

Number of Children

Indicators of Child
and Youth Well-Being



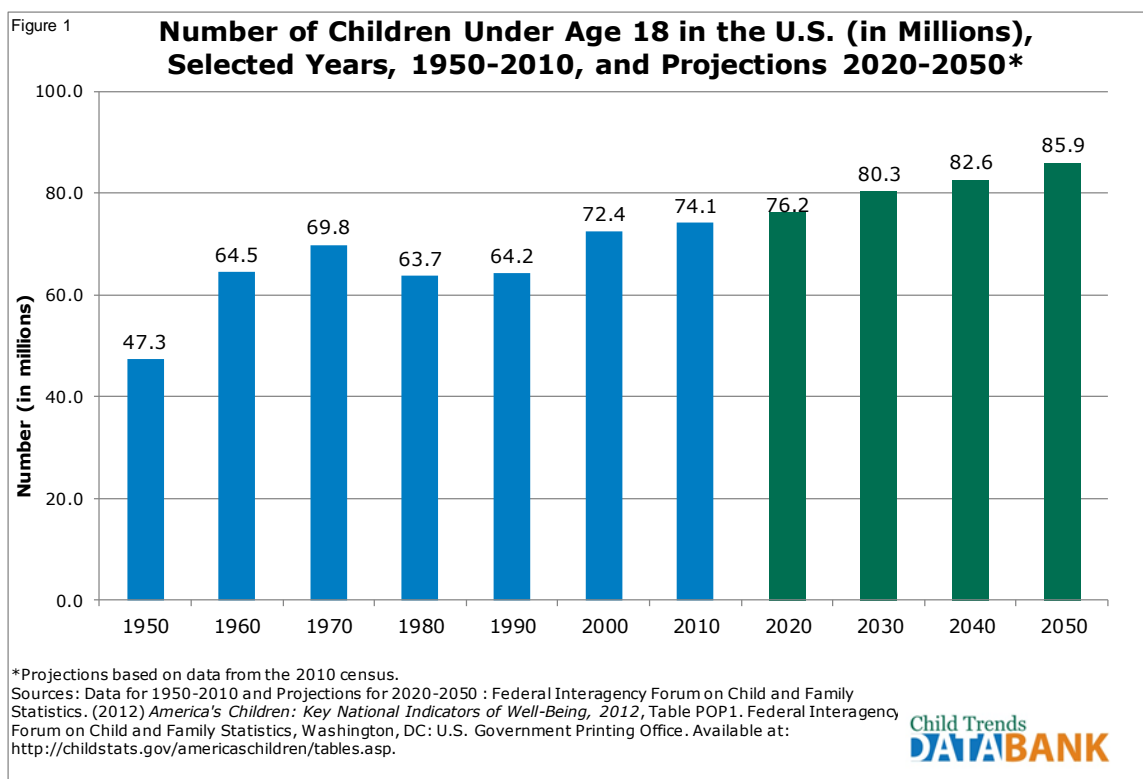
In 2014, there were nearly 74 million children younger than 18 in the United States. The child population will continue to grow for the foreseeable future, though it will account for a smaller share of the total population, as adults live longer and birth rates decline.

Importance

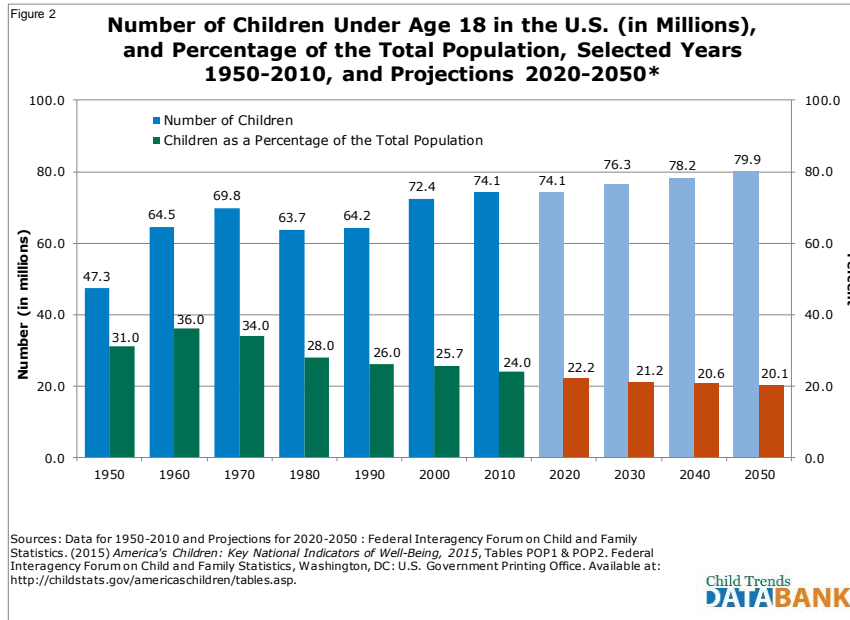
Knowing the number of children currently, and the number of children there are likely to be in the future, is critical to effective policy and planning efforts. The number of children affects demand for schools, health care, and other services for children and their families.¹ Society makes substantial public and private investments in children in all areas of life, including health and safety, education and training, recreation, and social development. With projections of the total number of children, such investments can be better informed, and therefore potentially more effective.

Trends

The number of children under age 18 in the United States has grown from 47.3 million in 1950 to 74.1 million in 2010, before decreasing somewhat to 73.6 million in 2014. (Appendix 1) During the 1950s, the heart of the baby boom, the number of children increased by over a third, reaching 64.5 million in 1960. After slower growth in the 1960s, the number of children actually fell during the 1970s and early 1980s, and even by 1990, at 64.2 million, had not quite caught up to 1960 levels. However, growth resumed in the mid-1980s, as baby-boomers reached their peak childbearing years, and there was a rise in immigration. The number of children in the country is projected to continue to increase, to 85.9 million in 2050. (Figure 1)



As a proportion of our total national population, children have accounted for a dwindling share since the early 1960s, their share falling from 36 percent in 1960, to 26 percent in 1990, and continuing to fall slightly through 2014. This trend is driven both by declining birth rates and by the aging of our population. In 2010, children made up 24 percent of our population, a share which is expected to fall to 21 percent by 2050. (Figure 2)



State and Local Estimates

- Child population data for 2014 at the state level are available from the U.S. Census Bureau at <http://www.census.gov/popest/data/state/asrh/2014/index.html>

population data for 2014 at the county level are available from the U.S. Census Bureau at <http://www.census.gov/popest/data/counties/asrh/2014/index.html>

- The KIDS COUNT Data Center (<http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data#USA/2/2/3,6,5>) has:
 - 1990-2014 state estimates of the child population by age group
 - 1990-2014 state estimates of the child population by gender
 - 1990-2014 state estimates of the child population by race
- State projections for 2000-2030 (based on the 2000 census) are available at <http://www.census.gov/population/projections/data/state/index.html>

International Estimates

Estimates of the child and youth populations are available for many countries on the UNICEF web site at http://www.unicef.org/statistics/index_countrystats.html

National Goals

None.

Related Indicators

- Racial and Ethnic Composition of the Population: www.childtrends.org/?indicators=racial-and-ethnic-composition-of-the-child-population
- Fertility and Birth Rates: www.childtrends.org/?indicators=fertility-and-birth-rates
- Immigrant Children: www.childtrends.org/?indicators=immigrant-children
- Life Expectancy: www.childtrends.org/?indicators=life-expectancy

Data Sources

- Data for 1950-2014 and projections for 2020-2050: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. (2015) *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2015*, Tables POP1 and POP2. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Available at: <http://childstats.gov/americaschildren/tables.asp>

Raw Data Source

U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Estimates and Projections

<http://www.census.gov/popest/index.html>



Appendix 1 - Number of Children Under Age 18 in the United States, and As a Percentage of the Population: Selected Years, 1950-2014, and Projections, 2020-2050

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Total number of children (in millions)	47.3	64.5	69.8	63.7	64.2	72.4	72.7	72.9	73.1	73.3	73.5	73.8
Age Group												
Ages 0-5	19.1	24.3	20.9	19.6	22.5	23.1	23.2	23.3	23.4	23.6	23.8	24.0
Ages 6-11	15.3	21.8	24.6	20.8	21.6	25.0	24.9	24.6	24.3	24.0	23.8	23.8
Ages 12-17	12.9	18.4	24.3	23.3	20.1	24.3	24.6	25.1	25.4	25.7	25.9	26.0
Children as a Percentage of the Total Population	31.0	36.0	34.0	28.0	26.0	25.7	25.5	25.4	25.2	25.0	24.9	24.7
										Projections ¹		
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2020	2030	2040	2050
Total number of children (in millions)	74.0	74.1	74.1	74.1	73.9	73.7	73.6	73.6	76.2	80.3	82.6	85.9
Age Group												
Ages 0-5	24.1	24.3	24.3	24.3	24.3	24.1	24.0	23.9	26.1	26.7	27.6	28.9
Ages 6-11	23.9	24.1	24.3	24.6	24.6	24.5	24.6	24.7	25.1	26.9	27.4	28.7
Ages 12-17	26.0	25.8	25.5	25.3	25.1	25.1	25.0	25.0	24.9	26.7	27.6	28.3
Children as a Percentage of the Total Population	24.6	24.4	24.2	24.0	23.7	23.5	23.3	23.1	22.8	22.4	21.7	21.5

¹Population projection estimates are based on the Census 2010 counts.

Sources: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. (2015) *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2015*, Tables POP1 and POP2. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Available at: <http://childstats.gov/americaschildren/tables.asp>



Endnotes

¹ Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. *America's Children: Key national indicators of well-being, 2009*.

Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC. Available online at:

www.childstats.gov/americaschildren/index.asp.