

# New Jersey Kids Count 2015 Mercer County Profile



The county profiles present the most recent data for each indicator. For historical data, please see the New Jersey Kids Count County Pocket Guides, which can be found in the library at [www.acnj.org](http://www.acnj.org).

## County Rankings at-a-Glance

County	2014 RANK	2015 RANK
Atlantic	20	20
Bergen	4	5
Burlington	9	9
Camden	18	17
Cape May	15	14
Cumberland	21	21
Essex	17	16
Gloucester	11	10
Hudson	14	15
Hunterdon	1	2
Mercer	13	13
Middlesex	5	4
Monmouth	7	7
Morris	2	1
Ocean	10	11
Passaic	16	18
Salem	19	19
Somerset	3	3
Sussex	8	6
Union	12	12
Warren	6	8

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### 2015 KIDS COUNT COUNTY PROFILES

2014 County Rank: 13

	Year	County	NJ	2014 Rank	2015 Rank
<b>DEMOGRAPHICS</b>					
Child Population	2013	81,519	2,022,117	12	12
Total Population	2013	370,414	8,899,339	12	12

<b>FAMILY ECONOMICS</b>					
Percentage of Children in Poverty	2013	16	17	13	13
Median Income of Families with Children	2013	\$89,172	\$85,248	7	10
Percentage Unemployed	2014	4.6	5.7	4	4
Percentage of HH Spending More Than 30% of Income on Rent	2013	48	51	10	4
Percentage of Eligible Children Receiving Free/Reduced Price School Breakfast	2014-15*	38	41	11	9

\*Please note that the 2014-15 percentage data are preliminary and based upon the most recent data, which include school meal eligibility data as of 2013-14 school year and receiving data as of October 2014.

<b>HEALTH AND SAFETY</b>					
Percentage of Women Receiving Early Prenatal Care	2011	73	79	13	17
Percentage of Births to Girls 10-19	2011	7	5	14	14
Infant Mortality (rate per 1,000 live births)	2011	7	5	18	18
Child Abuse/Neglect Investigations*	2013	49	47	11	10
Children in Out-of-Home Placement*	2013	5	4	11	12
Juvenile Arrests*	2012	22	15	17	17

\*Rate per 1,000 children under 18.

<b>EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION</b>					
% of Family Income Spent on Licensed Child Care for a Family with One Infant and One Preschooler	2013	28	25	11	14
Percentage of Students Passing 4th Grade Tests	2013-14	72	74	14	14
Percentage of Students Passing 8th Grade Tests	2013-14	75	77	14	13
Percentage of Students Passing 11th Grade Tests	2013-14	85	86	13	13



To view data sources and for more information, visit [www.acnj.org](http://www.acnj.org)

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Giving Every Child A Chance

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# NEWS



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## Mercer Remains 13<sup>th</sup> in Kids Count Rankings

Mercer County held steady at 13<sup>th</sup> place in the annual **New Jersey Kids Count** rankings, which measure progress in improving the lives of children in 13 critical areas.

Mercer saw some progress in a couple of key areas, including declines in unemployment and the percent of households spending too much on rent, and an increase in school breakfast participation.

The county, however, saw a drop in the percentage of women receiving early prenatal care, pushing Mercer from 13<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> place on this measure. In addition, Mercer families spent more of their income on licensed child care, from 24 to 28 percent.

“Statewide, we are seeing some positive trends, including fewer uninsured children and more children starting their school day with a healthy breakfast,” said Cecilia Zalkind, executive director of Advocates for Children of New Jersey, which publishes the Kids Count reports. “In the face of rising poverty, these supports are essential to ensure children have the nutrition and healthcare they need to succeed in school.”

“This is the fifth straight year that child poverty has increased in New Jersey,” Zalkind added. “While we have taken some steps to address this, we continue to put children on the budgetary backburner. As New Jersey legislators discuss the governor’s proposed budget, the top priority should be investments in children and families, including tax credits for the working poor, preschool and child care assistance.”

This year’s **New Jersey State Kids Count** report includes a special section on race, which found that black, Hispanic and mixed race children, on average, struggle more than children of other races. These children are more likely to live in poverty, experience negative health outcomes, be involved in the state child protection and juvenile justice systems and struggle in school. These data, however, are not available on a county-level.

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Giving Every Child A Chance

## **Following are some key trends in Mercer County.**

**Child poverty.** Despite a rise in the number of children living in poverty in 2013 from 15 to 16 percent and a drop in median family income from nearly \$100,000 to \$89,000, fewer households were spending more than the recommended 30 percent of their income on rent. In 2013, 48 percent of families spent too much on housing compared to 53 percent the previous year. This progress helped Mercer advance from 10<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> place in the rankings on this measure.

**School breakfast.** Mercer schools made headway in providing more low-income children with a healthy breakfast, rising from 30 to 38 percent in 2013-14, advancing the county to 9<sup>th</sup> from 11<sup>th</sup> last year. Still, Mercer schools fell short of the statewide average of 41 percent student participation. As many Mercer families continue to struggle financially, this critical program can help address childhood hunger.

**Child health.** The county saw a decrease from 78 to 73 percent of women receiving early prenatal care in 2011, the most recent year that data are available. As a result, Mercer moved from 13<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> on this indicator.

**Child care costs.** Mercer's working parents spent 28 percent of their income on child care for an infant and toddler in 2013 – more than the 24 percent from the previous year and higher than the statewide average of 25 percent. The county fell to 14<sup>th</sup> place from 11<sup>th</sup> place on this indicator. National standards say families should spend no more than 10 percent of income on child care.

In addition to releasing the county rankings, Advocates for Children of New Jersey also released:

- ***New Jersey Kids Count 2015: The State of Our Children***, which provides state-level data on key measures of child well-being.
- ***New Jersey Kids Count 2015: The State of Our Counties***, a pocket guide that provides a 5-year comparison of various measures of child well-being, including poverty, health, education and child protection.

To help counties use the data to address the needs of children, Advocates for Children will host two Kids Count Regional Forums – one in South Jersey and one in Central Jersey -- bringing together county, city and state leaders with the people in the community who work with children and families.

“These forums are designed to foster discussions about the data that result in concrete action at the state, county and local levels,” Zalkind said. “When we use data to drive critical decisions about responding to the needs of children, everyone benefits -- children, families, our communities and our state.”

To view the county profiles, the pocket guide and the state Kids Count report and for a schedule of Kids Count forums, go to [www.acnj.org](http://www.acnj.org).

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KIDS COUNT is a national and state-by-state statistical effort to track the state of children in the United States, sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Advocates for Children of New Jersey is a statewide child research and action organization and the New Jersey Kids Count grantee.

## **How ACNJ Calculated the Rankings for 2015**

Ranks are computed for each indicator so that 1 is the most positive and 21 is the least positive. For example, a county with the highest test scores would rank #1, while the county with the highest unemployment rate would rank #21.

Thirteen indicators of child well-being are ranked. The ranks exclude child and total population because these are not measures of child well-being. Each indicator is ranked for each county, and each county is given an overall rank based on the rankings of its individual indicators. For county rankings, each indicator is given equal weight except for the three rankings for test scores (fourth, eighth and eleventh grades). The three grades are averaged for each county and that average is given the same weight as a single indicator. This is done to avoid over-representation of test scores in the final overall county rankings.

# New Jersey Kids Count 2015 County Profiles

## Data Sources and Technical Notes

### Demographics

**Child Population, 2013.** As reported by the US Census Bureau, Population Division, Population Estimates Program.

**Total Population, 2013.** As reported by the US Census Bureau, Population Division, Population Estimates Program.

### Family Economics

**Percentage of Children in Poverty, 2013.** The percentage of children under 18 living in families earning below 100 percent of the federal poverty line, as reported by the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, chart b17001.

**Median Income of Families with Children, 2013.** Includes families with children, as reported by the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey chart b19125.

**Percentage Unemployed, 2014.** As reported by the US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics. Data are not seasonally adjusted and are as of December for each year. 2011 data are preliminary.

**Percentage of Households Spending More Than 30% Percent of Income on Rent, 2013.** As reported by the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey chart b25070.

**Percentage of Eligible Children Receiving Free/Reduced-Price School Breakfast, 2014-15.** Rates calculated using eligibility data from the NJ Department of Education and participation data from the NJ Department of Agriculture. Includes children attending traditional public schools and charter schools. Please note that the 2014-15 percent of eligible students receiving free- and reduced-price meals are based upon the most recent eligibility data as of October 2013, while the number of students receiving free- and reduced-price meals is as of October 2014. Some variation in eligibility may occur.

### Health and Safety

**Percentage of Women Receiving Early Prenatal Care, 2011.** Percentage of live births for which the mother received prenatal care during the first trimester, as reported by the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services, Center for Health Statistics, New Jersey State Health Assessment Data.

**Percentage of Births to Girls 10-19, 2011.** The percentage of babies born to girls ages 10-19 as a percentage of all births in each county, as reported by the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services, Center for Health Statistics, New Jersey State Health Assessment Data.

**Infant Mortality (rate per 1,000 live births), 2011.** The number of babies who died before their first birthday, calculated as a rate per 1,000 live births. As reported by the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services, Center for Health Statistics, New Jersey State Health Assessment Data.

**Child Abuse/Neglect Investigations (rate per 1,000 under 18), 2013.** Number of children who were alleged victims of child abuse/neglect. Calculated using data from the NJ Department of Children and Families and population data from the US Census Bureau, Population Division, Population Estimates Program.

**Children in Out-of-Home Placement (rate per 1,000 under 18), 2013.** Includes children under age 18 in all placements, including foster care, relative care, group homes, residential treatment and institutions. Calculated using data from the NJ Department of Children and Families and population data from the US Census Bureau, Population Division, Population Estimates Program.

**Juvenile Arrests (rate per 1,000 under 18), 2012.** Juveniles under 18 arrested. Calculated using data from the NJ Department of Law and Public Safety, Division of State Police, Uniform Crime Reports and population data from the US Census Bureau, Population Division, Population Estimates Program. Please note updated 2013 data were not available at the time of release of this report.

#### Early Care and Education

**% of Family Income Spent on Licensed Child Care for a Family with One Infant and One Preschooler 2013.** Median income data are as reported by the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey chart B19125. Cost data are as reported by the NJ Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NJACCRRRA), *The State of Child Care in New Jersey: A Profile of Key Child Care Indicators 2013*.

**Percentage of Children Passing 4th Grade Tests 2013-14.** As reported by the NJ Department of Education. Includes children enrolled in traditional public schools as well as charter schools.

**Percentage of Children Passing 8th Grade Tests 2013-14.** As reported by the NJ Department of Education. Includes children enrolled in traditional public schools as well as charter schools.

**Percentage of Children Passing 11th Grade Tests 2013-14.** As reported by the NJ Department of Education. Includes children enrolled in traditional public schools as well as charter schools.