

About the NSCH

The Health Resources and Services Administration’s (HRSA) Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) funds and directs the **National Survey of Children’s Health (NSCH)**, which the U.S. Census Bureau conducts.

The NSCH is the **largest national and state-level survey on the health and health care needs of children ages 0-17, their families, and their communities.**

2022 New Content Areas

- Autoimmune diseases
- Eating and weight-related behaviors and concerns
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD) evaluations and diagnoses
- Housing instability
- Receipt of federal benefits
- School readiness, also known as Healthy and Ready to Learn
- Structural inequities
- Use of e-cigarettes and vaping in the home

State Oversamples

In 2022, nine states and one metropolitan area sponsored oversamples: California, Colorado, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Wyoming, and Atlanta, Georgia.

Oversampling increases the number of households sampled and completed surveys to enable detailed analysis of specific populations, such as regions within a state or racial and ethnic groups.

2022 Data Release

Access the most recent [data and supporting materials](#).

What is School Readiness?

School readiness refers to the skills and abilities children need to succeed and thrive in school, including physical well-being, motor development, social and emotional development, general knowledge, language acquisition, and how a child learns.

Why is School Readiness important?

For more than three decades, researchers, clinicians, educators, policy makers, and parents have recognized the importance of school readiness as a key indicator of children’s health and development. Children who enter kindergarten **healthy and ready to learn** are more likely to meet early academic milestones, which in turn have been associated with a range of better social, economic, and health outcomes across the lifespan. The importance of school readiness is underscored by its selection as a **Healthy People 2030** objective, one of four National Academies of Science **Pediatric Vital Signs**, and a National Outcome Measure for the **Title V Maternal and Child Health Block Grant** program.

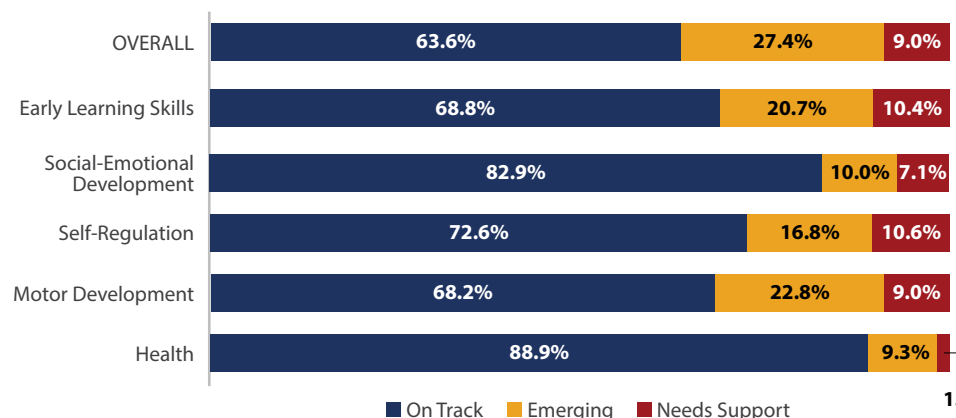
How is School Readiness measured in the NSCH?

The National Survey of Children’s Health (NSCH) provides the only national and state-level measure of young children’s readiness to start kindergarten within the context of influential health, behavioral, family, and community-level factors. The 2022 NSCH assesses school readiness from parent and caregiver responses to 28 questions in five areas (domains): Early Learning Skills, Social-Emotional Development, Self-Regulation, Motor Development, and Health. Responses are scored according to age-appropriate developmental expectations as ‘On Track’, ‘Emerging’, or ‘Needs Support’ (see next page for more detail).

Prevalence of Healthy and Ready to Learn

- In 2022, 63.6% of 3 to 5 year old children were ‘On Track’ in 4-5 domains without needing support in any domain—meeting the Title V Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant Program’s National Outcome Measure for School Readiness. By domain, the proportion of children ‘On Track’ ranged from just over two-thirds for Early Learning Skills (68.8%) and Motor Development (68.2%) to nearly 90% for Health (88.9%).
- Meeting the overall definition for ‘Needs Support’, 9.0% or 1 million children needed support in 2 or more domains. More than 1 in 10 children needed support for Early Learning Skills (10.4%) and Self-Regulation (10.6%).

Proportion of 3-5 Year Old Children Who Were On Track, Emerging, and Needing Support, Overall and by Domain, 2022



Healthy and Ready to Learn: Survey Questions

Early Learning Skills 9 Items

- How often can this child recognize the beginning sound of a word (e.g., “ball” starts with “buh” sound)?
- How often can this child come up with words that start with the same sound (e.g., “sock” and “sun”)?
- How well can this child come up with words that rhyme (e.g., “cat” and “mat”)?
- About how many letters of the alphabet can this child recognize?
- How often can this child write their first name, even if some of the letters aren’t quite right or are backwards?
- How often can this child read one-digit numbers (e.g., 2 or 8)?
- If asked to count objects, how high can this child count correctly?
- How often can this child tell which group of objects has more (e.g., group of 7 blocks has more than group of 4)?
- How often can this child correctly do simple addition (e.g., 2 blocks and 3 blocks add to 5 blocks)?

Social Emotional Development 6 Items

- How often can this child explain things they have seen or done so that you know what happened?
- How often can this child recognize and name their own emotions?
- How often does this child share toys or games with other children?
- How often does this child play well with other children?
- How often does this child show concern when they see others who are hurt or unhappy?
- How often can this child focus on a task you give them for at least a few minutes?

Self-Regulation 5 Items

- How often does this child have difficulty when asked to end one activity and start a new activity?
- How often does this child have trouble calming down?
- How often does this child have difficulty waiting for their turn?
- How often does this child get easily distracted?
- How often does this child lose their temper?

Motor Development 4 Items

- How well can this child draw a circle?
- How well can this child draw a face with eyes and mouth?
- How well can this child draw a person with a head, body, arms, and legs?
- How well can this child bounce a ball for several seconds?

Health 3 Items (4 questions)

- In general, how would you describe this child’s health?
- How would you describe the condition of this child’s teeth?
- DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS, how often have this child’s health conditions or problems affected their ability to do things other children their age do?
- [If child has a condition] To what extent do this child’s health conditions or problems affect their ability to do things?

Healthy and Ready to Learn: Measure Scoring

Parent/caregiver responses on each item were coded on a three-point scale, 1 = Needs Support, 2 = Emerging, and 3 = On Track, based on age-appropriate developmental expectations and an assessment of the overall distribution of responses across domain items and ages.

A score for each domain was then developed by summing all items with thresholds based on the overall average item-level score: On Track (average score ≥ 2.5 ; most items received a score of 3 or ‘On Track’), Emerging (average score 2.0-2.49; most items received a score of 2 or ‘Emerging’), and Needs Support (average score < 2.0 ; indicating at least one and usually multiple items received a score of 1 or ‘Needs Support’).

The overall measure was calculated by summing the number of domains in which a child was ‘On Track’, ‘Emerging’, and ‘Needs Support’. Children ‘On Track’ in 4-5 domains with no domain that ‘Needs Support’ were considered ‘On Track’ overall, forming the definition for the Title V National Outcome Measure for School Readiness. Children with less than 5 ‘On Track’ domains and no more than 1 ‘Needs Support’ domain were considered ‘Emerging’ overall. Children with ‘Needs Support’ in ≥ 2 domains were considered ‘Needs Support’ overall.

Data Notes

In 2022, parents/caregivers completed questionnaires for 11,121 children ages 3-5 years. Estimates presented in this brief are weighted to represent children living in U.S. households. Combining multiple years of data enables more reliable estimates, especially for smaller populations or state-level estimates. Many questions used in Healthy and Ready to Learn were added or modified in 2022. Therefore, it is not yet possible to combine data from multiple years, conduct comparisons to prior years, or examine trends over time for the Healthy and Ready to Learn measure.