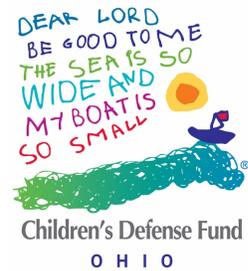


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**Overall Well-Being of Ohio Children Drops Compared to Other States –
First Time in the Bottom Half Since 2012**

COLUMBUS, OHIO – Through a state-by-state comparison of data on child well-being, the 2016 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* reveals what we know in Ohio - all of our children’s basic needs are not being met. Ohio’s rank in child well-being slipped to 26, the first time it has ranked in the bottom half of states since 2012. The *Data Book* measures child well-being in four areas: economic well-being, education, health, and family and community.

Nationally, the *Data Book* notes that with the aid of federal, state and local policies and investments in prevention, a record number of teens – those in Generation Z – have managed to avoid bad choices that could have derailed their future prospects. Comparing data between 2008 and 2014, teen birth rates nationally fell 40 percent, drug and alcohol abuse dropped 38 percent, and the percent of teens graduating not on time decreased by 28 percent.

Teens in Ohio are following similar trends, with a 36 percent drop in the teen birth rate, a decline of 38 percent in drug and alcohol use, and a 29 percent decrease in the percent of teens not graduating on time. These improvements have occurred despite a child poverty rate of 23 percent, a rate that has remained virtually unchanged for several years. Thirty-one percent of Ohio children live in families that lack secure employment and 14 percent live in high-poverty areas.

“The fact that Ohio teens are making their way through high school at record rates is cause to celebrate,” says Dawn Wallace-Pascoe, director of Data and Research at Children’s Defense Fund-Ohio. “However, we must do more to ensure a young person can continue his or her education to reach economic security in adulthood.”

Despite rising employment numbers, 22 percent of children in the U.S. lived in poverty in 2014—the same rate as in 2013, and almost one in three children lived in families where no member of the household had full-time, year-round employment. An increasing number of our young people are also growing up in neighborhoods that lack the resources they need to thrive. Since 2006-2010, the percent of children living in high poverty areas increased to 14 percent, up from 11 percent.

Generation Z teens growing up in low- to moderate-income households have fewer opportunities to move up the economic ladder compared to adults in the previous two generations. A college degree is now required to qualify for most middle income positions, but rising tuition costs and a shift in financial aid away from needs-based grants to loans has put a post-secondary education out of reach for most low-income students. Armed with only a high school degree, the future prospects for young adults are bleak. Among recent high school graduates nationwide, the unemployment rate was 28 percent for blacks, 17 percent for Latinos and 15 percent for whites. Those with jobs earned, on average, \$10.66 an hour, which was less than wages in 2000 when adjusted for inflation.

“With rising higher education costs, stagnant wages and a flimsy social safety net, teens are less likely than their parents or grandparents to obtain economic security,” said Patrick McCarthy, president and CEO of the Casey Foundation “For the sake of our economy and our society, we must reverse this trend to ensure that today’s youth – who will be the next generation of workers, parents and community leaders – have a successful transition to adulthood and beyond.”

Key trends include gains in health insurance but stagnating poverty and racial inequity

The 2016 *Data Book*, which focuses on key trends in child well-being in the post-recession years, measures child well-being in four domains: economic well-being, education, health, and family and community.

Nationally, the rates of children without health insurance have improved by 40 percent since 2008, with some states recording decreases of more than 60 percent. Ohio has seen a 29 percent decrease in uninsured children.

Children of color are the majority of the population in 12 states and are predicted to make up the majority of all children before the end of the decade. At the same time, our country’s legacy of racial inequity means that children of color continue to face significant barriers to their success. African-American children across the U.S. 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 least likely to live with a household head who has at least a high school diploma. In Ohio, the highest rates of child poverty occur among Black children (48 percent) and American Indian children (52 percent).

Bipartisan solutions based on American values

The *Data Book* reveals that a state-level examination of the data reveals a hard truth: A child’s chances of thriving depend not just on individual, familial and community characteristics, but also on the state in which she or he is born and raised. States vary considerably in their amount of wealth and other resources. State policy choices also strongly influence children’s chances for success.

Most recently, Ohio’s elected officials and policymakers have taken the necessary steps to begin to decrease our state’s historically high rate of infant mortality. In 2014, Ohio’s overall infant mortality rate was 6.8 per 1,000 live births, while the infant mortality rate for Black babies was 14.3. Executive Director Renuka Mayadev notes, “We are grateful for the work of the bipartisan Commission on Infant Mortality and the strong public-private partnerships that have formed in our cities to meet the critical needs of mothers and babies. Let’s continue the bipartisan effort and commit to meeting the most basic needs of all of our children.”

In the *Data Book*, the Casey Foundation offers a number of recommendations for how policy makers can ensure all children are prepared for the future, based on this country’s shared values of opportunity, responsibility and security.

- **OPPORTUNITY:** Increase opportunity by expanding access to high-quality Pre-K and early childhood services so that all children are prepared to succeed in school. In addition, expand access to higher education and training so that every low-income child has a fair chance to develop his or her potential.

- **RESPONSIBILITY:** Increase the Earned Income Tax Credit for low-income workers who do not have dependent children. This strategy will bolster workers, who may in fact be helping to support children who do not live with them and who are struggling to get by on low wages.
- **SECURITY:** Policies can ensure American families have a measure of security, particularly low-income parents of young children, by providing paid family leave that helps them balance their obligations at home and in the workplace.

The 2016 *Data Book* will be available June 21 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at 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 Children's Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind[®] mission is to ensure every child a *Healthy 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.

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.

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