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Georgia Ranks 39th in the Nation for Child and Family Well-Being

Families Continue to Struggle as Georgia Falls Two Places

Georgia slips in economic well-being, more children and teens are dying, we continue to be in the bottom 10 in low birthweight.

ATLANTA— Georgia ranks 39th out of 50 states in the nation for overall child and family well-being in the 2025 *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, falling two spots from the 2024 report. This ranking marks a troubling reversal after making progress in recent years. It's the Peach State's lowest overall ranking in seven years.

Georgia ranked 48th in the inaugural *KIDS COUNT Data Book* released in 1990 but hasn't been in the bottom 10 states since 2017. After holding steady at 38th for several years, we achieved our highest ranking of 37th in 2023 and maintained that in 2024.

"This slip in progress is a stark reminder that we must persist in our work toward measurably better outcomes for all our children, families, and communities," said Georgia Family Connection Partnership Executive Director Gaye Smith. "It's particularly troubling to see the startling increase in the number of teens and children dying in our state, and to lose ground in areas like economic well-being and education, where Georgia has made some gains and performed relatively well in recent years. When we dig deeper into the data, it's clear that success for some does not always translate into success for all."

The *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* uses 16 indicators to rank each state across four domains—health, education, economic well-being, and family and community—to assess child and family well-being. This year's *Data Book* reveals that Georgia has slipped or plateaued in some indicators, while neighboring states have continued to improve and outpace our progress, particularly in economic well-being and education. Georgia continues to struggle in the family and community and health domains, reflecting an increase in our child and teen death rate and only a nominal improvement to our stubbornly high low-birthweight rate.

Georgia Ranks 37th in Economic Well-Being

Georgia saw its largest lapse in the economic well-being domain, dropping from 32nd to 37th. The percentage of children living in poverty in Georgia in 2023 was 18%—higher than the national rate of 16% and Georgia's 2022 rate of 17%. This 1% increase represents 50,000 additional children living in poverty in Georgia.

Georgia ranks 39th in the Nation for Child Well-Being (cont.)

Georgia has 461,000 children living in poverty, the fifth highest in the nation. Children living in poverty are less likely to reach standard education milestones and are more likely to develop poor mental health, suffer from asthma and other childhood diseases, and experience poor health later in life.

The number of children in households spending more than 30% of their income on housing increased by 11% from 2019 to 2023, representing 66,000 additional children and ranking Georgia 36th in the nation.

“Rural and urban communities are experiencing low delivery of new housing units—and those already on the market have high and increasing rental requirements,” said Georgia Interfaith Public Policy Center Executive Director Wesley Myrick. “Being housing-burdened restricts a family’s choices by lowering their discretionary funds to purchase food, clothing, and other necessities. And having nearly half a million children living in poverty should be a distressing signal to our faith communities, schools, health care institutions, and businesses that it is time to act decisively. We have a moral duty to our neighbors and to ourselves to help create pathways to success for our most economically vulnerable families.”

We continued to keep pace with the nation in the percentage of children in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment. The national rate in 2023 was 25% and Georgia’s rate was 26%, continuing a 10-year trend where Georgia is within 1% of the nation on this indicator.

The good news is that there are fewer teens ages 16 to 19 not in school and not working. Georgia’s rate matched the national rate of 7%, tying us with several other states with a ranking of 26th—our highest ranking for this indicator since it was first tracked in 2010. This rate also represents a 13% improvement in the rate of teens ages 16 to 19 not in school and not working since 2019 in Georgia.

Georgia Ranks 32nd in Education

Georgia fell one spot in education from 31st to 32nd. This slip can be attributed to a few indicators, including the percent of fourth graders who scored below proficient reading level. Georgia’s rate of students not achieving this milestone worsened from 68% in 2022 to 70% in 2024—the second-highest rate recorded for Georgia since this became an indicator in 2009. While that rate is on par with the national average, with a rank of 28th, this is still a troubling trend. Because research links third- and fourth-grade reading proficiency to critical indicators like high school graduation and future economic opportunities.

More eighth graders in Georgia scored below proficient math level in 2024 with a rate of 76%, compared to the national rate of 73%. This represents a concerning 10% increase in students scoring below proficient in Georgia since 2019.

The percent of Georgia’s students not graduating on time from the 2019-20 to 2021-22 school years remained steady at 16%, causing Georgia’s ranking in this indicator to drop from 30th in 2019-20 to 33rd in 2021-22. However, Georgia saw a more pronounced improvement of 11% between 2018-19 and 2021-22, while the national percent of students not graduating high school on time decreased by 7%.

There was no change in the percent of children ages 3 to 4 not attending school, with 52% in 2019-23, 2018-22, and 2017-21. Georgia ranked 12th in the nation for this indicator across these timeframes.

Georgia Ranks 40th in Health

Georgia’s overall ranking in the health domain improved from 43rd to 40th. However, we continue to hover near the bottom 10 in the nation, due in part to our low-birthweight rate, which has remained consistently higher than the national average since 2010.

Georgia ranks 39th in the Nation for Child Well-Being (cont.)

Georgia's low-birthweight rate was 10.2% in 2023, representing the first decrease in three years. However, Georgia still ranks 47th in the nation and is well above the national rate of 8.6%, which is already higher than the rate for most developed nations. Low birthweight is the strongest predictor of infant mortality and provides insight into the state of women's overall health.

Another alarming trend in Georgia is that 941 teens and children died in 2023, marking a 21% increase since 2019 and ranking Georgia 34th in the nation. The child and teen death rate also increased nationwide but at a slower pace of 16%.

The percentage of Georgia's children without health insurance held steady at 6% from 2022 to 2023. This still resulted in 5,000 more children without health insurance in 2023 compared to the previous year. However, the number of children in Georgia without health insurance has decreased by 14% since 2019.

Georgia Ranks 42nd in Family and Community Factors

Georgia continues to perform in the bottom 10 states in the family and community context domain, garnering our lowest national ranking at 42nd.

The percent of children in single-parent families in Georgia in 2023 was 38%, which continues to be higher than the national rate of 34%. And the percent of children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma in Georgia worsened from 11% in 2022 to 12% in 2023. This 1% increase represents an additional 14,000 children living in these households, ranking Georgia 44th in this indicator.

The 2023 teen birth rate in Georgia was 17 teen births per 1,000 females ages 15 to 19. While the state has seen a 15% improvement since 2019, Georgia's recent teen birth rates remained higher than the national rate of 13 teen births per 1,000 females ages 15 to 19 in 2023—and has been outpaced by the nation's 24% improvement rate since 2019.

"We're rightfully proud that Georgia has for years been ranked the number one state in the nation in which to do business—especially since our workforce and education system are consistently touted among the top reasons we receive this recognition," said Smith. "But we can't stop there. We must always push the boundaries as we strive to ensure that this positive measure of opportunity for Georgia's businesses ultimately translates into positive outcomes for Georgia's families."

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RELEASE INFORMATION

Download the *2025 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* and explore the interactive report at 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.kidscount.org.

Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP) is a public-private partnership created by the State of Georgia and investors from the private sector to assist communities in addressing the serious challenges facing children and families. GaFCP also serves as a resource to state agencies across Georgia that work to improve the conditions of children and families. Georgia KIDS COUNT provides policymakers and citizens with current data they need to make informed decisions regarding priorities, services, and resources that impact Georgia's children, youth, families, and communities. Georgia KIDS COUNT is funded, in part, through a grant from The Annie E. Casey Foundation, a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. Visit gafcp.org.

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

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communities into safer and healthier places to live, work, and grow. Visit aecf.org. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of The Annie E. Casey Foundation.