



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

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Wyoming Ranks Among Top 10 States for Family and Community Indicators, Nearly Last for Children's Health

2019 KIDS COUNT® Data Book takes comprehensive look at children in Wyoming and across the United States

LARAMIE, Wyoming — An estimated 10 percent (14,000 total) of Wyoming's kids, double the national average, do not have health insurance according to the *2019 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The *Data Book* assesses child well-being using 16 measures that represent the domains of health, education, economic well-being and family well-being and community. The 2019 *Data Book* report found that Wyoming's child health system was weak when compared with the rest of the nation, ranking 49th out of 50 states.

While these findings were disappointing, the *Data Book* also found that Wyoming ranks ninth in the nation in the family and community domain, with only 10 percent of children living in households where the head of the household lacked a high school diploma (second best in the nation) and 663 children living in high-poverty areas (best in the nation). The *Data Book* also notes that teen births in Wyoming have declined by 55 percent since 1990, when the first *Data Book* was published.

The *2019 KIDS COUNT Data Book* is the 30th edition of an annual data study, which presents an interesting look at where Wyoming and the nation are today versus three decades ago. The *Data Book* is also a critical example of why an accurate census count in our state is so important.

"These data offer us visible evidence of the impact of policy decisions in our state over the past three decades," said Samin Dadelahi, Chief Operating Officer for the Wyoming Community Foundation.

The annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* provides data on 16 indicators, drawing from the census and other sources, and reports on it consistently for all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

Aside from the health domain, Dadelahi points out that when looking at how things have changed in Wyoming over the last three decades, Wyoming children and families are doing better in almost every area.

“When dealing with big social issues it can sometimes feel like the needle is not moving,” Dadelahi said. “But looking at things through the lens of time proves otherwise. In the 2019 *Data Book*, we can really see that Wyoming has made some impressive gains.”

For example, in 1990, 81 percent of eighth graders scored below proficient in math. By 2017 that figure had moved to 62 percent, proving that incremental gains over time add up. “As we prepare for the legislative budget session in 2020, this is exactly the kind of information Wyoming policymakers need to consider,” Dadelahi said.

Overall, Wyoming ranked 21st in the nation for child well-being. Across the four specific domains, Wyoming ranked:

- **14th in economic well-being.** Wyoming has seen the number of children living in poverty increase from 15,000 in 2016 to 18,000 in 2017, the most recent year of data available. Wyoming also saw a rise in the number of children in households spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing, dropping three places in this year’s national rankings on this indicator.
- **14th in education.** Wyoming saw its ranking improve from 25th in 2018, to 14th this year. From 2016 to 2017, the percentage of students not graduating on time dropped from 20 percent to 14 percent. While seeing improvements in some areas of education, Wyoming has shown no improvement in rate of preschool enrollment since 2010, with 9,000 3- and 4-year-olds not attending preschool in 2017 (38th in the nation).
- **Ninth in the family and community domain.** Wyoming dropped two spots in the rankings from last year (seventh) to this year (ninth). Just 5 percent of children lived in families where the household head lacked a high school diploma, which was below the national average of 13 percent, and 28 percent of children lived in single-parent families.
- **49th in health.** Wyoming’s low health ranking continues to be due primarily to two indicators: one of the lowest rates of child health insurance enrollment in the country and high rates of drug and alcohol use by children. The number of Wyoming children without health insurance (14,000) is staggering when compared to other states that have expanded Medicaid, and Wyoming is one of the only states with declining enrollment in Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program. Until Wyoming changes course, the numbers of uninsured children will remain high. However, the state did see an improvement in the percentage of teens who abused alcohol or drugs in the past year – 5 percent (2017) versus 6 percent (2016).

Accurate data collection is the foundation of the research and analysis behind creating good policies that lead to improved child well-being.

“The national *Data Book* uses data derived from the census to create state rankings, and those rankings get people talking,” Dadelahi said. “Wyoming is understandably worried to be 49th in health, and we hope all of us take a hard look at what needs to happen to better support all of our children.”

Dadelahi encourages people to talk to their local leaders and legislators about what is needed to create positive changes for youth in Wyoming, starting with the best way of ensuring an accurate census count. To receive your own copy of the *Data Book*, go to www.aecf.org/databook or contact the Wyoming Community Foundation for a hard copy.

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, 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.

The Wyoming Community Foundation

The Wyoming Community Foundation (WYCF) supports charitable causes across the state by connecting donors to causes most important to them. WYCF granted over \$8 million in 2018. As the KIDS COUNT partner of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, WYCF shares research and data valuable to Wyoming's families and kids.

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.

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