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Michigan ranks 34th in 2026 KIDS COUNT Data Book as Michigan League for Public Policy urges focus on supporting thriving kids and families; state continues to rank in the bottom 10 states for education at 42nd

New scoring index to increase accountability by showing how Michigan's policies and investment affect children's daily lives

Lansing, Mich. — Coming in at 34th, Michigan continues to rank in the bottom half of states in 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. The data show Michigan leaders must do more to ensure children growing up in the state have the support they need to thrive in their classrooms and families raising children have the financial security to meet their basic needs.

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. Michigan received a score of 527, below the national score of 547, with the lowest scores in the education and economic well-being domains at 248 and 549 respectively.

In addition to low comprehensive scores in education and economic well-being, Michigan continues to rank in the bottom 10 states in education at 42nd and in the bottom half of states in economic well-being at 32nd. The state's highest score continues to be in health, ranking in the top half of states at 21st, due in part to Michigan having one of the lowest uninsured rates for child healthcare in the country. "The comprehensive scores in the domains of health and family and community factors were both improvements from the previous year at 662 and 651 respectively; however, Michigan still ranks in the bottom half of states in family and community factors at 27th.

Digging deeper into the educational data, a stark picture emerges: 56% of young children are not in school, a rate that has worsened since 2019 despite significant investments in universal pre-K in recent years. Additionally, 3 in 4 fourth grade students are not proficient in reading, with reading proficiency shown to be 10% worse than pre-pandemic levels, and 3 in 4 eighth grade students are not proficient in math, with math proficiency also 10% worse than pre-pandemic levels. And 17% of Michigan high school students did not graduate on time in 2024. This is an improvement over 2019, but remains worse than the national average.

"Education continues to stand out as the area where we most need to improve when looking at this year's data," said Monique Stanton, president and CEO of the Michigan League for Public Policy, Michigan's member of the Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT network. "The data underscores the urgency of Michigan lawmakers to prioritize education in their budget and policy decisions over the coming year, [including strengthening early childhood education as well as meeting the needs of K-12 students. As our educational system continues to face federal threats](#), it's also important for [short-sighted property tax cuts proposals that would strip funding away from schools be voted down](#)."

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. The Michigan League for Public Policy encourages lawmakers and officials in Michigan 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.

“This year’s data, including the new comprehensive scores, should be used as a guide in improving child outcomes for our youngest generations. Education is one area where state decisionmakers must continue to focus, but economic well-being is also important, especially considering that 18% of children in Michigan live in poverty. This is worse than the national rate, and poverty among Black and Hispanic children is the highest at 37% and 25% respectively. At a time when costs are on the rise and basic needs, such as food and healthcare, are being stripped away from families by the federal government, state lawmakers must work together to mitigate these harms. [The League’s people-centered budget priorities are a great place to start](#),” said Anne Kuhnen, Kids Count policy director at the Michigan League for Public Policy.

“We know what kids need to grow up healthy and connected so they can thrive as adults. Strong schools and improved economic security are two of those fundamental needs. So are stable homes, nutritious food, meaningful relationships and opportunities to learn, play and grow. Programs that meet these needs are smart investments, especially now as Michiganders are really struggling to make ends meet. These kinds of investments will foster long-term gains like employment and economic growth,” said Stanton.

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RELEASE INFORMATION

The 2026 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* will be available at www.aecf.org/databook. Additional information is 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.