

decision making

2 0 0 4

Georgia

kids count

by the numbers

in Georgia

What is KIDS COUNT?

KIDS COUNT is a national and state-by-state effort funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation to track the status of children in the United States.

It provides a broad annual summary of state indicators of child and family well-being and monitors changes in these indicators over time.

KIDS COUNT seeks to enrich local, state, and national discussions concerning ways to secure better futures for all children. *KIDS COUNT* publishes a national *Data Book* and provides interactive data at www.aecf.org/kidscount.

The *Georgia 2004 KIDS COUNT* is produced by Family Connection Partnership to provide citizens and policymakers with current data needed to make informed decisions regarding priorities, services, and resources impacting Georgia's children, youth, families, and communities. Visit www.georgiafamilyconnection.org/kidscount for online data.



Family Connection Partnership is a nonprofit, public/private partnership created by the State of Georgia and funders from the private sector. We assist communities in addressing the serious challenges facing Georgia's children and families. We also serve as a resource to state agencies across Georgia that work to improve the lives of children and families. Working jointly with Family Connection county collaboratives, we are implementing a vision for community-based decision making and accountability to build a better future for our communities.

Georgia's Children and Families: Key Findings

The *Georgia 2003 KIDS COUNT Factbook* tracks progress across five areas of child well-being: healthy children, school readiness, school success, strong families, and self-sufficient families.

Indicators of child and family well-being are interrelated: children living in poverty are at greater risk for low educational attainment; children born to teen mothers are at higher risk for abuse and neglect; and dropping out of school is a risk factor for teen pregnancy. While progress can be tracked for individual indicators, it is important to also consider the implications for children, families, and communities that are impacted by multiple risk factors.

Children At Birth. Children continue to be born into circumstances that may place them at risk. The Healthy Start Index, a measure of prenatal care, healthy pregnancy and birth weight, was 72.7% in 2002. More than one-fourth of Georgia's babies continue to be born without a healthy start. Teen pregnancies continue to decline from 44.1 per 1,000 in 2001 to 42.4 per 1,000 in 2002. Teenage repeat births remain an issue of concern in Georgia. In 2002, 21.7% of births to teen mothers ages 15-19 were repeat births.

The New Family Index represents families who start out with a likelihood of success by having a first birth to a mother age 20 or older, with 12 years of education, and with the father's name on the birth certificate. Georgia made small gains from the previous year with the New Family Index improving from 58.9% in 2001 to 59.5% in 2002.

Children As They Grow and Mature. Children face various risks as they grow and mature. Georgia has had one of the highest infant mortality rates in the nation despite a general downward trend for the past five years. Data from 2002 show a slight worsening compared to the previous year, with an infant mortality rate of 8.9 per 1,000 in 2002 and 8.5 per 1,000 in 2001. Family stresses including poor parenting skills, social isolation, substance abuse, and economic difficulties may place children at risk for abuse and neglect. The rate of substantiated child abuse and neglect continued to climb after reaching a low of 11.3 per 1,000 in 1997 to 19.9 per 1,000 in 2002.

Unintentional injuries are the leading cause of child death for children ages 1-14 in Georgia and nationally, exceeding those from medical causes. The child death rate shows a positive trend, improving to 22.8 per 100,000 in 2002 from 25.2 per 100,000 in 2001. The violent death rate for teens ages 15-19 improved to 55 per 100,000 in 2002, down from 59.9 per 100,000 in 2001. A positive trend continued in the juvenile arrest rate, with the rate declining to 4.5% in 2002.

Children As They Learn. High school completion remains a challenge for Georgia with only 72.7% of students completing high school within four years. Nearly one-quarter of all babies in Georgia are born to mothers with less than 12 years of education. More than one-fourth of students miss 10 or more days from school annually; 29.7% of students in 2003 missed 10 or more days, up from 29.4% in 2002.

Curriculum-based test scores slightly improved for 4th- and 8th-grade students in core academic areas of language arts, reading, and math. Curriculum-based test scores for 11th-grade students held steady in language arts, math and writing but decreased in science and social studies. Investments in early education and care continue to have a beneficial effect on Georgia's young children. Scores on the Georgia Kindergarten Assessment Program-Revised improved again this year; 94% of Kindergarten children were scored as ready for first grade in 2003, up from 93% in 2002.

Healthy Children

INDICATOR	YEAR	NUMBER	RATE
Healthy Start Index: 1. Baby born weighing more than 2,500 grams 2. Mother received prenatal care in 1st trimester 3. Mother did not smoke or drink alcohol during pregnancy All Three Components	2002	116,742 109,217 117,329 92,833	91.4% 85.5% 91.9% 72.7%
Teenage Pregnancies, ages 15-17 (per 1,000)	2002	7,374	42.4
Infant Mortality (per 1,000)	2002	1,188	8.9
Child Deaths, ages 1-14 (per 100,000)	2002	405	22.8
Teen Violent Deaths, ages 15-19 (per 100,000)	2002	333	55.0

School Readiness

INDICATOR	YEAR	NUMBER	RATE
Kindergarten Students Ready for 1st Grade on GKAP-R	2003	106,529*	94%
Babies Born to Mothers with less than 12 years of Education	2002	32,027	24.0%

School Success

INDICATOR	YEAR	NUMBER	RATE
Absent 10 or More Days from School	2002	391,840	29.4%
4th-Grade Students Meeting or Exceeding State Standards on CRCT 1. Reading 2. Language Arts 3. Math	2003	93,081* 90,659* 85,967*	80% 78% 74%
8th-Grade Students Meeting or Exceeding State Standards on CRCT 1. Reading 2. Language Arts 3. Math	2003	90,671* 83,859* 74,698*	81% 75% 67%
11th-Grade Students Passing GHSGT the First Time 1. Language Arts 2. Math 3. Science 4. Social Studies 5. Writing	2003	72,275* 70,004* 52,208* 61,213* 69,753*	95% 92% 69% 81% 88%
High School Completion	2002	72,249	72.7%
High School Graduates Eligible for HOPE Scholarship	2002	40,186	55.6%

Strong Families

INDICATOR	YEAR	NUMBER	RATE
New Family Index	2002		
1. First birth to mother age 20 or older		40,242	76.0%
2. First birth to mother with 12 years of education		39,922	75.4%
3. First birth with father's name on birth certificate		43,075	81.4%
All Three Components		31,473	59.5%
Teenage Repeat Births, ages 15-19	2002	3,493	21.7%
Substantiated Incidents of Child Abuse and Neglect (per 1,000)	2002	44,932	19.9
1. Abuse		12,547	5.5
2. Neglect		32,385	14.3
Foster Care Children Achieving Permanency	2003	8,939	39.8%
Juvenile Arrests	2002	45,389	4.5%

Self-Sufficient Families

INDICATOR	YEAR	NUMBER	RATE
Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Meals	2002	650,640	44.2%
Job Growth	2003	n/a	2.9%
Unemployment Rate	2003	192,412	4.4%




**Calculated from number tested and the percent reported
n/a – Data not available*

State Trends: Indicators At-A-Glance

BETTER

NO CHANGE

WORSE

	BETTER	NO CHANGE	WORSE
Healthy Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Family Index: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No Smoking or Drinking Alcohol during Pregnancy Teenage Pregnancies, ages 15-17 Child Deaths, ages 1-14 Teen Violent Deaths, ages 15-19 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Family Index: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Birthweight > 2,500 grams Prenatal Care First Trimester All Three Components Infant Mortality
School Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Georgia Kindergarten Assessment Program-Revised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Babies Born to Mothers with Less than 12 Years of Education 	
School Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet or Exceed State Standards on Curriculum-Based Tests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4th-Grade (Language Arts, Reading, Math) 8th-Grade (Language Arts, Reading, Math) 11th-Grade Students Passing Georgia High School Graduation Test First Time: (Language Arts, Reading, Math) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High School Graduates Eligible for HOPE Scholarship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet or Exceed State Standards on Curriculum-Based Tests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11th-Grade Students Passing Georgia High School Graduation Test First Time: (Science, Social Studies) Absent 10 or More Days from School High School Completion
Strong Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Family Index: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> First births to mothers age 20 or older First births to mothers who graduated from high school First births with father's name on birth certificate All three components Juvenile Arrests Foster Care Children Achieving Permanency 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teenage Repeat Births, ages 15-19 Substantiated Incidents of Child Abuse and Neglect
Self-Sufficient Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job Growth Unemployment Rate 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Meals

How Will Georgia Respond?

Improving the well-being of Georgia's children and families requires vision, commitment and leadership. Georgia should be open to new policies and practices that use current resources wisely and strategically invest in initiatives that have been shown to improve outcomes.

Wise leaders know that investments in prevention and in front-end supports are tough but critical.

These investments are needed to break the cycle of poverty and low academic achievement that continue to jeopardize the futures of our youngest citizens.

Georgia's future depends on the vitality and well-being of our children. A growing economy, an educated workforce, self-sufficient families, and accessible healthcare are all hallmarks of success. Policymakers should be open to revising laws to protect children, support families, and enhance local community strengths.

Georgia has a rich tradition of strong ties to community and to family. Building upon the traditional approach of looking to neighbors, friends, and family for support, communities should be part of the solution and part of the decision-making needed to improve outcomes for Georgia.

Communities understand best the needs of their children and how to use resources to respond effectively.

Public agencies alone cannot bear the burden of improving the well-being of children and families. The private sector and the faith community have a vital role to play in fostering partnerships, providing opportunities, and encouraging and supporting families in self-sufficiency and educational achievement. Families should have supports close to home and feel engaged in ensuring their children are safe and healthy.

Families want their children to grow up healthy, educated, and secure, but often need access to supports to help them along the way. Georgia has made some improvements but significant gains are needed in order to ensure that children have a healthy start, begin school ready to learn, succeed in school, and live in strong, self-sufficient families.

The *Georgia 2004 KIDS COUNT State Summary* was made possible, in part, through a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and was produced by Family Connection Partnership.

Additional copies of the *Georgia 2004 KIDS COUNT State Summary* are available. For additional copies, technical assistance, presentations or further information contact:

Family Connection Partnership

235 Peachtree Street
North Tower, Suite 1600
Atlanta, GA 30303
(404) 527-7394 ph
(404) 527-7443 fax
communications@gafcp.org

For the complete Georgia 2004 KIDS COUNT data, please visit www.georgiafamilyconnection.org/kidscount

