



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

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## **North Dakota Ranks in Top 10 States for Child Well-Being, Yet Progress Needed for Education and Economic Well-being Outcomes**

The percent of children living in poverty in North Dakota increased for the first time since 2014, 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. While North Dakota ranks high in some areas of children’s well-being, including families with secure employment and children born at a low birthweight, many children and families are being left behind.

Black and Indigenous children experience poverty rates three times higher than the overall rate for all North Dakota children. Present-day disparities in poverty are a result of generations of added barriers and systemic racism that made it harder for Black, Indigenous and other families of color to build economic security.

Schools are still seeing the impacts of the pandemic on students. In North Dakota, education outcomes have remained steady or trended in the wrong direction with this most recent round of data. The share of eighth grade students achieving proficiency in the math assessment has continued to decline, with 28 percent scoring at or above proficient in 2022. The **2024 KIDS COUNT® Data Book** also shows North Dakota falling behind other states in children attending preschool. North Dakota’s recent state investments in early childhood through broader support for child care assistance and the Best in Class four-year-old program have significantly changed the early childhood landscape since the timeframe this data represents. Continued investment in these two early childhood programs is one way the state can increase access to early education opportunities.

“Seeing poverty tick back up in North Dakota is so concerning,” said Xanna Burg, Director of KIDS COUNT with North Dakota KIDS COUNT. “There are proven policies state leaders can implement to reverse this trend: a state-based child tax credit, expanded eligibility for school meals, continued participation in the Summer EBT program or SUN Bucks, and ongoing funding for child care and early childhood education.”

Each year, the **KIDS COUNT® Data Book** presents national and state data from 16 indicators in four domains — economic well-being, education, health, and family and community factors. Additional highlights from the report findings for North Dakota include:

- **Economic:** Nearly 1 in 5 (19 percent) of households spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing. While North Dakota ranks best in the nation on this indicator, with the smallest share of households affected, too many families still spend a large portion of their income on housing, leaving less for other necessities like food, child care, and transportation.

- **Education:** High school graduation rates dropped slightly, with 87 percent of high school students graduating in four years. Black, Indigenous, and other youth of color are less likely to graduate on time because of generations of added barriers and unequal access to high-quality education.
- **Health:** About 6 percent of children lacked health insurance in North Dakota in 2022, when the data was collected. However, the health insurance landscape has since shifted dramatically, with thousands of North Dakota children losing Medicaid or CHIP coverage beginning in 2023, when the continuous enrollment provision ended.

North Dakota should continue to invest in children and families to ensure all children have what they need to thrive. **Continued state investment in child care and early education** supports a family's economic well-being and access to early learning opportunities. Additionally, to get kids back on track academically, 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, and a safe home environment.**

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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 NORTH DAKOTA KIDS COUNT**

North Dakota KIDS COUNT is a leading resource for data on child and family well-being in the state and is dedicated to providing current, relevant, and reliable data to shape the issues affecting North Dakota children and families. More information can be found at [ndkidscount.org](http://ndkidscount.org). North Dakota KIDS COUNT is a project of the Montana Budget & Policy Center, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization providing in-depth research and analysis on budget, tax, and economic issues. The Montana Budget & Policy Center also leads the KIDS COUNT work in Montana and South Dakota. More information can be found at [www.montanabudget.org](http://www.montanabudget.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.