

Secure Parental Employment

Headline

Among children living with single mothers, the percent whose mother was employed full-time declined slightly from 50 percent in 2002 to 48 percent in 2005. This decline came after the percentage had increased substantially from 39 percent in 1996 (the year in which welfare reform was first implemented) to 50 percent in 2002. ([See Figure 1](#))

Importance

Secure attachment to the labor force, defined here as full-time, full-year employment, is a major determinant of financial stability and well-being for families. For low-income families, it is not a guarantee of escape from poverty¹ but it is associated with higher family income and greater access to private health insurance. Higher income, in turn, is associated with many positive child outcomes including better health, academic achievement, and financial well-being as adults.² However, in some cases, long hours of employment among mothers of very young children have been associated with modestly negative development outcomes.³

Trends

The percentage of children with at least one resident parent employed full-time, full-year increased steadily, from 72 percent in 1990 to 80 percent in 2000, before gradually decreasing after 2000. Increases during the 1990 to 2000 period were particularly large for children in families headed by single parents, non-Hispanic black children, and children in poor families. ([See Figure 1](#) and [Table 1](#)) Since the year 2000, the percentage of children with at least one parent employed full time has decreased to 78 percent in 2005. ([See Table 1](#))

Differences by Family Structure

Children who live with two parents are much more likely than children who live only with their mother or their father to have at least one parent employed full-time, full-year (89 percent among children living with two parents, compared with 48 percent of children living with single mothers and 71 percent of children living with single fathers, in 2005). ([See Figure 2](#))

Differences by Poverty Status

In 2005, among children living below the poverty line, only one out of three children had at least one parent in the household employed full-time, full-year, compared with nearly seven out of eight children at or above the poverty line (32 percent versus 88 percent). Among children in poverty, 57 percent of those children living in two-parent families had at least one parent employed full-time, full-year, compared with 17 percent of children

living in mother-only families and 32 percent of children living in father-only families, in 2005 ([See Figure 3](#))

Differences by Race and Ethnicity

In 2005, non-Hispanic white children were more likely than Hispanic children to have at least one parent employed full-time, full-year (84 percent versus 74 percent, respectively). At 62 percent, non-Hispanic black children were less likely than either non-Hispanic white or Hispanic children to have at least one parent with secure employment. ([See Table 1](#))

Differences by Age

Older children are more likely than younger children to have at least one parent employed full-time, full-year. Among children living in single-mother families in 2005, only 37 percent of children under age six lived with at least one parent employed full-time, full-year, compared with 53 percent of children ages six to 17. ([Table 1](#)) Among children living in two-parent households, the percentage of children living with at least one parent employed full-time, full-year also varies by age, although the differences are much less striking (87 percent and 90 percent, respectively).

State and Local Estimates

State-level estimates for the percent of children under age six with both parents in the labor force for 2006 are available from the 2007 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* at: <http://www.kidscount.org/sld/index.jsp> (See state data)

State-level estimates for the percent of children who do not have at least one parent employed full-time, full-year (the obverse of this indicator) are available from 2000-2005 from the *KIDS COUNT Data Book* at: <http://www.kidscount.org/sld/index.jsp> (See individual state data)

State and region estimates for parental employment by family structure for 1990 and 2000 are available from a Census Bureau publication available at: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0078/twps0078.pdf> (See Tables E.3 and E.4)

International Estimates

None

National Goals

None

Definition

A parent is defined as securely employed if he or she was usually working full-time (at least 35 hours per week) for 50 or more weeks in the most recent calendar year.

Data Source

Data for 2005: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. *America's Children in Brief: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2007*, Table ECON2. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. <http://www.childstats.gov/americaschildren/tables.asp>

Data for 2004: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. *America's Children in Brief: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2006*, Table ECON2. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. <http://www.childstats.gov/americaschildren/tables.asp>

Data for 2002-2003: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. *America's Children in Brief: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2005*, Table ECON2. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. <http://childstats.gov/americaschildren/eco2.asp>

Data for 1980-2001: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. *America's Children in Brief: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2004*, Table ECON2. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. <http://childstats.gov/americaschildren/pdf/ac2004/econ.pdf>

Raw Data Source

Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement (formerly known as the March Supplement)
<http://www.bls.census.gov/cps/ads/adsmain.htm>

Next Update

Summer 2008

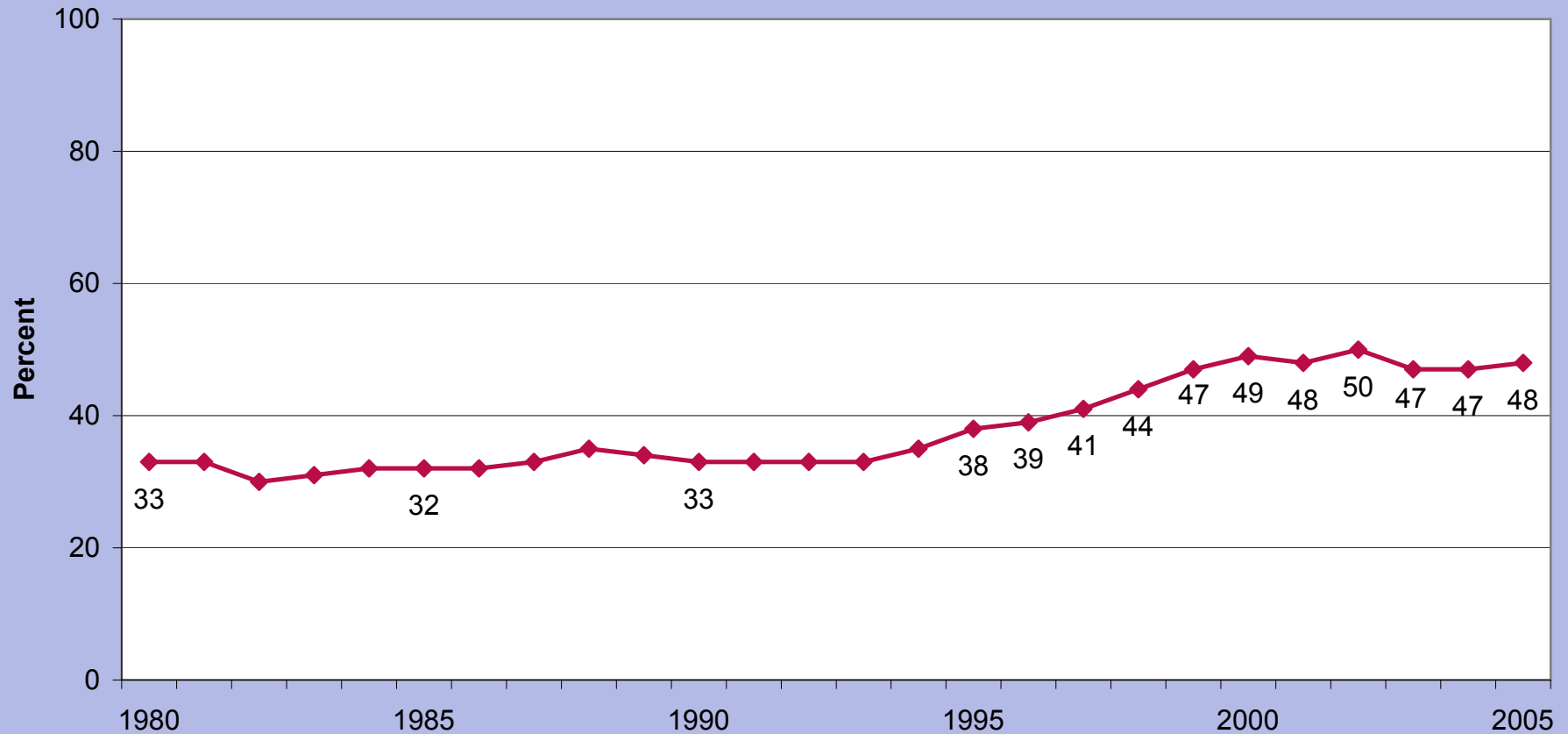
¹ Cauthen, Nancy. 2002. *Policies that improve family income matter to children*. National Center for Children in Poverty. <http://www.nccp.org/media/iec02a-text.pdf>

² Brooks-Gunn, J., and Duncan, G. 1997. The Effects of poverty on children. *The Future of Children*. 7(2), pp. 55-71. http://www.futureofchildren.org/information2826/information_show.htm?doc_id=72165

³ Harvey, E. 1999. Short-term and long-term effects of early parental employment on children in the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. *Developmental Psychology*. 35, 2 pp.445-459. This article may be purchased at: <http://www.psycinfo.com/psycarticles/1999-10060-012.html>

Figure 1

Among Children Living with a Single Mother, the Percent with Mothers Employed Full-Time, Full-Year, Selected Years 1980-2005

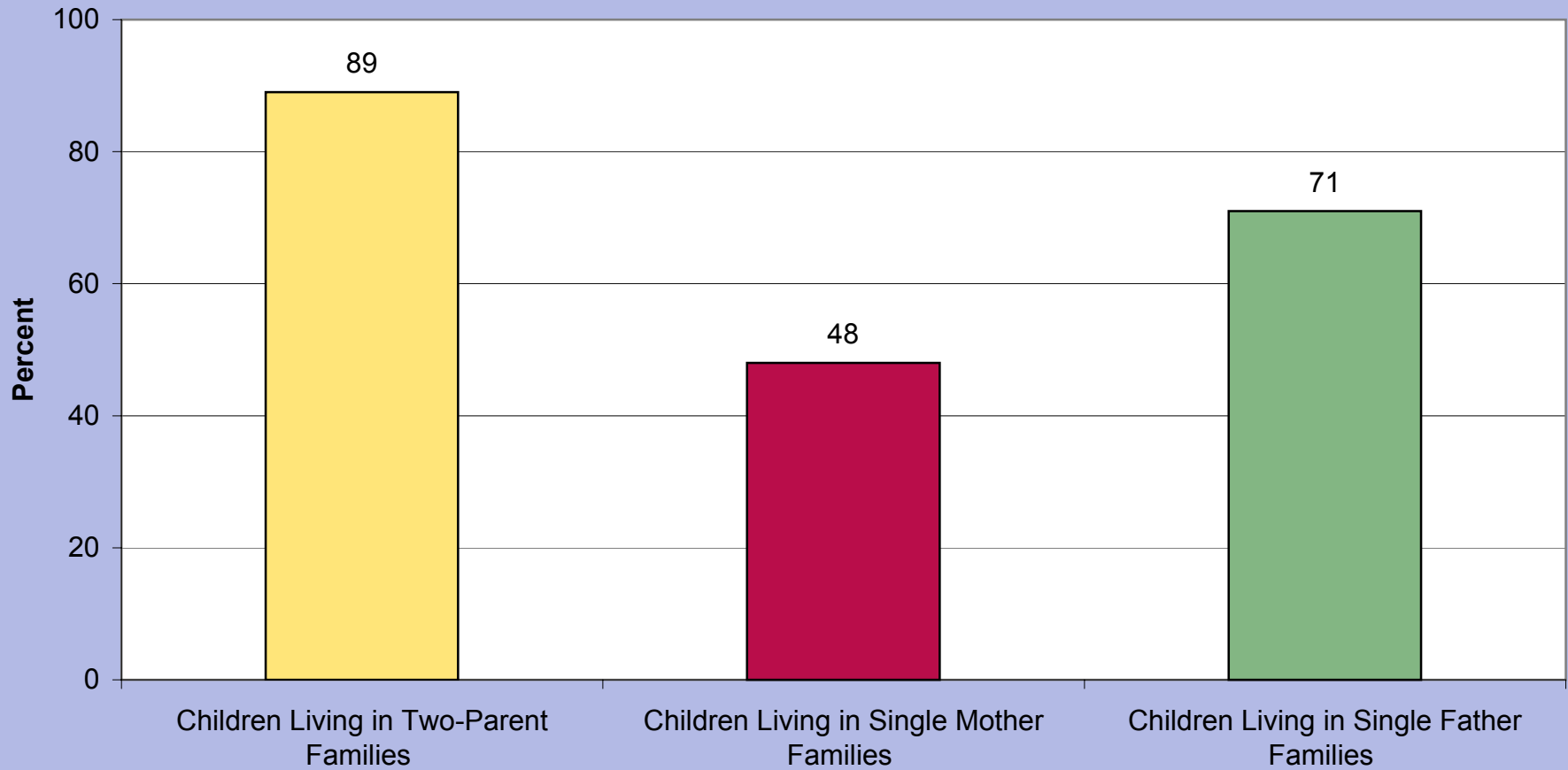


Note: Single-parent families include some families where both parents are present in the household, but living as unmarried partners.

Source: Data for 1980-2001: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. *America's Children in Brief: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2004*, Table ECON2. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Data for 2002-2005: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2007*, Table ECON2. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Available at: <http://childstats.gov/americaschildren/>

Figure 2

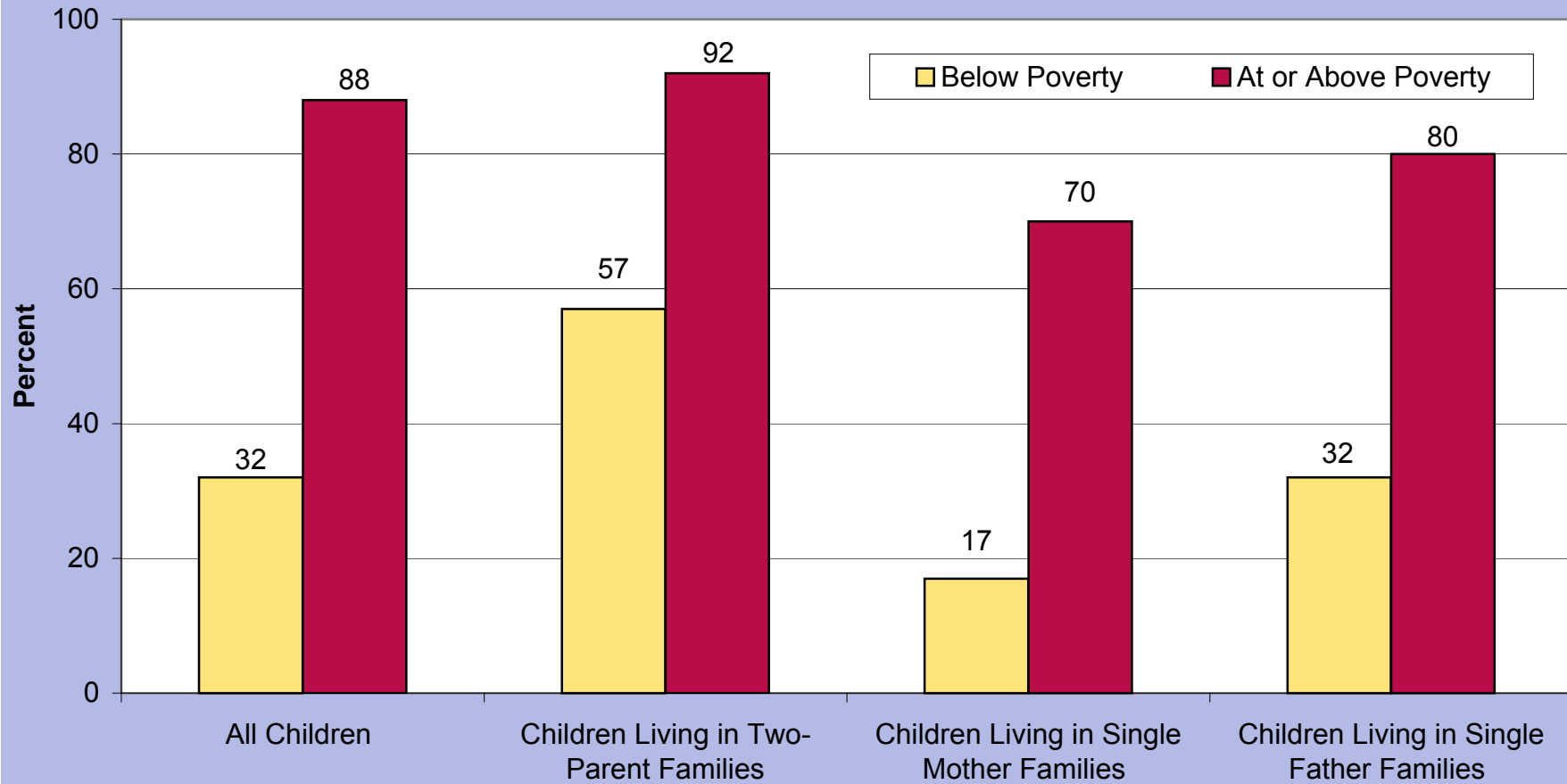
Percentage of Children Under Age 18 With At Least One Parent Employed Full-Time, Full-Year, by Number of Parents in the Home, 2005



Note: Single-parent families include some families where both parents are present in the household, but living as unmarried partners.
Source: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. *America's Children in Brief: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2007*, Table ECON2. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
Available: <http://childstats.gov/americaschildren/>

Figure 3

Percentage of Children Under Age 18 With At Least One Parent Employed Full-Time, Full-Year, by Number of Parents in the Home and Poverty Status, 2005



Note: Single-parent families include some families where both parents are present in the household, but living as unmarried partners.
Source: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. *America's Children in Brief: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2007*, Table ECON2. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Table 1

Secure Parental Employment: Percentage of Children Under age 18 Living with at Least one Parent Employed Full Time all Year by Family Structure, Race, Hispanic Origin, Poverty Status, and Age, 1980-2005

	1980	1985	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
All Children Living with Parent(s)														
Total	70	70	72	74	75	76	77	79	80	79	78	77	78	78
Race and Hispanic Origin¹														
White, non-Hispanic	75	77	79	81	82	82	84	84	85	84	83	82	82	84
Black, non-Hispanic	50	48	50	54	56	58	58	64	66	65	64	61	62	62
Hispanic	59	55	60	61	64	67	68	71	72	73	73	71	73	74
Poverty Status														
Below Poverty	21	20	22	25	25	26	31	31	34	32	33	30	33	32
At or Above Poverty	81	82	85	86	87	88	87	88	88	87	87	86	87	88
Age														
Children Under 6	67	67	68	69	71	72	74	76	76	76	75	73	74	75
Children Ages 6-17	72	72	74	76	77	78	79	80	81	80	79	79	79	80
Children Living in Families Maintained by Two Parents														
Total	80	81	85	87	88	88	89	90	90	89	88	88	88	89
With Both Parents Working Full Time All Year	17	20	25	28	30	31	31	32	33	32	30	29	30	31
Race and Hispanic Origin¹														
White, non-Hispanic	81	83	86	89	90	91	91	91	92	91	90	90	90	91
Black, non-Hispanic	73	76	84	85	87	85	86	88	90	89	84	85	86	85
Hispanic	71	70	74	77	79	80	82	83	85	84	82	82	84	85
Poverty Status														
Below Poverty	38	37	44	46	48	48	56	52	58	54	54	52	55	57
At or Above Poverty	84	87	89	91	92	92	92	93	93	92	91	91	92	92
Age														
Children Under 6	76	79	83	86	87	87	88	89	89	88	85	86	86	87
Children Ages 6-17	81	82	85	87	88	89	89	90	91	90	89	88	89	90
Children Living in Families Maintained by Single Mothers³														
Total	33	32	33	38	39	41	44	47	49	48	50	47	47	48
Race and Hispanic Origin¹														
White, non-Hispanic	39	39	40	46	47	46	52	52	53	52	52	52	49	52
Black, non-Hispanic	28	25	27	33	35	39	39	46	49	48	49	44	45	45
Hispanic	22	22	24	27	27	34	36	39	38	42	45	43	45	45
Poverty Status														
Below Poverty	7	7	9	14	10	13	17	18	20	19	19	17	19	17
At or Above Poverty	59	59	60	61	64	66	66	66	67	67	69	69	67	70
Age														
Children Under 6	20	20	21	24	27	28	31	35	36	38	40	34	34	37
Children Ages 6-17	38	37	40	45	45	47	50	52	55	53	54	53	52	53
Children Living in Families Maintained by Single Fathers³														
Total	57	60	64	67	67	70	70	70	69	69	68	63	68	71
Race and Hispanic Origin¹														
White, non-Hispanic	61	62	68	72	69	72	72	76	74	71	70	66	70	74
Black, non-Hispanic	41	59	53	64	60	67	66	51	52	58	64	54	60	65
Hispanic	53	53	59	58	66	68	69	65	68	72	70	63	69	67
Poverty Status														
Below Poverty	15	23	21	24	30	29	34	28	21	29	34	27	26	32
At or Above Poverty	68	69	74	79	77	80	79	79	79	78	77	73	78	80
Age														
Children Under 6	48	57	58	54	61	62	65	66	65	67	65	56	62	66
Children Ages 6-17	59	62	67	74	70	74	72	71	70	70	70	65	71	73

¹ Full-time, all-year employment is defined as usually working full time (35 hours or more per week) for 50-52 weeks.

² Estimates reflect the new OMB race definitions, and include only those who are identified with a single race. Hispanic of any race.

³ Includes some families where both parents are present in the household, but living as unmarried partners.

Source: Data for 1980-2001: Reproduced from Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2004, Table ECON2. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Available at: <http://childstats.gov/americaschildren/>. Data for 2002 and 2003: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2005, Table ECON2. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Available at: <http://childstats.gov/americaschildren/>. Data for 2004: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2006, Table ECON2. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Available at: <http://childstats.gov/americaschildren/>. Data for 2005: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2007, Table ECON2. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Available at: <http://childstats.gov/americaschildren/>.