



UNDER EMBARGO Until Monday, June 17 at 12:01 a.m. ET

Contact: Maria Mejia | mmejia@childrennow.org | (510) 763-2444 ext. 108

Despite areas of improvement, California ranks 35th nationally on children's well-being

State performs well in children's health (7th), but falls near the bottom (46th) for economic well-being

OAKLAND, California — While California may rank highly on economic growth and environmental protections, it is tough to be a kid here, according to the 30th edition of the *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The *2019 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* — the most comprehensive annual report on child well-being in the United States — notes measurable progress since the first *Data Book*, which was published in 1990. However, California ranks 35th nationally, compared with 36th last year.

Although the state has seen remarkable improvement in health with 97 percent of children now having health insurance coverage, soaring housing costs put many of California's children in economic jeopardy. At 43 percent, California had the highest rate of children in families that spent more than 30 percent of their income on housing in 2017. California also falls within the bottom 20 states on education (36th) and family and community (41th).

"California is one of the wealthiest states in the nation, and we have the resources to do better by our kids and hardworking families. As a state, we need to offer supports that both improve children's well-being and support our hardworking families, like affordable, quality child care. We need to ensure that our kids are receiving a rigorous education, with the supports and services they need to succeed," said Ted Lempert, president of Children Now. "California's ranking in health shows that when thoughtful policies are created and implemented, they can have a dramatic impact for our kids."

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* shows how essential accurate data are to sound policymaking. California is one of the most diverse states in the nation, with a little over 9 million kids from various backgrounds: 52 percent Latino, 28 percent white, 13 percent Asian or Pacific Islander and 6 percent Black. With an estimated undercount of 750,000 young Californians (0-5 years old) in the census, California has a lot to lose in federal funding support for programs and services to ensure that all young kids can thrive. The 2010 census missed 2.2 million young kids across the nation, and the upcoming count may miss even more if young children are not a priority. The stakes are high: 55 major federal programs, including Head Start and the Children's Health Insurance Program, allocate more than \$880 billion each year based on census data.

The annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* uses 16 indicators to rank each state across four domains — health, education, economic well-being and family and community — as an assessment of child well-being. California ranks:

- **46th in economic well-being.** Although the percent of California children living in households that spend more than a third of their income on housing has decreased over time, from 54 percent in 2010 to 43 percent in 2017, the state still remains at the very bottom of the ranks in the nation for this indicator. Supports like increased access to affordable, high-quality child care, can help to relieve some of the financial burden of raising kids in a high-cost state like California.
- **36th in education.** California has made modest improvements since 1990 in education outcomes for our kids. In 1992, 81 percent of fourth-graders were reading below proficiency; this percentage fell to 69 percent in 2017. Over that same time period, the percentage of eighth-graders who scored below proficient in math dropped from 88 percent in 1990 to 71 percent in 2017. Despite these gains, California needs to invest more in high-quality education so that students graduate from school ready for college, career and civic life.
- **seventh in health.** California has made tremendous improvement in making sure kids have health insurance, with 97 percent of all California kids covered today, thanks to the expansion of comprehensive Medi-Cal coverage to all income-eligible children regardless of immigration status. The state must continue its work to ensure every child is receiving health coverage.
- **41st in the family and community domain.** California ranks 50th in the nation in regard to the number of children whose head of the household lacks a high school diploma. In addition, California falls in the bottom 20 states on the number of children living in high-poverty areas with more than 1 million children living in impoverished areas.

The *2019 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* is the 30th edition of an annual data study that is based on U.S. Census and other publicly available data, representing all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

Release Information

The *2019 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available June 17 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at www.aecf.org/databook. Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs and rankings in stories about the *Data Book* can use the KIDS COUNT Data Center at datacenter.kidscount.org

About Children Now

[Children Now](http://www.childrennow.org) is a non-partisan, whole-child research, policy development and advocacy organization dedicated to promoting children's health and education in California. The organization also leads [The Children's Movement of California](http://www.childrensmovementofcalifornia.org), a network of more than 3,000 direct service, parent, civil rights, faith-based and community groups dedicated to improving children's well-being.

About the Annie E. Casey Foundation

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation's children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit www.aecf.org.

###