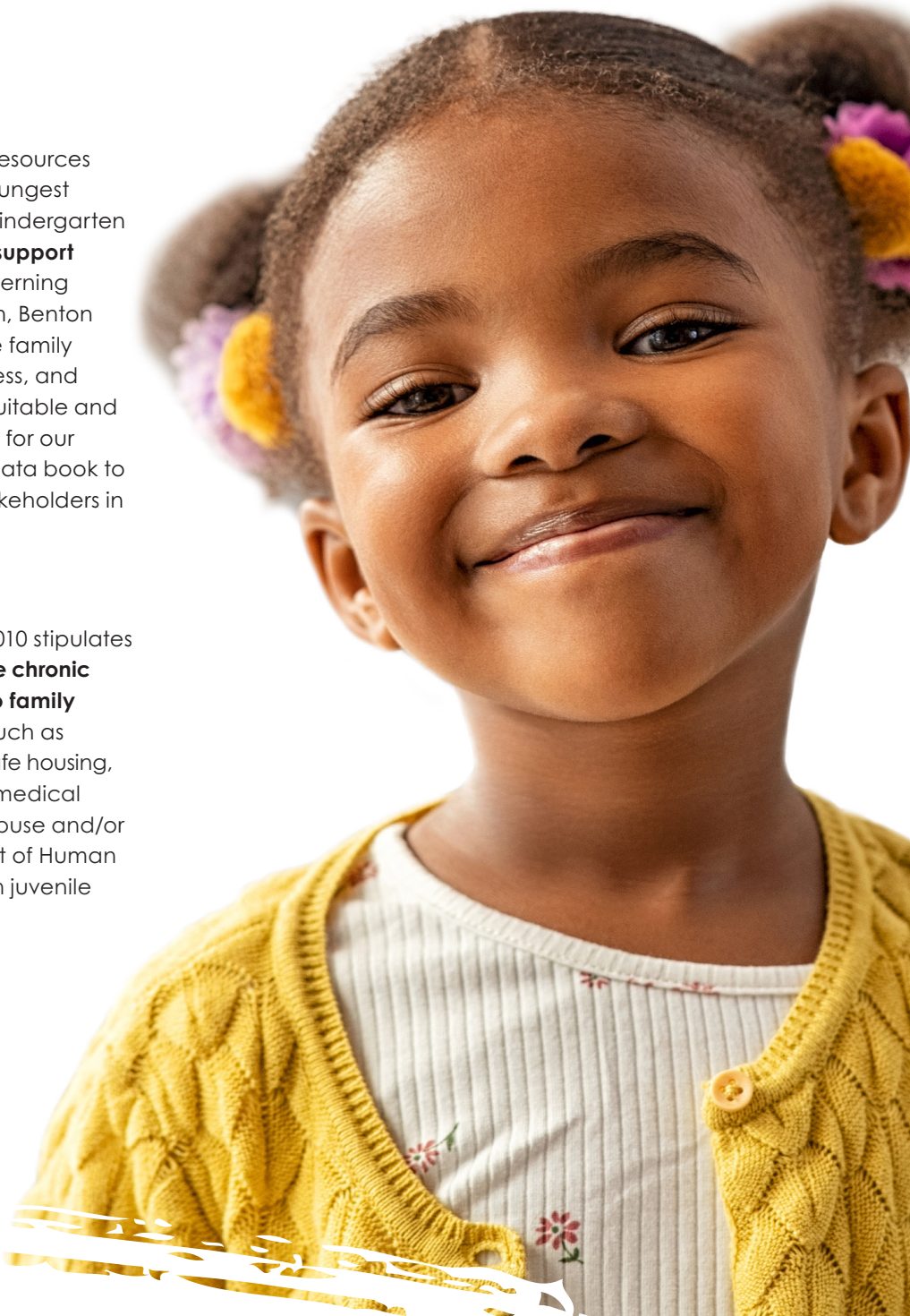


Executive Summary

# Regional Data Book

2023 EDITION





“High-quality, affordable early child care and education are vital to helping our children, families, and communities to thrive.”

## Our Charge

The Regional Data Book presents the resources and challenges facing our region's youngest children who are at risk of arriving at kindergarten unprepared. **This data will guide and support strategic decision-making** by the Governing Board of the Early Learning Hub of Linn, Benton & Lincoln Counties in order to increase family stability, improve kindergarten readiness, and ensure service coordination that is equitable and culturally and linguistically competent for our region. In addition, we designed this data book to assist our community partners and stakeholders in serving local children and families.

## Children at Risk

Oregon Revised Statute OAR 414-900-010 stipulates that **children who are at risk experience chronic and persistent opportunity gaps due to family circumstances beyond their control**, such as poverty, drug abuse in the home, unsafe housing, racism or ethnic discrimination, unmet medical needs, parental mental illness, child abuse and/or neglect, involvement with Department of Human Services (DHS), and families involved in juvenile and adult corrections.



## Social & Economic Factors

When children live in poverty, there is a high probability that they will not have stable housing, food security, or health insurance. There is also a higher chance that they will drop out of school and have lower overall earnings in life.

### The Poverty Line

27.8% of children under six years old (479) live under 100% Federal Poverty Level in Lincoln County, followed by 16.5% (1,466) in Linn County and 14.8% (932) in Benton County.

57.4% of children under six years old (1,156) live under 200% Federal Poverty Level in Lincoln County, followed by 46.6% (3,539) in Linn County and 29.1% (2,249) in Benton County.

**Families with young children are more inclined to live in poverty, especially single mothers with young children.** More than seven in 10 (77.5%) single mothers with young children in Benton County live in poverty, followed by 65% in Lincoln County and 45.6% in Linn County, all higher than the statewide rate (39.2%).

### Parental Employment

Families with young children (under six years) have lower percentages of all available parents in the labor force than families with older children (6 to 17 years).

Linn County (62.2%) has the highest percentage of families with children under six years where all parents are in the labor force, followed by Benton County (61.8%) and Lincoln County (61.7%).

### Rural Populations

Benton County (35.6%) has the highest percentage of young children living in rural areas, followed by Lincoln County (32.7%) and Linn County (15.9%) in our region.

**Rural communities face more disparities**, including higher poverty, unemployment, lack of transportation, limited access to healthcare, lower education levels, and reduced access to quality child care and education.

### Housing

Low-income households (less than \$35,000) are significantly more likely to be cost-burdened, with higher percentages in of cost-burden among households in Benton County.

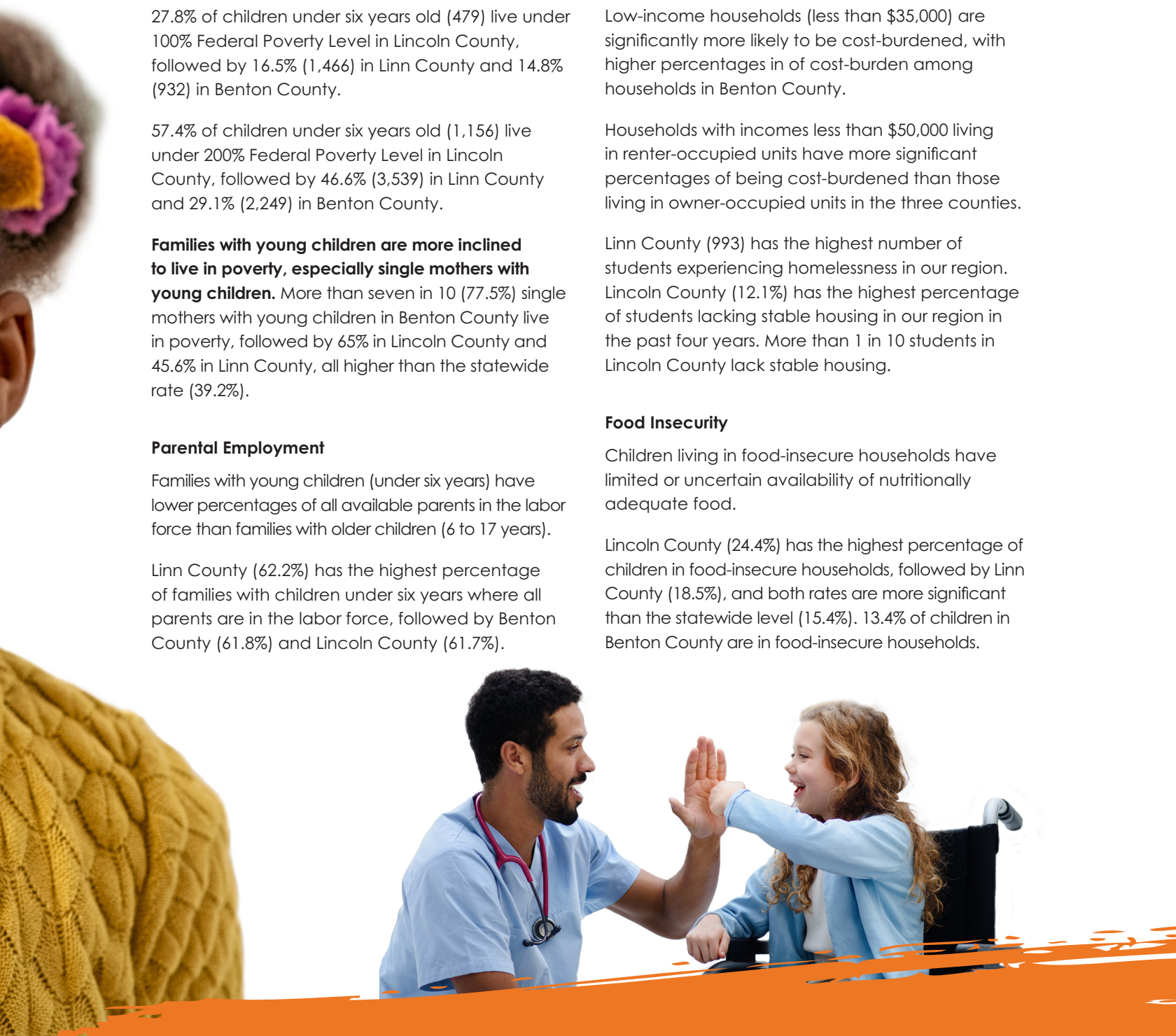
Households with incomes less than \$50,000 living in renter-occupied units have more significant percentages of being cost-burdened than those living in owner-occupied units in the three counties.

Linn County (993) has the highest number of students experiencing homelessness in our region. Lincoln County (12.1%) has the highest percentage of students lacking stable housing in our region in the past four years. More than 1 in 10 students in Lincoln County lack stable housing.

### Food Insecurity

Children living in food-insecure households have limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate food.

Lincoln County (24.4%) has the highest percentage of children in food-insecure households, followed by Linn County (18.5%), and both rates are more significant than the statewide level (15.4%). 13.4% of children in Benton County are in food-insecure households.



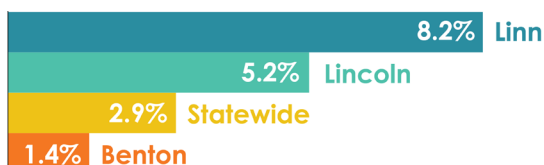
## Wellbeing

### Immunization

Two-year-old immunization rates have improved in our region but are still lower than the statewide rate (71%). Linn County (70%) had the highest immunization rate in 2021, followed by Lincoln County (69%) and Benton County (68%) in our region.

### Health Insurance

8.2% of young children (under 6 years) in Linn County are without health insurance in our region, followed by 5.2% in Lincoln County, and both rates are higher than the statewide rate (2.9%). Benton County has 1.4% of young children without health insurance.



The 2020 Oregon Student Health Survey found that **children and youths in our region are struggling with issues such as obesity, adverse childhood experiences, social and emotional health, and substance use**. It is important for families, schools, and communities to work together to provide support for these children and help them develop healthy coping skills.

### Abuse & Neglect

Lincoln County (16.2) had the highest victim rate per 1,000 children in 2021, followed by Linn County (16.1) and Benton County (13.6), and these rates were higher than the statewide rate (12.5).

In 2021, Linn County recorded the highest number of child abuse incidents at 663, with Benton County and Lincoln County following at 253 and 163 respectively. Notably, threats of harm and neglect were the most common factors contributing to these incidents.



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2023 Regional  
Data Book

## Child Care

### Availability

Our region is considered a "child care desert" where access to regulated child care is limited for all children, with the greatest need for child care slots for children ages 0 to 2 years. There are very few public slots from Regulated Programs for children 0 to 2 years in our region, with Lincoln County having no slots at all.

### Affordability

The median annual cost of toddler care in a child care center: \$9,420 in Linn County, which accounts for 39% of a full-time job pay with the minimum wage, \$14,828 in Benton County (60% of a full-time job pay with the minimum wage), and \$7,320 in Lincoln County (30% of a full-time job pay with the minimum wage).

### Teacher Salaries

The range of annual median early childcare teacher salary is \$25,480 to \$31,762 in Linn County, followed by \$25,480 to \$34,320 in Benton County and \$24,419 to \$45,750 in Lincoln County, which means **early child care teachers could be paid less than a full-time job with minimum wage** (\$28,080).

## Kindergarten Readiness

### Enrollment

The preschool enrollment rate is 21.8% (662 out of 3,042 children aged 3 to 4 years) in Linn County, much lower than the statewide rate (42.2%), 43.5% (592 out of 1,360) in Benton County, and 44.2% (356 out of 810) in Lincoln County.

Of the children enrolled in preschool, 53% are in public preschool in Linn County, 46.6% in Benton County, and 80.6% in Lincoln County.

Benton County (11%) has the lowest percentage of public slots for children 3 to 5 years from Regulated Programs, followed by Linn County (28%) in our region.