

Overview of *The State of America's Children 2014*

The U.S. is reaching a tipping point in racial and ethnic diversity.

- For the first time the majority of children in America under age 2 were children of color in 2012 as were the majority of all children in 10 states — Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, and Texas — and the District of Columbia. By 2019, the majority of all children nationwide are expected to be children of color.
- Over one-third of children of color under 2 were poor in 2012 during years of rapid brain development.

Child poverty has reached record levels.

- One in 5 children — 16.1 million — was poor in 2012.
- More than 7.1 million children — over 40 percent of poor children — lived in extreme poverty at less than half the poverty level. For a family of four this means \$11,746 a year, \$979 a month, \$226 a week and \$32 a day or \$8 a person.
- The youngest most vulnerable children were the poorest age group. Over 1 in 4 children under age 5 — nearly 5 million — were poor. Almost half of them — 2.4 million — were extremely poor.

Children of color are disproportionately poor.

- Nearly 1 in 3 children of color — 11.2 million children — was poor and more than 1 in 3 children of color under age 5 — 3.5 million — were poor.
- Black children were the poorest (39.6 percent) followed by American Indian/Native Alaskan children (36.8 percent) and Hispanic children (33.7 percent).
- In six states — Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, Ohio, Oregon, and Wisconsin — half or more Black children were poor and nearly half the states had Black child poverty rates of 40 percent or more.
- The largest group of poor children was Hispanic children (5.8 million) followed by White children (5.2 million) and Black children (4.1 million).

Children in single-parent families and Southern families are at greatest risk of poverty.

- Children in single-parent families were nearly four times more likely to be poor than children in married-couple families in 2012. Although almost 70 percent of all children lived with two parents in 2013, more than half of Black children and nearly 1 in 3 Hispanic children lived with only one parent compared to 1 in 5 White children.
- The South had the highest child poverty rate with 1 in 4 Southern children poor compared to 1 in 5 in the rest of the country.
- Child poverty rates were highest in cities (29.1 percent) followed by rural areas and small towns (26.7 percent) but nearly 2 in 5 poor children lived in suburbs.

Child poverty creates unacceptable child homelessness and hunger.

- Nearly 1.2 million public school students were homeless in 2011-2012, 73 percent more than before the recession.
- More than 1 and 9 children lacked access to adequate food in 2012, a rate 23 percent higher than before the recession.
- In an average month in FY2011, 1.2 million households with children had no cash income and depended only on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to stave off hunger.

- Black and Hispanic households with children were more than twice as likely as White households to lack access to adequate food in 2012.
- Eighty-nine percent of children who relied on free or reduced-price lunch during the school year did not receive meals through the Summer Food Service Program in 2012.

Government safety nets lifted millions of children out of poverty.

- Government safety net programs lifted 9 million children from poverty in 2012 including 5.3 million children through the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit and 2.2 million through SNAP.
- Child poverty would have been 57 percent higher in 2012 without government tax credits and food, housing, and energy benefits. Extreme child poverty would have been 240 percent higher.

Income and wealth inequalities are shockingly high.

- The top 1 percent of earners received 22.5 percent of the nation's income in 2012, more than double their share in 1964 and equal to levels last seen in the 1920s.
- The average wealth of White households in 2011 (\$110,500) was 14 times that of Hispanic households (\$7,683), and 17 times that of Black households (\$6,314).

Working families are struggling.

- Employment does not guarantee an above-poverty income: more than two-thirds of poor children lived in families where one or more family member worked.
- In no state could an individual working full-time at the minimum wage afford the fair market rent for a two-bedroom rental unit and have had enough for food, utilities and other necessities in 2013. A person would have needed to work more than two-and-a-half full-time minimum-wage jobs to afford a two-bedroom fair market rental.

Lack of investments deprives children of critical supports in the early years.

- Less than half of 3- and 4-year olds were enrolled in preschool in 2009-2011.
- Early Head Start funding served only 4 percent of the 2.9 million eligible poor infants and toddlers on any given day in FY2012 and Head Start funding served only 41 percent of the 2 million eligible poor 3- and 4-year olds.

The nation's schools fail to prepare millions of children in greatest need.

- Nearly 60 percent of all fourth and eighth grade public school students and more than 80 percent of Black and almost 75 percent of Hispanic children in these grades could not read or compute at grade level in 2013.
- Only 78 percent of students graduated from public high school in four years in 2010. That rate was 66 percent for Black students, 69 percent for American Indian/Alaska Native students and 71 percent for Hispanic students.
- Over half a million public school students dropped out of grades 9-12 during the 2009-2010 school year. This will cost taxpayers in the future billions of dollars a year in added benefits and services and foregone income tax revenue.

- In only 11 states and the District of Columbia are school districts required by law to offer full-day kindergarten to all eligible students, although 45 states and the District of Columbia have adopted Common Core State Standards that assume districts are offering a full day of kindergarten.
- Alaska was the only state in the nation to equitably fund education by spending 40 percent more for each student in its poorest school districts than its richest in 2007-2008, the most recent year of data. Thirteen states spent *more* on students in their *richest* districts than their *poorest* districts.

Ninety-five percent of all children now have access to health coverage although access does not ensure they will be enrolled.

- The percent of uninsured children in America has decreased 40 percent since 1997 thanks to Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) which provided health coverage to 44 million children under 19 (57 percent of all children) in FY2012.
- The unjust lottery of geography left more than 7.2 million children under 19 uninsured in 2012: 1 in 7 Hispanic children, 1 in 11 Black children and 1 in 15 White children. Nearly 70 percent of them were eligible for Medicaid or CHIP but not enrolled.
- Forty percent of children who needed mental health services did not receive them in 2011-2012.
- Family health care costs pushed more than 2 million children into poverty in 2012.

Many vulnerable children need treatment, services and permanent families.

- A child is abused or neglected every 47 seconds. Infants and toddlers are most likely to be victims of abuse and neglect.
- Nearly 40 percent of children who are abused or neglected receive no post-investigation services and many more receive far fewer services than they need.
- In 2012, 101,719 children in foster care were waiting to be adopted. More than 23,000 youth aged out of foster care at 18 or older without being returned home, adopted or placed with a permanent legal guardian.
- 4,028 children are arrested each day — one every 21 seconds and 1,790 children are serving sentences in adult prisons.

Guns kill or injure a child or teen every half hour.

- In 2010, 2,694 children and teens were killed by guns and 15,576 were injured by guns. Guns killed more infants, toddlers and preschoolers than law enforcement officers in the line of duty.
- U.S. children and teens are 17 times more likely to die from gun violence than their peers in 25 other high-income countries.
- Since 1963, three times as many children and teens have died from guns on American soil than U.S. soldiers killed in action in the Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq wars.
- Gun violence disproportionately affects children of color. In 2010, Black children and teens were nearly five times and Hispanic children and teens were more than three times more likely to be killed by guns than White children and teens.
- United States military and law enforcement agencies possess 4 million guns. U.S. civilians have 310 million. Every year American companies manufacture enough bullets to fire 31 rounds into every one of our citizens.

A Sad Story

A shopping cart was my first crib.
My sister and me.
Our home was on the street.
Finally under a roof.
Two beds for six.
No is always on our minds. No running, no jumping, no fun.
— Shanika, age 5

When They Take Away Your Car, You Don't Have As Much Food

My dad did not have enough money to buy his car license. So the cop took his car away. He can't drive anymore. Now it is harder for him to get to work, and sometimes he is late. So he does not get as much money as he used to get. Now we have to go walking everywhere.

We get tired. Our life is harder. We can't get as much food. Sometimes my mom has only beans, and I don't like beans so I just don't eat. Sometimes I get hungry. It's harder for me to go to sleep and I'm tired in the morning.

When I grow up, I was thinking to be a doctor, But now I think that I won't be able to do anything, because I won't even have food or shelter.
— Alan, age 10

Six People, Five Eat

There are six people in our family.
But only five sit down to dinner.
That's because my mom doesn't eat.
She wants to make sure we have enough food.
— Vanessa, age 6

Daydreaming on the Bus

Once we lived in a big, big place, my mom and my sisters and me. I was little. I carried my backpack everywhere. All my things were in it. It was hard to get good food. Eating is a word I hate the most. I don't like donuts. I don't like candy. Once I tried candy, and it was disgusting. I don't like chocolate either. I like broccoli and carrots and healthy things. My mom tries hard to get them for us. We live in a house now. I am happy.
— Josh, age 6

Preventable Costs

- Child poverty costs the nation at least \$500 billion each year in extra education, health and criminal justice costs and in lost productivity.
- Child abuse and neglect cost the U.S. \$80.3 billion each year in direct costs and lost productivity. A single case of nonfatal child abuse and neglect costs \$210,012 over a lifetime, and a case of fatal child abuse and neglect \$1.27 million, mostly due to lost productivity.
- Gun deaths and injuries cost the U.S. \$174.1 billion each year, or 1.15 percent of our total gross domestic product (GDP).
- Racial and ethnic health disparities cost the U.S. an estimated \$1.24 trillion in medical costs and lost productivity between 2003 and 2006.
- The high school students who dropped out of the class of 2011 will cost the nation's economy an estimated \$154 billion in lost income over the course of their lifetimes.
- The gap between Black and Hispanic compared to White high school achievement in 1998 cost the U.S. \$310 to \$525 billion in lost GDP by 2008 and the income achievement gap cost \$400 to \$670 billion.
- The achievement gap between American students and those in top-performing countries like Finland and Korea in 1998 cost the nation \$1.3 to \$2.3 trillion in 2008 or 9 to 16 percent of GDP.

We Can Afford to Do Better

- The amount the U.S. spends per minute on corporate tax breaks would pay the salary of 16 child care workers. More than 220,000 children are currently on waiting lists for child care assistance. Expanding child care increases poor mothers' work participation.
- Three days' worth of the amount the U.S. spends on corporate tax breaks would provide a whole year's worth of SNAP food assistance for the estimated 737,000 children who don't have enough food.
- The amount the U.S. spends a year on corporate tax breaks for private jets would pay the salary of 6,400 high school teachers.
- All poor infants and toddlers could have been served by Early Head Start if the government diverted just 18 days of defense spending. Currently only about 4 percent of eligible children reap the benefits of this high quality early learning experience. Quality early education programs return 7 to 10 percent a year for every dollar invested.
- More than 17,500 low-income children could enroll in Head Start for a year for the cost of just one F-35 fighter jet among the nearly 2,500 the Department of Defense is scheduled to buy.



“If we are to teach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children.”

“Poverty is the worst form of violence.”

— Mahatma Gandhi



“We owe our children — the most vulnerable citizens in any society — a life free from violence and fear.”

“We would like to create a world familiar with the smiles of children rather than their tears.”

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

— Nelson Mandela



“I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits.”

“Let us march on poverty until no American parent has to skip a meal so that their children may eat. March on poverty until no starved man walks the streets of our cities and towns in search of jobs that do not exist.”

— Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.