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2015 KIDS COUNT Data Book Fact Sheet

BALTIMORE — The 2015 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* marks one of the first looks at child well-being during the midst of the country's economic recovery and in the years afterwards. This year's *Data Book* focuses on trends over the last five years (roughly 2008-2013). It also examines the influence of parents' education, health, and other life circumstances on their children's well-being. Although we assume the 2014 data for poverty rates will show some improvement for kids, the current evidence shows unacceptable levels of low family income, low levels of parental education and inadequate housing in high-poverty neighborhoods, which pose risks to children and are associated with diminished prospects later in life.

Trends between 2008 and 2013 Using the Sixteen Indicators of the KIDS COUNT Index

Four domains comprise the KIDS COUNT index to capture what children need most to thrive: (1) Economic Well-Being, (2) Education, (3) Health and (4) Family and Community. Each domain includes four indicators, for a total of 16. These indicators represent the best available data to measure the status of child well-being at the state- and national-level.

Economic Well-Being

- Percentage of children in poverty (income below \$23,624 for a family of two adults and two children in 2013)
- Percentage of children whose parents lack secure employment (no full-time, year-round work)
- Percentage of children living in households with a high housing cost burden (spend more than 30 percent of income on housing)
- Percentage of teens not in school and not working (ages 16 to19)

Education

- Percentage of children not in preschool (ages 3 to 4)
- Percentage of fourth graders not proficient in reading
- Percentage of eighth graders not proficient in math
- Percentage of high school students not graduating on time

Health

- Percentage of low-birthweight babies
- Percentage of children without health insurance
- Child and teen death rate (per 100,000 children ages 1 to 19)
- Percentage of teens who abuse alcohol or drugs (ages 12 to17)

Family and Community

- Percentage of children living in single-parent families
- Percentage of children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma

- Percentage of children living in high-poverty areas
- Teen birth rate (per 1,000 females ages 15 to 19)

National Trends Since 2008

Comparing data over the last five years reveals positive and negative developments in child well-being nationally. Broadly speaking, children experienced gains in the Education and Health domains, but setbacks in the Economic Well-Being and Family and Community domains.

Economic well-being:

Two of the four Economic Well-Being indicators got worse since 2008, showing that families with children have not fully recovered from the deep recession, despite being several years into the recovery. Although still not back up to their pre-recession rates, most economic indicators have improved since 2010. Most notably, the child poverty rate finally declined slightly to 22 percent after increasing every year since 2008.

It's important to note that in 2013, the year of our most recent data, the national unemployment rate was 7.4 percent, but has since dropped to 5.4 percent. Given these recent gains in employment, one of the key factors to improving the economic well-being of families, continued improvement is expected in the Economic Well-Being domain data for 2014 and 2015.

Education:

In contrast, three of the four Education indicators — which cover preschool to high school graduation — showed some steady improvement in the last five years. Notably, with 81 percent of high school students graduating on time in 2011/12, the U.S. high school graduation rate is at an all-time high. Although more children are attending preschool today than ten years ago, the most recent data show a slight drop in the preschool attendance rate at the national level.

Health:

Similarly, child health continued to improve, with gains in all four indicators. Despite higher unemployment and a decline in employer-sponsored health insurance coverage during the past several years, fewer children lacked access to health insurance coverage in 2013 than before the recession.

Family and Community:

Trends in the Family and Community domain were mixed. The teen birth rate continued its dramatic decline, reaching a new all-time low. And, a smaller percentage of children were living with parents who lack a high school diploma. However, the percentage of children living in single parent families was higher in 2013 than in 2008.

Especially troubling is the steady increase in the likelihood of children growing up in a high-poverty neighborhood. At the national level, 14 percent of children lived in areas where poverty rates are higher than 30 percent in 2009-13. This is a significant increase from 11 percent in 2006-10 and 9 percent in 2000.

Racial Gaps in Child Well Being

Despite tremendous gains during recent decades for children of all races and income levels, inequities among children remain deep and stubbornly persistent.

On nearly all of the measures that the *Data Book* tracks, African-American, American Indian and Latino children continued to experience negative outcomes at rates that are higher than the national average. African-American children were twice as likely as the average child to live in high poverty neighborhoods and to live in single-parent families. American Indian children were twice as likely to lack health insurance coverage, and Latino children were the most likely to live with a household head who does not have a high school diploma.

State Rankings

The *Data Book* composite index of overall child well-being combines data across the four domains: (1) Economic Well-Being, (2) Education, (3) Health and (4) Family and Community. The composite scores are translated into a single state ranking which is used to rank states on how children are faring. All indicators are equally weighted in the domain and overall rankings.

In this year's report, Minnesota ranked first among states for overall child well-being, followed by New Hampshire and Massachusetts. Minnesota's number one ranking marks the first time in nearly a decade that a New England state did not hold the top spot for child well-being in our report. The three lowest-ranked states were Louisiana, New Mexico and Mississippi.

Top Five States Overall: Minnesota, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Iowa, Vermont

Bottom Five States Overall: Arizona, Nevada, Louisiana, New Mexico, Mississippi

Economic Well-Being: Top five states- North Dakota, Wyoming*, Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota

Bottom five states: Nevada, Louisiana*, New Mexico, California, Mississippi

Education: Top five states: Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut

Bottom five states: West Virginia, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Nevada

Health: Top five states: Iowa, Minnesota*, Massachusetts, Connecticut*, Illinois*

Bottom five states: Nevada, Montana, New Mexico, Louisiana*, Mississippi

Family and Community: Top five states- New Hampshire, Utah, Vermont, Minnesota, Maine*

Bottom five states: Arizona, Texas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Mississippi

* not in top or bottom 5 last year

Mississippi has been ranked 50th in every KIDS COUNT *Data Book* except 2013 when New Mexico was ranked last. The bottom five states are fairly consistent across domains with a few exceptions:

- California is ranked 2nd to the bottom in Economic Well-Being. This is extremely troubling considering that nine million children, or one in eight children in the country, live in the state.
- West Virginia ranked 46th in Education.
- Montana ranked 47th in health.
- Texas ranked 47th in Family and Community.

Biggest Improvements in Overall Rankings: Alaska saw the largest improvement (#33 to #27), followed by Minnesota (#5 to #1), three other states moved up three places (Wyoming from #19 to #16; South Carolina from #45 to #42; and Missouri from #29 to #26) compared to the 2014 *Data Book*.

Biggest Drops in Overall Rankings: West Virginia fell 6 spots from #37 to #43, three states fell 5 spots (Indiana from #27 to #32; Rhode Island from #26 to #31; Virginia from #9 to #14) and two states fell 3 spots Arkansas (#41 to #44) and Vermont (#2 to #5).

Note on data sources: The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* uses the most up-to-date estimates from federal statistical agencies including the U.S. Census Bureau, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Center for Education Statistics and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. For more information, see the Definitions and Sources section at www.aecf.org

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The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* with state-by-state rankings and supplemental data is embargoed until 12:01 a.m. EDT, July 21, 2015, and can be viewed at www.aecf.org/2015db at that time. Users can download the complete *Data Book*, access hundreds of other measures of child well-being and view real-time information on mobile devices at <http://mobile.kidscount.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 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.