

## Federal report shows drop in proportion of children in US population

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(Medical Xpress)—The number of children living in the United States declined slightly, as did the percentage of the U.S. population who are children, according to the federal government's annual statistical report on the well-being of the nation's children and youth. The percentage of children living in the United States who are Asian, non-Hispanic increased, as did the percentage of children who are of two or more races, and the percentage of children who are Hispanic. The percentages of children who are white, non-Hispanic, and black, non-Hispanic declined.

By 2050, about half of the American population ages under 17 is projected to be composed of [children](#) who are Hispanic, Asian, or of two or more races, the [report](#) stated. The report projected that, among children under age 17, 36 percent will be Hispanic (up from 24 percent in 2012); 6 percent will be Asian (up from 5 percent in 2012); and 7 percent will be of two or more races (up from 4 percent in 2012)."

These and other findings are described in *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2013*. The report was compiled by the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, which includes participants from 22 federal agencies as well as partners in several private research organizations. The forum fosters coordination, collaboration, and integration of federal efforts to collect and report data on children and families.

The report, the 16th in an ongoing series, presents key indicators of

children's [wellbeing](#) in seven domains: family and [social environment](#), economic circumstances, health care, [physical environment](#) and safety, behavior, education, and health.

Among the findings in this year's report:

- A drop for the fifth straight year in the percentage of infants born preterm, from 12.8 percent in 2006 to 11.7 in 2011.
- A drop in the percentage of children ages 4–11 with any detectable blood cotinine level, a measure for recent exposure to [secondhand smoke](#), from 53 percent in the years 2007 and 2008 to 42 percent in 2009 and 2010).
- A drop in births to adolescents, from 17 per 1,000 girls ages 15 to 17 in 2009 to 15 per 1,000 in 2011 (preliminary data).
- A drop in the percentage of births to unmarried women ages 15 to 44, from 40.8 percent in 2010 to 40.7 percent in 2011.
- A rise in the percentage of male and female 12th graders who reported binge drinking—consuming five or more alcoholic beverages in a row in the past two weeks—from 22 percent in 2011 to 24 percent in 2012.
- A drop in the percentage of children from birth to 17 years of age living with two married parents, from 65 percent in 2010 to 64 percent in 2011.
- A drop in the percentage of children from birth to 17 years with no usual source of health care, from 5 percent in 2010 to 4 percent in 2011.
- A rise in the percentage of households with children from birth to 17 years that reported housing that costs more than 30 percent of household income, crowding, and/or physically inadequate housing, from 45 percent in 2009 to 46 percent in 2011.
- A rise in the percentage of children from birth to 17 years of age living with at least one parent employed year round full time, from 71 percent in 2010 to 73 percent in 2011.

- A drop in the percentage of children ages 5–17 with untreated dental caries (cavities or tooth decay) over the past decade, from 23 percent in 1999 - 2004 to 14 percent in 2009 – 2010.
- A rise in the percentage of children ages 5–17 with a dental visit in the past year from 85 percent in 2010 to 87 percent in 2011.

The percentage of youth ages 12–17 who had a major depressive episode was unchanged in the previous year (8.2 percent in 2010 and 2011). However, this figure was lower than the 2004 high of 9 percent. The report notes that adolescent depression can affect school and work performance, impair peer and family relationships, and exacerbate other health conditions, such as asthma and obesity.

The Healthy Eating Index score, a measure of overall dietary quality did not differ significantly from recent years. For children ages 2-17, total scores ranged between 47 and 50 percent in 2003-2004, 2005-2006, and 2007-2008, . The report noted that the diet quality of children and adolescents fell considerably short of recommendations.

"Poor eating patterns can lead to childhood obesity and contribute to chronic diseases starting in childhood, such as type 2 diabetes, and those that emerge throughout the life cycle, such as cardiovascular disease," the report stated.

The report added that the diet quality of children and adolescents would be improved by an increase in vegetables, especially dark greens and beans, replacing refined grains with whole grains, substituting seafood for some meat and poultry, and decreasing the intake of sodium, solid fats, and added sugars.

This year's report includes a special feature on the kindergarten year, described as a pivotal marker for children's development..Three and a half million children entered kindergarten for the first time in the fall of

2010.

On average, girls received higher scores than boys on kindergarten entry assessments in reading and approaches to learning. There were no differences between girls and boys in mathematics and science.

The special feature was based on data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2010—2011 (ECLS-K:2011), conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics.

The report noted that the ECLS-K:2011 will follow the children's progress through the fifth grade, providing information on how the children's development may be shaped by such factors as child care, home educational environment, teachers' instructional practices, and class size.

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