

UNDER EMBARGO Until Monday, June 17 at 12:01 a.m. ET

Contact: [Whitney Tucker](#), NC Child Research Director 919.726.6540

North Carolina Adds over 676,000 Kids Since 1990, Sees Mixed Progress on Health, Poverty, Education

30th KIDS COUNT® Data Book provides the most comprehensive annual report on child well-being in the United States

RALEIGH— North Carolina is now home to 2.3 million children, part of the rapid growth in the Southeast region. With this boom in the youth population, greater investments must be made to programs that promote children's health and development, school success, and family financial stability — such as expanding access to early childhood education.

A significantly higher percentage of three- and four-year-olds are enrolled in school now than in 1990, but progress has stalled in recent years with a lack of investment. The percentage of North Carolina's 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in some form of school dropped in 2017, after two decades of significant improvement, according to the 30th edition of the *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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*, which was published in 1990. Nevertheless, close to half a million North Carolina children now live in poverty, and serious racial and ethnic disparities persist. Black and Latinx children in North Carolina are more likely to live in areas of concentrated poverty, and in families that spend more than 30 percent of their monthly income on housing.

“We truly can equip all kids to succeed in school and beyond,” said Michelle Hughes, executive director of NC Child. “But to make that vision a reality, we need to tackle the racial and ethnic disparities head on, and dismantle the obstacles that children of color encounter on the road to adulthood.”

The fastest-growing population of young children in North Carolina is Latinx children, who now make up 16 percent of North Carolina's child population. They are the same population most at risk of being missed in the 2020 census, according to a recent report by NC Child.

The *Data Book* shows how essential accurate data are to sound policymaking. The 2010 census missed 25,000 young children in North Carolina, and the upcoming count may miss even more if young children are not a priority. The stakes are high: 55 major federal programs, including Head Start and the Children's Health Insurance Program, allocate more than \$16 billion to North Carolina each year based on census data.

“America's children are one-quarter of our population and 100 percent of our future,” said Casey Foundation President and CEO Lisa Hamilton. “All of the 74 million kids in our increasingly diverse

country have unlimited potential, and we have the data, knowledge and evidence to create the policies that will help them realize it. It's incumbent on us to do just that."

The Casey Foundation and NC Child point to areas of tremendous improvement in children's lives — including access to health care, decreased rates of teen childbearing and increased rates of high school graduation — and draw a direct line to policies that support this success.

Especially as the child population is expanding, there are steps that policymakers should take to help all children thrive. The Casey Foundation calls on elected officials and representatives to:

- *Expand the programs that make and keep kids healthy.* For the sake of all children, regardless of their immigration status, states should close the "coverage gap." Parents, and people who will become parents, need access to quality, affordable health coverage in order to have healthy babies and care for their children. Parents' health coverage also supports family stability and financial health.
- *Provide the tools proven to help families lift themselves up economically.* Federal and state earned income tax credits (EITC) and child tax credit programs mean working parents can use more of their take-home pay to meet their children's needs.
- *Address ethnic and racial inequities.* The national averages of child well-being can mask the reality that black and brown children still face a greater number of obstacles.
- *Count all kids.* Ensure the 2020 census counts all children, especially those under 5 years old and from hard-to-count areas.

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.

About NC Child

NC Child builds a strong North Carolina by advancing public policies to ensure all children — regardless of race, ethnicity, or place of birth — have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. Visit <http://www.ncchild.org> for more information.

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.

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