

The State of U. S. Children & Youth: An Overview



EDUCATION

- America invests a smaller proportion of its gross domestic product in education than 13 other industrialized countries.
- About 27 million Americans – 20 percent of the population – are functionally illiterate. High-school graduation rates for blacks and Hispanics are far below those of whites. Fewer than 50 percent of Hispanic students graduated on time in 1986.
- Poor and minority children are less likely to be enrolled in preschool than middle-class white children; Head Start serves only 1 in 4 eligible children.
- By age 21, 83% of youths have a high school diploma or equivalency certificate. This figure masks the dropout rates in some inner cities, which approach 50%, and higher grade retention rates for blacks.

HEALTH

- America and South Africa are the only industrialized nations that fail to provide universal health coverage and child care for their children and parents.
- America invests a smaller portion of its gross national product (GNP) in child health than 18 other industrialized countries.
- In 1985, 1.5 million poor children under six – 30 percent – were not eligible for Medicaid and were not covered by any other type of health insurance; another 1 million near-poor children under six – 32 percent – also lacked health insurance.
- In the United States, the number of pediatric AIDS cases is rising rapidly, particularly in inner-city neighborhoods.