Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2006 National Report

Chapter 1: Juvenile population characteristics 1

Juvenile population demographics 2
Juveniles in poverty 7
Living arrangement of juveniles 10
Births to teens 12
School dropouts 14
Chapter 1 sources 16

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Chapter 1

Juvenile population characteristics

Juveniles in the U.S. today live in a world very 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. 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. These statistics pertain to factors that are directly or indirectly associated with juvenile crime and victimization. Although these factors may be correlated with juvenile crime and/or victimization, they may not be the immediate cause and may be linked to the causal factor. The sections summarize demographic, poverty, and living arrangement data developed by the U.S. Census Bureau, birth statistics from the National Center for Health Statistics, and education data from the National Center for Education Statistics.

At the beginning of the 21st century, 1 in 4 U.S. residents was under age 18

The juvenile population is increasing similarly to other segments of the population

For 2002, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that 72,894,500 persons in the United States were under the age of 18, the age group commonly referred to as *juveniles*. The juvenile population reached a low point in 1984, at 62.5 million, then grew each year through 2002, increasing 17%.

Current projections indicate that the juvenile population will continue to grow throughout the 21st century. The Census Bureau estimates that it will increase 14% between 2000 and 2025—about one-half of one percent per year. By 2050, the juvenile population will be 36% larger than it was in 2000.

In 2002, juveniles were 25% of the U.S. resident population. The Census Bureau estimates that this proportion will remain essentially constant through at least 2050; i.e., the relative increases in the juvenile and adult populations will be equivalent during the first half of the 21st century.

The racial character of the juvenile population is changing

The Census Bureau has changed its racial classifications. Prior to the 2000 decennial census, respondents were asked to classify themselves into a single racial group: (1) white, (2) black or African American, (3) American Indian or Alaska Native, or (4) Asian or Pacific Islander. In the 2000 census, Asians were separated from Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders. In addition, respondents could classify themselves into more than one racial group. In 2000, 1.4% of the total U.S. population and 2.5% of the juvenile population classified themselves as multiracial.

Most national data systems have not yet reached the Census Bureau's level of detail for racial coding—and historical data cannot support this new coding structure, especially the mixed-race categories.* Therefore, this report generally uses the four-race coding structure. For ease of presentation, the terms white, black, American Indian, and Asian are used.

With that understood, in 2002, 77.9% of the juvenile population was classified as white, 16.4% black, 1.4% American Indian, and 4.4% Asian. These proportions will change in the near future if the anticipated differential growth of these subgroups comes to pass.

Percent change within racial segments of the juvenile population (ages 0–17):

Race	1980–2000	2000–2020
White	8%	7%
Black	25	9
American Indian	85	16
Asian	160	59
Total	14	10

The Hispanic portion of the juvenile population will increase

In 2002, 18% of juveniles in the U.S. were of Hispanic ethnicity. Ethnicity is different from race. More than 9 of every 10 Hispanic juveniles were classified racially as white. More specifically, 92% of Hispanic juveniles were white, 5% black, 2% American Indian, and 1% Asian.

In 2002, 21% of white juveniles were also Hispanic. A similar proportion of American Indians (24%) also described their ethnicity as Hispanic. This proportion was far smaller for black juveniles and Asian juveniles (5% each).

The Census Bureau estimates that the number of Hispanic juveniles in the U.S. will increase 58% between 2000 and 2020. This growth will bring the Hispanic proportion of the juvenile population to 23% by 2020 and to 31% by 2050.

How useful are race/ethnicity classifications?

Using race and Hispanic origin as characteristics to classify juveniles assumes meaningful differences among these subgroups. If Hispanic and non-Hispanic juveniles have substantially different characteristics, then such comparisons could be useful. Furthermore, if Hispanic ethnicity is a more telling demographic trait than race, then a five-category classification scheme that places all Hispanic youth in their own category and then divides other youth among the four racial categories may be useful—assuming available data support such groupings.

However, this is only one of many race/ethnicity classification schemes. For example, some argue that the Hispanic grouping is too broad—that data should, for example, distinguish youth whose ancestors came from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and other countries. Similar proposals make finer distinctions among juveniles with ancestry in the various nations of Asia and the Middle East, as well as the various American Indian nations.

* To facilitate the transition to a more broad-based use of the new racial coding structure, the National Center for Health Statistics modified Census' population data, removing the 31 mixed-race categories. Bridging the new racial coding structure back to the old structure was accomplished by estimating a single racial group classification of mixed-race persons, based on responses to the National Health Interview Survey that asked respondents to classify themselves using both the old and new racial coding structures.

In the 1920s, the Children's Bureau (then within the U.S. Department of Labor) asked juvenile courts to classify referred youth by their nativity, which at the time distinguished primarily among various European ancestries. Today, the idea of presenting crime and justice statistics that distinguish among juveniles with Irish, Italian, and German ancestry seems nonsensical. The demographic classification of juveniles is not a scientific process, but a culturally related one that changes with time and place. Those reading our reports 100 years from now will likely wonder about the reasons for our current racial/ethnic categorizations.

Juvenile justice systems serve populations that vary greatly in racial/ethnic composition

In 2002, at least 9 of every 10 juveniles in Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire, and West Virginia were non-Hispanic and white. In contrast, New Mexico's juvenile population was 51% Hispanic. Other states with large Hispanic juvenile populations were California (45%), Texas (42%), Arizona (37%), Nevada (30%), and Colorado (24%). In 2002, three quarters of all Hispanic juveniles lived in California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois, Arizona, and New Jersey.

In 2002, four states had juvenile populations with more than 10% American Indians or Alaska Natives. These states were Alaska (21%), South Dakota (14%), New Mexico (12%), and Oklahoma (12%).

The states with the greatest proportion of black juveniles in their populations in 2002 were Mississippi (45%), Louisiana (40%), South Carolina (37%), Georgia (34%), Maryland (33%), and Alabama (32%). The juvenile population in the District of Columbia was 72% black.

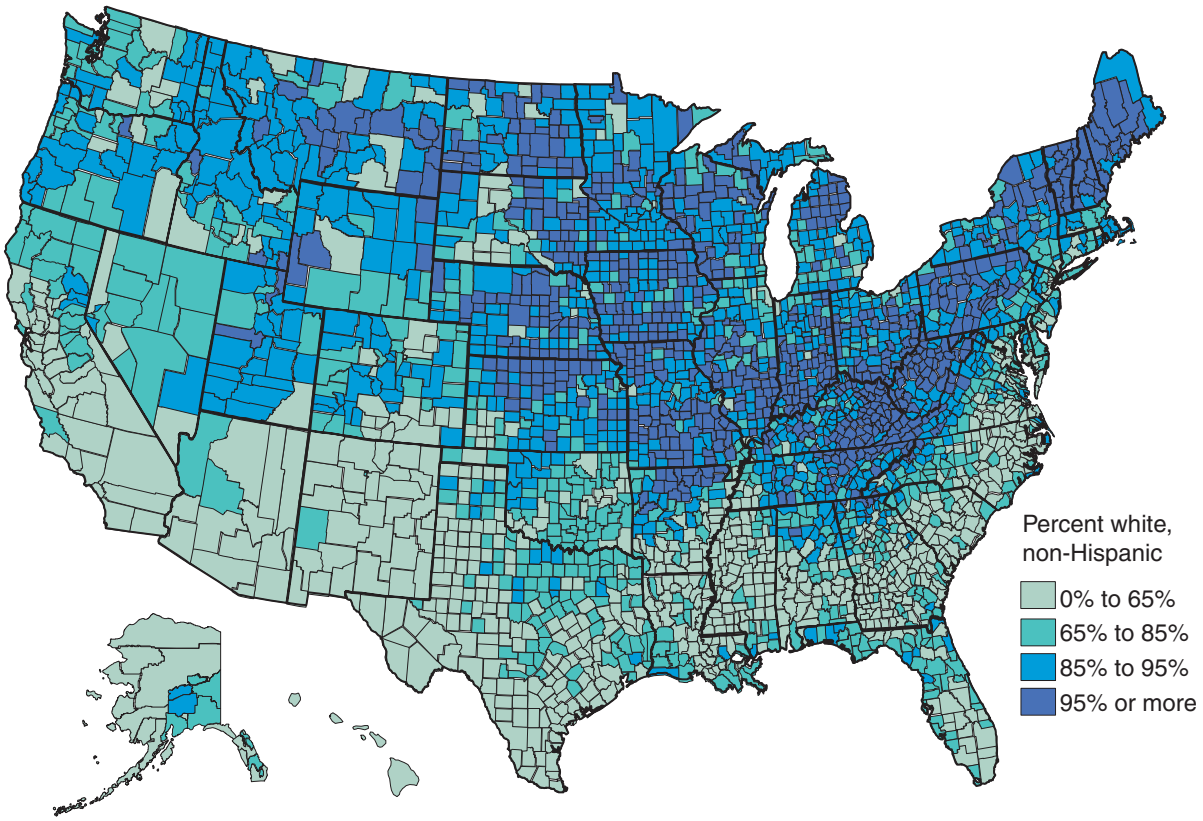
In 2002, more than 1 in 4 juveniles in New Mexico, California, Texas, Arizona, and Nevada were Hispanic

	2002 juvenile population (ages 0–17)						
		Non-Hispanic					Percent change
State	Number	White	Black	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	1990–2002
U.S. total	72,894,500	61%	16%	1%	4%	18%	14%
Alabama	1,107,100	64	32	1	1	2	5
Alaska	192,400	62	5	21	5	6	8
Arizona	1,476,900	50	4	7	2	37	47
Arkansas	677,500	72	21	1	1	5	9
California	9,452,400	36	8	1	11	45	18
Colorado	1,151,100	67	5	1	3	24	31
Connecticut	872,900	70	12	0	3	14	16
Delaware	189,700	65	25	0	3	7	15
Dist. of Columbia	112,100	15	72	0	2	11	–1
Florida	3,882,300	55	22	0	2	20	30
Georgia	2,268,500	56	34	0	2	7	30
Hawaii	295,500	23	3	0	61	13	6
Idaho	370,400	84	1	2	1	12	18
Illinois	3,254,500	59	19	0	4	18	11
Indiana	1,594,900	82	11	0	1	5	11
Iowa	698,000	89	4	0	2	5	–3
Kansas	696,500	77	8	1	2	11	5
Kentucky	931,600	87	10	0	1	2	–2
Louisiana	1,185,700	55	40	1	1	3	–2
Maine	279,100	95	1	1	1	1	–9
Maryland	1,379,900	57	33	0	4	6	17
Massachusetts	1,463,300	76	8	0	5	11	8
Michigan	2,570,300	73	19	1	2	5	4
Minnesota	1,252,100	83	7	2	5	5	6
Mississippi	760,700	52	45	1	1	2	4
Missouri	1,397,500	80	15	1	1	3	6
Montana	216,300	85	1	10	1	3	–3
Nebraska	439,400	82	6	1	2	9	2
Nevada	572,600	55	9	1	5	30	81
New Hampshire	308,400	94	1	0	2	3	11
New Jersey	2,127,400	59	17	0	7	17	17
New Mexico	500,500	33	2	12	1	51	10
New York	4,613,300	55	19	0	6	20	8
North Carolina	2,068,800	63	27	1	2	7	27
North Dakota	146,800	87	1	8	1	2	–14
Ohio	2,879,900	80	16	0	1	3	4
Oklahoma	873,600	68	11	12	2	8	4
Oregon	855,100	77	3	2	4	14	15
Pennsylvania	2,863,500	79	14	0	2	5	2
Rhode Island	239,200	74	8	1	3	15	6
South Carolina	979,200	59	37	0	1	3	6
South Dakota	195,600	81	2	14	1	2	–2
Tennessee	1,404,700	74	22	0	1	3	15
Texas	6,102,300	42	13	0	3	42	24
Utah	713,000	83	1	2	3	12	14
Vermont	139,700	96	1	1	1	1	–3
Virginia	1,779,400	65	24	0	4	6	17
Washington	1,513,400	73	6	2	7	12	16
West Virginia	389,200	94	4	0	1	1	–11
Wisconsin	1,338,100	81	9	1	3	6	3
Wyoming	122,300	85	1	3	1	9	–10

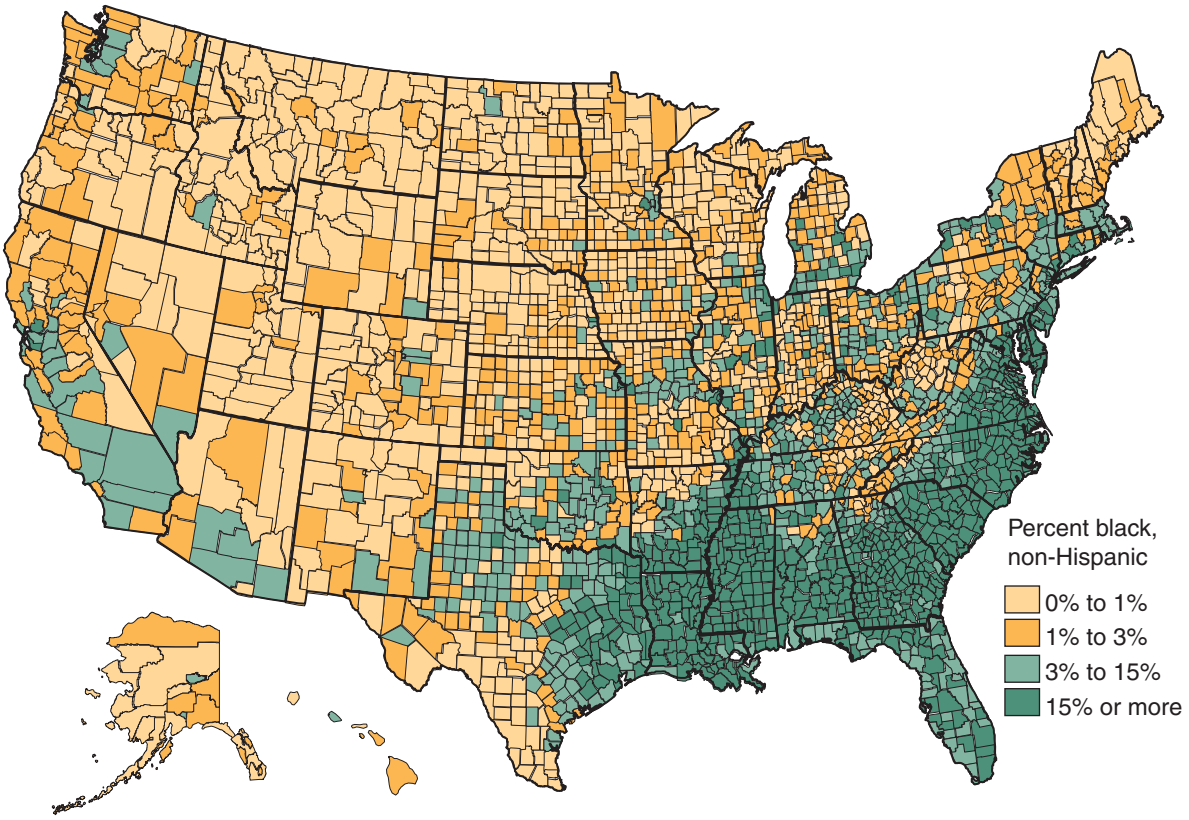
Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Puzzanchera et al.'s *Easy access to juvenile populations* [online analysis].

Proportion of non-Hispanic white youth in the juvenile population (ages 0–17), 2002

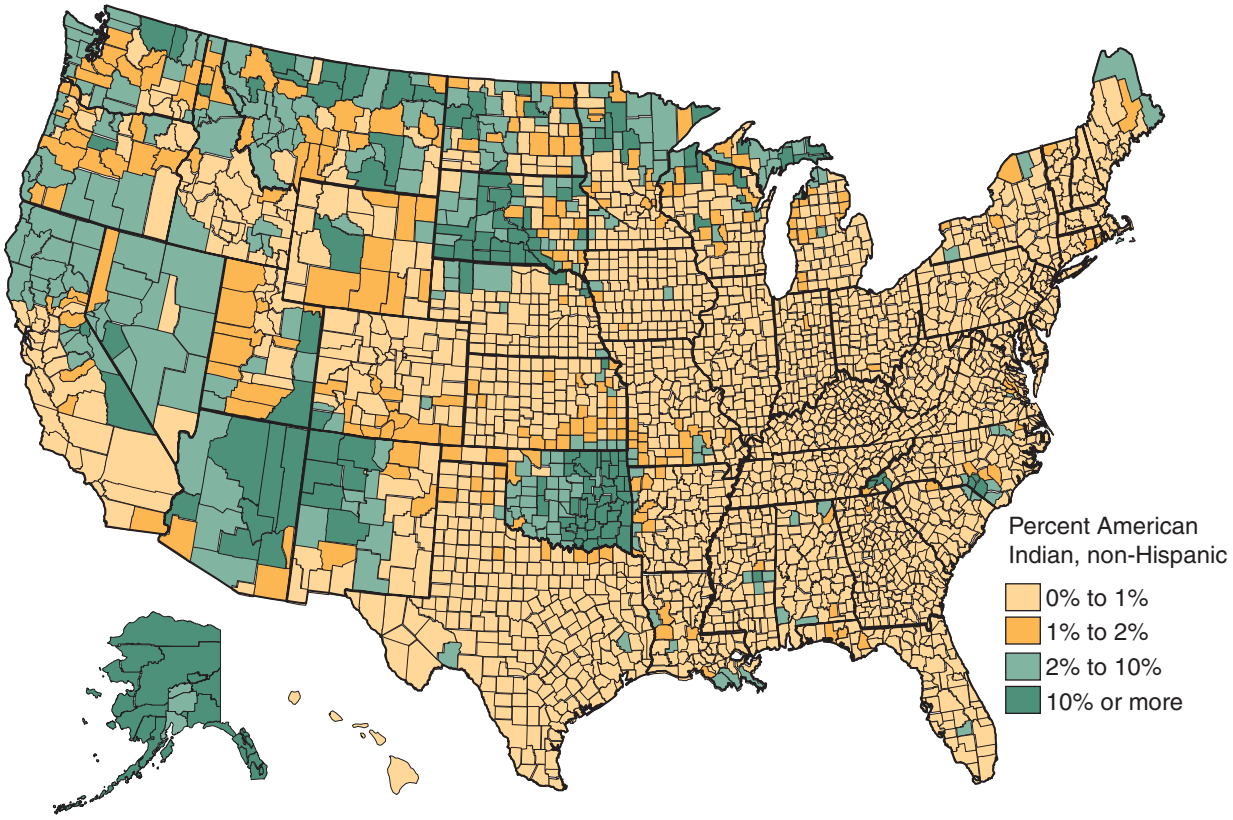


Proportion of non-Hispanic black youth in the juvenile population (ages 0–17), 2002

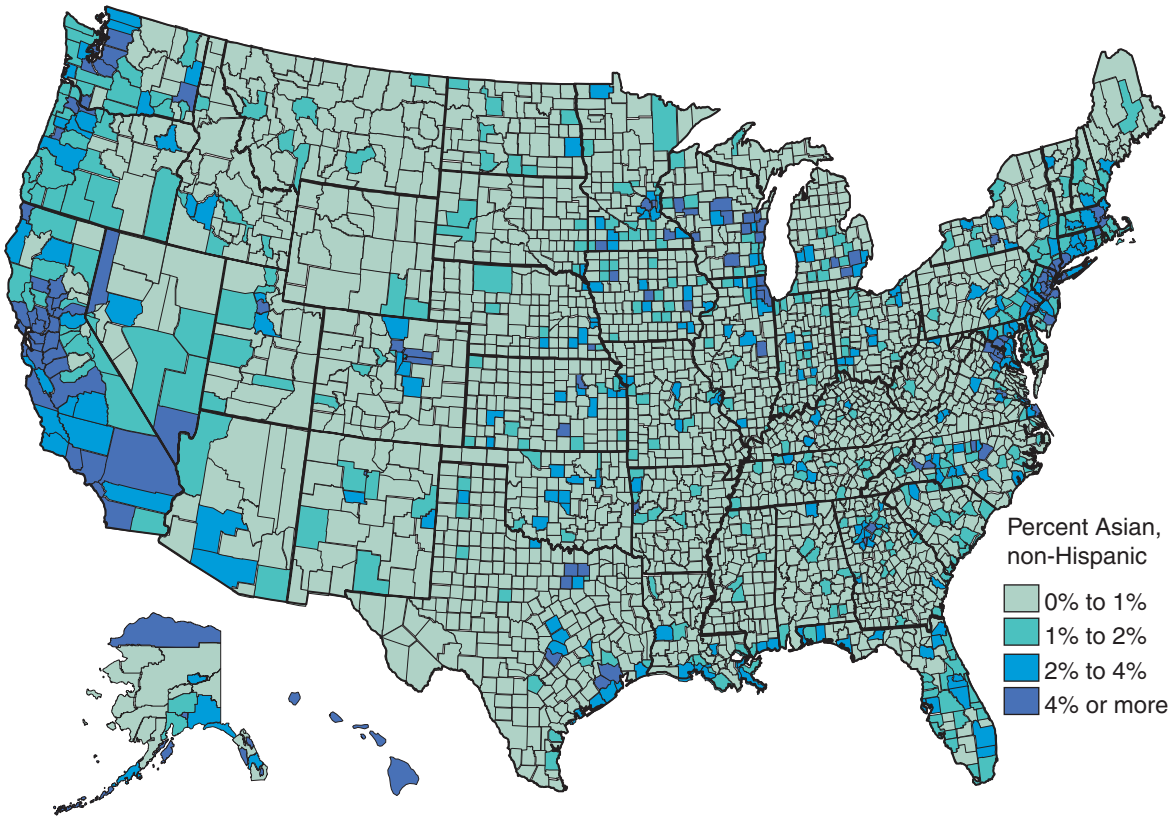


Source: Authors' adaptation of National Center for Health Statistics' *Estimates of the July 1, 2000–July 1, 2002 United States resident populations from the vintage 2002 postcensal series by year, age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin* [machine-readable data file].

Proportion of non-Hispanic American Indian youth in the juvenile population (ages 0–17), 2002

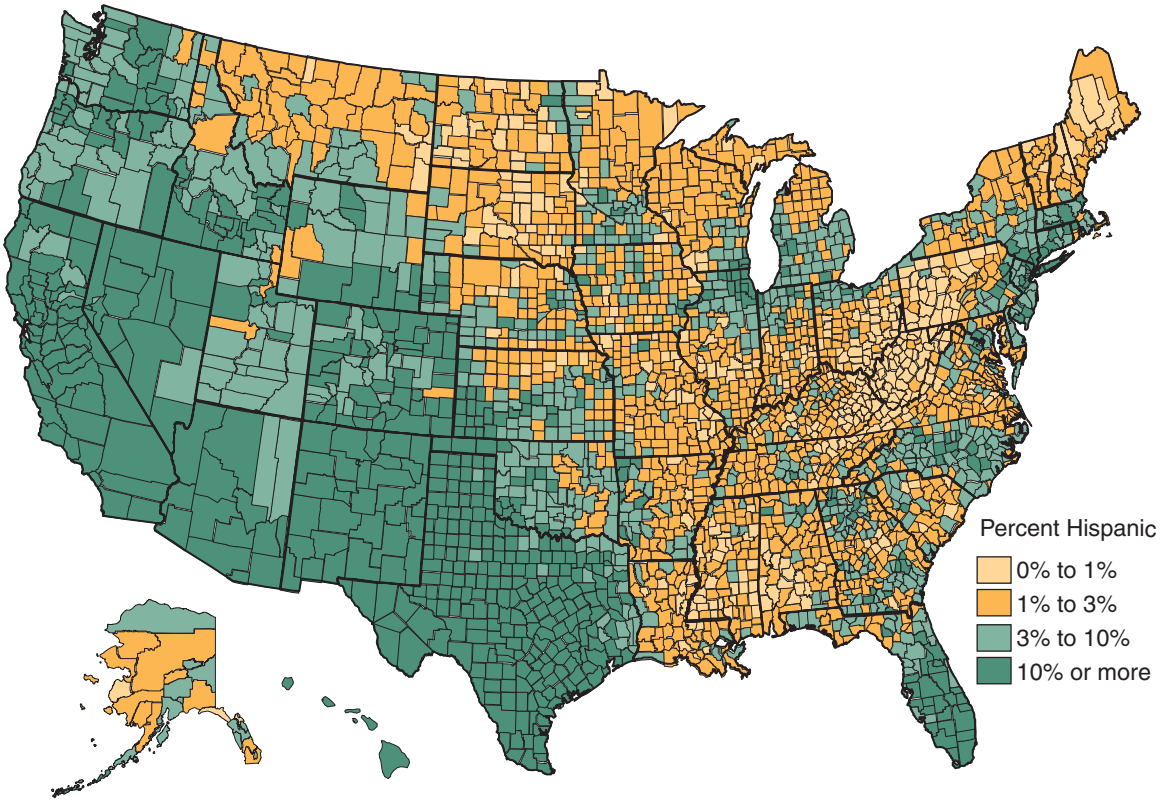


Proportion of non-Hispanic Asian youth in the juvenile population (ages 0–17), 2002

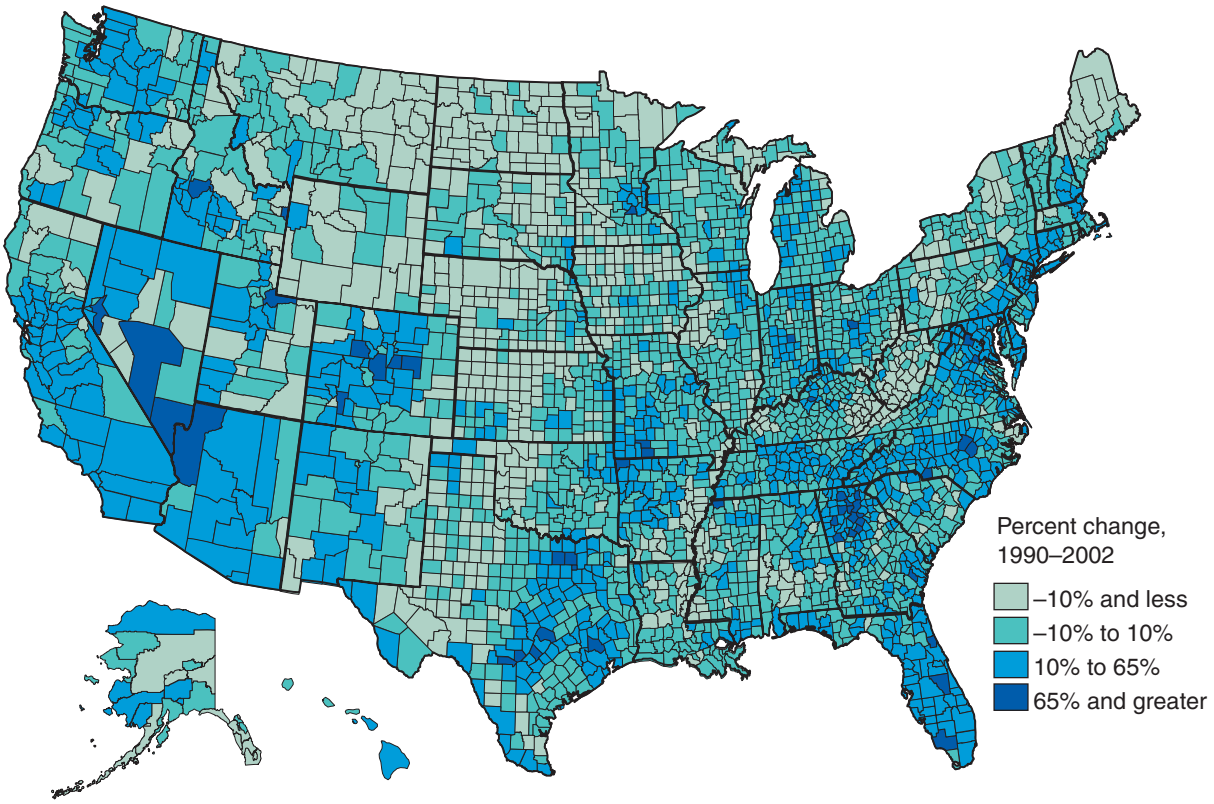


Source: Authors' adaptation of National Center for Health Statistics' *Estimates of the July 1, 2000–July 1, 2002 United States resident populations from the vintage 2002 postcensal series by year, age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin* [machine-readable data file].

Proportion of Hispanic youth in the juvenile population (ages 0–17), 2002



Change in the juvenile population (ages 0–17), 1990–2002



Source: Authors' adaptation of National Center for Health Statistics' *Estimates of the July 1, 2000–July 1, 2002 United States resident populations from the vintage 2002 postcensal series by year, age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin* [machine-readable data file] and *Bridged-race intercensal estimates of the July 1, 1990–July 1, 1999 United States resident population by state, county, age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin* [machine-readable data file].

In 2002, poverty was more common among children under age 5 than any other age group

Juvenile poverty appears to be associated with juvenile crime

Research has often found a connection between poverty and self-reported delinquency. For example, Farrington found that low family income measured when the youth was age 8 predicted self-reported violence in the teenage years and conviction rates for violent offenses. Research, however, indicates that the linkage may not be direct. For example, Sampson found that poverty exerts much influence on family disruption (e.g., marital separation, divorce), which in turn has a direct influence on juvenile violent crime rates. He also found that family disruption had a stronger influence on juvenile violence than adult violence. Therefore, differential poverty levels are likely to influence juvenile crime trends.

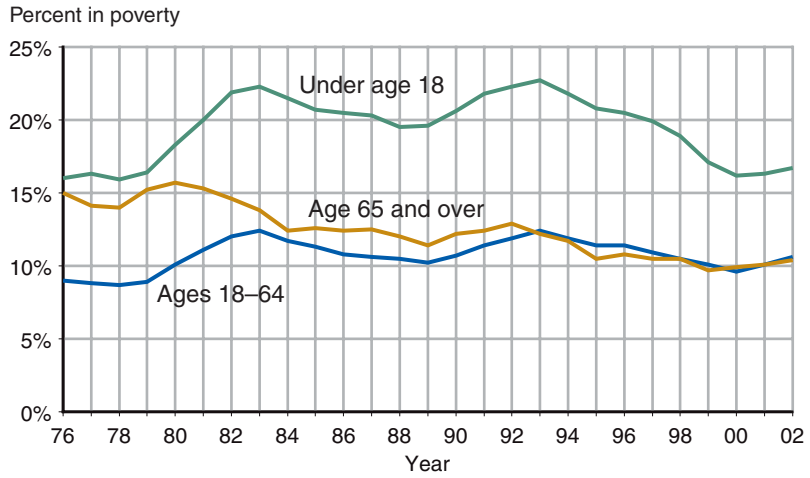
One of every six juveniles lived in poverty in 2002

Each person and family is assigned a poverty threshold according to the size of the family and the ages of the members.* The national poverty thresholds are used throughout the U.S. and are updated for inflation annually. In 1990, the poverty threshold for a family of four with two children was $13,254. In 2002, this threshold was $18,244. In comparison, the poverty threshold for a family of six with four children was $24,038 in 2002. Although the thresholds in some sense reflect families' needs, they are not intended to be a complete description of what individuals and families need to live.

In 2002, 12% of all persons in the U.S. lived at or below their poverty

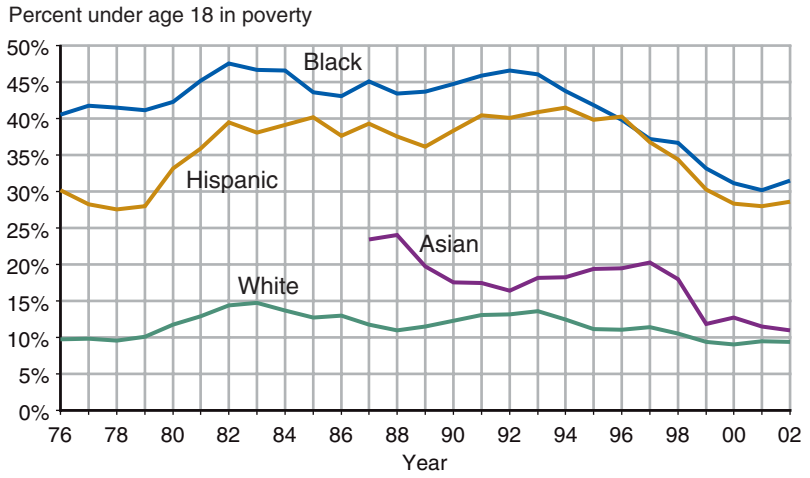
* Family members are defined as being related by birth, marriage, or adoption.

Although the proportion of juveniles living below the poverty level has declined substantially from its peak in 1993, it is still considerably larger than that of older Americans



- In the mid-1970s, the proportions of juveniles and senior citizens living in poverty were essentially equal. In the last quarter of the 20th century, the proportion of senior citizens living in poverty declined, while the juvenile poverty rates increased before falling back at the end of the century to the levels of the mid-1970s.

In 2002, black juveniles and Hispanic juveniles were more than 3 times as likely to live in poverty as non-Hispanic white juveniles



- Regardless of race or Hispanic ethnicity, the proportions of juveniles living in poverty in 2002 were at or near their lowest levels since the mid-1970s.

Notes: Poverty statistics on American Indians and Alaska Natives were not presented in the source reports. Racial categories do not include persons of Hispanic ethnicity.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Proctor and Dalaker's Poverty in the United States: 2002, *Current Population Reports*.

thresholds. This proportion was far greater for persons under age 18 (17%) than for those ages 18–64 (11%) and those above age 64 (10%). The youngest children were the most likely to live in poverty: 16% of juveniles ages 5–17 lived in households with resources below the established poverty thresholds, but 19% of children under age 5 did so.

Many children live far below their poverty thresholds. One technique for gaining a perspective on this is to see how many children live below 50% of the poverty level—e.g., in 2002, how many children lived in families of four with two children and incomes less than $9,122, or half the poverty threshold of $18,244. In 2002, 6.9% of persons under age 18 were living below 50% of the poverty level, compared with 4.6% of persons ages 18–64 and 2.2% of persons over age 64. This proportion was once again highest for children under age 5 (8.6%). In all, more than 40% of juveniles living in poverty lived in what can be characterized as extreme poverty.

More than 1 of every 4 juveniles in the District of Columbia, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and West Virginia lived below the poverty level in 2002

	Percent of persons living below the poverty threshold					Percent of persons living below the poverty threshold			
State	All ages	Ages 0–17	Ages 18–64	Over age 64	State	All ages	Ages 0–17	Ages 18–64	Over age 64
United States	12.1%	16.7%	10.6%	10.4%	Missouri	9.9%	15.3%	8.4%	6.4%
Alabama	14.5	19.1	12.2	15.7	Montana	13.5	18.5	12.3	10.6
Alaska	8.8	11.3	7.9	*	Nebraska	10.6	13.0	9.7	10.6
Arizona	13.5	19.3	12.6	6.0	Nevada	8.9	12.1	7.7	7.6
Arkansas	19.8	31.2	15.9	16.6	New Hampshire	5.8	5.8	5.5	7.1
California	13.1	18.7	11.4	8.9	New Jersey	7.9	9.3	7.2	9.1
Colorado	9.8	12.5	8.7	9.8	New Mexico	17.9	24.4	15.7	14.5
Connecticut	8.3	11.0	7.6	5.9	New York	14.0	20.5	11.9	12.4
Delaware	9.1	12.6	8.5	6.0	North Carolina	14.3	20.6	12.5	10.6
Dist. of Columbia	17.0	33.0	12.4	*	North Dakota	11.6	16.5	9.9	11.1
Florida	12.6	16.5	11.3	11.3	Ohio	9.8	11.8	9.4	7.5
Georgia	11.2	16.0	9.2	10.7	Oklahoma	14.1	19.3	12.7	10.5
Hawaii	11.3	14.4	10.4	9.4	Oregon	10.9	13.9	10.6	6.2
Idaho	11.3	15.0	11.0	3.6	Pennsylvania	9.5	13.8	8.3	7.7
Illinois	12.8	17.7	11.5	8.1	Rhode Island	11.0	15.2	9.2	12.6
Indiana	9.1	10.5	8.4	9.3	South Carolina	14.3	19.0	12.2	14.7
Iowa	9.2	10.7	8.1	11.8	South Dakota	11.5	12.2	10.5	14.4
Kansas	10.1	12.0	9.2	10.2	Tennessee	14.8	20.0	13.0	14.4
Kentucky	14.2	21.4	12.1	10.9	Texas	15.6	22.0	12.8	15.4
Louisiana	17.5	26.4	14.4	13.6	Utah	9.9	12.5	8.1	12.4
Maine	13.4	19.1	11.9	12.0	Vermont	9.9	12.8	9.2	8.4
Maryland	7.4	7.4	6.8	11.0	Virginia	9.9	13.8	8.3	9.8
Massachusetts	10.0	13.0	8.8	10.9	Washington	11.0	14.1	10.3	7.9
Michigan	11.6	15.0	10.3	11.5	West Virginia	16.8	25.1	15.2	11.6
Minnesota	6.5	7.7	5.9	6.9	Wisconsin	8.6	12.1	7.1	9.1
Mississippi	18.4	25.3	15.3	19.1	Wyoming	9.0	10.7	8.7	*

* The percentage has been suppressed because the denominator (i.e., the total population in the age group) is less than 75,000, making it statistically unreliable.

Source: Authors' adaptation of U.S. Census Bureau's *Annual demographic survey, March supplement, POV46, poverty status by state*.

In 2002, almost one-third of black juveniles lived in poverty, and one-fifth of black children under age 5 lived in extreme poverty (incomes less than half the poverty threshold)

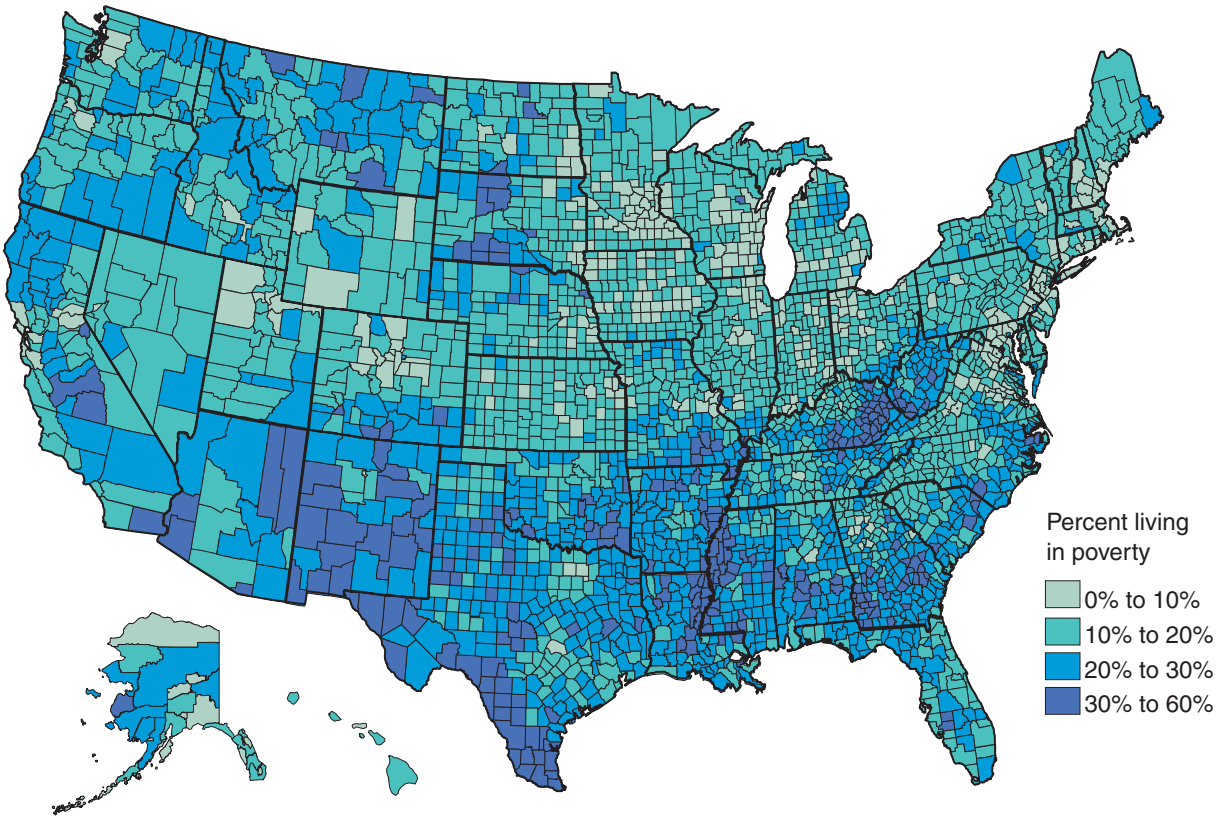
	Living below the poverty level					Living below 50% of the poverty level				
	All	White	Black	Asian	Hispanic	All	White	Black	Asian	Hispanic
All ages	12.1%	8.0%	24.1%	10.1%	21.8%	4.9%	3.2%	10.6%	4.9%	8.5%
Under age 18	16.7	9.4	32.3	11.7	28.6	6.9	3.6	15.4	5.0	11.2
Under age 5	19.0	11.2	37.5	9.2	29.3	8.6	4.6	20.8	4.2	11.9
Ages 5–17	15.8	8.8	30.4	12.7	28.3	6.3	3.3	13.5	5.4	10.9
Ages 18–64	10.6	7.5	19.9	9.7	18.1	4.6	3.3	8.8	5.3	7.3
Over age 64	10.4	8.3	23.8	8.4	21.4	2.2	1.8	4.8	2.1	3.9

- In 2002, for white and Asian populations, the juvenile poverty rates were about 20% above those of adults ages 18–64. In contrast, for black and Hispanic populations, the rate differences were about 60%.

Note: Racial categories do not include persons of Hispanic ethnicity.

Source: Authors' adaptation of U.S. Census Bureau's *Annual demographic survey, March supplement, POV01, age and sex of all people, family members and unrelated individuals iterated by income-to-poverty ratio and race*.

Proportion of juveniles (ages 0–17) living in poverty, 2002



Source: Authors' analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's *Small area income & poverty estimates 2000* [machine-readable data file].

In the last half of the 20th century, the proportion of juveniles living in single-parent households increased

Family structure is related to juveniles' problem behaviors

A recent study by McCurley and Snyder explored the relationship between family structure and self-reported problem behaviors. The central finding was that youth ages 12–17 who lived in families with both biological parents were, in general, less likely than youth in other families to report a variety of problem behaviors, such as running away from home, sexual activity, major theft, assault, and arrest. The family structure effect was seen within groups defined by age, gender, or race/ethnicity. In fact, this study found that family structure was a better predictor of these problem behaviors than race or ethnicity. The family structure effect emerged among both youth who lived in neighborhoods described as "well kept" and those in neighborhoods described as "fairly well kept" or "poorly kept." For these reasons, it is useful to understand differences and trends in youth living arrangements. However, it is important to note that family structure may not be the proximate cause of the youth behavior, but rather the conditions often linked with it.

About 7 of every 10 children live with married parents

Analyses of the 1960 decennial census found that 88% of children under age 18 lived in two-parent families. The Census Bureau's Current Population Survey found that the proportion of children living in two-parent families declined throughout the 1970s and the 1980s and through the first half of the 1990s. In 2002, 69% of children were living in two-parent families—a level that has held since the mid-1990s.

Most other children lived in one-parent households. (Even if a second adult is present and is a biological parent or functions in a parental role, the Census Bureau still classifies the household as single-parent if the two adults are unmarried.) The proportion of children living in single-parent households increased from 9% in 1960 to 27% in 2002.

Historical data are not available to document the changing proportion of children who live with two unmarried biological parents. However, the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) captured this distinction for 1996. SIPP found that only 2% of children lived in families with two unmarried biological parents in 1996. This proportion varied with race and ethnicity: white non-Hispanic (2%), black (2%), American Indian (6%), Asian (1%), and Hispanic (5%). SIPP also found that 69% of U.S. children under age 18 lived with married parents. This proportion was highest for Asian (82%) and white non-Hispanic (77%) children, lower for Hispanic (64%) and American Indian (56%) children, and lowest for black children (35%).

According to the Census Bureau, most children who live in single-parent households live with their mothers. The proportion of children living with their mothers in single-parent households grew from 8% of the juvenile population in 1960 to 23% in 2002. In 1970, the mothers of 7% of the children living in single-mother households had never been married; this proportion grew to 42% in 2002.

The proportion of children living with their fathers in one-parent households grew from 1% in 1960 to almost 5% in 2002. In 1970, the fathers of 4% of the children living in single-father households had never been married; this proportion grew to 38% in 2002, a pattern similar to the mother-only households.

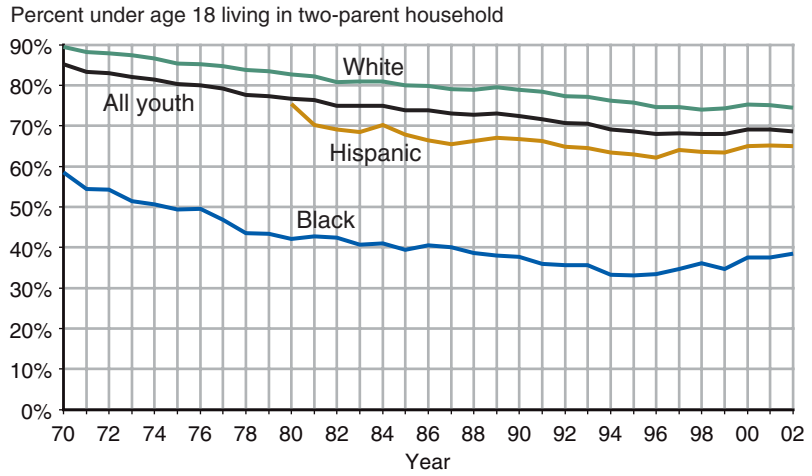
The Census Bureau found a major difference between mother-only and father-only households: cohabitation (living with an unrelated adult of the opposite gender who is not one's spouse) was much more common in father-only households. In 2002, children living in single-parent households were three times more likely to have a cohabiting father (33%) than a cohabiting mother (11%).

Some children live in households headed by other relatives or by nonrelatives. In 2002, 3% of children lived in households headed by other relatives, with about 3 of every 5 of these children living with a grandparent. (Across all household types, 8% of children lived in households that included a grandparent.) In 2002, 1% of all children lived with nonrelatives.

Most children live in families with at least one parent in the labor force

Overall, 88% of children in 2002 lived in families with one or both parents in the labor force. (Being in the labor force means that the person is employed or is actively looking for work.) Of all children living with two parents, 97% had at least one parent in the labor force, and 62% had both parents in the labor force. When just one parent in two-parent families was in the labor force, 87% of the time it was the father. Among children living in single-parent households, those living with their fathers only were more likely to have the parent in the labor force than those living with their mothers only (89% versus 77%).

The proportion of children under age 18 living in two-parent households declined between 1970 and 2002, regardless of race

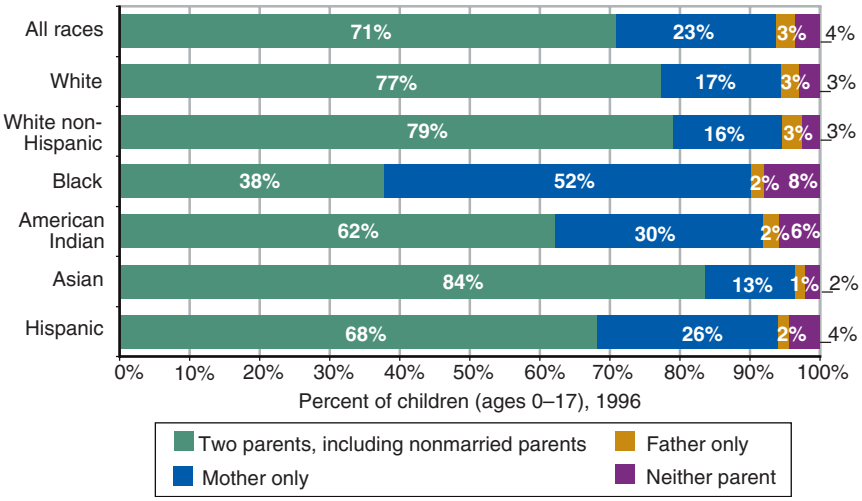


- Between 1970 and 2002, the proportion of children living in single-parent households increased from 9% to 22% for whites and from 32% to 53% for blacks. The proportion for Hispanic children increased from 21% in 1980 to 30% in 2002.

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

Source: Authors' adaptation of the U.S. Census Bureau's *Families and living arrangements, historical time series*.

Black children were the least likely to live with both parents—regardless of the marital status of the parents



Note: Persons of Hispanic ethnicity may be of any race.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Fields' Living arrangements of children: Fall 1996, *Current Population Reports*.

Children in single-parent families are more likely to live in poverty

The economic well-being of children is related to family structure. In 2002, 17% of all juveniles lived below the poverty level. However children living in two-parent families were far less likely to live in poverty (8%) than were children living with only their fathers (19%), only their mothers (38%), or neither parent (48%). Viewed another way, more than half (52%) of all children living below the poverty level in 2002 were living in single-mother families and about one-third (32%) were living in two-parent families.

Family structure is also related to the proportion of children in households receiving public assistance or food stamps. Overall, 5% of children in 2002 lived in households receiving public assistance and 11% lived in households receiving food stamps, but the proportions were far greater for children living in single-mother families.

	Percent of children receiving	
Family structure	Public assistance	Food stamps
All families	5%	11%
Two-parent	2	4
Mother only	13	29
Father only	5	13
Neither parent	12	15

In 2002, 62% of all children receiving public assistance and 61% receiving food stamps lived in single-mother families. Two-parent families accounted for 32% of children receiving public assistance and 23% of those receiving food stamps.

The teenage birth rate fell substantially between 1950 and 2002

Teen birth rates continue to decline

Tatem-Kelley and her coauthors have stated that having a baby as a teenager has serious and often deleterious consequences for the lives of both the young mother and her baby. Teenage mothers and fathers are often ill equipped to effectively parent and often draw heavily on the resources of their extended families and communities. For teenage parents who themselves were raised in dysfunctional or abusive families, parenting problems may be even more evident and family support more limited.

In 2002, the birth rate for older juveniles (i.e., women ages 15–17) was 23.2 live births for every 1,000 women in the age group. In the same year, the birth rate for young adults (i.e., women ages 18 and 19) was 3 times greater (72.8). The birth rates for older juveniles and young adults varied by race and Hispanic ethnicity.

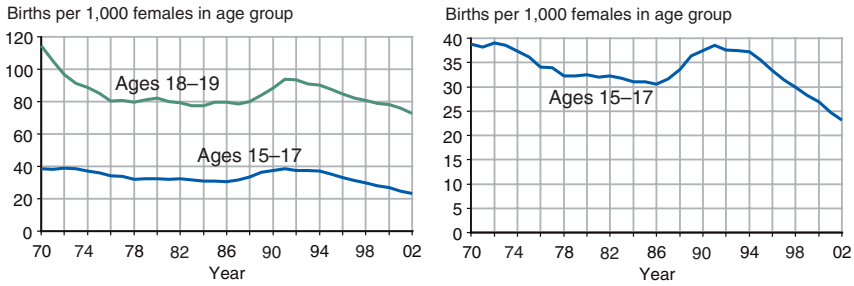
Births per 1,000 women, 2002:

Race/ ethnicity	Ages 15–17	Ages 18–19
All races	23.2	72.8
White non-Hispanic	13.1	51.9
Black non-Hispanic	41.0	110.3
Hispanic	50.7	133.0

The birth rate for Hispanic females ages 15–17 in 2002 was almost 4 times that for white non-Hispanics. The rate for black non-Hispanic females was more than 3 times that for white non-Hispanics.

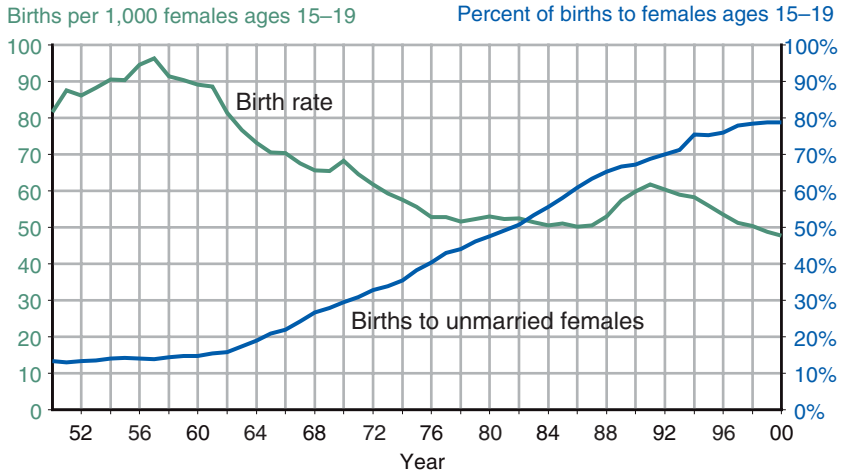
Between 1991 and 2002, birth rates declined more for older juveniles (40%) than for young adults (23%). The decline for older juveniles was greater for non-Hispanic whites (45%) and blacks (52%) than for Hispanics (27%).

Following a peak in 1991, the birth rate for females ages 15–17 fell consistently so that by 2002, the rate was 40% below its 1970 level



- The birth rate for older juvenile females (ages 15–17) fell 21% between 1970 and 1986, and then increased over the next 5 years back to its 1970 level.
- The birth rate for young adult females (ages 18 and 19) dropped even more than the rate for older juveniles between 1970 and 1986, falling 31%. Although the rate for young adults also then increased to a peak in 1991, this peak was far below the 1970 level. Similar to older juveniles, the birth rate for young adults in 2002 was 37% below its 1970 level.

The annual birth rate for females ages 15–19 declined substantially between 1950 and 2000, while the proportion of these births that were to unmarried women increased



- In 1950, 13% of all births to females ages 15–19 were to unmarried women. By 2000, this proportion had increased to 79%.
- In 1950, of the 82 births per 1,000 females ages 15–19, 71 were to married women and 11 were to unmarried women. In 2000, of the 48 births per 1,000 females ages 15–19, 10 were to married women and 38 were to unmarried women.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Martin et al.'s Births: Final data for 2002, *National Vital Statistics Reports,* 52(10); Ventura et al.'s Births to teenagers in the United States, 1940–2000, *National Vital Statistics Reports,* 49(10); and Ventura et al.'s Births: Final data for 1999, *National Vital Statistics Reports,* 49(1).

Birth rates for women ages 15–17 varied greatly across states in 2002, ranging from 8.1 in New Hampshire to 38.2 in Texas

State	Births per 1,000 females in age group, 2002			Ratio of ages
	Ages 15–19	Ages 15–17	Ages 18–19	15–17 to 18–19
United States	43.0	23.2	72.8	32%
Alabama	54.5	31.5	88.7	36
Alaska	39.5	18.9	73.7	26
Arizona	61.2	35.0	102.5	34
Arkansas	59.9	31.6	101.7	31
California	41.1	22.6	69.1	33
Colorado	47.0	26.2	79.1	33
Connecticut	25.8	14.1	45.1	31
Delaware	46.3	24.7	77.8	32
District of Columbia	69.1	44.8	101.5	44
Florida	44.5	23.2	78.4	30
Georgia	55.7	31.4	92.8	34
Hawaii	38.2	17.7	66.4	27
Idaho	39.1	18.4	69.1	27
Illinois	42.2	23.4	70.5	33
Indiana	44.6	22.6	78.5	29
Iowa	32.5	16.4	55.4	30
Kansas	43.0	21.4	74.2	29
Kentucky	51.0	26.5	84.8	31
Louisiana	58.1	31.7	96.1	33
Maine	25.4	11.9	45.2	26
Maryland	35.4	20.0	59.6	34
Massachusetts	23.3	12.5	39.6	32
Michigan	34.8	18.0	60.8	30
Minnesota	27.5	14.2	47.3	30
Mississippi	64.7	37.6	103.3	36
Missouri	44.1	22.2	76.6	29
Montana	36.4	17.8	63.3	28
Nebraska	37.0	18.3	64.2	29
Nevada	53.9	28.0	96.7	29
New Hampshire	20.0	8.1	39.0	21
New Jersey	26.8	14.7	46.1	32
New Mexico	62.4	37.8	99.5	38
New York	29.5	15.7	50.1	31
North Carolina	52.2	28.6	89.3	32
North Dakota	27.2	11.7	48.7	24
Ohio	39.5	20.1	69.4	29
Oklahoma	58.0	30.1	97.6	31
Oregon	36.8	18.2	64.8	28
Pennsylvania	31.6	17.2	53.7	32
Rhode Island	35.6	19.6	59.0	33
South Carolina	53.0	29.2	87.2	33
South Dakota	38.0	17.3	67.8	26
Tennessee	54.3	28.2	94.2	30
Texas	64.4	38.2	104.3	37
Utah	36.8	17.8	62.4	29
Vermont	24.2	10.4	44.4	23
Virginia	37.6	19.0	66.0	29
Washington	33.0	16.8	57.6	29
West Virginia	45.5	21.5	80.7	27
Wisconsin	32.3	15.9	57.1	28
Wyoming	39.9	17.7	72.1	25

- Comparing birth rates for older juveniles (ages 15–17) to those of young adults (ages 18 and 19) shows that the older juvenile rate ranged from 21% of the young adult rate in New Hampshire to 44% of the young adult rate in the District of Columbia.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Martin et al.'s Births: Final data for 2002, *National Vital Statistics Reports,* 52(10).

The teenage birth rate in the U.S. is high compared with other industrialized nations

A recent report by the National Center for Health Statistics presented teenage birth rates for a large number of nations. While it was not possible to obtain such rates for a common year, the authors of the report did show the most recent data from each nation.

Births per 1,000 women ages 15–19:

Country	Birth rate	Data year
United States	48.7	2000
Russian Federation	44.7	1995
New Zealand	34.0	1996
United Kingdom	30.2	1997
Canada	24.5	1995
Portugal	21.3	1997
Australia	20.5	1995
Israel	16.7	1997
Ireland	16.1	1996
Austria	14.7	1997
Norway	12.8	1997
Greece	12.1	1997
Belgium	11.9	1992
Germany	9.7	1996
Finland	9.1	1997
Denmark	8.3	1996
France	7.9	1993
Sweden	7.8	1996
Spain	7.5	1996
Italy	6.8	1995
Switzerland	5.7	1996
Netherlands	5.6	1996
Japan	4.3	1997

Source: Authors' adaptation of Ventura et al.'s Births to teenagers in the United States, 1940–2000, *National Vital Statistics Reports,* 49(10)

The teenage birth rate in the United States was roughly equal to the Russian rate; double the rates in Canada and Australia; 3 times the rates in Israel and Ireland; 6 times the rates in Denmark, France, and Sweden; and more than 10 times the Japanese rate.

Although the dropout rate fell over the last 30 years, nearly a half million youth quit high school in 2000

Educational failure is linked to law-violating behavior

The difficulties finding employment for high school dropouts can be documented by examining their labor force and unemployment status. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found that 64% of the 2000/2001 school year dropouts were in the labor force (employed or actively looking for work), with more than one-third (36%) of those in the labor force unemployed. In comparison, 81% of the 2001 high school graduates who were not in college were in the labor force, and a far smaller proportion of this workforce (21%) was unemployed.

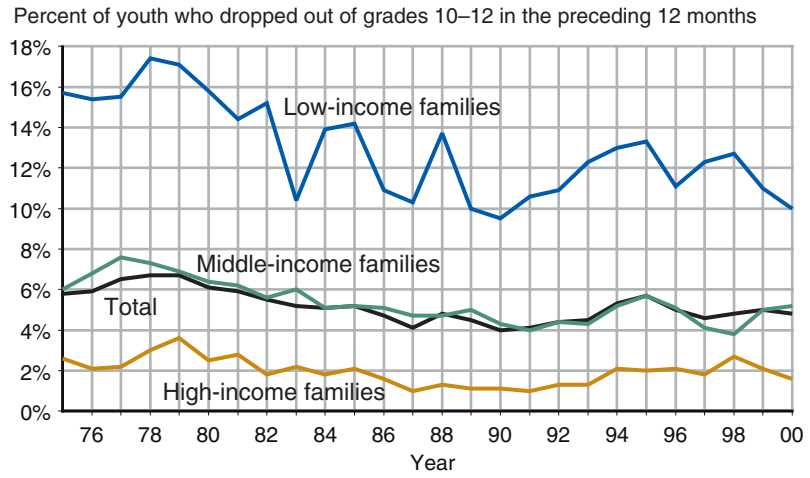
Within the juvenile justice system, programs often attempt to bring youth into the labor market. Sherman and his colleagues prepared a report for Congress in 1997 stating that, although there are some exceptions, research generally provides strong theoretical and empirical support for the conclusion that employment helps to prevent or reduce delinquent behavior.

If, as research has found, educational failure leads to unemployment (or underemployment), and if educational failure and unemployment are related to law-violating behavior, then patterns of educational failure over time and within specific groups may help to explain patterns of delinquent behavior.

The dropout rate varies across demographic subgroups

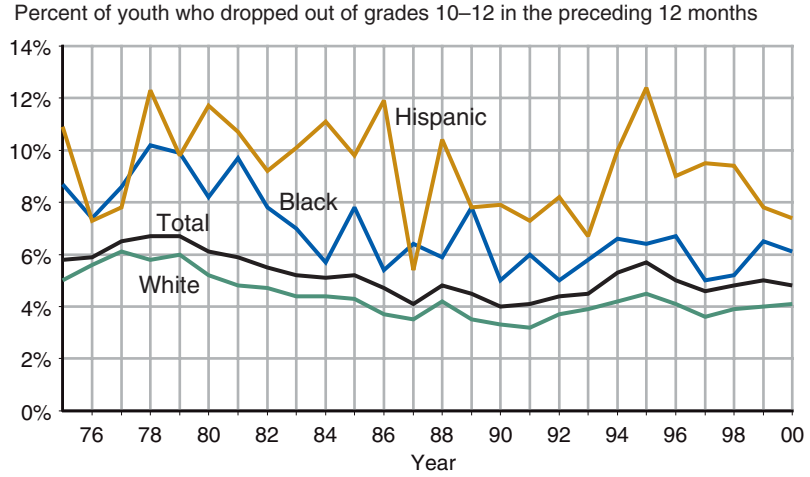
NCES develops annual estimates of (1) the number of persons in grades 10–12 who dropped out of school in the preceding 12 months and (2) the percent of persons ages 16–24

The annual proportion of students in grades 10–12 who left school without completing a high school program was lower in the 1990s than in the 1970s



Note: Low income is defined as the bottom 20% of family incomes for the year, middle is between 20% and 80% of all family incomes, and high is the top 20% of all family incomes.

Dropout rates for white youth have remained below the rates for other racial/ethnic groups



Note: Race proportions do not include persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Persons of Hispanic ethnicity can be of any race.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Kaufman et al.'s *Dropout Rates in the United States: 2000*.

who were dropouts. The first statistic (the event dropout rate) provides an annual assessment of flow into the dropout pool. The second statistic (the status dropout rate) provides an assessment of the proportion of dropouts in the young adult population.

Almost 5 of every 100 persons (4.8%) enrolled in high school in October 1999 left school before October 2000 without successfully completing a high school program—in other words, in the school year 1999/2000, about 488,000 youth dropped out and the event dropout rate was 4.8%. The event dropout rate in 2000 was higher for males (5.5%) than females (4.1%). The event dropout rates did not differ statistically among the various racial/ethnic groups: Asian (3.5%), white non-Hispanic (4.1%), black non-Hispanic (6.1%), and Hispanic (7.4%). However, the event dropout rate was far lower (1.6%) for youth living in families with incomes in the top one-fifth of all family incomes than for youth living in families with incomes in the bottom one-fifth of all family incomes (10.0%).

Over the years, demographic disparities in annual event dropout rates have accumulated to produce noticeable differences in status dropout rates—i.e., the proportion of young adults (persons ages 16-24) who are not enrolled in school and have not completed high school (or received an equivalency certificate). In October 2000, the status dropout rate among young adults was 10.9%. The rate was greater for males (12.0%) than females (9.9%). The status dropout rate was also substantially greater for Hispanics (27.8%) than black non-Hispanics (13.1%), white non-Hispanics (6.9%), or Asians (3.8%). A closer look at the data for Hispanics shows that the status dropout rate was much higher for Hispanics born outside the U.S. (44.2%) than those born in the U.S. (15.2%).

Juveniles in the labor force

In 2002, 25% of juveniles ages 15–17 were in the labor force. Being in the labor force means the juvenile was working either full-time or part-time as a paid employee with an ongoing relationship with a particular employer, such as working in a supermarket. Juveniles were not considered to be in the labor force if they worked in "freelance jobs" that involved doing tasks without a specific employer, such as babysitting or mowing lawns. Labor force participation increased with age: 9% of 15-year-olds, 26% of 16-year-olds, and 41% of 17-year-olds. About equal proportions of males and females ages 15–17 were in the labor force in 2002 (24% vs. 26%).

The unemployment rate is the proportion of persons in the labor force who are unemployed. For juveniles ages 15–17 in 2002, the unemployment rate was 21%. In comparison, for adults ages 25–54 the unemployment rate in 2002 was 5%. The unemployment rate for juveniles ages 15–17 varied by race and ethnicity in 2002. The unemployment rate for non-Hispanic white juveniles (18%) was significantly lower than the rates for black (40%) and Hispanic (24%) juveniles.

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