



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

Contact: Christian Davis , Research Manager John Stanford, State Director

Phone Number: 740-914-9025

Phone Number: 740-914-9027

Email: cdavis@childrensdefense.org

Email: jstanford@childrensdefense.org

OHIO Ranks 27th in 2026 KIDS COUNT Data Book as CDF-Ohio Urges Focus on Supporting Thriving Kids and Families; State score of 569 is Above the national average

New Scoring Index to Increase Accountability by Showing How Ohio's Policies and Investment Affect Children's Daily Lives

COLUMBUS, OHIO — Ohio ranks 27th in child well-being, according to the **2026 KIDS COUNT Data Book**, a comprehensive 50-state report developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation analyzing how children are faring nationwide. The findings highlight that while Ohio maintains a mid-tier position, there is significant room for improvement, particularly in areas such as child poverty, education, and health outcomes. The data show Ohio leaders must do more to address persistent disparities and invest in policies that promote the well-being of all children.

For the first time this year, states receive a comprehensive score (from 0 to 1,000) in the Data Book, not just a ranking. Ohio scored 569, above the national score of 547, with the highest scores in economics and low score in education. This new scoring system tracks 16 indicators over a five-year period from 2019 to 2024, providing a clearer picture of whether policies and public investments are genuinely improving children's lives or merely maintaining the status quo.

The data reveal that Ohio's child poverty rate decreased since 2019 dropping from 18% to 16% in 2024. The on-time high school graduation rate improved substantially, rising from 82% in 2018-19 to 88% in 2023-2024, but the state's proficiency in 8th-grade math declined from 38% in 2019 to 32% in 2024. 8% of babies are born with low birthweight, highlighting ongoing challenges in health and safety.

"Ohio's children deserve a future where they can thrive—this means investing in strong schools, affordable housing, accessible healthcare, and family support programs," said **CDF-Ohio State Director Dr. John Stanford**. "Our current rankings reveal the urgent need for policies that reduce child poverty, improve educational outcomes, and expand health coverage. We cannot afford to wait—our children's futures depend on it."

The data also show that 62% of Ohio children are economically disadvantaged, and roughly 1.4 million children are enrolled in Medicaid, indicating ongoing efforts to support health coverage, but also highlighting areas for expansion and improvement. The percentage of children receiving SNAP benefits is 13.7%, emphasizing the importance of food assistance programs.

In its 37th year, the KIDS COUNT Data Book provides reliable statewide numbers to help leaders identify where progress is being made, where support is lacking, and which strategies are effective. CDF-Ohio encourages policymakers and community leaders to use this detailed information to unite across party lines and implement initiatives that invest in young people. By leveraging this data, Ohio can develop targeted solutions to ensure every child has the opportunity to succeed.

“Every number in this report tells a story about Ohio’s children—stories of resilience, disparities, and potential,” said **Christian Davis Policy and Research Manager at Children’s Defense Fund-Ohio**. “It’s time for Ohio to prioritize investments in early childhood, education, health, and family stability. Our children’s well-being should be a shared responsibility and a top priority for all policymakers.”

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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.kidscount.org.

ABOUT THE CHILDREN’S DEFENSE FUND-OHIO

The Children’s Defense Fund-Ohio is dedicated to creating a brighter future for Ohio’s children by advocating for policies that promote health, education, and economic opportunity. We work to ensure that every child in Ohio has a fair start in life and the opportunity to thrive. For more information, visit www.childrensdefense.org/ohio.

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.

Note: All data referenced are from the 2026 KIDS COUNT Data Book, released June 8, 2026.