

## Report: Well-being of African-Americans in Michigan among worst in nation

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The well-being of African-American children in Michigan is among the worst in the nation, according to a report to be released today.

The Kids Count report found only Mississippi and Wisconsin fared worse than the Wolverine state, based on 12 criteria, including normal birth weights, [education](#)

[of parents](#) and the number of children living at or above poverty.

“For us to be third lowest in the country was pretty shocking,” said Jane Zehnder-Merrell, director of the Kids Count in Michigan project at the Michigan League for Public Policy in Lansing. “The country doesn’t look very good either.”

The national average score is 345 points out of a possible 1,000. Michigan’s score was 244.

She said the stakes are high in Michigan, where one of every six children is African-American, and across the nation. Children of color are expected to represent a majority of all children in the U.S. by 2018, according to Census Bureau projections, according to Kids Count.

Matt Gillard, president and CEO of Michigan’s Children, said the state’s performance in the study is disappointing, but not surprising. Based in Lansing, Michigan’s Children is a nonpartisan and nonprofit advocacy organization for children and their families.

“Those of us who work in this arena and with children of all races know that not enough is being done and not enough focus in Congress and our state Legislature is being put on the issues for children and families,” said Gillard, a former state representative.

Zehnder-Merrell said the report, “Race for Results: Building a Path to Opportunity for All Children,” measures success at each stage of childhood, as well as the economic and social context for children’s lives.

Among the topics measured in the report were the number of babies born with normal birth weights; elementary, secondary and college education levels; household living arrangements; the number of young adults in school or with a job; two-parent families; income level; and delay in child-bearing until adulthood.

This is the first time the Kids Count project looked at [data](#)

[on children](#) by racial and ethnic groups across the country and by state.

Among the report’s findings: Michigan got its highest score, 787, for the well-being of Asian children — following a national trend. It scored 668 points for white children, 501 for American Indians and 411 for Latinos.

Zehnder-Merrell said the results show starkly different conditions in the state for children of different races

“Our state and local policymakers must focus on strategies to increase opportunities for families with children in all racial/ethnic groups to have better outcomes and conditions,” she said.

There was one bright spot for Michigan in the report. It found children in three of Michigan’s racial groups were more likely than their national counterparts to live with a parent or guardian who had at least a [high school](#)

[diploma](#).

To improve conditions for Michigan families with children, the report recommends the state:

Reinstate the earned income tax credit at 20 percent of the federal earned income tax credit. The federal tax credit offsets payroll and income taxes for low-income workers, mostly parents. Michigan rolled back its version of the tax credit from 20 percent to 6 percent in 2012.

Increase the child care subsidy amount and eligibility level.

Raise the state minimum wage from \$7.40 to \$10.10.

“We really need to find ways to support parents who are trying to do the right thing for their children,” Zehnder-Merrell said. “And we’re certainly not talking at the state Capitol about what the impact of some of our policies are on children of color, but it’s definitely a conversation we should be having.”

The Kids Count project is funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in Baltimore, Md. The Michigan League for Public Policy is a nonpartisan economic development research and advocacy organization.