

Indiana Ranks 27th for Overall Child Well-Being and 15th for Economic Well-Being, on Trend for Higher Earning Potential for Hoosier Youth, in 2024 KIDS COUNT Data Book

50-State Data Show Academic Outcomes, Absence are Linked to Poverty, Trauma; Policymakers Must Act to Promote Kids' Future Success, Annie E. Casey Foundation Finds

INDIANAPOLIS, IN — Indiana ranks 27th in child well-being, according to the national **2024 KIDS COUNT® Data Book**, a 50-state report of recent data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation analyzing how kids are faring in post-pandemic America. The data show Indiana leaders must do more to prepare children to learn so they are ready to earn when they reach adulthood. At stake nationally: hundreds of billions of dollars in future earnings and trillions of dollars in lost economic activity.

There are bright spots in this year's national *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* for Hoosier kids and their families:

- Between 2019 and 2022, more parents (75%) had full-time secure employment in Indiana which surpassed both the national average and that of the four neighboring states: Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, and Ohio.
- In 2022, fewer children (22%) lived in households that faced a high housing cost burden, spending 30% of their income solely on housing expenses, in comparison to the national average (30%).
- In 2022, more Hoosier teens (95%) between the ages 16 and 19 were either enrolled in school or employed, an improvement from 93% in 2019
- Far fewer children under 19 (5%) were uninsured. Indiana saw the fifth-highest decrease nationally in uninsured children between 2019 and 2022 (a 29% improvement).

“Indiana has **significant opportunities and challenges ahead in supporting the well-being of our children**,” said **Tami Silverman, president & CEO of Indiana Youth Institute**, Indiana’s member of the KIDS COUNT network. “We should celebrate the progress we’ve made, especially in economic well-being areas such as parental employment rates and housing affordability, and we must acknowledge the disparities that persist for our kids. **Every child in Indiana should have access to quality education, regardless of their background or circumstances.** By addressing these disparities head-on, we not only invest in the future of our children but also in the economic prosperity of our state.”

In its 35th year of publication, the national *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* focuses on students’ lack of basic reading and math skills, a problem decades in the making but brought to light by the focus on learning loss during the COVID-19 pandemic. Unprecedented drops in learning from 2019 to 2022 amounted to decades of lost progress. Chronic absence has soared, with children living in poverty especially unable to resume their school day routines on a regular basis.

Each year, the national *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. Moreover, state averages mask disparities that affect students of color, kids in immigrant families and children from low-income families or attending low-income schools.

Compared to other states in the country, **Indiana ranks:** 27th in Overall Child Well-Being; 15th in Economic Well-Being; 17th in Education; 31st in Family and Community; 32nd in Health.

Key findings from the most recent school year available (2021-2022) include:

- In 2022, only 30% of Indiana eighth grade students performed at or above the NAEP proficient level in math, indicating an 11% decrease from 2019, ranking Indiana 11th nationally.
- Only one-third of Indiana fourth grade students were at or above the proficient reading level, marking a four percentage-point decrease from the 2019 rate of 37%.
- Among Indiana fourth graders in 2022, Black students had an average reading score that was 23 points lower than that of white students. Students eligible for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) had an average reading score 18 points lower than those not eligible for NSLP.
- 8th grade Black students in Indiana had an average math score that was 31 points lower than white students. Hispanic students in the same grade had an average math score that was 19 points lower than white students in Indiana.
- Chronic absence rates were highest for Indiana's Black (41%) and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (33%) students. 31% of Indiana students with disabilities and 26% of English learners were chronically absent.

"Kids of all ages and grades must have what they need to learn each day, such as enough food and sleep and a safe way to get to school, as well as the additional resources they might need to perform at their highest potential and thrive, like tutoring and mental health services," said **Lisa Hamilton, president and CEO of the Annie E. Casey Foundation**. "Our policies and priorities have not focused on these factors in preparing young people for the economy, short-changing a whole generation."

The Casey Foundation report contends that the pandemic is not the sole cause of lower test scores: Educators, researchers, policymakers and employers who track students' academic readiness have been ringing alarm bells for a long time. U.S. scores in reading and math have barely budged in decades. Compared to peer nations, the United States is not equipping its children with the high-level reading, math and digital problem-solving skills needed for many of today's fastest-growing occupations in a highly competitive global economy.

This lack of readiness will result in major harm to the nation's economy and to our youth as they join the workforce. [Up to \\$31 trillion](#) in U.S. economic activity hinges on helping young people overcome learning loss caused by the pandemic. Students who don't advance beyond lower levels of math are more likely to be [unemployed after high school](#). One analysis calculates the drop in math scores between 2019 and 2022 will [reduce lifetime earnings](#) by 1.6% for 48 million pandemic-era students, for a total of \$900 billion in lost income.

However, some states have [delayed spending their share of \\$190 billion in critical federal pandemic funding](#) (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief, or ESSER) that could help boost achievement. The deadline to allocate – not spend – this funding is September 30, 2024. Tens of billions of dollars set aside for schools will vanish forever if states do not act immediately.

The Foundation recommends the following:

- To get kids back on track, we must make sure they arrive at the classroom ready to learn by **ensuring access to low- or no-cost meals, a reliable internet connection, a place to study and time with friends, teachers and counselors.**
- **Expand access to intensive tutoring** for students who are behind in their classes and missing academic milestones. Research has shown the [most effective tutoring](#) is in person, high dosage and tied directly to the school.
- **States should take advantage of all their allocated pandemic relief funding to prioritize the social, emotional, academic and physical well-being of students.** As long as funds are obligated by the Sept. 30 deadline, states should have [two more full years to spend them](#).
- **States and school systems should address chronic absence, so more students return to learn.** While few states gather and report chronic absence data by grade, [all of them should](#). Improving attendance tracking and data will inform future decision-making. Lawmakers should embrace [positive approaches](#) rather than criminalizing students or parents due to attendance challenges, because they may not understand the consequences of even a few days missed.

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RELEASE INFORMATION

The 2024 *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 THE INDIANA YOUTH INSTITUTE

For over three decades, the Indiana Youth Institute has supported the youth services field through innovative trainings, critical data, and capacity-building resources, aiming every effort at increasing the well-being of all children. To learn more about the Indiana Youth Institute, visit www.iyi.org, like us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) or follow us on [X \(Twitter\)](#).

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