



UNDER EMBARGO until Monday, June 17 at 12:01 a.m. ET

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2019 KIDS COUNT Data Book Highlights Need for Investments in Education, Housing, Public Programs in Massachusetts

BOSTON — Massachusetts has always been strongest when it has been open to newcomers. As classrooms, pediatricians' offices and homes become more diverse, the need to ensure every child has the chance to thrive — regardless of where they live or how wealthy their families are — is ever more important. That's a key takeaway as the 2019 *KIDS COUNT*® *Data Book* — the most comprehensive annual report on children's well-being — is released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

"Even though Massachusetts has always been a national leader in math and reading education, half the state's children still lag behind on math and reading proficiency," said Nancy Wagman, director of *KIDS COUNT* in Massachusetts. "No single program or service can ensure that our kids do well — we need to support our children in all aspects of their lives, by investing in their schools, affordable housing, libraries and programs to help their parents get good jobs. Data indicate that the child population has grown more diverse — and a wealthy state like ours can do more to invest in **equitable public education** for our children."

The *Data Book* uses 16 indicators to rank each state across four domains — health, education, economic well-being and family and community — as an assessment of child well-being. For 2019, Massachusetts ranks second overall.

The data also indicate that Massachusetts can take steps to reduce the number of children experiencing poverty and help families afford rent. **Massachusetts slipped to 39th place in ensuring children live in households that aren't burdened by housing costs — almost a third of the state's children live in a household that struggles to afford housing.** Additionally, more than a quarter of children are in families where no parent is able to get full-time work all year round.

According to the *Data Book*, Massachusetts leads the nation in health measures, reading levels and mathematic achievement, but the share of children living in poverty is the same as it was in 2010 — 14 percent. Within each domain, Massachusetts ranks:

- **15th in economic well-being.** Massachusetts has fallen four places from last year's ranking in this dimension. The share of Massachusetts children whose parents lack full-time, year-round employment decreased by 10 percent since 2010.
- **First in education.** Massachusetts children remain first in mathematic achievement (with 50 percent of eighth-graders scoring at or above proficient level) and reading level (with 51 percent of fourth-graders scoring at or above proficient level). The percent of 3- and 4-year-olds attending school has stayed essentially the same since 2009-2011.
- **First in health.** The state remains first in the nation in ensuring children have health insurance, but the number of children *without* health insurance rose slightly between 2016 and 2017.
- **10th in family and community domain.** Massachusetts' rank slipped one place since last year's ranking in this dimension, which includes children living in high-poverty areas and teen birth rates.

Massachusetts' rankings on economic well-being and in the family and community domain indicate that raising the incomes of low-to middle-income families and improving employment opportunities remain important challenges for the Commonwealth. To get a better scope of the challenges, however, requires a complete and robust census count.



“Without accurate data, we can’t get an accurate picture of what our community needs,” said Marie-Frances Rivera, president of the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center (MassBudget). “It is particularly important that we make sure the upcoming census counts every person in Massachusetts.”

Release Information

The 2019 KIDS COUNT® *Data Book* will be available June 17 at 12:01 a.m. at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at www.aecf.org/databook, which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of indicators of child well-being. Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs and rankings in stories about the Data Book can use the KIDS COUNT® Data Center at datacenter.kidscount.org.

About MassBudget

MassBudget is an independent nonprofit organization that provides nonpartisan research and analysis of state budget and tax policies, as well as economic issues that affect low- and moderate-income people in Massachusetts. MassBudget is home to KIDS COUNT® in Massachusetts.

About the Annie E. Casey Foundation

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation’s children 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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