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**News from the 2010 KIDS COUNT Data Book  
Texas' Kids – Opportunities and Well-Being Status**

Our ability to progress as a state depends on the degree to which we can create opportunities for all children to succeed. Texas ranks 34th nationally in the *2010 KIDS COUNT Data Book*, a state-by-state study on the well-being of America's children. The *Data Book* reveals that Texas improved on four of the 10 measures affecting child well-being since 2000. Yet on four other measures, conditions worsened for Texas' kids. Two measures were not comparable to previous years.

The data in the 2010 *Data Book* do not reflect the current period of economic recession as they come from the 2008 American Community Survey. The ACS reflects information for the 12 months prior to the survey date. The economic downturn effects were not felt by most Texas families until the end of 2008 and into 2010, with unemployment peaking at 8.6 percent during January 2010.

**Despite post-2000 improvement, teen birth rate third highest in nation.**

In 2007 (the most recent year available), 54,261 babies were born to Texas girls ages 15-19. Despite being 7 percent lower than in 2000, Texas' teen birth rate was 64 births per 1,000 females ages 15-19—much higher than the national rate of 43 births per 1,000. Among the 50 states, Texas ranked 48th on this measure—above only New Mexico and Mississippi.

**Child poverty well above U.S. rate.**

Between 2000 and 2008, the number of Texas children living in poverty grew by more than 240,000, reaching nearly 1.5 million kids total. At 23 percent of the total child population, Texas' child poverty rate is well above the national rate of 18 percent. Texas ranked 43rd among the 50 states on this measure. (A family of two adults and two children were considered poor if their income in 2008 fell below \$21,834.)

**Share of teens not in school and not high school graduates cut in half.**

Between 2000 and 2008, the share of Texas teens ages 16-19 who were not enrolled in school and not high school graduates has been cut in half—from 14 percent to 7 percent.

**Mortality measures produce mixed trends.**

At 21 deaths per 100,000 children ages 1-14, Texas' child death rate in 2007 was 13 percent better than in 2000. Similarly, the state's teen death rate improved 17 percent between 2000 and

2007, to 63 deaths per 100,000 teens ages 15-19. Yet infant mortality has not improved. In 2007, over 2,500 babies died before their first birthday, or nearly 500 more than in 2000. Texas' infant mortality rate of 6.3 infant deaths per 1,000 live births was 11 percent higher than in 2000.

### **Investments in children yield better short and long-term outcomes**

Ranking 50<sup>th</sup> in per capita spending<sup>i</sup>, Texas is clearly a low tax, low spending state. While this may appear to be sound fiscal policy, in truth, the numbers show that greater investment in kids is related to better child well-being outcomes.

Texas does not fare much better in its investment in education. Investing less than \$8000 per pupil per year, Texas ranks 43<sup>rd</sup> on per pupil spending.<sup>ii</sup> Even after adjusting for regional cost differences across all states, the more states invest in education, the lower the dropout and teen birth rates and the higher their reading test scores.<sup>iii</sup>

### **Finding the data**

The 21st annual *Data Book* is complemented by the expanded KIDS COUNT Data Center, which contains hundreds of measures of child well-being and allows users to create maps and graphs of the data at the national, state, county, and city level. To access information for Texas go to <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/tx>.

#### **The KIDS COUNT Data Center – One-Stop Source for Child Well-Being Data**

<http://datacenter.kidscount.org>

The 21<sup>st</sup> *KIDS COUNT Data Book* is complemented by an online Data Center that is regularly updated with hundreds of measures of child well-being covering national, state, county, and city information.

Users can access:

- **The only compilation of the 2007 teen birth rates** for all 50 states.
- **Popular topics** such as KIDS COUNT overall rankings, the number of children in poverty; and children living in single-parent families.
- **Geographic Profiles** that include information on education, economic well-being, health, and more.
- **Customizable maps, trend lines, and charts** for use in publications and presentations.
- **Rankings** of states, cities, and other geographic areas.
- **Data** covering large racial and ethnic groups and children in immigrant families.

**Users who download maps and information from the Data Center to place on their own websites have the benefit of having that information automatically updated through syndication.**

**Keep up to date on what's new with KIDS COUNT by following us on [twitter@aecfkidscount](https://twitter.com/aecfkidscount) and becoming our fan on Facebook**

**<http://www.facebook.com/KIDSCOUNT>**

<sup>i</sup> Fiscal Year 2008 State Expenditure Report. (Fall 2009). *National Association of State Budget Officers*. Washington, D.C.

<sup>ii</sup> 2007 per-pupil expenditures adjusted for regional cost differences, Kids Count Data Center, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/acrossstates/Rankings.aspx?ind=5199>.

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iii CPPP calculations of Pearson product-moment correlations of state-level per pupil expenditures with the percentage of teens ages 16 to 19 who are not in school and not working ( $r = -.37, p < .01$ ); percentage of 4<sup>th</sup> graders who scored below proficient reading level ( $r = -.46, p < .01$ ); and the rate of births to teens ages 15-19 ( $r = -.57, p < .01$ ). All data retrieved from Kids Count Data Center at: <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/acrossstates/Default.aspx>