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National Study Shows the Well-Being of Alabama's Children Was Not Keeping Pace with Rest of the Country Before COVID *Alabama among the worst-performing states in the pandemic indicators*

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — A new national analysis released today by the [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#) shows the well-being of Alabama's children was generally improving before the pandemic. However, the state's progress was not keeping pace with the rest of the country.

The Foundation's analysis comes from new data in the *2021 KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, a 50-state report released annually to track child well-being in the United States. The 2021 edition uses 16 indicators to rank each state across four domains: health, education, economic well-being, and family and community. Overall, Alabama ranks 47th in the nation. Massachusetts and New Hampshire received this year's top rankings, while New Mexico and Mississippi are the lowest-ranked states.

Over the last decade, the well-being of Alabama's children improved or remained the same in 14 of the 16 indicators the Foundation tracks. The state ranks in the top 20 nationally on three indicators, including two indicators in the top five: the percentage of students not graduating on time (8%) and the percentage of children without health insurance (3%). However, Alabama remains behind the national average on 12 indicators. Despite an increase over the ten-year period measured in this report, the state ranked the lowest on eighth grade math proficiency (79% not proficient).

"The *2021 KIDS COUNT Data Book* reviews the last set of data points collected about Alabama's children before the start of the COVID pandemic," said **Judd Harwood, a partner at Bradley Arant Boult Cummings LLP and a member of the VOICES for Alabama's Children Board board of directors.** "While we are proud to see Alabama improve in most areas measured, the low rate of improvement before the pandemic is alarming. Understanding this report will not only help state policymakers measure the impact of the pandemic on our children but also better target COVID resources to children and families likely most affected by the virus."

The *Data Book's* authors are cautious about this year's findings, noting that a majority of data in this year's report reflect the well-being of children before the COVID-19 pandemic began. It does not capture COVID's impact on children over the last 18 months. The authors warn that the challenges children face likely worsened, and they fear the pandemic may have erased more than a decade of progress.

"The COVID-19 pandemic is the most extraordinary crisis to hit families in decades," said **Lisa Hamilton, president and CEO of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.** "Deliberate policy decisions can help them recover, and we're already seeing the beginnings of that. Policymakers should use this moment to repair the damage the pandemic has caused — and to address long-standing inequities it has exacerbated."

In December, the Foundation released a study, [Kids, Families, and COVID-19: Pandemic Pain Points and the Urgent Need to Respond](#), that assessed data collected for the U.S. Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey. That report provided insight into how children and families have fared during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Alabama is one of the 13 states ranked in the bottom 20 of the *Data Book* report that also performed poorly in the Foundation's COVID report's pandemic indicators. This reporting reflects a connection between the states struggling before the pandemic and those who have struggled during it.

Release Information

The *2021 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available June 21 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.

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About VOICES for Alabama’s Children

VOICES for Alabama’s Children is a statewide nonprofit that works to ensure the well-being of Alabama’s children through research, public awareness, and advocacy. For more information, visit alavoices.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. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.