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West Virginia Ranks 41st in 2025 *KIDS COUNT*® *Data Book* as WVCBP Urges Focus on Supporting Thriving Kids and Families

Data show that children in WV and nationwide see incremental improvements post-pandemic, but more focus on child well-being policy needed

Charleston, WV — West Virginia improved its overall child well-being ranking compared to last year, moving from 44th to 41st among the states 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. 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.

Since 2019, seven of the 16 key indicators have improved nationwide, six have worsened and three have not changed. Positive national trends include declines in child poverty and in teen births, as well as increases in health insurance coverage and high school graduation rates.

The *Data Book* indicates that where a child lives matters for their health and quality of life. Geographic disparities around the country have persisted for years, shaped by differences in state and local policies, economic conditions, infrastructure, resources, neighborhood characteristics and community investment.

In addition to ranking 41st overall, within the four domains West Virginia ranked 39th in economic well-being, 39th in health, 32nd in family and community context, and 45th in education according to the 2025 *Data Book*. This year’s report shows meaningful incremental progress in the well-being of children improving post-pandemic, but also that there is still more to do to invest in our children’s health, economic, and educational outcomes.

Because the 2025 *Data Book* compares well-being data with rates prior to the pandemic, it shows both continued recovery challenges and the fruits of positive policy interventions. While math and reading scores in West Virginia and nationwide are still reflecting post-pandemic recovery challenges, West Virginia has seen some of the [largest improvements](#) from the pandemic years in both categories. Regardless, there is still more work to do in reversing the trends [identified in the 2024 *Data Book*](#), which highlighted the unprecedented learning loss

during and after the COVID-19 pandemic and the [toll of chronic absenteeism](#) on academic performance.

The 2025 *Data Book* also highlights that 71% of West Virginia children ages three and four are not enrolled in school (child care, or preschool), the second-highest rate in the country. Meanwhile, 9% of West Virginia teens ages 16 to 19 are not attending school nor working, the second-highest rate nationwide. Both are likely a reflection of families still returning to post-pandemic normalcy.

“We are pleased to see West Virginia’s incremental child well-being progress in some key measures, including housing security, children insured, and declining teen birth rates. There is certainly more work to do to invest in our early childhood education and K-12 education systems, infant and maternal health, and other areas, and we look forward to working with state policymakers to continue building on our post-pandemic recovery,” says Kelly Allen, executive director of the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy, West Virginia’s member of the Casey Foundation’s KIDS COUNT network.

West Virginia saw some positive trends in economic and health measures in the 2025 data book.. Within the economic well-being domain, West Virginia saw reductions in the share of children living with parents who lack secure employment (30% in 2023) and in households with a high housing cost burden (19%, making WV the 2nd-best among all states on this indicator). The rate of children with health insurance held steady at 97%, while the rate of teen births significantly declined over the last decade (from 40 per 1,000 females aged 15-19 in 2013 to 18 per 1,000 in 2023). In all cases, federal economic policies related to helping households maintain health coverage and economic security alongside a strong economic recovery post-pandemic likely played key roles.

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 WVCBP encourages lawmakers and officials in West Virginia 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.

The WVCBP and the Casey Foundation encourage policymakers, school leaders and educators to unite in helping children and families succeed. We know what kids need to grow up healthy and connected: Strong schools, stable homes, 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. 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 WEST VIRGINIA CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY

The West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy is a public policy research organization that is independent, nonprofit, and statewide. The WVCBP works to advance public policies that increase opportunity and eliminate inequities through credible and accessible research and community-rooted advocacy.

ABOUT THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION AND KIDS COUNT

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 platform of the Annie E. Casey Foundation that provides legislators, public officials, and child advocates with reliable data, policy recommendations, and tools to advance policies that benefit children and youth. Each state—as well as the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands—is represented by a KIDS COUNT grantee that operates independently from the Casey Foundation. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.