

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.**

It is an annual survey completed by a parent or guardian, either by web or paper and pencil.

Additional Topics

- Health conditions
- Health care service access and quality
- Participation in early childhood education
- Food sufficiency and nutrition
- Screen time
- Outdoor play
- Sleep adequacy
- Caregiver mental health
- Family resilience and activities
- Neighborhood amenities

State Oversamples

Oversampling increases the number of households sampled and completed surveys to enable detailed analysis of specific populations, such as children with special health care needs or regions within a state. In 2022 – 2023, 15 states and 1 metropolitan area sponsored oversamples.

More Information

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

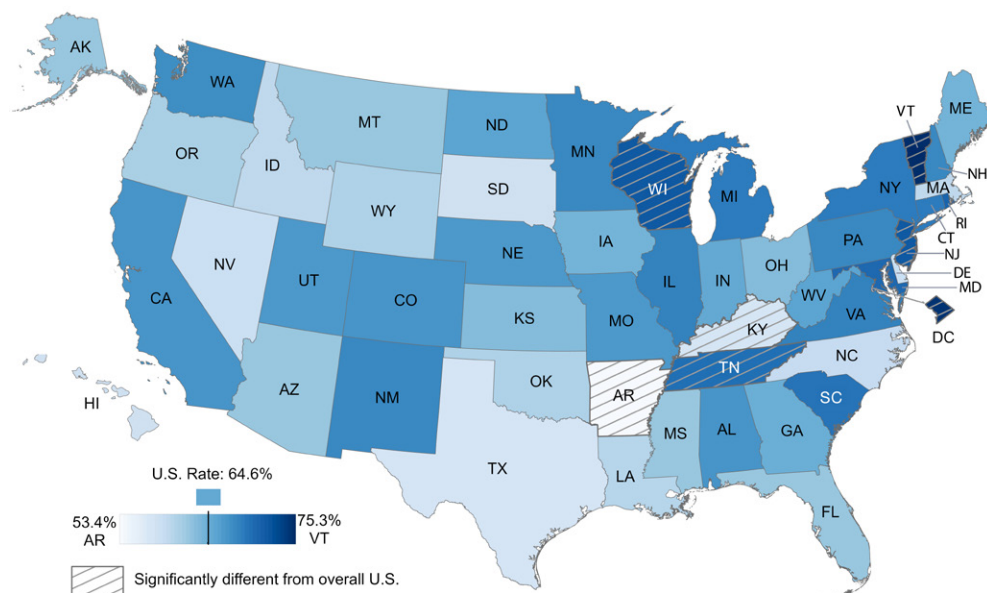
School readiness refers to the skills and abilities children need to succeed and thrive in school, including physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, early literacy and math skills, language acquisition, and how a child learns (for example, curiosity and temperament). Children who enter kindergarten ready to learn are more likely to meet expected early academic milestones, which in turn are linked to a range of better health and economic outcomes across the lifespan. School readiness is a National Outcome Measure for the **Title V Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant** program. Several National Performance Measures influence school readiness, including developmental screening, access to a medical home, housing instability, and food sufficiency.

The **National Survey of Children's Health** provides the only standardized national and state-level measure of young children's readiness to start kindergarten within the context of health, behavioral, family, and community-level factors. The 2022 – 2023 NSCH assessed school readiness from parent and caregiver responses to 28 questions in 5 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 the [School Readiness, 2022 data brief](#) for more detail).

School Readiness by State

- In 2022 – 2023, 64.6% of 3- to 5-year-old U.S. children met the Title V National Outcome Measure for School Readiness and were considered to be **Healthy and Ready to Learn**. These children were "On Track" in four to five domains without needing support in any domain.
- School readiness varied across states by over 20 percentage points (53.4% to 75.3%). Five states had rates of school readiness that were significantly higher than the national rate: Vermont (75.3%), District of Columbia (74.8%), New Jersey (71.8%), Wisconsin (71.7%), and Tennessee (70.0%). Only two states had rates of school readiness that were significantly lower than the national rate: Arkansas (53.4%) and Kentucky (57.0%).

School Readiness Among 3- to 5-year-olds by State, 2022 – 2023



School Readiness Domains by State

By domain, national rates of being “On Track” ranged from a low of 67.9% for Motor Development to a high of 89.1% for Health (see summary table below and full state details on next page). Across domains, Early Learning Skills had the largest variability across states, spanning more than 30 percentage points (52.1% to 86.2%). Compared with the U.S. overall, 19 states had significantly higher rates for at least 1 domain while 8 states had significantly lower rates for at least 1 domain. Five states had significantly higher rates for multiple domains (Connecticut, DC, New Jersey, Vermont, and Wisconsin). Only Arizona had significantly lower rates for multiple domains.

Domain	Items	U.S. Rate of “On Track”	State Range	States Significantly Higher Than U.S.	States Significantly Lower Than U.S.
Early Learning Skills	Nine items assessing letter sounds, letter and number recognition, rhyming, counting, etc.	70.1%	52.1% to 86.2% 34.1% point difference	DC: 86.2% Connecticut: 81.3% New Jersey: 81.3% Minnesota: 78.8% Maryland: 77.8% Vermont: 77.3%	Idaho: 52.1% South Dakota: 58.1% Arizona: 61.4% Arkansas: 61.8%
Social-Emotional Development	Six items assessing recognizing emotions, sharing, playing well with others, etc.	84.1%	77.9% [†] to 92.3% 14.4% point difference	Connecticut: 92.3% Vermont: 91.7% New Hampshire: 91.1% Nebraska: 89.4% Wisconsin: 88.8% West Virginia: 88.4%	
Self-Regulation	Five items assessing trouble calming down, difficulty waiting their turn, being easily distracted, etc.	73.3%	63.7% to 82.5% 18.8% point difference	Vermont: 82.5% South Carolina: 81.2% Rhode Island: 80.9% Michigan: 79.0% New Jersey: 79.0% New York: 78.3%	Montana: 63.7% Louisiana: 65.9%
Motor Development	Four items assessing ability to draw shapes, a face with eyes and mouth, bounce a ball, etc.	67.9%	61.4% [†] to 79.6% 18.2% point difference	DC: 79.6% Virginia: 76.5% New Mexico: 74.5% California: 72.4%	Ohio: 62.0%
Health	Three items assessing general health, condition of teeth, and health problems that affect functioning	89.1%	80.2% to 94.3% 14.1% point difference	Wisconsin: 94.3% DC: 93.9% North Dakota: 93.5% Connecticut: 92.9% Tennessee: 92.1%	Arizona: 80.2%

[†] Not statistically significant from the U.S. overall; see data notes and table on next page.

Protective Factors and Programs

- Various factors associated with being **Healthy and Ready to Learn** may help to explain state variation, including family income, food sufficiency, medical home access, and participation in early childhood education. For the 2022 – 2023 school year, Vermont and DC, which had the highest rates of school readiness (about 75%), both had **universal preschool programs** for children starting at age 3, while 5 more states had universal preschool beginning at age 4 (Florida, Iowa, Oklahoma, West Virginia, and Wisconsin).
- The **Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program** aims to improve early childhood development and school readiness by promoting positive parenting practices, family well-being, and connection to needed services in all 50 states, DC, and 5 territories. In fiscal year 2024, **83% of children enrolled in MIECHV** had a family member who read, told stories, and/or sang with them on a daily basis, representing a 22 percentage point increase since fiscal year 2017.

School Readiness Domains by State

	Overall School Readiness	Early Learning Skills	Social Emotional Development	Self-Regulation	Motor Development	Health
U.S. Overall	64.6	70.1	84.1	73.3	67.9	89.1
State						
Alabama	66.6 [†]	75.8 [†]	87.7 [†]	73.6 [†]	71.1 [†]	90.4 [†]
Alaska	61.7 [‡]	64.3 [‡]	87.9 [†]	68.1 [‡]	65.7 [‡]	88.6 [‡]
Arizona	61.9 [‡]	61.4 [§]	82.2 [‡]	68.4 [‡]	61.7 [‡]	80.2 [§]
Arkansas	53.4 [§]	61.8 [§]	84.3 [†]	68.7 [‡]	61.4 [‡]	85.6 [‡]
California	66.6 [†]	71.6 [†]	84.2 [†]	74.5 [†]	72.4 [*]	88.9 [‡]
Colorado	67.0 [†]	70.7 [†]	86.9 [†]	73.7 [†]	67.6 [‡]	90.0 [†]
Connecticut	68.8 [†]	81.3 [*]	92.3 [*]	68.7 [‡]	67.7 [‡]	92.9 [*]
Delaware	58.5 [‡]	66.9 [‡]	82.9 [‡]	73.4 [†]	62.9 [‡]	91.8 [†]
District of Columbia	74.8 [*]	86.2 [*]	88.3 [†]	72.9 [‡]	79.6 [*]	93.9 [*]
Florida	61.8 [‡]	69.3 [‡]	80.5 [‡]	66.8 [‡]	66.8 [‡]	83.8 [‡]
Georgia	64.5 [‡]	70.1 [†]	83.3 [‡]	74.5 [†]	66.3 [‡]	87.6 [‡]
Hawaii	57.6 [‡]	70.5 [†]	82.3 [‡]	73.9 [†]	66.5 [‡]	82.8 [‡]
Idaho	59.3 [‡]	52.1 [§]	87.2 [†]	71.6 [‡]	64.8 [‡]	89.3 [†]
Illinois	68.3 [†]	68.3 [‡]	84.9 [†]	74.8 [†]	68.5 [†]	88.2 [‡]
Indiana	64.7 [†]	68.1 [‡]	82.0 [‡]	70.5 [‡]	69.4 [†]	91.0 [†]
Iowa	63.6 [‡]	69.2 [‡]	85.9 [†]	73.6 [†]	70.2 [†]	87.3 [‡]
Kansas	62.8 [‡]	74.0 [†]	85.2 [†]	69.8 [‡]	66.0 [‡]	90.3 [†]
Kentucky	57.0 [§]	63.1 [‡]	81.5 [‡]	74.6 [†]	64.9 [‡]	87.7 [‡]
Louisiana	59.9 [‡]	70.2 [†]	82.3 [‡]	65.9 [§]	64.7 [‡]	87.1 [‡]
Maine	63.8 [‡]	72.1 [†]	88.8 [†]	74.6 [†]	62.9 [‡]	84.4 [‡]
Maryland	70.5 [†]	77.8 [*]	85.6 [†]	72.0 [‡]	73.3 [†]	84.0 [‡]
Massachusetts	59.5 [‡]	67.3 [‡]	87.5 [†]	68.8 [‡]	62.6 [‡]	90.5 [†]
Michigan	68.6 [†]	71.5 [†]	85.6 [†]	79.0 [*]	70.7 [†]	87.8 [‡]
Minnesota	68.0 [†]	78.8 [*]	84.9 [†]	78.5 [†]	70.8 [†]	91.2 [†]
Mississippi	61.7 [‡]	70.0 [‡]	84.6 [†]	73.9 [†]	66.5 [‡]	87.7 [‡]
Missouri	66.1 [†]	66.7 [‡]	87.5 [†]	72.5 [‡]	69.1 [†]	89.0 [‡]
Montana	61.9 [‡]	66.9 [‡]	86.5 [†]	63.7 [§]	61.5 [‡]	90.6 [†]
Nebraska	66.1 [†]	70.9 [†]	89.4 [*]	77.5 [†]	66.4 [‡]	90.8 [†]
Nevada	58.2 [‡]	64.4 [‡]	83.3 [‡]	72.2 [‡]	66.3 [‡]	86.7 [‡]
New Hampshire	67.8 [†]	73.7 [†]	91.1 [*]	77.4 [†]	70.2 [†]	90.4 [†]
New Jersey	71.8 [*]	81.3 [*]	86.8 [†]	79.0 [*]	70.6 [†]	90.9 [†]

Color Key

Compared to the U.S. Overall

- * Significantly higher rate
- † Higher rate, not significant
- ‡ Lower rate, not significant
- § Significantly lower rate

School Readiness Domains by State

	Overall School Readiness	Early Learning Skills	Social Emotional Development	Self-Regulation	Motor Development	Health
New Mexico	67.6 [†]	64.2 [‡]	87.9 [†]	74.2 [†]	74.5 [*]	86.2 [‡]
New York	68.7 [†]	74.3 [†]	86.2 [†]	78.3 [*]	70.2 [†]	89.2 [†]
North Carolina	58.6 [‡]	64.8 [‡]	81.2 [‡]	71.8 [‡]	62.3 [‡]	86.1 [‡]
North Dakota	65.1 [†]	73.9 [†]	85.5 [†]	71.6 [‡]	71.6 [†]	93.5 [*]
Ohio	62.7 [‡]	66.5 [‡]	85.1 [†]	72.9 [‡]	62.0 [§]	91.6 [†]
Oklahoma	60.4 [‡]	68.3 [‡]	88.0 [†]	68.0 [‡]	66.9 [‡]	90.0 [†]
Oregon	60.8 [‡]	68.8 [‡]	83.4 [‡]	68.9 [‡]	66.0 [‡]	90.1 [†]
Pennsylvania	67.9 [†]	74.7 [†]	82.0 [‡]	73.4 [†]	66.4 [‡]	90.7 [†]
Rhode Island	70.9 [†]	72.0 [†]	82.4 [‡]	80.9 [*]	67.1 [†]	90.5 [†]
South Carolina	69.1 [†]	71.8 [†]	86.3 [†]	81.2 [*]	66.9 [‡]	90.6 [†]
South Dakota	58.0 [‡]	58.1 [§]	81.3 [‡]	72.3 [‡]	62.6 [‡]	92.0 [†]
Tennessee	70.0 [*]	71.5 [†]	86.7 [†]	76.9 [†]	72.1 [†]	92.1 [*]
Texas	57.2 [‡]	64.9 [‡]	77.9 [‡]	72.1 [†]	64.2 [‡]	90.9 [†]
Utah	66.4 [†]	69.6 [‡]	86.6 [†]	69.2 [‡]	73.0 [†]	93.3 [†]
Vermont	75.3 [*]	77.3 [*]	91.7 [*]	82.5 [*]	71.5 [†]	90.8 [†]
Virginia	68.3 [†]	72.9 [†]	85.3 [†]	69.6 [‡]	76.5 [*]	90.7 [†]
Washington	67.4 [†]	75.1 [†]	84.3 [†]	77.4 [†]	63.9 [‡]	92.5 [†]
West Virginia	65.2 [‡]	68.1 [‡]	88.4 [*]	69.4 [‡]	69.9 [†]	88.4 [‡]
Wisconsin	71.7 [*]	73.4 [†]	88.8 [*]	77.2 [†]	73.3 [†]	94.3 [*]
Wyoming	60.1 [‡]	68.1 [‡]	87.1 [†]	72.6 [‡]	65.3 [‡]	88.6 [‡]

Color Key

Compared to the U.S. Overall

- * Significantly higher rate
- † Higher rate, not significant
- ‡ Lower rate, not significant
- § Significantly lower rate

Data Notes

In 2022 – 2023, parents/caregivers completed questionnaires for 23,176 children ages 3 – 5. 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. Statistical significance was determined using a two-sided, **nested Z-test** ($p < 0.05$) and is influenced by the rate and precision of estimates—states that **oversampled** have a larger sample size and more precise estimates. Many questions used in the Healthy and Ready to Learn measure were added or modified in 2022. Therefore, it is not yet possible to combine data from prior years or examine trends over time for the Healthy and Ready to Learn measure.