



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

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**Louisiana Improved Child Well-Being More Than Nearly Every Other State, 2026 KIDS COUNT Data Book Shows**

*Despite Ranking 48th Overall, Louisiana Outpaced Nearly Every State in Child Well-Being Gains Since 2019*

**NEW ORLEANS** — Louisiana’s children continue to face significant challenges, according to the *2026 KIDS COUNT Data Book*, a 50-state report developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation analyzing how kids are faring nationwide. The data show Louisiana’s leaders must do more to improve children’s health and economic well-being.

For the first time, states receive a comprehensive score (from 0 to 1,000) tracking 16 indicators across 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 measures whether policies and public investment are actually improving children’s lives, not merely how states compare to one another. Louisiana received a score of 313, well below the national score of 547. Despite that gap, Louisiana’s child well-being score improved by 36 points between 2019 and 2024, more growth than 48 other states, while the national average fell by six points.

Louisiana progressed in education, where its score improved by 83 points, more than any other state, even as the national average dropped by 101 points. Children’s health remains a concern: Louisiana’s health score fell 49 points, compared to a 17-point national decline.

Louisiana ranked 48th overall in child well-being, including 50th in economic well-being, 35th in education, 49th in health, and 48th in family and community, according to the report.

Key data from this year’s report include:

- 11.6% of Louisiana babies were born at low birthweight in 2024, up from 10.8% in 2019.
- Louisiana ranks among the best states (8th) for the percentage of young children not in preschool (51%).
- One out of every five Louisiana children (20%) lived in a high-poverty neighborhood in 2024, far higher than the national average (7%).

“Louisiana should celebrate its improvements in child well-being, but we must also redouble our efforts in areas where we are lagging, such as economic well-being and health,” said Jen Roberts, CEO of Agenda for Children, Louisiana’s member of the Casey Foundation’s KIDS COUNT network. “Successes like Louisiana’s improvements in reading proficiency and low rates of uninsured children prove that when we implement smart policies and make the right investments, we can achieve far better outcomes for kids.”

In its 37th year, the *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* equips policymakers, advocates, and communities with the data they need to make decisions that help children thrive. Agenda for Children encourages Louisiana’s leaders to use this information to unite across party lines and invest in the state’s young people.

“The evidence is clear — children thrive when they have stable homes, strong schools, nutritious food, meaningful relationships, and opportunities to learn, play, and grow,” said Teresa Falgoust, Chief Data

and Impact Officer at Agenda for Children. “If we connect children and families to those opportunities today, we can build a stronger, more prosperous Louisiana in the future.”

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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 AGENDA FOR CHILDREN**

Agenda for Children has been working to improve child well-being through policy, research, early childhood systems-building, and direct support for families and early childhood educators for over 40 years.