



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

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**Kansas Ranks 5<sup>th</sup> in Kids' Economic Well-Being, but Falls Short in Overall Health,  
According to the 2026 KIDS COUNT Data Book**

*Fewer Kansas kids living below the poverty line is driving families' economic success,  
but struggles still abound in families securing health insurance for their children*

**Topeka, KAN.** — Kansas continues to rank 5<sup>th</sup> in kids' economic well-being, but falls short in other areas, 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. The most recent data places Kansas at 14<sup>th</sup> in the nation for overall child well-being.

For the first time this year, states receive a comprehensive score ranging (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. Kansas received an overall score of 636, which is above the national score of 547.

The state's economic well-being ranking of 5<sup>th</sup> (with a score of 849 out of 1,000) is driven largely by comparatively low shares of Kansas children living in poverty (13%, or 87,000, in 2024), children in families with no parent working full-time (19%, or 127,000, in 2024), and being second best in the nation for children living in high housing cost-burdened households (20%, or 140,000, in 2024).

Yet, despite the strong economic well-being ranking, a concerning number of Kansas kids lack health insurance. The most recent data, 51,000 in 2024, represents the highest number of uninsured children since 2012.

"Kansas continues to be one of the best states for families' budgets," said John Wilson, President and CEO of Kansas Action for Children, Kansas' member of the Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT network. "But there's much more we can do to ensure families' economic success is not throttled by broken systems. The data point to parents having fewer choices in accessing and securing affordable health care for their families, and Kansas leaders must work toward ensuring Kansas kids can have all of these basic needs met."

Improving Medicaid and private health insurance access, making public assistance applications easier to navigate, and strengthening provider reimbursement rates to offer care are all solutions to ensuring children get the timely health care Kansans deserve.

Wilson continued, "The needs go far beyond health care. To grow up healthy, kids need safe, stable homes, strong learning opportunities at all ages of childhood, nutritious food, and supportive relationships with adults. These create a strong foundation for life-long well-being."

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. Kansas Action for Children encourages lawmakers and officials in Kansas 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.

**Kansas ranked 14<sup>th</sup> overall – 5<sup>th</sup> in economic well-being, 23<sup>rd</sup> in education, 25<sup>th</sup> in health, and 22<sup>nd</sup> in family & community context.** Key Kansas statistics include the following:

### **ECONOMIC WELL-BEING**

- The number of Kansas kids living in poverty declined from 101,000 (15%) children in 2019 to 87,000 (13%) in 2024. These kids lived in households below the 2024 poverty line, or a household income of less than \$31,812 for a family of two adults and two kids. █
- In 2024, 127,000 (19%) Kansas kids lived in households where no parent had full-time employment (defined as working for at least 35 hours per week, for 50 weeks in a calendar year); this is 20,000 fewer than in 2019.
- In 2024, Kansas still had around 140,000 children (20%) living in a household with a high housing cost burden, or more than 30% of the family's income. This has declined from 152,000 in 2019.

### **EDUCATION**

- Kansas continues to lag behind more than half of other states in student success, with the percentage of below-average math and reading scores worse than nationwide averages.
  - In 2024, the rate of fourth graders falling below NAEP-defined proficiency reading levels was 72%. Kansas ranks 35<sup>th</sup> in the nation for this data point.
  - In 2024, the rate of eighth graders falling below NAEP-defined math proficiency levels was 74%. Kansas ranks 25<sup>th</sup> in the nation for this data point.

### **HEALTH**

- In 2024, 51,000 (or about 7%) Kansas children lacked health insurance, an increase from 43,000 in 2019.

### **FAMILY & COMMUNITY CONTEXT**

- In 2024, 66,000 (10%) Kansas children lived in a household where the household head lacks a high school diploma. This was 67,000 in 2019.
- The number of Kansas children living in high-poverty areas continues to decline. In 2020-2024, 31,000 Kansas kids lived in high-poverty areas, a drop from 37,000 in 2015-2019.

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### **RELEASE INFORMATION**

The 2026 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* will be available at [www.aecf.org/databook](http://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](http://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](http://www.aecf.org). KIDS COUNT is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

### **ABOUT KANSAS ACTION FOR CHILDREN**

KAC is a nonprofit advocacy organization working to make Kansas a place where every child has the opportunity to grow up healthy and thrive. For nearly 50 years, KAC has been a resource to leaders and advocates who are working to ensure a brighter future for every child. We engage in bipartisan advocacy, partnerships, and information-sharing on key issues, including early learning and education, health, and economic security for families.