

# This Just In...

The latest parenting news, research, and health tips from our experts

## The State of Our Children



**There is eye-opening news** — some good, some bad — about our children in the U.S. government's annual report, *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2007*.

Among the highlights of the report:

- There were 73.7 million U.S. children ages 0–17 in 2006 (25 percent of the population). That is down from a peak of 36 percent of the population in 1964.
- Racial and ethnic diversity continues to increase over time. In 2006, 58 percent of U.S. children were white, non-Hispanic; 20 percent were Hispanic; 15 percent were black; 4 percent were Asian; and 4 percent were all other races. The percentage of Hispanic children has increased faster than any other racial or ethnic group, growing from 9 percent of the child population in 1980 to 20 percent in 2006.
- In 2006, 67 percent of children ages 0–17 lived with two married parents, down from 77 percent in 1980.
- In 2005, 18 percent of children ages 0–17 lived in poverty. That's up from 17 percent in 2000 and 16 percent in 2000.
- In 2005, 60 percent of children lived in counties in which one or more air pollutants rose above allowable levels. It's a significant increase from 46 percent in 2004.
- In 2005, 40 percent of households with children had one or more housing problems, up from 37 percent in 2003. The most common problems included the cost burden, physically inadequate housing, and overcrowded housing.
- In 2005, 47 percent of high-school students reported having had sexual intercourse. That represents no change from 2003, but continues a downward trend from 54 percent in 1991.
- In 2005, 69 percent of high-school graduates enrolled immediately in a two- or four-year college. That's a slight increase from 67 percent in 2004.
- The percentage of low birth weight infants was 8 percent in 2005 and has increased slowly but steadily since 1984 (about 7 percent).
- The proportion of children ages 6–17 who were overweight increased from 6 percent in 1976–80 to 11 percent in 1988–94 and continued to rise to 18 percent in 2003–04.

The report is a collection of the most recently released federal statistics on our nation's children, published by the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics.

# The Best and Worst Places to be a Mom

**Scandinavia is the best place to be a mother**, according to the eighth annual Mothers' Index, a report that ranks the best and worst places to be a mother and a child in 140 countries. Save the Children, a U.S.-based, independent global humanitarian organization, published the study.

Topping this year's best list were Sweden, Iceland, Norway, New Zealand, Australia, Denmark, Finland, Belgium, Spain, and Germany. The worst countries listed included Djibouti, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Chad, Yemen, Sierra Leone, and Niger.

The top 10 countries, in general, attain very high scores for mothers' and children's health, educational, and economic status. The 10 bottom-ranked countries are a reverse image of the top 10, performing poorly on all indicators. The United States placed 26th this year, tied with Hungary.



Conditions for mothers and their children in countries at the bottom of the index are grim. On average, one in 13 mothers will die from pregnancy-related causes. Nearly one in five children dies before his or her fifth birthday, and more than one in three children suffer from malnutrition. About 50 percent of the population lacks access to safe water, and only three girls for every four boys are enrolled in primary school.

"If 75 years of field experience have taught us anything, it is that the quality of children's lives depends on the health, security, and well-being of their mothers," says Charles MacCormack, president and CEO of Save the Children. "By providing mothers access to education, economic opportunities, and maternal and child health care, we ensure that mothers and their children will have the best chance to survive and thrive."

The study was based on key indicators such as lifetime risk of maternal mortality, skilled attendant at delivery, ratio of estimated female-to-male earned income, mortality rates for children ages 5 and younger, the percentage of children younger than age 5 moderately or severely underweight, and the percentage of the population with access to safe water.

# Play It Safe

**An estimated 135,000** — or 65 percent — of sports- and recreation-related traumatic brain injuries (TBI) treated in U.S. emergency rooms occur each year in young people ages 5 to 18, according to a recent study published in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. Approximately 8 percent — or more than 10,000 — of these young people were hospitalized, the study reported. Traumatic brain injuries, including concussions, are caused by a blow or bump to the head that disrupts the way the brain normally works.

The study found that for children ages 5 to 18 years old, the sport and recreation activities that generated the greatest number of emergency department visits for treatment of traumatic brain injuries were bicycling, football, basketball, playground activities, and soccer. The study also found that some sport and recreation activities resulted in a higher percentage of traumatic brain injury-related emergency department visits. Among 5- to 18-year-olds, horseback riding, ice-skating, riding all-terrain vehicles, hockey, and tobogganing/sledding were the activities with the highest percentage of visits related to TBIs.

Concussions and other brain injuries can occur in any sport, and coaches, parents, and athletes should learn the signs, symptoms, and action steps to take when a concussion is suspected. To address this need, the CDC has created a new tool kit, Heads Up: Concussion in Youth Sports. It includes essential and easy-to-use information about recognizing and responding to a suspected concussion.

The toolkit is free and can be ordered or downloaded at [www.cdc.gov/ConcussionInYouthSports](http://www.cdc.gov/ConcussionInYouthSports). For more information about concussions, traumatic brain injury, or injury in general, visit the CDC Injury Center's Web site at [www.cdc.gov/injury](http://www.cdc.gov/injury).

