



MISSISSIPPI KIDS COUNT

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Mississippi Remains 50th in State Rankings but Marks Improvements in Some Education and Health Indicators

2016 KIDS COUNT Data Book finds youth across the country are healthier and completing high school on time despite facing future limited by economic inequality, unaffordable higher education

STARKVILLE, MISSISSIPPI – The teenagers of Generation Z—the rising cohort born after 1995 that follows the Millennials—broke records in education and health indicators despite growing up in the midst of the economic downturn, according to the 2016 *KIDS COUNT*[®] *Data Book* from the [Annie. E. Casey Foundation](#).

In Mississippi, between approximately 2007 and 2014, teen birth rates decreased 41 percent, teen drug and alcohol abuse decreased by 17 percent and the percentage of teens not graduating on time dropped 11 percent. Nationally, teen birth rates fell 40 percent, the percentage of teens abusing drug and alcohol dropped 38 percent and the percent of teens not graduating on time decreased by 28 percent.

In Mississippi, 29 percent of children lived below the poverty line in 2014, down from 30 percent in 2008. 36 percent of Mississippi children lived in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment in 2014, compared to 35 percent in 2008. From 2008 to 2014, the percentage of Mississippi children living in high-poverty areas increased from 23 percent to 27 percent.

“The evidence is clear—states that consistently invest in children’s health and education while providing economic opportunities for their families and communities can promote a common good, which makes a positive difference in the well-being of their children,” noted Linda Southward, director of Mississippi’s KIDS COUNT. “An important question to answer is whether Mississippi is willing to make the investments to improve our children’s outcomes.”

The percent of children without health insurance in Mississippi decreased from 13 percent in 2008 to 5 percent in 2014, marking a 62 percent change during that time period. Nationally, the percentage of children without health insurance has decreased by 40 percent since 2008, with some states recording decreases of more than 60 percent.

Since 2008, teen drug and alcohol abuse has declined by double digits in every state except Louisiana and the District of Columbia. The teen birth rate fell by more than 20 percent since 2008 in all but one state, North Dakota, where it fell by 14 percent. Child and teen death rates fell in all states except two, Utah and West Virginia, with a 9 percent drop in Mississippi.

The 2016 *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. For the second year in a row, a non-New England state ranks number one for overall child well-being. Minnesota holds the top spot, followed by Massachusetts, Iowa, New Hampshire and Connecticut. Mississippi remains the lowest ranked, with New Mexico, Louisiana, Nevada and Alabama rounding out the bottom five. Among indicators specific to Mississippi:

- 74 percent of Mississippi 4th graders scored below proficient in reading scores in 2015 compared to 81 percent in 2007.
- Similarly, 78 percent of Mississippi 8th graders scored below proficient in math (2015) compared to 86 percent in 2007.
- 10 percent of Mississippi teens, (ages 16 to 19) were not working and attending school in 2014 compared to 9 percent in 2008.
- 51 percent of Mississippi children (ages 3 and 4) were not attending a pre-kindergarten program in 2012-2014 compared to 48 percent in 2007-2009.
- 14 percent of Mississippi children lived in families where the head of household lacks a high school diploma (2014) compared to 17 percent in 2008.

“This generation of teenagers and young adults are coming of age in the wake of the worst economic climate in nearly 80 years, and yet they are achieving key milestones that are critical for future success,” said Patrick McCarthy, president and CEO of the Casey Foundation. “With more young people making smarter decisions, we must fulfill our part of the bargain, by providing them with the educational and economic opportunity that youth deserve. We urge candidates in state and national campaigns to describe in depth their proposals to help these determined young people realize their full potential.”

The 2016 *Data Book* will be available June 21 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at <http://datacenter.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.

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.

Mississippi KIDS COUNT is part of the national KIDS COUNT network of state-based organizations supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. For more information, visit www.kidscount.ssrc.msstate.edu.