



UNDER EMBARGO – JUNE 8, 2026 at 12:01 a.m. ET

MEDIA CONTACT: Lorna Ramage, [media@everytexan.org](mailto:media@everytexan.org)

## Texas Ranks 44<sup>th</sup> in 2026 KIDS COUNT Data Book: State Score of 425 Falls Well Below National Average

*New scoring index indicates needed investments in health, education, and economic stability to improve children’s well-being.*

**AUSTIN, TX** — Texas ranks 44<sup>th</sup> in overall child well-being and remains the worst state in the nation for uninsured children, 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 are faring nationwide. The data show Texas leaders must act to ensure every child has access to affordable health coverage, well-funded schools, and stable housing. Texas finished in the bottom 10 in three of the four domains that the report measures.

For the first time this year, states receive a comprehensive score (from 0 to 1,000) in the *Data Book*, not only a ranking. The scores track 16 indicators in 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 actually improving children’s lives, rather than merely how states compare to each other. Texas received a score of **425, well below** the national score of 547, with its lowest scores in the **health (404, rank 47)** and **family and community (431, rank 47)** domains. The state’s highest-scoring domain was education (390, rank 28).

While the national overall score declined 6 points between 2019 and 2024, **Texas’s score remained stable**, a sign that masks deepening crises in health and education. The most alarming indicator: an estimated **1.1 million Texas children lacked health insurance in 2024**. That’s 14% of all kids in the state, the highest uninsured rate in the nation and up from 13% in 2019. Academic outcomes also tell a sobering story: **76% of Texas 8<sup>th</sup> graders scored below proficient in math** (up from 70% in 2019), and **72% of 4<sup>th</sup> graders scored below proficient in reading**. Meanwhile, 33% of Texas children live in housing cost-burdened households, up from 30% in 2019, ranking the state 43<sup>rd</sup> on housing affordability.

Texas did see some gains – the **family and community domain score jumped 116 points**, the largest improvement of any domain in the state, driven by a **25% drop in the teen birth rate**, a 17% decrease in the share of children whose household head lacks a high school diploma, and a continuing decline in the share of children living in high-poverty neighborhoods. Texas also ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> nationally for its high school graduation rate, with just 9% of students not graduating on time. Child poverty also declined modestly, with 18% of Texas children (about 1.35 million) living in poverty in 2024, down from 19% in 2019.

**Commented [1]:** we set a threshold of 5 or more points to count as change in the overall well-being domain to try and limit counting random noise as change.



“We know what kids need to thrive: a stable home, a strong school, nutritious food, timely health care , and meaningful relationships with the adults around them,” **said Parisa Fatehi-Weeks, Executive Director of Every Texan**, Texas’ member of the Casey Foundation’s KIDS COUNT network. “Our state has the resources, talent, and ingenuity necessary to be the best state in the country for kids to grow up, and the data show a clear opportunity to turn these numbers around this legislative session.”

In its 37<sup>th</sup> year of publication, the *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* provides reliable statewide numbers to help leaders see where greater support is needed and which strategies make a difference. We encourage Texas lawmakers and officials to use this information to unite across party lines and respond with initiatives that invest in young people. By offering a local road map, the *Data Book* equips policymakers, advocates, and communities with the information they need to help kids thrive.

“The new scoring index gives us a clear picture of how our state’s policy choices are affecting children’s daily lives,” **said Coda Rayo-Garza, Senior Director of Research and Data at Every Texan**. “The numbers clearly point where action is needed: expanding health coverage so that 1.1 million uninsured kids gain access, recovering academic ground in reading and math, and making housing more affordable for families.”

Every Texan should call on state policymakers to take concrete steps to improve child well-being. Priorities include: enrolling and retaining eligible children in Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to close Texas’ nation-leading uninsured gap; strengthening and sustaining funding for Texas public schools, with targeted supports for reading and math recovery; expanding access to affordable, high-quality child care and pre-K so more young Texans enter kindergarten ready to learn; and addressing the rising cost of housing for families with children.

###

#### 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 EVERY TEXAN

Every Texan is a nonpartisan research and advocacy organization that uses data and analysis to advance policies that ensure every Texan has the opportunity to thrive. Every Texan is the home to the Texas KIDS COUNT Project. For more information, visit [everytexan.org/kidscount](http://everytexan.org/kidscount).

#### 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.

