

The Child Indicator

THE CHILD, YOUTH, AND FAMILY INDICATORS NEWSLETTER

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New Editions of Key National Reports

KIDS COUNT 2011 Data Book: Assessing Damage from the Economic Storm; States' Ranks on Child Well-Being

The 2011 KIDS COUNT Data Book focuses on the condition of U.S. children and families in the wake of the recession. Drawing on a number of indicators of family economic security—including parental unemployment, median household income, foreclosures, financial assets, and health insurance coverage—the report documents growing economic insecurity and declining opportunity among families in the lower half of the income scale.

The introductory essay also argues for “two-generation” strategies that address the needs of both children and their parents, because “children succeed when parents succeed.” Some of the evidence-based interventions adopting this approach are programs and policies that increase family income and assets; high-quality early childhood development programs for children and their families; promoting childhood literacy; interventions to prevent teen pregnancy, and expanding access to prenatal care.

A signature feature of the Data Book is state-level data. For 21 years, KIDS COUNT has tracked 10 key indicators by state, ranking states on each, as well as on a composite index of well-being. **This year's report shows that, as in past years, there is great variability among the states on these measures, with the “worst” states performing two to four times as poorly on every indicator as the “best” states. This year, New Hampshire, Minnesota, and Massachusetts take the top three spots on the overall ranking, while the bottom three are Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama. Clearly, place matters for child well-being, in addition to factors such as race/ethnicity, family income, and many others.**

The 2011 KIDS COUNT Data Book, along with extensive, interactive data tables, charts, and maps for both national-level and state indicators, can be found at the KIDS COUNT Data Center: <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/>

America's Children: Indicators, and Indicators Needed

Twenty-two U.S. statistical agencies comprise the Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, established more than 10 years ago, and charged with improving the nation's reporting on the status of children. (Child Trends' Laura Lippman was involved in the Forum's founding, and helped develop the first several annual reports). The Forum's report this year has a special feature on adoption, drawing on data from three nationally representative surveys: the American Community Survey, the National Survey of Children's Health, and the National Survey of Adoptive Parents.

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America's Children: Indicators, and Indicators Needed, continued

From the perspective of experienced users of child indicators, among the most significant features of the report are the sections that highlight “indicators needed.” These lists represent a kind of “indicator development agenda” that, with the prestige of the Federal Forum behind it, stands a good chance of moving forward.

Here, by well-being domain, are these “indicators needed”:

Family and Social Environment

- Family structure (including information about cohabitation and family dynamics)
- Time use
- Social connections and engagement

Economic Circumstances

- Economic well-being (including multiple measures of income or consumption)
- Long-term poverty among families with children

Health Care

- Adequacy of health insurance coverage
- Quality and content of health care

Physical Environment and Safety

- Body burden measurements [indicators of the accumulation of toxins]
- Environmental quality
- Exposure to violence
- Homelessness

Behavior

- Activities promoting health and development
- Youth in the justice system

Education

- Early childhood development

Health

- Disability

“America’s Children: Key National Indicators of Well Being, 2011” is available at <http://childstats.gov/americaschildren/>

“A Child’s Day” According to SIPP

The Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) is an ongoing panel-sample interview of U.S. household members ages 15 and older, sponsored by the Census Bureau. It yields data that are nationally representative. SIPP recently released a series of tables of 2009 data that it dubs, collectively, “A Child’s Day.” The tables do provide insight into multiple dimensions (originally suggested by Child Trends) of children’s experience:

- About seven out of ten children who are between three and 11 years old live in households that have rules regarding how early or late in the day they can watch television, how many hours they can watch, and which programs they can watch. That proportion falls to about five in ten for children ages 12 to 17.
- About half of children ages one through five are read to seven or more times per week by one or more family members. However, nine percent of one- and two-year-olds, and six percent of three- and four-year-olds, are not read to as much as once a week. Hispanic children are less likely to be read to than are children of other ethnic/racial groups, as are children whose parents have not completed high school.
- The same two groups of children are also less likely than their respective counterparts to have ever been in non-relative child care arrangements.

Tables for “A Child’s Day, 2009” are available at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/children/data/sipp/well2009/tables.html>

Unintended Pregnancies: Three Reports Present New Data

One-and-a-quarter million unintended pregnancies occur each year in the U.S.—nearly half of all pregnancies. About 780,000 births result from these pregnancies. Taxpayer-subsidized medical care alone associated with unintended pregnancies totals more than \$12 billion annually. These figures are part of a recent report from the Brookings Center on Children and Families.

Unintended pregnancy is associated with a raft of negative outcomes for the women and children involved. It is difficult to disentangle the unique effects of unintended pregnancy from the other factors with which it is associated, but among the list of adverse outcomes associated with unintended pregnancies are poorer maternal mental health, greater maternal risk of physical abuse; and, for the children of unintended pregnancies, negative physical and mental health outcomes, and diminished educational attainment. More than four in ten of all unintended pregnancies end in abortion.

The report, “The High Cost of Unintended Pregnancy,” is available at http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2011/07_unintended_pregnancy_thomas_monea/07_unintended_pregnancy_thomas_monea.pdf

A report from the Guttmacher Institute provides additional context for understanding the trends in unintended pregnancy. Between 1994 and 2006, the unintended pregnancy rate fell by nearly 30 percent among higher-income women (those with incomes 200 percent or more of the poverty line). However, among poor women, the rate rose by 50 percent. Poor women were five times more likely than higher-income women to have an unintended pregnancy, and six times more likely to have an unplanned birth. Unintended pregnancies are also more prevalent among younger women, cohabiting women, and minority women. Conversely, they are less likely to occur among college graduates and married women. Nevertheless, rates of unintended pregnancy among poor married or cohabiting women are more than twice as high as those among higher-income women who are married or cohabiting.

The report, “Unintended Pregnancy in the United States: Incidence and Disparities, 2006,” is available at <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/journals/j.contraception.2011.07.13.pdf>

The damaging consequences of unintended pregnancies are all the more concerning because they are preventable. A recent research brief from Child Trends reports that young adults (ages 20-24) have the highest rates of unintended pregnancy of any U.S. age group. The report uses data from the National Survey of Family Growth to examine trends in the use of contraceptives among U.S. teens and young adults over the period from 2002 to 2008.

Contraceptive use among this age group increased in the late 1980s through the 1990s, but had much smaller increases in the 2000s. Almost all sexually experienced teen and young adult women report using some form of contraception at least once in their life. Condoms and various hormonal/long-acting methods are the most commonly used. The proportion of teens using contraception at first sex has increased from 67 percent for females and 71 percent of males in 1988, to 79 and 87 percent, respectively, in 2006-08, but changes in these figures since 2002 are not statistically significant.

Consistent use of contraceptives is reported by smaller percentages of teens and young adults. In 2006-08, among teens who reported having sex in the past month, 52 percent of females and 71 percent of males reported a condom was used every time they had sex. Reported use of hormonal/long-acting methods, and use of dual methods, was most common among white women, but among men there were no significant differences in contraceptive use by race/ethnicity.

The report, “Trends and Recent Estimates: Contraceptive Use Among U.S. Teens and Young Adults, is available at http://www.childtrends.org/Files//Child_Trends-2011_08_01_RB_ContraceptiveUse.pdf

A number of evidence-based programs can reduce unintended pregnancies. See <http://www.childtrends.org/Links/> for descriptions of many rigorously evaluated interventions.

“The Nations’ Report Card”: New Data on U.S. Students’ Knowledge in History, Geography, and Civics

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a project of the U.S. Department of Education, produces ongoing, nationally representative data on student achievement in a number of subject areas. State-level data, and data for some cities, are also part of NAEP. Recently released were 2010 data on assessments in history, geography, and civics, for fourth, eighth, and twelfth graders.

History

Average scores increased in all three grades, compared with scores in 1994, but (except for eighth-graders) not in comparison with 2006 scores. Less than one-quarter of students performed at the “proficient” level or above.

Geography

Average scores increased only in grade four, compared with scores in 1994 and 2001. About one-quarter of students performed at the “proficient” level or above.

Civics

Only students in grade four had average scores that exceeded scores in 1998 and 2006. About one-quarter of students performed at the “proficient” level or above.

Details on these and other subjects included in the National Assessment of Educational Progress are available at <http://nationsreportcard.gov/>

Examples of items at each grade level that students need to **succeed on to be judged “proficient”**:

Grade 4:

- History: Understand that canals increased trade among states.
- Geography: Recognize what prevents soil erosion.
- Civics: Identify a purpose of the U.S. Constitution.

Grade 8:

- History: Identify a domestic impact of war.
- Geography: Explain the effect of a monsoon in India.
- Civics: Recognize a role performed by the Supreme Court.

Grade 12:

- History: Understand Missouri statehood in the context of sectionalism.
- Geography: Explain the rate of natural increase.
- Civics: Define the term “melting pot” and argue if it applies to the U.S.

Global Roundup

ISCI Conference

The third biennial conference of the International Society for Child Indicators was held July 27-29 in York, England. More than 150 presentations from researchers in more than 50 countries filled a program that emphasized the wide-ranging interests of those who work with child indicators worldwide. Child Trends was represented in four conference sessions, presenting on topics ranging from the conceptualization of positive indicators, to child statistics in the U.S. federal system, to new analyses of data from the **National Survey of Children’s Health**.

Keynote presentations were made by Kathleen Kiernan, Professor of Social Policy and Demography at the University of York; and Peter Adamson, Senior Advisor to the Executive Director of UNICEF. Kiernan spoke on the importance of well-being in early childhood, presenting new data from the British Millennium Cohort Study on the influence of poverty and parenting on cognitive and behavioral outcomes. Adamson paid tribute to Jim Grant, the former UNICEF Executive Director who died in 1995. Grant was a firm advocate for using data to drive decisions, and was innovative in his ability to identify low-cost solutions (e.g., vaccination delivery systems, water treatment) for pervasive social problems within the developing nations.

More information on ISCI can be found at <http://www.childindicators.org/>

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“A living laboratory of British life . . .” Includes Data on Families, Children

Understanding Society is the name of a major British longitudinal social survey that will follow 40,000 U.K. households. Notably, the survey data include biomarkers, along with other health and social information, and will reportedly be integrated with other government data sets.

Data from the first wave (collected in 2009) have been released. Some highlights concerning children and families follow:

- British youth (ages 10-15) are, on the whole, quite satisfied with their lives. When responding on a life-satisfaction scale of zero to seven, their mean rating is 5.9.
- Material satisfaction is not strongly associated with life satisfaction. However, not living with one’s biological parents is negatively associated.
- The fewer the number of other children in a household, the greater the child’s life satisfaction.
- In families in which the mother is “perfectly happy” in her partner relationship, 73 percent of children say they are “completely happy,” whereas where the mother is unhappy in the relationship, 55 percent of children are “completely happy.”
- Bullying takes place both at school and at home; school bullying seems to have more negative effects on children’s behavior than does bullying at home.

The report, “Understanding Society: A Summary of First Findings,” can be found at <http://research.understandingsociety.org.uk/findings/early-findings>

Life Expectancy

Life expectancy in the U.S. varies widely across its 3,000-plus counties, and by race/ethnicity, and such disparities are widening. **What’s more, most counties are falling behind international benchmarks of progress on this indicator. These findings emerge from a recently published study. The authors used the concept of “international frontier” to describe the time-series of life expectancy in the 10 countries with the lowest mortality. Counties were assessed according to the number of calendar years in this series their estimated life expectancy was ahead of, or behind, this benchmark. For instance, if a county’s life expectancy in 2007 was closest to where the average life-expectancy of the 10 leading countries was in 1987, that county can be described as 20 years behind the international frontier.**

By the study authors’ calculations, the U.S. ranks 37th, as of 2007, in life expectancy worldwide; the U.S. was 13 years behind the international frontier for men, and 16 years behind for women. Counties ranged from 15 years ahead, to more than 50 years behind, for men; and, for women, from 16 years ahead to more than 50 years behind. Five Mississippi counties have the lowest life expectancies for women—below those for such nations as Honduras, El Salvador, and Peru. Another similar group of Mississippi counties has life expectancies for men that lag behind those of Brazil, Latvia, and the Philippines.

The study, “Falling Behind: Life Expectancy in U.S. Counties from 2000 to 2007 in an International Context is found at <http://www.pophealthmetrics.com/content/pdf/1478-7954-9-16.pdf>

South African Child Gauge

The sixth issue of this annual publication by the Children’s Institute at the University of Cape Town focuses on children’s right to participate and influence the decisions that affect their lives. Eight essays treat various aspects of the issue—including the role of the media, patterns of communication between adults and children, and children’s participation in running schools. Youth provided external review of the report summary.

The report is found at www.ci.org.za

Newborn Deaths Worldwide

A primary driver of life expectancy is infant mortality. Worldwide, deaths of newborns are declining, but they account for an increasing share of all child deaths. More than one million fewer newborns died in 2009 than in 1990, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), but deaths during the first four weeks of life now account for 41 percent of all deaths before age five, compared with their 37-percent share in 1990.

Nearly 99 percent of all newborn deaths occur in the developing world, and more than half in just five large developing countries (India, Nigeria, Pakistan, China, and Democratic Republic of the Congo). The U.S. ranks 43rd worldwide on neonatal mortality.

The WHO-sponsored study can be found at <http://www.plosmedicine.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pmed.1001080>.

Millennium Goals, 2011

All United Nations member states, and more than 20 international organizations, in 2000 adopted a set of goals and targets for which they agreed to be accountable. The Millennium Development Goals, to be achieved by 2015, include reducing child mortality, eliminating extreme poverty, and fighting disease epidemics, including HIV/AIDS.

A 2011 report shows that there has been real progress in many of these areas. For example:

- The global poverty rate is likely to fall below 15 percent, surpassing the 23-percent target.
- Some of the poorest countries have made great strides in increasing enrollment in primary education.
- Declining under-5 child mortality, led substantially by improved immunization practices, has resulted in 12,000 fewer children dying daily, when comparing 1990 to 2009 figures.
- There is improved access to clean drinking water.

Nevertheless, there are still many concerns:

- **Women's access to paid work lags far behind that of men, in at least half of the world's regions.**
- The chances that a child will not be in school are elevated for girls, for poor children, and for those living in conflict zones.

The report is available at [http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/\(2011_E\)%20MDG%20Report%202011_Book%20LR.pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/(2011_E)%20MDG%20Report%202011_Book%20LR.pdf).

Mothers' Index

The top ten "best places to be a mother" do not include the U.S. (it ranks 31st among 43 developed nations). The *Mothers' Index*, a composite of separate indices of child and maternal well-being, has been published for each of the past 12 years by Save the Children. **A total of 164 countries are ranked in this year's report. Reasons cited by the report for the less-than-impressive U.S. ranking include high rates of maternal mortality and under-5 child mortality; low rates of preschool enrollment; weak maternal leave policies; and lagging political representation by women.**

The "best" places to be a mother: Norway, Australia, and Iceland take the top three slots.

The report can be found at http://www.savethechildren.org/atf/cf/%7B9def2ebe-10ae-432c-9bd0-df91d2eba74a%7D/SOWM2011_INDEX.PDF.

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Facts of Life: Middle East

The MENA region—the Middle East and North Africa—is undergoing rapid, sometimes violent transformation, often led by youth (ages 15-24), who comprise one in five people in the region. Many of the issues uppermost in their lives—stemming from changing roles that affect the transition to adulthood—are strikingly similar to those faced by youth in the U.S. and other developed countries. Youth are staying in school longer and marrying later, at the same time that improved health has lowered the age of sexual maturity, and global access to media is accelerating the clash of traditional and emerging norms.

A recent report focuses on youth sexuality and reproductive health in this region, and includes indicators on literacy, school enrollment, marriage, and contraception, among others.

“Facts of Life: Youth Sexuality in the Middle East and Africa” can be found at <http://www.prb.org/pdf11/facts-of-life-youth-in-middle-east.pdf>

In Brief

Price of College Report

The value of post-secondary education for adult economic success, in addition to other aspects of well-being, is well-established. However, the cost of college may be out of reach for many U.S. families: two-thirds of college freshman report concerns about being able to pay for their education. A recent U.S. Department of Education report examines these costs in detail, as of 2007-08.

The average price of full-time undergraduate attendance varies by the type of institution, and—because of needs-based financial aid programs—by family income. The total price of attendance (tuition plus living expenses) is reported, along with the net price after subtracting grants and other forms of aid. The total average out-of-pocket net price at private nonprofit 4-year institutions was \$16,600, whereas at public 2-year institutions it was \$9,100. Students attending private institutions had the highest tuition payments but also received the most financial aid. Out-of-pocket costs for low-income undergraduates enrolled full-time were \$6,000 to \$9,800 at public or private institutions, and \$11,700 at for-profit institutions.

The report is available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011175.pdf>

Baccalaureate and Beyond

Of first-time bachelor’s degree recipients in 2007-08, two-thirds borrowed money to finance their post-secondary education, with the average amount at \$24,700. These degree recipients, and their experiences one year post-graduation, are the subject of the Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study, based on a national sample and sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics.

One-fifth of these students had parents whose highest level of education was a high school diploma or less. Just under half (48 percent) completed their bachelor’s degree within four years of enrollment. One year later, 30 percent had enrolled in another education program; 84 percent were working; and nine percent were unemployed, while another seven percent were out of the labor force.

The Study report is available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011236.pdf>

CLASP series: Keeping Youth Connected

The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) has launched a community profiles project, “Keeping Youth Connected,” that provides indicator data on youth in 20 low-income urban communities. The focus is on school, family, and community indicators related to youths’ ability to complete high school and achieve success in adulthood. Communities include Boston, Atlanta, Minneapolis, Denver, and Los Angeles, among others.

For more on this project, see <http://www.clasp.org/issues/pages?type=youth&id=0039>

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Tracking the Welfare of Youthful Offenders in Residential Facilities

As of October, 2008, more than 81,000 juvenile offenders resided in 2,458 facilities across the U.S. A slight majority (53 percent) of these facilities were privately operated; the balance were publicly operated. Privately-run facilities tend to be group homes with relatively small populations, whereas public facilities are more often larger residential treatment centers. Overall, the population of juvenile offenders in custody has declined—down 12 percent from 2006. However, crowded conditions are still a problem in some facilities: one in four juveniles (25 percent) was in facilities that were at or above their capacity.

The report, “Juvenile Residential Facility Census, 2008: Selected Findings,” is at <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/231683.pdf>

Marital Events

Having two parents in a committed, low-conflict marriage has been found to be an optimal setting for child development. Up until 1996, the vital statistics system collected data on marriages and divorces; since that time there has been a reporting void—a gap that, as of the 2008 data collection, has been filled by the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey. “Marital Events of Americans: 2009” includes marriage, divorce, and widowhood rates for men and women for the nation and states. The report also provides demographic characteristics of the adults who experienced these events, and a profile of children living with a parent who divorced in the past year.

By state, Maine and New Jersey had the lowest marriage rates in 2009 for both men and women, while Wyoming and North Dakota had high rates of marriage—about twice the rates in Maine and New Jersey. Divorce rates were also low for both sexes in New Jersey, and were as much as twice as high in Arkansas (for men), and Alaska (for women). The data show that recent divorce among women is associated with lower incomes than are found among recently divorced men, a circumstance that bears directly on children, since children are more likely to be living with women, post-divorce, than with men. Children whose parents experienced a divorce in the past year comprise 1.5 percent of all children. On average, they are more likely to be white, non-Hispanic, living in the South, and living in poverty.

The report, “Marital Events of Americans: 2009,” is available at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/acs-13.pdf>

Young Child Risk Calculator

The National Center for Children in Poverty has introduced its online Young Child Risk Calculator. Based on evidence from research that shows that children experiencing multiple sources of risk are especially vulnerable to poor outcomes, the Calculator lets users specify a state, a child age-range, and one or more risk factors (including multiple ratios of the federal poverty level, as well as low parental education, teen mother, unemployed parent, etc.). The application produces tables and charts showing the numbers of children experiencing each of the risk factors, as well as the percentages experiencing none, one, two, or three or more of the risks.

For example, in Virginia, seven percent of three- to five-year-olds are in extreme poverty (<50 percent of the federal poverty level); five percent have both extreme poverty and a single parent. Sixteen percent of Virginia children ages three to five have three or more of the tabulated risks. The site uses data from the 2007-2009 American Community Survey.

For more on the Young Child Risk Calculator, visit <http://www.nccp.org/tools/risk/>

Sexual Minority Students

In a “first” for the U.S. federal government, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has conducted an analysis of the well-being of sexual minority students according to a number of risk behaviors, across multiple geographies. Using data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, conducted between 2001 and 2009 among students in grades 9-12, the report analyzes data from seven states and six large urban school districts that collected information on students’ sexual identity, gender of sexual contacts, or both. Seventy-six health risks, in 10 categories (including violence-related; use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs; and sexual behaviors) were examined.

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Sexual Minority Students, continued

The findings show that gay, lesbian, and bisexual students face greater health risks in most of the ten categories. For example, prevalence of current cigarette smoking by site ranged from 8 to 19 percent among heterosexual students, but among gay and lesbian students it ranged from 20 to 48 percent. Similarly, among heterosexual students, between 4 and 11 percent had safety concerns that led them to not attend school at least once during the past month, whereas this prevalence was 11 to 25 percent among bisexual students. Students who have sexual contact with both sexes also have higher prevalence rates of many risky behaviors than those reporting contact with only the opposite sex. For instance, binge drinking was reported by 33 to 63 percent of students who had sexual contact with both sexes, compared with 16 to 44 percent of students who had sexual contact only with the opposite sex.

The report, “Sexual Identity, Sex of Sexual Contacts, and Health-Risk Behaviors Among Students in Grades 9-12 in Selected Sites—Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance, United States, 2001-2009,” can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/ss/ss6007.pdf>

Food Desert Locator

Getting a lot of recent attention from those addressing the problem of obesity is the availability (or lack thereof) of nutritious, affordable food-buying options, particularly in low-income communities. Various metrics have been offered to identify “food deserts”—those communities lacking adequate numbers of grocery stores, farmers markets, and other retailers offering fresh and healthy food.

A working group of the Obama administration’s Healthy Food Financing Initiative defines food desert as a “low-income census tract where a substantial number or share of residents has low access to a supermarket or large grocery store.” Low access is defined as “at least 500 people and/or at least 33 percent of the census tract’s population” resides more than one mile (or, for rural tracts, more than 10 miles) from one of these outlets.

A GIS-powered web application, the Food Desert Locator, produces maps, along with other associated demographic data (e.g., poverty rates), showing food-desert tracts.

To see the Food Desert Locator, go to www.ers.usda.gov/Data/FoodDesert/

Child Trends Databank

The *Child Trends DataBank* (www.childtrendsdatabank.com), a compendium of more than 100 indicators of children’s well-being and the context for their development, is a resource for researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and others. Along with trend data, for each indicator we summarize why it’s important, what we know about how to bend the trend in the desired direction, and links, where available, to state, local, and international data.

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. Past issues are available at www.childtrends.org/ci.

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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](http://www.childtrends.org/DataBank) at www.childtrends.org/DataBank. For summaries of over 500 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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