



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

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**Maine Ranks 17th in 2025 *KIDS COUNT* Data Book as Maine Children's Alliance Urges Focus on Supporting Thriving Kids and Families**

*Data show that the percentage of children growing up in high-poverty areas and children who lack health insurance are down in Maine, while the percentage of children in households paying more than 30% of their income on housing and fourth graders who scored below a proficient reading level were up, the Annie E. Casey Foundation finds.*

**AUGUSTA, MAINE** — Maine ranks 17th in 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 analyzing how kids are faring in post-pandemic America.

"We've seen strides in addressing economic security through programs like School Meals for All, investments in housing, boosts for General Assistance and TANF, and child care subsidies, along with important advancements in behavioral health and child welfare," said Ashleigh Barker (she/her), Executive Director of the Maine Children's Alliance, Maine's member of the Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT network. "However, we're deeply concerned that policy changes and the loss of funding at both the state and federal levels could undo the progress we've made. We need to ensure that the advances in meeting the essential needs of Maine's children and families are not rolled back."

Areas where Maine improved include fewer children living in high-poverty areas — census tracts with poverty rates that are 30% or more — and fewer children lacking health insurance. We know that children raised outside the conditions of poverty have a greater opportunity to reach their full potential, and that children with insurance receive more preventive care and can better access medical care when needed, contributing to positive short- and long-term health outcomes. When comparing 2014–18 to 2019–23, Maine experienced a 50% decrease in the percentage of children growing up in high-poverty areas and ranked 7th in the nation. Continued investment in children and families on both the state and federal levels will keep child poverty rates low and reduce the lasting adverse effects that persistent childhood poverty can have on brain development, health, and educational outcomes.

From 2019 to 2023, there was a 33% decrease in the percentage of children who were uninsured. This decrease could be attributed to the expansion of MaineCare eligibility for children in Maine, which now includes family incomes up to 300% of the federal poverty level. With 6,000 of the 11,000 currently uninsured children being eligible for coverage under MaineCare, Maine has an opportunity to further improve and ensure that more children have access to high-quality, affordable healthcare, which is critical for their health and development.

Areas where Maine needs to improve include children growing up in households with a high housing burden — households that spend more than 30% of their income on housing — and fourth graders scoring below a proficient reading level. We know housing is essential for children and their families to be safe and stable, and that those who enter fourth grade without solid reading skills may lag behind in learning, putting them at a higher risk of dropping out of high school. From 2019 to 2023, Maine experienced a 13% increase in the percentage of children growing up in households with a high housing burden. This percent change was higher than most other states. In 2025, Maine ranked 16th highest among all 50 states for the overall average fair market rent for a residential rental property at \$1,667. Additionally, from January 2019 to January 2025, the median sale price for a home in Maine increased by 54%, from \$253,700 to \$391,800, making homeownership unattainable for most. Investment in new construction, emergency shelters, and rent relief to address both immediate and long-term housing needs, as well as investing in higher wages, basic income, and robust social safety nets, will reduce reliance on charitable systems, empower individuals to meet their needs, and foster long-term financial stability for

families.

From 2019 to 2024, there was a 16% increase in the percentage of 4th graders who scored below a proficient reading level, reaching 74%, or about three of every four kids. While almost every state experienced a decline in reading proficiency, Maine's was the sharpest of all 50 states. Maine's average 4th-grade reading score was the lowest since 1992, ranking Maine 43rd out of the 50 states. A study from the Maine Education Policy Research Institute highlights the need for Maine to standardize reading curricula and guidance for elementary schools across Maine and provide teachers with materials and training in effective instructional approaches.

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.

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. Maine Children's Alliance encourages lawmakers and officials in Maine 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.

"We know what kids need to grow up healthy and connected so they can thrive as adults: Stable homes, strong schools, nutritious food, meaningful relationships, and opportunities to learn, play, and grow. Programs that meet these needs are smart investments, fostering long-term gains like employment and economic growth."

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#### **RELEASE INFORMATION**

The 2025 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* will be available at [www.aecf.org/databook](http://www.aecf.org/databook). 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.