

A GUIDE TO RESOURCES FOR CREATING, LOCATING, AND USING CHILD AND YOUTH INDICATOR DATA

**By
Brett Brown, Kyleen Hashim, and Pilar Marin
Child Trends**

November 2008



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	iv
Published Resources for Understanding and Using Child and Youth Indicators	1
Books	1
Papers, Books Chapters, and Briefs	2
Newsletters	4
Journals	4
Other Resources	5
Child and Youth Indicator Web Sites	7
Multi-topic	7
Health	9
Education	13
Demographics	15
Research Centers on Child and Youth Well-Being Available on the Internet	17
Indicators Web Site Development, Templates, Traffic Tracking, and GIS Mapping	20

Introduction

This guide provides brief descriptions of the ever-increasing number of data and information resources available to those who work in the child and youth indicators field. It is a resource useful to the novice and the veteran, to those who work in governance, advocacy, research, and the media.

Items covered include: books, journals, and other publications related to the identification, measurement, development and use of child indicators; professional newsletters focused on child indicator issues and products; web sites offering data at the national, state, and local levels; research centers focusing on child and youth well-being; and technical resources for those who would like to develop their own indicators web sites.

Funding for this guide has been generously provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Published Resources for Understanding and Using Child and Youth Indicators

BOOKS

Key Indicators of Child Well-Being: Completing the Picture – In this book some of the nation's leading child and youth development researchers review the progress that has been made in the measurement, collection, dissemination, and use of indicators of well-being, and identify opportunities for their future development. The collection includes chapters covering indicators of health, education, social and emotional development, the social context of development (family, peers, school, community), and summary indices of well-being. The use of child indicators as planning tools at the state and community levels is also covered.

Key Indicators of Child Well-Being: Completing the Picture. (2007) Ed. B.V. Brown. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: New York. Available at www.taylorandfrancis.com

Indicators of Children's Well-Being: Understanding Their Role, Usage, and Policy Influence –

This book examines how child well-being indicators affect public policy to improve family and child well-being. The first sections describe the general role of indicators in the United States and explore examples of their use at local and international levels. Another section details applications to U.S. public policy and how to improve indicators impact on policy decisions. The book concludes by investigating the role of indicators research, methods, and media coverage in policy and suggesting directions for future research.

Indicators of Children's Well-Being: Understanding Their Role, Usage, and Policy Influence. (2006) Eds. A. Ben-Arieh, R.M. Goerge. Social Indicators Research Series. Vol. 27 Springer: Dordrecht, Netherlands.

What do Children Need to Flourish?: Conceptualizing and Measuring Indicators of Positive Development –

Breaking from a tradition of measuring child status through negative indicators, this book seeks to identify potential indicators of positive development. The authors in this work examine the recent development of positive indicators across a range of topics from identity, character, health, behavior, to peer relationships, family environment, and school context. The authors not only identify research advances in these areas, but also evaluate their weaknesses and make recommendations for the future.

What do Children Need to Flourish?: Conceptualizing and Measuring Indicators of Positive Development. (2005). Eds. K.A. Moore & L. Lippman. Springer: New York, NY.

Developmental Assets: A Synthesis of Scientific Research on Adolescent Development –

This work describes over forty youth assets and relates them to the Search Institute’s conceptual framework of developmental assets. Using results from an extensive literature review, the authors assess the impact of these assets on youth, gaps in the current framework, how these assets are defined and “work”, and how they can be developed in adolescents’ lives. Each chapter covers a particular category of assets, including support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, constructive use of time, commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. The authors also discuss the policy and research implications of these results.

Scales, P. & Leffert, N. (2004). Developmental Assets: A Synthesis of Scientific Research on Adolescent Development. Search Institute: Minneapolis, MN.

PAPERS, BOOK CHAPTERS, AND BRIEFS

An Overview of State-Level Data on Child Well-Being Available Through the U.S. Federal Statistical System (Report) –

This report acts as a guide to the available federal, state-level data sources on indicators of child well-being. The data sources are organized in several ways including availability by state, by contextual versus child focused indicators, and by the categories of social and economic demographics, health and safety, education, and child welfare. The authors present a brief description of each survey, discuss their strengths and weaknesses, and address gaps and future objectives. The report also includes an appendix summarizing key information from each data source, such as sample size, years available, topics covered, limitations, and links to the data and further information.

B.V. Brown. & K.A. Moore. (2007) *An Overview of State-Level Data on Child Well-Being Available Through the Federal Statistical System*. Child Trends: Washington, DC.

Available at: http://www.childtrends.org/Files//Child_Trends-2006_10_01_FR_StateDataPaper.pdf

The Uses (and Misuses) of Social Indicators: Implications for Public Policy (Brief) – This research brief presents the dos and don’ts of using social indicators. Beginning with a short description of what indicators are and how they fit into the broader research context, the brief then describes how indicators can be used to monitor trends, inform practice, set goals, and increase accountability. The paper concludes with guidelines on how to properly use indicators and how to avoid their misuse.

Moore, K.A., Brown, B.V., & Scarupa, H.J. (2003) “The Uses (and Misuses) of Social Indicators: Implications for Public Policy”. *Child Trends Research Brief*. Available at: http://www.childtrends.org/Files//Child_Trends-2003_02_01_RB_UseAndMisuse.pdf

Child and Youth Well-Being: the Social Indicators Field (Chapter) -

The social indicator field and indicator uses, availability, and applications are outlined in this paper. The authors provide an overview of the types of qualities readers should look for when selecting and creating individual indicators and groups of indicators, identify major indicator uses, and describe indicator data sources that are available at state, national, and other geographic levels. In addition to indicator uses and availability, the authors examine how indicators have been disseminated and explore future steps for indicator research, dissemination, and application.

Brown, B.V., & Moore, K.A. (2003) “Child and Youth Well-Being: the Social Indicators Field” in Handbook of Applied Developmental Science. Eds. R.M. Lerner, F. Jacobs, & D. Wertlieb. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA. Vol. 1: 437-467.

Social Indicators as Tools of Public Policy (Chapter) –

This paper places indicators and their uses within the policy context. The authors examine the main ways indicators are used in a system where responsibility is often allocated to lower levels of government. Their examination relates indicator uses of description, monitoring, goal setting, accountability, and evaluation to this context and provides examples from the policy arena. The paper then describes challenges to improving indicator use and recommendations for national, state, and local governments as well as foundations and researchers.

Brown, B., & Corbett, T. (2003) “Social Indicators as Tools of Public Policy” in Long Term Trends in the Well-Being of Children and Youth. Eds. R.P. Weissberg, H.J. Walberg, M.U. O’Brien, & C.B. Kuster. CWLA Press: Washington, DC.

Indicators and Indices of Child Well-being: A Brief American History (Paper) –

The author provides a history of the origins of and recent developments in indices and indicators of child well-being. Through this history, the paper examines major evolutions and current consensus in indicator research, as well as the needs and recommendations for future research and use. The paper also describes products that were developed in response to recommendations for indicators, such as online resources. Highlights from the paper include the contributions of state and international indicator efforts, the acceptance of five domains of child well-being, and the need for contextual, positive, and subjective measures.

Lippman, L. “Indicators and Indices of Child Well-being: A Brief American History”. *Social Indicators Research*. August 2007. Vol. 83: 39-53.

National KIDS COUNT Publications

<http://www.aecf.org/KnowledgeCenter/PublicationsSeries/KCDataBookProds.aspx>

The national KIDS COUNT project offers a variety of publications including: the annual KIDS COUNT Data Book; a Data Snapshot series covering particular topics; special data reports and working papers; technical reports; and evaluations of the KIDS COUNT effort.

INDICATORS NEWSLETTERS

The Child Indicator Newsletter –

<http://www.childtrends.org/ci>

This newsletter from Child Trends highlights new data tools and research on indicators of child well-being. Every issue contains guides to new online data tools, summarizes findings from recent studies at the international, national, state and local levels, and lists short descriptions of other recently released reports. Each article provides a brief (one paragraph to one page) overview of tools and findings as well as links to further information. The newsletter publishes three times a year.

International Society for Child Indicators Newsletter –

<http://www.childindicators.org/>

This quarterly newsletter presents information on new international efforts in child indicators. Issues present highlights from and objectives of recent and upcoming indicator-focused conferences and announce new developments at the international society for child indicators. The newsletter also includes brief overviews of new national and international indicator publications and projects. Each article contains links to further information.

Social Indicators Network News (SINET) –

<http://www.soc.duke.edu/resources/sinet/>

The quarterly newsletter, distributed by the International Society for Quality of Life Studies, describes recent developments and research in social indicators of the quality of life. Articles include findings from new research, updates from conferences, and forums on research based theories and ideas. The newsletter also announces new resources, conferences, calls for papers, and other relevant events.

Measuring the Progress of Societies Newsletter

<http://www.oecd.org/oecdworldforum>

This is the newsletter for a major new initiative being spearheaded by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to promote the advancement and use of a broad range of social indicators in decision-making at all levels. This newsletter was launched in March of 2008, and new issues are expected every few months.

CHILD INDICATOR JOURNALS

Child Indicators Research –

<http://www.springer.com/west/home?SGWID=4-102-70-173750003-0&changeHeader=true&SHORTCUT=www.springer.com/12187>

This new journal, launched in 2008 and sponsored by the International Society for Child Indicators, focuses on international research on and applications of child indicators. The journal presents papers on analyses, theoretical issues, data resources, the status of child well-being, and the impact of indicators in policy and practice. Examples of specific topics include cross-border and culture-specific indicators as well as indicator-related advocacy, policy, dissemination, conceptual frameworks, and information technology. The journal encompasses research from areas of economic well-being, social behavior, health and safety, civic engagement, child welfare, and many others.

OTHER RESOURCES

International Convention on the Rights of the Child -

<http://www.unicef.org/crc/>

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is a legally binding, international agreement that lists the basic human rights children should have. The agreement, formed in 1989, includes the rights “to survival; to develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life”. One hundred and ninety-two countries have accepted this agreement; only the United States and Somalia have not ratified the convention. Following the agreement, the Committee for the Rights of the Child was created to monitor the implementation of the convention. The Committee’s state reports continually evaluate the status of each country’s children and that country’s progress and plan to ensure child rights.

State-of-the-USA

<http://www.stateoftheusa.org/>

This non-profit organization is developing a web site that will offer key indicators and trends on all aspects of American life, and is expected to include a section on child and family indicators. Indicators are being chosen with the advice of the National Academies. The data will come from federal agencies and other respected sources. The target date for initial release of the public web site is 2009. Data will be accessible, and will include a capacity to drill down from the national to the state and local levels where data are available.

Measuring the Progress of Societies

<http://www.oecd.org/oecdworldforum>

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), in cooperation with a host of other international and national organizations, has launched a major initiative to promote the use of social, environmental, and economic indicators to promote evidence-based decision-making around the world. These goals are being promoted through the organization of international and regional meetings, a newsletter, an online library, blog, and the establishment of regional working groups.

Early Childhood Development in Social Context: A Chartbook –

Guided by a model of early childhood development and expert advice, the chartbook presents indicators on the status of young children and their implications for policy and practice. The chartbook covers a comprehensive set of developmentally appropriate indicators from all major domains of child well-being and from contexts of family and community. Each indicator contains information on why the indicator is important and how children have been faring across different subgroups and through out time. The authors conclude with recommendations and implications for action among policymakers, practitioners, and parents.

Brown, B. & Weitzman, M. (2004). *Early Childhood Development in Social Context: A Chartbook*. A Commonwealth Fund Publication. Available online at:
http://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/publications_show.htm?doc_id=237483

Indicators of Child, Family, and Community Connections –

This study was conducted to explore the range of family context data available and the gaps in this data. It presents recent data and indicators of the family’s social context in six areas: family structure; family functioning (including relationship quality); family work and child care; school involvement and civic engagement; religiosity; and social connections (including neighborhood and social support). These indicators were selected to represent family context based on findings from a comprehensive literature review of family context, panel expertise, and available data. Links to and information on each of the data sources used are provided. The report also details specific information gaps for each area of family context.

Lippman, L. “Indicators of Child, Family, and Community Connections”. Washington, DC: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. August 2004. Available at: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/connections-charts04/>

Child and Youth Indicator Web Sites

There are a growing number of web sites dedicated to providing regularly updated child and youth indicator data at the national, state, and local levels. Here are the major sites as of the spring of 2008.

MULTI-TOPIC SITES

KIDS COUNT

<http://www.kidscount.org>

The KIDS COUNT national data effort maintains three major online data systems.

- The KIDS COUNT Data Center offers over 100 indicators at the national, state and city level from a variety of federal data sources.
- The CLIKS database contains data supplied by the state KIDS COUNT grantees, generated from local data sources and not comparable across states.

The 2000 Census Data Online system contains data from the decennial census, and provides estimates at the national, state, and local levels. Estimates in both the state-level and census databases are comparable across geographic levels and across geographic areas at the same level, allowing for comparisons across states and between cities, for example.

KIDS COUNT Data Center

This new online data system contains national, state and city-level estimates for over 100 indicators of child well-being. Included in this are all indicators in the KIDS COUNT Databook and Right Start for Newborns, as well as many other indicators. Measures are updated as new estimates become available, and new indicators are also added on a regular basis. Data are available for each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Estimates for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are also included when they are available, though often no data are available for these territories. In January, 2008, the system was expanded to include data for the 50 largest cities in the U.S. as well as six other large cities across the U.S.

Topics covered include health, education, youth risk factors, poverty, employment and income, population and family characteristics, and children in immigrant families. Estimates are usually available for multiple years. Both numbers and percents are available. In addition to the estimates, the user is also provided with detailed information regarding definitions and original data sources. Rankings across states can also be produced with ease.

Individual state profiles can be readily produced, as well as cross-state comparisons for all or selected states. Estimates can be displayed and downloaded as table, figures, and maps that can be used in PowerPoint presentations and other documents, and as raw data in delimited files.

CLIKS (Community Level Information on Kids)

This system brings together data on the well-being of children collected by KIDS COUNT grantees from state and local sources. The unique system allows users to access state-specific inventories of data from local sources, such as health departments, human services agencies, and schools. The content of state pages is determined by a participating KIDS COUNT partner using data from local jurisdictions.”¹

It should be noted that as this guide is being written, the CLIKS system is undergoing a dramatic update. We expect that the new system will be online in late 2008. At that time, CLIKS will become more fully integrated into the KIDS COUNT Data Center

Census Data

This data system offers 2000 census data as well as some comparison data from the 1990 census for many geographic areas including the nation and individual states, metropolitan areas, large cities, counties, congressional districts, state legislative districts and American Indian/Alaska Native/Hawaiian Home Lands.

Data available on children and their families include the following topics: income and poverty; parental employment; living arrangements; education; language; disability; neighborhood characteristics; age; sex; race; and Hispanic origin. Estimates for a particular outcome (e.g., percent in single-parent families) are often offered separately by race, Hispanic origin, poverty status, and age.

Profiles for particular geographic areas can be generated on a variety of topics. Comparisons and rankings across areas can be produced. Generated tables and figures can be studied online or printed out. Complete raw data for any geographic area can be downloaded as a delimited file as analyzed offline using Excel or a variety of statistical packages.

Child Trends DataBank

<http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/>

The Child Trends Databank is a continuously updated online data resource of about 110 indicators of child and youth well-being covering a wide range of topics in the following areas: health; social and emotional development; income, assets & work; education and skills; demographics; and family and community context. Each indicator contains the following information:

- Accessible text discussing the importance of the indicator as well as citations and links to the research referenced.
- Downloadable figures and tables presenting time trend and subgroup comparisons at the national level;

¹From the CLIKS web page, www.kidscount.org/cgi-bin/cliiks.cgi, November 21, 2007.

- Links to original data sources;
 - Links to sources of state, local, and international estimates when available; and
- Links to research identifying proven programs for improving outcomes (for selected measures).

All data are presented at the national level and are taken from a variety of sources including federal publications, online data tools, and Child Trends' original analyses of survey data. The indicators are continually updated as new data become publicly available.

America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being

<http://childstats.gov/>

This is the signature annual report from the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, a consortium of more than 20 federal statistical agencies that collect data on children. The report includes information on a select set of indicators in the following areas: family and social environment; economic circumstances; health care; physical environment and safety; behavior; education; and health. Indicators are updated annually.

The Child Well-Being Index

http://www.fcd-us.org/issues/issues_show.htm?doc_id=447092

The child well-being index (CWI) is a composite index of 28 measures of well-being that allows one to track overall child well-being over time. The index was developed by Ken Land and colleagues at Duke University with funding from the Foundation for Child Development (FCD). Both annual reports and special reports (including international and state-level versions of the index) are produced and disseminated through FCD.

HEALTH SITES

Data Resource Center: NSCH and CHSCN

<http://childhealthdata.org>

The Data Resource Center allows for online access and analysis of data from the National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) and the National Survey of Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHCN). Both surveys provide estimates for the nation, each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The NSCH includes a broad set of health and well-being measures for all children ages 0-17. The CSHCN focuses on families with children who have special health care needs, and the data gathered focus more on health conditions and care received.

The NSCH was fielded in 2003 and again in 2007. The CSHCN was fielded in 2001 and in 2005. The intention is to field each survey every four years. As of December 2007, data were available online for the 2001 and 2005 CHSCN, and the 2003 NSCH. It is expected that the 2007 NSCH data will also be made available online in early 2009.

Estimates for most individual measures as well as some created measures are available overall and separately by demographic subgroups such as age, race, family structure, and poverty status. Data can be compared across states and over time. Generated tables provide percentage estimates, population estimates, sample size, and standard errors that can be used to generate confidence intervals and tests of statistical significance. An excellent three-part tutorial, which requires the use of Micromedia Flash, can help users better understand how to navigate the website and generate the data query they desire.

Kaiser Family Foundation, State Health Facts

<http://www.statehealthfacts.org/>

The State Health Facts website allows users to access state-level estimates in the areas of demographics and the economy, health status, health coverage & uninsured, Medicaid and SCHIP, health costs and budgets, Medicare, managed care & health insurance, providers and service use, minority health, women's health, HIV/AIDS, and a feature on children's health. Users can begin a query by selecting a state or category of variables. If a specific state is chosen, users are sent to that state's at-a-glance page, which contains key names of leaders in the state legislature, executive office, and congressional delegation. On the left-hand side, users choose any one of the subject areas listed above, and then a specific variable in that area. Then a table is generated for that variable containing the number and percentage for the state of interest as well as the U.S. Users can then click on the compare button, which compares the variable across all states in table, map, or bar chart. The table that the user creates can be downloaded into Excel, as well as raw data files containing state and national estimates for each of the variables, with separate files for each subject area.

The recent updates box on the homepage provides a scrolling list of recently updated data on the website and email updates are available. The website also contains links to factsheets and related reports, a glossary of terms used, and the ability to save tables for future use.

Vital Stats

<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/VitalStats.htm>

VitalStats allows users to access and create data tables, charts, and maps for over 100 birth variables. Data are currently available for birth statistics from 1990-2005 at the national, state, and county levels on topics such as low birth-weight, maternal characteristics, and prenatal care. Additional years of data will be added as they become available. The data come from vital statistics records, such as birth and death certificates, provided by state health departments. The National Center on Health Statistics recently added perinatal data and plans to add infant mortality data to the site in 2008, with the eventual goal of making all vital statistic data available through the site.

The interactive table tool enables users to select a topic of their choice and alter a pre-built table to fit their needs. Users select pre-constructed tables from folders arranged by topic, location, and then year. By dragging and clicking on table variables, users can view data by a desired subgroup, switch the order of variables in rows and columns, and select which categories variables contain. Data can be displayed as numbers or percentages. Subgroups vary by indicator, but may include race/ethnicity, age of mother, and length of gestation.

Users can also build their own tables by selecting and arranging up to six variables from public data file folders. Users must log in and create a password to use this function, but can then save and re-use their created tables. Both interactive and user-generated tables include functions to view the data in a chart or map. Users can also export tables and make a printable version of their tables. The VitalStats site provides two guides to help users navigate and utilize the tools and data. They are called “Quick Guide: Getting Started” and “Quick Guide: Calculation Rates and Percentages”.

WISQARS (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System)

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars/>

The CDC’s National Center for Injury Prevention and Control provides an online database called WISQARS. The WISQARS data are divided into two sections: fatal (fatal injury reports, leading cause of death reports, and potential years of life lost reports) and nonfatal (nonfatal injury reports and leading causes of nonfatal injury reports).

For the injury reports, users select the type and cause of injury, and can specify years, gender, and age group, race/ethnicity, and Census region (fatal injury only). Users can choose to use age-adjusted injury rates or not. The tables present the numbers of deaths/injuries, population, crude rate, and age-adjusted rate and ICD-10 classification codes for the cause of injury/death are provided. For nonfatal injury reports the following advanced statistics are also available: standard error, coefficient of variation, upper and lower limit of the 95% confidence interval. Users can download their results into Excel or csv format. The leading causes of death follows the same table creation process, but allows users to choose to view between 5 and 20 causes and specify whether the causes should include all, only unintentional, or only violent causes. The years or potential life lost section also has a similar table creation process, but users can choose crude or age-adjusted years of potential life lost and at the age at which it is calculated.

A tutorial on how to use the system is available on the website, as well as a help section that contains definitions, FAQs, data sources, and a review of the options offered in each type of report. Users can also sign up for email updates that will notify them when the page has changed.

YRBS Online Data

<http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/yrbss/>

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey online data tool is a simple way to view data in the areas of unintentional injuries and violence, dietary behaviors, tobacco use, physical activity, alcohol and other drug use, and sexual behaviors. Users can view results by United States, state/territory, local (when available), and other populations (Navajo nation). Using the drop down menu, users can select a specific variable and year(s) and a table with percentages and confidence intervals (or standard error) is produced. Results can be displayed by gender, grade, or race/ethnicity. Bar graphs can also be viewed. Users can modify their query to make comparisons across years or locations. Estimates are available for most states, about 20 major cities, the U.S. territories, and the Navajo Nation. Only data that have been approved by the CDC as representative of the population of high school students for a particular area are included.

To see what years of data are available for a particular state or city, visit

<http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/yrbss/ShowAvailData.asp>

March of Dimes Peristats

<http://www.marchofdimes.com/peristats/>

The Peristats website provides infant and maternal health data at the national, state, county, and city levels. The data on the website are compiled from source such the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, Health Resources Services Administration, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Census Bureau National Governors Association, United States Department of Agriculture, and the National Newborn Screening and Genetics Resource Center. Users can select a state or indicator topic and choose from viewing state profiles, tables, or maps and graphs for individual topics. For each option, data are accompanied by text explanations and are presented as numbers, percentages, rates, or a mix of these forms. Peristats also provides a brief overview of main topics, which includes information on its importance, key statistics, and relevant Healthy People objectives. For each state Peristats provides a brief summary report of the major findings. In addition to state profiles and data by topic, the site provides trend data and comparisons by region, as well as comparisons by maternal age and race/ethnicity for most topics.

Users can print or download PowerPoint slides of these figures to supplement their own reports. The website also offers the option to download selected data into an Excel file. For every selected topic and subgroup comparison, users can link to a Pubmed search that automatically generates a list of citations related to these subjects. Under resources, Peristats also offers links to a range of government and non-profit websites that contain further information on infant and maternal health. In addition, for each state selected, the site provides a link to the state's department of health. Peristats also offers additional information about data definitions and

methods of calculating data.

EDUCATION SITES

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

www.nationsreportcard.gov and <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nde/>

The Nation's Report card is a comprehensive website containing data and information from the National Assessment of Educational Progress. State estimates are available in selected years in math, reading, and science. State participation has been 100 percent since 2003. Data are also available for select major cities and U.S. territories in some years. National estimates are available in economics, civics, U.S. history, and writing in addition to math, reading, and science.

The online data tool allows users to customize their own data tables and check the significance of their estimates. Users choose a subject area, grade, year(s), public or all schools. Separate estimates may be generated across major demographic subgroups and subgroups defined by such characteristics as instructional content, community factors, and teacher characteristics. Once the table is generated, the user can select how they want to view the estimates – as percentages, achievement levels, percentiles, etc. They can choose to view the output as a table or graph and standard errors are provided. Results can be saved as HTML or exported to Excel. There is a tool that allows one to check if the difference between two estimates is statistically significant, and for more advanced users, there is a tool to perform regression analysis.

In addition, each school subject area has its own page that highlights the most recent data available, relevant publications, and provides details about how the specific subject assessments are measured.

School Data Direct

<http://www.schooldatadirect.org/>

The School Data Direct website produced by the State Education Data Center, is a service of the Council of Chief State School Officers. Data sources include the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the U.S. Census, the National Public Education Finance Survey, state assessment data from state education departments, and college preparatory data from test vendors. Users can access the data in several ways. For each state selected data are available in the following area: overview, student performance, college prep, NCLB, spending, revenue & taxes, school environment, community demographics, analytics (math and reading proficiency, students with special needs index, return and spending indicators). Tables can be printed, downloaded in Excel, or saved to the user's favorite's folder. There is also a compare button

that allows the user to select trends or the nation for comparison, or view the national page for U.S. estimates of all the variables. For variables that may be easily misused, a warning box pops up when they are selected, discouraging users from employing the variables for ranking purposes.

Users can also begin queries using the search function, which allows users to choose school or district, city, state, zip code, and distance from zip code. A table is generated and users can compare up to 5 locations. Users can click on the district or school and view tables and charts for all the variables mentioned in the above section. There is also a benchmarking tool called “better performers.” Users can view benchmark schools within in the area, meaning that those schools had higher levels of proficiency, by grade and school subject. There is also a search function where users can search for higher performers in the state or district by subject, grade, and student group.

The download data section allows users to download tables they have created, or ones provided on the website, in Excel format. There are also data files that can be loaded. The resources section provides users with a glossary of terms and answers to FAQ.

School Matters

www.schoolmatters.org

School Matters is a data resource intended primarily for parents, hosted by Standard and Poor’s School Evaluation Services. The site provides school profiles and comparisons of school achievement and college entrance exam performance, expenditures, progress towards No Child Left Behind (NLCB) goals, school environment, and community data.

Common Core of Data (CCD)

<http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/>

The Common Core of Data is a data set produced by the National Center for Education Statistics containing of data on public schools, public school districts, and state education agencies. The data set consists of basic information about schools such as address and telephone number, descriptive and demographic information about the students and staff, and fiscal data, such as revenue and expenditures. The CCD website has a “Build A Table” function that allows users to create customized tables with the data from the state to the individual school level. Users are able to select the school years and row variable: state, core based statistical area (formerly metropolitan statistical area), county, district, or school. Then column variables, such as school enrollment, pupil/teacher ratio, or migrant students can be selected. Lastly, filters such as state, agency, county, district, or school can be applied. Once the table is generated, columns can be sorted and the order that the columns appear in changed.

Table output can be created in text or Excel format, formatted for printing, or saved and accessed at a later time. Several “most requested tables” are available, and can be modified by filters and table appearance. The website also contains a list of publications and products that use the CCD, as well as contact information for the staff involved in the project. A table listing each of the data sources and their years of availability is also available.

DEMOGRAPHIC SITES

American Community Survey (ACS)

<http://www.census.gov/acs>

The ACS is a source of demographic, social, and economic information. The survey provides detailed, annual data at geographic levels ranging from counties and metro areas of select cities to the states and nation. The American Community Survey website provides information on the available forms of data, key features, data methodology, and upcoming releases. The “Access Data” page presents a clear and succinct overview of all of the available forms of ACS data. Clicking on any one data source will provide users with additional guidance on how to use and access it. From these pages, users can directly link to ACS data in fact sheets and briefs, detailed tables and ranking tables, direct file downloads, and other formats.

To help users accurately interpret and use ACS data, the website also contains overviews and links to abridged user guides, definitions, and table indexes. On the “How to Use the Data” page, users can find general user and training guides, as well as definitions of geographical and common ACS subject terms. Users searching for data on a particular topic or area can also browse lists of available tables by topic, geography, and other categories.

Aside from user guides and definitions, the ACS site features information about and links to data quality, methodology, and other technical aspects of the ACS. Under “About the Data”, users can access documentation on data collection and dissemination, evaluation reports, and studies related to ACS content choice and differences between the ACS and Census. In addition, the site offers similar overviews and links to the ACS methodology, quality measures, accuracy, survey questionnaires, and other technical documentation.

DataPlace

<http://www.dataplace.org/>

The DataPlace website allows users to analyze detailed data in several formats. Data are provided by the U.S. Census Bureau, the Internal Revenue Service, Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council, and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The variables are divided into the following sections: overview (characteristics such as population size, race/ethnicity, language, foreign-born), demographic, income/employment, housing, mortgage lending, and federal expenditures.

To begin, users can select a geographic location ranging from the nation down to a specific census tract. In the area overview section, all data from each of the sections listed above are provided in a table, with the option to click on a link for each variable and view an accompanying bar chart or ranking table.

The mapping functions allows users to select variables from the sections listed above and views the data in map form. Users can choose the number of gradations and color palette for the shading down to the Census tract level. The ranking function allows users to create a ranking table that compares their geographic selection to whatever boundary he or she specifies. For example, one could compare the poverty rate in Suffolk County, NY to the poverty rate to counties in NY, or all counties in the U.S. The scatterplot function allows users to compare 2 indicators across a range of places and see how they are correlated. For example, one could look at Washington, D.C. and look at the how foreign-born is correlated with households with children under 18.

The website also contains how-to guides that give real life examples of how a user might utilize the data to explore policy issues and groups for online discussion and sharing.

Research Centers on Child and Youth Well-Being Available on the Internet

There are a number of major research centers around the country focused on children's research and policy issues. They provide high quality information online on many issues, often in formats intended to make that information more accessible and useful to policymakers, advocates, and the media, and other non-research professionals. Most also have a listserv to inform interested users of new publications.

Child Trends

<http://www.childtrends.org>

Child Trends is an independent, non-partisan and non-profit research center focused exclusively on children, youth, and their families. Child Trends work is broad-based including all dimensions of child and youth development and the social contexts that shape development. Its mission is to improve outcomes for children by providing research, data, and analysis to the people and institutions whose decisions and actions affect children, including policy makers, program providers, foundations, and the media.

Major activities include basic research, program evaluation, survey and data development, packaged in a variety of accessible formats including briefs, papers, literature reviews, chartbooks, and more. One can sign up for the e-newsletter to keep up-to-date on their latest offerings.

Center for Research on Child Well-Being (CRCW)

<http://crcw.princeton.edu>

The CRCW is an interdisciplinary research center at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and the Office of Population Research. Their stated mission is to "stimulate basic research, educate faculty and students about issues related to children's policies, and influence policymakers and practitioners at the federal, state, and local levels." The center has two main projects: The Fragile Families Study, and the Future of Children, a journal that is described separately below.

Fragile Families is primarily a study of unmarried parents and their children. The study is designed to address questions related to the condition and capabilities of unmarried parents, the nature of these parental relationships, the well-being of the children, and how policies might affect these parents and children. An extensive library of publications related to this project is available on the website, including working papers, reports, research briefs, and journal articles.

The website provides links to other research centers as well as sources for statistics on children. In addition to Fragile Families and *Future of Children*, Youth Policy Initiative publications on topics such as mentoring or after-school programs are available. There is also a listing of public events sponsored by the CRCW.

The Future of Children Journal

www.futureofchildren.org

Future of Children is an online journal produced by the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University and The Brookings Institution. *Future of Children* aims to promote effective policies and programs for children by providing timely, objective information based on the best available research. Authors are some of the top researchers in their field. All articles are available online and free of charge. Each issue focuses on a policy-relevant issue, such as poverty prevention programs or childhood obesity, and provides numerous articles of various aspects of the issues, such as importance, intervention approaches, and success of programs. Each issue has an executive summary which puts the issue in context and a policy brief, which discusses relevant policies to address the issue. Articles summaries and tables and figures are also provided. All previous issues of the journal are archived on the website and are available in HTML and PDF format. The “Recent Research” section of the website provides links to other relevant research centers.

National Adolescent Health Information Center (NAHIC)

<http://nahic.ucsf.edu>

NAHIC is a research policy center funded by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and based within the University of California, San Francisco. By acting as a national resource for adolescent health information and research, NAHIC aims to improve adolescent health by synthesizing, integrating, and disseminating information.

The website is home to a wealth of publications divided into 5 major areas: adolescent health data; recommendations for research, policy, and programs; tools for state and local programs; health care services resources; and the National Initiative to Improve Adolescent Health. Publications include factsheets, reports, guides, book chapters, and research briefs, and the website also contains links to others sources of data and research. NAHIC also provides technical assistance to program providers, communities, and states in areas related to adolescent health. For example, NAHIC has partnered with the California Department of Health Services, Maternal and Child Health Branch to implement the California Initiative to Improve Adolescent Health by the Year 2010 (CIIAH).

National Center for Children in Poverty

www.nccp.org

The National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) is a public policy center dedicated to promoting the economic security, health, and well-being of low-income families and children. The center’s vision has 3 components: (1) families that are economically secure; (2) strong, nurturing families; and (3) healthy child development. It is located in the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University.

NCCP has several projects, some of which are focused at the state-level, including summaries of state policy in areas affecting children. The data tools section has several features, including the 50 State Demographics Wizard and the 50 State Policy Wizard. These tools allow users to create customized tables by state in specific demographic or policy area of interest. In addition, users can visit the state profile section, choose a state and topic area, and view how their children in their state fare on a variety of indicators of child well-being. The website also provides numerous publications and press releases and statements for members of the media.

Chapin Hall Center for Children

www.chapinhall.org

The Chapin Hall Center for Children is a research center located at the University of Chicago. Chapin Hall focuses on the following 5 areas: economic programs for youth and families, child welfare services, community resources for child and youth development, community development strategies, and education. Their work is focused on having a direct impact on programs and institutions at the local, state, and national level. Chapin Hall is also part of an international network of child policy research centers which are connected somewhat informally, but meet about every 18 months to share ideas and think strategically.

The Chapin Hall website offers a wealth of publications in a variety of topics, many which are particularly helpful to state-level advocates. For example, the Data Systems for Policy Research section hosts the Multistate Foster Care Data Archive and the Illinois Integrated Children's Services Database. The Child Well-Being section has publications on methodological issues. The website also has an extensive list of conferences and presentations hosted by Chapin Hall.

Indicators Web Site Development, Templates, Traffic Tracking, and GIS Mapping

The dissemination of child indicator data over the Internet has become increasingly easy as new tools have been developed to facilitate the construction of web sites, the presentation of data online, and the monitoring of web site traffic.

Template Monster

www.templatemonster.com

This service offers thousands of basic templates for web sites, blogs, and e-commerce sites. These basic templates can be easily modified to suit your particular needs. These templates are created by in-house staff at Template Monster and by freelance staff. The cost for non-exclusive use of any of the templates is very modest, usually under \$100. There is also free live chat support and an online support center to where you can get technical assistance as you tailor you create your own site or blog.

There are other groups that offer similar services. They can be found by doing a Google search on “web templates”.

Google Analytics

<http://www.google.com/analytics/index.html>

Google Analytics is a free software package that allows anyone to monitor the number and type of visitors using their website, including the pages visited and file downloaded most often. Such software offers important information that allows one to monitor and document the number of users coming to your site, and the files and pages that they visit most often.

To take advantage of Google Analytic’s capabilities users simply create an account and embed the Google tracking number in each page of their site – tracking takes place immediately. From there, the user can track who clicks on their links, newsletter, or individual pages of their website. The can also analyze the keywords people used in search engines in order to arrive at their website. Reports can contain statistics such as number of visits, number of page views, average time spent on the site, and the source of traffic (referring site, search engine, direct traffic). The geo-targeting function allows users to track and map the geographic locations of their visitors.

Users can create customized reports, and schedule to have reports generated automatically on a regular basis. A customized “dashboard” is available so that users can views their statistics of choice whenever they open the Google Annalistic program. They can also purchase consulting services or other support packages from the Google Analytics homepage. In addition, free support from Google technicians and a user blog are available.

The major limitation of this software is that it will not load files from other programs, so one cannot examine historical site user statistics that predate use of Google Analytics. This program comes highly recommended by Velir Associates.

Other Web Tracking Software

There are a number of quality web tracking software programs available that can offer more detailed tracking information than Google Analytics, though they can be expensive. Here are several packages to consider if Google Analytics does not meet your needs.

Omniture SiteCatalyst

http://www.omniture.com/products/web_analytics/sitecatalyst

HBX WEB Analytics

<http://www.websidestory.com/products/web-analytics/hbx-analytics/overview.html>

GIS Mapping Software

There are many uses for GIS software ranging from simple mapping and data visualization to complex spatial analysis and presentation drawing multiple data sources.

Presenting county-level data in state maps can be a strikingly effective way to highlight regional patterns and cross-county differences in child and family well-being. Presenting data from multiple sources in this way can reveal areas of concentrated need, as well as areas of particular strength and vitality. Such maps are suitable for both hardcopy publications and for online data presentation. For an example of what can be done online, visit the KIDS COUNT State-level Data Online and easily create 50-state maps on a variety of topics. <http://www.kidscount.org/sld/>

There are a number of high quality GIS software products on the market. ArcGIS (formerly ArcView), by ESRI, is the Cadillac of GIS software. It is well designed and well supported. Training is available online and in classes that are offered around the country. It can meet simple data presentation needs or perform complex spatial data analyses and graphical representations. The cost in 2007 was \$1500 for a single user license. <http://www.esri.com/>

MapViewer, by Golden Software, is a simpler, easier to learn, and less expensive alternative that will suit the needs of many organizations. The cost in 2007 was \$249. <http://www.goldensoftware.com/>