

3. 205/8: 71-1

MAR 18 1991

DOCUMENTS COLLECTION U.S. Depository Copy

Statistical Brief

Children's Well-Being: An International Comparison

The Census Bureau has a vast amount of data on social and economic characteristics in countries abroad as well as corresponding data for the United States. This brief presents comparable international statistics on the status of children and youth under age 25 in the United States and in 11 other developed (see graph below) and 4 developing countries (China, India, Israel, and Mexico). Statistics on the topics covered in this brief are not available for all of these countries. For most topics, the data were collected in different years for each country. The statistics used come primarily from the International Data Base on the Health and Well-Being of Children, housed at the Bureau's Center for International Research (CIR) and supported by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Infant Birth Weight

Among nine developed countries (Norway, Sweden, France, West Germany, Canada, the United Kingdom, Italy, the United States, and Hungary), the percentage of low birth weight babies (under

2,500 grams or about 5.5 lbs.) in the early 1980's ranged from 4 percent of all births in Norway and Sweden to 10 percent in Hungary; the United States stood eighth at 7 percent. India, by comparison, stood at 30 percent.

Abortion

Sixty-two percent of all legal abortions in the United States in 1983 were performed on women ages 15-24. This youth share of all legal abortions was the highest of all countries studied. The remaining proportions ranged from 58 percent in Canada to 28 percent in Hungary, with the United States proportion double those of India (30 percent), Italy

(30 percent), and Hungary (28 percent).

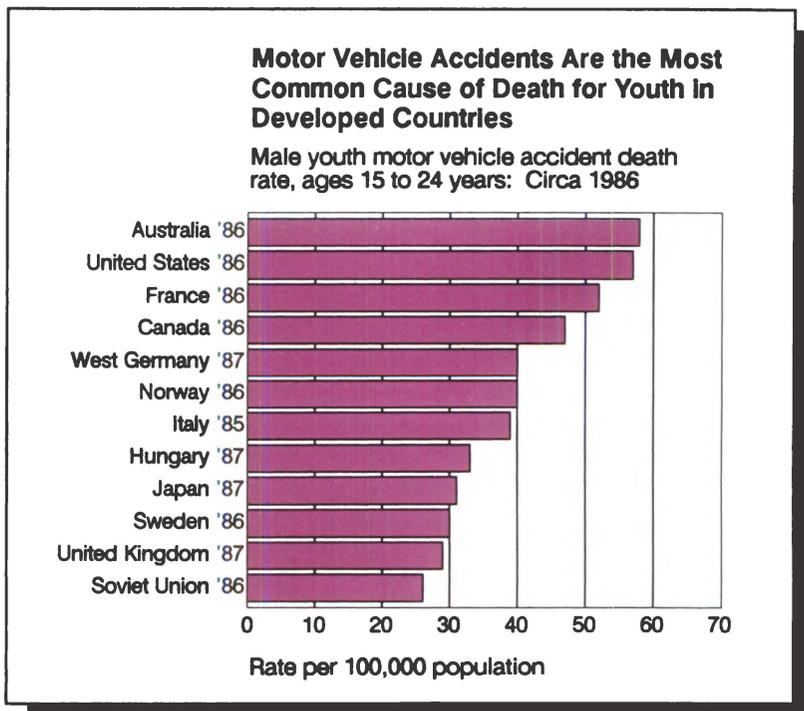
Homicide

About 22 male youths per every 100,000 were homicide victims in the United States in 1986. Male youth in the United States ages 15 to 24 years were at least 5 times as likely to be homicide victims as those in France, Israel, Australia, Norway, Canada, Sweden, West Germany, the United Kingdom, Japan, Italy, and Hungary in the mid-1980's. Mexico, though, had a male youth homicide rate nearly twice that of the United States: 39 male youths per every 100,000 were homicide victims in 1983.



SB/91-1 Issued January 1991

U.S. Department of Commerce BUREAU OF THE CENSUS



Single-Parent Families

Twenty-three percent of family households with children in the United States were headed by single parents in 1988. This is far higher than in other countries. Sweden (17 percent in 1985) was the next highest; Japan (6 percent in 1985) was lowest.

Child Involvement in Divorce

Children in the United States are more likely to be in a home experiencing a divorce than those in the United Kingdom, Sweden, Hungary, Canada, Norway, and Japan. About 19 children in every 1,000 children under age 18 were involved in a divorce in the United States in 1981. (The number was 17 in 1986.) This compares to the United Kingdom, second behind the United States with a rate of 13 in 1981 and Japan, last with a rate of 5 in 1980.

Births to Unmarried Women

Among six developed countries, the largest increase in births to unmarried women since 1960 took place in Sweden: from 11 percent of all births in 1960 to 48 percent by 1986. The increases in the United States, France, and the United Kingdom were similar during this period, with 23, 22, and 21 percent of all births in 1986 occurring to unmarried women — up from an earlier figure of 5 to 6 percent in 1960. In West Germany and Italy, the proportion of births to unwed mothers in 1986 remained small, at 10 percent of all births in West Germany to 6 percent of all births in Italy.

Unemployment

Unemployment rates are usually higher for youth than for the economically active population as a whole. Twelve percent of economically active youths were unemployed in the United States in 1987; the total unemployment rate was 6 percent. Australia,

Canada, and Israel had youth rates between 14 and 16 percent versus 6 to 9 percent total unemployment. In Japan, Norway, and Sweden, where total unemployment was low (below 3 percent in each country), youth unemployment was also low (below 6 percent in each country).

Government Assistance to Poor Children

In the United States, nearly 73 percent of poor families with children received some government assistance in 1979. In Australia, Canada, West Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom circa 1980, the percentage was at least 99 percent. Except for Australia, the United States provides a greater percentage of its assistance in welfare benefits than other countries, which provide most of their assistance through social insurance programs, such as social security.

For information on international children's well-being:

See *Children's Well-Being: An International Comparison*, International Population Reports,

Series P-95, No.80. Limited printed stock available from U.S. Government Printing Office. Stock No. 052-070-06673-3, \$4.75. For telephone orders, call (202) 783-3238.

Contact

Frank Hobbs or Laura Lippman (301)763-4221

For information on Statistical Briefs:

Contact

Robert Bernstein (301)763-1584

This brief is one of a series that presents information of current policy interest. It includes data primarily from the International Data Base on Health and Well-Being of Children as well as other sources. The data base is a collection of data for individual countries from numerous sources such as administrative and government records and statistical agencies. These data are subject to certain limitations such as differences due to collection methodologies and definitions as well as classification, reporting, and processing errors. Therefore, as with all data from different sources, use caution when comparing these data.

