



UNDER EMBARGO Until June 14, 2023, at 12:01 a.m. ET

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**Kansas in Top 10 for Economic Well-Being,
but Inaccessible, Unaffordable Child Care Threatens Parents' Financial Security**

Around 1 in 9 Kansas children birth to age 5 live in families where someone missed, quit, or scaled back work due to child care issues, Annie E. Casey Foundation finds

TOPEKA, KAN. — Kansas ranks seventh in economic well-being but is in the middle of the pack in education, health, and family and community context outcomes, according to the **2023 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.

Despite Kansas families' financial security, it generally isn't translating into better opportunities for Kansas kids. For instance, Kansas' lack of affordable and accessible child care short-changes children and causes parents to frequently miss work or even quit their jobs, while those who can find care are paying greatly for it.

Even if parents can find a child care opening near their home, they will have to put thousands toward high-quality care. Kansas' average cost of center-based child care for a toddler was \$8,074, or 8% of the median income of a married couple and nearly 26% of a single mother's income in the state.

Additionally, compared to parents in neighboring states, Kansas parents are leaving the workforce at a higher rate due to issues with securing child care that is compatible with work schedules and commutes. The Data Book reports that in 2020-2021, almost 12% of Kansas children birth to age 5 lived in families in which someone quit, changed, or refused a job because of problems with child care.

"Kansas parents know first-hand that there is a child care crisis in our state," said John Wilson, President and CEO of Kansas Action for Children, Kansas' member of the KIDS COUNT network. "Reversing the shortage of child care spots will be crucial to helping families become economically secure and improve kids' education and health outcomes."

While the cost of care burdens families, child care workers are paid worse than 98% of professions. Median national pay for child care workers was \$28,520 per year or \$13.71 an hour in 2022, less than the wage for retail (\$14.26) and customer service (\$18.16) workers. But in Kansas, the average wage for full-time child care workers is even lower at \$11.27 an hour, or just \$22,540 a year.

The data show that parents cannot afford to pay more for care, and providers cannot afford to charge less. These challenges put parents and providers under tremendous stress to meet the dual responsibilities of providing for their families and ensuring children are safe and nurtured.

"High-quality early education gives kids the vital developmental opportunities needed to set them up for success for the rest of their life," Wilson said. "We can get to the point of ensuring every Kansas kid can access high-quality care, but that can only be possible when the state adequately funds our child care system by increasing provider pay and ensuring care is affordable for families."

Kansas ranked 17th overall — seventh in economic well-being, 22nd in health, 24th in family and community and 26th in education.

Sixteen indicators measuring these four domains are used by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in each year's *Data Book* to assess child well-being. The annual KIDS COUNT data and rankings represent the most recent information available. Key Kansas statistics include the following:

AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE:

- In 2021, 38,000 children did not have health insurance. This is slightly down from the prior year. More kids could gain coverage if Kansas increased eligibility for programs like Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).
- Child and teen deaths slightly increased, with 268 children ages 1 to 19 dying prematurely.

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING:

- Kansas continues to have close to the fewest number of children living in families where no parent has full-time year-round employment when compared to the rest of the nation. Kansas currently ranks seventh best in the United States.
- The number of Kansas kids living in poverty is decreasing, but around 92,000 children in the state still lived in households with an income below the poverty line in 2021.

EDUCATION:

- In 2017-2021, 43,000 young children were not in school. These 3- and 4-year-olds didn't access the long-lasting benefits of early education that sets them up for K-12 school, jobs, and life.
- Kansas continues to lag behind half of other states in student success, with the percentage of below-average proficiencies (math and reading) increasing. Kansas now ranks 28th in the nation in fourth grade reading proficiency and 34th in eighth grade math proficiency.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT:

- In 2021, 30% of Kansas children lived in single-parent households.

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.

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RELEASE INFORMATION

The 2023 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 in stories about the *Data Book* can use the KIDS COUNT Data Center at datacenter.aecf.org.

About Kansas Action for Children

KAC is a nonprofit advocacy organization working to make Kansas a place where every child has the opportunity to grow up healthy and thrive. We engage in bipartisan advocacy, partnerships, and information-sharing on key issues, including early learning and education, health, and economic security for families. We work with policymakers, local organizations, and fellow advocates to inform sound policy, foster collaboration, and promote an equitable tax system. For more than 40 years, KAC has been a resource to leaders and advocates who are working to ensure a brighter future for every child.

ABOUT THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation's young people 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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