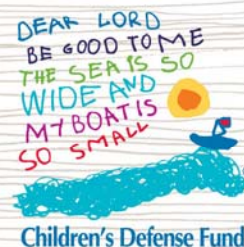


Children's Defense Fund

The State of America's Children 2008: Highlights



December 22, 2008

Are Our Children Ready to Compete in the Global Arena?

According to the CDF report, children in America lag behind almost all industrialized nations on key child indicators. The United States has the unwanted distinction of being worst among industrialized nations in relative child poverty, in the gap between rich and poor, in teen birth rates, and in child gun violence, and first in the number of incarcerated persons.

Poverty

- Every 33 seconds a baby is born into poverty. One in 6 children in America is poor. Black and Latino children are about 3 times as likely to be poor as White children.
- Almost 1 in 13 children in the United States—5.8 million—lives in extreme poverty. Young children are more likely than school-age children to live in extreme poverty: 1 in 11 young children, compared to 1 in 14 older children.

Demographics

- Minority children are a majority of the child population in six states and in the District of Columbia. In 12 other states, minority children make up between 40 and 50 percent of the child population.

Health

- Currently, 8.9 million children are uninsured. One in 5 Latino children and 1 in 8 Black children are uninsured, compared to 1 in 13 White children.
- In almost every state, Black and Latino babies are less likely than White babies to be born to mothers who received early prenatal care. About 1 in 12 babies born in the United States is low birthweight, with Black babies about twice as likely as White or Latino babies to be born at low birthweight. Infant mortality rates are more than twice as high for Black infants as for White infants.

Child Welfare

- More than 900,000 children were abused or neglected in 2006.
- Although Black children comprise 15 percent of all children, they are 32 percent of the approximate 500,000 children in foster care.
- More than 2.5 million grandparents are raising their grandchildren.

Early Childhood Development

- In 33 states and the District of Columbia, the annual cost of center-based child care for a preschooler is more than the annual tuition at a 4-year public college.
- Only about one-half to two-thirds of children eligible for Head Start are enrolled, and only about 3 percent of eligible infants and young children are enrolled in Early Head Start.

Education

- About two-thirds of public school 4th graders cannot read at grade level; 6 out of 10 cannot do math at grade level. More than 80 percent of Black and Latino 4th graders in public school cannot read at grade level, compared with 58 percent of their White peers. 85 percent of Black 4th graders in public school cannot do math at grade level, compared to 78 percent of Latino children and about half of White children.
- 7 out of 10 public school 8th graders cannot read or do math at grade level. More than 4 out of 5 Black 8th graders cannot read or do math at grade level, compared to 3 out of 5 of their White peers.

Nutrition

- More than half the children participating in the School Lunch Program—more than 17 million children—receive free or reduced-price meals. The 8 million children in the School Breakfast Program who received free or reduced-price meals—4 out of 5 participants—are the neediest children. Yet the Summer Food Service Program, an entitlement targeted at these children, served fewer than 2 million children, showing that needy children are not receiving this important assistance during the summer months.

Youth at Risk

- White, Black and Latino teens are about equally likely to use drugs, but Black juveniles are twice as likely as their White peers to be arrested for drug offenses and more than five times as likely to be incarcerated for drug offenses as White teens.
- 3,006 children and teens were killed by firearms in 2005, the equivalent of 120 public school classrooms of 25 students each. Another 16,000 children and teens suffered non-fatal firearm injuries.
- During the summer months, fewer than half of older teens have jobs.

Download the full report at www.childrensdefense.org/stateofamericaschildren

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