



North Dakota KIDS COUNT

NDSU Dept. 2362, PO Box 6050
Fargo, ND 58108-6050

Tel: 701.231.5931
Fax: 701.231.5118

nds.ndkidscount@nds.u.edu

www.ndkidscount.org

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE

Until 12:01 a.m. EDT

Tuesday, July 21, 2015

CONTACT: Karen Olson | 701.231.1060 | k.olson@nds.u.edu
Rick Axelson | 701.231.8621 | rick.axelson@nds.u.edu

North Dakota Leads Nation in Children's Economic Well-being; Yet, Opportunities for Improvement are Many

FARGO - North Dakota's overall child well-being ranks seventh in the nation, according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's 26th 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 in four key areas of well-being: Economic, Family and Community, Education, and Health. States are ranked on 16 indicators of child well-being, four for each key area, that reflect current research regarding the conditions needed for proper child development.

"It is encouraging to see our state's economic prosperity having an impact on children – there are fewer children living in poverty statewide now than in 2008," said Karen Olson, program director for North Dakota KIDS COUNT. "Yet, while child poverty is down overall, children living in poor neighborhoods have not benefited from the state's prosperity. This report helps to identify opportunities for addressing these and other challenges facing children and families in our state.

Research underscores that the development of children and parents is inextricably linked. Thus, two-generational approaches that work with children and their parents simultaneously can harness the family's full potential and put the whole family on a path to permanent economic security."

Economic Well-Being (1st in the nation)

- **Strengths:** North Dakota continues to rank 1st in the nation with regard to the economic well-being of children. North Dakota has the lowest percentage of children without secure parental employment (20%), the lowest percentage of children in families with a high housing cost burden (19%), the second lowest child poverty rate (12%), and the second lowest rate of idle teens (5%). In addition, three of these four economic well-being measures showed improvement from 2008.
- **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 four counties, at least half of all young children ages 0 to 4 live in poverty.

Family and Community (6th 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%) and the third lowest percentage of children living in single-parent families (28%). In addition, North Dakota saw improvement in the teen birth rate, from 28 births per 1,000 teenage girls in 2008 to 24 per 1,000 in 2013.
- **Challenges and Opportunities:** The proportion of North Dakota children who live with a single parent has nearly doubled since 1990. Just over one in four children now lives with a single parent (28% in 2013, up from 15% in 1990), and these children are about six times more likely to be living in poverty than children living with married parents. Also, despite the state's economic prosperity, there has been no change or improvement in the percentage of children living in poor neighborhoods since 2008.

Education (18th in the nation)

- Strengths: Two of the four education indicators showed improvement from 2008: children not attending preschool and high school students not graduating on time. North Dakota has the fourth lowest percentage of high school students in the nation not graduating on time (9%).
- Challenges and Opportunities: Despite these improvements, two out of three fourth graders are not proficient in reading – a proportion that has shown very little change over time. North Dakota also has the eighth worst ranking with regard to preschool enrollment. 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, 62% of 3- and 4-year-olds in North Dakota do not attend nursery school or preschool.

Health (29th in the nation)

- Strengths: Two of the four health indicators showed improvement from 2008: low birth weight babies and teens who abuse alcohol or drugs.
- Challenges and Opportunities: With regard to uninsured children, North Dakota dropped in ranking from 30th last year to 36th in this year's analysis. Although not tracked by the KIDS COUNT *Data Book*, mental health is a growing concern among high school students. The percentage of students attempting suicide has doubled, from 6 percent in 1999 to 12 percent in 2013.

The 2015 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* includes the latest data on child well-being for every state, the District of Columbia, and the nation. This information will be available July 21, 2015 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org and on the [KIDS COUNT Data Center](#), which also contains the most recent national, state, and local data on hundreds of other measures 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. Follow the Annie E. Casey Foundation on Twitter @aecfkidscount and on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/KIDSCOUNT>. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

###

The North Dakota KIDS COUNT program is a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. 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.