

THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

DEFINITIONS AND DATA SOURCES



2026 KIDS COUNT[®] DATA BOOK

STATE TRENDS IN CHILD WELL-BEING



DEFINITIONS

Domain scores for each state are the values between 0 and 1,000, based on the four key indicators within every domain. To construct these scores, the Foundation converted the state numerical values for the most recent year for each of the four key indicators within every domain into standard scores. The standard scores were calculated using this formula: $1,000 - [(Value - Minimum Value) / (Maximum Value - Minimum Value)] * 1,000$. The minimum value was set as the best state value for each indicator based on data from 2019 and the maximum value was set as the worst state value for each indicator based on data from 2019. The indicator scores were then averaged to produce a domain score for each state in each of the four domains. All measures were given the same weight in calculating the domain score. Lower values represent worse well-being for children, while higher values represent more positive well-being. Anchoring the scores to a fixed timepoint makes changes over time easier to see.

Overall score for each state also range from 0 to 1,000 and are based on all 16 key indicators across the four domains. Using the same standardization approach described above, each indicator score is calculated and then averaged to produce a single overall score for each state, with all measures equally weighted. As with domain scores, higher values indicate better outcomes for children, and the use of 2019 benchmarks allows for consistent tracking of progress over time.

Domain rank is based on the domain score. Casey ranked the states based on their domain score in sequential order from highest/best (1) to lowest/worst (50).

Overall rank is based on the overall score. The Foundation ranked the states based on their overall score in sequential order from highest/best (1) to lowest/worst (50).

Percentage change over time analysis was computed by comparing the most recent year's data for the 16 key indicators with the data for the base year. To calculate percentage change, the Foundation subtracted the rate for the most recent year from the rate for the base year and then divided that quantity by the rate for the base year. The results are multiplied by 100 for readability. The percentage change was calculated on rounded data, and the percentage-change figure has been rounded to the nearest whole number.



ECONOMIC WELL-BEING INDICATORS

Children in poverty is the percentage of children under age 18 who live in families with incomes below 100% of the U.S. poverty threshold, as defined each year by the U.S. Census Bureau. In 2024, a family of two adults and two children lived in poverty if the family's annual income fell below \$31,812. Poverty status is not determined for people living in group quarters (such as military barracks, prisons and other institutional settings) or for unrelated individuals under age 15 (such as children in foster care). The data are based on income received in the 12 months prior to the survey. *SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.*

Children whose parents lack secure employment is the share of all children under age 18 who live in families where no parent has regular, full-time, year-round employment. For children in single-parent families, this means the resident parent did not work at least 35 hours per week for at least 50 weeks in the 12 months prior to the survey. For children living in married-couple families, this means neither parent worked at least 35 hours per week for at least 50 weeks in the 12 months before the survey. Children who live with neither parent are also listed as not having secure parental employment because they are likely to be economically vulnerable. *SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.*

Children living in households with a high housing cost burden is the percentage of children under age 18 who live in households where more than 30% of monthly household pretax income is spent on housing-related expenses, including rent, mortgage payments, taxes and insurance. *SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.*

Teens not in school and not working is the percentage of teenagers between ages 16 and 19 who are not enrolled in school (full or part time) and not employed (full or part time). *SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.*



EDUCATION INDICATORS

Young children not in school is the percentage of children ages 3 and 4 who were not enrolled in school (e.g., nursery school, preschool or kindergarten) during the previous three months. *SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.*

Fourth graders not proficient in reading is the percentage of fourth grade public school students who did not reach the proficient level in reading as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. For this indicator, public schools include charter schools and exclude Bureau of Indian Education and Department of Defense Education Activity schools. *SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress.*

Eighth graders not proficient in math is the percentage of eighth grade public school students who did not reach the proficient level in math as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. For this indicator, public schools include charter schools and exclude Bureau of Indian Education and Department of Defense Education Activity schools. *SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress.*

High school students not graduating on time is the percentage of an entering freshman class not graduating in four years. The measure is derived from the adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR). The four-year ACGR is the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who form the adjusted cohort for the graduating class. Students who enter ninth grade for the first time form a cohort that is adjusted by adding any students who subsequently transfer into the cohort and subtracting any students who transfer out. Due to data collection issues during the COVID-19 pandemic, this indicator may not be comparable across time. *SOURCES: 2023–24: State estimates are from each state department of education’s official State Report Card. The national estimate was calculated using data provided by each state’s education agency and 12th grade enrollment data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data. 2018–19: National and state estimates are from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data.*



HEALTH INDICATORS

Low birth-weight babies is the percentage of live births weighing less than 5.5 pounds (2,500 grams). The data reflect the mother's place of residence, not the place where the birth occurred. *SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics.*

Children without health insurance is the percentage of children under age 19 not covered by any health insurance. The data are based on health insurance coverage at the time of the survey; interviews are conducted throughout the calendar year. *SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.*

Child and teen deaths per 100,000 is the number of deaths, from all causes, of children between ages 1 and 19 per 100,000 children in this age range. The data are reported by the place of residence, not the place where the death occurred. *SOURCES: **Death statistics:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics. **Population statistics:** U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates.*

Children and teens who are overweight or obese is the percentage of children and teens ages 10 to 17 with a Body Mass Index (BMI)-for-age at or above the 85th percentile. These data are based on a two-year average of survey responses. *SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, National Survey of Children's Health.*



FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INDICATORS

Children in single-parent families is the percentage of children under age 18 who live with their own unmarried parents. Children not living with a parent are excluded. In this definition, single-parent families include cohabiting couples. Children who live with married stepparents are not considered to be in a single-parent family. *SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.*

Children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma is the percentage of children under age 18 who live in households where the head of the household does not have a high school diploma or equivalent. *SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.*

Children living in high-poverty areas is the percentage of children under age 18 who live in census tracts where the poverty rates of the total population are 30% or more. In 2024, a family of two adults and two children lived in poverty if the family's annual income fell below \$31,812. The data are based on income received in the 12 months prior to the survey. *SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.*

Teen births per 1,000 is the number of births to teenagers ages 15 to 19 per 1,000 females in this age group. Data reflect the mother's place of residence, not the place where the birth occurred. *SOURCES: Birth statistics: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics. Population statistics: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates.*