



***UNDER EMBARGO until Tuesday June 21, 2016, 12:01 a.m. EDT***

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**More than 700,000 children and youth live in high-poverty areas in Puerto Rico**

*Teen birth rates have dropped by almost 30 percent according to 2016 KIDS COUNT Data Book*

**SAN JUAN, P.R.** June 21, 2016 – According to a new report on child well-being, children and youth in Puerto Rico continue to live in families facing enormous economic challenges. 84 percent of Puerto Rican children reside in areas of extreme poverty and the parents of more than half do not have full-time, year-round employment. These and 14 other indicators of child well-being are revealed in the 2016 *KIDS COUNT*<sup>®</sup> *Data Book* from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which is represented in Puerto Rico by the Youth Development Institute, a KIDS COUNT network partner.

"Traditionally we talk about the percentage of our children and youth who are living below the poverty line. In Puerto Rico, that is 58 percent of our kids," said Gloriann Sacha Antonetty, communications director of the Youth Development Institute (YDI). "That number is not acceptable and even less so is the fact that 702,000 children live in high-poverty areas. This is urgent and distressing. We have to approach this problem with concrete actions."

"The indicator relating to children under 18 who live in areas of extreme poverty refers to Census blocks where 30 percent or more of the population live below the poverty line. This statistic gives us insight into the effects of poverty and how it impacts upon the development of children beyond their immediate family," added Caridad Arroyo, YDI Statistics Leader.

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* reveals trends in child well-being in all states and jurisdictions of the United States in four categories: economic well-being, education, health and family and community.

The most significant results for Puerto Rico are:

- The percentage of children living in high cost housing: 33 percent
- The percentage of kids in single-parent families: 59 percent
- Teens ages 16 to 19 not attending school and not working: 15 percent
- Children ages 3 and 4 not attending school: 40 percent
- Deaths among children and teens (per 100,000): 23
- Births to teen mothers (per 1,000 girls ages 15 to 19): 40
- Percentage of low-birthweight babies: 10.8 percent

Overall, 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. Comparing national data to the recession-era, it can be seen that the rate of teen births has fallen by 40 percent, the percentage of teens abusing drugs and alcohol has dropped by 38 percent and the percentage of high schoolers not graduating on time decreased by 28 percent.

"Looking into this election period, candidates must propose solutions and public policies that benefit our youth and their families. We live in times of economic instability where the most affected by socio-economic deterioration are children. The population we serve faces conditions that limit their opportunities for development," added Antonetty.

### **Solutions that could benefit children and youth**

The Casey Foundation offers a number of recommendations based on shared values of opportunity, responsibility and security.

- **OPPORTUNITY:** Increase opportunity by expanding access to high-quality Pre-K and early childhood services so that all children are prepared to succeed in school. In addition, expand access to higher education and training so that every low-income child has a fair chance to develop his or her potential.
- **RESPONSIBILITY:** Increase the Earned Income Tax Credit for low-income workers who do not have dependent children. This strategy will bolster workers, who may in fact be helping to support children who do not live with them and who are struggling to get by on low wages.
- **SECURITY:** Policies can ensure American families have a measure of security, particularly low-income parents of young children, by providing paid family leave that helps them balance their obligations at home and in the workplace.

*The 2016 Data Book* will be available June 21 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at [www.aecf.org](http://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. In addition to the data contained in the *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, the YDI provides access to more than 140 indicators of the living conditions of Puerto Rican children and youth, including the well-being indexes for every municipality. For more information, visit [www.juventudpr.org](http://www.juventudpr.org).

#### **About the Youth Development Institute (YDI)**

*The Youth Development Institute (YDI) is a nonprofit organization that researches, educates, identifies and creates opportunities for people who work with youth from a systemic perspective. The YDI wants to remove to children and young people from invisibility by presenting data, research and statistics about their situation. The long-term goal is to make the Puerto Rican society put the issue of children and youth development as one of its three priorities. The YDI program areas are mobilization, research, training and public policy. For more information, visit our website [www.juventudpr.org](http://www.juventudpr.org), call 787-728-3939 or through social networking at [www.facebook.com/idj.pr](https://www.facebook.com/idj.pr) and / or [www.twitter.com / idj\\_pr](https://www.twitter.com/idj_pr) or using the "hashtag" #JuventudPrimer*

#### **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. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. For more information, visit [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org).*