KidsData

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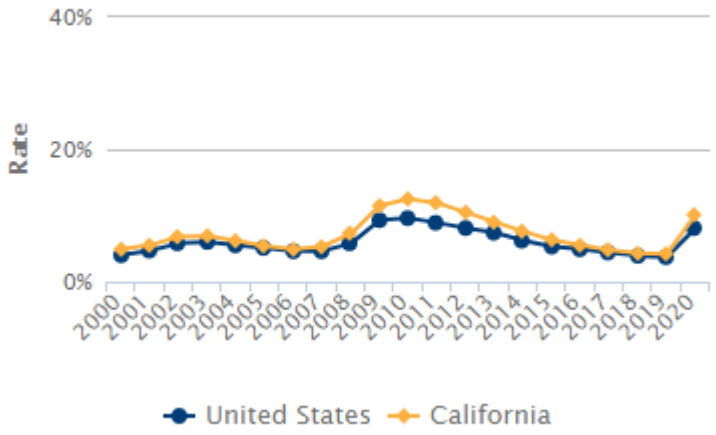
Unemployment in California

Percentage of Children without Secure Parental Employment: 2024

Locations	Percent
United States	25.3%
California	28.0%
Alameda County	19.4%
Contra Costa County	20.0%
Fresno County	36.0%
Kern County	34.1%
Los Angeles County	31.3%
Orange County	23.6%
Riverside County	24.7%
Sacramento County	29.9%
San Bernardino County	30.9%
San Diego County	23.9%
Santa Clara County	18.6%

Definition: Estimated percentage of children ages 0-17 in families without a resident parent who worked 35 hours or more per week for at least 50 weeks in the previous 12 months (e.g., in 2024, 28% of California children lived in families without secure parental employment).
Data Source: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey public use microdata (Aug. 2026).

Unemployment Rate



Definition: Estimated percentage of persons in the labor force who are not working but are available to work and have looked for work in the previous four weeks (e.g., in 2020, the unemployment rate in California was 10.1%).
Data Source: California Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Statistics Including the National Unemployment Rate (Sept. 2021).

What It Is

On kidsdata.org, estimates of children under age 18 living in families without secure parental employment (in which no resident parent worked 35 hours or more per week for at least 50 weeks in the previous 12 months) are available for the U.S., California, and counties and county groups as single-year estimates, and for regions with populations of at least 10,000 and legislative districts as five-year estimates.

Kidsdata.org also provides estimates of unemployed persons in the labor force ages 16 and older. Unemployment numbers and rates reflect persons who are not employed, are available to work, and have looked for work in the previous four weeks.

Why This Topic Is Important

Unemployment and underemployment can limit parents' ability to meet their families' material needs, while financial stress can affect their ability to provide for their children emotionally. Children who experience economic hardship when they are young, particularly hardship that is extreme or prolonged, are at increased risk for negative health and developmental outcomes. Parental unemployment has been linked to short- and long-term mental health problems in children, as well as academic and employment challenges later in life. Secure parental employment (with adequate pay and benefits) can reduce economic hardship and help ensure that children's basic needs are met and that they have family environments in which to thrive. Stable employment also is important for young people when they reach early adulthood, as it decreases the likelihood of long-term employment difficulties and low earnings.

Recent unemployment crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Great Recession, hit certain workers particularly hard, especially women, African American/black men, youth of color, immigrants, and those earning lower wages or with less education. Leaders can address the systemic issues behind these inequities, as well as support programs and policies to meet the needs of vulnerable groups.

How Children Are Faring

In 2024, an estimated 28% of California children living in families had no parent with full time, year-round employment in the previous 12 months, compared with 25% of children nationwide. At the local level, 2016-2020 estimates of children without secure parental employment ranged from less than 10% to

more than 50% across California cities, school districts, and counties with populations of at least 10,000.

California and U.S. unemployment rates, after reaching twenty-year lows in 2019 (4.2% and 3.7%, respectively), more than doubled in 2020, the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. An estimated 1.9 million California workers (10.1%) were unemployed in 2020, with rates across counties ranging from 7% to more than 20%.

View references for this text and additional research on this topic:
https://kidsdata.org/topic/43/unemployment/summary