



# North Dakota KIDS COUNT

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## **North Dakota Remains among Top 10 States for Child Well-Being Yet, There Are Many Opportunities for Improvement**

FARGO, N.D. – North Dakota’s overall child well-being ranks eighth in the nation, according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s 27<sup>th</sup> edition of the *KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, an annual assessment of children’s well-being in the United States. The *Data Book* provides a portrait of how U.S. children are doing by state in four key areas of well-being: economic, family and community, education and health.

The previous few years have brought some positive developments for North Dakota children and families. The state’s economic growth has boosted the economic well-being of children, the percentage of children attending preschool has increased and the percentage of teens abusing alcohol and drugs has decreased. Additionally, the percentage of children with educated parents has climbed and the teenage birth rate continues to decrease.

“It is encouraging to see improvement in all four sectors being measured,” said Karen Olson, program director for North Dakota KIDS COUNT. North Dakota’s prosperous economy continues to help with the overall ranking of children’s economic well-being (second in the nation). Since 2007/2008, the percentage of teens abusing drugs and alcohol declined by nearly half, and the teen birth rate has gone down by 14 percent. “However, the percentage of children in poverty is the same as it was in 2008 at 15 percent,” said Olson. “This report helps to identify opportunities for addressing these and other challenges facing children and families in our state.”

### **Economic Well-Being (second in the nation)**

- **Strengths:** While slipping from first to second overall with regard to the economic well-being of children, North Dakota continues to rank highly. North Dakota has the lowest percentage of children in families with a high housing cost burden (17 percent), the second lowest percentage of children without secure parental employment (22 percent), and the fifth lowest percentage of children in poverty (15 percent).
- **Challenges and Opportunities:** Despite these economic strengths, many children and families continue to struggle throughout the state, remaining unaffected by the state’s prosperity. In 2014, 15 percent of children lived in poverty – the same rate as in 2008 and approximately one in five children live in families where no member of the household has full-time, year-round employment.

### **Family and Community (sixth in the nation)**

- **Strengths:** When compared with other states, children in North Dakota fare well in terms of family and community indicators. North Dakota has the second lowest percentage of children living in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma (5 percent) and the fifth lowest percentage of children living in single-parent families (29 percent). In addition, North Dakota saw improvement in the teen birth rate and fewer children are living in high-poverty neighborhoods.
- **Challenges and Opportunities:** The proportion of North Dakota children who live with a single parent has doubled since 1990. Nearly three in 10 children now live with a single parent (29 percent in 2014 up from 15 percent in

1990), and these children are nearly eight times more likely to be living in poverty than children living with married parents.

### **Education (14<sup>th</sup> in the nation)**

- **Strengths:** Two of the four education indicators showed improvement from 2008: the percentage of children attending preschool increased and a larger percentage of fourth graders are reading proficiently. North Dakota has the third lowest percentage of high school students in the nation not graduating on time (9 percent).
- **Challenges and Opportunities:** Despite these improvements, more than 60 percent of fourth graders are not proficient in reading and more than 60 percent of eighth graders are not proficient in math. High-quality early learning programs for 3- and 4-year-olds can improve school readiness, with the greatest gains accruing to the highest-risk children. Yet, in North Dakota, 63 percent of 3- and 4-year olds do not attend school, which is the fourth worst ranking among states.

### **Health (17<sup>th</sup> in the nation)**

- **Strengths:** All four health indicators saw some positive movement. North Dakota has the second lowest percentage of low birthweight babies among states and the fifth lowest percentage of teens abusing alcohol and drugs in the nation. In addition, the percentage of teens abusing alcohol and drugs dropped from 9 percent to 5 percent from 2007/2008 to 2014.
- **Challenges and Opportunities:** While the uninsured rate for children is down slightly to 7 percent, nearly 12,000 children in North Dakota have no form of health insurance coverage. The child and teen death rate in North Dakota is at 24 per 100,000, similar to the national average. Approximately one in four of these deaths is the result of suicide – and the percentage of students attempting suicide in North Dakota rose from 6 percent in 2009 to 9 percent in 2015.

*The 2016 Data Book* will be available June 21 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). Additional information is available at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>, which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of indicators of child well-being. The Data Center allows users to create rankings, maps and graphs for use in publications and on websites, and to view real-time information on mobile devices.

*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. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. For more information, visit [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org).*

*The North Dakota KIDS COUNT program is a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and supported by the Center for Social Research at North Dakota State University. Our mission is to provide the information necessary to inform discussions and decisions to improve the health and well-being of children in North Dakota. You can see more at <http://www.ndkidscount.org> or search for "ndkidscount" on Facebook.*