



**UNDER EMBARGO Until June 10, 2024, at 12:01 a.m. ET**

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***New data shows the impact of the pandemic on North Carolina's children and families***

*Annie E. Casey Foundation releases annual data showing academic outcomes, child health, and family and community wellbeing*

**RALEIGH, N.C.** — North Carolina's children will need support to catch up from the COVID-19 pandemic according to the **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 results show that the pandemic affected academic outcomes for North Carolina's children. In North Carolina, 68 percent of fourth-grade students were not proficient in reading in 2022, a six percent increase from 2019. Additionally, 75 percent of eighth-grade students were not proficient in math in 2022, a 19 percent increase since 2019. Another key indicator is that in 2018-22, 58 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds in North Carolina were not enrolled in a form of early education programming,

“The latest data shows that we have room for improvements in North Carolina when it comes to the lives of our children,” said Erica Palmer Smith, Executive Director of NC Child, North Carolina's member of the KIDS COUNT network. “The good news is that we know what to do. By investing in early childhood education and by providing resources, including mental health support, we can help North Carolina's children thrive.”

In its 35th year of publication, the *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.

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. North Carolina ranks 33<sup>rd</sup> overall in the *Data Book*.

The results show that North Carolina 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.

[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.

“Investing in the health, education, and overall wellbeing of North Carolina’s children today is an investment in the long-term prosperity of our state,” said Smith. “By working together to advance sound, evidence-based public policies, we can improve the outlook for our children and for all North Carolinians.”

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#### **RELEASE INFORMATION**

The *2024 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 [datacenter.aecf.org](http://datacenter.aecf.org).

#### **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](http://www.aecf.org). KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

#### **ABOUT NC CHILD**

NC Child is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that advances public policies that improve the lives of all North Carolina children. As the state’s only multi-issue child advocacy organization, NC Child’s work addresses policies that affect the whole child, including health and wellbeing, early childhood education, and family economic security. NC Child is also a leading source of state-level research and data on the issues affecting children and families, and the organization serves as a trusted and reliable source for policymakers and other child advocates and organizations across the state. For more information, visit [ncchild.org](http://ncchild.org).