



UNDER EMBARGO Until June 8, 2026 at 12:01 a.m. ET

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VOICES for Alabama's Children: 2026 KIDS COUNT® Data Book Shows Alabama Maintaining Stability in Key Child Well-Being Indicators

New Scoring Index Provides Clearer Picture of Child Well-Being Trends Across Alabama and the Nation

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — The 2026 KIDS COUNT® Data Book, released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, shows Alabama improved slightly in overall child well-being, moving up one spot nationally to 42nd. The report highlights relative stability in several key indicators during a period when many states experienced steeper declines following the COVID-19 pandemic, while also pointing to ongoing challenges facing children and families across the state.

“While challenges remain, the data show that strategic, long-term investments can make a difference for children and families,” said Dr. Tracye Strichik, executive director of VOICES for Alabama’s Children. “The Data Book reflects both encouraging signs of stability and areas where continued focus and investment are still needed to improve long-term outcomes for Alabama children.”

The annual 50-state report examines 16 indicators across four domains — economic well-being, education, health, and family and community factors — using data from 2019 to 2024. For the first time, states also received an overall score from 0 to 1,000, offering a broader picture of child well-being beyond state rankings alone.

Education remained Alabama’s strongest relative domain, ranking 37th nationally. While education outcomes declined nationally following the pandemic, Alabama’s education indicators remained comparatively more stable than many states during the 2019–2024 period.

VOICES noted that recent statewide initiatives have emphasized literacy, math achievement, early childhood education, student support efforts, and expanded learning opportunities Initiatives such as the Alabama Literacy Act and Alabama Numeracy Act

have strengthened the state's education infrastructure by emphasizing foundational reading and math skills, early intervention, and targeted student support. Continued investments in out-of-school time and expanded learning programs have also provided students with additional academic support, enrichment opportunities, and safe learning environments beyond the traditional school day.

"These investments matter," Strichik said. "The data reinforce the importance of continuing strategies that support children both inside and outside the classroom, particularly during periods of educational and economic disruption."

The report also showed improvement in Alabama's Family & Community indicators between 2019 and 2024, including lower teen birth rates, fewer children living in concentrated poverty, and more children living in households with adults who have at least a high school diploma.

Health indicators reflected a mixed picture. Alabama saw modest improvements in low birth-weight rates and child and teen death rates, but the percentage of children without health insurance increased from 3% to 4%. Housing affordability also remains a growing concern, with the share of children living in households spending more than 30% of income on housing rising from 24% to 26%.

"While Alabama has made progress in some areas, the data also remind us that too many children and families continue to face significant barriers to success," said Apreill Hartsfield, Director of Policy, Advocacy & Research at VOICES for Alabama's Children. "The Data Book helps us better understand where progress is occurring, where challenges remain, and where strategic investments and policy decisions can make the greatest difference for children."

Now in its 37th year, the KIDS COUNT® Data Book provides state-by-state data to help leaders identify where progress is being made and where greater support is needed. VOICES also produces the Alabama Kids Count Data Book, which provides county-level child well-being data and analysis specific to Alabama communities.

VOICES for Alabama's Children encourages policymakers, educators, business leaders, and community partners to use the data to inform decisions that strengthen outcomes for Alabama's children.

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RELEASE INFORMATION

The 2026 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 VOICES FOR ALABAMA'S CHILDREN

VOICES for Alabama's Children believes all children deserve to live in a community that affirms their inherent value as members of the human family. Its mission is to speak for the well-being of Alabama's children through research, public awareness and advocacy. The organization works to promote policies that create opportunities for all children in Alabama to succeed. Learn more at www.alavoices.org.