

THE MEASURE OF AMERICA

AMERICAN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2008–2009

FACTOIDS FROM “THE MEASURE OF AMERICA”

HEALTH

The U.S. will spend \$230 million on health care in the next hour.

One in six Americans goes without health insurance (around 47 million people).

According to the National Academy of Sciences, lack of health insurance results in lost economic value equal to \$178 million to \$356 million every day, due to the poorer health and earlier deaths of the uninsured.

The U.S. ranks #24 among the 30 most affluent countries in life expectancy – yet spends more on health care than any other nation.

The U.S. infant mortality rate is on par with that of Croatia, Cuba, Estonia, and Poland; if the U.S. infant mortality rate were the same as that of top-ranked Sweden, 21,000 more American babies would live to celebrate their first birthdays every year.

A baby born in Washington, D.C. is almost two-and-a-half times more likely to die before age one than a baby born in Vermont. African American babies are more than twice as likely to die before age one than either white or Latino babies.

Changes in behavior and the physical and social environment can help avoid about 70 percent of premature deaths.

Insured adults under sixty-five are 50 percent more likely to have had cancer screenings than the uninsured; early detection saves lives and dramatically lowers treatment costs.

Premature death by homicide is more than five times higher in the U.S. than the OECD average; 68 percent of U.S. homicides in 2006 were committed with a firearm.

Nearly a third of all female murder victims were killed by intimate partners (husbands and boyfriends).

More than one million Americans are living with HIV.

One American dies every 90 seconds from obesity-related health problems.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, children living in central cities are less likely to play outside than other children; in central cities, 48 percent of Latino children and 39 percent of African American children were kept inside because of parental perceptions of neighborhood danger. Inactivity is considered a major factor in obesity among 66 million young people.

African American children are two-and-a-half times more likely to be hospitalized for asthma than white children – and five times more likely to die of asthma.

Suicide is the eleventh-leading cause of death in the U.S. overall, and the third-leading cause of death among children and adolescents. More than 90 percent of those who die by suicide have had mental or substance-abuse disorders.

One in seventeen Americans (about 6 percent of the population) suffers from severe mental illness.

More than half of all personal bankruptcies in the U.S. are related to an inability to pay for illness or injury.

ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE

College graduates can expect, on average, double the lifetime earnings of high school graduates.

Fourteen percent of the population – some 30 million Americans – lacks the literacy skills to perform simple, everyday tasks like understanding newspaper articles and instruction manuals.

Twelve percent of Americans lack the literacy skills to fill in a job application or payroll form, read a map or bus schedule, or understand labels on food and drugs.

More than one in five Americans – 22 percent of the population – have “below basic” quantitative skills, making it impossible to balance a checkbook, calculate a tip, or figure out from an advertisement the amount of interest on a loan.

In 2006, 4.5 million young people ages eighteen to twenty-four were not in school, not working, and had not graduated high school.

Nearly one in six American children lives in a family whose head didn't graduate high school.

School quality is a decisive factor in choosing where to live for many families with school-aged children; in 2003, parents of about one-quarter of all students reported that they had moved to their current neighborhood to enable their children to attend a better school.

White children ages one to five are about four times more likely to have been read to in the past week than Hispanic children, and about 50 percent more likely to have been read to than African American children.

By age three, the children of affluent mothers have vocabularies twice as large as those of the children of low-income mothers.

Among four-year-olds, 40 percent of children from disadvantaged backgrounds were proficient in number and shape recognition, compared to 87 percent of children from privileged families.

High quality preschool for disadvantaged children has positive long-term impacts; children who participated in the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project had a 44 percent higher high school graduation

rate, had 50 percent fewer teen pregnancies, were 46 percent less likely to have served jail time, and had a 42 percent higher median monthly income than the control group.

Educational expenditures vary significantly by state; New Jersey and New York spend around \$14,000 per pupil, Utah spends less than \$6,000 per pupil.

Schools with high proportions of minority students, poor students, and English-language learners were more likely to hire novice teachers than schools with low proportions of these students. Minority and low-income children are more likely to be taught English, science, and math by an “out-of-field” teacher than are high-income and/or white students.

African American students are three times more likely than whites to be placed in special education programs, and only half as likely to be placed in gifted programs.

In 2003, 45 percent of children whose parents had advanced degrees were in gifted classes, compared with 10 percent of children whose parents did not graduate high school. Children whose parents were married and better-off also were more likely to be in gifted classes than children of the never-married or poor.

Only three-fourths of American public high students graduated on time (within four years) with a regular diploma in 2003-2004.

College-going rates among high-achieving high school graduates from poor families are about the same as the college-going rates for the lowest-achieving high graduates from affluent families.

Children whose parents have at least a college degree enter college at more than twice the rate of children whose parents did not graduate high school; disparities in degree attainment are greater still.

STANDARD OF LIVING

The richest 20 percent of all U.S. households earned more than half of the nation's total income in 2006.

The top 1 percent of U.S. households possesses a full third of America's wealth.

Households in the top 10 percent of the income distribution hold more than 71 percent of the country's wealth, while those in the lowest 60 percent possess just 4 percent.

Nearly one in five American children lives in poverty, with more than one in thirteen living in extreme poverty.

The poverty line for a family of four (two adults and two children) is an income of \$21,027 before taxes; in 2006, more than 36 million Americans were classified poor by this definition.

In every racial/ethnic group, men earn more than their female counterparts.

In 1980, the average executive earned forty-two times as much as the average factory worker; today, executives earn some four hundred times what factory workers in their industries earn.

In 2004, median net worth was \$140,800 for whites, and \$24,900 for nonwhites.

The real value of the minimum wage has decreased by 40 percent in the past forty years.

OTHER DOMESTIC ISSUES

Homelessness:

Over the course of a year, at least 1.35 million children are at some point homeless.

More families with children are homeless today than at any time since the Great Depression.

Hunger:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture reported that on a typical day in November 2005, members of well over half a million households had their normal eating patterns disrupted due to lack of money or other resources.

Criminal Justice:

**The U.S. has 5 percent of the world's people –
but 24 percent of the world's prisoners.**

In absolute numbers and as a percentage of the population, the U.S. has more prisoners than any other country, including China and Russia.

From the 1920's until the 1970's, the U.S. prison population was stable at about 110 per 100,000, about the same as our peer nations today. But now more than 700 people out of every 100,000 are behind bars.

African Americans are imprisoned at six to eight times the rate of whites; the rate is much higher for African Americans who do not graduate high school; by age thirty-five, 60 percent of African American high school dropouts will have spent time in prison.

State and federal prison inmates average just eleven years of schooling.

About 1,900 people with criminal records are released every day and, according to the Department of Justice, two-thirds of them will eventually end up back in prison.

INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

A poor child born in Germany, France, Canada, or one of the Nordic countries has a better chance to join the middle class in adulthood than an American child born into similar circumstances.

The U.S. ranks second among 177 countries in per-capita income but 12th on human development, according to the global Human Development Index, published annually by the United Nations Development Programme. Each of the 11 countries ahead of the U.S. has a lower per-capita income than the U.S., but all perform better on the health and knowledge dimensions.

The U.S. infant mortality rate is on par with that of Croatia, Cuba, Estonia, and Poland.

If the U.S. infant mortality rate were equal to that of first-ranked Sweden, twenty-one thousand more American babies would have lived to celebrate their first birthdays in 2005.

In 98 countries, new mothers have 14 or more weeks of paid maternity leave. The U.S. has no federally mandated paid maternity leave.

The United States ranks second in the world in per-capita income (behind Luxembourg), but thirty-fourth in survival of infants to age one.

The U.S. ranks forty-second in global life expectancy and first among the world's twenty-five richest countries in the percentage of children living in poverty.

In the 2006 OECD international assessment of fifteen-year-olds, in math, the U.S. came in twenty-fourth, and in science, the U.S. came in seventeenth.

The U.S. incarceration rate is five-to-nine times greater than that of our peer nations.

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