

Indicators of Children's Well-Being

Family and Social Environment

The indicators in this section present data on the composition of children's families and the social environment in which they live. The seven indicators include family structure and children's living arrangements, births to unmarried women, child care, presence of a foreign-born parent, language spoken at home and difficulty speaking English, adolescent births, and child maltreatment.

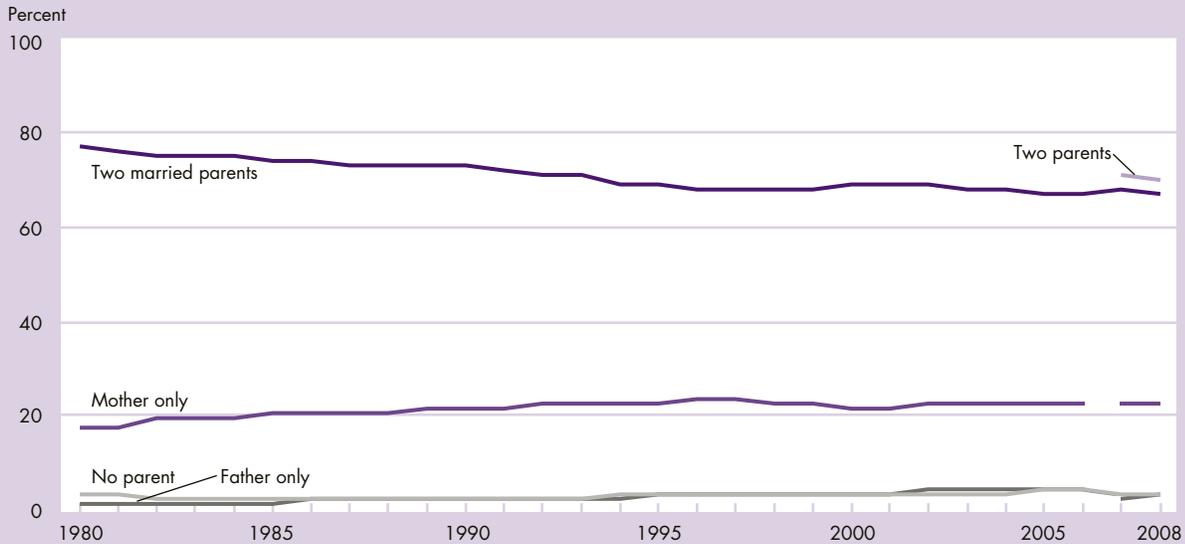


Family Structure and Children's Living Arrangements

The structure of children's families is associated with the economic, parental, and community resources available to children and their well-being.

Indicator FAM1.A

Percentage of children ages 0–17 by presence of parents in the household, 1980–2008



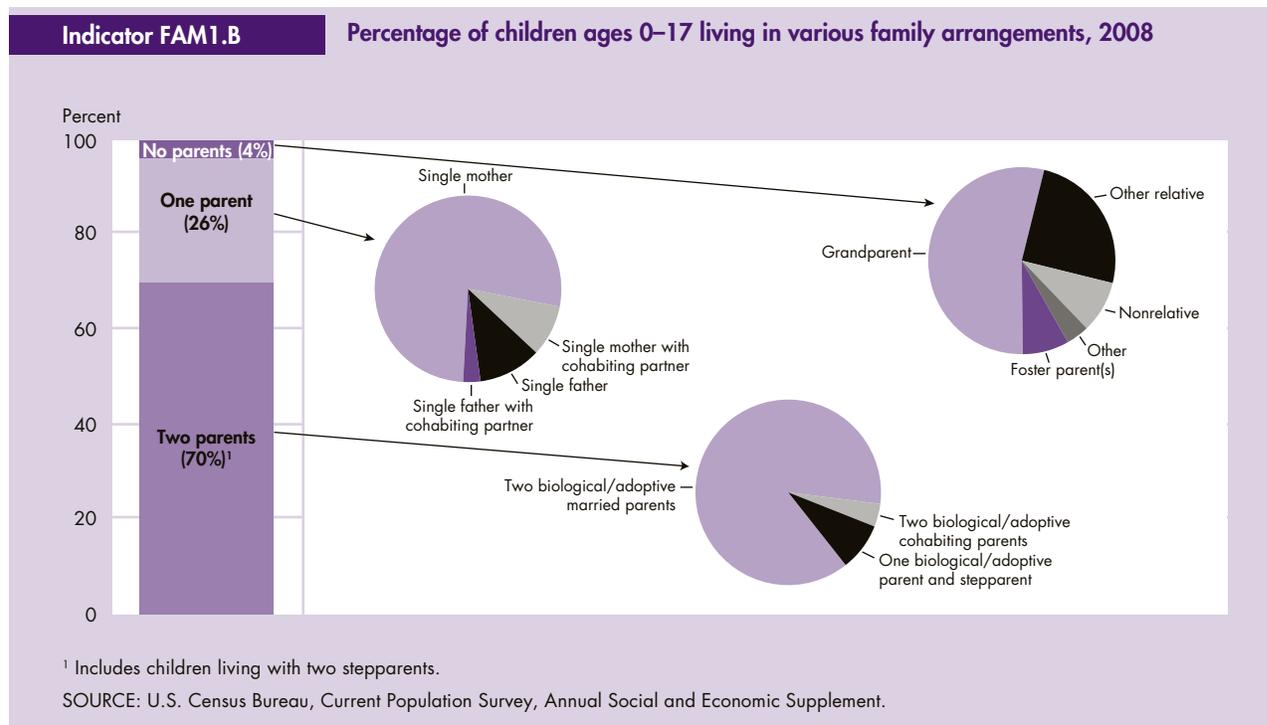
NOTE: Prior to 2007, Current Population Survey (CPS) data identified only one parent on the child's record. This meant that a second parent could only be identified if they were married to the first parent. In 2007, a second parent identifier was added to CPS. This permits identification of two coresident parents, even if the parents are not married to each other. In this figure "two parents" reflects all children who have both a mother and father identified in the household, including biological, step, and adoptive parents. Before 2007, "mother only" and "father only" included some children who lived with a parent who was living with the other parent of the child, but was not married to them. Beginning in 2007, "mother only" and "father only" refer to children for whom only one parent has been identified, whether biological, step, or adoptive.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements.

- In 2008, 67 percent of children ages 0–17 lived with two married parents, down from 77 percent in 1980.
- In 2008, 23 percent of children lived with only their mothers, 4 percent lived with only their fathers, and 4 percent lived with neither of their parents.¹
- In 2008, 75 percent of White, non-Hispanic, 64 percent of Hispanic, and 35 percent of Black children lived with two married parents.²
- The proportion of Hispanic children living with two married parents decreased from 75 percent in 1980 to 64 percent in 2008.
- Due to improved measurement, it is now possible to identify children living with two parents who are not married to each other. Three percent of all children lived with two unmarried parents in 2008.

For a detailed measure of living arrangements of children, see FAM1.B on page 3.

While most children spend the majority of their childhood living with two parents, some children have other living arrangements. Information about the presence of parents and other adults in the family, such as the parent's unmarried partner, grandparents, and other relatives, is important for understanding children's social, economic, and developmental well-being.



- FAM1.B provides more detailed data about children's living arrangements, using information about the coresident parents for each child, as well as the detailed type of relationship between parent and child—biological, step, or adoptive. In 2008, there were about 74 million children ages 0–17. Seventy percent of them lived with two parents, 26 percent lived with one parent, and about 4 percent lived in households without parents.
- Among children living with two parents, 92 percent lived with both biological or adoptive parents, and 8 percent lived with a biological or adoptive parent and a stepparent. About 74 percent of children living with at least one stepparent lived with their biological mother and stepfather.³
- About 4 percent of children who lived with both biological or adoptive parents had parents who were not married.
- The majority of children living with one parent lived with their single mother. Some single parents had cohabiting partners. Nineteen percent of children living with single fathers and 10 percent of children

living with single mothers also lived with their parent's cohabiting partner. Out of all children ages 0–17, 4.6 million (6 percent) lived with a parent or parents who were cohabiting.

- Among the 2.8 million children (4 percent) not living with either parent in 2008, 54 percent (1.5 million) lived with grandparents, 25 percent lived with other relatives, and 21 percent lived with nonrelatives. Of children in nonrelatives' homes, 38 percent (228,000) lived with foster parents.
- Older children were less likely to live with two parents—65 percent of children ages 15–17 lived with two parents, compared with 69 percent of children ages 6–14 and 73 percent of those ages 0–5. Among children living with two parents, older children were more likely than younger children to live with a stepparent and less likely than younger children to live with cohabiting parents.³

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Tables FAM1.A and FAM1.B on pages 92–95. Endnotes begin on page 73.

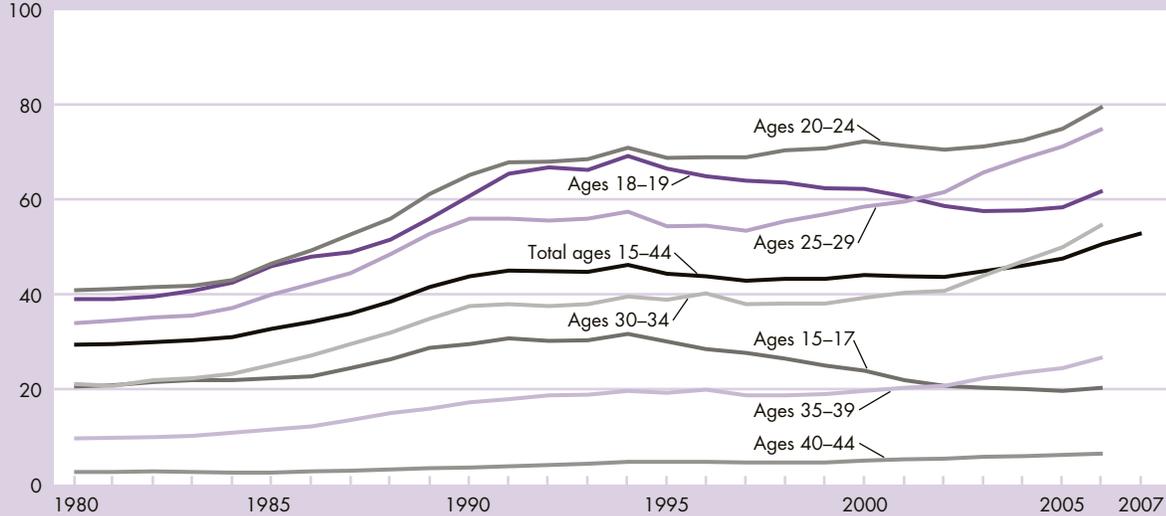
Births to Unmarried Women

Increases in births to unmarried women are among the many changes in American society that have affected family structure and the economic security of children.⁴ Children of unmarried mothers are at higher risk of adverse birth outcomes such as low birthweight and infant mortality than are children of married mothers. They are also more likely to live in poverty than children of married mothers.⁵⁻⁹

Indicator FAM2.A

Birth rates for unmarried women by age of mother, 1980–2007

Live births per 1,000 unmarried women in specific age group

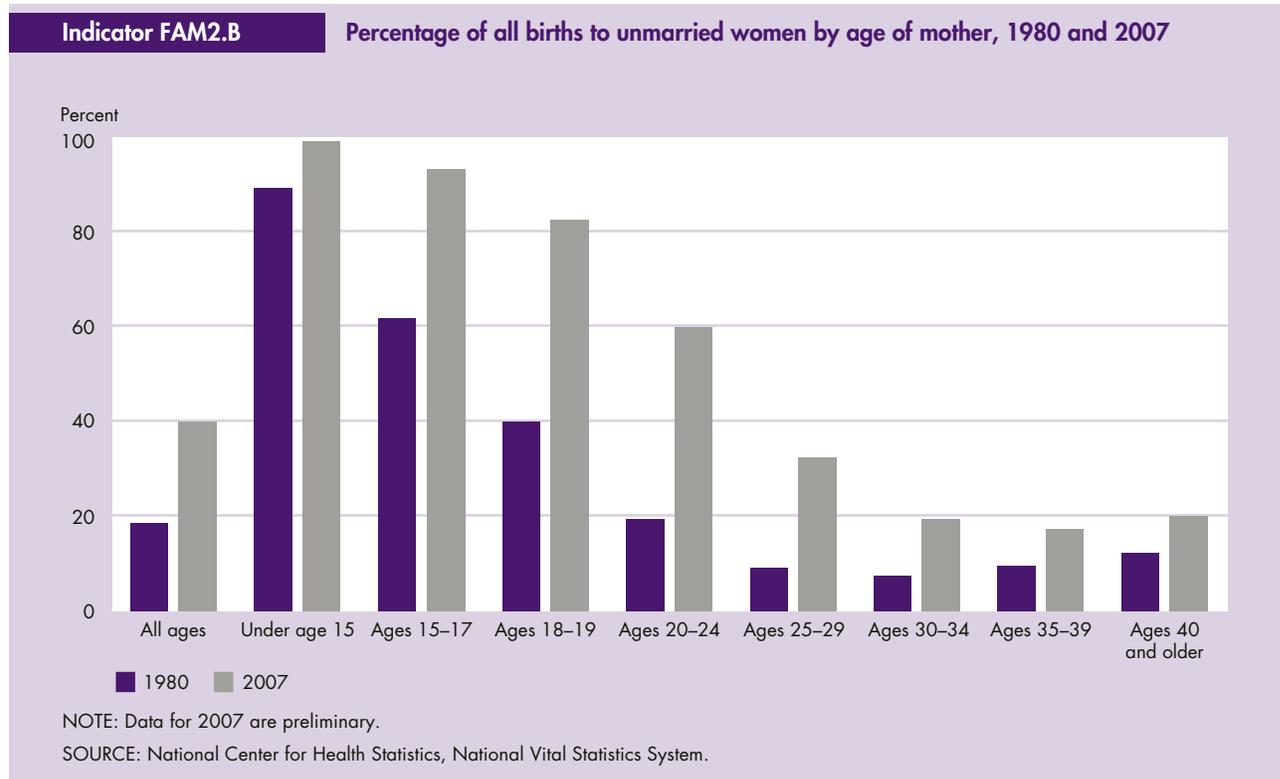


NOTE: The 2007 rate for total ages 15–44 is preliminary. 2007 data for specific age groups are not yet available.

SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System.

- There were 53 births for every 1,000 unmarried women ages 15–44 in 2007.¹⁰
- Between 1980 and 1994, the birth rate for unmarried women ages 15–44 increased from 29 to 46 per 1,000. Between 1995 and 2002, the rate fluctuated little, ranging from 43 to 44 per 1,000; from 2002 to 2007, however, the rate increased from 44 to 53 per 1,000.^{8,10,11}
- Rates in 2006 remained highest for women ages 20–24 (79.5 per 1,000), followed closely by the rate for women ages 25–29 (74.9 per 1,000).^{6,11}
- The birth rate among unmarried adolescents ages 15–19 declined between 1994 and 2005, and then increased in 2006. Among adolescent subgroups, the rate for adolescents ages 15–17 declined from 31.7 per 1,000 in 1994 to 19.7 in 2005 and increased to 20.4 in 2006. For adolescents ages 18–19 the birth rate declined from 1994 to 2003 and increased annually from 2003 to 2006. Birth rates for unmarried women ages 20–44 changed relatively little during the mid- to late 1990s, but increased in the 2000s. For women ages 20–24 the rate rose from 70.5 per 1,000 in 2002 to 79.5 in 2006. For women ages 25–29 the rate rose from 1997 (53.4 per 1,000) to 2006 (74.9), and for unmarried women ages 30–44 birth rates have steadily increased since the late 1990s.
- The long-term rise between 1960 and 1994 in the nonmarital birth rate is linked to a number of factors.⁸ The proportion of women of childbearing age who were unmarried increased from under one-third in 1960 to almost half in 1994. Concurrently, there was an increase in nonmarital cohabitation.¹² The likelihood that an unmarried woman would marry before a child was born declined from the early 1960s to the early 1980s and continued to fall, although more modestly, through the 1990s.^{11,13} At the same time, childbearing within marriage fell by almost half between 1960 and 1994.^{6-8,11}
- After several years of relative stability beginning in the mid- to late 1990s, the birth rate for unmarried women has increased since 2002. The proportion of women of childbearing age who were unmarried continued to rise to over half in 2007. However, nonmarital cohabitation has remained relatively unchanged: nearly 3 in 10 unmarried women ages 25–29 in 2002 were in cohabiting relationships.¹⁴

Children are at greater risk for adverse consequences when born to a single mother because the social, emotional, and financial resources available to the family may be more limited.⁵ The proportion of births to unmarried women is useful for understanding the extent to which children born in a given year may be affected by any disadvantage—social, financial, or health—associated with being born outside of marriage. The change in the percentage of births to unmarried women reflects changes in the birth rate for unmarried women relative to the birth rate for married women.¹⁵



- In 2007, 40 percent of all births were to unmarried women.¹⁰
- The percentage of all births to unmarried women rose from 18 percent of total births in 1980 to 33 percent in 1994. From 1994 to 2002, the percentage ranged from 32 to 34 percent. The percentage increased more rapidly since 2002, reaching 40 percent in 2007.
- Between 1980 and 2007, the proportion of births to unmarried women rose for women in all age groups. Among adolescents, the proportion was high throughout the period and rose from 62 to 93 percent for ages 15–17 and from 40 to 82 percent for ages 18–19. The proportion more than tripled for births to women in their twenties, rising from 19 to 60 percent for ages 20–24 and from 9 to 32 percent for ages 25–29. The proportion of births to unmarried women in their thirties more than doubled, from 8 to 19 percent.^{8,11}
- Nearly 4 in 10 total births, including more than 4 in 10 first births, were to unmarried women in 2006. Seven in 10 births to women under age 25 having their first child were nonmarital.¹⁶
- The increases in the proportion of births to unmarried women, especially during the 1980s, were linked to increases in the birth rates for unmarried women in all age groups during this period. In addition, the number of unmarried women increased more rapidly than the number of married women increased, as women from the baby boom generation postponed marriage.^{8,16,17}
- During the late 1990s, the rate of increase in the proportion of births to unmarried women slowed. The comparative stability was linked to a renewed rise in birth rates for married women.^{6,8} Since 2002, the rate of increase in the proportion of births to unmarried women has grown, reflecting increases, especially among adult women aged 20 and older, in nonmarital birth rates concurrent with relatively little change in birth rates for married women.^{8,16}

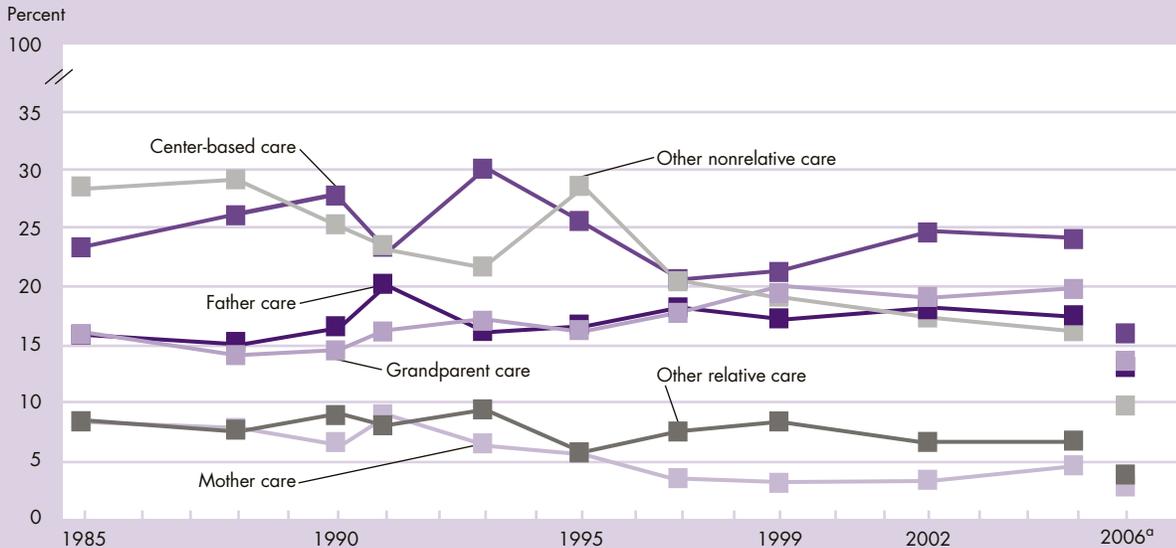
Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Tables FAM2.A and FAM2.B on pages 96–97. Endnotes begin on page 73.

Child Care

Many children spend time with a child care provider other than their parents. This indicator presents two aspects of early childhood child care usage: a historical trend of the primary child care provider used by employed mothers for their young children and overall use of different providers regardless of parents' work status.¹⁸

Indicator FAM3.A

Primary child care arrangements for children ages 0–4 with employed mothers, selected years 1985–2005 and summer 2006¹⁹



^a SIPP child care data collected in 2006 cannot be compared directly with SIPP child care data from previous years due to seasonality differences such as preschool closings, seasonal variations in school activities, and availability of child care arrangements. The 2006 child care data were collected during summer months, whereas previous survey years typically collected data during spring or fall months.

NOTE: The primary arrangement is the arrangement used for the most number of hours per week while the mother worked.

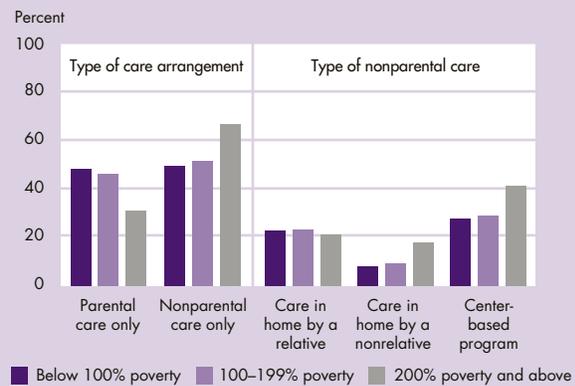
SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Indicator FAM3.A

- FAM3.A provides information about primary child care arrangements for preschoolers with employed mothers for selected years and for the summer months of 2006, thus providing a unique opportunity to examine summer child care patterns. Summer child care arrangements for preschoolers follow a similar pattern seen in non-summer months in that relatives play a primary role. Specifically, during the summer months of 2006, 32 percent of children ages 0–4 with employed mothers were primarily cared for by a relative: their father, grandparent, sibling, other relative, or mother while she worked. Sixteen percent spent time in a center-based arrangement (day care, nursery school, preschool, or Head Start). Ten percent were primarily cared for by a nonrelative in a home-based environment such as a family day care provider, nanny, babysitter, or au pair.
- Among children in families in poverty during the summer months of 2006, 12 percent were in center-based care as their primary arrangement, while 5 percent were with other relatives. Comparatively, a larger percentage of children in families at or above the poverty line were in center-based care (16 percent), and a smaller percentage were cared for by other relatives (4 percent).

Indicator FAM3.B

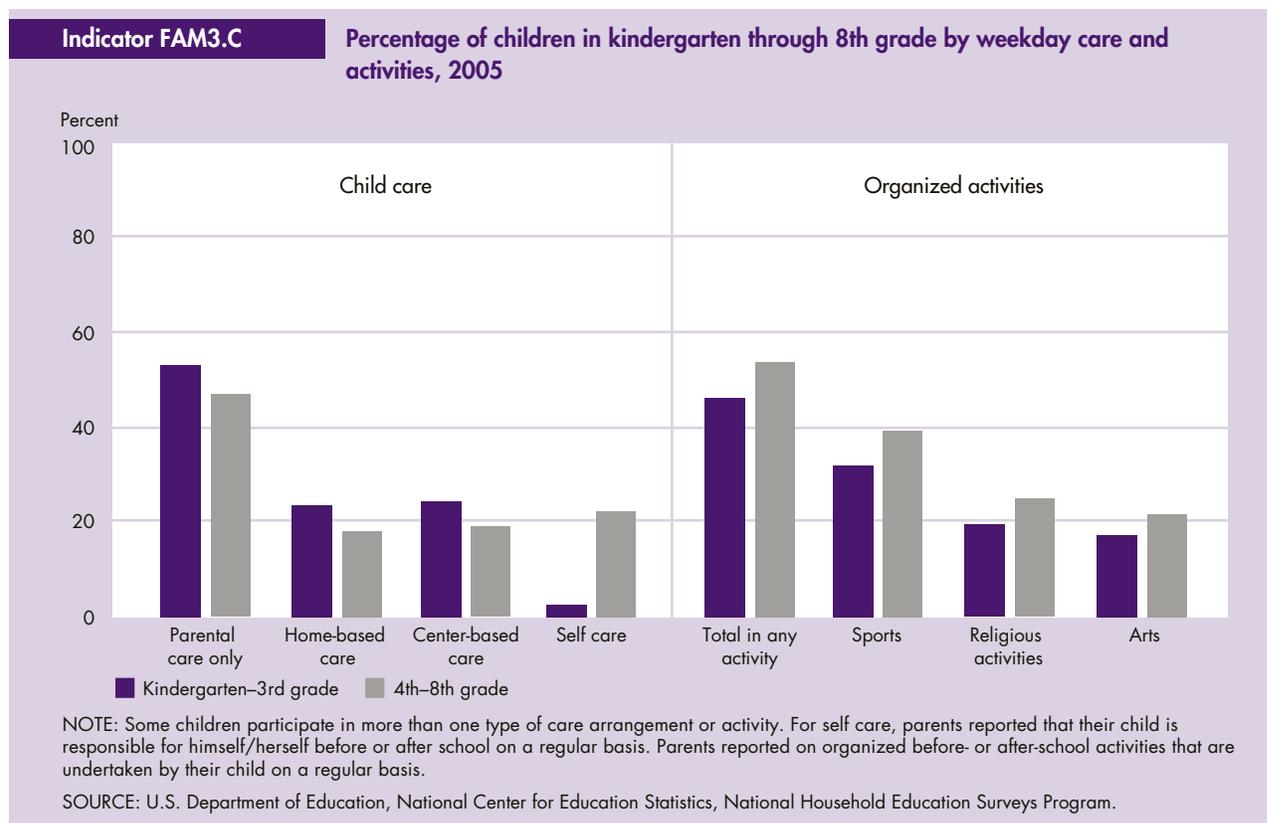
Percentage of children ages 0–6 not yet in kindergarten by type of care arrangement and poverty status, 2005



NOTE: Respondents indicated whether children had weekly nonparental care arrangements, regardless of the amount of time spent in such care. Some children participated in more than one type of arrangement, so the sum of all arrangement types exceeds the total percentage in nonparental care. Center-based programs included day care centers, prekindergartens, nursery schools, Head Start programs, and other early childhood education programs. Relative and nonrelative care could have taken place in either the child's own home or another home.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Surveys Program.

School-age children may spend their weekday, nonschool time in child care arrangements, and also may engage in a variety of enrichment activities such as sports, arts, clubs, academic activities, religious activities, and community service. In addition, some children care for themselves without adult supervision for some time during the week. This measure presents the most recent data available on how grade-school-age children spend their out-of-school time.



Indicator FAM3.B

- In 2005, 61 percent of children ages 0–6 who were not yet in kindergarten (about 12 million children) received some form of child care on a regular basis from persons other than their parents. This is about the same proportion of children in child care as in 1995.
- Patterns of child care vary by the poverty status of the child’s family. In 2005, children ages 0–6 in families with incomes at least twice the poverty level were more likely than children in families with incomes below the poverty level and children in families with incomes 100–199 percent of the poverty level to be in nonparental care (68 percent versus 51 and 53 percent, respectively). In addition, children in families with incomes at least twice the poverty level were more likely than children in families with lower incomes to be in home care by a nonrelative or in center-based programs such as nursery schools and other early childhood education programs.

Indicator FAM3.C

- In 2005, 47 percent of children in kindergarten through 3rd grade and 53 percent of those in 4th through 8th grade received some nonparental child care.
- In 2005, parents reported that older children were more likely to care for themselves before or after school than were younger children: 3 percent of children in kindergarten through 3rd grade and 22 percent of children in 4th through 8th grade cared for themselves regularly either before or after school.
- Children in the higher grades were more likely to engage in some kind of organized before- or after-school activity than were children in the lower grades. Children from families in poverty were less likely than those in families at or above poverty to participate in activities. Children in kindergarten through 8th grade were more likely to participate in sports than in any other activity.

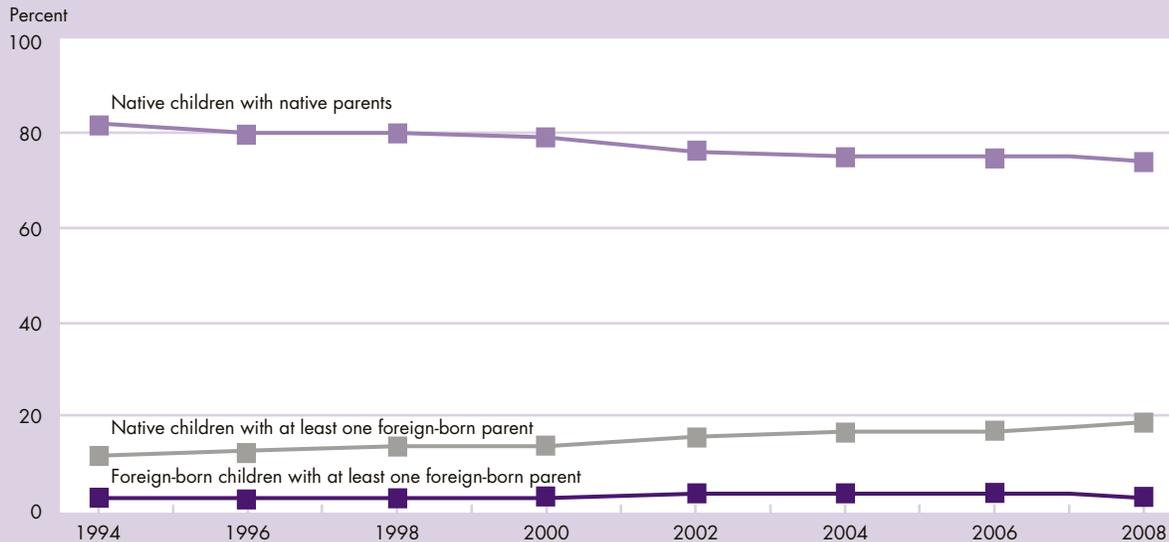
Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Tables FAM3.A–FAM3.C on pages 98–103. Endnotes begin on page 73.

Children of at Least One Foreign-Born Parent

The foreign-born population of the United States has grown since 1970.²⁰ This increase in the past generation has largely been due to immigration from Latin America and Asia, and has led to an increase in the diversity of language and cultural backgrounds of children growing up in the United States.²¹ As a result of language and cultural barriers confronting children and their parents, children with foreign-born parents may need additional resources both at school and at home.²²

Indicator FAM4

Percentage of children ages 0–17 by nativity of child and parents, selected years 1994–2008



NOTE: Includes children under 18 in households. Children living in households with no parents present are not shown in this figure, but are included in the bases for the percentages. Native parents means that all of the parents that the child lives with are native-born, while foreign-born means that one or both of the child's parents are foreign-born. Anyone with U.S. citizenship at birth is considered native, which includes people born in the United States and in U.S. outlying areas, and people born abroad with at least one American parent. Foreign-born children with native parents are included in the native children with native parents category. Prior to 2007, Current Population Survey (CPS) data identified only one parent on the child's record. This meant that a second parent could only be identified if they were married to the first parent. In 2007, a second parent identifier was added to CPS. This permits identification of two coresident parents, even if the parents are not married to each other.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements.

- In 2008, 19 percent of children were native children with at least one foreign-born parent, and 3 percent were foreign-born children with at least one foreign-born parent. Overall, the percentage of all children living in the United States with at least one foreign-born parent rose from 15 percent in 1994 to 22 percent in 2008.
- In 2008, 29 percent of foreign-born children with at least one foreign-born parent, 26 percent of native children with at least one foreign-born parent, and 7 percent of native children with native parents had a parent with less than a high school diploma or equivalent credential.²³
- In 2008, 30 percent of foreign-born children with foreign-born parents lived below the poverty line, compared with 21 percent of native children with foreign-born parents and 16 percent of native children with native parents.
- Regardless of their own nativity status, children with at least one foreign-born parent more often lived in a household with two parents present than did children with no foreign-born parents. In 2008, 84 percent of native children with at least one foreign-born parent lived with two parents, compared with 70 percent of children with two native parents.

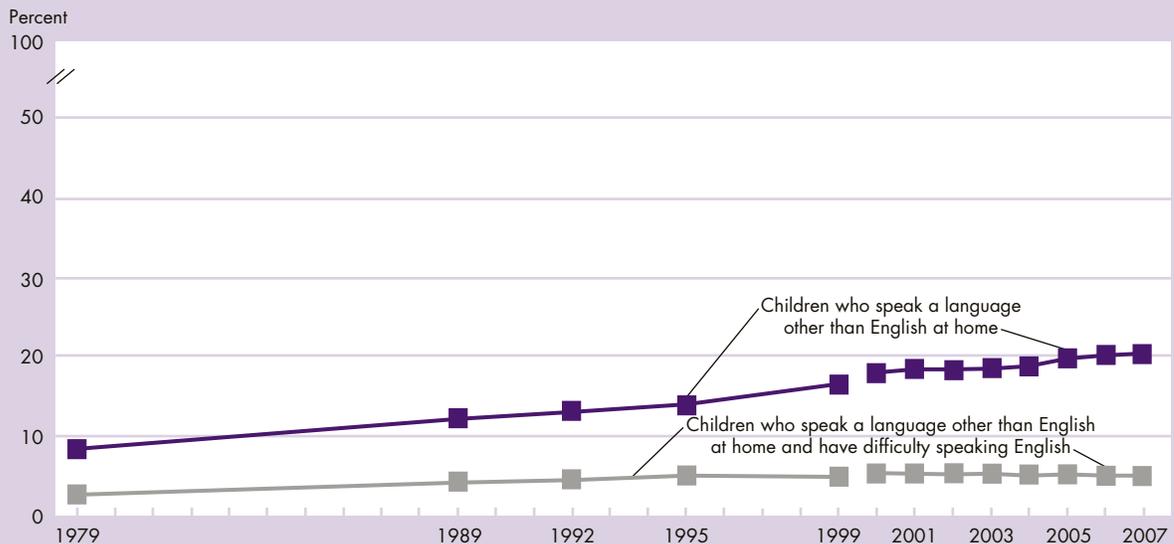
Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Table FAM4 on pages 104–106. Endnotes begin on page 73.

Language Spoken at Home and Difficulty Speaking English

Children who speak languages other than English at home and who also have difficulty speaking English²⁴ may face greater challenges progressing in school and in the labor market. Once it is determined that a student speaks another language, school officials must, by law, evaluate the child's English ability to determine whether the student needs services (such as special instruction to improve his or her English) and provide these services if needed.

Indicator FAM5

Percentage of children ages 5–17 who speak a language other than English at home and who have difficulty speaking English, selected years 1979–2007



NOTE: Numbers from the 1995 and 1999 Current Population Survey (CPS) may reflect changes in the survey because of newly instituted computer-assisted interviewing techniques and/or because of the change in the population controls to the 1990 Census-based estimates, with adjustments. A break is shown in the lines between 1999 and 2000 because data from 1979 to 1999 come from the CPS, while beginning in 2000 the data come from the American Community Survey (ACS). The questions were the same on the CPS and the ACS questionnaires.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, October (1992, 1995, and 1999) and November (1979 and 1989) Current Population Surveys, and 2000–2007 American Community Survey.

- In 2007, 21 percent of school-age children spoke a language other than English at home and 5 percent of school-age children both spoke a language other than English at home and had difficulty speaking English.
- In 2007, the percentage of school-age children who spoke a language other than English at home varied by region of the country, from a low of 11 percent in the Midwest to a high of 34 percent in the West.
- In 2007, the percentage of school-age children who had difficulty with English also varied by region, from a low of 3 percent in the Midwest to a high of 9 percent in the West.
- In 2007, 64 percent of school-age Asian children and 68 percent of school-age Hispanic children spoke a language other than English at home, compared with 6 percent of school-age White, non-Hispanic children and 5 percent of school-age Black, non-Hispanic children.²
- In 2007, 16 percent of school-age Asian children and 18 percent of school-age Hispanic children both spoke another language at home and had difficulty with English, compared with about 1 percent of both school-age White, non-Hispanic children and school-age Black, non-Hispanic children.²⁵
- About 6 percent of school-age children spoke a language other than English at home and lived in a linguistically isolated household in 2007. A linguistically isolated household is one in which all persons age 14 or over speak a language other than English at home and no person age 14 or over speaks English “Very well.”

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Table FAM5 on pages 107–110. Endnotes begin on page 73.

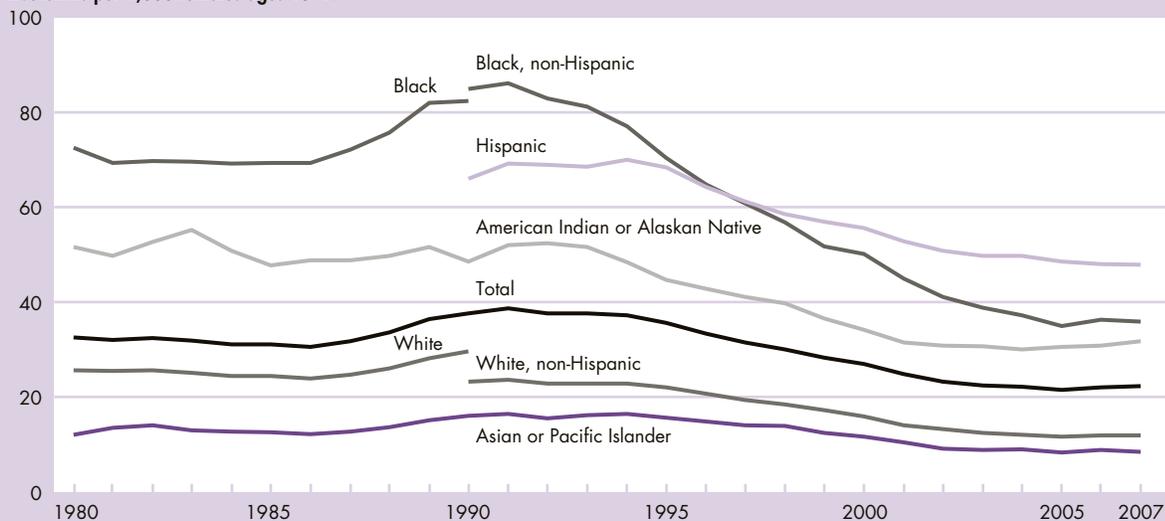
Adolescent Births

Bearing a child during adolescence is often associated with long-term difficulties for the mother and her child. These consequences are often attributable to poverty and other adverse socioeconomic circumstances that frequently accompany early childbearing.²⁶ Compared with babies born to older mothers, babies born to adolescent mothers, particularly young adolescent mothers, are at higher risk of low birthweight and infant mortality.^{6,9,27} They are more likely to grow up in homes that offer lower levels of emotional support and cognitive stimulation and they are less likely to earn high school diplomas. For the mothers, giving birth during adolescence is associated with limited educational attainment, which in turn can reduce employment prospects and earnings potential.²⁸ The birth rate of adolescents under age 18 is a measure of particular interest because the mothers are still of school age.

Indicator FAM6

Birth rates for females ages 15–17 by race and Hispanic origin, 1980–2007

Live births per 1,000 females ages 15–17



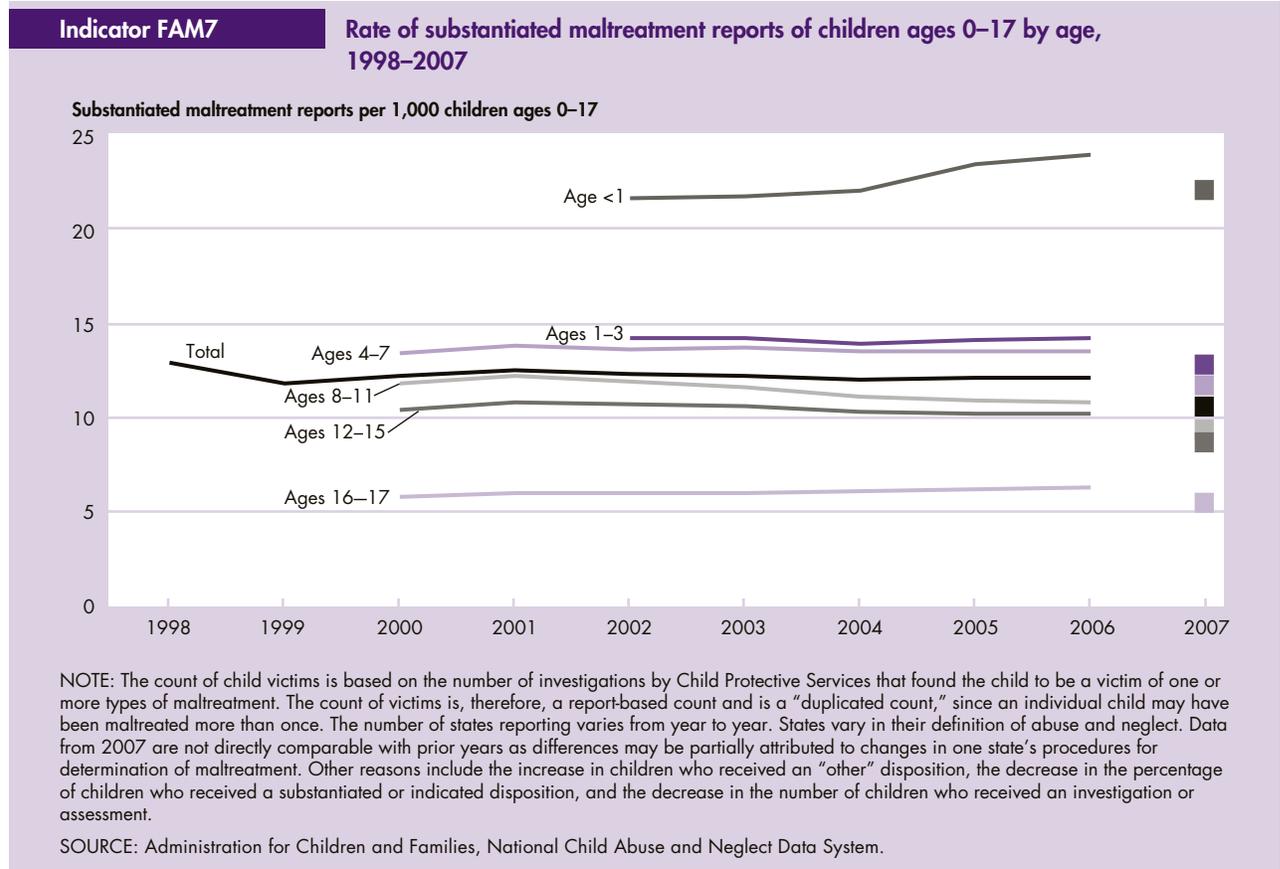
NOTE: Data for 2007 are preliminary. Race refers to mother's race. The 1977 OMB Standards for Data on Race and Ethnicity were used to classify persons into one of the following four racial groups: White, Black, American Indian or Alaskan Native, or Asian or Pacific Islander. Although state reporting of birth certificate data is transitioning to comply with the 1997 OMB standard for race and ethnic statistics, data from states reporting multiple races were bridged to the single-race categories of the 1977 OMB standards for comparability with other states and for trend analysis. Rates for 1980–1989 are not shown for Hispanics; White, non-Hispanics; or Black, non-Hispanics because information on Hispanic origin of the mother was not reported on birth certificates of most states and because population estimates by Hispanic ethnicity for the reporting states were not available. Data on race and Hispanic origin are collected and reported separately. Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System.

- In 2007, the adolescent birth rate was 22.2 per 1,000 adolescents ages 15–17. There were 140,640 births to these adolescents in 2007 according to preliminary data. The 2007 rate was higher than the 2006 rate of 22.0 per 1,000. This was the second consecutive year of increase in this measure since the long-term decline beginning 1991–1992.^{6,10,11}
 - The birth rate among adolescents ages 15–17 declined from 38.6 to 21.4 births per 1,000, between 1991 and 2005. This decline followed an increase between 1986 and 1991.
 - There remain substantial racial and ethnic disparities among the birth rates for adolescents ages 15–17. In 2007, the birth rates for this age group were 8.4 for Asians or Pacific Islanders, 11.8 for White, non-Hispanics, 31.7 for American Indians or Alaskan Natives, 35.8 for Black, non-Hispanics, and 47.8 for Hispanics.¹⁰
 - The birth rate for Black, non-Hispanic and White, non-Hispanic females ages 15–17 dropped more than half between 1991 and 2005, completely reversing the increase between 1986 and 1991. Rates for both groups increased in 2006 and were statistically unchanged in 2007.
 - The birth rate for Hispanic adolescents in this age group fell during 1991 to 2007, although at a slower pace than for Black and White non-Hispanic adolescents. Most of the decline for Hispanic adolescents occurred by 2003.^{10,11}
 - In 2007, 93 percent of births to females ages 15–17 were to unmarried mothers, compared with 62 percent in 1980 (See FAM2.B).
 - The rates of first and second births for females ages 15–17 declined by two-fifths and nearly two-thirds, respectively, between 1991 and 2005; both rates rose slightly in 2006.⁶
- Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Table FAM6 on pages 111–112. Endnotes begin on page 73.*

Child Maltreatment

Child maltreatment includes physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, as well as neglect (including medical neglect). Maltreatment in general is associated with a number of negative outcomes for children, including lower school achievement, juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, and mental health problems.²⁹ Certain types of maltreatment can result in long-term physical, social, and emotional problems, and even death. For example, “shaken baby syndrome” can result in mental retardation, cerebral palsy, or paralysis. Child maltreatment includes both fatal and nonfatal maltreatment.



- In 2007, the rate of substantiated reports of child maltreatment was 11 per 1,000 children ages 0–17.³⁰
 - From 1998 through 2002, the rate of substantiated reports of child maltreatment varied between 12 and 13 reports per 1,000 children and remained at approximately 12 reports per 1,000 children between 2002 and 2006.
 - Younger children are more frequently victims of child maltreatment than older children. In 2007, there were 22 substantiated child maltreatment reports per 1,000 children under age 1, compared with 13 for children ages 1–3, 12 for children ages 4–7, 9 for children ages 8–11, 9 for children ages 12–15, and 5 for adolescents ages 16–17.
 - Higher rates of maltreatment were reported for girls than boys (11 reports per 1,000 for females vs. 10 for males).
 - While neglect is the most common type of maltreatment across all age groups, types of maltreatment vary by age. In 2007, 79 percent of substantiated child maltreatment reports for children ages 0–3 involved neglect, compared to 62 percent for adolescents ages 16–17. Twenty-one percent of substantiated reports for adolescents ages 16–17 involved physical abuse and 17 percent involved sexual abuse. Among substantiated reports for children ages 0–3, 13 percent involved physical abuse and 2 percent involved sexual abuse.
 - In 2007, Black, non-Hispanic children had the highest rates of substantiated child maltreatment reports (17 reports per 1,000 children), followed by American Indian or Alaska Native children (14), children of two or more races (14), Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander children (14), Hispanic children (10), White, non-Hispanic children (9), and Asian children (2).
- Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Tables FAM7.A and FAM7.B on pages 113–114. Endnotes begin on page 73.*

Indicators Needed

Family and Social Environment

Current data collection systems at the national level do not provide extensive detailed information on children's families, their caregivers, or their social environments. Certain topical databases provide some of this information, but data need to be collected regularly across domains of child well-being. More details are needed on the following topics:

- *Family structure.* Increasing the detail of information collected about family structure and improving the measurement of cohabitation and family dynamics were among the key suggestions for improvement emerging from two "Counting Couples" workshops sponsored by the Forum.
- *Time use.* Currently, some Federal surveys collect information on the amount of time children spend on certain activities such as watching television and on participation rates in specific activities or care arrangements, but no Federal data source examines time spent on the whole spectrum of children's activities. In 2003, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics began the American Time Use Survey (ATUS), which measures the amount of time people spend doing various activities, such as paid work, childcare, volunteering, and socializing. The survey includes responses from persons age 15 and older. Since the numbers of observations for older youth are small, the data cannot be published separately for each year. ATUS data may be included in future *America's Children* reports as a regular indicator as more years of data become available. Forum agencies continue to be interested in the inclusion of time use questions for youth in other surveys, as appropriate.
- *Social connections and engagement.* The formation of close attachments to family, peers, school, and community have been linked to healthy youth development in numerous research studies. Additional research needs to be conducted to strengthen our understanding of how these relationships promote healthy development and protect youth from risks that, in turn, affect later life success. We currently lack regular indicators on aspects of healthy development, such as relationships with parents and peers, connections to teachers and school engagement, and civic or community involvement. To that end, the Forum co-sponsored the Indicators of Positive Development conference to define and measure healthy youth development and continues to be interested in developing appropriate measures of social connection and engagement.