

**2026 KIDS COUNT Data Book**  
State Press Release



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**Puerto Rico Sees Historic Drop in Child Poverty, But Major Challenges Remain**

*The Instituto del Desarrollo de la Juventud (IDJ) recognizes this milestone as evidence that reducing child poverty is possible and highlights the opportunity to accelerate public policies to improve economic security, early education, workforce development, family supports, and economic mobility.*

**SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO** — Puerto Rico has reached its lowest child poverty rate in over 30 years, according to the 2026 *KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, published annually by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and presented in Puerto Rico by the Instituto del Desarrollo de la Juventud (IDJ). The rate decreased from 58% in 2022 to 52% in 2024, a reduction that IDJ recognizes as a significant sign of progress and as evidence that child poverty can be reduced when the country sustains public policies and investments aimed at strengthening families.

Although 248,000 children and youth still live below the poverty line, IDJ emphasized that Puerto Rico has a clear roadmap to continue moving forward. The Ten-Year Plan established by Act 84 of 2021, the Public Policy Law of Puerto Rico to Combat Child Poverty and Social Inequality, establishes milestones and strategies aimed at reducing child poverty through policies in education, economic security, job creation, removing workforce barriers, human capital development, healthcare access, and food security.

“Reaching the lowest child poverty rate in over 30 years is good news for Puerto Rico and a clear sign that addressing this challenge is possible. We now have the opportunity to sustain this momentum and push it even further. At IDJ, we remain committed to advancing the systemic change that Puerto Rico urgently needs. Concrete solutions already exist to strengthen families’ economic security, expand access to early childhood education, remove barriers to employment, and create real pathways toward economic mobility. The challenge now is to implement these solutions with coordination, sustained investment, and a true sense of urgency,” said Sarah Vázquez-Pérez, Executive Director of IDJ.

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## Key Findings:

To sustain this historic progress, IDJ points to specific areas where targeted policy action and investment can help Puerto Rico continue reducing child poverty and expanding opportunity:

- **Strengthening family economic security.** While child poverty declined, the economic vulnerability of families with children remains significant. The median income for families with children in Puerto Rico is \$28,542 — nearly \$45,000 less than Mississippi, the jurisdiction with the second-lowest median income for families with children. This reinforces the need to expand access to quality jobs, strengthen income supports, and advance policies that help families build long-term stability.
- **Connecting youth to education, work and opportunity.** Currently, 11% of youth ages 16 to 19 in Puerto Rico are neither in school nor working, placing the island in the second-worst position among U.S. jurisdictions. This indicator underscores the importance of re-engagement strategies, workforce development, career pathways, and supports that help young people remain connected to education and employment.
- **Expanding access to early education.** With 43% of children ages 3 and 4 not enrolled in preschool, Puerto Rico has an opportunity to strengthen long-term educational outcomes by expanding access to early childhood development and preschool education programs, particularly for families facing economic barriers.
- **Supporting families and caregivers.** The share of grandparents living with grandchildren under age 18 who are responsible for their care increased to 39%, a five-percentage-point increase from the previous year. This shift highlights the need to strengthen family support systems, caregiving infrastructure, and two-generation approaches that respond to the realities of children, parents, and caregivers together.
- **Building on health access gains.** Puerto Rico continues to maintain a low rate of uninsured children, with 98% of children covered by health insurance. This achievement shows that sustained policy attention can produce measurable progress and offers an important example for other areas of child well-being.

While the decline in child poverty represents an important milestone, IDJ noted that this progress must be understood within a broader picture of child and youth well-being. Through its Child and Youth Well-Being Index, IDJ tracks how Puerto Rico compares across multiple dimensions that shape children's lives, including economic security, education, health, and family and community conditions. The Index shows that progress in one area must be sustained and expanded across systems if Puerto Rico is to improve long-term outcomes for children, youth and families.

"Data allow us to move from diagnosis to action. It provides the information we need to understand where we are and monitor progress. The decline in child poverty shows that change is possible, but sustaining that progress requires understanding which supports are reaching families, where gaps remain and how public policy can respond more

**Commented [CS1]:** Tied for last place (with Alaska)

**Commented [VV1R2]:** We observe this indicator in our Child and Youth Well-Being Index. Rankings are calculated using the full five decimal places provided by the Census data. While Puerto Rico and Alaska appear nearly identical, there is a slight difference: Alaska reports 10.7777276227397%, compared to Puerto Rico's 10.7520326507563%. This small margin explains the difference in ranking despite their close values.

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**Commented [VV2R2]:** We also include this indicator in the IDJ Child and Youth Well-Being Index: grandparents responsible for their grandchildren. This measure represents the percentage of grandparents who live with and are responsible for meeting the basic needs of their grandchildren under 18 years of age. These responsibilities include, but are not limited to, financial support for food, shelter, clothing, and childcare, regardless of whether the children's parents are present in the household.

The values are calculated as the proportion of grandparents who both live with and are responsible for their grandchildren under age 18, relative to the estimated population of grandparents living with grandchildren. Data for this indicator are derived from Table S1002 available through [data.census.gov](https://data.census.gov).

effectively. This is how measurement becomes a tool for implementation: it helps Puerto Rico focus resources on the solutions that can strengthen economic security, educational opportunity and long-term mobility for children and families,” said Dr. Enid Rosario-Ramos, Research Associate at IDJ.

To move in that direction, IDJ recommends ensuring access to early childhood development and preschool education programs; expanding and strengthening after-school and extended learning opportunities in public schools; implementing two-generation models that connect students and families to needed supports; creating stronger pathways from education to employment for youth; and using data to guide policy, investment and implementation.

In its 37th year of publication, the KIDS COUNT® Data Book provides reliable data to help leaders identify where progress is being made, where greater support is needed and which strategies can make a difference. IDJ encourages lawmakers, public officials and cross-sector partners in Puerto Rico to use this information to accelerate coordinated action, align investments with evidence and advance policies that strengthen the well-being and economic mobility of children, youth and families.

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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 INSTITUTO DEL DESARROLLO DE LA JUVENTUD (IDJ)**

IDJ promotes research and public policy to strengthen the economic security of families with children and youth, with the goal of reducing child poverty in Puerto Rico. The organization drives change by developing evidence-based policy recommendations, empowering affected individuals to participate in decision-making processes, and fostering strategic alliances. Furthermore, IDJ conducts in-depth research to better understand the systemic issues and generate solutions, while disseminating data that increases public awareness regarding the challenges faced by children and youth living in poverty in Puerto Rico. IDJ is Puerto Rico’s KIDS COUNT organization and a member of the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s national network. For more information, visit [www.juventudpr.org](http://www.juventudpr.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.

