



SOUTH DAKOTA KIDS COUNT  
BEACOM SCHOOL OF BUSINESS  
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**South Dakota 18<sup>th</sup> in Overall Rankings for Child Well-Being**  
*Health and Family & Community domains improve; Economic declines; Education remains the same for SD Children*

VERMILLION (July 21, 2015) – South Dakota ranked 18<sup>th</sup> nationally in overall child well-being, according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s 2015 *KIDS COUNT*<sup>®</sup> *Data Book*. The *Data Book* is an annual assessment of four key areas of children’s well-being: Economic, Education, Family and Community, and Health. States are ranked on 16 indicators of child well-being (four for each key area) that reflect current research regarding conditions needed for child development.

“Our overall rank of 18<sup>th</sup> is a slight drop from last year,” said Carole Cochran, project director of South Dakota KIDS COUNT at the University of South Dakota’s Beacom School of Business. She notes that conditions improved for South Dakota children in the Health and Family and Community domains. Despite being ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in the nation, two indicators in the Economic domain worsened. The Education domain ranking remained the same, even though all indicators worsened.

**Economic Well-Being (6<sup>th</sup> in the nation)**

- Strengths: South Dakota improved in the percentage of children in households that spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing. Twenty percent of children live in such households, which is a significant improvement from 25 percent in 2008.
- Challenges and Opportunities: The percentage of children in poverty (19 percent), and the percentage of children whose parents lack secure employment (25 percent) increased. The percentage of teens ages 16 to 19 not attending school and not working remained the same at 6 percent.

**Health (20<sup>th</sup> in the nation)**

- Strengths: South Dakota’s greatest improvement was in the Health domain, with its ranking moving from 33 to 20 in the last year. Ranked first in the nation, the percentage of teens who abused alcohol or drugs dropped to 5 percent. The state ranked second in the percentage of low-weight babies at 6.3 percent, which is almost 2 percent lower than the nation. The number of children without health insurance dropped from 8 percent to 6 percent.
- Challenges and Opportunities: Child and teen deaths in South Dakota worsened slightly from 34 to 35 deaths per 100,000, ranking the state 46<sup>th</sup> in the nation.

### **Family and Community (23<sup>rd</sup> in the nation)**

- Strengths: South Dakota improved in two indicators of the Family and Community domain. The percentage of children living in high-poverty areas dropped from 11 percent to 10 percent. Teen births improved significantly from 39 in 2008 to 29 per 1,000.
- Challenges and Opportunities: Seven percent of South Dakota children are in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma. That number remained the same from 2008-2013. The percentage of children in single-parent families is 33 percent, an increase of 3 percentage points since 2008.

### **Education (32<sup>nd</sup> in the nation)**

- Strengths: Even though the indicators in the Education domain worsened, South Dakota remained ranked 32<sup>nd</sup> in the nation.
- Challenges and Opportunities: South Dakota had a high number (65 percent) of children ages 3 to 4 not attending preschool, along with 68 percent of fourth graders who scored below the proficient reading level. The number of eighth graders not proficient in math rose to 62 percent, and high school students not graduating on time increased to 17 percent.

“It is encouraging to see improvement in Health and Family and Community indicators,” said Cochran. “We hope to see progress for Education in the state. An investment in children is an investment in South Dakota’s future economy and workforce.”

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*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.*

*Founded in 1862, the University of South Dakota is designated as the only public liberal arts university in the state and is home to a comprehensive College of Arts and Sciences, School of Education, the state’s only School of Law, School of Medicine, School of Health Sciences, the accredited Beacom School of Business and the College of Fine Arts. USD has an enrollment of more than 10,000 students taught by more than 400 faculty members. <http://www.usd.edu/university-relations>*