



America's Youngest Outcasts: A Comparison of the Top and Bottom Ranked States

America's Youngest Outcasts: State Report Card on Child Homelessness provides a comprehensive snapshot of child homelessness in America. *America's Youngest Outcasts* was developed by synthesizing and analyzing complex factors that contribute to child homelessness in America and providing each state with a rank of one through 50. This score is a composite that reflects each state's overall performance compared to other states across four domains: (1) extent of child homelessness; (2) child well-being; (3) risk for child homelessness; and (4) state policy and planning efforts. The lower the ranking, the better a state fares (e.g., a rank of three is better than a rank of 38). However, it is important to note that there are homeless children in every state, and therefore, there is work to be done to end this tragedy throughout the country.

By comparing states ranked one through 10 ("top-ranked states") and states ranked 41 through 50 ("bottom-ranked states"), we get a glimpse of child homelessness around the country. Top-ranked states have fewer children who are homeless and lower child poverty rates as compared to bottom-ranked states. The difference in poverty rates between the top and bottom ranked states was particularly significant: the child poverty rate in bottom-ranked states is double the rate in the top-ranked states (approximately 26% versus 13%). Other key findings include:

- Top-ranked states are more likely to have engaged in state planning efforts that include the needs of children and families.
- Housing, income, and education policies are slightly better in top-ranked states as compared to bottom-ranked states.
- Whether a homeless child lives in a top state or a bottom state, he/she is likely to experience more health problems than his/her housed peers. These health problems occur at about the same rate for homeless children living in top and bottom states; however, children in top-ranked states are more likely to have health insurance.
- Homeless children in top- and bottom-ranked states have low proficiency rates in reading and math. Homeless children in top-ranked states are slightly more proficient in reading, although the overall rate is still low.
- Children in bottom-ranked states are more likely to experience food insecurity. However, bottom-ranked states have higher enrollment of eligible children in the Food Stamp Program/SNAP and more schools participating in the School Breakfast Programs.

Regardless of the differences highlighted above, top- and bottom-ranked states have one thing in common: their rates of child homelessness are unacceptable. The National Center on Family Homelessness has launched the Campaign to End Child Homelessness to galvanize the public and political will necessary to end this national crisis, acting on the belief that it is unacceptable for any child in the United States to be homeless for even one day. As a nation, we can no longer ignore the fact that more than 1.5 million American children go without homes, access to health care, educational opportunities, and food. For more information and to join the Campaign, visit www.HomelessChildrenAmerica.org.