

## New Mexico Voices for Children

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### **New Mexico Moves Up to 49th in 2026 KIDS COUNT Data Book, as NM Voices for Children Urges Continued Investment in Kids and Families**

*New scoring index shows where policies such as Child Tax Credit are improving child well-being and where New Mexico continues to lag behind*

**ALBUQUERQUE, NM— JUNE 8, 2026** — New Mexico improved slightly in child well-being, moving from the 50th to 49th ranking nationally in the **2026 KIDS COUNT Data Book**, a 50-state report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation that examines how children and families are faring nationwide. Kids' economic well-being in the state particularly improved thanks to the Child Tax Credit enacted in 2022 and expanded in 2023 following data-driven advocacy and recommendations to state lawmakers.

While the improvement reflects progress in some areas, the data show New Mexico continues to face significant challenges in education and family stability, underscoring the need for continued investments in children and families.

The data, which reflect conditions in 2024, suggest that many child well-being indicators continue to recover from disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Compared with [2019 / 2023], New Mexico's outcomes improved in the Economic Well-Being and Health domains, while Education and Family and Community indicators remained weak.

In addition to the rankings, this year's data book features new scores that measure overall progress and progress across the report's four domains: economic well-being, education, health, and family and community. New Mexico received an overall score of 281, below the national average of 547, highlighting both gains and persistent gaps in child well-being.

New Mexico saw its largest gains in Economic Well-Being, earning a score of 399, a 135-point improvement since 2019, tied with Delaware for the greatest improvement nationally. Child poverty also continued to decline gradually, reaching 22%, the lowest rate New Mexico has seen in over 16 years. The child tax credit allows some families to claim a credit of up to \$600 per child, delivering more than [\\$100 million in tax relief to](#)

[about 292,000 families](#), based on family income. Housing affordability, measured by the share of children living in households with a high housing cost burden, showed signs of improvement after worsening in recent years. New Mexico continues to outperform the national average on this indicator, the only one where the state does so, with 27% of children living in households spending more than 30% of income on housing, compared with 31% nationally.

Health indicators also showed modest signs of stabilization. The share of children without health insurance held steady at 6%, even as the national rate increased to match New Mexico's. The state's child and teen death rate for 2024 also appear to have improved from the previous year.

“We moved from 50th to 49th because New Mexico made choices, and choices matter,” said **Gabrielle Uballez, Executive Director of NM Voices for Children**. “When we put kids and families first, we see progress. But one step forward is not the finish line, and our families deserve more than barely getting by. As a state, we are moving beyond affordability toward economic dignity, where families have the stability to imagine better lives and futures for their children. We know what works. The question is will we continue to have the courage to keep investing in it.”

Despite modest gains, Education continues to weigh heavily on New Mexico's overall ranking. The state remains 50th in education, with a score of 1, reflecting a 97-point decline since 2019, though New Mexico's post-pandemic decline has been smaller than many other states. Even before COVID-19, however, the state's education outcomes lagged significantly behind national peers.

New Mexico also continues to struggle in Family and Community, ranking 50th nationally with a score of 260, driven by a nationwide high of 20% of children living in concentrated poverty (tied with Maine) and 44% of children living in single-parent households.

“What stands out in this year's data is that New Mexico's strongest gains came in economic well-being, where the state saw one of the largest improvements in the country since 2019,” said **Emily Wildau, Director of Policy for New Mexico Voices for Children**. “The state's improvement in economic well-being is significant and suggests our policy investments are helping families, but persistent gaps in education continue to weigh heavily on overall child well-being.”

## **RELEASE INFORMATION**

The *2026 KIDS COUNT Data Book* 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 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.

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