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## **Hawai'i children and youth fare poorly in educational, economic well-being**

*Hawai'i keiki also more likely to suffer from anxiety and depression than before the pandemic, Annie E. Casey Foundation finds*

HONOLULU, August 8, 2022 — The educational and economic well-being of Hawai'i's children and youth ranks in the lowest third of states, according to the *2022 KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, a 50-state report of recent household data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The *Data Book* also finds that children and youth in Hawai'i were more likely to have anxiety or depression during the first year of the pandemic than prior to it. Nearly 2,200 more keiki struggled with anxiety or depression in 2020 than in 2016, an increase of 23%.

Hawai'i ranks 22nd in overall children's well-being in the *Data Book*, which tracks 16 indicators in four categories. The state ranked 34th in economic well-being, 35th in education, fifth in health, and 15th in family and community context. The *Data Book* uses the latest available figures, some of which were collected before the pandemic.

"Years of public underinvestment in Hawai'i's keiki have led to these disturbing statistics, which should be a wake-up call to everyone who cares about the future of our state," said Deborah Zysman, executive director of Hawai'i Children's Action Network, Hawai'i's member of the KIDS COUNT network. "The upcoming election is a chance for voters to ask candidates how they're going to make the profound changes our keiki need and deserve."

While children and youth across the country have suffered trauma and loss due to the pandemic, Hawai'i's keiki have disproportionately felt the pandemic's economic effects, as the state has faced some of the highest unemployment rates in the nation.

Economic and housing instability often lead to anxiety and stress, undermining the mental health of children and youth. Children's advocates, including Hawai'i Children's Action Network and the University of Hawai'i Center on the Family, say these findings raise alarms and underscore the need for greater funding for mental health services, public education, and social programs that support children and families.

Hawai'i ranks in the bottom 10 states for several key measures, according to the *Data Book*:

- 72% of Hawai'i eighth-graders scored below proficient math levels, ranking 42nd in the nation.
- Approximately 5,000 teenagers between ages 16 and 19, or 9% of that population, didn't attend school or work — ranking the state 43rd.
- 111,000 children lived in families that spent more than 30% of their income on housing, which is considered a high cost burden. This equates to 37% of all children in the state, ranking Hawai'i 48th.

“Compared to other states, Hawaii ranks in the bottom third in the education domain,” said Ivette Rodriguez Stern, junior specialist at the University of Hawai'i Center on the Family. “Policymakers have recently made investments to expand access to early learning and to address the impact of the pandemic on learning loss, but there is still room for improvement, and these investments must continue in the years ahead so that we can provide this generation what they need to lead the state.”

One area in which Hawai'i fares particularly well is in children's health, according to the *Data Book*. The state has the second-lowest death rate for children and teenagers and the fourth-highest percentage of children with health insurance.

“We know what works for keiki: providing quality, universal early care and learning, enacting paid family and sick leave, adopting student-centered budgeting, and ensuring economic security for families,” said Zysman. “Next year, the Legislature will have the opportunity to pass these priorities, putting children and families first and closing long-standing racial disparities.”

#### **Release Information**

The 2022 *KIDS COUNT*® *Data Book* will be available on August 8 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). Additional information is available at [www.aecf.org/databook](http://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](http://datacenter.kidscount.org).

A dashboard of selected Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey data for Hawai'i between April 2020 and March 2021 is available at [www.hawaii-can.org/covid19\\_dashboard](http://www.hawaii-can.org/covid19_dashboard).

#### **About Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN)**

HCAN is a nonprofit creating a unified voice for Hawai'i's children. Its grassroots movement strives to ensure that all keiki are safe, healthy, and ready to learn. For more information, visit [hawaii-can.org](http://hawaii-can.org).

#### **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](http://www.aecf.org). KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.