

KENTUCKY NEWS

# State ranks 36th in latest KIDS COUNT for child well-being

BY JAMES MAYSE  
PAXTON MEDIA GROUP

Life for Kentucky children and teens improved in several areas between 2019 and 2024, with fewer children living in poverty or high-poverty areas and more parents maintaining steady employment.

But data released in the Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT report showed Kentucky students lost ground in education during the survey period, particularly in fourth-grade reading proficiency and eighth-grade math proficiency.

The report also found fewer children living in households where the head of household lacks a high school diploma, and teen birth rates declined. However, child deaths increased, including deaths related to firearms and drug ingestion.

Overall, Kentucky ranked 36th in child well-being, according to the report.

KIDS COUNT uses state and national data sources, including federal statistics and information from nonprofit organizations, to measure child well-being in economic conditions, education, health, and family and community factors.

"We saw some progress in some of the indicators, especially around poverty and obesity," said Shannon Moody, chief policy and strategy officer for Kentucky Youth Advocates. "The education indicators are definitely concerning and are still overall really poor."

The study examined data from 2019 through 2024, encompassing the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moody said the pandemic likely influenced several indicators, including preschool enrollment.

Between 2015 and 2019, 59% of children ages 3 and 4 were not enrolled in school. Between 2020 and 2024, that figure rose to 63%.

"We know early childhood education really helps set up success for later education in K-12," Moody said. "That does not bode well for what we can anticipate seeing in the future for kindergarten readiness."

"But part of this has to do, I think, with the pandemic and access to early childhood education and child care settings," Moody said. "We saw a reduction in that, especially during the 2020-2024 time frame. My hope is that we will start to see that get back on track in the coming years."

The percentage of fourth graders who were not proficient in reading increased to 67% during the 2020-24 period, up from 65% in the 2015-19 study.

Among eighth graders, the

percentage not proficient in math rose from 71% in 2015-19 to 76% in 2020-24, the report found.

"Fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math are obviously a concern," Moody said.

Math and reading proficiency levels declined nationally between 2020 and 2024, in part because of the pandemic.

"Also, there's a lot of conversation around the prevalence of screens, the use of screens, and how it affects our literacy," Moody said. "We need to make sure parents and caregivers are taking the time to read to their children."

"Do we see a future where we can reduce the amount of screen time while still addressing technology needs and balancing the importance of children learning how to use technology? We're seeing a trend that began when personal devices started entering classrooms, and we've seen declines in some educational indicators."

Lawmakers have taken steps in recent years to improve student literacy, Moody said.

"What I do know is that our legislators in Frankfort have identified literacy rates as problematic for several years and have put measures in place in 2022 and again this year to address literacy," Moody said. "I think we will begin to see those efforts move in the right direction over the next couple of years because we're already seeing some promising results around some of the priorities. I think they're starting to see some very small gains."

The improvements in reading resulting from legislative changes will likely occur gradually, Moody said.

"I think our legislature is definitely paying attention and is working to put pieces in place, but it's going to take some time," Moody said. Meanwhile, lawmakers should also "make sure we are sustaining the funds needed in our K-12 education system to adequately support our students and staff."

In economic well-being, the report found the percentage of Kentucky children living in poverty fell from 22% in 2019 to 19% in 2024. The percentage of parents lacking secure employment declined from 31% in 2019 to 28% in 2024.

"The economy strengthened, so there has been better access to jobs," Moody said, noting the trend mirrors national data.

The percentage of children living with a single parent decreased from 36% in 2019 to 34% in 2024, while the percentage living in high-

poverty areas fell from 15% to 11%. Teen births declined from 25 per 1,000 in 2019 to 20 per 1,000 in 2024.

In child health, the findings were mixed. The percentage of children ages 10 to 17 who were overweight or obese decreased from 37% in 2018-19 to 33% in 2023-24.

However, the percentage of children without health insurance increased to 5% in 2024. Moody said that figure could continue to rise as adults lose health coverage, including coverage obtained through the Affordable Care Act. Subsidies that helped people afford ACA coverage expired at the end of 2025 and were not renewed by Congress.

"We can likely anticipate a continued reduction in youth having access to health insurance," Moody said. "Oftentimes, when parents don't have access to health care and health insurance, children are less likely to access it."

Moody said reductions to Medicaid included in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act should not directly affect children's health programs, including KCHIP.

"But what we do know is if parents are not accessing it, it may impact access for children," Moody said.

Child deaths remain a concern, Moody said. She noted lawmakers have increased accountability for caregivers whose firearms are accessed by children. She also pointed to services such as the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline as promising tools for helping young people in crisis.

"Programs like 988 are helping," Moody said. "What we also know is that the child death number includes ingestion cases involving young children. We saw a very large increase in the number of cannabis ingestions."

"Obviously, we have medical marijuana being approved in Kentucky, but we also have THC products on store shelves, including gummies and other products that are currently legal," Moody said. "We are seeing an increase in the number of children ingesting cannabis. It can be incredibly toxic for kids. It looks like candy, and they are ingesting several milligrams."

Moody urged parents to monitor children's access to firearms, particularly if a child is experiencing a mental health crisis or suicidal thoughts.

She also encouraged parents to secure THC products and both prescription and over-the-counter medications to prevent accidental ingestion by young children.



ALAN WARREN/Paxton Media Group

**Jade Jenkins, registrar and education assistant, ties a bow on an American Colonial day dress by Paula Alex Naas for the "Kentucky 250" celebration exhibit at the Owensboro Museum of Fine Art. Included in the display with the dress is a handcrafted Frontier Possibles bag by Joe Mills and a traditionally forged knife by bladesmith Max Soaper.**

## Owensboro Museum of Fine Art celebrates nation's 250th in style

BY KEITH LAWRENCE  
PAXTON MEDIA GROUP

The Owensboro Museum of Fine Art was created in 1977 — a year after the nation's Bicentennial.

But it's going all out for this year's Sestercentennial — the nation's 250th birthday.

Jason Edward Hayden, the museum's executive director, said a highlight of "Kentucky 250," which is sponsored by Owensboro Health, will be the unveiling of portraits of Col. Abraham Owen, for whom the city is named, and his wife, Martha Dupuy Owen.

The portraits are on loan from the Stacy family of Charleston, South Carolina, he said.

Those portraits will be displayed along with a portrait of Joseph Hamilton Daveiss, for whom Daviess County was misspellingly named, that is already in the museum's collection. Both men died in the battle of Tippecanoe on Nov. 7, 1811.

The exhibition will open with a reception from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. June 27 at the museum.

Hayden said the reception will feature re-enactors of three important figures from the American Revolution.

McCellus Mayes will portray Crispus Attucks, who is considered the first casualty of the Revolutionary War, having died during the Boston Massacre.

Thomas Moseley, an Owensboroan and a member of the 9th Virginia regiment, will be portrayed by Asa Seiber.

And Jeff Stokes will portray Capt. John Parker, who commanded the Minutemen who fought at the Battle of Lexington on April 19, 1775.

The re-enactors also will be in the museum galleries from 1 to 4 p.m. June 28.

A number of art works from the museum's collection that explore Kentucky history will be featured in the exhibit.

Hayden said, "A meticulously researched American Colonial Day Dress by Paula Alex Naas, a handcrafted Frontier 'Possibles' bag by Joe Mills and a traditionally forged knife by bladesmith Max Soaper highlight the skill, craftsmanship and material culture that shaped everyday life in Kentucky's early history."

Also showcased are miniature replicas of early American ships by Bardstown artist Jim Cantrell and several examples of "Ships in Bottles" by Owensboro artist Greg Alvey.

Leitchfield quilters Sharon Duke and Linda Gentry created a "Teaching Wall Hanging" that depicts historical events leading to the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

On loan from the Hancock County Museum and Historical Society is a handmade

replica of the steamboat Robert E. Lee, by Hawesville artist Franklin Meserve.

And a needlepoint by artist John Schleicher rounds out the exhibition that highlights the state's artistic heritage, family traditions and human connection with maritime technology.

The Smithsonian National Museum of American History has loaned three graphic reproductions from William D. T. Travis' Civil War panorama.

The original work stretched across more than 500 feet of canvas.

The exhibit will continue through July 12. Gallery hours are noon to 5 p.m. CDT Tuesday through Friday and 1 to 4 p.m. CDT Saturday and Sunday.



SECTION 00010 - ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

Sealed Bids for "Campbellsville Emergency Services Building Waterline and Sanitary Sewer Extensions" for the City of Campbellsville will be received until 11:00 a.m. (local time) on July 1, 2026, and then publicly opened and read aloud. The primary scope of work includes the installation of approximately 381 LF of 6-inch PVC SDR 17 waterline, 2,968 LF of 10-inch PVC SDR 17 waterline, 3 fire hydrant assemblies, 611 LF of 3-inch HDPE DR 9 force main, 261 LF of 8-inch PVC SDR 35 gravity sewer, 1 manhole, one 55 GPM duplex pump station and valve vault, and related appurtenances.

The Instructions to Bidders, Bid Form, Agreement Forms, Performance and Payment Bonds, Plans, Specifications and other Contract Documents may be viewed online at [lynnimaging.com](http://lynnimaging.com) or examined at the following locations: City of Campbellsville 109 West Main Street Campbellsville, KY 42718 (270) 465-7011 Eclipse Engineers, PLLC 113 West Mt. Vernon Street Somerset, KY 42501 (606) 451-0959 Copies of plans and specifications may be obtained from Lynn Imaging, 328 Old Vine Street, Lexington, Kentucky 40507 (859-255-1021) upon payment of a non-refundable price of \$250.00 for each set (including shipping and handling). No bid will be accepted unless the BIDDER is a registered plan holder. To become a registered plan holder, BIDDER must purchase at least one set of documents from Lynn Imaging and provide accurate name and contact information. Partial sets of documents will not be provided. Half-sized sets may be purchased for the full price. Digital download sets may be purchased for half of the full price. Questions shall be addressed to Alan R. Robinson, P.E. of Eclipse Engineers, PLLC, 113 West Mt. Vernon Street, Somerset, Kentucky 42501 (606-451-0959) as stated in the Specifications or by email to [arobinson@eclipseengineers.net](mailto:arobinson@eclipseengineers.net). The OWNER reserves the right to waive any informality or to reject any or all bids. Each BIDDER must deposit with his Bid, security in the amount, form and subject to the conditions provided in the Instructions to Bidders. No BIDDER may withdraw his Bid within ninety (90) consecutive calendar days after the actual date of the opening thereof.

## McConnell is 'fully engaged' on Senate matters amid hospitalization, spokesperson says

BY MCKENNA HORSLEY  
KENTUCKY TODAY

A spokesperson for U.S. Sen. Mitch McConnell said the Kentucky Republican is keeping up with government business during his recent hospitalization.

"Senator McConnell is fully engaged with staff on Senate business and Kentucky matters and is very appreciative of the outstanding care he is receiving," Stephanie

Penn said in a Monday evening statement.

McConnell, 84, was admitted to a hospital Sunday, Penn previously said. The original statement did not say why he was hospitalized nor if he is in Kentucky or Washington, D.C.

McConnell was hospitalized in February "after experiencing flu-like symptoms." At the time, Kentucky Senate President Robert Stivers said McConnell was "out texting

and calling from a hospital bed" and discussed federal funding going to Kentucky in a recent package.

McConnell announced last year that he would not seek re-election to the seat he's held since his election in 1984. Republican U.S. Rep. Andy Barr and Democratic former state Rep. Charles Booker are campaigning to succeed McConnell and will be on the Nov. 3 general election ballot.

qualifying games in Nas-sau next month.

McLean, who turns 35 years old in August, said "Bahamian pride" prompted him to pursue a spot on the national team's coaching staff early in his career.

"I just felt as though that I had so much to give to it," he said of coaching the Bahamas team. "... So just always being able to give back to a country that's done so much for me. I go back every year and I'm just able to pour into them. So it was a really, really big deal to do that."

McLean missed part of UK's summer practice session entering his first season in Lexington due to his obligations with the Bahamas team, and he'll be away for part of this summer, too. The Cats are scheduled to begin their eight-week summer practice session Monday.

Pope hired McLean, a relative unknown in college basketball coaching circles, to fill the final spot on his staff late in the 2024 cycle. Since then, he has established himself as a key part of Pope's coaching staff.

## Corvette Museum to spotlight Michael Jordan's car during anniversary event

BY CHIP HUTCHESON  
KENTUCKY TODAY

The National Corvette Museum will honor its past, celebrate the present and drive into the future with its 32nd anniversary — a three-day celebration in Bowling Green Sept. 3-5.

The celebration will include exclusive activities, road tours, tech talks, Corvette Hall of Fame induction ceremony, Corvette raffles and more.

The museum has hosted an anniversary celebration annually since it opened. Online registration is open now until 10 a.m. EDT Aug. 10. On-site registration will be available during the September weekend.

One of the Corvettes now on exhibit is Michael Jordan's 1993 ZR-1. It is part of the "Pop Culture and Corvette: An American Love Affair" exhibit.

Widely recognized as one of the greatest basketball players of all time, Jordan helped redefine professional sports during the 1990s while leading the Chicago Bulls to six NBA championships in eight seasons.

Jordan's Corvette gained

renewed attention in ESPN's acclaimed 2020 documentary series *The Last Dance*, which chronicled the rise of Jordan and the Chicago Bulls dynasty. In episode eight, viewers see Jordan stepping out of the same ruby red Corvette ZR-1 following his famous "I'm back" announcement during his return to basketball.

"That moment cemented the car as more than just a high-performance Corvette. It became part of one of the most recognizable stories in modern sports history," according to a museum news release.

Located in the museum's Skydome, guests will see more than a dozen legendary Corvettes connected to entertainment, music, sports and popular culture. Guests also can experience nearly a half-dozen Corvette ZR1 models spanning multiple generations, highlighting the continued evolution of Corvettes.

Jordan's vehicle is on loan to the National Corvette Museum and will remain on exhibition through spring 2027. The Jordan ZR-1 is included with regular museum admission.

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told the *Lexington Herald-Leader* shortly after joining Pope's first UK staff in 2024. "It's something I've been wanting to do, and this is my fourth year doing it, and we've gotten better and better every single year, so it's been amazing."

The Bahamas team was one victory away from qualifying for the Summer Olympics in 2024. The squad is scheduled to play two FIBA World Cup