

March 2014

Publication #2014-08

IN THIS ISSUE

Tracking Children's Economic Insecurity

Along with Other Positive Trends, U.S. Teen Pregnancy Rates Continue Historic Decline

One More Reason to Look at Kindergarten

Groundbreaking Report on U.S. Infants and Toddlers

Equity Opportunities

Being Black is Not a Risk Factor

Global Gambit Realizes Some Gains

Where Girls are Going

ISCI is Growing

ACS Data Community

Do You Know KID?

New on childhealthdata.org

SIPP Redesign

Census Explorer

UNICEF Reaches a Milestone

HUD and DOT Launch Location Affordability Portal



TRACKING CHILDREN'S ECONOMIC INSECURITY

The Great Recession hit U.S. children hard: by 2010, 2.8 million more were in poverty than in 2007. Not just poverty, but “economic insecurity”—for instance, a parent’s loss of a job, particularly when the effects are not buffered by public or private assistance—can be harmful to children’s development.

In the face of constrained resources, parents may need to divert support from a number of development-promoting activities to meet their families’ minimum basic needs. Economic insecurity may also lead to increased parental stress, which can impair the quality of parent-child relationships, and lead to poorer social-emotional and academic behavior in their children. Economic insecurity can lead to other kinds of instability for children—for example, in child care arrangements, and housing. Poverty itself, as well as maltreatment (including neglect) and other forms of unresponsive parenting, can lead to a child’s experiencing toxic levels of stress that can damage multiple systems of physiological self-regulation, with health effects lasting into adulthood. Additionally, economic insecurity can reduce children’s access to both acute and preventive health care.

A recent study used Current Population Survey data to examine the degree of economic insecurity experienced by children during the Great Recession (between 2007 and 2010). Economic insecurity was an index measure, including economic hardship, employment, housing hardship, family structure, and parental health and insurance coverage. The researchers also created an index of receipt of public assistance, including participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance and school meals programs, income support, housing or energy assistance, and health insurance. Study results document increases in multiple measures of children’s economic insecurity during the recession, but also that disparities among subgroups increased during this period.

For instance,

- Both household and child food insecurity increased, but the shocks were greatest for children in families with low educational attainment and for black and Hispanic children.
- “Doubling up” in housing rose one percentage point for white children, but for Hispanic children it rose five times that amount.

by **David Murphey, Ph.D.**

Child Trends
7315 Wisconsin Avenue
Suite 1200 W
Bethesda, MD 20814
Phone 240-223-9200

childtrends.org

- Similarly, there was negligible change in the proportion of white children living in single-parent households, but an increase of three percentage points for Hispanic children.
- The share of children living in families with three or more markers of economic insecurity increased from 28 to 34 percent; and,
- By 2010, nearly a majority of children (49 percent) received benefits from one or more of the public assistance programs noted above.

The study report is available at <http://www.urban.org/publications/412900.html>.

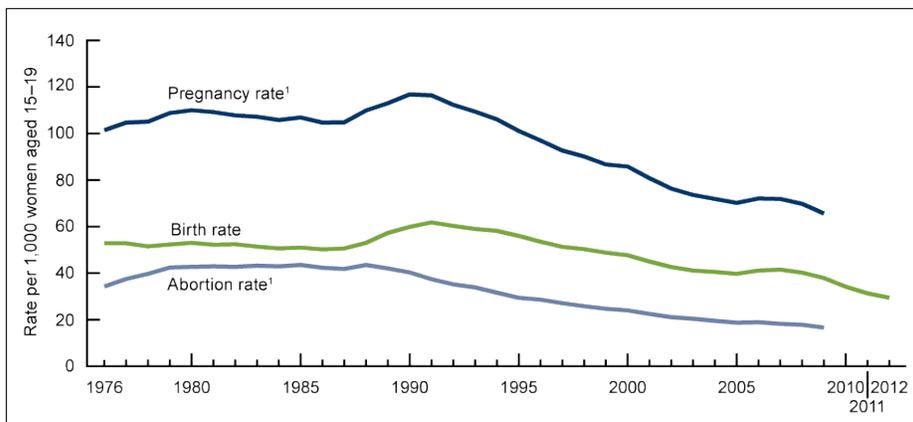
ALONG WITH OTHER POSITIVE TRENDS, U.S. TEEN PREGNANCY RATES CONTINUE HISTORIC DECLINE

Relatively few population-level indicators show trends over time that might be called dramatic; more often, progress is marked by stops and starts, occasional reverses, and uncertainty as to the robustness of any apparent direction. However, where child indicators in the U.S. are concerned, there are several exceptions that prove the rule.

One is rates of current *cigarette smoking* among twelfth-graders (down 50 percent since 2000); another is violent crime victimization (down 70 percent since 1993). Still others are *rates of child maltreatment*—with the exception of neglect—(down by 25 percent since 2000); *deaths due to motor vehicle crashes* (a 70-percent decline since 1980); *rates of fatal unintentional injury* (lower by 60 percent, since 1980); and *rates of placement in juvenile detention* (down 45 percent from 1997). There may be more, but these are trends that have held up over a decade or more, so we can be reasonably confident in their historic momentum.

Then there is *teen pregnancy*: rates have fallen by 40 percent since 1990, according to data recently released by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). New historic lows were achieved in pregnancy, birth, and abortion rates for teens in 2009, the latest complete data available. Moreover, teen pregnancy rates fell for all of the three major race and Hispanic-origin groups.

Figure 3. Pregnancy, birth, and abortion rates for teenagers aged 15–19: United States, 1976–2009, and birth rate, 2010–2012



¹Data not available for 2010–2012.
NOTE: Access data for Figure 3 at: http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db136_tables.pdf#3, and see reference 1 for more information.
SOURCES: CDC/NCHS, National Vital Statistics System and National Survey of Family Growth; CDC, Abortion Surveillance System; and Guttmacher Institute.

There are ample grounds to be concerned about young Americans; but those need not detract from the progress they have made on multiple, important measures of well-being.

The NCHS report is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db136.pdf>.

ONE MORE REASON TO LOOK AT KINDERGARTEN

We’ve highlighted the Rhode Island DataHUB in the past (*The Child Indicator*, Winter 2011) as a site taking an innovative approach to data analysis and communication. One of their recent products shines a light on what may be a little-known, but disturbing fact: in Rhode Island, absenteeism among kindergartners is greater than in any other grade prior to ninth.

Chronic absence in middle and high school is a well-established early-warning sign for failure to complete secondary education. Now, there’s evidence of its importance much earlier. In Rhode Island, a cohort of kindergartners was followed for seven years (provided they remained in the state’s schools). Chronically absent kindergartners, compared with those who attended regularly, had reading scores that were 20 percentage points lower, and math scores lower by 25 points. They were twice as likely to be retained in grade. By the end of seventh grade, they were more than twice as likely to have been suspended. And they were likely to have continued a pattern of chronic absence.

In the study, high absenteeism was closely associated with poverty. Chronic absenteeism was also particularly high among Hispanic children—nearly one in three.

What about national data? The DataHUB reports that only six states collect data on chronic absenteeism, and only three publicly report these data. Rhode Island does both.

See this “data story,” and others at <http://ridatahub.org/datastories/>.

GROUNDBREAKING REPORT ON U.S. INFANTS AND TODDLERS

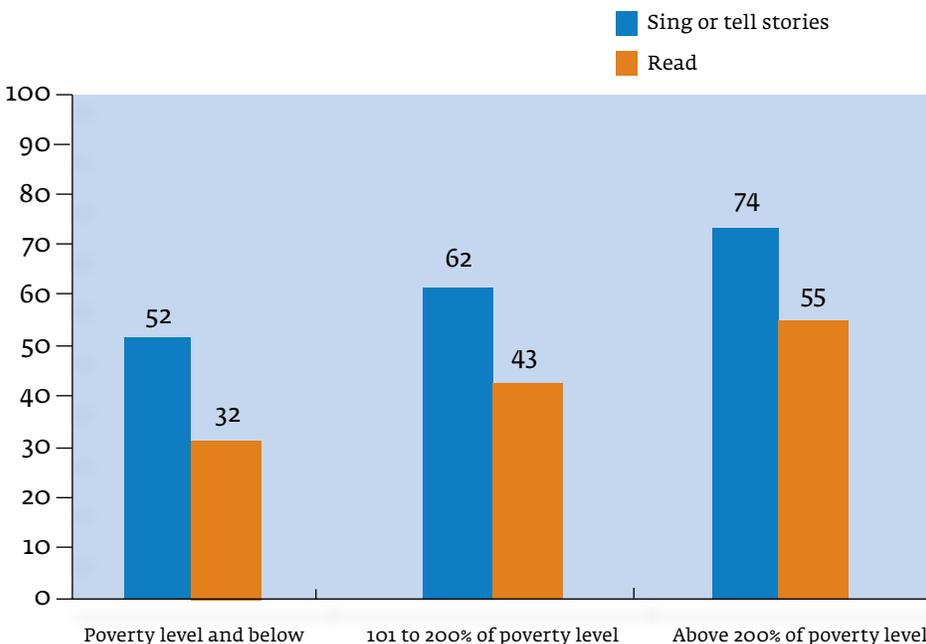
The Robert R. McCormick Foundation and Child Trends have released *The Youngest Americans: A Statistical Portrait of Infants and Toddlers in the United States*. The report draws upon multiple national data sets, and special analyses, to compile the most comprehensive look, to-date, at children in the critical earliest years of life.

More is known about this age group than ever before, but the systems and policies that serve them and their families often fail to take into account what the science says about promoting optimal development. For example,

- Infants and toddlers are particularly vulnerable to stress that, at toxic levels, can fundamentally restructure brain architecture and self-regulatory systems. Yet, the data show that infants and toddlers are exposed to high levels of interpersonal violence.
- High-quality early learning experiences are an important key to closing the achievement gaps already evident in the preschool years; yet, many families lack access to these programs.
- There are substantial gaps, by family income and race/ethnicity, in the frequency of parents' literacy-promoting activities with young children.
- Parents' needs—for protected time off from work, or for mental health services—too often go unaddressed.

Infants/toddlers with a family member who read, sang, or told stories to them every day in the past week (2011-2012)

Early Literacy Indicators



The Youngest Americans/ A report by The Robert R. McCormick Foundation and Child Trends

The report is available at <http://www.childtrends.org/?publications=the-youngest-americans-a-statistical-portrait-of-infants-and-toddlers-in-the-united-states>.

EQUITY OPPORTUNITIES

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR), within the U.S. Department of Education, recently released information from its Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) that provides estimates, at state and national levels, based on a sample-based collection in the 2009-10 school year. These data are intended to call attention to both the progress and the remaining challenges in closing opportunity gaps for students in various minority groups: Hispanics and students of color, as well as those with limited English proficiency, and those with special educational needs.

The CRDC has been conducted regularly (usually biennially) since 1968. However, the most recent collection is the first to include data, disaggregated by subgroup (including disability status), on many indicators, including the following:

- Access to rigorous courses required for post-secondary success,
- Retention in grade,
- Participation in SAT and ACT tests,
- Harassment and bullying, and
- Schools' use of disciplinary restraint or seclusion.

According to the report, more students were retained in kindergarten (116,000) than in any other grade except eighth (279,000). More students were disciplined for harassment on the basis of sex (114,000) than for race-based harassment (67,000). Thirty-two thousand students with disabilities received corporal punishment.

Later this year, OCR expects to release 2011-12 data from a census of all public schools, and will begin in the fall of 2014 collecting data from the 2013-14 school year.

More information is available at <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/>.

BEING BLACK IS NOT A RISK FACTOR

This provocatively-titled recent report from the National Black Child Development Institute is subtitled, “A Strengths-Based Look at the State of the Black Child.” Essays from a number of experts (including Barbara Bowman, Natasha Cabrera, Wade Boykin, and others) make a forceful case for recasting the deficit-laden frame in which children of color typically are viewed.

The authors don’t shrink from acknowledging the real risks black children face, but they lament a view that “risk is destiny” when it comes to their prospects. They provide evidence of a number of strengths (cultural, social, linguistic, psychological, and moral) that can characterize minority children. They suggest that negative expectations, as reflected in much of the “risk” literature, can be damaging to children’s lives.

One compelling feature of the report is its “Point of Proof” sidebars: summaries of exemplary programs, from Inglewood, CA, to Minneapolis, to Washington, DC, that illustrate how, when practitioners apply high expectations for youth engagement, and work in intensive relationship with them, great successes can occur.

The report is available at http://www.nbcdi.org/sites/default/files/resource-files/Being%20Black%20Is%20Not%20a%20Risk%20Factor_o.pdf.

GLOBAL GAMBIT REALIZES SOME GAINS

The Millennium Development Goals, a United Nations global initiative established in 2000, are approaching their target date of 2015. There are eight MDGs, most of which have direct relationships to child well-being. The UN recently published a 2013 report on progress, including these highlights:

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Poverty rates worldwide have been cut in half since 1990, meeting the goal. However, 1.2 billion people still live in extreme poverty (with income less than \$1.25 per day). About one in six children younger than five are undernourished and underweight. Young people have been most affected by the unemployment crisis accompanying slowed economic growth. As of the end of 2012, 45 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced by conflict or persecution.

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education. This goal is not likely to be met, mostly because of continued gender and urban/rural inequities. In 2011, however, there were 57 million children of primary school age who were not in school—many fewer than the 102 million in 2000.

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women. Gender disparities will not be eliminated by 2015, though some developing regions—the Caucasus and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, and South Asia—have achieved near-parity. In most countries of the world, women now account for the majority of post-secondary students. However, their education gains have not resulted in similar progress in their labor-market opportunities.

Goal 4: Reduce child (under 5) mortality. The target of a two-thirds reduction from 1990 levels will likely not be achieved, though the rate has fallen by more than 40 percent. In 2011, nearly seven million children under age five died, primarily from preventable diseases.

WHERE GIRLS ARE GOING

The Girl Scout Research Institute, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Girl Scouting, released *The State of Girls: Unfinished Business*.

Intended for Girl Scout councils, educators, policymakers, leaders of nonprofit organization, media organizations, parents, and girls themselves, the report summarizes data on numerous indicators in the areas of economic well-being, physical and emotional health, teenage pregnancy, risk behavior, education, out-of-school time, access to technology, and leadership.

The report is available at <http://girlscouts.org/research/publications/stateofgirls/>.

ISCI IS GROWING

The International Society for Child Indicators (ISCI) is an organization for researchers, data users, child advocates, and policymakers who develop and use indicators and measure the status of child and adolescent well-being. With a new campaign to recruit members, ISCI is offering a two-year membership. For more details, visit <http://isci.chapinhall.org/>. The next biennial ISCI conference will be held in Cape Town, South Africa, in September of 2015.

ACS DATA COMMUNITY

Users of the American Community Survey are invited to join this online networking site (similar to LinkedIn). It’s an easy way to learn what colleagues are finding useful, to get help on specific ACS-related questions, and share results of analyses of these data. You can sign up at <http://acsdatacommunity.leveragesoftware.com/>.

DO YOU KNOW KID?

The Kids’ Inpatient Database (KID) has data on hospital stays for children (up to age 21), and can be used to identify, track, and analyze national trends in health care utilization, charges, quality, and

Goal 5: Improve maternal health. The world will fail to reach the target of reducing the 1990 maternal mortality ratio by two-thirds. Regionally, however, Northern Africa and East and South Asia have seen declines of this magnitude. Among women who are married or in partnership, there are about 140 million worldwide who want to delay or avoid pregnancy, but who are not using contraception. The adolescent birth rate declined in all world regions between 1990 and 2010; progress was greatest in South Asia, and least in sub-Saharan Africa.

The report can be found at <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/report-2013/mdg-report-2013-english.pdf>.

NEW ON CHILDHEALTHDATA.ORG

Data from the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), Child Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) Supplement, are now available on the website of the Data Resource Center for Child & Adolescent Health. The 2012 NHIS collected nationally representative data on the use of complementary and alternative medicine by children between the ages of four and 17. Thirty-four CAM modalities were asked about in the Supplement, including chiropractic or osteopathic manipulation, massage, acupuncture, energy healing therapy, naturopathy, hypnosis, and biofeedback.

State-level estimates can be produced for the states with larger populations. State identifier information is not publicly released, but can be obtained through the National Center for Health Statistics Research Data Centers.

More information is available at www.childhealthdata.org and www.nhiscamdata.org.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

SIPP REDESIGN

The Survey of Income and Program Participation collects data on Americans' economic well-being, and includes questions about poverty and participation in public assistance programs, health insurance and medical expenses, family relationships, and other characteristics. A redesigned SIPP was launched in February, 2014. Changes were made to reduce the burden on respondents (interviews will occur annually, instead of every four months), save taxpayer dollars, and provide improved integration across topics.

More information is at www.census.gov/sipp/.

outcomes. The product of a state-federal-industry partnership, KID is the only such database for children in the U.S. that includes information from all payers. The 2009 KID (the latest available) has sample data from 4,121 hospitals in 44 states. Types of topics that might be studied using the KID are the incidence of rare conditions, such as congenital anomalies, the economic burdens associated with specific conditions such as teen pregnancy, and conditions most frequently associated with particular outcomes such as death in the hospital.

More information on KID is at <http://hcup-us.ahrq.gov/kidoverview.jsp>.

CENSUS EXPLORER

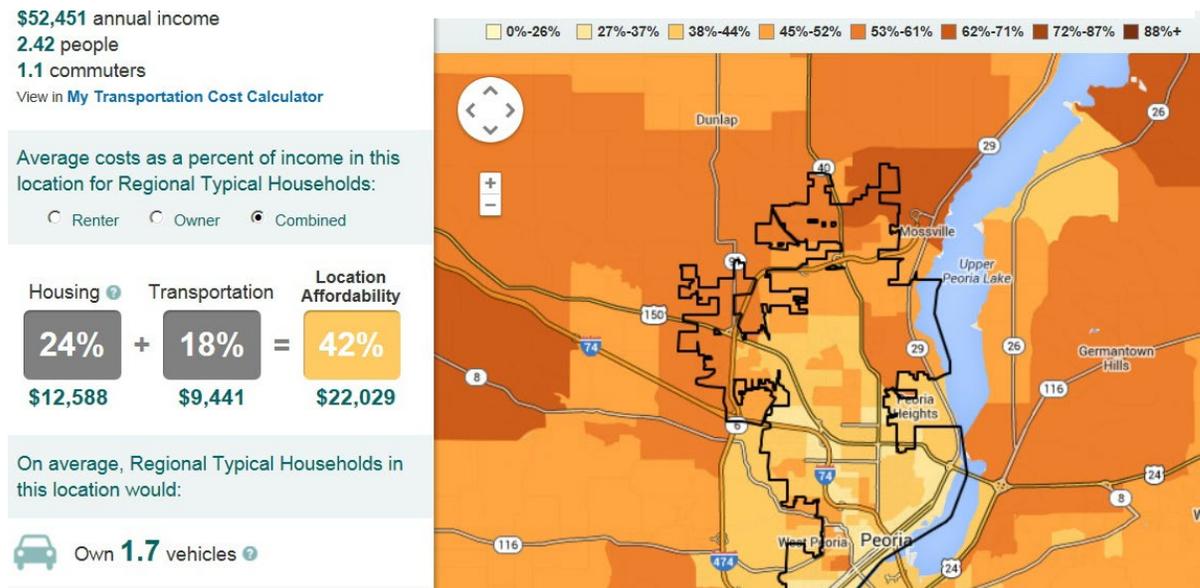
A new interactive map tool gives users of the Census Bureau's American Community Survey easier access to neighborhood-level statistics. Check it out at <http://www.census.gov/censusexplorer/censusexplorer.html>.

UNICEF REACHES A MILESTONE

Thirty years ago, UNICEF produced its first *State of the World's Children* report, one of the earliest to provide standardized global and national statistics on the circumstances of children. One of UNICEF's achievements is their development, in the early 1990s, of Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), which are the largest source of statistical information on children. Consisting of stand-alone modules on specific topics, and administered according to standardized methods, the MICS are in use by numerous countries. Each survey typically samples 10,000 households, interviewing women and men between 15 and 49 years of age, as well as mothers and caretakers of children younger than five. UNICEF is also involved in giving youth tools and training (such as GIS-enabled mobile phones) to document community problems and learn the value of evidence. A report, *Every Child Counts*, is available at <http://www.unicef.org/sowc2014/numbers/>.

HUD AND DOT LAUNCH *LOCATION AFFORDABILITY PORTAL*

The U.S. Departments of Housing and Urban Development, and Transportation have jointly sponsored this tool, designed for “understanding the combined cost of housing and transportation,” and featuring a Location Affordability Index. Users can enter a location (as specific as a street address), and the site engine will calculate the percentage of a typical household’s income going for housing- and transportation-related costs.



The Location Affordability Portal is at <http://locationaffordability.info/>.

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.

We welcome your comments and suggestions. All communications regarding this newsletter can be directed to dmurphey@childtrends.org.

Child Trends is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research center that studies children at all stages of development. Our mission is to improve the lives and prospects of children and youth by conducting high-quality research and sharing the resulting knowledge with practitioners and policymakers. For additional information, including publications available to download, visit our website at childtrends.org.