

**UNDER EMBARGO until Wednesday, June 27 at 12:01 a.m. ET**  
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**Over 1 in 4 DC Children Under 5 Could be Missed by the 2020 Census**

*Leaders Must Take Steps to Ensure an Accurate Census to Protect the Future of DC Children*

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**—We count on children to build our city’s future yet, in the District of Columbia, more than one out of every four children under five (27 percent) live in “hard-to-count” neighborhoods where there is a high chance they will not be represented in the upcoming 2020 census. If the census does not accurately count DC children, the District could lose millions of dollars in federal supports.

Today the Annie E. Casey Foundation released the 2018 *KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, its annual look at child well-being in the United States. The stakes are high for DC children. Census data dictate how federal programs allocate funding and an undercount of young children threatens DC children’s healthy development and well-being today and over the next decade by limiting vital resources and access to critical supports.

In fiscal year 2015 alone, the District relied on more than \$612.8 million in federal dollars to fund critical programs that support child well-being. Inaccurate census counts undermine the capacity of programs that bolster children’s healthy development, such as Medicaid and Head Start/Early Head Start.

“If we want to mitigate racial and economic disparities and increase opportunity, then we must take steps to ensure that all DC children and their families complete the census,” explains Shana Bartley, acting executive director of DC Action for Children. “The census most often misses children of color, children from low-income families, and children living in immigrant families; this puts DC’s advancements in child well-being at risk as vital federal programs face reductions in funding.”

The *Data Book* draws from numerous sources to focus on key trends in the post-recession years. It measures child well-being in four domains: economic security, education, health, and family and community.

Signaling that existing federally-funded resources and systems are benefitting DC children, KIDS COUNT data highlight numerous upward trends in child well-being:

- The percentage of DC children living in poverty decreased by 13 percent between 2010 and 2016.
- After spiking to 50,000 in 2015, the number of DC children living in families where no parent had full-time, year-round employment dropped by 18 percent between 2010 and 2016.
- Between 2010 and 2016, the teen birth rate in the District dropped 47 percent.

However, KIDS COUNT data also highlight persistent disparities in opportunity and well-being for DC children and families, disparities that could intensify if inaccurate census data reduces essential resources for communities in the District:

- 27 percent of DC children live in high-poverty areas. Second only to Puerto Rico, this is the highest rate in the country.
- 10.1 percent of babies born in DC are born at low-birth weights, the fifth-highest percentage in the nation.
- 71 percent of DC fourth-graders scored below proficient reading level, and 79 percent of eighth-graders in DC lacked proficiency in math, far below the national average for these indicators.

“The District has a long path ahead to ensure that all children — regardless of their race, ethnicity, family’s income or zip code — have the opportunity to reach their full potential. An inaccurate census takes us many steps back on this path,” said Shana Bartley. “We must join with our partners at all levels — policymakers, local agencies, advocates, and community members alike — to make fully counting young children and other vulnerable people a priority issue for the District of Columbia.”

The Annie E. Casey Foundation offered the following recommendations to achieve a more accurate census:

- **Maximize the Census Bureau’s capacity:** Federal legislators need to fully fund the Census outreach effort, and the administration needs to appoint a qualified and permanent director to lead the agency to provide support for a more accurate census than in 2010.
- **Fund state and local outreach:** State and local governments and community organizations need to invest in educational outreach around the census to ensure that the most vulnerable communities are counted.
- **Expand the pool of trusted messengers:** Broaden the circle of people (from child care providers to members of the clergy) and organizations (from public schools to libraries) who can provide outreach in their communities to reach hard-to-count households and encourage participation among people most likely to be missed.
- **Address the digital divide:** Provide online access for all families to participate in the census, either in local libraries or schools.
- **Address privacy and confidentiality concerns:** Given the growing distrust and fear of online data breaches, it is critical that government officials ensure the protection of respondents’ data.

### Release Information

The *2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available June 27 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). Additional information is available at [www.aecf.org/databook](http://www.aecf.org/databook), which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of indicators of child well-being. Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs and rankings in stories about the *Data Book* can use the KIDS COUNT Data Center at [datacenter.kidscount.org](http://datacenter.kidscount.org).

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### About DC Action for Children

Founded in 1992, DC Action for Children is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization focused on improving conditions and outcomes for the District’s children, youth and families through public awareness, policy,



research and technical assistance. DC Action is the KIDS COUNT grantee for the District, tracking key indicators of child and youth well-being and neighborhood wellbeing for children and youth. Follow us on Twitter at @ActforDChildren and like us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/dcaction>

**About the Annie E. Casey Foundation**

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® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.