



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

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### **Montana Saw Increase in Child Uninsured Rate, Ranking 39<sup>th</sup> in the Country, 2026 KIDS COUNT Data Book Shows**

Montana has seen an uptick in the number of children without health insurance, 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. While Montana made modest improvements in some economic well-being indicators, the state has seen a 33 percent increase in the share of uninsured children since 2019 and now ranks toward the bottom across the country.

In 2024, 19,000 Montana children were uninsured. Health insurance is a key indicator in a family's ability to access preventive care, wellness checks, and emergency services, and health care coverage can lead to better health outcomes as a child gets older.

Medicaid plays a critical role in providing health care coverage for Montana children. However, the health insurance landscape has since shifted dramatically, with thousands fewer Montana children enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP, following the end of the continuous enrollment provision enacted during the pandemic. Further changes to Medicaid in 2026 may impact families' ability to enroll and keep health care coverage

"As Montana moves forward with significant changes to Medicaid eligibility this year, we should be paying close attention to the impact on health care coverage for children," said Heather O'Loughlin, Executive Director of Montana Budget & Policy Center. "

The **2026 KIDS COUNT® Data Book** also shows that 25,000 Montana children (11 percent) lived below the poverty level, or in families with annual incomes of less than \$31,800 for a family of four with two adults and two children. Notably, poverty rates are disproportionately higher for Black, Indigenous, and other children of color as a result of generations of added systemic barriers that made it harder for families of color to build economic security. Nearly one in four children in Montana lived in a household that spent more than 30 percent of their income on housing. When families spend more of their income on housing, it leaves less income for other necessities like food, child care, and transportation costs.

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 improving children's lives, not

merely how states compare to each other. Montana received an overall score across all four domains of 590, above the national score of 547. However, Montana's score in health of 569 was below the national health score of 607.

Additional highlights from the report findings for Montana include:

- **Economic:** 54,000 children live in families that spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing, suggesting a need for greater state investments in housing solutions to support families.
- **Education:** In 2024, less than one-third of fourth graders scored at or above proficient in reading. While schools are still seeing the impacts of the pandemic on students, more recent investments in early literacy have the potential to shift reading proficiency for Montana's students.
- **Health:** Nearly 8 percent of babies born in Montana were at a low birthweight. This rate represents a 4 percent increase over the past five years, highlighting the importance of investments in maternal health services.

Montana should continue to invest in children and families to ensure all children have what they need to thrive. **Passing a state child tax credit**, particularly one that is refundable for low-income families, can help those struggling the most to pay for rising costs of housing, food, child care, and other necessities. In the interim, **state agencies that administer support programs like Medicaid can ensure these programs are well-advertised and easy to access**. Additionally, it is a critical moment to ensure federal funding is not cut for key programs that support families, like housing supports, Head Start, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP, Medicaid, and many others.

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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). Additional information is 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 MONTANA KIDS COUNT**

Montana KIDS COUNT is a leading resource for data on child and family well-being in the state and is dedicated to providing current, relevant, and reliable data to shape the issues affecting Montana children and families. Montana KIDS COUNT is a project of the Montana Budget & Policy Center, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization providing in-depth research and analysis on budget, tax, and economic issues. More information can be found at [www.montanabudget.org](http://www.montanabudget.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.