

The State of Kentucky Kids

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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



2026 US KIDS COUNT: How Are KY Kids Faring?

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING	SCORE			RANK	
	507 BETTER			39	
	UNITED STATES			KENTUCKY	
Children in poverty US 11,117,000 KY 192,000	17% 2019	15% 2024	↓ BETTER	22% 2019	19% 2024 ↓ BETTER
Children whose parents lack secure employment US 18,420,000 KY 287,000	26% 2019	25% 2024	↓ BETTER	31% 2019	28% 2024 ↓ BETTER
Children living in households with a high housing cost burden US 22,385,000 KY 232,000	30% 2019	31% 2024	↑ WORSE	23% 2019	23% 2024 STABLE
Teens not in school and not working US 1,218,000 KY 20,000	6% 2019	7% 2024	↑ WORSE	8% 2019	8% 2024 STABLE



2026 US KIDS COUNT: How Are KY Kids Faring?

EDUCATION	SCORE			RANK	
	429 WORSE			22	
	UNITED STATES			KENTUCKY	
Young children (ages 3 and 4) not in school US 4,277,000 KY 70,000	52% 2015-19	54% 2020-24	↑ WORSE	59% 2015-19	63% 2020-24 ↑ 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% 2023-24	↓ BETTER	9% 2018-19	8% 2023-24 ↓ BETTER

N.A.: Not available



2026 US KIDS COUNT: How Are KY Kids Faring?

HEALTH

SCORE

556
BETTER

RANK

31

UNITED STATES

KENTUCKY

Low birth-weight babies

US 308,966 | KY 4,640

8.3%
2019

8.5%
2024

↑
WORSE

8.7%
2019

8.8%
2024

↑
WORSE

Children without health insurance

US 4,648,000 | KY 54,000

6%
2019

6%
2024

STABLE

4%
2019

5%
2024

↑
WORSE

Child and teen deaths per 100,000

US 21,189 | KY 335

25
2019

27
2024

↑
WORSE

29
2019

31
2024

↑
WORSE

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

US N.A. | KY N.A.

31%
2018-19

30%
2023-24

↓
BETTER

37%
2018-19

33%
2023-24

↓
BETTER



2026 US KIDS COUNT: How Are KY Kids Faring?

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY	SCORE			RANK	
	501 BETTER			44	
	UNITED STATES			KENTUCKY	
Children in single-parent families US 23,472,000 KY 316,000	34% 2019	34% 2024	STABLE	36% 2019	34% 2024 ↓ BETTER
Children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma US 7,868,000 KY 103,000	12% 2019	11% 2024	↓ BETTER	11% 2019	10% 2024 ↓ BETTER
Children living in high-poverty areas US 5,419,000 KY 109,000	9% 2015-19	7% 2020-24	↓ BETTER	15% 2015-19	11% 2020-24 ↓ BETTER
Teen births per 1,000 US 137,273 KY 2,975	17 2019	13 2024	↓ BETTER	25 2019	20 2024 ↓ BETTER

N.A.: Not available





2025 Kentucky KIDS COUNT Data Dashboard

- ✓ Includes data on child well-being for all 120 Kentucky counties and by race.
- ✓ Data highlight that explores the impact of food access and school meals on childhood obesity.
- ✓ More details at www.kyyouth.org

Kentucky KIDS COUNT: Four Domains of Child Well-being

Economic Security

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

Health

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

Education

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

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



How Are Kids Faring in Each County ?

In 2023:

- **111 counties** had **lower** rates of child poverty, while **8 counties** had higher rates.
- **119 counties** had **worse** rates of child food insecurity, while **1 county** saw **no change**.

ECONOMIC SECURITY 		BASELINE DATA	LATEST DATA	CHANGE SINCE BASELINE*
	CHILDREN IN POVERTY (below 100% of the federal poverty level)	22.3% 2018	20.2% 2023	✓
	CHILDREN IN LOW-INCOME FAMILIES (below 200% of the federal poverty level)	46% 2014-18	44% 2019-23	✓
	CHILDREN LIVING IN FOOD INSECURE HOUSEHOLDS	15.2% 2021	21.1% 2023	✗
	HIGH RENTAL COST BURDEN	46% 2014-18	45% 2019-23	✓



How Are Kids Faring in Each County?

In 2024-2025:

- **62 school districts** had **better** rates of Kindergartners ready to learn, while **109** had **worse** rates.
- **96 school districts** had **better** rates of 8th graders who were proficient in math, while **51** had **worse** rates.

School district level data				
EDUCATION	KINDERGARTENERS READY TO LEARN	51.0% SY 2019-20	46% SY 2024-25	×
	FOURTH GRADE STUDENTS PROFICIENT IN READING	50% SY 2023-24	50% SY 2024-25	=
	EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS PROFICIENT IN MATH	37% SY 2023-24	40% SY 2024-25	✓
	HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS GRADUATING ON TIME	90.9% SY 2019-20	93.5% SY 2024-25	✓



How Are Kids Faring in Each County ?

In 2021-2023:

- **120 counties** had **lower** rates of mothers smoking during pregnancy.
- **59 counties** had **lower** rates of low-birthweight babies, while **53** had **higher** rates.

HEALTH 	SMOKING DURING PREGNANCY	17.8% 2016-18	10.6% 2021-23	✓
	LOW-BIRTHWEIGHT BABIES	8.9% 2016-18	9.0% 2021-23	✗
	CHILDREN UNDER 19 WITH HEALTH INSURANCE	96.3% 2018	96.7% 2023	✓
	TEEN BIRTHS (rate per 1,000 females 15-19)	28.2 2016-18	21.0 2021-23	✓



How Are Kids Faring in Each County ?

In 2022-2024:

- **82 counties** had **lower** rates of children in foster care, while **37 counties** experienced **worse** rates.

FAMILY & COMMUNITY	BIRTHS TO MOTHERS WITHOUT A HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE	13.6% 2016-18	12.2% 2021-23	✓
	CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE (rate per 1,000 children ages 0-17)	51.1 2017-19	39.4 2022-24	✓
	CHILDREN EXITING FOSTER CARE TO REUNIFICATION	37% 2017-19	38% 2022-24	✓
	CHILDREN LIVING IN HIGH POVERTY NEIGHBORHOODS	39% 2014-18	31% 2019-23	✓



KIDS COUNT Data Center



We track over 60 indicators on child well-being by county, school district, and race.

- *Safety Net Programs:* Children utilizing WIC, SNAP, K-TAP, Medicaid, and KCHIP
- *Health:* Newborns being breastfed, preterm births, and youth death rate
- *Education:* Student homelessness, chronic absenteeism, and kindergarten dental screenings
- *Juvenile Justice:* Youth charged with offenses, successfully diverted, and incarcerated in the juvenile justice system

Legislative Opportunities to Improve Child Outcomes

2027 opportunities

- Support youth mental health by creating mechanisms to direct social media settlement dollars to positive youth development programs.
- Support student learning by studying and developing recommendations on screen time and appropriate use of technology in schools.

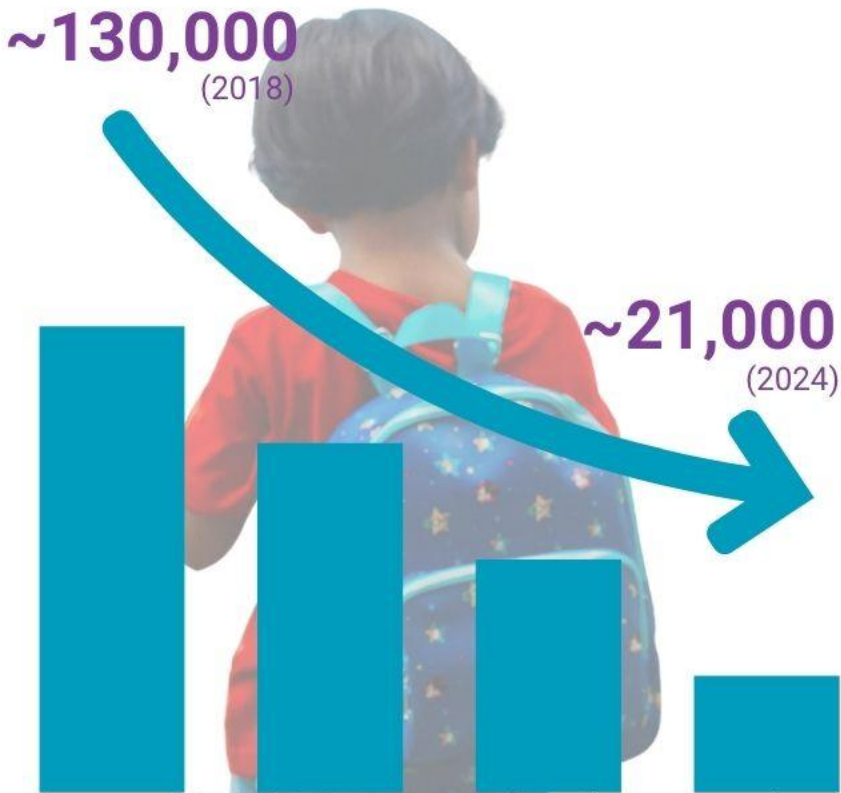
Looking ahead

- Increase efficiency, access to programs, and child outcomes by establishing a Children's Cabinet to bring together various departments such as early education, child care, human services, child welfare, family support programs, medical and behavioral health, and juvenile justice.



Legislative Opportunities to Strengthen Data Access

Declining KIP Survey Participation



Source: 2018, 2024 KY Incentives for Prevention (CIP) Survey

Consent for School-Based Surveys

- Kentucky now requires parents' active consent for all surveys administered in schools, impeding our ability to obtain critical data on Kentucky youth.
- It can be difficult to obtain parental consent for a variety of reasons, including parents forgetting to sign and students not giving the paperwork to their parents.
- Accurate youth data helps schools, organizations, and policymakers address critical issues, secure grants, and measure their success.

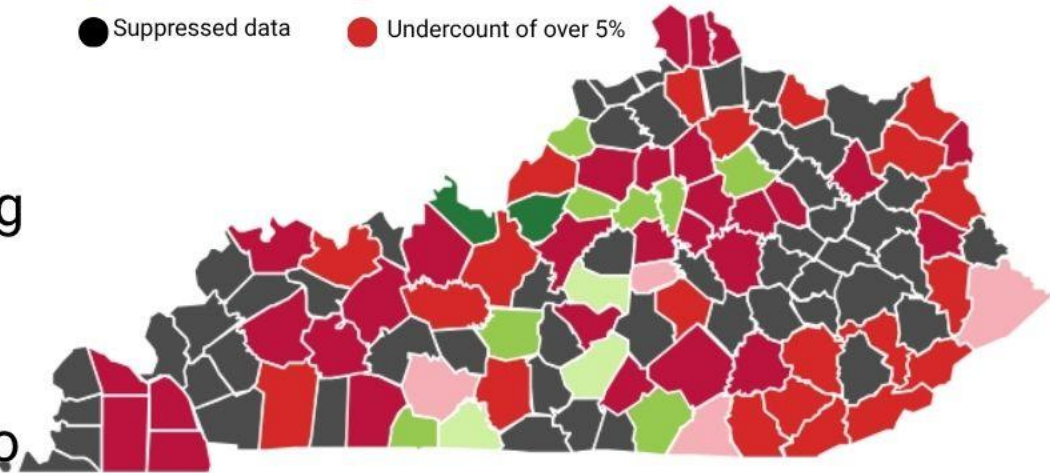


Legislative Opportunities to Strengthen Data Access: Getting Ready for the 2030 Census

We have the opportunity to guide federal funding for programs that support children and families until 2040.

- The Census guides billions of dollars in federal funding for Kentucky each year, as well as Congressional Representation. This includes funding for programs like the National School Lunch Program.
- Any undercount will lead to cuts in federal funding to Kentucky for critical programs.
- Kentucky could join Arkansas in preparing for 2030 by establishing a statewide Complete Counts Committee.

County Legend

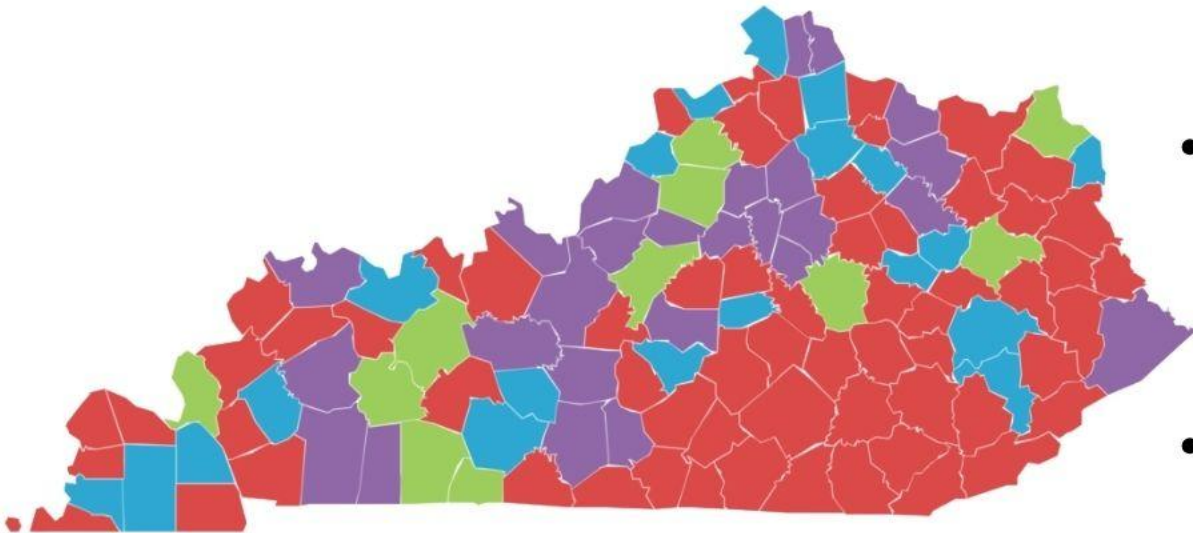


Local Opportunities to Get Ready for the 2030 Census

2017 LUCA Participation in KY

County & City Participation

- No LUCA Participation
- County & City LUCA Participation
- County LUCA Participation
- City LUCA participation



SOURCE: US Census Bureau, LUCA 2030 Team.

Local governments have a major opportunity to prepare for the 2030 Census next year through the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA).

- LUCA is where local governments review and update the Census Bureau's address list to ensure all households are accounted for.
- LUCA is especially important for communities that have experienced the following since 2020:
 - Significant housing development
 - Natural disasters
- Now is the time to be talking to your city & county leaders about participating!



Questions?

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