



UNDER EMBARGO until June 9, 2025, at 12:01 a.m. ET
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Sunshine State Ranks 35th in Child Well-Being

Proposed State and Federal Budget Bills Could Slow Florida’s Uneven Progress in Child Well-Being

State Appears to be Reversing Previous Gains in Fourth Grade Reading Proficiency

STATEWIDE, Fla. — Florida ranks 35th in the nation for child well-being, according to the **2025 KIDS COUNT® Data Book**, a 50-state report of recent data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Additionally, advocates warn that deep cuts to health care and food assistance being pushed in Congress would result in widespread hardship for Florida families, further jeopardizing the well-being of Sunshine State children.

The **Data Book** tracks 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.

Florida’s best showing was in the education domain, in which it ranked 19th, a sharp drop from its rank of 5th in the 2024 *Data Book*. In 2024, 67% of 4th-graders were not proficient in reading, a climb from pre-pandemic levels of 62%, while 79% of 8th-graders were not proficient in math, a 14% increase from the 2019 share of 69%. Moreover, 51% of children ages 3 and 4 are not in preschool, a slight rise from 2014–18. While the percentage of students not graduating high school on time has been improving from a high of three in 10 in 2010–11, progress has slowed in recent years with just over one in 10 not graduating on time in 2021–22, though the effects of the pandemic may be evident here.

Florida ranked 32nd in health and 30th in family and community. The state ranked 43rd in economic well-being, which remains the domain in which Florida needs the most improvement.

In the family and community domain, Florida made progress in terms of a decrease in the number of children in single-parent families, fewer children living in high-poverty areas, and a lower teen birth rate. The share of children in families where the head of household lacks a high school diploma, 10%, was the same in 2023 as it was in 2019.

In the health domain, Florida showed mixed progress. While there were fewer children who were overweight or obese in 2022-23, the number of children without health insurance was the same in 2019 and 2023 – 351,000, or 8% of the state’s kids – and there was a greater percentage of low-birth-weight babies in 2023. The child and teen death rate was significantly higher in 2023 than in 2019, at 29 per 100,000.

In terms of economic well-being, there were fewer children in poverty and fewer children whose parents lacked secure employment in 2023 as compared to 2019. Lack of affordable housing remains a struggle for Florida families. In 2023, 38% of children in the state lived in households who spent 30% or more of household income on housing, a significantly higher proportion than in 2019.

“The proposed funding levels in Florida’s budget and in the proposed federal reconciliation bills, if enacted, will lead to substantially reduced investments in child well-being and setbacks for Florida’s children be it education, early learning and child care, nutrition, or health care” said Norín Dollard, Ph.D., senior policy analyst and KIDS COUNT director at Florida Policy Institute. “We know what kids need to grow up healthy so they can thrive when they reach adulthood, but rather than invest in their futures, funding is nearly flat or has decreased. This is exacerbated by the large potential loss of revenue for state and federal government programs that could support these efforts.”

In its 36th year of publication, the *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* provides reliable statewide numbers to help leaders see where progress is being made, where greater support is needed and which strategies are making a difference. Florida Policy Institute encourages lawmakers and officials in Florida to use this detailed information to unite across party lines and respond with initiatives that invest in young people. By offering a local road map, the *Data Book* equips policymakers, advocates and communities with the information they need to make decisions that help kids and young people thrive.

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RELEASE INFORMATION

The 2025 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* will be 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 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.

ABOUT FLORIDA POLICY INSTITUTE

FPI, the state’s KIDS COUNT partner, is an independent, nonpartisan, and nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing state policies and budgets that improve the economic mobility and quality of life for all Floridians.