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## IN THIS ISSUE

**National Survey of  
Children's Health -  
2011/12 Data Release**

**Fact-Finder Updates**

**Education: Process and  
Substance**

**Syria's Children: Crisis  
Report**

**Survey of Youth in  
Residential Placement**

**Is the U.S. Becoming an  
"Also-Ran"?**

**New Release: Child  
Care Arrangements**

**International Data  
Explorer**

**Where'd You Come  
From, Where'd You Go?**

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### NATIONAL SURVEY OF CHILDREN'S HEALTH - 2011/12 DATA RELEASE

The National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH), sponsored by the U.S. Maternal and Child Health Bureau, is one of the few ongoing well-being surveys that yields data representative of children in every state, as well as nationally. Administered every four years since 2003, the latest data were collected in 2011/12.

In addition to continuing trend data on many indicators in the areas of health, access to health care, family and community activities, school engagement, and neighborhood safety and support, the latest version of NSCH introduces several important new topics. Among these are items on preterm births; children's "screen time," including watching television and using other handheld electronic devices; the presence of an adult "mentor"; persistence, curiosity, and resilience; and adverse childhood experiences.

There are several options available to researchers and others who want to explore these data. The Data Resource Center for Child & Adolescent Health (DRC) offers a user-friendly web site that includes a number of commonly-requested tabulations (national, by state, and by population sub-sample), together with several data display options; the DRC also provides expert help with questions, and access to the data sets. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides extensive documentation for the survey, and ftp access to the data sets.

Data Resource Center for Child & Adolescent Health: [www.childhealthdata.org](http://www.childhealthdata.org)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/slits/nsch.htm>

### FACTFINDER UPDATES

American FactFinder, the Census Bureau's online site for accessing decennial Census, American Community Survey, and other data, has had several updates recently. A "Community Facts" feature lets user enter a zip code, town, city, county, or state, and retrieve commonly-requested data (population, income, educational attainment, etc.) on that area.

For those seeking more specific information, there are both "Guided Search" and "Advanced Search" options. "Reference Maps" include geographic boundaries and key features, such as roads, and can be edited, printed, and downloaded. A "Deep Linking Guide" is available for website developers who want to create URLs that link to specific search results or reference maps.

You can learn more at <http://factfinder2.census.gov/>.

## EDUCATION: PROCESS AND SUBSTANCE

In education, a preponderance of measures focuses on characteristics of facilities, staff, funding, enrollments, and courses taken. Notably scarcer are measures that indicate what students know and can do. However, there are recent signs that suggest interest in addressing this imbalance.

Similar to the Common Standards movement in U.S. education, there are efforts underway to specify a global framework of learning domains. UNESCO's Institute for Statistics and the Brookings Institution's Center for Universal Education have convened a Learning Metrics Task Force. A primary aim of the Task Force is to shift the international focus from access to education, to access plus content. Through a staged process, the Task Force will address three big questions:

- What learning is important for all children and youth?
- How should learning outcomes be measured?
- How can measurement of learning improve education quality?

Considering what learning will be important in the 21st century, the task force (with input from more than 500 consultants in 57 countries) has identified seven domains as important for children and youth:

- Physical health and well-being
- Social and emotional learning
- Culture and the arts
- Literacy and communication
- Learning approaches and cognition
- Numeracy and mathematics
- Science and technology

Some of the issues still to be resolved in this undertaking are whether learning goals should be measured in an internationally comparable way, whether assessment ought to include children and youth both in and out of school, and whether measurements should be taken by age cohort or by grade level.

Toward Universal Learning: What Every Child Should Learn is the first in a series of reports. Online updates on this project are posted at [www.brookings.edu/learningmetrics](http://www.brookings.edu/learningmetrics).

Sounding a related theme, a recent policy report from ACT stresses the importance, beginning in early childhood, of content learning. Often, the focus in the early years of formal schooling is on print-decoding, inquiry, and other "learning to learn" skills; but the authors argue that exposure to a rich variety of content is essential for providing the vocabulary and background knowledge that underpins reading comprehension, as well as many higher-order skills, such as abstract thinking. Without early exposure to knowledge, many children (because of the cumulative nature of learning) fail to develop the competence for college or careers. Equally important, the opportunity for students to develop interests—a key factor in academic motivation—is shortchanged if they are lacking sufficient content knowledge. The report argues for a curriculum that brings to students history, science, geography, civics, and the arts, as well as language arts and mathematics.

The report is available at <http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/ImportanceofEarlyLearning.pdf>.

## SYRIA'S CHILDREN: CRISIS REPORT

Among the world's places where children are most immediately threatened, Syria must be near the top of the list. In a recent report, UNICEF declares that an entire generation may be lost as a result of this armed conflict.

Indicators paint a horrific picture. UNICEF estimates that half of the affected population (nearly two million) are children; more than half a million are younger than five. There are more than 520,000 child refugees. Health clinics, schools, and water and sanitation facilities have been severely damaged. Children who have not been direct victims of violence themselves have been traumatized through their exposure to it, or by separation from their parents.

Fortunately, there are also impressive numbers associated with UNICEF's response to the crisis—which includes vaccinations, nutrition aid, and psychosocial support.

Read more at [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/files/Syria\\_2yr\\_Report.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/files/Syria_2yr_Report.pdf).

## SURVEY OF YOUTH IN RESIDENTIAL PLACEMENT

The Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) recently announced the availability of a restricted-use data set derived from the only national survey that collects data directly from youth in the juvenile justice system. Data, from the spring of 2003, are on offenders between the ages of 10 and 20 in nearly all residential placement facilities. Information on youth's backgrounds, offense histories and problems, the facility environment, experiences with alcohol and drugs, victimization while in placement, medical needs and services received, and expectations for the future is included.

More information is at <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/NACJD/studies/34304/detail>.

## IS THE U.S. BECOMING AN “ALSO-RAN”?

Americans generally assume their country ranks at or near the top with regard to most measures of success. A recent UNICEF report (Child Well-Being in Rich Countries) strongly challenges that view—illustrating the dynamic nature of indicators, both over time, and with respect to what is measured.

Of course, it makes sense for the U.S. to be compared with other countries with advanced economies (what UNICEF terms “rich countries”), which for this report means members of the European Union and/or the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Twenty-nine countries in this group are ranked on material well-being, health and safety, education, behaviors and risks, and housing and environment. An averaged rank on child well-being across all five dimensions is also calculated; on this overall ranking, the U.S. is listed at 26th, just ahead of Lithuania, Latvia, and Romania. Top-ranked are the Netherlands, Norway, and Iceland.

Some further highlights:

- The U.S. ranks poorly on child material well-being not only because a large proportion (more than 20 percent) of our children are in relative poverty (below the national median income), but because, on average, they are “deeply” in poverty (nearly 40 percent below the median).
- The U.S. ranks third from the bottom (ahead of Greece and Romania) on educational well-being; our ranking is hurt by low rates of enrollment in preschool, and by relatively low participation in post-secondary education.
- In something of a paradox, the U.S. ranks dead last (that is, with the highest percentage) on the proportion of children who are overweight, but second only to Ireland in the percentage reporting an hour or more of daily vigorous activity.
- On the measure of teen drinking (children who report having been drunk at least twice), the U.S. is best (Lithuania and Finland are worst), and we are fourth-best on youth smoking rates.
- Turning to measures of housing and environment, the U.S. scores relatively well on air pollution (only Estonia and Ireland score better), but near the bottom on rates of homicide (all ages).

See the complete report at <http://www.unicef.org/media/files/RC11-ENG-embargo.pdf>.

## NEW RELEASE: CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS

Since 1985, the Census Bureau has published periodic reports, based on data collected through the Survey of Income and Program Participation, on the types of arrangements families in the U.S. use for the care of their preschool and school-aged children (up to age 15), and their cost. The latest, “Who’s Minding the Kids?”, describes these circumstances as of spring, 2011.

The nature (and cost) of child care differ significantly, depending on whether children are school-age or younger. Younger children (under five) generally

## INTERNATIONAL DATA EXPLORER

The U.S. Department of Education, building on its Data Explorer tool that facilitates analysis of results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, has released its International Data Explorer (IDE). The IDE allows exploration of student achievement data collected from the chief international surveys in which the U.S. participates.

Familiarly referred to by their acronyms, PISA, PIRLS, and TIMSS, these are the Program for International Student Assessment (focusing on math, science, and reading literacy results for 15-year-olds); the Progress in International Reading Studies (focusing on the reading achievement of fourth-grade students, as well as school characteristics and resources); and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, which examines the achievement of eighth-grade students.

You can use the IDE at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/international/ide/>.

## WHERE’D YOU COME FROM, WHERE’D YOU GO?

Today, about 130,000 Americans moved their residence. That’s the estimated daily average computed from the Census Bureau’s data on migration. Much of the moving is in the Los Angeles and Riverside-San Bernardino, CA, metropolitan areas. For example, about 121 people per day moved from Los Angeles County to San Bernardino County. Counties in the Miami, Phoenix, Detroit, and Chicago metro areas were other areas of high “flow.”

In addition to the release of flow tables that average data from the 2006-2010 American Community Surveys, there is also a tool, “Census Flows Mapper,” which allows users to select a U.S. county of interest, and view its inbound, outbound, and net migration flows. Flow data can be further segmented by age, sex, and race/Hispanic origin. For example, Montgomery County, MD, “lost” 801 children ages 5-17 (net migration) to neighboring Prince George’s County (MD), and 115 to the District of Columbia, while “gaining” (again, net of inbound and outbound migration) 379 from Frederick County (MD), and 189 from Fairfax County (VA).

You can learn more at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/migration/data/acs/county-to-county.html>.

spend more hours in care, and fewer hours in “self-care,” than is typical for their older counterparts. Younger children are also more likely than older children to be cared for by non-relatives. Patterns of child care for families where the mother is employed also vary greatly from those where she is not.

Despite a great deal of recent turmoil in the labor force and still unsettled norms around the optimal balance between parenting and employment obligations (particularly for mothers), there has been relatively little change over the past 25 years in the broad outlines of how parents arrange for the care of their children.

Other highlights from the report are these:

- More than one-third (39 percent) of preschoolers (ages birth through four) had no regular child care arrangement. However, among those whose mothers were employed, far fewer (12 percent) had no regular arrangement.
- Multiple arrangements (which can include care by relatives) were the case for more than one in four (27 percent) preschoolers with employed mothers.
- More than three-quarters (78 percent) of these younger children with employed mothers spent at least some time in the care of relatives (including fathers, grandparents, and siblings, as well as others).
- Nearly half (45 percent) of these children received care in organized facilities, primarily day care centers.
- The distribution of care arrangements by type varies by the mother’s race/Hispanic origin, income level, and work schedule, among other factors.

You can find the report at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/p70-135.pdf>.

## ABOUT THE CHILD INDICATOR

The goal of The Child Indicator is to communicate major developments and new resources within each sector of the child and youth indicators field to the larger community of interested users, researchers, and data developers on a regular basis. By promoting the efficient sharing of knowledge, ideas, and resources, The Child Indicator seeks to advance understanding within the child and youth indicators community and to make all of its members more effective in their work. Past issues are available at [www.childtrends.org/ci](http://www.childtrends.org/ci).

We welcome your comments and suggestions. All communications regarding this newsletter can be directed to [dmurphey@childtrends.org](mailto:dmurphey@childtrends.org).

Child Trends is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research center that studies children at all stages of development. Our mission is to improve outcomes for children by providing research, data, and analysis to the people and institutions whose decisions and actions affect children. For additional information on Child Trends, including publications available to download, visit our website at [www.childtrends.org](http://www.childtrends.org). For the latest information on more than 100 key indicators of child and youth well-being, visit the Child Trends DataBank at <http://www.childtrends.org/databank/>. For summaries of over 500 evaluations of out-of-school time programs that work (or don’t) to enhance children’s development, visit <http://www.childtrends.org/what-works/>.

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