



**RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT**

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**National *KIDS COUNT Data Book* on the status of American children released**

**26th edition highlights national improvements in family and community, health, education, and economic-wellbeing**

**Rhode Island ranks 31<sup>st</sup> in the nation for overall child well-being due to declines in economic well-being**

Providence, RI (July 21, 2015) – The 26<sup>th</sup> annual national *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, a state-by-state report on children’s well-being issued by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, finds that Rhode Island ranks 31<sup>st</sup> in the nation for overall child well-being (1<sup>st</sup> is best and 50<sup>th</sup> is worst). Rhode Island ranked last in New England, well below New Hampshire (2), Massachusetts (3), Vermont (5), Connecticut (6), and Maine (12).

The 2015 *Data Book*, which focuses on key trends in child well-being in the post-recession years, measures child well-being in four domains: economic well-being, education, health, and family and community. Today, the Casey Foundation reveals that the rising tide of recovery in the form of increasing employment and concentrated wealth has left stagnant pockets of low-income, struggling communities and families, where a child’s future is anchored in scarcity and hardship.

About 1.7 million more U.S. children live in low-income working families today than during the Great Recession, according to the 2015 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* from the Annie. E. Casey Foundation. In 2013, one in four children, 18.7 million, lived in a low-income working family in the United States. Nearly a third of children are living in families where no parent has full-time employment. And even when parents are working full time, wages and benefits are often not sufficient to adequately support a family.

“With almost half of the nation’s children living in low-income households, all sectors in our nation must work to ensure that the economic recovery reaches all families, especially those who are losing ground in our recent prosperity,” said Patrick McCarthy, president and CEO of the Casey Foundation. “Even though we’ve seen an increase in employment in recent years, many of these jobs are low-wage and cannot support even basic family expenses. The outcome is that millions of families are still struggling to provide for the day-to-day needs of their children.”

“This report shows how Rhode Island compares to other states on key measures of child well-being. We are doing well in some areas such as fewer low birthweight babies and births to teens, and we have work to do in other key areas, including parental education levels and secure parental employment, which are related to our high rate of childhood poverty,” said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of [Rhode Island KIDS COUNT](#).

### **Rhode Island’s national rankings for child wellbeing**

- Rhode Island ranks 31<sup>st</sup> among states, down from a ranking of 26<sup>th</sup> for the past two consecutive years.
- Rhode Island was among the six states with the biggest drops in overall rankings (along with West Virginia, Indiana, Virginia, Arkansas, and Vermont).
- State rankings are based on an index of 16 indicators in four key areas.

*Health:* Rhode Island ranks 12th (an increase from 15th in 2014)

*Education:* Rhode Island ranks 24th (an increase from 25<sup>th</sup> in 2014)

*Family and Community:* Rhode Island ranks 33<sup>rd</sup> (a decrease from 32<sup>nd</sup> in 2014)

*Economic Well-Being:* Rhode Island ranks 36th (a decrease from 26th in 2014, and the key area in which Rhode Island showed the largest decline)

### **Selected indicators of child well-being in Rhode Island**

#### **Improvements**

##### ***Rhode Island improved on percentage of babies born with low birthweight (Health)***

In Rhode Island in 2013, 6.9% of babies were born with low birthweight (less than 5 lbs, 8 oz.), an improvement from 8.0% of births in 2012.

##### ***Rhode Island continues to have low rates of uninsured children (Health)***

In Rhode Island in 2013, 5% of children did not have health insurance, the same as last year, and down from 6% without health insurance in 2008. Rhode Island is ranked 13th best in the nation for this indicator.

##### ***Rhode Island’s teen birth rate continues to fall (Family and Community)***

Following national trends, in 2013, the teen birth rate was 18 births per 1,000 teen girls in Rhode Island, down from 20 per 1,000 the previous year.

#### **Challenges**

##### ***Increase in child poverty (Economic Well-Being)***

In 2013, 22% of Rhode Island children lived in poverty, up from 19% in 2012 and up from 15% in 2008, at the start of the recession.

***Increase in children living in families without secure parental employment (Economic Well-Being)***

In 2013, 34% of children in Rhode Island were living in families where no parent had full-time, year-round employment; an increase from 33% the previous year and 30% of in 2008. Rhode Island is ranked 38<sup>th</sup> in the nation for this indicator.

***Increase in the percentage of children living in households with a high housing cost burden (Economic Well-Being)***

In 2013, 43% of Rhode Island children lived in households with a high housing cost burden, up from 40% in 2012, but better than 45% in 2008. Households with a high housing cost burden are defined as those that spend more than 30 percent of their pretax income on housing, whether they are renters or homeowners.

***Increase in the number of children in families without a high school diploma (Family and Community)***

In 2013, 14% of Rhode Island children lived in families where the head of household lacks a high school diploma, up from 13% in 2012.

“Several of the *Data Book* indicators show that the negative economic impacts of the recession continue to be felt among Rhode Island families,” said Bryant. “Rhode Island is on the right path of identifying strategies to connect parents to stable, good-paying jobs, while at the same time increasing access to high-quality education for all children so they will have the education and skills to compete when they are adults.”

**Solutions that provide opportunity for all children**

National and state level policies have proved that investments in health and education can create lasting positive differences for children. The Casey Foundation offers a number of recommendations to make good on the American promise of opportunity for all children. The Foundation promotes a two-generation strategy that simultaneously addresses the needs of children directly while providing tools and resources to their parents. Three critical strategies include:

- Provide parents with multiple pathways to get family-supporting jobs and achieve financial stability.
- Ensure access to high-quality early childhood education and enriching elementary school experiences.
- Equip parents to better support their children socially and emotionally and to advocate for their kids' education.

*The 2015 Data Book* will be available July 21 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). Additional information is available at <http://databook.kidscount.org>, which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of indicators of child well-being. The Data Center allows users to create rankings, maps and graphs for use in publications and on websites, and to view real-time information on mobile devices.

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*Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children's policy organization that works to improve the health, economic well-being, education, safety, and development of Rhode Island's children and youth. It is one of fifty state-level organizations that work in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation to track the social condition of children at the state and local level across the country.*

*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](http://www.aecf.org). KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.*