



Youth and the Juvenile Justice System: 2022 National Report

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Chapter 1

Youth population characteristics

1

Problems experienced by children today are the products of multiple and sometimes complex causes. Data presented in this chapter show that prevalence estimates for certain risk factors associated with delinquency have decreased while others have been on the rise. For example, teenage birth rates have declined to historically low levels; however, fewer children are being raised in two-parent families. The proportion of youth living in poverty has decreased since 2010, and was at its lowest level since 1975, but the proportion of youth experiencing major depressive episodes has increased in recent years. Although high school dropout rates have fallen for most demographic groups, the rates are still too high, especially in an employment market where unskilled labor is needed less and less.

This chapter serves to document the status of the U.S. youth population

on several indicators of child well-being and presents an overview of some of the more commonly requested demographic, economic, and sociological statistics on youth. These statistics pertain to factors that may be directly or indirectly associated with youth crime and victimization. Although these factors may be correlated with youth crime and/or victimization, they may not be the immediate cause but may be linked to the causal factor. The sections in this chapter summarize demographic, poverty, and living arrangement data developed by the U.S. Census Bureau, depression data from the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, birth statistics from the National Center for Health Statistics, and education data from the National Center for Education Statistics.



In 2019, about 1 in 5 residents in the United States was younger than 18

After a period of decline, the youth population is expected to increase through 2050

For 2019, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that 73,088,675 persons in the United States—22% of the population—were under the age of 18. The youth population reached a low point in 1984 at 62.5 million, increased 19% through 2010, and then declined 1% through 2019.

Population projections from the Census Bureau suggest that the decline in the population under age 18 will soon reverse, and the youth population will increase through the middle of the 21st century, albeit slowly. Compared

with 2020, the youth population is expected to increase 2% by 2030 and 6% by 2050. However, as Vespa and his colleagues note, the U.S. is a graying country: the growth in the population ages 65 and older will outpace all other age groups through 2050. In fact, by the mid-2030s, persons age 65 and older will outnumber the population under age 18 for the first time in history.

The race/ethnicity profile of the youth population has changed

In response to the Office of Management and Budget's 1997 revisions to the federal data collection standards on race and ethnicity, the 2000 decennial census adopted revised racial classifica-

tions. Prior to the 2000 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. Starting with the 2000 Census, Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders were separated from Asians. In addition, respondents could classify themselves into more than one racial group. Information about Hispanic ethnicity is collected separately from race.

Not all national data systems have reached the Census Bureau's level of detail for racial coding—and historical data cannot support this new coding structure, especially the multi-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.

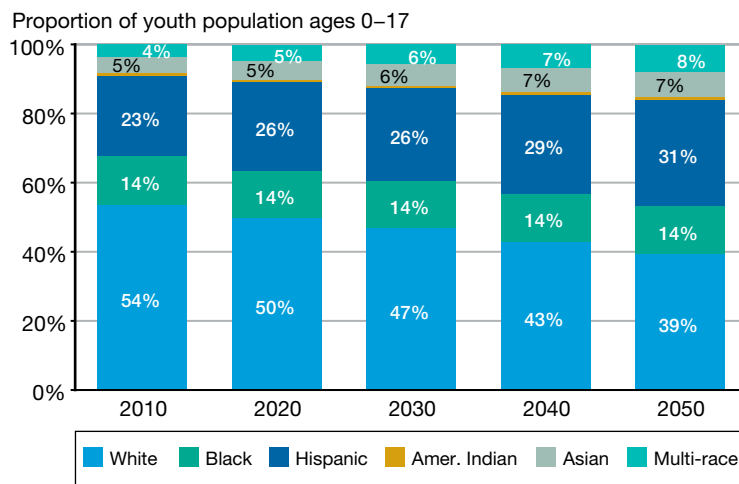
When viewed through the lens of race and ethnicity, the youth population has undergone a sizeable shift.

Race/ethnicity profile, youth ages 0–17:

Race/ethnicity	2000	2019	Pct. change 2000–2019
Non-Hispanic			
White	62%	52%	–15%
Black	15	15	–1
American Indian	1	1	–9
Asian	4	6	57
Hispanic	17	25	49

In 2019, just over half (52%) of the youth population was classified as non-Hispanic White, down from 62% in 2000, while the proportion classified as

The race/ethnicity profile of the youth population will change considerably by 2050



- Between 2020 and 2050, the number of non-Hispanic Black youth is projected to increase 7%, the number of non-Hispanic Asian/Pacific Islander youth is projected to increase 44%, the number of multi-racial youth is expected to grow 77%, and the number of youth of Hispanic ethnicity is expected to increase 28%. Conversely, the number of non-Hispanic White youth will decrease 16%.
- As a result of these changes, the race/ethnicity profile of U.S. youth will shift: by 2050, nonwhite youth will account for 61% of the youth population under age 18.

Note: The proportion of American Indian youth is too small to label and was 1% in each year.

Source: Author's adaptation of U.S. Census Bureau's *Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Sex, Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2019* and *Projected Population by Single Year of Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: July 1, 2016 to July 1, 2060* [machine-readable data files].

*The National Center for Health Statistics modifies the Census Bureau's population data to convert the detailed racial categories to the traditional four-race categories. This bridging is accomplished by estimating a single racial group classification of multi-race persons based on responses to the National Health Interview Survey, which asked respondents to classify themselves using both the old and new racial coding structures.

non-Hispanic Black and non-Hispanic American Indian changed little since 2000. Conversely, the proportion of the youth population classified as non-Hispanic Asian and Hispanic increased between 2000 and 2019.

In 2019, one-fourth (25%) of youth in the U.S. were of Hispanic ethnicity, up from 17% in 2000. Population projections from the Census Bureau suggest that the number of Hispanic youth in the U.S. will increase between 2020 and 2050, bringing the Hispanic proportion of the youth population to 31%.

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

In 2019, at least 9 of every 10 youth in Maine, Vermont, and West Virginia were non-Hispanic and White. In contrast, more than half of California's and New Mexico's youth populations were Hispanic (52% and 62%, respectively). Other states with large Hispanic youth populations were Arizona (45%), Nevada (41%), and Texas (49%).

In 2019, American Indian/Alaskan Natives accounted for at least 10% of the youth population in five states: Alaska (22%), Montana (10%), New Mexico (10%), Oklahoma (12%), and South Dakota (14%).

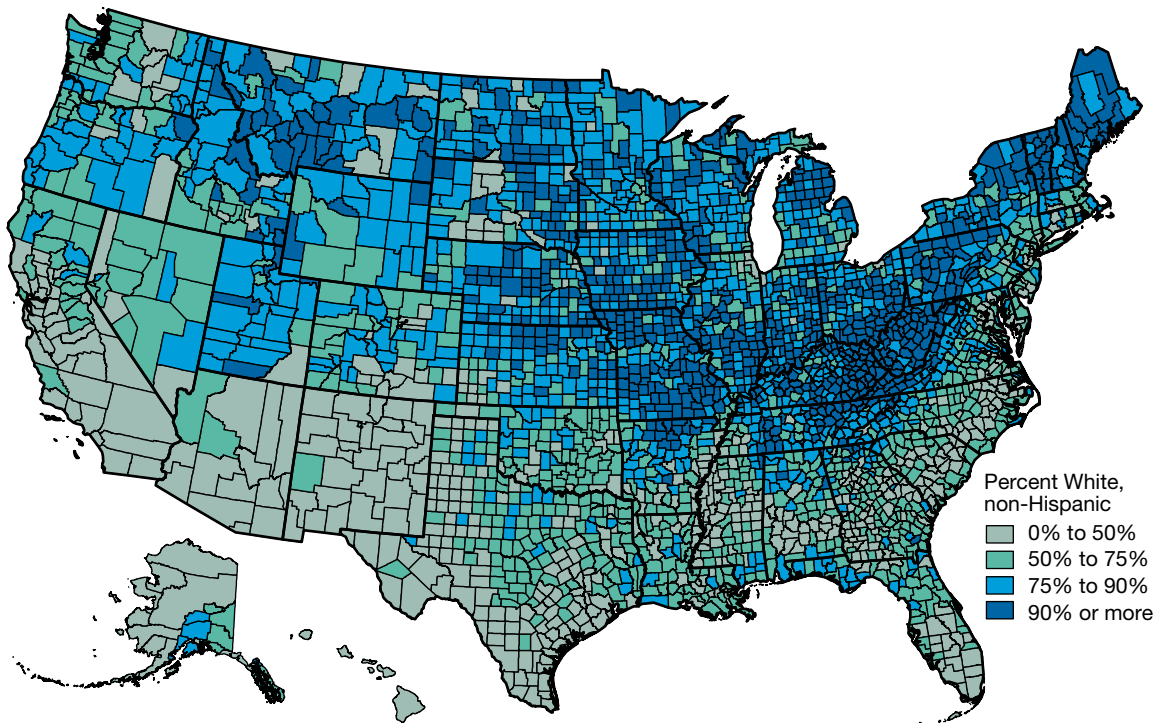
The states with the greatest proportion of Black youth in their populations in 2019 were Alabama (30%), Georgia (35%), Louisiana (38%), Maryland (33%), Mississippi (43%), and South Carolina (31%). The Black proportion of the youth population was highest in the District of Columbia (55%).

In 2019, non-Hispanic White youth accounted for less than half of the 0–17 population in 11 states

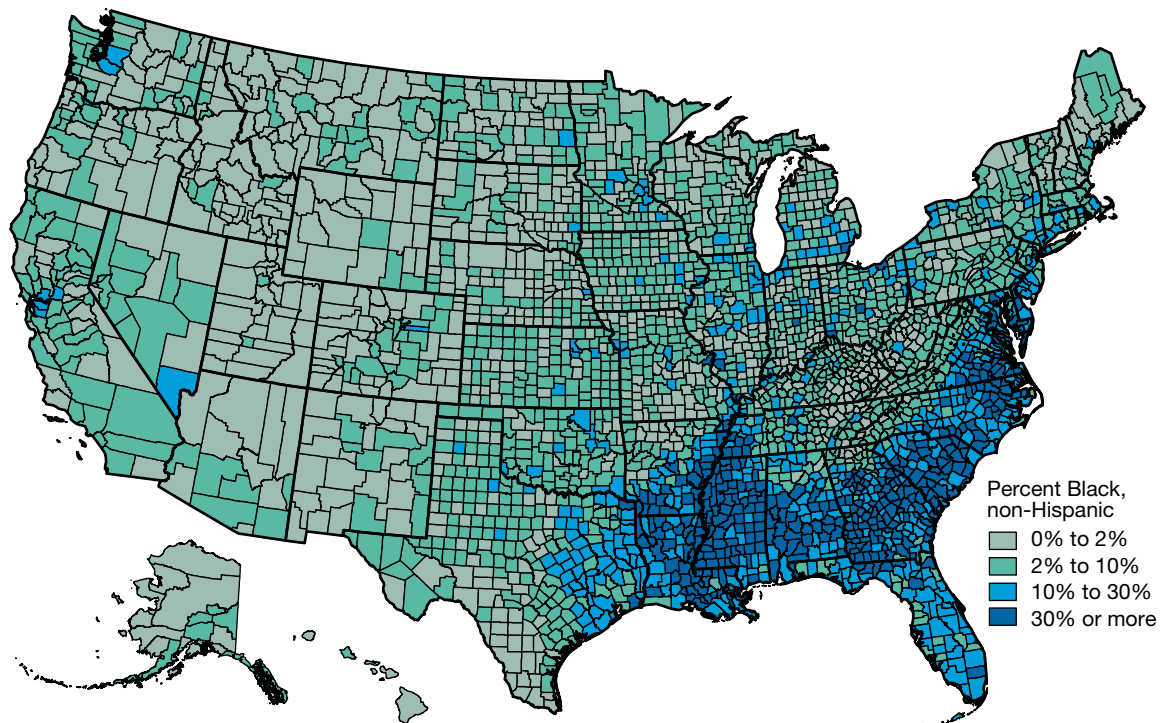
State	2019 population ages 0–17	Percent change 2010–2019	Racial/ethnic profile, 2019				
			Non-Hispanic				
			White	Black	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic
U.S. total	73,088,700	–1%	52%	15%	1%	6%	25%
Alabama	1,088,700	–4	59	30	0	2	8
Alaska	180,400	–4	54	6	22	9	10
Arizona	1,641,700	1	40	6	5	4	45
Arkansas	701,300	–1	65	19	1	3	13
California	8,881,100	–4	28	6	1	14	52
Colorado	1,256,700	2	58	6	1	4	32
Connecticut	727,300	–11	56	13	0	6	25
Delaware	204,300	–1	50	28	0	5	17
Dist. of Columbia	128,000	26	24	55	0	3	17
Florida	4,234,000	6	44	21	0	3	31
Georgia	2,505,400	1	45	35	0	5	15
Hawaii	299,400	–1	20	3	0	57	20
Idaho	448,100	4	77	2	1	2	19
Illinois	2,817,300	–10	53	17	0	6	25
Indiana	1,569,400	–2	72	13	0	3	12
Iowa	728,000	0	78	7	0	3	11
Kansas	701,500	–4	68	8	1	3	19
Kentucky	1,004,300	–2	80	11	0	2	7
Louisiana	1,089,900	–2	52	38	1	2	7
Maine	249,600	–9	90	4	1	2	3
Maryland	1,338,200	–1	44	33	0	7	16
Massachusetts	1,353,600	–5	63	10	0	8	19
Michigan	2,144,300	–8	68	18	1	4	9
Minnesota	1,303,200	2	70	12	2	7	9
Mississippi	700,000	–7	50	43	1	1	5
Missouri	1,374,700	–3	74	15	1	3	7
Montana	228,900	2	80	2	10	1	7
Nebraska	476,000	4	70	8	1	3	18
Nevada	694,700	5	37	13	1	8	41
New Hampshire	255,800	–11	86	3	0	4	7
New Jersey	1,943,600	–6	47	14	0	11	27
New Mexico	477,200	–8	24	3	10	1	62
New York	4,031,900	–7	50	16	0	9	25
North Carolina	2,304,600	1	54	24	1	4	17
North Dakota	180,600	20	77	5	8	2	7
Ohio	2,581,400	–5	73	18	0	3	7
Oklahoma	953,900	2	57	10	12	3	18
Oregon	864,800	0	67	4	1	6	23
Pennsylvania	2,635,800	–5	68	15	0	4	13
Rhode Island	203,900	–9	59	9	1	4	27
South Carolina	1,113,700	3	56	31	0	2	10
South Dakota	217,800	7	73	4	14	2	7
Tennessee	1,511,000	1	67	21	0	2	10
Texas	7,406,800	8	33	13	0	5	49
Utah	929,900	6	76	2	1	4	18
Vermont	114,300	–11	91	3	0	3	3
Virginia	1,868,700	1	56	22	0	8	14
Washington	1,661,000	5	59	7	2	11	22
West Virginia	360,400	–7	91	5	0	1	3
Wisconsin	1,267,900	–5	71	11	1	4	13
Wyoming	133,600	–1	79	2	3	1	16

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.
Source: Authors' analyses of Puzanhera et al.'s. *Easy Access to Juvenile Populations* [online analysis].

Proportion of non-Hispanic White youth in the youth population (ages 0–17), 2019

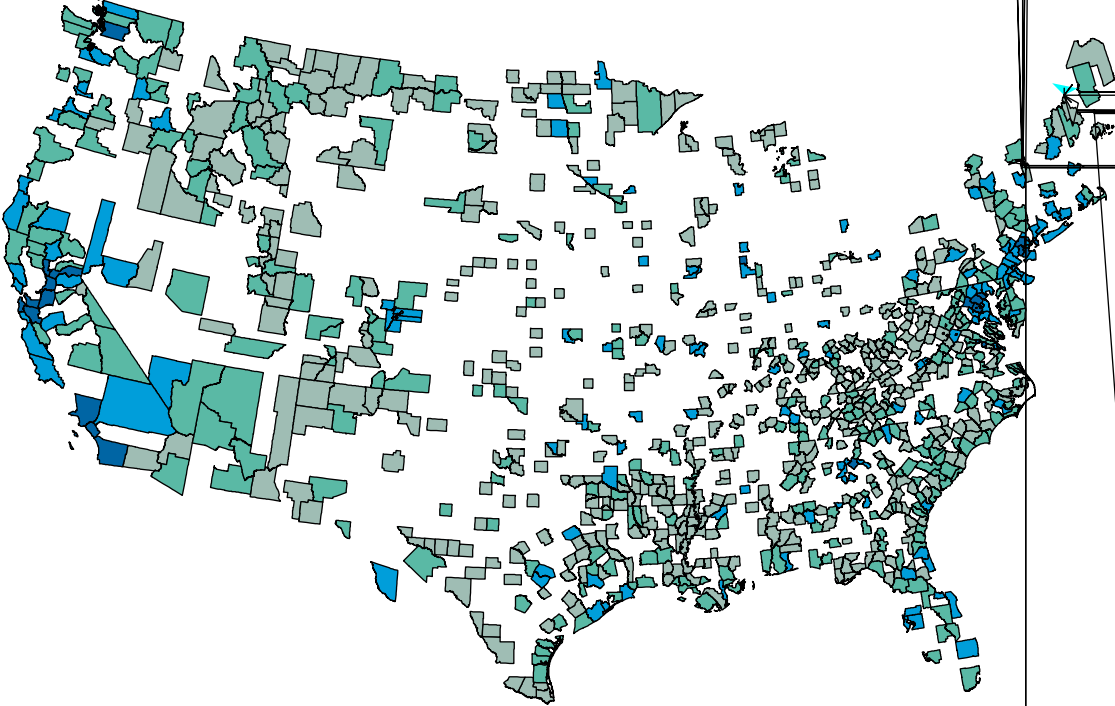


Proportion of non-Hispanic Black youth in the youth population (ages 0–17), 2019

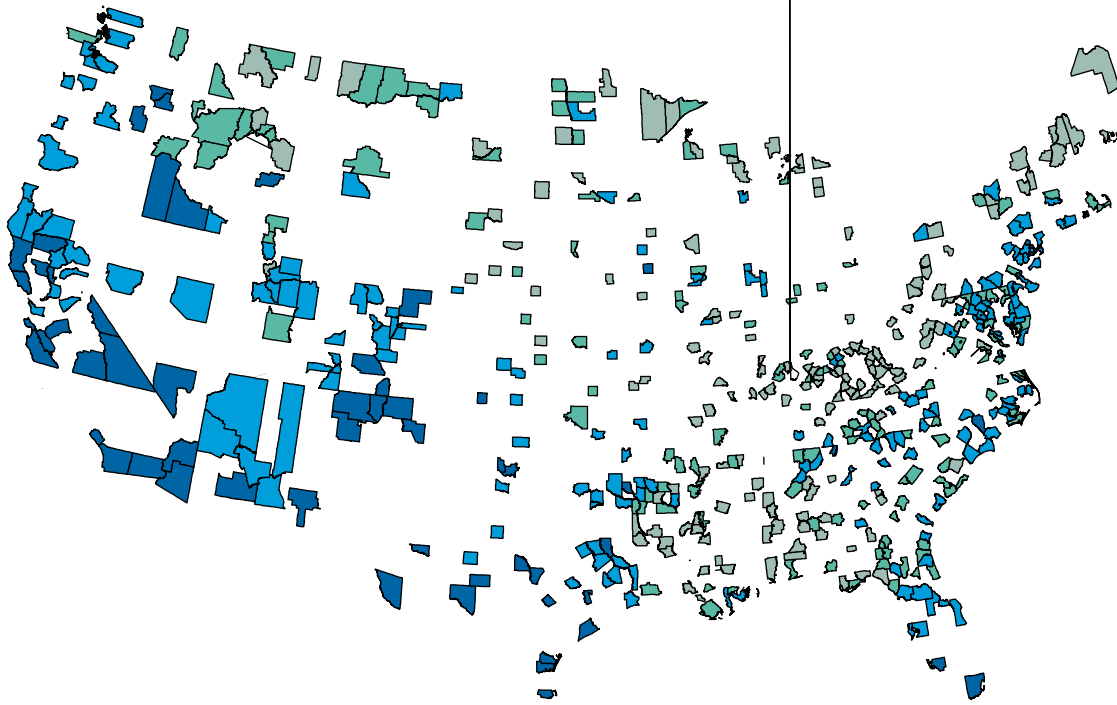


Source: Authors' adaptation of National Center for Health Statistics' *Vintage 2020 Postcensal Estimates of the Resident Population of the United States (April 1, 2010, July 1, 2010–July 1, 2020)*, by Year, County, Single-year of Age (0, 1, 2, ..., 85 Years and Over), Bridged Race, Hispanic Origin, and Sex.

Proportion of non-Hispanic Asian youth in the youth population (ages 0–17), 2019



Proportion of Hispanic youth in the youth population (ages 0–17), 2019



The proportion of children living in poverty in 2019 was at its lowest level since 1975

Exposure to poverty at an early age is linked to delinquency

Research has often supported a connection between poverty and involvement in crime. Youth who grow up in families or communities with limited resources are at a higher risk of offending than those who are raised under more privileged circumstances. Those who are very poor or chronically poor seem to be at an increased risk of serious delinquency. The timing of exposure to poverty is especially important. A meta-analysis by Hawkins et al. of several studies found that family socioeconomic status at ages 6–11 is a stronger predictor of serious and violent delinquency at ages 15–25 than family socioeconomic status at ages 12–14. Similarly, Jarjoura, Triplett, and Brinker found that poverty experienced within the first five years of life significantly increased subsequent delinquency involvement.

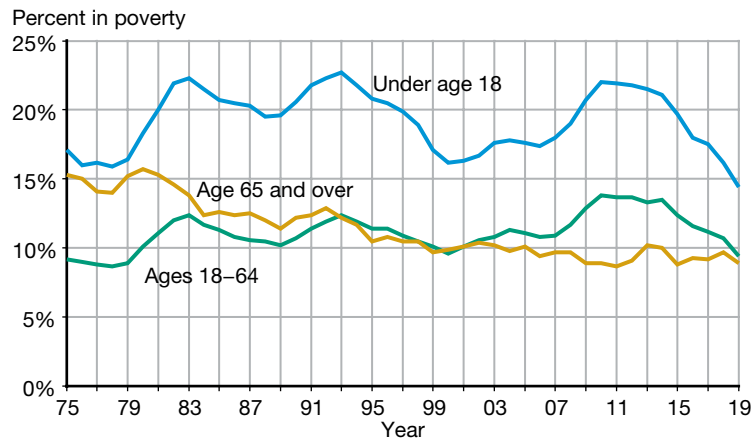
The linkage between poverty and delinquency, however, may not be direct. Some argue that the problems associated with low socioeconomic status (e.g., inability to meet basic needs, low access to support resources) are stronger predictors of delinquency than socioeconomic status alone. For example, Agnew et al. found that self-reported delinquency was highest among individuals who experienced several economic problems.

The child poverty rate has been on the decline

The U.S. Census Bureau assigns each person and family a poverty threshold according to the size of the family and ages of its members.* The national poverty thresholds are used throughout the U.S. and are updated for inflation annually. In 2010, the poverty threshold for a family of four with two children was \$22,113. In 2019, this

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

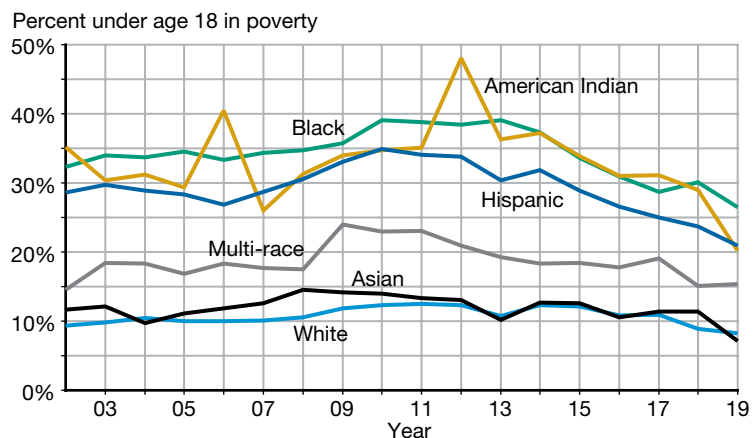
Following a decade long decline, the proportion of children younger than 18 living in poverty reached a new low in 2019



- Between 2010 and 2019, the child poverty rate declined 8 percentage points while the rate for persons ages 18–64 fell 4 percentage points. As a result, the proportion of children living in poverty in 2019 was at its lowest level since 1975 and the proportion of persons ages 18–64 in poverty reached its lowest level in two decades.

Source: Author's adaptation of the U.S. Census Bureau's *Current Population Survey. Historical Poverty Tables. Table 3: Poverty Status of People, by Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1959–2019.*

With the exception of multi-racial youth, the proportion of children living in poverty in 2019 was at its lowest level since 2002 for all race/ethnicity groups



- More than one-third (37%) of the nearly 10.5 million youth younger than 18 living in poverty in 2019 were Hispanic, while White youth accounted for 29% of all youth in poverty, and Black youth accounted for 25%.
- In 2019, the proportion of Black, American Indian, and Hispanic youth in poverty was more than twice the proportion of White and Asian youth.

Notes: Race groups exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Persons of Hispanic ethnicity can be of any race.
Source: Author's analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's *Current Population Survey (CPS) Table Creator* (for 2002–2017) and *Microdata Access, CPS Annual Social and Economic Supplement 201903/202003* (for 2018–2019).

threshold was \$25,926. In comparison, the poverty threshold for a family of six with four children was \$34,161 in 2019.

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 2019, 10% of all persons in the U.S. lived at or below their poverty thresholds. This proportion was greater for persons under age 18 (14%) than for

those ages 18–64 (9%) and those above age 64 (9%). The youngest children were more likely to live in poverty than their older peers: while 14% of children ages 5–17 lived in households with resources below established poverty thresholds, 16% of children under age 5 did so.

Many children live far below poverty thresholds in what is labeled as extreme poverty. One technique for gaining a perspective on the frequency of extreme poverty is to look at the proportion of children who are living below

50% of the poverty level—e.g., in 2019, how many children lived in families of four with two children and incomes less than \$12,963, half the poverty threshold. In 2019, 6% of persons under age 18 were living below 50% of the poverty level, higher than the proportion of persons ages 18–64 and persons over age 64 (4% each). This proportion was once again highest for children under age 5 (7%). In all, more than 45% of children living in poverty in 2019 lived in what can be characterized as extreme poverty.

In 2019, the proportion of children living in poverty ranged from a low of 3.6% in New Hampshire to a high of 27.4% in Mississippi

State	Percent of persons living below the poverty threshold, 2019				State	Percent of persons living below the poverty threshold, 2019			
	All ages	Ages 0–17	Ages 18–64	Over age 64		All ages	Ages 0–17	Ages 18–64	Over age 64
U.S. total	10.5%	14.4%	9.4%	8.9%	Missouri	9.4%	12.7%	8.0%	9.7%
Alabama	12.9	18.1	11.0	12.6	Montana	9.7	11.9	9.7	7.3
Alaska	10.2	14.2	9.7	5.0	Nebraska	8.7	15.4	6.7	5.8
Arizona	9.9	14.5	8.4	9.1	Nevada	10.4	14.4	9.2	9.3
Arkansas	14.1	18.8	12.8	12.4	New Hampshire	3.7	3.6	3.5	4.0
California	10.1	13.9	9.1	8.6	New Jersey	6.3	6.8	5.0	10.2
Colorado	9.3	11.8	9.3	5.4	New Mexico	15.3	22.0	13.7	11.9
Connecticut	8.3	10.8	7.3	8.8	New York	12.5	17.4	11.4	10.6
Delaware	6.5	10.2	6.0	4.1	North Carolina	12.7	19.9	11.3	8.4
Dist. of Columbia	12.5	14.6	11.4	15.1	North Dakota	8.1	8.7	7.9	8.2
Florida	11.5	13.3	10.8	11.6	Ohio	12.4	19.5	11.3	6.9
Georgia	12.1	15.8	10.9	10.7	Oklahoma	10.8	12.8	10.6	8.5
Hawaii	8.4	11.0	7.9	7.0	Oregon	8.1	9.9	7.6	7.7
Idaho	7.1	8.5	7.5	3.3	Pennsylvania	8.7	12.1	8.0	7.0
Illinois	9.3	12.9	8.6	6.9	Rhode Island	9.2	13.8	7.3	10.4
Indiana	10.1	14.4	8.9	8.5	South Carolina	15.1	22.1	14.2	9.7
Iowa	9.5	13.7	9.2	4.9	South Dakota	10.6	17.2	8.7	7.0
Kansas	9.5	14.4	8.2	6.7	Tennessee	13.1	19.6	11.2	11.3
Kentucky	13.6	17.1	12.0	14.5	Texas	11.1	15.0	9.5	10.7
Louisiana	17.9	26.0	15.4	15.1	Utah	7.3	8.0	7.5	4.8
Maine	10.4	13.9	10.0	8.6	Vermont	8.6	13.1	8.7	4.5
Maryland	7.0	11.1	5.6	7.0	Virginia	8.8	11.7	8.0	8.3
Massachusetts	7.5	9.6	7.4	5.7	Washington	7.0	10.0	6.5	4.5
Michigan	10.2	14.3	9.8	6.7	West Virginia	13.9	18.6	13.3	10.9
Minnesota	5.7	7.4	5.4	4.2	Wisconsin	8.4	11.3	7.3	8.2
Mississippi	19.2	27.4	18.2	10.7	Wyoming	9.2	11.9	8.7	7.5

■ Nationally, 14.4% of youth under age 18—nearly 10.5 million—were living in poverty in 2019; the proportion of children living in poverty exceeded the national average in 17 states and the District of Columbia.

Source: Author's adaptation of the U.S. Census Bureau's *Current Population Survey, 2019 Annual Social and Economic Supplement, POV46, Poverty Status by State*.

In 2019, more than 1 in 4 Black children were living in poverty, and 1 in 8 were living in extreme poverty (incomes less than half the poverty threshold)

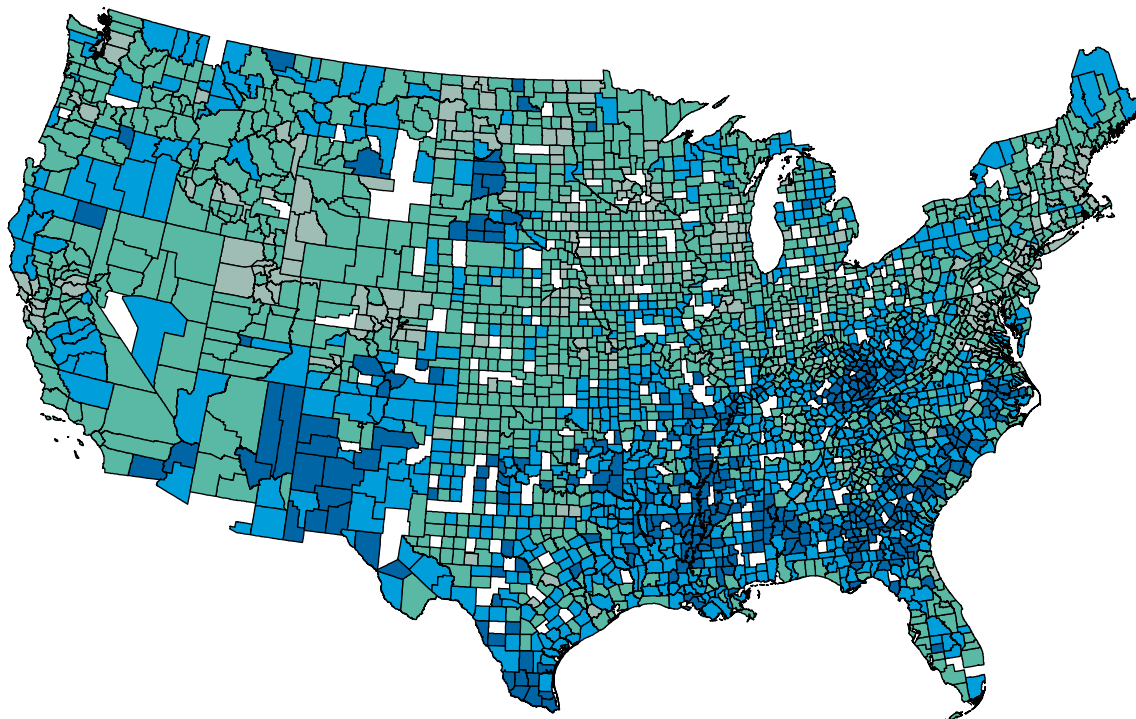
Age	Living below the poverty level							Living below 50% of the poverty level						
	All	White	Black	Amer. Indian	Asian	Multiple races	Hispanic	All	White	Black	Amer. Indian	Asian	Multiple races	Hispanic
All ages	10%	7%	19%	18%	7%	12%	16%	5%	3%	8%	9%	4%	6%	6%
Under age 18	14	8	27	21	8	14	21	6	4	12	11	4	8	8
Under age 5	16	9	31	25	6	20	21	7	4	14	11	3	10	9
Ages 5–17	14	8	26	20	8	12	20	6	4	11	11	4	7	7
Ages 18–64	9	7	16	16	7	11	13	4	4	7	9	4	5	5
Over age 64	9	2	19	21	10	6	16	4	3	7	9	5	2	7

■ There was little difference between the proportions of children in poverty compared with adults ages 18–64 in poverty for either White or Asian populations in 2019. Children under age 18 in poverty and adults ages 18–64 in poverty differed by 8 percentage points in the Hispanic population and 11 percentage points in the Black population.

Note: Racial categories (White, Black, American Indian, Asian, and multiple) do not include persons of Hispanic ethnicity. The Asian racial category includes Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders.

Source: Author's adaptation of the U.S. Census Bureau's *Microdata Access, CPS Annual Social and Economic Supplement 201903/202003*.

Proportion of youth (ages 0–17) living in poverty, 2019



The proportion of children living in single-parent homes more than doubled between 1970 and 2019

Children living with two parents generally report less delinquency

Research by Johnson, Hoffman, and Gerstein as well as Hemovich and Crano found that adolescents ages 12–17 living with two parents were less likely to use alcohol, cigarettes, and illicit drugs than their counterparts not living in two-parent families. Likewise, a review by Kroese and colleagues notes that existing research links growing up in a single-parent household with an increased likelihood of crime among adolescents. However, it is important to note that family structure may not be the proximate cause of problem behaviors. Rather, conditions within the family, such as poor supervision and low levels of parental involvement, are risk factors.

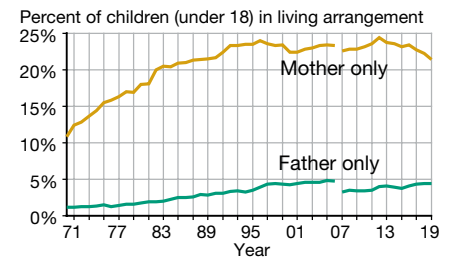
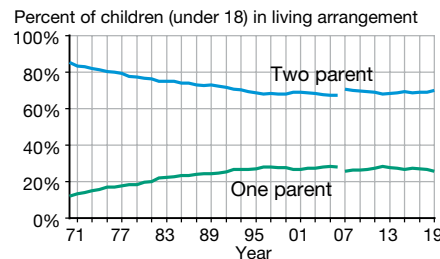
More than one-third of children living with only their mothers were in poverty

The economic well-being of children is related to family structure. In 2019, 14% of all children lived below the poverty level. However, children living in married couple families were less likely to live in poverty (6%) than children living with only their fathers (16%) or only their mothers (36%). Family structure is also related to the proportion of children in households receiving public assistance or food stamps. Overall, 3% of children in 2019 lived in households receiving public assistance and 17% lived in households receiving food stamps, but the proportions were far greater for children living in single-mother families.

Percent of children receiving assistance, 2019:

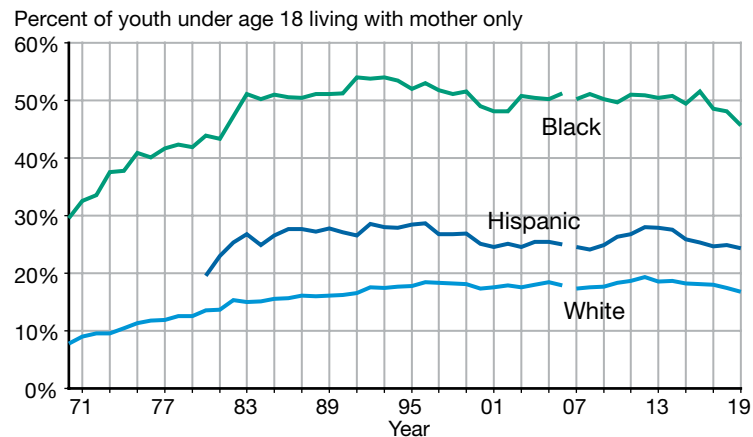
Living arrangement	Food stamps	Public assistance
All types	17%	3%
Two parents	10	1
Married	8	1
Unmarried	29	5
Single parent	35	6
Mother only	39	6
Father only	18	2
Neither parent	27	10

The proportion of children living in two-parent homes has declined since 1970



- In 2019, 70% of children were living in two-parent families—a level that has changed little since 2007. Most other children live in single-parent households.
- Most children in single-parent families lived with their mothers in 2019, but a growing proportion were living with their fathers. Since 1970, the proportion of children in single-parent homes living with their fathers grew from 1% to 4% in 2019.

Despite a recent decline, Black children were more likely than White or Hispanic children to live with only their mother in a single-parent home



- Between 1970 and 2019, the proportion of children living with their mothers in single-parent homes increased from 8% to 17% for White children and from 30% to 48% for Black children. For children of Hispanic ethnicity, the proportion increased from 20% in 1980 to 24% in 2019.

Notes: Beginning with 2007, estimates for two-parent homes include married or unmarried parents (biological, step, or adoptive). Persons of Hispanic ethnicity can be of any race; however, most are White. Race proportions include persons of Hispanic ethnicity.

Source: Author's analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's *Current Population Survey, Families and Living Arrangements, Historical Tables*.

In 2019, 51% of children receiving public assistance and 49% receiving food stamps lived in single-mother families. Two-parent families accounted for 30% of children receiving public assistance and 40% of those receiving food stamps.

Seven in ten children lived in two-parent families in 2019

Based on the Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey, 85% of children under age 18 were living in two-parent families in 1970. The proportion declined into the mid-2000s, where it fell to 67% in 2005. By 2019, 70% of children were living in two-parent (married or unmarried) families. Most other children lived in one-parent households. The proportion of children living in single-parent households increased from 9% in 1960 to 25% in 2019.

Beginning with the 2007 Current Population Survey, more accurate data are

available to document the proportion of children who live with married or unmarried parents. In 2019, 4% of children under age 18 were living with two unmarried parents, up slightly from 3% in 2007. In 2019, 66% of children under age 18 lived with married parents. This proportion was highest for Asian (86%) and White children (75%), lower for Hispanic children (68%), and lowest for Black children (42%).

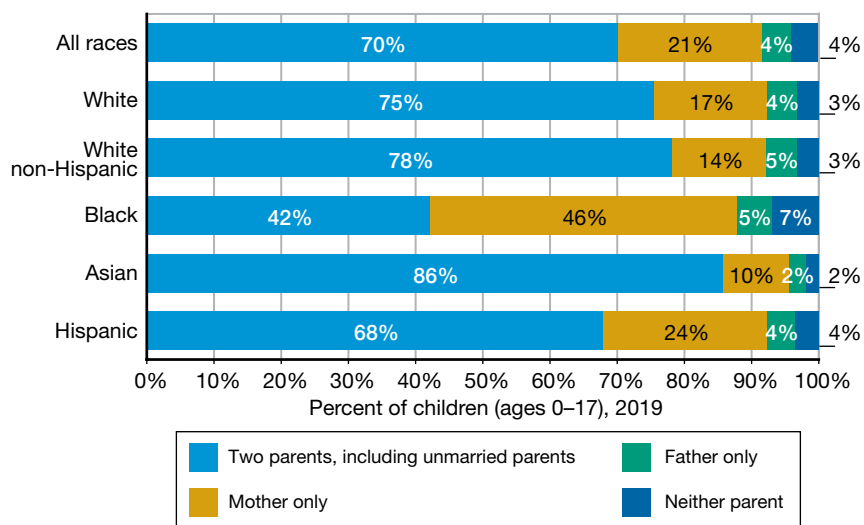
Most children who live in single-parent households live with their mothers. In fact, this was the second most common living arrangement of children in 2019. The proportion of children living with their mothers in single-parent households grew from 8% of the child population in 1960 to 21% in 2019. In 1970, the mothers of 7% of the children living in single-mother households had never been married; this proportion grew to 49% in 2019.

The proportion of children living with their fathers in one-parent households grew from 1% in 1970 to 4% in 2019. In 1970, the fathers of 4% of the children living in single-father households had never been married; this proportion grew to 39% in 2019, a pattern similar to the mother-only households.

The Census Bureau found a major difference between mother-only and father-only households: cohabitation was much more common in father-only households. A living arrangement is considered to be cohabitation when there is an unrelated adult of the opposite gender, who is not one’s spouse, living in the household. In 2019, children living in single-parent households were more likely to have a cohabiting father (28%) than a cohabiting mother (9%).

Some children live in households headed by other relatives or by nonrelatives. In 2019, 3% of children lived in households headed by other relatives, and about half of these children were living in the home of a grandparent. (Across all household types, 10% of children lived in households that included a grandparent.) In 2019, 1% of all children lived with nonrelatives.

In 2019, Asian youth were most likely to live with two parents while Black youth were least likely



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

Source: Author’s analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau’s *Current Population Survey, 2019 Annual Social and Economic Supplement*.

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

Overall, 88% of children in 2019 lived in families with one or both parents in the labor force, i.e., employed or 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 fathers only were more likely to have the parent in the labor force than those living with mothers only (87% vs. 78%).



In 2019, 3.8 million youth ages 12–17 reported experiencing a major depressive episode

Major depressive episodes in adolescence can have long lasting effects

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) annually conducts the National Survey on Drug Use and Health to collect information from persons ages 12 and older in the U.S. In addition to gathering information about substance use behaviors, the survey also collects information about depression; specifically, respondents are asked to report whether they have had a major depressive episode (MDE) in the 12 months prior to the survey. According to the American Psychiatric Association, an MDE is defined as a period of at least 2 weeks when a person experiences a depressed mood or loss of interest or

pleasure in daily activities, plus at least 4 additional symptoms of depression (e.g., problems with sleep, eating, energy, concentration, and feelings of self-worth).

Depression is known to have effects not only on mental health but also on physical health and can affect adolescent development. As noted in the *2021 America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being* report, familial and peer relationships may become strained, depressive episodes may continue into adulthood, academic performance may suffer, and youth who reported at least one major depressive episode in the prior 12 months are more likely to begin using alcohol or other drugs and are at greater risk for suicide.

The likelihood of experiencing a major depressive episode varied by demographics

In 2019, 1 in 6 (16%) youth ages 12–17 reported having at least one MDE in the prior 12 months. Older youth (youth ages 16–17) and females were more likely to report an MDE compared with their counterparts. The proportion of youth who reported having an MDE was similar for White and Hispanic youth and was higher than the proportion for Black youth.

Approximately 1 in 10 (11%) youth ages 12–17 reported having at least one MDE that involved severe impairment in the prior 12 months. That is, the MDE adversely impacted the respondent's life in relation to home management, work, close relationships with others, and social life. Fewer than half (43%) of youth who had at least one MDE in the prior 12 months received treatment. Compared with their counterparts, youth ages 14 and older, females, and White youth were more likely to have received treatment.

A small proportion of youth experienced an MDE and a substance use disorder

According to SAMHSA, 2.7% of youth reported having a substance abuse disorder (SUD) in the prior 12 months. SUDs are characterized by impairment caused by routine use of alcohol and/or other drugs, that results in health problems and failure to meet responsibilities at home, work, or school. Fewer than 2 in 100 youth (1.7%) reported having both an MDE and SUD in the prior 12 months. A similar proportion of youth (1.4%) reporting an SUD also reported having an MDE with severe impairment. Compared with youth who did not experience an MDE in the prior 12 months, MDE youth were more likely to have used illicit drugs, marijuana, or opioids, to binge drink alcohol, or to smoke cigarettes in the prior month.

In 2019, 16% of youth ages 12–17 reported a major depressive episode in the past 12 months, and 43% of these youth received treatment

Demographic	Percentage of youth (ages 12–17) reporting occurrence in the last 12 months		
	Major depressive episode (MDE)	MDE with severe impairment	MDE and received treatment
Total	16%	11%	43%
Age			
Ages 12–13	11	7	38
Ages 14–15	16	12	44
Ages 16–17	20	15	46
Gender			
Male	9	6	37
Female	23	17	46
Race/ethnicity			
White, non-Hispanic	16	11	50
Black, non-Hispanic	11	8	36
Hispanic	17	12	37
American Indian	12	12	NA
Asian	15	11	NA
Two or more races	21	15	NA

■ In 2019, youth ages 16–17, females, and multi-racial youth were more likely to report an MDE than their counterparts.

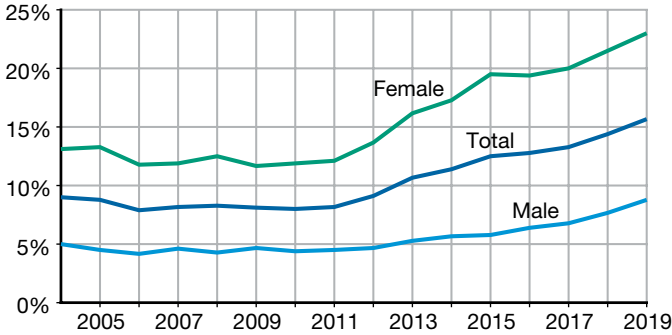
* Treatment refers to seeing or talking to a medical doctor or other professional or using prescription medication for depression.

NA: Data not available.

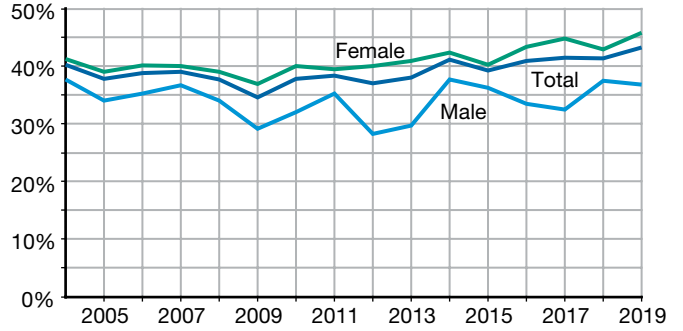
Source: Author's adaptation of the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics' *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-being, 2021*.

The proportion of youth ages 12–17 experiencing at least one major depressive episode has increased for all demographic groups in recent years

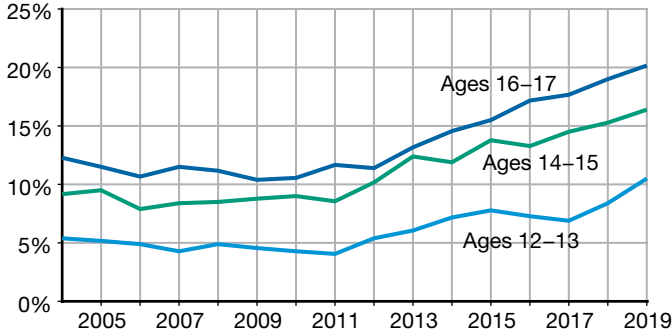
Percent of youth (ages 12–17) reporting a major depressive episode (MDE) in the last 12 months



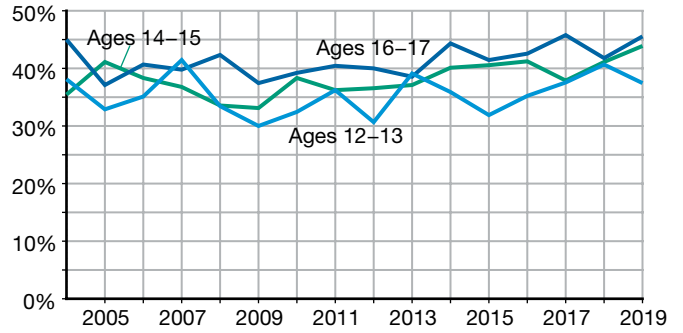
Of youth reporting MDE, percent reporting receiving treatment in the last 12 months



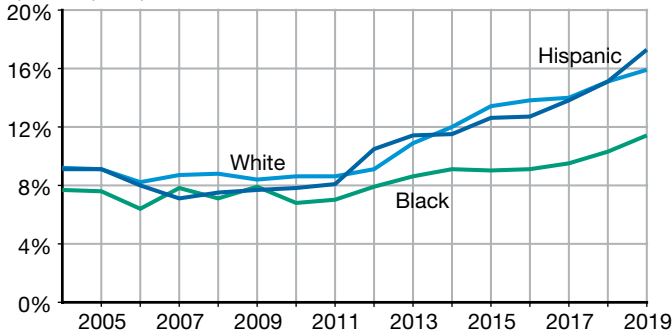
Percent of youth (ages 12–17) reporting a major depressive episode (MDE) in the last 12 months



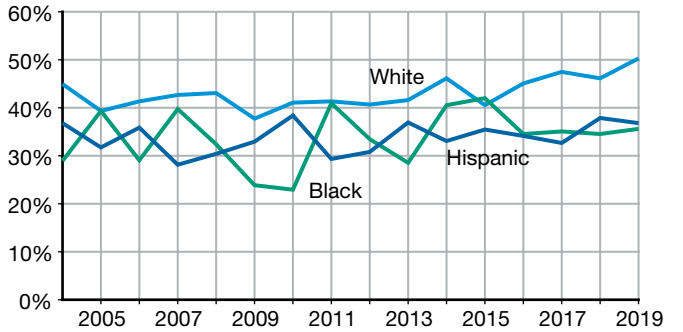
Of youth reporting MDE, percent reporting receiving treatment in the last 12 months



Percent of youth (ages 12–17) reporting a major depressive episode (MDE) in the last 12 months



Of youth reporting MDE, percent reporting receiving treatment in the last 12 months



- The proportion of youth reporting an MDE in 2019 (16%) increased 7 percentage points since 2004. Females (+10%), youth ages 16–17 (+8%), and White youth (+7%) had the largest percentage point increases between 2004 and 2019.
- Overall, the likelihood of receiving treatment following an MDE increased 3 percentage points between 2004 and 2019, but the level of increase varied by youth demographics.

Source: Author's adaptation of the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics' *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-being, 2021*.

The teenage birth rate declined considerably since the early 1990s

Teen birth rates reached a new low point in 2019

Research suggests (see Martin et al., Ely and Driscoll, Hoffman and Maynard, and Driscoll) that giving birth during adolescence brings long-term difficulties for the teen mother and her child. Compared with babies born to older mothers, babies born to adolescent mothers, particularly younger adolescent mothers, are at higher risk for low birthweight and infant mortality. In addition, giving birth during adolescence is linked to limited educational attainment for the teen mom, which can adversely impact their employment opportunities and future earnings, and children born to teen moms are themselves less likely to complete high school.

In 2019, the birth rate for older youth (i.e., females ages 15–17) was 6.7 live births for every 1,000 females in the age group. In the same year, the birth rate for young adults (i.e., women ages 18 and 19) was more than 4 times greater (31.1). Conversely, the birth rate for females ages 10–14 (0.2) was well below the rates of older teens.

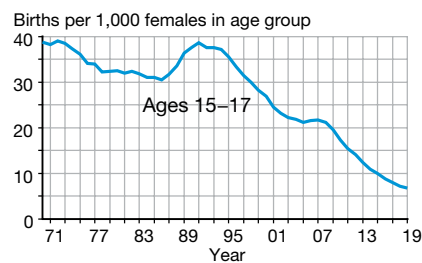
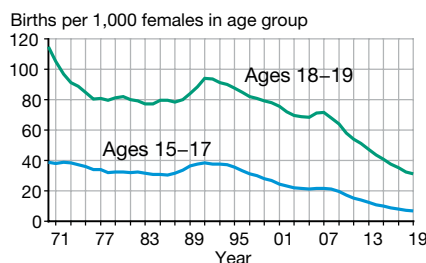
Teen birth rates have been on the decline since 1991, but the decline for females ages 15–17 (83%) outpaced the decline for young adults (67%) through 2019. The rate for both age groups in 2019 reached their lowest levels since 1970. Birth rates for older teens and young adults varied by race and Hispanic ethnicity.

Births per 1,000 females, 2019:

Race/ethnicity	Ages 15–17	Ages 18–19
All races	6.7	31.1
White	3.8	22.3
Black	11.1	46.4
Hispanic	11.5	46.2
American Indian	13.5	51.8
Asian	0.9	5.2
Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	7.7	53.8

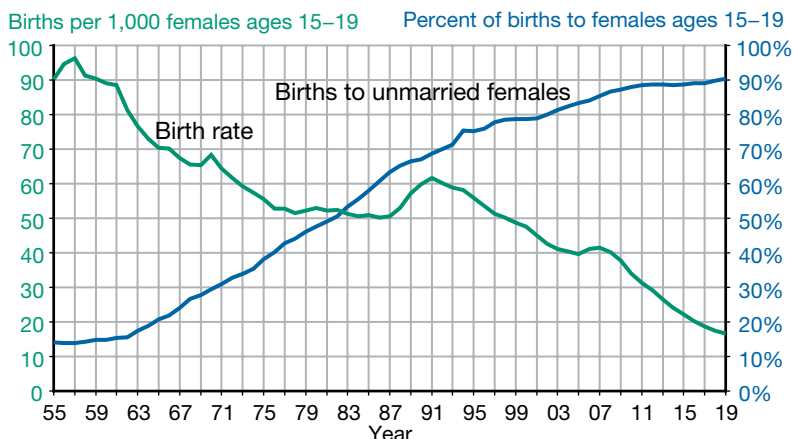
Note: Race groups exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Hispanic youth can be of any race.

Birth rates in 2019 for both females ages 15–17 and young adults ages 18–19 were at their lowest level since 1970



- The birth rate for teens 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 18–19 dropped even more than the rate for teens ages 15–17 between 1970 and 1986, falling 31%. Although the rate for young adults also increased through 1991, the rate did not return to its 1970 level.
- Since 1991, teen birth rates declined considerably; by 2019, the rates for both age groups reached their lowest level since at least 1970.

The annual birth rate for females ages 15–19 declined substantially between 1955 and 2019, while the proportion of these births that were to unmarried women increased



- In 1955, about 14% of births to females ages 15–19 were to unmarried women. By 2019, that proportion grew to 91%.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Martin et al.'s Births: Final Data for 2019, *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 70(2); National Center for Health Statistics' annual series, Births: Final Data, *National Vital Statistics Reports*, for the years 2000–2009; and Ventura et al.'s Births to Teenagers in the United States, 1940–2000, *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 49(10).

The birth rate for White females ages 15–17 in 2019 was about one-third the rates of Hispanic, Black, and American Indian females of the same age, and about half the rate of Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander females.

Across race/ethnicity groups, the birth rate for females ages 15–17 declined 70% or more between 1991 and 2019, and reached their lowest level since 1990.

Birth rates for females ages 15–17 varied greatly across states in 2019, ranging from 1.7 in New Hampshire to 12.6 in Mississippi

State	Births per 1,000 females in age group, 2019			Ratio of ages 15–17 to 18–19
	Age 15–19	Ages 15–17	Ages 18–19	
United States	16.7	6.7	31.1	22%
Alabama	25.6	10.1	47.8	21
Alaska	18.3	6.2	39.9	16
Arizona	18.5	8.3	33.0	25
Arkansas	30.0	11.2	58.3	19
California	12.4	5.0	23.1	22
Colorado	13.9	6.1	25.7	24
Connecticut	7.7	3.3	13.5	24
Delaware	14.9	6.7	25.8	26
Dist. of Columbia	16.8	11.8	20.2	58
Florida	16.2	6.1	31.3	19
Georgia	19.7	8.0	36.8	22
Hawaii	15.7	5.4	32.0	17
Idaho	14.9	5.0	30.7	16
Illinois	14.6	5.8	28.0	21
Indiana	20.8	7.9	39.5	20
Iowa	14.1	5.1	26.5	19
Kansas	19.2	7.3	36.8	20
Kentucky	24.9	9.4	47.6	20
Louisiana	27.8	10.9	53.9	20
Maine	9.1	2.7	18.0	15
Maryland	13.9	6.0	25.5	24
Massachusetts	6.9	3.0	11.3	27
Michigan	15.1	5.5	28.9	19
Minnesota	10.1	3.7	19.9	19
Mississippi	29.1	12.6	53.1	24
Missouri	20.3	7.6	39.2	19
Montana	16.3	6.1	32.0	19
Nebraska	15.3	6.7	27.8	24
Nevada	18.9	7.0	39.5	18
New Hampshire	6.6	1.7	13.2	13
New Jersey	10.0	4.1	19.6	21
New Mexico	24.4	10.8	44.8	24
New York	11.4	4.7	20.6	23
North Carolina	18.2	7.7	32.6	24
North Dakota	15.6	5.3	29.5	18
Ohio	18.8	6.9	36.0	19
Oklahoma	27.4	11.0	52.1	21
Oregon	12.1	4.1	24.0	17
Pennsylvania	13.3	6.0	23.1	26
Rhode Island	10.0	4.7	15.6	30
South Carolina	21.6	8.5	39.8	21
South Dakota	19.2	8.6	34.9	25
Tennessee	23.7	8.9	46.6	19
Texas	24.0	10.7	44.6	24
Utah	12.0	3.8	24.9	15
Vermont	7.6	3.0	12.3	24
Virginia	13.6	5.3	25.1	21
Washington	12.7	4.5	25.4	18
West Virginia	25.2	9.1	49.3	18
Wisconsin	12.5	4.5	24.0	19
Wyoming	19.4	6.6	39.2	17

■ Comparing birth rates for females ages 15–17 with those of young adults (ages 18 and 19) shows that the 15–17-year-old rate ranged from 13% of the young adult rate in New Hampshire to 30% of the young adult rate in Rhode Island and 58% in the District of Columbia.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Martin et al.'s Births: Final Data for 2019, *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 70(2).

The teenage birth rate in the U.S. ranks among the highest of industrialized nations

Birth rates for a large number of countries are collected and disseminated by the World Health Organization. The most recent data available for industrialized countries were not available for a common year but ranged from 2016 to 2019.

Births per 1,000 females ages 15–19

Country	Birth rate	Data year
Russian Federation	21.5	2016
United States	16.7	2019
New Zealand	13.3	2019
United Kingdom	11.9	2018
Australia	9.4	2018
France	8.6	2018
Greece	8.6	2018
Israel	8.2	2018
Portugal	7.3	2018
Germany	7.2	2018
Canada	6.6	2018
Ireland	6.2	2018
Spain	6.2	2018
Austria	5.5	2018
Belgium	5.5	2018
Finland	4.3	2018
Sweden	4.2	2018
Italy	4.1	2018
Japan	3.1	2018
Netherlands	2.6	2018
Norway	2.6	2018
Switzerland	2.3	2018
Denmark	2.0	2019

Source: Authors' adaptation of the World Health Organization's Global Health Observatory, *Adolescent Birth Rate (per 1000 Women Aged 15-19 Years)*.

The birth rate for U.S. females ages 15–19 remained one of the highest among industrialized nations. In 2010, however, the U.S. birth rate for females ages 15–19 occupied the top spot on this list. Following a 50% decline since 2010, the U.S. rate now ranks second, more than 20% below the most recent rate for the Russian Federation, but about 25% above the rate for New Zealand.



The high school dropout rate declined in the last 5 years, yet more than 470,000 youth left high school in 2019

The dropout rate varies across demographic groups

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) publishes annual statistics 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 who were dropouts. The first statistic (the event dropout rate) provides an estimate of flow into the dropout pool. The second statistic (the status dropout rate) provides an estimate of the proportion of dropouts in the young adult population. Event dropout rates are based on data from the annual October Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS and the American Community Survey (ACS) are the sources for the status dropout estimates.

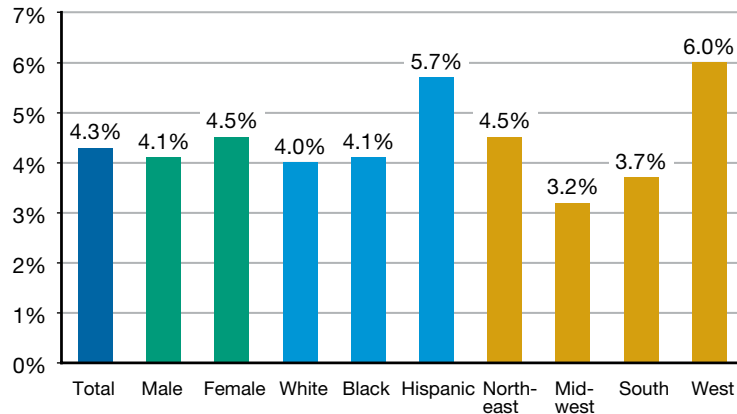
Approximately 4 of every 100 persons (4%) enrolled in high school in October 2018 left school before October 2019 without successfully completing a high school program—in other words, in the school year 2018-2019, about 470,000 youth dropped out and the event dropout rate was 4.3%. The 2019 event dropout rate for males (4.1%) was slightly lower than for females (4.5%), and the rates for White (4.0%) and Black (4.1%) youth, were less than the rate for Hispanic (5.7%) youth.

Dropout rates are greater for institutionalized youth than noninstitutionalized youth

Over the years, demographic disparities in annual event dropout rates have accumulated to produce noticeable differences in status dropouts rates—i.e., the proportion of young adults (person ages 16–24) who are not enrolled in school and have not completed high school (or received an equivalency certificate). The status dropout rate measure typically includes civilian, nonin-

In 2019, dropout rates were highest for females, Hispanic youth, and students living in western states

Percent of youth who dropped out of grades 10–12 in the preceding 12 months

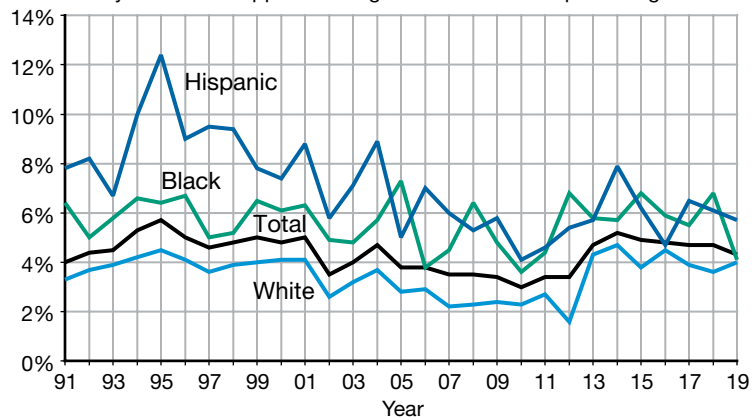


Notes: Race groups exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Persons of Hispanic ethnicity can be of any race.

Source: Author's adaptation of National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics: 2019*, Table 219.55.

Dropout rates for White youth have remained below the rates of Black and Hispanic youth

Percent of youth who dropped out of grades 10–12 in the preceding 12 months



Notes: Race groups exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Persons of Hispanic ethnicity can be of any race.

Source: Author's adaptation of National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics: 2019*, Table 219.55.

stitutionalized 16–24-year-olds. Youth, such as those who are incarcerated or in the military, are not included. However, the ACS allows for comparisons of status dropout rates for 16–24-year-olds living in households and noninstitutionalized group quarters (i.e., college housing or military housing located within the U.S.) with those living in institutionalized group quarters (i.e., prisons, nursing facilities, or other healthcare facilities). Regardless of race/ethnicity, status dropout rates were substantially higher for institutionalized youth than for other youth. In 2019, the status dropout rate was 30% for institutionalized youth and 5% for those living in households and noninstitutional group quarters.

Educational failure is linked to unemployment

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) estimates that 38% of the 2018-2019 school year dropouts ages 16–24 were in the labor force (employed or actively looking for work), though 15% of those dropouts were unemployed. In comparison, 72% of the 2019 high school graduates who were not in college were in the labor force, and a greater proportion of this workforce (18%) was unemployed.

Failing to complete high school results in lower earnings

According to the Career Outlook report by BLS, persons ages 25 and older with less than a high school diploma had the lowest median weekly earnings and the highest unemployment rate. In 2019, for example, the median weekly earnings among persons ages 25 and older was 20% less for those without a high school diploma than those who completed high school, and more than 50% less than persons with a bachelor's degree.

The status dropout rate decreased for both noninstitutionalized and institutionalized youth between 2010 and 2019

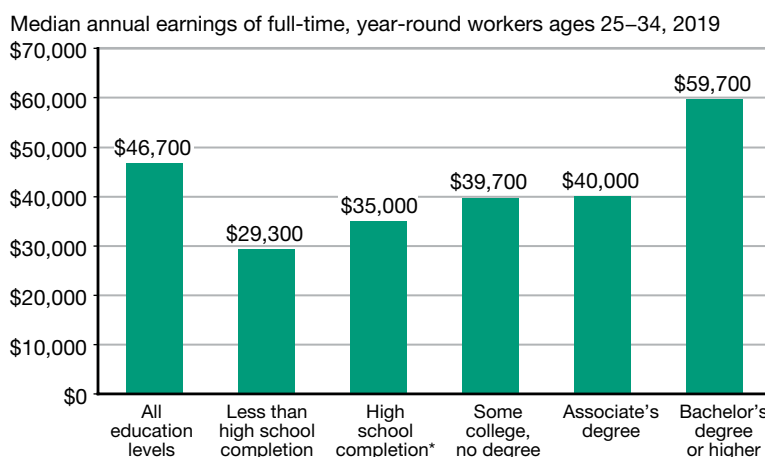
Race/ethnicity	Status dropout rate			
	Noninstitutionalized		Institutionalized	
	2010	2019	2010	2019
Total	8%	5%	37%	30%
White, non-Hispanic	5	4	29	22
Black, non-Hispanic	9	5	42	35
Hispanic	16	7	44	35
American Indian/Alaskan Native	15	9	39	26
Asian	3	2	28	31
Two or more races, non-Hispanic	6	5	23	25

- Among noninstitutionalized youth, American Indian/Alaskan Native and Hispanic youth had higher status dropout rates than all other racial groups in 2010 and 2019. For institutionalized youth, Black and Hispanic youth had higher status dropout rates in both years.
- The status dropout rate among institutionalized youth decreased among most racial groups between 2010 and 2019.

Notes: Status dropouts are 16–24-year-olds who are not enrolled in school and who have not completed a high school program (including equivalency credentials, such as the GED). Noninstitutionalized persons include those living in households, college housing, or military housing located within the U.S. and institutionalized persons include those living in prisons, nursing facilities, or other healthcare facilities.

Source: Author's adaptation of the National Center for Education Statistics' *Digest of Education Statistics: 2019*, Table 219.80.

In 2019, persons who completed high school earned about \$5,700 more than those who did not complete high school



- Among 25–34-year-olds who worked full-time, year-round in 2019, the median earnings of those whose highest level of education was a high school diploma was about 20% higher than those who did not complete high school, and the median earnings of those who completed a bachelor's or higher degree was more than twice that of persons who did not complete high school.

*Includes equivalency credentials, such as the GED.

Source: Author's adaptation of Irwin et al's *Report on the Condition of Education*.

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