



UNDER EMBARGO until Wednesday, June 27 at 12:01 a.m. ET
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Kids Won't Count if We Don't Count Kids: 2020 Census Undercount Threatens Child Well-Being

2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book ranks Wisconsin #12th nationally and calls for action to ensure an accurate census count

MADISON, WI – The health and well-being of Wisconsin's children is in jeopardy due to the likely undercount of children under age 5 in the 2020 census. The undercount will put hundreds of millions of dollars of federal funding at risk—including funding that is critical to the stability and success of thousands of children and families in the state.

Underfunding, poor management at the Census Bureau, and new methods of collecting data are likely to lead to an inaccurate 2020 census count. The alarming consequences of an undercount are highlighted in the *2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. For nearly 30 years, the *Data Book* has provided an annual, comprehensive look at the well-being of children in Wisconsin and across the nation.

Accurate data are the foundation of the *Data Book*; data from the census specifically are also the foundation in helping create, fund, and measure outcomes of policies and programs. Roughly 300 federal programs used census-derived data to allocate \$800 billion. In fiscal year 2015, Wisconsin received more than \$9.1 billion from 16 large federal programs that distribute money based on census statistics. Many of these programs go to support children, families, and communities.

"All people, including children, have a right to be counted and represented in our democracy," said Ken Taylor, executive director of Kids Forward. "An accurate census is essential to get a reliable picture of child, family, and community well-being across Wisconsin. Kids won't count if we don't count kids."

An accurate census is vital to monitoring and improving the well-being for children and families in Wisconsin. While Wisconsin is a top-tier state when it comes to well-being, there are plenty of improvements that can be made to ensure Wisconsin families are thriving.

Trends in Child Well-Being

According to the *Data Book*, Wisconsin is ranked 12th overall in child well-being. Despite its relatively high ranking, Wisconsin could be doing a lot more to give every child in the state the opportunity to thrive. Child poverty remains stubbornly high in Wisconsin with nearly 200,000 children impoverished. There has been no change in the number of children living in high-poverty areas, despite the fact that the economy has rebounded for many families and communities.

In addition, Wisconsin's overall relatively high well-being masks significant racial and ethnic disparities. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 49 percent of African American children live in poverty compared to 10 percent of white children in the state. In addition, 39 percent of American Indian children, 33 percent Latino children, and 22 percent of Asian American children in Wisconsin live in poverty*.

“Policymakers could be doing a better job at creating policies and programs that provide opportunities for every child in the state—especially children of color,” added Taylor. “The gap in well-being between white children and children of color in Wisconsin is shameful. It’s time policymakers prioritize closing these gaps and target investments at programs and policies that support both parents and children of color.”

In addition to investing in programs that support children of color and those furthest from opportunity, it’s also important that policymakers make sure that Wisconsin kids count in the 2020 census. An accurate count of Wisconsin’s youngest children will guarantee that the state has the resources to build strong families and strong communities. If current policies persist, Wisconsin is at risk of not counting nearly 10 percent (43,000) of our children under age 5.

Kids Forward offers the following recommendations to achieve a more accurate census:

- **Maximize the Census Bureau’s capacity:** Federal legislators need to fully fund the census outreach effort, and the administration needs to appoint a qualified and permanent director to lead the agency to provide support for a more accurate census than in 2010.
- **Fund state and local outreach:** State and local governments and community organizations need to invest in educational outreach around the census to ensure that the most vulnerable communities are counted.
- **Expand the pool of trusted messengers:** Broaden the circle of people (from child care providers to members of the clergy) and organizations (from public schools to libraries) who can provide outreach in their communities to reach hard-to-count households and encourage participation among people most likely to be missed.

Release Information

The *2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available June 27 at 12:01 a.m. ET at <http://www.aecf.org>. Additional information is available at <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.

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About Kids Forward

Kids Forward advocates for effective, long-lasting solutions that break down barriers to success for children and families in Wisconsin. Using research and a community-informed approach, Kids Forward works to help every kid, every family, and every community thrive.

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. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2012-16 5 year estimates*