



## Young Children – Our City's Future

The number of young children is growing in the District of Columbia. Are DC neighborhoods ready for them? The first five years of cognitive and social development establish a foundation for a child's school achievement and success as an adult. With an expanding young child population in DC, now is the time to make sure our city and all of our neighborhoods are places for children to flourish in their first five years and beyond.

Data indicate that DC's young child (under age five) population is beginning to increase, and this population trend is likely to continue. The greatest numbers of young children currently live in Wards 4, 7 and 8. Meanwhile, neighborhoods in Wards 2, 3, 4 and 6 are experiencing the most growth in young children. In responding to this changing trend, the city must consider both where most children live now as well as where the young child population is growing and creating a higher demand for services.

In light of the recent surge in the population of young children, it is important to evaluate policies and investments with an eye toward meeting the current needs of our youngest citizens and as they grow up. Boosting opportunities for young children in every neighborhood means that they have the resources they need today, such as high quality child care, early care and education and access to pre-kindergarten slots. At the same time, we must plan for the future: we have an important window of time before today's infants and toddlers enroll in school, and the city must be ready for them.

### Box 1: Young Children on the Rise in DC, 2000 to 2011

**-8%** Decrease in total children (under age 18)

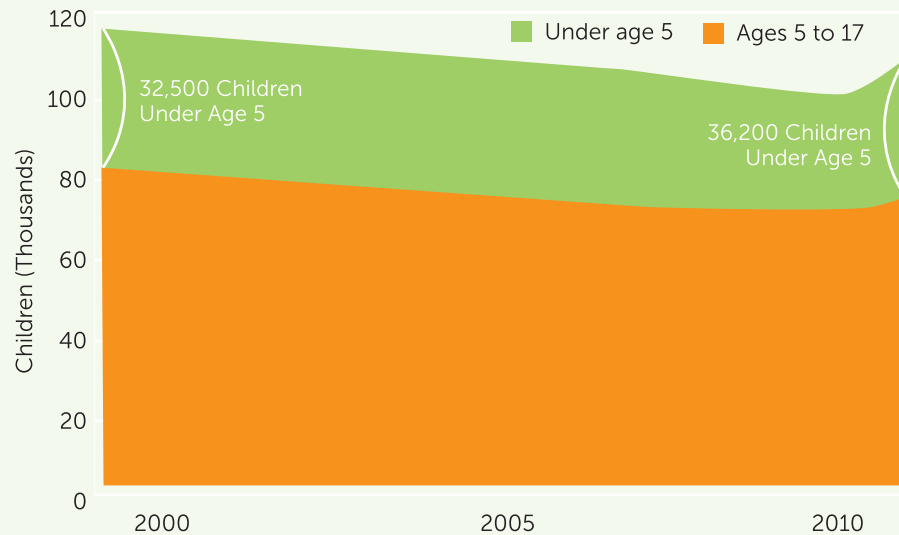
**+11%** Increase in young children (under age 5)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Decennial Census and 2011 Population Estimates.  
DC KIDS COUNT

*This data snapshot was written by Kate Kairys and supported by funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. For more information, please contact Kate Kairys, policy analyst, [kkairys@dckids.org](mailto:kkairys@dckids.org).*

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**Figure 1: Young Child (under 5) Population Rising in DC, While Entire Child Population Shrinks**



Source: U.S. Decennial Census, 2000 and 2010. Intercensal estimates from July 1 Population Estimates. DC KIDS COUNT

### Young Child Population Is Growing — Continued Increases Expected

While the total population of DC children under age 18 decreased over the past decade, the number of young children under age five has increased in recent years, a key finding of a 2011 DC KIDS COUNT data snapshot.<sup>1</sup> Figure 1 illustrates these trends. Today more than 36,000 children under age five are growing up across DC neighborhoods — playing on city playgrounds, attending child care centers and preparing for school in pre-kindergarten classes.<sup>2</sup> From 2000 to 2011, the number of children under age five increased by 11 percent. In contrast, the total child population under age 18 decreased by eight percent.<sup>3</sup>

Higher birth rates and an expanding overall city population suggest the recent increase in young children will continue. The number of children born to DC residents has increased steadily over the past decade, from 7,666 births in 2000 to 9,156 births in 2010.<sup>4</sup> DC's fertility rate — the number of births per 1,000 women ages 15 to 44 — has increased as well, though not as steadily. In 2000, the fertility rate was 53.3 but had risen to 56.4 by 2010.<sup>5</sup> The trend toward more births in DC is the opposite of the national decline in the fertility rate, which is largely due to a decrease in births to immigrant women that is linked to the recent recession.<sup>6</sup>

### Young Children by Neighborhood

The population density of young children varies across DC neighborhoods, as shown in Figure 2.<sup>7</sup> High density areas, where a large share of the resident population is under age five, span the city, from lower Southeast to upper Northwest. Neighborhoods with the greatest density of young children include Douglas, Shipley Terrace, Sheridan, Barry Farm, Buena Vista and Historic Anacostia. In these communities, young children make up 10 percent of residents.

Several Northeast neighborhoods also have high proportions of young children. Children under five are eight percent of all residents in Eastland Gardens, Kenilworth, Mayfair, Hillbrook, Mahaning Heights, Capitol View, Marshall Heights and Benning Heights. Northwest neighborhoods of Hawthorne, Barnaby Woods and Chevy Chase — where young children are nearly seven percent of all residents — are not far behind.

### Half of Young Children Live in Wards 4, 7 and 8 — But Not All Wards Are Growing

The largest numbers of DC's young children reside in the Southeastern and Northern parts of the city, with nearly half (49 percent) of these children living in Wards 4, 7 and 8. More than 6,500 young children — 20 percent of all DC children

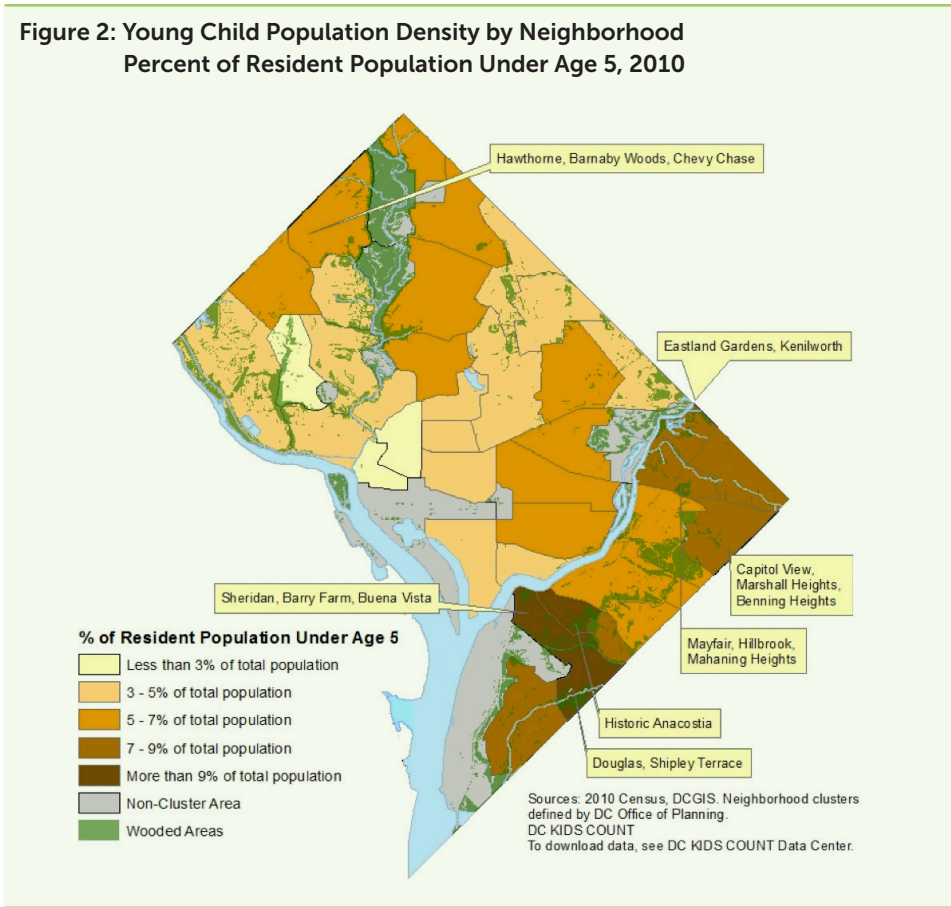
under five — live in Ward 8 alone.<sup>8</sup> As expected, the wards with the largest child populations also have the highest numbers of young children.

The recent upward trend in the young child population is uneven across DC wards, as shown in Figure 3.<sup>9</sup> From 2000 to 2010, the young child population in Wards 7 and 8 — still the highest in the city — dropped by four percent and 10 percent, respectively. Wards 1 and 5 also experienced a decrease. Despite these declines, the greatest numbers of young children still live in Wards 7 and 8. At the same time, the young child population grew in each of the remaining wards, including Ward 4, where nearly 5,000 young children live.

### The Influence of Demographic and Income Changes on the Young Child Population

Similar to many other changes in the District, the boom in the young child population is likely influenced by demographic and income shifts, including a record number of young adults who have moved to the area and stayed to raise families. The wards and neighborhoods with increasing numbers of children under five have seen median family income stay steady or rise dramatically over the past decade, and they have gained greater shares of

**Figure 2: Young Child Population Density by Neighborhood  
Percent of Resident Population Under Age 5, 2010**

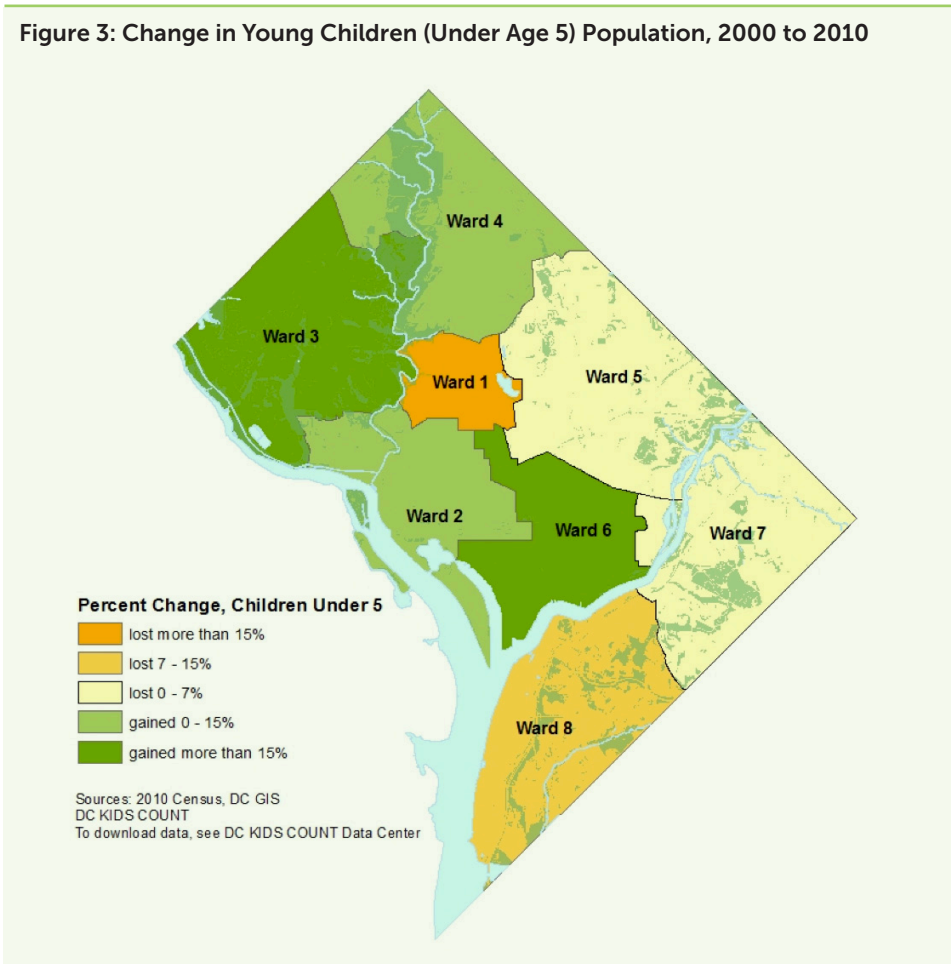


white residents.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, Wards 7 and 8, where the largest numbers of young children live, experienced a drop in median family income between 2000 and 2010.<sup>11</sup> Nearly all residents of these neighborhoods are black, and neighborhood demographics have changed less dramatically since 2000.

More than half (57 percent) of DC children under five are black, 28 percent are white and 14 percent are Hispanic.<sup>12</sup> Since 2000, the shares of white and Hispanic young children have increased, as well as children who are two or more races. Though white and Hispanic children now make up a larger portion of the young child population, the majority of young children in DC are black.

Migration within the city and out of DC is another factor in understanding the young child population growth trends, but available data add little to clarify the picture. Wards 2, 3, 4 and 6 are seeing the most growth in numbers of young children, but families may not remain in these neighborhoods as their children get older. Families with young children tend to move more frequently than other families. Recent data indicate that nearly 14 percent of children ages one to four moved from one DC residence to another in the past year, compared to 10 percent of both older children and the

**Figure 3: Change in Young Children (Under Age 5) Population, 2000 to 2010**



total population.<sup>13</sup> Tracking movement to neighboring jurisdictions is less exact, and current data are not robust enough to describe patterns for this age group. In 2009–2010 net migration to Maryland and Virginia was negative, with DC losing 3,500 more residents than it gained.<sup>14</sup>

### Implications of a Growing Young Child Population

How equipped is our city, and how ready is each of our neighborhoods, to support a burgeoning number of young children now and as they grow older? With rising birth rates, the need for maternal and child health services also increases. Toddlers and young children need places to play, their families require affordable child care options and, before long, they are ready to enroll in school.

Planning for our growing young child population requires that we assess DC neighborhoods and help to bolster assets and opportunities, such as quality schools, child care centers and play spaces. City-level planning across agencies is needed to ensure a strong school system, accessible health care services and economic opportunity for parents, including good jobs and work supports for parents of all income and education levels. Boosting these types of resources is also a way to keep families with young children in DC, because affordable housing, community resources and schools are critical considerations when making decisions about where to live.

To prepare all of our young children for healthy, productive lives, we must consider current need and future growth. It is imperative that we attend to where the young child population is increasing but also concentrate on the areas where the greatest numbers of young children currently live and where need for support for young children and their families is greatest. With a generation of children growing up ready to learn and succeed in life, our entire city will prosper.

## Box 2: Undercount of Young Children in the Census

Did you know that young children have a higher net undercount than any other age group in the Decennial Census? Nearly one million American children under age five were missed in the 2010 Census, which amounts to a net undercount rate of 4.6 percent. In DC, the estimated undercount was even higher, amounting to 16 percent, or approximately 5,000 children under age five.<sup>15</sup>

The Decennial Census is the basis for the Census Bureau's annual Population Estimates and has a multitude of uses across the country and in our city, from distributing federal funds to neighborhood-level planning. An analysis conducted by Dr. William O'Hare, senior consultant at the Annie E. Casey Foundation, describes the magnitude of the young child undercount, documents this persistent problem and points to possible reasons why young children are missed.<sup>16</sup> One possible explanation is the way data are collected: the Census form only has room for complete information on up to six household members, which may contribute to the youngest members being left out. Living situations also may contribute: young children are more likely to live in hard-to-count neighborhoods, where Census response rates are low. Young children are also more likely to live in larger, complex and more mobile families. Nationwide, young black and Hispanic children have the highest net undercount in the Census.

The high undercount of young children under five has a variety of implications, both nationally and in DC. If these children were included in population counts, statistics such as poverty rates might be even higher. Since population numbers are often a basis for allocating resources, the undercount affects funding available for programs that serve young children. In DC, the high net undercount for young children suggests that the number of young children may be even higher than the Census data indicate in this DC KIDS COUNT data snapshot. The young DC children who are missed by the Census are more likely to live in communities where poverty is higher and neighborhoods with more black and Hispanic residents.

1. DC Action for Children. (2011). A Tale of Three Cities: What the Census Says About the District and How We Must Respond.

2. U.S. Census Bureau. DC KIDS COUNT analysis of 2000 Decennial Census and Vintage 2011 Population Estimates.

3. Ibid.

4. DC Department of Health. (2010). Center for Policy, Planning, and Evaluation. 2010 Infant Mortality Report.

5. DC KIDS COUNT calculation based on DC Department of Health birth data and population counts from the 2000 and 2010 Decennial Census.

6. Livingston, G. and Cohn, D. (2012). US Birth Rate Falls to Record Low; Decline is Greatest Among Immigrants. Pew Center on Social and Demographic Change.

7. Because neighborhood clusters vary by size and population, mapping only the number of young children per neighborhood is insufficient. We examined the population of children under age five in each neighborhood, relative to the total neighborhood population.

8. U.S. Census Bureau. 2000 and 2010 Decennial Census.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. U.S. Census Bureau. 2000 Decennial Census and 2006-2010 American Community Survey.

12. U.S. Census Bureau. 2007-2011 American Community Survey.

13. Ibid.

14. DC Office of Planning. (2012). Domestic Migration Patterns in the District of Columbia 2009-2010.

15. O'Hare, W. (2013). "Comparison of 2010 Census Counts and Population Estimates for Young Children at the State and County Level." Paper presented at the Population Association of America Conference, April 11-13, New Orleans, LA.

16. O'Hare, W. (2009). Why Are Young Children Missed So Often in the Census? KIDS COUNT Working Paper. The Annie E. Casey Foundation.