



# The Well-Being of Children in the United States: 2017

## *The United States' Investment in Children<sup>1</sup>*

*Among industrialized nations, the United States is ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in gross domestic product yet is ranked:*

|  |  |
|--|--|
| last in relative child poverty                   | 21 <sup>st</sup> in 15-year-olds' science scores |
| last in the gap between the rich and the poor    | 25 <sup>th</sup> in 15-year-olds' math scores    |
| last in protecting children against gun violence |  |

## *Poverty and Children in the United States*

### *Children in Poverty*

- In 2015, 43.1 million people in the United States were in poverty, and one in three were children.<sup>2</sup>
- 19.7% of children were living in poverty in 2015, which was down slightly from 21.1% in 2014.<sup>2</sup>
- More than 6.5 million children (1 in 11) live in extreme poverty, which is an income of less than half the poverty level.<sup>2</sup>

### *Child Poverty and Race*

- Black and Hispanic children are disproportionately experiencing poverty. In 2015, one in three Black children and one in four Hispanic children were living in poverty, while the rate is one in eight for White children.<sup>2</sup>

### *Children in Working Poor Families*

- In 2015, 70.2% of children in poverty had at least one family member who works, and 31.7% have at least one family member working full time and year-round.<sup>2</sup>

### *Food Assistance*

- In 2014, over 46.5 million people from 22.7 million households participated in the USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).<sup>3</sup>
- 44% of SNAP participants were under age 18.<sup>3</sup>
- As of April 2014, 9.3 million women, infants, and children were enrolled in WIC.<sup>4</sup>
- In 2014, more younger children than older children were participating in WIC, with about 76% of WIC participants being under 5 years old.<sup>4</sup>
- Whites/Hispanics are the most represented racial groups among WIC participants (reported as a combined 58.7%), followed by Blacks/African Americans (20.3%), American Indians or Alaskan Natives (11.1%), and Asian or Pacific Islanders (4.1%).<sup>4</sup>
- During the 2014-2015 school year, 30.5 million children in schools participated in the National School Lunch Program, and 21.5 million of these children received free and reduced lunches.<sup>5</sup>

## *Violence and Children in the United States*

### *Child Abuse and Neglect*

- In fiscal year 2014, there were an estimated 702,000 victims of child abuse and neglect across the United States. This is 9.4 per every 1,000 children.<sup>6</sup>
- Of these 702,000 victims, 410,448 received post-response services and 147,462 received foster care services.<sup>6</sup>
- For children in their first year of life, the rate is 24.4 cases per 1,000 children.<sup>6</sup>
- The majority of child abuse and neglect victims were White (44.0%), Hispanic (22.7%), or African American (21.4%).<sup>6</sup>
- The most common types of maltreatment were neglect (75.0%) and physical abuse (17.0%). However, children may experience more than one form of maltreatment, and this is not reflected in the available data.<sup>6</sup>
- In fiscal year 2014, 1,546 fatalities from abuse or neglect were reported, and the estimated number is 1,580.<sup>6</sup>
- 79.3% of child fatalities involved at least one of the child's parents.<sup>6</sup>
- 70.7% of child fatalities were children under 3 years old.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Violent Crime***

- In 2014, homicide was the number three cause of death for 1 to 4 year olds and 15 to 24 year olds, number four cause of death for 5 to 9 year olds, and number five cause of death for 10 to 14 year olds.<sup>7</sup>
- Statistics from a 2013 nationwide survey indicate that:
  - 17.9% of high school students took a weapon to school in the past 30 days.<sup>7</sup>
  - 19.6% of high school students were bullied on school property.<sup>7</sup>
  - 24.7% had been in a physical fight in the past year.<sup>7</sup>
  - 14.8% had been bullied electronically.<sup>7</sup>
- More than 599,000 10 to 24 year olds were treated in emergency rooms for physical assault injuries in 2012.<sup>8</sup>

### ***Gun Violence***

- Guns are involved in the loss of seven children and teens in the United States each day, as of 2013.<sup>9</sup>
- In 2013, a child or teenager was injured or died from a gun every 30 minutes.<sup>9</sup>
- When compared to children and teenagers from 25 other high-income countries combined, children and teenagers from the U.S. are 17 times more likely to die by a gun.<sup>9</sup>
- Guns are the number one cause of death for Black children and teenagers and the second leading cause of death for all children and teenagers aged 1 to 19.<sup>9</sup>
- Black, Hispanic, American Indian, and Alaskan Native children and teenagers are at disproportionate risk to die or be injured by guns.<sup>9</sup>

## ***The Welfare of Children in the United States***

### ***Foster Care***

- As of 2014, approximately 415,129 children were living in foster care.<sup>10</sup>
- This was an increase compared to fiscal year 2013 when there were 400,989 children living in foster care.<sup>10</sup>
- 55% of these cases were labeled with the goal of family reunification. The second largest group (25%) had the goal of adoption.<sup>10</sup>
- 46% of children who left foster care in 2014 were in foster care for less than one year.<sup>10</sup>
- The median age of children in foster care as of 2014 was 8.0 years.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Adoptions***

- 119,514 children were adopted in the United States in 2012. This was a 14% decrease from 2008.<sup>11</sup>
- The number of intercountry adoptions has been declining as well, with 8,650 children being adopted from foreign countries by United States citizens. This is a decrease of 50% from 2008.<sup>11</sup>

## ***The Health of Children in the United States***

### ***Health Insurance***

- Insurance coverage varies by the race/ethnicity of the child, with Hispanic children being more likely to be uninsured (10%) than White/non-Hispanic (4%) and Black/non-Hispanic children (4%). White/non-Hispanic children were the most likely to have private insurance (68%).<sup>12</sup>
- For 2015, it is estimated that 48% of children ages 0 to 18 were covered by employer health insurance, 39% by Medicaid, and 5% were uninsured.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Obesity and Overweight***

- In the past 30 years, the number of children with obesity ages 6 to 11 has more than doubled, jumping from 7% in 1980 to 18% in 2012.<sup>14</sup>
- The number of adolescents with obesity ages 12 to 19 years old has quadrupled since 1980, growing from 5% to 21% in 2012.<sup>14</sup>
- As of 2012, more than one third of children and adolescents were either overweight or obese.<sup>14</sup>

### ***Teen Pregnancy***

- As of 2014, 249,078 babies were born to mothers aged 15 to 19 years old. This birth rate of 24.2 per 1,000 women at these ages dropped 9% from 2013.<sup>15</sup>
- The teen pregnancy rate varies by racial/ethnic group. As of 2014, non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic teen birth rates were more than two times the rate for non-Hispanic whites. For American Indian/Alaska Natives, the rate is 1.5 times the non-Hispanic white rate.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Illegal Substance Use***

- In 2015, illicit drug use among 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders dropped to 5.4%, 9.8%, and 14.3%, respectively.<sup>16</sup>
- However, there was also a decrease in perceived risk of harm and disapproval of the use of some substances, such as ecstasy, bath salts, and inhalants.<sup>16</sup>
- Compared to 2011, marijuana use has also declined among 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders, but the rate did not change for 12<sup>th</sup> graders.<sup>16</sup>
- Daily marijuana use is greater than cigarette use for 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders.<sup>16</sup>
- Alcohol use and binge drinking also decreased for all grades, yet in the past year 17.6% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders, 38.3% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and 55.6% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders used alcohol.<sup>16</sup>

## ***Education of Children in the United States***

### ***Student Enrollment***

- During the 2013-2014 school year, 50 million students were enrolled in public schools.<sup>17</sup>
- Between the 2003-2004 and 2013-2014 school years, public school enrollment increased in 30 states and the District of Columbia, while it decreased in 20 states.<sup>17</sup>
- In 2013-2014, 5.4 million students were enrolled in private schools, and 2.5 million were enrolled in charter schools.<sup>17</sup>

### ***English Language Learners***

- In the 2013-2014 school year, 4.5 million (9.3%) students in public schools were English language learners.<sup>18</sup>
- Five of the six states with the highest percentages of English language learning students are in the West.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Special Needs Students***

- In the 2013-2014 school year, approximately 13% of public school students were receiving special education services (6.5 million youth from ages 3 to 21).<sup>19</sup>
- The largest group of these students (35%) had specific learning disabilities, referring to a disorder in which at least one psychological process related to language use or understanding is impaired.<sup>19</sup>

### ***Student Participation in Public Schools by Race or Ethnicity***

- Between fall 2003 and fall 2013, the percentage of White students in public elementary and secondary schools decreased from 59 to 50%. The percentage is estimated to keep decreasing to 46% in 2025.<sup>20</sup>
- The percentage of public school students who are Hispanic increased from 19 to 25% during that same period, while the percentage of Black students slightly decreased from 17 to 16%. The percentage of American Indian/Alaskan Native students stayed at 1%.<sup>20</sup>

### ***Post-Secondary Education Trends***

- Enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions continues to increase. In 2014, 17.3 million undergraduates were enrolled, and this number is expected to reach 19.8 million by 2025.<sup>21</sup>
- The average cost of attendance for full-time students in 2013-14 was \$12,750 for 4-year public institutions, \$24,690 for 4-year private nonprofit institutions, and \$21,000 for 4-year private for-profit institutions.<sup>22</sup>

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The Center for Family Policy & Research is housed in the Department of Human Development and Family Science 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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