

**Oct 2013**

Publication #2013-40

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## NEW REPORTS ON U.S FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

### AMERICA'S FAMILIES AND LIVING ARRANGEMENTS, 2012

America's children today grow up in families that, in important ways, are very different from those even of a single generation earlier, let alone those of still earlier generations. The Census Bureau periodically summarizes selected data on family structure and household characteristics, most recently in August of this year.

Featured in this year's report are data on families' economic well-being before and after the recession of 2007-2009, with particular notice given to the perspective of children. Children in all types of families saw their economic well-being decline over this period, and it has not yet fully recovered to before-recession levels. However, children living with two married parents were less likely than those in other arrangements to suffer the worst economic effects. For example, nearly half of children living with their mother only, two unmarried parents, or no parents, were living below the poverty level, compared with one in nine children living with two married parents, in 2012.

Between 2005 and 2011, the number of households with minor children that had at least one unemployed parent increased by one-third.

Family structure is becoming increasingly regionalized:

- Single-parent families overall are concentrated in the South (and, among Asians and Hispanics, in the West).
- Married-parent households are more prevalent in the Plains States, the Midwest, and the West.
- Unmarried parents living with an unmarried partner are concentrated in the West and Southwest.

Married parents are typically older, better educated, and have higher earnings than cohabiting parents. Children living with cohabiting adults are less likely to be biologically related to them than are those living with married spouses.

The report is available at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/families/>.

## AMERICA'S CHILDREN, KEY NATIONAL INDICATORS OF WELL-BEING, 2013

The Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, a collaboration of 22 U.S. government agencies, oversees production of this annual indicators report, now 16th in the series. Domains, encompassing 41 indicators, include family and social environment, economic circumstances, health care, physical environment and safety, behavior, education and health.

Each year's report has included a Special Feature; 2013's is "The Kindergarten Year." Taking advantage of a nationally representative study of the 2010-2011 kindergarten cohort (the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, ECLS-K-2011), the feature spotlights children's performance in reading, mathematics, science, and approaches to learning. Among the findings are the following:

- Girls, on average, scored higher than boys on the reading assessment, and on teacher ratings of approaches to learning (such as persistence, adaptability, and working independently).
- Of all racial/ethnic groups tabulated, Asian kindergartners had the highest reading scores.
- Reading scores were higher among children who, in the year prior to kindergarten, had attended center-based care, home-based care with a non-relative, or multiple arrangements, than they were among children who had been cared for only by parents or other relatives.

More information is at <http://childstats.gov/americaschildren/index.asp>.

For another take on America's kindergartners, see Child Trends' news release here: <http://www.childtrends.org/news/news-releases/ready-or-not-here-comes-the-kindergarten-class-of-2013/>.

## THE LEAKY PIPELINE TO SUCCESS IN ADULTHOOD, REVISITED

### COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS: REPORT ON FEDERAL EDUCATION POLICY

The Council on Foreign Relations' "Renewing America" initiative has released Remedial Education: Federal Education Policy, which gives the U.S. education system a "weak report card."

According to the report, the U.S. is unique among developed countries in that the generation now entering the labor force is not more educated than the one that is exiting (due, in part, to rising numbers of GED recipients, as well as high dropout rates among college-goers). In a comprehensive analysis, the Council points out that, internationally, our country lags both at the beginning of the education pipeline (in pre-K enrollment), and at its finish (in on-time postsecondary completion).

With only about two-thirds of U.S. four-year-olds enrolled in preschool, we're playing catch-up with the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan, and Korea—all of which have, or have policies to ensure, nearly universal enrollment. More of our high school graduates than ever before are going into postsecondary education, but only slightly more than half graduate within six years, and our college dropout rate is the highest in the developed world. What's more, U.S. students pay the highest college tuition in the world, and are incurring huge amounts of debt (see related article below).

## INDICATORS OF WELFARE DEPENDENCE

Veterans of child indicators work in the U.S. will recall that, back in 1994, the Welfare Indicators Act required the Department of Health and Human Services to submit annual reports to Congress on indicators and predictors of welfare dependence. Recently released is the twelfth such report, providing indicators (in most cases) through 2009.

For reporting purposes, families dependent on welfare are defined as those for whom more than half their total income in a one-year period comes from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and/or the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program, and that income is not associated with work activities.

This is the first of these reports to include data that span the period of the last economic recession. Notable findings include the following:

- About five percent of the total population received more than half of total family income from TANF, SNAP, and/or SSI; this is the highest dependency rate reported since 1996, the year welfare reform was enacted.
- Although SNAP is the single largest program (in terms of participants) among the three, nearly two in three SNAP recipients have family members in the labor force. Further, most stay in the program for less than one year.

The report is available at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/indicators-rtc/index.cfm>.

What’s happening between these bookends of the education trajectory? As is frequently noted today, the explanation must include the pervasive achievement gap between high- and low-income students. Nowhere else in the developed world is the influence of parental wealth and investment on student achievement stronger than in the U.S., creating disparities that current public policy in this country (again, in contrast to other countries’) exacerbates rather than mitigates.

The report focuses its attention and recommendations on areas where federal education policy can make a difference. Within our system, local and state control have a great deal of influence on schools, but federal initiatives can shape change through promotion of exemplary and innovative practice, tax and lending policies, and efforts to create more explicit links between postsecondary education and success in the labor market.

See the full report at <http://www.cfr.org/united-states/remedial-education-federal-education-policy/p30141>.

## SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL

Echoing in certain respects the report from the Council on Foreign Relations, the authors of this report, from Georgetown University’s Center on Education and the Workforce, advance their thesis that “higher education reinforces the intergenerational reproduction of white racial privilege.” Using data primarily from the U.S. Department of Education’s Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, the report finds that college enrollment is increasingly stratified by race/ethnicity, with white students concentrated in 468 institutions representing the nation’s most elite four-year colleges and universities, and black and Hispanic students in the remaining 3,250 two- and four-year colleges, which are the least well-funded, and often open-access, institutions.

Specifically, since 1985, 82 percent of new white enrollments have been at the most selective schools, while 72 percent of new Hispanic, and 68 percent of new African-American enrollments have been at open-access schools. Among equally qualified students (as measured by their ranking in the top half of their high school class), there are great disparities in their subsequent educational trajectories: 30 percent of white students, but 48 and 51 percent of African-American and Hispanic students, respectively, either do not enter, or fail to complete college. Of white top high school students, 57 percent obtain a bachelor’s degree or better; this figure is 37 percent for the African-American top-performers, and 36 percent for their Hispanic counterparts.

The open-access colleges, moreover, are crowded, having lost, in recent years, both numbers of institutions and slots. They spend on instruction about \$6,000 annually per student, compared with \$13,400 at the 468 most selective schools. And their students overall are less likely to graduate with a degree within eight years of completing high school. The completion rate for the most selective schools is 82 percent, whereas it is 49 percent at the open-access institutions. The bachelor’s degree appears to be a key postsecondary threshold, since those who attain that credential go on to graduate school at similar rates, regardless of race/ethnicity.

The most selective colleges spend two to five times as much per student as the less-selective group, and their students earn more than two million dollars more, on average, over their lifetimes.

## STUDENT DEBT REPORT

It’s broadly known that student debt in the U.S. is large and growing—now surpassing the total credit card debt of Americans. Student debt has quadrupled in the past decade, to the point of \$1 trillion today. Average debt for college seniors is now \$26,600, according to this latest report from Demos. Translate that to a college-educated couple, and the \$53,000 in education debt results, over a normal lifetime of employment and saving, in a loss in wealth of nearly \$208,000, compared with those with no debt. An estimated two-thirds of this bite will come from reduced retirement savings, another third from lower home equity.

Student debt, like so many burdens, disproportionately falls on already disadvantaged households. While 48 percent of college students from high-earning households graduated with debt in 2008, 75 percent of those from low-income households did so. Fourteen percent of the latter group had student loan debt that exceeded \$30,500, compared with nine percent among the students from wealthier families. Among African-American students, 80 percent graduated with debt; among Latinos, whites, and Asian-Americans, 67, 65, and 54 percent, respectively, had debt.

The predictive models all used fairly optimistic assumptions about steady lifetime increases in income and assets, and decline in debt. Analyses were based on data from the 2010 Survey of Consumer Finances.

At What Cost: How Student Debt Reduces Lifetime Wealth is available at <http://www.demos.org/what-cost-how-student-debt-reduces-lifetime-wealth>.

Family income and parental education work in tandem with race/ethnicity in maintaining these inequities.

The report is available at <http://cew.georgetown.edu/separateandunequal/>.

## YOUNG ADULTS LIVING WITH PARENTS

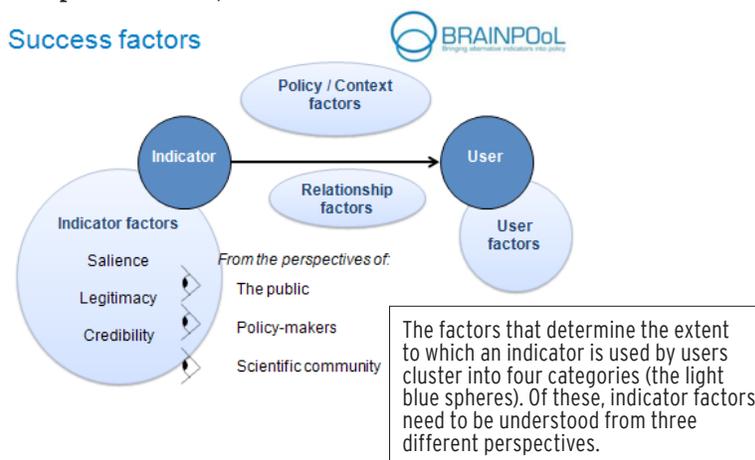
The “boomerang effect” is still with us: in fact, a record 21.6 million members of the Millennial Generation (ages 18-31) lived in their parents’ home in 2012. A Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data shows that 36 percent of this cohort were defined as residing with parents. Less well-known, perhaps, is that this trend is driven partly by increasing numbers of young adults enrolling in postsecondary education; those who live on-campus during the academic year are counted as living with their parents.

Men are more likely than women (40 versus 32 percent) to be returning to (or remaining in) their parents’ home. A related, contemporaneous trend concerns marriage: in 1968, 56 percent of this age group were married and living on their own; in 2012, that figure is 23 percent. Meanwhile, the proportion living in “other independent living arrangements” (for example, sharing housing with other unrelated adults) increased from six percent to 27 percent. Although, in 1968, nearly a third of young adults lived at home, they were more likely to be 18- to 25-year-olds, in contrast to today’s cohort, which is older, on average. Not surprisingly, economic forces also play a role: 45 percent of unemployed Millennials lived at home in 2012, compared with 29 of those who were employed. Read more at <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/08/01/a-rising-share-of-young-adults-live-in-their-parents-home/#overview>.

## INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

### WHAT MAKES INDICATORS SUCCESSFUL?

BrainPOol (“Bringing Alternative Indicators into Policy”) is a European Union-funded consortium aiming to expand the use of indicators in the public policy sphere, particularly progress indicators that reach beyond Gross Domestic Product. As part of this project, BrainPOol has produced training materials, including a brief presentation, titled What Makes Indicators Successful?



The presentation and related materials are available at <http://www.brainpoolproject.eu/research/>.

### DO YOU KNOW ABOUT MPINC?

One federally-sponsored survey that includes important information on young children and their mothers is the Maternity Practices in Infant Nutrition and Care (mPINC), conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) every two years since 2007. mPINC surveys all U.S. hospitals and birth centers with registered maternity beds. A key focus of the survey is hospital practices related to breastfeeding, but the data collected yield a number of indicators of evidence-based maternity care.

For example, facilities are scored (individually and on average, by state) on measures such as the following:

- **Skin-to-skin contact:** Uninterrupted time, immediately after birth, for mother and baby to get to know each other, and promote a good start to breastfeeding.
- **Rooming in:** The practice of having mothers and their babies stay together in the same room.
- **Active follow-up after discharge:** Home visits to check on the success of breastfeeding and help connect families with resources.
- **Teaching feeding cues:** Mothers are taught to recognize and respond to their infant’s cues, rather than feeding on a predetermined schedule.

The mPINC indicators are closely aligned with the WHO/UNICEF “Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding.”

Reports are available for each participating institution, and by state. For example, Maryland, on the most recent (2011) rating, receives a composite quality practice score of 70 (out of a possible 100 points), and is ranked 24th among 53 states and jurisdictions.

More information is available at [www.cdc.gov/mpinc](http://www.cdc.gov/mpinc). Selected mPINC data are included in CDC’s 2013 Breastfeeding Report Card, at <http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/data/reportcard.htm>.

## CHILDREN'S SOCIETY (UK) REPORT; A "GOOD CHILDHOOD"

In their work on child indicators, many developed countries take an approach quite different from that commonly used in the U.S. Here, we tend to rely on "objective" data (that is, information having a single, consensual meaning) about observable characteristics, behaviors, or events, such as those collected by the Census Bureau, the systems for vital statistics, or other administrative data systems. The percentage of infants born with low birth weight is an example.

In contrast, a number of our counterparts in the developed world—while not ignoring the available statistics on child health, education, family economics, and so on—consider these insufficient for portraying child well-being. In these countries, the aim is to include children's appraisals of their happiness and life satisfaction—their "subjective" well-being—as well as their self-reported psychological well-being (according to various dimensions identified by developmental research).

This ambitious agenda is exemplified by "The Good Childhood Report, 2013," the latest product of a collaboration between the University of York (England) and The Children's Society. This research team has tested a number of items with children (ages 8-17) in Britain. The following are some examples of these measures:

- "Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?" (positive affect/"happiness")
- "Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?" (life satisfaction)
- "Overall, to what extent do you think the things you do in your life are worthwhile?" (psychological well-being)

About four of five children in the United Kingdom (UK) scored above the mid-point on 10-point scales for the latter two items (answers to the positive affect item varied quite a bit, day to day). Drilling down further on psychological well-being, while 85 percent of children felt they were learning a lot, fewer (61 percent) felt they had a sense of direction in life.

On some dimensions—particularly satisfaction with school, personal appearance, money/possessions, and one's future—children's well-being appears to fall between the ages of eight and 15. At age 16/17, ratings in the domains of choice (that is, autonomy in some decision-making), family, and personal appearance show an increase.

Children with low life satisfaction are much more likely to feel there is conflict within their family, to have been bullied recently, to feel they have too few friends, and to feel they have a lot less money than their friends.

More than half the variation in children's life satisfaction was accounted for by three domains: family relationships, choice, and money/possessions. Into their early teenage years, children are increasingly dissatisfied with the amount of choice/autonomy in their lives, but become more satisfied with this dimension by age 16/17.

Incidentally, the Children's Society report cites international data on the life satisfaction of children ages 11, 13, and 15, showing the UK ranked at 14th among 29 developed countries. The U.S. is in 23rd place, ahead of Canada and Slovakia, but behind Germany, Portugal, and Latvia (among others). The full report is available at <http://www.childrengsociety.org.uk/good-childhood-report-2013-online/index.html>.

## EUROPEAN SOCIAL STATISTICS

The 27-nation European Commission (EC) publishes, through its Eurostat agency, numerous indicator reports. From a U.S. perspective, the data are of interest both for their points of connection with indicators in use here, and for shedding light on important differences between the European and American contexts.

An example is foreign language study. In the U.S. there is no comprehensive system for reporting on numbers of students who learn a foreign language in school. In all EC-member states, teaching of foreign languages begins in primary school. English is the most commonly taught, with more than nine in ten children studying English in countries that include Spain, Italy, Austria, Greece, and Norway. By secondary school, students are learning an average of 1.6 foreign languages, and in a number of countries (the Czech Republic, Norway, Finland, Romania) all, or nearly all, students learn two or more.

The full report is available at [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/product\\_details/publication?p\\_product\\_code=KS-FP-13-001](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/product_details/publication?p_product_code=KS-FP-13-001).

## UNICEF REPORT ON CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

The State of the World's Children—UNICEF's annual report on child well-being worldwide—has as its 2013 focus, children with disabilities. To raise up this population in the eyes of society and, in particular, policymakers, requires data that increase their visibility. However, there are significant measurement challenges in this arena, since child development is so diverse, common definitions of disabilities are lacking, and stigma still attaches to many disabling conditions. UNICEF's report emphasizes fundamental principles of inclusion and protection, but also proposes an action agenda that includes ratifying of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, opposing discrimination, and ending institutionalization.

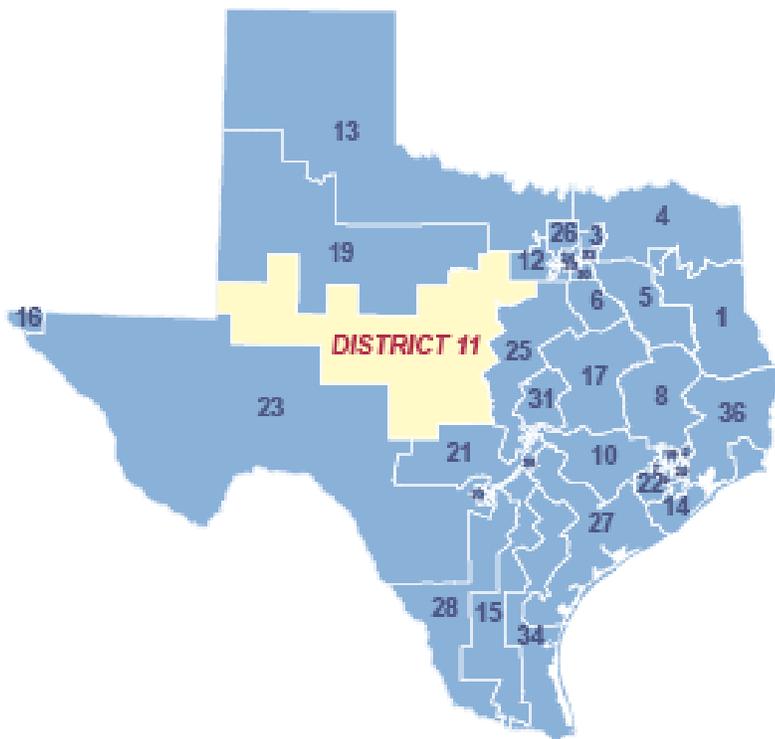
The report is available at [http://www.unicef.org/publications/index\\_69378.html](http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_69378.html).

**BRIEFLY: NEW AND NOTABLE**

**“MY CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT” APP**

The U.S. Census Bureau is moving assertively to make information accessible in a variety of formats. An example is this application, which can be shared via social media, or embedded on websites as either a full application or a widget. The interactive tool provides latest-available demographic and economic statistics for every district of the 113th Congress.

Find the app at <http://www.census.gov/mycd/>.



**PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES FOR A FEDERAL STATISTICAL AGENCY**

The Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT), of the National Academy of Sciences, has issued the fifth edition of Principles and Practices. The document names four principles “fundamental for a federal statistical agency”:

- Relevance to policy issues;
- Credibility among data users;
- Trust among data providers; and
- Independence from political and other undue external influence.

The commentary goes on to state that statistics that government agencies make publicly available are essential for advancing the economic well-being and quality of life of a nation’s people and to democratic government.

More information is available at [http://sites.nationalacademies.org/DBASSE/CNSTAT/Principles\\_and\\_Practices\\_for\\_a\\_Federal\\_Statistical\\_Agency/index.htm](http://sites.nationalacademies.org/DBASSE/CNSTAT/Principles_and_Practices_for_a_Federal_Statistical_Agency/index.htm).

**OOPS! GERMANY’S CENSUS COUNT**

In an illustration of the importance of comprehensive national data, Germany’s Federal Statistical Office recently announced that, as a result of its first census count since reunification, it had discovered that its population assumptions were too high—by 1.5 million residents. Most of the “disappearing” people appeared to be migrants (residents with foreign citizenship).

More information is at [https://www.destatis.de/EN/PressServices/Press/pr/2013/05/PE13\\_188\\_121.html](https://www.destatis.de/EN/PressServices/Press/pr/2013/05/PE13_188_121.html).

**OECD FAMILY DATABASE UPDATES**

The Organization for Economic and Community Development (OECD) maintains an on-line Family Database, which includes indicators in the domains of family structure, family labor force participation, public policies for families and children, and child outcomes. The following indicators have been recently updated and now include time-series information:

- Fertility trends
- Employment profiles over the life-course
- Gender pay gaps for full-time workers and earnings by educational attainment
- Gender differences in employment outcomes
- Public spending by age of children
- Public spending on childcare and early education
- Enrolment in childcare and preschools
- Childcare support

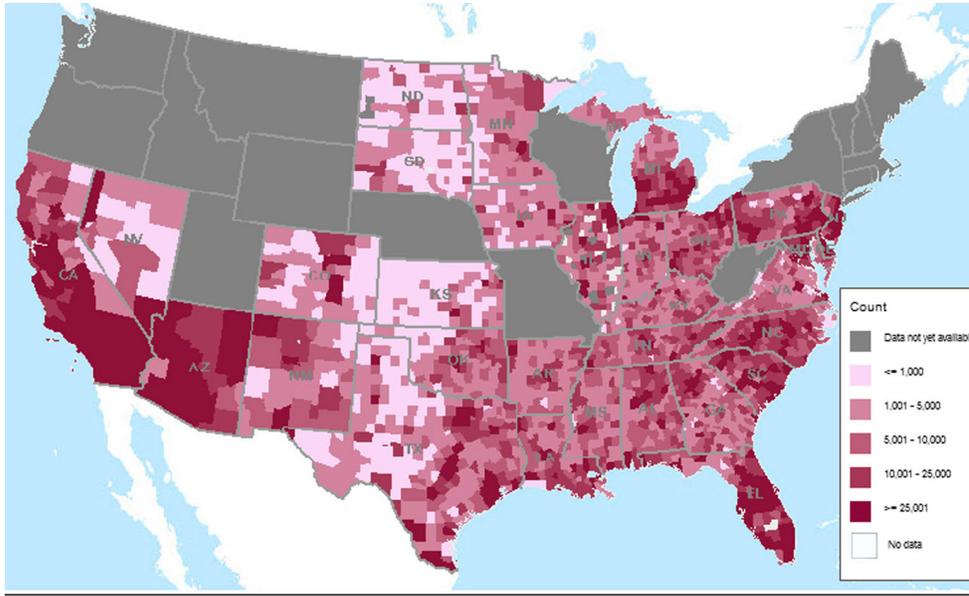
By the end of this year, 22 further indicators will be updated. The database now includes 67 indicators, and will have 70 by the end of 2013.

For more information, see [www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database](http://www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database).

## SNAP ON THE MAP

Participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp program) is at a record high. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers the program and offers an interactive map of participation (through 2011).

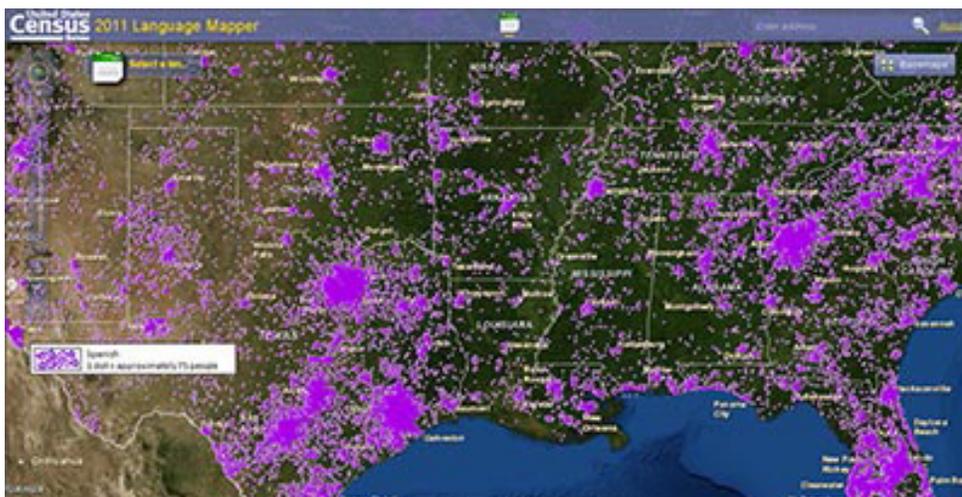
[http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-\(snap\)-data-system/go-to-the-map.aspx](http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-(snap)-data-system/go-to-the-map.aspx).



2011 total SNAP participants

## COLLECTING DATA ON LANGUAGE

The Census Bureau's American Community Survey asks respondents about languages spoken at home and, for those reporting speaking a language other than English, their English-speaking ability. Responses are coded into some 380 language categories. A Census Bureau product, the Language Mapper, shows (for 15 different languages) where people who speak them live. More information is at [http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/language/data/language\\_map.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/language/data/language_map.html).



## UPCOMING FROM THE CENSUS BUREAU

The Census Bureau has announced its release schedule for the American Community Survey (ACS) 2012 estimates, as well as the national income, poverty, and health insurance statistics for 2012 from the Current Population Survey:

- September 17, 2013: National income, poverty, and health insurance statistics.
- September 19, 2013: ACS one-year estimates.
- October 24, 2013: ACS three-year estimates (2010-2012).
- December 5, 2013: ACS five-year estimates (2008-2012).

## DATA FOR PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT: UPCOMING CONFERENCE

An "After the Leap" conference will be convened by PerformWell (a partnership of Urban Institute, Child Trends and Social Solutions) in Washington, DC, on December 3rd and 4th. The conference will immerse non-profit and public sector leaders, board members, and funders in the issues of performance management. Attendees will hear from the front lines of those who are building true performance cultures, as well as from national thought leaders speaking to what funders can do to support the "leap" to high performance. For more information, go to <http://www.aftertheleap.org/schedule/>.

## 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](http://www.childtrends.org/ci).

We welcome your comments and suggestions. All communications regarding this newsletter can be directed to [dmurphey@childtrends.org](mailto:dmurphey@childtrends.org).

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 website at [www.childtrends.org](http://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 <http://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 <http://www.childtrends.org/what-works/>.

Child Trends produces and distributes The Child Indicator with funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.