Children's Family Structure in California

Households with Children: 2014-2018; Showing Counties

Definition: Estimated percentage of households with and without one or more children ages 0-17 (e.g., in 2014-2018, 34.8% of California households had children).

Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (Jan. 2020).

What It Is

On kidsdata.org, measures of children's family and household structure come from the American Community Survey and Current Population Survey. Depending on the measure, data are provided as one-, two-, and/or five-year estimates for the nation, state, counties, cities, school districts, and/or legislative districts. The following indicators are available:

- Households with children ages 0-17
- Children living with parents or other relatives overall and by race/ethnicity
- Children in cohabitating couple households
- Children in same-sex couple households
- Children in the care of grandparents

In addition, kidsdata.org's measures of youth housing situation present characteristics of where and with whom students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs live. These estimates come from the California Healthy Kids Survey and are based on youth self-reports by grade level, gender, level of school connectedness, parent education level, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

Why This Topic Is Important

Child well being is strongly influenced by the family environment and the presence of caring, stable adults. While children can thrive in any kind of family structure (e.g., in the care of grandparents, single-parents, same-sex parents, etc.), the stability of the family and the nature of family relationships are important factors in child development. Research shows that unstable home environments can adversely affect children's health and well being. Financial stability is important, too, and is linked to family structure. For example, single and cohabiting parents are more likely than married parents to have lower incomes and experience financial difficulty. Financial hardship can cause family stress and hinder the ability to provide the environment and experiences a child needs for optimal cognitive, emotional, and physical development.

Kidsdata.org's family structure topic also includes data on the youth housing situation, which can provide insight into stability and vulnerability in young people's lives. For example, youth living in multi-family (overcrowded) homes, in hotels/motels, or with friends may be homeless or at risk of...
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