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2012 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* Fact Sheet

BALTIMORE — Using a revamped and more comprehensive index to measure child well-being nationally and by state, the Annie E. Casey Foundation's 2012 *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* shows that since roughly 2005, children have seen gains in education and health, while there have been setbacks in their economic well-being. The new KIDS COUNT index expands the data from 10 indicators to four categories – Economic Well-Being, Education, Health, and Family and Community – with four indicators in each category. The *Data Book* presents the most recent trends, starting pre-recession and ending with the most recent year of available data.

At the national level:

- **Improvements:** All four education indicators that cover key milestones in child development from preschool attendance to high school graduation showed some improvement over the measurement period. Despite the recession, the health indicators also show continued improvement, with gains in children's health insurance coverage and reductions in child and teen mortality and teen substance abuse. The percent of low-birthweight babies remained unchanged.

- **Declines:** All four economic well-being indicators got substantially worse, which is not surprising, given the depth and severity of the economic crisis over the last five years and continued high rates of unemployment.

- **Mixed picture:** Trends in the Family and Community category, which assesses the family and neighborhood environment children grow up in, showed a small drop in the percent of children living in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma and a small decline in the teen birth rate. However, the percent of children living in single-parent families increased and more children are living in high-poverty areas.

Why a New KIDS COUNT Index Was Created and How to Understand It
datacenter.kidscount.org

Since the first *Data Book* in 1990, research and data on child development has proliferated. This year's *Data Book* moves away from the 10-indicator index to take advantage of advances in knowledge and availability of new state-level data. The result is a more robust tool to better serve the needs of the decision makers and advocates.

The 16 indicators selected reflect a wide range of factors: They are comparably collected across states on at least a biannual basis and span the life of a child from birth to high school. To avoid redundancy, indicators that were highly correlated were excluded in favor of measures that track a different component of child well-being. For additional detail on the methodological changes, go to datacenter.kidscount.org/databook/2012.

New 2012 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* Index

1. **Economic Well-Being**

   - Percent of children in poverty (income below $22,113 for a family of two adults and two children in 2010)

   - Percent of children whose parents lack secure employment (no full-time, year-round work)

   - Percent of children living in households with a high housing cost burden (spend more than 30 percent of income on housing)

   - Percent of teens not in school and not working (ages 16 to19)

2. **Education**

   - Percent of children not in preschool (ages 3 to 4)

   - Percent of 4th graders not proficient in reading

   - Percent of 8th graders not proficient in math

   - Percent of high school students not graduating on time

3. **Health**

   - Percent low-birthweight babies

   - Percent of children without health insurance

   - Child and teen death rate (per 100,000 children ages 1 to 19)

   - Percent of teens who abuse alcohol or drugs (ages 12 to17)

4. **Family and Community**

   - Percent of children living in single-parent families

   - Percent of children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma

   - Percent of children living in high-poverty areas

   - Teen birth rate (per 1,000 teens ages 15 to 19)

Breaking the index into categories allows for a more nuanced characterization of child well-being in each state. The new index also incorporates a developmental perspective on childhood through the use of key milestones from preschool through high school. The indicators are consistently and regularly measured which allows for comparisons across states and over time.

Rankings in Child Well-Being in the 2012 *Data Book*

Top Five States Overall: New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Jersey and Minnesota.

Lowest Five States Overall: Arizona, Louisiana, Nevada, New Mexico and Mississippi.

Economic Well-Being Rankings: Top five states – North Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, South Dakota and Wyoming. Bottom five states – Arizona, Louisiana, New Mexico, Nevada and Mississippi.

Education Rankings: Top five states – Massachusetts, New Jersey, Vermont, New Hampshire and Connecticut. Bottom five states – Arizona, West Virginia, Mississippi, New Mexico and Nevada.

Health Rankings: Top five states – Vermont, Massachusetts, Maine, Washington and New Jersey. Bottom five states – Nevada, Wyoming, Mississippi, New Mexico and Montana.

Family and Community Rankings: Top five states – New Hampshire, Vermont, Utah, North Dakota and Minnesota. Bottom five states – Arizona, Texas, Louisiana, New Mexico and Mississippi.

Trends in the New 16 Indicators Across the Four Domains of Well-Being

Economic Well-Being – Substantial worsening across all indicators nationally

	States that Improved	States that Worsened	States that saw No Change
Children in poverty	3 and D.C.	43	4
Children whose parents lack secure employment	0	48 and D.C.	2
Children in households with high housing cost burden	1	44 and D.C.	5
Teens not in school and not working	7	32	11 and D.C.

Education – National improvement across all indicators

	States that Improved	States that Worsened	States that saw No Change
Children not in preschool	44 and D.C.	3	3
4th graders not proficient in reading	35 and D.C.	9	6
8th graders not proficient in math	46 and D.C.	3	1
Teens not graduating on time (2005/2006 data not available for Pennsylvania, South Carolina, District of Columbia)	29	13	6

Health – Continued improvement, but low-birthweight babies percent remained unchanged

	States that Improved	States that Worsened	States that saw No Change
Low-birthweight babies	25 and D.C.	17	8
Children without health insurance	41 and D.C.	1	8
Child and teen deaths	47 and D.C.	2	1
Teen dependence on drugs and alcohol	35 and D.C.	4	11

Family and Community – Mixed picture, but an increase in high-poverty areas

	States that Improved	States that Worsened	States that saw No Change
Children in single-parent families	3 and D.C.	47	0
Children living in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma	35 and D.C.	2	13
Children living in high-poverty areas	7 and D.C.	40	3
Teen births	27 and D.C.	15	8

Note on data sources: The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* uses the most up-to-date state-level 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 datacenter.kidscount.org/databook/2012.

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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 25, 2012, at datacenter.kidscount.org/databook/2012. Through the KIDS COUNT Data Center, users can download the complete* Data Book*, access hundreds of other measures of child well-being and view real-time information on mobile devices.*

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