

The State of Kentucky Kids

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About Kentucky Youth Advocates

As the independent voice for Kentucky children, KYA advocates for policies that give children the best possible opportunities for a brighter future. Our vision is to make Kentucky the best place in America to be young.



The Kentucky KIDS COUNT Project



Kentucky Youth Advocates has provided **county- and school-district level data** on children and families for Kentucky's state and local decisionmakers for **35 years**.

Supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation to:

- Release state and sub-state level data each year
- Maintain Kentucky data on the national KIDS COUNT Data Center



2025 US KIDS COUNT: How Are KY Kids Faring?

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING					RANK	
	UNITED STATES			KENTUCKY		
Children in poverty US 11,445,000 KY 209,000	17% 2019	16% 2023	↓ BETTER	22% 2019	21% 2023 ↓ BETTER	
Children whose parents lack secure employment US 18,437,000 KY 297,000	26% 2019	25% 2023	↓ BETTER	31% 2019	29% 2023 ↓ BETTER	
Children living in households with a high housing cost burden US 22,134,000 KY 234,000	30% 2019	30% 2023	= SAME	23% 2019	23% 2023 = SAME	
Teens not in school and not working US 1,168,000 KY 14,000	6% 2019	7% 2023	↑ WORSE	8% 2019	6% 2023 ↓ BETTER	



2025 US KIDS COUNT: How Are KY Kids Faring?

EDUCATION

RANK25

	UNITED STATES			KENTUCKY		
Young children (ages 3 and 4) not in school US 4,317,000 KY 71,000	52% 2014-18	54% 2019-23	↑ WORSE	58% 2014-18	63% 2019-23	↑ WORSE
Fourth graders not proficient in reading US N.A. KY N.A.	66% 2019	70% 2024	↑ WORSE	65% 2019	67% 2024	↑ WORSE
Eighth graders not proficient in math US N.A. KY N.A.	67% 2019	73% 2024	↑ WORSE	71% 2019	76% 2024	↑ WORSE
High school students not graduating on time US N.A. KY N.A.	14% 2018-19	13% 2021-22	↓ BETTER	9% 2018-19	10% 2021-22	↑ WORSE



2025 US KIDS COUNT: How Are KY Kids Faring?

HEALTH

RANK

31

UNITED STATES

KENTUCKY

Low birth-weight babies

US 308,263 | KY 4,597

8.3%
2019

8.6%
2023

↑
WORSE

8.7%
2019

8.8%
2023

↑
WORSE

Children without health insurance

US 4,155,000 | KY 37,000

6%
2019

5%
2023

↓
BETTER

4%
2019

3%
2023

↓
BETTER

Child and teen deaths per 100,000

US 22,841 | KY 395

25
2019

29
2023

↑
WORSE

29
2019

37
2023

↑
WORSE

Children and teens (ages 10 to 17) who are overweight or obese

US N.A. | KY N.A.

31%
2018-19

31%
2022-23

=
SAME

37%
2018-19

33%
2022-23

↓
BETTER



2025 US KIDS COUNT: How Are KY Kids Faring?

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

RANK

41

UNITED STATES

KENTUCKY

Children in single-parent families

US 23,531,000 | KY 336,000

34%
2019

34%
2023

=
SAME

36%
2019

36%
2023

=
SAME

Children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma

US 7,998,000 | KY 87,000

12%
2019

11%
2023

↓
BETTER

11%
2019

9%
2023

↓
BETTER

Children living in high-poverty areas

US 5,546,000 | KY 112,000

10%
2014-18

8%
2019-23

↓
BETTER

15%
2014-18

11%
2019-23

↓
BETTER

Teen births per 1,000

US 140,977 | KY 2,976

17
2019

13
2023

↓
BETTER

25
2019

21
2023

↓
BETTER



2025 KY KIDS COUNT:

Four Domains of Child Wellbeing

Economic Security

- Children in Poverty
- Children in Low-Income Families
- Children Living in Food Insecure Households
- High Rental Cost Burden

Education

- Kindergartens Ready to Learn
- Fourth Grade Students Proficient in Reading
- Eighth Grade Students Proficient in Math
- High School Students Graduating on Time

Health

- Smoking During Pregnancy
- Low-Birthweight Babies
- Children Under 19 with Health Insurance
- Teen Births

Family & Community

- Births to Mothers without a High School Degree
- Children in Foster Care
- Children Exiting Foster Care to Reunification
- Children Living in High Poverty Neighborhoods

2025 KY KIDS COUNT: Preview of Coming Data



119 of 120 counties saw **worse** rates of food insecurity in 2023 compared to 2021, and 1 county saw a rate that **did not change**.



ALL Kentucky counties had **lower** rates of mothers smoking during pregnancy between 2021-23 compared to 2016-18.



Data Spotlight on Childhood Obesity & Food Access



The neighborhood a child grows up in can shape their diet and impact risk of obesity:

- In Kentucky, nearly one in five youth ages 6–17 (18.7%) are obese, mirroring the national rate of 17%
- Limited access to healthy foods, few opportunities for physical activity, and chronic stress drive higher obesity rates, especially in low-income and rural communities
- Children living in high-poverty neighborhoods with poor food access during pregnancy and early childhood had a more than 50% higher risk of obesity

Data Spotlight on Childhood Obesity & Food Access



School meals impact children's nutrition and help combat obesity:

- Most Kentucky schools offer free meals through Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)
- Free/reduced priced meals at schools are linked to improved health and lower rates of obesity
- In Kentucky, more than 1 in 4 food-insecure children live in families that earn too much to qualify for free and reduced-price meals, relying on SNAP and Medicaid



2025 Kentucky KIDS COUNT Data Dashboard to be released December 11th

- ✓ Includes data on child well-being for all 120 Kentucky counties
- ✓ Policymakers, advocates, media invited to webinar to overview dashboard on December 11
- ✓ More details at www.kyyouth.org

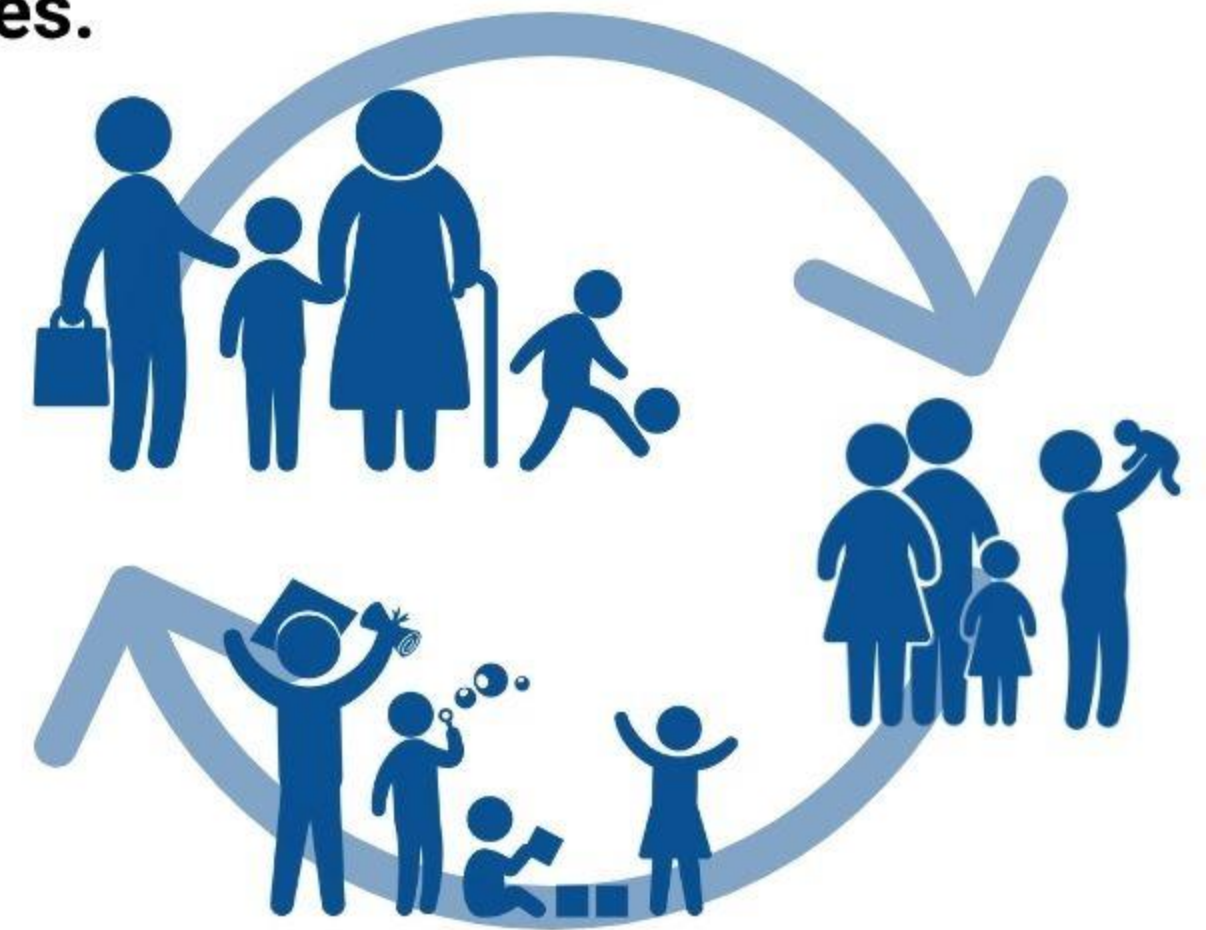


Data Informs Policy

The Blueprint for Kentucky's Children speaks with a common voice to create brighter futures for all Kentucky kids and their families.

The Blueprint is a coalition of non-profit, public, and private organizations that stands on three pillars:

- Thriving communities launch strong families,
- Strong families launch successful kids, and
- Successful kids launch a prosperous future for Kentucky.



Blueprint for Kentucky's Children

2026 State Policy & Budget Priorities

- Ensure meaningful nutrition access including SNAP and school meals.
- Prioritize investments for children who have experienced abuse and neglect by dedicating funds to support kinship caregivers.
- Define child and family impact statements and create a process for analyzing proposed legislation to determine impacts on kids and families.
- Support youth mental health by creating mechanisms to direct social media settlement dollars to positive youth development programs.

Questions?

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kyyouth.org

