The Annie E. Casey Foundation

2005

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 policymakers 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 2005 *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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Helping Our Most Vulnerable Families Overcome Barriers to Work and Achieve Financial Success

Every year, our KIDS COUNT data underscore the fact that kids from poor families too often lack the opportunities and assets that will enable them to become successful adults. Compared to their more affluent peers, kids from low-income families are more likely to suffer from preventable illnesses, fail in school, become teenage parents, and become involved with the justice system. As a result, these young people frequently reach adulthood without the necessary tools, experiences, and connections to succeed. At Casey, we've long believed that the most powerful approach to altering the future of our nation's most disadvantaged kids is to enhance the financial security of their parents. The most basic and best way to do this is to help parents connect to and succeed in the workforce.

Over the past decade, states have made significant strides on this front—partly due to changes in our nation's social welfare policies that placed time limits on the receipt of welfare benefits and allowed states more flexibility to set new work standards. Coupled with the robust economy of the late 1990s, these new policies caused welfare rolls to decline significantly and increased the employment rate of single parents substantially.

Although progress has been made toward helping struggling parents become employed, far too many have not successfully connected to the workforce. In 2004, almost 4 million American children lived in low-income families where neither their parent(s) nor any other adult in the household worked at all in the past year. U.S. Census Bureau data show that during the late 1990s, as new welfare work rules took effect and

the economy surged, the number of children living in non-working, low-income families dropped considerably. But since then, largely unacknowledged by policymakers or the media, the figure has been rising. Between 2000 and 2004, the number of children in low-income households where no adult worked grew from 2.9 million to 3.9 million. One million of these children live in the suburbs, and 600,000 live in rural America.

Many of the obstacles that impede parents from steady employment have been well researched and well documented in Casey publications and in various policy research venues. These barriers include an inability to secure affordable and accessible child care; low literacy levels; limited transportation options that make it difficult for parents to commute to available jobs; and disincentives that strip government benefits from families when they become employed and earn wages. In addition, a significant number of parents face debilitating physical and mental health barriers to employment.

There are four employment barriers that policymakers and others consider among the most difficult to overcome: substance abuse, domestic violence, a history of incarceration, and depression. These burdens can diminish a person's motivation and ability to find work. Furthermore, they can make it particularly difficult to demonstrate the workplace skills (for example, attendance, punctuality, collegiality, ability to take direction) that employers view as a foundation for success—even for entry-level jobs.

Because many people face more than one of these barriers simultaneously, it is critical for policymakers to champion interventions that are integrated, flexible, and comprehensive in their scope.

Several promising state and local initiatives demonstrate that many people who are considered the most difficult to employ can indeed become successful, both as workers and parents. For examples of these effective efforts, see the complete essay in the 2005 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* at www.kidscount.org.

Although these initiatives provide direction, they do not sufficiently address the needs of those persistently jobless Americans who can't connect to the workforce. If we're really going to build on successful welfare reforms and make good on our national aspiration to make work the pathway to self-sufficiency, then we must address the needs of this population in a more systematic, comprehensive, and integrated way.

We need to enable states to craft policies and programs that will help people overcome multiple barriers, while assisting them to secure jobs. We support the idea of offering states more flexibility, including the use of waivers, to combine welfare and workforce resources into a more robust, integrated support system for the most challenged job-seekers. In addition, we recommend:

- First, given the time limits (5 years or less) imposed on low-income families under the 1996 welfare reform law, states should screen and assess Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program recipients aggressively to uncover hidden barriers to employment.

- Second, states must do a better job of collecting and analyzing data on the number and characteristics of TANF recipients with serious employment barriers.

- Third, more emphasis should be placed on helping those TANF recipients who suffer from severe and/or multiple barriers and do not succeed in standard job search programs.

- Finally, for individuals transitioning from incarceration to society, states and localities must do more than provide work experience in prison to help them successfully connect to the workforce upon release.

We believe—and the evidence affirms—that it is possible to help these particularly vulnerable parents address and overcome these obstacles. Taking these solutions to scale, however, will require a significant commitment on the part of federal, state, and local leaders.

Today, too many parents want to work their way out of poverty, but are unable to do so, and as a result, the futures of too many kids are severely compromised. As a nation, we can and must do better than this. We can and must finish the work begun under welfare reform and make good on the promise of helping all of those who want to work—even those facing the most formidable barriers—connect to a job, become self-sufficient, and find a path out of poverty. Almost 4 million kids are depending on us.

Douglas W. Nelson, President
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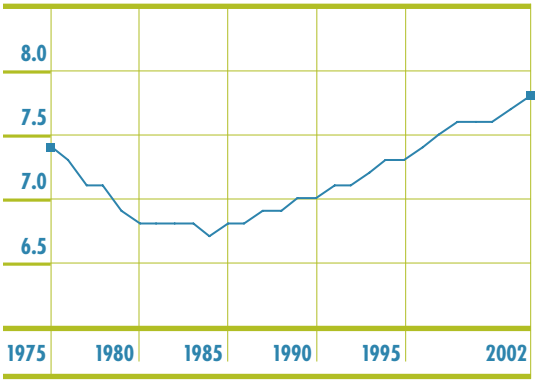
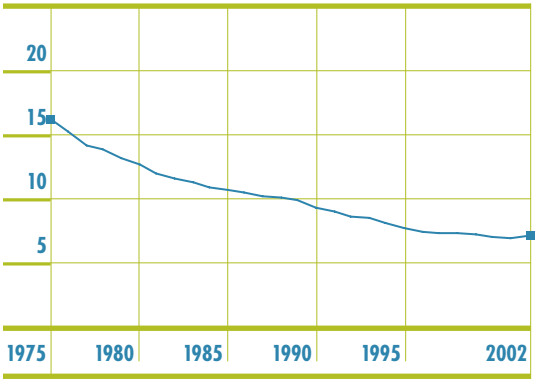
Percent Low-Birthweight Babies, 1975–2002



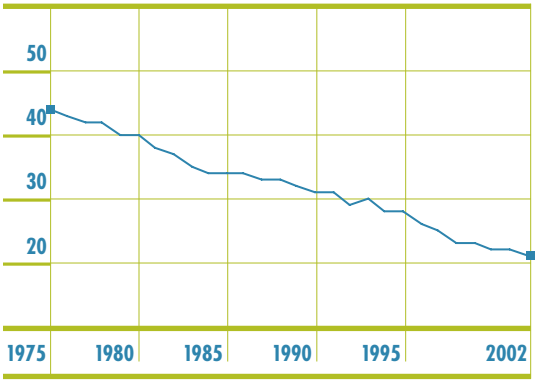
The percentage of babies weighing less than 5.5 pounds at birth has risen steadily since 1985. It reached 7.8 percent in 2002—its highest level since 1970.

Infant Mortality Rate (deaths per 1,000 live births), 1975–2002



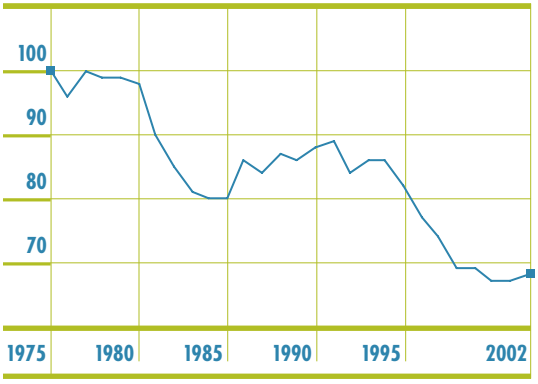
After being cut by more than half since 1975, the infant mortality rate rose slightly between 2001 and 2002—its first increase in more than 40 years. Preliminary numbers, however, suggest that it went back down in 2003.

Child Death Rate (deaths per 100,000 children ages 1–14), 1975–2002



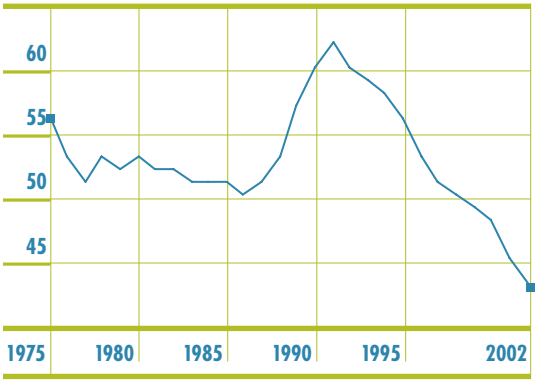
The child death rate has been cut in half since 1975, reaching 21 deaths per 100,000 children in 2002.

Teen Death Rate (deaths per 100,000 teens ages 15–19), 1975-2002



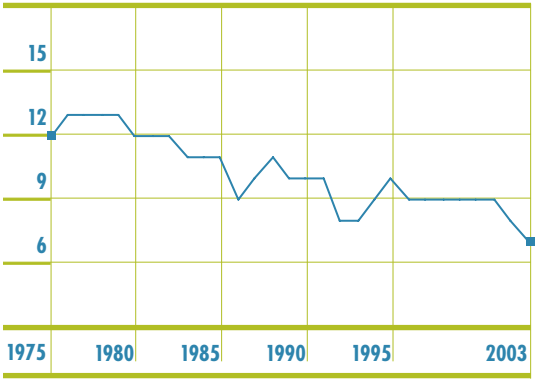
Before inching upward between 2001 and 2002, the death rate for teens ages 15 to 19 had fallen steadily since the mid-1990s. At 68 deaths per 100,000 teens, the teen death rate was still lower in 2002 than in 1999.

Teen Birth Rate (births per 1,000 females ages 15–19), 1975-2002



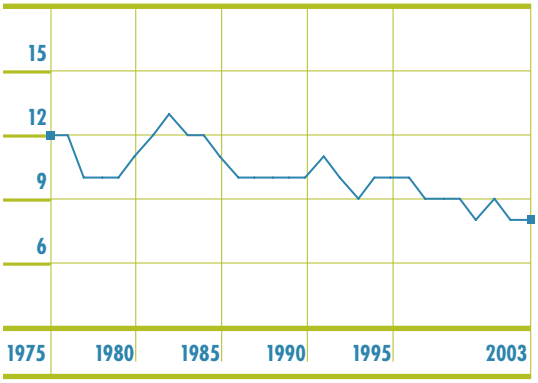
Teenage childbearing has declined steadily since reaching 62 births per 1,000 teens ages 15 to 19 in 1991. At 43 births per 1,000 in 2002, the teen birth rate has reached its lowest level ever.

Percent of Teens Who Are High School Dropouts (ages 16–19), 1975-2003



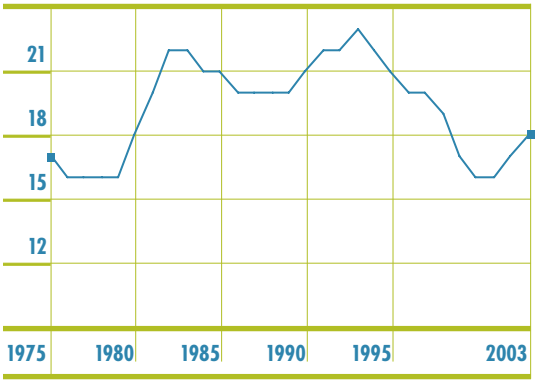
Teens ages 16 to 19 are less likely to have dropped out of school in 2002 than in 1975. This measure has shown slight improvement over the past couple of years.

Percent of Teens Not Attending School and Not Working (ages 16–19), 1975-2003



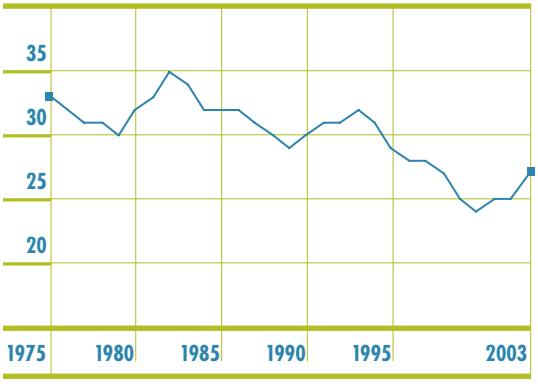
The percentage of youth neither attending school nor working was significantly lower in 2003 than in 1975. This measure reflects the difficulties of the transition from school to work.

Percent of Children in Poverty, 1975-2003



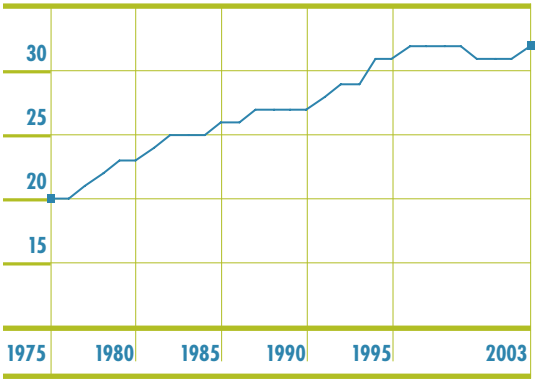
After falling in the mid- and late-1990s to its lowest level since 1979, child poverty rose slightly between 2001 and 2003.

Percent of Children Living in Families Where No Parent Has Full-Time, Year-Round Employment, 1975-2003



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 Not Living with Two Parents, 1975-2003



Despite leveling off in the past decade, the share of children not living with both parents was much higher in 2003 than it was in 1975.

	Overall Rank based on 10 key indicators	Percent low-birthweight babies: 2002		Infant mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births): 2002		Child death rate (deaths per 100,000 children ages 1–14): 2002		Teen death rate (deaths per 100,000 teens ages 15–19): 2002		Teen birth rate (births per 1,000 females ages 15–19): 2002		Percent of teens who are high school dropouts (ages 16–19): 2003		Percent of teens not attending school and not working (ages 16–19): 2003		Percent of children living in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment: 2003		Percent of children in poverty: 2003		Percent of children in single-parent households: 2003	
		RATE	RANK	RATE	RANK	RATE	RANK	RATE	RANK	RATE	RANK	RATE	RANK	RATE	RANK	RATE	RANK	RATE	RANK	RATE	RANK
United States	–	7.8	–	7.0	–	21	–	68	–	43	–	8	–	9	–	33	–	18	–	30	–
Alabama	48	9.9	46	9.1	45	29	44	100	46	55	42	10	39	11	39	35	36	24	44	35	45
Alaska	36	5.8	1	5.5	7	29	44	76	34	40	25	10	39	13	48	40	48	14	16	31	33
Arizona	41	6.8	14	6.4	19	24	34	86	40	61	47	12	49	11	39	36	41	21	41	34	43
Arkansas	44	8.6	38	8.3	41	30	46	94	42	60	46	6	10	9	29	37	44	24	44	33	39
California	17	6.4	9	5.5	7	18	9	58	10	41	28	7	15	8	16	35	36	19	34	29	24
Colorado	26	8.9	40	6.1	15	21	19	74	30	47	36	7	15	9	29	31	20	13	13	26	10
Connecticut	11	7.8	23	6.5	21	13	2	48	5	26	5	8	30	7	11	28	13	11	4	28	16
Delaware	31	9.9	46	8.7	43	27	42	65	19	46	34	7	15	6	6	29	15	12	5	32	35
District of Columbia	N.R.	11.6	N.R.	11.3	N.R.	23	N.R.	168	N.R.	69	N.R.	6	N.R.	10	N.R.	54	N.R.	36	N.R.	62	N.R.
Florida	35	8.4	36	7.5	32	22	23	68	23	44	31	8	30	8	16	33	28	19	34	36	46
Georgia	39	8.9	40	8.9	44	23	26	70	25	56	43	11	45	11	39	31	20	19	34	33	39
Hawaii	24	8.3	34	7.3	29	17	6	42	2	38	21	5	4	13	48	33	28	15	23	30	29
Idaho	16	6.1	4	6.1	15	23	26	74	30	39	24	7	15	8	16	35	36	18	30	20	2
Illinois	28	8.2	32	7.4	30	20	13	65	19	42	29	8	30	8	16	32	25	16	25	29	24
Indiana	30	7.6	21	7.7	36	22	23	73	28	45	33	11	45	8	16	30	17	14	16	28	16
Iowa	8	6.6	12	5.3	5	21	19	57	8	32	10	7	15	7	11	26	4	12	5	23	5
Kansas	15	7.0	16	7.1	27	25	38	70	25	43	30	5	4	8	16	27	7	14	16	26	10
Kentucky	42	8.6	38	7.2	28	25	38	85	39	51	37	9	37	12	46	39	46	24	44	29	24
Louisiana	49	10.4	49	10.3	49	35	49	100	46	58	44	12	49	14	50	40	48	30	50	41	49
Maine	7	6.3	5	4.4	1	20	13	58	10	25	4	7	15	5	4	31	20	13	13	27	13
Maryland	19	9.0	42	7.5	32	20	13	73	28	35	14	6	10	8	16	27	7	10	3	32	35
Massachusetts	6	7.5	19	4.9	3	15	4	42	2	23	2	5	4	8	16	31	20	12	5	28	16
Michigan	25	8.0	27	8.1	38	22	23	63	17	35	14	6	10	7	11	34	35	16	25	30	29
Minnesota	3	6.3	5	5.4	6	23	26	57	8	27	6	7	15	4	1	26	4	9	2	23	5
Mississippi	50	11.2	50	10.3	49	37	50	100	46	65	50	11	45	12	46	41	50	29	49	42	50
Missouri	33	8.0	27	8.5	42	25	38	83	38	44	31	8	30	8	16	29	15	16	25	29	24
Montana	34	6.8	14	7.5	32	23	26	100	46	36	16	10	39	10	34	32	25	18	30	27	13
Nebraska	12	7.2	17	7.0	25	23	26	72	27	37	18	7	15	7	11	23	1	13	13	20	2
Nevada	32	7.5	19	6.0	13	19	10	77	35	54	40	10	39	11	39	30	17	15	23	30	29
New Hampshire	1	6.3	5	5.0	4	12	1	34	1	20	1	7	15	6	6	27	7	8	1	25	8
New Jersey	4	8.0	27	5.7	10	17	6	47	4	27	6	4	1	5	4	27	7	12	5	27	13
New Mexico	46	8.0	27	6.3	17	24	34	94	42	62	48	10	39	10	34	39	46	26	48	36	46
New York	20	7.9	24	6.0	13	17	6	49	6	29	9	7	15	9	29	33	28	19	34	34	43
North Carolina	40	9.0	42	8.2	40	23	26	75	33	52	38	11	45	10	34	36	41	19	34	33	39
North Dakota	5	6.3	5	6.3	17	20	13	69	24	27	6	4	1	6	6	25	3	14	16	23	5
Ohio	29	8.3	34	7.9	37	19	10	59	13	40	25	7	15	8	16	32	25	18	30	32	35
Oklahoma	38	8.0	27	8.1	38	24	34	80	37	58	44	7	15	11	39	33	28	22	42	29	24
Oregon	18	5.8	1	5.8	11	21	19	62	15	37	18	8	30	9	29	35	36	18	30	28	16
Pennsylvania	27	8.2	32	7.6	35	21	19	67	22	32	10	8	30	7	11	31	20	16	25	31	33
Rhode Island	22	7.9	24	7.0	25	14	3	52	7	36	16	7	15	9	29	33	28	17	29	32	35
South Carolina	45	10.0	48	9.3	47	27	42	93	41	53	39	7	15	8	16	36	41	19	34	37	48
South Dakota	21	7.2	17	6.5	21	31	47	94	42	38	21	7	15	8	16	24	2	14	16	22	4
Tennessee	43	9.2	45	9.4	48	25	38	94	42	54	40	8	30	11	39	33	28	20	40	33	39
Texas	37	7.7	22	6.4	19	23	26	74	30	64	49	9	37	10	34	33	28	23	43	28	16
Utah	9	6.4	9	5.6	9	23	26	65	19	37	18	6	10	8	16	26	4	12	5	17	1
Vermont	2	6.4	9	4.4	1	15	4	60	14	24	3	5	4	4	1	27	7	12	5	28	16
Virginia	13	7.9	24	7.4	30	20	13	64	18	38	21	5	4	6	6	27	7	12	5	28	16
Washington	14	5.9	3	5.8	11	19	10	58	10	33	13	6	10	10	34	35	36	14	16	28	16
West Virginia	47	9.0	42	9.1	45	24	34	103	50	46	34	10	39	11	39	37	44	25	47	30	29
Wisconsin	10	6.6	12	6.9	24	20	13	62	15	32	10	4	1	4	1	30	17	14	16	26	10
Wyoming	23	8.4	36	6.7	23	34	48	77	35	40	25	5	4	6	6	28	13	12	5	25	8

	Percent of children in households where the household head did not finish high school: 2003	Percent of children in households where the household head has limited English proficiency: 2003	Percent of children in households where the household head has a work disability: 2003	Percent of children in low-income households where no adult worked in the past 12 months: 2003
United States	17	12	5	5
Alabama	19	2	8	7
Alaska	10	5	7	4
Arizona	22	18	5	5
Arkansas	17	3	9	6
California	26	30	5	4
Colorado	15	12	3	3
Connecticut	10	8	4	3
Delaware	14	6	5	3
District of Columbia	27	11	6	17
Florida	17	13	6	4
Georgia	17	6	5	5
Hawaii	11	12	6	3
Idaho	11	8	4	3
Illinois	15	13	4	4
Indiana	15	4	4	3
Iowa	8	3	3	3
Kansas	10	4	3	3
Kentucky	15	2	9	8
Louisiana	20	2	7	9
Maine	7	1	8	3
Maryland	12	5	4	3
Massachusetts	10	11	5	6
Michigan	11	4	6	4
Minnesota	7	5	3	2
Mississippi	22	1	10	8
Missouri	13	2	5	4
Montana	7	1	4	3
Nebraska	10	5	5	3
Nevada	23	19	5	3
New Hampshire	7	4	4	2
New Jersey	11	15	4	3
New Mexico	25	14	5	5
New York	16	17	5	7
North Carolina	18	6	7	7
North Dakota	5	1	3	3
Ohio	12	2	5	5
Oklahoma	15	5	5	7
Oregon	13	8	4	3
Pennsylvania	12	4	5	5
Rhode Island	18	16	7	8
South Carolina	15	2	5	5
South Dakota	8	2	3	4
Tennessee	15	2	6	6
Texas	26	22	4	4
Utah	10	6	3	2
Vermont	6	1	5	2
Virginia	12	6	5	4
Washington	11	8	4	3
West Virginia	15	1	9	8
Wisconsin	11	4	5	3
Wyoming	9	2	3	2

Data compiled by Kelvin M. Pollard, Population Reference Bureau.

N.R.=Not Ranked.

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www.kinetikcom.com

Photography by Susie Fitzhugh
and Carol Highsmith, © 2005

Data compiled by Population Reference Bureau
www.prb.org

Printed and bound in the United States of America
on recycled paper using soy-based inks.

This *KIDS COUNT Pocket Guide* was produced for the Annie E. Casey Foundation by the Population Reference Bureau (PRB). To contact PRB, visit www.prb.org, or call 202.483.1100.

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