



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

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Oklahoma ranks 46th in 2025 KIDS COUNT Data Book, highlighting lawmakers' misplaced priorities

New report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation finds Oklahoma remained among the worst states for child well-being, reflecting the failure of state leaders to invest in a better future for our children.

Oklahoma ranks among the bottom five states for overall child well-being in the **2025 KIDS COUNT® Data Book**, a 50-state report of recent data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation analyzing child well-being in post-pandemic America. Oklahoma ranked among the top half of all states in only two of those 16 indicators. The data show Oklahoma leaders must do more to invest in the well-being of Oklahoma children and families, including proven programs and services that can help them thrive.

For the 2025 KIDS COUNT® Data Book, Oklahoma ranked 46th overall for child well-being, with only Nevada, Mississippi, Louisiana, and New Mexico ranking lower. Oklahoma's individual rankings on major categories were:

- 40th in economic well-being
- 40th in family and community,
- 43rd in health, and
- 48th in education (ahead of only Alaska and New Mexico).

The report includes a comprehensive analysis of all 50 states across multiple domains of child- and family well-being. Among the 16 components of the report, Oklahoma ranked among the top half of all states in only two indicators: percent of children in single-parent families (34%, ranked 23rd) and percent of low-birthweight babies (8.6%, ranked 25th).

By contrast, the state ranked 40th or below on eight of 16 indicators:

- Percent of children in poverty, which for a family of two adults and two children was below \$30,900 in 2023 (21%, ranked 44th)
- Percent of 4th graders who scored below proficient reading level (77%, ranked 48th)
- Percent of 8th graders who scored below proficient math level (83%, ranked 49th)
- Percent of high school students not graduating on time (20%, ranked 46th)
- Percent of children in families where household head lacks a high school diploma (11%, ranked 40th)
- Child and teen death rate (40 deaths per 100,000 children ages 1 to 19, ranked 43rd)
- Percent of children and teens ages 10 to 17 who are overweight or obese (34%, ranked 40th)
- Teen birth rate (21 births per 1,000 females ages 15 to 19, ranked 46th)

"Oklahoma's elected officials like to say that our children's futures are a top priority, but the new KIDS COUNT report shows a stark disconnect between their words and their actions," said Shiloh Kantz,

Executive Director of the Oklahoma Policy Institute, which is Oklahoma's member of the Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT network.

Experience and common sense show what children need to help them grow into thriving adults: Stable homes, strong schools, nutritious food, meaningful relationships, and opportunities to learn, play and grow, Kantz said. Programs that meet these needs are smart investments, fostering long-term gains like employment and economic growth.

However, for more than two decades, Oklahoma lawmakers have prioritized tax cuts that have weakened the state revenue that would fund programs and services proven to improve outcomes. These include: sustained funding for strong public education, supporting robust early childhood education, increasing housing affordability and availability, lowering the incarceration rate for people convicted of low-level, non-violent crimes, increasing restorative justice practices for youth who referred to authorities, and collaborating with Tribal Nations to leverage resources that help all Oklahoma communities.

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. The Oklahoma Policy Institute encourages lawmakers and officials in Oklahoma 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.

“By staying grounded in data and driven by what children and families say they need, we can help ensure that all young people have the chance to thrive and contribute meaningfully as adults, helping to grow our future workforce, reduce long-term social and economic costs and build a stronger society for everyone,” said Lisa Lawson, president and CEO of the Casey Foundation.

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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 THE OKLAHOMA POLICY INSTITUTE

The Oklahoma Policy Institute seeks to create a more equitable Oklahoma through its nonpartisan policy research, analysis, and advocacy. OK Policy encourages critical conversations through data-driven research and outreach regarding state policy so that every Oklahoman has equitable opportunities to thrive. OK Policy is the KIDS COUNT affiliate for Oklahoma. Learn more at OKPolicy.org.