

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL June 8, 2026

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IDAHO'S EDUCATION AND HEALTH CARE CRISIS COMPLICATE PROGRESS ON CHILD WELL-BEING

50-State Data in Annie E. Casey Foundation Report Reveals Idaho is Falling Behind Other States in Education and Health Insurance Coverage for Kids.

Boise, Idaho — According to the **2026 KIDS COUNT Data Book**, **nearly 70% of Idaho students are scoring below proficient in reading and math, and the child uninsured rate has increased by 60% since 2019.** This 50-state report of recent data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation analyzes how kids are faring in America.

"Idaho leaders should use this data as both a roadmap and a call to action," said Ivy Walker, Policy Associate at Idaho Voices for Children, Idaho's member of the KIDS COUNT network. "The data highlights opportunities for state leaders to invest in programs proven to improve child health and well-being through meaningful policy action."

Idaho ranks 13th in the nation in overall child well-being with a score of 638/1000. Since 2019, 9 of Idaho's 16 key indicators have improved, 6 have worsened, and 1 has not changed, resulting in an 18-point decrease to Idaho's overall score. Positive trends include **reductions in the teen birth rate, and the child and teen death rate.** Negative trends include **increases in the share of children without health insurance, teens not attending school and not working, and a decline in the share of 8th graders who are proficient in math.**

In its 37th year of publication, the KIDS COUNT Data Book offers both a big-picture view and a local road map to equip policymakers, advocates and communities with the information they need to make decisions and investments in programs that help kids and young people grow and develop. For the first time this year, states received 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.

2026 KIDS COUNT DATA BOOK EXAMINES IDAHO'S CHILD WELL-BEING

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 scores states according to how children are faring overall. Key findings from the most recent data include:

- **ECONOMIC WELL-BEING:** Idaho scored **700** in the economic well-being domain, a 59-point decline since 2019.
 - About 8% of Idaho teens aged 16 to 19 were not attending school and not working in 2024. Between 2019 and 2024, **Idaho saw the nation's largest percentage increase (60%) in this category.**
 - Between 2019 and 2024, the share of **children living in poverty decreased by 15%.**
- **EDUCATION:** Idaho scored 339 in the education domain, a 76-point decline since 2019.
 - In 2020–24, about two-thirds (62%) of 3- and 4-year-old Idaho children were not attending preschool.
 - In 2024, **68% of fourth graders** were not proficient in reading and **69% of eighth graders** were not proficient in math.

- **HEALTH:** Idaho scored 671 in the health domain, a 29-point decline since 2019.
 - In 2024, **8% of children did not have health insurance**, a **60% increase** from 2019 to 2024.
 - Just over one-quarter (27%) of teens ages 10 to 17 were overweight or obese in 2023–24, down from 29% in 2018–19. Idaho now ranks ninth in the country.
- **FAMILY AND COMMUNITY:** Idaho ranked **5th in the nation** in the family and community domain, **the state’s highest ranking in the Data Book**, with a 94-point increase since 2019.
 - In 2024, 24% of Idaho children lived in single-parent households, the second lowest percentage in the country.
 - Between 2019 and 2024, the share of **children living in high-poverty areas went down by 67%**
 - The teen birth rate maintained a record low of 10 teen births per 1,000 teen girls in 2024, a 33% decrease from 2019 to 2024.

POLICIES ARE NEEDED TO PROMOTE CHILD WELL-BEING ACROSS ALL DOMAINS

“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.”

We know what kids need to grow up healthy and connected: 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. Idaho Voices for Children encourages state legislators, officials and Congress to use the detailed information in the *Data Book* to respond with initiatives that invest in young people, including:

- **Protect children’s Medicaid services:** Medicaid provides low-income children with health insurance and is a critical lifeline to essential care they would otherwise go without. Lawmakers must prioritize ensuring Medicaid eligible children get covered and stay covered.
- **Invest in Affordable Housing:** Idaho’s rental housing crisis is primarily caused by a severe shortage of affordable homes available to families with low incomes. To address the crisis, lawmakers must invest in building affordable rental homes, ensure rental assistance is universally available, and strengthen renter protections.
- **Invest in Idaho’s Public Schools:** Unless the causes of children’s instability are addressed, education outcomes will only continue to worsen. Policymakers should invest in public and community schools. Community schools provide wraparound support to kids and families, tutoring, mental health support, nutritional aid, and other services. They use innovative and creative programs to support young learners and encourage parent engagement, which leads to better outcomes for kids.

“It is essential that Idaho policymakers consider the data and what it is telling us about the needs of our youth. **Idaho can and should do more to ensure public schools have the resources and community support they need to help children succeed and strengthen health care access for children across the state**,” said Walker. “Idaho lawmakers must prioritize critical financial supports for families who are struggling to make ends meet.”

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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 IDAHO VOICES FOR CHILDREN

Idaho Voices for Children works to develop and promote a statewide public policy agenda that advocates for children on issues of health, education, safety, well-being and family economic security. Learn more at www.idahovoices.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.