



THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

2024 KIDS COUNT[®] DATA BOOK

STATE TRENDS IN CHILD WELL-BEING



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In addition, the KIDS COUNT Network — with members representing every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands (see pages 48–49) — is instrumental in making the *Data Book* available to national, state and local leaders across the country.



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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

FROM LISA M. HAMILTON

President and Chief Executive Officer
The Annie E. Casey Foundation



The COVID-19 pandemic wrought serious academic damage as it closed schools and separated students from their physical learning environment. Unprecedented drops in fourth grade reading and eighth grade math proficiency among students in the United States between 2019 and 2022 amounted to decades of lost progress.¹ But for educators, researchers, policymakers and employers who have been tracking students' academic readiness, alarm bells have been sounding for a long time. It's past time not only to listen but to act.

While other nations have made robust gains, U.S. scores in reading and math have barely budged in decades. Many of today's fastest-growing occupations require high-level reading, math and digital problem-solving skills that we are not ensuring our children possess.² Today's kids will become this country's mid-21st century workforce — and we as a nation have failed to prepare them:

- Only **32% of fourth graders** were at or above proficient in **reading** in 2022, a share that is better than it was at the turn of the 21st century (28%) but two percentage points worse than it was immediately before the pandemic (34% in 2019).³
- Just **26% of eighth graders** were at or above proficient in **math**, only slightly better than in 2000 (25%) and much worse than before the pandemic (33%).⁴

This 35th *KIDS COUNT Data Book* is about ensuring kids have what they need to be ready to learn — because by the time these children reach the workforce, they must be ready to earn in a highly competitive global economy. Up to \$31 *trillion* in U.S. economic activity hinges on helping children complete learning that was delayed by the pandemic, according to one estimate.⁵ Nevertheless, some states have delayed spending critical funding that could help boost achievement.⁶

Innovation in instruction and assessment will be essential to ensuring children meet educational milestones, as will recruiting and retaining⁷ excellent teachers. However, we must bring to the table a thorough understanding that children's academic success depends on more than what happens in the classroom. And we must bring a sense of urgency. Tens of billions of dollars in federal pandemic relief funding already allocated to schools will vanish forever if states do not act immediately. We all want children to have the opportunity to fulfill their individual potential. We also need them to succeed if our country and our economy are to remain strong into the future.

How Did COVID-19 Affect Education? Post-Pandemic Test Scores in Context

Research has documented the critical importance of fourth grade reading proficiency and eighth grade math proficiency to later success, which is why they are two of the 16 indicators that make up the KIDS COUNT index (see page 14). By fourth grade, mastery of reading becomes key to keeping up in every subject. Children who are not proficient readers by this time are less likely to finish high school, enroll in college or keep pace with the earnings of their peers.⁸

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), known as the nation's report card, has measured student achievement since 1969 in every state in reading, mathematics, science, the arts, history and other subjects.⁹ The most recent data, from 2022, show far too few children have the literacy and numeracy skills that would equip them to thrive as independent adults and productive workers.

The overall averages mask wide and persistent disparities among different populations (see Table 1). Fourth grade reading proficiency rates in 2022 were 16% for Black children, 18% for American Indian or Alaska Native kids and 20% for Latino students, all below the national average of 32%. Only one in four fourth graders attending higher-poverty schools (26%) and one in five eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch (19%) were reading at or above proficient. Only one in 10 English-language learners in fourth grade (10%) read at or above proficient in 2022, and just 4% of English-language

learners in eighth grade were at or above proficient in math — about one student in a typical classroom.

To be clear, children are more than test scores. Simplifying the potential of any child, any person, to a scaled score on a standardized assessment is something we must not do. Neither should we gauge the effectiveness of teachers or schools solely by test scores. Rather, these scores, like the other indicators in this *Data Book*, are tools we can use to understand what kids need and which disparities require targeted interventions.

TABLE 1

Percentage of Fourth Graders at or Above Proficient in Reading and Eighth Graders at or Above Proficient in Math (2000, 2019 and 2022)

POPULATION	FOURTH GRADE READING			EIGHTH GRADE MATH		
	2000	2019	2022	2000	2019	2022
Race and Ethnicity						
TOTAL	28%	34%	32%	25%	33%	26%
American Indian or Alaska Native	S	20%	18%	13%	15%	11%
Asian American and Pacific Islander	39%	55%	55%	40%	61%	56%
Black	9%	18%	16%	5%	13%	9%
Latino	12%	23%	20%	8%	19%	14%
White	36%	44%	41%	33%	43%	34%
Two or More Races	N.A.	40%	37%	N.A.	36%	27%
Immigration Status Proxy						
English Language Learner	3%	9%	10%	2%	5%	4%
Family Income and Title I Schools						
Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price School Lunch	13%	21%	19%	10%	18%	13%
Attending Title I School	22%	28%	26%	18%	25%	19%
Gender						
Male	24%	31%	30%	26%	33%	27%
Female	32%	37%	34%	23%	33%	24%

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2000, 2019 and 2022. S: Reporting standards not met. N.A.: Not available.

Will Today's Students Be Ready to Earn?

Learning is part of the full human experience we all want children to enjoy as their lives progress. It is intrinsically important to human development. It also is vital so that young adults can graduate from high school, secure decent jobs and contribute to their community and the economy. The latest NAEP results and other indicators tell us that today's young learners will face obstacles reaching key milestones, and they are also an early warning that our country's future workforce could lack the skills needed to sustain a healthy economy.

The Casey Foundation has been calling attention to fourth grade reading proficiency for years and in 2010 published *Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters*.¹⁰ Much research since has confirmed its importance.¹¹ The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, launched in connection with the report, continues to engage a national network of local and regional efforts — more than 350 communities — to reverse this troubling trend.¹²

Mathematics is no less important, and what little progress had been made over several decades was erased by the pandemic.¹³ One study showed students who never advanced beyond lower levels of math were 50% more likely to be unemployed after high school.¹⁴ An analysis conducted for the National Bureau of Economic Research calculated that the drop in math scores between 2019 and 2022 would reduce lifetime earnings by 1.6% for a total of \$900 billion of lost income for 48 million pandemic-era students.¹⁵

Math proficiency will be more vital than ever for the mid-21st century workforce, and not just for students who pursue higher education

in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). In 2021, 19.3 million people held jobs in health care, trades and other fields that did not require a bachelor's degree but did require STEM skills.¹⁶ Another 17.5 million workers holding a bachelor's degree or higher brought the total STEM workforce to 36.8 million, or nearly a quarter of the total U.S. workforce (24%).¹⁷ Jobs that pay well in fields that are growing quickly — positions such as software developers, data scientists and industrial machinery mechanics — will be open to math-proficient jobseekers.¹⁸ Not all of these careers require advanced degrees or even a bachelor's degree, but they do require skills that too few students in America are acquiring.

Just as underprepared workers are less competitive within our economy, an underprepared workforce makes America less competitive in the global economy. The United States lags many of its peer nations, according to the first post-pandemic results of the Program for International Student Assessment.¹⁹ Although U.S. students scored above average among developed economies in reading and science in 2022, math is a different story. Twenty-three countries' math scores were significantly above the average for developed economies, but the United States was not one of them. Hungary and Vietnam had higher mean scores.²⁰

Persistent disparities further damage both individual prospects and the economy as a whole — at an enormous scale.²¹ A study for the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco determined that the U.S. gross domestic product would have been \$540 billion larger in 2019 if racial, ethnic and gender disparities in educational attainment had been eliminated for the previous three decades.²²



Learning and the Key Roles of Poverty, Health, Absence and Trauma

Too few children are emerging from our high schools ready to earn, in large part because they are not arriving at the schoolhouse door ready to learn. Learning readiness entails much more than preparing a child to begin primary school at kindergarten, although the early years are particularly important.²³ To meet educational milestones, kids of all ages and grades must have what they need to learn each day, from enough food and sleep to a safe way to get to school to support such as tutoring and mental health services.

The KIDS COUNT index is meant to provide a broad assessment of overall child well-being, highlighting some of the health, economic, family and community indicators that can support or interfere with learning. Since the first *Data Book* in 1990, learning readiness has been one of its cornerstone concepts. The share of young children not in school is an indicator because kids who attend

high-quality preschool enjoy improved academic performance as they move through elementary school.²⁴ We keep tabs on health indicators — low birth-weight babies and health insurance — because infants born at a healthy birth weight are less likely to experience developmental problems²⁵ and because insured kids are more likely to avoid mental health challenges, eating disorders, obesity, risky sexual activity, smoking, drinking and marijuana use later.²⁶ (See pages 14–15 for national data on these indicators and pages 38–41 for these figures in the states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico as available.) Each of these problems has, in turn, been shown to affect academic performance.²⁷

Decades of research confirm that growing up in poverty directly affects learning, and more *Data Book* indicators are aimed at contextualizing these effects than any other dynamic. The percentages of children who live in poverty²⁸ or in high-poverty neighborhoods;²⁹ single-parent households;³⁰ and households whose heads lack a high school diploma³¹ each predict worse outcomes that negatively affect well-being beyond test scores, including higher dropout rates.³²

These and other root causes and contributing factors have kept U.S. students from higher achievement for decades. This letter also calls attention to national and state-by-state data tied to two other factors not directly accounted for by the KIDS COUNT index: chronic absence and adverse childhood experiences.

Chronic absence. *Children cannot learn if they don't attend school.* In 2021–22, 30% of all students (14.7 million students) were chronically absent,³³ meaning 10% or more days were missed in the academic year. This share was substantially higher than in 2018–19, the final school year fully unaffected by the pandemic, when it stood at 16%

(8.2 million students). This more than 80% increase almost certainly contributes to part of the drop in NAEP scores, according to the U.S. Department of Education.³⁴ The negative effects of this challenge are far-reaching given that two-thirds of all U.S. students attended schools plagued by chronic absence.³⁵

Many underlying causes of chronic absence long predate the pandemic; these include housing insecurity,³⁶ poverty,³⁷ unmet basic needs, health issues and student disengagement.³⁸ However, early research indicates that the pandemic both exacerbated existing attendance challenges and introduced new ones: rising anxiety and other mental health issues,³⁹ as well as sensitivity among schools, parents and children about students going to school with symptoms of illness.⁴⁰ In addition, illness-related attendance policies have been ever-evolving since the pandemic, reflecting new concerns about health and confusion about the rules.⁴¹

Disparities point to additional barriers. Children of color are more likely to be chronically

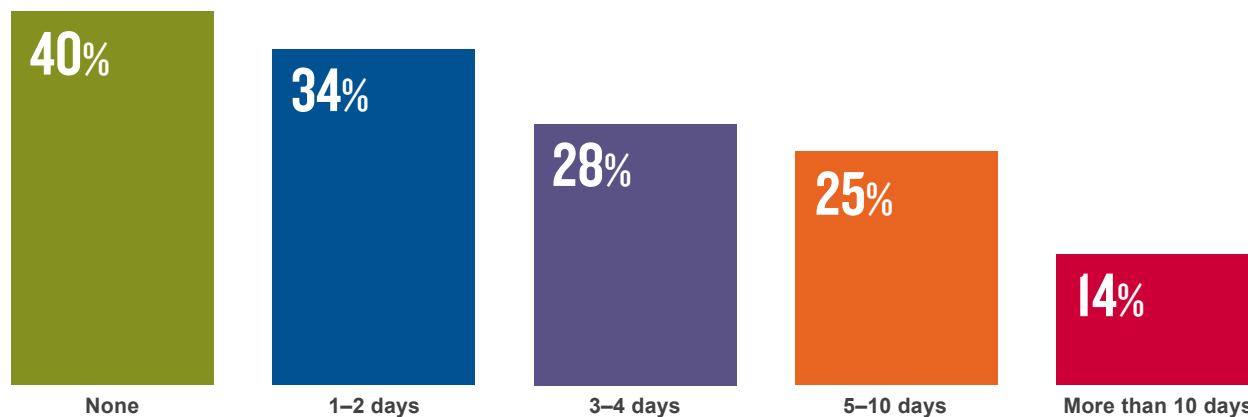
absent and more likely to be reported as absent without an excuse, and school districts with fewer resources have higher absentee rates.⁴² Pandemic-era data indicate that higher-poverty school districts have seen more chronic absence.⁴³

Chronically absent students have lower test scores; Figure 1 shows the correlation in the latest NAEP. There is also a spillover effect: Students in high-absence classrooms are more likely to have lower test scores as teachers are slowed by a perpetual cycle of catching students up.⁴⁴ And the consequences of chronic absence go beyond academic performance. A study tracking Rhode Island kindergartners through their next seven years found chronically absent children were not only twice as likely to have to repeat a grade, but also more than twice as likely to be suspended.⁴⁵

While chronic absence is a significant contributor to declining academic success, other conditions that point to instability in a child’s life are hindering young learners.

FIGURE 1

Percentage of Fourth Grade Students Scoring at or Above Proficient in Reading, by Days Absent From School in the Last Month (2022)



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2022.

Adverse childhood experiences.

Children may not come to school ready to learn, or come to school at all, if they are experiencing instability. According to the National Survey of Children’s Health, in 2021–22, roughly two in five children (40%) had undergone an adverse childhood experience (ACE).⁴⁶ These experiences included family economic hardship; a child’s parents having divorced, separated, served time in jail or died; witnessing domestic violence; experiencing neighborhood violence; living with someone with a mental illness or substance use problem; and being treated unfairly due to race or ethnicity.⁴⁷ Given the complex, often interrelated nature of these issues, one in six adults (17%) reports having experienced four or more ACEs.⁴⁸

Although ACEs can be defined slightly differently by different agencies and researchers, we know that each such traumatic experience can have ripple effects in a child’s life,⁴⁹ and studies indicate that this directly affects academic performance. One study found ACEs predicted repeating a grade and not caring about doing well in school.⁵⁰ Other research has shown a correlation between ACEs and worse sleep, emotional and behavioral issues, and math and reading performance below grade level.⁵¹ Finally, a 2022 study found children with ACEs in their backgrounds were more likely to be chronically absent even when the study controlled for socioeconomic conditions.⁵² In other words, even when resources are not the issue, the effects of trauma are keeping many kids away from — or distracted in — the classroom.

The stakes are high to make sure children have safe, stable and nurturing environments for growing and learning.

Sources: Adverse Childhood Experiences: Population Reference Bureau analysis of data from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Survey of Children’s Health; Chronic Absence: Attendance Works analysis of data from U.S. Department of Education, ED Data Express. Data for Puerto Rico not available.

TABLE 2

Key Challenges Children Face That Impact School Success

Location	Experienced One or More Adverse Childhood Experiences (2021–22)	Were Chronically Absent (2021–22)
United States	40%	30%
Alabama	46%	22%
Alaska	42%	46%
Arizona	43%	46%
Arkansas	47%	26%
California	34%	33%
Colorado	39%	36%
Connecticut	39%	22%
Delaware	43%	27%
District of Columbia	40%	44%
Florida	43%	35%
Georgia	42%	27%
Hawaii	37%	39%
Idaho	41%	4%
Illinois	37%	32%
Indiana	41%	25%
Iowa	38%	26%
Kansas	40%	27%
Kentucky	47%	25%
Louisiana	47%	18%
Maine	43%	31%
Maryland	38%	33%
Massachusetts	33%	28%
Michigan	42%	40%
Minnesota	34%	32%
Mississippi	50%	31%
Missouri	43%	20%
Montana	48%	41%
Nebraska	36%	23%
Nevada	44%	40%
New Hampshire	37%	33%
New Jersey	33%	17%
New Mexico	50%	41%
New York	38%	37%
North Carolina	43%	33%
North Dakota	38%	22%
Ohio	40%	34%
Oklahoma	49%	23%
Oregon	40%	42%
Pennsylvania	38%	26%
Rhode Island	38%	38%
South Carolina	43%	27%
South Dakota	40%	23%
Tennessee	44%	23%
Texas	42%	28%
Utah	36%	28%
Vermont	41%	34%
Virginia	36%	20%
Washington	37%	18%
West Virginia	45%	35%
Wisconsin	37%	26%
Wyoming	44%	37%



Solutions and Priorities

We know from research what all kids need to thrive: permanent relationships with caring adults; access to essentials such as food, mental and physical health care and stable housing; and a sense of safety and belonging in their communities. Here are some of the considerations and strategies we must embrace to make sure children have these things as they pursue academic success after the pandemic:

- The pandemic separated students not merely from their school buildings but also from access to low- or no-cost meals, a reliable internet connection, a place to study and time with friends, teachers and counselors. To get kids back on track, we must **ensure these essential resources are in place.**
- Copious research has also documented the toll the pandemic took on children’s mental health in the United States.⁵³ The *2022 KIDS COUNT Data Book* focused on mental health and urged policymakers to act on our recommendations by **prioritizing access to mental health care that accounts for young people’s different experiences and identities.**⁵⁴
- Of course, educators are also exploring improvements inside the classroom. Some states and schools have adopted a “science of reading” approach that emphasizes phonics.⁵⁵ A culture of **pursuing evidence-based solutions, testing different methods and sustaining efforts over multiple years** will improve curriculum and instruction, especially if teacher recruitment and retention are taken seriously.
- **Access to intensive tutoring** is important for students who are behind in their classes and missing academic milestones. Research has shown the most effective tutoring is in person, high dosage⁵⁶ and tied directly to the school to ensure that the extra instruction is tightly aligned with the curriculum and the tutor receives proper training and support.⁵⁷



One way to accomplish many of these remediation strategies is through community schools. Community schools, which are public schools that not only focus on academics but also provide wraparound support to kids and families, are natural homes for tutoring, mental health support, nutritional aid and other services. Research on community schools in Baltimore found they helped meet families' basic needs and grew trusted relationships during the COVID-19 period.⁵⁸ These schools encourage innovation and creativity in designing programs to support young learners.⁵⁹ They also foster parent engagement, which in turn has been shown to lead to better outcomes for kids.⁶⁰ Stronger

parent-school-community partnerships can yield benefits even before a child enrolls in school — for example, by increasing access to early developmental screenings.⁶¹

An important funding source that could jump-start new initiatives or sustain existing endeavors is about to expire. Time is short: Consider that the fourth and eighth graders whose test scores are the subject of this letter are already finishing sixth and tenth grades as this *Data Book* is published. By Sept. 30, 2024, states must draw down funding from the \$190 billion federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) program authorized by several pandemic-era relief bills.⁶²

The Annie E. Casey Foundation encourages policymakers, school leaders and educators to take action:

States should take advantage of all their allocated ESSER funding. As long as funds are obligated by the Sept. 30 deadline, states should have two more full years to spend if an extension is granted.⁶³ More than \$44 billion remained unspent in April 2024.⁶⁴ States are using these funds to prioritize the social, emotional and physical well-being of students. At least 16 states, for instance, have launched tutoring programs, from a new program in Louisiana that will serve eight school districts to a math-specific tutoring corps in Maryland to a \$140 million statewide initiative in Tennessee.⁶⁵

States should bolster services and resources that equip kids to learn. Whether with ESSER or other funds, states must answer the moment by investing in student readiness and opportunities for those who are behind. For example, New Mexico incentivized extending instructional time in 2023 by providing additional funding to districts that adopted longer school calendars.⁶⁶ States can tap Medicaid funding to provide crucial physical and mental health services at schools.⁶⁷

Policymakers should invest more in community schools. These schools have demonstrated their effectiveness in providing wraparound services for kids and families and serving high-poverty, low-opportunity neighborhoods.⁶⁸ Schools should create supportive environments that address children's history with traumatic experiences.⁶⁹ During the pandemic, community school coordinators proved adept at grasping neighborhoods' needs, then connecting families to vital resources, from emergency food pantries to child care.⁷⁰

States and school systems should address chronic absence so more students return to learn. While few states gather and report chronic absence data by grade, all of them should.⁷¹ Improving attendance tracking and data will inform future decision-making.⁷² Lawmakers should embrace positive approaches rather than labeling students or parents as criminals due to attendance challenges because parents may not understand the consequences of even a few days missed.⁷³ Richmond Public Schools in Virginia saw increased student attendance and engagement as a result of the district's comprehensive efforts to build trust with families to address barriers illuminated by attendance trends.⁷⁴ Family support teams, extra resources for high-need schools and even a chatbot designed to answer common questions about transportation and other issues enabled the district to reduce its chronic absence.⁷⁵

These are just a handful of steps we hope leaders will take to position the next generation to succeed, both in the classroom and eventually in the workforce. Yet we know from 35 years of publishing the *KIDS COUNT Data Book* that much more is needed to ensure children realize their full potential, no matter their family income, race or ethnicity, ZIP code or family of origin.

COVID-19 laid bare the many ways our nation has not positioned children to achieve. Test scores for decades predating the pandemic show that not a single state was doing as well as it should by its young scholars. We must do more to help kids overcome the setbacks that affect their learning. This moment brings not only an opportunity but an imperative to do better. The future of millions of young people and the enduring strength of the American economy are at stake. ■

TRENDS IN CHILD WELL-BEING



Since 1990, the Casey Foundation has ranked states annually on overall child well-being using a selection of indicators.

Called the KIDS COUNT index, these indicators capture what children and youth need most to thrive in four domains: (1) Economic Well-Being, (2) Education, (3) Health and (4) Family and Community. Each domain has four indicators, for a total of 16. These indicators represent the best available data to measure the status of child well-being at the state and national levels. For a more thorough description of the KIDS COUNT index, visit www.aecf.org/resources/the-new-kids-count-index.

This year's *Data Book* presents a picture of child well-being as the nation recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic. Comparisons are made between 2019 and 2022 where possible. The latest data on the well-being of kids, youth and families can be found in the KIDS COUNT Data Center at datacenter.aecf.org.

National Trends in Child Well-Being

Most of the new data in this report are from 2022, which marked the third year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Illness was less severe and deadly, cases were on the decline and restrictions started to be lifted. Life began to regain a sense of normalcy.⁷⁶ Data collected between 2019 and 2022 reveal the impact the pandemic had on children, families and communities and provide a glimpse of the recovery the nation witnessed and continues to experience.

During this time, six of the indicators tracked in the *2024 Data Book* worsened, while four stayed the same and five saw improvement (see pages 14–15). Comparison data were not available for the child obesity indicator. The most recent data available show that many of the negative trends seen between 2019 and 2021 stalled or reversed in 2022. The child poverty rate improved and economic security of parents increased back to pre-pandemic levels. At the same time, educational achievement was hit hard and the spike seen between 2019 and 2021 in the child and teen death rate remains. As the nation recovered, there were fewer children living in poverty and more children insured — outcomes that demonstrate the impact policy has on child well-being.

During the pandemic recovery, Economic Well-Being indicators began to move in the right direction. Since 2019, one of the Economic Well-Being indicators worsened, one improved and two saw no change. Notably, the child poverty rate improved, while parental employment stabilized between 2019 and 2022. Policies such as the child tax credit helped families cover basic needs. This coupled with historic job opportunities⁷⁷ kept poverty in check and improved economic well-being of families across the country.

Meanwhile, three of the four Education indicators worsened. The pandemic led to the largest decline in fourth grade reading and eighth grade math proficiency that the nation has seen. In 2022, 74% of eighth graders were not proficient in math, the worst figure in the last two decades. More young children did not attend school, and the steady improvement seen in the percentage of high school students graduating on time prior to the pandemic stalled.

TABLE 3: NATIONAL TRENDS

16 Key Indicators of Child Well-Being by Domain

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

Children in poverty US 11,583,000	17% <small>2019</small>	16% <small>2022</small>	↓ BETTER
Children whose parents lack secure employment US 18,635,000	26% <small>2019</small>	26% <small>2022</small>	= SAME
Children living in households with a high housing cost burden US 21,807,000	30% <small>2019</small>	30% <small>2022</small>	= SAME
Teens not in school and not working US 1,149,000	6% <small>2019</small>	7% <small>2022</small>	↑ WORSE

EDUCATION

Young children (ages 3 and 4) not in school US 4,328,000	52% <small>2013-17</small>	54% <small>2018-22</small>	↑ WORSE
Fourth graders not proficient in reading US N.A.	66% <small>2019</small>	68% <small>2022</small>	↑ WORSE
Eighth graders not proficient in math US N.A.	67% <small>2019</small>	74% <small>2022</small>	↑ WORSE
High school students not graduating on time* US N.A.	14% <small>2018-19</small>	14% <small>2020-21</small>	= SAME

*Graduation data may not be comparable across time due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The national average for 2020–21 was calculated using imputed data for Illinois and Washington.

N.A.: Not available

HEALTH

Low birth-weight babies US 315,288	8.3% <small>2019</small>	8.6% <small>2022</small>	↑ WORSE
Children without health insurance US 3,932,000	6% <small>2019</small>	5% <small>2022</small>	↓ BETTER
Child and teen deaths per 100,000 US 23,140	25 <small>2019</small>	30 <small>2022</small>	↑ WORSE
Children and teens (ages 10 to 17) who are overweight or obese** US N.A.	N.A. <small>N.A.</small>	33% <small>2021-22</small>	N.A.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

Children in single-parent families US 23,331,000	34% <small>2019</small>	34% <small>2022</small>	= SAME
Children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma US 8,015,000	12% <small>2019</small>	11% <small>2022</small>	↓ BETTER
Children living in high-poverty areas US 5,682,000	12% <small>2013-17</small>	8% <small>2018-22</small>	↓ BETTER
Teen births per 1,000 US 143,789	17 <small>2019</small>	14 <small>2022</small>	↓ BETTER

N.A.: Not available **Overweight or obese data are not comparable across time due to methodology changes.

The Health domain saw similar results, with two of the three comparable indicators getting worse. The percentage of babies born with low birth weight increased for the second year in a row. After peaking in 2021, the child and teen death rate stabilized at 30 deaths per 100,000 children and youth ages 1 to 19. And a third of children and teens were overweight or obese. It is worth noting that the number and percentage of children without health insurance improved between 2019 and 2022. Efforts to expand access to stable and affordable coverage helped children and families during a time when parents were losing their jobs, incomes were dropping and health-related needs were on the rise.

Trends in the Family and Community domain are mostly encouraging. A smaller percentage of children lived with parents who lacked a high school diploma and the number of children living in high-poverty communities improved. The record low for the teen birth rate was reached in 2021 (14 births per 1,000 teen females) and maintained in 2022.

Overall, the positive strides in some areas of child well-being, driven by effective policies, provide encouragement that the nation can make different choices about what it wants for children and youth and advance the work needed to build a brighter future for Generation Alpha and Generation Z.



Racial Inequities in Child Well-Being

The country's racial inequities remain deep, systemic and stubbornly persistent (see page 18). Data suggest that our nation fails to provide American Indian or Alaska Native, Black and Latino children with the opportunities and support they need to thrive — and to remove the obstacles they encounter disproportionately on the road to adulthood.

As a result, nearly all index measures show that children with the same potential are experiencing disparate outcomes by race and ethnicity. For example, public systems and communities have created situations in which American Indian or Alaska Native children experienced well-being at levels below the national average on all indicators. In fact, barriers to opportunity have placed these children at the bottom of the well-being scale in five indicators compared with other racial and ethnic groups. Black children had the worst scores on nine of the 16 indicators.

A few notable exceptions: Black children were more likely than the national average to be in school as young children, to be insured and to live in families in which the head of the household has at least a high school diploma. Latino kids were more likely to be born at a healthy birth weight. Latino children and teens also had a lower death rate than the national average.

As a result of generations-long inequities and discriminatory policies and practices that persist, children of color face high hurdles to success on many indicators. Black children were significantly more likely to live in single-parent families and in poverty. They also had the highest child and teen death rate, with alarming increases between 2019 and 2022. American Indian or Alaska Native kids were more than twice as likely to lack health insurance and almost three times as likely to live in neighborhoods with more limited resources than the average child. And Latino children were the most likely to be overweight or obese and to live with a head of household who lacked a high school diploma.

Although Asian and Pacific Islander children tend to fare better than their peers, disaggregated data show the stark differences that exist within this population. For example, 29% of Burmese, 24% of Mongolian and 23% of Thai children lived in poverty compared with 11% of Asian and Pacific Islander children overall. And 61% of Burmese children lived in a family where the head of household lacked a high school diploma — more than five times the national average.⁷⁸

Today, kids of color represent a majority of the children in the country,⁷⁹ as well as in 14 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The future success of our nation depends on our ability to ensure all children have the chance to be successful.

National and State Data Profiles Online

National and state profiles providing current and trend data for all 16 indicators, as well as an interactive look at the *Data Book*, are available at www.aecf.org/databook. In addition, thousands of child and family well-being indicators, including those cited in the *Data Book*, are available in the KIDS COUNT Data Center at datacenter.aecf.org.

TABLE 4: NATIONAL TRENDS

Key Indicators by Race and Hispanic Origin

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING							
	National Average	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian and Pacific Islander	Black	Latino	White (non-Hispanic)	Two or More Races
Children in poverty 2022	16%	29%	11%	30%	22%	10%	18%
Children whose parents lack secure employment 2022	26%	42%	19%	40%	31%	20%	28%
Children living in households with a high housing cost burden 2022	30%	31%	29%	45%	39%	22%	34%
Teens not in school and not working 2022	7%	12%	3%	9%	8%	5%	7%
EDUCATION							
	National Average	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian and Pacific Islander	Black	Latino	White (non-Hispanic)	Two or More Races
Young children (ages 3 and 4) not in school 2018-22	54%	60%	52%	53%	61%	52%	57%
Fourth graders not proficient in reading 2022	68%	82%*	45%*	84%*	80%	59%	63%*
Eighth graders not proficient in math 2022	74%	89%*	44%*	91%*	86%	66%	73%*
High school students not graduating on time [^] 2020-21	14%	26%*	7%*	20%*	18%	10%	N.A.
HEALTH							
	National Average	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian and Pacific Islander	Black	Latino	White (non-Hispanic)	Two or More Races
Low birth-weight babies 2022	8.6%	8.7%	9.3%	14.2%	7.9%	7.1%	9.1%
Children without health insurance 2022	5%	11%	4%	4%	8%	4%	6%
Child and teen deaths per 100,000 2022	30	37	16	53	26	26	17
Children and teens (ages 10 to 17) who are overweight or obese 2021-22	33%	37%*	22%*	39%*	42%	27%	32%*
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY							
	National Average	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian and Pacific Islander	Black	Latino	White (non-Hispanic)	Two or More Races
Children in single-parent families 2022	34%	50%	16%	63%	42%	24%	39%
Children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma 2022	11%	20%	10%	10%	25%	5%	15%
Children living in high-poverty areas 2018-22	8%	21%	4%	21%	11%	3%	8%
Teen births per 1,000 2022	14	16	4	21	21	9	13

*Data are for non-Hispanic children. N.A.: Not available

[^]Due to data quality concerns and late delivery of data, the national average was calculated using imputed data for Illinois and Washington.

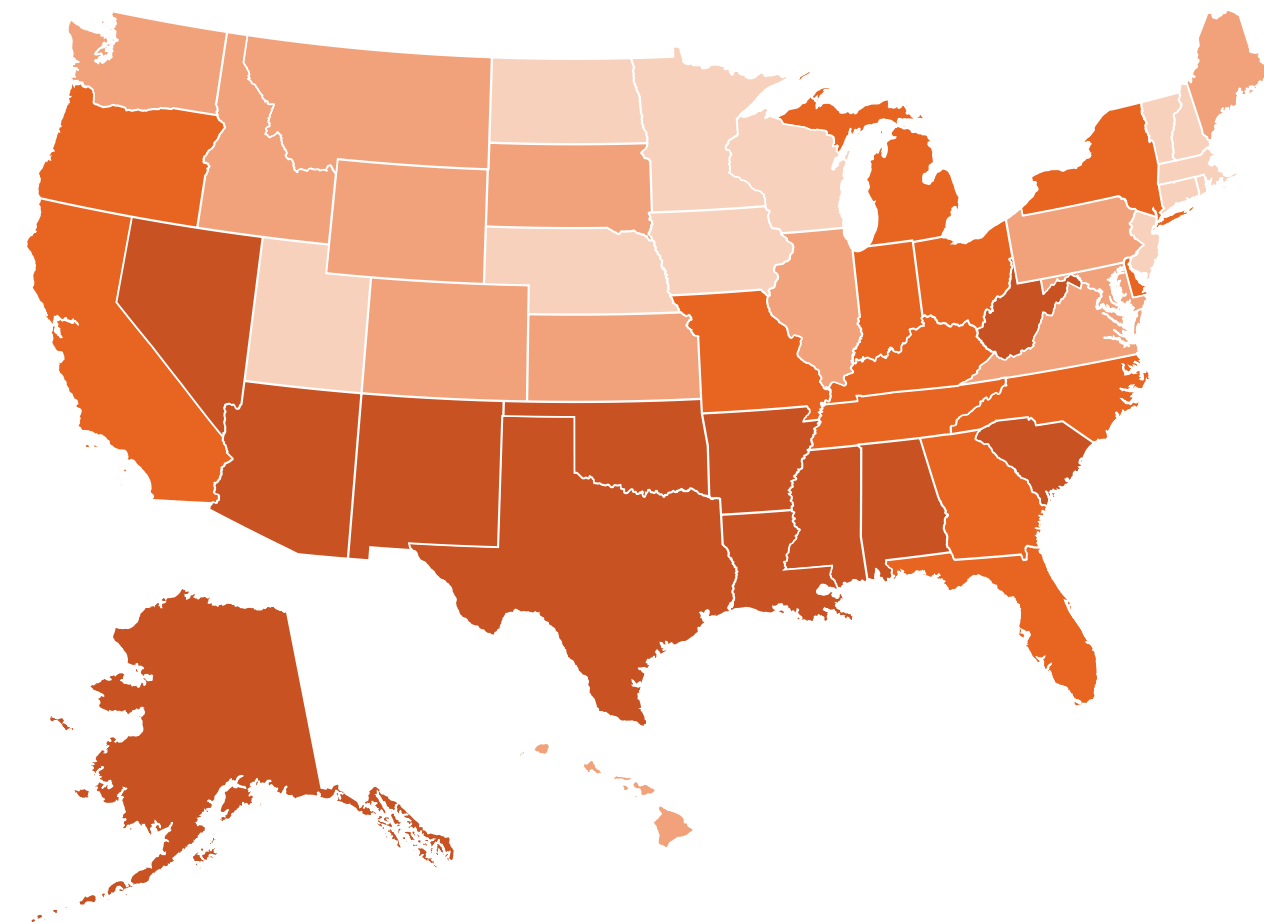




OVERALL CHILD WELL-BEING

The Foundation derives a composite index of overall child well-being for each state by combining data across four domains: (1) Economic Well-Being, (2) Education, (3) Health and (4) Family and Community. These composite scores are then translated into a state ranking for child well-being.

A 2024 STATE-TO-STATE COMPARISON OF OVERALL CHILD WELL-BEING



RANKINGS AND KEY

BEST	BETTER	WORSE	WORST
1. New Hampshire	13. Idaho	26. Oregon	39. Alabama
2. Massachusetts	14. Washington	27. Indiana	40. South Carolina
3. Utah	15. Maine	28. Ohio	41. Alaska
4. Vermont	16. Virginia	29. New York	42. Arizona
5. Minnesota	17. Colorado	30. Florida	43. Texas
6. New Jersey	18. Wyoming	31. Delaware	44. West Virginia
7. Iowa	19. Kansas	32. Missouri	45. Arkansas
8. Connecticut	20. Montana	33. North Carolina	46. Oklahoma
9. Nebraska	21. South Dakota	34. Michigan	47. Nevada
10. North Dakota	22. Maryland	35. California	48. Louisiana
11. Wisconsin	23. Pennsylvania	36. Tennessee	49. Mississippi
12. Rhode Island	24. Illinois	37. Georgia	50. New Mexico
	25. Hawaii	38. Kentucky	

District of Columbia and Puerto Rico are not ranked.



National data mask a great deal of state and regional variations in child well-being. A child's chances of thriving depend not only on individual, family and community characteristics but also on the state in which they are born and raised. States vary considerably in their wealth and other resources. Policy choices and investments — or a lack thereof — by state officials and lawmakers also strongly influence children's chances for success.

This year, New England states hold two of the top three spots for overall child well-being. New Hampshire ranks first, followed by Massachusetts and Utah. Louisiana (48th), Mississippi (49th) and New Mexico (50th) are the three lowest-ranked states.

The map on page 21 shows the distinct regional patterns that emerge from the state rankings. Five of the top 10 states in terms of overall child well-being are in the Northeast, including Vermont (fourth), New Jersey (sixth) and Connecticut (eighth). The Midwest has four states in the top 10, including Minnesota (fifth), Iowa (seventh), Nebraska (ninth) and North Dakota (10th).

States in Appalachia, as well as the Southeast and Southwest — where families have the lowest levels of household income — populate the bottom of the overall rankings. In fact, except for Alaska, the 15 lowest-ranked states are in these regions.

Although they are not ranked against states, children in the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico experienced some of the worst outcomes on many of the indicators the Foundation tracks. When available, the data for the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico are included on pages 38–41.

In addition to differences across states, the overall rankings obscure important variations within states. Although most state rankings did not vary dramatically across domains, there are a few exceptions. For example, North Dakota ranks 40th in Education but first for Economic Well-Being. New York ranks 44th in Economic Well-Being and 8th for Health. For all states, the index identified bright spots and room for improvement. See maps in this section to review variation in your state.

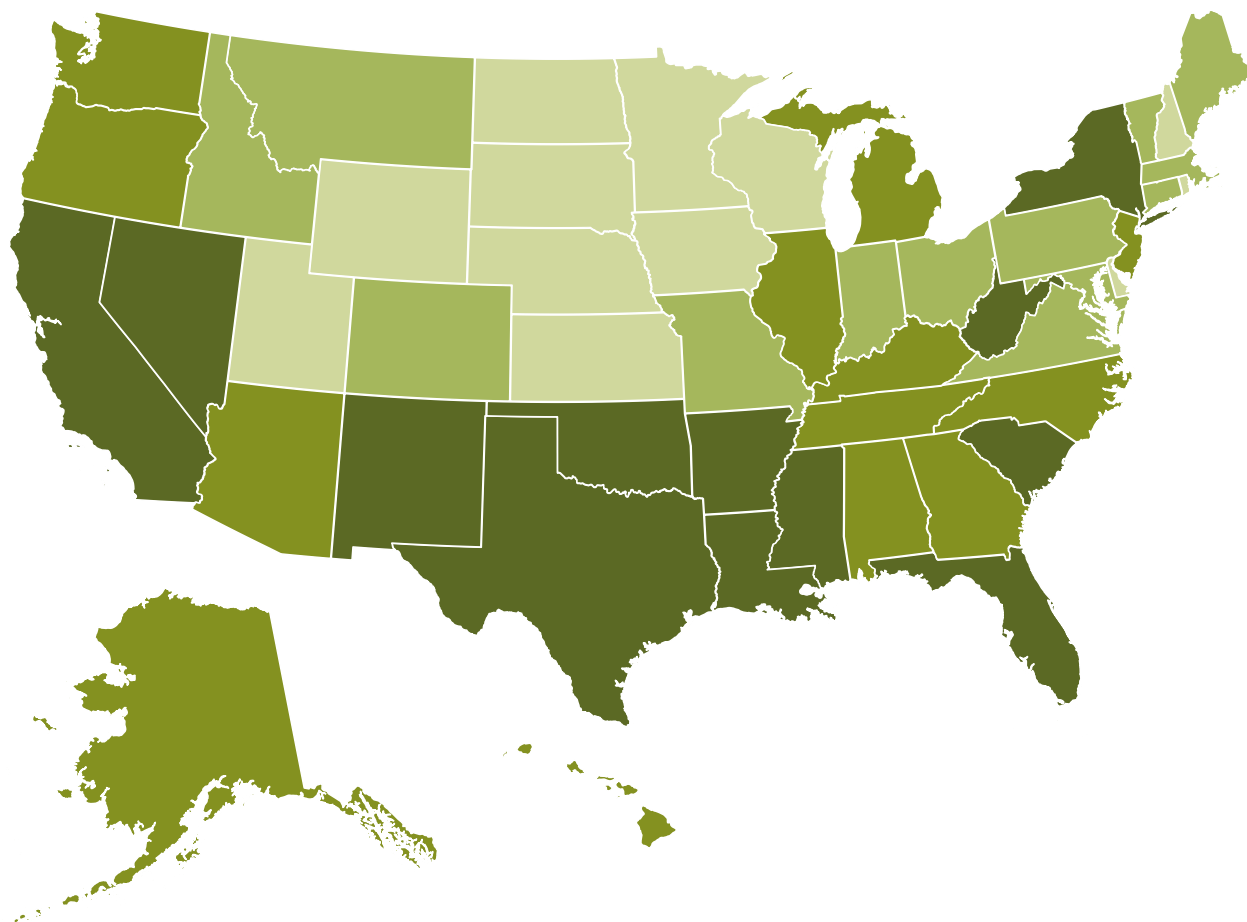




ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

To help children grow into prepared, productive adults, parents need jobs with family-sustaining pay, affordable housing and the ability to invest in their children's future. When parents are unemployed or earn low wages, their access to resources to support their kids' development is more limited, which can undermine their children's health and prospects for success in school and beyond.⁸⁰ The negative effects of poverty on kids can extend into their teenage years and young adulthood, as they are more likely to contend with issues such as teen pregnancy and failing to graduate from high school.⁸¹

A 2024 STATE-TO-STATE COMPARISON OF ECONOMIC WELL-BEING



RANKINGS AND KEY

BEST	BETTER	WORSE	WORST
1. North Dakota	13. Maine	26. New Jersey	39. Oklahoma
2. New Hampshire	14. Colorado	27. North Carolina	40. South Carolina
3. Iowa	15. Indiana	28. Washington	41. Texas
4. Utah	16. Massachusetts	29. Oregon	42. Florida
5. Nebraska	17. Virginia	30. Illinois	43. California
6. Minnesota	18. Maryland	31. Michigan	44. New York
7. Wisconsin	19. Connecticut	32. Georgia	45. Nevada
8. Delaware	20. Vermont	33. Arizona	46. Arkansas
9. Rhode Island	21. Montana	34. Tennessee	47. West Virginia
10. South Dakota	22. Idaho	35. Alabama	48. New Mexico
11. Wyoming	23. Pennsylvania	36. Kentucky	49. Louisiana
12. Kansas	24. Ohio	37. Alaska	50. Mississippi
	25. Missouri	38. Hawaii	

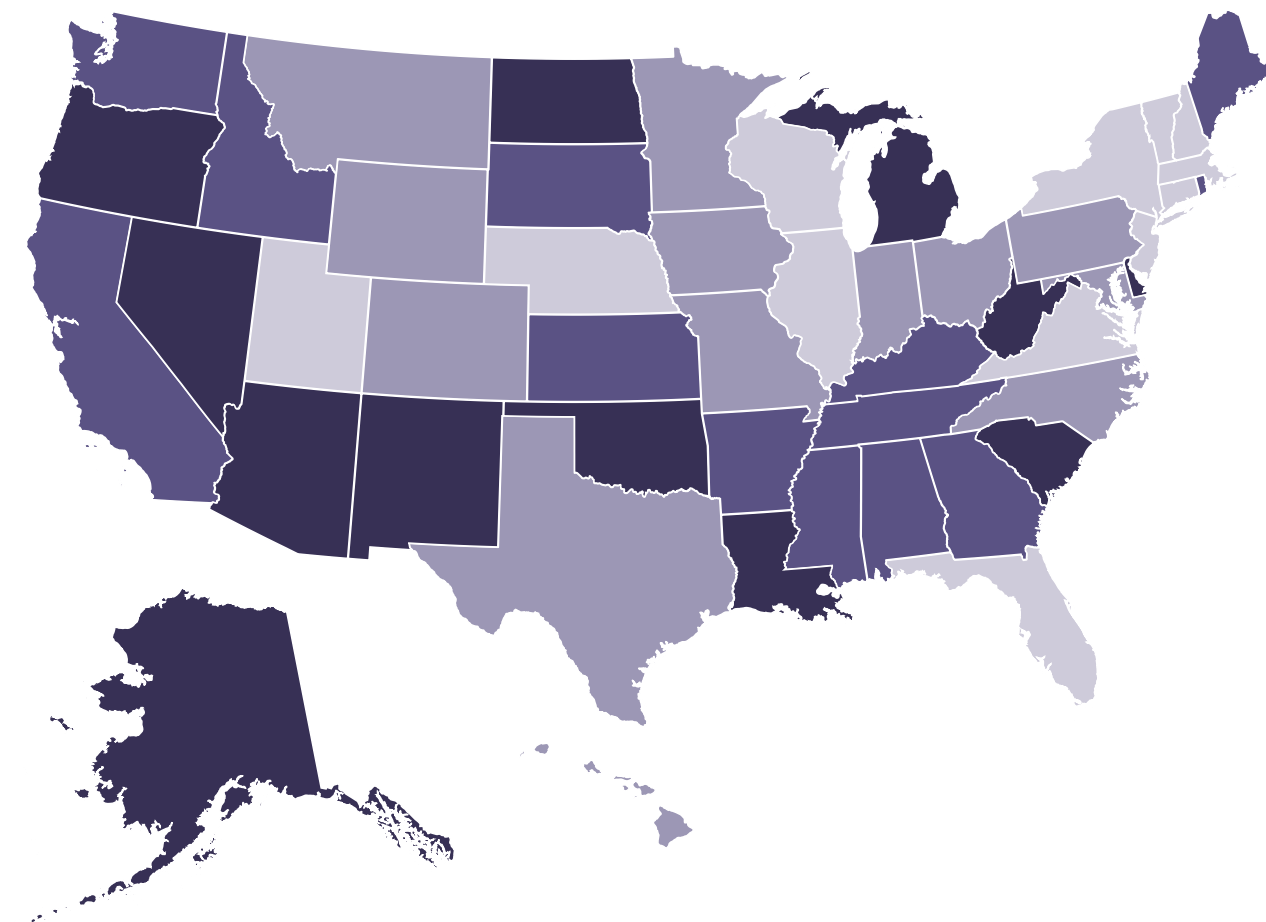
District of Columbia and Puerto Rico are not ranked.



EDUCATION

The early years of a child's life lay a foundation for lifelong success. Establishing the conditions that promote educational achievement for children is critical, beginning with quality prenatal care and continuing through the early elementary years. Adolescence also represents a pivotal window for growth and developmental opportunities that equip youth to remain on track to graduate from high school, pursue postsecondary education and training and successfully transition to adulthood. Yet our country continues to have significant gaps in educational achievement by race and income along all stages of development.⁸² Closing these gaps will be key to ensuring the nation's future workforce can compete on a global scale.

A 2024 STATE-TO-STATE COMPARISON OF EDUCATION



RANKINGS AND KEY

BEST	BETTER	WORSE	WORST
1. Massachusetts	13. Iowa	26. Washington	39. South Carolina
2. New Jersey	14. Wyoming	27. South Dakota	40. North Dakota
3. Connecticut	15. Colorado	28. Kansas	41. Michigan
4. New Hampshire	16. Pennsylvania	29. Rhode Island	42. Louisiana
5. Florida	17. Indiana	30. Mississippi	43. Oregon
6. Utah	18. Ohio	31. Georgia	44. Arizona
7. Virginia	19. Minnesota	32. Tennessee	45. Delaware
8. Wisconsin	20. Hawaii	33. Kentucky	46. Nevada
9. Vermont	21. Montana	34. Alabama	47. Alaska
10. Illinois	22. Maryland	35. California	48. West Virginia
11. Nebraska	23. Missouri	36. Arkansas	49. Oklahoma
12. New York	24. North Carolina	37. Maine	50. New Mexico
	25. Texas	38. Idaho	

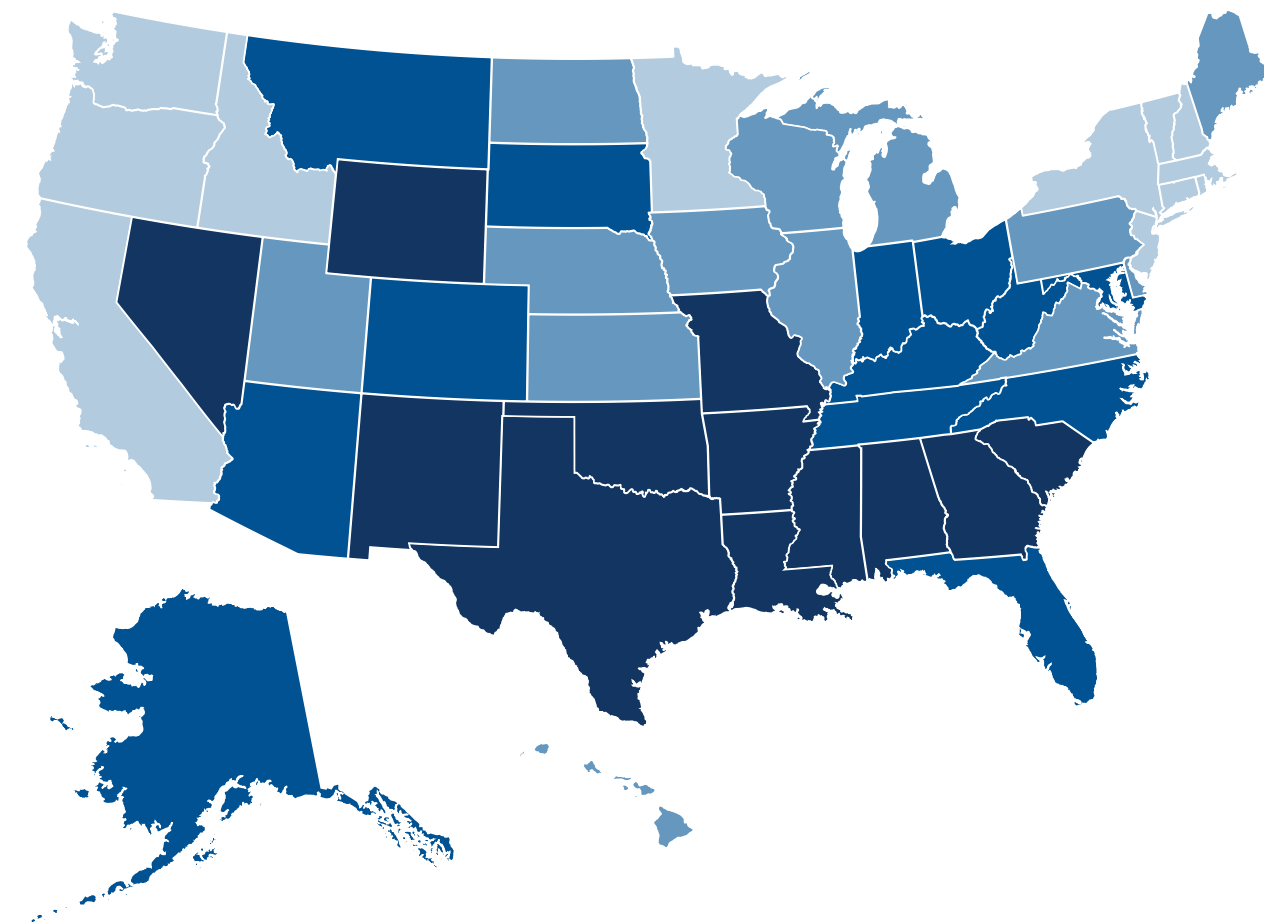
District of Columbia and Puerto Rico are not ranked.



HEALTH

Children's good health is fundamental to their overall development, and ensuring kids are born healthy is the first step toward improving their chances in life. Exposure to violence, family stress, inadequate housing, lack of preventive health care, poor nutrition, poverty and substance abuse undermine children's health. Poor health in childhood affects other critical aspects of children's lives, such as school readiness and attendance, and can have lasting consequences on their future health and well-being.

A 2024 STATE-TO-STATE COMPARISON OF HEALTH



RANKINGS AND KEY

BEST	BETTER	WORSE	WORST
1. New Hampshire	13. Utah	26. South Dakota	39. Alabama
2. Massachusetts	14. Iowa	27. Maryland	40. Missouri
3. New Jersey	15. Hawaii	28. Colorado	41. Wyoming
4. Washington	16. North Dakota	29. Ohio	42. Nevada
5. Vermont	17. Nebraska	30. Montana	43. Georgia
6. Rhode Island	18. Maine	31. Florida	44. New Mexico
7. Minnesota	19. Kansas	32. Indiana	45. Oklahoma
8. New York	20. Illinois	33. North Carolina	46. South Carolina
9. Idaho	21. Wisconsin	34. Arizona	47. Arkansas
10. California	22. Michigan	35. West Virginia	48. Texas
11. Connecticut	23. Virginia	36. Kentucky	49. Louisiana
12. Oregon	24. Pennsylvania	37. Alaska	50. Mississippi
	25. Delaware	38. Tennessee	

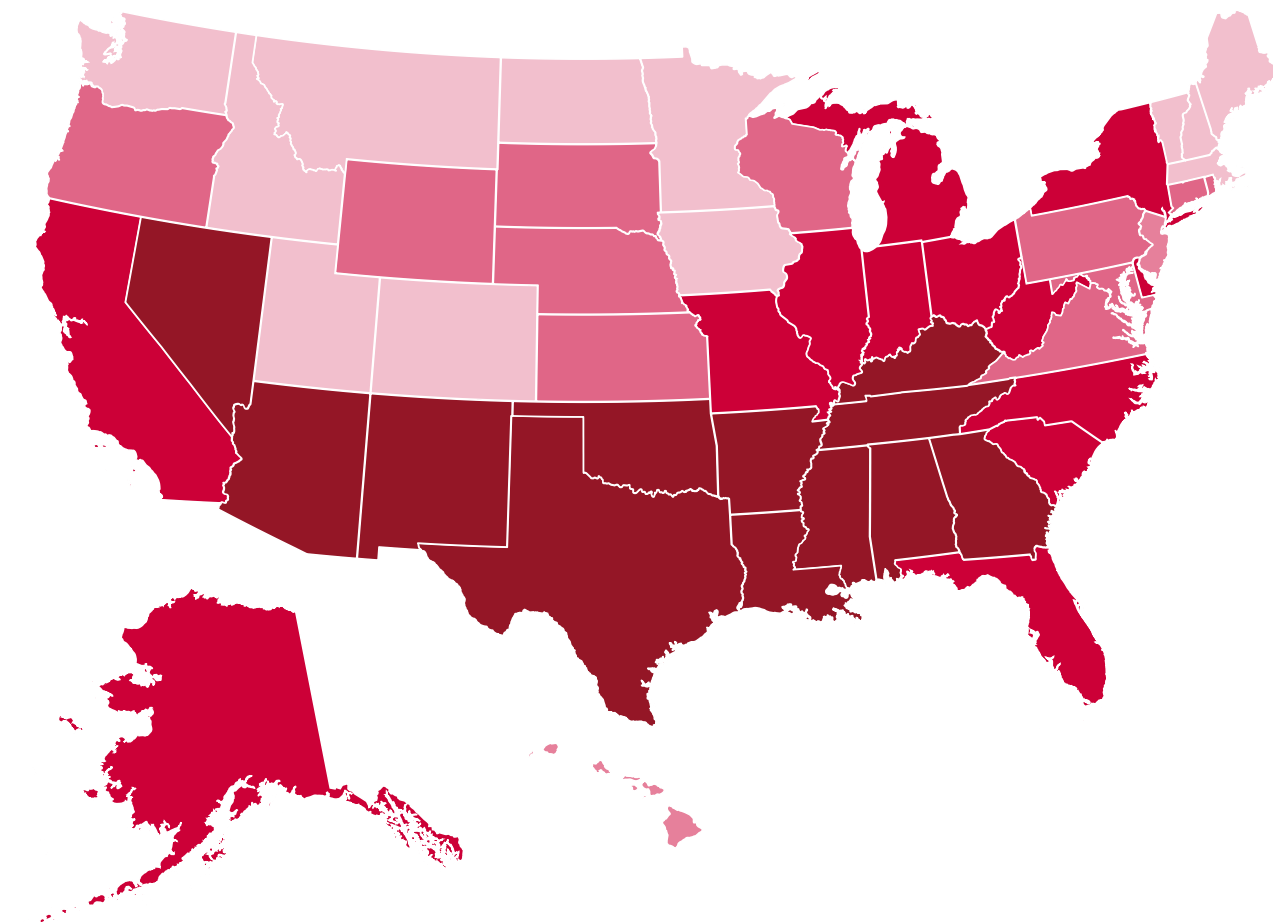
District of Columbia and Puerto Rico are not ranked.



FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

Children who live in nurturing families and supportive communities have stronger personal connections and higher academic achievement. Parents struggling with financial hardship have fewer resources available to foster their children's development and are more prone to face severe stress and depression, which can interfere with effective parenting. These findings underscore the importance of two-generation approaches to ending poverty, which address the needs of parents and children at the same time so they can succeed together. Where families live also matters. When communities are safe and have strong institutions, good schools and quality support services, families and their children are more likely to thrive.

A 2024 STATE-TO-STATE COMPARISON OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY



RANKINGS AND KEY

BEST	BETTER	WORSE	WORST
1. Utah	13. Wyoming	26. Alaska	39. Tennessee
2. New Hampshire	14. Wisconsin	27. Illinois	40. Oklahoma
3. Vermont	15. Nebraska	28. Michigan	41. Arizona
4. Idaho	16. Oregon	29. Missouri	42. Georgia
5. Maine	17. Virginia	30. Florida	43. Kentucky
6. North Dakota	18. Hawaii	31. Indiana	44. Alabama
7. Minnesota	19. New Jersey	32. Delaware	45. Nevada
8. Montana	20. Rhode Island	33. Ohio	46. Arkansas
9. Colorado	21. Maryland	34. North Carolina	47. Texas
10. Iowa	22. Connecticut	35. West Virginia	48. Louisiana
11. Washington	23. Kansas	36. South Carolina	49. New Mexico
12. Massachusetts	24. South Dakota	37. California	50. Mississippi
	25. Pennsylvania	38. New York	

District of Columbia and Puerto Rico are not ranked.

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APPENDICES



APPENDIX A

CHILD WELL-BEING RANKINGS

Location	OVERALL RANK	ECONOMIC WELL-BEING RANK	EDUCATION RANK	HEALTH RANK	FAMILY AND COMMUNITY RANK
Alabama	39	35	34	39	44
Alaska	41	37	47	37	26
Arizona	42	33	44	34	41
Arkansas	45	46	36	47	46
California	35	43	35	10	37
Colorado	17	14	15	28	9
Connecticut	8	19	3	11	22
Delaware	31	8	45	25	32
District of Columbia	N.R.	N.R.	N.R.	N.R.	N.R.
Florida	30	42	5	31	30
Georgia	37	32	31	43	42
Hawaii	25	38	20	15	18
Idaho	13	22	38	9	4
Illinois	24	30	10	20	27
Indiana	27	15	17	32	31
Iowa	7	3	13	14	10
Kansas	19	12	28	19	23
Kentucky	38	36	33	36	43
Louisiana	48	49	42	49	48
Maine	15	13	37	18	5
Maryland	22	18	22	27	21
Massachusetts	2	16	1	2	12
Michigan	34	31	41	22	28
Minnesota	5	6	19	7	7
Mississippi	49	50	30	50	50
Missouri	32	25	23	40	29
Montana	20	21	21	30	8
Nebraska	9	5	11	17	15
Nevada	47	45	46	42	45
New Hampshire	1	2	4	1	2
New Jersey	6	26	2	3	19
New Mexico	50	48	50	44	49
New York	29	44	12	8	38
North Carolina	33	27	24	33	34
North Dakota	10	1	40	16	6
Ohio	28	24	18	29	33
Oklahoma	46	39	49	45	40
Oregon	26	29	43	12	16
Pennsylvania	23	23	16	24	25
Puerto Rico	N.R.	N.R.	N.R.	N.R.	N.R.
Rhode Island	12	9	29	6	20
South Carolina	40	40	39	46	36
South Dakota	21	10	27	26	24
Tennessee	36	34	32	38	39
Texas	43	41	25	48	47
Utah	3	4	6	13	1
Vermont	4	20	9	5	3
Virginia	16	17	7	23	17
Washington	14	28	26	4	11
West Virginia	44	47	48	35	35
Wisconsin	11	7	8	21	14
Wyoming	18	11	14	41	13

N.R.: Not ranked

APPENDIX B

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING INDICATORS

Location	Children in poverty (2022)		Children whose parents lack secure employment (2022)		Children living in households with a high housing cost burden (2022)		Teens not in school and not working (2022)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
United States	11,583,000	16	18,635,000	26	21,807,000	30	1,149,000	7
Alabama	240,000	22	323,000	29	270,000	24	18,000	7
Alaska	24,000	14	55,000	32	49,000	28	3,000	8
Arizona	247,000	16	396,000	25	457,000	29	31,000	8
Arkansas	151,000	22	205,000	29	171,000	25	18,000	11
California	1,278,000	15	2,417,000	28	3,464,000	41	130,000	6
Colorado	133,000	11	268,000	22	360,000	30	18,000	6
Connecticut	90,000	12	167,000	23	230,000	31	9,000	5
Delaware	26,000	13	50,000	24	46,000	22	2,000	3
District of Columbia	21,000	17	43,000	34	40,000	32	N.A.	N.A.
Florida	723,000	17	1,108,000	26	1,617,000	38	70,000	7
Georgia	411,000	17	648,000	26	708,000	28	44,000	7
Hawaii	37,000	13	84,000	28	114,000	38	4,000	7
Idaho	61,000	13	108,000	23	115,000	25	8,000	7
Illinois	425,000	16	700,000	26	757,000	28	43,000	6
Indiana	243,000	16	392,000	25	342,000	22	21,000	5
Iowa	86,000	12	132,000	18	143,000	20	7,000	4
Kansas	94,000	14	138,000	20	156,000	23	10,000	6
Kentucky	207,000	21	285,000	28	231,000	23	19,000	8
Louisiana	257,000	25	318,000	30	326,000	31	22,000	9
Maine	28,000	12	60,000	24	52,000	21	4,000	6
Maryland	155,000	12	294,000	22	402,000	30	19,000	6
Massachusetts	152,000	12	317,000	24	427,000	32	15,000	4
Michigan	378,000	18	572,000	27	524,000	25	33,000	7
Minnesota	139,000	11	259,000	20	281,000	22	14,000	5
Mississippi	175,000	26	217,000	32	195,000	29	16,000	10
Missouri	225,000	17	336,000	25	298,000	22	24,000	7
Montana	31,000	13	58,000	25	50,000	21	4,000	8
Nebraska	64,000	14	91,000	19	105,000	22	3,000	3
Nevada	109,000	16	195,000	28	239,000	35	14,000	9
New Hampshire	17,000	7	48,000	19	63,000	25	3,000	4
New Jersey	254,000	13	483,000	24	707,000	35	21,000	5
New Mexico	105,000	23	147,000	32	128,000	28	10,000	9
New York	736,000	19	1,206,000	30	1,495,000	38	58,000	6
North Carolina	388,000	17	579,000	25	586,000	26	34,000	6
North Dakota	23,000	13	33,000	18	34,000	19	2,000	4
Ohio	446,000	18	662,000	26	584,000	23	37,000	6
Oklahoma	185,000	20	260,000	27	257,000	27	19,000	8
Oregon	112,000	14	223,000	27	251,000	30	12,000	6
Pennsylvania	394,000	15	657,000	25	667,000	25	41,000	6
Puerto Rico	297,000	58	256,000	49	150,000	29	21,000	13
Rhode Island	23,000	12	44,000	22	59,000	29	2,000	3
South Carolina	211,000	19	315,000	28	287,000	26	25,000	9
South Dakota	32,000	15	48,000	22	44,000	20	2,000	4
Tennessee	266,000	18	436,000	28	403,000	26	26,000	7
Texas	1,412,000	19	1,887,000	25	2,433,000	33	138,000	8
Utah	78,000	8	161,000	17	217,000	23	11,000	5
Vermont	13,000	12	29,000	26	29,000	25	2,000	6
Virginia	234,000	13	392,000	21	515,000	28	30,000	7
Washington	185,000	11	397,000	24	502,000	31	28,000	8
West Virginia	86,000	25	116,000	33	76,000	22	9,000	10
Wisconsin	156,000	13	251,000	20	272,000	22	14,000	5
Wyoming	18,000	14	27,000	21	28,000	22	2,000	5

N.A.: Not available

EDUCATION INDICATORS

Location	Young children (ages 3 and 4) not in school (2018–22)		Fourth graders not proficient in reading (2022)		Eighth graders not proficient in math (2022)		High school students not graduating on time (2020–21)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
United States	4,328,000	54	N.A.	68	N.A.	74	N.A.	14
Alabama	71,000	57	N.A.	72	N.A.	81	N.A.	9
Alaska	12,000	62	N.A.	76	N.A.	77	N.A.	22
Arizona	111,000	65	N.A.	69	N.A.	76	N.A.	24
Arkansas	42,000	57	N.A.	70	N.A.	81	N.A.	12
California	530,000	55	N.A.	69	N.A.	77	N.A.	16
Colorado	68,000	51	N.A.	62	N.A.	72	N.A.	18
Connecticut	30,000	39	N.A.	65	N.A.	70	N.A.	10
Delaware	13,000	55	N.A.	75	N.A.	82	N.A.	20
District of Columbia	4,000	22	N.A.	74	N.A.	84	N.A.	25
Florida	235,000	50	N.A.	61	N.A.	77	N.A.	10
Georgia	142,000	52	N.A.	68	N.A.	76	N.A.	16
Hawaii	19,000	54	N.A.	65	N.A.	78	N.A.	14
Idaho	31,000	64	N.A.	68	N.A.	68	N.A.	20
Illinois	144,000	48	N.A.	67	N.A.	73	N.A.	13
Indiana	103,000	61	N.A.	67	N.A.	70	N.A.	12
Iowa	45,000	57	N.A.	67	N.A.	72	N.A.	10
Kansas	42,000	56	N.A.	69	N.A.	77	N.A.	12
Kentucky	67,000	61	N.A.	69	N.A.	79	N.A.	10
Louisiana	60,000	51	N.A.	72	N.A.	81	N.A.	18
Maine	15,000	59	N.A.	71	N.A.	76	N.A.	14
Maryland	83,000	54	N.A.	69	N.A.	75	N.A.	13
Massachusetts	62,000	43	N.A.	57	N.A.	65	N.A.	10
Michigan	129,000	56	N.A.	72	N.A.	75	N.A.	20
Minnesota	75,000	54	N.A.	68	N.A.	68	N.A.	17
Mississippi	38,000	50	N.A.	69	N.A.	82	N.A.	12
Missouri	85,000	56	N.A.	70	N.A.	76	N.A.	11
Montana	15,000	61	N.A.	66	N.A.	71	N.A.	14
Nebraska	31,000	57	N.A.	66	N.A.	69	N.A.	12
Nevada	50,000	67	N.A.	73	N.A.	79	N.A.	19
New Hampshire	13,000	47	N.A.	63	N.A.	71	N.A.	13
New Jersey	85,000	39	N.A.	62	N.A.	67	N.A.	12
New Mexico	29,000	59	N.A.	79	N.A.	87	N.A.	23
New York	195,000	42	N.A.	70	N.A.	72	N.A.	15
North Carolina	145,000	58	N.A.	68	N.A.	75	N.A.	13
North Dakota	15,000	70	N.A.	69	N.A.	72	N.A.	13
Ohio	161,000	57	N.A.	65	N.A.	71	N.A.	15
Oklahoma	61,000	59	N.A.	76	N.A.	84	N.A.	20
Oregon	53,000	58	N.A.	72	N.A.	78	N.A.	19
Pennsylvania	160,000	56	N.A.	66	N.A.	73	N.A.	13
Puerto Rico	21,000	41	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	24
Rhode Island	13,000	55	N.A.	66	N.A.	76	N.A.	16
South Carolina	68,000	57	N.A.	68	N.A.	78	N.A.	17
South Dakota	14,000	62	N.A.	68	N.A.	68	N.A.	17
Tennessee	102,000	61	N.A.	70	N.A.	75	N.A.	11
Texas	470,000	58	N.A.	70	N.A.	76	N.A.	10
Utah	57,000	58	N.A.	63	N.A.	65	N.A.	12
Vermont	5,000	41	N.A.	66	N.A.	73	N.A.	17
Virginia	109,000	54	N.A.	68	N.A.	69	N.A.	10
Washington	107,000	57	N.A.	66	N.A.	72	N.A.	18
West Virginia	25,000	71	N.A.	78	N.A.	85	N.A.	9
Wisconsin	80,000	59	N.A.	67	N.A.	67	N.A.	10
Wyoming	8,000	58	N.A.	62	N.A.	69	N.A.	18

N.A.: Not available

HEALTH INDICATORS

Location	Low birth-weight babies (2022)		Children without health insurance (2022)		Child and teen deaths per 100,000 (2022)		Children and teens (ages 10 to 17) who are overweight or obese (2021–22)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Rate	Number	Percent
United States	315,288	8.6	3,932,000	5	23,140	30	N.A.	33
Alabama	6,047	10.4	37,000	3	459	39	N.A.	35
Alaska	650	6.9	15,000	8	85	46	N.A.	31
Arizona	6,119	7.8	142,000	8	591	35	N.A.	31
Arkansas	3,296	9.3	44,000	6	325	44	N.A.	37
California	31,114	7.4	287,000	3	2,005	22	N.A.	33
Colorado	6,146	9.9	62,000	5	454	35	N.A.	27
Connecticut	2,826	8.0	25,000	3	170	21	N.A.	32
Delaware	976	9.0	7,000	3	72	32	N.A.	33
District of Columbia	795	9.8	2,000	1	54	40	N.A.	38
Florida	20,354	9.1	336,000	7	1,353	30	N.A.	29
Georgia	13,321	10.6	166,000	6	938	35	N.A.	31
Hawaii	1,315	8.5	9,000	3	84	27	N.A.	32
Idaho	1,577	7.0	28,000	6	132	26	N.A.	25
Illinois	11,098	8.7	99,000	3	871	30	N.A.	33
Indiana	6,937	8.7	91,000	5	603	36	N.A.	32
Iowa	2,621	7.2	28,000	4	223	29	N.A.	33
Kansas	2,692	7.8	38,000	5	258	35	N.A.	29
Kentucky	4,643	8.9	46,000	4	388	37	N.A.	38
Louisiana	6,478	11.5	39,000	4	525	47	N.A.	38
Maine	989	8.2	12,000	5	79	30	N.A.	30
Maryland	5,980	8.7	60,000	4	404	28	N.A.	36
Massachusetts	5,346	7.8	22,000	2	261	18	N.A.	27
Michigan	9,375	9.2	60,000	3	622	28	N.A.	35
Minnesota	4,618	7.2	45,000	3	356	26	N.A.	26
Mississippi	4,400	12.7	39,000	5	342	47	N.A.	42
Missouri	6,285	9.1	83,000	6	591	41	N.A.	33
Montana	847	7.6	17,000	7	116	47	N.A.	26
Nebraska	1,918	7.9	23,000	5	144	28	N.A.	31
Nevada	3,072	9.3	55,000	8	220	30	N.A.	34
New Hampshire	813	6.7	9,000	3	52	19	N.A.	25
New Jersey	7,981	7.8	82,000	4	365	17	N.A.	27
New Mexico	2,133	9.9	18,000	4	196	40	N.A.	38
New York	17,735	8.6	111,000	3	867	20	N.A.	30
North Carolina	11,457	9.4	118,000	5	917	37	N.A.	30
North Dakota	683	7.1	10,000	6	62	31	N.A.	29
Ohio	11,151	8.7	122,000	4	869	32	N.A.	34
Oklahoma	4,085	8.5	73,000	7	376	37	N.A.	39
Oregon	2,785	7.1	27,000	3	254	28	N.A.	32
Pennsylvania	11,033	8.5	145,000	5	825	29	N.A.	32
Puerto Rico	1,926	10.1	13,000	2	139	24	N.A.	N.A.
Rhode Island	814	7.9	5,000	2	31	14	N.A.	33
South Carolina	5,775	10.0	56,000	5	465	39	N.A.	38
South Dakota	792	7.1	14,000	6	86	37	N.A.	31
Tennessee	7,367	9.0	86,000	5	626	39	N.A.	35
Texas	34,042	8.7	854,000	11	2,525	32	N.A.	39
Utah	3,480	7.6	61,000	6	258	26	N.A.	27
Vermont	405	7.6	3,000	3	34	26	N.A.	26
Virginia	8,064	8.4	87,000	4	601	30	N.A.	33
Washington	5,785	7.0	48,000	3	446	26	N.A.	28
West Virginia	1,684	10.0	11,000	3	110	29	N.A.	40
Wisconsin	4,813	8.0	60,000	5	392	29	N.A.	34
Wyoming	576	9.5	11,000	8	58	42	N.A.	26

N.A.: Not available

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INDICATORS

Location	Children in single-parent families (2022)		Children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma (2022)		Children living in high-poverty areas (2018–22)		Teen births per 1,000 (2022)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Rate
United States	23,331,000	34	8,015,000	11	5,682,000	8	143,789	14
Alabama	382,000	37	108,000	10	127,000	11	3,445	21
Alaska	57,000	34	10,000	6	13,000	7	357	17
Arizona	557,000	37	217,000	14	133,000	8	3,558	15
Arkansas	228,000	36	70,000	10	78,000	11	2,440	25
California	2,732,000	34	1,486,000	17	480,000	5	12,279	10
Colorado	323,000	28	105,000	9	27,000	2	2,004	11
Connecticut	236,000	34	66,000	9	57,000	8	784	6
Delaware	75,000	38	21,000	10	7,000	3	466	15
District of Columbia	59,000	49	10,000	8	22,000	18	240	12
Florida	1,524,000	38	398,000	9	266,000	6	8,139	13
Georgia	925,000	39	278,000	11	232,000	9	6,128	17
Hawaii	96,000	35	18,000	6	11,000	4	432	12
Idaho	103,000	23	34,000	7	5,000	1	807	11
Illinois	889,000	34	256,000	9	185,000	7	4,495	11
Indiana	478,000	32	160,000	10	113,000	7	3,741	17
Iowa	194,000	28	56,000	8	19,000	3	1,338	12
Kansas	189,000	29	63,000	9	40,000	6	1,615	16
Kentucky	313,000	34	101,000	10	116,000	11	3,038	22
Louisiana	457,000	46	110,000	10	204,000	19	3,502	24
Maine	73,000	32	10,000	4	5,000	2	319	8
Maryland	427,000	33	124,000	9	46,000	3	2,066	11
Massachusetts	408,000	32	109,000	8	71,000	5	1,302	6
Michigan	685,000	34	172,000	8	227,000	11	3,608	12
Minnesota	331,000	27	98,000	8	43,000	3	1,496	8
Mississippi	277,000	44	68,000	10	148,000	21	2,683	26
Missouri	427,000	33	112,000	8	98,000	7	3,270	17
Montana	61,000	28	11,000	5	14,000	6	401	12
Nebraska	125,000	28	37,000	8	16,000	3	937	14
Nevada	260,000	40	110,000	16	46,000	7	1,304	14
New Hampshire	69,000	29	12,000	5	<500	<.5%	183	5
New Jersey	577,000	30	201,000	10	124,000	6	2,288	8
New Mexico	191,000	45	60,000	13	88,000	19	1,372	20
New York	1,332,000	35	507,000	13	548,000	13	5,031	9
North Carolina	768,000	36	254,000	11	164,000	7	5,167	15
North Dakota	41,000	24	12,000	6	6,000	3	305	12
Ohio	862,000	36	219,000	9	264,000	10	5,621	15
Oklahoma	307,000	34	107,000	11	79,000	8	2,856	21
Oregon	240,000	30	81,000	10	19,000	2	1,230	10
Pennsylvania	837,000	34	224,000	9	220,000	8	4,352	11
Puerto Rico	319,000	64	43,000	8	464,000	82	1,169	13
Rhode Island	73,000	37	15,000	8	8,000	4	300	8
South Carolina	382,000	37	103,000	9	93,000	8	2,875	17
South Dakota	59,000	29	13,000	6	21,000	10	512	17
Tennessee	519,000	36	144,000	9	129,000	8	4,502	21
Texas	2,445,000	34	1,153,000	16	864,000	12	21,337	20
Utah	175,000	19	61,000	7	9,000	1	1,203	9
Vermont	32,000	30	4,000	4	1,000	1	116	6
Virginia	564,000	32	141,000	8	71,000	4	3,045	11
Washington	450,000	29	161,000	10	29,000	2	2,144	10
West Virginia	118,000	36	27,000	8	30,000	8	1,024	20
Wisconsin	364,000	31	91,000	7	63,000	5	1,832	10
Wyoming	35,000	29	8,000	6	4,000	3	300	16

ABOUT THE KIDS COUNT INDEX

The KIDS COUNT index reflects child health and educational outcomes as well as risk and protective factors, such as economic well-being, family structure and community context. The index incorporates a developmental perspective on childhood and includes experiences across life stages, from birth through early adulthood. The indicators are consistently and regularly measured, which allows for legitimate comparisons across states and over time.

Organizing the index into domains provides a more nuanced assessment of child well-being in each state that can inform policy solutions by helping policymakers and advocates better identify areas of strength and weakness. For example, a state may rank well above average in overall child well-being, while showing the need for improvement in one or more domains. Domain-specific data can strengthen decision-making efforts by providing multiple data points relevant to specific policy areas.

The 16 indicators of child well-being are derived from federal government statistical agencies and reflect the best available state and national data for tracking yearly changes. Many of the indicators are based on samples, and, like all sample data, they contain some random error. Other measures (such as the child and teen death rate) are based on relatively small numbers of events in some states and may exhibit some random fluctuation from year to year.

The Foundation urges readers to focus on relatively large differences across states, as small differences may simply reflect small fluctuations, rather than real changes in the well-being of children. Assessing trends by looking at changes over a longer period is more reliable. State data for past years are available in the KIDS COUNT Data Center at datacenter.aecf.org.

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* uses rates and percentages because they are the best way to compare states and to assess changes over time within a state. However, the focus on rates and percentages may mask the magnitude of some of the problems examined in this report. Therefore, data on the actual number of children or events are provided on pages 38–41 and in the KIDS COUNT Data Center.

The Foundation includes data for the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico in the appendices, but not in the state rankings because they are significantly different from states, and comparisons are not instructive. It is more useful to look at changes for these geographies over time or to compare the District of Columbia with other large cities. Data for many child well-being indicators for the 50 largest cities (including the District of Columbia) are available in the KIDS COUNT Data Center, which also contains statistics for children and families in the U.S. Virgin Islands.



DEFINITIONS AND DATA SOURCES

DEFINITIONS

Domain rank for each state was determined in the following manner. First, 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. It summed those standard scores in each domain to get a total standard score for each state. Finally, Casey ranked the states based on their total standard score by domain in sequential order from highest/best (1) to lowest/worst (50). Standard scores were derived by subtracting the mean score from the observed score and dividing the amount by the standard deviation for that distribution of scores. All measures were given the same weight in calculating the domain standard score.

Overall rank for each state was calculated in the following manner. First, Casey converted the state numerical values for the most recent year for all 16 key indicators into standard scores. It summed those standard scores within their domains to create a domain standard score for each state. The Foundation then summed the four domain standard scores to get a total standard score for every state. Finally, it ranked the states based on their total standard score in sequential order from highest/best (1) to lowest/worst (50). Standard scores were derived by subtracting the mean score from the observed score and dividing the amount by the standard deviation for that distribution of scores. All measures were given the same weight in calculating the total standard score.

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 2022, a family of two adults and two children lived in poverty if the family's annual income fell below \$29,678. 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 have few financial resources. *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. *SOURCE: 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 2022, a family of two adults and two children lived in poverty if the family's annual income fell below \$29,678. 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.*

STATE KIDS COUNT ORGANIZATIONS

ALABAMA

VOICES for Alabama's Children
alavoices.org
 334.213.2410

ALASKA

Alaska Children's Trust
www.alaskachildrenstrust.org
 907.248.7676

ARIZONA

Children's Action Alliance
azchildren.org
 602.266.0707

ARKANSAS

Arkansas Advocates for
 Children & Families
www.aradvocates.org
 501.371.9678

CALIFORNIA

Children Now
www.childrennow.org
 510.763.2444

COLORADO

Colorado Children's Campaign
www.coloradokids.org
 303.839.1580

CONNECTICUT

Connecticut Voices for Children
ctvoices.org
 203.498.4240

DELAWARE

University of Delaware
dekidscount.org
 302.831.3462

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

DC Action
www.wearedcaction.org
 202.234.9404

FLORIDA

Florida Policy Institute
www.floridapolicy.org
 407.440.1421 ext. 709

GEORGIA

Georgia Family
 Connection Partnership
gafcp.org
 678.326.2538

HAWAII

Hawaii Children's Action Network
www.hawaii-can.org
 808.531.5502

IDAHO

Idaho Voices for Children
 Jannus, Inc.
www.idahovoices.org
 208.947.4259

ILLINOIS

YWCA Metropolitan Chicago
ywcachicago.org
 312.372.6600

INDIANA

Indiana Youth Institute
www.iyi.org
 317.396.2700

IOWA

Common Good Iowa
www.commongoodiowa.org
 515.280.9027

KANSAS

Kansas Action for Children
www.kac.org
 785.232.0550

KENTUCKY

Kentucky Youth Advocates
kyyouth.org
 502.895.8167

LOUISIANA

Agenda for Children
agendaforchildren.org
 504.586.8509

MAINE

Maine Children's Alliance
www.mekids.org
 207.623.1868

MARYLAND

Maryland Center on
 Economic Policy
www.mdeconomy.org
 410.412.9105

MASSACHUSETTS

Massachusetts Budget
 and Policy Center
massbudget.org
 617.426.1228

MICHIGAN

Michigan League for
 Public Policy
mlpp.org
 517.487.5436

MINNESOTA

Children's Defense
 Fund-Minnesota
www.childrensdefense.org/cdf-in-the-states/minnesota
 651.227.6121

MISSISSIPPI

Children's Foundation
 of Mississippi
childrensfoundationms.org
 601.982.9050

MISSOURI

Family and Community Trust
www.mokidscount.org
 573.636.6300

MONTANA

Montana Budget & Policy Center
montanakidscount.org
 406.422.5848

NEBRASKA

Voices for Children in Nebraska
voicesforchildren.com
 402.597.3100

NEVADA

Children's Advocacy Alliance
www.caanv.org
 702.228.1869

NEW HAMPSHIRE

New Futures KIDS COUNT
new-futures.org
 603.225.9540

NEW JERSEY

Advocates for Children of
 New Jersey
acnj.org
 973.643.3876

NEW MEXICO

New Mexico Voices for Children
www.nmvoices.org
 505.244.9505

NEW YORK

New York State Council on
 Children and Families
www.ccf.ny.gov
 518.473.3652

NORTH CAROLINA

NC Child
ncchild.org
 919.834.6623

NORTH DAKOTA

Montana Budget & Policy Center
ndkidscount.org
 406.422.5848

OHIO

Children's Defense Fund-Ohio
cdfohio.org
 614.221.2244

OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma Policy Institute
okpolicy.org
 918.794.3944

OREGON

Our Children Oregon
ourchildrenoregon.org
 503.236.9754

PENNSYLVANIA

Pennsylvania Partnerships
 for Children
www.papartnerships.org
 717.236.5680

PUERTO RICO

Youth Development Institute
 (Instituto del Desarrollo
 de la Juventud)
www.juventudpr.org
 787.349.4353

RHODE ISLAND

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
www.rikidscount.org
 401.351.9400

SOUTH CAROLINA

Children's Trust of South
 Carolina
scchildren.org
 803.733.5430

SOUTH DAKOTA

Montana Budget & Policy Center
sdkidscount.org
 406.422.5848

TENNESSEE

The Sycamore Institute
www.sycamoretn.org
 615.680.0047

TEXAS

Every Texan
everytexan.org/kids-count
 512.320.0222

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

St. Croix Foundation for
 Community Development
stxfoundation.org
 340.773.9898

UTAH

Voices for Utah Children
www.utahchildren.org
 801.364.1182

VERMONT

Voices for Vermont's Children
www.voicesforvtkids.org
 802.229.6377

VIRGINIA

Voices for Virginia's Children
vakids.org
 804.649.0184

WASHINGTON

Children's Alliance
www.childrensalliance.org
 206.324.0340

WEST VIRGINIA

West Virginia Center on
 Budget and Policy
wvpolicy.org
 304.720.8682

WISCONSIN

Kids Forward
kidsforward.org
 608.285.2314

WYOMING

Wyoming Community Foundation
www.wycf.org/wycountkids
 307.721.8300

ABOUT THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private philanthropy that creates a brighter future for the nation’s children and youth 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.

KIDS COUNT (LA INFANCIA CUENTA™) is the Foundation’s national and state effort to track the status of children in the United States. By providing policymakers and advocates with benchmarks of child and young adult well-being, the Foundation seeks to enrich local, state and national discussions concerning ways to enable all kids and youth to succeed.

Nationally, the Foundation produces publications on key areas of well-being, including the annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, *Race for Results*® and periodic reports on critical child and family policy and practice issues. In addition, through its Thrive by 25® briefs, it reports on the needs of young people ages 14 through 24. All the Foundation’s lessons are available at www.aecf.org/publications.

The Foundation’s KIDS COUNT Data Center — at datacenter.aecf.org — provides the best available data on child well-being in the United States. Additionally, the Foundation funds the KIDS COUNT Network — which counts members serving every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands — to provide a more detailed, local picture of how children are faring.

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THE ANNIE E. CASEY
FOUNDATION

Our big ideas are building a brighter future
for America's children, youth and families.

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