Chapter 1

Juvenile population characteristics

Juveniles in the United States today live in a world much different from that of their parents or grandparents. Problems experienced by children at the turn of the century are the products of multiple and sometimes complex causes. Data presented in this chapter indicate that in many ways conditions have improved in recent years, but only marginally. For example, the proportion of juveniles living in poverty has declined recently, but juveniles are still far more likely to live in poverty today than 20 years ago. Similarly, teenage birth rates have declined in recent years but still remain high. Fewer children are being raised in two-parent families as well. Although high school dropout rates have fallen for most juveniles, the rates are still too high, especially in an employment market where unskilled labor is needed less and less.

This chapter presents a brief overview of some of the more commonly requested demographic, economic, and sociological statistics on juveniles. The sections summarize demographic and poverty data developed by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, educational data from the National Center for Education Statistics, and birth statistics from the National Center for Health Statistics.

In 1998, 70.2 million Americans—more than 1 in 4—were under age 18

The juvenile population is increasing by less than other segments of the U.S. population

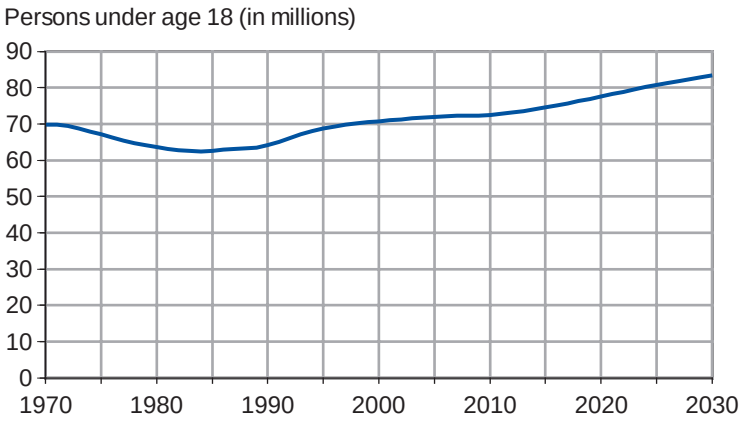
In 1998, more than 70 million persons in the United States were below age 18, the age group commonly referred to as *juveniles*. This represents 26% of the total U.S. resident population. The juvenile population fell to its lowest level in nearly three decades in 1984, to below 63 million individuals. Since that year, the juvenile population has increased gradually and is projected to do so well into the next century.

Media reports of future increases in juvenile crime are often tied to the anticipated growth in juvenile population. The U.S. Bureau of the Census has estimated that the juvenile population will grow 8% between 1995 and 2015. This increase appears relatively small compared to the increases in the other segments of the U.S. population during this period. Between 1995 and 2015, the number of persons ages 18 to 24 will increase 22%, persons ages 25 to 64 will increase 18%, and persons age 65 and older will increase 36%.

Juvenile minority populations will show the greatest increases

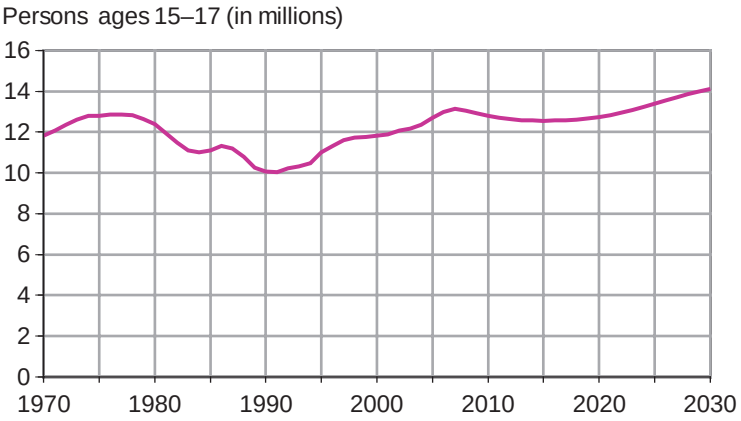
Between 1995 and 2015, the number of black juveniles is expected to increase 19%, American Indian juveniles 17%, and Asian/Pacific Islander juveniles 74%, while white juveniles will increase 3%. Along with race, the Bureau of the Census also classifies persons by their ethnic origin. Hispanic juveniles (who can be of any race, but are primarily classified racially as white) will increase 59% between 1995 and 2015. Over this period, the number of white, non-Hispanic juveniles will decrease 3%.

The juvenile population in the U.S. will increase gradually into the next century



- Between 1995 and 2030, the population of persons under age 18 is expected to increase 21%.

In 2007, the population of juveniles ages 15, 16, and 17—the age group responsible for two-thirds of all juvenile arrests—will reach a level similar to that of the mid-1970's



- Between 1995 and 2007, the population of persons ages 15–17 in the U.S. will increase 19%.
- Minority populations will experience greater increases in this population of older juveniles, with a black increase of 21%, an American Indian increase of 20%, an Asian/Pacific Islander increase of 65%, and an Hispanic increase of 60%. During this period, the number of white, non-Hispanic youth ages 15–17 in the U.S. population will increase 9%.

Source: Authors' analysis of Bureau of the Census' *Resident population estimates by age, sex, and race* for the years 1970–1996 [machine-readable data files] and *Population projections of the United States by age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin: 1995–2050* [machine-readable data files].

Between 1995 and 2015, California, Hawaii, the District of Columbia, Alaska, and New Mexico will experience the largest percent increases in their juvenile populations

State	Projected population percent change 1995–2015					State	Projected population percent change 1995–2015				
	All ages	Ages 0–17	Ages 18–24	Ages 25–64	Age 65 & older		All ages	Ages 0–17	Ages 18–24	Ages 25–64	Age 65 & older
U.S. total	18%	8%	22%	18%	36%	Missouri	13%	0%	12%	15%	27%
Alabama	17	3	7	19	42	Montana	23	3	2	24	74
Alaska	31	27	40	23	123	Nebraska	13	1	9	15	33
Arizona	38	20	42	38	73	Nevada	42	15	46	43	99
Arkansas	18	–4	1	23	48	New Hampshire	20	3	25	21	43
California	31	34	57	25	29	New Jersey	12	4	22	13	17
Colorado	29	12	31	24	99	New Mexico	36	26	32	37	69
Connecticut	7	–2	21	7	13	New York	4	1	20	2	8
Delaware	16	3	21	17	36	North Carolina	23	4	17	24	61
District of Columbia	7	29	55	–5	–8	North Dakota	10	–2	8	9	35
Florida	31	9	33	35	45	Ohio	4	–6	2	5	21
Georgia	28	14	29	28	64	Oklahoma	16	0	9	17	48
Hawaii	31	32	36	27	41	Oregon	27	7	19	26	74
Idaho	39	18	16	44	98	Pennsylvania	3	–6	4	5	9
Illinois	8	2	15	8	17	Rhode Island	8	4	20	9	4
Indiana	10	0	6	11	31	South Carolina	19	3	8	20	58
Iowa	5	–7	–2	8	23	South Dakota	15	2	6	21	30
Kansas	15	4	15	17	28	Tennessee	21	6	16	22	51
Kentucky	10	–7	–4	13	41	Texas	30	21	37	27	61
Louisiana	11	–1	9	12	43	Utah	37	18	28	42	97
Maine	10	–7	–4	16	27	Vermont	13	–1	7	14	42
Maryland	16	7	31	15	33	Virginia	20	8	21	18	50
Massachusetts	8	2	27	7	12	Washington	30	13	29	29	72
Michigan	4	–5	2	5	20	West Virginia	1	–14	–19	4	29
Minnesota	15	–1	15	17	39	Wisconsin	11	–3	7	14	31
Mississippi	13	–3	–3	19	38	Wyoming	34	18	18	34	87

- One-third of the States are expected to experience a decline in their juvenile populations between 1995 and 2015. The States with the largest projected declines are West Virginia, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.
- Between 1995 and 2015, the number of persons ages 65 and older in the U.S. population will increase 36%. All States (excluding the District of Columbia) are expected to see increases in their senior citizen populations—most will experience large increases. Only in California will the increase in the juvenile population outpace the increase in senior citizens.

Source: Authors' analysis of Bureau of the Census' *Population projections of the United States by age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin: 1995–2050* [machine-readable data files].

After the District of Columbia, States with the smallest proportions of white juveniles in 1997 were Hawaii (29%), Mississippi (53%), Louisiana (58%), and South Carolina (62%)

	1997 juvenile population (ages 0–17)						1997 juvenile population (ages 0–17)					
State	White	Black	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic origin	State	White	Black	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic origin
U.S. total	79%	16%	1%	4%	15%	Missouri	84%	14%	0%	1%	2%
Alabama	66	33	0	1	1	Montana	89	0	10	1	2
Alaska	68	4	23	5	4	Nebraska	92	5	1	2	6
Arizona	85	4	8	2	31	Nevada	84	9	2	5	21
Arkansas	77	22	1	1	3	New Hampshire	98	1	0	1	2
California	79	8	1	12	40	New Jersey	76	18	0	6	15
Colorado	91	5	1	3	20	New Mexico	83	3	13	2	48
Connecticut	85	12	0	3	12	New York	73	21	0	6	19
Delaware	73	24	0	2	5	North Carolina	69	27	2	2	3
Dist. of Columbia	19	78	0	3	9	North Dakota	90	1	8	1	2
Florida	75	22	0	2	16	Ohio	84	15	0	1	2
Georgia	63	35	0	2	4	Oklahoma	78	10	10	2	6
Hawaii	29	3	1	67	11	Oregon	92	2	2	4	9
Idaho	97	1	2	1	10	Pennsylvania	85	13	0	2	4
Illinois	77	19	0	3	14	Rhode Island	89	7	1	3	10
Indiana	88	10	0	1	3	South Carolina	62	37	0	1	2
Iowa	95	3	0	2	3	South Dakota	84	1	14	1	2
Kansas	90	7	1	2	7	Tennessee	77	22	0	1	1
Kentucky	90	9	0	1	1	Texas	83	13	0	3	37
Louisiana	58	40	1	1	3	Utah	95	1	2	3	8
Maine	98	1	1	1	1	Vermont	98	1	0	1	1
Maryland	64	32	0	4	4	Virginia	72	24	0	4	5
Massachusetts	86	9	0	5	10	Washington	87	4	2	6	9
Michigan	80	17	1	2	4	West Virginia	96	4	0	1	1
Minnesota	90	4	2	4	3	Wisconsin	88	8	1	3	4
Mississippi	53	45	0	1	1	Wyoming	95	1	3	1	8

- States with more than 95% white juvenile populations were Idaho, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and West Virginia.
- The largest proportions of black juveniles were in the District of Columbia (78%), Mississippi (45%), Louisiana (40%), South Carolina (37%), and Georgia (35%).
- States with the largest proportion of American Indians in their juvenile populations were Alaska (23%), South Dakota (14%), New Mexico (13%), Montana (10%), and Oklahoma (10%).
- States with the largest proportion of Hispanics in their juvenile populations were New Mexico (48%), California (40%), Texas (37%), and Arizona (31%).

Note: Race proportions include persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Persons of Hispanic ethnicity can be of any race; however, most are white.

Source: Authors' analysis of Bureau of the Census' *Estimates of the population of States by age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin: 1990–1997* [machine-readable data files].

In 1997, 14.1 million juveniles lived in poverty—42% more than in 1978, but 10% fewer than in 1993

In 1997, one-fifth of all juveniles lived below the poverty level

In 1997, the poverty threshold for a family of four was $16,400. Juveniles under age 18 were 26% of the U.S. population, but were 40% of all persons living below the poverty level in 1997.

The proportion of children living in poverty varied by race and ethnicity. In 1997, poverty rates for black juveniles and juveniles of Hispanic origin (37%) were far greater than the rates for white (16%) and Asian (20%) juveniles. Due to the proportion of white children in the U.S. population, however, the majority of children living in poverty were white. In 1997, 9 million white juveniles, 4 million black juveniles, and 0.6 million Asian/Pacific Islander juveniles were living in poverty—this included 4 million juveniles of Hispanic origin.

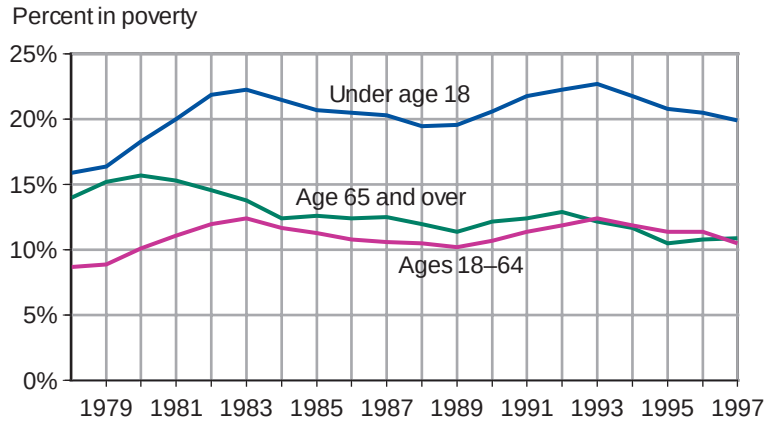
In 1997, families with children were three times more likely to live in poverty than were others

The poverty rate among families with children was just over 16% in 1997, compared with 5% among families without children. Black and Hispanic families with children were more than twice as likely to live in poverty as were white families with children.

	Percent of families with children in poverty	
	1978	1997
All races	13%	16%
White	9	13
Black	34	30
Hispanic	24	30

Note: Race proportions include persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Persons of Hispanic ethnicity can be of any race; however, most are white.

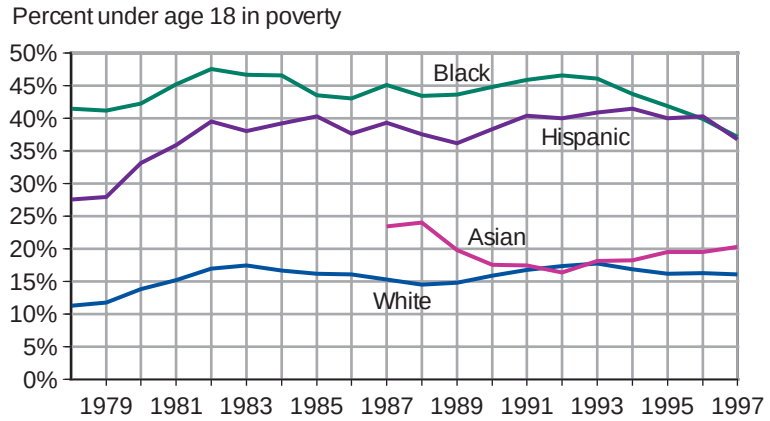
Between 1978 and 1997, poverty rates increased for juveniles while declining for the elderly



- In 1997, the child poverty rate—the proportion of those under age 18 who lived below the poverty level—was almost double the poverty rate for those 18 and over.

Source: Authors' analysis of Bureau of the Census' Poverty in the United States: 1997, *Current Population Reports: Consumer Income*.

In 1997, the proportion of black juveniles living in poverty reached its lowest point in over two decades



- For whites and Hispanics, the proportion of juveniles in poverty has been relatively stable since 1982.
- Poverty rates among black juveniles exceeded Hispanic rates between 1978 and 1995 and were similar thereafter.

Note: Race proportions include persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Persons of Hispanic ethnicity can be of any race; however, most are white. American Indian data are not presented because of small sample size.

Source: Authors' analysis of Bureau of the Census' Poverty in the United States: 1997, *Current Population Reports: Consumer Income*.

Growth in the number of juveniles in poverty varied by racial and ethnic background

Between 1988 and 1997, the overall number of juveniles living in poverty grew 13%. The number of black juveniles in poverty decreased 2%, compared with a 21% increase for white juveniles and a 32% increase among Asian/Pacific Islanders. The increase in the number of white juveniles in poverty was influenced substantially by the 51% increase in the number of juveniles in poverty who were of Hispanic origin (who are predominately white).

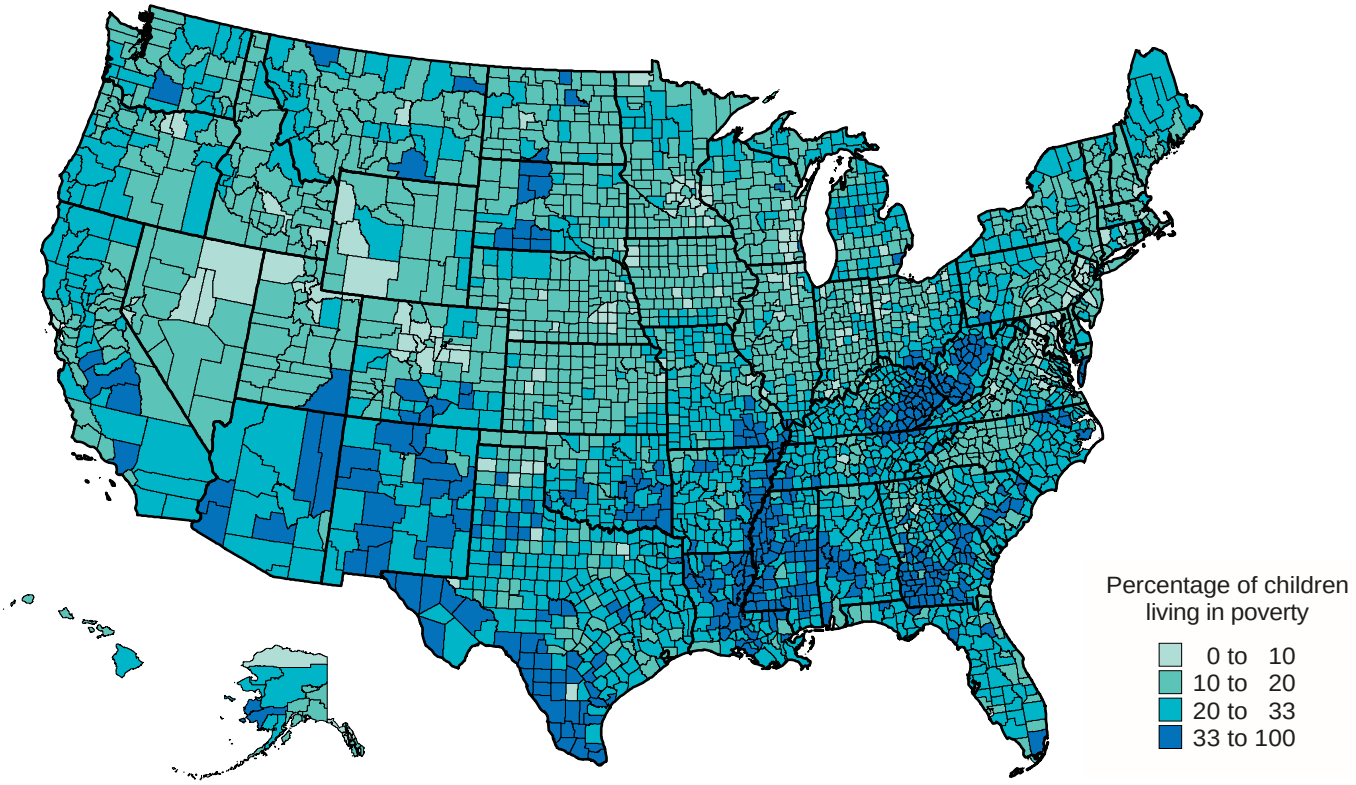
Income disparities among children grew between 1980 and 1996

According to a recent report by the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, the gap between rich and poor children grew between 1980 and 1996. The difference between the proportion of children in high-income families and those in extreme poverty was 10 percentage points in 1980. That difference grew to 16 points in 1996.

	Percent of children		
Income level	1980	1990	1996
Extreme poverty	6.6%	8.3%	8.4%
Poverty	11.3	11.6	11.4
Low income	24.0	21.8	22.7
Medium income	41.4	37.0	34.0
High income	16.8	21.3	23.5

Note: Estimates refer to children who are related to the householder and who are under age 18. Extreme poverty is less than 50% of the poverty threshold; poverty is below the poverty threshold, but above extreme poverty; low income is up to 200% above the poverty threshold; medium income is 200% to 400% above the threshold; and high income is over 400%.

In 1993, many counties with a high percentage of juveniles living in poverty were located in Southern States



Source: Authors' analysis of Bureau of the Census' *State and county income and poverty estimates–1993* [machine-readable data file].

According to 1993 estimates, the proportion of juveniles in poverty was greater than the proportion of all persons in poverty, and the proportion of children under age 5 in poverty was even greater

State	Percent in poverty			State	Percent in poverty		
	All ages	Ages 0–17	Under age 5		All ages	Ages 0–17	Under age 5
United States	15.1%	22.7%	26.5%	Missouri	15.1%	21.6%	26.0%
Alabama	18.8	26.2	30.2	Montana	15.2	19.8	25.8
Alaska	11.2	15.9	20.3	Nebraska	10.7	13.9	19.0
Arizona	18.5	28.0	33.0	Nevada	11.5	16.7	20.6
Arkansas	18.9	26.0	31.3	New Hampshire	8.6	11.5	14.4
California	17.4	26.4	29.2	New Jersey	10.0	15.7	17.1
Colorado	11.7	16.5	21.1	New Mexico	21.6	30.6	35.6
Connecticut	9.2	16.5	18.7	New York	16.3	26.7	29.4
Delaware	11.1	16.7	20.0	North Carolina	14.1	19.7	23.5
District of Columbia	20.4	33.3	35.6	North Dakota	12.5	16.2	20.0
Florida	16.0	24.7	28.3	Ohio	13.7	21.5	25.9
Georgia	16.8	25.2	29.2	Oklahoma	18.3	25.4	31.2
Hawaii	9.6	14.9	18.0	Oregon	13.2	18.3	24.9
Idaho	12.5	15.5	21.3	Pennsylvania	12.9	19.7	22.7
Illinois	13.4	20.4	23.5	Rhode Island	12.4	20.6	24.3
Indiana	11.9	17.3	21.5	South Carolina	16.6	23.7	27.3
Iowa	11.1	15.1	19.8	South Dakota	14.3	19.2	23.6
Kansas	12.2	16.7	20.6	Tennessee	17.8	26.0	30.4
Kentucky	19.7	28.1	32.5	Texas	19.6	28.6	32.9
Louisiana	23.9	33.3	37.3	Utah	11.2	13.6	18.7
Maine	13.7	19.4	23.6	Vermont	12.2	17.0	21.2
Maryland	10.2	15.1	17.5	Virginia	12.0	17.8	21.0
Massachusetts	11.1	18.7	21.3	Washington	12.0	17.3	21.6
Michigan	15.0	23.6	27.6	West Virginia	21.7	32.6	39.2
Minnesota	10.8	14.7	18.0	Wisconsin	10.9	15.9	19.4
Mississippi	24.6	33.9	38.6	Wyoming	11.9	14.9	20.6

Source: Authors' adaptation of Bureau of the Census' *State and county income and poverty estimates–1993* [machine-readable data file].

Children were less likely to live with both parents in 1997 than in the past

About 3 in 10 children lived in single-parent homes in 1997

The proportion of children living in two-parent homes declined from 85% to 68% between 1970 and 1997. This roughly paralleled an increase in the percentage of children living with only their mother.

Living arrangement	Percent of children			
	1970	1980	1990	1997
Both parents	85%	77%	73%	68%
Single-headed	12	20	25	28
Mother	11	18	22	24
Father	1	2	3	4
Other	3	4	3	4

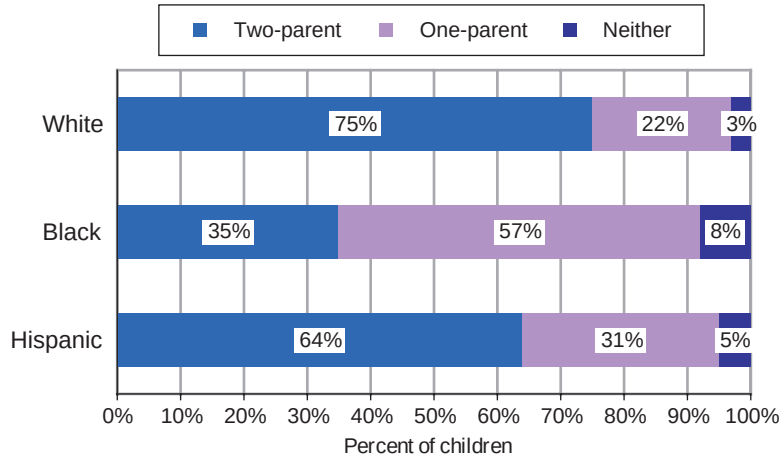
Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

While most children (85%) in single-parent families lived with their mothers in 1997, an increasing proportion were living with their fathers. Between 1970 and 1997, the proportion of children in single-parent homes living with their fathers grew from 9% to 15%.

In 1997, almost one-half of all children living with only their mothers lived in poverty

In 1997, similar patterns were seen in the proportion of children living with nonworking parents and the proportion living in poverty. The proportion of children living with a nonworking single parent was more than twice the proportion living with two nonworking parents (34% vs. 14%). Further, children were almost twice as likely to live with a nonworking mother as with a nonworking father (37% vs. 19%). Children were most likely to live in poverty when living with only their mother.

Over half of all black children lived with only one parent in 1997



- In 1997, approximately one-third (35%) of black children lived with both parents. The majority of white children and children of Hispanic ethnicity lived in two-parent homes (75% and 64%, respectively).
- The proportion of children living in two-parent families declined between 1980 and 1997 for white children (83% to 75%), black children (42% to 35%), and children of Hispanic ethnicity (75% to 64%).

Note: Race proportions include persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Persons of Hispanic ethnicity can be of any race; however, most are white.

Sources: Authors' adaptation of Bureau of the Census' Population characteristics: Marital status and living arrangements: March 1997, *Current Population Reports*.

Living arrangement	Percent of children	
	No working parent	Living in poverty
Both parents	14%	10%
Single-headed	34	43
Mother	37	47
Father	19	22

A never-married parent is becoming more common in one-parent homes

Between 1970 and 1997, there was a five-fold increase in the proportion of children living with a never-married parent. As a result, about the same number of children were living with a never-married parent as with a divorced parent in 1997.

	Percent of children			
	Never-married parent		Divorced parent	
	1970	1997	1970	1997
All children	7%	38%	30%	36%
White	3	27	39	46
Black	14	60	15	18

In 1970, more white children lived with divorced parents than with parents who had never been married. During the same year, about the same number of black children lived with divorced and never-married parents. Between 1970 and 1997, the proportion of children living with never-married parents increased among both white and black children.

After consistent increases between 1986 and 1991, teenage birth rates declined 13% from 1991 to 1996

5% of all babies born in 1996 were born to juvenile mothers

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, about 200,000 babies were born to mothers ages 10–17 in 1996. While older teens accounted for the majority of these births, 6% were to adolescents ages 10–14. Rates of birth per 1,000 females ages 15–17 were highest among Hispanics (69) and blacks (65), followed by American Indians (46), whites (28), and Asian/Pacific Islanders (15). Nonetheless, two-thirds of the women under age 18 who gave birth in 1996 were white.

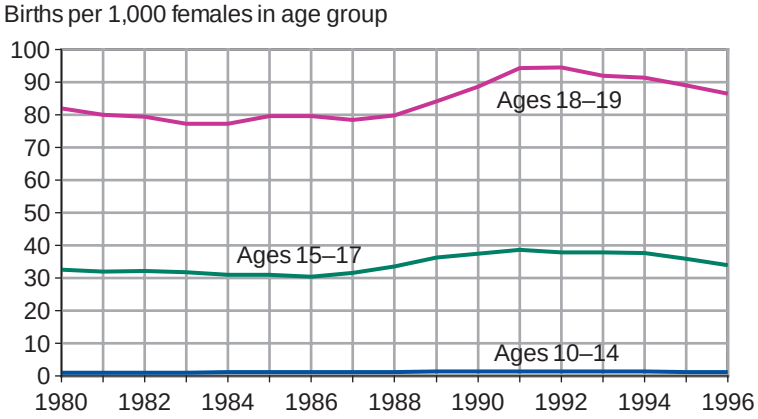
Teenage mothers are much less likely to be married now than a generation ago

In 1996, 32% of all births were to unmarried women, compared with 11% in 1970. Births to unmarried women ages 15–17 totaled 157,000 in 1996. The proportion of births to unmarried mothers ages 15–17 nearly doubled between 1970 and 1996. Among older teenage mothers, the proportion more than tripled.

	Percent of births to unmarried women ages			
	15–17		18–19	
	1970	1996	1970	1996
All races	43%	84%	22%	71%
White	25	79	14	63
Black	76	98	52	94

Although the majority of teen mothers were white, black teens were more likely than others to be unmarried mothers. However, the proportion of births to unwed mothers increased more among white than black teens between 1970 and 1996.

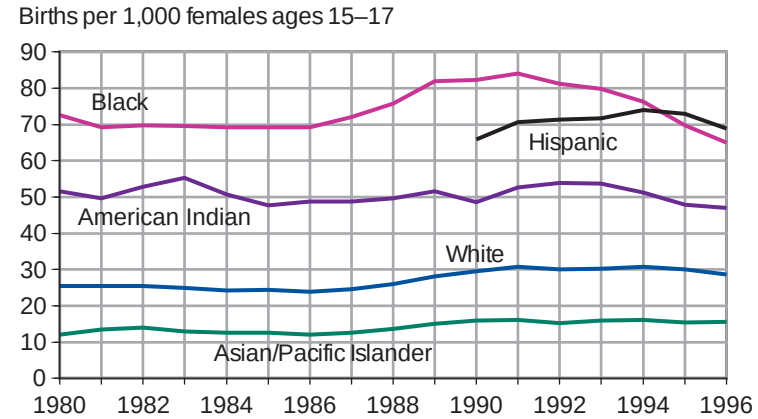
Despite recent declines in birth rates among teens of all ages, 1996 rates were still higher than rates during the early to mid-1980's



- In 1996, the birth rate for women ages 15–17 was 34 births for every 1,000 women, 13% below the 1991 rate but 11% above the 1986 rate.
- The 1996 birth rate for 15- to 17-year-olds was less than half the rate for 18- to 19-year-olds. The rate for older teenagers dropped 9% between 1991 and 1996.

Source: Authors' analysis of Ventura et al.'s Report on final natality statistics, 1996, *Monthly Vital Statistics Report, 46*(11) Supp.

The decline in birth rates between 1991 and 1996 was three times greater among black teens ages 15–17 than among white teens



- Between 1991 and 1996, birth rates among 15- to 17-year-old black teens declined 23%, compared with 12% for American Indians, 7% for whites and Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 2% for Hispanics.

Note: Race rates include persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Persons of Hispanic ethnicity can be of any race; however, most are white.

Source: Authors' analysis of Ventura et al.'s Report on final natality statistics, 1996, *Monthly Vital Statistics Report, 46*(11) Supp.

Infants born to teens are at greater risk of low birth weight

Teen childbearing creates disadvantages for both mother and infant. In 1996, mothers under age 18 were less likely than older women to receive prenatal care starting in the first trimester of pregnancy (60% vs. 81%). As a result of this and other factors, babies born to teen mothers are at greater risk of low birth weight. Overall, in 1996 low birth weights occurred in 10% of births to mothers younger than age 18. In contrast, 7% of births to those age 18 and older were low birth weight births. In 1996, black teen mothers were more likely than white teen mothers to have a low birth weight baby (14% vs. 9%).

Mother's age	Percent of low birth weight births in 1996		
	All races	White	Black
All Ages	7%	6%	13%
Under 18	10	9	14
Under 15	13	10	15
15	11	10	14
16	10	9	13
17	10	8	14
18	9	8	13
19	9	7	13
20–24	7	6	12
25–29	6	6	12
30–34	7	6	14
35–39	8	7	16
40–44	9	8	18

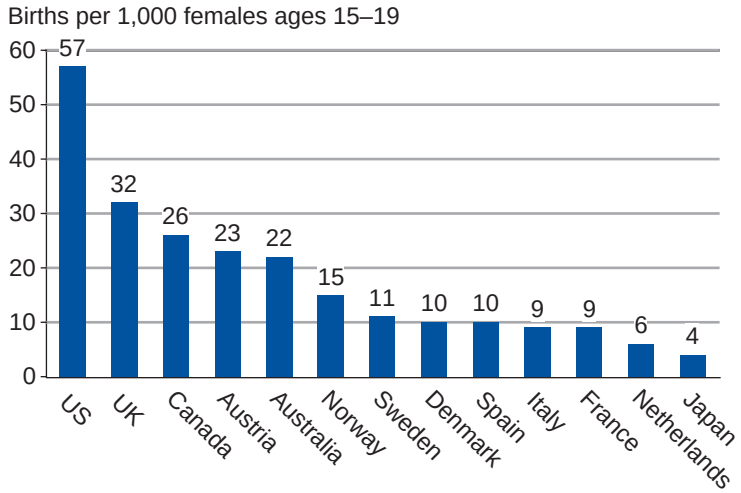
Note: Birth weights of less than 5 pounds 8 ounces are defined as low birth weights.

Teenagers are having sex less and using contraception more

In 1994, about one-half of young women and about 3 in 4 young men reported having had sex by age 18. Nonetheless, a 1995 National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) indicates that the proportion of sexually experienced teenagers has declined following a two-decade trend of increases. Also, teenagers' use of contraceptives at first intercourse has reportedly increased. These trends may be contributing to the recent declines in teen birth rates.

A Child Trends study identifed four key risk factors associated with having a baby before the age of 20: early school failure, early behavioral problems, family dysfunction, and poverty. The study indicated that educational success plays a role in averting subsequent teen births.

The teen birth rate in the United States is far higher than in many other countries

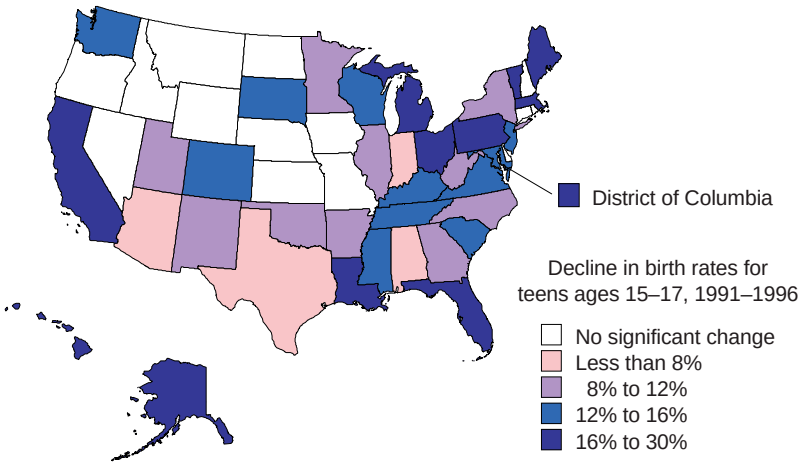


Note: Data years are inconsistent and range from 1990 to 1995.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Maynard's *Kids having kids: Economic costs and social consequences of teen pregnancy*.

In 1996, birth rates across States for teens ages 15–17 ranged from 15.1 to 52.1, but for most States, rates were lower in 1996 than in 1991

State	1996 births per 1,000 females in age group 15–19	15–17	18–19	State	1996 births per 1,000 females in age group 15–19	15–17	18–19
United States	54.4	33.8	86.0	Missouri	53.7	31.0	89.7
Alabama	69.2	45.3	104.1	Montana	38.6	21.2	65.8
Alaska	46.4	26.5	75.2	Nebraska	38.7	22.2	63.7
Arizona	73.9	48.9	110.7	Nevada	69.6	42.1	113.5
Arkansas	75.4	44.9	121.7	New Hampshire	28.6	15.1	50.9
California	62.6	39.2	99.1	New Jersey	35.4	22.9	55.3
Colorado	49.5	30.2	79.7	New Mexico	70.9	45.8	110.7
Connecticut	37.4	24.4	58.3	New York	41.8	25.6	66.4
Delaware	56.9	41.0	79.9	North Carolina	63.5	40.8	97.5
District of Columbia	102.1	79.0	132.5	North Dakota	32.3	16.1	58.1
Florida	58.9	36.7	94.1	Ohio	50.4	29.5	82.6
Georgia	68.2	45.4	103.3	Oklahoma	63.4	37.2	104.7
Hawaii	48.1	28.0	76.2	Oregon	50.8	29.4	84.7
Idaho	47.2	26.5	77.7	Pennsylvania	39.3	24.5	62.5
Illinois	57.1	36.1	90.9	Rhode Island	42.5	27.3	65.7
Indiana	56.1	32.9	91.4	South Carolina	62.9	41.3	94.2
Iowa	37.8	21.4	63.6	South Dakota	39.5	22.4	66.0
Kansas	49.6	27.8	84.2	Tennessee	66.1	40.2	105.8
Kentucky	61.5	36.9	97.9	Texas	73.5	48.8	111.3
Louisiana	66.7	42.9	102.3	Utah	42.8	24.3	68.6
Maine	31.4	16.8	54.5	Vermont	30.1	15.2	54.1
Maryland	46.1	29.6	72.3	Virginia	45.5	27.7	71.6
Massachusetts	32.2	19.9	50.6	Washington	45.0	26.1	74.5
Michigan	46.5	28.2	75.5	West Virginia	50.3	28.7	81.9
Minnesota	32.1	18.5	54.2	Wisconsin	36.8	21.7	60.7
Mississippi	75.5	52.1	110.5	Wyoming	44.0	24.9	74.9



Source: Authors' analysis of Ventura et al.'s Report on final natality statistics, 1996, *Monthly Vital Statistics Report, 46*(11) Supp.

In 1996, 86% of young adults had completed high school

High school completion rates have remained relatively stable over the last quarter century

In the 1950's, a high school education was an asset when entering the work force. In today's society, a high school diploma or its equivalent is often a minimal requirement for obtaining entry-level jobs or for continuing education or training.

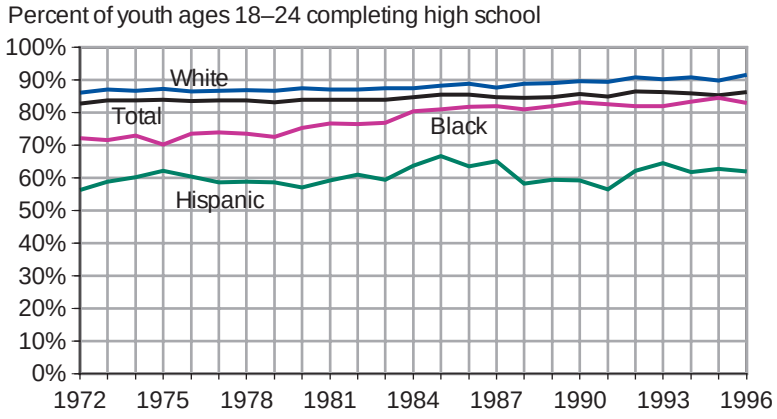
Despite the increased importance of completing high school, the completion rate among persons ages 18–24 and not still in school has increased only slightly since 1972 when it was 83%. In 1996, completion rates were about the same for males and females ages 18–24. The rate was lower among Hispanics (62%) than among non-Hispanic whites (92%) or blacks (83%).

High school completion levels vary by family income level

Many factors influence young people's life decisions. Family income, and the social factors related to income, may affect their ability to complete high school.

The majority of young adults who completed high school in 1996 lived in middle-income families. Young adults from high- and middle-income families were more likely to complete high school than were those from low-income families. The completion rate in 1996 was 97% in high-income families, 87% in middle-income families, and 75% in low-income families.

High school completion rates among persons ages 18–24 were consistently lower for Hispanics than others between 1972 and 1996



- High school completion rates among young black adults grew from 72% in 1980 to 83% in 1996 and remained stable thereafter. Among white persons ages 18–24, high school completion rates increased from 86% in 1980 to 92% in 1996.
- High school completion rates were consistently lower among young Hispanic adults than among both whites and blacks between 1972 and 1996. During this time, completion rates for Hispanics fluctuated between a low of 56% and a high of 67%.

Notes: Because of relatively small sample sizes, American Indians and Asian/Pacific Islanders are included in the total but are not shown separately. White and black race groups do not include youth of Hispanic ethnicity.

Source: Authors' adaptation of National Center for Education Statistics' *Dropout rates in the United States: 1996.*

1 in 10 young adults completes high school through alternative methods

High school completion may be achieved either by receiving a high school diploma or by passing a high school equivalency exam such as the General Educational Development (GED) test. In 1996, 10% of young adults ages 18–24 earned such an alternative credential, up from 5% in 1993. During that time period, high school graduation rates declined by the same amount.

On-time graduation is an indicator of how well students are progressing in the educational system

A student's decision to withdraw from school is not necessarily a permanent one. Many who drop out of school early ultimately earn a high school diploma or obtain an alternative credential, thereby lessening the consequences of dropping out of school.

A study of the sophomore class of 1980 revealed that 83% completed high school on time. By 1986 (3 years past their on-time graduation date), the completion rate had increased to 92%. Similarly, another study of students scheduled for graduation in 1992 found that by spring 1992, 88% were working toward high school completion, had already completed high school, or had passed an equivalency test. Among the dropouts in this study, more than half reported plans to pursue a general education diploma or to complete regular high school.

Why do juveniles drop out of school?

A 1992 study reported that 4 in 10 dropouts said they left high school because they did not like school or because they were failing. As many males as females said they left school because they could not get along with their teachers. More males than females dropped out because of school suspension or expulsion.

While overall most dropouts reported school-related reasons for leaving school, most female dropouts reported family-related reasons. Among dropouts, 21% of females dropped out because they became parents (compared with 8% of males), and 27% of females said they left school because they became pregnant. Among female dropouts, 26% of whites reported pregnancy as a motive for dropping out, compared with 31% of Hispanics and 34% of blacks. Black dropouts were far less likely to report getting married as a reason for leaving school (2%) than were white (15%) or Hispanic (13%) dropouts.

More than a quarter of those dropping out of grades 10 through 12 reported job-related reasons for withdrawing. Male dropouts were more likely than female dropouts to report finding a job as the motive for leaving school (36% vs. 22%).

In 1995, 80% of foreign-born Hispanic youth reported speaking English "not well" or "not at all." While 29% of all Hispanic youth ages 16–24 had dropped out of high school, 44% of foreign-born Hispanics this age had dropped out. In comparison, the dropout rates among white and black youth this age were 7% and 13%, respectively.

State-specific high school completion rates in the South and West were lower than rates in the Northeast and Midwest

State	Percent completing high school (ages 18–24) 1991–93*	1994–96*
United States	**85.7%**	**85.8%**
Northeast		
Connecticut	90.9	96.1
Maine	93.4	91.8
Massachusetts	90.5	92.0
New Hampshire	89.0	87.7
New Jersey	89.8	87.0
New York	87.6	90.9
Pennsylvania	90.5	89.6
Rhode Island	90.4	87.5
Vermont	89.6	87.0
Midwest		
Illinois	86.0	89.3
Indiana	87.4	88.3
Iowa	94.0	91.6
Kansas	91.4	91.6
Michigan	88.3	89.1
Minnesota	91.7	95.3
Missouri	88.3	88.0
Nebraska	92.5	93.3
North Dakota	95.7	93.0
Ohio	89.7	87.7
South Dakota	91.2	89.6
Wisconsin	92.4	92.5
South		
Alabama	81.0%	86.8%
Arkansas	87.7	86.7
Delaware	90.3	88.8
Dist. of Columbia	87.2	87.8
Florida	84.5	80.1
Georgia	81.9	81.3
Kentucky	82.6	82.2
Louisiana	82.5	82.2
Maryland	91.0	93.4
Mississippi	88.6	83.9
North Carolina	84.2	87.2
Oklahoma	81.8	87.0
South Carolina	85.5	88.4
Tennessee	77.5	83.3
Texas	81.2	79.3
Virginia	89.8	86.6
West Virginia	84.6	89.3
West		
Alaska	89.0	87.8
Arizona	81.1	85.8
California	78.2	78.6
Colorado	87.2	87.9
Hawaii	92.8	92.6
Idaho	89.0	85.2
Montana	91.6	89.8
Nevada	83.3	81.4
New Mexico	84.3	82.7
Oregon	85.5	81.1
Utah	94.6	91.3
Washington	89.2	86.8
Wyoming	92.1	89.4

*Numbers reflect 3-year averages to improve the stability of State-level estimates.

Source: Authors' adaptation of National Center for Education Statistics' *Dropout rates in the United States: 1996*.

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