



**UNDER EMBARGO Until August 8, 2022 at 12:01 a.m. ET**

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## Michigan Ranks 32<sup>nd</sup> in Child Well-Being, Kids' Challenges Compounded by Mental Health Pandemic

*Annie E. Casey Foundation finds 7.3 million kids nationwide, 242,000 kids in Michigan struggling with anxiety or depression*

**LANSING, MI** — Michigan remains in the bottom half of states for child well-being, according to the **2022 KIDS COUNT® Data Book**, a 50-state report of recent household data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation analyzing how children and families are faring. This year's *Data Book* emphasizes that children in Michigan and across the country are in the midst of a mental health crisis, struggling with anxiety and depression at unprecedented levels. For the first time, this annual resource focuses on youth mental health, concurring with a recent assessment by the U.S. surgeon general that conditions amount to a mental health pandemic for youth.

The report sheds light on the health, economic and other challenges affecting American children as well as how those challenges are more likely to affect children of color.

“Just as the COVID-19 pandemic laid bare a lot of challenges and policy needs facing Michigan kids, the surgeon general’s naming of a youth ‘mental health pandemic’ should open people’s eyes to what our kids are going through right now,” said Kelsey Perdue, Kids Count in Michigan Director for the Michigan League for Public Policy. “The state has rightly recognized these increased mental health challenges and increased related investment accordingly, including in the 2023 state budget, but there’s still much more that needs to be done to tackle this anxiety and depression crisis.”

The *Data Book* reports that children across America, and in more than 40 states and the District of Columbia, were more likely to encounter anxiety or depression during the first year of the COVID-19 crisis than previously, with the national figure jumping 26%, from 9.4% of children ages 3-17 (5.8 million kids) to 11.8% (7.3 million) between 2016 and 2020, the year COVID-19 swept across the United States.

According to the report, 13.5% of Michigan children ages 3-17 struggled with anxiety or depression in 2020. This rate was higher than the national average and more than in 33 other states and the District of Columbia. That rate was 13.4% higher than in 2016, an increase that represents 22,000 more Michigan children who are struggling to make it through the day.

Racial and ethnic disparities contribute to disproportionately troubling mental health and wellness conditions among children of color. Nationally, 9% of high schoolers overall but 12% of Black students, 13% of students of two or more races and 26% of American Indian or Native Alaskan high schoolers attempted suicide in the year previous to the pandemic hitting. Further, many LGBTQ young people are encountering challenges as they seek mental health support. Among heterosexual high school students of all races and ethnicities, 6% attempted suicide; the share was 23% for gay, lesbian or bisexual students—nearly four times as likely.

Each year, the *Data Book* presents national and state data from 16 indicators in four domains — economic well-being, education, health, and family and community factors — and ranks the states according to how children are faring overall. The data in this year’s report are a mix of pre-pandemic and more recent figures and are the latest available.

For the 2022 national *Data Book*, Michigan was ranked 32nd in the nation in overall child well-being. Michigan was ranked 29th in Economic Well-Being and Family and Community Context, and the state’s lowest national rank was again in Education at 40th in the country.

Michigan’s best national rank in the four categories was 27th in Health, and the state was the fourth-best in the country for children without health insurance. Michigan saw a 40% decline in the number of kids without health insurance from 2008-2012 to 2016-2020. However, more work is still needed to [increase health insurance coverage for Latino children](#). Michigan could insure another 3,000 to 4,000 young people by using the [Immigrant Children’s Health Improvement Act \(ICHIA\) option](#) to waive the five-year waiting period for Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) for lawfully residing children and youth up to 21 years old.

“Year after year, Michigan stands out in children’s health and in making sure our kids have health insurance in particular,” said Monique Stanton, President and CEO for the Michigan League for Public Policy. “This progress is due to positive policy decisions, and we hope policymakers will strengthen our support and national standing even more by expanding health coverage to up to 4,000 lawfully residing children, a priority of the League’s and a recent recommendation from the Michigan Poverty Task Force.”

In addition to the national *KIDS COUNT Data Book* released today, the Michigan League for Public Policy also released its *2022 Kids Count in Michigan Data Profiles* last month to identify state and county trends in four categories: economic security, education, health and safety, family and community. Michigan policymakers and child advocates can use this important

national context and state and local data to evaluate past policy and investment decisions and identify ongoing areas of need for Michigan kids and families.

On the mental health front, the Annie E. Casey Foundation calls for lawmakers to heed the surgeon general's warning and respond by developing programs and policies to ease mental health burdens on children and their families. They urge policymakers to:

- **Prioritize meeting kids' basic needs.** Youth who grow up in poverty are two to three times more likely to develop mental health conditions than their peers. Children need a solid foundation of nutritious food, stable housing and safe neighborhoods — and their families need financial stability — to foster positive mental health and wellness.
- **Ensure every child has access to the mental health care they need, when and where they need it.** Schools should increase the presence of social workers, psychologists and other mental health professionals on staff and strive to meet the 250-to-1 ratio of students to counselors recommended by the American School Counselor Association, and they can work with local health care providers and local and state governments to make additional federal resources available and coordinate treatment.
- **Bolster mental health care that takes into account young people's experiences and identities.** It should be trauma-informed — designed to promote a child's healing and emotional security — and culturally relevant to the child's life. It should be informed by the latest evidence and research and should be geared toward early intervention, which can be especially important in the absence of a formal diagnosis of mental illness.

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#### **RELEASE INFORMATION**

The *2022 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). Additional information is available at [www.aecf.org/databook](http://www.aecf.org/databook). Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs and rankings in stories about the *Data Book* can use the KIDS COUNT Data Center at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>.

**The Michigan League for Public Policy**, [www.mlpp.org](http://www.mlpp.org), is a nonprofit policy institute focused on opportunity for all. Its mission is to advance economic security, racial equity, health and well-being for all people in Michigan through policy change. It is the only state-level organization that addresses poverty in a comprehensive way.

**The Kids Count in Michigan project**, [www.https://mlpp.org/kids-count/](https://mlpp.org/kids-count/), is part of a broad national effort to improve conditions for children and their families. Funding for the project is provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, The Max M. and Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation, The Skillman Foundation, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation, Ford Motor Company Fund, Steelcase Foundation, Ruth Mott Foundation, Frey Foundation, Michigan Education Association, American Federation of Teachers Michigan, and United Way for Southeastern Michigan. More state and local data are available at the Kids Count Data Center, [www.datacenter.kidscount.org](http://www.datacenter.kidscount.org).

#### **ABOUT THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION**

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation's young children, youth and young adults by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.