



The State of Children and Families: 2009

Among Industrial Nations...

We should be proud that we are:

- 1st in Gross Domestic Product
- 1st in the number of millionaires and billionaires
- 1st in health technology¹

We have a lot of challenges:

- 12th in living standards among our poorest one-fifth
- 13th in the gap between the rich and the poor
- 14th in our efforts to lift children out of poverty
- 18th in the percentage of children in poverty
- 22nd in low birth weight rates
- 25th in infant mortality
- Last in protecting children from gun violence¹

Poverty

- In 2007, the poverty rate was 18% (one in six) for children under the age of 18. The total number of children living in poverty was 13.2 million children.² The poverty rate for children under the age of 6 was 20.8%.³
- Of these 13.2 million children, 5.8 million were extremely poor (total income for a family of four was below \$10,600).³
- Most child poverty is not temporary; 80% of children who are poor one year are poor the next year.⁴
- Families with two full-time working adults who earn an hourly wage at or near the minimum wage need supports such as food stamps and the Earned Income Tax Credit to be above the federal poverty level.⁵
- More poor families live in rural areas than in metropolitan areas.³
- The poverty rate for Black children (34%) is more than three times the poverty rate for non-Hispanic, White children (10%).²
- In most areas of the country, families must earn twice the federal poverty level (\$42,400 for a family of four) in order to provide their household with food, shelter, and health care.⁶
- In 2007, the poverty rate for female-headed, single-parent households with children under the age of 18 was 38%. However the poverty rate among these households varied by race/ethnicity: 46% among Hispanic women; 45.5% among Black women; 29% among non-Hispanic, White women; and 27.6% among Asian women.⁷

Violence and Crimes

- Among children and youth ages birth-19, eight are killed by guns in America each day.⁸
- In 2005, more than 720,000 young people ages 10-24 were treated in emergency rooms and urgent care facilities for injuries sustained from violence.⁹

- In 2005, among youth ages 10-24, violence (also reported as homicide) was the second leading cause of death.¹⁰
- In a 2005 nationwide survey, 36% of high school students reported being in a physical fight during the previous 12 months.⁹ In addition, 6% of students reported taking a gun, knife, or club to school during the 30 days prior to completing the survey.¹¹
- In 2005, youth ages 12-17 committed 437,000 violent crimes (17 crimes per 1,000 youth).¹²
- Among youth in grades 6-10, 30% reported being involved in bullying as either the victim or the perpetrator.¹⁰
- In 2005, firearms accounted for four out of five homicides and nearly half of all suicides among youth ages 15-19 (12 deaths per 100,000).¹⁰
- Among high school students, 11% of girls and 4% of boys reported having been forced to have sex at some point in their life.¹³

Unwed and Teen Pregnancy

- In 2006, the birth rate for women ages 15-19 increased 3% to 42 births per 1000 females. This increase is the first since 1991.¹⁴
- In 2006, there were 6,722 births to women under age 15 and 414,593 to women ages 15-19 (10% of all births).¹⁵
- During the 10-year period of 1995-2005, the number of pregnancies among Hispanic adolescents increased by 140%, and the number of live births to Hispanic adolescents increased by 178%.¹⁶
- In 2005, over half (56%) of the births to women ages 20-24 and more than a quarter (29%) of births to women ages 25-29 were to unmarried women.¹⁷
- Children born to young, unwed, low-income parents are at a greater risk than their peers for inadequate prenatal care, low birth weight, infant death, and poor developmental outcomes.¹⁸

Education

- In 2007, 7.8% of youth ages 16-19 were not working or enrolled in high school or college.¹²
- In neighborhoods where the poverty rate is highest, teachers are the least qualified.¹⁹
- Ten percent of those teaching special education classes are not certified to teach in special education; 98% of schools across the nation report special education teacher shortages.²⁰
- In 2006, the high school completion rate varied based on the race/ethnicity of the student: 96% of Asian students, 92% of White, non-Hispanic students, 86% of Black, non-Hispanic students, and 70% of Hispanic students completed high school.¹²

Nutrition

- Since the 1980s, there has been a steady increase in the proportion of children who are overweight. During the period of 1976-1980, only 6% of children ages 6-17 were overweight. Between the years of 1988-1994, this segment of the population increased to 11% and it continued to climb to 17% during 2004-2005.¹²
- Although government programs are available to support the food and nutrition needs of families, only 67% of the eligible population participates²¹, which is an increase from 54% in 2001.²²
- The food stamp program, officially known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) as of October 2008, reported 31.5 million participants in September 2008 the highest reported levels in the history of the program.²³ After hurricane Katrina and two other major hurricanes, the numbers were only at 29.85 million.²⁴
- In 2008, 60% of children participated in the free/reduced lunch program for a total of 18.4 million children. This is an increase of approximately 1% or 500,000 children since 2007.²⁵

Child and Teen Health

- Insurance coverage varies by the age of the child (younger children are more likely to have public health insurance and older children are more likely to have private coverage) and the race/ethnicity of the child (Hispanic children are the least likely to have any type of insurance). Overall, in 2005, the percentage of children who had some type of health insurance was 89%.¹²
- In 2006, 13% of children had been diagnosed with asthma at some time in their lives; about 9% of children were reported to currently have asthma; approximately 5% of all children had one or more asthma attacks in the previous 12 months.¹²
- The percentage of infants born at low birth weight (less than 2,500 grams, or 5 pounds 8 ounces) has risen steadily since a low of 6.7% in 1984. Currently, 8.1% of infants are born at low birth weight.²⁶
- In 2006, 29% of 12th-grade males reported heavy drinking (having five or more alcoholic beverages in a row in the past two weeks), compared with 22% of 12th-grade females.¹²
- In 2007, the NIDA reported overall decreases in illicit drug use among 8th, 10th, and 12th graders. However, there were increases of prescription drug use, to include OxyContin, Vicodin, and cough syrup (added to survey in 2006).²⁷

Child Welfare

- The number of children in foster care declined from 523,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2002 to 496,000 in FY 2007.²⁸
- Prevent Child Abuse America has estimated that the total annual cost related to child abuse and neglect is \$103.8 billion. This includes the direct and indirect costs associated with investigation of the reported abuse, prosecution of the perpetrator, and treatment of the victim. In the latter case, treatment needs are often long-term and continue into adulthood.²⁹
- According to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS), nearly 905,000 children were identified as victims of abuse or neglect. NCANDS data indicate children under the age of 3 are the most vulnerable for victimization and most perpetrators are women (as opposed to men), under age 40, and the parent (80%) of the victim rather than an unrelated caregiver (10%).³⁰
- According to NCANDS, in FY 2006, an estimated 1,530 children died as a result of abuse or neglect. Neglect (41%) or multiple forms of abuse (31%) were the most common causes of death and more than three-quarters of the victims were children under the age of 3.³⁰

Housing

- An individual must earn a Housing Wage of \$16.31 an hour and work full-time (40 hours per week, 52 weeks per year) to afford a two-bedroom apartment at the Fair Market Rent. The estimated average wage of renters was \$12.64 in 2005.³¹
- More than one out of seven Black children living in older housing has elevated lead levels in their blood.¹²
- During the last 2 decades, the number of families paying more than 30% of their income for housing rose from 15 to 28%. The number of families paying more than 50% of their income for housing rose from 6 to 11%.³²
- In 70 metropolitan areas, minimum wage workers would have to work in excess of 100 hours per week to be able to afford the Fair Market Rent of a one bedroom apartment in their community.²³

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The Center for Family Policy & Research is housed in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at the University of Missouri. The Center's mission is to create and disseminate research-based analyses to promote the well-being of families through informed public policy and program development.

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