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State of the F.A.M.I.L.I.E.S.

2026 Methods and Sources

How the 50 states are compared across eight pillars, with every indicator's definition, source and year. Free to share with attribution.

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Method

The State of the F.A.M.I.L.I.E.S. compares the 50 states on eight pillars of family and community well-being using 25 public indicators from federal agencies and established research organizations. Every value carries its source and year.

1. **Indicator ranks.** States with a published value are sorted from best to worst (lowest first where lower is better). Ties share the better rank.
2. **Standard scores.** z = (state value − mean of states with data) ÷ standard deviation of those states (population formula), sign reversed where lower is better. The yes/no indicator is scored 1 or 0.
3. **Pillar scores and ranks.** The average of a state's standard scores on the pillar's indicators; states ranked 1 to 50 on unrounded scores. Pillars are never combined into an overall score.
4. **Missing data.** A state with no reliable published value is not ranked on that indicator; its pillar score averages the indicators that remain. No value is estimated.

Principles

- No single grade, and no causal claims: indicators describe conditions, not why they exist.
- Close ranks may not differ meaningfully, especially for survey-based measures.
- Rushing4Success uses other organizations' published values, never their rankings, except the KIDS COUNT child well-being rank, which is shown for context only and is not part of any pillar.

Rank stability

Pillar ranks were recalculated with four alternative scaling methods and with each indicator dropped in turn. Changing the scaling moves the median state 2 places or fewer; dropping an indicator moves it about 10 places, because each pillar has only three or four indicators. A pillar rank describes a position on the specific measures chosen, not a precise measure of the whole concept.

Reproducibility

The data file, pillar results and a script that recalculates every rank are free at rushing4success.com/research.

Indicators and sources

	Indicator	Definition	Source and year
F	Median household income	Median annual income of all households, 2024 dollars.	U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-year estimates, in Guzman, G. G. (2025), Household Income in States and Metropolitan Areas: 2024 (ACSBR-025), Appendix Table 1, 2024
F	Poverty rate	Percent of people living below the official federal poverty threshold.	U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-year estimates, in Benson, C. (2025), Poverty in States and Metropolitan Areas: 2024 (ACSBR-026), Appendix Table 1, 2024
F	Unemployment rate	Unemployed people as a percent of the labor force, seasonally adjusted.	U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, State Employment and Unemployment — September 2026 (released October 20, 2026), seasonally adjusted, Sept 2026 (preliminary)
A	8th-grade math score (NAEP)	Average scale score (0–500) of public-school 8th graders in mathematics.	National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2024 Mathematics, grade 8, public schools (NAEP Data Service), 2024
A	8th-grade reading score (NAEP)	Average scale score (0–500) of public-school 8th graders in reading.	National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2024 Reading, grade 8, public schools (NAEP Data Service), 2024
A	High school graduation rate	Percent of students graduating with a regular diploma within four years of starting 9th grade.	NCES EDFacts, compiled by America's Health Rankings (United Health Foundation), 2022–23
A	Adults with a bachelor's degree or higher	Percent of adults 25 and older with at least a bachelor's degree.	U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-year estimates, Table S1501 (state map compiled by the Maryland Department of Planning), 2024
M	Youth with a trusted adult mentor	Percent of children ages 12–17 with at least one adult in school, neighborhood or community they can rely on for advice.	National Survey of Children's Health, compiled by America's Health Rankings (United Health Foundation), 2023–24
M	Youth not in school and not working	Percent of young people ages 16–24 who are neither enrolled in school nor working.	Lewis, K., Powers, A., Wohnsigl, C., Harvey, K., & Shawa, T. (2024), Broad Recovery, Persistent Inequity: Youth Disconnection in America, Measure of America of the Social Science Research Council, from Census ACS, 2022

Indicators and sources (continued)

	Indicator	Definition	Source and year
M	Teen birth rate	Births per 1,000 females ages 15–19.	CDC National Vital Statistics System, compiled by America's Health Rankings (United Health Foundation), 2024
I	State fiscal position per taxpayer	Assets available minus bills owed (including unfunded pension and retiree health promises), divided by taxpayers. Negative values are a burden.	Truth in Accounting, Financial State of the States 2025 (from audited state financial reports), FY 2024
I	Public pension funded ratio	Assets of state-run pension plans as a percent of the benefits already promised.	The Pew Charitable Trusts, Sliwa, K., Halpern, O., & Draine, D. (2025, October 29), State Pension Funding Levels Stayed Stable Despite Volatility, from state annual comprehensive financial reports and actuarial valuations, FY 2023
I	Audited financial report published on time	Yes if the state's FY 2024 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report was public by Aug 25, 2025 (about 14 months after year-end); No if not.	Truth in Accounting (2025, September 30), Delays in State Financial Reporting, from state Annual Comprehensive Financial Reports, FY 2024
L	Violent crimes per 100,000 residents	Reported murders, rapes, robberies and aggravated assaults per 100,000 residents.	Bureau of Justice Statistics, Remrey, L., & Smith, E. L. (2026), Crime Known to Law Enforcement, 2024 (NCJ 310856), Appendix Table 3, from FBI National Incident-Based Reporting System data (Alaska, Arizona, Hawaii, Mississippi and Pennsylvania not shown: estimates did not meet BJS reliability standards), 2024
L	Homicide deaths per 100,000	Deaths from injuries inflicted by another person with intent to injure or kill, per 100,000.	CDC WONDER, compiled by America's Health Rankings (United Health Foundation), 2022–23
L	Firearm deaths per 100,000	Deaths from firearm injury of any intent (homicide, suicide, unintentional, undetermined), per 100,000.	CDC WONDER, compiled by America's Health Rankings (United Health Foundation), 2023
I	Residents without health insurance	Percent of the civilian noninstitutionalized population without health insurance.	U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-year estimates, in Carter, C. (2025), Health Insurance Coverage by State: 2023 and 2024 (ACSBR-024), Appendix Table 2, 2024
I	Life expectancy at birth	Average years a baby born that year would live at current death rates.	Arias, E., Xu, J., Tejada-Vera, B., & Bastian, B. (2025), U.S. State Life Tables, 2022, National Vital Statistics Reports 74(12), National Center for Health Statistics, 2022

Indicators and sources (continued)

	Indicator	Definition	Source and year
I	Infant deaths per 1,000 live births	Deaths before age 1 per 1,000 live births.	CDC National Center for Health Statistics, Linked Birth/Infant Death Records via CDC WONDER, compiled by KFF State Health Facts, 2023
E	Homes with severe housing problems	Percent of occupied homes with overcrowding, severe cost burden (50%+ of income), or incomplete kitchen or plumbing.	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data, compiled by America's Health Rankings (United Health Foundation), 2017–21
E	People experiencing homelessness per 10,000	People counted in the January point-in-time count, per 10,000 residents.	HUD Annual Homelessness Assessment Report, compiled by America's Health Rankings (United Health Foundation), 2024
E	Fine-particle air pollution (PM2.5)	Average population exposure to fine particulate matter, micrograms per cubic meter.	U.S. EPA, compiled by America's Health Rankings (United Health Foundation), 2022–24
S	Voter participation	Percent of U.S. citizens 18+ who voted, averaged across the last presidential and midterm elections.	Census Current Population Survey, Voting Supplement, compiled by America's Health Rankings (United Health Foundation), 2022 & 2024 average
S	Adults who volunteer	Percent of people 16+ who volunteered through an organization in the past 12 months.	Census Current Population Survey, Volunteering and Civic Life (AmeriCorps), compiled by America's Health Rankings (United Health Foundation), 2023
S	Households with broadband and a device	Percent of households with a broadband subscription and a computer, smartphone or tablet.	U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-year, compiled by America's Health Rankings (United Health Foundation), 2026 Annual Report, 2024

Violent crime rates are Bureau of Justice Statistics estimates from FBI incident-based data; Alaska, Arizona, Hawaii, Mississippi and Pennsylvania have no reliable estimate. Vermont's 2023 infant mortality rate is not published. State fiscal position figures are Truth in Accounting's independent estimates, not official figures. Unemployment rates for the latest month are preliminary.