Children’s Defense Fund. (2021). *The state of America’s children: Overview.* https://www.childrensdefense.org/state-of-americas-children/soac-2021-overview/

**CHILD POPULATION:** America’s children are more diverse than ever.

* There were 73 million children in the U.S. in 2019—22 percent of our nation’s population.
* In 2019, children of color made up 49.8 percent of all children and the majority of children under 5.

**CHILD POVERTY:** Children remain the poorest age group in America, with children of color and young children suffering the highest poverty rates.

* Nearly 1 in 7 children—10.5 million—were poor in 2019. Nearly 71 percent of poor children were children of color. More than 1 in 4 Black children and more than 1 in 5 Hispanic and American Indian/Alaska Native children were poor compared with 1 in 12 white children.
* The youngest children are the poorest. Nearly 1 in 6 children under 6 were poor and almost half lived in extreme poverty below half the poverty line.

**INCOME AND WEALTH INEQUALITY:** Income and wealth inequality are growing and harming children in low-income, Black and Brown families.

* The share of all wealth held by the top one percent of Americans grew from 30 to 37 percent and the share held by the bottom 90 percent fell from 33 to 23 percent between 1989 and 2019.
* Today, a member of the top 10 percent of income earners makes about 39 times as much as the average earner in the bottom 90 percent.
* In 2019, the median family income of white households with children ($95,700) was more than double that of Black ($43,900), and Hispanic households with children ($52,300).

**HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS:** The lack of affordable housing and federal rental assistance leaves millions of children homeless or at risk of homelessness.

* More than 1 in 3 children live in households burdened by housing costs, meaning more than 30 percent of their family income goes toward housing.
* More than 1.5 million children enrolled in public schools experienced homelessness during the 2017-2018 school year.
* 74 percent of unhoused students during the 2017-2018 school year were living temporarily with family or friends.

**CHILD HUNGER AND NUTRITION:** Millions of children live in food-insecure households, lacking reliable access to safe, sufficient, and nutritious food.

* More than 1 in 7 children—10.7 million—were food insecure, meaning they lived in households where not everyone had enough to eat. Black and Hispanic children were twice as likely to live in food-insecure households as white children.
* The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helped feed 17 million children in Fiscal Year 2018—nearly a quarter of all children in America.
* Half of all families that received SNAP in 2019 were not able to get enough healthy food, however, because SNAP benefits were too low. Among households with children, monthly SNAP benefits averaged just $118 a person—or less than $4 a day.

**CHILD HEALTH:** Our children have lost the health coverage they need to survive and thrive at an alarming rate.

* An estimated 4.4 million children under age 19, were uninsured—an increase of 320,000 more children without health insurance since 2018.
* Disparities in health insurance coverage persist. The rates of uninsured children are especially high among Hispanic children, undocumented children, children living in the South, and children in families with lower incomes.
* Medicaid and CHIP are the foundation of the nation’s health insurance system for children. In 2019, nearly 36 million children under 19 received comprehensive, pediatric-appropriate and affordable health coverage through Medicaid and CHIP.

**EARLY CHILDHOOD:** The high cost of child care and lack of early childhood investments leaves many children without quality care during critical years of brain development.

* Center-based child care for an infant cost more than public college tuition in 28 states and the District of Columbia in 2019. More than 80 percent of two-child families were paying more for child care than for rent.
* During the 2018-2019 school year, only 34 percent of 4-year-olds and 6 percent of 3-year-olds were enrolled in a state-funded preschool program.

**EDUCATION:**America’s schools continue to slip backwards into patterns of deep racial and socioeconomic segregation, perpetuating achievement gaps.

* During the 2017-2018 school year, 19 percent of Black, 21 percent of Hispanic, and more than 26 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native public school students did not graduate on time compared with only 11 percent of white students.
* More than 77 percent of Hispanic and more than 79 percent of Black fourth and eighth grade public school students were not proficient in reading or math in 2019, compared with less than 60 percent of white students.
* In 2017, 60 percent of Black children attended high-poverty schools with a high share of students of color while fewer than 9 percent of white children did.

**CHILD WELFARE:** For the first time since 2012, the number of children in the child welfare system fell, but too many children wind up in foster care because of poverty.

* Black and American Indian/Alaska Native families are disproportionately impacted by the child welfare system. Nationally, Black and AI/AN children are represented in foster care at a rate 1.66 and 2.84 times their portion of the overall population, respectively.
* After steadily declining since 2008, the number of children aging out of the foster care system jumped by more than 14 percent in 2019, with 20,445 youth reaching adulthood without a permanent family.

**YOUTH JUSTICE:** A disproportionate number of children of color are incarcerated in the juvenile justice and/or adult criminal justice systems, placing them at risk of physical and psychological harm.

* Despite a 67 percent reduction in child arrests between 2009 and 2019, 530,581 children were arrested in the U.S and a child or teen was arrested every 59 seconds.
* Black children were 2.4 times more likely to be arrested and American Indian children were 1.5 times more likely to be arrested than white children.
* Black youth represented less than 15 percent of the total youth population but 52 percent of youth prosecuted in adult criminal court in 2018. Black youth are nine times more likely than white youth to receive an adult prison sentence, American Indian/Alaska Native youth are almost two times more likely, and Hispanic youth are 40 percent more likely.

**GUN VIOLENCE:** Child and teen gun deaths hit a 19-year high in 2017 and have remained elevated since.

* Gun violence was the leading cause of death for children and teens ages 1-19 in 2018, surpassing motor vehicle accidents for the first time.
* In 2019, 3,371 children and teens were killed with guns—one every 2 hours and 36 minutes.
* Black children and teens had the highest gun death rate, followed by American Indian/Alaska Native children and teens. Black children and teens were 4 times more likely to die from gun violence than their white peers.
* The United States has more guns than people—and nearly 1 in 5 are sold without background checks.

**IMMIGRANT CHILDREN:** Family separation and anti-immigrant policies are dangerous to children’s health, development, and well-being.

* Nearly 1 in 4, approximately 18 million, U.S. children lived with at least one immigrant parent in 2018.
* More than 1 in 4 immigrant children did not have health coverage in 2019, 25.5 percent compared to 5.1 percent of native-born citizen children.
* An estimated 6.9 million children lived with undocumented parents. Chronic uncertainty and distress about the threat of enforcement activity destroy children’s sense of safety and their mental health.