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At 42 Percent, Idaho’s Child Population Growth Since 1990 Outpaces National Average
*30th KIDS COUNT® Data Book ranks Idaho seventh for family and community,
but state falls near bottom (39th) for education*

BOISE, Idaho — Idaho is home to 130,419 more children since 1990, a 42 percent increase in the child population. With this boom in the youth population, greater investments must be made to improve Idaho’s lagging education outcomes.

According to the *2019 KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation today, Idaho’s child population growth significantly outpaced the national growth average of 15 percent between 1990 and 2017. The child population in Idaho increased from 313,373 to 443,792. The state’s child population also reflects Idaho’s growing diversity: In 2017, Latino kids represented 18 percent of children in Idaho, up from 7 percent in 1990.

“Today’s kids will be tomorrow’s community leaders, workers and parents. But are we doing better by children compared to a generation ago?” asked Christine Tiddens, community outreach director for Idaho Voices for Children. “While we have stepped up for kids in some areas, we have fallen profoundly short in other ways. Notably, Idaho continues to have significant gaps in educational achievement. The future of our state depends on creating opportunity for every child.”

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* is the most comprehensive annual report on child well-being in the United States. Idaho ranked seventh among states for the family and community indicator, with a growing number of youth avoiding drugs and alcohol and delaying childbirth past the teenage years. Nevertheless, Idaho falls near the bottom (39th) in education rankings.

Idaho is one of only four states that does not invest in prekindergarten or school-readiness programs. As a result, just 35 percent of Idaho’s 3- and 4-year-olds are attending preschool. From these shaky beginnings, Idaho kids starting off at a disadvantage only see their struggles compound. For example in 2017, 38 percent of Idaho fourth-graders scored proficient in reading and 35 percent of eighth-graders scored proficient in math.

State Trends in Child Well-Being

The annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* from the Annie E. Casey Foundation uses 16 indicators to rank each state across four domains — economic well-being, family and community, health and education — as an assessment of child well-being. This year, Idaho ranks:

- **11th in economic well-being.** Approximately 67,000 kids in Idaho — or 15 percent — live in poverty (income below \$24,858 for a family of two adults and two children). What’s more, 107,000 Idaho children — or 24 percent — live in households that spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

- **7th in family and community.** Teen birth rates have declined significantly since 2010, dropping by 42 percent in Idaho. One in four Idaho children lives in a family with one parent, the second-lowest rate in the nation.
- **23rd in health.** The percentage of children without health insurance has decreased 55 percent since passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010. Yet there are still 22,000 Idaho children who lack health coverage.
- **39th in education.** Only one-third of Idaho’s children ages 3 and 4 are attending school, ranking Idaho 48th in the nation for early childhood education participation. Meanwhile, 38 percent of Idaho fourth-graders scored proficient in reading and 35 percent of eighth-graders scored proficient in math.

Investing in the Future of Idaho

“America’s children are one quarter of our population and 100 percent of our future,” said Casey Foundation President and CEO Lisa Hamilton. “All of the 74 million kids in our increasingly diverse country have unlimited potential, and we have the data, knowledge and evidence to create the policies that will help them realize it. It’s incumbent on us to do just that.”

Idaho Voices for Children points to areas of improvement in children’s lives and draws a direct line to policies that support this success. Especially as the child population is expanding in Idaho, there are steps policymakers should take to help every child in the state thrive, including making smart public investments in high-quality preschool and school-readiness programs.

High-quality early learning programs play an important role in preparing children for success. When young children participate in school-readiness programs, such as evidence-based home visiting, and attend preschool, they experience higher levels of educational attainment, career advancement and earnings later in life. Idaho is missing opportunities to invest in proven measures to secure our state’s economic future.

“We can do a lot more to make quality early-learning programs accessible and affordable for every child in the state,” concluded Christine Tiddens. “With a strong and healthy beginning, children can more easily stay on track to remain in school and graduate on time, pursue postsecondary education and training and successfully transition to adulthood.”

Release Information

The *2019 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available June 17 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at www.aecf.org/databook. 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.

About Idaho Voices for Children

Idaho Voices for Children works to develop and promote a statewide public policy agenda that advocates for children on issues of health, education, safety, well-being and family economic security. Learn more at idahovoices.org.

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.