

How America Ranks among 35 Rich (OECD) Countries for Investing in Children and Key Child Outcomes

The U.S. is one of the richest countries in the world having the highest gross domestic product among member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the most billionaires. The U.S. also has the largest budget as the federal government spends more than any other country. Unfortunately, we do not prioritize our children in that budget. We spend more money than any other country on defense but invest less in areas such as early childhood and education. In turn, our children are far behind on key performance outcomes. Income inequality in the U.S. is also high, such that few are rich and many of our children are poor. Below, we have included key facts regarding how America ranks among 35 rich countries for investing in children and on key child outcomes. For all measures, countries were ranked 1-35 with one meaning a country is doing the best and 35 meaning a country is doing the worst. For some measures, data were not available for all 35 countries.

America's Rank for Income and Wealth

- 1st for gross domestic product (purchasing power parity), 2016¹
- 1st for number of billionaires, 2017²
- 32nd for income inequality, meaning the U.S. has one of the largest gaps between the rich and poor, 2015³

America's Rank for Government Spending

- 1st for military spending (in US dollars), 2016⁴
- 2nd for military spending (percent of GDP), 2016⁵
- 8th for spending on health (percent of GDP), 2016⁶
- 30th for spending on early childhood education and care (percent of GDP), 2013⁷
- 20th for spending on education (percent of GDP), 2013⁸

America's Rank on Key Child Outcomes

- 30th for percent of children in poverty, 2015⁹
- 33rd for percent of children under age 15 who do not have adequate access to food, 2014/2015¹⁰
- 30th for percent of infants born weighing less than 5.5 pounds (low birthweight), 2014¹¹
- 26th for percent of 1-year-olds vaccinated for diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis, 2014¹²
- 32nd for number of infants who die before their 1st birthday, 2014¹³
- 31st for number of teenage births, 2015¹⁴
- 29th for percent of children under age 5 enrolled in early childhood and primary education, 2014¹⁵
- 20th for reading scores of 15-year-olds, 2015¹⁶
- 31st for math scores of 15-year-olds, 2015¹⁷

Among rich countries, the U.S. also has the highest number of children and teens killed with guns and is the only member of the United Nations (U.N.) that has not ratified the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child.¹⁸