



**Internet-based Children's Data Users Perceptions of
KIDS COUNT**

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for

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Executive Summary

In the spring of 2005 Child Trends fielded an online survey of users of the Child Trends DataBank (www.childtrendsdatabank.org) to explore their awareness of, uses for, and levels of satisfaction with KIDS COUNT data products. The survey was sent online to 6,685 DataBank listserv subscribers, of which 808 responded. Members of the DataBank listserv were felt to be representative of an important set of potential users of KIDS COUNT products: those who look to the Internet for data on children and youth.

Among those who responded, three-quarters had heard of KIDS COUNT. Recognition was highest among government/policy, advocacy, and research personnel (85-90 percent). The annual KIDS COUNT DataBook was the most recognized product (66 percent) followed by individual state KIDS COUNT reports (54 percent), online KIDS COUNT census data (39 percent), the CLIKS data system (12 percent), and the Right Start data (11 percent).

Among those who had heard of KIDS COUNT, and on a four point scale ranging from “completely” to “not very,” most reported that the products were completely credible (69 percent), completely clear and understandable (60 percent), completely useful (59 percent), and completely relevant to policymakers (53 percent). In addition, 41 percent reported that they were completely timely, with another 45 percent reporting they were “mostly timely.” Finally, 39 percent felt that KIDS COUNT products were completely respected by persons with differing political views, while an additional 35 percent felt that they were “mostly respected.”

Among those who had heard of KIDS COUNT, most felt that KIDS COUNT products had made them aware of how their state ranked in comparison with other states (67 percent); enriched their understanding of a topic (66 percent); or highlighted a problem area that had improved (58 percent). Only six percent reported that it had actually changed their mind on a specific issue.

Introduction

In April, 2005 Child Trends fielded a brief online survey of its own DataBank users to assess their awareness and assessment of KIDS COUNT data products and reports,¹ the Child Indicator Newsletter, and the DataBank itself. The survey was done at the request of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The Child Trends DataBank (www.childtrendsdatabank.org) is a continuously updated online resource for the latest data and research on over 90 indicators of child and youth well-being, with a focus on national estimates. The DataBank is visited by over 40,000 users per month including many in the fields of government and policy, advocacy, academia and research. Members of the DataBank listserv were felt to be representative of an important set of potential users of KIDS COUNT products: those who look to the Internet for data on children and youth. Information on their awareness and use of KIDS COUNT products may provide useful guidance in future web-based dissemination efforts of KIDS COUNT products.

Survey Design and Methodology

The brief online survey included 13 questions. The first six questions concerned respondents' familiarity with KIDS COUNT products and their use of and satisfaction with these products. Following these questions, there were two questions on the *Child Indicator*, also supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundations, and three questions about the DataBank itself. The survey also asks respondents about their occupations and the state in which they live. This report covers findings related to KIDS COUNT products only.

An initial draft of the survey was developed by Brett Brown and Dena Aufseeser of Child Trends and was revised per review of the KIDS COUNT coordinator. The survey was then field tested by several Child Trends staff. On March 9, 2005 the survey was formally launched using *Survey Monkey*, an online survey creation tool.

The survey was sent online to 6,685 DataBank listserv subscribers. A total of 808 people responded over two weeks for a response rate of 12 percent, which is relatively high for this type of survey. Respondents were from every state except Delaware and Mississippi. Those who had identified themselves as formally affiliated with KIDS COUNT were removed from the survey before results were tallied.

Results

Name and Product Recognition

- Three quarters (75 percent) of respondents reported they had heard of KIDS COUNT. Table 1 presents differences in recognition level by occupation. Government/policy,

¹ Questions were also asked concerning the Child Indicator newsletter (www.childtrends.org/ci), and about the Child Trends DataBank itself. In this report, however, we discuss only responses related to KIDS COUNT.

advocacy, and research employees were the most likely to have heard of KIDS COUNT (between 85 percent and 90 percent). Percentages were lower for students (44 percent), primary and secondary educators (61 percent), and those involved in the medical and health fields (70 percent).

- The KIDS COUNT DataBook: Overall, 66 percent of all respondents had used the annual KIDS COUNT DataBook either online or in hardcopy. About a third (34 percent) had used or read both the hard copy and the online versions. Another 17 percent had used just the hard copy version and 15 percent had used just the data book online. (See Table 2)
- Other KIDS COUNT Products: Thirty-nine percent of all respondents reported that they had used KIDS COUNT census data online, 12 percent said they had used the KIDS COUNT CLIKS data system, 11 percent said they had used KIDS COUNT Right Start, and 31 percent said they had used other special reports by KIDS COUNT. (See Table 2)
- State KIDS COUNT Reports: More than half (54 percent) of all respondents reported reading or using a KIDS COUNT report of an individual state. (See Table 2)

Table 1

Percentage of Respondents who Have Heard of Kids Count, by Reported Occupation	
Occupation	Have heard of Kids Count
Total	75
Government/Policy	90
Advocacy	85
Academia (College/University)	77
Education (Primary/Secondary)	61
Student*	44
Research	85
Medical/Health Field	70
Program Staff/Director	79
Other	70

*Based on 16 responses

Source: Original online survey by Child Trends using Survey Monkey's online survey creation tool.

Table 2

Percentage of Respondents Using KIDS COUNT Products	
KIDS COUNT Data Book	66
both online and in hard copy	34
only in hard copy	17
only online version	15
KIDS COUNT census data online	39
KIDS COUNT CLIKS data system	12
KIDS COUNT Right Start	11
KIDS COUNT report for individual state	54
Other special reports	31

Source: Original online survey by Child Trends using Survey Monkey's online survey creation tool.

Assessment of KIDS COUNT Products

Respondents who had heard of KIDS COUNT were asked about the credibility and clarity of KIDS COUNT products, as well as their timeliness, utility and relevance for policymakers, and the degree of perceived bipartisan respect for the products.² (See Table 3)

- **Credibility:** 69 percent thought the products were completely credible and 26 percent thought they were mostly credible.
- **Clear and Understandable:** 60 percent reported the products were completely clear and understandable and 32 percent reported they were mostly clear and understandable.
- **Useful:** 59 percent reported that the products were completely useful and 31 percent reported that they were mostly useful.
- **Relevant to Policy Makers:** 53 percent report that the products were completely relevant to policy makers and 31 percent said they were mostly relevant to policy makers. Among those respondents working in policy or government: 53 percent reported products were completely relevant and 36 percent reported that products were mostly relevant.
- **Timely:** 41 percent reported the products were completely timely and 45 percent reported they were mostly timely.
- **Respected by People with Differing Political Views:** 39 percent said the products were completely respected by people with differing political views and 35 percent said they were mostly respected by people with differing views.

² [NOTE: Potential responses included: completely, mostly, somewhat, not very, or not applicable. (See Table 3 for detailed results). Percentages are based on those who had heard of KIDS COUNT and who had answered the question.]

Table 3

Respondents' Assessment of KIDS COUNT Products (%)					
	Completely	Mostly	Somewhat	Not Very	N/A
Credible	69	26	1	0	4
Clear and Understandable	60	32	4	0	4
Useful	59	31	7	0	3
Relevant to Policy Makers	53	31	7	0	9
Timely	41	45	8	1	5
Respected by People with Differing View Points	39	35	6	1	19

Source: Original online survey by Child Trends using Survey Monkey's online survey creation tool.

Influence of KIDS COUNT Products on Respondent

Respondents who had heard of KIDS COUNT were also asked about how KIDS COUNT products had informed their understanding of children's well-being: (See Table 4)

- 66 percent reported that it has enriched their understanding of a topic;
- 58 percent felt that it highlighted for them problem areas that have improved;
- Two-thirds (67 percent) reported that is made them aware of how their state ranked in comparison to other states;
- 31 percent indicated that it presented a trend they did not expect; and
- 6 percent felt that it had changed their opinion on an issue.

Other respondents wrote in that KIDS COUNT products provided support, background, or data for their programs, proposals, or grants.

Table 4

Percentage of Respondents Reporting They Were Influenced by KIDS COUNT in Various Ways	
Made me aware of how my state ranked in comparison to other states	67
Enriched my understanding of a topic	66
Highlighted problem areas that have improved	58
Presented a trend I did not expect	31
Changed my opinion on an issue	6

Source: Original online survey by Child Trends using Survey Monkey's online survey creation tool.

Appendix Table 1

Distribution of Respondents Reporting They Had Heard of Kids Count, by State	
State	Percent
AK	0*
AL	2
AR	0*
AZ	2
CA	8
CO	3
CT	2
DC	1
DE	0
FL	4
GA	3
HI	0*
IA	2
ID	0*
IL	2
IN	2
KS	2
KY	1
LA	1
MA	2
MD	5
ME	1
MI	6
MN	3
MO	3
MS	0
MT	1
NC	1
ND	0*
NE	1
NH	1
NJ	2
NM	0*
NV	1
NY	5
OH	4
OK	1
OR	1
PA	4
RI	1
SC	1
SD	0*
TN	2
TX	3
UT	1
VA	3
VT	1
WA	2
WI	3
WV	1
WY	1
Virgin Islands	0*
Other	1
Total	100

*Less than one percent.

Source: Original online survey by Child Trends using Survey Monkey's online survey creation tool.