



PRESS RELEASE

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Report: New Mexico Ranks 50th in Child Well-Being but Many Long-Term Trends Positive
National 2022 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* provides insight into the impacts of COVID
on kids and families

ALBUQUERQUE — New Mexico is ranked last in child well-being by the national 2022 *KIDS COUNT*[®] *Data Book*, a 50-state report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation that analyzes how children and families are faring. New Mexico has seen consistent improvements over time in most indicators, however, those improvements are outweighed by the hardship felt by families in 2020 due to the pandemic.

The report sheds light on the health, economic, and other challenges facing American children as well as how those challenges are more likely to affect children of color. The data used to determine the 2022 rankings span from 2016 to 2020. This is the most recent data available due to challenges in data collection during COVID, meaning this year's rankings cannot be compared with past years. The data also do not reflect many state-level policy changes passed more recently that provide support for New Mexico children and families.

“In recent years, New Mexico has been a leader in putting children first in public policy. However, the COVID pandemic caused major challenges for families that blunted the progress New Mexico had been making to improve child well-being,” said Amber Wallin, executive director of New Mexico Voices for Children (NM Voices), which runs the state's KIDS COUNT program. “Fortunately, we expect that the many good policy decisions enacted since 2019 – including tax credits for workers with children and expansions in high-quality affordable child care – will put us back on the path to improvement and create opportunities for all New Mexico children to thrive.”

The national *Data Book* tracks a total of 16 indicators of child well-being, including issues such as child poverty, high school graduation rates, and teen birth rates, that are grouped under four domains – economic well-being, education, health, and family and community. This year, the *Data Book* also includes data on the increases in children experiencing anxiety or depression during the first year of the COVID crisis.

Data show that COVID has been especially hard on children's mental health, with children in America struggling with anxiety and depression at unprecedented levels. The *Data Book* reports that 11.8% of children across America were likely to encounter anxiety and depression during the first year of the COVID crisis, a 26% increase from the rate of 9.4% in 2016. New Mexico's figure jumped from 11.4% of children ages 3-17 (46,000 kids) in 2016 to 12.9% (53,000 kids) in 2020, the year COVID swept across the

nation. This 13% increase represents 7,000 more New Mexico children who are struggling to make it through the day.

“While the data on child well-being is very informative, it only shows us where we have been. It does not show us where we are or where we’re going,” said Emily Wildau, KIDS COUNT Coordinator for NM Voices. “So despite the incremental improvements we had been seeing before 2019, the pandemic held back progress in 2020. This is better than a decline, but it’s not the improvement our kids deserve. The bottom line is that we need to bet on New Mexico children and center all of our policy decisions around improving their well-being.”

There are some bright spots. New Mexico continues to see long-term improvements compared to data from a decade ago in several indicators. Between 2008-2012 and 2016-2020, New Mexico has seen notable reductions in the rate of uninsured children (down to 6% from 11%) and 2,000 fewer teens who are not in school and not working. There has also been a significant long-term decline in teen births, with a 2020 rate of 22 per 1,000 female teens ages 15-19 compared to 53 per 1,000 in 2010.

NM Voices is holding its [10th Annual KIDS COUNT Conference](#) on Thursday, August 18, and will be covering the recently released data as well as policy strategies that can create opportunities for kids in the state.

New Mexico’s data profiles are attached separately and are available here: <https://www.nmvoices.org>
The national *2022 KIDS COUNT Data Book* is available here: <https://www.aecf.org/databook>

RELEASE INFORMATION

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

About New Mexico Voices for Children

New Mexico Voices for Children works to improve the status, well-being, and racial and ethnic equity of New Mexico’s children, families, and communities in the areas of health, education, and economic security by promoting public policies through credible research and effective advocacy. NM Voices manages the state’s KIDS COUNT program. For more information, visit www.nmvoices.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. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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