



EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE UNTIL:

June 17, 2019 at 12:01 a.m. EDT

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Colorado's Population Boom Driven by Growth in Children

Population of kids in Colorado has grown by 43 percent since 1990 and is becoming more racially diverse

DENVER—Colorado saw the sixth-largest increase in child population among states since 1990, according to a national report on child well-being released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Colorado's child population increased by more than 43 percent since the first edition of the *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* was released in 1990. Today, there are 1.26 million Coloradans under age 18.

Colorado ranks 20th in overall child well-being nationally. The state's strong economy compensates for stagnation in other areas, including certain health indicators and academic achievement.

The *2019 KIDS COUNT Data Book* — the most comprehensive annual report on child well-being in the United States — notes measurable progress since the first *Data Book* was published three decades ago. Nevertheless, more than 13 million U.S. children live in poverty and serious racial and ethnic disparities persist.

Colorado children have become more racially and economically diverse since 1990. The percentage of Hispanic/Latino children in our state has increased substantially — from 18 percent in 1990 to 31 percent in 2017. Children of color (those who identify as American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, black, and Hispanic/Latino) make up about 41 percent of the child population as of 2017.

"Children of color face many more barriers to health, education and economic security than their white peers due to historical and current policies and practices that limit opportunity based on race and ethnicity," said Kelly Causey, president and CEO of the Colorado Children's Campaign. "Unless we remove these barriers, not only will we hold our children of color back from meeting their full potential, Colorado's economic and social indicators will worsen as this generation moves into adulthood without every opportunity they need to succeed."

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* shows how essential accurate data are to sound policymaking. The last national census undercounted Colorado children under 5 by 18,000. The upcoming count may miss even more if states fail to prioritize reaching families with young children in the census. The stakes are high: 55 major federal programs, including Head Start and the Children's Health Insurance Program, allocate more than \$880 billion each year based on census data.

"Coloradans must commit to ensuring every kid counts in the 2020 Census, or more than 62,000 of our young children are at risk of being left out," Causey said. "They live in communities that are traditionally hard to

count. But we know that with the right outreach we can get it done — and ensure they see their share of federal and state resources during the next decade.”

The annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* from the Annie E. 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. Colorado ranks:

12th in Economic Well-Being

- Colorado earned a high ranking in the economic well-being domain due to low percentages of children living in poverty relative to other states (12 percent, or 149,000 children). The state has fewer children living in families in which both parents lack secure employment than the national average.
- However, poverty does not impact all of Colorado’s children equitably: Hispanic/Latino children, black children, and children of two or more races account for more than half of the state’s children living in poverty, a disproportionate share given their population size.
- Close to a third of Colorado children still live in households with high housing cost burdens, where families spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

19th in Education

- Colorado ranked in the top half of states in education due to fourth-grade reading scores that were better than the national average (60 percent of fourth-graders below proficient in reading), eighth-grade math scores (62 percent below proficient) and a relatively low percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds not in school (50 percent). However, the share of fourth- and eighth-graders scoring below proficient in those subjects is far too high, even if it is lower than other states. Progress in this area has been stagnant since 2009 and Colorado has not been able to increase the percentage of kids in these grades who perform on grade level.
- In 2017, 21 percent of Colorado’s high school students did not graduate on time, earning the state a rank of 44th on this indicator. While the percentage of young people failing to graduate on time has fallen in the last few years, indicating improvement, Colorado has not kept up with the progress of other states.
- On-time graduation rates for all Colorado’s young people have improved since 2010 — most significantly among Native American, Hispanic/Latino and black students. However, wide gaps in on-time graduation rates continue among young people of color and their white peers.

17th in Family and Community

- Compared to the rest of the nation, Colorado has continued to see lower shares of children living in single-parent families (28 percent, or 338,000 children), as well as children living in high-poverty census tracts (5 percent, or 59,000 children).
- Colorado’s teen birth rate has also fallen consistently since 2010, hitting a low of 16 births per 1,000 females aged 15 to 19 in 2017. Since 1990, Colorado’s teen birth rate has plummeted more than 70 percent.

41st in Health

- Colorado received one of the lowest ranks among states in child health, despite its reputation as a healthy place to live for adults. There is a higher than average share of teens who abuse alcohol and drugs (6 percent, or 24,000 teens), a higher percentage of babies born at low birth weights (9.1 percent, or 5,848 babies) and we see a higher than average child and teen death rate (28 per 1000 children teens)
- Colorado has made significant progress in providing children with health insurance during the past few decades, but 4 percent of our children remain uninsured (57,000 children).

The *2019 KIDS COUNT Data Book* is the 30th edition of an annual data study that is based on U.S. census and other publicly available data, representing all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

Release Information

The *2019 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available June 17 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at www.aecf.org/databook. 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.

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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.*

*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.*