



**UNDER EMBARGO Until Monday, June 21, 2021 at 12:01 a.m. ET**

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**AZ FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN CONTINUE TO STRUGGLE DURING THE PANDEMIC**  
*KIDS COUNT Data Show Lagging in Health Insurance,  
Education and Economic Well-Being*

**[PHOENIX]** Since 2019, more Arizona children are living in high poverty areas and more children in the state are without health insurance, according to the **2021 KIDS COUNT® Data Book**, a 50-state report of recent household data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation analyzing how families have fared between the Great Recession and the COVID-19 crisis. In Arizona, 15% of children live in high poverty areas compared with the national average of 9%, and in 2019, 9% of Arizona children are without health insurance compared with the national average of 6%.

This year's *Data Book* shows nearly a decade of progress could be erased by the COVID-19 pandemic unless policymakers act boldly to sustain the beginnings of a recovery from the coronavirus crisis.

“Even though we are seeing signs of recovery from the pandemic, too many of Arizona’s children and families are unable to fulfill basic needs. Providing access to quality health care, child care, education and mental health services must be the focus as we come out of the coronavirus pandemic,” said David Lujan, president and CEO of Children’s Action Alliance.

The *Data Book* shows simply returning to a pre-pandemic level of support for children and families would shortchange millions of kids and fail to address persistent racial and ethnic disparities.

Sixteen indicators measuring four domains — economic well-being, education, health and family and community context — are used by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in each year’s *Data Book* to assess child well-being. The annual KIDS COUNT data and rankings represent the most recent information available but do not capture the impact of the past year:

- **ECONOMIC WELL-BEING:** In 2019, one in four children in Arizona lived in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment (27%).
- **EDUCATION:** In 2019, one in five Arizona high school students did not graduate on time, and more than half (61%) of young children, ages 3 and 4, did not attend school.
- **AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE:** In 2019, Arizona ranked 46th in the nation as

161,000 children (9%) did not have health insurance.

- **FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT:** In 2015-19, 239,000 Arizona children (15%) lived in high poverty areas as defined by census tracts with poverty rates equal or greater to 30%.

“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.”

Investing in children, families and communities is a priority to ensure an equitable and expansive recovery. Several of the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s suggestions have already been enacted in the American Rescue Plan, and additional recommendations include:

- **Congress should make the expansion of the child tax credit permanent.** The child tax credit has long had bipartisan support, so lawmakers should find common cause and ensure the largest one-year drop ever in child poverty is not followed by a surge.
- **State and local governments should prioritize the recovery of hard-hit communities of color.**
- **States should expand income support that helps families care for their children.** Permanently extending unemployment insurance eligibility to contract, gig and other workers and expanding state tax credits would benefit parents and children.
- **States that have not done so should expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act.** The American Rescue Plan offers incentives to do so.
- **States should strengthen public schools and pathways to post-secondary education and training.**

### **Release Information**

The *2021 KIDS COUNT® 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 [www.aecf.org/databook](http://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](http://datacenter.kidscount.org).

### **About Children’s Action Alliance**

Children's Action Alliance (CAA), a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, strives to create an Arizona where all children and families thrive. CAA advocates for the well-being of more than 1.6 million Arizona children and their families at the state capitol and in the community. Since 1988, CAA works with elected officials, community partners, and coalitions to protect Arizona’s ability to meet the education, health care, and human services needs of vulnerable children and families. For more information visit [azchildren.org](http://azchildren.org) and follow CAA on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/azchildren) and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/azchildren).

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

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