



UNDER EMBARGO until June 9, 2025, at 12:01 a.m. ET

Contact: Jessica Herrera Russell | jessica@kac.org | (605) 929-5159

Fewer Kansas Families Experience Poverty, while Academic Achievement Remains Concerning and Health Insurance Rates Decline

Some Kansas families financially rebounded in the first year of data coming out of the pandemic, but there are looming long-term issues in the state's education and health sectors, Annie E. Casey Foundation reports.

Topeka, Kansas — Kansas is now ranked 14th nationally for overall child well-being, including jumping to 5th in economic well-being, according to the **2025 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 rebound in Kansas kids' economic well-being (compared to 2022 data) highlights the pandemic-era supports – like the enhanced federal child tax credit, continuous Medicaid eligibility, and increased SNAP benefits – that helped parents make ends meet.

“The 2023 data show that investments in families during the pandemic bolstered their economic security and other aspects of their kids' well-being,” said John Wilson, President and CEO of Kansas Action for Children. “Kansas could easily be one of the best states for parents to raise their children, if lawmakers prioritize policies that make it easier to raise a family in our state.”

Many short-term benefits, due to pandemic-era programs, showed how federal and state investment can help families:

- From 2019-2023:
 - Childhood poverty went from 101,000 to 89,000 Kansas kids.
 - About 19,000 more Kansas children have at least one parent fully employed.
- Between 2022 and 2023, around 10,000 fewer children lived in households suffering from a high housing cost burden.
- Over the last decade, around 14,000 fewer children lived in high-poverty areas.

But issues like children's health and academic success are not problems that can be solved by short-term solutions. The 2023 data show unresolved issues from the pandemic, which will only continue to decline the longer they remain unaddressed.

- From 2022 to 2023, 3,000 Kansas children lost health insurance.
- Kansas is now well within the bottom half of states in reading proficiency, as 72% of fourth graders were not meeting proficiency in reading standards in 2024, up from 69% in 2022 and dropping the state to 35th in this category.
- Kansas has remained stagnant in low birthweight rates in the state, with around 7% of infants born at less than 5.5 lbs., with no improvement since 2019.

“While we are pleased to see Kansans regaining their footing after the hardships of the pandemic, it will be harder to roll back adverse effects the longer that policymakers fail to tackle affordability of health insurance and adequate funding of early learning and public education,” said Wilson. “The future of our state relies on the success of our children. Kansas leaders can do much more to improve outcomes for all kids.”

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.

Kansas ranked 14th overall – 5th in economic well-being, 24th in education, 26th in health, and 24th in family & community context. Key Kansas statistics include the following.

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

- The number of Kansas kids living in poverty declined from 94,000 (14%) children in 2022 to 89,000 (13%) in 2023. These kids lived in households below the 2023 poverty line, or a household income of less than \$30,900 for a family of two adults and two kids.
- In 2023, 19% of Kansas kids lived in households where no parent had full-time employment (defined as working for at least 35 hours per week, for 50 weeks in a calendar year); this is 10,000 fewer than in 2022.
- In 2023, Kansas still had around 146,000 children — 22% — living in a household with a high housing cost burden, or more than one-third of the family's income. This has declined from 156,000 in 2022.

EDUCATION

- Kansas continues to lag behind more than half of other states in student success, with the percentage of below-average math and reading scores performing worse than nationwide totals.
 - In 2023, the rate of fourth graders falling below NAEP-defined proficiency reading levels was 72%. Kansas ranks 35th in the nation for this data point.
 - In 2023, the rate of eighth graders falling below NAEP-defined math proficiency levels was 74%. Kansas ranks 25th in the nation for this data point.

HEALTH

- In 2023, 41,000 (or about 6%) Kansas children lacked health insurance, an increase from 38,000 (or around 5%) in 2022.
- Since 2019, around 7% of Kansas children have been born below or at a low birthweight (5.5 lbs.), showing stagnation in an indicator that can have significant health implications for children as they age.

FAMILY & COMMUNITY CONTEXT

- In 2023, 61,000 (9%) Kansas children lived in a household where the household head lacks a high school diploma. This was 63,000 in 2022.

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. Kansas Action for Children encourages lawmakers and officials in Kansas 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.

###

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 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 nearly 50 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 mousewww.aecf.org. KIDS COUNT is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.