

# The Birmingham News

## Alabama ranks 48th for child health, well-being in Annie E. Casey Foundation 2011 Kids Count data

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BIRMINGHAM, Alabama -- Alabama's child health and well-being ranks 48th out of 50 states in the [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#) 2011 Kids Count data book, released today.

The 2011 data show the effects of the recession on children. In Alabama and the rest of the nation, that severe economic downturn reversed many of the economic and social gains that children of poorer families had made since the 1990s.

In Alabama:

- 131,000 children, 12 percent, were living with at least one unemployed parent in 2010.
- 45,000 children, 3 percent, had been affected by foreclosure since 2007.
- 1 out of every 4 children lived in poverty in 2009, an increase of 19 percent since 2000. Poverty is an income below \$21,756 for a family of two adults and two children.

For 22 years the Casey Foundation has sought to be the best source of information to track the status of children in the United States. It uses 10 key indicators of childhood health, poverty, education and family issues in its annual reports.

Alabama and much of the Southeast and Southwest have consistently dominated the bottom in those rankings. Alabama has been 48th six times, 47th three times and 43rd once in the past 10 years. But these numbers hide the state's overall progress.

"I am not disappointed or distressed that Alabama is ranked 48th, because the rankings are relative," said Linda Tilly, executive director of [Voices for Alabama's Children](#), a Montgomery-based child advocate. "The rank disguises the fact that we are improving."

Tilly said Alabama tied for 18th best in the rate of progress on childhood well-being measures from 1990 to 2000, and tied for 16th best for 2000 to 2005.

As for possibly moving up in the rankings, "we see North Carolina and Georgia and know it can be done," Tilly said. Laura Speer, the foundation's associate director for policy reform and data, said low income in the Southeast is the root cause of the region's persistently low rankings.

In Alabama in 2009, 35 percent of children lived in families where no parent had full-time, year-round employment, Kids Count found.

Alabama improved in three of the 10 key Kids Count indicators this year, mirroring national trends:

- The teen birth rate was down 13 percent in 2008 compared with 2000. The national trend was a 15 percent decrease.
- The percent of teens not in school and not high school graduates was down 46 percent from 2000 to 2009. The national trend was a 45 percent decrease.
- The death rate for children ages 1 to 14 was down 15 percent in 2007, compared with 2000. The national trend was a 14 percent decrease.

But Alabama worsened in five other measures since 2000: the infant mortality rate, the low-weight birth rate, the teen death rate, the percentage of children living in single-parent families and the percentage of children in poverty.

Two other Kids Count measures did not have 2000 data for comparisons.

The Kids Count Data Book with state-by-state rankings and supplemental data goes online today at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>.

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