

The Child Indicator

THE CHILD, YOUTH, AND FAMILY INDICATORS NEWSLETTER

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Violence in the Lives of Children & Youth

National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence

The first-ever National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence is the most comprehensive look to date at the national incidence and prevalence of these experiences. It was sponsored in 2008 by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), and supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Respondents were youth ages 10-17, and adult caregivers of children age nine and younger. Both a nationally representative sample, and an oversample of African-American, Hispanic, and low-income households, were included.

Past-year and lifetime exposure to violence was defined broadly to encompass conventional crime, child maltreatment (abuse/neglect), victimization by peers and siblings, sexual victimization, witnessing violence, school violence and threats, and Internet victimization. Research has established that children in the U.S. are more likely than adults to be exposed to violence and crime, and that such exposure can do lasting physical, mental, and emotional harm.

The survey's results are consistent in many cases with what previous, less comprehensive surveys have shown, but also

include some striking new findings:

- More than 60 percent of children were exposed to violence within the past year, either directly (i.e., as victims), or indirectly (e.g., as witnesses, or by hearing of threats or acts against people close to them).
- Nearly half of children and adolescents surveyed were assaulted at least once in the previous year. About one-quarter had witnessed an act of violence, and nearly one in ten had seen a family member assaulted by another family member.
- Lifetime exposures to violence were higher: for example, among 14-17-year-olds, more than one-third had seen a parent assaulted, and nearly one in five girls had experienced sexual assault or attempted sexual assault.

The survey's sponsors point out that the data likely understate children's actual exposure to violence because they rely on family members to report incidents, some of which may be undisclosed, minimized, or not recalled.

More information is available at: www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/227744.pdf.

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Indicators of School Crime & Safety: 2009

This report is produced annually by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). Data are drawn from a variety of sources, including national surveys of students, teachers, and principals. The report covers student and teacher victimization, including threats and bullying; fighting and weapon-carrying; student perceptions of personal safety at school; school conditions; disciplinary actions; and the availability and student use of drugs and alcohol.

Highlights of the report:

- The rate of crime at school (for students ages 12-18) has changed little between 2004 and 2007 (the most recent data reported); however, the 2007 rate is lower than in 1992.
- Students ages 12-18 were the victims of about 1.5 million nonfatal crimes at school in 2007.
- During the 2007-08 school year, 75 percent of public schools reported at least one incident of violent crime.
- Twenty-three percent of students ages 12-18 reported in 2007 there were gangs at their schools.
- In 2007, nearly a third (32 percent) reported having been bullied at school during the school year.

The report is available at: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2010/2010012.pdf>.

Sexual Victimization in Juvenile Facilities: First Look

More than 26,000 adjudicated youth are held nationwide in juvenile facilities. Some of these are state-operated; others are non-state facilities, operated by local jurisdictions or privately. Ninety-one percent of youth in these facilities are male. Demographics on employees at these facilities are not available comprehensively, but among state-operated facilities men comprise 58 percent of staff.

This report shares findings from the first National Survey of Youth in Custody (NSYC), conducted between June 2008 and April 2009 for the Bureau of Justice Statistics, as required by 2003 federal legislation. The NSYC used a computer-assisted self-interview technique to ensure confidentiality and fuller reporting by youth. A sampling of findings:

- Based on the survey sample, the report estimates that 12 percent of these youth experienced one or more incidents of sexual victimization by another youth or facility staff in the past 12 months, or since admission (if they were held fewer than 12 months at the time of the survey).
- About four times as many youth (about 10 percent of the total) reported being victimized by facility staff as those whose reports involved other youth (about three percent).
- More than half of sexual contact with staff was not explicitly coerced (i.e., did not involve force, threats of force, or other forms of pressure).

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- Almost all (95 percent) of the reported staff sexual misconduct was ascribed to female staff.
- Victimization by other youth was more prevalent among youth with a sexual orientation other than heterosexual.
- Male youth were more likely than females to report sexual activity with facility staff, whereas female youth were more likely than males to report forced sexual activity with other youth.
- Among victims of staff sexual misconduct, 88 percent had been victimized more than once by staff, and 27 percent more than 10 times.

The report is available at: <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/svjfry09.pdf>

Fourth National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect (NIS-4)

This periodic survey from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides the only nationally representative data on child maltreatment that use definitions of abuse and neglect standardized across time, and across jurisdictions. Updating the last NIS report, which published data pertaining to 1993, the NIS-4 effort collected data in 2005 and 2006, drawn both from child protective service agencies, and from “sentinel” community professionals.

The NIS uses two definitional standards. The Harm Standard is the more stringent, requiring demonstrable harm in order for a case to be classed as abuse or neglect. The Endangerment Standard is more inclusive, counting children not yet harmed but thought by sentinels to be endangered, and those where a CPS investigation substantiated or indicated their maltreatment.

Findings from the latest report include show some good news, while other trends are unchanged or worsening:

- Under the Harm Standard definition, the rate of child maltreatment declined by 26 percent between 1993 and 2005-2006 (from 23.1 to 17.1 per thousand children). Among types of abuse, the decline in sexual abuse was greatest (a 44 percent change in rates).
- Under the Endangerment Standard, no statistically reliable change in the overall incidence of maltreatment was noted between the two time periods. However, by sub-category, there were decreases in abuse but increases in emotional neglect.
- For the first time in this study series, race differences in the incidence of maltreatment were found. Specifically, rates of maltreatment for black children were significantly higher than rates for whites and Hispanics. These differences were present under both definitional standards.

To view the report’s executive summary, go to: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/abuse_neglect/natl_incid/nis4_report_exec_summ_pdf_jan2010.pdf

New State-Level Indicator Reports

State indicator report on fruits and vegetables, 2009: CDC

A first-ever compilation of indicators related to consumption of fruit and vegetables and related policies and environmental supports, has been released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In CDC's words, "fruits and vegetables, as part of a healthy diet, are important for optimal child growth, weight management, and chronic disease prevention." Increased access to, and availability of, fruits and vegetables are identified by CDC as key strategies to promote improved nutrition.

Data on adolescents (students in grades 9-12) come from the 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System. They show that, nationally, only about one in ten adolescents (9.5 percent) were meeting the Healthy People 2010 objective of eating at least two servings of fruit, and at least three servings of vegetables daily. Somewhat larger proportions met just the fruit component (32 percent) of the objective, or just the vegetable component (13 percent). Among the states, the share of students meeting the fruits-and-vegetables-combined goal ranged from 5.2 percent (Arkansas) to 11.4 percent (Vermont).

Policy and environmental indicators with particular relevance for youth include the percentage of middle and high schools that offer fruits and non-fried vegetables as alternatives in vending machines and school stores, and state-level policies supporting farm-to-school programs.

More information is available at: www.cdc.gov/Features/FruitsAndVeggies/.

Food Hardship

New data on "food hardship" are available for the nation, states, Metropolitan Statistical Areas, and all congressional districts, from responses collected in late 2009 for the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index, and analyzed by the Food Research Action Council. The survey used a question that is similar to one of the items the federal government uses in its annual survey of food security: "Have there been times in the past twelve months when you did not have enough money to buy food that you or your family needed?"

The report gives information for households with and without children. Food hardship was reported by 24.1 percent of households with children, and 14.9 percent of those without children. 20 states (including the District of Columbia) had overall rates of food hardship of 20 percent or higher.

More information is available at: www.frac.org.

Guttmacher Institute Report on U.S. Teen Pregnancies, Births, and Abortions

As they have for many years, the Guttmacher Institute prepares comprehensive data on teen pregnancy, using data from federal sources as well as abortion providers to produce estimates of frequencies and rates. (Pregnancies are the sum of births, abortions, and miscarriages.) Tables include state-level as well as national data, and breakouts by race/ethnicity and age group. Some highlights of this year's report ("U.S. Teenage Pregnancies, Births and Abortions: National and State Trends and Trends by Race and Ethnicity"):

- Following lows reached in 2005, both the national pregnancy rate and the abortion rate for females ages 15-19 rose slightly in 2006, mirroring the previously reported rise in the birth rate that began in 2006 and continued in 2007.

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- The pregnancy rate for this age group peaked in 1990, the abortion rate in 1988, and the birth rate in 1991.
- The latest state data are for 2005. They show that teen pregnancy rates declined in every state but North Dakota, between 1988 and 2005.
- The proportion of teen pregnancies ending in abortion varies widely by state, from more than half to fewer than 15 percent.

The report is available at: www.guttmacher.org/pubs/USTPTrends.pdf.

Why Rural Matters, 2009: State and Regional Challenges

The Rural School and Community Trust describes itself as “the leading national nonprofit organization addressing the crucial relationship between good schools and thriving communities.” Published every other year, *Why Rural Matters* looks at the contexts and conditions of rural education in all 50 states.

As of the 2006-07 school year, more than nine million public school students (about one in five) were enrolled in rural school districts. Indicators in the report (25 in all) describe states in five areas: the importance of rural education; the diversity of rural students and their families; the educational policy context impacting rural schools; the educational outcomes of students attending rural schools; and the characteristics of school districts with concentrated poverty. Within each of the five “gauges”, states’ rankings are averaged to produce a gauge ranking, and these are in turn combined to determine an overall rank—the Rural Education Priority ranking. For example, in terms of the place of rural education in the overall public education system, Maine and South Dakota have the most urgent need for attention; when it comes to educational outcomes, Alaska and Alabama are among those deemed most urgent for policymakers to address. Among the states doing best (i.e., ranked lowest) on the overall rankings (Rural Education Priority) are most of the New England states, Maryland, and several Midwestern states.

More information is available at: www.ruraledu.org/whyruralmatters.

Obesity prevalence among low-income, preschool-aged children

Reliable data on childhood obesity among young children, particularly at a state level, are infrequently available. However, for low-income preschool-aged (2-4) children participating in federally-funded health and nutrition programs, the Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance System (PedNSS) produces annual data submitted by participating states, territories, and Indian tribal organizations. In most states the data come exclusively from measurements collected through the WIC Program (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children).

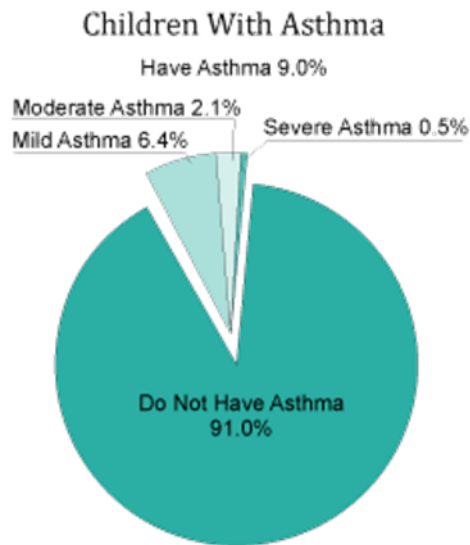
This recent report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that obesity among this population increased steadily from 12.4 percent in 1998 to 14.5 percent in 2003; since then, prevalence has remained essentially constant, with the 2008 figure at 14.6 percent. Among states, only Colorado and Hawaii had 2008 rates of 10 percent or less. California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Virginia all had rates higher than 16 percent.

More information is at: www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5828a1.htm.

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2007 NSCH Chartbook now available online

The Health and Well-Being of Children: A Portrait of States and the Nation 2007, a chartbook based on data from the National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH), is now available online from the federal Maternal & Child Health Bureau. National indicator data (e.g., on asthma) are portrayed in appealing text and graphics, and state data sheets (listing data on a number indicators) are also included.



2007 NSCH national data; graphic from *The Health and Well-Being of Children: A Portrait of States and the Nation 2007*.

In addition, the Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health has published a “national parent profile,” a summary of 2007 NSCH data bearing on parenting and family life.

The NSCH chartbook is available at: <http://mchb.hrsa.gov/nsch07/index.html>.

For the national profile on parenting and family life go to: <http://nschdata.org/Viewdocument.aspx?item=520>.

Recently Released Reports

State of Latino children and youth in the U.S.: NCLR

The National Council of La Raza (NCLR) has produced a fact sheet on Latino children and youth (younger than 18) residing in the United States. In sheer numbers—currently 16 million—this group has doubled since 1990. Nine out of ten are U.S.-born citizens.

The report summarizes key indicators in areas of family composition, poverty and income, education, health, and juvenile justice. Most data are from 2007. Both strengths and areas of challenge for Latino families are highlighted. For example, the majority of Latino children live in two-parent families; however, they are under-represented in early childhood education programs, and have high rates of overweight and obesity.

NCLR will produce a larger, state-level report in 2010. More information is available at www.nclr.org/content/publications/download/60188.

Recent trends in late preterm births: NCHS Data Brief

The majority of preterm (less than 37 weeks' gestation) births are "late preterm"—i.e., within 34 to 36 weeks of pregnancy. Although these infants have a less elevated risk than those who are born even more preterm, they are generally less healthy than full-term babies. Late preterm infants are more likely than term babies to have complications, to require intensive hospitalization, to suffer brain injury, and to die within the first year.

This data brief from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) reports that the rate of late preterm births rose 20 percent between 1990 and 2006, from 6.8 to 8.1 percent. By state, late preterm birth rates in 2005-2006 ranged from less than six percent (CT, VT) to more than 10 percent (AL, LA, MS).

Reasons for the recent increase are not clear, but probably involve many factors. Among those may be concurrent changes in labor and delivery practices, including greater use of induced labor, and a rise in the proportion of late preterm births with a cesarean delivery.

More information is at: www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db24.pdf.

Basic facts about low-income children, 2008: NCCP Report

Using the latest available data (2008, from the March 2009 Current Population Survey), the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) has released a fact sheet on low-income children in the U.S. While 19 percent of children under 18 live in families that are poor, according to the federal poverty guidelines, more than four in ten (41 percent) live in low-income families, defined as those with incomes up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

The report further breaks down the data by child age, race/ethnicity, parents' country of birth, parental education, and other variables.

The fact sheet is available at: http://nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_892.pdf.

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Pediatrics Special Supplement: NSCSHCN

The 2005-2006 National Survey of Children with Special Health Care Needs (NSCHCN) is the largest ever done on the health of this population, and produces estimates for all 50 states and the District of Columbia, as well as national-level data. Funded by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau and the National Center for Health Statistics, the telephone survey polled parents or guardians of children younger than 18.

A special issue of Pediatrics is devoted to analyses of NSCHCN data, with 15 articles touching on epidemiologic and public health issues at national and state levels. Examples of topics included are unmet health care needs among children with neurologic conditions, the association of family-provider relations with family/child outcomes, and oral health care.

The special issue supplement (December, 2009) is available at: http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/vol124/Supplement_4/.

Kaiser media study

Few would dispute the claim of this Kaiser Family Foundation report that, “media are among the most powerful forces in young people’s lives today.” Based on a national sample of U.S. youth (ages 8-18), it explores their use (including media multitasking) of TV, computers, video games, music, print, cell phones, and movies.

Since the last study-wave in 2004, children are spending an average of two-and-a-quarter more hours per day with media content: seven-and-a-half-hours a day, total, and nearly 11 hours daily when accounting for multitasking. Television still accounts for the single largest share of time (nearly four-and-a-half hours daily), but time spent with music/audio content has grown by 47 minutes, to two-and-a-half hours, and computer-time has increased by 27 minutes daily, to nearly an hour-and-a-half. Time spent with print has declined by five minutes—a non-statistically significant amount. Twenty percent of all media consumption (more than two hours daily) occurs on mobile devices.

More information is at: www.kff.org/entmedia/upload/8010.pdf.

Report to Congress: Vulnerable Children in Developing Countries

The Assistance for Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children in Developing Countries Act of 2005 called for a comprehensive, coordinated, and effective U.S. government response to what is a global issue. This third annual report includes a Global Profile of Highly Vulnerable Children, with estimated numbers and percentages of children worldwide (or, in some cases, in developing countries only) who suffer from poverty, lack of food and nutrition, access to health care, disability, lack of adequate shelter, abuse, child marriage, and being orphaned. Most data are from 2006 or later.

More information is at: www.usaid.gov/press/congressional/2009/pl109-95arIII.pdf.

Volunteering in the U.S.

The September 2009 Current Population Survey (CPS) included a supplement designed to collect data on volunteering. Volunteers are defined as those ages 16 and older who did unpaid work through or for an organization.

Data are broken out by age group, including those 16-24. They show that 22 percent of this age group volunteered during the past year—a rate slightly lower than that recorded in 2005 (24.4 percent). Women were more likely than men to volunteer. Youth in this age group were more likely to have been approached by the organization, than to have initiated the contact themselves. “Educational or youth service” and “religious” were the two types of organizations most frequently named by young volunteers. For 16- to 19-year-olds “general labor” and help with transportation was the single most frequent volunteer activity, whereas for 20- to 24-year-olds this was youth mentoring.

See more at: www.bls.gov/news.release/volun.nr0.htm.

America’s Families and Living Arrangements

The Census Bureau’s latest release in this series, based on data from the March 2009 Current Population Survey, includes a wealth of national-level information on families and households, and highlights some of the effects of the current economic recession. Examples of topics addressed by the accompanying tables are:

- Living arrangements of children by marital status of parents
- Nativity (immigrant) status of children
- Children’s health insurance coverage
- Various types of families with children, by parents’ labor force status (including “stay at home” status)
- Children in households with opposite sex unmarried couples

For more information, see:

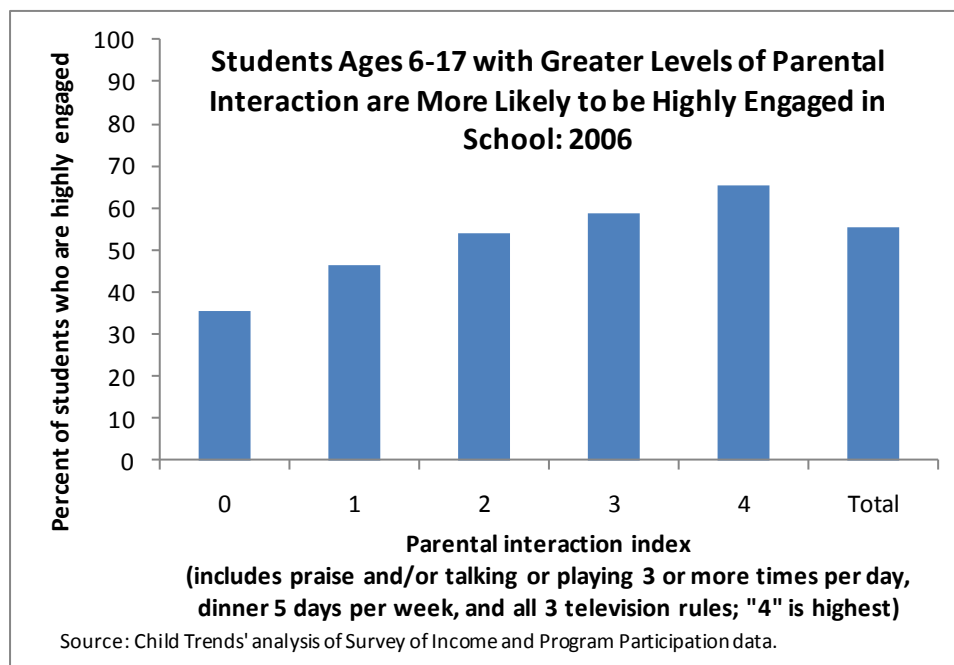
www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/families_households/014540.html

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A Child's Day: 2006

The federal Survey of Income and Program Participation has provided nationally representative data since 1998 for periodic reports on parents' interactions with their children, children's participation in extracurricular activities, and school engagement. Among the specific topics addressed in this report are:

- Parental restrictions on children's television watching
- Parents eating dinner with children
- The child's participation in sports, lessons, clubs, and religious activities
- School engagement (using an index developed by Child Trends)
- Parents' educational expectations for their children; and
- Whether children are academically on-track.



The complete report is at: www.census.gov/prod/2009pubs/p70-118.pdf

Briefly Noted

Greenville Family Symposium: The second annual such meeting, titled “Toward Inclusive Communities for Children and Families,” and drawing international participation, will take place April 12-14, 2010 in Greenville, SC. Sponsors are the Clemson University Institute on Family and Neighborhood Life, the American Orthopsychiatric Association, the International Family Therapy Association, and the International Society for Child Indicators. More information is available at: www.familySYMPOSIUM.com

2009 ISCI Conference: Sydney, Australia: The International Society for Child Indicators held its second Conference and Symposium, November 3-5, 2009. The conference marked the 20th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and brought participants from 23 countries and five continents to discuss the theme, “Counting Children In.”

More information is available at: www.childindicators.org

Child Trends DataBank with a new look and updated information

The Child Trends DataBank (www.childtrendsdatabank.org) is an online compendium of more than 100 indicators of child and family well-being. This resource has a new “look,” including data updates for many of the indicators. Additional features are new categorizations (by life-stage, or well-being domain), new links to state- and community-level data, more references to “what works” to make progress on an indicator, and improved graphics. Watch for further updates, along with new indicators, in the coming months.

About the Child Indicator

The goal of *The Child Indicator* is to communicate major developments and new resources within each sector of the child and youth indicators field to the larger community of interested users, researchers, and data developers on a regular basis. By promoting the efficient sharing of knowledge, ideas, and resources, *The Child Indicator* seeks to advance understanding within the child and youth indicators community and to make all of its members more effective in their work.

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Child Trends is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research center that studies children at all stages of development. Our mission is to improve outcomes for children by providing research, data, and analysis to the people and institutions whose decisions and actions affect children. For additional information on Child Trends, including publications available to download, visit our Web site at www.childtrends.org. For the latest information on more than 100 key indicators of child and youth well-being, visit the Child Trends DataBank at www.childtrendsdatabank.org. For summaries of over 400 evaluations of out-of-school time programs that work (or don't) to enhance children's development, visit www.childtrends.org/WhatWorks.

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