Family Structure for California's Children

Households with Children: 2013-2017; Showing Counties

Definition: Estimated percentage of households with and without one or more children ages 0-17 (e.g., in 2013-2017, 35.2% of California households had children).

Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (Dec. 2018).

Living Arrangement for Children, by Presence of Parents: 2017

Definition: Estimated percentage of children ages 0-17 living with and without parents or other relatives overall and by race/ethnicity, children in cohabitating couple households, children in cohabitating same-sex couple households, and children in the care of grandparents. Depending on the indicator, data come from the American Community Survey or Current Population Survey and are available for:

- California and the U.S., as single-year estimates
- Cities, school districts, and counties with 65,000 residents or more, as single-year estimates
- Cities, school districts, and counties with 10,000 residents or more, as 5-year estimates
- Legislative districts, as 5-year estimates

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
Youth Housing Situation, by Grade Level: 2015-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Situation</th>
<th>7th Grade</th>
<th>9th Grade</th>
<th>11th Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent’s or Guardian’s Home</td>
<td>87.7%</td>
<td>90.3%</td>
<td>92.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Relative’s Home</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend’s Home</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Family Home</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster or Group Home</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel or Motel</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Housing Situation</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Definition:** Housing situation among public school students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs (e.g., in 2015-2017, an estimated 4.3% of California 7th graders lived in multi-family homes).

**Data Source:** WestEd, California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) and Biennial State CHKS, California Dept. of Education (Mar. 2019).

How Children Are Faring

In 2017, the estimated share of California households with one or more children ages 0-17 was 34%, down from 38% a decade earlier. Statewide, 64% of California children lived with two parents in 2017, 23% lived with their mother only, 8% with their father only, and 4% with non-parent relatives. Additionally, 9% of children lived in households with unmarried couples and 3% lived in the care of their grandparents. Across counties with data in 2013-2017, family structure varied widely, from 51% to 76% of children living in two-parent households, 0.3% to 16% living in cohabitating couple households, and 0.1% to 7% in the care of grandparents. In 2016, 0.1% of California children lived in households with unmarried same-sex couples, compared with 0.2% nationally.

According to a survey of California youth, around 9 out of every 10 students in Grades 7, 9, and 11 lived in a home with one or more parents or guardians in 2015-2017. During the same period, fewer than 1 in 20 lived in a home with more than one family, and fewer than 1 in 40 lived in the home of another relative. Statewide, students in non-traditional programs, those with low levels of school connectedness, and those whose parents did not finish high school are less likely to live in a parent’s or guardian’s home than their peers in other groups.

**View references for this text and additional research on this topic:**
https://www.kidsdata.org/topic/8/family-structure/summary

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Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (Sept. 2018).