



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

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**Voices for Vermont's Children Calls for State to Strengthen the Systems Families Count on to Thrive As Vermont Drops from 2nd to 4th in 2026 KIDS COUNT Data Book Ranking**

*Annie E. Casey Foundation's new scoring index shows how Vermont's policies and budget priorities affect children's well-being.*

**Montpelier, VT** – Vermont ranks fourth in 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 are faring nationwide.

For the first time this year, states receive a comprehensive score (from 0 to 1,000) in the *Data Book*, not just 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, not merely how states compare to each other.

Vermont received a score of 756, well above the national average score of 547, with neighboring New Hampshire holding the top score of 838. Vermont rankings held steady in the domains of education (14th) and health (3rd), fell one position on the index for family and community factors (3), and improved on economic wellbeing, moving from a rank of 7th to 4th.

Vermont is top ranked in just one indicator, with the lowest rate of children in households paying more than 30% of their income on housing. The rate fell from 24% in 2019 to a low of 18% in 2024. However, this apparent improvement may mask harmful system failures. During the same period, child and family homelessness skyrocketed in Vermont, with the annual Point-in-Time count showing **the number of homeless children tripled from 2019 to 2024.**

"Vermonters may struggle to square the improved housing burden data with our lived experience," said Michelle Fay, executive director of Voices for Vermont's Children, a member of the Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT network. "Are fewer families burdened by high housing costs because they are unhoused? That's clearly not the hoped-for outcome, and demands urgent action to ensure every child has safe, secure housing."

KIDS COUNT trend data also show a 20% reduction in the rate of children in households where no adult has full-time, year-round employment (from 25% to 20%) a heartening indicator of

improving economic security. Child poverty rates fell as well, but by half as much (a 10% reduction), suggesting that more must be done to support working families with policies ensuring livable wages and universal paid family and medical leave.

Vermont’s commitment to early childhood education and universal pre-kindergarten is apparent in the rankings. Nationally, the share of 3- and 4-year-olds *not* in school increased by 4% between 2015–2019 and 2020–2024, while in Vermont it fell by 5% in the same period. But outcomes for older youth largely worsened at rates exceeding national averages:

- The rate of high school students not graduating on time grew from 16% in 2018–19 to 18% in 2023–24 in Vermont, while nationally that indicator fell from 14% to 13% during the same school years; and
- Reading and math proficiency scores remain above national averages, but both declined between 2019 and 2024 at a substantially higher rate.

In its 37th year of publication, the KIDS COUNT® Data Book provides reliable statewide numbers to help leaders see that the systems shaping children’s well-being were created by policy choices, and policy choices can strengthen them. KIDS COUNT data provide a road map to the conditions every child needs to grow up healthy and connected: adequate family incomes, stable housing, vibrant community schools, nutritious food, and caring relationships.

“Kids learn how to solve problems by watching the adults around them, too,” noted Fay. “Vermont’s elected officials can demonstrate that community voices matter, evidence-based decision-making yields better results, and the most important function of government is attending to the wellbeing of the children, youth, and families who call our beautiful state home.”

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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).  
<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 VOICES FOR VERMONT’S CHILDREN

Voices for Vermont’s Children is a research-based, multi-issue advocacy organization focused on promoting public policies that center a systemic response to meeting the needs of children and youth. We apply research, analysis and the lived experience of Vermont’s children and families to the pursuit of equity for all kids. To learn more, visit [www.voicesforvtkids.org](http://www.voicesforvtkids.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.

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