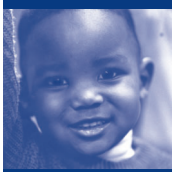


Children 2004: Vision, Action, Results



CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA
202/638-2952 • Fax 202/638-4004 • www.cwla.org

AMERICA'S CHILDREN: A SNAPSHOT

Child population under age 18 in 2002 ¹	72,894,483
White children under 18 in 2002 ²	76.6%
Nonwhite children under 18 in 2002 ³	23.4%
Children and youth under 12 in 2000 ⁴	66.4%
Children and youth age 12 and older in 2000 ⁵	33.6%

WHO CARES FOR AMERICA'S CHILDREN? *

Both parents ⁶	68.7%
Mother ⁷	22.8%
Father ⁸	4.6%
Grandparent ⁹	1.8%
Other relative ¹⁰	1.1%
Foster parent ¹¹	0.3%
Nonrelative ¹²	0.8%

OUR MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN †

Referrals of possible child abuse and neglect ¹³	2,673,000
Children substantiated or indicated as abused or neglected ¹⁴	903,089
Children who died as a result of abuse or neglect ¹⁵	1,321
Children in foster care on September 30, 2001 ¹⁶	542,000
Children adopted from the public foster care system ¹⁷	50,000
Children waiting to be adopted on September 30, 2001 ¹⁸	126,000
Children living in poverty ¹⁹	12,000,000
Children living in extreme poverty ²⁰	5,000,000

* Statistics for 2002

† Statistics for 2001; numbers of children estimated

How Well Are We Meeting the Needs of America's Children?

THE BASICS

At the most fundamental level, children need food and shelter. To grow and learn, they need a basic education and primary and preventive health care.

Economic Security

- In 2001, 16.3% of all children under age 18 lived in poverty—than any other age group of Americans.²¹
- Of the 11.7 million children living below the poverty level in 2001, 64% were white, 31% were Hispanic, and 30% were black.²²
- In 2001, 32.9 million people were poor. By 2002, that number had jumped to 34.6 million—an increase of 1.7 million people. The number of poor families increased from 6.8 million in 2001 (9.2% of all families) to 7.2 million in 2002 (9.6%).²³
- In 2001, 7% of America's children lived in extreme poverty—in families with incomes below half the poverty line of \$8,980 for a family of four.²⁴
- In 1995, 34% of poor children had a working parent. By 1998, that number had increased to 42%. Despite a reduction in the total number of poor children, the number of poor children in working families had increased by 650,000.²⁵
- In 2001, 39% of children living in female-headed households were living in poverty—a decline of 15% since 1993.²⁶
- Approximately 5 million people, half of them children, are removed annually from poverty as a result of the Earned Income Tax Credit.²⁷
- Between 1996, when the welfare reform law was enacted, and 2001, the number of individual welfare recipients declined by 56%; the number of families decreased by 52%.²⁸
- In 2002, about 5 million individuals, most of whom were children, and 2 million families, were receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits—a decline of 5.1% and 3.6%, respectively, from 2001.²⁹
- Between June 2002 and June 2003, TANF caseloads increased in 31 states, decreased in 17 states, and remained unchanged in 2 states. Since the start of the recession in March 2001, 28 states have reported caseload increases, and 22 have reported decreases.³⁰
- The value of the federal TANF block grant has eroded more than 11% since its creation in 1996 because funding has not been adjusted for inflation.³¹

Food and Shelter

- In 2001, 16% of households experiencing food insecurity had children younger than 18.³²
- From 2002 to 2003, requests for food assistance from families with children increased 18% in 25 major U.S. cities. Approximately one quarter of these requests went unmet.³³
- In 2003, the National School Lunch Program provided lunches to more than 28 million children. About 59% of the lunches served were free or at a reduced price.³⁴
- An estimated 2.3 million people experience homelessness at some point each year, including nearly 1 million children; 60% of homeless children are between birth and age 8.³⁵
- In 2003, families with children accounted for 40% of the overall homeless population in 25 major U.S. cities; unaccompanied youth accounted for 5%.³⁶

- From 2002 to 2003, requests for emergency shelter from homeless families with children increased 15% in 25 major U.S cities. More than one-third of these requests went unmet.³⁷
- Approximately 12% of homeless children are placed in the foster care system.³⁸
- In 1999, more than 50% of households with one adult and children under age 18 paid more than 30% of their income for housing.³⁹

Health

- From 1980 to 2001, the U.S. infant mortality rate dropped 46%, from 12.6 to 6.8 per 100 live births. But compared with the European Union and 24 other economically developed countries, the United States still had the highest infant mortality rate.⁴⁰
- The national teen birth rate in 2001 was 45.9 births per 1,000 women, ages 15–19, the lowest rate ever recorded in the United States.⁴¹
- In 2001, 83.4% of women received prenatal care.⁴²
- In 2002, approximately 79% of children ages 19–35 months received vaccination coverage for diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio, and measles.⁴³
- Almost 40 million people are enrolled in Medicaid. In 30 states, more than half of Medicaid recipients are children.⁴⁴
- The number of children enrolled in the State Children’s Health Insurance Program jumped from 4.6 million in FY 2001 to 5.3 million in FY 2002, an increase of 0.7 million or 15%.⁴⁵
- In 2001, 66.7% of children under age 18, and 70.6% of adults ages 18–44 had private health insurance.⁴⁶
- Through December 2002, 9,300 children under age 13 had been reported as having AIDS. Of these children, 5,407 had died.⁴⁷

Education

- In 2001, 87% of youth ages 18–24 completed high school or received a general equivalency diploma.⁴⁸
- In 2003, 37% of students in the fourth grade and 26% in the eighth grade did not perform at the basic reading achievement level. The average reading scores for white and Asian/Pacific Islander students were higher than those for black, Hispanic, and Native American students.⁴⁹
- In 2003, 23% of students in the fourth grade and 32% in the eighth grade did not perform at the basic mathematics achievement level. The average mathematics scores for white and Asian/Pacific Islander students were higher than those for black, Hispanic, and Native American students.⁵⁰
- Recent studies have shown that children in foster care do not perform as well as their peers in reading, mathematics, and general educational achievement.⁵¹

SAFETY

Keeping children safe from family, school, and community violence, reduces the likelihood that they will become either victims or perpetrators of such violence in the future.

Child Abuse and Neglect

- An estimated 903,000 children were victims of abuse and neglect in 2001; 57.2% of victims suffered neglect, 18.6% were physically abused, 9.6% were sexually abused, 6.8% were psychologically maltreated, and 19.5% experienced other forms of maltreatment.⁵²
- Children under 3 years of age had the highest rate of maltreatment in 2000 (27.7 per 1,000 children).⁵³
- Among families with children, child abuse occurs in 30%–60% of family violence cases.⁵⁴
- In 2000, family preservation programs served 314,766 children (in 27 states) and 163,952 families (in 29 states); family support programs served 380,507 children (in 22 states) and 343,067 families (in 27 states).⁵⁵

Family Violence

- Between 3.3 million and 10 million children witness some form of violence in the home each year.⁵⁶
- Children from violent homes exhibit more aggressive and delinquent behavior, compared with children from nonviolent homes.⁵⁷
- Studies have shown that 50%–70% of men who abuse their female partners also abuse their children.⁵⁸

Youth Development

- Students who spend at least one to four hours a week in extracurricular activities are 60% less likely to drop out of school by 12th grade than are their peers who do not participate in extracurricular activities.⁵⁹
- Research indicates that children who participate in afterschool programs have better school attendance, peer relations, grades, and conduct in school; reduced drop out rates; more positive attitudes toward school; and higher aspirations than do their peers who do not participate in afterschool programs.⁶⁰
- Eight million children ages 5–14 spend time unsupervised on a regular basis.⁶¹

Community Violence

- Most juvenile violence occurs during the afterschool hours of 3:00 PM–7:00 PM.⁶²
- In 2001, 13% of 9th graders were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property, compared with 9% of 10th graders, 7% of 11th graders, and 5% of 12th graders.⁶³
- In 1999, 4,210 children under age 12 were placed in juvenile detention facilities.⁶⁴
- In October 1999, 108,931 children and youth offenders were in juvenile correctional facilities. Of those, 74% were committed by the court, and 25% were detained while awaiting a court hearing, adjudication, disposition, or placement; fewer than 1% were voluntarily admitted.⁶⁵
- Law enforcement agencies in the United States made an estimated 2.3 million arrests of youth under age 18 during 2001; 32% of those were younger than 15. Over the last 10 years, juvenile arrests have substantially declined for murder (down 62%), motor vehicle theft (down 51%), and burglary (down 40%,) whereas juvenile arrests for drug abuse violations have increased dramatically (up 121%).⁶⁶

Other Threats to Children's Safety

- In 2002, 11% of the 3,642 racially motivated hate crime incidents took place at schools or colleges.⁶⁷
- In a 2001 national survey, 55% of children ages 8–11, and 68% ages 12–15, said that getting teased or bullied was a big problem for them. A large majority of both age groups also said they observe kids being teased or bullied at school.⁶⁸
- In 2001, 1,579 children ages 14 and younger died, and approximately 228,000 were injured, as occupants in motor vehicle crashes.⁶⁹
- Approximately 434,000 children ages 1–5 had elevated blood lead levels in 1999–2000.⁷⁰

HEALING

When we are unable to protect children, we must do all we can to ease the effects of the harm they have suffered. Helping children and youth to heal means providing safety and support, along with medical and mental health care and other needed services.

Mental Health and Substance Abuse

- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that 75%–80% of children who need mental health services do not receive them.⁷¹
- More than 80% of children in foster care have developmental, emotional, or behavioral problems. Mental health services are repeatedly identified as their number one health care need.⁷²
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among teens and young adults. In 2000, 3,994 teens and young adults ages 15–24 committed suicide—one every 2 hours and 12 minutes.⁷³

- Severe mental illness is highly correlated with alcohol and other drug dependence or abuse. In 2002, among adults with severe mental illness, 23.2% were dependent on or abused alcohol or other drugs. The rate among adults without severe mental illness was only 8.2%.⁷⁴
- In 2001, approximately 6.1 million children lived with parents who abused alcohol and other drugs. Of these, 1.1 million were younger than 3.⁷⁵
- In 2000, approximately one in four U.S. children—19 million, or 28.6% of children birth to age 17—was exposed to family alcoholism or alcohol abuse.⁷⁶
- Seven out of 10 cases of child abuse or neglect are exacerbated by a parent's abuse of alcohol or other drugs. In most cases, the parent's substance abuse is a long-standing problem of at least five years' duration.⁷⁷
- Approximately 67% of parents with children in the child welfare system require substance abuse treatment, but child welfare agencies are able to provide treatment for only 31%.⁷⁸
- Children whose parents abuse drugs and alcohol are almost three times more likely to be abused and four times more likely to be neglected than are children whose parents are not substance abusers.⁷⁹
- Children whose families do not receive appropriate treatment for alcohol and other drug abuse are more likely to end up in foster care, remain in foster care longer, and reenter once they have returned home, than are children whose families do receive treatment.⁸⁰
- Seventy-five percent of mothers receiving comprehensive substance abuse treatment had physical custody of one or more children six months after discharge from treatment, compared with 54% who had custody of any children shortly before entering treatment.⁸¹

Foster Care

- An estimated 57% of the children in foster care in 2001 were reunited with their parents or principal caretaker after an average stay in out-of-home care of 11.7 months. The average length of stay for all children exiting foster care that year was 22.1 months.⁸²
- In 2001, the average age of children in foster care on the last day of the fiscal year was 10 years. The average length of time in foster care for all children was 33 months.⁸³
- Of children in foster care, 37% are white non-Hispanic, 38% are black non-Hispanic, 17% are Hispanic, 2% are American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 6% are from other races or ethnicities. Of children waiting to be adopted, 45% are black non-Hispanic, 34% are white non-Hispanic, 12% are Hispanic, 2% are American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 6% are from other races or ethnicities.⁸⁴
- Children younger than age 6 represent 24% of the children in foster care. Youth ages 16 and older represent 19% of children in care.⁸⁵

RELATIONSHIPS

Close, nurturing relationships with parents, kin, and other caregivers allow and encourage children and young people to grow and thrive. Caring relationships with community members strengthen social and relationship skills, improve self-mastery, and enhance self-esteem.

Family

- Of the 542,000 children in foster care in 2001, approximately 24% lived with relatives while in care. Of the children 26,084 exiting foster care that year, 10% went to live with relatives. Nearly 11,670 adopted children (23%) were adopted by relatives.⁸⁶
- In 2002, 405,000 children lived in some form of court-involved relative or kinship care; more than half lived in families with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level.⁸⁷
- In 2000, 2.2 million children lived in relatives' homes, without their parents, in kinship care. Grandparents cared for almost 57% of these children; an aunt or uncle cared for 22%.⁸⁸

- Teenagers represent the largest proportion of children in kinship care (44%). Forty-four percent of youth in kinship care are black non-Hispanic, 38% are white non-Hispanic, 15% are Hispanic, and 3% are of another race or ethnicity.⁸⁹
- Almost two-thirds (64%) of children in kinship care live in families with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level; nearly a third (31%) live in families with incomes below 100% of federal poverty level.⁹⁰
- More than 1 million parents were incarcerated in prisons or local jails in 2000, affecting 2.3 million children.⁹¹
- From 1991 to 2000, the number of mothers in prison grew by 87%, and the number of incarcerated fathers increased by 61%.⁹²

Adoption

- Returning home is not an option for approximately 126,000 children in the foster care system who were free for adoption in 2001. More than half of them are children of color.⁹³
- In 2001, 50,000 children were adopted from the public child welfare system—a 2% decrease from the 51,000 adopted in 2000.⁹⁴

OPPORTUNITIES

Children and youth need opportunities to develop their talents and skills, to contribute to their families and communities, and to make positive connections to their cultures, traditions, and spiritual resources.

Child Care and Head Start

- In 2002, 66% of single mothers with children under age 6, and 58% of married mothers with children under age 6, were in the labor force; 78% of single mothers with children ages 6–17, and 74% of married mothers with children ages 6–17, were in the labor force.⁹⁵
- Only 14% of the 15.7 million children eligible for federal child care subsidies in 2000 received child care assistance. In 2000, almost 6 million low-income children below 85% of state median income were ineligible for child care assistance, primarily because of low state income eligibility limits.⁹⁶
- Nearly 16 million children under age 13 living in low-income working families are likely to need child care, but only one in seven children who are eligible for child care assistance under federal law receive it.⁹⁷
- Since the demand for child care is so great, most states do not keep waiting lists of those eligible to receive assistance. As of March 2000, 15 states had waiting lists for eligible families for child care assistance. Most state child care programs could not serve all the families who need help, even before the current budget crises.⁹⁸
- In more than 25% of the states, a family of three earning just \$25,000 a year does not qualify for any child care assistance.⁹⁹
- To maintain current child care programs against inflation, states will require approximately \$5 billion over the next five years, with no decrease in the availability of TANF funds or state budget allotments.¹⁰⁰
- In 2002, states spent \$3.5 billion in TANF funds for child care programs, compared with \$3.8 billion in FY 2000.¹⁰¹
- Since 1965, Head Start has served more than 21 million children and their families, providing preschool-age children with education, nutritious meals, and access to health, mental health, and social services that support their early development.¹⁰²
- Head Start received \$6.7 billion in 2003, a 3% increase from 2002.¹⁰³
- In the 2000–2001 program year, 77% of Head Start families enrolled had annual incomes below \$15,000.¹⁰⁴

- More than two-thirds of Head Start families in 2002 had working parents; 56% were headed by a single parent or caregiver. Only one-fifth of these families received welfare cash assistance, compared with 1997, when nearly half received TANF benefits.¹⁰⁵
- During the 2001–2002 program year, 13% of the Head Start enrollment consisted of children with disabilities, most of them speech and language disabilities.¹⁰⁶
- Children enrolled in Head Start show significant gains in social behaviors, such as reduced hyperactivity, aggression, and shyness, and increased cooperation. Behavior ratings in Head Start are related to academic success in kindergarten.¹⁰⁷

Disproportionality

- According to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis System, children of color accounted for 60% of the 542,000 children in foster care on September 30, 2001.¹⁰⁸
- In 1997, children of color represented 34% of the U.S. population, but they accounted for 62% of youth in detention, 67% of youth committed to public facilities, and 55% of youth committed to private facilities.¹⁰⁹
- In 2000, about 1% of the child population in the United States was American Indian or Alaskan Native, but this population group represented 1.6% of all victims of child abuse and neglect and 2% of children in foster care. The representation of American Indians and Alaskan Natives is likely underestimated, because children in tribal child welfare systems may not be reflected in the national data reported to the federal government.¹¹⁰

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440 First Street NW, Third Floor ▪ Washington, DC 20001-2085
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