



**UNDER EMBARGO until Tuesday, July 21, 2015, 12:01 a.m. EDT**

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## **Economic Gains Improve Colorado's Ranking in Child Well-Being**

### ***Colorado is 21st among states for well-being of kids***

Colorado moved up one spot to 21<sup>st</sup> in the nation in a ranking of overall child well-being, according to the 2015 *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Colorado's improving economic conditions were a driver behind the better ranking, although data show the economic recovery has been uneven across Colorado communities.

Colorado has made greater gains than many other states in both lowering the percent of children living in poverty and the percent of teens not working or not in school, according to the report. The improvements drove Colorado's rank in the area of economic well-being up five spots from 2014 to 13th. On the other hand, the state fell five spots to 44<sup>th</sup> in the nation for overall child health. A spike in child and teen mortality in 2013 contributed to the rankings drop. And although the number of Colorado teens reporting alcohol or drug use has declined since 2008, it has fallen at a slower rate than in other states and contributed to the lower health ranking.

"It's clear that many Colorado children are better off now than just a few years ago, but it certainly isn't true for all kids," said Chris Watney, president and CEO of the Colorado Children's Campaign. "The disparities we see when looking at areas where kids are doing well and where they aren't help point our attention to where it is most needed. Imagine the progress we'd make as a state if we removed barriers to good health and quality education for every child."

The economic recovery hasn't reached all Colorado kids, according to the report. Compared to 2008, 40,000 more Colorado children are living in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment. In 2013, 27 percent of Colorado kids—more than one in four—were living in families where no parent was securely employed.

More than 100,000 Colorado children (or 8 percent of all kids) were living in high-poverty neighborhoods, in which more than 30 percent of residents are living below the federal poverty line. Such areas often lack safe places to play, quality schools and adequate employment opportunities for parents.

“Colorado consistently ranks right in the middle of national rankings for child well-being,” Watney said, “but there’s a story behind that average. There are a lot of children doing very well in Colorado—especially due to the economic recovery—but there are many children who aren’t doing well. “

Colorado’s 2015 rankings among all states:

- Overall: 21st (up from 22<sup>nd</sup> in 2014)
- Economic Well-Being: 13<sup>th</sup> (up from 18<sup>th</sup> in 2014)
- Education: 9<sup>th</sup> (up from 11<sup>th</sup> in 2014)
- Health: 44<sup>th</sup> (down from 39<sup>th</sup> in 2014)
- Family and Community: 22<sup>nd</sup> (down from 21<sup>st</sup> in 2014)

The report also included encouraging trends for Colorado:

- The percent of Colorado children living in poverty has decreased for the first time since the 2008 recession, falling from 18 percent in 2012 to 17 percent in 2013. While there are still far too many children living in poverty in Colorado – about 207,000 – it is encouraging to see that nearly 20,000 fewer children were living in poverty in 2013 than in 2012.
- Only 8 percent of Colorado children were without health insurance in 2013, down from 14 percent in 2008. This trend means there are nearly 70,000 fewer uninsured children than there were in 2008.
- Colorado saw the number of disconnected teens, or those between ages 16 and 19 who were neither working nor in school, drop to its lowest level since 2008. From 2012 to 2013, Colorado saw its rate drop to 6 percent while the national average remained flat at 8 percent.
- Colorado students have shown more progress on academic measures than the national average. The percent of students scoring below proficient on fourth grade reading has dropped from 64 percent to 59 percent, well below the national average of 66 percent. Similarly, the percent of eighth graders scoring below proficient in math has dropped from 63 percent to 58 percent, eight points better than the national average of 66 percent.
- Fifty-one percent of Colorado 3- and 4-year-olds did not attend preschool during 2012 or 2013, remaining below the national average of 54 percent. Colorado’s ranking on this indicator has risen from 22<sup>nd</sup> in 2008 to 8<sup>th</sup> in 2013.
- The teen birth rate in Colorado continues to drop even faster than the national average. In 2013, there were only 23 births per 1,000 females ages 15 to 19, compared to 40 per 1,000 in 2008.

*The 2015 Data Book* will be available July 21 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). Additional information is available at <http://databook.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. For more information, visit [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). KIDS COUNT<sup>®</sup> is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.*

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*The **Colorado Children's Campaign** is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy organization committed since 1985 to realizing every chance for every child in Colorado. We advocate for the development and implementation of data-driven public policies that improve child well-being in health, education and early childhood. We do this by providing Coloradans with trusted data and research on child well-being and organizing an extensive state-wide network of dedicated child advocates. For more information, please visit [www.coloradokids.org](http://www.coloradokids.org).*