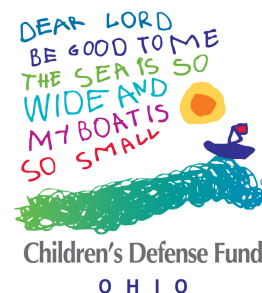


UNDER EMBARGO until Wednesday, June 27, at 12:01 a.m. ET

Ashon McKenzie, Policy Director
614.221.2244
amckenzie@childrensdefense.org

Tracy Nájera, Executive Director
614.221.2244
pkreber@childrensdefense.org



The 2020 Census Could Miss More Than 100,000 Ohio Children

COLUMBUS, Ohio — More than 100,000 of Ohio's youngest children and about 4.5 million children throughout the country live in neighborhoods where there's a high risk that they may go uncoun­ted in the 2020 census, according to the *2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Without an accurate count of children, state and local infrastructures could lose billions of federal dollars for supports of critical programs that give children the opportunity for a healthy start at life like education, school lunches, Head Start, Medicaid, SNAP and CHIP. In 2016, Ohio received more than \$5.4 billion from the federal government for the top 10 federal programs that benefit children. Roughly 300 federal programs use census-derived data to allocate more than \$800 billion a year nationwide.

The undercount of young children has gotten worse with every census since 1980. And the 2010 census, which had a net undercount of about 1 million children under age five nationwide, was the worst undercount since 1950. In Ohio, 106,000 children live in an area the U.S. Census Bureau considers “hard-to-count”—only nine other states have more young children at risk of being uncoun­ted. The risk is especially high for children in Ohio's largest cities: 73 percent of young children in Cleveland are at risk of being missed, 52 percent in Columbus, 46 percent in Cincinnati and 38 percent in Toledo.

“The census count is about more than data, it's about our nation's commitment and investment in our communities. An accurate census is about infants and toddlers all over our state who can't access high-quality pre-K because there's not enough funding to support them, counties that are overburdened by an influx of families in need because of the opioid crisis, families who need our support,” said Tracy Nájera, executive director for the Children's Defense Fund-Ohio.

The census is also an important part of understanding child well-being. The annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* from the Casey Foundation uses 16 indicators to rank each state across four domains — health, education, economic well-being and family and community — as an assessment of child well-being. Ohio ranks 25th overall, with these rankings within each domain:

- **22nd in economic well-being.** Twenty-one percent of Ohio children — 525,000 children — live below the poverty line. That's nearly 100,000 fewer children in poverty than in 2010. Families are finding more affordable housing. In 2010, one in three Ohio families was spending more than 30 percent of income on housing; now, it's one in four families. Only five states have seen more significant improvement since 2010. While Ohio has been making progress in this category, there is still much work to be done.
- **16th in education.** Ohio's numbers in education are largely stagnant by comparison to the previous years. Between 2014 and 2016, 56 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds were not attending school. Sixty-one percent of Ohio fourth-graders are not achieving grade-level reading proficiency; 60 percent of eighth-graders are not achieving grade level proficiency in math; and 17 percent of the state's high school students are not graduating on time. The state needs targeted investments across each age range to prepare students to succeed.

- **31st in the family and community domain.** Teen birth rates are at an all-time low nationwide, and while Ohio is seeing great improvements, at 22 births per 1,000 females ages 15 to 19, the teen birth rate is still above the national average of 20 per 1,000 females age 15 to 19. In addition, 42,000 fewer Ohio children are living in homes where the head of the household lacks a high school diploma than in 2010.
- **23rd in health.** Ohio is on track with the national average with 4 percent of children who lack health insurance. The state's child and teen death rate had a slight uptick to 27 per 1,000 in 2016 from 26 per 1,000 in 2015. And with 4 percent of teens who abused alcohol or drugs in 2015-16, Ohio is a part of a 22-way tie for first place in this category, beating the national average of 5 percent.

The *2018 Data Book* shows how crucial census data is for measuring progress and improving public policy to meet the needs of Ohio's children. A major census undercount will stunt Ohio's progress in education and health, resulting in overcrowded classrooms, shuttered Head Start programs, understaffed hospital emergency rooms, and an increase in the number of children without health insurance.

The risks extend beyond Ohio's cities. The 2020 census will rely heavily on technology — calling for most families to respond to the survey online. However, many people in the state's rural and Appalachian regions lack broadband access, placing many of the state's children and families at risk of losing their share of funding and political representation.

“Children who are out of sight will also be out of mind, not only for federal funding but also for representation locally and nationally. Ohio is in danger of losing a seat in Congress. A fair and accurate census count may be the state's only hope to maintain its level of political influence,” said Ashon McKenzie, policy director for the Children's Defense Fund-Ohio.

While the 2020 census effort has gotten off to a rocky start, congressional leaders are still able to allocate appropriate funding to the U.S. Census Bureau for this stage of preparation. State and local governments should play a central role in the census as well, allocating sufficient funds, conducting outreach and promoting the widest possible participation to ensure that the census is carried out as effectively as possible.

“We're calling on our state and local leaders and community stakeholders to establish and strengthen strategic partnerships with various public agencies, early childhood programs, health care professionals, religious and civic organizations and business and other community stakeholders to reach hard-to-count households to bridge the digital divide and increase participation in the first electronic census,” says Nájera. “Our children and our communities can't afford a decade of loss.”

Release Information

The *2018 KIDS COUNT*[®] *Data Book* will be available June 27 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at 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.

About the Children's Defense Fund-Ohio

The Children's Defense Fund's mission is to ensure every child receives a *Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start* in life and makes a successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

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. KIDS COUNT[®] is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.