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Florida ranks 38th in nation for child well-being according to new report

By Karen Cyphers on June 24, 2013

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Florida ranks 38th in the nation for overall child well-being according to a report released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, considering a spectrum of markers such as low-birthweight babies, child and teen deaths, high school graduation rates, and child poverty.



The study, titled the Kids County Data Book, derived a composite index for overall well-being on four factors: economic, education, health, and family and community.

Of these, Florida ranked most poorly on economic indicators: the state has 980,000 children in poverty, representing 25 percent of all children; nearly 1.4 million children whose parents lack secure employment (34 percent); 1.9 million children in households with a high housing cost burden (48 percent); and 93,000 teens who are not in school and not working (9 percent). In contrast, the national average for child poverty is 23 percent; with 32 percent of parents lacking secure employment; and 40 percent of children living in households with a high housing cost burden.

Education indicators leave a bit to be desired and do not include factors that Florida has shown significant improvement upon — but nevertheless paint a fairly grim picture, with the state ranking 35th overall. Approximately 51 percent of Florida children do not attend preschool; 65 percent of fourth graders are not proficient in reading; 72 percent of eighth graders are not proficient in math; and 29 percent of high school students fail to graduate on time. Of these, Florida's fourth grade reading levels are better than the national average, while eighth grade math skills fall just short, and high school graduation rates need seven points of improvement to hit the mid-line.

Florida also ranks 35th in the nation for family and community factors. Approximately 39 percent of Florida children live in single-parent families — far lower than the 64 percent of children who do so in Washington, DC, but higher than the US average (35 percent), Colorado (29 percent) or Utah (21 percent). About 14 percent of Floridian children have parents who lack a high school diploma; and 11 percent live in high poverty areas. These are both lower than the national average of 15 and 12 percent, respectively, although not by much. Finally, Florida's teen birth rate is 19,127 per 100,000 — about 32 percent of all births, just lower than the national average of 34 percent.

When it comes to health care, according to this analysis, Florida once again falls in the bottom half of states — ranking at 37th. About 8.7 percent of Florida babies are born at a low-birthweight; 12 percent are without health insurance; and 7 percent of teens abuse alcohol or drugs. Florida's child and teen death rate, at 1,166 per 100,000 youths, appears to sit right at the middle of the pack. Each of these measures is at or just above the national average.

The full report is [published here](#).

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