

# THE NATION'S CHILDREN 2017

## America's Children: A Snapshot

Child population under 18, 2015 <sup>1</sup>	73,683,825
White children (not Hispanic) under 18, 2015 <sup>2</sup>	51.4%
Non-white children under 18, 2015 <sup>3</sup>	48.6%
Young children (under 6), 2015 <sup>4</sup>	32.3%
Children (6–11), 2015 <sup>5</sup>	33.9%
Youth (12–17), 2015 <sup>6</sup>	33.8%

## America's Most Vulnerable Children: A Snapshot

Estimated referrals of possible child abuse and neglect, 2015 <sup>7</sup>	3,957,000
Children substantiated/indicated as abused or neglected, 2015 <sup>8</sup>	683,487
Estimated children who died as a result of abuse or neglect, 2015 <sup>9</sup>	1,585
Children living in out-of-home care, 2015 <sup>10</sup>	427,910
Children adopted from the public foster care system, 2015 <sup>11</sup>	50,549
Children waiting to be adopted, 2015 <sup>12</sup>	111,820
Children living in poverty, 2015 <sup>13</sup>	15,000,273
Children living in low-income families (200% of poverty), 2015 <sup>14</sup>	31,018,000
National Poverty Rate, 2015 <sup>15</sup>	14.7%
National Poverty Rate for children under 18, 2015 <sup>16</sup>	20.7%
National Poverty Rate for children aged 5 and under, 2015 <sup>17</sup>	23%

## Child Abuse and Neglect

- In 2015, approximately 4 million allegations of child abuse and neglect, representing 7.2 million children, were made to child protective services agencies. 1,826,820 of the reports were referred for investigation, as reported by 44 states.<sup>18</sup>
- During 2015, an estimated 683,487 children in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico were determined to be victims of abuse or neglect. Of these children, 73% were neglected, 17.2% were physically abused, and 8.4% were sexually abused.<sup>19</sup>
- Of the substantiations of child abuse and neglect in 2015, 63.4% received follow-up services. That service was foster care 23% of the time. Of the non-substantiated reports, 32% received follow-up services.<sup>20</sup>
- 427,910 children lived apart from their families in out-of-home care in 2015. Of those children, 39% were age 5 or younger, 45% were ages 6 through 15, and 16% were 16 or older.<sup>21</sup>



- Of the children living in out-of-home care in 2015, approximately 43% were white, 24% were black, 21% were Hispanic, 2% were American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 10% were children of other races and ethnicities.<sup>22</sup>

### **Permanent Families for Children**

- Of the 243,060 children exiting out-of-home care in 2015 in the United States, 123,894 were reunited with their parents or other family members. In addition, 22,303 children exited out-of-home care to guardianship.<sup>23</sup>
- In 2015, approximately 50,549 children were legally adopted through the public child welfare agency, a 0.39% decrease from 50,644 in 2014.<sup>24</sup>
- Of the 427,910 children in out-of-home care in 2015, there were 111,820 children waiting to be adopted.<sup>25</sup>

### **Kinship Support**

- 2,572,146 grandparents were responsible for his or her grandchildren in 2015.<sup>26</sup>
- In 2015, of the 427,910 children in out-of-home care, 127,821 were living with relatives while in care.<sup>27</sup>
- In 2015, almost 7.6 million children under age 18 lived in homes with a householder who was their grandparent or other relative. Of these, approximately 5.9 million lived with grandparents who were the householders.<sup>28</sup>

### **Child Poverty and Income Support**

- The percentage of children under 18 living in poverty is 20.7%, a slight decrease from 21.7% in 2014.<sup>29</sup>
- The total number of children receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) in the United States decreased from 2,681,139 in 2014 to 2,373,639 in 2015. The number of families receiving TANF in 2015 was down to 1,348,254 from 1,520,894 in 2014.<sup>30</sup>



- In 2016, approximately \$6 billion was spent on the Women, Infant, and Child (WIC) Nutrition Program, serving 7.6 million participants, a decrease from 8 million participants in 2015.<sup>31</sup>
- In 2015, approximately \$32.4 billion in child support funds was collected and distributed in the United States, up 13% compared to \$28.2 billion in 2014 and following a steady increase since 2009.<sup>32</sup>

## **Health**

### ***Pregnancy and Parenting***

- The birth rate for U.S. teenagers aged 15-19 fell 8% from 2014 to 2015, to 22.3 births per 1,000 females aged 15-19, falling below the records set in 2014.<sup>33</sup>
- Teen girls in foster care are estimated to be twice as likely as their peers not in foster care to get pregnant by age 19.<sup>34</sup>
- Children born to teen mothers are at increased risk of ending up in foster care and child protective services. It is estimated that teen childbearing costs taxpayers \$9.4 billion annually, including \$3.1 billion in child welfare costs.<sup>35</sup>

### ***Newborn Health and Infant Mortality***

- Nationally, low-birth-weight babies represented 8.07% of all live births in 2015, a slight increase from 8.0% in 2014 but lower than a four-decade high of 8.26% in 2006.<sup>36</sup>
- The infant mortality rate for 2015 was 589.5 deaths per 1,000 live births, an increase from 582.1 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2014.<sup>37</sup>

### ***HIV/AIDS***

- In 2015, 1,723 persons ages 13-19 were living with a diagnosed HIV infection.<sup>38</sup>
- In 2014, and estimated 1,716 youth aged 13 to 24 were diagnosed with AIDS<sup>39</sup>

### ***Child and Youth Mental Health***

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among those 10-19 years old, accounting for over 18% of deaths annually for this age group. Among American Indian/Alaskan Natives aged 10-19, the suicide rate is approximately 1.7 times higher than the national average for that age group.<sup>40</sup>
- Mental health disorders are chronic diseases among youth; half of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14 and 75% have begun by age 24.<sup>41</sup>



- The average age of onset was 6 for anxiety disorders, 11 for behavior disorders, 13 for mood disorders, and 15 for substance use disorders.<sup>42</sup>
- In 2015, 3.3 million youth aged 12–17 (13.3%) received treatment or counseling for problems with emotions or behavior in a specialty mental health setting (inpatient or outpatient care).<sup>43</sup>
- Among adolescents with mental health disorders, only an estimated 33% will receive treatment services. Adolescents with behavior disorders are most likely to receive services.<sup>44</sup>

### ***Foster Care and Mental Health***

- Instability in placement among children in foster care increases the likelihood of a child being diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder.<sup>45</sup>
- About 30% of foster care youth are reported to have severe behavioral, emotional, or developmental problems.<sup>46</sup>
- A Michigan Foster Care Alumni Study revealed that among surveyed adults who had been placed in foster care as children, more than half (50.8%) had experienced at least one mental health problem in the last 12 months. 73.8% experienced at least one mental health problem at some point in their lives.<sup>47</sup> A similar study in Texas revealed 39.0% with a mental health problem in the past 12 months and 68.0% experienced a mental health problem at one point in their lives.<sup>48</sup>
- In the child welfare system, an estimated 70-85% of children in need of mental health services do not receive such services, with children under 3 even less likely than older children.<sup>49</sup>

### ***Foster Care and Medicaid***

- Children who are in foster care represent 3% of the children served by Medicaid, however, they account for 15% of children utilizing behavioral health services and 29% of behavioral health spending.<sup>50</sup>
- The proportion of children with health insurance coverage for any part of the year has increased modestly, from 89% in 2000 to 94% in 2014. However, the share of children with private insurance decreased from 71% to 61%, while the proportion of children covered under Medicaid increased from 21 to 40%.<sup>51</sup>
- Expenses for behavioral health services for children in foster care are estimated to be two times greater than expenses for physical health services annually.<sup>52</sup>



- Children in residential or therapeutic group homes make up less than 4% of children receiving Medicaid services but account for 19% of total behavioral health costs.<sup>53</sup>

## **Substance Abuse and Child Welfare**

### ***Child Substance Abuse***

- An estimated 350,000 adolescents in 2015 had a co-occurring substance use disorder and a major depressive episode in the past year. This number represents 1.4 percent of all adolescents in the United States.<sup>54</sup>
- There were 53,000 adolescents aged 12 to 17 who were current users of cocaine in 2015.<sup>55</sup>
- In 2015, 7.0 percent of adolescents aged 12 to 17 were current users of marijuana.<sup>56</sup>

### ***Parental Substance Abuse***

- Children of parents who abuse alcohol or drugs are at an increased risk of abuse or neglect.<sup>57</sup>
- It is estimated that 61% of infants and 41% of older children in out-of-home care are from families with active substance abuse.<sup>58</sup>
- In a response to parental substance abuse serving as a key factor in out-of-home placements for children in the child welfare system, a competitive grant program was introduced that provides funding over a five-year period with regional partnership grants (RPGs) to improve outcomes for children and families.<sup>59</sup> There findings were as follows:
  - Grantees measured results for over 25,500 children and 15,000 families who received services during this time.<sup>60</sup>
  - 92% of children who were at risk of removal from the home remained in the custody of their parent or caregiver through case closure in the RPG program.<sup>61</sup>
  - The percentage of children who were able to remain in the home increased from 85.1% in year one to 96.4% in year five.<sup>62</sup>
  - There was a significant increase in timely reunification rates (reunifications within 12 months) from 55.4% in year one to 72.9% in year four.<sup>63</sup>



## Social Services Block Grant

- In 2014, Social Services Block Grant funds went towards:
  - Child foster care services, 16%
  - Child protective services, 12%
  - Child day care services, 11%
  - Special services for individuals with disabilities, 10% <sup>64</sup>

## Home Visiting Programs

In FY 2015, states reported serving approximately 145,500 parents and children in 825 counties in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and five territories through the Federal Home Visiting Program. <sup>65</sup>

In FY 2015, the Federal Home Visiting Program funded services in 29 percent of all urban counties, and 23 percent of all rural counties. <sup>66</sup>

## Child Care and Head Start

- In 2015, an estimated monthly average of 1,397,000 of the nation's children received subsidized child care. This compares to 2014 when 1,406,300 children were served, 1,449,800 children served in 2013, and 1,502,600 children served in 2012. <sup>67</sup>
- In 2015, Head Start served 944,581 children. <sup>68</sup>
- In FY 2015, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) was funded at \$5.352 billion, and the amount of TANF funds used for child care in FY 2015 was \$2.664 billion, for a total of \$8.016 billion. Even after adjustment for inflation, the amount of TANF and CCDBG funds used for child care in FY 2015 remains below its high of \$11.16 billion in FY 2001 inflation adjusted dollars. <sup>69</sup>
- In 39 states the income eligibility limit for obtaining child care assistance remained below 200% of poverty (poverty level in 2015 is \$20,090 a year for a family of three). In the majority of communities across the country, a family needs an income equal to at least 200% of poverty to meet basic needs, including housing, food, child care, transportation, health care, and other necessities. <sup>70</sup>
- In 2015, 21 states had waiting lists or frozen intake for child care assistance, compared to 18 states in 2014 and 21 states in 2001. <sup>71</sup>



- In 2015, only one state paid child care providers at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of current market rates, slightly lower than the three states in 2013, and a sharp decline from 22 states paying at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of market rates in 2001.<sup>72</sup>

### **Vulnerable Youth**

- In FY 2015, over 24,000 children left out-of-home care without a permanent family.<sup>73</sup>
- A 2015 survey of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students found the following:
  - Of the students who reported being harassed due to their sexual orientation, 85.2% were verbally harassed, 27% were physically harassed, and 13% were physically assaulted.
  - Of the students who reported being harassed due to their gender expression, 54.5% were verbally harassed, 20.3% were physically harassed, and 9.4% were physically assaulted.
  - Of the students who reported incidents of harassment or assault, 63.5% reported that school staff took no action.<sup>74</sup>

In 2015, there were about 685,000 teens between the ages of 16 and 19 who were not in school and had not graduated from high school. There were 1,191,000 teens between the ages of 16 and 19 who were not enrolled in school and were not working.<sup>75</sup>

In 2015, one quarter of all children in the United States had a parent who was foreign born. Children who have difficulty speaking English may face greater challenges progressing in school and in the labor market.<sup>76</sup>

### **Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention**

- In 2015, U.S. law enforcement agencies arrested an estimated 649,970 persons younger than age 18, an 8.4% decrease from 2014.<sup>77</sup>
- A study found 46% of homeless youth had been in a correctional facility in 2015.<sup>78</sup>
- In 2015, 65% of minors in detention had a parent or relative with who they could live with, and 48% of minors in detention were homeless or experienced housing instability before entering detention.<sup>79</sup>

### **Funding for Children and Child Welfare Services**

- In FY 2015, the federal government had a total budget of \$3.7 trillion. The sum of federal outlays and tax expenditures on children (\$471 billion) made up about 9 percent



of total federal outlays and tax expenditures in 2015, down from 10 percent in 2010–14.<sup>80</sup>

- Federal spending on children fell from 3.2% in FY 2010 to 2.6% of GDP in FY 2015. Spending on children is projected to continue to decline in the future.<sup>81</sup>
- The ten programs that spent the most on children in the FY 2015 federal budget were:
  - Medicaid (\$83 billion)
  - Earned Income Tax Credit (\$61 billion)
  - Child Tax Credit (\$50 billion)
  - Dependency Exemption (\$39 billion)
  - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (\$33 billion)
  - Employer Sponsored Insurance (\$23 billion)
  - Social Security (\$21 billion)
  - Child Nutrition (\$21 billion)
  - Title I/Education for the Disadvantaged (\$15 billion)
  - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (\$13 billion)<sup>82</sup>
- In FY 2014, \$29.1 billion federal dollars was spent for child welfare. Of this, 55% was from Title IV-E, 5% was from Title IV-B, 8% was from Medicaid, 10% was from the Social Services Block Grant, 20% was from TANF, and 3% was from other federal sources, including SSI and Survivors Benefits.<sup>83</sup>

### **Child Welfare Workforce**

- Average turnover rates for child welfare agencies range from 20% to 40%.<sup>84</sup> Turnover rates at around 10% are optimal within any agency.<sup>85</sup>
- Caseworker turnover has negative outcomes for children in the child welfare system, including placement disruptions and increased time in out-of-home care.<sup>86</sup>
- According to the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being II baseline report, 75% of caseworkers earned an annual salary between \$30,000 and \$49,999. Approximately 20% of caseworkers had salaries over \$50,000.<sup>87</sup>
- The majority of caseworkers hold a bachelor's degree (52.3%) or a bachelor of social work degree (21.9%). Only 25% of caseworkers hold a master's degree.<sup>88</sup>
- A workload model in Colorado found that approximately 574 additional caseworkers were needed in their state to adequately provide child welfare services, due to estimated time requirements for meaningful services. This number represents a 49% increase that is needed on top of hours already spent on case related tasks.<sup>89</sup>





<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2016). ACS demographic and housing estimates: United States. Retrieved February 9, 2017 from [https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_15\\_5YR\\_B09001&prodType=table](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_15_5YR_B09001&prodType=table).  
Note: Number is a CWLA calculation.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2016). *Children characteristics: United States*. Retrieved February 2, 2017 from [https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_15\\_1YR\\_S0901&prodType=table](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_15_1YR_S0901&prodType=table).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Note: Percentage is a CWLA calculation.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2016). *Child maltreatment 2015*. Retrieved February 2, 2017 from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cm2015.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2016). *AFCARS report #23*. Retrieved February 4, 2017 from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/afcarsreport23.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2015). *Poverty status in the past 12 months: United States*. Retrieved February 2, 2017 from [https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_15\\_1YR\\_S1701&prodType=table](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_15_1YR_S1701&prodType=table).

<sup>14</sup> KIDS COUNT Data Center (2016). *Children below 200 percent poverty*. Retrieved February 21, 2017 from <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/47-children-below-200-percent-poverty#detailed/1/any/false/573,869,36,868,867/any/329,330>.

Note: Number is a CWLA calculation.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2015). *Poverty status in the past 12 months: United States*. Retrieved February 2, 2017 from [https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_15\\_1YR\\_S1701&prodType=table](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_15_1YR_S1701&prodType=table).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center. (2017). *Children in poverty by age group*. Retrieved February 3, 2017 from <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/5650-children-in-poverty-by-age-group?loc=1&loct=1#detailed/1/any/false/573,869,36,868,867/17,18,36/12263,12264>.

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2016). *Child maltreatment 2015*. Retrieved February 4, 2017 from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cm2015.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2016). *AFCARS report #23*. Retrieved February 4, 2017 from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/afcarsreport23.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2016). *AFCARS report #23*. Retrieved February 4, 2017 from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/afcarsreport23.pdf>.

Note: Percent change is a CWLA calculation.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.



- <sup>26</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2015). *Grandparents: United States*. Retrieved on February 4, 2017 from [https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_14\\_1YR\\_S1002&prodType=table](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_14_1YR_S1002&prodType=table).
- <sup>27</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2016). *AFCARS report #23*. Retrieved February 5, 2017 from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/afcarsreport23.pdf>.
- <sup>28</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2015). *Children characteristics: United States*. Retrieved on February 5, 2017 from [https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_15\\_1YR\\_S0901&prodType=table](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_15_1YR_S0901&prodType=table). Note: Numbers are a CWLA calculation.
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- <sup>40</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, WISQARS. (2015). Leading causes of death reports, national and regional, 1999-2014. Retrieved February 6, 2017 from [http://webappa.cdc.gov/sasweb/ncipc/leadcaus10\\_us.html](http://webappa.cdc.gov/sasweb/ncipc/leadcaus10_us.html). Note: Percentages are a CWLA calculation.
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