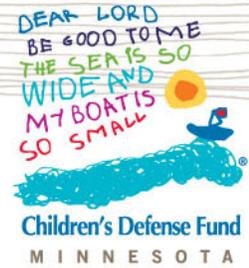


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Minnesota Ranked #1 State in the Nation for Child Well-Being *Disparities Persist Despite Minnesota's Number One Ranking in Child Well-Being*

MINNEAPOLIS, MN – Minnesota ranks number one in overall child well-being in the latest [KIDS COUNT® Data Book](#) released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Effective state and local investments have contributed to improved outcomes in the health and economic well-being indicators for children that propelled Minnesota to the number one ranking, up from 5th last year. However, not all Minnesota's children share equally in those improvements and for far too long the state has continued to have some of the greatest disparities compared to other states in health, education and economic outcomes for its children of color.

"We are proud of this national distinction, and the many Minnesota teachers, parents, doctors, and others who made it possible," said Governor Mark Dayton. "But our state has more work to do to narrow achievement gaps, and eliminate other troubling disparities among children. We are determined to make Minnesota a great place for every child to live, learn, and grow."

The *Data Book* examines overall child well-being, and bases its state rankings on 16 indicators in four categories: economic well-being, education, health, and family and community. This year, Minnesota ranked 5th in economic well-being (4th last year), 2nd in health (up from 17th last year), 6th in education, which was the same rank as last year, and 4th in family and community (up from 5th last year). Overall, Minnesota ranked 1st in the nation in child well-being.

More Work to Do

Despite Minnesota's high rankings in this year's study, when the data is examined by race and ethnicity, it is evident that children of color and American Indian children in Minnesota experience greater barriers to success. Those barriers include being more likely to live in economically insecure families and neighborhoods, less likely to attend preschool, meet reading and math standards, and graduate on time. The number of children of color is growing rapidly in Minnesota, already accounting for 30 percent of children under the age of 5, statewide. These changing demographics highlighted in the *Data Book* illustrate the urgent need to address disparities in economic, health and education outcomes that threaten the state's future workforce.

"It's evident that recent state and local investments that support children and families, especially policies and programs that support family economic success, are paying off in improved outcomes for many Minnesota children," said Stephanie Hogenson, research and policy director at Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota, the Minnesota KIDS COUNT grantee. "However, we cannot be content with a high ranking that masks chronic inequities for children of color in our state. We can't just keep doing what we've been doing because it's not ensuring success for all of our children. We need to rethink all of our systems that serve children and families and address systemic racism and inequities to ensure all children can access opportunities that are culturally relevant and support family success at the point before children get sick, drop out of school, get into trouble or suffer family breakdown."

The 2015 *Data Book* focuses on key trends in child well-being in the post-recession years, highlighting the fact that increased employment and concentrated wealth of the recession has not yet reached low-income families and families of color. While child poverty has decreased slightly in Minnesota and nationally in the

last year, highlights from the *Data Book* make it clear that more work needs to be done to ensure children live in economically secure families and can access resources that help them thrive:

- Sixty thousand more Minnesota children lived in low-income families in 2013 than in 2008. Black and American Indian children are three times as likely as White children to live in low-income families, and Asian and Hispanic/Latino children are more than twice as likely. Low-income is defined as twice the poverty rate (\$47,248 annually in 2013) and is a closer estimate to the cost of a family's basic needs budget. Research shows that low-income children face disparities in education, health and development similar to children in poverty.
- Nearly three-quarters of Minnesota children have at least one parent who has regular, full-time, year-round employment, according to the *Data Book*. While the unemployment rate in Minnesota has fallen to pre-recession levels, the jobs that are available are increasingly part-time and in sectors that pay lower wages, according to the most recent Job Vacancy Survey. The median wage for available jobs in Minnesota is \$13.29 per hour, a single parent with two children would need to earn at least \$19 per hour to meet basic needs. Moreover, historically Minnesota has had some of the worst racial gaps in unemployment in the country. As of May 2015 the overall unemployment rate is 3.8 percent and the unemployment rate in the state for African Americans is 14.4 percent, Latinos is 4.5 percent and Whites is 2.9 percent. The Black unemployment rate has spiked since Fall 2014 while the rate for Hispanic/Latino and White continues to decline.
- The rate of children attending preschool has remained unchanged from 2007 to 2013. Investments signed into law this legislative session in early learning scholarships, school readiness programs, Child Care Assistance and Head Start should increase the number of children attending preschool, which increases their chances for being ready for kindergarten and meeting academic standards on time. However, the investments fell far short of what was needed to ensure that all children, particularly low-income and children of color, are able to reap the long-term benefits of attending preschool.

"Ensuring that all Minnesotans benefit now from our robust, growing economy is vital to our future workforce and prosperity," Hogenson said. "Lawmakers made some substantial investments in children and families this legislative session that will make child care more affordable for families, increase access to early education and improve family economic well-being. But with a nearly \$2 billion dollar budget surplus, they didn't do enough to level the playing field for all children. It's imperative that we adhere to the research and best practices that demonstrate improved outcomes for all of our children by supporting programs and policies that improve family economic security and contribute to creating a better educated and healthier workforce, such as job training and higher paying jobs, affordable child care and paid family leave. We know what works; we just need the stamina to continue making the right choices."

About the KIDS COUNT Data Book

The 2015 *Data Book* is available online at www.aecf.org. The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* features the latest data on child well-being for every state, the District of Columbia and the nation. This information is available in the KIDS COUNT Data Center, which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of measures of child well-being. Data Center users can create rankings, maps and graphs for use in publications and on websites, and view real-time information on mobile devices. CDF-MN also produces its own annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* with state and county-level data. The 2015 Minnesota *KIDS COUNT Data Book* will be released this fall.

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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.

The Children's Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Health Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.