

# Youth Indicators 2005

## Trends in the Well-Being of American Youth

U.S. Department of Education  
Institute of Education Sciences  
NCES 2005-050

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# **Youth Indicators 2005**

## **Trends in the Well-Being of American Youth**

**July 2005**

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# INTRODUCTION

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The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) published the first edition of *Youth Indicators* in 1988, which contained statistics to describe the circumstances of young people's lives both in school and beyond the schoolhouse. This current report is the fifth edition in this series. The report acknowledges that learning may occur across many different settings and may be influenced by circumstances and experiences in various social contexts.

Parents, educators, and policymakers frequently refer to information on factors outside of school that influence learning. Information about youth across varied settings provides background and baselines to inform policies and practices intended to promote educational improvement. *Youth Indicators* is a statistical compilation of data on the distribution of youth, their family structure, economic factors, school and extracurricular activities, health factors, and other elements that constitute the world of young people between the ages of 14 to 24. These data present a composite of the youth experience, highlighting connections between their lives inside and outside of school. Much of the data in this publication are central to long-term policy debates on education issues. Where possible, trend data are provided as a historical context for interpretation. Some indicators cover only more recent years, either because they show key details of the current status, or because historical data are unavailable. Demographic information for additional age groups is provided on many indicators to relate the youth population to other groups.

This report presents a selection of indicators that provide a broad perspective on youth; it uses trend data that cut across disciplines and agency lines; and it provides information on both posi-

tive and negative aspects of the youth experience. These indicators are examined in five sections: Demographics, School-Related Characteristics, Employment-Related Characteristics, Activities Outside of School and Work, and Health. Each indicator contains a table, figure, and brief descriptive text describing the types of comparisons one might reasonably make. A short glossary defines key technical terms. Standard error tables for this report are available on the web at <http://nces.ed.gov>.

*Youth Indicators* contains indicators that have been adapted from various other federal reports, as well as indicators that have been constructed specifically for this report from NCES and other sources. Indicators published in previous editions of *Youth Indicators* constitute the basis for a significant proportion of this volume; however, many new and substantially revised indicators were designed to address emerging issues and take advantage of new databases or new features of surveys that were not available for previous editions. Many of the indicators in this report use published and unpublished data from other federal agencies and organizations, including the

- U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau;
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC);
- U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics;
- University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research; and
- Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics.

**Technical Note**

Unless otherwise noted, all statements cited in the text about differences between two or more groups or changes over time were tested for statistical significance at the 0.05 level. Several test procedures were used, depending on the type of data interpreted and the nature of the statement tested. The most commonly used test procedures were  $t$  tests and linear trend tests. Trend tests were conducted by evaluating the significance of the slope of a simple regression of the time series points and a  $t$  test comparing the end points.



# HIGHLIGHTS

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*Youth Indicators* was designed to meet the needs of individuals who are interested in viewing trends in the well-being of youth in various social contexts that may relate to youth education and learning. *Youth Indicators* contains statistics that address important aspects of the lives of youth, including family, schooling, work, community, and health. This report focuses on American youth and young adults 14 to 24 years old. The following highlights from the report provide a broad view of today's youth:

- The number of persons 14 to 24 years old is expected to increase between 2000 and 2020, reflecting growth in the number of minority youth. The population of Hispanics is expected to increase much more rapidly than the population of Blacks and Whites (*indicator 2*).
- The proportion of young adults, ages 18 to 24, with families of their own declined from 42 percent in 1960 to 19 percent in 2003 (*indicator 3*).
- The median age at first marriage has increased for both sexes; from 23 in 1970 to 27 years old in 2003 for males and from 21 in 1970 to 25 years old in 2003 for females (*indicator 4*).
- Although a performance gap in reading proficiency between 13- and 17-year-old White students and their Black and Hispanic peers was still present in 2004, this gap is smaller than it was in 1975 (*indicator 13*).
- Average mathematics proficiency for both 13- and 17-year-olds was higher in 2004 than in 1973 for all racial/ethnic groups (*indicator 15*).
- The proportion of all 16- to 24-year-olds who were dropouts declined between 1998 (12 percent) and 2003 (10 percent) (*indicator 19*).
- Young adults have attained higher levels of education over the past decades: 16 percent of 25-to 29-year-olds had completed college in 1970 compared to 29 percent in 2004 (*indicator 20*).
- College enrollment rates of 18- to 24-year-olds have increased from 26 percent in 1980 to 38 percent in 2003; the enrollment rate for females has increased more rapidly than that for males (*indicator 22*).
- The median income for male full-time workers 20 to 24 years old decreased between 1975 and 2002 (after adjustment for inflation). However, the income of females 20 to 24 years old also dropped, but not as much, and thus the gap between young males' and females' incomes narrowed (*indicator 32*).
- The proportion of high school seniors participating in community affairs or volunteer work grew between 1980 and 2001 (*indicator 36*).
- The percentage of White youth who reported using a computer at home was significantly higher than for Black and Hispanic youth in 2003 (*indicator 37*).
- The violent crime victimization rate for young people ages 12 to 24 was lower in 2002 than in 1995 (*indicator 43*).
- In 2003, 12 percent of high school students were overweight, while 15 percent were at risk for becoming overweight (*indicator 46*).
- The percentage of White seniors who reported current use of cigarettes, alcohol, and illicit drugs in 2004 was higher than the percentages of Black and Hispanic seniors (*indicator 48*).

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