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Minnesota Ranks 2nd in Economic Well-Being, 5th in Overall Child Well-Being in 2026 KIDS COUNT Data Book; CDF-MN Celebrates Progress in Economic Well-Being While Urging Action on Education

New Scoring Index to Increase Accountability by Showing How Minnesota's Policies and Investments Affect Child Well-Being; State Score of 743 Is Well Above National Average

SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA — Minnesota ranks 2nd in the nation in economic 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.

This ranking is a remarkable reflection of what is possible when we make bold investments in children and families. From 2019 through 2024, child poverty in Minnesota decreased by nearly 10 percent, driven in part by investments like Minnesota's Child Tax Credit.

Minnesota ranks 5th in the nation in overall child well-being. Despite high rankings in three of the domains, Minnesota continues to lose ground in educational outcomes, where the state now ranks 21st nationally. Improving educational outcomes in Minnesota will require bold, child-centered policies that ensure every child has the support, stability, and opportunity they need to learn and thrive.

This year, for the first time in the *Data Book's* history, 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. Minnesota received a score of 743, far above the national score of 547.

State data trends between 2019 and 2024 find:

- The overall score for Minnesota decreased from 790 to 743, with uneven change among the Data Book's four domains:
 - Family and Community increased from 774 to 846
 - Economic Well-Being slightly improved from 881 to 899
 - Health worsened from 878 to 792
 - Education plunged from 627 to 437

"Too many Minnesotans struggle to pay for basics, like diapers, food, school supplies, and other things needed to raise healthy, thriving children," said Minnesota Budget Project Director Nan Madden. "In 2023, Minnesota policymakers passed a powerful new state Child Tax Credit (CTC) as a proven way to strengthen the economic stability of families across the state. Minnesota families may qualify for a Child Tax Credit for each qualifying child under the age of 18; families that file their taxes using Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers also can qualify. Minnesota also has an innovative new way of delivering the CTC to families. Families can choose to receive a portion of their CTC in advanced payments, which respects families' decisions and better matches how they pay their bills. Minnesota's tax credits focused on families living on lower incomes

are effective ways to boost incomes and fight child poverty throughout the state,” said **Director of the Minnesota Budget Project Nan Madden**.

Minnesota’s nation-leading Child Tax Credit became law in 2023, and families first received the refundable credit in 2024. In 2024 alone, more than 220,000 families and 440,000 children benefited from the credit, with over \$562 million helping families afford food, housing, child care, transportation, and other essentials. Minnesota’s progress shows that when policymakers prioritize children and reduce family economic stress, children are better positioned to learn, grow, and thrive.

“Minnesota continues to rank among the top states in the nation for overall child well-being, and that is good news worth celebrating. Our state has made meaningful progress in supporting children and families, particularly in economic well-being. But we cannot ignore the academic realities facing far too many children – especially Black children, Brown children, Indigenous children, and children from other communities of color. It is heartbreaking and unacceptable that nearly 7 out of 10 fourth graders were not reading at grade level in 2024. Reading makes it possible for a child to fully engage in their world. Literacy is foundational to a child’s confidence, learning, and opportunities, and we must help these children succeed while ensuring that more children do not fall behind. Every child deserves to grow up safe, supported, and surrounded by abundant opportunity. That means investing in policies that continue to strengthen families – especially families with young children, expand access to early care and learning, and build stable, well-resourced environments where children can thrive. We owe our children joyful, flourishing childhoods where their well-being and potential are truly centered,” said **CDF-MN State Director Alisha Porter**.

In 2023-2024, 16 percent of students did not graduate high school on time, placing Minnesota 34th in the nation on this measure. At the same time, 66 percent of eighth graders were below proficient in math – an 18 percent increase from 2019 through 2024. These trends reflect deep and growing challenges in educational attainment and student support. Minnesota’s educational challenges begin long before high school graduation. Minnesota must invest earlier and more intentionally in children and families to ensure every child has the support they need to thrive.

Strong early childhood education and school readiness are foundational to a child’s lifelong learning, development, and opportunity. The early years of a child’s life shape literacy, math skills, emotional development, and long-term academic success. Yet in 2020–24, more than half (55 percent) of Minnesota’s 3- and 4-year-olds were not attending school, and that share increased as compared to 2015–19 (53 percent).

“I fear that educational outcomes for our children – especially our children from immigrant communities – will be even worse due to the actions of Operation Metro Surge. Fear, instability, trauma, and disruption compounded barriers that many students were already facing. When children do not feel safe and supported and can’t consistently go to and engage in school, the impacts can be profound and long-lasting. While this year’s data gives us an important picture of child well-being in Minnesota, it cannot capture what children and families are experiencing today. We are likely to see the impacts of months of traumatizing immigration enforcement actions in future data unless we act now. This is a crisis that demands urgent investment in targeted supports to help children heal, reconnect, reengage, and succeed so we can prevent long-term harm to children already carrying so much. Prioritizing the well-being of our children who are immigrants should be a priority when the 2027 legislative session begins,” said **CDF-MN Senior Policy Director Alexandra Fitzsimmons**.

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. CDF-MN encourages lawmakers and officials in Minnesota 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 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 www.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.