KidsData

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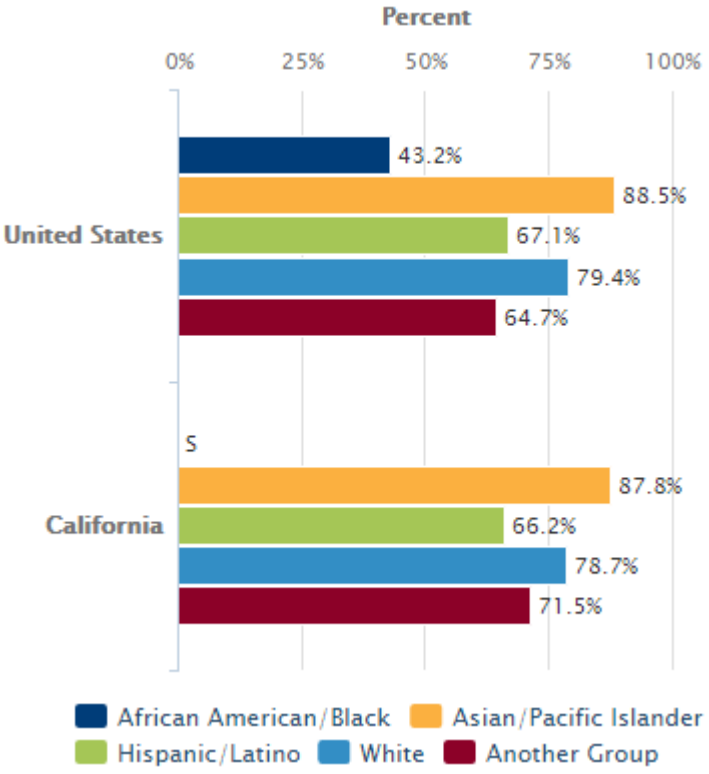
Children's Family Structure in California

Households with Children Ages 0-17: 2016-2020

Locations	Percent
United States	30.7%
California	34.0%
Alameda County	33.2%
Contra Costa County	35.7%
Fresno County	40.7%
Kern County	42.6%
Los Angeles County	32.4%
Orange County	34.1%
Riverside County	37.4%
Sacramento County	34.3%
San Bernardino County	41.5%
San Diego County	32.5%
Santa Clara County	35.8%

Definition: Estimated percentage of households with and without one or more children ages 0-17 (e.g., in 2016-2020, 34% of California households had children).
Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (Aug. 2022).

Children in Two-Parent Households, by Race/Ethnicity: 2024-2025



Definition: Estimated percentage of children ages 0-17 living in households with and without parents present, by child's race/ethnicity (e.g., in 2024-2025, 66.2% of Hispanic/Latino children in California were in living arrangements with two parents present).

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.

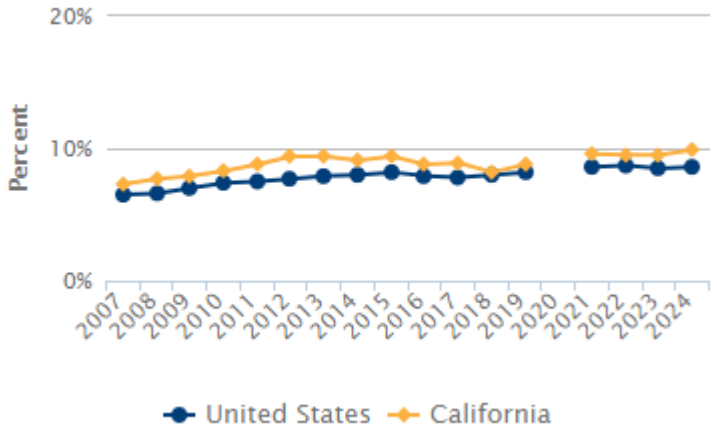
Why This Topic Is Important

Child well being is influenced strongly by the family environment and the presence of caring adults. Children can thrive in any type of family—e.g., in the care of grandparents, single parents, same-sex parents, etc. More important than family structure are factors related to family stability and strong, secure relationships with primary caregivers. Research shows that unstable home environments and parental relationships can adversely affect children's development and functioning. Financial stability is important, too, and is linked to family structure. For example, single parents—especially single mothers—are more likely than married or cohabitating parents to experience financial difficulty, housing instability, and food insecurity. Financial hardship can cause family stress and hinder a family's ability to provide the environment and experiences a child needs for optimal cognitive, emotional, and physical development.

Other factors related to family structure and home environments can put children at risk for negative health outcomes. For example, youth living in multi-family (overcrowded) homes, in hotels/motels, or with friends may be homeless

Data Source: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement public use microdata (Jul. 2026).

Children in Cohabitating Couple Households



Definition: Estimated percentage of children ages 0-17 living in households in which the householder resides with their unmarried partner (e.g., in 2024, 9.9% of California children lived in cohabitating couple households).
Data Source: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey summary files and public use microdata (Aug. 2026).

Youth Housing Situation, by Grade Level: 2017-2019

California	Percent		
Housing Situation	Grade 7	Grade 9	Grade 11
Parent's or Guardian's Home	85.8%	91.0%	92.0%
Other Relative's Home	2.4%	1.9%	1.9%
Friend's Home	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%
Multi-Family Home	6.0%	3.7%	3.5%
Foster or Group Home	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%
Hotel or Motel	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%

Definition: Housing situation among public school students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs (e.g., in 2017-2019, an estimated 6% of California 7th graders lived in multi-family homes).
Data Source: WestEd, California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) & Biennial State CHKS. California Dept. of Education (Aug. 2020).

or at risk of homelessness. Poverty and housing insecurity can impact young people's development and well-being throughout life. Additionally, youth living in foster care or group homes face particularly high risks for emotional, physical, and behavioral health challenges.

How Children Are Faring

The share of California households with children ages 0-17 was 34% in 2016-2020, down from 38% a decade earlier in 2006-2010. State estimates over this period followed national trends but were consistently higher than U.S. figures.

In 2024, 10% of California children in households lived with unmarried couples (of the same or opposite sex), 0.6% lived with same-sex couples (married or unmarried), and 3% lived with grandparents. Across counties and county groups with data, estimates of children in cohabitating couple households ranged from 3% to 16%, children in same-sex couple households from 0.1% to 4.3%, and children in the care of grandparents from 1% to 7%.

Statewide, 64% of children in households lived with two parents in 2018, 24% lived with their mother only, 8% with their father only, and 4% with non-parent relatives. Like other measures of family structure, these estimates vary widely by region and demographic group. For example, the percentage of children living with two parents ranged from 54% (Mendocino) to 77% (Placer) across counties with data for 2014-2018. Among racial/ethnic groups with data for 2024-2025, the share of California children in households with neither parent present ranged from fewer than 1 in 50 (Asian/Pacific Islander) to more than 1 in 10 (African American/Black).

According to a survey of California youth, more than 85% of students in grades 7, 9, and 11 lived in a home with one or more parents or guardians in 2017-2019. During the same period, fewer than 1 in 15 lived in a home with more than one family, and fewer than 1 in 40 lived in the home of another relative. 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://charts.kidsdata.org/topic/8/family-structure/summary