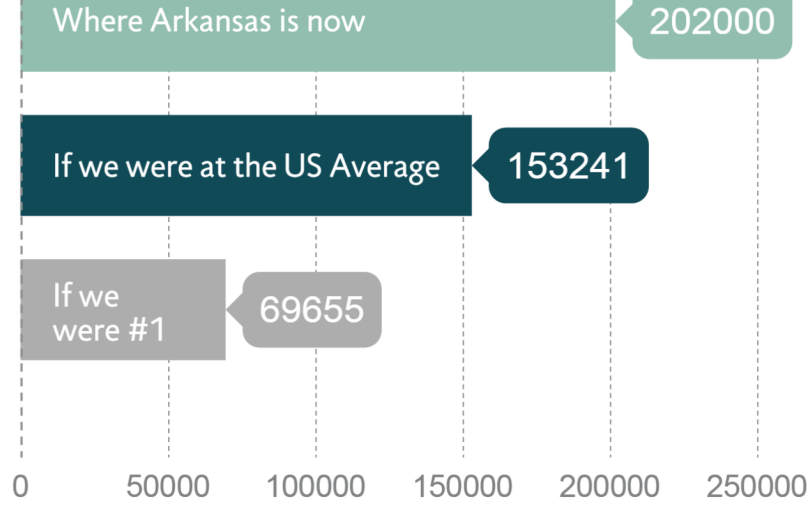


# IF ARKANSAS WAS RANKED #1

## 2015 Kids Count Data Rankings

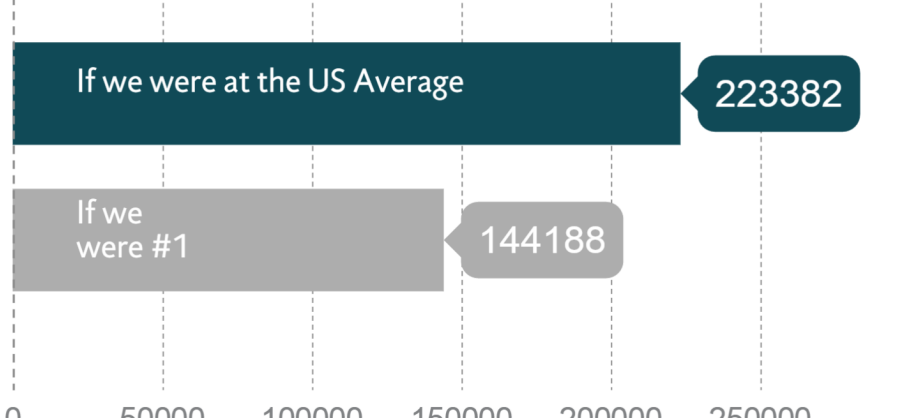
Every year, the Annie E. Casey Foundation releases the Kids Count Data Book, a comprehensive, 50-state look at child well-being. We see how Arkansas ranks in economic well-being, health, education, and “family and community” rankings. But what would it take for Arkansas to climb all the way up to the top? The tables below show the numbers Arkansas would have to reach to meet the U.S. average, and to be the absolute best in each category.

### The number of children living in poverty



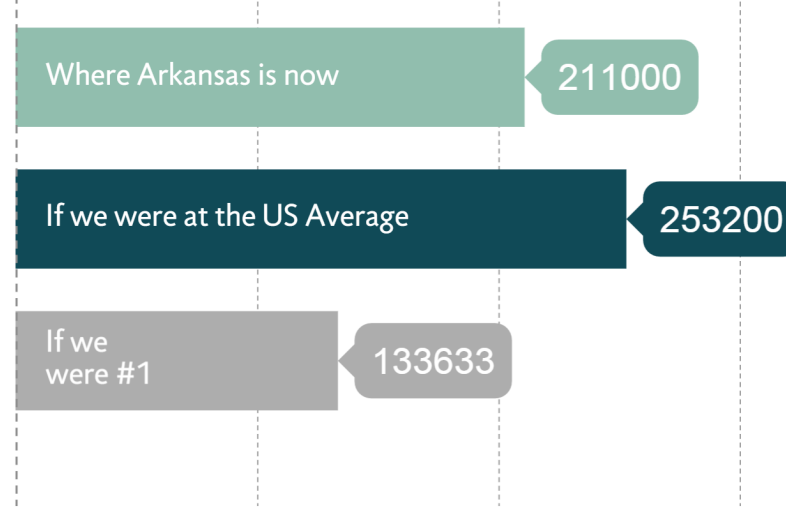
Living in poverty can threaten a child’s healthy development, their ability to learn, and even the amount of success they have in their careers. Twenty two percent of kids in the U.S. live in poverty, and for a family of four that means surviving on less than \$24,000 a year. But it isn’t the same across the nation. In some states, kids are much less likely to face damaging economic uncertainty early in life. For example, New Hampshire’s child poverty rate is only 10 percent. Unfortunately, Arkansas has one of the worst child poverty rates, ranking 48th in the country. Our rate is 29 percent, which is significantly higher than the national average, and means that 202,000 children in Arkansas live in poverty. If Arkansas was like New Hampshire, we would have 132,000 fewer kids living in poverty. If we met the U.S. average, there would be 49,000 fewer kids living in poverty.

### The number of children whos parents lack secure employment



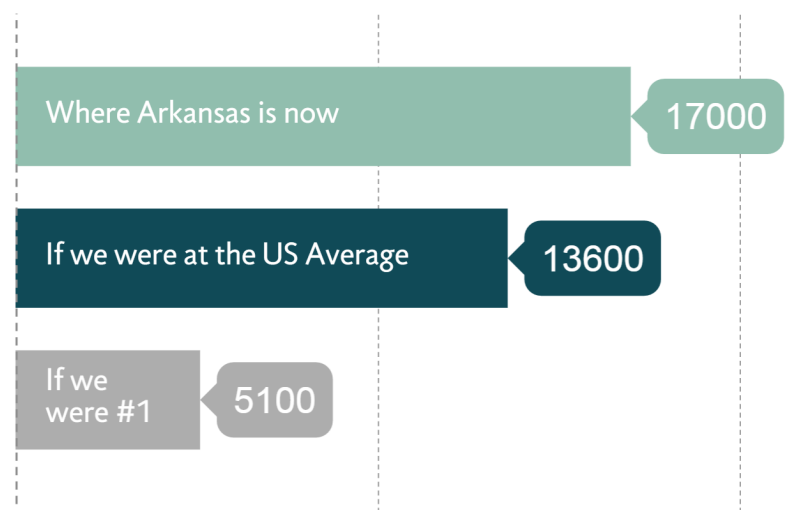
We know that when parents have better jobs, their kids do better too. Having a full-time, year-round job means parents are more able to provide healthy meals, safe households, and quality childcare. When parents can’t find consistent work their families are more likely to fall into poverty. Thirty four percent of kids in our state (245,000) live with parents who don’t have secure employment, putting us at the lower end of the spectrum with a rank of 38th. The state with the best rate of parental employment is North Dakota, with only 20 percent of parents lacking secure jobs. If Arkansas was like North Dakota, we would have 101,000 fewer kids with underemployed parents. If we met the US average (of 31 percent), there would be 22,000 fewer kids in households with unstable employment.

### The number of children in households with a high housing cost burden



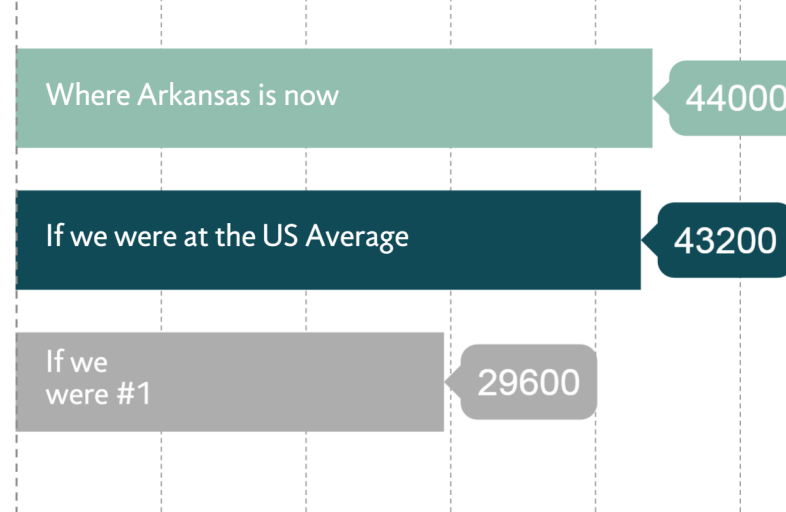
One of the biggest expenses for low-income families is housing. If housing costs exceed 30 percent of a family’s income, that financial burden can make it very hard for low-income families to afford other necessities. In Arkansas 211,000 kids have parents who spend nearly a third or more of their income on housing. Those kids represent 30 percent of all of the children in our state, which is lower than the national average of 36 percent. Arkansas’s relatively inexpensive housing market puts us near the top, ranking 15th in the nation. The state with the fewest parents who pay a high share of their incomes to housing is North Dakota, with 19 percent. If Arkansas was like North Dakota, we would have 77,000 fewer kids with parents struggling to afford rent and housing. If Arkansas was like the US average, there would be 42,000 more kids in households high housing cost burdens.

### The number of teens not in school and not working



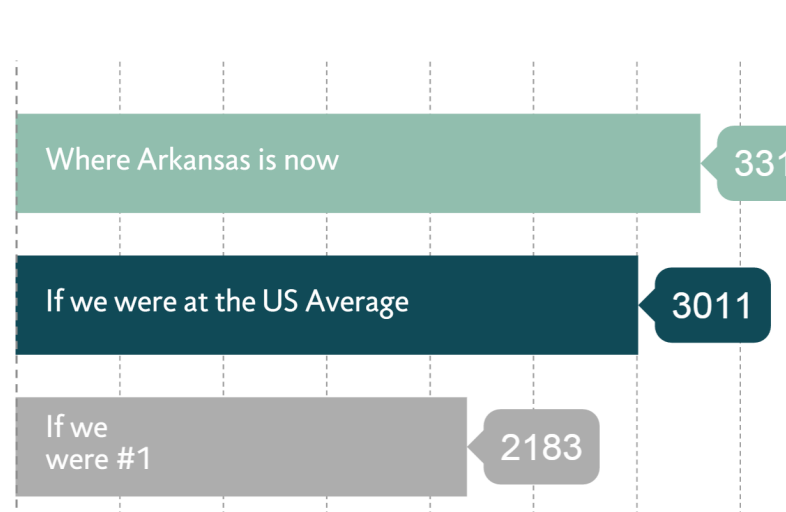
Teenagers who drop out of school are especially at risk for negative outcomes if they are also unemployed. Nationally, eight percent of young adults between 16 and 19 are not in school and don’t work. There is a higher rate of these “disconnected youth” (10 percent) in Arkansas. Our state has approximately 17,000 teens who don’t have jobs and aren’t in school. The state with the lowest rate of teenagers out of school and unemployed is Nebraska, with only 3 percent. If Arkansas was like Nebraska, we would have 12,000 fewer disconnected teens. If Arkansas was like the US average, there would be 3,400 fewer.

### The number of children ages 3 and 4 not attending preschool



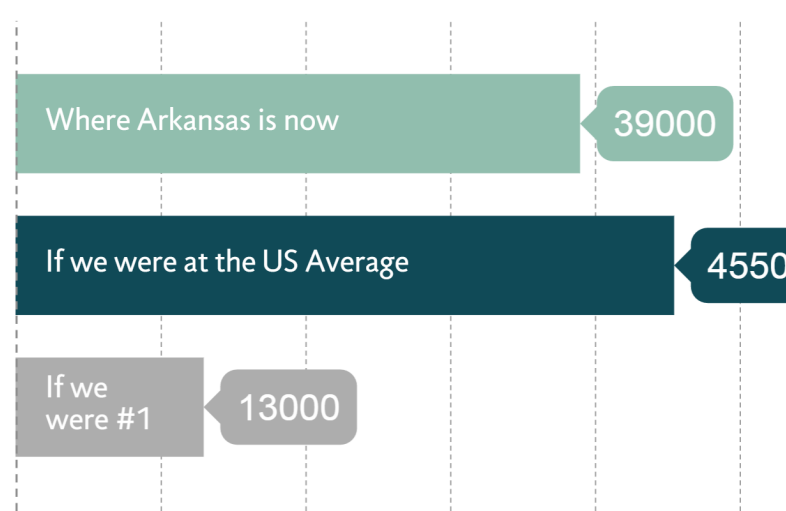
Quality preschool environments are shown to lead to better success in high school and future careers, but many kids are missing out. There are 44,000 three-and four-year-olds who are not in preschool in Arkansas. That is 55 percent of children in that age group (which is just above the national average of 54 percent). From 2009 to 2013, Arkansas has fallen in the ranks for preschool attendance (from 16th to 22nd). Our consistently underfunded pre-K program could be behind the growing percentage of kids who don’t attend. The state with the best preschool attendance is Connecticut, with only 37 percent of kids missing preschool. If Arkansas was on par with Connecticut, 14,000 more of our kids would be in preschool.

### The number of low birthweight babies



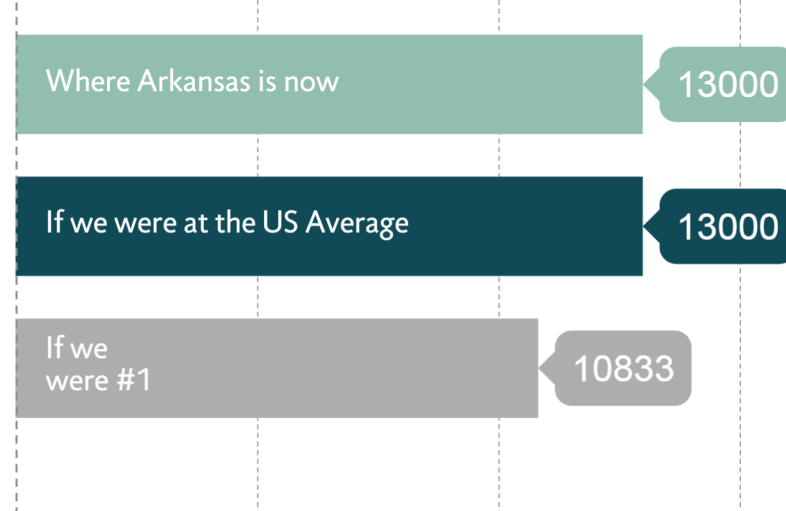
Low birthweight babies are prone to a host of short- and long-term health problems and face a greater risk of death within the first year. Arkansas is among the states with the greatest percentage of low birthweight babies (ranking 40th in the nation). Nine percent of newborns in Arkansas weigh less than 5.5 pounds, classifying them as “low birthweight”. Nationally, that number is only slightly lower at eight percent. The state with the lowest rate of low birth weight babies is Alaska (6 percent). If Arkansas kept up with Alaska, there would be 1,129 fewer low birth weight babies in 2015.

### The number of children without health insurance



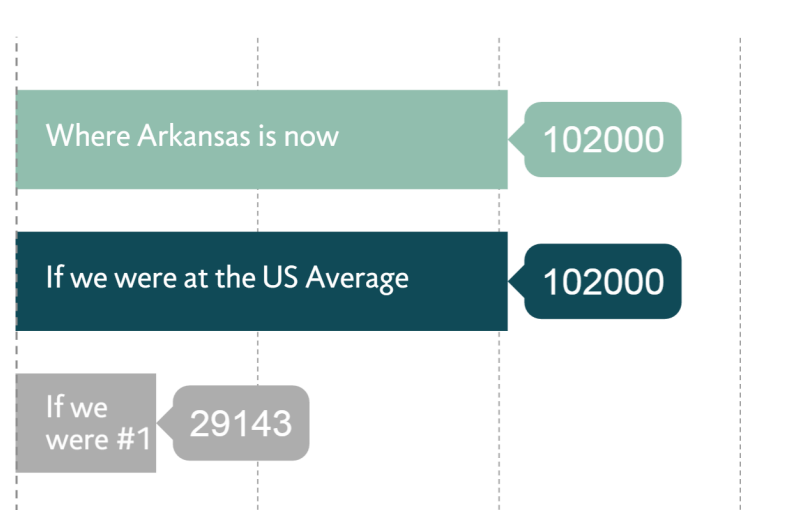
An insured child is more likely to get regular checkups and prompt treatment for illnesses. When a child has health insurance, their families are also more protected against unpredictable medical bills which can be financially devastating. Arkansas’s uninsured rate for kids beats the national average (six percent) compared to 8 percent), and with 39,000 uninsured kids, Arkansas ranks 20th in the nation in this category. The state with the fewest uninsured kids is Massachusetts, with only 2 percent uninsured. If Arkansas kept up with Massachusetts, we would have 26,000 fewer uninsured kids.

### The number of teens who abused alcohol or drugs in the past year



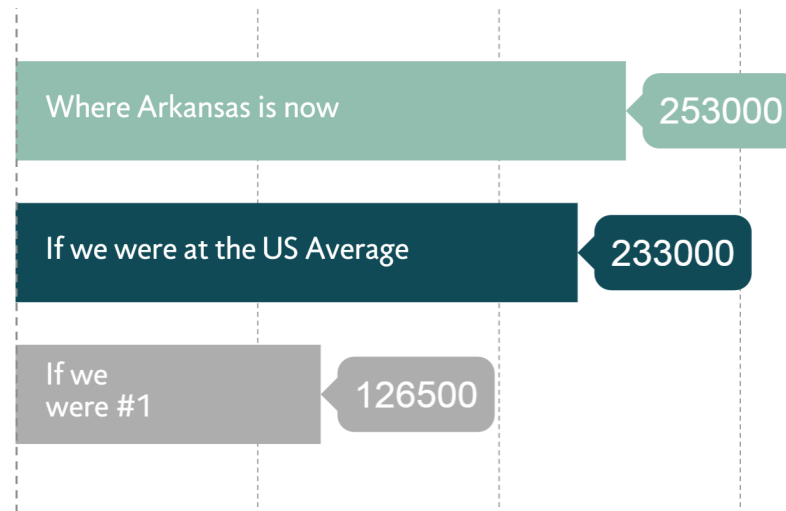
Teens who abuse drugs and alcohol are more likely to engage in harmful or dangerous behaviors like drunk driving, and criminal activity. Arkansas is in line with the national average (six percent) for the number of teens who abuse alcohol or drugs, and we rank 17th in the nation. Several states tied for first by having only five percent of their teenagers suffer from drug and alcohol abuse. If Arkansas moved from six percent to five percent, there would be 2,167 fewer teens in our state with drug and alcohol problems.

### The number of children in families where head of household lacks a high school diploma



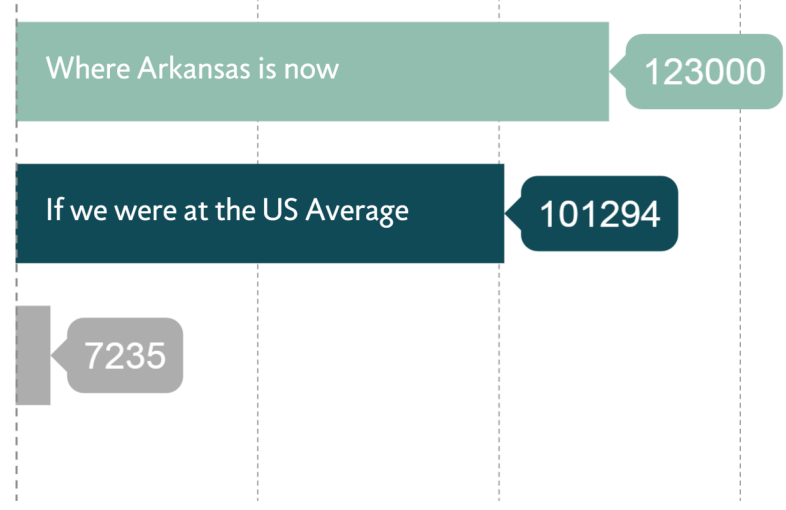
Kids who have parents that graduated from high school are more likely to be healthy, and achieve more in school. There are 102,000 kids in Arkansas who live in families where the head of household does not have a high school diploma. That is right in line with the national average of 14 percent and puts us at 37th nationally. New Hampshire is ranked first in the nation, with only four percent of children whose parents didn’t graduate from high school. If Arkansas kept up with New Hampshire, there would be 73,000 fewer kids living in non-high school educated households.

### The number of children in single parent families



A single parent is usually less financially stable than a two-parent household, and children from single parent households tend to do worse in school, have higher rates of teen pregnancy and are more likely to be divorced later in life. 253,000 Arkansas kids live in single parent households. That is 38 percent of all kids in our state and puts us at 39th in the nation. The national average is slightly lower at 35 percent, and the state with the best ranking, Utah, has only 19 percent of kids living with single parents. If Arkansas kept up with Utah, we would have 126,000 fewer kids in single parent households.

### The number of children living in high poverty areas



Children who live in neighborhoods with high levels of poverty are more likely to be exposed to criminal activity, and their community is more likely to have high levels of unemployment. Arkansas has one of the highest rates of children living in concentrated poverty. 17 percent of kids in our state live in areas with high poverty, putting us 41st in the nation. The national average is 14 percent, and the state with the lowest levels of children in high poverty areas is Vermont with only one percent. If Arkansas was like Vermont, we would have 115,000 fewer kids living in high poverty communities.