



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

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**Tennessee Remains 37th in 2026 KIDS COUNT Data Book
as Academic Achievement Improves, Economic Well-Being Metrics Decline**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (June 8, 2026) — Tennessee ranks 37th in overall 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 across the country are faring. The data show Tennessee students continue to make significant educational gains—particularly compared to students across the nation. Yet opportunities remain for improvements in other areas.

For the first time in this year's *Data Book*, states receive a comprehensive score (from 0 to 1,000)—not just a ranking—tracking 16 indicators 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. Tennessee received an overall score of 475, below the national score of 547.

Tennessee's score in education was 439—a 40-point improvement from 2023 and the second-largest education score improvement in the country from 2023 to 2024. Additionally, Tennessee slightly improved its score in health—from 463 in 2023 to 484 in 2024. Meanwhile, the state's score for economic well-being fell along with its ranking on related metrics—including the share of children living in households that spend more than 30% of their income on housing, which dropped from #22 in 2023 to #32 in 2024.

"Tennessee continues to distinguish itself through notable gains in educational attainment," said Mandy Spears, Executive Vice President of The Sycamore Institute, Tennessee's member of the Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT network. "Other areas of child well-being, particularly economic well-being and health, show more mixed progress in comparison."

Even with Tennessee's academic and health improvements, the *Data Book* highlights opportunities to help Tennessee's children and youth and thrive. For example, the state's percentage of children living in cost-burdened households (i.e., households that spend more than 30% of their income on housing) rose for the first time since 2019. A closer look at population and socioeconomic [trends](#) reveal that housing supply has not kept up with demand—leading to increased housing prices across the state. There are federal, state and local [policy levers](#) that can address these challenges—including [financing](#) tools and [zoning](#) policies.

Each year, the *Data Book* presents national and state data from 16 indicators in four domains—economic well-being, education, health, and family and community factors—and compares every state, Puerto Rico, and Washington, D.C. according to how children are faring overall. Tennessee's rankings and score changes from the prior year (based on data primarily from 2023) to the most recent year (based on data primarily from 2024), include:

- Economic well-being score fell by 59 points and ranks #42. Tennessee's outcomes improved on one of the underlying indicators, stayed the same on one, and worsened on two.
- Education score improved by 40 points, earning a rank of #18. Outcomes improved on three indicators and stayed the same on one.

- Health score improved by 21 points to rank #39. Outcomes improved on two indicators, stayed the same on one, and worsened on one.
- Family and community factors score improved by 29 points, yielding a rank of #42. Outcomes improved on two indicators and stayed the same on two.

In its 37th year of publication, the *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* provides reliable statewide numbers to help leaders see where progress is being made compared to other states, where greater support is needed, and which strategies are making a difference. The Sycamore Institute encourages leaders from across the state to use this information to better understand how to help kids and young people succeed.

RELEASE INFORMATION

The 2026 *KIDS COUNT Data* is 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 THE SYCAMORE INSTITUTE

The Sycamore Institute is an independent, nonpartisan public policy research center that helps Tennesseans identify, understand, and solve big challenges with impartial analysis of data and evidence. With leadership and staff from across the political spectrum, Sycamore provides accessible, reliable information in pursuit of sound, sustainable policies that improve the lives of all Tennesseans. For more information, visit sycamoretn.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.

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