



# Children's Action Alliance

*A Voice for Arizona's Children since 1988*

## NEWS RELEASE

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**EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE until  
Tuesday, June 26, 2018 9:01p.m.**

## **Economic Recovery Leaves One-Quarter of Arizona Children in Poverty;** *2018 KIDS COUNT Data Book Reveals Major Gaps for in Kids' Educational Success*

PHOENIX — Conditions for Arizona children remain much as they have over the last three years, with drops in the state's rankings in fourth-grade reading success and eighth-grade math proficiency, according to the *2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Each year, the KIDS COUNT analysis evaluates 16 indicators of data in four main areas: education, health, poverty and family and community factors. States are ranked from 1 to 50, with one being the best conditions for kids and 50 being the worst. Arizona ranks 45<sup>th</sup> overall.

Despite the economic recovery and low unemployment rates, a large number of Arizona children are not reaping the benefits of economic opportunity. Twenty-four percent of children live in poverty and 23 percent live in neighborhoods with concentrated poverty, ranking Arizona in the bottom 10 on both measures. The extreme stress, instability, and deprivation associated with childhood poverty can have lifelong consequences for low educational attainment, health problems, and depressed income. Unfortunately, these challenges could be exacerbated if communities of color and rural areas are undercounted in the 2020 Census. Without a full count, communities may receive fewer resources to address public health and poverty issues.

"Our policies have failed to translate overall economic growth into stronger health, education, and security for children in Arizona, especially children of color," said Dana Wolfe Naimark, president and CEO of Children's Action Alliance. "If we continue to leave so many children behind, today's celebrations about our start-up economy will leave us without strong families or a competitive workforce tomorrow."

For the past decade, shrinking resources for Arizona public schools have led to overcrowded classrooms with outdated textbooks and technology, as well as a lack of permanent teachers. The KIDS COUNT data show that children in Arizona remain behind their peers nationwide in key educational benchmarks. For example, Arizona ranks in the bottom 10 states in preschool participation, fourth-grade reading, and high-school graduation. Eighth-grade students in Arizona performed slightly better than the nationwide average in math proficiency, but Arizona's ranking dropped from 18 in the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), to 25 in the 2017 test.

"The top issue in this election year should be the need to invest in our public schools for up-to-date textbooks and technology, student support, and experienced teachers," said Wolfe Naimark. "Voters will expect candidates for the legislature and statewide offices to demonstrate their support for strengthening public education for every child in every zip code."

The *2018 KIDS COUNT Data Book* rankings for Arizona are attached.



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## **Release Information**

The 2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book will be available June 26 at 9:01 p.m. (Arizona time) at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). Additional information is available at [www.aecf.org/databook](http://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](http://datacenter.kidscount.org).

## **About Children's Action Alliance**

[Children's Action Alliance](http://www.aecf.org) is an independent voice for Arizona children at the state capitol and in the community. CAA works to improve children's health, education, and security through information and action.

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

**Reporters may conduct interviews on the data, but may not publish until the embargo is lifted on June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 9:01 pm.**

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## How Are Children Doing in Arizona? 2018 KIDS COUNT Data Book, The Annie E. Casey Foundation

Marker	U.S. Rate	AZ Rate	Previous AZ Rank	New AZ Rank
<b>Overall Rank</b>			<b>46<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>45</b>
Children in households that spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing (2016)	32%	32%	39	37
Children living in poverty (income below \$24,300 for a family of two adults and two children in 2016)	19%	24%	43	43
Children living in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment (2016)	28%	31%	30	38
Teens ages 16 to 19 not attending school and not working (2016)	7%	9%	40	41
4th graders who scored below proficient reading level (2017)	65%	70%	40	43
8th graders who scored below proficient math level (2017)	67%	66%	18	25
Children ages 3 to 4 not attending school (2014-16)	52%	62%	46	45
High school students not graduating on time (2015-16)	16%	21%	43	43
Child and teen death rate (deaths per 100,000 children ages 1 to 19) (2016)	26	28	16	28
Low-birthweight babies (2016)	8.2%	7.3%	17	16
Children without health insurance (2016)	4%	7%	44	44
Teens ages 12 to 17 who abused alcohol or drugs in the past year (2015-16)	5%	6%	N/A <sup>1</sup>	42
Children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma (2016)	14%	17%	46	46
Children in single-parent families (2016)	35%	38%	39	38
Children living in high-poverty areas (census tracts with poverty rates ≥ 30%) (2012-16)	13%	23%	48	49
Teen birth rate (births per 1,000 females ages 15 to 19) (2016)	20	24	33	32

**#1 is the best state for kids and #50 is the worst.**

For some indicators, a higher rate is better, while for others, a lower rate is better.

<sup>1</sup> Due to changes in the methodology calculating the Teens ages 12 to 17 who abused alcohol or drugs in the past year indicator, the overall ranking from the previous year cannot be compared to this year. This means the overall ranking and Health Indicator ranking cannot be compared to different years. The changes are due to methodological changes in the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, which used a different set of respondents in 2015 than in previous years.

Source: 2018 KIDS COUNT Data Book, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Baltimore, Maryland