

State Profiles of Child Well-Being

The Annie E. Casey Foundation

2006 KIDS COUNT


POCKET GUIDE



KIDS COUNT, a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, is a national and state-by-state effort to track the status of children in the United States. By providing policy-makers and citizens with benchmarks of child well-being, KIDS COUNT seeks to enrich local, state, and national discussions concerning ways to secure better futures for all children. At the national level, the principal activity of the initiative is the publication of the annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, which uses the best available data to measure the educational, social, economic, and physical well-being of children. (This *Pocket Guide* is derived from the 2006 *KIDS COUNT Data Book*.) The Foundation also funds a nationwide network of state-level KIDS COUNT projects that provide a more detailed, community-by-community picture of the condition of children.

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Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care: Strengthening a Critical Resource to Help Young Children Succeed

Since 1990, the Annie E. Casey Foundation has released an annual, updated *KIDS COUNT Data Book* to report on the well-being of America's children. Each year, we focus on the needs and conditions of America's most disadvantaged children and families, as well as on the statistical trends.

This year, we zero in on one of the most important challenges facing our nation: improving early childhood development opportunities for young children living in low-income neighborhoods so that more of these kids will start school healthy and prepared to learn and succeed. In particular, we examine the critical issue of child care.

About 15.5 million children, or 65 percent of all children under age 6, regularly receive non-parental child care. Of the 15.5 million children in child care, almost 42 percent—some 6.5 million children—spend all or part of their time in a home-based, rather than center-based, setting. Two and a half million of these children (about 39 percent) come from families with incomes below 200 percent of the poverty line.

Although parents are and always will be their children's primary caregivers and teachers, the importance of quality child care and its influence on early childhood learning are well established. High-quality child care nurtures, stimulates, and supports children as they build the confidence and critical capacities they need to thrive in school and in life.

Child care that provides engaging activities is important for all young children. However,


it is vital for poor kids who too often lack access to enriching learning experiences and arrive at school already academically disadvantaged. Children in the lowest socioeconomic groups, on average, start school months behind their middle-class peers in pre-reading and pre-math skills. These gaps are particularly pronounced for children of color.

Our 17th annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* essay looks at a critical component in the continuum of child-care options that millions of families, especially low-income families, use. It is a form of child care that we refer to as “family, friend, and neighbor care,” which is offered in a home-based setting outside a child’s own home, by both regulated and unregulated providers. It includes the many local caregivers who are paid to work with small groups of children in their homes, as well as relatives who open their homes daily to help family members, often for free.

We recognize that there are various audiences who make further distinctions among this population, particularly between those caregivers who are regulated and those who are not. We have chosen to define this type of child care more broadly because many of the issues we are raising are quite pertinent to both groups.

Family, friend, and neighbor child-care providers contribute to the healthy development of young children, and they help determine how ready millions of American children are to learn and succeed. At the same time, these critical caregivers often are undervalued and under-supported. If we strengthen and reinforce their effectiveness, then we can improve outcomes for the children and families who rely on these caregivers.

Families who rely on family, friend, and neighbor care rather than formal child-care



centers do so for varied and often intertwined reasons that are both practical and personal. For example, parents' employment status and schedules influence the kind of care they choose, especially for those who don't work 9-to-5 jobs. An even bigger factor, for many, is having their young children in a home-like environment with someone they know and trust. Parents also choose family, friend, and neighbor care because they want a provider who shares their culture, values, or child-rearing beliefs. For lots of parents, family, friend, and neighbor care is a purposeful and positive choice, not something they access only in the absence of affordable center-based care opportunities.

We believe that it is crucial to expand the financial support required to scale up the most effective center-based programs and make them more available and affordable for low-income families. We also strongly believe that much can be gained by increasing the type and amount of support available to family, friend, and neighbor care providers.

Many states and local communities have begun to test tailored strategies that are helping family, friend, and neighbor providers get the supports they need and want. These include establishing venues that serve as “hubs” where providers can come together to obtain information and materials, receive training, and interact with child development professionals and other providers.

Research tells us that after their parents, young children spend the most time with their child-care providers. Given that low-income families rely on family-based providers so heavily, it makes sense to enhance the ability of this care to improve early childhood development and school readiness outcomes for those who need the most help.

Toward this end, we offer the following specific recommendations for next steps:

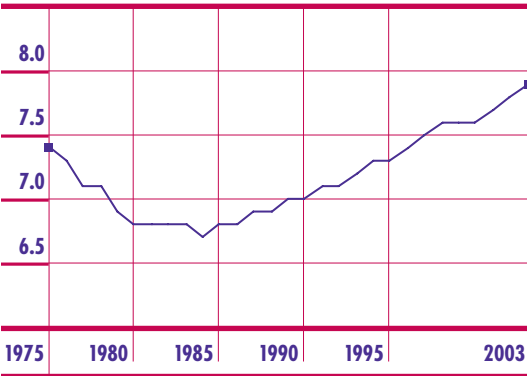
- Improve the levels of data, research, and evaluation related to family, friend, and neighbor care.
- Promote stronger local organizational integration and linkages between effective, high-quality child-care centers and the family, friend, and neighbor providers in their communities.
- Expand technical assistance and promotion of best practices to improve family, friend, and neighbor care.
- Increase and strengthen community-wide efforts to help parents make the best child-care choices.
- Urge states to do more to encourage quality improvements in subsidized family-based care.
- Make early care and development a higher policy and funding priority at both the state and federal levels.

These recommendations can only go so far. To make a real difference for kids, national and local policymakers, civic and community leaders, community residents, and child-care providers must be willing to commit the time, resources, and energy to act on these proposals.

At the Casey Foundation, we believe strongly that influencing the quality of family, friend, and neighbor care, particularly in America's low-income communities, is an opportunity to improve school readiness for the millions of kids who need it most. It is an opportunity that our communities—and our nation—can ill afford to disregard.

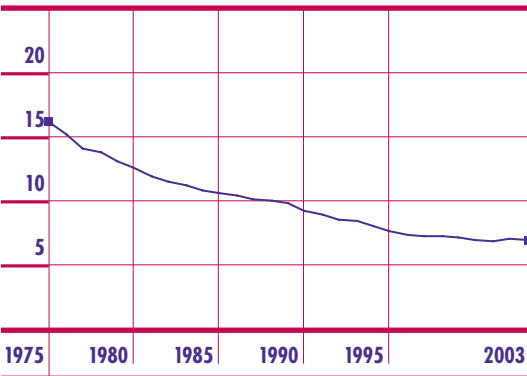
Douglas W. Nelson, President
The Annie E. Casey Foundation

Percent Low-Birthweight Babies, 1975–2003



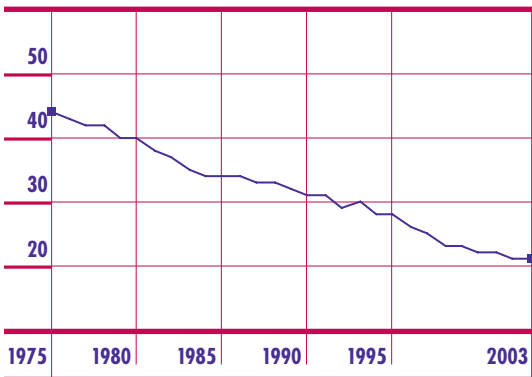
The percentage of babies weighing less than 5.5 pounds at birth has risen steadily since 1985. It reached 7.9 percent in 2003—its highest level since 1970.

Infant Mortality Rate (deaths per 1,000 live births), 1975–2003



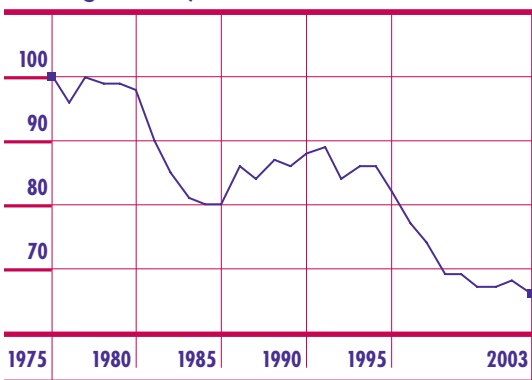
After a long steady decline since 1975, the infant mortality rate has been cut by more than half. The rate has stabilized during the past several years. In 2003 it was 6.9, the same as in 2000.

Child Death Rate (deaths per 100,000 children ages 1-14), 1975-2003



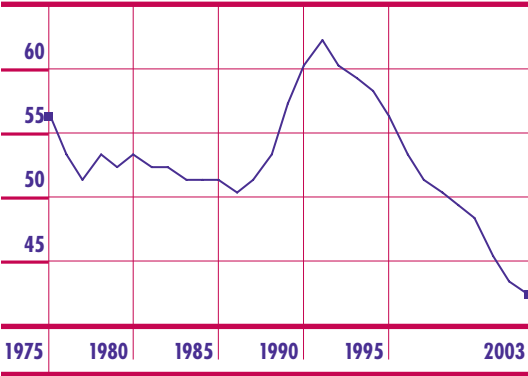
The child death rate has been cut in half since 1975, reaching 21 deaths per 100,000 children in 2003—an all-time low.

Teen Death Rate (deaths per 100,000 teens ages 15-19), 1975-2003



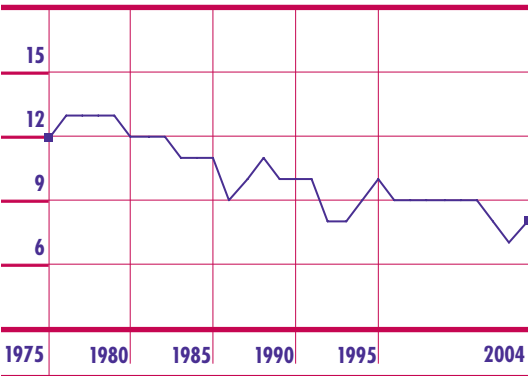
Despite a small upward shift in 2002, the teen death rate has fallen steadily during the past decade from 86 deaths per 100,000 teens in 1993 to 66 deaths per 100,000 teens in 2003.

Teen Birth Rate (births per 1,000 females ages 15–19), 1975–2003



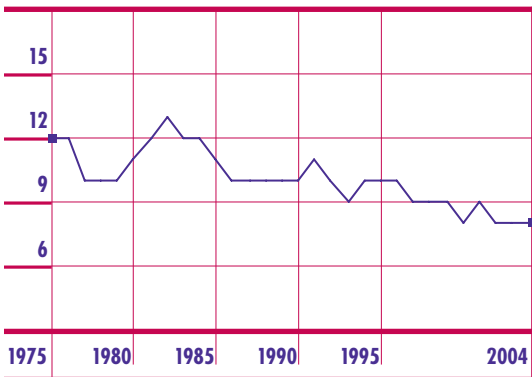
Teenage childbearing has declined steadily since reaching 62 births per 1,000 teens ages 15 to 19 in 1991. At 42 births per 1,000 in 2003, the teen birth rate has reached its lowest level ever.

Percent of Teens Who Are High School Dropouts (ages 16–19), 1975–2004



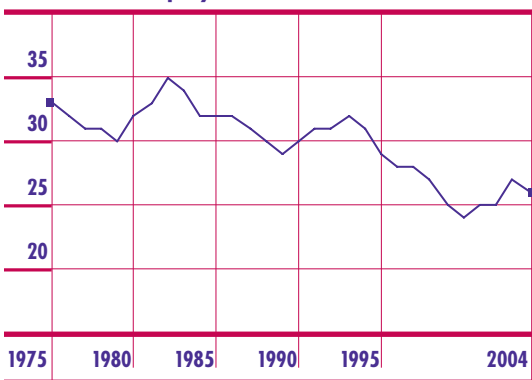
At 8 percent in 2004, the percentage of teens ages 16 to 19 who were high school dropouts remains lower than it was in the 1970s and 1980s.

Percent of Teens Not Attending School and Not Working (ages 16–19), 1975–2004



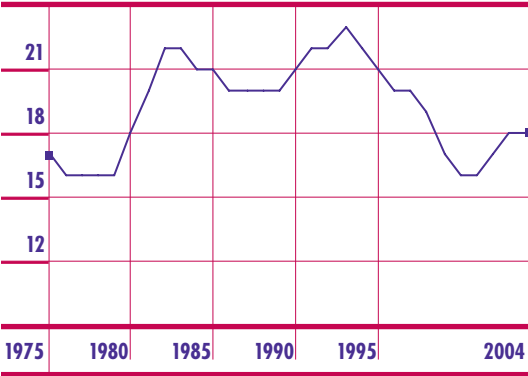
The percentage of youth neither attending school nor working has remained steady in recent years. At 8 percent in 2004, it is significantly lower than it was in 1975. This measure reflects the difficulties of the transition from school to work.

Percent of Children Living in Families Where No Parent Has Full-Time, Year-Round Employment, 1975–2004



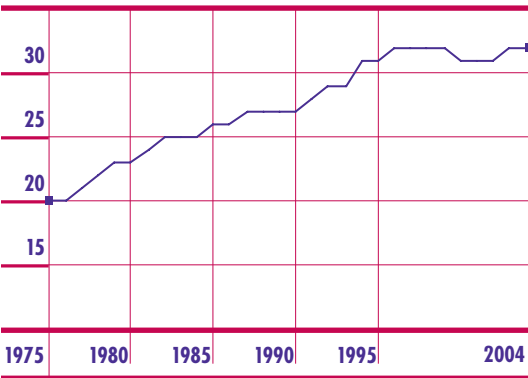
Roughly one-fourth of American children live in families where no parent works full-time, year-round. The trends for this measure parallel overall employment trends over the past 30 years.

Percent of Children in Poverty, 1975-2004



After falling in the mid- and late-1990s to its lowest level since 1979, child poverty rose slightly between 2001 and 2004.

Percent of Children Not Living With Two Parents, 1975-2004



Despite leveling off during the past decade, the share of children not living with both parents was much higher in 2004 than it was in 1975.

Children Under Age 6 in Family-Based Child Care

	Number of children under age 6 in family-based child care: 2003	Percent of children under age 6 in family-based child care: 2003	
United States	6,512,000	27	
Alabama	118,000	34	
Alaska	17,000	29	
Arizona	120,000	23	
Arkansas	70,000	31	
California	840,000	27	
Colorado	96,000	25	
Connecticut	62,000	24	
Delaware	20,000	30	
District of Columbia	11,000	28	
Florida	352,000	28	
Georgia	203,000	27	
Hawaii	27,000	27	
Idaho	34,000	27	
Illinois	251,000	23	
Indiana	151,000	29	
Iowa	80,000	37	
Kansas	67,000	30	
Kentucky	88,000	27	
Louisiana	136,000	35	
Maine	27,000	34	
Maryland	124,000	29	
Massachusetts	105,000	22	
Michigan	190,000	25	
Minnesota	127,000	32	
Mississippi	97,000	39	
Missouri	137,000	31	
Montana	19,000	30	
Nebraska	53,000	38	
Nevada	43,000	22	
New Hampshire	23,000	25	
New Jersey	174,000	25	
New Mexico	49,000	31	
New York	336,000	23	
North Carolina	205,000	29	
North Dakota	18,000	41	
Ohio	276,000	30	
Oklahoma	84,000	29	
Oregon	75,000	28	
Pennsylvania	224,000	27	
Rhode Island	25,000	33	
South Carolina	104,000	32	
South Dakota	28,000	47	
Tennessee	148,000	32	
Texas	560,000	26	
Utah	49,000	18	
Vermont	12,000	32	
Virginia	174,000	30	
Washington	109,000	23	
West Virginia	33,000	27	
Wisconsin	130,000	31	
Wyoming	11,000	30	

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The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. It was established in 1948 by Jim Casey, one of the founders of UPS, and his siblings, who named the Foundation in honor of their mother. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and communities fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs.

To obtain additional copies of this publication or to request a free copy of the *Data Book*, please visit the Foundation's website at www.aecf.org/publications.

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Definitions and sources for data contained in the charts and tables in this *Pocket Guide* can be found at www.kidscount.org/databook.

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