

2026 KIDS COUNT Data Book State Press Release



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Missouri Ranks 28th in 2026 KIDS COUNT Data Book as the Family & Community Trust Encourages Focus on Supporting Thriving Kids and Families.

*The Annie E. Casey Foundation Is Introducing a New Scoring Index
To Show How State Policies and Investment
Affect Children's Daily Lives Both Over Time and Within States*

Jefferson City, Missouri — Missouri's children continue to experience relative stability in measures of household economic wellbeing and community safety, yet face challenges related to educational achievement and healthcare access. Missouri ranks 28th in overall 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 Missouri leaders must do more to address educational opportunity and achievement beginning with increasing enrollment in early childhood education and as evidenced by the more than 70% of Missouri's 4th and 8th graders scoring below the 'proficiency' category on standardized tests.

For the first time this year, 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. Missouri received a score of 567, slightly above the national score of 547, with the highest score in the economic wellbeing domain.

While Missouri ranked 15th overall on the economic well-being indicators that consider children living in poverty, stable parental employment, housing costs, and adolescents engaged in school or work, 15% percent of kids, just over 200,000, are living in families with incomes below the federal poverty line, 23% are living in families where no parent has year-round, full-time employment, and 22% are living in households that spend 30% or more of their income on housing costs. Missouri children have experienced an uptick in lack of health insurance coverage, increasing from 5% in 2023 to 7% in 2024 equaling approximately 95,000 children without coverage.

"Sustaining progress and ensuring we can provide consistently and reliably for all of our families and children is the mission and the work we collaborate on with our state and community partners everyday," said Tracy Greever-Rice, Missouri *KIDS COUNT* program director at the Family & Community Trust, Missouri's member of the Casey Foundation's *KIDS COUNT* network.

William Dent, Executive Director of the Family & Community Trust said, "We know what our children need to grow up healthy and connected so they can thrive as adults: stable homes, strong schools, nutritious food, meaningful relationships and opportunities to learn, play and grow. Investment in initiatives that meet these needs are smart investments, fostering long-term gains like employment and economic growth."

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 Family and Community Trust encourages lawmakers and officials in Missouri 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. 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.