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Assessing
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An Urban Institute Program
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Children's Behavior and Well-Being

Findings from the National Survey of America's Families

Many of the adults affected by social policies implemented under devolution have children, so these policy changes may also affect children's lives. Clearly, the behaviors, resources, and well-being of adult family members help shape each child's environment. In turn, the family environment may ultimately affect performance in school, social and emotional adjustment, health, and other dimensions of child well-being (Child Trends 1999). Between 1997 and 1999, none of the indicators of well-being examined here changed for children in the United States as a whole, but interesting patterns emerged among children in different income groups. The changes tended to be positive for low-income children and negative for higher-income children, but a large gap between the well-being of low- and higher-income children persisted at the national level, with low-income children faring significantly worse on all measures.

This Snapshot presents findings on several parent-reported measures of child well-being from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families (NSAF) and compares these findings with data reported from the 1997 NSAF. These data are available for representative samples of the United States as well as for 13 states. Findings are discussed separately for adolescents and for younger children. In addition, this Snapshot compares the status of low-income children—those living in families with incomes below 200 percent of poverty in 1998—with that of higher-income children, whose family incomes exceeded 200 percent of poverty.

Ideally, child well-being should be measured using a broad array of indicators (Moore 1997). Although it was not possible to conduct individual assessments or personal interviews with children themselves, the NSAF incorporated a limited but carefully selected set of measures to provide a picture of child well-being during this period of policy devolution. Based on questions that parents answered about their children, the following measures were constructed:

- Engagement in school¹ (ages 6 to 17)
- Participation in at least one extracurricular activity in the past year² (ages 6 to 17)
- Levels of behavioral and emotional problems³ (ages 6 to 17)
- Skipping school once or more in the past year (ages 12 to 17 only)
- Expulsion or suspension from school in the past year (ages 12 to 17 only)
- Fair or poor child health⁴ (ages 0 to 17)

HIGHLIGHTS

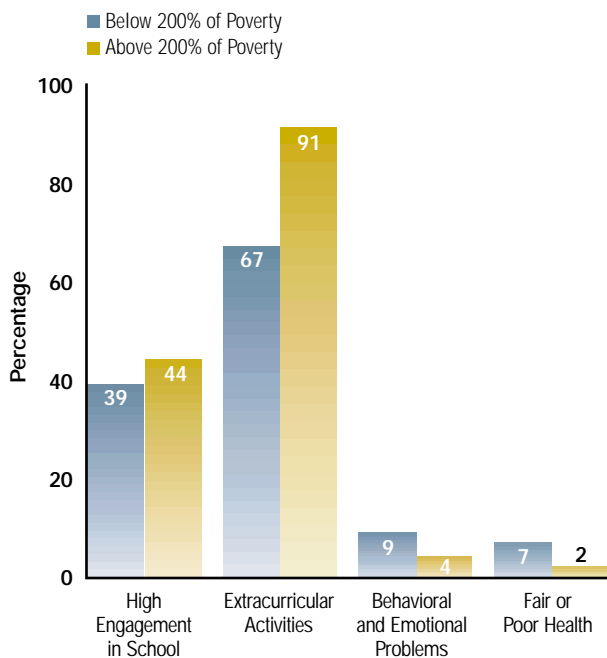
- At the national level only small changes were found in measures of children's well-being between 1997 and 1999. Where there were changes, they tended to be negative for children in higher-income families and positive for children in lower-income families.
- School engagement declined among higher-income children, but increased among lower-income children.
- A significant gap in well-being persists between children of different income levels, with low-income children experiencing disadvantages on all child outcome measures in 1999.



These measures tap crucial aspects of child well-being.⁵ For example, high engagement in school is associated with better school performance and postponed pregnancy (Connell, Spencer, and Aber 1994; Manlove 1998). Participation in extracurricular activities has been linked to improved academic performance, reduced rates of early dropout and criminal arrest, and lower risk of school-age motherhood (Eccles and Barber 1999; Mahoney 2000; Moore et al. 1998). Behavioral and emotional problems have been associated with lower literacy scores, persistent behavior problems, and maladjustment in later development (Ferdinand et al. 1999; Baydar, Brooks-Gunn, and Furstenburg 1993).

Different measures of well-being are appropriate for children of different ages. Accordingly, children ages 6 to 11 and adolescents ages 12 to 17 are discussed separately below.

Figure 1: Children Ages 6 to 11 Experiencing Various Child Outcomes, by Family Income, 1999



Source: Child Trends and Urban Institute

Children Ages 6 to 11

School Engagement. According to NSAF data, 42 percent of 6- to 11-year-olds in the United States were highly engaged in school in 1999. School engagement differed by income: 39 percent of low-income children were highly engaged in school in 1999, compared with 44 percent of their higher-income peers (figure 1). This gap persisted from 1997 to 1999 despite a 4 percentage point drop among higher-income children during the two-year period (figure 2).

Extracurricular Activities. Eighty-one percent of all 6- to 11-year-olds surveyed in 1999 had engaged in one or more extracurricular activities in the past year. Activity involvement, like school engagement, differed by income: 91 percent of higher-income children—and only 67 percent of low-income children—had participated in at least one activity (figure 1). This gap widened significantly between 1997 and 1999, as low-income children’s activity participation dropped by 4 percentage points (figure 2). While this decline may reflect behavioral changes, it may also reflect reduced access to sports, music, and arts programs for low-income children.

Behavioral and Emotional Problems. In 1999, only 6 percent of 6- to 11-year-olds exhibited high levels of behavioral and emotional problems, the same proportion as in 1997. These problems were more common to low-income children (9 percent) than to higher-income children (4 percent), as shown in figure 1, and the percentages for each group were similar in 1997 and 1999 (figure 2).

Fair or Poor Health. Most 6- to 11-year-olds were relatively healthy in 1999; just 4 percent were described as being in fair or poor health. Low-income children, however, were more than three times as likely to be in fair or poor health than were higher-income children of the same age (7 and 2 percent, respectively; figure 1). A similar income differential exists for children under age 6 (6 and 2 percent for low-income and higher-income children, respectively). The reported prevalence of fair or poor health was similar for both income groups between 1997 and 1999 and for both age groups.

Well-Being of 6- to 11-Year-Old Children in 13 States in 1999. The well-being of 6- to 11-year-olds varied across the 13 NSAF states. In general, state levels differed from the national average by fewer than 5 percentage points on any given measure (table 1 on page 4). Among all 6- to 11-year-olds, the measure that varied most across states was participation in extracurricular activities, which ranged from 74 percent in Texas to 91 percent in Minnesota, with a national average of 81 percent.

Among children of all income levels combined, two states performed as well as or better than the national average on all indicators. Besides surpassing the national average on extracurricular activities, Minnesota outperformed the national average on measures of health and behavioral and emotional problems. New Jersey did better than the national average on three measures: engagement in school, extracurricular activities, and behavioral and emotional problems. In contrast, Mississippi fared worse than the national average on measures of extracurricular activities and health and did not surpass the national average on any measure.

Adolescents Ages 12 to 17

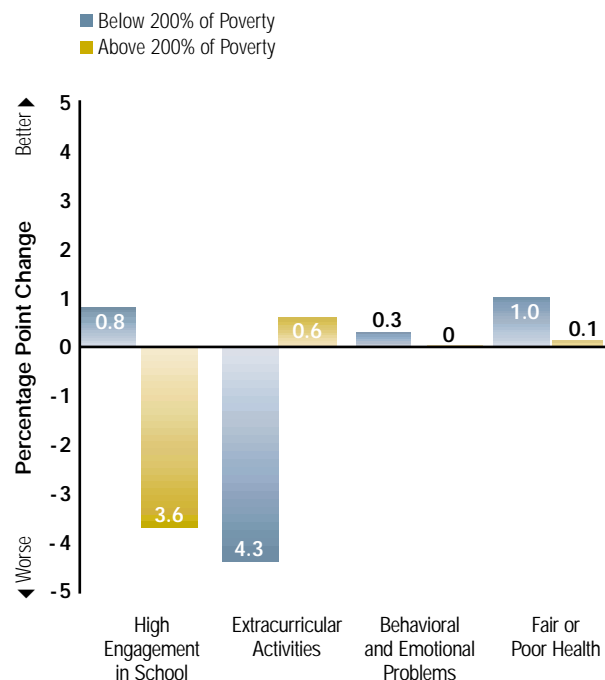
School Engagement. Thirty-eight percent of all 12- to 17-year-olds were highly engaged in school in 1999. There was a gap between low- and higher-income adolescents: 34 percent of low-income adolescents and 41 percent of their higher-income peers were highly engaged in school (figure 3 on page 4). Yet, this gap narrowed between 1997 and 1999, as school engagement improved by 4 percentage points among low-income adolescents and deteriorated by 3 percentage points among higher-income adolescents (figure 4 on page 5). This decline occurred primarily among adolescents with family incomes over 300 percent of the federal poverty level in 1998 (not shown).

Extracurricular Activities. In 1999, 83 percent of all 12- to 17-year-olds had participated in at least one extracurricular activity during the past year. Nationwide, there was no change in activity participation between 1997 and 1999 for either income group or for 12- to 17-year-olds overall. In 1999, as in 1997, low-income adolescents were less likely to engage in extracurricular activities (73 percent) than higher-income adolescents (89 percent), as shown in figure 3 on page 4.

Behavioral and Emotional Problems. Only 7 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds exhibited high levels of behavioral and emotional problems in 1999. Low-income adolescents, however, were more likely to have such problems than their higher-income peers (10 versus 6 percent; figure 3 on page 4). This gap narrowed significantly between 1997 and 1999, as the prevalence of such problems among low-income adolescents declined by 5 percentage points (figure 4 on page 5).

Skippping School and Expulsions or Suspensions. In 1999, 15 percent of all adolescents had skipped school one or more times in the past year and 14 percent had been expelled or suspended, proportions that had not changed from 1997. There was a large gap between low-income and higher-income adolescents; 20 percent of low-income and 13 percent of higher-income adolescents had skipped school (figure 3 on page 4). Low-income adolescents were also two-and-a-half times as likely as higher-income adolescents to have been expelled or suspended from school in the previous year (22 and 9 percent, respectively; figure 4 on page 5). Nationwide, these indicators remained the same in 1997 and 1999 for both income groups of 12- to 17-year-olds.

Figure 2: Improvements and Deteriorations in Behavior and Well-Being among Children Ages 6 to 11, by Family Income, 1997–1999

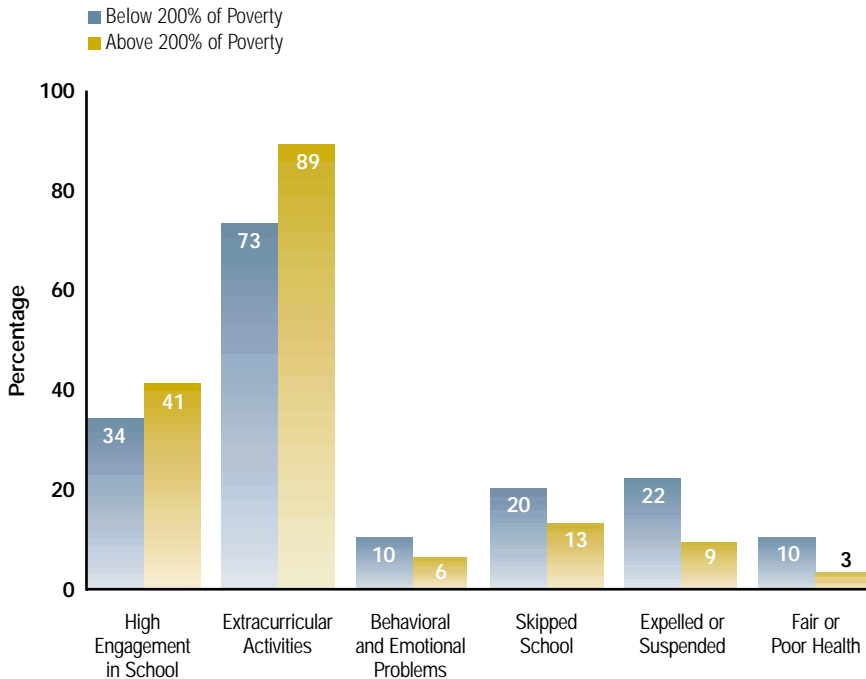


Source: Child Trends and Urban Institute



Fair or Poor Health. Finally, as with younger children, 12- to 17-year-olds were generally healthy in 1999, as reported by their parents. But low-income adolescents were more than three times as likely as higher-income adolescents to be in fair or poor health (10 and 3 percent, respectively; figure 3). This gap persisted between 1997 and 1999, although the relatively small proportion of higher-income adolescents in fair or poor health doubled during this time.

Figure 3: Children Ages 12 to 17 Experiencing Various Child Outcomes, by Family Income, 1999



Source: Child Trends and Urban Institute

Adolescent Well-Being in 13 States in 1999.

Most of the 13 NSAF states diverged from the national average on one or more indicators of well-being among 12- to 17-year-olds. With a few exceptions, state levels differed from the national average by less than 5 percentage points for any given outcome among adolescents of all incomes (table 1). The widest state variation was in the percentage of adolescents who skipped school—ranging from 9 percent in Alabama to 25 percent in Colorado, with a national average of 15 percent.

Among adolescents of all income levels combined, two states performed as well as or better than the national average on all indicators: Adolescents in Alabama did better than the national average on parent-reported measures of health and skipping school, while Michigan adolescents outperformed the national average on measures of extracurricular activities and health. In contrast, skipping school was more common among adolescents in California than in the nation as a whole, while New York adolescents fared worse than the national average on health. Neither state outperformed the national average on any measure.

TABLE 1 | Indicators of Children’s Behavior and Well-Being, by State

	AL		CA		CO		FL		MA		MI		MN	
	97	99	97	99	97	99	97	99	97	99	97	99	97	99
Children (%) Ages 6 to 17 Highly Engaged in School, by Family Income and Age, 1997–1999														
Below 200% of poverty level														
Age 6–11	28.4	34.3	30.7	35.8	37.9	33.5	33.1	34.7	29.4	35.7	38.3	36.9	38.4	46.2
Age 12–17	26.8	34.2 ▲	31.7	37.3	27.9	28.3	30.2	32.9	33.6	25.8	28.8	28.2	32.0	34.0
Age 6–17	27.7	34.3 ▲	31.1	36.5	33.5	31.3	31.7	33.9	31.4	31.2	33.9	33.2	35.5	40.9
Above 200% of poverty level														
Age 6–11	44.5	51.4	43.8	39.2	39.7	41.5	45.9	49.6	41.3	48.9 ▲	42.6	46.0	42.8	45.8
Age 12–17	44.6	44.2	41.9	42.2	33.0	38.6	40.3	40.6	45.2	43.4	37.2	46.2 ▲	40.6	36.6
Age 6–17	44.6	47.5	42.9	40.6	36.4	40.0	43.2	45.0	43.2	46.2	39.8	46.1 ▲	41.6	40.8
All incomes														
Age 6–11	36.3	42.5 ▲	37.3	37.8	39.1	38.8	39.8	42.5	37.6	45.1 ▲	41.1	42.7	41.4	45.9
Age 12–17	37.1	40.1	37.5	40.2	31.4	35.9	35.5	37.5	41.7	38.7	34.7	41.0 ▲	38.4	36.0
Age 6–17	36.7	41.3 ▲	37.4	38.9	35.4	37.4	37.7	40.1	39.6	42.1	37.8	41.9	39.9	40.8

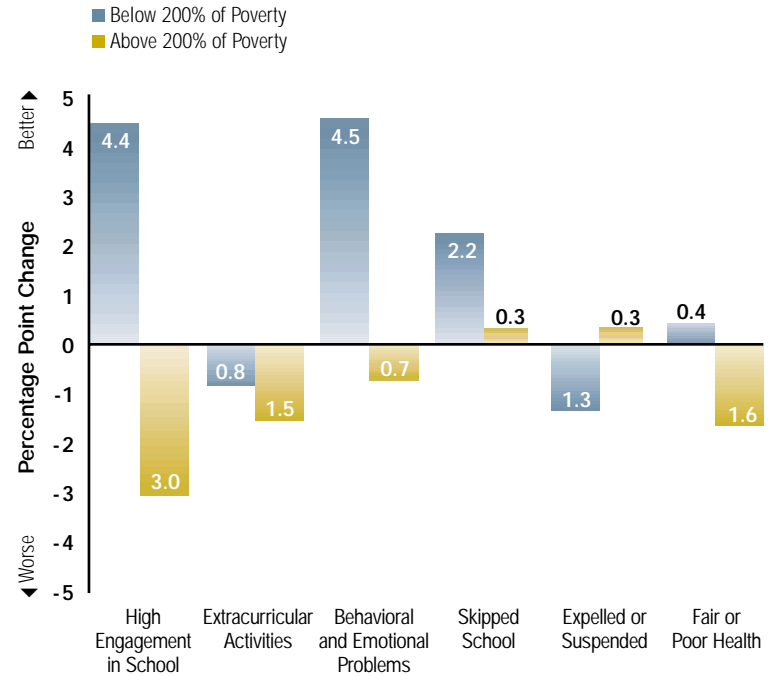
Discussion

Nationwide, between 1997 and 1999, children showed neither large improvements nor large declines in measures of well-being examined in the NSAF. However, it may take longer than two years for the measures examined here to show changes. It is also possible that positive changes for some children were offset by negative changes for other children, producing no net change. Moreover, as shown in this Snapshot, levels of and changes in well-being vary from state to state. These state-level changes may reflect individual state policies as well as the social and economic circumstances of each state.

Despite the lack of significant changes in child outcomes for the nation as a whole, several indicators did change for children in different income groups. At the national level, the only two improvements—in the prevalence of high school engagement and behavioral and emotional problems—occurred among low-income adolescents. These improvements contrast with the negative effects that some feared welfare reform would have on low-income children. However, the pattern is less clear for younger children, since low-income 6- to 11-year-olds' participation in extracurricular activities declined. At the same time, higher-income children and adolescents experienced a handful of relatively small changes for the worse on specific measures, including a decline in school engagement among all children and health status among adolescents.

Despite the observed changes, a significant and sizable gap persists between low- and higher-income children, with low-income children continuing to fare worse on every indicator of child well-being. Further monitoring of trends in child outcomes over time will be needed to disentangle the effects of complex influences on child well-being.

Figure 4: Improvements and Deteriorations in Behavior and Well-Being among Children Ages 12 to 17, by Family Income, 1997–1999



Source: Child Trends and Urban Institute

MS		NJ		NY		TX		WA		WI		US	
97	99	97	99	97	99	97	99	97	99	97	99	97	99
32.4	35.2	39.8	35.1	36.9	41.3	39.1	37.5	35.6	40.0	38.6	42.4	38.1	38.9
26.5	35.6 ▲	26.1	36.5 ▲	33.3	27.8	37.0	34.2	26.6	27.8	33.0	34.9	29.6	34.0 ▲
29.6	35.4 ▲	33.6	35.7	35.3	35.3	38.1	36.0	31.7	34.2	36.0	38.9	34.3	36.7 ▲
47.7	46.0	49.8	49.9	46.7	41.1	39.5	49.2 ▲	50.3	36.5 ▼	44.6	43.6	47.3	43.7 ▼
35.7	43.6	41.8	42.6	43.4	41.0	47.3	40.3	41.7	40.2	41.4	39.6	43.7	40.7 ▼
41.1	44.7	46.1	46.4	45.1	41.0	43.3	44.9	46.0	38.4 ▼	42.9	41.4	45.5	42.1 ▼
38.5	39.8	47.0	45.6	42.4	41.2	39.3	43.4	45.0	37.6 ▼	42.6	43.2	43.3	41.7
30.8	39.8 ▲	37.5	41.0	39.4	35.8	42.6	37.4 ▼	37.2	36.7	39.0	38.4	38.4	38.3
34.6	39.8 ▲	42.6	43.5	41.0	38.6	40.9	40.6	41.2	37.1 ▼	40.7	40.7	40.9	40.1



TABLE 1 Indicators of Children's Behavior and Well-Being, by State (continued)

	AL		CA		CO		FL		MA		MI		MN	
	97	99	97	99	97	99	97	99	97	99	97	99	97	99
Children (%) Ages 6 to 17 Participating in Extracurricular Activities, by Family Income and Age, 1997–1999														
Below 200% of poverty level														
Age 6–11	67.9	65.4	69.5	67.9	69.6	77.8 ▲	71.4	64.4	72.8	72.8	70.4	70.5	72.6	82.3 ▲
Age 12–17	68.6	73.8	75.1	68.1	70.4	82.0 ▲	71.1	70.8	74.1	74.8	74.7	73.2	77.1	77.2
Age 6–17	68.2	69.1	72.0	68.0	70.0	79.6 ▲	71.3	67.3	73.4	73.7	72.4	71.7	74.7	80.1 ▲
Above 200% of poverty level														
Age 6–11	88.4	87.8	91.0	86.7	92.4	92.9	89.1	87.1	94.3	92.1	86.2	91.6 ▲	91.7	94.8 ▲
Age 12–17	89.1	89.2	91.5	85.9 ▼	88.3	89.8	85.9	85.7	91.7	86.4 ▼	88.9	91.8	89.5	89.3
Age 6–17	88.7	88.6	91.3	86.3 ▼	90.4	91.2	87.5	86.4	93.0	89.3 ▼	87.6	91.7 ▲	90.6	91.8
All incomes														
Age 6–11	77.9	76.2	80.2	78.9	84.4	87.7	80.7	76.3	87.7	86.6	80.5	83.9	85.9	91.0 ▲
Age 12–17	80.5	82.8	84.3	78.8	82.6	87.7 ▲	78.8	79.7	86.4	83.4	84.6	86.3	86.4	86.7
Age 6–17	79.2	79.5	82.2	78.9	83.5	87.7 ▲	79.8	78.0	87.0	85.1	82.6	85.1 ▲	86.2	88.8 ▲
Children (%) Ages 6 to 17 with High Levels of Behavioral and Emotional Problems, by Family Income and Age, 1997–1999														
Below 200% of poverty level														
Age 6–11	12.7	12.6	8.0	8.1	7.2	7.5	8.3	10.5	13.5	10.8	11.5	13.3	10.3	4.6 ▼
Age 12–17	12.7	9.4	10.6	8.2	9.8	12.8	9.3	14.5	10.8	11.8	12.9	9.1	12.9	19.3
Above 200% of poverty level														
Age 6–11	2.1	5.1	3.2	5.0	5.2	5.4	7.6	3.7	6.7	4.9	4.6	5.9	5.4	3.4
Age 12–17	7.3	6.1	6.1	5.6	5.8	6.4	8.4	6.2	5.8	4.2	5.3	4.5	7.8	8.3
All incomes														
Age 6–11	7.6	9.0	5.6	6.3	5.9	6.1	7.9	6.9	8.8	6.6	7.1	8.6	6.9	3.7 ▼
Age 12–17	9.5	7.5	8.0	6.6	7.1	8.1	8.8	9.5	7.3	6.2	7.6	5.8	9.1	10.6
Children (%) Ages 12 to 17 Who Were Expelled or Suspended from School, by Family Income, 1997–1999														
Below 200% of poverty level	29.0	18.9 ▼	13.6	24.5 ▲	14.8	10.9	17.0	20.3	20.9	20.9	19.4	23.2	17.1	23.6
Above 200% of poverty level	13.2	9.2	10.3	5.3 ▼	13.7	11.9	11.0	11.8	6.4	7.7	12.6	10.2	9.3	9.2
All incomes	19.8	13.3 ▼	11.8	13.3	14.1	11.7	13.9	15.3	10.8	11.1	14.7	14.0	11.2	12.4
Children (%) Ages 12 to 17 Who Skipped School One or More Times, by Family Income, 1997–1999														
Below 200% of poverty level	15.4	7.4 ▼	27.0	26.5	26.5	30.0	21.2	19.5	22.6	27.6	18.6	21.8	24.1	24.7
Above 200% of poverty level	10.7	9.7	17.7	15.6	24.1	23.5	15.8	12.6	8.9	13.3 ▲	17.7	12.7 ▼	12.2	16.0 ▲
All incomes	12.6	8.7 ▼	21.7	20.1	24.9	25.2	18.4	15.4	13.1	17.1 ▲	18.0	15.4	15.1	17.9
Children (%) Ages 0 to 17 in Fair or Poor Health, by Family Income and Age, 1997–1999⁶														
Below 200% of poverty level														
Age 0–5	6.4	6.0	11.8	9.0	7.8	6.7	5.5	6.3	7.6	5.5	5.7	6.8	4.8	3.7
Age 6–11	11.4	9.6	11.1	9.8	7.7	9.8	7.8	5.1	6.6	5.7	6.7	5.9	3.9	2.5
Age 12–17	7.2	6.2	14.1	13.5	13.4	8.1	7.1	13.0	6.2	10.8	9.2	8.9	6.4	6.8
Age 0–17	8.4	7.3	12.2	10.6	9.4	8.2	6.8	7.9	6.8	7.2	7.1	7.1	5.0	4.2
Above 200% of poverty level														
Age 0–5	1.2	1.6	1.4	2.5	1.2	2.8	0.6	2.8 ▲	1.2	1.7	1.3	2.6	2.3	1.6
Age 6–11	4.9	1.6 ▼	1.5	1.9	0.8	1.5	2.8	2.3	0.7	2.1	2.1	2.3	1.7	1.1
Age 12–17	1.9	1.9	4.2	4.6	2.6	2.0	3.9	3.6	1.4	2.4	1.4	2.4	2.1	3.5
Age 0–17	2.6	1.7	2.4	3.0	1.5	2.1	2.4	2.9	1.1	2.1 ▲	1.6	2.4	2.0	2.2
All incomes														
Age 0–5	3.9	3.8	7.2	5.4	3.7	4.3	3.1	4.4	3.1	2.9	2.9	4.2	3.1	2.3
Age 6–11	8.2	5.8	6.4	5.2	3.2	4.4	5.2	3.6	2.5	3.1	3.7	3.6	2.4	1.5
Age 12–17	4.1	3.7	8.6	8.3	6.0	3.6	5.4	7.4	2.8	4.6	3.8	4.4	3.2	4.2
Age 0–17	5.4	4.4	7.3	6.2	4.3	4.1	4.6	5.1	2.8	3.5	3.5	4.0	2.9	2.7

Note: Figures in color represent values that are statistically significantly different from the 1999 national average at the 0.10 confidence level. The symbols "▲" and "▼" represent statistically significant increases and decreases, respectively, between 1997 and 1999 at the 0.10 confidence level.

MS		NJ		NY		TX		WA		WI		US	
97	99	97	99	97	99	97	99	97	99	97	99	97	99
64.5	66.4	71.6	76.5	67.2	73.0	65.0	62.0	69.3	78.7 ▲	75.6	77.0	71.8	67.5 ▼
79.0	77.2	76.7	76.3	71.4	72.6	72.3	69.1	82.1	72.5 ▼	81.1	73.4 ▼	73.4	72.6
71.4	71.1	73.9	76.4	69.0	72.8	68.5	65.2	74.9	75.7	78.3	75.3	72.6	69.8 ▼
85.3	90.8 ▲	92.4	93.9	90.9	86.4	88.4	86.4	89.8	89.5	89.3	92.6 ▲	90.2	90.8
87.6	88.6	91.4	90.8	92.4	91.5	87.7	92.5	92.2	91.6	88.4	86.3	90.1	88.6
86.6	89.6	91.9	92.4	91.6	89.0	88.1	89.4	91.0	90.6	88.8	89.1	90.1	89.6
72.8	76.9	86.5	88.9	80.4	80.4	77.3	74.2	82.3	86.1 ▲	84.6	87.6 ▲	82.2	81.1
83.1	83.2	87.2	87.0	84.1	84.1	80.6	81.4	89.1	86.2	86.3	82.9 ▼	83.7	83.0
78.0	79.9	86.8	88.0	82.1	82.2	78.9	77.6	85.6	86.2	85.5	85.2	83.0	82.0
11.6	10.0	8.3	7.8	12.6	7.8	12.5	6.3 ▼	7.4	4.8	11.3	12.6	9.6	9.3
17.9	12.8	11.6	8.0	9.8	8.4	12.6	12.9	10.3	10.3	15.7	14.7	14.8	10.3 ▼
5.1	5.8	5.5	3.2 ▼	5.2	3.7	5.9	4.8	4.6	5.2	5.1	5.2	4.2	4.2
5.2	6.4	4.2	5.2	4.7	5.5	5.6	5.9	5.1	5.8	5.3	7.1	5.2	5.9
9.0	8.2	6.3	4.5	8.5	5.6 ▼	9.0	5.6 ▼	5.6	5.0	7.2	7.5	6.6	6.3
11.9	9.4	6.2	5.9	6.7	6.7	8.8	9.2	6.7	7.1	8.3	9.0	8.8	7.4
30.8	35.7	20.9	29.1	13.2	18.3	16.8	14.7	18.2	17.2	20.6	21.4	21.1	22.4
10.4	10.9	9.6	8.3	8.1	7.2	8.5	10.5	9.0	9.7	7.5	8.9	9.6	9.3
21.4	22.7	12.8	13.7	10.1	11.6	12.3	12.5	11.7	11.7	11.4	12.0	13.9	13.9
17.8	14.5	23.4	21.3	24.4	22.4	19.3	16.7	20.8	24.1	20.6	23.0	22.3	20.1
9.6	7.3	13.2	11.9	10.7	13.1	9.0	10.9	14.6	13.9	11.2	13.7	13.3	13.0
14.0	10.7	16.1	14.4	16.1	16.8	13.7	13.7	16.4	16.7	13.9	16.1	16.7	15.5
7.0	9.3	5.3	9.4 ▲	9.5	6.8	10.9	8.9	6.1	4.9	3.5	5.3	7.3	6.3
9.4	13.4	5.9	12.2 ▲	5.8	8.1	11.0	10.5	5.5	7.4	3.8	6.4	7.7	6.7
10.0	15.5	11.7	10.8	7.2	15.2 ▲	15.1	13.3	9.8	9.3	9.5	5.6	10.1	10.5
8.8	12.6 ▲	7.4	10.8 ▲	7.6	9.7	12.2	10.7	6.9	7.1	5.6	5.8	8.2	7.7
1.5	3.8 ▲	1.5	2.6	1.6	0.7	5.5	2.4	1.8	1.2	1.2	2.1	1.7	2.0
4.0	2.4	1.9	1.3	2.7	1.8	2.3	3.6	1.3	2.1	1.6	1.3	2.2	2.1
1.2	2.4	3.4	2.3	2.3	3.2	1.6	2.2	2.8	2.4	2.4	2.4	1.6	3.2 ▲
2.2	2.8	2.2	2.0	2.2	1.9	3.1	2.8	2.0	2.0	1.8	2.0	1.8	2.5 ▲
4.8	6.9	2.7	4.5 ▲	5.3	3.5	8.5	5.9	3.5	2.6	2.0	3.1 ▲	4.3	3.9
7.3	8.7	3.0	4.4	4.1	4.7	6.4	7.0	2.8	3.8	2.4	3.0	4.6	4.0
5.9	8.6	5.8	4.5	4.3	7.9 ▲	7.9	7.5	4.9	4.4	4.5	3.2	4.9	5.8
6.0	8.1 ▲	3.8	4.5	4.5	5.3	7.6	6.8	3.7	3.6	3.0	3.1	4.6	4.6

Source: Child Trends and Urban Institute



This Snapshot presents findings from the 1997 and 1999 rounds of the National Survey of America's Families (NSAF). Information on more than 100,000 people was gathered in each round from more than 42,000 households with and without telephones that are representative of the nation as a whole and of 13 selected states. As in all surveys, the data are subject to sampling variability and other sources of error. Additional information on NSAF methods can be obtained at <http://newfederalism.urban.org/nsaf/methodology.html>.

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Acknowledgements

The authors thank Tamara Black and Nancy Geyelin Margie for assisting with data production.

Endnotes

- 1 A general measure of school engagement, based on work by James Connell and Lisa Bridges, was derived from four questions in which parents were asked about the extent to which their children did schoolwork only when forced to, did just enough schoolwork to get by, always did homework, and cared about doing well in school (Ehrle and Moore 1999).
- 2 Participation in extracurricular activities was assessed on the basis of parents' responses to questions about children's involvement in lessons, clubs, sports, or other activities (Ehrle and Moore 1999).
- 3 A measure of behavioral and emotional problems was derived from a series of questions in which all parents were asked to report the extent to which, in the past month, their children did not get along with other kids, could not concentrate or pay attention for long, or were unhappy, sad, or depressed. Parents of 6- to 11-year-olds were also asked how often during the past month their children felt worthless or inferior; were nervous, high-strung, or tense; or acted too young for their age. Likewise, parents of 12- to 17-year-olds were additionally asked how often during the past month their children had trouble sleeping, lied or cheated, or did poorly at schoolwork (Ehrle and Moore 1999).
- 4 Parents were asked to classify their children as generally being in excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor health.
- 5 Psychometric and validity analyses (Ehrle and Moore 1999) indicate that these scales have moderate to high internal consistency, and measures relate as expected to child and family characteristics.
- 6 The estimates for fair and poor health presented in this Snapshot are for children ages 0 to 17 and therefore differ from those presented in Kenney, Dubay, and Haley (2000).