

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

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## **New Hampshire Ranks First in 2026 KIDS COUNT Data Book as New Futures Urges Focus on Supporting Investment in Early Education**

**CONCORD, NH** — New Hampshire again ranks first 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.

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 five years 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. **New Hampshire** received a score of **838**, above the national score of 547, with the highest scores in the family and community domain.

Based on these indicators, New Hampshire has been named the top state for the fourth-straight year. The new comprehensive scores paint a complex picture for the Granite State: steady progress in some areas, setbacks in others, and persistent opportunities to do better for kids and their families. While New Hampshire saw increases in economic well-being, health, and family and community over the five-year period, the state saw a decrease in education outcomes.

Despite ranking fourth in education nationally, New Hampshire’s underlying numbers tell a concerning story. In 2024, 64 percent of fourth-graders were not proficient in reading and 68 percent of eighth-graders were not proficient in math, with both indicators trending in the wrong direction over the last five years. Research points to early childhood education as one of the most powerful levers for improving those outcomes, yet New Hampshire remains one of only six states in the country with no state investment in pre-K. Nearly half of all Granite State three-and four-year-olds—about 13,000 children—are not in any school setting, a rate that has barely budged in over a decade.

“New Hampshire’s top ranking in the KIDS COUNT Data Book is a testament to the strength of our communities and the dedication of the families and providers who show up for children every day,” said **Rebecca Woitkowski, Vice President of Policy at New Futures**, New Hampshire’s leading health policy and advocacy organization and home of New Hampshire Kids Count. “But we cannot let that ranking obscure a troubling trend: our education indicators are moving in the wrong direction, and our children are falling further behind on reading and math. We can’t keep ranking first overall while leaving our youngest learners without the foundation they need to succeed. Investing in affordable child care, including robust access to pre-K, is a commitment to the children who will carry New Hampshire forward[1] [2].”

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. New Futures encourages lawmakers and officials in New Hampshire 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.

Additional findings from the 2026 *Data Book* include:

- **New Hampshire ranked 1st in economic well-being.** Still, 41,000 Granite State children (17 percent) have parents who lack secure, full-time employment, a reminder that even our top-ranked state leaves too many families behind.
- **New Hampshire ranked 1st in health,** and just two percent of Granite State children—about 6,000 kids—lacked health insurance in 2024, tied for the lowest rate in the nation. These gains are fragile, as proposed cuts to Medicaid at the state and federal level threaten to reverse this progress for the thousands of children who depend on it.
- **New Hampshire ranks 1st in family and community,** tying with Massachusetts for the lowest teen birth rate in the nation (5 births per 1,000 females ages 15-19) and fewer than one percent of children living in high-poverty neighborhoods. Yet 61,000 children (25 percent) live in households spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing, a burden that strains family stability and puts other basic needs out of reach.

New Futures urges state lawmakers to treat these findings not as a report card, but as a road map. The data makes clear that New Hampshire's standing as the best state for children is not guaranteed, and that the policy choices made in Concord will determine whether Granite State children continue to thrive or fall further behind.

"We know what it takes to set children up for success, and we know what happens when we don't make those investments early," said Woitkowski. "New Hampshire has an opportunity to act on what the data is telling us. That means investing in a strong system of child care, which includes pre-K, protecting Medicaid for the one in four children who depend on it, and making sure every family can afford a stable home. Our rankings reflect our strengths, but our scores reflect our work, and there's more work to do."

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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 NEW FUTURES, HOME OF NH KIDS COUNT

For more than 25 years, New Futures has provided nonpartisan, evidence-based solutions to New Hampshire's health challenges. New Futures works to build bridges among policymakers and secure the passage of laws that improve access to early childhood supports, health insurance, substance use treatment, and prevention programming. Through policy change, we can ensure that social service programs and statewide systems work for everyone. For more information, visit [new-futures.org](http://new-futures.org).