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The Annie E. Casey Foundation



State Profiles of Child Well-Being

2000

KIDS COUNT DATA BOOK PRESS KIT

Embargoed until June 20th 2000



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June 20, 2000

Mr. David Beier
Chief Domestic Policy Advisor to the Vice President
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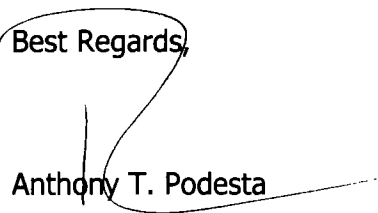
Dear David,

Despite our booming economy, too many American children grow up in families that are isolated from critical supports and services. The enclosed 2000 KIDS COUNT Data Book, for which we coordinate public awareness, reports that connecting these families and children to social and community resources is crucial if they are to benefit from the global 21st century economy.

To break the cycle of isolation and disadvantage, we need multi-dimensional approaches that connect families to their neighborhoods and communities and economic opportunities. Children succeed when their families are strong, and families get strong when they live in nurturing neighborhoods.

I hope you'll find the data and recommendations contained in this report useful.

Best Regards,



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KIDS COUNT, a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, is a national and state-by-state effort to track the status of children in the United States. By providing policymakers and citizens with benchmarks of child well-being, KIDS COUNT seeks to enrich local, state, and national discussions concerning ways to secure better futures for all children. At the national level, the principal activity of the initiative is the publication of the annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, which uses the best available data to measure the educational, social, economic, and physical well-being of children. The Foundation also funds a nationwide network of state-level KIDS COUNT projects that provide a more detailed community-by-community picture of the condition of children.

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news

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New Economy's Forgotten Families Still Striving to Bridge the 'Connections Divide'

10th annual KIDS COUNT report highlights economic, geographic, and social isolation

WASHINGTON – While the U.S. economy prospers and the Internet links citizens around the world, too many American children still grow up in families that are struggling in the shadows, unaffected by falling unemployment rates, rising household incomes, and expanding opportunities.

Moreover, the nation's poorest families are profoundly separated from connections to the critical supports -- from computers, cars, and telephones to banks, recreational facilities, and strong schools -- that more affluent families take for granted.

The latest findings are published in the Annie E. Casey Foundation's *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, which for 10 years has tracked child well-being state-by-state.

These intensely isolated families lack some of the most basic connections, which hinders their ability to participate fully in the global 21st century economy. Almost 20 percent of households in low-income urban areas do not have a telephone at home, and 50 percent do not even have a car. A full 84 percent of the households do not have a home computer, for example.

"At a time when media experts, economists, and social observers stress that the future belongs to those on the Internet and those who can compete in a global economy, many inner-city families don't have cars to get to work, phones to remain linked with family and neighbors, or computers that would allow them to navigate the information superhighway," said Douglas W. Nelson, president of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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Most disconnected and poor children live in low-income urban neighborhoods and in isolated rural areas, the KIDS COUNT report found. But the data also showed that the plight of children cannot be measured by household income alone, but rather by the myriad of social and community factors that influence a family's chances for success. The report asserts that these conditions actually constitute a more practical perspective on the impact of poverty in today's America.

According to the KIDS COUNT analysis, many families in these areas have been touched only marginally, if at all, by the economic boom of the past decade. The study notes that the communities where they live have been severed from employment and commercial opportunities and stripped of strong social networks and community institutions that help families thrive.

The survey found that although overall poverty rates declined slightly during the 1990s, the percentage of children living in poor families still encompasses about one-fifth of all kids.

Compounding matters is the lack of nearby low-cost shopping for goods and services, public transportation, and health care facilities. Even for those who do find work, earnings are often insufficient to support a family, as evidenced by the fact that since 1990, the number of children in "working-poor" families has increased by nearly one-third.

Low-paying jobs and lack of access to viable financial institutions make it difficult for many families to save money, accumulate modest assets, establish reliable credit, or qualify for auto loans and mortgages. While the number of bank branches per capita declined between 1985 and 1995, two-thirds of the closures were in low- and moderate-income communities. In many low-income communities, unregulated check cashing outlets often charge exorbitant rates for routine transactions. One result of these trends is that home ownership rates in central cities are about one-third lower than those in suburban areas.

"Low-income families in urban areas also suffer from the decline of social organizations, including block associations, PTAs, and faith institutions that historically have provided formal and informal networks of support," Nelson said. "In very poor neighborhoods, where there are fewer parks, playgrounds, libraries, or museums, it is easier for a kid to become a gang member than to become a shortstop or a Scout."

Disconnected low-income communities also lack quality schools, health care facilities, and child-care providers that contribute to family success. Many families in these areas live day-to-day with poorly performing social services and high crime rates, encountering law enforcement, child welfare, and other government officials who they often do not trust.

"At the Annie E. Casey Foundation, we now believe strongly that the framework of family *connections* is a powerful tool for understanding and addressing the disadvantages that confront children in America," said Nelson. "We think that this framework can promote a more informed and more action-oriented response to the real barriers that families face when they try to raise healthy, happy, and successful kids in poor, troubled, and isolated neighborhoods."

-more-



In addition to highlighting the value and significance of family connections, the *KIDS COUNT Data Book* updates the Casey Foundation's annual comprehensive state-by-state statistical assessment of the well-being of the nation's children. [For a more complete summary of these indicators, with background information for each state, including demographic, economic, and health data, see the enclosed National Fact Sheet, or use the online database available at www.kidscount.org].

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children and families in the United States. In addition to the *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, the Casey Foundation also funds a nationwide network of state-level KIDS COUNT projects that provide more detailed community-by-community data on the condition of children.

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Access the complete 2000 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* online
at www.aecf.org/kidscount/kc2000/
beginning June 12.

(username: press -- password: connect)

This online version of the *Data Book* also is embargoed until June 20.

The Casey Foundation will host a national policy briefing
on June 20 in Washington, DC to explore the 'connections
divide.'

FOLLOW IT LIVE ON THE INTERNET
at www.kidscount.org
from 9:30 am to 2:00 pm EST.



FOR RELEASE
June 20, 2000

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National Fact Sheet

The *2000 KIDS COUNT Data Book*, a state-by-state report on the conditions facing America's children, finds that between 1990 and 1997, the well-being of the nation's children deteriorated in three areas, improved in six and remained unchanged in one. The best/worst listings that follow each indicator are based on 1997 data. While KIDS COUNT reports data for the District of Columbia, the district is not included in the best/worst rankings because it is unique.

Low-birthweight rate moves in wrong direction

The share of babies born with a low birthweight climbed 7 percent between 1990 and 1997. In 1997, 7.5 percent of babies were born with a birthweight of less than 5.5 pounds, up from 7.0 percent in 1990. All states deteriorated on this measure, while the District of Columbia improved. *Best: Oregon and South Dakota, Worst: Louisiana*

National infant mortality rate dramatically improves

Between 1990 and 1997 the rate of infants who died before their first birthdays declined by 22 percent nationwide. In 1990, 9.2 deaths occurred per 1,000 live births, compared to 7.2 deaths in 1997. Every state and the District of Columbia witnessed a decline rate. *Best: New Hampshire, Worst: Mississippi*

Child death rate steadily decreases

The national child death rate decreased by 19 percent between 1990 and 1997. The rate of deaths per 100,000 children age 1-14 fell from 31 to 25 during this time period. Only seven states experienced an increased rate. *Best: Massachusetts and Rhode Island, Worst: Alaska*

Teen death rate falls substantially

The national rate of teen deaths by accident, homicide, and suicide fell by 18 percent between 1990 and 1997. The rate decreased from 71 deaths per 100,000 teenagers (15-19 years old) to 58 between 1990 and 1997. Forty-two states experienced a decline. *Best: Vermont, Worst: Arkansas and Mississippi*

Teen birth rate improves nationwide

The teen birth rate decreased by 14 percent nationwide between 1990 and 1997. For every 1,000 females age 15-17, 32 babies were born in 1997, down from 37 babies in

1990. This rate decreased in 49 states and the District of Columbia. *Best: Vermont, Worst: Mississippi*

High school drop out rate remains unchanged

The percent of teens age 16-19 that dropped out of high school nationwide remained at 10 percent between 1990 and 1997. *Best: Wisconsin, Worst: Nevada*

Rate of idle teens improves

Between 1990 and 1997 the share of teens age 16-19 not attending school and not working fell by 10 percent. In 1997, 9 percent of teens were neither attending school or working, compared to 10 percent in 1990. The percent of idle teens increased in only six states and the District of Columbia over this period. *Best: Minnesota, North Dakota and Wisconsin, Worst: New Mexico*

Percent of children living with underemployed parents decreases

The percent of children living with parents who did not have full-time, year-round employment decreased by 10 percent between 1990 and 1997. In 1997, 27 percent of children lived with underemployed parents, compared to 30 percent in 1990. *Best: Nebraska, Worst: West Virginia*

Child poverty rate deteriorates

The national child poverty rate worsened slightly between 1990 and 1997, increasing by 5 percent. In 1997, 21 percent of the nation's children were impoverished, up from 20 percent in 1990. *Best: New Hampshire, Worst: Louisiana, Mississippi and West Virginia*

Percent of families headed by a single parent increases

The percent of families headed by a single parent rose by 13 percent between 1990 and 1997. In 1997, a single parent headed 27 percent of families with children, up from 24 percent in 1990. All but five states witnessed an increase. *Best: Utah, Worst: Louisiana*



Changes in National Indicators 1990-1997

	Percent Change 1990-1997		Trend Data		Number of States That Are		
	WORSE	BETTER	1990	1997	Worse	Unchanged	Better
Percent low-birthweight babies	7		7.0	7.5	50	0	0
Infant mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births)		22	9.2	7.2	0	0	50
Child death rate (deaths per 100,000 children ages 1-14)		19	31	25	7	2	41
Rate of teen deaths by accident, homicide, and suicide (deaths per 100,000 teens ages 15-19)		18	71	58	5	3	42
Teen birth rate (births per 1,000 females ages 15-17)		14	37	32	0	1	49
Percent of teens who are high school dropouts (ages 16-19)		0	10	10	14	13	23
Percent of teens not attending school and not working (ages 16-19)		10	10	9	6	10	34
Percent of children living with parents who do not have full-time, year-round employment		10	30	27	15	6	29
Percent of children in poverty (data reflect poverty in the previous year)	5		20	21	22	8	20
Percent of families with children headed by a single parent	13		24	27	45	1	4

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THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. It was established in 1948 by Jim Casey, one of the founders of United Parcel Service, and his siblings, who named the Foundation in honor of their mother. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and communities fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs.



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