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Michigan improves in overall child well-being, drops to 10th worst state in nation for education

*National 2016 KIDS COUNT Data Book ranks Michigan 31st in country
for kids; state ranks high for children's health, poor for education
performance and poverty*

LANSING, Mich.—Michigan dropped to 40th in the nation for children's education, according to the 2016 *KIDS COUNT*[®] *Data Book* from the Annie. E. Casey Foundation. In Michigan, more than half of young children are not in preschool, 71 percent of fourth-graders are not proficient in reading, and 71 percent of eighth-graders are not proficient in math.

Michigan was ranked 31st overall in child well-being, up from 33rd in 2015. The state is still behind all other Great Lakes states: Minnesota (1st), Wisconsin (13th), Illinois (21st), Ohio (26th) and Indiana (30th).

The 2016 *Data Book* focuses on key trends in child well-being in the post-recession years, measuring child well-being at the national level and ranking states in four domains: economic well-being, education, health and family and community. For 2016, Michigan's rankings were:

Overall: 31st (Up from 33rd in 2015)
Health: 14th (Up from 23rd in 2015)
Education: 40th (Down from 37th in 2015)
Economic Well-Being: 28th (Up from 33rd in 2015)
Family and Community: 29th (Ranked 29th in 2015 also)

"This data tells two different stories about Michigan kids—their health is improving thanks to a continued emphasis on policy changes, but education and poverty numbers continue to get worse without legislative action," said Alicia Guevara Warren, Kids Count in Michigan project director at the Michigan League for Public Policy. "As we measure ourselves against the rest of the nation, there is clearly much work to be done to offer better opportunities for our kids, and a big part of that is employing two-generation strategies to help improve the education and economic standing of their parents."

Despite rising employment numbers and a so-called economic recovery in Michigan, 23 percent of children lived in poverty in 2014, which is higher than the national percentage and an increase since 2008. Almost 1 in 3 children, or 711,000 kids, live in families where no member of the household has full-time, year-round employment. This also worsened since 2008. While some are feeling relief post-Great Recession, the recovery has been uneven with low-income residents and people of color still struggling to make ends meet.

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“From lead poisoning in Flint and the struggles in Detroit schools to the rampant poverty in our rural areas, Michigan policymakers need to make significant changes to better serve our kids,” said Gilda Z. Jacobs, president and CEO of the Michigan League for Public Policy. “We already have legislation introduced in Michigan to improve access to early childhood education and improve third-grade reading, but we’re still doing poorly in those areas while these bills languish. Our kids can’t wait, and policymakers shouldn’t, either.”

While navigating their own family challenges, an increasing number of our young people are also growing up in neighborhoods that lack the resources and support services they need to thrive. Since 2006-2010, the percent of children living in high-poverty areas in Michigan increased to 17 percent, up from 14 percent. Only six states have a higher rate of children living in high-poverty neighborhoods. The percent of children living in poverty (23 percent) and whose parents lack secure employment (32 percent) both worsened over the last year.

Our country’s legacy of racial inequity means that children of color continue to face significant barriers to their success, and the data book numbers illustrate how bad these disparities have gotten. Children of color in Michigan are more likely to live in high-poverty areas, including 18 percent of American Indian, 55 percent of African-American and 30 percent of Latino children. Child poverty is also higher for kids of color (47 percent for African-Americans and 32 percent for Hispanics compared to 16 percent for White kids).

“With rising higher education costs, stagnant wages and a flimsy social safety net, teens are less likely than their parents or grandparents to obtain economic security,” said Patrick McCarthy, president and CEO of the Casey Foundation. “For the sake of our economy and our society, we must reverse this trend to ensure that today’s youth—who will be the next generation of workers, parents and community leaders—have a successful transition to adulthood and beyond.”

Looking at Michigan’s poor academic numbers, they, too, are dramatically worse for kids of color. In 2015, for fourth-grade reading, 91 percent of African-American kids and 83 percent of Hispanic kids were not proficient, compared to 68 percent of White students. For eighth-grade math, 95 percent of African-Americans and 82 percent of Hispanic students were not proficient, compared to 66 percent of White students.

In the *Data Book*, the Casey Foundation offers a number of recommendations for how policymakers can ensure all children are prepared for the future, based on this country’s shared values of opportunity, responsibility and security. For Michigan specifically, the Michigan League for Public Policy makes the following policy recommendations to improve Michigan’s child well-being, and in turn, national stature:

- Invest in communities to create safe neighborhoods, clean air and water, quality schools and adequate police and fire services;
- Strengthen policies that support work, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit, earned paid sick leave and workforce development opportunities;
- Promote comprehensive strategies to prevent child abuse and neglect, including providing mental health and substance abuse services for parents;
- Ensure access to affordable, quality child care; and
- Adequately fund public schools, targeting resources in high-need areas and providing early interventions and services.

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The Casey Foundation's 2016 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* is the national counterpoint to the [Kids Count in Michigan Data Book](#) the Michigan League for Public Policy releases each year. The national *Data Book* looks at national data and compares information and makes rankings for each state. **The Michigan Data Book has state-level data and county-by-county data and rankings.** The two reports work in concert to annually illustrate where child well-being stands in America, Michigan and in each county.

The 2016 *Data Book* is available at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/publications>, which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of indicators of child well-being. The Data Center at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org> allows users to create rankings, maps and graphs for use in publications and on websites, and to view real-time information on mobile devices.

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The Kids Count in Michigan project is part of a broad national effort to improve conditions for children and their families. Funding for the project is provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Skillman Foundation, Steelcase Foundation, Frey Foundation, Michigan Education Association, American Federation of Teachers Michigan, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation, United Way for Southeastern Michigan, Battle Creek Community Foundation, Fetzer Institute and Kalamazoo Community Foundation. More state and local data are available at the Kids Count Data Center, www.datacenter.kidscount.org.

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.