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South Carolina Ranks 38th in 2026 KIDS COUNT Data Book as Children's Trust Continues to Urge Investments that Support Children and Families

State score increase is largest in the nation; despite showing progress over time, South Carolina continues to be behind the majority of states in child well-being

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Critical child and family well-being measures show some progress for children in South Carolina, according to the *2026 KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, a 50-state report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation analyzing how children and families are faring nationwide. South Carolina ranks 38th in the annual report but its score increased the most of any state in the country.

A bright spot in the report shows that South Carolina has made significant improvements in Family and Community measures since 2019. Fewer children are living in single-parent families or in households headed by a person without a high school diploma. In addition, fewer children are living in concentrated poverty, and fewer babies are being born to teen mothers.

Despite this good news, we continue to face persistent challenges in health and economic well-being. Too many children (27%) live in families that spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing, and too many children (28%) live in families where no parent has stable employment. Health challenges persist year over year, including obesity and higher-than-national-average death rates among children and teens.

Across many of these indicators, we are holding steady and seeing only minimal improvements,” said Sue Williams, CEO of Children’s Trust of South Carolina, the state’s member of the Casey Foundation’s KIDS COUNT network. “We are investing today for the workforce of tomorrow, and we need to do more if we want to be prepared for the investments we are making in economic development.”

For the first time this year, the Data Book provides states with a comprehensive score (0 to 1,000) rather than just a ranking. The scores track 16 indicators across 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. South Carolina received a score of 468 based on data from 2024, **below** the national average of 547 and 38 points higher than its 2019 score of 430.

To accompany this national release, Children’s Trust has published its county-level child well-being profiles, which provide local leaders with insights into today’s disparities and opportunities for policy improvements and program investments. York, Pickens, Greenville, Berkeley and Lexington are the top five counties. Marion, Marlboro, Allendale, Lee and Colleton are the lowest-ranking counties.

"Where you grow up in South Carolina matters, and our county-level data makes that undeniable," continued Williams. "It's no surprise that our largest, most well-resourced counties lead the state in child well-being, with kids there thriving at levels that rival those of the nation's top-performing states. But our challenge is bigger than celebrating those successes. How do we ensure that every child in South Carolina, regardless of zip code, has the chance to grow up healthy, receive a good education, and live in a family that can keep the lights on? We want all our kids to become the productive, contributing citizens this state will depend on tomorrow."

Children's Trust funds and supports a range of collaborative initiatives and proven prevention programs that help families before a crisis. These include its network of family resource centers—community hubs where families can access support services and information, such as parenting classes, job training, school support, childcare, and more. Children's Trust also supports scParents.org, where families can easily access information, support, and resources to help their children thrive.

Children's Trust also published its most recent county-level child well-being profiles. Mirroring the national profiles, this tool gives leaders a snapshot of what is happening in their communities and insights for developing targeted strategies to help more children thrive. [County Data Profiles](#) can be accessed on the website at scchildren.org.

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Release Information

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 datacenter.aecf.org.

About Children's Trust of South Carolina

Children's Trust is the only statewide organization focused on preventing child abuse and neglect in South Carolina. It leads and supports a network that shares our belief that all children should thrive, live in secure families and be surrounded by supportive communities. Children's Trust coordinates the state's efforts for family resource centers, Strengthening Families Program, Triple P (Positive Parenting Program), S.C. Adverse Childhood Experiences Initiative, Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting, Child Abuse Prevention Month, and KIDS COUNT. For more information, visit scChildren.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. KIDS COUNT is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.