



UNDER EMBARGO Until June 14, 2023 at 12:01 a.m. ET

Contact: Carter Ashforth, cashforth@childrennow.org, (510) 763-2444 x 108

California Ranks a Dismal 35th in Child Well-Being
National Data Highlights that Working Parents and Caregivers Struggled More than Almost Every Other State to Secure Child Care

Oakland, CA — California ranks 35th of all states in overall child well-being, according to the **2023 KIDS COUNT® Data Book**, a 50-state report of recent household data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation analyzing how children and families are faring. By issue area, California ranks 43rd of all states in children’s economic well-being, 36th in education, and 14th in children’s health.

One of the most glaring issues the data highlights is California’s child care crisis. The *Data Book* reports that in 2020-21, 15% of children birth to age 5 in California lived in families in which someone quit, changed, or refused a job because of problems with child care (worse than only Arizona, North Carolina, and Vermont). Additionally, women are five to eight times more likely than men to experience negative employment consequences related to caregiving. National data shows that families who are most likely to have to change jobs due to child care are Black or Latino, single moms, and/or below 200% of the federal poverty line.

“The majority of Californians can’t afford or access quality child care, which is disastrous for our working families and young children’s developing brains.” said Ted Lempert, president of Children Now, California’s member of the KIDS COUNT network. “Child care rate reform must be the number one budget priority for our state’s leaders this year.”

Lempert added that Children Now is coordinating a letter to the Governor and Legislature through the Children’s Movement of California that over 1,100 organizations have signed, demanding that the state increase child care rates by 25% this year and adopt an alternative cost-based model, goals both the Senate Democrat and Assembly have aligned with. “Every sector and workforce relies on child care, we must support and expand this sector for the benefit of the state as a whole and to ensure children have enriching opportunities during a vital time in their development.”

Each year, the *Data Book* presents national and state data from 16 indicators in four domains — economic well-being, education, health, and family and community factors — and ranks the states according to how children are faring overall. “California’s ranking of 35th in child well-being should be a loud wake-up call to our state leaders,” said Lempert. “While we lead the country in some areas, we can’t be a true national model if we’re not doing right by our kids and our collective future.”

California’s rankings broken down by issue area are as follows:

- **43rd in economic well-being:** The percentage of children living in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment worsened from 27% in 2019 to 32% in 2021.

- **36th in education:** 8th graders scoring below proficient in math worsened from 71% in 2019 to 77% in 2022. Over two-thirds of 4th graders continue to score below proficient in reading, with little change from 2019 to 2022.
- **14th in health:** California continues to increase health care accessibility, ranking 4th nationally for children without health insurance. But teen obesity is on the rise, jumping from 31% in 2018-19 to 35% in 2020-21.

###

RELEASE INFORMATION

The *2023 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at <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.aecf.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, education and well-being in California. The organization also leads [The Children's Movement of California](http://www.childrensmovement.org), a network of over 5,000 direct service, parent, youth, 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 young people 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 <http://www.aecf.org>. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

###