

A Quarterly Review of Social Reports and Research on Social Indicators, Social Trends, and the Quality-of-Life.
News Included of Working Group 6 on Social Indicators and Social Reporting of the International Sociological Association.
Newsletter of the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies

ARE WE IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF AMERICA'S CHILDREN?

Abbott L. Ferris

The U.S. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics has issued its 2005 compilation of charts, tables and text outlining the status of children. Grossly on a ratio of 5 to 4, indicators show some improvement in child well-being. But, beware, all indicators are not equal, so look to the detail for the precise trends. The report devotes major sections to economic security, health, behavior and the social environment, and education. Two special features identify such limiting factors as asthma prevalence, levels of lead in children's blood, and emotional difficulties. Added, also, is a section on family structure and child well-being. Each section identifies additional needed indicators.

Forum on Child and Family Statistics, *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being 2005*, Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office. Single copies available through Health Resources and Services Administration Information Center, P.O. Box 2910, Merrifield, VA., 22116; tel. 1-888ASK-HRSA; e-mail: ask@hrsa.gov. The report, also, is available on the WWW at <http://childstats.gov>.

Altogether 23 data sources are encompassed in the report, mostly Federal agencies but included, also, are data collection instrumentalities supported by Federal funds but conducted by private agencies, such as the Monitoring the Future survey by Michigan's Institute for Social Research. No privately collected data are otherwise admitted.

Fourteen representatives from agencies are given credit of authorship of the report, headed by Shara Godiwalla, the staff director of Children's Forum. However, many others from the participating agencies contributed. Who said com-

mittees couldn't produce?

The report addresses the well-being of 73 million children ages 0-17, comprising one-fourth of the U. S. population. In 2003, 6 of 10 children were in white families, but Hispanic children had risen to 19 percent, with Black-alone at 16 percent. Diversity in ethnic origin continues. Some findings follow:

- The percent of children living with two married parents continues to decline, reaching in 2004 two-thirds of children.
- Births to unmarried women, both adult and teenage, have dropped since 1994. This bodes well for the family environment of children. In 2003, 1,000 unmarried women, 15-44, produced 45 births.
- Improvement is noted in the air quality of counties where children reside. But 62 percent of children still breathe polluted air.
- The blood of children has been tested for exposure to secondhand cigarette smoke. In 2003, 11 percent of children, 0-6, lived in homes where someone smoked. Some 59 percent of children, 4-11, had cotinine in their blood in 1999-2002. This is an improvement of 29 percentage points from the 1988-1994 assessment.

Economic Security. The 2003 national poverty level for children stood at 17 percent, down from its peak of 22 percent in 1993. However, 42 percent of children in female householder families, no husband present, were in poverty. Children, 5-17, in homes that speak a language other than English, were 28.4 percent of children ages 5-17 lived below the Federal poverty line.

A household that does not provide enough food, or provides a diet of poor quality and has anxiety about the food supply is classified as food insecure. Thirteen million children lived in such households in 2003. Those in poverty households were much more likely

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to live in food-insecure households.

The Economic Security section also identifies three needed indicators: 1, An average standard of living criteria needs to be introduced into the time series on economic well-being. 2, Long-term poverty of children should be identified. 3, Data on homeless children should be collected.

Health. Child mortality has dropped, now at 31 deaths per 100,000. Infant mortality increased slightly over 2001, but it still is at a record low. The basic problem seems to be low birth weight infants (weighing less than 1 lb., 10 oz. at birth).

A major national problem is overweight children. The proportion overweight has been climbing up since the 1980s. In 1999-2002, 16 percent of children were overweight. Better nutrition and exercise are looked upon as the keys to the solution. Three types of additional data are thought to be needed. 1, Some measure of disability of children is needed, despite the difficulty in its conception. 2, An indicator of the mental health of children is needed. 3, Child abuse and neglect was reported in the 1997 volume, but regular reporting based upon sample surveys is needed.

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SINET

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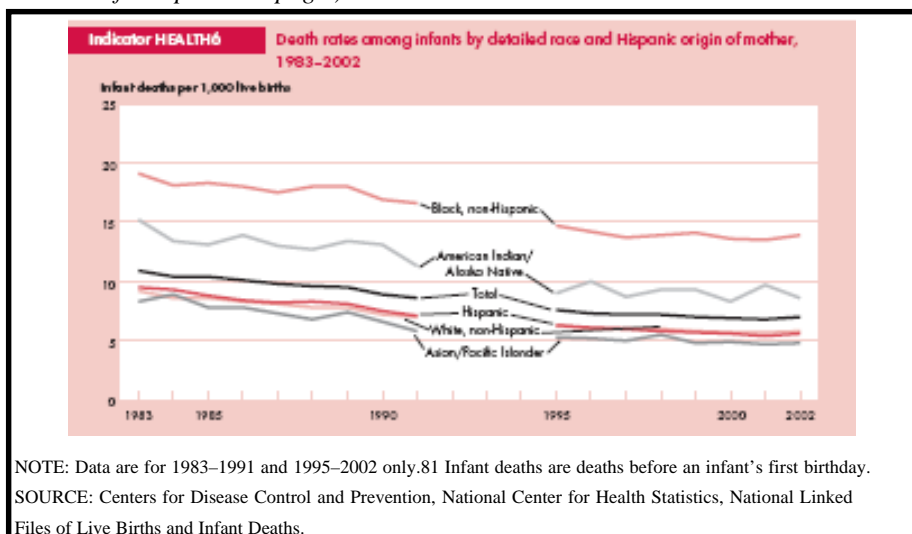
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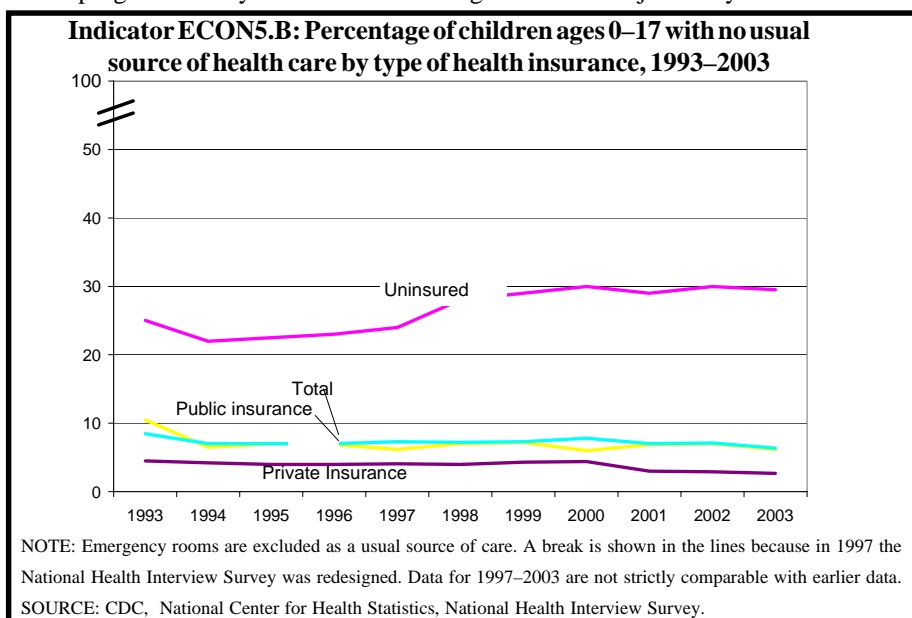
Behavior and the Social Environment. Daily smoking among school children has been declining since about 1997. Twelfth graders are the heaviest smokers (16 percent).

Alcohol drinking among school children has remained fairly constant over the past decade. Twenty-nine percent of 12th graders reported drinking five or more alcoholic beverages during the past two weeks. Trends of drinking among 10th graders and 8th graders follow at lower rates.

Illicit drug use among school children have been gradually declining, but the latest data show illicit drug use in the last 30 days to be 23 percent among 12th graders, 18 percent among 10th graders. These are constant percentages from the previous year.

Serious violent crime among youth 12 – 17 years of age has been declining since about 1994. The rate in 2003 was 15 crimes per 1,000 in 2003.

To the indicators of smoking, alcohol use, and crimes, the report recommends the collection of positive indicators of youth's behavior, such as volunteer activities, participation in organized sports, arts, religious activities, etc. Indicators also are needed of the progression of youth offenders through the criminal justice system.



Education. Fourth graders and eighth graders have improved their average math scores, but the twelfth graders' 2000 score was lower than were the 1996 twelfth graders.

The three grades stood about constant with their predecessors in reading or fell back slightly. In 2002, 36 percent of 12th graders were at or above the *Proficient* level in reading—only 36 percent.

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Data are needed on early childhood intellectual, emotional and social development. The report shows trends in asthma, which are relatively constant at about 13 percent of children. It also shows the lead blood levels of children 1 – 5 years. The parents’ reports on emotional or behavioral difficulties of children also are given. The report also includes a section on infant and adolescent well-being in relation to family structure, the unmarried mother or single parent householder usually being less well-off than the more typical family structure.

Data of the report are arrayed in about 65 detailed tables. There are nine pages of footnotes, chiefly references to literature of studies of children. Altogether there are 23 descriptions of the data sources. There is no index.

Comment

Children are our most valuable resource. How they are fed, clothed, trained in skills and understanding, are important to the future of the Nation. This volume brings together important indicators of these trends. Policy makers and legislators should ponder the import of the data and devise programs decrease the impairments and enhance the well-being of children. The volume, however, offers little assistance to what directions the policies should take.

How can we identify best practices to improve the well-being of children?

The Nation is structured by 50 states and the District of Columbia. These are natural laboratories of experimentation and practice. On the indicators reviewed in the report, detail by state would reveal those that are above and those below the national average. Inquiring into the practices of the states that show better records would lead to understanding what public policies and private practices best enhance the well-being of children. The Report, however, does not reveal any state indicators. Apparently, no disaggregating by state is the policy of the Forum. Not all indicators, of course, are available by state.

The KIDS COUNT program (see the article elsewhere in this issue) provides 10 indicators of child well-being by state. States superior on the combined index are Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Iowa, Utah, Vermont, Connecticut, North Dakota, Massachusetts, and Nebraska. What practices prevail in these states that makes them outstanding?

The 10 states that KIDS COUNT rates lowest are the District of Columbia, Mississippi, Louisiana, New Mexico, Alabama, South Carolina, Arizona, Arkansas, Tennessee and West Virginia. What deficiencies are present in these states that cause them to bring up the rear?

In addition, the KIDS COUNT program supports states in their assembly of county-by-county indicators, thus pinpointing areas where child well-being is better or worse.

It sometimes is important to know the actual numbers of children in a category. Here and there in the report gives the numbers, but from most of the tables, it is not possible to derive the number of children represented by the percentages. This deficiency in the tables could easily be remedied by adding a line to each table giving the estimated number of children in each category reported.

The Fed now publishes more than ten compendia of social indicators, each focusing upon a category of national interest (health, science, education, etc.). Similar to this report, few hazard to mention steps that legislators might take to improve deficiencies. One reason may be that the authors do not know what steps to take to affect improvement. Politics also may play a part. However, in the health sector, recommendations are advanced that bring about improvements. Perhaps, the health model should be studied and emulated.

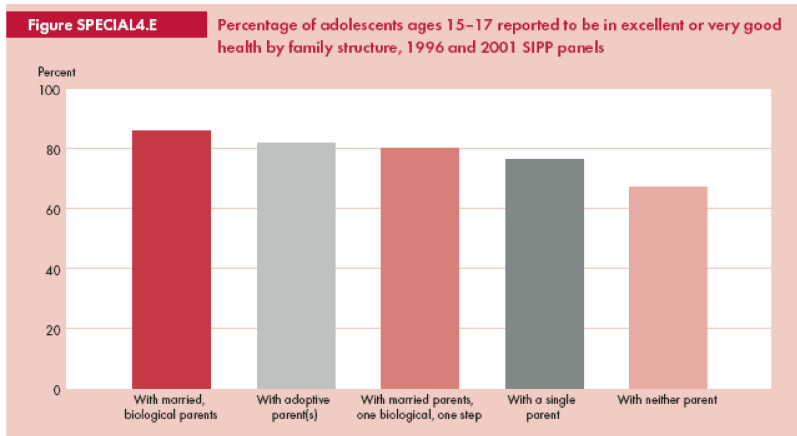
~Abbott L. Ferriss, Emory University

KIDS COUNT 2005

The Annie E. Casey Foundation has released the 2005 KIDS COUNT Data Book.

KIDS COUNT, a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, released the 2005 KIDS COUNT Data Book on July 27, 2005. The Data book features 10 key measures of child well-being that it has used to track the well-being of children since 1990. The data is used to provide state profiles of child well-being and to rank the states. This edition also includes several background measures related to unemployed parents in each state. The book also includes an essay by Casey President Douglas W. Nelson, “Helping Our Most Vulnerable Families Overcome Barriers to Work and Achieve Financial Success.” The new report may be viewed online at www.kidscount.org. Also, free copies may be ordered on the web site or by phoning Casey publications at 410-223-2890.

The KIDS COUNT website (<http://www.kidscount.org>) provides users with lots of state-level statistical data on children and provides easy-to-use tools which allow users to generate custom reports including rankings, graphs, and maps, which can be downloaded. Raw data files are also available. Some examples of the tables and graphs from the website are reproduced nearby.



NOTE: Percentage for adolescents with married, biological parents is significantly different from percentage for those with a stepparent, with a single parent, and with neither parent (.05 level). Percentage for adolescents with married, biological parents is not significantly different from percentage for those with adoptive parent(s). The 1996 and 2001 panels from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) were combined for the purposes of these analyses. SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1996 and 2001 panels.

THE ISQOLS-SPRINGER PROJECT ON THE

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SOCIAL INDICATORS

AND

QUALITY-OF-LIFE RESEARCH:

AN UPDATE

At the November 2004 Conference of the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies, an agreement was reached between ISQOLS and Springer Publishing Company to develop and publish an *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SOCIAL INDICATORS AND QUALITY-OF-LIFE RESEARCH* with Kenneth C. Land serving as Editor-in-Chief. The goal is to publish the *Encyclopedia* in 2006. The objective of the Social Indicators and Quality-of-Life Encyclopedia Project is to create a defining statement of the field in the early years of the 21st century that can be updated and improved upon as the field evolves and the century unfolds.

As a first step towards this goal, an Editorial Advisory Board has been formed. At present, the Board consists of the following members:

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Board members have provided advice to the Editor-in-Chief on the contents and on potential authors of contributions to the *Encyclopedia*. They also will read and provide advice to authors on drafts of their contributions.

Because the field of social indicators and quality-of-life research still is relatively small and only a limited number of scholars is available to write contributions, it has been decided to organize the volumes around a limited number of relatively long chapters as opposed to short entries. A number of authors have agreed to write chapters. A few others remain to be framed and assigned. The *Encyclopedia* will comprise three or four volumes, depending on the number and lengths of the contributions that are submitted and accepted. The current Contents of the four volumes are as follows (titles are indicative of content, but may change as the chapters are written; authors may change as well as the chapters are written and co-authors are added). Suggestions for additional chapters and/or authors may be sent to the Editor-in-Chief: kland@soc.duke.edu

(Continued from previous page.)

Volume I. Theoretical and Methodological Foundations

Introduction: The Evolution and Status of the Field of Social Indicators and Quality-of-Life Research ~ Kenneth C. Land*

Chapter Topics:

- Concepts of the Quality of Life in Philosophy and Social Theory ~ Alex Michalos*
- Subjective Well-Being, Happiness, and Life Satisfaction ~ Ruut Veenhoven*
- Homeostatic Mechanisms and the Quality of Life ~ Robert Cummins*
- Positive Psychology and the Quality of Life ~ Corey L. M. Keyes*
- Values and the Quality of Life ~
- Social Structure and the Quality of Life ~
- Politics and The Quality of Life ~
- Economic Development, Income, and the Quality of Life ~ Richard Easterlin* and Peggy Schyns
- Time Use and the Quality of Life ~
- Measuring the Quality of Life and the Construction of Social Indicators ~ Andrew Sharpe* and Filomena Maggino*
- Issues in Composite Index Construction ~ Michael R. Hagerty* and Kenneth C. Land*
- National Subjective Well-Being Indices: An Assessment ~ Ed Diener*
- Welfare Production and the Quality of Life ~ Wolfgang Glatzer* and Joachim Vogel*

Volume II. The Quality of Life in Societal Sectors

Chapter Topics:

- Health and the Quality of Life: Population Perspectives ~ David Moriarty*
- The Quality of Life in Biomedical Research and Clinical Practice ~ Carol Ferriss* and Michael Frisch*
- Education and the Quality of Life ~
- Work, Employment, and the Quality of Life ~ Joe Sirgy*
- Arts, Culture and the Quality of Life ~
- Sustainable Development, the Environment and the Quality of Life ~
- Spirituality, Religion and the Quality of Life ~ Ralph Piedmont*
- Sports, Leisure, Recreation and the Quality of Life ~ Catherine McCabe*
- Travel, Tourism and the Quality of Life ~ Muzaffer Uysal*
- Marketing and Quality of Life ~ Dong-Jin Lee*
- Community Quality of Life ~ Don Rahtz*

Volume III. The Quality of Life in Specific Populations

Chapter Topics:

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- Population Measures of Child and Youth Well-Being ~ Kenneth C. Land*
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- The Quality of Life of the Elderly ~ Elaine Sherman*
- The Quality of Life of Persons with Disabilities ~ Rebecca Renwick*
- The Quality of Life of Refugees and Migrants ~
- The Quality of Life of Socially Excluded Populations ~

Volume IV. The Quality of Life in World Regions and Inter-Regional Comparisons

Chapter Topics:

- Cross-National Comparisons of Quality of Life in Developing Nations (including the impact of globalization) ~ Laura Camfield*
- Cross-National Comparisons of Quality of Life in Developed Nations (including the impact of globalization) ~ Wolfgang Glatzer*
- Quality of Life in Australia and New Zealand ~
- Quality of Life in East Asia: The Case of The Phillipines ~ Mahar Mangahas
- Quality of Life in East Asia: The Case of Japan ~ Professor Naoi
- Quality of Life in East Asia: The Case of Taiwan ~ Luo Lu
- Quality of Life in Africa ~ Valerie Moeller*
- The Quality of Life in Muslim Populations: The Case of Algeria ~ Habib Tiliouine* and Meziane Mohamed*
- Quality of Life in the Caribbean and Latin America ~ Mariana Rojas Herrera* and Graciela Tonon*
- Quality of Life in Europe ~ Heinz-Herbert Noll* and Joachim Vogel*
- Quality of Life in North America ~ Richard Estes*

ISQOLS ANNOUNCES A NEW JOURNAL

Applied Research in Quality of Life

The Official Journal of the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies

The aim of this journal is to publish conceptual, methodological and empirical papers dealing with quality-of-life studies in the applied areas of the natural and social sciences. As the official journal of ISQOLS, it is designed to attract papers that have some direct implications for or impact on practical applications of research on the quality-of-life. We welcome papers crafted from interdisciplinary, inter-professional and international perspectives. This research should guide decision making in a variety of professions, industries, nonprofit, and government sectors such as healthcare, travel and tourism, marketing, corporate management, community planning, social work, public administration, human resource management, among others. The goal is to help decision makers apply performance measures and outcome assessment techniques based on concepts such as well-being, human satisfaction, human development, happiness, wellness and quality of life. The Editorial Review Board is divided into specific sections indicating the broad scope of practice covered by the journal, and the section editors are distinguished scholars from many countries across the globe.

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AN ANNOUNCEMENT FROM OUR SISTER SOCIETY:

12th Annual Scientific Meeting of the International Society for Quality of Life Research (ISOQOL)

San Francisco, CA, USA
Hyatt Regency Embarcadero
October 19-22, 2005

Conference Theme:
“Building Bridges to Enhance Quality of Life”

The purpose of the conference is to enhance the scientific study of health-related quality of life (HRQOL) with a mix of conceptual, methodological, and practical sessions including workshops, symposia, plenary sessions, and paper and poster presentations.

Invited sessions will examine HRQOL in clinical practice, needs of key stakeholders (patients, clinicians, federal agencies, accreditation organizations), and policy applications. The opening plenary will feature Robert H. Brook, M.D., Sc.D., F.A.C.P., Vice President and Director of RAND Health, who will kickoff the meeting by speaking about “Measuring Health.” Other confirmed speakers include: Bonnie Teschendorf, PhD, Director of Quality of Life Science, Cancer Control Science Department, American Cancer Society, Russell Mardon, NCQA, Michael Wolfson, Statistics Canada, Paul Kind, Centre for Health Economics, University of York, Galina Velikova, Cancer Med Research Unit, St. James’ Hospital, David Osoba, MD, QOL Consulting, and Michael Barry, Director of the Health Services Research Program, Massachusetts General Hospital.

We would love to see you in San Francisco in October 2005. Please put these dates on your calendar and tell your colleagues about the meeting. Also, if you belong to any QOL related listservs, help spread the word about the meeting and announce it to others who might have an interest. Preliminary information, including online registration, is available at the ISOQOL website www.isoqol.org <<http://www.isoqol.org>>. If you have any questions, please contact the ISOQOL Executive Office at info@isoqol.org.

ISQOLS Board of Directors 2005-2006

Richard Estes, President of the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies, reports that the following persons have been elected to the ISQOLS Board of Directors for 2005-2006:

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**THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR
QUALITY-OF-LIFE STUDIES:
RELOCATIONS OF HEADQUARTERS
AND NEW WWW HOMEPAGE**

The International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies (ISQOLS) was formed in the mid-1990s. The objectives of ISQOLS are: 1) to stimulate interdisciplinary research in quality-of-life (QOL) studies within the managerial (policy), behavioral, social, medical, and environmental sciences; 2) to provide an organization which all academic, business, nonprofit, and government researchers who are interested in QOL studies can coordinate their efforts to advance the knowledge base and to create positive social change; and 3) to encourage closer cooperation among scholars engaged in QOL research to develop better theory, methods, measures, and intervention programs.

The year 2004 membership fees are US\$50 for regular members and \$25 for students or retired persons. Prof. M. JOSEPH SIRGY (Virginia Tech and State University) is Executive Director of ISQOLS. Anyone interested in knowing more about ISQOLS should contact Prof. Sirgy at the central office.

The ISQOLS central office recently moved to new physical and virtual locations. Please note the new addresses:

International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies (ISQOLS)
1800 Kraft Drive, Suite 111
Blacksburg, Virginia 24060-6370, USA
Office tel: (540) 231-5110; fax: (540) 961-4162
E-mail: isqols@vt.edu
Website: www.isqols.org

SINET

Social Indicators Network News

Subscription Information

As a service to the world-wide social indicators community, SINET is issued quarterly (February, May, August, November). Subscribers and network participants are invited to report news of their social indicator activity, research, policy development, etc., to the Editor for publication. Deadlines are the 20th of the month prior to each issue.

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