

Did You Know

New Mexico kids are still faring poorly across 4 measures of Well-Being according to the latest Annie E. Casey Foundation 2024 Kids Count Data Book released in June 2024. Below is an overall rundown comparing New Mexico to the nation, based on data from 2022.

NM Rank

48	Economic Well-Being
50	Education
44	Health
49	Family and Community

Broken down by specific measures we find:

<u>Economic Well-Being</u>	<u>New Mexico Average</u>	<u>US Average</u>	<u>Comparison to 2019</u>
Children in Poverty	23%	16%	2% Better
Children whose Parents Lack Secure Employment	32%	26%	Same
Children Living in Households with High Housing Cost Burden	28%	30%	2% Worse
Teens Not in School and Not Working	9%	7%	2% Better
 <u>Education</u>			
Children Ages 3-4 Not in School	59%	54%	1% Worse
4 th Graders Not Proficient in Reading	79%	68%	3% Worse
8 th Graders Not Proficient in Math	87%	74%	8% Worse
High School Students Not Graduating on Time	23%	14%	2% Better

<u>Health</u>	<u>New Mexico Average</u>	<u>US Average</u>	<u>Comparison to 2019</u>
Low Birth-Rate Babies	10%	9%	.05% Worse
Children Without Health Insurance	4%	5%	2% Better
Child and Teen Deaths per 100,000	40	30	4% Worse
Children and Teens who are Obese	38%	33%	NA
 <u>Family and Community</u>			
Children in Single Patent Families	45%	34%	1% Worse
Children in Families where Household Head Lacks High School Diploma	13%	11%	1% Better
Children Living in High Poverty Areas	19%	8%	5% Better
Teen Births per 1,000	20	14	4% Better

Analysis

There is no way to sugarcoat these findings. There are many, many ways to measure children’s well-being. The Anne Casey Foundation uses some basic indicators of well-being. We can quibble with some like “children in single parent families”. However, there are 16 measures here and the overall results are certainly not good.

Of the 16 measures, New Mexico is worse than the national average on all but two of the measures (“Children Living in Households with High Housing Cost Burden” and “Children Without Health Insurance”). This result is unacceptable!

Even more alarming is that out of these 16 measures 7 are headed in the wrong direction since 2019! 3 of these 7 are in the overall category of **Education**. We can’t even claim progress in almost half of the measures.

Now New Mexico has recently taken some measures to improve the situation of children within the state. The 2 Plus Program is mentioned in the report as an example of a state “bolstering services and resources that equip kids to learn.” The program was created by a new state law passed during the 2023 regular legislative session and signed by Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham.

The state's K-12 House Bill 130 changed part of the Public School Code to extend instructional time requirements for elementary and secondary education. It also allows for an increase in funding from the state if local school districts and charter schools extend the learning calendar past 180 days, or 155 days for districts with four-day school weeks. This law is currently tied up in the courts.

Improvements in any of these measures won't happen overnight. They are more like turning around an aircraft carrier. They take commitment, time, resources and a strong will to change. What is clear is that excuses should no longer be tolerated.