



 **VOICES**
FOR ALABAMA'S CHILDREN

2011 ALABAMA
KIDS COUNT
DATA BOOK





2011 ALABAMA KIDS COUNT DATA BOOK

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ALABAMA KIDS COUNT: 2011 Data Book



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About This Data Book

Alabama Kids Count provides a wealth of accurate, reliable information concerning the well-being of Alabama's children for the state as a whole and each of its 67 counties. It contains the latest statistics for 12 indicators representing four major categories of child well-being. For several indicators, state- and county-level data are disaggregated by race in order to help users identify areas where systemic inequities have created disparities among racial groups. It is our goal to be continually mindful that the data contained in this book represent the children of Alabama and that this information should serve as a road map for change and as a monitoring tool for how Alabama's children are doing.

There are several ways to draw meaningful conclusions from the data presented in this publication. In order to make better sense of the information, use the following strategies:

Understand overall county rankings. Not all 12 indicators are used in determining the overall ranking of a county. Instead, the rankings are based on a group of five highly-correlated indicators. If a county ranks poorly on most of the five indicators, the county will receive a poor ranking overall (and vice versa).

Individual indicators help identify areas that need improvement. Where possible, rankings for each individual indicator are based on three-year-averages to help smooth year-to-year fluctuations in the data. Pay close attention to the individual indicator rankings. They provide an overall picture of how a county is performing on a specific indicator and how a county's performance compares to other counties and Alabama generally.

Some data are trended over a period of time. Looking at data which are trended, denoted by an "I" or "W," allows users to see how their county has improved or worsened over time in relation to a particular indicator. If an aggressive policy or program has been implemented to address a particular issue, over time the positive results are likely to be observed in the trend data. In order to determine a trend, statistical analyses are conducted on the data. Keep in mind that the Data Book only assigns an "I" or "W" if statistically there is 95 percent probability that the indicator has changed over a ten-year period in a positive or negative direction.

Indicators include data for different time periods. In the *Data Book*, this is referred to as the "base year" and "current year." Comparisons between the base year and current year provide a quick indication of where a county was positioned on a particular indicator in the base year, generally ten years ago, and where it stands currently based on the most recent data available. It is important to note that an increase or decrease in the base and current year numbers and percents alone does not necessarily indicate that a county is improving or worsening over time. That information can only be obtained from reviewing the trend column.

How To Use This Data Book

Indicators:

Twelve indicators of child health, education, safety and security are presented for the state as a whole on page 11 and for each county on the pages that follow. For each of these measures, you will see both the actual number of incidents or children affected as well as this number expressed as a percentage or rate.

Base and Current Years:

The numbers and percentages/rates are given for a base year and for the current year in order to reflect how each indicator has changed over time. Because data have a lag time in collection and reporting, base years and current years may vary for different indicators. For all data, the Alabama Kids Count Data Book uses the most current data available at the time of preparation for publication. The following are the base and current years used for each indicator in the 2011 Data Book:

	Base Year	Current Year
HEALTH		
Infant mortality rate	1999	2009
Infant mortality rate by race	1999	2009
Low weight births	1999	2009
Low weight births by race	1999	2009
Births to unmarried teens	1999	2009
Births to unmarried teens by race	1999	2009
EDUCATION		
First grade retention rate	2000	2010
Graduation rate	2000	2010
SAFETY		
Child death rate	1999	2009
Children w/indication of abuse or neglect	2000	2010
Juvenile violent crime court petition rate	2005	2010
Preventable teen death rate	1999	2009
SECURITY		
Vulnerable families	1999	2009
Total children in poverty	1999	2009
Children in single-parent families	2000	2010
Children in single-parent families by race	2000	2010
Other Data		
Median household income	1999	2009
All persons below poverty level	1999	2009
Working mothers with young children	2000	2005-2009 average
Women receiving first trimester prenatal care	1999	2009
Women receiving adequate prenatal care	1999	2009
Teens not attending school/not working	2000	2005-2009 average
<i>Where possible, VOICES uses a ten year time span between base year and current year data.</i>		

Trend Analysis:

For a number of indicators, VOICES indicates whether the measure shows improvement over time (I) or is worsening over time (W). **Trends are indicated only when they are statistically significant.** Due to insufficient data and other considerations, trend data are not reported for

the graduation rate, children with indication of abuse or neglect, juvenile violent crime court petition rate, children in poverty, and children under 18 living in single-parent families.

County Rates and Rankings:

For each indicator, with the exception of disaggregated data by race and the graduation rate, rankings are provided for the 67 counties. A rank of "1" indicates the best performance on a given indicator and a rank of "67" indicates the worst. While numbers, rates and percentages for each indicator are presented for a single year, county rankings are based on three-year averages to reduce the impact of erratic shifts in small numbers and populations. The three-year averages are determined by averaging the raw data and calculating rates or percentages for the three most recent years, with each of the three years weighted equally. Because of data limitations, county rankings for percent children in poverty and percent children under 18 in single-parent families are based on information available for the latest year only.

Composite County Rankings:

Overall county rankings are shown in the upper-right and left-hand corners of the county pages. The county ranking each year is based on a group of indicators that are highly correlated and meet other selected criteria. The overall county rankings are not based on a composite of all 12 indicators. In the 2011 Data Book, the indicators that were used to determine the overall county rank were: low weight births, births to unmarried teens, children in single-parent families, children in poverty and the high school graduation rate. Because the indicators that prove to be highly inter-related and thus reflect overall child well-being may vary from year-to-year, comparisons between one year's overall ranking and that of a previous year should be made only with caution. VOICES encourages users to focus on individual indicators to identify areas of child well-being in each county that need the greatest attention and to track positive changes made in areas where programs have been implemented to promote improvement. For methodology on determining county rankings, see page 7.

Numbers, Percentages and Rates:

Raw numbers, percentages and rates are reported throughout the 2011 Alabama Kids Count Data Book. "Raw numbers" represent the number of cases reported to us, such as the number of infant deaths occurring within a particular county. As such, they have not been "processed," or converted into percentages or rates. While it is important to know the basic number of events that are occurring within a given locale (e.g., the total number of infant deaths), numbers alone—because of major population differences among counties—do not allow one to make meaningful comparisons. Thus, raw numbers are converted into percentages and rates to make comparisons more meaningful (or to "standardize" them) from one county (or group) to another. To compute percentages and rates, we divide the raw numbers for a selected indicator by a given "base" (which, depending on our indicator, could be the total number of births to all females as in "percent of total births to unmarried teens," first-grade enrollment for the "first grade retention rate," the number of children aged 1-14 for the "child death rate," and so on). Then, we multiply the result by 100, 1,000 or 100,000 to avoid working with numbers that are often exceedingly small. When we multiply by 100, we generally call the result a "percent," although the term "rate" is sometimes used as well. When we multiply by 1,000 or 100,000, we label the result a "rate." We are often asked, "What is the difference between "percent" and "rate?" A "percent" is really a "rate," in that it represents the number of cases reported to us per 100 units of the base we have used.



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Cautionary Notes

All data are reported by county of residence except the juvenile violent crime court petition rate (tabulated according to the county where the petition was filed).

The number of cases reported for some indicators (such as the child death rate and the preventable teen death rate) and/or less-populated counties can be quite small. Caution should be exercised in using rates that are derived from a small number of cases and in using rates that are computed using small populations. Although not reported in the *2011 Kids Count Data Book*, three-year average rates (which help to smooth annual fluctuations when the number of cases is small) are available for most of the indicators used herein. Contact VOICES for Alabama's Children for more information.

Several of the county-based rates and percentages reported for the health indicators that are disaggregated by race (infant mortality rate, low-weight births, and births to unmarried teens) were computed using a base of less than 50 births; hence, should be viewed with caution. These include data reported for whites in 1999 for Bullock and Macon counties and in 2009 for Greene, Lowndes, Macon, Perry, Sumter, and Wilcox counties. Likewise, they include data presented for African Americans and persons of other races in Blount, Cherokee, Crenshaw, Franklin, Geneva, Jackson, and Marion counties in 1999 and all of these same counties in 2009 plus Clay, Cleburne, Coosa, Cullman, DeKalb, Fayette, Lamar and Winston.

The information appearing in this book is based on data reported to *Alabama Kids Count* by various Alabama agencies which, in turn, are sometimes dependent on other data collection entities. While we make every effort to reproduce this information as accurately as possible, we cannot guarantee that all of the data supplied to us are totally accurate. Reporting and tabulation errors beyond our control, therefore, may affect the validity of some of these data.

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public awareness and advocacy.*

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