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Connecticut Ranks 7th in the Nation for Child Well-Being, but Economic Inequities Continue to Hold Too Many Families Back

Despite Strong National Ranking, New KIDS COUNT Data Show Connecticut Struggles with Child Poverty and Housing Affordability

CITY, STATE — Connecticut ranks 7th in the nation for overall child well-being, according to the **2026 KIDS COUNT® Data Book**, a 50-state report of recent data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation analyzing how kids are faring nationwide.

While Connecticut remains one of the top-performing states in the country and improved from 8th place last year, the data reveal a more complicated story. Strong outcomes in education and health continue to bolster the state's national standing, but persistent economic disparities, high housing costs, and child poverty continue to prevent many children and families from fully sharing in Connecticut's prosperity.

Connecticut ranked 3rd nationally in education and 4th in health. However, the state ranked just 20th in economic well-being and 18th in family and community context, highlighting significant challenges that continue to affect children's daily lives.

For the first time this year, states receive a comprehensive score (from 0 to 1,000) in the *Data Book*, not just a ranking. The scores track 16 indicators in four domains — economic well-being, education, health, and family and community factors — over a five-year period from 2019 to 2024. The new scoring system shows whether policies and public investment are actually improving children's lives, not merely how states compare to each other. Connecticut received a score of 708, above the national score of 547. While this is an improvement from 684 in 2022, the state has not returned to pre-pandemic levels of 727 in 2019.

"Connecticut's overall high ranking is something to be proud of, but evidence we are not doing enough—we must engage in big, bold policy changes that advance economic security for all families, not just the privileged and lucky few. The data show both the impact of investments that support children and families and the consequences of longstanding status quo budgets that don't address equity and opportunity," **said Emily Byrne, executive director of Connecticut Voices for Children.** "As federal cuts threaten to increase hardship for many households, Connecticut has a moral responsibility to strengthen the social safety net as well as continue investing in other policies that ensure every child can share in the state's prosperity."

Key Findings from the 2026 KIDS COUNT Data Book

- The state's overall success masks significant disparities. While Connecticut performs well on many indicators, too many children continue to face barriers related to poverty, housing costs, and economic insecurity, limiting their ability to fully benefit from the state's prosperity.
- Connecticut ranks 40th nationally for housing cost burden, making housing affordability one of the state's most significant challenges.
- Connecticut continues to lead in children's health coverage. The state ranks 3rd nationally for children's health insurance, with just 3 percent of children uninsured.

- Connecticut ranked 2nd in the nation for having a low child and teen death rate. While the state slipped one spot in the rankings, the child and teen death rate improved from 17 to 16 deaths per 100,000 youth ages 1 to 19 and has now returned to pre-pandemic levels.
- Connecticut ranked 3rd in the nation for education, maintaining its position among the country's top-performing states. However, student performance remains below pre-pandemic levels, with the state's education score declining by 148 points, underscoring the need for continued investment in student learning and recovery.
- Connecticut ranked 15th nationally for youth obesity, with 29% of teens ages 10 to 17 classified as overweight or obese. It's important to note that there is a statistically significant relationship between childhood body mass index and food insecurity, where children who are food insecure tend to have higher body mass indexes. This suggests that while youth being overweight/obese is tied to health, it's also related to Connecticut's lower family economic security compared to other states. At a time when families continue to face high housing, food, and child care costs, cuts to SNAP and other federal supports could worsen food insecurity and make it harder for children to access the nutrition they need to grow and thrive.
- Connecticut ranked 29th in the nation for the percentage of children living in high-poverty areas. At 7 percent, Connecticut reports a higher share of children living in concentrated poverty than most New England states.

"Behind every number in this report is a child who is either hungry or fed, housed or homeless, progressing academically or falling behind. No state is consistently getting this right," **said Lisa M. Lawson, president and CEO of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.** "The Data Book challenges us to follow the evidence and do what delivers results."

Connecticut's strengths in education and health demonstrate what is possible when policymakers invest in children and families. The state has prided itself on long-term investments in health care coverage. Recent state investments, including the expansion of the Connecticut Earned Income Tax Credit, the creation of Connecticut Baby Bonds, and the establishment of the Early Childhood Education Endowment, represent important steps toward improving economic opportunity and reducing child poverty.

However, Connecticut Voices for Children warns that federal cuts to programs that help families afford food, health care, and other basic needs could undermine that progress and place additional strain on households already struggling to make ends meet.

"Connecticut's strengths, especially in children's health and early childhood, didn't happen by accident. They are the result of deliberate investments in children and families," **Byrne said.** "We cannot afford to reverse course. Closing federal budget gaps on SNAP and Medicaid, staying the course on early care and education as well as expanding and innovating where possible on K-12, housing, and employment is the path that leads to affordability for every Connecticut family."

In its 37th 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. Connecticut Voices for Children encourages lawmakers and officials in Connecticut 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.

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RELEASE INFORMATION

The 2026 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* will be available at [Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs and rankings in stories about the Data Book can use the KIDS COUNT Data Center at \[datacenter.aecf.org\]\(https://datacenter.aecf.org\).](https://www.aecf.org/data-center)

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 CONNECTICUT VOICES FOR CHILDREN

Connecticut Voices for Children is a “think and do” tank working to ensure that Connecticut is a thriving and equitable state where all children achieve their full potential. In furtherance of its vision, we work in the state and nationally to advance economic justice systems change through research and policy development as well as power building and legislative advocacy. To learn more, visit ctvoices.org and follow us on [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#), [Bluesky](#), [Threads](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#).